

**UNITED STATES ARMY**

# Strategic Landpower Engineers

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***Concepts and Doctrine for Assured Mobility***

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2/6/2014



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**Combat Engineers in Strategic Landpower:  
Concepts and Doctrine for Assured Mobility**

by

Captain JD Mohundro and Captain Michael R. Natalino

As the strategy and missions in Iraq and Afghanistan changed over 13 years, one task remained central to the success of all others: assured mobility. Like many other tasks, however, it was not executed using the same tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) at the end of the wars as it was in the beginning. The changes and improvements were hard won by the thousands of dedicated Sappers that cleared millions of miles of roadways. Now that the Army is moving towards Strategic Landpower, we have an unprecedented opportunity to codify these TTPs into concepts and doctrine to ensure they are not lessons we will have to learn again in the future.

In the beginnings of the wars, the typical engineer mission was often seen as ancillary to the central war effort. As U.S. and partner units were housed in large, hardened bases, only major roads needed to be cleared of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In fact, many engineer companies within Combined Arms Battalions were given battlespace and tasked with the same missions as their infantry and armor counterparts. Over time, however, the engineer mission grew to be critical to the success of the overall strategy. With the proliferation of small combat outposts, the need to protect logistics routes and lines of communication became so important that it drove a redesign of the brigade combat team's engineer assets.

## Strategic Landpower Engineers: Mohundro and Natalino

Now that OIF is over and OEF is drawing to a close, it is imperative that the Army seeks to codify these lessons into concepts and doctrine, just like it is doing in many other warfighting functions. The platoon leaders and company commanders of route clearance units are either being promoted out of the company level or leaving the Army altogether. If we do not take seriously this task, we risk losing a generation's knowledge of assured mobility. The Strategic Landpower concept provides the perfect backdrop against which to perfect our successes, learn from our mistakes, and prepare to provide the engineering support units will need in future conflicts.

In Strategic Landpower, engineer units will be asked to join with host nation armies to train our partners, develop lasting relationships, and compel our adversaries with our combined strength. Engineer leaders assigned to Regionally-aligned forces must be competent in the tasks associated with mobility and counter-mobility while being aware of regional nuances. This need for leaders to be comfortable operating in environments ranging from open desert trails to urban streets will drive two necessary developments. First, the Engineer Regiment will need to provide leaders unparalleled training and education in executable, decisive concepts and doctrine. Thankfully, as we are now leaving two theaters of concepts development, the information has never been more readily available. Second, leaders must embrace the concepts of Mission Command, empowering junior leaders with the latitude and strategic imperatives to prevent, shape, and win.

Route Clearance will not be a mission confined solely to the Global War on Terror. Our enemies have learned how to exploit our weaknesses in order to defeat our technological overmatch. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs), to include vehicle-borne

IEDs, will continue to provide the most dangerous threat to units working closely with host nation forces. Even in a high-intensity, linear war, IEDs will pose enormous threats to logistical and combat support formations operating within the battlespace. The Engineer Regiment, as the experts in Route Clearance, will most likely continue to be called upon to protect vital lines of communication.

After careful study to convert our tactics, techniques, and procedures to concepts and doctrine that can be applied by any leader in any situation, the Engineer Regiment will be presented with numerous leader development options. In order to promulgate the newly-defined concepts, options include increasing junior officer and NCO attendance at the Sapper Leader Course, re-writing and expanding the Route Clearance course in the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leaders Course (RSLC) mold, or adding to the professional military education curricula. Strategic Landpower, with its many supporting concepts and imperatives, provides the Regiment the perfect time to assert its importance in the future force's mobility.

