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## Mayo Clinic Physician Answers Call to Army Service

By Fonda Bock

In the late '60s, when thousands of American troops were fighting in Vietnam, Dr. Walter Franz, now a family doctor at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., and a colonel in the Army Reserve, was beginning to pursue his college education which he hoped would lead to a degree in medicine.

Grateful for having had the opportunity to finish his education while so many of his friends were serving their country, the thought of joining the Army often crossed Franz's mind during the '80s, but the timing was just never right.

But when Gulf War I, -- code named "Desert Storm"-- started in January 1991, Franz, then 38-years old, picked up the phone and called a recruiter.

"I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to finish my education during the '70s, so now it was my turn to pay back my country," said Franz. "It was purely God and country. It was an all-volunteer force serving, this war had a real purpose and it sounded like there was going to be a great need for doctors. It was my time to serve, so I joined."

Since Desert Storm lasted only a month, Franz never made it to the Gulf, but later in the 90's was deployed to Germany to serve as backup medical personnel for the Balkans conflict, was deployed to Iraq in 2003 and again in 2008 and 2009 serving as a battalion surgeon and public health team leader. During that time he was also appointed commander of the 945<sup>th</sup> Forward Surgical Team (FST) in Minnesota.

"Serving my country has been tremendously rewarding," said Franz. "It's just a good feeling to serve, to take care of Soldiers, their families and civilians and to train and teach medics. I don't need to be thanked or get awards; knowing I've helped those serving our country and being able to do humanitarian work is enough."



As a family doctor at the Mayo Clinic, Franz gained permission to use the clinic's multi-disciplinary simulation training center to train Army Reserve members of his FST team on nights and weekends. He was also instrumental in helping form a partnership between the Mayo Clinic and Army Reserve Medical Command that now allows for medical personnel from Army Reserve Combat Support Hospital (CSH) teams to train at the clinic.

"I've often been asked by some who are thinking about joining the Reserve, 'If Army doctors are not just Rambo with a stethoscope.' I tell them Army doctors are caregivers just like they are in the civilian world. You learn some different skills and practice in a different environment, but aside from that, it's not a whole lot different being in uniform. It's good to step up and join, serve your country and take care of Soldiers. My only regret is that I didn't do it sooner."

Franz is scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan in November.

For more information on an Army Medicine career, call 1-888-710-Army, or visit [www.goarmy.com/amedd](http://www.goarmy.com/amedd).

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Cutline:

Dr. Walter Franz, a family physician with the Mayo Clinic, stands at the entrance to the Clinic's Multidisciplinary Simulation Center in Rochester, Minn. Dr. Franz, a colonel in the Army Reserve, joined the Army team in the early 1990's, and has served in Germany and Iraq on several deployments.

Photo credit: U.S. Army photo

