

OPERATION Sand Castle 2007

By Brigadier General Jeffrey W. Talley

Operation Sand Castle 2007 was an Army Reserve exercise designed to challenge engineers to perform their mission in a tactical combat environment. The exercise consisted of several phases, including thousands of man-hours of planning; predeployment preparation; reception, staging, and onward integration (RSOI); stability operations; and the safe redeployment of all equipment and personnel. The overall goal of the exercise was to provide each command team within the 926th Engineer Brigade the ability to train their unit as it will fight, with the stresses, operational tempo (OPTEMPO), challenges, and danger the current battlefield presents. The National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, was the perfect backdrop for this training.

The 926th Engineer Brigade was task-organized with units that are not a normal part of its peacetime command, but with careful planning we successfully integrated and succeeded at our combat and construction-effects missions. We built permanent additions to NTC's training facilities, while maintaining a tactical posture throughout the exercise. Our task-organized engineers, through much sweat and hard work, made NTC a more robust and effective training facility—with new buildings, improved roads, and processed material ready for use in future projects. *Some of these projects are described in the articles on pages 23 through 33.*

All Soldiers are Warriors first and their respective military occupational specialties second. Everything we do must be focused on helping brigade combat teams (BCTs) and maneuver divisions project combat power. My goal during Operation Sand Castle 2007 was to train all Soldiers and units to execute individual and collective tasks under wartime conditions, while in support of the 3d BCT, 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized). We clearly achieved that goal!

The opportunity to train alongside the BCT and exercise our tactical skills in addition to our engineering skills was of immeasurable value. We must not forget the lessons learned from this exercise and must implement them throughout the training year. Together, we must have Soldiers and units ready to deploy and fight as a team.

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