



CHAPTER 14

LIMITED VISIBILITY OPERATIONS

MFF infiltrations during periods of limited visibility (adverse weather or darkness) have a higher chance of success than strictly daylight operations. Limited visibility infiltrations offer surprise and increased security due to reduced enemy observation capability. Limited visibility operations require a high degree of skill and individual discipline. A well-rehearsed tactical plan executed by personnel proficient in MFF skills is critical to success.

Adverse Weather

Foggy, overcast, or mostly cloudy conditions effectively prevent observation from the ground. However, adverse weather conditions present special problems for the MFF parachutist. High winds and precipitation can degrade canopy performance and make control difficult. Entering clouds may cause disorientation and lead to detachment separation under canopy, free-fall collisions, or canopy entanglements. The loss of depth perception due to ground fog, smoke, or haze may prevent the parachutist from executing a proper landing.

In free-fall, the parachutist stops all maneuvering upon entering a cloud. He activates the main parachute at the designated altitude, even if he has not passed through the cloud layer. In clouds under canopy, he flies the canopy at the half brake position to give himself the greatest range of canopy response.

Night Operations

Night MFF parachuting offers the same advantages as parachuting during adverse weather, especially during the first quarter, new moon, and last quarter moon phases. Night free-fall parachuting is the most psychologically demanding of

parachute operations. Extensive training must take place at night. During this training, the parachutist develops confidence in the equipment and his own abilities.

Commanders must weigh the tactical situation when placing lighting devices on the parachutist and on the parachute canopy for safety and control during free-fall and canopy flight. At a minimum, use lighting devices for altimeters and other instruments.

The use of oxygen dramatically improves night vision. Wearing the oxygen mask until the landing is a recommended procedure. The commander may consider using oxygen for all night free-fall operations, even if the jumping altitude does not require it.

The jumpmaster can use night vision devices to help him while spotting from the aircraft. The parachutist can also use them during canopy flight as an aid to navigation and formation flying. He must have extensive experience flying and landing with night vision goggles to overcome the loss of depth perception. An additional factor to consider is that the night vision goggles will seriously impair his night vision after using them for extended periods.

WARNING

Night vision goggles should not be worn during free-fall, because they restrict the parachutist's ability to locate the rip cord handle and the cutaway handle.

The lack of depth perception at night may prevent the parachutist from executing a proper landing. The parachutist flies the parachute at the half

brake position and performs a PLF on contact with the ground. Various night lighting techniques exist to identify parachutists, group leaders, or subunit elements while under canopy. Some techniques involve attaching the devices in the aircraft and some must be activated and placed on the canopy before packing the parachute. Some of these techniques are rheostatic electroluminescent riser lights; chemical lights (chemlites) on the parachutist's body and on the risers, and/or the bridle line attachment point (activated and packed before the chemlite's life span expires); and other electrical systems placed in pockets on the canopy's top skin.