

Air Guardsmen, Coast Guardsmen train then save together.

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129th Rescue Wing Public Affairs

2/3/2009 - **MOFFETT FEDERAL AIRFIELD, Calif. (AFP)** -- After wrapping up a day of training with Coast Guardsmen Jan. 29, the aircrew of Jolly 91, an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter, were ready to head to Moffett Airfield, home to the 129th Rescue Wing.

The Jolly 91 Airmen were dropping off their rescue brethren, members of the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team 91105, at U.S. Coast Guard Air Station San Francisco. Using the Pave Hawk as a platform, Team 91105 had been conducting vertical insertion training, a fast-paced technique used to effectively deploy law enforcement teams to a high-risk situation, onto Coast Guard Island in nearby Alameda, and onto the Coast Guard cutter Tern in the San Francisco Bay.

Unbeknownst to the crews from the 129th RQW and Coast Guard, they also would be saving a life together that day.

"We got a call from cutter Tern right after we dropped the Coast Guard crew off at the Air Station San Francisco," said. Capt. Nathan Nowaski, the Jolly 91 aircraft commander. "A Coast Guard C-130 (Hercules) received a mayday call from a pilot who crashed his plane in the ocean near Pillar Point."

Crewmembers on the Tern, the boat Jolly 91 had recently hovered over during the training mission, requested the helicopter crew fly out to the crash scene.

"On our way out to the crash, crews from the Tern said that the pilot was sitting on top of the airplane. I then assumed that the pilot would be alert, so we thought we could drop a rescue strop to the downed pilot," Captain Nowaski said.

A rescue strop is a strap used to hoist people during helicopter operations.

While Jolly 91 headed to Pillar Point, the Coast Guard C-130 aircrew dropped a life raft, survival suit and flares to the pilot. The pilot managed to swim 50 feet from his sinking aircraft and lift himself into the life raft.

"When we saw the pilot in the raft, we decided to send down the rescue strop," Captain Nowaski said.

The pilot managed to put himself in the strop even with the frigid temperatures and was safely hoisted up into Jolly 91.

The crew headed back to Air Station San Francisco where the man was treated for hypothermia before being transported by ambulance to San Francisco General Hospital. Approximately 30 minutes after being notified about the crash, Jolly 91 was heading back home to Moffett.

"It's very rare to get a notification like this and have things fall into place so quickly," Captain Nowaski



During a training exercise Jan. 29, members of the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team 91105 descend from an Air Force HH-60G Pave Hawk from the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing at Moffett Federal Airfield, Calif., onto the Coast Guard cutter Tern in the San Francisco Bay. Crewmembers conducted vertical insertion training, a fast-paced technique used to effectively deploy law enforcement teams to a high-risk situation. Shortly after the training was completed, the 129th RQW and Coast Guard crews rescued a downed pilot near Pillar Point, Calif. (U.S. Coast Guard photo/Petty Officer 3rd Class Melissa Hauck)

said. "It was pretty cool to be in the right place at the right time and know that you have just saved a life."

The 129th Rescue Wing and Coast Guard District 11 have worked together in the past on over-water rescue missions, and the day's training mission, coupled with their ability to immediately respond and rescue the downed pilot, defined teamwork.

"The 129th Rescue Wing remains vigilant to serve when lives are on the line," said Lt. Col. Steve Butow, 129th Operations Group deputy commander. "This latest rescue illustrates our responsiveness and interoperability with other agencies."

This life saving mission brings the total number of people saved by the 129th RQW to 599.