

# The Sun Never Sets on the USAFEG

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**F**or a time it was said that “the sun never sets on the British Empire.” We believe that the same could be said of the current reach and effect of the United States Army Facility Engineer Group (USAFEG). Since 11 September 2001, the United States Army Reserve’s facility engineer detachments (FEDs) and facility engineer teams (FETs) that belong to the USAFEG have provided extraordinary support to the nation. The USAFEG has deployed 55 FEDs and FETs to such locations as Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Djibouti,

Kuwait, Qatar, Bosnia, and Kosovo. During this time, FEDs and FETs have also provided peacetime facility engineering support to locations in Alaska, Hawaii and other Pacific Islands, Germany, and Korea.

The USAFEG is composed of 16 FEDs and 30 FETs distributed across the continental United States and Puerto Rico. A detachment or team is led by an engineer lieutenant colonel and filled with highly skilled engineer officers and senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Our officers and NCOs



**Road repair at K2 was a top priority in 2002 to improve theater logistics and airbase operations.**

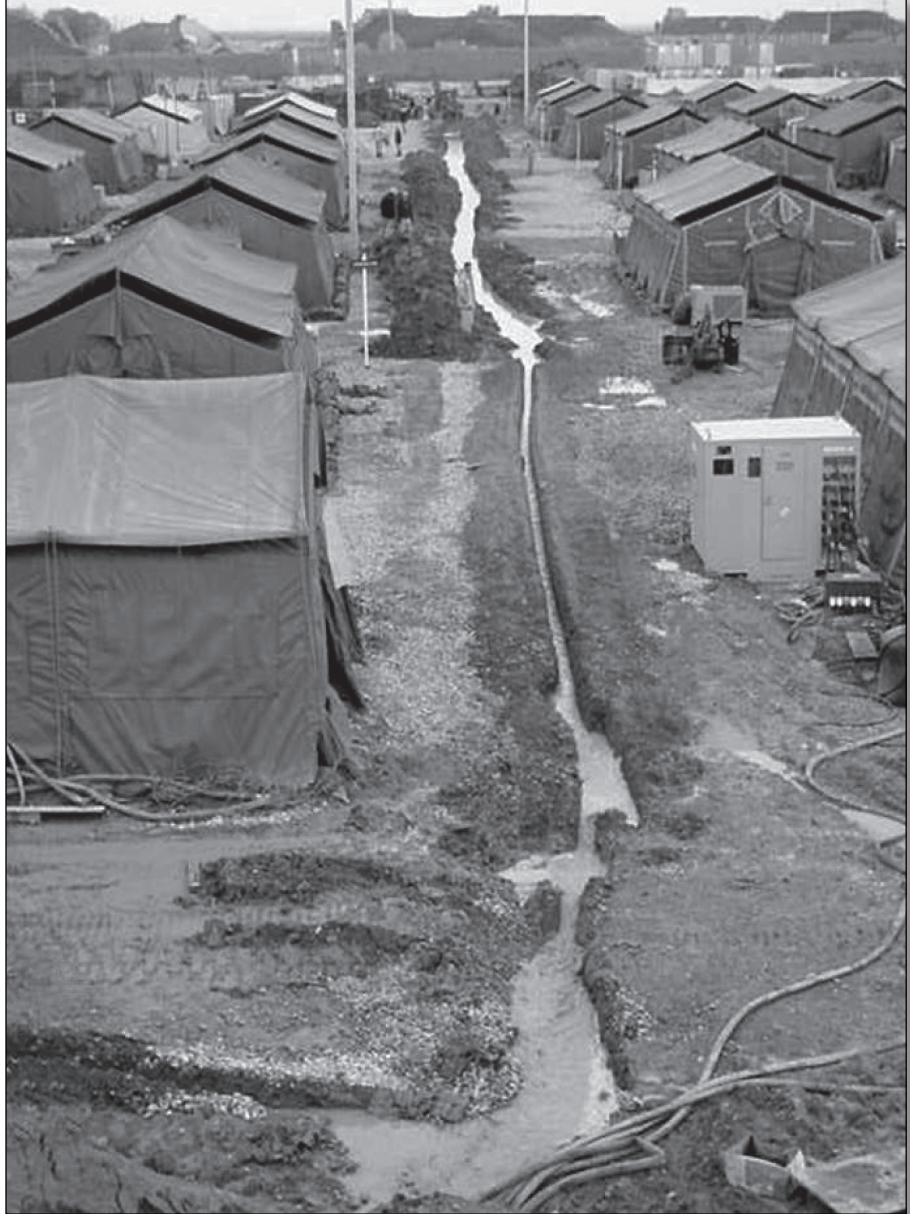
hold a large number of professional engineering, construction management, and environmental degrees and nearly one-third are professionally registered. A majority of our personnel work in engineering and construction fields in their civilian jobs. In theaters of operation, USAFEG Soldiers have engaged in projects ranging from helping local nationals rebuild wells to designing and overseeing air-field construction.

The detachments and teams are small, highly autonomous units that work with engineers from sister service units such as the United States Marine Corps, the United States Air Force Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers (RED HORSE), and the United States Navy Seabees. They also work with United States Army combat engineers, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), special operations forces, and local national engineers and contractors.

Army technical engineer teams that can perform in all phases of military operations and contribute to full spectrum operations reside primarily in the Reserve Component. The USAFEG, with previous deployment experience in the Balkans, has been the major contributor of facility engineers during the War on Terrorism. The capabilities of the FEDs and FETs are unique because their personnel possess skills from their civilian experience and deploy as Soldiers when needed.

According to a former 20th Engineer Brigade commander, the contributions of the FETs to his mission in Iraq in 2004-2005 were essential. He stated that he could not have fought without them. He marveled at the ability of these small teams to have such a great impact on the life support, base operations, command and control, and full spectrum operations of the 8,600 Soldiers under his command. He cited the ability of the teams to leverage USACE and other reachback assets to formulate technical solutions to tactical problems.

One of USAFEG's first deployments after 11 September 2001 was FET 23 to the primitive base camp at Karshi-Khanabad (also known as K2) Airbase in Uzbekistan on 8 December 2001. FET 23 became the Directorate of Public Works in support of Logistics Task Force 507 and the 10th Mountain Division. Team members developed the master plan and managed the base commander's vision for the



**K2 initially had poor drainage that needed improvement by facility engineers.**

development and construction of K2 to best support and sustain combat operations in Afghanistan. In addition, FET 23 developed the project design, statement of work, and bid package for all on-base construction in support of the expansion that would be performed by host nation contractor construction and troop labor projects. During FET 23's tour, K2 was transformed from a hastily constructed Harvest Eagle/Force Provider tent camp, without proper grading and drainage, to a developed camp with metal buildings and proper drainage. The team also increased the throughput into theater by expanding the maximum on-ground capacity for aircraft and improving runway conditions.

FET 16 had a similar impact during War on Terrorism operations while deployed to the Horn of Africa. In October 2002, FET 16 arrived at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti and, in a short period of time, quadrupled the camp's life support capacity, expanded the maximum on-ground capacity for aircraft, and coordinated with USACE to drill water wells. The well-drilling operations were essential to the continued




**Well-drilling design and construction is just one of the many services provided by facility engineer detachments and teams.**

goodwill of the local populace. Until this time, Camp Lemonnier got its fresh water from the local economy, overtaxing the local water supply and threatening to disrupt host nation relations. When their mission was complete in Djibouti, the members of FET 16 departed for an airfield in an undisclosed location, where they planned and executed the hasty construction of a temporary base camp that was essential for close air support and insertion of special operations forces in Iraq.

In Djibouti and other areas of operation, water is a scarce resource. FED Charlie from Tennessee arrived at Tallil Airbase in southern Iraq in April 2003. Using their design and construction management skills, team members devised a plan to reestablish a damaged, nonfunctional irrigation canal to flow from the Euphrates River into a reservoir planned for the airbase. The detachment surveyed the canal and future reservoir site, designed proper slope and drainage, coordinated for multinational troop engineer support, and worked to set up water purification contracts for the reservoir. It was full of usable water by fall 2003.

In the first weeks of the Iraq conflict, FED Bravo from Puerto Rico conducted facility assessments of many Baghdad area power, water, and sewer treatment plants. The detachment also played a key role in establishing Camp Victory near Baghdad International Airport. The grid supplying power to the main palace and to the northern section of Camp Victory was severely damaged. The Puerto Rico detachment conducted utility assessments and determined electric load requirements so that prime power units could establish generator farms and USACE could establish permanent sources of power for this key operating base. The detachment also sent a team to Fallujah and improved conditions for the local populace by working with USACE and contractors to fix power, water, and sewage treatment plants in the area.

While contributions to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have been significant, FEDs and FETs have continued to provide other valuable services to the nation. Detachments, teams, and individual Soldiers stand by to provide support and technical expertise in natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. They also provide support to major exercises in the continental United States and overseas. In the fall of 2008, a team will deploy to Bulgaria for a 60-day exercise. Also, facility engineer Soldiers are often asked to fill various interesting individual deployments and tours around the world.

The pace of support to the War on Terrorism and other exciting engineering missions continues. Soldiers who have an engineer military occupational specialty, or have relevant civilian engineering or construction management skills, will find that FEDs and FETs offer highly professional, challenging, flexible opportunities with unit locations across the country. For information about joining this dynamic organization, contact the authors. 

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