

Community rallies to aid in Ramstein air crash disaster

by Kathy Ports

Out of the smoke and ashes of the Ramstein air crash disaster emerges the overwhelming dedication of soldiers and volunteers. Both in and behind the scenes these unsung heroes worked diligently to provide whatever aid they could. It has been said that the quality of people can be seen by the actions they take when faced with an emergency situation.

Within thirty minutes after the first call for support came in, two CUCV's with the first shipment of medical supplies desperately needed for the Ramstein air crash victims were on their way from the United States Army Medical Material Center, Europe, Pirmasens to Landstuhl Army Medical Center.

USAMMCE personnel who had been at the show and others hearing about the crash reported in to the depot to aide in the flow of supplies.

Between 6 p.m. and Midnight ten requests for trauma and burn supplies were assembled and moved to the Army Hospital, largely by tractor-trailer from Pirmasens 76th Transportation Co.

"76th Trans. responded almost immediately," said MSG Chuck Colbert, NCOIC, Distribution and Transportation, USAMMCE.

"Shuttle truck~ arrived at the depot five minutes after we called. 22nd Aviation was also standing by to fly supplies to Landstuhl if the urgency became more intense."

"After our staff duty NCO, SFC Leslie Nuce received the first two calls, Capt. Larry Brostrom and MSG James Chapman set up an emergency call station to deal with any other calls," said Colbert.

USAMMCE has a life or death person on call," emphasized Colbert, "but because our soldiers are

sensitive to the needs of other individuals, they knew that this was more than one person could handle."

"The soldiers working all know their jobs," Colbert added. "For

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Ports, SFC Tommie Hines, Sgt. Charles Thrailkill, Sgt. Phillip Arnold, Sgt. James Becquart, Spec. Tim Sewick, Spec Donald Sherburn and PV2 James Kaffka.

**Col. Albert Wesse/mann
USAMMCE Commander**

about six hours they worked filling all the requests as soon as possible."

One of the USAMMCE soldiers, SFC Tommie Hines, reported in as soon as he arrived safely home from the air show. "I got here as soon as I could," said Hines. "The five boys I had taken to the show were only 25 meters away when the plane crashed. The explosion knocked me down and it took me about an hour and a half to locate all the boys. The place was in mass chaos, but because people helped people a whole lot of lives were probably saved."

"One spectator threw one of my sons out of the way of the fireball. Without his quick action, my son would have been seriously hurt or worse. Unfortunately, I'll never be able to thank him for what he did," added Hines.

"I couldn't be more proud of my soldiers," said Col. Albert Wesselmann, USAMMCE commander. "This is just one example of the ability of our soldiers to recognize a need and their dedication not only to the Army but to the support of all our hospitals and clinics."

The USAMMCE soldiers who reported to assist in the emergency are MSG Chuck Colbert, SFC Karl

they were never on a scale as large as this. And when the exercise was over, no one was actually hurt. This wasn't the case here."

"Because of the people who volunteered to help out with the injured victims, it kept the situation from becoming more chaotic than it already was. All the services worked together with one major goal, helping as many people as they could."

Red Cross answers calls

During the five days following the Ramstein Air show tragedy, Helen Hammond, Jolene Ashley and Sandi Racz answered the health and welfare reports coming in from Red Cross Chapters in the states requesting information about family members in the Pirmasens community.

"Ordinarily, we don't receive seventy welfare requests in five days," said Jere Hagen, Pirmasens Red Cross Station Manager.

"Because of the extraordinary efforts of these three volunteer caseworkers, we were able to secure all the necessary reports and provide answers to anxious parents and other relatives in the states."

Tragedy claims Pirmasens' members

Two Pirmasens Community members lost their lives in the Ramstein air crash disaster, Aug. 28.

PFC Genevieve Riggs, HOth MP Co., Muenchweiler and her son Joshua Frymyer were killed at the scene. Her husband, Sgt. Myron Riggs, also assigned to the HOth MP Co., sustained severe burns to the right side of his body and is currently being treated at Brooke Army Medical Center, Ft. Sam Houston, Texas.

Help at the scene

"I was only fifty meters off the runway, when the plane crashed," said Spec. Gina Grace, 56th General Hospital medic.

"Screams and cries for help were coming from all sides. Through the smoke, I recognized a familiar face. We hugged each other, made sure we were alright and then I began giving first aid to a man lying in front of me. Once he was taken care of, I assisted another soldier with CPR."

"Volunteers were appearing out of nowhere to help. Benches were being used as make shift litters and ice was being packed on burns until victims could be moved," added Grace.

Because of her expertise, Grace was transported to Ramstein clinic to help treat the most seriously injured. "After all the victims had been treated and moved to hospitals, we were bussed to Landstuhl," said Grace.

"At Landstuhl, I helped unload minor injury patients and supplies as they arrived. It was really great how USAMMCE responded in getting those supplies up there as fast as they did."

"Even though I have participated in several mass casualty exercises,