

An Evolution in Business Processes

The move toward transformation and realignment of America's Army in 2005 required the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deliver more facilities at a faster rate than ever before. The result was not just a minor tweak in the military construction (MILCON) process, but a complete paradigm shift in the Corps' overall business approach—and perhaps the biggest change in the agency since World War II.

The process has been termed "MILCON Transformation"—and, simply put, its goals are to deliver quality facilities in less time at a lower cost, while still meeting the Army's stringent operational standards and sustainability goals. One of the most notable outcomes of the transformation is reducing what was formerly a 5-year military construction process to between 2 to 3 years.

"MILCON Transformation required a total refocusing of our business process—planning, design, construction and contracting—for a federal agency as large as the Corps of Engineers to achieve faster, more economical construction that is comparable to the private sector," said Mike Sydow, Savannah district assistant chief of programs and project management. "On top of that, we still had to ensure the Army's mandates for force protection and antiterrorism, physical security and sustainable design. It was a staggering undertaking."

The keys to MILCON Transformation are standardizing Corps processes and military facilities—while adopting best practices from the private sector—

and developing innovative contracting methods to meet tight acquisition deadlines.

Centers of Standardization

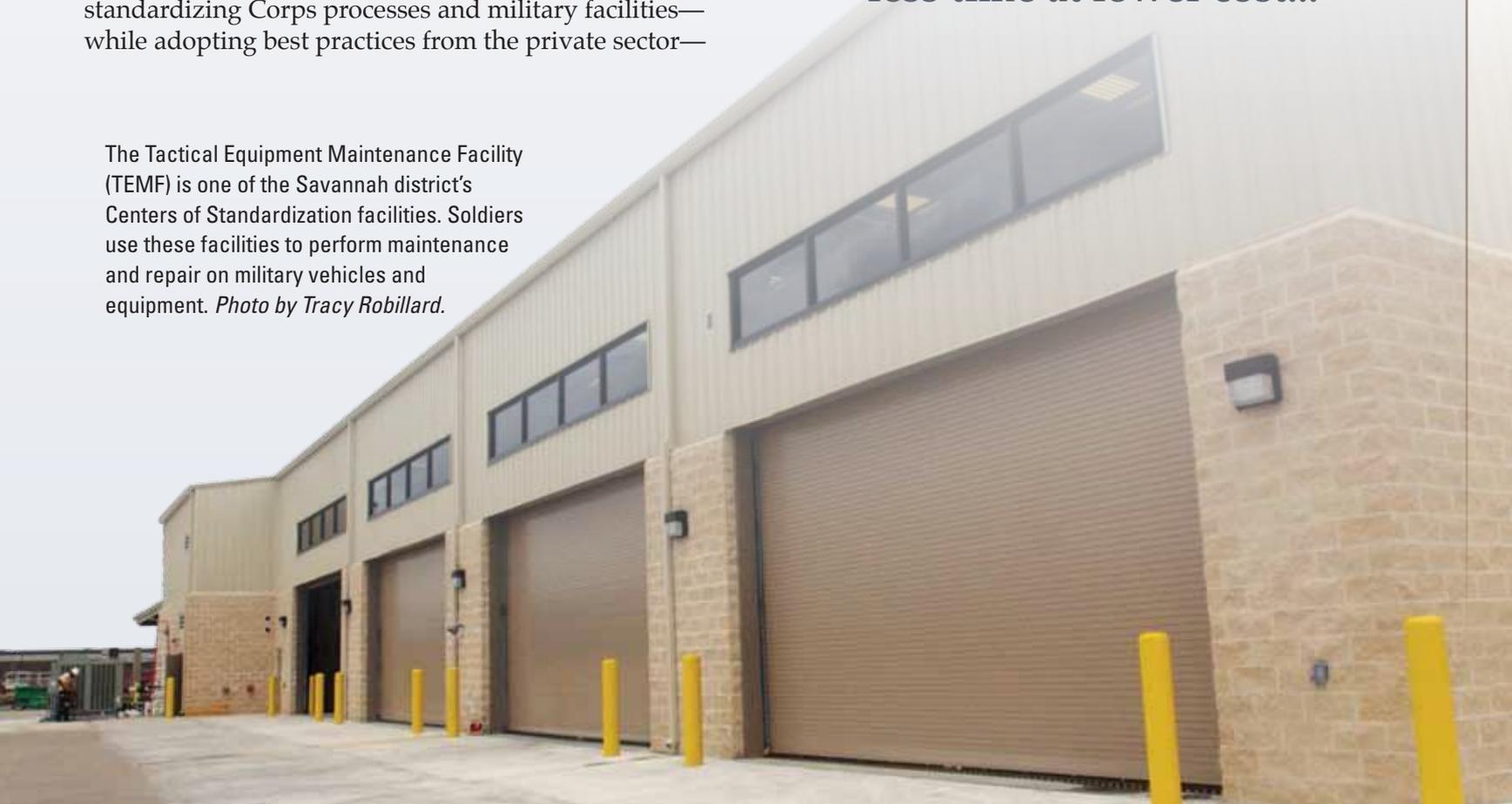
The philosophy for establishing standard designs throughout the Army is based on the idea that soldiers should have facilities with the same capabilities, features, and "look and feel" regardless of where they are stationed. But consistency isn't the only benefit. Standard design is proven to reduce project cost and shrink delivery time.

Thus, the Corps adopted an agency-wide Centers of Standardization (CoS) program in 2006. While the Corps had CoS programs in place before 2006, the increase in demand for new construction drove Corps leaders to revamp and repurpose the program nationwide.

"With the CoS approach, the Army no longer pays for the design of a battalion headquarters over and over again," said Thomas Brockbank, CoS chief, Savannah district engineering division. "We work with private and public sectors to develop designs that can be constructed repetitively, while allowing for adaptations based on geographic location."

"...quality facilities delivered in less time at lower cost..."

The Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facility (TEMF) is one of the Savannah district's Centers of Standardization facilities. Soldiers use these facilities to perform maintenance and repair on military vehicles and equipment. *Photo by Tracy Robillard.*





The Savannah district is the Center of Standardization for brigade headquarters, such as this 1st Brigade Combat Team Headquarters at Fort Stewart, Ga. The standard design incorporates all functional and operational Army requirements for command and control functions at the brigade level. *Photo by Tracy Robillard.*

Across the Corps, specific districts are responsible for developing and maintaining design standards for Army facilities constructed throughout the continental U.S. Each CoS district serves as the technical and acquisition experts for a particular facility type. The Savannah district operates one of the largest CoS programs in Corps. In fact, during the peak of the MILCON workload in fiscal year (FY) 2009, Savannah developed and executed 70 CoS task orders at \$1.4 billion—nearly double, and in most cases triple, the CoS workload of any other district.

“The Savannah team has become a leader for CoS lessons learned and has been a monumental driver in the development of new internal business processes,” said Scott Wick, CoS program manager, USACE Headquarters.

The Savannah district is the Center of Standardization (CoS) for the following facilities:

- Command & Control Facilities – including Division HQ, Corps HQ, Theater Army / Army Service Component Command HQ, Army Command HQ, and Direct Reporting Unit HQ
- Brigade Headquarters
- Battalion Headquarters
- Company Operations Facilities
- Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facilities
- Brigade Operations Complex
- Air Force Weather Detachment / Squadron facilities for activities assigned to Army Installations

“Savannah’s engineering division uses in-house resources and state of the art tools, including Building Information Modeling (BIM) to develop CoS designs,” Brockbank said. “We also work closely with other Corps districts and Architect Engineering (AE) firms in the private sector. By leveraging industry standards and best practices, and by creating a repository of designs adapted for application at different regions and installations around the country, we can minimize future

re-design, improve the end product, and increase the efficiency of the overall MILCON process.”

This approach, referred to as “adapt-build,” results in more consistent solicitations via Request for Proposals (RFPs) from potential contractors, because it minimizes uncertainty about requirements for similar facilities from installation to installation.

Additionally, the process reduces lead time by as much as 30 percent, allowing the Corps to put more focus on construction and delivery and less time on design. In fact, in some cases, the Corps can turn a building over for occupancy within as few as 18 months of issuing a Notice to Proceed to the contractor.

Contracting Innovations

Savannah district’s contracting division embraced new and efficient ways to execute an exponential increase in MILCON contracts (growing from \$600 million to more than \$2.4 billion in three years) with a minimal increase in staff during that time. The team developed initiatives that move away from acquiring facilities one at a time. Instead, they awarded more contracts under the umbrella of a Multiple Award Task Order Contract, or MATOC.

Awarded as regional contracts, MATOCs are competed on by a pool of qualified prime contractors who have experience building the same facility over and over. The MATOC-driven contracting program with CoS has resulted in significant reductions in delivery time and cost.

Each CoS district prepares a statement of work package and is responsible for contracting the facility, primarily through regional MATOCs. Then, once the contract is awarded, the construction responsibility is transferred to the geographic Corps district. The benefit is that the CoS district can capture lessons learned and adjust their processes based on feedback from the customer, the contractor, and the servicing Corps district.

Meanwhile, the district continued to meet its small business goals, setting aside a portion of construction dollars every year to contract with qualified small or disadvantaged businesses. From FY 2005 to FY 2011, the Savannah district awarded an excess of \$2.3 billion to small businesses.

“The MILCON Transformation process allows us to gather feedback from industry and develop long-term relationships with contractors,” Sydow said. “It’s a win-win for everyone—we provide jobs for the private sector and small businesses within the military communities, and in return, we get consistent engineering, construction and acquisition. We do it all in less time and at lower cost to the taxpayer. And most importantly, our soldiers get to have brand new, high-caliber facilities that will help them do their jobs and improve their quality of life.”

By Tracy Robillard, Corporate Communications Office