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Engineer STX raises skill stakes

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Twenty-two squads within the 5th Engineer Battalion battled it out in engineer-specific skills to determine the best during their annual Squad Training Exercise that ended Friday.

The STX is primarily about creating a competitive environment where engineer Soldiers can practice basic engineer skills, said Capt. Patrick Ripton, 5th Engr. Bn. plans officer.

“The Sapper Squad Training Exercise is being held to create a realistic and challenging training environment that replicates the stressors of a conventional enemy threat,” Ripton said. “The event is a competition that builds leadership at the squad level to conduct engineer qualification tasks.”

Many Soldiers in the battalion are not far removed from basic combat or advanced individual training, this exercise serves as an opportunity to practice skills on a more advanced level, according to Master Sgt. Raleigh Rucker, battalion operations noncommissioned officer in charge.

“For the most part, it’s been mostly refresher, but I am looking forward to learning something new,” said Pvt. Michael Hall, 55th Mobility Augmentation Company.

Spc. Brandon McClellan, 55th MAC team leader, agreed.

“It’s a good refresher for us seniors, and then it’s a learning experience for the new guys who’ve never done it before,” he said.

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Engineer specific events in the STX included bridge demolition, creating and destroying obstacles and firing a mine-clearing line charge. According to Ripton, one non-traditional event that was added to 'spice it up' was making and using a one-rope bridge.

"It's something that nobody will have a good solid training base on, but it's a legitimate engineer skill," Ripton said. "It's something that doesn't get trained often."

In the end, this competition builds cohesiveness within the engineer squads and brings out the best in the Soldiers in the battalion.

"This event will identify the strongest squads in the 5th Engineer Battalion and gives individual engineer Soldiers the chance to test their mettle," Ripton said.

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Enclosed: Photo

Photo Cutline: Spc. Brandon McLellan, 55th Mobility Augmentation Company, 5th Engineer Battalion, crosses the one-rope bridge as part of the Sapper Squad Training Exercise. U.S. Army Photo by Stephen Standifird, Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs

For more information, contact the Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

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.