

## Soldiers Make a Difference One Drop at a Time

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Combined Joint Task Force - 82 PAO 

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FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan— Resupplying Soldiers is a very important aspect of modern warfare.

Those supplies can extend the amount of time a unit can stay in the field. Ammunition, food and water are just a few of the items that can be packed and dropped into a unit's battle space. Building, packing and rigging a pallet of supplies is a process that requires attention to detail.

"When you pack these pallets you have to keep in mind the speed at which they are hitting the ground," said Army Staff Sgt. Marshall Peterson, a rigger with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division. "Three-hundred pounds can hit [the ground] pretty hard and without the proper packing it can destroy the supplies that these Soldiers need."

The base of these pallets is made out of plywood with a thick cardboard padding attached. These pieces are designed to take the brunt of the impact and keep the supplies intact.

After a pallet has been completed and strapped down, the certified riggers will add parachutes to the top. Each parachute is rated to handle up to 150 pounds, and is made for only one use. If the pallet weighs more than the rating, additional parachutes can be attached.

"These parachutes are not designed for extended flight. They are only made to quickly slow down the pallet before impact," Peterson added.

"We are flying as low as 150 to 300 feet and moving at up to 100 knots," said Army Chief Warrant Officer Mark Chojnacky, a CH-47 Chinook pilot with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment. "With speeds like that, these supplies have to be put together correctly."

The pallet is connected to a static line, similar to a paratrooper, in order to automatically deploy the chute at a predetermined height.

The chinook uses a series of rollers on the floor to deploy the pallets quickly and ensure they all land in the same area. "We do what we call a "quick pass," which lasts no more than a few seconds," said Chojnacky. "By being able to drop the supplies quickly, we don't expose the aircraft anymore than we have to and we can get the supplies right where they need to be."

Being able to resupply our Soldiers in remote areas is an important part to maintaining their effectiveness in the field.

"These drops are a high priority to us because it allows the Soldiers to go on a mission with limited supplies," said Chojnacky. "Having less weight ultimately gives them a tactical advantage."