

Unique firefighting crew has common trait: Military service

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

SALEM — After being in firefights in Afghanistan and Iraq, members of one of America's newest elite wild-fire crews are tasked with fighting fires in rugged country back home.

On the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's only hotshot crew focused on recruiting veterans, members have traded assault rifles and other weapons of war for chain saws and shovels.

But, like in the military, they have camaraderie, structure and chain of command. And the occasional adrenaline rush.

"Being in a firefight is way different than being in a wildland fire, but both are mentally taxing," said Chris Schott, who served two tours in Afghanistan with the Army's 7th Special Forces Group. "In a wildland fire, no one's shooting at you, but conditions can go favorable to unfavorable very quickly."

The Lakeview Veterans Interagency Hotshot Crew, based in Klamath Falls, received its hotshot certification after rigorous training and testing, the Bureau of Land Management announced last week. It's now among 112 elite U.S. wildland firefighting teams and the only targeting veterans for recruitment, the agency said.

Crew superintendent Michael McGirr said he and other managers took then-President Barack Obama's initiative to hire veterans to heart.

"We felt it was important for them to transition back home," McGirr said.

Their maturity and ability to follow and lead are benefits that quickly became apparent when the crew started operating in 2012 as a lower-classification unit, McGirr said. Their military experience also means they're used to enduring tough missions.

"It's a lot of arduous hiking in nasty terrain," McGirr said. "The steeper the terrain, that's usually the ground hotshots are on."

Kenn Boles, a member of the crew since 2012 who did three tours in Iraq as a Marine, agreed that veterans can withstand the intense work.

"You're working hard, sweating; the fire doesn't stop because of those things," he said. "It's like in combat — just because you're hungry, tired and thirsty doesn't mean the firefight stops."

The crew is on leave and



Members of a fire crew out of Lakeview work on the Cougar Creek Fire in August in central Washington state.

Kari Greer/BLM/USDA Forest Service



Christopher Schott in 2007 in northern Kandahar Province, in Afghanistan.



Christopher Schott works in Utah with a firefighting crew out of Lakeview.

hasn't been battling the recent deadly wildfires in California.

Of the 25 positions on the crew, 17 are filled by veterans, McGirr said. There are three additional openings, and McGirr said he wants to recruit female veterans, too.

Schott, the Army veteran, said the crew felt they had the potential to achieve elite hotshot status after fighting fires in 2015, including one in Crater Lake National Park that they almost had contained when winds picked up and changed direction, pushing the flames behind them.

They worked two weeks in a row, digging fire lines

and doing prescribed burns to deprive the fire of fuel. After three days off, they worked another two weeks straight.

"After that, we thought we could be the first veterans hotshot crew in the nation," Schott said.

The crew usually works for nine months, with three months off.

"We spend more time together than with our fami-

lies," McGirr said. "It's a grueling pace. We eat together, sleep together."

That creates a camaraderie that allows the veterans to share their wartime experiences with those who understand what they endured.

Boles lost a close friend a week after he left Iraq. That was the biggest contributor to post-traumatic stress disorder that hit him later, he said,

describing it as "a lot of survivor's guilt." The veterans have each other's backs when PTSD issues arise, acting as a support group.

"Instead of bottling it up, we're really receptive to hearing people's stories and problems," said Boles, who was in the invasion of Iraq and in heavy fighting in Fallujah and Ramadi.

Schott, who served in Afghanistan's Urozgan Province north of Kandahar, said, "A lot of times you think, this can't get any worse. And yet you made it through."

He was in an operations center when he heard radio traffic about someone killed

in action. It was his best friend.

"Myself, I was in denial for quite a long time about my PTSD," Schott said, adding that joining the crew and opening up to other veterans "helped me get my life back on track and where it needs to be."

The Bureau of Land Management is proud of the crew and efforts to develop a workforce of veterans, said Jeffrey Fedrizzi, agency deputy director for fire and aviation.

He said the men attaining hotshot status "demonstrates the exemplary quality and performance ingrained in this crew."



Christy Shoop
Paperwork

Divorce need not be expensive. We help you get the paperwork right and provide mediation to help you divide your assets.



Brian G. Kulhanjian
Mediation



OREGON LEGAL RESOLUTION SERVICES

552 Commercial Street Astoria (503) 325-9115

A division of Stahancyk, Kent & Hook

WANTED

Alder and Maple Saw Logs & Standing Timber

Northwest Hardwoods • Longview, WA

Contact: John Anderson • 360-269-2500

THE DAILY ASTORIAN



TV SCHEDULE

Evening listings
MONDAY

MONDAY EVENING										NOVEMBER 26			
A	L	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
2	KATU	(2) KATU News at 6 (N)		Jeopardy! (N)	Wheel Fortune (N)	C'mas Light Fight (SP) (N)		The Great Christmas Light Fight (N)		The Good Doctor "Empathy" (N)		News (N)	(3:5) Jimmy Kimmel
3	KOMO	(4) KOMO 4 News (N)		Wheel Fortune (N)	Jeopardy! (N)	C'mas Light Fight (SP) (N)		The Great Christmas Light Fight (N)		The Good Doctor "Empathy" (N)		KOMO 4 News (N)	(3:5) Jimmy Kimmel
4	KING	(5) NBC News (N)	KING 5 News	KING 5 News	Evening News (N)	The Voice "Live Top 11 Performances" (N)				Manifest "Dead Reckoning" (N)		KING 5 News (N)	(3:5) Tonight Show
5	KOIN	(6) KOIN Local 6 (N)	Evening News (N)	Extra	Ent. Tonight (N)	The Neighborhood Happy Together		Magnum P.I. "Sudden Death"		Bull "The Devil, the Detail"		News (N)	(3:5) Colbert
6	KIRO	(7) KIRO 7 News (N)	Evening News (N)	KIRO 7 News (N)	Ent. Tonight (N)	The Neighborhood Happy Together		Magnum P.I. "Sudden Death"		Bull "The Devil, the Detail"		KIRO 7 News (N)	(3:5) Colbert
7	KGW	(8) KGW News at 6:00 p.m. (N)		Tonight Cassidy	Inside Edition	The Voice "Live Top 11 Performances" (N)				Manifest "Dead Reckoning" (N)		News (N)	(3:5) Tonight Show
8	KRCW	(3) Modern Family	Modern Family	The Goldbergs	The Goldbergs	Arrow "The Slabside Redemption" (N)		LegendTomor. "Tender Is the Nate" (N)		News (N)	Friends	Two and a Half	Two and a Half
9	KOPB	(10) This Old House	Business (N)	PBS NewsHour (N)		Ken Burns: The Civil War		Brain Secrets Learn		to improve and maintain cognitive fitness.		Chet Atkins: Certified Guitar Player	
10	KPTV	(12) 6 O'Clock News (N)		Family Feud	Family Feud	The Resident "The Dance" (N)		9-1-1 "Merry Ex-Mas" (N)		10 O'Clock News (N)		News (N)	Page Six TV
11	KPDV	(12) Mike & Molly	Mike & Molly	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Prime News (N)		Prime News (N)		Big Bang Theory	Family Guy	American Dad!	The Game
12	KCPQ	(13) Modern Family	Modern Family	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	The Resident "The Dance" (N)		9-1-1 "Merry Ex-Mas" (N)		Q13 NEWS AT 10 (N)		News (N)	The Simpsons
13	TBS	(20) Bob's Burgers	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy		Family Guy		Family Guy		Conan Without Borders	"Haiti" (N)
14	KZJO	(22) Black-ish	Black-ish	Mom	Modern Family	Modern Family		Q13 News at 9 (N)		Big Bang Theory		Big Bang Theory	Two and a Half
15	ESPN2	(29) (5:15) NFL Football	Tennessee Titans at Houston Texans (L)			(5:15) SportsCenter With Scott Van Pelt (N)		NFL PrimeTime		SportsCenter With Scott Van Pelt		NFL PrimeTime	
16	ESPN2	(30) NCAA Basketball ACC/Big-10 Challenge	Minnesota at Boston College (L)			College Football	Around Horn (N)	Interruption		SportsCenter With Scott Van Pelt (N)		Poker World Series	SportsCenter
17	NICK	(31) The Loud House	The Loud House	The Loud House	Henry Danger	Henry Danger		SpongeBob		SpongeBob		Friends	Friends
18	DISN	(32) Movie	(5:50) Raven's Home	(1:15) Raven's Home	(4:40) Raven's Home	(5:05) Andi Mack		Coop & Cami		Raven's Home		Good Luck Charlie	Good Luck Charlie
19	FAM	(34) (5:10) Meet the Robinsons		(1:15) *** The Nightmare Before Christmas '93	Chris Sarandon.	(5:55) Paddington (2014, Family)		Nicole Kidman, Hugh Bonneville, Ben Whishaw.		(5:55) FXM Presents		Big (1988, Comedy)	Tom Hanks.
20	FMC	(35) (4:45) The Shallows	The Shallows (2016, Thriller)	Oscar Jaenada, Blake Lively.		Poinsettias for Christmas '18	Marqus Rosner, Lauren London, Bethany Joy Lenz.	(15) Press Pass (N)		NCAA Football		(05) Every Other Holiday '18	Dee Wallace, David Clayton Rogers, Schuyler Fisk.
21	LIFE	(36) *** Crazy for Christmas '05	Howard Hesseman, Yannick Bisson, Andrea Roth.			WCC All-Access	Sled Head 24/7	TMZ Sports (N)		Skip and Shannon: Undisputed Opinions on the biggest sports topics of the day.		CFB: Inside Slant	
22	ROOT	(38) NCAA Basketball North Dakota State at Gonzaga (L)				Speak for Yourself		To Be Announced		To Be Announced		To Be Announced	
23	F51	(39) 2018 U.S. Open: Brooks Back-to-Back		Herd for the Holidays (N)		The Office		The Office		The Office		The Office	
24	SPIKE	(43) Mom	Mom	Mom	Friends	The Office		The Office		The Office		The Office	
25	COM	(44) The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office		The Office		The Office		The Office	
26	HIST	(45) American Pickers "High Energy Crisis"		American Pickers "Ready to Roar"		American Pickers "Hard Bargain Picks"		Amer. Pickers "Pickers Like it Hot" (N)		(05) Amer. Pickers "Million-Dollar Cars"		(05) Brothers in Arms	
27	A&E	(46) The First 48 "Senior Year"		The First 48 "Deadly Premonition"		First 48: Gang		The Rookie/ Cornered/ Soldier Down/ Fatal Mistake		One of Ohio's most dangerous criminals is murdered. (N)		(05) The First 48	
28	TLC	(47) Long Island Medium "Sitcom Spirits"		Long Island Medium "Shoo Shoo Spirit"		LI Medium "Five Star Readings" (SF) (N)		Medium "Haunting at the Lake" (N)		Lost Family "I Want to Go Back" (N)		I Should Have Known (P) (N)	
29	DISC	(48) Memphis "Big Apple, Big Mouths"		OutlawsMemphis "Damn the DMV"		MemphisThrottle "Hustler's Paradise"		OutlawsMemphis "Desert Do-Over"		Race Night at Bowman Gray (N)		To Be Announced	
30	NGEO	(49) The Story of God "Beyond Death"		The Story of God "Apocalypse"		One Strange Rock "Shield"		Mars "Darkness Falls" (N)		In the Eagle's Nest (N)		StarTalk (N)	
31	TNT	(50) (5:00) *** Man of Steel '13, Action		Amy Adams, Michael Shannon, Henry Cavill.		*** Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice		Scott Eastwood, Alan Alda, Britt Robertson.		(55) FXM Presents		Big (1988, Comedy)	Tom Hanks.
32	AMC	(51) (4:30) Willy Wonka & the Chocolate F...		*** Elf (2003, Comedy)	James Caan, Bob Newhart, Will Ferrell.	*** Elf (2003, Comedy)		James Caan, Bob Newhart, Will Ferrell.				The Alienist "Castle in the Sky"	
33	USA	(52) Modern Family Modern Family		Modern Family Modern Family		WWE Monday Night Raw		Holiday Baking "Holiday Artistry" (N)		Cmas Cookie "Modern Classics" (N)		Real Country "Hitting the Road"	
34	FOOD	(53) Holiday Baking "Christmas Morning"		Hol.Bake "Live from the North Pole"		Holiday Baking "Turkey Day Delights"		Holiday Baking "Turkey Day Delights"		House Hunters (N) House Hunters (N)		House Hunters	House Hunters
35	HGTV	(54) Love It or List It "Laundry Overload"		Love It/List It "A Hole-in-one Location"		Love It or List It "Second Time Selling"		Love It or List It (N)		House Hunters (N) House Hunters (N)		House Hunters	House Hunters
36	FX	(56) *** Lucy (2014, Action)	Morgan Freeman, Analeigh Tipton, Scarlett Johansson.			*** X-Men: Apocalypse (2016, Action)		Michael Fassbender, James McAvoy, Jennifer Lawrence.		Cuomo Prime Time		Cuomo Prime Time	
37	CNN	(57) Cuomo Prime Time		Cuomo Prime Time		Anderson Cooper 360		Cuomo Prime Time		Cuomo Prime Time		Cuomo Prime Time	
38	FNC	(58) Hannity		The Ingraham Angle		Fox News @ Night		Amer. Greed "Baby-faced Drug Lord"		Amer. Greed "Florida Rehab Gone Wild"		Paid Program	Paid Program
39	CNBC	(61) American Greed: Scam		Green "Scams on Film/ God and Gold"		American Greed: Scam		Amer. Greed "Baby-faced Drug Lord"		Amer. Greed "Florida Rehab Gone Wild"		Paid Program	Paid Program
40	BRV	(63) Real Housewives "Reunion Part Three"		Real Housewives "Friends and Enemies"		The Real Housewives "Femme Finale"		Real Housewives "Reunion Part One"		To Be Announced		Watch What (N)	Housewives Atl.
41	TAM	(64) Movie	(4:45) *** Breakfast for Two (37)	Barbara Stanwyck.		*** Bureau of Missing Persons (33)		Bette Davis.		*** Little Big Shot (1935, Family)		Merry Wives of Reno	Margaret Lindsay.
42	SYFY	(65) *** Tron: Legacy (2010, Adventure)	Garrett Hedlund, Olivia Wilde, Jeff Bridges.			(4:45) *** Limitless (2011, Mystery)		Anna Friel, Bradley Cooper.				Futurama	Futurama
43	RFD	(62) Rancher (N)	Red Steagall	Horse Master 1/2	Horse of the West	Craig Cameron		Rural Eve. News		Gaither Gospel Hour		American Rancher	Red Steagall
44												Product Showcase	