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TNNG Aviators receive Sikorsky Rescue Award

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. - Several Tennessee Army National Guard Soldiers from the 1-230th Assault Helicopter Battalion that is now part of Joint Base McGhee-Tyson in Knoxville, Tenn., were awarded the Sikorsky Rescue Award July 10, for participating in three different lifesaving missions in Eastern Tennessee earlier this year.

"To be eligible to receive the Sikorsky Rescue Award, an individual must have directly performed a lifesaving rescue in any Sikorsky helicopter," said Shay Collins, a customer award program manager with Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation. The awards were presented by Tom Nicolette, a representative of Sikorsky Aircraft, and by Maj. Gen. Max Haston, Adjutant General for the Tennessee National Guard.

The award was established to salute the men and women who endanger their own lives to save others wounded in combat, trapped by hurricanes, mud slides, earthquakes, avalanches or other natural disasters, and imperiled by accidents such as shipwrecks, according to the company website.

It can be more difficult to treat a patient in the air than on the ground.

"The space in which we work is confined and we only have what we bring with us to treat the patient," said Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Banta, a flight paramedic for more than 20 years with the Tennessee National Guard. "We have to be vigilant when checking off the aircraft and our medical equipment prior to assuming the mission."

However, difficulties are not a deterrent.

"Having the ability to help people in their time of need is the greatest and most rewarding job I have ever had," Banta added. He currently works full time for the Guard as a standardization instructor training crew chiefs and other flight paramedics. Banta keeps his medical skills sharp working part time as a paramedic in the civilian sector as well.

The Soldiers have participated in three separate rescue missions just this year. On March 30, the National Guard crew rescued a diabetic man from the Mount Cammerer Tower area. The MEDEVAC unit had only been at Joint Base McGhee-Tyson for a few months at the time of the incident.

On April 29, a hiker suffering from a lower leg injury sustained somewhere along the Ramsey Cascade Trail in Great Smoky Mountains National Park had to be airlifted. The Tennessee National Guard again flew to the rescue and transported the woman to the University of Tennessee Medical Center. About a week later, on May 7, the unit was activated again, rescuing another injured hiker, this time along the Boulevard Trail, who was also flown to UT Medical Center for further treatment.

Overall, eight Tennessee National Guard Soldiers have received the Sikorsky Rescue Award this year: Maryville, Tenn., residents Chief Warrant Officer 4 Brad Hutsell and Staff Sgt. Giovanni Dezuani; Alcoa, Tenn., resident Sgt. John Sharbel; and Knoxville, Tenn., residents Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matt Jagers, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Andrew Cordray, Jr., Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Banta, Sgt. 1st Class Eddie Smith, and Staff Sgt. Doug Edmisten; as well as Sgt. Jason Bowen who has recently transferred to the Wyoming Army National Guard.

Sikorsky initiated the Winged-S Rescue Award Program in 1950 to honor all those who perform rescues flying a Sikorsky helicopter. Sikorsky helicopters have helped save an estimated 2 million lives since the first civilian helicopter rescue occurred in 1945.

TRAINING VIDEO PRIOR TO RESCUES:

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/453490/joint-force-medevac-training>

Airmen of the 134th Air Refueling Wing Aircrew Flight Equipment and 151st Air Refueling Squadron conduct joint-force UH-60 Blackhawk medical extraction training with Soldiers of Det. 1, Co. C, 1-169th Aviation Regiment at Joint Base McGhee-Tyson in Knoxville, Tenn., March 6. The training was a joint effort to accomplish the 151st Air Refueling Squadron's annual combat survival training and the 1-169th Aviation Regiment's ongoing MEDEVAC extraction training. (Video by Master Sgt. Kendra Owenby, 134th Air Refueling Wing).

PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS:



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 March 30. (Photo by National Park Ranger William Jaynes.)



Staff Sgt. Giovanni Dezuani with the injured patient on the hoist cable as they prepare to board the aircraft April 29 along Ramsey Cascade Trail. (Photo provided by 1-230th Assault Helicopter Battalion.)



Sgt. Jason Bown and Sgt. John Sharbel search for the injured hiker along the Boulevard Trail area of the Great Smoky Mountains May 7. (Photo provided by 1-230th Assault Helicopter Battalion.)



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