

BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

In re: U.S. Air Force Pararescuemen/Combat Rescue Officer
Medical Training

Docket No. ___

PETITION FOR ENFORCEMENT

Submitted to:

Lt. Gen. Charles Green, M.D.
Surgeon General, U.S. Air Force
HQ USAF/SG
1780 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

The Honorable Jonathan Woodson, M.D.
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
United States Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable Zachary J. Lemnios
Director, Defense Research and Engineering
Department of Defense
3030 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Date:

Feb. 29, 2012

Reply to:

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
c/o Ryan Merkle, Associate Director of Research Policy
5100 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Ste. 400
Washington, DC 20016
Phone: 202-527-7336

Submitted by:

John J. Pippin, M.D., F.A.C.C.
Director of Academic Affairs
Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
Washington, D.C.

David Jacobs, M.D.
Yucson, Ariz.

Lt. Col. William Morris, M.D. (ret.)
Chief of Neurosurgery
MultiCare Health System
Tacoma, Wash.

Marie Crandall, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.S.
Associate Professor of Surgery
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
Chicago, Ill.

1. Action Requested

The United States Air Force's scheduled use of pigs near Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Ariz., on March 1 and 2, in combat trauma training courses and its failure to adopt superior human-based training methods constitute a serious violation of Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 3216.01, *Use of Animals in DoD Programs*. Thus, the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) hereby requests that the Air Force and DoD immediately halt plans to use and kill pigs in the upcoming course and transition to readily available nonanimal training methods.

2. Summary of Animal-Based Training Exercises

On March 1 and 2, 2012, a contractor hired by the U.S. Air Force will use and kill 10 pigs in a combat trauma training course. The Air Force Performance Work Statement for this course states that the contractor will provide a "fixed training facility within 100 miles of Davis-Monthan AFB" where pigs will be used and then killed. The course is intended for 20 Pararescuemen and Combat Rescue Officers from the 306 Rescue Squadron, an Air Force Reserve unit.

According to the Performance Work Statement, live pigs may be subjected to:

- Limb amputation
- Blast injuries
- Burn injuries
- Wounds resulting in severe bleeding (hemorrhage control)
- Needles and tubes inserted into the chest cavity (needle thoracentesis and thoracostomy)
- Abdominal evisceration

Emergency medical procedures will be performed during a “Table Top Training” session as well as a “Field Exercise” session. The use of animals in similar U.S. military medical courses has been documented. For instance, an Army course is detailed in the Aug. 8, 2008, issue of the *San Antonio Express-News*. The reporter described the scene:

Two combat medics hold the rear leg of an unconscious goat stretched out on a blue sheet atop the nylon mesh of an Army litter. Instructor Armand Fermin places a tree trimmer over the joint in the leg, closes it, applies pressure, and a ‘crack’ echoes inside the dimly lit tent...

In a Nov. 2, 2006, *New York Times* article one Navy corpsman reported that he was charged with keeping an anesthetized pig alive for as long as possible after the animal was subjected to serious injuries, saying of the pig that, “they shot him twice in the face with a 9-millimeter pistol, and then six times with an AK-47 and then twice with a 12-gauge shotgun. And then he was set on fire.” According to the article, the corpsman kept the pig alive in this condition for 15 hours.

3. Superior Nonanimal Training Methods Exist

All of the procedures for which live pigs will be used in the upcoming Air Force course can be taught using realistic human-based medical simulation methods.

The Cut Suit from San Diego-based Strategic Operations, Inc., was specifically designed for combat trauma training courses and replicates the experience of performing emergency medical procedures on a living trauma patient. Trainees can apply tourniquets, control severe bleeding, and manage collapsed lungs. This device can also teach extremity arterial hemorrhage clamping, surgical incisions to the thoracic and abdominal cavity, hemorrhage control of organs, and suturing or stapling of organs and skin.

Compared to live animal-based training, the Cut Suit more closely replicates the experience of treating a wounded service member. The system allows for interaction with a live patient during the emergency assessment and treatment process. Furthermore, body armor, uniform, clothing, and equipment can all be worn over the suit. Compared to an unconscious, anesthetized animal, these elements more closely recreate the emotional stresses of working on a wounded service member.

Simulators from Maryland-based Operative Experience, Inc., feature artificial tissues, including skin, bone, muscle, fascia, blood vessels, and nerves—all of which can be operated on. The company’s point-of-injury simulators allow for control and management of high velocity gunshot wounds. The devices also allow trainees to amputate legs above and below the knee and control severe hemorrhaging.

Battlefield trauma expert Col. Mark Bowyer, M.D. (ret.), recently stated about Operative Experience’s devices:

Frankly, this is as close to human tissue as anything I've ever seen...[T]hese models are like nothing else out there... Combined with a curriculum, they have the capacity to revolutionize training.

Other military courses demonstrate that expert training can be obtained without the use of animals. The Marine Corps in Okinawa has confirmed to PCRMM that it exclusively “relies on lifelike, robotic mannequins” and “does not use live animals” to conduct combat trauma training courses. In addition, The Air Force’s Center for Sustainment of Trauma and Readiness Skills courses use high-tech simulators and human cadavers instead of animals.

The Air Force does not require live animal-based training, making it a matter of preference for the 306 Rescue Squadron. In fact, the Air Force’s *Career Field Education and Training Plan* for the pararescue specialty does not explicitly dictate training methods under “Emergency Medical Operations” but instead focuses on the skills that trainees must acquire.

With the availability of these realistic simulators, there is no ethical or medical justification to continue using and killing animals for the purpose of combat trauma training.

4. Scheduled Animal Use Violates the DoD Instruction on Animal Use

If this course moves forward it will constitute a violation of DoD Instruction 3216.01, *Use of Animals in DoD Programs*. The instruction mandates that “*methods other than animal use and alternatives to animal use (i.e., methods to refine, reduce, or replace the use of animals) shall be considered and used whenever possible to attain the objectives of RDT&E or training if such alternative methods produce scientifically or educationally valid or equivalent results.*” [italics added] As demonstrated above, advanced nonanimal training methods can provide superior training to Pararescuemen and Combat Rescue Officers; yet the Air Force is not employing these alternative methods to replace the use of pigs.

5. Conclusion

The scheduled unnecessary use and killing of pigs in an Air Force combat trauma training course constitutes a serious violation of the DoD instruction regarding animal use due to the availability of superior human-based training methods. To prevent this noncompliance the Air Force and DoD must: 1) immediately halt the use of animals in the course scheduled for March 1 and 2 in Arizona, and; 2) implement superior nonanimal training methods.
