

Bud Calkin Vice President and General Manager Skedco Inc.

Bud Calkin's initial military medical experience began in June of 1959, later serving as a dental technician at Fort Ord, Calif., and with U.S. Army Europe. He also served as an instructor at the Academy of Health Sciences, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. In 1980, he took a game carrier invented by his sister and re-designed it to be the Sked rescue litter system. Since that time he has designed several other medical and rescue products produced by Skedco for military and civilian agencies.



Q: Tell me a little about Skedco's background and involvement with the military?

A: Upon Skedco's introduction of the first-ever casualty evacuation [casevac] system, the Sked rescue and transport system in 1983, we are continuously researching, evaluating, testing, developing and producing casevac systems for the U.S. military. These systems have been used with great success in every conflict since Operation Just Cause-Panama and are irrefutably responsible for countless lives saved.

Since Skedco's inception, our focus has been saving the lives of our nation's greatest treasure—the warfighter—and through this focus, many other civilian and military lives have also been saved. Our dedication to the military has caused us to travel anywhere from 150,000 to 250,000 miles annually, providing service and training. Although Skedco is a manufacturer, we are a very service-oriented company.

Q: When a new concept is being worked on, do you do all of the design and manufacturing work in-house?

A: Prior to July 2006, Skedco exclusively designed, developed and manufactured all products in house, sometimes utilizing local subcontractors which allowed us to maintain strict quality control.

Since July 2006, we have affiliated itself with XMED Consultant Group, LLC of Grand Junction, Colo., to design and develop its new lines of state-of-the-art products. Casevac systems are not the only line of products we offer; we also offer a vast array of other state-of-the-art EMS and rescue products.

Q: Do you traditionally develop a product based on what your experience tells you the military needs or design to fulfill a requirement?

A: Although I have 26 years of intense casevac and rescue expertise regarding product development and end-user hands on training, I strictly rely on the service's operational requirements, even more importantly, my close interaction with our military's professionals. It is these men and women who risk their own lives to keep us free that we are dedicated to and depend upon. These men and women maintain an open dialogue with Skedco providing necessary feedback critical to the design and development. We listen to our customers. Our willingness to travel anywhere—anytime to seek out a sound solution meeting the needs of the operators on the ground is unsurpassed.

Q: What are critical design features you take into account when developing a new device?

A: Throughout Skedco's comprehensive product design and development process, we place patient and operator safety paramount, followed by fit, form and function with respect to the products intended application in the operational environment. Skedco takes great pride in its policy to over engineer our products in order to prevent failure on the battlefield. Twenty-six years of proven performance through superior design has enabled us to become an industry leader in casualty evacuation and rescue.

Q: Does Skedco maintain a standard for test and evaluation of their products?

A: All testing is not the same; Skedco formally tests all our products with respect to their intended application in the field. We use a combination of certified independent test laboratories and our own product testing. In addition, products requiring an airworthiness release, testing is confirmed by U.S. Army-certified test laboratories. Each product undergoes strict in-house quality control inspections throughout the manufacturing process, laboratory testing as required and a battery of field evaluations conducted by experienced operators.

Q: How much of your business is international?

A: We do substantial international business throughout the free world supporting our allies and coalition partner nations, both in the civilian and military communities. Skedco casevac and rescue products are the standard amongst many of the free world's military units. We maintain a strict policy not to sell products to nations that are unfriendly to the U.S. or its allies.

Q: Any hint of things you are working on in the future?

A: The U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command contracted with Skedco last year to produce the field expedient bleeding simulation system [FEBS]. The FEBS brings total realism to small unit training in the continuum of tactical combat casualty care by using live simulated casualties that will actually bleed. This gives a realistic simulation allowing the first responder to panic in the training environment rather than later on the battlefield. The FEBS is available now.

Recently, we developed aircraft and ground mobility casevac packages for U.S. Army and Marine Corps special operations forces. In the near future, Skedco will unveil a new and revolutionary warfighter-centric casevac system.

Q: Any final thoughts for the military community?

A: I would like to thank all of our military professionals for risking their own lives to protect mine and our great nation. God bless you all. ★