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## News Release

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### **Military medicine achieves new heights**

**Bethesda, MD** – As if taking on the challenges of serving in the U.S. Army and completing medical school weren't enough, two fourth year medical students at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences used their Spring Break to reach greater heights.

James Winegarner and Michael Chamberlin, both Army 2nd Lieutenants while completing their medical school education, successfully summited Uhuru Peak, Mt Kilimanjaro the morning of March 7 via the Machame route. While not the first to achieve the feat, according to both climbers it probably isn't a common accomplishment for most medical students.

"We share a passion for the outdoors and for challenging ourselves," said Winegarner, who, along with Chamberlin, has been a leader in the Wilderness Medicine Interest Group (WMIG) at USU. "Between our first and second year, we spent two weeks in British Columbia, Canada, climbing in Squamish. We had been planning since that time for this break in our fourth year, where there was some flexibility in our schedule to accomplish another big challenge."

The duo decided on Mt. Kilimanjaro because of the relatively short duration and non-technical nature of the climb and because of the location. Standing more than 19,334 feet high, Uhuru Peak is the highest summit on Kibo's crater rim. Kilimanjaro itself is the tallest free-standing mountain in Africa and the fourth highest of the seven summits. The Machame route is considered to be the most scenic and most difficult routes.

"We had hopes of conducting humanitarian health care while in Africa, in conjunction with this climb, but because of U.S. State Department limitations on official travel in that part of the world right now, the humanitarian portion fell through at the last minute," said Chamberlin.

According to Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Glenn Burns, assistant professor in the department of Military and Emergency Medicine and former faculty advisor to the WMIG at USU, the students' achievement is not surprising given their background and training. "We attempt to turn out not only exceptional physicians, but competent and well-rounded military officers who are prepared for the demands of challenging, austere and extreme environments," said Burns. "I can't imagine a better way to help them prepare for their future in military medicine."

"This climb was, at least in my mind, a capstone event and symbolic of medical school itself," said Winegarner. "It was seven very difficult days of non-stop physical exertion with the added effects of altitude and cold weather. The feelings we had when we reached the summit, I imagine, will be similar to how I'll feel graduating medical school later this month.

Winegarner and Chamberlin will be among the 162 medical students graduating from the USU, Saturday, May 15, 2010. The Commencement Exercise begins at 11:00 a.m., Daughters of the American Revolution Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C.

Located on the grounds of Bethesda's National Naval Medical Center and across from the National Institutes of Health, USU is the nation's federal school of medicine and graduate school of nursing. The University educates health care professionals dedicated to career service in the Department of Defense and the U.S. Public Health Service. Medical students are active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who are being educated to deal with wartime casualties, natural disasters, emerging infectious diseases, and other public health emergencies. Of the University's nearly 4,400 physician alumni and more than 400 advanced practice nurses, the vast majority serve on active duty and are supporting operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, offering their leadership and expertise. The University also has graduate programs open to civilian and military applicants in biomedical sciences and public health committed to excellence in the didactic and research training which have awarded more than 300 Ph.D. and 100 M.S. degrees to date.

For more information about USU and its programs, visit [www.usuhs.mil](http://www.usuhs.mil).

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