

Note from AFA President – Search and Rescue

Friday, March 27, 2009

AFA Members, Congressional Staffers, Civic Leaders, and DOCA members, one of the (dumber) ideas floating around Washington these days is to cancel the AF's replacement rescue helicopter – designated Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) – X. The logic behind this idea is that other assets can do the mission, and therefore, the DOD does not need specialized assets.

This logic is ably disputed with an op-ed written by former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen (Ret) Michael E. Ryan [see: [http://www.afa.org/EdOp/2009/edop\\_32609.asp](http://www.afa.org/EdOp/2009/edop_32609.asp)]. Gen Ryan argues that the CSAR mission area is not a "pick-up" game; AF CSAR forces have rescued over 3000 people in CENTCOM's Area of Responsibility since 9/11; and CSAR is a very complicated and dangerous mission ... for which we need ... a ready, trained, and dedicated force.

In a recent panel discussion of AFA's Mitchell Institute at the National Press Club, a similar question was asked to the panel. I thought Gen (Ret) Gregory S. Martin's answer deserves your attention. He said that there are a lot of experts on CSAR ... but none of them are in positions of authority. He (Martin) has commanded CSAR forces and understands a little bit about the mission. If you are interested in rescuing people who have been shot down, then you need a dedicated force ... one that is trained, equipped, and properly sized to be available to rescue people who become isolated behind enemy lines. You don't know where you will have to go ... you may have to go into the mouth of the tiger; you may have to shoot your way in or out ... but it is the American military ethos to **not** leave people behind.

Since I also commanded a group with two CSAR squadrons in it ... if only for just a short period of time ... let me add that my units saved lots of lives "in peacetime." They were scrambled, often in the middle of the night, to go to some faraway places. The crews, to include the PJs, were the most professional of any I saw during my career. They were deployed over 200 days per year and saved hundreds of civilians in their assigned area. Further, in Iraq and Afghanistan, our present enemies don't exactly have POW camps. They don't bother to follow the Geneva Conventions. They torture and kill their captives. To quote Gen (Ret) T. Michael Moseley, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, " ... to protect our people – not just Airmen, but those of all Services – it is a moral imperative that we field a new system." That is why the CSAR – X was and still is the #2 acquisition priority (behind KC-X) of the Air Force.

For a transcript of the Mitchell Institute event, go to:

[http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/presentations/031809CAFinCrisis\\_tnx.pdf](http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/presentations/031809CAFinCrisis_tnx.pdf)

For the latest Mitchell Institute study [Combat Air Forces in Crisis], go to:

[http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/Reports/CAF\\_0309.pdf](http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/Reports/CAF_0309.pdf)

For those of you interested in Blogging on this issue, visit our blog site, [Air Force Association Blog](#).

For your consideration.

Mike

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