



# NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**BUILDING STRONG®**

For Immediate Release:  
Dec. 22, 2012

Contact:  
Karla Marshall  
karla.k.marshall@usace.army.mil

## **USACE employee serves in Afghanistan; so does his son**

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Gerard Rabalais signed up for the Vietnam Era Draft in 1972 but he was never called to serve as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces. After years of regret, he answered a self-imposed call in early 2012 by volunteering to work in Afghanistan with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

His son Jason Rabalais arrived at Kandahar Airfield for his own tour some 10 months later.

“I always regretted not serving in an active duty capacity,” said Gerard who deployed from the USACE Louisville District. “I realized I could deploy and do my part as a civilian so I did. I’ve been here 11 months and have just one left.”

Gerard, 58, is a quality assurance and construction representative in the Afghanistan Engineer District-South Kandahar Airfield Area Office. He is primarily responsible for overseeing the quality of military construction on Kandahar Airfield.

“I check the quality of our contractors’ work and make sure it meets contract standards,” he said. “If it doesn’t, I work with the project engineer to get the deficiencies corrected.”

Quality facilities on Kandahar Airfield enable U.S. Forces to perform their mission with unnecessary distractions, Gerard said.

Jason, 28, a veteran who served six years in the Army and had four combat deployments, is a helicopter electronics mechanic. He now lives about a five minute drive from his father but in the U.S. they live a few hours apart.

“I didn’t deploy to be with my dad, but the fact that he is here is a benefit,” said Jason. “My company has a contract in Afghanistan for helicopter maintenance. I volunteered but I wasn’t sure where I would end up. I’m glad it is Kandahar.”



Jason Rabalais, right, explains the work he is doing to repair a Blackhawk helicopter to his father, Gerard Rabalais at Kandahar Airfield Dec. 22. The elder Rabalais is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employee deployed to KAF; his son is a contractor also deployed to KAF. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo by Karla Marshall)

Despite being only minutes apart, their schedules keep them busy so they do not see each other as often as they had hoped.

“I work until 7:30 each night,” Jason explained before turning to his father to make Christmas dinner plans. “Dad, can you pick me up?” he asked. “We can have dinner when I get off.”

After a few minutes of discussion, the plan was set. Gerard grinned then looked at photos his son got via email.

“My son is four,” said Jason. “If I can’t be with him and my wife on Christmas at least I’ve got my dad.”

Both father and son will return to Kentucky when their deployments are over and for the elder Rabalais, his upcoming return to the U.S. will be bittersweet.

“This deployment has been so much more than I could have asked for,” he said. “I’m busier than I expected, but the Corps of Engineers provided me with a great job opportunity, good living conditions and the ability to do my part.”

Rabalais said that his time in Afghanistan went by very quickly because he was so busy; now he is looking forward to returning home to the rest of his family.

“I’m originally from New Orleans and a lot of our family is still in Covington, La.,” he explained, “but I moved to Kentucky in the 1980s. My fiancée, kids and grandkids are there.”



Gerard Rabalais discusses the status of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project on Kandahar Airfield with a contractor representative Dec. 22. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Photo by Karla Marshall)

-30-

You can find more news and features about the district on our [homepage](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) and find interesting photos about the district on our [Flickr page](#).