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V CORPS MEDICS PRACTICE AIR EVACUATION PROCEDURES DURING EXERCISE IN BULGARIA

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NOVO SELO TRAINING AREA, Bulgaria — Three UH-60 Black Hawk medical evacuation helicopters sit on an airstrip at this rural, mountainous training area in central Bulgaria. Hopefully they'll remain there during the time nearly 1,000 Soldiers from U.S. Army Europe and various units in the United States are here participating with the Bulgarian army in exercise Bulwark 04.

Officials here say safety is paramount during the exercise, but potential dangers lurk, in the form of live ammunition, Soldiers running through simulated urban combat and temperatures nearing 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

To be ready if help is needed, medical and surgical support for the exercise is being provided by 35 Soldiers from Miesau and Landstuhl, Germany-based units.

If someone is seriously injured here -- miles from the



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Sgt. Clarence Behan from V Corps' 160th Forward Surgical Team carries an IV fluid bag for a simulated casualty, Sgt. 1st Class Mario Rodriguez of U.S. Army Europe's 7th Army Training Command during a medical evacuation training exercise the medics performed as part of their participation in exercise Bulwark 04 in central Bulgaria. For the training, the "patient" was medically evacuated to Bourgas Regional Hospital.

nearest hospital -- a "golden hour" from the moment of injury until reaching significant medical treatment is the critical time available to save someone's life. That's why V Corps medics are spending a portion of their time here practicing medical evacuation procedures they hope they won't have to use.

"This medevac rehearsal lets the Soldiers here know that regardless of injury that threatens life, limb or eyesight, we'll get them to a facility where they can get the treatment they need," said 1st Lt. David Lenzo, a pilot from the corps' 236th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), based in Landstuhl.

According to Capt. Benjamin Seeley, Bulwark medical evacuation planner from the corps' 160th Forward Surgical Team, also from Landstuhl, three Bulgarian hospitals in the region are available in the event an injury requires unique emergency medical care. Injuries such as severe burns, neurological injury or venomous snakebites could require medevac. By helicopter, all of these hospitals can be reached in less than an hour.

Lenzo added that rehearsal allows medics in the field to practice a medevac request procedure the Army calls a "nine-line medevac request" -- a checklist of nine procedures to follow to initiate a helicopter evacuation.

"Our philosophy is that anything worth doing is worth rehearsing. Knowing exactly what it takes to get a casualty to the nearest available surgery center is critical knowledge in our preparation for this exercise," Seeley said.

Bulwark 04 runs through mid-August.

