ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
HEALTH AFFAIRS

Military medicine always has met the challenge of providing medical support for our Armed Forces...in both the usual and the unusual circumstances. The Persian Gulf conflict offered yet another challenge, and another unusual circumstance in which our medical personnel demonstrated their personal and professional dedication.

Over 42,000 military medical personnel deployed to the Persian Gulf where they set up and operated a sophisticated, full service health care delivery system with over 18,000 beds. The environment was harsh: hot, dry weather, a multitude of endemic diseases, a variety of dangerous insects and pests, and frequent sand storms. Add to this the pervasive threat of unconventional weapons and one begins to comprehend the daily pressures faced by our medical personnel.

Victory was achieved in many ways. Certainly the unprecedented low rates of disease and non-battle injuries are among the medical victories. Included also are the numerous joint service endeavors such as medical logistics and patient evacuation; and, the successful use in combat of Deployable Medical Systems and other state-of-the-art equipment.

The conflict in the Persian Gulf clearly demonstrated that the Armed Forces of the United States are a Total Force -- Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps...Active and Reserve Components. It is a Total Force capable of working side-by-side with its allies, whether that work be planning, fighting or administering to the sick and wounded.

Capturing the events of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the preparation for it and the lessons learned from it, is a most worthy endeavour; one which will contribute to our planning for the future. The three special issues of The Journal of the US Army Medical Department served that purpose. Each of the contributors deserve our grateful thanks and appreciation.

From the vantage of my current position as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, I saw military medicine resolutely and imaginatively accomplish its mission in the Persian Gulf to support the combat force. I know this was possible only because of the dedicated professionalism of the men and women who are military medicine. I am proud of them all and the victories they have achieved.

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