



FIRST ENGINEER STRYKER UNIT

By Sergeant First Class Rhonda M. Lawson

It's not unusual to see an engineer element accompany an infantry unit on a mission. Even in the mountains of Afghanistan, engineers are frequently called on to clear mines and destroy weapons caches. However, a Fort Lewis, Washington, unit is breaking ground as the only engineer company assigned to the Army's new Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT). Soldiers of the 18th Engineer Company, 3d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division (SBCT), have traded in their old light medium tactical vehicles (LMTVs) to become the only engineer company in the Army to drive the new Stryker engineer squad vehicle (ESV). This has changed the way they do business.

The ESV has the same power as the Stryker infantry carrier vehicle (ICV), making it easier to negotiate rough terrain. In the past, the unit would go on missions using an LMTV, which made keeping up with the infantry a challenge. Now it can negotiate the same terrain. Aside from power, the ESV shares other

similarities with its Stryker brethren: It is equipped with two Javelin missiles and a .50-caliber remote weapon station with a screen that allows the gunner to shoot from inside the vehicle. It also has a digital video camera that allows the driver to see what's going on outside the vehicle. In addition, the squad leader

has a screen that allows him to see what both the gunner and driver see.

The ESV makes it easier to use the unit's main tool, the mine-clearing line charge (MICLEC). This device contains nearly 2,000 pounds of C4 explosive, which shoots out 100 yards ahead of the vehicle to clear mines from a



A soldier checks the remote weapons station screen in the Stryker ESV.



The ESV can be outfitted with a mine plow (left) or a mine roller (right).

14-meter-wide area. Once the MICLIC is fired, another ESV with attached mine plow goes through the area, making sure all mines are cleared. Soldiers then follow, placing lane markers so the ICVs can pass safely. Ideally, all this can take

place without anyone leaving the vehicle. The ESV can also be outfitted with a mine roller to clear and proof mined areas.

The 18th Engineer Company, along with the rest of 3d Brigade, 2d Infantry

Division (SBCT), is now operating in Mosul, Iraq, as part of Task Force Olympia. The SBCT deployed to Kuwait in November, crossed into Iraq in early December, and conducted its first month of operations in Samarra and Ad Duluyiah. The SBCT moved north to Mosul in January, where it and the rest of the units in Task Force Olympia replaced the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). This is the first operational deployment for the Army's first SBCT.



A Stryker ESV is shown at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California.

Sergeant First Class Lawson was the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 28th Public Affairs Detachment when she traveled with the SBCT for its precertification and certification exercises. She now serves with Task Force Sinai as part of the Multinational Force and Observers.

Photos by Sergeant First Class Rhonda M. Lawson.