

Brigadier General (retired) Rhonda Cornum, Ph.D., M.D.

Professor, Military and Operational Medicine, Uniformed Services University, and
Director of Health Strategy, Techwerks LLC

Rhonda Cornum entered the Army in 1978, the first year of women's integration into the service from the WACs. She did research for 4 years then went to medical school at the military medical school, USUHS. Following a Surgery Internship she was assigned to Fort Rucker where she served in several capacities, culminating in her assignment to the 229th attack helicopter battalion. While deployed with the 229th to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, she was shot down, and shot, while on a search and rescue mission for a downed pilot. Major Cornum was captured and held as a prisoner of war for 8 days. Although losing 5 of an 8 man crew, multiple injuries, sexual assault and uncertainty of survival could have been considered a traumatic event, she used the psychological skills of compartmentalization, reframing, problem solving and goal setting to endure the captivity and subsequent release and repatriation. She was later able to use those experiences while continuing an extremely successful military career.

Following repatriation and several surgeries she began a Urology resident and became a board certified Urologic surgeon. She took command of the 28th Combat Support Hospital at Fort Bragg, NC on 25 July 2000. In this position she deployed as the Medical Task Force Commander to Bosnia for SFOR 9, and deployed three subordinate units to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom. After that command tour she attended the National War College and graduated in June 2003 with a Masters in Strategic Studies.

She then took command of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center from 2003 to 2005. During this time, Landstuhl cared for over 26,000 evacuees from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Africa; including 5,540 battle injuries. In June 2005, she became the US Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) Surgeon, Ft McPherson, GA, where her responsibilities included casualty care of the deployed force and providing medical expertise to the higher headquarters for all CONUS-based Army Forces.

In addition to senior flight surgeon wings, BG (ret) Cornum wears the airborne, air assault, and the expert field medic badges. Decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit (2 OLC), Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal (4 OLCs), Purple Heart, Air Medal, POW Medal and others. Dr. Cornum has written or co-authored one book, eight book chapters, and numerous scientific articles. She sits on numerous committees and advisory boards, and is a Professor of Military and Emergency Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. Dr Cornum is Board certified in Urology, a Fellow in both the American College of Surgeons and the Aerospace Medical Association, and is a member of the American Society of Nutrition.

She retired from the Army in 2012 and resides on a cattle farm in Kentucky. In addition to consulting on psychological fitness programs, she raises, trains, exhibits and judges Gordon Setters.