



# News Release

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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### **ARMY PARATROOPERS DROP IN AT CHARLESTON AFB**

**CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C.** – One hundred and ninety-one paratroopers from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., jumped from three C-17's onto the Charleston AFB airfield as part of a salute to those attending the annual 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division National Convention Aug. 9.

The association is open to all military qualified parachutist or those who have been assigned to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. "We have veterans from the 11<sup>th</sup>, 101<sup>st</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Divisions and even Navy SEALs that are members," said Ben Beekman, national president of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Association.

About 1,400 former members of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division attended the convention, Aug. 8-12. The mass parachute jump is an annual tradition for the convention.

Several hundred conventioners and base members watched the demonstration. Upon landing on the airfield, 27 members of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Chorus sang a number of crowd-pleasing Army and patriotic songs. Immediately following the performance, the remaining 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division members marched in review for the crowd.

Beekman thanked the base and the Army for the exciting demonstration. "These C-17s are really some aircraft," he said after observing one of two C-17s on static display. One C-17 static was rigged for airdrop of paratroopers and the other was rigged for heavy equipment.

Beekman served at Fort Bragg, N.C., from 1954-1957 and jumped out of C-47, C-119, and C-124 aircraft. Beekman said this was one of their largest conventions ever and he attributed the large turnout to Charleston's close proximity to Fort Bragg.

Capt. Todd Grooms, a C-17 airdrop qualified pilot and instructor pilot in the 17<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron, has dropped Army 82<sup>nd</sup> AB jumpers many times. "The biggest thing that you worry about when dropping jumpers is timing. In the Army world, as long as you get it on the drop zone within the specific amount of time, they are happy. In the airdropper's mind, we want to be within a couple of seconds of being on time," Grooms said. "If we are more than 30 seconds away from that time on target, we're not happy."

Safety is another consideration. "As the aircraft commander, you are not just in charge of your crew but in charge of X amount of jumpers. If you drop 102 jumpers, than we are more concerned with are they in the right place, is the DZ clear, and can we drop them without dropping them on top of some obstacle? Also, if we have a hung jumper, that's when the loadmaster really comes into play because he becomes our eyes and ears to tell us what happened. If their equipment hangs them, then they cut themselves free. If they are hung by anything else, then it's the aircraft commander's decision whether or not to retrieve the person or to cut him free and for them to use their reserve parachute."

One Army officer from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division summed up the day: "What you have seen here today is a magnificent example of the wonderful Army and Air Force team. We work hand in hand to ensure that we can do the nations business."

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