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Sapper Leader Course increases class schedule

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – The 28-day Sapper Leader Course, which the Army boasts as one of its hardest courses, will increase the number of classes from nine to 15 per year beginning this October, at Fort Leonard Wood.

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Jacobs, a combat engineer, is the SLC senior operations sergeant in charge of all training resources.

According to Jacobs, after the years spent fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army has made improvements by increasing the engineer slots in brigade combat teams from a company-sized element to a battalion of engineers, which overall increases the amount of needed Sappers.

"In combat, engineers have had to outsource for additional engineer assets for route clearing, dynamic breaches or any mobility function," Jacobs said. "I was with the 82nd (Airborne Division) for several deployments, and we only had one company of combat engineers. That left zero engineers for route clearance or fighting with the infantry. The increased Sappers allow us to have all needed assets to function without requesting additional resources from other units."

Fort Leonard Wood's Sapper course, the only Sapper school in the Army according to its website, annually trains about 300 Soldiers. The number of trained Sappers is expected to increase to nearly 500, with the added classes.

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"The biggest challenge would be getting enough backside support as in personnel and resources. We have enough for one class at a time, but by doubling up, it will require more personnel, equipment and resources," said Staff Sgt. Joshua King, combat engineer and SLC instructor.

Sgt. Eric Hansen, combat engineer, 18th Engineer Company, 5th Infantry Battalion, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, based out of Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Washington, who is attending SLC, agreed with Jacobs on how adding Sappers to the ranks may save lives.

"When it comes to one unit being able to do route and obstacle clearances, and not having to call in a special team and wait two to 20 hours for them to get there, it will be very beneficial," Hansen said. "It saves a lot of time, and people get out of the danger zone a lot faster."

The Sapper Leader Course is designed to train leaders in a team-building environment to develop leadership skills, learn specialized engineer techniques and perform battle drills necessary to perform the engineer missions of a Sapper company.

In the French Army, sapeur (sapper) refers to the first official corps created by Napoleon I, a military engineering corp.

Sapping is a term used in siege operations.

In the U.S. Army, Sappers are combat engineers or other personnel who support the front-line infantry, and they have fought in every war in American history. For example, after the Battle of Yorktown, General Washington cited the U.S. Army first Chief of Engineers for conduct that afforded "brilliant proofs of his military genius."

- 30 -

For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145

Encl.: Photo

Photo outline: Sgt. Eric Hansen, combat engineer, 18th Engineer Company, 5th Infantry Battalion, based out of Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Washington, "gets off the rope" after rappelling from the 45-foot tower at the Sapper Leader Course July 9.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender

integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting a colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
