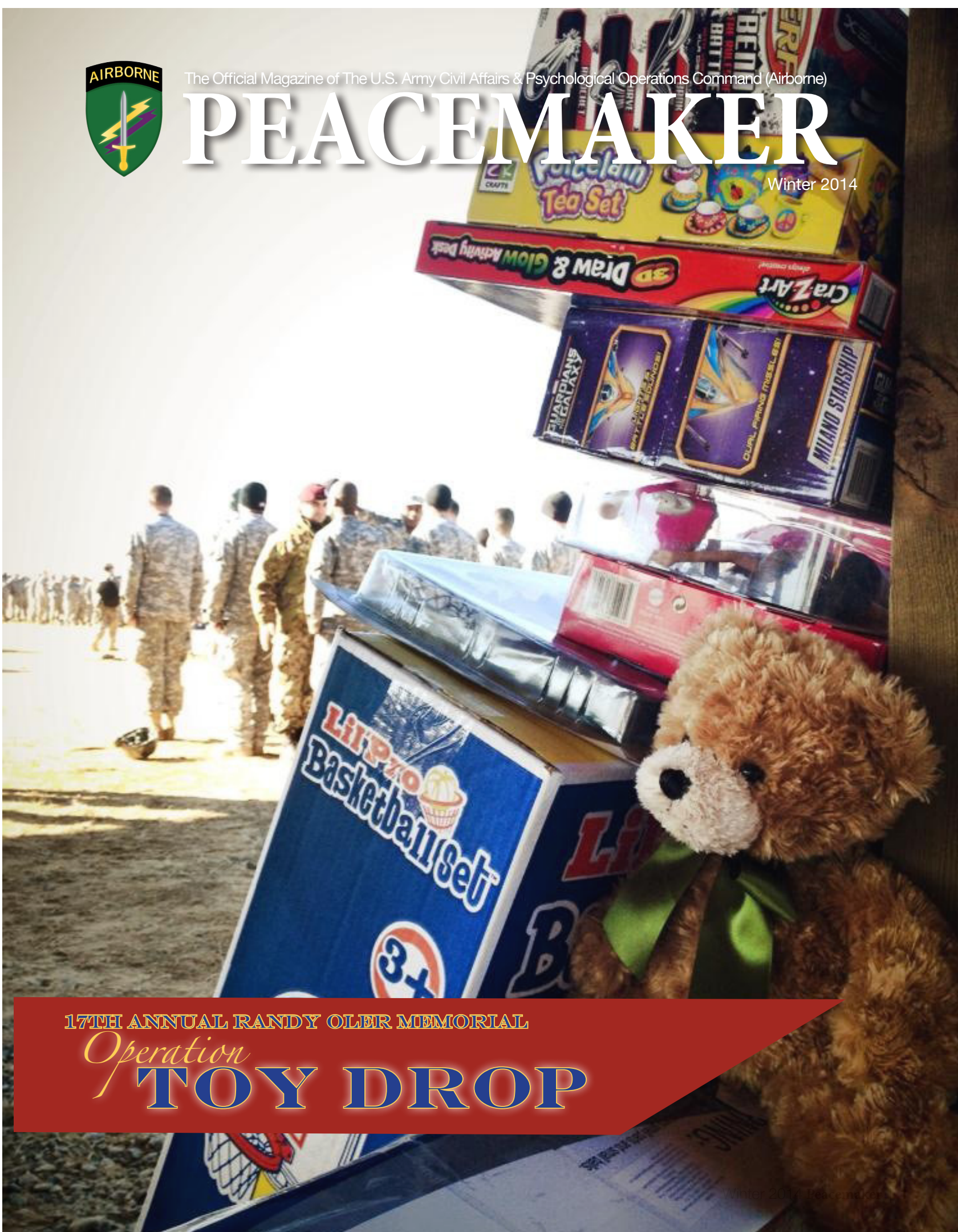




The Official Magazine of The U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)

PEACEMAKER

Winter 2014



17TH ANNUAL RANDY OLER MEMORIAL

Operation
TOY DROP

PEACEMAKER

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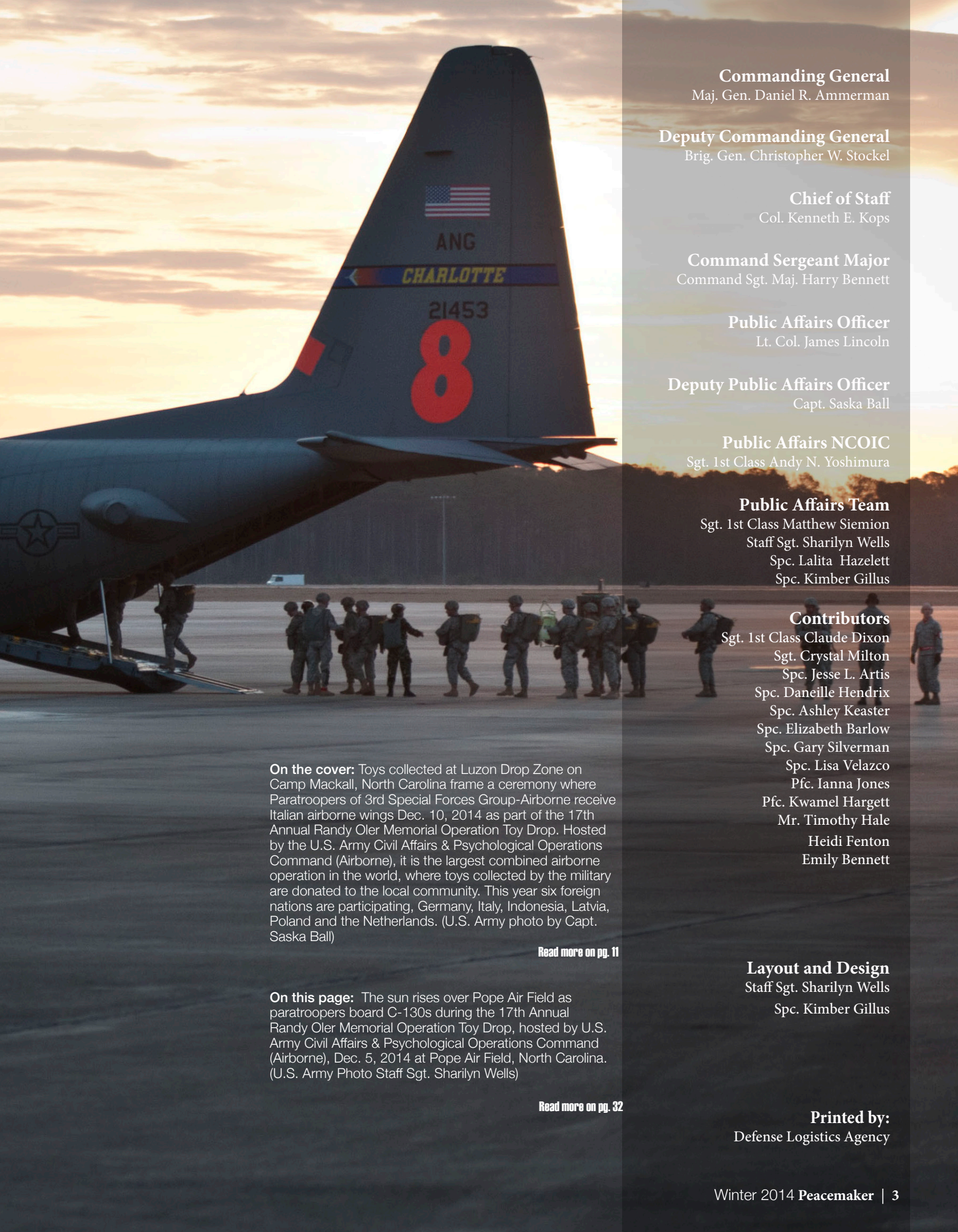
Holiday Departure:

Staff Sgt. Gary Tenhaaf hugs Family members before departing from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport on Wednesday, December 10, 2014 for a tour of duty in Africa with the 321st Psychological Operations Company.
(Emily Rose Bennett | MLive.com)

(Read more on Pg. 42)



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On the cover: Toys collected at Luzon Drop Zone on Camp Mackall, North Carolina frame a ceremony where Paratroopers of 3rd Special Forces Group-Airborne receive Italian airborne wings Dec. 10, 2014 as part of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop. Hosted by the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), it is the largest combined airborne operation in the world, where toys collected by the military are donated to the local community. This year six foreign nations are participating, Germany, Italy, Indonesia, Latvia, Poland and the Netherlands. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Saska Ball)

Read more on pg. 11

On this page: The sun rises over Pope Air Field as paratroopers board C-130s during the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Dec. 5, 2014 at Pope Air Field, North Carolina. (U.S. Army Photo Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)

Read more on pg. 32

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LETTER *from the* COMMANDING GENERAL Maj. Gen. Daniel R. Ammerman



In the previous *Peacemaker* issues, I outlined my vision, priorities and expectations. Then I described our progress, as well as introduced the updated guidance from our senior leaders through the new Army Operating Concept and the Army Reserves Rally Point 32.1. In this issue, I will focus on leader development which is essential to achieve readiness. We will not succeed in reaching our readiness goals if we do not continue to develop our leaders. Leadership development is equally applicable to the Officers, NCOs, and Army Civilians that comprise USACAPOC(A).

Our goal with leader development is to build and empower leaders that understand the strategic environment, are able to think critically and creatively, visualize solutions, and can describe and communicate crucial information to achieve shared understanding, collaborate

and build teams. Leader development is not a stand-alone program. Leader development must be integrated in all we do. It is a continuous process. We develop leaders through education, training, and experience. Trust is an essential quality of the Army profession. It is built by having leaders that have character and are competent and committed.

There are resources for leader development on the Army Training Network, <https://atn.army.mil/index.aspx> and the FORSCOM Leader Development Toolbox, <http://www.forscom.army.mil/LeaderDevelopment/Home>. The Army Leader Development Strategy 2013 is a key document that leaders must read.

Our leaders get some of their leadership education through Professional Military Education. PME not only prepares leaders for promotion to the next rank but it is essential for success at the current rank. If you don't attend your required PME you are not reaching your potential and are doing those that you lead a disservice. Quotas are a scarce resource so we need to do a better job at managing them. We need to fill each quota with a Soldier that will graduate from the course. Command teams must ensure those Soldiers we send to PME are ready and have met the course pre-requisites.

Another part of education is self-development. This includes not only Structured Self Development but also the

efforts we take to read and self-evaluate to excel at our profession and maintain our competitive edge over our adversaries. This should include the regional and foreign language experience that our Soldiers need to build. Soldiers can now be compensated for SSD, as well as some other self development education opportunities. See your company command team to get the specifics.

Leadership development within our units, the operational domain, is critical. It's where leaders are able to apply the theory they learned in the institutional and self-development domains. The training that we do in our units is the best tool we have for leader development. Specifically, we must use Mission Command Principles and Unit Training Management which builds toward a collective training event that validates the training status of our units, such as the Combat Training Centers. In our units we must integrate leader development in all we do. Our primary focus is the development of junior leaders. Our success with junior leaders will determine the future of our Army. It starts with mission command; giving junior leaders the mission and then giving them the latitude to plan, execute and assess. We should provide our junior leaders an environment that holds them accountable for results, but is also a learning environment where we are willing to underwrite mistakes. In this process junior

leaders will become adaptive, developing creativity and critical thinking skills. They also learn to lead by example and by leadership providing appropriate coaching and mentoring to junior leaders. This process is how we pass along experience to junior leaders. Furthermore, we need to identify

and effectively manage the talent within our formations. That way we ensure the most capable leaders within our formations are provided broadening and advancement opportunities to grow and serve at the tactical, operational and strategic levels.

Leadership is an inherent part

of everything the Army does. Our leaders provide us with a competitive advantage. We will continue to invest our time and talent in the development of our leaders within USACAPOC(A). This investment is the best way to make sure that we are ready when our nation calls.



LETTER *from the* COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR Command Sgt. Maj. Harry Bennett

USACAPOC(A) supports the Army and Joint Force with strategic, operational, and tactical civil affairs, military information support operations, and information operations capabilities across the range of military operations. However, the current shortfall of manpower within our formations puts our readiness at risk. As the Army continues to draw down and shape the force, USACAPOC(A) leaders at all levels must prioritize meeting our end strength goals. While there is no single solution, leaders starting with our command teams down to our sergeants and corporals, the first line leaders, must be engaged and do their part to impact this effort. Several areas were outlined recently in the USARC OPOD for Operation Full Court Press.

One area where units and first line leaders can start heading in a successful direction is by establishing a meaningful Unit Sponsorship Program. At this point, newly assigned Soldiers are welcomed into the unit as a valued member of the team. All Soldiers, whether

pre-initial entry training or those transitioning from active-duty, and their Family members, can meet the unit leadership and have a forum where their concerns can be heard. Soldiers are then able to meet who they will work for, and leaders can set expectations by providing an initial counseling, Battle Assembly dates, and contact information.

Another area of concern that we can all impact is retention. Leaders must do their part in avoiding personnel losses. Half of all Army Reserve Soldiers in their initial enlistments do not reach the fourth year of their initial 6x2 enlistment contracts. While these Soldiers should be the most “green” and “ready” with metrics, some are flagged while others leave units due to what happens or doesn’t happen at BA. Leaders must ensure that tough, realistic, and meaningful training is being done to standard. Additionally, the Army Reserve offers significant financial incentives for first-term reenlistments by qualified Soldiers in specific specialties, up to \$4,000 for a three-year extension or \$10,000 for a six-year extension. FLLs need to



work with retention counselors and Duty Appointed Retention NCOs to ensure that their Soldiers know what options are available to them for staying in the Army Reserve.

Soldiers with Suspension of Favorable Action, i.e. flags, also impact retention. Our Soldiers need to maintain their personal readiness, which includes physical fitness, height and weight, medical and dental readiness. Our FLLs must be engaged in facilitating those corrective measures needed to get

(CSM Letter continued from Pg. 5)

flagged Soldiers unflagged. Working with Soldiers to pass an APFT is just one example; more than 40 percent of USAR flags are for APFT failure and/or not being within HT/WT regulations.

Junior NCO promotions to Sergeants and Staff Sergeants are another area that impacts our end strength. Soldiers desire the opportunity to advance while they continue to serve. We must have quarterly Junior Enlisted Promotion Boards at battalion level to build the proper force balance of Sergeants and Staff Sergeants. While we have a

sufficient number of SGTs across the force, many opportunities exist for promotion to SSG as well.

Finally, using the Private Public Partnership Program can also impact retention. Leaders across USACAPOC(A) can use this program to link our Service Members and their Family members with military-friendly companies. These job opportunities can help retain Soldiers who would otherwise have employer conflicts. For more information, visit [http://www.usar.army.mil/resources/Pages/Employer-Partnership-](http://www.usar.army.mil/resources/Pages/Employer-Partnership-opportunities-and-Information.aspx)

[opportunities-and-Information.aspx](http://www.usar.army.mil/resources/Pages/Employer-Partnership-opportunities-and-Information.aspx)

While the active component of Pysop has the role of supporting special operations forces units with MISO, our Psyop Soldiers support conventional forces. Civil Affairs shares the responsibility of supporting conventional forces while also providing CA support at the strategic level. We must retain qualified Soldiers in our formations to maintain our capabilities and to meet the objectives of our commander, MG Ammerman, and the Chief of the Army Reserve, LTG Talley.

LETTER from the CHAPLAIN



Chaplain (Col.) Barry R. Baron, USACAPOC(A) Command Chaplain

"HE AMERICAN," AND SO ARE WE

"My son in Army." That's what a man I met in an airport, obviously an immigrant, told me recently. After our conversation established that his son is stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas, the man smiled and said simply, "He American."


Every time I replay this conversation in my mind, I find myself deeply moved. Growing up, almost everyone I knew had a father who had served in the Army. Among the few exceptions was my own father who, in 1950, was drafted into the Marine Corps. My paternal grandfather was an immigrant himself and, to the end of his life, spoke with a foreign accent. As my father was leaving for induction, my grandfather encouraged him, saying, "America is different."

As a young boy, I often met people during, or just after, their military service. Naturally, I assumed that serving in the military, at least for a few years, was part of being an American. Although the Vietnam War and its aftermath, along with the end of the draft, disconnected the role of Soldier from that of citizen. For many Americans, these roles stayed connected for me and for most Soldiers with whom I have been honored to serve.

Some of those most committed to the connection between service and citizenship are you, my fellow Soldiers in USACAPOC(A). While the Army Reserve likes to refer to its members as "twice the citizen," I think of us more as "complete citizens." Every day, we collectively act on our understanding that service and

citizenship are closely connected. In the seriousness with which we take our Army commitments, we show family, friends, neighbors and fellow Soldiers what being an American Citizen can actually mean.

As my grandfather and the Soldier's father in the airport knew, America is different. It is a truly special nation that has offered more freedom to more people than any other nation in history. As Soldiers committed to defending that freedom, we especially are aware of the difference that is America. We know that our service lends special meaning to our citizenship.

When that proud father of a Soldier son said, "He American," my silent response was, "So am I." Together with all of you, I am proud to say, "So are we." 

DOCTOR, TEACHER, SOLDIER

Story by Lt. Col. Patty Brewer, 352 CACOM PAO

FORT MEADE, Maryland

U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers pride themselves on their unique training, skills and experience they practice daily in the civilian sector. This is showcased by Dr. Alexander Garza, also known as Lt. Col. Alexander Garza, surgeon for the 352nd Civil Affairs Command located here.

Garza, a board certified emergency medicine physician with a master's degree in public health, has applied his civilian education and training into his position as a public health officer in the U.S. Army.

As a Soldier, Garza has previously served as a public health team chief with the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion during Operation Flintlock in Dakar, Senegal. While deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Garza helped to rebuild the healthcare sector and coordinated the development of a website to facilitate the donation of more than one million medical books to medical schools and hospitals in central Iraq. He also served as a special investigator and medical expert for then Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno of the 4th Infantry Division.

"Each deployment gave me the opportunity to apply the many lessons I learned in emergency medical care and public health" said Garza. "We solved problems by getting folks to focus on the same issue, reconcile conflicting priorities, and ensure civilians received the medical care they needed and addressed public health issues affecting the population."

In civilian life, Garza is the Associate Dean for Public Health Practice and Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Emergency Medicine at St. Louis University College for Public Health and Social Justice. Prior to that, Garza was appointed by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

In that capacity he was involved with emerging infectious disease and their effect on security as well as operational and occupational health. He was also the lead for Homeland Security on such issues as the H1N1 pandemic, the Fukushima



disaster, and addressing the health effects to various natural disasters. He has lectured nationally and internationally on health and security issues.

This year, in an October 3rd opinion editorial for the New York Times, Garza encouraged a more vigorous ebola response by the U.S. Government, to include airport screening for incoming passengers.

Since then, Garza has been in demand as an ebola subject matter expert for CNN, Fox News, CNBC, and the Dallas Morning News, as well as local and specialty news providers. During a recent interview with KSDK Channel 5, St. Louis, Garza confirmed that much of his time is currently spent "answering questions and giving some thoughts on how to deal with this [ebola]."

During his interviews, the knowledge and experience gained through years of both military and public service helped him communicate his message: ebola is a frightening disease, we have to understand the facts to fight smartly, and we must have a clear, articulate battle plan.

With all his civilian responsibilities, Garza continues to maintain his obligation to the U.S. Army Reserve. He attended Battle Assembly with the 352nd CACOM in October and helped organize a Soldier Readiness Program. The SRP ensured unit members had the proper physical evaluations, including flu shots and dental exams, required for the coming year. He also briefed the command on the current ebola outbreak in Western Africa.

"Duty, honor, country," stated Garza when asked why he continued his life as a Soldier. "I don't mean that to sound flippant, I truly believe it, I believe in service to my country."

17TH ANNUAL RANDY OLTR MEMORIAL

Operation

It only happens once a year, but for the men and women of USACAPOC(A), it's more than just the first weekend in December. Here's all of your coverage for Operation Toy Drop 2014.



TOY DROP



17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop

Fort Bragg, N.C.



Santa Claus himself spends time with paratroopers who wait patiently, hoping their ticket number will be called for an opportunity to earn foreign jump wings at the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop.

Behind the scenes at Operation Toy Drop

Story & photos by Spc. Kimber Gillus

Operation Toy Drop is the largest joint airborne operation in the world, bringing Army, Army Reserve, Air Force, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard and partner nations together to raise toys for children in need during the holidays.

While paratroopers usually get the limelight in this unique annual tradition, there are thousands of Army Reserve Soldiers behind the scenes that make Operation Toy Drop a 17-year success.

The U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) is where Operation Toy Drop was born, created by the late Sgt. 1st Class Randy Oler in 1998. Oler, described by many as a “gentle giant,” desired to give Soldiers a way to be generous to less fortunate children at Christmas.

In the beginning, Oler himself did most of the logistical planning for the

operation, a great deal of it from his own memory. After his death in 2004, the job of coordinating Operation Toy Drop fell to his friends and USACAPOC(A).

It is a task that has grown exponentially in scope and complexity, as the number of both eager paratroopers, and participating nations continues to rise every year.

Parking facilities, lodging and operational documentation must be arranged months in advance of the exercise. Operational centers must also be set up to process thousands of Soldiers who enter to jump. Much of this preparation is done by USACAPOC(A) Soldiers.

USACAPOC(A) personnel will in-process Soldiers for jumps. Some will act as primary points of contact to gather Soldiers’ information, while others provide quality control and confirm all data entered for a flight

manifest is accurate.


“One of the challenges is to keep distractions at a minimum,” said Staff Sgt. Seth Anderson, a human resources sergeant with USACAPOC(A). His team will process Soldiers and place their information onto flight manifests.

Those manifests are turned over to the corresponding stick leaders, whose responsibility it is to inspect Soldiers for safety and physical condition.

USACAPOC(A) staff will also create award certificates and badge memorandums. That memo allows Soldiers to wear the foreign jump wings they earn by jumping during Operation Toy Drop. Foreign jump wings are highly sought after; a mark of pride for many paratroopers. This makes the official memo extremely important.

Another human resources sergeant, Sgt. Brandon Miller, stated that Operation Toy Drop presents Reserve Soldiers in his unit with the rare chance to hone their skillset in a fast-paced, demanding environment. “Outside of deployment, this is the best opportunity for Reserve Soldiers to focus, hunker down and do their jobs,” Miller said.

Randy Oler’s vision has come a long way, with nearly 90,000 toys collected and distributed since its inception. Reserve Soldiers building the foundation for Operation Toy Drop garner valuable on-the-job experience with the added bonus of giving back to families and the local community.

“I’m glad that USACAPOC(A) still has it as a tradition. It builds camaraderie and community, and that’s the most important part,” said Anderson. 



An “elf” during the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), sorts toys according to gender and age on “lottery day” Dec. 5, 2014, at Pope Field, N.C.

17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop



Top: Italian soldiers familiarize themselves with the MC-6 parachute simulator, Dec. 1, 2014 at Pope Field, North Carolina. Each foreign jumpmaster that participates needs to successfully complete the training, just as the U.S. paratroopers must.

Bottom left and right: Foreign jumpmasters are instructed on the proper wear and deployment of the MC4 freefall parachute during U.S. military parachute familiarization.



SOLDIERS PREPARE FOREIGN JUMPMASTERS FOR OPERATION TOY DROP

*Story by Spc. Kimber Gillus
Photos by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells*

Fort Bragg, N.C.

Every year, thousands of paratroopers assemble here to participate in Operation Toy Drop, a joint airborne operation hosted by the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) that raises toys for families and children in need throughout the local community.

An Army Reserve and Airborne annual tradition since 1998, Operation Toy Drop is the largest airborne exercise of its kind and attracts jumpmasters from around the world. This year's exercise will see U.S. paratroopers training alongside service members from six countries, those countries are; Poland, Italy, Latvia, Germany, Indonesia and the Netherlands.

Before the jumps can happen, foreign jumpmasters must prepare themselves to conduct airborne operations with their U.S. counterparts.

One method of preparation is the MC-6 Simulator, which was designed to help familiarize paratroopers with the MC-6 parachute system, one type of parachute used during Operation Toy Drop. The simulator runs three scenarios that unfold exactly like a real-world jump minus the sensation of freefall. This training is required for all MC-6 parachute jumps.

"We conduct this training so that jumpmasters will be safe during Toy Drop, and so that they will know what they are doing for the exercise," said Sgt. 1st Class Blake Simms, noncommissioned officer-in-charge at the Airborne Special

Operation Test Directorate which runs the MC-6 Simulator.

Training, like the type seen with the simulator, is vital for exercises like Operation Toy Drop, an event that involves collaboration with jumpmasters from other nations, mixing different languages and cultures for one safe and successful mission.


Presented with an environment where basic communication is a challenge, it is important for Soldiers to leverage resources that all participants can understand, like visuals and active demonstrations.

"Even though the language barrier is there, they understand what you're talking about, even if it's with hand or arm signals," said Simms.

With Operation Toy Drop, foreign jumpmasters are provided with the opportunity to sharpen their skills and gain invaluable

experience. The exercise also enhances interoperability between the U.S. military and Allied Forces. For all airborne Soldiers, the chance to earn foreign jump wings is alluring and exciting.

But Simms, who has taken part in Operation Toy Drop as a jumper before, is looking forward to Operation Toy Drop for both the training experience and the joy it brings to children and their families during the holiday season.

"Not only do we get to jump with people from foreign countries, we also get to give back to the kids in the community," said Simms. 

"Even though the language barrier is there, they understand what you're talking about, even if it's with hand or arm signals."

— Sgt. 1st Class Blake Simms

17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop

Story & photos by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells



Left: Riggers of the 824th Quartermaster Company, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, will pack around 500 parachutes in support of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop.

Top right: Spc. Nathan Tryon, a rigger with the 824th Quartermaster Company, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, packs a parachute in support of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by the U.S. Army Reserve, U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Dec. 2, 2014.

Second from top right: Staff Sgt. Joshua Medina, a rigger with the 824th Quartermaster Company, ties retainer bands around a static line on a parachute.

Third from top right: Around 500 parachutes were packed by the 824th Quartermaster Company, the majority packs in the weeks before Operation Toy Drop.

Bottom right: Spc. Tryston Feeko, a rigger with the 824th Quartermaster Company, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, signs a rigger log of a parachute he packed. Riggers are "always sure" of each parachute they pack and records are tediously kept.



824TH QUARTERMASTER COMPANY

'RIGS' UP

FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Fort Bragg, N.C.

"I'm always sure of the parachutes I pack," explained Spc. Keneesha Rogers, 824th Quartermaster Company. "But it's always a great feeling jumping or hearing that the packed parachutes have been jumped successfully."

Packing parachutes is a lengthy and tedious job for anyone, and for Rogers, who's been packing military parachutes for about five years, taking shortcuts is not an option.

Depending on the type of personnel parachute being packed, the whole process of safely finishing a packed parachute can take 20-25 minutes. Packing reserve parachutes can take up to 45 minutes. When it comes to ensuring the safety of the paratrooper wearing that chute, time and accuracy is not an issue.

"The hardest part of my job is making sure I am meeting the numbers every day," said Spc. Nathan Tryon. "I joined the Army to be airborne. I love packing and jumping, I've been with the unit for about four years and packing parachutes for about two or three."

Rogers agreed that meeting the personnel parachute quota every day was a challenge, and even more hectic with the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop just around the corner.

"It's a short time frame to get so many parachutes ready," Rogers said. "But the job gets done correctly and safely."

Preparing the 500 parachutes that the 824th Quartermaster Company will be supplying for the world's largest combined airborne operation, with six allied partner nation paratroopers participating, is no different than any other packing job.

After a parachute is jumped and shook out, riggers will then lay out the chute on a long table

ensuring that it's straight. The suspension lines and risers are straightened, untwisted and untangled. The parachute is inspected for any deficiencies, holes, or tears and the riggers ensure that it isn't inverted. The serial number is verified on the parachute and then folded and packed into the deploy bag, along with the suspension lines and risers. It is then closed and tied with a closing tie.

Each step of the packing process is also double-checked by an IP, or inspect process, to ensure everything is safe to repack and deploy.

Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), brings Army, Army Reserve, Air Force, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard and Allied Countries together to conduct safe and valuable training, and to raise toys for families and children in need of a little help this holiday season. This year, 4,150 paratroopers will have the opportunity to earn foreign jump wings in exchange for donating toys to the event. This year's toy goal is to raise 10,000 toys, a significant jump from the 550 toys raised in its first year in 1998.

"It's a really important event ... it's a legacy," said Tryon. "I think it's a great mixture of tradition for what our paratroopers do and giving back to the community that has supported us throughout the years. I'm proud to be a part of it."

Just as much thought, detail and time is put into picking out the perfect toy to donate as packing a parachute. Many of the paratroopers who donate usually go off of personal experiences when picking out the special toy.

"I'm thinking a Power Ranger," smiled Tryon. "I usually try to remember what I thought was cool when I was a kid and I think a Power Ranger will be perfect."

unit.

"I try to be the best I can be," said Catimer moments after he came in first place with a remarkable time of 18 minutes and 30 seconds.

This is the first year that the Air Force and Army are jointly working together for Operation Toy Drop and Operation Toy Trot. Master Sgt. Claudia Alvarez and Staff Sgt. Loriannette Quarles, from the 43rd Force Support Squadron, have been attending meetings every Tuesday since August to coordinate with Toy Drop and adjust the logistics of both events.

"Toy Drop used to be on the same day as Toy Trot," said Quarles. "We have organized it now to be on separate days so that people have the chance to attend both events. The Army supports us with the trot, and we support the Army for the drop."


"Anything that helps bring attention to Toy Drop and families

in need is good," said Dittenber. "The whole operation is positive for unit morale, the post and the community in general."

As runners arrived early to begin their stretching and motivate themselves for the workout, they carried in children's toys to be collected as a part of Operation Toy Drop.

"I have been donating to this charity for the last three years," said Rosa. "Usually, the donations go to Falcon Children's Home."

Falcon Children's Home is a ministry of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church serving abused, abandoned, neglected and indigent children in Falcon, North Carolina.

All of the toys collected from the Toy Trot and Toy Drop will be distributed to a total of 27 organizations, children's homes and social service agencies throughout the local area surrounding Fort Bragg and Pope Airfield. 



Pope Air Field, N.C.

More than 200 people took part in the 2014 Operation Toy Trot Dec. 3, 2014, at Pope Airfield, North Carolina. Operation Toy Trot runs in conjunction with Operation Toy Drop. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Claude Dixon)

ITALIANO STYLE

Airborne training conducted and friendships strengthened

First Capt. Paolo Pastorino, 2nd Platoon Avvoltoi, goes over paratrooper safety procedures during jumpmaster rehearsals in a C-130 mock-up, Dec. 3, 2014.

Story & photos by Staff Sgt. Sharlyn Wells

Young at heart, 1st Capt. Paolo Pastorino, a retired commander and paratrooper from Milano, Italy, buckles his helmet and grabs a static line from the U.S. jumpmaster in front of him. He stands up, hooks up and shuffles to the door, and just as the jumpmaster yells 'Go!'... he jumps and counts to four in his native tongue, landing in the rocks below.

Granted, it's just a rehearsal jump, but it's the closest Pastorino will get to reliving what he loves; the feeling of the wind on his face and the thrill of jumping from an aircraft.

"I don't jump any more because to tell you the truth, I promised my wife not to do it any more and as you know, Family is very important in Italy," smiled Pastorino. "But I do like it so very much to be in the atmosphere, let's say 'to be in the business.'"

Pastorino first jumped from an airplane in 1978 and has more than 120 jumps under his belt. He speaks fondly of the year he first earned his U.S. jump wings.

"I earned my American jump wings during a friendship jump in Germany in 1994," he said. "I have sufficient wide experience training with other foreign armies from South America, South Africa, ... and obviously around Europe."

For his second year, he has returned here in support of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop. Hosted by the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Operation Toy Drop brings together Army, Army Reserve, Air Force,

Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, and partner nations for combined training.

"I had the privilege and pleasure to participate in Operation Toy Drop last year and I'm so happy to have come again ... and if my wife will let me, I will come again, if we are invited," he smiled.

Italy has been a guest of Operation Toy Drop for three consecutive years and Pastorino wants the tradition to carry on.

**"IT'S WONDERFUL TO SEE THAT
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT KIND
OF UNIFORM WE HAVE, IT DOESN'T
MATTER WHAT LANGUAGE WE
SPEAK — THE SOUL AND THE HEART
IS THE SAME. I'M SO HAPPY TO BE
HERE—I'M SO PROUD TO BE HERE."**

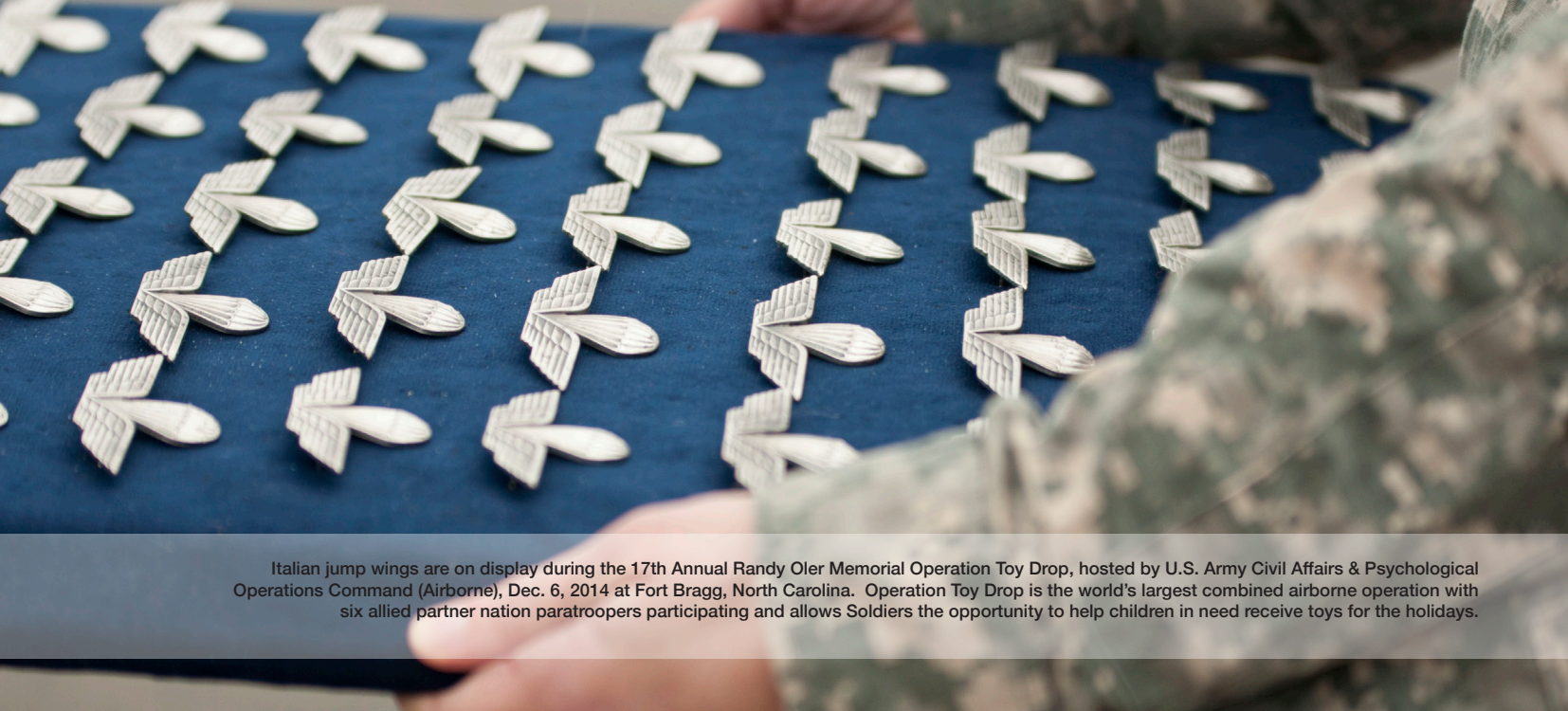
— 1st Capt. Paolo Pastorino, Italian army

"It's fantastic to know that we have been invited three times [in a row] which means we get to help USACAPOC reach it's goal, and that is what is important because we are working together to help out children," he said. "I think it's very important for different countries to come together not only to exchange training, procedures and experience but to also know and understand each other; the way that person lives, their

country, their homes, their shops, and so on," explained Pastorino.

As the liaison officer between his unit, the 2nd Platoon Avvoltoi based in Italy, and the USACAPOC(A) headquarters, Pastorino highlights the importance of the underlining factor in the training exercise, 'It's all about the kids.'

"Operation Toy Drop isn't your normal military exercise, as in you are shooting a weapon or something," Pastorino explained. "We are operating airborne jumps yes, but what is important is what together we are doing for the child and that is why this occasion is so special."



Italian jump wings are on display during the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Dec. 6, 2014 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Operation Toy Drop is the world's largest combined airborne operation with six allied partner nation paratroopers participating and allows Soldiers the opportunity to help children in need receive toys for the holidays.

Since it's start in 1998 by then Staff Sgt. Randy Oler, Operation Toy Drop has raised almost 90,000 toys, adding over 3,000 more toys from this year thus far. Operation Toy Drop still has a week left of donations during unit tenant operations week, Dec. 7 thru 11, 2014, and donations still arriving from the community.

Toys will be delivered just in time for the holiday season to children in need around the Fort Bragg area to include, county departments of Social Services, children's homes and children's hospitals, totaling 27 organizations.

"I think that Operation Toy Drop is a very collaborative initiative because you get a lot of nice and beautiful things for children, you make a nice connection with the civilian world around Fort Bragg and the rest of North Carolina and on the other hand you have the friendship and coordination," continued Pastorino. "And in my case, speaking personally, I think it's such an honor and privilege to understand the friendship of the U.S. Army and us. You're always underlining 'oh you are guests!' 'It's a privilege for us to have you here,' 'it's an honor for me' ... so that's really something. And honestly, it's a privilege for us to be here."

Even though Operation Toy Drop is about raising toys for children around the Fort Bragg area, the airborne operation is still an exercise in which airborne training is conducted. More than 4150 paratroopers, dozens of aircraft and six allied nations participate in the event.

Pastorino was contacted in May to start preparing for the world's largest combined airborne operation. After initial contact, Pastorino began looking for the most qualified soldiers he has for the operation.

"The people I choose to come with me are very experienced and like to jump," he explained. "We have lots of experience working with other countries like Russia, Portugal, Chile and more. We jump all over the world, basically just for


the friendships, just for the camaraderie, just for the pleasure; to exchange wings with other people who share our passion."

"I think this kind of event should be imitated around the world because as I mentioned before, it's a very collaborate way to mix up military and civilian, which the U.S. knows; other countries, they are two separate worlds," explained Pastorino. "What I like about the United States is that they all have U.S. flags in front of their homes; the people at the Super Bowl with their hand over their heart; people say to Soldier in uniform, 'thank you for your service.' These are things that being a military man inside and out has touched me very, very much."

Pastorino explained the differences and similarities of the different countries training together on airborne operations, to include one of his favorite pieces of equipment.

"It's always a great opportunity for a military man to grow in his profession by working with and training with a U.S. Soldier on such a spectacular piece of equipment [speaking of the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter]," Pastorino said during the aircraft familiarization portion of jumpmaster training that also included the C-130 aircraft. "Your technology is more advanced than other countries, but on the same hand, it's basically the same aircraft procedures that we would do on one of our airplanes."

Even though Pastorino speaks English fluently, as it's his second language, and he speaks French and Spanish, he elaborated on the camaraderie and friendships he has made with not only the U.S. Soldiers but with the other foreign jumpmasters from Poland, Germany, Indonesia, the Netherlands, and Latvia that participated this year as well.

"It's wonderful to see that it doesn't matter what kind of uniform we have, it doesn't matter what language we speak — the soul and the heart is the same," he said. "I'm so happy to be here—I'm so proud to be here." 

17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop



First Capt. Paolo Pastorino, 2nd Platoon Avvoltoi, stands ready to jump out of a mock C-130 doorway during paratrooper safety procedures at the jumpmaster rehearsals, Dec. 3, 2014.

SAFETY IN THE AIR STARTS ON THE GROUND

By Sgt. Crystal Milton, 220th Public Affairs Detachment

Jumpmasters have come from near and far to participate in the 17th Annual Randy Older Memorial Operation Toy Drop, but before anyone goes airborne, U.S. jumpmasters must be assured that everyone is on the same page.

Jumpmasters from Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Indonesia, Latvia and Italy joined U.S. Soldiers here for Operation Toy Drop, a U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) sponsored training event that also includes collecting toys to distribute to thousands of local children for Christmas.

This event is currently the world's largest combined airborne operation with more than 4,000 troops participating.



Sgt. Katarina Liene, a jumpmaster assigned to the Latvian National Armed Forces Army, rehearses jump master procedures on a U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Gary Silverman)

All of the allied jumpmasters and U.S. jumpmasters conducted aircraft orientation on mock C-130 aircraft and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters Dec. 3 and Dec. 4, 2014.

"The purpose of aircraft orientation is for jumpmasters to get used to working around the aircraft," said Sgt. Cecilia Poland, whose hometown is Joliet, Illinois, and who is a parachute rigger with the 824th Quartermaster Company here. "For us jumpmasters, it helps us practice what moves and what hazards we need to look for during an airborne operation," she added.

Jumpmasters entered the mock aircrafts with other troops from their nation and performed most of the steps in their native languages.

Paolo Pastorino, a retired commander and paratrooper from Milano, Italy, stated his reason for wanting to participate in this exercise was to "join in [on] a very important operation that is very well known abroad, where we can have a strong connection between the civilian world outside and the military world inside, and not to mention the fact that this is a charity operation."

Pastorino, who has been jumping since 1978, has more than 120 jumps under his belt, and acquired his U.S. jump wings when he jumped with American Soldiers in Germany in 1994.

Pastorino recalled the times he spent

with U.S. Soldiers in the past and reflected on his experience here with all the partner nations and said warmly, "to see that it doesn't matter what kind of uniform we have, it doesn't matter what language we speak — the soul and the heart is the same, it doesn't matter the nationality."

"I'm so happy to be here—I'm so proud to be here," Pastorino added.

"We learned the U.S. Military paratroopers way [of performing jumps] and maybe the good things we can adopt in our country," said 1st Lt. Ajie Purbaya, whose hometown is Bandung, Indonesia, and who is the support company commander of the 502nd Airborne Battalion in Malang, East Java, Indonesia.

Purbaya, who is participating in this exercise for the first time, has been a paratrooper since 2006 and has jumped more than 35 times.

"Jumpmasters do rehearsals until the primary jumpmaster is satisfied," said Master Sgt. Dwight Simon, whose hometown is Johnstown, Pennsylvania and who is the senior human resources sergeant at Headquarters and Headquarters Company USACAPOC(A) here and one of the jumpmasters for this event.

"Between the U.S. aircraft orientation and our aircraft orientation there are slight differences but the basic things are the same — we have to ensure the safety of the paratroopers jumping," Purbaya added.

17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop

Simmons Army Air Field, N.C.



1st Lt. Ajie Purbaya of Indonesian Airborne Brigade goes through jumpmaster training on a simulated C-130 aircraft during the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Kwamel Hargett)



Maj. Christopher Murphy, (center), 982nd Combat Camera, speaks with German jumpmasters before they go over jumpmaster and safety duties while in an C-130 mock up, Dec. 3, 2014. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



Italian Jumpmaster, Nicola Tiretti with Folgore Airborne Brigade, participates in UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter refresher training during 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, Dec. 3, 2014. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Daneille Hendrix)



Polish paratroopers with the 25th Air Cavalry Brigade, go through sustained airborne training. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Ianna Jones)



A jumpmaster from The Netherlands leans out of a C-130 mock aircraft during aircraft jumpmaster procedure training. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jesse L. Artis Jr.)

A New Set of WINGS



Story by Spc. Elizabeth Barlow, 318th Press Camp Headquarters

For an event that is celebrating its 17th year, not many firsts are left to happen. However, this year Operation Toy Drop has a new set of wings, Indonesian wings.

For the first time ever, four Indonesian jumpmasters will be here participating alongside five other countries and U.S. jumpmasters.

Operation Toy Drop is an annual event that collects toys for local children and social service agencies during the holiday season. The 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) is the world's largest combined airborne operation.

In years past, a mix of nations have come to participate in this airborne tradition, Indonesia now joins the list along with these countries : Brazil, Botswana, Cambodia, Chile, England,

Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Thailand, Ukraine, and Uruguay.

"This is very exciting for my comrades and me," said 1st Lt. Ajie Purbaya, the support company commander of the 502nd

Airborne Battalion in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. "With this experience, we can bring our knowledge back to our country."

••With this experience,
we can bring our knowledge
back to our country.♦♦

— 1st Lt. Ajie Purbaya

As operations in the military continue

to expand, so do the relationships between the United States and our partner nations.

According to a 2013 BBC World Service Poll, 38 percent of Indonesians view U.S. influence positively, with 44 percent expressing a negative view. With Indonesia participating in this operation along with the U.S., relations between the two countries can be affected in a positive way.

Fort Bragg, N.C.





2nd Lt. Bashoro Tendry, 502nd Airborne Battalion, returns after completing his jump in participation for the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop on Dec. 8, 2014 at Luzon Drop Zone, N.C. (U.S. Army photo by Spc Ashley Keasler)

“An operation like this can do nothing more than strengthen our relations,” said Purbaya as he interlocked his fingers.

To be chosen for this mission was not an easy task and isn’t taken lightly.

“There are strict regulations for us to go to foreign countries,” said 2nd Lt. Tendry Aryo of the 502nd. “Our headquarters chose us by our specialty, dedication, and work record.”

As this is both Pubaya’s and Aryo’s first time visiting the Unites States, a new environment can cause some anxiety. But both soldiers experienced a scene quite unexpected.

“The way the U.S. Soldiers have acted toward us has made us very comfortable these past few days,” said

Purbaya. “The weather, environment and different kinds of operations that the U.S. has is different, but everyone has made it a beneficial experience so far.”


1st Lt. Davy Simanjaya of USACAPOC (A), a fluent Indonesian speaker, is a human recourses officer who has been escorting the Indonesian soldiers.

“I have made a lot of friends who I want to stay in touch with,” said Aryo. “Simanjaya has helped me a lot. He even showed us local restaurants and stores.”

The Indonesian jumpmasters, and the five other nations, are expected to jump Dec 3rd and 4th, 2014 after performing their jumpmaster duties and land at Sicily Drop Zone. Once everyone

is safely on the ground, the jumpmasters will then award their jump wings to the U.S paratroopers that followed their countries’ commands during the airborne operation.

The presence of the Indonesian soldiers at this operation adds more variety and excitement to the event, allowing for more cultural and military exchanges between all the partner nations.

“With all the different cultures represented here, more people are attracted to the event, which brings more donations,” said Purbaya. “Toy Drop is a very good experience. I hope more than four of us can attend for the next mission. We will even bring toys from our country.” 



Above An Indonesian jumpmaster waits aboard a CASA 212 aircraft before take off at Mackall Army Airfield Dec. 10, 2014 as part of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Lalita Hazelett)



Above: An Indonesian paratrooper gets his parachute inspected by U.S. Army jumpmaster Sgt. Leslie Ames, with the 824th Quartermaster Company, prior to participating in an airborne operations in support of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, on Dec. 8, 2014 at Mackall Army Airfield, North Carolina, (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Gary Silverman.)

Right: U.S. Army paratroopers, from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, prepare to jump out of U.S. Army UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter with Indonesian army jumpmaster Staff Sgt. Thofik Hidayad during airborne operations in support of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Gary Silverman)



Early Bird

A Soldier in line for Operation Toy Drop Lottery Day

Story by Spc. Kimber Gillus

A Soldier crosses his arms against the cool night air at Green Ramp located here. “For me, this is my ‘Black Friday,’” said Pfc. Ezekiel Polite.

The first paratrooper in line for the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, Polite had arrived earlier in the day, around 3 p.m., the day

prior to actual lottery day.

“I told myself, ‘this year I want to be first,’” Polite, a unit supply specialist with the 82nd Brigade Support Battalion, said.

Over the last 16 years, Operation Toy Drop has become a Fort Bragg tradition. The yearly event was started by then-Staff Sgt. Randy Oler, a civil affairs

sergeant with U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), as a way to encourage Soldiers to raise toys for children in need during the holidays.

Paratroopers bring a toy and are entered into a lottery to jump with foreign jumpmasters, and in turn earn



Above: Pfc. Ezekiel Polite, a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division, gives his toy to one of the elves in exchange for his lottery ticket at the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, at Green Ramp, Pope Airfield, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Dec. 5, 2014. Polite was the first paratrooper in line at 2:45 p.m. the day before the lottery drawing. (U.S. Army photo by Timothy L. Hale)

Right: Pfc. Ezekiel Polite, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division arrived 2:55 p.m., Dec. 4, 2014, at Green Ramp, Pope Air Field to secure his slot as first paratrooper to receive a lottery ticket in hopes of being one of 500 paratroopers picked in the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop lottery. Doors don't open until 8 a.m. the next morning. (U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)





Pfc. Ezekiel Polite of the 82nd Airborne Division, walks off Sicily Drop Zone with two other paratroopers (to include the commanding general of USACAPOC(A)) after completing a successful jump during the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by USACAPOC(A), Dec. 6, 2014 at Fort Bragg, N.C. (U.S. Army Photo Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



Pfc. Ezekiel Polite of the 82nd Airborne Division receives his foreign jump wings after his participation in the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andy Yoshimura)



Pope Air Field, N.C.

Pfc. Ezekiel Polite of the 82nd Airborne Division stands in the doorway of a C-130 aircraft, Dec. 6, 2014. Polite was the first Soldier in line for lottery day of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop and he was given the honor of being first jumper during an airborne operation conducted by Italian jumpmasters. Polite, and the other paratroopers, landed onto Sicily Drop Zone at Fort Bragg, N.C. He was one of 399 paratroopers to jump that day. (Airborne). (U.S. Army photo)

17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop

foreign jump wings. Jump wings are a mark of pride for many paratroopers, and wings of the foreign variety are rare and hard to attain. Operation Toy Drop gives Soldiers the unique chance to acquire these wings and gain valuable experience training with allied and partner countries.

Thousands of hopeful paratroopers line up along the road to the air field. Some of them camp out the night prior to Lottery Day, where they wait hoping to hear their lucky number called.

Polite was one of these Toy Drop faithful. Last year, his number wasn't called and he was not given the opportunity to jump.

Polite said, "I made sure it wouldn't happen this year. I brought my rucksack, a blanket, a book to read, and some

food." He laughed, adding, "It should be warm enough. We'll find out."

As the sun began to set, Polite sat alone. Some passers-by commented on his dedication; since the operation is based on a lottery, there was a chance that Polite wouldn't be chosen despite his being first in line.


Unfazed and true to his namesake, Polite shook his head and smiled. "The chance is all that matters. I waited all year for this," he said.

The real motivation behind the operation wasn't lost on Polite. He picked up his donated toy—a Spider-Man scooter—and placed it in his lap. "And you get to donate a nice toy to a child, it's great," he said.

The following day, Lottery Day,

Polite waited to hear his number called. Again, his number was not called. However, his motivation was enough to impress the leadership of USACAPOC(A). He was given the honor of jumping, Dec. 6, 2014, as first-man-out on a jump overseen by Italian jumpmasters, the last chalk of the day.

Over 48 hours after he had started his vigil at Green Ramp, Italian jump wings were pinned on Polite's chest. He could hardly contain his smile.

Operation Toy Drop began as the honorable intentions of a few Army Reserve Soldiers. Today, it is the largest combined airborne operation in the world. Soldiers like Polite have no small part in making Operation Toy Drop the success it has become. 



Paratroopers line the street before the sun rises, waiting to donate their toys in hopes of receiving a winning lottery ticket for the opportunity to earn foreign jump wings at the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Dec. 5, 2014 at Pope Air Field, North Carolina. Many paratroopers spend their time chatting with one another, playing on their cell phones, and resting before the excitement of hearing their number called. Organizations and businesses, like the USO and Dunkin Donuts, donated coffee, donuts, and entertainment as well. (U.S. Army photos on this page by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop





A Soldier waits in line to donate his toy in exchange for a chance to earn foreign jump wings. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Saska Ball)



Soldiers and Airmen act as 'elves' during the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), sorting toys according to gender and age on 'Lottery Day' Dec. 5, 2014. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kimber Gillus)



The Carolina Panthers call out lottery ticket numbers during the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



A Soldier waits in line to donate his toy in exchange for a chance to earn foreign jump wings. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Saska Ball)



A U.S. Army paratrooper places his toy in one of the boxes he donated in exchange for his lottery ticket. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Lisa Velazco)



Soldiers react after a lottery number that was called didn't match the tickets in their hands. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



A paratrooper runs to the front after hearing his ticket number called out; winning a slot to obtain foreign jump wings. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)

Joy to the World the Airborne has come

Story & photos by Sgt. 1st Class Claude Dixon, 318th Press Camp Headquarters

“Joy to the world! The airborne has come, With their gifts they hope to jump. Let every child ...”

More than a thousand paratroopers landed at Sicily Drop Zone, here, as a part of Operation Toy Drop Dec. 5, 2014.

For American troops it was a chance to earn foreign jump wings by working with jumpmasters from Germany, Latvia, Indonesia, Poland, Italy and the Netherlands.

“We had a German

jumpmaster. It was awesome!” exclaimed 1st Lt. Michael Kipp, B Troops, 3rd Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division. “They did all the commands in German. We rehearsed everything prior to the jump to make sure everyone knew exactly what they were saying.”

The 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), an Army Reserve unit, is the world’s largest combined airborne operation with six allied and partner nations involved. It is also a time when Soldiers donate toys

so children in need around the local area can have a merry Christmas.

Kipp said jumping was a little different because the German aircraft was a little tighter and there is no real platform compared to what he is used to on American aircraft, such as a C-130 or C-17.

“So you have to jump farther out to avoid hitting the plane,” he said. “The chute opened great. To tell you the truth, this is one of my best jumps. I couldn’t be happier.”

Staff Sgt. James Vaughn, B Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, jumped with Latvian jumpmasters.

Far right: Staff Sgt. James Vaughn, B Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, shows off his Latvian jump wings after his descent onto Sicily Drop Zone on Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Dec. 5, 2014.

Right: A paratrooper, 1st Lt. Michael B Troops, 3rd Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, was one of the more than a thousand paratroopers who landed at Sicily Drop Zone at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Dec. 5, 2014.



"Latvia was good," said the 23-year-old. "They were confident. They knew the aircraft very well. I was never uncertain of the actions of the Latvian jumpmaster team. They were really good. I enjoyed it."

This wasn't Vaughn's first hard slot for foreign wings. He has had four previous hard slots but they were scratched for numerous reasons. So this was his first completed airborne operation to earn foreign jump wings.

"It's a great experience, you get to meet new people," said Vaughn. "There is a big mix of people in the chalks. So you get to network there. You get to speak a little with

the foreign jumpmaster team. They bring a little culture to the plate."


This was Vaughn's second year taking part in Operation Toy Drop.

"It is a great experience!" he said.

This was Kipp's first experience with Operation Toy Drop.

"It was really good experience," said the cavalry scout platoon leader.

He went on to say it was a great experience on multiple levels. The first was being able to give a toy to a child in need.

The other great experience was operationally, he said. It brought out trust with other countries. 



Fort Bragg, N.C.

More than a thousand paratroopers landed on Sicily Drop Zone at Fort Bragg, N.C., as part of the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Dec. 5, 2014.

17TH ANNUAL RANDY OLER MEMORIAL Fort Bragg, N.C.

Operation TOY DROP

ONE VISION THROUGH THE YEARS

Story by Spc. Kimber Gillus

For some Soldiers, this was their first year. For others, it was their sixth, or eighth, or tenth year. Either way, they all stood together in the cold. They carried a toy in one hand and their ACH in the other. All joined for the 17th year of the Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop.

What started by a lone civil affairs sergeant's labor of love has grown into the world's largest combined airborne training operation. Army, Army Reserve, Air Force, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard and foreign partner nations all participate annually, but it has seen some changes over the last 17 years.

The U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) has been the cornerstone of Operation Toy Drop from its infancy, with then-Staff Sgt. Randy Oler spearheading the exercise. The late Oler was known as a 'gentle giant' whose heart was saddened by seeing children who celebrated holiday cheer without gifts.

"Randy Oler combined two things he loved: Giving toys to kids, and jumping out of planes," said Lt. Col. Aaron Clapsaddle, airborne commander for USACAPOC(A). "For Reserve Soldiers, this is an opportunity to continue our service, this time to our local community."

While not losing sight of Oler's original intent, paratroopers and jumpmasters alike engage in an operation with the focus also being about training and proficiency. Jumpmasters from the U.S. Army participated alongside their foreign counterparts in jumpmaster training before the two busiest days of Operation Toy Drop.

The training helps U.S. paratroopers adapt to the challenges of combined training — cultural nuances and language barriers that can't be mastered in a single day's work.


In addition, the logistics and schedules of jumps

was adjusted from prior years to maximize the number of paratroopers who would benefit from the unique experience. On the first day, Soldiers who had 'hard slots,' or guaranteed entry on flight manifests for the exercise, had the opportunity to jump while the lottery was being held for the other 500 paratroopers who hoped to jump the following day.

Clapsaddle said the change added complexity in the planning stages of the Fort Bragg tradition, but gave many more Soldiers the chance to jump — A chance that many of them would not have otherwise.

The first Operation Toy Drop raised around 500 toys, a number that pales in comparison to what the exercise and turnout has become today. As of now, over 3,000 toys have been collected this year, with more expected as the operation continues through Dec. 11, 2014. The U.S. Army Reserve Command, USO, and other organizations provided entertainment, support and holiday cheer as Soldiers donated thousands of gifts, ranging from dolls to ride-on toy cars to gaming consoles.

"Each year the participation grows and grows," said Maj. Gen. Luis Visot, chief of staff of the U.S. Army Reserve, commenting on the importance of the training to Reserve Soldiers. "It's not just the toys, but the valuable training for the Soldiers that get to participate."

Every year during Lottery Day of Operation Toy Drop, the line wraps around the parking lot down along the road that leads to the passenger sheds. These Soldiers, and the entities that come out to support them, do it for both training and charity. Through their hard work, local children in need will have at least one gift this holiday season, which was the original vision of the gentle giant that started this airborne tradition. 



U.S. Army paratroopers wait patiently to board an aircraft before participating in an airborne jump during the 17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, hosted by U. S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Dec. 6, 2014 at Pope Air Field, North Carolina. Operation Toy Drop is the world's largest combined airborne operation with six allied partner nation paratroopers participating and allows Soldiers the opportunity to help children in need throughout the local community receive toys for the holidays. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Ianna Jones)



Staff Sgt. Cody Knapp, a jumpmaster with Battery Company 1/73 Cavalry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, inspects U.S. Army paratrooper's equipment. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Lisa Velazco)



Latvian jumpmasters, alongside U.S. jumpmasters, lead a group of paratroopers to a C-130. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



Italian jumpmaster Sgt. Alessandro Tola with Folgore Airborne Brigade signals 10 minutes to the drop zone to paratroopers from various units. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Daneille Hendrix)



Netherland jumpmaster, Roy Van Der Heijden, oversees proper exit during an airborne operation at Mackall Army Airfield Dec. 10, 2014. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Lalita Hazelett)



Italian jumpmaster Sgt. Alessandro Tola with Folgore Airborne Brigade acts as jumpmasters for U.S. Army paratroopers with 82nd Airborne Division. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Daneille Hendrix)



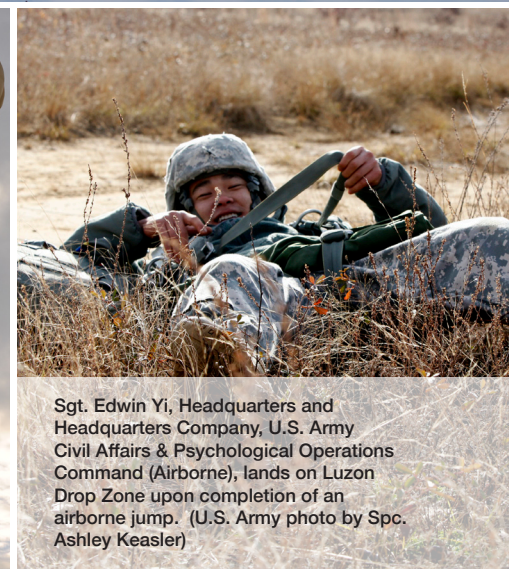
(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Lisa Velazco)



(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Lisa Velazco)



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jesse L. Artis Jr.



Sgt. Edwin Yi, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), lands on Luzon Drop Zone upon completion of an airborne jump. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ashley Keasler)

17th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop



(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jesse L. Artis Jr.)



Sgt. Josh Daniels, 824th Quartermaster Company, prepares to roll his parachute after completing an airborne jump. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ashley Keasler)



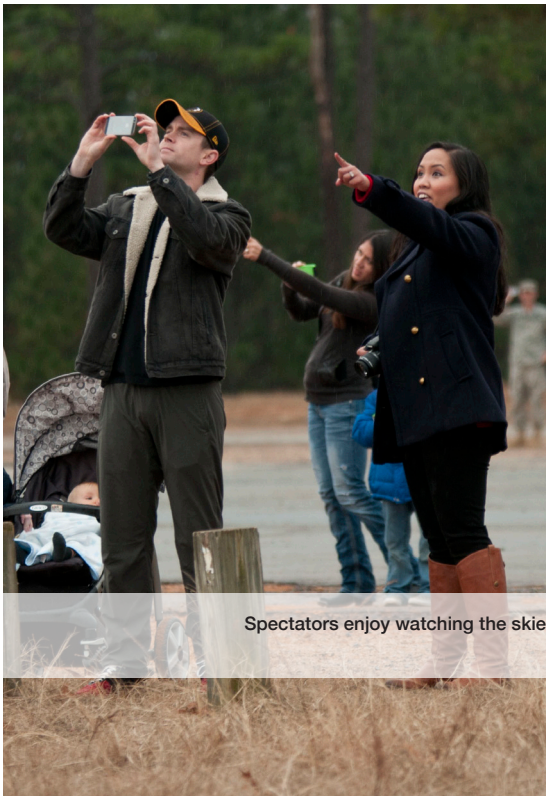
A Paratrooper walks off Sicily Drop Zone after completing a successful overcast jump during Operation Toy Drop. Because of the drizzly weather, paratroopers have to put their reserve parachutes in a trash bag to keep them dry for future use. (U.S. Army Photo Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



A paratrooper receives his German jump wings after completing a successful jump. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



(U.S. Army photo by Capt. Saskia Ball)



Spectators enjoy watching the skies as paratroopers float to the ground. (U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells)



AVIATOR GOES

Story & photos by Spc. Lalita Hazelett

Mr. Dave Beishline guided me through the new hangar where all the Army aircraft are now housed. He showed me the buttons and knobs, and talked about the transition from analog to digital technology. His excitement was that of a brand new pilot showing off his new skills to proud family members, but Beishline is a seasoned aviator full of knowledge and passion.

After more than 28 years of active-duty military service and 19 years of active-federal service as a Department of Army civilian, Beishline, a pilot with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Flight Detachment wraps up his career with one final CASA 212 aircraft flight during a very special event – Operation Toy Drop.

His career began in November 1967. After completing one year of college, Beishline entered the U.S. Army as a warrant officer, beginning his career in aviation. After completing basic training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, he went straight to Fort Rucker, Alabama, for aviation training, finishing in December 1968.

"I had a month's leave and ... in January, I was in Vietnam and was assigned to an assault helicopter company in Tay Ninh (north of Saigon)," said Beishline. "I did that for a year and

came home and went back out for a second tour to Long Xuyen on Sanford Army Air Field, which at the time was the largest supply base in the world."

After his two tours in Vietnam, Beishline went back to Fort Rucker to be an instructor pilot for three years. Then it was off to Germany.

"Germany was excellent!" exclaimed Beishline. "It was so good that I ended up extending and staying there for 10-and-a-half years."

For the young war pilot, Germany was an exciting place to be with

unforgettable views and a more relaxing schedule.

"Being stationed in Germany was like being in the states," said Beishline. "Weekends you were off and you could take leave like you'd want to."

Of all the places he's been to, Europe was Beishline's favorite place to be for the scenery, but Fort Bragg won him over for operations.

"I really enjoy the mission we do

Pope Air Field, N.C.

here [at Fort Bragg], but for the chance of flying around in the scenery, Europe is incomparable. However, I think I get a real sense of satisfaction flying this mission here as part of supporting the school house for SWCS [U.S. Army J.F.K. Special Warfare Center and School] for the Green Berets, the Military Intelligence, Civil Affairs, etc. It is a bottomless pit of missions."

He has had tours in Vietnam, Korea, Germany, and the U.S, all of which

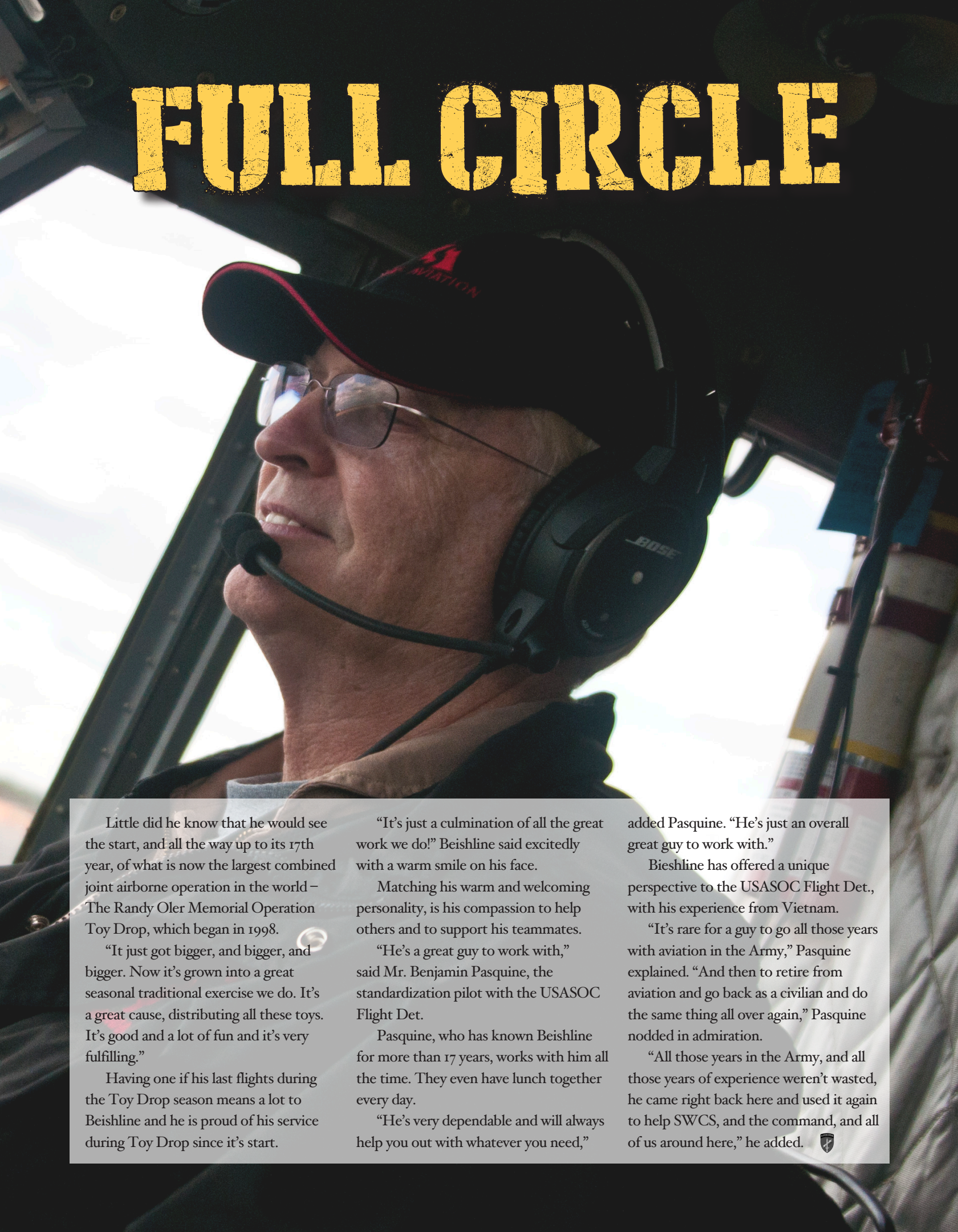
were during his active duty days as a Soldier. But in 1996, after more than 28 years of military service,

"I think I get a real sense of satisfaction flying this mission here as part of supporting the school house for the Green Berets, the Military Intelligence, Civil Affairs, etc. It is a bottomless pit of missions."

— Dave Beishline, Chief Warrant Officer 5 (Ret.)

Beishline retired from the Army, as a Chief Warrant Officer 5, the highest rank obtainable as a warrant officer. However, he realized he just couldn't stay away. Having fulfilled more than the amount of years needed for military retirement, and the offer of a new job at the USASOC Flight Det., he went from being an active-duty Army pilot to being a civilian contractor pilot, taking only 30 days of leave in between.

FULL CIRCLE



Little did he know that he would see the start, and all the way up to its 17th year, of what is now the largest combined joint airborne operation in the world – The Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop, which began in 1998.

“It just got bigger, and bigger, and bigger. Now it’s grown into a great seasonal traditional exercise we do. It’s a great cause, distributing all these toys. It’s good and a lot of fun and it’s very fulfilling.”

Having one of his last flights during the Toy Drop season means a lot to Beishline and he is proud of his service during Toy Drop since it’s start.

“It’s just a culmination of all the great work we do!” Beishline said excitedly with a warm smile on his face.

Matching his warm and welcoming personality, is his compassion to help others and to support his teammates.

“He’s a great guy to work with,” said Mr. Benjamin Pasquine, the standardization pilot with the USASOC Flight Det.


Pasquine, who has known Beishline for more than 17 years, works with him all the time. They even have lunch together every day.

“He’s very dependable and will always help you out with whatever you need,”

added Pasquine. “He’s just an overall great guy to work with.”

Beishline has offered a unique perspective to the USASOC Flight Det., with his experience from Vietnam.

“It’s rare for a guy to go all those years with aviation in the Army,” Pasquine explained. “And then to retire from aviation and go back as a civilian and do the same thing all over again,” Pasquine nodded in admiration.

“All those years in the Army, and all those years of experience weren’t wasted, he came right back here and used it again to help SWCS, and the command, and all of us around here,” he added. 

Collaborating to

Perrine, Fla.

Army Reserve Soldiers partner with local essential services to respond to an active-shooter

Story & photos by Spc. Kimber Gillus

U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers with the 478th Civil Affairs Battalion participated in a full-scale active-shooter training exercise together with the Miami-Dade Police Department and personnel from Miami-Dade Fire and Rescue.

The exercise consisted of two gunmen, who entered a building and then opened fire on Soldiers and civilian personnel inside. Responders from Miami-Dade Police Department secured the facility, while members of Miami-Dade Fire and Rescue treated simulated casualties and set up a triage outside of the building.

After the training iteration was complete, there was a review in which the 478th, as well as other participating units, combined their feedback and observations with that of police officials and response teams.

Typically, training concerning active-shooters is taught in a collaborative classroom setting, where Soldiers learn basic rules of engagement if a gunman or other assailants enter a building with the intent to harm. Full-scale training exercises, like this one, give Soldiers the chance to apply

Protect the Community



Participants acted as hostages and wounded victims as first responders simulated active-shooter response techniques.

what they have learned in a real-life, hands-on situation.

Staff Sgt. Lloyd Smith Jr., senior intelligence sergeant for the 478th and planner for the exercise, said the opportunity to conduct the training was a unique experience that was invaluable to Soldiers in the unit.

“Soldiers here have never had a full-scale exercise like this before. It’s one thing to look at a PowerPoint presentation, but this is totally different. I enjoyed the training, and I think we learned a lot,” said Smith.

Smith said the entire active-shooter exercise took about three months to plan, and that the hardest part was coordinating the schedules for a large group of Soldiers together with civilian personnel.


Numerous outlets of local media covered the event in the days leading up to the active-shooter exercise. Among them were local television stations and the Miami Herald newspaper. Presence of the media during the training gave Soldiers and civilian personnel

the opportunity to review standard operating procedures when interacting with civilian media during an active-shooter situation.

Capt. Mary Nelson, the anti-terrorism officer for the United States Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) applauded the 478th, noting that the training established connections with local authorities, which are pivotal in a crisis response situation.

“It makes our Soldiers aware of the imminent threat,” Nelson said. “It also helps us train with our local communities. Most of our Reserve centers are not on large bases, they are within the community.”

Nelson said the training with the 478th would be used as a prototype for other similar training throughout USACAPOC(A), and that addressing domestic threats was a critical part of overall mission readiness.

“If we train with our communities, we will have emergency response management plans with local authorities,” said Nelson. 



Staff Sgt. Jason Noakes, of Jackson, Michigan kisses his baby on the forehead before departing from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport for a tour of duty in Africa with the 321st Psychological Operations

Holiday

Overseas deployment comes just before Christmas for Michigan Soliders

Story by Heidi Fenton, MLive.com

Photos by Emily Rose Bennette, MLive.Com

Tears and hugs mingled Wednesday morning, Dec. 10, as 12 members of the U.S. Army Reserve's 321st Psychological Operations Company departed for a tour of duty in eastern Africa.

The group will strive to improve relations between residents in Horn of Africa countries and government officials and police there. The goal is to minimize conflict, said Capt. Jerry Peyton, who served in a tour of duty in Somalia with a similar mission in 2013.

This group is headed first for Djibouti. They are expected back around the end of October 2015, but that could change depending on what evolves on

the African peninsula while they are there.

They represent some of the brightest Soldiers, said Capt. Ryan Gore, who is leading the mission.

"This is a very well-trained unit full of extremely intelligent soldiers," Gore said.

Members come from all walks of life and depths of experience. It is the first tour of duty for just one.

For Staff Sgt. Robert Cooper, of Belding, Wednesday's departure from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport represented a return to overseas duty after more than two decades. Cooper served overseas in Panama in 1988, some of that time spent in active combat.

He left the service for several years and became a Michigan Department of Corrections officer. A coworker convinced him to reenlist. He now balances the two jobs.

Things are different now, with more technology available compared to the late-1980s and the training high-tech equipment requires. Still, Cooper, 45, felt a strong obligation to serve.

"I figured I had a lot to offer," he said. And now: "It's a thrill to be able to take Soldiers halfway across the world."

Cooper's eyes filled with tears Wednesday as he stood with his wife and 19-year-old daughter, Bradie Cooper, preparing to leave again. Life and the

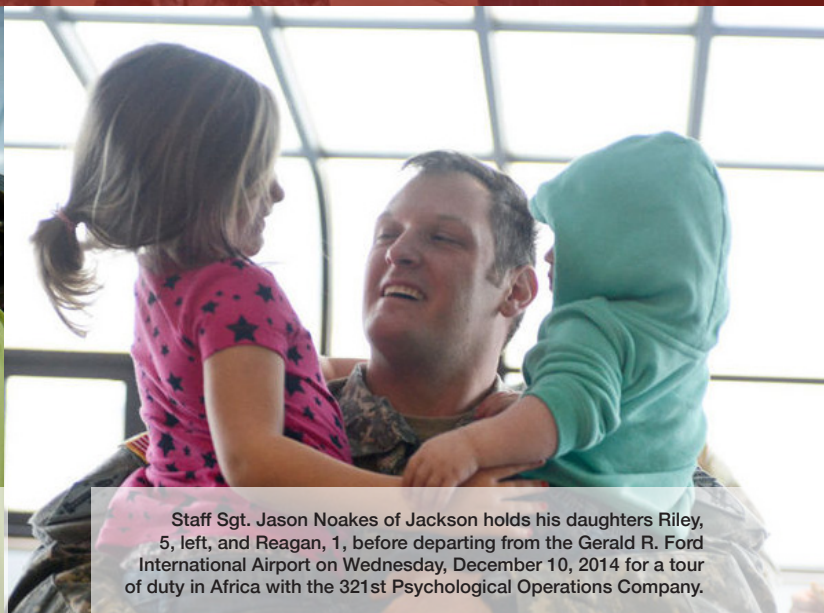
Soldiers with the 321st Psychological Operations Company prepare to depart the Gerald R. Ford International Airport for the horn of Africa for a tour of duty on December 10, 2014.



Departure



Staff Sgt. Gary Tenhaaf, left, prays with friends and family before departing the Gerald R. Ford International Airport on Wednesday, December 10, 2014 for a tour of duty in Africa with the 321st Psychological Operations Company.



Staff Sgt. Jason Noakes of Jackson holds his daughters Riley, 5, left, and Reagan, 1, before departing from the Gerald R. Ford International Airport on Wednesday, December 10, 2014 for a tour of duty in Africa with the 321st Psychological Operations Company.

pain of leaving are different now.


"I'm very proud of him. ... It's all I've ever known was him in that uniform," she said. "But it's very hard, it's my dad. You don't know what's going to happen."

Staff Sgt. Gary Tenhaaf, 27, of Jenison

held tightly to his 2-year-old daughter, Makenzie, as his wife, Katie Tenhaaf, stood close by.

For Tenhaaf, this experience of leaving was not new — he spent time in Iraq just a few years ago, in 2009. But now he is a father.

"It's definitely a lot tougher," he said.

A large group of family gathered took turns exchanging hugs and taking photos with Tenhaaf, saying their goodbyes. Tears were plenty. But he is one of a few who will be able to return for a few days to spend Christmas in Grand Rapids. 

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