

## CHAPTER 4

# Airdrop Support Responsibilities

### INTRODUCTION

Clear command and control channels must be set up in the theater of operations to meet the airdrop needs of the tactical commander. At each echelon, responsibilities must be clearly understood so that the required support can be provided quickly. The airdrop concept must provide responsive support so that the combat elements can influence the outcome of the action. Airdrop resupply normally is a joint action between the US Army and the US Air Force. Army elements provide the required supplies, rig them for airdrop, and deliver them to the departure airfield. Air Force personnel load the supplies onto the airdrop aircraft and fly the mission. Army personnel will control the drop zone. If Air Force combat control team personnel are available, they will provide navigational assistance to the airdrop aircraft.

### THEATER LEVEL

At theater level, support is either airlift support or rigging support. Airlift support is normally an Air Force function. Rigging support is normally an Army function.

#### Airlift Support

Theater component commanders state their airlift support requirements in priority sequence. The JFC validates the requirements and places them within the theater priority system. Airlift requests are then supported according to the priorities set up by the JFC. Since aircraft are limited and demand normally exceeds availability, the JFC will appoint an agent. This agent will validate all airlift requests, establish priorities, and pass requirements to the Air Force for execution. All airlift requirements will be sent through this agent. The JFC may also set up a JTB of service representatives. The JFC does not include Army aviation assets in the apportionment process.

#### Rigging Support

In the fully developed theater of operations, airdrop support units are required in each TAACOM. These units will provide airdrop resupply to elements in the supported corps area. They will also provide airdrop resupply to the

forward elements when the corps airdrop support units cannot.

### CORPS LEVEL

Corps level support is either airlift support or rigging support. Airlift support is normally an Air Force responsibility. Rigging support is normally accomplished by Army elements.

#### Airlift Support

The COSCOM ACofS, Transportation, oversees the MCC. The MCC controls all combat service support transportation movement activities within the corps. Airlift requests are normally validated by the support operations officer or the MCC.

#### Rigging Support

Airdrop support units are allocated to each corps. These COSCOM units will normally be attached to the supply and services battalion in the rear corps support group. However, as for other CSS units, they may be allocated to the active component, reserve component, or the unresourced force composition. Planners should be familiar with time-phased deployment lists to be sure that plans mesh with on-the-ground capability. The airdrop support units support all elements of the corps. Most airdrop resupply missions will be to units operating near the FLOT. Requirements for airdrop resupply support that cannot be met by the corps will be forwarded to the theater. Long-range surveillance units, aviation units, and other units requiring personnel parachute support receive this support from the airdrop support unit at corps.

### DIVISION LEVEL

Division level support is either airlift support or rigging support. Airlift support is normally an Air Force function. Rigging support is normally an Army function.

#### Airlift Support

The DTO plans and coordinates airlift movements in the division. Airdrop requests flow from

the requesting unit to the division TOC. Pre-planned airdrop requests are not as time sensitive as immediate requests. They are processed through G4 channels in coordination with the DTO. Immediate requests are time sensitive. Therefore, they must be processed through G3 channels. In either case, when the requirement is passed to corps, it is considered to have been validated by the division.

### **Rigging Support**

Only the airborne division has organic airdrop support. Its airdrop support unit must be able to support an airborne insertion. This includes providing the necessary airdrop equipment and preparing the division's equipment for airdrop. After the airborne division has been inserted into an airhead, the organic airdrop support unit must provide 200 tons a day of follow-up resupply support for a 10-day period. All divisions, to include the airborne division, will request airdrop resupply support from the corps or theater. Long-range surveillance units, aviation units, and other units requiring personnel parachute support, other than in the airborne division, will receive this support from the airdrop support unit located at corps.

## **SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES**

SFGs and the Ranger Regiment have only a limited airdrop resupply capability. For the Ranger Regiment, this comes from the TDA. For SFGs, this comes from the TOE. Both of these capabilities are designed, primarily, for providing insertion-type support similar to that provided by the airdrop support unit in the airborne division. Once these units have been inserted into a theater of operations, the theater commander is responsible for backup airdrop resupply support. Advance coordination must be made with theater airdrop units because of the unique airdrop equipment and delivery methods used in support of SOF units. See FM 100-25 for more information on SOF operations.

### **REQUESTING UNIT**

The unit requesting airdrop resupply has several important responsibilities. These are reflected in actions that the requesting unit must take either before or after submitting its request.

#### **Actions Before Submission**

Prior to submitting its request, the unit must determine what supplies and equipment are

needed and where and when they should be dropped.

***Supplies and equipment needed.*** The quantities requested should be influenced by the hazards involved in conducting the airdrop resupply mission. For instance, the immediate need is ammunition. However, the unit may also need other supplies (such as water, rations, or medical supplies) before land lines of communication are reestablished. All of these supplies should then be requested at the same time. It is better to request more supplies than are actually needed than to have to make a second request within a few days.

***Location of drop zone.*** The area where the supplies must be airdropped must be defined. The eight-digit coordinates for the center of the drop zone must be determined.

***Time and date airdrop desired.*** When setting up the time and date for an airdrop, keep in mind the request is passed through TOC channels back to corps. At the corps level, supplies must be identified, delivered to the airdrop support unit, rigged for airdrop, delivered to the departure airfield, loaded aboard delivery aircraft, and flown to the drop area. Unless the supplies are on a preplanned request, it usually takes more than eight hours to receive the resupply by airdrop.

#### **Actions After Submission**

After submitting its request, the unit must prepare to receive the resupply. The drop zone must be prepared, secured, and controlled and provisions made for recovery and retrograde of supplies and equipment.

***Drop zone preparation and security.*** Most airdrop resupply operations will deliver supplies in A-22 containers using either low-velocity or high-velocity parachutes. Therefore, little drop zone preparation will be required. This type of resupply can even be used to deliver supplies to a drop zone covered with relatively short trees. Security around the drop zone will be required to protect the drop zone support team and the recovery party. See FM 100-27 for additional information on drop zone criteria.

***Drop zone control.*** Most airdrop resupply operations will be conducted without an Air Force

combat control team. Therefore, the receiving unit must operate the drop zone. This includes communications with the Air Force crew flying the mission. FM 57-230 has more information on the drop zone support team.

***Recovery of supplies and equipment.*** The receiving unit should appoint a recovery team. The recovery team must retrieve the supplies and get them to the required locations quickly.

***Recovery, retrograde, or destruction of airdrop equipment.*** Airdrop equipment is expensive and in short supply. Therefore, the unit receiving airdrop resupply must attempt to recover, protect, and retrograde this equipment. If the situation prevents recovery, the unit should destroy or ruin the equipment. TM 10-500-7 has additional information on airdrop equipment recovery. More information on retrograde is found in Chapter 6 of this manual (FM 10-500-1).