

Firm Lion Airdrops Hit Objective Without Hitch

By CAL POSNER Staff Writer
SCHONGAU, Germany (S&S)

— The airborne portion of weather-plagued Operation Firm Lion went off without a hitch here Tuesday morning.

The joint USAREUR-USAFE training exercise was threatened by forecasts of adverse weather conditions Monday at the 509th Abn Inf's staging area at Kitzingen Army Airfield.

However, the storm front failed to materialize and at 11:50 p.m. Monday, Joint Task Forces commander, the 8th Inf Div's Brig. Gen. John R. Thurman, issued the "go" order.

On time at 7:40 a.m., a USAFE Combat Control Team (CCT) parachuted onto Schongau's Drop Zone (DZ) Gold, along with an 8th Div aerial assault team to secure the area, and guide in the oncoming sorties of paratroopers and battlefield gear.

Flying at 2,000 feet, nine of the four-engine turboprop C130s were over DZ Gold 20 minutes later, para dropping everything from jeep-mounted 106mm. re-coilless rifles to water trailers.

No Malfunctions

"All equipment landed safely along the middle sector of the DZ and there were no parachute malfunctions," said Air Force Capt. Robert Farmer, commander of the CCT.

The "Alpha-Prime" rigging

— special rigging required to airdrop heavy equipment — was handled by the 8th Div's 11th Quartermaster Co, which can boast 100-per cent safe delivery during their part of Operation Firm Lion.

With the last equipment chute collapsing on the ground at 8:08 a.m., 18 C130s flying a double-line formation entered the eastern edge of the DZ at 1,250 feet.

In turn, each transport disgorged its load of 60 paratroopers, literally filling the air with OD parachutes and rifle laden soldiers.

Of almost 1,200 men who jumped, only five were medevacked out of the operational area, according to drop zone safety officials.

Seven other paratroopers suffered minor injuries during the operation, including Sgt. Bob Smith, A Co, 2nd Bn, 509th Inf, who landed on a jeep, spraining an ankle.

Spec. 5 Roger Murray, also from Co A, bruised his collarbone during the landing.

“The wind carried me pretty good,” Murray said.

Brisk Winds

AF T.Sgt. William Shelton, NCO in charge of the CCT, commented that the wind during the jump ranged between 10 and 12 knots.

Under 8th Div regulations, the drop would have been canceled had the wind been over 13 knots.

Immediately upon landing, rolling up and packing their parachutes in kit bags, the paratroopers of the 1st and 2nd Bns, 509th, began putting into action their previously dropped heavy equipment.

Army S.Sgt. Edward Woodward, an 8th Div recoilless rifle team leader said, “My men are all here, my jeep is running and my gun is operational so I consider it a good jump,”

“Good jump!” My men are all down together,” said Capt. Donald Gregory, CO of C Co, 2nd Bn, 509th.

“Parachuting into Drop Zone Gold along with our infantry were elements of the 5th Bn, 81st Arty, 8th Med Bn, 8th S&T Bn; Hq Co, 1st Brigade, and a platoon from both the 12th Engr Bn and the 8th MP Co,” said Lt. Col. Robert E. Whitelaw, 1st Brigade CO.

After jumping into the DZ" located about two miles northwest of Schongau, Army Set Dean Hodgson, Hq Co, 1st Brigade, said, “This was a totally organized, well-executed jump.”

Flying 10 feet above the ground, 2 C130s conducted low- altitude platform extractions (LAPES) at noon Tuesday dropping their, support-type cargo along a 600-foot sod strip at the eastern end of the DZ.

The complete airlift operation included 22 C130 Hercules transports froth three stateside bases Which joined forces with aircraft from USAFE’s 322nd Tactical Airlift Wing (TAW) at Rhein-Main AB and the 513th TAW from Mildenhall AB, England.

Jets of 17th Air Force flew reconnaissance and support missions during the maneuver.

An additional 17 C130 loads of combat-support equipment was air-landed at nearby Kauf-beuren Air Base and convoyed to the Schongau drop zone Tuesday afternoon.

Final Landings

The operation will conclude Wednesday with 27 more equipment laden C130s landing at the German base at Kauf- beuren and two container delivery ' system (CDS) drops made into DZ Gold.

CDS is a relatively new technique and Wednesday will see a total of 18 water, ammo, fuel and ration containers, each weighing 2200 pounds, parachuted from 600 feet during two C130 sorties.

The objectives of Operation Firm Lion included providing joint training for military operations involving USAREUR- USAFE forces and to perfect techniques in the delivery of a joint airborne task force from the European Comd onto an objective, an announcement of the Joint Task Force Hq said.

Sent by Patrick Aguilar