

RESCUE AND EVACUATION OF CASUALTIES FROM THICK JUNGLE— A SUGGESTION

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Medical Paratroopers have often been employed in the past for emergency rescue missions in the jungle. Experience has revealed that paratrooping in thick jungle involves great risk to the life of the rescuer. This procedure of rescue often takes considerable time, as working through a jungle, particularly with a patient on a stretcher, is tiresome and risky.

Helicopters are nowadays employed in rescue operations. This involves winching down a team of rescuers in the vicinity of the spot, landing of the helicopter in the nearest natural clearance and transfer of the casualties to the helicopter after preliminary medical aid. But it is often difficult to find a suitable landing site for a helicopter within the vicinity of the casualty spot, which can lead to considerable delay in instituting specific medical treatment. To obviate this, certain helicopters in the R.A.F., like Whirlwind and Sycamore, are fitted with facilities so that the rescuer can be placed on the spot of the accident and a stretcher loaded casualty can be winched up right into the helicopter. The entire mission could be completed within a few hours after the accident is located.

A plan for quick and effective helicopter rescue, without making any modifications to the existing helicopters, is suggested below. This plan has been tried out successfully by the author in the jungles of Eastern Sector of India.

The Proposed Scheme

The first requirement is a rescue team consisting of a medical section and a non-medical section. The medical section comprises of a Medical Officer, Medical Assistant and necessary medical stores and equipment. The non-medical section should comprise of persons trained in handling explosives, tree blasting, jungle clearance, R.T. and other signalling methods.

The rescue helicopter should first lower the teams on the spot of the accident. If the spot is covered with tall trees, the rescuers should be placed on the tree tops from where they can climb down with the help of known techniques. If required, they can make use of a rope and karabiners.

The medical team should administer the primary medical aid. Meanwhile the non-medical team should improvise a helipad for the helicopter to land.

Improvisation of Helipad

An axe and khukri are very useful for clearing low growth, while exposures like primacord, in combination with the plastic explosives can be used for felling large trees.

A continuous groove, one to two inches deep should be cut along the circumference of the tree and should be filled with the plastic explosive. Around this should be

placed two or three loops of primacord. The set up should then be primed. To save time, many trees should be primed together.

Once the clearance is made the helicopter should land or however very close to the ground. Casualty may be transferred using a rescue harness. This rescue harness method can be used for winching up all types of sitting casualties. For lying casualties, a stretcher capsule should be employed.

The stretcher capsule can be hung to the cargo carrying hook and can be safely flown with the helicopter for short distance.

Adoption of the above plan in situations where the helicopter cannot land, will considerably diminish the time for rescue operations and increase the chances of survival for the casualties. The procedure does not involve any risk to the rescuing team.