

**MULTISERVICE
HELICOPTER SLING LOAD:

BASIC OPERATIONS
AND EQUIPMENT**

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**HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

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Washington, DC, 10 April 1997

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PREFACE

Note: Effective 1 October 1997 all Army loads will require an inspection by a qualified Sling Load Inspector. See Appendix I.

This manual is one of a series of manuals for aviation and ground personnel who perform helicopter sling load missions ashore or aboard ship. Other manuals in this series are FM 55-450-4/FMFRP 5-31, VOL II/NWP 42-1, VOL II/AFR 50-16, VOL II/COMDTINST M13482.3 and FM 55-450-5/FMFRP 5-31, VOL III/NWP 42-1, VOL III/AFR 50-16, VOL III/COMDTINST M13482.4.

These manuals are a coordinated effort of the US Army, US Marine Corps, US Navy, US Air Force, and US Coast Guard. All services participate in the sling load certification program begun by the Army in 1984. These manuals include standardized rigging procedures and other information from that program.

Efforts were made to standardize ground crew and hookup procedures and terminology. The terms "helicopter" and "aircraft" refer to vertical lift aircraft that participate in sling load operations. Where service-unique requirements apply to an entire chapter or body of text, the service initials are at the beginning of the chapter or text. Otherwise the initials are at the end of the applicable sentence.

The information in this manual will familiarize personnel with the sling sets, cargo nets, and other sling load equipment in the DOD inventory. It will also acquaint them with the helicopters used for sling load and provide basic procedures for rigging and hooking up loads. Rigging equipment and procedures described in this manual may not be authorized for all aircraft or services because of equipment or service restrictions. This manual does not provide details on aviation operations nor does it present detailed data that is normally contained in unit standing operating procedures (SOPs).

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*This publication supersedes FM 55-450-3/FMFRP 5-31, VOL I/NWP 42-1, VOL I/AFR 50-16, VOL I, COMDTINST M13482.2, 11 February 1991.

**FM 10-450-3/MCRP 4-23E, VOL I/NWP 3-04.11/AFJMAN 11-223, VOL I/
COMDTINST M13482.2A**

This manual implements the following International Standardization Agreements (STANAGs):

2949 - Technical Criteria for External Cargo Carrying Slings

2950 - Technical Criteria for External Cargo Carrying Nets

3117 - Aircraft Marshalling Signals

3542 - Technical Criteria for the Transport of Cargo by Helicopter

The proponent of this publication is HQ TRADOC. Recommendations for changes or improvement to the manual are requested.

Army personnel submit DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) to:

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CHAPTER 1

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SLING LOAD

1-1. INTRODUCTION

The helicopter sling load method of carrying cargo and equipment overcomes many of the obstacles that hinder other modes of movement. Helicopter sling load operations are used extensively in the ship-to-shore movement of cargo and equipment during amphibious operations, movement of supplies and equipment over the battlefield, vertical replenishment of ships, and firepower emplacement. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss helicopter employment considerations, request procedures, responsibilities, safety, and planning for sling load missions.

1-2. EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS

a. Advantages of Sling Load. The sling load method of moving cargo and equipment has some advantages over other methods. These advantages are:

- (1) The rapid movement of heavy, outsized equipment, or emergency supplies directly to the user.
 - (a) The ability to bypass surface obstacles.
 - (b) The rapid relocation of supplies and equipment.
- (2) The use of multiple flight routes and landing sites to enhance sustainability and security of ground units.
- (3) The establishment of multiple landing sites to support the maneuvering unit requirements.
- (4) Greater movement flexibility for the ground commander to accomplish the tactical mission.

b. Limitations of Sling Load. The sling load method of Aerial Delivery includes the following drawbacks:

- (1) The weight of the load is restricted to the aircraft's operating capability.
- (2) Load instability during flight may restrict aircraft airspeed or maneuvering capabilities.
- (3) Adverse weather and darkness (low visibility) may limit sling load operations.
- (4) Atmospheric conditions (pressure, altitude, temperature, and winds) affect the helicopter's lift capacity.
- (5) A limited number of helicopters are available for sling load missions.
- (6) Landing site surface conditions may restrict helicopter operation. Loose debris, dust, and snow are safety hazards that also limit pilot visibility.
- (7) Landing site size must be increased during the hours of darkness or reduced visibility to allow the pilot more room to maneuver.

1-3. FACTORS AFFECTING HELICOPTER LIFT PERFORMANCE

The supported unit should coordinate with the aviation unit prior to any sling load mission to determine the accurate lifting capability of the helicopter. Several factors affect how much weight a helicopter can carry.

a. Altitude. The helicopter loses rotor efficiency at higher altitudes and requires more power to hover than at lower altitudes. This means less capability to lift cargo.