

Virtual Route Clearance Trainer Gives Realistic Training to Units at Fort McCoy

By: Tom Michele

FORT MCCOY, Wis. -- "We would rather have you die a thousand times with us than die once over there," Brian Hoffman said. "That is Raydon's motto to go along with the Virtual Route Clearance Trainer."

Hoffman, a customer service technician-trainer with Raydon Corporation, and two of his team members brought the Raydon four-trailer VRCT set-up to Fort McCoy in early September to provide realistic training for mobilizing Soldiers.

The four trailers contain the mock-up consoles and virtual .50 caliber machine guns of the RG-31 Medium Mine Protected Vehicle and consoles of the Buffalo Mine Protected Clearance Vehicle, Husky Vehicle Mounted Mine Detection and the Joint Explosive Ordnance Disposal Rapid Response Vehicle with its Talon Man Transportable Robotic System.

"VRCT training is great for Soldiers who haven't even seen a Buffalo, Husky, RG-31 or JERRV," Hoffman said.

"We can stage up to 26 Soldiers at the same time on the four Buffalos, two Huskys, four RG-31s, one JERRV and one Talon operator," Hoffman said.

Those are spread out, or maybe condensed, into the four trailers, plus five instructor-operator control stations.

"We practice route-clearance missions, setting up convoys with the vehicles and having trainees operate through any of about 64 different scenarios and react to the different situations like they will encounter in Iraq or Afghanistan," Hoffman said. "The VRCT provides both individual and collective training."

Training realistically simulates combat conditions including terrain, weather, visibility, vehicle operating conditions, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and opposing enemy forces. Simulations include friendly and foe vehicles, IEDs, vehicle-borne IEDs, traffic obstacles and special effects including friendly and enemy tracers, explosions, smoke, vehicle dust trails and rocket-propelled grenade smoke.



Sgt. 1st Class John Borchardt operates the VRCT .50 caliber virtual machine gun while Staff Sgt. David Simmons is at the controls of the VRCT Husky vehicle-mounted mine detector. Both Soldiers are observer-controller-trainers with the 181st Infantry Brigade.

VRCT scenarios demonstrate how to detect, mark, investigate and report explosive hazards. Training sessions with student trainees are digitally recorded and later played back as part of after-action reviews for the students.

Carlos Nieves, lead instructor, said "we are about saving lives."

"We can give a lot more instructional value here and do it quicker, than in the field. We have the ability to record and play back to Soldiers what they did wrong and what they did right."

The third member of the Raydon team, Amber Mahabir, said "we continuously make upgrades to our hardware and software programs to adapt to the changes that happen in-theater and as directed by the Army."

"As the theater environment changes, so do we, so our warfighters in the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines can train as they fight." he said.

The training system set-up at Fort McCoy is one of nine being used across the country.

Source: <http://www.army.mil/-news/2009/09/28/27960-virtual-route-clearance-trainer-gives-realistic-training-to-units-at-fort-mccoy/?ref=news-science-title7>