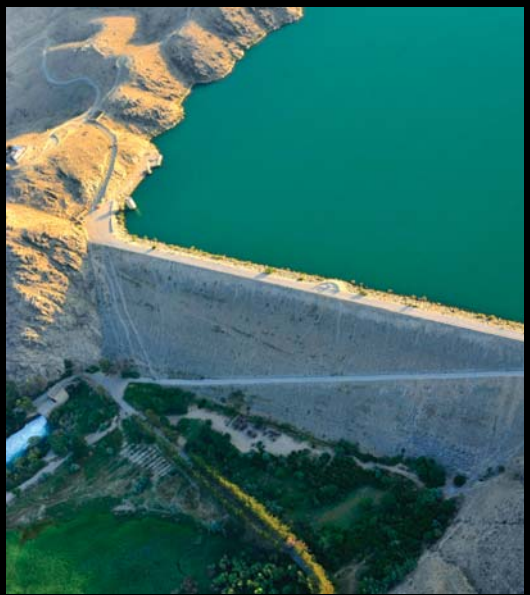
# Engineering Freedom

## Biannual Retrospective

**BUILDING STRONG® infrastructure to promote security and stability in Afghanistan**



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers®**
Afghanistan Engineer District-South

## Engineering Freedom

**Commander**
**Army Col. Vincent V. Quarles**

**Deputy Commander**
**Army Lt. Col. Stephen H. Bales**

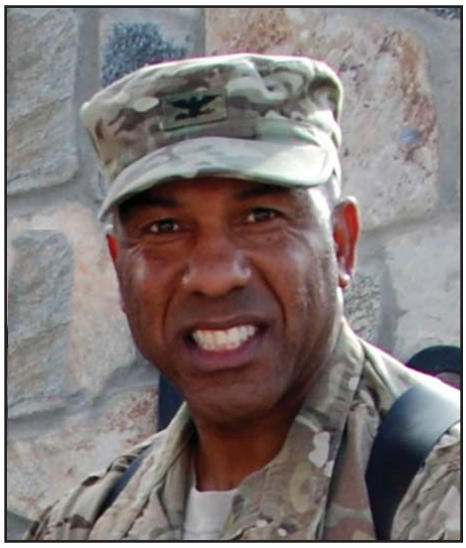
**Chief, Public Affairs**
**Karla Marshall**
**COMM: (540) 722-6263**
**DSN: (312) 265-6263**

**Public Affairs Specialist**
**Layout & Design**
**Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo**
**COMM: (540) 667-5705**
**DSN: (312) 265-6263**

The Engineering Freedom Biannual Retrospective is a magazine of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South (AED-South) and is an unofficial publication authorized by AR 360-1. It is produced twice a year in the Afghanistan theater of operations. Views and opinions expressed in the Engineering Freedom Biannual Retrospective are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. All photographs appearing herein are by the Public Affairs Office at AED-South unless otherwise accredited. The mission of the Engineering Freedom Biannual Retrospective is to support the commander's internal communication program for AED-South. It also serves as a communication tool for accurately transmitting policies, operations, technical developments and command philosophy to the AED-South team.


# Contents

# Commander's Message



**Col. Vincent V. Quarles, commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District – South**

District Family & Friends,
First, let me say "thank you" for all you have accomplished in 2012 and wish you all my best for 2013.

It has been my honor and a pleasure to serve as your commander during the past six months.

It is also a pleasure for me to rollout the first ever "Engineering Freedom Biannual Retrospective" because it features content documenting our **PEOPLE, MISSION, RELATIONSHIPS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS** that have occurred since I joined our district family in July of 2012.

We have been extremely busy doing what we must do to press forward toward our objectives. You should take extreme pride in all the accomplishments captured in the following pages of this magazine, along with everything else we've achieved together as a team.

For instance, the district is largely finished with project pre-awards due to your diligent efforts.

The district awarded 39 contracts from July 17 through Dec. 26 at a value exceeding $374.5 million. These contracts include Afghan National Security Forces construction, water and infrastructure, operations and maintenance, military construction and service contracts. During that same time, you completed and turned over 21 projects valued at $246 million. Some of that work is captured on the pages of this magazine.

Since my arrival, I have visited most of the project sites and have had the pleasure of meeting many of you. This issue celebrates you – the challenges you overcame, your successes and your inspiring spirit.

We face challenges ahead, to be sure, but you are the right people for the job and your integrity and selfless service will keep us pressing forward toward the goal. We still have much more to do, and I am counting on each of you to do your part.

Some district members don't often see the full picture of what is still ahead, so I want to take this opportunity to share with you just how much work we must complete. In pre- and post-award, we have 115 on-going projects—that is a lot of work! The dollar value of those projects is $2 billion. Keep in mind, of that number, we have committed to completing 37 projects worth about $514 million in the next seven months.

How can we accomplish this high volume of work and still remain motivated while continuing to build positive relationships? By doing what we are already doing so well- working together as solid teams across all of our areas of responsibility.

We all have a duty to deliver what we have said we would deliver; we've got to do it while caring for ourselves and each other. It is vital that we treat ourselves and others with respect, watch out for our own personal safety and well-being, and for the safety and well-being of those within and outside of our district. We must do all of this while maintaining balance within our daily lives here.

The mission and operations tempo demand that we stay strong to Build Strong. Take care to maintain your body, mind,and soul (physical, mental and spiritual health).

Mission success means that we aggressively work on building strong relationships with our fellow district family members, partners and customers as well.

Since I arrived, one of my personal goals was to improve communication at every level. We have put processes in place to do just that. Communication among the district family, our stakeholders, end users and the public must be frequent and continuous. Each of us has a responsibility and opportunity to help each other appreciate where we are going, how we plan on getting there and how long the journey will take.

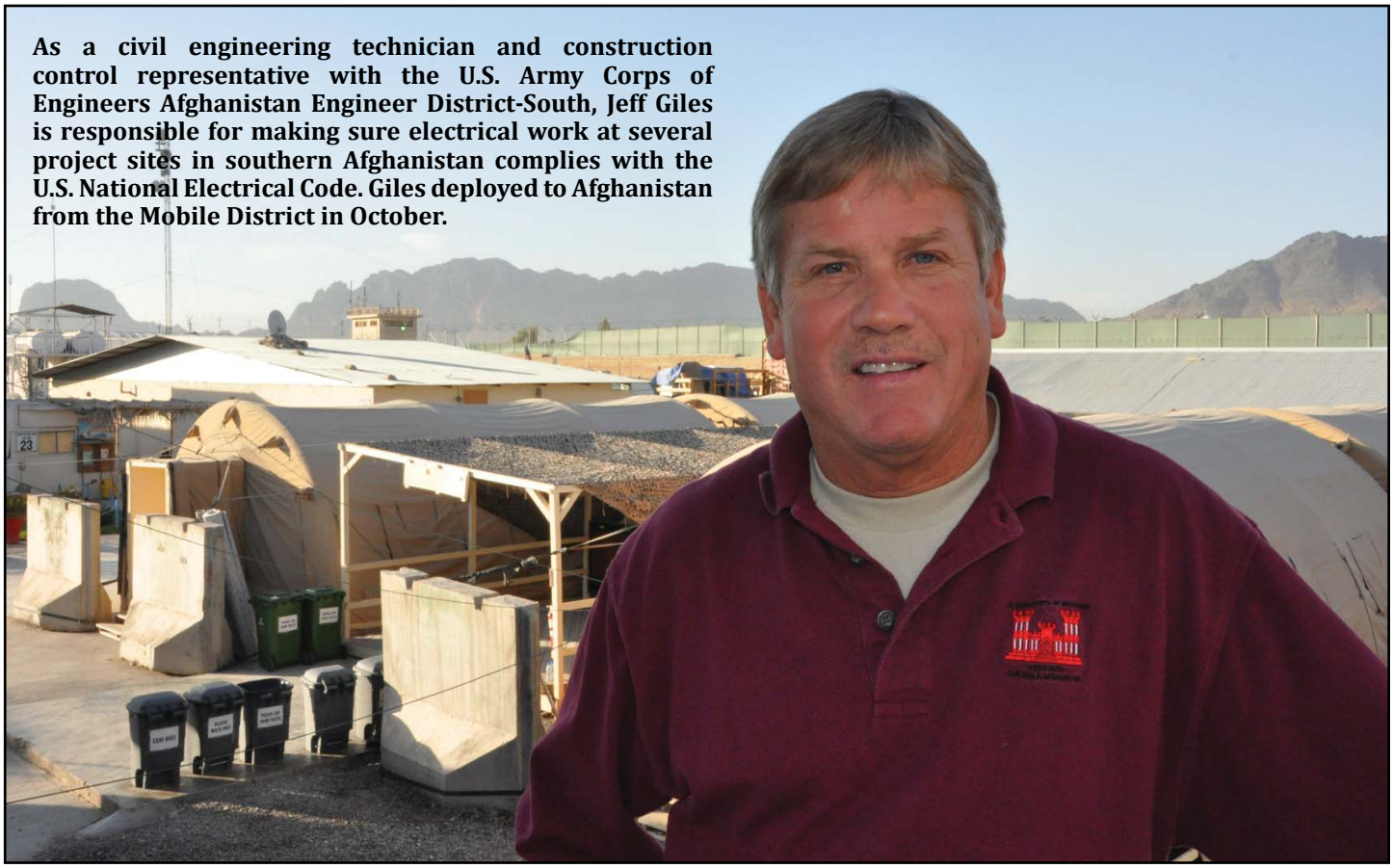
I look forward to this coming year and all the work we will do to support the people of Afghanistan.

**ESSAYONS!**

"PEOPLE ARE MY HIGHEST PRIORITY.
PEOPLE REPRESENT ALL THAT MAKES THE DISTRICT GREAT."

~ COL. VINCENT QUARLES.
AFGHANISTAN ENGINEER DISTRICT-SOUTH COMMANDER

**People are the focus of the first section of the retrospective. When a person takes the oath to become a Soldier or Department of the Army civilian, they enter into a sacred bond with the United States and her people. The men and women of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are capable of extraordinary achievements for the benefit of the communities they serve at home and abroad. In the following pages we highlight a few of the many who have contributed greatly to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Afghanistan Engineer District-South. They work hard at their respective disciplines; some have overcome tremendous odds to achieve their successes, others have found triumph in a life surrounded by family, friends and pastimes spent with them. Enjoy learning about a few of your district family members and the things that make them unique.**



**As a civil engineering technician and construction control representative with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South, Jeff Giles is responsible for making sure electrical work at several project sites in southern Afghanistan complies with the U.S. National Electrical Code. Giles deployed to Afghanistan from the Mobile District in October.**

# Assuring quality construction from seaside cities to landlocked Afghanistan

Story & Photo by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

It could be said that Jeff Giles was born of the sea. The 58-year-old former U.S. Navy Seabee who served in such exotic seaside cities as Kenitra, Morocco and Sigonella, Italy, has built a 35-year career closely connected to the water. Yet now, and for the next nine months, Giles will be supporting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers construction mission in landlocked southern Afghanistan. Despite the lack of waterways, Giles, whose favorite place to be is aboard his boat said, "It's a privilege to serve, and I'm honored that I was selected for deployment."

As a civil engineering technician and construction control representative with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, Giles is responsible for making sure electrical work at several project sites in southern Afghanistan is in compliance with established standards such as the U.S. National Electrical Code. He is based at Camp Nathan Smith in Kandahar.

"Quality assurance is very important because we want to make sure our contractors build reliable and safe facilities for the Afghans," said Giles, who has been deployed for about three months.

Giles normally works at the Mobile District's Panama City, Fla. site office, where he has served since 1987. Although this is Giles first deployment to a combat zone, he has deployed to some 15 domestic emergencies, including Hurricane Katrina, to provide disaster response. He previously served as an electrician for the Departments of the Navy and Air Force and is licensed to operate large disaster response vehicles including the Deployable Tactical Operations System, a mobile command and control vehicle system that supports quick ramp-up of initial emergency response actions.

Although Giles is a GS-09 on the U.S. civil service pay scale which ranges from GS-01 through GS-15, his emergency management experience has earned him leadership roles that most GS-09s would never fulfill. In 2011, he led a 60-person quality assurance team for three months, seven days a week, when a tornado ripped through Alabama killing nearly 300 people and leaving thousands of residents homeless.

"Tuscaloosa (Ala.) was probably the hardest mission I've ever had," said Giles. "Everything from body recovery to debris collection, to working with several different

**Story continues on page 6**

Assuring, continued from page 5

agencies, to overseeing and motivating people … I didn't know if I was going to be able to manage all of those moving parts, but I did, and I learned much about interagency cooperation and influencing people."

Giles, who holds an associate degree in electronics technology, a bachelor's degree in management and a master's degree in business management, said he realizes some may wonder why he has chosen to stay at the same office and the same grade for so long.

"I live on the water, I work on the water, I like and respect the people I work with and many of the people I care about live near me," said Giles. "Life is about choices and I've decided family and friends and free time spent enjoying life with them matters."

When in Panama City, Fla., Giles operates and maintains survey vessels and conducts hydrographic surveys for the Mobile District. He lives in his home near the water, keeps his boat in the backyard and enjoys weekends spent with his 88 year-old father and 12 year-old son fishing for grouper and snapper. His mentors include his father, James Giles, who was wounded aboard the USS Vincennes during the Battle of Midway in June 1942 and his supervisor in Panama City, Fla., Waylon Register, P.E. His father taught him about loyalty to family and duty to country and his supervisor encouraged him to participate in "Emerging Leaders," the predecessor to the USACE Leadership Development Program. Register also allowed Giles time for furthering his technical expertise and education, explained Giles.

"Life is about choices and I've decided family and friends and free time spent enjoying life with them matters," said Giles.

"Working at USACE has afforded me great benefits and opportunities, including this deployment," said Giles. "I am proud of being a Department of the Army civilian," he said.

His goal for this deployment is to do the best he can to make sure facilities are built to specification and are safe and reliable for the customers who will use them. He plans to employ the knowledge and experience honed from years of electrical work and emergency management in his efforts in Afghanistan, he said.

# From drill sergeant hat to USACE hard hat, Apuya demands

## High Standards

Story & Photo by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

His drill sergeant hat may have been traded in for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hard hat, but retired Army drill sergeant Benny Apuya still demands high standards be met by everyone he oversees. Only this time, it's on a construction site instead of at basic combat training.

"I am a drill sergeant. I will assist each individual in their efforts to become a highly motivated, well disciplined, physically and mentally fit Soldier, capable of defeating any enemy on today's modern battlefield," begins the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant Creed.

It's a motto Apuya, 50, still lives by even though it's been about a decade since he last transformed recruits into Soldiers, he explained.

"Every time I'm out at the construction site, I am mindful of exactly what we're doing and who we are doing it for. It's got to be done right, and I'm going to uphold the rigorous standards," Apuya said of the mission to build high-quality military installations for Afghan National Security Forces.

As a quality assurance and construction representative with the Afghanistan Engineer District - South, Apuya makes sure contractors follow the International Building Code as well as project plans and specifications.

**Benny Apuya, a quality assurance and construction representative with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District – South makes sure USACE construction of projects in southern Afghanistan meet plans and specifications as well as International Building Code standards. As a former Army drill sergeant, Apuya said he demands high standards and compliance with codes.**

His nearly 30 years of experience in construction, including 15 years of service as a military occupational specialty 21N, construction equipment supervisor, have afforded Apuya the expertise required to identify potential problems with construction and coordinate corrective

Story continues on page 7

Apuya, continued from page 6

actions.

Before enlisting in the Army, Apuya worked under the guidance of his brother, a master electrician. As a young Soldier, Apuya served as an MOS 21E, heavy construction equipment operator. He also earned an associate's degree in drafting and went on to build dozens of firing ranges, training areas, roads, quarries and more.

"I love construction because I can see the results of my work," Apuya said. "From nothing to something that matters; something useful and good," he added.

In 1998, Apuya was selected for Drill Sergeant School. Only the most qualified noncommissioned officers are selected to attend Drill Sergeant School because each is entrusted with teaching new recruits every aspect of the Army's initial entry training.

One of the highest honors for a noncommissioned officer is a seat in Drill Sergeant School; yet Apuya was not certain he wanted to attend. He had already graduated from Air Assault School, Airborne School and the Master Rappel Course to name a few. He was eager to remain in construction, near his family which includes his wife Rose and their four, then young, children. But it was an offer he could not refuse and serving as a drill sergeant turned out to be one of his greatest achievements, Apuya said. Over the course of his 30-month stint as a drill sergeant, Apuya estimates he trained and mentored 2,000 recruits who went on to become Soldiers. He was selected as drill sergeant of the cycle, an award reserved for the best drill sergeants, three times. Like construction work, Apuya saw the results of his labor within each basic training graduate he said, "from civilian to soldier."

After retiring from the Army as a master sergeant with 21 years of service, Apuya worked for a private sector construction company as an assistant superintendent before joining the USACE Savannah District's Fort Benning Area Office. The old Soldier was happy to be back working on a military base, he said.

"In the beginning, civilian life was very hard. It took a period of adjustment," said Apuya.

Once back within the Department of the Army as a USACE employee, Apuya felt reinvigorated by the Army Values which are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage.

"Although I may be very direct and vocal with my expert opinions on a job site, I strive to treat everyone with respect," Apuya said. "The bottom line is that we want to make sure the contractors build safe and reliable facilities that comply with the IBC, designs and specifications, and naturally, the contract itself," he said. "And it must be done within the time and budget allotted."

**"I LOVE CONSTRUCTION BECAUSE I CAN SEE THE RESULTS OF MY WORK. FROM NOTHING TO SOMETHING THAT MATTERS; SOMETHING USEFUL AND GOOD," SAID APUYA.**

Respect is his favorite Army Value, said Apuya and according to Army doctrine, respect is what allows us to appreciate the best in other people and self-respect is a vital ingredient which results from knowing you have put forth your best effort.

In Afghanistan, where access to adequate supplies and a highly-skilled workforce is not easy due to years of hostilities and neglect, Apuya, within the bounds of his prescribed authority, provides some mentoring to Afghan contractors on the job sites.

He visits construction sites several times a week and when he sees a deficiency or error, Apuya brings it to the attention of the contractor immediately and the contractor provides a corrective action plan to bring the construction into compliance. Since language differences can often be a barrier, Apuya says the best policy is to be clear, brief, and straightforward and verify required changes have been made.

To make sure construction complies with the design and code requirements, Apuya conducts preparatory, initial, follow-up and final inspections. During preparatory inspection, which is performed prior to the start of construction, Apuya reviews design drawings and confirms all required materials and equipment meet required specifications and have in fact been delivered to the job site. During the initial inspection, which is performed after the first segments of the site are constructed, Apuya inspects and verifies the quality of workmanship. He also verifies that the contractor's preliminary work is in compliance with specifications, design drawings, dimensions and contract requirements. Further along in a project's development, Apuya conducts follow-up inspections a few times a week to ensure continuing compliance with contract requirements, plans and specifications. Inspections culminate with the final inspection where all remaining issues are resolved just prior to the project being turned over to the end user.

To promote quality construction, Apuya conducts one to two hour-long meetings with the Afghan contractors weekly to make sure processes are working and to resolve any issues hampering progress on the project.

Although he uses the same expertise he's honed over the years in his approach to all construction projects, Apuya admits there is

Story continues on page 8

Apuya, continued from page 7

something special to him about building training facilities for Afghan National Army soldiers.

"I was a Soldier once and I trained a lot of Soldiers. Yes, Soldiers have the heart to live, work and train just about anywhere, but adequate facilities do make a difference," he said. "I want to build the best facilities we can for the Afghan National Army because they are entrusted with a significant mission, to serve and defend their citizens."

Building the best facilities is not an easy task to accomplish in Afghanistan, but he's committed to making it happen, Apuya said.

"I have been told, 'Benny, you always like tackling problems other folks shy away from,'" said Apuya. "Guess that's a part of my spirit," he added.

With his deployment in Afghanistan coming to a close in December, Apuya will take his problem-solving spirit to the USACE Far East District's Southern Resident Office in Daegu, Republic of Korea.

With their children grown, including one son in the U.S. Marine Corps and a daughter at university in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps, Benny and Rose Apuya, who enjoyed serving in Germany and Korea before, have decided to live and work overseas once again.

*Editor's note: Apuya completed his deployment in December 2012.*

**Benny Apuya, (left) a quality assurance and construction representative and Ira Dorsett, (right) a structural engineer, both with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, visit the Kandahar Regional Military Training Center construction project. Apuya and Dorsett visit the site several times a week to make sure construction complies with plans and specifications as well as International Building Code standards.**

# BUILDING STRONG® from the Rocky Mountains to the peaks of Afghanistan

**Jeff Regh, (center) an electrical engineer and Ken Dean, a quality assurance/ construction representative (left), both with the Seattle District, deployed to Kandahar to serve at the Afghanistan Engineer District-South. Both meet with contractors on various construction sites to determine progress on projects as they labor to build high-quality facilities for the Afghan National Security Forces.**

STORY & PHOTO BY JASMINE CHOPRA-DELGADILLO

Nestled below the rugged peaks of the wild and pristine Cabinet Mountains, an outdoor enthusiast's paradise, rests Libby, Mont., home to skier and hiker, Jeff Regh. From his duty station at Libby Dam and beautiful Lake Koocanusa in Montana, Regh works as an electrical engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Seattle District. For more than a decade, his predictable schedule and the rural location of his post has allowed Regh to explore the Rocky Mountain wilderness and volunteer as a search and rescue technician crewleader at a non-profit organization in his hometown. For the next several months, however, the only wilderness surrounding Regh will be the sharp peaks

Story continues on page 9

Rocky Mountains, from page 8

and isolated valleys of southern Afghanistan.

In May of 2012, Regh, 50, deployed to the Kandahar Vicinity Resident Office at Forward Operating Base Lindsey. He currently serves as a project engineer supporting the mission to build high-quality facilities for the burgeoning Afghan National Security Forces. Nearly as vital as the mission to mentor ANSF so they can provide safety and security in their homeland, is the USACE mission to build installations where those security forces may live, work and train. For close to a decade, the USACE, with its engineering, construction, and contracting expertise, has been building much-needed infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Technical experts like Regh, who in addition to being an electrical engineer, was a general contractor and small business owner, are crucial to delivering appropriate facilities within the time and budget allotted.

Regh's career path leading to Afghanistan is at once a mix of wanderlust and the yearning to be home. After graduating from high school in Montana, Regh was eager to leave his small town and head to the big city, he said. He set roots in urban New Jersey on account of a construction job. Six years passed and at the age of 24, cognizant that a young body is only young for so long, Regh thought it might be a good idea to go to college, he said. He had had enough of the big city, including nearby Manhattan and all its enticements, so he applied to Montana State University in Bozeman.

The son of a general contractor and from a long line of electrical workers, Regh had an aptitude for engineering, math and construction. He graduated with a bachelor of science in electrical engineering and once again wanderlust grabbed hold of him.

Regh was off to Sweden to work for an energy company. But home was always close to the self-described country boy's heart and upon finishing a four-month stint in Sweden, Regh returned to Montana. "I just really wanted to be in Montana, but jobs were scarce," he said. "The only way I could stay in Montana was to make my own job, so that's what I did."

Regh secured a small business loan, bought out a Montana-based existing electrical contractor and got to work.

He served as a contractor on many private sector as well as public sector projects including some for the USACE at Libby Dam. Proving that no one works as hard as an owner, Regh would often work seven days a week, 12 hour days.

"When you're building a business, you're either working all the time on existing contracts or looking for new work," he said.

Such a schedule was tolerable when Regh was single, but upon marrying his bride Anne, and immediately becoming stepfather to two children some eleven years ago, Regh yearned to spend more time with his new family.

An electrical engineering job with the Seattle District came up; Regh applied and was selected for the position. The predictable hours allowed Regh to enjoy time with his family and pursue his hobbies which included skiing and hiking.

On one hike with his nephew in 2001, Regh happened upon a terrifying scene in the Cabinet Mountains. A hiker had fallen into a bergschrund and was severely injured. A bergschrund is a type of crevasse on a glacier that is very deep and narrow.

"He couldn't speak, his eyes were swollen shut, his head was swelling; he was incoherent and in really bad shape," said Regh of the injured hiker.

Regh and his nephew called for help, but due to the remote nature of the accident on Snowshoe Peak, the highest peak in the Cabinet Mountains at some 8,700 feet, rescuers could not reach the victim until the following day. Regh, his nephew and the victim's companion, who was not injured, spent the night at the scene, caring for the wounded man as best as they could. The next morning volunteer search and rescue specialists with a local non-profit organization named David Thompson Search and Rescue arrived along with Air Force personnel and a helicopter from Malmstrom Air Force Base. The search and rescue volunteers set up a system to raise the victim out of the crevasse. Although he was rescued, he had suffered brain damage from his fall.

**"He couldn't speak, his eyes were swollen shut, his head was swelling; he was incoherent and in really bad shape," said Regh.**

"It was a milestone moment for me," said Regh. "I knew I wanted to help rescue victims," he said.

Since 2002, Regh has volunteered with David Thompson Search and Rescue and has participated in about 12 significant rescue and recovery events. Regh has risen through the ranks and completed special training and

Story continues on page 10

Rocky Mountains, from page 9

examinations to become a crewleader. His training has included FEMA's National Incident Management System, small unit leadership, maps, land navigation, hazardous terrain skills, stress management and more. Even his pets are involved. Tux, his 11 year-old Border Collie and Hannah, his eight year-old black Labrador, have both served as search and rescue dogs.

**"It was a milestone moment for me," said Regh. "I knew I wanted to help rescue victims," he said.**

His service as a search and rescue technician, his education and training in electrical engineering, his years as a construction worker and his yearning for travel and adventure, all contributed to Regh's decision to deploy to Afghanistan.

"I wanted to do something different, something challenging that would get me out of my comfort zone," he said.

His advice for fellow engineers who may be considering deployment, "be flexible, patient and prepared for challenges." He added, "deployment life is sometimes uncomfortable, other times it is hilarious or surprising and often, it's all three at once."

Regh said he is blessed with the best workgroup he could have asked for including Ira Dorsett, a structural engineer who deployed to Afghanistan from the New Orleans District and Al Lora, a quality assurance construction representative who deployed from the Louisville District.

One of Regh's goals for this deployment includes delivering high-quality facilities on time and on budget, which is no easy task considering language and cultural barriers as well as security concerns. Another one of Regh's goals is to leave Afghanistan having helped Afghan contractors improve their processes.

**Jeff Regh, (left) an electrical engineer from Libby, Mont. speaks with a contractor about an Afghan National Security Forces construction project. Regh deployed to Kandahar to serve as an Afghanistan Engineer District-South project engineer to build high-quality facilities for the burgeoning Afghan National Security Forces. Regh normally serves at the Seattle District's Libby Dam and Lake Koocanusa in Montana.**

"Professionals like Jeff, with a wide-range of experience as well as technical expertise, possess the know-how to manage complex projects from start to finish," said U.S. Army National Guard Lt. Col. Eric Bishop, Kandahar Area office officer in charge.

"We have an aggressive schedule and need to deliver first-rate installations in a timely manner. Folks like Jeff deliver."

## Army Civilian Corps Creed

I am an Army Civilian - a member of the Army Team.
I am dedicated to our Army, our Soldiers and Civilians.
I will always support the mission.
I provide stability and continuity during war and peace.
I support and defend the Constitution of the United States and consider it an honor to serve our Nation and our Army.
I live the Army values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.
I am an Army Civilian!

# From refugee to USACE project manager of the year

STORY BY JASMINE CHOPRA-DELGADILLO

**Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presents Viet Nguyen P.E. and PMP with the Project Manager of the Year Award for 2012. Nguyen, who normally serves at the Fort Worth District is currently deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan where he manages critical infrastructure projects aimed at increasing the Afghan government's ability to provide security, stability and economic opportunity for its citizens. (USACE Photo)**

How does a young Vietnamese refugee with no English, no money and no education go on to become a licensed professional engineer and in 2012, recognized as the best project manager in the entire U.S. Army Corps of Engineers?

"A little bit of luck and whole lot of drive," said Viet Nguyen, PE, PMP.

Nguyen, 43, who is currently based in Kandahar, Afghanistan, manages several critical construction projects aimed at supporting both Afghanistan's security and stability. He represents just one of some 37,000 USACE employees in 90 countries providing vital public engineering services in peace and war to strengthen security, energize economies and reduce risks from disasters.

Nguyen, who normally serves within the USACE Fort Worth District in Texas, earned the 2012 Project Manager of the Year award for leading some of the largest Base Realignment and Closure Act 2005 projects. Among the them was the state-of-the-art, DoD Medical Education Training Campus at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. With more than 24,000 annual graduates, the METC is the largest complex of its kind with more than 2.6 million square feet of facilities valued at $745 million. At the campus, enlisted personnel in all branches of the Armed Forces train to become combat medics, respiratory therapists, behavioral health specialists and dozens more specialties.

"It was an honor to help build a facility that will educate and train America's finest enlisted health care professionals," said Nguyen. "These students will provide crucial medical attention to troops both on and off the field, and I am pleased to know that they are learning and training in the highest-quality facility possible."

Formal education and training are perhaps more important to him than the average person because

**Story continues on page 12**

Refugee to USACE PM, from page 11

Nguyen and his four siblings struggled against immense odds just to attend school. In 1975, as knowledge that America's pullout from Vietnam was eminent, Nguyen's father, Diep Nguyen, a brigade commander in the South Vietnamese Army evacuated his family from Hue, near the demilitarized zone, to Saigon, some 400 miles away. This meant abandoning the beautiful family home near the banks of the Sông Hương or Perfume River.

"It was a beautiful place, a happy place. It wasn't a huge house, but it was my home. It was a beautiful place," repeated Nguyen.

Nguyen was about seven years old when his family fled Hue. Nguyen's father stayed back with his troops and became a prisoner of war in 1975. Seventeen years passed before Nguyen saw his father again. Saigon had fallen to the communists and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was declared in 1976. Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City. The family struggled to survive in the immediate post-war years. The Nguyens, like many others who supported the Americans and South Vietnamese, were discriminated against and the children were not allowed to attend school. The family went from a life of stability and abundance to poverty and persecution. Nguyen began working with his mother, Quynh Phan, at age 11.

"My mother and I spent long hours selling fruit, vegetables, clothing and later even selling individual cigarettes on the street," said Nguyen.

Phan was determined to seek and find a better life for her children and she wanted to make sure each had the opportunity to go to school. She wanted to get the family to the United States, said Nguyen.

From 1975-1986, an estimated 1.7 million people fled Vietnam, according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees statistics. Most fled by boats to whichever free Southeast Asian country they could reach and some escaped over land through Cambodia.

"I don't know how she did it, my mom; the courage, the desperation, sending her kids," said Nguyen of his mother's decision to send her children by boat to refugee camps. "She didn't want to put us all in one basket in case there was an accident or something worse," Nguyen said, so in 1982, when Nguyen was just 13 years old, his mother bid him farewell as he and two teenage cousins sailed away in a 30-foot fishing boat packed with more than 100 passengers.

Pham had successfully sent two of her other children by boat to a refugee camp the year prior. Those two children were surviving in Thailand.

Refugees aboard the vessel had no food and less than a half cup of water each per day. No one could stretch out because the boat had been overloaded with people, explained Nguyen.

The 1,200 nautical mile journey on the choppy South China Sea en route to a refugee camp in Malaysia took 14 days.

"The first few days people were ill; vomiting. When we finally arrived on the shore people could not even walk they were so weak," he said. "Some older folks died on the spot."

The dead were buried and an informal prayer service was held for them by the remaining refugees, Nguyen said.

After two weeks in a camp in Malaysia, Nguyen and his cousins were transported to the United Nations High Commissioner Galang Refugee Camp in Indonesia. Since they were minors, they were sent to a section of the camp for orphans and children who were traveling alone. He lived in an open bay with about 100 other children. It was in Galang that the value of teamwork was crystallized for the young Nguyen.

"Survival was about teamwork," he said.

**"The first few days people were ill; vomiting. When we finally arrived on the shore people could not even walk they were so weak," Nguyen said. "Some older folks died on the spot."**

About every two weeks refugees received food rations. Some got rice; others got cans of meat or vegetables.

"If you just opened up a can of meat, maybe it would last you two days. You had to work together to create meals that would last you until the next food ration," he said.

After about 15 months in Galang and a series of interviews with U.S. immigration authorities, Nguyen and his cousins were granted asylum in the United States. An American couple in Olympia, Wash. sponsored the Nguyen teenagers and helped them access government assistance, faith-based financial aid and an apartment. The teenagers took care of each other for about six months until Nguyen's mother and his two youngest siblings were also granted asylum and immigrated to Olympia. Nguyen's siblings who had first fled to Thailand arrived in Olympia safely too. All of the Nguyen family, except for Diep Nguyen who remained a POW, reunited in Washington. Each had made the dangerous journey by boat to a refugee camp first. For three years Nguyen and seven of his family members lived in a two-bedroom apartment. Nguyen described lean times in which even shopping at thrift stores was a luxury and the family

Story continues on page 13

Refugee to USACE PM, from page 12

would sift through dumpsters to find household goods. Although they were poor, they were safe and had enough food to eat. Much to Phan's delight, all her children attended school, even though learning English was not easy for them.

"There was no ESL (English as a Second Language courses) and we couldn't really communicate with others," said Nguyen.

**"Survival was about teamwork," Nguyen said.**

Nguyen did have an English-Vietnamese dictionary and there were a couple of subjects Nguyen was really excited about.

"Math and science," he said. "I was fluent in that."

After high school, Nguyen enrolled at Pierce College, a community college in Woodland Hills, Calif. where he completed lower division courses and met Thao Pham, the woman who would later become his wife and mother of his two children, Tyler, 10 and Ethan, 8. While at Pierce College, he also worked at an assembly plant. He then transferred to California State University Northridge and earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and went to work for a private architectural and engineering firm doing structural design. A friend encouraged him to apply for a job with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He was selected for a position at the Fort Worth District in 1995 where he served until he accepted a position with the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in San Diego, Calif. He subsequently returned to the USACE, completed the competitive Sustaining Base Leadership and Management Program for exceptional civilians, deployed to Iraq, did emergency response work during Hurricane Katrina and eventually deployed to Afghanistan Engineer District-South in Kandahar. As for the other Nguyen children, all mastered English and went on to college. One became a computer scientist, one a pharmacist and the two others became medical doctors.

Of his award, Nguyen said, "I never set out to win project manager of the year. I just wanted to be the best project manager I could be."

His advice for fellow project managers, "Honor your commitments to your customers and your team," Nguyen said. He added that it's a good idea for project managers to consider earning the project management professional certification as well as becoming licensed or accredited in their fields.

"The licenses and certifications are about discipline and showing your customers and the people you are leading that you at least have the baseline knowledge," he said. "You are able to do more things and it makes you more competitive."

Nguyen also values frequent engagement with his customers throughout the lifecycle of projects.

"You need to have good communication with everybody involved and it has to be real," he said, "not just the minimum contact required, but frequent contact because you want to create something that is going to make the customer happy."

The projects he has managed that have made customers happy include work on the Brooks Army Medical Center, the Fort Hood Hospital, both in Texas, and now projects in Afghanistan.

"Viet is a stunning example of just how far hard work, dedication and personal courage can take someone," said Col. Vincent Quarles, Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander. "He brings commitment to excellence and passion to every project he manages, and in doing so, he and others like him deliver facilities where Afghan Security Forces will live, work and train," he said. These facilities will help enable Afghan authorities to provide effective security for their citizens. Viet is an excellent engineer and leader, so it's no surprise he was selected as project manager of the year," said Quarles. "America did much to help him; now he is doing much to help America help others."

What's next for Nguyen?

"I want to complete our projects on time and on budget here in Afghanistan and get back home safely to my family," he said.

His family includes his father comfortably living in Escondido, Calif., In 1992, the Nguyen family finally secured the release of their father from a hard labor camp in Vietnam and Diep Nguyen immigrated to the United States. "Dad was so frail, just 85 pounds," said Nguyen. "But at least we were all together again. We all turned out OK; we've made our parents proud."

**"The licenses and certifications are about discipline and showing your customers and the people you are leading that you at least have the baseline knowledge," Nguyen said. "You are able to do more things and it makes you more competitive."**

*Editor's Note: Mike Beeman contributed to this article.*

# Small civil engineer achieves big results

By Afghanistan Engineer District-South Public Affairs

D'Lorah Small does not carry a tape measure or a level with her to a construction job site anymore? Instead, the 28-year-old engineer can size up a construction project and create a plan to help the South District and its customers make right decisions.

And although her opinion carries a lot of weight, the Afghan National Police branch project manager said she sees herself as a facilitator rather than a project boss.

"I am not in charge of anyone in the field. We work as a team. We work together to find resolutions," she said. "I provide collective recommendations to the customer."

Small, who graduated from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va. with a bachelors of science in civil engineering with a minor in environmental engineering when she was 18, describes herself as a combination hands-on and "office" engineer. "To be a good engineer you have to do both," she said. "You need to be able to communicate what you're seeing onto paper and you need to be able to visualize what that would look like on the ground."

Small deployed to Afghanistan for the second time in February 2012 from the Savannah District. During this tour, she has had the opportunity to see most of the Afghan National Police construction projects she is responsible for, but not all. Sometimes she walks the job with project engineers and quality assurance managers but there have been occasions, due to safety and security concerns, when she had to assess a project from the air or from the window of an up-armored vehicle.

"I typically go with the project's engineer -- they are the subject matter experts -- and I look at the overall status of construction. If there are issues on the ground that are going to impact time or cost, I communicate those back to the sponsor with ways forward to work around them," she said. "The more opportunities we have to visit the sites, the more chance I have to resolve those issues sooner and minimize the impact."

A successful engineer combines the ability to look at and see a project's successes and failures with the ability to take that information back to the office and solve problems, she said.

Small said she "always had a knack for construction" even when she was attending Princess Anne High School in Virginia Beach, Va. After graduating at 14 years old, she earned an associate's degree in civil engineering from Tidewater Community College at 16 and she earned a master's in business administration from Regent University, Virginia Beach, in 2008.


**Civil engineer D'Lorah Small accepts the Department of the Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for her efforts during her deployment and service with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South.**

Before joining the Corps of Engineers in December 2009, Small worked for the NASA Langley Research Center, the Virginia Dept. of Transportation and the U.S. Forest Service. During her first deployment to Afghanistan with the South District in 2009, Small worked as a program manager and acting resident engineer in the Kandahar Resident Office.

While she has set a professional goal of working her way through the Corps of Engineer's engineer ranks to a senior executive service position, Small's personal ambition is to mentor other aspiring engineers and gifted students. She is in the process of establishing a scholarship foundation for gifted students who may not have the financial resources to continue their education. The Small Foundation, which is still in the early stages of incorporation, will help "educationally accelerated high school students" with a grade point average of 2.5 or higher with financial assistance for tuition or books.

"I acknowledge and appreciate the people who recognize me as being special but I am not the only one.

**Story continues on page 15**

Small, from page 14

There are more to follow who will do bigger and better things than me."

Her advice to up and coming engineers: "Stay focused, never stop learning, build upon your strengths and always look to improve your abilities. Be willing to assist others in their efforts. Stay engaged, take initiative, and don't be afraid to explore opportunities. Most importantly: believe in yourself."

Small appreciates the support she and accolades she received from others and is proud of her early successes but now it is her turn to help others.

"No matter how high up you move you have to remember where you came from," she said. "And, you have to give back."

"D'Lorah brings a unique set of engineering and construction experiences to the Afghanistan National Police Program," said Fred Schelby, her previous supervisor in the Afghan National Police project management branch.

"Although relatively soft spoken and calm under pressure, she has the ability to articulate her point and remains persuasive to get others to understand her point."

Small carries technical, construction and practical experience in her engineer tool box, he said. These skills help her tackle high profile and challenging projects and communicate effectively with everyone involved.

"Whether she is working at the district headquarters, a remote project office, or accompanying a general officer on a site visit, D'Lorah has the ability to effectively communicate with various groups of individuals whether they are contractors, construction offices, fellow project managers and the members of the command group," Schelby said.

"D' Lorah Small has already accomplished so much by dreaming so big," said Col. Vincent Quarles, South District commander. "Smart, well-versed, and technically savvy, she successfully engages the most difficult challenges with poise and ease. She represents the best of today's engineer family and the future of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."

*Editor's note: Small completed her deployment in December 2012.*

# Spotlight: Afghan National Police


**Afghan police arrive to secure the Shindand Hospital building site. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is currently overseeing construction of the hospital which is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2013. (USACE photo by Karla Marshall.)**

# Architect, pilot at the nexus of art, design

Story & Photo by Karla Marshall

Did you know Jim Slomer, an architect in the district's engineering branch and a private pilot since 1989, restored two 1946 Luscombe Model 8 aircraft? With a friend and over a six-year period beginning in 1999, Slomer painstakingly restored the all-metal tail draggers to near original specifications.

"I always enjoyed the look of a Luscombe and wanted to have one of my own. When the opportunity to buy these Luscombes arose, I took it," said Slomer.

Having had an interest in model airplanes since childhood, Slomer got the first opportunity to fly during his enlistment in the U.S. Army.

"In 1966, I enlisted in the army right out of high school as an electronic signals intelligence analyst. The last two years of my enlistment I performed my job in an EA-3 (Skywarrior) aircraft … it was a terrific experience to very routinely 'go flying' and I think it was during that time that I caught the flying bug."

Slomer grew up in a small borough just outside of Pittsburgh and attended Grove City College, in western Pennsylvania where he earned his bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology. He then earned a master's degree in architecture from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh in 1982.

"I was always interested in design and art; I thought that becoming an architect was the best blend of both those interests."

Slomer flew often in the Army and always had an interest, but it wasn't until 1988 that he had enough discretionary income to pursue his pilot's license.

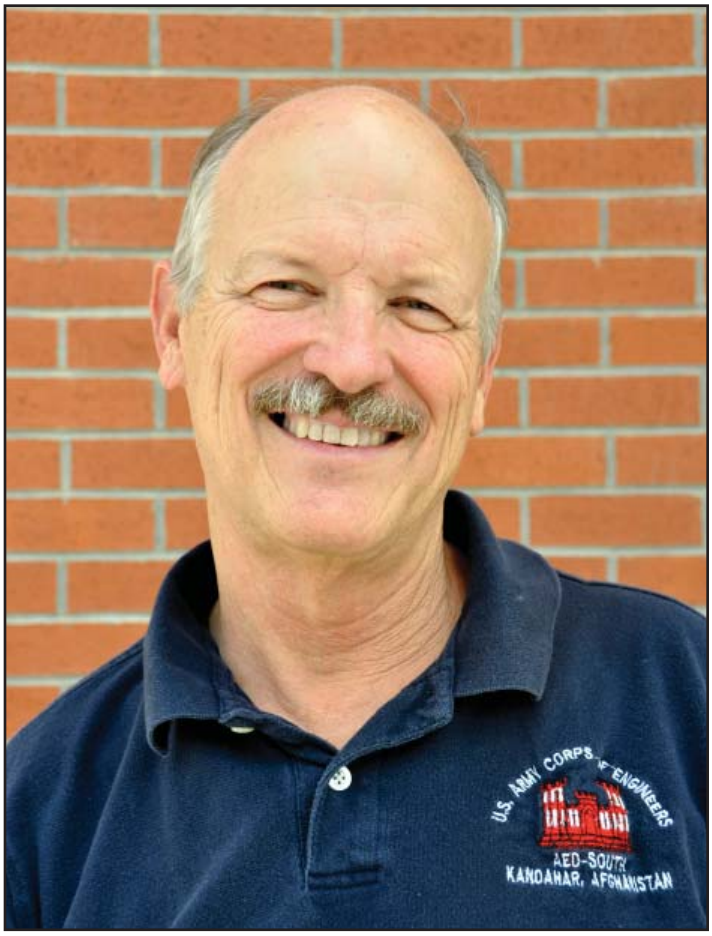
"I enrolled in the local community college in Allegheny County, Penn. and finished the requirements for my license in 1989." Slomer bought his first airplane, a 1946 Taylorcraft, a short time later and flew it recreationally for about 15 years.

"I'm partial to the older tail dragger airplanes, from the 40s and 50s," said Slomer. "I guess it is a little nostalgic for me. My son developed an interest in flying too and he flew his first solo flight in my Taylorcraft when he was 16."

When Slomer began working for the Corps of Engineers, he sold his Luscombe.

"I took a job at the Middle East District in 2009 because I was looking for new challenges and wanted to be a part of something bigger than the architecture work I was used to," he said.

Slomer has worked on a number of design projects for the Corps of Engineers and coming to Afghanistan has been a rewarding experience.




**Jim Slomer, an architect in the Afghanistan Engineer District-South's engineering branch is also a private pilot who restores planes for fun.**

"I deployed to Afghanistan from April 2011 to October 2011 and worked on the design of the J6 building on the USACE compound at Kandahar Airfield. I returned to Kandahar Airfield again in May 2012 when the building was almost complete, and will be here until May of 2013."

"Jim has been an invaluable asset to Engineering Branch," said Harrison Sutcliff, the chief of engineering at the district. "His extensive architectural experience in both private industry and with the Corps of Engineers combined with his experience in the contingency environment help enable the engineering branch in production of our construction contract documents and technical assistance to the field offices."

Working as an architect in a contingency environment is a unique and rewarding experience Slomer said but he misses flying. While he does not currently own an operable airplane, he said, "I have a project — a 60 percent complete Stolp Starduster Too biplane. I plan to complete it when I retire."

# Engineer, theologian serves at home and abroad

Story & Photo by Karla Marshall

Thaddeus "Moe" Williams, lead project engineer at the South District's Qalat Project Office, is a published author who earned a Ph.D. in theology while working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Pensacola, Fla.

Born and raised in Birmingham, Ala., Williams graduated from high school in 1979 and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in architectural engineering from Tennessee State University in 1986.

"After I received my degree in 1986, I married my sweetheart and began my USACE engineering career in Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.," said Williams.

He decided he wanted to be an architectural engineer while in middle school. "The catalyst that sparked my interest in becoming an engineer was the TV show 'The Brady Bunch.' The character Mike Brady (the father) was an architect engineer. To me that was the coolest job."

Williams recalled that he made the decision while on vacation with his family in Pensacola, Fla. "I announced to my mother on the beach that when I grew up I was going to be an architect and live in Pensacola."

His prediction came to pass as he and his wife moved to Pensacola in 1994. There, Williams worked for the Corps of Engineers, earned his doctorate in theology and worked as an assistant pastor at his church until he deployed with USACE to Iraq in 2008. "I had the honor to serve in two capacities," he said. "I worked as an engineer during the day and a minister at night."Serving is a large part of who Williams is. "Helping others has always been a desire of mine; so to me, making a difference means helping others succeed at being the best they can be."

Growing up Williams knew his family was not perfect, but seeing them face adversity together encouraged him to do the same for his family and others.

"My family is full of mentors. My parents, grandparents and uncles taught me by example. My mother and grandmother taught me the importance of God. My father, grandfather and uncles taught me that working hard, being the best friend and husband to my wife and best father to my children was the meaning of success, he said. "Sharing life's ups and downs helps others realize they aren't alone, too. When people see that I'm transparent, it gives them hope. I'm not afraid to share my failures and how much of my success was born from those failures," he added.


**Thaddeus "Moe" Williams (right), lead project engineer at the Afghanistan Engineer District-South's Qalat Project Office is a published author who earned a doctorate in theology while working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Pensacola, Fla. He is photographed with Afghanistan Engineer District-South Commander, Col. Vincent Quarles.**

Like many authors of non-fiction books, Williams has words of wisdom for others. Aspiring engineers or anyone still trying to figure out their future career goals should use the resistance and friction of success and failure to their advantage. "Nothing comes easy in this world but hold onto your dreams and vision while staying true to yourself." The key, he said is F.O.C.U.S.

(F)aithful to yourself and others
(O)pen to new ways of doing things
(C)ouragious in your quest to be the best
(U)derstand others want to assist you in being the best
(S)tand on the foundation of honesty and integrity

Never one to relax or rest on his accomplishments, Williams continues to do the best he can as an engineer and mentor.

"When Moe has a task, he will get it done and done well," said Clif Warren, the South District's chief of engineering. "He knows our projects, he motivates the rest of the Qalat team and he strives for perfection. Guys like him are crucial to the mission."

Williams has been deployed for about three years, first in Iraq and now in Afghanistan.

"Helping the government of Afghanistan create a more stable and secure country means a lot to me," he said. "We all have a role to play in this world and what I do as an engineer and minister here is very satisfying."

# Engineering opportunities through education, faith, risk

Story by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

In a village off the coast of the Caribbean Sea, surrounded by abundant areas to hunt, fish, hike and dream, 13 year-old Hector Vega decided there was only one place he wanted be: America. How then, did he end up in Afghanistan working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers?

Born in Puerto Cortés, Honduras in 1960, Vega descended from a long-line of fisherman and miners. As such, he learned much about the natural world around him and the value it contained.

From early childhood on, Vega excelled in school. He demonstrated aptitude for math beyond his years, but it wasn't dumb luck that made him so smart. Like many coastal villages bearing plenty of natural beauty but little economic opportunity, employment choices were limited in Puerto Cortés.

"I could be a miner or a fisherman," he said. "And my grandmother told me, 'don't be a fisherman because they drink too much,'" Vega quipped with a broad smile.

Born into a poor, but loving family, he learned to manage time and scarce resources wisely. Vega also came to understand that if he was going to immigrate to America, it was his intellect and potential that would get him there.

As a teenager, Vega wrote a letter to the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa explaining that he was an excellent student, responsible, healthy and fit. He wondered if he was eligible for any scholarships that would allow him to study in the United States; he was. Upon graduating from both technical and traditional high schools, Vega was on a plane to America and the University of Arizona's College of Engineering. An American company had granted him a scholarship. This marked the first time 18 year-old Vega had ever been apart from his family.

He was lonely, but quickly found a mentor in Meliton Garcia, a professor of safety and occupational health.

"To this day, I still seek his counsel," said Vega of the New Mexico native he affectionately calls padrino, which means godfather in Spanish.

As often happens in college, Vega fell in love with a beautiful, smart coed. He married quickly at just 19 years old.

Upon graduating with a bachelor of science degree in geological engineering, Vega went to work fulltime for the company that had granted him the scholarship. He was sent near the arid and barren border of Arizona and Mexico to conduct geophysical and geotechnical investigations at copper mines. He was later dispatched to the "middle of nowhere," he said, near the San Bernardino Mountains in California to work at an open pit mine. It was work he loved even though he often encountered "fat snakes, skinny horses and rats the size of baby pigs," he said. Regrettably, he also witnessed work-related fatalities. According to the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration, since the earliest days of mining, digging materials out of the earth has been considered one of the world's most dangerous occupations.

> **"I could be a miner or a fisherman," Vega said. "And my grandmother told me, 'don't be a fisherman because they drink too much.'"**

In the 1980's, laws, including the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, were established concerning hazardous waste sites. Such laws made liable those responsible for releasing hazardous waste at these sites and established a trust fund to provide for cleanup when no responsible party could be identified. Vega's interest in protecting natural resources resulted in a career shift to environmental engineering at the California Department of Toxic Substances Control.

"America had given me so much opportunity, I felt as though I had a debt to pay," he said of his decision to go into public service.

Vega had wanted to join the Navy after college and map the sea floor, but his wife urged him not to join, he said.

Vega committed himself instead to projects that reduced the volume and ensured the proper disposal of hazardous waste materials and contaminated objects. He worked with private industry to establish best practices and helped protect the environment from the harmful effects of toxic substances through the restoration of contaminated resources. This work led him to the Idaho National Laboratory where he

**Story continues on page 19**

Engineering, from page 18

collected, evaluated and managed radiological and chemically contaminated facilities, soil, water and waste material. At the lab, he met Kim Rodgers, who became another mentor.

"Kim was very supportive and impressed with my work, but recommended I pursue an advanced degree in engineering," Vega said.

**"America had given me so much opportunity, I felt as though I had a debt to pay," Vega said of his decision to go into public service.**

Despite working fulltime and being a new dad to beautiful little Lucia, Vega earned not just one advanced degree in engineering, but an additional master's degree in interdisciplinary studies, too. He had been promoted at the lab and started work on a doctorate. Then everything in his life derailed when Vega's wife told him she wanted a divorce, he said. She went to Arizona and took Lucia with her.

"The loss was so profound; I didn't want anything but my family back," he said.

Vega took a leave of absence and went to Arizona but it was of no use. The couple divorced and Lucia remained in Arizona. Vega was heartbroken and did not want to return to Idaho or the lab.

"My mother says, 'a man who doesn't own his own destiny will never become the man he needs to be.'"

So instead of returning to the lab, Vega went to Texas in search of his fortune. He bought 100 acres and 17 cows and decided to become a rancher. The cows became pets.

"How could I kill them? I knew each one," he said.

Vega also started a small business with three dump trucks and one backhoe. He made his brother the manager. Vega didn't realize his brother could not identify problems and develop and implement solutions until it was too late. When two clients failed to pay Vega about $60,000, he simply couldn't continue to operate. He sold his trucks, paid out final checks to employees and gave his cows and land to his sister. He even opened the doors to his home and told family, friends and neighbors to take whatever they wanted.

"I was divorced, I had no money, no work, and I didn't have my daughter. I felt like a total failure. All I had was my education and experience," he said, and something else. "I did have faith in God and the love and support of my mother."

Vega yearned for a fresh start and despite being in his early forties, decided to apply for internships with the federal government. Several months passed, and then on the same day, he was offered two internships, one with NASA in engineering and another with the U.S. Department of the Interior in contracting.

"I thought, 'God, I don't know what to do, please, please, please help me here," Vega said.

Since he had failed in business, Vega decided to accept the internship in contracting.

"I figured I would be exposed to business administration, contracting law, acquisition regulations. I thought maybe I would learn how to make a business profitable," he said.

The internship sent him to Virginia and once again, university, to learn procurement and contracts.

**A life-altering set of experiences prompted geological and environmental engineer, Hector Vega, to start his professional life over as an intern at the age of 42. The result has been successful. He has served as a contract specialist for 10 years and is currently serving in Kandahar, Afghanistan with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He administers contracts for the construction of facilities that will help the Afghan National Security Forces provide safety and security for Afghans. (USACE Photo by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo)**

At the Department of Interior he met Katherine Valltos, his knowledgeable supervisor who patiently guided him through all of the training and certifications he would need to become a contract specialist. Ten years post internship, Vega has served at the Departments of Defense, Justice, Commerce and more.

Vega has administered contracts for everything from equipment for Soldiers on the battlefield, to surgeries for inmates at federal prisons, to curricula for schools.

In Afghanistan, Vega administers contracts for construction projects. The USACE designs and provides construction oversight for military and police facilities that support the transfer of security operations to the Afghans. These facilities

Story continues on page 20

Engineering, from page 19

provide facilities for the Afghan National Security Forces to live, work and train.

"With 10 years of experience in procurement and 13 years in engineering, Hector adds value and accelerates the mission," said Army Lt. Col. Stephen Bales, deputy commander of the Afghanistan Engineer District-South. "Vega knows engineering and can easily characterize situations, recognize pitfalls and recommend courses of action," he said.

Although Vega is new to contracting as it pertains to large-scale construction projects, he is enthusiastic to be learning something new, he said through a broad smile. Even at age 52, he is eager to gain knowledge and new experiences, he said. In the four months he has been working in Kandahar, he has tackled a wide-range of contracting issues quite different than he is accustomed to back home.

"The contracting challenges here far exceed any other place I have ever worked," he said.

**In a village off the coast of the Caribbean Sea in Honduras, (photographed above) surrounded by abundant areas to hunt, fish, hike and dream, 13 year-old Hector Vega decided there was only one place he wanted be: America. In the 1960's, the intrepid teenager wrote a letter to the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa explaining that he was an excellent student and wondered if he was eligible for any scholarships that would allow him to study in the United States. There were. Upon graduating from high school, Vega was on a plane to America and the University of Arizona's College of Engineering.(Courtesy Photo)**

**"I BEGIN FROM A PLACE OF COOPERATION AND MUTUAL RESPECT, BUT I ALWAYS VERIFY WHAT THE CONTRACTOR IS DOING, AND I AM VIGILANT IN ADMINISTERING THE CONTRACT," VEGA SAID. "MOST CONTRACTORS WANT TO DO A GOOD JOB, THEY WANT TO DO THINGS RIGHT, BUT SOME DO NOT SHARE OUR VALUES AND WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BE ADVERSARIAL."**

In a country that has been ravaged by 30 years of war and neglect, it's a steep learning curve for many Afghan companies as they labor to comply with laws and regulations governing everything from scheduling, safety and occupational health, to subcontracting, invoicing and more.

Within the bounds of his prescribed authority, Vega educates and informs Afghan contractors about how to do business with the government.

"I begin from a place of cooperation and mutual respect, but I always verify what the contractor is doing and I am vigilant in administering the contract," he said. "Most contractors want to do a good job, they want to do things right, but some contractors do not share our values and we have no choice but to be adversarial."

Vega said he sees contractors as an important stakeholder, a valuable member of a team trying to accomplish something good for the end user.

With eight months remaining before he returns to his usual duty as a contract specialist with the Department of Defense Education Activity in Virginia, Vega expects to learn many more new things, including some Pashto.

Eagerly awaiting his safe return home is his daughter Lucia, now 18, along with his second wife, Johanna, 42; and his three step children; Johan, 17, Christopher, 13, and Katherine, 12. Vega met Johanna through his mother, who happened to meet Johanna at church. Joyful family, check. Good job, check. Perhaps Vega's prayers have been answered.

# Father, son share deployment at Kandahar Airfield

Story & Photo by Karla Marshall

Gerard Rabalais signed up for the Vietnam Era Draft in 1972 but he was never called to serve as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces. After years of regret, he answered a self-imposed call in early 2012 by volunteering to work in Afghanistan with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

His son Jason Rabalais arrived at Kandahar Airfield for his own tour some 10 months later.

"I always regretted not serving in an active duty capacity," said Gerard who deployed from the USACE Louisville District. "I realized I could deploy and do my part as a civilian so I did. I've been here 11 months and have just one left."

Gerard, 58, is a quality assurance and construction representative in the Afghanistan Engineer District-South Kandahar Airfield Area Office. He is primarily responsible for overseeing the quality of military construction on Kandahar Airfield.

**Jason Rabalais, right, explains the work he is doing to repair a Blackhawk helicopter to his father, Gerard Rabalais at Kandahar Airfield Dec. 22. The elder Rabalais is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employee deployed to KAF; his son is a contractor also deployed to KAF.**

**"I didn't deploy to be with my dad, but the fact that he is here is a benefit," said Jason Rabalais.**

"I check the quality of our contractors' work and make sure it meets contract standards," he said. "If it doesn't, I work with the project engineer to get the deficiencies corrected."

Quality facilities on Kandahar Airfield enable U.S. Forces to perform their mission without unnecessary distractions, Gerard said.

Jason, 28, a veteran who served six years in the Army and had four combat deployments, is a helicopter electronics mechanic. He now lives about a five minute drive from his father but in the U.S. they live a few hours apart.

"I didn't deploy to be with my dad, but the fact that he is here is a benefit," said Jason. "My company has a contract in Afghanistan for helicopter maintenance. I volunteered but I wasn't sure where I would end up. I'm glad it is Kandahar."

Despite being only minutes apart, their schedules keep them busy so they do not see each other as often as they had hoped.

"I work until 7:30 each night," Jason explained before turning to his father to make Christmas dinner plans. "Dad, can you pick me up?" he asked. "We can have dinner when I get off."

After a few minutes of discussion, the plan was set. Gerard grinned then looked at photos his son got via email.

"My son is four," said Jason. "If I can't be with him and my wife on Christmas at least I've got my dad."

Both father and son will return to Kentucky when their deployments are over and for the elder Rabalais, his upcoming return to the U.S. will be bittersweet.

"This deployment has been so much more than I could have asked for," he said. "I'm busier than I expected, but the Corps of Engineers provided me with a great job opportunity, good living conditions and the ability to do my part."

Rabalais said that his time in Afghanistan went by very quickly because he was so busy; now he is looking forward to returning home to the rest of his family.

"I'm originally from the New Orleans area and a lot of our family is still in Covington, La.," he explained, "but I moved to Kentucky in the 1980s. My fiancée, kids and grandkids are there."

"MISSION– WE ARE HELPING THE GOVERMENT OF AFGHANISTAN PROVIDE SECURITY AND STABILITY FOR ITS CITIZENS. EVERY BUILDING WE TURN OVER FURTHERS THAT GOAL."

~ COL. VINCENT QUARLES,
AFGHANISTAN ENGINEER DISTRICT-SOUTH COMMANDER

**The Afghanistan Engineer District-South mission is to execute quality and timely construction and engineering operations in the RC-South, RC-Southwest and RC-West regions of Afghanistan in support of the USFOR-A mission and the integrated Afghan National Security / Coalition Forces' counter-insurgency (COIN) operations aimed at protecting the population and defeating the Insurgency Forces (INS). On order, the district provides sustainable development projects for the Afghan people that employ the populace, build skilled human capital and promote the future stability of Afghanistan. Competent Soldiers and Civilians pursue mission excellence wherever and whenever possible. Achieving results consistently and ethically is at the cornerstone of everything we do.**

# Afghanistan Engineer District-South history

*The United States and its coalition partners sent military forces to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001. A six-person U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Forward Engineer Support Team deployed with the U.S. Army's XVIII Airborne Corps to provide engineering, construction, planning, contracting and real estate services. The U.S. Forces mission and long-term commitment to Afghanistan prompted USACE to bolster its presence in Afghanistan in 2004 with a Corps of Engineers district headquartered in Kabul. The district's personnel provided a full-range of engineering expertise to the combatant commanders.*

*The question was not whether the forces needed facilities from which to operate, but rather what kind and how permanent the structures needed to be? The answer was not simple. Some locations had one level of need while others had more, or less. USACE engineers, working with U.S. Forces-Afghanistan leaders, began designing military bases and facilities that met the current and future needs of the force and from which U.S. forces could execute their mission.*

*The deploying troops needed runways, taxiways, hangars, billeting, dining facilities, electricity, fresh and wastewater solutions, work spaces, roads, fuel depots and warehouses. USACE played a role in that early mission by designing and constructing facilities to meet those growing needs.*

*Five years later, in 2009, President Obama ordered a 30,000 U.S. troop surge. USACE created a second district, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South in Kandahar on September 29, 2009 to better manage the increase in military construction requirements.*

# USACE's military construction program in southern Afghanistan winds down

STORY BY KARLA MARSHALL

Since its beginning in 2009, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South has awarded 46 contracts for military construction and has completed 35 of them. Those 35 projects, in south and west Afghanistan, are valued at about $540 million. The South District has 11 more military construction projects which will be done by the spring of 2013, one slated for completion in the fall of 2013 and one slated for award in late December 2012

The larger-scale and more costly military construction projects were built on Kandahar Airfield in Kandahar province and Shindand Air Base in Herat province.

The South District also completed several more construction projects at Forward Operating Bases and other smaller

**Since its beginning in 2009, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South has awarded 46 contracts for military construction and has completed 35 of them. Those 35 projects, in south and west Afghanistan, are valued at about $540 million. The South District has 11 more military construction projects like the one photographed above which will be done by the spring of 2013, one slated for completion in the fall of 2013 and one slated for award in late December 2012. (USACE Photo.)**

**Story continues on page 24**

**Since its beginning in 2009, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South has awarded 46 contracts for military construction and has completed 35 of them. Those 35 projects, in south and west Afghanistan, are valued at about $540 million. The South District has 11 more military construction projects like the one photographed above which will be done by the spring of 2013, one slated for completion in the fall of 2013 and one slated for award in late December 2012. (USACE Photo.)**

installations. For instance, temporary housing on FOB Dwyer in Helmand province and FOB Wolverine in Zabul province gave U.S. Forces a safe and comfortable place to live.

USACE built fire stations at Multi-National Base Tarin Kowt in Uruzgan province and FOB Ramrod in Kandahar province to create safer installations from which our forces could conduct their missions. USACE also oversaw the construction of wastewater treatment facilities on MNB Tarin Kowt, Kandahar Airfield, Shindand Air Base, FOBs Delaram and Dwyer to improve sanitary conditions while troops remain in Afghanistan.

"When we transition in 2014, our completed military construction program will have totaled about $706 million," said Army Col. Vincent Quarles, Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander. "We are finishing up some critical construction that will facilitate the return of vehicles and equipment to the U.S. We are also finishing the last few aircraft hangers, warehouses, roads, utility upgrades and other enduring facilities that support our forces."

## KANDAHAR AIRFIELD

As the busiest single-runway airport and largest NATO base in the world, according to the International Security Assistance Force, Kandahar Airfield plays a central role in sustaining the 26,000 U.S. and coalition forces and contractor personnel at the airfield and the thousands more assigned to coalition installations throughout southern Afghanistan.

The 3rd Infantry Division, a tenant unit currently headquartered at Kandahar Airfield and serving as the command element for Regional Command-

**Story continues on page 25**

**Since its beginning in 2009, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South has awarded 46 contracts for military construction and has completed 35 of them. Those 35 projects, in south and west Afghanistan, are valued at about $540 million. The South District has 11 more military construction projects like the one photographed above which will be done by the spring of 2013, one slated for completion in the fall of 2013 and one slated for award in late December 2012. (USACE Photo.)**

South, moved into its USACE-constructed headquarters facility in late summer 2012 when they deployed to Afghanistan.

"The division headquarters facility can accommodate at least 500 personnel," said Quarles. "It includes offices, conference rooms, a command center, entry control points and an operations bridge."

At a cost of about $60 million, the division headquarters is a permanent, hardened facility that enables coalition forces to execute their mission with maximum capability.

U.S. Forces and their NATO allies share many facilities on Kandahar Airfield. Among them are the runway and airfield facilities. Hundreds of civilian and military aircraft fly into and out of KAF every day, said Steve McCall, the air traffic management site manager and an air traffic controller at the airfield. Both fixed and rotary wing aircraft from several coalition countries can be seen at the airfield at any time along with Afghan airlines and chartered passenger aircraft.

To keep air traffic moving with minimal mission interruption, the South District paved some 4.9 million square feet of runways, taxiways, shoulders and ramps on KAF alone.

"That's the equivalent of 100 football fields," Cummings explained.

Air traffic was not the only USACE focus — the district also built facilities for vehicular needs as well. One of those projects, the Theater Vehicle Maintenance Facility on Kandahar Airfield, is the single point for refurbishing and

**Story continues on page 24**

MILCON, from page 25

retrofitting the U.S. fleet of heavy, medium, and light tactical vehicles, mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles (MRAP), line haul trailers, armored security vehicles and route clearance vehicles.

The project includes facilities where workers can repair about 150 wheeled vehicles per month.

The 11 major structures associated with the project include two vehicle maintenance buildings, two administration buildings, a construction equipment and material handling equipment shop, robotics shop, storage buildings, tire repair shop, paint shop with paint booth, fire pump house and vehicle wash station, said Maj. Frederick Cummings, the South District's Kandahar Area Office officer in charge.

The facility is almost complete, with the wash-rack portion operational since the summer.

"The theater vehicle maintenance facility will provide our forces with unprecedented in-theater capabilities," said Cummings. "Already dozens of vehicles have been washed thoroughly in preparation for retrofitting and redeployment to the U.S."

**"We have given our Forces quality facilities; those who will remain in Afghanistan to assist with the transition of security responsibilities to the Afghans will continue to use them," said Col. Vincent Quarles.**

The wash racks operate 24 hours each day but shut down for 1.5 hours of maintenance during each 12-hour shift. The wash rack system also recycles about 400-800 gallons of water each day.

"The vehicles undergo an agricultural inspection upon arrival to the States," said Cummings. "The goal is to ensure that the vehicles leaving KAF don't carry soil, vegetation or insects that could potentially endanger U.S. ecosystems."

## SHINDAND AIRBASE

"USACE oversaw about $111.6 million worth of construction at Shindand Air Base, which is the headquarters and main training installation of Afghanistan's air force," said Nabil Abourialy, the lead engineer for USACE projects in Regional Command-West which includes Herat, Farah, Ghor and Badghis provinces.

"At Shindand, U.S. Forces already had a fairly secure base to operate from but we expanded it."

The construction of a perimeter wall which tripled the size of Shindand Air Base was completed in July 2011 and included 52 guard towers, perimeter roads, lighting and other antiterrorism and force protection measures. Abourialy said that with the expansion, the U.S. Forces on Shindand were able to relocate and make room for more runway, apron and airfield management facilities.

A strategic airlift apron, taxiway, passenger terminal and cargo terminal project costing $18.2 million was also completed in 2011 at Shindand. According to Air Force Col. John Hokaj, the previous commander of the U.S. Air Force's 838th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group based at Shindand, the multi-faceted Corps of Engineers project enabled the 838th AEAG to continue regular operations while training Afghanistan's budding Air Force.

Further, a rotary wing apron, about 133,000 square yards in size, storage facilities, solid waste management and wastewater treatment plants and an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance apron all constructed by the Corps of Engineers, contributed to the forces abilities to execute their mission.

At Shindand, USACE oversaw a total of 12 MILCON contracts, one of which included 28 aircraft shelters.

"The last of the hangers were finished this month and we've only got one MILCON project left on Shindand," said Abourialy. That one project is a wastewater treatment plant scheduled to be complete on Jan. 31, 2013.

## AIRFIELDS

Airfields are critical successful military operations and airfield construction, whether at KAF or Shindand, doesn't just include paving runways and taxiways. Cummings said appropriate lighting and markings to distinguish runways from taxiways, tie downs, curbs, gutters, storm drainage, fuel supply points and force protection measures are necessities.

"Kandahar Airfield and its aircraft facilities are similar to those found at many U.S. bases," Cummings continued. "The hangers have fire suppression systems, some warehouses are climate controlled, and the personnel transiting through KAF and Shindand have terminals and waiting areas."

There are significant differences though. "We are in a contingency environment," explained Quarles. "Our projects – the requirements, designs, specifications and costs all come together to meet very specific needs. The contracts had to be clear. Our architects and engineers had to consider the use of local materials and labor. They had to carefully monitor the

Story continues on page 27

**Shawn Huebner inspects the wash rack water recycling system at the Theater Vehicle Maintenance Facility on Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. The recycling system reuses about 80% of the water that is used for washing vehicles. (USACE Photo by Karla Marshall)**

work and most importantly they oversaw each phase of building to deliver the highest-quality construction."

That's no easy task even under the best of circumstances.

"In Afghanistan, we applied the same professional standards to our work as we do in the States," Quarles said. "But in Afghanistan we oversee construction in hostile areas where security is a concern and logistics can be a challenge."

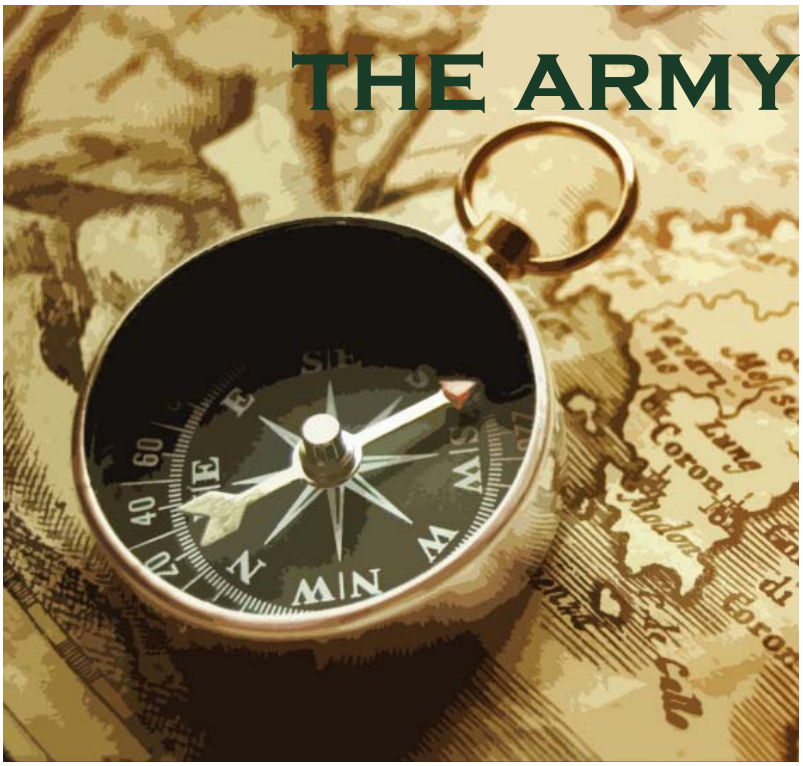
A significant challenge was the border closure between Pakistan and Afghanistan that lasted about seven months; from November 2011 through June 2012.

"When the border closed, many of the materials our contractors ordered got caught up in Pakistan," explained Quarles. For some projects, the closure meant months of delay.

"We worked with our contractors to find alternate suppliers and recover their schedules," Quarles said. "Our project engineers and managers mentored contractors and helped them find solutions to resolve logistical delays."

When the border reopened, construction schedules were solidified and projects moved forward.

"Today, we are very close to finishing our military construction program. We have given our Forces quality facilities and those troops who will remain in Afghanistan to assist with the transition of security responsibilities to the Afghans will continue to use them," Quarles added.



# THE ARMY VALUES

**THE UNIVERSAL VALUES OF LOYALTY, DUTY, RESPECT, SELFLESS SERVICE, HONOR, INTEGRITY AND PERSONAL COURAGE ENABLE YOU TO SEE WHAT IS RIGHT OR WRONG IN ANY SITUATION AND MAKE DECISIONS INFORMED BY THOSE VALUES.**

# USACE builds road in Helmand province, cuts travel time in half

Story by Karla Marshall

**The Nawa to Lashkar Gah road, currently under construction by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Helmand province, Afghanistan will be complete in June 2013. Already, the road has cut motorists' travel time in half. USACE is constructing the road in compliance with American Association of State Highway and Transportation Official Standards. The Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Ministry of Public Works Road and Highway standards also informed the road's design. (USACE photo.)**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is constructing a road in Helmand province, from Nawa to Lashkar Gah, that already has cut travel time in half.

"We are about 46 percent finished with construction on this 14.3 mile road," said Robert Greco, the project manager. "But already travelers are saving about 30 minutes of time by using the portions we have completed."

Construction on the two-lane road began in April 2012 and is scheduled for completion by June 2013. In addition to the 23-foot-wide paved roadway, there will be five-foot-wide gravel shoulders on each side and about 18 culverts to reduce the risk of flooding.

"This road will greatly benefit the people of Helmand province because travel times will be significantly reduced," said Army Col. Vincent Quarles, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander. "Once we complete the road, in about eight months, travelers will have an even faster way to get from Nawa to Lashkar Gah."

USACE is constructing the road in compliance with American Association of State Highway and Transportation Official Standards, said Greco who deployed to the Afghanistan Engineer District-South from the New York District.

AASHTO standards are used for road projects throughout the U.S. and in many countries around the world, Greco explained. The Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Ministry of Public Works Road and Highway standards were also incorporated into the road's design.

Greco and a team of engineers traveled the entire road in late November to check on progress and ensure standards were met.

"We had the contractor do borings to confirm the depth of the subbase; we measured the width of the road and inspected the surface at intervals along the road."

In road construction, the subbase is often the main load-bearing layer of pavement. It is necessary for surfaces used by vehicles. Its role is to spread loads evenly.

"Overall, we were satisfied with the quality of construction," said Mehdi Mizani, the Helmand Area Office lead engineer. "Borings showed that the subbase exceeded the design standards by about one half inch and that means quality."

Mizani said that getting the road done as quickly as possible was an important goal, but that quality was the number one priority.

At this point in construction, motorists are able to travel on asphalt surfaces only at intervals along the route, but even those are not the finished surface. Some may think the detours and sub base are completed parts of the completed project, Mizani remarked, but they are not; they are diversions that allow traffic to move while road construction continues.

"They still must detour off the road where we're working and in some sections they are driving on the subbase. Both of those issues slow them down," said Mizani.

"We'd like to have the road finished so that people could travel more quickly," he said. "As the weeks go by and more of the road is completed, travel times will continue to improve."

*Editor's Note: Robert Greco completed his deployment in December.*

# Contracting Officer Representatives receive refresher training in Afghanistan

STORY BY KARLA MARSHALL

Administering U.S. government construction contracts is challenging. To ensure that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' administrative contracting officers, contracting officer representatives and construction representatives understand the nuances of administering contracts in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South office of counsel and contracting office are visiting construction offices throughout the district to reinforce the basics and discuss key contractual elements.

"In contingency environments like Afghanistan, U.S. contract laws sometimes do not address the unique situations our contracting representatives encounter," said Dawn-Carole Harris, district counsel who deployed from USACE's Fort Worth District. "My job is to make sure that the contracts we enter into on behalf of the U.S. government comply with U.S. laws, protect the government's interests and are administered correctly."

Providing refresher training to employees directly involved with the contractors helps the district appropriately administer construction contracts.

On Nov. 3, Harris and Edward Boddie, the district contracting construction branch chief, provided refresher training at the Tarin Kowt Resident Office in Uruzgan province and have upcoming training sessions scheduled at other district area and resident offices.

"Many of the project, resident, and area engineers deploy to Afghanistan and oversee projects that are very different from those they work on in their home districts," said Boddie, who deployed from the Philadelphia District.

For instance, there are several different funding sources for construction projects, each with their own set of requirements and regulations, and one is unique to Afghanistan, said Boddie.

USACE builds projects with Commanders Emergency Response Funds, Afghanistan Infrastructure Funds, Military Construction Appropriations Act funds and Department of Defense Appropriations Act funds. "It gets tricky because the rules governing each type of funding are different and we must make sure to apply the correct set of regulations to each contract," Boddie explained.

At the end of the day, the basics of construction contract administration that apply in the U.S. are equally applicable here. The district's legal and contracting offices reinforce best practices in contract administration, give district employees the tools and knowledge necessary to get the work done and help them identify and resolve contracting issues.

"Contingency environments play havoc with the duration and cost, and present situations that most of our people will never encounter in the U.S." Harris continued.

For instance, contractors bear a lot of the risk in construction contracts. In the U.S. builders, contractors and subcontractors have access to builder's risk insurance and other safeguards to protect their interests during construction.

"That's not the case here," Harris continued. "Afghanistan does not have the kind of insurance programs that insulate small Afghan construction companies from risks beyond their control."

If storms destroy materials or on-going construction, USACE contracts permit extra time, but no additional money to repair or replace the damaged work. So, the contractor is liable for the costs of the delay and must also repurchase materials at their own expense.

"Sometimes those expenses are enough to severely impact a contractor's ability to perform," said Harris.

**"WE CAN'T ASSUME THAT OUR CONTRACTORS OR THEIR SUBS UNDERSTAND USACE CONTRACTS OR THEIR OBLIGATIONS," SAID D.C. HARRIS, ESQ.**

Because risks impact project completions, it is important to be diligent in oversight and administration of the work and in encouraging the contractors to maintain good construction practices.

Since USACE works with many foreign contractors who, in turn, hire foreign subcontractors, district contracting officers and contracting officer representatives must be alert and diligent to monitor work progress, site safety and ensure accurate submittals for work completed.

"We can't assume that our contractors or their subs understand USACE contracts or their obligations," said Harris. "Our CORs do much more than just oversee work. They mentor contractors and help them learn to

**Story continues on page 30**

Contracting from page 30

apply international standards and business processes to their work."

When contractors fall behind on their schedule or perform poorly, it is up to engineers who oversee their work and the CORs to utilize the contract tools available to get projects back on track.

"The CORs are the eyes and ears of the district's contracting officers," said Boddie. "They are in direct contact with the contractors and they provide me and the other contracting officers with the information we need to enforce the contracts."

That's no small task for a USACE district with more than $1.65 billion worth of construction occurring across the south and west of Afghanistan.

"We have about 260 construction, operations and maintenance and service contracts on-going with more to award by the end of December," said Gale Ross, the district's previous chief of contracting. "Every one of our CORs benefits from this refresher training and every project benefits from the professionalism and knowledge of our CORs."

**The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is overseeing about 260 construction, operations and maintenance and service contracts in the south and west of Afghanistan. Construction contracts for project sites like this require close oversight and management. (USACE photo.)**

## The NCO Creed

No one is more professional than I. I am a Noncommissioned Officer, a leader of soldiers. As a Noncommissioned Officer, I realize that I am a member of a time honored corps, which is known as "The Backbone of the Army". I am proud of the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps, the Military Service and my country regardless of the situation in which I find myself. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit, or personal safety.

Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind—accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my soldiers. I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient. I am aware of my role as a Noncommissioned Officer. I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my soldiers and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment.

Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve; seniors, peers, and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, Noncommissioned Officers, leaders!

# BUILDING STRONG® means building safe


**Jeff Ice, a safety and occupational health specialist who deployed to Kandahar from the USACE New York District inspects the harness on a construction worker at a job site. Construction is one of the most dangerous industries, not only in Afghanistan, but worldwide. As such, safety and occupational health specialists inspect job sites and equipment, and observe practices to ensure safety standards and regulations are followed. (Image has been altered to protect the identity of the laborers photographed.)**

STORY & PHOTOS BY JASMINE CHOPRA-DELGADILLO

Throughout the Afghanistan Engineer District-South area of operations, where dozens of Afghan National Security Forces installations are under construction, safety and occupational health specialists visit job sites daily to make sure laborers are protected from unnecessary risks.

"A person ought to be able to go to work, earn a living and return in the same condition he left home in," said Bruce Barrett, chief of Safety and Occupational Health for the Afghanistan Engineer District-South.

The safety of Afghans and Coalition troops continues to be the highest priority for NATO's International Security Assistance Force. To support the development of a safe and secure Afghanistan, USACE is building dozens of high-quality military and police facilities where ANSF will live, work and train. Construction is one of the most dangerous industries, not only in Afghanistan, but worldwide. As such, safety and occupational health specialists inspect job sites and equipment, and observe practices to ensure safety standards and regulations are followed.

"Nobody should have to labor in a reckless environment," said Barrett, who deployed to Kandahar from the USACE Southwestern Division in Dallas, where he serves as the division's chief of Safety and Occupational Health. Barrett has more than 40 years experience in the industry and has managed safety and occupational health programs to excellence at four of the nine divisions and several of the districts within the USACE.

"The people of Afghanistan have suffered decades of conflict which have ravaged public infrastructure and resulted in neglect for safety and health education in the Afghan construction industry," explained

**Story continues on page 32**

Safety, from page 31

Geronimo Gomez, a safety and occupational health specialist with more than 35 years of experience. Gomez was employed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the United States for 25 years. After retirement from OSHA, Gomez taught safety and occupational health courses at the University of Texas in Arlington.

Years of war and neglect may have created an education and skilled labor deficit, and imparting a culture of safety is challenging, but not impossible, explained Gomez.

USACE employs competent, experienced local Afghan engineers who provide on the ground quality assurance services and understand the importance of maintaining a safe and healthy work environment. Additionally, USACE safety and occupational health specialists educate workers about the benefits of maintaining a good safety and occupational health program during their site visits. Benefits which include reduced absenteeism due to illness or injury, less lost time, overall costs savings and most importantly, less fatalities.

More than 11,000 workers die annually in the course of their labor in Central Asia according to the International Labour Organization, a United Nations agency with government, employer, and worker representatives.

Common hazards for construction laborers include falls, trench and scaffold collapse, electrocution and failure to use proper personal protective equipment.

**Jeff Ice, a safety and occupational health specialist who deployed to Kandahar from the USACE New York District shows an Afghan construction worker how to detect a fake fire extinguisher. Some counterfeit ones, instead of releasing the normal fire-stopping agent they are supposed to release, spit out flour or other non-effective substances.**

"I look at fall protection, ladders, electrical work, excavations, protective systems and much more when I'm at a site," said Jeff Ice, a safety and occupational health specialist who deployed to Kandahar from the New York District. "I observe the workers, I check their equipment, I ask workers questions and I listen," he said.

**"A person ought to be able to go to work, earn a living and return in the same condition he left home in," said Bruce Barrett.**

For Ice, a former construction worker who survived a life-altering fall on the job that resulted in disability, safety is personal. Ice has worked for USACE since 2010 and in 2012, won the New York Federal Executive Board Emergency Preparedness and Employee Safety Award. He was also named the New York District's Safety Employee of the Year for 2011.

One of the most important aspects of his job is recommending measures to help protect workers from hazards. Some contractors don't know how, don't know they must or don't care to provide safe work environments for their staff. Workers may not be aware they deserve to labor in safe environments and workers may not perceive hazardous job sites as dangerous.

"Safety and occupational health is influenced by social, economic and cultural factors," said Ice, who holds a master of science degree in safety management.

"Interviewing family members of a deceased person, who died as a result of an industrial accident, is a very emotional situation, especially if the death was preventable and was caused by employer or employee negligence," Gomez said.

Gomez investigates accidents to identify their causes and determine how they might be prevented in the future.

"As we build installations that will enable the Afghan authorities to provide effective security across the country, we must create the conditions for a healthy and safe work environment for the people who are building these facilities," Barrett said. "It's about protecting lives and every worker's life matters."

# Program prepares Afghans for facilities operations, maintenance

STORY BY JASMINE CHOPRA-DELGADILLO

**With the support of Infrastructure Training Advisory Groups comprised of coalition troops with the technical expertise to assess facilities and mentor learners, USACE has trained more than 200 ANA, ANP and Afghan civilian personnel in facilities management. Topics covered have included heating, ventilation, air conditioning, painting, carpentry, welding, and pest management. (Courtesy photo.)**

Through its Afghan National Security Forces Program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has designed and constructed high-quality military and police facilities to support the transfer of security operations to the Afghans.

But as Lawrence Petrosino, a USACE program manager with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South explained, "developing skilled Afghan personnel capable of maintaining their own infrastructure is crucial to making sure these facilities will last for years to come."

Lessons learned from a decade of reconstruction operations in Afghanistan have shown that enhancing institutional and human resources capabilities is vital in order to achieve stable, sustainable infrastructure. To that end, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has implemented training programs that will teach Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan civilian employees the crucial basics of facilities operations and maintenance at hundreds of newly-constructed installations.

According to UNICEF, the adult literacy rate for male Afghans aged 15 and above is just 39 percent; for women aged 15 and above the rate is just 13 percent. With that in mind, a training curriculum had to be developed that would meet the unique needs of Afghans, explained Petrosino, a 41-year veteran of USACE who deployed to Afghanistan from the North Atlantic Division in Brooklyn, NY.

Thus the curriculum is practical, involves experiential, on-the-job training, and topics covered include plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, painting, carpentry, masonry, welding, pest management and more, he said.

For ANA who will be responsible for military installations, training is in-depth and lasts eight months.

**Story continues on page 34**

Facilities, from page 33

For ANP who will be responsible for police department facilities only, the training is six weeks.

Through private-sector contracts and with the support of Infrastructure Training Advisory Groups comprised of coalition troops with the technical expertise to assess facilities and mentor ANSF public works staff, USACE has trained more than 200 ANA, ANP and Afghan civilian personnel. And this is just the beginning. The South District Operations and Maintenance team plans to train at least two personnel at each AUP facility and hundreds of ANA and civilian employees at military installations across southern Afghanistan.

"We want to set the Afghans up for success," said Albert Soliz, the South District Operations and Maintenance program manager. "Supportive strategies, including educating and empowering the soldiers and police so they can appropriately operate and maintain their facilities will go a long way to preserve these installations for decades to come," said Soliz, who also serves as a major in the U.S. Army Reserve.

U.S. funded contracts that are in place now to provide operations and maintenance support for ANSF facilities will come to an end, "so we must train Afghan personnel to assume responsibility for operating and maintaining the facilities," said Soliz, who deployed to Afghanistan from Irvine, Calif. where he works as a senior project manager in the city's community services division. "I am confident that if we use the curriculum and can attract the students, we can help the Afghans become prepared to assume responsibility of the operations and maintenance of these facilities."

These efforts are significant because they offer Afghans the ability to learn new vital skills while creating sustainable infrastructure and a more secure and stable environment here in Afghanistan, added Petrosino.

## Spotlight: prime power

**From left: Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Hopkins, USACE Prime Power Liaison; Command Sgt. Major Roy Ward, Transatlantic Division, Staff Sgt. Charles Powell and Sgt. Christopher Warner, 249th Prime Power Battalion; Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, Transatlatic Division commanding general and Col. Vincent Quarles, Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander pause for a photo at the Shur Andam Industrial Park Nov. 20. (USACE Photo.)**

# Assuring quality construction for the benefit of Afghans' security

Story & Photos by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

NATO's primary objective in Afghanistan is to enable the Afghan authorities to provide effective security across the country so it can never again be a refuge for terrorists. In addition to conducting security operations and mentoring the Afghan National Security Forces, building adequate facilities where ANSF may live, work and train is vital to promoting a strong defense against threats.The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has constructed dozens of installations to support NATO's objectives with dozens more under construction, including the Regional Military Training Center in Kandahar province. The installation will be the site of basic warrior training, follow-on specialty training and day-to-day operations for up to 3,000 Afghan National Army personnel. The project includes the design, materials, labor and equipment to construct administration buildings, dining facilities, a fitness center, medical clinic, small arms storage, parking areas, barracks and more. Valued at $42 million, the RMTC in Kandahar is currently about 50 percent complete. A local Afghan company was awarded the contract.

Benny Apuya, quality assurance and construction representative and Ira Dorsett, a structural engineer, both with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, visit the Kandahar RMTC project site several times a week to follow progress and make sure construction complies with International Building Code standards. Accessing quality materials and highly-qualified labor is a challenge in war-torn Afghanistan, which is why quality assurance is hugely important, explained Apuya, who normally serves with the USACE Savannah District.

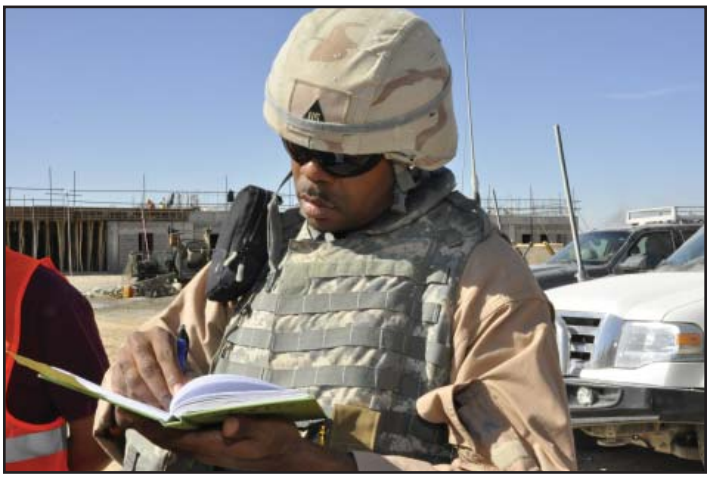
"It's about making sure the quality of construction is what it should be so that the facility will perform satisfactorily," he said

To that end, Apuya and Dorsett inspect construction, making sure it aligns with what is described in the project's plans and specifications. Together, Apuya and Dorsett have more than 40 years construction experience.

"When we find a deficiency, we let the contractor know right away what is unacceptable and the contractor develops a corrective action plan to bring the project into compliance with the designs and specs," explained Dorsett, who serves as the project engineer on the RMTC project.

He normally serves with the New Orleans District.

"My primary responsibility is contract administration and to ensure quality product delivery while minimizing delays," said Dorsett.



**Ira Dorsett, a structural engineer with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South inspects work at the Kandahar Regional Military Training Center construction site. He normally serves with the USACE New Orleans District.**

**Ira Dorsett, a structural engineer, (left) and Benny Apuya, (right) a quality assurance and construction representative, both with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South inspect the masonry block work for a concrete sink at the Kandahar Regional Military Training Center construction site.**

Apuya and Dorsett are authorized some specific technical and administrative functions. Their education, training, experience and expertise allow them to identify potential problems and coordinate corrective actions with contractors.

"The bottom line is we want to make sure the RMTC is a safe and reliable facility. One that, if properly maintained, can serve as an important military installation for the benefit of Afghans for years to come," said Dorsett.

# BUILDING STRONG® for stability in Afghanistan

STORY & PHOTOS BY JASMINE CHOPRA-DELGADILLO

**Construction workers labor at the Camp Zafar construction site. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversees construction projects for the Afghan National Security Forces, including Camp Zafar, that not only employ Afghan companies and workers, but also develop the knowledge, skills and abilities of Afghans.**

## "Afghanistan's future is clear: a country led by Afghans, defended by Afghans and working for the benefit of Afghans," said NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

"Afghanistan's future is clear: a country led by Afghans, defended by Afghans and working for the benefit of Afghans," said NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in October of 2012.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is playing a significant role in that growing reality. It oversees construction projects for the Afghan National Security Forces that not only employ Afghan companies and workers, but also develop the knowledge, skills and abilities of Afghans. Since its inception in 2009, each project the USACE's Afghanistan Engineer District-South has constructed in its area of responsibility, which includes Badghis, Daykundi, Farah, Ghor, Helmand, Herat, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces, has been aimed at fostering security and stability.

Through its Afghan National Security Forces Program, the district completed and transferred to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 31 Afghan National Army facilities valued at about $540 million. Forty-four Afghan National Police facilities valued at about $340 million have been completed and transferred, too. In doing so, the district has afforded the ANSF suitable settings in which to live, work and train.

"Armies play a vital role in the defense and stability of any country," said Afghan National Army Major General Taj Mohammed Jahid, commander of the 207th Corps through an interpreter. "You must have adequate facilities for armies," he said. "Not only do bases provide the location for training and day-to-day operations, but they serve as

**Story continues on page 37**

Stability, from page 36

deterrents to violence. Military bases and the soldiers who inhabit them have a positive effect on neighboring communities because they provide both physical security and peace of mind. Herat is a prime example. We have better security here in Herat then some of our neighboring provinces," said Jahid, who leads 12,000 troops from his base of operations at Camp Zafar in Herat province. "Peace of mind allows people to focus on more than mere survival; on things like building businesses, going to school and leading everyday normal lives," he said.

Camp Zafar, a sprawling base built with Afghan contractor labor, has everything from barracks for thousands of soldiers, to armories, gyms, warehouses, a medical clinic and more. It's one of the Afghanistan Engineer District-South's signature projects; tangible evidence the district is putting lead on target. Thousands of Afghan National Army troops now live, work and train on the base and the camp is currently expanding to accommodate even more troops. Countrywide, Afghan officers and noncommissioned officers mentored by Coalition forces now train most Afghan soldiers. This holds true at Camp Zafar where at the close of 2012, about 85 percent of recruits and soldiers, which include women, received training from Afghan instructors. They train at ranges, courses and classrooms built by the USACE.

For U.S. Army Col. Vincent Quarles, commander of the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, executing quality and timely construction for his customers and end users is a top priority. Everything his district builds supports the advancement of Afghanistan.

"We stand by the Afghan people and the goal of defeating the insurgency so Afghanistan can thrive," he said. "The facilities we construct provide an important base of operations for the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police to protect and serve their communities," said Quarles. "And we have more to do."

**Before construction on a new police station in Tor Gundi, facilities were old, decrepit buildings and some shacks for cooking, sleeping and working as photographed above.**

More than 100 ANSF projects ranging in size, cost and complexity are slated to be completed by the time the ANSF will assume full responsibility for security throughout Afghanistan in 2014.

With such a high volume of projects, the district has had to grow up fast, explained Laurel Stevens, deputy chief for programs and project management.

Prior to 2010, many of the facilities USACE built were traditional concrete masonry units. Construction of a police station used to take about two years to build. It was difficult to find local qualified construction contractors. Materials were not easily acquired. Design features appealed to western sensibilities, not Afghan ones. As a result, projects were delayed, equipment was hard to access and end users accidentally broke features such as sinks because they were not designed for common Afghan practices such as foot washing before prayer. A team of experts including personnel from the USACE, the Defense Logistics Agency and GIRoA discussed courses of action to address challenges. The way ahead included employing a more austere and standard design, using Government-Furnished Equipment instead of Contractor-Furnished Equipment, and selecting culturally-appropriate features such as squat toilets and ground level sinks that allow for ablutions. To employ maximum affordability with no reduction in quality, the district draws on reachback services which allow personnel on the ground to access timely, organized and responsive support from technical experts located at districts in the United States, Europe and Asia. Reachback personnel design projects, administer contracts, manage budgets and more. Reachback allows the deployed force to remain as small as possible while still executing a large-scale mission. This type of "insourcing" reduces costs. Along with affordability and quality, the need for sustainability, meaning facilities that can be operated and maintained by Afghans, is essential. Now it takes

Story continues on page 38

Stability, from page 37

about 2/3 of the time to construct a facility with austere and standardized designs that are easier to build using materials that can be locally or regionally sourced.

In addition to austere and standardized designs, the type of military construction USACE prefers to build in Afghanistan now is the self-supporting steel arch structure. It's quickly erected, relatively inexpensive, yet reliable. Arch-span structures have attributes that make them ideal because they offer weather-proofing quickly. Once the structure is up, laborers are able to work on the "guts" of the building: mechanical, electric and plumbing, sooner rather than later. The construction requires a commercial, trailer-mounted, automatic building machine, coiled steel and an electric seamer. A crane to lift arch panels into place, concrete form work and a welder are required. The time savings achieved is significant when compared to traditional construction. Delivering facilities on time and on budget has increased. Yet construction in Afghanistan remains no easy duty. Perhaps the most grueling task for project managers entails keeping aggressive project schedules on track, said Ron Muriera, a senior project engineer with the district's Herat Area Office.

Other challenges include logistics, since some supply routes remain dangerous and materials have gotten shot, stolen, or damaged, said Muriera, who deployed from the Seattle District.

Site accessibility is an issue, too, since a number of construction sites are in remote areas far away from forward operating bases in harsh, mountainous terrain. The USACE does not determine where to build. The Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan works with GIRoA's Ministries of the Interior, Defense and others to determine locations. Collaboration and frequent communication is essential, said Nick Norals, a realty specialist with the district who deployed from the Nashville District.

It really has been the right mix of people, planning, coordination and commitment by everyone involved, with the common goal of achieving sustainable outcomes for and with the Afghan people that has resulted in providing dozens of high-quality installations in strategic locations," said Quarles.

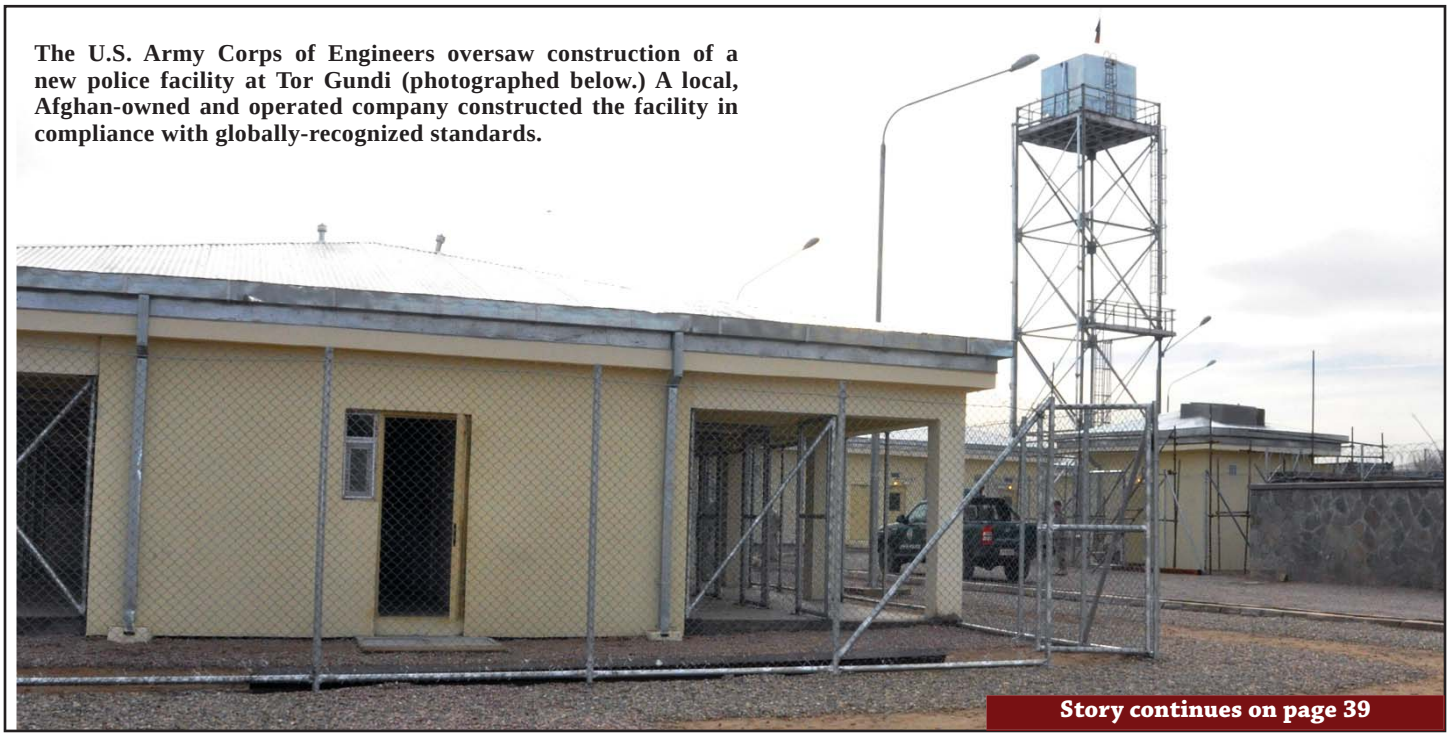
## DELIVERING WHAT THE CUSTOMERS WANT, WHAT THE END USERS NEED

On a visit to a police department near the border with Turkmenistan in December, Muriera met with ANP Colonel Noor Mohammad Adel to determine how the facility was operating. The facility was transferred in December to the ANP, although a few minor "punch list" items remained.

"I cannot even begin to explain what a positive effect this facility has had on the policemen and the neighborhood," said Adel through an interpreter. "Before, all we had was an old, decrepit building and some shacks for cooking, sleeping and working. Look what we have now: A proper facility where police can effectively train and operate," he said. "Most of the police are from this town and having such a good facility here makes their morale high. Their families feel safer, too," he said.
A local, Afghan-owned and operated company constructed the facility near the border with Turkmenistan and that fact was not lost on locals, explained Adel.

The new facility includes guard towers, entry control points, training rooms, barracks, a kitchen and more.

**The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversaw construction of a new police facility at Tor Gundi (photographed below.) A local, Afghan-owned and operated company constructed the facility in compliance with globally-recognized standards.**



Story continues on page 39

Stability, from page 38

Throughout the district's AOR, USACE engineers, again and again, have overseen construction of barracks, showers, latrines, storage facilities, dining facilities, headquarters facilities, classrooms, obstacle courses, maintenance facilities, training ranges, armories, electrical distribution systems, sanitary sewer collection system, antiterrorism/force protection features, medical clinics and so much more to support the development of the ANSF and advancement of the Afghan people.

"Good communication on all levels has been the key to being successful," said Jennifer Zimmerman, a project manager responsible for projects in the Regional Command West area of operations. Zimmerman, who deployed from the Portland District, has served in Afghanistan for almost three years. "Whether it's travelling frequently to visit the projects and meet with our internal team or daily meetings with the field office and customers to aggressively manage the schedule," frequent and good communication is key," she said.

"We want to set the Afghans up for success," Quarles said. "Building high-quality facilities, selecting Afghan companies when possible, employing Afghan professionals and mentoring Afghan soldiers, police and civilians in facilities management will go a long way toward promoting an independent Afghanistan," he said.

## MENTORING: A TWO-WAY PROCESS

In Afghanistan, where access to adequate supplies and a highly-skilled workforce is not easy due to years of hostilities and neglect, USACE has managed to locate and employ dozens of Afghan construction companies and engineering professionals. Since construction workers are most often Afghans and laborers from other developing nations where globally-recognized construction standards may not have been demanded, quality assurance and construction representatives play a critical role. Within the bounds of their authority, USACE quality assurance and construction representatives provide mentoring to Afghan contractors on the job sites. They visit sites several times a week and when they see a deficiency, they bring it to the attention of the contractor immediately. The contractor provides a corrective action plan to bring the construction into compliance. Since language and cultural differences can often be a barrier, the district supplements USACE personnel with Afghan professionals. All are engineering graduates of Afghan universities, speak English, inspect project sites and often are the only USACE eyes and ears on the ground.

"Afghan professionals are an essential part of the team," said Nabil Abourialy P.E.

Deployed from the USACE Walla Walla District, Abourialy is the senior civilian at the Herat Area Office.

For Afghan civil engineers like Tariq (full name purposely omitted) , 30, a graduate of Herat University and a project manager, USACE has afforded him the opportunity to be mentored by American engineers on projects designed to make the very province he hails from safer.

"When the Taliban left Herat, we just had one inadequate army base in the north of the city. We had no other police departments, no security forces buildings. Now we have much better facilities and forces. People in my neighborhood feel safe because they are actually safer," he said.

After completing a USACE-sponsored training course that focused on compliance with globally-recognized construction standards and USACE business processes, Tariq began work as a USACE quality assurance representative on construction sites. Six years later he is now a senior engineer performing a full range of duties including developing cost and schedule estimates, researching local market pricing, and supervising and mentoring junior Afghan quality assurance representatives.

"The Corps of Engineers has changed my life; my family's life. Before construction of the (ANSF) facilities, there was no security, no jobs, no hope. I didn't even own a bicycle. Now I am building projects that are making my country safer and providing for my family."

USACE has benefitted from the Afghan professionals, too.

"Their knowledge, skills and abilities rival American engineers," said Abourialy. "They may be learning from us, but we are also learning about how to operate in their homeland."

At the most remote construction sites, inaccessible to Americans, the Afghan engineers provide construction oversight and report back to USACE, with photography, video and professional assessments about progress on construction.

"Their service is essential to meeting aggressive project schedules and delivering what we have said we will deliver."

**Photographed is an expansion project on Camp Zafar in Herat province. An Afghan-owned and operated company is constructing the facilities in compliance with globally-recognized standards.**

"RELATIONSHIPS ARE CRITICAL TO MISSION SUCCESS. MISSION SUCCESS MEANS THAT WE MUST AGGRESSIVELY WORK ON BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR FELLOW DISTRICT FAMILY MEMBERS, PARTNERS AND CUSTOMERS."

~ COL. VINCENT QUARLES,
AFGHANISTAN ENGINEER DISTRICT-SOUTH COMMANDER

**Webster's Dictionary defines trust as the "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something." Trust is the cornerstone of the relationships we build with our stakeholders. We build trust with our teammates, customers and end users by earning it. We earn it through our competence, candor, cooperation and superb customer service. We earn it by putting lead on target: delivering results.**

# Helmand province electrical engineers, linemen receive training, new equipment

Story & Photos by Karla Marshall

Afghan engineers and linemen in Helmand province just got a major helping hand thanks to a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers program that taught Da Afghaninstan Breshna Sherkat (Afghanistan's electric utility company) employees how to safely operate the new electric utility trucks donated to them by the United States in early December.

"This is the second most important day for Helmand province," said Engineer Nabi, DABS-Helmand operations chief through an interpreter. "The first was when Kajaki Dam was built about 50 years ago." Nabi also said that this gift was the first of its kind and with the trucks and training his workers would be able to solve electric problems for many years.

Nabi and Haji Obaidi, the DABS-Helmand Director were on hand for the graduation ceremony and signing over of the 10 utility trucks Dec. 11.

Nabi said, "On behalf of DABS-Helmand, thank you USACE and America for providing DABS with the trucks and training. Both will make the linemen's jobs easier and faster."

Muhammad Farouq, one of the linemen agreed. Through the interpreter he said, "We used to take a full day to emplace just two poles. Now we will be able to do two poles in an hour."

The Lashkar Gah-based training included classroom and hands-on orientation and required coordination with DABS, Regional Command-Southwest who provided space for the truck and pole training and the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team who provided the classroom space.

USACE's 249th Prime Power Battalion non-commissioned officers organized and conducted the training. Staff Sgt. Daniel McKinney the senior NCO said the training introduced 15 DABS engineers and technicians to:

- fundamentals of safety
- power line maintenance
- operating "bucket trucks" that allow linemen to reach the top of utility poles
- operating augur trucks used to drill and emplace utility poles

"This training is absolutely critical to safely and effectively using the trucks donated by Regional Command-Southwest," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Hopkins, USACE's Prime Power liaison to battle space owners in Southern Afghanistan. "Using these vehicles to emplace a 3,000 pound concrete utility pole is not something these guys can learn from an operator's manual. We had the capacity to teach."

Of the 15 DABS employees who attended the training, the oldest had more than 20 years of service and the youngest, only 20 days.

"We weren't sure how difficult it would be to teach through interpreters and with the varying levels of knowledge, but the guys learned faster than we expected," said Staff Sgt. Troy Madden. "I was impressed by their interest and willingness to learn. In the beginning it was a little hectic, but it didn't take long for everyone to get in the groove."


USACE's 249th Prime Power Battalion non-commissioned officers organized and conducted training that taught Afghan DABS engineers and technicians the fundamentals of safety, power line maintenance, operating "bucket trucks" that allow linemen to reach the top of utility poles, operating augur trucks used to drill and emplace utility poles.

The first day of training began with the issuing of safety equipment and coveralls. "We stressed safety throughout the course but really focused on it in the beginning," said McKinney who, along with Madden, deployed from Schofield Barracks Hawaii.

"The men were used to climbing poles with scaffolding and open-toed shoes. We gave them information and the tools to work more safely," he continued.

The bucket trucks have two- and three-man buckets, said Madden. "We taught them to harness themselves into the buckets to prevent them from falling and how to maneuver the buckets for optimal use," he continued.

The Afghanistan Engineer District-South provided similar training in Kandahar province in June 2012 and used the lessons learned to design this second course.

"We saw this training mission as two fold," said Col. Vincent Quarles, Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander. "Provide the Afghan electric engineers and technicians with training so they could do their jobs safely and make sure the $1 million U.S. taxpayer investment in the trucks and equipment was well spent."

In addition to the training and truck donation, electric infrastructure improvements are also ongoing in Helmand province.

"The Corps of Engineers has done much since our arrival here to help the Afghan government transmit more consistent and reliable electricity," Quarles continued. "In Helmand province we are repairing or replacing some of the existing transmission lines, rebuilding substations and will boost the continuous transmission of power from 18 megawatts to 51 megawatts."

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Hopkins, (left) USACE's Prime Power Liaison meets with an Afghan DABS engineer during training involving the use of trucks donated by Regional Command-Southwest that will aid workers to emplace 3,000 pound concrete utility poles safely and quickly.

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees, recovering Soldiers and 1972nd Medical Detachment personnel got together for a cookout hosted by the 1972nd as a thank you event for volunteers at the Wounded Warrior Recovery Center on Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan.**

# USACE gives Wounded Warriors a little slice of home

Story & Photos by Karla Marshall

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees support recovering Wounded Warriors on Kandahar Airfield by donating items and volunteering to host Wounded Warriors on the Afghanistan Engineer District-South compound for movie night, game night, holiday celebrations and inpromptu get-togethers.

Beginning in early 2011, USACE employees saw a way to give back to their community on Kandahar Airfield by donating items to the wounded service members who arrive at KAF for medical treatment, said Laurel Stevens who heads the South District's employee activity committee.

"District employees donated bedding, toiletries, reflective belts, sunglasses, and other items to the recovering soldiers because when they arrived by medevac, they only had the uniform they came in," Stevens explained.

As awareness grew of the Wounded Warriors and their needs, district employees sought other ways to help the soldiers with recovery.

"Last Memorial Day, we invited the recovering soldiers to participate in our holiday barbecue," said Sarah White, an administrative assistant deployed from Liberty, Texas. "We picked the soldiers up in our van, brought them to our compound, ate together, played board games and spent time getting to know them."

More than a year later, and despite personnel redeployments at the South District, the frequent get-togethers continue with game and movie nights as well as other special events.

"I really enjoy spending time with the Warriors," said Ingrid Burnette who deployed to Afghanistan in February from the USACE Huntington District. "It's rewarding to see smiles on their faces. They love to come over because they can relax, get away and get delicious treats. When new wounded come in, it's a lot of persuasion, like pulling teeth, to get

**Story continues on page 48**

# Paving the road to stable economic growth at Shur Andam Industrial Park

Story & Photos by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

A merchant moves plastic wares from a manufacturing facility at the Shur Andam Industrial Park by motorized tricycle on an unpaved road. The entrepreneurs at the industrial park need a paved road to move goods more efficiently and effectively.

The entrepreneurs at the Shur Andam Industrial Park in Kandahar need a paved road, so civil engineers from the 565th Engineer Detachment Forward Engineer Support Team - Advance conducted a road survey November 7, 2012 to develop designs and specifications, a statement of work and cost estimate to facilitate future construction of a road at Shur Andam.

An industrial park is defined as a tract of land developed and subdivided into plots with provisions for roads, transportation and public utilities for the purpose of business-oriented activities, according to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Industrial parks play an important role in the economic development strategies of both developed and developing nations.

They are where manufacturing happens; paved roads to and from the parks move manufactured goods effectively and efficiently, explained Charles Yepa, a field engagement team advisor with the U.S. Department of State's Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar. A former U.S. Army master sergeant who retired after serving more than 40 years, Yepa subsequently served as a federal loan officer with the Indian Health Service before joining the KPRT.

Currently, only about 60 businesses occupy the Shur Andam Industrial Park which has room for up to 300 businesses. It's not easy for most wheeled vehicles to traverse in and out of the park. While it is uncertain if a paved road will result in an increase in tenants at the park; what is certain is that funding for construction of such a road at Shur Andam will not come from the U.S. Department of Defense.

"The goal is for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and/ or a donor nation to use the data we provide to build the road," explained Bill Hollingsworth P.E., a civil engineer with the 565th.

A former U.S. Army combat engineer with more than 30 years combined military and civilian experience, Hollingsworth has built roads, bridges, schools, clinics and military facilities around the world. He and fellow 565th member, Patrick "Mike" Bruse, a certified geographic information systems professional who retired from the U.S. Marine Corps, took several measurements, drew sketches and photographed the area where the proposed road would be located.

The road survey at Shur Andam and its related documents is one of about 140 projects the 565th has supported in Afghanistan in six months alone. If that sounds like a large number of completed projects that's because it is. The 565th Engineer Detachment Forward Engineer Support Team - Advance is an elite engineering solutions team capable of deploying quickly with armed forces on missions anywhere.

There are only eight such teams in the world; each comprised of one officer-in-charge, one non-commissioned officer and six highly-skilled U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilian technical experts. From design, construction management, contracting, geospatial support and more, the teams quickly produce relevant engineering products and services.

The 565th will provide the road designs and specifications, statement of work and cost estimate to the Department of State. One important feature is that the cost estimate will be in Afghan currency. This is in part because the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, established to develop programs promoting responsible financial growth, primarily in the non-agricultural sector, has an important role in developing the road at Shur Andam, explained Hollingsworth.

"Our goal is to provide information the Afghans can use to build a reliable road that is best-suited for their needs," said Hollingsworth.

Bill Hollingsworth P.E., (right) a civil engineer from the 565th Engineer Detachment Forward Engineer Support Team – Advance prepares to measure the width of an unpaved road at the Shur Andam Industrial Park Nov. 7, 2012. The goal is for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to use the data Hollingsworth provides to build a paved road.

# 565th Engineer Detachment (FEST-A) conducts route recon

BY MARK RAY

*The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has two districts in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Engineer District-North, headquartered in Kabul, and the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, headquartered in Kandahar. But USACE also has other units, the Forward Engineer Support Teams, which provide direct, hands-on engineering support to Regional Commands and Provincial Reconstruction Teams. One of those teams, the 565th Engineer Detachment (Forward Engineer Support Team-Advance), deployed from Schofield Barracks, HI, works out of Regional Command South.*

**Above, U.S. Army route clearance vehicles make a slow advance along the roads in Afghanistan to disarm and secure routes. Below, U.S. Army route clearance team conducts a search of a suspected improvised explosive device site using a remote controlled arm from their vehicle. (Courtesy photos by Spc. Egorov Victor)**

The 565th is one of eight active-duty FEST-A teams in the Corps of Engineers inventory. There are also 20 reserve FEST-A teams, and four larger FEST-M (or Main) teams (two active-duty and two reserve). The FEST-A teams provide technical engineer support and limited design capability for overseas contingencies, natural disasters and other crises. The larger FEST-M teams can be described as a "mini-USACE district" with electrical, mechanical, civil, and environmental engineers as well as logistics, contracting and resource management personnel. Both types of team have military and civilian personnel assigned. Eight personnel make up FEST-A teams; a FEST-M team has 36 personnel assigned.

Projects the 565th has completed in Afghanistan include:

- Multiple route recons and designs for road improvement
- Bridge assessments
- Culvert assessment and design
- Support to base camp expansions, including fire station and motorpool designs
- Support to Afghan district government centers, including assessments and designs of electrical systems, wells and district center rebuilds.

**Day One 0745—** Sgt. 1st Class Gary Malkin and David Nishimura from the 565th travel to Kandahar Airfield to wait for a helicopter that will take them to Combat Outpost Little Blue, north of Kandahar. There, they will link up with 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team out of Joint Base Lewis-McCord, Wash., which will provide movement support as the team reconnoiters a possible road project.

**1030 —** The FEST team members climb aboard a helicopter for the trip to the outpost. Once there, they meet with the members of a platoon and determine the day's schedule.

**1300 —** After lunch at the outpost's austere dining facility, Malkin and Nishimura mount their equipment in the all-terrain armored vehicle in which they will be riding. They brought along

**Story continues on page 47**

Story continues on page 46

equipment that when combined with still photography creates a detailed electronic description of the current condition of the surveyed route. The team uses the data to develop engineering plans for projects to repair or improve the route.

**1800 —** The platoon moves out in all-terrain armored vehicles, heading for a remote outpost that is providing training to Afghan Local Police forces.

**2100 —** The patrol arrives at the outpost around 2100, after a 20-plus kilometer trip on smooth pavement, and rough unpaved roads. The Soldiers and the FEST team quickly bed down to sleep in their vehicles, or on cots outside, under an Afghan sky filled with brilliant stars.

Although they are a field artillery unit, the platoon has been operating as an infantry unit for most of the three months they have been in Afghanistan, according to platoon leader, 1st Lt. Jeff Cink.

"We have done a little bit of everything. We participate in key leader engagements, visiting local Afghan leaders with the Afghan National Army units stationed here. The ANA is taking the lead on operations now -- they still look to us for guidance sometimes, but we encourage them to figure out the situation on their own. We do conduct mounted and dismounted patrols as well, to establish and maintain security."

**Day Two 0430 —** Reveille. The team members clean up, grab a quick cup of coffee or an energy drink and something to eat, and prepare to move out, supported by Afghan Local Police and their mentors.

Looking at the sun rise over the huge mountains, Malkin said, "with such a beautiful sunrise, someone is looking out for us today, it is going to be a good day."

**0530 —** The column moves out. They are reconnoitering a more direct, roughly 12-kilometer route back to their starting point, which if repaired, would significantly improve travel times and access to the regional market for local farmers and merchants.

**0910 —** The column moves slowly, often at walking speed. Nearly four hours after setting out, they have covered perhaps just a few of the 12 kilometers they are to travel. Explosives detection dogs and an explosive ordnance disposal specialist have to sweep the route, meter by meter, for Improvised Explosive Devices. The route they travel is at best a narrow, rough track, and often little more than the rocky bed of a dry wadi.

**0930 —** The patience pays off, as the team discovers an IED and destroys it in place.

**1100 —** The column successfully navigates a difficult and narrow passage between two rocks, then makes relatively rapid progress along the course of a wadi, or dry river bed.

**1230 —** Full stop. The mentors, scouting ahead, have discovered a large rock blocking the wadi that cannot be avoided. It is clear to Nishimura, who will prepare engineering documents for any future road along this route, that it will require much more than simple repairs to make the route passable for vehicles larger than motorcycles.

Nishimura and Malkin, with platoon leader Cink, dismount and hike up a knoll beside the wadi, to meet with the mentors and look down on the terrain ahead.

Further travel along the planned route risks moving into a position where the vehicles cannot move forward and cannot easily turn around. They decide to backtrack, move to the far end of the planned route, and try to recon as much as possible of the remainder of the route from there.

**1330 — IED!** On the return march, one of the M-ATVs is hit by an IED. The M-ATV is damaged and will have to be towed back to the combat outpost. The Soldiers in the stricken vehicle are shaken, but there are no serious injuries.

**1500 —** More difficulties. The team must cross the wadi to turn around, but the disabled M-ATV gets stuck. To add to the difficulties, the tow bar gets bent.

"This place could be seeded with IEDs," Malkin said. "We need to get everyone into the vehicles, get this vehicle ready to move and get out of here fast."

**1600 —** Malkin coaches the Soldiers on how to move the damaged all-terrain armored vehicle with tow ropes, using a lead vehicle to tow and a trail vehicle to brake. The column moves out.

**1800 —** The column arrives back at the remote outpost, fuels the vehicles and links up with a sister platoon.

**2100 —** After more than 24 hours in the field, the column pulls into "Little Blue." The Soldiers clean and prepare their vehicles for the next day's mission. Nishimura and Malkin grab a quick shower before getting some much-needed sleep.

**Day 3**

The FEST members catch an early flight back to Kandahar Airfield, where Nishimura will analyze the data they collected.

"It is never good when you hit an IED," Malkin said, looking back on the mission. "But everyone got back in one piece, with minimal injuries. My thoughts and prayers go out to the Soldiers that are not that fortunate. Our work takes us outside the wire a lot--this time we got bit by the enemy, Thank God it wasn't worse."

Warriors, from page 43

them over at first. They are out of their element. Once we get them over and they see a somewhat normal atmosphere, they look forward to coming over."

White said that her contribution to the Wounded Warriors is doing what comes naturally.

"I like to think we help them forget where they are for a couple of hours and treat them like a guest in our home," she said.

There are plenty of opportunities for other district employees to join in the efforts, said Burnette.

"Just show up for one of the scheduled get-togethers. Listen, engage, and share yourself with the Wounded Warriors."

If people are uncomfortable giving their time, they can donate items instead.

"If someone is interested in donating, they just need to contact Alana Hoye, Lt. Lewis or Triet Bui. They are the district employees who have really stepped up in that aspect," Burnette continued.

South District employees plan to sponsor another 5-kilometer race event to raise funds for the Wounded Warriors on KAF as they did in the past. Plus, they continue to coordinate with their friends and families in the U.S. for specific donated items.

Other employees carried their desire to help Wounded Warriors with them to KAF.

"My interest started in Louisville, Ky., when I became the project manager for the Sgt. Maj. William E. Sumner Warrior Transition Complex at Fort Knox," said Veronica Rife. "That project made me aware of the need our soldiers have for support and it was completed shortly after I arrived in Afghanistan."

Rife also supports Marines with post-traumatic stress disorders and traumatic brain injuries through a non-profit organization sponsored by her church.

**Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo, who deployed from the San Francisco District, enjoys hosting Wounded Warriors at movie nights at the USACE compound at KAF. Photographed are two wounded warriors who celebrated Christmas Eve with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South team.**

"Our church sponsors a motorcycle ride to raise funds for Marines to get help with PTSD and TBI. Coming to Afghanistan and continuing to help young service members is something I feel strongly about doing."

**"I LIKE TO THINK WE HELP THEM FORGET WHERE THEY ARE FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS AND TREAT THEM LIKE GUESTS IN OUR HOME," SAID SARAH WHITE.**

**Ingrid Burnette, who deployed to Kandahar in February from the USACE Huntington District, enjoys volunteering with the KAF Wounded Warrior Program. "It's rewarding to see smiles on their faces," she says.**

Along with Stevens, White, Burnette and Rife, other district employees who regularly give their free time to support the Wounded Warriors include Triet Bui, Wanda Coats-Flowers, Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo, Carolyn Imhoff-Hoffelder, Gale Ross, Trisha Yates, Dennis Lindemeyer, Kevin Pace, Alana Hoye, Navy Lt. William Lewis, Adam Walker and Bryan McCabe.

"USACE employees have a history of giving back to their community," said Col. Vincent Quarles, South District commander. "To bring this tradition here to Afghanistan enriches the lives of all who receive and those who give back. I'm proud of our South District family and encourage everyone to continue to support our heroes who are recovering here at KAF or wherever they may be."


"ACCOMPLISHMENTS—WE CELEBRATE THE WORK OF OUR DISTRICT FAMILY MEMBERS BECAUSE WHAT THEY DO IS WORTH RECOGNITION AND OUR GRATITUDE."

~ COL. VINCENT QUARLES,
AFGHANISTAN ENGINEER DISTRICT-SOUTH COMMANDER

**Having established a culture of mutual trust, broad collaboration and shared expertise, together we have generated remarkable results. Despite facing challenges synonymous with overseas contingency operations, our teams have accomplished extraordinary milestones that have improved the safety, security and stability of Afghanistan. While it is true, individuals here have achieved significant personal awards, we have come to understand that the sum of our team's skills is greater than the separate parts. Shared competence and shared confidence for the benefit of the people we serve.**

# Afghan Uniformed Police assume responsibility for new headquarters

Story & Photos by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

Afghan Uniformed Police in Daykundi province assumed responsibility for a newly-constructed headquarters Oct. 20, which will serve as a base of operations for about 60 police who have sworn to uphold safety and security in Miramor District.

At a cost of approximately $1.5 million, the facility includes offices, classrooms, training rooms, locker rooms, a kitchen, parking, force protection measures and other utilities commonly found at police headquarters.

"This facility will provide the police officers with a high-quality headquarters from which they can serve and protect their communities," said U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Michael Winkler.

**"This facility will provide the police officers with a high quality headquarters from which they can serve and protect their communities," said Michael Winkler.**

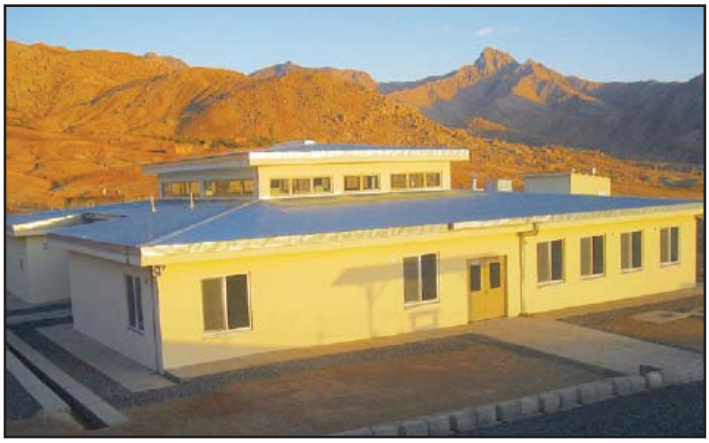
Based at the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, Winkler is a hydraulic engineer who deployed from the USACE Engineer Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, Miss.

Construction in Afghanistan is no easy task, explained the project's South District Resident Engineer Lori Gardner, who deployed from the USACE Fort Worth District.

Some challenges included removing mines, reduced access to the project site due to road closures, accessing highly-qualified laborers and the extreme remoteness of the location. The facility is situated in a desolate, mountainous region, at an elevation of approximately 7,300 feet above sea level.

"It's especially rewarding for the team to be able to turn over a first-rate facility that will benefit the Afghans and improve their security," said Gardner.

An important tactic used to complete projects and support the professional development of Afghan citizens includes employing local engineers.



**Photographed above is a newly-constructed police headquarters in Daykundi province that Afghan Uniformed Police assumed responsibility for Oct. 20, 2012. Construction of the facility was overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. (USACE Photo)**

"We enlisted the aid of our Afghan Quality Assurance Representative Waheedullah," said Gardner, "and he did a great job of addressing deficiencies and facilitating progress."

Since 2009, 11 Afghan Uniformed Police district headquarters have been turned over to the Afghans. Twelve more are scheduled to be completed and turned over to the Afghans by the close of 2013.

To help them become prepared to appropriately operate and maintain the headquarters, training will be provided to AUP so police facilities can continue running as designed once coalition forces return to their countries of origin. The training, which spans six weeks, covers topics such as plumbing, pest control, heating, ventilation and air conditioning. The plan is to train at least two personnel at each one of the AUP facilities throughout southern Afghanistan, said Albert Soliz, the South District Operations and Maintenance program manager. Soliz deployed to Afghanistan from Irvine, Calif. where he works as a senior project manager in the city's community services division.

**"It's especially rewarding for the team to be able to turn over a first-rate facility that will benefit the Afghans and improve their security," said Lori Gardner.**

"NATO's primary objective in Afghanistan is to enable the Afghan authorities to provide effective security across the country, so police headquarters like this one in Miramor are an important step toward achieving that goal," said Winkler.

# USACE builds another facility for Afghan National Security Forces

Story & Photo by Karla Marshall

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project engineer, Jason Riharb (right), explains some of the Afghan National Civil Order Police facility features to Afghan Civil Order Police Brig. Gen. Muhiuddin Sarwari Oct. 10.**

National Civil Order Police took possession of a new Service Support Battalion compound near Kandahar Oct. 10. The facilities, completed with minimal delay and within budget, will enable Afghan police to live and train near the people they serve and protect.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South turned over the nearly $17 million facility to the 2nd Brigade Afghan National Civil Order Police along with keys, schematics and other maintenance and operations documentation.

"This project included roads, utilities, buildings, force protection measures and site security," said D'Lorah Small, South District project manager.

The project began in June 2011 and includes barracks for both women and men, a dining facility, training areas, administration buildings, vehicle maintenance facilities and on-site water and power infrastructure.

"The diligent efforts by the contractor, our local quality assurance support and district team made the SSB project a success," said Jason Riharb, South District project engineer. Civil Order Police rely on Service Support Battalions for logistical support.

"The civil order police play a crucial role in stabilizing Afghanistan," said Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander, Army Col. Vincent Quarles. "I am very proud of our engineers and project delivery team who managed this project to successful completion within budget and with minimal delay. The Kandahar Service Support Battalion will be well served by these high quality facilities."

# USACE delivers 9th Commando Kandak facilities

Story by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

**Photographed is the garrison of the 9th Commando Kandak (battalion) of the Afghanistan National Army in Herat province. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South turned over the newly-constructed installation Oct. 1, 2012. (USACE Photo)**

Nearly as vital as the mission to mentor Afghan National Security Forces so they can provide safety and security in their homeland, is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mission to build high-quality facilities where security forces may live and train.

For close to a decade, USACE, with its engineering, construction, contracting and business expertise, has been building much needed public infrastructure in Afghanistan. USACE's Afghanistan Engineer District-South added the Afghanistan National Army's 9th Commando Kandak (battalion) in Herat province, to that list in October.

"This project is significant to our mission in Afghanistan as it provides a high-quality training facility for the Afghan National Army commandos who have a strategic and critical role in this region," said Jennifer Zimmerman, South District project manager who deployed from the USACE Portland District. "There is a sense of accomplishment throughout the whole district team that we were able to work closely with the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan, the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan, mentors and the Afghan-owned contractor to successfully provide a facility that allows the commandos to become a better and stronger security force in the area," she said.

**"This project is significant to our mission in Afghanistan as it provides a high-quality training facility for the Afghan National Army commandos who have a strategic and critical role in this region," said Jennifer Zimmerman.**

At a cost of about $18.5 million, the garrison includes several buildings, parking and other utilities designed to accommodate approximately 800 personnel.

"The installation will serve as an excellent facility where Afghan troops may live, work and train," said Maj. Victor Millán, the previous South District Herat Area Office officer in charge.

"This is a prime example of what happens when technical expertise and commitment to the mission combine," said Nabil Abourialy, the Herat Area Office lead engineer. "The team understood the needs of the commandos and worked hard to deliver the garrison to them."

Building quality Kandak facilities in Afghanistan supports the International Security Assistance Force goal of transitioning and turning over security authority to the Afghan people, added Millán.

# Let AMSC make a leader out of you

Story by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

I got an unexpected thrill on a recent flight to Boston, Mass. Imagine my delight when I found myself seated behind Colin Powell. He is likely best known for having served as U.S. Secretary of State, but in fact, Powell's entire adult life has been in service to his country. From his days as a young Army lieutenant, to wounded warrior, to White House fellow, to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Powell has distinguished himself as both a Soldier and civilian.

"Will you let me take a picture with you so I can post it on Facebook," did not seem like an appropriate request to ask of the former secretary of state as he was preparing for takeoff, so I just smiled at him like the nerd that I am and thought about the countless leaders Powell has inspired.

Perhaps my service in the Army and study of rhetoric in undergrad has influenced my fascination with military oratory. While it may be legendary football coach Vince Lombardi who said, "leaders are made, not born," it's a philosophy I believe Powell supports, as evidenced by Powell's numerous speeches on leadership.

It's a philosophy the Army Management Staff College supports too.

Some may be surprised to learn that nearly every fulltime Department of the Army Civilian, regardless of grade or education level, is eligible to participate in Army Management Staff College Civilian Education System courses. CES provides eight levels of sequential leadership and management development training. They include the Foundation Course, Basic Course, Intermediate Course, Advanced Course, Continuing Education for Senior Leaders, Action Officers Development Course, Supervisors Development Course and Managers Development Course.

Most permanent Army Civilians' tuition, travel, and per diem are funded from central budgets. Since funds do not come out of local coffers, CES courses are a great option, especially when local resources are scarce or when local programs such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers districts' leadership development programs are at capacity. Upon completion of the Advanced Course, civilians may seek additional education at the Senior Service Schools, War College, and Defense Leadership and Management Program.


**Above, recent graduates of the Army Management and Staff College Basic Course. Below, The Army Management and Staff College located at Fort Leavenworth Kansas. (U.S. Army Photo.)**

**"Leaders are Made, Not Born," Vince Lombardi**

The method of course delivery is distributed learning which is online, resident instruction, and blended learning which is a mix of both online and resident instruction.

I completed the resident portion of the Basic Course in July. I was thrilled to experience two weeks of intense personal reflection, problem solving, as well as management and leadership opportunities. Each course is taught by master or doctorate-level facilitators with expertise in fields such as psychology, organizational leadership, and change management. Through a series of assessments, lectures, and exercises, students expand their self-awareness and increase their ability to manage projects in a short period of time.

Students participate in classes with fellow civilians from dozens of Department of the Army and other Department of Defense organizations. Among my civilian classmates were folks from the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command who work to counter chemical and biological threats and personnel from the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command who work at a school that teaches law enforcement. Your communities need high-performing people to serve on high-performing teams. You've already taken the first step to serve as a Department of the Army civilian, why not expand your management skills and leadership ability too?

# Emanuel and Gevedon close the deal at the 2012 USACE Excellence in Contracting Awards

Story & Photos by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

Each year, hundreds of USACE contracting professionals from across the globe are nominated for one of the eight awards. Winners of the competition are high-performing employees who go the extra mile and effectively and efficiently deliver remarkable results. This year's winners were announced Nov. 29 in Dallas, but Emanuel and Gevedon could not personally accept their awards because both are currently deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Emanuel, 29, who deployed from the USACE New York District, won for Excellence in Mission Execution and Tim Gevedon, 47, who deployed from the USACE Huntington District, won for Excellence in Customer Service.

"Both Nick and Tim are leaders among their peers and there really is no mission they are unwilling to tackle," said Gale Ross, the previous Afghanistan Engineer District-South chief of contracting.

Ross supervises 16 personnel at the Afghanistan Engineer District-South and said he nominated Emanuel and Gevedon because of their extraordinary work ethic and ingenuity.

"The whole office is great, but I nominated Nick because of his exceptional and timely execution of contracts. Nick's dedication to mission execution resulted in the award of several technically-complex, mission-essential requirements that presented numerous challenges. His perseverance and hard work led to the execution of over $252 million in contractual actions," said Ross, 60, who deployed to Kandahar from the Kansas City District. "He truly is one of the backbones of the office. If he doesn't know how to do something, he researches the topic, masters it and then mentors others," said Ross. "Tim consistently delivers the highest level of customer service to both internal and external customers. His ability to bring parties with diverse interests to the table and focus them on the mission has saved the district an immeasurable amount of resources. His appointment as subcontractor relations liaison is unique within the theater of operations and has aided the district's ability to positively administer $65 million in projects. Tim never hesitates to assist his team, contractors and action officers. He epitomizes the term customer service."

**Timothy Gevedon, a contract specialist with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South earned the Excellence in Customer Service Award in the Fiscal Year 2012 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Excellence in Contracting Awards. Gevedon is currently serving in Afghanistan and deployed from the USACE Huntington District.**

For Emanuel, winning signals he's doing the right things and his instincts are good, he said.

"It is great to be singled out because of my dedication and results however I'd be remiss not point out that it takes a team to get the mission done, and I am part of a great team.

Now in its fourth year, the USACE Excellence in Contracting Awards Program recognizes the accomplishments and contributions of extraordinary USACE contracting professionals.

"I am extremely proud of both Nick and Tim, our contracting office

**Story continues on page 55**

Award, from page 54

and our entire district family for delivering excellence in what they do each day," said Army Col. Vincent Quarles, commander of the Afghanistan Engineer District-South. "Nick and Tim have accomplished much individually and collectively with their peers here in Afghanistan and back home in the United States. Both are very deserving of these awards."

Nicholas Emanuel, (center) a contract specialist with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South earned the Excellence in Mission Execution Award in the Fiscal Year 2012 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Excellence in Contracting Awards. Emanuel is currently serving in Kandahar, Afghanistan and deployed from the New York District.

# Army Commissioned Officer's Creed

I will give to the selfless performance of my duty and my mission the best that effort, thought, and dedication can provide.

To this end, I will not only seek continually to improve my knowledge and practice of my profession, but also I will exercise the authority entrusted to me by the President and the Congress with fairness, justice, patience, and restraint, respecting the dignity and human rights of others and devoting myself to the welfare of those place under my command.

In justifying and fulfilling the trust placed in me, I will conduct my private life as well as my public service so as to be free both from impropriety and the appearance of impropriety, acting with candor and integrity to earn the unquestioning trust of my fellow soldiers – juniors, senior, and associates – and employing my rank and position not to serve myself but to serve my country and my unit.

By practicing physical and moral courage I will endeavor to inspire these qualities in other by my example.

In all my actions I will put loyalty to the highest moral principles and the United States of America above loyalty to organizations, persons, and my personal interest.

# Anderson awarded Steel de Fleury Medal for contributions in Afghanistan

Story & Photo by Karla Marshall

Backing away from a challenge is not in her character, neither is doing something half way. Karen Anderson, the tenacious executive officer, was recognized Nov. 21 with a Steel de Fleury Medal for those character traits and the many behind-the-scenes contributions she made to the Afghanistan Engineer District-South and Army Engineer Regiment during her nearly four-year deployment to Afghanistan.The de Fleury Medal is an award of the Army Engineer Association and was named in honor of Francois-Louis Teissedre de Fleury, a French engineer in the U.S. Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.

According to the AEA, there are four levels of the de Fleury award. The Steel Medal is presented to junior soldiers and civilians whose selfless service provided the Engineer Regiment with support. That support assured mobility, enhanced protection, enabled expeditionary logistics, and built capacity in order to provide commanders with the freedom of action needed to win full spectrum operations in an era of persistent conflict.

"It is an honor and a privilege to have the engineer community recognize me for my contributions to the overall Engineer Regiment," said Anderson who deployed from the USACE Northwest Division in Portland, Ore. "I have given 100% of my effort to the district during my tour and without the support of the command teams, OICs (area officers in charge), operations office, human resources office, special staff and the joint visitor bureaus staff throughout the district's AOR (area of responsibility), I could not have executed my tasks nor contributed to the District's mission so successfully." "Many people do not know the extent of Karen's responsibility or her dedication to the district's mission," said Lt. Col.


**Karen Anderson, deployed to the Afghanistan Engineer District-South from March 2009 to December 2012, was presented the Steel de Fleury Medal Nov. 21 by Afghanistan Engineer District-South Commander Col. Vincent Quarles.**

Stephen Bales, Anderson's supervisor and the district's deputy commander. "Her willingness to go the extra mile to get the job done right despite every challenge that came her way is unparalleled."

Being an executive officer is often a thankless job, but to Anderson, she was well-suited to the role as she has held a variety of positions in many disciplines.

"I started my career as an active duty airman in 1985," said Anderson. "My Air Force career laid the ground work for what was to come as I held a myriad of positions to include Aerovac Specialist, Mortuary Affairs, Patient Affairs Advocate, and Hospital Systems Manager." All of which required attention to the smallest detail and a compassion for people who were hurting.

**Story continues on page 57**

Anderson, from page 56

"Helping people through hard times was really rewarding, but emotionally draining," said Anderson. "After four years, I needed a break."

Anderson left active duty in 1989 but continued to work for the Air Force another 11 years as a civilian.

"I was a mission planner at Holloman Air Force Base High Speed Test Track but as the years passed, I wanted to return to a people-focused job," she said.

That drive to make a difference eventually led to a position with the Oregon State Police Major Crimes Unit. Anderson became a crimes analyst and prepared case data for use by the state's district attorneys.

"I can't say that culling through crime scene information and pulling together data for trial was 'fun,' but it was very gratifying to contribute to the pursuit of justice," she said.

Learning to look through the prism of right versus wrong, and to not rely on emotions when making decisions has been instrumental in fulfilling her role as the executive officer at the district.

"There are times when we all want things to be a certain way because it is simply what we want," Anderson said.

"I often hear folks complain about the choice of food, lack of entertainment, insufficient transportation, etc., but like them I had to remind myself that I'm not in Afghanistan solely for my benefit. There's a bigger mission that must be accomplished, Soldiers to support and my comfort always came second to the district."

Anderson also said that deploying is not for everyone.

"We all make sacrifices to come here and work. Being separated from my family is difficult but I feel honored and privileged to serve. There are few opportunities for civil servants to serve in a contingency environment. My opportunity offered me the chance to routinely think outside the box to execute the mission."

When she returns to the U.S. Anderson will work a second time for a previous Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander.

"Once again I will have the privilege of working for Col. Anthony Funkhouser who was the district commander in 2010-2011. Now he is the Northwestern Division commander in Portland, Ore., where I deployed from in 2009."

# Spotlight: MRAP Crew

**The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers travels to project sites throughout Afghanistan. Often those trips are in dangerous areas and require security. On this trip, a Soldier assigned to the Afghanistan Engieer District-South provided that security. (USACE photo by Karla Marshall.)**

# Weekly award program highlights remarkable service

Story & Photos by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo

Long hours and tough, but fair deadlines help make sure U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees deployed with the Afghanistan Engineer District-South work hard; still some employees go the extra mile and effectively and efficiently deliver remarkable service.

Each week, South District employees throughout the district nominate peers who have gone above and beyond what was asked of them in the normal course of their duties for the Commander's Weekly Award. Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, the USACE Transatlantic Division commander supports this award initiative and his coin is given to each award recipient.

"We face many complex challenges here in Afghanistan, but highly engaged employees like the ones who have earned the Commander's Weekly Award possess the energy and enthusiasm to meet those challenges and deliver great results," said Col. Vincent Quarles, Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander. "One of the best parts of leading this district family is giving praise where it is truly deserved, to the exceptional members who use all of their knowledge and skill to accomplish our district's goals and improve conditions for everyone around them."

Recent awardees include: James Armstrong, Wanda Coates-Flowers, Rick Eberts, Paul Farrell, Alana Hoye, Bernadette Killebrew, Lorenzo Lora, Trudy Templeton and John Whittier.

## GET TO KNOW THE RECEPIENTS

Coates-Flowers is a project manager in the South District's Program & Project Management Division. She is relentless in her pre-awards functions for the Afghan National Army program. Six of her projects are 'reachback,' meaning much of the design work is conducted at engineer districts in the United States requiring extra coordination between the stateside districts and South District's Contracting Division. She had many challenges to overcome and worked to deconflict scope requirements between Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and the battle space owners. Out of 16 Afghan National Army pre-awards, Coates-Flowers is the program manager on seven of them. Coates-Flowers deployed to Afghanistan from the Baltimore District.

Every map tells a story and Eberts and Hoye labor to make sure the story is accurate. Eberts is a geographic specialist while Hoye is a geographer; both in the district's Geographic Information System shop.


**James Armstrong, (left) is a Weekly Commander's Award recepient.**

Together they have gone above and beyond to produce time-critical, sensitive mapping to support high visibility meetings and projects. They both have a 'can do' attitude and fully grasp the importance of creating highly accurate products as fast as possible. Eberts deployed to Afghanistan from the Rock Island District; Hoye deployed from Norfolk, Va.

Killebrew is a contract specialist in the South District's Contracting Division. As the contracting specialist for the Kandahar Air Wing Phase V project, several complex issues were identified by Killebrew and she did an outstanding job to resolve them. With her teammates from Engineering & Construction and Program & Project Management Division, Killebrew resolved several unanticipated concerns. Their effective communication and dedication to the project resulted in virtually no time lost. Killebrew deployed to Afghanistan from Los Angeles.

Lora is a construction representative for the South District's Kandahar Vicinity Resident Office. Lora served as the primary government representative providing information to customers during specific site visits. Lora was prepared with project handouts depicting exact progress to date on the various features of construction to include arch-span erection, utility installation and interior works. During the site visit to the Kandak (battalion) East and Kandak West project sites, his briefings were insightful and demonstrated in-depth, fluent knowledge of the site as well as the contractor's progress. Lora deployed to Afghanistan from Louisville District

**Story continues on page 59**

Weekly, from page 58

Templeton is a contracting officer representative at the Helmand Area Office within Operations & Maintenance. When a contractor performing generator maintenance on the 215th Corps Power Plant caused a failure resulting in much of the garrison to lose power for eight days, Templeton stepped up to help resolve the issue. During the repair period, multiple subject matter expert teams were dispatched from several sources. Coordination was required among the South District, Afghan National Security Forces commanders and RC-Southwest. Templeton provided all the ground coordination for teams, status updates to district leaders and the center-point for all actions on site. Her efforts during this period exemplified character and diligence, a reflection of her relentless professionalism. Templeton deployed to Afghanistan from Japan District.

Whittier is a project engineer at the Tombstone Resident Office, part of the Helmand Area Office. He is the project engineer for three of the district's most challenging contracts being constructed by the same Afghan construction company. Whittier demonstrated extraordinary diligence and courtesy when working with his Afghan counterparts and demanded high levels of performance from them. As a direct result of his efforts, the district has been able to achieve beneficial occupancy for the $6.9 million '20 Bunkers' ammunition storage facility and the $2.5 million entry control point projects at Camp Shorabak.

Whittier has applied the tools available in the aggressive schedule management toolbox and has invented some to overcome numerous technical and management challenges. Whittier deployed to Afghanistan from Fort Worth District.

James Armstrong, a program analyst based at Kandahar Airfield, used his information technology and knowledge management expertise to revamp the Employee Activities Committee SharePoint page in a dramatic way. The page now contains an active, live calendar with all upcoming holiday events and other features, including a photo slideshow of past events. He also designed a function allowing new employees and those re-deploying to post items on the SharePoint page to "buy, sell or trade."

**Bernadette Killebrew (left) is a Weekly Commander's Award recepient.**

Paul Farrell, a cost estimator based at Kandahar Airfield, pulled an all-nighter to produce an independent government estimate on short notice. A colleague had forgotten to inform him of the need for one for a particular project so Farrell worked hard to produce a quality IGE quickly so that bid opening would not have to be postponed. Paul's 'can do' attitude and his dedication to his job are greatly appreciated by his colleagues.

**Paul Farrell, (right) is a Weekly Commander's Award recepient.**

# Monthly award program highlights remarkable service

STORY BY KARLA MARSHALL

Two Afghanistan Engineer District- South employees were named monthly award winners for their efforts to support the South District's mission in September and October.

Bimla Multani, a member of the engineering and construction team, stepped up to a new challenge when she helped develop a construction placement model in the Resident Management System database. The model enabled the district team to anticipate upcoming construction and plan accordingly.

In September, Multani worked extra hours to help managers model pre-award projects, meaning those construction projects that are in development but not yet awarded to a contractor.

The RMS placement model makes this forecast more nimble and far less time consuming to adjust in a volatile award and execution environment said Bill Stout P.E., the district's deputy chief of engineering and construction.

"Bimi's work on the RMS database gave the district a better construction placement model; a more sure way of determining how well the district's anticipated construction was progressing and which projects needed attention," said Stout.

In October, Andrew Beall, a mechanical engineer deployed to the South District from Boise, Idaho, served as lead editor for requests for proposals for a new garrison for the Afghan National Police program and for new electrical transmission for the South East Power System.

Beall also exhaustively researched, studied, and monitored the air handling systems in the Regional Command- South headquarters facility to help identify and solve vexing problems with moving the appropriate amount and temperature of air into the command suite and west wing. Beall was nominated by the South District Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Stephen Bales.

"These two district employees are great examples of people who take their skills and use them to solve problems and make our district's products and our district family better," said Col. Vincent Quarles, the South District commander. "I am proud of their efforts and can think of no better way to recognize them than by presenting them with the Chief of Engineers' coin."

Quarles said that he appreciates the USACE Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Thomas Bostick, and Transatlantic Division Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, who both provided the district with coins to support the program.


**Bimla Multani, (right) is a Monthly Commander's Award recepient. (USACE Photo by Tony Carter.)**

Each month South District employees nominate their fellow workers for outstanding efforts and their willingness to go beyond normal duties. Bimla Multani and Andrew Beall are the first to receive recognition in the commander's monthly award program.

**Andrew Beall, (right) is a Monthly Commander's Award recepient. (USACE Photo by Karla Marshall.)**

*Editor's note: Beall completed his deployment in December 2012.*

# Rewarding Excellence


3

2

4

3

5

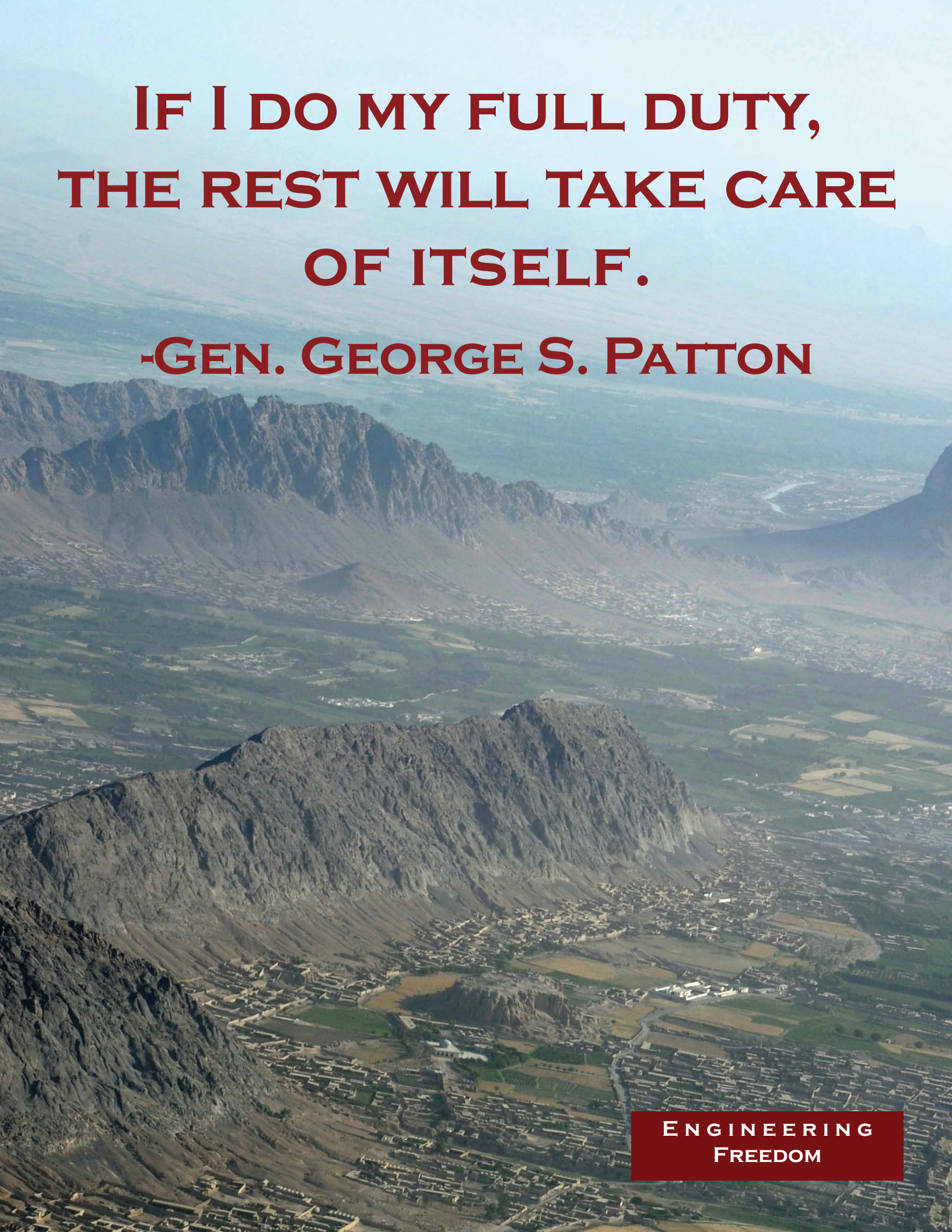
**1. The United States Department of the Army offers a variety of awards, decorations and incentive programs to honor and recognize the contribution and efforts of its civilian workforce.**

**2. Joyce D. Jackson receives her awards for service with the Afghanistan Engineering District-South.**

**3. Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Hawkins accepts his promotion.**

**4. Jeffrey Ide receives his awards for service with the Afghanistan Engineering District-South.**

**5. Caryl Hickel celebrates the accomplishments of her employee and friend, Vivien McGinty.**


If I do my full duty,
the rest will take care
of itself.
-Gen. George S. Patton
Engineering
Freedom