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## **Fort Leonard Wood hosts demolition engineer reunion**

**FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo.** – After World War II, a new state of geopolitical tension, known as the Cold War, emerged between the strongest superpowers at the time, the United States and the Soviet Union.

The battle was one of ideas and economics, where Western democracies set out to protect world stability and freedom from the constraints of communist control.

Though neither side wanted to fight each other directly, the U.S. Army formed several units, starting at the U.S. Army Engineer Center at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, in the 1950s, recruiting combat engineers for the military occupational specialty of Atomic Demolition Munitions.

ADMs were small nuclear explosive devices that provided tactical commanders with a means to create massive obstacles with fewer Soldiers and supplies, in less time than other demolitions or mechanical systems, according to Troy Morgan, Engineer Museum director with the John B. Mahaffey Museum Complex.

While ADM units have inactivated and its weapons systems decommissioned, the esprit de corps is very much alive among those who served.

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Fort Leonard Wood hosted an all-unit ADM reunion July 29.

"We decided to come to Fort Leonard Wood for a couple of reasons," said Steve Harmon, who was a first lieutenant with the 275th Engineer Company ADM when the unit inactivated in 1985. "Most of these guys did their AIT or one station unit training here, so we thought this would be a good place."

"We also knew that Troy (Morgan) was trying to document the history of 12E Atomic Demolitions Munitions, so we thought getting 12Es here for the different periods, could help the museum staff piece together a more accurate history," Harmon said.

Harmon, who coordinated this year's reunion, was pleased with the visit, saying it reawakened the strong bond that exists in the unit.

The reunion included a bus tour of Fort Leonard Wood.

"Listening to people on the bus, you can tell the visit brought back a lot of memories," Harmon said.

Larry Wetta, who trained at Fort Leonard Wood before moving on to Fort Belvoir and the 275th Eng. Co. ADM in the late 1960s, said, "We are a small, close-knit group of people who were dedicated to one purpose, and one purpose only, and that was to defend the United States in case of a conflict.

"We feel that we did our service proudly and effectively," Wetta said.

Another attendee commented that while many things have changed, the one thing that remains the same is the camaraderie.

"I'm glad to see that Fort Leonard Wood has changed a lot and improved," said Alvaro Castillo, who served with the 275th Eng. Co. ADM. "I think the diversity of the Engineering Corps requirements and the technology and tactics of engineers has diversified excessively since we were at Fort Leonard Wood as combat engineers."

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

**Photo captions:**

Bruce Goll and Richard Hilton, who served with the 275th Engineer Company Atomic Demolition Munitions, look at a V-100 "Commando" armored car during their ADM reunion tour of the Fort Leonard Wood museum July 29. *(Photo credit: Martha Yoshida, Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office)*

*About Fort Leonard Wood*

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*Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 75 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.*

*Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.*

*Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting a colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.*

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