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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## 18th CSSB Soldiers conduct airdrop, sling load training

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16th Sust. Bde. Public Affairs

BAMBERG, Germany – Running through the motions repeatedly to develop muscle memory is good, but it does not compare to the real thing.

Soldiers of the 23rd Ordnance Company and 574th Quartermaster Supply Co., both with the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sust. Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, conducted an airdrop and sling load training mission in the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, July 6.

Soldiers not only rigged the dropped cargo, but were also able to direct the helicopters in, hook up the sling load, direct the helicopters out once the cargo was hooked up and direct them back down once the cargo was delivered.

“Having the air support this time gives the Soldiers a real world mission experience so they will know what to do in a time of need or under fire, it doesn’t

matter,” said Staff Sgt. Matthew Cummings, a section sergeant with the 23 Ord. Co., 18th CSSB, 16th Sust. Bde.

“With helicopters we get a sense of reality so we know what we’re dealing with and we get all the nervousness out of our systems,” said Spc. Mariano Escalante, a firefighter with the 23rd Ord. Co., 18th CSSB, 16th Sust. Bde.

“Seeing an actual UH-60 and feeling what it’s like underneath one with the force of the rotor wash hitting you, it doesn’t get any more real than that.”

Soldiers prepare for several weeks before each mission to make sure they are proficient and can perform the tasks properly.

“Every time we have a mission coming up we start training for it about two weeks before hand,” said Escalante. “Staff Sgt. Cummings and I are on every mission but right now the teams change every time we come out here so everyone in the unit has at least a basic understanding of how to sling load equipment for transport.”

“This crew we have here has been training for about a month and a half now because we have the air support this time,” added Cummings. “I’m trying to get it to where we have the same people every time but still incorporate two or three individuals who haven’t done it before. That way we can get faster and more proficient at it but at the same time not be solely reliant on one 12-man team in case some of the Soldiers go on leave or PCS (Permanent Change of Station).”

During one particular sling load scenario, Soldiers rigged a Humvee for sling load transport, which is quite a bit different from what they have been doing.

“Rigging a HUMVEE is like night and day to rigging water blivets, which is what we normally do,” said Escalante. “We needed to make sure its weight was distributed equally so it didn’t tilt and fall on the wrong angle and be destroyed. It took about eight hours to do and I’ll never forget that. It was great training.”

“For a Humvee we have to use all four sling legs and a different link count and the whole rigging procedure is different than anything we’ve done before,” Cummings said.

“This was some great training,” added Cummings. “To have the helicopter this time was a lot of fun and it let the Soldiers experience what it will be like if they ever have to do this in a real world mission so they will know what to expect.”

## CUTLINES



110706-A-Q1532-057: Soldiers from the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sust. Brigade, 21st Theater Sust. Command, prepare to hook up simulated supplies to a UH-60 helicopter during an aerial operation and sling load training exercise at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, July 6. This was one of the first sling load training exercises in which Soldiers worked with an actual helicopter instead of simulating one. (Photo by Pvt. Kevin Alex, 16th Sust. Bde. Public Affairs)



110706-A-QI532-058: A Soldier with the 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sust. Brigade, 21st Theater Sust. Command directs a UH-60 helicopter during a sling load training exercise at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, July 6. For many of the Soldiers training, this was their first time conducting a sling load mission with air support. (Photo by Pvt. Kevin Alex, 16th Sust. Bde. Public Affairs)