

Ground Surgical Team: Development and Realization of a New Deployment Concept

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The dynamic global environment requires the adaptation of medical concepts to optimally meet mission requirements. As the operational picture shifts, the demand for more mobile trauma resuscitation capabilities has increased. Concurrent requirements demand teams that have a small footprint with a limited transportation and logistical requirement. The Air Force Mobile Field Surgical Team was the first-generation conventional force concept capable to forward deploy surgical and critical care capabilities. The six-person Ground Surgical Team (GST) was developed as the next-generation concept, evolving to provide an even smaller footprint in more austere locations. The modular configuration of the GST can provide damage control surgery for 3 patients with a 12-hour critical care holding capability within the first increment and flex to a total of 10 damage control procedures with the entire 1500 pounds (682 kilograms) of supplies. Along with the development of this new capability came the development of a new training pipeline. Pulling from the experiences of subject-matter experts, a 3-week training program was developed combining didactics, medical simulation, and a week-long field exercise. The first GST deployed in May 2017 with a hand-picked team of veteran deployers. As with any new platform, there were implementation challenges in both logistics and a steady need for socialization of the concept. However, opportunities for the team during the 90-day deployment allowed for concept validation, creation of operationally tailored configurations, and advancement of the training platform and logistical requirements for future GST deployments.