

Coast Guard pilot to be honored for harrowing rescue on Attu Island

By KTVA / AP 10:05 PM November 9, 2016



Remaining wreckage shortly after HC-130H #1600 went down on July 30, 1982 and killed two of the crew. US Coast Guard photo

A Coast Guard pilot is being honored for helping rescue nine colleagues whose cargo plane crashed on a hillside on the western Aleutian Island of Attu off Alaska in 1982.

Capt. William Peterson will be inducted Thursday into the Wall of Gallantry at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut.

The now-retired resident of Richland, Washington, flew a rescue helicopter in heavy fog and high winds across 90 miles of open sea from the Coast Guard Cutter Mellon to get to the crew of the Coast Guard HC-130 plane that crashed after hitting bad weather on July 30, 1982. The plane was on its way from Shemya Air Force Base — now known as Eareckson Air Station — to a base on nearby Attu Island, according to a statement from the USCG Academy.



Capt. William Peterson

Peterson and his co-pilot located four survivors on the side of a mountain, the academy's statement explained. Peterson worked from the air to help his co-pilot on the ground hoist up the survivors and then flew them to Loran Station.

"Returning to the scene, Lieutenant Peterson was able to re-locate the crash site," the statement continued. "In weather that was still deteriorating, he again sent his co-pilot out to aid the injured. He then flew to the Loran Station alone, picked up four personnel and returned to assist at the crash. Leaving his co-pilot at the crash site to direct the groups arriving from the Loran Station, Lieutenant Peterson and his air-crewman transported the remaining five survivors and then the original four to Shemya AFB."

The nine people Peterson and the other crew members rescued all survived. Two U.S. Coast Guard crew members died in the crash — Petty Officer 3rd Class Brad Canfield and Seaman Steven D. Berryhill, according to the U.S. Coast Guard Roll of Honor.

As a result of the rescue, Peterson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"Because of the heroic efforts and aeronautical skills of Lieutenant Peterson, all of the crash survivors were located and transported in a timely fashion," the academy wrote. "Lieutenant Peterson's courage, judgment, and unwavering devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard."