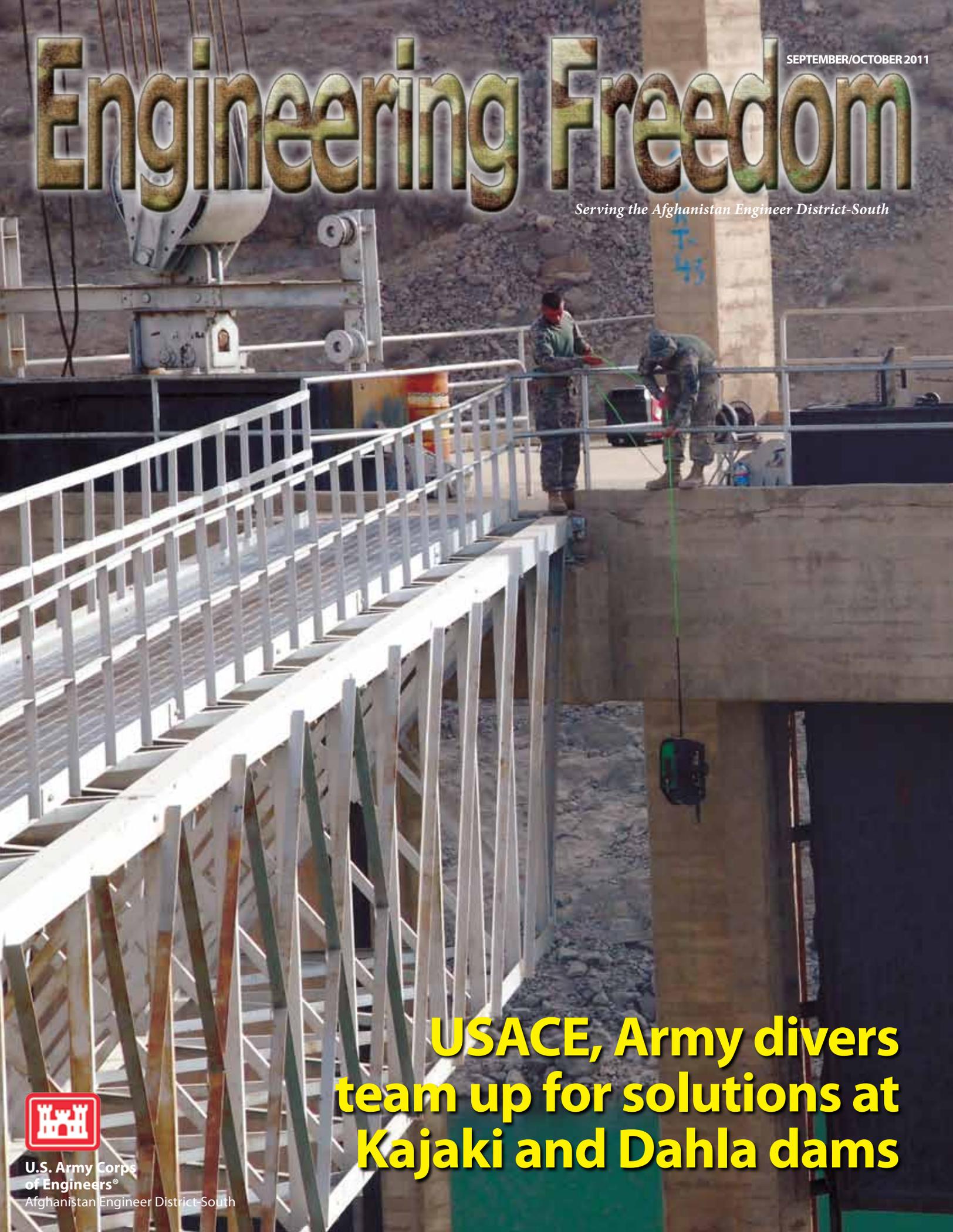


Engineering Freedom

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011

Serving the Afghanistan Engineer District-South



**USACE, Army divers
team up for solutions at
Kajaki and Dahla dams**



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of Engineers®
Afghanistan Engineer District South

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

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

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

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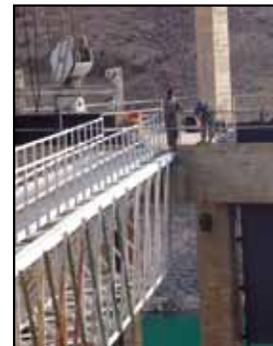


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On the cover ...



Two members of the U.S. Army's 7th Engineer Dive Team lower the remotely operated vehicle 150 feet into the Kajaki Reservoir Aug. 15. See story on page 12. (Courtesy Photo)



Commander's message...

Howdy folks! Well, I hate to say it, but time does fly when you're having fun. It has been two months since I "grabbed the stick" for the Afghanistan Engineer District-South and the time has flown by. I have travelled across southern Afghanistan from Farah in the west to the newest Afghan Border Police station at Muhamed Sayed. Across the entire south, we continue to build a stronger future for the Afghan people.

We are able to "Build Strong" because of the great folks that we have working in "the South." I would like to take the opportunity to highlight a couple of great team members. The first, Staff Sgt. Andrew Burrows, a combat engineer, serves as an MRAP team member at Camp Shorbak. When 1st Lt. Matthew Geldhor, the logistics and facilities officer with the former



Staff Sgt. Andrew Burrows

advisory team to the Afghan National Army's 6th Kandak (battalion), 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, inherited an unfinished joint combat operations center building at Patrol Base Deh Mazong. Staff Sgt. Burrows volunteered to assist in finishing the facility and ensuring it was ready for the upcoming rainy season. An experienced home builder, Staff Sgt. Burrows led a team of Marines in building a roof for the new facility. Not only did he complete the job in six days, but he also took great pride in mentoring the Marine team, training them on "bird mouths, plumb cuts, gable ends, and the use of speed squares." Staff Sgt. Burrows, through his leadership and "can do" attitude showed that we can "Build Strong" for anyone.

Second, I would like to highlight JL Summerlin, a USACE employee working with the provincial reconstruction team stationed at Forward Operating Base Smart, and Alejandro "Alex" Pascual III, a structural engineer here at the main office.

On Aug. 28, an insurgent team drove a vehicle with around 400 pounds of home-made explosives to the perimeter of Forward Operating Base Smart where they detonated it just outside the Hesco barrier walls. This blast was followed

by a second blast when a second suicide bomber scaled the Hesco barrier and then was stopped outside the guard tower. Remarkably, no Americans were killed or injured in this attack, but several Afghan citizens caught outside the compound were injured and had to be treated by U.S. forces. Following the blast, the entire reconstruction team, including JL, worked tirelessly over the next 96 hours to secure the installation and arrange for hasty repairs.

JL contacted me directly and asked for assistance in surveying the FOB and its facilities to determine the structural integrity of the key buildings affected by the blast. Alex volunteered to support the assessment, flying out to FOB Smart on short notice and joining up with a team of two other young engineers to assess the damage to all 18 facilities contained within the FOB. Through Alex's insight and expertise, an expedient and permanent protection plan



JL Summerlin



Alejandro "Alex" Pascual III

can be developed for all of FOB Smart's facilities.

Finally, I would like to thank Laurel Stevens. Laurel's leadership is essential to the operation of South District. As the deputy chief of Programs and Project Management Division, Laurel ensures smooth operations of this complex and incredibly busy division, which keeps all our critical programs moving along.

Laurel is also a leader when it comes to giving her time and talents to the district and those in need. She is a key figure in supporting the Wounded Warrior program here at Kandahar Airfield, working with the program coordinators and a number of enthusiastic volunteers here in the district to provide our Wounded Warriors a nice home away from their facility where they can enjoy a "home-cooked meal," play a game of spades or dominos, or sit around and enjoy a fine cigar. In addition, she is also a key



Photo by Brenda L. Beasley

Laurel Stevens, right, helps a Soldier find his size in the pile of Army uniforms that were mended by the AES team members participating in the Wounded Warrior program.

member of our Employee Activities Committee, which orchestrates all social activities including our end of fiscal year cookout, the Halloween and holiday parties, and sells the district merchandise that is so popular throughout the year — especially as we approach the holiday season. Under

the committee's guidance and Laurel's steady hand, all profits from these sales are redistributed in the form of entertainment and gaming systems to our outlying offices.

Each of these individuals embodied the spirit of this district and the Army core values of "Duty" and "Selfless

Service." In this issue you will find many different and interesting stories about the accomplishments of the South District. In every case, someone just like Staff Sgt. Burrows, JL, Alex or Laurel dug deep and made it happen. I am honored to work with folks of that caliber. Enjoy the issue. 📧

South District establishes new division focused on O&M

by Mark Ray

On Sept. 15, Afghanistan Engineer District-South established an Operations, Maintenance and Services Division, consolidating field operations of the following branches:

- Afghan National Security Forces Operations, Maintenance & Service Branch.
- Operations and Maintenance Planning and Programming Branch.
- Facilities Maintenance Branch.

"Standing up the O&M Division reflects the next logical progression in the district's work, from concept through execution to operations and maintenance and finally to full transition to our Afghan National Security Force partners," said District Commander Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham. "The district will never

be in a steady state — we are always building toward the transition to Afghan-led operations."

Establishing the new division will improve accountability, contractor oversight and program and field coordination in executing the operations and maintenance mission. The new division will increase the district's responsiveness to its customers by consolidating the planning, programming and oversight of service contracts and operations and maintenance execution, and by streamlining operational control.

The new O&M division will:

- Provide increased senior-level oversight of the Afghan National Quality Assurance Contract, operations and maintenance, and district facilities planning.

- Be responsible for communicating with the mentors of the ANSF to increase their understanding of the services available within the operations and maintenance contract.

The chief of the new division will report directly to the district commander, and will be responsible for all operations, maintenance and service contract activities for the ANSF program and for district facilities within southern Afghanistan.

The existing branches' authorized positions will be consolidated into the new division, with the division chief's position being the only increase to Manning. Albert Soliz will serve as the interim division chief until a permanent selection is made. 📧

Ammo storage point supports U.S. Air Force mission in southern Afghanistan

Story and photos by Joan Kibler

An ammunition supply point that opened Aug. 10 triples the munitions storage capacity for the U.S. Air Force on Kandahar Airfield.

“Having this additional storage capacity helps with the operational tempo for all Air Force assets at KAF and three other bases,” said 1st Lt. Jonathan Tolman, munitions flight commander, 451st Air Expeditionary Wing.

“We distribute from KAF to the air bases at Bastion (Helmand province), Shindand (Herat province) and Jalalabad (Nangarhar province),” Tolman said. “Those air bases then distribute to other FOBs (forward operating bases) throughout the theater.”

The \$16 million facility was opened with a ceremony attended by Air Force Lt. Col. Edward Phillips, construction management officer for southern Afghanistan, U.S. Air Forces Central; Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, commander, Afghanistan Engineer District-South, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; representatives from the construction firm, Contrack International Inc.; and several Air Force and Army members.



Representatives from the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Contrack International Inc. gather to open the ammunition supply point on Kandahar Airfield.



Air Force Lt. Col. Edward Phillips, left, accepts the ammunition supply point by signing a DD Form 1354 held by Brian Zickefoose, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The 451st AEW now has nine new earth-covered magazines for storing munitions.

“These new ECMs provide us with increased storage space for munitions,” said Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Meyers, munitions flight chief, 451st AEW.

“This means we no longer have to store them in open revetments, giving us better control and preventing loss.”

The ECMs have dual protection – from outside factors as well as to mitigate accidents that could occur in the storage areas, according to Glenn Matsuyama, chief of the Military Construction Branch, South District.

The ECMs reduce the amount of damage that results if an explosion occurs, said Brian Zickefoose, resident engineer, Kandahar Airfield Resident Office, South District. “Because the potential blast damage is decreased, the Air Force can increase the amount of munitions it stores.”

“Contrack International finished this project two months ahead of schedule,” Zickefoose said. “After the initial ECM was constructed to standard, the contractor repeated each structure quickly with good quality control throughout the project.”

The ammunition supply point was the last project to be completed in a contract awarded in April 2009 that had projects supporting both U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army operations on KAF.

“The work was completed in phases to meet operational needs,” said Greg Hegge, project manager, South District. “The first projects to be completed were the rotary wing apron and taxiway, followed by the close-air-support apron. Completion of the ammo supply point closes out the \$43.3 million contract.”

The rotary wing apron and taxiway were turned over to the Army in October 2010; the close-air-support apron was turned over to the Air Force in January.

Military construction projects completed at KAF extend the International Security Assistance Force’s ability to conduct operations more frequently, safely and efficiently. ■



Photo by Karla Marshall

USACE employee Kenny Pham (right), Herat Area Office project engineer, and John Clark, Tarin Kowt resident engineer, discuss arch-span construction.

USACE saves construction time and money in Afghanistan

by Karla Marshall

How do we quickly construct high-quality, yet inexpensive buildings for Afghanistan National Security Forces and execute within the time frame of President Obama's announced U.S. troop withdrawal planned for 2014? Solving that challenge became a priority for the U.S. Army in late 2010.

Working with the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and the Joint Program Integration Office, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers developed a plan to construct kandak (battalion-sized unit) complexes for the Afghan National Army using arch-span construction instead of traditional concrete brick and mortar as a first step in saving time and money.

Maj. Gen. Kendall P. Cox, USACE Transatlantic Division commander, explained that austere, arch-span facilities are more flexible and adaptable, easier to maintain, and can be constructed in as little as half the time of traditional buildings.

Col. Mario Trevino, deputy director for NTM-A/CSTC-A Engineering, agreed. "Sustainment requirements played a big role in the decision to use arch-span construction. When we

turn facilities over to the ANSF engineers, sustainment needs to be simple."

Acquisition strategy

With the arch-span construction plan in place, USACE's Afghanistan districts worked with the U.S. Defense Logistics Agency to develop an acquisition strategy to save additional time and money.

This tandem plan to acquire thousands of yards of rolled steel in advance of some contract awards for fiscal year 2011 arch-span projects took shape in January 2011.

"This acquisition strategy allows USACE to get a head start on the projects because we will provide contractors with U.S. government-furnished material," said Steve Belmore, a project manager at the South District who's deployed from the Army Materiel Command at the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Command in Natick, Mass. "It's a new approach for USACE throughout Afghanistan, but necessary because the shipping of steel is a logistical challenge.

"It could easily take more than six months for the steel to arrive at the storage yards in northern and southern Afghanistan," said Belmore. "We realized that if we ordered steel

and had it on hand when our contractors went to construction, we could potentially shave months off the construction time.”

Security concerns add additional delays and are ever present because the steel comes over land via convoys from Pakistan and other Asian routes. “Our shipping containers all have GPS tracking systems in them so we can check on their locations at any time, but there’s no guarantee the containers will arrive in a timely manner. So, our ultimate goal was to mitigate for shipping delays,” Belmore added.

After pledging its support to the government-furnished steel initiative in January, DLA developed its purchase plan and by April had ordered \$13 million worth of steel for the anticipated projects. About 3,400 rolls of 1 mm and 1.5 mm thick steel, in 330 of the planned 409 20-foot shipping containers, were on the way to Afghanistan by mid-May.

“The South District’s steel is being stored in original containers at a huge storage yard near Camp Bastion,” said Belmore. “We will keep it there until it’s time to requisition it for use and then will deliver the steel to project sites as needed, depending on each site’s milestone schedule.”

Sealed bidding

To further speed up kandak construction in the south, the district turned to the sealed-bidding process, which had been infrequently used in Afghanistan.

After determining the legal requirements and setting up the procedure, the South District hosted its first public bid openings, using the sealed-bidding process, June 18 and 22 at Forward Operating Base Lindsey near Kandahar Airfield. The solicitations were all amendable so that USACE could require the contractor to use government furnished steel when available.

One arch-span contract contained a government-furnished steel provision — expansion of the ANA 215th Corps at Delaram in Nimruz province — while the other garrison facility expansion, for the ANA 207th Corps at Camp Zafar in Herat province, will use contractor-furnished steel.

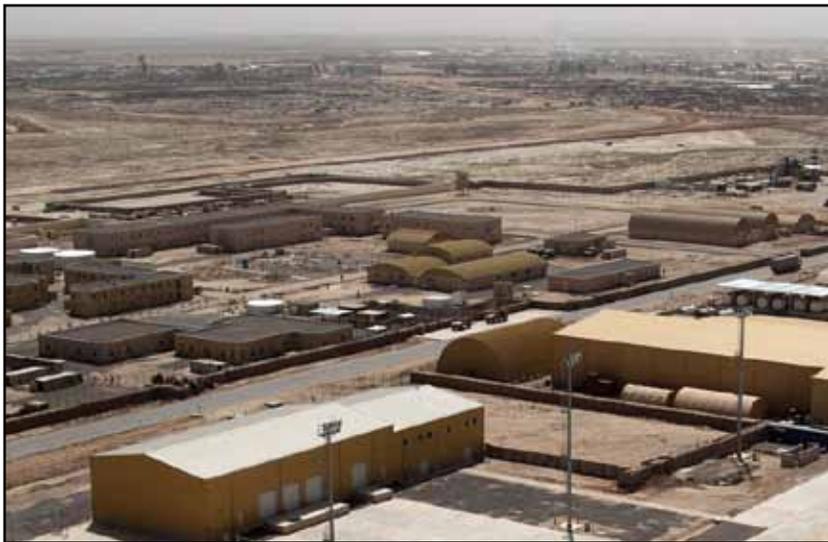
The Camp Zafar contract went to Contrack International Inc. for \$44.3 million, and the Delaram contract went to Lakeshore TolTest JV LLC for \$71.5 million.

USACE awarded three arch-span contracts in August: at Shorab in Helmand province to ECCI for \$29.9 million using government-furnished steel; at Camp Hero East to ECCI-C/METAG JV for \$62.2 million; and at Camp Hero West to Contrack International Inc. for \$16.6 million. The last two are in Kandahar province and will use contractor-furnished steel.

“Initially, we were concerned that the sealed-bidding strategy would reduce contractor competition,” said Bill Stout, chief of construction at the South District and deployed from USACE’s Baltimore District. “However, not only was that concern unwarranted, contractors with payment and performance bonds bid on the projects. That was good news to USACE because we now have confidence that our contractors will meet the interim milestones on our critical path.” “Critical path” represents the longest acceptable duration of planned activities from the beginning to the end of a project.

“We will drive the critical path heavily to ensure performance, and the bonds are tools we can use to help us meet our deadlines,” he said.

“The combined solution of using arch-span construction, employing bonding requirements with a sealed-bidding process, and providing steel to the contractors is working out well,” said



USACE Photo

Arch-span facilities are interspersed with traditional brick-and-mortar construction at this military installation in southern Afghanistan.

Rob Saari, ANSF program manager deployed from USACE’s Omaha District. “Despite a few challenges, the district is moving forward with the arch-span projects, which will move the ANA into their facilities sooner rather than later.”

“We are considering other types of construction techniques for the future to save time and money,” said Stout. “Also, these techniques may help reduce the amount of time our contractors spend on job sites, which will help with security in the more remote areas.”

“For these upcoming projects, we provide standardized architectural and engineering designs to the contractor. The contractor then adapts the designs according to a site’s concept plan,” said Belmore.

Contractors save time and money because the construction process is replicated for each building. The techniques are always the same; the only difference is scale, meaning width and length of the structure.

Construction at the ANA sites includes infrastructure, barracks, headquarters offices, latrines, storage, vehicle maintenance, training facilities and others. “We prioritized the construction for each site and separated the projects into smaller components,” said Stout. “This way, we can deliver facilities to the ANA sooner.”

From the notice to proceed, meaning USACE has given the contractor the go ahead to begin construction, the total time expected to construct each kandak complex is 540 days. The difference between arch-span and traditional bricks and mortar is the rate in which the facilities will be turned over to the ANA.

Fielding soldiers faster

“In the past, the entire compound was completed before we turned it over to the Afghans, and many factors played into finishing construction,” said Belmore. “When you compare arch-span construction to traditional concrete masonry construction, arch-span requires fewer construction workers, is not as weather dependent because there is less concrete that must cure, and the exterior is pre-painted. Plus, with arch-span, we can turn over buildings as they are completed.”

“The goal is to enable the ANA to field soldiers faster so that the government of Afghanistan can become more self-sufficient by the time NATO forces leave,” said Stout. “If we deliver buildings at intervals that help the ANA train their forces faster, the whole country benefits.”

Helping Afghan engineers learn international construction standards

Story and photos
by Karla K. Marshall



Engineer Reza, an Afghan senior project engineer who has worked South District for three years, inspects a construction project in Herat province Aug. 4.



Engineer Tariq (right) and construction representative Paul Bell (center) discuss progress of construction with the contractor at a site near Adraskan Aug. 4.

“For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be an engineer. I love my job; I am proud of the work I do for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The hardest part of my job as an engineer in Afghanistan is improving my English skills.”

These sentiments are a common refrain among the young engineers hired through USACE’s Afghan training program. In July, seven new Afghan engineers joined the ranks of the Afghanistan Engineer District-South in Herat province.

Getting hired

Getting a job with USACE is highly competitive. The engineer applicants, who are in the top of their graduating class, are interviewed; their skills, technical knowledge and English abilities are tested; and those who are hired have the opportunity to advance to more senior positions as their technical skills improve.

This unique hiring program, which began in South District’s Herat Area Office in 2008, is a small but significant part of the overarching U.S. national strategy to build Afghan capacity and develop Afghan institutions. Not only does USACE oversee the construction of facilities for Afghanistan’s National Police and Army, critical infrastructure upgrades and utility improvements, but it also takes seriously the imperative to develop young Afghan engineers into USACE quality assurance representatives and project engineers.

“The United States is not going to be in Afghanistan forever,” said Nabil Abourialy, Herat resident engineer and a native of Manhattan Beach, Calif. “Training Afghans to manage construction to an international standard sets them and the country up for success.”

Lt. Col. Gordon “Mark” Bartley, the Herat Area Office officer in charge, agrees. “The practical application of world-class construction practices is regarded as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these young engineers — an opportunity to use the theory they’ve gained at college and learn much more than they otherwise would with a civilian construction company.”

Afghanistan lacks the construction code compliance that USACE implements with all construction on jobsites, especially safety. “Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, the head of Afghanistan’s Transition Commission, said in the news recently that more than 70 percent of Afghan buildings are constructed illegally and without observing construction standards,” said Bartley.

“USACE QARs are ahead of their peers because they are getting exposure to international standards and learning to implement and enforce them early in their careers,” Bartley continued. “Most construction companies limit the tasks of their engineers. We don’t. USACE provides them with a well-rounded training and mentoring program that will serve them well into the future.”

Getting acquainted

Of the seven new engineers, six are recent graduates of Herat University; the other graduated from Kabul Polytechnic University. “The engineers come to us with a basic understanding of English because engineering classes are conducted in English,” said Bartley.

Edris, one of the newly-hired engineers, said that he is implementing what he studied at Herat University and being able to do so is the best part of his new job. “No other company builds to the codes and with high standards like USACE does. Spending time on the jobsites and getting to see the physical construction makes my job very rewarding.”

Edris works at a remote construction site and that, coupled with security concerns, are his biggest challenges working for South District. “Security

concerns are always present, but they exist for engineers all over the country,” he said.

Getting trained

“These young engineers start out as QARs at one of the many South District construction sites throughout the Herat province,” said Abourialy. First though, they must sit through a one-week training program that gives them basic knowledge and a broad overview of USACE processes.

“All of our Afghan project engineers have been through the program, and they are the ones who brief the new QARs on a variety of subjects,” said Masoud, deputy resident engineer at the Herat Resident Office and a graduate of the evolving training program. “We have six Afghan senior project engineers who present subjects to the new class of QARs and who, along with other Afghan project engineers and QARs, mentor the new engineers until they are fully trained.”

Engineer Bismillah, who has been with South District for three years, starts the training with a briefing on the basics of concrete construction, quality control testing, daily quality control report production, and the various U.S. Federal Acquisition Regulations that govern construction contracts.

Engineer Tariq then discusses construction finishing techniques, evaluating contractors, closing out projects and masonry. “I was assigned these topics because I have closed out several projects and am the most familiar with the requirements for finished projects,” he said.

Jawid, an engineer from Herat who has been with South District since 2007, follows with another four subjects: preconstruction meetings, developing and following a quality control plan, electricity 101 and plumbing 101. “One of my projects had plumbing deficiencies. During my presentation, I was able to refer to the International Plumbing Code to explain to the new engineers why the techniques used by the contractor were not permitted and how I resolved the deficiency.”

Omid, a senior project engineer who is overseeing five construction projects primarily at the adjacent Afghan National Army’s Camp Zafar, focuses on the next round of subjects. “I discuss definable features of work, QA inspection checklists, the three phases of inspection and the submittal process.”

Engineer Wali teaches the new engineers about scheduling and the payment process, safety and security

plans, design-build fundamentals, welding 101 and milestone achievement.

Requests for information, daily QA reports and safety issues are presented by Engineer Reza. “Safety is my number one issue. I use photos to show common safety problems on USACE project sites and photos correcting the problems. On my project sites, we have not had any loss of productivity or accidents leading to injury.”

Masoud concludes the initial week-long training with an overview of the QAR responsibilities and limited authorities along with an overview of the South District’s organization and mission.

Getting to work

“The Herat Area Office really benefits from the professionalism of these young engineers,” said Abourialy. “We bring these guys on with very little practical experience but within three to four months, they are functioning at a capacity that we expect from their American counterparts.”

The Afghan senior project managers perform a full range of duties including developing cost and schedule estimates, researching local market pricing, and supervising and mentoring the QARs. They provide a level of continuity that enables newly deployed USACE engineers and project managers to quickly learn their jobs.

“When the new U.S. project engineers and construction representatives arrive in Herat,” said Abourialy, “it is the Afghan senior project engineers who teach them the processes unique to the Herat Area Office. In my first days, I relied on and learned a lot from them. This helped me get up to speed and learn the projects and how to do the administrative steps necessary to keep the projects’ continuity.”

These six Herat Area Office Afghan senior project engineers progressed through the program tiers — junior QAR, mid-level QAR, senior QAR and project engineer — before becoming senior project engineers. No project engineers have left USACE for jobs in the private sector.



Engineer Omid (standing) explains the design features of a project on Camp Zafar to the new class of Afghan engineer quality assurance representatives Aug. 6.

“I can speak generally for all of the project engineers who work here,” said Masoud. “We wanted to work for USACE because of the reputation it has for building quality construction. We continue to work for USACE because we have become part of a family.”

“Our American co-workers and colleagues are professional, the work is rewarding and we get to perform a wide variety of tasks,” Masoud continued. “We don’t have this type of opportunity anywhere else.”

Since the training program began, 31 Afghan engineers have started their careers with the Herat Area Office and have been assigned to projects throughout the region. This latest group of seven has a world of knowledge to gain from their committed and professional Afghan and American mentors.

“When I started working for USACE, it was like obtaining my master’s degree,” said Tariq. “We learn so much here and I want to share that knowledge with these new engineers.”

Training is always a part of the job for the South District’s Afghan engineers. “We conduct training on a bi-monthly basis and whoever needs the training attends, whether they are new or have been here a couple of years,” Tariq continued.

Learning the USACE processes and requirements is fundamental, but just the beginning. “The initial training was helpful and there is so much to learn,” said Edris. “I now know the USACE policies and rules, and my mentor is always available for my questions. What remains for me is to expand my knowledge and become the best engineer that I can.”

New rotary wing apron at Shindand complete

by Karla Marshall

Completing a construction project ahead of schedule is unusual in Afghanistan. Completing a 112,000-square-meter rotary wing apron four months early is remarkable, as it represents a significant milestone in the on-going expansion at Shindand Air Base.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working with the 838th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group at Shindand to expand the base to triple its original size. The extra space will be used to relocate some 3,000 coalition forces to make way for construction of a new training runway for Afghan pilots.

“It (the apron) will enable us to progress on Shindand’s strategic mission — establishing pilot training for a professional, fully independent and operationally capable Afghan Air Force,” said Air Force Col. John Hokaj, commander, 838th AEAG.

In addition to the new rotary wing apron, several other projects are underway to improve the overall capability of the forces at Shindand including a



Photo by Deborah Duncan

Representatives from the U.S. Air Force, Army Corps of Engineers, Tetra Tech EC and Yuksel Insaat gather to open the rotary wing apron at Shindand Air Base.

strategic airlift apron; an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance apron; a fuels operations and munitions storage; a solid waste management plant and a wastewater treatment plant.

“This apron marks a significant milestone in the expansion of Shindand Air Base as it grows to become

Afghanistan’s premier training base for the Afghan Air Force,” said Lt. Col. Michael Kinslow, 838th AEAG deputy commander, at the turnover ceremony Aug. 15. “Not only does it make way for the new training runway, but it also creates a first-class platform to support our combat aviators.”

Celebrating the apron completion with Kinslow was Army Maj. Gen. Kendall Cox, commander, USACE Transatlantic Division; Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, commander, USACE Afghanistan Engineer District-South; Army Lt. Col. Blake Alexander, commander, Task Force Spearhead 3-227th Combat Aviation Battalion; Scott Vick, vice president, Tetra Tech EC (the prime contractor); representatives from Yuksel Insaat (the construction subcontractor); and other military and civilian officials.

“I’m very proud to cut the

ribbon on this,” said Wham. “In a direct partnership between USACE, Tetra Tech EC and Yuksel Insaat, we constructed 110 percent of the original contract — and completed the job at the highest quality four months early.”

The contract was awarded Sept. 16, 2010, for \$14.9 million and the expected completion date was mid-October 2011. However, a modification to the original contract increased the scope by 10 percent, the price to \$17.4 million and extended the completion date to December. The project provides parking for an additional 14 Chinook, 18 Black Hawk and 10 Apache helicopters.

“This project directly supports the war fighter and their mission to contribute to Afghanistan’s stability and security,” Wham concluded. 



Photo by Joan Kibler

The opening of the new 112,000-square-meter rotary wing apron on Shindand Air Base was celebrated Aug. 15 with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Forward area refueling point at Mustang Ramp operational

by Karla Marshall

Kandahar Airfield is busy. Every day, cargo and people are transported into and out of this major military hub in southern Afghanistan via fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

Every day, those same aircraft need refueling, and beginning Aug. 20, there are six more fueling points for rotary-wing platforms — Black Hawk, Apache and Kiowa helicopters.

Part of a two-phased military heliport construction project that began on KAF in February 2009, the forward area refueling point was completed in August and represents the last component of the contract.

Phase one of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project at Mustang Ramp included 45,000 square meters of ramp space and 20,000 square meters of runway. It was constructed by Contrack International Inc. for \$10.9 million.

Phase two, was constructed by Yenigün Insaat for \$16.9 million, and includes an additional 120,000 square meter ramp area (completed in January) and the refueling point.

“We look forward to using this new fueling point,” said Staff Sgt. Joseph Hart, the noncommissioned officer in charge of class III operations and who is deployed with the 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division from Fort Campbell, Ky. “At full capacity, our platoon can dispense at least 10,000 gallons of fuel each day.”

The six fueling points receive fuel via underground steel pipes originating at the nearby fuel facility. “This fueling point is the only one in Afghanistan with an underground piping system from the fuel source,” said Maj. Eric Peterson, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion executive officer.

Each fueling point has two other important features as well. “They can double as storage areas for various rotary-wing aircraft because each has tie-down points. They also have oil and water separators that we can use to safely clean fuel spills,” said Peterson.

Surrounded by a fence and separate from the fueling points, the fuel facility requires only one Soldier to effectively run it. There are fuel turnoff switches at each fuel point, but the main switch is at the fuel facility.

“The fuel facility is pretty self-sufficient,” said Brian Zickefoose, Kandahar Airfield resident engineer who deployed from Lancaster, Pa. “Once the main switch is turned on, the (JP8 jet) fuel in the 50,000-gallon bladders travels to the fuel points automatically.”



Photo by Karla Marshall

Sgt. 1st Class Jose Ramos and Staff Sgt. Joseph Hart inspect the new fueling point equipment at Mustang Ramp on Kandahar Airfield Aug. 15.



Photo by Karla Marshall

One of the six new forward area refueling point bays at Mustang Ramp on Kandahar Airfield.



Courtesy Photo

Soldiers from the 563rd Aviation Support Battalion fuel the first Black Hawk helicopter to use the new forward area refueling point on Kandahar Airfield.

USACE, Army divers team up for solutions at Kajaki, Dahla dams

by Karla Marshall

Maintaining underwater structures at dams, even under the best of circumstances, takes periodic inspection and repair. The Kajaki and Dahla dams in southern Afghanistan, however, have not had the benefit of either for several years, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working to remedy the neglect.

U.S. Army divers, at the request of the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, arrived at the district's headquarters at Kandahar Airfield in early August to help inspect both the Kajaki and Dahla dams. Their plan was to use a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) to collect data and images of the gate structures, release valves, inlet tunnels and trash racks. The team intended to obtain data, such as sediment buildup, structural integrity and concrete cavitations and provide it to USACE engineers and project managers working to analyze and improve the dams' integrity.

"When we first decided we needed to look below the surface, we didn't know who to call," recalled Noori Nader, project manager for the Kajaki Dam. "After spending several months contacting everyone I could think of, Sue Fox (the South District's safety manager) had the solution."

"I have a long work history with the Army dive teams," said Fox. "As the deputy diving coordinator in the (USACE) Portland District, I worked with them every year at our dams in Portland. I also worked with an Army dive team in Iraq in the past and knew they would be perfect for this mission. Once we got the go ahead from our command, I coordinated with the team to get them here; it actually happened quite quickly."

The dive team

The four-Soldier dive team deployed from the 7th Engineer Dive Team, 65th Engineer Battalion, 130th Engineer Brigade, 8th Theater Sustainment Command at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, to Kuwait in February. The team — 1st Sgt. William “Scott” Baumgartner, Staff Sgt. Sean Rowley, Sgt. John Hoover and Sgt. Britton Hall — support military operations in the U.S. Central Command’s area of operations from their base in Kuwait, but this was their first mission in Afghanistan.

“We work throughout Centcom’s AOR and have done a lot of diving in Iraq to support bridging operations primarily; however, we perform a full spectrum of dive operations as well,” said Baumgartner, a master diver and the team lead for this mission.

In addition to bridging operations during their one-year deployment, the team may be called upon to perform body recovery, obstacle removal, port opening, underwater surveying and demolition, salvaging, vessel security and inspections, and force protection missions.

“We are a dive team,” said Baumgartner. “But this mission required no diving at all.” The team did its entire fact finding through surface observation and the ROV.

The ROV findings will help the district’s engineers determine the best way to repair the various components of the Kajaki Dam and its irrigation tunnel. At the Dahla Dam, the data collected will help engineers determine the extent of sediment buildup at the reservoir and the conditions at the entrance to the outlet tunnel.



Courtesy Photo

Sgt. John Hoover, 7th Engineer Dive Team member, maneuvers the remotely operated vehicle at the Kajaki Dam in Helmand province, Aug. 14.

Mission One – Kajaki Dam

The Kajaki Dam was constructed in the 1950s by an American construction company as part of the Helmand Arghandab Valley Authority Project. The project was an ambitious undertaking by the Afghan and U.S. governments and was designed to store water for downstream irrigation.

In the 1970s, U.S. Agency for International Development funded the hydropower plant construction at the dam which included two 16.5-megawatt generators.

Years of neglect, however, have taken a toll on the dam and its ability to perform as designed. Work is ongoing to improve power generation as well, but this reconnaissance mission was solely to evaluate the irrigation component of the dam.

The original construction of the irrigation intake structure includes a trash rack that prevents debris from entering the tunnel and causing damage to the downstream valves and a 98-ton concrete maintenance bulkhead gate. The gate has a steel wheel which is supposed to open and close with a crane. The operational weight capacity of the crane is only 75 tons and therefore, it cannot raise and lower the gate.

“The crane failed, leaving the gates stuck in a fully open position,” said Noori. “So, no maintenance can be performed on the structure and we didn’t know its condition.”

“As a result of the permanently opened concrete gate, the next component of the irrigation system, the downstream intake tower, relies on a set of roto valves for emergency closure and a set of jet valves for a regulated release of irrigation water from the reservoir,” Noori continued.

Neither of the valve systems was designed to function in the current capacity, so South District engineers are concerned that their condition has deteriorated over the years.

“Without a functioning maintenance bulkhead gate, there is no way to take the valves offline for preventative maintenance or to assess the reliability of the system,” said Noori. “Should the valves fail, there is the potential for an uncontrolled release of water into the irrigation system.”

Uncontrolled release means flooding for the Helmand River valley. If water



Courtesy Photo

The remotely operated vehicle gets lowered into the Kajaki Reservoir, Aug. 15.



Courtesy Photo

7th Engineer Dive Team lead, 1st Sgt. William “Scott” Baumgartner (left) looks on as Staff Sgt. Sean Rowley maneuvers the remotely operated vehicle at the Kajaki Dam, Aug. 15.



Courtesy Photo

Staff Sgt. Sean Rowley lowers the line.



Courtesy Photo

Sgt. John Hoover sketches the shape of the Dahla Reservoir as part of the USACE reconnaissance mission, Aug. 20.

from the reservoir is allowed to freely flow downstream, potentially there would be loss of property. Additionally, the hydroelectric power station at the Kajaki Dam would be rendered inoperable, effectively cutting off renewable power to Helmand and Kandahar provinces.

As a result of the potentially tenuous condition of the valves and maintenance gate, there is risk of failure.

“The repair of the intake structure is essential to the longevity of the irrigation and hydroelectric systems,” said Noori. “This mission is the first step to determining the scope of repairs required to make the dam structures function as intended.

“I will use these findings and the ROV video to develop a specific contract, and pass these findings on to the contractor. They will now be able to ‘see’ the condition of the structure underwater,” continued Noori. “Having the information will make a big difference in defining the potential repair project.”

Inspection

The dive team and Fox made their way to the Kajaki Dam area via helicopter to FOB (forward operating base) Zeebrugge, located adjacent to Kajaki Reservoir.

Basing out of FOB Zeebrugge, the team rose early to arrive at the dam by 5:30 a.m. each of the five days they were there. After a short briefing from the U.S. Marines about the security situation in the area, the team learned that not just insurgents were nearby. Jackals, scorpions, hornets and cobras were also real and present threats.

“We saw scorpions and hornets, and we heard the jackals every night,” said Fox.

Like all missions in Afghanistan, the dive team encountered a few issues they were not expecting. Although they anticipated deploying the ROV from their Zodiac boats, extremely low water levels prevented them. As a result, the team had to deploy the ROV from the intake tower, some 150 feet above the water surface.

Almost immediately, the deployment of the ROV became problematic. The 150 feet of cable tangled with the chain used to deploy the trash racks. Before the mission could continue, the ROV had to be freed so that it could continue its descent into the reservoir.

An additional challenge was the scarcity of fuel for the ROV. Low-quality, contaminated fuel was all that could be found and the ROV’s function was impaired as a result. “We spent about 1.5 hours the second day at the dam just repairing the ROV. We had to disassemble it, clean it and then reassemble it before we could continue the recon mission,” said Baumgartner.

Despite the frustration of the first day, what the ROV encountered under the water gave the USACE team some much-needed optimism.

Findings

“We expected a significant amount of sediment to collect at the intake gate,” said Noori. “What the ROV video showed, though, was a sediment level of less than 1/8 inch. We didn’t know what to expect with respect to the condition of the intake structure. But what the ROV found was that the gates were in good condition as were the intake openings.” There was a small leak that requires repair, but according to Noori, the fix is not complex.

Next, the ROV inspected the trash racks. Those were all in good condition, but trees and boulders were caught in the racks and must be removed. A guiderail was twisted

and bent which will require repair. Nevertheless, Baumgartner said the trash racks were fairly clean and there was good flow.

At the irrigation tunnel outfall, the ROV was focused on the concrete walls and tunnel floor. Some scouring has occurred over time, exposing the rebar which will require repair, and some unidentified piping under the valves will require evaluation.

“We are pleased with what the ROV found and the dive team’s efforts,” said Noori. “With this data we can develop a comprehensive plan to repair the irrigation structure at Kajaki.”

Mission Two – Dahla Dam

After nearly a week at Kajaki Dam, the team split up. Rowley and Hall returned to Kandahar Airfield to plan the dive team’s return to Kuwait. Baumgartner, Hoover, Fox and Steve Bredthauer, South District’s project manager for the Dahla Dam, continued on to FOB Frontenac, their base of operations for the dam inspection.

“Delta Troop, 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, were our hosts for the Dahla Dam inspection,” said Baumgartner. “We met with them the night before our mission to get the mission plan and threat brief.”

The following morning, the team departed FOB Frontenac in an MRAP (mine-resistant, armor-protected) vehicle convoy to Dahla Dam. After a 20-minute ride, the team arrived and began its inspection.

“The mission here was much different than the mission at Kajaki,” said Fox. “We weren’t able to perform an underwater inspection because August is the peak of irrigation season and the dam could not be shut down.”

Baumgartner and Hoover instead measured the intake tower and determined the elevation measurements at the tower and its base. They took elevation measurements of the outfall structure and roughly estimated the total footprint of the reservoir.

“The goal was to get a general idea of the shape of the reservoir because it’s a dynamic body of water,” said Baumgartner. “We also needed to see if there was any unexploded ordnance, trees or boulders that would impede navigation for our next trip out here.”

The dive team will return in the fall to conduct a hydrographic survey and contour of the bottom of the reservoir to determine the maximum pool depth, which equates to how much water can be stored for future years. USACE will use that data and compare it to similar data obtained in the 1970s to determine how much sediment accumulates during the spring floods.

“This mission was successful all the way around and it feels good to be involved in such an important project,” said Fox. “We had some frustrating moments, but the information gained will help the projects progress and will make the next trip out here easier.”

Baumgartner agreed. “One of our big concerns is weather and its potential impact on our follow-on mission. There are no docks or boat ramps, so the marshy and muddy banks of the reservoir may be difficult to navigate and launch from. Having that information in advance will help us plan more effectively.”

Noori looks forward to the team’s return. “They have other capabilities that we could use in the future, such as surveying and measuring the level of cumulated sedimentation in the reservoir. I look forward to the team coming back and helping us with that task,” Noori concluded. 📷



Courtesy Photo



Courtesy Photo

MRAP teams enable USACE to deliver quality construction

Story and photos by Joan Kibler

They come from all walks of life and all sorts of backgrounds.

They're driven by the call to serve and willingly put their lives on the line every day.

They range in age from their 20s to their 40s.

They're National Guardsmen and reservists who volunteer to be combat Soldiers.

They protect members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who go "outside the wire" to project sites. Without them, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South couldn't carry out its mission to design and build projects that are a critical component of creating the conditions for stability and security in Afghanistan.

They're a cohesive group of Soldiers known simply as the MRAP team. In military parlance, they function as a personal security detachment, or PSD, on ground movements.

MRAP – or mine-resistant, ambush-protected – vehicles offer protection from roadside bombs and other explosives. The vehicle is renowned for its mobility and protection in dangerous environments. Its crew must not only possess the skill and knowledge to operate the vehicle and its weaponry but also must maintain an awareness of the local conditions and when to engage with the enemy.

USACE MRAP crews have a singular mission – to bring people back safely from their missions.

In the past year, the South District's MRAP capabilities have expanded beyond being Kandahar-centric. Now, MRAP teams are also located at the Qalat Resident Office in Zabul province and at the Helmand Area Office in Helmand province. A team is planned for deployment to Herat province as well.

"With a billion-dollar program this fiscal year alone, district personnel must get to project sites to work with customers to plan upcoming projects or to provide construction quality oversight," said Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, commander, South District. "Our PSDs provide the security we need to deliver this massive construction program to the Afghan people. These Soldiers are a critical component of our team."

MRAP teams include volunteer Soldiers and contractor personnel.

"The MRAP mission is purely defensive," said Lt. Col. Philip Bernier, "but our Soldiers have the capability to lay down overwhelming firepower on the enemy if needed." Bernier served as director of Operations and Security (J3) for the South District until he redeployed in August.

Getting trained

MRAP Soldiers report to the Kandahar area initially and are stationed at Forward Operating Base Lindsey near Kandahar Airfield.

New team members progress through a structured training program, according to Sgt. 1st Class Ramon Curiel, noncommissioned officer in charge of the MRAP program. "We teach them how to act and how to react. We teach them how to perform the duties of all the MRAP positions. If they can't



Sgt. 1st Class Ramon Curiel, noncommissioned officer in charge of the MRAP program for Afghanistan Engineer District-South, conducts surveillance while on a mission outside of Kandahar City.

Members of Afghanistan Engineer District-South conduct construction inspections near Kandahar City while the MRAP team provides security.



perform proficiently, they will be sent home.

“Our Soldiers depend on each other,” Curiel said. “They have to pick up the responsibilities of another Soldier if something bad happens. Their job is to protect their passengers and each other.”

Positions include truck commander, gunner, driver, medic, communications specialist, mechanic and engineer.

MRAP team members are not required to have a combat MOS (military occupational specialty) “because we will make them combat Soldiers,” Curiel said. Many are military police officers or combat engineers in their reservist or National Guard positions. Some have infantry experience.

Curiel said it takes 30-60 days to train new Soldiers to be combat ready. “We teach them how to drive the MRAPs, shoot all the weapons, and react in case of an ambush or rollover,” said Staff Sgt. Robert Moss, assistant NCO in charge, Kandahar team. They also get counter-IED (improvised explosive device) training, the combat life saver course, night driving and radio training, Moss added.

It’s an orchestrated process carried out by the training NCO, Spec. Travis Richmond, who keeps track of every Soldier’s training needs. “I coordinate for slots and availability for courses like driving an MRAP and combat life saver, which are week-long courses,” he said. “Some courses require recertification, so I keep records of when Soldiers are due their refresher training. Training gives points toward their next promotion as well.

“We teach weapons familiarization, including how to break them down and clean them,” Richmond continued. “We will not let a Soldier get behind a weapon to go on a mission until we are completely comfortable with the Soldier’s proficiency on that weapon.”

With an emphasis on weapons proficiency, MRAP Soldiers drill continuously. They go to the rifle range at least three times a month. New members initially focus on zeroing the weapon to make sure the sights are aligned properly; other training may focus on close quarters marksmanship.

They may find themselves drilling at almost any time.

Recently, while on site visits, Lt. Col. Douglas Hoenig, officer in charge of the Kandahar Area Office who is also in charge of the MRAP teams in Kandahar and Qalat, announced that he was a “casualty” with severe injuries who needed medical evacuation. The MRAP team kicked into high gear to save him.

“For training purposes, they treated me as though I had a sucking chest wound and was a double amputee. Within two minutes, they had applied two tourniquets and bandaged my chest. They ripped open my T-shirt and would have cut off my new uniform, but I let them forego that part of the drill,” he said with a smile.

“These sorts of drills are important so that we never become complacent,” said Hoenig, who has redeployed.

Double duty and then some

Getting trained is just the beginning. Everyone has double duty to ensure that the unit is self-sufficient, Curiel said.

In addition to preparing for and going on missions, Soldiers have extra duties such as training NCO, assistant NCO in charge, maintenance NCO, and supply NCO.

MRAP team members are also responsible for the vehicles and weapons systems. “They prepare the vehicle when going on a mission and take care of routine maintenance,” Bernier said, “and they also install and maintain the weapons systems.”

The unseen component of their jobs is the liaison and coordination that it takes to move, a critical process involving several commands that may take several days.

“When it’s time to move, they understand the requirements of each specific mission before they go out,” Bernier said. “They conduct battle drills or rehearsals before each movement. They plan what to do for certain scenarios – what they’ll do if ‘this’ happens, their order of movement, and what actions they’ll take on contact. They know the rules of engagement and what to do if escalation of force is required. If they must defend themselves and their passengers, they will.

“They know they are entrusted with the care of their passengers,” Bernier added.

Whether transporting generals or colonels or USACE civilians, the NCO in charge is responsible for bringing passengers back safely, Bernier said. "The general will put himself in that E-7's care and follows his orders during a movement."

Once the MRAP team has transported its passengers to the project location, they secure area. The NCO in charge issues specific instructions to USACE employees about safety, and then the team, both mounted and dismounted, carries out its protocols for maintaining security. Throughout, they ensure redundant communications while conducting the mission.

"The MRAP NCO in charge also maintains situational awareness of the security of the entire team so that they're ready to pull out on a moment's notice if necessary," Bernier said.

"The job is rigorous," Moss said. "Everyone who comes here to serve on the MRAP team volunteers. When there are problems, they come up with solutions. This is not the place for anyone who wants an easy ride. These Soldiers know that. Without exception, they are motivated when they're on missions."

With uncompromising mission requirements, "MRAP team members must be in good physical shape," Curiel said. "We must carry 100 pounds of equipment as we do our jobs. The schedule is full, day in and day out."

Always on alert

No mission is without risk.

"Our Soldiers literally put their lives on the line every day," Curiel said. "The insurgents are out there. We have to stay a step ahead of them."

Curiel's intensity about the mission is reflected in his regimented approach to conducting a mission or drilling his Soldiers on the rifle range. He barks orders with precision. His mind is always racing. He cares about the mission: "our first job is to protect our passengers" – and he cares about his Soldiers, calling them his "extended family."

In Helmand Capt. John Shelton is the officer in charge of the MRAP team, with assistance from Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Burd and Staff Sgt. Christopher Binder. In Qalat, Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Allen leads the team, assisted by Staff Sgt. Alberto Garcia, Staff Sgt. Ronald Stidham and Staff Sgt. Tony Bean.

The teams travel in convoys using three types of MRAPs: the M-ATV, the Cougar and the MaxxPro. The vehicles are fully equipped with the latest communications equipment and sophisticated weaponry.

Team members use individual weapons plus crew-served weapons, like machine guns and grenade launchers. Crew-served weapons require more than one person to operate due to their complexity or size.

"If we have to, we are prepared to engage," Curiel said. "Most of us have fought the enemy in other assignments."

MRAP team members find fulfillment doing their part for U.S. mission in Afghanistan

"I like what I do here to provide security for the USACE employees who are going to job sites. I know this work is making a difference, and I'm proud to be part of this team."

Staff Sgt. Michael Conner

"I like my job. I like to help the new guys. I can pass along lessons learned to make them better able to perform their jobs."

Staff Sgt. Robert Moss

"I was in the Marine Corps for more than 13 years, spent four years as a civilian, and then joined the North Carolina National Guard. This job helps me work toward a military retirement while working on my master's degree. But, most of all, it gives me the opportunity to serve – to make sure that with every mission everyone comes back safe."

Staff Sgt. Tony Bean

"I admire the courage and level of respect that these Soldiers have for their jobs and for each other. They demonstrate this cohesiveness all the time."

Lt. Col. Philip Bernier

Curiel is on his fourth deployment to Afghanistan. His previous assignments include serving as a mentor for the Afghan National Army and Police; a tour with Task Force Paladin, a unit formed by ISAF in 2006 to combat the threat of IEDs; and a tour with a PSD for Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan. He also served as a machine gunner in Iraq. Before joining the Army Reserves, he fought in Somalia as a U.S. Marine.

Moss is on his third deployment to Afghanistan. His previous assignments included route reconnaissance from Bagram Air Base, detainee operations at Bagram and Kandahar, and combat patrols and village assessments with the 10th Mountain Division at Ghosni. He also served in Iraq as part of the police transition team.

"You always have to be prepared for the worst," said Spec. Marcus Gross. "A Soldier must always be ready to deploy, engage and destroy. When you serve overseas, in an environment like this, you never look at a (U.S.) flag the same way again."

In his nine months as the J3 director, Bernier was impressed with the quality of volunteers for the MRAP teams. "Even though they come from varied backgrounds, these individuals are Soldiers first, and they come here serious about what they want to do. They want this professional experience. Some of them want to build their careers in this field. Some want to be back with a military unit. They want to contribute to the organization." 

Moving via an MRAP vehicle: an orchestrated process

Story and photo by Joan Kibler

A billion dollar program has hundreds of projects, requiring Afghanistan Engineer District-South personnel to regularly visit sites for project planning and construction oversight. Unless U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees are stationed at a project site, they must use air or ground movement to get there.

It's certainly not as simple as picking

up a phone to call a taxi or logging into a website to book a flight.

The district has established processes within Operations and Security, or J3, for both types of movements. For ground movements, MRAP (mine-resistant, ambush protected) teams or security liaison teams escort and protect South District employees. Until July, MRAP teams reported to J3, but an organizational realignment now places those teams under the officers in charge

at the South District's area or resident offices.

"That organizational change is part of a natural progression," said Lt. Col. Douglas Hoenig, the former officer in charge, Kandahar Area Office. "When standing up a unit such as this, you're heavily into recruiting, training and equipping them, so they fall under J3. With three MRAP units now deployed, the teams report to the OICs who can manage their schedules and prioritize

their missions to better support projects within the specific geographic regions.”

Hoenig is responsible for the MRAP teams based in Kandahar and Qalat. The Kandahar Area Office is responsible for construction projects in the Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan and Daykundi provinces.

Lt. Col. Ron Bahr, officer in charge, Helmand Area Office, manages the MRAP team based at Camp Shorabak. The Helmand Area Office is responsible for construction projects in the Helmand and Nimruz provinces.

Adding flexibility to meet the mission

Hoenig explained that USACE “owns no battle space.” “This means that all our projects reside in areas where a battle space owner provides security. Therefore, we must coordinate with the battle space owners to move through their areas to get to project sites.

“Since our area and resident engineers have frequent contact with multiple battle space owners when constructing the projects, ‘owning’ the movement assets gives us better capability to get to project sites,” Hoenig added.

“This change gives me much greater flexibility in tailoring an MRAP team to meet the needs in my specific area of operations as well,” Bahr said. “In Helmand, we have a different dynamic and don’t have the freedom of movement that the district has in Kandahar, for instance. The U.S. Marines (II Marine Expeditionary Force) are responsible for the battle space in Helmand province, and they have specific requirements for movement.”

Bahr said that for most movements, the Helmand-based MRAP team will fall in with a Marine convoy. “Our MRAP team travels independently only to certain areas in the immediate vicinity of Camp Shorabak.”

The South District has a standard operating procedure for MRAP teams, and the OICs have the authority to refine the process so long as they comply with the overall movement policy.

Tailoring the movement process

Hoenig developed an operations process for MRAP teams assigned to the Kandahar Area Office. His office white board with the six steps outlined in three to four words each belies the complexity of the process.

The process starts with developing a convoy operations order.

“It takes days to do a con-op,” said Sgt. 1st Class Ramon Curiel,

noncommissioned officer in charge, MRAP program, Kandahar. “We must request permission from every BSO (battle space owner) to enter their area. We coordinate what assets they can provide in case of emergency, such as air support or medical. We monitor intelligence reports continually. The OIC approves the mission.”

Concurrently, the OIC and the MRAP team coordinate with the J3 shop.

The process includes mission briefings, inspection of vehicles before movement, briefings to passengers on the day of movement, accomplishment of the mission and recovery, Hoenig said.

“Recovery includes maintenance on the vehicles and weapons systems,” Hoenig said, “but it also includes an after-action review that documents what the team did well during the mission and includes recommendations on what the team can do better next time. We are always looking for ways to improve performance in keeping people safe during movements. And keeping people safe is the first priority as we deliver our construction program.”

Like Hoenig, Bahr is developing a supplemental procedure that addresses the circumstances in his area of operations.

“We travel to most of our project sites via air movement,” Bahr said, “but we take our MRAP team along to provide protection. The BSO is tied in with those project visits, too, to support us with a quick reaction force if needed. The Marines have been more than willing to

support anything we need.

“We are getting ready to stand up two new project offices – at Kajaki Dam and Nolay (in the Sangin Valley) to support SEPS (Southern Electrical Power System) projects,” Bahr said. “That effort is being led by our liaison officer with the MEF – Capt. John Shelton. Because Shelton works closely with the MEF, I appointed him to also serve as the OIC for the MRAP team. He’s in a position where he can help make sure that we conduct safe movements.”

Assuring mission capability

Because of several factors – redundant communications, coordination with BSOs, the MRAP team’s compliance with protection standards – there have been few mishaps. But any injury and loss of property are serious concerns.

“We continually monitor our Soldiers and their missions to see the strengths and determine where additional training is needed,” said Lt. Col. Philip Bernier, former J3 director who redeployed in August to become deputy commandant for U.S. Central Command Forward in Qatar. “We make sure that every team has the composition and quality personnel it needs to be mission capable.”

Curiel said that in the past year, MRAP teams have carried out some 200 missions, which may last three to four hours or three to four days.

“Our MRAP teams go out almost every day,” Hoenig said. “We have some top-notch volunteers doing a tough mission.”



Staff Sgt. Michael Conner, a member of the USACE MRAP team in southern Afghanistan, trains on the M2 .50-caliber machine gun as part of the team’s regularly scheduled marksmanship training.

AES Team

Kandahar Airfield Area Office



Photo by Brenda L. Beasley

Kandahar Airfield Area Office team members, Sept. 30. From left to right, 1st row, Army Capt. Derek Bowen and Jim Gehle; 2nd row, Arnie Guillermo, Jim Pierce, Beth Nash, and Steven Lee; 3rd row, Eric Lambert, David Williams, Larry Wooters, Robert Van Winkle, Shane Wilson, Billy Williams, Jonathan Jones, and Chip Neiman; and 4th row, Peter Delaney, Dan Finke, Jeremy Wilson, Damien French, Randall Lewis, Scott Swanson, and Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Gary Szekely.

Story by Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Gary Szekely

Welcome to the Kandahar Airfield Area Office, where a highly skilled, well-oiled machine of 21 civilian and two military personnel are executing and managing \$340 million in construction projects. The Area Office is managed by a very small team, Jim Gehle (area engineer), Chip Neiman (office engineer), Capt. Derek Bowen (officer in charge) and me, Senior Master Sgt. Gary Szekely (noncommissioned officer in charge) who coordinate with garrison agencies, mitigate contract problems and work with area office staff to guarantee a successful project turnover after the blood, sweat and tears have been devoted to complete these projects. The area office is assigned to the South District and comprises two resident offices; the Airfield Resident Office and the South Park Resident Office. These offices are dedicated

to supporting combat operations, improving quality of life for Kandahar Airfield residents and helping to restore diplomacy to the country of Afghanistan by building the required infrastructure to defend a nation.

The Airfield Resident Office was led by Resident Engineer Brian "West Point" Zickefoose, who just redeployed. It's now run by Jonathan Jones, who is charged with increasing the capability of combat military operations and improving airfield surfaces for the Kandahar Airfield. The team consists of project engineers Steven Lee and David Williams, and construction representatives Jim Pierce, Scott Swanson, Billy Williams and Arnie Guillermo, who ensure the busiest NATO airfield in the world continues to launch and recover more than 30,000 sorties a month without impact or delay to airfield operations. One major project includes paving the Strategic-Tactical airlift apron, a \$32

million military construction project to further advance flying operations on Kandahar Airfield. This team of quality assurance workers oversees the placement of 550 to 700 cubic meters of concrete valued at about \$150,000 per day. In addition to overseeing construction of aircraft hangars and support facilities, the quality assurance inspectors examine more concrete than any team would possibly want to inspect, but the project will definitely improve future airfield operations.

The airfield office has tackled a \$17.5 million project to support the rotary wing mission on Kandahar Airfield that is currently in the final stages of completion. This project entailed many facets, including a new helicopter runway with lighting, forward aviation refueling point, and fire suppression system. The efforts of this team will help facilitate the 101st Airborne Division's search and recovery and equipment resupply channel

missions. The project also included additional parking spaces for the CH-47 helicopters and additional acreage for the U.S. Air Force ammunition storage point. These are just a few construction projects under the purview of the airfield office, so let's head over to the "South Park" office and view some outstanding facilities they are constructing.

This resident office, headed by Randall Lewis, develops land in the "Deep South." Lewis has a myriad of workers on his team that manage a \$200 million program of military construction contracts. The members include project engineers Peter Delaney, Eric Lambert, Laura Rowland (who just redeployed) and Jeremy Wilson; and construction representatives Larry Wooters, Shane Wilson, Marion Dye, Beth Nash, Damien French, Bob VanWinkle and Dan Finke. Their

projects include the \$27 million contract to construct the Regional Command South headquarters compound. The team devoted thousands of man-hours to ensure contract compliance and facilitate the construction of the new Command and Control facility required by the Theatre Posturing Plan for southern Afghanistan.

Many of the South Park team perform quality assurance evaluations on all electrical, mechanical, structural and finish work. The inspectors have a tremendous undertaking to validate contractor compliance and document contractor performance in accordance with numerous standards.

Upon completion of this facility later this year, battle space owners can successfully manage combat operations in southern Afghanistan in a central

location.

As mentioned earlier, the South Park Resident Office is deeply involved in the development of the area called "Deep South." This includes a \$27 million theatre vehicle maintenance compound, \$24 million drainage and utility project, and \$14 million Defense Logistics Agency warehouse storage area.

The projects shared by the resident offices are a small snapshot of the larger task the Kandahar Airfield Area Office is successfully executing on Kandahar Airfield at a pace of \$14 million each month. Every team member is dedicated to mission accomplishment. For everyone assigned this means building a lasting infrastructure for the people of Afghanistan. 🇦🇫

USACE recognizes quarterly top performers by Karla Marshall

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South recognized the quarter's top performers during an award ceremony held Sept. 27.

"I congratulate the winners of our first quarterly top performer awards. Each represents all of the men and women who work for the South District. Our individual and team contributions have made us the most productive district in Afghanistan and maybe in the Corps of Engineers," said U.S. Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, district commander. "I believe each of those recognized would say that their achievement results from the great support of those who work with and for them. I am very proud of each our quarterly award winners and thank them for being outstanding representatives of our district."

Awardees in each category were:

Company grade officer: Capt. Derek Bowen, the officer in charge of the Kandahar Airfield Area Office, deployed from Las Vegas, Nev., was recognized for his outstanding leadership, which resulted in the execution of 12 airfield projects valued at \$120 million, and for his technical expertise and dedication, which facilitated significant progress on several military construction projects.

Senior noncommissioned officer: Master Sgt. Darrell McAllister, the senior noncommissioned officer at the Tarin Kowt Resident Office, deployed from Charlotte, N.C., was recognized for his tenacious drive for professional and personal improvement. In addition to expertly performing his primary duties, he filled in when there were staffing gaps in quality assurance representatives, which required that he learn new skills quickly.

Junior noncommissioned officer: Staff Sgt. Andrew Hansen, the air movement noncommissioned officer in charge, deployed from USACE's Detroit District, was recognized for saving \$2.7 million by prioritizing aviation requirements and expertly executing 264 missions.

Enlisted Soldier: Spc. Michael J. Green, a communications specialist on one of the district's MRAP (mine-resistant, ambush protected) vehicle teams, deployed from the 302nd Military Police Company in Grand Prairie, Texas, was recognized for his technical expertise and knowledge that contributed to 12 successful missions to safely move district personnel to project sites and other locations "outside the wire."

Department of Army Civilian, GS-11-13: Elliott Porter, a project manager in the district's water and infrastructure branch, deployed from USACE's Pittsburg District, was recognized for his expert knowledge and resourcefulness. He successfully managed complex projects requiring significant coordination with other agencies and governments. His in-depth knowledge of the Commander's Emergency Response Program was a key element of the district's efforts to build Afghan capacity and support the International Security Assistance Force counter-insurgency mission.

Department of Army Civilian, GS-01-10: Lance Walker, a construction representative at the district's Tombstone Resident Office, deployed from USACE's Vicksburg District, was recognized for his superb job performance and willingness to take on project engineering responsibilities. His relentless efforts led to the completion and turnover of four Afghan National Police facilities.

"I would like to thank those supervisors and peers who took the time to recognize the hard work of their team members," said Command Sgt. Major Lorne Quebodeaux, the initiator of the district's quarterly award program. "I know there is important work going on in every office, everyday and I appreciate that our leaders have gone through the process to tell the district about the significant accomplishments of some of

our shining stars.

"These awards and decorations reflect the dedication and service of the Military members and Civilians who have deployed in support of USACE's mission in Afghanistan, and who have committed themselves to delivering projects that help improve security and governance in Afghanistan." 🇦🇫



Photo by Brenda L. Beasley

USACE Commander Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, left, presents the first quarterly top performer award to Capt. Derek Bowen, right.

USACE recognizes outstanding legal staff

Story and photos
by Karla Marshall

The Afghanistan Engineer District-South has some of the best U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilian employees. So, it came as no surprise that two civilians in the legal office, Hank Iarrusso and Louis P. DiNatale, were recently recognized for their outstanding work.

"I am incredibly proud of the district's legal staff," said District Commander Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham. "They focused on getting the mission done and keeping us legal and ethical. I have been deployed many times, and I have never worked with a more mission-driven, contingency-focused legal staff. My sincere congratulations to them for this well-deserved recognition."

Henry "Hank" Iarrusso, South District's district counsel, was awarded the USACE Chief Counsel's E. Manning Seltzer Award for outstanding contributions to USACE legal services. The E. Manning Seltzer Award recognizes an attorney who has made one or more special contributions to the Corps legal service mission through the development of a legal theory, a legal management innovation or practice, or outstanding performance in solving a legal or management problem.

Iarrusso was recognized for his extraordinary procurement actions and his numerous significant contributions to the USACE mission in Afghanistan. He ensured that all real estate and fiscal legal requirements were met as he charted new areas of the law by providing legal guidance on Commercial Airlift Review Board certification, the Fly American Act, and Civil Reserve Air Fleet legal requirements. Additionally, he was instrumental in resurrecting a seldom-used procurement tool — sealed bidding — at the district.

"There was a lot of work involved with the sealed bid process," Iarrusso said. "I want to thank the (Transatlantic) Division and our district team for all the work that went into developing and implementing the sealed-bidding process at KAF. We had to get a about a half billion dollars worth of quality work accomplished, while protecting the government's interest. These contracts go a long way to accomplishing the U.S. Army's mission in Afghanistan."

Sealed bidding employs competitive bids, public bid openings, and prompt contract awards to the offeror with the lowest-priced, responsive bid. The process works well in Afghanistan for certain

types of projects because the district attracts new contractors and contractors can become bonded. Also, the sealed-bidding process helps diversify the district's acquisition strategy, which benefits the overall USACE mission. Iarrusso was also awarded the Commander's Award for Civilian Service, the Global War on Terrorism Civilian Service Medal and the NATO Medal for his contributions while assigned to the district. He will return to the Huntington District in October, where he'll resume his position as district counsel.

Louis P. DiNatale was awarded the USACE Chief Counsel's Keystone Award for outstanding para professional. The Keystone Award recognizes the professionalism and indispensable role non-attorneys perform in the successful accomplishment of the Corps legal services mission. DiNatale is recognized for his extraordinary work with the Freedom of Information Act program at his home district, Louisville District.

In December 2009, DiNatale started his civilian employment with USACE after leaving a 24-year career with the U.S. Army. His first major task was to reduce the Louisville District's FOIA request backlog by 10 percent. With his co-workers, not only did they accomplish that task, but through the implementation of a new program the entire backlog was gone in just seven months.

"The program works and is still keeping pace with the FOIA requests at the Louisville District," said DiNatale. "Once I got the program on track, I went to other organizations to explain our process. I briefed our process to the (U.S.) Departments of Justice and Transportation, to the Internal Revenue Service and others.

"I had no idea that my performance was on that level. I just did what I thought needed to be done and I'm just grateful that the Louisville District Counsel, Janice Lengel, nominated me," DiNatale concluded.

DiNatale was also awarded the Commander's Award for Civilian Service, the Global War on Terrorism Civilian Service Medal and the NATO Medal for his contributions while assigned to the district. DiNatale concluded his deployment to Afghanistan Aug. 27, and will resume his paralegal position at the Louisville District. ☐



Henry "Hank" Iarrusso



Louis P. DiNatale

FEATURED PHOTO

In this "Featured Photo" - Jumping James

PHOTO BY MARJORIE MCDONALD, KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

While Safety Office team members were out doing some of their sampling on Sept. 23, Marjorie geared up to take a photo of a helicopter and James Ediger "just jumped in the way."

Can your photo make the cut?

Break out the camera and send your best shot to TAS.AES.PAO@usace.army.mil. If it makes the cut, the Engineering Freedom Magazine will publish it in this special "Featured Photo" column.

Rules of engagement: photo must be taken in Afghanistan; photo can be of people, places or things; photo cannot have been featured in another publication; photo must be taken by individual who submits it. ☐



Afghanistan Safety 101 by James Ediger

Of course it's turned off ... my boss told me it was!

Have you ever wondered what those twin water tanks and bunch of conveyor belts running gravel up into steel containers are? And why there are guys covered in grey dust working around them? These are concrete batch plants. There are many here on Kandahar Airfield and throughout Afghanistan supplying concrete to our USACE construction projects.

Have you had, or heard about, "close calls" in and around batch plants? Plant operations including conveyor belts, aggregate gates and electrical panels are just a few of the everyday dangers faced by our contractors and their employees when working in and around a concrete batch plant. Workers can be electrocuted, lose fingers, hands, or arms, or suffer severe crushing injuries because machinery is inadvertently turned on, or worst yet, left on while being serviced or maintained. The most recent death and recurring injury(s) in our district were at a batch plant. These unfortunate accidents could have been prevented by establishing and enforcing an effective lockout program. This article addresses Lock-Out/Tag-Out or "LOTO" and why plant operations should include these easy to follow guidelines.

As defined by the US Department of Labor, LOTO refers to specific practices and procedures to safeguard workers from the unexpected energizing or startup of machinery and equipment, or the release of hazardous energy during service or maintenance activities. EM 385-1-1, Section 12, Control of Hazardous Energy, explains in detail the requirements that we must follow and enforce our contractors to use concerning LOTO controls. LOTO procedures require that a designated competent person turns off and disconnects the machinery or equipment from its energy source(s) before performing service or maintenance and that the authorized employee(s) either lock or tag the energy-isolating device(s) to prevent the release of hazardous energy and take steps to verify that the energy has been isolated effectively.

Failure to LOTO machinery



was the direct cause of our most recent injury. An effective LOTO program should include the following:

- An inspection of equipment by a competent person who is thoroughly familiar with the equipment operation and associated hazards.
- Identification and labeling of lockout devices.
- Purchase of locks, tags, and blocks.
- A written LOTO plan and training for all affected workers on the plan.
- A written standard operating procedure and accident prevention plan.

If these safety procedures are in place and workers are trained and practicing them on a daily basis, you're doing it right. Any plan is useless if it is not enforced.

The job of specifying plant type, setup, and performing maintenance, repairing, operating and producing concrete at our batch plants presents unique and sometimes difficult situations when it comes to maintaining safety. The following three examples have been found to be very important steps that could lead to more efficient and safer operations. The most efficient and safe batch plants produce more concrete with less wasted material, lower repair costs, less downtime, fewer disruptions in production, and better accident rates. These three areas are preventive maintenance, cleanliness, and safety.

1) Preventive maintenance

At concrete batch plants that we have formalized inspection and maintenance schedules in place, there tend to be fewer breakdowns and accidents. If the plant manager recognizes the importance of regular PM and communicates that to the workers, chances are good that noisy bearings, worn belts, leaky air systems, clogged filter bags, etc., will be detected and repaired before breakdowns interrupt the concrete batching process. Maintenance should be scheduled during "down time" so there is less risk of accidents to the workers. Following the SOP and APP on the LOTO plan is very important. All parts of the plant being

serviced must be turned off and isolated by LOTO. You do not want any part of the plant restarted by accident, while the worker is exposed to gears, conveyor belts etc. It is recommended for maintenance to be done on a regular schedule in lieu of emergency maintenance during operation.

2) Cleanliness

Keeping a concrete batch plant clean is a constant battle, but one well worth winning. Abrasive dust is especially hard on machinery and the workers. Add to that a little moisture, which mixes with the dust to form a crust that's hard to remove, and you have a mess that hinders maintenance, inspection activities and creates a hazard for worker injury. The yard around the plant must be kept clear of debris which includes all full and empty cement bags. The gravel staging areas and material offload site needs to be organized as well.

3) Safety

Concrete batch plant design, set-up and construction must be efficient while keeping worker safety in mind. Employees working around conveyors, gravel gates, fall hazards, moving parts and electrical panels are exposed to potential injury, which translates from exposure for the plant operator to production downtime for our projects. Safety features include emergency shutoffs and safety disconnects on conveyor and turn head motors, and confined space entry access manholes in aggregate and cement bin compartments. Where possible, stairs with handrails are recommended for the safe access of workers. Fall Protection Plans are required when workers are exposed to falls over six feet. Going one step further, certain kinds of automation can keep workers out of harm's way. One example is a central grease manifold, which reduces employee exposure to dangerous areas by eliminating the need to apply grease at the bearing. This can prevent some of the possible hand/finger crush injuries at batch plants. Contractors need to be reminded they must adhere to EM 385-1-1, Section 12, and OSHA's 29 CFR 1910.147 LOTO standard, which would protect employees from injury or death due to unexpected startup while cleaning or maintaining all equipment. ■



ON THE MOVE

Moving in



Shelly Barunica Cedric Bland Ken Bright Mamie Brouwer 1SG William Buttrey LTC Dwight Carr John Clark Hugh Coleman MAJ Christina Cook Jeffrey Cowman



Jeffrey Cravens Thomas Curtis Hosam Dajani Tony Delgado Robert Dibenedetto Juan Dominguez Gerard Edelen Henry Egbuka Stanley Fudge Mike Hatchett



Sean Hoben Marty Holmes Carolyn Imhof-Hoffelder Paul Jacques Jonathan Jones Keith Jones Ray Jones Joseph Lacanlale Cesar Lopez MAJ Reginald Maddox



Ricky Mers Andy Mitzel Bimi Multani Robert Nebbio Robin Parks Michael Patrick Bonnie Perry William Pioli Gerald Piotrowski April Pratt



Mark Ray Joseph Redlinger SPC Jonathan Rich Harley Rowe Christopher Schreiber LTC Corey Spencer SPC Daniel Stearns Jason Stuart SSG Michael Swope Mathew Walden



1SG Dwight Wallace Tammy Washington



Christine Weisenberger SPC Alexander Wensink

Photos unavailable at press time: Michael Beasley, LTC Michael Brothers, CPT Sean Burnett, SPC Marcos Caraballo, SGT Johnson Chuong, SPC Fisher Courtland, MSgt Charles Hamilton SSG Maurice Hanes, SPC Eric Harper, SSG Jeffrey Hofstetter, SPC Kyle Johnson, SPC Dennis Kleyn, PFC Anthony Nardone, Capt Thang Nguyen, SSG Kelly O'Bryan, SFC Joshua Robinette, and CPT John Shelton.

Moving on

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Connie Adams | Louis Dinatale | Nicholas Konovodoff | Portia Stagger |
| Nellie Akbarpour | Scott Doeden | Denise Mason | CPL Erika Stormont |
| Jeffery Ball | David Dyer | SSG Jose Minaya | John Terry |
| Raquel Blankenhorn | Alan Eastridge | SSG Mark Mintkenbaugh | SFC Fabio Vallejo |
| Thomas Blankenhorn | Andrew Ferng | Joseph Moyer | MSG John Walls |
| Michael Bockman | SGT Josue Flores | Patrick Mulkey | Richard Webb |
| Christopher Borton | MAJ Anthony Hammett | TSgt Mark Pechuls | SFC Claudia White |
| Curtis Bragg | Sterlin Hill | Andrew Phillips | LCDR Eric Williams |
| Stephen Bredthauer | LTC Douglas Hoenig | SSG Richard Polanco | Kalid Williams |
| Evan Carter | Logan Hunter | CPL Robert Ryan | Mark Wright |
| Geoffrey Chatfield | CPT Adin Kern | Charles Sellmeyer | Timothy Wynn |
| Celia Cockburn | Joan Kibler | SMSgt Brent Sheehan | Paul Yates |
| Brooksie Crosby | LTC Martha Kiene | | Brian Zickefoose |