



# 411th Engineer Battalion Trains at Pohakuloa Training Area

By Mr. Robert H. McElroy

**A**lpha Company, 411th Engineer Battalion (United States Army Reserve), recently completed its annual training rotation at Pohakuloa Training Area (PTA), on the Big Island of Hawaii. (See article on page 26.) The training was especially important because it had been more than a year since the company had been together for longer than a weekend drill, and half of the Soldiers—to include the company commander—were new to the unit.

The commander's goals for the annual training were to qualify Soldiers on individual and crew-served weapons and conduct individual skills training and combat lifesaver training. Once those tasks were completed, his focus became training Soldiers on sustainable military occupational specialty (MOS) skills for engineers.

Since there were approximately 35 new Soldiers in the unit from the rank of private to specialist, it was necessary for the experienced noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to teach the new Soldiers. Since many of the NCOs had operated heavy equipment in Iraq, they could teach the young Soldiers how to operate it safely—always a major concern during training.

When the Soldiers had completed weapons qualification and combat lifesaver training, they turned their attention to several engineer projects for PTA that would test the skills of both the company's vertical and horizontal platoons. The Horizontal Platoon focused on improving selected roads and ranges. At the site of PTA's new Known-Distance Range, engineer Soldiers graded the ground and laid crushed rock



**Soldiers from Alpha Company, 411th Engineer Battalion, construct a range house/observation tower during their annual training.**



**A load of freshly-crushed rock is dumped on a new road being built at Pohakuloa Training Area.**

along the road. They repeated the same task at the site of one of the forward operating bases (FOBs) in the training area. The Vertical Platoon spent its time building a new structure in the training area and renovating older ones in the cantonment area.

At Pu'u Ahi, deep in the training area, engineer carpenters built a combination range house and observation tower for use by Army aviation attack-helicopter units. And on PTA's cantonment area where the troop billets and support facilities

are, the engineers renovated a Quonset hut containing billets and a shower for female Soldiers.

The skills the new engineer Soldiers gained during their annual training will help them greatly the next time the 411th deploys. When the unit deployed to Iraq, it was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood, Texas, and completed several carpentry and construction projects.

Despite the company's focus on unit and individual training and construction projects, some Soldiers found time to visit students at Keauu Middle School, on the east side of the Big Island. Alpha Company Soldiers joined PTA Soldiers in handing out dictionaries and other school supplies to the students.

For one staff sergeant, annual training was all about leaving something behind:

the knowledge he imparted to his young charges and the range house they built together.



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Photos by Robert H. McElroy.