



# Airmen keep deployed soldiers healthy

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Being responsible for the healthy living environment of 60,000 Soldiers at eight different camps is no small job, but that is exactly what Airmen of the 2nd Preventive Medicine Team Air Force have been doing since mid-March.

This team of nine enlisted and two officers has conducted more than 2,000 inspections, providing a full spectrum of preventive-medicine support ranging from base camp and health-risk assessments to occupational- and environmental-health surveillance.

One of the team's major responsibilities is testing the water for contaminants, said Col. James Swaby, the team's commander.

"With the extreme weather conditions we have seen, these Soldiers could be drinking up to (3 gallons) of water a day," he said. "During our three-month deployment here, we have ensured the safe usability of more than 53 million gallons of water."

Besides the heat, the Airmen have prevailed through many challenges including losing a water system and a sewer line breakdown that threatened a dining facility.

Yet through it all, under the Airmen's watch, there were no major food, water or insect-borne disease outbreaks in any of the eight camps.

"When we first arrived here, there were these warehouses housing 1,700 Soldiers in each of them," Colonel Swaby said. "We quickly realized the importance of our team to these Soldiers, and the potential for disease if we weren't thorough in our work."

The team comprises technicians from five career fields including bioenvironmental engineering, public health and pest management. The amount of work they did helped them learn each others jobs to complete the tasks.

"There was so much work [that] we had to pull together as a team, each of us learning how to do inspections not associated with our individual career fields," said Staff Sgt. Sean Hasty, a preventive medicine technician. "For example, our bioenvironmental technicians learned how to conduct public-health inspections and vice versa."

The Airmen said their unique assignment had them travel to a host nation naval base to collect water samples from U.S. Army ships before they left port.

"I knew I was deploying to a unique environment, as an Airman working with the Army, but before I left I ...



Courtesy photo

Col. James Swaby, 2nd Preventive Medicine Team commander, holds up a large lizard the locals call a "Dub Dub." They have a nasty bite and their tails are equipped with spikes. Col. Swaby has been TDY in the middle-east for three months and will soon be returning to his job at the Air Force Institute of Operational Health at Brooks.

never pictured myself collecting water samples, let alone on an Army ship," said Tech. Sgt. Daniel Pacheco, a pest-management technician. "I didn't even know the Army had ships."

"Our team has come together to get the job done by keeping the environ-

ment healthy and these Soldiers fit to fight," Colonel Swaby said. "The reality is there's nothing we've been asked to do; it's just that we are doing it under a new set of rules in a unique environment. We were sent here to protect the troops, and we did."