

# Engineering Freedom

*Serving the Afghanistan Engineer District-South*



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# Happy Holidays

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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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### On the cover ...



**Team members gather at the South District headquarters flag pole area on Veterans Day.** Group photo by Karla Marshall and graphic illustration by Brenda Beasley.

# Commander's message...

**H**appy Holidays to all of you on the South District team and your families, as well as all those who serve our great nation at home and abroad. This is the second holiday season I have spent in the area of responsibility over the last four years, and I count these among the most special experiences of my career.

It is always tough being separated from family and loved ones during any time of the year, but especially so during the holidays. What makes this time more bearable are the terrific people here who share their traditions with generosity and thoughtfulness.

It is also amazing to me that I have been in charge of this outstanding unit for almost five months. The old saying goes, time flies when you are having fun, but it seems to fly even faster when you are serving and leading such a fantastic crew of people. Over the last five months, we have seen many projects and programs take root and start to gain significant traction as we prepare to transition the battlespace from U.S. to Afghan control.

We continue to work a major electrical transmission and distribution upgrade of the electrical system from Kajaki Dam to Kandahar City with over seven distinct communities along the way, as well as significant upgrades to irrigation and water storage capacity for both Kajaki and Dahla Dams. In addition, we have more than 100 Afghan National Security Force projects currently under construction with another \$900 million projected for award in fiscal 2012.

While our Military Construction Program saw some reduction, we are still executing close to 50 current and planned projects during fiscal 2012.

Finally, our Operations, Maintenance and Services Division is making great strides as we start to tackle the rapidly increasing workload. We recently sponsored a conference that will do wonders in ensuring that USACE, NTM-A, the Regional Commands and our Afghan partners are moving together to ensure the future sustainability of what we are building.

When I arrived on station, I looked around and then quickly developed my five priorities for the district. These priorities are:

- Protect people
- Get work done
- Work efficiently
- Follow core (Corps) processes
- Have fun doing it

I would like to give you my "mid-term" report card on how we are doing in implementing and executing these priorities. As you will see, this is not an indictment of the current situation, but an indicator for future success.

Most of you have heard me talk about the importance of **protecting our people**. This is my number one priority and each and every one in the district has played some role in making sure we meet the priority.

Since I arrived on station, we have slashed the time to obtain 100 percent accountability by more than 75 percent.

We are responding quicker to incoming rounds and moving folks from our exterior bunkers to the MWR building on average in less than 10 minutes.

We have reduced the number of safety incidents involving government employees by 60 percent.

We have or will shortly move from expeditionary facilities to permanent facilities in many of our Area and Resident Offices, and we have published and are now executing a Standard Operating Procedure for all outside-the-wire movements.

We are challenged with the loss of many of our fine Soldiers as part of the surge recovery, but I know that our contract security is poised to continue to provide first-rate protection and support to the South District mission.

We still have some security concerns to address around the district, but your leadership embraces this priority, and we look forward to correcting these deficiencies.

In summary, I am very impressed by how each member of the team looks out for their teammates.

Protecting teammates starts at the desktop and job site first.

Overall, I would give us a grade of B+, but it is critical that we maintain or improve on this grade with the loss of the majority of our military teammates.

**Getting work done** is what we do and why we are here. During the last four months I have seen Resident Offices, Area Offices and District Headquarters all embrace the need to move our program forward as quickly as possible.

Our placement grew from \$51 million a month when I arrived in July to \$62.3 million in November, an increase of 22 percent — the growth in placement has been slow but sustained as we focus our efforts. We are trending toward meeting 95 percent or better of our construction placement objectives — not a bad record anywhere, and very impressive in a contingency environment.



Many of our contractors have embraced the need to move the program forward and across the board I see workers on the job sites and facilities coming out of the ground at a rapid rate. This is a huge collective team effort.

As of Nov. 30, the South District program totals slightly more than \$2 billion of work on contract with another projected \$1.4 billion still to be added in fiscal 2012.

With the 2014 transition to Afghan security forces looming, completing projects is a must for the successful execution of the campaign plan. We still have some challenges out there with non-performing contractors, manpower challenges in key areas and local execution issues, but overall we continue to accelerate.

I give us a grade of B-, which is rapidly improving as we continue to see the program get healthy.

**Working efficiently** is a hallmark of the South District. We have always been leaner in our manpower and support footprint than a traditional district. That leanness did not affect our ability to execute the mission in fiscal 2011.

We still managed to execute almost \$1.9 million for each person assigned to the South District. That is the highest production per capita of any USACE district in the world. In addition, we are always looking to improve how we execute our mission. As Paul Sidney, our previous chief of Quality Management System used to say “the largest room in the world is the room for improvement,” and we continue to live and work in that

room on a daily basis.

Many of our QMS events have become benchmarks for all USACE districts, not just the deployed districts. As we continue to execute, we also continue to look to improve our “foxhole” for future South District teammates.

I give us a grade of B ... because there is always room for improvement.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a hallowed institution of our nation, and a key enabler for nations around the world since 1802. Much of our nation’s key infrastructure was executed via the watchful oversight of USACE.

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**“We still managed to execute almost \$1.9 million for each person assigned ...”**

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Our collective business processes and practices are a standard for national and international engineering, and building concerns support military construction and civil works. The **processes of USACE** are “tried and true processes” that perform well in both peace and war.

We continue to ensure all our projects meet the intent of EM 385-1-1 (Safety and Health Requirements Manual), and ER 5-1-11 (Project Management).

We are doing great work, using the fundamental systems like RMS and CCAS to ensure we have the latest fidelity on our projects under construction.

Right now, I give us a B-, but the grade is rapidly improving.

Finally, the adage “**work hard, play**

**hard**” holds true at the South District.

Whether it is volleyball at Herat, softball at Helmand, Texas Hold ‘Em night at FOB Lindsey (chips, no money), Cross Fit workouts at the South Park Resident Office or Wounded Warrior dinners at the main compound, we all find a way to enjoy our time and share the company of others.

In addition, our district personnel have access to excellent living quarters, communications capabilities, fitness facilities and recreational space. Almost everyone enjoys serving here, and there is never a shortage of things to do. Everyone has access to good eating facilities. We have fun here and we take care of our fellow teammates as well.

On this, I would give the district a solid A.

I would say the South District team is doing an extraordinary job in implementing these priorities in our day-to-day business and lives, and I would give us an overall grade of B.

Like all the mid-terms we took in school, this is not the final score, but rather an indicator on how we are succeeding and where we must focus to improve. I look forward to working with you to identify areas of improvement and collectively make this district an even better place to work and live.

Again, happy holidays to all our South District teammates and their families, as well as the entire TAD and USACE Team. I wish each of you a wonderful season and send my personal love and affection to my lovely wife of 24 and one half years, Ellen Wham, and my two beautiful daughters, Jennifer and Lizzy. I love and miss you all.

*Bulldog 6*

## Fickett receives Purple Heart story and photo by Brenda Beasley

Army Spc. Robert A. Fickett was presented with the Purple Heart medal Oct. 1 by the South District Commander Col. Benjamin Wham at Kandahar Airfield.

Fickett, an MRAP team member, was awarded the Purple Heart medal for wounds received in action July 6 in Zabul province, Afghanistan.

“Most of the time, you like giving Soldiers medals. But the Purple Heart is one of those medals you don’t want to give because it means a Soldier was hurt, and close to the line between serious and really serious risk to his life,” said South District Command Sgt. Maj. Lorne R. Quebodeaux. “Fickett was in the worst position possible – the turret gunner in an MRAP that rolled over – but when he got in that position he was able to react correctly and survive because he had been well trained by his leadership and he reacted according to that training.”

Before being assigned to an MRAP team, Soldiers receive extensive training which includes battle drills. It was during one of those drills, that Fickett learned how to respond in an MRAP vehicle rollover, according to Master Sgt. Angel A. Espinoza.

“His ability to react in that split second minimized his own

injuries,” said Espinoza.

While on a new project assessment mission, Fickett was injured when his vehicle was hit. Despite his injuries, he stayed on the scene for three days, helping his team provide security for two unarmed USACE civilians.

“We have a great team in Qalat,” said Staff Sgt. Alberto Garcia, the MRAP team leader. “Spc. Fickett did an outstanding job.”

Established by Gen. George Washington at Newburgh, N.Y., Aug. 7, 1782, the Purple Heart medal, originally the Badge of Military Merit, is the oldest known U.S. military decoration still in use, according to the Military Order of the Purple Heart. 



# Afghanistan Safety 101

by Sue Fox

The protection of our people is Col. Benjamin Wham's highest priority and safety is a critical part of ensuring that people are protected. Sometimes though, the subject is a little dry or unexciting. In this issue, we wanted to add a little levity to the whole idea of safety and share a poem with you about the "safety professional."

Although it may not always seem the case, the safety office is in the business of keeping everyone safe. The next time you wonder what we are doing, just remember, the district's safety team has one mission — to keep all of you safe! 🇺🇸

**Left to right, Sloane Wieber , Safety Officer Sue Fox (who recently redeployed), Marjorie McDonald (here on temporary orders from Sacramento District), and James Ediger.**



Photo by Brenda Beasley

## "SAFETY PROFESSIONAL"

Sandwiched tightly between top brass and the teaming masses, sits a wild-eyed individual madly singing a safety tune. He's sometimes misunderstood or maligned in business. He's the proverbial SAFETY PROFESSIONAL.

This fellow makes the rounds, but is a member of no clique. To fellow employees, he's a tool of management; to management, he's just another employee.

He has the curiosity of a cat, the tenacity of a mother-in-law, the determination of a taxi driver, the nervous system of a race car driver and the diplomacy of a wayward husband.

He has the busiest, plottingest, worryingest, most thoroughly washed brain of any human. His mail basket is always full, his desk is a constant mess and his calendar looks like cave drawings. Nobody cuts through so much red tape!

The SAFETY PROFESSIONAL keeps companies in business. He treads lightly, knowing where to tread and, more importantly, when and where NOT to tread.

Whenever there is an accident, the SAFETY PROFESSIONAL is often called in to explain why and how it happened. He must engender interests in good housekeeping to people who live in garage sale clutter, promote wider responsibility to people who have a narrow focus and preach safety to people who think they don't need it.

Despite all the careful planning he is usually found dangling on a deadline, in the middle of a muddle and of course is LATE. The master of understatement, he must make fire protection sound as essential as religion and an accident cost sound like the national debt.

Half the people wonder what he does ... the other half know what he does but think he's doing it wrong!

More people bend his ear than anybody else's. Everybody thinks he always has time to stop and listen to a joke, hear a gripe, attend a meeting or serve on a committee. He does, and then winds up taking most of his work home.

— (Author Unknown)

# Contractors learn USACE way to assure quality

story and photos  
by Karla Marshall

**B**uilding strong, building quality and building safely — three mandates forming the foundation of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers training program targeted toward contractors who build the facilities in Afghanistan that make it possible for the Afghan government to improve services for its people.

Every month, more than 20 Afghans, Turks, Indians and others attend the Afghanistan Engineer District-South's two-day construction quality management training seminars, which are designed to teach contractors about USACE processes and quality expectations.

"This training gives contractors the knowledge they need to adhere to Corps' processes on quality control," said Frank Scopa, chief of the Quality Assurance Branch at forward operating base Lindsey near Kandahar Airfield. "For the process to work and to deliver quality products, everyone needs to understand their role within the team and must be active supporters of USACE processes," Scopa continued. "The need for quality and safety cannot be understated."

District instructors deliver a series of briefings that cover:

- Schedules and milestone completion
- Definable features of work
- The purpose of daily quality control reports
- How to track deficiencies
- Quality control plans
- Testing
- The three phases of inspection requests for information
- The submittal process
- Pay activities and progress payments
- Project closeout



**Lt. Col Michael Brothers, District Commander Col. Benjamin Wham and Construction Representative Robert Nebbio discuss the status of an on-going project with contractor representatives near Kandahar Nov. 2.**

After all that instruction, attendees are tested on what they have learned and become certified. They then evaluate the day's instruction and provide feedback to the instructors.

"I've been in Afghanistan for three months and needed to learn USACE methodology," said Stephen Baxter, a group construction manager at Jetspark Specialist Support Services. "It is similar to how we do things in the U.K., but getting certified by USACE will make me more effective."

A second day of instruction includes an introduction to database management tools used by the Corps of Engineers. "We cover the Quality Control System program, which is used by contractors to input required contract information into the Resident Management System program," said Scopa, deployed from USACE's Walla Walla District.

The RMS program is used by USACE to administer construction contracts and can generate status reports instantly. "We use RMS to keep track of where we are at any given time on a project," Scopa continued. "It's a great tool because everyone involved in a project can see the project's historical progress."

The final training module is devoted to safety. "Safety is the number one priority to the Corps of Engineers," said Darrell Gay, an engineer technician and master electrician from Michigan. "Our instruction covers electrical safety, fall protection, personal protective equipment, scaffolding, stair and ladder safety."

For the most part, it is the small, sub-contractors who need this type of training," said Lt. Col. Michael Brothers, the Kandahar Area Office officer in charge and deployed from Boone, Iowa. "The large, multinational contractors working with USACE send representatives as well. We have found that keeping everyone up-to-date on USACE processes enables the team to safely provide quality construction." 📷



**Attendees at the monthly Construction Quality Management course take a break from instruction Sept. 21.**

# Doing it better, faster is the constant for South District's information technology section

story and photo  
by Karla Marshall

Keeping a district headquarters wired tight to 14 forward operating bases in the harsh environment of Afghanistan is a big challenge, especially when your customers are Americans accustomed to seamless information technology. To meet these challenges, the information technology section at the Afghanistan Engineer District-South is always on the lookout for improved equipment and processes.

According to Chris Brooks, chief of the district's information technology section (J6), the 23 contractors assigned to his section are continually looking for ways to improve the district's current technology as well as develop new capabilities.

"The J6 is responsible for all technology functions on USACE compounds throughout southern Afghanistan that are typical of an Army Signals Battalion," said Brooks, a native of Dallas, Texas, but a resident of Spokane, Wash. "We provide communications security, user support, satellite communications and connectivity, disaster preparedness and file recovery, fidelity of data services, software procurement and support, web development services and video teleconferencing.

"We also provide Blackberry services, but because the cell tower infrastructure in Afghanistan is still being developed, our capabilities are somewhat limited," Brooks said.

Despite the wide variety of

services offered, the J6 faces a few significant challenges that hinder reliability.

Dust is the primary culprit and it plays a considerable role in the system's overall capability, said Brooks. "In addition to interfering with satellite linkage, dust permeates everything. Because there is no dependable fiber optic infrastructure in Afghanistan, we are dependent upon expensive satellite access and good weather, meaning relatively dust-free skies," Brooks continued. "Plus, our electronics require frequent dusting and vacuuming for optimal performance."

Affordable and timely access to USACE databases in the United States is particularly important for mission success. "We need to pull data from shared budget and project management databases efficiently," said Deborah Duncan, former Deputy District Engineer, who has redeployed to USACE's Middle East District. "Any interruption slows our ability to function effectively.

The district has a finite time to accomplish a lot of construction so we are continually looking to the J6 to improve access to State-side systems."

Incorporating immediate needs with strategic and long-range planning means the IT team continually searches for appropriate technologies. U.S. forces anticipate being in Afghanistan through 2014, so maximizing capability for the next three to four years is critical. "We put crazy emphasis on doing things the best way, in the least amount of time," said Brooks.

For instance, the IT team is looking to improve the



**Chris Brooks, chief, information technology section at the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, secures a cable in the district's server room. The district has about 100,000 feet of computer cable on its Kandahar headquarters compound.**

way the district accounts for people in emergency situations. The current process includes paper rosters and telephone calls to the district operations center. "Our goal is to transition to an automated personnel accountability solution, using wireless and tablet computer technology so real-time capabilities are vastly enhanced," said Brooks.

The J6 is installing an experimental wireless network

for non-military applications and once the system testing is complete, wireless capability will extend to the district's government computer network as well.

"Going wireless will definitely be a force multiplier," said Brooks. "The J6 exists to support the district's mission and when we do our job well, the district is effective." ■



# USACE delivers books to build Afghan engineering capacity

story and photos by Mark Ray

Afghans from Kandahar University work with Soldiers from PRT Kandahar and South District's Elliot Porter (far right) to unload engineering textbooks.

The Soviet occupation damaged Afghanistan's universities, and the reign of the Taliban nearly destroyed them. On Sept. 22, the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team helped the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South repair some of that damage by delivering \$120,000 worth of engineering text books to Kandahar University.

The Commander's Emergency Response Program, which allows military commanders to meet urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements in their areas of responsibility, funded the purchase of the books, said Elliot Porter, a program manager with the district's Water and Infrastructure Branch. Porter, who deployed to Afghanistan from the USACE Pittsburgh District, is responsible for coordinating CERP and renewable energy initiatives at the South District.

The books were the first of a series of efforts which will increase the capability of Kandahar University to provide quality engineering instruction to Afghans, Porter explained. Over the next year, the

# Afghanistan Engineer District-South CERP Program

story by Mark Ray

The Commander's Emergency Response Program has been described as "money as a weapon" but is really a rapid reaction capacity building program. The program is a cornerstone of the counter-insurgency strategy of the International Security Assistance Force, providing a critical capability for conducting stability operations.

The program allows commanders to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements with projects that will immediately benefit the local population. Such projects have traditionally been performed by U.S., foreign, or local professional civilian personnel or agencies, but military commands are often better equipped to take on this work in the difficult security environment of Afghanistan. Tasks can include reconstruction of infrastructure, support to governance, restoration of public services and support to economic development.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South executes a wide variety of CERP projects at the request of regional commands, battlespace owners and other agencies. We have completed projects totaling approximately \$200 million, and have more than 20 projects in varying stages of development or construction, with a total value of greater than \$120 million.

## Examples of our programs include:

### POWER GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION UPGRADES

— The district has procured a range of equipment to allow the Afghan national electrical utility to upgrade the capacity and reliability of its systems in southern Afghanistan and

create a metering capability that will provide the utility with a reliable revenue stream.

**ROADS AND BRIDGES** — The district has three road and five bridge CERP projects currently under construction. These projects will construct or repair over approximately 35 kilometers of critical roads, repair or replace some 40 bridges/culverts, and provide bridge bypasses to improve commerce, economic development throughout the region and ensure continued movement in the event of insurgent activity.

**WATER PROJECTS** — The district has developed a master plan for water supply in Kandahar City and is working on a similar master plan for waste water. They include long-term plans to increase access to safe drinking water and sanitation to the population of Kandahar City, and hydrogeological and water distribution models for planning and project development. An ongoing project will provide the region with three deep-groundwater wells for an improved supply and quality of potable water. The district is also conducting a design study of Dahla Dam, the first step in an ambitious effort to improve the supply of water for irrigation and consumption in the Kandahar City area.

**ENGINEERING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT** — The district has projects in place to provide textbooks, demonstration and laboratory equipment and other materials to the engineering departments at Kandahar and Herat Universities to improve the training of Afghan engineers, badly needed to design, build and maintain Afghan infrastructure, now and in the future. 

university will also receive:

- Equipment to help demonstrate key engineering concepts, such as erosion and fluid dynamics;

- A concrete testing laboratory;
- Office and classroom equipment.

The program to increase the capacity of the engineering department started with a visit to the university by former district commander, Army Col. Anthony Funkhouser in March 2010, Porter said. Funkhouser wanted to discuss the possibility of establishing a program to hire locally-educated Afghan engineers. The district's Herat Area Office already has had significant success with a similar program with Herat University. In the course of the discussions, it became clear that the university had serious shortfalls in textbooks and equipment needed to educate its engineering students.

"Colonel Funkhouser asked the university authorities for a list of requirements," Porter said. "Once we had the list, we reviewed it to see what we could do within the district's CERP

authority, and began to develop a program to meet the most pressing needs."

"The faculty and students of the engineering department are very excited by the prospect of having up-to-date textbooks and demonstration equipment," said a representative from the Kandahar University Authority. "These materials will help increase the capacity of our professors to teach, and our students to learn."

"By helping the Afghan universities reestablish their ability to train engineers, we help create the conditions for Afghans to effectively build and maintain their national infrastructure, including the infrastructure that supports the



Soldiers from PRT Kandahar arrive at Kandahar University.

Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police," said Porter. "Building the Afghan national capability to train engineers directly supports Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and coalition goals and furthers the establishment of security and stability in this country." 

Jeff Helmick speaks with mine-clearance contractors on a site with obsolete Soviet armor near Herat.



# Clear, then build

story and photo by Mark Ray

**A**fghanistan in 2011 remains heavily contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordnance left over from the Soviet occupation and the years of internal conflict that followed. Mine clearance is an essential early step before a construction project can move forward.

“Every project the district undertakes requires a mine-clearance certificate from the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Center Afghanistan,” said Jeff Helmick, an ordnance and explosive safety specialist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South. Helmick deployed to Afghanistan from the USACE Baltimore District.

Mine clearing includes disposal of unexploded ordnance other than mines, such as artillery shells. Contracts for smaller projects generally include mine clearance, while larger projects require separate mine-clearance efforts.

“At any one time, depending on requirements, we can have anywhere from two to 10 or more mine-clearance projects underway,” said Robert Garcia, project manager for mine clearance at the South District. Garcia deployed from the USACE Albuquerque District. “We use what is known as a Multiple Award Task Order Contract for large projects. We write task orders against the contract and have four large contractors that can execute the work.”

“The prime contractors use Afghan subcontractors,

who are certified by the U.N.” Helmick continued. “The Afghans have gotten a lot of experience in mine clearing over the last 10 years — they are very professional.”

Normal mine-clearance projects search the site to a depth of one meter. “We get out to do quality control on the mine clearance as travel restrictions and security permit,” Helmick said. However, once construction begins, excavations sometimes uncover additional, deeper hazards.

“We recently had to respond when a construction contractor discovered large amounts of ordnance buried about five-meters deep,” Helmick said. “Construction contractors are required to have unexploded ordnance support on call, but you can have cases where they come across large burial pits that

they can't handle."

The buried ordnance is typically artillery projectiles up to 152 mm and larger, Helmick said. "The Soviets buried a lot of ordnance before they withdrew. They buried it deeply so it couldn't be

used against them during the withdrawal."

In such cases, the district will assess the need for additional remediation and take the appropriate action, Garcia said. "In Afghanistan, mines and unexploded

ordnance can be anywhere. Sometimes construction contractors just find things that are outside of the scope of their contracts and that they can't handle."

"Before you build in Afghanistan, you have to

make sure there is nothing on the site that will go boom," Helmick said. "That's what mine and unexploded ordnance clearance is all about." ■

## Mine (and UXO) Clearance 101

story and photo by Mark Ray

No construction should begin in Afghanistan without a U.N. Mine Action Clearance Center Afghanistan mine-clearance certificate.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer-South mine and unexploded ordnance disposal experts Jeff Helmick and Marty Holmes explain the steps contractors go through to clear project sites.

Before work begins, a contractor will prepare equipment, mobilize workers and arrange for security teams to protect the workers and the site.

Mine-clearing equipment includes magnetometers and large loop detectors, along with marking and digging equipment.

Magnetometers locate ferrous metals; large loop detectors generally find all metals. A large loop detector is exactly what the name implies: a large loop of wire, housed in a support

frame, typically plastic pipe, with electronics that detect signals from buried metals. These detectors range in size from three by three feet to as large as eight feet by three feet. Two workers carry the large loop detector between them. These detectors sense metal objects buried as deeply as 15 feet.

Digging equipment consists primarily of shovels, loaders and backhoes. Most of the time, workers use shovels; when excavating for mines and unexploded ordnance, faster is not better.

The first step is to survey the project area, determine the correct grid coordinates for the corners of the site, and mark the edges, with painted rocks. White signifies cleared, blue is a battle area with suspected unexploded ordnance, and red means a known or suspected minefield. As work progresses, rocks will be painted two colors, with white on the cleared side and blue or red on the side still to be cleared. In the beginning, however, all the rocks will usually be blue.

Once the contractor establishes the correct clearance area, the team creates a safety zone and clears it first. The safety zone becomes the marshalling and rallying area. It typically includes:

- Rallying points
- A briefing area
- A medical station
- A break area
- Parking for vehicles

Workers receive daily safety and operational briefs in the safety zone before starting work. Contractors also register and brief any visitors at the safety zone, before allowing them to inspect the site.

During this initial phase, the contractor determines if any contract changes are required, based on conditions at the site.

The contractor then begins the actual work by clearing a path from a known safe area to the work site. Teams lay out lanes across the site, and sweep the lanes with the large loop detector.

Workers with magnetometers sweep in advance of the team carrying the large loop detector to ensure their safety.

Workers mark anomalies with colored markers (typically a chip of wood), and excavate those areas to a meter deep (or the point of contact with whatever caused the anomaly). If the clearance team finds movable unexploded ordnance, they will move it to a disposal area off site and dispose of it through controlled detonation daily — it is easier to destroy ordnance on a daily basis than it is to store it.

If the team finds objects that cannot be safely moved, they typically call in a military explosive ordnance disposal team to destroy the objects in place.

Time to clear a site varies depending on the site and the amount of unexploded ordnance present. However, projects generally go quite quickly. Typically contractors have 90 days to complete their work once they are given notice to proceed.

After they finish clearing the site, the clearance team applies for a clearance certificate from the U.N. Mine Action Clearance Center Afghanistan, which oversees mine and unexploded ordnance clearance throughout the country.

USACE ordnance and explosive safety specialists conduct quality assurance inspections on the site during and after clearance, as security permits. The USACE specialists also review the mine clearance certificate to ensure that work met contract specifications, and that the correct areas were cleared. When project managers are satisfied that the work was executed correctly, they give the go-ahead for construction to proceed.

"The actual workers on these sites are almost exclusively Afghans," said Marty Holmes. "They are doing one of the world's most dangerous jobs — mine clearance — and they are very professional and focused. For them, it isn't just a job for pay, but one that serves the future of their country." ■



A mine-clearance worker on a site near Herat.

After conducting an environmental site visit at FOB Mescall in Zabul province, Michael Bell awaits his ride back to the South District headquarters at Kandahar Airfield. Remnants of an ancient fort can be seen in the background.

USACE Photo

A soldier in a desert environment, wearing a green beret, sunglasses, and a tan uniform, carrying a large green bag and a helmet. The background shows a vast, arid landscape with some ruins in the distance.

# Environmental work decreases impact to natural and cultural resources

story by Brenda Beasley

**M**useums once brimming with finds from Buddhist, Hellenistic, Islamic and Prehistoric sites lay crumbled and empty; their valuable antiquities turning up in high-end art markets across Asia, Europe and the United States.

An environment once pristine and rich in biological diversity is now barren and supports little wildlife. Fertile valleys that once produced such large quantities of grain and fruit that the country was known as the “breadbasket of the Middle East,” now can’t feed many of its children.

Tragically, the combined pressures of warfare, civil disorder and drought have taken a major toll on Afghanistan’s natural and cultural resources.

Exploitation of these resources saw some relief and improvement when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South, prompted by growing relevance of environmental considerations in military operations and the importance of soldier health, began conducting environmental site surveys in December 2009.

“Our role is to decrease the impact our projects may have on the natural and cultural resources of this country,” said Heather Moncrief, an environmental specialist in the South District’s Civil and Environmental Branch. “We find out what

the property was like before we received it and make sure it’s returned in the same shape.”

From a 10-person patrol base to a 5,000-soldier Afghan National Army base, most land with U.S. real estate instruments is surveyed to determine if hazardous materials and natural or cultural resources are present – like mosques, graveyards, grazing land, or karez (old underground irrigation systems used to get water from mountains to the valleys).

Very little information is available, so a lot of research is involved. Most determinations are made through interpretation of photos taken by site assessment contractors, aerial photos from GIS (geographic information system), and internet searches on nearby villages.

“We depend on a lot of information from the 1970s, when monuments and old fort locations were documented,” said Moncrief. A list of endangered species was issued by the Afghanistan government in 2009.

Although environmental considerations are secondary to wartime operational requirements, they’re important when safeguarding the health of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan personnel, minimizing costly and resource-intensive environmental corrective actions, and facilitating timely base transfers to the Afghans.

“In short wars, we dig pits. We advance and retreat. Here, we’ve come and stayed ten years. Waste has built up,” said Michael Bell, an environmental specialist for the South District.

“What are we going to do with the sewage? How are we going to compensate Afghans for the land we modified? We knock out an orchard; we have to put it back. One of my jobs is to determine what’s there and try to protect it.”

When conducting site surveys, Bell is conscious of the hearts and minds of the Afghan people. In addition to the environmental and legal liability, it’s important to him to avoid negative impacts like destroying mosques or areas of importance to Afghans. “The Taliban drew the world’s fury when they destroyed monuments in Bamiyan. We don’t want to be like them,” said Bell.

On one site, a bulldozer was destroying an ancient burial site to build a helicopter landing pad. The Afghan villagers were watching this happen. “We, USACE, intervened and asked them to get borrow material from somewhere else, and they did,” Bell said. “It wasn’t done on purpose, they just didn’t know.”

Forts, castles and burial sites dot Afghanistan’s landscape, added Bell. Some of them are more than 1,000 years old. When working in Qalat province, at FOB Apache, FOB Davis or FOB Lagman, an impressive hilltop fortress can be seen from all three locations. Armies under Alexander the Great, the legendary Greek conqueror, constructed it more than 2,000 years ago. Known to locals as “Ball Haizer,” the area has since been occupied by British, Russian, Taliban and now NATO and Afghan National Armies. “We’re protecting this important cultural resource,” Bell added.

Looting of cultural treasures is also a NATO concern. The National Museum of Afghanistan was destroyed by the Taliban and the antiquities were sold on the black market. “NATO is trying to help rebuild the museum and is buying back some of these items,” said Bell.

By identifying what’s there, the South District can possibly repair or replace it; however, some resources may be gone forever. “The Russians completely deforested an area in Herat, and that forest will not be coming back,” said Bell, an east Tennessee native and a regulatory appeals officer deployed from the USACE South Atlantic Division.

One big environmental concern is disposal of waste from project sites into a wadi, a dry river bed. It may seem like a good idea until rain washes it away, and the untreated wastewater, sometimes containing fecal matter, contaminates water sources. “You don’t know where it’s being disposed, and that’s a huge risk to natural resources,” said Moncrief, a Seattle native deployed from the USACE Alaska District.

Although her travels have taken her to the various sites throughout southern Afghanistan, what Moncrief finds most surprising is the similarities between Afghanistan and her Alaska work sites. “Even in Alaska, I travel in small aircraft to remote places without comforts, like electricity and water,” she said. “It surprised me how similar they are.”

Once site assessments are complete, the South District makes recommendations; however, only the environmental officer or the officer in charge at the site or forward operating base can make changes.

“We’re not the decision makers,” said Moncrief. “We’re the problem fixers.”

**Straight lines of circles with holes, seen when flying into Kandahar Airfield, are spoil piles developed from maintenance of ancient irrigation tunnels called “karez,” still in use today. They’re dug from a dry village to the base of mountains delivering snow melt. The spoil material is deposited by bucket from small men or boys who squeeze into vertical shafts to remove fill to maintain water flow. This system was so successful that Afghanistan was once considered the “breadbasket” of the Middle East.**



Photo by Brenda Beasley



Photo by Michael Bell

**Built more than 2,000 years ago, during his push to India, this fortress was considered a favorite by legendary conqueror and Greek military leader Alexander the Great. His army spent three years here while his troops fattened themselves from the “breadbasket” of the Middle East.**



Photo by Michael Bell

**While on a site visit to FOB Lagman in Zabul province, Heather Moncrief used an ammunition-box desk and a five-gallon bucket chair as the work station in her bedroom.**

# Bulldog recognition program grows teammate success

**W**ithout people, the South District cannot accomplish its mission to provide sustainable development for the citizens of Afghanistan.

To recognize these people for their excellent work and contributions, essential to the success of the mission, South District Commander Col. Benjamin Wham instituted the “Bulldog of the Week” program.

“Selecting a mascot to represent the South District meant identifying the attributes of our team members that make our district a great place to work,” said Wham. “The bulldog naturally comes to mind as it is loyal, friendly, determined and resilient. The bulldog has been a symbol of courage and strength for many years and the South District team is comprised of many such men and women.”

Each week a department or section identifies a team member who exemplifies the bulldog nature and the South District features that person on the front page of the district website.

“We are proud of our district and proud of the work our team accomplishes every day,” said Wham. “I salute our Bulldogs of the Week.”

## Michael Bockman, Aug. 14-20

A realty specialist, Michael Bockman, earned recognition as Bulldog of the Week because his efforts in obtaining licenses for construction (LFCs) have helped the South District be successful in completing projects for the Afghan National Security Forces program. He participated in a real estate LFC process improvement team, and his recommendations for improvements in the development of site assessments and district coordination with the customer were adopted by the team. Bockman deployed from USACE Omaha District.



## Ken Bright, Aug. 21-27

In just three weeks as Water and Infrastructure Branch chief, Ken Bright quickly became involved with several projects to be awarded using money from the Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund and the Commander’s Emergency Response Program. He helped secure the necessary funding to make contract awards before fiscal year end to meet U.S. commitments to improve infrastructure for the Afghan people. Bright revised project management plans and reworked acquisition strategies that will enable several large power projects to be contractually



awarded quickly. His efforts were critical to ensuring that these projects stayed on schedule for contract award this fiscal year. Bright deployed from USACE Memphis District.

## Sarah White, Aug. 28 - Sept. 3

Providing consistent, outstanding and professional support to the district’s Engineering Branch earned Sarah White recognition. From assisting with rest and recuperation packets, to transporting team members to and from the airfield, White takes her responsibility seriously, yet with a smile and easy laugh. She went above and beyond by contacting the families of branch personnel whose R&R flights were delayed due to Hurricane Irene. The South District team is fortunate to count Sarah as one of our own.



## James Ediger, Sept. 4-10

Taking on challenge after challenge with a great attitude earned Safety Specialist James Ediger “Bulldog of the Week” recognition. He was instrumental in implementing the district’s fire prevention and protection plan. As a result of his efforts, the district now has first aid kits, fire extinguishers and trained fire wardens inspecting our facilities monthly. His willingness to respond to emergency situations is without hesitation, and the district is fortunate to have him. Ediger deployed from USACE Portland District.



## Scott Hughes, Sept. 11-17

Bulldogs grab hold and hold on. Scott Hughes exemplified those characteristics when a variety of issues left the resident office in Herat short of people. Hughes, a project engineer and construction representative, juggled 12 active construction projects without issue, worked to resolve issues hindering the turnover and completion of garrison facilities for the Afghanistan National Army at Qala-e-Naw, and prepared two sites for major audit inspections. He also ensured numerous contractors had access to sites, and contributed to site assessments for future Afghan National Police projects. Hughes deployed from USACE Portland District.



### Capt. Derek Bowen, Sept. 18-24

Determination and persistence — Capt. Derek Bowen exemplified these characteristics while resolving difficult construction issues on two very high-profile projects. Bowen, who was promoted to be the officer in charge of the Kandahar Airfield Area Office, resolved final construction issues on the schedule-sensitive Regional Command South headquarters compound and post-construction issues on a barracks that provides temporary housing for deploying units. Both projects are on Kandahar Airfield. His in-depth knowledge of the projects, professionalism and ability to effectively communicate and resolve difficult issues with district customers are why he was selected to be the Bulldog of the Week.



### Staff Sgt. Andrew Burrows, Sept. 25 - Oct. 1

The noncommissioned officer in charge of the Delaram Area Office, Staff Sgt. Andrew Burrows, is also a construction representative and a convoy commander. His professionalism, high standards and accurate compliance with reporting requirements for \$90 million in construction projects are why he earned Bulldog of the Week. An experienced home builder, Burrows led a team of Marines in building a roof for a new facility. Not only did they complete the job in six days, but he also taught them to perform ‘bird mouths,’ plumb cuts and gable ends. His leadership and ‘can do’ attitude showed that USACE can build strong for anyone. Burrows said he looks forward to receiving the coveted bulldog, a small stuffed toy before he returns to the States. “My two-year-old daughter deserves a gift for being such a strong girl while I have been away.”



### Staff Sgt. Sean Rogers, Oct. 2-8

Army medics work tirelessly to keep their fellow soldiers healthy and their medical equipment at the ready. Staff Sgt. Sean Rogers is no exception. During his four months as an MRAP vehicle team medic at the Helmand Area Office, he taught various classes and conducted scenarios to train his team members to handle battlefield injuries. He volunteered in the emergency room at the Bastion Hospital to keep his skills honed and coalition forces alive. Keeping people safe is South District’s top priority and Rogers plays an instrumental role in ensuring the care of our people.



### Erick Fry, Oct. 9-15

Project Engineer Eric Fry balanced quality requirements with urgency in addressing design reviews and earned recognition as Bulldog of the Week. Deployed from the USACE Louisville District, Fry’s efforts allowed work to begin on a wastewater treatment plant in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan province, alleviating a base-wide problem with black water disposal. As a project engineer for five military construction projects at Tarin Kowt, Fry skillfully led his team through negotiations to award a



**Bulldog of the Week Eric Fry, center, receives a small, stuffed bulldog, as an emblem of his tenacity from District Commander Col. Benjamin Wham, left. Command Sgt. Maj. Lorne Quebodeaux, right, looks on.**

modification to correct a significant drainage problem with the new runway. Using his technical expertise, he also provided justification to answer questions raised by a Defense Contract Audit Agency audit report, which allowed a long-overdue modification issue to be settled.

### Richard Horton, Oct. 16-22

Diligence in implementing an infrequently-used procurement method to quickly award contracts for large projects to support the Afghanistan National Army earned Richard Horton recognition as Bulldog of the Week. A branch chief in the Contracting Division, Horton conducted the first-ever solicitation and award in Afghanistan for the South District using a “sealed bidding/invitations for bid” process. This method allows the district to expand the pool of responsible contractors, reduce risk to the government, and execute contracts more quickly than negotiated procurements. His efforts resulted in the one-time award of six contracts exceeding \$280 million and reduced the procurement action time by two to six weeks. Horton deployed from USACE Huntington District.



### Rosana Rocha, Oct. 23-29

When the going gets tough, the bulldogs get going. Rosana Rocha did the work of three to make sure the vital flow of personnel in and out of theater was not disrupted, despite a significant shortage of personnel in her office. Her dedication to mission earned Rocha recognition as Bulldog of the Week. Rocha, an administrative support specialist in the J1 Office (Human Resources), arranges travel for all personnel assigned to the district. With her office short two administrative support specialists, Rocha stepped up to the plate and took on additional duties and responsibilities. She helped in- and out-process personnel, prepared and processed about 50 travel vouchers, and coordinated with the South District’s higher headquarters on the reporting dates of new arrivals. Rocha is deployed from USACE Los Angeles District.



## Steve Belmore, Oct. 30 - Nov. 5

Bulldogs meet challenges head-on — Steve Belmore played a key role in developing and implementing innovative business practices that ensure the district meets the challenges of contracting for large infrastructure and facilities projects to support the Afghan National Army. Belmore, who works in the ANA office of the district Programs and Project Management Division, led the district team that developed the processes to manage government-furnished steel for large ANA projects. He worked closely with other district leaders to develop a successful sealed bid process and integrate an innovative bonding methodology into the contracting for the large ANA projects. These innovations will help the district meet its mission to rapidly contract for and construct the vital facilities the ANA needs to be able to grow, train, operate and take over security in Afghanistan by 2014. Belmore deployed from the U.S. Army Natick Soldier Systems Center.



## SPC Jonathan E. Rich, Nov. 6-12

Bulldog lovers will tell you a bulldog is three times the dog of any other breed. Spc. Jonathan E. Rich, the air movement coordinator for the South District, showed that same spirit by doing the work of three people. His commitment to the district's mission earned him the Bulldog of the Week. Rich, the district's sole air movement coordinator, stepped into the primary role when his section lost two higher-graded team members to redeployment. District personnel travel to project sites serviced by more than 30 airfields throughout the area of operations. Keeping track of where they are and ensuring they arrive to their destinations is critical to meeting mission requirements. Rich single-handedly manages the fixed and rotary wing requirements and keeps the district moving.



## James A. Murray, Nov. 13-19

Bulldogs are natural-born leaders and James A. Murray, a project manager at the South District, showed that same quality when he stepped up to lead the solicitation efforts for the Southeast Power System – Helmand Transmission Lines and Substation Compounds Project – a \$100 million project. Murray also led the SEPS assessment on very short notice, a role that required him to coordinate closely with USAID and other stakeholders. Executing all projects associated with the SEPS is one of COMISAF's (commander, International Security Assistance Force) top priorities and one of the critical pieces of the work USACE does in Afghanistan. Teammates like Murray are getting that job done. His extensive knowledge, expertise and leadership are keys to the success of our mission. Murray deployed from USACE Detroit District.



## Michael Fellenz, Nov. 20-26

Bulldogs are described as leaders, courageous and unafraid of challenges. Michael Fellenz demonstrated those characteristics the moment he stepped off the airplane for his new assignment as resident engineer at the Farah Resident Office. Fellenz hit the ground running, quickly took control of challenging projects and instituted processes that greatly improved project efficiency and progress. Fellenz deployed from USACE Buffalo District.



## Robert Garcia, Nov. 27 - Dec. 3

Bulldogs can carry a lot of weight on their broad shoulders. Robert “Bobby” Garcia, the Mine Clearance and Site Assessment project manager, showed his bulldog trait when he carried his own and helped with covering ANP pre- and post-award projects in the Herat Area Office and training of a project manager. He was directly responsible for stewarding three stalled pre-award projects to award, facilitating two project modifications, conducting two project site visits and participating in two source selection advisory boards. His extra efforts were indispensable to the ANSF/ANP group when they were understaffed for three weeks. Garcia deployed from USACE Albuquerque District.



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*“The bulldog ... a symbol of courage and strength ... the South District team is comprised of many such men and women.”*

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# District builds strong momentum

story by Karla Marshall

Staying on schedule and meeting critical construction timelines are top priorities for South District Commander Col. Benjamin Wham. To meet those expectations, the district must award construction contracts in a timely fashion and ensure work on the job sites progresses at a rapid pace.

The South District finished strong in fiscal 2011, awarding 45 contracts and placing almost \$54 million in construction in September. Construction placement is a measure of the progress contractors are making toward completing projects.

In October, the district placed \$61.8 million in construction, surpassing the mark of \$54 million in placement in September.

In November, the District continued its pace, placing \$62.0 million of construction, almost 99 percent of the scheduled total for the month, and a remarkable feat in the difficult Afghan environment.

Project completions and turnovers also maintained momentum. Completed projects turned over to customers in October were:

- Afghan Uniform Police District Headquarters in Shindand, Herat province — a \$1.4 million project begun in March 2010, finished Oct. 1.

- Electrical distribution system, Afghan National Army Camp Hero, Kandahar province — a \$1.2 million project begun in August 2010, finished Sept. 31.

- Fuel spill containment structure, Camp Zafar/Shindand Airfield, Herat province — a \$320,000

project, begun in March 2011, finished Oct. 9.

- Afghan National Border Police Company Headquarters at Mohammed Sayar, Spin Boldak district, Kandahar province — \$5.6 million project, begun in June 2008, finished Oct. 27.

- Highway 4, Tarnak Bridge bypass, Kandahar province — a \$911,000 project, begun in Sept. 2010, finished Oct. 6.

- Afghan National Army fuel depot, Camp Hero, Kandahar province — an \$883,000 project, begun in June 2010, finished Oct. 31.

In November, the South District turned over the following construction projects:

- Command and Control Facility at Kandahar Airfield — a \$12.2 million project awarded in September 2009.

- Rotary Wing Parking and Taxiway, Forward Operating Base Dwyer, Helmand province — a \$14.9 million project awarded in February 2010.

- CSSB Yard, Kandahar Airfield — a \$6.3 million project awarded in April 2009.

- Afghan National Army Troop Medical Clinic, Camp Zafar, Herat province — a \$1.67 million project awarded in February 2011.

- Class 1 Yard, Kandahar Airfield — a \$5.8 million project awarded in February 2009.

“We’ve got more than 290 projects ongoing right now at a value of more than \$2.50 billion,” said Bill Stout, P.E., the district’s chief of construction in early December. “We have placed \$124 million in construction in the last two months — those values will rise as we become more efficient in performance of our construction placement.”



USACE Photo

**Arch-span structures take shape Nov. 30 at the 207th Brigade Expansion project at Camp Sayer, where USACE is building more than 90 total arch-span buildings.**



USACE Photo

**Workers install a window at the Uniform Police District Headquarters project site in Farah Nov. 30.**

As 2014 quickly approaches, getting projects completed is the primary focus of the district. “We’ve got a lot of work ahead of us; a lot of placement,” said

Wham. “But, every project we complete helps move Afghans closer to self-governance and our military towards Mission Complete.”

# ANP STATION OPENS in Ashterlee

story and photos by Mark Ray

The governor of Daykundi province and the deputy commander of the Afghan National Police headquarters with responsibility for southwestern Afghanistan opened a new district police headquarters in Ashterlee, Daykundi province, Nov. 3.

Daykundi Governor Qurban Ali Uruzgani spoke of the steadily improving security situation in the province, and highlighted the need to resource the Afghan police adequately to ensure their continued morale and effectiveness.

**Right: Daykundi province governor Uruzgani speaks at the ceremony. Below: Residents from the surrounding area at the opening ceremony for the new district police headquarters at Ashterlee, Daykundi province.**





View of the compound in September 2011.



Brig. Gen. Mirwais Khan Noorzai makes remarks at the ceremony.

USACE contracted for, and oversaw, the construction of the \$1.5 million facility.

Brig. Gen. Mirwais Khan Noorzai, deputy commander of the 404 Maiwand Zone, which is the headquarters for the national police throughout southwestern Afghanistan, praised the new headquarters as a symbol of stability in the area, and said the Interior Ministry is making efforts to establish additional police facilities throughout the region.

Col. Robert Akam, commander of the Combined Team Uruzgan, which mentors Afghan National Security Forces, recognized the work of the Afghan forces in establishing security in the province. He spoke of looking forward to a day when Afghanistan as a whole is a society where the police, not the Army, are the primary providers of security and order.

Col. Benjamin Wham, commander of the South

District, saluted the district team that had worked hard over the summer to ensure that the facility was complete before the onset of winter. The new headquarters is in a remote, high-altitude location where long winters reduce the time available for construction. Wham extended his best wishes for success and safety to the police who will serve at the new facility.

The ceremony included prayers by a local mullah, as well as readings from boys and girls of the neighboring town.

The new facility included the headquarters building, with offices, a dining facility and detention cell, as well as a perimeter wall with access control points, and basic electrical, water and wastewater infrastructure. The new headquarters is the 25th ANP district headquarters that the South District has completed and turned over to the Afghan security forces. ☐



Photo by Karla Marshall

The Bagh-e-Pul power station, situated near a Soviet-era grain silo in western Kandahar City, is one of two diesel-fuel powered stations built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Prime Power Battalion that delivers electricity to the city's residents.

# USACE's 249th Prime Power Battalion lights up Kandahar

story by  
Karla Marshall

A small contingent of Soldiers plays a huge role in improving and maintaining southern Afghanistan's electric power infrastructure, primarily in Kandahar City.

These non-commissioned officers, deployed from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' only active duty unit, the 249th Prime Power Battalion at Fort Bragg, N.C., are all prime power specialists assigned to Task Force Breshna Barq. Established in the summer of 2010, the task force's primary mission is bringing more and more reliable power to Kandahar City.

"These Soldiers are responsible for electric power outside the wire," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas Black, deputy commander of Task Force Breshna Barq. "Locally, four Soldiers are

based at the USACE-built and managed power stations in Kandahar city — two at the Bagh-e-Pul power station in western Kandahar and the others at the Shurandam Industrial Park power station."

The initial task force mission was two-pronged: daily oversight and contract management for the installation and commissioning of two \$40 million, 10-megawatt diesel-fueled power plants and the validation and assessment of about 40 kilometers of 20-kilovolt, overhead medium-voltage feeder lines. The electric lines distribute electricity to satisfy the industrial, business, agricultural and residential demands of one third of Kandahar City's 480,000 residents.

"We are here to assist in the development of the Afghans' outdated electrical distribution networks

throughout the region so businesses can thrive and stimulate the economy," said Staff. Sgt. Mario Sanchez.

Once the two power stations were commissioned, the task force members began overseeing the \$10.3-million operations and maintenance contract for the power stations and developing and managing \$7.2 million worth of "starter kit" tools and materials for DABS (Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat), the Afghan power utility company.

The starter kits include transformers, medium and low-voltage cable, distribution panels and tools. Also included are electrical test equipment, bucket trucks, and pole truck with a trailer. The kits will provide the Afghan utility with the resources it needs to accomplish immediate, lasting, effective and reliable repairs in Kandahar province

so it can meet the needs of its customers.

As the conditions and needs evolved, the prime power team took a mentoring role on as well. “We work with the utility company to maintain the power systems and train their employees,” said Staff Sgt. Alex Brown. “They really do want to improve their way of life and are willing to work hard at it.”

Sgt. Joshua Strausbaugh agreed and added, “In the United States, there are many codes that must be followed when working with electricity to ensure safety. In Afghanistan, they don’t have these kinds of regulations. Fortunately, the utility employees picked up quickly on the whats and whys that we were trying to communicate to them.”

Safety is an essential component of all USACE projects, said Col. Benjamin Wham, South District commander. “Our first priority is keeping people safe. We must share that fundamental value with our Afghan partners.”

The team worked hard to accomplish their goal of safely getting more power production and effective distribution inside Kandahar, and were gratified by the appreciation they saw on the faces of Kandahar City residents, said Strausbaugh.

The team’s work has also taken them to the Kajaki Hydroelectric Plant, where they installed special protective switchgear. This relatively inexpensive installation increased the reliability of the transmission lines to Kandahar and Helmand provinces. According to Black, a new diesel plant providing an equal amount of power would have cost \$24 million.

A private contracting company was willing to install the switchgear at a cost

## Becoming a Prime Power Specialist

story by Karla Marshall

Prime Power Soldiers’ unique capacity to tackle complex electrical engineering tasks are developed through specialized training at the Prime Power School at Fort Belvoir, Va.

“We went through a very rigorous, one-year training program, with fairly stringent prerequisites,” said Staff Sgt. Mario Sanchez a prime power specialist deployed to Afghanistan from the 249th Prime Power Battalion at Fort Bragg, N.C. “We go through two foundational phases of instruction before training for instrumentation, electrical and mechanical specialties.”

The current Prime Power Production Specialist training program evolved from a Nuclear Power training program established in 1958 to train and qualify members of the Army, Navy and Air Force as nuclear reactor operators and technicians.

As military power requirements changed, so did the training program. In 1977, the Nuclear Power program was phased out and replaced by the Non-tactical Generator training program. In 1985, the name changed to the Prime Power Production Specialist course.

Throughout their history, Prime Power Soldiers have deployed around the world to deliver utility-grade power with the unit’s own generating equipment, and to troubleshoot and solve critical electrical generation and distribution challenges. 

of \$1.5 million with an eight-month lead time. Instead, three Prime Power Soldiers, working with and mentoring the Afghan hydroelectric plant operators and electricians accomplished the installation in six weeks for less than \$150,000.

“The \$150,000 for the primary switch center was borne by USACE as it had the item in stock,” said British Air Force Wg. Cdr. Charlie Allan, Regional Command Southwest development plans officer. “But that said, there was also a benefit to the power house staff who were given on-the-job training by the prime power team during installation.”

“Language barriers and the idea that ‘doing things the old way was fine,’ were issues we overcame working with the Afghans,” said Brown. “But the challenge of doing something that would improve the life of Afghans was worth it.”

From initial conception to completion took just 39 days, but the impact on the electric system was immediate, said Allan. The switchgear protects the two Kajaki turbines where none existed before and prevents hard shut downs of the grid and mechanical deterioration of essential generators. This, in turn, leads to a far more stable power supply to the people of Helmand and Kandahar and far fewer power outages leading to longer electricity availability per day.

“Regardless of how costs are measured, having prime power specialists in Afghanistan is an exceptional value,” said Black. They supervise, operate, install and maintain electric power plant and associated systems and equipment — the 249th is a unique unit with unique and valuable capability.

“The 249th has a really critical mission here,” said Wham. “Afghans need electricity to develop and sustain their economy. By helping the Afghan utility company improve and maintain its electric power generation, this small group of Soldiers delivers huge benefits. The outgoing crew has done an outstanding job training Afghan technicians and working with our private contractor to ensure Kandahar City enjoys reliable, stable power. I salute the outstanding efforts of the 249th Soldiers.”

This team of prime power NCOs returned to the United States and was replaced by a new team in October.

“There is still much to do,” said Sanchez. “Sub-stations powered by the Kajaki Dam will need upgrades to increase power throughout southern Afghanistan. The new team will continue the mentoring and contract oversight mission.” 



USACE Photo

**Afghan utility workers prepare the new electric switch for installation at Kajaki Dam.**



USACE Photo

**Afghan National Police assemble for instruction at their compound in southern Afghanistan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently completed this compound at Mohammed Sayed to enable the Government of Afghanistan to provide for the security of its citizens.**

# USACE considers new austere standards for construction in Afghanistan

story by Karla Marshall

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers builds strong and builds smart. In Afghanistan, building strong and smart means constructing cost-effective facilities that meet the needs of Afghans, and are easy to operate and maintain over the life of the facilities.

Spurred by the deadline to transition responsibilities for security in Afghanistan to Afghan forces by 2014, USACE's Afghanistan Engineer District-South met with Regional Command South's battlespace owners, mentors and engineers in August 2011 to map out a strategy to evaluate remaining planned construction and determine the best way forward to support the planned transition.

"We needed to focus on how the district could construct faster, decrease fuel consumption, and increase the overall sustainability of facilities for Afghans," said Steve Osborne, an engineering section chief at the district. "Jeff Usavage, the district's Afghan National Police program manager, gathered a team of the district's architects, engineers and ANP project managers together to develop recommendations for achieving these goals.

"For Afghan National Army and Police facilities, we need to build facilities that Afghans are accustomed to," said Osborne. "That means constructing austere buildings that maximize the use of locally available materials, simple architectural features, low energy lighting and climate control systems and efficient water systems."

NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan is currently evaluating USACE's new austere standard recommendations. If implemented, the district will apply the standards to projects

that are in the early stages of construction and all future projects.

"We have standard designs for a variety of Afghan National Police buildings," said Steve Karwan, a district architect who recently redeployed. "If we adopt austere standards, the district will update many of these existing designs with a variety of changes that will improve value and allow the facilities to be more easily sustained long into the future."

The austere design plan is not without challenges. Integrating austere changes means coordinating closely with stakeholders including the customers, regional commands, regional support commands, battlespace owners, Afghan National Police mentors and the end users. "We are continually looking to improve processes and deliver quality facilities," said Fred Schelby, the austere standard transition team lead. "The district strives to integrate feedback and apply lessons learned to each new project we undertake. Our austere design recommendations are the result of these efforts."

The primary goals of the new austere standard designs are to turn over facilities that can be operated and maintained by Afghans, offer a more normal living experience and have more affordable first-costs of construction and life-cycle costs of operation said Col. Benjamin Wham, district commander. "USACE is here to build facilities that enable the Afghan government to provide security and stability for the people of Afghanistan. We want to make the transition from coalition forces security to Afghan forces as easy as possible and by incorporating lessons learned to the construction we have remaining, our ANSF partners and all of Afghanistan will benefit." 

# USACE facilitates medical mission in Daykundi province

story by Karla Marshall

Access to healthcare is not always possible in Afghanistan, but for 33 men and boys in the remote village of Miramor, Daykundi province, much-needed care came to them Nov. 14 courtesy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

USACE's Afghanistan Engineer District-South periodically visits project sites in remote locations to check on the progress of construction. For sites like Miramor, where the district is overseeing the construction of a uniform police district headquarters, those visits require helicopter transport and occasionally there are empty seats.

This was the fourth trip to Miramor for USACE and each time they bring school supplies and other small gifts for the kids.

On this visit, Afghan nurse, 2nd Lt. Fida Mohammed, from the Regional Uniform

Police Headquarters Surgeon's Office near Kandahar, rode along to treat Miramor villagers while district employees inspected on-going construction.

"I got the idea to bring along a medical provider from our security detail medic, Spc. Justin Gleisner," said Lt. Col. John Carpenter, the South District's chief of intelligence. "We try to accomplish multiple objectives on our visits to these remote sites because scheduling travel is such a challenge; not just for us, but for the Afghan Regional Uniform Police as well.

"The Hazara people have very little access to healthcare so bringing providers to them seemed like an easy thing to do. Plus, enabling the uniform police to provide healthcare helps them develop a better relationship with the Miramor community."

Gleisner played a significant role in the success of the mission said Carpenter. "He procured the medical



Photo by Lt. Col. John Carpenter

**Spc. Justin Gleisner, a medic-mentor assigned to the 404th Maiwand ANP, provides medical treatment to an Afghan boy with the assistance of a translator.**

equipment and medications, outlined the requirements and helped 2nd Lt. Mohammed treat as many patients as possible."

According to Maj. David Steele, an Afghan Uniform Police mentor assigned to 404th Maiwand ANP who has traveled with USACE

to Miramor in the past, the mission demonstrated the benefits of having an Afghan Uniform Police district headquarters close by.

"For me, the best part was when the District Chief of Police said he would like to have his police attend some of the medical training conducted by the regional headquarters," Steele said.

The men and boys were treated for various minor ills, primarily cold and flu, sinus infections and urinary tract infections. "As a long time combat advisor, the tangible appreciation of the Miramor community affirmed the value of this mission. If we are invited again, we would like to bring a female medic so that we can treat women and girls as well," Steele concluded.

"Our primary reason for coming to these remote sites is to inspect on-going construction," said Carpenter. "But each time we visit, we recognize more and more faces. This is the best kind of soldiering because we see the tangible rewards of building infrastructure and connecting with the people in these remote areas." 



Photo by Lt. Col. John Carpenter

**Afghan boys await the opportunity to receive health care by Afghan and U.S. medical providers during a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mission to Miramor in Daykundi province.**

# AES Team

## Kandahar Area Office



Photo by Karla Marshall

**At an award ceremony for early departing MRAP team members. Front row (left to right), Pfc. Anthony Nardone, Spc. Marcus Gross, Spc. Daniel Stearns, Cpl. Paul Hanneman, and Staff Sgt. Thomas Johnsen. Back row (left to right), Sgt. 1st Class Ramon Curiel (Team NCOIC), Sgt. Johnson Chuong, Spc. Marcus Caraballo, Spc. Luis Ortiz, Staff Sgt. Robert Moss (current team NCOIC), and Staff Sgt. Michael Conner.**

story by  
Lt. Col. Michael Brothers

With roughly half the total dollar value of construction for the South District, the Kandahar Area Office has its hands full staying on top of requirements for 61 projects. But in the Bulldog tradition, the KAO welcomes the challenge and performs to the high standard expected in this district.

The KAO has responsibility

for projects undertaken in the Regional Command South area of operations, a very diverse area made up of four provinces that together are about the size of the state of Indiana.

Kandahar province contains the main city in the region, and the bulk of the project load. There is open desert in the southern Registan and Shorabak districts and a large border with Pakistan, including major border crossings at Chaman (Pakistan) and Spin Boldak.

Going north from Kandahar City, you get into mountainous terrain heavy with agriculture. Zabul province also has a large border with Pakistan with very open and mountainous territory. A large section of the Ring Road (Highway 1) goes through Zabul, and is the focus of our projects there.

Uruzgan province is the gateway to the alpine interior provinces, with its major population center at Tarin Kowt, in the south, which is surrounded by imposing hills and fertile ground bordering

the Arghandab River. As you go north in Uruzgan the mountains take over, leading directly into Daykundi, which is sparsely populated due to the terrain, but is one the most pleasant and peaceful locations in Afghanistan.

The office has undergone changes in organizational structure that have helped streamline the project management hierarchy and place the right assets in the right places to manage the project load. KAO maintains a resident office at forward

operating base Lindsey, co-located with the area office in the Castle complex.

Due to the high volume of current and proposed projects, this resident office will be split into an Afghan National Police Resident Office and an Afghan National Army Resident Office. The ANA resident office will oversee a project office at FOB Sakari Kharez, which covers projects in the Maiwand and Zhari districts, two of the most kinetic districts in RC-South.

A major project coming in the near future is the Dahla Dam improvement, which will be overseen by a project office at FOB Frontenac.

The resident office at Multi-National Base Tarin Kowt directs a diverse program, covering small police projects in Daykundi (accessible only by air for our engineers), to the road projects under the Qalat Project Office, to large ANA kandak compounds.

The diversity in our battlespace is not limited to the terrain. It is our privilege to be able to work with forces from the United States, Australia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, among others. Five battlespace boundaries come together at Kandahar City, adding to the challenge of coordinating movement of our engineering staff on the battlefield.

Easing that challenge is our MRAP Team. The surge drawdown took a heavy toll on the number of Soldiers assigned to the team, but these Soldiers, augmented by civilian contractor personnel as drivers and truck commanders, do outstanding work putting together threat assessments, maintaining and operating all equipment, and training to a high level of proficiency so they can escort our civilians to far-flung project sites safely and efficiently.

Since Sept. 1, the team has conducted 51 missions without incident.

Working in the Kandahar area certainly presents varied challenges, but the KAO staff, like the district's bulldog mascot, attacks the challenges head-on and gets the job done. Essayons! 🇺🇸



Photo by Lt. Col. Michael Brothers

**Air Force Capt. Matthew Strickler (center), Tarin Kowt Resident Office officer-in-charge, is presented with a ceremonial robe for his role in the completion of the district Police headquarters in Ashterlee, Daykundi province.**



Photo by Lt. Col. Michael Brothers

**Kandahar Vicinity Resident Office engineers Keith Jones (left) and JaVaughn Perkins speak to contractor personnel during a site visit to the Arghistan Bridge Bypass project.**

# PROJECT SHORTS



Photo by Mark Ray

**South District Commander Col. Benjamin Wham makes comments at the ANA brigade ground breaking Oct. 12.**

## Ground broken for ANA 1st Brigade, 215th Corps Garrison

BY MARK RAY

A groundbreaking marked the ceremonial start to construction of a new garrison for the 1st Brigade, 215th Corps of the Afghan National Army Oct. 12 at Camp Garmsir, Helmand province.

The project will provide the buildings, roads, utilities and other infrastructure to support the 5,500 Afghan soldiers who make up the brigade.

The garrison will provide the 1st Brigade with the base it needs to be a long-term guarantor of security in Helmand province said Brig. Gen. Ali Shujale, commander of the brigade, in remarks translated by an interpreter.

“The contractor will build this project using a combination of arch-span and traditional brick and mortar construction,” said Col. Benjamin Wham, South District commander. “The flexible mix of construction methods will allow us

to quickly deliver a garrison with durable austere facilities, ready to meet the needs of the brigade, and able to withstand harsh Afghanistan conditions.”

The project will cost roughly \$83 million, and is expected to be completed in roughly a year and a half.

## Work progressing on theater vehicle maintenance facility

BY MARK RAY

Steel is going up for a facility to maintain U.S. tactical vehicles from throughout the Afghan theater. The South District is overseeing the contract to construct the facility.

When completed, the Kandahar Airfield project will comprise 11 major structures, including two large buildings for vehicle maintenance, a tire assembly and repair facility, a paint booth and a vehicle wash station. It will also include a fire pump house and administrative and storage buildings.

The \$26.3 million project should be completed by the end of February 2012.



Photo by Mark Ray

**Four cranes work at erecting the steel framework of a vehicle maintenance building on Kandahar Airfield.**

## USACE turns over another headquarters facility to Afghan Uniform Police

BY KARLA MARSHALL

Building facilities that enable the government of Afghanistan to provide security for its citizens is a priority for USACE.

On Oct. 17, USACE turned over another uniform police district headquarters compound to the Afghan National Police. This district headquarters is located in Shindand, Herat province.

Similar to other district headquarters built by the South District for the Afghan Uniform Police, the Shindand compound consists of a perimeter wall, entry control points, guard towers, billeting for 60 personnel, office space, holding cells, vehicle parking, kitchen and dining facilities and all associated infrastructure components.

“Since the district has been in existence, we’ve constructed and turned over 24 uniform police district headquarters, with 18 more currently under construction,” said Jeff Usavage, the South District’s Afghan National Police program manager.

This \$1.4 million project was constructed by the Afghanistan Rehabilitation and Architecture Organization beginning March 14, 2010, and was completed Aug. 29.

“The biggest challenge we had to overcome on this project was finding a solution for wastewater disposal,” said Frances Hinkley, project manager deployed from USACE’s Mobile District. “The water table is high at the project location, but after doing considerable

research, the contractor devised a solution that will support the incoming occupants well.”

“We are glad to get this project off the books,” said Donny Davidson, the Herat Area Office lead engineer. “This area needs more security and with completion of this compound, the Afghan government can provide Shindand residents with an effective police force.”

## USACE to build much-needed hospital in Shindand

BY KARLA MARSHALL

The U.S. and Afghan governments kept a promise when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded a \$5.4 million contract to build a much-needed hospital in Shindand Sept. 26. The funding for the project came from the Commander’s Emergency Response Program. (See sidebar on page 9 for more information about CERP.)

The South District is managing the project that, when complete, will provide a fully functional, 50-bed hospital and two outpatient clinics to help the Afghan government provide health care to its citizens. Shindand citizens now rely on a rudimentary 28-bed clinic for their health care.

“This is a really important project for us to undertake,” said Col. Benjamin Wham, South District commander. “There is a critical need for adequate healthcare in Shindand and this facility



Photo by Karla Marshall

**Paul Bell, center, discusses wastewater disposal with Engineer Tariq, a USACE senior project engineer, and the construction contractors Aug. 2. USACE turned over the compound to the Afghan Uniform Police Oct. 17.**

will greatly improve the capability of the Afghan public health authorities to meet the needs of Shindand residents.”

The Afghan Ministry of Public Health committed to fully staffing and supporting all related operations and maintenance costs when the hospital is complete, and plans on budgeting \$165,000 annually for the effort. ☐

## FEATURED PHOTO

### In this “Featured Photo” - A moment in time

PHOTO BY MARK LAFLEUR

Veterans Day is always a very special day to Mark LaFleur, but this one was just a bit more so. Along with being deployed, he wanted to record the exact moment in history for the eleventh month, on the eleventh day, at the eleventh hour, the eleventh minute and the eleventh second — 11.11.11.11.11.

At age 12, he gave himself the “Point Blue Dot” tattoo, a traditional symbol of pride for Point Blue, La., natives.

### Can your photo make the cut?

Break out the camera and take your best shot! E-mail it to [TAS.AES.PAO@usace.army.mil](mailto:TAS.AES.PAO@usace.army.mil). If it makes the cut, it’ll be shown in this special “Featured Photo” column of the Engineering Freedom Magazine.

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; and photo must be taken by the individual who submits it. ☐



# ON THE MOVE

## Moving in



Bethany Baker



Johan Barrios



Charles Bauer



LTC Melody Charles



Edward Ciccarelli



Willie Clark



Qiana Davis



Harry Dozier



Megan Donnelly



Ira Dorsett



Magie Ednalino



Tereso Falcon



Michael Fellenz



Lane Gary



Kelly Gilhooly



Keleigh Glass



Marco Goodman



Robert Greco



Steven Huebner



MSG Kevin Hughes



Ollie Jackson



Terrance Knowlton



Ulrike Krueger



Evan Lauterbach



Daniel LeFever



Georgia Lewis



William Manwill



Ronald McDonald



Vivien McGinty



LCDR Hal Mohler



Ryan Moore



Patrick Mulkey



John Murner



Neil Myers



James Nason



Darla Pack



LaKenya Parker



Lourdes Pastrana



Phillip Payne



Michael Phan



MSG Harvey Philson



James Powell



Paul Powell



Steven Rice



Mary Spencer



Rickey Sturdivant



Leai Toeie



Raymond Urena



Roger Vogler



John Whittier



Charles Williams



William Wright

## Moving on

SPC David Allison  
 Joshua Atkinson  
 SGT John Badger  
 Steven Baker  
 Michele Barunica  
 SPC Jeffrey Baxley  
 Thomas Bender  
 SSG Christopher Binder  
 Rita Boccieri  
 ABF2 Derek Brewer  
 Ronald Brooks  
 Bruce Brune  
 SSG Andrew Burrows  
 Lynda Christensen  
 SGT Johnson Chuong  
 SGT Craig Clark  
 SGT Marlon Cockerham

David Cooper  
 Prieux Cruz  
 Hosam Dajani  
 Peter Debski  
 MAJ Ferdinand Desir  
 Larry Drane  
 MSG Janelle Dubois  
 Deborah Duncan  
 Marion Dye  
 Charles Eberhardt  
 SSG Natazha Feliciano  
 CPL Robert Fickett  
 Jason Foust  
 Susan Fox  
 SSG Alberto Garcia  
 SGT Rex Gilliam  
 SPC Michael Green  
 Raymond Greenheck  
 SPC Marcus Gross

SPC Paul Hanneman  
 SSG Andrew Hansen  
 Greg Hegge  
 Caryl Hickel  
 Henry Iarrusso  
 Brian Johns  
 SSG Thomas Johnsen  
 Jeffrey Johnson  
 Chad Jungman  
 Joshua Keyser  
 Ashley Kosmal  
 Steven Lee  
 Randall Lewis  
 Danilo Mayo  
 William McKenty  
 SSG Christopher Medeiros  
 SSG Marcus Mendiola  
 SPC Jeffrey Miller

MSG Angel Morales-Perez  
 PFC Anthony Nardone  
 SPC Benjamin Nickel  
 Randy Nylund  
 SPC Luis Ortiz  
 John Perez  
 Kenny Pham  
 Elliott Porter  
 Jeremy Rickard  
 Kimberly Robinson  
 SSG Sean Rogers  
 Laura Rowland  
 Richard Rupert  
 Sonny Sapida  
 Joseph Schwing  
 Harry Shatto  
 Paul Sidney  
 James Slomer

SGM Jim Song  
 SPC Daniel Stearns  
 CPL Teon Stepney  
 SGM David Tindall  
 Hans Tolsdorf  
 Earl Wagner  
 Lance Walker  
 CPT Gregory Ward  
 Ross Warner  
 SPC William Watts  
 Larry Weatherwax  
 Richard Weisenburger  
 LCDR Ennis Williams  
 Courtney Wilson  
 Steven Wilson