

The Flying Tigers of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 262 were tasked to fly troops and equipment between various forward-operating bases and combat outposts throughout the Al Anbar province of Iraq. While the Operation Iraqi Freedom mission was routine, the flight quickly proved otherwise.

That night, one of the two generators that provide electrical power to the CH-46E Sea Knight helicopter caught fire. The fire led to a complete electrical failure and prompted an emergency landing in the desert. The crew included crew chiefs Sgt. Jesse Morgan and Cpl. Michael Scheddel; the aircraft commander, Maj. Daren "Bones" Brown; and his copilot, BrigGen. Timothy "B.T." Hanifen (visiting commanding general).

Shortly after takeoff, the general smelled something burning. Sgt. Morgan saw sparks coming from the back of the helo and immediately directed the pilots to turn back toward the airfield. The sparks grew to a large blaze, engulfing the rear portion of the cabin, so Sgt. Morgan called for the pilots to land immediately. With one of the two onboard fire extinguishers, Sgt. Morgan rushed to fight the fire. He completely discharged the first fire extinguisher in three to four seconds, putting out only the lower flames, but a fire still was burning higher near the aft transmission. As the pilots maneuvered the helo, looking for a safe place to land, Sgt. Morgan grabbed the remaining fire extinguisher and continued to battle the flames. He quickly emptied the second fire extinguisher. While Sgt. Morgan fought the fire, Cpl. Scheddel had the pilots secure the generators and located a road in the open desert suitable for an immediate emergency landing.

After Maj. Brown landed the burning aircraft on the road, Cpl. Scheddel evacuated the passengers. Sgt. Morgan grabbed his M16-A2 rifle, ran outside, and used his flashlight to signal the lead aircraft



From left to right, helicopter aircraft commander, Maj. Daren "Bones" Brown; copilot, BrigGen. Timothy "B.T." Hanifen; crew chiefs, Sgt. Jesse Morgan and Cpl. Michael Scheddel. Photo by Cpl. Andrew Kalwitz of the Al Taqaddum, Iraq Public Affairs Office.

circling above to land. When the lead aircraft touched down nearby, Sgt. Morgan sprinted to the helo, grabbed another fire extinguisher, and hurried back to the burning aircraft to snuff the remaining flames. Once the fire was out, Cpl. Scheddel and Sgt. Morgan climbed back into the helicopter to man their .50 caliber machine guns and prepared to repel any enemy insurgents who might threaten the downed aircraft and crew. The crew chiefs manned their weapons until a quick-reaction force arrived on scene to provide security. A maintenance crew flew to the site and made sufficient repairs to recover the aircraft later that night.

For their actions, Sgt. Morgan and Cpl. Scheddel were awarded Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals and were recognized as safety professionals of the quarter.

BRAVO Zulu

Identifying potential mishaps before they occur is key to a successful safety program. The Hazard Reporting (hazrep) Program is an information-sharing process that the Naval Safety Center, Commander Naval Air Forces, Naval Air Systems Command, and Chief of Naval Air Training use to identify and mitigate risk factors. Hazard information that is shared among communities also serves as an ideal training tool to reduce mishaps. The following aviation activities are recognized for their robust Hazard Reporting Program with five or more hazreps submitted during the second quarter of FY07:

HMM-261 VT-3 HMM-364 VT-7 VP-1 VT-31 VQ-1 VT-35 VQ-2