

10th Mountain Division mortar crews test new equipment

U.S. Army

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (Sept. 5, 2012) -- Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team's 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment; 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment; and 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, participated in testing of the new One Tactical Engagement Simulation System, Aug. 14-24, in the Fort Drum training area.

A group of operational testers from Operational Test Command brought the One Tactical Engagement Simulation System, or OneTESS, to Fort Drum for Soldiers to use with their mortar systems. The testers come up with scenarios in which the Soldiers can use the system. The Soldiers, in turn, provide feedback on how well it works.

"What we are doing is testing to make sure the equipment is durable, suitable and survivable," said Neil Jorgenson, a tester with Operational Test Command. "We want to make sure Soldiers understand it, and go through the right training. We will actually see how well they can use it, deal with it, repair it and support it."

By using the OneTESS, units can employ mortars in a live force-on-force training exercise by using an instrumentation system with indirect system capability against the Homestation Instrumentation System, or HITS.

"OneTESS is what we mount on the mortar system which works in conjunction with the Homestation Instrumentation System, which is the new MILES (Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System)," Jorgenson said.

"We are giving a lot of information to the program manager to make sure this piece of equipment is going to work right," Jorgenson explained. "He will then take this data and go back, refine the equipment and make some tweaks to it from software to hardware. When we do put this into the Soldiers' hands, it is something they will be able to use."

The OneTESS is composed of three kits: the dismount kit, a mortar kit and forward observer kit. The dismount kit consists of a player unit that is worn on the Soldier with the individual weapon system and instrumentation radio system.

The mortar kit consists of a mortar simulator round, collar insert, optical sensor Weapons Orientation Module and player unit. The kit is appended to a weapon system and is intended to capture azimuth and elevation adjustment made by the crew in real time.

The forward observer kit consists of a player unit and forward observer tablet. The forward observer, or FO, tablet provides the FO the ability to coordinate the real

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training environment with a virtual training environment.

Sgt. 1st Class David M. Huntington, a section leader with Mortar Platoon, A Troop, 1-89 Cavalry, said he thinks the new system will be beneficial to Soldiers during training exercises.

"The OneTESS will give the Soldiers more realistic results and accurate fires," he said. "(When) using a fire marker during training, we are limited by the civilian's ability to get to where our rounds are notionally going to impact."

Jorgenson explained that the system works with FM signals and throws out a probability hit / kill code to Soldiers, vehicles and equipment that are geared up with a HITS system and are within the impact area. The mortar crews will not be dependent on fire markers to go check what has been hit in the impact area.

Soldiers are taking the training and testing of the OneTESS system seriously.

"The Soldiers are providing excellent feedback during the after-action review comments," Huntington said. "Hopefully everything is taken into consideration when the testing period is over and the developers (use the information) to make it an even better product than we have now."

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