

Tripler Army Medical Center

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Combined Task Training hones battlefield skills of Tripler Soldiers

by Les Ozawa

Tripler Army Medical Center Public Affairs Office

HONOLULU—“Every Soldier in the Army has to come through this training, from E-1 through General Pollock,” said Sgt. 1st Class Roy Ridgeway.

Soldiers assigned to Tripler Army Medical Center know well the training Ridgeway was talking about: Common Task Training, better known as CTT. Recently, Ridgeway traded his hospital gown for cammies and boots for a week, to oversee about 200 Soldiers go through 28 specific tasks now required by the Army to ensure their mission readiness in wartime.

Ridgeway and a cadre of about two dozen Tripler Soldiers deployed camouflaged tents on the slope below Tripler during the week of April 25. The previous CTT last October trained about 800 Soldiers assigned to Tripler. This time, about 200 Soldiers who had not yet fully met their annual CTT requirements were expected spend several hours making their way through the six CTT stations. Tripler also makes the training available to other Oahu commands, and Soldiers of the 396th Signal Company and the 516th Signal Brigade also participated in the spring training.

“Last year, the Army did a big change to CTT,” said Ridgeway. “They added some additional tasks, like how to react to an IED (Improvised Explosive Device), EPW (Enemy Prisoner of War) and added SAW (Squad-Level Automatic Weapon).” While civilian eyes may glaze over this alphabet-soup terminology, each Army-mandated Common Task is a well-focused training window based on lessons learned from today’s battlefields.

One new addition to the CTT is “Current Operations,” which trains Soldiers on how to identify an IED. It also requires Soldiers to role-play how to control entry and exit from a restricted area, including conducting a vehicle search, and reviewing how to interact with the media.

“A lot of us have been to Iraq or Afghanistan in the past two years,” said Sgt. Michael Crain, a CTT cadre who works in Tripler’s Ophthalmology Clinic. “We bring real-world experience to the training.” Crain, wearing a kaffiyeh, a traditional Arabian headdress he bought in Kuwait City, played the role of an Arabian driver whose van is stopped at a security checkpoint, in one of the CTT scenarios.

“Training this year is more realistic than it was last year,” said Spc. Deidre Zapata, after she had worked her way through the last CTT training station designed for medical personnel. Zapata and Spc. Warren Frazier, who both work in the Pediatric Clinic, and Pfc. Kristen Elminger of the Medical Oncology Clinic, had just been walked through the procedure of removing a possible spinal injury victim from the driver’s seat of a truck.

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Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Hatcher of Headquarters and Headquarters Company at U.S. Army Pacific, signs off 30th Signal Brigade’s Staff Sgt. Isaac Shubert’s CTT performance sheet after briefing him about the M249 machine gun.

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Tripler Soldiers Spc. Warren Frazier of the Pediatric Clinic (from left), Pfc. Kristen Elminger of the Medical Oncology Clinic, and Spc. Deidre Zapata of Pediatric Clinic practice removing a spinal injury victim-dummy from a vehicle, coached by Pediatric Clinic’s Sgt. Maria Jamieson.

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In a current operations scenario, Staff Sgt. James Wheeler of 516th Signal Brigade guards the driver of a van stopped at a security checkpoint, while the van is searched. Playing the role of the driver is Ophthalmology Clinic Eye Technician Sgt. Michael Crain, who is wearing a kaffiyeh, a traditional Arabian headdress.