



Standing left to right: Capt Rocky Villafane, AC; SMSgt James B. Bourcier, FE; and Capt Steve Krank, CP. Kneeling left to right: SSGts Joseph Kelly and Joel Lukens, PJs.

Captain Villafane and crew, Detachment 14, 67 ARRS. Captain Villafane and his HH-3 crew were flying a medical evacuation mission to remove a severely injured U.S. Navy crewman from a submarine on patrol in the North Atlantic. Due to high seas, the helicopter had to maneuver for a pick-up from the sailplane of the moving submarine. This difficult maneuver requires the pilot to depend entirely on verbal commands from the flight engineer to keep the helicopter properly positioned during the hover.

As the helicopter hovered over the submarine, Senior Master Sergeant Bourcier, the flight engineer, lowered the pararescuer, Staff Sergeant Kelly, to the sailplane of the rolling submarine. After a quick medical evaluation, Sergeant Kelly secured the patient and himself to the penetrator. The two were then hoisted towards the helicopter, but rose only 20 feet when the hoist quit. As Captain Villafane maintained a constant hover, the flight engineer and the second

pararescuer, Sergeant Lukens, attempted to free the hoist cable. After troubleshooting, the helicopter's altitude was increased and the cable was lowered approximately 50 feet in an attempt to free the jam, but to no avail—the hoist froze and could not be moved.

The two men on the penetrator now swung perilously below the helicopter. Because they were over 50 miles from shore, Captain Villafane decided to return the two men to the deck of the submarine. Working from a 120-foot hover and guided by Sergeant Bourcier's directions, he was able to skillfully lower the two men to the deck below. With the pararescuer and the injured seaman safely onboard the waiting submarine, the helicopter's crew retrieved the penetrator and cable by hand.

The superb skill and outstanding crew coordination demonstrated by Captain Villafane and his crew during this extremely hazardous situation not only prevented damage to

valuable Air Force equipment, but prevented injury to the two men stranded on the penetrator.