



Humanitarian Airdrop Relief Effort (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

What It Is:

Operation Provide Promise is the largest humanitarian airdrop mission in the history of the United States, surpassing even the celebrated Berlin Airlift. Over 35,000 tons of relief supplies were airdropped to Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1993 and 1995.

Why It's Needed:

The citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina faced hunger, cold, and damaged or destroyed homes. We provided humanitarian aid by airdropping food, medical supplies, and winterization kits that included blankets, clothes, and supplies to build and repair shelters — like lumber, plastic sheeting, nails and tape.

How It Works:

We delivered supplies via two types of airdrop:

Free Drops...Ground convoys couldn't reach some towns to distribute the food and supplies. Looking for another method to deliver rations without using up parachutes and cargo containers, we developed TRIADS, the Tri-Wall Container Free Drop System. Rations are packed in tri-wall cardboard boxes, which are ripped open by a static line as they fall from the aircraft. The rations fall free over a large area.

High-Velocity Airdrops...For high airdrop altitudes, we used the Container Delivery System (CDS), a standard military parachute (the "26-foot ringslot") on top of a cargo container called the A-22. Because of the massive extent of the airdrop effort, the Army quickly exhausted its supply of 26-foot ringslot parachutes. We then turned to a large stock of low-velocity G-12D parachutes; these had to be modified for the high-velocity airdrops. The G-12D is designed for heavy loads; to take full advantage of its capacity, we lashed cargo containers together to form "double A-22s" that could carry up to 3,500 pounds of supplies.

Benefits:

During Operation Provide Promise, the U.S. forces dropped an average of 100 containers a day and recovered none, because of the drop zones' dangerous locations. This meant that \$30 million worth of air items were depleted from U.S. war reserves. Though humanitarian resupply was a success, we've learned that our airdrop missions could be more efficient and cost effective. The need for better airdrop delivery equipment has opened the door for these new technologies:

LCADS...The Low Cost Aerial Delivery System includes parachutes designed for one-time use, helping to lower the price tag for humanitarian operations.

New Cargo Containers...Natick is developing cargo containers that can carry more TRIADS, so fewer aircraft are put in harm's way.

Point of Contact:

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