

AMCOM Express Revisited

By Al Schwartz, AMCOM Public Affairs

“AMCOM [Air Mobility Command] Express is working, and it is working well, said Army Maj. Dave Edson, Corpus Christi Army Depot’s Logistics Modernization Program manager. AMCOM Express, the dedicated C-17 flown from Corpus Christi, Texas, to Balad, Iraq, has shipped more than 272,000 pounds of critical, high-priority items and has returned to Corpus Christi with more than 208,000 pounds of battle-damaged aircraft and materiel since its first flight last October.

“Receiving units love it because they get parts quickly,” said Edson. “And all of us at Corpus Christi, no matter what organization we work for, love it because we have a direct impact on supporting our troops.”

The plane normally carries 17 or 18 pallets of cargo. Most pallets are built at, and all are loaded, at the Defense Logistics Agency’s Defense Distribution Depot Corpus Christi, Texas (DDCT). A few pallets arrive from Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas (DDRT) within a week of the scheduled flight.

According to Bob Rosarius, DDCT’s deputy commander, the objective is to fill requisitions of large, heavy cargo such as transmissions, engines and blades. “Rather than flowing through normal distribution channels, we are able to control and expedite the loading, delivery and unloading of these critical parts,” he said.

DDCT makes “pure” pallets as often as possible, so when the materiel is unloaded in-country the entire pallet goes to one unit and doesn’t have to be broken down for distribution to several locations. “We have really improved our method to load pallets,” he said. The number of days from the time a Materiel Release Order is “dropped” until when the materiel is received by the customer is 19 days. “With AMCOM Express, we have

reduced that to an average of 11 days,” Rosarius said, “and we were able to do it one time in seven days.”

To do that requires a concentrated effort. “What we do with AMCOM Express is very similar to our day-to-day operations,” said Army Lt. Col. Sheila J-McClaney, the DDCT’s commander. “Our mission is to provide distribution support for Corpus Christi Army Depot and load the aircraft.” The first six flights have been successful in reducing both the amount of time and cost of transporting

the critical parts and retrograde items. “Our analysis shows that we have saved almost \$800,000 by using AMCOM Express over normal channel lift distribution,” she said.

DDCT is also responsible for retrograde. They unload the material and pull it forward so item managers and depot personnel know it is available.

Rosarius said the team has studied the after-action reports for the first flights to determine how to improve their operations, and they are incorporating



A crew member of the 6th Airlift Squadron, McGuire Air Force Base, waits at the tail of the C-17 to load the first pallets onto the AMCOM Express that will be transporting materiel to Balad, Iraq.



The AMCOM Express sits ready to be loaded.



Pallets of high priority helicopter parts arrive by truck to be loaded onto the AMCOM Express flight.



Crew members of 6th Airlift Squadron, McGuire Air Force Base, and employees of Defense Distribution Depot Corpus Christi, TX, load a pallet of helicopter blades onto the AMCOM Express flight.

comments from a recent joint inspection team review.

“The reports we get from soldiers in the field are positive,” said Lt. Col. J-McClaney. “They can see the shortened requisition time and they can count on getting the parts they need as quickly as we can provide them.”

That sentiment is echoed by Larry Jobe and Army Sgt. Maj. Larry Lovell, respectively the Corpus Christi Army depot chief of staff and sergeant major.

SUPPORTING The Warfighter

Both have accompanied the cargo on several flights.

“The first flight was crucial to establishing our credibility,” said Jobe. “Within 24 hours of the cargo getting on the ground, a company of Apache helicopters was made combat-ready with the parts we brought.

“We also returned with battle-damaged aircraft and ten pallets of cargo. The retrograde helps us keep our lines operating so we can repair and refurbish material and provide it back to the field,” Jobe said.

Lovell accompanied the first flight last year. “We took a large load of blades,” he said. “When we were met in Balad by the Theater Aviation Single Manager, we were jokingly referred to as Santa Claus showing up with a sled load of spare parts.” Lovell said Corpus Christi employees have steadily increased the efficiency of the processes, and are continuing to fine-tune the operation.

When the material arrives in Balad, AMCOM’s Theater Aviation Single Manager oversees its distribution to the forward-based units by C-130, Chinook or ground convoys. The flights are scheduled in advance, so the TASM works with units to schedule quick pickup and delivery of the parts and upload of the retrograde items. The AMCOM Express plane sits on the ground in Balad only about four hours before it begins its return flight to Corpus Christi.

The engine, transmission and blade shops are working extended shifts, according to Army Col. Timothy Sassenrath, Corpus Christi Army Depot commander. “These are the high priority items that ground the helicopters,” he said. “I would like a more steady line of retrograde to repair and return. I need to have assets returned from theater to keep our lines working smoothly so we can continue to support our soldiers.”

When space on the plane allows, employees of Corpus Christi organizations provide unofficial “care” packages for units. “We control the contents and numbers of packages,” said Lovell. “We include toothpaste,

toothbrushes, sunscreen and other basic, simple items.”

“Our employees are very proud of America’s soldiers and by helping them get parts quickly we know we have a direct impact on their lives,” said Sassenrath. “It takes a team to make this program a success, and we have a great team.”

The AMCOM Express program is managed for the command by the Integrated Materiel Management Center.

Parachute Riggers Conduct Airborne Operation

By Sherre Mitten-Bell, DDSP Public Affairs

It’s believed we are born with the fear of falling, so it isn’t surprising that jumping out of airplanes doesn’t appeal to everyone. There are some who do it for the adrenaline rush, the thrill of living on the edge.

However, for the Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, PA (DDSP) Parachute Riggers, it’s a part of their job and necessary in order to maintain their proficiency status as parachute riggers. Jumping with the airdrop equipment systems they maintain facilitates an understanding that can’t be taught from a book.

On occasion, riggers are required to perform test jumps with parachutes that were recently repaired to determine the system’s “Air Worthiness.” These are just a few of the reasons why the Riggers conducted an Airborne Operation at Capitol City Airport in New Cumberland, PA, in June.

The DDSP Army “jumpers” were SSG Michael Morris, SGT Randolph Policar, SGT Eri Ramos, and SGT Anthony Penson, who were joined by SFC Mark Hearn, Integrated Logistics Support Center, Natick, MA, and SFC Chris Rafuse, 104th Infantry Detachment LRSD. CW3 Kevin Wood performed the final jumpmaster gear inspection before the group boarded the plane.

The C-130 made two passes so that

the five could perform routine static line proficiency jumps from 1,250 feet above ground. Weather conditions were ideal this day, assuring that they would avoid hazards such as trees, fences, and golfers from the adjacent Riverview Golf course, and successfully land on the DZ, or drop zone.

Airborne Riggers have to maintain jump status in order to stay current as a Rigger. The minimum requirement is one jump every three months after training as a Paratrooper.



Jumper's board a C-130 plane during the DDSP Airborne Operation.



Paratrooper descends to drop zone.

The Airborne Rigger is the only Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) 92R in the Army in which you have to stay current and on airborne status in order to keep your position. “A Paratrooper is so well trained that the fear of falling is replaced with sheer anticipation. You can’t wait to make your first jump,” said CW3 Wood.

“I will be sure always!” is their motto.” Airborne Riggers will go beyond the minimum standard of once a quarter to at least once a month or more to ensure they stay very fluent with not only the complexities of airborne operations but also with how personnel parachute systems react to a live deployment.