

Bronze Star Medal Awarded at Gordon Center

The University of Miami Miller School of Medicine's Gordon Center for Research in Medical Education recently hosted a Bronze Star medal award ceremony for U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant J. Austin Hall.



From left, Lt. Col. Marshall B. Webb with MSgt. J. Austin Hall.

The Bronze Star is the military's fourth-highest combat medal and was awarded to MSgt. Hall for extraordinary heroism while deployed with the Special Operations Surgical Team (SOST) in Operation Inherent Resolve in 2016.

SOSTs are teams of six mobile surgical specialists who have advanced medical and tactical training devoted to saving lives. And according to USAF Lt. Col. Marshall B. Webb, director of operations of SOST, members of this team spend 250 to 300 days a year just in training.

The Gordon Center is one of the facilities that offers training to members of the Special Ops teams to perform life-saving medical care on the battlefield.

“Occasionally, members of the Special Ops Surgical will assist members of the U.S. Army Trauma Training Detachment in the teaching of clinical and surgical skills. These sessions take place at the Gordon Center as part of the preparation of U.S. Army Forward Surgical Teams (FSTs) prior to deployment,” said Barry Issenberg, M.D., professor of medicine and director of the Gordon Center. “The Miller School is grateful and proud to have members of the USAF Special Ops Surgical Team contribute their expertise, experience and skills to life-saving training courses that take place at the Gordon Center.”

MSgt. Hall received his training here at the Ryder Trauma Center at UM/Jackson Memorial Hospital, working alongside surgeons from the University of Miami Health System. This assignment allowed him to get training in trauma cases that might not have been available in a military hospital.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime assignment being here in Miami,” said MSgt. Hall. “Most of us who are assigned here look at it that way. We appreciate everything that Miami has to offer.”

During his deployment, the team employed the principles of damage control surgery and resuscitation in austere conditions in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). By adapting to the unique demands of the mission, MSgt. Hall's team was successful in proving the concept of a surgical team advancing along with the forward line of troops, where they could be in the best position to save lives.

"Our SOSTs are trained and ready to perform life-saving battlefield surgery, far forward, to ensure our service men and women and our allied forces make it home alive," said USAF Lt. Col. Michael Wendelken, commander of the 720th Operations Support Squadron, which manages Special Operations Surgical Teams. "We couldn't be more proud of Master Sergeant Hall and the competency he executed during his deployment."