

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



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1ST ARMORED DIVISION SOLDIERS GET UP-CLOSE TRAINING AS They PREPARE IN KUWAIT FOR MOVE INTO IRAQ

By Staff Sgt. Mark S. Patton

1st Armored Division Public Affairs Office

CAMP BUEHRING, Kuwait -- Most Soldiers deploying to Iraq are accustomed to a stay in Kuwait, completing additional training before heading north, and the recently deployed Soldiers of U.S. Army, Europe's 1st Armored Division headquarters are no exception.

While division officials say they expect to have a majority of their "Iron Soldiers" in Iraq over the next few weeks, they are staying busy here making sure the troops are fully equipped with all the tools necessary for success in their 15-month mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



STAFF SGT MARK S. PATTON

1st Armored Division Soldiers practice close-quarters marksmanship on a live-fire range at Camp Buehring, Kuwait. The recently deployed U.S. Army, Europe troops are training in Kuwait as they prepare to move into Iraq in the coming weeks.

Just miles south of the Iraqi border, division Soldiers are participating in training designed to simulate the conditions frequently encountered in Iraq.

One such recent training session, in temperature well over 100 degrees, schooled the Soldiers in close-quarters marksmanship, designed to provide them with the skills necessary to accurately acquire, identify and engage targets closer than 25 meters.

Wayne Thompson, a contract instructor for MPRI, retired from the Army last year, after last serving with the 10th Mountain Division. Not able to fully shake the camaraderie the military provides, Thompson says, he jumped at the chance to continue to train Soldiers.

“I have a passion for this stuff,” explained Thomas. “It’s my way of supporting troops.”

MPRI, formerly known as Military Professional Resource Inc., decided to be known as simply MPRI after they were signed on to train military, law enforcement and security personnel worldwide, explained CQM instructor Dale Ellsworth.

The training began with a classroom lecture followed by an opportunity for the Soldiers to apply what they learned on a live-fire range.

Thompson shouted commands to the Soldiers as they fired at a sandy berm, relying on each other as a team as they combined verbal instructions with live shooting. Thompson later said the troops followed his direction flawlessly.

“I think they understand the next time they raise that weapon, it may be for real,” he said.

Spc. Cyd Moreira, a food service specialist with the division's Company B, Special Troops Battalion, thought the training was a great chance to prove that cooks are Soldiers, too, and can fight alongside their comrades.

“I feel safe if I have to go 'outside the wire' and support the troops,” Moreira said.

“It was hot out there, but it was good training,” added Sgt. Jamaal Smith, another Company B food service specialist.

Bravo Detachment, 146th Signal Company 1st Sgt. Matthew Shea said he thought the training was a great experience for his signal Soldiers.

“It is something that is unique to (the OIF) theater, and we really enjoyed it,” he said.



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