

Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa
Story by Staff Sgt. Carlin Leslie

Parachute riggers: One ripcord at a time Staff Sgt. Carlin Leslie



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Mike Garcia, 82nd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron aircrew flight equipment rigger, secures the suspension lines onto the outside of a parachute using rubber bands, Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, March 26, 2015. The correct tolerances must be maintained to ensure proper operation. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Carlin Leslie)

CAMP LEMONNIER, Djibouti – The U.S. Air Force uses more than 20 types of parachutes to conduct personnel recovery, airdrops and asset insertion into a combat zone. Knowing what type of parachute is required for each mission and verifying the safety of those parachutes is the job of a USAF parachute rigger.

This responsibility on Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, is up to the 82nd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron Aircrew Flight Equipment riggers, deployed from Moffett Federal Airfield, California, 129th Rescue Wing, Air National Guard.

“Being a rigger, everything we do has to be 100 percent,” said Tech. Sgt. Isaac Corniel, 82nd ERQS AFE noncommissioned officer in charge. “There is no room for mistakes. There’s no room for error. Their lives are in our hands. Even if we have a small twist in a line we want to make it straight, as it can mean someone’s life.”

Being deployed to Djibouti has allowed the 82nd ERQS AFE to train on real world missions unlike any other training they can get at home station.

AFE are required to pack a variety of chutes in a variety of conditions throughout the world to meet mission needs. The parachutes can take from 35 minutes to several hours to inspect and repack. Along with the complex quality control measures that must be performed.

“We just try to be the best that we can. We preach quality, quantity and efficiency,” Corniel said. “We are combined with a variety of military forces being deployed, so our guys get to train on more scenarios than they would at home.”

According to Corniel, being deployed to Africa has allowed the team here to have hands-on experience with more air drop missions, where as back home they would only provide chutes for one or two drops a month. The AFE Airmen have grown their understanding on the job to make their deployment a success.

“The guys have been great. They all live up to the riggers creed; they know now what it is to be a rigger,” Corniel concluded. “We are a part of something special and we strive to keep the history of excellence between the pararescue teams and riggers.”

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/158744/parachute-riggers-one-ripcord-time#.VY6ZZPIVilE>