



1st Engineer Battalion (Combat Effects)



COMMANDER



LTC Robert F. Whittle Jr.

MISSION:

On order, the 1st Engineer Battalion (Combat Effects) deploys and conducts full spectrum operations in support of Army, Joint, or Combined Operations.

MOTTO:

ALWAYS FIRST! DIEHARD!

COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR



CSM James K. Benton

CURRENT OPERATIONS (Unclassified)

- Conducting RESET Operations until mid-June 08
- Collective training begins in 4th QTR FY 08
- The battalion will deploy in 2009 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom to serve primarily as a route clearance battalion.

TRANSFORMATION – ROAD AHEAD

As of 16 March 2006, the 1st Engineer Battalion is a modular Combat Effects battalion comprised of the 111th Sapper Company, 41st Mobility Augmentation Company, 72nd Mobility Augmentation Company, Forward Support Company (FSC), and Headquarters Support Company (HSC). The battalion is currently assigned to 555th Engineer Brigade (TRO) and ADCON to 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. In May 2008, the 41st Mobility Augmentation Company will convert to the 41st Clearance Company in order to provide the Army with a long term route and area clearance capability.

HISTORY

The history of the most oldest and decorated Engineer Battalion dates back to 1846, when Congress authorized the organization of the first company of engineer soldiers. General Order 14 constituted Company A as a company of sappers, miners, and pontoniers at West Point, New York.

Company A immediately moved to and fought at Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Cherubusco, Molino Del Ray, and Chapultaptec. Some of the young officers with the company at that time included Robert E. Lee, P.G.T. Beauregard, George G. Meade, Joseph E. Johnston, and George B. McClellan. At Cerro Gordo, the engineers, led by CPT Robert E. Lee, found a trail that enabled the American Army to envelop and rout Santa Anna's forces.

At the outbreak of the Civil War the entire Engineer force of the US Army consisted of only Company A. In January 1861, the company was ordered from West Point, New York to Washington D.C. to secure important buildings in the capital. There was also a detachment building roads in the Puget Sound area of Washington Territory, and later building artillery batteries on Alcatraz Island near San Francisco, California. In March 1861, Company A served as the escort for President Lincoln at his inauguration.

In August 1861, Congress expanded the Engineer force by authorizing three new companies. B Company was recruited in Portland, Maine by CPT Thomas L. Casey. C Company was recruited in Boston, Massachusetts by CPT J.B. McPherson. It wasn't until July 1862, that D Company was formed at Harrison's Landing, Virginia. E Company was formed when the Corps of Topographical Engineers merged into the Corps of Engineers in December 1865 at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.

During the Civil War the battalion fought with the Army of the Potomac in numerous campaigns building fortifications, road maintenance, building, and destroying bridges. Also, the battalion was regularly called to fight on the line as infantry. Their ability to rapidly emplace pontoon bridges, under fire, gained them presidential praise. In one incident during the Peninsula Campaign they were attacked while emplacing a bridge and successfully defended themselves with axes and oars. In another incident while detached in Virginia they built a 1,340 foot bridge and then disassembled this bridge and another over night and marched 45 miles in three days to rejoin general headquarters. In 1871, SGM Frederick W. Gerber was awarded the Medal of Honor for distinguished gallantry in many actions and in recognition of long, faithful, and meritorious services covering a period of 32 years.

In 1898 to 1901, the battalion was called to action again in the Spanish-American War. Companies C and E fought in Cuba, while A and B companies were sent to the Philippines. It was also during this time that B Company sent Soldiers to help with the China Relief Expedition during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Following this war the battalion returned to the Philippines from 1905 to 1909 to fight in the Philippine insurrection. Following this members of the battalion were sent to assist in the construction of the Panama Canal.

In 1914, the battalion participated in the occupation of Vera Cruz, in response to the Tampico Affair (Mexican Soldiers seized American Sailors delivering fuel). In July 1916, the battalion reorganized into the 1st Engineer Regiment and was placed on border patrol during the hostilities with Mexico and Pancho Villa. In August 1917, the regiment departed for France

and World War I, where it joined the 1st Infantry Division. Members of the regiment were among the first Americans Troops to go into combat and among the first casualties.

The regiment fought in every major campaign in France and was awarded the French Fourragere and two awards of the Croix de Guerre for valorous service. In October 1918, SGT [Wilber E. Colyer](#) earned the Medal of Honor for Volunteering with two other soldiers to locate machinegun nests. SGT Colyer advanced on the hostile positions to a point where he was half surrounded by the nests, which turned into an ambush. He killed the gunner of one gun with a captured German grenade and then turned this gun on the other nests silencing all of them before he returned to his platoon. He was later killed in action.

Prior to the start of World War II, the 1st Engineer Regiment was reorganized as the 1st Engineer Combat Battalion and again assigned to fight as part of the 1st Infantry Division. In 1942, the battalion landed with the initial forces spear-heading the North Africa invasion. In addition to their many engineer tasks they also fought effectively as infantry. D Company organized special "Hell Squads" equipped with 81MM mortars and trained as Rangers. This unit worked closely with the now famous "Darby's Rangers".

The battalion earned its first Presidential Unit Citation for actions during the Allied attack on Gafsa in North Africa. Two days before the attack, torrential rains carried away much of the roads constructed through the wadis. Despite this set back, the companies rebuilt the roads so the attack could be launched as scheduled. Over 2,000 vehicles of the 1st Infantry Division and 1st Armored Division moved over the roads that had been opened and constructed by the battalion. A second Presidential Unit Citation was awarded for the battalion's devotion to duty and skillful accomplishment during the many missions assigned to it during the Tunisia Campaign.

In 1943, the battalion cleared underwater obstacles and destroyed enemy pillboxes during the landings on Sicily. During the Normandy landings at Omaha Beach in 1944, the battalion led the assault forces, breaching gaps in the extensive enemy mine and wire obstacles and clearing the combat trails leading off the beaches. The battalion received its third [Presidential Unit Citation](#) for actions at Omaha Beach and received the Distinguished Unit Citation for combat action at Gafsa, Tunisia, and Normandy. The battalion fought as part of the 1st Infantry Division during the remainder of the war in the European Theater, aiding in the Army's breakthrough into France, breaching the Siegfried Line, attacking in Aachen, fighting in the Hurtgen Forest, the Battle of the Bulge, and crossing the Rhine at Remagen. When hostilities finally ceased the battalion had reached Leibsten, Czechoslovakia. The battalion's exceptional service during World War II earned them three Presidential Unit Citations, the French Fourragere, and the Belgian Fourragere.

Finally, after 10 years of occupation duty the battalion moved to Fort Riley, Kansas. On their return they began training exercises and completed many post improvement projects including: Moon Lake, Wyman Park, the Old Trooper Monument, Locomotive installation, training ranges, and the installation of historical signs.

On May 2, 1965 B Company was alerted for deployment to Vietnam with 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, with the rest of the battalion deploying to the Republic of South Vietnam as part of the 1st Infantry Division in September 1965. For five years, the battalion cleared obstacles, built roads, airfields, base camps and bridges in support of numerous combat

operations including operations: Cedar Falls, Tucson, Junction City I and II, Manhattan, Dallas, Bluefield I and II, Paul Bunyan, Billings, Portland, Lam Aon '68, Giant Swath, and the TET Offensive of 1968. The battalion became famous for the Diehard [Tunnel Rat](#) section that bravely cleared the extensive Vietcong tunnel systems with little more than small arms and demolitions. The battalion received four Meritorious Unit Citations for actions during the Vietnam War. In April 1970, the battalion returned to Fort Riley.

Immediately following the battalion's return they deployed to Europe in October-November 1970 for REFORGER II. The summer of 1971 was dedicated to ROTC support and field training. Later that year the battalion returned to Europe for REFORGER III. In 1972, E Company supported Exercise Gallant Shield at Fort Hood, Texas; while the rest of the battalion continued to be deeply involved in ROTC support. In total, the battalion participated in 12 REFORGER exercises, and numerous smaller exercises.

In December of 1990, the battalion deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. The battalion breached and cleared lanes through Iraqi obstacle belts that allowed the passage of two divisions. Elements of the battalion destroyed 2 Artillery pieces, 61 Iraqi tanks, 41 Armored Personnel Carriers, 300 wheeled vehicles, 2.5 million lbs of explosives, and other large quantities of ammunition and war material. The battalion returned to Fort Riley in 1991 and received the Valorous Unit Citation for actions in Southwest Asia. In 1991, as part of the Army's restructuring, D Company and E Company were deactivated.

Since 1991, the battalion participated in many NTC and JRTC rotations, fought fires in the Northwestern United States, and supported anti-drug operations as part of JTF-6. In 1995, the 1st Engineer Battalion was awarded the Superior Unit Award for exceptional performance during the Engineer Restructuring Initiative on Fort Riley.

The battalion deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of SFOR-6 from August 30, 1999 to December 12, 1999. The battalion helped provide a stable and secure environment so the benefits of democracy and freedom might flourish. At the end of the deployment, the battalion conducted reconnaissance of over 1,230 kilometers of routes and 298 bridges; destroyed 116,000 anti-personnel land mines; constructed 30 kilometers of roads and 5 bridges; supervised Entity Armed Forces' clearance of more than 43,000 square miles of minefields; and distributed toys, clothing, and humanitarian aid to Bosnian children and homeless families.

In September 2003, the battalion deployed to the Ar Ramadi area of Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. HHC, A Company, and C Company were based out of Camp Junction City, while B Company was attached to 1-34 Armor at Camp Manhattan near Al Habbaniya. During its time in Iraq, the battalion was active in fixed site security, route clearance, cache searches, cordon and searches, raids, Traffic Control Points, force protection, and construction projects. The battalion was also instrumental in developing Lioness Teams of female soldiers, to search Iraqi women while still maintaining their modesty. The battalion's efforts succeeded in destroying large quantities of enemy supplies and ammunition and assisted in the capture of numerous insurgents. The battalion's hard work and perseverance served to greatly curtail the activities of insurgents in Al Anbar province, assisting in the security and well-being of the citizens of that area and enabling to move forward on the path to a stable, democratic Iraq. The battalion returned in late 2004 and

received the Joint Meritorious Award for service with the Marine Corps and for actions during OIF II.

In March 2006, as part of the battalion's transformation to a modular force, companies A, B, and C transformed and reflagged as the 111th Sapper Company, 41st Mobility Augmentation Company, and 72nd Mobility Augmentation Company. HHC transformed into the HSC (Headquarters Support Company), and the new FSC (Forward Support Company) activated. This transformation enables the battalion to stay current with the contemporary operating environment and prepare for future missions.

From September 2006 to December 2007 the battalion deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, as part of the 105th Engineer Group (NCNG) in support of the 25th Infantry Division and later as part of the 111th Engineer Brigade (WVNG) in support of the 1st Armored Division. During this time period the Battalion temporarily changed its slogan from DIEHARD to TRAILBLAZER to reflect its mission in theater to adjacent units. The Battalion patrolled over 485,751 km, inflicted 159 enemy casualties, and successfully cleared over 1,900 IEDs and UXOs during route clearance operations along main and alternate supply routes from Baqubah to Mosul in Multi National Division – North, setting the standard for Route Clearance Operations throughout Iraq. The battalion returned in late 2007 and was awarded the Valorous Unit Award for actions during OIF 06-08. The battalion was also reassigned to the 555th Engineer Brigade (TRO) in December 2007 but continued to remain at Fort Riley, Kansas and was under ADCON to 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.