



Inside SWCS

The official newsletter of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy
Special Warfare Center and School

June 20, 2011
Issue 23, Volume 2

“No room for error”

SWCS paratroopers know Support Battalion riggers have got their backs



Riggers assigned to the Support Battalion, part of the 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne), pack parachutes to be used by SWCS students and cadre during airborne training operations.

By Caroline Goins
SWCS Public Affairs Office

SWCS riggers pack and maintain parachutes for about 2,000 special-operations students and 500 cadre members at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. With only a few exceptions, all Special Forces, Civil Affairs and Military Information Support Operations Soldiers at SWCS must be airborne-certified.

“Everyone wants to jump; the only way that happens is through us,” said Staff Sgt. Marcus Jones, one of the riggers. “We provide a service that everyone wants to be a part of.”

The SWCS rigger team is made up of 25 riggers and 11 noncommissioned officers. The NCOs are responsible for quality control, ensuring all packs meet safety standards. Riggers are responsible for packing parachutes and assisting jumpmasters during pre-jump inspections and resolving any discrepancies.

These riggers are responsible for packing 25 packs a day, five days a week. Additionally, two riggers are on-site for each airborne operation SWCS conducts. A big part of SWCS’ airborne

population includes the Military Freefall School in Yuma, Ariz. — riggers support their high-altitude, high- and low-opening training as well.

In total, SWCS riggers support 26,000 individual jumpers each year, with no injuries due to packing malfunctions.

“This is a special group that can handle the daily monotonous tasks and maintain a high level of professionalism,” Jones said.

The repetitiveness of packing can be draining, but it helps to focus on the pack, said Spc. DeMarius Jackson, another rigger.

“Everything else is blocked out and it’s done by muscle memory,” he said. “If the smallest thing doesn’t feel right, you check it; there’s no room for error.”

“I have the best guys in this shop,” Jones said. These guys are out there busting their butts every day to support airborne operations for SWCS.”

These airborne operations are included in the Special Forces, MISO and Civil Affairs qualification courses’ culmination exercises.

“SWCS is a great place to assist with jumps because jumpers have been taught properly, they listen better and are focused because usually after the jump they have a training mission to complete,” Jackson said.

**“We don’t take our jobs lightly.
We have a very important job:
we hold a Soldier’s life in our hands.”**

Spc. DeMarius Jackson
Rigger, Support Battalion, 1st SWTG(A)

Riggers don’t just pack parachutes; they jump with them as well. All riggers must be airborne-qualified and conduct at least one airborne operation a month.

“That’s the biggest test of quality,” Jones said. “We don’t go through and pick packs that we prepared for ourselves; we just grab a pack off the truck like everyone else does.”

For the riggers at SWCS, the adrenaline rush of jumping out of a moving airplane is only one of the job’s biggest perks.

“I watch these Soldiers pack their parachutes and I have full confidence in the team,” Jackson said.

“We don’t take our jobs lightly,” he said. “We have a very important job; we hold a Soldier’s life in our hands.”

SWCS sponsors civil schooling programs for ARSOF Soldiers

By Col. David Fitchitt

Director, Directorate of Special Operations Proponency

Most Soldiers in Army special-operations forces have ample combat experience and a vast amount of the best training available. That should expedite their promotions, but for the fact that their peers are equally well-qualified. The best way Soldiers can set themselves apart from their peers is to advance their education.

Officers in all three ARSOF regiments should strive to attain a master's degree before they are in the primary zone of consideration for promotion to lieutenant colonel. Warrant officers and noncommissioned officers also need education to help set them apart — start with an associate's degree and work from there to develop intellectually and professionally.

For ARSOF Soldiers who already have a bachelor's degree, SWCS has three fully-funded, accredited master's-degree programs available that won't cost Soldiers any money out of pocket.

The National Defense University College of International Security Affairs Program is a 10-month program that provides a strategic perspective on the global threat environment; the rise of newly empowered and politicized ideological movements; the relationship between political objectives, strategy and all instruments of national power; and the roles of power and ideology.

The University of Kansas Interagency Studies Program is a 10-month program conducted by the University of Kansas that prepares officers for service in interagency assignments. Core and elective courses focus on U.S. government structure, interagency organizations and cultures, negotiation theory, conflict resolution and interagency legal considerations. The program is conducted in conjunction with Intermediate Level Education at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

The Naval Postgraduate School Special Operations Master's Degree Program is an 18-month program that provides Intermediate Level Education/Joint Professional Military Education 1 credit. The program provides a broad education in the art and science of unconventional warfare at the tactical, operational and strategic levels.

Application for the programs is easy: All the information is available at the website of the Army Human Resources Command, or HRC (<https://www.hrc.army.mil>), or on the SWCS Portal under the Directorate of Special Operations Proponency (<https://arsoportal.soc.mil/swcs/dsop/pages/Default.aspx>). HRC assignments managers can answer specific questions and assist in determining the best time in terms of career development for Soldiers to attend.

Soldiers applying for either the University of Kansas or Naval Postgraduate School programs should apply for both and indicate their preference. A selection board will review the application and determine which program is the best fit for the Soldier and ARSOF, and if one program fills quickly, the Soldier may still be eligible for the other. Board dates and eligibility requirements are announced annually via MILPER message. Personnel in a non-ARSOF branch or military occupational specialty need a memorandum from their HRC assignments officer stating that if they complete the education program, their branch or MOS will allow them to serve 36 months in a position under the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

Regardless of a Soldier's rank, more education will make them stronger, individually and professionally. The ARSOF qualification courses prepare Soldiers for tactical-level excellence. Furthering their education will not only develop them as an individual but also enhance the performance of their duties, preparing them to be a master SOF practitioner at the operational and strategic levels.

SWCS Staff Profile

Spc. Craig A. Tompkins

Rigger, Support Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne)

Spc. Craig A. Tompkins of Austin, Texas shows his pride in his team, his work, and the U.S. Army in every parachute he packs. Averaging about 10 minutes per pack, well within his 12-minute satisfaction mark, Tompkins excels at his craft, but always strives to be the best.



On at the Special Warfare Center and School:

"SWCS has the absolute best riggers in the Army. Every year SWCS participates in the Army's Rigger Rodeo, and we may not be the fastest but we have 100 percent quality every time. That's the shop's mentality: not to do it the fastest, but the best."

On giving paratroopers assurance peace of mind:

"My favorite part of the job is knowing exactly what it is I'm jumping with and knowing all the technical aspects of the pack. Riggers are technical advisors to give confidence and eliminate doubt out on the jump site."

On a brief stint outside the military:

"Leaving the military was the biggest mistake I ever made. Supervisors outside the military aren't going to go out of their way to help you advance. I missed the military, and re-enlisted. I gladly traded the normal work hours and being back home to have a career with the military; a life with purpose and support to excel."

On conducting military airborne operations:

"I love jumping, it's the ultimate roller-coaster, a definite rush. When you hear the call everyone is jumping, you really don't have a chance to think about it. There's a thrill in the free-fall and then the first shock of the shoot opening; then it's peaceful on the way down."

SWCS activates Reserve-specific Civil Affairs training company

By Dave Chace

SWCS Public Affairs Office

SWCS held an activation ceremony June 13 on Fort Bragg, N.C. for a new company dedicated to training civil affairs Soldiers.

This unit, D Company, 3rd Bn., 1st SWTG(A), will train officers and NCOs to join the Army Reserve's civil affairs community. Civil affairs Soldiers and units serve combatant commanders by quickly and systematically identifying critical requirements needed by local citizens in war or disaster situations.

"While we do serve under [SWCS], we must always recognize that our customers are all the Army Reserve officers and NCOs who will come through this schoolhouse on their way to vitally important, yet often dangerous assignments around the world," said Maj. C. Shawn Keller, the new unit's commanding officer, during the ceremony.

"It is my intent to provide for them the most beneficial, challenging and rewarding training that we possibly can," he said.

"We owe it to them, our customers, to always be at our best, to continue improving, not only the course,



Maj. C. Shawn Keller, commander of D Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st SWTG(A), hands the company's guidon to its acting first sergeant.

but ourselves as well, and to strengthen those relationships between SWCS and USACAPOC(A) in order to make their training here as efficient and effective as possible," Keller said.

Keller, a native of Charleston, S.C., deployed to Diyala, Iraq in 2007 as a civil affairs team leader with the 360th Civil Affairs Brigade out of Fort Jackson, S.C.

"I look forward to the opportunity and the challenge to build upon the exceptional legacy of training that is conducted here while serving among some of the finest officers and NCOs in the military," Keller said.

SWCS Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
19	SWCS NCO and Soldier of the Year Competition (all week)	21	Robin Sage ends	23	24	25
26	5th Battalion, 1st SWTG(A) Activation Ceremony 9 a.m. JFK Plaza	6th Battalion, 1st SWTG(A) Activation Ceremony 8:30 a.m. JFK Plaza	29	ARSOF Company, DSOP Change of Command 2 p.m. Camp Mackall	Training holiday	2
3	Independence Day	5	6	7	8	9