

Fort Stewart Soldiers Return from Deployment to Brand New Mini-City

When soldiers of the Vanguard Brigade returned from a yearlong deployment to Iraq, the last thing they wanted to do was a dreaded “duffel bag drag” — troop slang for frequent moving from one living quarters to another.

But several months before their scheduled homecoming, the Vanguards, also known as the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), received word they would have the complete opposite of a duffel bag drag. Instead, they would come home to a top-notch \$306 million “mini-city” at Fort Stewart, Ga., courtesy of the Savannah district.

The project converted 457-acres of forest into a multi-facility development in just two years. It includes everything the brigade needs to fulfill daily operations: 20 barracks (accommodating 72 soldiers each), six company operations

facilities, six tactical equipment maintenance facilities, a combined brigade / battalion headquarters building, physical fitness center, and a dining facility.

“We knew we had a whole new facility waiting on us, and as a soldier, that means a lot,” said Sgt. Shawn Damm, ammunition specialist with the 4th IBCT, 89 Bravo. “You’re coming to a brand new environment and you know it’s going to be state-of-the-art and have all the amenities that anyone could hope for. It means a lot coming back from that type of environment.”

When the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission report was first announced by the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management, the transformation of the Army’s infrastructure was one of the key focuses. This initiative outlined the guidelines for modernization, modular conversion and rebalancing of the active and reserve components worldwide. The resulting infrastructure would be designed to enable the operational force to better meet the challenges of a dangerous and complex 21st century security environment.

According to 4th IBCT unit history, the Vanguard Brigade was the first new brigade formed under this initiative setting the pace for the Army.



Soldiers of the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team attend a ribbon cutting ceremony for the \$306 million IBCT complex at Fort Stewart, Ga. *Photo by Tracy Robillard.*

An aerial view of the completed IBCT complex at Fort Stewart, Ga. Built by the Savannah district, the project converted 457-acres of forest into a mini-city in just two years, and includes everything the brigade needs to fulfill daily operations: 20 barracks (accommodating 72 soldiers each), six company operations facilities, six tactical equipment maintenance facilities, a combined brigade/battalion headquarters building, physical fitness center, and a dining facility. *Photo provided by Aerophoto.*



“One of the greatest benefits of having all of the brigade facilities so close together yet functionally organized according to the force structure of the brigade, is that every soldier at every level has direct access to their leaders, subordinates, and equipment without the need to travel very far,” said Will Abrams of the Department of Public Works.

“The area was purposely located within walking distance of the small arms range complex as well as other multi-purpose training areas,” said Abrams. “This is particularly important for a light unit which can be called upon to move by foot across the battlefield.”

The complex is Fort Stewart’s largest construction project and one of the largest military construction projects within the Savannah district. The Corps began construction in June 2009 and completed the job in four phases, coordinating with six different contractors on site while constantly striving to meet the completion deadline.

“This project was a huge undertaking as we had multiple contractors on site, which required communication and close coordination,” said Troy Funk, resident engineer, Savannah district. “There were a lot of moving parts and the partnerships on site were instrumental in bringing the project to completion.”

The barracks are designed as two-person suites with a shared common area, kitchen and bathroom, and two private bedrooms.

Damm said he enjoys having a private bedroom with adequate space for personal belongings—including

his own walk-in closet. He also lauds being able to do laundry in his suite—something he couldn’t do in previous Army housing and college campus dormitories he lived in.

“When I saw the entire complex, I was blown away,” Damm said. “It far exceeds anything that I’ve ever had. As a soldier, you come back and you want to have your own space. You want to have an opportunity to get away from things for a while and recharge, then go back at it again. Having this type of environment really sets us up for success.”

The complex also includes a troop medical clinic, which remains under construction with scheduled completion by the summer of 2012.

Like all Army construction, this project incorporated environmentally-friendly features, such as natural landscaping, low-odor paints and carpets, energy efficient lighting, and mechanical systems. These “green” buildings will satisfy the Silver rating criteria established by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system, in accordance with the U.S. Green Building Council standards. 

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