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Tennessee Guardsmen rescue hiker in Great Smoky Mountains National Park

LOUISVILLE, Tenn. – On the evening of Wednesday, June 12, a flight crew from the Tennessee Army National Guard, based at Joint Base McGhee-Tyson, rescued a hiker having a medical emergency in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Shortly after 7 p.m., eastern time, the Tennessee National Guard and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency were notified of a hiker suffering from cardiac distress and needing rapid transport to a nearby hospital. The hiker was in a remote area, at the Double Spring Gap Shelter, south of Gatlinburg, near the North Carolina border.

Once TEMA was notified of the possible mission, the Tennessee National Guardsmen assigned to Task Force Smokey, assembled a flight crew, readied a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter for flight, and prepared to rescue the hiker. Ten minutes after the mission was approved, the aircraft departed Joint Base McGhee-Tyson and flew directly to the Double Spring Gap Shelter.

The Tennessee Army National Guard flight crew consisted of two pilots, 1st Lt. Gavin Huffman and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Koons, the crew chief, Sgt. Daniel Bandy, and two flight paramedics, Sgt. 1st Class Giovanni DeZuani and Staff Sgt. Sarah Hanna.

Twenty minutes after launching, the aircraft arrived at the shelter and located the hiker and park rangers with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, who were rendering first aid.

Shortly before 8:30 p.m., the aircraft crew chief, Daniel Bandy, lowered Giovanni DeZuani, the flight paramedic, to the ground by hoist to do a quick medical assessment and prepare the hiker for transport. After a few minutes rendering aid, the hiker and DeZuani were then hoisted into the Blackhawk helicopter hovering above where first aid was continued. Once everyone was safely on board, the aircraft flew to the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville.

At approximately 8:50 p.m., the aircraft landed at the medical center where medical personnel rushed the patient into the emergency room. Once the patient was safely in the care of medical professionals, the aircraft returned to Louisville and landed just before 9:30 p.m.

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Tennessee Army National Guard Blackhawk helicopter crew chief, Sgt. Daniel Bandy, prepares to lower flight paramedic, Sgt. 1st Class Giovanni DeZuani, to the ground by hoist to begin rescuing a hiker in cardiac distress at the Double Spring Gap Shelter in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, on the evening of June 12. (submitted photo)



Tennessee Army National Guard Blackhawk helicopter crew chief, Sgt. Daniel Bandy, hoists the hiker in cardiac distress and Sgt. 1st Class Giovanni DeZuani, the flight paramedic, into the helicopter at the Double Spring Gap Shelter in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, on the evening of June 12. (submitted photo)

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