# Postcard from Afghanistan

*Drake Lanier- Philadelphia District*

After passing through the USACE Deployment Center and a brief stay in Kabul, which are adventures in themselves, I was sent to the Salerno Area Office as an area engineer of the Khost, Paktiya and Paktika provinces of Afghanistan.

Since arriving, my fellow employees have become family; as it always happens in an environment where you spend eleven or more hours a day with them for work, food and play. Aside from the natural beauty of Afghanistan's rugged mountains, awesome valleys, mysterious deserts and fascinating cultural differences; the most exciting part of the deployment experience for me has been the professional challenges. Typically, in Afghanistan, you will rise to a position of higher responsibility than you were accustomed to at your permanent duty station.

You will work at a pace and load for supporting procurement, design and construction that far exceeds what you may be used to in CONUS. The challenges include working through obstacles of language barriers, access difficulties, communication issues, lack of contractor experience and understanding of government contract requirements, staffing levels and diversity (e.g., Park Rangers as Project Engineers) and many more exciting challenges.

I have nearly completed my seventh tour under Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom since 2003 and cannot thank USACE enough for the fond memories and adventures that I have experienced during those deployments. The Army and USACE have been the hub of my life's finest moments and the deployments have founded my greatest professional and personal adventures. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.