

Unit 4. Personnel Recovery

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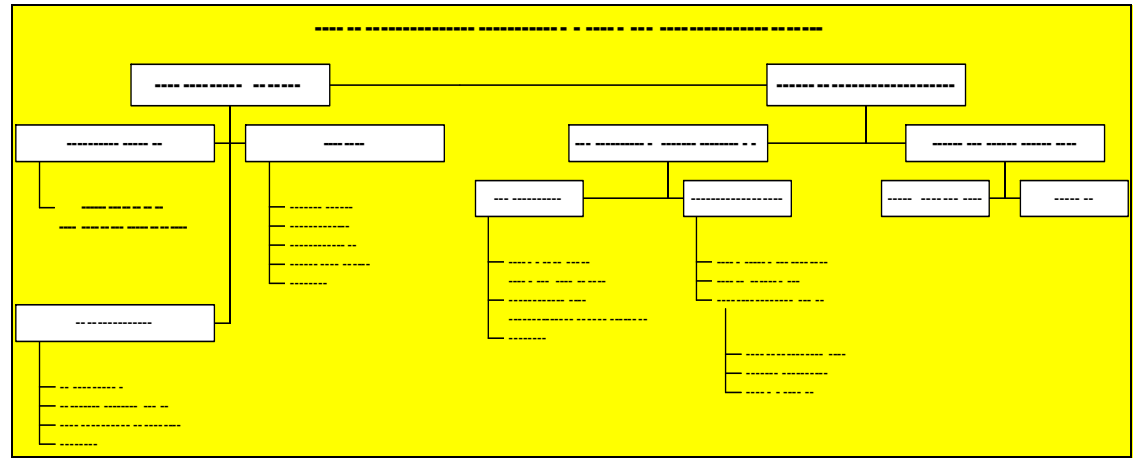
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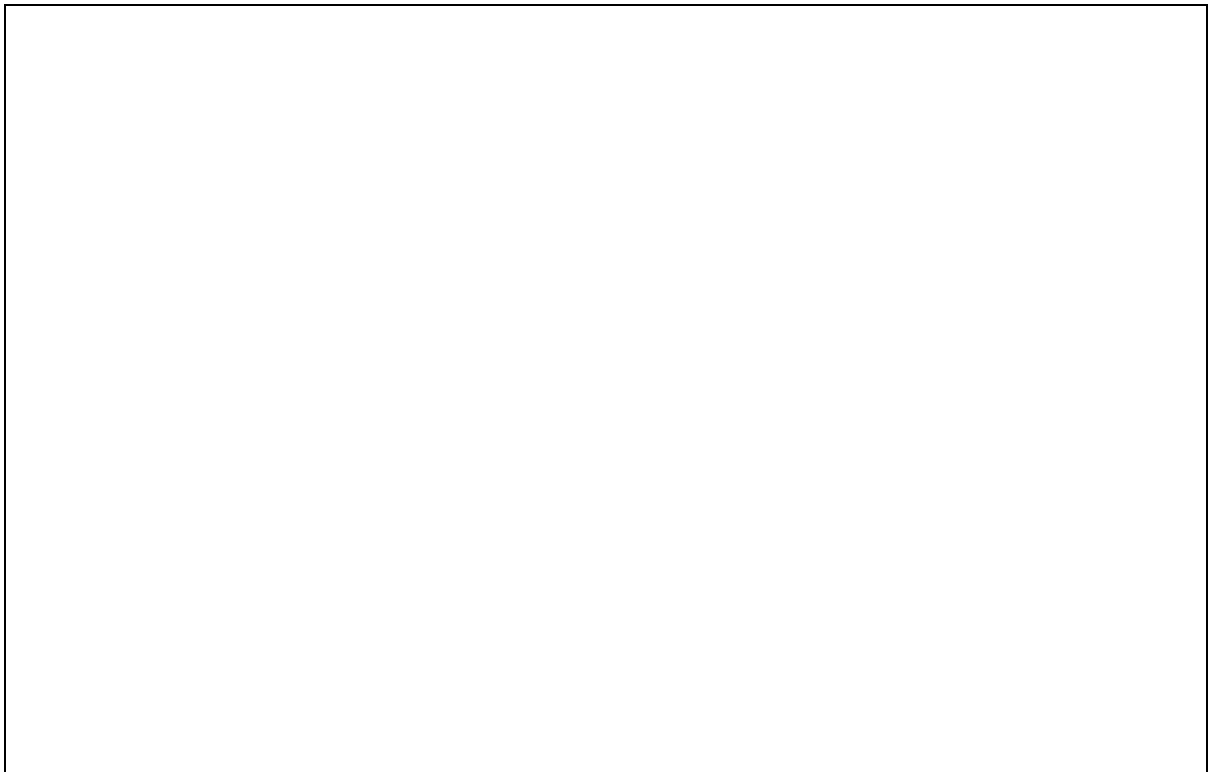
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220. Understanding captivity, exploitation, and escape

Some nations at war take prisoners with one primary goal in mind: to derive propaganda from the exploitation of PWs. Many nations have displayed other uses for PWs, most of which are prohibited by the various Geneva, Brussels, and Hague Conventions concerning the treatment of POWs.

It is worth noting that, in US armed conflicts, none of the nations that generally follow Communist ideology have abided by the Geneva Convention of 1949 that pertains to prisoner treatment. These nations include Vietnam, China, and North Korea. In all cases, these nations have displayed a desire to gain more than propaganda from allied and US prisoners they have captured.

Goals of the enemy

Although there is a strong interrelationship between many of the goals of US enemies in their exploitation of Americans and allied prisoners, these goals can be generally categorized as follows.

Military intelligence

This information plays a vital part in a small country's intelligence process. Smaller countries, which do not possess a high-technology intelligence collection capability, must rely on POWs and the news media to get their information. Furthermore, there are levels of intelligence that can only be supplied by humans.

World opinion

In recent history, the enemies of the United States have placed heavy emphasis on attempting to sway world opinion by exploiting POWs. The confessions of bombing schools and hospitals that came out of the Vietnam conflict are examples of the attempt of the North Vietnamese to tear down the United States' image and make other nations sympathetic to their cause. This propaganda is directed toward countries with which they feel a kinship and have a common goal.

Levers of negotiation

American POWs are a valuable asset at the bargaining table, since the freedom of even one person is sacred to the people of the US government.

Control of the local populace

This goal is closely related to world opinion. In fact, the same tactics may be used to direct the local populace into hatred of Americans. This tactic is designed to eliminate any doubt of who is fighting for whose rights, and obtains support for the propagandist's military action. This can also serve to ensure that none of the local populace aids or cooperates with US or allied forces.

Camp organization

Experience has shown that POWs must implement or plan an overt organization that is known to camp authorities. The senior ranking officer (excluding doctors, lawyers, and chaplains) within the camp assumes command without regard to military service. If no officers are present, the senior enlisted or noncommissioned officer assumes command.

Exploitation of prisoners

An enemy's propaganda program can increase in value if they can coerce a prisoner into making statements that support their position, even if the statements are false. There have been incidents when a prisoner has been told that another individual supplied pieces of information when, in fact, this was not the case. This is an attempt to get the second individual to give information because he or she thinks someone else has already talked. Enemies use five different techniques or pressures to obtain a statement from POWs:

1. Physical abuse.
2. Degradation.
3. Isolation.
4. Denial of basic needs.
5. Implanting despair.

Physical abuse

Abuse might take many forms. Examples included forcing newly captured prisoners to march barefoot for long distances with their arms tied behind their backs, stoning by the local populace, hanging from rafters by their elbows, beating to near death, and subjecting them to almost every variety of torture imaginable. The most important concept that aircrews should keep in mind is that each person has their own pain threshold.

Degradation

American POWs have suffered various forms of degradation by their captors. POWs have been forced to live in a hole in the ground for long periods of time and eat and sleep in mud, slime, and their own excrement. POWs have been forced to bow politely to their captors and perform other gestures of obedience. They have also been forced to perform labor that is below the dignity of any individual.

Prisoners must expect that the enemy will try to degrade and humiliate them to some extent. The POWs must recognize and understand what the enemy is trying to do and the reason for it.

Isolation and resistance

Total or near-total isolation is a technique that has been used most effectively to attain a number of goals. If each prisoner is isolated from the rest of the prisoners, it is much easier to guard them. Isolation in a POW camp can cause prisoners to wonder what will become of them. Its purpose is to deprive the victims of all social support that the aircrew had with other crewmembers. Without the aid and comfort of a friend to reassure them, prisoners have worried themselves into frenzy, wondering

what fate the enemy has in store for them. It can also cause the POWs to develop an intense concern for self and make them dependent on the detainer. When their isolation is interrupted, it is always the interrogator who is available to talk to at a crucial time when the prisoners are likely to say things they may regret later.

The prisoners must keep their minds occupied so their thoughts do not turn inward to self-pity, fear, and hopelessness. They should use numerous well-known techniques to achieve this, such as mentally solving math problems, recalling and using the tap code, or simply doing pushups and exercise. Above all, they must think positive thoughts and have faith in their country and religious convictions.

Denial of basic needs and resistance

Basic needs, such as medical attention, food, and water, have often become items for captors to bargain with. Denial of these needs is designed to weaken the prisoners' mental and physical ability to resist interrogation. PWs who need medical aid can be exploited by denying them this aid unless they are willing to cooperate with the captors.

If prisoners are denied food, water, sleep, or any other basic need, they must understand that the enemy is doing it for a reason. Usually, the captors promise these items only as rewards for compliance. The best way for prisoners to combat this situation is to call their bluff. If the enemy has taken the trouble to capture a prisoner, it is because the prisoner has some value.

Implanting despair

Being a prisoner exerts powerful pressures on the mind and spirit of a person. Prisoners are instantly weighed down with the feeling of guilt, even though their capture may be due to circumstances outside their control. They may feel guilty because they know they are on the sidelines from now until the end of the game and cannot be out there fighting with their pals.

POWs have often found that the enemy denies them any contact with the outside world, especially home, except for bad news. Frequently, the only contact that prisoners of Communist forces have been allowed to receive from home was mail notifying them that someone either had died or was ill or that they were being divorced. After receiving this news, the prisoner may have been placed back in isolation. Prisoners can become so depressed about their situation that they are willing to comply with any request made by the captor.

Another method used to implant despair is to imply threats of violence, non-repatriation, or endless isolation. This too can cultivate anxiety and despair. Making mysterious changes in treatment or simply building a structure that looks like a gallows in full view of the POWs can create intense anxiety among the isolated victims.

Other tactics

Pressure tactics are often combined with other tactics. One type of physical or mental pressure may be applied with long periods of isolation. While the preparatory steps are being applied, the prisoner's exploitation continues—the exploitation actually began at the time of capture. The prisoner's actions are observed and documented; careful notes are made of any equipment the aircrew member has; everything is taken away, both official and personal items. This information is then forwarded to the permanent camp with the prisoner.

At the permanent camp, a team of interrogators may be assigned to the prisoner, and all information gathered is screened. The interrogators carefully study the information and collate it with other available information about the crewmember, the equipment, and any documents found with the crewmember. During this period, the prisoner is usually in strict isolation, often denied food and watched carefully. When the time is right, the prisoner meets an interrogator.

Interrogation

The first contact with an interrogator is usually used as a verbal assessment of the prisoner. The conversation is usually light, with little or no pressure applied. This is important, since the interrogator is searching for clues of a character flaw, depression, and anxiety. The interrogator will also attempt to find a subject the prisoner is willing to speak about freely. When the assessment is made, the interrogation team is ready to start the basic methods of interrogation. Each meeting between the interrogator and the prisoner may dictate that the interrogator use one interrogation method or a combination of interrogation methods.

Friendly

If any one approach can be identified as being the most effective, it is the friendly approach. When this method is used, a friendly atmosphere prevails over the interrogation, and there are no threats on the part of the interrogator. The interrogator will carefully guide the conversation around various subjects that the prisoner is at first reluctant to talk about. The subjects may range from the prisoner's health and welfare to idle yet convincing promises by the interrogator to improve the prisoner's surroundings and treatment. Then the interrogator mentions flying and guides the conversation toward aircraft capabilities and performance information.

Shock and surprise

This approach has been very effective. Prisoners may be astonished if the interrogator tells them who their unit commander is or that they had a 3.6 grade point average at the Air Force Academy. The prisoners know they did not give the interrogator such information, so they wonder how much else the interrogator knows about them. This method is used primarily to entice the prisoners into telling nothing but the truth, lest they be caught in a lie. This method also serves to make the prisoners feel as though the interrogator already knows everything about them, and that it would be useless to try to withhold any information. Much of this type of information is easily available in open-source literature such as newspapers, magazines, and public records.

Fear and despair

By itself, the fear and despair approach is not the most effective approach with most American prisoners. Many prisoners have found that threats of physical punishment bolstered their resistance. When the threats of physical punishment are carried out, interrogators frequently find that they were given false information. Interrogators may find that the prisoners tell only what the interrogators want to hear, not necessarily the truth, simply to end the punishment. However, when used with other approaches, the fear and despair approach can be very effective.

Threat and rescue, or Mutt and Jeff

This approach is very dangerous to the unsuspecting prisoner. It usually begins with a harsh verbal assault by an interrogator and may lead to an actual beating. Suddenly, the door will burst open and the friendly interrogator will enter. The first interrogator will be verbally accosted for treating the prisoner in such a despicable manner. The brutal interrogator is ordered out of the room, and the friendly interrogator apologizes to the prisoner for the rough treatment. The second interrogator implies that the prisoner can't always count on being rescued from such rough treatment. The interrogation turns friendly.

Disgrace

The disgrace method is one of the harshest approaches of interrogation. The interrogator verbally assaults anything prisoners hold in high esteem. It may be the prisoners themselves, their religion, their form of government, or their spouses' fidelity. The object is to entice the prisoners to burst forth in protest or defense. It may be used when all else fails to get a prisoner to talk.

Accusations of crimes

This is a slightly more subtle form of threat. The interrogator often explains that, under the laws of his or her country, the prisoners could be tried for crimes. They might be told that they could face a firing squad. All of this lets the interrogator ask very specific questions about the crew members' jobs, aircraft mission, and future targets, forcing them to prove they are not spies and are innocent of any crime.

Non-interrogator

This approach is the most devious of all. A person who, above all else, does not resemble an interrogator applies it. The interrogator may pose as a doctor, a reporter, or perhaps a friendly prison guard who likes to chat. POWs must remember that in a POW camp no one is their friend, except other crewmembers whom they already know.

Electronic devices

Although electronic devices, such as bugs, tape recorders and other listening devices, and video cameras, are not commonly recognized as direct interrogation methods by themselves, their use with other approaches can be effective enough to warrant a special note. Every prisoner must expect that his or her cell and the common areas in the camp are bugged and possibly have a concealed camera. Audiotapes can easily be spliced to take statements made by prisoners and change their entire meaning and context.

Political indoctrination

The aim behind political indoctrination activities can be divided into two categories. The first is an attempt on the part of the captor to make the prisoner a sympathizer of the captor's political views under captive audience conditions. The second category is an attempt to weaken the political outlook of the prisoner by confusing his or her own political aims or beliefs with those of the captor.

Susceptible individuals

This type of prisoner must be of a caliber that is different from the norm. This category includes the uneducated, drifters, and the couldn't-care-less types. They must be essentially unattached politically. This means that their beliefs about our political system are not firm and contain a great deal of doubt about certain aspects of the US system. This susceptibility may include becoming an agent for the captor.

Approaches used

For these people, the approaches used by the enemy are subtler. The prisoners may be unaware that an attempt to change their political views is being made. However, if their political beliefs can be weakened or torn down, they will fit nicely into the enemy's scheme to exploit and control them.

A sophisticated enemy will place enormous reliance on ideological weapons. The same process may be observed working full force within a POW camp where the beliefs and outlooks held by a prisoner will meet with severe tests and challenges. That prisoner must find the courage to stand, as the early Christians did, and say: "This is my faith. This is where I stand; if necessary, this is where I die."

Well-trained indoctrinators will introduce their own deceptive rules into the discussions, and prisoners will be expected to adopt these values, distorted as they may be. The only sure, certain defense that prisoners may possess under such circumstances is an abiding and unshakable faith in themselves and their country.

Prisoner screening process

During interrogation and the early stages of indoctrination, the prisoners are carefully screened to determine which ones will be vulnerable to indoctrination. The prisoners who prove to be staunch resisters and indicate they may disrupt the indoctrination sessions will probably not go beyond the screening step. These are usually people who have a keen mind and a good education, who are

naturally intelligent, and who have enough leadership ability to organize group resistance. These prisoners will be branded as reactionaries and will probably be returned to isolation. Prisoners who listen intently and do not appear to present a disruptive influence over the others will continue to the next step.

Establishing rapport

The indoctrinators now begin the process of creating a common bond between themselves and the prisoners. In good English, they might confide to the prisoners that they had visited the United States and admire the American way of life. The prisoners who accept this line and react warmly will now proceed to the next step.

Gaining the prisoners' participation

First, the indoctrinator may ask the prisoners to stand up and state their name, hometown, and the college they attended. Those who decline to participate will not be forced to do so, since they will get involved later. The indoctrinator may ask them questions about their treatment and any suggestions the prisoners may have for improving their conditions. The idea is to get full participation from the prisoners.

Attacking basic beliefs

After the indoctrinator has enticed participation from the group, the subject may change to religion or politics. All of this will begin with only mild criticism. The interrogator may even state that US ways are not understood and may ask the prisoners to explain. This lets the interrogator launch into political or religious differences. The prisoners who would not speak earlier are invited to defend their position. Ideally, the intent is to get the prisoners to question their own beliefs and to create doubt in their minds.

Evoking self-criticism

When the indoctrinators have brought the prisoners to the point of questioning their own basic beliefs, the prisoners are instructed to adopt the indoctrinators' way of thinking. The interrogators will attack every belief they can think of until they can get the prisoners to agree with their point of view. At this phase, the prisoners are ready to begin the self-criticism stage. It will begin with mild confessions and apologies from the prisoners for not thinking correctly. These may be very small statements such as: "I was unaware of the plight of your people. As Americans, we should be more generous to your people."

Prisoner compliance

The enemy's eventual goal is to persuade, convince, or coerce at least one prisoner out of 100 to make a speech or radio broadcast, heavily criticizing the United States. A prisoner who reaches this point in the indoctrination process is being set up for further intense efforts to make even more propaganda, pushing the prisoner further toward full compliance.

Prisoner resistance

The ability to continue to resist and rally depends on the prisoner's physical, mental, and moral makeup. Under normal conditions and situations, the average person has all of the traits required to overcome the efforts designed to change his or her basic beliefs. However, like many other trying situations, the environment of a POW's enclosure brings out the best and the worst personal qualities.

Discipline

Effective group action is impossible without discipline. Discipline may be defined as "the willing, spontaneous obedience to the will of a leader." In a POW situation, discipline assumes added importance. There is no place for the self-seeking, self-centered individual. Any prisoner who tries to go it alone is looking for trouble of the worst type. The individuals who cut themselves off from the mutual protection of the group become easy prey for the enemy.

Mental attitude

US military personnel who are captured must always remember not to get into the mental frame that they are POWs. They are US fighting men and women in the status of PW; only their status has changed. To the individual prisoner, a healthy mental attitude is an important thing. After the initial shriek of capture has worn off, a state of depression will usually follow. Many prisoners in Korea died as a direct result of their own inadequate mental attitude. A confident, hopeful attitude will pay rich rewards in the long run. Two factors that are important to a healthy mental attitude are faith and religion.

Faith is an important personal quality. Undermining and destroying a person's faith is required before indoctrination can succeed. Mutual faith and trust among prisoners can effectively block any such attempt by an enemy.

In discussing the personal qualities and characteristics that are of importance to a prisoner, religion can't be overemphasized. The POW population in Korea represented a fairly complete cross-section of the various religious practices throughout the world. Since religion has no place in the Communist scheme of things, it was the subject of attack. The morale and spiritual consolation and solace that can be derived from religion makes it an important asset to a captive person, especially one held by Communists.

Unlike interrogation, indoctrination doesn't require verbal participation by the prisoners to be successful. The prisoners should resist as a group so reprisal can't be taken against a lone individual. The best way for POWs to resist indoctrination is to constantly reassure them that the faith they have in their beliefs is justified.

Escape

Escape from the enemy is difficult at best, but far from impossible. You must emphasize to your aircrews that successful escape from enemy hands is the only guarantee they will have to come home alive and with honor.

Escape is the duty of every US POW and is the highest form of resistance. The planning stage of an escape should begin immediately after capture. The chances of escape are best immediately after capture and decrease proportionally with time. In fact, in the early 1950s, between 600 and 700 Americans successfully escaped from North Korea. Most of the escapes occurred between the time of capture and the time they would have arrived at a permanent POW camp.

Prisoners must be alert to their surroundings, including the terrain, available cover, and the physical security the captors impose. The most significant point to stress to aircrews is the importance of planning their escape as soon as they are captured. Secondly, the earlier they attempt the escape, the better the odds are that it will be successful.

Timing

When the evader is captured, the military or civilian captors may have little training in handling a prisoner. It is also likely that the holding facility and security measures are less organized than those that will be encountered later. Delays may occur while the captors await special guards, transportation, or instructions. This initial stage may offer an escape opportunity that is unlikely to be found again.

At some point, there will be movement from the point of capture to a more permanent confinement facility in the rear area. Security precautions may again be somewhat poor, presenting another opportunity to escape. It is during this phase that the psychological shock of captivity really will hit the POW. During the movement phase, the prisoner is likely to be too confused and agitated to realize the full impact of the situation.

Motivation

You are one of the key factors in providing aircrews the necessary motivation to try an escape from enemy hands. You must constantly remind them that escape is the best form of resistance and that an escape-proof prison has never been built. You should collect as much material as possible about the experiences of those who have successfully escaped and encourage the aircrews to read them. Aircrews must think in terms of escaping, not in terms of being subjected to enemy exploitation for long periods of time.

Physical conditioning

The physical capability to escape may or may not be within the control of the captured airmen, depending on the amount of time they are in a camp. They should be urged to stay in the best possible physical condition while in the camp. It also should follow that they be in excellent physical condition to begin with, since the best opportunities to escape will be early on.

Limitations

There are factors over which prisoners have no control, thus limiting their possibilities. They should not give up hope, since they may still be able to escape at some later date. The geographical area in which the aircrew is captured greatly influences escape opportunities. An airman who ejects over water and then is picked up by enemy naval forces may have to wait to reach land before attempting an escape. The physical appearance of the local populace may severely limit any chance of escape. A blond-haired, 6-foot-tall American in prison uniform would be rather conspicuous in any Arab or Asian nation.

Summary

No one relishes the thought of being taken as the prisoner of an adversary, especially one that may not follow the Geneva Conventions as it pertains to treatment of prisoners. Training is vital to prepare our service members for this type of situation, and it is a known fact that it can immensely help them deal with being a POW. Though much of the training is conducted through the use of specific resident-level courses, it will be your job to conduct some form of limited refresher training in several of these areas. Knowing what to expect from a captor, and how best to deal with particular situations is vital to maximizing the chances of our service members in making it through an ordeal of this nature, and, ultimately, to safely return them to friendly control.

We've covered a lot of ground in this unit, but it should be glaringly obvious how important your role is when it comes to aircrew training. You have quite a responsibility – ensuring that your aircrews are fully trained and ready to deal with most anything that is thrown at them.

Self-Test Questions

After you complete these questions, you may check your answers at the end of the unit.

217. Understanding survival, evasion, resistance, and escape

1. What is evasion?
2. Under the Code of Conduct, how is evasion viewed?
3. What actions can be taken against escaped prisoners of war who commit acts of violence against an enemy's military or population?

4. During war, what will a neutral country do with an evader who crosses into its country?
5. Under the Geneva Conventions, what considerations are given to an evader who participates in MOOTW?
6. Which evasion aid provides topographic information about the area of operations and fits into a flight-suit leg pocket?
7. For what purpose do isolated personnel use a blood chit?
8. What is the most critical period for an evader?
9. What is an evader's most important ally while evading?
10. In a nuclear environment, how many miles upwind from a known target should an evader attempt to get?

218. Understanding recovery procedures

1. Name the two categories of recovery operations.
2. Which recovery operation includes overt or low-visibility SAR operations?
3. Evaders who independently make their way back to friendly control are performing what type of conventional recovery?
4. List some examples of unconventional forces.

219. Understanding combat search and rescue (CSAR)

1. Who has primary responsibility and authority for CSAR forces within an AOR?

2. Who is normally the first line of response for SAR and CSAR incidents?
3. If an aircrew has to ditch their aircraft, at what frequency should they attempt to make radio contact?
4. List six of the elements that commonly participate in a CSARTF.
5. What is precautionary CSAR?
6. List the assets dedicated for USAF rescue and recovery.

220. Understanding captivity, exploitation, and escape

1. When dealing with POWs, what type of goal are US enemies using when they direct propaganda toward countries with which they feel a kinship and have a common goal?
2. What type of enemy goal attempts to ensure the local populace does not aid or cooperate with US or allied forces?
3. If the senior ranking officer in a POW camp is a chaplain and the next ranking officer is an intelligence officer, who would assume command?
4. What is the most important concept that aircrew members need to keep in mind if they're being physically abused?
5. Why should a POW call the enemy's bluff over being denied such things as food and sleep?
6. What type of outside news does the enemy normally allow a POW to have?
7. What is usually the purpose of the interrogator's first contact with a POW?

8. What is the most effective interrogation approach?
9. What is the most devious interrogation approach?
10. What is the first aim of political indoctrination?
11. Which POWs are least likely to be put through the indoctrination process?
12. When interrogators discuss political differences between the United States and their country, what are they trying to attack?
13. What is a necessary ingredient for effective group action in a PW camp?
14. What two factors are important to a healthy mental attitude for PWs?
15. What is the highest form of resistance?
16. When should plans for escape begin?

Answers to Self-Test Questions

214.

1. ISOPREP
2. At least two.
3. ISOPREP form contains the personal authenticator number, identification data, a physical description, and the personal authenticator statements.
4. Confidential

215.

1. SAFE
2. DIA
3. SAID

4. Terrain, concealment advantages, subsistence capability, contact and recovery point possibilities, worldwide selection.

216.

1. EPA is the means by which downed aircrew members, prior to their isolation in hostile territory, relay their after-isolation intentions to recovery forces
2. Planned route of flight to and from the objective, planned bailout, ditching, or forced landing sites for each leg of the flight; Aircrew objective immediately after aircraft downing (join-up, treatment of wounds, hiding or stowing parachutes, securing survival gear, etc.); radio and contact procedures; initial evasion goals and techniques, extended evasion goals.
3. EPAs are given a security classification that is equal to the mission-tasking directive.

217.

1. A process whereby people isolated in hostile or unfriendly territory avoids capture with the goal of returning to areas under friendly control.
2. As an extension of combat and a refusal to capitulate to the enemy.
3. They can be charged under the laws of the detaining power.
4. Place the evader into detention for the rest of the war.
5. The Geneva Conventions do not apply in this case.
6. Evasion chart.
7. Promises a reward to anyone helping the bearer and/or returning the bearer to friendly control
8. First half hour.
9. The will to survive.
10. 20 miles.

218.

1. Conventional and unconventional.
2. Conventional.
3. Unassisted.
4. SOF, guerrillas, and/or clandestine organizations.

219.

1. Joint force commanders.
2. Rescue Coordination Center (RCC).
3. Frequency of last contact or calling on an established common frequency.
4. Airborne mission commander.
 - (1) On-scene commander.
 - (2) Recovery helicopters.
 - (3) Rescue escort.
 - (4) Rescue combat air patrol.
 - (5) Support aircraft.
5. Planning and prepositioning aircraft, ships, or ground forces and facilities before an operation begins.
6. HH-60G helicopter.
 - (1) HC-130P/N fixed-wing aircraft.
 - (2) RCC controller.

- (3) Pararescue personnel.
- (4) SAR duty officers.
- (5) SAR liaison officers.

220.

- 1. World opinion.
- 2. Control of local populace.
- 3. Intelligence officer.
- 4. Each person has their own pain threshold.
- 5. Because the prisoner has value to the enemy.
- 6. Bad news.
- 7. Verbal assessment.
- 8. Friendly.
- 9. Non-interrogator.
- 10. To make the prisoner a sympathizer of the captor's political views.
- 11. Those with keen minds, a good education, natural intelligence, and leadership ability to organize group resistance.
- 12. Basic beliefs of the POWs.
- 13. Discipline.
- 14. Faith and religion.
- 15. Escape.
- 16. Immediately after capture.