Drop Zone Support Team Training

CAPTAIN PAUL S. WARREN

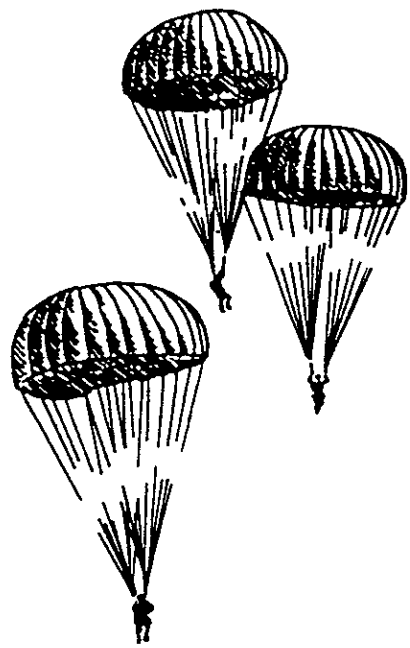
Today's missions continue to require that combat units be proficient in conducting sustainment operations by air. As commanders rely more heavily on the accurate delivery of supplies, they have an even greater need for personnel who are trained in establishing drop zones to receive these supplies.

Most commanders assume that the control of the drop zone for aerial resupply during wartime is the responsibility of Air Force combat control teams (CCTs). As doctrine changes, however, and as units develop more complex mission profiles, the requirements for airdrop support often exceed the capabilities of the CCTs. And even when a team is available, the tactical situation may not allow for its insertion before an airdrop.

To cope with this problem, in 1987 the U.S. Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps agreed to give Army and Marine Corps personnel the primary responsibility for establishing and operating drop zones. As a result of this agreement, Air Force CCTs now focus on force projection, the airdrop of large numbers of troops and equipment, and sustainment missions at brigade level and above, while certified Army and Marine Corps personnel provide airdrop support to forward units at battalion level and below.

To meet the requirements for maintaining the ability to perform these missions, the Army and Marine Corps established the concept of a drop zone support team (DZST). A team consists of two soldiers—a leader and an assistant leader—who provide a direct link between the ground commander and the supporting unit. Their job is to select, establish, and control drop zones for both planned and emergency airdrop operations.

Training the team is the responsibility of the immediate commander. Because of the required certification, however, this training can be conducted only by DZST-qualified personnel. Support for this training is available through the United States Army Airborne School (1st Battalion, 507th Infantry) at Fort Benning, Georgia. At the request of unit commanders, the school's Pathfinder Training Branch provides a mobile training team (MTT) that can train and certify DZST candidates on-site. Qualified MTT instructors train and certify students on all facets of operating drop zones for receiving both bundle and container delivery system (CDS) missions.



This training, conducted over a five-day period, offers comprehensive instruction in establishing and operating computed air release point (CARP) and ground marker release system (GMRS) drop zones. The students normally spend the first two days in classroom instruction on the DZST leaders' duties and responsibilities, regulations governing the establishment of drop zones, and assessing the suitability of a tentative site for future operations. Before leaving for the field training phase, the students also receive instruction on using the required equipment and on determining wind speed and direction and safe operating conditions.

The two-day field training phase allows students to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. DZST instructors supervise as the students establish and operate a live drop zone using Air Force C-130 aircraft and various bundle and CDS configurations. During this phase, the students get practical hands-on experience in setting up CARP and GMRS drop zones for both day and night missions.

On the final day of training, students are tested on what they have learned. Once a student has passed the testing phase, he is fully qualified to run a resupply drop zone for a drop formation of up to three C-130s or any number of helicopters.

To maintain their DZST skills, these soldiers must actively participate in an airdrop operation at least every six months, either as DZST leaders or assistant leaders. Leaders who lose their currency must attend a refresher course given by a currently qualified team member. User units conduct these refresher courses, or arrange the training through the Pathfinder Branch at Fort Benning.

Actions at the Joint Readiness Train-

ing Center and the National Training Center have shown that the fast, efficient delivery of critical supplies by air has a direct effect on a unit's ability to continue the fight. Training soldiers to serve on drop-zone support teams is a cost-effective method of improving sustainment capabilities during peacetime and war; a drop zone support team's level of training can determine whether air-dropped supplies arrive on target or fall into enemy hands.

DZST training is open to any unit, regardless of its mission requirements. Commanders who take advantage of it will improve their units' ability to resupply themselves by air when all attempts by ground have failed or are otherwise impractical.

The DZST Mobile Training Team mission schedule for the remainder of Fiscal Year 1994 is shown here. A commander who is interested in this training should contact his division G-3 Air to request a class date as soon as possible.

DZST MTT SCHEDULE
REMAINDER FY 1994

03 JAN – 07 JAN 94
24 JAN – 28 JAN 94
07 FEB – 11 FEB 94
28 FEB – 04 MAR 94
14 MAR – 18 MAR 94
28 MAR – 01 APR 94
11 APR – 15 APR 94
25 APR – 29 APR 94
09 MAY – 13 MAY 94
23 MAY – 27 MAY 94
06 JUN – 10 JUN 94
20 JUN – 24 JUN 94
11 JUL – 15 JUL 94
25 JUL – 29 JUL 94
08 AUG – 12 AUG 94
12 SEP – 16 SEP 94
26 SEP – 30 SEP 94

Class dates are reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. All funding and support for the DZST MTT is the responsibility of the using unit, but Pathfinder Branch will provide qualified instructors, class hand-outs, and the applicable publications.

The point of contact for information and coordination is 1st Battalion, 507th Infantry, ATTN: Pathfinder Branch (DZST), Fort Benning, GA 31905; telephone (706) 545-3218/1111 or DSN 835-3218/1111.

Captain Paul S. Warren served as chief of the Advanced Airborne Operations Detachment, 1st Battalion, 507th Infantry and now commands a company in the battalion. He previously served in the 82d Airborne Division and led a rifle company in the 25th Infantry Division. He is a 1987 ROTC graduate of Texas Christian University.

Airborne Operations

Recovery From Tree Landings

CAPTAIN DAVID A. McBRIDE

Most soldiers assigned to airborne units for any length of time have seen a paratrooper miss the drop zone and land in a wooded area. The jumper involved either passes through the trees and hits the ground or becomes entangled. A jumper who is hanging in a tree should always try to free himself if he can do so without undue risk of injury. Sometimes he can step out of the harness or climb down, using the tree's trunk and branches. But if he is higher in the tree, can't reach the trunk or a sturdy branch, or is injured, he may have to be rescued.

Airborne units are required to include emergency landings in pre-jump training. SH 57-1, *The Jumpmaster Checklist*, describes the steps a jumper should take when he realizes he is about to land in the trees. The checklist says that "after landing in a tree, a parachutist may have to activate the reserve chute and climb down the suspension lines on the outside of the canopy." Field Manual (FM) 57-220, *Basic Parachuting Techniques and Training*, describes these steps in greater detail and with the following warning: "Make sure the reserve reaches the ground or comes close to it before continuing with the following actions."

Unfortunately, though, neither manual covers techniques for conducting a rescue when the jumper can't or won't free himself (occasionally, a jumper may refuse to try for fear that any movement on his part will cause the parachute canopy to release itself and cause him to crash to the ground). Equally lacking is information on training and equipping the drop zone support team. As a result, most tree rescues are based on trial and error and depend to a large extent on the experience of the recovery detail and the jumper.

In an attempt to fill this gap, I would like to share a good working technique for getting a jumper out of a tree. This technique grew out of my experience in a variety of airborne assignments (the 75th Ranger Regiment, the Ranger Training Brigade, a long-range surveillance unit, and the Joint Readiness Training Center); it does not reflect the official policy