Press Release

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10th Mountain Division Soldiers help save victim of fuel truck explosion

FORT DRUM, N.Y. – One moment they were sipping coffee inside a diner. Then an explosion outside shook the seats of two 10th Mountain Division (LI) Soldiers yesterday morning.

Staff Sgt. Joshua Hayes and Pfc. Jacob Lundemo, both with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, made a quick stop in the town of Fowler for gas and coffee when a fuel truck exploded on County Route 22.

Hayes, a weapons squad leader, said the noise sounded like a mortar round exploding and their immediate reaction was to get everyone to safety.

“Our first instinct was to evacuate the area of all the pedestrians … and secure the area and make it as safe as possible for everyone,” he said. “Initially when the explosion happened, it was chaotic around the area and emotions were pretty high.”

Then they saw a body lying under the truck.

“We let the situation develop for a few seconds and then, collectively, made the decision to go and rescue the casualty from underneath the vehicle,” Hayes said.

Workers were behind the truck attempting to extinguish the fire. The Soldiers directed other truck drivers to move their vehicles away from the incident site and then asked someone to help them move the victim.

“We administered first aid until EMS arrived, according to how we’ve been trained to handle medical situations in certain circumstances,” Hayes said. “We double-checked and triple-checked everything that we did to make sure we didn’t miss anything that could possibly help until medical professionals arrived.”

Besides the initial medical instruction that they received in basic training, Hayes said they developed more advanced skills during Expert Infantryman Badge training.

“Any free time we have, we like to really hone in on medical training for emergency situations,” he said. “And not just the medical training, but everything we do in combat arms builds mental resiliency to handle stressful situations. All the training in general that we’ve had, I think, allowed us to be able to react properly to a situation that was otherwise very chaotic and to be able to make smart decisions in a timely manner.”

Lundemo was the first to speak with the victim, and he found him responsive and in good spirits.

“I told him he would be all right and that we would get him out of there,” he said.

Hayes said that people on the scene gave them clean blankets and towels to clean the victim’s wounds and keep him warm.

As for their being in the right place at the right time, both Soldiers said they were just glad they could assist.

“I believe we were there to help,” Hayes said. “That’s the only sense I can make of the whole situation. It felt good to be able to help out. It really did.”

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Photo caption: Pfc. Jacob Lundemo and Staff Sgt. Joshua Hayes, both with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, are interviewed by local media Oct. 19, a day after they helped rescue a civilian following a fuel truck explosion. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)