Static Line
Your Airborne "Lifeline"
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SPORT PARACHUTISTS

This is the crew that jumped in Belarus and Latvia with Bernie Hasenbein and the International Airborne Society.
Back row, standing, L-R: Butch Garner (82d), Bill Fanaras (SF), Bob Hunt (SF), Uriel Evan (Rgr), Roscoe Turner (SF), Bernie Hasenbein (82d), Henry Koehn (SF), Frank Shaw (SF), Jim Gettens, U.S. Military Attache, Igor (interpreter), Oksana (interpreter), Sterling Savley (82d), and Andre (an Afghanistan Veteran). Front row, kneeling, L-R: Mike Brownridge (10 Para), Ed Wragge (USMC), SSG Attache Staff, Jim Lang (Canada) (187), John Larrimer (101), daughter of Nikolai, Ed Wright (USMC), Nikolai (Afghanistan Veteran), and George Beldecos (Greece).

Bernie Hasenbein's International Airborne Society took a group of 16 jumpers to the ex-Soviet States of Belarus and Latvia from 22 July to 2 August, 2002. The group met in the Belarussian capital, Minsk, and then moved to Vitebsk, the location of the Airborne school.

Jumping took place at Severnaya DZ outside Vitebsk. The jump aircraft was the ever dependable AN-2, the pilot of which was a real star, and the parachutes were Soviet D-6's. The Static Line on the parachute deploys a pilot chute, which keeps the jumper in an upright position. After about 3 seconds, the main canopy is automatically deployed by a timing device. The jumper can also use a ripcord to deploy the main canopy.

Because of the very high speed at which troops are dropped from the IL-76 and AN-26, a conventional static line deployment would result in death or a serious injury to the jumpers.. .

Three jumps were made, the last a 10 second delay from 1000 meters, exciting stuff!

We were looked after very well. The accommodations were fairly basic, but we had 3 huge meals a day and the beer is great. We fired various weapons, including the RPG, and finished off with a monumental prop blast party.

We then moved to Riga, capital of Latvia. For some of us it was our third visit, so we met some old friends. Again there were two jumps on land using the 0-6, and one into water using the D-1-5U. This is a round, steerable conventional parachute, static line deployment and has a forward speed of about 7 knots. The equipment can be .used at altitudes of below 300 feet.

The harness of the D-1-5U is not so easy to get out of and several jumpers landed in the water still firmly attached to their equipment. Fortunately, the life jackets were in good working order. No injuries were suffered, and everyone had a good time.

Both of these countries are heavily forested and the cities beautiful with tree-lined streets and large areas of parkland. Riga, especially, has great restaurants and the old city with large pedestrian areas with open air bars.

If it happens again and you have the time and the money, Go!
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