

Marine tankers leave Knox after 7 decades

Training will shift to Fort Benning, Ga., and it will remain mostly the same

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For seven decades Marine tanks have made the earth tremble at Fort Knox., Ky. In about one year, the last of those tanks will have moved to Georgia as part of a 2005 Base Closure and Realignment Commission directive.

Marines will soon train at Fort Benning, Ga., 90 miles southeast of Atlanta.

Training will remain mostly the same, with the Marine training detachment conducting its own courses but using the Army's equipment and facilities.

"Training beside the Army is a reduction in cost for everyone," said Lt. Col. Michael Muller, commanding officer of Marine Detachment Fort Knox.

He described Benning's training lanes as "great facilities," but said the Army is addressing some concerns as it works to cram the Armor Center onto a post that already is home to the Infantry Center.

"The Army is combining two bases, and there are shortages of space and facilities, but we're working with the Army to get what we need," said Muller, who has planned closely with Benning leaders over the past year to help secure the Corps' needs there.

Another challenge will be the change in terrain. Benning, "is built on a swamp, and Fort Knox is built on clay, which is better for tank training," Muller said.

The Corps' tank community includes about 1,000 enlisted Marines and officers, according to Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Some 500 enlisted Marines and officers train at Fort Knox each year, in nine tanker courses. Five of the courses fulfill the following MOSs: Marine Armor Crewman, Reserve Marine Armor Crewman, M1A1 Tank System Mechanic, Assault Breacher Vehicle Operator (engineer students) and Assault Breacher Vehicle Mechanic (engineer students).

The consolidated courses under Army control are: the M1A1 Tank Master Gunner's Course; Basic Officer Leadership Course for tank officers; and the Maneuver Captain's Career Course.

One non-MOS producing course is the Armor Vehicle Launched Bridge Operator's Course, which also is trained around the Corps with mobile training teams, Muller said.