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Corps responds to Hurricane Wilma

By Amanda Ellison
Jacksonville District

Hurricanes are not new to Floridians, so it came as no surprise that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was one of the first responders bringing hope to battered communities. Red shirts were a visible sign of relief in South Florida after Hurricane Wilma visited the region and left destruction in her path.

Seeing blue

Two days after Wilma made landfall, the first Right of Entry (ROE) stand opened in the small town of Belle Glade. The stand, set outside of a Winn-Dixie supermarket that had been torn to shambles, was a beacon for the weary. Operation Blue Roof had come to town, and was the first sign of hope for hurting residents of the community.

Within one week, more than 40 ROE stands had been established in the 13 affected counties, and thousands of roofs were showing off their shiny new plastic. Within two weeks of the program being established, 50 percent of all eligible, damaged roofs had been covered, and South Florida was seeing blue.

Teamwork

The success of the Operation Blue Roof program could not have been accomplished without the partnerships formed with emergency operations centers in each county. In the face of disaster, state and federal agencies forged a team to meet the needs of others. Each county provided both volunteers and resources to help the Corps establish various ROE sites in each devastated area. The goal was to reach as many people as possible in the least amount of time.

To reach the homebound and special needs population, the Corps partnered with the Area Council for the Aging to identify these individuals and obtain signatures for blue roof assistance. The word teamwork took on a whole new meaning during this disaster.

A face with a name

Giving a face to the Corps was an important mission for those involved in relief efforts. Taking a page from the outreach techniques used for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), relief workers found themselves directly in the middle of revivals, community events, and church services spreading the word about Operation Blue Roof.

Outreach specialists zeroed in on the Spanish communities by offering translations about the program to those who may not understand English and may require assistance.

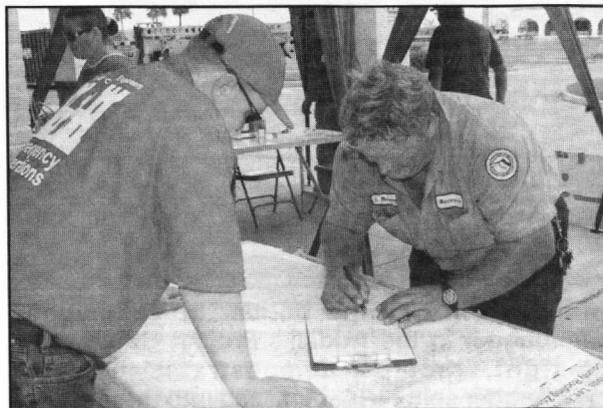
Another grassroots effort reached the disadvantaged by using the "Government on the Go" vehicle. The vehicle was used to sign up communities for assistance by moving from one location to another daily. It was primarily used in the highly populated Miami-Dade area.

Can you hear me now?

When disaster strikes, it is important for victims to know not only that their needs will be met, but



Blue roofs mark repairs in Harbor Heights, Fla. (Photo courtesy of Jacksonville District)



A Corps of Engineers employee signs up a resident of Lee County for the Operation Blue Roof program. (Photo courtesy of Jacksonville District)

that they are being heard as well. Phone banks were established to give an outlet for individuals to voice their concerns or ask questions. The phone banks were operational seven days a week, eight hours a day. They offered information such as the status of blue roof assistance, and temporary housing repairs.

Rays of light

Wilma left darkness across the region during and after landfall. Thousands were left without power, including critical facilities such as hospitals. A few short hours after the eye of the hurricane passed, the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) descended and started bringing light to darkened communities. The 249th supports disaster relief operations by providing advice and technical assistance in all aspects of electrical power and distribution systems. This is



Soldiers of the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) prepare generators for distribution. (Photo courtesy of Jacksonville District)

the only active duty unit that belongs to the Corps of Engineers, and the only prime power unit in the Army. The 249th's Soldiers maintain a constant state of readiness, and are the first to arrive after a disaster. Their presence was critical in the first few hours after Wilma, allowing dark areas to see light again.

Offering hope

The Corps continues to offer hope to communities overwhelmed by Hurricane Wilma. "This year's hurricanes dealt a staggering and unexpected blow to the residents of South Florida," said Bob Carpenter, Jacksonville District Commander. "Because diverse missions and extensive experience, we have the power to bring relief in many, many ways. We'll continue to assist the victims of Hurricane Wilma until their needs are taken care of."

Insights

Chaplain says farewell to Corps of Engineers

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

Holiday greetings to all my fellow members of the Corps of Engineers family!

I suppose this is my "swan song", even though I'm not much of a singer. The last two years and eight months have been one of the most rewarding and fulfilling times of my life, God assigned me to be the MACOM chaplain of this extraordinary command and organization.

When a chaplain can minister to his flock throughout this great country and overseas, in the nation's capitol and onboard boats, in quiet cubicles and in disaster areas and war-zones, it is truly an extraordinary experience.

Your great support and prayers have enabled me to be a caring shepherd/pastor to our special family. In this ministry, I have striven to follow the lead of that great saint, Mother Teresa, who said, "Spread love everywhere you go, first of all in your own house. Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness — kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, and kindness in your greeting."

To the degree this has transpired in my ministry,

give God the glory!

And now the rest of the story...as I leave, I have the good fortune and honor of passing the torch of this great ministry to another man of God, Chaplain Col. Sherrill Munn, who will assume this ministry in late December. This good man will provide an exemplary caliber of pastoral leadership and care. He will be a holiday gift from God to all of you!

Finally, let me leave you beautiful people with this blessing from the old Scottish poet Robert Burns, who said, "May the best you have experienced, be the worse you will ever see!"

God bless and keep you all in His everlasting care!

Prayer — Lord God, I thank you for the wonderful treasure of this ministry to the Corps of Engineers. You have permitted me to live out my calling and dream. As I leave, please grant this family only Your best of blessings, for they do so very much for our great nation and world. Let this Holy season of miracles bless and surround all of us with Your great love. And especially, as always, be very near to our comrades serving downrange, and with their families back home. **Essayons and Amen.**

As I depart, I am reminded of the words of another person I admire, a man of both faith and science, Albert Einstein — "It is high time the ideal of suc-



Chaplain Col. Mark Fentress and his wife Rebecca share a laugh with Debbie Reumont (left) after Fentress' retirement ceremony in Woodlawn Chapel at Fort Belvoir, Va., on Nov. 16. (Photo by F.T. Eyre, HECSA)

cess should be replaced with the ideal of service." The people of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers live that ideal every day.

Until we meet again, may God hold all of you in the palm of His hand.

In faith and friendship,
Chaplain Mark

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

New sandbagger speeds bag loading

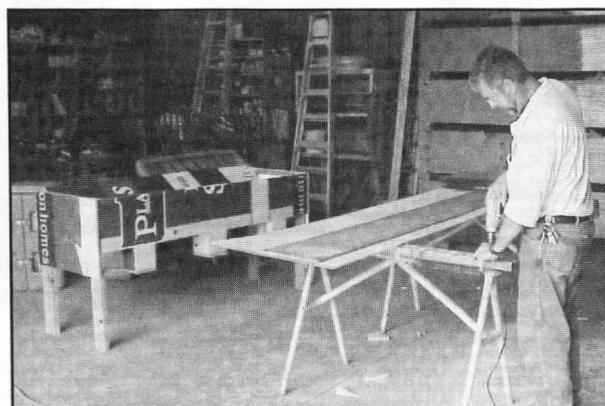
Article and Photos
By Kristine Brown
Galveston District

Whenever floods strike, the humble sandbag is often the first line of defense for many businesses and homeowners. Thousands of them are prepositioned at the first sign of trouble.

While sandbags are effective against fast-rising water, they take time to fill and are awkward to transport. But, according to Bill Krampe at Galveston District's Addicks Project Office, "It doesn't have to be this way." His latest invention is called the "triple action sandbagging loading chute." It is efficient, easy to transport, and economical, costing \$10 for screws and about 12 man-hours to build.

Krampe's redesign of the sandbag loader was prompted by Hurricane Rita's wind and rain that adversely impacted Lake Livingston's two-and-a-half-mile-long earthen dam. A conference call, between the Trinity River Authority (TRA), owner and operator of the dam, and the Fort Worth/Galveston District led to a request for sand bags. The Galveston District Alternate Emergency Operation Center (AEOC), located in Houston at the Addicks Project Office, was tasked to provide and deliver sand bags to the site.

Project manager Richard Long directed Bill Krampe and his trusty front-end loader to load two crates of sand bags and a single chute sand bag loader (handmade back in the 1970s) onto a trailer. Kenneth McDonald and Andy Williams were as-

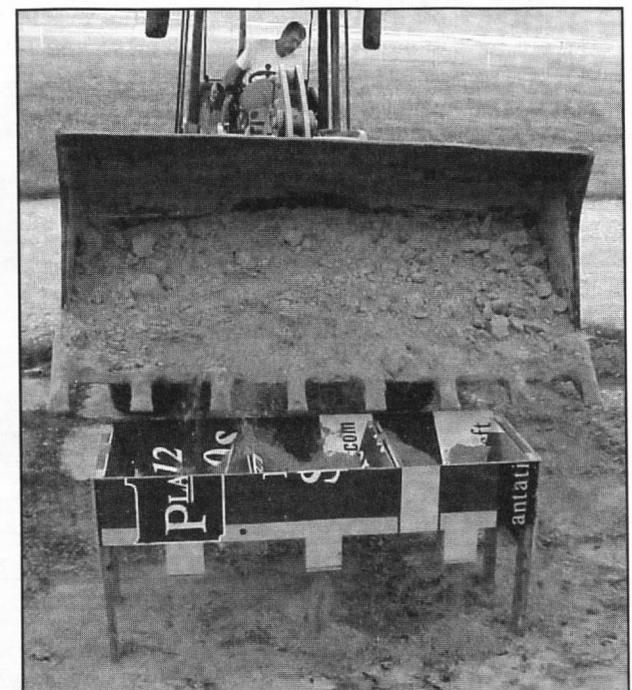


(Above) Bill Krampe builds the redesigned sandbagger in the Addicks Project Office shop. At right, Krampe demonstrates how the sandbagger splits a load of sand into three chutes at once. The device can be locally built from recycled materials, costs about \$10, and takes about 12 man-hours to build.

signed to deliver the valuable cargo to Lake Livingston's seriously damaged dam.

Exactly one week later, in the heated confines of the project garage, Bill Krampe began redesigning the single chute sand bag loader. He is most proud of the fact that his new design uses recycled project building materials.

Krampe's triple action sandbagging loading chute is about the size of a desk and weighs less than 100 lbs. It has three asymmetrical hoppers, and the process requires six individuals...two individuals per



chute to fill three bags at once.

Krampe's redesigned triple action sand bagging loading chute is ready and available to assist regional teams' battle a critical flooding situation in the Houston-Galveston region. Emergency workers and volunteers will be able to fill more sandbags in a couple of minutes, a fraction of the time it usually takes for hand-shoveling wet or dry sand one bag at a time.



Tactical ops teams are first ones in

Article and Photo
By Shannon Bauer
St. Paul District

The Deployable Tactical Operations System (DTOS) teams are the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' version of the Army's 82nd Airborne. They're always the first ones in.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, all DTOS assets except one, and 40 out of 100 volunteer team members from across the country supported recovery operations.

"This is the biggest response we've had to date," said Doug Nester, DTOS National Response Manager with the Corps' Readiness Support Center, adding that the next closest missions were Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and the World Trade Center in 2001.

DTOS assets provide Corps' and other federal personnel the ability to rapidly respond to any emergency. It is a tactical support system in a 29-vehicle fleet that belongs to the Readiness Support Center in Mobile, Ala., but is physically located across the country. Nationally, there are three Deployable Tactical Operations Center (DTOC) sets, two in Mobile District and one in Sacramento District.

Each set has two Emergency Tactical Operations Center trailers that are towed into position. These trailers have workspaces, computers, and satellite communication systems. They can be manned by up to 38 personnel. Each DTOC setup is supported by a communication vehicle and a support vehicle, and the whole group can deploy within six hours. The equipment allows first responders to operate in areas without phones, power, or Internet service.

The DTOC deployment team generally consists of six people, including a team leader, a communications person, and four logistics personnel. The team will usually add a backup team for the night shift. The team members are all volunteers who train throughout the year, and are willing to deploy at a moment's notice.

To support Hurricane Katrina responders, Nester said the Readiness Support Center set up 10 DTOS operational sites in early September.

"It was a tactical and logistical challenge to get all the assets here," said Nester. "One came here all the way from Portland, Ore., about 2,800 miles."

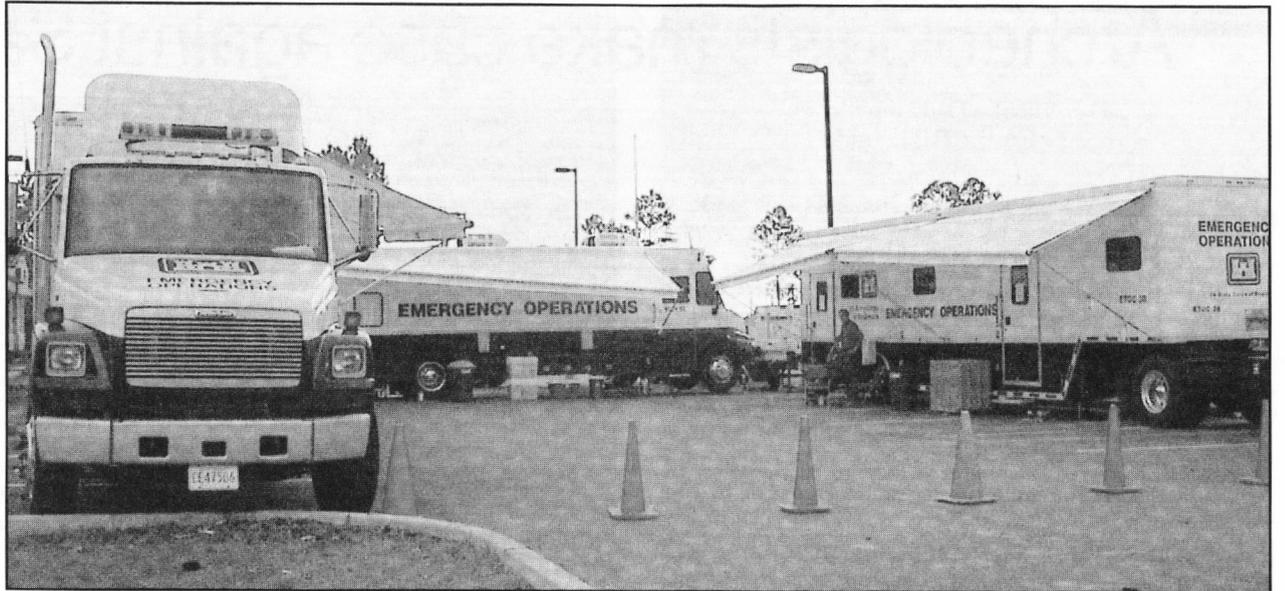
William Cherney, team leader for the DTOS unit stationed at Stennis International Airport in Kiln, Miss., normally works in Mobile District's Logistics Section. He said they were with a unit headed to Tampa to help with a flooding mission from Katrina's first strike, when they were diverted to Marianna, Fla., to safe-haven the DTOS assets, and then be ready to head to the Gulf Coast after Katrina made her second landfall.

Melissa Cartwright, an information specialist with Nashville District, volunteered to serve as a DTOS communications specialist a few years ago "to feel a part of things and to help others." She joined Cherney's team in Florida shortly before it headed to the Gulf Coast after Katrina made landfall. This was her first deployment.

"Pictures don't describe it," she said, commenting on her first impression of the damage in southern Mississippi. "Once you get here, it's a totally different experience. I'm sending pictures home, but one or two pictures just don't show it."

The DTOS crew made their first stop at the Stennis Space Center, north of Pearlington, Miss., before relocating to the airport, where the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established an Emergency Operations Center for the area.

They slept in the units, as did a few FEMA and U.S. Forest Service officials at first. It took four days for a cold shower and a few days later for a hot one. She said it took two or three weeks to get a pillow. "When we left, we didn't realize it was going to be this bad - normally we live out of a hotel, but



The Deployable Tactical Operations System (DTOS) at Stennis International Airport in Kiln, Miss., gave Corps personnel in the area a complete self-contained operations center.

there were no hotels left that were habitable," Cartwright said.

But she doesn't regret the rough living conditions and believes what she is doing is worthwhile. "What we're going through isn't as bad as what the people who live here are going through," she said. "At least these units, the DTOS trailers, have air conditioning."

Cartwright said her experience with DTOS has been rewarding. "I've learned a lot doing this. I

learn something new every day. I've found out I can adapt to just about everything. And the best thing about it is that there was nothing when we got here, but within a week, there was a whole city here, and they did it by using our communications equipment."

Rusty Retherford, debris team manager for Hancock County, Miss., who normally works in Louisville District, said having the DTOS teams and equipment available was essential to accomplishing his mission.

Ranger helps rescue 304

By Jim Pogue
Louisiana Recovery Field Office

Thanks to quick thinking, and the miracle of mobile phone technology and instant messaging, New Orleans District park ranger Emile "Skip" Jacobs assisted in the rescue of more than 300 people in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Jacobs said it began a little after 7 p.m. on Sept. 2 while he was in Memphis, Tenn. He had fled there to escape the fury of Hurricane Katrina.

"I received a text message on my cell phone from my son Todd," Skip said. "This was the only way I had to communicate with him at the time. He said he'd received another text message from a college buddy, Thanh Kim Troung, who told him about 300 people stranded at Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church in New Orleans East."

The text message explained that their situation was becoming desperate. They had not eaten or had anything to drink in several days and people were dying.

Jacobs swapped a few more text messages with Todd until he had enough information, and then called Lt. Rocco Dominic of the St. Charles Sheriff's Department.

He gave Dominic the basic information, and Dominic in turn passed it along to the New Orleans Emergency Operations Center. Ultimately, the rescue plea reached the New Orleans Fire Department, whose members rescued the parishioners from the church.

Another New Orleans District employee, Don Williams, heard about the rescue from the church. Williams told Jacobs that his mother, Debra Williams, and members of her family were trapped in their home in New Orleans.

Williams gave Jacobs his mother's address, and Jacobs passed the information along to the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Department.



Emile "Skip" Jacobs (left) stands outside the Mary Queen of Vietnam Church in New Orleans. Next to him is Father Van Nygen, and the other Corps of Engineers person is Sinko Stewart Higgins from Chicago District. In front are Uyen (left) and Lananh. Jacobs and Higgins are working for the FEMA water and ice mission.

Two days later, Williams learned that the sheriff's department had rescued his mother and family members as well.

"In all, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assisted in the rescue of more than 304 people from the disaster of Hurricane Katrina," Jacobs said.

Evidence

Archeologists make case against Saddam Hussein

By Nicole Dalrymple
St. Louis District

Some evidence that will be used in the trial of Saddam Hussein and his lieutenants was gathered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

On Oct. 19, Saddam Hussein and seven other former regime members were called before an Iraqi court to stand trial for a 1982 massacre in Dujail, a town 50 miles north of Baghdad that was a center of opposition to Hussein's regime. The little-known massacre, where 150 people were killed, is just one of several incidents of mass murder that Hussein and 50 of his top officials will stand trial for in the coming years.

Saddam's iron-fisted rule of Iraq left hundreds of thousands of people dead, thousands more vanished, and it created hundreds of thousands of refugees who now reside in countries all over the world.

It is estimated that the Iraqi countryside is dotted with more than 400 mass graves. It would take 20-plus years to excavate them, estimates Dr. Michael "Sonny" Trimble, Chief of the Corps' Mandatory Center of Expertise (MCX) for Archaeological Curation and Collections Management in St. Louis District.

Gathering evidence

Knowing who is responsible for these atrocities is one thing. *Proving* it is a different matter. That is where Trimble and his team of forensic experts enter the picture. It includes federal employees, private citizens, and professors.

As program director for the Iraq Mass Graves Team (IMGT), part of the U.S. Department of Justice's Regime Crimes Liaison Office (RCLO) in Baghdad, Trimble and the Corps' forensic team perform professional archaeological mass grave exhumations and forensic analyses to gather evidence that will be used in trials of former regime members.

The Justice Department, through the RCLO, has been assisting Iraq to establish a law enforcement-based investigative unit and a judicial system tailored to try former regime members. The intent of the Mass Graves Program is to assist the RCLO and use forensic data to show a pattern of genocide between 1988 and 1996.

"We're at least one-quarter of the overall data recovery effort," Trimble said during a Lunch and Learn with St. Louis District personnel where he showed the Discovery Channel's *The Case Against Saddam*.

Intifada & the Anfal Campaign

Along with the Dujail massacre, regime members will stand trial for using chemical weapons against the Kurdish town of Halabja in 1988, killing 5,000; the deliberate campaign to kill the Kurdish population, known as the Anfal Campaign; and the suppression of the Shi'ite uprising following the first Gulf War, known as Intifada.

"The Anfal Campaign, between 1988 and 1997, involved the systematic destruction of the Kurdish people, not unlike what Hitler did to the Jews, gypsies, and other minorities," Trimble said. "The aim was to wipe out any trace of them. The bodies are buried deep, and the executors had orders that none of the villages were to have rubble above 18 inches remaining."

Trimble prefers to use heavy equipment in mass grave excavations, a process not widely embraced in his field. The equipment of choice in Iraq is an



Temporary Camp Yankee was the spartan home in the Iraqi desert for the forensic and archeological team. (Photo courtesy of St. Louis District)

80,000-pound excavator to remove overburden before using hand tools. This is an enormous time saver, Trimble said, which is especially important to ensure the team's safety by getting them in and out of a hostile environment as quickly as possible.

The excavation of mass graves linked to these campaigns is providing the evidence for trials and establishing existence of a deliberate operation by the regime. "The evidence will demonstrate a well-planned, systematic extermination of people by the regime," Trimble said.

The MCX received the call for this historic endeavor last summer. Deanne Strauser, at that time the project manager for the district's Interagency & International Support program, believes Trimble's professional qualifications and the MCX's work in Southeast Asia recovering remains of Soldiers killed in Vietnam probably put him on a short list of qualified individuals.

Super Bowl of forensics

Strauser called it the Super Bowl of forensic investigation.

"It's not often that the archaeology you perform has such high stakes," Trimble said. "This is probably the most important job we'll have in our lives. An entire nation is waiting, and the Corps has the best team in the world working on this right now."

After the initial call things moved quickly. "Everything happened in a one to two month period," Strauser said. Due to the time crunch, assistance came from all over the Corps. Transatlantic Programs Center had existing contracts that brought specialist team members, such as pathologists, in from outside the Corps.

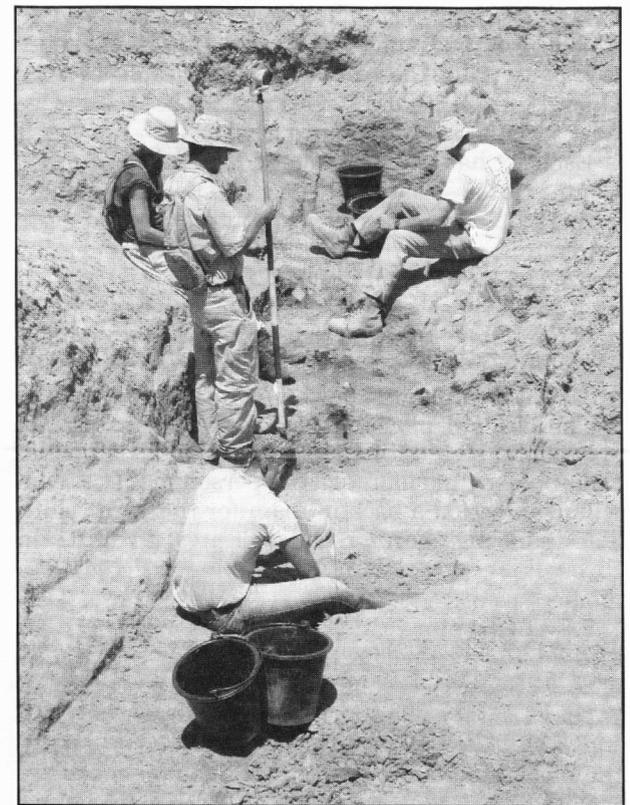
People in St. Louis District's contracting, logistics, and finance offices worked long hours making sure everything was ready for deployment. And an established camp in northern Iraq being used by the Engineering & Support Center, Huntsville, for the Captured Enemy Ammunitions program was identified as the base camp for the first dig.

"Expertise came from all across the Corps," Strauser added. "It was amazing. Everyone rose to the occasion, although it didn't hurt that I walked around with the Presidential Directive (signed by the president himself), which established the RCLO and this mission," she said with a smile.

Technology

Technology has played a significant role in the team's work.

"Technology can make an operation progress rapidly, or it can bring it to its knees just as quickly," Trimble said, referring to the requirement for batteries and generators needed to keep the technology



A team of archeologists at work in a mass grave. (Photo courtesy of St. Louis District)

up and running. "It's a blessing and a curse. I usually don't rely on so much electronic equipment in the field, but in Iraq I'm taking into account unusual safety considerations with this mission. I want our footprint in the area to be as brief as possible. I'm focused on getting people out of danger areas quickly. That's what bothers me, the stress on my people out there."

Hard work

But often technology took a back seat to old-fashioned hard work. Natalie Drew from the MCX cleaned and stabilized papers and identification cards recovered from the graves. While not expected, it was a welcome surprise that so many documents were found with people.

For several weeks she cleaned IDs to uncover the faces of potential victims, which was a very emotional task.

"These people were just dumped in the middle of the desert while their families had no closure and no idea what became of them," said Drew. "No one deserves that end. This has nothing to do with politics and everything to do with being human."

Continued on next page

Excavation was emotional experience

By Judy Marsicano
Fort Worth District

It has been a little more than a year since Paddie Patterson returned from her mission to exhume mass graves in the northern Iraqi desert, but she is just now able to talk about it. Knowing that Saddam Hussein's trial began late in November doesn't do much to lessen the impact of what she saw.

Patterson, an archeologist with Fort Worth District, was part of a carefully chosen team of archeologists and forensic anthropologists summoned to Iraq late last summer to work on the Mass Graves Project. Directed by the U.S. Department of Justice, the project was organized for the Regime Crimes Liaison Office (RCLO) in Baghdad.

Patterson was asked to be a part of the Mass Graves Team because of her previous experience. In 1997, she went to Vietnam and led an MIA Recovery Mission for the Department of Defense. Her team found the remains of two men who have been missing since 1971.

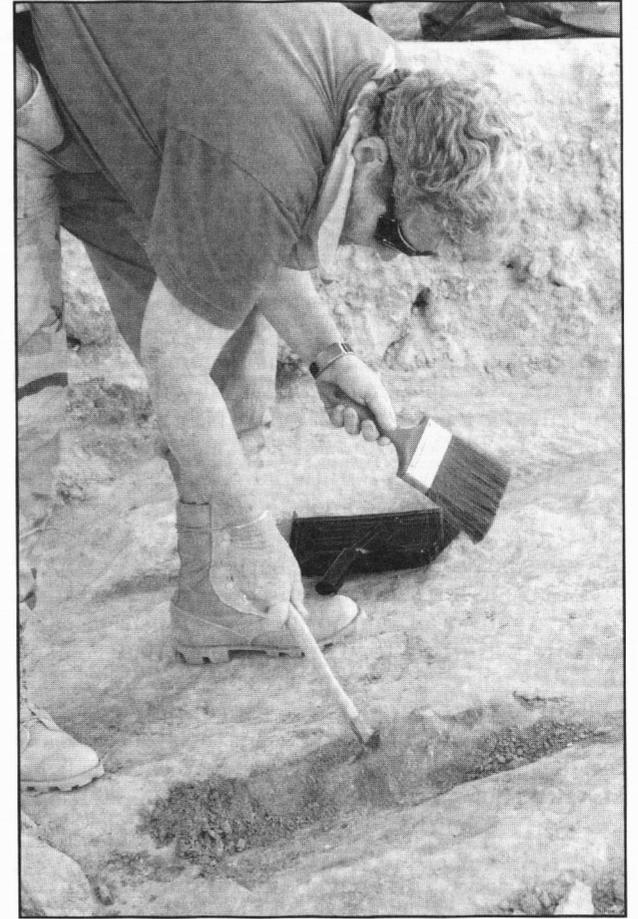
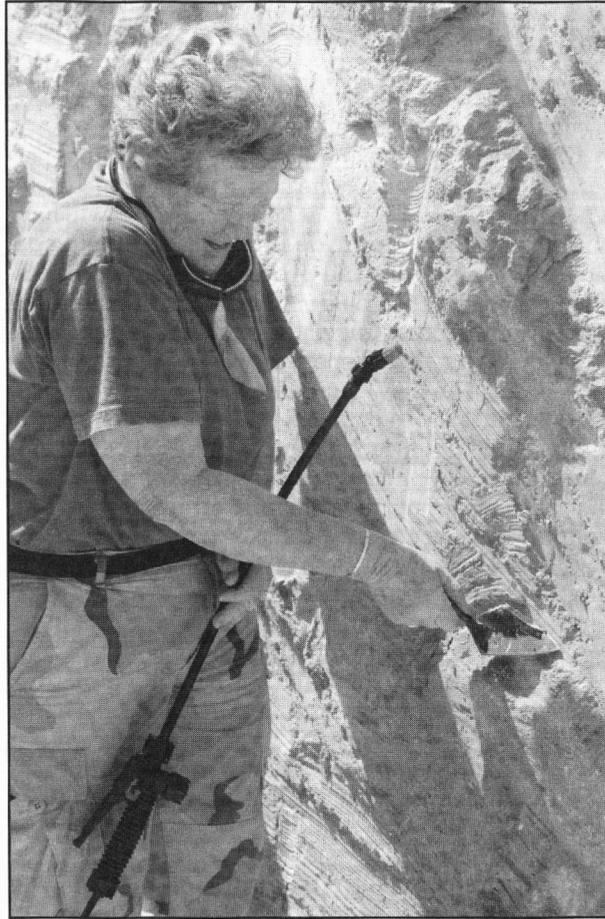
Patterson could not say no to the Iraq mission.

"This was the first time this type of mission was undertaken as an archeological exercise, so there was exacting precision in removing the remains and assessing the situation," Patterson said. "We had chains of evidence, so each day the recovered remains were brought back to camp for analysis. Everything was mapped and GPSed (Global Positioning System) for the records."

The team received a security briefing each morning before traveling to the work site southwest of Mosul in armed "hard-skin" cars. While work was underway, the site was under surveillance by military and contract armed guards 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"We lifted the bones and other remains of each individual into a body bag, carefully excavating around them to completely isolate each person from the others, and sealed each bag," Patterson said. Chains of evidence were generated, and the body bags were taken to a makeshift morgue for further analyses by forensic personnel. Each had a case number and a file that was turned over to the RCLO following the investigation.

The team worked under incredibly hard conditions, in sweltering heat from 110 to 125 degrees during the day. They had no refrigeration, equip-



Paddie Patterson at work in one of the mass graves in Iraq. The team worked with everything from 80,000 lb. excavators to paintbrushes. (Photos courtesy of Fort Worth District)

ment, or technology to deal with all the remains, so they just did whatever they could to complete their mission.

"The experience was a rollercoaster of emotion, far different from excavating a prehistoric burial," said Patterson. "You're down in the pit, doing your job, just trying to determine what happened. Then, you see a baby with its pacifier still around its neck and you feel this tremendous sadness. You realize that these innocent people were seized from their villages. They were fully dressed and had their possessions with them. But they were led down into this hole and shot."

The team had to stay on their grim task, and they did so for two-and-a-half months. Once their

investigation was completed, they reburied the area. At some time in the future, it will be sown with wheat.

Patterson returned just before Thanksgiving last year, with a new perspective.

"I hope our efforts will help bring Hussein to justice, and close the chapter on this hideous act for all the families of these victims," she said.

The Department of Justice, following a directive from the White House, sent a team of prosecutors and investigators to Iraq to take charge of organizing the evidence to be used in the war crimes trials of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi government will decide what charges to bring against him and his lieutenants, and will run the trials.

Evidence

Continued from previous page

Trimble doubts that this type of work has been carried out on this scale in a war-zone. He acknowledged that similar work has been done in Bosnia and Rwanda, but the fighting there was mostly done.

Once the remains are recovered, they are taken to a temporary lab outside of Baghdad. The tents, arranged in the shape of a cross, are an efficient system.

Assembly lines vs. individuals

"I know it sounds horrible, but it's an assembly-line system," Trimble said. It takes about four man-days to process each person through intake, forensic analysis, cultural objects documentation, and determination of death.

A strict chain of custody travels with each person. The remains are always signed off as they enter and leave an area.

Each person recovered is treated as an individual. "The team sees each case as an individual homicide within genocide," Trimble said.

This structure was a contribution by paralegal Kelly Bertoglio, who argued early on "that we

shouldn't lose sight of the individual. "I was taken with her reasoned argument, and the result is a unique case and report structure."

Within the final report there is a four-page synopsis for each person recovered, which contains several pictures, information about the victim and their clothing, a record of the cultural artifacts and documents with them, trauma to the body, and the cause of death.

Unique report

"This report is unique," Trimble said. "It has changed mass graves reporting."

Those creating the report's structure considered the audience.

"Ordinarily a report like this would have a lot of academic text in it, but knowing that this was for the Iraqi judges and prosecutors it was structured to give them a clear picture of all the homicides to aid their prosecution," Trimble said. "We reduced the traditional academic terminology, and we used lots of short descriptions, images, and graphs."

Trimble and the team know the stakes are high. "The stakes are enormous," he said. "We under-

stand an entire nation is waiting. We can't and won't have any cracks in our work."

In mid-August Trimble found himself once again working feverishly to prepare for the upcoming third leg of the mass graves excavations. It is an "intense build up," he said, likening the preparation to that of planning a military mission, particularly the personnel and logistics.

Complexity

"The whole project is a logistical puzzle, very complex," he said. "We're preparing to go out for a year, and with that we have to consider food, living quarters, transportation, and other life support elements. We're all working hard to make sure that everything we need is there when we arrive."

Trimble says he is grateful to the MCX and the Corps for this opportunity. "All of the team took it as a personal challenge. I certainly will never have a greater honor in my career."

"Without a doubt it is the most important job I've ever done," said Jim Kister, a St. Louis-based radiographer who deployed with the team on the second mission. "What we're doing is historic."

NSPS will be implemented in February

On Nov. 16, DoD and unions reached an agreement to delay implementation of most of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) until next February. These regulations were published in the *Federal Register* on Nov. 1, and establish a new human resources management system for civilian employees in DoD, which offers new rules and processes for pay and classification, performance management, hiring, reduction in force, disciplinary matters and appeal procedures, and labor-management relations.

Under the agreement, DoD still will be able to implement a few minor portions of NSPS before then. Most notably, DoD can continue to train employees on the new system. Additionally, implementing issuances, which provide details on how to carry out the regulations, may also be released but cannot be effective before Feb. 1 at the earliest.

By way of introduction, in November 2003 Congress granted DoD authority to establish, in partnership with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), a new civilian human resources management system to better support its critical national security mission. DoD and OPM spent the past two years in a design process with input and participation from key stakeholders including employees, supervisors, managers, union representatives, senior leaders, and public interest groups, including significant participation of USACE managers and human resources staff.

These regulations are the result of a rigorous, broad-based effort to modernize DoD's personnel system while preserving the core values of civil service.

The current HR system needed to be improved to manage the diverse DoD civilian workforce in today's dynamic national security environment, which requires a flexible and agile total force to meet the threats of the 21st century. DoD has more than 20 years of successful experience with testing personnel flexibilities in personnel demonstration projects like China Lake and the Acquisition Demonstration Project.

Within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a similar system has been in use since 1998 at the Engineer Research & Development Center (ERDC), and is well liked by both participating employees and managers.

NSPS expands these flexibilities to the rest of DoD while modernizing the outdated civil service system, and will allow us to attract, recruit, retain, compensate, reward, and manage employees with a focus on performance, flexibility, and accountability.

Although most DoD civilian employees are eligible to be covered by NSPS, certain categories of employees are excluded, including intelligence personnel and employees in the 10 DoD laboratory organizations, including ERDC.

NSPS Labor Relations will be the first of the new regulations to be implemented, and will cover all DoD employees currently covered by the labor relations provisions of Title 5, Chapter 71. NSPS pay, performance, staffing, RIF, adverse actions, and appeals provisions will be phased in using a "spiral" implementation approach.

The first group, "Spiral One," includes up to 300,000 General Schedule (or equivalent) employees in selected DoD organizations, and will be phased in over about 18 months. Employees in non-GS pay systems, including wage grade employees, will be phased in later.

Within the Corps, all employees who are eligible under these parameters in the Southwestern and South Pacific divisions will be in Spiral One.

All employees, supervisors, managers (including military supervisors), and HR practitioners will be trained extensively on NSPS. Supervisory training will include how to set and communicate clear per-

formance expectations and provide effective, ongoing feedback to employees on performance.

Employees will have an avenue to challenge performance ratings under the NSPS performance management system. Employee representatives will have the opportunity to provide input on developing detailed NSPS policies and procedures that will be issued within DoD through a formal "continuing collaboration" process under the proposed regulations, thus ensuring that disparate views are heard and considered as policy is written.

And, contrary to popular opinion, employees will not lose pay upon conversion to the NSPS pay system. Similarly, merit system principles, whistleblower protections, rules against prohibited personnel practices, veterans' preference principles, anti-discrimination laws, benefits (retirement, health, and life insurance, etc.), allowances and travel/subsistence expenses, training, leave, and work schedules regulations all remain unchanged.

NSPS provides a simplified pay banding structure, allowing flexibility in assigning work with each band. Pay increases will be based on performance rather than longevity. The performance management system requires supervisors to set clear expectations linked to DoD's goals and objectives and employees to be accountable.

Hiring processes have been streamlined and will be more responsive. More efficient, faster procedures will soon be used to address disciplinary and performance problems while protecting employee due process rights.

Finally, the NSPS labor relations system recognizes DoD's national security mission and the need to act swiftly to execute that mission while preserving collective bargaining rights of employees.

The NSPS classification and pay system allows positions to be grouped in broad career groups and pay schedules based on nature of work, mission, career patterns, and competencies, and is a much more

simple and user-friendly than the General Schedule (GS). Pay bands replace GS grades with broad salary ranges based upon the level of work an employee performs (e.g., entry level, full performance level, supervisory). These changes allow supervisors more flexibility to assign employees new or different work, and lengthy, detailed job descriptions will no longer be needed.

Movement through each pay band is based primarily on performance and contribution to accomplishing the organization's mission, giving supervisors greater flexibility in setting employee pay upon promotion or reassignment.

NSPS will use market sensitive pay, meaning that local market conditions will be taken into consideration to set pay rates.

The cornerstone of the performance-based pay system that NSPS implements is a solid performance management program. Under NSPS, supervisors will work closely with employees to establish performance goals and expectations that are aligned with mission-related goals. Unlike the current system, on-the-job behavior and a professional demeanor are an element of performance in recognition of the fact that conduct has a direct bearing on how well one can perform his or her duties.

Ongoing feedback and communication between supervisors and employees will be expected so that supervisors can prepare timely evaluations reflecting meaningful distinctions in employee performance.

While the NSPS regulations make other changes in human resources management, it is in these areas that most DoD employees will see the impact of the changes.

In the next several months, more information will become available about NSPS, and local commanders and Civilian Personnel Advisory Centers will share what they learn with all employees. For more information, you are encouraged to visit the NSPS Web site at www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps.

Special needs family helped

By Ron Hudson
Emergency Field Office West

A special needs family, in a critical situation in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, has gotten help, thanks to people in Operation Blue Roof.

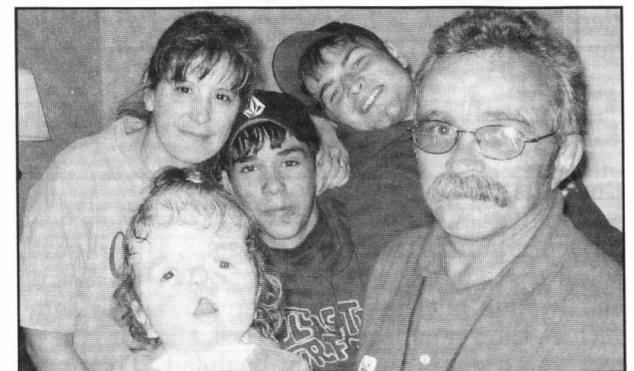
On Oct. 27, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) forwarded a "Special Needs" Operation Blue Roof request to Emergency Field Office - West (EFO-West). Quality assurance (QA) team leader Kenny Baker was immediately dispatched to estimate the damage.

Upon arrival in Vinton, La., Baker discovered that the mobile home had a metal roof that was not eligible for the Blue Roof program. But he also found a family in a truly desperate situation.

After their mobile home was damaged, the Angela Navarre family (Angela, her son, daughter, and nephew), were living in a small camper with no heat.

But that was just the tip of the iceberg. Navarre's 18-month-old daughter, Taylor, is on a respirator, heart monitor, and feeding tube. Taylor has had one heart surgery, and will need more than 20 operations to correct multiple medical problems.

Baker assessed the situation as critical and called his QA supervisor, Jim Janicek, to report the situation. Janicek told Baker to bring the family from Vinton to Lake Charles, and secured a motel room for the family. He then called the local contractor, Shaw Group, informed them of the situation, and asked if they could help on a voluntary basis.



Kenny Baker with Angela Navarre, her daughter Taylor, her son (center), and nephew. (Photo courtesy of Emergency Field Office West)

Shaw immediately responded to temporarily cover the mobile home. Baker coordinated with FEMA to get a replacement mobile home for the family.

The next day a team of volunteers - Baker, Sharon Schwab, and five volunteers from QA contractor CH2M Hill went to the home to install plywood and tar paper, reinstall the blue roof, and clean the trailer so it was, once again, habitable.

As more of the EFO-West personnel learned about the Navarre family, they became "our family," and cash contributions began to come in, and CH2M Hill provided a mall gift.

After two nights in a motel, the family returned home. They are awaiting the FEMA mobile home.

Around the Corps

New England flood watch

The New England region endured a nine-day deluge in October that affected every local brook, stream, and river. As water levels rose, causing some waterways to overflow, residents of Keene, N.H., watched two of New England District's dams – Surry Mountain Dam and Otter Brook Dam.

Concern rose about storage levels behind the dams on Oct. 12 when Surry Mountain Dam reached 73 percent capacity. NED officials released water at channel capacity, but the pool stages only fell slightly.

"The projects released as much as they could, but we throttled back to keep the Keene Gage on the Ashuelot River below flood stage," said Paul Marinelli, team leader.

As water rose behind the dams, employees of NED's Emergency Operations Center kept in regular contact with the New Hampshire Emergency Management Office and the city of Keene to update them on water levels.

Pool stages at Surry Mountain and Otter Brook rose and fell slightly, until additional rain caused Surry Mountain to become 96 percent full, and Otter Brook 78 percent. Although NED officials were not as concerned about Otter Brook having spillway discharge, the possibility for Surry Mountain was a reality. Keene officials evacuated low-lying residential areas as a precaution.

Spillway concerns receded due to sunny skies and the aggressive round-the-clock management of the dams. As of Oct. 24, water capacity at Surry Mountain was down to 70 percent, and Otter Brook Lake was 47 percent.

William Penn Mott Award

R. Scott Jackson, a biologist with the Environmental Laboratory (EL), has won the prestigious William Penn Mott Jr. Award for Excellence from the National Society for Park Resources.

The Mott award is given for professional achievement in parks and recreation, and citizen action advancing profession or park and recreation programs.

"While the award is a personal honor, it really reflects the good work of our EL Human Dimensions Team and the Natural Resources Management Community of Practice," said Jackson.

Best disability program

Albuquerque District has the 2005 Army's Best Disability Program, and received the Distinguished Meritorious Civilian Service Award from the Secretary of the Army at the Pentagon in Washington D.C., on Dec. 6. Eddie Paulsgrove, the district's Individuals With Disabilities Program (IWDP) manager, received the award on behalf of the district.

"They really got high, high ratings," said Ernie Moya, IWDP Director in Arlington, Va. "Raters for the award noticed growth in employment through use of the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) for college students with disabilities. Ernie's tenacious networking with other agencies, specifically with colleges and universities, was significant because he really reached out to the community to make certain that college students with disabilities are offered opportunities for employment."

"The district recognizes the increasing number of individuals with disabilities in the workforce, and is addressing the need for improved community involvement with the disability population," said Paulsgrove. "The program has been successful in recruiting, promoting, and retaining employees with disabilities."

"I think it's a really worthwhile program," said Mary Montano, WRP coordinator at the University of New Mexico (UNM). "The placement rate is the

best I've seen in comparison to the private sector."

About 10 percent of all employees assigned to the district identify themselves as having a disability, which is higher than the national average. The district hired three employees through UNM since 2004 under the WRP, and is currently branching out to more schools to participate in the program.

"We look for people with abilities rather than turn away people with disabilities," said Paulsgrove. "Everybody has something to offer."

Presidential award

Dr. James Houston, Director of the Engineer Research & Development Center (ERDC), received the Presidential Rank Award for Distinguished Executive, the government's highest award for civil servants.

Each year, the president recognizes a select group of senior executives for leadership, accomplishment, and service to the nation. In selecting Houston, the president recognized his efforts in leading the development of innovative technologies to support the warfighter, installations, environmental quality, and water resources.

Houston manages a budget of \$650 million and a workforce of 2,000 federal workers and 500 on-site contractors in four states. He led the transformation of seven formerly independent laboratories into a single award-winning integrated research organization. Under his direction, the ERDC was recently named the 2005 Army Research Laboratory of the Year.

New Bedford Superfund site

New England District officials joined federal, state, and local representatives in celebrating another milestone on the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Project. Col. Curtis Thalken, District Engineer, joined New Bedford Mayor Frederick Kalisz, EPA Regional Administrator representative Susan Studlien, and other guests in a Golden Spike ceremony for start of rail service from the Superfund Site Dewatering Facility to the disposal site in Michigan. The ceremony was held at the city's rail yard, where trains go from the dewatering facility.

"The rail service will reduce the cost for off-site disposal, provide a safer mode of transportation, and

significantly reduce the hauling of PCB-contaminated sediments through the neighborhoods and streets of New Bedford," said Thalken.

In a 20-year plus period, an estimated 900,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments will be dredged and dewatered or excavated from a two-mile stretch of the New Bedford Harbor before going off-site for disposal in a Toxic Substance Control Act approved landfill in Romulus, Mich. The site is one of the largest and most challenging hazardous waste sites in the country. New England District has supported EPA on this project since the mid-1980s.

Best fuels engineer

Jimmy Brasch of Omaha District was named Fuels Engineers of the Year by the National Petroleum Management Association (NMPA). Brasch is a project engineer for the district, and serves as the program manager of the fuels program.

According to Dave Eklund, president of NMPA, Brasch exemplifies high performance, accomplishment, and self-improvement. "Jim is a pillar in the fuels community," said Eklund. "He understands design and construction of fuels systems, and his expertise brings life to the public sector."

Tele-engineering demonstration

On Nov. 8, Far East District supported the first-ever ROK-US Combined Engineer Tactics Conference by establishing a three-way video teleconference between the Tele-Engineering Operations Center (TEOC), the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army Engineer School, and the ROK Army engineer unit deployed to Iraq.

The demonstration showed our ROK allies the Corps' reach-back capabilities using tele-engineering equipment, allowing senior ROK Army officers to speak directly to their deployed unit and discuss the importance of ROK-US relations to their junior and mid-grade officers.

During the question session, the group fielded several with regard to engineer support to Global War on Terrorism, how the Corps trains its leaders to be both fighters and construction engineers, application of Corps equipment to Korea, and the possibility of joint training activities to better learn tele-engineering capability.



Royalty visits

On Nov. 8, His Royal Highness Willem-Alexander, the Crown Prince of the Netherlands, visited Headquarters in Washington, D.C. After Hurricane Katrina, the Rijkswaterstaat, the Dutch flood control and water management agency, sent a team with three pumps to help dewater New Orleans. The Netherlands also contributed a frigate and a detachment of marines. This visit allowed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to formally thank the Netherlands for their assistance, and highlighted the importance of the memorandum of agreement between the Corps and the Rijkswaterstaat. (Left) The prince receives a briefing about the Corps of Engineers. (Right) The prince and Brig. Gen. Bo Temple, Director of Military Programs, answer questions at a press conference in front of the General Accounting Office building. (Photos by F.T. Eyre, HECSA)

Engineers join humanitarian mission

After days of seemingly endless coordination and planning meeting, Gilbert Dent and Larry Ryan of Afghanistan Engineer District (AED) traded their laptops for a humanitarian relief mission into the remote Kaghan Valley in Pakistan.

"We had completed all our tasks and were awaiting the arrival of the advanced structural safety analysis team," Ryan said. "Rather than take a day off, we thought we could assist one of the helicopter crews."

Unlike large pallets carried on the C-130 (large four-engine Air Force cargo aircraft), the Army helicopters have the relief goods loaded by hand in bulk. Ryan and Dent joined a CH-47 crew deployed from Hawaii. (CH-47s are twin-rotor heavy-lift helicopters.) The mission involved dropping the bundles of rations and supplies to isolated villages that have been cut off from road access.

"We wound our way through a narrow valley, stopping to hover at about 200 feet at five different villages," Dent said. "We passed the 60-pound bundles forward to the crew chief and he pushed them off the open ramp."

The loads were rigged so that the outer bundle burst, cushioning the inner packages that stayed intact. The villagers ran to retrieve the goods...even from their height Dent and Ryan could see their waves and smiles.

The flight went on to land at the main village of Kaghan. The remaining bundles, which included special high energy rations, canned goods, and blankets, were quickly off-loaded.

About 50 villagers, mostly children and elderly family members, were evacuated to a settlement camp about 30 kilometers (about 18 miles) south in the provincial capital of Muzaffrabad. There were some apprehensive moments as the helicopter could not accommodate all the people wanting to leave, but the Pakistan military quickly restored order. Looks



Gilbert Dent prepares to pass a sack containing aid materials from a CH-47 helicopter to ground workers for distribution in Pakistan. (Photo courtesy of Afghanistan Engineer District)

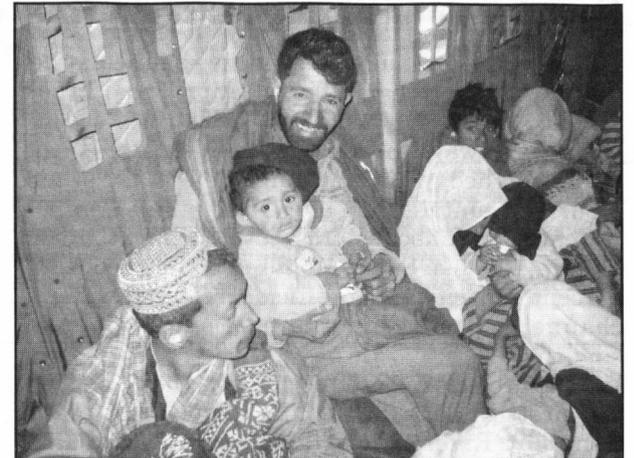
of fear and confusion among the passengers quickly changed to smiles as the helicopter lifted off.

About 20 minutes later the CH-47 landed at Muzaffrabad. As Dent and Ryan helped the passengers offload, there were smiles and handshakes, ample reward for the two AED engineers.

On the return flight, Dent noticed a large plume of dust rising from a fresh landslide — the area continues to experience frequent aftershocks. Many villagers are reluctant to return to their damaged houses, fearing other jolts will bring them down.

This was an emotional day. Although saddened to see so much destruction and human suffering, Dent and Ryan were impressed by the spirit and determination of the villagers.

With wooded hillsides and the tumbling Kunhar River running down its middle the Kaghan Valley offers a beautiful but harsh environment. "We could



A father and son were among the evacuees from a remote village devastated by the earthquake in Pakistan. (Photo courtesy of Afghanistan Engineer District)

see why these people were reluctant to leave," Dent said.

With snow already visible on the ridgelines, the winter will challenge those that remain. There is little chance that the single road, carved into the side of the mountain above the valley floor will be repaired until next year. Some with families in other cities have decided to leave, many have sent children and their elderly relatives to safety, yet most are reluctant to leave what is left of their homes, their crops, and their farm animals.

The challenge for humanitarian organizations will be to stockpile four months of food in these remote villages before winter weather closes in making travel difficult, even by helicopter.

(Gilbert Dent of Afghanistan Engineer District wrote this article while deployed to Chaklala Air Base in Islamabad, Pakistan.)

'Needle in a haystack'

Honorable discharge found in Katrina debris, returned to veteran

By Angela Dickson
Louisiana Recovery Field Office

Like a needle in a haystack...

That is perhaps one of the most common clichés of our time, but its true meaning is seen each day during debris cleanup in Louisiana. So, when quality assurance supervisor Don Cleary saw that proverbial needle, he had to act.

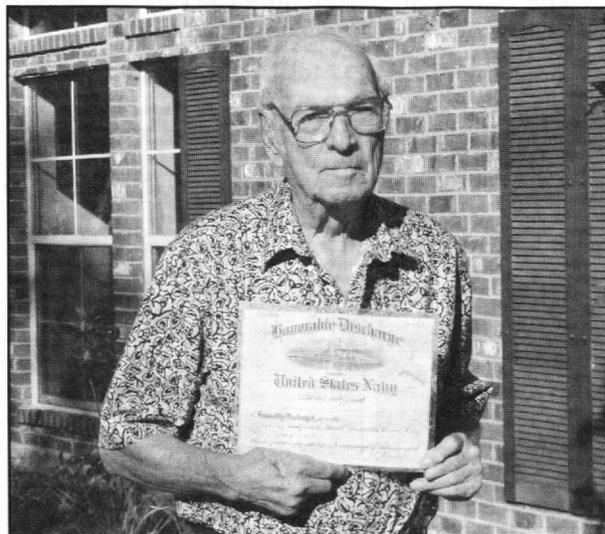
The debris sites are often monotonous — piles of trash, furniture, refrigerators, wood, and the like. But one recent day on the job was different. Cleary saw a significant document amid the debris. What he saw turned out to be a World War II honorable discharge certificate.

"It was just sort of lying there," Cleary said. "Anytime something seems important, we try to grab it and pull it out. We understand people have lost almost everything, so if we can give them something back, maybe they can preserve a piece of their history."

The name on it was Samuel Steele. Cleary searched the phone book, but to no avail. He wanted to keep trying, so he contacted the local newspaper. They searched their database and found his name and address.

Cleary went to the house, but it seemed abandoned, wrecked by Hurricane Katrina. But in the yard was a "for sale by owner" sign. He wrote down the number and continued his search.

That number reached Kerry Steele, Samuel's son. "I wasn't sure how it happened," Steele said. "But



Samuel Steele, Jr., with his honorable discharge certificate. Don Cleary, a Corps quality assurance inspector, found it in hurricane debris and returned it to Steele. (Photo by Kerry Steele)

it was truly the most incredible thing that has happened in my life. I couldn't figure out how this man got my number."

But making connections still was not easy. Steele said he received Cleary's message, but could not make out the last two digits of his phone number.

"I tried every combination I could think of, but could not get him," Steele said. "I knew a few people

from the Corps of Engineers and contacted them."

Jim Pogue, Public Affairs Officer for the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, told Steele that there were many people working in Louisiana, but that he would try to track down Cleary. And it worked. Pogue made contact in less than 30 minutes, and Steele made arrangements to pick up this memento from his father's past.

"It wasn't until later that I learned how much this man did to find me and my father," Cleary said. "My neighbor, Mary, called and asked if Don Cleary had contacted me."

Mary explained that Cleary saw her on the street and asked if he knew the people that lived there. He explained the situation, and Mary gave Cleary additional contact information for Steele. "I can't believe this man physically went to my parent's house. I mean, how busy these guys are and to take that effort. It's just unbelievable."

Samuel D. Steele, Jr. is still alive. He and his wife, Betty, are living with their children in the wake of the storm. A retired pilot, he served four years in the U.S. Navy aboard the battleship *USS Arkansas*. Now 82 years old, Steele had still been flying until only recently. The document had been laminated and stored in a hangar that was completely flooded after the storm. Kerry Steele told his father immediately, who was almost speechless.

"I never got the chance to meet Mr. Cleary," Kerry Steele explained. "He was out when I went to pick up the certificate, but I just want to say thanks to him."