

THE GALLIVANTER

Vol. III, Issue 5

"Orion, the Hunter!"

August 6, 2010



Weather Forecast

Friday, Aug. 6



High: 71°

Low: 55°

Chance of rain: 30%

Saturday, Aug. 7



High: 72°

Low: 55°

Chance of rain: 0%

A publication of New York's 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

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Engineers take arts and crafts to explosive new heights

By SPC. IAN BOUDREAU
27th IBCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

If you need something blown up, the 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion's engineers are just the people to call.

"We actually made it rain yesterday," said 1st Lt. Justin Simon, the executive officer of A Company, 27 BSTB.

Simon said his engineers had used a C4 cratering charge in a hole filled with water, and the effect had been impressive.

"The extra tampering force (from the water) created twice the size hole we'd normally get," he said. The water, along with several hundred pounds of earth, had been blown into the air by the powerful charge, and created a brief, muddy rain shower on its way back down.

The A Company engineers can blow large craters in roads or airfields, rendering them unusable by enemy forces. They're also handy with detonation cord, and can use just about anything on



Photo by Spc. Ian Boudreau

Staff Sgt. Justin Kaier teaches A Company engineers how to create a door charge with detonation cord, tape, and target silhouettes.

hand to open doors that have been inconveniently locked or sealed.

Staff Sgt. Justin Kaier, an A Company squad leader, showed new engineers in his company how to use two target silhouettes and 60 feet of det cord to create a charge that would make a roughly human-sized hole in a door or wall partition. Taping the two target silhouettes together end-to-

end, the engineers wrapped the cord around in concentric loops around the edge, carefully taping it down.

Once the cord was placed, they used more tape to attach the "field-expedient" charge to a piece of particle board set up to simulate a door. Once everyone was clear, they ignited the charge, which ripped a

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Mortar crews, forward observers light up the Fort Drum ranges

By SPC. IAN BOUDREAU
27th IBCT PUBLIC AFFAIRS

There are times on the battlefield when large exploding objects falling out of the sky and onto enemy targets is just what is needed, and the 27th Infantry Brigade's mortar crews and forward observers are the guys who make this happen.

"Our mission is to destroy, suppress, or neutralize targets out here in the field," said 2nd Lt. William Vilardo, a Fire Support Team (FiST) leader with Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment.

Vilardo and his team of forward observers were the "eyes on the range," identifying and marking targets for 2/108 mortar crews, who had set up their tubes on an adjacent Fort Drum range Aug. 2. After spotting a target, the "Fisters" radio its location to the mortars, giving the mortar crewmen the targets' distance and direction from their position.



Photo by Spc. Ian Boudreau

Spc. Casey Rosiak, a C Company mortar crewman from Scotia, N.Y., aims a 60-mm mortar tube.

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The mortar teams responded by launching appropriate munitions—60mm, 81mm, or 120mm high-explosive shells, white phosphorus rounds, or illumination, which lights up the battlefield below with either conventional light or infra-red radiation.

At a glance, the mortar teams' mission is similar to that of field artillery, but Vilardo said there are important distinctions. The ranges of the weapons systems vary, of course, but there are tactical differences in the way they are put to use as well.

The 27th Brigade's mortar squads are attached to infantry line companies,

which means that an infantry company commander or platoon leader can talk directly to mortar crews in his own company. This is crucial in situations where an infantry squad needs an immediate effect.

Once the forward observers have confirmed that the mortar crews have a target "locked in," they can instruct the crews to "fire for effect," and the mortar crews will send anywhere from three to fifteen rounds downrange per tube, devastating the targeted area.

"It's whatever we need to do to knock the enemy out," said Sgt. Wil Cullins, a mortar crew squad leader with Headquarters Company, 2/108 Infantry.

In addition to several iterations of live-fire training, the 27th's forward observers also learned from trainers from the FIRES Center of Excellence based in Fort Sill, Okla. Using a program known as GuardFIST and a Call For Fire Trainer, new forward observers were able to learn the skills they would need to direct fire in the field.

"They've given us the foundation and ability to actually train and certify our own guys in the future," Vilardo said.

The 2nd Battalion of the 108th Infantry Regiment, based in Utica, N.Y., participated in two weeks of annual training with the rest of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team from July 24-Aug. 7. •



Photo by Spc. Ian Boudreau

An A Company engineer watches as a "demon cross" shaped charge explodes on a Fort Drum training range Aug. 3.

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neatly-shaped hole through the board.

During their time in the field, the engineers used a wide variety of items to create different effects—an IV bag of fluids, for example, can blow through a metal door when combined with some appropriate explosives.

"It looks like it was punched by the Incredible Hulk," Simon said.

The engineers can also use det cord to cut a door lengthwise, or a "donut" of C4 to blow out the doorknob and locking mechanism.

They can set traps, too—small chunks of C4 attached to the legs of a chair can be

rigged up to a pressure plate on the seat. The engineers simulated this (detonating the charge from behind the safety of a range bunker) with a desk chair they found on the explosives range.

"It's a lot of fun, it's a great time," Simon said. "It's a long day, though. We're trying not to push it too hard, because when you're tired, you can make stupid mistakes. So we're getting lots of good sleep, too."

A Company and the rest of the 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion participated in annual training exercises on Fort Drum from July 24 - Aug. 7. The company is based in Lockport, N.Y. •

Chaplains reflect on first two weeks of 27th's annual training

The 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's two chaplains said Thursday that they were happy with how this year's Annual Training had developed, both for the Soldiers of the 27th, and for themselves.

"It's been a really great first experience wearing the cross," said Catholic Chaplain (Capt.) Jim Collins.

Collins said he had enjoyed working with Chaplain (Maj.) Alex Knowles, and the two developed a reputation for their back-and-forth comedy routine in the field.

"One Soldier compared us to the two old Muppets in the balcony, from the Muppet Show," Collins said. "I'm hoping that was a compliment."

"It's been a successful AT thus far," Knowles said. "I really enjoyed visiting all the Soldiers out there in the field, watching them be successful in their missions and everything God has called upon them to do."

Knowles and Collins both expressed their hopes that the 27th's Soldiers remain safe after annual training draws to a close.

"We pray and wish all of a safe return to your loved ones and families," and a continued happy summer."

"Continue to be safe," Knowles said. "Enjoy your time with your family and friends, and prepare yourself for the missions to come."

"Until we meet again, remember that our good God is always with us," said Collins. •

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