

1437th MRBC Bridging In Iraq

By Sergeant First Class Robert Milligan

The 1437th Multirole Bridge Company (MRBC) of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, working jointly with the First Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group and the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 7 (Seabees), has completed one of the biggest projects of its kind since World War II. The 1437th MRBC lent its experience and equipment in float bridge building to construct a 762-foot long Mabey-Johnson bridge across the Tigris River at Zubaydiyah. This is the longest floating span built in Iraq by military engineers. The bridge is a new type used by U.S. forces, and a representative of Mabey and Johnson Ltd. of England was on-site to assist with technical information throughout the construction.



Military engineers from the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps begin construction on a float bridge across the Tigris River.

Along with the 1437th MRBC, the Marine engineers, and Seabees, the project was assisted by a diving section from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, Naval Construction

Support Team 2, Amphibious Construction Battalion 1, and Amphibious Construction Battalion 2.

Coalition forces had destroyed the original bridge across the Tigris River at Zubaydiyah to deny its use by Iraqi forces. Though the bridge wasn't critical to the movement of coalition forces toward Baghdad during the war, it was rebuilt to restore a major transportation route used by civilians and coalition forces. The project, which took two weeks to complete, was opened on 28 June 2003.



A Seabee crane helps attach a section of Mabey-Johnson bridge to a pontoon.

The 490-ton bridge consists of six sections linked together—two 40-meter sections anchored at either bank, with four 33-meter sections pinned and welded in the middle. The sections sit atop 100-meter-long pontoons, which were then anchored to the river bottom through a kedge anchor system consisting of 20 anchors, each weighing 500 pounds. The

faster the current, the deeper the keedge anchors dig into the river bottom, stabilizing the bridge's position.

The 1437th MRBC used many of its skilled boat operators throughout the project to place the pontoons for pinning and welding and to hold the bridge in place until the anchor system was complete. The current was swift, and it took all of their skill to keep the bridge steady. Steadying the pontoons to get the separate bridge decking in place was the critical part of the job. If anchoring hadn't gone well, the bridge wouldn't have been built. Soldiers had to keep adjusting their boats so the Seabees could drop the anchors.

The 1437th also ferried construction equipment across the Tigris River to facilitate the construction of the far shore bridgehead. Another mission the unit performed with Marines from the First Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group was using 28-foot powerboats to provide river reconnaissance and security for the bridge project. This allowed the bridge crews to work without being fired upon; no hostile incidents occurred at the site.

The last bridges built in combat by the Sault Ste. Marie unit were treadway bridges across the Pukkhan and Humsong Rivers by the 1437th Engineer Treadway Bridge Company during the Korean War. One of those bridges was built within



Engineers drive in the final pins to connect the near shore with the rest of the bridge.

800 yards of combat between Republic of Korea and North Korean troops. 

Sergeant First Class Milligan is the 1437th Multirole Bridge Company's mess chief. The unit was mobilized from the 107th Engineer Battalion in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from January 2003 through July 2003.

The Engineer Writer's Guide

Engineer is a professional-development bulletin designed to provide a forum for exchanging information and ideas within the Army engineer community. We include articles by and about officers, enlisted soldiers, warrant officers, Department of the Army civilian employees, and others. Writers may discuss training, current operations and exercises, doctrine, equipment, history, personal viewpoints, or other areas of general interest to engineers. Articles may share good ideas and lessons learned or explore better ways of doing things.

Articles should be concise, straightforward, and in the active voice. If they contain attributable information or quotations not referenced in the text, provide appropriate endnotes. Text length should not exceed 2,000 words (about eight double-spaced pages). Shorter after-action-type articles and reviews of books on engineer topics are also welcome.

Include photos (with captions) and/or line diagrams that illustrate information in the article. Please do not include illustrations or photos in the text; instead, send each of them as a separate file. Do not embed photos in PowerPoint. If illustrations are in PowerPoint, avoid excessive use of color and shading. Save digital images at a resolution no lower than 200 dpi. Images copied from a Web site must be accompanied by copyright permission.

Provide a short paragraph that summarizes the content of the article. Also include a short biography, including your full name, rank, current unit, and job title; a list of

your past assignments, experience, and education; your mailing address; and a fax number and commercial daytime telephone number.

Include a statement with your article from your local security office that the information contained in the article is unclassified, nonsensitive, and releasable to the public. Not only is *Engineer* distributed to military units worldwide, it is also available for sale by the Government Printing Office.

We cannot guarantee that we will publish all submitted articles. They are accepted for publication only after thorough review. If we plan to use your article in an upcoming issue, we will notify you. Therefore it is important to keep us informed of changes in your e-mail address or telephone number. All articles accepted for publication are subject to grammatical and structural changes as well as editing for style.

Send submissions by e-mail to <pbd@wood.army.mil> or send a 3 1/2-inch disk in Microsoft Word, along with a double-spaced copy of the manuscript, to: Editor, *Engineer Professional Bulletin*, 320 MANSCEN Loop, Suite 210, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri 65473-8929.

Note: Please indicate if your manuscript is being considered for publication elsewhere. Due to the limited space per issue, we do not print articles that have been accepted for publication by other Army professional bulletins.