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## SESAMS LEAVES ITS MARK ON MARINES

*By Sgt. Jason J. Bortz*

**MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. (Aug 28)** -- The Special Effects Small Arms Marking System provides realistic and safe training for Marines by using special rounds filled with color paste that leave a visible mark where ever it hits. The rounds can currently be used with slightly modified M-16A2s or M9s.

A squad of Marines rush a building suspected of being a terrorist hideout. Working in teams, the Marines attempt to clear every room. The building appears vacant, the Marines begin to relax and then suddenly ... gunfire erupts from the back of the building. Four Marines have been hit, small red splotches of paste cover their flak jackets marking where real bullet holes would be if this had been a real-life situation.

Training like this will soon be possible with the Special Effects Small Arms Marking System developed and tested by the Marine Corps System Command here.

Paintball wars have been popular for years with people wanting to experience that combat feeling, but paintball guns don't look or feel anything like Marine Corps weapons.

With the SESAMS, Marines use their own M-16A2 or M9 to fire special rounds that have plastic colored paste-filled tips that leave a mark where they hit. Additionally, there are versions of the SESAMS that can also be used with the Close Quarters Battle Weapon, and development of a shotgun version is underway.

The weapons are slightly modified to fire the paste rounds. For the M-16A2, the upper receiver is replaced with a modified one that looks exactly like the original but has a shorter chamber and the diameter is slightly larger. The only change necessary for the M9 is a modified barrel. The same round can be fired from either weapon. A modified magazine is used for the M-16A2 to hold the shorter rounds, but a regular M9 magazine can be used with the M9. Both weapons are accurate up to 50 yards which makes them ideal for close combat and urban training.

The paste is biodegradable, environmentally friendly and washes off with soap and water. It currently comes in two colors, red and blue. "If the round hits exposed skin it leaves a stinging feeling," said Maj. Thomas M. Varmette, project officer for infantry small arms at MARCORSYSCOM.

For safety reasons, all Marines must wear a flak jacket, helmet and a full face mask when using the SESAMS. "We are trying to get the gas mask certified to be able to be worn with the SESAMS," said Varmette. "The only requirement for the mask is that it must be a full-face mask."

Another safety feature is that the modified weapons cannot fire live rounds. "If a Marine puts a live round into the M-16A2 or M9, there is no way he could fire it," said Varmette.

The SESAMS has been field tested at Camp Lejeune, N.C., by 2nd Recon Bn. and Special Reaction Teams of Military Police. "The Marines loved it," said Varmett.

The SESAMS is a realistic way of training for Marines in close quarters. Marines get the chance to engage an enemy with the same weapons used on an everyday basis. The SESAMS should hit Corpswide in November.

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