

CONTINGENCY AEROMEDICAL STAGING FACILITY



SENDING HEROES HOME



Photos—Capt. Ray Geoffroy; Story—TSgt Shawn McCowan; Video—SSgt Neal Uranga

The state-of-the-art Craig Joint Theater Hospital

at Bagram Airfield is widely recognized as the premier medical facility in Afghanistan. CJTH treats about 4,000 patients each month – as many as 130 war-related injuries each day – yet more than 95% of their patients survive.

Within the CJTH, the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility provides a critical “stable care” function in the hospital’s battlefield care process. Arriving patients who are stabilized are transferred to this facility within the hospital while awaiting a flight to a medical center outside of Afghanistan.

There, CASF staff and volunteers work together to keep wounded warriors as comfortable as possible until their flight. When it’s time to move patients to or from aeromedical airlift, the CASF team calls on a group of unsung heroes who give much of their off-duty time, including many late nights, to make a difference in their own way.

The number of patients being moved varies greatly, but it always requires tight coordination. Amazingly, the



A1C Robert DeSantis of Clearwater Fla. (left)

transfer process takes only about ten minutes.

A1C Robert DeSantis of Clearwater Fla., is a medical technician who works at the facility in a job called “Bulldog.” He manages all of the patient transfers both into the CASF when they arrive, and out to an aircraft when they leave. He recognizes the value of those volunteers possibly more than anyone at the hospital.

“We’d be lost without our volunteers. A

lot of the manpower used to move patients was from hospital staff. Without these volunteers, the mission would take a lot more time, and we might have trouble maintaining good patient safety. But with all these people from different units, things go smoothly and we can get our patients out in a timely manner,” said DeSantis.

Even though the MEDEVAC volunteers work very late hours, DeSantis noticed how CASF volunteers seem to be brought together by their service.

More photos [HERE](#) — Full story [HERE](#) — CASF mission video [HERE](#)



CMSgt Gregory Boyer, from Honolulu, HI.

“A lot of these people become friends. We can forget there are people still getting injured out there. This makes me realize how aware people are that there are servicemembers out there who need our help,” said DeSantis.

The long hours of stop-and-go labor might be an inconvenience for the volunteers, but any difficulties seem to be lost on those lending a late night helping hand.

CMSgt Gregory Boyer, from Honolulu, HI, a volunteer who is otherwise assigned to 455th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, was just looking for a place where a Chief Master Sergeant could volunteer. But he says he found something much more meaningful at the CASF.

“CASF is one of the places where we can give back to the men and women who put their life on the line out here.

It’s a really tight team and a really wonderful thing we’re allowed to be a part of. There’s been a lot of very strong memories here too,” said Boyer.

TSgt Matthew Kostos works with Chief Boyer in ELRS, and joined him one evening to help. He immediately understood the importance of the volunteer experience.

“I volunteered one night. And after doing this only once, I could really see the opportunity to give back. Volunteering here made me see the war is impacted by CASF. If there’s any place to give time that has impact, it’s here,” said Kostos.

As Kostos continued to volunteer with the CASF team, his experiences had a deeper and more personal impact on him.

“Every night is a night I won’t forget. One of the most rewarding parts of this is getting to talk to the people here. Recently there was a guy coming off the aircraft with a gunshot wound in the chest,” said Kostos. “I just started talking with him a little, and found out he was from my hometown. I got to talk to him about life back home.”

More photos [HERE](#) — Full story [HERE](#) — CASF mission video [HERE](#)



SrA Guillermo Hernandez, medical technician from Oakland, Tenn.

Finding the right people to serve in the CASF is up to SrA Guillermo Hernandez, a medical technician from Oakland, Tenn. He is in charge of personnel assignments, “Manpower,” there. His job gives him a special appreciation for volunteers supporting the CASF.

“We get notified of an arrival, then we have to be at the aircraft about 90 minutes before wheels up. We wouldn’t

be able to do anything without our volunteers. Without a CASF, the patients could not get processed out and they would all be in-house. To allow us to keep bringing critical patients in we need the CASF to help the rest of the stable patients transfer out,” said Hernandez.

As a testimony to the value of serving there, Hernandez also volunteers at the CASF when off-duty.

“Volunteering is very rewarding. It gives you a different perspective on being part of the war. You get to know your patients, and you hear what happened to them and why they’re in the CASF. They could’ve been a six-foot-something football player, but now they’re an amputee. But you’re here with them, and they’re still smiling. That’s always a great feeling.”

Each morning at sunrise, a shift of tired volunteers leave while the physicians and day shift staff arrive, prepared to use every advantage at their disposal to save nearly everyone they see. Behind the renowned doctors and staff, and beyond the cutting-edge medical technology, the hospital’s greatest assets show up; the next wave of CASF volunteers.—



Bagram’s CASF Team: Sending Heroes Home

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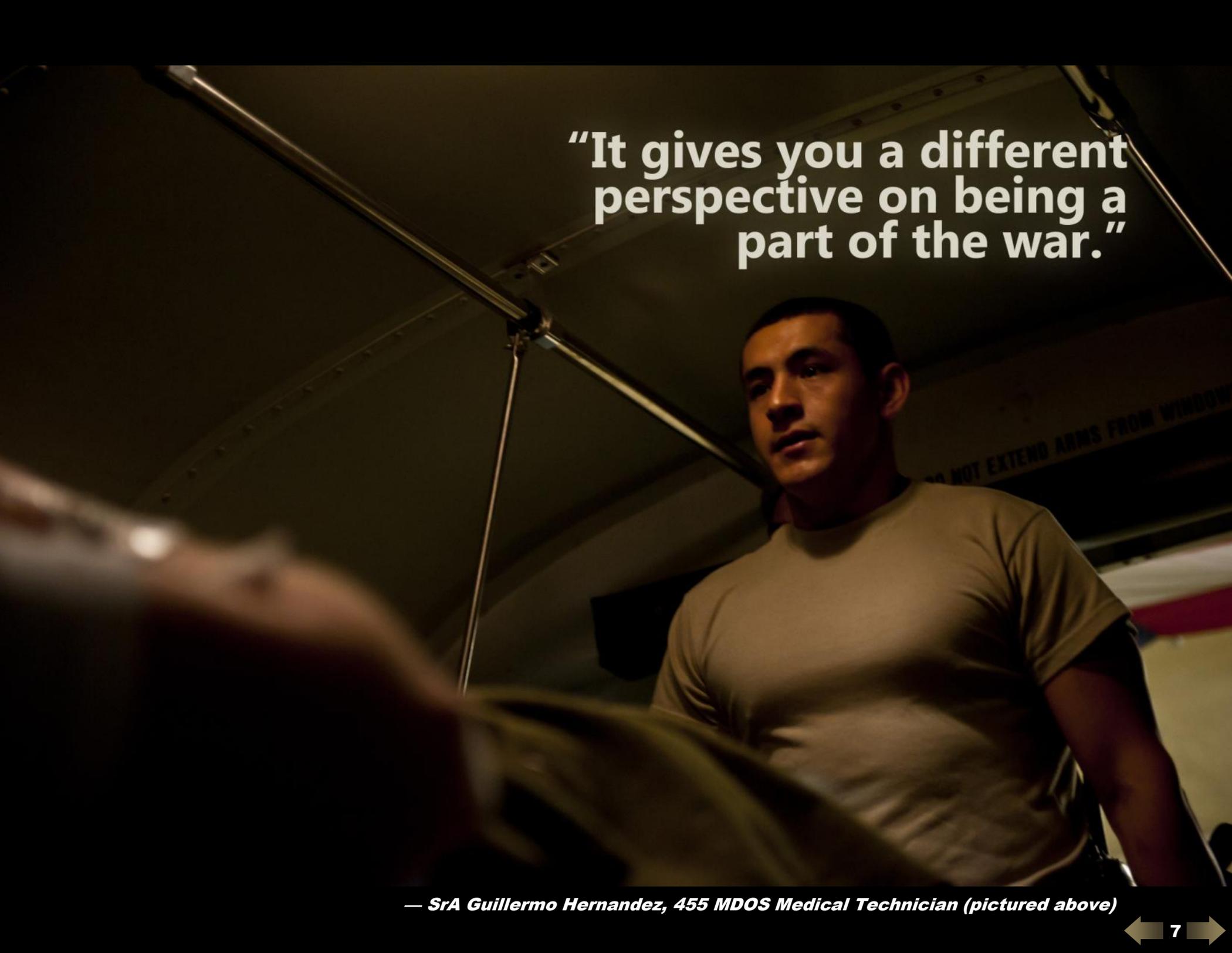


“We’d be lost without our volunteers... With all these people from different units, we always have enough people, so things go smoothly”

—A1C Robert DeSantis, 455 MDOS Medical Technician (pictured above)



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—CMSgt Gregory Boyer , CASF Volunteer from 455 LRS (pictured left)



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