

ROSEPINK SEARCH UPDATE 121203

This is a combination update and trip report. There is a lot of information here and will be more a stream since so much overlaps.

Our trip was outstanding and clarified our plans. We flew from PIT to Las Vegas and Fuzzy picked us up in his 210. We first met with the Director of Volunteer Services, Cmdr Rock Lacertoso, Kern County Sheriff Department. The meeting was excellent. After preparatory discussions lasting several weeks, he decided the best thing to do is let us search unimpeded without any Kern County assets working at the same time. After we are done and gone and give a report of what we grid searched, he plans on firing up his teams to continue searching for Ron in other areas. (The idea he is doing nothing is bogus, his is a timing issue.) We discussed the danger level of the areas, what he thought we needed to be prepared for, procedures to follow in the event of a find. Though I'll say this often here, it is basic Ranger SOP you're used to. He gave us his opinion of the search area and I asked him where he would want us to concentrate. His requested area was already on our search area list.

We then met with the partner owners of the Keene Ranch, 95% of the property we'll be searching. Commander Lacertoso went with us and explained to the owners the KSC Dept is a "silent" partner in the search, it's a private effort by highly trained and prepared SAR professionals, and the Department is supporting us 100%. His doing this is a great milestone because he has put his reputation on the line with these folks by vouching for us. The owners were gracious and wanted to help, but have been burned severely in the past. Their legal and moral obligation to assist in finding Ron has already been fulfilled and they were under no obligation to let us on their property. As I've done many times, I explained all of your training, discipline, qualifications, etc. We briefed them on our game plan and they gave us several excellent tips and more detailed property maps.

They had some very specific requirements. First, they are holding me personally responsible for everything that happens. Everything. They had three hard and fast rules. First two are no shooting cows and no cutting any barbed wire fences. Got that? No one is allowed on the property not approved by me after completing their required paperwork, in briefing, etc. There will be a 100% accountability of everyone on the property at all times. Jeff Smith as the base camp mayor will be responsible for much of that administration work and he's been briefed already. Our team will be issued unique ID cards. Anyone on the property not with our team will be immediately reported to the owners and law enforcement. We will have a specific and very limited daily schedule of entry and exit from the property to minimize disruption to the workings of the ranch, independent of emergencies. I will be getting keys to all the gates.

They (and the sheriff) were also adamant on no publicity and keeping it as low key as possible. They have horror stories of people coming onto the property to check out things going on and damaging property, disrupting the cattle operation, and getting hurt. They were very willing to support official searchers and have done so countless times over the years. Their problems come from media types and local curiosity seekers. We told them if no one knows we are there, we get in, do our job and get out with no one the wiser that would be best for all concerned. They were very grateful for our sensitivity to their livelihood and pledged their complete support.

We provided the owners with the name and addresses of those who are on our team and you'll be receiving a copy of the liability release in the mail. It's also on the website so you can print it out and get it sent. Initial the first two pages, sign the last page. Even though they aren't signing it also, our attorney has no problem that an unmistakable paper and action trail exists, plus the Sheriff as a witness, that we have approval from them. If you're under 18 and your parents are on the team and will be there, they will have to sign it for you. Then use my FedEx shipping number, 177926361, my phone number 412-417-8190, your return address, check Bill third party in block 7 and reenter my shipping number. Send the release to:

Mr. Sam Young

27801 Woodford-Tehachapi Road
Keene, CA 93531

Then send me an email dgemperle@aol.com and give me the tracking number on the top of the waybill so I can track it to Mr. Young's house. They have a semi-hard date when they want all the releases in, just get it to them ASAP. You'll be issued your numbered ID card when we get there by Smitty or myself. We will be giving the landowners a daily recap of who is on the property, what we did that day, the vehicle schedule, and the next day's plan.

The next day one of the partners gave Jeff and I a three hour tour of the entire ranch and we became good friends. I drove, Jeff filmed, and Mr. Young showed us all the trails. All the trails on the map are passable in a 4 wheel drive, though we only used it twice. Jeff and I evaluated the terrain, pitch, hazards, and vegetation and refined our initial planned search method. Jeff and I were constantly taking his inputs and applying SAR evaluations and constantly war gaming. It isn't as tough as we originally thought, with the foliage down easier to search than in the summer, much less technical rope work will be required. For a variety of reasons, our base camp plan was validated and we upgraded what will be going on there.

Crocker has enough medical equipment to deal with a combat unit and we'll have things set up in the base camp for him to stabilize someone hurt. Cmdr Lacertoso is coordinating the hoist helo with the Fire Department and they will know we are operating so they can plan accordingly. Helo will be able to land in the valley with no problem.

We met with the CAWG leadership and Steve Ache, the DO, who will be in the field with us for several days. He's looking forward to working with the PAWG Ranger types. They are having a problem getting a training mission number to run support in parallel because of their recent PA-28 accident. It might not be resolved by next week, which will affect airlift. More below. We also met with the Tehachapi Cadet Squadron guys and they are providing us with a 4 wheel drive 6 pack and max pax van. Cell phone coverage is almost 100% in the entire valley, so their 24/7 communication support is not necessary. They are looking forward to working with the PAWG folks as well, especially any under 18 year old cadets that make it out there. I've arranged for some huge tours at Edwards through Fuzzy for all the CAP members not searching.

Jeffy and I probably briefed the whole plan 12 different times while we were there and every group was impressed and made comfortable with all our contingency planning and our proposed tactical search plan.

The access roads are tough and the time going in and out during daylight in the shortest days of the year will be precious. We would burn up an unbelievable amount of time, energy and assets going in and out like the FUNSAR style search efforts. We will be doing more of a Summer School operation and not a full backpacking SAR or aircraft security mission. We'll have two GP tents set up (one for sleeping and one for everything else) with heat and at least one cabin tent for the ladies. We'll have access to potable water, a field stove, table and chairs, cots, two porta potties, generators, lights, TV with VCR for the evening entertainment plus many other details. DeEtte and Ron's sister Kari will be running the food service and will be staying at the base camp, not in Tehachapi as originally planned. We'll have a couple of hotel rooms in town for folks that feel the need to run and get a hot shower aka Blue Rocks.

There will be no back packing so you can pack your stuff in duffle type bags and we'll truck them to the camp. Simple daypack is a player with a lunch and not a 24 hour pack. For weather, plan on winter school through a nice fall day (we saw both the 4 days there) and most of the search area schedules will be set up to minimize any vehicle travel. The valley should not take too long to search as it is rolling hills, probably 1.5 days. The primary southern slope will be mostly a contour search alternating between really thick brush to nothing. Jeff and I hiked through there examining the areas, some on our hands and knees, and formulating search techniques. The technical stuff will be around Black Mountain, which is a series of

rock outcroppings with nothing but grassy hillside in between. A rappel down the outcroppings to search holes is a big player. Imagine a series of Pulpit Rock(s). Jeff took about 2 hours of video of every part of our trip and will be sending parts to John to look over. We'll try to get it set up via the web as well for everyone.

We have Ron's 4 wheel drive van, Fuzzy's Jeep Cherokee, two ATVs with bear proof trailer, CAP's 4 wheel drive 6 pack, and another 4 wheel drive truck. We have more than enough vehicles for our in valley operations. Communications in the valley will also be very easy.

We had lunch with the lessee (brand new hip last week) who runs the cows on the property, another great guy. We briefed him and he gave us a slew of good advice. We also spoke with adjacent landowners and because of the efforts we made with the Keene Ranch folks, offered their complete support. All were most concerned with publicity, lawsuits, and damage. We met with the chief and #1 Sgt of the Bear Valley Police Department. Because we were working with the Sheriff's Department and landowners, they offered their complete support. We met with the Asst Battalion Commander for the Keene Fire Station at the owner's request and they too offered their complete support. In a word, because we did things by the book, we have had all doors opened to us.

There are several individuals and groups who donated money to this specific effort, so we do have working capital. Like everything we do, since we are Rangers, our needs are not great. Several on our team have offered to self fund their participation as their financial contribution. We have enough funds to cover those who are short, so lack of money should not restrict someone from participating. We figured out a way to have this a tax deductible contribution event and told interested parties (they can take the deduction or increase their gift).

Airlift. For the CAP folks, CAWG will either have to get a training mission that PAWG can justify an airlift request, or AMC needs to have flights going there (say McGuire to March) to give "orientation flights". I have purposefully stayed out of this and let Herb, App, and Steve Asche work it. After talking to Steve and looking at the calendar, I doubt this will happen. So I will make a drop dead date for the airlift of 16 December for the CAP guys...if no airlift by then we go to Plan B.

Several weeks ago, we did an analysis of using buddy passes and determined it was too risky a method of travel during the holidays. A buddy pass is the absolutely lowest level of standby and if you look at the load factors for the holidays, are filling up quickly. There is no guarantee when you would get there or get home. Taking your gear might be a hassle since you are just standby. The price for a pass to CA would be between around \$125. If you go on to any of the web based cheap fare sites, a Pit to Las Vegas round trip, confirmed space is running \$200-\$300, round trip. Fuzzy and the local volunteers will coordinate getting you to Rosamond and his house if you arrive at any of the local airports.

That said, if you're going to pay your own way, make your reservations immediately. If you need us to buy a ticket, tell either DeEtte or me when you want to travel and any restrictions, like you have to be back to work on Jan 2. If we don't have airlift on the 16th we'll start buying tickets. And they are non-refundable. I request you all to be in CA sometime by the 24th. We have a lot of work to do on the 25th getting ready, and Kari, Ron's sister, is cooking us Christmas dinner. The rest of the schedule remains the same. Several of us will be putting up "Toon Town" 22-24th and taking it down Jan 2-3.

With positive space airline tickets and how we will be running things in the field, you can just bring your gear with you as checked baggage. I brought my anti-bear device with me and it was a joy going through security. They confiscated Jeffy's pepper spray. Call me if you want details. I would recommend NOT packing your daypack but just have your stuff in your bags. They unpacked Jeffy's and my 24 hour daypacks and had a hell of a time putting them back together, wrong too. Bring enough underwear and clothes for the entire time you are there since I'm not having DeEtte take laundry into Tehachapi unless we have an emergency.

We are still working out event liability insurance for our specific group. Maybe yes, maybe no.

This next part is very difficult to write, but events require it. First point is I love Al Wallace as a brother and am sure his heart is in the right place. When he very publicly resigned from assisting our effort I called him to try and bring him back into the fold. He declined. He told me what his vision of events should be and what he was going to attempt to do. I pleaded with him to not do some of the items as they had the potential to totally ruin the house of cards I was putting together with the authorities and landowners. It is clear now that he disregarded that request in the extreme.

He did not include the SAR authorities in his planning and intends to pit the local Tehachapi politicians against the Kern County EMS\SAR authorities who are 100% in support of what we're doing. He posted information on the Edwards Website for any and all volunteers to come to Tehachapi with the intention of sending them to trespass on Black Mountain (owned by Mr. Young and one of our planned search areas) to look for Ron. The landowners are 100% behind us and they're holding me personally responsible for implementing the plan we presented to them. I'm directed by them and the local law enforcement authorities to notify them of any persons on their property not part of our group. You can ask Fuzzy and Jeffy of the seriousness of this requirement as levied on me in the home of the Keene Ranch owner. Also, the SAR coordinator of Kern County went out on a limb for us, putting his reputation on the line asking the landowners to support us since he was comfortable with all the details of our effort.

The landowners wanted no publicity since they have had trespassers destroy property, get hurt, disrupt their business and ranch operation. They were concerned that local curiosity seekers would descend on their property and they've had incredible problems with the media, as we're all aware of doing CAP missions. We assured them that we would not tell a soul other than the local SAR players and would be very discrete on coming and going. Once on the property and out of sight of prying eyes we will be able to rage with no restrictions, another reason for staying at a base camp.

On Thursday afternoon, after Jeffy and I established an incredible amount of good will over 4 days of face to face relationship building, I learned the extent of Al's disregard of our sensitive and careful efforts. I called him and told him very directly (I didn't discuss it or ask as I did the last time) that under no circumstances can he do any big media event or trespass on private ranch property or else he will cause the landowners to pull their approval for our technically proficient 7 day search of the ranches.

He did not listen. On Friday I learned that he has made a general casting call for anyone who wants to come and look for Ron with no identification of command and control, contingency planning for field work, etc. In that posting, which is being spread like wildfire on the Edward website, he states he will send individuals trespass on private property including the Keene Ranch's Black Mountain, which Jeffy and I determined was the most technical difficult section and will require most of our high angle ropework. Al states there will be stories in the LA Times, Bakersfield and other local papers, and other media. He even gave my name and number to the Pgh Tribune Review with out my permission.

I unfortunately had to notify the Kern County Sheriff of Al's plans and have asked him to convince the landowners that we have nothing to do with Al's efforts. The Commander is quite angry with Al and the dangerous situation he's creating for the local authorities and by putting individuals in harms way. The Commander is also on the hook since he vouched for us with the property owners and other SAR authorities. Long after we're gone they will still be living their lives together and our intention was to leave with them a good image of us. Al's disregard for their business and property rights, his disregard for the long standing relationships they all have, puts us in an extremely difficult position.

While this may change, we will have absolutely nothing to do with Al's efforts and are taking positive steps to disassociate our work with his plans. Only my ability to look the fully supportive owners

in the eye and tell them we are meeting their few unconditional requirements will allow us to continue. We will stay as far away from anything Al is doing both physically and conceptually. I cannot stop you from getting buddy passes from Al, but explained why as a team policy we aren't going to use them. Call DeEte or myself to get airline tickets if you want us to pay for them up front. We will reimburse you if you buy the tickets and need funds. We have donations coming in independent of Al's efforts and should be able to cover incidental expenses with that. Some folks are donating to the effort with no regard for reimbursement as their financial contribution.

Now for the most terrible issue. Because of Al's actions, we face the very real possibility of losing the landowners support if they clump us together with Al. You all need to be emotionally and psychologically prepared from this point to any time during the search, that permission from the landowners will be withdrawn and the mission will be shut down. The airline tickets are non-refundable and we could spend every single day in CA sitting around waiting to go home. If the landowners can be convinced we're not connected with Al, we may be able to keep their support. I would say there's a better chance of losing their permission than keeping it once the media information hits the street. We must press forward as though it is a full go.

On a less critical note, I've been working hard with Billy attempting to include his concept of an ad hoc search team under the auspices of his GOALS organization. I had him create a GOALS certification level in his head using what he knew of those he has interested to make him some sort of SAR Team certified equivalent. I then went to bat for him and this team with Cmdr Lacertoso in an attempt to have him used with the other Kern County certified SAR teams. That didn't go very well. Regardless, since the Cmdr decided not to do a parallel search effort until after we leave, using a GOALS team became moot.

Our team is NOT a GOALS team and will not be associated with Billy's company in any way in spite of what Al had been trying to get you all to do. Our attorney, and I agree, that we risk getting nothing from any liability coverage we try to piggyback on Billy's company. With the current turmoil and since Al intends to use Billy's GOALS team in his efforts we can't have anything to do with those guys either. I spoke to Billy on Friday and he and I understand what is required to keep them separate. With my agreement with the landowners and the local SAR authorities we will not have the GOALS team on the property at anytime. When Billy fully disburses his GOALS team on Sunday, he will then get his ID card and be able to personally join us.

The number of folks going is flexing and I expected that. It peaked will above what I initially expected and is now settling slightly above my original estimate. Jeffy and I met with local county SAR agencies and they may be part of our team when approved by their bosses and the landowners.

I'm available to answer talk to you if you want to jingle me. I took a leave of absence from FedEx for the month of Dec and first part of Jan to get this done and should be either at home 724-453-2987 or my cell phone, 412-417-8190. Regardless of the turmoil in the air right now I need you all to grit your teeth and proceed. Let me worry about the larger issues.

Davey