

## Major Durham and Crew



GOOD SHOW

Kneeling, left to right: Maj Louis D. Durham, aircraft commander; 1/Lt Robert P. Gradle, copilot; and TSgt Dennis L. Bowling, flight mechanic. Standing, left to right: Sgt David S. Greskovics, crew chief; Airman Joseph A. Ruperto, crew chief; Airman Eldon D. Schmidt, PJ, and A1C Frederick H. Reinhardt, PJ.

**D**uring a local area support mission, an HH-53C, commanded by Maj Louis D. Durham of the 55 ARRS, Eglin AFB, Fla., experienced an in-flight landing gear malfunction in which the left main gear would not extend. All normal and emergency procedures were accomplished by the crew, but the gear still would not come down. While the helicopter was orbiting, the gear dropped from the up and locked position to an intermediate position, but further efforts to fully extend the gear in flight were unsuccessful.

Maj Durham brought the helicopter to a hover on the ramp and a ground party attempted to release the gear by pushing up on the wheels. The left gear raised two inches, but returned to its original position. Pulling downward on the gear also proved unsuccessful.

A Conference Skyhook was initiated through another aircraft, King 09, to MAC, ARRS, and the 39 ARRW Operations Centers and the 55 ARRS commander as Maj Durham orbited his helicopter to conserve fuel. After it was determined that the gear could not be lowered, the decision was made to land on stacked bed mattresses and sheets of plywood to prevent aircraft damage. Fourteen mat-

tresses and four pieces of three-quarter inch plywood were tied with cargo tie-down straps and secured to the ramp for the landing. As the helicopter hovered over the landing area, a final attempt was made by ground personnel to pry the gear down. It was unsuccessful and the helicopter crew chief, over interphone, directed the aircraft to a smooth landing on the mattress platform.

The initial investigation revealed that the left main landing gear drag strut had failed. There was no damage to the helicopter.

Maj Durham and his crew performed in a highly professional manner. Their judgment and skillful handling of this emergency prevented major damage to the aircraft and possible injury to the crew. Sgt David S. Greskovics, crew chief, and Airman Joseph A. Ruperto, assistant crew chief, both of the 55 ARRS, were among the ground crew team that assisted the helicopter. Their actions were significant in the successful termination of the emergency.

For Maj Durham's crew's initiative, skill, and professionalism, THE MAC FLYER offers a well deserved "Good Show." ✪