



Corps of Engineers



Military Corner

“George Washington appointed the first engineer officers of the Army on June 16, 1775, during the American Revolution, and engineers have served in combat in all subsequent American wars. The Army established the Corps of Engineers as a separate, permanent

branch on March 16, 1802, and gave the engineers responsibility for founding and operating the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Since then, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has responded to changing defense requirements and played an integral part in the development of the country. Throughout the 19th century, the Corps built coastal fortifications, surveyed roads and canals, eliminated navigational hazards, explored and mapped the Western frontier, and constructed buildings and monuments in the Nation’s capital.

From the beginning, many politicians wanted the Corps to contribute to both military construction and works "of a civil nature." Throughout the 19th century, the Corps supervised the construction of coastal fortifications and mapped much of the American West with the Corps of Topographical Engineers, which enjoyed a separate existence for 25 years (1838—1863). The Corps of Engineers also constructed lighthouses, helped develop jetties and piers for harbors, and carefully mapped the navigation channels.

In the 20th century, the Corps became the lead federal flood control agency and significantly expanded its civil works activities, becoming among other things a major provider of hydroelectric energy and the country’s leading provider of recreation. Its role in responding to natural disasters also grew dramatically.



Assigned the military construction mission in 1941, the Corps built facilities at home and abroad to support the U.S. Army and Air Force. During the Cold War, Army engineers managed construction programs for America’s allies, including a massive effort in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the Corps of Engineers also completed large construction programs for federal agencies such as NASA and the postal service.. The Corps also maintains a rigorous research and development program in support of its water resources, construction, and military activities.

In the late 1960s, the Corps became a leading environmental preservation and restoration agency. It now carries out natural and cultural resource management programs at its water resources projects and regulates activities in the Nation’s wetlands. In addition, the Corps assists the military services in environmental management and restoration at former and current military installations. When the Cold War ended, the Corps was poised to support the Army and the Nation in the new era. Army engineers supported 9/11 recovery efforts and currently play an important role in the rapidly evolving Global War on Terrorism, including reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

[<http://www.usace.army.mil/History/Documents/Brief/index.html>]