

## **Tripler Army Medical Center Public Affairs Office News Release**

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Lt. Col. (Dr.) Howard F. Detwiler Jr., with Tripler Army Medical Center's Department of Psychiatry, closes the Combat Stress Chamber getting ready to ship it to Afghanistan with the 25th Infantry Division Jan. 21st.

### ***Pre-emptive strike at stress***

#### **Tripler Psychiatry sends Combat Stress Reduction Chamber to desert for deployed Soldiers**

##### **Tripler Army Medical Center Public Affairs Office**

by Margaret Tippy

HONOLULU - The Army Medical Department wants to take care of the whole Soldier - mind, body, spirit - which is one reason deployed Soldiers will have the chance to use a Combat Stress Reduction Chamber in Afghanistan, thanks to Tripler Army Medical Center's Lt. Col. (Dr.) Howard F. Detwiler Jr., Department of Psychiatry.

Imagine returning from a combat patrol tired, exhausted and on edge, and within minutes sitting back in a comfortable chair and watching peaceful, meditative videos for stress reduction in a climate-controlled chamber. As the Soldier is enjoying this relaxing time, technicians and clinicians can measure pulse rates and skin responses, among other things to gauge the Soldier's response and measure stress and stress reduction.

"We call them Combat Stress Reduction Chambers," Detwiler said. And he's hoping the chamber deployed can make a difference in stress levels in the desert. Combat Stress Control teams are also available to assist Soldiers.

This is the first time a chamber has actually been deployed to the battlefield. It was palletized and sent with the 25th Infantry Division, thanks to Capt. (Dr.) Bryan Bacon, division psychiatrist, who also deployed.

Combat Stress Reduction Chambers have been used at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., in the past, though, Detwiler said, and have enjoyed success in reducing stress reactions.

He sees the chambers as a tool that can be used by those under stress - a teaching performance enhancement to "do a task better" through biofeedback. Allowing Soldiers to de-stress enhances their abilities to concentrate and more effectively perform their missions.

Detwiler and his wife, Lisa, constructed three chambers themselves - two small ones and one large one - consisting mainly of the medical equipment necessary for monitoring, a TV set, VCR, comfortable lighting, massage chair, and speakers. One of the smaller chambers went to Afghanistan.

They kept them portable by making them around 200 pounds and they are constructed to be shipped with all equipment inside and camouflaged with the appropriate desert colors.

The cost is basically the cost of the equipment placed inside the chamber - depending on how high-end your equipment is - for instance a regular TV monitor versus a flat TV screen, Detwiler said.

Detwiler's also demonstrated the device many times at various conferences to include the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS), and has received support from a variety of commanders, he said. Stress reduction is a force multiplier that keeps healthy troops with their units making the military more effective.

Since 1984, the military has realized the need to treat those in harm's way quickly and rapidly through Critical Incident Debriefings, Detwiler said. Historically, the need for stress reduction has been recognized by the military since World War I. Quick debriefings help in reducing the incidents of situations such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) beginning in theater.

A great indicator of how Soldiers will do in combat is their attitudes, Detwiler said, and improving attitudes can only help Soldiers' effectiveness to get the job done.

He has a great deal of experience in this field having served as a Special Forces medic from 1966 through 1969, and working with Deceased Col. Nick Rowe at Fort Bragg, N.C., on the manual for the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Course (SERE). Rowe had been held as a Prisoner of War (POW) for 62 months by the Viet Cong and shared his insights in to dealing with and handling stress. Communist rebels assassinated Rowe in the Philippines April 21, 1989.

Detwiler has also conducted research in his private practice and as an adviser to the Los Angeles SWAT Team. He says a 95 percent approval rate has been achieved in his practice testing the system as an addition to regular counseling, as reported in a news release from the February 1993 Flaming Blade military magazine.

For more information, Detwiler may be reached at 433-2737.



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Comments or suggestions to the [Public Affairs Officer](#)

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