

Engineers repair Iraqi roadways

Lance Cpl. Ryan L. Tomlinson

1st Marine Logistics Group

AL ASAD, Iraq — They left the wire toting a trailer stocked with cement, shovels, jack-hammers and other road repair essentials destined to fix a problem faced by coalition forces and Iraqi civilians — big

holes in the road.

Combat engineers with Alpha Engineer Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 1, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) engage in route repair missions throughout Al Anbar province, Iraq. The Marines not only make

the roads smoother and safer for traveling, they also prevent insurgents from using the holes to their advantage.

“We make the roads safe so the rest of the Marine Corps could travel on them without the worry of getting blown up by an improvised explosive device,” said Cpl. Marcos D. Valadez, 21, mine-sweeping team leader of 1st Platoon, Alpha Engineer Company. “If there’s a chance for insurgents to use that hole to their advantage, we fill it.”

The missions sometimes last five hours at a time and although the hot weather is cooling down, the constant construction-type labor is in a combat zone. Despite the inherent risk, the Marines remain focused on mission accomplishment.

“When we go outside [of base] and we know it’s an area that gets [attacked] a lot, we still go through with our jobs,” said Cpl. Eddie J. Solórzano, hole repair team leader of 1st Platoon, Alpha Engineer Company. “We disrupt the enemy activity.”

1st platoon is split into three teams: the mixing team fills the holes with cement; hole-repair team digs up the old hole for filling; and mine-sweeping team eliminates explosive threats.

Operations Platoon, Alpha Engineer Company provides security during the route repair operations.

The Marines attitude while completing their objectives working in an austere atmosphere was

a revelation for Solórzano, a 22 year-old Miami native.

“It was great knowing that within a week of us being [in Iraq], we were laying six pallets of cement in one night,” said Solórzano. “The progress the [junior enlisted Marines] have shown is motivating.”

“The most rewarding factor of the job is watching the Marines perform their job and enjoy it to its full extent,” said 2nd Lt. William T. Hoefer, executive officer of Alpha Engineer Company. “I am very proud of them for all the hard work they put into every single mission that we have done.”

Hoefer, 25, also commands all route repair missions done by 1st and Operations Platoons.

The cohesive unit does not waste time between jobs.

“When they go out its all business,” said Sgt. John A. Stone II, 24, 1st Squad Leader of 1st Platoon and a Huntsville, Ala., native.

“We are filling so many more holes in such little time and it feels great to make that much difference,” said Laredo, Texas, native, Valadez.

Alpha Engineer Company will continue its work in Iraq improving passage on the roadways for coalition forces and civilians until the unit returns to the United States in spring 2007.

“We know that when we finish filling the hole we have just saved a life,” said Solórzano. “It’s great to know that we have one less soul to worry about.” ■



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Route-repair mission: Lance Cpl. Christopher T. Hart, 22, a combat engineer with 1st Platoon, Alpha Engineer Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 1, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) stirs a bucket of wet concrete while engaging in a route-repair mission in Al Anbar province, Iraq.



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