



THE FREEDOM BUILDER

July 2010

MAGAZINE



One on one

District commander emphasizes business of leadership

Task Force Kabul

Operations and Maintenance branch keeps facilities in working order

Off the ground

New runway at Forward Operating Base Shank supports the military mission

Change of Command

Col. Thomas Magness assumes command of Afghanistan Engineer District - North



US Army Corps of Engineers®
Afghanistan Engineer District

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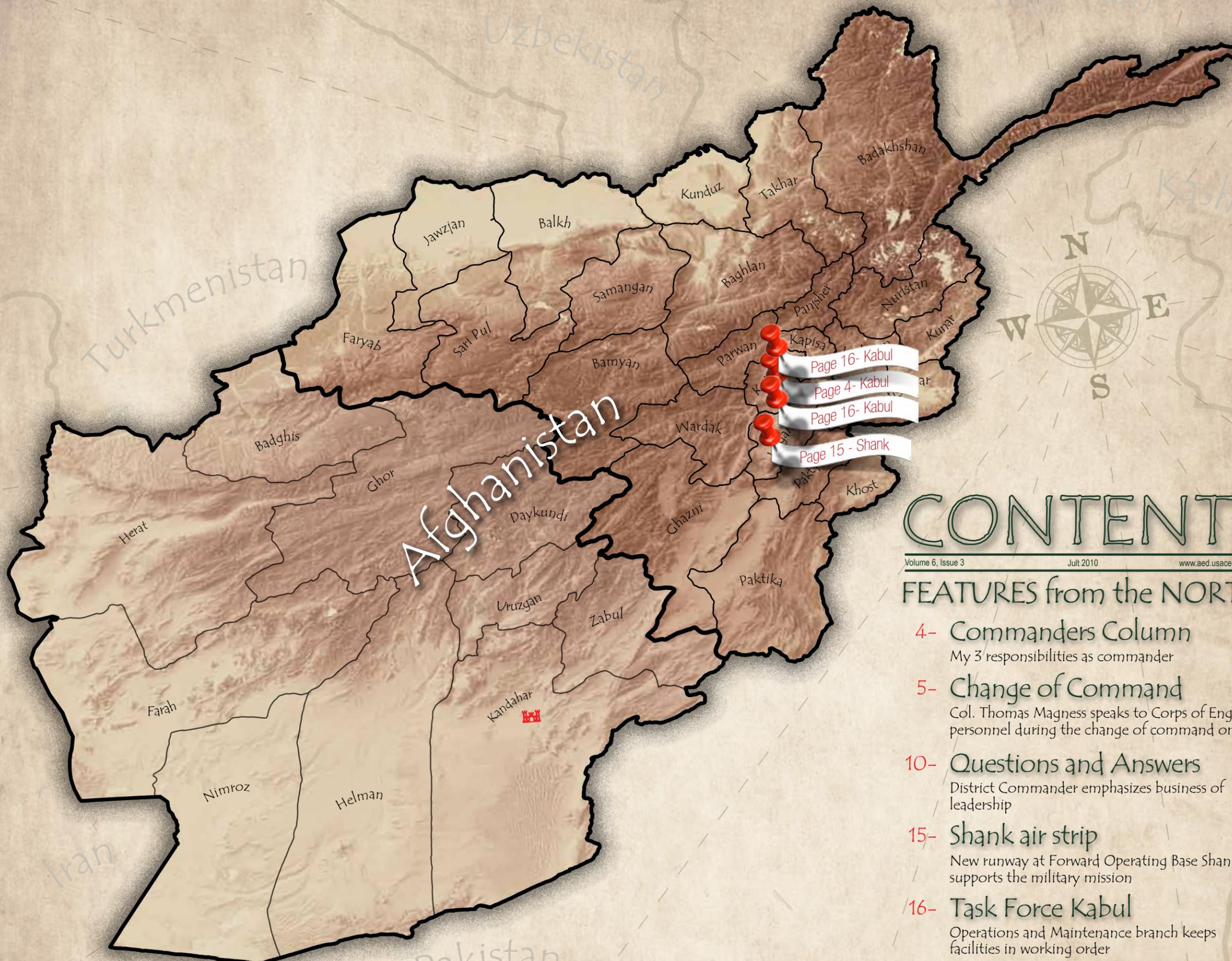
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Cover Image:



Brig. Gen. William Buckler passed the Corps of Engineers flag to Col. Thomas Magness during the Change of Command. (Full story on pg. 5)

Photo by | Joe Marek



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COMMANDER'S Column

My 3 responsibilities as commander

I was as proud as I could be to take command for Afghanistan Engineer District-North on July 8.

I come from the Los Angeles District, where I was the district commander for three years. I loved every minute of it. I left with the conflicts that any commander would have: the sadness of leaving friends and family, and the joy and excitement of joining the team here in Afghanistan.

The Change of Command ceremony at Qalaa House was a moving event that underscored the continuity of the mission here. It allowed Col. Michael McCormick to essentially give command over to the incoming commander – that would be me – and we kept rolling along.

I'm proud to join the team and I look forward to getting into the field to spend some time with each one of you to find out more about your piece of the mission. More importantly, I want to find out how I can help you be successful.

Ultimately, that's the role of the district commander.

I don't do design. I don't do quality assurance. All I can do is enable your success. If there is anything that would allow you to do your jobs better, that would allow you to serve your customers better, that would allow us to complete our mission better, please tell me. Tell me in person or send me an e-mail.

My first responsibility is to accomplish the mission.

This year and next year we're scheduled to do nearly \$4 billion worth of work. Now, how are we going to do \$4 billion worth of work? I

mean, that's just a monumental task.

We can do it if we're innovative, if we're creative, and if we're thinking about new ways to deliver. We can do it if we're serious about the business of building capacity, in which we train the Afghan people to take over in the future. We've got a lot of work ahead of us.

My second responsibility as commander is to take care of people. No surprise there.

It means bringing in the right people for the various jobs we have. It also means making sure that quality-of-life matters are in order so you can just focus on your jobs. You shouldn't have to worry about food or where you're going to go to the gym. I also want to ensure that we have a support network in place back home.

As the Army says, "Mission first. People always."

My third responsibility as your commander is the

efficient use of resources.

We've got nearly \$4 billion worth of work. How do we account for that? Are we handling it in such a way that when somebody wants to take a look, we're on high ground? Are we being good stewards of the taxpayers' money?

So my job is taking care of those responsibilities: Accomplish the mission, take care of people, and manage our resources in an effective and efficient way.

I'm excited to be here. I love the Corps of Engineers. I love our mission. I believe in what we're doing. And I know you do, too.

We've got a great and an important mission. If we work together, we'll be successful. Thanks for what you do and I look forward to seeing you soon. 🇺🇸



Story by | Paul Giblin

Photos by | Joe Marek

Col. Thomas Magness speaks to Corps of Engineers personnel during the change of command on July 8.

Col. Magness takes charge of Corps of Engineers in Kabul

KABUL, Afghanistan – Col. Thomas Magness took command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' district in Kabul on July 8, becoming the district's ninth leader since it was established in 2004.

Magness, who previously headed the Los Angeles District, succeeds Col. Michael McCormick, who commanded Afghanistan Engineer District-North since July 9, 2009, a period of rapid growth in scope and mission for the unit.

"I cannot tell you what an honor it is to take command of this outstanding unit today," Magness told about 300 Corps of Engineers employees and guests during a

Change of Command ceremony at the Qalaa House compound in downtown Kabul. "The greatest privilege we give Army officers today is command. And there is no greater assignment than command in a wartime theater."

He credited McCormick for assembling a strong team, and establishing sound policies and conditions that position the unit for success.

The district is comprised of 627 military personnel and civilians stationed in Kabul and across eastern and northern Afghanistan. The unit's primary mission is to bolster Afghanistan's infrastructure



Incoming commander Col. Thomas Magness, left, congratulates outgoing commander Col. Michael McCormick, right, as Brig. Gen. William Buckler looks on.

system after three decades of conflict by building army bases, police stations, roads, airstrips and other facilities.

Brig. Gen. William Buckler awarded McCormick the Bronze Star Medal for exceptional meritorious achievement while serving as commander of the district. During a speech that followed, Buckler recognized McCormick for selfless and tenacious service.

He noted that McCormick guided the district as its manpower swelled from approximately 450 to more than 600, doubling the size of some branches. Buckler emphasized that the growth came during a time when the original Afghanistan Engineer District split into two separate divisions – Afghanistan Engineer District-North, which retained the original headquarters at Qalaa House in

Kabul, and Afghanistan Engineer District-South, which was established at Kandahar Airfield in Kandahar.

North district personal provided critical support to help the South district get started, Buckler said.

“That selfless service, that selfless attitude that all of you embody, starts with Col. McCormick’s leadership,” Buckler said. “You think that happened by accident? No. By the result of tremendous effort and work. And Col. McCormick embodies the type of ethic required to do that.”

The brigadier general also recalled the colonel’s unwavering dedication to his assignment. He said he’d lost count of the number of times McCormick called him late at night.

“I’d pick up the phone and it would be Col.

“I cannot tell you what an honor it is to take command of this outstanding unit today.”

– Col. Thomas Magness

McCormick going, ‘Sir, you may hear about this and I just wanted you to know that ...’ and fill in the blank about whose toes he’d stepped on, or whose shins he’d kicked, or whose sensibilities he may have put aside to accomplish a mission,” Buckler said.

The mission will go uninterrupted, Buckler said, because Magness’ experience, and in particular his tour as commander of the Los Angeles District for three years, will serve him well as he takes over. “It certainly demonstrates the Army’s capability to pick qualified commanders to lead organizations like this in a combat environment,” he said.

McCormick used the change of command to thank personnel within the Corps of Engineers, other U.S. agencies, Afghan ministries and contracting companies who had served either alongside him or under him during his command. “The last 12 months have mostly flown by, and I must say that I’ve very much enjoyed working with all you,” he told those assembled.

He thanked many people by name, including personnel whose tours in Afghanistan had ended weeks or months earlier, and those whose tours in country extend weeks or

months beyond his own.

The focus of his command, McCormick said, was the important work of rebuilding Afghanistan by delivering infrastructure projects that benefit Afghan security forces and Afghan residents. “I found these objectives are much easier said than done, particularly in such a complex operating environment,” he said.

The work was extraordinarily difficult, though the Corps of Engineers team achieved many significant objectives, he said. Among them:

- Progress toward an Afghan national police training center in Wardak Province.
- Development of more than 75 Afghan national army and police facilities across the country.
- New standard designs for the buildings that cut costs and construction times.
- A program that provides armed military escorts for Corps of Engineers personnel in the field.
- A procedure that closely monitors contractors’ construction schedules.
- A program that allows the Corps of Engineers to hire Afghan nationals.



Architect Bogdan Figiel, front left, and other civilian Corps of Engineers employees participate in the ceremony that’s steeped in military tradition.



Corps of Engineers personnel and guests show their respect during the playing of U.S. national anthem.

- Partnerships with various Afghan government agencies, business organizations and trade schools.
- Initiatives to develop and hire small Afghan businesses.
- And policies to fight corruption and force contractors to pay their employees and suppliers promptly.

“Successes in these programs, projects and initiatives and many others like them are directly attributed to the many dedicated AED employees and the teamwork displayed by the U.S., coalition and Afghan partners, and the design and construction contractors,” the outgoing commander said.

Under sunny skies outside the namesake Qalaa House building, McCormick and Magness followed longstanding Army tradition as they passed the unit’s red-and-white flag to represent the transfer of authority from one commander to another.

First, Command Sgt. Mjr. Calvin Williams, the senior enlisted Soldier in the unit, passed the flag to McCormick, symbolizing his last act of allegiance to the outgoing commander. Then McCormick passed the flag that bears the Corps of Engineers’ castle logo to Bucker, signifying that the unit is never without senior leadership.

Next, Buckler passed it to Magness, symbolizing the transfer of responsibility for the unit and its members to the incoming commander. Finally, Magness completed the rite by passing the flag back to Williams, showing his confidence in the senior enlisted Soldier, and allowing Williams to demonstrate his first act of allegiance to him.

The Army 101st Airborne Division Screaming Eagles Band opened the ceremony playing the U.S. and Afghan national anthems. Civilian vocalist Shawn Washington, an equal employment

opportunity assistant for the district, joined the band in performing the “Star-Spangled Banner.”

Chaplain Martin Booth gave the invocation. The guests included Maj. Gens. William Grisoli and Timothy McHale; Jim Bersson, the director of the Joint Program Integration Office; and Naeem Yassin, the president of the Afghanistan Builders Association, among others.

The band concluded the event with “Essayons,” “The Army Song” and other selections, including “Gonna Fly Now,” the theme song to the movie “Rocky.”

Afterward, McCormick said his final farewells to employees and guests inside the Qalaa House building, before departing for his next assignment in Seattle, where he will coordinate defense support for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Meanwhile, Magness greeted employees and guests in the not-quite-completed new dining facility at Qalaa House, video-taped an introduction to district employees in outlying posts, met with groups of employees, and represented the Corps of Engineers that evening at a media event at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. 📺

“That selfless service, that selfless attitude that all of you embody, starts with Col. McCormick’s leadership.”

– Brig. Gen. William Buckler



Marine Staff Sgt. John Kirk joined other military personnel in the time-honored ceremony.

THOMAS



MAGNESS

Story by | Paul Giblin

Photos by | Joe Marek

Commander emphasizes business of leadership

KABUL, Afghanistan – If you should happen to get Col. Thomas Magness talking about leadership, prepare to settle in for a while. He wrote the book on the topic – literally.

During a 30-minute question-and-answer session in his Qalaa House office, the new commander discussed his up-coming book, his decision to accept the post of commander for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' district in northern Afghanistan, his family and why the date of the interview, July 12, marked something of an occasion for him.

And let the record show: Magness previously served as commander for the Corps of Engineers' Los Angeles and Detroit districts. He's had a number of teaching assignments, including at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. He earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from West Point, and a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Texas at Austin.

Question: You've written a soon-to-be-published book on leadership. Why did you write it and what are the key points?

Answer: I used the framework from the National Training Center where you plan an operation, you prepare yourself and your unit; you execute it; and then you learn from what you did.

It's kind of a cycle in everything we do in the Army, and certainly in the Corps. In life, you're constantly in some phase of that.

So I tried to look for leadership themes that I've seen in the military that I've experienced in the Corps of Engineers in all of those elements – planning, whether it's casting a vision, creating plans for a theme, or empowering people; No. 1 is getting the job done, execution; then conducting after-action

reviews and learning from our experiences.

I really felt strongly about what I've seen in the military and I thought that it would resonate with other people. And I started writing. I have a passion for writing. It all kind of came together and hopefully other people will benefit from that.

Q: What was your writing process?

A: 4 a.m. came awfully early every day for about three months.

I had written a lot of that over time. When I got to Los Angeles, I kind of lost some momentum. A friend of mine suggested just writing a leadership blog, so I started a little blog that keep me writing about every week, maybe sometimes twice a week. So I had enough material.

Then for three or four months at 4 a.m., one or two hours a day, it was just cranking it all out and putting it all together. It was a lot harder that I thought it would be. It's easy to write a short little three-paragraph blog. It's a lot more difficult to weave the thread all the way through, chapter after chapter, to make it coherent.

Somehow, it came together.

Q: On a similar topic, what motivates you?

A: My family. I don't want to let them down. I'm motivated by people. I'm generally a positive person. I try to bring energy to every situation. What I really enjoy is the challenge of a mission and the thrill of victory. I'm truly motivated to accomplish the mission.

Q: You specifically chose the mission here in Afghanistan. What led to your decision to take the post?

A: You know, I was seriously considering retirement after my tour of duty in Los Angeles. What better place to join the civilian workforce than Southern California?

But the chief asked. And as I thought about an opportunity to command again, and this

time to do it in a wartime theater where the stakes were higher, the challengers were greater, the opportunity for me to give back, and to be a part of something that was bigger than me, was something that I couldn't say no to.

Q: What do you hope to achieve during your command here?

A: Between this fiscal year and next fiscal year, we've got about \$4 billion worth of construction. I want to get the mission done. I want to find a way to get dirt moved and steel into the ground. And to accomplish that very sizable and very challenging construction workload.

Beyond that, I hope that we can put some systems into place. We can get good people and continue the pipeline that brings people in. Six to 12-month assignments means you always need new talent.

I want to look for opportunities to share what we're doing with the rest of the Corps of Engineers, so that it's easier to recruit, so that more people want to join us. We want to be a fully staffed organization, because I think that's what it's going to take to accomplish this very sizeable mission.

At the end of the day, I want to execute. I want to get the job done.

Q: No doubt that's a big task. Looking back over your career, what do you consider your single biggest accomplishment?

A: I don't think I could say that there was anything that I did by myself. I've always been a part of some great and powerful teams.

I did two tours of duty at the National Training Center at Fort Hood, an assignment that most people would think would be the kiss of death and that they hope they never get. I volunteered to go back a second time. I loved every minute of it.

Probably the most rewarding thing for me was four years of training people who

are preparing for combat – training them, certainly, on leadership elements, but also on the tactical components of being a combat engineer and being part of a maneuver team.

I love being a trainer. I love teaching people, the rewards of that. At the National Training Center, we established a roadside bomb training center. It didn't exist before. We knew that was important.

But I think my legacy lies with the people I've worked with. If I've inspired them to some higher level of greatness, I think ultimately that's what any leader can say is their greatest accomplishment – what they've done for other people.

Q: What's your proudest accomplishment outside of work?

A: I have two daughters. One of them is a sophomore in college. One's getting ready to start her freshman year in high school. I can't think of something more important that I've accomplished than raising two girls to be young women. They're just sweet, sweet children. I'm really proud of that.

I'm proud of this book – if it gets to market – because I know how hard I had to work to pull it all together. As I said, a lot harder than I thought.

So, as I think of things outside of work, I think of things like that.

Q: What are your daughters' names?

A: Jenna is the about-to-be 19-year-old sophomore in college. She goes to the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas. Shelby is 14 years old and is going to be a freshman at the Port of Los Angeles charter school in San Pedro, California.

Q: On a personal note, what's the best piece of advice anyone's given you? Who gave you the advice? What were the circumstances? How do you continue to use that advice today?

A: Well, this is the introduction to my book.

Very early in my career, when I was a young lieutenant, when I assumed wrongly that elements of leadership were not necessarily my responsibility, my boss, the battalion commander, came and said, "This is leader business. This is what leaders do. It's the full range of leader responsibilities. You can't just pick and choose which things you're going to be responsible for and assume that somebody else is going to take care of the rest. If you lead a unit, you own it and you're responsible for all of it."

That's what my boss called leader business.

I've kind of spent 25 years in the Army trying to figure out what leaders bring to an organization. That's probably the greatest advice I got.

I've had a series of commanders and great leaders I've worked with, each of whom shaped me differently, some of whom helped me understand what it meant to cast a vision, some of whom have helped me understand what it means to relate to every individual like they matter because they do.

Any number of commanders I can think of, or even people outside the military, have helped shape my leadership style.

Q: Speaking of leadership responsibilities, what's a challenging work issue you had to face, and how did you deal with it?

A: I think maybe the greatest challenge is when you have more work than you have people to do it. Certainly even here in AED-North, we've got a monumental workload, so you've got to prioritize. That means some things will be No. 1 priority and other things won't. You've got to be willing to understand where you draw the line and say, "This is what we've got to get done, and these are some things where we can assume some risk and perhaps defer, perhaps mitigate it in some other fashion."

I would say one of the biggest challenges in any position is trying to do more with less. It means you've got to prioritize, and those

things that are critical, you've got to get done.

Q: What traits make a good team member?

A: For me, any team member that I work with ought to bring energy. They ought to bring their best. If you find a team that consists of people who are positive, energetic and are willing to do whatever it takes to accomplish the mission – if you've got an entire team that's committed that way, in my opinion, they can't fail. There's no obstacle they can't overcome.

What I look for in a team member is a willingness to help each other, to hold each other accountable, to pick up the slack. If they have their piece done, to come in and share the workload, with the understanding that it's not about them; it's about the team. It's not about their own personal goals and objectives and accomplishments; it's about whether or not the team is successful.

If you've got team members that are thinking that way, as I said, there's nothing they can't do.

Q: You're something of a gym rat. What's your routine?

A: My routine is every day. If I don't get in there, I get a little irritable. It's for two reasons:

One – I believe in physical fitness. I believe that helps you maintain the level of energy you have to bring to any situation. And certainly as a leader, you're always on display and you ought to bring a level of fitness, stage presence, and that sort of thing. So, you know, it's important to me from that regard.

Two – I love to eat. There's no way I can maintain my level of eating if I don't have a commensurate level of fitness, so I have to get into the gym every day.

Q: What question should I have asked, but haven't?

A: You asked some good questions, but I didn't tell you about my wife Michelle. You could have asked me about her. I've got a beautiful picture of my family there. She's my rock.

You could have asked me more about my background. I like to tell people who ask how long I've been in the Army that I've been in the Army – as of today – 47 years.

Q: Forty-seven years?

A: Now, you're looking me and you're going, "If I do the math, you look pretty good for that age!"

But the reality is that I was born into a military family. My father was in the Corps of Engineers, retired as a colonel. I was born at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in a military hospital, and I've been in the Army my entire life. And, as of today, which is my birthday, 47 years in the Army.

Q: Hey, happy birthday. I'll take care of all that background stuff in the introduction to the article, but, um, it occurs to me that I want to ask you about your wife Michelle. Where'd you meet her?

A: I met her in Texas, my first assignment. She was a little school teacher at Fort Hood and I was a butter bar second lieutenant when we got married.

Q: What was the occasion?

A: It was at a party, friends getting together. I saw some sweet young thing and struck up a conversation. And a year, almost to the day from the time we met, we got married.

Q: Excellent. And with that, we're wrapped up. Thanks.

A: OK. Good to go. Thank you. 🇺🇸



The first C-130 transport plane to use the FOB Shank airstrip heads skyward after delivering supplies.

KABUL, Afghanistan—A C-130 transport airplane rumbled in for a landing on new \$11.8 million runway at Forward Operating Base Shank on June 24, christening a new era of air transportation for the base in Logar Province, south of Kabul.

Before completion of the runway, Shank was accessible only by ground transportation and helicopters. The 1.4-mile airstrip can accommodate large military transport planes, such as the Lockheed C-130 Hercules and the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III transport plane.

Smaller aircraft got an earlier start, first using the concrete airstrip on June 18. And C-17s have yet to touch down, but are expected to use the runway after a full

complement of fire equipment is in place, said U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project manager Dennis Lindemeier, who oversaw development of the project.

The airstrip near the city of Puli Alam is important to the military mission in Afghanistan because it allows greater flexibility in moving troops and equipment, Lindemeier said. More than 4,500 U.S. and coalition personnel are stationed at Shank.

Work on the runway began in May 2009. Army Capt. Andrew Stockhoff, who has since redeployed, served a critical role as resident area officer in charge during most of the construction, Lindemeier said. Area engineer Peter Gauer and resident engineer Daniel Wilson also played key roles. 🇺🇸

Up and running

Operations and Maintenance branch keeps facilities in working order



Story and photos by | Paul Giblin

Mechanical engineer Rex Mols scrutinizes the overhead electrical and mechanical systems in one of the barracks buildings at Task Force Kabul.

KABUL, Afghanistan – Civil engineer Thomas Urbaniak carefully examined the welding work on an exterior staircase at an Afghan military base called Task Force Kabul.

Some of the welds at the barracks building simply lay atop of the joints they were supposed to have joined. Good welds would have been smooth and flat. In contrast, the welds he spotted during an inspection of the complex on June 17 were coarse and lumpy.

He photographed the welds from several angles and later noted in a report that the joints were poor quality. “I question the strength,” he wrote.

The staircase joints were among dozens of details that Urbaniak and a team of

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel scrutinized during their inspection. The U.S. Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency is overseeing construction of the compound that’s nearing completion.

Upon completion, the Corps of Engineers will assume operations and maintenance for the facility, as it has done for other Afghanistan National Army bases and Afghanistan National Police stations across the country. The Corps of Engineers works closely with two contracted service companies that provide most operations and maintenance duties at the facilities.

The scope of work covers both scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, plus the repair, replacement and renovation of

systems and equipment for the buildings and grounds.

“Those contracts cover everything from changing the light bulbs to unclogging toilets,” said Tim Brown, deputy program manager for the Corps of Engineers’ Operations and Maintenance Branch in Kabul.

An important facet for some of the contracts is that they require maintenance company workers to teach operations and maintenance skills to Afghan government workers who are expected to take over the duties when U.S. and coalition forces leave the country. Corps of Engineers personnel likewise provide instruction.

“When you’re looking at the overall transition plan for O&M, our goal is to be out of here in by 2014,” Brown said. “We’re training them in key areas of operations and maintenance – plumbing, electrical, HV/AC and carpentry.”

The training component is critical to the Corps of Engineers’ mission in Afghanistan, said Ray Reed, deputy chief of the branch.

“If we leave this country and there aren’t people

in these facilities who take care of them, then it’s all going to disintegrate,” Reed said. “And the ability of the government to keep their military functioning will fail due to the fact that their soldiers don’t have water out at their sites, or electricity or things like that.”

The Corps of Engineers’ Operations and Maintenance Branch also authorizes and oversees minor new construction jobs at Afghan security forces’ facilities. Recent jobs have included the installation of a ventilation system in an existing wood-fired kitchen, construction of an awning to provide shade for soldiers, and upgrades to existing security parameter walls.

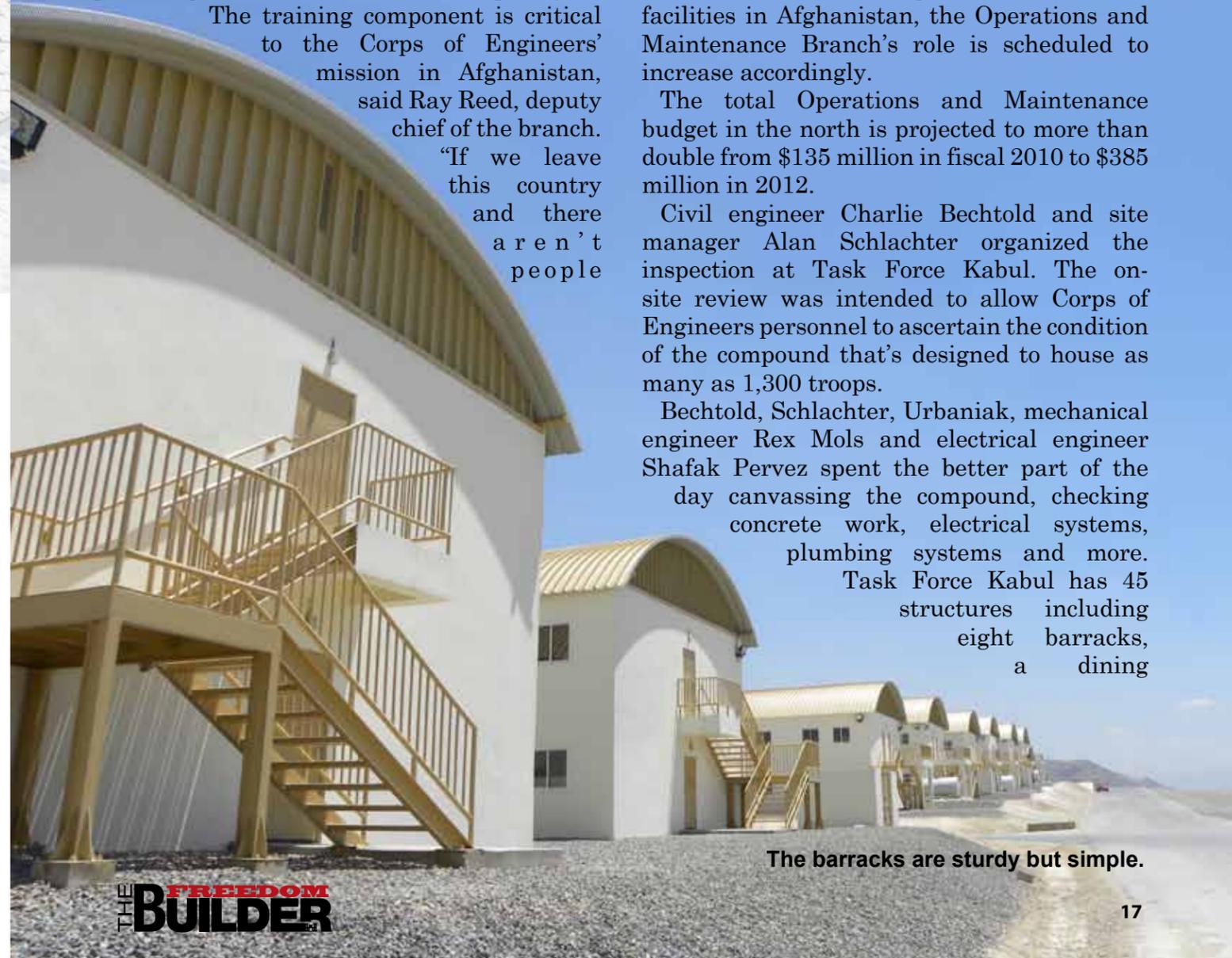
In May 2010, the Corps of Engineers’ district in north Afghanistan provided services for 80 Afghan army locations and 110 Afghan police locations. As the Corps of Engineers and other coalition agencies build more facilities in Afghanistan, the Operations and Maintenance Branch’s role is scheduled to increase accordingly.

The total Operations and Maintenance budget in the north is projected to more than double from \$135 million in fiscal 2010 to \$385 million in 2012.

Civil engineer Charlie Bechtold and site manager Alan Schlachter organized the inspection at Task Force Kabul. The on-site review was intended to allow Corps of Engineers personnel to ascertain the condition of the compound that’s designed to house as many as 1,300 troops.

Bechtold, Schlachter, Urbaniak, mechanical engineer Rex Mols and electrical engineer Shafak Pervez spent the better part of the day canvassing the compound, checking concrete work, electrical systems, plumbing systems and more.

Task Force Kabul has 45 structures including eight barracks, a dining



The barracks are sturdy but simple.

facility, a waste-water treatment plant, a well and a power plant. Armed security personnel shadowed the Corps of Engineers team the entire time.

Also, Anthony LaRosee, the project manager for Colorado-based CH2N Hill Constructors Inc., which is serving as the prime contractor for the compound, walked with the Corps of Engineers workers, taking notes to ensure that their concerns were addressed before CH2N Hill wrapped up the job.

The inspectors checked nearly every facet of the barracks – walls, floors, doors, windows, the electrical system, stairs, the heating and cooling system and more. The two-story buildings featured simple and solid construction designs and materials, including cast-in-place foundations, concrete floors, masonry walls and K-span roofs.

The overall quality looked good, Urbaniak said.

“Mainly, we went out there and used our knowledge of what’s good and bad in this country,” he said. “From the quality assurance standpoint, we’ve seen a number of projects around the country and we know what the code says, so we were able to find things.”

The compound was nearly complete, but the projected full opening had been delayed because a truck that was transporting electrical transformers was involved in a traffic accident that destroyed the equipment.

Air Force contractors installed temporary power generators to be used until another set of electrical transformers arrives, so that the facility would be able to open within weeks. A number of U.S. troops also will take residence in the camp to mentor their Afghan counterparts.

The buildings at the compound were designed and built to withstand heavy use, Bechtold said. However, sink fixtures and ceiling tiles, among other items, are somewhat likely to be damaged by Afghan soldiers, many of whom have had no prior experience with faucets, suspended ceilings and other modern-era building materials, he said.

“From our experience, we just know that some things won’t last,” he said.

In contrast, other features, such as heavy-duty stoves in the dining facility and painted concrete floors in all of the buildings are more likely to endure long after U.S. and coalition forces leave Afghanistan. 🇺🇸



Civil engineer Charlie Bechtold inspects holding tanks at the waste water treatment plant at Task Force Kabul, an Afghan army complex that will house as many as 1,300 soldiers.



Parting shot

It's gotta be the shoes! Air Force Staff Sgt. Paul Kelly from the Force Pro team goes vertical for a spike as capacity development project manager Seyar Ziayeen, left, of the Afghan Local Nationals team prepares for a block during first-round action of the Independence Day volleyball tournament at Qalaa House on July 4.

Despite Kelly's high-flying efforts, Force Pro fell in the championship match to the Kabul Area Office Spikers, a team comprised of Army Lt. Col. Joe Danao, project engineer John Heard, demining and safety specialist Clint Henker, resident engineer Mike Kessler, Army Capt. Jesus Perez, construction representative Ramon Sierra and Army Master Sgt. Michael Staudt.

