



Allied jumpmasters spread their wings with American paratroopers

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FORT BRAGG, N.C. - U.S. and allied paratroopers from six nations spread their wings, here, Dec. 5 and 6, filling the sky over Sicily Drop Zone supporting the largest airborne operation in the world and also a great cause.

The 17th annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop is an annual holiday event sponsored by the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), a U.S. Army Reserve operational command, based here.

Operation Toy Drop brings smiles and joy to thousands of area children each year. In order to participate in Toy Drop, paratroopers must donate a new, unwrapped toy in order to earn a seat for the airborne operation. The pay-off for the paratroopers is the chance to earn foreign parachutist badges by working with allied jumpmasters.

Jumpmasters from Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, and Poland participated in this year's event.

"We get to work with

each other, learn each others techniques and train on a large scale," said Lt. Col. Aaron Clapsaddle, Chief of Air Operations Division, USACAPOC. "The complexity of this operation itself is on a large scale and helps us with planning and mission execution."

Jumpmasters are expert paratroopers in airborne units who train and teach proper airborne operations. They are also responsible for training Soldiers who attend the Airborne School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

U.S. and allied jumpmasters shared their experiences with each other every chance they could, participating in several airborne training exercises and simulated jumps prior to actually going up in the aircraft.

"We train together, we jump together, and it's a great opportunity for me and my team to work with all these countries" said Master Sgt. Nicola Tirreti, an Italian jumpmaster with the Folgore Parachute Brigade.

"My job as a jumpmaster is very important to me. We are

all together in this, my team, American, all of us, and their safety is a big factor."

Five of the six countries involved in this year's event have participated in past Toy Drops. This year, Indonesia joined the ranks for the first time.

"In Indonesia we do many exercises, but this is the first time I'm jumping with other countries and the Americans" said Staff Sgt. Thofik Hidayat, 502nd Airborne Infantry Battalion.

Hidayat, like many of his allied counterparts, did not let the language barrier interfere with training. He often smiled as he watched and learned from others.

"I don't know if I'm more excited or nervous. We will see when I get up there" said Hidayat.

As each Soldier donned their parachutes, their harnesses and straps were checked by the jumpmasters and battle buddies to ensure their safety. Allied jumpmasters ran through dry run rehearsals with their U.S.

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PRE-JUMP INSPECTION. Indonesian Army 1st Lt. Ajie Purbaya, 502nd Airborne Infantry Battalion, is shown paratrooper pre-flight body check techniques by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Donaldson, U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command jumpmaster, at Green Ramp, Pope Army Airfield, N.C., Dec. 5, 2014. The Indonesia jumpmasters joined five other allied nations at the 17th annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), a U.S. Army Reserve operational command. This is the first time the Indonesian jumpmasters have participated in Operation Toy Drop.



CHECK AND DOUBLE CHECK. Spc. Alan Sonseca, above, a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division, dons his parachute and tightens his harness in a staging area in preparation for the 17th annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, at Pope Army Airfield, Fort Bragg, N.C., Dec. 5. Allied jumpmasters from six nations shared their knowledge and experiences with their American counterparts.

A paratrooper, top, with the 82nd Airborne Division walks with his main parachute and reserve chute towards the staging area.

Spc. Adam Nuesse, right, was among the 1,000 hard-slotted paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division who participated in the first day of Operation Toy Drop with allied jumpmasters.



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partners before boarding the aircraft.

“The routine with the allied jumpmasters are similar to what we do,” said Spc. Walton Morris, with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. “Should we have to go to war with these guys, we know all the things we need to do to work together.”

While the highlights of the event are the actual parachute jump and collection of toys for area children, there were mutual benefits for everyone involved.

“While this is a training event, with great training value, there is also the intangible, which is the cultural piece to this,” Clapsaddle said. “This is the time to build relationships and spend time with our counterparts. It’s the greatest part of this operation. Our partner nations go to great expense to come here and participate with us and we want them to understand how we appreciate that.” 🇺🇸

REHEARSE AND REHEARSE AGAIN. An Italian jumpmaster, top right, with the Folgore Parachute Brigade, wears an Operation Toy Drop sweatshirt while waiting in between training sessions with their U.S. and other allied nation counterparts.

Ft. Bragg paratroopers, right middle, from the 82nd Airborne Division listen to instructions from their allied jumpmasters in the early morning hours.

82nd Airborne Division paratroopers engage in simulated jump procedures with their allied jumpmasters.



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