SWAP SHOP

Pickup Zone Crisis Action Team

Recently, my unit has found great success in missions by using a special element called the crisis action team (CAT) on our pick-up zones (PZs). (Some units have used other terms to describe this type of contingency element, such as a *PZ response team*.) The CAT is a small element of two or three-men that can be placed strategically around a PZ to expedite the mission and add a new level of safety and control to both large-scale and small-scale air assaults.

A primary mission of this team is to assist the PZ control officer in preparing the PZ, inspecting sling loads, and managing the flow of both troops and materials once the operation is under way. This can be done in several ways, such as locating one team with the sling loads, a second team with the troops to be loaded aboard the aircraft, and a final, senior team, with the PZ control officer, able to(where he can??) respond to the PZ to assist a team in the event of problems.

Types of PZs the CAT should be able to manage include sling loading, pure personnel moves, forward area rearm and refuel points, or a combination of these. The CAT should consist of at least one NCO who is familiar with air assault operations and one or two soldiers to help him execute the CAT mission.

Equipping, refreshing, and training these teams is vital. The training should consist of mission requirements first. The type of PZ and procedures, sling loads to be used, emergency and communication procedures on the PZ, and contingencies must be clear to all team members. The equipment issued to the team can range from a PZ flow chart, to sling-load link counts (cheat sheets), to a small bag containing type III nylon, cotter pins, break away and 100 mile per hour tape. This type of bag has turned tragedy into triumph more than once. The management of the teams before a mission should fall on the battalion S-3 Air, the S-4, or the support platoon leader.

The CAT system has been used with great success at both the Joint Readiness Training Center and the National Training Center in the delivery of Class IV and Class V and in light infantry brigade-level air assaults.

The air movement of supplies and soldiers can be hazardous, from large-scale operations at the 101st Airborne Division to small-scale sling loads at your unit. A CAT can make all the difference in both speed and safety.

(Submitted by Staff Sergeant Eric B. Johnson, HHC, 1st Battalion, 502d Infantry, 101st Airborne Division.)