

1AD faces off against OPFOR Ready First battles CMTC's men in black

Story and photos by
Spc. Joe Thompson
1st Armored Division PAO

HOHENFELS, Germany – “The Box.” That’s what the soldiers call the Combat Maneuver Training Center here. At times, it can be a challenging place to be, but for the soldiers of the “Ready First Brigade” it’s just another chance to go out, kill the enemy and hone their warfighting skills.

“I get up at 3:45 a.m., turn my radio on, come out here [to the perimeter], wake everybody up, start bore-sighting, go down and prepare for the defense, prepare for a hasty defense later on tonight, hope to shoot, hope



Kicking up dust, a 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment, M3A2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle rolls through Hohenfels Training Area to battle the bad guys of CMTC.



Dust boils as the “Bandits” from 1st Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment, ride down and engage the OPFOR in a battle for control of Hohenfels Training Area. The “Bandits” are stationed in Friedberg, Germany.

to kill,” said Spc. William Cherry, Armored Crewman, Company B, 1st Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment.

Soldiers at CMTC use blank ammunition for their weapons and the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System, or MILES gear, to fight against an opposing force. Basically, it’s a giant game of laser-tag used to simulate combat. All of the soldiers and vehicles in the exercise are equipped with the MILES gear. When a soldier is “killed” in simulated combat, the MILES gear sounds off with a loud tone that signifies the soldier is wounded or dead. The vehicle-mounted MILES gear is connected to a rotating orange light that flashes when a vehicle is

“destroyed.”

The soldiers of 1st Brigade have a two-fold mission once engaged in combat at CMTC. First, they defend their position from attack, fighting against the 7th Army Training Command’s opposition forces. Then, they test their offensive skills by rolling out and taking an objective by force. Spc. Benjamin Faczan, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment, said it’s always good to train against an enemy that fights back even if the enemy has an unfair advantage.

“I don’t necessarily know that any of the battles with the OPFOR if there’s actually a winner per se, because the OPFOR always outnumbers us

ridiculously, so it makes it a little tough,” said Faczan. “We’ve had a couple of really good battles with them so far. So I think last night went pretty well.”

Even though the soldiers have to fight fatigue from sleepless nights on patrol or wait for the attack sitting in their tanks, Bradleys or armored personnel carriers for extended periods of time, they still have to stay sharp because the enemy could attack at any time.

“Our mission right now is that we’re doing maintenance and prepping the vehicles, MILES and bore sights,” said Spc. Christopher Stockdale, Company B, 1-37 Armor. “We’re doing everything so we can hopefully destroy the OPFOR.”

In most missions, the engi-

neers play an important role in clearing battlefield obstacles and making a path for the rest of the troops to get to their objectives.

“I was sent on a primary breach squad, and we were to remove mines from a minefield,” said Sgt. Sylvester L. Watkins, Company A, 16th Engineer Battalion. “I’d say it went pretty well. There were a lot of lessons learned. We actually got to do what we came here to do.”

Before the soldiers from 1st Brigade can go out into the Box to fight against the OPFOR, they go through Situational Training Exercises, or STX training. 1st Lt. Eric E. Konicki, Mortar Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-37 Armor, said that this training prepares the soldiers for