

Successful Implosion of Building on Fort Myer

Project raises the bar for building recycling

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FORT MYER, Va. – At 6:25 a.m. June 4, Bldg. 501 stood 12 stories tall against the backdrop of the morning sun. With a series of loud booms at 6:30, the 40-year-old housing complex came crumbling down.

It took engineers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and contractor partners 124 pounds of explosives and 15 seconds bring the building down. All that remains to do is to crush the remaining rubble into small pieces and use it as landfill to raise the elevation of the parking lots on the west side of the site and to become an extension of the Hatfield Gate entrance of Fort Myer.

Fort Myer worked with the Engineering and Support Center in Huntsville, Ala., the Corps of Engineers Baltimore District, Bhate Associates of Birmingham, Ala., and Controlled Demolitions Inc., of Phoenix, Md., on the project.

"This demolition effort is an excellent example of the Fort Myer Military Community's outstanding partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers," said Garrison Commander Col. Thomas A. Allmon. "The project is a true environmental success story for our Army and the open communication with our partners is the key to that success."



Building 501 at Fort Myer implodes early in the morning on June 4, 2006. The buildings rubble will now be recycled in an effort to divert 90% of the building material from the landfill.

Imploding the building versus traditional demolition saved both time and money and is a much safer operation. The team will divert (reuse or recycle) nearly 90 percent of the building material from the landfill, which exceeds the 2004 Army regulation that requires 50 percent diversion of materials.

"This is big. This is probably the best one we've ever been able to do because we're going to be able to crush the main building," said Bhate Associates Project Manager Greg Taylor. Bhate Associates is the firm contracted for the \$1.6 million demolition of the apartment complex.

When Huntsville Center wrote the scope of work for the project, it included the requirement to recycle – or divert – as much of the building as possible. Recycling can

save money by cutting down on the cost of transporting materials to a landfill, and paying to dump the materials in the landfill.

"These particular firms – Bhate and CDI – are really committed to recycling," said Michael Norton, the project manager with the Huntsville Center. "The recycling effort was a success because of these contractors. A lot of demolition projects just bring in backhoes, or a claw, tear it down and dump it in a landfill."

Bhate Associates began their on-site work the first week of February. "When we got here we wanted to try to salvage everything we could and recycle the material," Taylor said.

Items recycled included dishwashers, stoves and refrigerators that went to Fort Belvoir, Va., in exchange for new housing for E1s through E5s from Bldg. 501. The playground equipment outside the building also was sent to Fort Belvoir.

The team offered items to Habitat for Humanity and the Jimmy Carter Foundation. Taylor estimates that 95 percent of the copper wires, 95 percent of the steel piping and 80 percent of the metal studs and screws are being recycled. Even the light posts in the parking lot are being recycled as aluminum.

A whopping 60,000 pounds of sheet rock are being recycled. The sheet rock is ground up and used as a fertilizer. Tom Peck, a project manager with Bhate Associates, said he took the idea from a demolition guide developed for Fort Campbell, Ky.

As many trees as possible are being saved.

"I love trees and I know how hard it is to grow one," said Taylor, who grew up on the treeless prairie of Kansas City, Mo. Ninety percent of the trees that can't be saved will be recycled into mulch. The rest will be given as firewood to needy families.

Bldg. 501, named for Col. Anthony J. Tencza, housed enlisted Soldiers and their families from 1966 until 2005.

When the apartment complex became outdated, Gay van Brero, Fort Myer's housing manager, said she would remove the building from the inventory. The installation plans to build new roads, supporting utilities, storm sewers and a possible visitor control center on the revamped site.

Van Brero, who had been working on removing the building since 1997, said all she could think of as the building came down was how many families had lived there over the years.

"If you consider that 120 families that have lived in the building for the past 40 years, and that those families rotated every three years, and multiply that number of families by 13 changes of occupancy in each apartment with the Army average for a Soldier's family of 2.5, that's a lot of families that have lived in Tencza Terrace," van Brero said.

(Matt McFarland, a staff writer with the Pentagongram, Fort Myer's command information newspaper, contributed to this article.)