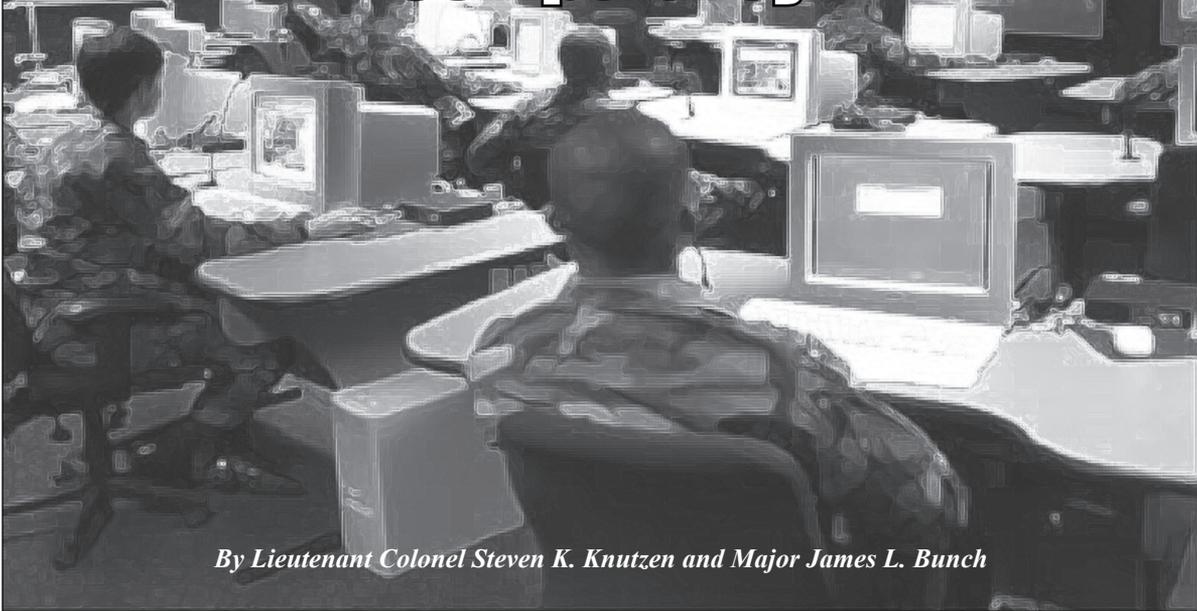


ECCC-RC Improves Technical Competency



By Lieutenant Colonel Steven K. Knutzen and Major James L. Bunch

Lead the way. The phrase is not new to Reserve Component (RC) engineer officers. As the Regiment continues to support the War on Terrorism, RC officers are expected to be leaders in their communities or industries one day and on the cutting edge of maneuver support and protection operations the next. Army National Guard and United States Army Reserve engineers are now involved in a nation-building and reconstruction effort unlike any since the reconstruction of Europe and Japan following World War II. Technical skills—especially in construction project management (PM) and contract administration—are sorely needed. Since its inception, the United States Army Engineer School has provided an overview of construction methods, and currently does so in its Basic Officer Leader Course, the Engineer Captains Career Course (ECCC), and the Engineer Captains Career Course-Reserve Component (ECCC-RC). Officers in the field have asked for more such training and ECCC-RC is moving to deliver.

Since 13 December 1636, when the oldest Army engineer unit (now designated the 101st Engineer Battalion, Massachusetts Army National Guard) was organized by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Engineer Regiment has supported our country with full-spectrum engineer operations. The ability of engineer officers to provide the technical expertise to fulfill the needs of the nation has sometimes been questioned. This has been mainly a process of self-reflection to assess the engineers' abilities and ensure that they can meet operational needs. The Regiment has again reached a point of questioning its ability to meet the technical competencies needed to fulfill today's operational requirements.

ECCC-RC Changes

Two of the engineer technical competency areas being questioned today are—

- PM skills.
- Contracting officer representative (COR) or fiscal responsibility training.

As a result, starting 1 October 2009, the following seven changes to the ECCC-RC will be instituted:

Change 1

Add a COR course to Phase II. A 40-hour block of instruction via distributed learning (dL) will cover the complete COR course, and completion will be required before attending Phase III. All students will receive Army COR certification from this block of instruction. The course will be taught once each quarter via the Engineer School Blackboard system and will have live feedback from the instructor. This instruction is being added without the allocation of any additional resources. We have already received requests from RC officers who are not currently enrolled in ECCC-RC to receive this training, and the staff is working to obtain the resources necessary to implement this training for all RC engineer officers. A pilot course will be conducted during the fourth quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2008, and earlier ECCC-RC graduates will be given the opportunity to participate.

Change 2

Enhance the infrastructure reconnaissance (IR) training during Phase III. A critical task to providing engineer support

during stability operations is conducting a thorough IR. Currently, warrant officers receive training on a tool called “It Knows Everything,” or IKE, which facilitates rapid integration of IR data, coupled with a reachback capability and reporting and analysis functions. Starting in the first quarter of FY 2009, a full day of IR instruction using IKE will be provided using local community infrastructure. Tasks to be trained are as follows:

- Introduction to IR (2.5 hours)
- It Knows Everything (2 hours)
- Hands-On IR Practical Exercise (5.5 hours)

Change 3

Add 1-hour blocks of instruction on the history of combat engineering and civil works engineering. This will serve as an introduction to the branch to facilitate inclusion of officers seeking branch transfer to the Engineer Regiment. These lessons have already been piloted and will be taught during Phase III, effective immediately.

Change 4

Add an introduction to engineer personnel and equipment to Phase III. A 4-hour overview of engineer equipment and personnel will familiarize officers with the equipment that will be discussed and integrated into tactical plans for the remainder of Phase III. Equipment demonstrations and subject matter expert interaction will be used when possible. This instruction is intended to serve as refresher training to students returning to the Engineer School and as a first-time overview for branch-transfer officers. Full implementation of this training will begin in FY 2009.

Change 5

Restructure and enhance PM instruction. This will align with the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) developed by the Project Management Institute (PMI). A 35-hour dL module will be added to Phase IV, along with an optional 35-hour advanced PM module. The training will allow officers to sit for the PMI Certified Associate in Project Management/Project Manager Professional exams to earn certification, depending on PM experience. A pilot course will run during the fourth quarter of FY 2008, and recent ECCC-RC graduates will be notified and invited to participate. Full implementation will begin in FY 2009. New PM topics include the following:

- Introduction to PM (2.5 hours)
- Project Life Cycles and Stakeholders (2 hours)
- Introduction to Project Process Groups and Initiating a Project (1.5 hours)
- Project Planning (2.5 hours)
- Executing, Monitoring, Controlling, and Closing a Project (1.5 hours)

- Initiating a Project and Preparing the Project Plan (2.5 hours)
- Planning Project Scope (1.5 hours)
- Project Scheduling (3.0 hours)
- Estimating Activity Costs (1.5 hours)
- Planning for Quality (2.0 hours)
- Communications Planning and Information Distribution (2.5 hours)
- Planning and Identifying Project Risk (2.5 hours)
- PM Practical Exercise (10 hours)

Change 6

Add 10 hours of “hands-on” PM training and a 12-hour construction capstone exercise to Phase V. PM training will provide reinforcement training to the Phase IV PM instruction through a 10-hour practical exercise using Microsoft® Project and the Theater Construction Management System (TCMS). This will lead into the 12-hour construction capstone exercise, a military decision-making process-driven engineer battalion planning exercise. Additional instruction will also be provided on force protection and environmental laws.

Change 7

Add counterinsurgency/urban operations instruction to Phase V. Training will include the following topics, which will be integrated with the capstone combined arms exercise scenario:

- History of Counterinsurgency (1 hour)
- Urban Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (1.5 hours)
- Urban Operations Practical Exercise (3 hours)

Summary

Support of full-spectrum operations requires highly trained RC engineer officers, and ECCC-RC has been updated to meet the growing complexity of the problems faced by the Regiment. Though not the complete answer to the overwhelming requests for more technical training, the revisions to ECCC-RC represent a large step in the right direction. It is an exciting time to be an engineer officer, and RC engineers are leading the way!

For more information about the changes to ECCC-RC, e-mail Major Bunch at <james.bunch@us.army.mil>. 

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