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# Engineer Update

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## USACE morale high in Afghanistan; AED missions, staff to increase

By Bruce Huffman  
Afghanistan Engineer District

Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp visited Afghanistan Engineer District (AED) in late July to see key construction projects and share his vision with the military and civilian personnel.

He was accompanied by Command Sgt. Maj. Micheal Buxbaum on his first visit overseas since assuming his duties in April, and Maj. Gen. Merdith W.B. "Bo" Temple, the deputy commanding general for military and international operations.

### Growth and construction

Van Antwerp first visited several AED construction sites at Bagram Air Field where USACE is currently managing about \$200 million in construction projects. According to Lt. Col. Jim Utley, area engineer and officer in charge of Corps personnel at Bagram, the base is growing fast, and a lot has changed since the chief's visit last December. USACE projects such as utility upgrades, bulk fuel storage facilities, barracks, and flight line improvements will enable coalition forces at Bagram to project military power throughout the region.

"The Soldiers and airmen are moving in and filling up the barracks as fast as we can build them," said Utley.

The next day, the chief took a helicopter flight over the Kabul to Bagram road, currently under construction and managed by AED. This 20-kilometer (12.4 mile) road will connect the nation's capital in Kabul with the largest coalition base in Afghanistan.

During the same flight, the chief visited the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) compound in the volatile Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan. The sprawling ANCOP compound was recently turned over to the Afghan government, and is one of almost 300 Afghan National Police facilities that AED is building this year.

Later, the party toured AED Headquarters in Kabul and saw some of the construction in the compound.

"The district has nearly doubled in personnel in the last year," said Capt. Jason Hipps, AED's personnel officer. "Not only are we building all over Afghanistan, we're building new barracks and office space here to accommodate growth at the district."

AED currently has seven area offices, 22 resident offices, and six project offices in Afghanistan, and will manage more than \$2 billion in construction projects this year, which is twice as much as fiscal 2007.

### Town hall

Van Antwerp held a town hall meeting that evening at AED headquarters. The chief explained his philosophy about taking USACE from "good to great," and his desire to establish an organization that's "built to last."



Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp (left), chief of engineers, chats informally with employees of Afghanistan Engineer District before a town hall meeting in AED. (Photo courtesy of AED)

"AED is going to grow, and that's why we're trying to get out in front with a work force that can take on growth," Van Antwerp said. AED currently has 72 military and 229 civilian volunteers. In addition, 324 Afghans work for the district. According to Hipps, the number of military and civilian volunteers is projected to reach nearly 400 by the end of the year.

Van Antwerp also explained how vital power generation and adequate quantities of drinking water and water for irrigation are to the Afghan people.

"We have to set the standard for our profession," Van Antwerp said. "Who else would you call on to develop hydro, wind, and solar power?" According to Van Antwerp, once you establish these things, you can start developing the exports and imports to build an economy that can operate on a world scale.

After a brief question and answer session, Van Antwerp presented a Meritorious Unit Commendation to AED for service from March 1, 2004 to Feb. 28, 2006. According to AED Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Winkleblack, Soldiers assigned to AED during that period are authorized to permanently wear the ribbon on their uniforms. Soldiers currently assigned to AED who were not attached during those dates can wear the ribbon only while assigned to AED.

The following morning, Van Antwerp met with AED personnel for a prayer breakfast. He also visited Kabul area project sites at the Afghan National Army

Commando School, Bala Hissar, and the Afghan National Military Academy.

### Command sergeant major

Buxbaum was also busy in AED. This was his first trip overseas as the USACE command sergeant major, and his first trip ever to Afghanistan.

"I spent most of my time talking with the leadership, finding out what their challenges are," Buxbaum said. "The Engineer Regiment chain of command can't go over to Afghanistan as often as we can, so I had a dual mission. I look out for our

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## Chief's blog

"Corps-e-spondence," the Chief of Engineers' blog, can be seen on the USACE Web site at [www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil).

Recent postings include:

- Flooding in America's heartland
- Building the bench
- Take me out to the ball game
- Rebuilding trust in New Orleans



# An exciting time to be part of USACE

By Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp  
Chief of Engineers

What an exciting time to be a part of Team USACE! From the new Campaign Plan to the new Web site and Corps' branding, I want to share a number of focused major initiatives with you – initiatives essential to taking this organization from "Good to Great!"

## Campaign Plan

At the Summer Leaders Conference earlier this month, I unveiled our new Campaign Plan and, in conjunction with some serious "elbow grease" from all of the Corps' senior leaders, we really put some disciplined thought into what we should be focusing on in the next three years.

Through disciplined action and execution of this Campaign Plan, we will become a GREAT organization. We'll know we've arrived when we can say that in all of our mission areas we:

- Deliver superior performance
- Set the standard for our profession
- Make a positive impact on the nation and other nations
- Are built to last as evidenced by our strong "bench" at all levels — educated, trained, competent, experienced, and certified.

I often tell a story about the "sanitary engineer" at NASA who told me that he wasn't just cleaning the floor, he was "putting people in space." I hope each of you can find yourself in this Campaign Plan, and see how you are a part of the big picture. You really do impact our Corps, our Army, and our nation.

Here is the breakdown of the new USACE Campaign Plan vision, mission, and goals:

**Vision:** A GREAT engineering force of highly disciplined people working with our partners through disciplined thought and action to deliver innovative and sustainable solutions to the nation's engineer-

ing challenges.

**Mission:** Provide vital public engineering services in peace and war to strengthen our nation's security, energize the economy, and reduce risks from disasters.

**Goal 1.** Deliver USACE support to combat, stability, and disaster operations through both forward deployed and reachback capabilities.

**Goal 2.** Deliver enduring and essential water resource solutions through collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

**Goal 3.** Deliver innovative, resilient, sustainable solutions to the armed forces and the nation.

**Goal 4.** Build and cultivate a competent, disciplined, and resilient team, equipped to deliver high quality solutions.

Each of those goals has four objectives, which I won't spell out here. But I encourage you to get a copy of the Campaign Plan and think about your job and how what you do directly impacts our success as an organization. You really are the "cornerstone of the Corps' success."

## New Web site

We are also diligently working to provide you with a new, modernized USACE Web site. I really think you're going to like it. Our team has been working for months to design the perfect site, one that incorporates all of the latest and greatest Web 2.0 technology, which will give us ample opportunity to showcase the best asset we have in the Corps – our people!

It will take a while for all of the pages throughout the Corps to migrate to the new design, but we're moving on it and I am told that within the next few months, our "window to the world" will be much more high-speed and easy to navigate.

The new Web site design is part of a conscious effort to give us a new, more modern look that nests the Corps with the Army. That kind of design will begin to appear on more of our displays, PowerPoint

presentations, folders, posters – you name it! We want to remind people that we are the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers!

## Family support

I'm also very proud of our efforts at improving support to our Corps family. So many of you have deployed, some of you multiple times, to support the Global War on Terror or disaster response, and we've heard your concerns. We have a major effort underway that will dramatically improve the quality of support to Soldiers and civilians who deploy, and it will also take much better care of your families during deployments as well.

Our team is putting the disciplined thought into this and really is making headway. Some districts already have great plans in place and are setting the bar very high for the rest of us. But we're working to make that level of support *standard* across the Corps. We are stealing ideas shamelessly from those areas that seem to "get 'er done" right!

So what does great look like in family support? We're still working on the specifics, but I think it could involve:

- Providing video-teleconference opportunities for the families to communicate with their deployed loved one
- More solid communication, perhaps a monthly conference call between families of deployed teammates and district/division leadership
- A coordinated plan for casualty assistance
- Reintegration plans
- And more.

Things like that will make a huge difference in providing a level of support commensurate with the level of sacrifice and service you provide. We're not there yet, but we're getting there!

That's just a few of the major initiatives underway right now. I hope you are as motivated by them as I am, because I know we're heading for GREAT!

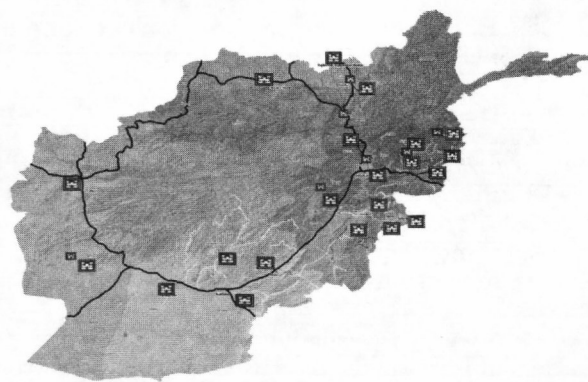
## Afghanistan

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USACE personnel, and I also talk with the Army engineer units on the ground and provide that feedback to the regimental chain of command so they have an up-to-date picture of the situation in Afghanistan."

Buxbaum talked with numerous USACE employees in AED. "Great folks, motivated to be there," he said. "Sometimes when I go places, folks want to bend my ear and say, 'Hey sergeant major, this is messed up.' But I didn't hear any of that. Everyone was positive and upbeat about what they are doing. When the only complaint I hear is about the chow in the dining facility, that normally means that everything else is going pretty well."

Buxbaum later met with all the enlisted Soldiers at Qalaa House. During the meeting, Buxbaum talked about the possibility of sending AED Soldiers to professional development training, Soldier and NCO of the Year boards, etc. After a brief question and answer session, he encouraged them to make sure "things are being done to standard and to know what right looks like," and to take care of USACE civilians in uniform while they are in AED.



USACE has offices located throughout Afghanistan. (Map courtesy of AED)

"As Soldiers we get specific training about what to do, for example, if we have incoming fire," Buxbaum explained. "I told the Soldiers to not make the assumption that everyone has the same level of training as we do. Make sure our civilians in uniform all know what right looks like. If there's an incoming round, what's the correct response? We have the

responsibility as Soldiers to make sure everyone around us is trained to the same level."

## Life changing

"This is a very important mission, and our part of it is to build facilities and capacity," said Van Antwerp as he summed up his visit to AED. "Anyone who has deployed here or to Iraq will tell you that this changed their life. You get outside yourself and focus on working with a team that feels like a family, which is an incredible experience."

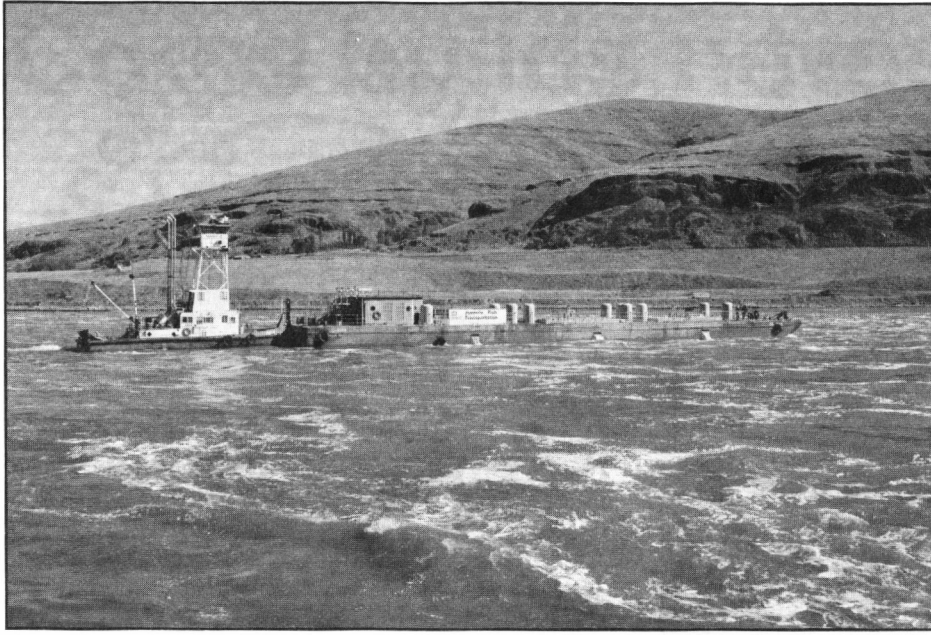
"We're at a place in time where we're writing the book," Van Antwerp continued. "We're using tried and true practices, but we're adapting those practices to a new environment that doesn't have time to wait. We need to do it now! So how can we be more efficient and at the same time be effective?"

"Talk to an AED employee and ask, 'Why did you come, and why did you stay?' and you'll find out that it's something special," Van Antwerp said. "So come join them and be part of it."

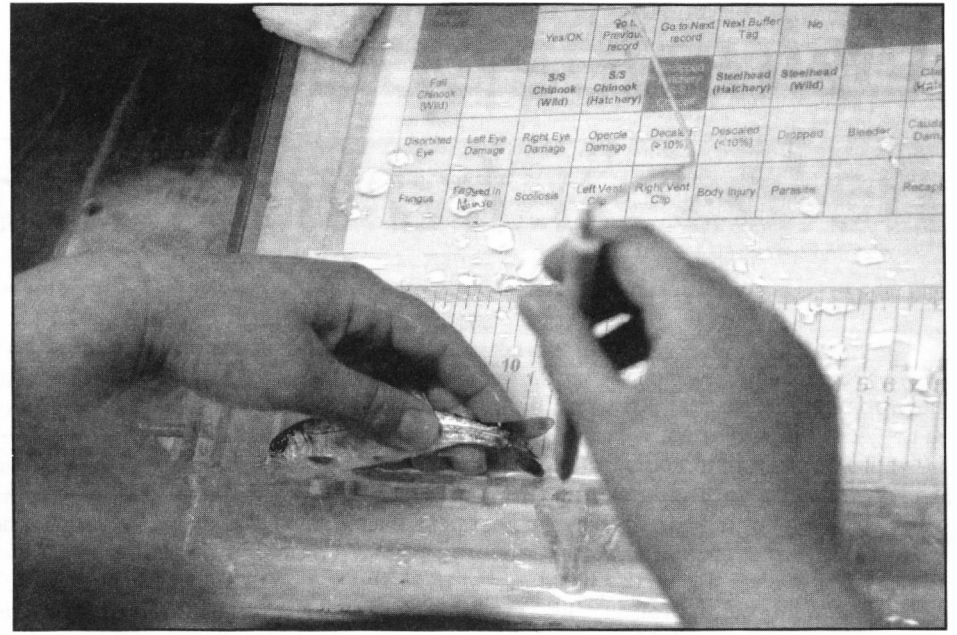
(Bernard Tate of Headquarters contributed to this article.)







The towboat *Mary Jane II* steers a specially-equipped barge full of young salmon and steelhead around dams on the lower Snake and Columbia rivers. The fish take a 300-mile trip and are released just past Bonneville Lock and Dam. (Photo courtesy of Walla Walla District)



Researchers at the Lower Granite Lock and Dam's Juvenile Fish Facility record the physical condition of juvenile salmon and steelhead that bypass the dam through the fish collector system. (Photo courtesy of Walla Walla District)

# Salmon, steelhead populations rebound in Pacific Northwest rivers

By Witt Anderson  
Northwestern Division

Pacific Northwest residents have worked together for many years to rebuild salmon populations throughout the region, and there have been tremendous improvements that have put salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake rivers on the road to recovery. That good-news story, however, has not been widely or accurately reported.

**Salmon runs.** Assertions that the ongoing West Coast fishing shutdown includes Columbia River salmon are not true. Runs of spring Chinook salmon returning to the Columbia River are strong this year, and there is successful commercial, sport, and tribal fishing all the way into Idaho.

**Columbia River fish runs.** Fish runs are rebounding in the Columbia River basin. The most recent 10-year average count of fish at Bonneville Dam in the Columbia River (1998 to 2007) shows a 20-percent increase. That's an upward trend of 200,000 fish. Sockeye salmon are showing a strong run in the Columbia River this year; currently, the numbers are higher than at any time since 1955. These figures are critical because they illustrate that Columbia River runs are performing well at a time when other West Coast stocks are severely depleted.

**Dam breaching.** Some groups have proposed breaching the lower Snake River dams to restore salmon runs in the Columbia River Basin. Breaching the dams would in fact affect only four of the 13 fish stocks now on the endangered species list in the basin, with no guarantee of positive results.

A five-year-long study to evaluate how best to improve passage conditions for salmon and steelhead (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 2002 Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration Feasibility Study), determined that breaching by itself would not necessarily recover even those four listed stocks, but it would have substantial *negative* economic and environmental effects. For more information about the study, go to [www.nww.usace.army.mil/lsr/lsrmain.htm](http://www.nww.usace.army.mil/lsr/lsrmain.htm).

Additionally, the dams on the lower Snake River



A new fish trap system at Lower Granite Lock and Dam tripled the system's tank capacity, giving researchers easier handling of migrating adult salmon and steelhead. (Photo courtesy of Walla Walla District)

produce no carbon emissions and provide enough electricity to power a city about the size of Seattle. If the dams were breached, replacing the lost power would cost \$400 million to \$550 million every year, according to a 2007 Bonneville Power Administration study.

The most likely replacement sources of electricity, coal- or gas-fired power plants, would put 3.6 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually, more than half a million cars would produce on the road every year, according to a separate 2007 cli-

mate impact study by the Northwest Power & Conservation Council.

**Improved fish passage.** There have been huge changes in the river system to benefit fish. The in-river survival rate of Snake River spring Chinook juvenile salmon is nearly three times higher than it was in the mid-to-late 1970s.

Today, with the recent addition of surface bypass structures at most of the dams, few fish pass through the turbines. The vast majority of juvenile fish passing the dams are sent over spillways, and most of those that do not pass through spillways use systems that bypass the turbines.

In addition, the adult salmon migration rate and travel times through the river system are similar to levels before the Snake River dams were completed.

**Salmon recovery costs.** While some question the expense of salmon recovery, Northwest rate payers, not taxpayers, bear 80 percent of the costs to rebuild salmon runs and improve fish passage past the dams. Funds for fish research, dam modifications, and habitat and hatchery improvements come from residential, commercial, and industrial users of electricity generated by regional hydropower dams.

**Regional support.** Recovery of fish species on the endangered list throughout the basin depends on a broad-based cooperative approach by federal, state, tribal, and other regional interests that consider all phases of the salmon life-cycle.

In fact, earlier this spring, the federal agencies, a number of tribes, and two Northwest states working on salmon recovery signed 10-year agreements that will include many new actions and funding for fish recovery in the region.

In contrast to the past, the Northwest can be proud of these multi-year, multi-party accords that put the focus on recovery strategies, not the courtroom. The strategy is based on collaboration, good science, and good sense. It acknowledges that sustainable changes must be made for basin-wide improvements to habitat, hatcheries, and harvest.

(Witt Anderson is the programs director for Northwestern Division.)



# Volunteer peer support helps in traumatic times

By Kristine Brown  
Galveston District

No organization is immune to tragedy, and when it happens the emotional toll can be high. On July 4, tragedy hit hard at Galveston District. Ben Boren of Operations Division was killed in a tragic motorcycle accident. A quick call went out from the chief of Operations Division to Galveston District's Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team coordinator to get peer support assistance.

Early the following Monday, local volunteer peer support was made available to all Galveston District employees.

What is CISM and how did it work in the district? The Critical Incident Stress Management program is a Corps-wide, voluntary, comprehensive system of services, including education and outreach, designed to achieve several objectives such as preventing and alleviating the symptoms of traumatic stress disorder.

CISM exists for Corps employees who encounter a line of duty death or serious injury, multi-casualty incident or disaster, significant events involving employees, and suicide.

The Southwestern Division CISM team, managed by Chris Smith, coordinated both professional mental health provider services (grief counseling) under the district's Employee Assistance Program and peer support assistance by offering one-on-one or group debriefing sessions to manage employees' initial grief,

lessening the impact and facilitating recovery from a traumatic event.

A critical component of the program is to note that all information shared during one-on-one sessions and debriefings is kept confidential and no notes are taken so that an employee may feel comfortable talking about his or her experiences.

What happens during a critical incident briefing session? CISM teams and health care professionals help Corps employees deal with their emotional responses to traumatic incidents, such as the death of an employee. A well-trained team conducts a session that lasts an hour. Attendees might include doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains, and any others involved in the event.

"A lot of tissues get passed around at these sessions," Smith said. This is not a finger-pointing process but rather a forum where people talk about what they think and feel. It's a simple way to start to work through your own feelings, to look for ways to deal with them, and then come to closure.

The Galveston District team took steps to help its employees deal with grief after Boren's death. They opted to provide early intervention, and it made a big difference. Employees were thankful and commented that management cared.

CISM is an extension of the Corps' mission to help others. Galveston District's response demonstrates that leaders want to take care of their people, and CISM is a tool to help.

The USACE CISM program began on May 15, 2006.



Today the program has 56 CISM-trained peer-support volunteers ready to respond if called. It is important for Corps employees to know about this confidential program and to know that help is available after a traumatic event.

After a major disaster like Hurricane Katrina, CISM specialists are assigned to emergency management as first responders to coordinate and dispatch CISM activities.

To schedule CISM help or for more information, call the National Operations Center contacts, Mark Roderick at 618-724-2493 or Larry Bogue at 469-487-7062. Or visit the CISM Web site at <http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/cism/cism.html>

*(Kristine Brown is a park ranger in Galveston District, and a member of the Critical Incident Stress Management team.)*

# Fulbright scholarship leads to India

By Nadia Abou-El-Seoud  
and Vanessa Villarreal  
Chicago District

For one Chicago District person, the quest to make a difference extends all the way to India. Adam Tennant won a Fulbright U.S. student scholarship to India to study engineering.

The Fulbright Program is sponsored by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Tennant will travel abroad for the 2008-2009 academic year through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. He was one of eight applicants in the country to win this scholarship specifically to India. He said he's looking forward to representing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and his alma mater, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

Tennant, an engineer in the Civil Design Section, has bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering from UIC. His time in India will count toward his doctorate degree.

Starting next January, Tennant will research the flexural strength of compressed earth block walls at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. He will work with Professor B.V. Venkatarama Reddy, well-known for his research in the compressed earth block field. He will supply the lab time and expertise that Tennant needs for his experimental work.

"I applied for this scholarship because, frankly, I couldn't find anyone



**Adam Tennant of Chicago District has won a scholarship from the Fulbright Program to study engineering in India. (Photo courtesy of Chicago District)**

who was willing to research the topic at UIC," Tennant said. "Most professors thought I was crazy when I suggested the topic. I was introduced to the scholarship by a friend who learned of my predicament and advised me to just go where the experts are."

Though his options were numerous, he had two specific places in mind to study—India and England. He selected India because large amounts of compressed earth block masonry buildings exist there, and because of the expertise that Reddy could supply.

Tennant said that this type of ma-

sonry, used mostly for housing, is used all over the world, even for houses in the Midwest.

"Compressed earth block masonry benefits the environment and the Indian people since it provides eco-friendly construction material made with local resources by locals," Tennant said.

He said the Corps has provided him with the knowledge, hard work, and experience to prepare him for his journey to India. His co-workers taught him "from the ground up." Also, the district gave him the opportunity to be a lead engineer on various projects, which

was an added learning experience.

"Chicago District is excited to have a member of its team awarded such an honorable scholarship," said John Groboski, Tennant's supervisor and chief of the Civil Design Section. "Although Adam has only been with us a short time, he has provided valuable services to the district. He has demonstrated the aptitude to quickly grasp the principles in many different work groups—cost engineering, civil engineering, and structural engineering. He developed designs, contract documents, and government estimates for several contracts. Given his performance, personality, and work ethic, I'm delighted to know that Adam will someday become a university professor and shape the future work force of civil engineers."

Tennant will return to Chicago District in October 2009. He's looking forward to completing the theoretical work for his doctorate when he returns.

"I look at the people around Chicago District who have taught me a lot," he said. "I'm proud to serve with them. There is an immense level of dedication around here."

Tennant plans to become a professor and teach others who are pursuing engineering. He would also like to continue his research in compressed earth block and other topics.

"I want to continue doing work that is novel and helpful," Tennant said. "To do something I believe in and am interested in."



# Corps builds new school in Caucasus

By Justin Ward  
Europe District

A small boy of 8 or 9 peers through a square windowless opening in a drab gray cinderblock home at the construction workers across the street. Squinting from the sun, his deep brown eyes are barely high enough to peek over the ledge at the men hammering, shoveling, and painting away in the dry afternoon heat.

The site, a new one-story building, sits in the middle of a fetid, neglected, and cheaply built refugee community near Baku, the Azerbaijan capital. To Westerners, the building may not seem like much. But to the boy next door and the neighborhood children like him, it signifies the future. And help from the U.S.

The project, managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is a \$445,000 school for children up to 16 years old. When complete this fall, this 12,000-square-foot school will have 11 classrooms, administration offices, male and female bathrooms, and boiler and electrical rooms. It will offer the children of families displaced in the 1990s by fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh something they've never had — a warm, dry, safe place to learn.

Currently, the children attend school in a small, unheated, dirt-floor building with missing windows replaced by wood, and missing bricks replaced by trash bags.

"This community is very poor — probably one of the poorest in the country," said Charles Samuel, chief of Europe District's Georgia project office. "If there's anyone who needs our help, it's these people." Samuel is based in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The school is financed by the U.S. European Command's (EUCOM's) Humanitarian Assistance (HA) program. It is an unusual use of U.S. military funds, as there are no military units nearby. Yet it is one of several HA projects spread throughout the former Soviet states of the Caucasus deemed valuable enough to get the attention of the Stuttgart-based combatant command.

"They're addressing things that could be at the heart of instability," said Charles Brady, EUCOM's HA program manager, referring to projects like the school near Baku. "It is in despair that you'll find crime, lawlessness, or see children not going to school."

According to the U.S. government's HA program policy document, while "indirect" benefits such as improving a nation's capacity to provide essential services to its populace are important because they discourage susceptibility to terrorist or insurgent influences, the foremost benefit is to achieve U.S. security objectives by promoting DoD goodwill and interoperability with foreign counterparts.

"It's a DoD program," Brady said. "So the projects have to be in concert with the U.S. strategic goals of reinforcing stability and support operations."

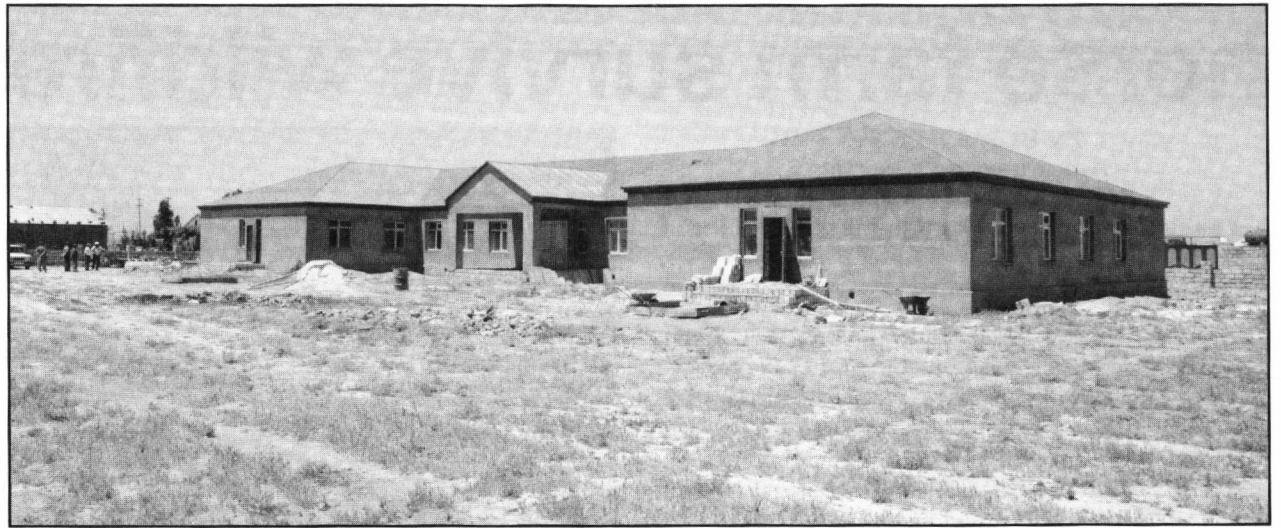
As such, Brady said, countries in the Caucasus are more appropriate for HA than well-developed countries because they still benefit greatly from the transference of knowledge and skills and not simply donated supplies.

Samuel agreed, adding that HA projects like the one near Baku are "the most important we're doing in the district. They really mean something."

In Baku, the U.S. embassy personnel in the DoD's Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) act as EUCOM's eyes on the ground for humanitarian assistance funds, said Dora Avshalumova, a foreign service national and a local Azeri who works at the ODC.

The ODC seeks out the most vulnerable communities of society where U.S. support and dollars would provide the most stability, security, and friendship, Avshalumova said. And then they see what project would benefit them most appropriately.

"This project was not chosen at random,"



This 12,000-square-foot, \$445,000 new school will give children in the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic a warm, dry, safe place to learn. (Photo courtesy of Europe District)

Avshalumova said. "There are many people in our country that need this humanitarian assistance to help them with a better life. And that is why we do it. We have been doing this for several years and, even though each project is different, the end result is always to make lives better. That is why we're here."

About \$3 million in EUCOM's HA funds have gone toward much-needed projects in Azerbaijan, including new construction projects like schools and water projects, as well as equipment like furniture, vehicles, and school supplies. But this school project is the first in Azerbaijan that the Corps has been involved in.

The able alliance that has formed with EUCOM, the Corps, and the representatives in the country has proved successful so far, Samuel said. And he said he knows this project won't be the last.

"We work with the ODC embassy very closely," said Samuel, the project engineer in charge of managing the HA sites. "And we've already picked up a few more projects throughout the country that we're excited about."

Current plans call for Samuel's team to manage the construction of a new school in the town of Agjabedi and to investigate the likelihood of starting a few other projects in rural communities of the country's mountainous interior.

The ease of calling on the Corps to facilitate new projects like these, Brady said, is part of the reason why the program is so successful.

"There's no HA program without the Corps of Engineers," Brady said. "We would have some other form, with a lesser amount of creativity and functionality."

Sandwiched between Iran and Russia, the countries in the Caucasus mountains (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) are full of porous pathways that have been used for centuries to traffic goods.

These countries had been members of the Soviet Union. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the area has received special attention from the U.S. government to ensure the region begins to build and care for its infrastructure, stays stable, and understands that the U.S. is their friend.

In Armenia, for instance, Samuel's USACE staff has been working with the U.S. embassy in Yerevan on a \$300,000 HA project to help three small communities in the center of the country (Sevkar, Vaghashen, and Ttudjur) gain access to potable water.

And in Georgia, thanks to the strong partnership between Samuel's staff, the U.S. embassy in Tbilisi, and the ODC, more than \$1.5 million has been designated for ongoing and coming HA projects varying from installing a small heating system at an orphanage to designing and building a half-million dollar special-needs youth camp.

"Instead of a microscopic view, we try to do a mac-

roscopic view and identify the areas that will benefit the most from the assistance that we give them," said Lt. Col. Matt Shannon, the bilateral affairs officer with the U.S. embassy in Tbilisi's ODC. "At all these locations, our intent is to give these people a better opportunity."

Shannon is EUCOM's humanitarian lead in country. He says that his HA commission is to coordinate the funding that comes from EUCOM, and to assist the ambassador and his staff in setting up projects and coordinating with non-governmental offices.

"Working on these projects gives me a great sense of pride," Shannon said.

The smallest project, \$58,000, is a heating system for an orphanage in Kodjori, located about 30 minutes from Tbilisi.

At the rural hamlet of Gremi, about two hours from Tbilisi by car, an entire child-care center for orphaned, disadvantaged, and handicapped children is being built because the currently facility is too small and run down to guarantee their safety.

At \$137,000, the Gremi project, scheduled to be complete by November, is one of the smaller ones Samuel and his team are executing. But he said it's no less significant.

"For me, personally, these projects really do a lot more for me," Samuel said. "I really feel good about these projects because you can see not only the end products, but also the appreciation on the faces of the people who actually benefit from this."

The largest project in Georgia is a \$500,000 special-needs youth camp in Manglisi, located near Kodjori, that will assist children with diabetes and asthma. These are controllable diseases in the U.S., Shannon said, but almost completely disabling in Georgia.

"The humanitarian assistance we do for children is phenomenal," Shannon said. "At all these locations, our intent is to give these people a better opportunity. It's obviously one of the most rewarding things we can do while we're here."

Brady said he's proud to have such a well-trained team come together to address basic humanitarian needs and make these projects happen.

"This truly is a team effort," Brady said. "Our combatant commanders study the history, politics, and the transitional nature of their countries and think about the steps that we can help them take. And I like working with the Corps of Engineers because they understand what this is about. They don't just say 'length, width, height.' They understand the purpose of it."

"The Corps is pretty much a one-stop-shop," Brady said. "Once we get approval and get the funding in place, we want to turn it over to the guys who can go out and make sure that, from inception through acceptance, a high-quality project is turned over."



# Albuquerque employee's home, horse farm survive wildfires...3 times

By Bruce Hill, Jr.  
Albuquerque District

Visible from miles around, a massive plume of dark smoke billowed from behind the mountainside. As the smoke banked upward into the crystal blue sky, a fire raged below with relentless intensity, punctuated with the crackle of burning trees and bushes.

As thousands of acres blazed in the Trigo fire, residents of the usually quiet and peaceful small town of Torreon, N.M., were busy saving their lives and possessions, and helping others flee their homes.

## First fire

One of those grimly busy people was Beverly Noel, acting operations project manager for Cochiti Lake, Galisteo Dam, and Jemez Canyon Dam in Albuquerque District. Her Torreon home seemed certain to be taken by the blaze, along with her multi-acre horse breeding farm.

She evacuated all of her animals and stayed with friends until residents were allowed to return seven days later when the fire was more than 70 percent contained. The fire had come within 200 yards of Noel's property from the south-southwest. She was grateful to be home, and even more grateful to have a home to come back to.

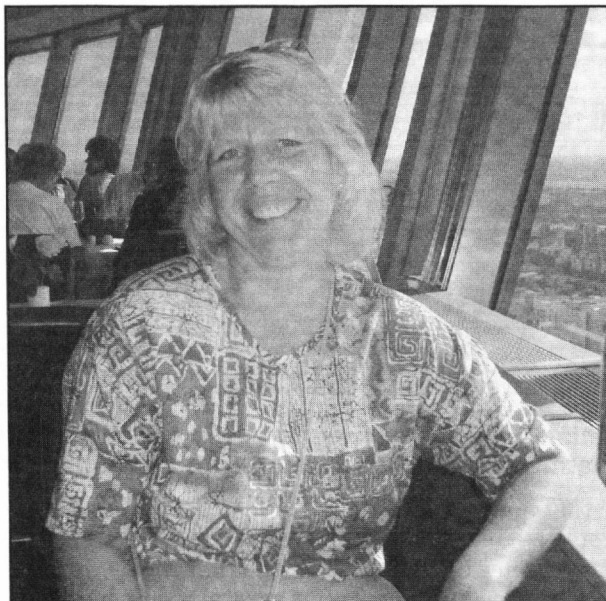
## Second fire

But the danger was not over. Three days later, winds came up and re-ignited the fire, which jumped most of the fire lines to rage out of control.

Residents, including Noel, frantically evacuated again since the fire was much closer to their homes this time. As the property of one of her neighbors ignited, the neighbor and a bulldozer operator created a fire line beside the fire to keep it from reaching Noel's home and the neighboring homes.

"My neighbor and his wife stayed with their property, and were up all night to fight spot-fires, keeping it away from my house" she said.

To put a little normalcy into Noel's life, everyone encouraged her to go to Tulsa District and fulfill her obligation to teach two Corps-related classes. She did so, because there was nothing she could do



**Beverly Noel had to flee her home three times to avoid wildfires during the recent fire season. At right is Trigo, a colt born during one of the fires. (Photos courtesy of Beverly Noel, Albuquerque District)**

with her home. Also, her animals were safe.

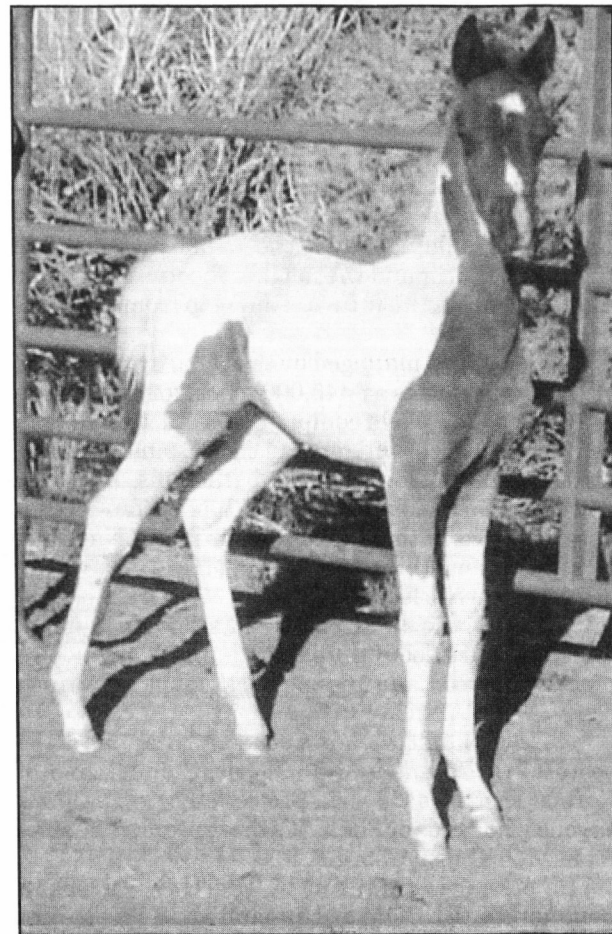
"I returned home several days later to find I still had a house," she said. "My neighbors are the reason I still have a home, for which I am eternally grateful."

The fire came within a quarter-mile on her west side during this second evacuation.

"I knew my animals and I were safe and that I had food, clothing and shelter," Noel said. "I couldn't ask for anything else. Two foals were born during the event, one named Trigo and the other Lucky."

Investigators believe the Trigo Fire was started by hunters on opening day of turkey season. It ultimately burned nearly 60 homes and scorched more than 14,000 acres. It would take nearly a month for Noel to get things completely back to normal.

"I'm one of the very lucky ones," she said. "I had several neighbors and friends who lost homes and have the tremendous task of rebuilding their lives. Please keep the families that lost their residences in your thoughts and prayers."



"Many friends and co-workers offered me their homes and anything I needed to help me, even with the cats, dog, and horses," Noel added. "I appreciated the thoughts, prayers, and offers of service during this time."

## Third fire

In late June, Noel's home was threatened by another fire. The Big Springs fire approached her property on the north side, the only side not burned by the Trigo fire. Fortunately, firefighters and some rain stopped the fire a quarter-mile from her property. The Big Springs fire destroyed 15 structures, including six homes, and burned 5,000 acres.

HR Corner

## Voting assistance easily available

Whether you are military or civilian, stationed in the continental U.S. or abroad, you can find a voting assistance officer (VAO) in your division or district to assist you with your voting needs. The USACE Voting Assistance Program has established VAOs specifically for this purpose.

To contact the USACE VAO, or to find the VAO for your division or district, please call 1st Lt. Keri Daniel at (202) 761-4211. If you prefer, you can find voting information, voter registration instructions, and state specific deadlines online at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

From this Web page you can also access the Federal Post Card Application Standard Form 76 (FPCA SF 76) that will allow you to vote by absentee ballot in the event you are assigned to duty away from home.

Each of the USACE divisions, as well as Headquarters, has already received or will receive a visit

from the engineer inspector general to assess its Voting Assistance Program. Feedback received from each of these visits is meant to strengthen the effectiveness of the program and reach all who are in need of voting-related assistance.

Please be aware that in November after the general elections you may be asked, at random, to participate in a Presidential Post-Election Survey. Each presidential election year, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) conducts post-election surveys as required by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).

This survey helps determine voter participation by military and overseas citizens in the electoral process and assists in the evaluation and improvement of the program. This survey is not the same as the Election Day survey conducted by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

If you are asked to complete the survey, it is be-

cause you fall into one of the six populations that make up the FVAP post-election survey:

- Department of State voting assistance officers
- Local election officials
- Unit voting assistance officers
- Uniformed service members (active duty and reserve)
- Non-federal citizens overseas
- Federal civilian employees overseas

If contacted to take the survey, we strongly encourage you to participate, as your responses will play an important part in improving the absentee voting process for military and overseas absentee voters.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the survey, please contact Erin St. Pierre at 1-800-438-8683 or [vote@fvap.ncr.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.ncr.gov).

There is still plenty of time to register to vote if you have not yet had the opportunity to do so.



# Around the Corps

## Civilian of the Year award

James Hathorn, a senior hydraulic engineer from Mobile District, has been selected for the 2008 LTG J.W. Morris U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Civilian of the Year award.

The honor recognizes an employee who has achieved the highest standards of excellence and who made the most significant contributions to the mission, reputation, and prestige of the Corps.

Hathorn was selected from a field of 17 nominees, and received the Civilian of the Year honor at the awards banquet during the Summer Leaders Conference in Pittsburgh.

During the recent drought, Hathorn led a multidisciplinary team to develop a drought operation plan for the rapidly declining Apalachicola-Chatahoochee-Flint river basins.

The Exceptional Drought Operation (EDO) was developed under challenging conditions — an ongoing record drought, competing political pressure from three states, and a short schedule to develop and implement. The EDO found that balance between protecting people and the endangered species in the river basins.

The drought culminated in President Bush's request that the Secretary of the Interior facilitate negotiations between the governors to develop a drought operations plan. Hathorn worked hand-in-hand with the Bureau of Reclamation, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the governors of three states.

## Quality of life

Two schools and a renovated water distribution network in Dohuk Province will improve the quality of life for the residents. The projects, overseen by Gulf Region North District, are built by Iraqi firms using funds from the Economic Support Fund.

The schools in the Malta and Shindohka neighborhoods each have 12-room compounds that include an administrative building, laboratory rooms, toilet facilities, play area, garden, perimeter wall, guard house, and maintenance room. The facilities will support about 2,400 children in two school sessions a day and employ more than 40 teachers. At a total cost of \$2.5 million, these schools are scheduled for completion by the end of the year.

The Masike to Jami Bini water network will provide a reliable water supply for about 65,000 people. Replacing the existing damaged network and installing new water lines will improve the quality and quantity of safe drinking water in the area. The \$1.5 million project will also increase water pressure, fill existing water storage tanks, and slow aquifer depletion. This project is also scheduled for completion by the end of the year.

"Americans take a lot for granted," said Jim Hilario, the Dohuk resident engineer. "Just by turning on the faucet, we're assured clean reliable water for cleaning, cooking, or drinking. I'm blessed to be part of rebuilding the infrastructure of Iraq."

## Public affairs awards

The Locke L. Mouton and Michael C. Robinson awards have been given to honor USACE public affairs practitioners during 2007.

The winner of the Michael C. Robinson Award for public affairs practitioner of the year is Michael Logue, a re-employed annuitant. Logue worked for Memphis District during 2007. The Louisiana Recovery Field Office public affairs team, led by Logue, developed aggressive media and community relations programs to engage and inform Corps employees, FEMA, Louisiana, the nation, and residents of the greater New Orleans area about Corps accomplishments in the Louisiana recovery operations after hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The Locke L. Mouton Award honors individual USACE public affairs practitioners for superior achievement. This year the winners were:

- Media Relations and Public Information — Khaalid Walls, Philadelphia District
- Community Relations — Todd Hornback, Louisville District
- Command Information — Justin Ward, Europe District
- Emergency/Disaster Response: Michael Logue, Memphis District

## NBA job

Retired Maj. Gen. Ronald Johnson, former deputy commander of USACE, has been hired as senior vice president of referee operations in the National Basketball Association.

The move splits the job of Stu Jackson, executive vice president of basketball operations, into two positions. Johnson will oversee all aspects of officiating, while Jackson will continue to handle all other domestic and international basketball matters.

## Mussayib power plant

Iraqis are immersed in another summer of triple digit heat. Electrical demand from appliances such as air conditioners, washing machines, and microwave ovens continue to outstrip supply. Electricity generated from facilities like the Mussayib gas generation power plant helps reduce the gap between need and capacity by putting additional megawatts on the grid.

Gulf Region Division engineers and the Government of Iraq's Ministry of Electricity are working together to provide more electricity to Iraq. The \$26.8 million project is among the most recent plant refurbishments that are adding electricity to the grid.

"This power plant will bring on-line about 400 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 36,000 Iraqi homes," said Joseph Wendl, GRD electrical generation lead. "But the added value of Mussayib centers on the new refinery. The refinery can produce more than 40,000 barrels of diesel each day."

Construction work at the plant includes building the water treatment plant, energizing the switch yard, rehabilitating the plant's generators driven by LM 6000 turbines (the same engines that power 747 airliners), and building the new refinery.

By collocating a refinery at Mussayib, the power plant will have a steady supply of diesel to run the generators.

"Ideally, the refinery will produce more diesel than is required at Mussayib," said Wendl. "The Minister of Electricity plans to use the additional fuel to power other Baghdad gas engine generation plants. This is important because diesel is difficult to come by in this country."

## Project delivery team of the year

The 2008 project delivery team (PDT) of the year awards were presented during the Summer Leaders Conference in Pittsburgh.

**Excellence Award** — The Excellence Award was presented to the Operation Border Brothers Project Delivery Team of South Pacific Division and Southwestern Division. The team was recognized for teamwork, effort, and response in executing the complex Secure Border Initiative for several agencies within the Department of Homeland Security.

**Honor Award** — The Honor Award was presented to the Division Headquarters Project Delivery Team in Kansas City District. The team was recognized for teamwork and effort in delivering a command and control facility to serve as the new headquarters of the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kan.

**Merit Award** — The Merit Award was presented

to the Jackson Avenue Whole Barracks Renewal Project Delivery Team in Seattle District. The team was commended for teamwork and effort in providing affordable and sustainable barracks for the Soldiers at Fort Lewis, Wash.

## Communicator of the year

Each year the public affairs community of practice recognizes a member of USACE outside of the PA career field for his or her contributions in communicating the USACE missions and programs.

This year the judges selected Aaron Snyder as the Ronald J. Ruffennach Communicator of the Year. Snyder is project manager for the Roseau, Minn., flood damage reduction project. As project manager, Snyder routinely speaks to the media and participates in public meetings in the Roseau area, including city council meetings.

When the I-35 bridge collapsed in Minneapolis, Snyder worked side-by-side with St. Paul District public affairs staff as a PA augmentee at the Lower St. Anthony Falls lock and dam site for 32 of the first 70 hours of the disaster.

He worked with international, national, regional, and local news media, as well as with the White House press secretary for President Bush's visit to the disaster site. Snyder will receive his award at the Summer Leaders Conference.

## Master logistician

Matthew Sannito of the Logistics Activity has been certified as a demonstrated master logistician. He is first USACE member to achieve this certification.

The Demonstrated Logistician Program is managed through the Society of Logistics Engineers and the Army Logistics Management College. The program has three levels. The first is demonstrated logistician, next is demonstrated senior logistician, and the highest level is the demonstrated master logistician.

All levels require that the individual continue his or her professional education, plus continued demonstrated professional performance in the logistics field.

## Courthouse complex

As Iraq strives to reform its system of justice, Gulf Region Division is completing the Al Rusafa Courthouse complex in Baghdad. The compound has a courthouse, a witness security facility, and 16 additional structures for security, maintenance, and concessions.

Secure apartment quarters for about 150 witnesses, and offices for the judges and other legal advisers are located in the 4,000-square-meter witness security facility. Offices, conference rooms, and courtrooms for the High Judicial Council of Iraq are located in the 10,200-square-meter court house.

The two buildings are joined by an enclosed corridor that allows witnesses and court officials to move between the facilities without danger.

"This courthouse provides the capacity to fairly and openly conduct trials of criminal suspects," said David Crumpton, GRD deputy sector lead for security and justice. "The complex is essential to improve security and gain confidence of the Iraqi people in a fair judicial process. This courthouse complex will play an integral part in Iraq's effort to implement an effective rule of law process within the country."

The compound also includes closed caption television, security cameras, and an outer force protection wall with an entry control point and secure parking.

The \$10.8 million project is expected to be completed in September. It was funded by the Iraqi Relief and Reconstruction Fund and built by a local Iraqi construction company. Engineers from GRD participated as the contracting and construction management/quality assurance for the project.



# Iraq children's hospital is 1st in 30 years

By John Connor  
Gulf Region South District

Art Bennett, a veteran of more than 28 years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has spent most of the past year in Iraq as the project manager for a key USACE initiative, a children's hospital in Basrah.

The 94-bed Basrah Children's Hospital (BCH) is the first new hospital built in Iraq in nearly three decades. In addition to giving Iraq a state-of-the-art pediatric facility with a focus on oncology (the medical field dealing with cancer), the project provided hundreds of jobs and strong support for the local economy.

As with others who are immersed in the project, the children's hospital became a labor of love for Bennett. "When I met our BCH Iraqi partners in September 2007, we shook hands," he recalled. "When I depart, there will be embraces of appreciation and friendship."

Bennett came to his current assignment from Jacksonville District. He is winding up his third tour in Iraq, a tour spent riding herd on a complex project with multiple partners and contractors. The partners include Project HOPE, a nongovernmental organization devoted to making health care available to people around the globe, especially children, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which is administering a grant of nearly \$22 million from Spain.

Bennett said his departure "will be very difficult, but I take comfort in knowing that USACE will press forward to completion and the children of southern Iraq will be treated in this new one-of-a-kind hospital when it opens in 2009."

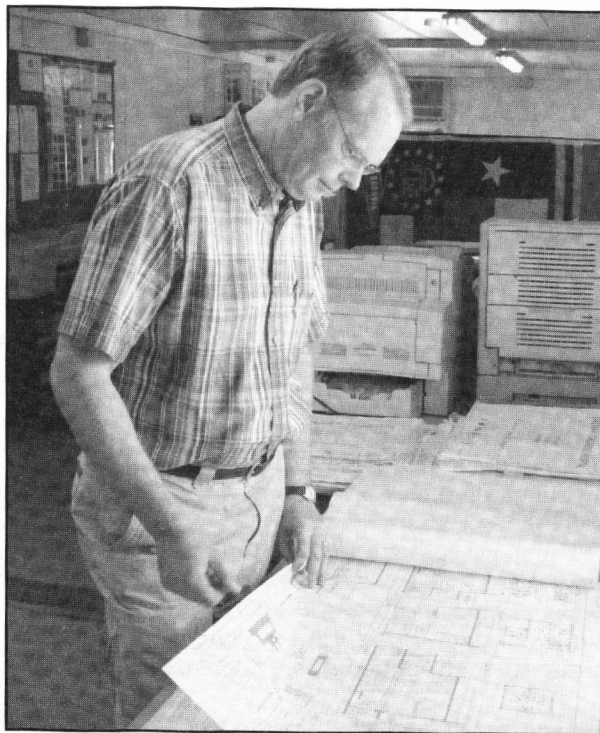
The project is managed by USACE's Gulf Region South (GRS) District, which does reconstruction works in Iraq's nine southern provinces. Bennett performed a dizzying array of tasks while serving as project manager, including maintaining close coordination with partners, managing project monies and addressing new funding needs.

Bennett has a long list of people to commend, starting with "the nine GRS Iraqi engineers who work on the site every day," said Bennett. He also cited the BCH leadership from the Iraqi Ministry of Health (MoH) Basrah Health Directorate, saying these leaders "have stepped up and remained steadfast in taking steps to partner with the U.S. government in construction, maintenance agreements, permanent electrical power, and working with Project HOPE to plan staffing and receive training in the various aspects of hospital equipment and management."

Bennett also praised and thanked the GRS engineers, architects, and construction representative, saying they served as the integrators of the project's many pieces, always pushing toward the goal of providing an operational hospital. "Seventeen contracts make up the construction and equipment provision being accomplished by the U.S. and UNDP," he said. "It is GRS's responsibility to piece all this together as the integrator to realize a functioning hospital by next January."

The hospital is designed to support southern Iraq in its objective of reducing child mortality by half within five years after opening, a goal that will affect more than one million children. While it will be a national leader in children's health care, the hospital will primarily be a pediatric referral center with a special focus on pediatric oncology, providing specialty services not otherwise available in Iraq.

Components of the project include a 160,000-square-foot two-story, 94-bed children's hospital building, mechanical and electrical plants, a 38-bed dormitory, medical waste treatment system, oxygen generation plant, warehouse, back-up generators, roads/parking, and landscaping. Furniture and computer equipment are provided under a HOPE and U.S. government partnership. Iraqis will train to operate the array of mechanical and electrical systems that are the back-



Art Bennett studies blueprints for the Basrah Children's Hospital. (Photo courtesy of Gulf Region South District)

bone of the facility.

The project's price tag now stands at \$163.8 million, paid by several sources of funds. It includes the \$22 million grant from Spain administered by the UNDP, \$30 million from Project HOPE for high-end medical equipment and hospital staff training, and \$9.8 million from the Iraqi MoH for consumables. The MoH is also providing permanent electrical power, a wastewater treatment plant, and all the staff to oper-

ate the facility. In addition, \$50 million of the total was spent by the previous project manager, U.S. Agency for International Development, before the job was handed over to USACE in 2006.

The partnership of the Corps, HOPE, and UNDP will yield about 8,000 pieces of medical equipment, furniture, computers, and other necessary items to equip the hospital for operation, according to Bennett.

"With the help of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, they will complete the list with the necessary consumables to stock the shelves and warehouse for successful operation," he said, noting that clinical and management staff training is provided by HOPE and the World Health Organization through a UNDP grant.

GRS is pressing for a substantial completion on all U.S. and UNDP-issued contracts by the end of this year. Bennett said MID Contracting Company, the prime contractor for the main hospital building and the mechanical and electrical plants, is currently about 88 percent complete, and that UNDP contracts are about 11 percent complete.

The hospital is not all that Bennett has accomplished during his tours of duty in Iraq. During his first tour, Bennett found time to partner with some friends to arrange a life-saving operation for an Iraqi boy. During his second tour, he established a system to provide, via donations from churches, schools, and individuals in the U.S., needed items such as shower shoes, clothing, and other personal items for wounded American soldiers in Baghdad.

During his third tour, Bennett realized one more step in his quest to help Iraqi families, this time the construction of a modern pediatric hospital to help Iraqi youngsters battle childhood cancer. "It was an extreme privilege to walk alongside my Iraqi friends and coalition partners as we worked together to improve the level of medical care in southern Iraq," he said.

## Sappers blast water tower

Mary Beth Hudson  
Tulsa District

First, spectators saw a flash and a cloud of smoke. Next, the old water tower started to tilt. Then, they heard the explosion.

It was a lesson in the speed of sound experienced by people who gathered to watch the demolition of the old water tower at Fall River Lake in Tulsa District.

Capt. John Miller leads the 111th Engineer Company (Sapper), 1st Engineer Battalion, stationed at Fort Riley, Kan. He is also a former platoon leader of Col. Anthony Funkhouser, commander of Tulsa District, and their connection led to a partnership that benefited both the Soldiers and the district.

The engineer company, which returned from Iraq late last year, is always looking for real-life engineering challenges to keep them trained for their military work. The old water tower, which needed to be removed from Fall River Lake, provided just such an opportunity.

The obsolete tower, built in 1948, had a 25,000-gallon tank and stood about 95 feet tall. It was used for the Fall River Lake Office and Overlook water supplies, but its final purpose was to train young engineer Soldiers. They established a safe perimeter; inmate labor built blast barricades; the news media were informed; charges were set; people gathered to watch; and unmanned cameras were anchored by sand bags. Then came the traditional warning, "Fire in the hole!"

Two planned explosions took down the tower. The first caused it to lean and the second made it fall — right between two trees as planned.

Lots of work went into the event, and park ranger Gary Simmons pulled it all together. He coordinated with Kansas state parks, the highway department, nearby residents, and the utility company, which tem-



The 111th Engineer Company (Sapper) gathers in front of the water tower that they knocked down with explosives. (Photo courtesy of Tulsa District)

porarily removed transformers in the area of the blast.

The Soldiers arrived the day before to prepare. On the morning of the demolition, Simmons said, "It was a lot of work, lots and lots of man-hours, but it was all worth it to spend last night camped with those young Soldiers and hear their stories and look at their pictures. I think getting to know them on a personal level was the high point for the entire staff."

Following the tower's fall, nearly 100 Soldiers and family members were guests at a cookout provided by the Fall River Project Office.

"Everyone worked real hard," said Susan Couch, manager of the Fall River, Big Hill, and Toronto projects. She noted that all the extra work and preparation for both the demolition and barbeque were accomplished during a flood watch. Fall River was on the edge of needing 24-hour surveillance. Fortunately, there were sunny skies that day, and the weather stayed clear through the meal and family time.