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Personal Security Detachment sharpens skills in Grafenwoehr

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GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – Soldiers from 18th Engineer Brigade’s personal security detachment sharpened their combat readiness skills at the Grafenwoehr Training Area here Jan. 18-21.

During the four-day event, the Soldiers trained round the clock on Military Operations on Urban Terrain, rifle marksmanship, hand grenade procedures and night operations.

“One focus during this exercise was on the team’s ability to move through urban terrain as a cohesive unit,” said 2nd Lt. Thomas Malejko, the 18th Eng. Bde. assistant chief of staff from Hackettstown, N.J. “I saw a dramatic change between day one and day four in the team’s ability to move throughout the site and rapidly clear each room.”

For a lot of the Soldiers, the highlight of the exercise was using night vision devices for the first time.

“It was a good opportunity for them to learn how to operate under those conditions without losing their depth perception,” said Malejko.

“When working on our movement techniques at night, we realized it was a lot more difficult than we anticipated, but it gave us more realistic training,” said Sgt. Brandon Vergien, an 18th Eng. Bde. team leader from East Aurora, N.Y.

On the team’s final day in the field, a practice range was coordinated to ensure each Soldier learned proper hand grenade techniques and placement. After each Soldier became proficient with practice grenades, they ended the day with a live grenade qualification.

For Vergien, the training helped to enhance the team’s bond and strengthen their capabilities.

“This exercise helped us work as a team and actually become familiar with the equipment that we’d never used before,” said Vergien. “We learned what our weaknesses were and focused on them to improve ourselves and make the team operate better as a whole.”

The personal security detachment team will continue to hone their skills through various field training exercises in preparation for an upcoming deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



Spc. Brandon Johns, a dismount team member with 18th Engineer Brigade's personal security detachment, from Eustis, Fla., pulls security so another team member can cross a roadway during Military Operations on Urban Terrain training Jan. 19. The team spent a week in Grafenwoehr, Germany, training on MOUT procedures, marksmanship and night operations. (Photo by 1st Lt. Joseph Caperna, 18th Engineer Brigade)



Sgt. Brandon Vergien, an 18th Engineer Brigade personal security detachment team leader from East Aurora, N.Y., qualifies with his M4 rifle during a qualification range in Grafenwoehr, Germany, Jan. 20. (Photo by 1st Lt. Joseph Caperna, 18th Engineer Brigade)



Pfc. Osvaldo Lara, a medic for 18th Engineer Brigade from Del Rio, Texas, throws a practice grenade at a range in Grafenwoehr, Germany, Jan. 21. Soldiers from the 18th Eng. Bde.'s personal security detachment spent a week training on Military Operations on Urban Terrain procedures, marksmanship and night operations. (Photo by 1st Lt. Joseph Caperna, 18th Engineer Brigade)