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## **Logistics Paratroopers prepare for combat**

782nd BSB conducts convoy live-fire

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Fort Bragg, N.C- In his day job, Staff Sgt. Vincent McRae, a light-wheel vehicle mechanic with Company B, 782nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, helps track maintenance at his motor pool, going over preventative maintenance checks and services work sheets, parts orders and scheduled services for tactical vehicles in his brigade.

But from his wartime experience, he knows that he could easily be expected to go on convoy missions and lead his Paratroopers in combat, and that's why his battalion conducted convoy live-fire exercises Feb. 9 to Feb. 13 on Fort Bragg.

Even though the battalion's primary mission is to provide logistical support to the brigade, its Paratroopers need to be just as prepared for whatever combat they might face as any other Soldier.

"We're mechanics." McRae said. "We fix stuff, but we might be on those convoys ... It's all the same to the enemy when they see a bunch of U.S. trucks rolling down the street; they don't know our ranks or our jobs, they just see a target."

Before the exercise, which included both day and night iterations, the Paratroopers were given a briefing by the battalion's military intelligence analysts on their situation and mission.

To ensure the live-fire portion of the exercise was as safe as possible, the Paratroopers first conducted a dry run with no shooting, then one with blank ammunition before finally using live rounds.

Going through the range one platoon at a time, the troopers practiced security halts, reacting to ambush and improvised explosive devices, spotting IEDs, medical evacuation and scrutinizing the route so that their observations could be used as military intelligence.

McRae was on a wrecker/recovery team in Afghanistan, repairing damaged vehicles on the road or towing them to forward operating bases if they couldn't be fixed on the spot. That's why he emphasizes to his Paratroopers that even though they are mechanics, they can't expect to always be in the safety of a FOB, he said.

"You might have to put that wrench down and kick in a door one day," McRae said.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Timms is the first sergeant for Company A, 782nd BSB, which is a distribution company. His unit has supply and ammunition Paratroopers who run warehouses and storage operations, water and fuel specialists, as well as truck drivers who haul the ammunition and supplies from point A to point B.

Timms, who is a truck driver by trade, has been deployed to Iraq twice and Afghanistan once.

Convoy operations training is essential even for warehouse and ammunition Paratroopers who don't do combat logistics patrols on a daily basis, Timms said.

"Even a guy working in a warehouse is going to end up on a CLP, even if just to check out a fire base and come back," Timms said. "When you're out there it's just you and you've got to know you're stuff."