



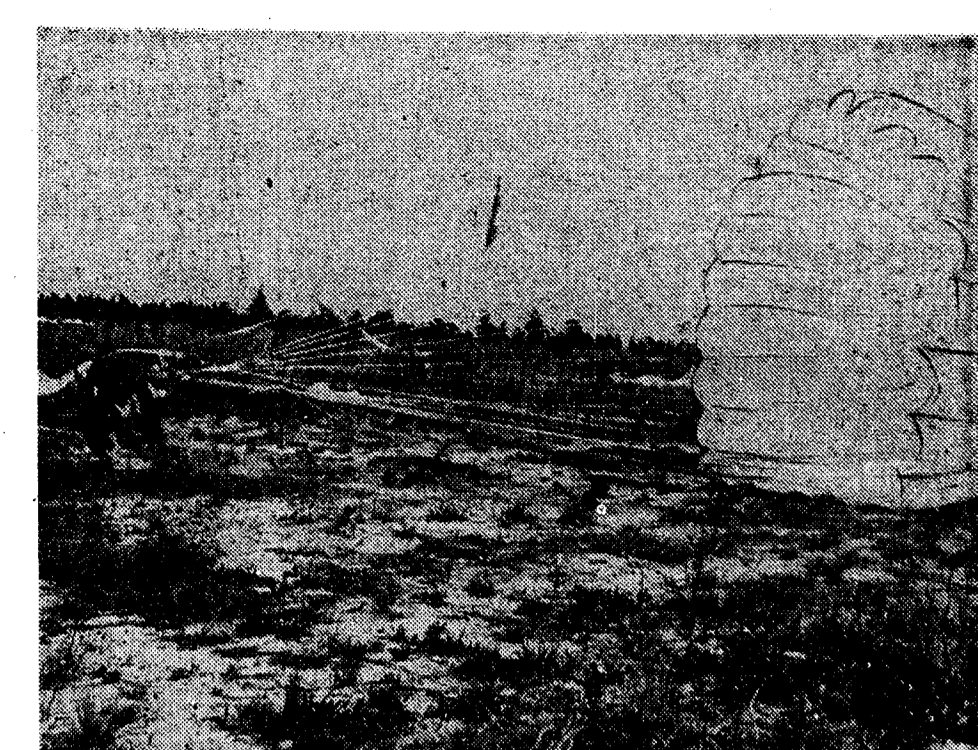
Paratroopers don equipment preparatory to a mission.



Airborne troopers board a troop carrier.

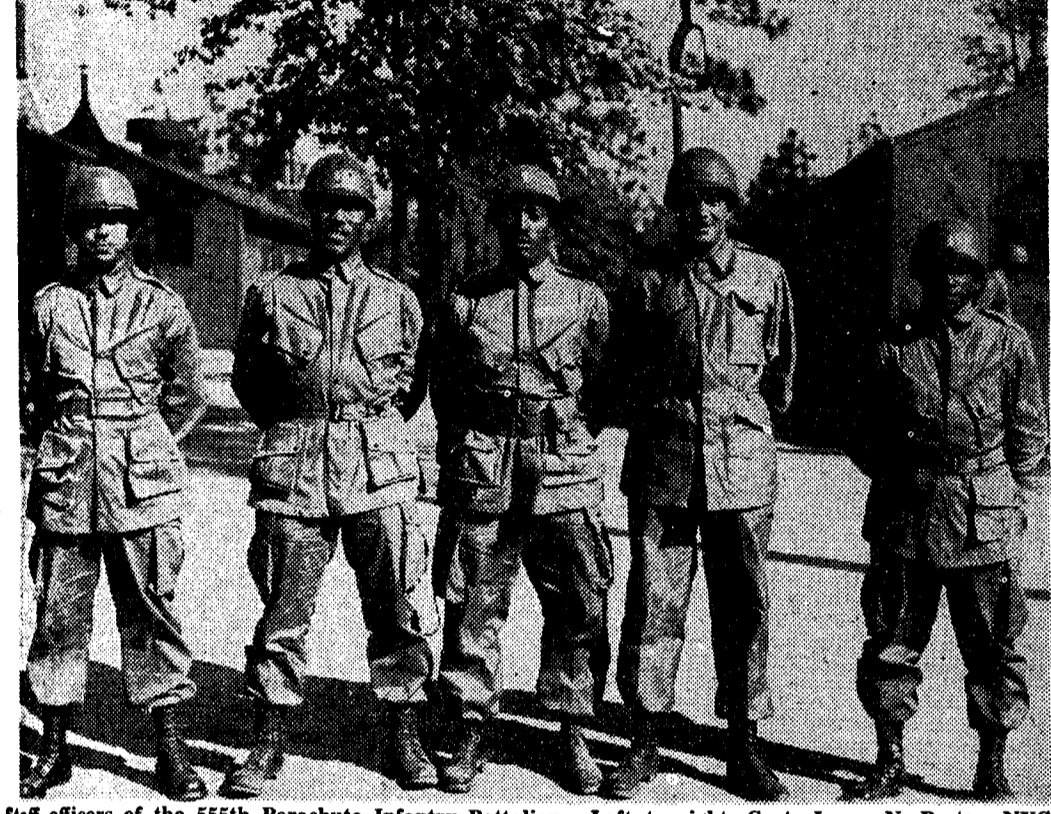


Paratroopers inside C-47 ready for take-off. Plane holds 46.



A paratrooper is shown as he lands with complete equipment for battle.

Staff Officers of 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion



Staff officers of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion. Left to right, Capt. James N. Porter, NYC, commanding officer; First Lieuts. Clifford Allen, Chicago; Richard Y. Shelton, St. Louis; Second Lieut. Charles R. Otey, Columbus, Ohio, and First Lieut. Melvin E. Farris, Cleveland.

National Medical Group Won't Hold Convention
LOUISVILLE — (ANP) — The National Medical Association will not hold its convention here next summer because of the recent ban on conventions, food and the housing shortage.

Instead, the board of trustees and all officers will meet here August 20-23, to discuss increasing medical problems, hospital facilities and medical care for returning veterans.

AFRO Writer Witnesses Jump from Nine Carriers

Detailed Briefing, Inspection Bring About Near Perfect Execution by 109 Selected Men

By Staff Correspondent
CAMP MACKALL, N.C. — A jump by paratroopers is a colorful spectacle and when properly executed under ideal flying conditions, something that one doesn't see often.

Two AFRO representatives watched one. The jump we witnessed here was one of excellent timing, grand co-ordination and near perfect execution, according to veteran observers.

A select company of 109 men, fully equipped for combat, their rations and weapons, dropped from skies over "D" field and from afar looked like multi-colored mushrooms descending from heaven.

Jump from Nine Carriers
The jump was scheduled for 2:30 p.m. (1430 Army Time). About thirty seconds before jump time one got the first glimpse of C-47 Troop Carriers in the distance winging their way toward the field.

There were nine aircraft, grouped in threes, flying V-trails, with each group fanning the letter "V." A tenth and spare plane trailed in the rear.

As the planes reached the exit point on the field, the first trooper in the lead plane dropped. Others tumbled after him, quickly.

Equipment Dropped
This procedure was duplicated in all the planes. (A troop carrier ordinarily contains 26 paratroopers.) Simultaneously, equipment chutes were dropped.

In a few seconds the air was filled with billowing 'chutes' of various colors. Despite a gusty wind, the men were coming down in good formation and with reasonable proximity.

As some of the men neared the ground, one could see some of the oscillating, but as they came nearer the ground, the air became calmer, and the majority landed without terrific bumps.

Gather at Appointed Place
Some, however, landed about 300 or 400 yards beyond the point designated for landing, but there was little time wasted in assembling and moving off to previously arranged rendezvous.

The group had a simulated tactical problem, and each man moved with swiftness in getting his ammunition, weapons and equipment, identified by certain colors and made his way to the appointed place.

Story Behind Jump
That was about all there was

Top Officers Praise 555th Parachute Bn.

Morale of Men High, Many Served Overseas; Volunteers Needed

By Staff Correspondent
CAMP MACKALL, N.C.—Staffed by 22 officers, the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, the only all-colored air-borne unit, is now in advanced training here and there is visible evidence that it will make a good showing if and when assigned to duty.

However, the unit has to face an intensive period of training in infantry tactics before it will be ready for combat action.

Morale High
The morale of the unit is high, and the men who are a bold, cocksure bunch, seem to be fully confident that they will be amply able to fulfill any combat mission they will be called upon to face, once their training is completed.

Nevertheless, there is a distinct desire among many of the paratroopers to avert the fate of the controversial 92nd Division. They want to be neither wistfully glorified nor overpublicized.

Anxious to Make Good
Fundamentally, they are interested in making themselves good troopers and marking up a good record.

I am not inclined to paint an unnecessarily optimistic picture, but I feel that I am climbing out on a pretty strong limb when I predict that the unit, given first-class training—and as far as I can see the men are getting it here—it will take care of itself in good fashion.

There are yet a few kinks to iron out, but they are not insuperable hurdles—at least to the uninitiated eye.

Captain Highest Officer
The battalion is now commanded by Capt. James H. Porter of New York. A parachute battalion's table of organization calls for a lieutenant colonel as commander.

It is difficult here that no ranking colored officer has yet qualified for air-borne service. None of the 555th officers has been commissioned long enough to acquire sufficient seniority for a higher rank than captain.

So for the present that aspect of the unit's setup is pretty much a makeshift affair, but in time may work itself out.

Volunteers Being Accepted
The battalion is not yet full strength. Fillers for the outfit are being trained at Fort Benning and more volunteers are being accepted.

One big rub is to get qualified men to volunteer for the grinding service of air-borne units. An added difficulty of the 555th is that many qualified colored soldiers were already overseas when the unit was activated December 30, 1943.

Praised by Officers
In talking to the high command at this training center you find that the 555th is held in high esteem. Top-ranking officers with whom I talked had warm praise for both the commissioned and enlisted personnel.

One thing I can say without equivocation is that the most experienced troopers in the unit are certainly skillful jumpers. I watched them in one leap and

Varied Equipment Taken by Men for Any Emergency

CAMP MACKALL, N.C.—When a paratrooper goes into action he is well heeled in equipment for any contingency or emergency.

Of prime importance are two parachutes: the T-5 regulation 'chute, with the 28-foot canopy, attached to the trooper's back, and a 24-foot canopy reserve chute, attached to his front.

He carries either a carbine with a folding stock especially designed for paratroopers or an M-1 rifle that is separated into three parts and can be put together in a few seconds or some special weapons such as the M-3 sub-machine gun.

Specialists, such as demolitionists and communication experts, carry much more elaborate equipment. All paratroopers are equipped riggers and are able to pack their own 'chutes.

Other Equipment
Trenching tools, first aid kit, short axe, individual demolition kits, gas masks, K-rations, field equipment, chustit's rope to climb out of trees, and other personal effects are also among his combat equipment.

Field Officers of Airborne Unit



Other officers of the airborne unit, left to right, first row, First Lieut. Edwin Wills, Washington; Capt. Richard Williams, Waycross, Ga.; First Lieut. Bradley Biggs, Vaux Hall, N.J.; Second Lieut. Roger S. Walden, Detroit; second row, Second Lieuts. Thomas M. Armous, Morristown, N.J.; Sanders D. Middleton, Saginaw, Mich.; Harry E. Sutton, New York; First Lieuts. Clarence T. Gaines, Cleveland, and Charles J. Burks, Pittsburgh.

GI's Segregated in Theatre Despite Order Banning J.C.

By Staff Correspondent
CAMP MACKALL, N.C.—There is one bias fly in the ointment of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion.

Notwithstanding a War Department memorandum to the contrary, jim crow is imposed on enlisted men in the post theatre located in the heart of their area.

While it has had no tangible effects on their keenness for training, this discriminatory policy, attributed to the commanding officer of the post, Col. L. L. Hathaway, has disturbed the morale of some of the men.

I did not see Colonel Hathaway while I was here, but I learned that he is a Northerner whose social views apparently coincide with Southern mores.

Only One Theatre in Use
When there was a much larger troop population at Mackall, and other theatres were in use, there was no segregation in the movie house in question, I learned.

However, now that there are a comparatively small number of troops on the post and only one theatre is being utilized, Colonel Hathaway has ordered that colored enlisted men be relegated to one side of the building.

Officers Not Affected
This order does not affect officers, who have tried in vain to bring about corrective action.

Only recently have service club and guest room facilities been provided for the personnel of the 555th. Officers of the unit have been able to frequent the officers' club whenever they wish.

There is a post exchange in the area of the 555th. I was told that there is no cordial invitation for the men to visit PX's in other areas, although officially they are not barred.

Few Recreation Facilities
The unit's non-com club is one of the most attractive I have seen anywhere and the men take considerable pride in it.

Members of the 555th have other social problems that are, in broad terms, not racial.

Mackall is somewhat isolated and recreation and amusement facilities in nearby towns, such as Laurinburg, Rockingham, Southern Pines, and Maxton, are nothing to write home about.

Bluntly speaking, they are practically nil, and one has to be charitable not to say they are virtually non-existent.

It makes the troopers somewhat disconcerted when they reminisce about their "big city" life at Fort Benning and then are suddenly jolted back into the reality of their present remote existence.

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Ex-92nd Officer of N. Y. Heads Unit

CAMP MACKALL, N. C.—The 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion is commanded by Capt. James H. Porter of New York, who rose from the ranks of enlisted men to his present post.

Drafted four years ago while a drugstore employee in New York, Captain Porter went to Officers' Candidate School for his commission, and was attached to the 92nd Division before he volunteered for air-borne service.

The only other captain attached to the unit is Capt. Richard W. Williams, of Waycross, Ga., also a 92nd Division veteran. He commands the company of the first group of jumpers to win their wings.

N.J., N.Y. Men Among Officers
Other officers include: First Lieut. Edward D. Baker, Jasper E. Ross and Clifford Allen, of Chicago; Bradley Biggs, former professional football player, of Vauxhall, N.J.; Clarence T. Gaines, Cleveland; Edwin H. Wills, Washington; Julius F. Lyane, Tampa, Fla.; Richard Y. Shigley, St. Louis, Mo.; Second Lieut. Roger S. Walden, De-

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