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Teammates -- This month, the LeMay Center highlights the 55th Special Operations Squadron and the rescue of SLATE 46 as our Doctrine Paragon for Personnel Recovery.

On the morning of 21 January 1991, US Navy Lieutenants Devon Jones and Larry Slade were flying as SLATE 46, escorting an EA-6B electronic warfare aircraft on the fourth day of Operation DESERT STORM. SLATE 46 was over central Iraq when their F-14 Tomcat was struck by an SA-2 surface-to-air missile (SAM). The aircraft entered an unrecoverable spin, and LTs Jones and Slade ejected and parachuted safely to the ground.



The EA-6B aircraft acted as the *on-scene commander* and relayed the distress call and approximate position of SLATE 46 to the AWACS controlling the airspace. The AWACS relayed this information to the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC, known today as the Joint Personnel Recovery Center, or JPRC) within the Theater Air Control Center (TACC, known today as the Combined Air Operations Center, or CAOC). The TACC contacted the 55th Special Operations Squadron and directed them to launch an MH-53 helicopter, callsign MOCCASIN 05, to be the *Recovery Vehicle* to pick up the downed aircrew. However, the airspace around LTs Jones and Slade was defended by Iraqi SAMs and fighter aircraft. Additionally, Iraqi ground forces and civilians began to search for the two aircrew, and LT Slade was captured. The race was on to recover the remaining *isolated personnel*, LT Jones, who struggled to evade and hide in the featureless Iraqi desert.

At King Fahd Air Base, two A-10s on Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) Alert status were directed to launch and contact the AWACS. The A-10s, callsigns SANDY 57 and SANDY 58, took fuel from a tanker and then moved into the area to search for LT Jones. As they approached, Iraqi MiGs and helicopters moved toward the A-10s and MH-53. The AWACS directed a flight of F-15s to provide *Rescue Combat Air Patrol* (RESCAP) to cover for the A-10s and MH-53. As the A-10s approached the last known position of SLATE 46, they attempted to contact LT Jones. Fortunately, LT Jones heard the SANDYs, but did not



know where he was currently located. The A-10s used direction finding equipment in their aircraft radios to get closer to LT Jones' location. As they approached, LT Jones lit a signal flare from his survival kit, which the SANDYs saw and marked on their maps. LT Jones' actual location was relayed to MOCCASIN 05, who flew less than 50 feet above the desert floor to avoid detection by enemy gunners.

After refueling, the A-10s joined up on the large helicopter, providing *Rescue Escort* (RESCORT) to protect the MH-53 from enemy threats. As they approached LT Jones' location, the door gunner on the helicopter spotted Iraqi army trucks racing to LT Jones's location. The A-10s rolled in and destroyed one truck with 30mm cannon fire, and the other quickly retreated. MOCCASIN 05 landed within 20 yards of LT Jones and pararescuemen from the helicopter loaded him on board. The MH-53 took off and egressed the area under the careful escort of SANDY 57 and 58. MOCCASIN 05 returned safely to Al Jouf Air Base, where LT Jones was given a medical checkup and then returned to his ship. LT Jones' rescue was the first successful CSAR operation since Vietnam.

Why it matters today: Personnel recovery, while not unique to the US military, is a mission deeply rooted in American values. While personnel recovery protects the DoD's investment in its personnel and denies the enemy a chance to exploit isolated personnel for propaganda, it also clearly sends the message that the DoD recognizes the American value for the sanctity of life. Knowing there is a chance for rescue if something goes wrong increases the morale and effectiveness of our military personnel. Every branch of the military is responsible for conducting personnel recovery, and CSAR is the US Air Force's method for locating, authenticating, protecting, and recovering isolated personnel. In addition to the CSAR operation that rescued SLATE 46, the 55th Special Operations Squadron has conducted multiple other CSAR operations in various theaters, including the rescue of then Lt Col David Goldfein in Serbia during Operation ALLIED FORCE. The 55th Special Operations Squadron's lineage lives on as the 55th Rescue Squadron, part of the 355th Wing at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. Future conflicts will require rescue units like the 55th to adapt and consider creative ways to recover DoD personnel in distress. While the tactics, techniques, and procedures may change, the dedication and bravery of the US Air Force rescue community will always strive to uphold the motto of the historic Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service: "That others may live."

For more information, see AFDP 3-50, *Personnel Recovery*, and check out the latest episode of the *Air Force Doctrine Podcast: Lessons Learned in Doctrine- Episode 9 – General Goldfein: His rescue story, leadership: character-competence-curiosity, and Uber as the future of CSAR*, which can be found on iTunes, Spotify, Amazon Radio, and DVIDS at www.doctrine.af.mil.

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