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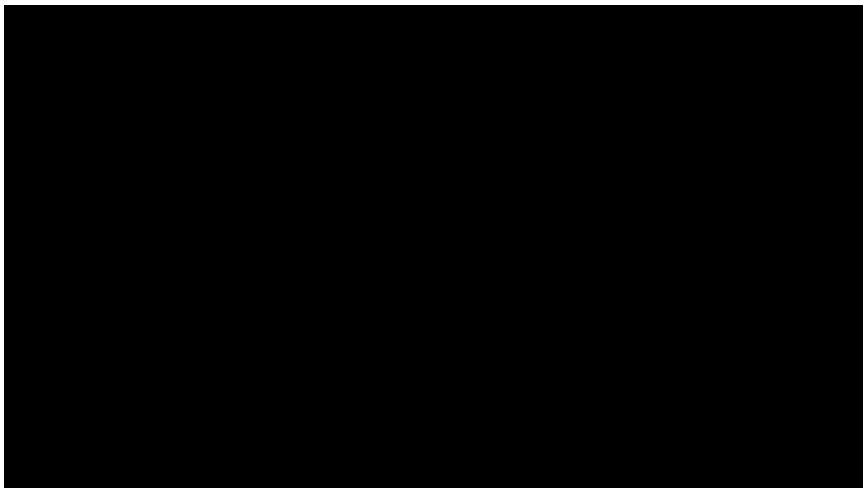
By

- [Brian Albrecht, The Plain Dealer](#)



Lonnie Timmons III, The Plain Dealer
First Sgt. Bill Nelson, left, and Sgt. Randy Jones, stand guard outside a house that was once home to Ravenna Arsenal personnel but is now used in urban combat exercises of the Ohio Army National Guard's Camp Ravenna Joint Military Training Center.

By **Brian Albrecht Plain Dealer Reporter**



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When is Edmonton's Coliseum coming down?

The simulated guts of an improvised explosive device lay scattered on a desk in the small house in Portage County. Nearby, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher leaned against a "blood-spattered" wall.

Flash-bang grenades were concealed as booby traps to greet Ohio Army National Guard troops who would soon burst into the house, firing blank-loaded M-4 carbines at "insurgents" lurking in dark rooms and hallways.

In a few months these same soldiers could be repeating this urban combat training exercise for real in Afghanistan.

The Windham couple also shared a love of hunting and fishing on the arsenal's grounds, and were actively involved in the Ravenna

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The committee and community outreach efforts by the National Guard have lifted the secrecy once shrouding the old arsenal, possibly inspiring speculation that it stored nuclear materials, or served as a toxic landfill or even a UFO landing site.

The change in attitude has impressed Chuck Keiper, president of the Portage County Commissioners.

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"There has been an armored ring around that property for 70 years, and this is the first time, really, that armor has come down far enough for us to see if there is an opportunity there, in a partnership with the Ohio National Guard and Army," he said.

Noting that the current water/sewer project will not only benefit the camp but could reduce overall water and sewer rates, Keiper added, "Hopefully there will be a good spin-off here as this grows, and we're making an investment in their infrastructure to make sure we can capture all we can.

"Operations like these (Camp Ravenna) seem to start small and build," he said. "This is a good starting point. The rest remains to be discovered."

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