

Nursing “outside the box”

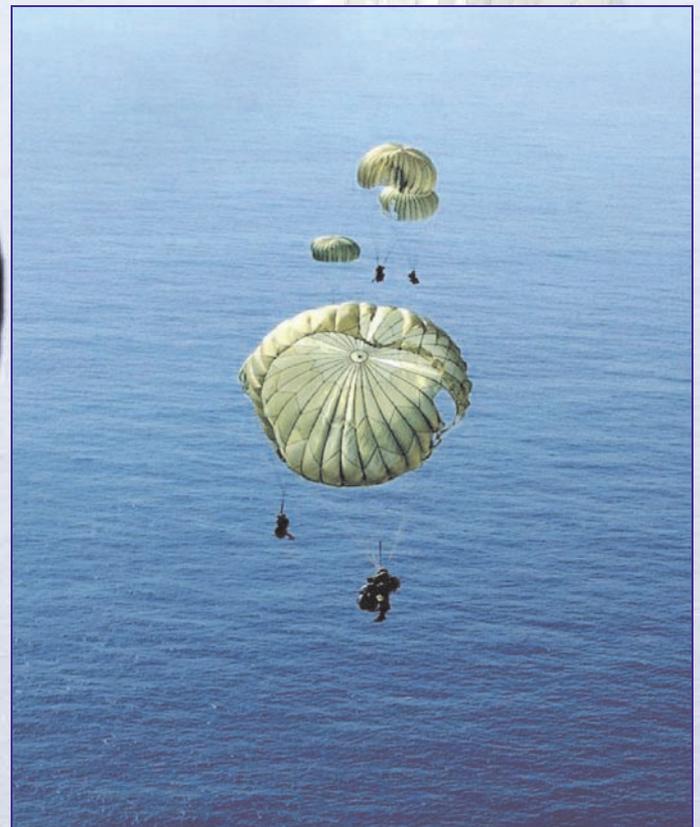
“WHAT ON EARTH has this got to do with nursing?” I asked myself, as I prepared to jump out of a C-130 with commandos of the 4th Battalion. The rear doors opened with a familiar clunk and whine, to expose the ocean 1000 feet below in the late afternoon light. Strangely, my usual level of fear (or abject terror?) before jumping had been replaced by one of interest in my surroundings. This was strange — a water jump —

how easy can it get?

As part of a scaled down Primary Health Care Team, comprising the doctor, myself and another medic, we are to insert with the Headquarters element of a Commando Company Group. Three other medics have already jumped with their platoons to provide initial care when needed. Stepping off the ramp into the cushion of air that is the slipstream, I see the large Commando Watercraft (“CWs”), as well as the Zodiacs, moving into position to collect us from the water.

In the waning light, I find it hard to judge my height above the water. I hit the surface

continued on page 48



continued from back cover



while quickly drifting to the right. My face smacks in hard, causing me to take a large gulp of salt water. “Great! Bet that impressed the commandos!” Still, I act as though nothing happened — image is everything, you know. The water is a chill 16°C, so I’m glad the dry suit does its job. Willing hands assist me and my gear into a CW. The rest of the force is now in the boats, and the flotilla sorts itself into order to await darkness before insertion.

As we move towards the coast for the insertion phase, craft head off at intervals to conduct assaults on their objectives. Near our own objective, the water settles, lapping quietly at the bow of the boat. Torpedo trails of phosphorescence appear beneath us as dolphins speed past to see what we’re doing. The steady throb of the diesel engine at almost idle speed mixes with the sounds of us removing dry suits and retrieving weapons and equipment from waterproof A-bags. Night vision equipment reveals the insertion point — a low coastline with a narrow beach, and a small jetty jutting into the water. The boat thumps against the timber pylon — the tide is high, so it’s an easy step onto dry land. Still, the weight of my medical pack, 3 days’ rations, water and ammunition cause me to stagger. I gain my balance, and we march quietly to our night location, and commence battle procedure.

But that’s another story...

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