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Fort Knox Commander Maj. Gen. Robert Williams, left, presents the colors of the newly activated 19th Engineer Battalion to Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Courtney Paul during the activation ceremony Thursday afternoon in the Abrams Auditorium of the Patton Museum at Fort Knox.

New life for the 19th

Engineer battalion reactivated after nearly a decade in limbo

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FORT KNOX — As a flag was unrolled and a cluster of streamers dangled from its tip, one of the Army's most storied battalions was resurrected at Fort Knox.

The 19th Engineer Battalion celebrated its return Thursday at an activation ceremony at the Patton Museum. The unit was reactivated in October.

About 200 members of

the battalion are already at Fort Knox, and the remaining 500 or so soldiers should arrive by the summer.

The battalion's arrival is the first step in the realignment of Fort Knox, said Maj. Gen. Robert Williams.

"I think it's very appropriate that the 19th Engineers is the first of the new groups to arrive because of its great history at Fort Knox," Williams said.

The 19th Engineers were



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Vietnam veterans of the 19th Combat Engineers Battalion take photos of the new 19th Engineer Battalion before the activation ceremony Thursday in the Abrams Auditorium of the Patton Museum at Fort Knox.

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based at Fort Knox from 1975 until their inactivation in 1997. The battalion, originally formed in 1933, has served in World War II, the Vietnam War and operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

About 20 former 19th Engineer Battalion soldiers attended the ceremony to see their unit come back into action. They sat in the audience dressed in suits or red jackets with 19th Combat Engineer Vietnam Veterans Association emblazoned on the back.

"It's awesome," said Hallet Newman, president of the 19th Combat Engineer Vietnam Veterans Association, after watching the uncasing of the colors.

The veterans couldn't miss the ceremony, Newman said. Several members of the group traveled from across the country to attend.

The battalion's commander, Lt. Col. Courtney Paul, thanked the veterans for their service and praised them for the brotherhood that continues off the battlefield.

"There's a camaraderie built when you crawl through mud together," Newman said.

Newman, who served with the battalion in the late 1960s, presented Paul with the Bit and Reins, the 19th Engineer Battalion's symbol since 1944.

Paul promised that the current companies would carry on the strong tradition of the "Sea Horse Battalion."

The battalion is expected to be at Fort Knox for only a brief time before being deployed to support the war on terror.

"Despite that fact, I see soldiers showing up every day willing to do their jobs," Paul said. "They understand the urgency of getting battalions like this into the fight."

The 19th Engineer Battalion is made up of five companies: Headquarters Support Company, Forward Support Company, the 15th Engineer Company, the 60th Engineer Company and the 76th Engineer Company. The 72nd Survey Detachment is attached to the unit.

Soldiers in the companies include heavy construction equipment operators, general construction equipment officers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, masons, surveyors and technical engineering specialists.

The unit is the first modular engineer battalion to be set up by the Army.

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