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Special ops group helps out in Lebanon operations

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7/26/2006 - **CYPRUS (AFPN)** -- The 352nd Special Operations Group, from Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England, is taking part in joint operations to transport American citizens, who are voluntarily departing Lebanon to Cyprus.

The group plays an important role in the U.S. State Department operation.

Our mission is to assist the Combined Task Force 59 with the departure of American citizens from Lebanon, said Col. Brad Webb, 352nd SOG commander.

More than 12,000 American citizens have been transported out of Lebanon since the start of the operation. The 352nd has transported more than 260 citizens, flying MH-53M Pave Low helicopter and MC-130P Combat Shadow missions daily.

The group was tasked to arrive on July 20, but they arrived July 16, six hours after the first Marines hit the ground in Cyprus.

"Before we started flying missions, our guys were going down to the port to provide medical treatment for the first Americans brought into Cyprus," Colonel Webb said.

The first mission started July 19, he said.

The 352nd SOG is trained to respond to different types of environments and to blend in with other military forces on the ground.

"From the moment they hit the ground they have been filling in where needed," Colonel Webb said.

The group also purchased items to provide comfort to the American citizens.

"When we go in to pick them up, there is no telling how long they have been waiting, so we do whatever we can to ensure their comfort," said Tech. Sgt. John Stott, an aerial gunner. "Being on a military helicopter is not something most people are accustomed to."

The effects of the Lebanon missions are immediate for these deployed Airmen.

"With some of the missions we go on in Afghanistan or Iraq, you may not see the effects of that mission for a while. With this mission, the effects are tangible," said Master Sgt. Daniel Leick, a flight engineer who has flown five missions.



CYPRUS (AFPN) -- Tech. Sgt. John Stott checks the left side of a MH-53M Pave Low helicopter in flight July 24. Sergeant Stott is an aerial gunner with the 352nd Special Operations Group at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England, and is deployed here to help with the transportation of American citizens from Lebanon. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Brian Ferguson)

