210 RESCUE SQUADRON



MISSION

The mission of the 210 was Combat Search and Rescue picking up downed aircrew members during wartime. Beyond that, the 210th had an important peacetime mission: to stand on constant 24-hour alert, ready to rescue military personnel and civilians stranded in Alaska's unpredictable wilderness.

LINEAGE

924 Quartermaster Company, Boat (Aviation) constituted, 14 Jun 1942 Activated, 1 Jul 1942 Redesignated 924 Boat Company (Aviation), Transportation Corps, 31 Jul 1942 Redesignated 924 Quartermaster Company, Boat (Aviation), 17 Sep 1942 Redesignated 10 AAF Emergency Rescue Boat Squadron, 3 Jul 1944 Inactivated, 8 Mar 1946 Disbanded, 15 Jun 1983

10 Rescue Squadron constituted, 15 Feb 1946 Activated, 1 Apr 1946 Redesignated 10 Air Rescue Squadron, 10 Sep 1950 Headquarters 10 Air Rescue Group, 14 Nov 1952 Inactivated, 8 Jan 1958 Redesignated 210 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, 7 Jul 1988 Redesignated 210 Air Rescue Squadron, 7 Aug 1989

10 AAF Emergency Rescue Boat Squadron Reconstituted, and consolidated with 210 Air Rescue Squadron, 18 Dec 1989 Consolidated squadron retains 210 Air Rescue Squadron designation.

Redesignated 210 Rescue Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

STATIONS

Elmendorf AAB, Alaska, 1 Jul 1942 Adak, Alaska, 24 Nov 1944-8 Mar 1946 Elmendorf AAB (later, Elmendorf AFB), Alaska, 1 Apr 1946-8 Jan 1958 Kulis ANGB, Anchorage, AK Elmendorf AFB, AK

ASSIGNMENTS

Eleventh Air Force (later, Alaskan Air Command), 1 Jul 1942-8 Mar 1946
Alaskan Air Command, 1 Apr 1946
Air Rescue Service, 1 Jul 1950-8 Jan 1958 (remained under operational control of Alaskan Air Command, 1 Jul 1950-8 Jan 1958)

WEAPON SYSTEMS

AT-7 (later, T-7), 1946-1949 C-45, 1946-1949 C/SC-47, 1946-1952 SC-47B L-5, 1946-1949 OA-10, 1946-1949 OA-10A R-5 (later, H-5), 1946-1955 SH-5A SH-5F SH-5G SH-5H B/SB-17, 1947-1949 B-17G C/SC-54, 1947-1957 C-64, 1947-1949 CG-15 (later, G-15) gliders, 1947-1951 C-82, 1948-1949 OA-12, 1948-1949 L-13, 1949-1950 LC-126, 1949-1952 SA-16, 1952-195 SH-19, 1954-1956 SH-21, 1956-1957 MH-60G, 1990 HH-60G, 1992 HC-130H, 1990

HC-130N, 1990

COMMANDERS

Maj Gordon R Donley, 1 Jul 1942 Capt Melvin A Howe, Jun 1945 Capt Ralph A Fried, 1 Oct 1945 Capt Orris L Lamb, 5 Dec 1945-unkn Maj Charles E Mosse, 1946 Lt Col Edward E Cunningham, 1946 Lt Col Edward M Huntington, 1946 Lt Col Beverly E Carmack, 1948 Col Bernt Balchen, Nov 1948 Maj Robert A Ackerly, 1 Jul 1950 Col Patrick R Arnold, 11 Oct 1950 Col Marcus O Owens Jr, 13 Aug 1952 Col Harold M Brecht, 8 Mar 1954 Col John L Parker, 1 Sep 1954 Col Joseph A Stenglein, Sep 1956-8 Jan 1958 Lt Col John K. Jacobs Lt Col Timothy O'Brien Lt Col Gene Ramsey

HONORS Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



10 AAF Emergency Rescue Boat Squadron emblem



On a circular blue disc edged with a narrow yellow border, a white snowy owl in flight between a yellow star above a tricolored mountain range. (light blue between black below and medium blue above} issuing from base below. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Blue and yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The star on the blue field is adapted from the State Flag of Alaska and suggests the North Star in the arctic night and the home base of the Squadron. The mountain range is characteristic of the rugged terrain and harsh environment in which the unit performs its rescue missions. The snowy owl is native to the arctic and its superior vision and hearing symbolizes the capabilities and combat rescue mission of the Squadron.

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OPERATIONS

With detachments stationed along the Alaskan coast and using a variety of boats, performed search and rescue of downed aircraft, disabled ships, and injured and ill persons, Jul 1942-c. Dec 1945. Lost boats and most personnel by Jan 1946 and was not operational thereafter. Inactivated on 8 Mar 1946.

The 10th Rescue Squadron activated on 1 Apr 1946 and replaced the 10th Emergency Rescue

Boat Squadron. Provided search and rescue within the territory of Alaska, adjacent areas of water, and along the Alcan highway to Ft Nelson, Canada. Provided arctic survival training to squadron personnel. Developed search and rescue techniques and aircraft modifications for arctic environment. Operated with a variety of aircraft types and initially with detachments at Elmendorf Fld, Adak Island, Ft Randall, Ladd AFB, Nome, and Shemya. By 1948, the major detachments were at Elmendorf AFB, Ladd Fld, and Davis AFB, Adak Island.

Elevated to group status in Nov 1952, and organized with four squadrons, two at Elmendorf AFB, one at Ladd AFB, and one on Adak Island, with aircraft operating at Lake Hood and Galena as required. One of the Elmendorf squadrons and the squadron on Adak Island inactivated within a year's time. In Jun 1954 received responsibility for manning a joint search and rescue center for the Alaskan Command area of responsibility, formerly a responsibility of the naval component of the Alaskan Command. In Oct 1957, the71st Air Rescue Squadron was reassigned directly to Air Rescue Service and the 74th ARS stood down in preparation for inactivation.

The Headquarters, 10th Air Rescue Group was not operational after 21 Oct 1957 and inactivated on 8 Jan 1958, leaving the 71st Air Rescue Squadron responsible for search and rescue in Alaska.

Following the war, all the activities were consolidated into one unit, the 10th Air Rescue Squadron. It was activated 1 April 1946 at Elmendorf Field, and Lt. Col. Edward E. Cunningham served as its first commander. The famed arctic and Antarctic aviator, Col. Bernt Balchen, assumed command in November 1948 and retained this position until October 1950.

The 10th Air Rescue Squadron remained under AAC control until 1 July 1950, when it was transferred to the Air Rescue Service. During the 1940s and early 1950s, the 10th was equipped with OA-10s, SB-17s, C-45s, L-5s, and R-5 helicopters.

Detachments were maintained at Elmendorf AFB, Ladd AFB, and Adak Naval Station. The 10th was redesignated as a group on 4 November 1952. At the same time, the detachments were upgraded to squadrons, which resulted in the assignment of the 71st and 72nd Air Rescue Squadrons to Elmendorf AFB, the 73rd Air Rescue Squadron to Adak Naval Station, and the 74th Air Rescue Squadron to Ladd AFB. The 72nd and 73rd were inactivated in September and November of the following year, in response to the withdrawal of Air Force units from the Aleutians.

During this period, the 10th Air Rescue Group became widely known in Alaska as The Guardian of the North," and provided support not only to the military but also to the civilian communities. The group established a pattern that would be followed in the years ahead. A rescue coordination center was maintained at Elmendorf AFB on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis to coordinate search-and-rescue activities, which included any support given by civilian agencies throughout Alaska.

The group's responsibilities were threefold: search, aid and rescue. The search function was performed by specially equipped aircraft and ground vehicles, as well as dog teams, which were

used occasionally. Aid was rendered by highly trained paramedics, who were capable of parachuting to the rescue scene when necessary. Rescue was carried out by several means, including the use of helicopters, amphibious and conventional aircraft, and surface vehicles.

The 10th Air Rescue Group continued to provide support to AAC's growing air defense system. By 1957, with the steady decline in AAC forces, Headquarters, USAF, questioned the need to continue the group, particularly in view of the contemplated reduction of search-and-rescue forces worldwide. The 72nd Air Rescue Squadron was inactivated on 8 December 1957, and the 10th Air Rescue Group on 8 January 1958.

In September 1954 the 8th ARG was established to perform the mission of Strategic Air Command aircrew recovery in the polar region and Pacific Ocean. Stateside units assigned Albatrosses included the 10th ARS at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.

July 7, 1952 – A C-47 carrying five personnel (including Capt Ernie Walker) that vanished on January 11, 1952 was spotted near the Yukon River. The 10th Rescue Squadron at Ladd AFB discovered the aircraft. Captain Lyle D. Otto spotted the aircraft nestled in the Yukon River north of Eielson AFB approximately 40 miles southeast of the village Ft Yukon. Evidence indicated at least two of the crewmembers survived the crash, but perished in the bitter cold.

In 1987, the Air Force announced that Elmendorf's 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron was being inactivated. Sen. Ted Stevens, the senior member of Alaska's congressional delegation, asked Alaska Air National Guard leaders if they were interested in taking over the mission. Interest was high, and the answer to Stevens' query was a resounding "yes."

In early 1989 the new unit began hiring its first full-time personnel.

From Apr through Jun of 1990 the maintenance and operations personnel trained on a UH-60A on loan from the National Guard Bureau.

The 210th became the first U.S. based rescue unit to receive the new MH-60G when its first one arrived in Jun 1990. Three others arrived by August. Organizational work continued, and in Nov and Dec the first of the 210th's new HC-130Ns arrived. These airborne tankers were equipped to supply the Pave Hawks with aerial refueling. They were also able to serve as airborne search vehicles and as platforms for pararescue and equipment airdrops. After its first year of operation, the 210th Rescue Squadron was given credit for saving 72 lives and assisting in the rescue of 20 more. For operations in Alaska, the HH-60Gs are fitted with skis.

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Between Jan and Mar 1991, the 210th rescuers rolled into action, initially sharing the 24-hour Alaska Theater helicopter alert duties with the inactivating 71st. They received credit for their first four saves January 18, rescuing survivors of a light plane crash near Cordova. In Apr they mounted their first high-altitude rescue, plucking two climbers from the 8,000-foot level of Mt. Jarvis. The next month the squadron saved a climber stranded at the 14,400-foot level of Mt. McKinley.

1 Apr 1991. The 210th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air Guard, began performing rescue alert duties at Kulis Air National Guard Base.

In Jun, responding to a request from the U.S. Coast Guard, the unit flew its first long-range mission over mwater to rescue an injured mariner whose boat was beyond the unrefueled range of the Coast Guard's helicopters.

In late Oct the Alaska Air National Guard received an urgent request to help rescue the freezing survivors of the crash of a Canadian C-130 on Ellsmere Island, 430 miles from the North Pole. An HC-130 was dispatched to the site while maintenance crews at Kulis worked frantically to partially disassemble two Pave Hawks and load them aboard a waiting C-5. Arriving in Greenland shortly after midnight, the crews worked feverishly to reassemble the aircraft. The helicopters were put back together and in the air in less than seven hours; together with the HC-130, they were credited with 13 saves.

210th Rescue Squadron and Russian in the first SAREX, Apr 1993

210th Rescue Squadron deployed first members to Operation Southern Watch, Jun 1993

On 1 Jan 1994, Detachment 1 of the 210 RQS was activated at Eielson AFB. Det. 1 provides an HH-60 and aircrew on alert primarily during duty hours on weekdays, while additionally providing range support to the surrounding USAF gunnery/bombing ranges.

In 1994, the last contingent of Alaska Air National Guard members returned home from their second overseas rotation to Kuwait. For a period of five months, some 60 members rotated through there on 60-day schedules, while rescuers from the 210th operated two helicopters out of the desert kingdom in support of U.S. fighters patrolling the southern no-fly zone over Iraq.

In early 1996, the 210 RQS received new HC-130(H)N from the Lockheed Factory and transferred its original C-130's to the New York ANG.

Gen Michael Ryan, the Air Force Chief of Staff, presented five members of the Alaska Air Guard's 210th Rescue Squadron with the 1999 MacKay Trophy, the service's highest award for meritorious flying, for their daring 27 May 1998 mountaintop rescue of six people trapped in a crashed Cessna 207. The rescue with their Pavehawk helicopter took nearly seven hours due primarily to strong winds and thick swirling clouds above the 10,500-foot level of Mount Torbert

70 miles east of Anchorage where the crash victims were stranded. 21 Sep 1999.

10-11 Jul 2002. Air Guardsmen from Alaska's 210th Rescue Squadron, operating with an HC-130 and an HH-60, rescued a Filipino sailor who was stricken with a case of appendicitis 1,000 miles at sea and delivered him to a hospital at Kodiak. The entire mission lasted about 26 hours.

2005 10 Sep Five pararescuemen assigned to the 210th Rescue Squadron, Alaska ANG, returned to home station at Kulis.

25 Sep The ANG deployed fifty-two pararescue personnel to support Hurricane Rita relief operations in Louisiana, Texas, Florida, and Mississippi. Pararescue personnel came from the 123d Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG; 125th Special Tactics Squadron, Oregon ANG; 106th Rescue Wing, New York ANG, and the 210th Rescue Squadron, Alaska ANG.

As the 1980's began to fade and drift towards the 21st Century a new, yet an old mission began to be discussed by leaders of the Alaska Air National Guard Search and Rescue.

Military Search and Rescue, as we know it today, was born in Alaska just prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians. The idea of having rescue boats for downed pilots began at Elmendorf Air Force Base in December of 1940 when Major Everett Davis ordered two Twentytwo foot Chris Craft speedboats from California. In the summer of 1941, Lt Gordon Donley was put in charge of organizing a search and rescue unit for Alaska. He travelled throughout Southeastern Alaska organizing a boat squadron of Alaskans familiar with boat operations.

By 1942, this "Father of Search and Rescue" had built up a remarkable unit the 924th Quartermaster Boat Company (Aviation). They performed search and rescue operations for the next three years, primarily in the Aleutian Islands. They were a unique organization. They were U.S. Army Air Force personnel, they sailed PT-type boats, got fuel and supplies from the Army and Navy and sometimes wore mixed uniforms. They did a remarkable job as the 10th USAAF Emergency Boat Squadron and are the roots of the Alaska Air National Guard's newest unit -the 210th Air Rescue Squadron.

Following the war, the Air Force activated the world famous 10th Rescue Squadron that served the military and civilian population during Territorial days. They were the original "Guardians of the North" or the "Sourdough Savers."

They roamed the vast distances of Alaska and beyond and established standards that are still respected today in the world of search and rescue. Bernt Balchen, the famed Norwegian polar pilot who flew with Admiral Byrd over both Poles, was 10th Rescue's most famous commander. When the 10th Rescue passed from history in 1958, it left one of its squadrons to carry on the work. The 71st Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron continued the military tradition "That Others Might Live" throughout the 1970's and 1980's.

When it was learned that the Air Force planned to pull out of the rescue business in Alaska, talk of an Air Guard mission began in earnest. Guard search and rescue could trace its roots back to the World War Two Alaska Territorial Guard's record of being on scene to help the regular military services in rescue. The Army and Air Guard had made many saves throughout the years in Alaska and the mission seemed a natural for the Air National Guard. After all, who knew Alaska better than Alaskan pilots? All the ingredients were present to form an outstanding search and rescue organization. The first 10th had been outstanding. There just had to be a second 10th (or the 210th) to serve the people of Alaska.

Through the good offices of Senator Ted Stevens and a tremendous amount of planning, the organization took form. On August 11, 1990 the 210th Air Rescue Squadron was activated adding MH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters, HC-130H aircraft and still another new mission to the Alaska Air National Guard. Although the 210th is the newest part of the Air National Guard it has already set records for saves and has added a glorious chapter to an already interesting history.

The squadron's history began in the period prior to World War II when in December 1940 Maj. Everett S. Davis, commanding officer, Elmendorf Air Base, saw the success the Royal Air Force was having in the English Channel with fast heavy-duty small boats recovering downed air crews and returning them to fly again.

Lt. Gordon R. Donley, later captain then major, was dispatched to Ketchikan, Alaska, in December 1941 where the Coast Guard had agreed to assist in training small boat crews. Donley brought with him a few non-coms on detached service from various Elmendorf squadrons and immediately began recruiting young men in Ketchikan who had been raised in the local fishing fleet and who already had their basic small boat training. The official name of the organization became the "Air Corps Marine Rescue Service," later changed to the "924th QM Boat Sqdn. (AVN)," then to the "10th Emergency Rescue Boat Sqdn. "

Housing for the new squadron was a persistent problem. At first, Donley rented the New England Fish Co. salmon canner's Filipino bunkhouse, vacant during the winter. Most of the recruits bunking in these barracks came from the local Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) organization that had been disbanded when the war started. Donley was so successful in recruiting young men that the bunkhouse soon became over-crowded, so when the new salmon season approached, and the New England Fish Co. asked for their bunkhouse back, it was time to move on.

The next stop was the abandoned CCC camp at Ward Lake, some eight miles out the north highway from Ketchikan. With just a little clean-up the camp was both usable and somewhat isolated from the community. That became the "boot camp" for Army training as well as a classroom for the navigation, signaling and small boat handling classes. The squadron had received two new 42-foot Owens twin screw cabin cruisers, the P-30 and 31, that became training vessels and later were assigned to air stations as rescue boats.

Not too long after the transfer to the Ward Lake CCC camp, the military decided to move the Aleut natives out of their communities in the Aleutians to Southeastern Alaska, further away from the war. As the CCC camp looked like a good place to deposit some of those families, the squadron again had to move, this time to the new Annette Island Army Air Field. Nights were spent patrolling offshore on the lookout for Japanese submarines, and days were spent hauling passengers and mail between Annette

Donley finally received word that the first two 104-foot rescue boats were under construction at the Stephens Brothers shipyard in Stockton, Calif., so he shipped 20 men to San Francisco for further training in gunnery and celestial navigation with the Navy on Treasure Island, engine training at the Hall Scott factory in Berkeley and weather training at the Stockton Air Base. Before leaving Annette, the squadron ran into a serious snafu. Several of the group were hospitalized when the Yellow Fever vaccine they were given was found to be unstable. One man spent several months in the Presidio Hospital and nearly died. Why they needed Yellow Fever shots in the Aleutian Islands is anybody's guess. As recently as 1988 the government was still checking back on those who had become ill from the vaccine.

When departing for California, the men came over to Ketchikan on their own boats, then boarded a USCG 38-foot picket boat to go alongside a Standard Oil Co. tanker that had slowed down in the channel for them. They had to climb up a rope netting with barracks bags, helmets, rifles, gas masks and sleeping bags, then sleep on the steel deck in the midship house for the trip to the states. They went back down the netting to a pilot boat at Port Angeles, Wash., then via bus and ferry to Fort Lawton in Seattle where they moved into tents. After a few days they departed via Northern Pacific Railroad chair cars for San Francisco. They first used the old Ghirardelli candy factory as a temporary barracks, then moved to tents in Funston Park with an MP detachment.

The boat construction schedule had been delayed, so it was the fall of 1942 when the men finally moved into a barracks in Stockton, to help prepare the P-114 and P-115. The P-115 was ready first and departed several weeks ahead of the P-114. It headed downriver for San Francisco where it moored at the foot of Market Street.

An elderly ship pilot, brought out of retirement for the war effort, was assigned to pilot the boat up the Pacific Coast to Seattle. He wanted to travel far offshore to get away from land, but the crew didn't want to lose sight of land, so they stayed within sight of land, taking a pretty good beating off the Northern California coast, then going into Coos Bay, Ore., for refueling. After arriving in Seattle, additional water tanks were installed and the boat proceeded north for assignment, the P-114 to Adak and the 115 to Cold Bay in the Aleutians.

By this time the P-141 thru P-146 were ready to be ferried to Alaska. After adding water tanks in Seattle at the Barbee Shipyard, these vessels went on to their Aleutian base duty stations. The P-142 was assigned to the new air base at Amchitka along with the P-143.

While at the BarBee yard in Seattle, an 85-foot wood P-143 of Amchitka departing from alongside the HA-2 anchored in Scabbard Bay at Adak. Fuel barges were also in this small protected harbor and two of the 85-foot crash boats can be seen refueling.

herring seiner-type vessel had been acquired and a new wheelhouse was constructed. Also, a medical dispensary was installed in the hold, capable of handling 12 patients. The vessel was designated the TP-92 and was stationed in Chernofski Harbor to serve the Umnak area. It was felt that with the fishing vessel lines it might be able to outperform the higher speed crash boats. This same vessel following the war operated out of Ketchikan as a fish and freight packer renamed the Sidney. The Sidney burned and sank about 1973 while returning south across the Gulf of Alaska.

In 1943 the squadron took delivery at San Francisco of the 158-foot steel vessel named COL Joseph C. Morrow designated "HA-2" for hauling auxiliary. The HA-2 was carried on the roster as an aircraft retriever as it was equipped with a 30-ton jumbo lift boom along with regular cargo booms. The cargo capacity of 500 measurement tons enabled it to haul priority Air Force cargoes and crash boat parts and supplies to and between all the Aleutian bases from the Tacoma Air Force terminal.

The squadron next added six 104-foot crash boats, P-214 thru P-217 plus P-219 and 220, constructed in Coos Bay, Ore., and powered by three Kermath gas engines.

These vessels proved to be under-powered and not as satisfactory as the Stephens Brothers boats with their three Hall Scotts. The 104-foot design was able to operate in extremely tough weather and sea conditions but were slow when time was of the essence in rescue, so Major Donley obtained five 85-foot PT-style crash boats equipped with 1350 HP Packard engines. Their main problems were that they sweat very badly and had a lousy heating system— a serious problem in the Aleutians. The 85-footers were all stationed originally at the Casco Cove PT base in Attu formerly used by the Navy but abandoned after they were found unsuitable for Aleutian use.

The squadron next received six 104-foot crash boats, P-749 thru P-754, modified a great deal from the original design and actually appearing top-heavy. These new vessels allowed some of the older boats to be moved back to mainland stations away from the continued battering of the Aleutian weather conditions. Of these, the P-750 had been built in New York state while the other five were probably built in Biloxi, Miss. They were powered by the same 1350 HP Packards that had been used in the 85-foot design. Crews reported the workmanship was so bad that they were in the Olson & Winge shipyard on Lake Union, near Seattle, for almost two months repairing and finishing the vessels.

The total number of vessels operated by the 10th Emergency Rescue Boat Squadron now totaled 37 over the period of the war. Over 520 men were in the organization over that same period.

Very late in 1945 the squadron began returning the vessels from the Alaska and Aleutian bases to Seattle where most of them were declared surplus and sold to the highest bidders. Some of the 85-footers became high-speed charter boats, and the only other two crash boats that became civilian vessels were the P-115 and the TP-92. In 1972 the P-115 showed up in Ketchikan as a salmon troller named the Shauna and was identified from records by the Stephens Bros. shipyard. It had been purchased locally from an owner in California who had been using it as a tuna fishing vessel for many years.

The squadron participated in many rescues during the war, climbing mountains, hiking across the tundra, transporting seriously ill tugboat crew members to shore hospitals, emergency calls to outlying weather and radar stations, as well as the aircraft emergency-ditching calls. In some cases aircraft had just run out of fuel and needed a tow, and others had to belly-land on the tundra or beach. Some of the boats had to go out to sea just to provide a radio signal to be used as an approach beacon so aircraft could get down to sea level to find their way into a field. When a call was received there wasn't such a thing as checking the weather and planning a trip, the boat just went out in whatever weather there was. There were some who asked for a transfer ashore as they just could not avoid being seasick every time out, but they were usually replaced immediately by another who wanted to get out of the mud. It is amazing that, in the worst weather in the world, and with the number of boats and personnel on duty; not one man was lost.

Detachments Annette, AK Adak, AK Amchitka, AK Amchitka, AK Annette Island, AK Attu (Casco Cove), AK Bethel, AK Cold Bay, AK Umnak, AK

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES Created: 12 Oct 2019 Updated:

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