National Training Center (NTC)

SWEAT

By Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Magness and Major James Ahearn

The status of infrastructure, and the ability to show improvement, is critical to the success of the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan. NTC is addressing this issue by preparing units to assess infrastructural deficiencies and develop plans to remedy critical shortfalls. By aggressively seeking to determine the current state of infrastructure through assessment and interaction with local leaders—and then using all available assets to design and implement solutions—units will be successful in achieving their intended effects and reaching overall strategic goals.

SWEAT Assessment

Although there are variations among units, NTC defines "SWEAT" as the status of sewage, water, electricity, academics, and trash. The SWEAT assessment simply provides a format for assessing these conditions. During reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI), rotational units are given the task of performing an assessment of actual facilities on Fort Irwin, such as the sewage treatment facility and the electrical distribution system. As the rotation progresses, units should continue this process by conducting an assessment of each town in the area of operations.

Many Soldiers are daunted by the task of performing an evaluation of something such as a power plant, but there are tools available to help. One such product is the SWEAT Smart Book, a tool produced by the Sidewinder team in collaboration with the United States Military Academy faculty, the United States Army Engineer School, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers® (USACE). The Smart Book is an easy-to-use guide that identifies the basics of facility operations and provides checklists of information required for further analysis. The SWEAT Smart Book and other associated infrastructure assessment tools are available for distribution through the Sidewinder Team at NTC or online at the Sidewinder home page <*http://www.irwin.army.mil/Units/Operations+Group/Sidewinder*>. (Select "Resources" from the menu.)

In addition to assessments conducted by the unit, a great deal of information is available through local leaders and public officials. This information is also helpful because it indicates the most pressing needs as seen by those who are the end users of each system. By addressing critical needs first, coalition forces are able to demonstrate their resolve to improve the living conditions of the average citizen. Doing so eventually robs the insurgency of its legitimacy. Training units are able to conduct assessments, develop plans and specifications, and project scopes of work and initiate contracting measures for proposed infrastructure projects.

Professional Assistance

NTC and USACE have recently teamed up to provide even more realistic training by deploying a Forward Engineer Support Team (FEST) during rotations. This team, comprised of USACE military and civilian personnel, works in support of the brigade. The team's professional background provides the ability to produce comprehensive design work, to include identification of resources required for each project. In addition, the FEST brings with it a Tele-Engineering Kit, which enables the team to simultaneously interact with research and design facilities worldwide, bringing the full weight of USACE to the fight.

A recent addition to the NTC rotation is Soldiers from the engineer prime power battalion. Working in conjunction with the FEST, the battalion is trained and ready to enable the brigade combat team (BCT) to assess and improve electrical infrastructure in the forward operating bases (FOBs) and the supported town populations.

A USACE FEST conducts an assessment in Medina Wasl, a mock Iraqi training village at NTC.

Project Management

BCTs are often challenged to fully leverage the engineer capabilities within their ranks and to make any meaningful progress with regard to infrastructure and project delivery during a 14-day rotation. While the BCT includes a variety of units with the requisite skills and tools (SWEAT Smart Books, FESTs, and prime power members; trained combat and construction engineers; and civil affairs specialists), they are generally best served by a dedicated organization with the leadership and staff support to meet the monumental tasks associated with reconstruction.

As trainers for the special troops battalions (STBs)—or brigade troops battalions (BTBs) in our current doctrine—within the BCT, the Sidewinders continue to take observations from the theater and apply them to the training scenario and with NTC rotational units. Currently, deployed BTBs often have the lead role for reconstruction within their supported BCTs, leveraging the capabilities of its staff and leaders for what is among the top operational priorities for our forces. Deployed units have determined the magnitude of a reconstruction program with hundreds of individual projects valued in the tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. Requirements for work inspections, pay agent duties, and military and civilian liaison responsibilities across the brigade's area of responsibility are worthy of focused (command) oversight. As the doctrinal command and control node for attached units such as FESTs, prime power, civil affairs, and engineers, STBs/BTBs are often in the best position to build and lead the team to address the infrastructure needs, in coordination with the Iraqi government leadership. The Sidewinders have developed a suite of tools to assist those units that are assigned the reconstruction/project management mission, to include staff products and project management tools.

Summary

As units aggressively seek to employ all available skills and tools in the collection and analysis of relevant information—and then develop coherent, achievable goals—they find themselves postured for success in the battle for the hearts and minds of the local population. By showing tangible progress in the daily life of average citizens through steady, meaningful improvements to critical infrastructure, coalition forces will earn their trust and respect, denying the enemy the same. This is just as important to success at NTC as it is in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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