ARMY GROUND RISK-MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Countermeasure

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Mid-Year Review

Countermeasure
ARMY GROUND RISK-MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

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DASAF'S CORNER

From the Director of Army Safety

Keeping Our Guard Up…

The majority of the enemy's guns in Iraq are now silent. The scenes from the fall of Saddam Hussein's statue in the center of Baghdad and particularly the dramatic rescues of our brave young men and women once held captive now have been added to the collection of our proudest moments in the history of the United States of America.

Equally as important, the rescues themselves will serve as a comfort to all present and future generations of soldiers and their families. Let no one doubt that for your selfless service and the many sacrifices you make for this great country, this Army, and this Nation, we will not forget you—no one will be left behind—and those who would willfully inflict harm on you will not go unpunished. This is yet another lesson that any present or future enemies of our great Nation should heed.

Staying intensely focused was easy when the mission before us was to liberate the Iraqi people, protect each other, and recover our comrades. Maintaining situational awareness isn't an option when the enemy is firing back or when our fellow soldiers' lives are in peril. A momentary lapse in vigilance could be deadly. But now that the major pockets of resistance have been overcome, the Iraqi people are getting a daily taste of that precious thing called freedom that we, as Americans, have long been willing to defend and even to die for. Sadly, some of our American and coalition soldiers have paid the ultimate price in helping them secure that freedom.

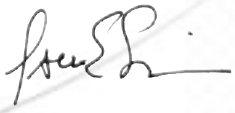
The loss of any life is a tragic event, whether it occurs while engaging the enemy or whether it happens as the result of a moment of carelessness. History shows that we repeatedly lose more soldiers to accidents than to enemy action. We survived the early stages of the war with minimal accidental losses, and I believe that this is a testament to the training of each soldier and commanders' emphasis on properly integrating risk management into mission planning, preparation, and execution.

Historical data also tells us that often the most dangerous portion of any mission is when it is almost over and we are starting to feel the symptoms of get-home-itis. Time and again, the majority of our losses have occurred once the battlefield guns have fallen silent and the flight crews are headed home. That's when the adrenalin slows, our guards drop, hazards are overlooked, and accidents happen.

Your determination, skill, discipline, and execution of each task to the standard you have been trained to have helped us be overwhelmingly victorious in the early main battles—but the dangers have not yet fully passed. I urge you to maintain vigilance, being ever alert for new hazards as situations and conditions change.

It has been said many times before that "He is safe who is **always** on guard."

Keep your guard up!
BG James E. Simmons



First-Half FY03 Army Ground Accident Review

The Army has been extremely busy this fiscal year. Troops were mobilized and deployed in a buildup that lead to Operation Iraqi Freedom, which began on 19 March 2003. Although the war has been won and the Army is now transitioning to post-hostility activities, information on the in-theater accidents experienced during this time are still filtering in to the U.S. Army Safety Center (USASC). Therefore, this article will concentrate on a review of Class A accidents excluding those in theater. A separate article (in a later issue) will discuss accidents that occurred during Operation Iraqi Freedom and associated lessons learned.

During the first half of FY03 the Army experienced 65 Class A ground accidents, resulting in 59 Army military fatalities and a cost of $12.8 million. The majority of these accidents (74 percent) and fatalities (81 percent) occurred during off-duty time.

Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Accidents

POV accidents continue to be the most common cause of accidental death in the Army, with 44 Class A accidents and 44 Army military fatalities during the first half of FY03. The vehicles most frequently involved in these serious accidents were automobiles and sedans (66 percent), trucks (16 percent), and motorcycles (14 percent). The most common reported causes of fatal POV accidents continue to be excessive speed and driving while fatigued. Failure to use required safety equipment, such as seatbelts, also continues to be involved in fatal POV accidents.

Accident Example: Two soldiers went to a nightclub for the evening and consumed alcohol. When they left the club and got in their vehicle, the driver was under the influence of alcohol. Neither soldier wore his seatbelt. Both of them had been awake for about 20 hours. Their vehicle veered off the road and rolled. Both soldiers were ejected from the vehicle. The driver was paralyzed from the waist down, and the passenger received multiple fractures and spent over a month out of work.

Personnel Injury (PI)

PI accidents accounted for 15 percent (10 total) of the ground Class A accidents and 17 percent (10 total) of Army military fatalities during the first half of FY03. Of these 10 accidents and fatalities, half were on duty and half were off duty. Three of the fatalities involved physical training (PT) activities. Two soldiers collapsed while performing PT, and one collapsed during cool-down exercises after a PT run. Two fatalities were the result of drowning, and both of these involved alcohol—one SM fell into a river after leaving a club, and the other SM drowned in a hotel Jacuzzi. Two fatalities involved sports activities: one on duty (SM riding a horse) and one off duty (snowboarding). The snowboarding accident involved an SM that struck a tree, resulting in fatal injuries. The SM riding a horse was a member of the Honor Guard and was thrown from the horse during morning exercise. Two fatalities involved weapons handling (one off duty and one on duty). The off-duty SM was at a friend's residence when he accidentally shot himself. The on-duty SM was participating in training on an M16 rifle range at night. The last PI fatality was the result of choking on food.

Army Motor Vehicle (AMV)

There were five AMV accidents, accounting for 8 percent of the ground Class A accidents but only one fatality (2 percent) during the first half of FY03. Three of these accidents involved commercial vehicles (a rental vehicle, a firefighting truck, and a tractor-trailer). Two accidents involved tactical vehicles—an M35A3 truck and a light medium tactical vehicle (LMTV).

Army Combat Vehicle (ACV)

There were three ACV accidents during the first half of FY03, accounting for 5 percent of the ground Class A accidents and three Army military fatalities (5 percent of total fatalities). Two accidents involved M1A1 tanks, and one involved an M3A2 fighting vehicle.

Explosives and Fire Accidents

There were two explosives accidents and one fire during the first half of FY03, resulting in one Army military fatality. The two explosives accidents involved anti-personnel land mines (one occurred during Operation Enduring Freedom). One involved a Claymore mine during unit training, and the Operation Enduring Freedom accident occurred during a reconnaissance for planned mine clearing. The fire occurred in a warehouse, damaging training equipment.

Conclusion

This year the Army has again lost soldiers and equipment to accidents—accidents that did not need to happen, losses that did not need to occur. Fifty-nine families have lost a loved one, and each of us must do everything in our power to ensure that no other family suffers such a loss. How do we do that? Each leader and soldier must know the standard and perform to that standard. They must take responsibility for their own actions, both on and off duty.

Editor's note: These statistics are current from the USASC database as of 28 April 2003. Delayed reports and follow-up details on preliminary reports could change the statistics, figures, and findings somewhat in the coming months.

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Risk Management:
A Life-Changing Experience

SMA JACK L. TILLEY
Sergeant Major of the Army

When Army Chief of Staff General Eric K. Shinseki directed the U.S. Army Safety Center (USASC) to field a Mobile Training Team to take risk management to the NCOs in the field, I knew it would have a positive impact—and it has!

The premise was simple. Take senior NCOs from combat arms and combat support military occupational specialties, provide them with resident safety training, and then send them to the field to do what NCOs do best—coach, mentor, and train the force. And, oh, by the way, provide them 3 hours of upper-level college credit or 3 hours of graduate-level college credit at the same time.

Not only have the NCOs of the USASC provided quality training to the targeted E-5s and E-6s, but as the reputation of the course grew so did the audience. Colonels, first lieutenants, warrant officers of all grades, sergeants major, corporals, and Department of the Army civilians—not to mention U.S. Air Force and U.S. Marine Corps personnel—have attended the course and provided me with resounding positive feedback. The course provides the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate risk management and safety into our combat mission and our garrison operations. Many of these NCOs are now forward deployed and are using this training to protect the force, accomplishing their mission *safely*. If you haven't attended the course, you are missing out on some outstanding training—training that is constantly updated with lessons learned from USASC teams that deploy to Afghanistan, Turkey, Kuwait, and other locations around the globe where our soldiers train and fight. And it's training that won't cost you a dime—just 45 hours of training and education in a 5-day course. That's right, General Shinseki and USASC foot the bill!

My guidance to you is that if this course hasn't been to your installation recently, contact your G3 and get it on the training calendar. Sign up and attend. Hooah!

"Bullseye" Program Hits the Mark

Julie Shelley
Editor

Every commander, from the largest corps to the smallest company, is well aware of the issues their soldiers are faced with on a daily basis. If those concerns were only tactical, perhaps they would be easier to solve; however, soldiers are just as affected by personal problems as their civilian counterparts. Often, these problems affect readiness and have a lasting impact not only on the soldier, but on the unit as well.

How can commanders combat some of these issues? The Soldier Risk Reduction Program (SRRP), already implemented at Fort Riley, KS, could be the answer.

Originally a collaborative product of the Army Center for Substance Abuse and the U.S. Army Safety Center, the SRRP was formally applied at Fort Riley in 1996 with the formation of an "Installation Prevention Team" made up of chaplains, social workers, preventive medicine personnel, community mental health workers, the provost marshal, the installation safety officer, and many others. Since the SRRP's inception at Fort Riley, significant improvements in safety have been seen in several key areas, including POV safety.

The SRRP, which focuses on the active-duty soldier, is a program that tracks several risk factors, both tactical and non-tactical, on a quarterly basis for each command, with the battalion commander being the primary customer. Instead of a grading program, the SRRP is a training program. At the end of each quarter, the battalion commander receives a report detailing statistics for:

- **Deaths**
- **Accidents**
- **Injuries**
- **Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)**
- **Suicide gestures and attempts**
- **Absences without leave (AWOLs)**
- **Drug offenses**
- **Alcohol offenses**
- **Traffic violations**
- **Crimes against persons and property**
- **Spouse and child abuse**
- **Financial problems**

Once commanders have the data, they can focus their attention on those factors that most impact soldier and unit readiness. Although any risk factor will see an increase or decrease each quarter, the data gives the commander a "snapshot in time" of their unit. The data also allows commanders to pinpoint trends in their unit, with a trend being defined as a two-quarter increase or decrease in any particular risk factor. From this and other historical data, commanders can then look two to three quarters ahead and plan strategies to reduce problem incidents.

An increase in a risk factor does not necessarily signal an increase in that particular area at all—it simply could be a matter of increased awareness. For instance, a commander that is aggressive in drug testing will have a higher incidence of drug offenses. At Fort Riley, commanders have been receptive to the program and even taken time to contact subject matter experts in their problem areas. In fact, since the program was formally introduced, downward trends have been established in injuries, traffic violations, spouse and child abuse, and financial and alcohol problems.

The SRRP has been a success especially in reducing POV fatalities and accidents at Fort Riley. Since 1996, Fort Riley has logged nearly 600 POV accident-free days, and up to Valentine's Day of this year had recorded almost a complete year of no POV fatalities. With so many soldiers dying in POV accidents throughout the Army, the Fort Riley statistics are definitely a good-news story, showing that this forward-thinking approach really can work.

For more information on the Fort Riley SRRP, go to their Web site at http://www.riley.army.mil/services/fort/asap/srrp.asp.

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Just Having a Little Fun

The mission was to conduct a mounted patrol to provide security for a logistics camp in the desert. To provide mobility, the light infantry company responsible for the mission received a section from the anti-armor company that included six soldiers and two M966 HMMWV TOW vehicles. The HMMWVs had M249 Squad Automatic Weapons mounted in their turrets.

The two units had never worked together before being attached. The company commander assigned each of his three line platoons an 8-hour shift to provide 24-hour coverage. A driver and HMMWV from the attached section accompanied each platoon on shift. On the day of the accident, the second-shift platoon responsible for camp security reported to the Force Protection Operations Center to receive a briefing from the outgoing platoon and prepare for their patrol. The crew assigned mounted duties assembled, conducted pre-combat checks, and did a joint preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) of their vehicle. The crew consisted of the driver, NCOIC, gunner, and two observers in the rear seats.

The crew moved out to begin their patrol as scheduled. They accomplished one full security check of the guard towers, the camp entry control point, and the perimeter. While checking the perimeter, the crew noted a Bedouin camp that was too close to the berm and returned to camp to report. Nothing out of the ordinary happened during the first few hours of the mission.

Upon returning to check the perimeter again, the gunner noticed some tire tracks in the sand and said, "Someone's been doing doughnuts out here." Although the exact conversation that followed is not known, some of the crew discussed performing the same type of maneuver. The driver told the gunner he was going to do a quick turn and proceeded to accelerate. He then turned the vehicle hard to the right—while still accelerating—and attempted to perform a quick 180-degree turn. The HMMWV was riding on 3 to 4 inches of loose sand with hard-packed sand below. The vehicle, traveling at approximately 40 mph, began to slide and the driver's side tires dug into the sand. Eventually the tires gripped, and the vehicle began to roll. The gunner was ejected as the vehicle rolled and was crushed beneath it.

The bottom line is that this is not a case of a young soldier just doing something stupid. There were a series of failures that allowed this soldier to perform that maneuver. The senior occupant was an NCO. He knew from the conversation that the driver was going

Mission: Force Protection Mounted Roving Patrol

Hazards

- Gunner exposed in turret
- Excessive speed
- Horseplay
- Untrained crew
- Unlicensed driver
- No seatbelts worn

Controls

- Rollover Battle Drill, ARTEP 19-100-10 Drill
- Senior occupant enforces standards for safe vehicle operation – leaders spot check
- Published speed limits for surface conditions
- Enforce dispatch procedures IAW AR 600-55

to perform a dangerous stunt, yet he failed to exercise his authority to do something to stop him. All too often a soldier dies because an NCO failed to enforce a known standard. Also, not one of the vehicle occupants was wearing a seatbelt. Although the injuries to the soldiers in the vehicle were moderate, they could have been reduced had the soldiers been buckled up. Once again, the NCO failed to enforce the standard.

The unit conducting the mounted patrol was a light infantry company, and most of the soldiers had never operated from a HMMWV. Knowing the soldiers were unfamiliar with vehicle operations, the commander should have assessed the mission and identified potential hazards. Unfortunately, since the mission was in the rear area and did not involve contact with the enemy, he didn't consider there to be any additional hazards present. The commander never applied the principles of risk management after receiving the mission from the battalion. By removing himself from the process, he failed to ensure his soldiers were properly trained and disciplined to execute the task.

The M966 "gun truck" is being used more and more as a force protection platform, with an M240B or M249 mounted instead of the TOW weapon system. Even though the gunner was in the proper position at nametag defilade, he still was ejected. Had the crew been trained in rollover drills, the outcome of this accident could have been different. There is no published rollover standard designed specifically for the M966 vehicle. However, the Military Police have developed a battle drill for the up-armored HMMWV that will work just as well for the M966 when a gunner is in the turret. ARTEP 19-100-10 MTP is available in the Reimer Digital Library. Every unit with gunners exposed in HMMWV turrets should begin training this drill now. It takes only a few minutes to practice and could make all the difference during a rollover.

What can be done to prevent young soldiers from doing stupid things? We've all done things that we occasionally look back on and say, "What was I thinking?" Everyone makes mistakes, but for most of us they don't result in someone losing their life. The key to preventing these kinds of accidents is leader involvement, discipline, and strict enforcement of standards. Had the NCO involved in this accident made a simple correction, a soldier would still be with us to continue the fight. It never crossed the driver's mind that his actions could cause such a tragic accident. He was just trying to have a little fun during an otherwise mundane mission.

Commanders must recognize the small deviations, such as not wearing seatbelts, that result in new and looser standards being set. Check the small things and hold your junior leaders accountable. It's rarely as simple as one soldier knowingly violating the rules. Someone's life could hinge on your commitment to standards.

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RESULT
1 Fatality

Tips for Driving

MAJ HAROLD E. RAUGH JR.
Adapted from *Infantry*,
July-August 1992

Many of the soldiers who participated in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were unprepared for the terrain and driving conditions they encountered in the Middle East. Generally, only those who had trained at the National Training Center or who previously had served in a desert area had ever practiced desert driving in wheeled vehicles.

Off-road desert driving is a unique experience. Desert terrain consists of much more than just large, drifting sand dunes. It also includes mountains, cliffs, and deep valleys. In addition, the soil texture varies from soft, fine-grained sand to hard-packed sand, pebbles, gravel, and rocks up to boulder size. In many places there is a combination of all these.

Wheeled vehicle drivers and other soldiers assigned in or deployed to the Middle East or Southwest Asia need to learn about desert terrain and develop a confident attitude about driving in it.

The following are some tips you might find helpful when driving in a desert environment:

- Sand conditions change rapidly. Learn to read sand colors like a map.
- The "feel of the sand" is never the same, whether in the same vehicle or another vehicle. Experience is the only teacher.
- Getting stuck is normal. Accept it with patience.

in the Desert

• Cross a rippled sand area (if you cannot avoid it) parallel to the ripples and very slowly.

• Low fourth gear is the best gear to drive in when driving four-wheel-drive vehicles.

• In soft sand, start the vehicle, accelerate, and (once moving) speed shift to second gear.

• Once you are committed to driving in sand do not hesitate, slow down, or stop—continue driving.

• Plan all your stops and make them gradually. Never stop on an uphill grade.

• Never back into a position from which you cannot move forward.

• Plan your route from one terrain feature to the next.

• Know your exact location at all times.

• Accept backtracking; sometimes it is necessary.

• Never drive to the top of a dune or get to a point where you are committed to do so without first checking to see what is on the other side.

• Before cresting a dune, clear the sand from the vehicle's undercarriage. After cresting, use low gear to go down the dune and avoid using the brakes.

• Never drive into a depression between dunes where the sides are too steep to climb out.

• Communicate from high ground, if possible.

• When patrolling in pairs, support each other.

• Vehicle recovery in a dune area is dangerous. If possible, it is better to repair the vehicle on site.

• Avoid mined areas, destroyed war equipment, and dunes that end at an oasis.

• Take a 15-minute "eye break" when you experience sand blindness.

• Reduce eyestrain and fatigue by changing drivers and taking rest or meal breaks often.

• Never leave your vehicle unattended.

• Never attempt to walk out of the desert.

NOTE: Operators need to check their vehicle's technical manual for any additional instructions on how to drive on sand and in desert environments.

"Know your exact location at all times."

Editor's Note: This article was authored by MAJ Raugh on behalf of soldiers patrolling the Sinai Peninsula after the conclusion of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. In view of the current military operations supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, these driving tips might again prove useful.

Run the Clock Forward

Bob Van Elsberg
Managing Editor

I was the second vehicle in a line of four driving down a country road that offered only one lane in each direction. I had just passed an area with some mobile homes when the road turned sharply to the right, followed by a long, sweeping curve to the left. A stand of trees bordering the left side of the road effectively concealed any vehicles in the oncoming lane. I knew that, so I made it a point to be patient if I was stuck behind a slow driver. I could always pass a little farther down the road where a long, straight section allowed me to see any approaching traffic.

As I started around the right-hand curve, something in my rearview mirror caught my eye. My jaw just about dropped into my lap. The last car in the line behind me suddenly pulled into the oncoming lane. The impatient driver was attempting to pass all three of us on a blind curve!

I started weighing my options. There wasn't much of a shoulder to my right, nor was there much of a shoulder on the left-hand side of the road. If anyone was in the oncoming lane, it would be almost impossible for them to avoid hitting our impatient passer head-on. All I could do was slow down so that I could better maneuver if something bad did happen. I was also trying to leave a space for our impatient passer to pull into if she suddenly needed it.

Fortunately, there were no cars in the oncoming lane and everyone escaped what could have been an ugly crash. I breathed a sigh of relief.

As the impatient passer drove out of sight, I asked myself a simple question: "Why didn't that driver 'run the clock forward'—think a few seconds ahead in time before she

"Safety is thinking about what you're doing"

attempted that dangerous pass?" If she had envisioned a vehicle in the oncoming lane, she would have realized that she had nowhere to go and almost no time to react. But she didn't think about the possible consequences of her actions.

You see this all the time. When someone tailgates, are they really thinking about what might happen in the next couple of seconds? What about on the job? Last year, I read about a bizarre on-duty accident that happened in the Air Force. A maintainer was trying to pry an access panel off an aircraft using a screwdriver instead of the proper tool. He *had* the proper tool in his toolbox, but getting it would have involved climbing down his maintenance stand and then back up again. That would take time, more than he wanted to invest at the moment. As he pried the edge of the panel with his screwdriver, it slipped and flew back. The blade hit him in the eye, causing an injury that cost him his sight in that eye. The screwdriver, not being the proper tool, must have been awkward to use. If he had paused long enough to envision what could happen, he might have recognized the dangers to himself.

Thinking ahead—even if it is just a few seconds from where you are right now—doesn't take a Ph.D. It's simply the first couple of steps of risk management. Do you remember what those steps are? The first is to identify the hazards. The second is to assess the risks. Neither the driver in this story nor the maintainer did either of these. If they had, the driver wouldn't have put herself and others in danger and the maintainer would still have both eyes.

Safety—if you'll pardon the pun—is not an accident, nor is it the result of being lucky. Safety is thinking about what you're doing and envisioning the consequences. The fact is, if you don't do the first couple of steps of risk management you'll never get to the fifth step: evaluating how your plan worked. When the program "The A Team" was on TV, actor George Peppard's favorite phrase was, "I love it when a plan comes together." When it comes to being safe, wouldn't you like to be able to say the same thing? A big part of that is "running the clock forward"—just thinking ahead.

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SAVED by the BELT

Dale Larry
CP-12 Intern
U.S. Army Safety Center

It was 1400 on a rainy Sunday afternoon and I was on my way to the golf course. According to the weather forecast, the rain was going to clear. Just as I was leaving out the door, the telephone rang. A policeman was on the other end. I could hear fear or excitement in his voice—at that instant, I didn't know which. "Your wife has been involved in a serious accident," he said.

Diann, my wife, was on the way to the shopping mall. The trip took her along a two-lane highway that winds through a mountainous area called Chapman Mountain. This stretch of road is about a mile from our house in Huntsville, AL. As she came over and down the mountain road, a truck was stalled just ahead of her. She checked the rearview mirror far in advance of reaching the truck to make sure she could move over safely. She switched on the right turn signal, indicating her intent of moving into the right lane. The next thing that happened was a terrifying and helpless experience.

Diann turned the steering wheel to move over, but the car did not respond. She tried moving the car into the next lane several more times—still with no response—all the while getting closer and closer to the stalled truck. Seconds before the impact, she slammed on the brakes. Then the car hydroplaned! In less than a second, a 5,000-pound car traveling at 50 miles per hour came to a complete stop, slamming into the truck in its path.

The image of her flying through the windshield at a speed greater than 50 miles per hour was burned into my brain. I knew she didn't like wearing seatbelts. In fact, we'd had a heated argument about that very subject the day before. I refused to start the car until after she had fastened her seatbelt. She called me a few choice words, but put it on anyway. I believe my persistence was the reason she had her seatbelt on the following afternoon.

The car was totaled, but Diann walked away from the accident with only a friction burn from the seatbelt. That scar is a "beauty mark" that reminds her to always buckle up!

For more information on seatbelts and safety, visit the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration's Web site at http://www.nhtsa.gov.

Mr. Larry currently is assigned to Anniston Army Depot, Anniston, AL. He may be contacted via e-mail dale.larry@us.army.mil.

Do you have a personal experience story where a seatbelt saved your life or protected you from serious injuries? If so, why not share your story with your fellow soldiers through this magazine? There are three ways you can do that. You can e-mail your story to countermeasure@safetycenter.army.mil or fax it to us at (334) 255-3003, DSN 558-3003. You can also send a letter to: U.S. Army Safety Center, Attn: *Countermeasure,* Bldg. 4905, 5th Avenue, Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363.

A "Sometimes Humbling" Experience

Julie Shelley
Editor

During April 2003, Ms. Julie Shelley and Ms. Paula Allman, both writer-editors for the U.S. Army Safety Center's publications *Flightfax* and *Countermeasure*, traveled with the CP-12 Safety Professional intern class to the National Training Center (NTC) in Fort Irwin, CA. Below is an excerpt from their briefing to BG James E. Simmons, Director of Army Safety and USASC Commanding General. Look for more NTC stories coming soon in both publications!

The NTC is a place designed to push our soldiers to the limit, both physically and mentally. After spending 5 days there, I now know on a very limited scale that a rotation to the NTC isn't a fun-filled TDY trip for our soldiers. To say the very least, the USASC editors' trip to the NTC with the CP-12 intern class was an eye-opening and sometimes humbling experience.

When you sit in an office all day and see accident reports listing nothing but rank, MOS, unit name, and cause of injury or death, it is easy to become desensitized to the reality of what our soldiers face every day—no name, no face goes along with those reports. At the NTC we were able to see, in flesh and blood, just why we are here. Our jobs are about more than checking for correct punctuation, grammar, and spelling—we, too, are committed to keeping our soldiers as safe as possible.

On this trip we had the privilege and honor to meet dedicated green-suiters, including COL Joseph E. Martz and CW3 Mike Burnside; NTC Safety Director Mike Williams, a.k.a "Safety Mike," who is easily one of the most devoted civilians I've ever met; and also enthusiastic contractors with a passion for their work. But an equal honor was meeting some of the junior enlisted officers of the Stryker Brigade, who had just come in from a rotation and were tired, hungry, and dirty, but answered all our questions with both pride and a smile. Those are the guys we are here for—the ones who will fight our Nation's wars.

We learned about obvious hazards, but we also gained insight into the subtle hazards desert warfare presents to our soldiers. Who would have thought that a small washout on a sandy road could flip a HMMWV or other tactical vehicle? Someone even had to point out an unexploded simulator round to me because I didn't see its fins sticking up out of the ground—not a hazard I generally encounter in Room 246, U.S. Army Safety Center. I had never flown in a helicopter before, and I've worked with aviation-related documents for the Army for more than 2 years. We slept in barracks and ate MREs. How can you effectively write about something if you've never experienced it? Needless to say, this trip offered me these and many other experiences I will never forget.

It is stories like these that give us the insight we need to convey to our readers the real dangers that are out there, not only at the NTC, but at any military installation and certainly any battlefield in the world. We have now seen firsthand what the "war stories" are all about, but there are so many more, and we are here to tell them.

On this trip we made invaluable contacts. We've all heard the saying, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." From experience, I can tell you that it's much easier to get information for a story when your POC can put your face with your name. Since we got back, we've even had calls come into our office from NTC personnel, asking us safety related questions! And we cannot leave out the contacts we made in this class itself—these are the people who will be in the field with their soldiers in places we'll probably never see. We are the mouthpiece for Army safety professionals, and these students know they can call us anytime and that we WILL be calling them! Never before have the USASC editors been given the opportunity to see so much or get to know so many of the people we are here to support. We send many thanks to Dr. Brenda Miller, the CP-12 class, and the NTC staff for allowing us this chance.

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My Daddy's No Rocket Scientist!

A few summers ago, I scanned the Web for the biggest skyrocket I could get. I located a fireworks importer who had this monstrous skyrocket—the "Sky Dragon." It was perfect! Standing 4 feet tall and mounted on a half-inch wooden dowel, it was pure aerospace engineering.

I plopped down a bunch of money and had the dealer send me two cases. Each case contained 80 rockets and had a "Class 4 Explosives" sticker on its side—a real bonus! Hmm … something to save for the scrapbook. The night the rockets arrived, the kids and I had a genuine rocket-launching ceremony.

I placed one of the Sky Dragons in a liter-size glass bottle, but the bottle fell over. Obviously, the rocket was way too big to be launched this way, so I needed a better platform. I pried up one of the driveway drain grates with a crowbar. It looked sort of like a hardened missile silo—the perfect launching pad. Of course, I did all this covertly, as "projectile-type" fireworks are totally illegal in my county.

I began the countdown and asked my kids which one wanted to light the fuse. They all took a few steps back and politely declined (they must take after their mother). So, I did the honors.

The fireworks importer promised me the rockets wouldn't make any noise. I needed them to be relatively quiet so I could shoot them off in my neighborhood without causing undue alarm and being visited by the local police.

I launched the rocket. It soared to about 1,000 feet and then disintegrated into a huge shower of silent red sparks. "Pretty cool," I thought, until the shower of sparks burned out and suddenly turned into a cloud of extremely bright and loud explosions.

The kids scrambled into the back door Three Stooges-style and left me standing in the smoking haze waiting for the cops to arrive. Luckily, they never did.

The next day my oldest son, Doug, and I decided we would "neuter" one of the rockets so it wouldn't make any noise. The rocket was pretty simple, so we took it apart. It had a large booster engine topped with a warhead that contained red sparkly things that exploded.

After removing the payload, we tested one of the rockets. Our modifications added nearly 50 percent to the altitude.

Encouraged by our seeming success, we customized four more rockets. When we were done Doug had a jar full of stuff that came out of the warheads, including 12 fuses, some paper, four plastic nose cones, and a big handful of little black balls (the poppers) about the size of buckshot.

I didn't want to see the popper thingies go to waste, so I told Doug we were going to put them in a hole in the ground and set them off. He gave me a big smile. It's amazing how kids think alike—even when separated by 30 years.

As I was digging a shallow hole with my hand, Doug asked if it would be OK to put a toy Army man next to the explosives. Darn—exactly what I was thinking! So, we added an action figure to the pile of black balls and fuses.

I figured that 3 inches of fuse would take 2 seconds to burn. I squatted next to the soldier and gave a short eulogy. Doug laughed. I took my trusty lighter and placed it next to the fuse. One flick got the lighter going, and then an image appeared that I'll remember for a long time—my hand holding a lighter next to a pile of explosives.

I had badly miscalculated the fuse burn time. It was in the thousandth-of-a-second range. The pile of little poppers immediately ignited into a tremendously brilliant ball of fire. Unfortunately, when viewed at ground level, those tiny popper thingies became really BIG popper thingies that exploded for 15 feet in all directions. I was instantaneously engulfed in a ball of fire

that sounded a lot like being in a half-done bag of popcorn.

About as fast as I could snap my fingers, it was all over.

After the smoke cleared, Doug started laughing hysterically. That meant I was still in one piece. I checked all my clothes for burn marks and, amazingly enough, found none. Doug checked my back to make sure it wasn't on fire. No combustion there either.

The driveway was peppered with black holes where the concrete had been scarred from the explosives. The toy soldier wasn't as lucky as me—he looked like he'd been nuked. Doug quietly examined him, then looked at me and probably wondered the same thing I did: How was I not burned beyond recognition?

I hope this vivid image tempers his interest in fireworks. After all, if your dad isn't going to teach you fireworks safety, who is?

Some tips on fireworks safety:

- Always read and follow the manufacturer's safety directions.
- Don't allow children to light fireworks.
- Don't dismantle fireworks or try to make your own.
- Don't light fireworks and hold them in your hand.
- Don't throw fireworks. Place them on the ground or in whatever platform you will launch them from, then light the fuse and get away as fast as you can.
- Don't light fireworks inside a can or bottle. The explosion could be more than you bargained for.
- Fireworks should only be lit outdoors and away from any structures or flammable materials.
- Don't assume Class C fireworks are harmless. The heat from a sparkler (1,800 degrees Fahrenheit) can melt gold, so imagine the harm it could do to a child's skin. Children under the age of 5 are the ones most often injured by sparklers.
- Keep a bucket of water or a hose nearby for emergencies.
- Pick up duds with a shovel, not your bare hands.
- Don't try to light a firework that has misfired. Instead, soak it in water and throw it away.
- Securely store fireworks in a cool, dry place where children can't get to them.
- Don't use illegal fireworks.

Reprinted courtesy *Torch*, November 1999.
Fireworks safety tips courtesy *Safety Times*.

Be Careful with M9 Paper

Soldiers should be careful when using M9 Chemical Detector Paper, the paper used to detect liquid chemical agent aerosols. This paper contains a small amount of dye that might cause dermatitis in sensitive individuals. One of the dyes also is considered mutagenic, meaning it can cause changes in the DNA molecule. In addition, the paper might contain a chemical that has been determined to be carcinogenic. Because M9 paper contains small amounts of these dyes, the health risk is considered small. However, soldiers need to take care to avoid contact with the paper. When handling M9 paper, always wear chemical protective gloves and never allow the paper to touch your bare skin. **Also, before using any chemical, always consult the materiel safety data sheet (MSDS).** If you need any further information, consult your safety officer or industrial hygienist.

POC: LTC Heidi Overstreet, Chief, Policy and Programs Division, U.S. Army Safety Center, (334) 255-2477, DSN 558-2477, e-mail overstrh@safetycenter.army.mil

Get "Belted" in that HMMWV!

If you are driving an older HMMWV and wearing load-bearing equipment (LBE), a protective vest, chemical gear, or other equipment, getting the original seatbelt all the way around you might be a bit of a challenge. Now there is good news on that front. The Program Manager, Light Tactical Vehicles, has developed a longer seatbelt that is available as a kit (NSN 2540-01-495-0817). The kit will add an extra 18 inches to the length of the original belt, meaning you can buckle up and breathe again.

In addition to the kit, there also is available an improved seatbelt assembly (Part Number (P/N) 12480530, CAGE Code 19207). This seatbelt assembly has a longer strap made of a slicker material that provides smoother retraction. The improved seatbelt assembly replaces both P/N 12342377-1 (NSN 2540-01-315-3358) and P/N 12342377-2 (NSN 2540-315-3143) in all applications. Technical Manuals (TMs) 9-2320-280-24P and 9-2320-387-24P are affected by this change.

POC: Mr. Don Wren, Ground Systems and Accident Investigation Division, (334) 255-2744, DSN 558-2744, e-mail don.wren@safetycenter.army.mil

Vehicle Recalls

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently released the following recall information for the vehicles listed below. More information can be found on the NHTSA Web site at www.nhtsa.gov.

2003 Buick Rendezvous, Pontiac Aztek. Defect: In some of these sport utility vehicles, the diameter of the steering column intermediate shaft is too small. This condition could allow the intermediate shaft to spin inside the steering column coupling, resulting in the driver losing control of the vehicle's steering. If this were to happen while the vehicle is moving, a crash could result. *NHTSA Recall No. 03V052, GM Recall No.03009*

2003 Dodge Ram 2500/3500. Defect: Pickup trucks equipped with Cummins diesel engines and manual transmissions might experience an elevated idle speed after extended use of the cruise control. This could result in unintended acceleration and a reduction in braking effectiveness. *NHTSA Recall No. 03V033, DaimlerChrysler Recall No.C02*

1998-2001 Chrysler LHS; 1998-2002 Chrysler Concord 300M; and 1998-2002 Dodge Intrepid. Defect: The seat back recliner bolt can break, resulting in the seat back reclining unexpectedly. If this should happen while the vehicle is being driven, the driver could lose control of the vehicle. *NHTSA Recall No. 03V035, DaimlerChrysler Recall No.C04*

2002 Nissan Altima and Xterra. Defect: The clock spring electrical connector might not be fully secured to the driver's air bag module squib pin connector. If the connector comes loose, the driver's air bag will not deploy during a crash, increasing the risk of injury. *NHTSA Recall No.03V061*

Owners who do not receive a free remedy for these recall defects within a reasonable time should contact the following numbers: Buick, (800) 521-7300; Pontiac, (800) 762-2737; DaimlerChrysler, (800) 853-1403; and Nissan, (800) 647-7261.

POV

Class A

■ SM was killed when he was struck by an oncoming vehicle while stopped to render assistance at an accident site.

■ SM was killed when the vehicle he was riding in was involved in an accident. The driver of the vehicle, also an SM, received minor injuries. Details of the accident were not reported.

■ SM suffered fatal injuries when he was ejected from his vehicle after it left the roadway and overturned. SM died 9 days after the accident.

■ SM was killed when the vehicle he was riding in ran off the roadway and overturned. The civilian driver of the vehicle was not injured.

■ SM suffered fatal injuries when the vehicle he was operating ran off the roadway, struck a guardrail, and overturned.

AMV

Class A

■ A Department of the Army civilian was killed when the GSA vehicle he was driving collided with the rear of a semi tractor-trailer. The civilian driver of the semi was not injured.

■ Two SMs were killed when an AVLB impacted the rear of an LMTV. Five other SMs suffered injuries in the accident. The driver of the AVLB, also an SM, was not injured.

Personnel Injury

Class A

■ SM was killed when he apparently fell from a 100-foot cliff. SM had been participating in a night land navigation course at the time of the accident.

■ SM was killed when he was mistaken for an enemy and fired upon by a vehicle from an adjacent unit. SM had dismounted his vehicle to investigate a destroyed tank at the time of the accident.

■ SM collapsed during a PT run. SM was taken to a local hospital and put on life support until time of death.

■ SM was pronounced dead after he was found collapsed after apparently performing PT.

■ SM was discovered unresponsive after apparently having completed personal PT and pronounced dead.

■ SM suffered a permanent total disability after he received a severe electrical shock from overhead train power lines. SM was conducting a security check of a Bradley during transport by rail at the time of the accident. Another SM suffered burns in the accident while attempting to help the injured soldier.

Class C

■ SM was running in formation when he collided with another SM and fell, striking his head. SM's injures were listed as critical.

■ SM received burns to his face and hands after he ignited powder from a simulator round. SM was part of a detail to clear a squad live-fire range by picking up expended ammunition.

■ SM received injuries to his knee after striking the ground during a night military free-fall jump. SM had flared his canopy for landing at too high an altitude, causing the hard landing.

■ SM had an allergic reaction to fire ant bites after he was bitten on the hand during PT. SM had failed to observe that he was placing his hand on an ant hill while doing push-ups.

■ SM dislocated his shoulder after conducting an improper parachute landing fall during military free-fall training. SM had thrown his arms out to break his fall, causing the injury.

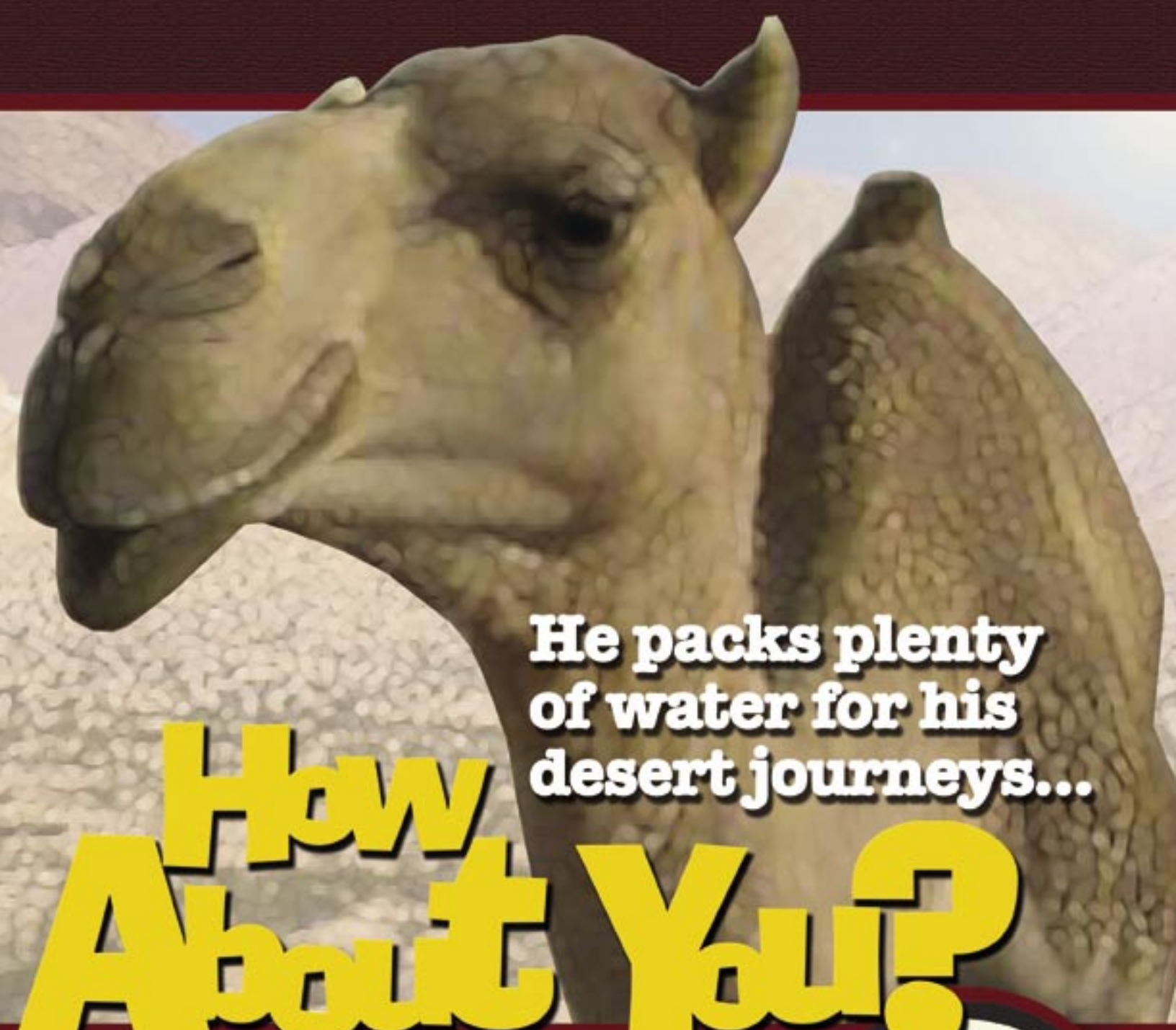
Other

Class A

■ SM drowned when the boat he was fishing in capsized on a lake. SM's son, son-in-law, and friend also were killed in the accident.

■ SM was killed when he was hit by a boat while riding a jet ski.

■ SM was killed when he lost his balance and fell four stories from a window sill in his barracks.



He packs plenty of water for his desert journeys...

How About You?

If it's 80 °F or hotter, you'll need up to 12 quarts of water a day for your desert journey.

Are you packing enough water?

U.S. ARMY SAFETY CENTER