The Bullet'n

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NEXT MISSION: CONQUERING THE VIRTUAL BATTLEFIELD

U.S. Army photo by Todd Mozes

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Mero uses a Talon trainer, while a Talon robot sits in the background. Military members use Talon robots to disarm improvised explosive devices.

Virtual training allows Soldiers to prepare for combat situations

By Audra Calloway
Picatinny Arsenal Public Affairs

PICATINNY ARSENAL, N.J. -- With more than eight million registered users, the Army-developed video game "America's Army" is an interactive, first-person shooter game that allows Civilians a taste for the Soldier life.

However, what debuted in 2002 as a communication tool for the Army to promote awareness and Army values to the general public has evolved into a practical training tool for Soldiers.

The Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center has used the game to develop training simulators to help familiarize Soldiers with the robots used to detonate improvised explosive devices.

The "America's Army" video game was spearheaded by Col. Casey Wardynski at the office of economics and manpower analysis at West Point, N.Y., said Brad Drake, computer engineer and team leader for America's Army – Picatinny.

Though ARDEC had been doing simulation for a long time, when Picatinny simulation engineers saw the game,

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Army News

Reset program maintains troop readiness

By Elizabeth M. Lorge
Army News Service

WASHINGTON -- The Army reset program is essential to the readiness and combat capability of the Army, said the outgoing director of integration at the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Army Programs.

According to retiring Brig. Gen. Albert Bryant Jr., the Army reset program that began about three years ago is responsible for recapitalizing or replacing more than 300,000 pieces of equipment.

"The program is an essential part of sustaining the Army's ability to conduct operations. If we don't reset these units and get the equipment into the hands of the Soldiers, allow them to train with it and deploy, then obviously our ability to do our job in our deployed theaters of operation will suffer," he said.

Reset is one of Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr.'s four imperatives, and it costs an average of $16 billion dollars to reset 20-something brigades each year. Congress passed the latest supplemental spending bill on June 30 and included almost $8 billon for reset in operations and maintenance funding and almost $2 billion for reset in procurement funding.

In a typical reset process, a unit would take a piece of equipment, a Humvee, for example, and turn it over to the Army Sustainment Command in Kuwait. The vehicle would be shipped to a depot in the US, where it would be inspected, stripped to the base frame and inspected again. After sandblasting the vehicle, it would be put through an assembly line and rebuilt to the highest, newest standards available. An older, up-armored M1114 Humvee would come out as a heavier, safer M1151/1152 Humvee, for example.

U.S. Army photo by Steve Grzezdzinski

Field service representatives deployed from Tobyhanna Army Depot, Pa., prep a Humvee before installing a Warlock electronic counter measure system.

The goal, Bryant said, is to return each piece of equipment to zero-miles, zero-hours status.

"That's an almost like-new vehicle," he said. "Zero-hours and zero-miles means that it's like getting a completely factory-rebuilt vehicle with the same warrantees you had when you started.

"The wear on our vehicles (is intense). We're using them at many, many times the normal peacetime utilization rates. The terrain is tough on the vehicles. The weather is extreme. The combination of heat and dust is extremely wearing on any mechanical system. So the process of looking at them in detail and ensuring we are restoring them to (full-operational) capacity at whatever our requirement is, is fundamental to our reset pro-

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JMC commander lays out vision

By Justine Barati
Joint Munitions Command Public Affairs

U.S. Army photo by Ted Cavanaugh/EL Hamm

Col. (promotable) Larry D. Wyche, Joint Munitions Command commander, speaks to a JMC headquarters audience during his first town hall meeting Aug. 13.

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL, Ill. -- "Thank you for what you do day in and day out. You are making a significant impact on the war," said Col. (promotable) Larry Wyche.

These are the words he used to begin his first town hall meeting with the Joint Munitions Command workforce on Aug. 13. Wyche assumed command of JMC on Aug. 1.

Wyche then went on to tell of his firsthand experience with JMC's work within the combat environment. He said that he has seen JMC's ammo delivered to Soldiers 10,000 feet in the mountains of Afghanistan. According to Wyche, it was great "to see the sparkle in the Soldier's eye" when they received the needed munitions.

JMC "is taking the fight to the enemy. Not once was it (ammo) not ready, reliable, and lethal," he said. "This organization amazes me with the talent it has. JMC is truly recognized as Army experts in munitions… You all are the best in the world at what you do, and that's a fact.

"Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Civilians, and contractors should never have to worry about getting bullets…We will never say no as long as we have one gallon of gas or one bullet to give," said Wyche. "We are warfighter logisticians and supporters prepared to give the shirts off our backs and boots off our feet to support the fight."

Wyche also believes in servant leadership. He said, "It is a good feeling for me to have the opportunity to serve you. I work for you. As commanding officer, I'll give everything I've got to facilitate the incredible standards you've set for yourself."

He said there are three things that drive him:

1. Supporting our Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Civilians, and contractors on the battlefield,
2. The individual success of JMC employees, and
3. Revitalizing the workforce to make sure we have the right talent in place as employees retire.

Wyche emphasized that everyone plays a key part in JMC's success and that everyone is important. "No one is better than anyone else. I value your opinion and honest feedback. Don't tell me what I want to hear; tell me what I need to know," said Wyche. He then said with a smile on his face, "If you see me (around town), talk to me. If you don't, I'll yell at you and say, 'Hey, you don't know me or something?'"

He also believes in treating people like they want to be treated. "Every once in a while I look at myself in the mirror and ask myself, 'Would I want to work for myself?' If I hesitate, I'm probably not doing something right," said Wyche. He said that is the attitude all supervisors should have. He said that he won't tolerate abusing another person. JMC should be "an environment where everyone should enjoy coming to work." However, that doesn't mean employees are not expected to work hard, "I'm going to squeeze you like getting juice out of a raisin to get every piece of potential you've got, and I'm going to force you to think," said Wyche.

When working on assignments, Wyche recommended asking the following questions:

- What is the requirement?
- What is the capability?
- What do we need to do to get there?

By asking these questions, Wyche said that employees can position the organization for the future. "We need to think out where we need to go, lay it out, and then let's figure out how to get there," he said.

"Wyche" continued on page 12

Seeing the finish line

U.S. Army photo by Laura C. Walker

JMC employees Adrienne Johnson and Joe Schneider have served as JMC headquarters building renovation project managers since 2006.

By Laura C. Walker
JMC Public Affairs

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL, Ill. -- New renovations are the topic of conversation as Joe Schneider and Adrienne Johnson sit and talk about the long journey it's been these past two years as building 350 was renovated.

Schneider is the project manager for Building 350 renovations, and Johnson is the executive officer for the Joint Munitions Command's Munitions and Logistics Readiness Center. From telephone calls to face-to-face interaction with the construction and furniture teams, Schneider and Johnson have been the backbone behind the building's reconstruction. The building is almost complete, "It's a great accomplishment," says Schneider. "It's gone fast. It was fun, and I wouldn't hesitate to do it again." He added that "In some areas, we were able to do two bays at once."

The last bay is complete and the cafeteria is finished. Those are sweet words to the ears of employees at JMC headquarters after waiting more than a year for the building to be complete.

Former JMC Commander Brig. Gen. James E. Rogers stated at a previous town hall meeting, "When I started this job on the improvements, we thought it would be a part-time job and be quick. We fully realized later that was a serious miscalculation, and Joe stood up and said we'll take it - and he's done a great job with it."

When the renovation began Rogers toured the building and commented on the selection of furniture, he liked it. No hidden treasures were uncovered when the renovation took place, but most people are not aware Building 350 was originally a warehouse.

Between the middle and north bays on the sixth floor there is an old fire door. It's huge and you can't miss it. It has a little pulley on the side and they left that door in and painted the hardware. "A few employees were startled when they first tested the new door," said Schneider.

Schneider went on to commend the contractors, "They were just awesome to work with. We saw results right away."

Funding for the project came from the Army Material Command and internal JMC sources. Looking over the completed job, Johnson remarked, "It was fun, even with all the strange issues that came up."

Schneider and Johnson want workers at JMC headquarters to know that they should all keep the work area clean and looking good. Schneider and Johnson used the input of workers at JMC to determine the colors for the workstations.

A display room on the sixth floor is in progress. Guests and employees who want to learn more about JMC will be able to use hands-on mechanisms to pinpoint facts about JMC's mission. The plan includes placing small caliber boxes on a pallet and placing them in the igloo structure. A hand-held scanner will demonstrate the 2D bar- coding capability. In addition, there are plans to locate a workstation next to the igloo to demonstrate the key-control system. This will be used to demonstrate logistics expertise.

"If you haven't seen the suite, it's gorgeous" said Schneider. Schneider and Johnson make a great team. Their satisfaction at creating improved working conditions was evident.

The final move began August 25. The 15-year-old carpeting was replaced, the ceilings were replaced, walls were repainted, new electrical and communication cables were installed, outer offices were renovated and new furniture was purchased replaced for third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floors. They also removed abandoned cables and piping and asbestos items in many locations. Many bathrooms were redesigned and updated to the latest Americans with Disabilities Act standards. A total of 11 bays were renovated.

Rogers said during a July 23 town hall meeting, "I use the driveway analogy. It's painful when you don't have it, but as soon as it's fixed you say 'oh man, that's nice, I'm glad I waited for it!' They've done an unbelievable job for something you're literally renovating while you're working and I know all of you have felt that pain."

Schneider and Johnson received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service for the completed renovation. The commendation noted the project was completed six months ahead of schedule.

Energy Award for Radford a team effort

U.S. Army photo by Darryl Howlett

Radford Army Ammunition Plant Commander Lt. Col. Jon R. Drushal and Radford's Civilian Executive Assistant Ron Rossi display the Secretary of the Army Energy and Water Management Award. The plant, along with its operating contractor, ATK, received the award at the GovEnergy Conference Aug. 6 in Phoenix, Ariz.

By Darryl Howlett
JMC Public Affairs

RADFORD, Va. -- A formula for success: energy + efficiency = awards.

Or so says the Department of the Army.

Radford Army Ammunition Plant and its operating contractor Alliant Techsystems received the Small Group Secretary of the Army Energy and Water Management Award in the Efficiency/Energy Management category at the Army's 30th Annual Secretary of the Army Energy and Water Management Awards at the GovEnergy Conference in Phoenix, Ariz., on Aug. 6.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Privatization and Partnerships (Installations and Environment) Paul P. Bollinger Jr. presented the awards.

"I commend these individuals for their outstanding energy conservation programs," wrote Army Director of Operations Brig. Gen. H.T. Landwermeyer, Jr. "This accomplishment reflects the wholehearted support of the Army's energy objectives."

Radford was recommended for the award by the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management for its accomplishments in reducing steam demand, optimization of coal-fired boilers, enhanced steam distribution repairs and improved steam monitoring.

The members of the award-winning team include Randolph Evans (Radford government staff), industrial engineer; Donald Clark (ATK), power house engineer; Douglas Messner (ATK), power house modernization program manager; Donald Yee (Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center), environmental product manager; and Donald Moore (ARDEC), general engineer.

"Working hand in hand with the U.S. Army, ATK has made tremendous improvements to the quality and efficiency of the products and processes at Radford," said ATK Energetics Systems Division Vice President and General Manager Kent Holiday. "Our employees are focused on providing defenders of freedom superior performing propellants, energetics and munitions that will enable them to perform their mission with total confidence."

Lt. Col. Jon R. Drushal, Radford's plant commander, said the award honored a team effort.

"I'm glad to see our Army investment paying off," he said. "We have in excess of $4 million in this project resulting in over 3,700 repairs and steam savings in excess of one billion pounds per year."

Editors Note: Army News Service and ATK contributed to this story.

This is a drill, This is a drill...

U.S. Army photo by Nancy Gray

Soldiers from the Army Reserve 7244 Medical Support Unit transport someone needing medical attention to an air-rescue helicopter during a mass casualty exercise held Aug. 9 at the Holston Army Ammunition Plant.

Holston, Army Reserve conduct terrorism exercise

Nancy Gray
Holston AAP Public Affairs

KINGSPORT, Tenn. -- The U.S. Army Reserve 7244 Medical Support Unit conducted a mass-casualty exercise Aug. 9 at the Holston Army Ammunition Plant.

Supporting and participating in that exercise was Holston's fire and security personnel, along with Mountain States Health Alliance Wings Air Rescue.

The actual "terrorist" action began at noon, and over the next two hours saw terrorists, authentically garbed, slipping through underbrush and running into the open throwing grenades and bombs (bottled water), firing at Soldiers and Civilians, and activating explosive devices. The MSU and Wackenhut fire and security personnel responded swiftly. The scene was a little unnerving.

Training of this caliber is hard to come by for the Holston fire and security personnel and is a valuable asset for those who protect and defend the installation. The same goes for Wings Air Rescue. It's not often, if ever, that they would be called upon to airlift casualties from a zone where terrorists are actively engaging with "their enemies." And as for the Army Reserve Medical Support Unit, this is what they do for a living and, as such, they can never get enough training to prepare them for any eventuality.

Holston stands ready to participate in any exercise that keeps the plant's personnel trained and ready.

U.S. Army photo by Nancy Gray

A man posing as a terrorist adds realism to an Aug. 9 mass casualty exercise at Holston Army Ammunition Plant.

Tooele support to TACOM ensures Soldier safety on battlefield

U.S. Army photo by Kathy Anderson

An up-close view of a counterweight bumper. Tooele Army Depot is supporting a TACOM Life Cycle Management Command mission.

By Kathy Anderson
Tooele Army Depot Public Affairs

TOOELE, Utah -- Tooele Army Depot is helping provide additional safety and security for warfighters on the battlefield through a program run by TACOM Life Cycle Management Command by installing add-on-armor (AOA) counterweight bumper kits for the M1078 2.5 ton trucks.

The TACOM LCMC project outfits the family of Medium Tactical Vehicles with an AOA kit for their Low Signature Armored Cabs. A counterweight to the kit was needed to stabilize the vehicle when the armored cab is titled forward.

"Tooele Army Depot answered the call and provided an exceptional product in the most responsive time," said Maj. Joel Franklin, TACOM LCMC Medium Tactical Vehicles project manager.

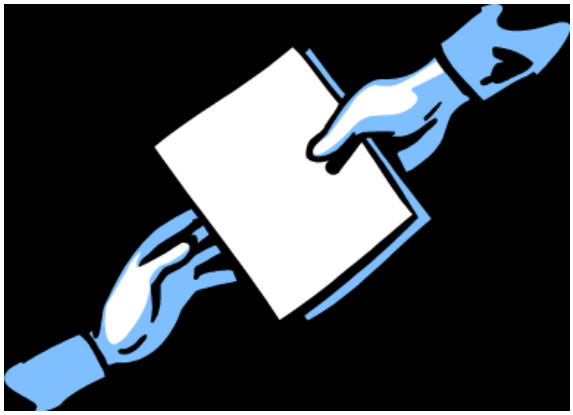
A team consisting of 25 employees from TEAD's Directorate of Ammunition Equipment and Logistics rapidly produced the bumper kit that would be attached to the vehicles. The kits will better distribute the increased armor weight from the front to the center of the vehicle.

Scheduled work provides 25 units a week with a total of 625 units provided by the end of August. The extremely tight production schedule demonstrated to TACOM LCMC that TEAD's service and support capabilities can be used for future projects.

"In recognition of Tooele's responsiveness for the counter weight effort, TACOM (LCMC) has yet again called on their support to help produce a rack bracket that will add service life to the Radian Armored Cab Kits, until we can field our new Long Term Armor Solution vehicles," said Franklin. "Tooele has proven their capability to compete with the larger Army depots and we're ecstatic with their performance to date."

Spotlight on Lean Six Sigma

Project saves time in approving job fill criteria



Graphic by Microsoft

By Ursula Burkhalter
JMC Human Resources

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL, Ill.– The time between an approval to fill a vacancy and the approval of the job criteria has been reduced to less than three days as a result of a Lean Six Sigma green belt project. It has also saved the Joint Munitions Command more than $6,400.

The project's goal was to improve the cycle time between commander approval to fill and approval of the job criteria from managers to three days or less. The scope of the project included all vacant competitive fill positions located at JMC headquarters.

Tools used in analyzing project data include Pareto plots, scatter plots, a cause and effect matrix, a cause and effect diagram, failure modes and effects analysis, and control charts.

The team consisted of five members, all from JMC headquarters.

The team conducted a manager survey to assign priority ratings to improvements as the "voice of the customer." Customer requirements and process outputs included crediting plan process standardization, quality, simplified and streamlined processes to reduce rework, timely receipt of approved crediting plan, and acquires the "right fit" employee.

The survey allowed the team to focus on areas for improvement that were consistent with the baseline data cycle times. Data were generated to form baseline statistics for improvement. During the control phase, additional data was generated to show any/all improvements to the cycle time.

"In working through the project, awareness of the process and the troublesome points became apparent. Some things could easily be corrected or improved with training of management and employees within (JMC's) human resources directorate. Direction from the commander to fill positions quickly enhanced the positive results, as there was increased command emphasis on timeliness," said Marsha Huttenlocher, JMC human resources specialist.

"Improvements in the process will not only result in management having the "right fit" employees in a position faster, but will also reduce the amount of time being spent by management and the Human Resources Directorate in establishing well-written crediting plans," said Rita Smith, JMC programs specialist.

The project met the goals and provided other benefits such as increased customer satisfaction, decreased vacant position time, improved morale and enhanced mission effectiveness.

Common Cause Variation: The variation due to random shifts in factors that are always present in the process. A process with "only common cause variation" is said to be "in control" (or "in statistical control").

Environmental cleanup is a priority at Lake City

By Margaret Browne
JMC Public Affairs

INDEPENDENCE, Mo. -- In an industrial setting such as Lake City Army Ammunition Plant, there is always the possibility of contamination of surfaces and groundwater due to the activity taking place there. Industry standards done in the distant past, such as dumping industrial solid and liquid waste, we now know are harmful to the environment.

The standards predated today's environmental laws and at the time, the Army was in full compliance with any laws and regulations it was subject to according to Tom Buechler, Chief, Lake City's operations division.

The problems have been around a long time, but since there is so much awareness of what this hazardous waste can do to human health and the eco-system--how it affects the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breath--cleanup is of paramount importance. The task at hand today is removing or containing the toxic materials so that the groundwater does not get contaminated.

A "fixed-price, performance-based" contract from the Army Environmental Command is in place at Lake City. The contract's scope covers cleanup of groundwater contaminated by the plant's activities. Contaminants such as lead, solvents and depleted uranium can be found in the ground at Lake City, according to Kristine Stein, former environmental manager at Lake City. Stein now works for the Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District.

"LCAAP was the first JMC installation to implement the Environmental Management System. Management precludes trouble and is composed of compliance, pollution prevention and improvement," she said.

The cleanup at Lake City, which is to industrial standards, is accomplished through a system of wells that are placed strategically throughout the areas believed to have been contaminated. Some of the contamination is on the surface, some is in the groundwater. The contamination that this program is intended to remediate is in the groundwater.

The problem with the groundwater is that as it flows, it carries contaminants with it as it seeps throughout the ground. This seepage is called the plume and it is hard to contain because it is dissolved into the groundwater.

"The type of bio-remediation that is performed at Lake City is *insitu*, which means that it is performed 'in place," said Stein. "It is a system of wells through which the plumes are connected.

"This particular cleanup involves a huge volume of mixed waste, said Stein. "Microbes degrade it and render it innocuous. We remove what we can and let microbes do the rest."

The naturally occurring microbes reside in the soil. They are fed a digestible form of carbon. In the case of Lake City, it is molasses. When that source of carbon is exhausted, the microbes look for other sources of carbon. They end up ingesting the contamination and rendering it harmless to the environment, according to Stein.

Before anything is done, there is a pre-remedial process that is put in place. This involves a preliminary assessment, site investigation and a National Priorities Listing or "Superfund" designation, which is assigned by the EPA.

Then a remedial investigation is conducted, which entails characterizing the site as to the contaminants contained therein, assessing the baseline risk, studying different modes of treatment to be developed and screened, and completing of a detailed analysis of each treatment alternative.

Next, preferred remedies are identified, a proposed plan is formulated, public comment is solicited, the remedy is selected and a record of decision is drafted. The public comment is usually through the local Restoration Advisory Board.

A record of decision is an agreement which spells out what the problem is and how it will be solved. It is signed by the Army, the EPA and the state where the problem area is located. A record of decision can be amended if necessary.

"A record of decision says that 'this method is best,'" said Stein. "If one is written, and it is found that more work needs to be done, the document is rewritten. The EPA reviews progress every five years."

Remediation assessment started in the mid-1980s and included an investigation of the site, interviews with employees, soil and water sampling and looking at records to determine the scope and breadth of the problem, according to Stein. "Once it is determined how bad it is, ask the question of what level of effort is needed to clean it up," she said. "The military does a wonderful job cleaning up these sites and sets the example for other organizations.

Milan Army Ammunition Plant sells part of its past

By Darryl Howlett
JMC Public Affairs

U.S. Army photo by Darryl Howlett

Old railcars sit along the northern edges of the Milan Army Ammunition Plant. Plant officials are selling the cars for scrap metal.

MILAN, Tenn. -- If Bruce Laird had his way, 78 old train railcars would be coming to a scrap yard really soon.

Bruce Laird, transportation officer at the Milan Army Ammunition Plant, is leading the effort to turn 78 excess railcars into a profit for the plant.

"These railcars have been here for a long time," he said. "Now the cars are not railroad exchange interchangeable."

Laird, who began working on this project during the summer of 2007, said the break-barring boxes and steel wheels are obsolete.

"These are 1950s vintage railcars," he said. "The floors and walls are made of wood, but the value is in the wheels and railcar frames. They're made out of heavy-duty alloy steel. When you melt them down, they're very valuable."

Twenty-one railcars thus far are ready for purchase, according to Laird. It's also not uncommon for the plant to sell older materials no longer in use, use the sales money for other projects around the plant.

Resting in the northern reaches of the plant's boundaries, Laird said that once sold, the transportation of the cars with not be an issue, despite its heavy weight.

"We will set them on some lowboys and truck them out of here," he said.

Reset

Continued from page 2

gram," Bryant continued, noting that equipment reset will continue for at least two to three years after operations in Iraq and Afghanistan end.

If a vehicle is so damaged that it would be impossible or cost-prohibitive to repair, the Army will replace it, said Bryant.

"We always balance out the requirement between what is the cost of repairing the vehicle versus what is the cost of replacing the vehicle," he said. "That's obviously a function of both resources that we have available to place against the problem, and what is the best mix. If a vehicle is not cost-effective to repair, we will request replacement of it."

The reset equipment won't be returned to the same unit, but will go into a large Army "motor pool" and be assigned to commanders and units as needed. The process usually takes eight to 10 months, but can be expedited depending on requirements.

Bryant said the Army tries to get modernized or recapitalized equipment to Soldiers within six months of a unit's return so they'll have plenty of time to train before beginning another deployment, but added that both meeting this requirement and getting the equipment to theater where it's needed most is a big challenge.

In order to get equipment back into the hands of warfighters, depots like Anniston Army Depot, Ala.; Red River Army Depot, Texas; and Tobyhanna Army Depot, Penn., are busier than they've been since Vietnam. According to Bryant, most are meeting or surpassing production requirements.

Some depot employees even deploy to the Middle East to repair equipment in theater, and the Army Sustainment Command recently began sending teams to individual units to repair smaller equipment like weapons, radios, and chemical and biological detection and sensing equipment. According to Bryant, in two or three weeks one team might repair 40,000 pieces of equipment for a brigade combat team.

"Commanders love it. They said it's exactly the right way to do it, and we're trying to see if we can expand it throughout the total force as much as possible. That's over and above equipment which is so seriously damaged that it has to be evacuated to a depot facility for repair," said Bryant.

"The reset program has been a tremendous success," he said. "The proof is in the fact that when our units deploy, commanders have what they need to do their jobs."

Virtual

Continued from page 1

they wanted to put that level of detail into their graphics simulation, Drake said.

At that point, Drake said, the simulation team had minimal graphics in their designs – for instance they were using blocks as tanks – and engineers thought the America's Army graphics could be incorporated in training, simulations, prototyping, mission rehearsal and all types of other areas to assist Soldiers.

He also said that since the Army owned the license, they were able to give ARDEC the development code, editor and everything that came with the license.

However, getting the license was the easy part. Drake said that initially it was difficult to convince people the virtual training battlefield was a relevant one.

"It took a little while for people to see video games as a worthwhile way to train Soldiers," Drake said. "There was quite a bit of resistance up front, but now more and more people are accepting it."

The Picatinny team began by designing virtual prototyping technology for the XM25 grenade launcher that turned out to be more of a technology demonstrator.

Drake said that while it did not actually get into the Soldiers hands, it provided an awareness of how the new simulation technology could work.

The XM25 grenade is a 25 mm air-bursting munition, "so it's really cutting edge and … difficult to show how that works on a Power Point," Drake said. "But with us implementing it into America's Army, we could kind of provide that 3-D feel of what it's going to look like, how it's going to behave and give people a much better feel for how it works."

The Talon and PackBot training simulation begin when the AA-Picatinny team paired with ARDEC's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technology Directorate members.

The Foster-Miller Talon and iRobot PackBot are both tracked robots used to disarm improvised explosive devices. Because they are remotely operated and equipped with cameras, they allow Soldiers to safely detonate suspicious objects from a distance.

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Mero, who has served tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan, works in ARDEC's EOD Technology Directorate to help develop trainers for the Talon and PackBot robots.

The trainers are virtual robots that allow Soldiers to gain experience driving robots without actually having the robots present, Mero said.

The trainers were needed because when the Army stopped using the 450-pound Andros robot in exchange for the lighter PackBot and Talons, they did not have enough robots to train with, he said.

While quantity is not such an issue these days, the approximately $140,000 cost of the Talons makes it cost-effective to train Soldiers with virtual robots before using the real robots, he continued.

"Use of a simulator reduces cost of repairs to the robot platform," Mero said. "Utilizing training systems help reduce roll-overs and silly accidents that shouldn't happen."

The Talon trainer, currently on its third upgrade, is physically similar to the Talon. The training control unit hooks into a laptop, which plays the Talon Trainer video game. The main controls for the video game are almost identical to the controls on the real Talon.

Mero said the trainers are meant to familiarize the operators with the controls as opposed to training them how to respond to different incidents and situations.

However, the operators also detonate different types of IEDs using an assortment of methods. The IEDs are found in locations realistic to where Soldiers would find when deployed, such as hidden in sandbags or in courtyards.

Mero said the AA-Picatinny team does all the code writing for the trainers – the EOD professionals give them scenarios they want and the AA team creates the graphics in-house.

Approximately 90 trainers are being used by all branches of the military. Unlike the America's Army video game, the trainers are available only to the military.

Wyche

Continued from page 3

He also said JMC employees need to keep the customer's requirements in mind. Sometimes the customer is not asking for much, but JMC needs to be attuned to those needs. He then told a story of Soldiers returning to Kandahar after fighting for three weeks in the rugged terrain of southwest Afghanistan. The Soldiers were weary, had not had baths in weeks, and had been in an incredibly stressful environment. Wyche's command had set up the area for their return with clean clothes, a chaplain, and bottled drinks on ice. One of the Soldiers, covered with dust and grime from the battlefield, came up to Wyche and said, "Sir, thank you for the cold Gatorade." Wyche said that this amazed him. "These are the customers we are supporting in the war fight," said Wyche. He said it is important to "continue to get feedback from your customers" and to "find out what's on their mind."

Wyche ended the town hall as it began, restating the importance of JMC employees in making sure that Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Civilians, and contractors on the battlefield are supported with munitions that are ready, reliable, and lethal and complimenting employees on a job well done.

JM&L LCMC's Safety Spot Check

Take a Hike

By Michael Wood
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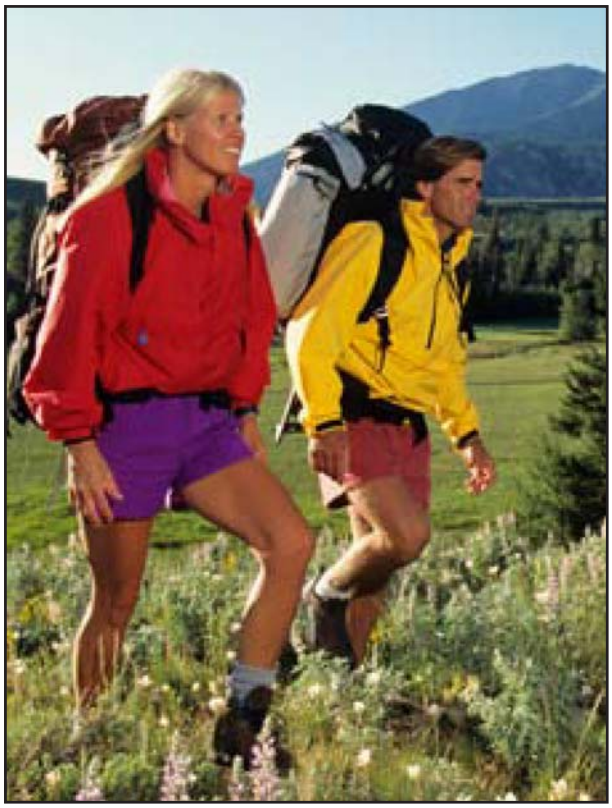
FORT RUCKER, Ala. -- For many Americans, a trip to the great outdoors can be a great way to leave behind the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Before communing with Mother Nature, however, hikers and campers must first ensure they're properly prepared.



Every year, Families load up their gear for camping or hiking getaways into the wilderness or mountains. While these outdoor activities may seem relatively safe, they can be deadly for those who don't take the appropriate safety precautions. Since fiscal year 2001, the Army has lost 13 Soldiers to hiking and mountain climbing accidents and another Soldier was electrocuted when lightning struck his tent.

Before heading out for any outdoors adventure, it's important to plan ahead. Campers and hikers should learn as much as possible about the area they will visit and have a written plan of activities, a map of the area, emergency phone numbers and the locations of medical assistance, lodges and park rangers.

It's also a good idea to leave a copy of these plans with someone at home.

Once at their destination, the California Department of Parks and Recreation recommends hikers and campers adhere to the following safety tips:

• Always hike with a friend or Family member.

• Take plenty of drinking water. Leave stream, river and lake water for the park wildlife. Although it looks clean and refreshing, mountain stream water can make you ill.

• Always let someone back at camp or home know where you're going and when you plan to return.

Take a mobile phone for emergencies or to let them know you have returned safely.

• Don't leave the hiking trail. Doing so increases the chances of suffering an injury or getting lost.

• Be aware of local wildlife. Whenever you encounter wildlife on a trail, keep your distance, back away slowly and do not run. Report your sightings to a park ranger.

After a long day trekking through the woods, many hikers like to spend the evening relaxing by a campfire.

By following a few simple fire safety rules from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, you can prevent a smoldering ember from becoming a wildfire.

• Dig a small pit away from overhanging branches. (Most parks have campfire pits ready and waiting for you.)

• Circle the pit with rocks or be sure it already has a metal fire ring.

• Clear a 5-foot area around the pit down to the soil.

• Keep a bucket of water and a shovel nearby.

• Stack extra wood upwind and away from the fire.

• After lighting, do not discard the match until it is cold.

• Never leave a campfire unattended, not even for a minute.

The weather can also present challenges to hikers and campers. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports that lightning, which is a serious hazard to any outdoor recreational activity, kills an average 62 people a year.

If you find yourself unexpectedly caught in inclement weather while hiking or camping, do not seek shelter under tall trees, tents or near metal objects. The best shelter is a building or your vehicle. If caught in open terrain, seek lower areas and stay at least 15 feet from other members of your group.

There's nothing quite like the sights and sounds of nature. By placing safety first, you can help ensure your Family's outdoor activities are enjoyable experiences for years to come.

For more information on the 101 Critical Days of Summer safety campaign, visit https://crc.army.mil.