



1964  
TO  
2014

FIFTY YEARS of



# Prime BEEF: Transformers with a Mission

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Prime BEEF civil engineers are never around until you need them.

Well, actually they are. In fact, they're everywhere throughout the Air Force, just "regular" CEs working every day at home station in their own particular specialty.

Until a contingency calls — then they're transformed into a Prime BEEF team, a powerful force focused on a mission.

This transformation is what sets Prime BEEF CEs apart from military engineers in the other services, which contract out most of their installation engineering. In the Air Force, military CEs operate and maintain their home station bases, ready to deploy on short notice and "change" their title from installation engineer to Prime BEEF engineer.

Prime BEEF's mission, according to Air Force Doctrine Annex (AFDA) 3-34, Engineer Operations, is "rapidly responding worldwide to provide the full range of engineering expertise and emergency services needed to establish, sustain and recover bases for employing Air Force weapons systems or supporting joint, interagency or multinational operations." This mission includes response to natural disasters.

Their mission has stayed steady since the Prime BEEF concept was conceived and implemented 50 years ago (see article, p. 4).

"Prime BEEF is just as valid today as it was in the '60s," said Maj. Brandon Sokora, the Contingency Operations Program Manager in the office of the Director of Civil Engineers,

Washington, D.C. "As long as the Air Force requires power projection platforms to deliver airpower, the Prime BEEF Airmen's mission will be paramount."

Military active duty, Guard and Reserve CE personnel are assigned by their unit or organization to either a Prime BEEF or a RED HORSE Unit Type Code. UTCs are Joint Chiefs of Staff-developed five-character codes that uniquely identify the types of units and equipment available for contingency missions. This system allows visibility of manpower and equipment capabilities all the way from top-level Joint and Air Force war and mobilization planners down to unit-level deployment managers.

Currently, there are 87 Prime BEEF UTCs, 43 for personnel and 44 for equipment, and 8,373 Prime BEEF postured for personnel and equipment, according to Nancy McHugh, the Prime BEEF program's publication analyst at the Air Force Civil Engineer Center, Detachment 1, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. The UTCs serve as "building blocks" to tailor a Prime BEEF team by size and capability to match a specific mission requirement.

"The 26-person Basic Engineer Beddown/Sustainment Team UTC (4FPET) is the foundation of the building block concept of employing Prime BEEF teams," according to the 2014 Civil Engineer Supplement to the War and Mobilization Plan-1. To meet specific mission requirements, additional engineer augmentation UTCs can be added to the mix, including those for emergency services personnel — Fire Emergency Services, Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Emergency Management.

While Prime BEEF's mission has remained relatively unchanged over the years, the size of the individual UTCs has "yo-yoed," said Greg Cummings, the Expeditionary Engineering lead at AFCEC.

"We have gone back and forth from small to large, from grouping small teams together to form a force module, and then said, 'nope,' let's roll it all up into one UTC that provides a lot of capabilities," said Cummings. "In 2008, we went back to smaller, modular UTCs, primarily to be more flexible in meeting joint combatant commanders' utility detachment type requirements. At the same time, we do have functional force modules of grouping UTCs together for some of the static beddown requirements — for example, for 1,100 personnel, or 2,200 or 3,300."

At the same time in 2008 that Prime BEEF UTCs became more modular, the personnel and equipment UTCs were separated.

"Equipment UTCs are still tied to personnel in the mission capability statement, or MISCAP, but can be deployed independently," said Larry Lomax, the Prime BEEF program



manager at AFCEC. “For example, the equipment may already be downrange, or vice versa, or we might pull equipment from one location and people from another. We’ve always had a separation of people and war reserve materiel — the BEAR UTCs.”

Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources, or BEAR, assets are WRM managed by the 49th Materiel Maintenance Group and are essential to the Prime BEEF mission, especially a bare base beddown. BEAR UTCs include items such as large generators, water purification systems, fuel bladders, environmental control units and a variety of shelter systems to house people and equipment. WRM is prepositioned at locations worldwide, ready to quickly meet up with a Prime BEEF team.

“We currently have more than 2,000 BEAR UTCs located at 15 or so sites,” said Lt. Col. Frederick Berrien, a CE and the commander of the 49th Materiel Maintenance Squadron at Holloman AFB, N.M. “In 2008, we established the BEAR Order of Battle, or BOB, that broke our UTCs down into more modular and numerous UTCs. The 49th also has small teams that can deploy to quickly train a Prime BEEF unit on any needed specifics about a BEAR UTC.”

Training is a continuous requirement for Prime BEEF CEs, and critical for how they transform into a deployed unit, said Lomax.

“Air Force CEs’ technical ability is what sets them apart from the other services,” he said. “It gives them the ability to expeditiously set up the beddown, to work together regardless of what base or component they came from. As they come together it quickly shows the level of expertise they bring to fight and why Air Force Prime BEEF is the combatant commanders’ service of choice for beddown and sustainment.”

“The difference in approach that the Air Force takes for engineers is more of a ‘balanced portfolio’ capability,” said Cummings. “You have active duty CEs that in garrison do a peacetime mission that builds their technical skills. Air Reserve Component CEs have technical skills gained through tech schools, military training or their jobs in the private sector. So when we bring a CE to the fight they are able to think on their feet and utilize the standard tactics, techniques and procedures they’ve learned. The CE civilian workforce plays a vital role as well; working side-by-side with Prime BEEF Airmen at the installations, they enable both their training and their ability to deploy.”

So what do the AFCEC Prime BEEF managers see in the program’s future?

“I think we’ll continue to meet the needs of the mission, but more efficiently,” said Lomax. “We may even see some

additional expansion into the areas of disaster relief and contingency support. I also see modernization playing a major role in many of the things we do.”

“Our equipment will be modernized as we go along,” said McHugh. “The new Airfield Damage Repair program is going to be huge when it’s implemented.”

“We are the service of choice when it comes to bed down forces of any type, of all services, and even in some of the combined environments,” said Cummings. “I think we need to make sure we keep this balanced portfolio — it’s how we build our technical capability, our Prime BEEF Airmen.”

All three agree: Prime BEEF Airmen will continue to be transformers — changing from installation engineers at home station to ready expeditionary engineers at the call of a contingency, whenever, wherever.



Prime BEEF Airmen from the 436th Civil Engineer Squadron assemble a tent frame during a training deployment to Dover AFB, Del. (U.S. Air Force photo/Roland Balik)