

When It Comes Down to Life or Death, DDJC Expeditors Deliver

By: Doug Imberi, DDJC Public Affairs

Whenever Defense Distribution Depot San Joaquin, California (DDJC) has to provide support in a life or death situation or for a disabled weapon system, it calls for special handling. Providing that special treatment is a group of eight transportation assistants commonly known as expeditors.

“Many of the customers call us the ESOC-Emergency Supply Operations Center,” said expeditor Laticia Salcido.

On a slow day the expeditors will get 190 emergency Material Release Orders and on a busy day it could be as many as 300. These are items needed for a life or death situation, urgent care, a crippled weapon system or something holding up a deployment.

According to expeditor John Becker, they usually get a call each week from the Marines at Quantico, VA, who fly and maintain the President’s helicopter.

“They like the service we give them,” said Becker.

All of the emergency requisitions come in from the Inventory Control Points. About 70 percent of the expedites come in via the Distribution Standard System (DSS). However, they also get faxes and phone calls for emergency items that customers need expedited.

Usually they can get the order out in a few hours. But, if need be, they can get an item selected, packed and delivered to Federal Express in minutes.

Typically an expeditor will key an emergency shipment into DSS and then walk it through the process.

“We will get it selected, hand carry it to the packing area, arrange for transportation and deliver it to the carrier,” said expeditor Andrei Mallari.

“However, our part doesn’t end until we provide the customer with the shipping info and close it out,” added Becker.

In most cases the expeditors are dependent on material handlers to get the stock selected and packed for shipment. “They stop what they are doing to help us get the expedites processed,” said Salcido.

Expeditors are on duty Monday through Friday from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays they quit at 3:30 p.m. However, they are on-call and can be summoned at any hour.

Peggy Laird, expeditor supervisor, recalled getting a phone call at 3 a.m. for an emergency MRO. A Navy hospital in Yokosuka, Japan, had a dying patient that needed a medical item stored at DDJC.

“I arranged for a carrier to fly the item to Japan and typed up the paperwork,” said Laird. “Tony Vaca, who was then



DDJC Transportation Division’s expeditors from left are: Peggy Laird, Laticia Salcido, John Becker, Wayne Cooper, Andrei Mallari, Remedios Palmer, Pauline Lavonite, and Sharon Cass.

the weekend/after hours coordinator, selected, packed and drove the package to the airport.”

Unfortunately, after the expeditors have gotten the needed material moving, they don’t know exactly how the emergency resolved itself. Laird and Vaca didn’t find out for sure the patient made it, but they believe he did.

Usually the emergency item fits in a small box—but not always. Laird recalls a Navy ship that got underway at Puget Sound and needed two truckloads of lubricating oil waiting for them when they arrived in San Diego the next morning.

“They wanted the oil flown into San Diego,” said Laird. “However, I found a carrier that could truck it down in time.”

Laird’s quick work to find truck transportation saved the Navy more than \$15,000 and still met the deadline.

The expeditors also coordinated the emergency shipments of Humanitarian Daily Rations and tents to Kosovo refugees that amounted to several truckloads.

The most challenging expedites come from the Navy, added Mallari. Late shipments can delay a ship in getting underway. Also communicating with ships at sea can be difficult.

“The other day I was working an emergency on a ship at sea, and the only way I could communicate with the customer was via email,” said Mallari. Mallari stayed until the emergency was solved, even though they lost contact a few times.

Becker has been an expeditor for nearly eight years and enjoys the job.

“It is fast paced,” Becker pointed out. “You don’t have time to get bored. You get to talk directly to the customer and get a sense of accomplishment when you help a customer get something they need.”