



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC 20330-1000

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SAF/LL
1160 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1160

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4705

Dear Ms. McMorris Rodgers

Thank you for your letter to the Air Force Chief of Staff regarding the 36th Rescue Flight (RQF) based at Fairchild Air Force Base (AFB), Washington, and the corresponding Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training accomplished at the SERE School. As you noted, the 36th RQF is an integral portion of our SERE training program as well as an asset to local communities during execution of Search and Rescue (SAR) missions on a case-by-case basis. The following information addresses your specific concerns and data requests on the 36th RQF and SERE training.

Provide a detailed description of the SAR capabilities (aircraft, personnel, SAR unique equipment, etc.) of the 36 RQF at Fairchild AFB, the 40th Helicopter Squadron (40th HS), located at Malmstrom AFB, and the Air Force Reserve (AFR) 304th Rescue Squadron (304 RQS), located in Portland, Oregon. These three units are previously identified as available for SAR missions in the Northwest.

The following descriptions highlight the capabilities of the three requested units:

- 36th Rescue Flight (RQF) – Equipped with 4 UH-1N helicopters manned by 10 pilots and 6 flight engineers. In addition, Independent Medical Technicians (IDMTs) from the 336th Training Support Squadron (TRSS) are utilized on SAR taskings. Normal crew composition consists of 2 pilots, 1 flight engineer, and 1 IDMT for SAR mission execution. The UH-1N helicopters are equipped with a hoist, forward looking infrared (FLIR), and Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation.
- 40th Helicopter Squadron (HS) – Equipped with 8 UH-1N helicopters manned by 19 pilots and 8 flight engineers. For SAR mission execution, flight surgeons or medical technicians from the 341st Medical Group will accompany the helicopter. Normal crew composition consists of 2 pilots, 1 flight engineer, and 1 flight surgeon/medical technician for SAR mission execution. The UH-1N helicopters are equipped with a hoist, forward looking infrared (FLIR), and Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation.

- 304th Rescue Squadron (RQS) – The 304th RQS consists of specially trained Guardian Angel personnel to conduct full spectrum rescue activities. Note that this unit does not possess any rotary or fixed-wing aircraft to conduct rescue operations. The squadron consists of 127 personnel including Pararescue (PJs), Combat Rescue Officers (CROs), and SERE Specialists. Specific skills possessed by these specialized personnel include confined space collapsed structure extrication, dive recovery/salvage, swift-water rescue, and high/steep/low angle and avalanche mountain recovery. Normally, the 304th RQS will team with HH-60G and HC-130 aircraft from other rescue units for combat deployments and taskings.

Based on 2005 BRAC recommendations, what is the Air Force’s plan to realign the 304 RQS in Portland, Oregon to McChord AFB, WA? What SAR capabilities will be available, at McChord AFB, once the move is complete?

The 304th RQS was not included in the 2005 BRAC recommendations. Currently, no dedicated rescue units are located at McChord AFB.

What is the nautical distance between the 40th HS and the 304th RQS (pre & post BRAC)?

The nautical distance between the units is approximately 480 nautical miles. As noted above, there are no current plans to relocate the 304th RQS to McChord AFB.

- What is the estimated flight time, of the rotary-winged aircraft assigned to each unit, from each location to a random location approximately half-way in between the two units (pre/post BRAC)? Assume aircraft are fully manned with flight/rescue personnel and equipment.

Estimated flight time for a UH-1N helicopter is 5 hours 20 minutes (based on 90 knots ground speed) between Malmstrom AFB and Portland, Oregon. The approximate half-way point between the units requires 2 hours 40 minutes for a UH-1N helicopter based on the identical ground speed. As previously noted, the 304 RQS does not possess aircraft to conduct operations.

- Given the distance, to the estimated half-way point, what are the refueling requirements and crew-rest guidelines related to such a mission?

The approximate half-way point between Malmstrom AFB and Portland, Oregon, is Moscow, Idaho. A UH-1N helicopter would require a refueling at this half-way point to transit the distance between the two locations. Air Force directives allow a 12-hour duty period for aircrew of the UH-1N helicopter. Based on the transit time to and from the half-way point (5 hr 20 min), the helicopter crew would have approximately 6 hours of additional flight time available (in addition to the transit time between these locations). Dependent upon several variables (including refueling options, search location, etc.), this remaining time may allow 2 flying sorties after the transit is deducted from the 12-hour crew duty period.

- What is the estimated flight cost to accomplishing a sortie to and from the estimated half-way point between the 40th HS and 304th RQS (pre & post BRAC)?

The approximate cost is \$7,995 (based on \$1,500 per flight hour) for a UH-1N helicopter.

Provide a break down of the number of missions accomplished at 50-mile increments from the unit's primary bed down location, up to the nautical half-way point between Malmstrom AFB and Portland, Oregon. For instance, so many missions were accomplished within 50 miles, so many within 100 miles, within 150 miles...and so on. Within these distances, breakdown the missions by year and whether in response to civilian or military SAR requests. How many were requested?

The following table highlights the SAR execution for the 36th RQF during the last four years. Military missions are annotated in parenthesis with (mil). The total amount of mission requests that were not fulfilled for the year is annotated by the parenthesis next to the year designation.

Year	Month	50 miles	100 miles	150 miles	200 miles	250 miles
2004 (2)	January					
	February	1 (mil)				
	March					
	April					
	May					
	June	3 (1 x mil)		1		
	July					
	August					
	September					
	October	1	1			
	November	1	1			
	December					
2005 (7)	January	1 (mil)				
	February					
	March	1				
	April					
	May					
	June					
	July		3			
	August	1 (mil)	1			
	September	1				
	October	1 (mil)	1			
	November					
	December					
2006 (0)	January					
	February					
	March					

	April	2 (2 x mil)				
	May	1				
	June	1 (mil)				
	July					
	August					
	September					
	October	3 (1 x mil)				
	November					
	December					
2007 (0)	January	3				
	February					
	March					
	April					
	May					
	June	1				
	July	1 (mil)				
	August	1				
	September	1 (mil)				
	October	2	1	1		
	November			1		
	December	1				
2008 (0)	January					
	February					
	March	1				
	April					
	May	1 (mil)	1			
	June	2 (2 x mil)	1			
	July		2			

Given the demands of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and other primary mission responsibilities, what has been the availability of the 36th RQF, 40th HS, and 304th RQS to fulfill non-primary mission (non-national emergency – i.e. Hurricane Katrina) SAR request during the last four years? (Requested vs. Fulfilled)

During the last four years, the 36th RQF has flown 47 SAR missions with 9 requests unfilled due to weather and availability factors. The 40th HS flew 39 SAR missions with 5 requests unfilled due to weather factors. Since the 304th RQS does not possess unit aircraft, mission accomplishment statistics are not available for stateside SAR taskings.

- Provide a breakdown of the number of these missions requested/accomplished within the distance increments above and by month.

The following table highlights the SAR execution for the 40th HS during the last four years. The total amount of mission requests that were not fulfilled for the year is annotated by the parenthesis next to the year designation.

Year	Month	50 miles	100 miles	150 miles	200 miles	250 miles
2004 (0)	January					
	February					
	March					
	April					
	May					
	June					
	July					
	August	1				
	September					
	October					
	November					
	December	1				
2005 (3)	January		1			
	February	1				
	March	1				
	April			1		
	May					
	June					
	July		1			
	August			2		
	September					
	October	1				
	November		1			
	December					
2006 (2)	January					
	February		1			
	March			1		
	April	1				
	May					
	June			2		
	July			1		1
	August					
	September					
	October					
	November					
	December					
2007 (0)	January					
	February		1			
	March					
	April					

	May	1				
	June	1	1			
	July		2	2		
	August	1	1			
	September					
	October					
	November		1	1		
	December					
2008 (0)	January					
	February			1		
	March					
	April					
	May	1				
	June					
	July		1			

Provide a detailed justification for Air Force removal of the 36 RQF from Fairchild AFB.

The 36th RQF is fully funded through Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 and there are no plans to close the 36th RQF at Fairchild AFB.

What is the predicted impact on training effectiveness of SERE students without the support of the 36 RQF? What training objectives will require alteration, simulation and/or be eliminated in the training program?

The following training objectives will be impacted by the elimination of dedicated helicopter support, and will require alteration (A), simulation (S), and/or be eliminated (E) from the program.

S-V80-A, SERE Training

1. Use a transceiver without comprising self or recovery assets (A/S)
2. Guide recovery asset to isolated personnel's position (A/S)
3. Communicate enemy activity to friendly assets (A/S)
4. Use concealment techniques (A)
5. Use evasion movement techniques (A)
6. Use evasion movement techniques during periods of darkness (A)
7. Determine evader responsibilities during personnel recovery (A)

S-V80-B, Emergency Parachute Training

1. Participate in a live hoist recovery (A/S)
2. Determine post-egress procedures by observing a live deployment of an aircrew emergency parachute (S)

3. Determine landing procedures by observing a live deployment of an aircrew emergency parachute (S)

S-V81-A, SERE Specialist Training

1. Use issued aircrew signaling devices in a temperate environment (A)
2. Use improvised signals in a temperate environment (A)
3. Guide recovery forces in a temperate environment (A/S)
4. Use recovery devices in a temperate environment (E)
5. Use issued aircrew signaling devices in a desert environment (A)
6. Use improvised signals in a desert environment (A)
7. Guide recovery forces in a desert environment (A/S)
8. Use recovery devices in a desert environment (E)
9. Use issued aircrew signaling devices in a tropical environment (A)
10. Use improvised signals in a tropical environment (A)
11. Guide recovery forces in a tropical environment (A/S)
12. Use recovery devices in a coastal environment (E)
13. Use issued aircrew signaling devices in a coastal environment (A)
14. Use improvised signals in a coastal environment (A)
15. Guide recovery forces in a coastal environment (A/S)
16. Use recovery devices in a coastal environment (E)
17. Use issued aircrew signaling devices in an open sea environment (A)
18. Use improvised signals in an open sea environment (A)
19. Guide recovery forces in an open sea environment (A/S)
20. Use recovery devices in an open sea environment (E)
21. Use issued signaling/communication devices under evasion conditions to effect recovery (A/S)
22. Use improvised signals under evasion conditions (A/S)
23. Emergency Parachuting Demonstrations (E)
 - a. During the Temperate, Desert, Coastal, and Evasion phases of training and when an aircraft is available, a live demonstration of the emergency parachute will be performed to support an evasion movement demonstration. After this, students will guide recovery forces and use recovery devices IAW syllabus objectives to complete the recovery picture (E)

S-V94-C, Combat Rescue Officer Advanced SERE Course

1. Use issued and improvised signaling devices under evasion conditions (A)
2. Vector a helicopter or recovery force under evasion conditions (A/S)

What are the projected overall costs, over the next 10 years, of maintaining the 36 RQF at Fairchild AFB?

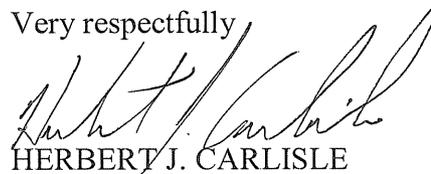
The 10-year cost (FY09-18) to maintain the 36th RQF operations is estimated at \$69.8 million. This is based on \$21.4 million for 10,080 flying hours (1,080 per year), \$29.3 million for maintenance, and \$19.1 million for 18 active duty personnel (9 officers and 9 enlisted).

Given the Air Force expertise in coordinating/performing SAR activities, what realistic alternatives, for maintaining 36 RQF like capabilities (equipment, availability, responsiveness, etc.) at FAFB, would the Air Force offer should the 36 RQF cease to exist at FAFB.

As noted previously, the 36th RQF is a fully funded unit and no plans exist to remove this capability from Fairchild AFB, Washington. Currently, the Air Force has no planned alternatives since the 36th RQF is fulfilling Air Force requirements at Fairchild AFB.

We look forward to continuing our close partnership with the State of Washington and appreciate the great support we receive which allows the successful execution of our critical missions at Fairchild AFB. Please let us know if you have any further questions or concerns.

Very respectfully



HERBERT J. CARLISLE
Major General, USAF
Director, Legislative Liaison