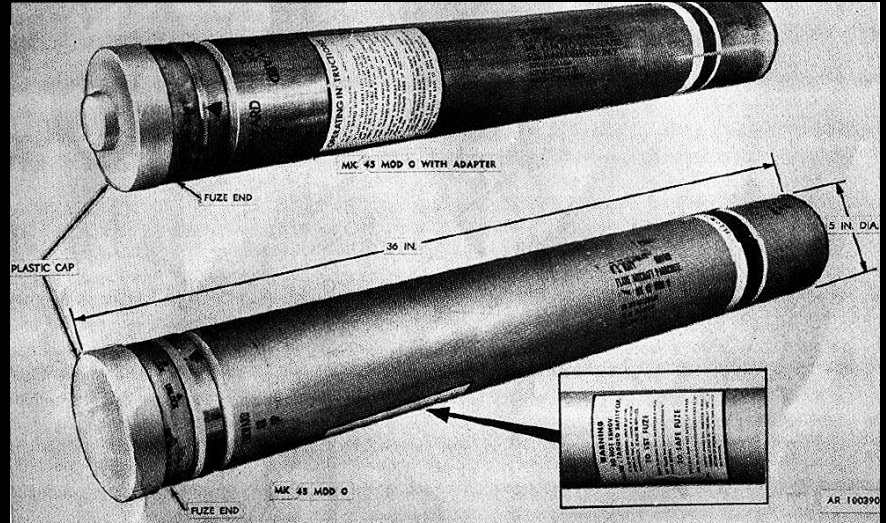


Flare Duty



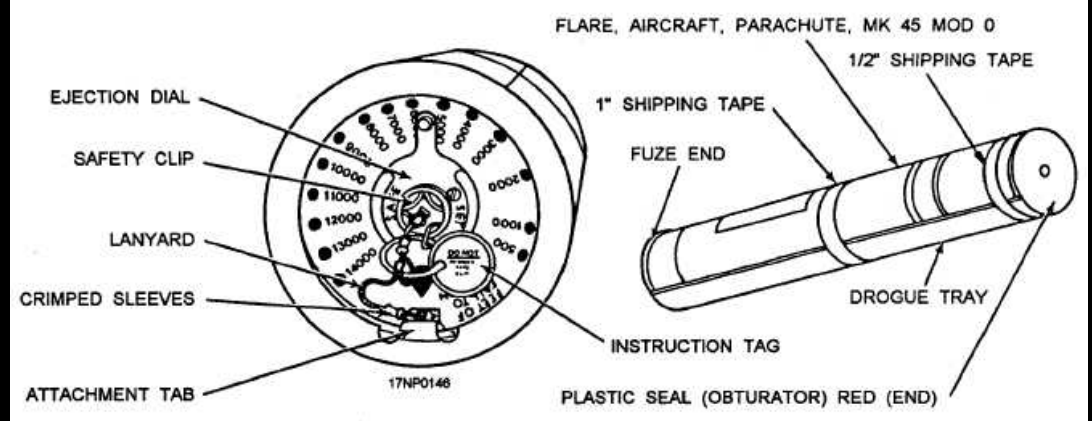
Each **Search & Rescue** mission would quickly be evaluated for optimum equipment to be utilized. While the H-52 helicopters were dispatched to search in the El Yunque mountains for Prinair flight 227 The HU16 was preparing to provide the much needed light for the search. The cabin would be loaded with MK45 Parachute Flares from the forward bulkhead from top to bottom . The flares were about 3 feet long and 5 inches in diameter and weighing approx. 28 lbs. There could be over 100 flares loaded for this specific night search. Each would provide 2 million candle power for about 3 minutes when deployed.

Flare duty was always a little intense. Each flare needed to be prepared by removing cap, attach lanyard, timed and armed and manually deployed from the rear hatch. Flying above El Yunque was not smooth air and the continued bumps just made the exercise that much more demanding.

A flare is a dangerous pyrotechnic and could be catastrophic if not handled properly. The aircraft flew at a higher altitude above the search area with the search helicopters operating below. Once the aircraft was in proper position and the drops began and we systematically deployed the light until the inventory was depleted, approximately 3 hrs. When the last flare left the aircraft the entire crew always breathed a little easier.

A Marine helicopter that joined the search was the first to discover the crash site.

A very sad event that could have been avoided.



Another HU16 flare duty in 1973 that did not go well.



Date of incident: 21 September 1973

Crash related deaths:

LCDR Francis W. Miller (CG Aviator #1164)

LTJG Jerald M. Mack (CG Aviator #1567)

AD1 Harold D. Brown, Jr.

AM2 Benjamin R. Gaskins, Jr.

AT2 John F. Harrison

AT2 John P. Pledger

Air Station the aircraft and/or crew were assigned to:

Air Station Corpus Christi, TX

Aircraft type and Coast Guard tail number:

Grumman HU-16E Albatross, 2123*

Location of the incident:

Gulf of Mexico

Description of the incident:

This crew was dropping parachute flares to illuminate a search area. One of the flares accidentally ignited in the aircraft and the intense smoke incapacitated the pilots and crew. The aircraft made an uncontrolled descent into the water.