

Armor School to finish move to Fort Benning by Sept. 15

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Moving soldiers from the U.S. Armor School at Fort Knox, Ky., to the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning will hit its peak during the next six months, post officials said. Brig. Gen. Ted Martin, commander of the Armor School, told a group of concerned residents in a briefing this week at the National Infantry Museum & Soldier Center that the move to Fort Benning will be complete by Sept. 15. By that time, the total assigned personnel to the Armor School will be 7,500.

"We have launched the first school training every scout, tanker, every mechanic, repairing tanks or the Bradley, all the leaders," Martin said. The Base Realignment and Closure added the Armor School to a post that already trains soldiers at the Infantry School. The changes will make Fort Benning the sixth largest installation in the nation.

The BRAC expansion is projected to bring about 28,000 people to the Chattahoochee Valley, including soldiers, civilian workers, contractors and family members. To prepare for the expansion that was announced in 2005, Martin said more than \$2 billion has been spent on barracks, facilities and training areas necessary for the soldiers.

Martin said he honestly didn't know how many new buildings were part of the expansion but noted they are extensive.

"I can tell you all of Harmony Church complex has been transformed," he said.

The Bradley maintenance course started in January. Other armor courses include cavalry leader, armor basic officer, scout basic, tanker basic, master gunner, tank maintenance and the Army reconnaissance course. Most courses range from three to 16 weeks before soldiers move to their next assignment.

In addition to the buildings, there will be 140 miles of new roads, 19 ranges, six training areas and 13 bridges.

To move all the Armor School traffic from Interstate 185, a four-lane widening project is underway to complete 4.7 miles along Dixie Road and 1st Division Road. The Lindsay Creek and 1st Division Road interchange will be improved along with the widening of Marne Road Bridge.

The project, including design and construction, is estimated to cost \$36 million. Sauer Incorporated of Jacksonville, Fla., is the prime contractor for the project with 80 percent of subcontractors from the Columbus area, said Cindy Andruss, a public affairs specialist. Construction to improve the road may be completed by the fall.

"I tell you I'm not worried because of the fine planning at Fort Benning and at Fort Knox in 2005," Martin said. "I'm the beneficiary of the greatest strength of the United States Army and that is making a comprehensive and complete plan to do a mission."