



Airmen from the 17th Special Operations Squadron light flares during a combat survival training exercise, Jan. 6, at Camp Hansen. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Nick Emerick)



SERE, DAGRE, AIRCREW MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING EXERCISE

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1/13/2017 — The jungle floor is slick and damp, making traversing the terrain markedly difficult, especially when you are not only attempting to evade opposition, but also recover personnel.

Survival, escape, resist and evade specialists and deployed aircraft ground response element team members from the 353rd Special Operations Group, members of the 17th Special Operations Squadron aircrew and Marines from III Marine Expeditionary Force practiced for real world personnel recovery operations, Jan. 6, at Camp Hansen, Japan.

“Combat survival training for aircrew members happens every three

years,” said Tech. Sgt. Bon Strout, 353rd SOG SERE specialist. “There’s academics, basic survival, how to find food and water, and how to take care of themselves; then we put them in a field exercise.”

Not only is the environment difficult for teams on the ground to cross, but with conditions like heavy foliage or elevation, ability to communicate with those in need of help also becomes a challenge, according to Strout.

“The jungle is a huge obstacle for ground teams,” Strout said. “It’s good practice because the same problems will happen real world, so they can practice dealing with these issues in a controlled environment.”

According to Strout, the important

thing is to capture lessons and learn from them so next time, the same mistakes are being avoided.

“Working with SERE specialists helps us immensely,” said Staff Sgt. Sean Boes, 353rd SOG DAGRE fly away security team leader. “They are the experts when it comes to personnel recovery and we learn a lot from them whenever we support exercises such as this.”

With over 60% of recovery operations having some type of communication issue, realistic training makes all the difference when it comes to operations like personnel recovery behind enemy lines, according to Strout.

“With any personnel recovery event, the main problem is always communication,” said Strout. “The aircrew did

really well with this mission. We had Marines out with working dogs tracking the aircrew, which they were able to evade. They adapted and were able to overcome the communications issues they had faced.”

According to Strout, it is important to bring together several teams to work together in ways they may not be familiar with.

“It takes a lot of time to put on an exercise like this,” said Strout. “The more we can bring different people in for a single effort, it’s advantageous to everyone. Bringing all of these different teams together and having an exercise go well is what I really get a lot of enjoyment from, because when it comes to personnel recovery, there are no lines.”