

Pacific Stars & Stripes
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Tachi NCO Makes His 200th Jump

M. Sgt. Gordon Hamblin stepped to the open door of a C-130 Hercules high over the Milo drop zone 60 miles north of here, jumped, and began another routine descent to earth, dangling beneath a parachute.

With the skill of years of practice, Hamblin landed without incident, marking the completion of a milestone in his 21-year career—his 200th jump.



Hamblin, 38, is one of an elite group of men in the Air Force known as Combat Controllers. These men can be identified by the blue berets they are authorized to wear bearing the wings of a qualified parachutist.

“Floating up there is the greatest sensation I’ve ever experienced” Hamblin said. “You’re in a world by yourself, and each jump is a new adventure.”

Left; M.Sgt. Gordon Hamblin inspects a packed parachute as he prepares for his 200th jump as a Combat Controller.

Hamblin is NCO-in-charge of the Combat Control team assigned to Det. 11, 7th Aerial Port Sq. at Tachikawa.

Japan is not new to the veteran NCO from Utica, N.Y. He is in his third tour here, and his second as the NCOIC of Det. 11’s Combat Control team.

He began his service career as a radio operator, but in 1956 he completed jump training at Ft. Benning, Ga., and the air traffic control course at Keesler AFB, Miss. During his 11 years as a Combat Controller, he has served as the NCOIC of the Combat Control team at Dyess AFB, Tex., and Langley AFB, Va., as well as two tours at Tachikawa.

In addition, he has “inherited” the job of first sergeant for the detachment since he is the ranking enlisted man in the 30-man unit.

Since his last, assignment to Japan, in 1965 he has served two 40-day tours in Vietnam and now wears the Republic of Vietnam parachutist's badge. His 23 jumps in the last two years include several in the jungles of Vietnam. His 200 lifetime jumps include jumps from eight different aircraft and two different helicopters.

With approximately one year left before his planned retirement in Japan. Hamblin considers himself fortunate that he has never had to use his reserve chute, a smaller parachute that all jumpers have in the event their main parachute does not deploy correctly.

“In 11 years of jumping I have never had a malfunction.” he said. Then he a laughed, said “Knock on wood”, and gave the wall three raps.

Sent by Patrick Aguilar