

Building Bridges



For the Soldiers of River Assault

2014

U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers of the 412th and 416th Theater Engineer Commands prepare to disembark for improved ribbon bridge construction on the Arkansas River for Operation River Assault - an annual training exercise that focuses on collective and mission-essential training at Fort Chaffee, Ark., July 23.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Rognstad



Soldiers gain new experiences on weapons, vehicles

By Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
412th Theater Engineer Command

The Army has a variety of weapons and vehicles Soldiers train to fire and drive, but some are a bit more exclusive.

The 449th Engineer Company and Forward Support Company, 478th Engineer Battalion trained on some of the less common weapons and vehicles during Operation River Assault at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

Vehicles comprise of the M9 Armored Combat Earthmover, the M60A1 Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge and the M113 Armored Personnel Carrier. Weapons include hand grenades, Mossberg 500 shotguns, Mark 19 40 mm grenade machine gun, M2 machine gun, M240 machine guns and demolitions.

The shotgun range, held July 19, was one of the more exciting ranges for the Soldiers.

"I loved it," said Sgt. Lindsay Schwab, a track mechanic from Cincinnati, with Forward Support Company, 478th Engineer Battalion.

"It was a little harder than what I thought as far as the recoil goes, but I liked it. I would defi-



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
U.S. Army Reserve Pvt. Daniel Pyles, a fueler from Loveland, Ohio, with Forward Support Company, 478th Engineer Battalion, fires the Mossberg 500 shotgun at his target during a qualification range July 19 at Fort Chaffee, Ark.

nately do it again."

To qualify on the shotgun, Soldiers fired from five positions, including standing exposed and behind a barricade, kneeling, and crouching. They received 10 rounds, two per target, which contain six to eight pellets. Qualification consisted of placing 16 pellets in a silhouetted target.

"Shotguns are part of ballistic breaching so it's important to have people qualified on how to use it," said Staff Sgt. Ryan Wood, a platoon sergeant from Cincinnati, attached to the 449th

Engineer Company. "It's also a weapon issued to a lot of units. It's primarily used in security as a gate guard and things of that nature."

Ballistic breaching is the use of a slug to penetrate a metal door or anything thicker than can be breached manually. The shotgun is used to destroy the hinges or a deadbolt.

Wood said many of the Soldiers probably hadn't qualified

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One team: building bonds through IED defeat

By Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
412th Theater Engineer Command

Soldiers drive slowly down the road, watching on either side for any indication of an improvised explosive device. They must make sure this road is clear.

These Soldiers are not in Afghanistan. They are training at Fort Chaffee, Ark., during Operation River Assault.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
U.S. Army Reserve Spc. Stacy Glover, a combat engineer from Lakeland, Fla., with the 689th Engineer Company, reassembles a squad automatic weapon during weapon familiarization training July 20 at Fort Chaffee, Ark., for Operation River Assault. Soldiers with the 689th Eng. Co., 420th Engineer Brigade and 412th Theater Engineer Command Deployable Command Post, conducted route clearance training in addition to IED awareness training, medical training, weapon familiarization and a dismounted patrol.

Soldiers with the 689th Engineer Company, 420th Engineer Brigade and 412th Theater Engineer Command's Deployable Command Post, formed a route clearance team July 20.

"Today, we're out here at the IED lane range," said Sgt. Richard Berryman, a reconnaissance sergeant from Vicksburg, Mississippi, with the 412th TEC's DCP. "What it is, is for combat engineers, our primary job overseas is to search and find improvised explosive devices and get rid of them as safely as possible, not only for military personnel, but also for the civilian population over there."

The units conducted two route clearance missions as well as IED awareness training, medical training, weapon familiarization and a dismounted patrol.

"The troops did really well," said Staff Sgt. David Rosado, a platoon sergeant with the 689th Eng. Co., and a Kissimmee, Fla., resident. "The communication was outstanding, which is really key for route clearance. The tactics are a little rusty, but they kept communicating and adjusting as they went along, which is really key in route clearance."

Soldiers in the units said they worked very well together.

"It's worked out really well having all three units together," said Berryman. "The 689th is the host of this lane and having the 420th and then us, 412th combat engineers there, they've really accepted us. The great thing about being engineers we all just fall into place and do our jobs as a family. We know our basic jobs and then we just contribute as best we can here and there."

Not only did they fall in as a family, but this is great training for when Soldier are pulled from other units to support or cross-leveled when the unit deploys.

"We got to throw in Soldiers from the 420th and the 412th TEC into the line platoons," said Rosado. "You get cross-leveled Soldiers all the time so it's pretty important to know how to communicate and talk to others, build that rapport with other Soldiers who are not part of your unit. So, I hope at the end of this exercise, the Soldiers have a couple more friends, a couple more battle buddies they

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Building Bridges

The Official Publication of River Assault

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Engineers compose bridge across Arkansas River

By Staff Sgt. Peter A. Ford
211th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

The 412th and 416th Theater Engineer Commands alongside aviation and army diving assets combined forces to meet the challenges of crossing the Arkansas River at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, July 23.

Operation River Assault is an exercise executed with coordination, communication and precision. The building of an improved ribbon bridge is similar to a composer assembling conductors and musicians with instruments to create a masterpiece.

“This exercise is the primary engineer exercise of the Reserve component where we actually give our units an opportunity to practice building an improved ribbon bridge over a river which will enable the movement of Army assets across it,” said Col.

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Top: Medics with HHC, 397th Eng. Bn, set up their equipment in preparation. Medics had stations at every launch site as a precautionary measure.

Right: A U.S. Army Reserve Soldier pilots a bridge erection boat in the early morning hours on the Arkansas River.

Below: Bridge erection boat crews await CH-47 Chinook helicopters to drop bridge bays into the Arkansas River.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rigo Cisneros



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Rognstad



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Peter A. Ford



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rigo Cisneros

Clockwise from top: U.S. Army Reserve engineers with the 416th and 412th Theater Engineer Commands standby as fellow engineers continue to work on the improved ribbon bridge on the Arkansas River July 23 during Operation River Assault.

A CH-47 Chinook helicopter drops a bridge bay during the assembly of the improved ribbon bridge across the Arkansas River as distinguished visitors look on.

A bridge crew member jumps onto a bridge bay connecting it to his boat so the crew could use it to connect other bridge bays to complete the improved ribbon bridge.

U.S. Army Reserve engineers with the 416th and 412th Theater Engineer Commands wait as a bridge bay segment opens before maneuvering it into place with a bridge erection boat.

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Kirk Claunch, 420th Engineer Brigade commander, and a Fort Worth, Texas, resident. “Detailed coordination of this River Assault is actually done by the crossing force commander who ensures the bridge companies and aviation assets coordinate in ways necessary to get the number of bays and boats into the water at the right time.”

In the early morning hours, Soldiers staged their equipment and stood ready to engage in the task like musicians of a symphony who anxiously wait for the signal from the conductor to start playing so their symphonic masterpiece. At the break of dawn, the crossing force commander gave the order to the commanders to begin building the improved ribbon bridge.

“There is a huge component of leadership and I can’t directly conduct a bridge boat or a bridge bay to go in a certain location at a certain time but I can lead leaders or company commanders,” said Lt. Col. David R. Skavnak, 397th Eng. Battalion commander and the crossing force commander of Operation River Assault. “Most of the orchestration is between

the companies and company commanders.”

After receiving the order from the crossing commander to build the improved ribbon bridge, the company commanders lead their units, moving equipment with precision. Bridge erection boats dropped into the water from the shore followed by bridge bays from land and air with no breaks between the insertions of the equipment.

The motivation of the engineer units was much like the emotion and passion of musicians in a symphony giving the audience a performance. The engineers exceeded the standards of the river crossing increasing their esprit de corp with a memorable performance.

“Our unit erected 11 bays in 22 minutes and 39 seconds; exceeding the Army standards of six bays in 20 minutes,” said Staff Sgt. Charles Elliott, a multi-role bridge engineer with 401st Engineer Company, out of Mustang, Oklahoma. “The more we train the better we get.”

The 412th and the 416th Theater Engineer Command’s engineer Soldiers assembled the bridge to cross the Arkansas River in a little more than three hours.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rigo Cisneros

Clockwise from left: U.S. Army Reserve engineers standby as fellow engineers cross the completed improved ribbon bridge.

U.S. Army Reserve engineers disassemble the improved ribbon bridge.

U.S. Army Reserve engineers maneuver a bridge bay segment into place with a bridge erection boat.

U.S. Army Reserve engineers standby as fellow engineers, who pulled far shore security, cross the completed improved ribbon bridge.

U.S. Army Reserve Col. Kirk Claunch, 420th Engineer Brigade commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Rickie Virgil, command sergeant major of the 420th, march on an improved ribbon bridge constructed by a mix of Reserve and active duty engineer Soldiers as part of Operation River Assault

U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers of the 412th and 416th Theater Engineer Commands link bridge bays together to form an improved ribbon bridges on the Arkansas River.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rigo Cisneros



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Rognstad



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rigo Cisneros



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rigo Cisneros



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Rognstad

Developing Soldiers, teamwork through training

By Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
412th Theater Engineer Command

Soldiers are lined up, weapons ready; they begin to walk forward raising their weapons to engage their target. They stay on-line; a musical rhythm resonates as they fire their three-round bursts.

The U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers of the 477th Engineer Platoon, 388th Engineer Company, headquartered in West Palm Beach, Florida, conducted reflexive fire July 16 during Operation River Assault 2014 at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

“Reflexive fire is individual movement designed to allow troops to fire on the move,” said 2nd Lt. James Hardy, platoon leader of the 477th. “Most of the time in the past they had to fire from a standing, kneeling or prone position. This actually adds a little more realism in it where they have to fire from different angles, while moving as well as under stressful conditions.”

Reflexive fire is a vital skill for Soldiers to learn because it’s more likely in a combat situation.

“The reason it’s important is because in a combat scenario you’re not just standing and shooting,” added Hardy, a New Orleans native. “A lot of time you’re running and gunning, you’re out of breath, you’re under stress and this is the best way we can simulate those conditions in a controlled environment: giving them the stress, out of breath, high heat rates, heavy breathing and still having them able to maintain accuracy under fire and under stress.”

The Soldiers found the training enjoyable and said they felt it was good to train firing on the move.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
U.S. Army Reserve Soldier Spc. Boris Gorrita (right), a combat engineer 477th Eng. Plt. from West Palm Beach, Fla., fires his M16A2 rifle at a target during reflexive fire while Sgt. Richard McClung, a combat engineer from Inverness, Fla., also with the 477th, keeps him on-line.

“I think it was an awesome exercise,” said Spc. Boris Gorrita, 477th combat engineer from West Palm Beach. “I would say it was good for experience, especially considering when we qualify we always do one round, maybe controlled pairs and we’re never moving around so if we’re going out to the field or we’re deploying overseas anywhere we’d have no idea, you never know what it’s like.”

While the reflexive fire is an essential task, it’s not the only one the Soldiers will be learning

“What this is for us is a Soldier-first training as opposed to a mission-first training event so we are looking to develop our Soldiers,” said Hardy. “Through that we’ll be doing some MOUT courses, some military operations in urban terrain, which will consist of breaching and clearing, as well as helo-casting, which is jumping out of helicopters into the ocean - it’s a quick insertion method - and a lot of individual Soldier tasks such as weapon drills, working on their (physical fitness), a lot of individual tasks.”

The unit plans to work hard on their training for the next two weeks, but also made time for Soldier care.

“We have some time built in to actually work with the Soldiers, not just on training, but with financial issues and make sure all the Soldiers are up-to-date on their schooling,” said Hardy. “It gets us to bring them together and really make sure everyone is on the same page; everyone is up-to-date.”

While all the Soldier care and training is important, what Hardy really wants is for the Soldiers to get a good feel for full-time Army life.

“What we want for them to get out of this whole River Assault is not just the training - the training is extremely important - but what it’s like to be in a garrison environment on an active-duty military base. Getting out of the mentality of a two-day a month type training,” said Hardy. “They have to eat, live, sleep and breathe the Army.”

The training has already reaped benefits for the Soldiers and the unit.

“This builds cohesion and helps us stand out as leaders,” said Hardy. “This is actually allowing us to truly bond through training and what the Army puts us through, but it builds a lot of camaraderie and team spirit.”

Helocasting: A dip in the river



Clockwise from left: A U.S. Army Reserve Soldier jumps out of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during helocasting, a battlefield insertion technique.

U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers with the 365th Eng. Co. (Sappers), swim to shore after helocasting from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

A CH-47 Chinook crew member with 158th Aviation Brigade observes the Arkansas River during a fly-by before allowing Soldiers to helocast.

U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers with the 365th Eng. Co. (Sappers) emerge from the water after helocasting, a low-altitude battlefield insertion technique.

U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best



Just another day in paradise



U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Rogstad

Get him to the chopper!



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Rognstad



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Rognstad



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Aaron Rognstad

Clockwise from above: Canadian Sgt. Isaac Anderson, 33rd Canadian Brigade Group from Ottawa, Ontario, and U.S. Army Reserve Sgts. Christopher Manley, a general equipment operator and Portland, Ore., resident, and Carlos Lopez, a reconnaissance sergeant, from Vancouver, Wash., both with the 671st Eng. Co., carry a litter with a mock casualty over their heads simulating crossing through water while competing in an obstacle course competition, July 16.

U.S. Army Reserve Sgts. Carlos Veloz (bottom), a machinist from Bellingham, Wash., Robert Collins (top), a heavy equipment operator from Seattle, and Jonathan Miller (right), a mechanic from Oak Harbor, Wash., all from the 671st Eng. Co., compete in an obstacle course competition while carrying a simulated casualty on a litter July 16.

U.S. Army Reserve Spc. Carlos Veloz, a machinist from Bellingham, Wash. from the 671st Eng. Co., competes in an obstacle course competition while carrying a simulated casualty on a litter as part of a three-man team during Operation River Assault.

U.S. Army Reserve Sgts. Carlos Veloz (left), a machinist, Robert Collins (right), a heavy equipment operator, and Jonathan Miller (back), a mechanic, all from the 671st Eng. Co. compete in an obstacle course competition July 16.

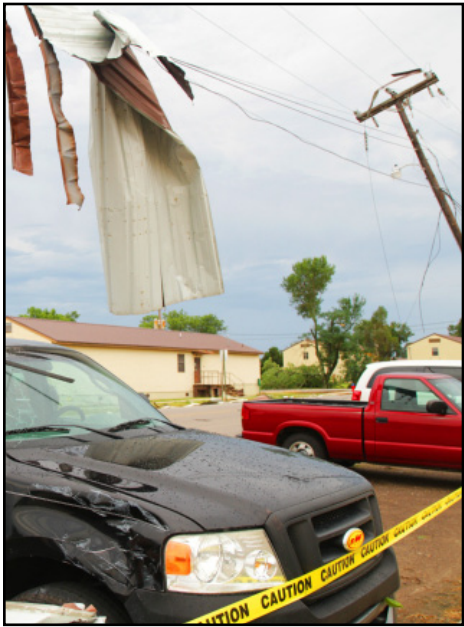
‘Gustnado’ hits Fort Chaffee during River Assault

On the afternoon of the 23rd about four hours after the river crossing, the skies over post darkened within minutes and a storm abruptly moved into the area.

A “gustnado,” as the local media called it, touched down at approximately 3 p.m., causing damage to more than 20 buildings and knocking out power to more than half the post for days. No injuries were reported.



U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Aaron Rognstad



Training to provide essential support during River Assault

By Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
412th Theater Engineer Command

When hearing about an Army exercise called Operation River Assault, most people would think of boats and bridges, but it takes far more to ensure this exercise is successful than just amphibious equipment.

The 381st Engineer Company, out of Tifton, Georgia, provides one of the pieces to make this operation run smoothly.

“Our job for this exercise, specifically we re-grade the roads so they can get the bridge down to the launch site safely and be able to have an area to stage their vehicles,” said Sgt. Kirk Jackson, 381st job site supervisor from Valdosta, Georgia.

“Some of them are in pretty bad condition because of the rain; they’re washed out. A lot of them are really dusty. That’s another one of our missions out here is to provide support with our water distributor to lay water on the road and keep the dust down when convoys are coming in and out.”

To complete their mission, the 381st uses a variety of heavy equipment. It is vital for the Soldiers to be able to operate the heavy vehicles so the first training the unit conducted when they arrived at Fort Chaffee, was equipment training and re-familiarization. The vehicles they trained on included a roller, wheeled loader, deployable universal combat earthmover, motorized road grader and the D6K dozer.

“Today we’re doing equipment training; just getting re-famil-

iarized with the equipment and getting some of the new Soldiers who haven’t been on this equipment before, getting them trained up so when they go out to the job sites they’ll be good to go,” said Jackson.

The grader is a newer model, which replaced the seven levers and steering wheel to operate the vehicle with two joysticks. Most of the Soldiers said they were unfamiliar with the new design and were excited to learn how to operate the vehicle.

“It’s got two joysticks, but there is just so much you can do with those joysticks,” said Mary Daniels, 381st heavy equipment operator, also from Valdosta, after operating the grader. “I prefer the new one. I just need a little more operators training to get a better understanding. This is my first time on the new one. If

I have more time, I think I can get it. I can get it down pat, I’m sure.”

The Soldiers are not only excited about training on the new vehicles, but also because the opportunities have been rare at home.

“It’s been a long time since we’ve been on our equipment because it’s been raining back home so we really can’t do a lot of stick time,” said Daniels. “Being out here it’s really nice great weather.”

Not only is the weather a blessing, but the Soldiers also said getting this training is important for their mission.

“It helps us get ready and makes us feel more confident in our jobs so when we do deploy we won’t be lost,” said Daniels.

“We’ll know what we have to do with all our equipment,” she added.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
Sgt. Kirk Jackson (right), job site supervisor, reviews the controls of the vehicle with Spc. Mary Daniels, heavy equipment operator, while training on the motorized road grader. The 381st Engineer Company Soldiers from Valdosta, Ga., conducted equipment training and re-familiarization during Operation River Assault at Fort Chaffee, Ark., July 15.

Our Northern cousins: U.S., Canadian Reserve engineers train together

By Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
412th Theater Engineer Command

Eighteen Reserve members of the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian engineers imbedded with the U.S. Army Reserve’s 412th and 416th Theater Engineer Command engineer units for Operation River Assault at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, July 14 to 26.

“Our mission here is to observe how you guys train, as in the U.S. combat engineers,” said Canadian Cpl. Unyun Ni, 41 Canadian Engineer Regiment, out of Edmonton, Alberta. “Training will mainly focus on how you build bridges, demolition and get a little bit of weapon handling time in there as well.”

The Canadians said they were well received by the U.S. Soldiers they are working alongside.

“(The Canadian Soldiers) have been welcomed by the American forces here,” said Canadian Maj. Steven Boychyn, commander of the Canadian contingent, with the 32 CER, and a Toronto resident. “We’ve integrated our corporals, sergeants; all levels have been fully integrated.”

The Canadian Reserve decided to send forces from all across the country due to availability and other training commitments.

“We are all volunteers who came here on this exercise,” said Boychyn. “I think a lot of us recognized the opportunity with the scope and scale of this exercise.”

The Canadians were mixed into units just like any other Soldier.

“Right now one of my sergeants is leading the recon team for one of the companies, so he’s in charge of the small detachment that’s out there,” said Boychyn. “Most of my corporals, as that is the vast majority of what I have here, are actually just imbedded into the different platoons and squads so they are doing everything from the demolition, the crew-serve weapons; they did the individual qualification on the M16 (rifle). They will be participating as a boat crew and probably driving some of the boats as we build the bridge across the river. Everything from a little squaddie digging trenches to my lieutenant leading the entire platoon and doing all the planning as well.”

The equipment training available during River

Assault is impressive for the Canadian Soldiers, said Boychyn, as well as the training opportunities and the grand scope of the exercise.

“Just the number of bays, number of bridges, all the different equipment, the size of the river that’s being crossed and the size of the floating bridge that’s being created,” Boychyn said. “We don’t get to see that type of opportunity almost ever in our careers up north.”

The Canadian group expressed similarities, more so than the differences between their military and the much larger American one to the south.

“I think it was one of the colonels here who mentioned, ‘we’re all the same, with just a slight difference,’ and it has proven to be absolutely true,” Boychyn said. “This is an opportunity to share knowledge and just see the slight differences between how we do things and (the American Soldiers) do things. It

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U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
A contingent of Canadian Reserve Soldiers worked alongside the U.S. Army Reserve engineers from the 416th and 412th Theater Engineer Commands during Operation River Assault at Fort Chaffee, Ark., July 14 to 26. The 18 Canadian Soldiers were imbedded into various companies and battalions during their two-week stay.

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can lean on for information and training.”

The lane is designed for route clearance engineers to preform their tactics, techniques and procedures and prepare them for any environment.

“The 689th has been deployed twice within last six, seven years, once to Iraq, once to Afghanistan, so we’re pretty familiar with some of the newer tactics Afghanistan has to offer,” said Rosado. “The lane mixes both Iraq and Afghanistan so it throws some of the old stuff back into play.”

Not only is there a variety of experiences on the lane, but also in the vehicles driving through the lanes.

“We had a lot of new guys,” said Berryman. “We did quite well today as far as their inexperience. We do have some experienced people, such as myself, who have seen IEDs over in Iraq and Afghanistan, the different types. As far as running through it, everything went extremely well for our first scenario.”

While there was a mix of experienced and inexperienced Soldiers, there were even some Soldier who were in the mix to get a feel for what a combat engineer does and decide if they want to pursue that field.

Pvt. Derrick Benson, an intelligence analyst with the 412th TEC’s DCP from New Orleans, is one of those Soldiers.

“I’m cross-training right now,” he said. “It’s possible if I could re-class, 12B (combat engineer) would definitely be at the top of the list after this training. It’s just more of an on-the-ground type job and it’s just cool watching things explode. It’s the heat of the moment, a lot of adrenaline and it’s good training.”

The leaders who went through the lane think this training is valuable for their future in route clearance.

“Those who have never seen it before, I think it’s beneficial to them because the way we actually do it here in training is the same thing they’ll see down-range,” said Spc. Dakota Perez, a combat engineer from Dallas, Texas with the 420th Eng. Bde. “It’s never easy but it’s not hard to spot something. As long as they can spot out the obvious and the small things, they can get a bigger picture out of it.”

Not only is the training important for application, but it also is important for the Soldiers to experi-



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
U.S. Army Reserve Sgts. Elvin Algarin (right), a Orlando, Fla., resident, and Andrew Breaux, from Titusville, Fla., squad leaders with the 689th Engineer Company, discuss their route clearance plan using rocks to represent convoy vehicles July 20 at Fort Chaffee, Ark., during Operation River Assault.

ence the emotions.

“(The adrenaline rush) is there, especially for non-experienced personnel,” said Berryman. “It can definitely be a rush as far as mentality and heart racing and definitely catches you your first time out and even every time after that it still does. Primarily, that first time is what usually breaks Soldiers in on how to deal with the pace, what to do and what to do if it actually does detonate.”

Some Soldiers experienced this rush for the first time, but the experienced engineers’ goal is to make sure that adrenaline doesn’t take over.

“When we did take some course of action when something happened, knowledge just started pouring through my head of what to do, stay calm, keep my guys calm, make sure they weren’t putting themselves out there in danger,” said Perez.

Leaders at the lane hope this training helps the interaction among the Soldiers.

“I would like the junior (noncommissioned officers) to begin that leadership spot and they do that especially on a lane like this,” said Rosado. “They have to make decision and the lower enlisted get to see these corporals and sergeants making decisions on the spot, learning how to communicate, learning how to lead Soldiers in basic Soldier skills, Army Warrior Tasks and training. For us it’s part of that mission essential communication that everybody needs to know. So, hopefully by the end of this exercise, they’re going to know the fundamentals of what it takes to make decisions, on the spot, on the go, especially if an event happens.”

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with a shotgun and thought only a few ever used the weapon in the Army during urban operations training. While the Soldiers may not be experienced with the weapon, Wood is convinced this training is important to build on, even if they don’t qualify.

“I know a lot of them aren’t going to get it on the first try and unfortunately I don’t think we have the rounds to allow a second try,” said Wood, “but even if they don’t qualify, at least they get their hands on a weapon they haven’t shot before and they build a little bit of confidence so maybe next time they get a chance to get it.”

The shotgun may not be as easy for beginners as it looks, according to 1st Lt. Aubrey Smoot, a platoon leader from Raleigh, North Carolina attached to the 449th Engineer Company. Smoot said the most difficult part of qualifying with the shotgun as

opposed to other weapons is “adjusting for the recoil. If you haven’t fired a shotgun recently, it’s a stark difference between your M4 (carbine) or your M16 (rifle).”

While the recoil may be challenging for some, others find it’s an adrenaline rush.

Schwab said her favorite part of shotgun qualification was “feeling the power of it - the whole recoil and everything.”

Wood thinks giving Soldiers training on less common weapons and vehicles encourages the Soldiers.

“Motivation is up. Everyone is having fun. Take shotgun for instance,” said

Wood. “They are getting a chance to do things. Either shoot a weapon or drive a vehicle they haven’t touched before. As long as we can keep that up, they’re happy.”

The Soldiers should stay happy with more weapon ranges and a demolition later in the week.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Debralee Best
U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. Evan Peul, a squad leader, acts as a wall for Spc. Andrew Gula, a team leader, to demonstrate the proper stance while using cover during a Mossberg 500 shotgun qualification range July 19.

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has been a great learning opportunity.”

Boychyn said the one major difference is the time spent at the unit.

The Canadian Reserve usually spends one to two nights a week conducting training and preparing for an exercise, followed by one weekend a month in the field. Annual 10-day exercises are usually in the summer, as opposed to the U.S. Reserve’s one weekend a month and two to three weeks a year.

“That’s the primary difference,” said Boychyn. “Otherwise I think the Canadian Reserve and the American Reserve are very similar in that we bring a vast experience from our civilian side that

only augments our abilities to do our military jobs.”

This experience was important for the Canadian Soldiers for the training, but also because of the possibility of being deployed in the same location. The networking is one of the most integral parts of the exercise.

“Any opportunities we have to train here at home in North America together is just an excellent opportunity and I personally fully plan on keeping contact with the people we’ve met here, those who are close to the border at least, inviting them north to some of our events, even if it’s just a social event, to keep up the ties,” said Boychyn. “I think these types of cross-border opportunities are invaluable. You can’t put a price on it when we’re actually working together like this.”

U.S. Army Reserve engineers with the 416th and 412th Theater Engineer Commands maneuver bridge bay segments into place with bridge erection boats on the Arkansas River. Forty-two segments were used to cross a 300- meter section of the river in 3 hours.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rigo Cisneros

