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Corps activates new division in Iraq

By Richard Dowling
Gulf Region Division (Provisional)

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineer's Gulf Region Division (Provisional) was activated in Baghdad on Jan. 25. The new division brings under one umbrella about 20 separate Corps offices and organizations. Working hand-in-hand with the Iraqi people, their provisional government, and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the new division provides a more enduring and efficient base of support to both U.S. and coalition operations in Iraq.

The title "Provisional" indicates this division will be temporary. GRD follows in the footsteps of other temporary Corps divisions that have worked in the region — Middle East Division in the 1950s, and elements of the Mediterranean Division in the 1970s and '80s.

Under the command of Maj. Gen. Ronald Johnson, the provisional division includes three districts — North, Central, and South. The personnel strength of the division emphasizes the Corps' principle of deploying only the number of people needed, who then take maximum advantage of USACE's "reach-back" capability. "Reach-back" capability uses secure satellite communications technology (e-mail, telephone, data transfer, video teleconferencing, etc.) to access expertise throughout the Corps worldwide.

Johnson, former Director of Military Programs and Operations Officer at Corps Headquarters in Washington, said the reach-back technology enables the division to focus on "deeds, not words."

The result is tangible improvements to the Iraqi infrastructure, including oil facilities, electric generation, water and sewer treatment plants, and support bases for the U.S. and Iraqi military. Ports, airports, roads, bridges, schools, and health clinics continue to be built and improved with the oversight of the GRD team.

In addition to being Division Engineer, Johnson is the U.S. Deputy to the Program Management Office of the CPA. Overall, the division has a hand in overseeing billions of dollars in reconstruction and improvements in Iraq.

By design, the division staff is a mix of both U.S. citizens and local Iraqi engineers, so that the relationships can develop a synergy beneficial to both nations and their engineer communities.

The major components of the division are the former Iraq Provisional Command, the Iraq Reconstruction Office, Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil, Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity, and the Iraq Area Office. All of these were Corps offices or groups.

GRD scheduled its activation ceremony for the same conference room where Ambassador Paul Bremer recently announced the capture of Saddam Hussein. Representatives from military units, civilian employees, and local government officials from Iraq were among the invited guests who watched as Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, Commander of Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7), helped GRD Command Sgt. Maj. William Clarkson uncase the division flag for the first time.

Several significant units will now fall under the GRD provisional umbrella. The Corps' Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil (TF RIO) was the executive agent for the Department of Defense tasked to work with the Iraqi Ministry of Oil to repair, restore, and protect the oil production infrastructure of Iraq.

Since April 2003, when the last oil well fires were extinguished, to the present, TF RIO has invested about $1 billion into repairs of oil wells, pipelines, refineries, and distribution systems, resulting in exports worth more than $5 billion to date in income to the Iraqi people.

A Corps employee checks valve repairs at Cluster Pump Station 3 in the South Ramaila Oil Fields. Helping restore Iraqi oil production capacity is just one of the many missions of the new Gulf Region Division (Provisional). (U.S Army Corps of Engineers Photo)

In addition, TF RIO oversaw the importing and distribution of nearly two billion liters of refined benzene, diesel fuel, kerosene, and 250,000 metric tons of liquid propane gas.

The Iraqi Oil Ministry announced in late December that oil production from the Southern Oil Fields had reached pre-war levels, and overall oil production is now consistently exceeding interim targets set by the Oil Ministry.

Another significant component of the provisional division is the Corps' Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity (TF RIE), an asset of the U.S. Central Command that has assisted in restoring the national electrical power grid for the Iraqi people. Working in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), TF RIE has rehabilitated generators, erected transmission towers, installed computerized control and communications networks, and upgraded the

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GRD has historic lineage

By Richard Dowling
Gulf Region Division (Provisional)

The Gulf Region Division, a provisional unit of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, follows in the distinguished footsteps of the Corps' Middle East Division and elements of the former Mediterranean Division.

Beginning in 1951, the Trans-East and Gulf Districts of the Mediterranean Division successfully carried out U.S.-sponsored projects throughout the Middle East. By the mid-1960s Saudi Arabia was requesting assistance and the growing construction program led in 1976 to the formation of the Middle East Division in Riyadh.

With district offices in Ryadh, Al Batin, and Jiddah, the division helped build military bases, schools, airfields, ports, hospitals, and highways. The jewel of the Saudi program was the King Khalid Military City, a massive base designed for more than 70,000 personnel, and the largest single military construction project in Corps' history.

By working side-by-side with a new generation of local national engineers and project managers, the men and women of the Middle East Division not only completed their mission, they left behind a tradition of engineering excellence that continues to this day.

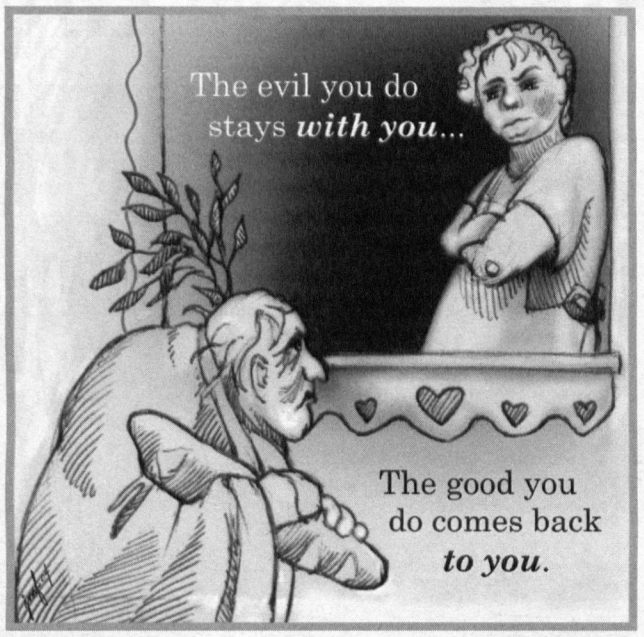
King Khalid Military City in Saudi Arabia was the crown jewel of the Middle East Division. (Photo courtesy of the Office of History)

Its job completed, the Middle East Division became the Middle East/Africa Projects Office, which eventually evolved into today's Transatlantic Programs Center in Winchester, Va.

Insights

'The good you do comes back to you'

Article by Col. Mark Fentress
Headquarters
Artwork by Jan Fitgerald
HECSA



Greetings, friends! After reading the morning paper and observing something of the massive brokenness in our world, we all need a transfusion of hope and renewal. I'd like to share some good, practical, and inspirational advice on how we can heal our broken and needy world.

There is a fantastic spiritual law that is found in the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faiths. When that spiritual law is activated in our lives, it brings incredible benefits and blessings to all. It is one I learned at my mother's knee, and one that is repeated throughout the Bible. It is this recurring promise of the Man of Galilee, Who said "The good you do returns to bless you." It may not be immediate and of like kind, but at some time and in some way, there will be a returning benefit and blessing.

One scripture that articulates this exciting spiritual law is Ecclesiastes 11:1-2. It says: "Give generously, for your gift will return to you later."

Many years ago, I heard an old legend that comes from the Azores. A woman baked bread every day for a wealthy family. As she did so, she made loaves for her family, and also baked one for charity.

Each day, as she took the charity loaf out of the oven, she petitioned God for the safe return of her oldest son who had gone abroad to seek his fortune. Then she set the charity loaf on the window ledge where a crazy little hunchback came each morning and took it.

This deformed little man irritated the woman for, instead of showing gratitude, each time he raised his cackling voice and repeated an odd proverb — "The evil you do stays with you; the good you do comes back to you."

After months of listening to the hunchback, the woman determined to put a stop to his demented behavior. So she baked a loaf of bread with poison in it. But when she pulled the loaf from the oven, she began to shiver in horror at what she had done. She tossed the poisoned bread into the fire, and set out a loaf baked for her family.

Later, the hunchback came by, picked up the loaf of bread off the window sill, and cackled his old saying – "The evil you do stays with you; the good you do comes back to you." The woman listened, then watched him go, trembling at what she had almost done.

Later that evening, there came a tapping at the door. The woman opened it, and there before her stood her beloved son, tattered, penniless, and hungry.

"Mother, it's a miracle I made it home," he said. "I was about a mile from here when I began to faint from hunger. I hadn't eaten for three days. A little old hunchback came by eating a loaf of bread and, when I asked him for the crust, he gave me the whole loaf. Mother, it was as if he gave me life again."

Friends, during this Valentine season, and at all times, give kindness, love, and consideration to all people. It is the right thing to do, and by extending God's kindness and care to your neighbor and all mankind, the healing of our broken world can begin. You can make a difference no matter where you are — Iraq, Afghanistan, Mobile, Nashville, Portland, or wherever.

Never forget this divine spiritual law because it can transform your life and God's world — The good you do returns to bless you!

Prayer — Heavenly Father, help us to practice this inspirational spiritual law in our lives — "Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later." We also continue to pray for our comrades who are serving our nation overseas. May Your blessings of encouragement, protection, and strength be upon each of these champions and their families. This we pray in the name of the Lord God, the Father of all mankind. ***Amen.***

In faith and friendship,
Chaplain Mark

(The opinions in this article are those of the writer and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.)

Letters to the Editor

A retiree's life

I enjoy receiving the *Engineer Update*. I read it all to keep up with the tremendous spread the Corps has throughout the world, and USACE 2012 seems to be a necessary reorganization.

Jan. 27, 1957 was my first day with the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors as a cartographic draftsman GS-2. My yearly salary (from the old W-2 form in my file here) was $2,943.59. In April 1986, my retirement salary was around $27,000.

And today my monthly annuity of about $1,580 is at poverty level for me and my wife of five years. So I work as a landscape maintenance day laborer for older people incapable of doing their own gardens.

At age 72 I still keep physically fit riding my lightweight 19 lb. American-made bicycle in many directions along New Hampshire's seacoast. My ride takes me to Rye Harbor where receipt of fish is very big, and some pleasure and sightseeing craft anchor. At low tide there seems to be much settled hard sand, gravel, and dirt blocking potential anchorage space. It's a very small port with two docks.

I often cycle to Newburyport, Mass., which is on the Merrimack River and is mainly pleasure craft docking. And I have cycled to Gloucester, Mass., a familiar fishing port.

I enjoy life, and stay healthy in spirit and mind. Thank you for listening.

Bill McCoomb
North Hampton, N.H.

Gulf Region Division (Provisional)

Continued from page one

Power Police security force that protects these facilities.

With an investment of $1 billion since September, TF RIE is on track to support the growth of stable and consistent electricity on the Iraqi national grid. TF RIE has overcome widespread looting and damage to transmission lines. The task force has built more than 200 new transmission towers and replaced 640. They secured more than 1,000 kilometers (about 620 miles) of cable for 400-kilovolt electric power transmission.

Another component, the Corps' Iraq Reconstruction Office (RIO), is the technical advisor to USAID for construction management oversight of the Iraq infrastructure reconstruction contractor, Bechtel National Inc. The IRO team of qualified and experienced professionals has provided technical assistance, quality assurance monitoring, and information management in an area from Mosul south to Basra. The contract has grown from $680 million to more than $1 billion of investment into 75 separate job orders in construction/reconstruction, rehabilitation, repair, and/or upgrading of Iraq infrastructure.

This diverse spectrum of work encompasses all the major infrastructure sectors including ports, airports, electrical power systems, surface transportation (roads, railroads and bridges), water treatment and sewer systems, and buildings (schools, health clinics, fire departments, and selected local government buildings). USAID recently awarded a second Iraq infrastructure contract providing up to another $1.8 billion of infrastructure construction, also to Bechtel.

The Iraq Area Office (now part of the provisional division) was constituted last April from two Forward Engineer Support Teams in support of CJTF-7. With 55 personnel at eight camps in central Iraq, the IAO has supported coalition military construction, work for the new Iraqi Army, and other specialized troop support contracts.

To date, the IAO has completed 18 projects for $12.2 million, has 30 ongoing projects worth $62.3 million, and has 31 future projects worth an estimated $118 million.

Since the new GRD is provisional, it will not become a permanent part of the USACE structure, which is limited by law to eight divisions. Staffing will be on a rotating basis, with plans calling for temporary change of station assignments of up to one year.

Corps members interested in working with the GRD should contact their local Emergency Operations offices or Civilian Personnel Assistance Centers.

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Commentary

Coping with continuous change

By Margaret Tindal-Fisher
Headquarters

The uncertainty and possible personal consequences of change resulting from USACE 2012 are creating anxiety in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' workforce. But not only are there significant changes such as USACE 2012 in the Corps, there are also many external factors driving change in the work world, both public and private.

It is important to understand that the changes and challenges in today's workforce are the result of global economic, demographic, and social forces and trends. Layoffs in the private sector have risen 20 percent annually for the last three years, and in the past 10 years Fortune 500 companies have downsized more than five million people. Today, the average American will work for nine different companies during his or her career.

Response to change

As civilian members of the Department of the Army, we are not exempt from these forces. In this environment of change, you can't change the instability associated with work, but you can be better prepared. When making career decisions, it is important to keep in mind that your choices must fit the realities of the working world. You are in charge of your own career, and it is largely up to you to develop goals and strategies to realize your career aspirations.

There are actions and steps you can take to soften the landing for you and for others as USACE 2012 is implemented. Here are some things you can do, whether you will be affected by the coming changes or not.

Information

First, pay close attention during the next several months to the sources of information available to you. Participate in the USACE 2012 town hall meetings, and make sure you seek out all information available to keep yourself informed of actions planned, and the status of the USACE 2012 implementation.

Relationships

Second, in preparing to work in the USACE 2012 environment, make sure you take every opportunity to strengthen your network of relationships. Your network should consist of people at many skill levels. Keep in touch with everyone in your network as often as you can. This communication network is the crux of the USACE Communities of Practice (CoP). When you are active in your CoP, you will be both learning and sharing learning, and that will serve you well.

Intangibles

Third, you can be ready for USACE 2012 by increasing your self-awareness regarding the "intangibles." In our USACE Learning Organization doctrine, we discuss the "Be" portion of what you bring to the job. That doctrine can be found at http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cepa/learning/learning.htm.

"Be" is the foundation of what you Be, Know, Do, and Learn. It is consistent over time, and is the source for your greatest growth, development, and satisfaction when you align your work with your talent potential.

Talents and strengths are aspects of individual character that we can understand, define, and measure. They also contribute to success in the workplace. All people have talents that characterize them. A positive way to characterize people is by these dominant talents. When a person develops a talent to a level that provides consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity, we call this strength.

Talents and strengths are different from knowledge and skills. Talents are what a person is particularly competent at. They consist of behaviors, values, attitudes, motivation, and thinking styles. Experience and research show that these talents and strengths are major determinants of a person's success.

Today's managers know that the best teams are not necessarily made up of the most highly educated or most experienced members. Winning teams are made up of those who are engaged in the work of the organization, know how to accomplish objectives, and who work well together to achieve the common goal of a Learning Organization.

The "intangibles" or "Be" of our working makeup is critical to achieving success. So increase your self-awareness of what motivates you and gives you satisfaction so you can use these talents in your day-to-day work.

As you think about and describe your knowledge, skills, education, experience, qualifications, and "Be" qualities, you are creating a snapshot of where you are now on your career path. Knowing where you are now is critical to getting where you want to be. Look at what you love about what you are doing now, figure out what skills and talents you use doing that, and do the same analysis regarding those tasks you dislike. After that work, you will be able to discern what skills and talents you would like to use and enhance as you work in the USACE 2012 environment.

Stress reduction

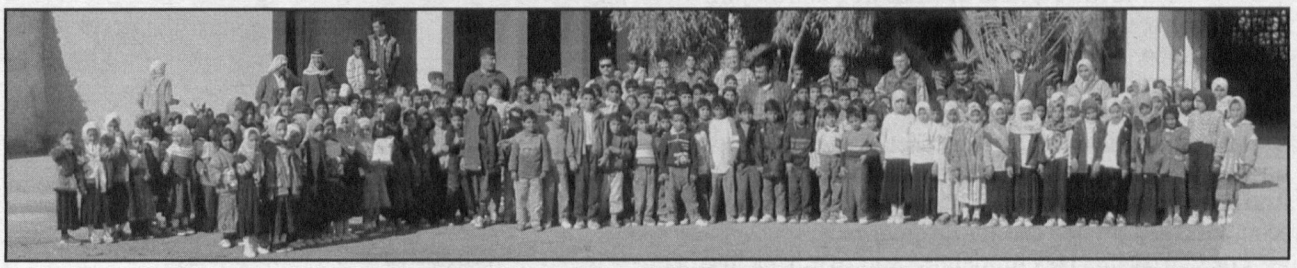
The effects of 2012 and other proposed changes can potentially be traumatic to you and your co-workers. However, taking the above steps can reduce some of the stress associated with change. You will work with more confidence knowing that you are prepared to meet the various challenges you may face.

Additionally, do the things that relieve stress and bring you joy. Keep up your fitness and health routines. Get enough rest. Try exercise, as it has been shown to reduce stress. Encourage your co-workers to do the same.

At the end of our journey toward USACE 2012, we will all know more about our own strengths and about our capacity for change. We will truly be a transformed workforce, better able to serve the Corps, our customers, and the nation.

Assessments improve Iraqi schools

Article and Photo
By Grant Sattler
Coalition Provisional Authority



Pupils and teachers stand with members of the Forward Engineer Support Team during the team's visit. Pictured are only the children who attend the morning sessions in the six-room school.

Portraits of Saddam Hussein no longer hang in Iraq's schools, yet his legacy of neglect remains. Helping school children in south central Iraq move toward a brighter future is one mission that the six members of Huntington District's Forward Engineer Support Team (FEST) relish.

They are conducting assessments used for planning the renovation and expansion of schools throughout the Coalition Provisional Authority South Central region. The CPA-SC region encompasses Karbala, Al Hilla, An Najaf, Al Kufa, Ad Diwaniyah, and Al Kut.

"Iraqis say nothing has been done since the day Saddam walked in," said Lt. Col. John Ross, military team leader for the Huntington FEST that arrived in Al Hilla Nov. 25. While all of Iraq's schools suffered (except those for the Ba'ath Party elite) those in rural Shi'ite areas in southern Iraq are in miserable condition.

The FEST and six local engineers from the Iraqi Ministry of Construction and Housing who work with them are providing engineering expertise to improve the dilapidated, overcrowded primary and secondary schools. Many of the schools have not seen repairs for decades.

Built of masonry, most can be renovated, although some have structural problems. Leo Arbaugh, the FEST's civilian team leader, said the aim is to provide interior and exterior lighting, install circuit breaker boxes, replace window frames and glass, install ceiling fans or air conditioning, replace broken concrete tile flooring, replace rusty entrance gates, repair crumbling school yard walls, improve sanitation by refurbishing lavatories and replacing broken septic tanks and plumbing, install sufficient roof top water tanks, repair roofs, and refinish and paint walls.

Arbaugh, a former schoolteacher with 14 years of experience, has found involvement with schools especially rewarding. "Stateside, people say, 'Why are we there?' When you're over here, you realize why," he said.

Space is also a problem for many rural schools that were provided cookie-cutter, six-room buildings believed originally built in the 1950s. Even running separate morning and afternoon sessions, many primary schools are forced to have up to 60 pupils per classroom. Arbaugh said the CPA-SC intention is to build additions to the schools to increase the number of classrooms. In some facilities it may also be possible to add small rooms for libraries, or basic kitchens for those that do not have one.

"The kids are the future of Iraq," said Arbaugh after a typical day in the Kifl area. The FEST assessed three schools, three possible clinic sites, and conducted a quality control check on a police station. "I think the real changes will come in five to 10 years when these kids have seen there's a new way of life other than under a tyrant."

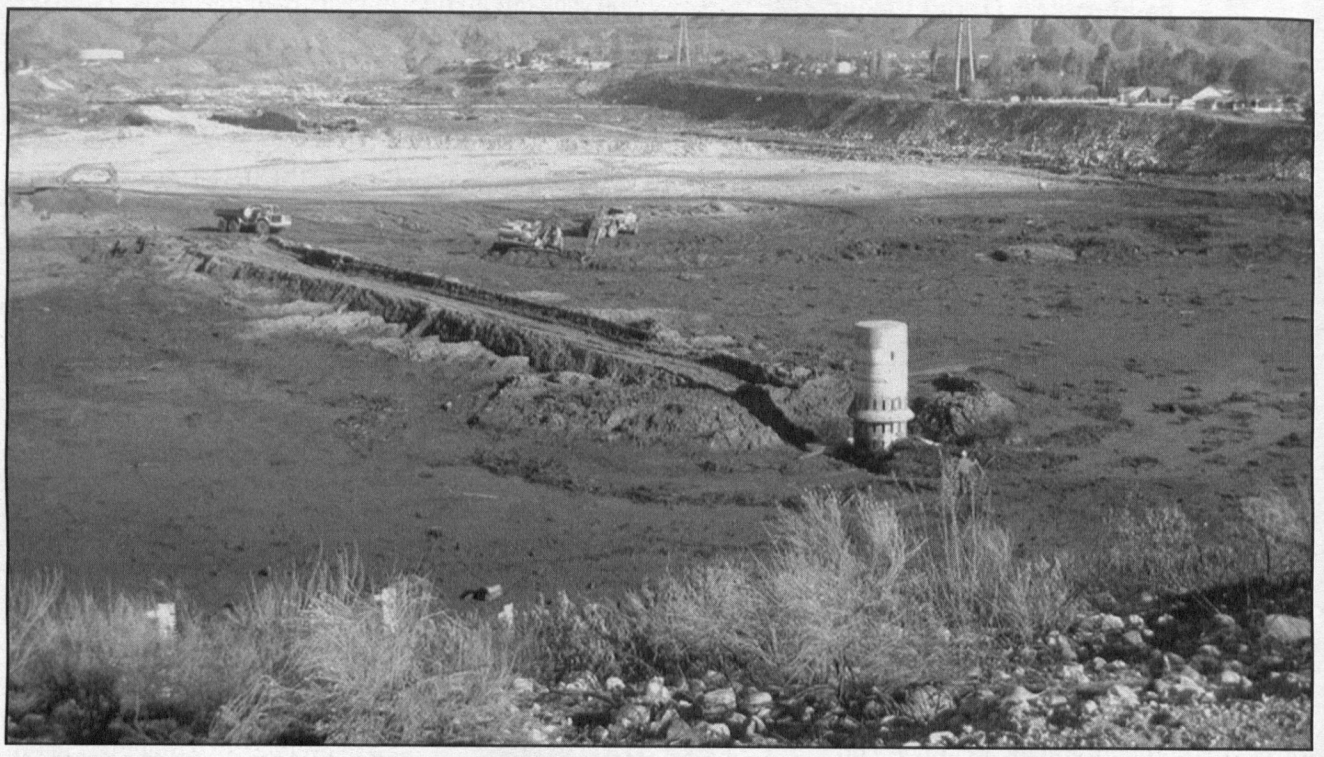
After a day conducting assessments of five schools in Badrah near the Iranian border, FEST member Larry Drown said one can see that the Iraqi children want to go to school and learn. "They know if they're going to move forward, they've got to have an education," he said. "School systems, that's where we need to do our work."

Jeff Yost, FEST civil engineer from Huntington District's Civil Design Section said he's making a lot of good memories. "The kids, they really touch you," he said.

'I've seen fire, and I've seen rain...'

L.A. District cleans up mudslides that followed Calif. fires

Article and Photos
By Mike Tharp
Los Angeles District



Rancho Cucamonga Basin several days after water drained into southern channels.

Here's how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers keeps Californians from drowning...

...With 10-wheeled dump trucks, 54-ton bulldozers, three-story-high excavators, and a rowboat.

...With people who missed every pro football playoff game on TV; people who were at work before dawn and still at it when Letterman and Leno did their monologues.

...With money gotten fast and spent well.

...And with planning and preparation and persistence.

Lives were at stake. Armageddon-like forest fires in October and November had stripped the hillsides of all grass, shrubs, and trees. Then a Christmas Day downpour swept down the naked hillsides. Mud and VW-sized boulders flowing like cold lava surged out of the San Gabriel Mountains, killing at least 16 people, including several campers at a Christian retreat.

"I got a call on Dec. 26 from the California Department of Water Resources saying that San Bernardino County required assistance from the state," said Ed Andrews, Los Angles District Emergency Operations Branch Chief. "But the state wasn't in a position to help, so they were coming to the Corps."

The result was a month-long frenzy of 24-7 activity to remove debris from dozens of flood-control basins at the foot of the mountains. The Corps' cleanup effort was a "bookend" for its relief and recovery operations during and after the devastating autumn fires in five southern California counties.

Said Ken Miller, Director of Public Works for San Bernardino County, "This cleanup is really helping us minimize the risk to our communities. The remarkable effort of the Corps' staff was spectacular. Within only a Friday-to-Monday period, work started on the cleanup."

To visualize what L.A. District, South Pacific Division, and private contractors did, imagine the flood-control basins as a series of 33 lagoons necklaced at regular intervals along the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. From the top of the mountains to their bottom, most of the vegetation had burned off. Stretching 35 miles east to west, the mountains lay denuded of natural barriers to slow or stop down-rushing water.

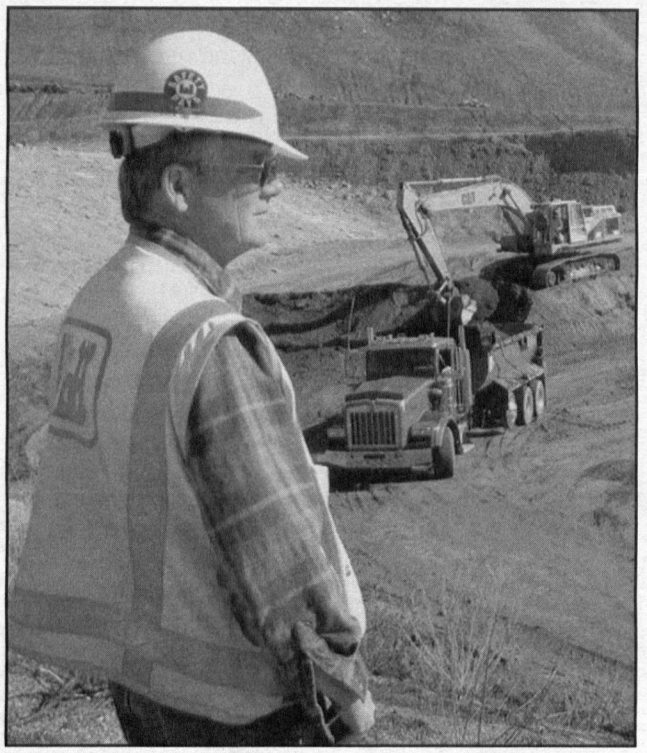
So when the Christmas rains came, those basins/lagoons quickly filled with all the junk that nature could conjure — silt, gravel, rocks, limbs, and leaves mixed into a deadly brown gumbo. The muck clogged the holes through which water normally flows out of the holding basins via concrete channels.

Unless the holes were unstopped, the basins would become turncoats — not preventing floods but *causing* them. And meteorologists were forecasting another winter storm soon, so the threat had become an emergency.

"The Christmas Day mudslides and resulting loss of life have shown that a much larger effort beyond local and state resources is needed," wrote Linda Adams, director of the Department of Water Resources to Col. Richard Thompson, L.A. District Commander, on Dec. 28. "To prevent widespread flooding and loss of life and property, it is critical to clear the San Bernardino County debris basins...Therefore, I am requesting the technical and direct assistance of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers..."

District team members were already prepared. Even as the fires burned last fall, Andrews and others knew what the fire would do to the hillsides, and what the hillsides would then do to the basins. In fact, before the fires were snuffed out, division and district specialists had gameplanned their options and strategies for mudslides.

So when the earth moved, so did the Corps. The immediate need was money so that contractors could bid on the jobs and be paid for their work. On Dec. 27, after a flurry of phone calls, e-mails, and a video teleconference between Thompson (visiting in Washington, D.C., at the time) and his crisis management team in L.A., $4.5 million in federal funds were authorized for the cleanup.



Tom Pagiegal at a nearly finished cleanup site in San Antonio Heights.

The process amazed even Corps veterans with its speed, and that momentum never slackened. By 9 p.m. on the day that funding was approved, contractors appeared at the basins, gauging what needed to be done. "The county was stunned and absolutely delighted that we pushed ahead so quickly, and the state was as well," Andrews said.

In short order, bids were let and approved and the first cleanup began. But the lightning round wasn't over. On Jan. 5, USACE Headquarters authorized another $5 million for the second cleanup phase. The division and district now had $9.5 million to spend on making southern Californians safer.

On Jan. 14, across from the San Manuel Indian Casino in Highland, Calif., Los Angeles District's Paul Apodaca, Terry King, Al Quintero, and Joe Flynn met contractors at Patton Basin. All the contractors were certified Multiple Award Task Order Contractors, a select group pre-qualified to bid on projects during a set period.

Patton would be the first of six flood control basins they visited that day to determine their bids. Maintaining the district's extraordinary pace, they would submit their bids by 1 p.m. the next day, and contracts would be awarded four hours later. On Jan. 17, two working days after seeing the basins, the contractors would mobilize at the sites.

"The project duration is 20 days," King told them at Patton Basin. "The important part of the job is to get this material out as quickly as possible. We want you to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And we don't think that's unreasonable."

Carrying video and digital cameras, the contractors walked to the basin's dike. Doug Youngdak of RQ Construction Inc. judged the work "simple" and said he was there to "Figure out the access and any unknown risks."

Rick Garcia, of Straub Construction Inc. was looking for "The nearest utilities and the nearest dump site to determine your return times, gradients, vegetation, any existing hazards, environmentally protected areas, and animal habitat."

At Devil's Basins 1, 2 and 3, King told the men, "We're trying to be fair and measure what you take out and pay you for it." Vern Thomas of Earthtech observed that "It's gotta get done, no question about it. They're full and there's a bunch more rain coming."

After looking at a dumpsite, the contractors' convoy rolled up to Badger's Basin. As high winds and dust devils whipped around the group, they hiked to the end of the basin where greenish tapioca-thick mud had congealed. "You gotta get the water to get this stuff out, so you might as well use it as dust control on the dirt road," said Flynn.

One by one, the contractors headed off to mull over their bids and the work ahead. On Jan. 16, Straub got the contract award of $943,704.

Two days later, heavy equipment from Pomona's Miramar Construction and its subcontractors, Reyes Construction Inc. and Ecco Equipment Inc., plus Thomas Land Clearing Co., beavered away at cleanup work. They used heavy equipment that looked like machines from the *Terminator* movies — 54-ton D9 bulldozers to shove the muck into disposable mounds, dump trucks with 10 wheels, and mantis-like excavators whose metal jaws could reach 33 feet in the air as they loaded the trucks. Their round-the-clock schedule meant they could clear 20,000 cubic yards in 900 loads a day from the basins.

Like a circuit-riding frontier judge, Tom Pagiegal, a L.A. District construction representative, drove from basin-to-basin in his white Expedition, checking for progress and problems.

Continued on next page

Recruiting program is great success

By Doug MaKitten
San Francisco District

Aggressive, targeted recruiting on college campuses and capitalizing on changes in personnel regulations enabled San Francisco District to hire 30 new engineers and scientists in the past two years.

"Thanks to our recruiting efforts and great help from Human Resources (HR), we have added 10 Department of the Army and nine locally-funded interns and others, all with tremendous qualifications," said Arijs Rakstins, chief of San Francisco District's Engineering and Technical Services Division. "This includes new hires from schools like Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, the University of California at Berkeley, UCLA, and Cal Poly Pomona.

"We've also been able to hire Hispanic and black engineers and about 50 percent of our new hires are women," added Rakstins.

That's a tremendous change from the past when San Francisco, like other big city districts, had difficulty recruiting. The high cost of living, inability to compete with private sector salaries and, perhaps most of all, the slow process made it difficult for the Corps to compete for the cream of the graduating crop.

"Often times in the past we would recruit at a school and find a top student who was interested in working for the Corps – someone we really wanted," recalled Rakstins. "However, the hiring process took so long, and the competition was so great, they couldn't wait for us to act and took other jobs. It was very frustrating."

San Francisco District works closely with South Pacific Division's (SPD) Rich Gallegos, who is in charge of the division's regional recruitment program, which includes San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and Albuquerque districts.

"I work with each of the SPD districts to help them recruit at universities and colleges in their own civil works area of operations," said Gallegos. "However, we recruit corporately, because at a given time there might not be an opening in Albuquerque for a top student in New Mexico, but there might be one in San Francisco or elsewhere in the Corps.

Rich Gallegos, South Pacific Division's Recruitment Program Manager (in Corps polo shirt), discusses Corps career opportunities with a student at Humbolt State University. (U.S. Army of Engineers Photo)

"We have received new personnel authorities in the past few years that allow Human Resources to better meet the needs of our districts," said Gallegos. "Probably the single most important one is the Federal Career Intern Program, or FCIP."

According to Gallegos, through the FCIP new hires can be brought in at the GS-5 or GS-7 level for a two-year internship that tops out at GS-9. At the completion of their program, the interns are usually placed in an open position.

Gallegos also said the cooperation of the Western Regional Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC) has been important in the recruiting success story.

"The CPOC has delegated the authority to SPD HR to develop the FCIP list," said Gallegos. "This enables us to have someone on board and working in a district in as little as three weeks after their interview."

Gallegos said SPD recruits at college and university job fairs throughout the region. The division is also represented at annual national events hosted by the National Society of Black Engineers, the Society of Women Engineers, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, and Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Awards Conference.

Both Gallegos and Rakstins said the Corps gets a warm welcome from faculty, students, and the sponsors of national conferences.

"When we went out to the campuses, it was gratifying to learn that the reputation of the Corps and the quality of our work was still recognized in academic circles," said Rakstins.

One of the San Francisco District FCIP hires is Chris Wang, who holds both a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in geotechnical engineering from the University of California at Berkeley.

Wang met Gallegos at a UC Berkeley career fair in early 2003, but that wasn't his first exposure to the Corps.

"I worked at the Port of Oakland after I got my bachelor's degree and met Len Cardoza (the port's dredging manager and a former San Francisco District commander)," said Wang. "He told me a lot about the Corps and the opportunities to do interesting work, and I wanted to work for a large engineering company or organization on a variety of projects. The Corps is giving me that opportunity."

Wang is about halfway through the first year of the FCIP's two-year program.

"It's a great opportunity to get work experience," said Wang, who is working in the district's Geotechnical Section. "My mentor, Marc Goodhue, has been a big help, and I have a well-developed training program."

Joel Pliskin, a recent FCIP graduate who continues to work with San Francisco District, was also impressed with the training he received.

"I graduated from Pomona College in 2000 and worked for two high-flying crash-and-burn Internet companies as a technology analyst," said Pliskin. "After the second company went out of business, I decided to look for something more stable and something more aligned with my degree and undergraduate interests – environmental science and economics.

"I came across the Corps' FCIP position, which was a perfect fit, on the Monster.com website, and it was also listed on the USAJOBS site," said Pliskin. "The FCIP process was a quick way to bring me in and bring me up to speed, and I've received a lot of mentoring and training since I started my position."

During his two years in training, Pliskin has worked as a project planner in the Plan Formulation Section. He's had experience working on a variety of civil works and environmental restoration projects.

"As a planner and project manager, I've learned a tremendous amount about scheduling, budgeting, contracting, customer relations, the planning process, Corps policy, engineering, and how the federal government's budgeting and legislative process works," said Pliskin. "At the Corps I've learned first-hand by performing and experiencing projects, rather than watching others lead or assisting more senior employees, as is often the case in the private sector."

Rakstins said the new hires are already paying dividends.

"We're no longer understaffed, we've brought in people with outstanding qualifications and enthusiasm, and that helps us provide better customer service," said Rakstins.

Gallegos said he has shared this SPD success story with his counterparts across the Corps. He recommends other districts and divisions having recruiting difficulties consider it as a successful model in developing their own recruiting programs.

"The FCIP and HR flexibility enables us to bring on people with technical ability and enthusiasm, helps us build a quality work force, and provide better customer service," said Gallegos. "I think it's terrific that we're using these options to develop a Corps-wide, corporate approach to recruiting."

Fire & rain

Continued from previous page

To date, it has been nearly all progress. At Deer Creek Basin north of Rancho Cucamonga, Pagiegal met Jaime Pinedo, president of Miramar, and his associate, John King. Miramar got the job of digging 500,000 cubic yards of material the night of the same day that the Corps called them to inspect the site. "It was good to get the call," Pinedo said. "It will make us a stronger contractor to respond faster next time."

A few miles farther west, the three men rendezvoused with Will Gonzales, a Reyes superintendent, at the "Mother of All Basins," Rancho Cucamonga. The basin has a capacity of 1 million cubic yards. When Gonzales and his crew showed up, the whole alluvial plain was underwater, a sure sign the drainage holes were not open.

The first order of business was to unclog a concrete tower called an energy dissipator that literally takes the energy out of rampaging water through vertical portals and spreads it into drainage channels.

Gonzales didn't know how deep the standing water was, so he requisitioned a 14-foot metal rowboat and paddled out to the tower. Using the oars, he reopened the dissipator's clogged arteries, and currents began to flow into the channels.

All three contractors and Pagiegal, a native Philadelphian, are football fans. But the basin work took priority, so none of them saw any January NFL playoff games. For instance, for heavy equipment to reach the tower and finish removing debris, it took 16 hours to build a crude road. "We've got two more weeks to remove all the silt from around the tower," King said. "We hope to finish before the Super Bowl."

Marlowe Kulseth, a construction representative from L.A. District's Tucson office, was also on scene and, like Pagiegal, rotated from site-to-site. As the men stood on the dam between the basin and the disposal site, they marveled at their luck with the weather. Despite the forecasts, no more rain had fallen since Christmas, and the basin cleanup was ahead of schedule.

The giant machines growled as they scooped up chocolate-colored mud and dumped it into the trucks. A swampy odor arose, and a flock of seagulls had gathered, drawn by food churned up by the blades and wheels. As the trucks circled in an endless round of loading and dumping, Gonzales noted that the debris was drying out. "I'd figured it would be soup," he said.

At the same time, near 8,600-foot Mt. Baldy, six flood control basins were also being cleared at upscale San Antonio Heights. Some of the basins nudged million-dollar homes, and one of Pagiegal's duties was to explain to residents the need for all the noise and activity.

The cleanup was nearly finished, and Pagiegal got out of his rig to check with Ron Thompson, a superintendent with Thomas Land Clearing. "We're going to have a street sweeper and water truck out here tomorrow," Thompson said. "It's done. Stick a fork in it."

Deployed civilians eligible for benefits

***(Editor's note:** This article was complied from numerous official sources by members of the Headquarters' Human Resources Office.)*

As you are aware, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' has an ongoing mission, one unprecedented in size and scope, to assist in rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure. There is also a similar, though smaller, mission in Afghanistan.

We have deployed a lot of civilian employees to Iraq in the past few months, and more are deploying every week to fill positions critical to the success of our missions. One lesson we have learned is that there is some confusion surrounding the benefits and entitlements received by deployed civilian employees.

This article, with the accompanying chart, details the additional compensation and benefits that civilians can expect if they volunteer for duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Employees may be placed in a Temporary Duty (TDY) status for up to 179 days. Those who volunteer for this shorter tour of duty may receive temporary, non-competitive promotions not to exceed 120 days. Or they may apply for longer-term promotions for longer tours.

***(Note:** All employees who are TDY in Iraq or Afghanistan are temporarily reassigned from their home stations, either to the Transatlantic Programs Center or another command. Since the duty station remains the same, base and locality pay are not affected.)*

For longer tours of duty, employees may serve in Iraq on a Temporary Change of Station (TCS) either six months or one year long. Unlike TDY, employees who opt for a TCS do not receive locality pay for the period of time they are on assignment, and will only receive the basic pay for their position as determined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

General Schedule Civilian Pay and Allowance Entitlements

	TDY (Any length)	Six Month TCS	One Year TCS
Pay or Allowance Entitlement	Regular Home Station Schedule Including Locality Pay or COLA	Base Home Station Schedule without Locality Pay	Base Home Station Schedule without Locality Pay
Overtime (All are exempt from FLSA under the foreign exemption rule)	1.5 x GS-10/1 or regular hourly rate, whichever is greater; below GS-10, 1.5 x regular hourly rate	Same	Same
Holiday Pay	2 x hourly rate for regularly scheduled hours	Same	Same
Post Differential * (Paid upon return to regular duty station)	After 42 consecutive days, 25% of Base Pay for 40 Hours	Same, effective after one day in country	Same, effective after one day in country
Danger Pay (Paid upon return to regular duty station)	In effect from 1st day, 25% of Base Pay for 40 Hours	Same	Same
Promotions	May be granted non-competitively for up to 120 days	Opportunities must be applied for by interested parties	Opportunities must be applied for by interested parties
Night Shift Differential	10% for all regularly scheduled hours from 1800-0600	Same	Same
Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA) www.state.gov/m/a/als/1739	None	Annual Rate varies based upon number of family members and is pro-rated based upon length of tour	Annual Rate varies based upon number of family members
Relocation Bonus	None	Up to 10% of base salary	Up to 25% of base salary
Rest and Recuperation Leave	None	None	One 15-day period after serving 5 months
Leave Accrual	No change to regular accrual and carryover	Employees may carry over up to 360 hours (45 days) of annual leave per CY for rest of career	Employees may carry over up to 360 hours (45 days) of annual leave per CY for rest of career

NOTES:
* After 42 consecutive days in country, pay is retroactive to the 1st day

Incentive pay

As an incentive for those interested in a six-month tour of duty, they will receive a relocation bonus of up to 10 percent of their base salary. Those who volunteer for a one-year TCS assignment will receive a relocation bonus not to exceed 25 percent of their base salary. A relocation bonus does not count against the annual limitation on premium pay (discussed later in this article), nor does receipt of this bonus preclude receiving an award upon completion of the assignment. It does, however, count against the aggregate pay cap, also detailed later in this article.

Due to the nature of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, additional compensation is also given to staff that serve there:

Danger Pay: Employees are eligible to receive danger pay beginning on the date of arrival in Iraq. The amount is determined by the Department of State, and for Iraq is 25 percent of base pay for a basic 40-hour workweek. It is not earned for overtime or weekends.

Post Differential: Post differential is designed to provide additional compensation to employees for service in foreign areas where conditions of environment differ substantially from conditions in the continental U.S. Normally, post differential begins on the date of arrival for employees on TCS, and on day 43 of duty for employees on TDY.

However, effective March 23, 2003, employees assigned to Afghanistan, Iraq, or Kuwait for 42 consecutive calendar days or more will receive post differential for the number of days served, beginning with the first day of detail. The amount is also determined by the Department of State, and is also 25 percent of base pay for a basic 40-hour workweek, separate from the danger pay mentioned above. It is also not earned for overtime or weekends.

Payment of danger pay and post differential is made upon an employee's return to home station, and only after the TDY/TCS is completed. This additional compensation counts against the aggregate (higher) annual pay cap.

Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA): This is an allowance to assist an employee who is compelled by dangerous, unhealthful, or adverse living conditions in a foreign area, or for the convenience of the government, to maintain his or her family members elsewhere. The amount varies by the number of family members. Information regarding the amounts and process for requesting SMA can be found at http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/1739.htm.

Foreign Exemption from the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA): If a deployed employee's permanent position is exempt from FLSA, that individual continues in that manner for travel, overtime, and other pay entitlements. If an employee's permanent job is a nonexempt position, that individual converts to exempt status for all workweeks spent entirely in an area subject to the foreign exemption.

Premium Pay: Employees are additionally compensated for time worked outside of their regular shift. This includes:

- *Overtime* — Paid for hours authorized and worked in excess of eight hours per day or 40 hours per week. The overtime rate is either 1.5 times the GS-10 Step 1 hourly rate, or the employee's hourly rate, whichever is greater.
- *Night Differential* — Paid for hours regularly scheduled and worked between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. The amount is the hourly base salary rate, plus 10 percent.
- *Holiday Pay* — Employees who work on a federal holiday are paid their normal salary.

Leave

Rest and Recuperation Leave (R&R): Employees who sign up for a one-year tour of duty or more are eligible for one 15-day R&R period after serving five months in a deployment location. R&R leave may not be taken after the 10th month of deployment. R&R leaves are limited to one trip within a 12-month period, and may not be combined with other absences, such as liberty, administrative absences, temporary duty, or travel for other purposes.

This program provides funded transportation to Frankfurt, Germany; Baltimore, or other R&R destinations only as authorized by the command. Employees are required to pay for travel to all alternate locations. Employees are not charged leave during travel time. Charged leave starts the day after arrival at the R&R location, and ends the day before the return to the duty location.

Leave Accrual: Employees who serve on an overseas TCS assignment may earn up to 45 days of annual leave each leave year. While they may carry this amount over from year-to-year for the remainder of their careers, once they drop below this number, that new amount becomes the maximum leave carryover.

Insurance and death benefits

Being sent to a combat zone **does not** cancel Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) coverage. Civilian employees sent to a war zone or combat zone in a support capacity keep their FEGLI coverage, including Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) coverage. Being sent to a combat zone does not affect the amount of FEGLI coverage, provided the employee is not engaged in combat. (Self-defense is not considered combat.)

If a federal employee working in a war zone is killed, regular death benefits are payable to the beneficiaries. In addition, accidental death benefits are also payable under Basic insurance (and Option A, if the employee had that coverage), unless the employee was in actual combat or nuclear weapons were used at the time of death.

The Office of Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance decides whether to pay AD&D benefits only after thoroughly studying the facts surrounding an employee's death, and OPM makes such determinations case-by-case. While we cannot say that in 100 percent of civilian deaths AD&D benefits will be payable, it is highly unlikely for a civilian to be in actual combat.

If an employee is *not* covered under FEGLI, and is deployed overseas, there is an opportunity to enroll for basic FEGLI under a 60-day personal "open season" because that employee is an emergency essential employee by virtue of deployment to such a position.

Limits

General Schedule (GS) employees have an annual limitation on premium pay. Their base salary and premium pay cannot exceed either GS-15, step 10, or Executive Schedule V (set at $127,300 for 2004), whichever is greater. This category includes only base pay, locality pay, and premium pay as defined above.

Additionally, aggregate pay cannot exceed Executive Schedule I in any calendar year ($174,500 for 2004). This category includes all discretionary compensation, such as relocation bonuses, awards, and post allowance.

The National Security Personnel System contains provisions allowing the Secretary of Defense, in conjunction with OPM, to waive the annual limitation on premium pay. Recognizing that the non-traditional work environment in Iraq and Afghanistan makes it more challenging to schedule and monitor hours worked, USACE has requested that the Secretary of Defense use the authority to eliminate

Continued on next page

Around the Corps

William Penn Mott Award

Don Dunwoody and Kelly Thomas have received the William Penn Mott Awards from the National Society for Park Resources. Dunwoody, with Northwestern Division, received the Meritorious Service Award. Thomas, with Portland District, received the National Student Award for Educational Excellence.

Dunwoody has been with the Corps 30 years. His accomplishments include developing the career path and training program for GS 5-7-9 park rangers, helping establish the Corps' Natural Resource Management Mission Statement for the Corps, helping develop the User Fee and Shoreline Management policies, and developed and implemented an outreach strategy for Corps projects in Northwestern Division. This outreach strategy is a model for the Corps that has been applied nationwide.

Thomas' accomplishments include managing the Visitor Center, wildlife food plots, ponds, and wood duck nesting box programs. He coordinated many different programs including a physically challenged deer hunt, youth squirrel hunt, haunted trail hike, and dove hunt.

Dam rehabilitation project

The Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers will present St. Paul District a Seven Wonders of Engineering award on Feb. 27 for its Orwell Dam renovation near Fergus Falls, Minn.

A safety inspection of Orwell Dam identified deficiencies in the dam's ability to safely discharge a major flood. This 50-year-old, 47-feet high dam could only handle flows up to 20,400 cubic feet per second, and needed to handle 24,400 cfs.

The project took five years and cost more than $4 million. Work completed included building an embankment with culverts downstream of the existing dam, placing additional riprap erosion protection in the discharge channel, and building a parapet wall to raise the height of the dam. Rehabilitating the dam's spillway gate was completed in an earlier project.

Correction

Marcia Meekins took the photo that accompanied the article "Savannah District builds new home for Army's champion skydiving team" on page six of the January *Engineer Update*.

Resource management awards

Three Corps people received awards in the annual Army-wide Resource Management Awards Program sponsored by the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Financial Management & Comptroller) (ASA(FM&C)). The awards will be presented during the first week in June at the American Society of Military Comptrollers Professional Development Institute.

Carl Camp of the Engineer Research & Development Center received the Accounting and Finance Individual award for major command (MACOM) level and below. Kenneth Littlefield of Headquarters received the Budgeting Individual Award for MACOM level and higher. Arland Luster of Headquarters received the Education, Training, and Career Development Award at MACOM level or higher.

Littlefield and Luster also received Capstone Awards. Littlefield received the ASA(FM&C) Award. It recognizes the top Army civilian employee serving in a leadership capacity that the Assistant Secretary cites for outstanding contributions to the field of resource management.

Luster received the Functional Chief Representative Special Award. It recognizes the top Army civilian employee serving in a leadership capacity that the Principal Deputy to the ASA(FM&C) cites for outstanding contributions to the Comptroller Civilian Career Program.

Value to the Nation

The Institute for Water Resources (IWR) has launched the Value to the Nation (VTN) communication initiative to supply clear, simple messages about the Corps' civil works programs. The VTN Web site is at www.CorpsResults.us.

The VTN initiative also includes brochures for major civil works programs, including:

- Water Resources
- Floodplain Management
- Inland Navigation
- Deep Water Ports and Harbors
- Environment
- Lands and Waters Stewardship
- Recreation
- Water Supply
- Hydropower
- Regulatory Program
- Emergency Management

The published brochures are posted on the VTN Web site, and can be ordered from IWR publications (Arlene.J.Nurthen@usace.army.mil).

Quality award

Vicksburg District will receive an Excellence Award from the Mississippi Quality Awards (MQA) program. The award recognizes achievements in applying the principles of continuous quality improvement. It will be presented at a ceremony on March 26 Choctaw, Miss.

The MQA program has four award levels — Governor's Award, Excellence Award, Quality Commitment Award, and Quality Alignment Award. These steps guide organizations in continuous improvement to assess their capabilities and achievements to achieve higher levels of performance excellence. All award criteria are based on the Baldridge National Quality Award.

On-line learning a boon for the busy

By Janet Thomas-Botello
Galveston District

One of the Army's best advanced classes is now available as a computer-based correspondence course taken via Internet at your pace, in the comfort of your home.

The Army Management Staff College's (AMSC) Sustaining Base Leadership and Management (SBLM) Program is available to civilians who serve in or have potential for key leadership positions, have a career or career-conditional appointment or career status, and are GS-12 through GS-14. (GS-11s are accepted, on exception.)

The SBLM program provides graduate-level education on topics which include broad-based leadership, management, critical thinking and decision making, military forces and doctrine, force integration, resource management, acquisition and logistics, personnel management, and information and installation management. Credit gained through this program can also be applied toward an online graduate or undergraduate degree at the American Military University in Virginia.

The SBLM program offers two avenues for students — the Resident and Non-Resident Programs. The Resident Program involves a three-month stay at Fort Belvoir, Va., in-class activities, presentations, tests, daily journaling, and some written assignments.

The Non-Resident Program is achieved through a year of work at home via the Internet, plus three one-week resident sessions at Fort Belvoir. Tuition, travel, and per diem costs for the program are centrally funded.

I could not spend three months away, so I chose the Non-Resident program. It offers a unique learning opportunity for serious students. It removes several of the most common reasons that people can't pursue more education — cost, distance to school, lack of transportation, and daytime obligations.

Benefits I've gained from the program include lessons and perspectives in leadership and my leadership style, a wider view of the Army and current events, a greater perspective of where the USACE and this district fits in the larger picture, information on organizational culture and change management, and invaluable input from a professor on my writing and presentation skills.

My class consisted of students throughout the U.S., Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, Europe, and Southeast Asia. Each class is subdivided into "seminars."

The program involves at least 21 written assignments and about 1,500 hours of time, but the learning process in the Non-Resident Program is different from the Resident Program. Except for the three resident sessions, in-class participation isn't possible.

Throughout the year, my seminar participated in weekly Internet classes when all students and instructors were logged in at the same time. We also conducted other chat classes known as caucus sessions — online debates and discussions. We completed them by logging in at different times, for a certain number of days, and posting statements on an Internet bulletin board for others to consider.

Written assignments were completed either individually or as a team. All lesson plans and reading references were taken from the AMSC Electronic Campus.

All those in Galveston District who have participated in this program agree that one of the biggest challenges is time management. We had to maintain the same quality at work, meet family obligations, *and* complete program requirements. Due to the volume of reading and writing, most of the work had to be done at night and on weekends.

Even though the program can be intense and requires a lot of personal effort, I believe it is a worthwhile endeavor for anyone interested in future leadership positions.

Information on AMSC programs can be obtained by visiting their Web site at www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil.

Benefits

Continued from previous page
the limitation on premium pay.

However, it is imperative that employees and supervisors schedule work in a manner that does not cause employees to work without compensation. Even if the limitation on premium pay is waived, employees and their supervisors must be aware of the problems that excessive overtime causes and have plans in place to protect against potential overpayment situations.

Civilian employees are not entitled to the combat area tax exemption of military members. Employees should contact the local Internal Revenue Service's Taxpayer Assistance Center or a tax advisor with questions concerning tax exemptions. DoD and USACE are pursuing legislation that would give civilian employees serving in combat areas the same tax exemption the military receives under those circumstances.

For more information

This article cannot cover every issue and question. Employees are urged to use the many resources available to gather additional information on deployment.

If you are not a GS employee, or have a question not covered in this article, more information can be obtained from your local Human Resources Office, and by checking the Corps Civilian Deployment website at http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cehr/Deployment/main.htm.

Major effort restoring Iraq electricity

If petroleum is the lifeblood of modern civilization, then electricity must surely be its nervous system. In recent months, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has deployed two teams to help restore both in Iraq. Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil (TF RIO) is well known. But as quietly as they went, Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity (TF RIE), working under operational security, has quietly come home.

(***Editor's note*** *— Since it was to the advantage of former Saddam Hussein loyalists, and other dissidents, to sow confusion by sabotaging TF RIE's work, Corps volunteers and their Iraqi counterparts often operated under dangerous conditions. To protect TF RIE from attack, and to protect their work from sabotage, their presence and missions were kept under tight security until recently.)*

TF RIE completed its work on Jan. 25, and most members have returned to their duty stations in the U.S. Some elected to remain in Iraq and become part of the new Gulf Region Division (Provisional).

Deployment

Commanded by Brig. Gen. Steven Hawkins (also commander of Great Lakes and Ohio River Division), TF RIE deployed on Sept. 20 as an asset of the U.S. Central Command (CentCom). The task force was 84 Corps civilian and 90 U.S. Army volunteers with specific skills such as mechanical, civil, and electrical engineers, cost estimators, contract specialists, schedulers, and a wide range of support skills.

Before they deployed, each underwent a weeklong crash course in field procedures such as using satellite telephones, video equipment, and first aid at the Transatlantic Programs Center in Winchester, Va. There they also took medical exams and vaccinations; received lectures on Iraqi culture, customs, and language; and were issued U.S. Army battle dress uniforms.

The task force began arriving in Iraq on Sept. 20. They traveled in four deployments, met in Baghdad, and then split into Headquarters, North, Central, and South teams. TF RIE was headquartered in the Baghdad Green Zone in a former Saddam Hussein palace called The White House beside the Tigris River. The North, Central, and South teams were stationed near major projects. (***Editor's note*** *— Operational security for ongoing work precludes exact details about locations.)*

Urgent request

Last year Ambassador Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) requested assistance from CentCom in bringing reliable, consistent electricity to all of Iraq. USACE was selected because of the Corps' proven proficiency in problem-solving and emergency contracting.

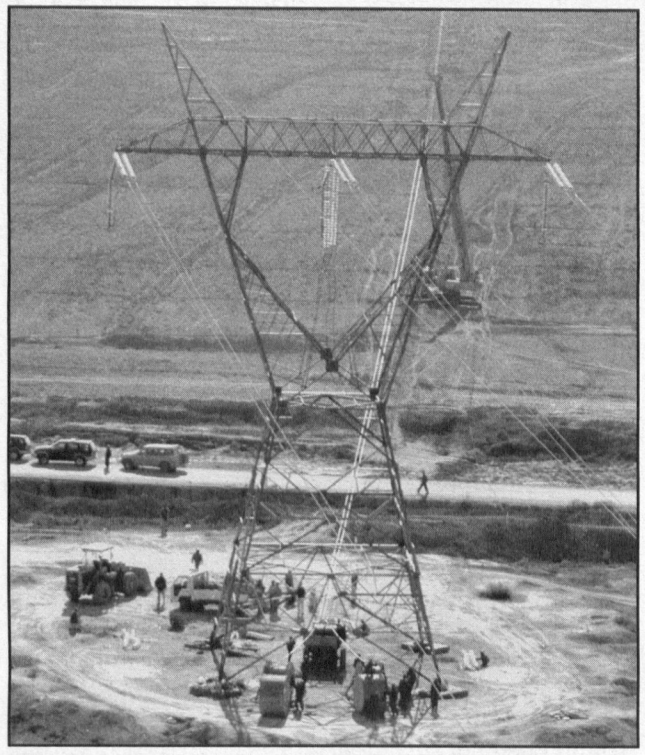
TF RIE operated as a team-within-a-team, working with the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity (MoE) and, through CPA, the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Mission

The task force's mission was to supplement activities already underway in Iraq to repair and upgrade existing power generation, transmission, and command and control facilities to restore reliable electricity to national and regional power grids.

In most cases, Iraqi engineers and power plant managers knew what was needed, but lacked the resources and organization assets to get the job done. Their efforts had also been severely hampered by looted and trashed substations, damaged or destroyed transmission towers, and miles of transmission lines lying on the ground.

Much like it does for disaster recovery, the Corps created a response team with the engineering and contracting skills to perform a high-impact, short-term mission. There were a couple of important differences, though. In this case, the team was solving highly unusual problems on a national scale. And the mission would last only a few months.



A new 132 kilovolt transmission power will carry electricity from Basra to Baghdad. (Photo by Ed Evans, Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity)

TF RIE members fast-tracked the 26 most difficult projects in an attempt to complete as many as possible, knowing they could not complete all in such a short time.

The task force's assigned tasks included:

- Repair and upgrade existing power generation facilities.
- Build new large-scale power generation facilities.
- Repair and restore 400 kilovolt lines to transmit power from generating facilities to distribution nodes. More than 640 towers and 1,000 kilometers (about 620 miles) of electrical cable were destroyed by war, looting, or action by Saddam loyalists.
- Establish a system to inventory, procure, and distribute parts for repair.
- Refurbish parts for all power generation and distribution nodes.
- Strengthen an existing mobile police force to protect towers and transmission cable throughout Iraq.

Working hard

TF RIE brought more to bear on the problem than highly qualified engineers and contractors. USACE has a unique technical advantage called tele-engineering. Using modern communications like satellite telephones, digital cameras, and video-tele-conferencing, TF RIE could tap the skills of experts around the world.

These skills were badly needed in a country that had been in technological limbo for 17 years. For every substation limping along so badly that it was pulling power from the grid instead of adding it, for every generating station with a polyglot of non-working French, Russian, and American generators, the TF RIE members inspected, assessed, photographed, and brought in contractors with solutions.

Soon, from all over the world, generators, transformers, parts, transmission towers, and electric lines began to flow to Iraq as if it were a magnet. They came by ship and by civilian and military planes. Crews went to work putting an electric grid together that would provide reliable service to all the people of Iraq.

Accomplishments

As of January, the task force had:

- Rehabilitated generators at Dibis, Najaf, and Kohr al Zubayr to put about 180 megawatts (MW) on the grid. Two more units will be rehabilitated in March to generate another 70 MW.
- Installed Internet connectivity at eight critical command and control nodes throughout Iraq. For the first time, the MoE is sending reports and transmission/distribution information via e-mail, greatly improving their ability to manage and improve power distribution.
- Built about 10 new power transmission towers every day, with more than 335 installed as of press time. Completing these lines will allow additional power to be transmitted from the north and south to Baghdad. They will also help stabilize the grid, preventing future power outages.
- Secured 1,000 kilometers (about 620 miles) of transmission lines and towers. Towers were being destroyed at a rate of more than 50 per week. TF RIE brought in contract security personnel to stop tower looting on these lines.
- Installed a Logistics Maintenance Management System to improve the MoE's ability to repair their generation facilities. MoE maintenance personnel can now access a central database of equipment and parts to facilitate ordering and delivery.
- Provided 1,500 Power Police, complete with vehicles, weapons, and uniforms, to protect transmission lines and other electrical infrastructure from looting and sabotage.
- Installed computer control systems at substations throughout Ma'ari, which will allow automated and controlled load shedding and transfer. Phase II, which will install control systems throughout the rest of Baghdad, has begun.
- Provided 78MW to key critical industrial facilities in the Mosul area.

"I would not have been anywhere else..."

"I would not have been anywhere else in the world than with this hardworking, sacrificing, skilled Corps team," said Ed Evans, TF RIE Public Affairs Officer. In his regular duties, Evans is the PAO of Nashville District. "These men and women were thrown together in a flash, hit the ground running, and never stopped working 16 and 18 hours a day, with no days off, not even holidays, to make a better life for the people of Iraq.

"I've been a military public affairs man and photojournalist for 45 years, and this is my fourth battlefield," Evans added. "I'm honored beyond my ability to express to be a member of a team who never quit, under fire nearly every day, until the job was done."

In progress

In the end, some projects were so involved that, once begun, they had to be handed off to other Corps of Engineers volunteers coming in-country. On Jan. 25, the stand-up date for the Gulf Region Division (Provisional), all future electrical missions were transferred to the new division, and TF RIE is no more.

The main body of TF RIE returned to their home districts in time for Christmas. About a dozen task force contract managers volunteered to stay with their projects and bring them to closure under the new division. All new electrical missions will be managed by the new division.

Work in progress includes:

- The new 184MW Baiji Mobile generation facility is nearing completion with six of the eight generators on-site.
- Baiji Gas Turbine Units 1 & 2 were assigned to TF RIE by CPA in December to cease diesel operations and convert them to running on residual oil. The fuel conversion will free two million liters (about 500,000 gallons) of diesel a day. TF RIE also repaired Unit 2, which generates 150MW.
- Significant progress is underway on the new Qudas generation projects that will provide another 420MW.
- Installation of new components is underway at 23 substations in the Baghdad area, which will provide better reliability and eliminate local power outages due to substation failure.

(This article is based on detailed public affairs guidance and fact sheets about Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity, and an article written by Ed Evans, TF RIE Public Affairs Officer.)