

CHAPTER 13

TROOPS TRANSPORTED BY AIR

GENERAL

■ 996. *Parachute troops* are troops moved by air transport and landed by means of parachutes. The principal tactical unit for parachute troops is the battalion. It consists of two or more combat companies and other units required by the mission and operation.

■ 997. *Weapons and equipment* of parachute troops include the rifle or carbine, automatic pistol, submachine gun, light machine gun, 60-mm mortar, and hand grenade, together with signal and demolition equipment. Parachute troops are armed and equipped for the execution of a specific task. Weapons and equipment not carried by the individual during the descent are dropped in containers on the landing area simultaneously with the parachutists.

■ 998. Ordinarily, parachute troops may be considered as the *advance guard element* of air landing troops or other military or naval forces. They constitute a powerful surprise factor and usually are employed in conjunction with air landing or mechanized troops in the path of the main ground effort, or close in rear of the enemy front line; otherwise they may be quickly surrounded and destroyed.

■ 999. *Air landing troops* are troops moved by powered aircraft who disembark after the aircraft reaches the ground. They are task forces organized as to personnel and equipment and trained for the execution of particular missions. They execute special missions in areas which are inaccessible, or not immediately accessible to other friendly troops. Their organization would include a headquarters, infantry, and essential units of other arms in suitable proportion. In each component the unity of tactical organization should be preserved as far as practicable. Parachute troops are attached to air landing troops for operations in hostile territory when it is necessary to seize, hold, and protect landing areas for air landing troops.

■ 1000. *Combined operations* of parachute and air landing troops are similar to the advance guard action of a large command; to the execution of a reconnaissance in force; or to a major raid against the enemy. Excluding the minor operations of parachute troops on sabotage and special missions, air landing operations are executed usually in conjunction with other ground or naval operations.

■ 1001. *Air superiority* in the locality of the operation is a fundamental requisite to successful air landing operations. Except when employed in small numbers and on missions requiring strict secrecy, air landing operations must be closely supported by combat aviation prior to, during, and after landing in hostile territory.

■ 1002. Except in extreme cases when used on sacrifice missions, troops transported by air should not be employed unless they can be supported quickly by other military or naval forces, or unless they can be withdrawn after their mission has been accomplished.

MISSIONS

■ 1003. Suitable missions for troops transported by air include:

a. Seizing and holding, or otherwise exploiting, important tactical localities or installations, in conjunction with or pending the arrival of other military or naval forces. Such missions include seizure and clearance of landing fields, beachheads, strong points, and ports; seizure of essential observation or other critical terrain; severing hostile lines of communication and supply; the destruction of bridges, locks, public utility enterprises, and other designated demolitions; seizure of river crossings, defiles, and other bottlenecks; blocking a hostile counterattack; interrupting the movements of hostile reserves; cooperating in the pursuit or breakthrough by ground forces by operating against enemy reserves and lines of communication, and blocking hostile avenues of retreat; and preventing the enemy from destroying essential installations, supplies, and matériel which might be of use in our own subsequent operations.

b. Executing an envelopment from the air in conjunction with an attack by ground forces.

c. Execution of surprise attacks as a diversion or feint in connection with other air landing or ground operations, or to create confusion and disorder among the hostile military and civilian personnel.

d. Execution of an attack against an isolated enemy position, impossible or impracticable of attack by ground forces.

■ 1004. The missions of parachute and air landing troops are facilitated under the following conditions: when the enemy air force is inferior or has been defeated; when landing in territory whose population may be expected to support the parachute troops with food, information, and transport; when landing in rear of a disorganized or defeated enemy; and when suitable terrain and good weather exist.

PLANNING OPERATIONS

■ 1005. In *planning* air landing operations, factors to be considered include the mission of the force; strength, disposition, and capabilities of the enemy to interfere with the operation; composition of own force; support to be furnished by combat aviation, and ground or naval forces; the effect of terrain; weather conditions; number, types, and capacities of transport planes available; time required for the movement; measures for coordinating the action of the combined forces engaged in the operation; movement of the command to the airdrome from which the operation is launched; troop and cargo loadings; sequence of deplanning; and supply and evacuation plan.

■ 1006. In planning the *organization* of a force for the execution of an assigned mission careful consideration must be given to the relative importance of the different arms. Certain missions require a relatively high percentage of infantry and artillery whereas other missions may require a preponderance of parachute troops, engineers and other special troops.

■ 1007. Excluding the use of parachute troops in small numbers for sabotage or special missions *any plan* for operations in hostile rear areas should provide for the following: local air superiority; close support by combat aviation en route, during, and after landing; the allotment of parachute troops in sufficient strength to assure the seizure of necessary landing areas and protection of the transport planes while landing;

an adequate infantry component. When facing a strong and unshaken enemy the landing must be quickly supported by advancing mechanized or other highly mobile ground units.

■ 1008. Plans must be based on accurate and detailed information. Every effort must be made to obtain detailed information of enemy activities in the combat area, including location, strength, armament, and capability of the hostile force to interfere with the operation; location of anti-aircraft batteries and other defensive installations; composition and type of organized defenses of airdromes, landing fields, and other military or civil installations; morale of the civil population and its effectiveness as part of the defense force; location and type of obstacles used to obstruct possible landing areas; and the location of highly mobile hostile forces.

■ 1009. A comprehensive knowledge of the *terrain* is essential to the formulation of a detailed tactical plan for the operation. By studying maps and aerial photographs and by personal aerial reconnaissances of the combat area, landing and alternate landing sites are selected; towns, roads, and other key points definitely located; and the advantages and disadvantages of the terrain for the proposed operation carefully weighed.

■ 1010. The *weather* is an important factor in an air landing operation and must be studied carefully during the planning phase. Heavy fog, low clouds, and icing conditions have an adverse effect on flying. In addition, high winds interfere with accurate and safe landings of parachute troops. Therefore, a long range weather forecast should be studied and the operation scheduled, if practicable, so as to take advantage of favorable weather conditions.

■ 1011. The *tactical plan for parachute troops* should include provision for such matters as time of landing; support to be furnished by combat aviation; specific missions for the seizure and protection of the landing area including road blocking missions and control of local signal communications; anti-aircraft and anti-tank defensive measure; seizure of transportation; contact with friendly espionage agencies; removal of obstacles from landing area; disposition of civilians; and plan for use of parachute troops when reinforced or relieved by air landing troops.

■ 1012. The *tactical plan for air landing troops* after landing in the hostile area should include provision for such matters as: time of landing; support to be furnished by combat aviation; missions for leading wave and subsequent waves; reinforcement of parachute troops; assembly positions; special signal communication instructions; location of command post; and similar matters. (For details of an air movement table, see FM 101-10.)

■ 1013. When an air landing force is operating in conjunction with ground forces and combat aviation, the air landing plan must be coordinated with the ground and air force plans. This coordination is best effected by personal conferences between commanders and staffs concerned. Each commander should have full knowledge of the general plan of operations; the forces involved; the missions of the ground force, the air force and the air landing force; objective of each force; time of attack and scheme of maneuver of ground forces; combat aviation support missions; signal communication arrangements between the forces; and other information necessary to assure coordinated action by the combined forces.

■ 1014. All preparations for an operation should be completed well in advance of the operation and, within the limits imposed by the necessity for secrecy, subordinate commanders should be given timely information of the details of the plan in order that units will have sufficient time to adjust equipment requirements, and complete special training.

As far as practicable, training and rehearsal for the operation should be conducted on terrain similar to that for which the actual operation is planned. *This includes joint training by the combined arms detailed to participate in the operation.*

■ 1015. The size and composition of the force assigned to a landing field is determined largely by the location and facilities of the field, the mission, the enemy situation, and the organization for combat. Each force is organized and equipped to execute a specific mission.

CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS

■ 1016. The *combined operations of parachute and air landing troops* are characterized primarily by the speed and sur-

prise with which these troops can execute an attack in hostile rear areas, or to intervene at critical areas in the theater of war.

■ 1017. It is not likely that higher commanders can exercise *direction or control* of air landing operations until after initial objectives have been seized or initial tasks executed. Each unit must be self-sustaining during the initial phase of combat. No support, except from combat aviation, can be expected before the landing of additional troops or until contact is made with other ground forces.

■ 1018. *The number of hostile landing areas* that are required for an air landing operation depends on the size and composition of the force, the mission, hostile defensive dispositions, and similar factors. Ordinarily, several landing fields are necessary for major operations. The use of several landing areas serves to deceive the enemy in that it causes him to disperse his defensive forces over a wide area, and conceals the place of landing of the bulk of the command.

■ 1019. Preliminary air attack directed against the prospective landing areas will ordinarily be required preceding the landing, to destroy or disorganize local defenses.

■ 1020. The time of starting *bombing missions* in support of an air landing operation depends largely on the mission of the force, the enemy air situation, defensive ground organization, and other factors which must be considered for each operation.

At an appropriate time preceding the launching of the air transport movement, bombardment aviation attacks enemy airdromes, planes on the ground, and other installations in the combat area. This is followed closely by bombing and machine-gun attacks against the local hostile defense force and against the defenses surrounding the landing areas to include hostile artillery within range of the landing area. During the landing, bombing operations seek to destroy enemy ground forces and defensive works, with particular attention to the attack of any motorized or mechanized units moving to the defense of the landing area. After the landing is effected, bombardment aviation furnishes close support for the ground operation in accordance with previously arranged plans or on call.

■ 1021. The *landing of parachute troops* should be timed to follow closely the bombardment operations against the defenses of the landing areas. Ordinarily, these troops are dropped around the perimeters of previously selected landing areas. Small fighting groups or units proceed to the execution of their initial tasks, which usually are the seizure and clearing of landing fields and the neutralization of local defenses. Other suitable missions for these troops include capture of important terrain features or buildings; road blocking; seizure of local signal communications; contact with friendly civilians and agents; covering the operations of other parachute troops; executing specified demolitions; and reconnaissance toward designated localities.

■ 1022. Air landing troops land shortly after the parachute troops in accordance with a time schedule coordinated with combat aviation and parachute troop operations or on a pre-arranged signal from the parachute troops on the ground. Thereafter, transport planes are landed on a time schedule which may be modified to conform to actual conditions on the ground.

Units operating from the several landing fields execute their assignments in accordance with a previously prepared plan, which should be flexible enough to allow commanders wide latitude in the conduct of the operation.

■ 1023. *Signal equipment* of parachute troops is limited to light and comparatively simple apparatus. Units down to and including the squad may be equipped with small, two-way radio sets, panels, and pyrotechnics. Signal equipment may also be procured or improvised locally.

Air landing troops modify their means and methods of signal communication to suit each local situation. On some missions long range radio sets and special pyrotechnic equipment may be required. Particular care should be taken to assure signal communication with supporting combat aviation by providing sufficient equipment for at least two different means.

COUNTERMEASURES

■ 1024. All unit commanders are responsible for the defense of their areas against parachute and air landing troops. Measures are taken to insure timely warning of the approach

of such troops by the establishment of air warning sentries or patrols and by cooperation with established military or civilian air warning services.

■ 1025. All troops stationed in an area cooperate in the defense against parachute and air landing troops by firing or descending parachutists and enemy aircraft within range. Hostile elements that land are attacked before they can effect a reorganization on the ground.

■ 1026. Troops engaged in tactical operations should be free of the responsibility of defending rear areas.

Special defense measures may be required. These include provision for the local defense of vital localities, a highly mobile reserve and an information and warning system carefully integrated with an adequate signal communication system.

■ 1027. *Local defense* involves dispersion; the detail of first-line troops for the purpose should be avoided. Troops capable of only limited service may be employed for the defense of industrial areas. Civilian law enforcement agencies, State guards, patriotic organizations, and industrial employees also may be trained in local defense.

■ 1028. The function of the *mobile reserve* is the attack and destruction of any enemy troops attempting or effecting a landing. The reserve should consist of thoroughly trained troops. It should be highly mobile. Speed is essential. It is desirable that its counterattack be delivered before the enemy has completely organized his forces after landing.

The composition of the reserve should be in accordance with its mission. The use of mechanized troops supported by light cannon is indicated both for mobility and because the enemy will necessarily be weak in these elements, unprotected by intrenchments and obstacles and vulnerable to their assault. Any additional troops should be motorized.

The position of the reserve is influenced by the location of the various areas it is to protect and the road net.

■ 1029. Thorough coordination is secured with the aircraft warning service and any other air defense measures organized in the area.