



# The French Engineer School and U.S. Army Engineer Training Opportunities in France

By Major Andamo E. Ford

**T**he *École Supérieure et d'Application du Génie*, or French Engineer School, located in Angers, France, is the home of the French Engineer Corps and the training center for engineers in combat and technical skills. The school has two missions:

- Train future army officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) in the craft and culture of engineers, in three branches of the Engineer Corps: combat engineering, infrastructure, and civil defense. The school provides specialized training in civil defense on the techniques of lifesaving and clearing debris for missions during natural disasters.
- Perform doctrinal studies in the future employment of engineers and engineer equipment for operations worldwide.

To optimize personnel and equipment resources, the various engineer training establishments (equipment operators, electricians, mechanics, etc.) were consolidated in Angers. This reorganization was completed in 1995 with the fusion of the Technical Engineer School from Versailles and the Combat Engineer School in Angers.

The school trains about 3,000 students per year, with training covering more than 60 different courses. Students may attend courses ranging from a few days to two years for technical degree programs. A major characteristic of the school is its student diversity. Representing 25 different countries, students are officers; NCOs; soldiers; Ministry of Defense civil servants; and personnel from other branches, services, and government departments. The school is also responsible

for intensive mine awareness training for more than 5,000 military and civilian personnel per year.

## Organization

**T**he school is organized into four levels:

**Command Group.** Consists of the general, the commanding officer, and the headquarters staff.

**Administration and Resources Section.** Covers all the functions required for operating the school.

**Training Directorate.** Including both the student courses and the facilities needed to train them, the directorate is divided into two areas:

### ■ Student Management Division

- ✓ *Division d'Application* (officer basic course)
- ✓ *Division Sous Officiers* (NCO courses)
- ✓ *Cours de Futurs Commandants d'Unité* (captain's career course)
- ✓ *Diplôme Technique* (technical courses)

### ■ Training Departments

- ✓ *Département Formation Opérationnelle* (tactics)
- ✓ *Département Formation Technique d'Arme* (engineer skills)
- ✓ *Département Enseignement Scientifique et Technique* (technical courses)

- ✓ *Departement d'Enseignement Physique et Sportif* (sports and fitness training)
- ✓ *Departement Formation de l'Exercice de l'Autorité* (leadership)

**Support Group.** Furnishes the troops needed to support practical training of students.

To carry out the missions, the school has several specialized installations, which include local training areas and camps, bridging schools on the Maine and Loire Rivers, diver training facilities, and other specialized facilities. The school also has ties to the civilian academic world, including universities and training institutions, which play an increasingly important role in technical training. About 40 civilian professors and instructors teach courses at the French Engineer School every year. This demonstrates a recognition of the quality of instruction.

### Restructuring the French Army

**T**he French Army has undergone profound changes, and as a result, there was a significant reduction in manpower. There are now just 85 total regiments, 11 of which are engineer. Eight engineer regiments are assigned and support each armored, infantry, and mechanized brigade. The other three are assigned to the French Engineer Brigade, located in Strasbourg along with a nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) group and a topographic group (not shown in the chart on page 30).

Over the period of army restructuring, the military manpower at the French Engineer School has diminished by 60 percent—from 1,500 to 630, which has impacted the support group—although there has been an increase in civilian personnel in

administrative functions. The challenge is to train the same number of students, while maintaining the quality of instruction with less than half the original manpower.

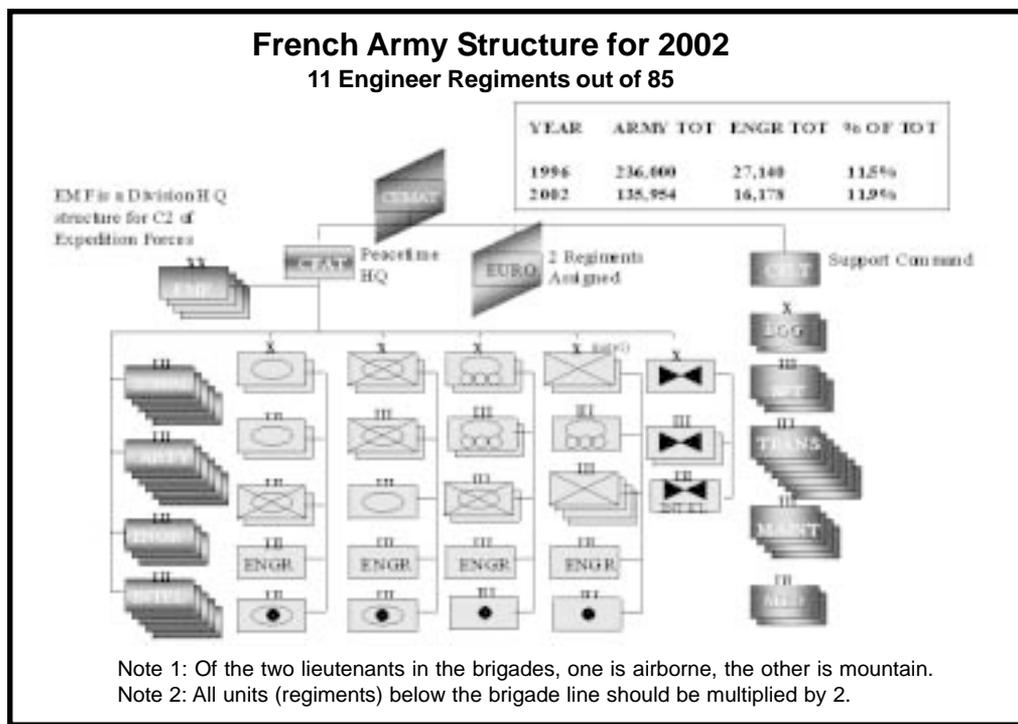
Partnerships and contracting out are possible solutions to the manpower problem. To provide the practical training support, despite the disappearance of most of the support group, an arrangement has been established with the field army in which it provides the troops and equipment necessary to carry out field exercises. Contracting out allows some support and administrative functions to be provided by civilian companies, thereby saving military manpower. These contracts are expensive and cannot be expanded. Contracting out some of the training to civilian organizations or calling on external instructors, although they are already in place for technical training, is more difficult for specific military-type training.

### Liaison Officer Program

**T**he Liaison Officer Program is supported by selected elements of allied defense establishments for the mutual exchange of information on combat development, doctrine, training, and educational information with appropriate personnel. Liaison officers act as TRADOC emissaries to facilitate the exchange of information and fulfill the host activity's requirements for information. Liaison officers represent the commandant of the U.S. Army Engineer School in France and effect and enhance coordination between the two countries on matters relating to doctrine, training, force structure, and equipment. They initiate, organize, and participate in joint studies, visits, and training activities designed to extend interoperability and improve understanding between the two armies. Liaison officers coordinate with the French research, development, and acquisition community. They operate independently under broad guidance from the



Students at the French Engineer School



commandant of the U.S. Army Engineer School in the following areas:

**Unit Visits.** Work with the French army, the French Engineer School in particular, and engineer regiments around the country. Throughout the year, they visit engineer regiments to receive their latest mission/capabilities briefs.

**Exchanges.** Schedule various exchanges and training opportunities for U. S. Army Engineer and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) units and individual soldiers either at the French Engineer School or with French engineer units.

**Briefings and Presentations.** Brief and teach classes in either English or French on the U.S. Army and engineers to the French equivalent of the Engineer Captain's Career Course (ECCC) and additional officer and NCO basic and technical-level courses.

**Training and Testing.** Help the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College liaison officer to the French army conduct English language testing of French captains. The intent is to test staff officers' proficiency in the use of U.S. operational terminology (operational English).

English language testing is an integral part of the training that French captains receive at their staff course, which all French officers must attend. The six-month course, which is equivalent to a combination of the ECCC and Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3), consists of about 200 officers. U.S. and British officers conduct English language testing throughout the year. However, American English is critical to the success of a French officer's career, which means that the staff course has increased the involvement of Americans in all aspects of the course curriculum. Liaison officers also participate in training exercises throughout the year. They act as a higher-level commander, adjacent unit

commander, or liaison officer receiving tactical operations order briefings.

### Training Opportunities in France

U.S. Army engineers receive invaluable training from the French engineers each year. Recently, a U.S. Army engineer captain attended the CFCU, the French Engineer School's equivalent to the ECCC, and 16 officers and NCOs attended a one-week course conducted specifically for U.S. Army officers and NCOs that focused on demining operations in the Balkans. The French Engineer School continues to develop and train in the most up-to-date demining techniques in the world. It continues to emphasize the role of demining awareness and planning to all of their junior leaders. The school has the requirement for mine awareness training for the entire French army. The emphasis on demining training to junior officers and NCOs is typical of the importance placed in all branch schools as French army and engineer units are present on various operations worldwide.

These training opportunities are conducted through the International Military Training Office, 7th Army Training Command, Germany. Contact Mr. Art Brown at (011) 49-96-41-83-8449/8450 or e-mail [browna@hq.7atc.army.mil](mailto:browna@hq.7atc.army.mil).

### Captain's Career Course

The 11-week CFCU is designed to prepare a captain for company command. The course flows in a progressive, mission-oriented manner. Blocks of instruction are not organized by subject area—such as construction, demining, or leadership—but by mission (for example, employing a unit in a peacekeeping operation). Subject areas are taught throughout the course as they apply to the mission type. The course is divided into two blocks:

**Block I.** The captain prepares the unit for employment.

- Exercise command. Includes communications/leadership/command, training/ educating, and security.
- Know the environment. Includes the battlefield, enemy, other branches and their relationship to engineers, and engineer branch (missions, structures, principles, etc.).
- Optimize resources. Includes giving orders; organizing, conducting, and inspecting training; and managing personnel and materiel.
- Prepare unit for operations. Includes mobilization and deployment, planning (the military decision-making process), and force protection/NBC operations.

**Block II.** The captain employs his unit in an operational mission.

- Support combat operations.
- Support peace operations.
- Support civil authorities (disaster relief, civil defense, etc.).

The majority of instruction is devoted to tactical or combat engineering training. Sustainment engineering training is limited to deployment support missions such as base camp construction and route maintenance. The course consists of two sessions per year with about 30 captains per course. The average age of the French officers in CFCU is 30. About 70 percent have a college degree and an average of six to seven years experience in units, although some have as little as three years experience. The course is open to many foreign army officers.

Engineers who are interested in attending the French CFCU should meet the requirements below. Attendance at this course is in conjunction with a permanent change of station (PCS) to Europe.

- Be a first lieutenant (promotable) or a captain.
- Speak and comprehend French. (The course is taught entirely in French).
- Have completed the U.S. Army ECCC and CAS3—or be scheduled to attend these courses—and be eligible for a PCS move.
- Have not participated in the University of Missouri-Rolla master's program.
- Attend French engineer officer's advanced course (unaccompanied) TDY in conjunction with a PCS to Europe.
- Volunteer for the course.

Officers interested in attending the French CFCU should first contact their assignments branch manager at PERSCOM. Other important contacts include Ms. Victoria Anthony at the Engineer Personnel Proponency Office, U.S. Army Engineer School, (573) 563-6137, DSN 676-6137, e-mail [anthony@wood.army.mil](mailto:anthony@wood.army.mil), or Major Andamo E. Ford, U.S. Army

Engineer Liaison Officer (France), (011) 33-24-12-48-279, e-mail at [TRADOC.FR.ENLO@Wanadoo.fr](mailto:TRADOC.FR.ENLO@Wanadoo.fr) for additional information.

### **Demining/Mine Exercise (MINEX) Course**

At least twice a year, the French Engineer School schedules a course for U.S. Army engineers and EOD units that is designed as a “train-the-trainer” course for leaders (NCOs and officers). Subjects covered during the course include—

- Learning about the French EOD branch.
- Demining according to international standards.
- Identifying and treating antipersonnel mines in the Balkans and Afghanistan.
- Identifying and treating antitank mines in the Balkans and Afghanistan.
- Demining in the Balkans and Afghanistan.
- Organizing and conducting a mine clearance worksite (classroom instruction).
- Identifying and treating rockets and missiles in the Balkans and Afghanistan.
- Identifying and treating grenades in the Balkans and Afghanistan.
- Identifying and treating booby traps in the Balkans and Afghanistan.
- Identifying and treating antipersonnel and antitank mines in a field environment.
- Using demining tools.
- Organizing and conducting a mine clearance worksite (in a field environment).
- Monitoring demining operations.
- Becoming familiar with the mine situation in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan.

Transportation, lodging, and course fees are at no cost to the unit. Funding is handled by 7th Army Training Command, Germany. The point of contact is Mr. Art Brown, (011) 49-96-41-83-8449/8450, e-mail [browna@hq.7atc.army.mil](mailto:browna@hq.7atc.army.mil), or Major Andamo E. Ford, U.S. Army Engineer Liaison Officer (France), (011) 33-24-12-48-279, or e-mail [TRADOC.FR.ENLO@Wanadoo.fr](mailto:TRADOC.FR.ENLO@Wanadoo.fr) for additional information. 

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