

The Air Force helicopters made 38 trips to the hotel roof to rescue 93 persons. The 302nd's CH-3Es hoisted 15 persons from hotel balconies to safety.

Tech. Sgt. Daniel R. Jaramillo, a flight engineer aboard one of the CH-3Es rode his helicopter's rescue hoist sling to balconies to strap survivors into sling seats. Once hoisted, the helicopter lifted them to the roof, where other helicopters flew them to ground level.

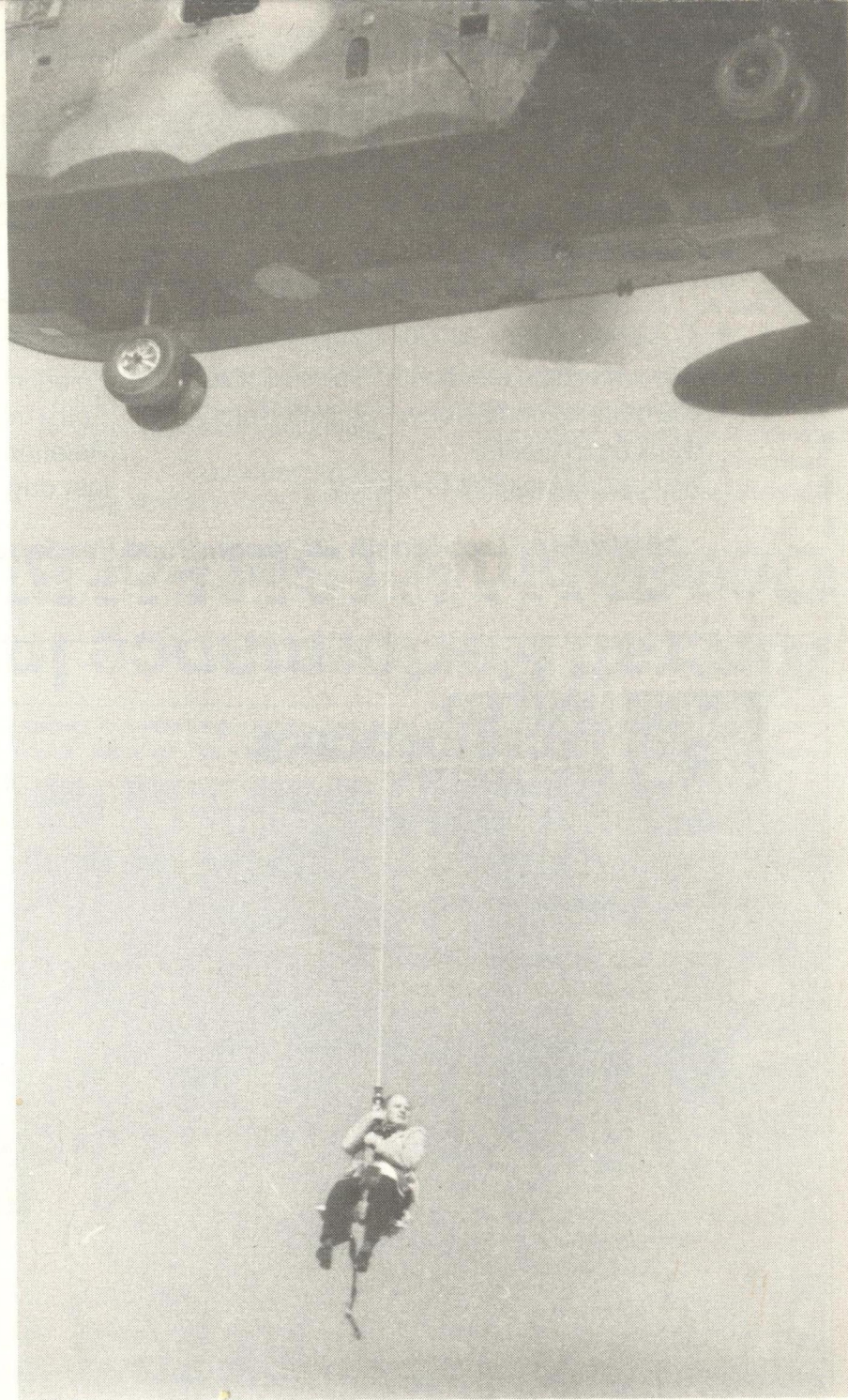
The large CH-3Es were required to hover above the hotel roof, because of their large rotor diameter. The overhanging hotel balconies almost prevented Air Force rescuers from rescuing stranded survivors.

The problem was solved, according to an Air Force spokesman, by 302nd pilot Capt. Michael A. Martin, who had his crewmen, Msgt. James W. Connett, riding a rescue sling, toss a cargo strap to survivors on balconies. They would pull the strap to make the sling pendulum. Once close enough, Msgt. Connett would grab balcony railings and climb them to start rescue operations. Other CH-3E crews quickly adopted this method to make balcony rescues.

Once he was able to get onto a balcony, Connett said he would strap people to the hoists, one or two at a time. They were lifted to the helicopters, sometimes hovering as much as 200 feet above, for evacuation to the roof.

Military personnel praised efforts of police and fire authorities, including city police flying their own helicopters, who coordinated the rescue

AIR FORCE crews rescued 15 persons from the hotel balconies using the sling lifts of their Sikorsky CH-3Es. (USAF photo)



In Las Vegas

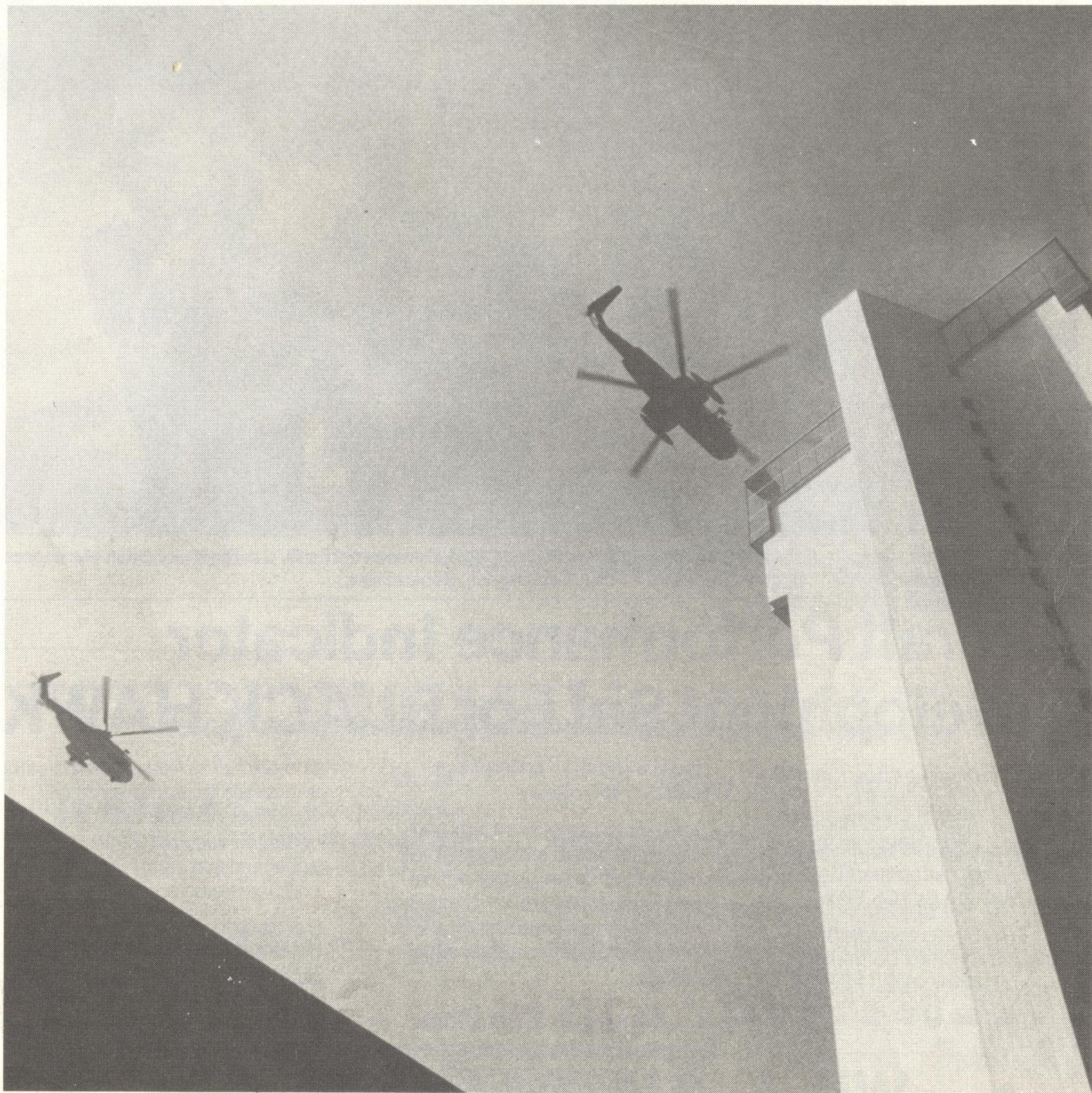
Helicopter Units Aid Hotel Fire Rescues

United States Air Force personnel, some flying Sikorsky helicopters, and civilian police and firefighters, rescued more than 108 persons from the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas November 21 after fire swept through the building.

Six regular Air Force and three reserve helicopters aided in the rescue by plucking hotel guests stranded on the roof and balconies to safety, and carried fire and rescue personnel to the hotel roof.

The Air Force helicopters responded after a call for help from the Las Vegas Police Department to nearby Nellis Air Force Base. According to the Air Force, three helicopters from Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field, 40 miles north of Las Vegas participated in the rescues.

The additional six helicopters were participating in training exercises, and included aircraft from the 1st Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Fla., and three Sikorsky CH-3E Jolly Green Giants from the 302nd Special Operations Squadron, an Air Force reserve unit at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.



SIKORSKY CH-3Es hover above the MGM Grand to position themselves for rescue operations. Rescue hoists were lowered from the aircraft to persons stranded on the hotel's balconies. (USAF photo)