

Parachute riggers reset 173rd Airborne

8,000 parachutes to be packed by 5th QM Co.

Story and photos by Sgt. Fay Conroy,
21st TSC Public Affairs Office

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

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

Keeping the airborne airborne is exactly what the parachute riggers of the 5th QM Co. are doing by resetting the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team based at Vicenza, Italy. The 173rd ABCT recently completed a combat tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

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

During the reset, 25 riggers from the 5th QM Co. will pack 3,000 parachutes in a month's time. In the next two to three months, the riggers will pack about 8,000 parachutes. Despite the high volume passing through their hands, safety is always first.

"Safety is the most important because we have people's lives in our hands," said Spc. Steven Clement, a parachute rigger with the 5th QM Co.

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

"They call 'rigger' every step until the end. I check the step that they just did and tell them to go to the next step," said Sgt. Maikeld Quarles, parachute packing inspector with the 5th QM Co.



Spc. Jonathan Sisk, a parachute rigger with the 5th Quartermaster Company, packs a parachute at Miesau Army Depot. The 5th QM Co. will pack 3,000 parachutes in a month's time. In the next two to three months, the riggers will pack about 8,000 parachutes.



Pfc. Lashley Basilio is one of about 25 riggers from 5th Quartermaster Company, 39th Transportation Battalion, 21st Theater Sustainment Command who is responsible for resetting the 173rd Airborne Combat Brigade Team after the unit's deployment to Afghanistan.

Throughout the process there are two checks to inspect the work being done and to ensure that everything is serviceable. Once everything is done there is also a final inspection before a pack is ready to be used.

Because of the very thorough process the 5th QM Co. has had zero malfunctions for as long as anyone can remember.

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

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

"It is great when you can support the airborne community,"

said Capt. Josielyn Carrasquillo, commander, 5th QM Co. "We know that we have a job and a mission, which is to bring the 173rd back to jump status. I know that they miss that."