

## 2nd Brigade Combat Team engineers clear way

by Sgt. Sierra A. Fown, 2nd Brigade Combat Team | Posted: Thursday, May 21, 2015 6:00 pm

Engineers from Company A, 39th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, ended a four-day field training exercise May 14. Training included executing explosive timber cutting operations, constructing a combat trail and a helicopter landing zone, and establishing an anti-vehicle timber obstacle.

“The engineers were given a mission to construct a combat trail and helicopter landing zone through a densely wooded area, which was intersected by a small stream, and then ultimately block the trail with an obstacle,” said Capt. Ryan B. Orbison, commander, Company A, 39th BEB, 2nd BCT Strike. “This training event enabled Soldiers and leaders to understand not just the capabilities of themselves and their equipment, but also how they are used to accomplish tactical effects.”

Since September 11, 2001, the role of the Engineer Corps in combat has heavily focused on route clearing.

The training conducted by Co. A includes other functions of the corps, which Orbison hopes will make for a better-rounded engineer.

“The training we completed hasn’t been done in over 15 years,” said Staff Sgt. Wilfredo Llorens, squad leader, Co. A. “We are going back to our roots as horizontal engineers, in addition to combat engineers.”

Horizontal engineering involves operating earth moving equipment to construct roads or obstacles and dig survivability positions, Llorens said. Sappers, or light combat engineers, typically attach directly to maneuver units to explosively or manually clear obstacles and construct wire or explosive obstacles.

The training began with Sappers employing military demolitions to fallen trees. With trees felled, the engineer construction equipment moved onto site and began constructing a two-lane combat trail and landing zone for two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. When the combat trail reached swampy low ground, the Sappers brushed up on their woodsmen skills by constructing a hasty culvert out of timber from cleared trees that was capable of supporting military vehicles.

“Training of this nature is a major transition away from route clearance and combined arms clearance and really lets the engineers exercise their vast utility and agility,” Orbison said.



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Soldiers with Company A, 39th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, prep a tree for demolition with C4 plastic explosives during a field training exercise at Fort Campbell, May 13.

The training event concluded when the Sappers employed their military demolitions to create an abatis – a countermobility obstacle of six to 12 large fallen trees in an interwoven pattern that blocks even tanks from getting through a road. The engineers demonstrated their mastery of shaping the terrain to support a maneuver commander’s intent and were able to help ensure range control was able to facilitate future gunnery training on Fort Campbell.

“The Soldiers honed their technical proficiency, but most importantly, the leaders were presented with challenges they had never faced,” said Orbison. “This was a great event to train some of those core mobility and counter-mobility tasks, which an engineer brings to the fight.”

Llorens hopes that the shift in training focus will give new engineers and incoming engineers a better understanding of how complex and multifaceted the corps of engineers really is.

“A lot of our guys came from a unit where they focused heavily on route-clearing,” said Llorens. “As a junior Soldier, I didn’t get a chance to get training on operating heavy equipment, so I am glad my Soldiers are getting the opportunity to experience it.”

Earlier this year Alpha Company took home the coveted Itschner Award, which distinguishes one engineer company as the best in the United States Army.