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DLA Disposition Services

8/16/2012

## New training helps deploying personnel perfect the art of demilitarization

By Tim Hoyle, Public Affairs

It may not have been a light saber, but the way Vickie Rodgers eyes light up when she talks about her recent pre-deployment training, the Petrogen torch she used might as well have come right out of Star Wars.



DLA Disposition Services employee Chance Young tries cutting metal with a multi-fuel style torch at his pre-deployment demilitarization training. (DLA Photo by Vickie Rodgers)

According to Rodgers, Petrogen has specially adapted its regular oxygen-gasoline torches for the Defense Logistics Agency for use in Afghanistan to fill in the gaps that are not being filled by the plasma torches. The multi-fuel version can operate with military fuels like "mogas," JP8, and diesel, which Rodgers said makes the torches extremely versatile to fit the mission over in Afghanistan.

"They are incredibly powerful," Rodgers said. In fact, the corporate website for one torch manufacturer claims its model can cut through 14 inches of steel, 4 times faster than acetylene and much cheaper.

Rodgers is preparing for another deployment for DLA Disposition Services, this time as area manager for Afghanistan. It's an area that should look familiar since she helped establish the first site there in December 2005. Fellow employees Ryan Fuller, Chance Young and Merrill "Sonny" Waugh joined Rodgers at McAlester, Okla., Aug. 8 -9, for some hands on torch cutting training. Rodgers said being at McAlester gave the group a chance to not only learn about the torches, but they were also able to talk to the operators and view the functions of the shear, shredder and plasma cutters being used in the demil process at the site.

"Watching the operator use the shears, it was like they were his hands," Rodgers said. "We were able to ask a gazillion questions, which will help since the shears and shredders at McAlester are the same type as we'll find in Afghanistan."

Not only did McAlester offer access to the same type of equipment being used for demil in Afghanistan, but they were also able to practice cutting on and see much of the same types of items being turned in at forward operating sites. Between the withdrawal of U.S. forces and upcoming troop reductions, Rodgers said they expect many items being turned in for demil in Afghanistan rather than being shipped home. With one type of vehicle alone, she said the Bagram staff expects to handle around 1,300 turn-ins.

Most demil work performed in Afghanistan is done through a labor contract, but Rodgers said DLA Disposition Services is continuously looking for ways to become more efficient with time and resources. She emphasized that the only way for employees to truly oversee the labor contract is to be aware of the capabilities of resources available.

"How can we be sure that the torches are being used in the most efficient manner if we are not trained to understand the abilities and constraints of the tools that are used," Rodgers said.

That is why DLA Disposition Services, according to Rodgers, is now working to ensure that a deploying representative from each site in Afghanistan is exposed or trained on the various tools used for demilitarization. Her group's training was the test run in providing that sort of training to deploying personnel. She credits McAlester's Andre Robinson with ensuring the training was done in the most comfortable way possible.

"Mister Robinson ensured that the site was outfitted with huge fans that employed moisture, as the weather in McAlester was over 105 for both days of training," Rodgers said. She added that Robinson made sure the group was well supplied with anything they needed. "McAlester folks were exceptional hosts."

Deployments are nothing new to any of the four trainees, but with their recent training behind them they should all know more about the best ways to demil an item.

The cutting torches used in the training make quick work of even a multi-layered steel item. (DLA Photo by Vickie Rodgers)



The shear at McAlester, Okla., gave trainees the chance to see what the ones in Afghanistan can do. (DLA Photo by Vickie Rodgers)

