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Engineers attend Counter-IED train the trainer course

Story by 1st Lt. Michael Frazier, 54th Engineer Battalion PAO

BAMBERG, Germany – Soldiers from the 541st Engineer Company, 54th Engineer Battalion recently attended the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device train the trainer course in Grafenwoehr, Germany, in February.

The course, which is designed for Soldiers in the position of team leader and above, is also known as C-IED and consists of both a classroom and practical exercise. The 541st Eng. Co. sent leaders from the ranks of specialist to lieutenant, all currently holding leadership positions.

“Although the course was advertised as a ‘train the trainer’ course, it was more of an introduction to C-IED tactics,” said Sgt. Leslie Pittman, a combat engineer team leader in the 541st Eng. Co.

The course covered the how and why insurgents use and emplace IEDs and attempted to teach unit leaders how to train their new Soldiers on route clearance operations.

The course synopsis stated the class was designed to develop the ability of small group leaders to turn the map around and think like an insurgent, allowing the small group leader to better plan and execute missions in an IED environment.

The primary method of instruction in the course was through slideshows with additional training aids developed by the 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command.

“The instructors presented a lot of statistics from both the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters of operation, however, most of the tactics, techniques and procedures were out of Iraq,” said Pittman.

A capstone practical exercise followed the classroom instruction. The practical exercise split the course into two groups.

“My group went out and emplaced an IED along a route to get us in the mindset of the enemy, while the other group’s mission was to do route clearance along the route,” said Pittman.

Specific topics covered throughout the course included recognizing IED initiators, understanding recent IED statistics, IED-defeat tactics and procedures, identifying components of an IED, unexploded ordnance, explosively formed penetrators, identifying explosive hazards and markers, conducting 5- and 25-meter explosive hazards searches, identifying characteristics of suicide bombers and capturing enemy arms and bomb making equipment.

While the course was intended to focus on small group leaders, it seemed more relevant as a primer for Soldiers unaware of IED tactics and procedures. The course is geared for junior leaders who have yet to deploy – particularly, those leaders whose Soldiers could potentially face the threat of IEDs if deployed – irrelevant of duty position or military occupational specialties.