



## When Edwards airmen try Marine training, they end up ... Flying high

**Story and photos by  
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A faint smell of exhaust, the whine of engines and the thunder of the rotors permeated the air as



the CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter traversed the southern California terrain at 11,000 feet on its way to Camp Pendleton, Calif.

The chopper, loaded with a crew of Marines from Marine Aircraft Group 46, Detachment Bravo, and two Air Force members from Edwards, was on its way to support special patrolling insertion/extraction rigging training, commonly called SPIE rigging, for several Marine units at Camp Pendleton Jan. 18.

The Air Force members were there at the invitation of Sgt. Maj. Victor Escobedo, command sergeant major for MAG 46 Det. B, to take part in the training. The sergeant major said he invited the airmen to show them what the Marines do for a living.

“So, when the Marines here are out doing something, the airmen will know what they’re talking about,” he said.

Airman Anthony Magliaro, 95th Security Forces Squadron, was one of the Edwards airmen to go along for the ride. He said he wasn’t sure what to expect, since he only had about half an hour’s notice before the helicopter left that he would be going along.

SPIE rigging is a technique used to insert or extract troops into territory where an aircraft couldn’t land, such as heavily wooded or uneven terrain.

The troops, up to 10 at a time, are suspended from a 50-foot rope beneath a helicopter and hoisted in or out of the area.

Once at the training site, the Marines and airmen were given instruction in putting on the special harness and tying the safety ropes, and then were told what to do as they ascended and descended

below the helicopter.

As they left the ground, the troops tended to rotate on the rope without much control, but once the helicopter got some forward momentum, a repositioning of a hand or foot could adjust their position and give them an opportunity to see the earth below in a whole new light.

“It was the most fun experience I have ever had,” Magliaro said.

“It was unlike anything I have ever done before. I would do it again.”

This was also the first time SPIE rigging for many of the Edwards Marines on the exercise, too.

“I didn’t think I was going to be scared,” said Pvt. Chad Adams. “But once I left the ground, I was, just for a few seconds.”

Flying along, suspended 50 feet below a helicopter and up to 500 feet above the earth might seem like an unreasonable act, but for the Marines, this is a normal part of life, said Escobedo.



*Top left: Airman Anthony Magliaro, 95th Security Forces Squadron, ties his back-up safety harness and checks his carabiner before donning the final harness.  
Left: Marines leave the earth one-by-one for special patrolling insertion/extraction, or SPIE, rigging training.  
Below: The view of Camp Pendleton, Calif., from 500 feet.  
Right: Marines fly suspended below a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter during SPIE rigging training. SPIE rigging can be used to insert or extract up to 10 troops at a time.*

