



JOINT ENGINEER- A MULTINATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

By Major Jared L. Ware

The Multinational Security Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTC–I), a subordinate command of Multinational Force–Iraq (MNF–I), is responsible for the construction of facilities for Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) within the Ministry of Defense (MOD), Ministry of Interior (MOI), and Counter Terrorism Bureau (CTB). This includes facilities for the generation of forces, as well as permanent basing for operational units. Within MNSTC–I, the Joint Engineering Directorate (J7) is the primary directorate for planning, executing, and transferring engineer facilities missions in support of the ISF. The J7 coordinates vertically and horizontally with the various coalition staffs, the United States Air Force Center of Excellence for the Environment, the United States Army Corps of Engineers–Gulf Region Division (USACE–GRD), and its Iraqi counterparts within MOD, MOI, and CTB, to ensure a cradle-to-grave engineering process. The purpose of this article is to outline how the MNSTC–I J7 is currently structured to meet requirements, and how the organization is transforming to meet new requirements for 2009.

Structure

The J7 is a joint staff consisting of officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) from each of the Services, as well as Department of Defense civilians and contractors. The sole function of the staff is civil engineering, and it does not focus on full spectrum engineering functions such as combat or geospatial. The J7 is organized into the following basic sections:

- MOD construction
- MOI construction
- Construction development cell (CDC)

The MOD and MOI sections derive requirements from the various stakeholders and assign program and project managers to each construction effort. For example, if the Coalition Army Advisor Transition Team (CAATT) defines a requirement for an Iraqi division training facility in central Iraq, then the J7 MOD section leader will assign a program manager and project engineer to the mission.

The program manager helps CAATT define the scope of work and a rough order-of-magnitude cost estimate. The program manager also works with the CDC to prepare a more detailed estimate for the overall cost of the facilities requirement. The program manager and CDC also work with the contracting agency, usually Joint Contracting Command–Iraq or USACE–GRD, to award the case. Also, the J7 hosts the technical evaluation board to ensure that the bidding contractors meet the minimum criteria for the overall design and building of the project. Once the project is awarded, the J7 program manager interacts with all stakeholders to ensure that the project is meeting the statement of work criteria, the projected timeline, and the projected budget. Normally, the source of funding is ISF funding (ISFF), but there are ongoing projects funded through the Security Assistance Office’s Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program for construction. Once the project is completed,

the J7 works with the MOD's director general for infrastructure or the MOI's director general for construction to transfer the completed property to the Iraqi government. The process is a total cradle-to-grave process that covers the joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational (JIIM) gamut.

Transformation

In 2008, the J7 executed more than 300 ISFF projects from within the MOD and MOI sections at an estimated cost of more than \$1 billion. These projects ranged from United States Army shoot houses, United States Air Force dormitories, United States Navy seawalls, Iraqi police stations, and local facilities upgrades. However, the directorate recognized that the MNSTC-I mission, as well as the source of construction funding, was changing. This required the directorate to conduct an in-depth study of the new mission sets and transform its existing joint manning document. The result was an organization that kept the basic construction engineering capabilities but also focused on joint planning and base management. There are various operational planning teams within the MNSTC-I staff that support operational order development, joint campaign planning, and joint basing. The J7 recognized the importance of these teams and of "plugging in" early to the efforts, since most had specific engineering requirements above and beyond the expertise of staff planners in the other directorates. The J7 has now developed a small planning section assigned to conduct all planning functions, to include preaward construction planning. The section also manages the FMS construction mission, currently consisting of several projects valued at approximately \$800 million, plus potential projects valued at approximately \$400 million.

Another change in the structure is the combination of the MOD and MOI sections into one execution section. As the source of funding transitions from coalition-funded ISFF to Iraqi-funded FMS, there are fewer program management and project management requirements on the horizon. Moreover, there is a growing requirement to improve the engineering competencies at the ministerial levels as the government of Iraq takes on its own engineering programs and projects. The execution section will continue to provide oversight of engineering projects, but take on an additional role as the "right-seat ride" lead as the section interacts with its Iraqi counterparts. Finally, the J7 is developing a base management section that focuses on project transfer and follow-on facilities engineering. In the past, ISF-funded projects were transferred to the government of Iraq, but little future sustainment funding was programmed within the MOD or MOI to provide maintenance and upkeep to the new facilities. The goal of the base management section is to develop processes to facilitate the transfer of facilities, as well as prepare Iraqi facility engineers to properly plan, program, budget, and execute the base management and facilities engineering missions for their respective facilities.

Recommendations


These recommendations are based solely on personal observations, and are focused primarily on the United States Army's Engineer Regiment.

Education and Experience. Given the civil engineering nature of the J7 Engineering Directorate, it is advisable that all incoming personnel possess an engineering or hard science degree, preferably a master's in an applicable discipline. Most of the stakeholders are degreed engineers, and it is difficult to hit the ground running in the assignment without an engineering background, to include an understanding of the facilities engineering and contracting processes. It is also advisable to have engineers attend the Joint Engineer Operations Course before an assignment to MNSTC-I.

Capturing Credentials. A method should be established to capture and document engineering and technical credentials for officers and NCOs. Completing Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act facilities engineering courses, program management professional certification, or managing a multimillion dollar construction project are not formally documented within the human resources system, unless they are stated on a Soldier's efficiency report. The proposed change could help track the development of technical skills required for progressive assignments within the Engineer Regiment.

Directorate Leadership. The past two directors and the incoming director are all from the Navy Civil Engineer Corps community. Over time, the procedures and processes seem to have changed from a truly joint engineering doctrine to one with a Naval Facilities Engineering Command flavor. This has future implications, since most of the MOD facilities are for the Iraqi army. In the future, the directorship should perhaps be rotated among the various services, preferably with senior officers who have previous joint engineering experience.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to provide an understanding of the MNSTC-I J7 Engineering Directorate, and explain how the structure is adapting to the changing operational environment within Iraq. As the mission changes from one primarily focused on construction engineering for MOD and MOI to one focused on preparing the Iraqis to conduct engineering missions within their own organizations, the MNSTC-I J7 Engineering Directorate stands ready to meet the future challenges of joint engineering within Iraq. 

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