

Muscatatuck Urban Training Center

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Note: This article is based on information from Camp Atterbury, IN; Muscatatuck Urban Training Center (MUTC); and other source news releases.

“People have tried to explain this, but you can’t really grasp the capability until you see it first hand, this is big . . . we are spending millions trying to build this, and you already have it in Indiana.”

—Colonel (P) Joe E. Ramirez, Deputy Commanding General,
Combined Arms Center–Training,
U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command,
18 August 2006

According to two Department of Defense (DOD) studies, the MUTC, a microcosm of a “living, breathing, urban area,” provides a unique and realistic urban training venue on a scale unmatched in existing training venues. Located in rural south central Indiana near Butlerville, and once home to Indiana’s Muscatatuck State Developmental Center, the MUTC is a 1,000-acre self-contained urban training environment unaffected by encroaching urban sprawl. In July 2005 the Indiana state government transferred this property to the Indiana National Guard for training military personnel preparing to deploy to combat theaters or to respond to disasters. The MUTC is also used to train homeland security personnel and first responder professionals.

The MUTC offers military units, police and firefighters, and other agencies unique training opportunities for responding to various homeland security scenarios and military and/or disaster response operations, all at one location. These organizations can access a 180-acre reservoir and an urban infrastructure consisting of 68 fully functional buildings comprising approximately 5 square city blocks. The buildings include a school, a hospital, dormitories, light industrial structures, single-family dwellings, a dining facility, jail/correctional facilities, and administrative office buildings, totaling approximately 850,000 square feet of floor space. The buildings range from one to five stories, including nine with basements. Additionally, the training area includes approximately one mile of extensive underground utility tunnel systems that connect many of the buildings and more than nine miles of roads and streets. The training buildings are concentrated in a tight geographical area that simulates urban density. Surrounding the urban site are wooded areas and open/undeveloped land often found within or adjacent to urban areas. The property is valued between \$500 million and \$1 billion in infrastructure.

The MUTC is a consortium of governmental, public, and private entities that are pooling their unique capabilities to provide the most realistic training experience possible. For example, it is receiving from the DOD a major upgrade that began in fiscal year (FY) 2008 and continues through FY 2013 with \$100 million in military construction, operations and maintenance, and pay and allowances funding. Such resourcing allows the MUTC to continue expanding its training capabilities for future needs. By 2012 the MUTC will train an estimated 5,500 personnel each day. Additionally, Purdue University, which has farms adjacent to Muscatatuck, is actively involved with training agribusiness development teams (ADTs) and provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) preparing to deploy.

Some of the civilian and military organizations benefiting from the excellent training opportunities the MUTC offers include:

- Active and reserve components of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and special operations forces.
- Federal and state emergency management agencies.
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS), both federal and state.
- Department of State (DOS).
- Department of Agriculture (DOA).
- U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).
- Federal Bureau of Investigations.
- Department of Health, both federal and state.
- Public safety training institutes.
- Civil Air Patrol.
- Army National Guard (ARNG) civil support teams.
- State counterterrorism agencies.
- State departments of correction.
- Law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical personnel.
- PRTs and ADTs.

The MUTC can conduct doctrinal and nondoctrinal DOD and DHS events. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines normally conduct such training at Camp Atterbury, which is about 40 miles northwest of the MUTC, but they can deploy to the MUTC by convoy or air to train in an urban setting against a hostile enemy or a man-made or natural disaster.

Training at the MUTC can replicate both foreign and domestic scenarios. Civilian and military organizations use the training to reach their readiness goals. Training occurs in two ways: to prepare Soldiers to fight in foreign cities and to prepare Soldiers and civilians to deal with the aftermath of attacks or disasters in urban areas.

The facility's lake and grounds provide excellent resources for training search and rescue K-9 teams and personnel in cadaver recovery either on land or in the water, ground search, and K-9 trailing and tracking. Special operations teams use the lake and grounds to train for deployment in urban environments similar to those found at the MUTC.

The MUTC's joint training capability is realizing the DHS's Office of Domestic Preparedness strategic directive to achieve and sustain national preparedness by conducting systemic and periodic rehearsals of homeland security missions.

The MUTC has tremendous potential as a training center for civilian public safety personnel. The Indiana DHS and the Indiana National Guard completed major military support to civil authorities full-scale exercises at MUTC as well as statewide public safety training. Local public safety and response organizations throughout Indiana routinely train at the MUTC. Law enforcement tactical teams (special weapons and tactics teams) benefit from having a dedicated training site to conduct tactical scenarios with which they are not familiar, and the grounds have proven extremely useful in conducting training for special events and riots. An example of this is the recent Indiana State Police riot control training in the village that actually represents an Iraqi or Afghan street; however, it could be any street anywhere.

More than 100,000 individuals from military, government, and private agencies have trained at the MUTC since it was established in 2005. For example, from 5–12 November 2009, more than 4,000 military and civilian personnel used the facilities of Camp Atterbury and the MUTC during training exercise Vibrant Response, commanded by U.S. Army North, to test capabilities in a simulated nuclear attack in an urban environment. Valuable lessons learned each day during Vibrant Response included communications, logistics support, casualty care and evacuation, and coordination issues between all kinds of military units and civilian agencies that do not usually train or work together.

Contingency Operations Training Environment

Part of the MUTC's mission is to "provide the most realistic contemporary operating environment possible in which to mobilize and train the joint, interagency, intergovernment, multinational, non-governmental team to accomplish missions directed toward protecting the homeland and defending the peace." This means everybody trains to work together.

Recently more than 500 Marines from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) shared space with civilians from the U.S. DOS's PRT, creating a training opportunity neither expected until they got together. The PRT training focused on teaching civilian employees from the DOS, DOA, and USAID how to live and work in Afghanistan. They spent four weeks training for their Afghanistan assignments with the final week of the training taking place at the MUTC.

While in Afghanistan, the civilians will interact with all branches of the military to accomplish their mission. During the class in October, they interacted not only with the Army but with the Marines as well. Jim McKellar of the McKellar Group and project manager for the PRT training thinks integrating everybody on-site into the training really helps all those who will be working together in Afghanistan. McKellar said, "I think it's easy to integrate the military units here because they're focused on the same mission, being successful in Afghanistan. Therefore, it's very easy to integrate the civilians into the military staffs since they're focused on the same mission that the president laid out for us."

Marines from the 24th MEU provided realistic scenarios for the PRT training, guarding the mock embassy the civilians had to enter and roadways they had to traverse. The PRT members were also able attend Marine briefings and see firsthand how their actions affect the Marines in country.

Elizabeth Rood, director of the Stability Operations Division for the DOS Foreign Service Institute, saw value in the interagency training, even at times when it was uncoordinated. Rood said, "There were some cases where the Marines were in a facility that we were intending to use." The PRT or another civilian group might be going out to meet people and discover that there is a maneuver unit already doing something there that wasn't a planned encounter. So it's not a bad thing that these movements are going on simultaneously."

Purdue and Indiana Universities also take part in the PRT and ADT training, providing important information on local Afghan farming techniques and training the interagency civilians on what to expect once they arrive in country.

Working together in a small space is one of the hallmarks of urban training, and the MUTC helps military and civilian entities work together to achieve a common goal. Even the full-time civilian utility and maintenance personnel frequently role-play, in appropriate civilian or military clothing, depending on the scenario in which the military or civilian personnel conducting training have to work with these unique role-players to accomplish specific construction, utility, or maintenance tasks; some MUTC directed and some player requested.

Additionally, just as unplanned natural disasters can affect operations, they can affect training for such operations. In May 2008, an entire Marine Corps expeditionary brigade was training with the facilities at the MUTC as a major training site for its upcoming deployment. It also used Indianapolis, Camp Atterbury, Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center/Army Ammunition Activity, and other military and civilian training areas. During this period, numerous damaging tornados and flood-producing rains saturated southern Indiana, including some of the Marine bivouac and training areas. Without missing a beat, the Marines immediately responded to the disaster by helping the local first responders while continuing to conduct their training mission. News reports showed Marines with their trucks and helicopters rescuing trapped residents in the stricken areas while other Marines continued their predeployment training.

Domestic Catastrophe Response

Lieutenant General Tom Turner, commander of U.S. Army North and director of Vibrant Response, describes Camp Atterbury and Muscatatuck as second to none. His statements include the following:

- “This is a very realistic battlefield. Every burning car, every trash heap and rubble pile was put in place so people who come to train at Muscatatuck are immersed in the most realistic scenario possible.”
- “This should be a national treasure. I really think it is a perfect place to do the integration of interagency training. It is an incredible piece of terrain that provides great opportunities and great realism.”
- “Training in an exercise such as Vibrant Response helps the participants work through any kinks that would otherwise manifest at an inopportune time. When you show up at an incident of this magnitude is not the time to start meeting the players that are going to be involved in this kind of effort.”
- “Everyone will get training in their own task that they perform but they’ll also go away with a much better understanding of how the pieces fit together, how federal, local, and state folks get integrated to conduct this mission.”

Air Force General Victor E. “Gene” Renuart Jr., commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, who commanded Vibrant Response, explained how when attacks of this nature surpass the capability of first responders, there are people in place who are trained specifically for such an occasion. His statements include the following:

- “When an event like this occurs, absolutely the first people on the scene are going to be the local first responders. . . . But as you could imagine, an event like a nuclear

detonation will rapidly grow beyond the capacity of certainly the local first responders and maybe state and potentially national responders.”

- “So what we’ve tried to approximate in this scenario is that those first responders have arrived, they have conducted those initial searches, and we’ve asked for the civil support teams from within the state to come and assess for chemical, biological and nuclear conditions and help us understand what would be required to respond to this.”

Medical Training Environment

The MUTC hospital facilities are used to conduct realistic training and practical exercises in responding to mass casualties and fatalities, establishing and operating mass disease prevention sites, receiving and distributing strategic national stockpile inventories, and responding to other public health emergencies conducted in a manner that is currently unavailable elsewhere in Indiana. When the Muscatatuck State Development Center closed, it left fully equipped hospital examination and treatment rooms, which are incorporated into the realistic medical training.

During Vibrant Response, a building at the MUTC was set up as a nursing home in an outlying area of Indianapolis following a nuclear blast. Fifteen role-players were assigned to the building to act as nursing home residents who needed to be saved and cared for by Army medical personnel. Roles included the following:

- Role-players were given different injuries or afflictions medical personnel had to attend to while removing them from a possibly contaminated area. The role-players were coached on how to act toward the rescue personnel who, on arriving to help these victims, had no idea what to expect.
- As a husband and wife role-playing team walked around the building appearing confused and looking for the bingo bus, a medical team rolled onto the scene with only one vehicle. The team quickly discovered it needed much more.
- Three more medical teams arrived to help evacuate the “injured” who remained in character until the very end.
- Ambulatory patients and nursing home residents were quickly placed into military ambulances while those who could not walk were cared for. Bandages were put in place where needed, and the medical teams tried to calm the patients and residents who were shaken by the experience of living through a nuclear blast.
- One resident, however, could not be calmed. In her scenario, she could not be convinced that her “husband” was actually dead. In her role, she believed her husband was merely unconscious, and she refused to let go of his body. Staff Sergeant (SSG) Bryan Jimenez, a Muscatatuck Soldier playing the part of a local policeman, was impressed: “Wow, she was good. I actually felt sorry for her and started getting mad that the medic wasn’t getting her away from her husband’s body.”

At the end of their training, Army medics and civilian medical first responders had a much better understanding of how to work together and how to deal with people who could be neighbors, friends, fellow Soldiers, or total strangers. The lessons learned will, hopefully, never need to be used after a national emergency here in the U.S., but these medics will be better prepared for it if it does.

Patriot Academy

With the start of the 2009–2010 school year, the Indiana ARNG opened the nation's first Patriot Academy at the MUTC. The academy is located in the school building residents of the Muscatatuck State Developmental Center attended.

The Patriot Academy is a National Guard Bureau pilot program open to all 54 states and territories. The program offers an Indiana high school diploma opportunity for youth who want to serve their country in the ARNG. Different from the National Guard Youth Challenge Academies, students of the Patriot Academy must join the ARNG and will receive pay, benefits, and military training while attending the program.

Students attend basic training before reporting to the Patriot Academy, then earn a high school diploma and continue to learn military skills and life skills throughout their stay at the MUTC. On completion, students attend advanced training and return to their home states for service in their ARNG units.

Student enrollment in the first class was just under 50 students, but the population is expected to grow to 500 within the next 2 years.

Dealing with the Local Population

The local population, in areas where military operations or training for such operations are occurring, is always affected by the presence of Soldiers. Noise from convoys, aircraft, and exploding munitions can be disruptive to formerly peaceful surroundings. Military traffic ties up roadways, and the presence of Soldiers can be startling and/or intimidating. While many individuals may not be directly affected by the Soldiers, some will openly welcome them and others reject them.

Muscatatuck and Butlerville were once peaceful, with little to disrupt their tranquility. The MUTC has changed that! But this change can be a blessing for commanders and leaders who use the many training venues on MUTC and around Butlerville. This facility opens a real-world training opportunity wherein commanders and leaders are aware of the impact of their presence on the local population. Additionally, it offers employment opportunities and stimulates the local economy. The reopening of Muscatatuck, even as a military/civilian training site, enabled several of its former employees to return to work there.

The commander at the MUTC also recognizes the importance of being proactive in promoting positive community relations. Peaking interest and inquiries as to how the Army is using the former Muscatatuck State Developmental Center led officials to host an open house. Recently, the MUTC held its first open house to show its operations to the people living or working in the area. The news release describing the reopening of the site included the following statements:

- “Loud noises, explosions, and frequent helicopter traffic are all common to the citizens of the communities surrounding the MUTC as a result of new construction, training, and daily operations.”
- “We want to bring the public in and show them what it is we do on a day-to-day basis,” said MUTC commander Lieutenant Colonel Chris Kelsey in a previous interview. “We want the people of the local area to see what we have built and why we have built it . . . get a feel for why we’re here.”

More than 800 people attended the event and participated in the walking and driving tours, a petting zoo, paintball target practice, weapons and vehicle displays, face painting, and more. Free hot dogs and soft drinks were also available. The large turnout included curious enthusiasts, concerned citizens, and military families and friends.

“It’s interesting to see our tax dollars at work,” said North Vernon resident Alan Morrison. “It looks like a world-class facility to me. The density of the buildings is something that is hard to find in other shanty towns in other training camps, so it looks like you have enough buildings and infrastructure here to provide that next level of realism that is difficult to fabricate.”

Even former employees of the old Muscatatuck State Developmental Center came to see the changes and new additions to the facility. Mamie Erickson said, “I’ve worked at Muscatatuck here for 40 years. It’s great that this facility is now offering this for our U.S. servicemen. The program is still beginning but you can see a big difference. I think this program will get better and better overtime. It’s just awe inspiring.”

Kelsey said he plans to hold more open house events in the future as more construction, modifications, and additions are made to the MUTC. “It’s a partnership,” said Kelsey. “We can’t exist unless we coexist with the local community. We’re trying to exist in harmony. There have been some complaints about the noise and the aircraft so we wanted to open it up and show what we do; give them an understanding of what we do, and that it’s safe.”

Butlerville uses the sewage treatment plant located on the MUTC and benefits from the MUTC’s fully equipped and trained fire department along with other multiple-use facilities. Additionally, the MUTC rents the local county fairgrounds and its buildings to ADT teams preparing to deploy to Afghanistan when the MUTC is not in use. This partnership enables the county to maintain a fully capable fairgrounds facility to promote agriculture.

The commander of the 24th MEU, realizing the impact of his Marines on the lives and daily activities of those living around the MUTC, sent the following letter to the residents of Butlerville and the surrounding area during his organization's recent training at the MUTC:

Dear Residents,

Let me first apologize for any inconvenience we may have caused during our training in the local area. We whole-heartedly appreciate your patience and cooperation in opening up your neighborhoods so that we can conduct this very important training. I know that hearing a loud aircraft over your neighborhood, particularly at night, can be startling.

Please understand we are trying to mitigate the disturbance as best we can. We are constantly doing everything possible to minimize any inconvenience to the community while balancing the need for your Marines to receive realistic urban training prior to deploying overseas in the service of this Nation.

You may be wondering why we are training in your local area rather than our home base in North Carolina. The training value we receive here allows your Marines to experience somewhere totally unfamiliar to them, just as it will be when we deploy.

I'm sure some residents are worried about damage we may cause and are concerned about the safety of their families. This is completely understandable. I would be too. Safety of the local public and of your Marines is a huge concern for us as well. I can assure you though, that your Marines are professionals. They've conducted multiple training exercises just like this one all along the East Coast and back at their home bases and stations, and are well prepared to do the missions you are witnessing.

We will only be here for a short time and I will strive to minimize any disturbance we may be causing. Our training is scheduled to conclude in the middle of next week. We have already taken measures to cancel some of our landing zones and flight paths that might have caused undue stress on your communities. I ask for your continued cooperation and understanding.

I, and the Marines and Sailors of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, THANK YOU! Your support means more to us than can be expressed. If you have any further concerns, please call our toll free hotline at 877-676-0396 and we will get back in touch with you.

Semper Fidelis, Sincerely,

Col, USMC
Commanding Officer, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit

Summary

Only four locations across the U.S. currently have this level of urban operations and homeland security training center development: the MUTC (IN), Fort Irwin (CA), Twentynine Palms (CA), and Fort Polk (LA). These four sites will soon become the new state-of-the-art urban warfare training centers. Actions on these sites are proceeding independently based on the specific needs of military units in each geographical region.

The combination of the MUTC, Camp Atterbury, Jefferson Proving Grounds, and Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center/Army Ammunition Activity gives Indiana unique training facilities and the ability to meet the needs of military units, homeland security personnel, and civilian first responders preparing for missions.

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