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July/August 2012

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District bids farewell to Wham, welcomes Quarles



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Afghanistan Engineer District-South

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Articles or photographic submissions are welcome and should arrive in PAO by the 15th of each month preceding publication. They can be mailed or e-mailed to the below address. If submitted electronically, all stories should be in Word document format. All photographs should be high resolution (at least 5x7 inches and 300 dpi), include photo caption information, and be submitted as separate .jpg or .tif image files.

All photographs appearing herein are by the South District Public Affairs Office unless otherwise accredited.

The mission of Engineering Freedom is to support the Commander's internal communication program for South District. It also serves as the Commander's primary communication tool for accurately transmitting policies, operations, technical developments and command philosophy to South District team members.

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The South District bid farewell to its commander of the past year, Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, and welcomed its new commander, Army Col. Vincent Quarles, at a change of command here July 12. See story on page 3. USACE photo by Karla Marshall.

Commander's message...

First, let me say "thank you" (to all of you)

– I truly appreciate the warm reception I received before, during, and since I joined the TAS family. Our district culture reminds me of the family bond I felt while growing up in southern Virginia, as I expressed during our recent town hall meeting. It is an honor and a pleasure to serve within such an exceptional family (dedicated, talented, and professional military personnel, civilians, and contractors alike). The district is well prepared to meet the many challenges that are sure to come as we continue to execute our missions while taking care of each other and building relationships (my overarching philosophy of command).

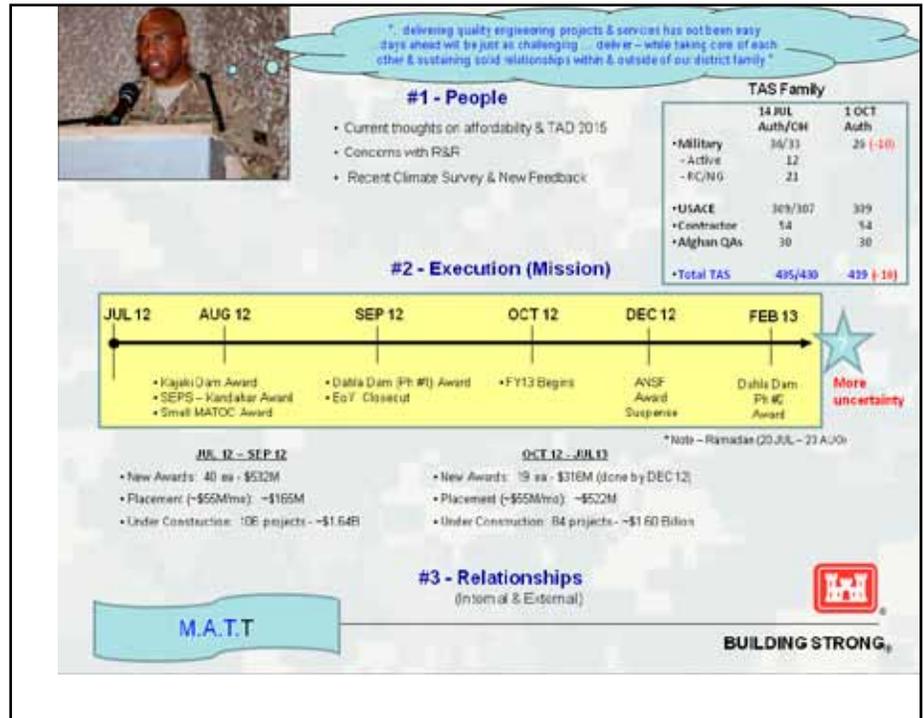
Since my arrival I have visited several project sites and had the pleasure of meeting many of you. I know the challenges we face, what we must achieve, and I am counting on each of you to do your part for our district family. We must focus on essential tasks (individual and collective) that bring value to our efforts delivering quality engineering solutions and capabilities as we say we can. To help us stay on track, please push forward three priorities captured within my overarching command philosophy:

1. **People** – It is vital that we treat each other with respect, watch out for our personal safety and well-being, and for the safety of other TAS family members and of the contractors who work with us. We must sustain a healthy district quality of life that balances hard work with moments that we will cherish for a lifetime. The battle rhythm and operations tempo demand that we stay strong to build strong. Maintain your physical, mental and spiritual health. You and your contributions are critical to the success of our mission.

2. **Execution (Current Mission)** – we must systematically move projects towards completion, using sound business processes. This includes actively managing our projects to deliver what we say while remaining mindful of costs and schedules – safety, affordability and quality go hand in hand.

3. **Relationships (Internal & External)** – we must communicate often with our TAS family and customers. When you have questions, seek out answers. When you have information, share it. Relationships are built on mutual trust and understanding.

I only ask that we all give our best daily in support our district family, the coalition, the Afghan people and our nation. You and your contributions are critical to the success of our mission. Even though the number of coalition forces will decrease over the next year, our mission will not. TAS must complete pre-awards and shift our attention to post-award execution while facing many uncertainties during the next year. This year will also be one of transition, and I expect that Maj. Gen. Eyre will



make important decisions about the future of this district and the Transatlantic Division before the end of calendar year 2012. I will keep all the members of the district family informed as these decisions are made.

"We have a lot of work planned. As I write this in late July, the district has about 69 projects, with an estimated value of about \$2 billion to award by the end of my deployment, including such high priority projects as Dabla Dam, Kajaki Dam, South East Power System-Helmand and -Kandahar and others. I expect that number may increase as CSTC-A reviews its requirements and available funding."

Mission success also requires that we aggressively work on relationships– with the other members of our district family and with our customers. When I relinquished command of the Chicago District, I had the opportunity to look back on my tenure and assess what the Chicago District did well and where we could improve. The primary lesson I learned was that mission success depends on continuous communication among the district family, our stakeholders, and end users from the beginning of a project straight through to its end. Each of us has a responsibility and opportunity to help each other understand where we are going, how we plan on getting there and how long the journey will take.

I look forward to this coming year and all the work we will do to support the nation of Afghanistan.

ESSAYONS!

Col. Vincent Quarles, commanding



(From left) Col. Vincent Quarles, incoming commander U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan District - South, Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, USACE Transatlantic Division commanding general, Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, outgoing commander and Command Sgt. Maj. Lorne Quebodeaux, district command sergeant major, render honors during change-of-command ceremonies held on Kandahar Airfield July 12.

District bids farewell to Wham, Quarles assumes command

**Story by Dave Melancon
Photos by Karla Marshall**

The South District bid farewell to its commander of the past year, Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, and welcomed its new commander, Army Col. Vincent Quarles, at a change of command on Kandahar Airfield here July 12.

Army Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, USACE Transatlantic Division Commander, presided over the ceremony.

Speaking before an audience of South District service members, employees and other guests, Eyre praised Wham for his service – not just as South District commander – but as an Air Force officer over a distinguished 26-year career.

“Col. Wham and Col. Quarles represent the very best the Air Force and the Army have to offer in engineer leaders,” he said. “They also represent the efforts and capabilities of so many others – the civilians and military personnel of the Transatlantic District-South.”

“Colonel Wham did a super job, leading a team of more than 400 professionals in executing a multi-billion dollar construction program to support the transition strategy for Afghanistan,” the general said. “With Ben’s guidance and keen insights, the district has been able to build an even greater, more robust, quality U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contingency or-

ganization – one that is better able to meet the overall mission requirements through demonstrated engineering and construction expertise.”

After assuming command of the district July 8, 2011, Wham and the South District completed 66 projects valued at \$444 million dollars. The district is supervising 218 ongoing projects valued at \$2.4 billion and will undertake 64 additional projects valued at \$992 million in the next two years, Eyre said.

The district can be proud of its road, public health, transportation, water and power projects, and its partnerships with battle space commanders, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of State and Afghan agencies, Eyre said.

“It has been nothing short of stellar,” Eyre said. “When all construction is completed, the facilities to support more than 350,000 Afghan Army and National Police personnel will reinforce their capability to provide security and stability throughout Afghanistan.”

Before introducing Quarles, Eyre challenged the audience to remember the Transatlantic Division’s MATT imperatives: Mission, Affordability, Transition and Transformation.

“Your focus must remain on executing your mission, on

Continued next page.

Change of command, continued

staying affordable, and on transitioning to the post-2014 division structure,” he said. “As we go through this transformation and transition period, I encourage you all to stay strong. When the mission is complete and the last project has been turned over, you will be rewarded for your faithful service.”

During his introduction of Quarles, Eyre told the district’s employees and service members that they will be challenged and excited by the work ahead. “With Col. Quarles at the helm, I have no doubt that the district will continue to build on its widely recognized record of accomplishments.”

“Ben, you will be remembered for your spirit of service, patriotism and commitment to our nation all of which make you a great American and an outstanding commander.



Col. Vincent Quarles, incoming South District commander, receives the district’s colors from Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, USACE Transatlantic Division commanding general, during change-of-command ceremonies held on Kandahar Airfield July 12.



Incoming commander Col. Vincent Quarles, addresses the audience during South District’s change-of-command ceremonies held on Kandahar Airfield July 12. (USACE Photo by Dave Melancon)

I wish all the best to you and your family. Vince, welcome aboard. You are joining a great team,” Eyre said.

“It has been a long eventful year and I have enjoyed almost every single moment of it,” Wham told the audience.

Wham said that when he arrived he set five priorities for the command: protect people, get work done, work efficiently, follow the Corps of Engineers business and work processes and have fun. He said the district team had met or exceeded his expectations.

“We have protected the personnel of this district across a multitude of outside-the-wire missions and construction in some very inhospitable locations, as well as ensuring a safe environment in which to work, rest and play across this entire district,” he said.

Under his command, the district placed more than \$710 million in construction, provided work and building skills to more than 7,500 Afghan workers, trained 263 Afghan National Army public works professionals and transferred 369 facilities to the ANA for their operations, Wham continued.

“They performed splendidly as a lean organization, placing more than \$1.9 million dollars per person, higher per capita than any other district in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, while setting the division standard for affordability and execution,” he said. “They established new austerity standards for

Continued next page.

Change of command, continued

Afghan National Police facilities that will ensure the constructability of projects in some of the most remote locations.”

Wham also thanked the regional commanders, the district’s customers, U.S. agencies and the Transatlantic Division for their support, reserving his strongest praise for his district command team, employees, service members and family.

But the mission is not complete, Wham cautioned.

“There is still much to do before we can say that our mission is complete. I know that the members of the district will continue to bring the same energy, sense of mission, purpose and dedication under the leadership of Col. Quarles,” he said. “The district has gained a great leader who has commanded both combat engineer units and a USACE district before today and I look forward to hearing and reading about all the great things that he and this district will accomplish over the coming year.”

Wham will join his wife and two daughters in Charleston, S.C. and he will complete his Air Force career on Joint Base Charleston.

Quarles reports to the South District after earning a master’s degree in National Resource Strategy and participating in the Afghanistan and Pakistan Fellows Program at the Industrial Col-



Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre presents Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham with the Bronze Order of the de Fleury Medal July 11. The Bronze de Fleury Medal is awarded by the Army Engineer Association and is presented to individuals who have "...rendered significant service or support to an element of the U.S. Army Engineer Regiment." Wham also received the Bronze Star medal for his yearlong service as South District commanding officer.



Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, former South District commanding officer, unveils a plaque with the name of the current district commander, Army Col. Vincent Quarles, shortly after completing a formal change-of-command ceremony July 12.

lege of the Armed Forces, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C. Before attending the Industrial College, Quarles commanded the USACE Chicago District from 2008 to 2011.

“I know that delivering quality engineering projects and services here in Afghanistan has not been easy,” Quarles said. “The days ahead will be just as challenging as we work to award 50 or so new construction contracts by the end of this calendar year and place about \$800 million in construction by the end of 2013.”

Quarles said he will build upon Wham’s and the district’s successes.

“We are well positioned to get this work done due to your outstanding efforts under the superb leadership of Benjamin Wham during the past year,” he said. “I know we will deliver these and other requirements while taking care of each other and sustaining solid relationships within and outside of our district family.” 



(From left) Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Hopkins, South District prime power liaison officer, Samedi, generator manager for Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, Afghanistan's electric utility company, Haji Sultan, DABS Kandahar director and Louie Brackett, South District electrical engineer, discuss plans for dividing 10 megawatts of electricity among Kandahar's neighborhoods during a July 15 meeting in Bagh-e-Pul. After inspecting the diesel generators and storage areas on the site, which is also known as the Russian Silo site, the electrical engineers planned future projects, hammered out several minor problems and exchanged ideas on how to provide electricity to as many Kandahar City customers as possible. (USACE photo by Dave Melancon.)



David Williams, former Kandahar resident office civil engineer, discusses plans for the theater vehicle maintenance compound currently under construction on Kandahar Airfield to Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, U.S. Army Chief of Engineers and Army Corps of Engineers commanding general, during the general's tour of South Area projects June 5. Bostick toured ongoing projects and met with South District service members and employees during his stay. (USACE photo by Dave Melancon)



William Fodder, Tombstone Resident Office civil engineer, and Mohad Javid Ahmed, project manager, spotted a dust devil landing near Forward Supply Depot on Afghan National Army's Camp Shorabak June 2. (USACE photo by William R. Fotter)

USACE boosts access to water and power in southern Afghanistan

Story and photos by Karla Marshall

The United States military and its coalition partners may be drawing down their combat missions in Afghanistan, but the next two years will continue to be busy for the South District.

Among the South District's 51 construction projects still to be awarded this fiscal year, three water and infrastructure projects sit high on the district's priority list – Dahla and Kajaki Dams and the Southeastern Electrical Power System – vital infrastructure systems in Afghanistan's arid south that are in need of substantial upgrades and repairs.

"These three projects are critical to improving the lives of Afghan citizens in Helmand and Kandahar provinces," said Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, the previous South District commander. "Together they represent about \$421 million worth of construction and will boost the supply of water and electric power to both provinces."

Dahla Dam

Located in Kandahar province on the Arghandab River, the Dahla Dam has suffered from years of neglect and war. Its intake and outlet works do not operate correctly and sediment reduced reservoir capacity.

Increased water for irrigation means the once productive "breadbasket of Afghanistan" can again produce the fruits and vegetables that Afghanistan needs to feed its people.

"The Canadians already rehabilitated many of the irrigation canals south of Dahla Dam as part of their Arghandab Irrigation Rehabilitation Project," said Wham. "Our mission is threefold: to boost the holding capacity of the Dahla reservoir so more water is available for irrigation, raise the spillway height and shore up existing embankments and saddle dams."

The Corps of Engineers will oversee the construction at Dahla Dam in two phases.

The first phase will include improvements to the intake and outlet works. "We expect to award this phase of the Dahla Dam project in September," said Linda Murphy the South District's water and infrastructure branch chief. The existing intake tower will be retrofitted to accommodate an 8-meter dam raise, the existing tower gate and operating machinery will be refurbished, and the single tower gate design will be maintained by reinforcing of the tower gates and providing a new tower gate and operating machinery.

The outlet works will consist of a new valve house adjacent to the existing one and connected to the outlet tunnel extension. Four new valves will replace the two existing valves and the valve house will be sized to accommodate two future valves for industrial water supply.

The second phase will include the embankment works. "We plan to raise the main dam embankment by five meters," Murphy said. To stay within budget, we will use a mechanically stabilized earth wall."

The plan also calls for earth fill to raise the six saddle dams



Kajaki Dam powerhouse, in Helmand province, Afghanistan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will repair several features of the dam.

and roller-compacted concrete to widen the main spillway, Murphy said. The second spillway will be replaced with an earthen saddle dam.

As soon as funding is available in fiscal year 2013, the district will award the second phase.

Kajaki Dam

Located in Helmand province on the Helmand River, the Kajaki Dam serves two functions: a source for irrigation and water along the lower Helmand River and hydroelectric power generation. USACE has several concurrent project plans associated with the Kajaki Dam with a total program amount of approximately \$205 million.

Together, the projects will improve water flow for irrigation and electric power generation, said Murphy, who deployed from the USACE Louisville District.

The first phase will repair the dam's intake structure. The gates currently do not close, so no maintenance can be performed on the gates or the irrigation outlet tunnels, said Nader Noori, the district project manager for Kajaki Dam.

"This project includes the rehabilitation of existing intake structure components – intake bulkhead gate, steel sliding gate, crane, crane hoist assembly, lifting assembly, embedded parts, and hydrology guage," said Noori, a native of Afghanistan who immigrated to the United States more than 30 years ago.

The second phase will rehabilitate the three 84-inch roto valves inside the irrigation tunnel and three 84-inch jet valves at the outlet end of the irrigation tunnel.

According to Noori, a roto valve is designed to open and close relatively easily, despite high fluid pressure. Jet valves are installed as part of the outlet structure, and decrease the pressure of the water exiting the bottom of the dam, which prevents

Continued next page

Water and power continued

erosion and scouring.

Another part of the project is to evaluate the current condition of inoperable piezometers at the dam and seek bids to repair or replace them. Noori said piezometers measure the flow of water through a dam; they help operators monitor the stability and “health” of a dam.

“There are a few challenges ahead of us at Kajaki,” said Murphy. “We have several moving pieces that are included in the contract. Tracking and funding them separately will involve more time but in the end will make the award and construction process cleaner, meaning that we will track expenditures and schedules more efficiently and effectively.”

Southeast Power System

This two-phased project promises to improve access to electric power for residents of Helmand and Kandahar provinces. The current system has been the victim of years of war and neglect.

“The power house was built in the 1970s,” said Jim Murray the SEPS project manager. “It can hold three turbines, but only two were ever installed. USACE is not adding the third turbine as part of the SEPS upgrade, but what we are doing is improving the delivery of power. USAID will install the third turbine in the Kajaki Dam powerhouse.”

The SEPS – Helmand phase includes rebuilding the Kajaki Substation; replacing the 20-kilovolt line from the Kajaki Substation to Tangi; a new switchyard at Tangi; a new substation at

Musa Qaleh; a new 110kV line from Kajaki Substation to Musa Qaleh Substation; a new 20kV line from Kajaki Substation to Kajaki Village, and the rebuilding of a 110kV line from Kajaki Substation to Sangin.

The project also includes rebuilding the Sangin North Substation, a new substation at Sangin South, rebuilding a 110kV line from Sangin to Durai Junction, and rebuilding a 110kV line from Durai Junction to Lashkar Gah.

USACE awarded the project on June 22 to Perini Management Services, Inc. of Framingham, Mass., with a 550 day period of performance.

The SEPS-Kandahar project includes repairing an existing 110kV line from Durai Junction to Kandahar City, constructing new substations at Maiwand and Pushmool, and upgrading substations at Breshna Kot. This project is scheduled to be awarded by the end of the fiscal year.

These projects should improve distribution of electrical power to the people of the Lashkar Gah area in Helmand province, and the Kandahar City area.

“These three projects really are pretty complex,” said Wham. “But when complete they will be a tangible demonstration to Helmand and Kandahar province residents of the commitment of the U.S. to improve their livelihoods. I am proud to be a part of this work as it represents our desire to see Afghanistan grow in its ability to provide vital services to the people.” 

Divers support district work at dams



Spc. Matthew Tommaso (left), Staff Sgt. Bryan Crowley (center), and 1st Lt. Michael Jappe (right) conduct a hydrographic survey at Kajaki Dam. (U.S. Army photo)

Six Army engineer divers from the 569th Engineer Dive Detachment, recently spent 30 days in southern Afghanistan, conducting underwater surveys to help the South District prepare for major repair projects at Kajaki and Dahla dams.

“We basically conducted two missions at each dam,” said 1st Lt. Michael Jappe, who led the team. “We conducted hydrographic surveys, mapping the underwater contours of the reservoirs, and we used a remotely operated vehicle — essentially, an underwater drone — to check the condition of various submerged structures, such as trash racks and inlets

for irrigation tunnels.”

“The team deployed with an inflatable Zodiac boat,” added Staff Sgt. Andrew Miltenberger, the senior non-commissioned officer on the team. “On the Zodiac, we have a sonar system that is linked to a global-positioning system which can produce very accurate underwater topographical maps of the reservoirs.”

“The hydrographic surveys allow us to estimate the current volume of the reservoir,” explained Nader Noori, project manager for Kajaki Dam. “We have the original survey maps from when the dams were constructed. By comparing the original topography with the team’s products, we can determine how much sedimentation has occurred and how much reservoir capacity has been lost since the dam was built.”

“We try not to dive around dams, if possible,” Miltenberger said. “The turbulence and currents can make it pretty hazardous. The remotely operated vehicle allowed us to safely inspect various underwater features: the dam face, the trash racks and their guide rails and the inlets of the irrigation tunnels.”

“This mission was a great experience,” Miltenberger said. “The planning, preparation and coordination with the district were superb. We are only the second group of Army divers to work in Afghanistan and support Operation Enduring Freedom. We’ve had the chance to go where few Army divers go.” 

Afghan Air Force accepts more O&M responsibility

Story and photo by Karla Marshall

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers turned over operations and maintenance responsibilities for 10 more buildings to Afghanistan's 205th Air Wing on Kandahar Airfield July 7.

As part of the overarching goal to equip Afghanistan's military with the fundamental training necessary to perform basic facilities O&M, this latest round of turnovers marks a milestone in the five-phase turn over plan, said U.S. Air Force Maj. Stephen O'Leary, the 443rd Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron commander who deployed from Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. He and his team meet regularly with their Afghan Air Force counterparts to develop engineering management and skills.

Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, the previous South District commander, said that this turnover of guard towers, storage facilities and other buildings was significant because preparing for this day was a collaborative effort between USACE, the U.S. Air Force's 777th Expeditionary Prime BEEF Squadron and the training contractor, ITT Exelis.

"USACE and ITT Exelis provided classroom and on-the-job training for the Afghan O&M technicians," Wham said. "Prime Beef provided mentorship for the Afghan engineers and technicians who are responsible for ensuring these buildings are functioning and properly maintained."

In his remarks to the audience, Afghan Col. Shah Mahmood, the Mission Support Group Commander, said through an interpreter, that he looked forward to assuming control of O&M functions for more of the buildings at the Kandahar Air Wing. He also thanked USACE, the 777th Expeditionary Prime BEEF Squadron and ITT Exelis.

"On behalf of Afghans, our military, and me, thank you for all the mentoring and training you have done to make Afghanistan's military better. This day will stay a memory for us long into the future," he said.

During the first week of July, the South District turned over these 10 buildings at the cantonment on Kandahar Airfield, 73 buildings at Camp Shorabak, 25 buildings at Qal-e-Naw and 10 buildings at Camp Zafar. Also, in mid June, the district turned over 28 other buildings to the Afghan National Army at Camp Hero near Kandahar City.

"This training is an ongoing effort and we have been training Afghans in the southern region since January to operate and maintain buildings on their bases," said Christine Florea, the project manager responsible for O&M training. "There have been and will continue to be numerous challenges to successful



Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, previous South District Commander and Kandahar Air Wing Vice Commander Lt. Col. Mohammad Isreal exchange greetings July 7 at the 205th Air Corps Cantonment on Kandahar Airfield. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, together with the U.S. Air Force and ITT Exelis, trained and mentored the Afghans who will assume facility operations and maintenance responsibilities on the Air Wing cantonment area.

transition – manpower, procurement of tools, parts, and equipment – but we have come a long way since the program kicked off earlier this year."

Penny Coulon, the South District contracting officer representative responsible for ensuring that the training program meets contract requirements said that working with Col. Shah Mahmood, the Afghan National Army Department of Public Work Facility Engineer Officer for the 205th Corps O&M program was a great experience.

"I hope that the teamwork demonstrated by USACE and Exelis will leave a positive impression on the Afghan soldiers. It has been a long hard road traveled but well worth the effort."

The Afghanistan Engineer District-South is turning over O&M responsibility for facilities on Afghan military installations across southern and western Afghanistan to Afghan National Security Forces in a multi-phased approach that includes an aggressive training schedule. Training begins with fundamentals of safety then progresses to six months of skilled-trade and technical training in 10 disciplines, followed by two months of validation and any required remedial training said Florea.

"Camp Hero [in Kandahar province] and Camp Sayer [in Helmand province] were the first locations where we had training sites," said Florea.

"To date, we have turned over more than 140 buildings at Camp Hero alone, in addition to the sites that have begun transition this summer. I'm confident that the Afghans who take the lead in operations and maintenance are excited about the program, and are dedicated to ensuring that their facilities remain in the best condition possible." 

Shura prepares Afghan National Police for O&M responsibilities



Helmand province chief of police Col. Abdul Nabi Elham speaks at the opening of the shura June 28.

Story and photo by Mark Ray

A June 28 shura –or consultative meeting of stakeholders – held in Lashkar Gah and Helmand province laid the groundwork for Afghan National Police units in Helmand and Nimroz provinces to assume responsibility for operating and maintaining their facilities.

Col. Abdul Nabi Elham, Helmand province chief of police welcomed the opportunity for Afghan forces to take on the operations and maintenance of their facilities, while acknowledging that the time line for the transition is ambitious and that there will be significant challenges in training personnel and putting the necessary contracts in place.

Lt. Col. Dominic Cooper, a British Army officer from the Regional Command-Southwest, outlined the transition process. Currently, the international coalition funds contracts for maintenance and operation of Afghan police facilities throughout the RC-SW area of operations. By the end of calendar year 2012, the Afghan forces will assume full responsibility for accomplishing this work through contracts and in-house efforts.

First Lt. Anthony Bastone, Regional Support Command-Southwest Infrastructure Training Advisory Group, provided more detail about the types of contracts that the police will need to put in place. Coalition contracts currently cover the full range of operations and maintenance at ANP installations, including:

- Repairs of buildings, structures and property,
- Services such as trash and septic waste removal,

- Operation, preventive maintenance, inspection and repairs of water and wastewater systems and generators and electrical distribution systems,

- Minor construction.

The Afghan Ministry of Interior will fund long-term and short-term contracts for operations and maintenance services. In addition, local and regional commanders will have considerable capability and funding authority to contract locally for services. Establishing requirements for contracts is a critical element that must begin immediately, Bastone said, adding that ITAG will conduct weekly training sessions to educate ANP personnel on the contracting and quality assurance processes.

Although contracts will provide much of the operations and maintenance of police installations, in-house workers will be needed to provide basic O&M services as well as quality assurance for contractors.

Albert Soliz, chief of the South District Operations and Maintenance Division, which oversees the Afghanistan-wide contract for O&M services at army and police installations, outlined the program to train police personnel in basic O&M.

Unlike the Afghan National Army, the tashkil, or manning documents, for ANP units do not provide for a dedicated O&M workforce. Instead, the transition plan calls for police personnel to be trained in O&M as an additional duty. The South District has modified an existing training program for ANA personnel to provide basic training in operations and maintenance to the ANP in an accelerated process. The ANP program envisions a two-month training phase for the police personnel, followed by two months at home station, and then an additional two months of training that would provide more in-depth instruction in O&M functions. Soliz emphasized the importance of ensuring that police with O&M responsibilities attend the entire training program, without being diverted by their normal duties.

“We welcome the opportunity to take responsibility for our own facilities,” said Capt. Satar, from the Afghan Uniform Police.

“The lack of positions on the tashkil will be a real challenge for us,” he said. “Right now, we have only one electrician and one plumber for all of Helmand and Nimroz provinces. Other trades have similar deficits. We also have shortages of tools and materials.”

Lt. Col. Rahim, Afghan Border Police, raised concerns about fuel for generators, and ensuring contractor performance. He said the border police welcomed the information provided by the coalition and the opportunity to assume responsibility for operating and maintaining their facilities.

Cooper closed the shura by reiterating the timeline for transition and acknowledging the concerns raised by the police representatives. He emphasized the importance of Afghan police fully participating in the upcoming training and offered the support of his office in raising police concerns about the transition to Ministry of Interior officials. 

Afghan linemen gain new skills, receive

Story and photos by Dave Melancon

Twelve Afghan electric company technicians will be better able to maintain power lines throughout southern Afghanistan after learning to safely operate electric utility trucks during a training course on Kandahar Airfield June 10-19. The U.S. is providing the trucks to the Afghan utility.

The course, taught by South District noncommissioned officers, introduced 12 technicians from Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, Afghanistan's electric utility company:

- fundamentals of power line maintenance and safety and
- operations of two "Cherry Picker" boom trucks that allow linemen to reach the top of utility poles and auger trucks used to drill and emplace utility poles.

While the classroom training was important, getting outside and operating the trucks and erecting utility poles was the highlight of the course, said lineman Nasheed, who asked that only his first name be used, a 14-year DABS employee.

"This new equipment is going to make my job a lot easier and a lot safer," he said speaking through an interpreter. "We learned about safety for ourselves, for our friends and with the equipment."

During his years as a lineman, Nasheed said he had to use scaffolds and ladders to climb utility poles.

Safety was also the primary topic for Sgt. Gabriel Akonom, Company A, 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power), one of three USACE NCOs leading the course.

"Our mission was to train the DABS employees to use the bucket truck equipment that we're signing over to them, making sure they were proficient with them so they could work safely and efficiently," he said. "The majority of them expressed concerns about safety. That's because in the past, they did not have the equipment to do their work safely. They were climbing (utility poles) in their bare feet on ladders and scaffolds."

Akonom said his students' experience ran the gamut from more than 20 years as a lineman to almost none. Most had not worked with a bucket truck before. The students were a combination of linemen and drivers and supervisors from Kandahar City.

"This is the first time that we have seen and handled such nice equipment," added Abdulah, a 15-year lineman who asked that



Sgt. Gabriel Akonom, 249th Prime Power Battalion, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South, shows an Afghan technician from Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, Afghanistan's electric utility company, how to maneuver the work platform on one of the two "bucket trucks" donated to the utility by the United States. (USACE photo by Dave Melancon)

trucks during debut training session

only his first name be used.

“I enjoyed using drilling with the truck-mounted auger and erecting utility poles,” he added.

“All of the students were happy to be here, grateful for the instruction and very interested in learning about the equipment, especially the safety portions,” Akonom said.

With only two interpreters for the class, there were some minor language barriers to overcome, he said. The NCOs plan to emphasize hand signals – using more pictures and practice – in later classes.

Akonom said the students told him that due to a backlog of work, they will be putting their training and the trucks to use as early as this week.

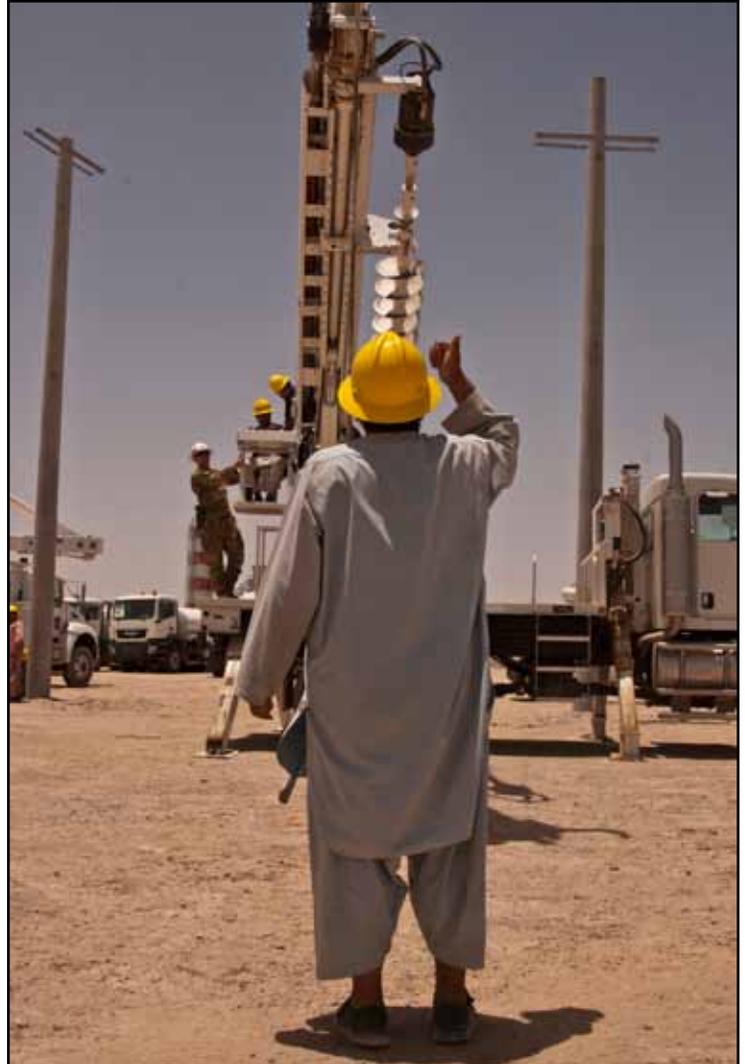
“I am very happy with how enthusiastic they were. We were skeptical going into the training about how much we could get across,” he said. “They were attentive, interested in learning and they absorbed the information very well. I am happy the training went the way that it did and the students were as good as they were.”

This was first class of its kind taught in Afghanistan, said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Hopkins, South District prime power liaison officer. A second class, led by the same NCOs, will take place later this summer in Helmand province.

“The students are very attentive and quite interested in the class,” said Hopkins, who deployed to Afghanistan from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. “They look forward to using this equipment instead of dangerous scaffolds and rickety ladders.”

“All of the instructors felt very confident with sending the students out the gates with the trucks; confident they would perform the work correctly and confident that they would be doing it safely,” Akonom said.

“That’s what makes me the most proud.” 



(Above) An Afghan electrical technician practices hand signals while a fellow student learns how to operate a truck-mounted auger system used to emplace utility poles during a 10-day class led by South District NCOs June 10-19.



(Left) Sgt. Gabriel Akonom, 249th Prime Power Battalion, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South, gives his final maintenance and safety lesson to 12 technicians from Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, Afghanistan’s electric utility company, during a training-site graduation ceremony June 20. The technicians completed 10 days of classroom and hands-on training on power line operations and how to operate three new utility trucks -- two “bucket trucks” and one equipped with an auger for setting utility poles -- provided by the United States.

9th Commando building project nears completion, turnover to Afghan Army



Afghan workmen complete a guard tower on the 9th Commando compound perimeter in Herat July 2.

Story and photos by Dave Melancon

A large building project managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South will be crossing the finish line before the end of the summer, according to



Jackson VanPelt (left), project engineer, and Tariq Taheri, Afghan project engineer, inspect a recently finished classroom in one of several buildings nearing completion on the 9th Commando compound in Herat province July 2. Work on the \$13.7-million project is scheduled to be completed by late July.

the two USACE employees overseeing the construction.

Work on the \$13.7-million 9th Commando compound, located in the outskirts of Herat City, will become the home for a battalion-size element, or kandak, of the Afghan National Army Special Forces later this summer said Jackson VanPelt, the project engineer.

“We should be ready to turn it over to the Afghan National Army very soon,” he said. “The contractors are wrapping up some finishing work and we’ll conduct our final inspection soon.”

VanPelt said remaining work at the site includes touch-up painting, finishing concrete roadways, sports fields, perimeter walls and anti-vehicle ditches, installing windows and interior hardware on several of the site’s 55 buildings and installing stoves and other appliances in the dining facility.

This project, which kicked off in January 2011, is for the Afghan Army and is being built by an Afghan contractor with Afghan workers, VanPelt said. Arao-Fellgroup Joint Ventures, Inc. has about 250 men working on the day shift and 100 working overnight to get the final work done.

A formal final inspection will take place later this month and a “punch list” of last-minute and fix-up tasks will be given to the prime contractors. A formal ribbon-cutting ceremony, to officially mark the project’s turn over to the Afghan Army, will take place later this summer when all the punch list items are checked off as completed.

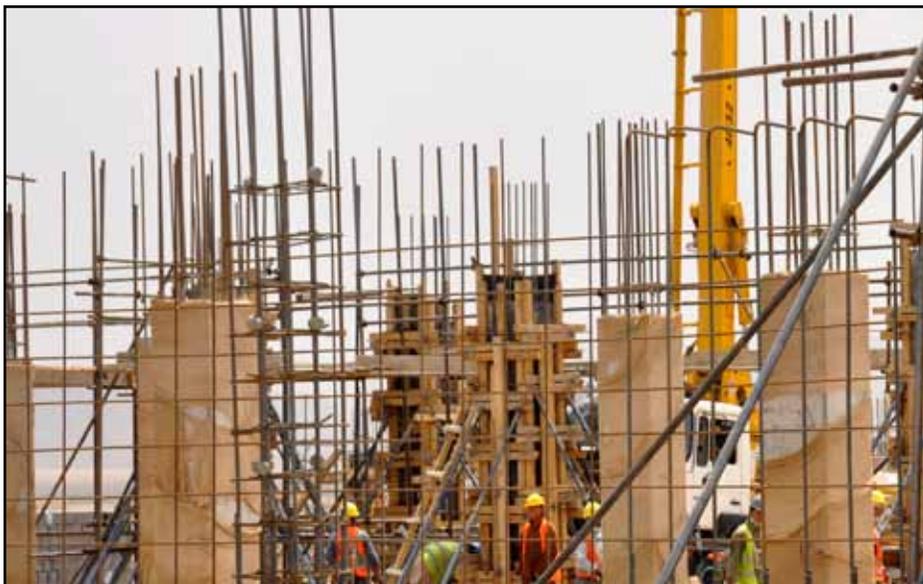
Members of the South District’s Operations and Maintenance Division will team up with Afghan maintenance crews to decide the best plan for use and maintenance of the site’s buildings, generators and other equipment, VanPelt said.

“These guys will be set up pretty well,” he said. “They will be completely self-sufficient.”

The compound boasts two wells, its own power generators, bunkers, dining and storage facilities, recreation areas, parade field, entry control points, roadways, medical clinics and security systems, he said. Only the waste water will be piped to nearby Camp Zafar for treatment.

“This project will help our people because it helps improve our Army,” said Tariq Taheri, Afghan project engineer and one of two Afghan USACE employees assigned to the project. “The Army will protect the people.” 

Corps of Engineers announces upcoming contracts



The South District's upcoming contract awards span the full gamut of construction projects that will improve the lives of Afghans. Quality construction starts with foundations like this one at a construction site for the Afghan National Army near Kandahar.

Story and photo by Karla Marshall

The South District announced in early July that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has 52 construction and service contracts, worth a total of almost \$712 million, to award in southern Afghanistan before the end of fiscal year 2012.

Many of the contracts will be for Afghan National Security Force facilities, but “there are six or seven water and infrastructure projects valued at up to \$150 million still to be awarded this fiscal year,” said Linda Murphy, the South District’s water and infrastructure branch chief.

The four largest water and infrastructure projects scheduled for award are water projects at Kajaki and Dahla dams and electric power distribution systems for Helmand and Kandahar provinces, Murphy said. *(See page 8 for more information about these projects.)*

In addition to the big water and electric infrastructure projects, Murphy’s branch is also looking forward to starting work on smaller-scale projects like the Kandahar University Law Library, highway paving and Kandahar International Airport improvements, she said.

Afghan National Police projects consist primarily of district headquarters compounds and border police stations.

“If we award all 21 anticipated projects, we will be overseeing an additional \$235 million worth of construction,” said Fred Schelby the ANP branch chief.

The first austere standard construction contract is set for award in August said Schelby. The austere standard is the culmination of many months of coordination with end users and battle space owners.

“The South District is positioned to move forward on the construction of the more austere facilities,” he said. “They will require fewer materials, take less time to construct, and ultimately cost less money.”

Schelby, an Albuquerque, N.M. native, also said that the upcoming ANP construction contracts are scheduled for completion by the end of 2014.

The nine Afghan National Army contracts still up for award will total about \$70 million. “The ANA branch is fully engaged, and will aggressively use our project delivery teams and the project management business process to deliver these projects on schedule,” said Steve Sullivan, the ANA branch chief who is deployed from the USACE Jacksonville District. “I’ve got a great team of project managers; a lot of continuity.”

In addition to the major program contracts, the South District also has several operations and maintenance contracts to award. Those projects total about \$130

million, said Caryl Hickel, the district’s business management chief. “The big programs obviously will consume the greater amount of time, money and effort, but the small O&M and facility maintenance contracts are important for the health and safety of our employees and the Afghans who use some of the buildings the district has constructed,” she said.

The acquisition methods for these contracts will fall into in one of three categories:

- Invitation for Bids – These are full-design packages, which the district will award to the lowest-priced bid from a responsive bidder. A responsive bidder is one who complied with every requirement of the solicitation;
- Full & Open/Low Price Technically Acceptable – The district will issue a request for proposal, review bids for technical acceptability, and award the contract to the lowest-price, technically-acceptable proposal; and
- 886 Limited Competition – These contracts are for projects that will cost less than \$7.8 million; contractors must be on the existing “Afghan First” bidders list to bid on this work.

“We still have a lot of work ahead of us,” said Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, the previous district commander. “The projects range in size and scope from very large to quite small. The district encourages all qualified contractors to bid on these contracts.”

Editor’s note: Contractors interested in bidding on the upcoming construction contracts should visit the South District’s website at <http://www.aed.usace.army.mil/AES/contracting.asp> and the www.fbo.gov website for specific details of upcoming contracts.





Provincial police headquarters opens in Uruzgan

Story and photo by Mark Ray

Afghan National Police opened a new provincial headquarters in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan province May 31.

Dignitaries at the ceremony included:

- Amir Mohammad Akhundzada, governor of Uruzgan province;
- Maj. Gen. Salim Ehsas, Commander, Afghan Uniform Police Maiwand 404 (responsible for Kandahar, Uruzgan and Daykundi provinces);
- Maj. Gen. Mohammad Zafar, commander of the 48th Brigade of the Afghan National Army;
- Brig. Gen. Matiullah Khan, Chief of Police for Uruzgan province.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South contracted for and oversaw construction of the \$4 million facility, which will accommodate over 80 provincial police. The facility includes barracks, offices, a dining facility, clinic, motor pool and vehicle maintenance facilities. 

Provincial Chief of Police Matiullah Khan (right), Gen. Salim Ehsas (left), and Provincial Governor Amir Mohammad Akhundzab (center), raise an Afghan flag after a ribbon cutting ceremony of the new Provincial Police Headquarters in Tarin Kot, Afghanistan, May 31, 2012. (U.S. Army photo, Spc. Nevada Jack Smith, Combined Team Uruzgan Public Affairs)



Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, former Afghanistan Engineer District South commander, describes the features of the Theater Vehicle Maintenance Compound to Alan Estevez, assistant secretary of defense for logistics and material readiness, Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Robert Ruark, U.S. Central Command logistics and engineering director, and Air Force Lt. Gen. Brooks Bash, U.S. Joint Staff director of logistics, during a site visit June 9. Wham briefed the visiting logistician leaders on the Kandahar Airfield site's construction progress and led them on a brief walk-through tour of the completed wash rack station and construction site. (USACE photo by Dave Melancon)



Billy Carroll (left), information systems help desk technician and Lt. Col. Corey Spencer, South District deputy commander anchor a ceremonial ribbon of a safety tape and network cable for Col. Benjamin Wham, former South District commander, Adam Walker, project engineer and Christopher Books, information technology section chief during the official opening of the information technology building on the South District compound on Kandahar Airfield July 3. The windowless, three-story structure houses help desk services, telephone systems, a computer repair shop, servers and routers which support information services throughout the South District. (USACE photos)

Information systems building opens



Building timeline: (clockwise) Dec. 26, 2011; Jan. 19, 2012; Feb. 1, 2012; March 19, 2012; "Topping Off ceremony" April 1, 2012; April 5, 2012; May 23, 2012.(USACE photos)



Profiles in leadership:

David 'Russ' Tolle

Russ Tolle served as the Helmand Area Engineer from December 2011 through June 2012. Before he left Afghanistan, he gave an interview to Engineering Freedom about his experiences and lessons learned.

Interview by Mark Ray

EF: How long were you the area engineer here in Helmand?

RT: I served as the Helmand area engineer from Dec. 16, 2011 until early June 2012.

EF: What are some of the things that you, as area engineer, did to help the Helmand office work well?

RT: Before my arrival, there had been three area engineers overseeing the office within the preceding 90 days, which was not conducive to a productive and harmonious work environment. I worked hard to provide a sense of stability and continuity to the area and resident office team. I also firmly believe in leading by example and trying to add a "personal touch"



to the office environment. No single individual, no matter how great their strengths or abilities, can execute the mission alone. It takes a full team effort to accomplish the challenging missions we have been assigned here at the South district.

EF: What were some of the things you did to establish continuity?

RT: I wanted to give everyone a sense of stability. I let everyone know I was going to be there for the next six or seven months. I wasn't going to change things right away, but I was going to look at the operations and see where we could do things better.

I focused on morale and getting everyone to work together. I implemented a few standard operating procedures. For instance, we had weekly telephone calls between the area office and the resident offices to talk about what needed to be done that week. I also focused on personnel— getting performance

plans in place and up to date.

It was important to establish processes that let people know what they were supposed to be doing, and pulled everyone into the team. People needed to know that they weren't alone, that their contributions were valuable and that they were needed for the organization to be successful.

We had quite a few issues with our contractors. The mind set had been that we were going to be pull contractors across the finish line. We would go out and assist them, no matter how badly they were performing, because we had to get the projects done.

But some of the contractors and projects just weren't performing. They were way behind schedule, quality was bad, and there were safety issues. We changed the mind set. If we had a contractor that was not going to be able to complete a project, we would cut the losses, re-award the contract and get someone who is going to be able to complete the project.

We started issuing terminations for default almost as soon as I got here and ended up doing six in the time I was the area engineer. You try to give the contractor every opportunity to perform, but if they are not going to commit the resources, or the emphasis on safety and quality, or the cash flow and the staffing required, we had to move on to someone who can get the job done and deliver a product we can be proud of.

Termination for default is painful — you're not going to meet the original target date for the project, but it is worse to be late and deliver an inferior product. We had to terminate a couple of significant projects, each worth about \$30 million. It took a lot of time and effort, but we feel we'll end up with a much better product in the end.

Lessons for the next contingency are to require the contractor to give us payment-performance bonds and to be more careful about whom we award contracts to. One of the big issues with non-performing contractors was that we had no surety. If a contractor didn't pay their subcontractors and the subcontractors walk off the job site, or if subcontractors weren't producing acceptable quality, we didn't have any leverage to require them to get back to work or to tear the substandard work out and replace it.

When you come into a contingency operation, the first emphasis is getting contracts awarded, getting boots on the ground, getting the recovery underway right away. Sometimes, in our haste to do those things, we don't incorporate all the tools and mechanisms we could in our contracts because we are concerned about delaying contract awards. I think we have found that payment-performance bonds raise level of quality of the contractors.

EF: Tell us a bit about working with contractors in this kind of environment, and what people need to expect now and in future deployments.

RT: I'll tie this back into the termination issues. In the states, all the contracts have bonding requirements in them.

Continued next page

Tolle continued

If a contractor is not performing and you issue a show cause or a cure notice, a copy of that goes to the bonding company, who start to get very involved because they have a financial stake in the outcome.

In 25 years of working with U.S. contractors, I'd only been involved in one termination for default. It never gets to that point normally. The bonding company will step in and have negotiations with the contractor and require him to do what is necessary to finish the project, or they'll bring in someone else.

The contracting pool is also quite a bit different — in the states, you typically work with large, capable contracting companies.

Those companies were in Iraq, but they haven't come to Afghanistan, so we are dealing with a lot of contractors that we don't know.

The contractors also don't know us. They aren't familiar with Corps methods and processes. Our quality assurance representatives and project engineers have to train the contractors on things like the three-phase quality control system, submitting a pay estimate, or developing a security plan, a safety plan, or an environmental protection plan.

We don't have to do that kind of coaching in the states, but here you have to get back down in the weeds and work hand-in-hand with the contractor to get projects constructed. It is a real challenge.

Another challenge is that many of our project engineers and resident engineers are not in roles that they perform in the states, where they might be a project manager or a park ranger. Or they might work operations at a lock and dam, or on the engineering side of the house doing geotechnical work.

Here they are thrust into the role of project engineer or resident engineer or quality assurance representative. They need a lot of mentoring and training. The senior personnel who have experience not only have to train the contractors, but also Corps personnel. Our people want to work and learn. They want to be successful, but they don't always have the experience or training to hit the ground running.

EF: What are the some of the ways you led by example?

RT: I always want to be fair and treat people with respect, treat people the way I want to be treated, have open dialog and live up to the standards that I apply to others. I expect a full day's work out of everybody. In my position, I work pretty long hours. It is important that my staff see that I'm putting in a full day's work. I don't expect everyone to be in the office with me at 7 p.m., but I expect they will give me a full day's work. You treat everyone with respect, pull everyone into the team and let everybody know you need their contribution for the team to be successful.

Quality in everything you do is vital. I always want to produce a high-quality product, whether it is a finished project, or a letter to a contractor or a memorandum to the contracting officer. Because many folks are in unfamiliar roles, you have to help them, for instance, by giving them a finished letter or memorandum as an example.

EF: What are some the ways you establish standards?

RT: I always tell people that their personal standards should exceed what is on their performance plans. But performance standards are the key. They make sure people know what

they are supposed to be doing. People need to know the standard and required documentation for quality assurance reports. When a project gets behind schedule, the project engineer needs to know that he should draft a letter of concern for the contracting officer's representative. Your people need to know what you expect from them — that ties in to standards.

We are dealing with difficult contractors here and people are doing processes that they aren't familiar with. It takes mentors and leaders within the whole organization to help our people and the contractors get up to speed. We want to give the customer a finished product that meets standards — we want them to walk through and say, "this is a nice facility," instead of "we've been waiting on this for two years now and it isn't good." It is very important that we deliver quality products.

EF: What are some of your lessons learned or things you would do better or differently if you were doing this again? What are things that we did well that we need to capture?

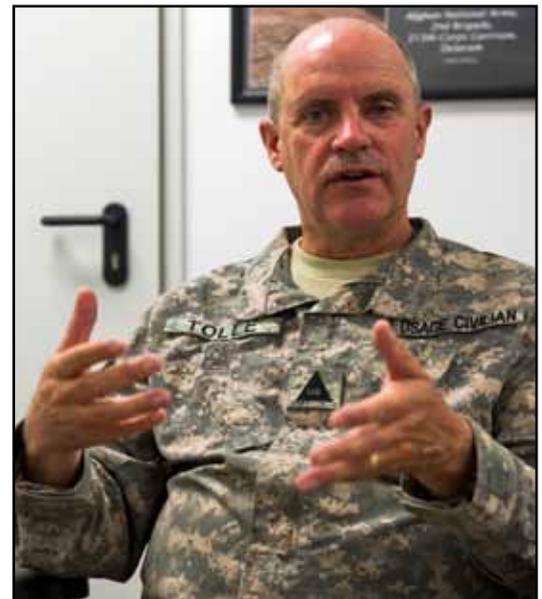
RT: Preparation is a key to success. Learn as much as you can about the environment, so you are as ready as you can be. Go over the organiza-

tion chart. Look at the program, the kinds of projects you'll be working on.

I think it would be valuable to establish positions for assistant area engineers. I spent a great amount of time focusing on my administrative contracting officer duties. When you do a termination for default, it takes a lot of time and effort, a lot of documentation. You have to show you have written letters of concern, interim unsatisfactory ratings, cure notices, show cause and that you have done everything the government should do to get a contractor to perform. I spent a great amount of time on those tasks.

If I'd had an assistant area engineer, I could have spent more time establishing processes and focusing on traditional area engineer duties, versus contracting duties. I didn't get out to the resident offices as much as I would have liked. In hindsight, I should have visited each resident office every couple of weeks, working with the resident office staff and engineers, helping them with their duties, looking at the projects, and giving more insight on their operations.

It is a challenge to do both roles. In the states, resident



Continued next page

Tolle continued

engineers are normally administrative contracting officers, so they deal with the contractors one-on-one, they do the mods, and take care of most of those duties. Here, I was the only administrative contracting officer with 20 projects and \$350 million worth of work, so things were cut a little thin. You always want your resident engineers to act as administrative contracting officers, but it can be hard to recruit people with that capability.

I also spent a lot of time getting our manning document straightened out. When I first got here, we had a lot of folks who had moved around and our manning document did not really reflect what we had in terms of boots on the ground. I also made monthly conference calls with the recruitment center in Winchester trying to find people to deploy and fill positions. Recruiting is very tough right now.

EF: If you were to rapidly stand up a contingency district to assume a large workload, how would you do it?

RT: I see three distinct phases of any contingency operation. You've got the stand-up period where everyone is coming in, the missions are being thrown at you left and right, and you are creating an organization with leaders and personnel from Corps districts and divisions all over the world. You are trying to throw everyone together and come up with standard operating procedures. You're assigning people to roles they might not be familiar with, but you need someone to fill that role. If they are qualified, that is great, but if they aren't, you give them on-the-job training and do the best you can do.

Once you've stood up the district, you get into a bit of a stable mode, which might last a year, or a couple of years. During this phase, your emphasis is going to be not only getting people on the bus, but getting them in the right seat on the bus. You focus on recruiting people who have experience as project engineers, resident engineers, area engineers or project managers. You want experienced folks.

Then you get the drawdown, when the district begins to prepare to shut down as it continues to do work. At this point, a lot of the folks who want

to deploy on a mission like this have already done so, and gone back to the states. Recruiting becomes tougher and the mission becomes tougher. You might not have the battle space owner support that you had six months or a year earlier because they've closed a lot of the small FOBs that provided security throughout your region. Your mission becomes more difficult, for both you and your contractors, but it doesn't stop. You still have to complete projects and finish out your contracts.

One of the things we do for stateside contingencies is set up standing emergency response teams so when a disaster hits. You know who is responsible for sending a debris team, who is responsible for sending a "blue roof" team. The responsibilities are shared throughout the Corps districts and divisions. For overseas contingencies, TAD is responsible for standing up the organization on its own. If there were teams established for the different functions – engineering and construction, contracting, project management, all the "J" shops – like we have for contingencies in the states, it might lend itself to rapid mobilization for an overseas contingency mission. You could have individuals pegged against specific billets or an organization identified to provide someone for the stand-up period.

EF: What was your biggest challenge while you were here? How did you overcome it?

RT: My biggest challenge has been the pace of the workload. I'm typically in the office from 7 a.m. to at least 7 p.m. and many, if not most, days still feel like I'm just barely keeping my head above water. I've made the statement more than once that I alternately go from "hitting the ground running" to "being dragged behind the train." I don't know that I've actually overcome this scenario, but I make a sincere effort to prioritize my workload, delegate whenever possible, work as hard as I can each day, and then



go to bed each night knowing I've given the Army my best effort.

EF: What would you like to add?

RT: This has been a very challenging assignment. A lot of long days. Looking back, the seven months went very fast, but there were days that I wasn't sure I would get through. It has been very fulfilling – I'd like to think I've accomplished a good bit. Aside from the mission, it has been great to work in a contingency environment with another group of people – that's what I'll remember. I look back to 20 years ago to when I was in Kuwait. I don't remember specific bureaucratic tasks I accomplished, I remember the people I worked with and going out to see the projects. Five or 10 years down the road, it'll be the same thing: I'll remember the people. I've made good friends here, and I intend to keep up with them.

EF: Do you have any final thoughts?

RT: Listen to your team. Many of them have been executing the mission long before you arrive and they possess valuable institutional knowledge. Also, listen to your body - the long work hours combined with the dust, the heat and the stress of working in a combat environment can impair both your physical and mental health. Just remember - laughter can sometimes be the best medicine. Live, laugh, love. 

Keeping the district's people safe means vehicle rollover training



South District employees buckle into the MaxPro MRAP simulator on Kandahar Airfield as part of their egress orientation training.

Story and photos by Karla Marshall

About 30 South District employees took part in MRAP (mine-resistant, ambush-protected) vehicle safety and egress orientation training on Kandahar Airfield July 15.

The South District identified those employees who regularly travel in MRAPs as the first group of attendees.

"In late June, I asked the district's supervisors to identify personnel who ride in MRAPs," said Maj. Michael Dinkens, the district's operations chief. "Civilian project engineers, project managers, quality assurance representatives, contracting officer representatives, public affairs specialists and management all participated."

Dinkens said the egress training is important because district employees need to know what to do in the event of a rollover and to be ready when a quick reaction force comes to transport them to safety.

"The Soldiers who come to the rescue of over-turned MRAPs are putting themselves in harm's way and everything we can do to minimize danger and injury to the Soldiers and our teammates is a step in the right direction," he said.

"Keeping people safe is the commander's top priority," said Dinkens.

"Ensuring our civilians have the training needed to safely exit turned-over or incapacitated MRAPs helps them be better prepared when they go on missions."

The training consisted of buckling into a MRAP roll-over trainer, either a MaxPro or M-ATV styled vehicle, with the standard four-point harness, enduring a rollover and then egressing the MRAP at both 90 degree and 180 degree angles.

"I can't say that it was fun, but I did gain a whole new perspective on just how difficult it is to get out of a vehicle with body armor on," said Brenda Dunwoody, a paralegal deployed from the USACE Far East District in Seoul, Korea. "It was difficult to hold the gunner in place for all the rest of us because we were hanging by our seat belts upside down."

The gunner in the MaxPro must drop into the MRAP and be held in place by the other vehicle's occupants while the vehicle rolls. "I didn't realize how hard it would be with body armor to keep the gunner from tumbling during the roll."

Julio Arocho, the district's deputy for programs and project management division, agreed. "We have a requirement to mitigate risk every time we go to project sites," he said. "This training was a challenge and if I hadn't done it, I would not have been able to really understand the difficulty or even how to get out of a tipped MRAP," he said. "But, it gives us more knowledge and real world experience. The more

we know, the better prepared we are."

Gary Pray, the primary training instructor said the USACE civilians who participated in the training did quite well. "One of the most important things people learn is to ensure they have a solid load plan," he said. "Water bottles, weapons, cameras, iPods and anything else you can imagine can and will go flying throughout the MRAPs when they roll over. So it is very important to secure and tie down anything that can become a projectile."

Pray and his co-trainer, Patrick Franko are instructors in the Warfighter Training Program on Kandahar Airfield. They inject levity into the training but stress the seriousness of the potential dangers. Not only must passengers consider threats from outside the vehicle when they egress, but they must protect themselves from empty water bottles, Styrofoam blocks and copious amounts of dirt and smoke that fill the MAXPRO vehicle to simulate common scenarios.

"I got a few bangs and bumps from the debris in the MRAP," said Dunwoody. "But now I know to keep my chin tucked, communicate with the other vehicle occupants, and most importantly keep my mouth closed as much as possible." 



Gary Pray, a Warfighter Training Program MRAP (mine-resistant, ambush-protected) vehicle rollover and egress trainer on Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan monitors USACE employees during training July 15. USACE employees who travel in MRAPs are required to attend the training which includes simulated vehicle rollover and exiting.

District recognizes top quarterly military, civilian performers

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South recognized quarterly top performers for the second quarter 2012 at an awards ceremony held here July 9.

“I congratulate our quarterly top performers,” said Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, previous district commander.

“Their supervisors nominated them which is a testament to their contributions to the South District. I am very proud of their hard work and thank them for being outstanding representatives of our district.”

Awardees in the following categories were:

Junior Noncommissioned Officer:

Army **Sgt. Derek W. Straubie**, assigned to Task Force Breshna Barq and deployed to the South District from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, went above and beyond the call of duty.

He re-wired the conference room, the arms storage room, and installed an HVAC system at Forward Operating Base Lindsey. He was instrumental in connecting the district compound to Prime Power. As an instructor for Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherak (the Afghan utility company) bucket and line training, Straubie successfully qualified 13 Afghan technicians in both skills.

Department of Army Civilian, GS-11-13:

Darla Pack, an engineer technician in the district’s Quality Assurance Branch, was responsible for the South District’s bidding, construction, and environmental reviews as well as providing monthly instruction to contractors on various Resident Management System topics.

Her superior technical knowledge, ability to teach and mentor and her presentations made a noteworthy impact on a daily basis. Pack deployed to the South District from the USACE Huntington District in West Virginia.

Department of Army Civilian, GS-01-10:

Dave Melancon, a public affairs specialist in the district’s public affairs office was a consummate professional in every task he undertook. He went on many “outside the wire” and other missions that resulted in more than 30 news stories and 40 photo events.

Melancon’s dedication to the district’s mission and his selfless contributions are a testament to his positive attitude and sense of duty. Melancon is a U.S. Forest Service employee who deployed to the district from Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Rhinelander, Wis.

“These awards and decorations are a reflection of the dedication and service of the military members and civilian employees who have deployed in support of USACE’s mission in Afghanistan, and who have committed themselves to delivering projects that help improve security and governance in Afghanistan,” Wham said. 



Sgt. Derek W. Straubie



Darla Pack



Dave Melancon



South District Deputy Commander, Lt. Col. Corey Spencer, Command Sgt. Maj. Lorne Quebodeaux and executive officer Karen Anderson, are the South District Bulldogs of the Week for July 9 through 13.

South District Commander names final Bulldogs of the Week

Story and photo by Karla Marshall

During his final week in command, Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, the previous South District commander, selected district Deputy Commander Army Lt. Col. Corey Spencer, district Command Sgt. Maj. Lorne Quebodeaux, and Executive Officer, Karen Anderson as the Bulldogs of the Week for July 8-13.

“As an Air Force officer commanding a Corps of Engineers district in a war zone, I had to have a very strong command team,” said Wham. “Spence [Lt. Col. Spencer], the Sergeant Major [Quebodeaux] and Karen were absolutely critical to the success of our mission. Their recommendations and ideas helped me create an atmosphere where district employees were empowered and allowed to find creative solutions to the very real challenges inherent in working in a battle zone.

“Spence [Lt. Col. Spencer] is a consummate professional. He provided solid leadership to everyone in the district, especially the support staff. His engineering knowledge, attitude and tireless commitment to the district are exceptional,” Wham continued.

“Sgt. Maj. Quebodeaux, likewise, was invaluable. He men-

tored the Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the district and led by example. He demonstrated to all of us a level of professionalism that inspired and motivated excellence,” Wham continued.

“Finally, Karen did an outstanding job interpreting my intent and making things happen. She was always available, always willing to do the right thing and always had my back.”

Wham said that he could not have asked for a better command staff and that because of them, he was able to focus on more than just managing the district. He got to get out in the field and “engineer”— inspect construction, identify solutions and solve problems.

“Commanders don’t always get the luxury of working closely with the guys and gals who actually get the projects done. But Lt. Col. Spencer, Command Sgt. Maj. Quebodeaux and Karen Anderson made it possible for me to be closely engaged in construction and management of projects when necessary. I’m lucky to have had this team. They truly are bulldogs of the best kind,” Wham said.

Upon completing his tour with the District July 12, Wham redeployed to Charleston, S.C. where he will finish out his 26-year Air Force career. 

Fore on the 4th

The South District celebrated the 4th of July and celebrated the leadership of Col. Benjamin Wham during the first and last-ever “Wham Open Golf Tournament” held on the Kandahar Airfield compound.

Each staff section put their collective creative minds to work by creating holes and obstacles ranging from the comical to patriotic.

Leader board results:

Winning Team: Score: 29

- Leslie Olson
- Jim Henderson
- Mike Hatchet
- Adam Walker

Last Place Team:

- Debra Funk
- Monica Robbins
- Angela May
- Megan Donnelly

Closest to the Pin: Richard Rupert – Hole in one

Longest Drive: Jeremy Cobb

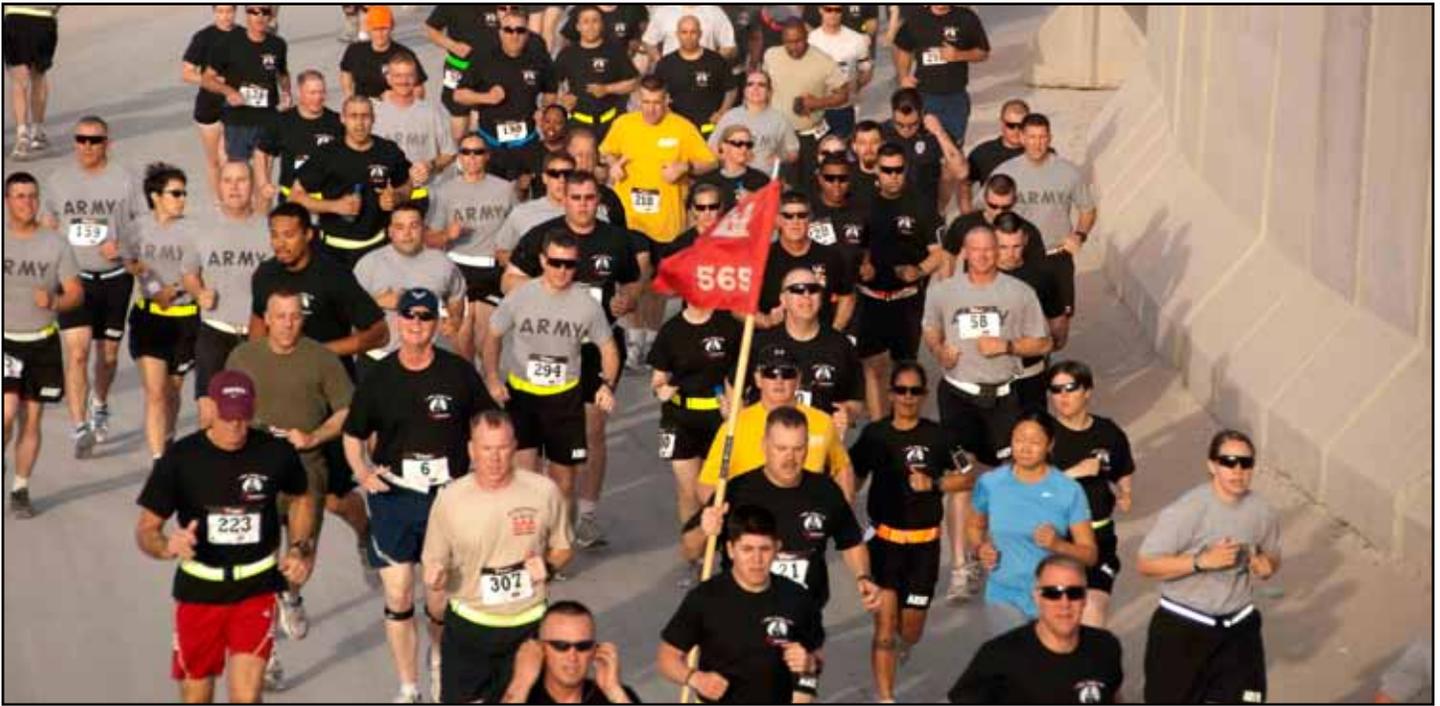
Champion Golf Hole Construction: Contracting Team

Creative Golf Hole Construction: O&M Team



My, my who's got the ugliest tie?

(left to right) Matt Wilson, Tim Gevedon, Ed Boddie, Rick Horton and Eric Horcick show off their prize-winning ties during the South District's “Ugliest Tie” contest held June 17 as part of Father's Day observances. (Photo by Karla Marshall)



Sgt. First Class Gary Malkin, the 565th Engineer Detachment FEST-A noncommissioned officer in charge carries the unit guidon during the Engineers Day 5-K June 16 on Kandahar Airfield. (USACE Photo by Dave Melancon)

Corps hosts Birthday 5k run on KAF

Story by Karla Marshall

The South District celebrated the Corps of Engineers birthday by sponsoring a 5-kilometer run on Kandahar Airfield June 16 to benefit the wounded Warrior Support Center here.

“Thanks to all of you who are here to run with us this morning,” said Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, the previous South District commander before the start of the race. “All the proceeds from this event will go to the wounded warriors.”

About 400 NATO troops, civilians, and support personnel participated in the early morning run with the first place finisher, Royal Air Force Sgt. Paul Vernon completing the run in 17 minutes, 35 seconds and the first place female finisher U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Jennifer Han in 20 minutes 13 seconds.

Ingrid Burnette, deployed to the South District from the USACE Huntington District, headed the team of volunteers who planned, organized and worked the 5k run. “We were hoping to have at least 600 participants and ordered T-shirts for that many,” said Burnette. “I’m happy to report that we ran out of shirts and had to order 100 more. We raised \$7,118 for the Warrior Support Center.”

The money raised will purchase shoes, shirts, reflective belts, alarm clocks, power converters, watches, DVD players and other items that will help keep the Soldiers’ morale up while they recover from the wounds they received on the battlefield, said Burnette.

Burnette, a long-time long-distance runner, had the idea to host a 5k for Engineers Day and presented the concept to the South District’s Command Group in mid-March.

“Whenever our people are willing to take on big challenges

that benefit others, I wholeheartedly support their efforts,” said Wham. “Ingrid and the other USACE employees worked on their own time to make this happen and did a good job.”



More than 400 NATO service members, civilians and support personnel took part in USACE-sponsored Engineer Day 5-kilometer race. Proceeds from the event benefitted the airfield’s warrior recovery center. (USACE Photo by Dave Melancon)

AES Team

Task Force Breshna Barq (TFB2):

The South District's go-to team for solving electrical problems



Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, former South District commander, thanks Task Force Breshna Barq Soldiers (left to right) Sgt. Derek W. Straubie, Sgt. Gabriel Akonom, Staff Sgt. Joshua McClure, and Staff Sgt. SSG James Gray for their work with Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, (Afghanistan's electrical utility) linemen during "Bucket Truck" training held earlier this summer on Kandahar Airfield.

Story by Staff Sgt. James Gray, Task Force Breshna Barq NCOIC

The six noncommissioned officers and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Hopkins, deputy commander of Task Force Breshna Barq, commonly called TFB2, are responsible for improving the electrical power supply throughout Helmand and Kandahar provinces.



Staff Sgt. James Hamilton

One of our most important missions is the \$8.5 million Operation and Maintenance Contract for two 10 MW power plants providing electricity to Kandahar City.

One is located at Bag-e-Pul, the site of an old Russian silo and another at the Shurandam Industrial Park in

eastern Kandahar City, each with two TFB2 Soldiers assigned. These power plants serve as a temporary solution until the Southeast Power System (SEPS) is constructed with its 110 kV transmission line and 20 kV distribution network and substation packages.

Additionally, Task Force Breshna Barq is responsible for the training of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (Afghanistan's electrical utility, known as DABS) personnel. To date we have successfully trained DABS linemen on bucket and line truck operations and issued two bucket trucks and a line truck to the utility.

DABS has already put their new trucks into use, and are extremely pleased with the vehicles. There will be another bucket and line truck training course for DABS linemen in the fall.

Also, DABS personnel are currently being trained at both power plants in plant operation and maintenance and warehouse operations at Shurandam Industrial Park. The training also includes plant operations.

Our overall goal is to turn both power plants over to DABS in fall of 2013.

Once SEPS is complete, the power plants will provide back-up power during periods of high demand.

TFB2 is responsible for a commander's emergency response program project valued at around \$8 million which involves receiving, storing and issuing to DABS two packages of tools and equipment called electrical starter kits. The starter kits are designed to include every tool and piece of electrical equipment DABS would need to rebuild their electrical infrastructure in Kandahar City. TFB2 also has the same responsibilities for CERP-funded completion kits for use in various districts in Helmand and Kandahar provinces.

TFB2 also provides on-call support for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers electrical projects at Dahla Dam, and the Joint Regional Afghan National Police Center and Qalat hospital.

We are the South District's go-to team for solving electrical problems.

By providing training and power to the Afghan people, TFB2 contributes to the International Security Assistance Force mission short-term counter insurgency operations and longer-term stabilization goals. 



Sgt. Dana Beard

Afghanistan Safety 101

Hazardous Indigenous Species of Afghanistan

Story by Jeff Ice South District
Safety and Occupational Health Specialist

Afghanistan has a wide range of reptiles, insects and rodents that deliver different chemical agents which can be devastating to the body.

The various species of poisonous snakes of Afghanistan are categorized in three groups: vipers, pit vipers, cobras and kraits. These reptiles deliver a mixture of proteins (neurotoxins & hemotoxins) that affect the central nervous system and blood cells often causing paralysis, heart failure and death if not treated in time.

Pit vipers are relatively small and vary in skin color. These snakes transfer venom through large tubular fangs. The venom is primarily hemotoxic causing pain, blistering, hemorrhaging and digestion of tissue at the wound.

Like pit vipers, the venom of a viper is primarily hemotoxic and causes pain, blistering, hemorrhaging, and digestion of tissue around the bite wound. The distinct characteristic of a viper is generally a triangular shape head, heavy body and a short tail.

Unlike both types of vipers' nocturnal habits, Afghan cobras are more active during the early evening and early morning. They tend to be aggressive when nesting and display a hood when provoked.

Kraits display bands as body markings and have a rounded head slightly distinct from the neck. Kraits commonly hunt during hot, humid nights and seek shelter in sleeping bags, boots, and tents. They rarely bite during the day, but are aggressive at night.

Besides snakes, Afghanistan has many species of venomous scorpions and spiders. Although they are not venomous,



Krait

spiders deliver a painful pinch.

Finally, rodents and other small mammals are detrimental to human living conditions in Afghanistan and the districts prevents their presence. Mice, rats, squirrels, hedge hogs and others attract unwanted species such as snakes and are also known to spread diseases through lice and ticks. Ticks spread Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever, sand fleas spread Leishmania.

There are many things you can do to protect yourself and you co-workers from these hazardous creatures:

- Don't leave unopened food in tents or rooms
- Walk at night with a flashlight
- Look before you put your hand or foot into a small place
- Use caution around buildings or storage boxes and rocks

as animals like to hide underneath

- Never walk barefoot
- Do not touch any animals
- Shake out boots, bedding and clothing prior to use
- Use caution when entering abandoned buildings or bunkers

spiders

- Be vigilant around water sheds and shaded areas

If you experience an animal or insect bite you should:

- Remain calm and seek help
- If possible, collect or kill the animal or insect and bring it with you when seeking treatment

• Apply a pressure dressing around the bite or sting site to slow the spread of venom

- Get to a medical facility as soon as possible!

By being aware of your surroundings and by practicing good housekeeping where you live and work you can avoid unwanted contact with the dangerous indigenous species of Afghanistan. 



Russell's Viper

ON THE MOVE

Moving in



Connie Adams



Jeremy Allen



Mark Alton



James Armstrong



Quatina Austin



Triet Bui



Cherri Burch



Roberto Canseco



Jason Choi



Wanda Coates-Flowers



Larry Cole



Elizabeth Dailey



Richard Eberts



Derland Ellison



Mark Fascher



Debra Funk



Conrad Gren



Dawn-Carole Harris



Cheryl HeyLiger



Savoth Hy



Marsha Jackson



Karen Johnson



Lawrence Leahy



Joanne Long



Joyce Mayfield



Jerad McIntyre



David Milligan



Theresa Negron



Kevin Pace



Nandy Perillo



Shafak Pervez



Kim Phillips



Col. Vincent Quarles



Steven Reed



Charlie Riley



Thomas Semotuk



James Slomer



Richard Spigler



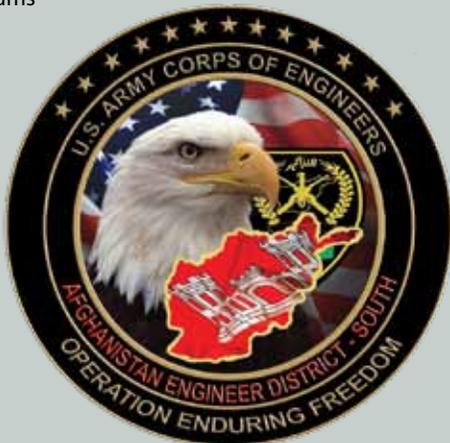
Trudy Templeton



Lawrence Thomas



Thaddeus Williams



Moving on

Spc. Brandon Abraham, Joshua Adekanbi, David Alexander, Gurprett Bains, Brian Brandt, Capt. Sean Burnett, Brian Combs, Theresa Cox, Anne Crenshaw, Maj. Christina Cook, Jeffrey Daniels, Qiana Davis, Gary Desmarais, Henry C. Egbuka, Frederick Espy, Geoff Fallon, Phillip German, Joe Godwin, Charles Gordon, Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Hofstetter, Eric Horcick, Richard Horton, Scott Hughes, Master Sgt. Kevin Hughes, William Johnson, Mark Jones, Sgt. Dennis Kleyn, Roger Kohls, Mark Kwon, Georgia Lewis, Dimael Lopez-Roman, Rick D. Mers, Eric Miller, Ahmed Mohammed, Cmdr. Hallock Mohler, Leslie Olson, Michael Patrick, Bonnie Perry, Norman Rasmussen, Karen Rippey, Rosana Rocha, Timothy Runquist, Terry Rupe, Fredrick T. Schelby, Regina Schowalter, Robert Sokoloski, Edward Starnes, Mark Summers, Staff Sgt. Michael Swope, Bruce Walrad, Col. Benjamin Wham, Billy Williams, David Williams, Peter Wilson, Mervin J. Wolfe