

# Pilots Happy to Be 'Arrested'

SAIGON (7AF) — "If either the drag chute doesn't open, or his brake system fails — or both — the 'Back 12' will stop him safely and ease his real gone feeling."

SSgt. Paul J. Jensen, 35, of Las Vegas, Nev., sergeant in charge of the barrier maintenance crew at a Southeast Asia air base, went on to explain a bit more about the "Back 12" and the "real gone feeling."

"The Back 12," he said, "is the nickname given to the aircraft arresting device near the end of runways used by fighter aircraft, and the real gone feeling probably best describes a pilot's emotions as his jet speeds down the runway on landing without

'chute or brakes. One final safety device is ready to bring both pilot and plane to a safe halt when all else has failed — the arresting barrier."

Jensen and his crewmates, SSgt. Jim Willoughby, 39, Fort Worth, Tex., and SSgt. Cecil L. Norton, 27, of Pueblo, Colo., have seen five safe stops of planes this year at barriers they maintain.

The device, which operates automatically when engaged by the arresting hook of an aircraft, will normally bring a 40,000-pound jet traveling at 200 m.p.h. to a halt before it reaches the end of the runway.

The barrier is a 1-inch cable stretched across the runway, held about 3 inches from the surface

by rubber "donuts." The cable is attached to a nylon tape, or belt, which is wound onto a drum on which is mounted a hydraulic braking system.

When the plane's hook engages the cable, it unwinds the nylon tape against hydraulic pressure. As the pressure builds up, the brake pressure increases until the aircraft is brought to a halt.

Maintenance of the arresting barrier mechanism is performed daily by Jensen and his crew, with a round-the-clock watch placed on it.

"It's the last word in safety for a pilot," says Willoughby. "After all, he is nearing the end of the runway, and there just isn't anything left."