

Oklahoma National Guardsmen come to the rescue in Ukraine Community

Posted by:

Posted on : 2017/7/17 23:41:49

Detecting a Lviv apartment house on fire, soldiers with the Oklahoma Army National Guard's 1st Bn., 279th Inf. Regt., 45th IBCT rushed into action, helping warn residents and assisting them to safety until local firefighters arrived.

Story and photo by 1st Lt. Kayla Christopher, 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team LVIV, Ukraine – During a routine morale, welfare and recreation trip, deployed Citizen-Soldiers of the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team found themselves in a dangerous situation that put their military and civilian training to good use. “We were about to head back to base when we saw smoke coming from down the street, so we decided to investigate,” explained Sgt. Matthew Odom, of Norman, Oklahoma, a Soldier assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 279th Infantry Regiment, 45th IBCT. The smoke was coming from an apartment building that had caught fire. Odom, along with fellow Thunderbirds Sgt. Nelson Deese, Spc. Vincent Humerickhouse, Spc. Kellar Jackson, Spc. Aaron Moore and Pfc. Kevin Polk, rushed into the burning building and evacuated the third floor before local firefighters arrived on scene. We kept asking if there was anyone still in the building, and finally we found someone who spoke English who said that there was, Odom said. Sgt. Deese and I just gave each other a look; it was like we knew what the other was thinking and we just stormed in. “Instinctively, we all just ran inside and started getting people out,” said Jackson, a native of Watonga, Oklahoma. “There was a lot of smoke. It was chaotic and intense.” The language barrier made the situation even more difficult, Jackson said. Deese, who serves as a volunteer firefighter in his community of Crowder, Oklahoma, said his training as a firefighter and infantryman just kicked in, “We were knocking on doors and windows trying to get people’s attention; they were definitely not aware of the fire.” Once firefighters arrived on scene, Deese made sure his fellow Soldiers were safely outside the burning building before he pitched in to help the firefighters, unrolling their hose and helping them move their equipment upstairs. “I feel like most Soldiers, especially infantrymen, we run to the fight,” said Deese. “Not a single hesitation.” Soldiers with the Oklahoma Army National Guard’s 1st Bn., 279th Inf. Regt., 45th IBCT are deployed to Ukraine in support of the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine, an international coalition dedicated to building the training capacity of the Ukrainian army. “I’m proud of the actions these Soldiers took to ensure the safety of others,” said Lt. Col. Bruce Lambeth, commander of the 1st Bn., 279th Inf. Regt., “They are true examples of Oklahomans upholding the Oklahoma standard, in this case, looking after their global neighbors while serving their state and country abroad here in Ukraine.”

###