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V CORPS ENGINEER TROOPS SEARCH OUT EXPLOSIVE DEVICES IN KARBALA

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WITH TASK FORCE 1-37, Iraq – When B Company, 16th Engineer Battalion, rolled into Karbala this month, its Soldiers came ready for any mission.

One of those missions included a “quiet afternoon” looking for improvised explosive devices at a location that was a combat scene the day before.

Task Force 1-37 is part of the 1st Brigade Combat Team of V Corps' 1st Armored Division.



SPC ANDREW MEISSNER

Combat engineers with the 16th Engineer Battalion of V Corps' 1st Armored Division patrol a street in Karbala, Iraq in search of improvised explosive devices.

Pvt. Leo Preston said engineers always anticipate combat when they patrol.

“When we roll out, we expect contact. We look for ambushes. We look for IEDs. We look for anything that will trip us up,” he said.

The combat engineers cleared routes in the city, destroying three IEDs in the process. Some were destroyed with explosives; others were "disrupted" with gunfire.

"We usually fire shots at it (with a) 50 caliber (machine gun)," said Preston.

Looking for IEDs requires patience and vigilance, especially in the heat of an Iraqi afternoon. It is a difficult and dangerous job. If it's not done correctly, the consequences are dire.

The engineers have learned some of the telltale indicators of the IEDs found in this area, explained B Company platoon leader 2nd Lt. Josey Sandoval. Some IEDs the engineers have found recently were different from those the engineers encountered in Baghdad, he added.

"Out here, we're seeing a lot of hard-wired artillery shells," Sandoval said.

While on the lookout for enemy troops, an sniper round zinged over the engineers' heads.

Moments later came another crack of gunfire. A call came over the radio that a Soldier had been hit. The Soldier's Kevlar helmet had saved him from grave injury, but he required several stitches for a wound to his scalp.

As the afternoon drew to a close, the engineers' M113 armored personnel carriers rolled back to the base camp. The trip back was dusty. The engineers were hot, but relieved that there was no close combat for them that day.

"We're always looking for the enemy," said Preston, "We've got to keep low and make sure no gets hurt."

