



# Postcard from Afghanistan



Lt. Col. Aaron Benson - Woodbridge, Va.



**How has your experience in Afghanistan working for the Corps affected you?**

Being in the Air Force, I have never had the opportunity to work for the Army Corps of Engineers, but when offered the chance at this assignment, I jumped at it! Plus, I really wanted to serve in Afghanistan after also deploying to Iraq, in order to compare the two countries and cultures, as well as have the opportunity to serve in both campaigns. Knowing every day that I am making a lasting, positive difference for this country is a genuine motivator for me to do the best I can for whatever needs to be done.

**What have you learned?**

In three short months, I have learned a ton about the Corps, such as how they execute projects, how challenges are overcome, and how funds are managed, which is all somewhat different than the Air Force. I've also learned more about the Army in these three months than I have in over 20 years in the Air Force. For example, I have learned how to write operation orders and how important rating schemes are in military supervisory relationships that are done differently in the Air Force. Plus, I know

that this joint environment truly maximizes the effectiveness of everything we do because we can feed off each Services' strengths and talents.

**What were your expectations and what is the reality of being in Afghanistan?**

After serving in Iraq, I was expecting more of the same here, but this country has unique challenges that I did not see in Iraq. Though Saddam Hussein was far from a model leader, he at least maintained some stability in Iraq, which is something that Afghanistan unfortunately has not had. But for the limited government that Afghanistan has had, it is remarkable how many Afghans are pulling together to make their homeland more secure and more prosperous. The improvements made here in 10 years are nothing short of miraculous; and with the continued buildup of the Afghan military forces, the steady capture of roughly 200 prisoners a month, improved infrastructure, and continually higher education of its citizens, there is great hope for a very bright future for this country. One day, I look forward to seeing peace reign here and knowing that I had a hand in it, as tiny as it was.