

Exercise SOAKTIME

by Cst Paul Pitzel

The idea of combined training is not, in itself, unique by any means but with the large geographical distances between bomb teams in western Canada it is not necessarily an easy task to assemble a multi-team training opportunity. Several years ago the Saskatchewan teams (RCMP F division, Regina Police EDU and Saskatoon Police EDU) decided to travel to Regina and train together for a couple days. From those humble beginnings, the annual cross-training opportunity has grown to see representation from 4 provinces and up to 6 full teams and the future promises even more expansion.

This year we expanded the event once again by inviting several corporate entities and we added an adopt-a-tech program. The adopt-a-tech program allows the full teams attending to absorb a tech from a province or city that is located too far away for a full team deployment. This year Winnipeg Police service took advantage by sending two members and judging by their comments, they will be pushing hard to return next year. Med-Eng and MREL also participated and outdid themselves with their corporate sponsorship and participation.

Exercise SOAKTIME, which ran May 07-09, had three goals: Training, Learning and Camaraderie. Through the use of a fantastic training area, real life scenarios, demonstration disruptions by MREL and an IABTI sponsored social evening; all three goals were easily achieved.

Training. Each team was presented with three scenarios over the course of two days. There was a simple dynamite find, a complex criminal pipe bomb case and a unique floating pipe bomb that incorporated a rapid flowing river into the planning of the render safe procedure (RSP). All scenarios were, of course, live fire and teams were expected to respond as they normally would in their home services. The same directing staff ran each scenario over the course of the first 2 days, so the conditions remained constant from team to team. This allowed the team approaches to be compared from one to the other and gave some interesting insight into the slight nuisances each team displayed when planning and executing RSPs.

Learning. Aside from learning from other teams during the course of the scenario portion of the exercise, SOAKTIME had other learning opportunities that were appreciated by all. Jeff from MREL delivered an impressive display of his companies large vehicle disruptors and he easily, and successfully, tore through an insulated cube on a 1 ton truck, rendering the simulated ANFO VBIED safe. He further impressed with a trunk disruption on a pretty nice Buick. Overall, everyone agreed that the MREL products did what they claimed to do and Jeff was a great addition to the training exercise. Thanks MREL!

Med-Eng sent three people to SOAKTIME and all three demonstrated why this company is so successful and has so much credibility in the industry. Although Kate and Mike were fantastic, it was Jordan who stole the show. Jordan is a senior Med-Eng technician and he happily kept busy by inspecting, repairing and replacing components of all Med-Eng equipment, including the suits. Being out in the wild west of Canada, the teams rarely get this opportunity and I think every team took full advantage. In addition, each team was allowed to use the newest suit technology and other Med-Eng equipment as Mike and Katie brought enough stuff to fill a truck. It was a great experience and all feedback was extremely positive. Thanks Med-Eng!

Much of the success of this exercise was due to the location and the ability to hold live fire scenarios and large demonstration disruptions. Major Sophie Prevost, Commanding Officer, and the entire staff at the Canadian Forces Ammunition Depot (CFAD) were instrumental. They opened their doors to us and no request went unfilled. In addition to a full tour of their facility, we played hard on their range and they never complained about the mess! Every Canadian should be proud of our military and the effort that these professional soldiers provide in supporting operational roles both domestically and abroad. Thanks CFAD!



Jeff Wight from MREL

Camaraderie. The adopt-a-tech program is a great way to introduce bomb techs to each other. The ones who attended and assimilated into the full teams had nothing but positive feedback. Of course the IABTI sponsored social evening didn't hurt either! On behalf of all teams I wish to extend our gratitude to Derick Ivany the IABTI Region VII Director for stepping up with some sponsorship and ensuring a great time was had by all. Mike from Med-Eng also ensured no one went home hungry or thirsty and after two days of scenario work in the prairie heat, it was much appreciated.

In conclusion, the western Canadian training Exercise SOAKTIME was a tremendous success. All goals were achieved and there wasn't a negative comment to be found. Next year, this annual event will be hosted by the Regina Police Service and it will likely be located in or around the city of Regina. I would like to take this opportunity to complicate things for their hosting committee by inviting any teams in the North-Western United States who may be interested in attending as an adopt-a-tech. The location is nice and close to the US/Canadian border and we would love to have you attend. The invitation is also extended to any Canadian techs west of Thunderbay, Ontario. If you are interested please contact me by email and I will pass along your information to the appropriate person in Regina. Although dates have not been set as of the time of writing, it is usually held in the late April or early May timeframe. All the best, stay safe and perhaps we'll see you next spring!

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