



By LeMay Center Staff

LeMay Center Doctrine Development and Education

This month, the LeMay Center highlights Exercise Emerald Warrior 25.2 as a striking demonstration of personnel recovery (PR) and its enduring importance to the Air Force mission.



In August 2025, US Air force Special Operations Command conducted Emerald Warrior 25.2 in Arizona. Demonstrating the crucial role of PR in today's contested environment, Air Commandos partnered with Czech Special Operations Forces, to successfully execute a full-spectrum PR mission, by locating, authenticating, medically treating, and successfully extracting isolated personnel. The exercise rigorously tested capabilities by simulating challenges such as electromagnetic interference, degraded communications, dynamic threat injects, and complex air-ground coordination.

PR originated from the need to recover downed aircrew behind enemy lines during World War II and evolved through Korea, Vietnam, and modern conflicts. While the central purpose of PR has remained constant – to preserve the force, deny the enemy strategic advantage, and uphold national commitment to every isolated Airman – its methods have adopted to meet evolving threats. These principles are codified in Air Force Doctrine Publication (AFDP) 3-50, *Personnel Recovery*, which emphasizes rapid, integrated, and adaptive recovery operations across the conflict continuum.

Why it matters today: AFDP 3-50 emphasizes PR is a strategic imperative, essential to maintaining combat credibility and protecting national will. Emerald Warrior 25.2 put key doctrinal principles in action, demonstrating flexible command and control, multi-domain integration, rehearsed interoperability with allies, and recovery force readiness



under degraded conditions. The exercise reinforced the doctrinal expectation that PR planning should begin early; be embedded throughout operations; and executed with speed, precision, and adaptability. Personnel recovery remains fundamental to airpower. Emerald Warrior 25.2 highlighted how trained, integrated, and resilient recovery forces bring AFDP 3-50 to life. It demonstrated that PR remains as vital today as at any point in airpower history. As our nation focuses on both Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving this month, I can think of no greater form of gratitude than the successful recovery of an isolated person, especially in a combat or otherwise hostile environment.

For more on the Air Force's approach to Personnel Recovery, see [AFDP 3-50](#). You can also explore our doctrine podcast library on iTunes, Spotify, Amazon Music, or at wwwdoctrine.af.mil.