



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

# Engineer Update

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## Corps responds to Hurricane Charley

Article by Penny Schmitt  
Wilmington District  
Photos by Jonas Jordan  
Savannah District

It's seven in the morning, time for a shift change at the Emergency Response and Recovery Organization (ERRO) in Florida. Another sauna-like night is ending for some, and another sauna-like day is beginning for others working around the clock to bring emergency aid to the people and communities devastated by Hurricane Charley.

People here are working as fast as they can, well aware that many Floridians are suffering overwhelming losses and seemingly unending discomforts and frustrations.

"This is where we really become 'One Corps, Serving the Nation,'" said Col. Bob Carpenter, who is commanding the response and recovery effort. "We've pulled in people and resources from all over, and their individual district identities just disappear when they walk in and get down to work. Tulsa, Albuquerque, Omaha, Wilmington, St. Paul, wherever—doesn't matter. They're here to work together and accomplish some big missions."

As the briefing proceeds, one mission after another reports. Charley is such a big storm that the Corps has taskers in most of the response missions assigned to us as the engineer agent of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

### Operation Blue Roof

Charley ripped off some roofs and punched holes in others. Florida's rainy climate means that every day exposes homes and belongings to further damage. The Corps' mission is to temporarily shield homes and non-commercial buildings. At first the estimate was about 10,000 in Florida's hardest-hit counties, but on the afternoon of Aug. 22 the mission suddenly expanded to 15,000.

Within a week of Charley's passage, close to 6,000 rolls of blue plastic roofing tarps had been delivered to a staging site, 12,000 more were enroute, and 21,000 were identified in stock. Corps and county officials were scrambling to put together the most effective outreach plan for "Operation Blue Roof," since repairs require asking residents for rights of entry to fix their homes.

Americorps volunteers and contractors marshaled teams and set about applying the temporary roofs. Corps quality assurance workers in their familiar red shirts accompanied the teams to ensure the work was done safely and correctly. The immediate goal was to fix 500 roofs by Aug. 25, and continue to step up the pace of work after that.

### Temporary housing

Every morning's newspaper brings more heart-wrenching stories about the fragile elderly and the working poor who have lost all their belongings and shelter to the storm.

FEMA can get travel trailers and other temporary housing. The hard part is setting up instant community infrastructure. A temporary housing team is surveying sites to find areas that can accommodate both travel trailers and other mobile types of housing.

By Aug. 23, the team had identified four potential sites for temporary housing, 20 trailer/mobile home parks with 572 pads available for immediate use, and 166 pads that can be prepared for use.

The team was also working hard to explore alternatives for delivering usable sites with water, electric power, and wastewater utilities available.

### Water

The Corps water product delivery team was "positioning for mission closeout" on Aug. 21. Community water supplies have been turned back on, and after delivering 3.6 million liters of water to hurricane-damaged areas, the team was successfully diverting incoming water shipments to storage facilities.

But on Aug. 22, they found themselves coordinating with another potential response mission taking shape in the Pacific. Typhoon Chaba slammed into Guam overnight.

"We already own the water," said Hugh Heine, water mission manager for the Hurricane Charley ERRO. "Another team can use our excess supplies if they need them."

Heine's team is just one of six available to answer the call for emergency help.

"This just shows that the Corps can handle multiple emergencies as well as handle its mission in Iraq," said John Roberts, contracting officer for the water team, and a veteran of several months' service in Gulf Region Division.

### Other missions

**Ice** — By Aug. 21, the ice mission had supplied more than 12 million pounds of ice for refrigeration needs. Orchestrating a stream of trucks delivering, staging, and transporting ice to several locations was the name of the smooth-running game.

**Power** — Although power companies put forth a massive and successful effort to restore power, emergency needs for specialized facilities like hospitals and other critical facilities have to be met. The Corps' power mission is designed to answer those spot needs for power generation, while power companies rebuild dam-



Hurricane Charley caused widespread damage in Florida, like this destroyed home and power lines in Port Charlotte.



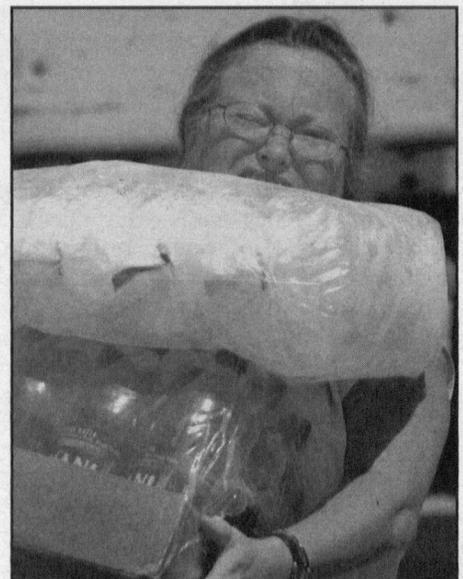
"Fort DTOC," the Corps of Engineers' Deployable Tactical Operations Center in Lakeland, Fla.

aged networks.

By Aug. 22 the team had answered 270 calls for assessment and identified 128 requirements for generators. The team worked with contractors, and with Soldiers from the 249<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (Prime Power). They were cycling back to ensure smooth operation of generators installed earlier in the week. About 20 new requests for assessment and assistance are still arriving each day.

**Debris** — Florida counties are experienced in dealing with storm debris. They have contracts in place, and FEMA can supply quality assurance monitors to ensure the work is done properly.

The Corps' mission, in this case, has been to provide technical assistance and training to FEMA workers and to 10 counties. By Aug. 22, some members of the debris mission team were adding their muscle to the burgeoning roof repair effort.



A woman in Punta Gorda, Fla., carries a load of ice and water provided by the Corps of Engineers.

Insights

# 'Trouble is often a blessing.'

By Col. Mark Fentress  
Chaplain, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Many years ago my beloved Grandmother Stella, a dedicated and faithful follower of the Lord, shared with me that "Trouble is often a blessing. Never forget that, Mark!"

Forty-some years have now gone by since she passed that truth on to me. Today I am a far wiser person because I have now experienced first-hand the liberating, divine truth that trouble is often a blessing. Indeed, disappointment and trouble are often God's appointment to bless and grow us into a deeper, more vibrant spiritual maturity.

The Rev. Charles Allen tells a wonderful story that illustrates this eternal truth that blessings can arise from the ashes and heartache of trouble.

A Norwegian fisherman with his two sons went on his daily fishing run. As usual, the mother went down to the wharf to see her family off and to wish them safety and a good catch.

By mid-afternoon the sea was rough, the waves were rolling higher than usual. A sharp, brisk wind whipped little spits of salty spray into the faces of the rugged fisherman and his teenage boys. The wind increased, the waves grew like humped, marine giants of a prehistoric age.

The fierce storm caused the little boat to toss and pitch as the three rowed desperately to get back to shore. The wind put out the light in the lighthouse on shore, leaving



the fishermen in the dark, groping home by guesswork.

Meanwhile, a fire broke out in the kitchen of their rustic cottage. Before the fisherman's wife could put out the fire, it destroyed all their earthly possessions except the clothes on their backs.

Finally, the father and the sons were able to row their boat safely to shore. Their wife and mother waited on the beach to tell them the tragic news of the fire.

"Karl, fire has destroyed our house and all our possessions," she said tearfully. "We have nothing now."

But Karl just smiled at the terrible news.

"Didn't you hear me, Karl," his wife repeated. "Our house is gone."

"Yes, I heard you," he replied. "But a few hours ago we were lost at sea, riding high waves, and death seemed mighty close. Our only guide to the shoreline, the light from the lighthouse, went out. For an hour I thought death would be our lot. Then a dim, yellow glow appeared in the distance. It grew bigger and bigger. We turned our boat and rowed with all our might to get in the path of that light. When we did, we followed it safely to the shore."

"You see, Ingrid, that little yellow glow our house burning," her husband explained. "At the peak of the blaze, we could see that seashore as bright as day. The same fire that destroyed our house created a light which saved our lives."

So you see, some of our greatest blessings can come from the troubles that we experience in our journey. Dare to trust God and keep your faith strong, and you will find blessings that will help you grow, even in times of trouble.

**Prayer** — Lord God, grant us faith like a prospector that seeks the nuggets of God's blessings from the gold mine of trouble. Bless, O God, those now in the grip of trouble, and bring them to a place of blessing, victory, and peace. **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.)*

# TAC builds new airbase for Egyptians

By Joan Kibler  
Transatlantic Programs Center

Hundreds of Egyptian and U.S. government personnel turned out for the grand opening of Fayid Air Base, a state-of-the-art base built for the most recent sale of F-16 aircraft to Egypt by the U.S. Transatlantic Programs Center (TAC) led the design and construction of the \$128 million base.

Air Marshal Magdy Shaarawy, responsible for all Egyptian Air Force operations, hosted the May 12 ceremony.

Maj. Gen. Guy Bourn, Chief of the Office of Military Cooperation Egypt, said that completing Fayid Air Base finishes five years of work to deliver the aircraft.

"Peace Vector VI represents the full spectrum of requirements — operations, logistics, infrastructure, and support," Bourn said. "This is the latest in a series of bilateral projects between the Egyptian Air Force and the U.S. Air Force" that has been ongoing for 20 years. The work is accomplished through the Department of Defense's foreign military sales program, which permits the sale of defense equipment and services to eligible foreign nations.

Shaarawy also acknowledged the 20-year relationship between the Egypt and U.S. governments. "This project is a celebration of the efforts of many people, and it shows the cooperation between the U.S. and Egypt," he said. "I have very high appreciation for everyone who has kept the wheels running on this project."

During the ceremony, Shaarawy expressed appreciation to the multi-agency team — the Office of Military Cooperation, the U.S. Air Force Materiel Command, TAC, and Contract International and Orascom, the U.S./Egyptian joint venture construction firm.

Fayid Air Base was upgraded to accommodate the sixth sale of F-16 aircraft under the Peace Vector program. The base is located on the western shore of the Gulf of Suez.

"Peace Vector VI began in 2000 with its initial design



**Renovations at Fayid Air Base included rehabilitation of 32 aircraft shelters.**

work," said Tom Jackson, TAC's project manager. "Like the Peace Vector programs before Fayid, building this air base was an integrated team effort with a multitude of U.S. Air Force, Egyptian Air Force, contractor, and Corps people on both sides of the ocean working to meet the customer's needs, and the required completion date."

The U.S. Air Force Materiel Command is the program manager, and TAC provides design, construction, and associated services. Burns and McDonnell designed most of the base facilities, with the Corps providing criteria for the airfield pavements.

The construction contract was awarded to Contract/Orascom in June 2001. All DoD activities in Egypt fall under the purview of the Office of Military Cooperation, part of the ambassador's staff.

On the Corps side, Omaha District, the Transportation Center of Expertise, was engaged "to work with us to perform an airfield pavement evaluation and prepare a report that established the pavement criteria," Jackson said. "Having the proper pavement is critical for flight operations."

The contract called for upgrading certain existing structures and building new facilities.

"In total, the Peace Vector VI resident office managed

the construction of 96 facilities, rehabbed 32 Russian-designed aircraft shelters, and upgraded the runways to U.S. Air Force standards," Morley said.

William Ricketts, TAC's construction representative, said the operational and maintenance areas are the "heart of the facility." Operational facilities support flying and maintaining F-16 aircraft and include airfield paving and lighting, shelters, an aircraft maintenance hangar, control tower, engine shop, and squadron operations building.

The maintenance and industrial facilities support aircraft operations, such as vehicle maintenance, motor pools, munitions storage, POL (petroleum, oils, and lubricants) storage, water and wastewater treatment plants, sewage treatment plant, and base power plant.

Also included in the contract are utility systems, fire protection, security fencing, and personnel support facilities such as housing and a dining hall.

At the peak of construction, the Corps had 18 team members in its resident office, and the contractor had more than 3,000 workers on site.

"One of the most significant challenges we faced was unexploded ordnance," Morley said. "The contractor and our people faced that daily with the initial site work and demolishing the existing facilities to make way for the new construction. We worked with the Egyptian government to have the site cleared, but this delayed construction start. Once the site was cleared, we had an aggressive schedule to get the bulk of the facilities ready for the aircraft delivery."

The first F-16s arrived in March, and it was impressive to watch the Egyptian Air Force pilots landing them," Morley continued. "With the arrival of the F-16s, we had an active base to finish construction around, but we were fortunate to have the major portion of construction occurring while the base was inactive."

While the air base is essentially complete, some additional work remains that will keep a resident office in place.



# 'Essayons' dredges in Pearl Harbor

Article and Photos  
By Capt. Neal Nyberg  
Portland District

The image that most of us have when we hear the words "Pearl Harbor" are bombs dropping and exploding, debris flying, fighters with red zeros darting overhead, clouds of black smoke, and chaos and pandemonium on the ground.

But the reality is now quite different. Pearl Harbor today is dusty, dry jungle forests, red dirt, heat...and gray ships. Coral reefs, blue clear water, white sand beaches, palm trees, gentle breezes...and gray ships. White, buff, tan, and pink buildings, old and new, paint worn and peeling, new stucco...and gray ships. Faded names of commands and units, abandoned airfields with cracked and patched concrete...and gray ships.

The dredge *Essayons* departed Portland and, after eight days of transiting 2,200 miles of the Pacific Ocean at 13.5 knots (about 15 mph), she arrived at Pearl Harbor. We dredged 14 areas in 34 days, and then departed for Eureka, Calif. The trip back was 2,000 miles and took 7.5 days.

Naval Station Pearl Harbor is the point of the defense spear for the Pacific Ocean. There are scores of warships, support ships, attack submarines, missile submarines, salvage ships, research ships, all mostly gray with the occasional black hull of a merchant cargo ship supplying fuel.

About half of the base is covered with concrete and buildings — shipyards, dry docks, cranes, towers, warehouses, air strips, housing, all interspersed with tropical trees and lawns. The other half is rather natural and untouched.

The harbor is a natural saltwater estuary that drains the distant high green mountains and eventually the gradual slopes surrounding it. It is a flat drainage basin, swampy in some areas and shallow in many parts. Creeks, normally dry, drain into the various lochs, what we would call narrow bays or fingers.

With each rainstorm, a flood of red dirt from the surrounding hills pours into the harbor, staining it a red-brown color. The blue water returns a day or two later as the mud settles, gradually silting in the harbor.

When Pearl Harbor was first discovered, it was quite shallow — access over an ocean reef was by canoe only. The lochs (West, Middle, and East they're now known) were shallow and swampy, riddled with obstructions and snags. They were rimmed in layers of sedimentary rock or, in some places, volcanic rock eroded away for millenniums. Separating the fingers of water were wide swaths of flat land, covered with dense, dry lowland forests, almost impassable except by native foot trails.

Most early Western observers found the harbor too shallow and undeveloped for any immediate use, but it had obvious potential.

Pearl Harbor today has an entrance from the sea through the coral reefs, about 45 feet deep and several miles long. The lochs serve different purposes; some have docks for mooring ships, others for minor repairs and major shipyards. There are supply docks, fuel docks, ammunition docks, long-term ship moorage, salvage, and research facilities.



The dredge *Essayons* works near the historic battleship *Missouri* in Pearl Harbor.

Hickam Air Force Base, next door to the naval base, shares runways with the Honolulu Airport. Almost every plane flying into Honolulu flies low over Pearl Harbor on approach.

The *Essayons* stood out in Pearl Harbor like a sore thumb. It's a U.S. Army ship, not a boat, and not a gray ship, but black and buff. Dredge? What's that?

It took the crew a while to get used to the "Navy-speak" used to coordinate our operations with the control tower. For example, we had to ask permission to move, not just announce it as we do in other ports. And they couldn't just ask us, "What are you doing?" They had to say, "Interrogative, *Essayons*, request your intentions?"

It's the difference between civilian and military procedures. After we broke out the dictionary, and they got used to pronouncing *Essayons*, we got along famously.

The *Essayons* worked in Pearl Harbor for a little more than a month, not including the 15-day round-trip transit time.

Every 10 years or so, Portland District provides dredging support to maintain Pearl Harbor, a task that has been going on for decades, at least since World War II.

Portland District is also the primary provider of full-time hydrographic survey support for the Navy in Pearl Harbor and other Pacific ports.

This mission started quietly at the request of the Navy. The U.S. Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Honolulu District, and Portland District started the project planning and discussions.

Eventually the mission firmed up, the money and timing fell into place, and after much work by Portland's Channels and Harbors Project, the schedule was set.

This project was unusual because the Navy wanted Portland District to also administer a contract for clamshell work in Middle Loch along with the government dredge work in Pearl Harbor.

Jim Anderson, a civil engineer in Waterways Maintenance Section, was project manager, assisted by staff from contracting, finance, hydrosurvey, dredge operations, plant project, and others.

Honolulu District provided engineering support, logistics and regulatory assistance, plus local communications with the Navy and dredges.

Hopper dredging is generally the same anywhere, but Pearl Harbor provides unique challenges. The channel edges in many places are steep, almost vertical. They are often old coral or volcanic rock



The *Essayons* crew sifts through old cables dredged from Pearl Harbor. The dredge recovered cables, scrap metal, even ammunition.

underwater cliffs. Some of the bottoms are not down to the project depth we are used to on the mainland, and so we might hit hard rock close to the required depth.

Most of the material in the harbor is mud interspersed with rock and old coral fragments. The rock and coral we dredged could be anywhere in size from a pea to a small boulder.

Today the Navy is an active player in caring for the environment, and we experienced this first-hand during the planning and execution of the operations.

All around the harbor remain remnants of the environmental policies of the past. We dredged what seemed like miles of old cables and wires from abandoned projects, and trash of all kinds — tires, scrap metal, half a dozen live ordnance shells, and small arms ammunition.

During World War II an ammunition ship exploded in West Loch that destroyed several ships, and killed scores of men. Thousands of rounds of various munitions exploded or were dispersed over the area.

That ordnance is what we were picking up. We would call a Navy Unexploded Ordnance Team to come out and get the shells when we found them. None really posed an imminent threat of exploding, but we treated each one as if it did, to be safe.

We cleaned up maybe a hundred cubic yards of trash and debris, which was taken

to a landfill. The dredged materials were dumped in an ocean disposal site several miles offshore in water 1,500 feet or deeper.

Because we dredge 24 hours a day, we cannot get off the ship during our 15-day tour aboard, and most of the crew didn't see much of the islands, except coming and going from the airport. Most of the crew flew home to their families on their days off; a couple of lucky crewmembers stayed over for all or part of their days off.

The Navy and Honolulu District personnel were quite interested in the dredge, and we hosted many tours to explain operations and show them the ship. Lt. Col. Charles Markham, Acting Commander of Portland District, met with our Navy customers and Honolulu District VIPs.

In the end, the *Essayons* operated continuously without any significant downtime during both ocean transits and the 34 days of challenging dredging, which is attributable in a large part to the hardworking and experienced dredge crews.

The Navy plans major new work in Pearl Harbor in the channels and other infrastructure during the next several years. Some of the future work will probably include hopper dredging, and the *Essayons* crew hopes to retain their position as the U.S. Navy's Army dredger at Pearl Harbor.

(Capt. Neal Nyberg is the master of the dredge "Essayons.")

# Maryland, Army cop helps train Iraq's police force

Article and Photo  
By Mitch Frazier  
Gulf Region Division

Deploying to train Soldiers is nothing new for 45-year-old Matt Breeding, an Army Reserve major and military police officer from Oldtown, Md. After nearly 27 years in the Military Police, and 22 years as a Maryland state trooper, Breeding had become one of the Army's top cops in security and keeping Soldiers and their belongings safe.

Nearly seven months after major hostilities were declared over in Iraq, the Army called upon Breeding's expertise to help protect the Soldiers and civilians of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers working in Iraq.

The Corps had already sent hundreds of its civilian volunteers and military officers to Iraq to rebuild the devastated country when Breeding was forced to step back into his Army combat boots last November and report to Washington D.C., where he would lead the Corps' Anti-Terrorism and Force Protection planning in the Provost Marshal's Office.

Breeding, who had taught at the Maryland State Police Academy and also served as the lead officer of the Army Reserve's curriculum to instruct military police, was at home in Washington teaching classes to the Corps' leadership and coordinating the safe movement of the initial Corps reconstruction efforts in Iraq.

"It was a perfect marriage for me," said Breeding, a husband and father of three. "Teaching and planning are certainly my strengths, and the opportunity at the Corps allowed me to do both."

In less than a month in his D.C. office, Breeding became well known for his work in keeping Corps employees safe in Iraq. His work drew the attention of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, and prompted a request for Breeding to deploy to Iraq to work on the frontlines of bolstering security for Corps personnel and other U.S. interests.

As the agency worked to enlist Breeding's expertise, the Corps' director of Homeland Security, Edward Hecker, was also seeking opportunities for the Corps to liaison with other federal agencies involved in Iraq.

The fit, Breeding said, was perfect.

He soon found himself in Baghdad serving on the Iraqi Ministry of Interior's Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, an interagency and international group of law enforcement officials charged with teaching the new Iraqi police force how to restore and maintain law and order in the newly free country.

"The Corps is spending and managing an incredible amount of money in country to restore the infrastructure and to keep its people here on the ground safe," Breeding said from his Baghdad office. "By investing in teaching the new Iraqi police forces, we will increase security here and allow everyone to further concentrate on building a solid foundation for the Iraqi people to build upon."

Sitting beside special agents from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and officials from the Department of State, Breeding works 14-to-18-hour days building curriculum that will teach the squads of new Iraqi police the philosophies and principles of democratic policing and human rights.

"We used to focus on how to deal with the enemy, because our police force operated like the military. We didn't focus on the criminal aspect or human rights," said Maj. Gen. Jihan Baban, the second in command of training at the newly established Iraq Ministry of Interior. "Now we focus on the police officer's duty to serve and protect and to protect human rights."

Building upon international policing standards from the United Nations and the European Union, Breeding and his team continue to evolve the 320-hour new basic police training to include everything from criminal investigations, counterterrorism, site security, executive protection, fire-



Maj. Matt Breeding, an Army Reservist with the Corps of Engineers, is training Iraqi policemen.

arms training, kidnapping investigations, post-blast investigations, and human rights.

The course, he said, will help bridge the gap between former Iraqi police officers and the new program graduates who will eventually fill the country's 396 police stations and more than 250 border patrol checkpoints.

"It's critical that we develop a sustainable system for the new Iraqi police force from the top down," said Denver Fleming, the team's director of training for law enforcement, and former Police Chief of Smyrna Beach, Fla. "A properly instructed police force free from political and military control is the backbone of any free democracy. Without it, you don't have true law enforcement. You'll have what was here before, and clearly we know that doesn't work."

While Fleming and Breeding continue to develop the new Iraqi police force, it won't be a short-lived effort.

"This is about building long-term, comprehensive, and sustainable law enforcement organization and program that will include police and border and highway patrol," Breeding said.

The long-term portion of the training is where Breeding currently focuses most of his time, as he now serves as the deputy director of training and bureau chief for specialized training and professional development.

"They're hungry for this training," he said. "You can see it in the classroom. Their willingness to learn and to become a better, more modernized police force."

That goal, Breeding said, requires an assurance of an agency that is free the former regime's system that put the police at whim of the elected leadership.

It also requires a constant evolution of the training.

"This is not a static program or environment. We have to continue to help the new force evolve, which will in turn make this a safer place for the Corps in country as well as the Iraqis."

"Just like in the U.S., threats here change and the demands on police change," Fleming said. "In light of current kidnapping events, we're working with the FBI at Quantico, Va., to develop a kidnapping investigation course based entirely on the actions we've seen here."

The course began July 17.

"The cooperation between the multi-national forces and the Iraqi government to make a better police force is exceptional," Baban said. "With this level of coordination, I think everyone in Iraq will see a very good outcome."

Nearly 29,000 new Iraqi police officers have graduated from the team's basic and advanced training academies since 2003.

## Boonie hats & Hit-me lights The lingo of 'downrange'

*(Editor's note — Every war has its own language... a stew of humor, foreign words, and military jargon. Here is a sampler of lingo contributed by Corps team members in Iraq and Afghanistan. For much more, please see the on-line edition of the "Engineer Update.")*

*Many thanks to the folks who contributed.)*

**battle-rattle**—The helmet, flak vest, belts, and other gear worn by Soldiers and civilians when working outside of the Green Zone.

**boonie hat**—Soft-brimmed hat worn by civilians and Soldiers alike. The design dates back to the Vietnam War.

**Celebratory fire**—Refers to the Iraqi tradition of shooting into the air in celebration.

**DCU**—Desert camouflage uniform.

**downrange**—A war-zone or other dangerous region. Corps personnel who go to Iraq and Afghanistan are said to be "going downrange."

**Essayons Base**—A complex of three residences built for King Faisal in Baghdad. Now headquarters of the Gulf Region Division. Also called the Villa.

**Freaky Friday**—The day when you take your weekly dose of malaria medication, which gives some people wild, colorful dreams. Also called Malaria Monday, Wacky Wednesday, etc.

**Giant Voice**—Alarm system in the Green Zone that warns "Take cover! Take cover!" or announces "All clear! All clear!"

**Green Zone**—A two-square-mile secure area west of the Tigris River where CPA personnel are billeted, and where Coalition Provisional Authority operations are managed. See *Red Zone*.

**Groundhog Day**—The repetitive nature of daily operations in Iraq. Refers to the movie where Bill Murray lives one day over and over.

**Hit-me lights**—Any outside lights that could be used to target you.

**Insh'Allah**—"If God wills" in Arabic. A common phrase among Muslims.

**It's all good.**—A shrug-it-off line used when nothing goes right.

**kevlar**—Synthetic fabric used to make armor. Often refers to the helmet made of the material.

**lead rain**—Falling bullets after celebratory fire.

**Mafi moshkila!**—Arabic for "No problem!"

**PSD**—Personal Security Detail. U.S. Soldiers or privately contracted personnel who bodyguard civilians while in danger areas.

**reach-back**—Refers to Corps personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan consulting with experts back in the U.S. See *tele-engineering*.

**Red Zone**—Any area outside of the relative safety of the Green Zone. See *Green Zone*.

**RUMINT**—Rumor intelligence, information gained from rumors. A play on human intelligence (HUMINT) and signal intelligence (SIGINT).

**Saddam's Revenge**—Diarrhea, same as Montezuma's Revenge and other traveler's problems.

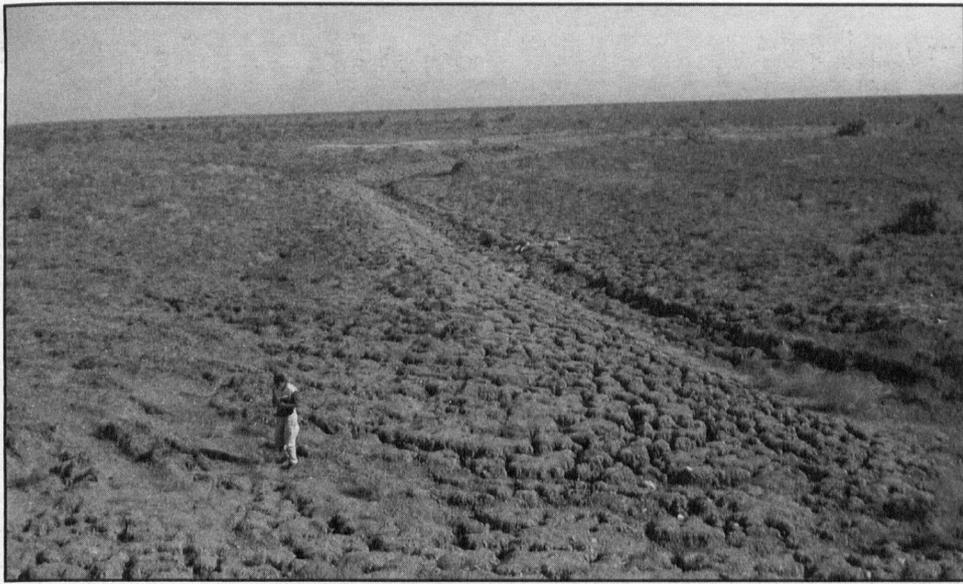
**SAPI**—Small Arms Protection Insert. Bullet-stopping plates inserted into the flak vests.

**shooter**—The person in a vehicle with a weapon providing protection.

**Speed is your friend.**—A common reminder to travel fast in unsafe areas.

**tele-engineering**—Portable secure communications gear used to share engineering information and plans across great distances. See *reach back*.

**up-armor**—To attach armor plates to a vehicle.



In retaliation for rebelling against him, Saddam Hussein had the Mesopotamian Marshes drained to destroy the Ma'dan culture. Today, the marshes are coming back, thanks to restoration efforts by coalition groups including the Corps of Engineers. (Photos by Hassan Janabi)



## Corps helps rebuild Iraq's marshes

The Mesopotamian Marshlands, considered by many to be the cradle of civilization, were largely drained by Saddam Hussein's regime. Now the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is helping to restore the historic wetlands.

Located between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the marshes were once among the world's largest wetlands. Within this 8,000-square-mile area, the 5,000-year-old culture of the Ma'dan, or Marsh Arabs, developed the first alphabet.

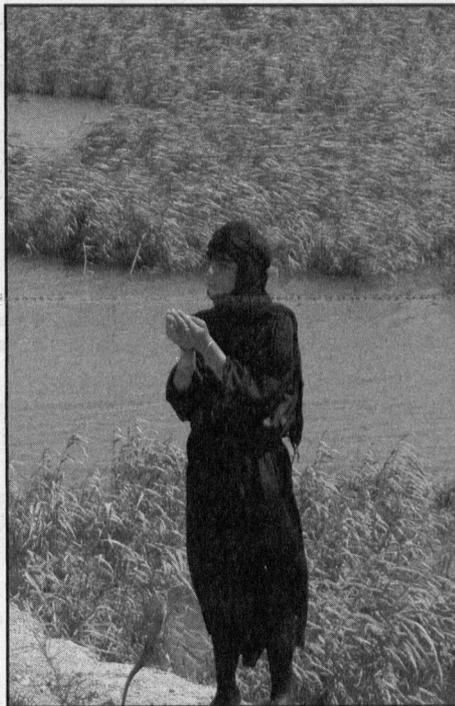
Before their destruction, the Mesopotamian Marshlands spanned an area roughly twice the size of the Florida Everglades. They were known for their biodiversity and cultural richness. The marshes were home to millions of birds, fish spawning and nursery areas, and various agricultural crops. The devastation by the former regime has been compared to the deforestation of the Amazon.

After putting down a rebellion by the Ma'dan at the end of the Gulf War, the Iraqi government set its full wrath upon the group, burning towns, killing livestock, and making the drainage of the marshlands a top priority. An estimated 150,000 people were displaced; some were forced to relocate as many as 18 times.

By 1999, the marshlands had been reduced to seven percent of their original state. Many native species were lost, a natural filter system for waste and pollutants into rivers and the Persian Gulf was devastated, and an entire culture rich in history was destroyed. The area was in dire need of structure and rebuilding efforts.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), an independent federal government agency that funds development projects in many countries, leads the effort to restore these marshlands. USAID and the Iraqi Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), along with the Corps, are developing a water management model that will aid efforts to reconstruct Iraq's historic water flow system and restore Iraq's marshes.

To help the remaining marshland population and support other U.S. efforts to secure Iraq's infrastructure, USAID turned to the Corps' Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC) for its expertise in modeling

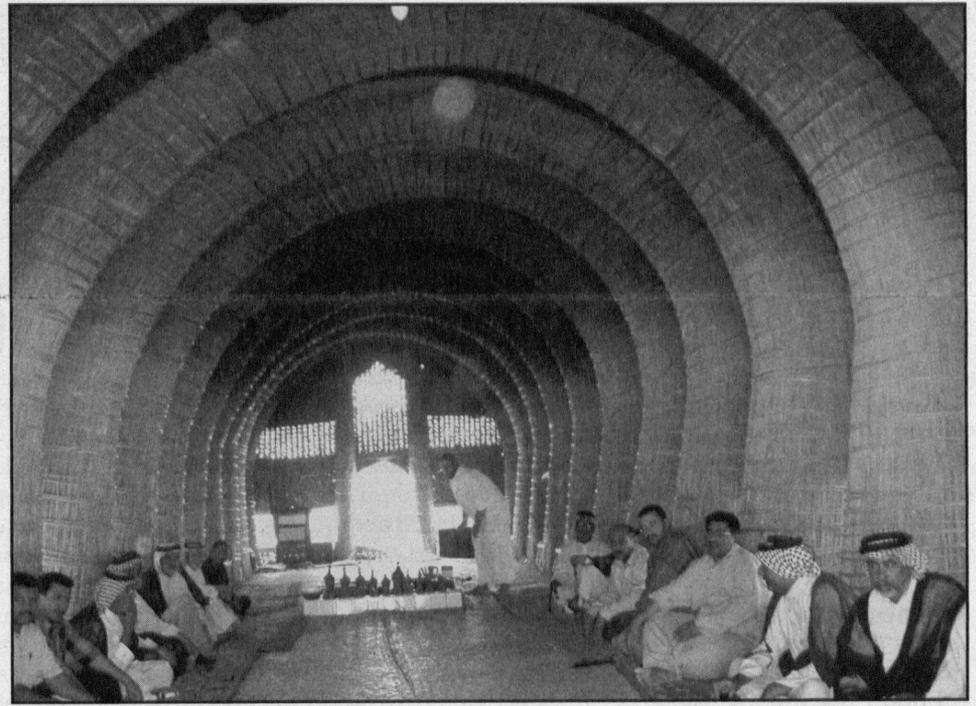


A young Ma'dan woman pauses while gathering reeds. (Photo by Hassan Janabi)

water management in large watershed systems. HEC is responding by developing a Reservoir-Simulation Model. This model will provide real-time simulation to help U.S. officials and the new Iraqi leadership make smart operational decisions to maintain and update the country's complex system of dams and canals.

"After the invasion, Iraq's dam and infrastructure system was intact, but the institution was in disarray," said HEC Director Darryl Davis. "The Ministry of Water Resource's headquarters building was burned, and their ability to manage the complex system of dams and barrages was significantly compromised. This model will provide modern technology for use in both day-to-day operation decisions, and long-term water resource management studies."

A training program between HEC and the MoWR will integrate the model into Iraqi officials' decision-making process. Once put in place, officials said the data from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers it provides can be used by other organizations.



Reeds are an important raw material in the Ma'dan culture. The *mudhif*, a traditional Ma'dan guest house, is made entirely of reeds. (Photo by Hassan Janabi)

"We expect this model to have far-reaching impacts," said Dan Barcellos, Chief of Water Management Systems at HEC. "Not only will it support the restoration efforts in the Iraqi marshlands, but we anticipate its use to support water management operations and studies for water resources planning and development."

HEC is developing the Reservoir-Simulation Model in two phases.

Initially, a preliminary water balance model will cover the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the lowest dam in the system, considerably above the delta region. The first phase established a relationship between HEC and other Iraqi groups working with the marshlands. It also successfully developed the concept of the water control system with the help of two skilled MoWR engineers. They contributed field experience and local knowledge to the team while working with HEC on site in Davis, Calif. Phase 1 was completed in November 2003.

The second phase of development is underway and is expected to be complete by the end of the year. Phase 2 will de-

velop the model in more detail and extend the lower boundary to marsh areas. It will also add structure and develop data sets useful in long range planning and studies of alternative operations.

"The Phase 2 model will provide the Ministry with the capability to make detailed assessments of the consequence of alternative reservoir releases before issuing operation instructions to dam operators," said Davis. "Also, other Iraqi agencies, such as the Ministry of Environment, and nongovernmental agencies interested in marsh restoration, such as the U.S.-based Iraq Foundation, will be able to use the model in support of their studies and activities."

The partnership between the Corps and USAID is designed to eventually restore the Mesopotamian Marshland ecosystem through improved management of the nation's water infrastructures and natural resources, officials said.

(Army News Service.. Article submitted by the Gulf Region Division Public Affairs Office.)

# Orphanage in Tbilisi gets new buildings

By Brian Temple  
Europe District

At times, Europe District team members may play the role of the unsung hero. They work on projects that prove to be invaluable for a few, and their satisfaction for a job well done may be just a hug, or a handshake.

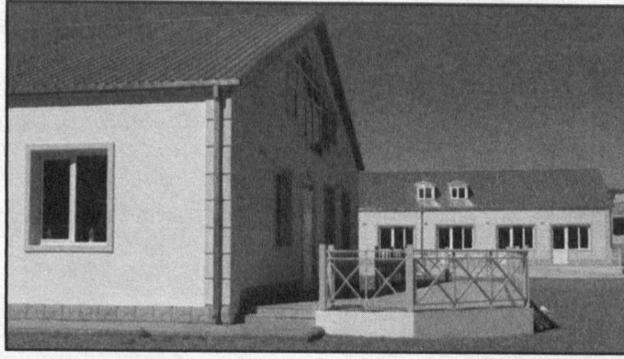
We all remember the big projects — a \$50 million hotel for the Armed Forces Recreation Center, Europe, or the \$6.1 million headquarters for the American Forces Network, Europe. But in the Republic of Georgia, several Europe District employees helped change the lives of a handful of orphans. This is the humanitarian side of Europe District that many usually don't get to see.

In late June, Europe District's Tbilisi Project Office participated in the dedication ceremony for three new buildings added to the Digomi First Step Children's Village.

Located in the capital of Tbilisi, the new structures are a residence for 12 orphans, and a training school for more than 30. The third structure houses the gas-fired mechanical heating system for the facility.

The First Step Foundation was created in 1997 as a Georgian charity and non-governmental organization, said Kellis Nobles, program manager of Europe District's International Engineering Center. The main goal of the foundation is to promote the social rehabilitation of physically and mentally disabled children through de-institutionalization and integration into the community.

The new buildings at Digomi will improve First Step's efforts to teach the orphans valuable skills that will help them become more independent.



The new residence hall and training building at the Digomi First Step Children's Village in Tbilisi, capital of the Republic of Georgia. (Photo courtesy of Europe District)

Funded under the Department of Defense's Humanitarian Assistance-Other (HA) Program, the project became a reality through a unique partnership among the First Step Foundation, U.S. Embassy (Georgia), the Naval Regional Contracting Center (Naples, Italy), U.S. European Command (EUCOM), local contractors, and Europe District.

In June 2000, the U.S. Embassy entered into discussions regarding how it might complement an ongoing humanitarian project managed by First Step for the Digomi Children's Village, Nobles said. Through the DoD and EUCOM, the U.S. Embassy earmarked \$280,000 for the project.

The new structures are similar in design to an existing one-and-a-half story concrete and masonry residential

building built in 2001 as the initial facility for the village. Design plans and cost estimates developed by Tbilisi Engineering Group LTD were provided to the U.S. Embassy for award of a construction contract.

Although EUCOM designated the Naval Regional Contracting Center as the project contracting proponent, the agency had no construction contracting experience in the Republic of Georgia. They requested assistance through the U.S. Embassy. The embassy approached Europe District for assistance due to the district's numerous years of experience as design and construction agent for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Georgia Border Security and Law Enforcement Program.

During his initial visit to Tbilisi, Lt. Cmdr. Chris Higgins, a Navy contracting officer, met with Nobles, and Herman Celosse, Tbilisi project engineer. They exchanged information vital to project success, including a list of qualified contractors.

On July 25, 2003, a construction contract for \$261,111 was awarded for the new buildings to DTS LTD Tbilisi. Because of its established presence in Georgia, the Europe District Tbilisi Project Office was also asked to perform the construction supervision and administration.

During his address at the dedication ceremony, U.S. Ambassador Richard Miles thanked each partner and acknowledged that the project's success was founded on the dedicated team approach.

Maj. Douglas Peterson, U.S. Embassy Office of Defense Cooperation, said "as a result of the completed improvements, the Dagomi Facility is currently the premiere orphanage in the Republic of Georgia."

HR Corner

## Awards effective, but use them wisely

Recognizing employees with incentive awards is probably the most flexible management tool a manager has. Public recognition of superior ideas and outstanding individual and group performance helps build morale. It can also help build and maintain a highly motivated and productive organization.

### Different types of recognition...

There are three categories of recognition — monetary, honorary, and time off. All can serve as motivation to the recipients, and to other employees. Effective use of awards requires consideration of the nature of the contribution and the needs and interests of the employees.

For example, some might consider it appropriate to grant an honorary award to an individual for long and distinguished service, while giving a cash award to an individual or group for superior job performance or for producing an excellent and/or complex assignment in an outstanding way.

But human resources theorists will tell you that each employee is different, and that getting to know your employees will help you better understand what motivates them.

Since employees usually pay bills with cash, most performance recognition consultants recommend staying away from cash gifts. "While money is probably the most universally desired reward, it is not the best recognition award because it has no symbolic value and, once spent, there is nothing to remind the employee of the special event," says Dr. David J. Cherrington, the author of numerous books and research articles on organizational behavior and leadership.

The best organizations and managers don't just hand out gifts to recognize achievement; they create memorable experiences for employees and their co-workers. The most powerful moment of a recognition experience can come when an award is presented. What is said in that setting has tremendous potential for positive affect on the recipient and on co-workers who are present.

### ...given for the right reasons...

As is true with any tool, there is a right and a wrong way to use the Incentive Awards Program. Some managers use recognition to focus employee attention. Some may give awards to less deserving individuals rather than have a frank and somewhat difficult conversation with subordinates about performance expectations and accomplishment. Experts recognize neither purpose as an appropriate use of an awards program. It requires a commitment from all levels of an organization to create a place where people know their contributions are noticed, appreciated, and rewarded.

Managers should grant awards judiciously, particularly performance awards, in order to avoid giving the impression that it is an entitlement. Awards should only be granted where fully deserved, to those who meet the criteria, and with full explanation as to the accomplishments being recognized. In this way, employees will be confident of the value and integrity of awards granted within an organization will be maintained.

Service awards or career achievement awards are used by more than 90 percent of organizations in North America. But many have allowed awards to become entitlements. When done right, using the right recognition strategy and with the right presentations, incentive awards programs are a perfect opportunity to recognize every employee in the organization to open communication channels, enhance personal worth, and build relationships between management and employees.

### ...and at the right time...

All too often, recognition for a job well done is not given until many months after the service or performance that earned the award. While it is certainly better to give the award later than never, one of the most important aspects of recognition is its timeliness.

Awards should be given within 30 to 60 days of the act or service being recognized. This means that a manager

needs to begin the awards process as soon as they become aware that something "recognition-worthy" has taken place. This is particularly true in the case of those awards that require an Incentive Awards Committee review, e.g., either to recommend for the commanding general's signature or send to HQDA if that is the approval authority. These types of awards require, at a minimum, 30- and 60-day lead times, respectively, for the award to be ready for presentation.

Clearly, some planning is required to ensure that an award is given in as timely a manner as possible, or else an award's intended result can be diluted.

In the USACE 2012 environment, such planning is even more important since giving a cash award may involve individuals from entirely different parts of the organization. Should a multi-organizational team wish to recognize a team member assigned to a different organization and supervisor, it is imperative that the supervisor of record be informed, be provided the justification, and agree with the award before the award is processed.

### ...ensure the right results.

The U.S. Corps of Engineers' Incentive Awards Program exists to help enhance the performance of all employees, and help retain top performers. The program does three things. First, it reiterates the definition of first-rate work. Second, it shows employees that we truly value their contributions. And third, it gives employees an opportunity to celebrate their triumphs with others.

### ...more next month

Next month *HR Corner* will continue the discussion about incentive awards by publishing a list of equivalent military and civilian awards, providing on-line resources for you to learn more about awards, and describe some special awards to consider for employees involved in either support to military contingency operations or civil disaster relief.

# Around the Corps

## Public service recognition

Eddie Paulsgrove has been selected the 2004 Federal Disabled Employee of the Year, and awarded the U.S. Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service.

Paulsgrove works in the Regulatory Branch of Albuquerque District. He is the Corps' Special Emphasis Committee Chairperson for Employees with Disabilities, and also sits on the University of New Mexico's (UNM) Disability Advisory Group. Paulsgrove has been instrumental in implementing the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) for College Students with Disabilities in New Mexico. WRP has recruited students from UNM who are now employed by Albuquerque District.

## WO5 retires

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jeffrey Popp, the Corps' first engineer warrant officer to achieve his rank, and the Army's senior engineer warrant officer retired at the Topographic Engineering Center (TEC). Popp served as the principle military adviser to TEC's Operations Division on Army geospatial operations, doctrine, and crisis support requirements. Popp also managed the careers of the Soldiers assigned to TEC.

Popp joined the Army as a private, and said that achieving his rank was a milestone. "There are about 11,000 warrant officers on active duty, of which only about 400 are CW5s. On top of that, there are only two engineer warrant officer military occupational specialties with about 70 officers total. It's pretty tough to achieve the rank. I'm certainly glad I did."



**CWO5 Jeffrey Popp at his retirement.**

## Afghanistan contract

Transatlantic Programs Center has awarded a second design-build project for Afghanistan National Army (ANA) brigade facilities to Perini Corporation. The project is the design and construction of brigade facilities at Gardez in eastern Afghanistan. It is in addition to a similar project awarded for Mazer-e-Sharif. The award value of each individual project is \$52 million, for a total of \$104 million.

The facilities at each site will support a regional brigade and will each include a water treatment, storage and distribution system; a sewage collection system; a prime power plant and site distribution system; a dining facility; administrative buildings and barracks, and associated site work. The scope of work also includes the development of a master plan for each base to include training ranges and additional facilities for future expansion.

## Baby eagle rescued

Maintenance workers at Rough River Lake in Louisville District an eaglet (baby eagle) on the ground near a demolished nest that had fallen from a tree. The eaglet had sustained significant but non-life threatening injuries.

Working together with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Corps, a raptor rehabilitation service from Louisville came to Rough River to pick up the bird, assisted by project maintenance and ranger personnel. The raptor rehabilitators transported the bird to Wisconsin and placed it with a foster mother. Once the eagle is fully rehabilitated, it will be released back into the wild.



**The rescued eaglet (lower right corner) with its foster mother.**

## Kaumalapau Harbor repairs

The Hawaii State Department of Transportation and the Corps held a groundbreaking ceremony on Lanai on Aug. 15 for breakwater repair at Kaumalapau Harbor.

The \$16 million project will repair the existing breakwater to reduce wave action in the harbor and to increase harbor safety and usability. Much of the damage to the breakwater was done by storms during the 1980s and 1990s.

Kaumalapau Harbor is Lanai's only commercial harbor and is essential to the welfare of the island's residents and visitors. There are no other island harbors capable of accommodating tug and barge services, which bring in virtually all consumer goods and fuel.

The project contractor is Traylor Brothers Inc. Work is scheduled to run until May 2006.

## Ordnance removed

Contract workers from Tetra Tech-FW, Inc., recently completed the recovery and destruction of old target practice ordnance rounds at an old range in the Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge. The land was part of the former Fort McClellan, Ala.

The work was performed in compliance with an Alabama Department of Environmental Management administrative order. Twenty-four 81mm practice munitions were recovered from the site, located in a relatively remote area with limited access that is fenced and locked.

"Although training rounds of that type are not designed to explode, there's always a chance that improper handling of a fuse by a trespasser could result in an injury," said Dan Coberly, Public Affairs Officer for Huntsville Center. "Not all the rounds were fused. To ensure safety, all items were destroyed. Whatever scrap remaining is inspected, characterized, and disposed of in accordance with state and federal rules."

## Competitive sourcing updates

The question is asked, "Who is in charge of developing the government's A-76 proposal?"

The employees are. Under the A-76 process, the employees make up the Most Efficient Organization Team, therefore they are in control of coming up with efficient ways to structure themselves to become competitive and win the competition.

In addition, the Information Management/Information Technology Team has been collecting data since mid-July. Key members of Corps divisions and centers are visiting the Performance Work Statement Team in Jacksonville District to provide workload data essential for the PWS Team to develop the PWS document.



**Campers enjoy Pickensville Campground in Mobile District, one of the top 100 campgrounds in the nation.**

## Top campground

Reserve America recognized Pickensville Campground in Mobile District as one of America's Top 100 Family Campgrounds. Each year more than 3,000 campgrounds are reviewed, but only 100 are selected for this honor.

The top 100 are selected based on criteria requested by family campers including park amenities, scenery, and educational facilities. The quality and availability of hot showers, laundry facilities, hiking trails, family beaches,



## Chief promoted

**Lt. Gen. Carl Strock, Chief of Engineers, (who stands six-foot-three-inches tall) leans down so that his wife Julie, and Gen. Richard Cody, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, can pin on his third star. The promotion took place Aug. 6 at Corps Headquarters. (Photo by F.T. Eyre)**

radio-free zones, visitor centers, educational programs, children's activities, and location were also considered.

Pickensville Campground offers 176 Class A campsites, providing concrete pads, picnic tables, grills, lantern posts, fire rings, electrical hookups, water hookups, and plenty of shade. The campground also offers accessible sites, sites with sewer connections, sewer dump station, laundry facilities, hot showers, playgrounds, hiking trails, multi-purpose game courts, and a beach.

Last year, more than 21,000 people visited the campground, located off Highway 86 in Pickensville, Ala., on Aliceville Lake of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.

## Milfoil cleanup

New England District temporarily closed the swimming beach at Elm Brook Park, N.H., while Hopkinton Lake was treated for invasive variable milfoil. Variable milfoil is an invasive plant that displaces native aquatic plants that provide habitat for animals, fish, waterfowl, birds, and insects. If untreated, milfoil will destroy the lake habitat.

A herbicide named Aqua-Kleen was used. Aqua-Kleen has been used to control noxious aquatic plants, including variable milfoil, for more than 20 years. It has been approved by the EPA and is a herbicide of choice by the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture Pesticides Board.

Aqua-Kleen has no effect on humans, animals, birds, or fish once it is diluted in the lake. It only affects plants, and selective application limits what plants are affected. During last year's treatment only milfoil was eradicated, and native plants were not affected.

The contractor tested the water and submitted the results to the New Hampshire Pesticide Board before the beach reopened. NED also tested the lake levels to ensure the beach is safe for swimming. All the tests were within state standards and the beach reopened as scheduled.

## More power to Iraq

Engineers from Iraq and the Corps have breathed new life into a generator near Kirkuk, bringing an additional 17 megawatts of electricity to the country's power grid. The renovation of the generator at the Mullah Abdullah power plant is the fifth at the plant to be rehabilitated.

Since the regime change, Iraqi and Corps engineers have worked to stabilize the country's neglected electrical infrastructure, increasing electricity production to a level that exceeds pre-war provisions. Electricity production in Iraq now averages about 4,625 megawatts, a total that services about 13.9 million homes.

Increasing available electricity continued throughout August as additional generators came on line. Since beginning work in Iraq nearly a year ago, the Corps has added an 1,409 megawatts to the grid.

# The Giant Serpent of Kerr Lake

## Or, how wild rumors get started!

By Sherrie Storm  
Wilmington District

That story you may have heard about the giant...

- *Serpent*
- *Anaconda*
- *Water moccasin*
- ...caught in...
- *Kerr Lake*
- *Buggs Island Lake*
- *Clarksville Bridge*
- *Satterwhite Point*

...that was brought to the Kerr Lake Dam where we...

• *Couldn't identify it and sent it to the Smithsonian.*

• *Identified it as an anaconda brought in by South American workers.*

• *Put a tracking device on it and released it back into the lake.*

• *Put it in a big tank on display at Kerr Lake Dam.*

...is a just a **rumor!**

Yep, it's just a tall tale that got spread by misinterpretation of one digital photo of a dead three-foot-long copperhead snake taken by a bridge inspector named Brad Rogers.

I'm sorry to report that the truth isn't nearly as exciting as the rumors. But it's still a good story, and it illustrates how urban legends and Bigfoot sightings and UFO scares and such things get started.

OK, here's what really happened...

One day in June, someone e-mailed me a photo of a dead copperhead next to a bridge, with its mouth propped open with a stick. I recognized it immediately because I'm a snake lover and a biologist.

I also recognized that the snake *looked* big due to the camera angle. In fact, it looked *real* big. But there were clues like

the guardrail and the rivets that put the snake's size in perspective. At least that's what I thought.

*Wrong!*

Within a few days, I had received calls from local newspaper reporters and dozens of citizens around Clarksville, Va., asking me about the giant snake that...take your pick of the options above. After many questions and answers and lengthy conversations, I thought I'd heard the end of it.

*Wrong again!*

Weeks went by and the calls increased. The story got wilder, the snake got bigger, and the location was now on the North Carolina side of Kerr Lake. I even got chewed out by one citizen claiming to be an animal rights activist who was upset that I allowed it to be killed!

Remember, please, that I *never* saw the snake and *never* took its picture. But by this time I was the go-to person for this beast that continued to capture attention. The calls were coming in from as far away as Oxford, N.C., and Raleigh, N.C.

And that was just *my* experience. Occoneechee State Park was getting calls, too, from people wondering if it was safe to come to Lake Fest!

Well, one day my phone rang again, only this time it was a fellow who had more to offer than tales from Bizarro World...

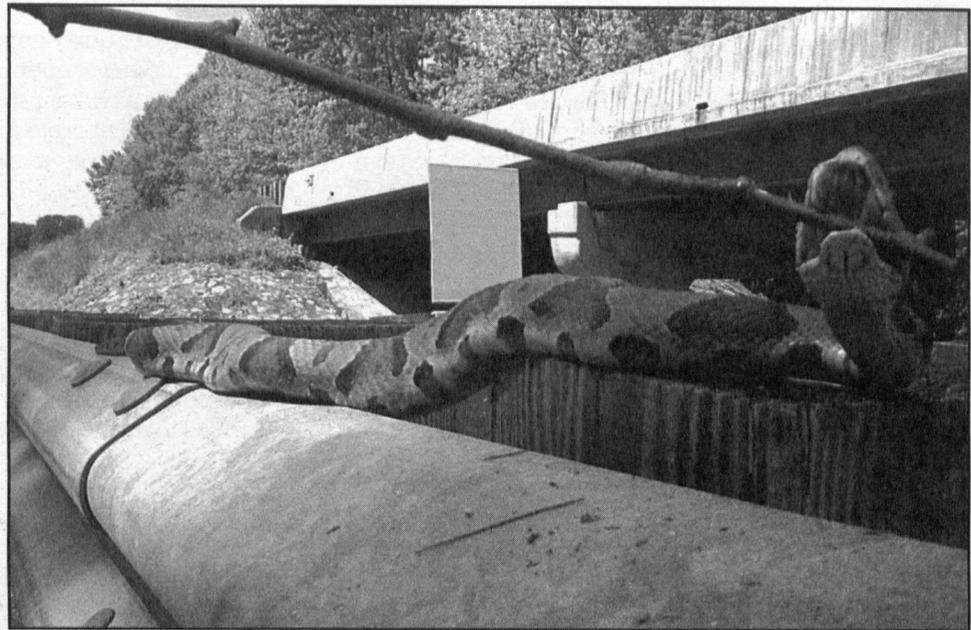
"Tanner Center; this is Sherrie," I said cheerfully.

"Hi, my name is Brad Rogers. Are you the one to talk to about the snake story?"

*Oh no! I thought. Not again!* "Yes, sir, and that giant snake story is just a ru—"

"Yes m'am, I know," he politely interrupted. "I took the picture."

I was thrilled! We talked, I invited him



This photo of a dead three-foot-long copperhead snake started rumors of a monster serpent lurking in Kerr Lake. (Photo by Brad Rogers)

over, and he told the story of how all this happened.

Brad Rogers is a structure and bridge inspector for the Virginia Department of Transportation. On May 4 Rogers, Jim Hardin, and Terry Melton were at the Route 1 northbound bridge over the Nottoway River in Brunswick County, Va.

"Jim and Terry were inspecting the deck, and I walked under the bridge on the south side, on the eastern approach," Rogers said. "I looked at the piers and everything looked good. I came out on the west side and started walking up the bank. Suddenly my attention jolted as I nearly stepped on a snake, and I hurdled the guardrail in one leap.

"I went back and got the guys to have a look," Rogers said. "We recognized it as a copperhead. When we took a stick and poked it, it didn't move. It was dead, so

Terry put it up on the guardrail.

"I had the camera, so while Jim stuck a stick in its mouth to show the fangs, I took the shot," said Rogers. "I just wanted to show the whole snake and its fangs, so I got as close as I could. I never even thought about the angle of the shot, or whether it looked out of proportion. We just wanted a picture to hang on our office wall."

Rogers downloaded the photo when they got back to the office and e-mailed it to his coworkers on the bridge crew. Somebody sent it out statewide and the rest, as they say, is history.

And so the legend continues. Even repeated tellings of the mundane truth hasn't stopped it. Years from now, your children's children may be hearing the Legend of the Giant Serpent of Kerr Lake.

(Sherrie Storm is a park ranger at Kerr Lake.)

## Service offers easier recreation planning

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on Aug. 9 announced a contract to provide a single, interagency federal recreation information and reservation service called the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS).

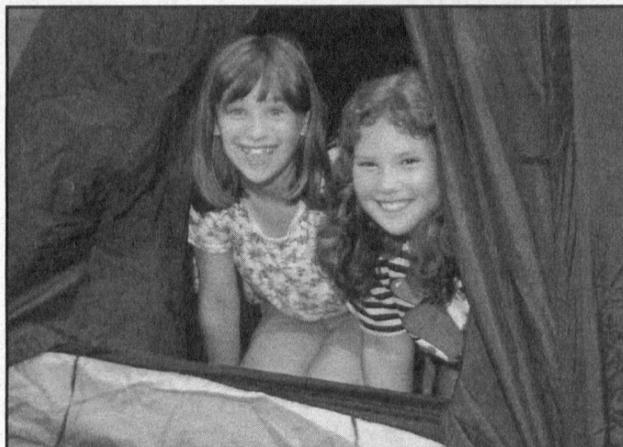
The three-and-a-half year, performance-based contract with a total potential value of \$128 million was awarded to ReserveAmerica of Ballston Spa, N.Y. The contract provides for additional option periods for a total contract period not to exceed 10 years.

The USDA's Forest Service conducted a full and open competition for the award of the new contract. The contract will consolidate and expand the existing federal reservation services, and agencies may add other sites that are currently individually reserved at the local level. The NRRS will begin operating in late 2004.

The new service is part of the President's E-Gov Recreation One-Stop Initiative and will offer one-stop shopping for a wide range of federal recreation areas, facilities, and opportunities — more than 57,000 campgrounds, cabins, parks, and tours of national sites, historic homes, and caves.

Participating agencies include the Forest Service, the Department of Interior's National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"This multi-agency approach for one-stop shopping for federal recreation site reservations capitalizes on our commitment to deliver customer-friendly services to our visitors," said Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman. "By work-



Two sisters enjoy camping at Carters Lake in Mobile District. The new National Recreation Reservation Service promises to make family fun like this easier to plan. (Photo by Adrian Lamarre, Digital Visual Library)

ing together, we have designed a convenient and responsive service for recreation seekers to make reservations."

The reservation service will operate through multiple sales channels, including telephone contact centers, online reservations, and walk-up field reservations at some locations. Expanded service under the new contract will include one Web-based portal at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) to

make reservations. A high demand exists and is growing for this type of service. More than 50 percent of reservations are now made by Internet access.

This site will provide information about thousands of federal recreation areas and opportunities. Interactive maps and text searches will allow customers to discover which parks, forests, lakes, museums, and other recreation sites managed by government agencies are located near an area, or that offer specific recreation opportunities.

"By late 2004, this new service will allow customers to do their trip planning and to make campsite and tour reservations on one site," said Interior Secretary Gale Norton.

The two current reservation services, the existing NRRS at [www.reserveusa.com](http://www.reserveusa.com) and the National Park Reservation Service (NPRS) at <http://reservations.nps.gov> will continue to be operational for making reservations until the integration is final. At that point, the [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) site, which is currently operational, will serve as the sole Web portal for making reservations.

"Recreation seekers will benefit by having additional choices among campgrounds and other facilities available through one convenient reservation service," said John Paul Woodley, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works). "It will also offer more cost-effective and efficient service."

Current reservations will be honored and outstanding reservations will be transferred to the new system once it is operational. Transition to the new service is expected to be seamless with minimal disruptions in customer service.