

## **438th MDVSS at NTC**

Upon redeployment from Afghanistan in late March 2013, the 438<sup>th</sup> MDVSS was presented with a familiar challenge experienced by all Veterinary MTOE units: How to realistically train Soldiers and Leaders to support tactical operations in an era of decreasing resource availability. In addition to retaining MOS and professional skills, Soldier skills, and equipment maintenance required to maintain a fully-trained and validated veterinary unit, 438<sup>th</sup> command elements sought methods to train and maintain competent teams to support BDE or higher Force Health Protection operations. This did not include just Veterinary Support Services to MWDs and Troop Feeding operations but full spectrum operations extending to Preventive Medicine and other Medical services.

One novel and exciting solution involved the 438<sup>th</sup> MDVSS Operations Officer actively engaging the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Medical Operations team to coordinate training support during ongoing BDE operations. While providing support, 438<sup>th</sup> MDVSS Soldiers would be provided with a unique opportunity to practice their skills in a realistic training environment.

After several months of attending 4<sup>th</sup> ID Medical Operation and Surgeon meetings, the first opportunity to exercise this new partnership came into fruition with a joint exercise between 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the 10<sup>th</sup> Combat Support Hospital's. The 438<sup>th</sup> MDVSS was able to successfully deploy a Headquarters Element, Veterinary Role III and Food Surveillance Laboratory in support of the 10<sup>th</sup> CSH while tasking the VSSTs to support 4<sup>th</sup> BDE operations. During the exercise, the VSSTs supported seven Battalion and Company level troop feeding operations while the Headquarters element gained extensive experience coordinating exercises at multiple sites. This exercise served as a training model and showcased the veterinary assets' capabilities while providing training to the 438<sup>th</sup> MDVSS Soldiers. The level of professionalism, timeliness of reports, and recommendations resulting in monetary savings impressed the Infantry BDE to such a degree that they requested a Veterinary Support team accompany them on their rotation through the National Training Center.

A Veterinary team consisting of one Veterinarian, an NCOIC, and two Veterinary Food Inspectors was selected to provide support at the National Training Center (NTC). The opportunity proved to be a climactic event in an otherwise challenging year of preparation. The 438<sup>th</sup> Veterinary team inspected an estimated 1.2 million dollars of Operational Rations during the 16 day rotation of which approximately \$6,000 dollars worth of rations were salvaged. The need to visually inspect food service operations at two Class I delivery points and eight Containerized Kitchens (CKs) throughout the AO served as a challenge to operation planning; however, the boost in Soldier morale after receiving safe and wholesome meals in an austere environment was clearly evident. In addition to the invaluable hands-on training, the 438<sup>th</sup> Veterinary team gained valuable experience in understanding the importance of integration and networking to gain support and accomplish the mission. Unique cross training opportunities extended past the primary mission of food inspection. For example, collaboration with Brigade Preventive Medicine assets was made to help reduce Disease Non-Battle Field Injuries (DNBI) while over 50 Human Health Care Providers were trained on veterinary emergency medical care and evacuation.

The success of this training model was evident when the Infantry Brigade publicly acknowledged the Veterinary team's contributions with Army Achievement Medals. Furthermore, the 438<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment (Veterinary Service Support) is expected to play a major role in providing support to the 10<sup>th</sup> CSH's mobilization to support Operation Global Medic in June 2014 and also to support the next 4<sup>th</sup> ID rotation through the NTC.



CPT Bass, PFC MimilaGalinda, SPC Christopherson and SSG Schmidt at NTC