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THE TRANSITION PERIOD 1974–1978

The establishment of the United States Army Engineer Division, Europe (USAEDE), on 1 July 1974 marked the first time that the chief of engineers rather than the theater commander controlled contract construction for U.S. forces in Europe. Although the line of authority and command governing engineer services was new, the tasks remained much the same. On both sides of the Atlantic, people worked to make the transition from the United States Army, Europe (USAREUR), to the Corps of Engineers successful, to redistribute the resources of the Engineer Command (ENGCOM), and to reorganize USAREUR's other support services. The organizational changes affected thousands of Americans and Germans working in Europe.

The Corps of Engineers introduced a new culture and a different way of doing business. The people working in Frankfurt and throughout the area covered by USAREUR already had years of experience doing business in Europe and thought that their experience would be valued. In spite of the tensions that developed, division personnel provided the services expected of them. On a purely administrative level, the reassignment of people and distribution of resources was completed quickly; but the transition period persisted through 1978, and turbulence and dislocation remained the dominant feelings recalled by those who lived through it.

Brig. Gen. James C. Donovan, serving under the USAREUR commander in chief, commanded the new division only until mid-August 1974, when he was reassigned.[1] It fell to Donovan's successor, Brig. Gen. Louis W. Prentiss, Jr., to shape the new entity as an operating division of the Corps of Engineers. And it was the task of his successor, Brig. Gen. Norman G. Delbridge, Jr., to forge a cohesive organization from the "old-timers" who remained and the "newcomers" from the United States.

New Management

General Prentiss, whose father had been deputy theater chief engineer under United States Forces, European Theater, in 1946–1947, report-

ed in Frankfurt on 1 September 1974. He was the first division engineer to serve under the chief of engineers in Washington. Prentiss came to Frankfurt from Stuttgart, where he had served as commander of the 7th Engineer Brigade, VII Corps engineer, and community commander since July 1973.[2] Prentiss graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1950 with Donovan. As a new lieutenant, Prentiss served three years in Germany with an artillery unit. When he returned to Europe in 1973 as the staff engineer for the VII Corps commander, Lt. Gen. George S. Blanchard, Prentiss heard firsthand the dissatisfaction of the corps commanders with the Engineer Command.

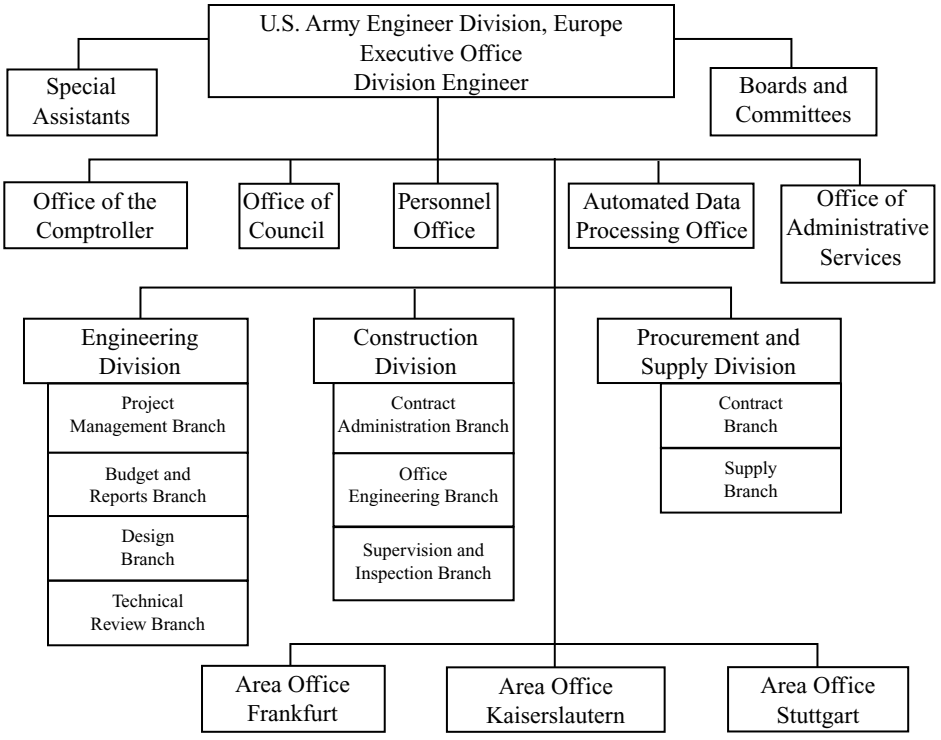
General Prentiss

The agreement of April 1974 transferring engineer functions from the commander in chief of USAREUR to the chief of engineers defined USAEDE's responsibilities very generally: to plan, direct, and supervise design and construction of new military construction and family housing programs; to inspect and supervise design and construction carried out for the Army by host-nation agencies under indirect contracting; and to furnish design and construction services on a reimbursable basis as requested by USAREUR.[3] Because USAEDE was an operating division, headquarters incorporated both the oversight and review functions assigned to a stateside division and the contracting and project management functions assigned to a stateside district. Civilian administrators from the Office of the Chief of Engineers (OCE) had worked with the organization's deputy division engineer, Col. Edwin S. Townsley, and other staff to create the structure.[4] (*Chart 10*) Prentiss found the new engineer organization still in its formative stages.

Exactly how the USAEDE would fulfill the terms of the April agreement became one of Prentiss' major concerns. Between April 1974 and January 1976, the division negotiated a dozen supplemental or implementing agreements covering such matters as USAREUR's provision of civilian personnel and real estate services, base support, funding and billing, and the services that the division would provide to USAREUR regarding North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) construction and recoupment, Alternate Construction, and project development.[5]

Prentiss and division staff also had to establish internal operating procedures and mold the organizational pieces of the division into a function-

Chart 10: Organization of the Europe Division, 1974



ing whole. Adding to the challenge, the division was understaffed; and Prentiss faced low morale, changes in senior leadership, additions in territorial responsibility, and growth in the workload. Years later he recalled his tour as "a very difficult period, because nothing was normal."[6]

The issue of what name the new organization would use was symptomatic of the need to define everything. Although officially designated the United States Army Engineer Division, Europe, the organization's common names became European Division and EUD. After the Corps of Engineers became a major command in 1979, headquarters asked the division in Frankfurt to use the name Europe Division. EUD continued to be the most frequently used short designation.[7]

Administrative tasks in the early weeks included organizing recruitment, drafting procedural documents, implementing Corps of Engineers reporting systems, establishing field offices, and purchasing equipment. This work was complicated by uncertainties regarding levels of funding and staffing and by changes in mission assignments.[8]

Area Offices

The 1974 reorganization of USAREUR created three regional commands—V Corps, VII Corps, and 1st Support Brigade (later 21st Support

Command)—and each region became the focal point for the base support functions and the facilities engineering support previously provided by the Theater Army Support Command and ENGCOM. The headquarters of each region provided utilities and maintenance and limited engineering design to the community commanders who managed installations within the regions. (*Map 14*) The Europe Division provided support when engineering tasks exceeded the professional skills available through the regional staffs.[9]

By terms of the agreement between USAREUR and the chief of engineers, the Europe Division located area offices with V Corps headquarters in Frankfurt, with VII Corps headquarters in Stuttgart, and with the 1st Support Brigade headquarters in Kaiserslautern. During the first year the division headquarters struggled to provide personnel and administrative assistance for the area offices and their subordinate resident and project offices. Because of other priorities, the division gave staffing and support of the three area offices secondary consideration.[10]

Initially, military and civilian personnel who had served in ENGCOM's resident offices staffed EUD's field offices.[11] Many of the positions previously held by military officers were converted to civilian slots. Nevertheless, the division had considerable difficulty stabilizing the military leadership in the area offices. In late 1974 Lt. Col. John L. Buxton, former comptroller of ENGCOM, was named area engineer in Frankfurt; Lt. Col. M. R. Carson served in Stuttgart. A civilian, E. M. Grigsby, served as acting area engineer in Kaiserslautern until Maj. Robert M. Faxon took over early in 1975. In July 1975 Maj. Brian W. Teates, Jr., replaced Faxon, and on 1 August Lt. Col. T. L. Doherty replaced Carson in Stuttgart.[12] This rapid turnover of leadership in the area offices complicated the effort to achieve stability.

Despite the organizational changes in Frankfurt, field offices continued to oversee construction projects, even with inadequate administrative support. Jim Wise, a civilian from the Fort Worth District on temporary duty in Bad Kreuznach, reported that the secretary in the field office there had established a barter arrangement with local German contractors:

> I was just flabbergasted, coming from a structured and long-standing organization in the States, [where] logistics is something you don't even think about. Simple things like supplies—typewriter ribbons, paper, pencils, paper clips, all that type stuff—we couldn't beg, borrow, or steal within the organization. Our people were typing letters for contractors in exchange for supplies![13]

Dave Cox, assigned to the Würzburg resident office in late 1974, recalled the chaos of new procedures, the limited support, and difficulties acquiring and maintaining vehicles.[14]

The creation of a fourth area office severely taxed the division's resources. In May 1975 EUD activated the Northern Area Office in Dortmund to manage two growing construction programs—aircraft shelters and

U.S. ARMY, EUROPE
WEST GERMANY
1975
Regional Boundary (approximate)
Regional Headquarters
0 50 100 150 Miles
0 50 100 150 Kilometers
DENMARK
NORTH SEA
NETHERLANDS
1ST SUPPORT BRIGADE
POLAND
BERLIN
Elbe R
EAST GERMANY
V CORPS
BELGIUM
Rhine R
Frankfurt
Main R
LUXEMBOURG
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Kaiserslautern
1ST SUPPORT BRIGADE
VII CORPS
Stuttgart
Danube R
FRANCE
Rhine R
SWITZERLAND
LIECHTENSTEIN
AUSTRIA

Map 14

ammunition security—centered in the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern Germany. The chief of engineers, Lt. Gen. William C. Gribble, Jr., denied Prentiss's request for an additional lieutenant colonel, but Prentiss obtained a transfer for Lt. Col. Roy A. Brown, who was already in USAREUR and eager to change assignments.[15] When the new office opened, the other three area offices were renamed with geographic designations: the Central Area Office (Frankfurt), the Southern Area Office (Stuttgart), and the Southwest Area Office (Kaiserslautern).[16] (*Map 15*)

EUD established a fifth area office when the Corps of Engineers reorganized military construction activities in the Mediterranean. Beginning in 1952 the Mediterranean Division had performed design and construction for U.S. forces and other U.S. agencies in Africa and the Middle East. Since 1957 it had also supervised construction for U.S. forces in Italy, Greece, and Turkey. By the mid-1970s, 90 percent of the division's work had shifted to Saudi Arabia and work in Italy and Greece had declined. The work in Turkey all but stopped as a result of the reaction of the Turkish government to an arms embargo imposed by the U.S. Congress in the wake of the Turkish-Greek clash over Cyprus in 1974.[17] In January 1975 the Office of the Secretary of Defense circulated a draft audit report recommending a general reorganization in which the Mediterranean Division would merge with the Europe Division.[18]

OCE strongly objected to this suggestion and cited political, logistical, and economic reasons against the merger. Politically, Saudi Arabia wanted to have the engineer headquarters in its own capital. Logistically, EUD would be strained "beyond its capabilities" if it tried to supervise work from the North Atlantic to the Arabian Peninsula. Economically, OCE argued, the savings that had been predicted from consolidation were "greatly overstated."[19] USAREUR responded that while it had no particular interest in how the Corps of Engineers organized its work around the world, it had a strong interest in any change that would "bring all NATO construction functions under EUD cognizance." USAREUR also expressed opposition to the transfer of any functions to Europe Division not related directly to NATO.[20]

Out of this exchange, the Corps of Engineers developed a plan to retain two divisions but to redistribute responsibilities. In 1976 the Mediterranean Division was inactivated and a new Middle East Division was established with its headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. EUD took over responsibility for military construction in NATO member states south of the Alps and established the Mediterranean Area Office at Camp Darby, near Livorno, Italy, with Lt. Col. Kermit Oelberg as area engineer.[21] Personnel from the inactivated division staffed the office, which included a design section of about twenty Italians. By June 1976 EUD assumed management of the personnel and projects of the Mediterranean Division for work in Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Portugal.[22]

The volume of work that EUD inherited south of the Alps was not large—construction placement between $10 million and $20 million annually in the 1970s—but the geographic expanse was considerable. Prentiss

Map 15

knew that supervising that work in the new countries added expenses and problems of communications and transportation to EUD's budgetary and management responsibilities. He requested help from OCE to facilitate travel and communications, arguing that "bluntly, we cannot perform

the mission down there without an aircraft." EUD finally received an airplane in late 1976, several months after Prentiss had left.[23]

Staff Continuity and Morale

A constellation of problems in the Europe Division's headquarters confronted Prentiss during his first months at EUD. The division had four major categories of employees: military personnel, Department of the Army civilians (DACs), Germans, and dependents of other military and civilian personnel serving in Europe (dependent hires). The division had only a few military officers, all in supervisory positions. Some positions had been designated for German citizens, and these employees provided stability in the work force. Employees carried over from the Engineer Command initially occupied the positions designated for DACs, but division leaders had the most flexibility of recruitment and selection in this category.

In the transition from the Engineer Element to the Engineer Command in 1966, experienced civilian personnel had been encouraged to stay on, but in 1974 leaders at OCE in Washington thought that the transition offered "the opportunity to make some needed personnel changes in the engineer hierarchy then in Europe."[24] A 1973 study had suggested that personnel with long service who occupied top management positions in ENGCOM be encouraged to retire or to seek positions in the United States.[25] The old-timers had experience in dealing with the unique problems of overseas construction, and many were fluent in German and other European languages; but they were entrenched in positions and at salaries that blocked new employees.

The first major personnel change came quickly. In the summer of 1974, John Tambornino, chief of engineering since 1956, decided to retire on 30 November. OCE drew up the list of candidates for his position and included no one with experience working in Europe. Ralph Wheeler, assistant to the chief of construction at OCE, Frederick McNeely, emerged as the leading candidate; and General Donovan appointed him as chief of engineering. Other people from the Corps of Engineers subsequently filled top vacancies in Frankfurt; the lists that OCE prepared seldom included EUD staff or persons with experience in Europe.[26] OCE's priority was placed on familiarity with Corps procedures.[27] Washington recruited employees from Corps districts and divisions in the United States to help institute the "Corps system" in Europe, and in the first several months forty-one persons took temporary duty assignments of ninety or more days in EUD.

The newcomers to Europe received no briefing or orientation before they arrived.[28] The incoming chief of the Office of Administrative Services, R. L. Rousseau, described the situation in Frankfurt as "chaotic."[29] Jim Wise, who later returned to a permanent position in EUD, recalled that "there were a lot of people in a very limited space.… They were sitting out in hallways; where they were inside offices, you could barely walk between the desks."[30] Notwithstanding the confusion, many who came

*General Prentiss (*left*) with John Tambornino in November 1974*

from the United States described their experience in the new organization as "exciting."[31]

Those who had been working in Europe viewed the transition period differently.[32] American civilians who had been recruited for work in Europe by the Corps in the 1950s and 1960s thought that they had always been a part of the Corps of Engineers "family." William E. Camblor, who had served as director of the U.S. Army Construction Agency, Germany (USACAG), beginning in 1956, drew attention to this attitude during a 1961 inspection tour by the visiting chief of engineers. Camblor explained that he had organized USACAG "along the basic lines of a normal stateside Corps of Engineers district."[33] The attitude of the newcomers distressed the old-timers, who felt their professional competency and their patriotism were being challenged. The choice of Wheeler—rather than someone already in Europe—to succeed Tambornino increased suspicions that Tambornino had been targeted for removal.[34]

Most of the several thousand Germans who had worked for the Engineer Command had served in facilities engineering. Those who joined the Europe Division worked in military communities, where they provided the new organization with valuable continuity in managing projects and in estimating, indirect contracting, real estate, NATO recoupment, and legal affairs. The attitudes of the newcomers also distressed these employees: "They said, this is not the way the Corps does it. They didn't pay any attention to the fact that they are not in the States, [that] we are working under entirely different rules and conditions."[35]

The newcomers had little knowledge of indirect contracting, little regard for the experience and knowledge of the old-timers, and little disposition to learn from their new colleagues. Almost two decades after the activation of the division, long-term employees spoke of the 1974 transition as "traumatic" and "horrible." The adversarial atmosphere remained one of the strongest memories of the period.[36]

Division leaders soon realized that they did not have adequate staffing for their mission. General Prentiss thought that OCE had failed to take into account the difficulties of doing business in Europe, where staff had to observe both American and European design criteria. Also, indirect contracting required project managers to coordinate with layers of host-government agencies, and the language differences made translators and interpreters essential. These factors made EUD's work more labor intensive than managing construction in the United States. The division pressed its recruiting effort to fill vacant positions with permanent employees. By March 1975 EUD's staff had increased from the 280 who transferred from ENGCOM to just over 400. By the end of the year the staff numbered almost 500.[37]

In September 1975 the chief of engineers, General Gribble, told Prentiss to expect "some reduction in military spaces" in fiscal year 1976 because of ceilings that Congress had placed on the military. Prentiss protested that EUD needed more employees.[38] A manpower survey conducted in mid-October confirmed that the division's workload justified nearly 600 employees, but Gribble informed Prentiss that the staff would remain below 500 for the foreseeable future. OCE suggested the continued use of personnel on temporary duty.[39]

In addition to the shortage of personnel, Prentiss had to deal with the growing concern in OCE over the position of women and minorities in the Corps. The command inspection team visiting EUD in September 1975 advised the division to create an equal employment opportunity (EEO) function and a race relations program. Prentiss had begun to implement such programs, but he had so few people that he chose to staff the EEO position only part time. Because USAREUR's Civilian Personnel Office in Frankfurt served EUD, the division prepared only a supplement to the USAREUR Equal Employment Opportunity Action Plan.[40]

Prentiss began to make personnel changes. As he came to realize the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships with international leaders, Prentiss involved William Camblor more extensively, especially in contracting. Commensurate with Camblor's rank (GS–15), his experience, and his skills as a negotiator, Prentiss changed his title from "assistant to" the division engineer to "assistant division engineer for intergovernmental affairs."[41] After appointing the comptroller, Colonel Buxton, as area engineer for the Frankfurt Area Office, Prentiss promoted Buxton's deputy, Randolph S. Washington, to the position of comptroller. Prentiss believed that this promotion made Washington the only African American civilian managing an administrative division in the Corps of Engineers.[42] Another African American

civilian, Jacques Bouchereau, served as deputy chief of the Construction Division.

Prentiss was not satisfied with the chief of construction, H. Jace Greene. Greene had served in Frankfurt since the beginning of USACAG, and his involvement in military construction in Europe went back to 1946. Prentiss asked his deputy, Colonel Townsley, to monitor Greene's performance; Greene found this supervision insulting, and a contest of wills continued for months. In November 1976, after an extended medical leave, Greene retired. By that time both Prentiss and Townsley had left the division, leaving it to the next commander to select a new chief of construction.[43]

Adjustments in the Comptroller's Office

When the command inspection team submitted its report, it acknowledged that "the transition from the administrative and command procedures of Engineer Command to those of the Corps of Engineers" created major problems for the Europe Division. These difficulties were compounded by the "shortage of experienced personnel in the administrative activities." As a result, the team concluded, "full and effective support of the operational mission" was lacking.[44] Harmonizing practices in the new Comptroller's Office presented special challenges for the Europe Division. The dissolution of ENGCOM had shifted employees who had little accounting experience into the Finance and Accounting Branch. Turnover among staff in the basic clerical positions was exceedingly high—at times over 100 percent a year—which made it especially difficult to maintain continuity, to train, or simply to get the work done.[45] Several key positions in the Comptroller's Office—chiefs of finance and accounting, budget and programs, and cost accounting—remained vacant for several months.[46]

OCE sent people on temporary assignments from other Corps offices to work with EUD staff while recruitment continued. They were not prepared for the complexity of tracking costs of projects in seven countries and seven currencies, each at varying rates of exchange for the dollar. Furthermore, each project might use funds from a mix of two or more sources or appropriations.

In EUD all posting was done by hand. Comptroller Washington and the deputy division engineer, Colonel Townsley, had expanded the standard five-column account sheet used in the United States to fourteen columns. The additional columns allowed them to monitor fluctuations of the exchange rate between the day EUD awarded a contract and the actual payment for work, delays arising from the indirect system of contracting through host-nation agencies, and a half-dozen other variables that stateside offices never had to worry about. One of those variables—inflation—compounded the comptroller's headaches: In 1975 inflation amounted to 20 percent on dollar purchases and 7 percent on purchases in Deutschmarks, the worst rates in over twenty years.[47]

OCE's plan to implement the Corps of Engineers Management Information System (COEMIS) encountered serious problems. Overall,

COEMIS was ill suited to the European environment: It could neither handle multiple currencies nor maintain the personnel records of a labor force that included German employees, DACs, and locally hired dependents. EUD's computers, installed in 1974, turned out to be incompatible with COEMIS.

The command inspection team that visited EUD in August 1975 did not appreciate the ingenuity of the system that Washington and Townsley had cobbled together. They saw only that the system was complex and unwieldy, the general ledger frequently did not correspond with subsidiary records, and the records proliferated in "distressing" ways.[48] Townsley and Washington cooperated with the Comptroller's Office at OCE to reconcile the two systems and to recruit new employees, but progress in the Comptroller's Office was painfully slow. Incompatibilities between COEMIS and EUD's needs took many years to resolve.[49]

In-House Design

Tensions arising from the clash of old and new personnel and procedures were exacerbated by the OCE decision to establish an in-house design capability to EUD. None of the Europe Division's predecessor organizations had maintained such a capability, although stateside Corps districts generally accomplished from 25 to 50 percent of their design in-house. This practice helped maintain the technical proficiency of engineer personnel and saved money. Thinking to apply the same logic to Europe, the transition team wrote a design branch into the Engineering Division in EUD's organization chart.[50]

When Ralph Wheeler arrived in Frankfurt as the chief of the Engineering Division in the autumn of 1974, he intended to develop a Design Branch capable of handling about a quarter of the division's design requirements. He expected the remaining 75 percent of the work to be passed to architect-engineer firms either under direct contract to EUD or as indirect contracts through a host-government agency.[51] Wheeler received approval from OCE for an authorized strength of more than eighty people for the Design Branch and began recruiting when notified of his appointment as chief of engineering. By the time he arrived in Frankfurt, more than twenty people from all over the United States were committed to the Design Branch.[52]

Wheeler was conscientious and enthusiastic, but neither he nor his recruits understood the international agreements and conventions that governed indirect contracting and limited the division's ability to do design work in-house. Neither were they equipped to prepare design documents in metric measurements and in both English and the language of the host country.[53]

Wheeler also failed to appreciate that the Europeans took a radically different approach developing a design package from Americans. As a result, his arriving personnel would have to learn a totally new system of preparing contract specifications. American design engineers put every-

thing that the design demands on the drawings (plans) for the project. Specifications then define how or according to what standards various jobs are to be accomplished, for example, how to mix the concrete, prepare a surface before painting, and lay roofing. Construction contractors, working from the drawings, determined the scope of services, quantities of materials, and type of equipment needed to complete the work. Then they submitted a bid based on their own calculations.[54]

Specifications in the German design package had to contain a detailed list of the materials and services required by the project. American engineers expected the contractors to generate their own list. For standards on the quality of work—the "how to" set out in American specifications—Germans turned to the *Deutsche Industrie-Normen* (*DIN*). The Germans had a *DIN* on roofing, a *DIN* on painting, and a *DIN* on structural steel, and so on, each of which tells how to do specific tasks in every phase of construction.[55]

The German specifications became an expanded bill of materials so that all bidders started with the same definition of how much work was to be done. This approach placed the responsibility and the risk on the designer rather than on the contractor. Europeans "didn't want construction firms going broke because somebody had underestimated the job."[56] The American approach placed greater responsibility and risk on the construction contractor. He had to calculate how much material to purchase and risk losses if his estimates were wrong. Joe G. Higgs, who succeeded Wheeler as chief of engineering at EUD, explained: "In the United States you look at the plans and then you read the specs. In Germany they read the specs, and they don't even look at the plans until they start construction.… In Germany, if it is not in the specs, it doesn't count."[57]

Wheeler put a tremendous amount of personal effort into making in-house design succeed, but there were too many obstacles. The learning curve for the new staff was steep, and the backlog of design increased. In-house design never exceeded 11 percent of the workload of the Engineering Division and averaged below 5 percent.[58] Wheeler had compounded the problems when he put almost twenty of the long-time employees who could have helped the new design engineers—they had experience with the *DIN*, metrics, and local materials—into a Technical Review Branch.[59] After less than two years he recombined the Design Branch and the Technical Review Branch into a technical engineering branch headed by Lou Brettschneider, the engineer who had served as chief of that branch after Saul Fraint retired in 1973.[60]

Support for Facilities Engineers

The April 1974 agreement signed by the chief of engineers and the commander in chief of USAREUR provided that the new Corps organization would "furnish engineering design and construction services to the regional commanders … as requested," and referred specifically to "OMA [Operations and Maintenance, Army] and minor military design and con-

struction projects," which EUD was to execute "on a reimbursable basis." Although USAREUR expected this support for the facilities engineers, it could offer EUD no staff positions to cover the work.[61]

In the inactivation of the Engineer Command and the establishment of the Europe Division, the regional corps commanders assumed the function for installation support. The transfer of responsibilities did not go smoothly, and relations between the EUD staff and facilities engineers were not cordial. No one had a very clear idea which new tasks or projects would go to the regional Directorates of Facilities Engineering and which would go to EUD. People at EUD doing work very similar to the work done in facilities engineering positions had been given higher grades and salaries. The facilities engineering personnel in the regions saw no reason to channel new work to Frankfurt.[62]

The division's first challenge was to complete projects left unfinished. Brettschneider recalled that ENGCOM's Facilities Directorate had a large number of projects under way in 1974, and the departing staff "dumped cartons into Mr. Tambornino's office.… It took months and months of tremendous effort to clear the decks."[63] To complete design work on these projects, the division turned to stateside districts for help and intensified recruiting for additional personnel.[64]

General Prentiss placed a high priority on establishing good relations between EUD and the facilities engineering organizations. He did not want to be criticized, as ENGCOM commanders had been, for failing to provide adequate engineering support to the military communities. In early October 1974 he met with the regional directors of facilities engineering for V Corps, VII Corps, and the 1st Support Brigade to outline EUD's capabilities and to offer assistance with architect-engineer contracts and with the supervision of construction and design.[65] From his experience in Stuttgart, he thought that facilities engineers in the communities needed EUD's technical expertise and help in managing contracts. He also knew that the facilities engineering workforce had little capability for even minor new construction or inspection.[66]

Prentiss and Wheeler told the commanders that EUD would help them with their operations and maintenance program.[67] Division personnel met monthly with facilities engineers. The three directors of facilities engineering began asking the division to assist with design and supervise construction. Project funding came from family housing maintenance, nonappropriated funds, and OMA budgets.[68]

EUD also devised a new way to obligate year-end OMA funds that might otherwise have reverted to the U.S. Treasury. The procedure involved encumbering funds by using reimbursable orders—a form of purchase order between government agencies—for work to be done in the next fiscal year. Once obligated, the funds were carried over into the next fiscal year to finance work in progress.[69]

Prentiss and Wheeler's efforts succeeded almost too well: The workload increased rapidly. In April 1975 Wheeler created the Facilities Engineering Support Section to handle the influx of work. Headed by

Tom Conner, the section began with just three project manager positions; by June the regional Directorates of Facilities Engineering had given them 300 projects with a value of $47 million. By August they had more than 450 projects with a total value of $54 million; some single projects were as low as $1,700. The section grew to six people, and by the end of 1976 the number of projects had more than tripled.[70]

A severe backlog of design work developed in the Engineering Division and attracted the attention of OCE's Directorate of Military Construction. OCE warned the division against taking on "too much work" in facilities engineering. The command inspection team that visited the Europe Division in August 1975 recommended that USAREUR be "requested to provide adequate manpower spaces to EUD to undertake the work [for facilities engineering]."[71] To General Prentiss, this advice exemplified OCE's lack of understanding of the division's mission. He sent the director of military construction, Maj. Gen. Bates C. Burnell, a copy of the USAREUR agreement with pertinent passages underlined. Calling USAREUR's requests for engineering services "legitimate," Prentiss questioned whether the people in OCE had read the agreement.[72]

Work for the facilities engineers remained an important part of EUD's operation and a concern for each successive commander. Army auditors ruled that the division's device of obligating the year-end money through special purchase orders violated government regulations, but the division developed other instruments such as open-ended contracts that allowed the communities to group small jobs into larger bid packages. The division also established guidelines that eliminated the very small contracts. Both of these steps eased some of the pressure on the Engineering Division.[73]

Assessing the First Two Years

In May 1976 General Prentiss moved to the position of deputy chief of staff, engineer, in USAREUR.[74] In his final letter to the chief of engineers from Frankfurt, Prentiss boldly addressed his difficulties with OCE. He protested against "those on your staff with great authority and no responsibility," against inspection teams who arrived in Frankfurt with "an obvious bias," and against the lack of information in headquarters about "indirect contracting and about our support agreement with USAREUR." He called OCE's control of referral lists for staff openings a "major irritant" and cited his search for a new chief of construction. The list he received included "only three names that I recognized, two OCE long-timers and another former OCE member who refused my offer of a job a year ago." He was "amazed" to find neither of the two names he had recommended on the list. Prentiss had registered these complaints months earlier in correspondence with OCE, and many of his successors echoed them.[75]

For all the problems, Prentiss had a sense that the division had made progress. Although there were many procedures and administrative guidelines to be worked out, he felt that EUD's energetic support of facilities engineers at the community and regional levels and its acceptance of

expanding responsibilities in the Mediterranean had earned the organization credibility throughout the Army.[76]

The assessment Prentiss presented to his own staff was more critical than that in his report to OCE. In one of his last staff meetings he pointed four administrative shortcomings: missed deadlines, failure to supply interim responses alerting customers to delays, poorly written correspondence, and failure to record policy decisions. He commented on the tendency to conceal problems so as to avoid criticism and urged just the opposite, that civilian employees bring problems into the open for discussion.[77] Two years after its activation, the division had dissatisfied people and sloppy procedures.

Change of Command

General Delbridge arrived at the division a few days after General Prentiss moved to Heidelberg. At the end of the war Delbridge, just eighteen, had enlisted in the Army and had gone from the ranks to Officers' Candidate School. As a young lieutenant he supervised airfield construction in Berlin from 1947 to 1949. He then won an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy, where he graduated in 1953. Delbridge served three years (1958–1961) with the U.S. Engineer Group in Turkey. In 1975–1976, just before taking over at EUD, he had commanded the Support Command of the 3d Armored Division in Frankfurt.

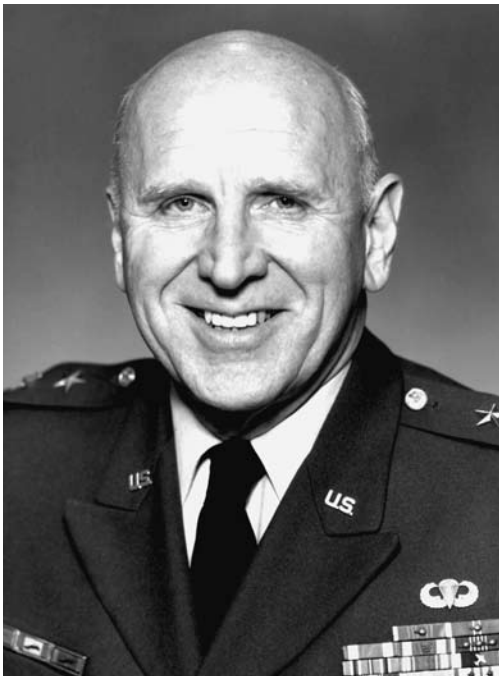
Delbridge was gregarious, and he wanted to create an atmosphere at EUD in which the staff would feel they were part of a large family and share in "the closeness and professionalism" associated with the Corps.[78] From his first days at the division, however, he was troubled by the cliquishness among the staff and the absence of cordiality toward him and his family. Delbridge concluded that there was something "desperately wrong."[79]

The new commander began to work on staff morale immediately. During a command inspection, Delbridge asked for pictures he could use for a briefing, emphasizing that he wanted photos not only of construction projects, but also of division personnel at work: "secretaries typing, inspectors inspecting, supervisors supervising, reviewers reviewing."[80] He also went "shopping" for a full-time public affairs officer, someone to take responsibility for the internal issues of staff morale and cohesiveness as well as the public image of the division. He remembered a young woman from the San Francisco District who had given "a magnificent presentation … full of fire and humor." Early in the summer of 1976 Delbridge contacted Shirley Kappa, and she agreed to come to Europe.[81]

Kappa took over editorship of the division's newsletter and put it on a monthly publication schedule. She filled it with news about staff members and division activities. The newsletter featured pictures of both military and civilian employees, with prominent attention to German employees. Initially, the publication used the title *EUD Bulletin*, but Kappa asked for suggestions for a more imaginative name. The July 1977 issue featured the

new masthead—a woodcut print of ten hard-hatted men linked shoulder to shoulder, each with one very large shod foot kicked high in the air. (*Figure 3*) Across the soles of the shoes appeared the letters "c-o-r-p-s-'-l-i-n-e."[82]

Kappa also organized "Kastle Keepers," a group of American and German staff members who planned activities for employees and their families, including ski trips, holiday parties, sports teams, and "Meet and Mingle" afternoon get-togethers. To welcome new employees, Kappa put together a photo brochure on the division and set up a program matching an employee "sponsor" with each new employee. She promoted the idea of business cards for staff and had them printed. Delbridge believed that Kappa's "little things" helped to foster an identity for EUD and to improve staff morale.[83] Her energy and enthusiasm mirrored Delbridge's style of management: His deputy, Col. Carlyle "Chuck" Charles, said, "I don't think there was a person he didn't know by first name—and what they did."[84]



General Delbridge

The Projects Board

Delbridge wanted people at EUD to see themselves as part of a team, to look beyond their particular jobs, and to develop a sense of the entire organization. In his first meeting with the staff, on 25 May 1976, he described this philosophy and quoted the renowned English physicist

Figure 3: New Masthead of the Europe Division Newsletter

and novelist C. P. Snow: "Judgment is the ability to look at many things at once in their interdependence, their related importance, and their consequences." In his first weeks at the division, Delbridge found that "too many people were making judgments by looking down a straw."[85]

When he looked at the EUD workload, he found that the staff was not able to report on all of the active projects and contracts. He concluded that the division needed a tracking and reporting system to monitor expenditures and keep work on schedule. Such a system could also encourage everyone to take a broad view of the work and activities. Delbridge asked each division to prepare reports for staff meetings. He also asked them to devise a method to "permit monthly review of 'key' projects … [to be conducted] as part of a monthly review by the entire EUD staff in the new conference room, which will be designed to present the total workload of this division in a visible manner."[86]

"The board" became a fixture of Delbridge's tenure. Three walls of the conference room were hung with large magnet-sensitive display boards; each of the nearly 1,400 projects under contract within EUD was listed on a separate magnetic card about ten inches wide. The cards contained the pertinent information for the project, including project manager, contractor, amount spent, and current status; they were arranged on the boards by funding source, and they could be updated in grease pen. Delbridge made the "board review" a monthly event, and just before the review the comptroller put a red flag next to any project on which reports showed overspending or deviation from the schedule.[87]

The review sessions were detailed and time-consuming, because Delbridge asked the project managers to report on every project. When Delbridge judged an explanation inadequate, he bore down hard and demanded answers. John Lewis, who had arrived from the Huntsville Division on 1 September 1976 to succeed Greene as chief of construction, managed about 250 projects in his division and acquitted himself well. Ralph Wheeler's task was much more difficult: The Engineering Division had to track more than 1,000 projects. Preparing for board reviews took hours of work, and the reviews could last all day. Heated exchanges among the participants were frequent, and the whole exercise was very controversial. Some staff found the demands of accountability personally exhilarating and invigorating for the organization. Others resisted, complained that they were drowning in detail, and labeled Delbridge a micromanager.

Few people in the division understood the board review as a device. Delbridge wanted to jolt people into seeing the various individual projects "in their interdependence, their related importance, and their consequences." Despite the staff time required to keep the board updated, Delbridge thought that on balance the board succeeded. Several people who worked with him agreed: Lt. Col. Roy Brown, Northern Area engineer, described the period as "a most dynamic time," in which the organization improved because Delbridge put "many people's feet to the fire." The division counsel, Allan B. Aaron, observed that Delbridge "pushed us to do things we

probably didn't think we could do in the time frames that were demanded, but we managed because our commander pushed us." Delbridge's deputy, Colonel Charles, said "the esprit de corps was super in the organization unless you were a slackard [*sic*].… It was probably a high point of my career to see an outfit work like we were doing."[88]

From the monthly reviews, evidence mounted that the Engineering Division could not handle the increasing design workload. The review of 24 January 1977 revealed that 70 percent of the projects in the division were behind schedule; the prediction for February was 80 percent slippage. Delbridge exploded! Although he acknowledged that the Engineering Division was understaffed, he held the chief of engineering, Wheeler, personally accountable for the delays.[89]

Addressing Personnel Shortages

Division and branch chiefs reported to Delbridge the same personnel shortages about which Prentiss had complained. The new commander quickly concluded that the shortages hurt EUD's ability to accomplish its mission.[90] To address the problem, Delbridge took two courses of action. First, to make the division more attractive to potential employees, he requested both an increase in authorized positions and an increase in the average grade structure. Second, he ordered internal reviews to evaluate how EUD was using people. Completed in October 1976 and January 1977, these studies showed that if the division carried its locally hired dependents as temporary rather than permanent full-time staff, as many as thirty-five additional spaces could be regained and filled with DACs. Although most of the dependents worked in clerical and secretarial positions, the recovered spaces could be set at a higher level, making it possible for the division to recruit additional professional staff. Delbridge directed that the spaces be reallocated internally to the Engineering Division, particularly for project management.[91]

Delbridge ran into trouble when OCE reviewed his requests for an increase in authorized strength. In a visit to Frankfurt in March 1977, the chiefs of engineering and construction, Lee Garrett and Fred McNeely, respectively, challenged the purported needs and EUD's recruiting ability, noting that the division had not filled all its authorized positions. They proposed that EUD use stateside districts to do more of its design work and that the division contract out other work. They also questioned the "alleged" need to use indirect contracting for design. Overall, they seemed unsympathetic to EUD's problems; OCE turned down Delbridge's request.[92]

Delbridge won modest support from the chief of engineers, Lt. Gen. John W. Morris, when the two met at NATO headquarters in Brussels in May 1977. Delbridge returned to Frankfurt with assurances from Morris of limited increases in the authorization for senior-level civilian positions, an increase of thirty-two positions in overall professional strength (seven military and twenty-five DACs), and an increase in the average grade, all

to be added to the authorization for fiscal year 1978. The new authorization was less than the forty-five positions Delbridge had requested, but it was a start.[93]

The new spaces, plus the spaces recovered by internal reallocation and openings created by normal attrition or rotation, allowed Delbridge to bring in more people with Corps experience. In the summer of 1977 Delbridge had to select a new chief of construction to replace John Lewis, who accepted a comparable position with the new Middle East Division in Saudi Arabia. McNeely at OCE did the recruitment and preliminary selection for this position. His choice, Jose Cruz, had twenty-five years of experience in the Corps of Engineers, most recently as assistant chief of construction in the Fort Worth District, but had never worked in Europe. Cruz started work in Frankfurt in September 1977, allowing a brief overlap with Lewis, who remained with EUD until early October.[94]

In this same period General Delbridge decided not to renew Wheeler's three-year contract as chief of engineering. After a national search during which he returned to the United States to interview candidates, Delbridge selected Joe G. Higgs, chief of engineering in the Savannah District. During his career with the Corps of Engineers since 1954, Higgs had worked in the Huntsville Division and Mobile District but had not worked overseas. Higgs and his family arrived in Europe late in February 1978.[95]

The decision to replace Wheeler, the selection of Higgs, and the battle over authorized positions took place while Delbridge struggled with a delicate issue involving the personal links among his superiors in the chain of command. Delbridge's predecessor, General Prentiss, had joined a close-knit team of engineer officers serving under USAREUR commander, General George S. Blanchard. Lt. Gen. Kenneth B. Cooper, deputy commander in chief, had graduated from the U.S. Military Academy with Blanchard in 1944. The chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Richard H. Groves, class of 1945, was Prentiss's immediate superior. General Burnell, also class of 1945, served as director of military construction in OCE. Burnell initiated an exchange of letters with Prentiss, and in early 1977 Prentiss reinstituted "the practice of informally updating" the chief of engineers each quarter on the engineer activities of USAREUR.[96]

From his arrival at EUD in May 1976 to the end of 1977, Delbridge exchanged letters with Prentiss and Burnell about the policy directions EUD should pursue. As the junior officer, Delbridge felt uneasy. Support for him at OCE seemed equivocal—the response to his removal of Wheeler and his selection of Higgs being examples—and he thought, as Prentiss had, that the senior civilians in Washington were undercutting him. Some at EUD, including Delbridge, thought that he might be relieved as commander.[97]

Delbridge's concerns increased when in September 1977 Prentiss gave Burnell a series of "suggestions" for revising EUD procedures, particularly urging that the division turn more work over to host nations under the indirect contracting system. Delbridge prepared a lengthy reply. He

reiterated the division's challenge of "executing an extremely large program with a disproportionately small staff"; but he concluded that "the Corps and its European customers would best be served by retaining present EUD flexibility which allows us to go either directly to industry, indirectly to the host nation, or to any CONUS [Continental United States] district for services."[98]

Delbridge's defense reached a new team of military leaders at OCE. Brig. Gen. Richard M. Connell had replaced Burnell as director of military construction, and Maj. Gen. Ernest Graves, deputy chief of engineers from July 1977 to March 1978, emerged as a supporter. Graves helped to resolve the impasse over manpower, and he shored up Delbridge's authority to make decisions for EUD.

General Graves was particularly well prepared to judge whether the Europe Division needed the workforce that Delbridge had been requesting. In 1970, while serving as deputy director of military construction, he had devised a formula for calculating the appropriate ratio of employees to any given level of work in military construction.[99] In December 1977 Graves, accompanied by Garrett and McNeely, made the first of two visits to Frankfurt to discuss the division's personnel issues. About two-thirds of the way through Delbridge's briefing, "Graves slammed his hand down on the desk—scared everybody to death—and said, 'Dammit! You needed 100 people six months ago!'" Delbridge's initial reaction was anger, but then he realized, "[Graves] wasn't talking to me, he was talking to the guys on either side of him."[100] Graves told Delbridge to have his staff prepare a detailed statement of the division's manpower requirements.

In March 1978 Graves returned to EUD with Garrett and McNeely to review the manpower requests. Higgs, who had recently arrived to head the Engineering Division, took Garrett and McNeely aside and asked them to "leave us alone. Give us a chance … give me time to work." Within weeks EUD received authorization to recruit 120 new employees, and in the ensuing months the frequency of visits from OCE declined.[101]

His confidence bolstered, Delbridge launched a broad recruitment campaign to fill the new positions. In May 1978 the division sent a five-person recruiting team, headed by Shirley Kappa, to the United States. Team members visited Washington, Baltimore, Kansas City, New Orleans, Sacramento, Portland, and Seattle. They gathered several hundred applications from Corps employees, and more than 70 percent of those who received offers accepted. This success was especially satisfying because Garrett and McNeely had predicted that fewer than half the people offered positions would actually accept. With the new positions, routine departures at the end of contracts, and an authorized "overhire" of 70 DACs, EUD added about 120 new employees in the summer and autumn of 1978. In the division's initial year, 1974, its staff numbered 280. That increased to 589 by October 1976, five months after Delbridge had taken command. In the fiscal year ending October 1977, staff size increased by less than 5 percent, but the rate of expansion tripled in Delbridge's final year, bringing the total to about 700 by October.[102]

Visiting TUSEG

During his tour as commander of EUD, General Delbridge took special pleasure in returning to Turkey, where an old acquaintance, Herb Wooten, represented U.S. Army engineer interests.[103] After mustering out of his all–African American unit at the end of World War II, Wooten had stayed in Paris to indulge his love of classical music. He had held various government positions in Europe before joining The United States Engineer Group (TUSEG) in Turkey in 1955.[104] Wooten had remained in Ankara through many organizational changes. When the Mediterranean Division was inactivated and TUSEG transferred to the Europe Division in 1976, Wooten used his contacts in the government of Turkey and with the Turkish General Staff to the advantage of EUD. He had also traveled to Frankfurt to help plan EUD's takeover of responsibilities and had worked at the area office in Italy to arrange the final transfer of equipment and vehicles from the Mediterranean Division.[105]

As a captain in Turkey in the early 1960s, Delbridge had known Wooten as a GS–5 office manager. By 1977 Wooten had hardly advanced in grade, but the general saw immediately the advantages that his longevity brought to EUD.

> When I landed in Turkey Herb came out on the tarmac to meet me and had a retinue of people and a car.… About 50 yards away was an airliner that had landed with several Air Force generals.… They were all standing in line going through customs and getting the traditional hard time.… We just bypassed it all! When [Wooten] flashed his ID cards, they were all the ID cards we had in the '50s.… They all thought he was a spook, a CIA guy.… And since he knew so much about the area, the ambassador would call him in on occasion, which again added to the mystery and mystique of Herb Wooten.[106]

Although U.S. military construction in Turkey declined in the aftermath of the Cyprus dispute, Wooten remained in Ankara even after Delbridge left EUD. When work picked up again in 1979, he helped reopen the TUSEG office.[107]

During the second year of General Delbridge's tenure EUD achieved a degree of stability. New procedures were helping incoming employees adjust to life in Europe, and increased social activities improved staff morale. Much of the tension between the newcomers and the old-timers had dissipated. Joe Higgs and Jose Cruz, the new chiefs of engineering and construction, appeared to be getting the workload under control. Their cooperation helped to dispel friction between their divisions and get staff members to work together to review projects, thereby reducing the late modifications to contracts.[108]

Whereas General Prentiss had spent his eighteen-month tour as division engineer struggling to put the new organization into operation, General Delbridge had sought to gain control of the workload, establish

regular procedures, and improve morale. Their efforts brought results. By 1978 Delbridge began to feel that EUD had become a "hard-charging organization" made up of enthusiastic people who enjoyed working together. His gregariousness put some people off but engaged others and, in their view, changed the atmosphere dramatically. Though the review board was onerous, it helped establish more effective project management and control of funds.[109] By the summer of 1978 EUD had moved through its transition period.