

Perceptions of a Brazilian Officer about the Argentine Army Air Assault Course

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Abstract— *In Argentina, as well as in Brazil, because they are nations of continental dimensions, the military must be able to fight regardless of the region of the country to which they are assigned. It is noteworthy that, in terms of current regionalism, South American Defense Integration is among Brazil's strategic objectives. In this context, in relation to military courses, the purpose of this article is to report impressions about the Air Assault Course, of the Air Assault Regiment 601. By the Argentine Army, there is great prestige and interest in training military personnel in this activity, since only those who complete will be qualified for employment in Air Assault missions. However, more than half of the volunteers (from various Military Organizations in the Argentine Army) did not make adequate prior preparation to meet the physical requirements of the initial tests. As for the course instructions, organization, preparation and employment, it was evident that the methods and techniques taught are very valid and similar to those used by the Brazilian Army, being adequate to the doctrinal aspects of the United States Army. Anyway, this troop must be able to operate in any operational environment, this time it performs training in several areas of the Argentine territory, aiming to specialize its officers and officers. it was evident that the methods and techniques taught are very valid and similar to those used by the Brazilian Army, being adequate to the doctrinal aspects of the United States Army. Anyway, this troop must be able to operate in any operational environment, this time it performs training in several areas of the Argentine territory, aiming to specialize its officers and officers. it was evident that the methods and techniques taught are very valid and similar to those used by the Brazilian Army, being adequate to the doctrinal aspects of the United States Army. Anyway, this troop must be able to operate in any operational environment, this time it performs training in several areas of the Argentine territory, aiming to specialize its officers and officers.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Brazilian foreign policy, in the last decades of the twentieth century, strengthened diplomatic relations with Argentina, cooperating for the formation of the Southern

Common Market, formalized through the Treaty of

Asunción in 1991¹.

In 2008, the Brazilian General Sérgio Etchegoyen, at the time Commander of the Army Command and General Staff School, in a presentation made at the International University of Florida (Miami-USA), when addressing military cooperation in South America, stressed that the international relations can generate conflicts or associations (CEE/ ECEME², 2008, p. 91).

Meanwhile, Brazilian foreign policy maintains South American integration as a strategic objective, as noted in the White Paper on National Defense, for the preservation of peace in the region and as a fundamental element of socioeconomic development (BRASIL, 2012, p. 37). Guimarães (2012) mentions that in the South American context, Brazil should “significantly reinforce technical cooperation programs, including in the military area”.

In this sense, as a form of military exchange and cooperation, the Air Assault Course of the Argentine Army receives military personnel from the Brazilian Army, from the 12th Light Infantry Brigade (Aeromobile), as well as the Aeromobile Operations Internship, of the Brazilian Army, receives military personnel of the Argentine Army. About the Brazilian Internship, it is described as follows:

“[...] Aims to expand the professional training of the military in the tactical employment of Army Aviation in joint missions with the Surface Force, enabling them to know the possibilities, limitations and the correct compliance with the safety standards in the employment of Aviation in the Army. During two weeks of intense activities related to the study and planning of aeromobile operations, Flight Safety, Helicopter Landing Zone instructions, Helitransport Operations and airborne infiltrations/ exfiltrations of military personnel from various Military Organizations

of the EB and friendly nations, where they can experience the challenges of the 3rd dimension of the battlefield, enabling them to operate together with Army Aviation in operational activities, recognizing their possibilities and limitations of the air resources employed, in addition to the faithful compliance with safety standards by the helitransported troops.³”

The light troops of the Brazilian Army are identified by the characteristic designation “Leve”. The Brazilian Army has the 12th Light Infantry Brigade (Aeromobile) whose main characteristic is the speed of its organization, adequate equipment and training to carry out missions in the short term and anywhere in the national territory. Its origin dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, in the 5th Strategic Brigade⁴, created by Decree n°. 7,054, of August 6, 1908, with its initial headquarters in the city of Aquidauana, current state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Currently, it is located in Caçapava, in the state of São Paulo.

It is noteworthy that there are materials essential to the life of the military on campaign, among them the burden of combat, in which items are carried out for the fulfillment of a certain mission, as well as that can provide relative comfort to the combatant.

For this purpose, the individual equipment of the combatant must be prepared according to the operational situation of tactical employment, which can vary between a field or assault bag. The planning requires observation of the cargo transport capacity of each aircraft, characterizing a relevant logistical limitation of the Helicopter Force.

In a military air assault operation, the light infantry troops are able to carry out missions with their organic means, equipment and combat burden, for up to forty-eight hours after the interruption of the logistical flow, hampered by the depth and interposition of Enemy Forces.

From the above, an analysis of the materials contained in this combat burden is necessary, providing a

¹ Available at: <https://www.mercosur.int/pt-br/documento/tratado-asuncion-constitucion-mercado-comun/>. Accessed on: December 18, 2020.

² Center for Strategic Studies of the Army Command and Staff School.

³ Available at: <http://www.ciavex.eb.mil.br/index.php/component/content/article?id=93>. Accessed on: December 4, 2020.

⁴ Available at: <http://www.bdaamv.eb.mil.br/index.php/historico-menu>. Accessed on: December 4, 2020.

clearer and standardized guidance as to the preparation of the materials to be conducted by the military in campaign activities, with the purpose of providing a maximum return on operations.

In Aeromobile Operations, the helicopter force or Aeromobile Force, of Unit or Subunit value, fulfills combat missions, combat support and logistical support. The Aeromobile Assault is the combat mission, carried out in Aeromobile Operations, in which an Aeromobile Task Force, under the command of the Surface Force (segment of the Ground Force for which the Army Aviation is acting to advantage), deploys trained and equipped troops, aiming at the conquest and maintenance of regions of the terrain and the participation in the destruction of enemy forces.

“In the Doctrine of the Brazilian Army, an aeromobile assault is a large-scale operation, carried out by an aeromobile task force (surface force and helicopter force). It does not involve transporting only the marine companies, but also the entire apparatus so that the operation can extend for up to 48 hours. This includes artillery, engineering, cavalry (for reconnaissance).”⁵

As in the Brazilian Army, in the Argentine Army, all Infantry units must be prepared to act integrated with the Army's Aviation assets, and may constitute an Aeromobile Task Force. However, the Light Infantry and Parachutist Infantry troops are the most capable to carry out the Aeromobile Assault, as they have specific instruction and tactical skills.

Whatever the operations or the combat, they need not only physical and psychological preparations, but also concern with the conditions of the material, collective or individual, that will be used.

The Argentine troop characteristic of Light Infantry is the Air Assault Regiment 601. It is important to note that the doctrine used by the Argentine Army is based on the techniques and tactics employed by the United States of America, in the 101st Air Assault Division.

“The aeromobile assault troops are light infantry troops with additional training in abseiling and transport by aircraft, in an aerial insertion

called vertical wrapping. The equipment is modified to facilitate transport, since helicopters have much greater load restrictions than paratroopers and aircraft. While paratroopers are prepared to sustain an action for 72 hours, air force troops sustain combat for only 48 hours. Helicopter support can be intense and includes close air support, reconnaissance, medical evacuation and resupply, as well as transportation. The troops of the 101st Aeromobile Division are trained in rappelling and fast rope. The USMC, on the other hand, only disembarks from the helicopter.”⁶

In this tuning fork, the versatility and unique strength of the Air Assault Task Force is obtained by combining the capacity of the modern rotary-wing aircraft (fast, agile and with firepower) with the Infantry and other combat weapons. To this end, the Air Assault Regiment 601's mission is to carry out Air Assault operations homogeneously integrated with Army Aviation, articulating a quick and flexible response in a crisis or armed conflict.

Basically, the Argentine Army operates with BELL UH-1H aircraft, from the Battalion de Assault 601 Helicopters, with a capacity for eight military personnel, in addition to three crew members, totaling an internal payload capacity of approximately 1000 kg. UH-1⁷s are always remembered as a symbol of the Vietnam War and really participated in the main battles during the conflict. It is worth mentioning that the greater the cargo carried, the smaller the height the aircraft will fly to seek its best use, that is, the greater flight autonomy, which on average is up to 2.5 hours.

“It generally operates in a coordinated manner with the unit responsible for its mobility: the Battalion of Assault Helicopters 601. In 2010 it counted on a battalion

⁵ Available at: <http://sistemasdearmas.com.br/ter/teamv.html>. Accessed on: December 4, 2020.

⁶ Available at: <http://sistemasdearmas.com.br/ter/teamv.html>. Accessed on: December 4, 2020.

⁷ Available at: <http://sistemasdearmas.com.br/ter/teamv.html>. Accessed on: December 4, 2020.

of 500 troops. The members of this unit use a color beret with the emblem of the airborne troops. It is organized in the Assault Companies A, B and C, but a Command and Services Company.”⁸

Under the coordination of School of Airborne Troops and Special Operations, the Regiment conducts the Air Assault Course.

The Argentine Army Air Assault Course

The first helicopter to be used in armed conflicts was the *Flettner Fl 282 Kolibri*. It was used in reconnaissance and observation operations by the German army during World War II⁹.

In 2016, from June 1 to June 30, during the harsh Argentine winter, in Campo de Mayo, a region where Military Organizations are centralized in the Province of Buenos Aires, 94 military personnel started their activities with physical tests, of an eliminatory character, remaining 48¹⁰ students for admission (from the Brazilian Army: 01 Captain and 01 Sergeant; and from the Argentine Army: 08 Lieutenants, 20 Sergeants and 18 Soldiers).

The aforementioned test of entry to the Course consisted of a flexion test on the bar, upper arm, abdominal, climbing on the rope and a 50-meter run, with indexes by age categories, with a 3200-meter run at the end performed by all participants. postulants.

Below, succinct observations on aspects related to the course and the course of activities will be presented, as well as materials used, evaluations, among others, exclusive fruits of the practice experienced by Brazilian military personnel in 2016.

Air Assault Combat (1st phase)

In the first week, instructions were given on airborne operations and aerial assault combat. There were instructions in the Aviation of the Argentine Army, in which fixed-wing aircraft (as a support) and rotary aircraft

(being a dedicated Battalion for the Air Assault Regiment 601) are used. Also, there was instruction from the Fast Hope technique, whose form of execution is different from that employed by the Brazilian Army.

One of the evaluations consisted of a 10 km march, for up to 1h30min with a 12 kg backpack (helmet, equipment and rifle with 5 chargers), which was successfully completed by all students. Still in the morning, after the march, the other assessment was theoretical, with 60 minutes of execution. In addition, in the afternoon, the practical tests took place.

Preparation of external loads (2nd phase)

Learning activities for the preparation of External Loads began. Still, there was the flight of adaptation, embarkation and disembarkation of aircraft, by means of UH-1H helicopters, with day and night training, with and without the use of night vision goggles. Also, instructions were given on aircraft marking, use of international signs in case of emergencies, setting up a small space and requesting health support in case of medical emergencies.

A practical load preparation test was carried out in the morning, in the (individual) load preparation control system, with 3 workshops, of 3 minutes each, in which the task was to identify 5 errors in the preparations, as follows:

1- Lohr vehicle (with 120 mm mortar) - Poorly anchored seat or steering wheel, 120 mm mortar badly anchored, sling N°. 9 in place of N°. 20, lack of tailing tape, missing tape on the lanterns, an empty tire, slings crossed, “M” type connector wrongly clicked or inverted, N°. 20 slings crossed in connection with N°. 3 sling and wrong place of placement in the vehicle's Chassis (20 sling).

2- *Chinguillo* (armed with students' backpacks) - load poorly distributed, set of moorings badly fixed, ends badly placed in sling N°. 3, type M connector badly fixed, without 1 link or badly positioned, sling N°. 9 in place of the sling of N°. 3, cargo open or poorly prepared and without tie-off tape at the mooring.

3- Container A22 (armed with 4 barrels) - sling N°. 3 with M type connector poorly clicked/ positioned/ missing link, *Clevi Chico* thread not closed, *Clevi Grande* instead of *Clevi Chico*, Cables with the order of inverted placement, no facing outwards or crossed, inverted or missing tie set, ends not finished with adhesive tape, missing corner tie cords, poorly centered load, the 2 side and top corner brakes crossed or not firm, poorly placed metal hook (fixed with fixed - mobile with mobile), parts of the A22 crossed, untied centers, pallet or flat surface under the frame is missing. Later, in the afternoon, the

⁸ Available at:

https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regimiento_de_Asalto_A%C3%A9reo_601. Accessed on: December 4, 2020.

⁹ Available at:

http://www.cdoutex.eb.mil.br/vocesabia/voce_sabia_40.html. Accessed on: December 4, 2020.

¹⁰ The minimum entry rates were reduced, as initially only 21 military personnel were successful in the stipulated physical requirements, in accordance with the provisions of the distributed Directive.

theoretical test took place, with 25 questions to be executed in up to 90 min.

At the end of the week, the 15 km march test took place. The forecast, according to the Directive, was 2h15min. However, the previous day they confirmed the change to 2h.

Special techniques (3rd phase)

In this phase, initially, there were knot instructions and moorings. Night cargo preparations were carried out, using night vision goggles, in the internal area of the Air Assault Regiment 601. There were also theoretical instructions on the execution of an Air Assault operation, based on the necessary planning.

In addition, the instructors demonstrated the execution of Abseiling do *Patin* with a war dog, Australian and inverted mode. The students, on the other hand, performed the Rappelling technique with combat burden, open and armament, at the different levels of the Tower. During the night period, the practice occurred with glasses with appropriate vision.

The Practical Test, referring to the Third Phase of the Course, consisted of 4 workshops:

- 1- Proof of us and theoretical questions;
- 2- Execution of the improvised seat (Swiss) in 90 seconds;
- 3- Rappelling from Plano 90 (Tower); and
- 4- Abseiling do *Patin* (Tower).

After the tests and training activities, there were practices with the use of helicopters.

To finish the stage, there was a 20 km march, for up to 3 hours of execution, with a 12 kg backpack (heavy at the end), open bale, rifle and helmet. In addition, the

Order of Operations was issued on the exercise in the field next week.

Final operation (4th phase)

In La Plata, in the Arana and Magdalena region, the course closing operation took place, despite the possibility of cancellation due to bad weather.

The Operation consisted of air displacement and Assault in enemy territory against actual Platoon value, figured by metal targets in the Shooting Range for tanks. There were also shots from machine guns and attack helicopters.

After the standardization of safety standards, orders were issued by subordinate levels, collective tests and divisions of aircraft boarding spaces were carried out. For overnight stay in a bivouac. The platoon of exploration (equivalent to the platoon for the recognition of Brazilian doctrine) infiltrated aircraft in enemy territory, by abseiling, in order to raise and pass on information from enemies.

External cargo (Lohr vehicle) was transported with Super Puma aircraft (Cougar) for training purposes.

The exercise lasted five days, through continued military operations, from planning to executing the real assault shot. At the end, the Commander of the Rapid Deployment Force approached that this is the newest course of the Argentine Army, and must be constantly improved. Finally, he confirmed that the troop should improve in terms of use and accuracy of the shot on the occasion of the assault, constituted fraction level (platoon and company).

Mosaic: Photos of the activities taken, Buenos Aires, 2016.



Source: the Author

II. OBSERVED BEST PRACTICES

a. Each phase of the course was closed after a theoretical test, of an eliminatory character, on the subjects seen throughout the week.

b. The instructors and monitors had a great technical capacity and were committed to the transmission of knowledge during the activities.

c. Military physical training, conducted by a physical education teacher from the Argentine Army, suitable for the course, respected the individual limitations and the preparation / recovery for the marches tests.

d. The supply of clothes for cold and rain (like pants and Goretex jacket, in addition to second skin),

subject to caution. The average temperature was below 10 degrees Celsius, sometimes with continuous wind and rainy days.

e. The countless training opportunities in the 15-meter tower, with open bale and rifle, for practical improvement of the various aircraft landing techniques.

f. Prior to the start of activities at the Tower, three inspections were carried out, with different military personnel, to certify the safety items provided for each student.

g. Use of false aircraft, UH-1H, discharged for use only in instructional activities, located in the inner area of the barracks.

h. During the Course there were about 40 flight hours for practical activities and operational training missions.

Others aspects of the Course

a. The Air Assault activity requires the use of manuals in order to standardize and level the procedures.

b. The Argentine Army has a project to change the technique of Fast Hope. Its execution will start to be taught in Brazil, however they depend on it being approved by the Argentine Army Command. Until this occurs, they will continue to teach the method of "crushing" the rope to end braking.

c. For the Fast Hope test, an aircraft of the Argentine Air Force was used, as it has adequate adaptation to the use of the rope in the "descent".

d. It is advisable to use tarpaulins, blankets or other type of protection for the rope used in the Tower, as the friction of the ropes tends to wear the material.

e. For the Abseiling night, by *Patin* da Torre, it would be appropriate for students to use helmets, which would require adaptation to fit the night vision goggles.

f. The Argentine Army instructs the making of the Swiss seat, for descents, in a slightly different way than what is taught by the Brazilian Army (American seat). It is evident that it loses security and durability, as it quickly needs to be readjusted to give firmness to the body.

III. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

a. The treatment given by all military personnel in the Regiment was very friendly and cordial. With the students, the subjects in the conversation circles, mostly, were about football or comparison between the Armed Forces of Latin America. Sometimes the military talked about the Malvinas disputes. On April 25, 1982, the British recovered South Georgia (Malvinas) from the Argentines. Preceded by a consistent naval fire, they carried out an aeromobile assault with 120 marines, who quickly dominated the Argentine garrison of a few dozen men. This conflict was referenced in graduations and in military songs during the races and displacements inside the Regiment, daily.

b. Military personnel applying for the course must be physically well prepared. For the collective development of attributes of the affective area, such as the body spirit of the group, there were races in the form of torus (trunks of the trunk type) conducted by rotating the number of students.

c. The officers (instructors) are responsible for coordinating the rotation of the instructions, setting up and correcting the evaluations. Sometimes they give some theoretical instruction at the beginning of each Phase. In practice, instructions are conducted by the Squares (subinstructors, which in Brazil would be the same as monitors).

d. The Argentine Army does not use the single cable (10 mm rope), but the ringed cables (rope of up to 8 mm) for making improvised seats for descending with ropes. This thinner rope contributes to, after the practices of descents, causing greater pain in the lumbar and pelvic region, where all the weight of the body (and the equipment when necessary) is concentrated.

e. A relevant difference in employment in relation to EB is that the Air Assault troops themselves are able to prepare and hook the external cargo for transportation in rotary wing aircraft. As for the Brazilian Army, this task is destined for Army Aviation.

f. *Patin's* technique of descent differs from that used by the Brazilian Army. The Argentine Army does not carry out the technique known in Brazil as "bat", tending to pendulate excessively and to extend the rope abruptly in each *Patin* approach.

g. Regarding the compositions of the kits, it is worth mentioning that the experiences presented here were collected in practice. With that, a brief assembly suggestion follows:

1) First Aid Kit: crepe bandage, gauze (10 units), alcohol (50 ml), tape (1 roll), surgical gloves (1 unit), syringe with needle, injectable painkiller, iodized alcohol (10ml), antipyretic (10 units), analgesic (10 units), 0.9% glucose serum (500 ml) and *gelco*¹¹ (16, 17 or 18);

2) Health Kit: hydrogen peroxide (30 ml), ready dressings, oral rehydration, tweezers, ointment for diaper rash and cocoa butter;

3) Armament Maintenance Kit and Combat Knife: oil (50 ml), string, cloths or flannels, whetstone, cleaning brush and tactical handkerchief;

4) Boot Maintenance Kit: black grease (1 unit), grease brush, cleaning brush and cloths or flannels;

5) Survival Kit: pliers, electrical tape, fishing line, lighter, water purifier, salt (small pot), pocket knife, mirror for ground-plane signaling, sinker (3 units), steel sponge, hooks (3 units), coconut soap, candle (2 units), small alkaline battery (2 units) and large BA-30 battery (2 units);

¹¹ *Gelco*: material for administration of serum.

6) Sewing Kit: needles, olive green and black threads and buttons;

7) Personal Hygiene Kit: wipes or cloth with alcohol, toothpaste, toothbrush, comb, soap, towel (carried in the backpack), cream, shaver, brush, dental floss, small mirror and toilet paper (carried in the backpack);

8) Annotation Kit: pencil, eraser, ballpoint pen (blue or black), mementos¹², compass, squares, ruler, scale, 360° protractor, calculator, paper pad, plastic pad, retro pen (2 colors), clipboard (carried in the backpack), alcohol and cloth; and

9) Operations Kit: checkered powder (blue, green and red), symbology (PRPO, ASS, OBJ), miniatures (constructions, armor, soldiers, boats) and chalk (3 colors).

10) With regard to First Aid Kits and Dressings: they must present an easily visible label containing an index with the dosage, use and validity of each item contained in the respective kit.

IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Easy and pleasant to read, this pioneering article described the Argentine Army's Air Assault Operational Course, carried out by Brazilian military students in 2016, being an officer and 01 sergeant concluding.

It is noteworthy that the Regiment's local structure for practical instructions is very good. In comparison to the Brazilian Army, it is observed that the Argentine Army employs an Assault Bag or Assault Bag for Air Assault Operations, seeking as much as possible to reduce the weight carried by the aircraft. In this way, it allows the best use of your travel autonomy.

In summary, the methods and techniques taught by the Argentine Army remain current and valid, with few differences from the Brazilian Army.

It appears that the campaign backpack, whose transported material stands out below, is moved by another land-based means or by the “chinguillo” (high-strength nylon net) with a transport capacity of up to 5000 kg, as an external load from the aircraft. Despite the aforementioned capacity, the “chinguillo” is used in the BELL UH-1H for useful transport of 900 kg, about 50 ready campaign backpacks.

Table 1- Composition of the Combat Burden

Material conducted by the Argentine Army	Material conducted by the Brazilian Army
PANTALON / FIGHTING SWEATSHIRT (EXTRA)	All the material exposed in the previous column (conducted by the Argentine Army) and the following kits:
FIGHTING BOOTS (EXTRA)	
PONCHO	
LIGHT BLANKET	
SINGLE CABLE (SLING)	sewing kit (sew)
ALM COMPLETE BREASTFEEDING	First aid kit
THERMAL INSULATION (THERMAL AISLAMIENTO)	note-taking kit (scriptures) survival kit
SLEEPING BAG	personal hygiene kit
COLCHÓN DE CAMPAÑA	maintenance kits
RATION/ FOOD	camouflage kit
SCHOOLBAG	health kit
MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS	operations kit

Source: the Author

It is verified, due to the limitation of material transport in the aircraft, that the Argentine Army doctrinally does not train its troops with the use of kits, as in the Brazilian Army. In their assault rucksacks, only means for immediate use are carried, such as: ammunition, rations and materials to perform specific special tasks, when applicable. In the field backpack, displaced by another means of transport, the responsibility of which is the responsibility of the Logistics Officer, the rest of the bales and personal materials follow.

Therefore, ammunition, operational feed, water, collective and individual weaponry are not objects of this study, however they are also of great relevance and their transport must be considered together with the materials to be presented, and the ammunition must be always within easy reach.

It is concluded that the use of campaign kits favors greater organization and practicality, in addition to waterproofing and protection of the material. In spite of the backpack becoming more bulky, it must be adequate to the tactical planning, as well as to the technical limitation of the cargo transport capacity, internal or external, of the aircraft to be employed.

Finally, the experience lived with the members of the Argentine Military Organization was quite valid,

¹² Miscellaneous elements: private military notes with brief reminders or manual data.

mainly because it is a unique Argentine Army Troop, confirming that it is very similar to the spirit of the Brazilian Army's Light Aeromobile Brigade.

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