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Mungadai tests warriors' skills

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Mungadai originated in the 13th century as a process for Genghis Khan to select his legendary Mongolian cavalry.

The 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Chemical Brigade, has transcended its original purpose into a way to not only test their Dragoon Soldiers' skills, but strengthen the unit's esprit de corps.

“Mungadai was created by Genghis Khan, who created an arduous selection process to test potential leaders,” said Capt. Jake Stewart, Company A, 1-48th Inf. Reg. commander.

According to legend, the Munga-Dai were the special forces of Genghis Khan's Mongol army, but now the term “mungadai” has become an adventure challenge that tests Soldiers' endurance and warrior skills as a team.

Stewart said his battalion commander, Lt. Col. Shane Gries, had a vision for developing Basic Combat Training cadre and refining their tactical proficiency to better train future Soldiers for expeditionary operations.

The battalion's first Mungadai Cadre Tactical Proficiency Training took place from Feb. 9 to 12 across Fort Leonard Wood.

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“Drill sergeants come from different tactical backgrounds – thus Mungadai is essential in creating a common tactical basis to ensure the highest quality of training for our basic trainees,” Stewart said.

“The goal for the Mungadai is to develop our leaders. We allotted time for our cadre, from their highly packed schedules, to focus on embodying the Army Profession of Arms by balancing tactical and technical competency and trusting members of the unit that they’ve never worked with,” he added.

A total of 28 Soldiers, amounting to approximately one third of the battalion's cadre participated in the inaugural event.

Capt. Trey Ferguson, Co. C commander, participated in the event. He said the hardest part of meeting the objectives was the frigid temperatures.

“The weather was the most challenging, as it dropped to 3-degrees during the night, while we were conducting a squad ambush. Everything else was bearable, but those winds cut straight to the bone,” Ferguson said.

Despite the bitter cold, Ferguson said he liked how the expeditionary training focused on the cadre and not the trainees.

“We spend the majority of our time instructing trainees while we, as leaders, are hard-pressed to improve ourselves without these types of events. It allowed us to refine our techniques and refresh our skill sets,” Ferguson said.

“I learned not everyone within the battalion operated at the same tactical level as others. But that was OK, because this was an event where we could come together and better ourselves through training,” he added.

Ferguson said the Mungadai challenge gave the cadre an opportunity to build camaraderie by “embracing the suck together.”

“Everyone agrees the weather and the numerous hills we climbed brought a level of suffering to the training that bonded us during our missions. ‘Just one more hill,’ brought a number of laughs from all of us and boosted the morale,” Ferguson said.

The Mungadai participants encountered several objectives during the four-day event, but Ferguson's favorite was the early morning squad ambush.

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“We woke up at 2:45 a.m., broke down our patrol base and started hiking 1,100 meters to our objective in single-digit temperatures. I was impressed, because my squad did not gripe or complain, but persevered through the elements and terrain. It demonstrated we were all in this together to better ourselves as professionals,” he said.

Ferguson said the Mungadai event helped him hone several skills he hasn't used since he was a platoon leader.

“It felt great to get back into the woods and lead a patrol through adverse conditions, while on the lookout for enemy ambushes. It's definitely an event I'm sending my drill sergeants to,” Ferguson said.

According to Stewart, the after-action review confirmed the validity and effectiveness of Mungadai.

“The feedback from the participants was filled with comments on how much they learned and/or relearned. They also discussed a great deal of tactical concepts and how they wanted to improve the training for the next iteration,” Stewart said.

The Mungadai event is being planned quarterly in order to ensure all Dragoon Soldiers benefit from the experience.

“For people like me, who aren't strong swimmers, it is important to learn these skills, so we can have the confidence to perform them properly in the event that we need them,” Mandabon said.

“I feel lucky to have this opportunity. I realize that I am learning more than some of the other Soldiers in BCT,” he said.

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

Encl. (1) Photo

Photo Cutline: Staff Sgt. Nicholas Thompson, Co. A drill sergeant, takes cover while setting up for an early morning ambush Feb. 12 during the 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment's inaugural Mungadai Cadre Tactical Proficiency Training.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear

School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
