



News Release

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U.S., Georgian military swap Wounded Warrior care info

By Ed Drohan
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SEMBACH KASERNE, Germany – Several staff members from the Warrior Transition Battalion-Europe recently spent a day as guest of the Georgian Armed Forces to compare notes on the two countries' versions of wounded warrior care.

WTB-E commander Lt. Col Lawrence Burns, battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Leigh Perry and nurse case manager Maj. Eric Mutchie were guests of the Georgian Ministry of Defense April 7. The trip was a chance for the WTB-E staff, whose mission is to provide mission command and administrative support to Soldiers requiring complex care, to see how the Georgian version of the program operates.

"This was a peer-to-peer engagement with the Georgian Warrior Care Program," Burns said. "Their program focuses on unilateral below-the-knee amputees, the largest part of their wounded population."

Georgian military members have participated in the war in Afghanistan since 2004, the largest non-NATO and largest per capita troop contributor to the International Security Assistance Force. As of July 2014, 29 Georgian Soldiers had been killed 435 wounded during Afghanistan operations.

The WTB-E staff was hosted during the visit by Col. Medea Betashvili, Chief of the Georgian Armed Forces Medical Department, the Georgian counterpart to U.S. Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Patricia Horoho. Starting in the capital of Tbilisi, The group accompanied Georgian and U.S. representatives to the National Defense Academy in Gori, the Tserovani Rehabilitation Centre and the Kedia 7 Rehabilitation Centre.

Several differences in the two nation's programs became evident during the visit.

"They are just starting their program. They don't have anything like a Veterans Administration although they expect to have something by the end of 2016," Burns said. "Now injured Soldiers are placed on convalescent leave for 90 months but they're hoping to get a system established to take care of them long term."

In comparison, the WTB-E provides comprehensive case management services for wounded, ill and injured Soldiers. Staff members ensure that Soldiers assigned to the battalion receive the care they need, whether it takes the form of medical appointments, adaptive reconditioning, or opportunities for families to participate in their loved one's rehabilitation.

"There's no consolidated unity of effort (in the Georgian Armed Forces)," Perry explained. "We're bringing the lessons learned from our program, but they are developing their own plan to bring the assets needed together."

Burns said the Georgian program is advancing thanks in part to assistance provided by the U.S. The Army Corps of Engineers is working on a project to build a prosthetics and rehabilitation center that will be used by both the military and civilian populations. Soldiers from the (U.S.) Georgia National Guard are assisting as part of the Georgia to Georgia program, and Dr. Sheri Michel, an occupational therapist and chief of rehabilitative services at Brook Army Medical Center has been assigned on temporary duty as the senior advisor to the Defense Minister of Georgia.

While the Georgian program's emphasis is currently on below-the-knee amputees, they hope to expand it to include Soldiers with other injuries in the future.

"The Georgian surgeon general is passionately aggressive about getting the program up and running," Perry said. "They are very proud of what they have done to modify and adapt it. They see it as a valuable long-term asset."

As for the future, there is hope for additional engagement opportunities between the two wounded warrior programs.

"I wanted to share our methods of adaptive reconditioning," Burns said. "They've taken part in our annual Soldier Ride in the past, and I look forward to doing something for both populations of Soldiers."

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Cutlines:



WTB-E Georgia 1

Lt. Col. Lawrence Burns, Warrior Transition Battalion-Europe commander, speaks with Col. Medea Betashvili, Georgian Armed Forces Medical Department chief, through a translator during a visit to Tbilisi April 7. WTB-E staff recently spent a day as guest of the Georgian Armed Forces to compare notes on the two countries' versions of wounded warrior care. (Photo by Maj. Eric Mutchie)



WTB-E Georgia 2

Command Sgt. Maj. Leigh Perry, Warrior Transition Battalion-Europe command sergeant major, greets a member of the Georgian Armed Forces at the Georgian National Defense Academy in Gori, Georgia. WTB-E staff recently spent a day as guest of the Georgian Armed Forces to compare notes on the two countries' versions of wounded warrior care. (Photo by Maj. Eric Mutchie)



WTB-E Georgia 3

Lt. Col. Lawrence Burns, right, Warrior Transition Battalion-Europe commander, briefs Col. Medea Betashvili, Chief of Medical Department of the Georgian Armed Forces, during a visit to Georgia April 7. Burns and several other WTB-E staff members Georgian military education and medical facilities as part of their trip to see the differences and similarities between the two countries' programs for wounded warriors. (Photo by Maj. Eric Mutchie)



WTB-E Georgia 4

Lt. Col. Lawrence Burns, left, and Command Sgt. Maj. Leigh Perry, right, speak with a Georgian translator and a staff member at the rehabilitation center where prosthetics for Georgian injured Soldiers are made. WTB-E staff members visited Georgian military education and medical facilities as part of their trip to see the differences and similarities between the two countries' programs for wounded warriors. (Photo by Maj. Eric Mutchie)