

## Camp Liberty Soldiers Up-armor Humvees

By Sgt. Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq (Army News Service, March 5, 2007) - As the enemy changes its tactics in warfare, the military constantly updates strategies on how to keep service members safe.

At a new center on Camp Liberty, Soldiers are working hard to up-armor M1115 Humvees with the newest and highest level of protection available: Frag 5.

"We have more people outside the wire now that are needing this protection," said 1st Lt. Aaron J. Kravitz, the Frag 5 yard officer in charge of the 541st Combat Support Sustainment Battalion.

Soldiers work 12-hour shifts turning out about 10 Humvees per day, Kravitz said. Their mission is to fully strip Humvees of all prior armor, add the new Frag 5 kits and hand them back to the units as quickly as possible.

The process of giving Humvees their Frag 5 facelift is a six-step assembly-line process, Kravitz said.

"We rebuild the Humvee, kind of like a puzzle," he said. "It's an evolving process. The Humvee wasn't originally built for the mission it's doing now."

From start to finish, the process takes about 40 hours. With an augmented staff of Soldiers from different units, the shop is more productive than it was a few months ago.

"When we first started we had a small section of about 12 to 15 people," said Sgt. Kevin D. Gatlin, a quality control noncommissioned officer. Gatlin, who works the night shift, said operations shifted dramatically in October when they changed their mission from working on other levels of Frag armor, and turning out one or two vehicles per day, to working strictly with Frag 5.

They increased tempo, boosted staff and changed locations to supply safer vehicles to the battlefield. This change in mission was due to the incoming surge of Soldiers in the Baghdad area who did not have the most current armor on their vehicles, Kravitz said.

The Soldiers and civilians working at the new center are trying to ensure that all Soldiers traveling on the roads of Iraq have the most current and sophisticated safety equipment possible.

"Right now we are turning out a truck every two to three hours," Kravitz said. "We try to get it through as quick as we can because the more trucks we get out, the more trucks are out there saving people's lives."



A U.S. Soldier and civilian up-armor a vehicle in Kuwait.

Kravitz said he is most proud of the job he does when Soldiers come to his shop thanking him and his unit because their work saved a life.

"Just knowing that we make a difference is the best," Kravitz said. "Everybody has to do their own little part, and this is our part."

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