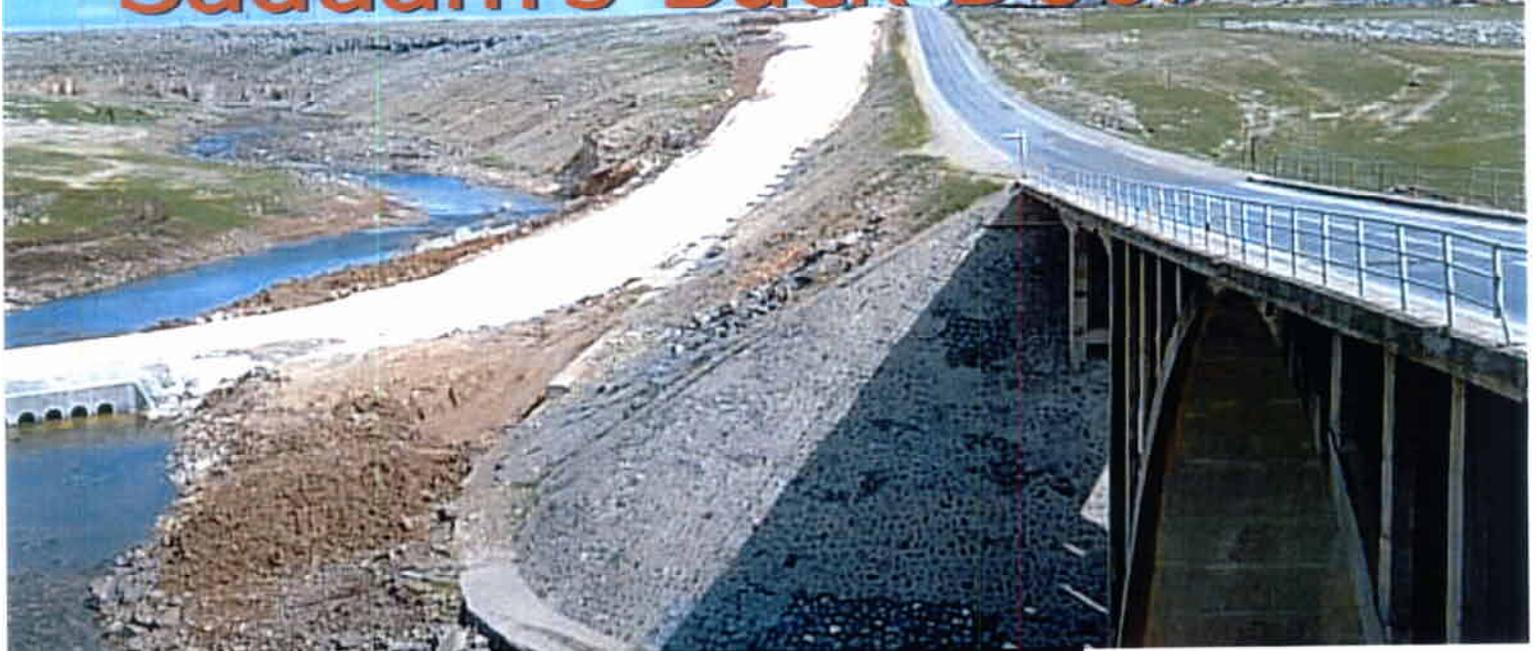


Blazing a Trail to Saddam's Back Door



Bridge bypasses, such as pictured, allow transport of heavy equipment.

Field Force Engineer Teams Make the Difference in Turkey

Story by Grant Sattler

Delivering construction projects at two dozen sites along the route from Mediterranean ports to the Turkish-Iraqi border was an engineering mission in the best *Essayons* tradition.

The Turkish government's decision to support Operation Iraqi Freedom with air corridors, rather than permit an overland drive to Baghdad by the 4th Infantry Division through Turkey and Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, does not diminish the fact that Army Engineers blazed an 800-kilometer trail, preparing facilities and infrastructure along a strategic line of communication in less than a month's time.

The accomplishment was the feat of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Forward Engineer Support Teams, working together with the 18th Engineer Brigade, a unit comprised of soldiers from the former Deputy Chief of Staff, Engineering, U.S. Army Europe.

Pulling off the task in such a short time took plenty of preparation. Europe District became involved in engineer planning in August 2002 for what became Operation Iraqi

Freedom, as the Emergency Operations Center team began working with U.S. Army Europe, said Simon Rosa, Europe District's Chief of Operations, Readiness & Security.

In January 2003, seven Europe District engineers joined three infrastructure assessment and two reconnaissance teams visiting multiple locations in Turkey as part of USAREUR's participation in the U.S. European Command site coordination visit.

Jonathan Carr, Susan Bittick, Joni Rhiner, Omar Chavez, Rebecca Goetzke, and Shawn Pelowitz deployed from Germany to evaluate port facilities, railheads, and possible marshalling and billeting locations. They joined Capt. Todd Plotner, along with other personnel from The U.S. Engineering Group, commonly known as TUSEG, the



TURKEY



photo by Joni Rhiner

(Above) FEST team members located facilities to lease and modify, like the storage units above, in preparation for the flow of troops and equipment through Turkey.

(Left) Most team members deployed to remote locations in Eastern Turkey and lived under austere conditions while awaiting amenities like showers and heated tents. Shower trailers, like the one to the left, were delivered to make a comfortable home for transient troops.



photo by Joni Rhiner

Corp's permanent presence in Turkey based on Incirlik Air Base near Adana.

Also deployed were Dr. Larry Lynch and Terry Stanton of the Engineer Research and Development Center who traveled from Vicksburg, Miss., to provide invaluable technical support.

Along the proposed route, team members evaluated the condition of road surfaces, conducted bridge analysis and load classifications, and noted any pre-existing environmental problems.

The deployment was a baptism of fire for the team's Tele-engineering tool kits as they compiled site data collected daily during the 10-day mission.

Pelowitz, a project manager with the District's International Engineering Branch, said they trained on the equipment before they deployed to work out any hiccups. "There were quite a few specialized pieces of equipment that were newly developed, so they had a lot of glitches, a lot of bugs that you had to work through," he said. "Once we got down there, [the equipment] still had some issues, but overall it went well."

Pelowitz said despite minor equipment challenges, the Corps' presence and technical abilities impressed the multi-forces team. The Corp's video teleconferencing capability not only exceeded FFE team member expectations for data transmission, but came to be the communications link of

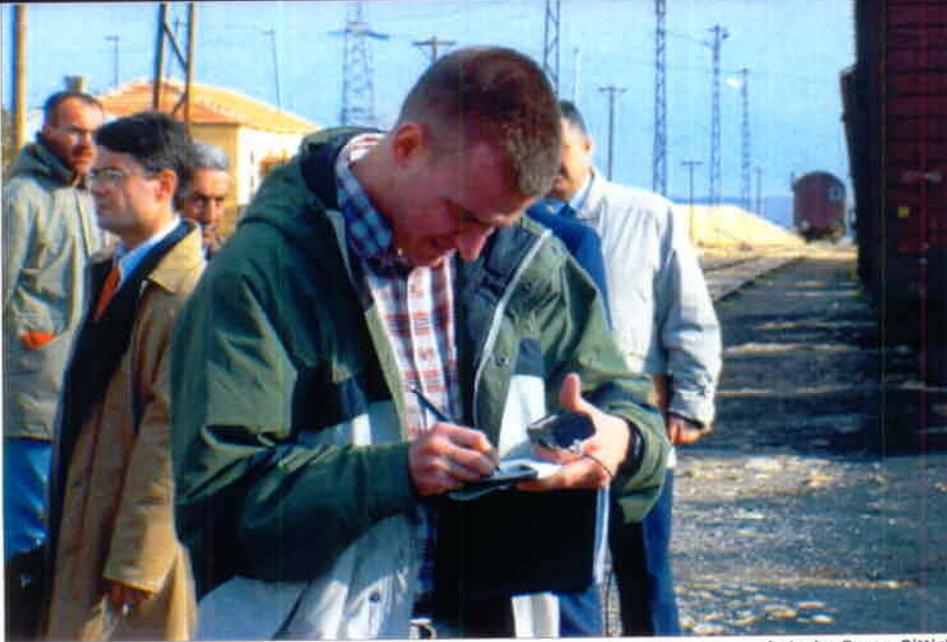


photo by Susan Bittick

(Left) Capt. Todd Plotner, from The U.S. Engineering Group in Turkey, commonly known as TUSEG, assesses a railhead to be considered as a possible transportation site for troops and equipment. Plotner joined Corps employees from Germany on a reconnaissance team to search for locations to build up infrastructure supporting troop movement.

(Below) Joni Rhiner, a project manager with Europe District, joined the Forward Engineer Support Team to help combat engineers such as this 1ID soldier.

choice for other team operators. The District team joined with Marines, Army and Naval personnel and served not only engineering staff, but also logistics, transportation and force protection personnel.

Working with a multi-forces team and having the tools and talent to support them was a positive experience, but it was also a challenge, Pelowitz said. "You really felt that people were going to be depending on what you did, that it would have a really big payback. You knew that if you screwed up there were going to be 30,000 guys behind you cussing your name out. It was rewarding," he said.

Although most of the reconnaissance team returned to Germany to pass along their findings to those soon to deploy, Jonathan Carr remained in country following the assessments to work with the newly formed 18th Engineer Brigade.

As the mission developed, USAREUR called for additional engineering expertise in country. Bittick and Rhiner, joined by team leader Lt. Col. Stephen Tennant, Michele Sung, Arbor Drinkwine, Bryton Johnson, and Cathy Drosos, returned in February as the Forward Engineering Support Team from Europe District. They were joined by team members from the Turkey TUSEG office — Maj. Joe Gandara, Capt. Plotner, Capt. Tom Asbery, Ralph Ross,

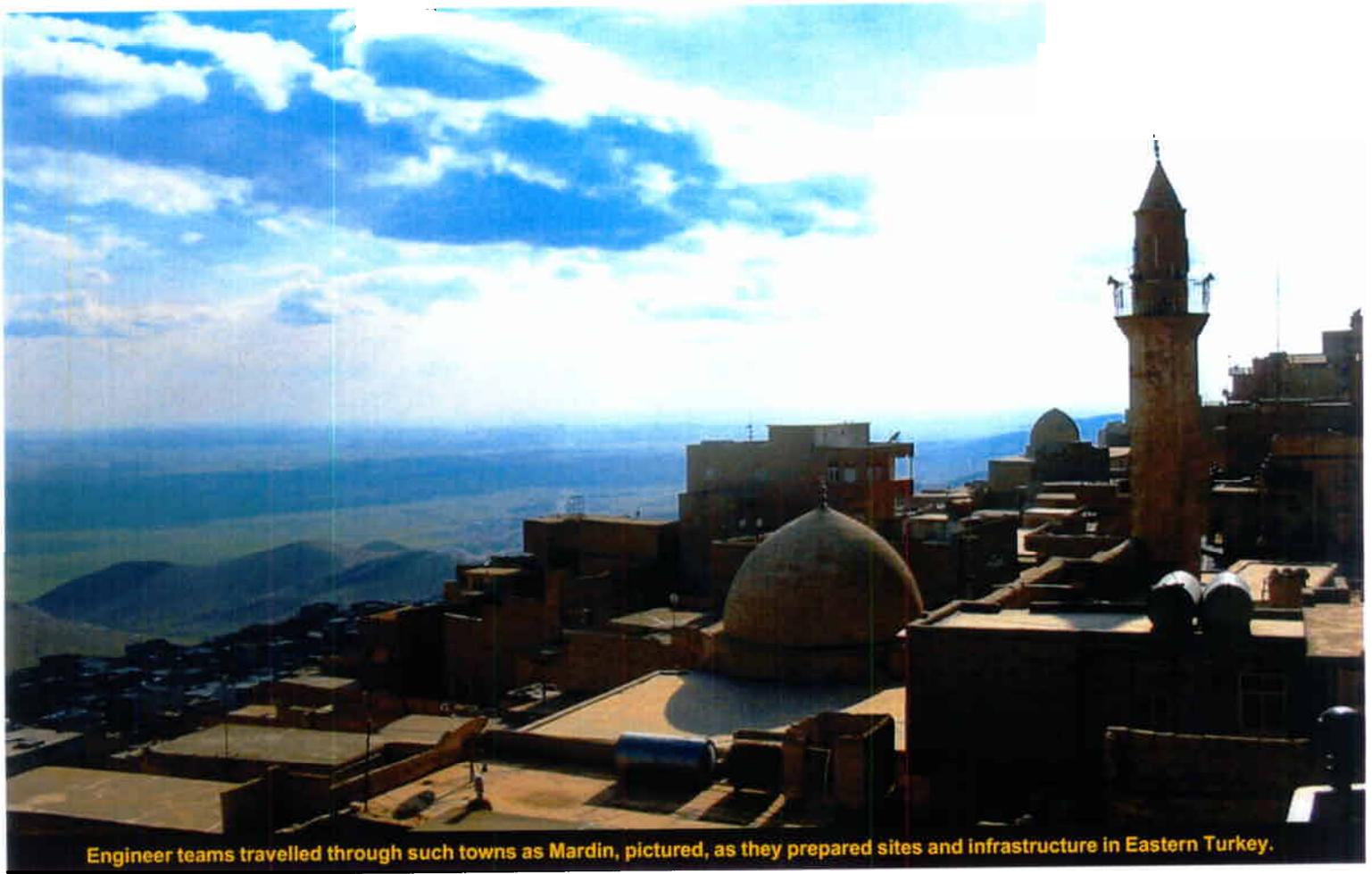


U.S. Army photo

Francisco Colon, Charlie Truesdell, Lloyd South, Okan Nalbant, and Orkun Dincer.

The Europe District FEST joined the Contingency Real Estate Support Team (CREST) comprised of per-

sonnel from five different Corps districts, the FEST-As from New York and Philadelphia Districts, and noncommissioned officers from 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power). These teams traveled throughout Turkey providing



Engineer teams travelled through such towns as Mardin, pictured, as they prepared sites and infrastructure in Eastern Turkey.

everything from master planning to environmental assessments to construction oversight.

Directing operations at remote locations across eastern Turkey was a daily challenge. "It was like herding cats," said Lt. Col. Stephen Tennant, Europe District's deputy commander. Many team members worked and lived under austere conditions while awaiting the construction of basic amenities like showers and heated tents, but others like Johnson set up camp on Incirlik Air Base.

Johnson coordinated an environmental "inventory" focusing on the containment, transportation, and disposal of hazardous materials discovered at potential communications sites, or nodes. This environmental baseline study was orchestrated between Turkish officials, contractors, and other team members throughout Turkey.

"[We would] go out to the different nodes across Turkey before the Army got there ... to determine what was there that could pose a problem in the future. Were they any contaminants, were there any waste barrels, trash or debris? ... So, once the Army had moved through Turkey and backed out of these nodes, there would be another baseline study to determine what we impacted, ... versus what was there already," Johnson said.

The team's interaction with the combat engineers was successful, he said. During the 18th Engineer Brigade's appreciation ceremony, combat engineers said they would not

have been able to put the infrastructure together as quickly as they did had it not been for the expertise of the Corps, Johnson said.

Johnson said he enjoyed his time on Incirlik Air Base and felt that his efforts helped the combat engineers greatly. "It was a big honor being able to go out there and help the war fighters. ... It's interesting interacting with the soldiers and being able to tie in what I normally do for a living with something a whole lot bigger than I've ever done," he said. Johnson's work lasted a month, but the TUSEG workload - largely for the U.S. Air Force - continued without pause. Gregg

Takamura, Pedro Corona, Mike Maynard, Rob Lewis, and Shaleigh Daniel traveled on short notice from Germany and

Italy to help the remaining TUSEG employees.

The engineers coming out of Europe, where much of the work is accomplished through an indirect process using host nation government engineering entities, found the direct management of the projects a change. "It was a lot like in the States, working on direct contracts and a lot of Job Order Contract and Multiple Award Task Order Contract work," Daniel said. "They followed the whole Contract Quality Management Process, the way the Corps likes to do business."

Daniel said that the contractors took the change in Corps personnel in stride. "I was just really impressed with the contractors. They were accepting of the whole situation and just worked with the flow."

"It was a big honor being able to go out there and help the war fighters."