

Got blood?

Center Ensures Supplies Ship Safely

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AL UDEID AIR BASE, Qatar - No matter who you are, they have your type.

"They" are the six-person staff at the blood transshipment center at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. The team, part of the 379th Expeditionary Medical Group, is the first rotation here since the center was relocated in March. The half-dozen Airmen not only ship blood supplies everywhere in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, but also are the only ones who do so.

"Blood saves lives, bottom line," said Capt. George Hestilow, the CENTCOM joint blood officer assigned to the Combined Air Operations Center here. "Blood supply units at forward locations depend on us to keep their supplies at the appropriate levels."

Because of the short shelf life of blood products, its distribution is one of the highest priorities in the theater. The turn-around time at the BTC is under 48 hours, so by the time blood products get where they're needed, medical units have a three-week window before the products are no longer useable, the captain said.

"We deal with red blood cells, plasma and cryoprecipitate, all of which are necessary for medical teams on a ship or in the field," said Captain Hestilow, who is deployed from Travis Air Force Base, Calif. "Accountability is extremely important, and that's our main focus. We track which units have which types of blood products and get everyone what they need.

His team is so good at sending out the much-needed shipments, he added, that no blood ever expires at the center.

To ensure that constant level of efficiency, the BTC is manned 24 hours a day, said BTC Chief 1st Lt. Sara Hatcher, deployed from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

"We are always ready in case of an emergency anywhere in the theater," the lieutenant said.

Because shipping blood is a priority, the BTC couldn't do their job effectively without the assistance of the traffic management office staff, Captain Hestilow said. "They (TMO) have helped us tremendously," he said. "They understand that when we show up with a package, it has to



Staff Sgt. Scott Tone, a medical lab technician at the blood transshipment center, moves a box of blood and quickly gets it into the storage refrigerator. In less than two days, the box of blood will be on its way to a forward location to restock a blood supply unit. Sergeant Tone is deployed from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

Donors can:

- Give blood every eight weeks.
- Give platelets every two to three days.
- Save up to three people with one whole blood donation.



(from left to right) Staff Sgt. Scott Tone, 1st Lt. Sara Hatcher and Airman 1st Class Covito Redman are half of the six-person blood transshipment center team at a deployed location in Southwest Asia. The center is responsible for receiving blood from the distribution center at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J. and sending it to anywhere in the theater of operations. All three Airmen are deployed from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

go out ASAP."

As a part of the first rotation to operate here, Airman 1st Class Covito Redman, also deployed from Davis--Monthan, is especially proud to be working at the BTC.

"We're a part of something special," Airman Redman said. "I know that we're getting blood out there to help people on the front lines who need it and I feel like I'm a part of the fight against terrorism. We're helping people, and it just doesn't get any better than that."



A member of the blood transshipment center staff takes a reading of 6.5 degrees Celsius on a box of blood before it is stored. The temperature must remain between 1 and 10 degrees Celsius while it is being catalogued. When it's shipped, bags of blood are packed in plastic foam and ice until it gets to the appropriate place, where it's then refrigerated until needed.



Blood Transshipment Center Chief 1st Lt. Sara Hatcher monitors the temperature of a box of several bags of blood as it gets moved to a temporary storage refrigerator. Each box holds different blood types to ensure supplies are evenly distributed. The lieutenant is deployed from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

People with 'O' blood types are especially needed because anyone can receive their red blood cells. The following is a breakdown of blood types people in the U.S. have:

O +	38%
A +	34%
B +	9%
O -	7%
A -	6%
B -	2%
AB +	3%
AB -	1%