



## Forget “Where’s Waldo?” Where’s Dr. St. Clair?

Where in the world is Dr. St. Clair?

As the State Air Surgeon for the Washington Air National Guard, Dr. Bob St. Clair is called into action for our country several times a year. Since January of this year, he’s been to the Middle East and Thailand, and will be flying out again for two weeks in June.

In the Middle East, Dr. St. Clair was part of Operation Iraqi Freedom where he not only provided medical support for airlift missions in Turkey, but brought supplies to fighting units in Iraq.

“Part of being a flight surgeon is actually having contact with and being in the air with the crew,” he explains. “In the nearly four weeks I was there, I flew about 20 sorties into various parts of Iraq including Baghdad.” Most of his flights were in the middle of the night — after seeing patients and loading supplies all day. Although it sounds like a rough time, Dr. St. Clair thrives on it.

“I was an active duty fighter pilot for the Air Force from 1967 to 1977,” he says of his days in a F-4 Phantom. “Yes, I flew in Viet Nam.”

Before joining the military, Dr. St. Clair was taking his pre-med courses. Although he loved flying, he turned his attentions to his new wife and baby daughter. “I signed up with the Air National Guard and went to medical school.”

He’s been mixing the two ever since.

“I spend one weekend a month on drill and split my time between Fairchild and Camp Murray in Tacoma, which is the state guard headquarters.” With 100 medical guardsmen in Washington, Dr. St. Clair keeps more than busy.

“They don’t actually work for me,” he explains of the title ‘State Air Surgeon.’ “My job is more consultation with the medical group commanders. I provide guidance and oversight to make sure everyone is trained and up to speed.”

In fact, Dr. St. Clair was instrumental in an Explosives and Ordinance training in Thailand in March.

“We have a state partnership program which involves different aspects of training and medical information exchange with the Thai military. The most recent training was a combat lifesaver course to provide emergency medical services to casualties injured by mines or other explosives.”

Mines and bombs are a constant danger, especially in southern Thailand where there is a large Muslim influence. “There are explosions there every day. The military is often called in, so we’re training them in best practices to triage and transport victims.”

As for his recent trip to Turkey and Iraq, Dr. St. Clair says he was impressed with what he saw... and heard.

“The Turks are very support of America for the most part and glad to have us there.” Although he flew into Baghdad, Dr. St. Clair did not get contact with civilians. “However, I can tell you that our troops are committed and doing everything they can for the Iraqi people. They are hardworking and dedicated.”

