

Mortars blow stuff up

by **Sgt. John Glover**
115th MPAD Staff

One of a battalion's most valuable assets is its mortar platoon. Mortars are equipped to perform a variety of missions in both offensive and defensive operations; these Soldiers are proud of their ability to support rifle companies with a barrage of mortar rounds at a moment's notice. The 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry's mortar platoon got a chance to fire – or hang – live rounds June 15 during Operation Bayonet Thrust II.

A standard mortar platoon consists of four gun crews and a fire direction center. Each crew manning an 81mm mortar consists of three Soldiers – a gunner who ensures the mortar is on target, an assistant gunner who helps

maneuver the heavy weapon into position and hangs rounds and an ammunition bearer who prepares the rounds. Mounted on the back of a humvee, the FDC is crewed by three Soldiers who are trained to use the high-tech computer equipment and navigate a variety of charts used to check its results by hand.

The platoon trains to fire from hastily occupied sites and carefully selected positions where the platoon leader has time to lay in the guns.

The process of laying in the guns orients the weapon in a known direction and takes about 10 minutes using an aiming circle – a low-powered telescope with integrated compass and elevation instrumentation similar to sur-

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Photo by Sgt. John Glover
Specialist David E. Bower (right), mortar platoon gunner, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, makes adjustments to his weapon's orientation with the help of his squad leader Cpl. Jack E. Chadic during a live fire exercise at OTA.



Photo by Spc. Nick D. Wood
An ambulance team from Charlie Company, 141st Support Battalion, transports a patient from a UH-60 Blackhawk to the triage center.

Medics learn to prioritize

by **Spc. Nick D. Wood**
115th MPAD Staff

Charlie Company of the 141st Support Battalion took part in trauma lanes training at Forward Operating Base Idaho in Orchard Training Area June 16 - 21 in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom.

Trauma lanes consist of patient reception, triage, stabilization and patient dispatching.

Charlie Company received most patients through medical evacuation,

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TRAUMA, from page 1 — provided by the UH-60s of 1042nd Medvac from Salem, Ore., although patients also arrived by convoy.

Triage is the prioritization of patients and allocation of care to maximize the number of survivors where a high number of casualties is expected.

The primary goal of Charlie Company is to stabilize patients within 72 hours said Spc. Lacey Reynolds, a medic for Charlie Company. If the medics are unable to stabilize the patients, they send them to better equipped facilities in rear operating areas.

Charlie Company sends stabilized patients to where subsequent care will be provided, such as surgery facilities, or back to their units if well enough.

Because Charlie Company will participate in the Afghan National Army mission with the 41st Brigade Combat Team, the medics focused on what they would encounter overseas.

The type and number of simulated injuries mirrored what is being seen

141st keeps Soldiers moving

by **Spc. Annie Baxter**
115th MPAD Staff

Convoys are armed with different tools to ensure safety of the troops. Soldiers are armed with their M-16 rifles, humvees sport .50 caliber machine guns and medics are armed with life saving packs to administer first aid when necessary.

But who administers first aid when a vehicle goes down? Bravo Company of the 141st Support Battalion will.

The mechanics of the 141st are the ones who keep things moving, said Spc. Michael Bays, light wheel mechanic for the 141st.

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overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq, mostly improvised explosive device and gunshot wounds.

Patients for this operation consisted of volunteers from Foxtrot and Golf Troops of the 1st Battalion, 82nd Cavalry as well as volunteers of the Oregon State Defense Force.

“We’re here because we’re needed,” said Sgt. Matthew Brooks of Foxtrot Troop, 1st Battalion 82nd Cavalry, one of the many patients to cycle through the trauma lanes on Sunday.

Staff Sgt. John Rich, a supply sergeant for 2nd Battalion, ORSDF was another of the simulated casualties. He said ORSDF members have been playing as opposing forces in addition to their role as civilians and casualties on the battlefield.

To add realism, patients wore makeup, prosthetics and pumps that pushed mock blood into the prosthetics and makeup the makeup.

“We’re having a blast,” said Brooks.

162nd Engineers construct OBT II

by **Spc. Mary Jane Jacobsen**
115th MPAD Staff

Before any units occupied the Orchard Training Area for Bayonet Thrust II, the 162nd Engineer Company was hard at work building forward operations bases and the military operations urban training sites. Both are miniature cities within the confines of the dusty desert; one city is a safe haven for the hard-working Soldiers. Both are built to be sturdy and efficient.

Captain Michael Moffit is assigned to the 162nd Engineer Company and attached to the 41st Bri— See **ENGINEERS** Page 8

Corrections

In the June 20 issue of The Observation Post, Master Sgt. Thomas Davie was incorrectly identified as a sergeant first class.



Photo by Spc. Annie Baxter

Sgt. Derrick Laughlin, wheeled vehicle mechanic for Bravo Company, 141st Support Battalion, hooks a chain onto a vehicle to be towed by a wrecker.

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Role-playing isn't just a story for Bosnian

by **Spc. Annie Baxter**
115th MPAD Staff

For most people, the sounds of gun fire and mortar blasts are not too inviting. But for 25-year-old Mia Kacmarcik, the noise is just like home.

Kacmarcik is a Sarajevo, Bosnia, native who saw the territorial war in Bosnia first-hand when she was only 14 years old. After being smuggled out of Sarajevo, she endured over two years of moving around from country to country before entering the United States where she lives now.

Kacmarcik works for Blue Canopy, a company that employs foreign nationals to role-play as civilians on the battlefield for Army training exercises. She believes her presence provides deploying Soldiers with a different perspective of foreigners.

"I lived through what people in Iraq and Afghanistan are going through right now," she said.

The role-playing puts a human face to the scenarios the Soldiers train on. It teaches them to interact more humanely with the people in theater and respect the situations in a foreigner's homeland.

Until the war started, Kacmarcik

"The first couple times you're scared. You can't sleep; you cry."

— Mia Kacmarcik
Bosnian native

lived a normal life in Sarajevo. She played with her friends, went to school and even played with Barbie dolls.

But once the war began, the incessant presence of snipers on rooftops made the streets in her neighborhood unsafe to walk down. Walls and buildings were scarred with holes made from firearms and explosives. Grenades were thrown into crowds of civilians at the marketplace. Families slept in hallways

and bathrooms — any room which was free of outside walls. On really bad nights they would huddle in the basement hoping to survive through another night. Yet this was home.

"The first couple times you're scared. You can't sleep; you cry," she said.

But then everyone got used to it. They just carried on with life and were happy they were alive, she said. But her parents saw things very differently.

Since their apartment was one of the first areas fired upon when the war started, Kacmarcik's parents decided to pack the bare necessities and move the family to downtown Sarajevo with her grandparents.

She was so upset about leaving her home and her father, who had been drafted into the Bosnian Army, that she ran away from home to face the hostile streets armed with only her Barbie doll.

"Having to leave my dad, who I am eternally attached to, was just not an option," she said.

She was seen in the streets by a neighbor who was a friend of her fathers. He pulled her to safety in an alley and kept her in his home. She stayed there for two days, unable to contact her parents because all the phone lines had been destroyed, until she was able to safely return home.

Her family was of a Serbian background and the downtown area was a rival Muslim community, so her grandparents' home was only a safe haven for a little while, she said.

During this time, her mother was working as an administrative assistant for the Children's Embassy, an organization which arranges the evacuation of women and children from war-torn areas. Therefore, she was able to pull some strings to have her name, along with Kacmarcik's and her 3-year-old sister's, moved closer to the top of the



Photo by Pfc. Michael S. Gann

Mia Kacmarcik (right), a Blue Canopy role-player in Operation Bayonet Thrust II, makes her frustration clear to Army National Guardsmen during a training scenario.

refugee list.

One day, Kacmarcik's mother received a phone call notifying her a bus was leaving for the airport that afternoon with room for her and her daughters. They had only a few hours to pack bags, but they got to the bus on time. They tried twice on two separate days to get to the airport, but militant encounters on the way forced them to return home.

"I couldn't have been happier. I didn't want to leave in the first place," said Kacmarcik.

On the third day, the bus was able to get to the airport and thousands of women and children crowded onto a standing-room-only aircraft, not knowing their destination until the captain addressed them during the flight.

"It was so stuffy in there. I remember not even being able to breathe," she said.

The plane landed safely in Belgrade, Serbia, where the trio lived

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Top left: Soldiers prepare to enter a military operations in urban terrain site on the OTA. Top right: A soldier stands guard as the sun rises on the OTA. Middle: A Soldier from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry helps his comrade to a covered position. Left middle: A UH-60 Blackhawk transports a load of supplies to the field. Bottom right: Soldiers board a UH-60 Blackhawk after completing a mission. Bottom left: A Soldier provides security for his squad with his M-249 squad automatic weapon.



Photo by Pfc. Micheal S. Gann



Photo by Spc. April Dustin



Photo by Spc. Janelle Henderson



Photo by Pfc. Micheal S. Gann



Photo by Pfc. Micheal S. Gann



Photo by Pfc. Micheal S. Gann

BOSNIAN, from page 1 —————
with Kacmarcik's aunt and 14 other family members. They stayed there for three weeks, trying to find food, water and any work they could do for money.

Though there were still no phone lines available, Kacmarcik's family used telegraph and any other means available to contact her father. He had escaped from Bosnia into Slovenia. He was able to gain citizenship there which enabled his wife and children to be with him after going as long as a year without communicating. He eventually made arrangements for his family to cross the border into Italy. They actually had to walk over a small mountain and enter the country on foot, said Kacmarcik.

Once in Italy, the family was taken in by a Protestant organization which helped them find housing and other resources. They were able to get visas and Kacmarcik was enrolled in school there.

After two years, Kacmarcik's mother and father decided there was no future for their family in Italy, so they began considering other places they could move. The only options available to them were New Zealand and the

United States. They decided to move to America where they had a blood-relative sponsor who had promised them an apartment, vehicles and basic living needs. When they arrived in the United States, the things they were promised were not there, so the family did what they could to manage with the mere \$1,500 they had.

Though her father was a successful urban engineer in Bosnia, he was able to find work as a garbage/ maintenance man for an apartment complex. Her mother, a psychologist, found work at a day care. Kacmarcik enrolled in a private school on a scholarship.

"Once we got here and got on our own two feet, it was easy to get back to normal life," she said.

The only holdback she had was that she needed to pass the eighth grade. The private school she attended didn't offer any English as a second language classes, so she was forced to learn the English language by observing other students and staying after school with her teachers in order to understand and pass her final exams.

The Kacmarciks ultimately decided there was no future for them back

home in Bosnia. They settled their family in New Orleans, La., where her mother is a special education teacher and her father has worked as a city street development supervisor and is now a taxi cab driver.

"We stuck together and made a life," she said.

Kacmarcik is enrolled at Louisiana State University where she is majoring in forensic psychology. She works as a bartender and spends time working for Blue Canopy. She participated in two exercises in 2001 at Fort Polk, La., helping train soldiers for peace-keeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. She worked at Pinon Canyon outside Fort Carson, Colo., in 2004 to help create a realistic Iraqi environment during annual training for the 41st Brigade Combat Team and is currently making her rounds at the Orchard Training Area, providing training for troops heading to Afghanistan next year.

"It's a way for me to give back because I've been offered such great things here," said Kacmarcik. "If one of those scenarios saves one soldier from getting killed or injured, then it's worth it."

MECHANICS, from page 2 —————

"Our only mission is to make sure our troops are safe, [the ones] who are rolling out to convoy in our vehicles," he said.

During Operation Bayonet Thrust II, maintenance support teams were assigned to each battalion. The four-man teams lived in the field alongside their battalion, staying readily available to fix any vehicular problems.

The contact trucks are like a mobile shop, said Sgt. Antonio Rocha, NCOIC of the Forward Operating Base Wyoming maintenance support team..

They carry the tools needed to fix most problems the vehicles may face. If there is something they can't fix in the field, they also have the wrecker to tow almost any wheeled vehicle.

Vehicle maintenance is divided into three levels: crew level, organizational level and direct support level. The 141st falls under direct support. This means they can fix nearly any major deficiencies the vehicles may have. They work on transmissions, brakes engines, etc., but are not necessarily

responsible for the scheduled maintenance and general troubleshooting, said Rocha.

General maintenance is the responsibility of the organizational level mechanics. They can replace basic parts to maintain the vehicle's performance, said Chief Warrant Officer Steven Geist, company maintenance technician for the 162nd engineer company, which provided organizational maintenance at the company level during OBT II.

The crew level of mechanics includes lower level repairs and preventative maintenance checks and services.

The 141st was providing direct-level support for the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, maintenance section out of Oklahoma. As well as supporting the 1-180th, they supported any other unit that didn't have maintenance capabilities, said Chief Warrant Officer Danny Collins, battalion maintenance technician for the 1-180th. He said that between the groups they have been very successful in keeping the equipment of the 1-180th in battle.

"We've built a good working relationship [with Oregon troops]," he said. "It's a team here, it really is."

MORTARS, from page 1 — veering equipment. Mortars are much more accurate when the guns are properly laid in, said 2nd Lt. Chris A. Bird, the 1-186th's mortar platoon leader.

This preparation allows the gun crews to be extremely accurate out to their maximum effective range of 5,600 meters. The guns can hit a wide variety of locations including some covered positions by using a combination of ballistic factors such as the barrel's angle of elevation and different propelling charges — low intensity explosives which propel a round, explained Bird.

If the mortars are on the move when a call for fire comes in, the platoon can perform a "hip shoot" to bring their weapons to bear as fast as possible; any time taken to set the mortars up in a more accurate position could be the difference between life and death for Soldiers the gun crews are supporting, according to Bird.

"We should be able to give immediate suppression in about two to three minutes — as much as they need. And what usually happens is the enemy will automatically disengage," said Cpl. Jack E. Chadic, a squad leader in 1-186th's mortar platoon.

When the guns are set up and ready to fire, the FDC waits for a call from a forward observer. There are three basic mission types depending on what information the caller has. A grid mission allows Soldiers to call in fire when the grid coordinate of the target is known, a shift from a known point allows Soldiers to make use of pre-designated targets, and polar missions are used when the forward observer has his own grid coordinates, an azimuth and distance to a target.

When the call comes, Soldiers manning the FDC input the pertinent information into the computer and hand check the results with a large wheel called an M19 plotting board. Using the computer allows the team to account

for varying winds at different elevations, the difference in elevation between the guns and the target and other environmental conditions that affect the ballistic performance of mortar rounds, said Sgt. Todd L. Sahlberg, FDC chief for the mortar platoon.

The total time from call until the FDC gives the deflection (change in direction from aim point) and elevation commands to the gunners is approximately one to one and a half minutes for the initial mission but drops to a half minute for adjustments, explained Sahlberg.

All gunners immediately begin re-orienting their guns with the FDC Chief's adjustments. The adjustments can take up to a minute depending on the amount of change from the previous target; all of the gunners in 1-186th's mortar platoon qualified as experts — the highest of three levels of qualification which rates gunners on adjustment time as well as accuracy.

High explosive rounds set to detonate on impact — known as HE quick — are the mortar platoon's bread and butter. However, Soldiers calling for the rounds have additional options. Mor-

tar rounds come in the white phosphorus, smoke and illumination variety. White phosphorus and smoke are used to mark positions or screen troop movement, though WP can also be used to cause damaging fires. Illumination rounds are used to allow greater visibility of enemy troops during nighttime maneuvers.

Time-delay and proximity fuses give the HE rounds greater flexibility. The time-delay fuse allows a mortar round to penetrate through light or medium cover before detonating, while a proximity fuse will cause the round to burst in the air when close to the ground.

The array of ordnance available and skill of 1-186th's mortar platoon allows these Soldiers to effectively support any mission the battalion requires. "These guys are ready. When it's time to go they are frickin on it," said Bird with obvious pride in his Soldiers.

While these Soldiers take their jobs seriously, they definitely enjoy what they do. "For me, this is a vacation ... one weekend a month and two weeks out of the year I get to blow stuff up," beamed Chadic as he readied his section to hang some rounds.



Photo by Sgt. John Glover

Second Lt. Chris A. Bird, mortar platoon leader, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, manipulates an M2 aiming circle as he prepares to lay in his platoon's guns.

ENGINEERS, from page 2 —
gade headquarters to advise the commander and plan all engineer missions for the brigade.

Moffit works with the primary staff in the headquarters to ensure the brigade commander has an adequate plan for mobility, survivability and counter-mobility on the battlefield.

“We accomplish our mission in several ways,” Moffit said. “We either take out mine fields or put in mine fields. We put up tactical obstacles or take them out.

“We also have a support platoon that has some heavy equipment for making minimal roads, setting up helipads or air-strips, and digging fighting positions for the artillery units.”

The 162nd Engineer Company out of Camp Rilea, Ore., is responsible for the set-up of the FOBs, stringing concertina wire and building a guard tower in each of the bases and building the mobile, modular MOUT sites.

The construction of the guard towers differ from the normal mission of the 162nd Engineers. These Soldiers are 21 Bravo Combat Engineers. CEs are not



Photo by Pfc. Micheal S. Gann

Private first class Sean Steigleder, 162nd Engineer Company, tears down a wall used in one of the MOUT sites during OBT II.

trained in vertical construction, according to Moffit.

“We don’t have that asset in the brigade so what the company commander did was take the platoon and train those guys how to be carpenters and constructors,” Moffit said. “[He] has guys in his platoon who are carpenters and contractors on the outside and he had them come in and train everybody. They came to OTA a week earlier than the rest of the brigade and built all five villages called modular, mobile MOUT sites and all four FOBs.”

Each FOB location, Idaho, Kansas, Washington, and Wyoming, differs in size and capacity. Restrictions in place for preserving the natural habitats and the critters that live in the area will determine how much of a given area can be used.

“It took seven days and 38 Soldiers to build all four FOBs and all five MOUT sites,” said Moffit. “They used two small emplacement excavators, or SEEs. They look like the front end of a VW van with a backhoe on back and a bucket on the front.”

The structures will be dismantled in a two-day coordinated effort.

“These FOBs are similar to what it will be like in Afghanistan,” Moffit said.

On arrival the unit may move into a vacated FOB, or contract with local nationals to build one ahead of time so the troops can just come in and do the mission with very little setup. This exercise allowed the engineers to understand the construction of encampments in the event they would need to build or repair their own, Moffit said.

“The MOUT sites constructed by the 162nd engineers are unique in that they are pre-constructed walls that are basically a standard two-room configuration in a mobile village and takes about an hour for a two-man crew to build,” added Moffit. “Unless there is any dig-

ging of the ground or leveling of the earth that they need to do first.”

The larger the building, the more time it takes to go up. The engineers can configure them in a variety of different ways to capitalize on the training opportunity, according to Moffit.

“If you compare the mobile, modular MOUT to conventional construction of a fixed-structure MOUT, you’ll see that it takes a lot less manpower and man-hours,” he explained.

The custom MOUTs are hauled by a five ton truck and dropped off at the training sites on pallets or left on a tractor trailer. The drivers drop off enough panels for the engineers to begin bolting them in place using pre-constructed holes, explained Moffit.

“The buildings are quality checked by a Soldier whose sole job it is to inspect the buildings once they are up,” Moffit said. “He will check for levelness of the overall structure, the bolts for tightness and placement. Most importantly, the inspector asks himself, ‘Is it safe for Soldiers to train in’.”

“When others see the castle on the collar they tend to think we know everything about everything pertaining to engineering and construction, but the 162nd Engineers are light engineers so they know light sapper techniques,” he said.

Sapper techniques date back to the Civil War, according to Moffit. Engineers used saplings to construct a defense during the conflict, hence sappers or construction engineers.

“In the school house they learn construction, project management, a piece of it all, making them adaptable; plus they know what books they need to look in to get the information,” Moffit concluded.

The sight of a far off FOB, secure and well defended, creates a sense of refuge; this is a Soldier’s home — a safe place to come back to after a long day at the OTA.