

# Medics' greatest reward comes on battlefield

By **Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma**  
1st Cavalry Division

BAGHDAD — Army medics undergo countless hours of training before being certified, but for some healthcare specialists, the real “seal of approval” doesn’t come from a certificate on graduation day. It comes from performing their job under the stress of combat.

A healthcare specialist at Joint Security Station Thrasher, Pfc. Tony Lawry said every opportunity he gets — whether lying on his cot or rolling in a convoy — he thinks about all the possible injuries he might encounter and how he’ll react to them.

“The first time I saw something, I reacted with training,” said Lawry. “It was exactly what I’ve trained to do hundreds of times in my head, on my buddies, on mannequins.”

On Saint Patrick’s Day, when JSS Thrasher was only a couple of days old, the first challenge appeared in the form of a Soldier with a gunshot wound to the leg.

Although not the smartest of ideas, Lawry ran from behind cover to get to the wounded Soldier.

“I rushed up, cut away his pants, found the wound, put the tourniquet on, gave him morphine and got him the hell out of there,” said Lawry, a member of the Fort Bliss, Texas-based 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment.

The victim had a “through and through,” meaning the bullet went in one side and out the other.

“One of the first things medics learn is when someone is shot in the leg you just drop your knee there, jamming it on the artery,” Lawry said. “You’ll stop the

bleeding. If it hurts the patient, not doing any further damage, but is physically painful, you’re probably doing it right.”

Lawry said that when medics are working on fellow Soldiers — one of their own — all they think about is getting them stable and evacuated.

“You don’t think about your equipment; you don’t think about your own safety,” Lawry said.

Medics at joint security stations work alongside Iraqi troops, sometimes helping mend local nationals or foreign troops. There is nothing predictable about their jobs.

“It’s basically fly by the seat of your pants, moment’s notice, ‘Hey, we got casualties coming in’ and you don’t really know what’s going on until they’re right in front of your eyes,” said Spc. Andrew Demma, the senior medic at the JSS, also with the 2-12 Cav.

The medics face death on a regular basis.

“I’ve ridden back to the Treatment Medical Center with a dead Soldier. I watched my best Army friend suffer from a chest wound on the way back to the TMC,” Demma said.

They gradually grow immune to the potentially traumatic situations that fill their days.

“It’s like any other thing in life — you get desensitized,” said Demma. “Every once in a while you catch yourself thinking back after each incident and you just realize it’s not bothering you as much. You don’t dwell on it as much and as time goes by, you tend to go about your business a little quicker after each incident.”

Demma and Lawry agree that the fulfillment that comes with being a medic



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A Soldier drives past the aftermath of the detonation of an improvised explosive device in Baghdad’s southern Ghazaliya neighborhood last month. Army medics frequently find themselves helping casualties caused by IEDs.

outweighs the bad parts of it.

Lawry said a feeling of pride took over when a doctor told him he saved a Soldier’s life.

“I felt like I finally had done my job,” Lawry said. “I can say I’ve been under fire treating a guy, and that makes it so that people listen to you more. I feel if

someone listens to you, and respects what you’re saying because you’ve been there and you’ve done it; you can do your job better.”

# Improved Army combat shirt coming soon

By **Debi Dawson**  
Army News Service

FORT BELVOIR, Va. — The Army Program Executive Office Soldier will soon provide an improved Army combat shirt to Soldiers deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The flame-resistant, long-sleeved shirt, which retains the moisture-wicking capability, breathability, and durability of other components in the ACU, also has many of its other features, including cargo pockets, infrared identification tabs, and hook-and-loop fasteners for the American flag.

The new shirt has a foliage green torso and sleeves in the universal camouflage pattern, and sports seamless shoulders

and side panels for comfort, along with integrated anti-abrasion elbow pads, and a small Army Strong logo centered on the chest.

The high-performance shirt, designed to be a base layer, can be worn directly under the Interceptor Body Armor, according to Maj. Clay Williamson, assistant product manager for clothing and individual equipment.

The ACS is made of an anti-microbial cotton and rayon blend fabric treated with a new process that penetrates to the fiber level. It provides fire-resistance for the life of the garment. “It is completely safe, non-toxic, and allows us to treat fibers that were once not treatable,” Maj. Williamson said.

The shirt integrates with other flame-

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**Brig. Gen. R. Mark Brown**

resistant components, such as the Army combat pants, to provide head-to-toe protection against burns. The Army combat pants are the same as the ACU pants, except they are made of a flame-resistant material, according to the major. Soldiers’ hands are protected by flame-

resistant gloves that have been a part of the Army’s Rapid Fielding Initiative.

This ensemble further complements the Army’s system-of-systems approach to force protection, which integrates layers of protection for Soldiers on the battlefield.

“I want to assure the American public, the Soldiers, and their families that they have the best equipment when and where they need it. If there were something better, we would buy it; and we’re always looking for something better,” said Brig. Gen. R. Mark Brown, Program Executive Officer Soldier.

*Debi Dawson serves with the Program Executive Office Soldier Strategic Communications Office.*



U.S. Army photo

The new improved Army combat shirt will be issued to Soldiers deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan.

# Combat Soldiers in Afghanistan first to receive new semi-automatic sniper rifles

By **Spc. Matthew Leary**  
Army News Service

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan — Soldiers from Task Force Fury are the first in a combat zone to receive a new sniper rifle, the XM110 semi-automatic sniper system.

The new rifle has several new features, the most prominent being an improved rate of fire.

“It’s semi-automatic, so it allows for rapid re-engagement of targets,” said

Staff Sgt. Jason R. Terry, a sniper instructor with the U.S. Army Sniper School.

Older rifles such as the M24 Sniper Weapon System are bolt-action weapons that require the user to manually feed another round into the chamber after each shot.

The automatic firing capabilities of the SASS will decrease lag time in between shots, Terry said.

A metal tube that fits over the barrel of the rifle also significantly reduces the signature blast and eliminates the small cloud of dust that rises off the ground

from the gases emitted through the barrel.

This advancement will make locating snipers in the field, even after they have fired a shot, difficult for enemy forces, said Terry.

The new weapons came with three days of training, both in the classroom and on the range, by Terry and other experts.

“We learned to maintain and operate the weapon, what we can fix ourselves and what we can’t,” said Pfc. Joel D. Dulashanti, a sniper with the 82nd Air-

borne Division’s C Troop, 4th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team.

Kyle P. Gleason, an equipment specialist with Tank Automotive and Armorer Command, handled the maintenance portion of the class.

“I teach them the basics,” he said. “Here’s your rifle, here’s what it can do and here’s how you take care of it.”

Gleason taught Soldiers how to determine the level of maintenance the weapon needs and who is capable of providing it. He also cautioned Soldiers

about particularly fragile parts of the weapon, which only the manufacturer can repair.

Soldiers appreciated the hands-on training, which they said helped them better understand their new equipment.

“I think it’s a pretty simple weapon to maintain and operate,” said Spc. Aaron J. Fillmore, an infantryman with Troop C, 4-73 Cav. “It was good to get the familiarization.”

*Spc. Matthew Leary writes for the Task Force Fury Public Affairs Office.*