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WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2008

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SECTION SR

Surgeon takes Scottsdale training to Iraq



COURTESY OF LT. COL. ROBERT DIXON

Lt. Col. Robert Dixon, one of the early trainees in Scottsdale Healthcare's combat medicine training program, is stationed today at Kirkuk Regional Air Base in northeastern Iraq. Reporter Kate Nolan interviews the senior flight surgeon from Luke Air Force Base about his mission, **Page 8.**

Doctor takes training to Iraq

By Kate Nolan
THE REPUBLIC | AZCENTRAL.COM

First of three parts

Lt. Col. Robert Dixon, a senior flight surgeon at Luke Air Force Base, was among the early trainees in Scottsdale Healthcare's combat medicine training program.

Dixon, 52, who has served in Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Afghanistan, was deployed this spring to Kirkuk Regional Air Base in northeastern Iraq. The base is on the outskirts of Kirkuk, a city of more than 750,000 about 180 miles north of Baghdad.

Dixon is a Goodyear resident with specialty training in emergency and aerospace medicine and a medical degree from Virginia Commonwealth University.

He was recently interviewed online by reporter Kate Nolan, with his responses reviewed by U.S. Air Force authorities.

Today's story, the first of three parts, provides an overview of his mission:



ROBERT DIXON

The mission statement is posted on a concrete blast wall at Kirkuk air base.

How did you get to Kirkuk?

Combination of commercial carrier, government contract carrier and military aircraft, starting in Phoenix and arriving in Kirkuk three days later with stops in two states and two countries to refuel, change aircraft, rest, and pick up equipment. (You) lose half a day going half way around the world.

How does the Kirkuk countryside compare to Arizona's?

Imagine the scenery, driving across the Aqua Fria river bed in the West

Valley: Dry sand, dust, gravel and more gravel, airport, derelict industrial buildings, fences, and concrete walls. But if you bother to take a dirt bike or hike, up close, you'll find colorful wild flowers, small wildlife and insects, and even ponds in the desolation. The weather and heat are about the same; we've had one five-minute thunderstorm and a severe dust storm. Unlike Phoenix, it does get cold and even snows here in the winter.

Surround with a defensive perimeter and add about 5,000 armed personnel, pickup trucks, armored vehicles, and aircraft; throw in modular buildings and lots and lots of sandbags; now you have a picture of Kirkuk Regional Air Base.

What's the mission of the base?

Kirkuk Regional Air Base is home to the 506th Air Expeditionary Group, which maintains security at the base, conducts safe flying operations and actively supports base agencies. It is part of the 332nd Air

Scottsdale Healthcare to honor active duty military

U.S. Rep Harry Mitchell and Scottsdale Healthcare will kick off the health-care provider's new "Salute to the Military" display, recognizing employees, physicians and volunteers who serve in the military and military personnel who train at Scottsdale Healthcare.

The first honorees:

■ Lt. Col. Frederick Marciano, medical director of neurology at Scottsdale Healthcare, is on active duty in the U.S. Army Reserves at Fort Bliss, Texas. In 2003 Marciano served at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, where he was lead neurosurgeon in the treatment of Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who was taken captive and rescued in one of the most highly publicized events in the early stages of the war in Iraq in 2003.

■ Lt. Col. Robert Dixon, senior flight surgeon at Luke Air Force Base, has served in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Currently deployed in Kirkuk, Iraq, Dixon participated in combat medical training at Scottsdale Healthcare in 2005.

Details: The dedication will be at 4:30 p.m. Sunday in the cafeteria at Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn, 7400 E. Osborn Road, Scottsdale. Speakers will include Mitchell, D-Ariz., and representatives of the U.S. Air Force, the Arizona National Guard, and Luke Air Force Base.

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Doctor takes combat medicine training to Iraq

Scottsdale Healthcare military training

Who: In 2005, Goodyear resident Lt. Col. Robert Dixon, a U.S. Air Force surgeon now serving in Kirkuk, Iraq, was one the first trainees in a unique Scottsdale Healthcare program that helps the military accomplish its combat mission.

Program: The military trauma training program at Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn consists of a trauma skill tutorial and hands-on clinical trauma rotations. The program partners with Maricopa Integrated Health System and offers training in trauma, burns, orthopedics, EMS ride-alongs and wound care.

Model: Scottsdale Healthcare executive Wendy Lyons and then trauma chief Dr. Tom Wachtel set up the program. It is described as a model for community hospitals to provide military medical training as military hospitals increasingly are shuttered. Luke Air Force Base, the U.S. Army Reserve and Army and Air National Guard units participate.

Duty: Surgeons participating in the program focus on preparing for a combat deployment.

DIXON

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Expeditionary Wing, home of the famous 332nd Fighter Group led by the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II. (Kirkuk) is also home to the 370th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group, which provides guidance to Iraqi pilots at their flying training school here.

What's your mission?

Our Expeditionary Medical Squadron (506 EMEDS) mission is to care for America's heroes to enable ... combat operations throughout Northern Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Our airmen are our most valuable "weapon" in fighting the global war on terrorism and preparing for future threats. Our job is to keep them healthy and mission-ready and to care for them when they are not.

We take care of the medical needs of teenage soldiers and airmen, more mature senior enlisted and officers and contract civilians, some in their 60s. We also provide dental, mental, occupational, environmental and public health-care and biomedical services.

As the EMEDS medical operations



This growing in Iraq is a reminder of home for Lt. Col. Robert Dixon.

ROBERT DIXON

flight commander, I am responsible for the effective functioning of the emergency department, operating room and inpatient units as well as the supervision, administration, discipline, and well-being of the great Air Force personnel who really make it all happen. I also function as the EMEDS surgeon.

Have you seen any of those 2-foot-long scorpions in Iraq?

Sorry, no 2-foot, or even foot-long scorpions. *Note: Lt. Col. Dixon sent a "Local environmental hazards briefing" that lists six kinds of venomous snakes, 18 kinds of venomous scorpions and four types of spiders capable of painful bites.*