



An M1A1 Abrams fires at the Miller Complex range.

Photos: SPC Clinton Wood

MINNESOTA ARNG

Drive In, Taxi In, or Drop In... Camp Ripley Ranges Are Flexible

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What started out as a single farm field in the 1930s is now one of the finest training range complexes in the United States, a range complex that units dream about. A unit can literally drop in by parachute and start training, or it can land in a C-130 at a nearby airstrip, check out tanks, and commence maneuvering. These are a couple of the options available at the Miller Range Complex, located at Camp Ripley, Minnesota.

The support the Camp Ripley staff provides on the range is what makes it a site worth traveling to. "We try to do a better job to suit the needs of the unit training here," commented MSG John Stewart, Range Control NCOIC at Camp Ripley. "What makes Camp Ripley a little better is the support; logistically, everything is closer together. The M1 tanks are right here, so a unit could fly right in, draw its tanks, and start firing. The logistics support package is really good, especially considering the shrinking training dollars. This makes Camp Ripley more economically viable for the unit," added Stewart.

Another feature that Camp Ripley can provide is more targets. "We can put up a range anywhere," stated SPC Greg Dezurik, range mechanic.

The Miller Complex design evolved from the training requirements of the modern combined arms team made up of the tank (M60A3 and the M1 Abrams), M2/3 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle (BFV), and the Attack Helicopter AH-1 (Cobra). It now consists of four ranges: The West, East, North, and Center ranges.

The West Range is a fully computerized Multi-Purpose Training Range (MPTR). The range covers an area approximately 1,600 meters wide by 3,000 meters in length and is a "state-of-the-art" MPTR. Units can fire Table VII or Table VIII using HEAT or sabot ammunition. Tactical maneuver training can be conducted on a firing course in a woodland setting. Infantry elements can utilize this type of terrain to conduct Live Fire Exercises (LFXs) and Situational Training Exercises (STXs). The target systems also support two lanes of 50 cal. machine gun qualification and a 1/2-scale range capability.

Equipment at the West Range includes 22 hard-wired Remote Electronics Target System (RETS) target lifters, 20 portable target lifter emplacements, and two Armored Moving Target Carriers (AMTC). The target systems include a variety of enhancements, such as thermal targets, hostile fire flash, and smoke simulators. The target area supports the firing of all non-dud-producing ammunition.

The West Range, like the other three ranges, offers excellent support facilities. Each range has an all-weather tower equipped with radios, telephones, thermal sights, and simple weather stations to record barometric pressure. Each tower also has video capabilities for sight and sound that can be replayed for after-action briefings in all-weather classrooms. In addition to the tower on West Range, there are two Mobile Conduct of Fire Trainer (MCOFT) pads with integration shelters. Within walking distance is a company assembly area that has a two-bay covered maintenance shelter. The North Range is a multipurpose range that covers an area approximately 1,000 meters wide by 1,700 meters in

depth. North Range is laid out to favor defensive operations, but offensive missions can be accomplished as well. The range can be used as the starting point for gunnery operations. North Range provides training on gunnery skills or tables that can be accomplished on a 1/2-scale range. Firing of sub-caliber devices and machine guns up to .50 caliber can be used for LFXs. STXs can be set up using the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) devices with Laser Target Interface Device System (LTIDS) attached to the targets to register the simulated target hits.

Targetry equipment included on the North Range includes portable, radio-controlled target-lifting systems that portray infantry and armored vehicles. The target systems offer a variety of enhancements, to include thermal targets, hostile fire flash, and smoke simulators.

In addition to gunnery operations, infantry units can conduct training on squad/platoon level STXs using MILES, or conduct LFXs and integrate indirect fire into an adjacent impact area.

The Center Range is best suited for gunnery, starting with screening and proceeding through Table VII, squad-platoon level offensive and defensive LFXs, as well as TOW missile firing. Center Range covers an area 800 meters wide and 3,000 meters in length. The range layout provides for long offensive runs of up to 900 meters with engagements up to 2,700 meters. The target configuration provides a minimum of two emplacements every 100 meters for engagement opportunities from 100m to 2,800m. The target array supports gunnery using MILES, 1/2-scale sub-caliber or full-up gunnery using both HEAT and sabot ammunition. Infantry elements can conduct squad-platoon LFXs or MILES STXs on the range. In addition, engineers for digging operations can be integrated into the scenario. The target systems include a variety of enhancements, such as thermal targets, hostile fire flash, and smoke simulators.

Camp Ripley's premier training range is the East Range. According to SGT Chad Daniels, gunner for A Company of the 1st of the 94th Armor from Hibbing, Minnesota, "I think it's a great range. There is a lot more depth and a lot more possibilities. It's so multi-purpose."

East Range is a fully computerized, state-of-the-art range that combines the capabilities of Table XII gunnery and an infantry platoon battle course. The focus of the Camp Ripley staff for East Range is to provide the most realistic battlefield environment possible for STX, LFX, and Combined Live Fire Exercise (CALFEX) exercises using MILES or live ammunition. This can be accomplished through a unit scenario. The unit provides the scenario to Range Control and they proof it out. An added feature to the scenario proofing is the secondary target. Normally the unit chooses a primary target but Camp Ripley goes one step further to provide a secondary target just in case there is a problem with the first. "This enables the



MEDEVAC landing zone at the Miller Range Complex, Camp Ripley, Minn.

unit to keep going without stopping to see what is wrong with the target. Units only have so much time to get soldiers qualified, so time is of the essence," commented Stewart. The main area of concern is safety. "If we can safely do it, you, the unit can do it," remarked SGT Richard Green, Shift Sergeant, Range Control.

The East Range target and maneuver area covers approximately 1,000 meters wide by 2,300 meters in depth. Four fire and maneuver trails 600-900 meters long are furnished with 17 tiered defensive positions. The four trails are divided into two lanes, with two trails each. Each trail is capable of Table VIII qualifica-



A C-130 lands at Camp Ripley, Minn.

tion. When all four trails are used, Table XII platoon qualification, various LFXs, STXs or other tactical tables can be accomplished.

Rolling terrain on the East Range enhances the training offered to infantry squad and platoons. The range has various grouped military objectives that can be used for offensive and defensive operations. Training realism is enhanced by bunkers, trench lines, pop up infantry, and an assault/defend house. All targets can be thermalized. In addition, demolition can be done like the Canadians did last year using Bangalore torpedoes to breach concertina wire. Also, call for fire can be simulated using flash-to-bang simulators. These features, capabilities, and target array offer a challenging and wide variety of options for the trainer.

The East Range also is equipped with adjustable hit sensors for live fire or (LTIDS) for use with MILES. Units can also request through-sight video, which is attached to the firing vehicle. Whatever the gunner sees is recorded on tape in the tower for after-action reviews. Support facilities include a tower with two levels equipped with radios, telephones, VCR, camera, and a thermal sight for efficient tower operation. The all-weather support building provides a large multipurpose room, AAR debrief room, and latrines. A MCOFT pad with an integration shelter is on site. In addition, a helicopter pad for medical evacuation is located approximately 400 meters south of the range.

Conducting realistic training is a challenging business, and so is providing it. Camp Ripley more than meets that challenge by providing first-class training ranges and staff support to units.

If you would like further information about the Miller Complex, call Operations at DSN 871-7346 or commercial (320) 632-7346. You can also write for more information to: Post Commander, ATTN: Range Control, P.O. Box 150, Camp Ripley, Little Falls, MN 56345-0150.