



Photo by Dennis Johnson

Wiesbaden's 159th Medical Company, based at Baghdad International Airport, uses Blackhawk helicopters to carry in doctors and blood, and to carry out wounded Soldiers in Iraq.

## Life and death missions

### Wiesbaden's 159th Medical Company delivers 'Dedicated, Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces'

By Dennis Johnson  
414th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

Ready to fly on five minutes notice, Wiesbaden's 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) has been going airborne in Iraq since March to save lives.

In Germany the company falls under the 421st Medical Battalion in Wiesbaden, and 30th Medical Brigade in Heidelberg, but in Iraq "we're a general support asset and not usually attached to a specific unit," said Capt. Joseph C. Alexander, a forward support medical evacuation team leader and pilot. "It's based on your mission and

where you're located. Medevacs are divided into teams, and a team may go to support a particular unit as needed. A team is usually made up of three aircraft, but that also varies as needed."

The company's 15 Blackhawk helicopters are outfitted with a carousel that holds up to six litters, and can carry another four seated patients in urgent situations. Each flies with a pilot, a co-pilot, a medic and a crew chief.

"Throughout the war teams were sent out all over the country to support units, but now we are centrally located on Baghdad International Airport," said Alexander. "We provide air assistance in medical emergencies because an air evacuation can be so much faster, and that increases the chances of survival."

Patients are flown to the 28th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad or to one of about eight Forward Surgical Teams located around the city. "Dustoff" crews have flown over 5,000 patients on 3,200 missions while in Baghdad, said officials. The unofficial acronym stands for "Dedicated, Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces."

"All these guys believe it," said Capt. Todd D. Farrell.

"We're the busiest medevac unit since Vietnam," said 1st Lt. Thomas K. Powell, a team leader and pilot.

"Up to a month ago we were still flying 15-16 missions a day; 29 was the most in one day," said Farrell.

"We got a call one night to pick up a Soldier who'd been shot in downtown Baghdad," said Powell, describ-

ing one memorable flight. "An Iraqi man had just walked up to him and shot him right in the face. We were off the ground in five minutes and headed to the site.

"I couldn't believe how tight the landing zone was, a narrow street with tall buildings all around and power lines. I asked the ground force by radio if we could land in a vacant lot just a short way off. The Soldier who responded was crying, 'Dustoff, we need you down here now. My buddy is dying.' We took off our night goggles because there was too much street light to use them and landed straight down on the street median," said Powell.

"My medic jumped out and disappeared into the darkness. He came back with the Soldier, loaded him in and we were off. I looked over my shoulder when I got a chance and saw the medic doing CPR while our crew chief held the kid's face together. We landed at the hospital and dropped the Soldier off. Later we got word that he had died.

"A couple hours later, about 1 a.m., we got a call to pick up an Iraqi man shot in the chest. It doesn't matter who it is, we respond just as fast. We ran out, spun up and were off to the scene when the radio called. 'This is the guy who shot our kid.' The Soldier's unit had tracked the man, positively ID'd him and tried to take him in." A fight ensued and the Iraqi was shot.

"We put him on the same litter as our Soldier a few hours earlier, and the medic performed CPR on him with the same intensity as he did for ours. And we saved his life. Three or four times we've picked up a wounded Soldier and the Iraqi who shot him together," said Powell.

"Some days the medics come back saying they hate their job, but then they're back at work the next day with the same intensity. I've looked back there sometimes and I don't know how they do it. Now I just keep my eyes forward and fly."



Photo courtesy of the 159th Medical Company  
A patient is delivered for further treatment after transport on a Blackhawk.

# Büdingen Soldiers help build Iraqi Police force

## Task Force 1st Armored Division screens potential police academy applicants

By Sgt. Mark Bell  
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

By 4 a.m. on Jan. 25 more than 600 Al Rashid residents arrived to begin what could be a new career as an Iraqi Police Service officer.

Sponsored by 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, assigned to 1st Armored Division Artillery, residents spent hours waiting patiently in line during an initial application process at an Iraqi Civil Defense Corps camp in southern Baghdad.

As more applicants arrived at the muddy, water-filled compound, several dozen ICDC guardsmen assigned to the Büdingen-based cavalry regiment began searching men for weapons or other illegal items and controlling the crowd of applicants.

From a brief physical examination to random security background checks, Soldiers scrutinized application forms and checked applicants' health conditions to ensure the best 500 are submitted for possible admission into the Baghdad Iraqi Police Academy.



Photo by Sgt. Mark Bell

Spc. Kevin Johnson, Comanche Troop, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, checks the blood pressure of an Iraqi Police applicant during a two-day screening process in Baghdad.

Applicants ranged from 20-year-old adults looking for their first job to career carpenters looking for a new occupation.

"I want to serve my country and live in peace," said Iyad Hassan, age 28, a carpenter who hasn't seen work in months. "I think the

review process, medics and physician's assistants saw applicants—for some receiving their first medical examination in their life.

future of Iraq is good. I know from my heart it will get better. The American Soldiers will help our country get better." Applicants must be 20 years old and have a diploma from a primary secondary school, said Sgt. 1st Class Brad Engelhorn, a non-commissioned officer with Comanche Troop, in charge of the two-day recruitment process.

The initial screening taking place at the first station looked over applications to ensure they were properly completed and the applicants met the basic age and education requirements.

Working to help make a better Iraq with a new Iraqi Police is an important job, said Pfc. Derrick Nunley as he looked over each application.

"We are helping them build a better Iraq," he said. "By being a part of the application process, it shows them that we are actually making an effort to help them get back on their feet."

From the initial application process, medics and physician's assistants saw applicants—for some receiving their first medical examination in their life.

From head to toe, applicants' blood pressure, eyes and abdomen were checked to ensure the Iraqis have an overall health checkup before being selected to attend the academy.

Obesity, uncorrectable bad vision and diabetes will disqualify an applicant from being an Iraqi Police officer, said Capt. Eric Klage, a physician's assistant assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop.

"First of all, we are looking to make sure they are overall healthy," he said. "We are looking for a history of disease or disorders that would disqualify an applicant. We basically are doing a quick and general head to toe medical check to ensure there are no obvious medical conditions that would hinder in their ability to perform as an Iraqi police officer."

From eyes, throat, lungs and heart checks, the medical staff moved the applicants through the process efficiently and quickly.

In two days the team of several dozen cavalry Soldiers screens more than 800 applicants.

At the end of the day, Engelhorn hoped 500 applicants would have their class date to begin training at the Baghdad Police Academy.

"This is just the beginning process that we do to help the Iraqi people establish their own police force," he said. "These people need to start taking care of themselves. This is the only way this country is going to see change."

# Hanau Soldiers keep 4th Brigade flying in Iraq

## 127th Aviation Support Battalion troops 'come early and stay late'

By Dennis Johnson  
414th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

Working out of a cavernous hangar on Baghdad International Airport once used to service the jumbo jets of Iraqi Airlines, 127th Aviation Support Battalion Soldiers from Hanau keep the aircraft of 1st Armored Division's 4th Brigade flying.

Company A Soldiers provide aviation maintenance support for the Apache and Blackhawk helicopters of the 1-501st and 2-501st Aviation Regiments. "There's a lot of work. You come early and stay late," said Pfc. Joel Larson, a 127th ASB engine specialist.

In one corner of the vast hangar power plant specialists huddle over surprisingly small Blackhawk jet engines bolted onto work stands for repair and inspection. Across the hangar jeans-clad civilian contractors swarm over helicopters performing extensive repairs and scheduled servicing. The brigade's pilots agree that the crew chiefs and "maintenance guys" are the unsung heroes of the operation, working day and night without much recognition.

The 127th ASB keeps the helicopters flying, the trucks rolling and the generators sparking. Day-to-day maintenance, nearly three hours for every hour of flight time, is performed by the crew chiefs. Specialists from the 127th ASB provide intermediate level maintenance and perform phase maintenance service. After every 500 hours of flight the helicopters undergo an increasingly

thorough inspection.

"They pretty much tear down the aircraft," said 1st Lt. Sarie Spaulding, 127th ASB adjutant and unit historian. Every access panel is opened and all the engine and transmission components are given a complete inspection. Rotor blades are removed to be checked for damage and balance.

While Company A keeps the aircraft flying, Company B provides ground maintenance support for the HMWVVs, Bradleys, M-1 Abrams tanks, generators, air conditioning units and even golf carts for the entire 4th Brigade in a part of the hangar dubbed Area 51.

"We work on any sort of wheeled vehicle, and our day-to-day mission is not too different than when we were back in Hanau," said Spaulding. One major difference in Iraq is the large amount of convoy work Soldiers do.

"In Hanau the biggest challenge was getting 'march credits' from the German government to make a convoy," said Spaulding. "There you can't drive military vehicles on the roads on Sundays and holidays. We'd receive a number for each vehicle and have to mark it on the doors in chalk. Here it's much different: We need gun trucks for protection and we need a larger convoy. We use a minimum of six vehicles. We're convoying every day and we go all over, lots of times to Balad, Taji, Camp Mule Skinner and Freedom Rest.

"The people on convoys are assigned to that duty for a week at a time, and when they're not on convoys they're training. Security, reacting to threats and the recovery of broken vehicles are our focus. It's all to prepare us to be out in a hostile environment. We've been very lucky, we've had uneventful convoys, but there's always that element of threat," he said.



Photo by Dennis Johnson

Pfc. Joel Larsen (left) and Spc. Jacob Jorgensen, Company A, 127th Aviation Support Battalion, work on a Blackhawk engine at Baghdad International Airport.

"I've been on 12 or 13 convoys now," said Spc. Edward Casey as he repaired the electrical system of a five-ton truck. "The first one I went on, I was a little nervous. We went downtown and were surrounded by people. One wanted to share his milk with me, which was nice, but you have to stay aware and be assertive. The people are trying to sell you stuff, but I also see a bunch of people who want to help, and kids waving with two fingers up in the peace symbol."

Whether working on their equipment or retooling between missions, 127th ASB Soldiers have adjusted to their home away

from home. "These facilities are perfect for us," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Richard Gutteridge. "Someone was thinking when they didn't bomb it during the war. For the level of maintenance we do, this is perfect. As far as we can tell it was used by Iraqi civilians to maintain their fuel trucks for the civilian airport. We found a lot of spare parts around. I'm sure it'll revert back to that as soon as we leave. It should—that's what it's here for."

Area 51 is also the bulk-fuel depot for the airport, an underground facility that holds three million gallons of jet fuel. While it's not the right fuel for Army aviation, the facility is being maintained for use when the commercial airport resumes operations. Presently only American military aircraft, a few cargo and relief supply flights and a single passenger flight from Jordan land at Baghdad International Airport.

The 127th's Headquarters and Supply Company comprise the battalion headquarters and staff plus two additional platoons. The Supply Support Activity platoon provides "everything from toilet paper and print cartridges to tank engines and helicopter blades," said Spaulding. Units bring their trucks to Area 51 and load up whatever they need, whether boxes of office paper, cleaning supplies or brooms.

Another platoon provides fuel and ammunition at the Baghdad Airport gas station and a number of Forward Arming and Refueling Points. The FARPs are in strategic locations around Iraq so aircraft and ground vehicles can refuel and rearm closer to their mission locations.

Battalion Soldiers are also responsible for material purchased from Iraqi vendors. "Every battalion is authorized a field ordering officer and a paying agent who work as a team to purchase things on the local economy," said Spaulding. "We're buying lots of 'quality of life' stuff such as televisions, sports equipment, really tacky curtains, couches and chairs, and also using the money to employ locals to paint and repair our buildings."

Whether hanging curtains or repairing jet engines, 127th ASB maintains quality of life for the Soldiers it serves.