

Snapshots From a Liaison Officer

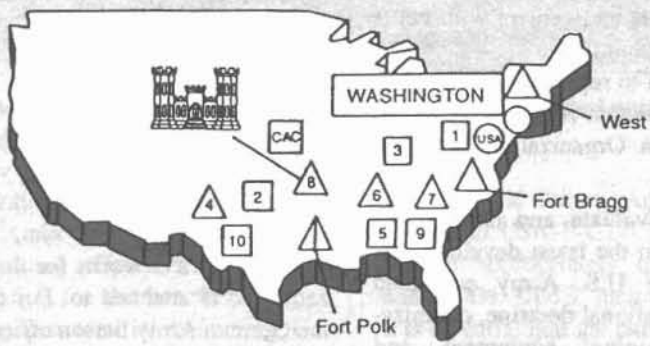
By Lieutenant Colonel Reinhold Hocke

Observations from the German Army Liaison Officer concerning the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and his four-year tour at the U.S. Army Engineer School.

Throughout my military career, I have enjoyed many contacts with U.S. Army engineers in Germany. As a company commander I shared a unit citation with the U.S. partnership unit, Delta Company of the First Infantry Division (Forward), at that time stationed in Neu-Ulm, later in Goeppingen, Germany. The award was presented by CINC USAREUR, General Kroesen. I share many memories with engineer officers and soldiers of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who served tours in Germany. Cooperation with U.S. and allied army engineers has always been part of my life in the German military.

During recent discussions, the Commanding General of the Engineer Center, Major General Gill, encouraged me to share some "snapshots" of my tour here with the readers of *Engineer.* Information flow includes both receiving and giving. Having received so much from U.S. Army engineers in the last four years, it is a pleasure to give a little information back. First I will explain the mission and organization of the German Army liaison organization (see chart). In conversations with Americans, I am often asked to describe the German Army liaison officer's job.

German Army Liaison Organization in the U.S.



Army Main Liaison Staff	Army Liaison Staff
Army Liaison Officer	Observer/Controller (O/C)
HHptVStab (USA) Fort Monroe*	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Cmd (TRADOC)
HVStab USA CAC Fort Leavenworth*	U.S. Army Combined Arms Center
HVStab USA 1, Fort Lee*	Combined Army Spt Cmd
HVStab USA 2, Fort Sill*	Field Artillery Center and School
HVStab USA 3, Fort Knox*	Armor School
HVStab USA 5, Fort Rucker	Aviation School
HVStab USA 9, Fort Benning*	Infantry School
HVStab USA 10, Fort Bliss	Air Defense Artillery Center and School/USASMA
HVO USA 4, Fort Huachuca	Intelligence Center
HVO USA 6, Fort McClellan	Chemical School
HVO USA 7, Fort Gordon	Signal School
HVO USA 8, Fort Leonard Wood	Engineer Center
HVO USMA, West Point	U.S. Military Academy
HVO XVIII, Fort Bragg	XVIII (US) Airborne Corps
O/C JRTC, Fort Polk	Joint Readiness Training Center

* Installations with a battle lab.

The Commander of the German Armed Forces Command, United States and Canada, is the superior for all German soldiers in the United States, excluding military attachè personnnel. He is headquartered in Reston, Virginia. The German Army Liaison Organization, USA, is a subordinate element that is colocated with Headquarters TRADOC, at Fort Monroe, Virginia. It provides a direct means of liaison between the German Ministry of Defense's Army staff with its subordinate elements and selected U.S. Army agencies and facilities. These include TRADOC, the Combined Arms Center (CAC), the National Training Center, the United States Military Academy at West Point, and the service schools and centers with battle laboratories.

In addition to representing the interests of the German Army, the German Army Liaison Organization is tasked to—

- Obtain, evaluate, and assess information on the latest developments regarding U.S. Army command and operational doctrine, organization, training, equipment, and logistics, and to report pertinent recommendations to the German Army Office.
- When invited, inform and brief U.S. agencies and officer and NCO course students on the German armed forces in general or any particular combat engineer subject.
- Attend and report on authorized field exercises and trials.
- Carry out assignments in response to specific requests for information.

While at Fort Leonard Wood I have written more than 100 reports to the German Ministry of Defense. Numerous letters, phone calls in country and to Germany, meetings, and TDY travel activities are also part of the job.

The liaison mission essentially is about communication between our respective armies. At Headquarters TRADOC, CAC, and those U.S. Army centers owning a battle lab, the German Army is represented by a main liaison staff or by a liaison staff consisting of at least a senior lieutenant colonel and a sergeant major. Since TRADOC is scheduled to stand up the "Maneuver Support Battle Lab" at Fort Leonard Wood in October 1996, the German Army will keep the sergeant major's position here.

"The mentality and thinking of Americans differ from those of Germans or other Europeans because the United States and its armed forces have never really suffered from a lack of natural resources."

To many, the difference between a liaison officer and an exchange officer seems unclear. However it is very simple: The liaison officer works for the organization that sent him, and the exchange officer works for the organization he is attached to. For example, the German Army liaison officer works for the German Army, while the British exchange officer in the Directorate of Training at the U.S. Army Engineer Center works for the Engineer School's Director of Training.

Let me now provide some impressions. I have enjoyed my appointment at the U.S. Army Engineer Center very much and have seen and learned a lot about the world's only remaining military superpower, the U.S. Army, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Since 1967, the German Army liaison staff at Fort Leonard Wood has always enjoyed working with open-minded people who are aware of the importance of sound allied relations. I have met very few people who were not interested in NATO, allied, and U.S.-German interoperability issues. I have always enjoyed open discussions where I could pass on information about the German Army that is relevant to U.S.-German Army engineer interoperability.

I have a lot of admiration for the U.S. Army. But I would not be frank if I did not admit to some concerns acquired during my dealings with U.S. Army personnel over the last few years.

Doctrine

Military doctrine is subject to many influences and parameters. Today's high technology obviously has a major influence on it. However, it was most interesting for me to learn and understand to what extent resources influence military thinking and doctrine. In this assignment it was important for me not only to get acquainted with the U.S. armed forces but also to learn about American culture by traveling around the country and learning some of your history. I am deeply impressed to what extent the availability or lack of resources influences a nation's mentality and thinking. The mentality and thinking of Americans differ from those of Germans or other Europeans because the United States and its armed forces have never really suffered from a lack of natural resources. Think about that.

Training

The U.S. and German Armies are starting a cross-training program for engineer officers. This program will be relevant for career development and assignments such as liaison officers. The program's payoff will be a broader and better understanding of the capabilities and limitations of both our armies. As a result of this program, the effectiveness of bi- and multinational operations will increase.

Germany sent the first students to the Engineer Precommand Course and the Engineer Officer Advanced Course (EOAC) at Fort Leonard Wood in 1996 to gain a better understanding of U.S. Army engineer operations. On a reciprocal basis, the first U.S. Army engineer officers recently attended the German EOAC at Munich. I do not believe an inability to speak German is



Photo courtesy MaK System Gesellschaft

The mine-clearing vehicle Keiler (or"Wild Boar") in action. The Keiler successfully clears both buried and surface-laid land mines. It is employed with the German Army engineer contingent in Bosnia.

an obstacle for this program. Many U.S. Army engineer officers are fluent enough in German and would have no difficulty attending courses at the German Army Engineer School.

Training is a main key to success. Learning about training in the U.S. Army and on Fort Leonard Wood makes me think about the influence of a nation's educational system in general, and vocational training in particular, in providing relevant and useful trade skills. Most of the recruits joining the German armed forces (both regular soldiers and conscripts) are well trained in trade skills. So a plumber, mason, electrician, or carpenter has three or more years of vocational training when he joins the German Army Corps of Engineers. Because the German Army takes advantage of the soldier's civilian trade skills, it must provide training only for his military skills.

I was frankly impressed by the efforts U.S. armed forces must take to provide well-trained soldiers with appropriate trade skills to complete their missions. The engineer Interservice Training Review Organization, recently established on Fort Leonard Wood and various Air Force and Navy bases, is the evidence. By realizing your training efforts, I have gained appreciation for the benefits that conscription provides in resourcing Germany's armed forces with well-skilled tradesmen.

Army engineers cooperate with coalition forces sometimes down to the company level. This creates a demand for engineer officers and NCOs to have some knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of attached foreign formations. The Euro-NATO Engineer Training Center, hosted by the German Army Engineer School in Munich, has the mission to train military leaders from squad level up to battalion commander in engineer interoperability and standard NATO procedures. Many allied engineer NCOs and officers have attended these courses and should continue to do so.

Sending students to allied nations for training is not just a question of diplomatic relations. Today, joint, combined, and multinational military operations are common. The success of these operations is closely related to the quality of cooperation within the multinational forces. At least the two binational US/GE-GE/US Army Corps require appropriately trained officers and NCOs. Under such circumstances, it is essential that the participating military forces understand the capabilities and limitations of the national military forces being committed to these special task forces.

Leadership

What is *leadership* all about? Millions of words have been written about leadership, motivation, and counseling. For years scientists have tried to penetrate the human psyche to find more ways of getting the job done.

A leader needs—

- Realism and imagination.
- Receptiveness and strength of character.
- Self-assurance and adaptability.
- Modesty and moral firmness.
- Patience and a sense of justice.
- Inward composure and excellent professional skills.

- Stamina and outstanding physical fitness.

Leaders must decide quickly, courageously, and prudently; promote comradeship; strengthen the sense of responsibility in their soldiers; take resolute action; and set an example.

All of these pearls of wisdom are from just two pages of the German Army Field Manual 100/100, which is equivalent to the U.S. Army's FM 100-5. Had I continued to turn pages, I would have found much more. Do you fulfill all those requirements? I don't! Nor did Frederick the Great, Blucher, Clausewitz, or Rommel. Did George Washington, Patton or MacArthur fulfill them all?

Leadership means the ability to get other people to do what you want them to do. But there are two sides of that coin: First you must know what is to be done; then you must make your soldiers do the job. That involves more than simply issuing orders according to NATO and STANAG regulations. It is more, also, than the ability to inspire or force your will upon others. Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, and other scoundrels of world history had those qualities. We lead free men and women who think and know their rights. They will fight for a just cause, but we must prove it is a just cause. They will not fight for justice if we treat them unfairly or fight for freedom if we put them down. They will follow us if we prove our honesty and integrity, and if they experience our compassion and morality.

How do we prove that? One simple four-letter word clearly describes what real leaders must do: *care*. We must care about our soldiers and care for them, because anyone who wants to lead people must like people.

If you care, you listen to your soldiers. I don't mean the stilted baloney that some superiors ask: "How old are you, son? Where are you from? Thank you, next man." I'm talking about real listening—because a soldier probably will not tell you when everything is all wrong. He'll be a little hesitant. If you ask a soldier how he's doing and he just nods or shrugs, you know he's doing poorly and you need to dig a little deeper.

You care if you really wonder what your soldiers do both on and off duty. If PFC Miller does not go to the movies with the rest of the squad, you care if you wonder why. You care if you wonder why PFC Jones has flunked weapons inspection for the third time in a row. And you care if you stand up and tell the commander that your men were not slow but your plan was faulty.

You care if you share their problems, their hardships, and their jokes. Your soldiers are as lousy as you let them be, and they are as good as you make them be.

You care if you make them proud and don't humiliate them. Your soldiers won't be brave if you abuse and cower them—and they won't be strong if you break them. You know they won't be respectful and obedient if you haven't treated them with the respect and dignity that fosters personal pride.

There is a very fine line between firmness and harshness, between strong leadership and bullying, between discipline and "chicken". We must find that line and we will—if we care!

I'm not sure that the following observation is correct, but I've noticed over the past few years that some military leaders act more "boss-oriented" than "mission-oriented." If we get the mission done properly, our boss will be happy. But keeping the boss happy does not always mean getting the job done. Think about that. In my estimation, good leaders focus first on the mission.

Organization

The U.S. Army is focused on Force XXI. In this scenario, we digitize the battlefield using high-tech, state-of-the-art electronic equipment to improve the combat power of the force. Force XXI will consume a lot of energy and resources. But we Army engineers should not forget that most of the physical and mechanical missions will not be done by computers.

For the foreseeable future, we will still need an adequate number of well-trained "damned engineers" to deal with mud, snow, land mines, river-crossing sites, etc. Planners sometimes forget that future wars, just like those in the past, will be determined by the adequately equipped combat engineer working side-by-side with his fellow soldiers of the combat arms. Reducing the number of combat engineers may lead to a loss in combat power.

Materiel

Today, the U.S. Army's credo is to fight and win the war by first fighting and winning the information war. This vision of "Army XXI" is focused on digitizing the battlefield. In this arena the U.S. Army is second to none. A huge research and development (R&D) world is pushing this issue forward. While visiting U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps R&D installations, I noticed some duplication and redundancy of efforts, which is nothing new for a super-sized organization. On the other hand, it may be prudent to focus R&D efforts more on users' needs. Let me explain.

While visiting U.S. Army combat engineer units, I saw aging and worn-out engineer equipment that needs to be replaced. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has struggled with this problem during all the years of my assignment at the Engineer Center. I sincerely hope that urgently needed new equipment will be fielded within the next few years. If you need help in the interim, ask your fellow German Army engineers for support. We have engineer equipment, such as the new mine-clearing vehicle Keiler, that may meet your requirements (see photo, page 29).

Soldiers

A resource all armies must handle very carefully is the soldiers. Belonging to an army that recruits female soldiers only to a limited extent, it was a new experience for me to learn about gender-integrated training and equal promotion opportunities for female officers and NCOs. I have followed with interest the ongoing discussions about which positions should be opened to females or kept closed.

I admire the willingness and good morale of young American soldiers—they show pride in what they do. Recently I had an opportunity to visit U.S. engineer units in Bosnia. Even though I spent only a few hours with the Task Force Eagle engineers, I was deeply impressed by their discipline, confidence, and commitment.

I am very grateful to the fine soldiers and officers I served with in the United States. I would go to war with American soldiers any time because I know that I can trust them. They are committed to readiness and dedicated to victory. Many things are done differently over here, but I got reaffirmance again and again that we can rely on our U.S. allies. It has been a privilege to serve a four-year tour with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I thank all of you who I had the chance to meet for your support and friendship. Auf Wiedersehen and Essayons!

Lieutenant Colonel Hocke served as German liaison officer to the U.S. Army Engineer School and Center, Fort Leonard Wood, from August 1992 to September 1996. He previously served as commander of the German 61st Engineer Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry Division; and staff officer engineer and senior combat engineer officer, Headquarters Allied Forces Central Europe. LTC Hocke is a graduate of the German General Staff Officers Course at the Federal Armed Forces Command and General Staff College in Hamburg.

Book Review



Breaching Fortress Europe: The Story of U.S. Engineers in Normandy on D-Day, by Sid Berger. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., Dubuque, Iowa, 1994, 272 pages.

By Lieutenant General Daniel W. Christman, Superintendent, United States Military Academy.

Assault landing on a fortified coastline, arguably an army's greatest challenge and an engineer's greatest nightmare, has been masterfully captured by Sid Berger with insight, detail, and thoroughness honed through firsthand experience and in-depth research. A veteran of amphibious operations in Sicily, Italy, and Normandy, the author has written one of the most compelling and comprehensive accounts of Operation Overlord. His focus on engineer units and their tactics and techniques, so crucial to the success of this complex operation, is unique and long overdue.

Breaching Fortress Europe is a definitive and accurate account of the planning and execution of the D-Day assault on Omaha and Utah beaches. Sid Berger has produced a readable story that strikes an excellent balance between a narrative that is easily understood by nonengineers and one that is technically useful to combat engineers and military historians. The significance of the book has been recognized in several independent reviews, one of which was highlighted in the March/April 1995 issue of *Military Review.* One quote from that review captures the essence: "Berger's book should be combined with S.L.A. Marshall's *Night Drop* and Cornelius Ryan's *The Longest Day* for the background and framework upon which these build."

Although other works have portrayed in detail the activities of 6 June 1944, the author's focus on engineer cross-channel planning and engineer support to landing-force preparation and invasion-force marshaling and embarkation is unique and refreshing. His description of the enemy's prepared positions, stretching 2,400 miles with more than 15,000 fortified positions laced with extensive mines and wire obstacles, provides a rich picture of unique engineer factors affecting the operation. By highlighting the engineer units' participation, he leaves no doubt as to the importance of their effort and sacrifice to the successful outcome of the entire operation.

The inclusion of four 18" x 22" full-color, top-secret Bigot maps of Omaha and Utah beaches, one of which the author personally used during his landing on Utah beach, is especially noteworthy. Also of interest are the many original drawings, illustrations, maps, and photographs that depict the varied and complex nature of the operations. A "must read" for the serious student of military history; pure intellectual enjoyment for the rest of us. And for combat engineers, it is a particularly moving, emotional account of heroism that has rarely been equaled in the annals of warfare.

Proceeds from the sale of this book, which was produced by the Society of Military Engineers, will be used to repair and maintain five engineer battle monuments on Omaha and Utah beaches. These monuments are fully described in an appendix to the book.

Note: Engineer *is seeking insightful reviews of books of special interest to military engineers. Contributions are welcome.*