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Annotated article by Edward P. Moore Jr. to The Commercial Appeal, 30 September 1962

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Charged with escorting Negro James H. Meredith to the University of Mississippi campus, the marshals began deplaning here in force by mid-afternoon at University Airport. They quickly boarded vehicles for the encampment prepared by men of the 70th Engineer Battalion from Ft. Campbell, Ky. Others were leaving the Memphis Naval Air Station by cars and busses.

Maj. William V. Koch, information officer for the battalion, said that 25 paratroopers were attached temporarily to the engineers. He emphasized that the paratroopers had been detached from airborne duty and assigned as individuals to perform specific functions required by the engineers. The major, a paratrooper himself, cited his position as information officer as an example. Commander of the unit is Maj. Ralph S. Kristoferson of Pittsfield, N. H.

"We have no mission in regard to Mr. Meredith's admission to the University or in the maintenance of law and order," Maj. Koch said.

"Our assigned mission is the erection of a tent city for use by federal marshals — if required. If they are moved in, we are here to provide logistical support for feeding, housing, and medical care.

Fifty vehicles were in the caravan which brought the battalion from Memphis to the National Forest. Included were command cars, jeeps, trucks, water and gas trailers, and command vehicles. Fifteen tents had been raised by noon and preparations were underway for other; each tent (more)
will accommodate 12 men. Maj. Koch said that several hundred men could live in the tent city which was scheduled for completion by Sunday evening.

Most of the engineers appeared to be recruits and carried M-1 rifles. Several Negroes were included in the group. Newsmen spotted several cartons of blank cartridges stacked alongside the camp area which was restricted to military personnel.

The only people aware of the Defense Department's deployment of the unit in the forestry and game preserve were Mr. and Mrs. Cotton Tabor who live opposite the temporary site. Mr. Tabor said he was first aware of his new neighbors between 4 and 5 o'clock Sunday morning.

"Frankly, I was scared," said the boating camp owner. "I thought the whole Army was dropping in on me."

"This has my business cut off. I have a boating camp, and some of my customers have been turned back. Of course, it is federal property, but I don't think they should be cutting off traffic."

Newsmen were readily admitted to the area on presentation of credentials but were originally stopped outside the camp by a single soldier, sporting a walkie-talkie and rifle. He was holding Outpost No. 1. Further along the road, cars were again halted and occupants asked to park outside the restricted area. A captain introduced Maj. Koch and requested newsmen to direct all questions to him, rather than individual soldiers.