

# Crew Resource Management Christmas

Assertiveness

Decision Making

Communication

Leadership

Adaptability/Flexibility

Mission Analysis

Situational Awareness



#### CRM Contacts:

Lt. Dave Messman, OPNAV  
CRM Resource Officer  
(703) 604-7729, (DSN 664)  
david.messman@navy.mil

ATC(AW) Douglas Thomas, NAVAIR  
(301) 757-8127 (DSN 757)  
CRM Program Manager  
douglas.thomas@navy.mil

CRM Instructional Model Manager  
NASC Pensacola, Fla.  
(850) 452-2088/5567 (DSN 922)  
<https://www.ntc.navy.mil/crm/>

LCdr. Deborah White, Naval Safety Center  
(757) 444-3520, Ext. 7231 (DSN 564)  
deborah.j.white@navy.mil

By LCdr. Brad Sultzer, USCG

Just another duty day at Coast Guard Air Station, Barbers Point, Hawaii, and I was the duty C-130 search-and-rescue aircraft commander.

I was scheduled to fly a first-pilot check flight at 1230. At 1115, I got a call to prepare to search for a missing 30-year-old man in a 12-foot kayak, northwest of Fanning Island. This sparsely inhabited island lies 150 miles from Christmas Island, Kiribati. It is about 1,100 miles south of Hawaii, or four hours flying time in our Hercules.

We loaded CG1703 with the maximum 62,000-pound fuel load, which gave us about 12 hours of flight time. On takeoff, I never would have imagined the mission would be one of the most demanding search-and-rescue missions of my 25-year Coast Guard career, including more than 20 years as a pilot and crewman in the C-130.

During the preflight planning, we contacted the rescue coordination center (RCC) Honolulu and voiced our concerns. We had to confirm permission to recover and to refuel at Christmas Island's primitive airport, following the search

# in January

for the kayaker. We also needed to confirm the airport would be open, and the airport lights and non-directional beacon were working. We still awaited a response from RCC Honolulu when we departed.

Our plan was to get on-scene as soon as possible and search until dark, then recover at Christmas Island. We knew once we flew beyond the point where we could return directly to Barbers Point, we were committed to landing at Christmas Island; no other divert options were available.

After takeoff, we reviewed the search-action plan CGD14 RCC had given us, and we still had questions about the best way to prosecute the mission. If we flew as planned, we wouldn't have enough fuel to recover anywhere but Christmas Island. I had heard previous flights had had problems with Christmas Island's airport lighting. I wanted to be certain the airport was open before I allowed my fuel to go below the minimum to reach another location.

We felt the search area was too small and concentrated, and it didn't give us the best chance to rescue the kayaker. He had been lost at sea through the night and already was 24 hours

overdue. We needed to get on-scene, look at a large area before sunset, recover at Christmas Island, refuel, and be ready to search at first light the next day.

Within 20 minutes after takeoff, we called RCC. We had hoped to confirm the fuel and lighting issues and to get permission to double the size of our search area. RCC responded—opening the track spacing, or the distance between legs, but not to the extent we had requested. They directed us to complete the area search and then to search at the aircraft-commander's discretion. Later, we were told that the airport lights were working and that fuel had been arranged. We were good to go.

For the next four hours, we readied the aircraft for the search. We got a raft and marine-location markers ready to drop. We discussed completing the area search, then doing a shoreline search of Fanning Island, followed by a trackline search 50 to 60 miles out from the island. If daylight allowed, we would conduct another search west of the originally assigned area.

As we arrived on-scene, the weather and sea conditions were good. We dropped a