

The Stars and Stripes
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Combat Controllers Are First in Drop Zone

WIESBADEN (Special) — Looking for a Combat Controller?

You'll find him wherever there are combat troops in conflict — real or training — or wherever there is a need for resupply of men and equipment at facilities without runway control-tower operations.

Anytime U.S. Air Force aircraft are air-dropping troops or landing them in an area without necessary navigational aids and air traffic control communications, a Combat Control Team parachutes in first. Once on the ground, the team then selects a suitable site, and goes to work setting up a control point for either aerial supply, troop drops or aircraft landings.

Next, the operation zone is marked. Meanwhile, weather information is continually being passed on to the incoming aircraft. During the operation, the team guides and controls all air traffic in the area.

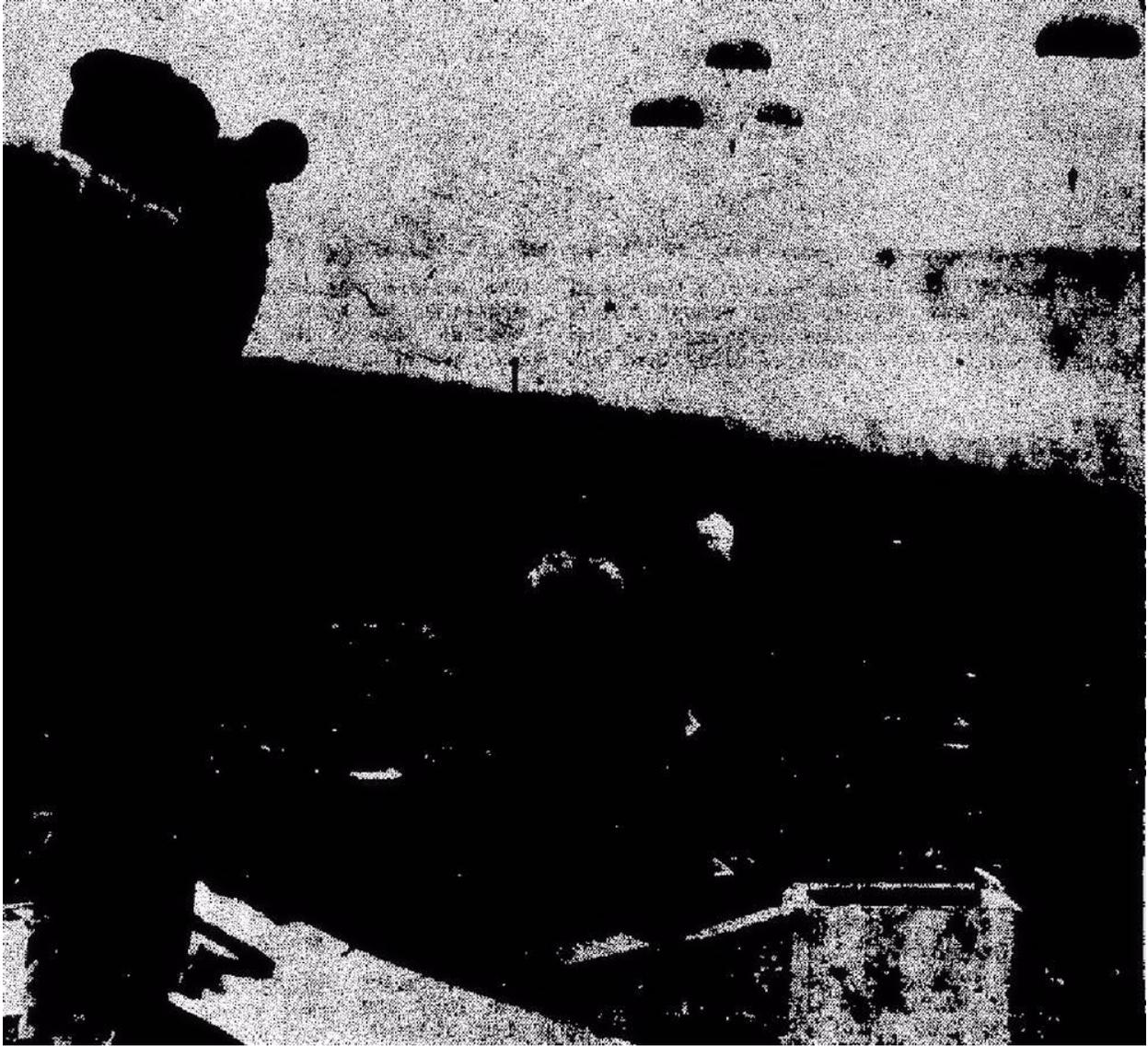
One of two 12-man U.S. units assigned Combat Control duties for the European theater of operations is Det 1 of the 5th Aerial Port Sq. The detachment, commanded by Capt. Gary Carlson, is located at Wiesbaden Air Base. The squadron, with its headquarters at Mildenhall Air Base, England, also has a 12-man team operating from there.

Combat Control teams are composed entirely of volunteers. Individuals are either recruited by Tactical Air Command teams from basic trainees, or by word-of-mouth from team members. Individuals are carefully screened, then undergo about a year of training to obtain the basic background.

First on the training agenda is either air traffic control school or radio maintenance school. Then comes jump school, followed by the Combat Control School. Physiological school comes next, then the jumpmaster course and finally, combat survival training.

“Required standards are high,” states Carlson, “but not unreasonable. Individuals should be fairly well coordinated and in good physical condition; it's not necessary that they be athletic or muscle-bound types.”

ON TARGET — T. Sgt. Billy Jones (below) gets a sighting on the strike area of a paratrooper while S. Sgt. William M. Roberts stands by to relay the strike report to aircraft controllers. Jones and Roberts, as members of a Combat Control Team, jumped in first.



Sent by Patrick Aguilar