Providing humanitarian relief in the United States and around the world is an essential part of the mission of the U.S. Army health care team. Army Medicine is bringing advanced and innovative procedures to areas that can benefit greatly from our efforts. Physicians find that the opportunity to take part in these programs and share medical expertise in a variety of situations, with talented colleagues and individuals from vastly different backgrounds, strengthens their sense of purpose and enhances their abilities.

HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS
Army Medicine has a broad vision and encourages team members to participate in missions around the globe that offer humanitarian assistance. Examples of humanitarian missions include the following:

- A team of Tripler Army Medical Center’s Ear, Nose, and Throat physicians visited the Federated States of Micronesia, where 407 outpatient visits and 234 audiologic evaluations were provided to a population in need of care that was not affordable or accessible to those living in the region. “These missions and deployment are the most satisfying parts of being in the Army for me,” said Lt. Col. Philip D. Littlefield, M.D., an otolaryngologist at Tripler Army Medical Center. “I see myself doing something meaningful for the world. It certainly beats the daily grind of email and online training,” said Littlefield.

- U.S. Army health care team members conducted an annual cataract medical readiness training exercise in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The mission was designed to build partner nation capacity, while providing humanitarian services and improving eyesight for hundreds of Dominican citizens. Maj. Eric Weber, a U.S. Army ophthalmologist from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, said: “I see more patients here with strabismus in a two-week mission than I would in an entire year of practice back home.” Weber added that there was no other training environment like the one he experienced in Santo Domingo. Because of the training exercise, he was able to gain a great deal of experience in a short period of time while working closely with host-nation medical colleagues.

Information for this article has been sourced from www.army.mil: “Army Medicine ENTs answer call to provide humanitarian aid to Pacific Republic” (July 2, 2013) and “MEDCOM, Army South mission improves eyesight for Dominicans, builds partner nation capacity” (August 1, 2012); as well as www.wcapinternist.org: “Medical missions in Iraq help train next generation of doctors” (October 2011); the Journal of Graduate Medical Education; “Over the Shoulder training: impact on the experience of local Iraqi physicians” (March 2012); and an interview with Lt. Col. Ahmad Slim (March 31, 2011).