

# Members of Air National Guard Learn Value of Team Work in Nation's Defense

By CADET HAROLD WHITE

Some Wyoming Army National Guard units recently learned the value of team work in the nation's defense strategy. Members of the 920th Medical Detachment (Air Ambulance) and the 349th Air Traffic Control Detachment, both based in Cheyenne, participated in Operation Red Flag.

The exercise was a combined Army National Guard, active Air Force, Air Guard and Naval Reserve medical exercise held at Camp Guernsey. The 920th was performing its two weeks' annual training period (AT) and the 349th was providing exercise support.

"In the past we went to AT and trained for our ARTEP (Army Readiness Training and Evaluation Program). This time we are really working the system," said Staff Sgt. Bruce Koerwitz of Cheyenne, first sergeant for the 920th.

The wartime mission of the 920th is to provide front-line combat casualty care. Members of the unit perform as field medics and casualty evacuation crews utilizing UH-1 helicopters.

"Our mission is to transport medical supplies and personnel, casualties and whole blood. We're getting to do that here," said Capt. Dana Dockendorf of Laramie, commander of the 920th.

The concept behind Operation Red Flag was to acquaint the participants with the conditions they might encounter working in a combat environment. The exercise was divided into three, three-day blocks where participants physically went through field training involving mobilization, site selection and establishment of a tactical bivouac site.

Classes were taught on a variety of military and medical subjects, and problem-solving exercises tested the participants' knowledge and know-how.

"We've tested every skill we have and recorded a lot of flight time, which is very important," Koerwitz said. "From medics to mechanics we are doing it all."

The finale to each block of the exercise was a mass casualty evacuation drill. Here casual-

ties were placed at various locations on the North Range at Camp Guernsey. Then medevac requests were sent in to the 920th to evacuate them to a nearby Air Force second echelon medical facility.

A second echelon medical facility is near the front lines and is the first point of evaluation and stabilization for casualties. From there troops are treated and returned to duty or transported to other rear area medical facilities. The medevac requests were received either by radio or land-line communications by the operations section of the 920th.

"Anyone with a radio and our frequency can call in a medevac request," Pvt. 2 Ronald Rukyzio of Cheyenne said. Depending on the availability of assets the missions are approved or denied by the medevac operations center.

"I look at our situation board and determine if we have the assets to handle the request," said Sgt. Dan McCracken of Laramie, operations sergeant. Once a mission is approved, an aircraft and crew are alerted, assembled and a pilot is briefed.

"I tell him where he is going and what to expect when he gets there," said Sgt. Bill Turner of Cheyenne.

For most of those in the National Guard, AT is a time to refine individual skills and bring the unit together as a whole, but for 2nd Lt. C. Allen White of Cheyenne, AT was an educational experience.

"I got back from flight school the day before we came up here, so I'm trying to learn everything about my unit and our mission," White said. He served as the Army/Air Force liaison officer for each service. His job was to keep members of the Army and the Air Force "on the same sheet of music," as they say.

"With the first group, communication was a problem. We all speak a different tongue around here so it took a while to figure out what others were trying to say," White said.

In addition to participating in Operation Red Flag, the 920th also conducted other mission-oriented training that demanded even more of their sol-



STAFF SGT. Dale Pawling of Cheyenne secures a litter in a UH-1 helicopter during Operation Medical Red Flag. Pawling, a member of the 920th Medical Detachment (Air Ambulance), Wyoming Army National Guard, which joined forces with the Army Guard's 349th Air Traffic Control De-

ment.

"We are actually conducting two missions at the same time," Dockendorf said. "First there is their scenario, Operation Red Flag, then we are stacking ours on top of that. Really we are getting twice the training out of our time."

The 349th Air Traffic Control also got quality training from

attachment, the Wyoming Air Guard, members of the Naval Reserve and the regular Air Force to complete two weeks' annual training at Camp Guernsey. The multi-force effort measured the combat medical readiness of all its participants. (197th Public Affairs Detachment photo by White)

Operation Medical Red Flag, according to Staff Sgt. Timothy Peterson of Littleton, Colo. "We've been controlling air traffic since this exercise started. It's been good training for us," Peterson said.