KEYNOTE ADDRESS
OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN IRAQ

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There is very high level emphasis for environmental concerns and sustainability programs. This is evidenced by their inclusion in the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, numerous Joint Publications and Army Field Manuals. However, the implementation of these programs, regarding the environment and sustainability, appears to be lacking with regards to deployed situations.

Simply stated, the Army, and for that matter Department of Defense (DoD), does not have a consistent management approach regarding environmental and sustainability issues. There is a general sense of confusion as to what is the Army’s policy (and DoD) regarding the environment during deployed operations and what if any sustainability issues should be or can be addressed. Commanders are not adequately being informed [or there is not adequate command emphasis] that environmental and sustainability training is not only directed but is also a necessity for mission execution. Without convincing mission commanders of the benefits of addressing environmental and sustainability issues you will not gain their support in implementation of environmental or sustainability programs. Without mission commanders’ support, you will not be able to infuse the environmental and sustainability ethic into their units.

With a lack of policy and command emphasis, the natural result will be a lack of emphasis on training. Soldiers and deploying civilians across all levels lack general environmental training with regards to deployed operations. Specifically, this includes the understanding of their roles and responsibilities once deployed. Finally, when units and individuals do not understand their roles and responsibilities materiel/material solutions are not well addressed. Processes are continually being re-invented. Information is not shared from one area to the next or from one organization to the next. The requirements are not identified in a logical manner that can be addressed from an optimized and prioritized methodology.

Army Commanders need to realize that environmental and sustainability issues have the potential to impede the mission by creating safety problems, impacting resource allocation, impacting host nation relations, impacting public opinion, creating legal issues, and requiring unplanned costs. The first step to emphasizing these issues is to require Army’s leaders to give environmental and sustainability issues the same importance as that of safety. Combatant commanders must be trained to look at deployed operations environmental and sustainability issues as something different than compliance mandated actions. It is extremely important they consider how environmental and sustainability conditions will affect their mission and their Soldiers. They must realize that as the environment has an impact on them, Soldiers have an impact on the environment and those impacts can affect the mission and Soldier health.