ENFORCE 2008—
BUILDING GREAT ENGINEERS

By Brigadier General Gregg F. Martin

For ENFORCE 2008, we chose to focus on the human dimension because, in the words of our Chief of Engineers, Lieutenant General Robert L. Van Antwerp, "It's ALL about PEOPLE!" Soldiers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), warrant officers, officers, civilians, and Families—they are the heart, soul, brains, and essence of all that we are and do as a Regiment, and they are what unites the entire Regiment into the incredible team that we are.

Since 9/11, the Regiment has played an increasingly critical role for our Army, joint force, and nation, as we operate across the full spectrum of operations around the globe. From the tactical to strategic levels, and from environments ranging from stable peace to war, engineers have been crucial. One of the key observations and lessons learned during this period is that full spectrum operations have driven up the requirements for engineer effects and have revealed a capability gap in terms of engineer force structure, organizations, and individual technical competency. While we continue to build the modular engineer force and work to improve force structure deficiencies, we chose to focus on the people part of Building Great Engineers at ENFORCE, because people are by far the most important element; and investment in people also offers the greatest long-term payoff for our Regiment and Army.

So what kind of people do we want, and for what purpose?

The Regiment needs people of great character and values, who are fit, tough, smart, innovative, and adaptive and who are energetic, passionate, and committed to the cause. These people will be charged to plan, orchestrate, and execute full spectrum engineering operations, which range from tip-of-the-spear sapper and combat engineering, to general and geospatial engineering, to massive reconstruction of entire nations (such as Iraq and Afghanistan) and parts of our own (such as the Gulf Coast), and a wide range of diverse engineer missions and requirements in between and across the spectrum of operations (see Figure 1).

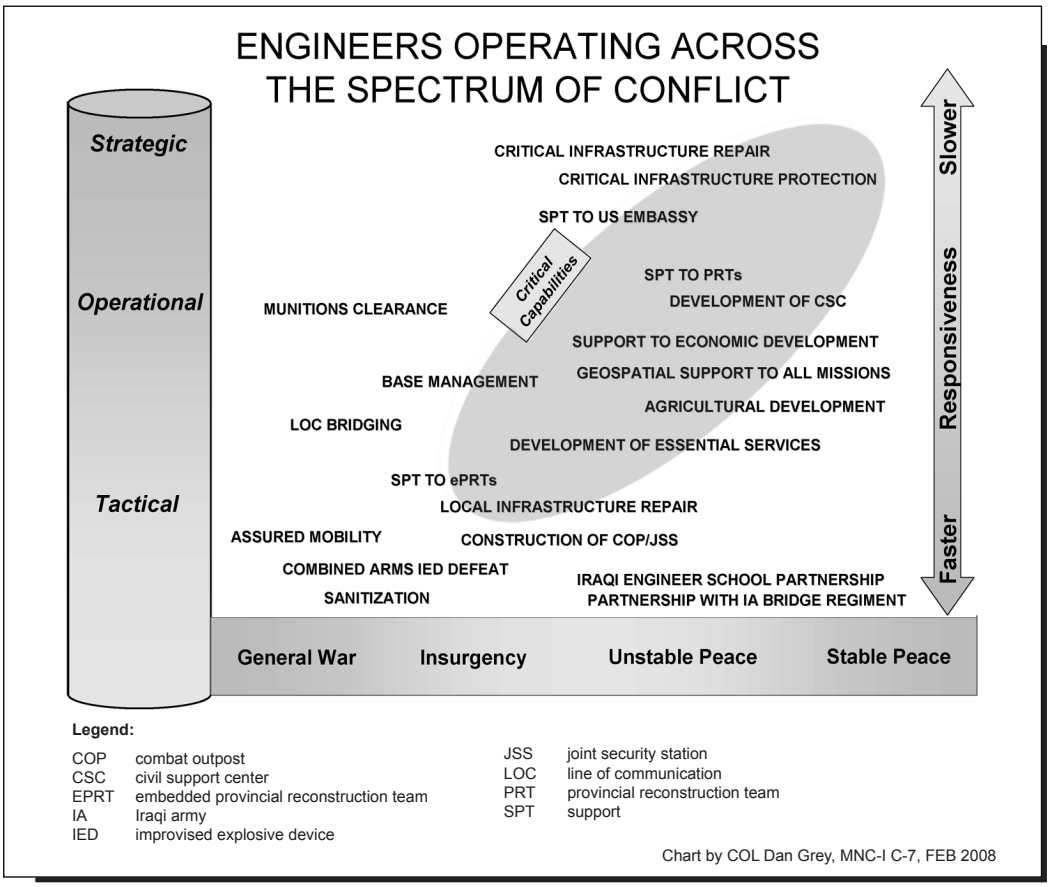

Figure 1

Our goal as a Regiment is to get the right people, with the right capability, at the right point in time and space, in order to deliver the desired engineer effect in full spectrum operations. Although there are many aspects to achieving this, we have chosen to focus initially on the *People, Training and Education*, and *Leader Development* aspects of this goal.

A key challenge is to figure out how to effectively harness all of the great engineer capability we have resident in our total Army Engineer Regiment—which includes the Active Army, Army National Guard (ARNG), United States Army Reserve (USAR), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Directorates of Public Works (DPWs), and contractors. Yet, we know from experience that even after we harness all of this capability, we still will not have enough engineers to meet all of the requirements and will have to partner with our joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) engineer colleagues. JIIM is the way we will head in the future. More to follow on this as our journey unfolds…

To achieve these desired ends—and with **"Requirements and Future Roles/Missions"** as the driver, we have chosen to pursue a holistic, cradle-to-grave approach (see Figure 2) —to include **"Accessions," "Training and Education," "Employment,"** and **"Retention"**—all wrapped together and linked through a **"Strategic Communications/ Engagement"** plan. With the goal of Building Great Engineers for full spectrum operations and effectively managing our most precious resource—people—ENFORCE 2008 participants broke into six work groups (shown bolded in this paragraph) to ask the big questions, understand the issues, see ourselves, identify gaps, and develop an action plan for the way ahead.

We actually started work back in January when we kicked off our initial Engineer Leader Technical Competency (ELTC) Study. (See previous issues of "The Engineer Blast" and the ENFORCE 2008 issue of *Engineer*, January-March 2008, page 4, for details.) After several months of research, collaboration, analysis, and assessment, the charge to each work group was to start with a blank sheet of paper and unconstrained thinking and—

- Identify low-hanging fruit and quick wins.
- Identify what we do not know and need to investigate (scope out research paper topics to leverage our engineers who are going to school and need paper topics).
- Determine best practices wherever they might be found.
- "Think different," as we develop the way ahead.

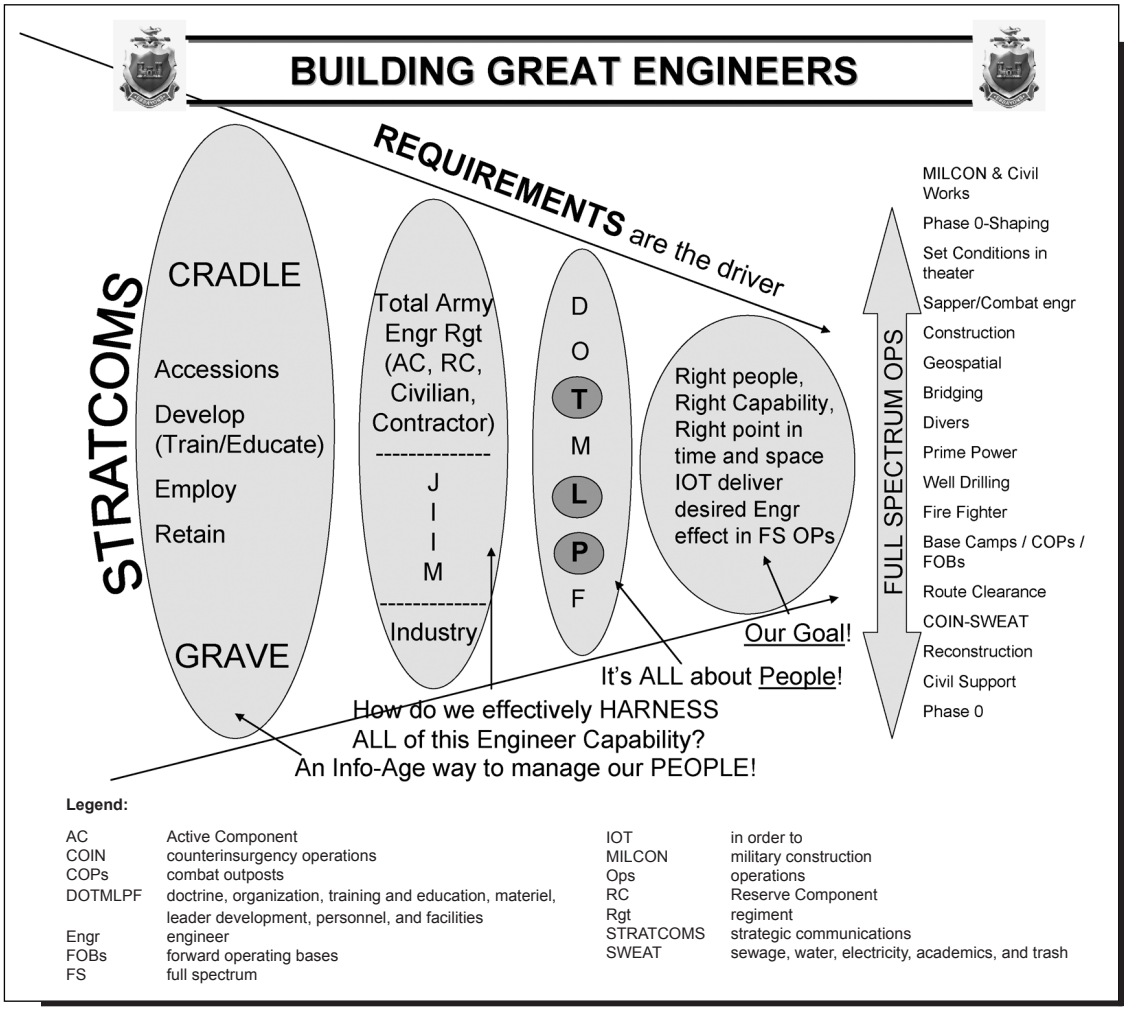

Figure 2

Guiding principles were to "Steal [Good] Ideas Shamelessly" (SIS), "Share [Good] Ideas Willingly" (SIW), communicate transparently, brainstorm (there are no "dumb" ideas), cross-talk, collaborate, and inform one another.

In order to unite the Regiment, yet provide diversity of thought, each work group had a healthy mix of uniformed and civilian leaders from all elements of the Regiment, as well as a mix of officers, warrant officers, NCOs and civilians, with a general officer responsible for leading and pulling the effort together.

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A final step and forcing function was the requirement for each work group to deliver an action plan back-brief to the Chief of Engineers, the Engineer School Commandant, and all of our ENFORCE colleagues on the final day of the conference. This led to a rich dialog and cross-fertilization of ideas. Each work group followed up with a written action plan that was delivered to the Commandant at the end of May. We are now transforming these six written plans into a Regimental Campaign Plan for Building Great Engineers, which I will brief to the Chief of Engineers by the end of July. The Campaign Plan will have clear, measurable goals, objectives, and time lines, which will be tracked and briefed to the senior leaders of the Regiment every quarter. I will brief the Plan to the field during the next Commandant's VTC – you are all invited to listen, dialog, and provide feedback.

In addition, the Chief charged each of the USACE Division commanders to develop a comprehensive and enduring engineer strategic communications (STRATCOM)/ Engagement/Outreach Program to tell the Army engineer story, in order to help Build Great Engineers in their respective areas of operation. He directed them to reach out to the entire regimental team in their geographical footprint—to include USACE; troop units of all compos; Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs; engineer feeder schools, colleges, and universities; the Recruiting Command; regimental alumni; Families; United States Military Academy (USMA)/ROTC liaison officers; media; relevant professional associations, such as the Army Engineer Association (AEA), Society of American Military Engineers (SAME), Associated General Contractors (AGC), Association of the United States Army (AUSA), and others; politicians; and others who can contribute to our goal of Building Great Engineers. Each Division commander will brief the Chief on his program and execution plan at the USACE Senior Leader Conference in August. The flywheel is beginning to turn—HOOAH!

Let me assure you that this is not a short-term blip on the screen. The intent is to embark on a journey that will plant the seeds and shape our people, such that we will enjoy the fruits of our labor in the form of great engineers for the next century and beyond. This effort is in sync with the Chief's vision of moving from *Good to Great*[1] and being *Built to Last*,[2] in accordance with the two leadership classics by Jim Collins. (We recommend that you read these two books so you catch the Chief's vision and passion for moving our Regiment to the next level.) We will lay out the details and way ahead in future issues of "The Engineer Blast," issues of *Engineer*, VTCs, and other venues in order to ensure transparent communications and dialog.

That, in a nutshell, was the hard intellectual work we did during ENFORCE. We welcome and need your engagement and participation as we embark on our campaign to Build Great Engineers for full spectrum operations in an era of persistent conflict.

Brigadier General Martin is the Commandant of the United States Army Engineer School, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He has served in a wide variety of command and staff assignments, including instructor duty at West Point and the Army War College and Commander of the 130th Engineer Brigade, during full spectrum operations in Europe, Kuwait, and Iraq from 2002- 2004. He is a graduate of the United States Military Academy, Command and General Staff College, and the Naval and Army War Colleges. He holds a master's and a doctorate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Endnotes

[1] *Good to Great* by Jim C. Collins, Harper Business: New York, 2001.

[2] *Built to Last* by Jim C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, Harper Business: New York, 1994, 1997.