



# 130TH ENGINEER BRIGADE: A YEAR IN IRAQ

By Colonel Thomas W. Kula

Simply put, it's about attitude. The 130th Engineer Brigade and other Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 05-07 engineers went into the country determined to continue the success of previous engineer units and to make a difference. The following articles (pages 4-43) highlight this determination and accomplishments in numerous areas of engineer support to the Multinational Corps–Iraq (MNC–I). It was a team effort all year long. I would like to thank all the OIF 05-07 engineer brigade commanders for their unwavering support and commitment to the fight, the MNC–I command and staff for their guidance and support, and especially the OIF 04-06 team. You set us up for success.

## Our Challenge

In October 2005, the 130th conducted relief in place (RIP)/transfer of authority (TOA) of the corps engineer brigade for the MNC–I with the 20th Engineer Brigade. The OIF 05-07 rotation was a turning point for engineers: Their force structure was reduced by 25 percent because the two engineer brigades serving under the 20th, the 30th, and the 194th Engineer Brigades were not replaced. By early December 2005, the 130th was the only engineer brigade above division level in the MNC–I. The unit looked at this period “right out of the starting blocks” as one of its defining moments as the corps brigade. The 130th commanded all corps engineer units spread across the entire theater, including the United States Air Force facility and utility detachments. Truly a joint engineer force, the brigade's strength averaged about 3,300 Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen—either assigned, attached, or under tactical control (TACON) or administrative control (ADCON)—during its year in-theater.

## Building the Team

The 130th team was not only joint but also a mix of active and reserve—one determined “total” Army engineer force. The 130th was augmented with the 412th Engineer Command Construction Management Section (CMS) upon arrival in Kuwait to fill the missing part of the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE). The 412th's tasks were numerous, not only filling the traditional role of a CMS but also serving as the command and control element for the many facility engineer teams and detachments attached or TACON to the brigade. The 412th CMS was ready and trained, and its accomplishments as part of the OIF 05-07 engineer team are a story in itself. As we built the team, the 46th, 54th, 84th, and 110th Engineer Battalions were also

significant in helping piece the engineer team puzzle together with each of their missions.

The 130th built its team and staff well before deployment, ready to link the separate pieces together once in-theater. Beginning with the first of seven corps training exercises, started in September 2004, the command and staff prepared a list of the keys to successful staff operations (Figure 1). Preparation began a year out from deployment, while the brigade simultaneously deployed two of its assigned units from Germany—the 94th Engineer Battalion (Combat) (Heavy) and the 502d Engineer Company—to OIF 3. The 130th staff had its “head in the fight” by deploying and training its units, focused on the complex operating environment in Iraq. We participated in seven command post exercises (CPXs) at the corps and brigade levels to prepare for our mission.

Before the V Corps mission rehearsal exercise (MRX), brigade leaders conducted three leader's recons in-theater so that we fully understood and exercised our mission during this critical MRX. By the time the 130th arrived in Kuwait for reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI), all that remained was polishing individual and collective battle tasks before heading north into Iraq to assume its mission.

A second product developed during these exercises was a wallet-size leader card to disseminate the command philosophy (Figures 2 and 3). These basics and fundamentals built the

### Basics of Brigade Operations

- Execute the fundamentals
  - By staff (expert in your lane)
  - By information (what to do with it)
  - By key roles and missions of the top 5
    - Brigade commander (BC)
    - Command sergeant major (CSM)
    - Deputy brigade commander (DBC)
    - Chief of staff (CoS)
    - S-3
- Keep everyone engaged
  - Clearly identified duties
  - Clearly identified responsibilities
- Maximize use of technology: How can we do it quicker and more efficiently?
- Promote teamwork among staff sections, higher and lower
- Plan ahead: Resource subordinate units for success

Figure 1



# Mission, Vision, and Priorities

**MISSION:** On order, the 130th Engineer Brigade deploys and conducts engineering operations in support of V Corps and regional combatant commanders in a joint environment.

**VISION:** All units and Soldiers in the 130th Engineer Brigade are prepared for combat. The brigade has trained and disciplined Soldiers (that live the Warrior Ethos), adaptive leaders, and competent staffs.

**PRIORITIES:**

- **Leader Development:**
  - Empower leaders and hold them accountable.
  - Conduct performance and developmental counseling.
  - Train subordinates to do their job and the job one level up.
- **Training:** Prepare for combat by focusing on the basics and mission-essential tasks.
- **Maintenance and Logistics:**
  - Assign ownership and maintain and account for equipment.
  - Execute systems to standard to sustain operations.
- **Readiness:** Readiness is the sum of personnel readiness, family readiness, superior training, and disciplined maintenance and logistics programs.
- **Caring:** Take care of our Soldiers and their families.
  - Process quality, timely administrative actions and awards.
  - Enforce high standards in barracks, work areas, and facilities.
  - Encourage effective family readiness groups.

**SAFETY is part of caring.** Risk management must be part of our daily regimen. Our goal is no loss of life. Leaders make a difference!

Dec 04

Figure 2



# Command Philosophy

**Be a Leader.**

- Define the standard.
- Lead by example.
- Lead from the front.
- Hold Soldiers accountable.
- Recognize excellent performance.

**Be a Soldier.**

- Be disciplined. Always do what's right.
- Be proud to be in the Army and in the 130th.
- Be sharp, motivated, and professional.
- Be mission-oriented. Live the Warrior Ethos and Army values.
- Be a team-player.
- Be safe on duty and off duty. Conduct risk management for all that we do.
- Be innovative, creative, and show initiative. Don't wait to be told what to do.
- Be positive. Always maintain a positive, can-do attitude.
- Be balanced. Maintain a balance between your job, professional development, personal hobbies, spiritual growth, physical fitness, and social activities. Have fun and spend time with your family and friends.

\* Teamwork and positive attitude

\* Fight through challenges

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Figure 3



## Commander's Intent

**PURPOSE:** Provide proactive joint expeditionary engineer support that is essential, timely, and relevant.

- Proactive: Anticipate requirements and marshal resources before they are needed.
- Essential: Focus on the main effort and provide support according to the commander's priorities.
- Timely: Be on time and to standard to meet operational timetables.
- Relevant: Achieve minimum military requirements doing what others cannot do for themselves.

**KEY TASKS:**

- Maintain and upgrade lines of communications. Purpose: Ensure uninterrupted ground movement throughout the area of operations.
- Support the MNC-I Coalition Basing Plan. Purpose: Expand enduring bases and support the scheme of maneuver.
- Support development of ISF and construction of Ministry of Defense (MOD)/Ministry of Interior (MOI) bases. Purpose: Support the transition of the operational environment to Iraqi control.
- Reinforce tactical reconstruction efforts. Purpose: Support divisional and MNC-I nonlethal effects.

**END STATE:**

- Achieve assured mobility of MNC-I units along corps main supply routes.
- Perform expedient military repairs to infrastructure replaced by permanent repairs or reconstitution by MNF-I or civil agencies.
- Consolidate coalition bases according to United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Sandbook standards and the MNC-I campaign plan.
- Implement effective command and control to ensure responsive and sustained engineer support.

Figure 4



## Standing Sapper Rules

- Make security and safety the first priority.
- Enforce discipline and standards: every Soldier, every day, no complacency—do the right thing even when no one is watching.
- Always maintain situational awareness and aggressively execute battle drills.
- In everything we do, look at how we can involve the Iraqis and help them win. Treat the Iraqi people with dignity, and respect their customs and cultures.
- Do not depart on a mission unless you are 100 percent ready, have all situational updates, have coordinated your movements, and have completed the risk management process.
- Know and enforce the rules of engagement (ROE).
- Fight through challenges, and never run out of options.
- Take care of your equipment. Perform preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS), precombat checks (PCCs), and precombat inspections (PCIs) to standard!
- Use your battle buddy. Take care of yourself and each other. Stay balanced.
- Remember your solemn responsibility to protect the American way of life. Love your Soldiers, accomplish your mission at the least cost, and be a Warrior.

Figure 5

foundation for preparing the staff to assume corps engineer brigade command and control. These principles for staff, leaders, and Soldiers are just as important today as they were at the start of the deployment. They were also useful tools to pass along to our successor.

As the 130th coordinated with the team prior to deployment, we shared our philosophy for combat operations with our subordinate units. Figures 4 and 5 show OIF 05-07 cards sent out to units before deployment. The 130th leadership used the same cards to brief battalion and company leaders as they flowed through RSOI in Kuwait. There are never enough opportunities to team-build for OIF, and these products were useful.

The 130th continued to emphasize *security, safety/risk management, and discipline* throughout deployment. We considered these as three legs of a stool, with *leadership* banding together and reinforcing the legs. On the stool rests *mission accomplishment* and *keeping troops alive*. It's a platform for success, with each part vital.

### Missions and Achievements

**W**ith the mission as the MNC-I corps engineer brigade, the 130th's primary focuses were assured mobility (route clearance and bridging) and theater construction. As a carryover from the 20th Engineer Brigade, the 130th continued to provide proactive, essential, timely, and relevant engineer support to the MNC-I. A few of the many missions and achievements of the 130th Engineer Brigade units in OIF 05-07 were—

- *Route clearance* – achieved and consistently sustained greater than 50 percent of the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) found on corps routes.
- *Route sanitation* – cleared 700 kilometers of debris and trash along main routes.
- *IED blasthole and pothole repair* – filled more than 600 potholes.
- *Construction and facilities design and management* – completed 345 projects across theater.
- *Bridging* – emplaced three assault float bridges (AFBs) and one medium Mabey-Johnson bridge (MJB) (Float), conducted two long-term rafting operations, and maintained eight bridges.
- *Topographic/geospatial engineering* – completed 1,800 surveying and mapping projects for units in-theater.
- *Well drilling* – provided wells in Multinational Force–West (MNF–W) at forward operating bases (FOBs) and Iraqi security force (ISF) camps to reduce logistics haul requirements.
- *Electrical power repair, generation, and distribution* – provided constant power to 25 contingency operating bases (COBs) and FOBs and reduced safety hazards.

- *COB and FOB infrastructure repair and expansion* – improved power, water, and sewer systems to Amber or Green ratings.
- *ISF development* – constructed ISF contingency outposts and checkpoints and partnered with the Iraqi Engineer School.
- *Support reconstruction efforts* – supported force protection projects of Iraqi infrastructure.

### Joint Team Effort

**T**he success of the brigade was a joint team effort across all the Armed services. From the Air Force detachments working construction all over Iraq, to the Navy electronic warfare officers on brigade and battalion staffs, to embedded Navy explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) personnel, to the mix of Active Army, United States Army Reserve, and Army National Guard service members, the 130th Engineer Brigade was a multifaceted force that made a difference in-theater. Each member of the team played an important role and, by the end, helped the 130th leave its mark during OIF 05-07.

### Conclusion

**T**he 130th Engineer Brigade units completed OIF 05-07 with pride and a true sense that they had made a difference. It was a long year; we fought through challenges, and some of our Soldiers were wounded and killed while trying to make a difference. We will never forget our fallen comrades.

Even though the war continues, we measure our success by the victories of our units. We gave it our all, and our sense of accomplishment is best summed up by Coach Vince Lombardi:

*“I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is the moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle—victorious.”*

OIF 05-07 corps engineer units—Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen—you made a difference. Thank you for serving your country!



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