

Engineers exchange ideas, procedures

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Combat engineers have proven to be a valuable asset to the U.S. Army, so it didn't surprise Specialist Daniel J. Dunker, a Camp McGovern combat engineer with 2nd Platoon, Company A, 20th Engineer Battalion, when he discovered the Norwegian Army values their engineers the same way. He was excited when he learned a joint exercise was planned at McGovern, bringing the two countries together to exchange ideas and techniques for recovering wounded soldiers from mock minefields, the Muskego, Wis. native said.

"Their army does the same thing we do; they just do it a different way. This exercise was to give each side ideas," said Dunker.

Before the exercise, the simulated McGovern minefield was divided, and both U.S. and Norwegian soldiers prepared the field for their demonstration. The U.S. soldiers did this by burying pieces of metal to set off the mine detectors, similar to handheld metal detectors, while the Norwegians buried deactivated mines for their bomb dogs to find.

The United States conducted the first demonstration. Two soldiers dressed in kevlar suits made their way toward a simulated victim, one soldier using a mine detector to find the mines, the other using fist-sized florescent sandbags to mark the mines. When they reached the casualty, the soldiers secured the area around him and carried him out through the cleared route.

The Norwegians then showed the American soldiers two new approaches. The first method involved using a bomb dog to sniff a path to the casualty. When the dog smelled explosives, it stopped and stared at the suspect spot, awaiting the next command. The handler marked the spot with spray paint, then detoured around the danger.

The second scenario was a backup plan in case the dog was unavailable, and consisted of a bridge of ladders built to lead to the casualty. The first ladder was lowered into the field with a soldier on it. Prior to touching the ground, a soldier cleared the area where the ladder's feet would be placed. A second ladder was then attached to the front of the first, and the process was repeated until the casualty could be reached and evacuated.

According to Specialist To V. Nguyen, an engineer with 2nd Platoon, Company A, 20th Engineer Battalion, and a



Norwegian combat engineers demonstrate their procedure to retrieve a fallen soldier from a mine field using the ladder bridge method in a joint training exercise with the Company A, 20th Engineer Battalion.

Dallas native, said both sides were impressed by the other's procedures.

He said he found the Norwegian techniques appealing, especially the bomb dog method. "I never thought about using a bomb dog before. It seems like an interesting idea."

Not only did the exercise give the McGovern soldiers the opportunity to show the Norwegians their equipment and methods, but it also tested their skills, and increased confidence in their training.