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V CORPS' 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION HELPS GET LIMB-SAVING CANCER SURGERY FOR 12-YEAR-OLD IRAQI GIRL

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TIKRIT, Iraq — A 12-year-old Iraqi girl who was in jeopardy of losing a leg to bone cancer was recently flown to Beirut, Lebanon for treatment with the help of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division.



PHOTO COURTESY 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION
Muna, a 12-year-old Iraqi girl who was in danger of losing her right leg to cancer, was flown to Beirut, Lebanon for advanced treatment recently, thanks to the aid of members of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division.

Iraqi doctors diagnosed Muna, whose last name is being withheld for security reasons, with osteogenic sarcoma several weeks ago. The cancer normally occurs in the long bones, such as the arms, legs and pelvis. The disease often affects children between the ages of 10 and 25, and the only treatment available in her native country included amputation.

After learning that his daughter could lose her right leg, Muna's father went to American Soldiers for help. He asked if they could take her to a place where the surgery could be performed without amputation.

One such place is Beirut, but the procedure is also available in other Western countries, said Lt. Col. Michael Brumage, the division's surgeon, who headed up the efforts to help Muna.

The treatment requires removing the tumor and replacing it with a rod, allowing the patient to keep her limb, Brumage explained.

He then contacted a friend, Lt. Col. Ronald Prauner, a child cancer specialist with the 225th Forward Support Battalion, to examine Muna in Tikrit, where she lives with her family. Prauner determined that she was eligible for the more modern treatment.

With the help of division Staff Judge Advocate Lt. Col. Stuart Risch, Brumage said, he immediately began taking steps to negotiate the fiscal, logistical and bureaucratic roadblocks to flying Muna to Beirut.

Despite the obstacles, Brumage and Risch continued to work to get the girl the help she desperately needed. In the end, 1st Infantry Division Commander Maj. Gen. John R.S. Batiste decided that Muna's "health and welfare were of the utmost importance," Brumage said.

The general allowed Muna to travel to Beirut by a commercial airline July 17. She is currently being treated at American University Hospital, which has a partnership with the renowned St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. St. Jude has agreed to pay for Muna's treatment, Brumage said.

"To see the smile on her face is worth all the effort in the world," Risch said.

“We are obligated to help as many people as we can, whenever we can and as much as we can,” added Brumage. “It’s difficult to turn people away when you know you can help them.”

