

DISCOM soldier is iron link in chain of hope

1st AD soldier gives Cole survivors

a helping hand

“There was something...like a very quiet bravery when they smiled at you.”

Spc. Maggie Wilson about the survivors of the U.S.S. Cole disaster.

were signed out and escorted to a high security ward on the first floor to be interviewed by the FBI. Inquiries were answered by phone, orders were called out to different clinics, information was funneled to admin personnel, and family members were contacted for the patients, according to 1st Lt. Tracy J. Lundahl, night charge nurse on ward 14 CD.

In the midst of the frantic pace was Spc. Maggie Wilson, a medical records clerk from the Division Medical Operations Center, Division Support Command, 1st Armored Division, in Bad Kreuznach. Wilson was attending the 90-day Medical Proficiency Training Program at LPMC when the U.S.S. Cole tragedy rocked the nation. Although she was in a student and training capacity, she found herself on the schedule in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to augment the administrative staff.

Stationed in front of the normally easily accessed fire door, Wilson worked from a bedside table maintaining a log of visitors, personnel, and patients that had been escorted out for FBI interviews. Keeping a sharp eye on the double doors to the ward, she would move to the nursing station to answer the phone and field the hundreds of inquiries, doctor's orders, messages and administrative communications that flooded the phone lines.

“She had a very real positive attitude, and she worked some very long hours,” stated Lt. Col. Francis W. Bannister, patient administration chief and officer in charge of the EOC. “Spc. Wilson was an augmentee to the staff during that operation. She was a very great asset, not only to the staff, but to the patients that she had contact with.”

“I helped the patients get in contact with their families back home,” Spc. Wilson explained. “It was the first time for them to talk with their families and to let them know that they were okay.”

Wilson also helped the ongoing investigation of the incident by assisting staff members and FBI personnel collect hair and clothing samples from the patients. She helped the collection go smoothly by smiling to and talking with the

patients as she went room to room for the samples. “Some of them [the patients] wanted to just rest,” she said. “But I listened when they wanted to talk. They really impressed me with how brave they all were.”

One situation that stuck out in Wilson's mind was a night-long search for one patient's luggage. “The FBI was confiscating all the baggage for evidence, but then decided to give it all back to the patients,” she explained. “One patient had not received his, and I went back and forth between the staff and the Navy liaison trying to locate it.”

At one point during the night, Wilson was ordered to go home by Lt. Col. Bannister. She explained the situation, and he let her stay a few more hours to try and recover the lost baggage. “I just couldn't leave him [the patient] hanging like that. So I stayed

awhile to keep looking,” Wilson said.

1st Lt. Lundahl remembered Wilson's baggage mission. “Yes, I do believe the luggage was returned to the patient shortly before his MEDEVAC flight,” she stated, smiling.

“Working with those patients and the staff members is something that will stay in my head for a long time,” Wilson said. “The patients were smiling. I think they were just happy to have contact with us and we were there to talk to if they needed to. There was something...like a very quiet bravery when they smiled at you.”

Photos of U.S.S. Cole crewmembers courtesy of USAREUR Public Affairs Office. Staff Sgt. Ray Drumstra and Spc. Kathleen Edgecomb, photojournalists from 138th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, New York National Guard, were activated in May in support of Joint Endeavor with USAREUR.

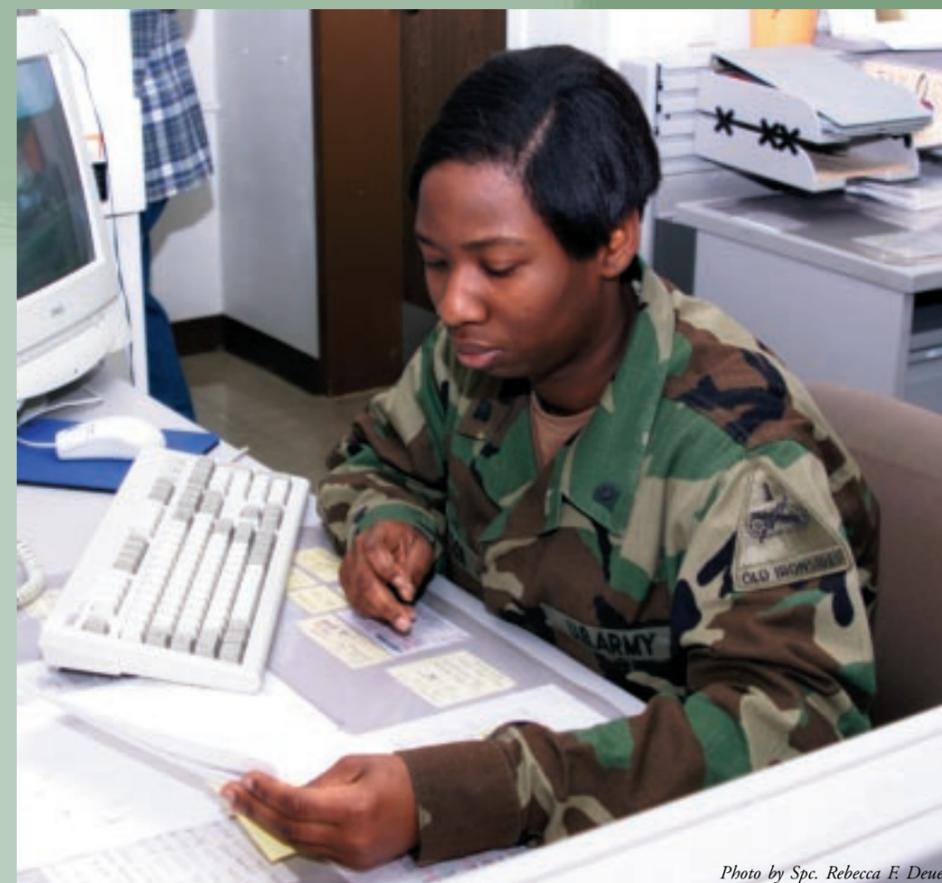


Photo by Spc. Rebecca F. Deuel

Spc. Maggie Wilson reads over patient orders while working as a medical records clerk on 14 CD Medical Surgery ward at LPMC. Wilson assisted staff members with the EOC mission, and helped survivors of the U.S.S. Cole disaster loved ones back home for the first time since the incident.



Photo courtesy 138th MPAD

Medical personnel prepare to move an injured U.S.S. Cole crewmember into LPMC. The largest military medical center in Europe, LPMC stabilized and continued treatment of 39 injured sailors enroute to Portsmouth Naval Medical Center in Virginia.

Photo courtesy 138th MPAD

Medical personnel unload one of the injured U.S.S. Cole crewmembers at Landstuhl Army Regional Medical Center (LRMC) Oct. 14.

Story by Spc. Rebecca F. Deuel
1st Armored Division Public Affairs

LANDSTUHL, Germany—In the early morning hours of October 14, medical transport after medical transport sped through the gates of Landstuhl Army Regional Medical Center (LARMC). Personnel at LARMC were ready, and breathed a sigh of relief after an anxious wait for the survivors of the U.S.S. Cole explosion.

Thirty-nine patients were moved into the secured 14 CD Medical Surgery ward on the second floor of the hospital. Personnel moving in and out of the ward were scrutinized by administrative personnel posted to either side of the nursing station, and checked for identification and proper clearances to be on the ward. Patients