

July 19, 2005

## For the man who has everything ...

*Mosul, Iraq, July 19*

It sounds like every guy's dream — disposable drawers.

There's this small company called DNA Products out of New York that makes underwear for soldiers and outdoor freaks that are designed to be worn and tossed in the trash.

I pulled the assignment to field test these disposable briefs just before leaving for Iraq a couple of weeks ago.

Actually, I was tricked into the task.

Knowing what a complete gear-head I am, my senior managing editor stopped me in the office a couple of days before departure and baited me.

"Hey Matt," he whispered casually. "We have a new piece of gear we want you to review."

"Sure!" I blurted out. "What is it?"

"Disposable underwear," he said, flashing his best "gee, I wish I could do this" smile.

I was hoping it would be a new knife or the latest field flashlight, but what the hell, I thought.

I was assured that I was free to give my honest opinion. As a journalist, this doesn't come naturally, since my job is to report the views of others.

The package of five MIL-TREKS disposable briefs takes up no more space in a rucksack than a couple of MRE main entrees stacked together.

The white briefs come rolled up and individually wrapped in plastic. They're about the size of a Leatherman multi-tool and weigh next to nothing.

Unwrapped, they look like something doctors wear to cover their heads during surgery.

The ultra-thin, Polypropylene material feels almost like medical gauze.



**Reporter Matthew Cox, a 38-year-old veteran of the 82nd Airborne Division, is on his fourth assignment in Iraq for Army Times. Photographer James J. Lee is on his first assignment there. — James J. Lee / Army Times**

My first thought was the half-inch wide waist band was a bit feminine for my taste, but I was determined to keep an open mind.

I waited until my clean supply of expensive, wicking underwear was running low to try them out.

Army Times photographer James Lee and I have been shadowing soldiers from the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (SBCT), on daily combat patrols throughout Mosul.

The mid-day temperature here averages about 125 degrees these days, and this is the cooler region of the country in summer.

We don't carry near the load that infantrymen here do, but you still sweat plenty wearing body armor and a ballistic helmet while you're running on and off Stryker vehicles.

I was skeptical when I put them on, but they're pretty comfortable. In fact, I forgot I was wearing them during the three-hour morning patrol that started our day.

In this extreme heat, it's was hard to judge how breathable they were compared to the high-tech, wicking drawers I usually wear. But I didn't notice much difference at first.

As the day wore on, it became obvious, however. They didn't dry as fast as underwear made of fabrics such as Polyester, Spandex or nylon.

The trapped sweat made the fabric feel sort of slippery against my skin.

Sorry — that was probably too much information.

By late afternoon, I shed them and tossed them, which was nice. When you are packing light, anything that cuts down on laundry is a good thing.

As I said, I tried the men's briefs, but MIL-TREKS also makes men's disposable boxers along with women's disposable briefs and thongs.

They are very packable, lightweight and relatively comfortable. The price seems right, too — \$2 for package of five.

I think they could be a good idea to keep as a spare when you haven't had time to do laundry and don't want to go commando.

I do think they would be better worn in more temperate conditions, though — say, under 100 degrees.