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Maintenance Center Barstow enhances vehicle protection with explosive resistant coati

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Maintenance Center Barstow enhances vehicle protection with explosive resistant coati

Maintenance Center Barstow enhances vehicle protection with explosive resistant coating
Submitted by: MCLB Barstow
Story Identification #: 2004624172254
Story by Mr. Rob Jackson

MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS BASE BARSTOW, Calif.(June 24, 2004) -- Maintenance Center Barstow is normally called upon to repair and rebuild equipment that has been battle worn or is in need of work because of every day training and operational use.

This time, however, the Maintenance Center has been tasked by the Marine Corps Logistics Command to perform another task vital to the survival of the Marines participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

This monstrous undertaking includes putting together a team of Marines, volunteers from different commands, and training them to train Marines in theater in applying a new type of explosive resistant coating on vehicles already equipped with protective armor plating.

The group of 25 devil dogs volunteering for this assignment come from Marine Corps Logistics Bases Albany and Barstow, Blount Island Command, Fleet Support Division Barstow, and Marine Corps Systems Command, Quantico, Va., according to Mischa Sharpe, head of the Engineering Division, Maintenance Directorate, Marine Corps Logistics Command, at Albany, Ga. They are also under the operational control of Col. Rob Gerlaugh, Commander of Maintenance Center Barstow.

The coating being used is produced by a company in Lakewood, Wash., and is used on dumpsters, as truck bed liners and to protect icebreaker ship bows, according to the company's Web site.

"The State Department Technical Support Working Group and the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab worked together testing different types of resistant coatings," said Sharpe.

A lot of the coatings tested could not be used because of delaminating problems, meaning when hit with ballistics it would fall off or when the coated vehicle was in motion it would fall off, she said.

As an example of how well the ERC performed during the ballistics test, Sharpe explained that the folks in Quantico used two vehicles, one sprayed with the coating and the other without.

The vehicle without the coating was literally destroyed when subjected to an explosive device whereas the other vehicle, enhanced with the protective armor plating, survived pretty much intact.

"By itself the explosive resistant coating is no good but when sprayed on the protective armor plating it provides additional protection for the humvees," said Sharpe.

During testing the coating was applied to 3/8-inch armor kits but it turned out that this combination was too heavy and caused a few problems for the humvees.

"They have problems with the frame, transmission seals and such, and that's one of the reason we're looking at this coating," Sharpe revealed. "We can go back to the 3/16-inch armor and with the coating it'll provide as much protection as the 3/8-inch metal but it's not nearly as heavy."

To give the Marines that extra protection and a chance of surviving detonated improvised explosive devices and other types of projectiles, the material must be at least of an inch thick when applied to the 3/16-inch plating.

The Marines volunteering for this assignment are really motivated and anxious to get on with the task ahead, according to Sharpe.

"All of these guys are great, highly motivated and eager to learn," said Dave White, sandblast supervisor and the Marines' ERC application instructor. "Most of these guys have never had any experience with spraying, but on just their second or third try they had it down to a science."

White said the training, which had to be accomplished in a short time, included showing the Marines how to disassemble the vehicle, prepare the metal, use proper spraying techniques and perform preventive maintenance on the machine.

"The training has been very intense, and a lot to learn in just a couple of weeks," said Cpl. Gregory Horn, a cable splicer with MCLB Barstow's Communication Division. "But we've learned a lot, and right now we're ready to go."

According to Horn to get the job done correctly one person has to watch the gauges on the machine, and one must assist with the hose because it's so cumbersome, while the third Marine applies the coating.

Horn and the other Marines on the team are part of what's been dubbed the New Equipment Training Team and their assignment, once the I Marine Expeditionary Force Forward is ready for them, is to go into Iraq and train Marines in theater how to apply the explosive resistant coating.

To date the NETT has applied the ERC on two humvees, a two- and four-door model.

These vehicles will be taken to a test facility in Nevada and run through a 1000-hour durability test to see how well the coating holds up and how well the vehicle will hold up with the additional weight, according to White.

Sgt. Eric Santiago, a tactical network specialist assigned to Marine Corps Systems Command, Quantico, Va., said he is looking forward to going to Iraq and performing this important task.

"This is a great opportunity for us to go over, to do something good to help protect our fellow Marines' lives and I'm ready to go," he said.



Sgt. Santiago Real, quality assurance analysis specialist with the Blount Island Command, checks the depth of the Explosive Resistant Coating that was sprayed onto a panel. Real knows that the depth is right when he hears metal hitting metal. Photo by: Lance Cpl. Ashley Warden

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Ellie

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY LATE HUSBAND, SSgt Roger A. Alfano, USMC

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