

South Dakota National Guard

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Flight crews hone life-saving skills during training exercise

By Spc. Carl Johnson – 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Soldiers with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, conducted a medical evacuation training exercise near Wasta, Oct. 1, to hone their life-saving skills.

The training event put HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter flight crews in realistic combat scenarios with simulated casualties to practice emergency medical care and flight operations.

The Rapid City-based unit provides aerial medevac support to military forces while deployed overseas or during state domestic emergencies and natural disasters.

In order to make the training as realistic as possible, the flight crews of medics, crew chiefs and pilots were not notified of the scenario before hand. They boarded their aircraft not knowing if the mission was a real event or simulated.

“It is important to make the training as close to reality as possible,” said Staff Sgt. Adam Max, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the training. “We had two different missions today with three aircraft and multiple simulated injuries involved in each one. A lot goes into making that happen.”

The Soldiers simulating the injured used makeup and red-dyed corn syrup to simulate wounds. During the scenario, the Soldiers screamed as though they were in pain and grasped at the medics pleading for help.

One Soldier simulated a brain injury by stumbling around in a confused state. As the flight crew approached, he ran in fear and the crew was forced to restrain him.

“When we are in a deployment situation, having a Soldier with a brain injury that makes him operate irrationally is a very real possibility,” said Max.

Aside from preparing Soldiers for a combat zone, the training also benefits the crews for real-word emergencies here at home.

“Many times we get calls for injured hikers,” said Sgt. Courtney Tyrell, crew chief with the 189th. “The local (hospital) helicopters have to land in order to provide care. That isn’t always possible in difficult terrain.”

The hospital medical evacuation helicopters are not capable of conducting hoist operations. Should the need arise, the crew is ready to help.

“I work as an air EMT at the hospital as well,” said Sgt. Rachel Sirignano, flight medic with the 189th. “I get to see both sides, and I think it helps me to stay focused and prepared.”

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Many times crews from the 189th will work side by side with local emergency response personnel during a medical emergency. To make sure things run smoothly, leadership for the unit will periodically coordinate with local authorities to conduct a joint training operation.

According to Sirignano, due to the nature of medical emergencies, it is essential for the crews to be extremely well prepared.

“I have to tell myself that the crew is all the injured person needs right now,” said Sirignano. “You have to stay as calm, cool and collected as you can, so that you don’t affect their condition even more by being stressed. You have to put it aside and focus on the patient.”

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High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard



161001-Z-FO002-027: Members of Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, secure a patient during a medical evacuation training scenario near Wasta, S.D., Oct. 1, 2016. The training event put HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter flight crews in realistic combat scenarios with simulated casualties to practice emergency medical care and flight operations. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Carl Johnson)



161001-Z-FO002-450: Medics with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, cut clothing off of a patient during a medical evacuation training scenario near Wasta, S.D., Oct. 1, 2016. The training event put HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter flight crews in realistic combat scenarios with simulated casualties to hone their life-saving skills. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Carl Johnson)



161001-Z-FO002-403: Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, load a patient onto a HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter during a medical evacuation training mission near Wasta, S.D., Oct. 1, 2016. Medics secured patients to stretchers, transported them to the helicopter and simulated treatment during the flight. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Carl Johnson)



161001-Z-FO002-148: Members of Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard transport a patient to a medical evacuation helicopter via stretcher as a part of the Soldiers monthly drill near Wasta, S.D., Oct. 1, 2016. The training event put HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter flight crews in realistic combat scenarios with simulated casualties to hone their patient care skills. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Carl Johnson)



161001-Z-FO002-174: A medic with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, places an IV in a fellow Soldier as a part of a medical evacuation training near Wasta, S.D., Oct. 1, 2016. The training is geared to be as realistic as possible so Soldiers are prepared when real medical emergencies occur. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Carl Johnson)



161001-Z-FO002-412: A member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, closes the door after loading a patient onto a HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter during a medical evacuation training event near Wasta, S.D., Oct. 1, 2016. Soldiers simulated injuries in order to give the medics a realistic training opportunity. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Carl Johnson)

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