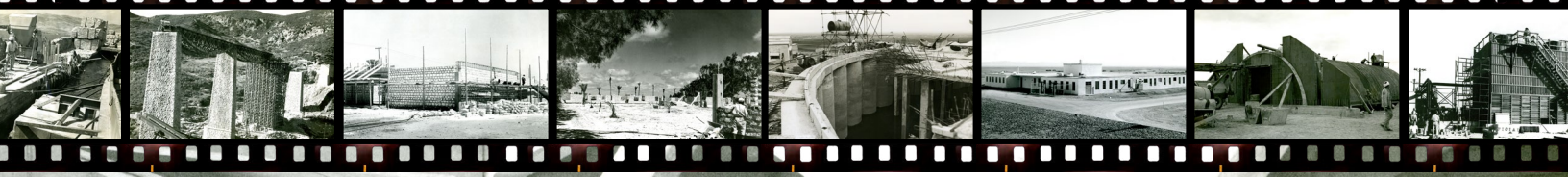
US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST



Building Legacy

1940-2025

The Historical Lineage of USACE IN CENTCOM

BUILDING LEGACY
USACE IN CENTCOM: 1940-2025

Since the 1940s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has operated a wide range of divisions, districts, area offices, resident offices, field detachments, and specialized task forces throughout the Middle East and surrounding regions. Some were longstanding fixtures; others stood up rapidly in response to contingency operations, emerging missions, or partner-nation requirements. Whether focused on reconstruction, infrastructure development, security assistance, or combat support, each played a direct role in advancing U.S. and allied objectives across the region.

This historical lineage represents an initial effort to consolidate USACE's chronological footprint in the region. Input from those who served in these organizations, who led them, staffed them, or partnered with them, remains invaluable. Corrections, additions, and context are encouraged to help ensure the historical record reflects the full scale and impact of USACE's presence across the region.

BUILDING STRONG.

HISTORICAL VIGNETTES

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Office of History

Throughout this booklet, selected historical vignettes from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Office of History offer additional context and depth to the organizational timeline. These brief entries highlight key operations, milestones, and contributions of USACE across the Middle East, Central and South Asia. Placed to complement the formal lineage, the vignettes provide a broader view of the strategic roles and lasting impact of USACE throughout the region's evolving history.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: It has been a true privilege to create and complete this historical lineage booklet. Capturing the legacy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in this region is more than an act of preservation, it is a way to honor the people, places, and missions that shaped it, and to ensure that their stories endure.

As a public affairs professional, I believe strongly in the power of storytelling. Words and images are how we remember, how we teach, and how we pass on the lessons of the past. Ensuring that those who serve are seen and remembered has always been at the heart of my work, and this project reflects that commitment.

My hope is that this booklet serves as more than a record. I hope it becomes a foundation, a starting point for those who will one day write this chapter in full and the next. Perhaps it might even spark a second volume to follow in the path of Bricks, Sand, and Marble, expanding the story of USACE's enduring mission in the region.

This project would not have been possible without the contributions of so many remarkable professionals. I am grateful to those, past and present, who shared their knowledge, memories, and time. Your insight gave meaning to the milestones and depth to the timeline.

Special thanks also to the public affairs specialists in the field whose photographs brought the story to life, and to the authors and contributors of Bricks, Sand, and Marble, whose work laid the foundation for this and so much more. Thank you for this legacy and I am honored to be able to add to the story of USACE IN CENTCOM.

Catherine Carroll
Transatlantic Division Regional Public Affairs Director
catherine.e.carroll@usace.army.mil

**Filmstrip photos are not reflective of the pages on which they appear and may not be in exacting chronological order.*

AMERICA'S ENGINEERS
250 YEARS AND COUNTING

Legacy is not about what is built. It is about what endures.

For 250 years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has shaped the nation's strength through engineering. Every district, division, and mission contributes to that legacy, supporting the U.S. Army, serving the public, and building the foundations that carry us forward.

In the U.S. Central Command, legacy is measured by impact. The kind that does not fade with time or shift with headlines. From the earliest efforts to move supplies through austere terrain to today's integrated infrastructure networks that support multidomain operations, USACE has remained ahead of the mission, not behind it. Its work turns bare terrain into operational reach, transforms partner needs into enduring capability, and builds solutions that continue long after the ribbon is cut.

Whether supporting the rapid deployment of joint forces, reinforcing defense ties through foreign military construction, or developing the facilities that enable U.S. and partner success, USACE serves as a quiet enabler of strategic momentum. In a region defined by complexity, USACE brings consistency by delivering projects that ensure access, strengthen partnerships, and enhance resilience.

Today, the focus extends beyond traditional construction. USACE is integrating energy security, climate adaptation, and cyber resilience into every layer of design.

THE FORCE BEHIND THE FORCE

Strategic basing, smart installations, and regional access points are built with future threats and joint interoperability in mind. Every project is more than infrastructure. It is a safeguard for tomorrow's mission.

As one of the most trusted U.S. entities in the region, USACE also plays a critical diplomatic role. Its presence fosters collaboration with host nations, military commands, and interagency partners alike. That trust has been earned not through words, but through decades of results measured in concrete poured, partnerships forged, and missions enabled.

As America celebrates 250 years of Army service, it also recognizes the enduring role of America's Engineers in securing that legacy. From the earliest forts of the Revolution to today's mission-critical facilities, USACE has built more than infrastructure, it has built trust, adaptability, and strategic momentum.

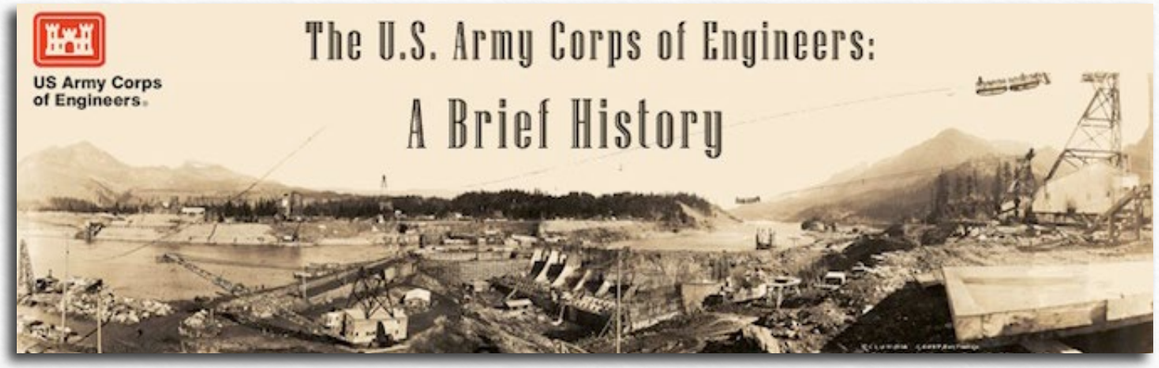
That legacy is not just technical, it is human. Engineers. Soldiers. Civilians. Specialists. They bring knowledge, creativity, and resilience to some of the nation's most complex projects. Their work supports not just operations, but options. Not just presence, but purpose.

America's Engineers currently deliver more than $91 billion in programs around the world, including military construction on more than 287 installations. But nowhere is that impact more evident or more tested than in the Middle East and Central and South Asia. Here, legacy is not a concept. It is concrete.

Across 250 years of Army history, USACE has stood as the force behind the force, laying the foundation for what comes next. And in the CENTCOM region, that legacy is still being built.

BUILDING STRONG. BE ALL YOU CAN BE.

USACE: A BRIEF HISTORY



Shortly before the United States entered World War II, Congress and the War Department approved the transfer of military construction responsibilities from an overtaxed Quartermaster Corps to the Army Corps of Engineers. The shift was implemented piecemeal. After the Destroyers for Bases Agreement of September 1940, the chief of staff, General George Marshall, assigned USACE the job of constructing air bases in the string of British Atlantic territories from Newfoundland to British Guiana, thereby initiating a program of overseas base construction by USACE that long remained one of its most important functions.

In November 1940, Marshall ordered the transfer to USACE of all air base construction in the United States, excluding the Canal Zone. Finally, in December 1941, Congress transferred to USACE the responsibility for real estate acquisition, construction, and maintenance for Army facilities, including training camps, government-owned munitions plants, air bases, depots, and hospitals.

Domestic base construction peaked in 1942, as the nation geared for war. U.S. military construction expenditures in July of that year alone exceeded those spent during the entire period of 1920 1938. By the end of 1942, the Army could house 4.37 million soldiers and provide hospital beds for 180,000 more. It had built 149 munitions and aircraft manufacturing plants and constructed depots with 205 million square feet of storage space. Domestic military construction has remained an important function of the Corps of Engineers since 1942, but never again did it reach the level of that year.

COMBAT AND MILITARY CONSTRUCTION

During World War II, Army engineers placed floating and later fixed bridges across the rivers of Italy, France, and Germany, supporting hotly contested crossings of the Rapido, Roer, and Rhine rivers. Engineer troops prepared and developed beaches for assault landings, both in Europe and the Pacific. On the beaches of Normandy, engineer troops, operating under heavy enemy fire, cleared lanes for landing craft by destroying the mine-bearing steel structures that the Germans had implanted in the intertidal zone and bulldozed roads up the narrow draws through the cliffs lining the beaches. During the Battle of the Bulge, quick engineer actions destroyed critical bridges in the path of advancing German forces, slowing and diverting them while Allied forces regrouped. The engineers also opened road connections traversing the long wilderness reaches between the southern Canadian road net and interior Alaska and between British-ruled Assam Province in India and Yunnan Province in southwestern China.

Outstanding Army engineer support continued in the Korean War. Army engineers destroyed bridges over the Naktong River and built fortifications that helped American and South Korean forces hold the Pusan perimeter in the southeastern corner of the peninsula while General Douglas MacArthur prepared his assault landing at Inchon near Seoul. When Chinese forces entered the war and forced the Americans to retreat, the engineers built lateral roads behind new defensive lines that permitted the rapid movement of forces and equipment to areas subject to heaviest attack. This helped American commanders stabilize the front.

In Vietnam the engineers helped provide access to enemy strongholds in support of concerted U.S. search and destroy missions. To assist in these efforts and to reduce enemy attacks on military convoys, the engineers introduced the Rome plow, a military tractor equipped with a protective cab and a special tree-cutting blade. Engineer troops also constructed 900 miles of modern, paved highways connecting the major population centers of the Republic of Vietnam and monitored the construction by private American contractors of an additional 550 miles of Vietnamese highways.

FOUNDATIONS OF USACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' presence in the Middle East began not with a peacetime construction mission, but in response to the urgent logistics demands of global war. During World War II, the United States identified the Middle East as a critical strategic corridor linking Allied supply lines to the Soviet Union via the Persian Gulf. American military planners recognized that infrastructure in the region, especially in Iran and Iraq, was inadequate to support the level of transport required. What followed would become the Army Corps of Engineers' earliest sustained operations in the region, laying the foundation for decades of future engagement.

In 1941, USACE established the Iranian District, the first formal district-level command in the Middle East. Functioning under the North Atlantic Division, the Iranian District was responsible for managing a vast logistics infrastructure effort along what became known as the Persian Corridor. This included ports in Basra and Khorramshahr, railways, road networks, and staging areas, largely aimed at supporting the Lend-Lease supply program. Thousands of U.S. engineers, including the 711th Engineer Railway Battalion, operated under this framework, moving millions of tons of supplies northward to bolster the Soviet war effort. The work was challenging, requiring engineers to rehabilitate and expand crumbling infrastructure while adapting to extreme environmental conditions and vast logistical distances.

In 1943, this mission was consolidated under the newly formed Persian Gulf Command, which oversaw all U.S. Army operations in the theater, including continued USACE activities. Although the Persian Gulf Command was a broader military logistics entity rather than a USACE command, it carried forward the work begun by the Iranian District and solidified the Army's engineering footprint in the region. These early operations in Iran and Iraq marked the first enduring presence of Army engineers in the Middle East and the genesis of USACE operational lineage in the area.

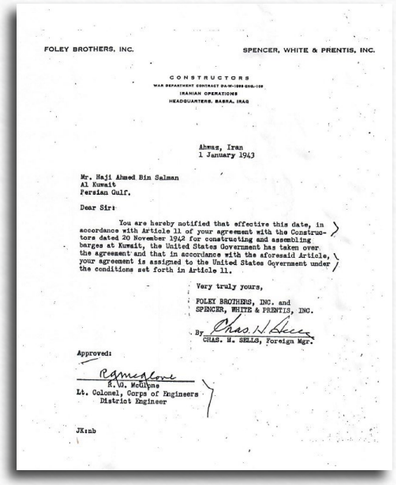
As the war ended and U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East and Mediterranean deepened, the region became a focal point in the emerging Cold War. Rising tensions between the Soviet Union and the Western alliance led to the articulation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, committing the United States to support free nations resisting communist influence. Greece and Turkey, both grappling with internal instability and Soviet pressure, became early test cases for this policy, prompting increased American military, economic, and engineering engagement in the eastern Mediterranean. These dynamics elevated the strategic significance of nearby Middle East infrastructure and reinforced USACE's evolving role as a partner in projecting stability across the region.

In 1945, USACE signed an agreement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to construct the Dhahran Airfield, a project that would become one of its most enduring symbols of postwar military engineering in the region. Completed in 1946 despite intense heat, sandstorms, and logistical complications, the Dhahran Airfield served both military and civil aviation roles and helped cement USACE's role as a strategic enabler in the region.

At the same time, USACE engineers were active in Libya, supporting newly established U.S. and Allied basing infrastructure in North Africa. These efforts required the development of new techniques to adapt to desert environments, modifying concrete mixtures to withstand heat, reinforcing structures against high winds, and navigating terrain challenged by locust invasions and blowing sand. These environmental adaptations would go on to inform how USACE approached construction across the Middle East for decades to come.

By the close of the 1940s, the scale and scope of USACE work in the Middle East made clear the need for a permanent, regional structure. In 1950, USACE formally established the Middle East District, its first peacetime district-level command in the region. This marked the transition from wartime engineering surge to enduring strategic presence. From the railways of Iran to the runways of Dhahran, these early efforts laid the foundation for what would become one of USACE's most complex and continuous missions outside the continental United States.

IRANIAN DISTRICT (1941–1943)



FOLEY BROTHERS, INC. SPENCER, WHITE & PRENTIS, INC.

CONSTRUCTORS

WAR DEPARTMENT CONTRACT W-535-eng-208-139

IRANIAN OPERATIONS

HEADQUARTERS, BASRA, IRAQ

Ahwaz, Iran
1 January 1943

Mr. Haji Ahmed Bin Salman
Al Kuwait
Persian Gulf.

Dear Sir:

You are hereby notified that effective this date, in accordance with Article 11 of your agreement with the Constructors dated 20 November 1942 for constructing and assembling barges at Kuwait, the United States Government has taken over the agreement and that in accordance with the aforesaid Article, your agreement is assigned to the United States Government under the conditions set forth in Article 11.

Very truly yours,

FOLEY BROTHERS, INC. and
SPENCER, WHITE & PRENTIS, INC.

By Chas W. Sells
CHAS. W. SELLS, Foreign Mgr.

Approved:

R.A. McAlpine
R.A. McAlpine
Lt. Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

JKrab

The Iranian District was established in 1941 under the North Atlantic Division to support the Persian Corridor during World War II. Tasked with building and restoring vital logistics infrastructure, the district enabled Allied supply routes through rugged terrain and extreme conditions ranging from desert heat to mountain cold. Headquartered near Baghdad before moving to Basra and Tehran, it guided engineering operations in Iran and Iraq. The district was dissolved in May 1943 once its mission was absorbed by the Persian Gulf Service Command.

Supported Operations:

- Persian Corridor logistic support for Soviet-bound Lend-Lease supplies
- Rehabilitation of ports, railways, and staging areas in Iran and Iraq
- Engineering coordination for Army Service Forces transport operations

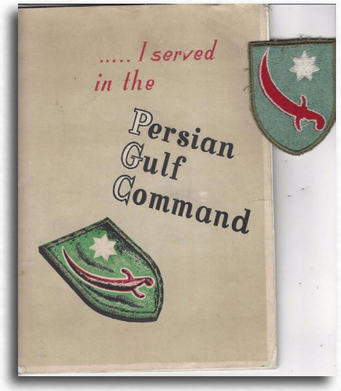
Accomplishments:

- Expanded ports at Khorramshahr, Basra, and Bandar Shapur using local materials
- Improved railway and road networks across mountainous terrain
- Enabled movement of millions of tons of war materiel to the USSR

Notable Projects:

- Reconstruction of the Trans-Iranian Railway from Khorramshahr to Tehran
- Development of staging marshalling yards and vehicle assembly sites
- Implementation of emergency logistical routes through adverse environments

PERSIAN GULF COMMAND (1942–1945)



The U.S. Army created the Persian Gulf Service Command in 1942 to direct the flow of Lend-Lease supplies moving from Persian Gulf ports through Iran to the Soviet Union. It absorbed the engineer assets and projects of the Iranian District, placing U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officers inside a broader transportation and logistics headquarters. In December 1943 the organization was redesignated the USACE Persian Gulf Command, but its mission and personnel remained the same: run the ports, railways, roads, depots, and construction programs that kept the Persian Corridor open. Although the command reported to Army Service Forces, USACE continued to lead the field construction, maintenance, and expansion work that sustained this critical Allied supply route until the end of World War II.

Supported Operations:

- Continuous Lend-Lease supply shipments from Persian Gulf ports to the Soviet Union
- U.S. Army transportation, maintenance, and construction across Iran and southern Iraq
- Diplomatic and military events such as the 1943 Tehran Conference

Accomplishments:

- Integrated Iranian District engineers into a single theater-level command without interrupting work
- Kept the Trans-Iranian Railway, highway network, and port complex operating under wartime pressure
- Moved more than four million tons of matériel to Allied forces between 1942 and 1945

Notable Projects:

- Expansion and operation of the ports at Khorramshahr, Bandar Shahpur, and Abadan
- Upgrading and daily running of the Trans-Iranian Railway's tunnels, bridges, and yards
- Construction of aircraft assembly plants, staging depots, fuel farms, and repair shops that supported the southern supply route

POST-WAR TRANSITION PERIOD (1945–1950)

After the inactivation of the Persian Gulf Command in 1945, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers did not maintain a standing district-level organization in the Middle East. Instead, engineers operated through smaller detachments, military missions, and temporary offices supporting U.S. diplomatic and military goals. These efforts were managed under Army theater commands and coordinated through the North Atlantic Division or sometimes Europe-based commands, depending on the region.

During this period:

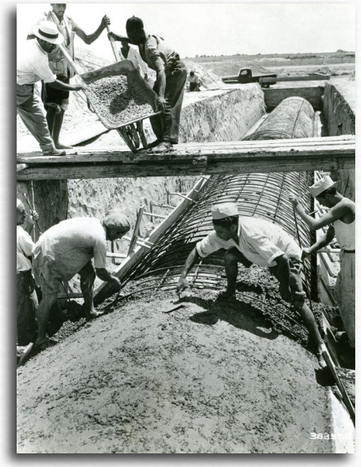
- Construction assistance to allied nations (like Turkey, Greece, and Iran) was often provided via military missions and the U.S. Mutual Defense Assistance Program, with engineers embedded in those efforts.

- Engineering surveys and site development began in key countries, including Libya, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran, in preparation for longer-term presence and possible basing agreements.

- Early coordination efforts laid the groundwork for the 1950 activation of the first Middle East District, which formalized USACE's return to the region under its own command structure.

MIDDLE EAST DISTRICT (1950-1952)

The Middle East District was one of the earliest formal U.S. Army Corps of Engineers organizations established to manage construction and engineering activities in the Middle East. Activated in 1950 and based in the region, the district laid the foundation for future USACE missions and partnerships across Southwest Asia. Though short-lived, it represented USACE's initial effort to establish a sustained overseas presence in support of emerging U.S. defense and diplomatic interests in the post–World War II era. Its functions were absorbed into the newly formed Mediterranean Division in 1952.



Wheelus Air Base, 1940s

Supported Operations:

- Early Cold War regional engagement and infrastructure planning
- U.S. military presence expansion across the Middle East
- Bilateral military and diplomatic facility support for emerging U.S. partners

Accomplishments:

- Provided initial engineering oversight for U.S. construction efforts in the Middle East
- Established the foundation for long-term USACE operations in the region
- Coordinated with regional stakeholders during a formative period of U.S. involvement

Notable Projects:

- Preliminary planning and design for military infrastructure in Libya and Saudi Arabia
- Site development and engineering surveys across the Persian Gulf
- Supported logistical infrastructure assessments in advance of permanent basing initiatives

USACE HISTORICAL VIGNETTE #064

ENGINEER CONSTRUCTION IN THE PERSIAN GULF

Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, the British and Soviet governments established a joint occupation of the Middle Eastern nation of Iran that lasted the duration of World War II. Engineer officer Col. Raymond A. Wheeler (later Chief of Engineers) led the U.S. Military Iranian Mission, established in September 1941, to facilitate lend-lease supply to the U.S.S.R. At this same time, the Iranian District of the North Atlantic Division was set up to provide construction support. In August 1942 the mission was re-designated as the Persian Gulf Service Command and in December 1943 became the Persian Gulf Command. It subsequently came under the command of a succession of engineer generals. Following the War Department's full militarization of construction, the Iranian District ceased to exist in May 1943. Three districts directly subordinate to the area command eventually replaced it.

Troops of the command faced immense challenges. In this part of the Middle East, engineers transported supplies through rugged terrain that ranged from desert to snow-packed mountains and had to operate equipment in temperatures from below zero to more than 120 degrees F. Supplies headed northward were shipped to the ports of Ahwaz, Khorramshahr, and Bandar Shapur, Iran and Basra, Iraq. Army engineers expanded these ports using easily obtainable materials, such as imported Indian teak logs to form pilings. Cargo in flatcars or in trailers known as "lowboys" were removed from Liberty ships at an astonishing pace. During the summer of 1943, a friendly off-loading competition broke out between troops of a white battalion and that of a black unit—in a single 24-hour period one company of black troops off-loaded 980 long tons of mixed freight. Soon another company broke the world's time record for off-loading a Liberty ship. At one point, Khorramshahr became the world's third busiest port in terms of tonnage handled.

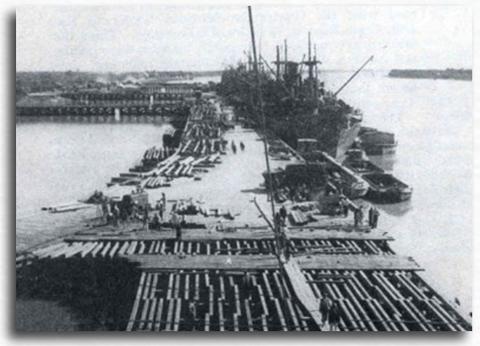
From these ports, engineers constructed inland roads. The principal project was the main highway that extended from Khorramshahr to Kazvin. In the southernmost section, the civilian contractors Folspen (Foley Brothers and Spencer, White, and Prentis) began work and laid a 24-foot-wide highway that sloped upward. Given the lack of adequate base materials, the southern section consisted of an earthen embankment compacted with sheep's foot rollers. Suffering recurrent washout, this section was completed only after the arrival of the 352d Engineer General Service Regiment, a black unit. With a shortage of concrete, the subgrade of the road's entire length was sealed with asphalt and overlaid with a 2-inch layer of soil asphalt. Of note, many of the roadbed sections that were improved were originally constructed in ancient times by Alexander the Great or Persian King Darius.

ENGINEER CONSTRUCTION IN THE PERSIAN GULF PROVIDED A KEY LIFELINE DURING WORLD WAR II

In conjunction with British troops and Iranian civilian labor, the 334th Engineer Special Service Regiment began construction concurrently on the Andimeshk-Malayer highway and on a large reservoir near one terminus. An ingenious use of materials overcame the difficulties of working in this area, where the ascent could be as much as 12 percent in places. For bridges, the command engineers used steel beams salvaged from the demolition of the Sixth Avenue elevated transit line in New York City. The bridges, along with the attendant concrete abutments, piers, beams, and 26-foot-wide deck slabs, were designed to fit these beams and not necessarily the terrain on which they were being built.

The 711th Engineer Railway Battalion, stood up at Fort Belvoir and comprised of recruits from the rail industry, was the first such unit deployed overseas when it arrived in Iran. The railway was integrated into the backbone of the Iranian supply line. It was a daunting task, as noted by one observer who said, "It's as though you suddenly had to serve all of Greater New York with the Coney Island scenic railway." The professionals in this unit were wildly successful in getting their 90-ton "Mike" locomotives (originally designed at the turn of the century for the Japanese Emperor, a.k.a. the Mikado) to the Soviet border. This unit's construction activities dramatically increased the Iranian State Railway's capacity; in July 1944, 7,520 tons of equipment were moving northward daily. In fact, oftentimes the Soviet Union received tonnage that exceeded original requests several times over. Occasionally the command sent some of these rail troops to assist the Soviets when sections of their tracks north of Tehran would wash out.

The Persian Gulf Command built other structures in support of its major tasks. Engineers constructed vehicle assembly plants at Khorramshahr to piece together cased motor trucks shipped from the U.S. They also built 44 airstrips. The command's headquarters facility alone, at Amirabad near Tehran, contained barracks facilities for more than 3,000 troops. In the end, more than 30,000 Americans served with the Persian Gulf Command. At war's end, the Persian Gulf Command reverted to a service command, which itself closed at the end of 1945. The organization had engaged in construction work valued at $100 million and allowed for the transshipment of four and a half million long tons of materiel, almost 5,000 airplanes, and 184,000 vehicles to the Soviet Union.



MEDITERRANEAN DIVISION (1952–1976)

The Mediterranean Division was one of the first overseas organizations established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to support American Cold War strategy and allied infrastructure. Initially headquartered in Morocco, specifically Casablanca, or Wheelus Air Base, and later relocated to Livorno, Italy, the division managed engineering and construction missions across Southern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. It oversaw multiple subordinate districts, including the Trans-East and Gulf Districts, and served as the forerunner to later USACE organizations in the region.

Nouasser airfield water reservoir
Dec.16, 1953

Supported Operations:

- Cold War strategic posture and basing
- Early North Atlantic Treaty Organization military infrastructure
- Expansion of U.S. military and diplomatic presence in the Middle East

Accomplishments:

- Directed large-scale construction and infrastructure development across more than a dozen countries
- Enabled U.S. and allied access, mobility, and logistics throughout the Mediterranean theater
- Provided foundational support for future regional USACE organizations like the Europe and Middle East Divisions

Notable Projects:

- Airfield construction and upgrades in Turkey, Libya, and Saudi Arabia
- Civilian air terminal development in North Africa and the Levant
- Port expansion projects in Morocco, including Casablanca and Agadir
- Road and highway engineering in Libya and Iran
- Construction of barracks, fuel depots, communications stations, and command centers across key Cold War sites

GULF DISTRICT (1952–MID-1970s)

The Gulf District operated under the Mediterranean Division and played a leading role in executing infrastructure projects across Afghanistan, Iran, and parts of the wider Gulf region. While it briefly assumed responsibility for ongoing projects in Saudi Arabia following the closure of the Trans-East District, the district's long-term focus was centered on road construction and engineering development in Afghanistan, along with targeted support to U.S. military and economic initiatives in Iran. The district laid the foundation for U.S. presence and influence in the Arabian Peninsula for decades to come.

Khaneh Area, Neqadeh Project
July 1959

Supported Operations:

- Cold War regional posture and U.S. military infrastructure expansion
- Bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan and Iran through technical assistance programs
- Support to Saudi military facilities following the deactivation of the Trans-East District

Accomplishments:

- Executed major highway construction projects in Afghanistan supporting long-distance mobility
- Delivered fuel infrastructure, facilities, and engineering support in key Iranian locations
- Completed military assistance projects in Saudi Arabia before closing regional offices in 1962

Notable Projects:

- Construction of the Kabul–Kandahar and Kandahar–Spin Boldak highways in Afghanistan
- Facility improvements and fuel storage infrastructure on Kharg Island and in Mashhad, Iran
- Oversight of the Dhahran Civil Air Terminal and training school barracks in Riyadh during Saudi mission period

TRANS-EAST DISTRICT (1954–MID-1970s)

Afghan highway asphalt laying Early 1960s

The Trans-East District operated as a subordinate district under the Mediterranean Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Headquartered variously across the region, the district was responsible for delivering engineering and construction services in support of expanding U.S. diplomatic and military engagement throughout the Middle East. Its mission focused on Cold War priorities, bolstering allied capacity and establishing infrastructure critical to U.S. regional access and influence.

Supported Operations:

- Cold War-era development and strategic partnerships
- Infrastructure expansion in support of U.S. military presence and diplomatic missions
- Technical assistance to emerging allied governments in the region

Accomplishments:

- Extended U.S. engineering capacity across key Middle Eastern countries including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Burma (now Myanmar)
- Facilitated military mobility and access through early development of air and land corridors
- Provided planning, design, and oversight for multi-nation construction programs supporting U.S. and host nation priorities

Notable Projects:

- Construction of military airfields and logistics support facilities in Turkey (notably at Incirlik and Diyarbakir)
- Terminal and airbase development in Pakistan and Iran
- Communications infrastructure, road systems, and port access points to support regional force deployment and resupply
- Technical support for civic projects including government buildings and training academies for partner nations

SAUDI ARABIA DISTRICT (1967–1976)

Saudi Arabia Mobility Program training complex, 1968E

In 1967, the United States Army Corps of Engineers established the Saudi Arabia District under the Mediterranean Division to manage an expanding national construction program funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The district operated from Riyadh with field offices in Jeddah and Al Batin and a rear detachment near Winchester, Virginia. Its mission focused on Saudi-funded military and civic construction executed through an engineer assistance agreement signed with the Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation.

Supported Operations:

- Support to the Ministry of Defense and Aviation's expanding infrastructure needs
- Expansion of U.S.–Saudi military cooperation through national construction programs
- Development of dual-use facilities to support both military readiness and civilian growth

Accomplishments:

- Built cantonments, headquarters complexes, training facilities, family housing, and utility infrastructure
- Executed major port expansion and national broadcast systems such as television and radio networks
- Completed King Khalid Military City, a multimillion dollar base supporting tens of thousands of personnel

Notable Projects:

- King Khalid Military City, including full city infrastructure and port at Ras al Mish'ab
- Military academy, airborne training school, and naval headquarters in Riyadh
- Broadcast facility programs and surveillance infrastructure across the Kingdom
- Navy port projects at Jubail and Jeddah, and media and telecom systems under the engineer assistance agreement

MIDDLE EAST DIVISION (1976–1989)

The Middle East Division was activated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers following the inactivation of the Mediterranean Division. Headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, it was created to manage one of the most ambitious military construction programs in USACE, largely funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The division oversaw three subordinate districts: Riyadh, Al Batin, and Jiddah. It marked a major escalation in U.S. engineering presence in the region and was critical in building enduring defense infrastructure.

Silos at Ras al Mishab, 1976-81

Supported Operations:

- U.S.–Saudi military assistance program during the Cold War
- Regional infrastructure expansion aligned with U.S. and allied interests
- Support to major bilateral construction initiatives under the U.S.–Saudi Memorandum of Understanding

Accomplishments:

- Managed a $20 billion construction effort, the largest foreign military construction program in USACE history at the time
- Deepened intergovernmental coordination between USACE and the Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation
- Delivered the foundation for Saudi Arabia's modern military infrastructure

Notable Projects:

- Planning and oversight of King Khalid Military City, including hundreds of buildings and support systems
- Design and construction of major air bases at Khamis Mushait and King Abdulaziz Air Base, and Sheikh Isa Airbase for the Bahrain military
- Development of training academies, missile facilities, logistics centers, and medical installations
- Construction of roads, utilities, and air defense infrastructure across remote and urban locations
- Supported Foreign Military Sales in Egypt through involvement in the Peace Vector projects. These FMS projects were generated after the agreements signed at the Camp David Peace Accords and expanded to seven phases (Peace Vector I-VII) over the span of nearly two decades.
- The Logistics Civilian Augmentation Program planning started under Med in 1985 with ARCENT. The first LOGCAP contract was awarded in 1986, The Southwest Asia Petroleum Distribution Program

USACE HISTORICAL VIGNETTE #065

MIDDLE EAST DIVISION'S EXTENSIVE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

Beginning in 1951, the Trans-East and Gulf Districts of the former Mediterranean Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, carried out U.S. government-sponsored construction projects in the Middle East. By the mid-1960s, Saudi Arabia requested USACE's expertise on mass communications projects and the construction of Saudi military infrastructure, all of which they funded. On April 20, 1976, the Middle East Division was formed to oversee this construction program in Saudi Arabia, which by that time had become extensive.

From its headquarters located at Riyadh, the division administered three districts in Riyadh, Al Batin, and Jiddah. Design and contracting offices, employing some 400 personnel, were set up at division (rear) located between Berryville and Winchester in northern Virginia. Under an Engineer Assistance Agreement and a subsequent Memorandum of Understanding between USACE and the Saudi Ministry of Defense and Aviation, the division would help MODA build three large bases, MODA headquarters, the Royal Saudi Air Force headquarters, a military academy, an airborne training school, housing, airfields, ports, hospitals, schools, and road infrastructure. USACE also would build an engineer training center and carry out its military engineering training program.

The jewel of the entire Saudi program was the construction of King Khalid Military City, a massive base designed to house more than 70,000 personnel. It alone cost $8.5 billion. KKMC was built as an octagonal-shaped city with houses and apartments in its northern section, command, recreational, and training facilities for three brigades in its southern sector, and a commercial city center area that also contained schools and a mosque. This was the single largest military construction project in USACE history and required the awarding of more than thirty large contracts.

With no support facilities in place for these projects, the division imported most of the multinational labor force—at just one project site fifteen languages were represented—and housed and fed them. It brought into Saudi Arabia most of the construction machinery and built facilities in country for the production of building materials. The division also built from scratch a port at Ras al-Mish'ab in order to handle the load of materials specifically needed for the construction of KKMC. The port was designed with four general cargo berths, one cement berth, and storage and support facilities.

USACE also managed other high-profile projects. These included the construction portion of the $2.5 billion Saudi Naval Expansion Program, which included the building of deepwater ports at Jubail and Jiddah, an interim repair facility at Dammam, and the naval headquarters complex at Riyadh. The Middle East Division oversaw additional work in Oman, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, and Somalia during this period.

The Saudi program was phased out in 1988 by which time the Middle East Division had become the Middle East/Africa Projects Office headquartered at Winchester. Eventually, MEAPO evolved into the Transatlantic Programs Center and then the Middle East District.

The Middle East Division had managed a $14 billion construction program, fully funded by the desert kingdom. Over its lifespan, 3,000 Corps employees rotated through Saudi Arabia. As a result of the program, the Saudi and U.S. governments forged a bond that paved the way for Saudi acceptance of an American presence on their soil during Operations Desert Shield/Storm.

RIYADH DISTRICT (1976–LATE-1980s)

The Riyadh District operated under the Middle East Division and served as the central management hub for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers activities in and around the Saudi capital. It was responsible for the execution of major construction projects supporting the Royal Saudi Air Force and Ministry of Defense and Aviation. The district also coordinated with U.S. military advisors and contractors to ensure delivery of high standard, strategically aligned infrastructure.

Ministry of Defense and Aviation HQ
Riyadh, June 1986

Supported Operations:

- Saudi defense modernization under U.S.–Saudi bilateral agreements
- Strategic basing and mobility infrastructure in central Saudi Arabia
- Cold War-era regional defense cooperation

Accomplishments:

- Managed high-visibility projects directly tied to U.S.–Saudi strategic objectives
- Delivered complex, multi-phase facilities that enabled expansion of Saudi military aviation and command capabilities
- Strengthened interagency and multinational collaboration on engineering and construction delivery

Notable Projects:

- Construction of Riyadh Air Base facilities, including runways, hangars, and operational centers
- Development of headquarters buildings, housing compounds, and utilities for Royal Saudi Air Force personnel
- Installation of advanced communications systems and integrated support infrastructure
- Coordination of contractor oversight and technical inspections for dozens of concurrent projects
- The Saudi National Guard Program

AL BATIN DISTRICT (1976–1985)

The Al Batin District, headquartered in Hafar al-Batin near the northeastern border of Saudi Arabia, was one of three districts operating under the Middle East Division. It was created to execute the construction of major military infrastructure in the northern region, particularly to support ground force readiness and Saudi border defense. The district played a leading role in delivering the centerpiece of the Saudi-U.S. military construction program: King Khalid Military City.

King Khalid Military City
mid-1980s

Supported Operations:

- Cold War-era Saudi defense posture and infrastructure expansion
- U.S.–Saudi military cooperation under foreign military construction agreements
- Border security and strategic mobility initiatives along the Saudi-Kuwaiti-Iraqi corridor

Accomplishments:

- Executed one of the largest military construction efforts ever undertaken by USACE
- Oversaw multi-year phased development of military, housing, and support facilities for thousands of personnel
- Established standards for quality control and coordination between U.S. engineers, Saudi stakeholders, and international contractors

Notable Projects:

- Complete development of King Khalid Military City, including 65 square kilometers of built environment
- Construction of housing for more than 10,000 military personnel and families
- Design and installation of integrated transportation networks, utilities, and base defense systems
- Delivery of training centers, maintenance depots, supply warehouses, and religious and recreational facilities

USACE HISTORICAL VIGNETTE #083

THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT HONORED A USACE PROJECT ON CURRENCY AND POSTAGE STAMPS

The Dhahran Civil Air Terminal was one of the earliest U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' projects in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Mediterranean Division's Saudi Arabia District constructed the project with U.S. Agency for International Development funding in 1959-1961.

USACE'S engineering and construction expertise so impressed the Saudi government that the Saudis included an image of the terminal on their one riyal paper currency. In 1963 they issued a set of stamps to commemorate the terminal and the inauguration of international jet air service. The project's success also was instrumental in the Saudi's decision to engage USACE for a major reimbursable program that grew during the 1970s and '80s to become one of the largest USACE history.

Japanese-American architect Minoru Yamasaki (1912-1986) designed the terminal building. In 1963 the American Institute of Architects awarded him its First Honors Design Award for the project. Yamasaki's other projects included the St. Louis Airport, the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, and the World Trade Center in New York City.

JIDDAH DISTRICT (1977–1980)

Khaneh Area, Neqadeh Project
July 1959

The Jiddah District operated along Saudi Arabia's western coast under the authority of the Middle East Division. It played a vital role in supporting the logistical and coastal infrastructure needs of the Kingdom and U.S. defense planners. Positioned near the Red Sea, the district provided engineering support for port development, airlift infrastructure, and facilities that served both military and civil functions in the western region.

Supported Operations:

- Strategic logistics and transportation expansion in western Saudi Arabia
- Support for coastal mobility and maritime access for allied operations
- U.S.–Saudi construction collaboration during Cold War-era posture alignment

Accomplishments:

- Enabled rapid movement of supplies and personnel through improved port and coastal access
- Enhanced Saudi Arabia's ability to project power and respond to regional threats along its western frontier
- Strengthened USACE credibility in delivering infrastructure in austere, logistically challenging environments

Notable Projects:

- Construction and modernization of key Red Sea port facilities and supporting logistics hubs
- Development of airfield and warehouse infrastructure in western Saudi Arabia
- Delivery of base support facilities for joint U.S.–Saudi operations in the Jiddah region
- Coastal roadways and connectivity improvements supporting strategic transport corridors
- The Saudi Navy Expansion Program

MIDDLE EAST AFRICA PROJECTS OFFICE (1986–1991)

The Middle East Africa Projects Office was established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1986 to manage construction, engineering, and infrastructure programs across the Middle East and Africa. Headquartered in Winchester, Virginia, MEAPO provided centralized oversight of military construction, foreign military sales programs, and host nation-funded projects during a time of major regional transition. It operated as a key bridging organization between the closure of the Middle East Division and the establishment of the Transatlantic Division.

Karlene Morgan of the Army Corps of Engineers and memebers of the Egypthian military at the site of Peace Vector III project

Supported Operations:

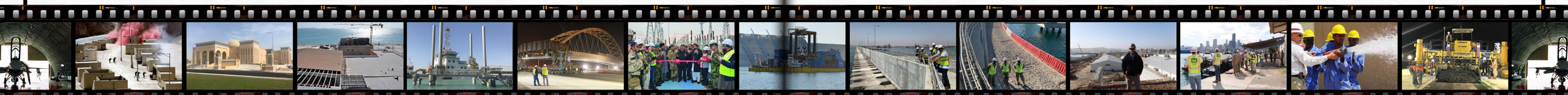
- Post-Iran-Iraq War regional infrastructure support
- Pre-positioning and modernization projects leading into the Gulf War
- Strengthening of U.S. regional security partnerships and allied capacity

Accomplishments:

- Managed military construction programs across the Middle East and Africa
- Oversaw foreign military sales construction initiatives for allied nations
- Maintained USACE operational continuity during regional and organizational transition

Notable Projects:

- Infrastructure development and upgrades in Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia
- Construction of military facilities supporting prepositioning efforts
- Execution of host nation-funded facility improvements across the Middle East
- Bahrain Naval Support MILCON Program (still ongoing) It supports the US Navy value well over 1.0 Billion
- African Civic Action Program provided humanitarian support to over 15 countries in Africa, schools, clinics, water wells, clean water, bridges and other facilities. It was started under MEAPO and extended thru 1995.



USACE HISTORICAL VIGNETTE #042

USACE HELPED KUWAIT RECOVER FROM IRAQI OCCUPATION

On 28 February 1991 a cease-fire ended military operations of the U.S.-led coalition in the Persian Gulf. In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, the mission for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rapidly evolved from one of support for military operations to one of emergency response. The goal was to return the crippled nation of Kuwait to its feet.

Even prior to the end of the war, the Kuwaiti government officially requested USACE's assistance following liberation. The Department of Defense authorized USACE to assist the Kuwaitis in restoring public works, electric, water, defense, and internal security systems. Colonel Ralph Locurcio, Savannah District Engineer, became the commander of the Kuwait Emergency Recovery Office, the organization that would fulfill USACE's mandated mission. KERO was set up along the lines of a USACE District, with separate offices for project management, emergency operations, engineering services, and contracting and support. On 28 January 1991 a KERO advance party arrived in Saudi Arabia and subsequently served as the lead agency for all civil restoration assistance provided by DoD. When it appeared that the war would end sooner than expected, KERO responded to a dramatically increased workload by employing a project management approach and swiftly executing needed contracting and logistics purchases.

In the wake of the destruction resulting from the Gulf War, USACE rose to the challenge by providing emergency aid to Kuwait. At the close of the ground war, KERO personnel and engineer elements attached to Task Force Freedom, the Army's umbrella organizational unit for emergency operations, arrived in Kuwait City to render humanitarian assistance. KERO's damage assessment teams were operating within 72 hours after the cessation of hostilities and eventually conducted more than 1,200 surveys. Combat engineers restored power for critical facilities such as hospitals, telecommunications centers, distribution warehouses, and financial institutions. KERO's electrical crews restored primary power throughout the capital by March 23.USACE-hired contractors eventually repaired 10,000 kilometers of transmission lines and 29 electrical stations.

KERO also supervised the repair of breaks in the city's main water supply line as well as sewage treatment facilities. Furthermore, KERO worked to quickly reopen the major gateways to Kuwait, namely the air and water ports. The most significant challenge was the rebuilding and repair of Kuwait's road network. Bombing had obliterated major portions of the roadways; still other sections were littered with bomb craters or Iraqi bunker emplacements. KERO and its contractors filled in hundreds of bomb craters, removed 3,700 barriers emplaced by Iraqi troops, and repaired 200 kilometers of road.

USACE HISTORICAL VIGNETTE #043

RECONSTRUCT KUWAIT FOLLOWING THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' emergency assistance activities in Kuwait helped stabilize the nation immediately following the Gulf War. The mission of USACE then evolved into one of infrastructure reconstruction. On 30 April 1991, authority over the entire effort was passed from the theater commander to the Secretary of the Army. Likewise, the Defense Reconstruction Assistance Office, a new agency that continued to coordinate closely with the Kuwait Emergency Recovery Office, replaced Task Force Freedom. USACE provided construction and contractual expertise critical to the reconstruction of the emirate. To begin recovery work, USACE awarded many contracts, most of which went to U.S. firms. KERO was able to reopen 145 schools in less than four months and also reopened another 1,000 public buildings. Additionally, Company A, Engineer Battalion (Prime Power), redesignated as the 249th Engineer Battalion, remained in theater until September to provide power generation and perform other operational and maintenance projects for U.S. Central Command.

The U.S. Army supported the largest oil-fire-fighting campaign in history. Withdrawing Iraqi soldiers blew up more than 600 oil wells, resulting in a production decrease of almost six million barrels per day.

Ultimately, Kuwait would lose one billion barrels of oil from its reserve due to this malicious Iraqi act. USACE helped the Kuwaitis gather information about the well fires, plan logistical support, and develop an emergency plan of action. It also contracted with Bechtel International to reconstruct the petroleum production infrastructure and to provide food, housing, and other support to the firefighters. Combat engineer vehicles with turret-mounted demolition guns and hydraulically-operated debris blades were provided to support the fire suppression effort. Initial estimates predicted that it would take up to two years to extinguish the fires and repair the wells. However, by 25 July Kuwait was able to announce the impending resumption of oil exports, and by November, well in advance of predictions, all of Kuwait's formerly burning oil wells had been capped.

Demining was another USACE activity in Kuwait. USACE personnel and engineering troops took part in the international effort to remove an estimated nine million landmines laid by Iraqi troops in Kuwait, only a fraction of which were cleared more than a decade later.

In the space of a year, KERO issued about 1,200 work orders valued at more than $500 million. These projects included the repair and restoration of Kuwait's Parliament building at a cost of $68 million, hundreds of major government buildings and schools, numerous new or rehabilitated hospitals, 5,000 kilometers of 300-kilowatt power lines, ninety electrical substations, the national water and sanitation systems, the terminal facilities at the international airport and at two military airfields, 250 kilometers of national highways, eight bridges, and two deepwater shipping ports, as well as the construction of a base for 5,000 U.S. troops that were permanently stationed in Kuwait.

KUWAIT EMERGENCY RECOVERY OFFICE (1991–1992)

Following the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers established the Kuwait Emergency Recovery Office as a temporary, district-level office to lead urgent reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm. Operating during the same period as the initial formation of the Transatlantic Division, KERO was a unique, HQ-directed organization created specifically to manage Kuwait's recovery. While not formally subordinate to the newly formed Transatlantic Division, KERO functioned alongside it as part of the broader USACE response in the region.

KERO's focused mission, rapid execution, and direct reporting to USACE Headquarters made it one of the most effective emergency engineering responses in USACE history. Its efforts helped stabilize Kuwait in the immediate post-war period and set the foundation for future USACE operations in the region.

Supported Operations:

- Post-conflict reconstruction following Operation Desert Storm
- Emergency restoration of critical infrastructure and public services
- Foreign Military Sales program support to the Kuwait Ministry of Defense

Accomplishments:

- Managed over 1,200 work orders valued at more than $500 million within one year
- Reopened 145 schools and over 1,000 public buildings within four months
- Restored essential power, water, and sanitation networks

Notable Projects:

- Reconstruction of the Kuwait National Assembly (Parliament) building
- Repairs to Ali Al Salem Air Base, Al Jaber Air Base, and the Kuwait Navy Base
- Rehabilitation of key transportation routes and government facilities

TRANSATLANTIC DIVISION (1991–1995)

Activated in 1991 immediately following Operation Desert Storm, the Transatlantic Division provided centralized command for United States Army Corps of Engineers missions in the Middle East. Even before its formal establishment, its personnel and regional teams were deeply involved in Desert Storm engineering support, including forward-base infrastructure, emergency repairs, and logistical staging. Headquartered in Winchester, Virginia, the division oversaw contingency construction, host-nation partnerships, and regional military basing support under U.S. Central Command.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Desert Storm recovery and post-war stabilization
- Strategic facility restoration for U.S. and allied military units in the Middle East
- Regional construction coordination for emerging CENTCOM infrastructure needs

Accomplishments:

- Repaired and upgraded key facilities damaged during the Gulf War
- Helped reestablish airfields, operations centers, and logistical hubs needed for continued U.S. military presence
- Provided critical engineering liaison between U.S. Central Command and USACE assets in Europe and the United States

Notable Projects:

- Rehabilitation of Kuwait military facilities and U.S. staging areas damaged during Iraqi occupation
- Restoration of hardened aircraft shelters, hangars, and munitions storage at regional air bases
- Design and construction support for long-term partner-nation infrastructure planning in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait
- Engineering assessments and master planning for U.S. facilities across the Arabian Peninsula

EUROPE DISTRICT (1991-1996)

Following the inactivation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe Division in 1991, the Europe District was established to continue providing engineering, design, and construction management services across Europe and parts of the Middle East. Headquartered in Frankfurt, Germany, and later relocated to Wiesbaden, the district operated under the South Atlantic Division. It served as a key transitional organization during a period of shifting U.S. strategic posture following the end of the Cold War and the 1990–1991 Gulf War.

Supported Operations:

- Post-Gulf War reconstruction and regional engagement
- Peacekeeping infrastructure and NATO support across Europe and the Balkans
- Continued execution of military construction and foreign military sales programs in the Middle East

Accomplishments:

- Provided seamless transition of mission support following the inactivation of the Europe Division
- Delivered joint and allied facility upgrades across U.S. European Command and partner nations
- Maintained USACE operational continuity across Europe and portions of the Middle East during organizational restructuring

Notable Projects:

- Military facility modernization in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait
- Design and oversight for NATO support sites and peacekeeping operations.
- Support to contingency planning and infrastructure readiness across U.S. and allied installations

The Cradle of Civilization

One of the Most Historically and Culturally Rich Environments on Earth.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' area of operations within the U.S. Central Command's region is a tapestry of history, culture, and vast opportunities.

GEOGRAPHICAL SPAN:
- Over 4 million square miles, at the crossroads of three continents.

DEMOGRAPHICS:
- Home to a diverse population of over 560 million individuals.
- Encompasses 25 distinct ethnic groups.
- Uses 20 primary languages, each enriched by a myriad of dialects.
- Cultivates myriad religions, often intersecting and blending across national borders.

ECONOMIC & STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE:
- Cradles essential commercial sea lanes and pivotal flight pathways.
- Houses invaluable pipelines and strategic overland routes.

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RICHNESS:
- Lies at the heart of ancient civilizations and age-old trade routes.
- Holds a treasure trove of world heritage sites, historical landmarks, and architectural wonders.
- Offers an endless spectrum of artistic expressions, traditions, and festivals.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE:
- Comprises 21 countries, weaving from Northeast Africa through the Middle East to Central and South Asia.
- Showcases a spectrum of governance structures, from budding democracies to age-old monarchies, each contributing uniquely to the global narrative.

In our work within this region, we are not just contributing to infrastructure and development, but also immersing ourselves in one of the most historically and culturally rich environments on Earth.

Click the QR Code to learn more about the U.S. Central Command's region and mission.

The U.S. Central Command was established in 1983 and covers 21 nations from Northeast Africa across the Middle East to Central and South Asia.

TRANSATLANTIC PROGRAMS CENTER (1995–2009)

Following a reorganization of the original Transatlantic Division, the Transatlantic Programs Center was established in Winchester, Virginia. The center continued to operate under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to manage construction, design, and program management in support of U.S. Central Command and allied partner nations. During this period, the center played a critical role in foreign military sales, diplomatic facility development, and contingency infrastructure planning in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Supported Operations:

- Foreign military construction and host-nation facility development
- U.S. Army Central strategic infrastructure programs
- Support for early phases of Operation Enduring Freedom and regional base planning

Accomplishments:

- Oversaw hundreds of foreign military sales-funded construction projects across multiple nations
- Provided technical and programmatic oversight for both enduring and contingency infrastructure
- Enabled the rapid expansion of U.S. operational capacity throughout the CENTCOM region

Notable Projects:

- Embassy and consulate facility design in Jordan, Bahrain, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia
- Execution of large-scale foreign military sales construction programs in Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and the Gulf States
- Support for U.S. Army forward basing master plans and site development, including Camp Arifjan in Kuwait
- Pre-construction planning and scoping support for post-9/11 expansion of facilities in Afghanistan
- Executed design, contracting, construction, and real estate services for U.S. forces during the Persian Gulf War and played a key role in reconstructing Kuwait after the war ended

AFGHANISTAN AREA OFFICE (2002–2004)

The Afghanistan Area Office was the first formal U.S. Army Corps of Engineers organization established in Afghanistan following the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom. Operating under the direct authority of USACE Headquarters, the office laid the foundation for future USACE operations in the region by managing urgent reconstruction, military basing, and diplomatic infrastructure projects during the initial phase of U.S. engagement. It later expanded into a full district due to rapid mission growth.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Enduring Freedom
- Initial U.S. and coalition entry and establishment of enduring presence in Afghanistan
- Early stabilization and reconstruction efforts in coordination with U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense

Accomplishments:

- Created a blueprint for full-scale USACE district operations in a conflict zone
- Delivered engineering solutions under austere conditions with limited infrastructure
- Established critical relationships with U.S. Forces–Afghanistan, U.S. Embassy Kabul, and Afghan ministries

Notable Projects:

- Construction of the first Afghan National Army training facilities
- Expansion of Kabul International Airport and supporting infrastructure
- Delivery of temporary U.S. Embassy compound and diplomatic housing
- Initial assessments and site development for forward operating bases across eastern Afghanistan

IRAQ AREA OFFICE (2003-2004)

The Iraq Area Office was established in the spring of 2003 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Transatlantic Programs Center in coordination with personnel from TAC's Kuwait Area Office. Formed in the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Iraq Area Office provided on-the-ground engineering, contracting, and construction management support during the initial phase of U.S. reconstruction efforts in Iraq. It operated as one of the earliest forward-deployed USACE elements during the conflict, enabling rapid project execution in a complex contingency environment.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom initial reconstruction phase
- Combatant command and interagency stabilization initiatives
- Forward-deployed contracting, engineering, and infrastructure support

Accomplishments:

- Established USACE's operational footprint in Iraq following the start of OIF
- Executed urgent engineering support in support of stabilization and reconstruction
- Provided the foundation for later expansion into full Gulf Region Division operations

Notable Projects:

- Immediate infrastructure repair and facility assessment missions in Baghdad and southern Iraq
- Coordination with coalition and interagency partners for rapid reconstruction response
- Transition planning for establishment of Gulf Region Division districts

TASK FORCE RESTORE IRAQI OIL (2003–2004)

Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil was a temporary U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-led mission established in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Operating under U.S. Central Command and the Coalition Provisional Authority, Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil was tasked with rapidly assessing, securing, and restoring Iraq's vital oil infrastructure to support the country's recovery and generate revenue for stabilization efforts.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Post-invasion recovery and economic stabilization

Accomplishments:

- Assessed more than 500 oil-related facilities and infrastructure sites
- Repaired refineries, pipelines, and pumping stations to resume oil production
- Coordinated with Iraqi oil ministries and international contractors for phased restoration

Notable Projects:

- Emergency pipeline repairs near Basrah and the Rumaila oil fields
- Restoration of the Bayji and Daura refineries
- Coordination of oil export resumption through the southern export terminal
- Training and transfer of operations to the Iraqi Ministry of Oil

TASK FORCE RESTORE IRAQI ELECTRICITY (2003–2004)

Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity was a short-term U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mission operating alongside Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil. It focused on the rapid rehabilitation of Iraq's national power grid, working closely with the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity and multinational partners. The task force aimed to restore power generation, stabilize transmission, and bring reliable electricity back to key urban and industrial centers.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Reconstruction and humanitarian support for Iraq's electrical grid

Accomplishments:

- Restored over 4,000 megawatts of generating capacity within one year
- Reconnected large portions of the national grid interrupted by war and looting
- Facilitated technical assessments, prioritized repairs, and oversaw contract execution

Notable Projects:

- Emergency repairs to the Baghdad South Power Plant and Al Quds Power Station
- Restoration of high-voltage transmission lines and substations across central Iraq
- Diesel and gas turbine generator installations in remote areas
- Laid groundwork for longer-term power grid modernization under the Gulf Region Division

AFGHANISTAN ENGINEER DISTRICT (2004–2009)

Elevated from the Afghanistan Area Office, the Afghanistan Engineer District was formally established as a full district under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters to meet the growing engineering demands of Operation Enduring Freedom. Based in Kabul, the district delivered complex military and civilian infrastructure projects in direct support of U.S., coalition, and Afghan government objectives. It marked USACE's first long-term district-level presence in an active combat zone since the Vietnam War.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Enduring Freedom
- Coalition basing and expansion of the Afghan National Security Forces
- United Nations and interagency reconstruction coordination

Accomplishments:

- Established a scalable engineering and construction program in a combat environment
- Integrated engineering efforts with the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan and USAID
- Provided design and construction oversight across all major regions of the country

Notable Projects:

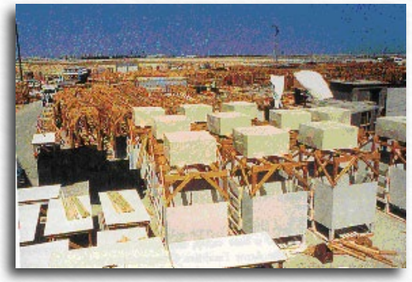
- Expansion of Bagram Airfield, including runways, hangars, and logistics zones
- Construction of Afghan National Police academies and regional command facilities
- Delivery of clinics, roads, border stations, and infrastructure in remote provinces
- Construction of Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense buildings for the Afghan government
- Design support for Provincial Reconstruction Team compounds across Afghanistan

USACE HISTORICAL VIGNETTE #041

OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contributed significantly to the U.S.-led victory in the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. USACE rapidly deployed its equipment, effectively used contractors to perform engineering functions, reached out to obtain support from other nations, and quickly dispatched its personnel to the Persian Gulf to oversee much of the process. Although under a pre-existing arrangement USACE's Middle East/Africa Projects Office (now the Transatlantic Programs Center) had been designated as the Department of Defense contract construction agent throughout the region, USACE basically accomplished these feats without significant prior positioning or planning.

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, USACE joined in the rapid and large-scale response by the U.S. military. Then Chief of Engineers Lieutenant General Henry J. Hatch urged the U.S. Army component of the U.S. Central Command to add engineer officers to its staff. Within a matter of weeks USACE sent an advance party to Saudi Arabia to plan the myriad of construction tasks to support the deployment of a large coalition force. Another issue overcome was the initial delay in dispatching combat engineer battalions to the theatre of operations. The delay, which had been caused by the priority given to maneuver forces, fortunately was short-lived, and combat engineer battalions soon deployed to the region.



USACE managed to overcome the shortages of personnel, equipment, materiel, and funding, as well as the climatic challenges encountered in Southwest Asia. It soon increased its in-country team by sending civilian volunteers recruited from inside the agency. While USACE did deploy 160 civilian personnel as part of its mission tasking, women were not sent to Saudi Arabia during the initial phase due to the lack of separate facilities and the dictates of Saudi culture. USACE civilian personnel, who came to constitute more than 90 percent of the construction management and real estate capability for the American military presence in the Gulf, received extensive training and equipping prior to deployment.

USACE also used the Gulf Peace Fund as a more effective way to channel funding from other nations quickly. The regional contingency construction team, first activated byUSACE in August, eventually oversaw a construction program valued at almost $1 billion. Given the immense size of the task, civilian contractors already living and working in the region critically supplemented troop construction due to their experience with local customs and conditions.

During the buildup prior to the outbreak of hostilities, USACE provided housing, sanitation facilities, and logistics support to a burgeoning number of U.S. troops arriving on an almost daily basis. In addition to administering defense contracts, the Corps also deployed the 535th Engineer Detachment (later relieved by the 249th Engineers) to ensure power transmission to Army headquarters, patriot missile batteries, and the 85th Evacuation Hospital. USACE laboratories developed new technologies for analyzing terrain, detecting mines, locating water, and controlling dust in order to help soldiers achieve victory. For its efforts, the Engineer Topographic Laboratories (now the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center's Topographic Engineering Center) received special recognition as the Army's Research and Development Organization of the Year. Army Engineers requested that the Belvoir Research, Development and Engineering Center develop a new mine-clearing rake. The rake, which allowed for quick penetration of armored vehicles through Iraqi lines, became fully deployed to Saudi Arabia prior to the start of the ground campaign.

During Desert Shield, Engineer combat troops maintained supply routes and built roads and airstrips. In addition to their support of operations from the continental United States, topographic engineers also were deployed in forward positions. When ground fighting broke out on February 24, 1991, combat engineering elements involved in the campaign were tasked with locating and then breaking through Iraqi bunkers to rapidly demolish as much enemy equipment and munitions as possible. At the termination of Operation Desert Storm four days later, USACE personnel and engineer troops acted quickly to render humanitarian assistance to the liberated Kuwaiti populace.

In support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, USACE ultimately supported just under $300 million of construction on base camps, airfields, wash racks, sunshades, and equipment rental. Indeed, simply to support the basic needs of the troops USACE spent roughly $40 million on contracts and equipment primarily for latrines and washstands. It also executed almost $100 million in leasing contracts during the military operation. Of the total funds expended, the majority came from Saudi Arabia under host-nation support agreements, and a sizeable portion of the balance from the Gulf Peace Fund on behalf of the Japanese government. In spite of the trying conditions, USACE successfully fulfilled its mission.

GULF REGION DIVISION (2004–2009)

The Gulf Region Division was established in 2004 to provide centralized command and control over all U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operations in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Headquartered in Baghdad, the division consolidated and succeeded several earlier USACE elements deployed to support reconstruction and infrastructure restoration, including the Iraq Area Office, Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil, and Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity. The Gulf Region Division functioned as a division-level command, overseeing three subordinate districts and coordinating with U.S. Central Command, Multi-National Force–Iraq, and numerous interagency and coalition partners.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom reconstruction and stabilization
- Interagency and host-nation infrastructure redevelopment
- Support to U.S. Central Command and Multi-National Force–Iraq engineering missions

Accomplishments:

- Delivered over $11 billion in construction across thousands of projects supporting health, education, transportation, energy, water, and security sectors
- Unified previously independent engineer elements under one coordinated structure
- Enabled long-term Iraqi capacity building through collaboration with ministries and local contractors

Notable Projects:

- Nationwide reconstruction of water treatment plants, power stations, hospitals, and schools
- Infrastructure restoration of oil and electricity sectors initiated under TF RIO and TF RIE
- Establishment of GRD-North, GRD-Central, and GRD-South districts to oversee regional project execution

GULF REGION NORTH DISTRICT (2004–2009)

The Gulf Region North District, headquartered in Mosul, operated under the command of the Gulf Region Division. The district was responsible for engineering and construction across northern Iraq, including the provinces of Nineveh, Kirkuk, Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah. Its mission spanned both military support infrastructure and critical reconstruction efforts for the civilian population during and after intense conflict.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom
- U.S. and coalition stabilization operations in northern Iraq
- Regional reconstruction in partnership with the Government of Iraq and coalition forces

Accomplishments:

- Delivered infrastructure that supported military operations and local governance in an ethnically and politically complex region
- Reestablished critical services and built new facilities to support public health, education, security, and power distribution
- Enabled rapid project execution in remote and often contested areas by partnering with local contractors and civic leaders

Notable Projects:

- Construction and rehabilitation of hundreds of schools and health clinics across Nineveh and Kirkuk provinces
- Power distribution projects to restore electricity to cities and rural communities
- Police stations and border forts built to enhance security infrastructure
- Water purification and delivery systems for underserved districts
- Road and bridge repair to reconnect isolated areas and restore supply routes
- Coordination with provincial reconstruction teams to ensure alignment with broader stability objectives
- Rehabilitated the Kajakai Dam to restore critical hydroelectric power generation
- Rehabilitated Alasad Air Base to restore critical infrastructure to present air travel specifications

GULF REGION CENTRAL DISTRICT (2004–2009)

The Gulf Region Central District, headquartered in Baghdad, operated under the Gulf Region Division and was responsible for reconstruction and military engineering support across Iraq's central provinces. Operating at the heart of the country's political and operational landscape, the district handled some of the most complex and high-visibility projects in direct coordination with the U.S. Embassy, Multi-National Force–Iraq, and the Government of Iraq.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Post-invasion stabilization in Baghdad and central Iraq
- Interagency coordination for infrastructure restoration and development

Accomplishments:

- Delivered hundreds of critical infrastructure projects in densely populated, high-threat environments
- Rebuilt essential services to restore civil governance, healthcare, education, and public utilities
- Worked alongside Provincial Reconstruction Teams to align U.S. infrastructure goals with Iraqi provincial needs

Notable Projects:

- Restoration of electrical substations and transmission networks in and around Baghdad
- Construction of hospitals, emergency clinics, and maternity centers to restore healthcare access
- Rebuilding of police academies, fire stations, and ministry buildings
- Development of potable water systems and sewer networks in Baghdad neighborhoods
- Schools and university facilities repaired or rebuilt to accommodate returning students
- Judicial and rule-of-law infrastructure including courthouses and detention facilities

GULF REGION SOUTH DISTRICT (2004–2009)

The Gulf Region South District, based in Basrah, operated under the Gulf Region Division and managed construction and reconstruction projects across southern Iraq. This district was instrumental in restoring infrastructure in a region that had suffered from decades of neglect, war, and sanctions. The district worked closely with Iraqi ministries, coalition partners, and local governments to rebuild essential services while also supporting U.S. and allied military operations in the southern provinces.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Regional stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction in southern Iraq
- Infrastructure support for logistics corridors and forward operating bases

Accomplishments:

- Delivered vital services to key population centers and port cities, enabling economic recovery and government reestablishment
- Improved access to power, water, education, and healthcare for millions of Iraqis
- Supported U.S. and British military forces operating in the region through base infrastructure development

Notable Projects:

- Expansion and modernization of Basrah International Airport facilities
- Water treatment plants and distribution systems in Basrah, Dhi Qar, and Maysan provinces
- Upgrades to electrical generation and transmission systems in the southern power grid
- Construction of schools, health clinics, and municipal buildings in rural and urban areas
- Border fortifications and customs facilities along key southern entry points
- Road and bridge repair to support reconstruction convoys and commercial transport routes

USACE HISTORICAL VIGNETTE #161

On September 11, 2001, when terrorists launched devastating attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., the U.S. government in turn declared war against terrorism on a global scale, vowing to fight terrorists on both its own and foreign soil. On October 7, 2001, the first large-scale response began—military action against Afghanistan's Taliban regime and the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization it harbored. The regime fell within a matter of weeks, and by mid-December an interim government had taken its place in Kabul.

In March 2003, the Global War on Terrorism expanded to Iraq in response to Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's refusal to disclose, remove, or destroy his weapons of mass destruction and end all support for terrorist organizations. Shortly before combat operations began, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers participated in the pre-invasion planning by, among other things, helping to prepare a database of Iraq's transportation, oil, and electrical infrastructure. After the air war began, USACE planners helped prepare target lists and advised coalition forces on targeting decisions. At the outset of the ground war, USACE personnel, operating in close coordination with ground forces, helped capture and secure Iraq's oil fields. In the south USACE's Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil and its contractors were instrumental in extinguishing the oil well fires set by the retreating Iraqis. Combat engineers such as the 249th Engineer Battalion participated in the capture of hydroelectric facilities at the Haditha Dam and later helped the dam's Iraqi staff resume electricity production.

Soon after coalition forces toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein, USACE began to address two vital concerns—helping the Iraqis resume the production of oil and repairing some of the nation's battered electrical infrastructure. To revamp the Iraqi oil infrastructure, TF RIO began to rehabilitate worn or damaged facilities, including oil pipelines, pumping stations, gas-oil separation plants, and refineries. Immediately after combat ceased, when Iraq was neither pumping nor refining oil for domestic consumption, TF RIO also imported hundreds of millions of gallons of benzene and diesel fuel and hundreds of thousands of tons of liquid petroleum gas to sustain the country. In the fall of 2003, USACE established Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity to help bolster electrical production and enhance the distribution of power throughout the country. Working closely with their Iraqi counterparts, TF RIE engineers helped refurbish Iraqi power plants, build new generating capacity, rebuild hundreds of miles of electrical transmission lines, construct new electrical substations, and install automated control systems to monitor the flow of power across the nation's electrical grid.

But the rehabilitation of the Iraqi oil and electrical infrastructure was only part of a much larger effort by the American-led coalition to help rebuild Iraq and create a safe, stable, and secure nation. Toward that end, through the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund, the U.S. government allocated approximately $11 billion for 3,000 projects that included the construction or rehabilitation of Iraq's transportation facilities, water and sewage treatment plants, hospitals and local health clinics, schools, fire and police stations, and border forts.

To provide construction management for the huge undertaking, as well as deliver military construction and maintenance services to the U.S. military in Iraq, in January 2004, USACE established the Gulf Region Division. Headquartered in Baghdad, the division encompassed three engineer districts, one each in the southern, central, and northern parts of the country. GRD boasted a staff of approximately 500 civilians and 200 military personnel. All the civilians were volunteers, and operations in Iraq marked the first time the Corps of Engineers had sent such a large contingent of civilians into a combat zone.

A few months after GRD's establishment, hostilities erupted again. This time, rival Shiite and Sunni militias and extremist terrorist groups fought one another and U.S., coalition, and Iraqi troops. Among Shiite militia groups, the Mahdi Army, led by cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, was particularly deadly in its battles against others. The guerrilla-style assaults compounded the difficulty of rebuilding Iraq and so, in January 2007, President George W.

USACE HISTORICAL VIGNETTE #161
(CONTINUED)

Bush surged the number of U.S. forces in Iraq by more than 20,000. Although the violence initially was intense, hostilities began to decline toward the end of the year such that some of the additional troops redeployed in 2008. In February 2009, newly elected President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. would withdraw its combat forces from Iraq by August 31, 2010, with the remaining troops due to pull out in December 2011.

As a part of the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq, in July 2009 GRD consolidated its North and Central districts into the Gulf Region District. Three months later, USACE inactivated the division, and the newly re-established Transatlantic Division assumed command over the remaining Gulf Region and Gulf Region South Districts. In March 2010, the Corps consolidated its presence in Iraq even further when it converted the Gulf Region South District into an area office under Gulf Region District. The district continued to provide full-spectrum construction management to the United States Forces-Iraq command, the U.S. Embassy-Baghdad Mission, and the Government of Iraq until its inactivation at the end of 2011.

In the intervening years, the GRD's engineer soldiers and civilians, undaunted by the dangers posed by the insurgency, helped the Iraqis to add 7,000 megawatts of electricity to Iraq's power grid and supported the oil industry's efforts to meet its production capacity of 3 million barrels per day. Five million people benefitted directly from GRD's water and sewer projects and millions more received treatment in medical facilities USACE helped build. In addition, the Gulf Region Division managed nearly 1,200 school projects that served hundreds of thousands of children. The division also oversaw construction of hundreds of infrastructure projects such as roads, railroads, aviation facilities, and ports, and it supervised the building of hundreds of vital national security and community safety structures such as border posts, entry facilities, courthouses, and fire stations. In sum, the GRD completed more than 5,100 projects at a construction cost of nearly $9 billion funded by the U.S. government through various programs.

While America withdrew most of its armed forces from Iraq in 2011, the U.S. remained ready to engage if the Iraqi government required support and assistance. Necessity arose within a couple of years when Iraq came under attack from an Al-Qaeda offshoot calling itself Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Unable to withstand the onslaught, Iraqi Security Forces ceded large swaths of territory north and west of Baghdad. By December 2013, ISIS occupied about a third of the country and made Mosul its new capital. In response, the United States assembled a global coalition of 79 countries to defeat ISIS. Operation Inherent Resolve commenced in 2014 and defeated ISIS in three years of, at times, bitter fighting. In 2017, USACE established Task Force Essayons to provide full-spectrum engineering support to the coalition forces' continuing counter-terrorism mission.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, USACE supported U.S. and coalition forces during combat and reconstruction and stability operations. In the process, USACE civilians and military established trusting relationships with Iraqi citizens and their government that remained intact even after the U.S. withdrew its forces. For example, the Iraqi government's request that USACE act as its engineer on the Mosul Dam rehabilitation project was a testament to USACE's even-handed professionalism and expertise in construction management.

The years of ISIS rule in northern Iraq had a profound impact on Iraq's biggest dam, the embankment dam on the Tigris River near Mosul. Built on an unstable foundation of water-soluble gypsum, the Mosul Dam required constant maintenance to remain stable—primarily filling of holes by grouting with cement. When grouting operations came to a standstill during hostilities, erosion created large cavities in the foundation. In 2016, Iraqi and U.S. dam safety experts sounded the alarm. Consequently, the Iraqi government hired the industry leader in foundation stabilization, the Italian Trevi Group, and requested that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers act as the engineer on the project. USACE agreed and established Task Force Mosul Dam to oversee the rehabilitation of the dam. Work on the roughly $300 million contract began in autumn 2016 and involved overhauling and modernizing the dam's monitoring instrumentation, drilling thousands more grouting holes, and repairing flood gates and outlets. By August 2019, the Corps' task force and Trevi finished their work and returned full control of Mosul Dam to Iraq's Ministry of Water Resources.

TRANSATLANTIC DIVISION (2009–2025)

Reactivated in 2009 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Transatlantic Division was established to provide unified command and control over USACE operations within the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. Headquartered in Winchester, Virginia, the division oversaw multiple subordinate organizations and supported a full spectrum of engineering missions across the U.S. central Command region. Its work ranged from contingency and combat support to long-term foreign military construction, infrastructure development, and partner capacity building.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn
- Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom's Sentinel
- Operation Inherent Resolve
- Support to U.S. Central Command and its component commands
- Foreign Military Sales construction programs and strategic base development

Accomplishments:

- Established enduring engineering partnerships with U.S. military commands, embassies, and host nations across the region
- Delivered agile and scalable construction and design support to forward-deployed forces and interagency partners
- Integrated contingency operations with long-term strategic development efforts across complex environments
- Maintained uninterrupted support during major transitions, including combat drawdowns, counterterrorism campaigns, and the COVID-19 pandemic

Notable Projects:

- Management of Task Force Mosul Dam and Task Force Essayons
- Design and construction of base infrastructure across Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Qatar, and Jordan
- Delivery of Foreign Military Sales-funded facilities in Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, and Israel
- Master planning, engineering, and execution of sensitive facilities in support of Special Operations Forces and joint commands
- Humanitarian infrastructure and disaster relief support to U.S. embassies and partner agencies

MIDDLE EAST DISTRICT (2009–PRESENT)

The Middle East District, re-designated from the former Transatlantic Programs Center during the 2009 reactivation of the Transatlantic Division, serves as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' lead district for long-term, steady-state missions across U.S. Central Command. Headquartered in Winchester, Virginia, the district supports U.S. military construction, foreign military sales, interagency infrastructure, and international engineering engagements in more than a dozen countries across the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa. Overseas offices include Kingdom Of Bahrain Resident Office, Egypt Resident Office, Israel Area Office, Kingdom of Jordan Resident Office, Qatar Area Office, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Area Office, and United Arab Emirates Project Office.

Supported Operations:

- Foreign Military Sales programs under the Department of Defense
- Long-term facility and infrastructure support to U.S. military and embassy operations
- Engineering support to U.S. Central Command and partner-nation militaries
- Humanitarian assistance and civil works through interagency coordination

Accomplishments:

- Established enduring partnerships with U.S. embassies, combatant commands, and host-nation governments
- Delivered consistent, high-quality engineering in dynamic, politically sensitive environments
- Maintained mission continuity across changes in U.S. military posture and diplomatic priorities

Notable Projects:

- Construction of airbases, training centers, and operational facilities in Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates
- Embassy and consulate support projects in Egypt, Oman, and Lebanon
- Foreign Military Sales-funded engineering programs in Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt
- Long-range master planning, environmental services, and infrastructure design across more than 20 partner-nation installations
- Embassy and consulate support projects including Kuwait and Iraq

AFGHANISTAN ENGINEER DISTRICT NORTH (2009–2013)

In response to the troop surge and increasing workload, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers split its single Afghanistan district into two geographic districts. The North District, headquartered in Kabul, was subordinate to the newly reactivated Transatlantic Division. It was responsible for overseeing construction in northern and eastern Afghanistan, focusing on both military and civil infrastructure to support coalition operations and Afghan government institutions.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Enduring Freedom
- Coalition force expansion and Afghan National Security Forces development
- Provincial Reconstruction Team and U.S. Embassy-supported development initiatives

Accomplishments:

- Executed a high volume of projects simultaneously across multiple provinces under hostile conditions
- Built capacity within Afghan ministries through engineering consultation and project transfer
- Supported counterinsurgency objectives through targeted infrastructure delivery

Notable Projects:

- Ministry of Interior compounds in Kabul and regional capitals
- Afghan National Army garrisons and training centers in northern provinces
- Construction of police headquarters, district centers, and logistics hubs
- Development of roads, bridges, and utilities in support of Afghan civil society
- Base upgrades and force protection infrastructure for forward-deployed U.S. and NATO units

AFGHANISTAN ENGINEER DISTRICT SOUTH (2009–2013)

Created alongside its northern counterpart during the Afghanistan surge, the South District was headquartered at Kandahar Airfield and operated under the Transatlantic Division. It was responsible for executing construction projects in southern and western Afghanistan, including infrastructure for U.S., NATO, and Afghan forces operating in some of the most kinetic regions of the country. The district also coordinated with local communities and Afghan ministries to deliver both security-focused and civil works projects.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Enduring Freedom
- Counterinsurgency operations and surge support in Helmand, Kandahar, and surrounding provinces
- Development of Afghan military and police capacity in southern regions

Accomplishments:

- Delivered mission-critical construction in high-threat, logistically difficult environments
- Supported International Security Assistance Force and Afghan National Security Forces expansion
- Contributed to regional stabilization through infrastructure supporting governance and security

Notable Projects:

- Expansion of Kandahar Airfield, including tactical operations centers, maintenance facilities, and airfield upgrades
- Afghan army corps headquarters and logistics compounds in Helmand and Zabul
- Police training centers, district offices, and forward operating bases throughout the south
- Coordination with NATO partners for delivery of shared coalition facilities
- Emergency repair and engineering assessments following insurgent attacks on critical infrastructure
- Southeast Electrical Power System initiatives in southern Afghanistan, including Helmand substations and electrical transmission lines

TRANSATLANTIC AFGHANISTAN DISTRICT (2013–2021)

The Transatlantic Afghanistan District was formed through the consolidation of the former North and South Afghanistan Engineer Districts and operated under the Transatlantic Division. Initially stood up and headquartered at Camp Phoenix, Kabul, the district later moved to Bagram Airfield. The district fully relocated to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait as U.S. forces began their phased withdrawal from Afghanistan and strategically combined with Task Force Essayons and cased its colors in 2021. The district supported U.S., NATO, and Afghan partners through the final years of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, and the Resolute Support Mission.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Enduring Freedom (final phase)
- Operation Freedom's Sentinel
- Resolute Support Mission
- Retrograde and transition operations during U.S. drawdown

Accomplishments:

- Maintained continuity of engineering operations during high tempo retrograde and base closures
- Supported Afghan ministries in completing and transitioning dozens of facilities to local control
- Integrated engineering, project management, and field oversight in hostile and logistically challenging environments

Notable Projects:

- Construction and transfer of Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense compounds and facilities
- Coalition support infrastructure for NATO forces, including command centers and joint operation bases
- Logistics hubs, roads, and airfield improvements to support the retrograde of U.S. forces
- Execution of sustainment and maintenance contracts to ensure continuity of services at strategic bases

MOSUL DAM TASK FORCE (2016–2019)

Task Force Mosul Dam was established under the authority of the Transatlantic Division to oversee the emergency stabilization and rehabilitation of the Mosul Dam in northern Iraq, considered one of the most high-risk dams in the world. Located near active conflict zones and suffering from decades of structural instability, the dam posed an existential threat to millions living downstream. The task force operated in partnership with the Government of Iraq, the U.S. Embassy Baghdad, coalition forces, and Italian engineering firm Trevi Group.

Supported Operations:

- Coalition stability and infrastructure protection in Iraq
- Strategic assurance to Iraqi civilians and global partners
- Non-combat emergency engineering in support of post-conflict recovery

Accomplishments:

- Successfully executed high-risk grouting and dam stabilization in an active security environment
- Managed coordination among international contractors, Iraqi ministries, U.S. State Department, and military elements
- Prevented potential catastrophic dam failure that could have endangered more than 6 million lives downstream

Notable Projects:

- Emergency grouting operations across the dam's foundation to address persistent seepage and void formation
- Construction of onsite contractor camps, security infrastructure, and logistics zones
- Installation of monitoring systems and training of Iraqi engineers for long-term maintenance and safety operations
- Risk reduction measures implemented under constant aerial and ground threat conditions

TASK FORCE ESSAYONS (2017–2021)

Task Force Essayons was created under the Transatlantic Division to meet urgent engineering and construction requirements in support of U.S. and coalition forces operating in Iraq and Syria. Headquartered at Camp Taji, Iraq, and later operating from Kuwait, the task force was designed as a rapid-response element capable of delivering expeditionary engineering support to forward-deployed units. Its mission focused on supporting the fight against ISIS and ensuring coalition forces had the infrastructure needed for mobility, protection, and mission success.

Supported Operations:

- Operation Inherent Resolve
- Coalition Special Operations support in Iraq and Syria
- U.S. Central Command expeditionary engineering requirements

Accomplishments:

- Provided time-sensitive construction in support of combat operations in remote and austere environments
- Enabled special operations and joint forces to establish, expand, or reoccupy forward operating sites
- Delivered technical expertise, contract oversight, and quality assurance under constant operational pressure

Notable Projects:

- Secure compounds, tactical operation centers, and mission-critical infrastructure in Iraq and Syria
- Airfield improvements and vertical construction in support of aerial resupply and rotary-wing operations
- Forward command posts, entry control points, and anti-vehicle barrier systems
- Sustainment of construction oversight during troop movements and site transitions

TRANSATLANTIC EXPEDITIONARY DISTRICT (2021–PRESENT)

Established in 2021, the Transatlantic Expeditionary District emerged from the consolidation of the Transatlantic Afghanistan District and Task Force Essayons following the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. As a subordinate element of the Transatlantic Division, the district is headquartered at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, and is designed to provide agile, scalable, and rapid-response engineering and construction support to U.S. Central Command. The Expeditionary District is uniquely postured to execute contingency, expeditionary, and short-notice missions across the CENTCOM area of responsibility. Overseas offices include Kuwait Area Office and Iraq Area Office.

Supported Operations:

- Post-Afghanistan transition and enduring presence operations
- Operation Inherent Resolve
- Security cooperation and partner-nation support across the Middle East and Central and South Asia
- Ongoing contingency and crisis response missions

Accomplishments:

- Maintained continuity of engineering support following the largest U.S. military withdrawal in a generation
- Integrated expeditionary engineering with long-term planning and host-nation coordination
- Provided consistent on-the-ground presence for forward missions with flexible reach-back capability

Notable Projects:

- Design and construction of rapid-turn facilities in Iraq, Syria, and Kuwait
- Engineering support to U.S. Special Operations and joint task forces
- Reconstruction and hardening of infrastructure impacted by combat operations
- Forward basing and prepositioning site upgrades across the Arabian Peninsula and Levant
- Delivery of FMS funded facilities for The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Dubai

ISRAEL AREA OFFICE (2024-PRESENT)

In June 2024, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers formally transferred responsibility for its Israel program from the Europe District to the Middle East District. This realignment followed the U.S. Central Command's 2021 assumption of combatant command responsibility for Israel from U.S. European Command, aligning USACE regional support structure accordingly. The newly established Israel Area Office, under the Middle East District, continues to manage design and construction projects supporting U.S. and Israeli defense initiatives, building upon a legacy of nearly 50 years of USACE support in Israel.

Supported Operations:

- Transition of USACE mission alignment from EUCOM to CENTCOM
- Ongoing U.S.-Israel defense cooperation and infrastructure development
- Support for Foreign Military Financing projects enhancing regional security

Accomplishments:

- Seamless transition of program management to align with CENTCOM's area of responsibility
- Continued delivery of high-quality engineering and construction services in Israel
- Strengthened partnerships with Israeli defense and engineering counterparts

Notable Projects:

- Oversight of military construction projects funded through FMF
- Infrastructure enhancements supporting U.S. and Israeli defense operations
- Collaboration on facilities improving interoperability between U.S. and Israeli forces

SOUTHWESTERN DIVISION (2025-PRESENT)

In 2025, the Transatlantic Division cased its colors, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mission in support of U.S. Central Command was formally transferred to the Southwestern Division.

With this transition, the Middle East District and the Expeditionary District came under the command of the Southwestern Division, ensuring continuity of operations across the region and preserving one of the most complex and enduring responsibilities in Army engineering.

This is not a new role for the Southwestern Division. For years, it provided critical support to the mission in the Middle East through its expertise in engineering, contracting, and contingency operations. Districts such as Fort Worth routinely contributed design services, acquisition support, and deployed personnel to meet the demands of regional partners and warfighters. The transfer of command reflects not a change in commitment, but a formal recognition of a relationship that had long been active.

The mission now carried by the Southwestern Division represents more than an operational hand off. It is the continuation of a legacy that stretches back more than eighty years. From railway operations and supply routes in Iran during World War II, to Cold War infrastructure in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, to reconstruction and contingency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, this mission has been a constant thread in the history of Army engineers in the region.

The casing of the Transatlantic Division's colors does not close the book on that legacy. It affirms its place in the lineage. Under the leadership of the Southwestern Division, the mission in support of CENTCOM and the U.S. Special Operations Command, shaped by history, executed with precision, and driven by a purpose that remains unchanged. Building strong is not a motto. It is a record. And that record now moves forward, carried by a division ready to write the next chapter.

ORGANIZATIONAL ELEMENTS

Since the early 1940s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has maintained a layered network of area offices, resident offices, project offices, and task-organized elements across the Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest and Central Asia. These organizations, operating under a succession of divisions, districts, and specialized commands, have served as the direct link between higher headquarters and on-site project delivery. Together they illustrate the breadth and longevity of USACE's engineering presence across eight decades of engagement.

WORLD WAR II – PERSIAN CORRIDOR

Ahvaz Resident Office (1942–1944)–Iranian District–Persian Gulf Service Command
Andimeshk Resident Office (1942–1944)–Iranian District–Persian Gulf Service Command
Khorramshahr Resident Office (1942–1944)–Iranian District–Persian Gulf Service Command
Bandar Shahpur Resident Office (1942–1944)–Iranian District–Persian Gulf Service Command

EARLY COLD WAR & PRE-1970S GULF ERA

Dhahran Resident Office (1950–1952)–Middle East District (1st Formation)
Wheelus Resident Office, Tripoli (1952–1956)–Mediterranean Division
Kabul Field Detachment (1956–1967)–Gulf District
Dhahran Civil Air Terminal Field Office (1960–1962)–Gulf District
Riyadh Field Office (1961–1962)–Gulf District

SAUDI ARABIA DISTRICT ERA

Riyadh Area Office (1967–1976)–Saudi Arabia District
Jeddah Area Office (1968–1976)–Saudi Arabia District
Ras al-Mish'ab Field Office (1970–1976)–Saudi Arabia District

MIDDLE EAST DIVISION ERA

Riyadh Area Office (1976–Late-1980s)–Riyadh District
Al Batin Area Office (1976–1985)–Al Batin District
Jeddah Area Office (1977–1980)–Jiddah District

1990S TRANSITION & POST-GULF WAR

Kuwait Emergency Recovery Office (1991–1992)–Transatlantic Division (1st Formation)
Cairo Field Office (1992–1994)–Europe District

OFFICES BEYOND THE DISTRICT LEVEL

IRAQ & AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION ERA

Afghanistan Area Office (2002–2004)–Transatlantic Programs Center
Iraq Area Office (2003–2004)–Transatlantic Programs Center
Baghdad Resident Office (2004–2011)–Gulf Region Central District
Taji Resident Office (2005–2011)–Gulf Region Central District
Mosul Resident Office (2004–2011)–Gulf Region North District
Kirkuk Resident Office (2005–2011)–Gulf Region North District
Tallil Resident Office (2005–2011)–Gulf Region South District
Basrah Resident Office (2005–2011)–Gulf Region South District
Umm Qasr Resident Office (2005–2009)–Gulf Region South District
Task Force RIO Field Office (2003–2004)–Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil
Task Force RIE Field Office (2003–2004)–Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity

AFGHANISTAN SURGE ERA

Kandahar Area Office (2009–2013)–Afghanistan Engineer District South
Bagram Area Office (2009–2013)–Afghanistan Engineer District North
Mazar-e-Sharif Area Office (2009–2013)–Afghanistan Engineer District North
Jalalabad Area Office (2009–2013)–Afghanistan Engineer District North
Herat Area Office (2009–2013)–Afghanistan Engineer District South
Shindand Resident Office (2009–2013)–Afghanistan Engineer District South
Camp Phoenix Resident Office (2009–2013)–Afghanistan Engineer District South
Kabul Area Office (2013–2021)–Transatlantic Afghanistan District
Mosul Dam Task Force (2016–2019)–Transatlantic Division
Task Force Essayons (2017–2021)–Transatlantic Division

RECENT CENTCOM OPERATIONS

Iraq Area Office (2021–Present)–Transatlantic Expeditionary District–Transatlantic Division
Kuwait Area Office (2021–Present)–Transatlantic Expeditionary District–Transatlantic Division
Bahrain Area Office (2009–Present)–Middle East District–Transatlantic Division
Jordan Area Office (2009–Present)–Middle East District–Transatlantic Division
Qatar Area Office (2009–Present)–Middle East District–Transatlantic Division
Saudi Arabia Area Office (2009–Present)–Middle East District–Transatlantic Division
UAE Area Office (2009–Present)–Middle East District–Transatlantic Division
Egypt Area Office (2009–Present)–Middle East District–Transatlantic Division
Israel Area Office (2024–Present)–Middle East District–Transatlantic Division

HISTORY IS BEST WRITTEN BY THOSE WHO LIVED IT.

This record of organizational lineage is not just a historical reference, it is a testament to the scope and continuity of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' involvement across the Middle East, North Africa, and Central and South Asia. From the earliest missions of the 1940s through the complex post-9/11 expansion and into the current era of dynamic regional engagement, these commands and their subordinate elements have enabled American strategy, strengthened partnerships, and delivered essential infrastructure under some of the most challenging conditions in the world.

While this booklet captures a detailed chronology of named organizations, the full story of USACE in this region continues to evolve. Countless individuals, units, and missions have contributed to a shared legacy of service, innovation, and resilience. The work of documenting that history remains ongoing.

For those interested in further exploring this legacy, the QR codes on the right link to official histories, published studies, archived material, and additional digital resources that offer deeper insight into the missions, impacts, and people behind the structures. These sources complement the lineage presented here and offer context for those who served, and those who continue to build on that foundation.

If you served in one of the organizations listed, or in one that is not yet captured here, and have corrections, additions, or documentation to share, we encourage you to reach out. History is best written by those who lived it.

Contact USACE at:
https://www.usace.army.mil/Contact/

EXPLORE FURTHER: USACE HISTORY AND LEGACY

Bricks, Sand, and Marble

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Construction in the Mediterranean and Middle East, 1947–1991

by Robert P. Grathwol and Donita M. Moorhus

THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS: A HISTORY

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Office of History

A BRIEF HISTORY

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Office of History

SUPPORTING THE TROOPS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Persian Gulf War
Janet A. McDonnell, October 1996, EP 870-1-50

**Filmstrip photos are not reflective of the pages on which they appear and may not be in exacting chronological order.*

FOR MORE THAN SEVENTY YEARS,
THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
HAS MAINTAINED A FORWARD PRESENCE IN THE
MIDDLE EAST, EVOLVED WITH THE REGION,
ENDURED THROUGH CONFLICT, AND DELIVERED
STRENGTH THROUGH EVERY TRANSITION.