

The Castle



APRIL 2025



412TH THEATER ENGINEER COMMAND (VICKSBURG, MS)



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FROM | Maj. Gen. Matthew Warne, Commanding General, and Command Sgt. Major Ryan Bodmer, Senior Enlisted Advisor, of the 412th Theater Engineer Command.

In an era of dynamic challenges and evolving missions, our Command Team is excited to share a vision for the future that prioritizes readiness, leadership, and innovation. This vision serves as a guide for our Soldiers, civilians, families, and friends, ensuring we remain steadfast in our commitment to excellence.

As we move forward, we recognize the importance of building agile, combat-ready formations that can adapt to any environment.

The key aspects of our vision include:

Readiness: We are dedicated to ensuring our personnel are always equipped to face challenges head-on. Emphasizing skill development and ongoing training will keep us operationally ready at all times.

Leadership: Strong leadership is at the core of our mission. We will foster a culture that encourages growth, accountability, and empowerment among all ranks, cultivating effective leaders for the challenges of tomorrow.

Innovation: Embracing new technologies and innovative practices will enhance our effectiveness and efficiency. We are committed to exploring cutting-edge solutions that provide our formations with a competitive edge.

Together, we embody the mantra “*Twice the Citizen, Combat Ready*,” reinforcing our dual commitment to serving our nation and our communities. As we continue to lead the way, let us unite around our common purpose, ensuring we are not only ready for today’s missions but also for the future challenges that lie ahead.

Stay engaged, stay informed, and let’s work together to achieve our vision!

ONE TEAM – Build to Serve!



ARMY RESERVE ENGINEERS SUPPORT HELENE EMERGENCY EFFORTS

FROM | Lt. Col. William Wratee, 412th Theater
Engineer Command Public Affairs Officer

BURNSVILLE, N.C. – Hurricane Helene made landfall along Florida’s coastal bend as a powerful Category 4 storm before weakening to a tropical storm and continuing northward into Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee. The storm brought severe flooding, strong winds, and widespread power outages, leaving many communities in dire need of assistance.

The 357th Engineer Company, a U.S. Army Reserve unit based in Asheville, North Carolina, played a crucial role in the recovery, clearing roads, removing debris, and supporting the restoration of critical infrastructure. Their efforts included using bulldozers to push aside fallen trees and broken asphalt and transporting quarry rocks to stabilize damaged roads and foundations.

The 357th Engineer Company responded after a call for assistance from Yancey County, where the Sheriff’s Department requested engineer support. In response, the Army Reserve engineers sprang into action.



Staff Sgt. Parker Kessel (left) and Staff Sgt. Joseph Armstrong (right) from the 357th Engineer Company secure a military DR7 II CAT Dozer onto a transport trailer on October 5, 2024, before moving out to clear debris from a nearby road where residents were trapped. The Army Reserve engineers were deployed early in the morning to restore road access for the local community in Burnsville, North Carolina (Yancey County).



"Our first priority was making sure we had full accountability of our Soldiers," explained Staff Sgt. Parker Kessel, the senior noncommissioned officer on the ground in Yancey County. "The storm caused major disruptions, including a loss of cell service and blocked roads, but we ensured everyone in our unit was accounted for."

"Once we gained accountability, we were on-site within two hours," said Kessel. After communication was re-established, the unit began holding daily briefings to coordinate recovery operations. "I posted at 1400 every day at the Reserve Center so any Soldiers arriving could get updates on when and where they were needed."

The unit prepared equipment, including bulldozers and dump trucks, in anticipation of a request for support. "We knew there would be a need, so we got everything ready in advance," Kessel added.

"We mobilized our engineer assets within two hours of the county's official request. After getting on the ground, we assessed the situation and started clearing trees and debris from houses and roads under Immediate Response Authority," said Kessel.

Immediate Response Authority allows military commanders to provide rapid support to civil authorities during emergencies, such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks, without prior approval. It enables military assistance to be deployed quickly when there is an imminent threat to life or property. Typically, Immediate Response Authority support is temporary, bridging the gap until civilian agencies can fully respond.

Approval for the Immediate Response Authority came from the 357th Engineer Company's commander, Capt. William Callahan. Initially, the company provided two tactical vehicles and six Soldiers for 72 hours, assessing the situation daily for potential extensions.

Further assessments were conducted by the 412th Theater Engineer Command, TEC, the higher headquarters for the 357th Engineer Company, based in Vicksburg, Mississippi. As one of two Army Reserve theater engineer

commands, the 412th TEC has command and control of all Army Reserve engineer assets east of the Mississippi River, providing engineering support for military operations worldwide, including combat zones and domestic emergencies.

The storm cut off most access points into the county and surrounding areas, isolating the community. Despite these challenges, the 357th Engineer Company coordinated with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, clearing debris and stabilizing damaged roads. "We integrated with the local team at Mountain Heritage High School, which served as the command operations center, and by the afternoon of the first day, we were moving dump trucks and pushing rock to create safe passageways," Kessel noted.

Maj. Gen. Matthew Warne, commanding general of the 412th Theater Engineer Command, praised the 357th Engineers' swift response. "I couldn't be prouder of our engineers and their ability to respond swiftly in times of crisis," said Warne. "Their dedication and readiness to step in when needed most is a testament to their training and commitment to serving our nation and its communities."

Reflecting on the response, Kessel emphasized the unit's pride in their rapid efforts. "It was a very fast turnaround. We were tired but proud to help. This is our community, and we wanted to make a difference. I'm proud of what we accomplished — helping our neighbors in need."



Staff Sgt. Joseph Armstrong, with the 357th Engineer Company out of Asheville, North Carolina, takes a break after loading a military DR7 II CAT Dozer on to a trailer for transport to clear road debris in support of citizens affected by Hurricane Helene in Burnsville, North Carolina (Yancey County).



3 ARMY RESERVE SOLDIERS GRADUATE SAPPER LEADER COURSE

FROM | 382nd Engineer Company
(Sapper), based out of Mechanicsburg,
Pennsylvania

Three Army Reserve Soldiers from the 382nd Engineer Company graduated from the prestigious Sapper Leader Course at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in September.

This rigorous 28-day leadership program, conducted by the U.S. Army Engineer School, is designed to develop elite combat engineers through advanced training in demolitions, mobility operations, and small-unit tactics—skills essential for supporting frontline infantry missions.

The graduates—1st Lt. Dylan Tracey, Sgt. Rhett Mattson, and Sgt. Daniel Willingham, recently promoted to Staff Sergeant—demonstrated exceptional adaptability and resilience.

Tracey praised the course's realism and holistic approach, noting its resemblance to real-world combat conditions. Mattson emphasized the value of critical thinking and decision-making under pressure. Willingham stepped outside his comfort zone to strengthen his leadership skills.

Beyond earning the coveted Sapper Tab—a symbol of excellence and tactical proficiency—these Soldiers gained invaluable experience that will enhance their ability to lead and support their units in complex, high-stakes environments.

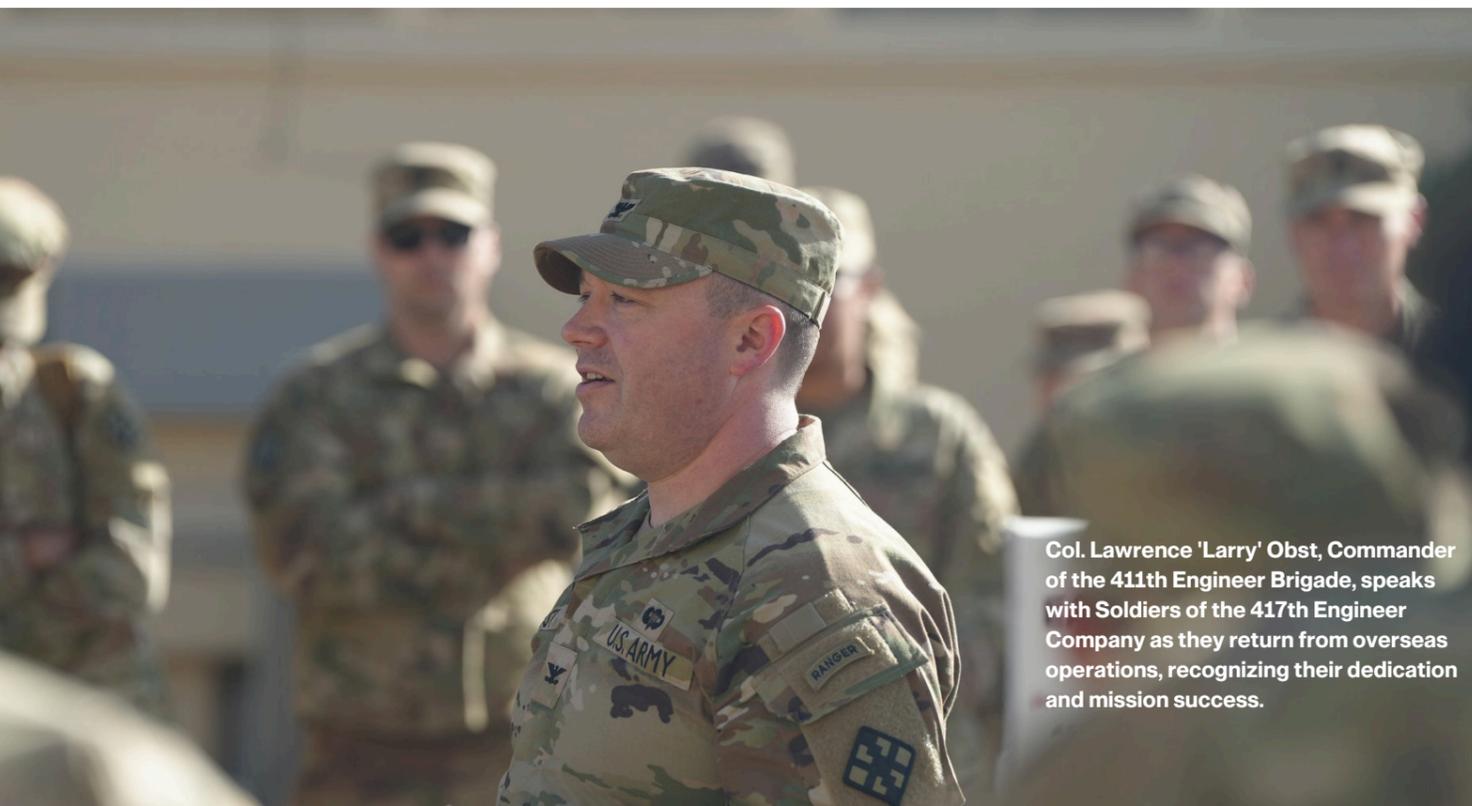


1st Lt. Dylan Tracey

Sgt. Rhett Mattson

Sgt. Daniel Willingham





Col. Lawrence 'Larry' Obst, Commander of the 411th Engineer Brigade, speaks with Soldiers of the 417th Engineer Company as they return from overseas operations, recognizing their dedication and mission success.

FROM | Colonel Lawrence "Larry" Obst, Commander of the 411th Engineer Brigade, New Windsor, New York

Rethinking Battle Assembly: Empowering Junior Leaders and Maximizing Training Time

In an era where the global security environment is rapidly evolving, the Army Reserve must adapt by embracing innovation, empowering junior leaders, and optimizing the limited time we have to train and prepare for future challenges. To meet these demands, we must rethink how we plan, execute, and develop leaders during each battle assembly, ensuring that every Soldier's contribution is purpose-driven and impactful.

Our pool of eligible recruits continues to shrink, and we do not retain enough of our current Soldiers to help fill that gap. We have ever increasing training, readiness, and fielding tasks, but we squander many of our allocated thirty nine days with poor planning and inefficient execution. Many reserve units excel at active training and field training exercise events, but do not put the same amount of preparation into the days at home station.

In my previous assignment as an Inspector General, I visited companies for inspections and asked them to see the training schedule for that battle assembly. Each training schedule was virtually a carbon copy of every training schedule that I've ever received since joining the Reserve in 2008. Units have formation, sign in, and maybe physical training in the morning, typically company leadership huddles before morning or afternoon formation, and hard times for events throughout the day. An hour or two might go by without any actual work being accomplished. Without fail, every unit would have periods during the day where Soldiers would stand around with nothing to do, either finishing one event early and waiting for the next thing on the schedule or waiting on leadership to finish their meetings.

In the past, I would have said the supervisor of those idle Soldiers needed to have some hip-pocket training for them, the good old response to combine with the good old training schedule. However, it is

not the sergeant's fault that the duty day is poorly planned, and by saying we need more hip-pocket training we put the burden on them and divorce ourselves from responsibility. Besides wasting paid time, idle Soldiers are not motivated Soldiers, they should be put to productive work or sent home early if the required tasks for the day are complete. In my Inspector General visits, the units that trained the most had the highest morale, Soldiers want to do their military occupational skill tasks and feel like they have accomplished something, not get paid to sit around and do nothing.

Our current training schedule in garrison promotes attendance and compliance, with strict times and tasks, and leaders below platoon sergeant are just along for the ride. It is ironic that the Reserve, where many members have civilian jobs at lean corporations or own their own businesses, has training plans on the weekends that we would never allow Monday through Friday. We need a training plan in garrison that promotes efficiency and innovation within the commander's intent. We need to invite mission command in from the field and give it a parking space next to the Commander.

The Army Reserve has a surge of newly promoted sergeants, and we need to develop and evaluate those new noncommissioned officers at every opportunity. Battle Assembly is the best opportunity to put junior noncommissioned officers in charge and let them fail in a low threat environment.

In Iraq, I had a sergeant run checkpoints with Bradleys twenty miles from my location, they were empowered to respond to threats, shoot, move, and communicate on their own. I told this story to a command sergeant major, who said that we need to train and develop our new sergeants so that we could trust them to accomplish similar missions. I believe we need to do the opposite, we need to trust and empower our junior leaders now, throw them into challenging leadership roles in garrison and field environments, and allow them to fail when that failure will not get anyone injured or killed. Every day at battle assembly is an opportunity to develop and evaluate junior leaders.

I have asked my company commanders to reimagine the duty day to take the current training schedule and ask if we really need each item on there. Do we need formations

at the beginning and end of the day, or can we make do with one before lunch? And if we serve lunch, can we do a mandatory training class while everyone is eating? Can we let Soldiers reschedule training for birth month audits, and schedule a Teams call with the Army Reserve Administrators during the week? What if squad leaders got a list of tasks before battle assembly, took accountability for their Soldiers, completed tasks as quickly as they could, and then left when they were done working? There still might be hard times to mass the company, but we should mass in garrison the same way we mass in combat, for a specific vital purpose, and for only as long as necessary, then we disperse to separate tasks again.

I have told Company Commanders my vision for battle assemblies, and many relay that they are already doing what I described above, or a version of it. Upon closer inspection, they are not close. Company leadership should be uncomfortable when they enact the program described above. Commanders are not giving up their responsibility or control of the unit, but the control comes from proper planning and guardrails to keep operations on track and ensure that they are conducted safely. Company leadership should spot check their junior leaders, but they should also have more free time during the day to plan future events.

Empowering junior leaders during battle assembly will enable us to accomplish more, in a shorter amount of time, and avoid boredom and wasting Soldiers' time. Junior leaders will work harder, accomplish more, and appreciate the opportunity. Every battle assembly day is an opportunity to let junior leaders succeed or fail in a safe environment, then review and reset the next day. The Army Reserve cannot face our current and future challenges by doing business how we always have done it, we must innovate and improve to become more efficient and excel at retaining our great Soldiers.



The milepost highlights key locations around the world, providing a striking visual of just how isolated the Kwajalein Atoll is from essential construction equipment and materials. Understanding this 'tyranny of distance' is an eye-opener for junior leaders accustomed to CONUS-based projects.



FROM | Colonel Michael Trofinoff, PE, Commander 368th Forward Engineer Support Team-Main, Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands

Troop Design for Troop Construction: Engineers Tackle Challenges in the Western Pacific

Amid ongoing financial constraints, training opportunities for technical and construction engineer units remain limited. However, when the Kwajalein Army Garrison, Republic of the Marshall Islands requested engineering support, the 412th Theater Engineer Command's, TEC, Garrison Engineer Operations Cell, GENOC, seized the opportunity to provide valuable hands-on experience for troops operating in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility.

Located in the western Pacific, the Kwajalein Atoll is home to military and civilian personnel supporting U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, SMDC, missions. While contractors handle

mission-critical construction, quality of life projects present an opportunity for military engineers to contribute. The 412th TEC has deployed Forward Engineer Support Teams and Engineer Facilities Detachments ,EFD, in three rotations to oversee project designs. Troop construction will be executed alongside the 303rd Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's 411th Engineer Battalion, based in Hawaii, as well as other construction assets within the 412th TEC.

Challenges in the Pacific

Just reaching the atoll proved difficult. In November 2024, the first design rotation faced flight delays due to a tropical storm in the Marshall Islands, causing a four-day holdover in Hawaii. However, engineers maximized their time by conducting planning meetings, reviewing as-built designs, and analyzing the garrison's

preferred construction materials for the corrosive, salt-laden environment.

Once on the island, the team quickly learned the challenges of logistics. Essential construction equipment and materials can take up to 120 days to arrive, with shipments routed through Guam before being ferried to Kwajalein's logistics facility. To mitigate delays, the first design rotation secured and inspected a warehouse previously used by U.S. Navy Seabees for equipment storage.

Understanding the Mission

The engineers met with the Kwajalein Department of Public Works, DPW, to discuss project priorities and constraints. Col. Andrew Morgan, the garrison commander, emphasized the importance of the projects, noting how morale is vital for personnel stationed on a remote atoll surrounded by thousands of miles of ocean.

"Soldiers realize that resource constraints are a stark reality on remote islands," said Col. Danley, officer in charge of the 412th TEC GENOC.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 John McKechnie, officer in charge of one of the two design teams, highlighted the training benefits for engineers.

"Our Soldiers will benefit from making a difference for a military community in an extreme remote environment," said McKechnie. "They'll understand how to complete construction with limited resources."

The team quickly adapted to the unique environment. A metal test stand near the Kwaj Lodge demonstrated the severe impact of saline exposure on various coatings. Engineers noted widespread concrete spalling caused by corroding rebar, prompting DPW guidance to prioritize corrosion-resistant materials and construction methods.

A Legacy of Conflict: Dealing with UXO

Kwajalein Atoll was a significant World War II battlefield. Captured by U.S. forces during Operation Flintlock in 1944, remnants of the conflict remain. Unexploded ordnance (UXO) continues to be discovered, limiting excavation and construction activities.

Troops deploying for design or construction rotations must adhere to strict UXO policies—report any findings and avoid disturbing potential hazards.

For those interested in history, SMDC offers an online staff ride detailing the battles for Kwajalein and Roi-Namur. Due to slow internet speeds on the island,



This site marks the opening moments of Operation FLINTLOCK, where U.S. forces launched a fierce assault to reclaim these islands from Japanese control. The battlefield remains a testament to the courage and sacrifice of the 7th Infantry Division, 4th Marine Division, and U.S. Navy.



Soldiers are encouraged to download the 85MB document before departing the continental United States. The tour includes remnants of bunkers, fortifications, and Japanese cemeteries, which must be respected.

"Touring the battlefield sites gave great perspective on the type and quality of structures that would be required to adequately protect troops and hold the island in future conflicts," said Lt. Col. Alvin Caesar, officer in charge of the 305th EFD.

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Havlovic reflected on the sacrifices made by service members in 1944.

"I walked away with a renewed sense of respect and admiration for the young men, actually—of the 7th Infantry and 4th Marine Divisions who made the landings," said Havlovic. "In today's world, we honor sports figures and Hollywood stars as heroes. It's time we reconsider our hero status and learn of the bravery of these young men."

Preparing for Future Rotations

The upcoming rotations will provide valuable training for technical engineers and construction specialists. Soldiers should prepare by considering the following:

- Double and triple check U.S. Air Force chartered flight reservations when traveling through Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, as schedules frequently change.

- Establish contingency plans for travel delays and assign clear deliverables for each design team.
- Wi-Fi is available on the island, but there is no cell service. Soldiers should enable Wi-Fi calling before leaving Hawaii.
- Transportation options are limited; bicycles are more common than cars.
- Dining facilities on Kwajalein and Roi-Namur are well-rated, and there are small shops, fast-food options, a bakery, and a fitness center.
- Weather conditions are mild in November, with 12-hour daylight cycles and warm rain showers. Soldiers should pack rain gear and sun protection.
- Recreational opportunities include snorkeling rentals from the dive shop—always go with a buddy.
- A ferry to nearby Ebeye Island offers a chance to experience life among the Marshallese people.

Engineers deploying to Kwajalein Atoll should embrace the opportunity to hone their craft while contributing to vital quality-of-life projects in the Pacific. Their work will not only improve conditions for personnel stationed on the atoll but also prepare them for future engineering challenges in resource-constrained environments.

Additional Resources: SMDC Staff Ride: CompleteBook.pdf (<https://www.smdc.army.mil/Portals/38/Documents/Publications/>)



FROM | Command Chief Warrant Officer Five Brian Bergeron, 412th Theater Engineer Command

The U.S. Army Reserve is enhancing warrant officer recruiting and professional development.

A key initiative is establishing regional councils under the Senior Warrant Officer Advisory Council. These councils will unite major subordinate commands within each Readiness Division, providing a forum for warrant officers to voice concerns and influence policy. While only senior warrant officers can vote, all ranks are encouraged to participate.

The Army Warrant Officer Corps was created in 1918 with 40 warrant officers in the Army Mine Planter Service. Today, the corps includes 48

specialties across 17 branches, such as logistics, intelligence, aviation, engineering, and ground forces.

Warrant Officers are recruited from the ranks of enlisted Soldiers in the active-duty Army, Army Reserve, or Army National Guard. Candidates must demonstrate expertise in their field, attend Warrant Officer Candidate School, and complete branch-specific training.

Strengthening enlisted and warrant officer recruiting is a high priority. Since warrant officers are technical experts, they are expected to have extensive experience in their Military Occupational Specialty as NCOs before transitioning. Developing a strong NCO Corps is essential to maintaining a healthy pipeline for future warrant officers.

Efforts to enhance the corps include analyzing data to identify gaps and focused recruitment of critical Military Occupational Specialties. Increasing awareness of available resources and fostering collaboration will help drive readiness and improve morale.

For more information on the Warrant Officer Corps, visit <https://recruiting.army.mil/ISO/AWOR/> and <https://www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs/find-your-path/warrant-officers>.





FROM | Lt. Gen. William H. "Butch" Graham Jr., The 56th Chief of Engineers and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USACE, Commanding General

USACE Commander Outlines Vision for Engineering Excellence

As the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) new commanding general and 56th Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Scott A. Graham, reaffirmed the organization's commitment to its mission, emphasizing delivery, innovation, and people-focused leadership.

"It is the honor of a lifetime to lead this group of dedicated professionals. Together, we will continue Building Strong!" says Graham.

Graham brings a wealth of experience to the role. Prior to his appointment, he served as the USACE Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations at headquarters in Washington, D.C. His career also includes command positions as the North Atlantic Division Commander (Brooklyn, NY), Pittsburgh District Commander (Pittsburgh, PA), and USACE Chief of Staff (Washington, D.C.).

Under his leadership, USACE remains at the forefront of delivering engineering solutions that strengthen national security, respond to disasters, and sustain critical

infrastructure across the globe. Graham outlined USACE's three core priorities:

Deliver Today – "USACE is responsible for delivering programs and projects every day to the nation, energizing the economy, and reducing disaster risk," Graham stated. He highlighted how across 44 districts, nine divisions, and multiple centers and laboratories, the Corps is steadfast in meeting its commitments.

Innovate for Tomorrow – "Staying ahead of emerging challenges, USACE professionals continually innovate in their respective fields," he continued. Graham emphasized advancements in infrastructure repair, construction improvements, and evolving contracting processes that harness private-sector capabilities. "We continue to leverage technology to deliver vital engineering solutions for the nation, now and in the future."

Focus on People, Always – "USACE is a people-driven organization," Graham affirmed. "Our leaders ensure that all employees are treated with dignity and respect, while also providing cutting-edge training and development to prepare personnel at all levels." He emphasized leadership development as a cornerstone of USACE's success.

As the Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Graham oversees the Army's Engineer Regiment, commanding more than 84,000 Soldiers across the Active, National Guard, and Reserve components. In addition to advising Army senior officials on general, combat, and geospatial engineering, he leads USACE's 40,000-strong workforce, executing projects in over 110 countries worldwide.



The 478th Engineer Battalion Celebrates the 100th Birthday of Command Sgt. Maj. (Retired) Henry Armstrong

FROM | 478th Engineer Battalion, Fort Thomas, Kentucky

Command Sgt. Maj. (Retired) Henry Armstrong, the first command sergeant major of the 478th Engineer Battalion, is honored during his 100th birthday celebration at the Brooks-Lawler Army Reserve Center in Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

On November 5th, 2024, the 478th Engineer Battalion, known affectionately as the "Wildcat Battalion," recently gathered to celebrate a significant milestone—the 100th birthday of Command Sgt. Maj. (Retired) Henry Armstrong. The event was held at the Brooks-Lawler Army Reserve Center in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, bringing together Soldiers, veterans, and local community members in honor of a distinguished military career.

Armstrong, a veteran of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, made history as the first command sergeant major of the 478th Engineer Battalion, serving from 1971 to 1976. His leadership and commitment to the battalion and its mission have left a lasting impact on those who served alongside him.

The celebration was further elevated by the presence of Maj. Gen. (Retired) Troy Kok, an Army Reserve Ambassador, who presented a special proclamation from the City of Fort Thomas. This proclamation recognized Armstrong's unwavering dedication and service to the nation, underscoring the importance of honoring veterans, especially as the event coincided with the approach of Veterans Day.

Throughout the celebration, attendees reflected on the bravery and sacrifices of all who have served in the armed forces, reflecting the deep camaraderie and shared service that embodies the Wildcats.

Armstrong's centennial celebration serves as a poignant reminder of the contributions and legacies of veterans, inspiring future generations to appreciate and uphold the values of service and duty.

With heartfelt tributes and shared stories, the "Wildcat Battalion" commemorated not only Armstrong's centennial but also the profound impact of military service, encapsulated in the rallying cry, "Never Down!"





"KEEP BUILDING"



ARMY RESERVE

