



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tennessee Guard Helicopter Proves Key Factor in Mountain Rescue

Alcoa, TN - The type of medical helicopter that normally flies into Knoxville's Ft. Sanders Regional Hospital heliport is a UT Lifestar bird, but yesterday the heliport was reminiscent of a scene from MASH.

A HH-60 Blackhawk assigned to the Tennessee Army National Guard's 1-169 Medevac unit landed at Fort Sander's after rescuing a 66 year old man suffering from a critical medical condition from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

At approximately 5:00 p.m., Flight Paramedics Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Banta and Staff Sgt. Giovanni Dezuanì were lowered from the helicopter, reached the man who is diabetic and suffering from hypertension, stabilized him and rode with him as they were hoisted more than 200 feet into the hovering helicopter. SSG Dezuanì and Sgt. 1st Class Banta continued to treat and stabilize the patient, who was responsive but weak, as they flew from the Mount Cammerer tower area to Fort Sander's Regional Hospital.

"We knew it was crucial that we reached the patient as soon as possible, because of the medical threat and the remote area where he was located," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Brad Hutsell, pilot in command of the HH-60. "When the National Park Service called us, we knew that time was essential."

"The Medivac unit has only been at McGhee Tyson for a few months", said Maj. Gen. Max Haston, Tennessee's Adjutant General. "We moved part of them from Smyrna just to address missions such as this after losing the OH-58D Kiowa Warriors due to the redesign of Army Aviation. It's very fulfilling that these outstanding Soldiers are fully operational in such a short time on an entirely new aircraft."

Assisting in the mission were Guard pilot CW2 Keith Bowery, and crew chief Staff Sgt. Doug Edmisten, who operated the hoist bringing both Flight Paramedics and the patient onboard for treatment and transport.

The 1-169th is based at Joint Base McGhee Tyson in Alcoa as part of the Guard's newly formed 1-230th Assault Helicopter Battalion. The battalion also has Blackhawks based in Nashville and Jackson.

NOTE: HI-RES Photos attached

Photos and Captions:



A Tennessee Army National Guard HH-60 Blackhawk sets down at Ft. Sander's Regional Hospital after rescuing a patient from a remote area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Photo by National Park Ranger William Jaynes



Tennessee Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Doug Edmisten operates the hoist bringing Flight Paramedic Staff Sgt. Giovanni Dezuani and a critically ill hiker out of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Photo by National Park Ranger William Jaynes



Flight Paramedic Staff Sgt. Giovanni Dezuani clutches a critically ill hiker recovered in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park as Staff Sgt. Doug Edmisten assists in bringing him into a Tennessee Army National Guard HH-60 Blackhawk.

Photo by National Park Ranger William Jaynes