

Operation Hele On: Mission accomplished

By 1st Lt.
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For some, it was a long goodbye. For others, it was a quick kiss on the cheek and the promise they would soon meet again. But for all 50 military dependent children, it was their last few moments before deploying to the wilderness of Kumulani Air Base Aug. 19.

This mock deployment, Operation Hele On, wasn't a 90-day or even 180-day rotation. It was only eight hours and for these young Sky Warriors it was a day that will not soon be forgotten.

"This was an opportunity for the children to learn firsthand what their parents go through when they deploy," said Beth Hodges, Family Members Programs Flight Chief and Hickam Community Action Team chairperson. "The kids are left behind when parents deploy and they don't know what happens when they say 'goodbye'. Now they have an idea of what their parents are going through and the measures the Air Force takes to protect and prepare them for deployment."

This was the second year for the operation, which was developed and implemented by Hickam's Community Action Team.

Beginning the adventure, the young warriors met face-to-face with volunteer train-



Capt. Lance Freeman, 15th Airlift Wing Legal office, goes through legal details with Hele On Airman, Tyler Thompson.

ing instructors who taught them basic military training and protocol. Learning the basics of military training proved to be a challenge.

"Following orders is kind of hard," said 11-year old Thomas Scott. "But at least I know more about what my dad does in the military."

The next stop was a trip to the deployment line for a bag drag and equipment issue.

The kids received personalized dog tags, camouflage hats and shirts and special backpacks complete with camouflage face paint. They also received pre-deployment briefings from representatives from the medical group, the legal office, finance and other base agencies.

"Putting this event together was definitely a team effort," said Maria Barrows, director of Hickam's Family Support Center. "So many volunteers and base agencies made this experience possible for the children."

Once outfitted with proper deployment gear, the children were bussed to the Hawaii Air National Guard's 154th Wing and got the chance to explore the inside of a KC-135.

Finally, the young warriors arrived at Kumulani Air Base. Before the children could sample MREs, they had to raise the flag to officially open the base. After lunch, volunteers from the 15th Medical Group provided a demonstration in

medical moulage and first aid, and Airmen from the 15th Security Forces Squadron provided a military working dog demonstration and weapons briefing.

Throughout the day, the children had the chance to continue honing their military etiquette and marching skills.

"There were a lot of things we had to do today, like learning how to march and salute," said Kendra Nash. The mock deployment truly hit home for the 9-year old since her father was currently preparing to deploy.

"It'll be sad when he's gone," she said, "But I have my mom and sister, and as long as we have each other,



Pilot 1st Lt. Chris Cole explains the mechanics of wings on the back of a KC-135 as Senior Airman Cal Cordeiro, boom operator, maneuvers them to children participating in Operation Hele On.

it'll be okay."

While the day's activities focused on fun and learning, Ms. Barrows hoped each child returned home with a new appreciation for what their military parents do each day.

"I hope each one of these children will be better able to relate to their military moms and dads and have learned that deploying isn't easy and it requires a lot of sacrifice from the entire family."

Catch a falling star *Part 2, the early years*

By AI Blankenship
15th Logistics Group

A fleet of specially modified C-119 Cargo planes arrived in the fall of 1958 at Hickam Air Force Base. These planes were known as JC-119's since their special rear cargo doors opened vertically instead of side to side. Each planes cargo compartment had a winch, pulleys, and two pole mounts to permit aerial recovery of descending parachutes. In flight, when rigged for aerial recovery, there were two poles extending down and behind the aircraft holding two loops of aerial recovery hooks. These planes of the 6594th Test Group worked with other aircraft and ships to retrieve returning earth orbiting capsules for the national satellite science program Discoverer.

After many months of practicing their future mission at Edwards and Holloman Air Force Bases the members of the test group and their families were grateful to settle at Hickam. The JC-119's were brought out of storage. They had previously been used for aerial recovery of high altitude reconnaissance balloon packages over the South China Sea. A few years earlier hundreds of these balloon systems had been launched from northern Europe to fly over Russia and China.

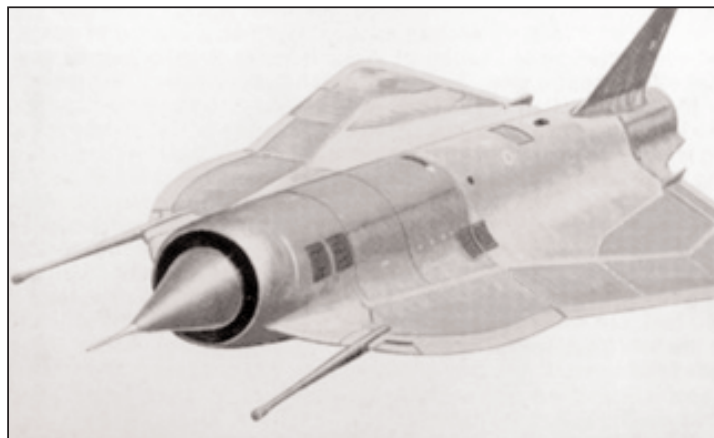
They practiced their future mission over the Edwards and Holloman test ranges by dropping 200-pound training capsules. After the dropping of a training capsule they would fly away a few miles and then turn back to the descending capsule to make a mid-air recovery. Mr. Charles Dorigan who was an Air Force C-119 loadmaster trained as an aerial recovery rigger to handle the poles, parachute, hooks, and cap-

sule; was at Edwards, and arrived at Hickam AFB with his crew in early December 1958.

"It was exciting to be on this mission, and to see Hawaii from the open backend of the JC-119 aircraft." He was reassigned to Edwards AFB in October 1959 to the 6594th Test Group's operating location to test the new aerial recovery equipment being engineered for the expected JC-130B aircraft. Mr. Dorigan was also on the C-130 from Edwards AFB that transported the August 19, 1960 capsule back to the mainland.

By February 28, 1959, the crews were fully trained and ready to recover a capsule returning from earth orbit. However the first launch from Vandenberg AFB failed to achieve orbit, causing great disappointment to test group members who were eager to accomplish their mission. Training continued over the next one and one half years, while eleven additional missions were attempted. These planned missions were scheduled two weeks to several months apart. Finally Discoverer 13 returned to earth successfully. However, the capsule descended outside of the planned area and was too far away from the on-scene aircraft for a mid-air recovery. The telemetry signal from the capsules radio beacon enabled it to be located as it floated on the ocean and it was retrieved by ship.

The first successful mid-air recovery was accomplished with the Discoverer 14 capsule on August 19, 1960. For their efforts, this aircrew received the McKay trophy for the most meritorious aeronautical feat of 1960. This mission achieved two major milestones in space history, for it was the first time a photo had been taken from space and the first mid-air



(Above) The D-21 Drone was used by flight groups to catch film and camera packages after they came out of China during the 70's. (Top) A SH-3 Helicopter over the Pacific Ocean prepares for a water pick-up of a film capsule from a spy satellite.

recovery of an object from space. Both the recovered capsule and this JC-119 aircraft now reside in the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

The success of this new Air Force mission resulted in the 6594th Test Group receiving twelve brand new JC-130B Hercules aircraft and six SH-3 helicopters. Two modified World War II Liberty Ships, the Sunnysvale and Longview, both

equipped with a landing pad and two hangars each, supported the SH-3 helicopters. The test group also received the needed funding to build its offices and Recovery Control Center in Hanger 2 where 15th Services Squadron and the Education Center are located today. They were previously located in cramped quarters in a wing of what is now the PACAF Headquarters building. At this point, the unit occupied Hangers 2, 4, and 11; and was the largest fly-

ing organization at Hickam. The base parachute shop stayed busy repairing and repacking training parachutes for the test group.

In 1967, the unit was assigned to support a top-secret mission, called Senior Bowl (D-21 Drone). They received three JC-130H long-range Hercules planes to provide this support. Several of the early test launches of this drone, designed to fly four times the speed of sound at 100,000 feet were conducted in the mid pacific. This allowed the test group to practice the mid-air recovery of the D-21 Drones 800-pound camera and film system. This mission required the unprecedented use of the one half inch steel cable on the recovery winch, versus the one half inch nylon rope. The test group supported operational D-21 missions out of Kadena Air Base, Japan from 1969 until 1972. These missions were flown over Mainland China and were halted with improved US/China relations in 1972.

The 6594th Test Group was also supported by the last active duty B-47 bombers, which were assigned to Hickam and retired in July of 1969. They were used as weather WB-47's to check the weather in the recovery area.

Next week

The second half of the 6594 Test Group's history started with a much larger recoverable film capsule, upgraded helicopter capability, and a long range rescue mission.

The Base Library will host three "Catch a Falling Star", Presentations with slides; parachutes, hooks, etc; and video Sept. 14 (two presentations) and Sept. 17 (one presentation).