'Larry the Cable Guy' sees Natick technology

U.S. Army

NATICK, Mass. (Nov. 12, 2012) -- When it comes to turning out the finest equipment in the world for American servicemen and women, no one else can "Git-R-Done" quite like the folks at the Natick Soldier Systems Center.

That's what "Larry the Cable Guy" discovered Nov. 8, when the comedian known for that blue-collar catch phrase brought the crew of his popular History Channel TV series "Only in America" to Natick Soldier Systems Center, or NSSC, for a visit.

This wasn't the first experience with the military for Larry, an American history lover who uses humor to share information gleaned during his cross-country tours. The 49-year-old Nebraska native previously had shot his way through the U.S. Army Sniper School at Fort Benning, Ga., so it surprised no one to see him take a hands-on, lighthearted approach during his day-long quest to find out exactly what NSSC does for Soldiers.

Larry began his day at the Load Carriage Design Lab, which devised a modular chest rig to hold his beer, cigars, lighter and TV remote control.

"This is so awesome," Larry said.

He also had a look at the "Ironman" ammo carriage system, which holds 500 rounds for the M240B machine gun. The system was the brainchild of members of the Iowa National Guard.
"It just sounds cool," said Larry, "the Ironman."

Then it was on to the Thermal Test Facility, where he fired a laser through fabric and Plexiglas, had his clothes set ablaze, and helped extinguish them using a spray bottle.

"Whoa! Holy mackerel!" said Larry as he watched a four-second burn test conducted on a manikin clad in a fire-resistant uniform. "Nothing caught fire! That's great. That's good technology. You help save lives of people."

After lunch, Larry went to the Warfighter Cognitive Performance Building at the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine to try out the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000, a weapon simulator that measures physical and cognitive performance. There, he shot against a female Soldier, which he found challenging.

"I just want to let everybody know watching this, honestly, you've seen me shoot on other shows -- I'm not a bad shot," Larry said. "But when you're out in the field and you've got to shoot in these conditions, it ain't easy."

"I'm trying to let people know how tough it is for those guys," he continued. "It

seems like people forget they're out there doing this kind of work. It's not easy."

Next, Larry became a human test subject at the Doriot Climatic Chamber. Connected to a heart monitor, he climbed onto a treadmill wearing the Ironman and carrying the M240B as the tropic chamber temperature hovered around 108 degrees.

"It's very hot in here," said Larry, whose heart rate rose to 138 beats per minute and skin temperature climbed to 36 degrees Celsius. "I'm sweating already."

He then repeated the test wearing a microclimate vest that cooled him down.

"This is very thinning, this outfit," said Larry, joking as he was fitted to the vest.

Late in the afternoon, Larry sampled apple sauce from the Department of Defense Combat Feeding Directorate at Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center before meeting with Soldiers to wrap up his day at Natick.

"I knew it was going to be awesome," Larry said of the visit. "I love meeting the troops. I love seeing the things that they use out there and what they go through."

The Natick segment on "Only in America" is expected to air sometime in April.

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