

NIE 13.1 inserts OPFOR, Soldiers react using NETT Warrior

U.S. Army

DONA ANA RANGE, N.M. (Nov. 19, 2012) -- Soldiers using NETT Warrior during the Network Integration Evaluation 13.1 met with mock opposition forces during a combat training engagement.

The training scenario was designed to evaluate the benefits the portable, hand-held device provides Soldiers during dismounted operations conducted by the 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

"We came into multiple IEDs (improvised explosive devices)," said Spc. Brad Flowers from 1-35 AR. "We were supposed to set off a cordon on the outside -- [we] hit IEDs on the way in -- took a lot of casualties."

Flowers said NETT Warrior allowed his platoon to perform various tasks in an effort to counter the mock insurgency.

"We could set up casualty collection points we set up support by fire positions," Flowers said. "You could set up a lot of things actually, IED positions -- where they went off, where we're taking fire from. Plus you can communicate with it at the same time seamlessly. So it helps out a lot."

Soldiers who have participated in previous NIEs said the [opposing force] in this scenario was the most realistic threat they have seen inserted in an NIE. This is attributed to the use of role players from Lexicon, Inc.

Some of the role players are originally from Iraq and also bring cultural sensitivity training and foreign language support to military bases around the United States. Salam Nassir Jayddim, a team leader for the role players, said their backgrounds and expertise in military and civilian life helps inject realism into the scenarios.

"This is an opportunity to support our troops," said Jayddim. "We are U.S. citizens. We laid [everything] down to serve our Army -- the U.S. Army. Both sides take it very seriously -- to the point that sometimes both sides forget we are just playing a role. So it becomes very close to reality."

Sgt. Jeff Sweeney, a team leader for the OPFOR in Special Troops Battalion, 2-1 AD, said he was pleased when the role players showed up to augment him and the group of Soldiers tasked to play the OPFOR.

It creates a better battlefield effect and it makes the fight for the OPFOR more realistic, said Sweeney.

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"It gives us a lot more play and headway, instead of going around saying, 'bang, bang,' and arguing over who's dead and who's not," he said.

Angela Stephan, who has worked as a role player for seven years, said she feels a sense of pride in her work and also feels she helps prepare Soldiers for threats they may face when they deploy.

"I like helping our forces here, they are doing a great job," said Stephan. "I've played the role of [an] insurgent. I had the suicide vest on, I blew myself up, so we kept repeating the same scenario until they got it right. And at the end when they got it right I didn't blow myself up, and when they arrested me they actually arrested me as if I were a real insurgent."

The Soldiers engaged by the OPFOR role players said they welcome the challenging training they are exposed to during their evaluation of new systems and technologies.

"Pretty much anything can happen downrange," said Flowers. "This sets us up to expect anything and to deal with it, so it helps out a lot to train this way -- to have unexpected events happen."

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