







Joint Forces Engineer Command: A Proposal

By Colonel Jerry L. Anderson and Colonel James H. Robinson

Joint is here. Army engineers are training as carpenters, builders, and steelworkers at Gulfport, Mississippi, and mechanics will train at Port Hueneme, California. Starting in October 1995, Navy Seabees and Air Force engineers will train on Army heavy engineer equipment at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Training for plumbers and electricians soon will be conducted at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas.

Issues. Jointness seems simple on the surface, but the jargon and terminology used by the various services are not easily discernible and sometimes defy logic. In the December 1994 issue of *ENGINEER*, Major General Ballard [1] discussed a host of minor differences in terms of training, equipment, organizations, and doctrine between services. Engineers must be especially clear about operational-level engineer missions, joint and multinational operations, and notional force designs. Rear Admiral Jack E. Buffington[2] notes an increasingly crucial need for engineer officers to gain greater exposure to the engineers of other services. He recommends more officer billet exchanges and seminars at engineer officer courses. Following the suggestions of the Roles and Mission Study, Colonel Lee Gibson[3] strongly endorsed the idea of establishing joint engineer working groups. These working groups are to investigate potential areas of benefit in engineer acquisition, doctrine, force structure, training, and operation programs. Questions like "Why can't the joint services consolidate the research, development, and acquisition of engineer construction and combat equipment?" and "Why can't joint service engineers use the same construction standards and even the same construction management and component systems?" are asked.

Efforts to improve efficiency and to avoid duplication of effort are not confined to uniformed members of the Department of Defense (DOD). The research and development community initiated Project Reliance to provide areas of primary focus for research development testing and engineering across DOD, with areas of responsibility for research identified for each service component.

Rationale. Recent deployments of engineers were fully joint operations, not necessarily from a well-designed plan, but through necessity. That does not mean that those who were responsible for responding to an immediate situation were negligent or irresponsible; it means that their plan and the execution of that plan were based on individual dynamism and leadership not on joint doctrine. Navy Captain John Lehman[4] states that since Desert Storm, the U.S. military has operated as a joint force in nearly every significant operation—whether it was a regional contingency operation or a humanitarian-relief, a disaster-recovery, or a nation-assistance scenario. Rear Admiral Jack E.

Buffington[5] further adds that unified operations fundamentally shape the way we think about and train for war. The need for understanding each service's mission and capabilities requires development of doctrine to support effective joint operations.

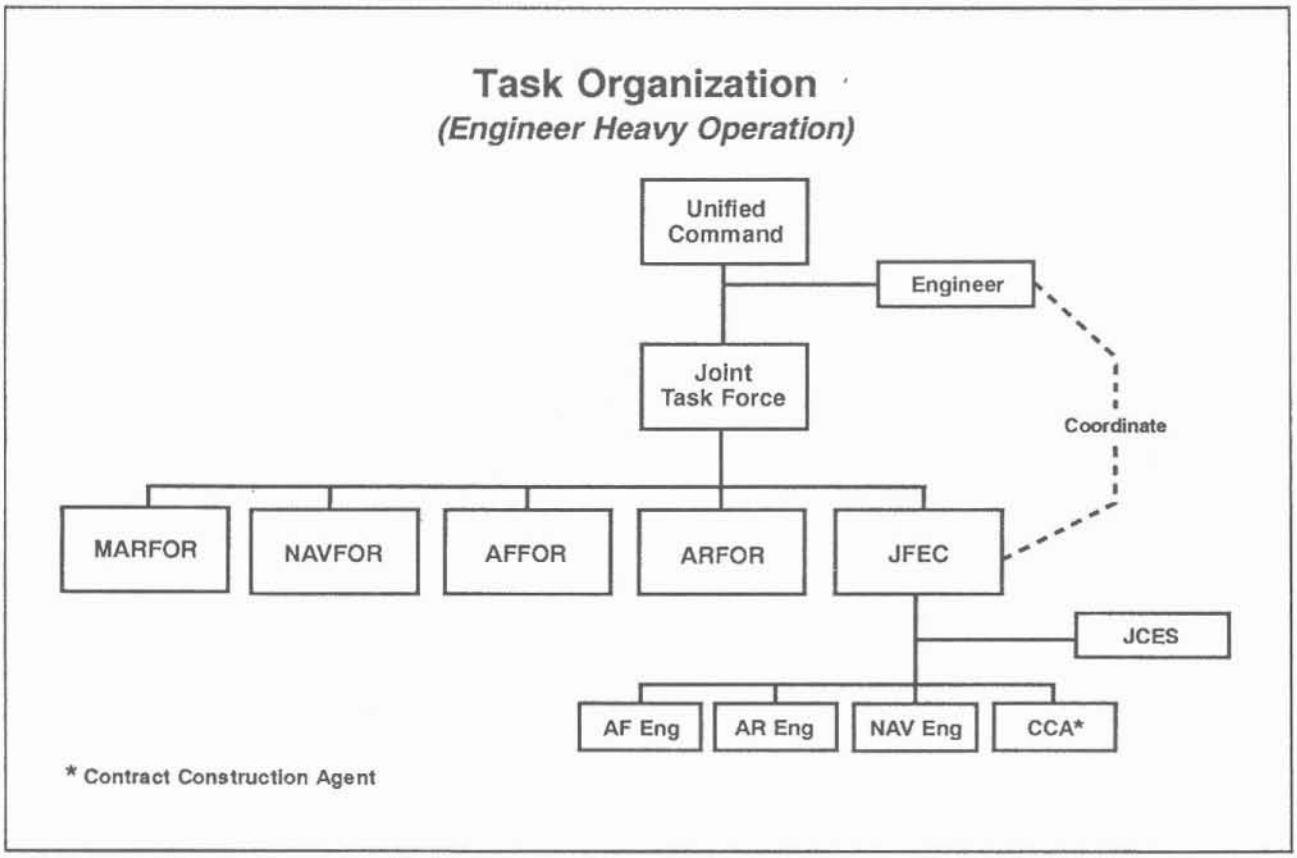
During Operation Provide Comfort, the 18th Engineer Brigade provided command and control for Army engineers, Navy Seabees, Air Force engineers, and engineers from other NATO countries. Recent experiences in Somalia[6] demonstrated the need for a theater engineer to ensure proper engineer coordination outside of the joint task force (JTF). During the deployment of the 43rd Engineer Battalion (Combat Heavy), confusing theater command relations made routine duties more trying than necessary. Out of frustration and a desire to simplify work, the battalion held weekly meetings with all in-country key engineers. As a result, communications flowed smoother, actions were expedited, and efficiency of work effort improved. A final recommendation by the 43rd was that in-theater staff engineers, military and civilian, meet at least weekly to coordinate efforts.

JFEC Concept. Thus, the stage is set for creating a joint forces engineer command (JFEC). A JFEC can exist only according to the provisions of Title 10, United States Code. The proposed JFEC would function under doctrine that governs joint activities and the performance of U.S. armed forces in joint operations. Additionally, the JFEC would operate under the doctrinal basis for U.S. military involvement in multinational and international operations. Today, joint service engineers train together in classrooms, exercise together in command post exercises and field training exercises, and deploy during times of crises to meet the military objectives of the National Command Authority. Each service component endorses the idea of jointness but, because of current doctrine, each remains focused primarily on service-oriented missions and functions. For jointness to become a reality in engineer operations, the above-mentioned requirements of U.S. law and joint doctrine must be met.

Because of the mission and current tables of organization and equipment (TOE) alignment, the Army's engineer command (ENCOM) is ideally suited to be structured as a JFEC. The ENCOM is a major subordinate command of the Army Service Component Command (ASCC) during war and operations other than war. The ENCOM commander has the rank equivalency of other subordinate commanders under the ASCC. For the force-projection Army responding to a major regional contingency (MRC), the ENCOM functions in a joint service environment. It also provides engineer command and control for engineer brigades and groups that provide engineer support at the operational level and support to the corps and divisions at the tactical level. Additionally, the ENCOM can provide staff support to the JTF or joint contingency engineer staff (JCES), as well as maintain an ENCOM headquarters to provide engineer command and control for the remainder of the theater.

In an MRC, the ENCOM commander could be dual-hatted as the JTF engineer and as the engineer troop commander. As recommended in the Operation Restore Hope Lessons Learned Report[7] for operations requiring a large engineer effort, a JTF engineer section should be established as a special staff group. In that case, the ENCOM commander, as a special staff officer, would report directly to the JTF commander. The ENCOM is then removed from the command and control of the ASCC and is placed under the command and control of the JTF commander. The JTF commander has responsibility for direct support to the operational area and general support to the tactical areas within the MRC area of responsibility (AOR). For operations where engineer efforts are key to mission accomplishment, the ENCOM commander, as a special staff officer, has direct access to the JTF commander for the assignment of engineer priorities for critical needs—such as transportation assets, Class IV supplies, and engineer equipment.

Doctrine. Joint Publication 4-04[8] authorizes the commander in chief (CINC) "to exercise directive authority over civil engineering within their AORs to ensure effective execution of approved OPLANs, provide efficiency and economy in operations, and prevent or eliminate the unnecessary duplication of facilities and overlapping of functions among service component commands." Further, the CINC has "the authority to transfer civil engineering functions between or among Service components within the AOR." Additionally, Joint Publication 4-04[9] states "peacetime organizations should be tailored and trained to meet those requirements." This concept of directive authority has been endorsed by USEUCOM, USLANTCOM and USPACOM in the Concept of Operations for Joint Forces Air Component Commander.[10] It states that the objective "...is to enhance the theater's joint warfighting capability by providing a framework for conducting coordinated and unified joint air operations and ensure that potential conflicts in priorities for the application or contribution of theater air assets are resolved efficiently and in the interest of the Joint Forces Command."



Proposed force structure for a Joint Forces Engineer Command

Proposal. Using this concept as a guide, a proposed joint engineer command and control structure, identified as the JFEC, is shown above. The JFEC consolidates all theater engineer planning and management considerations under its command and control. During contingencies (including major regional contingencies), the JFEC, as the theater engineer, exercises command and control for all joint engineer forces within the theater. Staffing for the JFEC is from all services. Staff training focuses on joint engineer support of joint operations during peace and war in a unified command's AOR. Ideally, the JFEC will be under the command and control of the subunified command responsible for providing all support to the deployed force. A JFEC develops the total Civil Engineer Support Plan and conducts the engineer preparation of the theater. This includes planning, coordinating, and supervising military, contract construction, and engineering services for U.S. and coalition forces in theater. The JFEC commander ensures that all engineer missions are fully planned, integrated, synchronized and executed to support the maneuver commander's intent.

Force XXI operations[11] require engineer forces to be more ready, more capable, more modernized, more integrated, and more available than ever before. This new joint-service organization, the JFEC, will serve as the engineer power-projection platform for the 21st century.

Colonel Jerry Anderson serves as Assistant Chief of Staff, Engineering, 412th Engineer Command, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Colonel James Robinson serves as Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, 412th Engineer Command, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Endnotes

[1]*ENGINEER*, December 1994, "Clear the Way".

[2]*ENGINEER*, December 1994, page 17.

[3]*ENGINEER*, August 1994, page 32.

[4]*ENGINEER*, December 1994, page 9.

[5]Ibid, page 17.

[6]*ENGINEER*, April 1994, pages 13-14.

[7]*Operations Other Than War*, Center for Army Lessons Learned, U.S. Army Combined Arms Command, page VII-5.

[8]Joint Publication 4-04, *Joint Doctrine for Civil Engineering Support*, page III-1.

[9]Ibid, page III-4.

[10]Joint Force Air Component Commander, Concept of Operations, USEUCOM, 21 October 1993.

[11]*Force XXI Operations*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5, 1 August 1994, pages 1-3.