

Engineers make Iraq roadways safe for all

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By *Cpl. Wayne Edmiston*, 2nd Marine Logistics Group



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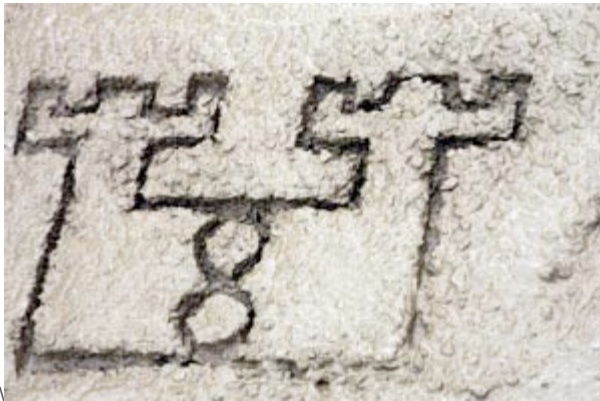
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AL TAQADDUM, Iraq (March 26, 2007) -- The scars of insurgent attacks can easily be seen on the roadways here, reflected by the large craters where improvised explosive devices were previously detonated. These craters also serve as an opportune location for insurgents to place more explosives.

The Marines of Engineer Support Company, 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward) fix these scars by working day and night to repair the roads of Iraq for the safety of both the coalition forces and the Iraqis who travel them.

“We are basically repairing the IED holes and fixing the roadways so convoys can do their mission without worrying about driving off the road to avoid them,” said Cpl. Michael Mocerri, a heavy equipment operator with the company and a Tacoma, Wash., native.

The Marines use a combination of fast-drying repair pavement and concrete to fix these holes. The process of preparing for a mission is an arduous one.

For the smaller holes, buckets of the fast-drying pavement are loaded on the back of a large truck the day prior.

According to Chief Warrant Officer Darryl L. Jones, the process begins with mixing water and the pavement. The Marines then pour it into the hole and

smooth it with a trowel.

To fix larger holes, the Marines use a mobile concrete mixer. The mixer needs preparation first and Marines spend hours prior to the mission putting nearly 200 110-pound bags of concrete into the back of the mixer known as the “Crete-mobile”, at which point it is mission-ready.

The Crete-mobile can perform most of the tasks of a large concrete truck in the civilian industry, explained Jones.

Mocerri explained that he knows the value of his labor and that it is rewarding to see his work make a difference.

“The work helps Marines and civilians get around easier and also keeps Marines safer when they convoy on already dangerous roads,” Mocerri said.

One Marine was more blunt in her explanation of what she does.

“I don’t want myself or anyone else getting blown up; plain and simple,” said Lance Cpl. Patricia Lusk, a heavy equipment operator with the company.

Mocerri also explained that his job is not for someone who does not want to get his hands dirty. The work is strenuous and many have had to pick up skills on the job.

“They have quickly and efficiently learned how to use equipment that is not available back at Camp Lejeune and have performed well above expectations,” Jones said. “Most of the Marines in this company have several other billets and additional duties to perform. The average workday can last 16 to 18 hours and varies between day or night operations based on the mission.”

Jones believes his Marines have a special quality not seen in others.

“The Marines of this company possess the ability to rapidly adapt to any situation, learn new processes and improve on them to effectively accomplish the mission while always keeping safety in mind,” Jones concluded.

Safety for themselves is one thing the engineers may have in mind as they

fix the holes in the road, but safety of their comrades and Iraqi citizens is the true motivation for their toil.

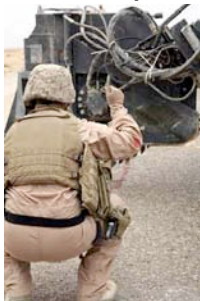
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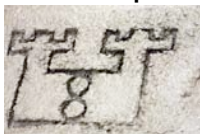
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