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A UH-60 Black Hawk medevac helicopter from Forward Operating Base (FOB) Salerno arrives in a remote part of Ghazni Province to pick up and transport a wounded Afghan civilian to the Salerno Combat Support Hospital (CSH).

Saving Lives in Afghanistan

Text and Photographs by Paul Avallone

The U.S. military's major trauma center in southeastern Afghanistan, the Combat Support Hospital (CSH) at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Salerno, was a busy place in 2008, as the increase in the Taliban insurgency and the American and Afghan offensives against the insurgency resulted in a far greater number of combat casualties

than in years past. Staffed and administrated in 2008 by the U.S. Army's 48th CSH, then the 349th CSH, the hospital was a mixture of Army and Air Force medical personnel. With a fully equipped two-table operating room and a four-station trauma center (including CAT scan), the hospital can easily accommodate the normal flow of a handful of casualties, with litter-stands set up in the ICU and corridors on days of mass casualties, such as August 18, 2008, when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device was detonated at the Afghan laborers' gate of the FOB, killing six and wounding 16 locals—all then brought to and treated at the CSH.

During a nine-month embed with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Infantry Division (Airmobile), headquartered in 2008 at FOB Salerno, photographer Paul Avallone chronicled some of the daily lifesaving of the CSH during various stops at the base.

SGT Brita Dunmire monitors a wounded ANA soldier who has been stabilized and prepared for surgery or transport to the larger hospital at Bagram Air Base.

Medical personnel hurry a wounded soldier, transported from the site of an improvised explosive device (IED), into the hospital at FOB Salerno.

Hospital staff transport an American soldier wounded in an IED explosion from the medevac helicopter to the hospital.



Members of the 349th CSH attend an Afghan National Police officer who survived a devastating truck-bomb attack 20 kilometers from FOB Salerno.



Below left, MAJ Tammy Polorney, a registered nurse, checks on a wounded ANA soldier. Below right, medical technicians of the Army and Air Force work together seamlessly performing blood analysis on trauma patients.



Medical staff perform lifesaving surgery on one of the civilian victims of a vehicle-borne IED attack.



The staff of the CSH wear body armor while performing their jobs, a necessary precaution at FOB Salerno after multiple suicide bombings in nearby Khowst City.



MAJ Paul Schenarts, a trauma surgeon with the 48th CSH, studies the X-ray of a wounded ANA soldier.

