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21st Theater Sustainment Command parachute riggers 'resetting' thousands of chutes for jump with 173rd Airborne Brigade

By Sgt. Fay Conroy

21st Theater Sustainment Command Public Affairs Office

MIESAU ARMY DEPOT, Germany -- Parachute riggers are an airborne Soldier's best friend. When a Soldier jumps out of an airplane, he wants to be confident his parachute will be fully functional -- especially when something as small as string can render a chute inoperable.



SGT FAY CONROY

Pfc. Lashley Basilio is one of about 25 parachute riggers from the 5th Quartermaster Company at the Miesau (Germany) Army Depot preparing parachutes for the 173rd Airborne Combat Brigade Team following the brigade's deployment to Afghanistan.

"We are what keeps the airborne, airborne," said Warrant Officer Alexander Alvarado, airdrop systems technician for U.S. Army Europe's 5th Quartermaster Company, 39th Transportation Battalion, 21st Theater Sustainment Command.

Keeping the airborne airborne is exactly what the parachute riggers of the 5th are currently doing as they "reset" the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team based at Vicenza, Italy, following the brigade's combat tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"Resetting means that we are packing their jump chutes so that they can jump again and get their jump status back," said Alvarado. "We also are going to get their jumpmasters and riggers updated on training that they missed while they were deployed."

During the reset, 25 riggers from the 5th will pack 3,000 parachutes in a month's time. Over the next two to three months, the riggers will pack about 8,000 parachutes.

In spite of the high volume passing through their hands, safety is always first.



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Sgt. Kenita Zimmerman, a parachute rigger with the 5th Quartermaster Company, packs a parachute for the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. The riggers are preparing about 8,000 chutes during their 'reset' of the 173rd.

serviceable. Once everything is done there is also a final inspection before a pack is ready to be used.

This thorough process has ensured that riggers of the 5th QM Co. have had zero malfunctions for as long as anyone can remember.

"It is a very stressful job," said Alvarado. "The Soldiers take their jobs very personally because we also jump our packs."

In November the 5th QM Co. will jump with the 173rd ABCT in Grafenwoehr, Germany.

"It is great when you can support the airborne community," said Capt. Josielyn Carrasquillo, commander of the 5th. "We know that we have a job and a mission, which is to bring the 173rd back to jump status. I know that they miss that."



"Safety is the most important because we have people's lives in our hands," said parachute rigger Spc. Steven Clement.

At each step the packing is inspected by a parachute packing inspector to ensure that nothing is missing.

"They call 'rigger' every step until the end. I check the step that they just did and tell them to go to the next step," said Sgt. Maikeld Quarles, a parachute packing inspector.

Throughout the process there are two checks -- to inspect the work being done and to ensure that everything is