



U.S. Army and allied foreign paratroopers from nine different countries participated in the training as part of a week-long series of events held prior to the scheduled 16th Annual Randy Oler Operation Toy Drop on Dec. 7 at Sicily Drop Zone. Hosted by the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Operation Toy Drop is the world's largest combined airborne operation where Fort Bragg's paratroopers and allied jumpmasters donate toys to be distributed to children's homes and social service agencies in the local community. (U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells/USACAPOC(A) PAO)

Paratroopers From Across the Globe Prepare For a Holiday Tradition

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FORT BRAGG, N.C. – “It’s a good way to say, ‘Thank you,’” said Sgt. Maj. Ronny Hahnlein, German Army liaison to the XVIII Airborne Corps. “It’s maybe a little thing to give back, but I think this is what a friendship is.”

This past week, German jumpmasters as well as jumpmasters from eight other countries have been

training together with their U.S. Army counterparts in preparation of the 16th Annual Randy Oler Operation Toy Drop.

Operation Toy Drop is the world’s largest combined airborne operation that allows paratroopers to conduct safe, valuable training and also raise toys for underprivileged children around the local com-

munity; something the founder of the event, Sgt. 1st Class Randy Oler, a former U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) soldier, envisioned in 1998 when the first event raised more than 500 toys.

Hahnlein said that Operation Toy Drop is not only a humanitarian mission, but also a great way for German jumpmasters and aircrews to work with U.S. Army soldiers.

“With operations downsizings in Afghanistan, this relationship between our armies is even more important,” Hahnlein said.

Relationships between allied jumpmasters and the U.S. have been growing constantly as they train diligently on how to use U.S. parachute rigs, the different types of aircraft used and the procedures that occur in each aircraft to ensure a safe airborne operation.

Allied jumpmasters were introduced to the U.S. parachutes, such as the MC6, by trying the equipment on to ensure proper fit as well as using a simulator to land the parachute. Paratroopers have to successfully jump and land three times during the simulation in order to be given approval to use the parachute.

This year’s Operation Toy Drop will be held on Sicily Drop Zone at Fort Bragg, N.C., Dec. 7 starting at 7:30 a.m. and running through the afternoon. In addition to the Saturday jump, paratroopers plan to participate Dec. 9-13 in Luzon Drop Zone. In total, 4,500 paratroopers are expected to jump with the support of jumpmasters from Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Canada, Poland, Sweden, Chili, Brazil and Latvia.

“It’s like we are bringing all of NATO together,” said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Griffin, special operations testing director. ■



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