

COL Rhonda Cornum, MD

Colonel Rhonda Cornum is currently the U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) Surgeon, Ft. McPherson, GA. She was commissioned into the Army and began a research career in 1978 after receiving her Ph.D. in nutrition and biochemistry from Cornell. Assigned to the Letterman Army Institute of Research, she focused on wound healing metabolism and improving liquid blood preservation and transfusion therapy. From 1982-1986 she attended medical school at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, received her M.D. and then completed a General Surgery internship at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. In 1987, she transferred to the Army Aeromedical Center at Fort Rucker, AL, first as Chief, Primary Care and Community Medicine, then Chief of Aviation Medicine. In 1989 research again became her primary duty as Chief, Crew Life Support Branch at the Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory, also at Fort Rucker. While there, her interests revolved around enhancing pilot performance and use of helmet mounted displays in advanced attack helicopters. Research was interrupted by the Persian Gulf conflict. In August of 1990 Colonel Cornum was assigned as the flight surgeon to the 2/229 Attack Helicopter Battalion. During the last week of February 1991, while performing a search and rescue mission for a downed Air Force F-16 pilot, her Blackhawk helicopter was shot down. Five of the eight person crew were killed. The three survivors, including Colonel Cornum, were captured by Iraqi forces. She was repatriated on 6 March 1991. Colonel Cornum attended Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base from 1991 through 1992. She began her residency training in urology in 1993. Following graduation in 1998, Colonel Cornum was assigned to Eisenhower Army Medical Center in Augusta, GA. 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. COL Cornum then commanded Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany. During this time Landstuhl cared for over 26,000 war heroes, including 5,540 battle injuries, evacuated from Iraq and Afghanistan. She is now the Command Surgeon at FORSCOM, the higher headquarters for all CONUS based Army Forces, where she is responsible for casualty care of the deployed force, providing medical expertise to organize, man, train, equip and mobilize Soldier-medics and medical units. In addition to senior flight surgeon wings, Colonel Cornum wears the airborne, air assault, and the expert field medic badges. Decorations include the Legion of Merit (1 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, four book chapters, and numerous scientific articles. She sits on numerous committees and advisory boards, including the Secretary's POW Advisory Committee for the DVA. She is married to Air Force Colonel Kory Cornum, a USU 1986 classmate, who is an orthopedic surgeon and Commander of the 1st Fighter Wing Hospital, Langley AFB, VA.