



SUSTAINABILITY

FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA

RECYCLED REALITY: FORT BRAGG BUILDS AN IRAQI VILLAGE

A convoy of American Soldiers came under fire in an Iraqi village this morning.

A convoy of American Soldiers came under fire in an Iraqi village this afternoon.

A convoy of American Soldiers came under fire in an Iraqi village tonight.

Wave after wave of Soldiers faced the same scenario – enter a village with a tiny team, make contact with the leader, determine what help the people need, leave at the first sign of hostility. The attack came, every time.

In a little tin village under the pines of Fort Bragg, N.C., they prepared for deployment to Iraq.

“Freedom City” is a busy place. Airborne and infantry, military police and logistics units all pass through on their way to the Middle East. For such a valuable piece of real estate, the village cost the Army only \$4,500.

The key was building the entire place out of materials either recycled or diverted from the Fort Bragg landfill.

The idea for Freedom City struck Range Officer Bill Edwards in March 2004. At the time, the crowded schedule at the installation’s two other villages threatened to hold back the deployment of units, Edwards said. Those villages were built to allow the use of live ammunition.

But a unit practicing a convoy scenario for a week used live ammunition only for two or three days. The rest of the training, Edwards reasoned, could take place in another location, freeing the live-fire village for another unit.

Director of Plans, Training and Mobilization Mike Lynch gave the new village his approval, but also gave Edwards only 90 days to build it.

The schedule and budget essentially prevented using outside contractors or new materials, Edwards said. “This didn’t start



For more information

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out as a sustainability project, but when we looked at the best place to get products fast, we had to look at the landfill and it sort of became one,” Edwards said. “It was primarily an economic decision.”

It was also a natural choice in a division with a culture of encouraging sustainability, for which Edwards credits Lynch. “As a division we train about 150,000 Soldiers per year,” Lynch said. “If we want to be here for another hundred years, we need to do what we need to do for sustainability now.”

“We probably saved \$250,000 on the project” by using recycled and diverted materials, Edwards said.

The installation’s range control staff built the entire village. They worked from photographs of buildings in Iraq but no blueprints, said Greg McLean, range maintenance chief. Fifty steel transport containers became the buildings. One hundred gallons of paint came from the recycling center.

The roads, like most dirt tracks on Fort Bragg, are surfaced with tons of ground concrete from the foundations of deconstructed buildings. Painted plywood rounded the corners of arches and domes.

“When we were hauling it out there it looked like a trash dump, but when we were done it looked like an Iraqi village,” Edwards said.

Freedom City features a narrow bridge where Soldiers can react to an ambush and a four-lane dirt highway built to resemble the kind of place they might encounter an improvised explosive device.

Sgt. 1st Class David Pittari, a Reserve civil affairs Soldier and instructor with the 98th Division (Institutional Training), said the village resembles what he saw in Iraq, but the point is to put Soldiers under the kinds of stress they will face. “You need to help get them over that initial shock,” Pittari said. Filled with shouting villagers, smoke and at least one accused insurgent, Freedom City grows in realism, according to Pittari. All the tin and plywood? “It’s just a backdrop, really.”



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