

The 1st Engineer Battalion is the oldest and most decorated engineer battalion in the United States Army. The battalion's history can be traced back to May 15, 1846 when a company of Miners, Sappers, and Pontoniers was formed at West Point, New York. Alpha Company, 1st Engineer Battalion is that company's direct descendant. During its long history, the battalion has received 62 decorations and campaign streamers and eight foreign awards.

Alpha Company served gallantly during the Mexican-American War of 1846, participating in the Vera Cruz campaign and leading the charge up the formidable heights of Chapultepec in Mexico City. During the war, Robert E. Lee, George McClellan, and P.G.T. Beauregard served as lieutenants in Alpha Company and lead the list of distinguished Americans that have served in this battalion.

Alpha Company was expanded into the Battalion of Engineer Troops during the Civil War and was assigned to the Union Army of the Potomac. The battalion served with distinction and earned ten campaign streamers. The battalion fought at Antietam, bridged the Rappahannock River six times at Fredericksburg, breached fortifications at Petersburg and was present at the surrender of General Lee at Appomattox. The battalion's first Sergeant Major, Frederick W. Gerber, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his 23 years of service to the battalion, which included the Mexican-American and Civil Wars.

During the Spanish-American War, Charlie and Echo companies of the battalion were sent to Cuba where they fought in the campaign to take the city of Santiago. The remainder of the battalion was sent to the Philippines where they provided engineer support during the battles for Manila and Cavite. Alpha Company remained in the Philippines and conducted pacification operations during the Philippine Insurrection.

With the start of World War I, the battalion was expanded to the 1st Engineer Regiment and assigned to the 1st Infantry Division. The regiment fought as part of the "Big Red One" and participated in the Lorraine and Meuse-Argonne campaigns and was awarded the French Fourragere and two awards of the Croix de Guerre for valorous service. Sergeant Wilber E. Colyer of Alpha Company received the Congressional Medal of Honor for advancing under fire and destroying a series of enemy machine gun positions near Verdun, France in

1918.

Prior to the start of World War II, the 1st Engineer Regiment was reorganized as the 1st Engineer Combat Battalion and again assigned to fight as part of the 1st Infantry Division. In 1942, the battalion landed with the initial forces spearheading the North Africa invasion. In 1943, the battalion cleared underwater obstacles and destroyed enemy pillboxes during the landings on Sicily. During the Normandy landings at Omaha Beach in 1944, the battalion led the assault forces, breaching gaps in the extensive enemy mine and wire obstacles and clearing the combat trails leading off the beaches. The battalion received its third Presidential Unit Citation for actions at Omaha Beach and received the Distinguished Unit Citation for combat action at Gafsa, Tunisia, and Normandy. The battalion fought as part of the 1st Infantry Division during the remainder of the war in the European Theater and after 10 years of occupation duty moved to Fort Riley, Kansas.

On May 2, 1965 the battalion deployed to the Republic of South Vietnam as part of the 1st Infantry Division. For five years the battalion cleared obstacles, built roads, airfields, base camps and bridges in support of numerous combat operations including Junction City I and II and the TET Offensive of 1968. The battalion became famous for the Diehard Tunnel Rat section that bravely cleared the extensive Vietcong tunnel systems with little more than small arms and demolitions. The battalion received four Meritorious Unit Citations for actions during the Vietnam War.

During the next 20 years at Fort Riley, the battalion took part in numerous training exercises, NTC rotations, and REFORGER deployments. In December of 1990, the battalion deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. The battalion breached and cleared lanes through Iraqi obstacle belts that allowed the passage of two divisions. Elements of the battalion destroyed 58 Iraqi tanks, 41 anti-aircraft artillery pieces, and other large quantities of ammunition and war material. The battalion returned to Fort Riley in 1991 and received the Valorous Unit Citation for actions in Southwest Asia.

Since 1991, the battalion participated in many NTC and JRTC rotations, fought fires in the Northwestern United States, and supported anti-drug operations as

part of JTF-6. In 1995, the 1st Engineer Battalion was awarded the Superior Unit Award for exceptional performance during the Engineer Restructuring Initiative on Fort Riley.

On August 30, 1999 the Battalion deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of SFOR-6. Units redeploying on 12 December 1999, the battalion helped provide a stable and secure environment so the benefits of democracy and freedom might flourish. To this end, the battalion conducted reconnaissance of over 1,230 kilometers of routes and 298 bridges; destroyed 116,000 anti-personnel land mines; constructed 30 kilometers of roads and 5 bridges; supervised Entity Armed Forces' clearance of more than 43,000 square miles of minefields; and distributed toys, clothing, and humanitarian aid to Bosnian children and homeless families.

In September 2003, the battalion deployed to the Ar Ramadi area of Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. HHC, A Company, and C Company were based out of Camp Junction City, while B Company was attached to 1-34 Armor at Camp Manhattan near Al Habbaniya. During its time in Iraq, the battalion was active in fixed site security, route clearance, cache searches, cordon and searches, raids, Traffic Control Points, force protection, and construction projects. The battalion was also instrumental in developing Lioness Teams of female soldiers, to search Iraqi women while still maintaining their modesty. The battalion's efforts succeeded in destroying large quantities of enemy supplies and ammunition and assisted in the capture of numerous insurgents. The battalion's hard work and perseverance served to greatly curtail the activities of insurgents in Al Anbar province, assisting in the security and well-being of the citizens of that area and enabling to move forward on the path to a stable, democratic Iraq. The battalion returned in late 2004 and received the Joint Meritorious Award for service with the Marine Corps and for actions during OIF II.

In March 2006, as part of the battalion's transformation to a modular force, companies A, B, and C transformed and reflagged as the 111th Sapper Company, 41st Mobility Augmentation Company, and 72nd Mobility Augmentation Company. HHC transformed into the HSC (Headquarters Support Company), and the new FSC (Forward Support Company) activated. This transformation enables the battalion to stay current with the contemporary operating environment and prepare for future missions.

From September 2006 to December 2007 the battalion deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, as part of the 105th Engineer Group (NCNG) in support of the 25th Infantry Division and later as part of the 111th Engineer Brigade (WVNG) in support of the 1st Armored Division. During this time period the Battalion temporarily changed its slogan from DIEHARD to TRAILBLAZER to reflect its mission in theater to adjacent units. The Battalion patrolled over 485,751 km, inflicted 159 enemy casualties, and successfully cleared over 1,900 IEDs and UXOs during route clearance operations along main and alternate supply routes from Baqubah to Mosul in Multi National Division – North, setting the standard for Route Clearance Operations throughout Iraq. The battalion returned in late 2007 and was awarded the Valorous Unit Award for actions during OIF 06-08. The battalion was also reassigned to the 555th Engineer Brigade (TRO) in December 2007 and continues to remain at Fort Riley, Kansas under ADCON to 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

The 1st Engineer Battalion continues to serve our country in the proud tradition of the many Diehards of years gone by. Our colors, heavy with battle streamers, are a proud testimony to our continued dedication to the defense of this great nation.

“NO MISSION TOO DIFFICULT, NO SACRIFICE TOO GREAT – DUTY FIRST!”

ALWAYS FIRST!

DIEHARD!