

South Africa Begins PHTLS Training

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Trauma training has just changed in South Africa.

The first Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) courses on the African continent are now training military personnel and will expand to include training for civilian prehospital care providers. PHTLS began in South Africa with courses conducted July 13-14 in Pretoria.

These courses were supported by the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program. Funded by the U.S. State Department, ACOTA provides materials and training all over the African continent. Their mission is to support peace keeping operations throughout the African continent.

The PHTLS were a part of a larger medical and tactical medical training conducted under contract through Northrop Grumman and subcontractor Securing our Country (SOC). SOC provided paramedic and tactical training, and they brought in PHTLS faculty to provide the PHTLS provider and instructor training.

PHTLS was actually introduced to the South African Army in 2006. Since those first courses they have pursued an opportunity to develop their own PHTLS training center. That opportunity came with the deployment of the Grumman/SOC team.

Once orders were received by SOC, Vice President Michael Bermudez, who tasked Raffaele Di Giorgio to put together the team. Raffaele, who wanted to include PHTLS in the project, contacted PHTLS officials to assist in putting together a team to include PHTLS faculty. Total deployment required some personnel being in South Africa for over three months. The PHTLS project would take place over a two-week period. Faculty was selected and approved by the PHTLS office. Michael Hay was selected as Course coordinator and the faculty team included: David Girga, Harold Bell, Michael Buldra, Natalie Chavez, Jerry Domaschk, Kacey Sammons, Peg Fonseca, David LeBaron, Mark Lueder, Adam Steinmetz and Will Chapleau and Dennis Rowe from the PHTLS executive committee.

The team arrived in May to begin paramedic training with the objective of bringing personnel previously trained at an intermediate level to paramedic level. Michael Hay's team arrived in July followed a week later by the remaining team members. I monitored the new South African PHTLS faculty doing their first teaching.

The SOC team did an outstanding job. They provided the training in a technically correct manner, and they developed relationships between learners and students that clearly generated trust and enthusiasm for PHTLS. When the team arrived to monitor the performance of the new faculty, they found competent, confident faculty that were excited about being able to train South African prehospital care providers.

Captain Phillip Nel has been advocating PHTLS in South Africa for several years. He was a part of the original group that participated in PHTLS in 2006 and is now the national coordinator for South Africa. He has a strong faculty and local support and a plan for PHTLS training throughout South Africa for military and civilian personnel.

The PHTLS Executive Committee was excited for the opportunity to work with ACOTA at the invitation of Northrop Grumman and SOC. Their hope is that the success of this first cooperative effort will spawn activity throughout Africa and possibly into other parts of the world eager for training. These types of collaborations personally excite me because we've been trying for years to get help to prehospital personnel that may have the desire, if not the resources, to bring training programs to their countries.

This collaboration between governmental, private and not-for profit entities can allow us to get to difficult places with diverse resources to ensure that when we all leave, something is left behind so that our hosts can build their own national program.

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