

50 Paratroopers injured in major airborne operation

By Michelle Tan, Staff writer 5:06 p.m. EDT April 14, 2015



(Photo: Staff Sgt. Sean Martin/Army)

About 50 paratroopers were injured Monday after a large-scale airborne operation conducted by the 82nd Airborne Division and the United Kingdom's 16 Air Assault Brigade.

About 2,100 paratroopers participated in Monday night's airborne operation. Most of the injured troops were Americans; about 10 were British paratroopers, said Lt. Col. Cathy Wilkinson, a spokeswoman for the 82nd Airborne Division.

The paratroopers were taken to Womack Army Medical Center on Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to be evaluated by medical personnel, the 82nd Airborne said in a statement.

About 40 of them were released and returned to duty early Tuesday afternoon.

Five were admitted to the hospital and the rest were waiting to be evaluated.

Most of the paratroopers suffered injuries to their legs or ankles or had back pain, which "are not out of the ordinary for injuries associated with airborne operations," Wilkinson said.

None of the injuries was life-threatening, and officials expected the majority of the soldiers to be able to return to their normal duties by the end of the day Tuesday.

"The 82nd Airborne Division conducts thousands of airborne operations each year," Wilkinson said. "Exiting an aircraft in flight with a full combat equipment load comes with inherent risks, but we take prudent precautions to minimize potential injuries."



Monday night's jump, which took place shortly before 9 p.m., resulted in "relatively minor injuries for a small number of the participants," she said. "We're thankful that the majority of the troopers were treated and released and wish everyone a fast recovery."

The jump, featuring soldiers from the 82nd Airborne's 2nd Brigade Combat Team and the U.K.'s 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, 16 Air Assault Brigade, kicked off a major exercise between the two units.

The Combined Joint Operational Access Exercise is the largest U.S.-U.K. bilateral airborne training operation to take place on Fort Bragg in the last 20 years.

The soldiers were to jump from American C-17s and C-130s and Royal Air Force aircraft onto Fort Bragg before moving to seize an airfield, evacuate non-combatants and execute offensive and defensive operations.

Some U.S. paratroopers jumped with British parachutes and vice versa, but there is no indication that was a factor, Wilkinson said.

The exercise is continuing as scheduled, Wilkinson said.

Original source:

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/2015/04/14/82nd-brits-exercise-injuries/25779899/>