

Mississippi Guardsmen bring medical skills to Oahu

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Photo courtesy of Tripler Army Medical Center Public Affairs

The 186th Medical Group, Air National Guard, says goodbye to Oahu after lending their specialized services to TAMC and Schofield Barracks, June 8-18.

*Capt. Jerry Cunningham
186th Medical Group*

HONOLULU — Thirty-one Air National Guardsman of the 186th Medical Group, “Magnolia Militia,” Meridian, Mississippi, brought a wide variety of medical specialties to Tripler Army Medical Center and Schofield Barracks, recently.

“Joint overseas deployment training is designed to provide (Guardsmen) with realistic mobilization from their unit for two-week annual training to test their ability to prepare, move and train with their active duty counterparts, and then re-deploy back to home station successfully,” said Lt. Col. Derek Morton, chief of Reserve Affairs, Pacific Regional Medical Command. “Thirteen years of war has shown how important joint medical capabilities are in a field or fixed facility environment.”

The 186th's medical specialists included family practice physicians, optometrists, nurses, medical and radiology technicians, laboratory specialists, public health techs and physician assistants. During their time on Oahu, the group saw 1,623 patients while working 1,421 independent hours.

"This training was particularly helpful in exposing our staff to the current electronic medical records system, Armed Forces Health Longitudinal Technology Application (AHLTA), which our medical group is currently implementing back at our home base," said Col. John Tugwell, commander, 186th Medical Group. "The timing could not have been any better to have had this AHLTA training right before we implement the system back home.

"Another added benefit was the ability to train one of our medical technicians and get her certified in the immunizations area," said Tugwell. "This training is very hard to come by in the civilian sector, and only a limited number of military medical centers provide this training. This technician will now be able to administer immunizations, such as anthrax, typhoid and yellow fever for Airmen deploying in foreign locations."

The group augmented the regular staff at sick call on Schofield Barracks.

"There is a lot of paperwork and behind-the-scenes work that takes place in order to pull off an annual training tour, such as this one, but with the help of the Reserve Affairs staff and others within TAMC, this valuable training was accomplished," said Chief Master Sgt. Catherine Wilson, superintendent, 186th Medical Group. "It is great to see (186th junior medical personnel) get the training they need to be able to help other Airmen be medically fit to fly, fight and win."

"The group was able to take in some of the sights and attractions of Oahu in their off-duty time," said Capt. Jerry Cunningham, group medical administrative officer. "Whether it was a luau or a hike up Diamond Head, the morale of the group was greatly enhanced by the opportunity to participate in all the scenic MWR events available on the island.

"Also, for any military member, no trip would be complete without taking in the historic Arizona memorial," Cunningham added.

(Note: Tripler Army Medical Center Public Affairs and U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii Public Affairs contributed to this story.)

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