

# Convoy

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"You learn about team work and that you have to trust your team," Minnick said. "They are your life line to everything. The training is similar to combat operations and it is pretty right on. The training definitely is going to give me the edge to survive in Iraq."

As the platoon of Soldiers nestled in the back of their Light Medium Tactical Vehicles with their M16A2s locked and loaded, they were sent forward to negotiate a three mile drive while engaging hostile enemy pop-up targets hidden in positions among debris and damaged vehicles. Burgemaster continued putting pressure on the team as a squad leader yelled, "Ok, we have to move quickly! We have to clear this building!"

"Gotta go in, gotta go in, hurry, hurry, hurry!" Burgemaster shouted. "Is there anyone behind that wall? Can you see behind that wall?"

Though all of this was only a scenario, the medics of the 36th ASMC, 44th MEDCOM, are preparing to encounter scenarios such as these during their deployment.

"Our training is scenario driven and resembles what we are expecting to see in Iraq as far as IEDs, sniper, AK-47, and RPG (rocket propelled grenade) injuries," said Burgemaster who added that the 36th ASMC includes an ambulance

platoon that must be prepared to drive for hours on treacherous roads teeming with the enemy. "Our training is driven towards understanding that we are not only medics, but we are Soldiers first," he said.

In order to prepare for scenario type training, the leaders of the 36th ASMC have been working closely with the 601st ASMC, 44th MEDCOM, a sister company currently deployed to Iraq. In addition, the leadership researches information via the media and lessons learned available at the Center for Army Lessons Learned. The intent is to take the information drawn from their sister company and those from deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan that the 36th ASMC can anticipate to encounter. However, they are also preparing and training on skills not commonly trained on by combat service support units. The medical company no longer views themselves as just supporting the war fighter, they view themselves as a war fighting unit too. The Soldiers of the 36th ASMC have been preparing for this type of training. While in garrison, they train on individual level I and level II medical and common skills tasks. In three months, they have participated in three convoy life fire exercises. They take advantage of every opportunity they have to train.



photo by Lucille Anne Newman/Paraglide

**Spc. Manuel Tapia**, 36th Area Support Medical Company (Airborne), 44th Medical Command, left, carefully pulls **Spc. Charles Linder**, casualty role-player, from a collapsed tunnel. **Pvt. Rossane Paul**, right, keeps watch on the area for hidden enemies in the building during a casualty evacuation training exercise.

## BUSTER'S BATTERY

I'VE HAD CHILI IN A CUP. I'VE HAD CHILI IN A BOWL. BUT I'VE NEVER HAD CHILI IN A LUMP.



by Maj. James Crabtree

## MILITARY TRIVIA

### This week's trivia: The Mitrailleuse

by Maj. James Crabtree

XVIII Airborne Corps PAO

When the German Confederation, led by Prussia, invaded France in 1870, the French Army was equipped with a weapon that sounded like it had a lot of potential — the mitrailleuse.

The weapon was a rapid-fire gun, although it was not a machine gun as we know them today. Instead of an automatic firing mechanism, the gun employed a mechanical lever or crank to fire in sequence up to 25 rifled barrels in rapid succession, giving it a fire rate of 75 rounds per minute (although in an emergency it could shoot 125 rounds). This type of weapon is known as a volley gun.

Among the weapon's drawbacks were the need to replace the entire breechblock in order to reload it. Each mitrailleuse operated with three blocks, one being fired, one having the spent cartridges extracted, and one being reloaded, the limited elevation and azimuth aiming available on its cannon-like mounting and the use of two different calibers in at least five different models. But the biggest problem was the secrecy surrounding the mitrailleuse.

The "coffee grinder," as it was nicknamed by French troops, was a secret weapon for use with the French armies funded with secret money by Napoleon III. It was tested in secret at the Polygon facility near Versailles, with the guns concealed by tents as they engaged distant targets. Very few French soldiers knew of the existence of the Coffee Grinder and as a result there was no professional discussion of how the weapon should be organized or employed. So, the few officers who were in on the secret decided that since the thing looked like a cannon it should be used like a cannon.

It didn't help that most of the reservists designated to operate the

mitrailleuse were not familiar with the weapon; the secret weapon was apparently kept a secret from them too. The guns were kept out of sight in storage facilities and were only brought out after the crews were assembled. Manuals for using the mitrailleuse had only been written the previous January and must have made fascinating reading for the gunners as they moved up to the front. The Soldiers earmarked to use the Coffee Grinders had an artillery background and tried to employ the guns in the same manner as artillery, as per their secret instructions. The potential of the mitrailleuse to provide close fire support for infantry was not realized because the gunners tried to use the weapon at its most extreme range against static targets, nor were there enough of them to provide concentrated firepower to breakup enemy assaults..

And the secrecy surrounding the weapon didn't help command and control either. One French general said that the first time he became aware of the mitrailleuse was when one was wheeled past him near the front lines. When France lost the war, the mitrailleuse was employed in the suppression of the Paris Commune, when it was used to execute captured rebel communards who didn't like the outcome of the war. One wonders how many Parisians' last words were "what the heck IS that thing?"

As a weapon the mitrailleuse was a technological dead-end. Volley guns could not compete with belt- and magazine-fed machine guns. However, it was heavy-handed secrecy that really prevented the Coffee Grinder from taking its proper place in military history.

**Next Week:**  
What were land torpedoes?

## RANGE SCHEDULE

From Monday through Oct. 29 units on Fort Bragg will be conducting small arms and high explosives firing in the Fort Bragg range area. All personnel are warned against entering any danger or impact area without specific approval from the installation range officer. The Fort Bragg range area is not considered an open range. Entry into or use of fixed ranges, observation posts, training facilities, or areas other than designated recreational areas on Manchester, Plank or King roads, must be approved by the installation range officer. The schedule below is subject to change without notice to the public. Additions and/or deletions occur frequently. Commanders with a few individuals who need to fire may coordinate with the using unit to add firers to that unit's range. The following is the weekly range schedule that indicates the units that will be using the ranges.

<b>PISTOL</b> 38/45/9MM <b>Tuesday</b> Range 29: COSCOM <b>Wednesday</b> Range 29: MUIC Range 66C/1: 3/4 ADA Range 66C/2: 82SIG Range 66C/3: DSTB <b>Thursday</b> Range 29: 122AV Range 66C/2: PACOM Range 66C/3: 18FABDE <b>Friday</b> Range 29: 519MI	Range 31: PACOM Range 41: 18FABDE Range 50: 4BCT Range 52: 1/73CAV Range 58: CARTY Range 59: 1/73CAV <b>Wednesday</b> Range 31: 3/4ADA Range 41: 18FABDE Range 52: 1/73CAV <b>Thursday</b> Range 28: 3/4ADA Range 31: 82SIG Range 41: 18FABDE Range 50: 2/504 Range 52: 1/73CAV Range 58: 3/4ADA Range 59: 1/73CAV <b>Sunday</b> Range 52: MUIC	<b>M16 QUAL</b> <b>Monday</b> Range 34: 44MED <b>Tuesday</b> Range 33: PACOM Range 43: 18FABDE <b>Wednesday</b> Range 33: 3/4ADA Range 43: 18FABDE <b>Thursday</b> Range 43: 18FABDE Range 56: 319MI <b>Friday</b> Range 34: 1/504 <b>M60 SAW/ZERO</b> <b>Monday</b> Range 53: 2/325 <b>Tuesday</b> Range 53: 18FABDE	<b>Wednesday</b> Range 53: 18FABDE <b>Thursday</b> Range 53: 18FABDE <b>Friday</b> Range 53: 2/325 <b>M60 SAW/TRANSITION</b> <b>Monday</b> Range 54: 2/325 <b>Tuesday</b> Range 54: 18FABDE <b>Wednesday</b> Range 54: 18FABDE <b>Thursday</b> Range 54: 18FABDE <b>Friday</b> Range 54: 2/325
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## LOOKING BACK

### Hasty minefields, dinner plates

by Al Alvarez

Special correspondent

After a slow afternoon, Capt. Fred Chirigotis from the 745th Tanks asked for our indirect fire observing so they could "use up" their 75 mm ammo. I jumped at the chance to get some invaluable and exhilarating shooting experience and contributed to some of the damage too. But later, during Coté's watch, an engineering squad was seen laying a hasty

minefield in the road leading south into the town of Faymonville.

"What the hell are those guys doing?" Coté asked as we tried to figure out why they were using dinner plates to cover mines.

(Editor's note: This is a series of memoirs by Lt. Col. Al Alvarez, who retired from XVIII Airborne Corps and now volunteers at the Airborne Special Operations Museum.)