FORGING OUR FUTURE —

USING OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM PHASE IV LESSONS LEARNED

By Lieutenant Colonel Reinhard W. Koenig

About a year ago, U.S. Army engineers crossed the line of departure for Operation Iraqi Freedom as members of a joint and multinational team. Immediately, and throughout the operation, they provided assured mobility for the force—breaching the berms at the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border, bridging gaps, reducing minefields, mitigating explosive hazards, providing an endless supply of geospatial products, constructing and repairing lines of communication, repairing airfields, and performing numerous other missions. Perhaps just as important, engineers executed their secondary mission of fighting as infantry, often as a primary mission.

To capture the myriad of lessons learned, the Engineer Regiment produced a draft after-action review (AAR) for Phases I through III and presented it at the Warfighter track of the Society of American Military Engineers Regional Conference in Savannah, Georgia, in November 2003. (See *Engineer,* October-December 2003, page 19.) Based on input from that conference and from across the Regiment, the U.S. Army Engineer School formed a doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leader development, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) integration board to review each issue and formulate actions to resolve them. Solutions are being developed to address both short- and long-term challenges for the Regiment. While not all problems are easily solvable, it is important to note that approximately 50 percent of the issues from a similar effort in Operation Desert Storm were resolved before Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The transition from Phase III (decisive) to Phase IV (stability) operations is sometimes unintentionally portrayed in doctrine and training scenarios as smooth and easy. Experience in Operation Iraqi Freedom shows this is far from the truth. Some units that violently executed offensive operations suddenly, and in some cases immediately, found themselves supporting humanitarian relief operations, then rapidly returning to the offensive. Even today, it can be argued that engineers are simultaneously executing Phase III and IV operations. Engineers may be tasked to conduct cordon-and-search missions under combat conditions one day and provide construction support for schools and hospitals the next day. The last two issues of this publication included important articles that gave insights to the missions, challenges, and solutions of Phase IV. But given the additional complexity and the great challenges sappers in theater have met, it is time to begin compiling the Regiment's AAR for Phase IV. This will allow us to initiate the DOTMLPF solutions process the same way we are doing for Phases I through III.

During ENFORCE 2004 (26-30 April) the Engineer School will host a breakout session to begin to compile and analyze Phase IV issues. Individuals are encouraged to attend this

(Phase IV - Stability Operations) Soldiers from V Corps's 18th Military Police Brigade and 94th Engineer Battalion join an Iraqi policeman and contractor to cut a ribbon, celebrating the renovation of the Al-Jazaaer Police Station in downtown Baghdad. The project was a collaborative effort between military police, engineers, and Iraqi police and contractors.

(Phase IV - Return to Combat Operations) Engineers assigned to Alpha Company, 1-32 Infantry, 10th Mountain Division, use a breaching device to gain entrance to the building during a daytime raid of a shop suspected of producing and selling anticoalition CDs and DVDs in the town of Al Fallujah.

session to shape the discussion. If you cannot attend ENFORCE, please submit input on the issue, discussion, and recommendation format to <*doctrine.engineer@wood.army.mil*> for inclusion in all discussions. At the breakout session, we will have Colonel James (Jim) Greene, the engineer representative from the recent Center for Army Lessons Learned Operation Iraqi Freedom Combined Arms Assessment Team. Colonel Greene spent most of February in the area of responsibility, collecting information that will help guide the discussion.

Specific topics are being solicited and developed for the breakout discussion. The following areas are important to address:

- What lessons on modularity, Active Component/Reserve Component rebalance, and the joint and expeditionary mindset did we learn during Phase IV that should shape the road ahead for the Future Engineer Force?
- What geospatial products were useful during Phase IV, and how can our capabilities for this battlespace function be improved?
- What training for soldiers and leaders at home station and in the training base should be sustained or improved?
- The Regiment employed the 1138th Engineer Battalion (Missouri Army National Guard) as the Mine and Explosive Ordnance Information Coordination Center (MEOICC). What are the "sustains and improves" of this structure?
- Field force engineering was a huge success. How should the Regiment shape this capability for the future?
- Nation building is a major aspect of current operations. What have we learned and what actions do we need to take in the future?
- Base camp development was a major challenge for the Regiment. What worked and what did not?
- Engineers encountered explosive hazards, to include improvised explosive devices, on a massive scale. They quickly adapted to this dangerous environment and the associated missions. What actions should we take based on this experience?
- As part of this effort, engineers participated in one of the largest transfers of authority in history. What lessons should we take from this experience?
- What engineer equipment was useful during Phase IV? What equipment did not meet expectations, and how can we improve it?
- What are the joint aspects of Phase IV operations that have proved to be effective, and which need to be improved?
- What unit reports, histories, stories, and articles have been prepared and need to be submitted for analysis; archiving; lessons learned; doctrine; and development of tactics, techniques, and procedures?

This is clearly not an all-inclusive list, and many of these have important subtopics. So we encourage everyone to submit topics before and during the breakout session. As part of that session, we want to come as close as possible to articulating workable DOTMLPF solutions to the Regiment's leadership for immediate implementation.

The importance of this effort is readily apparent, and it is too easy to say that some of our problems are simply unsolvable. With sourcing for Operation Iraqi Freedom Phase III and beyond already underway, we owe it to the Regiment's great soldiers and leaders who are about to go in harm's way to give them our best effort in determining and solving the challenges they will encounter.

Lieutenant Colonel Koenig is chief of the Doctrine Development Division at the U.S. Army Engineer School, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.