

BRAC: Fort Gillem vehicles arrive

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**BY VINCE LITTLE
THE BAYONET**

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FORT BENNING, Ga. — Another major move under Base Realignment and Closure kicked off Monday, and this one has nothing to do with the Armor School.

The first dozen of nearly 1,350 vehicles from the 43rd Equipment Concentration Site at Fort Gillem, Ga., arrived here on heavy equipment transports and were taken to the 11th Engineer Battalion motor pool and other temporary storage facilities around post. The command's rolling stock includes cargo trucks, trailers, construction equipment and Humvees.

Transformation officials said the entire shipment is expected by July 15, the Army's deadline for shutting down Fort Gillem and standing up a new Armed Forces Reserve Center and Equipment Concentration Site on Harmony Church.

"It's a giant addition to the Fort Benning team," said Derek McCrea, a strategic planner for the garrison's Facility Plans Office. "We're not just the center for Armor and Infantry, but also home to a Reserve center and ECS for the Southeast region. ... This makes Fort Benning an even more important base."

The 43rd ECS has more hardware coming than Fort Knox, Ky., he said. By mid-July, about 1,275 line haul trucks — slightly more than the Armor School plans to dispatch for its relocation to Fort Benning — will carry out the mass delivery.

The organization, which falls under the Army Reserve's 81st Regional Support Command, based at Fort Jackson, S.C., supports 120 units in nine states and Puerto Rico. It receives, stores and repairs up to 40 percent of the vehicles and more than 5,000 different types of equipment and supplies assigned to those Reserve units. The 43rd ECS can maintain up to 4,500 vehicles.

"These are major end items on a unit's equipment list they might need to turn in to be combat ready," McCrea said.

As the project lead here, he said he's put in 70-hour workweeks since November synchronizing and coordinating the move from Fort Benning's end. Twelve members of the 43rd ECS advance party showed up last week.

McCrea said consolidating equipment concentration sites into strategic areas is a key BRAC mandate.

"Fort Benning is one of those strategic areas for receiving and turning in equipment for the states they support," he said. "Over time, this will save the Army a lot of money and resources."

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About 160 trucks carrying 317 vehicles will arrive from Fort Gillem by the end of February, said Darrell Shelton, the 43rd ECS manager. The goal is to move 20 to 25 a day.

Col. Frederick Wolf, the deputy garrison commander for transformation, said the Fort Gillem piece and Armor School move are the two largest BRAC actions affecting Fort Benning.

"We started the Armor School move last year, and this is momentous because we're now making the big move of the equipment concentration site," he said. "They were originally supposed to come in July, but the Army moved them out early to prepare for Fort Gillem's closure. Getting some equipment out now makes it easier for them to close this summer. We're happy to accommodate them here at Fort Benning."

McCrea said 43rd ECS vehicles and equipment will remain in temporary hold until completion in late June of a 150,000-square-foot warehouse and 50,000-square-foot maintenance facility at Harmony Church. About 70 percent of the unit's 101 employees have committed to relocating here. The main body is set to arrive July 15.

Located in Forest Park on the southeast edge of Atlanta, Fort Gillem has been home to many different supply and support units since 1941.

The Armed Forces Reserve Center, under construction next to the 43rd ECS site, will support more than 540 Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers and civilians. Army Reserve units currently on Fort Benning, along with the U.S. Army Reserve Center in Columbus, are moving there in September as part of the BRAC initiative to combine Reserve hubs across the United States.