

NEWS RELEASE

No. 17/55

NOTE TO EDITORS, PICTURE EDITORS, NEWSREELS, etc.

ROYAL NAVY'S HELICOPTER SCOOP RESCUE NET:

FACILITIES

Admiralty News Release No.10/55 dated 13th January gave details of new apparatus developed by the Search and Rescue Unit at the R.N. Air Station, Ford, Sussex, for rescuing casualties in the sea. A Press demonstration in the use of this net has been arranged for Monday, 24th January. The visit will start at 11 a.m. at H.M.S. SISKIN, the R.N. Air Station, Gosport, where an explanation will be given. This will be followed by the demonstration in the Solent at noon. Representatives travelling from London should arrange to catch the 8.50 a.m. train from Waterloo to Portsmouth Harbour Station, and to cross to Gosport by first available ferry. Naval transport is being provided from the Gosport ferry terminal.

Those wishing to attend should apply for passes to the Chief of Naval Information, Admiralty, Whitehall (Whitehall 9000, Ext.1125). It is regretted that the limited resources of the wardroom make it impossible to offer lunch to the Press.

Admiralty, S.W.1.  
20th January, 1955

NEWS RELEASEHELICOPTER RESCUEROYAL NAVY GETS NEW APPARATUS

New apparatus to improve the means of rescue by helicopter has been developed by the Royal Navy in the form of a scoop net.

Since helicopters became air/sea rescue craft, the Navy's method of lifting persons from the sea has been by means of a strop which is lowered and then secured round the waist, either by the persons themselves or by an aircrewman lowered to assist them.

The use of these methods has resulted in the saving of many lives, both of Service airmen who have crashed into the sea, and seamen and civilians in distress. The only survivor from the South Goodwin Light Vessel was rescued by means of a strop lowered from a helicopter. Many pilots who crashed or forced landed behind the enemy lines during the Korean war were also rescued by this method.

While the existing methods of rescue normally work well, there are disadvantages. People struggling in the sea often cannot help themselves, and suspension in mid-air is frequently a completely new and terrifying experience for them. There is the added disadvantage that if a badly injured person is lifted by a strop, further injury may be caused during the lift.

In an endeavour to overcome some of these disadvantages, the Search and Rescue Unit at the R.N. Air Station, Ford, in Sussex, designed the scoop net and produced prototypes on the station for trials. The net is capable of scooping a person out of the sea as a helicopter moves overhead at walking pace. It is available for general Service use and is being supplied to aircraft carriers and Naval Air Stations at home and abroad.

The scoop net is extremely simple: a rope net is attached to a tubular frame which is in the form of a D. The D. frame is lowered face downwards into the water and is stabilised by a drögue. It is secured to a spacer bar by four cables and operated by a single cable from the helicopter's winch.

When not in use the net is secured alongside the cockpit of the helicopter and does not impede the progress of the aircraft. It is lowered into the sea as the aircraft is advancing at a speed of about five knots and a height of about 25 feet. When in position for a pick up the face of the D. is submerged and the arc of the letter remains above water.

The helicopter is then navigated to bring the scoop net into line with the person to be rescued and is trawled through the water until the person is drawn into the net. The net is then hoisted alongside the cabin of the helicopter so that the person can either be assisted into the aircraft or, if badly injured, allowed to remain undisturbed in the net until the helicopter returns to base.

During trials in the English Channel - some of which were witnessed by American Service authorities, who have shown considerable interest in the apparatus - oil drums were at first used as dummies. Now 100 "live" pick-ups have since been successfully carried out, the rate of pick-up in some cases being as high as ten or twelve persons within twenty minutes. Some of those "rescued" have described their experience as "a comfortable ride".

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While the new method will not replace those methods already in use, it is considered that the scoop net is definitely the right approach to the problem of rescuing injured or unconscious people from the sea, but it will be impossible to use this method when there is wreckage near the person to be rescued.

The scoop net was invented by the Commanding Officer of the Air/Sea Rescue Unit at Ford, Lieutenant-Commander John Sproule, R.N., who entered the Royal Navy as a Volunteer Reserve in 1940, having formerly been employed in the aircraft industry. The development and trials of the device have been carried out by him in conjunction with other members of this rescue team, consisting of Lieutenant J. Walden, R.N., second pilot, whose home is at Village Road, Alverstoke, Hants; Chief Petty Officer Aircrewman Stewart Lock, who won the D.S.M. for his part when a member of the crew of a Barracuda aircraft which bombed the German battleship TIRPITZ in Trondheim Fjord, and now lives at Selsey Avenue, Gosport; and Leading Telegraphist R.J. Tomkins, whose home is at The Vista, Eltham, S.E.9.

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NOTE: Photographs illustrating the rescue scoop net are obtainable from International News Photographs 72 Fleet Street, E.C.4. Central 5641.

*Mavis Jirina*  
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*LITA.M. Ridley*

*Georg Hazel*

ADMIRALTY, S.W.1.  
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