

ON POINT!



ISSUE 1

2011

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First Lt. Daniel Bordeaux, platoon leader of 2nd Platoon Blackhawk Co. 1st Battalion 23 Infantry Regiment takes a compass reading May 25 to determine the direction of movement while on a 20- to 25-kilometer ruck march during platoon evaluations at Yakima Training Center, Wash. During the ruck march, 2nd platoon traversed uneven rocky terrain, crossing several hills and valleys in order to assault various objectives.
(U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Austan R. Owen)

Back COVER

A Soldier with Battery A, 1st Battalion, 37th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, mans an automatic machine gun atop a Lightweight Medium Tactical Vehicle May 21 in the first few days of a three-week brigade-wide exercise of full-spectrum operations. This new approach to training, which encompasses everything from conventional force-on-force warfare tactics to unconventional insurgent threats and everything in between, has Soldiers constantly securing their positions, rather than setting up forward operating bases.
(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Christopher M. Gaylord)

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Sykes Regulars back to basics

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Corey M. Ray,
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Before the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Brigade had even finished setting up life support systems; they were already at the demolition site deep within Yakima Training Center blowing stuff up.

On May 22 breach teams from the “Sykes’ Regulars Battalion” were conducting familiarization training on bangalore torpedoes and claymore mines, courtesy of subject matter experts from the 18th Engineer Company.

“The Soldiers have been loving it, it’s hard to keep their heads down” said Sgt. Jared M. Harney, a combat engineer assigned to the 18th Eng. Co, 2-3 Infantry Battalion. “This is our bread and butter right here. Any obstacle that needs to get breached, that’s what we do.” Squad and platoon training followed, and by the next day Alpha Company, 5-20th Inf. Bn. was working together as a cohesive unit capturing an objec-



Soldiers assigned to 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Brigade anticipate the explosion of claymore mines on 22 May 2011 at Yakima Training Center. The “Sykes’ Regulars” Battalion is conducting full spectrum operations, along with the rest of the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division in preparation for an upcoming rotation to the National Training Center, Calif.



A Soldier from Headquarter and Headquarters Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Brigade observes the after-effects of bangalore torpedoes on 22 May 2011 at Yakima Training Center. The “Sykes’ Regulars” Battalion is conducting full spectrum operations, along with the rest of the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division in preparation for an upcoming rotation to the National Training Center, Calif.

tive.

The 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division is at YTC in preparation for an upcoming rotation to the National Training Center in California, where the Army’s original Strykerbrigade will conduct full-spectrum operations for the first time.

Lt. Col. Steven J. Soika, 5-20th Inf. Bn. commander, has employed a bottom-up approach to training, with each training mission building off the last. Squad level training leads to platoon training, and company assaults are conducted in preparation for battalion maneuvering. The multi-echelon training will culminate in a brigade combined-fire exercisewhen commanders will synchronize indirect fires, close-combat attacks and aviation assets.

“Everything we are doing is focused on our current war-fighting missions,” said Lt. Col. Steven J. Soika. “We are supposed to be (on standby as) the contingency expeditionary force coming up in the next few months.”

“As the CEF the Arrowhead Brigade will function as a force that has to be

ready, if called upon, to provide anything from humanitarian assistance to combat operations,” said Soika. “It is all part of the normal Army Force Generation cycle that units go through.”

Since the brigade needs to be ready for anything, the brigade is going back to the basics.

A major focus for the training here has been movement and maneuver drills, and understanding the concept of both. The 325,000 acres of shrub steppes that make up YTC has proven to be an effective training asset. Testing both man and machine as Soldiers conduct mounted- and dismounted assaults, qualify on their weapons and work on their infantry skills, while using all available assets. Just because Soldiers are working on basic skills doesn’t mean that tasks are boring and repetitive.

“This is something that I have never done before”, said Pvt. 1st Class Meafua Filoalii, Jr., infantryman assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 5-20th Inf. Bn., commenting on the bangalore torpedo demolition range. “It was fun blowing stuff up.”

Ready for anything, 1-37th FAR train

Story and photos by
Sgt. Christopher M. Gaylord
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

It might be the perception from the outside that field artillerymen don't exactly get close to the battle, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

To meet the unconventional requirements of two simultaneous overseas conflicts during the last ten years, artillery Soldiers all across the Army have traded in one gun for another, accepting once unexpected infantry-like roles as members of maneuver teams in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Currently engaged in an expansive variation of exercises at Yakima Training Center in Central Washington State, Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, are now taking back what they traded in, but still training on all levels of Soldiering.

Immersed in what the Army is calling full-spectrum operations, they're preparing for whatever comes next, and they're preparing well.

"Generally, we train for Iraq or Afghanistan, where we've been on the ground for quite some time, but now they're training us for a full-spectrum fight that hasn't been done before," said Capt. Kevin Hansen, the intelligence officer for the battalion, which is a 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division asset out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Hansen said full-spectrum operations include lessons learned from past deployment and peacetime experiences and encompass all forms of warfare, whether it's conventional fighting, insurgency threats, or dealing with civilians on the battlefield.

"It's not just Desert Storm, and it's not just counterinsurgency," he said. "It blends all of them together."

This widespread approach to training, which comes in the midst of significant force drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan, is focusing on returning the battalion to its basic field artillery roots while at the same time allowing it to maintain the "non-standard" skills it's developed from years of involvement in the two countries.



Cannon crew members with Battery A, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, fire the M777 Lightweight Howitzer Cannon System May 21 during a three-week exercise at Yakima Training Center in Central Washington State. The battalion, which is a 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division asset, is currently immersed in a brigade-wide approach to training called full-spectrum operations, which allows the entire brigade to practice tactics that encompass all forms of warfare, from conventional fighting to insurgency threats. The exercise has field artillerymen not only staying up on their cannon systems, but mounted and dismounted infantry techniques as well.

ns on all levels, fires on all cylinders

The intention is to produce a fine-tuned, flexible unit able to meet the demands of any future conflict that might arise.

"This is something that will allow the Army to be a contingency force able to go anywhere in the world," Hansen said. "We can't really name an enemy, but we can train for what the enemy might do."

"We have to provide very tough, realistic training for our guys so they're prepared for the absolute toughest enemy," he added.

Capt. Matthew Kuhlman, commander of Battery B, 1-37th FA, said this visit to YTC, which began May 17 and ends June 7, will prepare the battalion for its upcoming month-long rotation in August to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

During this rotation, Kuhlman says, 3rd SBCT, which already holds the legacy of being the Army's first Stryker brigade, will claim another landmark first.

"Our brigade is supposed to be the first brigade coming through NTC to actually have a no kidding full-spectrum operations environment," he said.

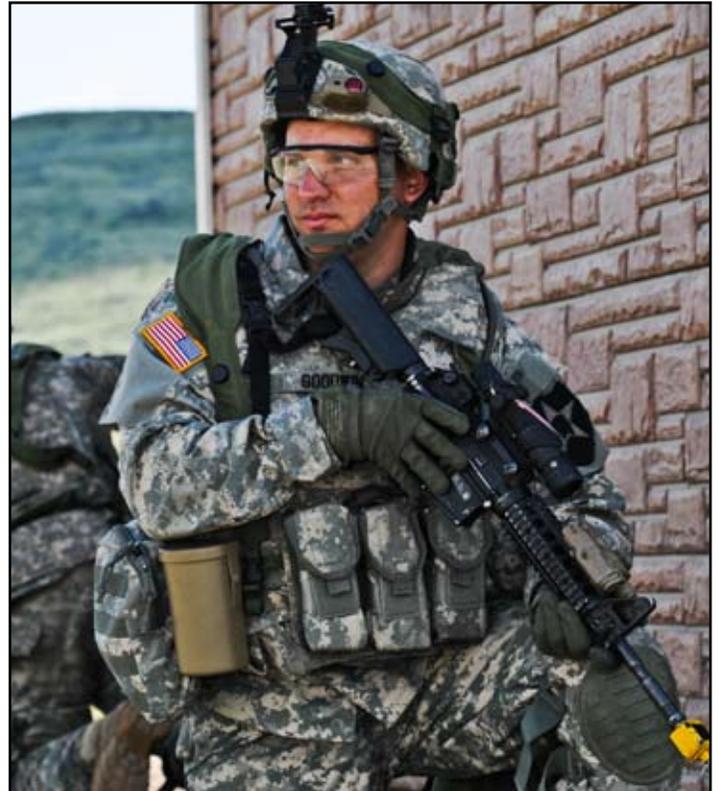
What that means, he added, is that the entire brigade will engage in full conflict that includes every type of warfare, from conventional force-on-force fighting experienced in World War II to the detaining of civilian insurgents that is common to the Army's most recent conflicts, and everything in between.

Kuhlman says the significance in this, when it comes to 1-37th FA, is that his battery, along with two others, will do it all - something the battalion's never experienced.

"The majority of our time here we're doing artillery," he said, "but with full-spectrum operations it can go from convoy and dismounted movement, going through mock towns and villages and interacting with the people, to clearing a room, reacting to contact and reacting to improvised explosive devices."

"Last rotation to NTC, one-third of the battalion was doing artillery missions, and the other two-thirds were doing maneuver operations," Kuhlman said.

With the freedom and time to train for an unseen enemy, 1-37th FA is able to put the primary focus back on artillery



Soldiers with 1st Platoon, Battery C, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, pull security May 22 after entering into a mock village during a three-week exercise at Yakima Training Center in Central Washington State. The battalion, which is a 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division asset, is currently immersed in a brigade-wide approach to training called full-spectrum operations, which allows the entire brigade to practice tactics that encompass all forms of warfare, from conventional fighting to insurgency threats. The exercise has field artillerymen not only staying up on their cannon systems, but mounted and dismounted infantry techniques as well.

fundamentals that might otherwise leave with an older generation of Soldiers.

"The majority of the time our battalion has deployed it's been given a non-fire mission," Kuhlman said. "A lot of guys who have deployed several times have never really done artillery, so we're refocusing ourselves."

"As the guys who have been in 10 to 15 years leave, we're losing a lot of our core competencies," said Sgt. 1st Class Faataui Iuli, the platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon, B Batt., 1-37th FA.

Iuli's platoon conducted dismounted maneuver operations May 22 through a simulated village intended to mirror a general urban overseas environment, eventually apprehending a local with plans to emplace an IED – a task that new artillery Soldiers like Pvt. Guillermo Urrego might not have seen coming.

See Artillery on Page 26

2-3 Inf. Regt. prepares for

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

The rolling hills of Yakima Training Center can be seen in the distance from the rear hatch of an armored fighting Stryker vehicle. After several days of training in sunshine, the sky has shifted with rain soon on its way. In the foreground there is a ranger tab resting directly above the Arrowhead patch that Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment wear, many on both shoulders. Adjusting the sight picture reveals Cpt. Don Kanase, Bravo Company commander, who looks on as his fleet of Strykers files down a rugged dirt road toward a live-fire weapons range.



(Top) A Soldier with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment inspects his Stryker's M-2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun before starting a live fire range. The Strykers engaged multiple targets at varying ranges.

(Bottom) A Soldier with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment fires at silhouette targets as part of a close-quarters marksmanship range. Soldiers practiced firing in controlled pairs as they advanced on paper targets.



The Stryker crews conducted scenario-based exercises May 21 in which they were given certain amounts of time to engage various targets ranging up to 1000 meters in distance. The Strykers used two main remote weapon systems: the .50 caliber machine gun and the MK-19 automatic grenade launcher. The crews alternated, rattling off rounds downrange until the targets were destroyed.

“For my Stryker crews to be proficient on the most casualty-producing weapons in my company is extremely important,” Kanase said. “We have been non-stop training to get to that proficient level.”

Kanase departed the range in his Stryker and headed out to view his Soldiers who were concurrently training on a M-4 semi-automatic rifle range. Along with zeroing and qualifying with their weapon systems, the infantrymen practiced close-quarters marksmanship, where they advanced on targets and fired in controlled pairs.

or total warfare at YTC

For Pfc. Robert Frain Jr., rifleman, B Co., 2-3 Inf. Regt., this is just another day in the life of an infantryman, which starts at 5 a.m. and ends only when the training is complete. After qualifying expert by hitting 37 of 40 targets, Frain joined his fellow Soldiers in the short-range marksmanship drills involving turning and shooting, running and kneeling.

“I had fun doing the SRM,” said Frain, who was getting used to living outdoors and shooting in a different environment.

The infantrymen are working toward qualification on all weapon systems and proficiency at the platoon level. The training provides the Stryker platoons, which are a combination of light infantry and weapons platoons, preparation for 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division’s trip to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., slated for August.

“For the first time in Stryker history we’ll conduct full-spectrum operations,” said Kanase, “which focuses on training for total warfare.”

This type of training stresses the importance of Soldiers bringing all of their gear and equipment to the field without the opportunity to roll back to the forward operating base once the mission is completed, which was the case in the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq.

“When you initially go into a country, you don’t have anything,” Kanase said. “In a high-intensity conflict in full-spectrum operations, you don’t have that FOB.”

Around the clock, versatile training comes with the job of an infantryman, and the Soldiers of 2-3 Inf. Regt. have proven that throughout the ranges of Yakima.

As the sun sinks below the green mountains at Bravo “Blackhorse” Company’s base camp, around which Strykers and Soldiers provide 360 degrees of security, the infantrymen eat chow as the day winds down.

The captain, whose goal when enlisting as a private 13 years ago was to be a company commander, looks on at his Soldiers, who successfully qualified with their weapon systems.

“I have the luxury of seeing Soldiers develop,” Kanase said. “From the private to the brand new second lieutenant, I have the opportunity to see them become professional infantrymen.”

For the leaders of Bravo Company, the day was not over, as they met long into the night to plan upcoming missions. Once the briefing was concluded they each found a piece of real estate on the ground, unpacked their sleeping bags, and grabbed a few hours of sleep before the next day’s training commenced.



A Soldier with Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment checks his ammunition before going hot during the M-2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun exercise. Stryker crews were timed on conducting various scenerios on varios targets.

5-20 Inf. Regt. mortar men

Story and photos by
Spc. Hannah Frenchick
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

As four Soldiers await a radio call to fire their mortars down range, they stand in the back of a Stryker overlooking the hills of Yakima Training Center. Playing the game, hurry up and wait, the Soldiers are anxious to play with their weapons system. One Soldier begins humming a tune, and soon enough all four are singing a song, trying to keep motivated on a windy, rainy day.

The Soldiers of 3rd Squad, Mortar Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, live and work in the confines of

Spc. Clifford Woodward, an indirect fire infantryman, mortar platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 5th Battalion 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade 2nd Infantry Division, drops a mortar round into the weapons system during a fire coordination exercise at Yakima Training Center, May 25. The exercise depends on teamwork from the whole brigade down to the individual firing teams.



a Stryker vehicle during a brigade field training exercise at YTC, May 18-June 8.

“The past four days we’ve been doing a fire coordination exercise,” said Spc. Clifford Woodward, indirect fire infantryman. “It’s working together to make sure the mortars are on deck with our mortar system and talking to the fire support platoons making sure we are coordinated with them to get the job done.”

Teamwork plays an important role in full-spectrum operations, as well as within the three-man team it takes to run the mortar system.

“The gunner, assistant gunner and the ammo bearer all have to work in sync,”

said Pfc. Josh Dirrigle, indirect fire infantryman. “They all have to be able to communicate with each other, feel comfortable around each other and know how each other work. That comes into play during a fire mission, you know what’s going on with everyone.”

“If you don’t have teamwork, than you can’t work together,” said Dirrigle, the Raleigh, N.C., native. “You’d be fighting all the time.”

During the 3 years the Soldiers of 3 Gun have been together, they have become more than members of a squad, they have become a family.

“I don’t have family here in Washington, so these guys are my family,” said Spc. Andrew Richardson, indirect fire infantryman, a Richland Center, Wis., native. “I’m not around anybody, everyone is back home. They are my brothers.”

Knowing each other like brothers is a benefit for 3 Gun when it comes to performing their jobs.

“When you train with the same guys over and over you start to learn their habits,” said Woodward, an Interlachen, Fla., native. “It’s like a brother thing. You know exactly how they are going to act when something goes wrong, how they are going to react when something goes right. You know exactly when they need a little push to get that extra oomph in their step.”

For the platoon’s new guy, Spc. Christian Olivarez, a combat medic, a native of Victorville, Calif., the team accepted him with open arms into their Stryker and family.

“I’ve been with the mortars for about

work as a well oiled family

seven months,” said Olivarez. “As soon as I got attached with them they welcomed me in. As long as I’m taking care of them, they are taking care of me.”

The Soldiers of 3 Gun have become a well-oiled machine in the three years they have been together. They are able to work more effectively as a team by knowing what motivates each other and how each person reacts to different situations. Without teamwork and sense of family, the team members wouldn’t be able to pull together to perform their piece of the fire coordination exercise.

With the wind whipping across the faces of the singing Soldiers, they hear a radio call come in. The singing immediately stops and the members of 3 Gun jump into action, ready to load and fire a mortar round across the barren land of YTC.



Three Gun mortar team is made up of Pfc. Josh Dirrigle, indirect fire infantryman, Spc. Andrew Richardson, indirect fire infantryman, Spc. Clifford Woodward, indirect fire infantryman, and Spc. Christian Olivarez, combat medic, mortar platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 5th Battalion 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade 2nd Infantry Division. The team lives and works in the confines of a Stryker vehicle. The team has been together for three years and considers themselves a family.



Spc. Clifford Woodward, an indirect fire infantryman, mortar platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 5th Battalion 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade 2nd Infantry Division, and Spc. Andrew Richardson, an indirect fire infantryman, mortar platoon, HHC 5/20 INF, 3-2 SBCT, prepare their squad’s Stryker to shoot a mortar round during the fire coordination exercise at Yakima Training Center, May 25. The squad, 3 Gun, is made up of five Soldiers who lived, ate and slept in their Stryker during the brigade’s field training exercise.

1-14 Cav. Regt. are the eyes

Story and photos by
Spc. Ashley M. Outler
28th Public Affairs Detachment

Cavalry Scouts of 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, practice their artistic abilities as they provided details to paint a picture of the battlefield during a platoon live-fire exercise at Yakima Training Center on May 24.

“Reconnaissance is about letting everybody know what’s happening on the battlefield so that they know how to weigh the forces that fight us. We provide the details for them to be able to refine how they fight so that they can apply the appropriate amount of forces in the right places to stop the enemy,” said Cpt. Kyle S. Phillips, troop commander, Alpha troop, 1-14th Cav. 3-2 SBCT.

Pvt. Jaime M. Magana, dismount team, Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division and Sgt. Shaun C. Collins, team leader, A troop, 1-14th Cav. 3-2 SBCT, prepare to enter a building while clearing a village during a platoon reconnaissance exercise at Yakima Training Center on May 24, as part of the Arrowhead Brigade’s multi-echelon training event designed to prepare them to conduct full-spectrum operations at the National Training Center.



Cpt. Kyle S. Phillips, troop commander, Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, observes one of his platoons as they conduct a platoon reconnaissance exercise at Yakima Training Center on May 24, as part of the Arrowhead Brigade’s multi-echelon training event designed to prepare them to conduct full-spectrum operations at the National Training Center.



and ears of Arrowhead BDE

The LFX provided the scouts opportunity to incorporate and coordinate every moving piece of a reconnaissance mission to be certified to perform the missions in combat.

“The live-fire exercise was a culminating event for the platoon so that they can actually go into combat and coordinate fires with each other while staying on line and not getting into each others way,” said Phillips. “It’s about learning how to disperse targets, learning how to move as a team while training as you fight.”

The exercise was a culmination of individual, crew and squad training and qualifications that the scouts had been performing for several days.

“They’ve trained on the same type of operations that a scout platoon would conduct in a combat operation, conducting reconnaissance forward. (They’ve identified) terrain that they would report, and enemy contact which they report and engage if they had to,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph L. Miller, squadron command sergeant major, 1-14th Cav. 3-2 SBCT. “

The platoon had to transfer their report to upon completion of their mission to a scout platoon from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment 3-2 SBCT.

“Out here we get to work with our brother and sister units and see how we can really compliment each other. We haven’t had very many opportunities to work with the infantry units in the past and now we are really working off of them, and they are working off of us, and we can see how we can better work with each other in the future,” said Sgt. Shaun C. Collins, team leader, Alpha troop, 1-14th Cav. 3-2 SBCT.



Pvt. Jaime M. Magana, dismount team, Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division raises his weapon as he enters a building while clearing a village during a platoon reconnaissance exercise at Yakima Training Center on May 24, as part of the Arrowhead Brigade’s multi-echelon training event designed to prepare them to conduct full-spectrum operations at the National Training Center.

The training was conducted in support of the Arrowhead Brigades exercise designed to prepare them to perform full-spectrum operations at the National Training Center in hopes of becoming the first FSO certified Stryker Brigade. “Full-spectrum operations is a lost art, for the last ten years we’ve been doing nothing but counterinsurgency operations so today we are trying to instill

arts that were lost a long time ago, as in maneuvering in sections and maneuvering platoons gunnery, fire commands and basic Soldier skills,” said Miller.

The 1-14th Cav. training provided opportunity to perfect their piece of the brigade’s anticipated operational masterpiece.

296th BSB supports A

Story and photos by
Spc. Hannah Frenchick
20th Public Affairs Detachment

In preparation for the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., Soldiers of the 296th Brigade Support Battalion began setting up and running a brigade support area (BSA) on the vast land of Yakima Training Center during a field training exercise beginning May 15.

The 296th BSB supports the maneuverable battalions, who are located throughout YTC, with logistical, maintenance, and medical support.

During this field event, 296th BSB is preparing for NTC, said Maj. Steven Putthoff, executive officer, 296th BSB. NTC is different than it used to be. Now it's maneuvering against the enemy, rather than fighting on a FOB (forward operating base), everything is now mobile. We need to be able to provide our own security, while continuing on with our support missions.

The training the Soldiers of 296th BSB are receiving at YTC prepares them to set up a BSA in any environment and drive on with their mission to support

the Brigade.

"There is great teamwork here and its good to have company, battalion, brigade training events it gives us the opportunity before we go to NTC or even deploy to get the team to work together," said Capt. Jon Messenger, C Company commander, 296th BSB.

Each company in the BSB plays an intricate roll in supporting the many missions while training at YTC.

Headquarters, Headquarters Company is made up of administrative staff and cooks. HHC has four cooks preparing breakfast and dinner daily in a containerized kitchen for approximately 500 members of the BSB.

Having a hot meal is normal while in a garrison environment, but while in the field or deployed a hot meal is a luxury.

"After a few days of eating MRE's soldiers sometimes stop thinking about the mission and start thinking I'm hungry," said Spc. James Bradbury, head cook of the containerized kitchen, HHC 296th BSB. "We like to think it'd be difficult without hot food. "

Members of the BSB aren't the only ones receiving hot meals while in YTC.

The battalion has the capability of sending out the assault kitchen to the other units, said Bradbury, a Newburgh, N.Y. native. The assault kitchen is a smaller version of the containerized kitchen. Two soldiers are able to prepare food on the go and feed a company.

The refill on the move (ROM) is the first place convoys stop once reaching YTC. The fuel and water specialists of A Co, 296 BSB tops off each vehicle of the convoy with fuel and water to keep them on the move to their missions.

"Vehicles can't move without fuel and soldiers can't move without water," said Capt. Douglas Lafont, A Company commander, 296 BSB. "If it doesn't move, we don't fight."

The ROM pumps 6,000 gallons of fuel and 1,000 gallons of water a day to over 200 vehicles, said Lafont, a Homa, La., native.

B Company's main responsibility is the maintenance of Strykers and other equipment the brigade maintains during the field training exercise.

"Maintenance keeps the vehicles and people in the fight," said Sgt. 1st Class-Jody Witham, maintenance supervisor, B Company, 296th BSB. "We are a Stryker brigade. We spend a lot of time making sure they stay in the fight as much as possible. We have to keep them moving to fight."

To keep the maneuverable battalions moving the maintenance company uses

The 296th Brigade Support Battalion set up the brigade support area in Yakima Training Center, May 18. The 296th BSB provides support to the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry division with logistical, maintenance, and medical support.



Arrowhead at Yakima

an area support concept.

“If battalions have issues they call us and we launch assets to maintain or recover their equipment,” said Witham, a Bluefield, Va., native. “We have vehicle maintenance, generator support and we have Soldiers embedded with all the maneuver battalions who coordinate and tell us what they need through our battalion element. Our guys here at the BSA turn that plan into a reality.”

The BSA also houses a Role-2 medical treatment center ran by C Company.

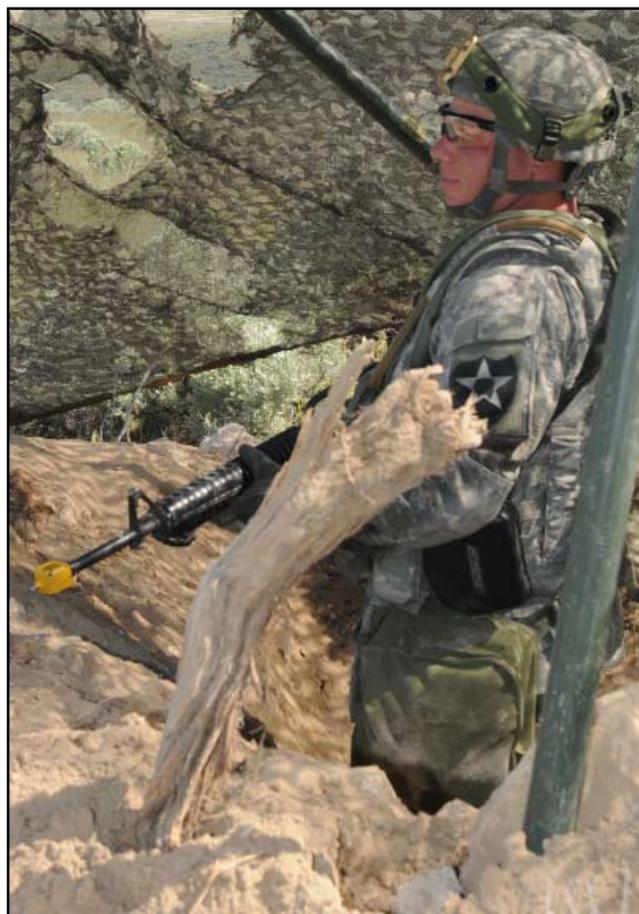
“A Role-2 medical treatment center includes a traditional maneuverable aid station, a patient holding area, and multiple providers,” said Messenger. “We also have ancillary services such as lab, x-ray, physical therapy, dental, behavioral health and preventive medicine.”

“This Brigade FTX is really the first opportunity we’ve had to set up the Role-2 tents completely and really figure out how we are going to run it at NTC,” said Messenger. “Coming out here and doing the patient care without the nice buildings, like you have in Iraq or Afghanistan, but with the actual tents we are issued and doing it in an austere environment, has been beneficial in preparing us for NTC.”

While maneuverable battalions of 3-2 train on their specific missions, the Soldiers of the 296th BSB continue to support them on a day to day basis, providing them with supplies, food, maintenance and medical treatment, everything they need to successfully complete their missions.



(Above) Spc. James Bradbury, noncommissioned officer in charge of the containerized kitchen, Headquarters Headquarters Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, adds seasoning to a pot of mixed vegetables while preparing dinner for approximately 500 Soldiers of the BSB at Yakima Training Center, May 20. Bradbury, a Newburgh, N.Y., native is one of four Soldiers working out of the containerized kitchen on the brigade support area.



(Left) Cpl. Skylar Ramsey, wheeled vehicle mechanic, B Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, pulls security around the brigade support area (BSA) during a field training exercise at Yakima Training Center, May 20. The 296th BSB must be able to provide their own security as well as continue supporting the 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

1-23 Inf. Regt. take on grv

Story and photos by
Sgt. Austan R. Owen
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The wind whipped through the hillside with a bone-chilling cold, blowing dust in the faces of the Soldiers from 2nd Platoon Blackhawk Company as they received the operation order for their upcoming mission. 2nd Platoon would be making a 20- to 25-kilometer dismounted movement over rocky, uneven mountainous terrain to assault several objectives. With the operation slated to begin within a few hours the platoon was given the order to get what rest they could while still pulling guard on their position.

The call came in over the radios at around 1 a.m. that 2nd Platoon would be moving out soon. The unit sprang to life as the Stryker fighting vehicles were fired up and equipment checks were performed. Preparations for the upcoming mission were completed as the platoon drew their ammo and stripped their packs down to just the

necessary equipment. The sun broke over the horizon as 2nd Platoon started their movement at the designated starting point carrying water, food, ammo, weapons and the other necessary tools to complete their mission.

All the pain staking preparation was just the beginning for platoon evaluations, which include a dismounted movement to assault an objective, followed by mounted movement and maneuvering to clear an urban assault course.

First Battalion, 23 Regiment, which is part of 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, conducted platoon evaluations between 23 and 24 May at Yakima Training Center in preparation for their National Training Center trip in August.

“The platoon evaluations are where they move at least 20 kilometers over uneven and mountainous terrain, hitting at least three objectives,” said Capt. Benjamin Meier, commander

of Blackhawk Co., 1st Bn. 23rd Regiment, with 3rd B 2nd Inf. Div. “On their return they will mount up in the Stryker fighting vehicle and conduct a two hour mounted movement where they will have to conduct an assault at the urban assault course.”

During the movement the platoons will have to conduct vehicle recovery, casualty evacuation and complete their mission said Meier.

“This is empowering, allowing the individual Soldiers and noncommissioned officers to choose their route and terrain to go over,” said Lt. Col. Wilson Rutherford, commander of 1st Bn. 23rd Inf. Regt..

The overall movement with no rest and a high operation tempo is an important step in “testing their ability to function across a broad spectrum of tasks,” said Meier.

In preparation for the platoon evaluations Blackhawk Co. went through weeks of training prior to their field training exercise.

Spc. Thomas Babler, the medium machine gunner for 2nd platoon, explained that the platoon had been pushing themselves a lot more using dismounted movements. Working more dismounted and less with the Stryker gives the team a new aspect on fighting.

“They have been working really hard at their dismounted movement,” said Meier, “including 12- and 18-mile ruck marches with heavy weight.”

The Soldiers ruck marched across terrain that is barely navigable and brutal on the body, pushing pain and endurance.



Soldiers assigned to 2nd Platoon Blackhawk Company, 1st Battalion, 23 Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade 2nd, Infantry Division move down a hill at Yakima Training Center, Wash., May 25 as they prepare to assault an objective several miles away during platoon evaluations.

Training mission at Yakima

ance thresholds to the limit.

“The best way to get around these little pains and stuff is to stop thinking about yourself and start thinking about the mission or the guys,” said Sgt. Alexander Brown a squad leader in 2nd Platoon.

Rutherford explained how stressful the movement would be and the pride that the soldiers would have upon completion.

Once they finish “They realized that they did do it and can do it, and can push themselves to do it,” said Rutherford “You see a lot of smiles once they get done.”

After about eight miles of marching across a wilderness of, ankle breaking rocks and scrub brush, 2nd Platoon reached their first objective. The enemy compound was atop a hill with security on all sides. Tired and low on water, 2nd Platoon assaulted the compound breaching the wire fortifications. They searched the enemy for intelligence and the area for weapons caches. Only half way through the dismounted portion of the overall mission they still had to assault two more objectives and continue with a mounted movement to the urban assault course. With no rest and several missions to complete the next 24 hours would test the very limits of the soldiers.

First Lt. Daniel Bordeaux, platoon leader of 2nd Platoon, Blackhawk Company, 1st Battalion, 23 Infantry Regiment, an element of 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division takes a compass reading May 25 to determine the direction of movement while on a 20- to 25-kilometer cross-country ruck march during platoon evaluations at Yakima Training Center, Wash. During the ruck march, 2nd platoon traversed uneven rocky terrain, crossing several hills and valleys in order to assault various objectives.



From foreground to background: Pfc. Jacob Boggess, Spc. Thomas Babler and Sgt. Alexander Brown with 2nd Platoon Blackhawk Company, 1st Battalion, 23 Infantry Regiment, with 3rd Brigade 2nd, Infantry Division lay down suppressive fire while an assault team takes an objective nearby during platoon evaluations at Yakima Training Center, Wash. May 25.



Last line of defense: vital artillery chart operations

Story and photos by
Sgt. Christopher M. Gaylord
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

In today's Army, the range and direction of artillery rounds are calculated almost solely by computer systems. But the long-outdated method isn't going anywhere.

In the event those high-tech computer systems fail, range and direction fall into human hands - into the hands of a chart operator.

In a fire direction control section, it's a chart operator's job to ensure the accuracy of a round's impact when a unit is forced to default back to the "old school" way of doing things.

"It's kind of stone age stuff," says Pfc. Bronson Koeber, a chart operator with 2nd Platoon, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, and a Keokuk, Iowa, native. "But if a computer system should happen to fail, or a generator fails, it goes back to the old way of doing the chart part."

"I'm the fallback guy," he adds.

Koeber is currently sharpening his skills at Yakima Training Center in Central Washington State. He, his battalion and all other assets of their parent brigade, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd



Koeber double checks the grid as he plots the coordinates for a fire mission. Koeber follows every mission by plotting targets on the chart as a back up to today's modern computers.

Infantry Division, will be engaged until June 7 in three weeks of full-spectrum operations, a new approach to training that encompasses all forms of warfare and borrows from experience gained by the Army in both times of peace and deployments over the past several decades.

Koeber's section, which communicates to cannon crews the exact aim the crews must take to eliminate a target based off information given to it by an on-ground observer, is packed into a small shelter on the plains of Yakima that's attached to the back of a specifically-designed

Humvee.

The section receives a series of coordinates that indicate the location of a sighted enemy.

Like a flash and meaning serious business, Koeber takes up a long, steel L-shaped ruler and huddles down with it over a table. Atop the table sits a large and laminated piece of white paper with grid lines - like a map with no countries.

Immediately Koeber begins plotting the coordinates on the paper, shifting between adjacent sides of the table and turning the ruler in one direction and the next.

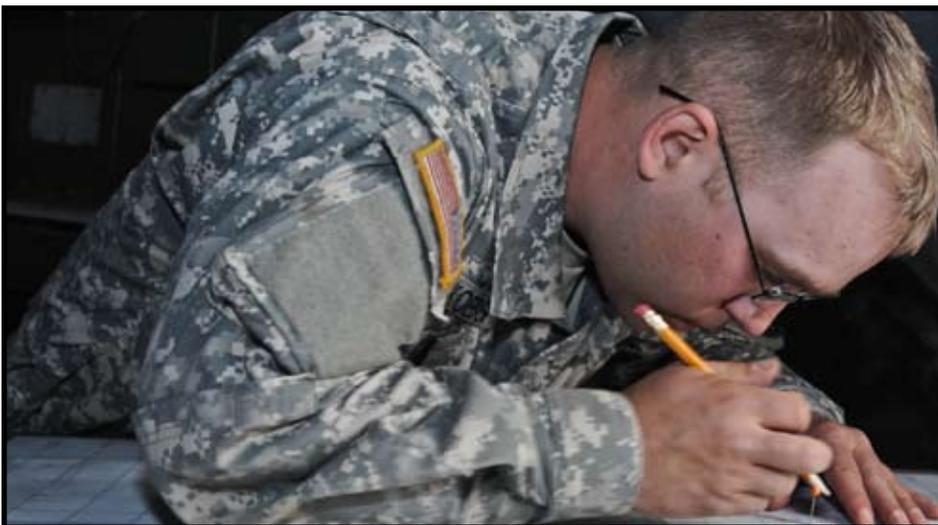
He's plotting with pinpoint accuracy - literally.

"You have to be within 30 meters," he warns.

"And just the shaft of the pin used to plot takes up 30 meters," he adds, with the end of the small pin squeezed between his finger and thumb. "So, you have to be very precise."

Within less than a minute, Koeber can tell his section where the gun, an M777 Lightweight Howitzer Cannon System, should fire.

Even considering Koeber's speed, the computer system, called the Army Field Artillery Tactical Data System, is faster.



Pfc. Bronson Koeber, a chart operator with 2nd Platoon, Battery A, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, plots coordinates on a large chart of paper with grid lines and a long steel ruler May 21 at Yakima Training Center in Central Washington State during three weeks of full-spectrum training for 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. It's Koeber's job to determine the range and direction of artillery rounds in the event that today's computer systems should fail.

See Chart on Page 26

296th Feeding the force

Story and photos by
Spc. Ashley M. Outler
28th Public Affairs Detachment

It takes effort and cooperation from every piece of the pie for Soldiers to be successful in combat.

Field feeding teams from 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, trained on their contribution to the mission by providing fresh, hot meals to Soldiers during the brigade's multi-echelon field training exercise at Yakima Training Center May 15- June 8.

"Our main focus is making sure that everyone is fed. Nobody deserves to be served food not worth eating because it's a moral booster to be served hot meals. It's great seeing people come in off the field excited to eat," said Spc. James J. Bradburg, food service specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

Their goal was to not only sustain Soldiers with hot meals for breakfast and dinner, but to also meet the "Arrowhead" brigade's training goals of achieving full spectrum operations and becoming self sufficient.

"In going back to full spectrum operations it means that we have to go back to the basics, learn how to dig foxholes and secure ourselves. As a support unit we are used to being guarded so that we can concentrate on field feeding," said Cpt. Frederico C. De Vera, commander, HHC, 296th BSB, 3-2 Inf.

The six field feeding teams supporting the exercise prepared and served food using containerized kitchens and assault kitchens, which are mobile, field kitchen's that feed about 550 Soldiers in one meal.

"Being out here we get to use the (containerized kitchens) and we get to use all the equipment and skills that we have and it helps us to get used to working in this kind of environment," said De Vera.

Being understaffed, the field feeding teams had to adapt quickly to feeding such large amounts of Soldiers with such little support, said De Vera, who considered it a great learning process.

"Training events like this help to identify our shortfalls, especially being under-manned because we have to do the same job with less personnel, and it only makes us a stronger team and more prepared for anything," said De Vera whose four Soldier team fed about 500 Soldiers a meal.

Sending personnel to pull security, dig foxholes and perform other tasks further shortened their staff. It also tested their soldiering skills.

"Being self-sufficient and knowing those skills goes back to our first days

in the Army, but once you get into your job you get into your own comfort zone. You think, 'I don't have to do that because I have infantry to watch my back,'" said Bradburg. "Being out here we are performing to the standard and now we have two standards to train to, one being our day-to-day job and now infantry tasks as well."

Instead of occupying already established areas, they had to set up their kitchens, tents and sanitation areas on their own but they couldn't have done it without help.

"Honestly without the support from everyone else we couldn't do our jobs, we need fuel just as much as they need food. Everyone is doing their part so that we can all accomplish our mission here and we can't be successful without each piece," said Bradburg.

The training gives them all the opportunity to learn, experience and train cohesively with each other to achieve mission success and to learn to appreciate every piece that contributes.



Spc. Van R. Casis, food service specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division cheerfully loads a Soldiers plate with ham during breakfast at Yakima Training Center, May 20, during the brigade's multi-echelon field training exercise.

3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Te

Story and photos by
Spc. Ashley M. Outler
28th Public Affairs Detachment

Commanders of 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division compose a symphony of rockets, mortars, artillery and bullets during a fire coordination exercise at Yakima Training Center on May 22.

“It’s kind of a ballet of fire and steel, coordinating the different assets to ultimately help out those guys on the ground getting shot at by the bad guys,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jaime C. Spencer, platoon sergeant of mortar platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3-2 SBCT.

The purpose of the FCX was to provide a live-fire training environment for commanders to practice the necessary steps of working multiple fire support elements safely and concisely.

“What an FCX does is teach leaders how to coordinate all the fires that are available to them on a modern battlefield into one central location. You have to understand how all of those systems work in the same space in order to get those effects into one single location,” said Col. Charles R. Webster, brigade commander, 3-2 SBCT.

The exercise included fire support from 155mm Mortar systems, M-777 Howitzer



Cpt. Andrew Figer, commander, Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, calls for fire during a fire coordination exercise designed to train senior leaders on proper procedures for requesting and directing fire support at Yakima Training Center, May 22. The FCX was conducted as part of the brigade’s field training exercise that was designed to prepare the brigade to perform full spectrum operations for certification at the National Training Center

Artillery Cannons, High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and Air Force and Army aviation.

“The more that I work with them the more confident I am in how quickly they can get rounds to the target and we’ve had a lot of fun seeing the artillery shooting and the mortars and the HIMARs and all that stuff,” said Cpt. Andrew Figer, troop commander, B Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3-2 SBCT.

The intent of it was to run several missions under the authority of different commanders for a span of 3-4 days. They were required to determine what sort of support-by-fire to request based on the reports they received, give direction to each support element, and to ensure that the elements were not firing on each other.

“What we are doing is training the leadership so that we are comfortable using the



Soldiers of the 17th Fires Brigade fire from high mobility artillery rocket systems during a fire coordination exercise designed to train senior leaders on proper procedures for requesting and directing fire support at Yakima Training Center, May 22. The FCX was conducted as part of the brigade’s field training exercise that was designed to prepare the brigade to perform full spectrum operations for certification at the National Training Center.

Team's fire coordination exercise

radios and talking with these people and coordinating all these different moving pieces," said Figer. "It's really important for us because we don't do it on a daily basis and when we deploy and go into combat we need to understand how to do this. The first time you do something you don't want it to be in combat that's the reason why we train.

It also provided each support element opportunity to train on proficiency in their mis-

sion and equipment by timely and accurately responding to requests and providing support-by-fire.

"Ultimately it goes to those guys on the ground, those Soldiers sitting there in contact, it's a good feeling to know to know that you are able to support those guys and help them out when they really need indirect fire the most," said Spencer.

The training was conducted in support of the Arrowhead



Cpt. Andrew Figer, commander, Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, explains his plan (using a rock drill) in the coordination exercise designed to train senior leaders on proper procedures for requesting and directing fire support at Yakima Training Center, May 22. Rock drills are an ancient and effective way to rehearse military scenarios before putting them into action.

Brigade's exercise designed to prepare them to perform full-spectrum operations at the National Training Center in hopes of becoming the first FSO certified Stryker Brigade.

The FCX provided a realistic, earth-rattling experience for each participant and proved how crucial cooperation and coordination from different war-fighting elements are to operational success.

"It's a very important opportunity for them to get back into and understand how to fight on the full spectrum of our war fighting," said Webster.



Kiowa helicopters from 4-6 Air Cavalry fly over the mock battlefield as scout weapon teams. The scout weapon teams were just one of the many forms of fire support that commanders could call upon to engage the enemy.

1st Squadron 14th Cavalry Re

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg
3rd SBCT, 2nd ID Public Affairs Office

The fog was thick and heavy the morning of 1st Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team 2nd Infantry Division's 15 mile road march. The blades of two CH-47 Chinook helicopters churned the chill air reminding the Soldiers of 1-14 Cavalry they were alive. They waited patiently on the flight line ready for the Chinook's crew chiefs, who would signal it was time to load the bird.

Each troop of 1-14 CAV would be air inserted and march independently relying on their endurance, determination and Soldier skills on Joint Base Lewis McChord March 25. The Soldier of 1-14 CAV have been preparing for this day, and each Soldier knew what was expected of them.

We have been working and conditioning foot marches over the last six months,



PFC James Doria (Left) from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop 1st Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment cuts mole skin for PFC Kyle Wilkens (Right) at checkpoint three on Joint Base Lewis Mchord 25 March, 2011. Checkpoint three was the first of two planned foot evaluation stations.

said Carlos A. Palma, 1st Sgt. of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop 1st Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment.

Once the Soldiers of 1-14 CAV were loaded aboard their respective Chinooks, they enjoyed a short ride to Rogers Drop Zone. There the Chinooks landed and the Soldiers of 1-14 CAV rapidly moved down the rear ramp, and took up positions in the tall grass around the bird providing security. Once the Chinooks were airborne the Soldiers gathered together and began the 15 mile trek back to their battalion's headquarters.

Every one of the Soldiers was looking forward to the ride in the Chinook, which just brought forth a lot more excitement to the operation, said Palma. It is the first air insertion that the squadron has done since we got back (from Iraq).

Troop commanders held maps and radio telephone operators conducted radio checks as each troop independently made their way through checkpoints one and two. At checkpoint three the troops stopped to check their feet.



SGT Michael Wood from A Troop 1st Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment pulls security as his fellow Soldiers rest at checkpoint four on Joint Base Lewis Mchord 25 March, 2011. The checkpoints allowed Soldiers to replenish their water supplies and check their feet for soars.

giment marches with family



Headquarters and Headquarters Troop 1st Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment marches towards checkpoint three and the eight mile marker of their 15 mile road march on Joint Base Lewis Mchord 25 March, 2011. The entire 1-14 CAV was air inserted at Rogers drop zone one troop at a time by a CH-47 Chinook from Gray field.

Moleskin was passed back and forth as Soldiers changed their socks and tended to any blisters or soars their feet may have incurred.

Soon after each troop was back on their feet marching towards checkpoint four and five. Once the troops reached checkpoint five the Soldiers stopped for a much needed rest and to check their feet again. Medics tended to Soldiers feet, while Soldiers filled their canteens and pulled security.

The air had become warmer throughout the morning, but was still cool with a mild breeze. You could see on the Soldier's faces they were tired, but spirits were high as they knew they were past the halfway point and the end was near.

Checkpoint six was only a few miles away and about a mile after that they reached checkpoint seven. Checkpoint

seven was a stopping point where the Soldier's family members could meet them. The battalion's Family Readiness Group notified family members that a Soldier's family was invited to march the last mile with their Soldier.

"We got to role in a lot of different flavors to the training today," said Sgt. Maj. Sean C. Mayo, the operations Sergeant Major for 1st Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment. "We got an air movement, which we can't always get, we got some great physical training, we got some tactical training and then we got to involve our families in it."

Many families came out to support their Soldier, and many Soldiers wore happy expressions when they saw their family waiting for them at Scouts out Gate. Wives, kids and even dogs were there waiting for their Soldier to come into view. They had a short rest just inside the gate with their families, and then

they were on their feet once more.

"Gives us a firsthand look at some of the things they do on a daily bases," said Nisha N. Taylor from Tacoma, Wash., fiancé of Spc. David W. Noble from B Troop 1-14 CAV.

It bring a sense of pride to the dependent when she sees her Soldier come in after a 15 mile foot march, said Palma.

This last mile was the happiest mile of them all. Some were happy to see their families during the work day, some were happy a warm meal was waiting for them at the finish line and some were happy they had just one mile left to go. Whichever of the three it might have been the moral was high and the heads even higher as each troop crossed Rose Field and stopped for the last time at 1-14 CAV Battalion's Headquarters.

Arrowhead



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg

On Point!



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ashley M. Outler



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ashley M. Outler

Arrowhead



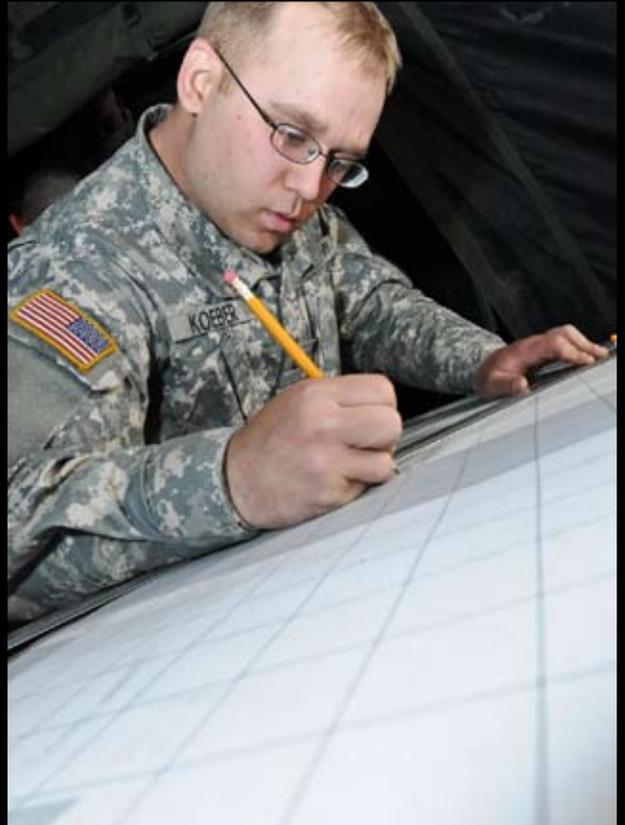
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Corey M. Ray



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Christopher M. Gaylord



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg

at Yakima



U.S. Army photo



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Austan R. Owen



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ashley M. Outler

Arrowhead



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Hallock



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Hallock



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Hallock

ed at NTC



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U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Hallock



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U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg

Chargers destroy IED cache

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

Dust from a desert road gets kicked up into the air. Through the cloud emerges a Stryker armored fighting vehicle, headed into the mountainous region of the California desert. Soldiers from Charger Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, are inside with full magazines loaded, ready to achieve their day's mission. The sun beat down through the top hatches upon their faces.

"If you see a lake, tell him to pull over," said Pvt. Corey Teed, a saw gunner from 3rd Platoon, C Company, as sweat poured down from his helmet to his eyes.

The squad wasn't headed for a swim though. They were headed straight for



First Lt. William Ryan, 3rd platoon leader, Charger Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, calls in over the radio for the enemy's position in the Mojave Desert at the National Training Center Aug. 14. Intelligence provided the company with the location of an improvised explosive device cache in a cave complex in the mountains.



First Lt. William Ryan, 3rd platoon leader, Charger Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, scouts the enemy's position in the Mojave Desert at the National Training Center Aug. 14. Intelligence provided the company with the location of an improvised explosive device cache in a cave complex in the mountains

the enemy, hidden deep in a cave in the mountains at the National Training Center Aug. 14.

"Today's mission was to search and attack," said 1st Lt. William Ryan, 3rd platoon leader, C Company. "We had intel saying there was an enemy IED cache sight."

Roadside bombs threaten the local citizens and these missions are in support of village stability operations, said Spc. Jason Wilson, radiotelephone operator.

The Stryker vehicle came to a halt at the base of the mountain. As the back hatch lowered, thoughts of hometowns and cool lakes shifted from their focus. Prior to engaging, the soldiers had to positively identify the enemy.

"Relay the enemy's position," yelled Ryan over the radio, as he and his

in cave complex at NTC



Sgt. Kellen Archer, 3rd platoon weapons squad leader, Charger Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, lays down suppressive fire from a M240 machine gun in the Mojave Desert at the National Training Center Aug. 14. Intelligence provided the company with the location of an improvised explosive device cache in a cave complex in the mountains.

soldiers sprawled for cover behind a ridge.

Positive identification of three enemy personnel carrying small arms came over the radio.

With confirmation from Ryan, each squad advanced toward the cave complex, navigating the desert terrain in bounding movements. One soldier lays down heavy machinegun fire, while the other rushes closer to the enemy's position.

"We had a main assaulting force that moved in on the cave," said Wilson, who coordinated the platoon's movement by radio.

"My job is to provide communications to the platoon leader," said Wilson. "People's lives depend on communication."

Squads charged in on the cave in rapid succession.

"We closed in and destroyed the enemy," said Wilson.

Soldiers entered the opening of the cave that had a sign that read: ENTER AT OWN RISK. No enemies were hidden within, just bats zooming around in the dark.

They found small arms and mortar tubes on the killed in action.

"It was a coordinated effort that led to success," said Wilson.

Wilson used the handheld inter-agency identification detection equipment to scan the KIA's eyes and fingerprints to enter them into the database. This process helps track the movements of the enemy and confirm their movement patterns.

With the IED cache destroyed and the intelligence collected, the soldiers of Charger Company rucked back to their Stryker vehicles. Although the only lake on the way back to the forward operating base would be a mirage, the spirits remained high after the successful mission.

3-2 SBCT transport Strykers to NTC

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

The Stryker armored fighting vehicle is nearly 20 tons of machinery, including eight wheels and automatic fire power, all at the disposal of the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

Transporting these rolling giants of destruction from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., to the National Training Center required the unification of commanders, non-commissioned officers, and junior enlisted soldiers to successfully complete the mission.

“The junior enlisted guys are the ones making this push happen,” said Staff Sgt. Joseph Schaffner, a squad leader from Blackhawk Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3-2 SBCT and native of Canby, Oregon. “They’re pretty much the heart of it. They’re physically fit, they’re mentally fit, and they’re ready for the challenge.”

The Arrowhead team loaded over 300 Strykers onto trains in Washington state three weeks prior to personnel movement on Aug. 4. They were transported by rail to Yermo, Calif., about an hour drive from NTC.

A logistical operation of this magnitude can only run smoothly like a train on its rails for so long. While the vehicles arrived in Yermo, the keys to the locks securing them did not.

This was a minor setback in the beginning of an approximately month-long training exercise. Bolt cutters were busted out, locks were cut, and the convoy was on their way, transporting 30 to 40 vehicles at a time, said Staff Sgt. Jon Reiser, a rifle squad leader from Blackhorse Company.

“Although there have been challenges,
30



A row of Stryker armored fighting vehicles line the California desert ground at the National Training Center, Aug. 6. More than 300 Strykers were transported from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., to NTC for the approximately month long training exercise in the California desert.

like with any deployment, that everybody’s seen, we have put the right people in the right places to overcome those challenges,” said Maj. Robert D. Halvorson, brigade executive officer, 3-2 SBCT.

Once the Stryker vehicles arrived at NTC, soldiers performed preventative maintenance checks and services to ensure the vehicles were mechanically sound. They were also prepped for the crew system to be installed which blocks command detonations [improvised explosive device] that are activated by radio frequencies, said Reiser.

Arrowhead soldiers worked to get their Stryker vehicle geared up for missions in the California desert.

“This is great terrain for the upcoming deployment,” said Schaffner. “This is really going to give the guys a great idea on what to expect in Afghanistan.”

For Pfc. David Bellen, a saw gunner

from Blackhawk Company, and many Soldiers new to the brigade, this is their first rotation at NTC. Bellen, a native of Vancouver, Wash., said he is looking forward to interacting with Afghan role players.

“My goal is to have them treat this like we’re actually in combat,” said Schaffner. “That way they’re prepared for the upcoming deployment which is just around the corner.”

Schaffner attributes the successes of the Arrowhead team to the close working relationship between officers and NCOs.

“The dissemination of information getting put out is what makes the operation go real smooth,” said Schaffner.

Now that the Stryker vehicles have been successfully transported over a 1,000 miles to NTC and equipment installed, the soldiers of the Arrowhead Brigade are ready to tear the desert up.

Arrowhead soldiers receive spiritual guidance at NTC

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

For some Arrowhead soldiers of the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, attending religious services creates a fresh start to a new week in the Mojave Desert at the National Training Center in southern California.

The isolation of the rugged terrain day in and day out, sunrise and sunset, can develop an atmosphere to what Maj. Edward Choi, brigade chaplain, 3-2 SBCT, describes as similar to Groundhog Day.

To provide soldiers with something new and different to look forward to each week, chaplains conduct spiritual services, provide a listening ear, and give words of encouragement to them and their families, which enhances soldier's spiritual fitness, said Choi.

Soldiers have the opportunity to attend religious services, where they can pray and mediate about not only their place in their units, but also their place in life, said Choi, who draws his inspiration for his service from the Arrowhead team.

"The unit ministry team is a very key component to the soldier as far as getting them that motivation and helping that soldier through whatever crisis they have," said Sgt. Richard Wallace, brigade chaplain's assistant, 3-2 SBCT.

To triumph over some of the frustrations stemming from the harsh training at NTC, Pfc. Marlen Redd, combat medic, 296th Brigade Support Battalion, 3-2 SBCT, said she attends spiritual services to provide relief from her busy schedule.

"It's just a happy and peaceful feeling, and I do enjoy that," said Redd, a native of Decatur, Ill., and who recently graduated advanced individual training



Chaplains and chaplains' assistants from the 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, sing a gospel song to Arrowhead soldiers at the National Training Center, Calif., Aug. 7. To provide soldiers with something new and different to look forward to each week, chaplains conduct spiritual services, provide a ministry presence, and give words of encouragement to them and their families, which enhances soldiers' spiritual fitness.

at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

"I think it's important for chaplains to be able to relate to young soldiers," said Choi. "We chaplains are a little bit older and a different kind of generation, but able to speak the same language."

The chaplain compared Captain America to Arrowhead soldiers and what strengthens them during difficult times, whether at NTC or downrange. What sustained him was not his physical ability, said Choi, but rather what was inside of him.

"What sustains a soldier in combat is their spirit," said Choi. "Spirituality is in the core of the soldier; it's in the heart of the soldier."

Gen. George C. Marshall, former Secretary of State, once said, "It is not enough to fight. It is the spirit which we bring to the fight that that decides the issue. It is morale that wins the victory."

The chaplain referred to the general's sentiment to reinforce the importance of spirituality in comprehensive soldier fitness, which encompasses the five

dimensions of strength: physical, emotional, social, family, and spiritual.

The motivated soldiers of the Arrowhead brigade will draw upon one another's strength as they gear up for their training exercise in the mountainous terrain of NTC.



Maj. Edward Choi, brigade chaplain, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, sings gospel songs during his religious service at the National Training Center Aug. 7. To provide soldiers with something new and different to look forward to each week, chaplains conduct spiritual services, provide a ministry presence, and give words of encouragement to them and their families, which enhances soldiers' spiritual fitness.

Charger Company soldier

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

The infantrymen of 1st platoon, Charger Company arrived in the village of Bolan at the National Training Center here, Aug. 20. Bolan is a small urban center whose school was bombed and remains non-functional. It lacks medical supplies, has no organized fire service, and no internal water supply.

Charger Company commander Capt. Dan Ferriter, platoon leader 2nd Lt. Matt Horine, and platoon sergeant Sgt. 1st. Class Rudy Parreno met with the leaders of Bolan to discuss these problems and to establish a relationship to help the Afghan citizens.



“We are here for this village and the people,” said Parreno during the key leader engagement involving the vil-

Pvt. Joshua Jones, a Woodlands, Texas native and squad automatic weapon gunner from 1st Platoon, Charger Company commander, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, pulls roadside security in the village of Bolan at the National Training Center Aug. 20. Soldiers from 1st Platoon moved into the village of Bolan to establish a relationship with the local population and to provide security.



Pvt. Christopher Tassi, a rifleman from 1st Platoon, Charger Company commander, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, pulls rooftop security in the village of Bolan at the National Training Center Aug. 20. Soldiers from 1st Platoon moved into the village of Bolan to establish a relationship with the local population and to provide security.

lage elder, the chief of police, and the mayor of Bolan.

The leaders discussed the security issues of the village and agreed upon providing four checkpoints at the north, south, east, and west ends of the village. Coalition Forces and the Afghan local police guard the checkpoints, with Stryker armored fighting vehicles as backup.

“The security of the town is the most important thing,” said Ferriter during the meeting. “Together, I think we can make this happen.”

Charger Company has been conducting village stability operations. Coalition forces train the ALP in basic rifle marksmanship, personnel and vehicle searches, and how to engage the enemy. The medics combine forces and share supplies.

Soldiers move into 'Taj Bolan'



Pvt. Skye Martin, a native of Albuquerque, New Mexico and a squad automatic weapon gunner from 1st Platoon, Charger Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, takes aim with his M249 machinegun at the National Training Center Aug. 20. Soldiers from 1st Platoon moved into the village of Bolan to establish a relationship with the local population and to provide security.

“The goal of VSO is Afghan solutions to Afghan problems,” said Horine, a Kingwood, Texas native.

To assist with these problems and to establish a presence within the community, soldiers moved into a vacant house in the center of the village. With Bolan’s head figure’s permission, Charger Company set up 24-hour security from the rooftop and conducted joint patrols through the village.

The soldiers quickly occupied the three-story building and set up a control point on the first floor to oversee the operation. Parreno, a San Jose, Calif., native, calls their new home the “Taj Bolan.”

With security established at four-points of the village and the rooftop of their centralized home, the soldiers began to interact with the locals.

“It’s good to be able to finally interact with the local community again,” said Spc. Steve Brown, vehicle commander, 1st platoon, Charger Company, who has deployed to Iraq twice. “My first tour was great. I got to see a real change in the local community.”

Brown, a Hoschton, Ga., native, said the markets were empty when he first arrived in Iraq, much like the situation in Bolan. After a few months of their presence in Iraq, the markets were crowded, he said.

“We are trying to help get this village back on its feet,” said Brown. “It’s quite possibly the most rewarding feeling to be able to watch as a local community gets better.”

That night, Horine attended a dinner with the village elders. They welcomed

him inside and gathered around the table to enjoy a traditional Afghan meal. “Now that we share the same food, we are brothers,” said one elder in a toast to the newly formed relationship.

From across the table came news from the radio that a high-valued insurgent had been captured trying to enter Bolan. It was welcomed news at the dinner table.

“I just want this place to be safe,” said Parreno.

After the first day in Bolan, Charger Company has successfully integrated themselves into the village. The guys camped out on the rooftop next to their fellow infantrymen, who were on guard.

Forward Observers conduct fire missions at NTC

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

Operation Baton Rouge: a sniper fires down from a rooftop on Staff Sgt. David J. Castillo and his team in Iraq. Comprised of infantrymen and forward observers, the team found themselves bogged down by the sniper four blocks into their patrol. After failing to receive air support, the team had a nearby tank blast the sniper's position. Whatever the circumstances are, forward observers neutralize the threat by calling in for fire support.

Castillo, a fire support trainer

with Ops Group Sidewinders at Fort Irwin, now trains Soldiers in fire mission tactics at the National Training Center.

"We're training the fire supporters how to properly utilize fire markers and how to adjust fire," said Castillo.

Forward observers from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, conducted fire missions at NTC Aug. 12.

The Soldiers observed potential enemy threats using lightweight laser designator range fire. This equipment uses thermal optics, which allow the observers to pinpoint their target by shooting

a laser. Air support can identify the coordinates of the laser and rain in fire support.

The objective of fire missions is to identify threats of indirect and direct fire. Sniper fire, ambushes on patrol, and tree-line fire are common threats that forward observers must quickly identify. Upon acquiring accurate target position, forward observers call for artillery and mortar fire to neutralize the threat.

Sgt. Matthew J. Niemann, a forward observer from Charlie Company, 2-3 IN, set the scenario for a typical fire mission while out on patrol.

"We're walking down the road. We receive sniper fire from a building. We're unable to eliminate the sniper. We call in mortars to take out that building."

Forward observers must be proficient in both infantry and artillery tactics to successfully complete their mission. Whether patrolling through villages or securing a forward operating base, they provide timely intelligence to their fire support.

"We're Infantrymen on steroids," said Niemann.

Niemann and his fire support team called in fire support on targets around 300 meters away from their position high on the mountainside. The blast echoed out seconds after the flash of the fire.

Fire mission training is designed for Soldiers to hone in on the basics and to become proficient with the technology.

"This shows observers what effects they can expect to see when they call a fire mission," said Capt. Christopher M. Cook, fire support officer from 2-3 IN.

Cook said the fire missions conducted at NTC translate into village stability operations in Afghanistan. These operations involve securing safe houses and villages from Taliban attacks.

"This is about neutralizing insurgency," said Cook.



Sgt. Matthew J. Niemann, a forward observer from Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, scans the desert for potential threats at the National Training Center Aug. 12. Upon acquiring accurate target position, forward observers call for artillery and mortar fire to neutralize the threat.

Legion Company airstrike produces 2 enemy KIA at NTC

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

It's around 1 p.m. in the Mojave Desert. Two Blackhawk helicopters kick dust and rocks into the air as they swoop down to land at the National Training Center, Aug. 22.

Soldiers from Legion Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, run hunched over toward the spinning blades that cause the dust storm and hop in. They strap in and within seconds they are airborne, headed for the day's objective.

The birds can take them only so far, but their mission takes them high into the mountains. Jackrabbits sprint by the soldiers in the opposite direction. The enemy's position is on the other side of the mountain line, and the soldiers, led by 1st Lt. Thomas Parker, take to foot and climb to the top.

"The biggest challenge is finding a good observation point without comprising the unit," said Parker, a Providence, R.I., native and 1st Platoon leader, Legion Company.

Without silhouetting the mountain line, the soldiers made it to the top and found cover. In a joint mission with the U.S. Air Force, they identified the enemy's position near a shack on the opposite mountains.

Spc. Ricky Martin, a South

Padre, Texas native and bravo team leader, 1st squad, they work with the U.S. Air Force due to their powerful air-strike capabilities.

Martin deployed to Iraq twice and used these tactics to identify and destroy the enemy.

"Cover your eyes or look away," called Parker over the radio to his platoon.

From the Soldier's backs came sounds of thunder as F-16 fighter jets stormed through the sky. They looped over the Soldier's position and in for the kill. The jets dropped 500-pound explosives on the enemy after receiving the grid coordinates from Legion Company.

"It's what we do," said Staff



First Lt. Thomas Parker, a Providence, Rhode Island native and 1st Platoon leader, Legion Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, calls in the enemy's position in the mountains of the Mojave Desert at the National Training Center Aug. 22. Legion Company conducted an airstrike mission after identifying the enemy's position from their over-watch position high in the mountains.

Sgt. David Barber, 1st platoon sergeant, Legion Company. "It's fun."

The mission produced two enemy killed in action along with enemy intelligence.

With the sun sinking low and

the mission a success, the soldiers of Legion Company packed up their gear and headed down the mountain-side. Their Stryker armored fighting vehicles waited at the bottom for the platoon, so they could return to base in time for chow.



Pvt. Michael R. Lowd, a saw gunner from Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, watches the enemy being destroyed by a 500-pound explosive in the mountains of the Mojave Desert at the National Training Center Aug. 22. Legion Company conducted an airstrike mission after identifying the enemy's position from their overwatch position high in the mountains.

Chargers conduct KLE missions at NTC

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

It's another day in the life for the infantrymen of Charger Company. These guys define training to standard, not to time. Whether the mission ends at 10 p.m. or 2 a.m., their wake up call is 5 a.m. They joke, laugh, and prepare for the next objective, despite the amount of sleep they got the night before.

"It's a brotherhood; it definitely is," said Michael Upchurch, a grenadier from 3rd Platoon, Charger Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. "There's nothing else really like it. We have a lot of pride in our job."

Each morning prior to their mission, they saddle up in their Stryker armored fighting vehicles. These Cadillac

lacs on eight wheels are the soldiers vehicle of choice on the battlefield. Driver, vehicle commander, squad leader, team leader, soldiers, it takes a squad to function.

"We all fight together," said Pvt. Jonathan Toyens, Queens, N.Y., native and a driver from 3rd platoon, Charger Company. "We cherish each other's lives."

As Sgt. Mumaiana Lagai and his soldiers mount up, "California" by the Red Hot Chili Peppers plays over the radio. The soldiers are geared up head to foot and ready to leave the wire for the day into the mountains of California at the National Training Center Aug. 18.

With their backs to the forward operating base, the Stryker convoy headed towards the village of Jahel dar Lad-e. Their mission is to engage the key leaders of the village, build relation-

ships with them, and further gain their trust.

"That is the cornerstone to counterinsurgency and village stability operations," said Capt. Dan Ferriter, Charger Company commander. "That's where we're going to make Afghanistan better."

Arriving at the outskirts, the Chargers mapped out the village in the sand with rocks, trash, and whatever else the troops could find. Lt. William Ryan, 3rd platoon leader, Charger Company, laid out the security plan so he could safely visit with the police chief and the mayor.

After they rehearsed the plan of action, they rolled into the village. Squads got themselves in their security positions, while Ryan went and met with the police chief. Using an interpreter, they discussed the security issues of the village and the cohesion needed to protect the Afghan civilians. Afterward, the police chief escorted Ryan to the mayor's building to facilitate their meeting.

Meanwhile, Pvt. 1st Class Jeremiah Honeycutt, Taylorsville, N.C., native from 3rd Platoon, Charger Company, set his M240 machine gun in place to provide security from a few buildings away.

An improvised explosive device exploded somewhere in the small village, ending the meeting between Ryan and the mayor.

Honeycutt began spilling rounds from his machine gun to suppress the enemy small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades he and his team were receiving.

"Just doing my job," said Honeycutt. "Try to fight the bad guy and keep his head down."

The squads pulled back to the outskirts. Sgt. Mumaina Lagai and his Alpha team moved across the desert to clear the perimeter. Two insurgents fired from underneath brush more than 250 meters away. Lagai and his SAW gunner, Pvt. Brandon Love, laid down brass and bounded forward to eliminate the enemy threat.

"My soldiers, that's it," said Lagai. "That's all that's running through my head is getting them back home."

With the enemy threat neutralized and the soldiers of Charger Company out of harm's way, the infantrymen loaded back up into their Strykers for the journey home. The ride back is always cramped, hot, sweaty, dusty, but all of those things get thrown out of the top hatch because of the strong bond between infantry soldiers.

"Just put a smile on your face and drive on," said Upchurch.



U.S. Army 1st Lt. William Ryan, 3rd platoon leader, Charger Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat team, 2nd Infantry Division, discusses village security with the police chief of Jahel dar Lad-e at the National Training Center Aug. 18. The company conducted key leader engagements with the police chief and the mayor.

MILES gear simulates live combat at NTC

Story and photos by
Spc. Ryan Hallock
28th Public Affairs Detachment

Intelligence analysts from 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, geared up their Humvee for the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System to be installed at the National Training Center Aug. 5.

NTC is located near the Nevada border and provides the Army with over 1,000 square miles of California desert to simulate combat scenarios. The rugged, isolated terrain of this training center allows soldiers to conduct missions in conditions similar to those during deployments.

Rotations in this training environment are designed to evaluate soldier's perfor-

mances in live situations, and the MILES gear augments that mission by detecting when soldiers have come under enemy fire, including near misses and direct hits from improvised explosive devices on their Humvees.

"The simulation is supposed to actually be as close as we can get to a deployment," said Spc. Theodore Durbin, intelligence analyst, 1-37 FA.

The system alerts teams from a remote display that rests in the Humvee's dash, said Durbin, and will signal the seriousness of the attack.

The intelligence analysts will train to react to IEDs according to the specific type of attack based on the MILES gear feedback, said Durbin.



Sgt. Clifton Pettway, intelligence analyst from 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, gets his Humvee ready for the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System to be installed at the National Training Center, Aug. 5. MILES gear is used simulate live combat by detecting enemy fire, including near misses and direct hits from IEDs.

Intelligence analysts have the opportunity to experience what infantrymen go through, which will prove beneficial in relaying information, said Sgt. Clifton Pettway, intelligence analyst, 1-37 FA.

"We're trying to get information for them and from

them," said Pettway. Understanding exactly how infantrymen operate will further assist in intelligence gathering, said Pettway.

The MILES gear offers a system of simulating live combat to any soldier on the road, from the infantryman to the intelligence analyst.



Spc. Theodore Durbin (Right), intelligence analyst from 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, and Sgt. Clifton Pettway, intelligence analyst, 3-2, 1-37 FA, drive their Humvee to have the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System installed at the National Training Center, Aug. 5. MILES gear is used simulate live combat by detecting enemy fire, including near misses and direct hits from IEDs.

Syke's Regulars batt

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg
3rd SBCT, 2nd ID

The sun was all alone in the clear blue sky; beating down on the desert. The sounds of civilian Afghans in a small market located in the city center of Shar-E-Tiefert filled the air as they sold their goods.

The U.S. Stryker vehicles were staged outside the city alongside their Afghan National Army counterparts, watching the town for anything suspicious. In the distance there were American helicopters flying through the air. The city seemed a safe place for all.

The U.S. and ANA entered the city and moved up a main street towards the center of the city on their way to the local police station. As the Stryker and ANA vehicles cleared the street, the rear HUMVEE was violently struck

by an IED, completely demobilizing it and wounding the four U.S. Soldiers inside. The nearby civilians screamed and scattered as they fled the streets in search of safety. It was time for the real training to begin.

The wounded Soldiers were not actually hurt, the civilians were not actually scared and the entire town to include the ANA was all set up for B Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. Shar-E-Tiefert is a mock Afghan city located in the Mojave Desert inside the training area of the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif. A city of over 100 buildings and 40 civilians is the backdrop to a scenario that takes B Company through the ringer to see if all their training in the past has been worth it.

The National Training Center makes sure that this training is as real as it can get; by bringing in U.S. Soldiers to act

as the insurgents, ANA and friendly Soldiers. So real in fact, that one of the Soldiers that was hit by the IED is an actual amputee and some of the civilians are from the Afghan region.

"It's almost as realistic as it can get in there," said Sgt. 1st Class Troy Jensen, platoon sergeant for 2nd platoon, B Company. "It's quite an eye opener for the young guys that haven't done anything overseas yet."

The training scenario is all events driven. Without scripts and with casualties, which do not come back into the fight, the mock battle unfolds and depends on the actions and decisions of B Company, just like in actual combat.

It was good showing that the medics can go down and what happens then, said Private 1st Class Brian Pernick, an infantry Soldier with 1st platoon, B Company.

"It was a real simple mission," said 1st Lt. Alex Ruggers, platoon leader for

A Stryker vehicle with B Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team cautiously moves through a group of Afghan role players as it makes its way to the local police station.



le in Shar-E-Tiefort

2nd platoon, B Company. "It started off as we were going into the town with ANA partners to link up with a PRT [Provincial Reconstruction Team] at the local police station."

B Company must secure the area, treat and evacuate the wounded, recover downed vehicles, as well as deal with and protect the local populace. All while fighting several well equipped insurgents to include a sniper and gun team, several IEDs, a suicide bomber and a vehicle born explosive device. Mentally this is the hardest training we have done since we have been here at NTC, said Jensen.

For over two hours B Company battled the opposition before finishing the mission and having an after action review. B Company then took what they learned the first time and fought through the city a second. The initial mission stayed the same but after the first IED went off, the scenario escalated and evolved around what actions B Company took. So that the battle wasn't the same fight as earlier and the Soldiers always had to think while improving their skills and tactics.

We have a lot of experience in the platoon that I think we need to spread to the younger guys that we have and get them to work more independently, said Ruggers.

After two grueling battles through the hot streets of the Afghan city Shar-E-Tiefort the tired Soldiers of B Company were in high spirits.

For all the things that the scenario threw at us, as a company I would say we did awesome, said Jensen.

It was good showing that the medics can go down and what happens then, said Private 1st Class Brian Pernick, an infantry Soldier with 1st platoon, B Company.



Soldiers from B Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team dismount a Stryker vehicle after an improvised explosive device detonates in the city center of Shar-E-Tiefort. The mock scenario incorporates small arms fire, improvised explosive devices, sniper teams and suicide bombers all in order to test B Company's various combat capabilities.



Soldiers from B Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team load a fellow Soldier onto a Stryker vehicle after he became a casualty during the squad training exercise in the mock city Shar-E-Tiefort at the National Training Center. Medical evacuation was just one of the skills Soldiers had to hone during the two hour scenario.

Artillery:

"I didn't expect to be clearing rooms," he said. "But, we're here to support the infantry, whether it's with the howitzer cannon or breaking down doors."

"Whatever it takes," he added.

It's the new guys like Urrego, however, that Iuli says will benefit most from such a wide array of training.

"It gives these young guys out here a taste of what the future's going to be for artillerymen," Iuli said. "We have to be proficient in infantry skills, and we have to be proficient in artillery skills."

Full-spectrum training may be complex, but the end result – at least in this battalion's case – is simple to Hansen.

"This is preparing us for the next battle," Hansen said. "Whenever the nation calls, this unit will be ready to go."

Chart:

Koeber's section chief, Staff Sgt. John Vlieger, said once the information from a forward observer is entered, AFATDS can calculate feedback within seconds.

It's for this reason that Koeber will do his job as a chart operator, almost always, during training exercises only, though the chart is always on hand.

Although the method hasn't been used primarily in more than a decade, a chart operator's knowledge and skill still maintain their value in an FDC section.

"In the age of all this digital stuff, that digital stuff can go down,"

said Capt. Rick Helton, the commander of Battery A, 1-37th FA, and a West Palm Beach, Fla. native. "It provides that time-tested, surefire way of getting rounds down-range."

"With the chart, there is no power to lose; there are no things that break," said Vlieger, a Yakima, Wash., native.

Koeber doesn't think chart operation should be underestimated.

"The chart can be just as accurate as the computers," he said.

Helton said skills like Koeber's, and the other sets of skills required in an FDC section, have begun to fleet as a result of ten years' engagement in un-

conventional overseas conflicts, but added that a full spectrum of operations is allowing field artillerymen to put the primary focus back on their fundamentals while still including non-standard infantry-like tactics in the mix.

"It's a real perishable skill," he said. "What's wholly perishable is the FDC part."

Helton sees a day when the worth of those skills will once again shine through.

"Sooner or later there will be a force-on-force fight again, and we'll be needed," he said.

"They don't call us the king of battle for nothing," he added.



NEVER
FORGOTTEN

