Cases of Weapon Sabotage Reported

Two seized rifles found with holes drilled in barrels

On February 3, the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) responded to the Combat Arms Range located at Hurlburt Field, Florida, in response to possible weapon sabotage.

The U.S. Air Force Special Operations School (SOS) reported that a weapon seized in Iraq had malfunctioned during test firing. The weapon, a Dragunov SVD rifle (7.62mm), NSN 1005-PSVD, had been seized from Iraq and forwarded to the SOS for use in familiarization training in the Dynamics of International Terrorism Course.

The weapon was shipped from Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, with all the appropriate clearances and inspections. On February 3, personnel from the SOS test fired the Dragunov SVD at a small arms range on Hurlburt Field.

During the test fire, the weapon was secured in a vise and remotely fired. Immediately upon firing, the handguards appeared to explode off the weapon. During the test fire, gas pressure was released from a hole in the barrel concealed by the handguards. The release of pressure resulted in the destruction of the handguards. Pieces of the handguards were projected up to 30 feet from the weapon. An examination of the weapon revealed the barrel of the weapon had been intentionally altered to injure the person firing the weapon. A small hole, approximately one-eighth of an inch wide, was drilled through the barrel approximately two inches forward of the chamber area.

Due to the school's safe test fire procedures, no one was injured. The weapon had Arabic writing, later translated as "war machine," engraved on the left side of the upper receiver. The numbers 331 and 2003 were stamped below the engraving.

A telephonic interview with the point of contact (POC) from the area of responsibility (AOR) where the weapon originated, it was determined the cache also contained three AKM rifles and one additional Dragunov. To his knowledge the AKM rifles had been destroyed, and the Dragunov was scheduled to be destroyed.

At the direction of AFOSI, the POC at the AOR inspected the second Dragunov and discovered it had also been modified. The weapon had a hole drilled into the barrel. The hole was similar in size and location to the hole found in the first weapon.

Two Dragunov SVD rifles seized in Iraq were found with holes drilled in the barrels. One of the rifles was being test fired when the handguards appeared to explode off the weapon. Below is a close up of the hole that caused the malfunction, which could have caused injury to the person who fired the weapon.

GI Bill Can Be Used for OJT, APP Training

Most veterans know they can use their GI Bill to pay for the costs of education. However, many are unaware they can also receive up to $12,988.98 tax-free education benefits during a 24-month program of On-The-Job (OJT) or Apprenticeship (APP) training.

On-The-Job Training and Apprenticeship Programs offer recently hired veterans and other eligible persons an alternative way to use their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) GI Bill education benefits. Under OJT or APP, veterans learn skilled occupations by performing each job process described in a training outline. This is accomplished under the supervision of a skilled worker. While training, eligible participants receive monthly education benefits from the VA.

These programs may be approved in a wide variety of occupations. Some are in trades that relate to military occupations, but many are not. Currently approved programs include correctional officer, prosthetics technician, diesel mechanic, beautician, forest ranger, and many others. Additional programs can be created if needed.

Employers also benefit from these programs. The OJT or APP program is an excellent way to attract and retain well-disciplined employees.

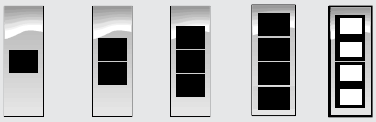
Employers direct the training, thereby ensuring the veteran becomes familiar with work processes as defined by the employer, equipment to be used upon completion of training, and company policies. There are no direct payments to employers under these programs. Payments made directly to the veteran are intended to serve as a salary supplement during the period of training.

To receive GI Bill benefits while training in an OJT program, a veteran must work full time. Full time as applied to OJT means that the standard workweek is not less than 30 hours (120 hours per month). The training establishment can be a sole proprietor business, a partnership, a corporation, a city, county, or state government office. The employer must agree to establish and document the OJT program. The employer is the person or organization responsible for the training, record keeping, and reporting; however, these tasks are made simple and easy by the State Approving Agency (SAA).

If a veteran recently began a new job, or has been promoted, it may be advantageous to look into OJT and discuss it with his or her employer. Training can be for a minimum of six months' and a maximum of two years' time.

For additional information about On-The-Job or Apprenticeship training programs, contact the State Approving Agency in your state. A list of SAAs can be found at www.gibill.va.gov/education/SAA.htm. If you have questions about eligibility, contact the Department of Veterans Affairs at 1-888-442-4551.

Do you want to become a warrant officer?



The U.S. Army is looking for highly motivated Soldiers, Marines, airmen and sailors to fill its warrant officer ranks. Positions are open in all 45 specialties if you qualify. Soldiers with less than 12 years active federal service are encouraged to apply.

For more information, contact the Warrant Officer Recruiting Team at (502) 626-0484/0458/0488/0478/1860 or visit www.usarec.army.mil/warrant

Small Arms Championship Set for March

PAULA J. RANDALL PAGÁN

The U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit (USAMU) will host the All-Army Small Arms Championships in conjunction with the U.S. Army Infantry Center March 14-25. The last All-Army Championships were in 1994. Soldiers and units will compete with the M16 rifle or M4 carbine, M9 pistol and M24 or M14 rifles against counterparts from the regular Army, Reserve, National Guard and Cadet Command.

"The advanced shooting experience gained in these challenging matches will translate into better trained and confident Soldiers, ready to meet the challenges of the global war on terrorism," said USAMU Commander Lieutenant Colonel David J. Liwanag. "These championships are the pinnacle of in-service Army competitive marksman-ship training."

Soldiers who excel in the All-Army Championships may be selected to compete on the Army, Army Reserve or National Guard Rifle and Pistol Teams in the Interservice and National Championship competitions. Winners of designated matches and classifications may be awarded Secretary of the Army trophy rifles.

Rifle matches will be shot at ranges from 200 to 500 yards. Pistol matches will be fired under combat time standards at seven to 25 yards. All firing will be done with helmet and individual combat gear (minus body armor and mask). Long-range matches will be fired at ranges of 600 to 1,000 yards.

Soldiers of all military occupational specialties from around the Army as well as U.S. Military Academy and ROTC cadets will be competing in the event.

More information about the All-Army Small Arms Championship and the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit can be found on the Web at www.usarec.army.mil/hq/amu.

New Stryker Defense Proven in Combat

JIM GARAMONE

A change made to the Stryker infantry vehicle has proven itself in combat.

The Stryker, an eight-wheeled infantry transporter, is an armored vehicle designed to stop 14.5 mm rounds. Critics said the main threat in Iraq is rocket-propelled grenades, and that the vehicle would not provide protection from them.

The 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division – also called Task Force Olympia after its Fort Lewis, Washington, home — is a Stryker brigade currently deployed to Mosul, Iraq. The unit replaced the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in this city.

Army officials outfitted the Strykers with what the Soldiers call a "cage." The slat armor put on the vehicles in Kuwait does look like a cage. It encircles the vehicle and gives added protection to the body of the Stryker. It is slats placed about 18 inches away from the main body. The theory was that an RPG would hit the slat and "defuse" between the slat and the main armor, said Brigadier General Carter Ham, the brigade commander.

The theory was exactly right, he said. "A bit earlier this morning there was an RPG attack against a Stryker vehicle in the eastern part of Mosul," he said to reporters traveling with Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz. "It was the second attack against a Stryker, but the first to strike the slat armor.

"It did exactly was it was intended to do," he continued. "When the round impacted on the slat armor, it detonated the warhead. The round defused in that space."

There were no casualties of any kind, he said, and there was "very, very minor damage to the vehicle."

The crew continued its patrol. The patrol was conducting neighborhood engagement, interacting with local citizens.

The crew identified the assailant and tried to call an OH-58 helicopter in on it, but the helicopter crew was unable to regain contact with the assailant.

It was a typical "drive-by" shooting, Ham said. A car drives up about 100 meters away, a gunner pops out of the window or the sun roof and fires the weapon, and the car speeds away.

"We're not surprised the slat armor worked the way it was intended to, and we continue to have great confidence in the Stryker vehicle," Ham said.

All of the 300-plus Strykers in the brigade have this cage.

Personal Cooling Systems Become Smaller

Every Soldier will carry some high-temperature relief when a microclimate cooling system is incorporated into the upcoming Objective Force Warrior uniform.

Microclimate cooling has been researched and developed at the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center in Natick, Massachusetts, since the 1980s, beginning with the Portable Vapor Compression System, a system shaped like a vacuum cleaner canister weighing 27 pounds, leading now to a couple of prototype compact systems weighing less than 5 pounds that resemble an oversized brick.

Engineers on the Chemical Technology Team are focused on having a system that weighs less than 4 pounds by 2008 and ultimately a system weighing less than 3 pounds by 2015 that will still provide the desired cooling to enhance Soldier safety and performance.

"Cooling is a medical and safety issue," said Brad Laprise, a mechanical engineer. "Comfort is a by-product. You'll never feel like you're in an air-conditioned room (with these systems), but the idea is to mitigate the Soldier's heat stress, allowing them to do their jobs safely and more effectively."

Cooling can also be a force multiplier because troops can work longer without taking frequent breaks necessary because of high ambient temperatures. It also can reduce the logistics load by decreasing the amount of drinking water, said Walter Teal, a chemical engineer.

The personal coolers designed by Aspen Systems, Inc. in Marlborough, Mass., and Foster-Miller in Waltham, Mass., are unique prototypes using the same technology as the Advanced Lightweight Microclimate Cooling System but in a smaller package. "These prototypes are stepping stones. The next step is to take the lessons learned from the Aspen and Foster-Miller units and go to something smaller," Teal said. "We know we are pushing the envelope of vapor compression, but we think there are things we can do to lower the weight and power use."

Vapor compression technology works the same way as a refrigerator or air conditioner. It's composed of a compressor, condenser, evaporator, thermal expansion tube, fan and pump working to move heat to the ambient environment. In the case of microclimate cooling, liquid is chilled and pumped through a vest lined with a network of tubing, removing excess body heat.

The Foster-Miller prototype provides 110 watts of cooling at 95 degrees F ambient temperature and weighs 4 pounds. The Aspen prototype weighs 4.65 pounds and provides 120 watts of cooling under the same conditions. Both require 50 watts of power, but engineers hope to achieve similar cooling capacity with only 30 watts of power in the future. Although 300 watts of cooling is ideal, at least 100 watts of cooling is needed to lower core body temperature according to studies they've seen, Teal said. Lower cooling capacity is a trade-off for reduced weight.

Shrinking size an inch or two and trimming a few ounces here and there will work for the next phase, but Teal said breakthrough technology is needed to achieve the most compact cooler for Objective Force Warrior. "Taking off those last two pounds will take more effort than the first 22 pounds," he said. For more information about the Soldier Systems Center, visit www.natick.army.mil.