

# Before Equipment and Training, There Must Be Engineering

By Major Thomas D. Heinold

**T**he Multinational Security Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTC–I) has the mission “to assist the Iraqi government in the development, organization, training, equipping, and sustaining of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and ministries capable of defeating terrorism and providing a stable environment in which representative government, individual freedom, the rule of law, and the free market economy can evolve and which, in time, will contribute to Iraq’s external security and the security of the Gulf Region.”<sup>1</sup> None of this would be possible without facilities and the engineers it takes to plan, design, and construct them.

Fortunately, MNSTC–I has thought about that, even if it’s only implied in the mission statement above. The engineer staff (J-7) is ready to provide the facilities needed to stand up a national defense system for Iraq. Two separate sides of the J-7 execute these programs: the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), which is focused on the Iraqi Police (IP), and the Ministry of Defense (MOD), which is focused on the armed forces. Headquartered at Phoenix Base in Baghdad’s International Zone, the J-7 facilitates a program that builds everything from ablution facilities to ranges. The MNSTC–I J-7 supports the headquarters and subordinate transition teams by providing suitable and lasting infrastructure for the ISF by planning, budgeting,

and executing an infrastructure program with coalition and Iraqi funding. The J-7 also supports the ISF ministerial transition team mission with mentorship in the following areas:

- Infrastructure
- Long-term programming
- Policies
- Budgeting
- Execution
- Accountability
- Recapitalization programs
- Maintenance programs

The MOI section is primarily in charge of facilities for the IP, which involves police stations, training academies, ranges, and border forts. Iraq shares borders with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Kuwait, so the IP have their hands full patrolling and manning border checkpoints. They ensure that no weapons of mass destruction are transported to support Al Qaeda or other terrorists, maintain order, and enforce trade and transportation laws. In addition to the facilities at road and pipeline crossings at the borders,



Facilities for an Iraqi army infantry brigade include billeting, dining facilities, headquarters and administration buildings, maintenance bays, and a fuel station.



**This obstacle course for an Iraqi army infantry division is under contract to an all-Iraqi construction company.**

internal security is also required. As the Iraqis stand up additional police forces and are issued new equipment, they need places to train, maintain, and operate those forces. The J-7 MOI is delivering on all counts.

The MOD section services the needs of the Iraqi armed forces, to include the following:

- Iraqi Ground Forces Command
- Director General of Intelligence Services
- Iraqi MOD
- Iraq's 13 Army divisions
- Iraqi Air Force
- Regional training centers
- Divisional training centers
- Iraqi Army Service Support Institute
- National maintenance and supply depots
- Besmaya Range Complex
- Other facilities required to build a trained, equipped, and sustainable armed force.

Once a requirement is identified—whether for billeting space, maintenance facilities, offices and administrative buildings, or training areas—the J-7 MOD works with the requesting organization to develop the requirement. This includes examining whether the Iraqis can use existing facilities, deciding if it would be more economical to renovate existing facilities or build new ones, answering questions about what the Iraqis will be able to operate and maintain in the long term once the

project is completed, and determining the delivery date required.

There is such a staggering volume of effort required to provide facilities for all of the Iraqi security elements that very often the required delivery date has passed and there are already Iraqi units that need the facilities. In these cases, the J-7 has to prioritize work and request the shortest possible contract periods of performance while still providing a safe, quality project that will provide years of service. In a high operating tempo environment, the process is quicker than similar processes back home. Projects that would normally take months or even years to authorize and fund in a peacetime stateside environment may take only days in Iraq. Similarly, military construction projects that would take years on American soil may only take months in Iraq.

Between the MOI and MOD sections, the J-7 engineers have completed more than 520 construction projects valued at more than \$1.5 billion. To deliver all of the requirements not yet met, they are now managing the ongoing development, acquisition, and construction of more than 220 projects. MNSTC-I is helping to build up the Iraqi capability for future construction contracting. More and more work is being done by Iraqi firms that have been working alongside U.S. contractors in Iraq, and the unskilled laborers hired for many projects obtain valuable on-the-job training that can qualify them as skilled laborers.

As the skilled labor base develops, Iraqi firms are beginning to assemble capable workforces that can deliver construction projects. Although it takes extra effort to overcome the language barrier and enforce contract standards that are new to the Iraqis, the effort will pay off in the long run. The Iraqi government will develop a contracting system, Iraqi contractors will become more capable, and U.S. forces will be able to step out of the picture and hand over the J-7 functions of the MNSTC-I to the Iraqis. One such success story is a Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan project that was awarded to an all-Iraqi company. Although most people thought the period of performance given to the contractor was practically unattainable, the J-7 established effective communication with the contractor and helped him through a new submittal process. After 60 days, the contractor was nearly finished constructing an obstacle course for divisional unit training at the Besmaya Range Complex, which is akin to the United States Army's National Training Center.

The contract development cell (CDC) is a J-7 section dedicated to tracking new requirements, developing contract documents to meet those requirements, deciding upon the contract

vehicle, coordinating with other MNSTC-I sections to ensure that they have provided authorization and funding for the requirements, and executing the contracting process to deliver the facilities needed by the Iraqis. The cell is a team of senior engineers and technicians working with elements within the MNSTC-I, which in turn works with the Iraqis and identifies what their facilities needs are. Those elements include the following:

- MNSTC-I supply/logistics
- Coalition Army, Air Force, and Navy transition teams
- Intelligence Transition Team
- MOD Advisory Team
- Coalition Police Assistance Transition Team
- Other advisory groups to the ISF that work to develop force generation plans, training plans, and schedules for equipping troops
- Any agency that requires facilities or infrastructure

The next step is approval by a program, budget, and acquisition council, a senior-level working group that meets within MNSTC-I to ensure that funds are spent appropriately. Once the element that originated the requirement gets council approval, it requests funding and provides an approved funding document to the finance section, which then funds the appropriate contracting agency. Then the cell goes to work, developing the statement of requirements or plans and specifications as appropriate, choosing the most appropriate or efficient contracting method, and following through with the contracting agency to get the project out for bids.

Keeping track of requirements is increasingly difficult as Iraqi forces stand up, identify new needs, and deploy to the front lines to fight the War on Terrorism. The J-7 works closely with the Coalition Air Force Training Team and the Coalition Army Advisory Training Team to provide facilities that support Iraqi force generation and force sustainment. As the Iraqis increase their capabilities, they constantly change or update their missions and often deploy to take on the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fights. At times, this leaves vacant some of their basing infrastructure, so there is a constant need to reutilize or rehabilitate existing facilities, or construct new facilities to enhance the flexibility of those who will soon assume the security mission here.

MNSTC-I uses three main contracting vehicles: the United States Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division, the Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan, and the Air Force Center for Engineering and the Environment. The J-7 works closely with all three to ensure that—

- Contracts are solicited and bids submitted in a timely manner.
- Delivery dates are coordinated with the needs of the Iraqi forces using the projects.

- Projects are supervised and administered closely to meet the specifications and deadlines in the contracts.

Ever since the invasion in 2003 decimated Saddam's armed forces, coalition forces have been in Iraq fighting terrorism, keeping the peace, and rebuilding the country. Not all of the construction is funded with U.S. dollars though. As the Iraqi government becomes more capable, more Iraqi money is funding projects, and U.S. funding is falling off. For the first few years of Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. funding constituted nearly 100 percent of the projects built for Iraq. However, there are no new requirements now being delivered with U.S. dollars. More and more, the Iraqi MOI and MOD are authorizing cases for the Foreign Military Sales program. These cases begin with a letter of request that identifies a requirement, which leads to the actual authorizing document, a letter of offer and acceptance. After that letter is signed, the Iraqi government provides funding to the American government, and MNSTC-I executes the requirement.

Although the government of Iraq is starting to develop capabilities for its own construction contracting, coalition forces still possess a unique capability that the Iraqis do not yet have up and running. Although U.S. expenditures are starting to shrink for MNSTC-I, the J-7's task will remain the same—to deliver the facilities the Iraqi forces need. Until the Iraqi forces have the facilities they need, the J-7 will remain poised to deliver them so that Iraq can equip and train its forces to assume full responsibility for the security mission in their country. 

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#### Endnote

<sup>1</sup>Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq mission statement, "Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq directorate pages," <<http://www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil>>.