

Simulation training enhanced by role playing unit



Dressed in full Afghan attire, complete with authentic beards, long hair and wardrobe, members of 3 Platoon, Contemporary Operational Environmental Forces unit, trained Task Force 1-09 near Fort Bliss, Texas.

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Fort Bliss, Texas – The Contemporary Operational Environmental Forces (COEFOR) unit exported its unique skills in support of Task Force 1-09's final confirmation training in January.

Dressed in full Afghan attire, complete with authentic beards, long hair and wardrobe, the unit's soldiers created scenarios at Fort Bliss that soldiers can expect to face in theatre.

The bilingual unit is normally based at CFB Wainwright's Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre, but it is deployable.

"We export our soldiers, equipment and capabilities to wherever the training is required," said Sergeant Jean-François Germain, a member of 3 Platoon in COEFOR. "I have worked in Mississippi, Texas and California in support of American and Canadian troops in training."



Sergeant Jean-François Germain, portraying an Afghan villager, draws a diagram of his village in the sand for a section commander.

Members of the COEFOR unit portray all the 'characters' that soldiers can expect to encounter while deployed.

"In our unit you can find the Afghan National Army soldiers, the Afghan National Police forces, role players that populate the simulated villages, assault sections, IED cells and other theater-specific recreations," said Sgt Germain.

Tasking requires playing dual roles

"We have dual roles," said Sgt Germain. "In some scenarios, we are good. We might be providing information to the primary training audience (PTA)."

"Sometimes, we are the bad guys, harassing them."

"For example, someone tasked to the IED cell will take a two-week bomber's course where they will learn how to use all the IED materials and methods currently used in theater," said Sgt Germain.

"Or they could spend a lot of time driving civilian pattern vehicles, quads, or setting up fruit stands or just populating villages - basically being seen by the primary training audience (PTA) so they can send reports up the chain of command," he added.

Unit acts as more than opposition force



Master Bombardier Darcy Hansen conceals a simulated improvised explosive device in the Fort Bliss training area.

The COEFOR unit is much more than the obvious, such as the opposition force. COEFOR soldiers must master many tasks.

"We conduct passive and overt recce missions," Master Bombardier Darcy Hansen, a full-time member of COEFOR.

"Passive could be a drive by a forward operating base, following a convoy or setting up a fruit stand," said MBdr

Hansen. "Overt could be going into an area where there is an operation going on and gathering information to use against the PTA."

"We have an assault cell that can provide anything from a two person detachment going out to bump someone up, to company level with a hundred of us, complete with heavy weapons, RPGs, the whole nine yards."

Simulation goes beyond flash-bang effects

MBdr Hansen currently works in the IED cell where he specializes in the replication of IED events.

"Anything that an insurgent might use, we replicate," said MBdr Hansen. "We augment this with simulation, the large blast with powder effects."

The simulation does not stop at flash-bang effects.

"Full replication includes forensics," he said. "When the explosive ordinance device team shows up, they can disarm some of our devices. They can exploit the pathways and materials we used to determine who the bomber is and stop that particular IED cell in their area."

Training prepares soldiers to succeed overseas

"We take this job very seriously," said MBdr Hansen.

"We are sending our soldiers to places all around the world," he said. "Whether they come to train with us in Wainwright or we go to train with them, we know that the more complex and better training we give them here and now, the more prepared they are to succeed overseas."

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