

French Coalition Forces

Some Aspects of the French Military Health Service in the Gulf War

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Approximately 1,000 members of the French military medical services supported the French armed forces during their deployment to Saudi Arabia, including 200 physicians.

The French medical support included regimental medical units, light medical divisional formations, field hospitals and Navy ships with surgical treatment capabilities. The medical services were deployed to five different locations in Saudi Arabia as follows:

(1) With the Daguet division, a name given to the French division which took part in Desert Shield/Storm.

This included the following elements: (a) First aid stations (regimental level) with physicians, medics and ambulances. (b) Divisional formations including air transportable surgery units, light structures with one operating suit, 12 beds and a surgical team; air transportable medical unit (heavier), with 50 beds, a laboratory, a dental chair and several ambulances; recovery platoons with four-wheel-drive armored ambulances, equipped with light resuscitative equipment; decontamination teams to deal with biological and chemical injuries and environmental poisoning.

(2) At King Khaled Military City then in Rafha. The health chain of the lo-



Figure 1. Medical care rendered to an Iraqi wounded on the first day of battle.

gistic support group was composed of two field hospitals with 50 beds and one surgical team each; one air transportable surgery unit; one decontamination team; one ambulance group; one air medevac pick-up-point counting 100 transit beds; one medical supply group.

(3) At Riyadh International Air Port, a medical surgical hospital and an air transit point (HMCTA) set up with two field hospitals and an air medevac pick-up point. Together they provided about 300 beds for patient care. A medical supply section also located here distributed the medical supplies coming in from France to the various medical treatment facilities.

(4) At Yambu, two Navy ships had hospitalization and surgical treatment capabilities, and close to the airport was another air medevacuation pick-up point. Transportation between these two points was by ambulance or utility helicopter.

(5) At Alahsa Air Base where a medical team provided services supported by a light surgical team from the Navy.

The health service organization that was established in the Gulf region was an adaptation of the one planned for a possible conflict taking place in Europe. Particular attention had to be paid to the distances between deployment sites of the troops and the medical treatment sites. Within Saudi

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Figure 2. French field hospital at RAFHA.

Arabia, air transport by utility helicopter (PUMA), C160 (TRANSALL, and C130 (HERCULES) were favored for the transport of the injured. For evacuation to France the DC8 and commercial flights were used.

The triage and treatment plan for the wounded can be described as follows:

- first aid and recuperation at the unit level first aid station;
- transportation to the division base for clearing by air transportable units by helicopter or armored ambulances;
- at this level, emergency treatment is of utmost importance;
- evacuation of P1, P2, and P3 casualties to Rafha by helicopter (P1—most severe injury, P3 less severe);
- treatment of P1 casualties at this level;
- evacuation of P2 and P3 casualties to Riyadh or Yambu by C130 or C160 air craft;

- treatment of P2 casualties at this level;
- evacuation of P3 casualties to France.

Casualties treated in Saudi Arabia, were subsequently evacuated back to France in the same manner after the post-operative time.

The French Health service support had been planned to answer the needs of the Daguet Division.

Many contacts were established to the health services of the allied and coalition forces, particularly to the health services of the United States.

During the ground operations, the 82 AB and the Daguet division coordinated the use of their resources. Also, the French field hospital and the 93rd Evacuation Hospital who were deployed alongside in Rafha, established close and useful cooperation. A French physician was designated as the medical liaison officer of the

18th Medical Command. Another one took up contact with the 44th Medical Brigade and the 93rd Evacuation Hospital.

In Riyadh, a physician of the HMCTA was in contact with the US Air Force hospital, Saudi Arabian military hospital, and the British hospital located at the air port.

The director of the French health services or his deputy attended the weekly meetings of the allied medical services to discuss and resolve common problems and to coordinate medical care. ●