

# The New York Times

PROTOTYPE | CLAIRE MARTIN

## At the Ready, at the Games

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Specializing in high-stakes rescue work, a company is poised to aid athletes in Sochi.

IN JANUARY 2008, an American skier named Brett Buckles flew 10 feet into the air during a training run in the village of Tignes, France. Instead of landing gingerly on her skis, she came down with a thud 40 feet down the course and was knocked unconscious. Later, at a small local hospital, she learned that she had broken her pelvis in two places, fractured her sacrum, sustained a severe concussion and torn the labrum in her right shoulder.

Because Ms. Buckles was a member of the United States Ski Team at the time, a paramedic — working with a group that included doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital — flew in the next day to assess her condition. He determined that she should be transferred back to the United States. A jet equipped with medical equipment flew her to the Denver Health Medical Center, and she made a full recovery.

Ms. Buckles' evacuation was handled by Global Rescue, a company based in Boston that has been working with the United States Ski and Snowboard Association since 2006. Currently, Global Rescue is poised to aid the team's athletes who are competing at the Sochi Olympics. Should a seriously injured skier or snowboarder require medical attention, or the whole team be in jeopardy from a terror attack or a natural disaster, Global Rescue employees stationed temporarily in Sochi would be able to mobilize at least six airplanes in the region and pull the athletes out.

This type of high-stakes rescue work may call to mind special forces military operations — and, in fact, Global Rescue employs former Navy Seals, Army Rangers and Defense Intelligence Agency analysts to pluck people from precarious situations worldwide. Since its founding a decade ago, the company has used military veterans to help innovate within the field of medical and security-related evacuations.

DAN RICHARDS, A FORMER investment banker, was motivated to start the company in part because of an injury he sustained in 1992 while playing college football on a remote New England field. "There was nobody in the small hospital that could actually give me an accurate diagnosis or treatment recommendation," he says. With a ruptured spleen, he was sent by ambulance to another hospital, even though, he later learned, the motion of the vehicle could have aggravated his injury.

When Mr. Richards, now 40, set about assembling a staff for Global Rescue, he gravitated to former members of the military. At the time, United States troops were beginning to return from Afghanistan and Iraq and re-enter civilian life. He says that his goal was to "provide an incredible level of service to our clients and provide a very team-oriented, mission-driven environment for these veterans and help them reintegrate into the private sector."

He met with staff members for John



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GLOBAL RESCUE



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Dan Richards, top, founded Global Rescue in 2004. Its emergency medical evacuations included one in 2008, above left, on Mount Dhaulagiri in Nepal. This month, the analyst Ryan Uljua, above right, in the company's headquarters in Boston, checked images from sites at the Sochi Olympics.

**Military veterans are bringing their expertise to companies in the field of international evacuations.**

Kerry, then a senator from Massachusetts, to discuss possibilities for hiring veterans. Mr. Richards also tapped his professional networks and turned to RecruitMilitary, a recruiting service. He eventually hired 200 employees, roughly 25 percent of them former members of the military.

International SOS, a company based in Singapore and London that focuses mainly on medical evacuations, also makes an effort to hire veterans.

"You're getting people who have worked within organizations to accomplish missions in times of crisis, using limited resources," says John G. Rendeiro Jr., vice president for global security and intelligence at International SOS and a former United States Army intelligence officer and Diplomatic Security Service special agent. "That's where military folks shine."

GLOBAL RESCUE HAS 3.5 million members — both individuals and corporations — who pay a weekly, monthly or yearly membership fee for its services, which include evacuations for medical and security-related reasons. The cost for an individual annual membership, covering all services, is \$655. Corporate membership fees vary. On rare occasions, Global Rescue has evacu-

ated nonmembers, charging one-time fees.

During the Arab Spring, the company ushered more than 200 people out of Egypt. Its staff spent a month evacuating clients from Haiti after the earthquake there in 2010. Last year, it helped the American snowboarder Luke Mitrani after he broke his neck in New Zealand while training for a competition.

Four of Global Rescue's 10 largest corporate customers are foreign companies; domestic clients include Condé Nast and National Geographic. It also works with about 1,000 tour operators.

The hiring of veterans has entered a more mature period, according to Peter Gudmundsson, C.E.O. and president of RecruitMilitary, based in Cincinnati. In the past, some employers "waved a flag about veteran hiring without following it up with real efforts," he says.

But now, military skills are more attractive to private-sector employers, he adds, and recruiting efforts have become more serious.

"There aren't many institutions left in our society where young people really learn intangible skills that are useful in the workplace, like discipline, teamwork and a results orientation," he says.