

# Controlled Chaos

*By Staff Sgt. Kelly Goonan, 439th Airlift Wing Public Affairs / Published March 13, 2015*

**PERRY, GA** -- Partially collapsed buildings, dozens of Somalian role-players, flooded housing areas, and hundreds of charred and mangled vehicles scattered across 820 acres offered a uniquely realistic training environment for pararescue jumpers and combat rescue officers from the 920th Rescue Wing at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida.

The Reservists endured the challenging environment to refine their search and rescue skills during an extensive four-day training exercise in March at the Guardian Centers in Perry, Georgia, about 20 miles south of Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command at Robins Air Force Base.

“This facility was really like the Ritz Carlton,” said Capt. Ryan Ruddy of Patrick’s 308th Rescue Squadron. “We had everything we needed to conduct imperative real-world training in a controlled environment.”

According to its website, Guardian Centers is America’s premier disaster preparedness and tactical training validation center. Its facilities enable realistic, large-scale disaster response exercises and kinetic military operations training.

“Guardian Centers was conceived, designed and purpose built to help first responders from different agencies work together to act swiftly and decisively in times of crisis,” the website says.

Controlled chaos ensued as the Guardian Centers staff created a Hurricane Katrina-like flood scenario calling for two HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters to circle overhead and lower PJs down to rooftops below to extract victims and cut open roofs to save those inside the flooded building.

“It was a great opportunity to use the tools we have, see how they work and provide feedback,” said Staff Sgt. Carl Enis, 308th pararescue jumper. “We learned quickly that some tools work better than others, depending on the type of roof we’re cutting into.”

Another natural disaster scenario necessitated diverse response techniques as a simulated earthquake destroyed a U.S. Embassy in Somalia. The PJs were confronted with disgruntled Somalian-speaking citizens, gunfire and mass confusion outside the partially collapsed, smoke-filled building. Inside, the Reservists found victims pinned by huge chunks of cement and requiring medical care.

The final training scenario involved a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that detonated within a small city in Somalia. Joining the Reservists and their helicopters for this training opportunity were Marines operating two MV-22 Ospreys used to transport the pararescue Airmen into and out of the disaster zone.

Burning rubber and vehicles filled the air with foul odors as disheveled citizens roamed the debris-filled road after the explosion went off. In addition, sounds of gunshots filled the air in between helicopter passes. PJs quickly organized and evaluated the scene. They were forced to cut into vehicles to extract the injured and dead. The narrow road, filled with broken pieces of vehicles and shattered glass, required the PJs to use their all-terrain vehicles to quickly and safely move the victims from the chaotic scene to the helicopters for extraction.

“This was the first time I’ve trained alongside Air Force pararescue and Army special forces,” said Staff Sgt. Kyle Storm, 273rd Marine Wing Support Squadron explosive ordnance disposal technician.

“Watching these elite groups conduct missions together in such a realistic training environment was a great experience.”

*(Staff Sgt. Goonan is assigned to the 439<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing public affairs office at Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts. She wrote this story while on a temporary duty assignment to the HQ AFRC public affairs office at Robins Air Force Base.)*



*MSgt. Christopher Lais, 308th Rescue Squadron, administers care to a vehicle-borne improvised explosive victim during a mass casualty training exercise conducted March 10, 2015 in Perry, GA. This four-day exercise used HH-60 Pave Hawks and MV-22 Ospreys for simulated scenarios that included earthquake collapsed buildings, vehicle-borne improved explosive devices detonating, and mass casualty response. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Kelly Goonan)*



*Pararescue Jumpers and Combat Rescue Officers, 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick AFB, Fla., conduct search and rescue response during Katrina-like flood training March 8, 2015 in Perry, GA. This four-day exercise used HH-60 Pave Hawks and MV-22 Ospreys for simulated scenarios that included earthquake collapsed buildings, vehicle-borne improved explosive devices detonating, and mass casualty response. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Kelly Goonan)*



*SMSgt. John Louden, 301st Rescue Squadron, prepares to lower a rescue strop as the HH-60 Pave Hawk positions above a rooftop during Katrina-like flood training March 8, 2015 in Perry, GA. This four-day exercise used HH-60 Pave Hawks and MV-22 Ospreys for simulated scenarios that included earthquake collapsed buildings, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices detonating, and mass casualty response. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Kelly Goonan)*



Pararescue Jumpers and Combat Rescue Officers, 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick AFB, FL, conduct joint training with a Marine Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft at the Guardian Center training facility March 11, 2015 in Perry, GA. This four-day exercise used HH-60 Pave Hawks and MV-22 Ospreys for simulated scenarios that included earthquake collapsed buildings, vehicle-borne improved explosive devices detonating, and mass casualty response. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Kelly Goonan)



Pararescue Jumpers and Combat Rescue Officers, 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick AFB, FL, conduct search and rescue response training at the Guardian Center training facility March 8, 2015 in Perry, GA. This four-day exercise used HH-60 Pave Hawks and MV-22 Ospreys for simulated scenarios that included earthquake collapsed buildings, vehicle-borne improved explosive devices detonating, and mass casualty response. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Kelly Goonan)