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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



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Fort Leonard Wood spotlights veterans

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Nearly half of the more than 3,200 Department of the Army civilian employees on Fort Leonard Wood traded in their military uniforms for civilian attire.

One of those is Orville Wilson, a training support center technician and Army veteran. He can usually be found in one of Fort Leonard Wood's engagement skill trainers.

The ESTs are simulators that provide firearms training to troops, and Wilson said there is no place he would rather be.

"This is my life. It is all I have done for almost 30 years now. I'm still training Soldiers — just in a different role," Wilson said. "I feel proud that I am still able to contribute to the training of Soldiers."

Wilson served as a combat engineer for the U.S. Army from 1985 to 2010.

He said he joined because he wanted to follow in his father's and grandfather's footsteps.

During his career, Wilson participated in several conflicts including Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Wilson said he rarely talks about his time spent at war, but he is thankful for the experience of travelling to different countries and all the friends he made along the way.

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During Desert Shield and Desert Storm he was deployed out of Germany with the 78th Engineer Battalion.

“We went to Saudi Arabia, then moved north to Iraq when the ground war kicked off,” Wilson said. “I remember sitting around among buddies and talking about the wait to go north for the ground war.”

Wilson said his mission in Bosnia was to supervise demining operations.

“I was just amazed on how many mine fields were in the country. We also performed route clearance to ensure roads were safe after the war,” Wilson said.

He said he was deployed to Kosovo as part of a stabilization force, and he also helped to rebuild the infrastructure.

His next deployment was to Baghdad and Mahmudiyah, Iraq.

“I was responsible for different missions throughout the area of responsibility. There are so many memories; I guess the one that stands out was the amazing camaraderie built during these tough times and just how close the unit became in a time of war,” Wilson said.

He said being away from his Family and missing events like anniversaries, birthdays and holidays was the hardest part for him.

This Veterans Day he said he is looking forward to making up for some of that time lost by spending quality time with his loved ones.

“I’ll probably be in the woods hunting and spending time with friends and Family,” Wilson said.

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

(This is the first of a series of stories leading up to Veterans Day, highlighting just a few of the thousands of veterans working on Fort Leonard Wood.)

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 more than 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, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. 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.
