



**18th Engineer Brigade
United States Army
Unit 29060
APO AE 09081**

PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE: 2010-05-26-02**

May 26, 2010

STORY:

15th Eng. Bn. puts its platoons to the test

Story by Spc. Aislinn M. Amig, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – Soldiers from 15th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade spent two weeks simultaneously completing construction projects and conducting platoon evaluations in May at the Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels training areas.

Platoons from the 500th Engineer Horizontal Company and the 902nd Engineer Vertical Company were evaluated on their construction skills, warrior tasks and their interactions with simulated media and Afghan citizens.

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Jackson, a squad leader with 500th Eng. Co., said his platoon's training mission was to flatten out an area that had been previously occupied by a U.S. operating base. Since the operating base closure, the area had become an enemy stronghold and a danger to the local populace in the area.

“This will deter the enemy from coming back here,” said Jackson. “We are here to win the hearts and minds of the local Afghans. The first step is to have respect for these people and their culture.”

As part of their relationship building and interactions with the simulated local populace, many platoons were evaluated on their participation in key leader engagements.

Throughout each meeting, Army leaders discussed with local leaders the current food resources, medical services and opportunities for development in their perspective communities.

To complete their real-world mission of reconstructing roads and building B-Huts throughout the training areas, the engineers used multiple types of construction equipment. Graders, rollers, water distributors and a variety of power-operated tools were used to facilitate the quick progression of each construction site.

1st Lt. Joe Caperna, the 3rd platoon leader with the 902nd Eng. Co. said his platoon's training mission was to construct a B-Hut that was to be used as a shelter for local Afghan citizens. A B-Hut is a small building that serves a variety of functions, from office space to living area for example. And in all actuality, the B-Hut they constructed will be used as training facility at Hohenfels.

While Soldiers who train and work at the Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels training areas will benefit from the new facilities and roadways built by the 15th Eng. Bn. Soldiers for many years to come, the immediate benefit to the Soldiers from 15th Eng. Bn. was valuable knowledge and experience gained from the training and evaluation portions of their real-world mission.



Spc. Leonard Witucke, a heavy equipment operator with 500th Engineer Horizontal Company, 15th Engineer Battalion, takes cover and provides security during an escalation of force exercise in the Grafenwoehr Training Area May 4. Platoons from 500th Eng. Co. were evaluated on warrior tasks and their ability to interact with the media while conducting a real-world construction mission. (Photo by Spc. Aislinn M. Amig, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)



Spc. Arturo Hernandez, a heavy equipment operator with 500th Engineer Horizontal Company, 15th Engineer Battalion, uses a grader to flatten the area on a construction site May 5 at the Grafenwoehr Training Area. Soldiers from the 500th Eng. Co. spent two weeks in Grafenwoehr being evaluated on construction tactics, warrior tasks and their interactions with simulated media and Afghan citizens. (Photo by Spc. Aislinn M. Amig, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)



Pfc. David Miller, a plumber with 902nd Engineer Vertical Company, 15th Engineer Battalion, uses a jigsaw to cut lumber for the construction of a B-Hut May 12 in at the Hohenfels Training Area. Platoons from 902nd Eng. Co. built real-world projects while being evaluated on construction tactics, warrior tasks and interactions with simulated media and Afghan citizens. (Photo by Spc. Aislinn M. Amig, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)