



*A Cameroon armed forces member uses a compass to determine proper aircraft heading and aerial delivery drop zone marker placement prior to a Cameroon Air Force C-130 low-cost low-altitude bundle air drop during Central Accord 13. (Photo by Master Sgt. Stan Parker)*



# Enhancing Self-Sufficiency in Central Africa

Exercise Central Accord 13 helped Cameroon and surrounding nations bolster capabilities to support disaster response and peace by enhancing their logistics capacity and medical readiness.

■ By Col. Giselle Wilz

When heavy flooding hit northern Cameroon in September 2012, the Cameroon armed forces faced many challenges while responding to this natural disaster. The region's terrain, from coastal plains to mountains and barely navigable roadways, significantly delayed the response time, according to the Cameroon Air Force deputy chief of staff. He emphasized that he wished he and his comrades could have done more to quickly protect endangered citizens while mitigating the disaster.

The Cameroon armed forces had to return to a home base every few days to resupply before going back to conduct peacekeeping and stability operations, which resulted in the loss of valuable time. These concerns and more were addressed during Cen-

tral Accord 13, a joint, multinational exercise to promote regional cooperation and increase aerial resupply and medical treatment capacity. The 10-day exercise was sponsored by U.S. Army Africa and hosted by the Cameroon armed forces. The participating armed forces used their own equipment and manpower to increase self-sufficiency for the future.

Roughly 160 U.S. Soldiers, Airmen, and Sailors participated in the exercise with hundreds of military members from Cameroon, the Gabonese Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, and Burundi.

The annual exercise, which rotates among different Central African partner nations, demonstrates the continued U.S. commitment to



supporting African military efforts to remain equipped and capable of maintaining peace, stability, health, and well-being in their countries.

### Aerial Delivery

One key area of Central Accord 13 focused on aerial deliveries by working with the Central African militar-

ies to package water, food, and medical supplies for drops from existing airframes. U.S. Army riggers surveyed existing needs and capabilities and then delivered some cardboard honeycomb material for distributing weight during the practice airdrops.

Advisers from the U.S. Air Force provided instruction, and the U.S.

and Central African teams worked together to develop feasible ways to meet existing needs. In the meantime, airborne pathfinders discussed drop zone operations with the Central African militaries to establish and mark areas for receiving aerial deliveries.

Everyone participated in a training session provided by U.S. riggers on the various methods of packaging supplies for free fall airdrops from Cameroon's small Bell 206 and larger Eurocopter Puma helicopters. They also discussed the low-cost low-altitude system (LCLA) for use with Cameroon's single fixed-wing asset, the C-130 Hercules.

The LCLA is a single-use parachute airdrop system that costs less than other approved low-drop delivery systems. The LCLA can quickly resupply small units on the battlefield and can be assembled with little-to-no rigger training. This made it ideal both for the 10-day training event and for future use by Central African military partners.

Paratroopers from Cameroon and representatives from nearby partner nations quickly recognized the benefits of LCLAs in maintaining and improving operations because paratroopers can more quickly and easily receive supplies while in an operational area. Soldiers on dismounted patrols can expediently recover the supplies without materials-handling equipment. The bundles also can be retrieved without leaving any indicators of troop activity in the drop zone.

Altogether, the LCLA enables fast, precise delivery in a package configured to meet small-unit needs without operational pauses—a great training benefit to meet the needs of the Cameroon armed forces.

### Field Training Exercise

With the help of linguists from the Utah Army National Guard, whose State Partnership Program is aligned to Morocco, Central Accord 13 training quickly progressed from academics into practical exercises and a three-day field training exercise (FTX).



*A Burundi National Defense Force paratrooper adjusts the straps for a low-cost low-altitude delivery system during Exercise Central Accord 13 (Photo by Sgt. Austin Berner)*

During the first day of the FTX, the Cameroon armed forces made history with their first ever aerial supply delivery from a C-130 transport. Their Central African counterparts closely observed, knowing that the techniques and procedures could be replicated using their own aircraft.

The Cameroon armed forces were pleased with the exercise, commenting that when the next disaster hits, the airmen would be more ready to help by using the parachute systems to get food and water to those affected. Others commented in after-action reviews that they would be better able to manage their units' resupply operations in the air and on the ground by establishing drop zones and collecting supplies.

### Medical Treatment and Evacuation

Beyond the improved ability to get supplies to natural disaster victims and military members in the field, the Cameroon armed forces collaborated with U.S. and Central African counterparts to enhance patient treatment, medical readiness, and evacuation procedures.

Working just with the Cameroon military's existing airframes, U.S. personnel taught, demonstrated, and practiced loading patients into the helicopters, first while stationary and then during quick stops with the helicopter rotors spinning. By the tenth day of the exercise, the Central African militaries were quickly and efficiently demonstrating patient lifts and litter placement in helicopters while adhering to carefully practiced safety procedures. Cameroon armed forces officers commended the U.S. medical personnel for their knowledge of the aircrafts' capabilities.

In addition to evacuation techniques, the 256th Combat Support Hospital, an Ohio-based Army Reserve unit, worked with the Central African militaries on improving patient treatment in the field and evaluating conditions more commonly seen in recent conflicts, such as traumatic brain injuries. The instruction evolved into train-the-trainer style

classes that incorporated methods of using moulage kits to simulate injuries for better training.

Just as with the aerial delivery and drop zone training, all of the medical-related tasks came together during the three-day FTX as mock patients with injuries were treated using the shared medical techniques and then evacuated to airframes using a litter carry onto a Puma or a two-person lift onto a Bell helicopter.

### Real-World Benefits

Central Accord 13 participants said that they learned a wider scope of use for Cameroon's airframes—beyond their use for patient evacuation and aerial supply—such as incorporating the aircraft in peacekeeping missions or using them for search-and-rescue operations. Much of the training followed that thread: the equipment was there and the personnel were trained and ready, but both areas were primed for growth through mentorship and discussion. That growth in capacity remains a cornerstone of the annual Central Accord exercise.

The partnerships formed during the exercise are credited with advancing cooperative relationships. This was the first opportunity for several of the six participating Central African militaries to connect. These cooperative relationships are imperative to developing regional solutions to transnational security threats.

The Cameroon Army chief of staff said that with the amount of continental conflicts requiring intervention, Cameroonian service members serve as soldiers not only for their own country but also for Africa and the world. African militaries that focus on interoperability for better sustainment during operations to achieve or maintain peace and stability will benefit the region.

With many of Africa's nations identified as fragile states on Foreign Policy's Failed States Index, exercises like Central Accord 13 provide critical training for operational and relational improvements that strengthen the partners' capabilities to prepare for and

respond to crisis. The exercise did more than build relationships, however.

The need for standardized mission sets and terminology was apparent not only among the different countries but also among those hailing from the same military. For example, pilots from Cameroon are trained in schools across the globe, depending on available seats and funding. The differences in techniques and terminology posed conflicts with some operating procedures. As part of the joint effort of Central Accord 13, contradictions were worked out and best practices were established for conducting future operations safely and efficiently.

Central Accord 13 provided a mutually beneficial training opportunity for the United States and its African partners. Operating on a global scale in an austere environment furthers U.S. armed forces' capabilities as they gain the opportunity to plan and execute a multinational mission, train with international military forces, and strengthen their own mission execution skills. It also demonstrates the continuing commitment of the United States to enhance military interoperability and global security through mutually beneficial exercises.

Central Accord has been bringing U.S. and African militaries together for advancement since 1996. This commitment continues to enhance global operations and develops the operational capacity of some of the weaker nations in the global sphere to strengthen the whole.

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