



THE

FREEDOM BUILDER

NOVEMBER 2009

MAGAZINE



Afghanistan's "West Pointers"

3 Afghan Engineer Officers
Intern with AED-North



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Afghanistan Engineer District

Year in Review

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All photographs appearing herein are by the Afghanistan Engineer District Public Affairs Office unless otherwise accredited.

The mission of The Freedom Builder is to support the Commander's Internal Communication Program for the Afghanistan Engineer District. It also serves as the Commander's primary communication tool for accurately transmitting policies, operations, technical developments, and command philosophy to the Afghanistan Engineer District.

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Cover Image:

NMAA Graduation ceremony which took place in march 2009, 3 of the top graduates start their internship at AED.

**(Full story on pg. 6)
Photo by Bruce Huffman**



CONTENTS

Volume 2, Issue 10

November-December 2009

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FEATURES

3-



**8- Afghanistan's
"West Pointers"**



**11- New Detention
Facility**



**14- Destination
Afghanistan**



DEPARTMENTS

Graduating Interns.....	6
Safety Bits	7
On the move	17
Frank Walker Memorial	18

Postcards from Afghanistan

The Public Affairs Office is expanding AED's Internal Communications Program with "Postcards from Afghanistan."

The postcards will appear on AED's Internet Site in PDF format and a copy will be sent to your home District Public Affairs Office.

The postcards consist of a 3 to 4 paragraph write up along with 2 to 3 photos with a photo caption describing what is happening in each photo. The write-up is similar to a personal note from you to your family and friends, that focuses on a specific project or event, or that provides an overview of your total experience here in Afghanistan.

The Public Affairs Office will provide help needed to write these.

If you would like to be featured on one of these postcards, please contact the Public Affairs Office at 540-662-6578 or come visit us in the Azadi House, 1st floor, room 3, or e-mail joseph.marek@usace.army.mil.

Thanks in advance for helping AED's Internal Communications Program.



Afghan workers are completing a repair to the water supply tank from system.

My buddies and I had a long session. We were both African the manager for the contractor.

From the Commander ... Year in Review

2009 was a year of substantial change for the Afghanistan Engineer District. In the course of the past year, we experienced rapid growth, vastly improved processes and procedures, and successfully closed out a busy year, having delivered key projects in support of ongoing counterinsurgency operations here in Afghanistan.

In 2009, we experienced an increase in our program size from \$1.6 billion in FY 2008 to more than \$2 billion in FY 2009 and a projected increase to more than \$3 billion in FY 2010. Due to this substantial program growth, the Chief of Engineers made the decision last March to create a second district – the AED South, headquartered in Kandahar – along with the formation of the Joint Program Integration Office to provide

requisite oversight.

This year was also marked by improvements to procedures which are changing the way we do business. Through the implementation of Aggressive Schedule Management (ASM), we will help ensure that our projects have the best opportunity for on time completion through a 12 step contract administration process that focuses our contractors on adhering to agreed upon project delivery schedules. We've also adopted the Alignment, Movement and Security Plan (AMSP), which better aligns our Area Offices with Brigade Combat Teams / Regional



COL Michael McCormick

Continued on Page 3...

From the Command Sergeant Major ...

We are fast approaching the end of the 2009 calendar year. For some, this year brought us to Afghanistan; for others, it took us home to our families and friends; and then there are those that extended their tour of duty, to which we say thank you to all. Whichever your situation is, we all should stop, capture the moment and reflect on our personal sacrifice, the sacrifices of our families and our collective accomplishments throughout this year.

The Afghanistan Engineer District has accomplished an enormous amount of good this year. There is nothing that we do that we do by ourselves ... it takes a total team effort by all! For the good that we as a District accomplished this year, we have so many people to thank for all the effort put forth in either providing us security, maintaining our life support needs, obligating the money, writing the contracts, overseeing the contracts, and construction and program management as just a few.

Each of you makes a unique contribution and personal impact upon what we accomplish on a daily basis. True American volunteerism is one facet that makes our country great. Putting yourself at risk in an environment that has many unknowns and dangers for this mission says volumes about your character. There will always be those who will talk the loudest, but few of them will ever step up to the plate and volunteer. For you see, it's easier to talk about doing something

bigger than yourself than actually doing it for all the right reasons. All I can say is THANK YOU for your loyalty, duty, respect, honor, selfless service, integrity and personal courage – you're the best. Many have reached the point in their tour of duty to rotate back for R&R leave. I know this is an important time for all, especially for those who are able to return during the holidays. I hope that everyone will reunite with loved ones, enjoy their time with family and share their experiences. However, it is equally important that everyone get rested and recharged so upon your return, you are ready to tackle the difficult year ahead. Now is the time to concentrate our efforts toward the placement of new construction - we clearly have a lot of work ahead us for the coming year.

As a final thought, I am, and always will be extremely proud of my association with the Afghanistan Engineer District during 2009. My tour here has formed a positive memory that will last with this old soldier forever. THANK YOU for all you do on a daily basis and never stop making a difference.

Making a Difference Every Day,

Harry D. Farris
AED-N, Command Sergeant Major



CSM Harry D. Farris

Continued From The Commander Comments ...

AED Year in review

A look Back at FY09



An Afghan equipment operator prepares the substrate on the Kabul/Bagram Road using a Komatsu Motor Grader.

All photos AED file photos

Commands. This integration enables better communication, unity of effort and provides better opportunities for QA site visits which are absolutely integral to our infrastructure delivery mission. Other important additions include rotary wing assets and Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) military vehicles to ensure both safe and timely movement to and from project sites. We've also changed the way we're building ANSF projects by developing "site adapt" standard designs. By adopting

these standardized designs, we will be able to free up engineer staffs from numerous / repetitive design reviews, as well as the procure materials and begin construction faster than ever before.

In 2009, we awarded nearly \$1 billion alone in projects, representing 52 contracts, to support the Afghanistan National Security Forces, including the National Police Training Center, the National Logistics Center, the National Police Command Center, and two garrison headquarters for the Afghan National Army. One of our greatest MILCON project successes was the delivery of the \$60.2 million Bagram Theater Internment Facility. The AED-contractor construction team came together, worked collaboratively / efficiently, building this strategic facility to standard and delivering it nearly two months ahead of schedule -- no small challenge. The large program dollar amounts for AED not only illustrate the scope of what we've accomplished in terms of projects and physical structures,



An Afghan worker removes oversized rocks with a hand pick so the substrate can be rolled and compacted. A jingle truck loaded with bags of coal travels south on the existing road.



Outdated existing fuel bladder system at Bagram is being replaced with a newer, more modern system that will provide proper handling and treatment of fuel.



An Afghan worker operates the drilling equipment at a bulk fuels storage site.

but they also demonstrate what we've done to stimulate Afghanistan's economy. Of 644 contract actions, 84% were awarded to Afghan firms with Afghan laborers, purchasing equipment and resources from the local area.

Fiscal Year 2009 brought changes not only in the way we're structured, but in the way we've streamlined our business practices in order to better accomplish the mission. Although we have much to be proud of, we must maintain our focus and continue to push into 2010 with a renewed sense of service and drive toward mission

accomplishment. The scale of projects we're tasked with will only grow, as will the importance of our mission. I've talked quite a bit about dollars, processes, procedures and infrastructure. But we must never lose sight of the fact that our most valuable resource here at AED is our people. Thank you all for what you do every day and know that what you do contributes to the success of this great team.

Michael McCormick
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding



An Afghan worker assembles scaffolding for construction of a two-story barracks at a Border Patrol site.



A containment area site gets prepared for the placement of a fuel storage tank at Bagram.



Congratulations

AED's First Graduating Interns


Submitted by Capacity Development

From left to right Peter Schei, Reed Freeman, Dewey Mclean, 2nd LT Mohamed Shafiq, 2nd LT Shah Noor, 2nd LT Geul Rhaman, MG Mohammad Sharif Yaftali, LT Fazlumenallah Fazlei, COL Michael McCormick, CSM Harry Farris, Sandy Higgins and Afghan Dignitaries.

The Afghanistan Engineer District-North (AED-N) celebrated the graduation of three interns from the National Military Academy Afghanistan (NMAA). These Lieutenants are the first in what is expected to be a successful venture in higher learning into Corps processes which include design, construction and management for the future growth and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

AED had very high expectations of these Soldiers as they came to the program within the top of their graduating class of cadets. Not only did they meet but they far exceeded our expectations, setting a very high standard for all the future interns that will join the AED family. These Soldiers came to us as National Military Academy Afghanistan interns, joining the AED organization and quickly becoming vital members of the team, especially in assisting the engineering division. Their knowledge as Afghans greatly improved the mission of infrastructure delivery. They reviewed, translated, and improved design guides which we provided to every AED contractor. This not only led to a better overall product from AED but it fostered an environment for teaching, coaching and mentoring Afghan companies interested

in competing for AED construction projects. These lieutenants experienced an overview of the various organizations within AED and now have a better working knowledge of engineering, construction, project management and contracting. The consistent interactions with AED employees also greatly improved their English communication skills including reading and writing. Even though this inaugural program was very demanding and challenging, the lieutenants far exceeded the outlined curriculum and provided much needed constructive feedback. In doing this, AED has been able to adjust the program to strengthen the courses which will benefit the program for future interns to come. AED's success in this program will be an important link in the future prosperity of Afghanistan.

At AED, we have been and will continue to be a major contributor in the prosperity and the future of Afghanistan. As we plan on increasing the number of Lieutenants in the program and strengthening the curriculum, we're looking forward to our partnership with NMAA as we develop Afghanistan's future leaders through coaching and mentoring from the U.S. Corps of Engineers. 



SAFETY BITS

Preparing for the Flu Season

Both 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal influenza are thought to spread mostly from person to person through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with influenza. People also may get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it, and then touching their mouth or nose.

2009 H1N1 flu illness has ranged from mild to severe. Most healthy people who have been sick with 2009 H1N1 have recovered without needing medical treatment, however, hospitalizations and deaths from 2009 H1N1 have occurred. Most people who have been hospitalized with 2009 H1N1 have had a medical condition that places them at higher risk of serious flu-related complications. Flu Season typically runs November to April.

Symptoms of the Flu:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny, stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

What to do to stay healthy:

The CDC recommends a three-step approach to fighting the flu: vaccination, everyday preventive actions including frequent hand washing and staying home when sick, and the correct use of antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them.

- Take everyday actions to stay healthy. Avoid contact with sick people.
- Social distancing 3-6 feet of individual during illness.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

What to do if you get the Flu:

- Stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever has gone (temperature is below 100° F or 37.8°C. Usually 7 days
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues and dispose in the trash or "sneeze in your sleeve".
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Restrict visitors.
- Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables and surface in the bathroom) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

H1N1 and routine vaccinations are now available in the Nurse's Office top floor Azadi. 0800 - 1600
Sat - Thur. Just bring your shot records.
Barb Smith RN COHN X2122



Afghanistan's "West Pointers"

Story by: Hank Heusinkveld

Second intern class taken under AED's wing

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager Bill Doan, right, explains water resource management to engineer officers from the National Military Academy Afghanistan. The officers are interning with Afghanistan Engineer District-North in Kabul for six months to understand how the Corps of Engineers operates. From left to right; 2LT Shah Noor, 2LT Gul Rhaman, and 2LT Mohamed Shafiq. (Photo by Joseph Marek)

It's hailed as "the West Point of Afghanistan." The National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA) in Kabul is modeled after the U.S. Military Academy and is dedicated to graduating officers of the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Air Corps. All graduating officers receive degrees offered in English Language, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Management and Law. On the military side of the house, they're commissioned in one of six branches; Infantry, Armor, Artillery, Combat Engineer, Logistics and Communications.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-North has

welcomed three NMAA engineer officers into its ranks for a six-month internship program that will introduce them to several aspects of engineering.

"We hope to give them a better appreciation of design, construction and project management that we execute at AED," said COL Michael McCormick, AED-North Commander. "And we also plan to learn from them specifics about the Afghan Army and Afghan culture. They'll be getting practical experience in the field and some great training behind the desk through design projects and learning from our project managers."

The Afghan officers are committed to helping repair their war-torn country. In



Former AED Commander COL Thomas O'Donovan talks with students at the National Military Academy Afghanistan (NMAA) on the military's role in the rebuilding of Afghanistan (File Photo)

Afghanistan, most members of the military come from military families. They're motivated to maintain traditions they've learned at the academy, and are ready to take ownership of reconstruction efforts.

"Yes, they certainly are," said COL James Cook, a U.S. Air Force Academy mentor at NMAA. "As a matter of fact, the analogy of West Point could extend to the entire country because West Point played a pivotal role in developing engineers to settle the American west. These young engineers are going to end up serving their entire careers, maybe decades long, building their entire country back to where it might have belonged. If I were in their shoes I'd be very excited as well."

Cook and nine other U.S. military officers act as advisors at the academy. After the young officers complete their internship with the Army Corps of Engineers he said they'll return to NMAA to teach.

"We try to help them become better instructors at the academy. The Department of Civil Engineering here at NMAA prides itself on how all of its instructors speak English. The linguistic level varies, so the AED engineers have to overcome a little bit of a linguist gap."

Bringing the engineers onboard with AED-North is part of capacity development, a process through which individuals, organizations, and societies obtain, strengthen,

and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time. Robin Liffmann is spearheading capacity development at AED .

"We're developing relationships with the Afghan officers with face-to-face interaction. Under USACE capacity development we're building up Afghan human resources and institutions to better meet, and eventually take over, the Corps' mission which is the design, construction and maintenance of infrastructure."

Liffmann helps introduce the officers to AED project management processes. They're exposed to western-style methods, but they're also encouraged to explain what Afghans really want and need.

"We're trying to make it a two-way street. Not just their learning our processes, but also our getting their feedback on the Afghan perspective so we can have a better idea of their cultural values. For example, we have new standard designs that are more austere, and we want to make sure that some of the features actually make sense to the culture. For instance, we had been putting in western-style bathrooms in Afghan military training facilities. Many recruits coming from outlying, rural areas didn't know how to use them. The fixtures would be broken and they weren't fixed properly. Now we're putting in Afghan-style restrooms. Another example is how

a building will be used by Afghans, rather than Americans...these things we weren't always fully aware of and we need to make sure that the facilities meet Afghan requirements to be fully functional into the future. The Afghan officers are helping us with that."

Liffmann said one of the officers is a perfect match for a function near and dear to USACE. Learning how to harness and work with water is one thing that AED-North is gladly sharing with Gul Rahman who has a specialization in water resource management.

"We have flexibility in our schedule and we're going to make sure that he works with our water resources branch to get some hands-on experience with watershed assessments and constructing dams and reservoirs. We also want him to be mentored by our engineers to study water flow in relation to roadways, bridges and other infrastructure. "

Liffmann said one goal of AED's capacity development is to have all three be a part of the thinking process.


"We're not only teaching them engineering, we're teaching them project management and they want to know how to write a proposal, how to figure out cost estimates and schedules, and how to follow through."

The Afghan officers are quickly picking up bits and pieces of American culture in the isolated island that makes up the AED-North's Qalaa (kah-luh) House compound. They're grateful for the knowledge and education they're receiving, and have warmed up to the USACE Ccivilians who've volunteered to support Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We like the communication with people from other countries and especially with AED civilians from the United states," said Mohammed Shafiq. "It's really good for us because sometimes we just know the people from the military and we can't be very close

to them because we just focus on the mission. But we like to learn about the American culture and we are learning a lot. We are really trying to build back up our country to improve our knowledge and getting to participate in the rebuilding of our country. It is a good impression given to us that the coalition forces are here helping us. I am trying to learn so much and work hard on my studying to build Afghanistan up."

There's a lot to learn, and the newly commissioned Afghan lieutenants have immersed themselves into an education that will be hard to surpass. What they learn from USACE will trickle down beyond NMAA to the Ministry of Public Works which will hopefully provide jobs for Afghanistan. AED-North Deputy District Commander LTC Steve Lefebvre is optimistic that the Corps' version of capacity development will have a long-lasting effect.

"These lieutenants are at the top of their class. They're smart and they know what they're doing. They're getting a lot of experience and learning how the Army Ccorps of Engineers works which will really help when they go out to the field. I think it's very exciting to see them progress." 



Airmen, Soldiers help establish military academy
More than 1,800 prospective cadets rise for the playing of the Afghan National Anthem before the start of the Afghan College Entrance Exam for the Afghan National Army Academy, Kabul, Afghanistan, Oct. 25. The prospective cadets here are hoping to be one of the approximately 300 chosen for the new freshman class. The exam makes up 80 percent of their final admissions score. (U.S. Air Force photo/ Staff Sgt. Brian Ferguson)



New detention facility in Afghanistan a team effort

Story by: Erick Barnes - Photos by Joe Marek

Ribbon cutting by COL Michael McCormick, Mr. Neil Helliwell, MAJ Gordon Bell, LTC Michael Rounds, COL John Garrity, Mr. Nelson Mora

The new Shamali Detention Facility, located about 40 miles north of Kabul, Afghanistan, will soon replace the Bagram Theater Internment Facility (BTIF) and is considered the new standard for detention facilities in Central Asia and the Middle East.

It is also the product of hard work performed by many people from many organizations located around the globe. The Afghanistan Engineer District (AED)-North led the effort on behalf of the Army Corps of Engineers, with support from the Middle East District (MED).

"This was a very high-profile project," said Joseph Zaraszczak, chief of MED's Afghanistan Branch, who served as project manager when the project began in 2008.

"This one was being followed closely by the Department of Defense, Department of Army, U.S. Central Command, and by the international media."

The previous incarnation of an internment facility at Bagram Airfield, a converted

aircraft hangar left behind by the Soviets after their occupation ended in the 1980s, was deteriorating and limited the ability of the command to institute vocational, educational and religious discussion programs for the detainees to assist in their reintegration into Afghan society.

"Of the many projects the Afghanistan Engineer District has, I believe this is Gen. (David) Petraeus's number one theater construction project," Col. Michael McCormick, commander, AED-North, said during the construction completion ceremony Sept. 17, highlighting the criticality of the facility.

The planning process actually began several months ahead of any official directive.

Zaraszczak was in Afghanistan as part of a project planning team, called a charrette, in January 2008. Discussions about the scope of the detention facility project weren't on their original schedule, but plans changed when Army leadership decided they should begin considering the highly anticipated

project as part of their charrette efforts on other projects in the FY-08 Military Construction program.

Another planning charrette traveled to Afghanistan in April 2008 to begin taking a serious look at the project site and discussing the scope of work with the end user – Task Force Guardian – and other stakeholders. From there, a torrent of work began.

The Design Directive arrived April 29 and Mark Curry, a MED architect, immediately began working on a concept design for the new facility. MED's design team completed 50 to 60 percent of the architectural, structural and civil designs – far beyond the normal 35 percent at the concept phase, according to Curry.

"We did more than usual for this design-build package because of the short time frame required. The contractor was able to jump straight into the more advanced phases of the design process," said Curry. "The contractor was able to start producing the construction documents and ordering the pre-engineered metal buildings sooner than they would have if we had only completed the standard 35 percent.

"I am definitely not suggesting the contractor's design team didn't have much work to do," he added. "Due to the time we spent with the facility's user working out spaces and flow during the charrette, we provided them with a huge jump start on the project."

"It is amazing to look at Mark's early



View from the 2nd level above communal cells for monitoring detainees

designs now and see that the finished product is so similar to his original vision," said Zaraszczak. "He did an excellent job of getting the project rolling on the design side to meet the customer's needs."



Mr. Neil Helliwell, Managing Director, Prime Projects International, Contractor and builder of BTIF

MED advertised the project on June 4 and awarded a design-build contract to Prime Projects International of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on July 30. The Notice to Proceed (NTP) was issued just two weeks later, and the project was fast tracked throughout the construction phase, which compressed the project schedule by running design and construction phases simultaneously. PPI's architectural-engineering department completed the remaining design work and coordinated directly with AED's resident office at the site. MED's architects continued to provide reach-back support through completion. The \$60.2 million facility was designed and constructed in 400 days, which is no easy task, according to Zaraszczak.

"This project was my life during the design phase," said Zaraszczak. "We were working on other projects, but this one demanded almost complete dedication from the design team to meet the customer's timeframes. We provided reach-back support that continued throughout the construction phase as interim design submittals and construction submittals were flowing continuously. All of them required a quick turnaround for review. The most important thing on this project was to keep moving forward – making modifications as necessary and continuing to progress." According to Zaraszczak, in an almost unprecedented convergence of efforts, AED, U.S. Army Central Command, Task Force Guardian, the contractor, and other stakeholders located at Bagram Airfield worked cooperatively from the early days of inception at the charrette stage through

design and construction.

"There were a lot (of) people involved in the process and planning of this facility. In my 35 years with the Corps of Engineers I don't think I've been with a harder working, more dedicated team than the people who put this together," said Jimmy Hadden, AED's third and final project manager. "This was an outstanding team effort that we can all be proud of for many years to come."

The new internment facility has the capacity to house more than 1,000 detainees. The 19 buildings on its 40-acre campus include a dining facility, three detainee housing units, one special detainee housing unit, medical housing unit, medical/dental building, large visitor center, water treatment plant, and vocational buildings where detainees can learn carpentry and culinary skills. It also meets all CENTCOM and Geneva Convention requirements.


However, the most impressive part of the project may be the safety record during construction, according to McCormick. Workers logged more than two-million man hours without a single safety mishap. "Those two million man-hours aren't just a statistic; there are people behind those," said McCormick. "Most deserving of recognition for this great construction effort ... are the workers who (were) out here." From the first planning charrette to the

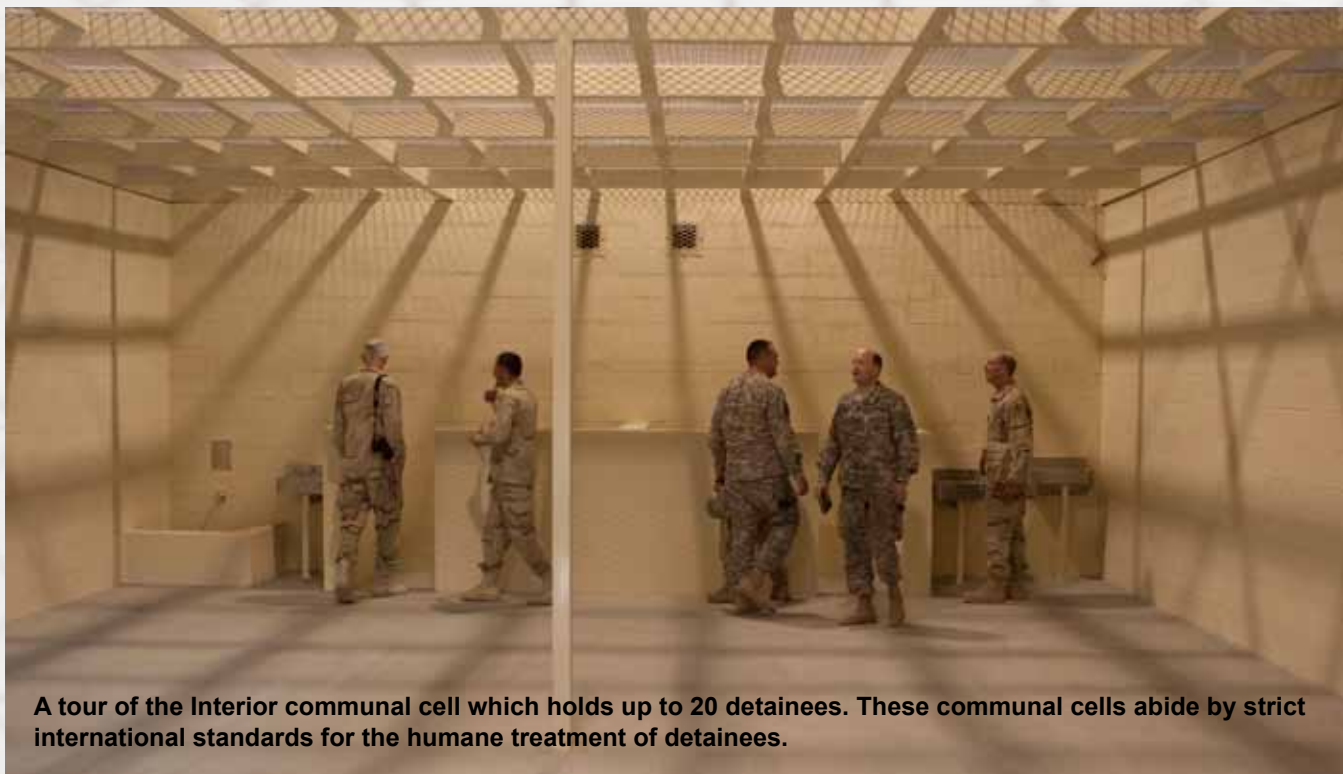


Exterior view of communal cells

day workers began demining the site and building a fence to the ribbon-cutting ceremony Sept. 17, the new facility proved to be the shining example of how construction should be done in Afghanistan, said McCormick.

"It is a model for success in how things get done," he said. "If anyone in Afghanistan, or in the United States or anywhere else in the world, wants to know what they need to accomplish projects on time, within budget, and with a high quality, all they need to do is come here and look at the great team that put this project together."

The complex, which eventually will be handed over to the Afghan government, was expected to begin housing detainees at the end of November. 

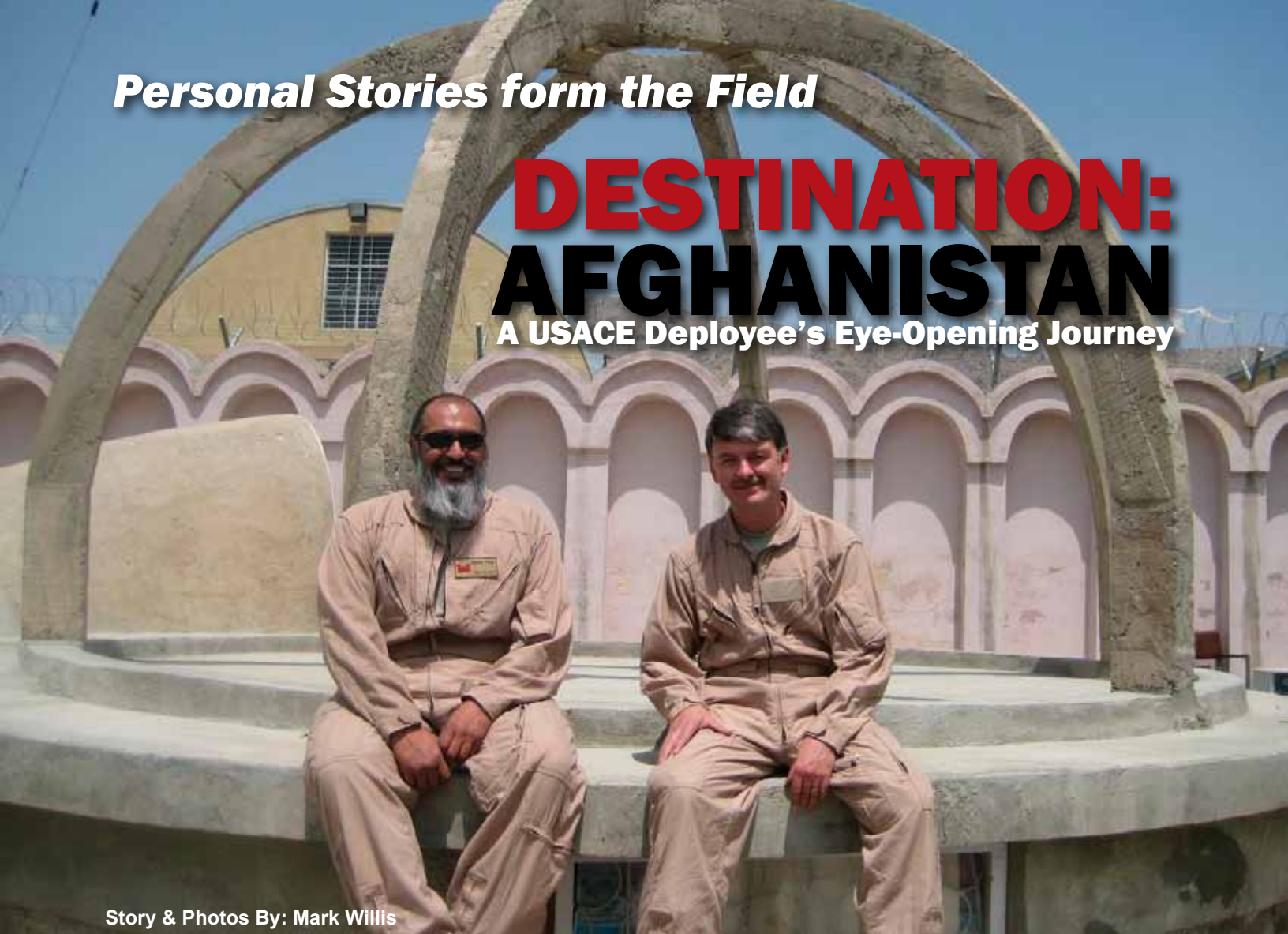


A tour of the Interior communal cell which holds up to 20 detainees. These communal cells abide by strict international standards for the humane treatment of detainees.

Personal Stories from the Field

DESTINATION: AFGHANISTAN

A USACE Deployee's Eye-Opening Journey



Story & Photos By: Mark Willis

AED Construction Representatives Eddie Pena (left) and Mark Willis (right) at a Kabul Afghan National Army Base.

There are some things in life, like coffee or dark chocolate, that people tend to gradually acquire a taste for a little at a time; but ironically enough, those can also be some of the very same things they end up loving for a lifetime.

That's the way Afghanistan has been for me. All I really knew about it before seeing it with my own eyes is that it was a land of soaring mountains and remote deserts. I'd heard it was a place where a population is trying to re-build from multiple wars brought on by a series of conquering invaders and insurgent groups.

I soon discovered I had a lot to learn about Afghanistan, beginning from the moment I stepped off the plane at Kabul International Airport as a USACE deployee, coming

over to take part in Operation Enduring Freedom. This initiative, directed by USACE's Afghanistan Engineer District (AED), turned out to be much more complex and far-reaching than I'd ever imagined. During those first days here I learned that Afghanistan is currently listed as the second-poorest country in the world, and its people truly need all the help they can get. Because of the overwhelming need to re-build the shattered infrastructure of this struggling nation, the Corps is on hand here in this far-flung corner of the world, helping to build (or re-build) hospitals, police stations, schools, water treatment plants, and other needed facilities.

Soon after my arrival I was assigned to be a part of the Kabul North Office team, which

is responsible for a wide range of projects underway in the Kabul province, in which the capital city is located.

Meanwhile, my fellow USACE deployees from the States – the ones with whom I’d just made the transatlantic journey – had received other assignments, and each of these was soon on his way to assist in other provinces of Afghanistan, which is roughly the size of Texas.

I felt lucky to be a part of the Kabul North Team, a close-knit group mostly up of USACE volunteers mostly from California and Tennessee. Each team member is assigned one or more projects, depending on their complexity, and ranging from things like building roads, the re-location of high-voltage power lines, or the construction of a much-needed radar facility at the Kabul International Airport. Our team is also involved in projects designed to assist the Afghan National Army - such as security upgrades, and the construction of new storage warehouses – as well as the construction of several new Afghan National Police headquarters facilities.

Providing a helping hand to help build or re-build Afghan National Army and Police facilities is also crucial to Afghanistan’s future too, I learned, because by doing so our efforts can help the Afghan people better resist, in the future, the insurgent forces that once wrecked this country, and who continue to make efforts to do so again. My project involves doing quality control work as a Construction Representative, overseeing the construction work on the building of two new police stations which

will be the base for the local Afghan National Police in these areas, and will be of great importance to the security of these remote villages.

Since my work sites and those of my co-workers (whom I often accompany to visit their own projects) can sometimes be a considerable distance from our living quarters, each morning we load up in our up-armored SUVs, and it has been during these daily journeys that I’ve gotten my true education about Afghanistan.

To give you an idea of my first impression of this incredible place, here are the first few paragraphs of one of the earlier emails I sent back home:

“I’m out on the road most days, and you wouldn’t believe all the strange, unusual, and amazing sights I see along every mile of the way...it’s truly a Visual Overload.

Every trip out I see odd and exotic things: Middle East street bazaars, and remote mountain villages with adobe mud homes that make it seem like I’ve been thrown back in time 600 years; I’ve seen dust storms, and children standing on roof tops, engaged in the traditional sport of kite fighting.

A few days ago I looked over in the lane next to me and saw a sort of Volkswagen mini-bus filled with people. Then I looked on top of the bus and saw about 8 people sitting on the rear of the roof of the bus with only those little luggage rails to hang onto. And then...clustered on the front of the same roof were about 8-10 goats tethered up there also...all while this mini-bus was motoring down the road...”

How could you not love a place where you see things like that?





Living here in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city has also been fascinating, and it's like no capital city I've ever seen or heard of before. For example, you're just as likely to pass a small wagon pulled by donkeys as you are a fleet of battered, bright yellow taxi cabs, or for that matter, a herd of sheep or goats slowly making their way down through one of the main thoroughfares, right in the midst of - and totally oblivious to - the busy traffic.

I've also learned that The Afghanistan District is more than just a district, it's a community. The main headquarters building for the AED North office is the "Qalaa House" a former Iraqi embassy building which has since been renovated and retrofitted to serve as the hub of activities (both official and recreational) for USACE employees stationed here in the AED North of Afghanistan.

It's a place of command decisions and high level meetings, but also a place of good food, karaoke, and super-competitive Friday night volleyball games. It's a place to make new friends from across the Corps and to take part in some pretty unique social functions. (For example, it's also the place where I had my first camel ride, right after the big Qalaa House 4th of July parade). My experiences here in Afghanistan have been a swirling mixture of many things - unique sights, sounds, vistas, and new Corps friends made - but there's

one other unexpected aspect about it I've yet to mention, and that's the people of Afghanistan.

I'm not sure what I expected - maybe a population that was, at the very least, a reluctant host to the Western presence in their country - but that's not what I found. Instead, I discovered that the Afghans are a hospitable people, quick to smile and to return a wave. The Afghans I've gotten to know are humble and gracious to visitors, and those who've heard about the different USACE projects underway in their country seem to be genuinely grateful. In fact, I'd have to say that all the new friends I've made over here on the other side of the world has been one of the richest parts of my deployment experience.

So, looking back on it all, now that my deployment is drawing closer to an end, it comes down to this: yes, it may have taken me a little while to develop a taste for coffee, but on the other hand it didn't take long at all for me to develop a taste for Afghanistan. With its magnificent snow-capped mountains, its warm, hospitable people, and colorful, exotic culture, it's certainly been an unforgettable experience. And even though Afghanistan is 11,000 miles away from my Kentucky home, I know it's a place that I (and all my USACE co-workers) will re-visit again and again - at least in memory. 🇦🇫



Moving in

Baughman, Steven	Chambers, Gerald	Clarke, Bradley	Jackson, Ollie	Yin, Thareth	LTC Scott R. Howard
1LT Stewart Cathey	SGM Terry Woosley	TSG Lance Farias	TSG Junie Garnenez	Charles Comeau	Gerald Allen
Erskine Gosling	Boncile Smith	Barbara Smith	Fredricka Bangs	MSG Joseph Casey	TSgt Ethan Nunn
TSgt Carlos Blake	David Linn	William Wiesser	David Crumpton	Brian Swope	David Purdy
Valdez Blackwell	Herman Wine	Garry Harris	Joyce Jackson	Robert Scott	George Afram
John Blandmer	Scott dussing	Cecilia Mau	Yvonne Scofield	MSG Peter Stabile	Roy Clark
Zaida Frising	Henry Heusinkveld	Carl Knaak	Douglas Latka	David Muellerleile	David Salazar
Phyllis Svetich	Richard Ulrich	BU1 Shawn Poff	Michael Kessler		

Moving out

Kabuchi Anderson	Robin Babcock	Dennis Carey	Beverly Zarr	Andrew Bianchi	Edward Pena
Walter Perrett	Ben Neely	SFC Carlos Santiago	Mark Alton	Thomas Goebel	Penny Mahaffey
Connie Parks	James Hadden	Marc Graham	David Burford	Patricia Cason	James Collins
Damon Durham	Ben Lazo	Thomas Luzano	Carla Williams	An Trang	Daniel Murphy
Vicky Maurseth	Pamela Kelly-Farley	Jerome Maurseth	Earl Newton	MSG Edward Walton	Gloristine Price
Carolyn Steuart	Kathleen Carpenter	Diedrienne Fauser	Kathleen Harper	Kale Horton	Stephen Kelly
William Lemer	Betty Nash	Nanette Nicolas	Terry Steuart	David Stanton	Jeffrey Ward
Kendra Whaley	Robert Michaels	Joseph Swiniarski			

CAC Cards at Qalaa House

Common Access Cards (CACs) can be processed at the Qalaa House J-1 Office

Monday through Thursday and Saturday from 0800 to 1600 hrs.

CACs will not be processed on Fridays and Sundays.

For more information, contact CPT Stacy Goodman, AED-N J-1 at 540-723-4995 or by e-mail at stacy.l.goodman@usace.army.mil.



In Memoriam

Frank Walker

15 April 1943 - 28 October 2009

Mr. Frank (Richard) Walker was born 15 April 1943; his home of record is Oklahoma City, Ok. Richard was a well educated man with two Bachelor's degrees from Oklahoma State University, one in Pre-Veterinary Science and one in Geology. He also earned two Master's degrees, including one in Civil Engineering from the University of Oklahoma. He had been a Federal Government employee for the past twenty years, recently serving four deployed tours at Camp Liberty, Iraq, before joining the Afghanistan Engineer District North in September 2009.

Richard came to us from the U.S. Air Force at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma City, Ok, where he had served as a Project Manager for various remediation projects. He continued his assignments during deployment in the Project and Program Management fields. Upon joining the team here at Bagram Air Field, Richard was assigned Project Management responsibilities for a wide range of Army Military Construction projects on the base. He enjoyed hunting moose, elk and deer, with both rifle and camera. Richard also loved horses and was saving to purchase a race horse. He was also a gentleman rancher with over 600 acres under lease while he was deployed. He is survived by his wife of 28 years, Jeri, and five adult children.