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Senate Honors Air National Guardsmen for International Maritime Rescue

SACRAMENTO – Seven California Air National Guardsmen from the 129th Rescue Wing will be recognized on the California Senate floor Thursday for their efforts in the successful rescue of two injured fishermen from a fishing vessel in international waters 500 miles off the coast of Acapulco, Mexico, on March 12, 2012.

Senator Lou Correa, chairman of the California Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, will introduce each Airman by name and speak about their personal involvement in the rescue operation.

The 129th received a call from the U.S. Coast Guard on the evening of March 9 concerning two injured fishermen aboard a fishing vessel. The fishermen, badly burned in a diesel fire, required medical treatment beyond the capabilities of the vessel's medical staff. Due to the vessel's remote location in the Pacific Ocean and the immediate need for medical care, the 129th accepted the mission.

The 129th rallied two MC-130P Combat Shadow cargo refueling aircraft, two HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopters and a team of Pararecuemen to complete the mission. After flying more than 1750 miles the team parachuted into the open ocean with necessary supplies, boarded the vessel, stabilized the patients, hoisted them off the vessel and rushed them to a medical facility in San Diego.

This rescue brings the total number of people saved by the 129th to 950.

Video and photos from the mission are available online via the following sites:

Youtube (video)

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC8E2CD378E874934&feature=plcp>

129th Rescue Wing Website (photos)

<http://www.129rqw.ang.af.mil/photos/index.asp>

The primary mission of the 129th Rescue Wing is to conduct its wartime mission of combat search and rescue anywhere in the world. In addition to its wartime mission, the unit also works closely with the Coast Guard and other civil agencies on state missions. Equipped with MC-130P Combat Shadow aircraft and HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopters, the 129th has performed a variety of civilian search-and-rescue missions, including responding to distressed persons aboard ships, lost or injured hikers, and medical evacuations.

Media interested in covering the event or learning more about the 129th should contact Maj. Jonathan Shiroma at 916-869-0142.