Press Release

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**Navy Reservists hone medical skills during annual summer training at Fort Drum**

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (July 27, 2023) -- In the morning their hands were caked in blood (of the fake variety), and they were hardly able to hear one another over the sounds of a battlefield soundtrack playing in the small simulations room.

Hours later, they got filthy while lumbering through a litter obstacle course to deliver casualties to a field hospital.

By the end of the day, roughly 70 Navy Reservists from across the U.S completed their two-week summer training at Fort Drum, July 17-28.

“This training ensures that we are all as prepared as possible for deploying forward, where we can help take care of combat wounded for any of our shipmates or teammates from the other services in any environment,” said Navy Reserve Capt. Milo Sewards, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Throughout the two weeks, Reservists tackled annual training requirements such as Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC), Basic Life Support (BLS), and other basic proficiency courses.

“I work in a trauma center as an orthopedic surgeon, so I’m very focused on what I do in a civilian hospital,” Sewards said. “The TCCC training is for medical providers, and it’s a good way for us to re-orient to how we, our corpsman and combat medics, would provide care in a combat environment.”

Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman Richard MacPartland was in the first group to go through the simulated trauma lane, where teams of two had 12 minutes to evaluate a casualty for major life threats and provide life-saving care. With state-of-the-art mannequins spurting blood from appendages and chests heaving, the medical professionals said it was as close as possible to the real thing.

“There’s a lot going on in there, and it’s designed to be stress-inducing while simulating all of the chaos that happens in battle,” MacPartland said. “We’ve got a job to do, so you just have to overlook all the distractions and focus on the mission, focus on the casualty.”

He said that it is important for those who have less experience to practice life-saving skills, so they don’t freeze up when they need to perform at their best.

“It’s easy to forget what you have to do and feel overwhelmed,” MacPartland said. “But through repetition you develop muscle memory, and it just becomes instinct. You just react and no longer focus on thought process. The more they do this, the more confident they feel in their skills. So when they are in battle, and they need to apply these skills, they know what they need to do.”

Reservists also spent time in the weapons simulation facility and weapons qualification range.

“Essentially, for a medical unit, weapons training is not a primary focus of our mission,” Sewards said. “But being familiar and proficient with the weapons, especially when deployed in a combat setting or hospital environment, is critical. It’s also a way for us to really connect with what our job is when we wear the uniform.”

The Reservists also worked with U.S. Navy Militia and U.S. Coast Guard personnel for water rescue training and medical care in Alexandria Bay.

Hospital Corpsman Third Class Andrew Wheeler was already wet when he jumped in the water, because of the rain, but he and other trainees quickly huddled in a circle to stay warm while staying afloat.

“That was a great experience,” he said. “It was interesting to see how the Coast Guard operates and get a better idea of what they do. This was my first time doing any kind of joint training.”

Wheeler said he learned a lot in a short time, and that he felt that the experience has made him grow as a medical professional.

“I was able to work on skills here I haven’t been able to practice back at home,” he said. “I work at a clinic where we mainly just take vitals, or I might assist with taking dental X-rays. And I met a lot of great people here, and I made a lot of great connections.”

Staff and cadre from the Bridgewater-Vaccaro Medical Simulation Training Center (MSTC) coordinated the training at Fort Drum, with additional support from 10th Mountain Division Sustainment Brigade and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade Soldiers during the final field exercise.

“For us, it’s always a plus when we can support joint training,” said Mike Wheeler, MSTC site lead. “When Army units deploy, they usually get augmented by Air Force and Navy. We’re all in one fight. So this helps us not only as a base but as a facility to get multiple services here where they can exposure to the different ways they do things.”

The MSTC is the training facility for the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence in the northeast region, and this was the 10th year the staff has supported the summer training called Operation Commanding Force.

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Photo Captions: Navy Reservists from across the U.S. spent their two-week summer training at Fort Drum where they tackled annual training requirements such as Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC), Basic Life Support (BLS), and other basic proficiency courses. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

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