



A Brief History of the 178th Engineer Battalion

218TH INFANTRY BRIGADE, SOUTH CAROLINA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

FINAL

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South Carolina Army National Guard**

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Introduction

The 178th Engineer Battalion belongs to the 218th Infantry Brigade of the 59th Troop Command. This South Carolina Army National Guard unit is composed of five companies Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Forward Support Company, 174th Engineer Company, 1223rd Engineer Company, 1222nd Engineer Company, and the 1782nd Engineer Company. The Battalion's headquarters is in Rock Hill, York County, South Carolina. The 178th Engineer Battalion has a rich history of service and sacrifice with roots in global battles of the twentieth century. Today, the unit continues to employ its unique skillset across both the State of South Carolina and the world to support, protect, and defend citizens of the United States of America.

Lineages and Honors

The 178th Engineer Battalion's history is uniquely intertwined with the history of the National Guard in Rock Hill. The Army National Guard emerged during the nation's earliest conflicts and mirrored the British militia service. The makers of the Constitution confirmed the necessity of these soldiers in 1789 and the Guard has continued to evolve to meet the nation's challenges ever since.¹ Men from Rock Hill are believed to have participated in many of the country's early struggles including the Cherokee War (1757-1761), the American Revolution (1765-1783), the War of 1812 (1812-1815), the Seminole War (1817-1858), and the Spanish American War (1898).² During these conflicts, units from across the State were called upon, but specific documentation of these historic units participation has yet to be located.³

During the Civil War, units with ties to the 2d Battalion, 263d Armor fought in many campaigns. Volunteer militia played a critical role throughout this conflict. Off the battlefield, these men were tasked primarily with confiscating and guarding useful federal facilities including forts, arsenals, and mints.⁴ Of course, they also were called upon to fight in battles across the nation. Historically, the 2d Battalion, 263d Armor claims ties to soldiers who fought in Stonewall Jackson's Corps and under General Micah Jenkins, A.P. Hill, General Wade Hampton, and General Dorsey Pender.⁵ After the South's defeat in 1865, Reconstruction

¹ Doubler, Michael D. (2001) I Am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000. Washington D.C.: Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 130-1, xvii.

² Plaag, Eric W. (2011) Historical Survey and Evaluation of 15 SCARNG Armory Complexes, South Carolina. Prepared for the South Carolina Army National Guard, 166.

³ Rhodes, Gwen R. (1988) South Carolina Army National Guard. Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 353.

⁴ Doubler 2001: 101

⁵ Rhodes 1988: 353

initially allowed states to maintain their militias; however, over time these forces began to take the shape of socio-political resistance movements. Consequently, in the 1867, Congress attached a rider to the Army Appropriations Act which effectively eliminated officially sanctioned state militias in the South.⁶ Ten years later, tensions had cooled enough to allow for the reformation of volunteer military units in the south. Rock Hill saw the organization of Company I, 1st Battalion Mounted Rifles on May 24, 1877. Led by Captain Allen Jones, the unit became known colloquially as the Catawba Rifles.⁷

In the conflicts in the west and with the southern border, National Guard troops proved indispensable. As Congress debated the future of the United States' military, the militia emerged as a cost-effective means of increasing the standing Army's force without militarizing the national image. The Militia Act, or Dick Act, was passed in 1903. It catalyzed the traditional militia's transformation into the modern National Guard by providing federal funding and equipment and requiring that the militia units organize and train in accordance with the Army's standards.⁸

The effectiveness of this system was tested not long after the Dick Act's passage. The enormity of the challenges in Europe during both World Wars presented a new challenge to the United States' military. National Guard units from across the country were called upon to join the standing forces in Europe, Africa, and the Pacific. The South Carolina Army National Guard was no exception. The 30th Division which included soldiers from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee entered France in May 1918. Over the course of the conflict in France, at least 8,415 men perished from the 30th Division alone.⁹ Through the 2d Battalion, 263d Armor, the 178th Battalion received its first campaign streamers in World War I. These honors recognize the men from Rock Hill who fought in many of these campaigns from 1917-1919 including the Somme Offensive, Ypres-Lys, and Flanders.¹⁰ Today, the Battalion retains combat campaign streamers from these battles.

Soon after the final shots of World War I were fired, the United States began assessing its triumphs and losses during the conflict. The nation took a critical look at the military, its structure, and the future challenges it would likely face. Despite the National Guard's service during the Great War, the reserve forces were initially targeted for elimination during this round of reorganizations. But after a great deal of lobbying, the National Guard succeeded in influencing a more favorable outcome. In 1920, Congress

⁶ Doubler 2000: 110

⁷ Rhodes 1988: 353.

⁸ Doubler 2000: 143-4.

⁹ Doubler 2000: 179.

¹⁰ Rhodes 1988: 354.

passed the National Defense Act. This law established three military branches: the Regular Army, the National Guard, and the Organized Reserves. This Act also provided the framework for another reorganization and established the reserve forces' strength at 435,000 men.

Men from York County were primarily part of the 118th Infantry Regiment during World War II. These soldiers served as part of the Iceland Base Command for fifteen months beginning in July 1942. As the war raged on Britain became in increasing need of additional support. The 118th Infantry Regiment was called on to replace tired and wounded soldiers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as part of the Ground Forces Replacement System.¹¹ Men from Rock Hill earned campaign streamers from Northern France and the Rhineland during World War II which the Headquarters Company of the 178th Engineer Battalion remains entitled to.¹²

Federal Recognition

The 178th Engineer Battalion as it is known today traces its roots to the 2d Battalion, 218th Infantry, 51st Infantry Division. The 2d Battalion with Headquarters at Rock Hill was organized and federally recognized in the South Carolina Army National Guard on 7 February 1947.¹³ This period immediately following the end of World War II saw the United States reconsider its traditional military configurations. As the Cold War began to take shape, the U.S. reflected on the challenges and victories of recent conflicts. The long-held purpose of the National Guard's reserve troops had been to supplement the Army in times of "large-scale conflict."¹⁴ Yet in both World Wars, the nation's citizen soldiers proved indispensable. In 1917, the 1st Infantry Regiment (redesignated 118th Infantry Regiment, 30th Division) of the South Carolina National Guard was drafted into federal service.

The year of the 2d Battalion's recognition was one of widespread reorganization within the National Guard. In South Carolina the National Guard was deactivated after World War II leaving the South Carolina Defense Force as the primary reserve component. This proved a temporary circumstance and the War Department outlined the new objectives of the post-war National Guard that would be "capable of

¹¹ Rhodes 1988: 354; Steele, James and Eric W. Plaag (2013) "A Brief History of the South Carolina Army National Guard, From 1663 to Desert Storm" Prepared for the South Carolina Army National Guard, 170.

¹² "Lineage and Honors Information. Engineers" Accessed 19 April 2019.

<https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/lineages/branches/eng/0178enbn.htm>

¹³ Lineages and Honors

¹⁴ Jacobs 1994: 1

immediate expansion to war strength [and] able to furnish units fit for service anywhere in the world...”¹⁵ In a speech in 1947, Strom Thurmond noted that the War Department intended for this new Guard to total 622,500 officers and enlisted men.¹⁶ In this new organization, South Carolina was to recruit a total of 12,146 officers and enlisted men – three times the size of the South Carolina National Guard in 1940. The reorganization resulted in the loss of the 30th Division and the assignment of most troops to the 51st Infantry Division. The War Department’s plans, as reported at the time, allocated 155 officers, 5 warrant officers, and 2,836 men to the 218th Infantry Regiment.¹⁷

This post-war reorganization required each regiment to establish “a headquarters company, service, cannon, and antitank companies, a medical section, and twelve infantry companies organized into three battalions, each with a battalion headquarters company.”¹⁸ Not only did the Guard’s structure change, but militia soldiers’ traditional responsibilities also evolved. General Dozier outlined the changing roles of South Carolina Army National Guard soldiers saying:

The day has passed when all that was necessary to equip a soldier professionally for combat was a good physique and knowledge of the use of a rifle. Our fighting men of the future must be highly trained specialists, in keeping with the complex and scientific character of modern-day warfare. War has become a profession not only for the generals, but for every junior officer and for every man in the ranks.¹⁹

However necessary this reorganization proved challenging nationwide. States were called upon to dramatically increase the number of troops but were provided with little support or direction for housing these new units. In a speech to the Southern Governor’s Conference on 21 October 1947, Strom Thurmond outlined the challenges facing the South Carolina Army National Guard. He noted that South Carolina had a total of 40 National Guard armories but needed at least 36 additional armories and 60 garages in order to accommodate the increases in soldiers and supplies.²⁰

At this time, Rock Hill already had an armory. Little is known about this building. It seems to have been constructed in the 1930s and was possibly located at the site of the present-day Rock Hill Readiness

¹⁵ Rhodes 1988: 50.

¹⁶ Thurmond 1947

¹⁷ Workman 1946: 23.

¹⁸ Steele 2013: 183.

¹⁹ Rhodes 1988: 50.

²⁰ Thurmond 1947.

Center.²¹ As Adjutant General, Brigadier General James C. Dozier had lobbied both the federal and state governments for funds to construct new armories. In 1936, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) agreed to construct 30 armories throughout South Carolina. Rock Hill was one of the first to receive one of these new armories.²² The South Carolina Army National Guard retains one armory from this period of construction, the Olympia Armory located in Columbia, South Carolina. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Olympia Armory is a one-story Art Deco/Modern brick building with a “barrel-vaulted roof, brick parapeted end walls, and intricate brick detailing.”²³ This armory offers the only insight into the style and size of the original Rock Hill armory. Although it ultimately proved too small, during the 2d Battalion, 218th's original recognition and organization, this WPA era armory served as the home of Rock Hill's soldiers.

Cold War Readiness (1959-1970)

On 1 April 1959, the 2d Battalion, 218th Infantry 51st Infantry Division was converted and redesignated as the 2d Reconnaissance Squadron, 263d Armor. Concurrently, the 263d Heavy Tank Battalion of the 51st Infantry Division was also reorganized and consolidated into the 2d Reconnaissance Squadron, 263d Armor. This newly aligned Battalion continued operating out of Rock Hill.²⁴ These shakeups constituted part of the broader Pentomic Concept reorganization. At this time, the Eisenhower administration shifted military priorities to nuclear warfare readiness. Budget cuts for manpower followed and reductions to the Army ensued.²⁵ Effectively, this slashed the National Guard by 35,000 soldiers. Two facets of this reduction program significantly impacted the South Carolina National Guard. First, the six newest divisions of the National Guard were first on the chopping block. The 51st Division was one of these six newly established divisions. Second, the restructure attempted to end the practice of splitting divisions between states and South Carolina and Florida shared the 51st Division.²⁶ Consequently, the South Carolina Army National Guard lost the 51st Division.

²¹ Kitchens 2005: 76

²² Steele 2013: 152-3.

²³ Blake 1994

²⁴ Rhodes 1988: 353-4.

²⁵ Doughty, Robert A. (1979) *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-1976*. Fort Leavenworth: DIANE Publishing, 19.

²⁶ Steele 2013: 191.

This reorganization proved controversial. In South Carolina, National Guard leadership opposed the cuts. Some accused the federal government of infringing on states' rights, others warned of the danger that would befall the country with diminished reserve forces.²⁷ Dissatisfaction with the Pentomic division structure was widespread throughout the country. Ultimately, the reorganization proved short-lived and the Army had to find more effective means of confronting the nuclear threats of the Cold War era.²⁸

The Battalion underwent its third reorganization on 1 April 1963 when it was relieved from assignment to the 30th Infantry Division and redesignated as the 2d Battalion, 263rd Armor.²⁹ Once again this realignment followed a broader national program. Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, frustrated by the wartime strength of National Guard units, implemented a series of force structure reductions beginning in 1963. These reductions ultimately eliminated four infantry divisions including South Carolina and Florida's 51st Infantry Division.³⁰

A year after this reorganization, the South Carolina Army National Guard broke ground on a new armory. Continued increases in troops rendered the WPA armory built in 1930s too small for the Cold War era mission of Rock Hill's soldiers. The 2d Battalion, 263rd Armor required substantial increases in administrative, classroom, and kitchen space.³¹ Congress passed the National Defense Facilities Act in 1950 establishing a funding arrangement for the construction of new armories. The law allowed the federal government to cover 75% of the cost of construction and state governments to pay 25% of construction costs. State governments also accepted responsibility for future maintenance fees and provided the land.³² Generally, the Rock Hill armory conformed with the style of armories that were constructed throughout South Carolina from 1950-1970. The Rock Hill armory is a two-story International Style building, built originally with a flat asphalt roof. The armory has a central drill hall and an Art Deco panel depicting the South Carolina National Guard's campaign history. This armory remains the headquarters of the 178th Engineer Battalion today.

In 1968, the Battalion saw yet another reorganization when it was assigned to the 30th Infantry Division. The 30th Infantry Division also known as "Old Hickory" was established in 1917. At the time of the

²⁷ Steele 2013: 191-2.

²⁸ Davis, Robert T. (2010) *Challenge of Adaptation: The U.S. Army in the Aftermath of Conflict, 1953-2000*. Fort Leavenworth: DIANE Publishing.

²⁹ Lineages and Honors

³⁰ Doubler 2001: 255.

³¹ "Armory Inventory and Stationing Plan, South Carolina," 1959, Folder 633, South Carolina, Box 3784, Army-NGB Decimal File, 1959, RG 168, NARA II.

³² Ward-Brandt 2016: 8.

battalion's assignment, the division (composed of soldiers from South Carolina, North Carolina, and Tennessee) had established itself as one of the National Guard's finest and most reliable reserve forces. Old Hickory soldiers emerged from the battlefields of World War I and II as some of the most decorated men in the United States with twelve men receiving the Medal of Honor.³³

Total Force Policy (1970-2000)

The challenges of the Cold War continued to impact the National Guard's structure in the 1970s. Social and political backlash from the U.S. Government's draft program during the Vietnam prompted changes in the military. In 1973, the Department of Defense announced the Total Force Policy. This policy sought to lessen the nation's dependency on the draft by integrating reserve and active components; thereby, enhancing the role of the reserve forces.³⁴

Shortly after these changes went into effect, the 2d Battalion, 263d Armor underwent another reorganization. On 1 January 1974, 2d Battalion, 263d Armor was relieved from assignment to the 30th Infantry Division.³⁵ The Battalion became an element of the 218th Separate Infantry Brigade (Mechanized). Rock Hill remained the home of the Battalion's Headquarters and Headquarters Company.³⁶ The 218th Infantry Brigade was a new and welcome addition to the South Carolina Army National Guard. This Brigade brought with it a formal requirement for more equipment and soldiers. To meet the requirements of the Total Force policy with a surplus of soldiers, South Carolina expanded the McCrady Training Center (then Leesburg Weekend Training Site) and opened a new facility at the Charleston Army Depot.³⁷

During the mid-1980s, the unit began preparing for another round of restructuring. In 1986, the 2d Battalion, 263d Armor was reorganized and redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion, 263d Armor. Headquarters and Headquarters Company continued to operate out of Rock Hill. Four additional companies were assigned to the 2d Battalion, 263d Armor with Company A in Gaffney, Company B in Fort Mill, Company C in Clover, and Company D in York. By this time, the Battalion's state and federal mission had been well established with the unit expected to respond to South Carolina's

³³ Baumer, Robert W. (2017) *Old Hickory: The 30th Division: The Top-Rated American Infantry Division in Europe in World War II*. Guilford: Stackpole Books, 5.

³⁴ Jacobs, Jeffrey A (1994) "The Future of the Citizen-Soldier Force: Issues and Answers" *Military Studies*. 8: 1-2

³⁵ Lineages and Honors

³⁶ Rhodes 1988: 73, 354.

³⁷ Steele 2013: 213.

natural and manmade disasters and United States' foreign conflicts. To meet its dual responsibilities, the 2d Battalion, 263d Armor was assigned the M60A3 Main Battle Tanks as replacements for their M48A5 Battle Tanks.³⁸ These new tools gave the unit the ability to train and prepare with more advanced weapons.

In 1993, the South Carolina Army National Guard began preparing for the Engineer Restructure Initiative (ERI). Initially, the 4th of the 178th Field Artillery Battalion was designated to be converted to an engineer battalion. However, the battalion lobbied to be reconverted to an artillery battalion and succeeded. The 2d Tank Battalion, 263d Armor was selected for conversion to an engineer battalion at this time.³⁹ On 1 October 1995, the unit was converted and redesignated once again. This time as the 178th Engineer Battalion.⁴⁰

Modular Force Reorganization (2008-Present)

Since its 1995 conversion, the 178th Engineer Battalion has seen one additional reorganization at present. Beginning in the early 2000s, the Army began transitioning from a corps wheel structure to the modular force structure. Based on lessons from the Gulf War and experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Army instituted a plan that featured the development of a New Unit of Action – the Modular Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), fielding of 43-48 independently deployable BCTs, consolidation of layered command echelons to modular units, and designation of FCS weapons and systems to modular units.⁴¹ For the South Carolina Army National Guard, the result of this transformation was smaller, specialized units capable of deploying independent of the Battalion.⁴²

In 2008, the 218th Brigade began its own transition under the “Palmetto Transition.” Under this reorganization, the 218th changed from a Composite Combat Arms Brigade to a Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. The Composite Combat Arms Brigade consisted of five battalions and three separate companies, while the Maneuver Enhancement Brigade includes four double “A” battalions and three separate double

³⁸ Rhodes 1988: 354.

³⁹ Smith, Steven. Interview with Josi Ward. October 9, 2018. Transcript. SCARNG Archives and Environmental Server, McCrady Training Center, Eastover, South Carolina.

⁴⁰ Lineages and Honors

⁴¹ Kugler, Richard L. (2008) “Case Study in Army Transformation: Creating Modular Forces” Case Studies in National Security Transformation. No. 14. Prepared by the Center for Technology and National Security Policy, 15.

⁴² Shealy, Todd. Interview with Josi Ward. October 9, 2018. Transcript. SCARNG Archives and Environmental Server, McCrady Training Center, Eastover, South Carolina.

“A” companies. This restructure saw the 178th Engineer Battalion transferred to the 59th Troop Command.⁴³ The 178th Engineer Battalion converted from a Divisional Mechanized Battalion to a modular Engineer Battalion. The 1223 Engineer Company, vertical construction company, out of Summerville, moved to the 178th Engineer Battalion. Under the 2008 reorganization, the 178th Engineer Battalion consisted of the Headquarters and Support Company. Additionally, Companies A, B, and C were redesignated as the 174th Engineer Company, the 1222d Engineer Company, and the 172d Engineer Platoon.⁴⁴

Domestic Responsibilities

Throughout its many reorganizations and redesignations, the 178th Engineer Battalion has maintained a dual state and federal mandate. The Battalion is regularly called on to serve both the State of South Carolina and states across the nation to meet the challenges of natural disasters and domestic conflicts. At home, the Battalion is also always on hand to support local South Carolina communities. In keeping with modularity, the Battalion can also be deployed to assist in foreign conflicts.

Recovery Efforts

Like many of the South Carolina Army National Guard’s units, the 178th Engineer Battalion is regularly deployed to assist before, during, and after natural disasters. Over the years, Battalion has answered the call to aid communities from Puerto Rico to South Carolina to New England. South Carolina’s citizen soldiers are typically assigned to State Active Duty for a two week period typically, but potentially for up to 60 days.

Following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the 178th Engineer Battalion was deployed to Belle Chasse, Louisiana to contribute to stabilization and recovery efforts.⁴⁵ In 2011, Engineers out of Rock Hill along with soldiers from the 122nd Engineer Battalion assisted Vermont following Hurricane Irene.⁴⁶ The Battalion was also on hand to assist the Midlands and Lowcountry after the Great Flood of 2015.⁴⁷ The

⁴³ “An Extremely Active Year for the 218th Regiment (Leadership)” *Palmetto Guard*, Winter 2008: 12-15.

⁴⁴ Lineages and Honors

⁴⁵ Boehm, William B., Renee Hylton, and Maj. Thomas W. Mehl (2005) In *Katrina’s Wake: The National Guard on the Gulf Coast*, 2005. Arlington: National Guard Bureau, Office of Public Affairs, Historical Services Division, 45.

⁴⁶ AP 2011.

⁴⁷ Dys, Andrew (6 October 2015) “National Guard troops leave Rock Hill for flood in Columbia, Charleston” *The Herald*. <https://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/andrew-dys/article37962909.html>.

178th Engineer Battalion in coordination with the 122nd Engineer Battalion was activated for around 45 days. During this activation, soldiers repaired roads and sinkholes, installed culverts, cleared debris, and restored transportation routes. A major priority during this catastrophe was stabilizing dams and the Columbia Riverfront Canal.⁴⁸

When Hurricane Matthew struck in 2016, the 178th Engineer Battalion was activated to support recovery along the South Carolina coast and Texas.⁴⁹ In 2017, Governor McMaster sent 150 soldiers from the 178th and 122nd Engineer Battalions and 60 vehicles to Puerto Rico. The Battalions provided relief to the devastated community using bulldozers, front-end loaders, dump trucks, and chain saws to clear debris across more than 150 miles of roads. These maneuvers aided broader recovery efforts by creating open access routes from which the Puerto Rican community could receive much needed supplies and services.⁵⁰

Most recently, soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion aided South Carolinians when Hurricane Florence hit. As Florence made her way across the state, soldiers filled and delivered sandbags to the northeastern counties. In coordination with several other units, the South Carolina Army National Guard delivered 10,000 linear feet of barrier material including 126,000 sandbags along the Highway 501 corridor.⁵¹ Although these examples are far from the Battalion's only contributions to national recovery efforts, they effectively demonstrate the 178th's readiness to rapidly respond and aid communities across the nation.

Training

Training is another essential aspect of the 178th Engineer Battalion's responsibilities. Soldiers participate in both weekend drills and annual trainings exercises that last approximately two weeks. Although training has evolved with the unit's many reorganizations, it has always remained vital. In 1959, the 2d Reconnaissance Squadron, 263d Armor trained at Fort Stewart using 40-mm guns, 50-mm machine guns, M-47 tanks, and M-41 tanks.⁵² From 1968-1973, the 2d Battalion, 263d Armor completed annual training at Fort Stewart in Georgia. Beginning in 1974 until 1987, soldiers trained variously at Fort Jackson, South

⁴⁸ Donnelly, Jessica and Brad Mincey (2016) "South Carolina National Guard Soldiers compete in Best Engineer Competition" *DVIDS*. Accessed 12 May 2019.

⁴⁹ Dys, Andrew (11 September 2018) "Hundreds of York, Chester, Lancaster National Guard deploy for Hurricane Florence" *The Herald*. <https://www.hearldonline.com/news/local/article218182070.html>. Accessed 30 December 2018.

⁵⁰ Dorgan, Tracci (5 October 2017) "S.C. National supports recovery efforts in Puerto Rico" *The Fort Jackson Leader*. www.fortjacksonleader.com. Accessed 30 December 2018.

⁵¹ "Unity in Crisis" (2019) Accessed 17 May 2019. <https://citizen-soldiermagazine.com/unity-in-crisis/>

⁵² "Guardsmen Prepare To Leave for Fort Stewart" (1959) *The Clinton Chronicle* 60.26.

Carolina, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Camp Shelby, Mississippi, Fort Stewart, Georgia, and Fort Pickett, Virginia.⁵³ In addition to participating in these exercises, soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion also contribute to broader readiness preparations by constructing training courses. For example in 2009, soldiers from Rock Hill built a borrow pit and demolition range on two acres of land at the McCrady Training Center, Richland County, South Carolina.⁵⁴

Training can take a more competitive edge as well. The Best Engineer Competition held at the McCrady Training Center is one example. In 2015, the 178th Engineer Battalion began competing against the 122nd Engineer Battalion in a series of physical and engineering challenges including a 12-mile ruck march, constructing small structures, using heavy equipment in confined spaces, wire obstacle construction, and weapon assembly. During the 2016 competition, the 1223rd Engineer Company, 178th Engineer Battalion out of Walterboro won the construction effects competition with the 122nd Engineer Battalion winning the overall competition.⁵⁵

Defense

Beyond hazardous weather recovery, the 178th Engineer Battalion can also be called upon to protect United States citizens against domestic threats. Throughout the South Carolina Army National Guard's history, citizen soldiers have been called upon to squelch a variety of civil disturbances ranging from Civil Rights sit-ins to antiwar protests. In 2007, soldiers from the South Carolina Army National Guard were deployed to Arizona where they participated in Task Force Diamondback for Operation Jump Start.

Engineers from both the 122nd Engineer Battalion and the 178th Engineer Battalion of the 218th Separate Brigade (Enhanced) joined soldiers from across the country at the border. From February 9th to March 7th, 92 soldiers from the 122nd Engineer Battalion installed human and vehicle barriers. Barriers were built by from Vietnam era landing mats. Fifty-eight soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion took over for the 122nd Engineer Battalion on March 18th. They continued the mission of their predecessors specifically converting eroded mountain terrain into easily navigable roads. This was no simple task and involved removing and recycling railroad tracks laid in 1902 by Carnegie Steel. Members of the Battalion supported

⁵³ Rhodes 1988: 354.

⁵⁴ Thompson, Mike (2009) "S.C. National Guard News Brief" Palmetto Guard Family Magazine, Summer 2009, II. IV, 5.

⁵⁵ Donnelly, Jessica and Brad Mincey (2016) "South Carolina National Guard Soldiers compete in Best Engineer Competition" *DVIDS*. Accessed 12 May 2019.

the U.S. Border Patrol's surveillance and security efforts by improving border roads, constructing vehicle barriers, and installing new segments of fence along the border.⁵⁶

International Role

In support of broader national efforts, the soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion have been deployed to countries across the globe. These deployments range from nation building exercises aimed at enhancing ties between global partners to homeland security missions. In recent decades, the Battalion has sent soldiers to Romania, Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan for various missions.

War Time Deployment

Soldiers from the South Carolina National Guard and more specifically the 178th Engineer Battalion's ancestral units have fought in conflicts abroad since World War I. Since 2001, soldiers from over 80 units in the South Carolina Army National Guard have been deployed to the Middle East.⁵⁷ The 178th Engineer Battalion has been active in these mobilizations with soldiers from the unit serving in Iraq and Afghanistan since the beginning of the war.

Operation Iraqi Freedom

In 2003, 100 volunteers from the 178th Engineer Battalion joined 530 soldiers from the 122nd Engineer Battalion in Iraq. In the early months of 2003, these soldiers began preparing for demobilization in weekend trainings at Fort Stewart. During these brief stints, soldiers received shots and underwent medical screenings.⁵⁸ The combined forces and their families gathered in Aiken in February 2003, where 122nd Engineer Battalion Commander, General Brad Owens, explained to concerned families what soldiers would be doing during mobilization and in their overseas' mission.

Organizing the units' assorted equipment including over "178 pieces of engineer equipment...and over 100 support vehicles" for movement was key among mobilization priorities in addition to preparation of soldiers' personal gear. Beyond these concerns, General Owens noted more personal considerations: "But our primary task is to solidify the team, both in our military units and with our family readiness groups.

⁵⁶ Paschal, Hardy (2007) "218th Has Demanding & Exciting Year" Palmetto Guard Family Magazine, Winter 2007, 14-15.

⁵⁷ Wilkinson, Jeff (9 February 2017) "South Carolina has played big role in Afghanistan" *The State*.

⁵⁸ James Michael Butler Collection (AFC/2001/001/89255), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

We're trying to balance all of our requirements yet maximize the amount of time our soldiers are at home." He said soldiers might be called upon to perform tasks as diverse as demolition, bridge construction, heavy dirt removal, or combat operations. General Owens closed his speech to the assembled soldiers and families saying, "Because there are bad men in this world good men must come together."⁵⁹

The engineers from the South Carolina Army National Guard moved to a mobilization station in Fort Steward, Georgia shortly after this speech. There soldiers prepared for the Middle East through individual weapons qualifications, gas chamber drills, specified missions, physical training, and equipment maintenance. On 19 March 2003, President Bush formally declared the beginning of *Operation Iraqi Freedom*.⁶⁰ Just weeks later the units would deploy. Engineering equipment was loaded on a train which went through Corpus Christi, Texas to be loaded onto a ship bound for Kuwait. The soldiers followed soon afterward arriving at Camp Wolf in Kuwait on April 18, 2003. After processing through this initial "reception station", the troops rode a bus for three-and-a-half hours to Camp Pennsylvania, located 308 miles from Baghdad.⁶¹ There they prepared their vehicles, equipment, and ammunition and waited for further orders.⁶² The Battalion was also waiting on its equipment which only left Corpus Christi on April 19th.⁶³

On April 11, 2003, the troops crossed the border and headed towards Baghdad. Primarily the mission consisted of clearing threats and increasing force protection. Soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion cleared suspected IEDs from the path of other units, while heavy equipment operators built berms and repaired barracks on base to ensure safe and appropriate living conditions for soldiers.⁶⁴ James Butler was a Squad Leader out of the 178th Engineer Battalion who volunteered for deployment in 2003. He describes the soldiers' mentality going into the war just after the September 11th attacks as "guns blazing." Before entering the country, the soldiers had a strong distrust of the Iraqi people. But as they made their way in, they found the local communities "ecstatic" and grateful for the U.S.'s support in liberating them from the Hussein regime. Butler says this gave the mission a newfound purpose.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Owens, Stephen (Brad). Interview with Rachel Morgan. October 17, 2018. Transcript. SCARNG Archives and Environmental Server, McCrady Training Center, Eastover, South Carolina.

⁶⁰ General Owens interview

⁶¹ General Owens interview

⁶² James Butler Interview

⁶³ General Owens interview

⁶⁴ James Butler Interview

⁶⁵ James Butler Interview

Troops from the South Carolina Army National Guard operated in the Sunni Triangle encompassing Al Asad, Al Fallujah, and ?. Groups of soldiers rotated across the Triangle serving primarily as QRFs at each base. The summer and fall of 2003 saw a sharp increase in IEDs.⁶⁶ South Carolina's engineers held responsibility for responding to IEDs within a 200 mile radius of each base. They tore down buildings with backhoes, built berms, and cleared unsafe ammunitions. Butler notes that the groups intentionally rotated areas every two weeks to prevent themselves from becoming familiar with any one area and to stay alert.⁶⁷

Butler also notes a particularly satisfying portion of this rotation. In an area known as H3, there were several historic underground bunkers loaded with ammunition. These bunkers were targeted during air raids and soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion were tasked with cleaning up ammunition dispersed by those bombings. This ammunition was loaded onto HEMMTT tankers or dump trucks, taken out to the middle of the desert, and stacked. The ammunition would easily stretch 100 feet long by 10 feet wide and stand 5 feet high. The soldiers would then prime and charge land mines, place C4 in between, and detonate the ammunition. On these rotations, soldiers set off two explosions a day.⁶⁸

In addition, engineers fought as infantry, put out oil fires, recovered downed aircraft, and supported CID operations. Soldiers also tackled the complicated task of deciphering and restoring the power grid in the Al Anbar Province which was plagued by rolling blackouts. Meeting these diverse and complex tasks highlighted the importance of the civilian acquired skills of South Carolina's engineers.⁶⁹

This occurred just after the Battle of Fallujah. During the fight, South Carolina Army National Guard soldiers supported other units by maintaining a security lane keeping enemy combatants in a containment zone for three days, while the battle raged on. On their return, the convoy was ambushed and for their actions in this fire fight, several soldiers, including James Butler, received the Combat Action Badge.⁷⁰

When their tour of duty ended in 2004, the South Carolina Army National Guard's Engineers had earned a reputation as the "technical gurus." They responded to units throughout Iraq protecting soldiers from IEDs and gained respect throughout the military for their expertise.⁷¹

⁶⁶ General Owens Interview

⁶⁷ Butler interview.

⁶⁸ Butler interview.

⁶⁹ General Owens interview.

⁷⁰ Butler interview.

⁷¹ Butler interview.

Operation Enduring Freedom

In 2008, approximately half of the 178th Engineer Battalion joined soldiers with the 218th Enhanced Separate Brigade in deploying to Afghanistan.⁷² This time the soldiers were expected to be serving in Kabul in a mountainous and cold climate. Because of this, soldiers trained in Minnesota and Wisconsin prior to mobilization. By this time, pre-deployment training had evolved and soldiers were able to train on simulations for each type of vehicle they would be using in Afghanistan. They also prepared for their other duties in Afghanistan by training on mine clearing and ground sonar penetration.⁷³

In Afghanistan, the unit was primarily occupied with route clearance. During this deployment, the 178th Engineer Battalion lost one of its own – Sergeant Shawn Hill when in January 2008, when his vehicle encountered an IED.⁷⁴ After 18-months in country, the Battalion returned home to South Carolina having completed their mission.⁷⁵

Soon after their return, the 1222nd Combat Engineer Company, 178th Engineer Battalion out of Fort Mill began mobilizing. The unit deployed in December 2009 and arrived in Afghanistan shortly thereafter.⁷⁶ In the Kandahar Province, southern Afghanistan, these soldiers cleared over 7500 kilometers of roads of IEDs and other hazards.⁷⁷ The mission proved just as dangerous as the deployments of previous South Carolina Army National Guard units. When the Company returned at the end of 2010, soldiers from the 1222nd Combat Engineer Company their work was recognized through several medals. In March 2011, a ceremony held where five Purple Hearts and six Bronze Stars were awarded to soldiers in the 178th Engineer Battalion.⁷⁸

In 2012, the 178th Engineer Battalion received orders to begin preparing for deployment to Afghanistan. Prior to deployment, unit leaders collaborated with a local artist in Rock Hill to create a new logo for those deploying. The end result was a black panther perched atop the traditional red castles of the Army Corps of Engineers. The design read “Sapper Strong” and was used throughout training and deployment as a

⁷² “178th Engineer Battalion Highlights for FY 2008” *Palmetto Guard Family Magazine Winter 2008*, 8.

⁷³ Butler interview.

⁷⁴ “S.C. Guard remembers fallen; 16 killed since 2001; 19,000 have been deployed overseas” (26 May 2017). https://thetandd.com/news/s-c-guard-remembers-fallen-killed-since-have-been-deployed/article_c89967d5-8631-5124-9c80-71bda31aafd2.html. Accessed December 30, 2018.

⁷⁵ “178th Engineer Battalion Highlights for FY 2008” *Palmetto Guard Family Magazine Winter 2008*, 8.

⁷⁶ Dyches, Chris (29 October 2010) “South Carolina National Guard troops come home from Afghanistan”

⁷⁷ Dys, Andrew (6 October 2010) “When SC soldiers die in Afghanistan, all families concerned” *The Herald*.

⁷⁸ Dick, Kimberly (14 March 2011) “Soldiers with Rock Hill unit receive Bronze Star, Purple Heart medals” *The Herald*.

cohesive, morale booster.⁷⁹ Soldiers left Rock Hill on July 9, 2012 for Texas and New Mexico. There they trained for the mission in Afghanistan by familiarizing themselves with weapons, practicing convoy operations, and completing 16 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) driver training. They were also given cultural awareness guidance and prepared for working with both civilians and enemy prisoners of war.

Troops arrived in Afghanistan on 5 September 2012. Once in theatre, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Carol Dobson, the 178th Engineer Battalion responded to IEDs and provided route clearance much as South Carolina's engineers had done in past deployments. Additionally, the unit provided convoy security and repaired infrastructure as needed.⁸⁰ During the year of deployment, the unit completed 47 missions across an expanse of over 10,000 miles of desert roads. As in the past, this work put the lives of the men and women of the 178th Engineer Battalion at risk every day. In fact, four soldiers from New York and New Mexico working with the 178th were killed by suicide bombers during this mission.⁸¹

On 8 May 2013, the soldiers of the 178th Engineer Battalion returned home to South Carolina. For their service in Operation Enduring Freedom, they received the Meritorious Unit Commendation. The award described the unit's service:

The Soldiers of the 178th Engineer Battalion and the cited units provided dynamic and fluid management of large deconstruction projects, provided transportation of mission essential route clearance equipment upgrades, allowed freedom of maneuver for detecting as well as eliminating improvised explosive devices and providing clearance of routes critical for retrograde operations. The 178th Engineer Battalion and the cited units assisted in the training of three Afghan National Army Engineer Companies helping them to achieve independent operations with little help from coalition forces. The units' contributions bring great credit to Task Force Prowler, the 555th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Triple Nickel, United States Forces Afghanistan and the United States Army.⁸²

⁷⁹ "South Carolina artist designs patriotic panther logo for National Guard units" (27 May 2012) *Augusta Chronicle*.

⁸⁰ Dys, Kevin (2014) "Rock Hill-based National Guard unit gets new commander" *The State*.

⁸¹ Dys, Andrew (17 August 2012) "Rock Hill-based Guard soldiers leave today for war in Afghanistan" *The Herald*. Accessed 17 May 2019. <https://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/news.../andrew-dys/article12284627.html>

⁸² Meritorious Unit Commendation

Strengthening Alliances Abroad

Historically, the South Carolina Army National Guard has also undertaken missions aimed at peacekeeping, stabilization, and nation building across the globe. Most recently, soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion participated in Resolute Castle 17 in Cincu, Romania. This NATO exercise is an element of the European Reassurance Initiative and Operation Atlantic Resolve. Soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion volunteered for 21-day rotations over a five-month operation. Ultimately, Resolute Castle 17 sought to enhance international readiness and security by “developing training infrastructure in eastern Europe, enhancing interoperability among NATO partners, demonstrating commitment to the alliance, and strengthening relationships among participating nations.”⁸³ To this end, soldiers from the 178th Engineer Battalion helped construct a moving target system for a tank range and oversaw maintenance and repair of heavy combat vehicles.⁸⁴

The South Carolina Army National Guard’s Engineers

The 178th Engineer Battalion has proved itself a vital element of the United States’ military capabilities. Whether training in South Carolina, delivering aid across the country, or defending the United State’s around the globe, the unit has a strong history of implementing specialized skills in support of broader mission goals. The 178th Engineer Battalion is not alone in its success. The 122nd Engineer Battalion, 59th Troop Command, also holds a reputation for excellence.

In 2019, the South Carolina Army National Guard proudly welcomed a new brigade to the state – the 117th Engineer Brigade. Speaking about the importance of this new brigade, General Brad Owens, recognized the work of both the 122nd and 178th Engineer Battalions, stating: “our willingness to deploy and our success upon deployment, whether it be in fighting a hurricane or fighting a flood or fighting the Iraqis, has established a reputation within the 90, 000-man engineer regiment in this country.”⁸⁵ Both in South Carolina and around the world, the 178th Engineer Battalion maintains this reputation of indomitable work ethic and unshakable sense of dut

⁸³ Wood, Clinton (13 September 2017) “Resolute Castle 2017 Maintenance team gets the job done” *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*.

⁸⁴ Cutler, Colin (29 July 2017) “National Guard Soldier from Bonneau, SC builds in Romania” *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*.

⁸⁵ General Owens Interview

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