



# NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:  
Karla Marshall (540) 722-6263  
karla.k.marshall@usace.army.mil

## Thanksgiving shared by mother and son in Afghanistan

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Deployed soldiers and civilians rarely expect to see family members on their deployment, so when mother and son had the opportunity in Afghanistan, they quickly grabbed it.

Cheryle Hess, chief of Operations and Maintenance for the Afghan National Security Force at the Afghanistan Engineer District-North in Kabul, and her son Army Sgt. Thomas Hess, a geospatial engineer assigned to the 1st Stryker Brigade, 25th Infantry Division at Forward Operating Base Masum Gahr in Kandahar province were able to spend some of Thanksgiving week together.

“I had to attend a conference at Kandahar Airfield and learned that at the same time, Tom may be attending training there, so I was hopeful we could be together for Thanksgiving,” said Cheryle, a retired Army Reserve Lt. Col.

“Coming from a military background and a military family, I knew the likelihood of me seeing Tom was remote, but it was worth a shot.”

Tom checked with his brigade deputy commander and sure enough, the training was scheduled during the same time that his mom would be at Kandahar Airfield.

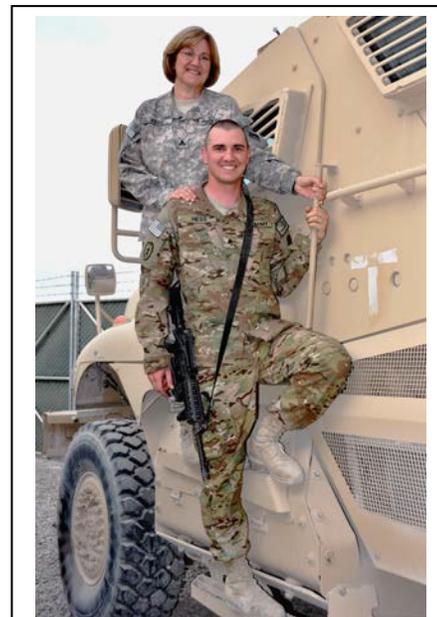
“I wasn’t sure if I could see her, but when I talked to the brigade deputy commander, he gave me great news,” said Tom.

Both Cheryle and Tom spent a few days before Thanksgiving together at Kandahar Airfield. Cheryle treated Tom and a few of his friends to dinner one evening and enjoyed meeting Tom’s extended military family. “The rest of our family is back in the United States,” said Cheryle. “But this is the next best thing.”

Tom, who was married just a few months before he deployed in April, is grateful to have his mom relatively close by. “I miss being home with my wife, Molly, and the rest of our family, but having my mom here is awesome.”

The Hess family is close-knit. Cheryle’s husband is an engineer who developed the computer hardware Tom uses in his job here. Her son-in-law developed the software for the system. “When I have computer issues at work, I can call my dad or my brother-in-law to troubleshoot,” said Tom. “I’m lucky to have them both a short phone call away.”

Cheryle agreed. “Our family really works together in so many ways. My daughter is keeping everything running smoothly at our home in Northern Virginia, which made it possible for me to deploy.”



*Cheryle Hess and Sgt. Thomas Hess share time together at the USACE Afghanistan Engineer District-South compound on Kandahar Airfield while deployed to Afghanistan. (USACE Photo/Karla Marshall)*

Tom returned to FOB Masum Gahr on Tuesday, Cheryle joined him there on Wednesday. She served a Thanksgiving meal to the troops and got to meet more of Tom's co-workers and friends. "Everyone in the 1-25th SBCT was exceptionally supportive of my visit with them which made this time together really special."

"I am really grateful for this opportunity to spend time with my son and to have this memory," said Cheryle. "Not many people get to spend a holiday with loved ones while they're deployed."

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