

Fort Hood shooting victims remembered during Afghanistan cross-fit competition

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KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- By 9:30 a.m. Nov. 5, more than 50 servicemembers gathered at the Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, boardwalk to participate in the Lumberjack 20 Cross-fit competition to honor the Soldiers who lost their lives in the Fort Hood shootings, Nov. 5, 2009.

"The cross-fit workout is a way to collectively pull everyone together for a common goal. It will allow Soldiers to get out their aggressiveness and sharpen their skills," said 1st Lt. Brian Mackey, 20th Engineer Battalion tactical officer. "We do this in memory of the four Soldiers we lost, to carry on their names in honor."

The Fort Hood-based "Lumberjack" battalion was two months from deploying and had several Soldiers going through the final phases of pre-deployment screenings at the shooting site.

Four Lumberjack Soldiers were killed in the shooting and 11 were wounded.

The Lumberjacks held a ceremony before the competition started to unveil a memorial to honor the fallen Soldiers and their families.

"There isn't a day that goes by that we don't think about them," said Mackey, who is from Pittsfield, Mass.

The 20th Engineer Battalion's main mission in Afghanistan is route clearance. They search for, and destroy, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) on Kandahar Province's many routes. It is a dangerous job, as IEDs are the number-one weapon used by the Taliban to attack Coalition Forces.

Of the wounded Soldiers, a few were able to join the unit in Afghanistan.

"The guys were all courageous," Mackey said. "We had a number of guys whose doctors' told them they would not be able to deploy, but they pulled through on time and it was really inspiring."

The Lumberjack 20 Cross-fit competition consisted of 20 dead lifts, 20 kettle-bell swings, 20 pull-ups, 20 box jumps, 20 squat and leans, and a 400-meter run after each event.

"It looks fun, but it's not," said 1st Sgt. Shannon Carver, 510th Engineer Company and native of Tyler, Texas.

He said the rugged and challenging competition was a perfect fit to honor the "hardcore" Soldiers who were killed.

"There is no better reason than remembering the Soldiers who lost their lives that day," Carver said.

Carver added losing Soldiers while still at home station was a tough way to start the deployment.

"Nothing is done in vain. There's a reason we're here. There's a mission we're accomplishing," Carver said.

Cpl. Jonathan Rivera, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 20th Engineer Battalion, from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, was one of the first to tackle Lumberjack 20.

"I'm not a fan of cross-fitness, but the main reason I am here is to support my battle buddies [who] were lost November 5 (2009)," he said.

He was at the site just before the shooting started. He said he left to get lunch. As he was coming back into the building he heard the shooting.

"It was a pretty rough day. A lot of people were hurt. A lot of people lost their lives," said Rivera.

Rivera said it is a tragic what happened, but he hopes everyone will move forward in their honor and in their memory.

The winner of the Lumberjack Cross-fit Competition was Capt. Ross Browning, HHC, 20th Engineer Battalion.

<http://www.army.mil/news/2010/11/06/47773-fort-hood-shooting-victims-remembered-during-afghanistan-cross-fit-competition/index.html?ref=home-headline-link0>