



# Capturing the Lessons of War - The Engineer Perspective on Operation Iraqi Freedom

By Lieutenant Colonel Jack Drolet and Major Glen Masset

Upon completion of Phase III of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. Army Engineer School determined the need for a comprehensive review of engineer issues. The forum for this was achieved from 3-5 November 2003, when senior leaders of the Engineer Regiment met in Savannah, Georgia, in conjunction with the Savannah post of the Society of American Military Engineers and the Army Engineer Association Regional Conference. As an integral part of the conference, a Warfighter track was established to give leaders an opportunity to hear from those who participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom and to discuss emerging issues for engineer units and soldiers.

The conference began with presentations ranging from operational planning down to the tactical execution of ground combat. The intent was to have the operational perspective set the foundation for tactical-level presentations. To examine all aspects of the conflict, representatives from the sister services and coalition partners presented their views of engineer operations. The culmination of the conference was a series of breakout sessions designed to stimulate discussion and generate issues that need to be resolved for both present and future engineer operations.

Colonel Charles Smithers, assistant chief of staff, C7 (Engineer), 3d Army/Army Central Command (ARCENT)/Coalition Force Land Component Command (CFLCC), and Colonel John Lendrum, G3, 416th Engineer Command, provided the operational-level presentations and highlighted theater planning, the design of engineer force packages, and the unique aspects of command and control of Active and Reserve Component unit deployment. The joint and multinational panel consisted of Colonel Michael Boyd, U.S. Marine Corps, Colonel Neil Kanno, U.S. Air Force, Captain William McKerall, U.S. Navy, and Colonel John Shanahan, United Kingdom Royal Engineers, who discussed engineering aspects from their services' perspectives and joined in a panel discussion with members of the conference. The tactical-level perspective was provided by Colonel Gregg Martin, Commander, 130th Engineer Brigade, and Colonel John Peabody, who commanded the 3d Infantry Division's Engineer Brigade. This forum provided a close look at the tactical employment of engineers on the drive to Baghdad.

The panel discussion provided a candid view of some of the most critical engineer issues facing the Regiment today. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) involvement was detailed by Major General Carl Strock, Director of Civil Works, USACE. His presentation outlined the wide breadth of USACE involvement, from support to the Coalition Provisional Authority in restoring the basic infrastructure of Iraq, down to direct support of combat forces on the battlefield. Breakout sessions were designed in a round-robin fashion to ensure that all conference participants were able to discuss each of the subject areas of battle command, mobility, and construction.

In total, the Engineer School has formally captured roughly sixty engineer issues taken from Operation Iraqi Freedom lessons learned (Phases I through III). To address these issues, the school has assembled an Operation Iraqi Freedom doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leader development, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) action officer board, with representation from across the Maneuver Support Center. The purpose of this board is to analyze engineer lessons learned in detail and formally document recommendations for improving the Regiment, utilizing the full DOTMLPF framework. The ultimate goal is to implement actions to resolve the majority of these issues or explain why an issue cannot or should not be solved. As this board continues its work, it will share periodic updates with the field and intends to publish a formal document before ENFORCE 2004 (26-30 April).

As Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom missions continue into the future, we encourage units to keep sending relevant lessons learned and after-action reviews to the Engineer School Center for Engineer Lessons Learned (CELL). Submissions remain vitally important to support the Current Force and to take into consideration as we shape our Future Force. Unclassified information can be sent to the CELL by e-mail to <reggie.snodgrass@us.army.mil>. Classified information can be sent by secret Internet protocol, routed (SIPR) e-mail to <massetga@monroe.army.smil.mil>.



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