

861st Riggers Jump Into Fort Campbell



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Courtesy Story

372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

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Fort Campbell, Kentucky -- A beautiful sunny morning at the William F. Lyell U.S. Army Reserve Center, Nashville, set the tone Saturday as parachute riggers from the 861st Quartermaster Company prepared to jump into Fort Campbell's Corregidor Drop Zone.

Excitement filled the air as the Soldiers went through their last minute drills.

"Ten minutes!" yelled Staff Sgt. Travis Merryman, with a smile on his face, reflecting the relaxed mood felt by the Soldiers despite the importance and seriousness of the training.

The lighthearted mood continued at the Nashville Airport as the riggers joked around while strapping up their equipment and parachutes under the unrelenting rays of the sun. The clear skies and low winds meant it would be a great day for a jump.

"Weather conditions were perfect for an airborne operation," said Sgt. 1st Class Car Thomas Jr., 861st QM Co. operations and training noncommissioned officer. "Almost no winds while airborne meant an almost perfect experience to control the MC-6 parachute

system.”

Typically the parachute riggers prepare and inspect parachutes for others, but this time they made sure everything was operational to be able to perform their own jump. They enjoy having somewhere close by like Fort Campbell to conduct their airborne operations.

“The use of a closer base means that the 861st Quartermaster Company can drive to the location if need be, or if there are issues that need to be resolved in an expedient manor,” explained Thomas, who served as a jumpmaster.

After completing all their final preparations, 32 Soldiers from the 861st QM Co. loaded onto a C-130 Hercules being operated and crewed by the 731st Airlift Squadron, 302nd Airlift Wing, Air Force Reserve out of Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. Once the jumpmasters and safeties hopped on and soon after everyone donned ear protection – and some with barf bags in hand – the C-130 gracefully took off and headed to Fort Campbell.

After a couple of practice passes, some of the Soldiers began to look anxious. On the next pass, the green light flashed on and the first group of riggers leapt out, one after the other. It was an experience enjoyed not just by the jumpers, but also by the active-duty medics from 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Division Artillery, 101st Airborne Division.

“I loved it,” said Sgt. Samuel Embry. “It’s my first time ever watching a jump...our unit was assigned, but we volunteered. I’d definitely come out here again.”

In addition to the Soldiers from the 861st QM Co., 27 Soldiers from the Army Reserve’s 325th Tactical Psychological Operations Company (Airborne) took part in the jump that proved to be a successful mission amongst reserve and active-duty service members from multiple branches.

“With the outstanding weather and the exceptional experience that was in the aircraft, the operation was an enormous success,” said Thomas, who has been airborne-qualified since 1995. “Anytime we can work with other branches and succeed in a mission, shows that we can build U.S. military cohesion. This also shows that during a war-time situation, we can work diligently together to eradicate whatever enemy or situation there might be.”

Original Source:

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