



Air Rescue Association recognizes Moody pilot

by Airman 1st Class Eric Schloeffel
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11/9/2006 - **MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, Ga.** -- A Moody helicopter pilot took his experiences flying for the Army to new heights in the Air Force and recently earned the Air Rescue Association's 2006 Richard T. Kight Award.

Capt. Eric Trocinski, 41st Rescue Squadron, earned the association's highest honor for his role during a recent deployment.

"I was extremely surprised to win the award," said the captain. "I'm very happy and humbled to have won it."

The ARA brings together Airmen from across the Air Force rescue community once a year for an awards banquet in which they present the Kight award to the profession's highest achiever.

Though he was deployed to Iraq during the presentation in Savannah, Ga., 347th Rescue Group commander Lt. Col. Lee Pera accepted the award for Captain Trocinski.

The Kight award is named for Brig. Gen. (ret.) Richard Kight, the first air rescue commander and originator of the pararescue creed, which includes the phrase "that others may live."

Captain Trocinski began his military career as a helicopter pilot and warrant officer for the Army, flying the HH-60 Black Hawk. Instead of rescue, he was trained to fly air assault missions to assist Army infantry units.

After 10 years as a warrant officer, Captain Trocinski earned his commission and spent four more years in the Army before "jumping ship" - or in his case, helicopter - and joining the Air Force in 2004.

Transitioning into the new service mid-career was a move that brought challenges to the pilot, but the rescue mission he now supports has provided him with many positive experiences.

"(The transition) took a lot of work, especially since in the Air Force you're almost speaking a different language when you talk tactics and the mission in general," said Captain Trocinski, a native of Lewiston, Minn. "But the mission now (in the deployed environment) is a joint world, and you have to be able to speak Army, Air Force, Navy or Marines - so it did help out.

"I like working in the rescue community, because if you can do a combat search and rescue, then you can perform any other mission," the captain added. "If you're not as efficient as possible, people are exposed to the elements longer that could increase the possibility for death. There is such a small margin of error."

During his last deployment to Iraq, Captain Trocinski piloted a recovery mission after two F/A-18 Hornets experienced a mid-air collision. To accomplish the mission's objectives, Captain Trocinski flew more than 12 hours straight while dealing with harsh weather conditions. He also piloted numerous 12-hour missions in support of Hurricane Katrina.

Flying in the face of adversity doesn't seem to faze Captain Trocinski, who believes operating in the deployed environment is the calling of any military pilot.

"Operating (in the deployed environment) is what I am trained to do, so it makes sense for me to be there," he



Capt. Eric Trocinski, 41st Rescue Squadron pilot, stands beside an HH-60G Pave Hawk shortly before takeoff from Moody's flightline. Capt. Trocinski was recently awarded the Air Rescue Association's 2006 Richard T. Kight award for his performance in the deployed environment. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Eric Schloeffel)

said. "I enjoy contributing to the peace of mind we provide to other pilots and ground troops who know, no matter the circumstances, somebody is going to rescue them."

This type of dedication to putting mission first is what propelled the captain into the distinguished category of 2006 Richard T. Kight award-winners, said Col. Joe Callahan, 23rd Wing commander.

"Captain Trocinski's experience and accomplishments as a helicopter pilot makes him a valuable asset to the Air Force rescue mission," he said. "The honor of winning the prestigious Kight award only re-affirms this notion, and I take pride knowing some of the most skilled warriors call Moody home."