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Arocho father and son reunite in Afghanistan

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Afghanistan may not be the idyllic location when Americans consider where to spend quality time with family members, but for Julio, a Puerto Rico native, and 1st Lt. Francisco Arocho, no place could be better. Julio, the deputy district engineer for programs and project management at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South and his son, Francisco briefly reunited April 15 at Kandahar Airfield to catch up with one another.

Francisco deployed with the 668th Engineer Company, 980th Engineer Battalion, from Orangeburg, N.Y. in mid-December 2011 and Julio arrived in Afghanistan April 1. “Over the past couple of years our family has been really busy and we have not had many opportunities to be together,” said Julio. “Cisco married Laura in Norfolk, Va. in September and the whole family got together at Thanksgiving. Outside of those major events, we didn’t really get to see each other.”

Although this time together is brief, for the Arochos, duty in Afghanistan is an experience they get to share. “Both dad and I have deployed before to Iraq and Afghanistan. But this is the first time that we are in the same place at the same time,” said Francisco, who served in Iraq as a Army National Guard enlisted Soldier prior to obtaining his bachelor’s degree in economics from George Mason University in 2010. “We get to see firsthand what each other is doing.”

Francisco is stationed at Forward Operating Base Walton and inspects his battalion’s construction of persistent ground surveillance system facilities on other FOBs around the country. “My battalion makes it possible for coalition forces to deploy and use PGSS systems, which helps keep Soldiers safe.”

Julio is the senior civilian at the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, which oversees construction of Afghan National Security Forces facilities, U.S. military construction, and water and infrastructure projects that benefit Afghan citizens. “We have a really important mission in Afghanistan,” Julio said. “The Corps of Engineers directly supports the government of Afghanistan in providing safety and security for its people. I am lucky that I get to share that with my son.”



Julio(left) and 1st Lt. Francisco (right) Arocho, father and son, reunite at Kandahar Airfield, April 15. Both are currently deployed to Afghanistan; Julio with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Francisco with the 668th Engineer Company from Orangeburg, N.Y. (USACE Photo by Karla Marshall)

Julio and his wife of 32 years, Olga, live in San Francisco, Calif., Cisco and his new bride, Laura, live in West Point, N. Y. and Julio's daughter, Alexandra lives in Japan.

“Alex has a master's degree in education and works as an English instructor in Akita,” Julio said. “My wife and I miss her but the experience she is gaining makes the separation worth it.” In fact, Julio and his wife are considering a trip to Japan to visit Alex during his next scheduled rest and recuperation leave.

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