

## Assessment of Air Ambulance Vendors

*When an international emergency air rescue is required, the Office of Medical Services (OMS)/Field Support is responsible for contacting the air ambulance company and requesting service. The Office of Health Services (OHS) has an international air evacuation contract comprised of several regional sub- contractors. Decisions concerning which company to use are made on a case-by-case basis by OMS. Unless authorized by OMS, PCMOs or other post staff should not contact or request service directly from air ambulance companies for international medevacs (TG 380-Medical Evacuation).*

*In the event that a Volunteer needs to be transported via air ambulance within their host country, post staff is responsible for authorizing in-country air ambulance services. The PCMO and the DMO collaborate on many aspects of administrative support for a medevac, however the PCMO is primarily responsible for ensuring that all necessary and appropriate medical care is provided, and the DMO is responsible for providing the necessary administrative support to accomplish these tasks. The DMO arranges all local logistics associated with transportation and travel of the Volunteer being medically evacuated and the accompaniment. This includes arranging in-country air and ground transportation, among other tasks detailed in TG 380.*

*Please use the following questions as a guide in your assessment of potential local resources. In many circumstances, in-country medical air transport options may be limited and that available options may not be able to meet all criteria listed below. In such suggestions, OHS asks that your Post selects the best possible of the available local options for use in medical emergencies in which rapid, safe transport to a more resourced environment is necessary.*

- ☐ **Is the air ambulance vendor licensed?**
  - Ensure the air ambulance vendor holds the appropriate licensure in compliance with the Post country regulations and laws.
- ☐ **Does the air ambulance vendor carry aircraft liability insurance and medical malpractice?**
- ☐ **Is the air ambulance company willing to provide proof of insurance?**
- ☐ **Is the air ambulance vendor accredited?**
  - Currently there are no mandatory regulations for air ambulance vendors. The Commission of Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems (CAMTS) and European Aeromedical Institute (EURAMI) are the two most recognized accrediting bodies that offer a voluntary evaluation of compliance with accreditation standards, which demonstrate the ability to deliver service of a specific quality (see attached). By participating in the voluntary accreditation process, AA vendors can verify their adherence to quality accreditation standards to themselves, their peers, medical professionals, and to the public.
- ☐ **What is the air ambulance vendor's safety record?**
- ☐ **What is the expertise of the air ambulance vendor?**
  - How many years have they been in business?
  - What type of missions have they supported and where?
  - What type of aircraft will be used and can the aircraft safely accommodate the Volunteer?
    - Rotary-Wing Air Ambulance (Helicopter) – typically used for emergency response (accident scene) and relatively short distances.
    - Fixed Wing Air Ambulance – two types
      - Propeller driven (turboprops and twin-prop) – typically shorter flights
      - Jet Engine Powered – typically longer flights
        - Lear Jet 35: Very fast, with enough room to accommodate a patient and passengers. Often used for international transports.
        - Beechcraft King Air 200 (B200/B200C): 1 -2 patients depending on configuration. Good for loading patient as well as medical equipment due to cargo door.
        - Cessna Citation V: Single patient transport
        - Gulfstream Jet: Depending on configuration can be used for up to 4 patients, including medical crew.

## Assessment of Air Ambulance Vendors

- Is their fleet used exclusively for air medical transport and do they employ their own medical staff?
- **Does the air ambulance vendor employ their own Medical Director?**
  - Many good air ambulance vendors employ their own Medical Director, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days per year. The medical crew functions under the direction of verbal, written, and standing protocols. If medical direction is required during flight, the physician is available. The Medical Director should additionally be trained in Critical Care with an emphasis in aviation medicine and altitude physiology.
- **Does the medical transport team have the appropriate training, licensure, and certifications?**
  - The medical transport team must hold licensure appropriate to their job function (Medical Doctor (MD), Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner (CRNP), Registered Nurse (RN), Respiratory Therapist (RT), and Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic (EMT-P)). All staff must also hold current certifications in Advanced Life Support appropriate to specific age categories (Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS), trauma specific certifications (International Trauma Life Support (ITLS), Trauma Nursing Core Course (TNCC), Transport Nurse Advanced Trauma Certification (TNATC)), as well as specialty certifications such as CCRN, CFRN, and FP-C. In addition, the medical transport team must also be up-to-date with training on advanced airway management, crew resource management, aircraft safety training, and altitude physiology.
- **Will the air ambulance vendor provide bedside-to-bedside care?**
  - Some air ambulance vendors will assist with ground transport to the airport to ensure a continuum of care.
- **Does the air ambulance vendor provide the required equipment and medications to conduct critical care transports?**
  - Air ambulance vendors must adhere to the standards and requirements set forth by the accrediting agencies so that care of the most critical patient can be carried out immediately.
  - This includes standard medical equipment such as; medical oxygen system, stretcher and base for each patient, electrical outlets, air compressor, vacuum pump with adequate suction for a suction canister as examples.
  - Do they have adequate medical equipment and supplies to support the length of the flight? As an example, of necessary medical equipment, International medical aircrafts should have an un-replenished oxygen supply on board to safely transport a ventilator dependent patient the entire transport, including fuel stops, and have a 25% reserve in case of unexpected delays. This standard can require 40-60 hours of medical oxygen to be available on the aircraft. A suctioning device should be part of the aircraft medical equipment as well as a portable device for use during the ground ambulance portion of the transport. All needed fluids and medications required by the patient during the transport are provided, to include adequate surplus to accommodate potential flight delays. Fluids are administered during the flight with the use of flight approved intravenous pumps to avoid fluid boluses that may result at altitude with physiological gas changes.
- **Will the air ambulance vendor provide the necessary medical equipment during the transport?**
  - The air ambulance vendor should be equipped with the necessary equipment to care for the Volunteer from the time care is assumed until care is transferred at the patient's destination. Back-up equipment should be available in the case of equipment failure. Diversion plans should be in place in case the patient's status changes and the air ambulance vendor requires additional resources.

## Assessment of Air Ambulance Vendors

- **Does the aircraft configuration allow for safe loading and unloading of the Volunteer without excessive maneuvering and allow access to the Volunteer by the medical team during the flight?**
  - The aircraft should be configured so that patient loading and unloading can be performed without the need to excessively maneuver the patient. The placement of the patient on the aircraft should provide for constant access and monitoring capabilities by the medical crew.
- **Can airway measures be performed without delay or constraints during the flight?**
  - The aircraft should be configured so that the patient's safety and health are the priority. Medical crews must have continuous access to the patient so that Advanced Life Support and procedures can be carried out immediately.
- **What documentation will the air ambulance vendor provide following the flight?**
  - The air ambulance vendor should provide real-time updates to the customer, which includes initial itinerary for the mission - to status reports during the flight. Once transport is completed, the medical record should be provided to the customer within a timely manner. The air ambulance vendor must maintain compliance with HIPAA guidelines and the customer/Volunteer privacy.