

# Riggers practice parachute packing quality control

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BASTROP, Texas - The UH-60 Black Hawk kicked up a cloud of dust as it rose into the sky with six Soldiers' boots dangling out the side of the aircraft. The bird carried the paratroopers about 500 feet above the dry, grassy field before they jumped out one by one. The jumpers took the leap, trusting the parachutes on their backs to deploy at the right moment, in the right configuration, to bring them safely back to Earth.

"There's nothing that you can compare it to," said Staff Sgt. Cabe Scotland, jump master with the 294th Quartermaster Company, 36th Sustainment Brigade. "You just forget everything, and you appreciate the view from up above."

The 294th QM Company parachute riggers conducted these jumps Aug. 15, at Camp Swift, Texas, during their two-week annual training.

The riggers' main job is to pack parachutes for airborne troops to jump from fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft.

The unit conducts these jumps with their riggers every quarter for them to build confidence in their skills as riggers and as a quality assurance to paratroopers who will use the parachutes packed by the 294th on future airborne missions.

"It's kind of a checks-and-balances type thing," said Sgt. Brian Treutler, parachute rigger and inspector with the 294th. "If I'm not willing to jump my own chute, why should any other Soldier jump my chute?"

Back at Camp Mabry, the riggers spent the days leading up to these test jumps packing the parachutes that they would use.

"There's a lot," Sgt. Erica Urrtia, squad leader with 294th, said about the steps involved in packing the parachutes. "Pretty much you have to know your equipment. Before you pack it, you have to check everything over, make sure everything's good to go."

Each Soldier checks for holes, rips and frays in the parachute canopy. Then they check the suspension lines for twists, turns and tangles. The suspen-



**Soldiers with the 294th Quartermaster Company practice parachute jumps during annual training at Camp Swift, Texas, Aug. 15. The riggers participated in the training for confidence building and competence assurance in their packing skills. The unit provides parachute-packing support to airborne units across the state in the National Guard, Army Reserve and active Army units at Fort Hood.**

sion lines connect the parachute to the paratrooper via kit bag and harness.

"We fold the parachute into a long fold," Urrtia continued. "Then we stick the whole entire chute into a small kit bag. After that, we stow the suspension lines, then close it up."

For this exercise, the riggers packed and used parachutes designed for pinpoint landings, as well as smaller, backup chutes in case the main one fails to deploy properly.

"We are jumping today with the MC1-1D," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Michael Beraldi, rigger shop chief. "These are life preservers. When you jump out of an airplane, rotary wing or high-performance aircraft, that's the only thing keeping you from falling straight down."

The MC1-1D parachute weighs in at 29 pounds when packed and ready. Made from low porosity nylon, the chute reduces descent rates of geared-up paratroopers up to 360 pounds. Modified spaces in the canopy panels facilitate direction and speed control.

"Those are modifications in the canopy and they have toggle lines up on the risers to where you can steer," Beral-

di said. "If it's a windy day, you see a lot of them rotate to where the modifications are behind them... If you're turned the other way, the modifications facing the wind, that means you're going to be running really fast with the wind."

Beraldi said the company packs primary and reserve parachutes for airborne units across the state, including an Army Reserve unit and active Army paratroopers at Fort Hood.

"And lately, we've been getting a lot more requests for airborne operations from outside the state and other agencies," he said. "The 294th Quartermaster Company in the state of Texas is a fantastic group of Soldiers, and they work hard to keep the airborne, airborne."

Beraldi said he appreciates the care his riggers put forth in their parachute packing because it ensures paratroopers' safety.

"For me, the best part of jumping is seeing every Soldier have that canopy open up and land safely," he said. "That is the best part for me being the shop chief. That means my Soldiers are doing a fantastic job at doing their job and producing a fantastic product."