The Canopy

Issue 6 / Volume 34 / Nov 2026



Buddy Care Under the Drones

That hour is now a day.

Read more on page 3.

The Long Line of Canopies

We've hung under them all.

Read more on page 5.

The Night Flight to SNAFU

That's a long way to land off-target.

Read more on page 7.

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Upcoming Events and Historical Notes

14 November @ 1300 hrs | Chapter Meeting | VFW Post 8083

From the Editor



Happy November everyone! The turkey is in the air. This issue hits on a topic that's been front of mind for me for a few months now: casualty care in today's drone environment. Prolonged buddy care or even self-care seems like it will be the norm in the battlefield of tomorrow. The idea that you can get a CASEVAC helicopter to you in an hour seems quaint these days. It's a different world out there. Send me your thoughts!

This month's cover comes from Sgt. Jesse Rugg, 1st Cavalry Division. Taken October 27, 2026.

Airborne! All The Way!

Ron Dahlgren
Editor, The Canopy
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Buddy Care Under the Drones

By Ron Dahlgren



Combat medics provide care to a simulated casualty during a prolonged field care exercise. Photo by Sgt. Haden Tolbert, Oklahoma National Guard

FORT BRAGG, North Carolina — The Golden Hour is a casualty of modern warfare. For decades, the military relied on getting wounded troops to surgical care within 60 minutes. That standard worked during the Global War on Terror. Today, drone warfare has shattered that timeline. The military is moving away from its long-standing policy of rapid surgical evacuation. Reports indicate the concept itself has become a casualty of modern battlefields ruled by unmanned aircraft.

The Drone Reality. Persistent surveillance makes movement lethal. The World Health Organization reports 1,986 attacks on Ukrainian health care infrastructure and 428 attacks on medical evacuation vehicles between 24 February 2022 and 23 April 2025. The war in Ukraine demonstrates a battlefield under constant surveillance where both sides use integrated kill webs. Commercial, off-the-shelf drones spot targets for immediate artillery strikes.

Training Shift. US medical training is adapting to the new threat. Held annually at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, Operation Bushmaster is the five-day capstone field exercise for fourth-year medical students from the Uniformed Services University. At this year's exercise, nearly 200 fourth-year medical students completed the exercise alongside 13 international military peers. Operation Bushmaster 2026 incorporated drone threats into scenarios. Scenarios built around drone threats required teams to move patients quickly instead of treating them in place at the point of injury. Army Lt. Col. Melissa Myers said, "The news coming out of Ukraine is telling us very clearly that drone warfare is going to be a pretty significant part of any future conflict."

Tourniquet Trouble. Prolonged care brings new risks to the battlefield. In parts of the Ukrainian front, evacuation delays can extend far beyond doctrinal timelines. A soldier described by Taras waited 12 days to be evacuated from the front lines to a forward field unit. By then he had developed gangrene and his leg had to be amputated, but he survived.

Reassessment is critical for survival. The standard medical goal is to get tourniquets off within two hours. But this one was in place for seven. And Taras said sometimes they have been left on for days. Reports emphasize the need for the U.S. military healthcare system to prioritize tourniquet reassessment and conversion during prolonged care.

US leaders acknowledge the change in doctrine. During the Global War on Terror, "missions were very often planned within the range of where you could get an aircraft within an hour," Col. Ken Dwyer said. "But it is on life support with respect to what we think the future might hold," he added. Army Col. Jennifer Gurney warned that prolonged casualty care is a consequence of impossible evacuation, not a standalone solution.

Technology Limits. Robotic systems offer some help but remain limited. Unmanned ground vehicles can remove bodies

from the combat zone, yet mass-produced devices for remotely loading a body onto a platform do not exist. Consequently, evacuations happen less frequently due to execution complexity.

The Human Cost. Stress levels are climbing among frontline troops. Constant UAS surveillance and attacks force medics and patients to remain vigilant, complicating operations. Without strong support to process grief in real-time, unit cohesion risks fracturing under shared distress. Medics and junior leaders face decision fatigue managing complex triage with dwindling supplies.

Training seminars at Fort Bragg underscore the shift in doctrine. The 18th Airborne Corps hosted the event for combat casualty care specialists. Sgt. Major Clark Hitchcock, the Corps' senior medic, observed that the discussion reinforces established prolonged care guidelines. "I think that really speaks to where our prolonged casualty care guidelines are going and really reinforcing what we already know to be true," he said. "It's very encouraging to hear the practices that we're looking at are actually in play in Ukraine right now."

Paratroopers must prepare for isolation. For the warfighter, realizing no helicopter is coming shatters a generational psychological safety net. Units will hold, treat, and defend wounded personnel for days, often while actively engaged in combat under strict emission control. For paratroopers reading these pages, that standard sounds familiar.



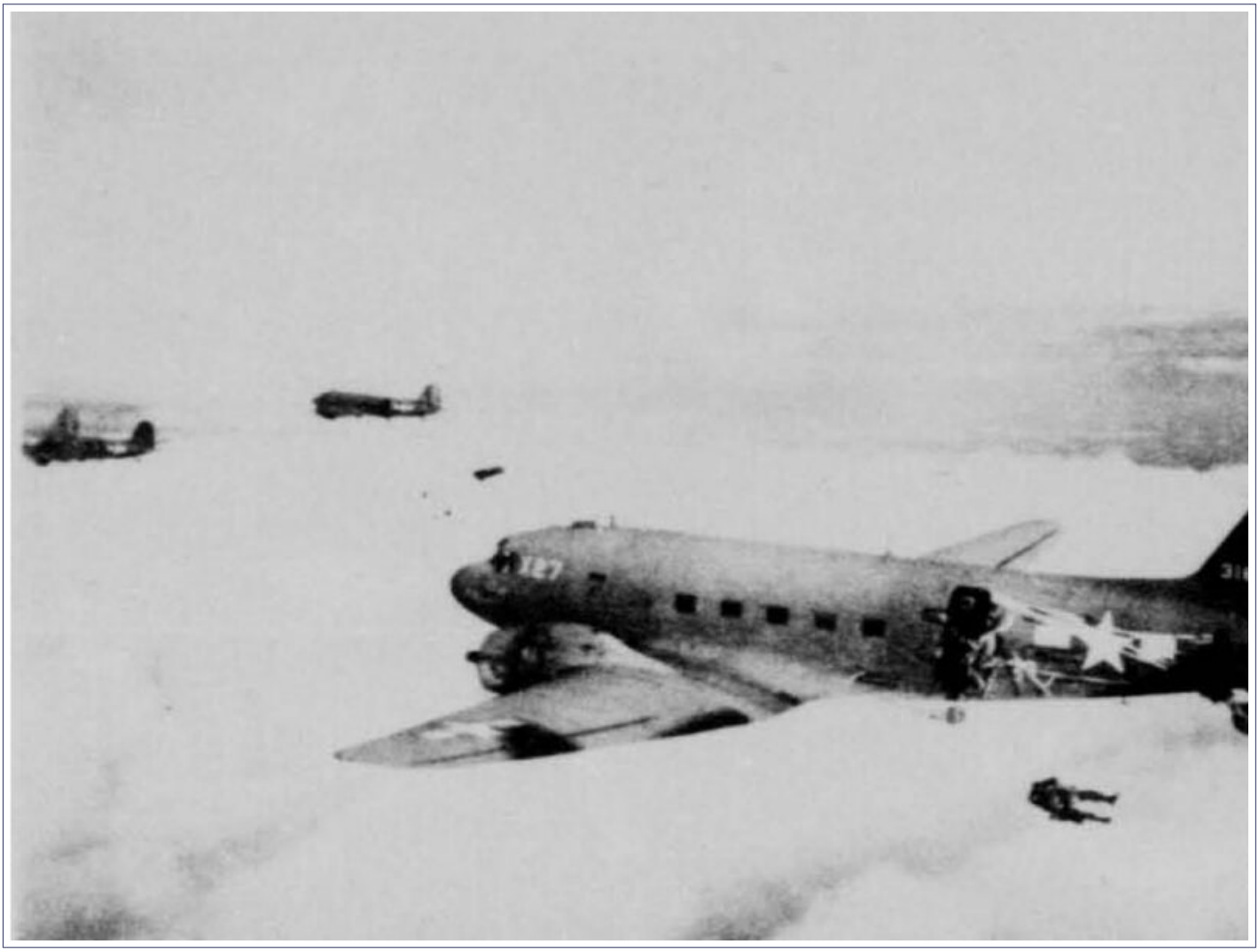
A U.S. Marine performs tactical combat casualty care during a drone incursion exercise. Photo by Lance Cpl. Tyler Bassett, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni

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Sources include reporting from the World Health Organization, the Uniformed Services University, and interviews with Ukrainian medical personnel conducted by Carolina MEdiC.

The Long Line of Canopies

Airborne Notes



511th Parachute Infantry Regiment paratroopers airdrop over Tagaytay Ridge in 1945. Photo by Capt. Aaron Moshier, 7th Bomb Wing

The First Step

Symbols define our trade. Wings on a chest. A maroon beret. But the real trigger is a small green light in a noisy aircraft. Before that light burns, the day builds pressure. Planning. Manifest. Friction. The shift started long before the light became standard.

On August 16, 1940, at Fort Benning, Georgia, volunteers took a step that changed history. The Parachute Test Platoon executed the Army's first official jump. Lieutenant William T. Ryder led the way; he became a pioneer of American Airborne. William "Red" King followed right behind Ryder. History marks him as the Army's first enlisted jumper. The War Department authorized this experimental unit in June.

Reconstruction puts the jump height near 1,500 feet. Training started late June 1940. Selection picked two officers and 48 enlisted men for a new program where techniques were still being codified. Ryder insisted men prepare their own chutes to build confidence in the gear. Before the aircraft trials, the Test Platoon conducted some preparation using parachute towers in New Jersey. It was a completely new program. Much of the techniques still had to be tested and codified.

The T-10 Years



511th Parachute Infantry Regiment paratroopers stage gear in Mindoro, Philippines, in 1945. Photo by Capt. Aaron Moshier, 7th Bomb Wing

The T-10 design entered service in the 1950s with few changes. Stability defined the era. It drops at 23 feet per second. We could pull a slip to drift slightly, but true steering wasn't

the name of the game. The design parameters stayed stable for decades. That consistency kept us safe for a long time. The same stability in design parameters is true for personnel parachutes such as the T-10, which uses a design that has been in service with few alternations since the 1950s.

In the late 60s, we jumped T-10 round chutes. Bozz10mm recalls, "T-10s were still the standard then, with MC-1 just getting in to the system." Official MC-1s were hard to come by back then. Units often rigged their own conversions from T-10s to meet operational needs. By 1998 to 2000, the 82nd still used T-10s. Jumpmasters sometimes got the toggle chutes. You could pull on the risers to change direction a little bit, but it wasn't true steering.

Defense parachute tech moved slow from the 40s to the mid-90s. Soldier weight grew while gear loads increased. Heavier loads mean faster descent speeds and higher injury rates. To address this problem, the Army developed the Advanced Tactical Parachute System. It aims to lower the paratrooper's descent speed and lessen injury rates.

Steering and Safety

Maneuvering chutes in mass jumps raises injury risks for new jumpers. A C&GSC paper warns, "Putting the ability to maneuver a parachute during mass tactical jumps into the hands of inexperienced paratroopers significantly increases the risk of injury." Steerability existed on the MC-1, but nothing compared to today's rectangular designs. Todd Joyce notes, "It less that it's completely non-steerable, it's more that steerable implies the ability to navigate under canopy in today's lexicon. The T-11 doesn't enable that."

During Grenada, the 2nd Ranger Battalion exited at 500 feet AGL. Reserve chutes were left behind. A steerable parachute would be useless under those conditions. I've jumped low and high from various aircraft. Jumps sometimes hit 4,000 feet in helos. But during actual ops, we stayed low.

At Fort Bragg in the early 70s, riggers had a "25 and go" policy. Bozz10mm remembers, "Pack 25 chutes and you were off the rest of the day." Some walked off at noon. Their disregard for procedure was shocking. Throws into the bag were careless. Rigging 75,000 chutes yearly is a heavy lift. Now they limit packs to 15 a day.

The T-11 Shift



511th Parachute Infantry Regiment paratroopers travel enroute to Tagaytay Ridge in 1945. Photo by Capt. Aaron Moshier, 7th Bomb Wing

The T-10 gave way to the T-11. It handles our heavier gear loads without the sport-chute steering. Exit weights top out around 400 pounds. Reduced opening shock cuts down on other issues. The larger canopy spreads the force on landing. This suits various body types.

Descent slows to 19 feet per second. They call the shape cruciform. The T-11R reserve offers better reliability. It maintains vertical alignment for landing. Bozz10mm admits, "This is the first I've heard of T-11s." Rigging standards changed since his time. The whole system evolved.

Wudidiz recalls, "There were a few times that I would have missed the DZ if it wasn't for climbing up those T10 risers. In Okinawa, an old runway sat in the middle of the Yomitan DZ. I almost landed on the concrete due to wind. Manipulating risers shortened drift. I wouldn't be a fan of the T-11s."

Chapter Note

Readers know that standard. We build on shared experience. In the chapter, we lack a green light. We decide to show up after long absence. We call a member instead of assuming they are fine. That's the real manifest. We are an organization built around shared experience. It's the same commitment we made under the static line. The signal is different, but the discipline holds.

Signals matter. Simplest ones often carry the most weight. Actions follow the signal immediately. When it turns green, you go. The standard holds. The next 75 years look ready to meet it. For the paratroopers reading these pages, that last standard will sound familiar.

Sources include U.S. Army Center of Military History, Airborne and Special Operations Museum, and veteran accounts from TexasGuntalk.com forums.

The Night Flight to SNAFU

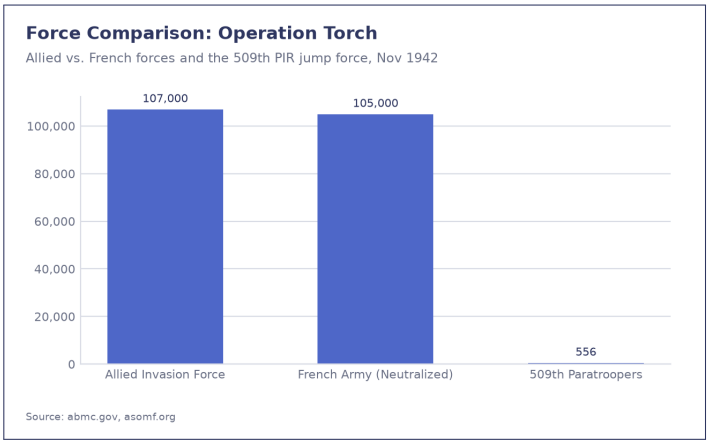
Airborne Notes



Paratroopers from 1-509th and 3-509th Infantry jump together to celebrate Geronimo unit lineage. Photo by Airman 1st Class Moises Vasquez, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson

The Long Haul

On November 8, 1942, American paratroopers jumped into combat for the first time in the Army's history. The jump was part of Operation TORCH, the invasion of North Africa: a 107,000-man force under Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose mission was to neutralize the 105,000-man French army technically allied with Germany. The airborne tip of the spear was the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry—redesignated the 2nd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry on November 2, six days before the jump, while the battalion staged in England—with orders to seize the airfields at Tafaraoui and La Senia, near Oran.



The 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion represented a tiny fraction of the massive 107,000-man Allied invasion force. Chart: The Canopy; data from abmc.gov, asomf.org

Fog and Fuel

The plan asked the near-impossible of 1942 aviation: take off in Cornwall, cross the Bay of Biscay and neutral Spain in the dark,

and jump on airfields outside Oran, more than 1,500 miles away. No airborne mission of the war would fly farther. On the night of November 7, 556 paratroopers lifted off in 39 C-47s from St Eval and Predannack as the vanguard of the invasion. Overflying neutral Spain was a political gamble, the C-47s were packed with men and gear, and every mile tested the limits of the aircraft and their crews.

Over Spain, thick fog broke up the formation. Planes wandered off course and missed their objectives, and the sheer range and the navigation errors took the edge off the airborne spearhead. One paratrooper summed it up as a "Night flight to SNAFU" (situation normal, all fouled up). If any unit was built for that kind of chaos, it was this one: its aggressive commander, Lieutenant Colonel Edson D. Raff, had drilled the battalion hard for whatever waited on the ground.

A Minor Epic



Paratroopers from 1-509th and 3-509th jump together to celebrate Geronimo unit lineage. Photo by Airman 1st Class Moises Vasquez, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson

The scattered force paid for every navigation error. Three planes ran out of fuel in Spanish Morocco, where the soldiers were interned; another landed at British-held Gibraltar. Raff jumped, smashed into a rock, and broke two ribs—35 miles from the Tafaraoui airstrip. By the time he reached the field by jeep, troops driving up from the invasion beaches had already taken it. Other aircraft dropped their paratroopers far off-target.

The Geronimos recovered and fought. Raff's paratroopers teamed up with British and French troops to harass the Germans in Tunisia, nearly always outnumbered, and quickly earned a name as hard fighters against the Afrika Korps. Eisenhower called Raff's exploits "a minor epic": in *Crusade in Europe*, he wrote that the deceptions Raff practiced, and the speed of his movements, kept the enemy confused for weeks.

Writing the Playbook

Tactically, the results were disappointing—but the jump proved that long-range airborne operations could be done, and every hard lesson went into the Army's young airborne playbook. The hardest lesson was navigation, and the 509th answered it themselves: at Oujda, French Morocco, in the spring of 1943, the battalion's Scout Company became the Army's first pathfinders, trained to jump ahead of the main body, mark the drop zones, and bring the following waves in safely. The role has evolved, but it remains essential today—and its lineage runs straight back to the 509th.

The Geronimos jumped again a week after Oran, at Youks-les-Bains, with far better results. By the end of the war they had made five combat jumps—Oran, Youks-les-Bains, and El Djem in North Africa, Avellino in Italy, and Le Muy in France, the last in support of Operation DRAGOON—plus an amphibious assault at Anzio.

Geronimo's Mark

The 509th's nickname is the "Geronimos"; its motto, "All the Way"; its colors, black and gold. The nickname was born in August 1940, when Private Aubrey Eberhardt of the Army's original Parachute Test Platoon announced he would prove he wasn't scared by yelling "Geronimo!" as he went out the door—and he did. The first parachute units took up the cry, the 509th put it on its early patches, and it became a symbol of the unit's spirit.

The first jump also gave the airborne one of its first fallen. French fighters attacked the transports near Oran on November 8, and Private Tommy MacKall of E Company was mortally wounded; he died four days later at Gibraltar, 22 years old. Three months on, the Army named its new airborne training center near Fort Bragg—whose construction had begun the very day MacKall was hit—Camp MacKall, in his honor.

The insignia carries the whole story. The stylized yellow figure of a parachutist on a black ground was adapted from the device worn by the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment during World War II. The red field alludes to the red berets worn by the British 1st Airborne Division and the close association between it and the Regiment during World War II in England and North Africa. The nebuly white and blue bars refer to the record-breaking parachute flight from England to North Africa on November 8, 1942, and the five arrowheads stand for the Regiment's five major assault landings of the war.

The name is still earned today: the 1st Battalion serves as the opposing force at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk. Our chapter meets on November 8, the anniversary of that first combat jump. We honor the men who flew into the fog and made their last jump on African ground. When it turns green, you go. See you on the final drop zone.

**Sources for this article include the U.S. Army's First Parachute Combat Assault (asomf.org), the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion "Geronimo" (abmc.gov), and the Edson D. Raff Memoriam (sandiegouniontribune.com).*

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