

# SUPPORTING SOLDIERS' NEEDS DOWNRANGE



Soldiers from the 542nd Quartermaster Company train at the Base Camp Integration Lab, Fort Devens, Mass., on the new Force Provider system, which supplies everything the soldiers need downrange.

From shelter to sustainment, preparing for life downrange is vitally important. For soldiers of the 542nd Quartermaster (QM) Company, 301st Regional Support Group, headquartered in Fairview, Pa., the annual training they complete at the Base Camp Integration Lab at Fort Devens, Mass., allows them to test the unit's Mission Essential Task List, including operating the new Force Provider system that supplies everything the soldiers need: climate-controlled billeting, showers, latrines, laundry, dining facilities, an all-electric kitchen, and a power distribution system. These modules support 150 personnel, and the 542nd QM Co. is capable of supporting 24 modules for a total of 3,600 personnel.

"Force Provider equipment is very unique, and it's very limited on availability," said Staff Sgt. John K. Schwentner, USA, the shower/bath and laundry non-commissioned officer-in-charge. "Here, we have everything, brand-new and the next generation. You're not going to get that anywhere else."

"The 542nd QM Co. is the only force provider company still within the Army's inventory," added Maj. Mitchell J. Wisniewski III, USA, commander of the 542nd QM Co. "The only current training sets are here at Fort Devens."

The Force Provider containerized modules weigh less than 10,000 pounds, making them easily movable with a forklift. In addition, these readily deployable, pre-packaged base camps can be transported inside one C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and within a matter of hours set up and operational. These tents cut down on weight by using air-filled beams, not metal supports, and are easily replaceable without having to take the whole tent down. Soldiers from the 542nd QM Co. are using their annual training to learn the new systems and brush up on old skills.

"We have everything we need to be self-sufficient," said Schwentner.

These modules include nine air-beam tents with flooring, electrical, insulation and bunk beds.

"This one uses an air compressor to fill the beams," said Spc. Nicholas E. Pire, USA, a food service specialist who went through the training. "It's much quicker and much more reliable than the old I-beam tents."

"You just deflate the beam, put it back in, no problem," noted Pfc. Tasha A. Baranchak, USA, a water treatment specialist. "It's cheaper also in the long run."

Each of the seven billeting tents house 22 soldiers. Also included are an all-electric expeditionary kitchen that feeds 150 personnel, a tricon freezer/refrigerator, a laundry unit capable of handling the Army standard of 15 pounds of laundry per soldier, a shower system divided into two containers with a total of eight showerheads, and two latrine units.

"We have what's called a shower-water reuse system," said Wisniewski. "It's a system based initially off a (Reverse Osmosis Purification Unit) theory, but it has a lot more filters in it, and it allows us to reuse up to 75 percent of the shower water

in order to save on resources, water deliveries and such. So, we don't have to have additional transportation assets always bringing water in."

Being prepared and properly trained for deployment situations is vitally important for soldiers serving in the Army Reserve.

"This type of training here is essential for our soldiers who never touched any of this to actually learn how to properly use this equipment," said Schwentner. "So, when they move downrange, they will know what they are doing." He stressed how this new equipment will help other soldiers while deployed.

Schwentner spent the first 14 years of his career as a truck driver and vividly remembers sleeping under his trailer while deployed.

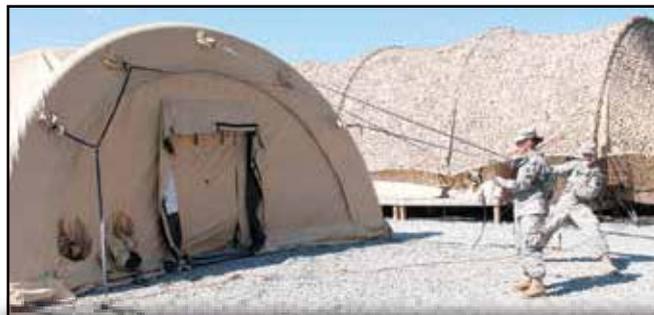
"It was an absolute welcome to at least find some sort of shelter to stay in besides the cab of our truck or underneath the trailer," said Schwentner. "It is a really nice morale booster to have a bunk you can sleep on instead of the ground, have a hot meal, get a shower and have a flushable toilet. It's the small things that count."

The training also provides soldiers with skills they can use in many situations.

"At a moment's notice, we can be called to go anywhere to support any type of mission, so having this training here is key in updating our soldiers' skills on this equipment," said Wisniewski.

"The bigger picture of the exercise is to enable the soldiers to be able to take the skills they're learning here on the actual Force Provider equipment and apply that to deployment situations or exercises ... worldwide as well as assisting with disaster relief efforts at home."

—MCH



Pfc. Tasha A. Baranchak, a water treatment specialist, and Pvt. Cassandra M Rubly, a food service specialist, both with the 542nd Quartermaster Company, help set up an air-supported tent during annual training.

Photos by Spc. Sophia Klevemann