

# First Armor School tanks arrive at Fort Benning

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By **LARRY GIERER**

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The first U.S. Army Armor School tanks have arrived from Fort Knox.

“It’s a historic day,” said Support Operations Officer Joe Massouda, who was directing the move.

Shortly after getting here, the five M1A2 Abrams main battle tanks were driven off a train car and moved along post roads the approximately four miles from the Ochille Rail Head at Harmony Church to the motor pool at Kelley Hill where they will be maintained.

These first five tanks will initially be used to validate the new digital tank ranges nearing completion on post and will subsequently be used to train armor lieutenants and privates.

By next summer, 183 more of these tanks are expected to be at Fort Benning as the U.S. Armor School relocates from Fort Knox to Fort Benning as part of Base Realignment and Closure.

The school’s integration with the U.S. Army Infantry and Center and School establishes the Maneuver Center of Excellence.

The move is expected to be completed September 2011.

Massouda referred to this as the “marriage between the infantry and the armor.”

“There has been a lot of excitement about this,” Massouda said. “This is the first day the hardware has made its presence. We believe these are the finest tanks in the world.”

Massouda said the price tag on each tank is \$4 million. The approximately 70-ton tanks hold more than 504 gallons of fuel and use seven of them for every mile traveled. Each tank is powered by a 1,500-horsepower turbine engine and according to a U.S. Army website can go about 42 miles per hour.

Sgt. 1st Class Vernon Prohaska is the liaison officer for Strategic Plans Cell Headquarters, U.S. Armor Center and School. He was on hand for the arrival of the tanks.

“I’ve trained soldiers on these very tanks,” he said, as they made their way down the dusty road.

The tanks have a lot of upgrades from the M1A1, he said, including an improved fire control system and position navigation system.

The enhancements allow for better communication and more accuracy, he said.

Prohaska said these five tanks will be used at the new range to “identify glitches.”