

U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



RELEASE #2009-09-14-1

2009: THE YEAR OF THE NCO

Sept. 14, 2009

18th Engineer Brigade uncases colors, earns commendation for 15-month tour in Iraq

SCHWETZINGEN, Germany – U.S. Army Europe's 18th Engineer Brigade uncased its colors here Sept. 14, officially marking its return home from a 15-month combat tour in Iraq.



U.S. ARMY PHOTO

Col. Matthew Russell, commander of the 18th Engineer Brigade (left), and brigade Command Sgt. Maj. David M. Clark attach a Meritorious Unit Commendation streamer presented in recognition of the 18th's recent 15-month combat tour in Iraq, to the brigade colors during a ceremony at Tompkins Barracks in Schwetzingen, Germany, Sept. 14.

The engineers returned to Germany in July, and the uncasing symbolizes that the brigade is now officially home and fully operational for V Corps and U.S. Army Europe.

Col. Matthew Russell, the 18th's commander, and brigade Command Sgt. Maj. David M. Clark, unfurled the colors on the parade field at Tompkins Barracks under gray skies dropping intermittent rain.

During its deployment the brigade logged some 20,000 miles as its Soldiers moved three times in the course of their tour in Iraq. Beginning their mission at Contingency Operating Base Speicher in Tikrit, the engineers moved to Forward Operating Base Warrior in Kirkuk in November, then to Contingency Operating Site Marez in Mosul in February.

The brigade worked to improve engineering in northern Iraq, surveying bridges and construction sites and working with civil-military operations experts to improve government and economic conditions. The engineers also focused on non-lethal engagements such as route clearance, Iraqi engineer partnership and planning, funding and initiating construction projects.

Commanding four battalions during its tour, the 18th is credited with managing more than 3,000 route clearance missions; enhancing governance and infrastructure; building cooperation among reconstruction agencies, nongovernmental organizations and maneuver units; and providing engineer expertise and oversight for more than 200 construction projects for essential services such as waste management, electricity, water and sewage systems, estimated at \$241 million.

In his remarks during the ceremony, Brig. Gen. Michael A. Ryan, V Corps deputy commander, said the brigade was entrusted with a large and complex mission in Iraq, and did an incredible job tackling that mission. Moving three times, often under fire, made the 18th's task particularly challenging, he added.

"Every one of those moves was a combat operation in itself," the general said.

Following his remarks Ryan stepped onto the field to present the brigade with a Meritorious Unit Commendation in honor of its efforts during the deployment.

Russell accepted the commendation, then stepped to the podium and opened his remarks with a nod to the overcast skies.

"This is great engineer weather," Russell said.

The colonel thanked the Soldiers of the brigade for their "phenomenal" efforts, for their service, and for helping the people of America and Iraq.

"I could not have written a better script than the conduct of our deployment," he said.

"Your contributions will light up the pages of our nation's history."

Russell also gave his thanks to those who supported the unit at home station and cared for its families during the deployment, and read a letter from Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. praising the brigade for its professionalism and skill in taking on a difficult task in Iraq.

The colonel closed the ceremony with a reminder to the Soldiers that it was their efforts and service that ensured the brigade's success.

"Always remember what you've done and always be proud to be Soldiers," he said.



Visit the U.S. Army Europe home page at: www.hqusareur.army.mil

Additional U.S. Army Europe images are available online at:
<http://www.flickr.com/groups/usarmyeurope>