

## 56 RESCUE SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

56 Air Rescue Squadron constituted, 17 Oct 1952  
Activated, 14 Nov 1952  
Discontinued and inactivated, 18 Mar 1960  
Activated, 8 Jul 1972  
Redesignated 56 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, 10 Jul 1972  
Inactivated, 15 Oct 1975  
Activated, 1 May 1988  
Redesignated 56 Air Rescue Squadron, 1 Jun 1989  
Redesignated 56 Rescue Squadron, 1 Feb 1993

#### STATIONS

Sidi Slimane, French Morocco, 14 Nov 1952-18 Mar 1960  
Korat RTAFB, Thailand, 8 Jul 1972-15 Oct 1975  
Keflavik, Iceland, 1 May 1988

#### ASSIGNMENTS

7 Air Rescue Group, 14 Nov 1952  
12 Air Rescue Group, 8 Dec 1956  
Air Rescue Service, 18 Feb 1958-18 Mar 1960  
3 Aerospace rescue and Recovery Group, 8 Jul 1972  
41 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery (later, 41 Rescue and Weather Reconnaissance) Wing  
(attached to 3 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group) 20 Aug 1972-15 Oct 1975

39 Special Operations Wing, 1 May 1988  
41 Rescue and Weather Reconnaissance Wing, 1 Apr 1989  
Air Rescue Service, 1 Aug 1989  
Air Forces Iceland, 1 Feb 1993  
35 Operations Group, 31 May 1993  
85 Operations Group, 1 Oct 1994  
85 Group, 1 Jul 1995

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

5 Air Division, 14 Nov 1952-28 Feb 1953  
Detachment 3, 8 Air Rescue Group [European Rescue Operations Center], 18 Feb 1958- 18 Mar 1959  
Detachment 3, Air Rescue Service [European Recovery Operations Center], 18 Mar 1959-18 Mar 1960

#### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

H-5, 1952-1953  
SA-16, 1952-1960  
SC-47, 1953-1956  
SH-19, 1953- 1960  
HC-130, 1972-1975  
HH-43, 1972-1975  
HH-3, 1988-1992  
HH-60, 1992

#### **COMMANDERS**

Maj William P. Armstrong, 14 Nov 1952  
Maj Edmund B. Berry III, 25 Jun 1953  
LT COL Edward T. Davis, 7 May 1954  
LT COL John T. Burke, 8 Mar 1956  
LT COL John F. Zinn Jr., 10 Jul 1958  
LT COL Harry N. Young, 1 Jul 1959-18 Mar 1960  
LT COL Dale A. McGuire, 31 Dec 1972  
LT COL Billy R. McGee, 19 Mar 1973  
LT COL Edgar L. Allison, 26 May 1973  
LT COL Robert J. Bullington, 30 Sep 1973  
LT COL Chester G. Oehme Jr., 23 Aug 1974  
LT COL Walter L. Lindsey, 20 Jul-30 Sep 1975  
Unmanned, 1-15 Oct 1975  
LT COL William L. Schaefer Jr., 1 May 1988  
LT COL Charles W. Griffin, 1 Jul 1988  
LT COL Gary L. Robinson, 20 Aug 1989  
LT COL Dale A. Kissinger, 10 Oct 1990  
LT COL Jerry W. Cruik, 8 Jun 1992

LT COL James A. Sills, 26 Feb 1993  
LT COL Gary L. Copsey, 30 Jun 1994  
LT COL Robert P. Donnelly, 28 Jul 1995  
LT COL Jerry F. Miller, 3 Jul 1996  
LT COL William J. Dunn Jr., 1 Jul 1997  
LT COL Richard W. Leibach, 4 Jun 1999  
LT COL Keith H. McCready, 8 Jun 2001  
LT COL David A. Duke, 21 Feb 2003  
LT COL Thomas J. Sexton, 25 Jun 2004  
LT COL Thomas M. Greetan, 7 Dec 2005  
LT COL Steven Huss, 6 Jun 2007

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

Vietnam

Vietnam Ceasefire

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

Presidential Unit Citation

Southeast Asia, 8 Jul 1972-27 Jan 1973

### **Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards**

1 Aug 1991-31 May 1993

1 Jun 1993-31 Jul 1994

1 Oct 1994-31 May 1996

1 Jun 1996-31 May 1997

1 Jun 1997-31 May 1998

1 Jun 1998-31 May 1999

1 Jun 2000-31 May 2001

1 Jun 2001-31 May 2002

1 Jun 2002-30 Sep 2003

1 Oct 2003-30 Sep 2004

1 Oct 2004-31 Oct 2005

1 Jan-31 Dec 2007

1 Jan-31 Dec 2008

1 Jan 2009-31 Dec 2010

1 Jan 2014-31 Dec 2015

1 Jan 2020-31 Dec 2021

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm  
8 Jul 1972-28 Jan 1973

### EMBLEM



56 Air Rescue Squadron emblem approved, 26 Feb 1958.



On an Ultramarine Azure background, an Or ray of light descends from the chief position on the disc to the northern latitudes of the two-tone Argent globe. The globe is positioned at the nombril point on the disc, and occupies all base positions. A Gules winged sword is surmounted over the ray of light. The globe extends downward to middle base on the disc and occupies all base positions. The disc is bordered with Or. Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The globe represents day and night rescue capabilities the unit performs for all nations. The sword and wings signify the strength and wisdom needed to fly in the harsh Icelandic environment. The ray of light indicates hope for those in desperate need. (Approved, 31 Mar 1989; modified, 30 Apr 2007).

### MOTTO

## **OPERATIONS**

Flew search and rescue, and medical evacuation, in North Africa and southern European area, Nov 1952-Mar 1960.

The 56th AR Squadron rescued 18 men from the deck of a grounded Swedish freighter near the Casablanca harbor. They were hoisted aboard an SH-19. 3 Apr 54

Aircraft from the 56th and 58th AR Squadrons carried earthquake relief supplies to Orleansville, Algeria. The helicopters also evacuated 39 persons from the area. 11 Sep-17 Sep 1954

The 56th AR Squadron rescued 13 crewmen from an Italian tanker, Lisa C, in distress near Mayagan, Morocco. 17 Mar 1958

SH-19s from the 56th AR Squadron evacuated 37 persons from flooded areas near Tazi, Morocco. 25 Dec 1958

Eagle Pull Eight HH-53s and three HC-130s from the 40th and 56th ARR Squadrons, respectively, participated in Eagle Pull, the evacuation of United States personnel from Phnom Penh, Cambodia. One HH-53 inserted a combat control team prior to the evacuation and two HH-53s removed the last 15 military personnel from Phnom Penh following the completion of the evacuation. The Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) operated by the 3d ARR Group at Nakhon Phanom, exercised operational control of roacuc forces. There were no ARRS injuries or casualties although two HB-53S incurred hits from small caliber ground fire. 12 Apr 1975

Combat in Southeast Asia, 10 Jul 1972- 15 Aug 1973, to include search and rescue, airborne mission control, and aerial refueling; and local search and rescue until Feb 1975.

Frequent Wind Eight HH-53s and three HC-130s of the 40th and 56th Squadrons, respectively, participated in Frequent Wind, the evacuation of United States personnel from Saigon, Vietnam. Two of the HH-53s airlifted 362 evacuees from Saigon to the USS Midway. Both aircraft returned enemy ground fire. The HC-130s provided command and control communications and aerial refueling. The 3d ARR Group coordinated rescue operations. No ARRS personnel were injured. 29 Apr 1975

Search and rescue support to Iceland Defense Forces, May 1988.

The Air Force has released the names of the four airmen killed when their HH-60 Pave Hawk crashed on the Norfolk Coast of Eastern England on Jan. 7. The two pilots were Capt. Christopher S. Stover and Capt. Sean M. Ruane. The special mission aviators killed were TSgt. Dale E. Mathews and SSgt. Afton M. Ponce. All four crewmembers were assigned to the 56th Rescue Squadron at RAF Lakenheath, England. "The loss of our Liberty Wing brethren is felt deeply across RAF Lakenheath," said Col. Kyle Robinson, 48th Fighter Wing commander. "I can only imagine the hurt and sorry felt by the family and friends of these airmen. You are in our

hearts and minds." The aircraft was conducting low-level training along the coast when the crash occurred at approximately 6 p.m. local time, officials stated. "Police continue to work with various partner agencies to piece together the exact circumstances concerning the crash," Norfolk Constabulary Chief Superintendent Bob Scully said in a statement. "It remains a challenging, lengthy process due to the difficult terrain and the size of the area," he added. The recovery was hampered by incoming tides, which forced officials to move the wreckage, as well as scattered live ammunition, according to police. The accident remains under investigation. 2014

Multiple bird strikes caused the fatal HH-60 Pave Hawk crash on the Norfolk coast of England back in January, US Air Forces Europe-Air Forces Africa investigators determined. The flight of two HH-60s diverted over a marsh area to avoid populated areas during a night search training mission from RAF Lakenheath, England, Jan. 7. The helicopters startled a flock of geese, several of which took flight and crashed through the Pave Hawk's windscreen and cabin knocking the pilot, copilot, and gunner unconscious, according to the investigation's executive summary, released July 8. "The types of geese that hit the [Pave Hawk] weigh between six and 12 pounds," states the report. "A bird weighing 7.5 pounds would impact with 53 times the kinetic energy of a baseball moving at 100 miles per hour. The impact from the geese exceeded the design tolerance of the [mishap aircraft's] windscreen." The impact also disabled the helo's flight-path stabilization system, allowing the HH-60 to roll left, stall the rotors and impact the ground, killing all four crewmembers. The crash caused minimal damage to civilian property, but accident investigators pegged the loss of government property at an estimated \$40.3 million. Pave Hawk serial number 88-26109 was assigned to the 56th Rescue Squadron at Lakenheath. 2014

The Air Force is moving its European-based combat search and rescue capability from RAF Lakenheath, Britain, to Aviano AB, Italy, to more quickly respond to needs across Europe, Africa, and Southwest Asia. HH-60 Pave Hawks of the 56th Rescue Squadron and Guardian Angels of the 57th RQS, will relocate to Aviano in 2017, according to a US Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa release. "Moving to Italy, where we're better postured to provide rescue capabilities quickly and effectively, just makes sense," explained 57th RQS Commander Lt. Col. Jose Cabrera. The shift also gives the units greater access to training airspace and opportunities with regional partners and allies, according to the release. USAFE-AFAFRICA announced earlier this year that it is also moving CV-22s and HC-130s of the 352nd Special Operations Wing out of Britain to Spangdahlem AB, Germany, as part of an overall infrastructure review. During the same review, leaders identified Aviano as having excess capacity, making it the ideal site to absorb the five HH-60s and some 350 pilots, maintainers, Guardian Angels, and support personnel currently at Lakenheath. 2015

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency, U.S. Air Force, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.