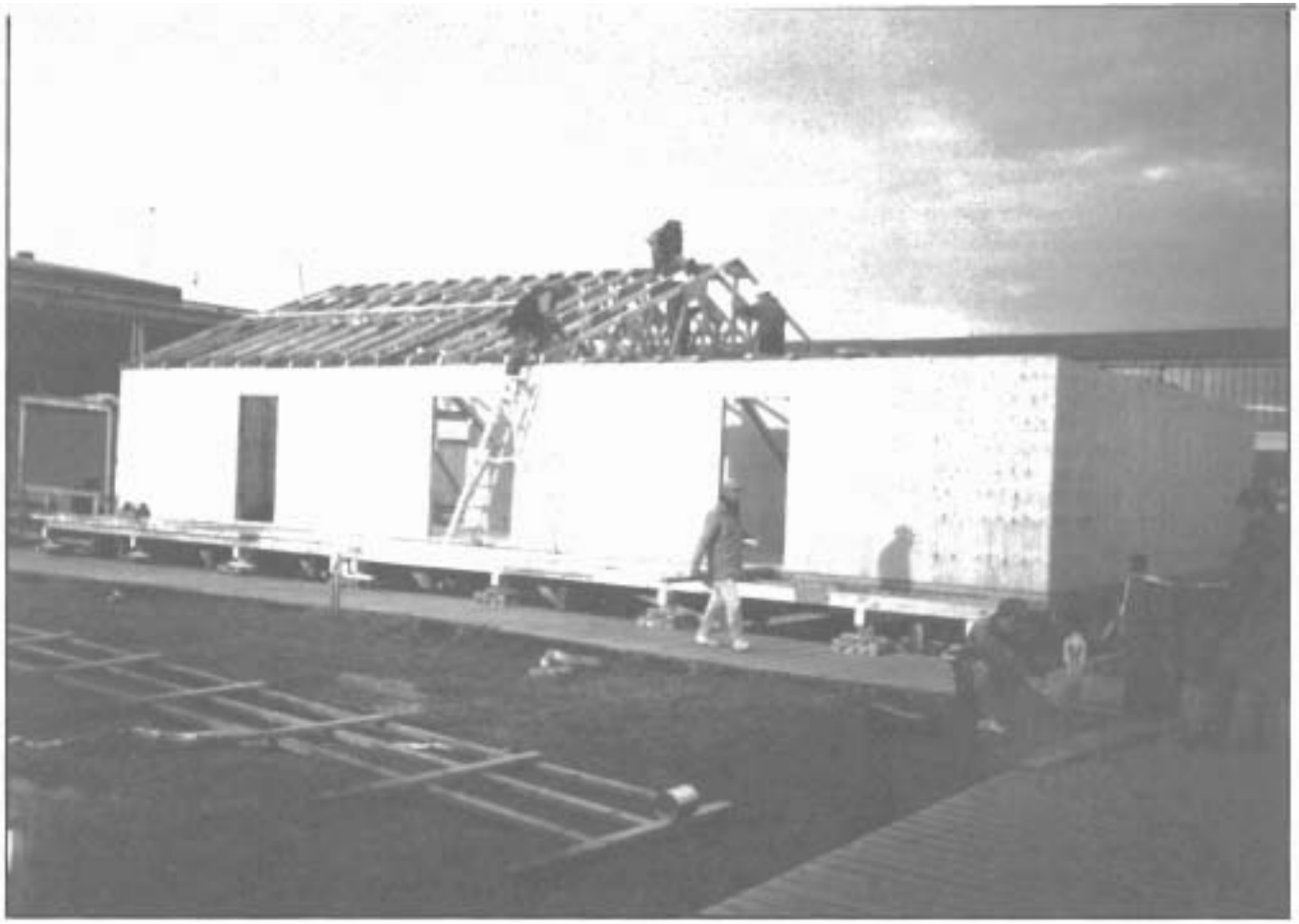


Thriving on Base Camps

By Lieutenant Colonel John R. Jones

It was a privilege as well as professionally rewarding to have supported the soldiers and civilians involved in Operation Joint Endeavor in the former Yugoslavia. This is the largest military operation in the history of the NATO alliance. The initial U.S. portion of this 60,000-troop contingent was about 20,000 soldiers, who formed Task Force Eagle. The 1st Armored Division formed the core of the task force.

To support U.S. forces, base camps were quickly planned, constructed, and sustained. This was accomplished by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the 1st Armored Division Engineer Brigade (DIVENG), the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) contractor, and the Base Camp Coordinating Agency (BCCA). The BCCA served as the focal point for building, sustaining, and decommissioning all U.S. base camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

This article describes how the BCCA supported the base camp mission from June through October 1996 during my tenure as the BCCA chief. Included are some insights and "flashes of the obvious" that I believe are key ingredients to successful mission execution in the Balkans. My intent is that these insights and flashes of the obvious will help others in the years ahead.

Command and Control

Task Force Eagle formed the nondoctrinal BCCA early in the deployment (January 1996) to plan, coordinate, and execute the urgent base camp construction mission. The BCCA was at the confluence of various organizations, to include USACE, DIVENG, U.S. Army Europe (Forward), and the LOGCAP contractor. To ensure functional interdependence, the BCCA coordinated extensively with all of these organizations while simultaneously taking direction from the 1st Armored Division Assistant Division Commander-Support (ADC-S).

Organization

The BCCA, a hybrid of a Directorate of Public Works and a USACE resident field office, was organized into five branches.

- The ***Plans and Operations Branch*** focused on both current and future operations. BCCA planners ensured that camp perspectives were integrated into all future Task Force Eagle operations. This included task force reshaping, support for national elections, redeployment, and transition of mission responsibilities to the covering force (1st Infantry Division).
- The ***Environmental Branch*** administered USACE environmental contracts and facilitated the education and assessment of environmental programs at each base camp.
- The ***Base Camp Assistance Team (BCAT)***, an "over-the-road" team, focused on training, assisting, and assessing all base camps.
- The ***Project Management Branch,*** formed late in the operation, was responsible for funding, customer interface, project monitoring, troubleshooting, and reporting.
- The ***Real Estate Branch*** acquired, managed, and disposed of land and facilities. To improve responsiveness, reduce over-the-road time, and provide continuity of care, the BCCA established two field offices and positioned them in the northern and southern halves of the U.S. sector.

Special staff in the functional areas of preventive medicine, safety, ammunition storage, and fire safety augmented the BCCA.

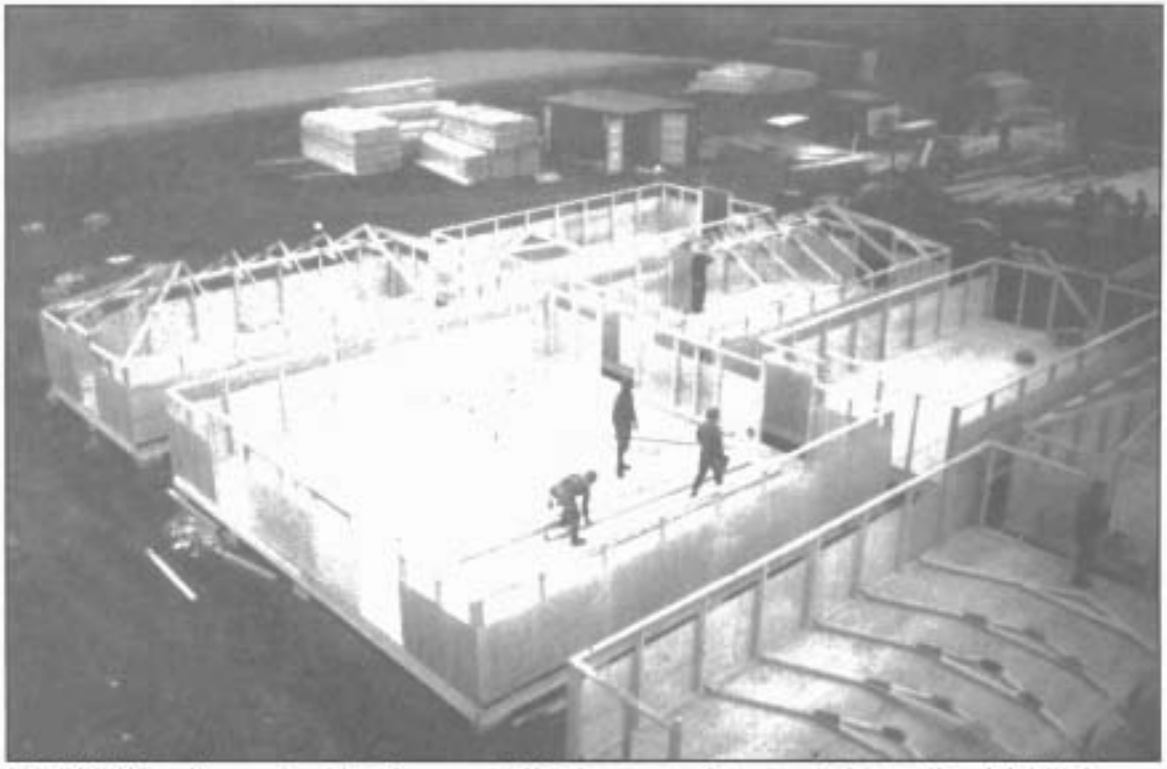
Staffing

BCCA staffing at its peak totaled 40 personnel. It included USACE active duty officers and individual mobilization augmentees, 412th Engineer Command personnel, U.S. Army Europe and 1st Armored Division augmentees, and Department of the Army (DA) civilians. The civilians provided expertise in real estate, safety, ammunition storage, and environmental engineering. Beginning in August 1996, the Army Audit Agency assisted the BCCA in process development and validation. As U.S. force levels were reduced from October through December 1996, the BCCA evolved into a leaner organization.

Base Camp Standards

Task Force Eagle established standards up front that addressed living and support facilities as well as force-protection measures. Both *interim standards* (less than 30 days) and *duration standards* (more than 30 days) were established. The goal was to improve safety and provide consistent and prudent quality-of-life levels throughout the U.S. sector.

Interim and duration living standards for the general-purpose, medium, tents were 15 and 10 soldiers per tent, respectively. Other accommodations included fixed facilities and living containers. Additionally, a total of six Force Provider sets (each housing and supporting 550 soldiers) were installed on three base camps. For hasty insertions, Force Provider sets are convenient; however, maintenance is high as are costs to decommission, clean, and repackage them for reuse. The duration standard for showers and latrines was one shower head and latrine per 25



1AD DIVENG units construct tent frames at a U.S. base camp in support of Operation Joint Endeavor.



Twenty-two U.S. base camps were scattered throughout the U.S. sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One U.S. base camp was located in Croatia, along the Sava River.

soldiers. Lighting, heating, and hard floors were in all duration standard tents. There were facilities on each base camp for dining; a chapel; a laundry; and morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) activities. Base camp population determined the number of tents for support and administrative facilities.

Task Force Eagle's force-protection standards ensured that every soldier had access to a bunker or fighting position. The task force also developed standards for perimeter lighting, fencing, guard towers, ammunition holding areas, and helipads. Base camp site selection criteria addressed items such as trafficability, living and motor park space, defendability, communications, water source, and main supply route accessibility.

Base Camp Construction

U.S. Army engineer battalions, a U.S. Navy Seabee battalion, a U.S. Air Force RED HORSE battalion, and the LOGCAP contractor (Brown & Root Services Corporation) shared responsibility for constructing 23 base camps in the U.S. sector. USACE (specifically the Transatlantic Program Center in Winchester, Virginia) administered the LOGCAP contract (*Engineer*, March 1997, page 2).

LOGCAP, an Army program, uses a civilian contractor to perform selected services to augment U.S. forces during a military operation. Tapping into this program allowed the best use of our engineer resources. For Operation Joint Endeavor, Brown & Root provided base camp construction and sustainment services as well as some logistics support services (i.e. transportation, maintenance, supply, laundry, and dining facilities). Each base camp had a Brown & Root manager and staff to fulfill construction, sustainment, and decommissioning contractual requirements. Herculean efforts by the entire engineer team ensured that construction was executed to standard with no compromise of the soldiers' safety or quality of life.

Base Camp Leadership

Senior base camp leaders, the BCCA, and Brown & Root shared responsibility for operations and maintenance. There were 22 base camps in



Organizational structure of the Base Camp Coordinating Agency (BCCA)

Bosnia-Herzegovina and one in Croatia, each housing from 200 to 2,500 soldiers. Each senior base camp tactical commander appointed a "mayor" to assume camp leadership responsibilities. The mayors worked closely with the Brown & Root camp manager, the DIVENG direct support unit, and the BCCA. Since mayors required the knowledge to "run" a base camp, the BCCA developed and sponsored necessary training. One course focused on operations and maintenance and the other on decommissioning. Topics included real estate, environmental programs, operations and maintenance, local contracting practices, LOGCAP rules, DIVENG roles, civil-military affairs, safety, property accountability, force protection, preventive medicine, ammunition storage, and MWR responsibilities.

Town Hall Meetings

The BCCA facilitated regional town hall meetings every two weeks at various base camps throughout the sector. These meetings provided a forum for discussion and problem solving. Attendees included the ADC-S, the BCCA chief, base camp mayors, and senior tactical commander representatives (usually brigade and battalion executive officers), the Task Force Eagle G4 and Property Book Officer, Brown & Root camp managers, BCCA project managers and real estate specialists, force-protection and safety experts, and representatives from DIVENG and MWR. These command-sponsored events encouraged dialogue, built trust, and allowed issues to be addressed quickly.

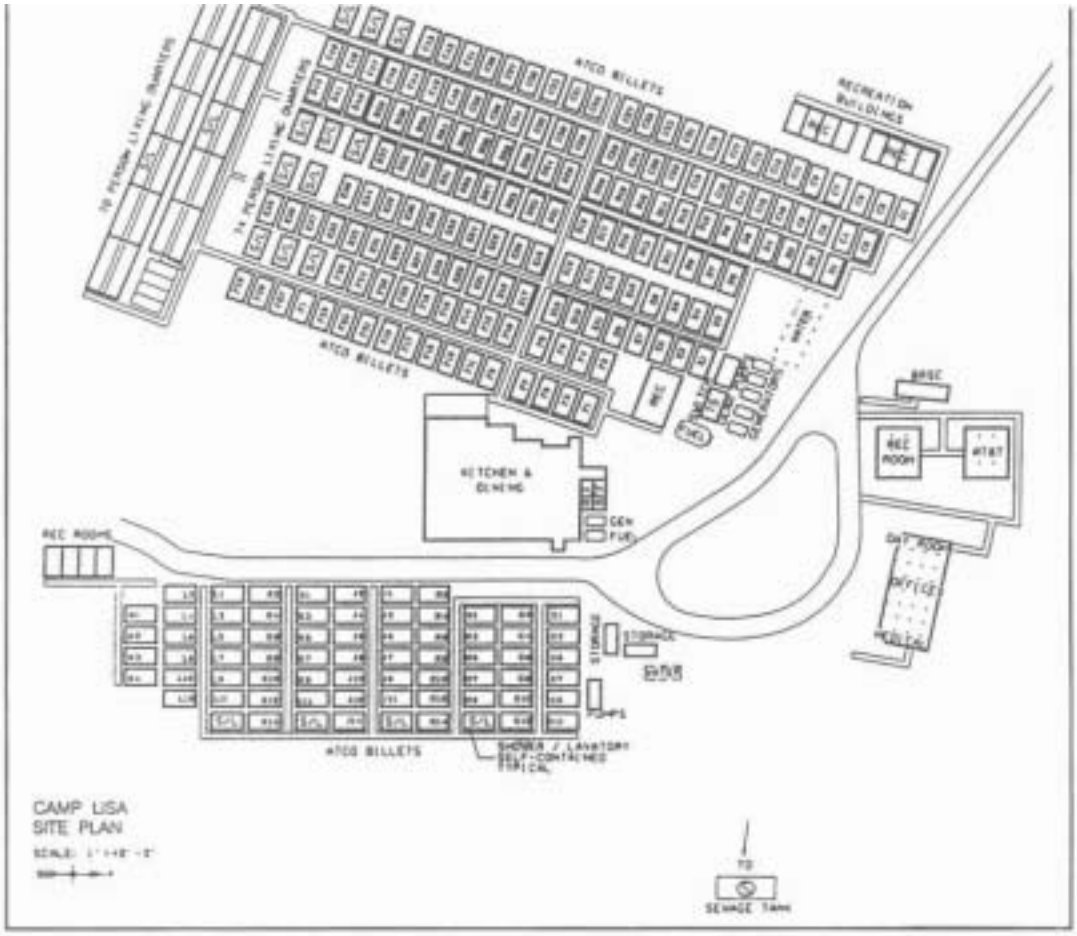
Business Practices

Task Force Eagle established a Joint Acquisition Review Board (JARB). This common-sense, better-business-practices group included the BCCA chief (the JARB president) and the Task Force Eagle resource manager, G4, G3, and a Staff Judge Adjutant advisor. All new base camp work required JARB review and ADC-S approval. Any soldier or unit could initiate a work order. Then it went to the base camp mayor for approval and on to DIVENG (usually the engineer battalion in direct support to that base camp) for review and action. DIVENG could recommend disapproval, execute the work order, or forward it to the JARB. Work orders costing more than $2,500 required JARB review and approval; those less than $2,500 were acted on by the BCCA chief. The task force review process saved money, standardized procedures, developed practical low-cost solutions to requests, and promoted safety and consistent quality of life on base camps.

Base Camp Assistance Visits

The Base Camp Assistance Team (BCAT) visited sustainment camps every four weeks and de-commissioning camps every two to three weeks. On these visits, the team concentrated on education, training, and assistance, although it also conducted a base camp assessment and reported to the Task Force Eagle command group after every visit. Based on published standards and approved definitions, the BCAT assessed four major areas:

- ***Force protection***—local national screening, perimeter integrity, risk assessment, ammunition storage, and weapons security.
- ***Environmental program***—spill prevention, spill response, hazardous-waste and hazardous-material disposal, and petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) transfer operations.
- ***Preventive medicine***—dining facility operations, water supply, and vector and rodent control and repellent systems.
- ***Safety***—fire safety, living area safety, motor pool safety, and accident prevention program.



An example of a U.S. base camp facilities site plan, exclusive of site perimeter and force protection measures.

Coupling outstanding base camp leadership with BCAT visits ensured that all base camps complied with established Task Force Eagle standards.

Environmental Program

The Task Force Eagle environmental program was proactive and highly effective. BCAT team visits always included a BCCA environmental representative who promoted, trained, and enforced the established environmental standards (*Engineer*, March 1997, page 12). Every BCAT visit and town hall meeting stressed items such as spill prevention, hazardous-waste and hazardous-material management, safe POL transfer point operations, and spill response capabilities. Before a base camp was occupied, an environmental baseline survey was done to acquire a benchmark. A final survey was conducted when the camp was decommissioned. Task Force Eagle then took appropriate actions to mitigate differences between the two surveys.

Proof of this effective environmental program was reflected in the minimal corrective environmental actions required when base camps were decommissioned.

Base Camp Decommissioning

As the U.S. reduced its presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it decommissioned base camps in a deliberate, safe, and disciplined manner, using a process developed by DIVENG and BCCA. Force protection and stewardship of government property were critical. The senior base camp tactical commanders responsible for decommissioning their camps applied lessons that were learned early in the operation. Base camp complexity, location, and size determined the decommissioning time and effort, but the phased process usually took about six weeks. The decommissioning team consisted of tenant units, DIVENG assets, and the LOGCAP contractor. Base camp leaders, with the advice and assistance of BCCA and DIVENG, orchestrated the work.

The phased decommissioning process collapsed the camp in on itself. Soldier support facilities (the shopette, chapel, library, and MWR facilities) were removed first, followed by life-support facilities (dining facilities, tents, showers, and latrines). Bare essential life-support facilities and force-protection infrastructure (concertina wire, guard towers, and fighting positions) were removed last. BCAT closure team visits to base camps anticipated and solved problems as they arose and assessed and monitored progress. On the final visit, a clearance checklist (similar to a range control checklist) served as the clearance document. Harvesting material from decommissioning base camps was deliberate and saved money. Essentially, all base camp expansions and improvements after June 1996 were completed at little cost using harvested materials (gravel, lumber, tents, shower and

latrine facilities, force-protection material, and electrical and plumbing equipment) from decommissioning base camps. BCCA served as the clearing house for all harvested materials. Once items were identified as base camp excess, they went on the harvest list for transfer to a base camp with a valid need.

Base Camp Transition

The outgoing 1st Armored Division and the incoming 1st Infantry Division developed a memorandum of agreement that addressed which base camps would be kept, their respective capacities and capabilities, transfer dates, and which unit would accept responsibility for each camp. The BCCA played an important role during the transition process to ensure that incoming 1ID leaders understood the base camp mission.

The units developed transition plans for each base camp to be retained. Outgoing and incoming leaders executed these plans to standard, which included training (sponsored by BCCA), a 100-percent property inventory between mayors, transitioning the base camp smart book, and conducting a joint walk-through.

Flashes of the Obvious

- When your boss asks you to go do great things in a far-away land, go for it.
- Nothing is more important than applying common sense and keeping things simple—so tired and confused people can understand and quickly get on with the task at hand.
- Bad news seldom improves with age. If you have a problem you cannot resolve, surface it. Task Force Eagle rarely shot the messenger and quickly addressed issues.
- View obstacles as a transient state—something to be solved along the pathway to excellence. Press the fight.
- Establish base camp standards early, and enforce them consistently. The desire to improve base camps above established standards was immense, but established and understood standards helped squelch that desire.
- Underwrite honest mistakes. Perfectionists in the Balkans did not do well. Planning, preparing, and rehearsing paid dividends and eliminated most mistakes. Don't demand exactness. Don't chisel decisions in stone. Be willing to change as time unfolds and circumstances change.
- Gather information and critical items of interest by talking to people and visiting base camps. Don't hide behind your computer or telephone. Get near the action to listen and learn, but don't micromanage the action. Base camp assistance visits and town hall meetings encourage dialogue and build trust.
- Make decisions quickly. Often there isn't time to sleep on an issue. Working in this environment brings a new meaning to decision making.
- Plan ahead. Focus your attention on the next few days, not the next few minutes. This advice is not always possible, but focus on the important things.
- Military operations cost a lot of money. Implement cost-saving measures such as joint acquisition boards, better business processes, and material-harvesting programs.
- Three equals one in the Balkans. It usually took three times as much effort, persistence, and time to execute missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina as in other places I have served. Plan accordingly and get over all the obstacles!
- Remember, a task is not finished until the soldier is living in it or using it.
- Teamwork is crucial—it's an attitude.
- Estimates are only estimates to the person making them; everyone else hears a fixed price or absolute schedule. The listener hears only the low end.
- Stay proactive. The champion-to-chump cycle can be short in this type of environment. Keep your head in the game.
- Activated reservists, DA civilians, and the LOGCAP contractor did a superb job.

Summary

Base camp accomplishments were many. Efforts by Task Force Eagle, USACE, DIVENG, and Brown & Root were extraordinary as they constructed, sustained, and decommissioned base camps—safely, quickly, and to standard. The safety and quality of life in these camps received high marks. Engineer efforts have played a large part in the success thus far of Operation Joint Endeavor, but another factor deserves a significant portion of the credit: the professionalism and selfless service of Task Force Eagle soldiers, DA civilians, activated reservists, and contractors. The men and women who are serving proudly and tirelessly are true patriots who have made a lasting difference to this war-torn region.

Lieutenant Colonel Jones is the Deputy Commander, St. Louis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In addition to serving as chief of the Base Camp Coordinating Agency in support of Operation Joint Endeavor, he has completed tours with the 3rd Armored Division, Germany; New York District, USACE; the 130th Engineer Brigade; and Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. LTC Jones holds a master's degree in civil engineering from Pennsylvania State University and is a registered professional engineer in Missouri.