



The Theater Engineer Command – It's Not Your Legacy ENCOM Anymore

By Major General Robert J. Williamson and Lieutenant Colonel Adam S. Roth

A question that is constantly heard around our Regiment and our Army is, “What exactly does an ENCOM do?” Or better said, “I saw something about the ENCOMs in ‘The Engineer Blast,’ but what do you guys really do?” In years past, many Soldiers would quickly associate an ENCOM with conferences in the major warfighting theaters and, of course, the unforgettable catfish luncheons associated with them in Vicksburg, Mississippi, or the impressive facilities at the Argonne Laboratories in Darien, Illinois.

In the past, the two engineer commands (ENCOMs) have assumed the role of theater engineer, but primarily in support of the Army Service Component Command (ASCC) headquarters. Although a recent 416th ENCOM commander and a majority of his staff—as well as the commander of the 412th ENCOM—have deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the ENCOM has been a 226-Soldier headquarters that has not had conditions set for the mobilization of an entire ENCOM since Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, due to its large size and rank structure. That moniker has been relegated to the era of “your legacy ENCOM.” The purpose of this article is to show—

- The unprecedented change that is occurring to both ENCOMs, as driven by a Department of the Army (DA) Initiative.
- The command and control of units for which the ENCOMs are now responsible in generating forces to support the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).
- The evolution in support to the geographic combatant commanders (GCC).
- The leadership role that the ENCOMs are playing in the transformation of the Regiment while at war.

Background

For purposes of this article, the term “ENCOM” refers to both the 412th and the 416th ENCOMs. Although the authors are more familiar with the 412th ENCOM, many similarities may be found between the two.

The 412th ENCOM is a United States Army Reserve (USAR) unit, nestled in the historic Mississippi town of Vicksburg, along the Mississippi River. For more than a decade, it has served primarily as a wartime command and control headquarters, supporting the United States Army Europe (USAREUR) and Seventh United States Army in Germany; the Eighth United States Army (EUSA) in the Republic of Korea; and the United States Army Pacific (USARPAC), headquartered in Hawaii. The 412th provides support to the GCCs along four lines of operation:

- Enable stability operations with engineer capability
- Protect the force
- Provide engineer intelligence and knowledge management
- Sustain the force

The 416th ENCOM, based in Darien, Illinois, also a USAR unit, has primary responsibility for wartime support of the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) and United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) areas of responsibility.

Together, the two ENCOMs form the only two-of-a-kind units in the entire Army force structure. Both units are under the operational control (OPCON) of the United States Army Corps of Engineers® (USACE) through a formal Memorandum of Agreement. Both ENCOMs supported hurricane relief under USACE in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, through the Mississippi Valley Division, in both Louisiana and Mississippi. That relief work, and support to Emergency Support Function 3 under the National Response Plan, continues to this day.

TEC Transformation

In close cooperation with USACE as the lead agency, the ENCOMs are actively engaged with the United States Army Engineer School to implement DA Initiatives 18, 23, and 24:

- Initiative 18 is to establish and provide base operations capabilities to support the operational Army in a contingency environment.

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- Initiative 23 is to establish a theater engineer element and the processes needed to plan, train, and deploy in support of an ASCC.
- Initiative 24 institutionalizes and improves the responsiveness and readiness of civilian capabilities in support of the ASCC.

Both ENCOMs—in conjunction with USACE—have exercised the implementation of those initiatives through the Castle Quest series of exercises held in the National Capitol Region. The Castle Quest exercise is a tabletop scenario based in a joint, interagency, and multinational (JIM) environment. Once approved, DA Initiative 23, *Theater Engineer Command (TEC)*, will transform both commands from the legacy-based ENCOM structure to a TEC.

Each of the respective commodity areas are represented in the legacy force structure (G1-G8). The challenge has always been, as has been the case with much of the Regiment's force structure, that the United States Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) would either have to mobilize the entire command for a contingency or create a derivative unit identification code for a unit that may possess only a portion of the ENCOM's capability. Currently working through the force development update (FDU) process, DA Initiative 23 would serve to formally establish the TEC, replacing the former ENCOM organization. The TEC will have a main element of approximately 99 Soldiers, commanded by a major general, to form the nucleus for force generation. The main element serves as a platform for command and control for two deployable command posts (DCP) each consisting of roughly 62 Soldiers. The DCPs are led by a colonel or potentially a brigadier general, depending on the factors of mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civilian considerations (METT-TC). Under the DCP, the staff is aligned in effects-based groupings of combat, construction, and sustainment effects. This new modularity allows the TEC to be deployable in smaller subsets, while maintaining scalable capability in support of the warfighting commander.

The DCP can assume command and control of various specialty "plugs" that it would receive from USACE, such as a contingency real estate support team (CREST), one or more forward engineer support teams (FESTs), or other modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) units such as a facility engineer detachment or a construction management module. This structure further demonstrates its flexible tailorability to match the requirements of a given contingency. Having two DCPs in each of the ENCOMs provides the ability to either engage at two separate echelons of command simultaneously, such as at the GCC and ASCC levels, or to provide four total DCPs that could be placed in the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) Model and deployed in phases. The TEC concept is continuing the FDU process and has already received input from all Army major commands, as well as the Engineer School, USACE, and the 412th and 416th ENCOMs. A decision for the final composition will be made soon.

Command and Control in CONUS

The 412th ENCOM, under the United States Army Reserve Command (USARC), is playing a key role in Army Reserve Command and Control (ARC2) transformation. USARC, under its Millennium Transformation Plan, is standing down the majority of its two-star peacetime command and control headquarters, called regional readiness commands (RRCs), in support of creating four regional readiness sustainment commands (RRSC) across the country.

These RRSCs will be responsible for the base operations functions for all units within their geographic footprint. The units once commanded by the RRCs will now fall under operational and functional commands, that share both a Title X support mission to their respective downtraces as well as a responsibility to maintain their own go-to-war mission. Consistent with the USARC Transformation Plan, the 412th ENCOM is considered an operational command—essentially a senior USAR command headquarters with both engineer and nonengineer units assigned. The driving reason for the shift in emphasis on the USAR operational and functional commands is to ensure training and readiness oversight (TRO) of Soldiers with similar missions, as well as the efficient mobilization of its community-based, skill-rich Soldiers and units to support the joint warfighters whenever needed—anywhere in the world.

As one of the first senior USAR operational and functional commands to lead the USARC transformation, the 412th ENCOM assumed command and control of the new 926th Engineer Brigade on 1 October 2006. The 926th, headquartered in Montgomery, Alabama, also is transforming from a legacy engineer group structure to a brigade during this transition. The concurrent restructuring of the 926th, while shifting senior command relationships and assuming command of seven new USAR engineer battalions during a time of war, further exemplifies the true nature and depth of transformation within our Regiment. The 926th's USAR span of control extends from West Virginia to Florida, and west to the Mississippi River.

The 412th ENCOM will also assume command and control of two additional brigades by the end of this fiscal year. As of 1 October 2007, the 411th Engineer Brigade—based in New Windsor, New York, and currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with four battalion equivalents—will fall under the 412th ENCOM umbrella. The 412th will also stand up the 302d Combat Support Brigade (Maneuver Enhancement) (CSB [ME]) at Westover Air Reserve Base in Massachusetts. The 302d CSB (ME) will contain at least three battalion equivalents, including an engineer battalion, a chemical battalion, and a military police battalion. The geographic endstate of the 412th ENCOM footprint will extend from the tip of Maine to the tip of Florida and west to the Mississippi River. Similarly, during mid-January 2007, the 416th ENCOM assumed OPCON of the 420th Engineer Brigade in Bryan, Texas, and will soon provide command and control for an additional USAR engineer brigade and virtually all USAR engineer units west of the Mississippi River.

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Force Generation and GWOT Support

The headquarters of both ENCOMs have provided modules of task-organized Soldiers at the operational level in support of the GWOT since the start of the campaign. Soldiers from the 412th headquarters have supported USAREUR, operating as the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineer (ODCSENGR), in multiple rotations. Additionally, the 412th has deployed its Soldiers to support several rotations for the Multinational Force–Iraq, and continues to support the USACE Gulf Region Division and its subordinate districts. The 412th will continue to provide these modular capabilities while performing its ARC2 command and control responsibilities. The 416th ENCOM is currently preparing to mobilize Soldiers from its headquarters to replace Soldiers from the 412th supporting the Gulf Region Division headquarters in Iraq.

As previously stated, under the new ARC2 arrangement, the ENCOMs will be responsible for TRO of their downtrace units as they progress through the ARFORGEN cycle. The 412th ENCOM, in conjunction with the 416th ENCOM and USARC, are jointly developing challenging gate exercises as units leave the *Reset/Train Pool* and enter the *Ready Pool* through certification in a warrior exercise (WAREX). The 412th ENCOM currently has responsibility for the only USAR validation exercise, Operation Sand Castle (OSC), at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. This gate is for units to leave the *Ready Pool* and enter the *Available Pool*. OSC has seen a fourfold increase in USAR exercise units, now currently at 35, and spans the full spectrum of combat support and combat service support unit employment.

The training organizations within the USAR are also undergoing a total reorganization. The training organizations will focus on three areas in the future:

- Initial-entry training
- Total Army School System for duty military occupational specialty (MOS) – qualified (DMOS-Q)
- Leader development

The 412th ENCOM is forging strategic alliances with these organizations to anticipate requirements necessitated by transformation and focus targeted individual and collective training requirements on a command-wide scale. The 412th ENCOM is engaged with the Engineer School to help develop an engineer-specific training support brigade, which will further facilitate the ENCOM’s TRO mission.

The “take away” is this: If a USAR engineer unit is required for future contingencies, it will have been trained and deployed under either the 412th or the 416th ENCOM’s TRO mission.

GCC Support

The 412th ENCOM has maintained habitual associations with USAREUR and Seventh Army, EUSA, and USARPAC, as the 416th ENCOM has done with the Third United States Army. Most of our associations have remained with the ASCC in support of theater security cooperation planning (TSCP); however, as we move toward joint operations, the 412th has engaged at the joint headquarters level and will continue to do so in the future.

PACOM

The 412th ENCOM has transformed its engagement in this area to a regional approach, as has the GCC we support. As a result, our Hawaii forward element and Korea forward element are merging under a single command and control element.

Korea

The 412th ENCOM will continue its habitual association with Korea-based missions and the exercises that support it, to include Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration/Foal Eagle (RSOI/FE) and Ulchi Focus Lens. The deputy commander of the 412th ENCOM is also dual-hatted as the EUSA engineer, further showing our connectivity with our supported command. Whereas in the past we have exclusively supported the ASCC EUSA, the 412th has also identified potential contingency theater engineer synchronization requirements to support laterally the Joint Force Support Component Command (JFSCC) under United States Forces Korea (USFK), as assisted by United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM).

Pacific Rim

Just as the 416th ENCOM has done in Central America, the 412th ENCOM has supported humanitarian construction exercises throughout the Pacific Rim under USARPAC. Exercise Talisman Saber, a joint rapid airfield construction (JRAC) mission, will be executed this year in Australia with support from the 412th. USAR Soldiers and units will train during Exercise Khan Quest, which will include vertical construction missions in Mongolia. In the past year, the 412th has supported the GCC TSCP through exercises in Vietnam, the Philippines, and Thailand, among others.

EUCOM

The 412th ENCOM has recently formalized an agreement with EUCOM that will provide engineer planning to support TSCP missions for the EUCOM J4 engineer, while simultaneously supporting the ASCC USAREUR. Elements of the 412th continue planning with the United States Special Operations Command, Europe (SOCEUR), for a vertical construction project scheduled for execution this fiscal year in Africa. Last year, elements of the 412th supported overseas deployment training for a water distribution mission in Angola. Construction missions will continue to support the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Hohenfels, Germany, as well.

Transformation While at War


Nearly 100 percent of the 412th ENCOM downtrace will modularize within the next 18 months. Both ENCOMs, in conjunction with the Engineer School, are participating in a Fusion Cell, modeled after the Active Army Fusion Cell, to address transformational issues that arise in this truly dynamic period in our history. Participants in this forum will include all major players in the manning, equipping, funding, structuring, and training of units during their conversion. Major issues are vetted by the Engineer Advisory Board, which is chaired by one of the two ENCOM deputy commanders and has senior-level participation from major subordinate engineer commands, USACE, the Engineer School, and the United States Army Maneuver Support Center (MANSCEN).

Doctrine and New Technology

The ENCOMs, in conjunction with the Engineer School and USACE, have actively participated in the revision of several joint publications, to include JP 3-34, *Joint Engineer Operations*. As more and more engineer leaders return to the command with recent combat experience, the ENCOMs will have a greater ability to contribute to the revision of engineer doctrine by synchronizing the experience of a multitude of different types of units within each ENCOM's downtrace and other engineer units.

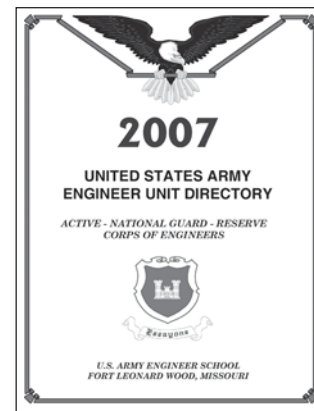
The 412th ENCOM has served a critical role in technology transfer that has directly benefited the warfighter on the ground. Through the Joint Forward Operating Base handbook and related video teleconferences that address both operational and technical aspects of the Joint Contingency Operating Base strategy, the 412th ENCOM, in conjunction with USACE, has provided a key role as knowledge manager to support the efforts of the Joint Staff. The 412th maintains key relationships with various agencies, including the Joint Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Defeat Organization (JIEDDO). This unique relationship has provided the most challenging training opportunities using current tactics, techniques, and procedures for deploying units participating in OSC. Key elements of operational protection will additionally be exercised during this year's OSC exercise at Forward Operating Base Santa Fe, at the National Training Center.

Summary

The anticipated transformation of both the 412th and the 416th ENCOMs to TECs, coupled with new command and control missions, support of force generation, evolving support to the GCCs, leadership in transformation to modularity while at war—while playing a key role as a warfighting theater contingency clearinghouse for engineer capability and support for both doctrinal and technology transfer—should demonstrate that it's not “business as usual.” The current ENCOM is truly “not your legacy ENCOM.” The ENCOMs of the future look forward to our mutual efforts among all components to support the needs of the warfighting commands through unity of effort throughout the Regiment. 

Major General Williamson is the Commander of the 412th Engineer Command. He served in Iraq concurrently as the Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineer, for the Multinational Force-Iraq and as the Director of Operations for the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office in Baghdad. He has commanded at the battalion and group levels and served as the Deputy Commander of the 416th Engineer Command. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy and the Army War College and holds a master's in operations management from the University of Arkansas.

Lieutenant Colonel Roth is the Deputy G3 of the 412th Engineer Command. He has deployed to Iraq as the Executive Officer of the 458th Engineer Battalion and has commanded a combat heavy engineer company. He is a graduate of the Command and General Staff College and holds a master's in mechanical engineering from Boston University.



2007 Engineer Unit Directory

The 2007 United States Army Engineer Unit Directory is available online in Adobe PDF format at <http://www.wood.army.mil/enr/mag/Engr%20Unit%20Dir/2007Directoryonline.pdf>. Take a moment and see if your unit's listing is correct. Changes to the Unit Directory can be made by calling (573) 563-7644 or e-mailing engineer@wood.army.mil.