

# The Castle

News and Information For The 412th Theater Engineer Command



**US ARMY CHIEF  
OF ENGINEERS  
VISITS JTF EMPIRE  
SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN**

Soldiers from the 459th Engineer Company from Bridgeport, W.Va., get combat ready in preparation for River Assault 2012 at Fort Chaffee, Ark. on July 26. Combat engineers from all over the country assembled to construct an Improved Ribbon Bridge spanning the Arkansas River. The bridge, consisting of individual floats pieced together, was completed in three hours. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Bradley Miller



MIAMI, Fla.-Veterans Day celebration came early for resident-military veterans of the Miami Jewish Health Systems. Soldiers of 841st Eng. Bn., 926th Eng. Bde., joined a number of local organizations and center employees in a colorful parade to show support and appreciation to their local heroes for their service and sacrifice, Nov. 6.

Soldiers of the 316th Mobility Augmentation Company receive a safety brief while at demolition range during River Assault 2012 at Fort Chaffee, Ark. The 316th MAC, from Chattanooga, TN was recently notified they will deploy to Afghanistan next year to conduct route clearance operations.



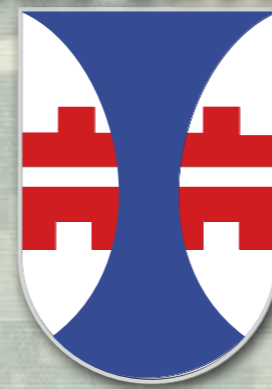
Cpl. Carlos Heres, 388th Route Clearance Company, instructs a Soldier how to properly connect an initiator to a ring of C4 at the demolition range during River Assault 2012 at Fort Chaffee, Ark.

Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Flores, 382nd Military Police Battalion, and Danish Guard Soldiers survey West Camp Rapid for gun emplacements June 10, 2012, during the Golden Coyote exercise.



Pvt. Calyn Burton, engineer, 465th Engineer Company, uses a skill saw to prepare framing boards during an Innovative Readiness Training exercise on November 3, 2012 in Birmingham. The local Army Reserve unit practiced carpentry skills that prepare their Soldiers for their wartime missions, while assisting a nearby needy family. Photo by Sgt. Devin M. Wood.

## The Castle



Commander  
Maj. Gen. William M. Buckler, Jr.

Deputy Commander  
Brig. Gen. Doug Satterfield

Command Sergeant Major  
Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Flubacher

Public Affairs Officer  
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- 4 A Word From The Commander
- 5 Command Sergeants Major's Notes
- 6 A Holiday Message From The Chaplain
- 7 Inspector General's Notes
- 8 Army Reserve Bridge Unit Activated After 62 years  
*by Capt. Maryjane Falefa Porter*  
*412th Theater Engineer Command*
- 10 340th Engineer Company Conducts Fire Management Exercises  
*Story by Spc. Amber Hoy,*  
*314th Public Affairs Operations Center*
- 12 'Build to Serve' on Display  
*by Capt. Maryjane Falefa Porter,*  
*412th Theater Engineer Command*
- 14 US Army Chief of Engineers visits JTF Empire soldiers in Afghanistan  
*by Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith,*  
*Joint Task Force Empire*
- 16 Ching Retires, Ott Takes Over As Chief of Staff  
*Lt. Col. Doril Sanders*
- 18 JTF Empire Dedicates Venne Engineer Center  
*by Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith,*  
*Joint Task Force Empire*
- 20 Mountain Blade:  
Partnership slices through historic Afghan pass  
*by Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith,*  
*Joint Task Force Empire*
- 28 Cooks Weather Stormy Waters  
*by Sgt. Timothy Book*  
*326th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*
- 30 Raise The Roof: One Nail At A Time  
*Story by Spc. William Taylor*  
*314th Public Affairs Operation Center*
- 31 The Safety Briefs

## A Word From The Commander

As you read this, the Holiday Season has passed and we are now focused on the new year. As we look back, there were many good times and accomplishments in 2012. We need to take them and build upon that good, to make a better 2013.

Safety is critical as we move into 2013. Whether you live in the North or South, I feel obligated to discuss winter safety. Even in the South, ice can be a problem. In fact, in the South, because it is unexpected, it can be even worse – because it is so unexpected. Regardless, of where you live, though, I ask you to take special precautions when it is icy out. Driving or walking can be hazardous in cold, wet times.

As a whole the 412th TEC made some significant improvements in readiness over the last year, but there is a still a long way to go. The quickest fix is for each individual Soldier to manage them self. Each one of us is responsible for taking care of ourselves. That goes for managing our training, our records, our medical readiness, and our Family's readiness. We have to be ready to deploy as individuals or units, at any time. Every Soldier and Family member is encouraged to find out what we need to do to be "GREEN" across the board, and then do it.

In our nation, suicides have take turn upward. That is still no excuse for our suicide rate to go up among 412th TEC Soldiers. When a Soldier is in danger of suicide, we ALL need to do everything in our power to rescue that Soldier. Intervene. Our Soldier's Creed and the Warrior Ethos requires it of us. "I will never leave a fallen comrade" is more than words. In this case, we do not have to be in combat to live up to our creed and ethos.

Another example of an opportunity for us all to live our Soldier's Creed and Warrior Ethos is

with our comrades who have returned home to have to stay in the Warrior Transition Units. We have over 80 Soldiers currently assigned there. From their squad mates to the TEC leadership, we need to be reaching out to ensure they know they are not forgotten and that we are doing all we can to assist in their transition. Let's all make sure they remember that they are part of the team.

As you may know, CSM Flubacher has deployed to Afghanistan to be the CSM for US Army Corps of Engineers, Transatlantic Division, Afghanistan District – North. In the interim, CSM Steven Hatchell, the CSM of the 926th Engineer Brigade will be dual-hatted as the TEC interim CSM as well as his current assignment as the 926th Brigade CSM. While this will strain CSM Hatchell a little, I am confident in his ability to take care us all of us Soldiers in the TEC during this time. Meanwhile, CSM Flubacher will be helping the effort in Theater AND gaining knowledge to help all of us when he returns. Please wish him well in his endeavors.

Of course we have many other Soldiers deployed throughout the year. Please keep every one of them in your thoughts and prayers.

As the new year starts, I wish you and your Families good health and prosperity. As Citizen-Soldiers, we all walk a tough road – that we willing take. I hope you all feel proud of what you are doing for your Nation. I know, from talking to many citizens around the country, that they are proud of us. I know, I am proud to serve with you!

Always act Safely!  
HOOAH!!  
Essayons!  
BUILD TO SERVE!!



## The Command Sergeant Major's Corner

It's 2013 and I hope everyone enjoyed spending time with family and friends over the holidays. I first want to mention that I have deployed to Afghanistan in support of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. I will be working for Transatlantic Division North. There are currently two districts in Afghanistan, one in the north and one in the south. The south will be going away mid-year and then we will be the only district. It will be a busy time and I'm looking forward to the challenge. If you're over there please look me up.

CSM Steve Hatchell, the 926th Engineer Brigade CSM, will serve as the interim CSM of the 412th TEC while still holding down the fort at the 926th. This will be a very challenging and rewarding time for CSM Hatchell and I have all the faith in him to be successful in both assignments. I fully expect that you will give him the respect that he has earned like you did for me when I served as the interim CSM while I was the 411th Engineer

Brigade CSM. Upon my return, I will return to my position and resume my duties as the 412th TEC CSM. I would like to personally thank MG Buckler publicly for allowing me to pursue this opportunity as this will make me a better Soldier and leader.

In October we had our Army Force Generation Readiness Review with MG Visot and SGM Helton from USARC. We have made some improvements in medical readiness but there is much work to be done to reach the USARC goal of 90%. MG Buckler has signed a policy that no Soldier who is Dental Class 4 will be paid until the Soldier has been to the dentist and returned the proper SRP documentation. There will be more of this type of policies signed in the future. I wanted to mention this to ensure that everyone is aware and that to ensure that all NCOs know that readiness is your responsibility. You need to know the standards of

all Individual readiness indicators and the frequency that they are conducted. If you don't know, then ask your direct supervisor, get the most current information and add this to your Soldier's section of your Leader Book.

If you don't have a Leader Book then you need to create one. There are many good examples on the internet, just Google "Leader Book" and look up some examples and select the one that meets your needs. This is an inspectable item and I am sure CSM Hatchell will be asking NCOs for their individual books during his travels with MG Buckler. He is currently doing that within the 926th Engineer Brigade and it is having a positive impact on the Brigade's Readiness.

We are also making progress in cleaning up late NCO-ERs and OERs. The TEC is at about 5 % late as of early December. We are getting closer to USARC's goal of 2 % late, but still a ways to go. Getting evaluations completed on time is a matter of discipline. Current rating chains must be posted on your unit's bulletin board. Your rater

must counsel you at the beginning of your rating period and at least one other time if you are a TPU and three other times if you are an AGR. Talk to your rater if you haven't been counseled. You have a responsibility as well. You must know when your rating period begins and when it ends and inform your rater that your evaluation is coming due. If you know you are transferring to a new assignment then inform your rater so the evaluation can be submitted on time.

Best of luck to all for the next year, stay safe and continue to improve.



## A HOLIDAY THOUGHT FROM THE COMMAND CHAPLAIN

A quick look out the window, a visit to a nearby shopping mall or a review of our most recent credit card statements is enough to remind us that another holiday season is here! May this year be your best ever. All of us at the Command Chaplain's Office hope and pray that regardless of circumstances, you sense God's love, guidance and presence is just the way you need to.

For those of us in the Christian tradition, the approach of Christmas is an especially important time of year. It serves as a powerful reminder that the King of Kings and Lord of Lord's is actively pursuing a relationship with us.

The Christmas story as described in the Gospels describes several journeys that key players in the unfolding drama undertook. The Angels journeyed from their heavenly abode to announce the birth of the Christ Child to the shepherds keeping watch of their flocks by night.

In response, the shepherds journeyed to Bethlehem to seek out the Christ Child. The magi from the east journeyed several hundred miles when they'd observed the star announcing Christ's birth. Mary and Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem in order to take part in a census ordered by the King.

Though all these journeys are noteworthy, they don't even begin to compare to the journey Christ Himself took on our behalf! Leaving behind the glory of heaven for a humble birth in a manger, He became one of us that we might become one of His! Philippians 2: 6-7 states, "Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be desired, but emptied Himself taking the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of men."

And so during the normal rush of the holidays, may we understand that the Lord is knocking at the doors of all our hearts, seeking entrance and intimacy with us.

God bless you all richly!



## Communication is critical and we are all in the 412th TEC Family.

How we communicate with each other is critical to the interpersonal relationships of a unit that make it stronger than the collection of its individual skills. Basic, MOS school, Leader Development Courses, etc. teach you specific skills related to your job or rank but it is often the manner in which we communicate with each other that drives effective use of those skills to the benefit of the organization. Communication requires both speaking and listening.

AR 600-20, Army Command Policy, requires commander's to establish open door policies. It also states: "Soldiers are responsible to ensure that the commander is made aware of problems that affect discipline, morale, and mission effectiveness; and an open door policy allows members of the command to present facts, concerns, and problems of a personal or professional nature or other issues that the Soldier has been unable to resolve." Commanders are "...expected to inquire into the matter and attempt a resolution."

Of all the assistance and investigation the Inspector General handles on behalf of the Commanding General, the vast majority were resolved by Commanders and their Staff not the IG. What? Well, an IG starts with communicating to get as complete a picture of the facts, concerns, and problems as possible – think open door policy. Then we research the

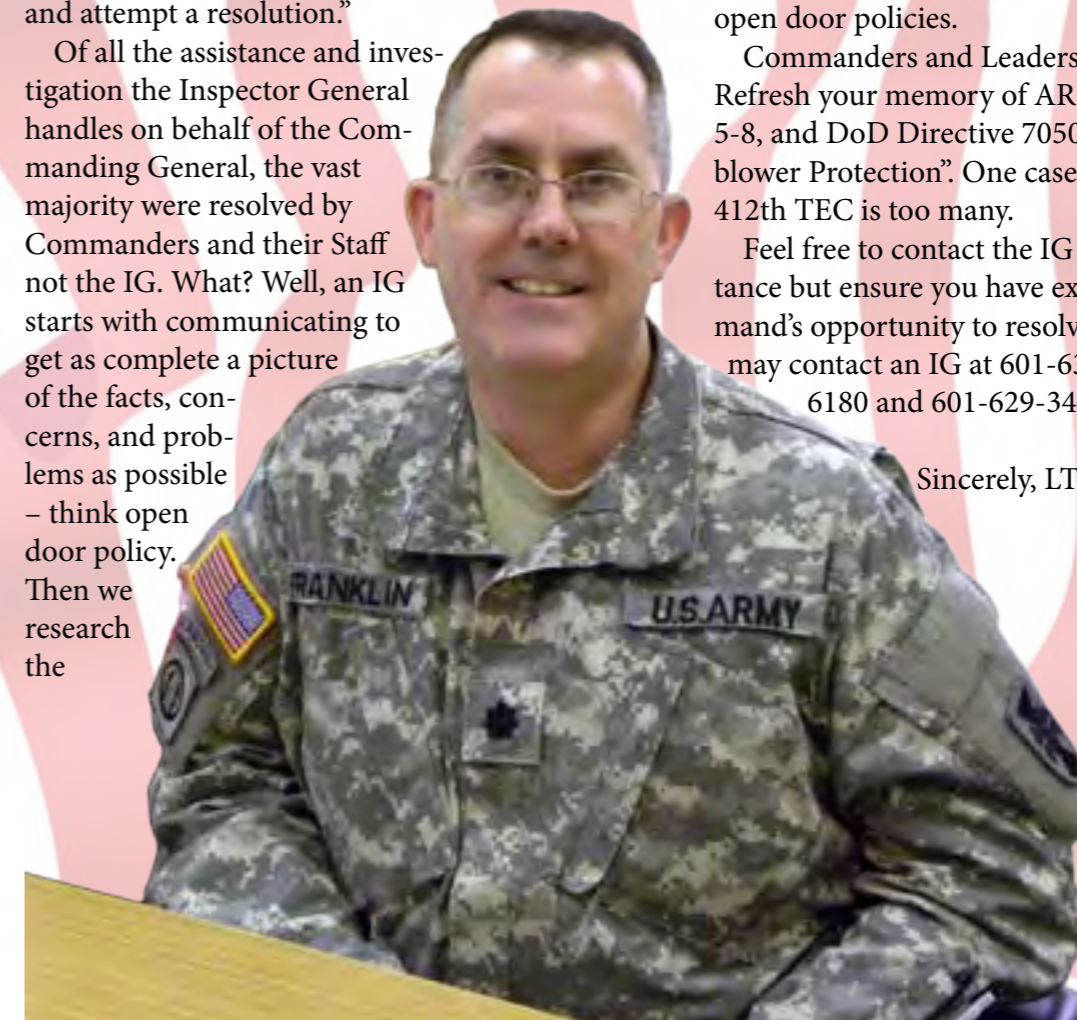
standards (often Army Regulation, Policy, etc. but if a standard is not clear or there is no standard published then substitute standard with "the right thing to do") – think self improvement and education within the unit. Then we communicate the issues and the standards with those that can resolve things – think speaking and listening. The 412th TEC is a large organization made up of people and none of us are perfect or know everything -- we all make mistakes.

Think of the 412th TEC as a Military Family filled with individuals that take the time to communicate, listen, and support each other through our challenges, not just do our own jobs. If a sergeant does not process something or loses something, then don't just complain and blame, be a part of the solution and help. If you try and simply can't find a solution, you MUST inform your commander. If your commander is part of the problem, inform the next higher commander – remember open door policies.

Commanders and Leaders: Reprisal is a NO-GO. Refresh your memory of AR 600-20, paragraph 5-8, and DoD Directive 7050.06 "Military Whistleblower Protection". One case of reprisal in the 412th TEC is too many.

Feel free to contact the IG for advice and assistance but ensure you have exhausted your command's opportunity to resolve the problem. You may contact an IG at 601-631-6175 / 6159 / 6173 / 6180 and 601-629-3456.

Sincerely, LTC James B. Franklin



# Army Reserve Bridge Unit Activated After 62 years

Story by Capt. Maryjane Falefa Porter, 412th Theater Engineer Command

“I couldn’t have done it without them. They were always there, never hesitated to help out when asked.”

FORT A.P. HILL, Va. - Soldiers, families and government officials from nearby Caroline County came together to witness the activation of the Army Reserve’s 310th Engineer Company in a ceremony held here Oct. 13, 2012.

The ceremony uncased the unit’s colors since it was inactivated 62 years ago and provided an opportunity for Col. John R. Seeley of 411th Engineer Brigade, 412th Theater Engineer Command, to introduce the unit and its soldiers to the community.

Seeley said the event marks the beginning of a new chapter for the 411th, and for Maj. Michael J. Trofinoff, commander of 365th Engineer Battalion, and Capt. Dustin Lahiff, commander of 310th Engineer Command, to get the unit to mission capable, ensuring soldiers are trained, prepared and ready to get the job done, wherever they may

be called to serve.

The 310th, as a Multi-Role Bridge Company, is armed with a mission to transport, assemble, disassemble, maintain and retrieve Army bridging systems. Trofinoff is confident that the soldiers, thrilled to be a part of reliving history, will achieve their path toward success as they continue to train as one team, one fight in the months ahead.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Keith Hafemann, who served as provisional commander, echoed Trofinoff’s remarks and challenged non-commissioned officers to remain focus on doing the right thing and moving the unit forward.

He also thanked the A.P. Hill team for their tremendous support in the past months.

“I couldn’t have done it without them. They were always there, never hesitated to help out when asked,” he said.

Following the ceremony, Hafemann provided a guided tour of the unit’s new \$15 million “home” located right here on A.P. Hill, a 33,170 square-foot facility equipped with administrative, educational, assembly areas for up to 200 people - a library, vault, maintenance shop, storage building, physical fitness area, and an indoor non-live fire weapons simulator.

The new facility is a testament to the Army Reserve’s commitment to ensure units have the means to train and be ready to accomplish their mission. It also fulfills today and tomorrow’s missions to standard, by managing resources, conserving and securing energy, and operating and building future

capabilities to achieve the Army’s triple bottom line of mission, community and environment.

The Army Reserve center comes to Fort A.P. Hill as part of the Grow the Army Program, which supports the Army’s goal to sustain force readiness, match Army force capabilities with mission requirements, and preserve soldier and family quality of life.

The 310th was constituted Feb. 25, 1943 as the 676th Engineer Light Equipment Company, inactivated in August 1950, and redesignated as the 310th Engineer Company Sept. 24, 2009 - campaigns included World War II, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe.



# 340th Engineer Company Conducts Fire Management Exercises

Story by Spc. Amber Hoy,  
314th Public Affairs Operations Center

Custer State Park, S.D. - Engineers from the 340th Engineer Company conducted fire management in the Black Hills of South Dakota for their 2-week extended combat training starting on June 9, 2012.

"Fires are extremely likely in [the Black Hills] and that is something we are continually cognizant of during the exercise," said Capt. Andy Yount, commander of the 340th Engineer Company.

Cutting down excess trees and clearing out dead trees that were victims of the pine beetle not only reduces the risk of fire spreading over a large area but it helps local Native American reservations have timber for the winter. The 340th Engineer Company mission was to load timber into trucks for a National Guard transportation company to deliver the timber to 15 different Native American reservations.

The Native American reservations will use the timber as firewood through the long South Dakota winter and also for ceremonial purposes.

"This humanitarian mission is important because brings troops together with the Native American nation," said Sgt. 1st Class Naamam Lowry, Operation Non-commissioned Officer of the 340th Engineer Company. "[The mission] produces positive relations and it lessens the fire hazard in the area."

Not far from where the timber was being loaded onto trucks, Soldiers, also from the 340th En. Company, worked on improving a fire trail at Custer State Park. The park already had a five-mile fire trail that the engineers smoothed out so that it would be accessible to emergency vehicles.

"[The mission] helps out the state parks and we get more training on the equipment," said Pfc. Cooper J. Ware, horizontal construction engineer with the 340th En. Company, who is on his first ETC. "If there is ever a fire in this field there would be a fire break because of the trail. The improved trail also allows emergency vehicles to access the road faster that way the fire does not spread as far."

While the fire trail improvement mission was completed on time, the mission faced some challenges because of local wild life.

"The wildlife in the Black Hills is a treat," said Yount. "But the buffalo herds can completely engulf a project site and you are at a stand still until they decide to move on."

The fire management and humanitarian missions were apart of the Golden Coyote Exercise that ran from June 9 to June 22, 2012.

SOLDIERS LEADERS CIVILIANS FAMILIES

## Take 5

Safe and Sober Celebrating

### For Hosts

- Collect car keys from guests as they arrive, and return them to only those guests who are not impaired
- Offer alcohol-free beverages and plenty of food so guests have alternatives to alcohol
- Ensure guests leave sober or with a sober designated driver, or call a cab for guests without a ride
- Keep alcoholic beverages off limits to all guests under the age of 21

### For Guests

- Make a plan; designate a nondrinking buddy and give them the keys
- Prearrange a taxi service or have the numbers for local cab companies programmed into your cellphone
- Rotate designated driver responsibilities and, if no one else volunteers, speak up and offer to stay sober



ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG



# 'Build to Serve' on Display

Story by Capt. Maryjane Falefa Porter, 412th Theater Engineer Command



This was a win-win situation for our Soldiers, and no one can communicate our 'Army Strong, Twice the Citizen' story better than we can.

VICKSBURG, Miss.- Soldiers of 412th Theater Engineer Command were out in full force to not only honor veterans of past and current wars, but to also share their unique 'Soldier for Life' experience with members of the local community, during Veterans Day celebration here Nov. 12.

This was a win-win situation for our Soldiers, and no one can communicate our 'Army Strong, Twice the Citizen' story better than we can, said Sgt. 1st Class Henry, NCOIC for the 412th team.

We're here to honor, meet and learn from the valuable experience of our veterans of War World II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Afghanistan and Iraq, and

to engage with our local community about who we are and what we do as Army Reserve Soldiers at 412th TEC, he said.

The 'Build to Serve' team didn't miss a beat, as Soldiers interacted with parade spectators when the event kicked off at 10 a.m., entertained questions from the public about their military static display, demonstrated the mechanics and operation of a HMMWV and LMTV vehicles, and facetime conversations with veterans of WWII, Korean War and Vietnam War.

This was really nice, first time to see so many veterans from different wars in one place. I'm impressed with the display and to have soldiers eager to share their experience with us," said Shane

Shumake of the Chahta Alla Youth Council.

Event coordinator, Sue Bagby, seconded the thought. The presence of the 412th here was refreshing and hard to ignore, visitors gravitated to their area to find out more about their story.

Soldiers were actively roaming the area, reaching out to other vendors and visitors, talking proudly about who and what they do as not only members of the military, but members of our local community as well.

A 'Welcome Home Warrior' flag was signed by veterans at the event and will be displayed at the 412th TEC headquarters here at the George A. Morris Army Reserve Center.





## US ARMY CHIEF OF ENGINEERS VISITS JTF EMPIRE SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN

Story by Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith, Joint Task Force Empire

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, U.S. Army Chief of Engineers and commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, visited the command and soldiers of the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, here June 8.

This was Bostick's first visit to units in Afghanistan since he became the 53rd U.S. Army Chief of Engineers and commanding general of USACE May 22. He serves as the senior military officer overseeing most of the nation's civil works infrastructure and military construction.

Bostick received operational briefs from command staff and spoke with soldiers on issues concerning engineers specifically and the state of the Army in general. He stressed the importance of working in a deployed environment, each soldier's role in Afghanistan and as "ambassadors of the Army."

"You have to work as a team," Bostick advised. "There's no experience like the forward [deployed] experience. The experience you have here will carry you through the rest of your lives."

Bostick said he spoke with military commanders in Af-

ghanistan about the vital role of military engineers play in operations. He said he was impressed by the amount of knowledge and interest command maintained concerning engineer missions.

"They really know what you're doing," Bostick explained. "You're in the day-to-day fight supporting commanders. They deeply value the engineer assets."

"Make sure your priorities are in line with their priorities," he advised. "Show them how we help support the mission."

Bostick emphasized not all concerns were operational in nature.

"I spend a lot of my time in guard and reserve issues," he explained. "We are very good with the operationalization of the Guard and Reserves. We're not very good at the health of the force. The Army knows that. The nation knows that. We have to fix it"

Bostick expressed a growing concern with the care for soldiers and Veterans on the homefront. He remains involved in the restructuring of soldier care and said many states were lacking in standardized care. The Department of Defense's solution started with choosing a hospital in Georgia as its basis for standardizing care.

"We found out where we thought the standard should be," Bostick pointed out. The process here became the seed which expanded to six more locations. The ultimate goal is to take the final standard for care and return it the states to effectively control.

Bostick addressed the persistent dangers of harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault. He implored all soldiers to hold a high standard and maintain a zero tolerance on these issues.

"It's not good order and discipline," Bostick said of harassment. "It's not treating people with dignity and respect. We've got

to get back to basics on how we treat each other. The way you win in this environment is with good teams. It's something you have to work on every day."

Another concern Bostick addressed was the unemployment rate of reserve-component Soldiers.

"We are facing an economic situation like no other," said Bostick. "We have a huge issue with unemployment. Unemployment of young soldiers [20 to 24 years of age] is higher than any other category. It's about 30%. It's about half that in the civilian population."

Bostick encouraged soldiers to use resources available to them through the military, including job fairs in which employers hire veterans and service members on site.

Bostick concluded his visit with the JTF Empire engineers by thanking them for their service, encouraging them to take advantage of their deployment and of assets available to them upon their return home.

"You have a great organization and a great mission," Bostick smiled. "I wish I could be with you and I'm proud of you."





Left: Col. Edmund Ching, surrounded by members of his family, was honored by the Soldiers and commanders of 412th Theater Engineer Command during his retirement ceremony and farewell dinner held Dec. 1, 2012 in Vicksburg, Miss. Ching was the 412th TEC chief of staff and retired after 30 dedicated and honorable years in the Army.



Right: (Left to Right) Col. Edmund Ching receives parting gifts from Col. Richard Ott during his retirement dinner hosted by the 412th Theater Engineer Command Dec. 1, 2012 in Vicksburg, Miss. Ching retires after 30 years of military service and passes the reins of chief of staff over to Ott.

# Ching Retires, Ott Takes Over As Chief of Staff

Story by Lt. Col. Doril Sanders

“Wow. This has been a fast ride,” said Col. Edmund Ching at his retirement ceremony hosted by the 412th Theater Engineering Command at the George A. Morris Army Reserve Center Dec. 1, 2012. “Thirty years is hard to imagine. It seems like yesterday I was starting as a young Second Lieutenant.”

Ching was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in December 1982 upon graduation from the University of Texas in Austin with a degree in Civil Engineering. He served on active duty for nearly 14 years. While deployed to Desert Storm, his leadership and ideas led to the development of various engineer methods. Also, he served in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

He served in many capacities during his 30-year military career. He served as a company commander, an executive officer, a battalion command-

er, leader of the intelligence section, leader of the training section and leader of the financial section. His last assignment before retirement was serving as Chief of Staff of the 412th TEC in Vicksburg, Miss.

Ching earned many awards and honors while serving in the military. The most recent were the Legion of Merit and the De Fleury Medal, an Army Engineer honor medal.

“He has been a tremendous asset to our nation,” said Maj. Gen. William Buckler, Jr., commander of 412th TEC. “I told his family that I wanted them to know the value he lends to our nation and to this unit.”

Ching presently works as a Construction Project Engineer and Contract Officer’s Representative for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District. He resides in League City, Texas.

“I say know your craft, always be mentoring someone below you, and be the best you can be.”

“I will be,” said Ching. “I still enjoy it. It has been a fantastic ride.”

Col. Richard L. Ott, with over 29 years of military experience, will take the reins of Chief of Staff for 412th TEC. He has served in the military since 1983. Ott was on active duty for nearly 12 years.

Ott brings a wealth of military experience to this position. He has served as a company commander, a logistic officer, battalion commander, leader of the training section, deputy Chief of Staff, and engineer liaison officer.

He deployed in support of Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In his civilian capacity, Ott serves as Deputy Chief of Operations with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Memphis District. He lives in Memphis.

Col. Edmund Ching was awarded the Legion of Merit and the De Fleury Medal by Maj. Gen. William M. Buckler, Jr., commander of 412th Theater Engineer Command, during his retirement ceremony Dec. 1, 2012 at the George A. Morris Army Reserve Center in Vicksburg, Miss. Ching served as chief of staff and retired after 30 years of military service.





# JTF Empire Dedicates Venne Engineer Center

Story by Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith, Joint Task Force Empire

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Members of Joint Task Force Empire and honored guests gathered to officially dedicate the Staff Sgt. Dain Venne Engineer Center at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Nov. 19. The center, built by engineers for engineers, will be a central location for synchronizing military engineer operations throughout the country.

JTF Empire, the single engineer brigade command coordinating Army, Air Force and Navy engineer operations in Afghanistan, dedicated the building to the memory of Staff Sgt. Dain Venne of the 444th Engineer Company, who was killed in the line of duty in Paktya Province, Afghanistan, Nov. 3. Additionally, attendees honored two other Soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice by dedicating the Sgt. Brett Gornewicz Conference Room and the Sgt. 1st Class James E. Thode Joint Operations Center in the new establishment.

Gornewicz was killed in the line

of duty while conducting route clearance operations with the 444th En. Co. in Paktya Province, Afghanistan, Nov. 3. Thode was killed while conducting route clearance operations with the 118th Engineer Sapper Company, Dec. 10, 2010.

“These three men are heroes in the truest sense of the word,” said Brig. Gen. David L. Weeks, commanding general of the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire. “It is appropriate that we honor these fallen engineers for their service, for their ultimate sacrifice, for their fight against terrorism. These men gave all they had in the defense of freedom, for mission accomplishments, to ensure freedom of movement, to ensure a better and free Afghanistan.”

Weeks explained the Venne Center will centrally direct engineer combat and construction operations throughout Afghanistan. The major focus of these operations will be to manage and guide the training and development of Afghan

National Army Engineers.

“ANA engineers will soon assume the mission of assuring freedom of movement and synchronizing construction operations for the building of infrastructure here,” explained Weeks. “They will be the cornerstone in the development of a better and a brighter Afghanistan.”

The dedication was bittersweet for many attendees as they reflected on the men whose names will now be permanently associated with the hub of all engineer operations. Capt. Donald J. Oechslin, commander of the 444th En. Co., based out of Oswego, N.Y., said the new center was aptly named.

“Staff Sgt. Venne influenced others with his actions. This man was a decision maker,” Oechslin reflected. “There is no better place to dedicate than this building which will influence (engineer operations) throughout this country.”



“Staff Sgt. Venne influenced others with his actions. This man was a decision maker”





# Mountain Blade: Partnership slices through historic Afghan pass

Story by Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith, Joint Task Force Empire

“The Salang Tunnel is a strategic piece of key terrain. It’s the focal point of the northern distribution network. It’s of substantial interest to (NATO and Afghan forces).”

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – With a surface denoting the embodiment of Afghanistan’s tumultuous history, the Salang Pass is more than a roadway; it’s an economic and cultural symbol to Afghans. The battered roadway through the Parwan province is the primary transit route between northern and southern Afghanistan crossing the treacherous Hindu Kush mountain range, and typically the only pass in the area to remain in use the entire year.

This highway is the main route between North and South Afghanistan, by which nearly all commerce for the capital city of Kabul and all other cities in the east, such as Bagram and Jalalabad, travels. An estimated 5,000 vehicles travel daily through the winding mountain pass.

With little maintenance since the Salang Tunnel first opened in 1964, the iconic passage has slowly slipped into a rutted path of decay. Continuous risk of closure threatened the economic and social lifeline to southern Afghanistan. After decades of conflict and neglect, Afghan and NATO leadership concluded something had to be done.

During a visit to the tunnel with Afghan Ministry of Public Works representatives in spring 2012, Gen. John R. Allen, International Security Assistance Force commander, committed to assist Afghanistan with repairs prior to winter. ISAF Joint Command tasked the engineers of the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire (JTF Empire), with the mission. Operation Mountain

Blade was born.

The road oft traveled ...

The Salang Tunnel remains the primary connection from northern to southern Afghanistan. The path reduces travel time from 72 to 10 hours and cuts approximately 190 miles (300 km) from the trip. It is 1.6 miles (2.6 km) long at an altitude of approximately 11,200 feet (3,400 meters) above sea level, making it one of the highest road tunnels in the world.

The Soviet Union and Afghanistan developed the Salang Road jointly, starting in 1955. It was a crucial military link through the country during the Soviet-Afghan war. The natural danger inherent in the pass, such as avalanches and extreme weather, has been compounded over the years by military actions and accidents. A tunnel fire in 1982 killed more than 170 Soviets and Afghans. Due to combat between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban through 1997 and 98, the ventilation system and entrances to the tunnel were destroyed, resulting in the closure of the tunnel to all but foot traffic. It was not reopened until January 2002, after a joint effort by Afghanistan, Russia, the U.S. and other countries cleared the pass of mines and debris.

The area of the route can be treacherous and the tunnel itself has been the site of many disasters. Inside the tunnel may become pitch black, and the air is filled with deadly carbon monoxide. Travelers



A convoy stages outside the Salang Tunnel during Operation Mountain Blade, an emergency road repair effort to the Salang Pass section of Highway One in the Parwan province, Afghanistan, recently. The operation, conducted by engineering elements of Joint Task Force Empire, improved the road surface of the pass in preparation for winter.

can feel the air settling into their lungs, chokingly and nauseatingly so. While there are other routes through the Hindu Kush, the tunnel is the quickest, most efficient road and deemed most protected from insurgent attacks.

“The Salang Tunnel is a strategic piece of key terrain,” explained Lt. Col. Jon Brierton, JTF Empire chief of operations and Afghan National Army development officer. “It’s the focal point of the northern distribution network. It’s of substantial interest to (NATO and Afghan forces).”

Traveling through the darkened walls of the Salang tunnel, travelers can see runoff from the mountain water seeping through holes in the tunnel’s half-century old walls. Pavement of the road had been worn into a bumpy rutted path of mud in many parts. Cars and trucks tightly squeeze through, depending on the traffic volume, too often with only inches to spare between vehicles and the walls.

The long climb ...

The operation was initiated to enable the Afghan MoPW to conduct emergency repairs of Highway One through the Salang Pass by providing equipment, materials and technical advice to repair portions of the road. IJC provided a specific scope; to assist in the repair of 400 meters of road inside each end of the tunnel and 200 meters outside each end

of the tunnel - a total of 1,200 meters. The repairs were to be conducted as soon as possible to finish before the winter snows arrived.

“The intended scope was to improve the road surface,” explained Brierton. “The road surface was in a serious state of disrepair prior to Empire’s involvement. There were massive ruts and potholes running throughout the inside of the tunnel which was a result of poor drainage. Over the years, it’s been repaired through various means, whether it was putting down concrete or overlaying it with asphalt. One of the biggest challenges was getting down to a solid sub-base from which Joint Task Force Empire could rebuild up the road.”

“OMB is phase one of a two phase (Commander’s Emergency Response Program) project to complete emergency repairs of the Salang Tunnel,” stated Lt. Col. Greg Wooten, 605th Survey and Design Engineer Detachment commander. “Two million dollars of the total \$20 million project was allocated to phase one. Phase two is contracted to a civilian company and they indicate they will be on-site to begin work on living quarters in December 2012 and construction in spring 2013.”

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers here in Kabul have contracted for the enduring repair of the road surface which is phase two of this project to essentially resurface the roadway throughout the entire Salang Tunnel roadway,” Brierton elaborated. “This includes the snow galleries that lead up into it. There are approximately 16 galleries that essen-

tially exist as an avalanche precautionary measure.”

Movement to the site began in August. Construction started on schedule Sept. 1. The 605th Engineer Detachment Construction Management Team took the lead on the operation which included elements of the 7th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Red Devils; 1st Battalion, 142nd Infantry Regiment, Task Force Hydra, assuming the security role, ensuring force protection to construction and support assets throughout the area; and the 10th Sustainment Brigad., Task Force Muleskinner, supplying logistical support.

The operation was planned as a collaborative effort between JTF Empire and Afghan engineers. Early miscommunications led to a slow start to the project. Details of the partnership were not firmly established prior to the start of OMB which led to confusion. Partnership became a continuous negotiation.

“The overall intent of the partnership between Joint Task Force Empire and the Ministry of Public Works was for our subject matter experts, being the equipment operators and the horizontal engineers, to train the MPOW to maintain the road,” stated Brierton. “They were trained on how to maintain the road and fix parts of the road that still need to

be repaired. We purchased gravel and heavy engineer equipment, all of which was turned over to the Afghan Ministry of Public Works.”

“We struggled daily with the concept, implementation and execution.” Wooten recalled. “Our interpretation of what this should be was very different from the on-site supervisor’s, (Afghan National Army) Col. Ataullah, which was very different from his boss, who was very different from his boss. Our saving grace lay in our ability to communicate frequently each day with Col. Ataullah. He was very supportive and knew what needed to be done.”

Initial key leader engagements were conducted to establish guidelines on cooperation and equipment availability. In addition to the typical language barrier and limited number of linguists; pay, liability and equipment issues also hampered progress.

“Initial on-site visits prior to OMB led us to believe there was adequate equipment (to conduct the operation),” Wooten said. Once OMB began, it became obvious more construction assets would be needed. “We negotiated daily in regard to equipment use and frequently gained access to critical pieces and we continued with the augmentation of equipment through purchase and the use of mili-





tary equipment.”

“We purchased seventeen pieces of construction equipment for use during the project and to enable the MoPW to conduct road maintenance through the winter in order to sustain traffic ability, facilitating civilian traffic and critical movements of commerce, goods and services,” Wooten continued. “A maintenance contract was acquired to support and enhance the capabilities of the construction equipment. This proved invaluable as the construction effort was absolutely brutal on the equipment. The removal of multiple layers of pot-holed asphalt inside the tunnel resulted in worn and damaged equipment each day.”

Negotiations between the U.S. and Afghan engineers on construction efforts took place almost daily resulting in a range of participation results. Ultimately, later engagements between the MoPW and Brig. Gen. David L. Weeks, JTF Empire commanding general, resulted in a stronger support of the partnership by all parties. Over time, a broader understanding developed and a stronger partnership developed.

In such a remote location, communications, which are sometimes taken for granted, became even more critical. Even while lacking electrical power during the initial week, the soldiers ensured they maintained contact.

“Basically, communications are something we take for granted wherever we are. We always assume we can pick up a cellphone or a computer and have access to information,” said Capt. Mark R. Bailey, JTF Empire communications chief. Bailey established communications for the operation with a staff of two, then remained on site for the duration of the project to maintain these systems. “The reality is that those types of capabilities are quite complex and are only made easy to use through modern communications systems. In a country such as this, very few of those systems exist, so we have to carry them with us in order to communicate on the battlefield.”

“Communications was a critical part of the planning process,” Bailey explained. “We were given this mission, and we accepted it knowing that it was at an austere environment away from any existing base. Initially, communications were to be limited to Blue Force Tracker, which is a satellite-based messaging system, as well as radio. It was determined that additional capabilities were required in order to meet the commander’s intent. This included digital data services, so we added a satellite data communications system which provided both secure and non-secure data services as well as telephone capabilities and secure video teleconference capabilities.”

These communication requirements included, updates on project status, security related information for force protection, and even morale and welfare for recreational use for the benefit of soldiers the doing the difficult job, so they could maintain communications with their families.

Plunging into the darkness ...

Due to the large volume of traffic though the pass, the decision was made to conduct all construction efforts during the night. This increased risk and stressed workers’ abilities to comply with reasonable mitigation measures regarding safety.

“Visibility is limited during night operations regardless of efforts to provide artificial lighting, especially inside a tunnel,” explained Wooten. “We experienced minor vehicle accidents with the construction equipment, even with ground guides. No guard rails are present on this treacherous high mountain pass. Conditions elevated the nightly risk of a vehicle plunging over the edge.”

“By far (the equipment issue) was our most critical and difficult obstacle to overcome,” said Wooten. “Both military and purchased equipment would become non-mission capable each night. We struggled each day, working maintenance issues to get them back up. As luck would have it, we were able to shift efforts relative to the mission capable

equipment which kept us on track and moving forward.”

Other issues included: blown transmission and alternators, dead batteries, fuel pump failures, thrown tracks, broken windshields, broken cutting blades on graders, flat tires, civilian vehicle accidents, and cut fiber lines.

“Though we never got behind schedule, our progress was challenged daily by mechanical failures and equipment damage,” emphasized Wooten. “OMB soldiers worked nonstop from the time arrival through the final night (of the operation).”

“Site visits indicated a critical need for quality materials to complete the repairs and enable the MoPW to continue repair efforts through the winter,” said Wooten. “(Existing) repair efforts included local materials extracted from nearby mountains. This material was not suitable for adequate durability on a high trafficked road. It was mostly dirt and large rocks.”

“JTF Empire worked with the local regional contracting command to contract delivery of high quality well-graded aggregate to establish adequate subgrade and a maintainable road surface,” Wooten continued. “More than 800 truckloads of base-course and road surface aggregate were delivered, totaling 15,000 cubic meters.

Portions were used during OMB as we assisted in the immediate repairs prior to winter. The remain-



der was stockpiled for use in the continued maintenance and follow-on completion of phase two (in the spring of 2013).”

Unusable road surface was removed from the work areas, averaging 10-20 inches in depth. An aggregate road surface was then laid down. An asphalt transition ramp was constructed to merge the concrete road surface with the existing road surface of the tunnel and severe potholes were repaired with asphalt. The engineers worked throughout the night in and around the tunnel, pausing regularly to allow traffic through.

“This highway is the main route between North and South Afghanistan,” Wooten explained. “It is impossible to completely close a road with this much traffic and the single most viable route spanning the Hindu Kush. We experienced continual authorized traffic such as emergency vehicles, wedding and funeral processions, government officials and vehicles supporting other contracted efforts supporting the tunnel and Highway One. Unauthorized vehicles also plagued our efforts, as no strict requirements were established by the ministry traffic control personnel and we could not allow the vehicles to accumulate at our construction sites. Operations had to be managed in such a manner to allow traffic to pass routinely.”

Traffic and darkness were not the only adversaries to the engineers. The elements and environment exacted their toll on the soldiers as well. An elevation change of over 10,000 feet for many soldiers resulted in cases of altitude sickness and exposure.

Sitting on top of the world ...

Soldiers of Task Force Red Devils established a temporary patrol base on the north side of the tunnel. Utilizing existing buildings on site, the soldiers were able to provide a suitable area for command and control of the operation, staging equipment, and billeting.

Initially, the staging and living site was austere with no latrine facilities requiring burn out latrines and burn pit. Within two weeks, though, the engineers established latrines, shower and laundry facilities along with a water and trash contract. Additionally, the MoPW assisted with facilities for barracks, maintenance, supply storage and vehicle staging areas.

Route Clearance Patrol 11 established initial security until the Task Force Hydra team members assumed the security mission of the project. While Task Force Muleskinner maintained supplies to the operation, conducting convoy and airdrop opera-



tions to the troops on site. The remote location made routine ground supply difficult. The majority of resupply was conducted from the air with directional parachute drops.

Supply and security were not the only concerns for the engineers at the Salang Tunnel. The high altitude, remote location created many challenges from personnel sickness to wildlife.

“The very first day, there was literally a miniature stampede of sheep that ran right through the patrol base,” Bailey recalled. “I had never been through a stampede of any sort, let alone a stampede of sheep.”

“At night we would here very strange sounds coming from the mountainside,” Bailey continued, though he remained unable to determine what was actually making the sounds. He recounted there were also several cats who lived on the base. Though the felines were friendly, soldiers exercised caution around them.

Wooten explained that these issues did not, however, dampen soldiers’ spirits, even though temperatures dropped below freezing most nights and they had to endure two snow storms during September.

“Morale ran high throughout the mission due to the unique circumstances, continual contact with local nationals, and a high sense of accomplishment

in regard to assisting the country of Afghanistan,” said Wooten. “The food was the most difficult issue with regard to morale. (Meals, Ready-to-Eat and shipped hot meals) for a month is enough to discourage anyone. This was mitigated by the MoPW. OMB soldiers had access to freshly baked bread and occasionally, freshly cooked rice, beans or lamb. Soldiers (were able to) consume the local food as a welcomed supplement to the military rations.”

“The interaction with local nationals really stood out,” Bailey recalled. “Local Afghans worked there and lived there long before we got there. We established a good neighborly rapport with the local Afghans.”

The light at the end of the tunnel ...

OMB completed and exceeded the original mission scope by repairing more than 500 meters of road inside each end of the tunnel and 400 meters approaching each end of the tunnel in addition to 300 meters in gallery 15, further down the route, for a total of more than 2,200 meters of road repair. The entire project was completed 26 days ahead of schedule

“It met the intended goal,” Brierton affirmed after

# Cooks Weather Stormy Waters

Story by Sgt. Timothy Book  
326th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



FORT CHAFFEE, Ark.—After only a week of Army Reserve cooks serving meals they still display plenty of motivation as they are tasked with moving to a different building during River Assault 2012, July 14 – 27, 2012.

Dealing with change is sometimes like going through rough waters, but a good crew can weather any storm.

Just a few days into the training, the cooks had to move from one building to another just a few blocks away. Not only did they have to move, they had to move quickly as more than 900 Soldiers depend on them for their meals. “We know our mission is to feed Soldiers,” said Sgt. Adrien Bouchee, a Chicago native with the 823rd Engineer Battalion, Darien, Ill. “The first thing we did is we all got together and got to work,” Bouchee said. “We worked non-stop and before we knew it, we were done!”

They were able to transfer to the new facility and start operating quickly. “The first day, Monday, was spent getting everything dress-right-dress,” said Staff Sgt. Harvey Dillard, a shift leader at the facility with the 533rd Battalion Support Company of Queens, N.Y. “That means cleaning up, getting everything sanitized and getting the DFac ready to prepare meals.”

This group of cooks composed from many different units throughout the country, were ready for business the next day. “Tuesday was our first dinner meal,” said Dillard. He attributed the fast turnaround to the “it has to be done” attitude that all the cooks share. “This was a, ‘have to do mission.’” He said they succeeded because of that motivation and the fact that everyone did what they knew needed to be done.

Dillard attributes the mission success to the overall training of the cooks. “A lot of these soldiers have been in this atmosphere before,” he



said. “Their experience cultivates a lot in preparing for this type of mission.” He said only a few have never worked in a DFac before and some have never worked as a cook.

The cooks seem to be happy with the new facility. “This is so much nicer,” said Spc. Nyssa Johansen, 368th Engineer Company, Londonderry, N.H., who lives in Brunswick, Maine, “I feel

bad the equipment failed, but this is a blessing.”

Johnathan O’Neill, of the 854th Engineer Battalion, Saugerties, N.Y., says the new facility is much better than where they started, with more space and better equipment.

“A lot more spacious and less congested,” described Spc. Andrew Cilla, with the 854th Engineer Company in Saugerties,

N.Y. the new DFac. “It’s a better facility to serve the Soldiers,” said the Pine Bush, N.Y. resident.

Bouchee expressed a similar point of view, “I was able to choose my (Extended Combat Training) this year, and I chose Arkansas. I’m glad I did.”

“If I were to come here next year,” said Dillard. “I hope I have the same crew.”



# Raise The Roof: One Nail At A Time

Story by Spc. William Taylor  
314th Public Affairs Operation Center

Specialist Clint D. Brown, an interior electrician with 3rd Platoon 365th Engineer Company from Kissimmee, Fla., lines up shingles on the roof of a Hoover, Ala., home that was damaged from April 2011's tornado November 3, 2012 (photo by Spc. William J. Taylor, 314th Public Affairs Operation Center).



BIRMINGHAM, Ala. -- Soldiers from the 465th Engineer Company, 926th Engineer Brigade, 412th Theater Engineer Command, assisted volunteers with Habitat for Humanity of Greater Birmingham to perform vital upkeep on a Hoover, Ala., residence, Nov. 3.

More than 80 soldiers from the Birmingham, Ala., unit assisted volunteers at three different project sites. Thirty Soldiers shingled roof tiles, trimmed tree branches, and cleared brush at the home of Nina Lockard.

Staff Sgt. Alvina Woods, non-commissioned officer-in-charge of the project, said that the partnership with Habitat for Humanity provided important on-the-job experience for the soldiers.

"We've been trying to get projects to get more job training," said Woods. "We're here to learn."

The 465th reached out to Habitat for Humanity for opportunities to hone in on engineering skills while helping out the community, said Spc. Louis Cooley, a carpenter with the 465th. He added that the work was perfect for a unit like the 465th, which has teams of plumbers, electricians and carpenters.

The partnership was part of an innovative readiness training exercise. These types of ex-

ercises are designed to provide real world training opportunities that prepare service members for their wartime missions while supporting the needs of underserved communities.

"If we deploy, these are the sorts of projects we would assist with," said Cooley.

"This has been important to our soldiers, because it keeps our skills fresh. Not only is this great training for our soldiers, it also helps out the community, so everyone benefits."

Habitat for Humanity, through an agreement with the city of Hoover, provides volunteers for work projects that benefit elderly, disabled, and low-income families that qualify for a grant, said Jack Hake, director of construction for Habitat for Humanity. Hake said that most of the money for the work at Lockard's home would go to repairing the roof, which at times would crumble under volunteers' feet.

Lockard said she applied for the assistance because she was not physically or financial capable of doing the necessary maintenance on the home. She was surprised and grateful when the soldiers arrived in the early morning to help with the work.

"I never expected this," said Lockard. "This, to me, is above and beyond."

## The Safety Briefing

# Be Vigilant

Wear your personal protective equipment.

# It may SAVE YOUR LIFE!

**1** **COMFORT.** Uncomfortable gear can distract you from riding. Properly fitted protective gear will help you stay comfortable when encountering various riding conditions.

**2** **PROTECTION.** In the event of a crash, protective gear can help prevent or reduce injuries.



Continued from page 27

schedule

"It met the intended goal," Brierton affirmed after conducting a site survey a month after completion. "The road surface that Empire put down is wearing exceptionally well. It has enabled a safer throughput of traffic. It has set conditions for the start of stage two of USACE's contract. From this point, USACE can come in now, where we left off, do very minor maintenance on the base we have established and start putting down asphalt."

"That was an impressive thing the engineers were doing," said Bailey. "It was not easy work. It's common knowledge - the absolute critical nature of that mountain pass. From an economic and security

standpoint, it is just imperative that it stay open, and personally, I was glad to participate in the mission for those reasons.

"This effort was extremely effective," Wooten agreed. "Ultimately, we provided the MoPW with equipment and materials sufficient to continue necessary road maintenance through the winter months and beyond. MoPW employees participated in the repairs and learned much needed techniques for repairing the road and conducting routine maintenance. In the end, OMB was successful at training equipment operators and increasing their knowledge of best practices for repairing and maintaining Highway One."

# License to Fail

JOSEPH FENTRESS

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Kansas City, Mo.

Some motorcyclists only go through safety training to get their license and drive on post. However, once off the installation, they seem to forget the rules and fail to practice the skills that might save their lives. When riding a motorcycle, even the smallest mistakes can be life threatening, so risk management and situational awareness are crucial. It was the first warm weekend of spring during my senior year in high school. The northern Virginia winter was bad that year, and the heavy snows we'd been getting had only recently disappeared. With winter behind us, my best friend, Seth, was eager to get his Kawasaki Ninja sport bike on the road again. The year before, Seth taught me how to ride it in the school parking lot, but we only covered the basics — how to shift, what brakes are where and how to use the blinker. I had only driven it on the road once, and I remember being both very nervous and excited at the same time. I thought that bike was the coolest thing in the world and wanted to learn to ride.

As Seth and I were making plans for the day, my brother called and told me he had just bought a new Honda scooter. He'd wanted a motorcycle but did not know how to ride one. The scooter was more comfortable for him because he didn't need to shift gears, it was street legal and could get up to 55 mph. Seth suggested my brother stop by so we could all go for a ride.

Within an hour, we were all together on a cul-de-sac near another friend's house. My brother and Seth took off first, and I could hear them laughing as they drove down the street. About 30 minutes later, they returned so I could have a turn. I was nervous, but being 17 and having my peers around, I didn't take the time to consider the risks involved. I hopped on the motorcycle, and my brother and I took off down the street. About 100 yards down the road, there was a sharp turn and, before I knew it, I was sliding on the ground. Even though I was only going about 30 mph, I slid for what seemed like 20 yards, barely missing a mailbox. The Bermuda

shorts, tennis shoes with no socks and T-shirt I was wearing didn't do much to protect me from the road rash that took off most of the skin on my elbows, forearms, hands and knees. Oddly enough, the helmet — the only appropriate personal protective equipment I was wearing — never hit the ground.

With the adrenaline pumping, I immediately hopped to my feet and picked up the Kawasaki like

it was a Huff. I then rolled it back to the cul-de-sac and apologized to Seth profusely for totaling his prized possession. Like a good friend, he was more concerned about my condition. I told them I felt fine and didn't need to go to the ER. They then pointed out the thick stream of blood running down the driveway from my right shoe. I decided I might need to get that checked out.

The injury was extensive. The brake pedal had scooped a chunk of flesh out of my leg and scraped the bone. Because it wasn't a cut, the doctors couldn't sew it together. I had to spend nearly a month in Walter Reed Army Medical Center undergoing skin grafts and preventive infection procedures due to the scraped bone.

There are several lessons I learned from my accident — the first being proper training is an absolute must. Had I taken the time to get trained and licensed, I likely could have avoided this accident. Without proper training, you only have a license to fail.

Proper PPE is also important and probably would have kept me out of the hospital. A long-sleeved shirt or jacket, pants and gloves would have helped prevent the road rash, and heavy leather boots would have helped me avoid the most painful injury I have suffered in my life. Finally, I should have considered the environment I was riding in before I got on the bike. Because the snows had only recently ended, there was still an abundance of sand and salt on the street. When I drove through that sand in the curve, it was a millisecond ride to the asphalt. That's a ride I hope to never take again.

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- Suit up for safety — wear your personal protective equipment.
- Keep the "rubber side" down by riding responsibly.
- Don't speed. Life is not a sprint — it's a marathon.

Take 5 ... then take action.



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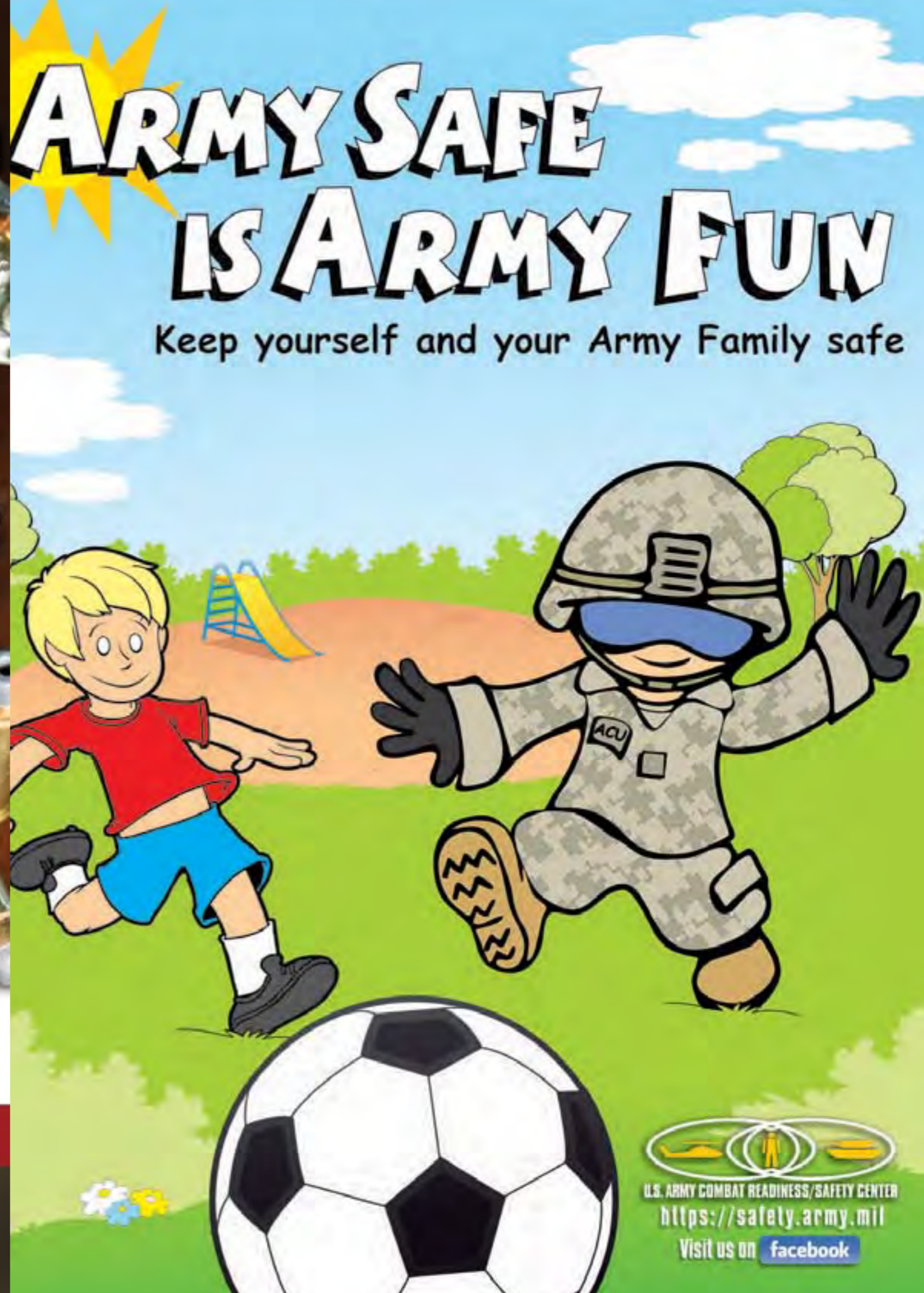
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