

Building Cooperation

Story by Andrew Stamer

Every day around the world, the Corps of Engineers is building relationships and working with team members to complete quality construction projects.

Some of these are multimillion dollar projects, while others are of a smaller scale. Small scale, however, can produce a great increase in the quality of life for many.

In Turkey, The U.S. Engineer Group (TUSEG), part of Europe District's Mediterranean Area Office, is working with the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Department of State, and the Office of Defense Cooperation in Ankara to help them keep their facilities operational.

The ODC is part of the U.S. Embassy mission, but their offices are located outside of the embassy compound in a 70-year-old facility which has seen a lot of construction face-lifts.

Much of the work has been small contracts for projects around the building that houses both American and Turkish staff.

A new roof and power system, which supplies commercial power to the building, have been added. There are also hundreds of thousands of dollars invested with the Corps for facility upgrades and infrastructure, said Air Force Maj. Dean Hitchcock, Office of Defense Cooperation.

Currently, ODC is working hard with the Corps to push a Multiple Award Task Order Contract to get a

building-wide electrical upgrade, he said.

"There has never been a major upgrade to our half of the facility," said Hitchcock.

This is an important contract for a couple reasons. One is that the electrical distribution system in the facility does not meet any of the modern safety codes. The fact that at least three electrical fires have occurred because of the old and overloaded wiring, have also made a system upgrade an essential safety requirement, he said.

Part of Hitchcock's job is to coordinate State Department construction in Turkey with the Turkish general staff. He also takes care of the ODC building, a well as embassy properties in the surrounding area. However, he is the only engineer located at the ODC.

"I don't have any staff at all. I can't really execute projects without the Corps' help," he said. "When I pay the Corps for their services I get project management, I get inspectors, I get design

(Right to left) Maj. Tom Asbery, Europe District, gets an update on the construction of future office space for the Office of Defense Cooperation, Turkey, with Air Force Maj. Dean Hitchcock, ODC joint engineer, while Cuneyt Findikoglu, Euope District, and Oytun Yanikoglu, site manager at the ODC, listen in.



Photo by Brian H. Temple

services – none of which I have the capability to do by myself.”

Hitchcock relies on the Corps to come through for him in many aspects beyond the MATOC.

Hitchcock’s position exists within an elite group of facilities managers and engineers, who look to the Corps for expertise and project execution.

These smaller organizations also go to the Corps for technical expertise which isn’t available through their organizations.

“Because we are a small organization, and because I have one engineer, I rely on the Corps’ expertise to design and to help us define what our requirements are,” said Col. Clay Bridges, Deputy Chief for the American Forces, Office of Defense Cooperation.

Bridges uses the Corps when he has a requirement, which he says can be hard to define in engineering terms at times. That idea can then be translated into specifications of how the product can be produced.

“We are a small organization and we don’t have immediate access to the technical expertise that we need for these projects,” said Bridges.

Currently, many of the projects are small engineering projects, but there is a possibility for larger construction in the future.

“For me, the largest pro of going to the Corps of Engineers is that I’m paying for the service of project management and quality control,” said Bridges.

“I want other government agencies to understand our capabilities and also understand products and services that we can provide – the value that we can add to their organization,” said Maj. Thomas Asbery, former resident engineer, TUSEG.

Asbery was in charge of between \$1.5 and \$2 million in construction with the U.S. Embassy in Ankara.

Many of the projects have been primarily Job Order Contracts, which are executed to get quick turn around on contracts and construction, said Asbery. The JOC avoids having to go through the

Europe District has managed approximately \$750,000 in Job Order Contracts to help the ODC renovate their building and to provide them with needed construction services. Job Order Contracts can place smaller construction projects on the fast track for customers, such as the ODC staff in Ankara, Turkey.

Photo by
Brian H. Temple



discovery period on a contractor because there are already contractors who are approved. The JOC allows for quick turn around and quick services with qualified contractors that routinely do work for the U.S. government.

The Corps generally works with EMTA, one of the contractors in Turkey, to get projects off the ground, said Asbery.

During his two-year tenure at TUSEG office, Asbery said he has completed more than 20 projects.

“We have produced a lot of great work. Our customers are happy, our contractors are happy, and they’ll bend over backwards for us,” said Asbery. “There is a lot to be said about the working relationships that we maintain.”

For him it is truly a combined effort, with every team member putting their best foot forward.

“We’re in this together ... I can’t build that building without you,” said Asbery of the contractors who he has built close relationships through the JOC process.

ODC is scheduled to get over \$400,000 of work done with year-end funds, and based on funding it may be a million or more in the future, said Asbery.