

Marseilles Training Center
1700 Army Rd.
Marseilles, IL 61341

10 March 2004

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE RAPPEL FACILITIES - MARSEILLES TRAINING CENTER

Purpose: To provide guidance for the conduct of Rappelling operations at the Marseilles Training Center Rappel Facilities.



1. Safety is of paramount importance to all soldiers involved in rappelling operations. A safety briefing will be conducted before all rappelling operations.
2. Safety will be stressed constantly throughout training. Any individual, regardless of rank, is obligated to stop training if he/she observes an unsafe act.
3. Tower Safety Inspection – The Illinois Army National Guard will conduct a yearly safety certification of the rappel tower. A team comprised of the State Safety manager, a facilities representative and a rappel master will conduct the inspection. At the conclusion, there will be a memorandum of record prepared by the inspection team certifying the tower as safe. This memorandum will be kept on record at Marseilles Training Center.
4. Personnel required to conduct training:
 - a. Rappel Master or Rappel Instructor – Rappel Master refers to Army Rappel Master certified personnel specifically. These individuals will adhere to the standards set forth in TC 21-24. All Department of Defense organizations operating the rappel tower or rappel site will have at least 2 Rappel Master certified personnel, no other rappel certifications military or civilian will be accepted for DoD users. Rappel Instructors are individuals holding certificates from various civilian or law enforcement rappel instructor schools. A copy of the certificate must be provided to validate instructor's status. All civilian or law enforcement organizations operating the rappel tower or rappel site will have at least two rappel instructors to perform rappelling operations. Rappel masters or instructors will not perform the duties of OIC.
 - b. Officer in Charge – OIC must be SFC or above and Air Assault or Ranger qualified or an individual trained in rappel operations on the civilian side. Duties and responsibilities as per TC 21-24. In addition, the OIC will be responsible for completing a risk assessment and ensuring risk management guidelines are followed. It is also the responsibility of the OIC to ensure that prior to training, a rappel operations safety brief is read to all personnel participating in training. OIC will not perform the duties of rappel master/instructor.
 - c. Belay Control Officer – must be Air Assault or Ranger qualified or a competent individual on the civilian side. Must have a refresher briefing on belay and belay safety procedures from the Rappel Master prior to start of training.
 - d. Belay personnel – there will be an individual performing belay duties on each rope at all times while rappel training is being conducted. All belay personnel will receive training in belay procedures prior to performing belay duties.
 - e. Medic – there must be at least one Army Medic, or civilian EMT with current certification on file at MTC Range Control, on site at all times. Medic will have a minimum of a backboard, neck collar, dedicated evacuation vehicle and a strip map to the nearest medical facility.
5. All soldiers will observe the following safety procedures when training on the rappel tower or rappel site:
 - a. Loose clothing and equipment will be secured.
 - b. Rappel seat will be tied by the individual and checked by a rappel master prior to conducting a rappel.
 - c. Rappellers will climb the tower or move to the edge of the rappel site only when told to do so by a rappel master/instructor.

- d. On the tower Rappelers will stay behind the yellow line until told to move to a rappel point by a rappel master/instructor.
 - e. No one will be allowed within three feet of the edge of the tower or rappel site without being secured to the tower unless moving to a hook up point.
 - f. Rappel masters/instructors will wear a safety line or some restraint system secured to an anchor point while on the rappel tower or rappel site. There will be a minimum of one recovery line per two rappel ropes. Additional safety lines will be kept on top of the tower or rappel site for possum rappeller recovery.
 - g. No one will be allowed to sit or lean on the railings or banisters located on the top of the tower.
 - h. When hooking up to the rappel rope, the slack will be pulled *towards* the anchor point.
 - i. Any soldier weighing over 190 lbs. may use a double wrap around the snaplink. Combat equipment will be positioned around the individual without interfering with the brake hand. The weapon will be slung diagonally across the back with the muzzle pointed down on the side *opposite* the brake hand.
 - j. Heavy-duty gloves or black leather gloves with or without green wool inserts are required for all tower rappel training. All rappellers will wear gloves.
 - k. While on the tower, the rappeller will maintain eye to eye contact with the rappel master/instructor at all times and take all commands from the rappel master/instructor.
 - l. Both rappeller and rappel master/instructor will insure that belay personnel are present and ready at the base of the tower or rappel site.
 - m. The belay personnel will *not* wear gloves and will keep both hands in a loose spot weld on the ropes at all times. Belay personnel will also keep his/her head and eyes on the rappeller at all time.
 - n. Running is prohibited on the tower.
 - o. Eating and/or smoking are prohibited on or near the tower.
 - p. Anyone observed intentionally committing an unsafe act that might endanger his/her own life or the life of those around him/her will be removed from the tower or rappel site.
6. When a rappeller becomes possum (slides backwards down the rope before bounding and ends upside down), the rappel master/instructor will give the hand and arm signal to “freeze” (arm extended, hand clenched in a fist) to the possum rappeller. Possum rappeller freezes and has eye to eye contact with the rappel master/instructor. The rappel master/instructor will give the hand and arm signal “show me the snap link” (arm extended to the front and down, hand bent upwards forming approximately a 90 degree angle with the arm, fingers extended and joined, palm facing the rappeller and moves the hand back and forth with the palm always exposed to the rappeller). The rappeller removes guide hand from the rope, allowing the rappel master/instructor to inspect the snap link. The rappel master/instructor will inspect the snap link to ensure that it has not inverted and that it is not open. If the snap link has not inverted and it is not open, the rappel master/instructor gives the possum rappeller the command “go” (arm extended, palm facing to the side, fingers extended and joined pointing in the direction of the rappeller receiving the command). The possum rappeller then places the guide hand back on the rope and continues the rappel. The rappel master/instructor then assumes normal rappel operations. If the snap link has inverted or has opened, the rappel master/instructor will lower the possum rappeller a recovery line which the possum rappeller will hook to the leg rope of their Swiss rappel seat, using the

snap link attached to that recovery line. If conducting aircraft operations: The rappel master/instructor will send the remaining rappellers. Once all rappellers (except possum rappeller) are safely on the ground and off the ropes, the rappel master/instructor will turn over control to the aircrew who will lower the aircraft until the rappellers feet can touch the ground they will wait until the rappeller is standing and is no longer under the aircraft before completing the landing. The rappel master/instructor will then unhook the recovery line and get the rappeller back into the aircraft to go up with the next lift. If conducting tower operations: The rappel master/instructor will send all rappellers who have already rotated out over the edge of the tower. If there are additional rappel masters/instructors on the tower, they all assist in pulling the possum rappeller back up to the top of the tower. If there are no other rappel masters/instructors, other rappellers may be used to assist. It is mandatory that any personnel assisting in the recovery of a possum rappeller have a safety line attached from them to the tower.

7. All soldiers will observe the following safety procedures when training with helicopters:
 - a. Sleeves will be down and buttoned at all times.
 - b. When approaching or leaving aircraft, always keep the helmet chinstrap fastened.
 - c. Approach or leave the aircraft in a crouching position.
 - d. Move to and from the aircraft on the down slope side.
 - e. Approach and leave aircraft as briefed by the aircrew prior to operation and always be aware of the tail rotor.
 - f. Do not touch Plexiglas window or any of the moving parts of any helicopter.
 - g. Keep LZs and PZs clear of all loose articles such as water cans, ground cloths, ponchos, etc...
 - h. Rappel master/instructor is in command of soldiers in the aircraft for all rappelling operations.
 - i. In the event of a forced landing in a UH-60 or CH-47, assume the crash position by holding your weapon and rucksack securely on your lap, lean back in the seat and tilt your head rearward. No one will exit any aircraft until the main rotor has completely stopped and all debris has stopped falling whether on land or in water, unless the aircraft is on fire. The pilots or crew will direct emergency evacuation of the aircraft.
 - j. All soldiers will wear earplugs when working in or around aircraft.
8. MEDEVAC Procedures:
 - a. Medical assistance will be available on site for all rappel operations.
 - b. The senior medic on site will determine the need for evacuation and notify the OIC before leaving the site. When medical personnel leave the site, training will cease until coverage is restored.
9. Communication:
 - a. The rappel tower must have a primary and secondary means of communications. The primary Range Control FM radio frequency is 41.75 alternate 40.15.

REFERENCES

TC 21-24
Rappelling

Sabalauski Air Assault School handbook.

SOP Reviewed By:

1LT Eric Davis
Facility Manager

Date

MAJ Linda Hadley
Safety

Date

LTC Byron Von Hoff
State Training Administrator

Date

SOP Approved:

COL Steven Peterson
J-3

Date