

16th Engineers explode in *Catamount Thunder*

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GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – Pfc. Michael J. Kavanagh from Company A, 16th Engineer Battalion, walks up to the unassembled M21 anti-tank mine and calmly begins inspecting and taking inventory of its parts. He knows exactly what he needs to do and how long it should take him to do it.

Once he has completed the initial inventory and inspection, he starts assembling the mine. He starts by placing the booster in the bottom of the mine. Afterwards, he screws the fuse into the top of the mine. Finally, he screws the tilt rod into the mine. Now that he has properly assembled the mine, he begins disassembling it.

Under live conditions, the mine Kavanagh assembled and disassembled, if detonated, would have easily incapacitated a heavily armored vehicle and would have very likely killed the occupants of the vehicle.

However, Kavanagh was participating in Operation Catamount Thunder, a training exercise the 16th Engineer Battalion conducted at Grafenwoehr Training Area, in mid-November, to hone their soldiers' engineer skills.

"I think this was good training," said Kavanagh. "It helps to keep the senses sharp in case we go into a real-world situation."

The soldiers went through a variety of exercises that tested them from the individual up to the



With steady hands and steadier nerves, Pfc. Michael J. Kavanagh from Company A, 16th Engineer Battalion, arms an M21 anti-tank mine during one of the individual training exercises during Operation Catamount Thunder.



Two soldiers from Company B, 16th Engineer Battalion, set up a mine in an ice covered pond during one of the squad-level exercises during Operation Catamount Thunder.

squad level, ranging from obstacle demolition and constructing minefields to putting up concertina wire and mine marking.

"The purpose of the exercise was to certify our squads," said Command Sgt. Maj. William J. Rozinek, the 16th Engineer Battalion sergeant major. "We took a stair-stepping approach with the training. The soldiers started off with exercises using inert training aids then they moved up to training with live explosives. Then we put them together in collective squad exercises dealing with breaching obstacles, marking lanes and other essential tasks that our squads need to know to accomplish our mission."

The exercise helped the soldiers sharpen and master their fundamental engineer skills, according to 1st

Lt. Jeff P. Laughlin, 2nd Platoon leader, Company B, 16th Engineer Battalion.

"We are glad to be out here," said Laughlin. "The soldiers have been anxious for a chance to train and do what engineers are supposed

to do. They got that chance and did extremely well. The lousy weather added to the challenge our soldiers faced but they went out and did their jobs with professionalism and precision."

The highlight of the whole



Two soldiers from Company B, 16th Engineer Battalion, pack C-4 explosives in between metal posts to make a bangalore mine that will later be used to breach a concertina-wire fence line.

training exercise was constructing and detonating a field-expedient claymore mine, according to Sgt. Reginald L. Bush, a team leader with 1st Platoon, Company B, 16th Engineer Battalion.

During that exercise, the soldiers packed five blocks of C-4 explosives into the center of a roll of barbed wire, placed an initiating system into the C-4 and detonated the mine, blasting shrapnel into the surrounding enemy — wooden silhouettes.

"If this mine is set up properly, it can do a lot of damage," said Bush while holding up a silhouette with multiple pieces of shrapnel hanging out of it. "As you can see, it went pretty well. Doing this kind of stuff really makes it fun to be an engineer."