



20th SOS crews show gratitude to EMS flight crews

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1 SOW Public Affairs

10/5/2007 - **Hurlburt Field, Fla.** -- "Thank God! We're going to be alright."

This was the first thought Lt. Col. Eugene Becker, MH-53 PAVE LOW helicopter pilot and 20th Special Operations Squadron director of operations, had when he saw the AC-130 gunship overhead and then the Gulf Flight 1 helicopter from Twin Cities Hospital hovering approximately 15 minutes after their helicopter made a hard landing near Duke Field during a routine night time training mission Sept. 7.

Col. Bill Nelson, Air Force Special Operations Command aerospace medical division chief, and Airman 1st Class Bradley Jordan, an MH-53 gunner, were injured during the incident.

At a ceremony Sept. 28 in the 20th SOS auditorium, the crew of Cowboy 21 expressed their gratitude to the two EMS helicopter crews who appeared out of the darkness that night, and calmly and professionally tended to the injured Airmen before flying them to separate hospitals in Pensacola.

Colonel Nelson and Airman Jordan presented the crews with plaques expressing their appreciation.

"A flight surgeon is supposed to treat, not be treated," Colonel Nelson said. "You got there safely because you did exactly what you were supposed to do. I salute you, and I really do appreciate you."

Air Heart 3, based at DeFuniak Springs Airport, along with Gulf Flight 1 received the call from their dispatch headquarters in Nebraska. Both were in the air minutes after being alerted.

Ed Light, pilot for Gulf Flight 1 coordinated with the Air Heart 3 crew to circle opposite sides of Highway 85 in search of the crash site.

"My primary concern was finding these guys," said Mr. Light, who circled the west side of the highway. "We hadn't even circled once before I saw their strobe lights, and thought, 'There they are!'"

The EMS helicopter hovered over the site for several minutes assessing the situation and guiding the ground rescue units who were having difficulty finding the location.

"It was eerie seeing that helicopter, really intense," Mr. Light said.

Despite debris and contamination, both EMS helicopters were able to land in the same helicopter landing zone where the MH-53 went down. Within 15 minutes, both Colonel Nelson and Airman Jordan were en-route to hospitals in Pensacola.

"The Airmanship displayed that night was exceptional," Colonel Becker said. "We fly every night, but we have night vision goggles and all sorts of technology to help us. You found us in the pitch dark with no night vision goggles, took control of the situation and made everyone feel at ease. We thank you for what you did to help us that night."



The 20th Special Operations Squadron presented a plaque to the paramedic team that came to the 20th Special Operations Squadrons aide during a recent MH-53 Pave Low accident, Hurlburt Field, Sept 28, 2007. The team was invited to the 20th SOS to be honored and sincerely thanked for their timeliness and accuracy. (USAF photo by Senior Airman Stephanie Jacobs) (Released)