

## Unit Receives Task Force Marne's First MRAPs

*By Sgt. Michael Connors*

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, recently became the first in Task Force Marne to receive the Army's new mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles, known as MRAPs.

They completed MRAP drivers training here Nov. 8 and will be returning to their respective bases with about 20 MRAPs. MRAP fielding will continue steadily, with a goal of having the entire task force outfitted by February, said Army Sgt. 1st Class Jabari Williams, the 2nd BCT's noncommissioned officer in charge of MRAP fielding.

MRAPs come in two categories. Category 1 holds up to six soldiers and will replace the Humvee. Category 2 is a longer version, which can hold a crew of 10 soldiers.

"It's a good opportunity for us," said Army Sgt. David Ipock. "Any time we get a new vehicle with more protection, it's a good thing."

Prior to the vehicles being handed over to the units for day-to-day use, the soldiers got five days of training on how to operate, drive and maintain the vehicles. The training included classroom instruction and on- and off-road driving. This training also introduced the soldiers to some new features the Humvee lacked, such as a pneumatic rear ramp and a shock-absorbing seating system with four-point seat belts.

"The bomb protection with the seats - I think that might help a lot," said Ipock. "Everything's just more advanced - the switches and gauges, things like that."

Army Spc. Daniel Lopez also weighed in with what he liked about the new vehicle.

"It's a big, new toy to replace the 1151 (Humvee) - a lot more room," he said. "I feel more secure in it than the 1151."

The training not only familiarizes soldiers with the vehicles, but also builds confidence by giving them the opportunity to drive the vehicles over steep hills and through tight turns.

"It handles fairly well for a tall vehicle; as far as the suspension and handling, I was fairly impressed with it," said Army Staff Sgt. Steve Stutzman. "I went down a 60-degree hill and hit the brakes, nose first, and we just sat there - the vehicle has really good air brakes."

MRAPs are designed to be both safe and effective for soldiers conducting patrols, convoy security and missions throughout Iraq. They are being fielded to units that need them the most and that



Soldiers from Company B, 1-30th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, drive a new mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicle, or MRAP, through an off-road confidence course at Camp Liberty, Iraq, Nov. 7, 2007. Photo by Sgt. Michael Connors

operate in areas with the highest threat, officials said. The goal is for each platoon eventually to have four MRAPs, Williams added.

(Army Sgt. Michael Connors serves with Multinational Division Center Public Affairs. Mark B. Matthews, 27th Public Affairs Detachment, contributed to this story.)