Engineer Roles in Stabilizing Haiti



Brigadier General Phillip R. Anderson spoke with Catherine Eubanks about his recent tour as Commander, U.S. Support Group Haiti, and Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Forces Haiti under United Nations control.

Q. *When were you in Haiti, and what were your responsibilities there?*

A. I was in Haiti from 12 June until 28 November 1995. That was well after the 31 March departure of the multinational forces, led by the United States. With their departure, the multinational forces turned over their duties to the U.N. Mission in Haiti (UNMIH).

While there, I wore two hats. Under the U.N. flag, I served as the Deputy Commanding General of U.S. Forces in Haiti. In that capacity I served as the principal advisor to Major General Joe Kinzer, who was both the United Nations and the United States Forces Commander. My duties for MG Kinzer focused on command matters of administration, logistics, engineering, discipline and internal organization. In my second job, as Commander of the U.S. Support Group Haiti, I was charged with setting up a self-sufficient organization capable of conducting U.S./Haiti bilateral and U.S. unilateral support missions under an exercise called Fair Winds. Basically, if the United States wanted or needed to provide some type of support not readily endorsed by the United Nations, we tried to provide it through the U.S. Support Group Haiti and Exercise Fair Winds.

Q. *What was the United Nations' mission in Haiti?*

A. U.N. Security Council Resolution 940 stated that the U.N. mission was to assist the democratic government of Haiti in sustaining a secure and stable environment. This mission was accomplished by providing about 800 U.N.-sponsored civilian police from several nations, who assisted the interim public security force and the Haitian national police. Also, a 6,000-man multinational military force was used to secure the peace and help establish an environment conducive to the conduct of free and fair elections—free of intimidation, with readily identifiable polling places, and workable administrative and logistics support systems. The UNMIH mission also included protecting international personnel and key installations. For example, we protected ambassadors and consulates and key installations like the presidential palace, the international airport and the international seaport. Finally, the UNMIH mission included training a new Haitian national police force. That program eventually resulted in fielding about 5,000 new police officers. All of them were trained in Haiti and about 2,900 also received training here at Fort Leonard Wood.

Q. *Can you explain the U.S. unilateral mission?*

A. The Support Group Haiti mission was to provide additional U.S. support, not sponsored or resourced by the U.N., through a METL (mission



Photo by 1LT Jason Smallfield

Air Force REDHORSE engineers renovated the outpatient clinic of the hospital in Port-au-Prince. These hardback tents were used by hospital personnel during the renovation. The same design was used to house engineers at their base camp.

essential task list) oriented overseas deployment-for-training exercise called Fair Winds. The intent was to provide appropriate units (like engineer, medical or aviation units from all services) with quality training opportunities while simultaneously assisting the government of Haiti in strengthening its fragile democracy.

Q. *What engineer capabilities were in Haiti to support these missions?*

A. Let me answer that in two parts. First, under the U.N. flag, there was the Canadian-American Engineer Battalion, called the *Can-Am Engineer Battalion*. In that combined unit, the United States provided the battalion-level command and control and the horizontal construction capabilities while the Canadians provided the vertical construction capability. The U.S. units in the Can-Am Battalion initially included the 92d Engineer Battalion from Fort Stewart and, later, the 46th Engineer Battalion from Fort Polk. Brown & Root, also under the U.N. flag, provided additional engineer expertise. They were under contract with the United Nations to perform engineering services and to provide logistical support to the deployed force.

Under the U.S. Support Group Haiti, there were significant engineer capabilities. The joint engineer staff included an Air Force lieutenant colonel, who directed the engineer staff; a Navy lieutenant commander, who handled all of the real estate actions, design concepts, cost estimates, and contract administration; and an Army major and several captains and noncommissioned officers, who had project management responsibilities. About 150 Air Force REDHORSE personnel provided both horizontal and vertical construction capabilities; later they were joined by about 100 Navy Seabees with both horizonal and vertical construction skills.

Q. *How did engineers contribute to the U.N. mission?*

A. I should address the engineers' contributions in terms of overlapping phases. The first phase of work under the U.N. flag largely focused on force-protection measures. Engineers made sure that the base camps and key installations were constructed properly to protect the force with the right kind of guard posts and bunker facilities. Force-protection measures later included expedient repairs to selected infrastructure to avoid potential crisis situations. Repairs to the prison in Port-au-Prince was one example. We found the prison to be in a horrible state of repair. Unless we improved the lighting, security, and water and sanitation systems, U.N. forces would constantly face the potential for prison riots. Engineers under the U.N. flag were placed in that prison, where they made expedient and rudimentary repairs to stabilize the situation and thereby reduce the likelihood of a prison riot.

After force protection, the next phase focused on force beddown. The Can-Am Engineer Battalion did most of the force beddown construction at multiple base camps around the country. Their work was supplemented by Brown & Root under contract with the United Nations. Brown & Root personnel usually made improvements to the base camps built by the Can-Am engineers. For example, they improved water-distribution and sanitation systems and installed air conditioners in some dining facilities and recreation centers to improve our foxholes, so to speak, and make the base camps more liveable.

The third and final engineer phase to the U.N. mission I should highlight is the contribution of civil-affairs projects. Engineers made significant improvements to roads, bridges, and water-distribution systems. They provided expert advice and counsel to officials of the Haitian government responsible for power generation, reforestation, sanitation, and public safety. After meeting the force-protection and force-beddown requirements, engineers completed many civil-affairs projects to support the long-term security and stability of Haiti.

Q. *How did the tasks completed by the U.S. Support Group Haiti differ from those already discussed?*

A. Engineers not under the U.N. flag had a somewhat different mission. Recall, their mission was to provide U.S. support while hosting overseas deployment-for-training opportunities that would assist the emerging democratic government of Haiti. The first thing the U.S. Support Group Haiti did was to construct a base camp to accommodate incoming U.S. forces. They included engineers, aviators, and some logisticians, with plans to accommodate some follow-on medical units.

After the base camp was constructed, projects to be performed were largely negotiated with the government of Haiti. For example, the Haitians would identify a candidate project to meet some emergency infrastructure requirement, such as a road, bridge, school, or hospital. The units scheduled to deploy and work under U.S. Support Group Haiti then compared the candidate projects with their training requirements. After matching a Haitian infrastructure requirement with a METL-oriented unit training requirement, we proceeded with preliminary designs and cost estimates. Eventually this led to a government-to-government agreement defining

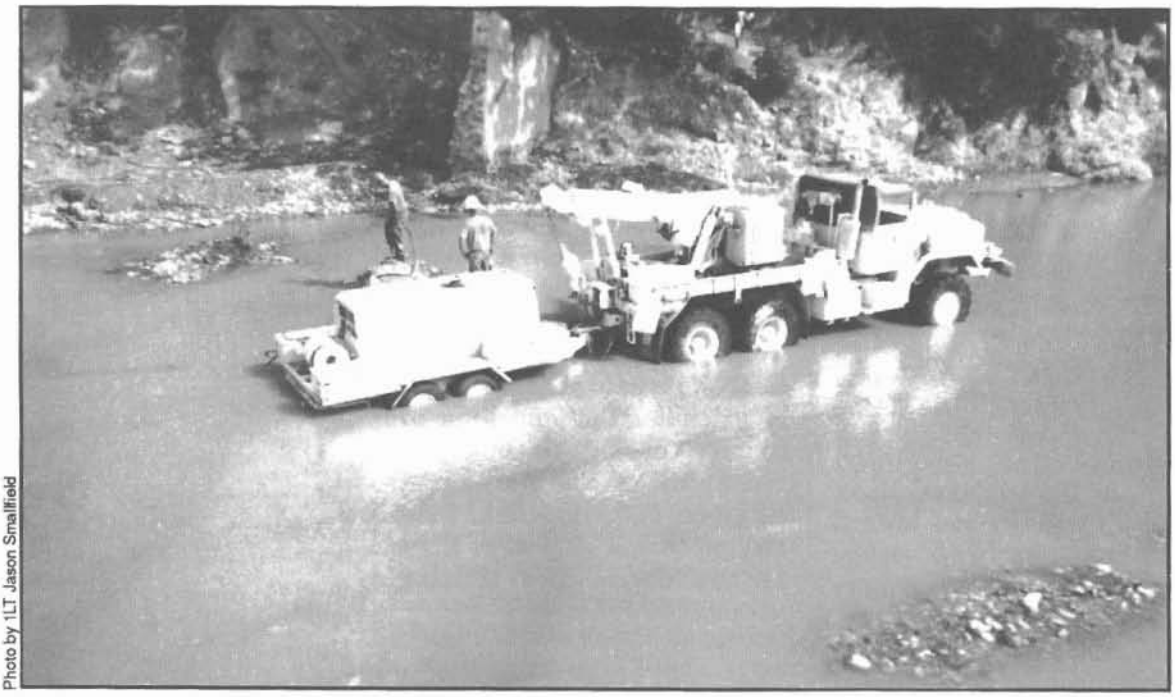


Photo by 1LT Jason Smallfield

U.N. engineers replaced the bridge on a road near Jacmel, which was destroyed in a hurricane. Here, soldiers from the 92nd Engineer Battalion, Fort Stewart, demolish the old bridge abutments to make way for the new construction.



Photo by 1LT Jason Smallfield

Air Force REDHORSE units renovated six schools in Haiti. Here, airmen construct the floor for a new building at the Peru School after the old building collapsed.

project scope and funding requirements.

As a result of this negotiated approach to projects for the Support Group to execute, engineers completed a $500,000 hospital renovation in Port-au-Prince. This renovation greatly improved the hospital's outpatient service. They also renovated six schools in Port-au-Prince at a cost of $330,000.

Incidently, materials for the hospital and the schools were funded by the U.S. Government. Once we demonstrated the capabilities of U.S. military engineers to assist the government of Haiti, we hoped that international donors would offer to fund future worthy projects to keep our military engineers gainfully employed. We were successful with this strategy. After demonstrating our skills in the hospital and school projects, the Inter-American Development Bank contributed $1 million toward a four-lane concrete highway through one of the worst parts of Port-au-Prince, right along the waterfront. Other projects on the horizon for international funding included water wells and additional school renovations. So a combination of U.S. and international funding allowed the Support Group to make the best use of the military engineer talent sent to Haiti for training and to complete emergency infrastructure repairs.

Q. *Were you able to avoid mission creep while completing the additional projects?*

A. Mission creep was not a problem because the deploying engineer units typically rotated to Haiti for 6 months and therefore negotiated a 6-month package of projects to complete during their deployment. When units had unexpected delays in acquiring materials or support, we would determine how to best complete that project—either by extending the unit's time in country or by passing the remainder of the work to a follow-on unit. But units were able to complete most of their projects during their training period.

Q. *In other words, units could select the kinds of projects they wanted to accomplish?*

A. Exactly. The saying that "everything in Haiti is broken except for the human spirit" is true. With so many projects needing to be done, it was easy to match candidate projects with unit training requirements. The real issues became how to best fund projects and acquire the materials to accomplish them quickly.

Q. *Was the end state clear before you went to Haiti, or were you instrumental in developing it?*

A. For the United Nations, the end state was very clear. As mentioned earlier, the U.N.'s mission statement was spelled out in a Security Council resolution. But there was no clear end state for the U.S. Support Group, because one of our objectives was to maintain a U.S. presence in Haiti after the United Nations' planned departure. Our intent was to demonstrate the continuing interest of the United States and our continuing concern for Haiti's growth and progress toward becoming a stronger and more self-sufficient democracy.

Q. *Do you have some insights or lessons to help engineers involved with peacekeeping operations?*

A. I don't have any new lessons or new insights, but I have some relevant observations. The first deals with the importance of joint engineer doctrine and our need to clearly understand joint engineer operations. Here at the Army Engineer School, we are working hard with the other services to establish joint engineer doctrine for contingency operations. That doctrine must address command and control relationships as well as staff relationships. For example, should there be an independent engineer on every joint staff, or is it OK for the staff engineer to work for the senior staff logistician or someone in the staff operations chain? The consensus here tends to be that an independent engineer staff officer needs to answer to the commander and that we need to retain independent command and control of our engineer organizations to be more responsive to the commander.

Another observation from Haiti concerns the value of multinational engineer operations. Canadian engineers brought fantastic talent to the construction requirements in Haiti. Their vertical construction skills far exceed those of our combat heavy battalions. That is largely because of the Canadians' intensive training programs and because they have journeyman-level expertise in their junior grades.

Another observation pertaining to peace operations is the value of seeking coalition project support and sponsorship versus just national sponsorship. There are many opportunities to use the resources of organizations like the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank to fund military engineer training projects. In the future we could propose that the United States provide the military personnel and equipment, construct the base camp, provide the design and project management, but request a cost-sharing arrangement with non-U.S. sponsors to purchase required materials and fuel. That proved to be a cost-effective way of sponsoring some projects in Haiti. As a result, U.S. military units acquired significant training benefits without prohibitive costs to the U.S. Government. We should pursue this resourcing method in future operations.

It was evident to me that the engineers always provided a visible measure of progress in Haiti. That was important as we tried to assess if we were making any progress in helping to establish a more secure and stable environment. Sometimes it was difficult to see something visible or tangible that signified a major improvement. Tangible results were evident after parliamentary elections were held, and we could see progress after a significant number of new Haitian national police were fielded. But on a regular basis, the Haitian people and many international observers measured progress through our engineer projects. They could see how a renovated hospital or school represented tangible and real progress. Frequently large crowds would surround our projects to watch the work in progress and imagine the benefits they would gain in the future.

I can't overemphasize the importance of prioritizing the engineer effort. With more projects in Haiti than we could ever complete, we had to evaluate construction requirements and select projects with the greatest payoffs. We always focused on work we were capable of doing that had the greatest benefit to the overall mission.

Let me speak briefly about preparing for military operations other than war or what we now refer to as stability and support operations. Army engineers must continue to train on their wartime METL. This is the training necessary to be successful in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and humanitarian relief operations. We hear a lot of discussion about the need to change our wartime METL to accommodate peacetime operations. I say "no." Simply continue to focus on the wartime METL and temper it with a good understanding of the rules of engagement and some appropriate situational training exercises. That regimen will best prepare engineers for all future contingencies.

I might just conclude by saying that engineers really did make a major contribution toward the long-term security and stability of Haiti and that engineers are a major contributor in these kinds of contingencies toward winning and maintaining peace.



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