

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SD Guard trains Afghan National Air Force on Jaws of Life

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CAMP MARMAL, Balkh Province, Afghanistan – In an emergency situation, time is of the essence. With little time to react, there is no room for error. For situations requiring quick reaction, knowing what to do, and when to do it is credited to proper training.

Members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 451st Engineer Detachment firefighters, of Sturgis, collaborated on an exercise on the proper use of vehicle extrication methods with Afghan National Air Force firefighters members here May 2.

The training evolution is designed to teach the proper methods to assess a crash scene and expedite the evacuation of victims who may be in need of immediate medical care.

Sgt. 1st Class Austin Hagen, fire chief, of Sturgis, says the information is to prepare their Afghan counterparts the best way to react in a situation where every moment counts.

“We teach them the proper way to save lives with the proper tools and techniques,” said Hagen.

By proper tools and techniques, Hagen refers to what is commonly called the Jaws of Life. He also states, with proper training and reaction speed, the tools can safely extract a patient from a vehicle within 20 – 30 seconds, increasing the survivability rate of crash victims.

Sgt. Max Stoltenburg, firefighter, of Aberdeen, says the Jaws of Life is a tool used to remove a vehicle from the victim, when removing the victim from the vehicle is impractical. These utensils are designed to be portable and readily available to safely and quickly aid in the rescue techniques of firefighters.

The instruction begins with a safety meeting, where Stoltenburg and Hagen both make comments regarding the day's event. Stoltenburg stresses the importance keeping a safe distance from any possible hazards and Hagen makes a point to the students to bring any possible threat to his attention.

After the safety brief, the process begins. While the students pay close attention to the explanation of the demonstration by their teachers, they seem eager to get their hands on the tools and perform the tasks as well. The entire display covers all necessary steps to recover a victim from a crash site. From stabilizing the vehicle to the removal of the victim with the hydraulic powered tools, they successfully extract the victim from the vehicle.

Since the 451st arrived to Camp Marmal, they have played a role in the training of their Afghan cohorts. Sgt. Max Stoltenburg says through both mentorship and formal training, they have seen a level of success to a high degree of satisfaction.

“We are very proud of these men,” said Stoltenburg. “Their training has definitely paid off.”

The payoff is also shown through the efforts of the students when they are not being instructed. U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Chris Gerwick, a member of 438th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group Detachment 3, who is assigned to mentor the Afghan unit on a daily basis, says the Afghan group successfully applies these skills to real life situations.

“A month ago, this team responded and successfully extinguished a fire on their own,” said Geswick. “The training they’ve received is a direct credit to their efforts.”

The commander of the Afghan Air Force firefighting group, Maj. Said Shah, says he values the efforts the instruction has offered his unit.

“This is a benefit for us to learn how to use these tools,” said Shah. “It makes us feel good about being able to help our people when they need it and the Americans have shown us a wealth of knowledge with this training.”

Through the training, the instructors gain their own reward as they claim they are actively participating in the successful transition process, which gives them a high degree of satisfaction.

“This is a win-win for us,” said Hagen. “It’s good for them because they are learning new things and it’s good for us because we sharpen our skills when we teach. With the right training, tools and techniques in place, these guys will save the lives of their people in need.”

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120502-A-XX000-001: An Afghan National Air Force airman prepares for vehicle extraction training by utilizing the proper personal protective equipment here May 2. The training, facilitated by the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 451st Engineer Detachment firefighters, provided hands on training of the tools and techniques to safely remove a victim from a vehicle accident. International Security Assistance Force Regional Command North supports Afghan National Security Forces in close coordination and collaboration in providing security and disrupting insurgent activities in order to protect the Afghan population. (Photo by German Army Pfc. Malte Kastenberg)



120502-A-XX000-002: Maj. Said Shah, of the Afghan National Air Force speaks with his airmen as they prepare for vehicle extraction training held here May 2. The training, facilitated by the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 451st Engineer Detachment firefighters, provided hands on training of the tools and techniques to safely remove a victim from a vehicle accident. International Security Assistance Force Regional Command North supports Afghan National Security Forces in close coordination and collaboration in providing security and disrupting insurgent activities in order to protect the Afghan population. (Photo by German Army Pfc. Malte Kastenberg)



120502-A-XX000-003: An Afghan National Air Force airman clears one of the windows of the crash vehicle during vehicle extraction training exercise held here May 2. The training, facilitated by the South Dakota Army National Guard's 451st Engineer Detachment firefighters, provided hands on training of the tools and techniques to safely remove a victim from a vehicle accident. International Security Assistance Force Regional Command North supports Afghan National Security Forces in close coordination and collaboration in providing security and disrupting insurgent activities in order to protect the Afghan population. (Photo by German Army Pfc. Malte Kastenberg)



120502-A-XX000-004: Afghan National Air Force airmen work together to remove the windshield of the crash vehicle during vehicle extraction training exercise held here May 2. The training, facilitated by the South Dakota Army National Guard's 451st Engineer Detachment firefighters, provided hands on training of the tools and techniques to safely remove a victim from a vehicle accident. International Security Assistance Force Regional Command North supports Afghan National Security Forces in close coordination and collaboration in providing security and disrupting insurgent activities in order to protect the Afghan population. (Photo by German Army Pfc. Malte Kastenberg)



120502-A-XX000-005: An Afghan National Air Force airman uses the spreader tool on the crash vehicle during vehicle extraction training exercise held here May 2. The training, facilitated by the South Dakota Army National Guard's 451st Engineer Detachment firefighters, provided hands on training of the tools and techniques to safely remove a victim from a vehicle accident. International Security Assistance Force Regional Command North supports Afghan National Security Forces in close coordination and collaboration in providing security and disrupting insurgent activities in order to protect the Afghan population. (Photo by German Army Private 1st Class Malte Kastenberg)

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