

Paintball battles build unit morale for 100th GMD

By SGT Sara Storey

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — The Soldier crouched behind several large planks of wood, trying to make himself invisible. He took a deep breath and peered around the edge of his cover, quickly scanning the area. He saw a flash of movement to his left. He wasted no time and began firing. As a round whizzed past his enemy's ear, the opponent turned and opened fire, but not quickly enough. Splat! The enemy was hit — as green paint spread across his chest he raised his weapon and surrendered, then slowly made his way to "Casualty Hill" and waited until the next paintball battle began.

Nearly one dozen members of the 100th Missile Defense Brigade (Ground-based Midcourse Defense) participated in the unit's morale day at Dragon Man Paintball Park April 6. The day included numerous paintball battles and a tour through the Colorado Springs Historical Military Museum.

Troops rented guns and face shields and headed to the paintball park. After loading approximately 100 paintball rounds each, Soldiers divided into teams — green vs. desert uniforms. Inadvertently, this also separated the forces into officer vs. enlisted. Before beginning the battle, the crew decided on double elimination for the first round — meaning after the first hit, each combatant returned to his/her team's starting point and had another "life" before final elimination. The team with the last "living" person on the field won. Additionally, the group decided that any paint splatter larger than a quarter qualified as a death-hit. After being hit for the second time, the wounded made their way to Casualty Hill to observe

the ongoing conflict and cheer on their team.

"The enlisted whooped the officers the first two games," said SSG Eddie Negron, engagement control team leader, 100th MDB. "We used military tactics and cover to keep from getting hit — and you don't want to get hit because it hurts!"

After the first two games, the group moved to a paintball field resembling an old junkyard with rusted cars and piles of tires. They also decided to switch the game — instead of green team vs. desert team, the next round was declared a free-for-all. Again, this match was double-elimination, but the last Soldier standing took all the glory.

WO2 Anita Thompson, information systems technician, 100th MDB, began using military tactics, but swiftly found that alternate battle techniques served her better in this game.

"I quickly turned to 'street' tactics," Thompson said. "I was sneaking up behind people and shooting them and once I was used as the bait to fish an 'enemy' out of his hole."

Thompson said she had such a good time that she's planning a second trip to take her daughter, brother and members of her church to play paintball.

"After my daughter saw my bruises she said she didn't want to go, but I know she'd enjoy it," Thompson said.

However, the unit's morale day wasn't just about slaughtering one another with paintballs. Before becoming covered in paint and dirt, Soldiers toured the Colorado Springs Historical Military Museum. The museum



boasts more than \$2 million of military artifacts from World War I to the present. Mel “Dragon Man” Bernstein, museum and paintball park owner, displays authentic military gear from U.S., British, German, Japanese and Vietnamese forces. Contained in 16,000 square feet, the museum has more than 70 vehicles, numerous guns, various equipment, uniforms and other memorabilia.

Between paint and military history, the morale day was declared a success. Thompson, bruises still fading two weeks after the event, did issue one final warning to would-be paintballers — “I recommend four or five layers of clothing because those paintballs hurt!”

SGT Sara Storey joined the Marine Corps in 1996 and entered the field of public affairs. She was a broadcast news reporter in Okinawa, Japan, and the editor of the base magazine at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. She was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps in 2001, and earned a bachelor’s degree in public communication from the University of Idaho in 2004. Storey now serves full-time in the Colorado Army National Guard as the public affairs NCO for the 100th Missile Defense Brigade (Ground-based Midcourse Defense).

SSG Eddie Negron’s “death” is signified by the green paint splattered across his face mask during the unit’s morale day at Dragon Man Paintball Park on April 6. *Photo by SGT Sara Storey*

Warrior training includes high-end paintball battle

By SFC Dennis Beebe

FORT CARSON, Colo. — “Simunitions,” a word Soldiers may be hearing a lot of in the very near future, are now being used to add realism while keeping Soldiers safe during training.

The modified bullets have little or no modification:

In the M-4/M16A2, a different, lighter bolt is inserted.

The M-9 gets a special smooth bore barrel.

The bullets are loaded into conventional clips and loaded into the weapons.

Then, action.

This concept played out when members of the 1st Space Battalion participated in convoy operations training at Fort Carson. The Soldiers learned how to route a convoy to accomplish a mission. They were shown how and where to anticipate Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). And

they were taught immediate action battle drills should their convoy come under enemy small arms and indirect fire.

The exercise included a ‘force-on-force’ operation with some of the Battalion’s members acting as Opposing Forces (OPFOR). An IED ambush was initiated against the convoy causing it to stop completely. The Soldiers then utilized their training to exit the vehicle, establish a defensive perimeter, and have their combat lifesavers check for, treat and evacuate any wounded who required immediate serious medical attention.

This scenario played out for both the first and second Space companies over a four-day period at Fort Carson training areas. The terrain there is very similar to the terrain in Afghanistan. This aspect of the training provided an extra
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Clockwise from top: WO2 Anita Thompson covers MAJ Brian Gary as Gary darts forward to slay an enemy paintballer during the unit's morale day April 6.

Thompson (left) and Gary continue to work together to exterminate the enemy.

Gary secures a covered position among the tires from which to attack paintball rivals.

CPT Eric Everts takes cover behind a rusted vehicle while searching the area for enemy paintball opponents. *Photos by SGT Sara Storey*



Top left: Soldiers exit their vehicle after an Improvised Explosive Device has halted the convoy.



Center left: A member of the opposing force is stopped in his tracks by the Soldiers of the 1st Space Brigade, but First Aid is also administered to the enemy combatants.



Bottom left: Immediate action to treat the wounded in the field is an important skill. Combat lifesaver gets practice during the exercise. Photos by SFC Dennis Beebe

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sense of realism for those who have served there.

As they did this, the results of using the new system were mixed.

When asked how it was using the paintball bullets, SPC Jason Lane said, “I felt it was a lot more realistic training than the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) as there is no dispute as to whether you get hit. It is very definite when you actually do get hit. There is a colored mark on your clothes, equipment or body armor. With MILES you never know whether you are getting some residual radiation from a control gun, or maybe your batteries are getting weak. There are also ways to cheat with MILES. This new stuff really works to give us realistic training.”

SGT Tamika Lane expressed her opinion. “I like the MILES system much better as it feels more realistic to me. I feel I have had a lot better training with MILES equipment. When someone fires at you with a laser, your equipment gives you a beep as if the bullet whizzed by very close to you. I did get hit in the leg with the simunitions so I know how that feels. I prefer the MILES however.”

Convoy operations training is a standard part of Soldier skill training at SMDC/ARSTRAT. It makes sense because it allows the Soldiers to train in the way they may have to fight. Whether the Soldiers are firing paint balls at each other or lasers, the training will still be just as necessary.

Following the simulations with the paintball equipment, the Soldiers went into a live fire exercise that finalized their training using live ammunition.

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