

**Story and photos by
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Delta Battery 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment is continuing training in Bashur, Iraq on key tasks needed for future operations in the region.

Delta Battery is currently providing indirect fire support for coalition forces in the area.

Soldiers trained on treatment and handling of prisoners of war in combat situations in order to minimize harm to prisoners and coalition forces, said Sgt. John Nystrom, a soldier in Delta Battery.

“After prisoner of war drills, we trained on combatives,” said Sgt. Greg Trent, a crew chief in Delta Battery.

“Combatives is hand-to-hand combat, but we use it to control individuals who threaten our safety.”

“We don’t want to hurt prisoners,” said Pfc. Daniel Branstrator, “but if they assault us, we must be able to defend ourselves without using deadly force.”

Soldiers practiced their moves on each other in full gear: body armor, load carrying equipment that included two canteens, two ammunition pouches loaded with ammunition, butt pack, and more, Kevlar, and much-needed knee and elbow pads.

After combatives, the soldiers were perspiring under the weight of the heavy equipment and blistering sun. Dust clung to uniforms turning sweat into mud.

“Combatives is no joke when wearing full combat gear,” Nystrom added. “I was sweating like a polar bear in Florida.”

After a much-needed break, soldiers practiced their advance party dismounting and mounting procedures.

Soldiers practiced loading the vehicle and dismounting the vehicle at full combat speed to make the training as real as possible.

“We broke the procedures down to the point where soldiers know by heart who gets on the vehicle in what order and to load equipment onto the vehicle,” said Trent.

“We’re ingraining into our brains exactly what we have to do,” said Branstrator. “When the time comes to do this under fire, we’ll do it right the first time, because there might not be a second time.”

All the training being done by Delta Battery is nothing new, said Nystrom. It’s all been covered in previous training deployments.

“Training is only for our advantage,” said Branstrator. “I’d rather be dirty and sweaty today, than be sorry tomorrow.”