

# Learning the Ropes

## *Army Medics Use North Carolina Quarry To Fine Tune Rocky Rescue Techniques*

What does a Martin Marietta quarry on the outskirts of Greensboro, North Carolina, have in common with the treacherous terrain in remote regions of Afghanistan?

Apparently quite a bit, and enough to make it a prime practice site for members of U.S. military preparing for their impending overseas deployment.

On a recent early spring day, approximately 30 Army medics from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, based in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, converged on Martin Marietta's **Central Rock** to rehearse their repelling and rescue techniques.

The daylong session was the third part of a four-day-long course on "Rope Rescue for Military Operations" conducted for the medics by the Office of the State Fire Marshall (OSFM), a division of the North Carolina Department of Insurance.

"The quarry was basically their graduation day," said lead instructor **Shannon Orndorff**, a fire rescue training specialist with the OSFM. "The soldiers were able to put into practice the skills we taught them the previous two days"

### **Team-Oriented Training**

After their safety orientation in the quarry's employee building, the medics were divided into four groups and rotated through stations which simulated different rescue scenarios that they could encounter when deployed.

The medics took turns repelling down the quarry's walls to reach dummies that represented injured soldiers. They then worked to safely secure their "patients" in special flexible gurneys which, with the help of soldiers above, they then lifted to safety above.

The goal of the training, Orndorff said, was not only for the soldiers to become more familiar with equipment and techniques, but also for the soldiers to work together to find the best way to achieve their objectives.

"We didn't want to just tell them how to do everything. We wanted to give them the basic skills and let them practice their small-unit tactics and figure out solutions to the problems we presented."

### **'Eye-Opening' Experience**

According to Orndorff, the quarry closely resembles the type of terrain the medics are likely to encounter in Afghanistan.

"The terrain, the soil conditions and the different types of inclines and vertical drops, are pretty close to what a large majority of Afghanistan is like," he said.

"For those who have already been to Afghanistan, the training was a great re-familiarization with the conditions over there," he added. "For those who haven't been there yet, it was an eye-opener for what they're about to encounter."

While he could not divulge the medics' exact deployment date, Orndorff, a former Marine himself, said they'd likely be shipping out at some time "in the near future."

### **Partners in Preparation**

Central Rock Plant Manager **David Thorne** said he was pleased to be able to host the rescue training.

"It was great that the Company decided to support the military in this way," he said. "If it helps save even one life, then I think it was definitely a worthwhile thing to do."

Thorne and three other employees -- Foremen **Jerry Easter** and **Billy Pritchard** and Plant Leadperson **Billy Ashby** -- monitored the soldiers' activities at all times and, as Thorne described it, "everything went extremely well."

"They were a great group to work with," he said. "If we had any safety concerns, they addressed them immediately."

Orndorff said he welcomed the scrutiny.

“I can’t say enough about the staff at the quarry,” he said. “They were absolutely phenomenal, especially with regard to their attention to detail and the emphasis they put on safety, which is our number one priority.”

“Without a doubt,” he added, “if the need for this arises again, Martin Marietta will be the first one we call.”





























