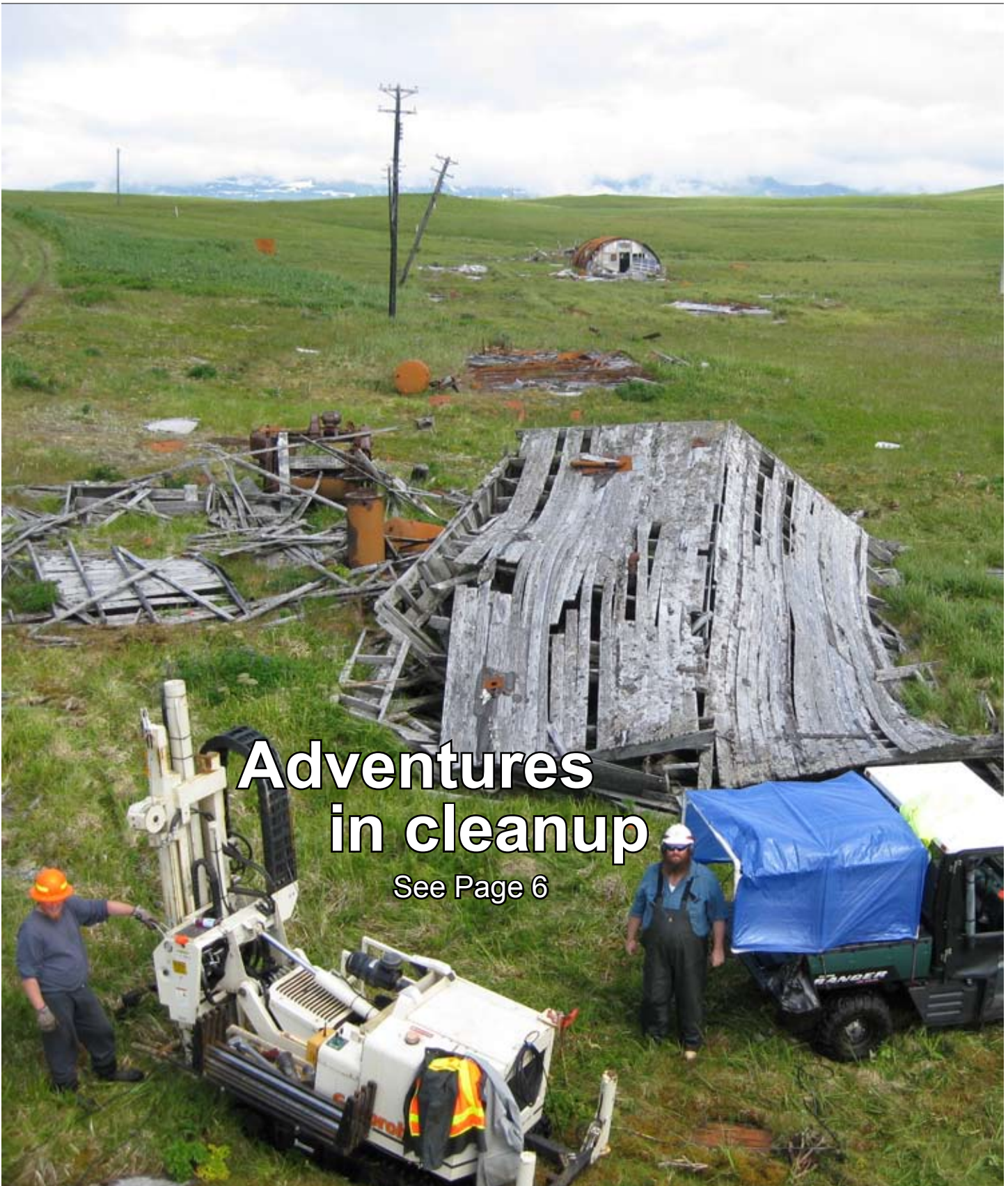




Arctic Engineer

"Building and Preserving Alaska's Future"



Adventures in cleanup

See Page 6



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Cover photo

Sean Benjamin (right), chemist in the Alaska District, and Justin Rucker, driller with Hammer Environmental Services, operate an Ultraviolet Optical Screening Tool-equipped Geoprobe drill rig to investigate the vicinity of an old maintenance shop that once supported the former Naval Auxiliary Field on Tanaga Island. Time and weather took a toll on the remaining facilities on the island. Yet even after 70 years, the road system constructed by Navy Seabees remains usable without any maintenance. (Photo by Steve Adamak, Dakota Technologies).

District workload remains strong

Thank you for reading this issue of the "Arctic Engineer" and learning more about how the Alaska District is "Building and Preserving Alaska's Future." I think you will agree that we are going from "Good to Great."

In this issue you will learn about the incredible cleanup happening in the Aleutians on Tanaga and Ogluiga islands, a new state-of-the-art equipment maintenance facility constructed for an Army engineer battalion at Fort Richardson, the activation and first deployment of our very own 62nd Engineer Detachment to Iraq, a professional development trip to visit a World War II battleground at Attu on the westernmost top of the Aleutian Islands—please do not ask me about the "double dip"—and more.

We were fortunate that Tad Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health, traveled here to personally present the 2009 Secretary of the Army Environmental Award for environmental restoration for the district's accomplishments on Tanaga and Ogluiga islands.

All of these articles provide evidence that we are executing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Campaign Plan, Pacific Ocean Division Implementation Plan and the Alaska District Operations Plan in an exemplary manner and achieving "Great."

I thank our work force for completing and posting the form called the "Piece of the Puzzle" in their work areas. I hope it was beneficial as the district leadership asked employees to look at each plan and determine how they fit into the organization and what they contribute to the mission. I reviewed many of these forms and have no doubt that each member of our talented team is contributing in this effort to take us to "Great."

In the next several months, the senior leaders will update the district's Operations Plan for Fiscal Year 2011-2012, and employees will be asked to update their Piece of the Puzzle and link it to their performance plan.

Although our leaders have not started updating the Operations Plan, one item I am certain we will add is our ongoing effort to reorganize the district's structure and staffing to meet the mission in 2017. With our "Seven-Year Plan," the goal is to begin the process of how to best implement changes in structure, staffing or both while executing the mission using a specific strategy with clear milestones. This will position the district for the inevitable loss of highly-experienced staff because of retirement.

Teams are developing four potential courses of action for consideration, and this effort will likely continue for the next

four to six months. If you have comments or ideas, please let me know or get with your chain of command to ensure we incorporate them.

Despite the upcoming turnover in personnel, I cannot stress enough how bright the future is for the district.

The Military Construction Program has hundreds of millions of dollars of work each year through at least 2015.

The Environmental and Special Projects Program will be executing increased work in the Formerly Used Defense Sites Program with more than \$50 million budgeted in 2012 alone. Environmental programs for the Army, Air Force and Coast Guard are growing as well. The district also will continue to contribute to the U.S. Pacific Command's Humanitarian Assistance Program throughout Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile, the Civil Works Program is growing with the recent award of projects at Akutan and Unalaska. This summer the district received guidance on implementation of Section 116 of a new law, the Energy and Water Development and Related Agency Appropriations Act of 2010, for planning and constructing erosion protection and storm-damage-reduction projects in Alaska.

Furthermore, I expect our Regulatory Program workload to rise as the state recovers from the economic downturn and larger permitting actions begin, such as with natural gas pipelines and mines.

All the while, we will need the engineering and support staff to help execute these herculean tasks. The Alaska District will continue to have a role in supporting our military servicemembers and improving Alaska for all its residents.

In closing, continue to exercise good risk-mitigation procedures. We are entering a dangerous time of the year when we realize winter is right around the corner, so we often try to push ourselves to get as much fun in before "termination dust" coats the surrounding mountains. It is then that we are tempted to cut safety corners and very bad things can happen. Don't become a statistic. You are too important to your family and this team. Identify the risks in everything you do and come up with solutions to mitigate or eliminate those risks.

Lastly, let me thank each one of you for your service, which is providing a piece of the puzzle that is taking us to "Great." I continue to be amazed by the teamwork, camaraderie, technical expertise and incredible professionalism I see displayed every day. Thank you for making this a great organization.



Col. Reinhard Koenig

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reinhard E. Koenig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wrench ready

Modern facility improves maintenance operations

By David Bedard
Contributing Writer

The 6th Engineer Battalion's vehicle and equipment maintenance operations took a leap forward when the unit moved from its legacy facility to the new Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facility (TEMF) in April.

The \$13 million structure is part of the \$54 million Fort Richardson Battalion Complex project managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District, designed by USKH Inc. and constructed by Alcan General Inc. It provides the battalion a place to maintain its vehicles and other equipment, and prepare for deployment.

The contract award to Alcan in August 2008 was delayed several months by National Environmental Policy Act paperwork and affordability, said Mollie TeVrucht, project manager. With the Army needing the facility by the end of March 2010, the team had one summer to finish it.

She said streamlined design and expedited construction practices enabled the project to finish on time.

By coordinating early with

Fort Richardson's Directorate of Public Works on furnishings and communication infrastructure, Soldiers were able to use the facility less than one week after the beneficial occupancy date, TeVrucht said.

Lt. Col. Roosevelt Samuel, 6th Engineer Bn. commander, said although the TEMF was planned for years as part of Fort Richardson's military construction program, the facility was completed on an unusually short one-year schedule instead of the normal 18 to 24 months.

"(That) is absolutely unbelievable, especially with our short construction season," Samuel said. "The engineers and the contractors here in Alaska have gotten smart on how to continue building quality facilities in a reasonable amount of time with a short construction season."

Samuel said the Directorate of Public Works placed the TEMF on an expedited project list that called for innovative business practices, such as building the exterior first in the summer, which allowed contractors to work on the interior during the winter.

The shortened construction time

was possible because the Corps has partnered with many civilian architect and engineering firms, according to Samuel, and incorporated the best practices of the private sector construction industry into its military program.

What the TEMF itself offers is just as impressive.

According to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Brendan Kallenbach, senior automotive technician for the 6th Engineer Bn., the TEMF represents vast improvements in safety, maintenance throughput, communications, storage, and distribution of parts and automotive fluids.

Kallenbach said the TEMF houses Forward Support Company's distribution platoon—consisting of a field-feeding team, fuel-handling section, transportation and cargo section, and water purification, distribution and transportation section—ensuring the element has a viable platform to accomplish its logistics support mission.

Providing the operations center functions of the facility is the Administrative Control Section where the unit's automated logistical specialists use the Standard Army Maintenance System—Enhanced computer system to request parts, process work orders and evacuate equipment to higher echelons of maintenance if necessary.

The facility's robust electrical system and improved welding station greatly enhance job order throughput.

"For our welding and fabrication, we are able to emplace all of our welding and cutting assets at one time, whereas the electrical service in the previous building couldn't handle the amperage draw of all of our machines working at the same time. So you would have to cut, shut the machine down, start welding," Kallenbach said. "Now with the power capabilities of this building, I can emplace those assets all at one time."

Grounding stations throughout the facility allow welders the additional capability to relocate welding assets without the danger of electrocution.

Vehicle pits enable Soldiers to work underneath equipment while an indoor 20-ton crane allows for the repairs of



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

The \$13 million Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facility is part of the \$54 million Fort Richardson Battalion Complex. Improvements include enhanced safety, maintenance throughput, communications, storage, and distribution of parts and automotive fluids.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

A medium tactical vehicle is parked for undercarriage service in the drive-through bay.

major assemblies without having to bring a wrecker into the bay.

Kallenbach said a Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants distribution system provides a centralized point where vehicle operators can source automotive fluids using a meter to draw a precise amount. Previously, Soldiers would have to track down ungainly bulk containers, often risking small hazardous materials spills when filling vehicles or transferring the fluids to smaller containers.

A communications vault facilitates the repair of night vision goggles, chemical alarms, radios and tactical automations, while a digital classroom located on the building's upper level hosts 26 computer work stations suitable for driver training, military occupational specialty training and other instruction.

A vehicle wash area uses an oil-water separator with a capacity of 85 gallons of waste oil, greatly increasing time between disposals.

Inside and outside storage facilities for repair parts replace ad hoc storage previously provided by shipping



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

The facility's Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants distribution system provides a centralized point where vehicle operators can source automotive fluids using a meter to draw a precise amount.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

The Tactical Equipment Maintenance Facility has 16 maintenance bays. If these spaces are occupied, the facility has an end-to-end throughput capability so a vehicle can pull into one side for an undercarriage service and then move down the lane for other maintenance. An indoor 20-ton crane allows for repairs of major assemblies without driving a wrecker into the bay.

containers, greatly improving access, organization and inventory management.

The bay's surface is no-slip sealed concrete, specially formulated for user safety and ease of cleanup.

Although the facility is as large as some legacy brigade maintenance facilities, Samuel said it is just the right size for a modern multimission engineer battalion.

"The Army has finally gotten around to building facilities that truly support the total mission of units," he said. "That's the whole concept for this building. A lot of folks have said 'Hey, this is way too big' because we have been doing without for so long."

Whereas the battalion's previous facility made do with six bays, the TEMF houses 16 maintenance bays.

"Even if all of those 16 bays are full, we still have an end-to-end throughput capability so a vehicle can pull in one end, pull over the pit, get an undercarriage service and then move down almost like an assembly line type of process," Samuel said. "All the while, the other 16 bays are entirely occupied."

He said the facility also doubles as a deployment platform, with storage facilities for unit equipment and a spacious bay allowing for the rapid deployment of a contingency force package.

"When the phone call comes in the

middle of the night and says 'Hey, we need to deploy this package,' the unit can come in, fire up its vehicles, pull in off the line, offload all of their weapons and communications devices, and drive out the other end of the building and head on out," Samuel said.

He said the robust design of the TEMF reflects the Army's modernization in everything from equipment to training to facilities.

"What the Army really did in this latest series of facilities was to operationalize them," Samuel said. "We're an Army at war, and we're going to be at war for the foreseeable future. So we have to make sure, whether it's a company operations facility or a brigade headquarters, that the unit can do its complete mission out of these new facilities because we're not a Cold War Army anymore."

Along with modernization, Samuel said the TEMF epitomizes the Army's commitment to unit readiness and Soldier well-being.

"These are trying times," he said of the Overseas Contingency Operations. "We're asking an awful lot of our Soldiers, and I think that's why the Army is taking great strides in terms of facilities, equipment and training to give our Soldiers the very best."

David Bedard is a journalist for the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson newspaper "Arctic Warrior." Curt Biberdorf contributed to this story.

Rising to meet the challenges of a difficult remediation project, the Tanaga and Ogliuga Formerly Used Defense Sites team performed so well that it took the Army's highest honor for...

Environmental restoration

Story by Mary Cochran

"It's the most remote location I've worked, and I've worked in Alaska for 30 years," said the helicopter pilot while putting on his headset.

The location was the uninhabited island of Tanaga, part of the Aleutian Island chain between mainland Alaska and Russia. The mission was for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District to clean up formerly used defense sites from World War II.

The journey began with a 1,350-mile flight from Anchorage. Then there was a little adventure from Adak, population 178, a former Naval Air Station now practically a ghost town in a state of disrepair.

This westernmost town in the United States is the "birthplace of the winds," and flights in and out are only on Sundays and Thursdays. That wind plus a healthy dose of fog meant helicopter transport to Tanaga was a no-go, so on to Plan B: an overnight stay and then a 45-minute flight swapped for an 11-hour ride on one of the first crab boats of the season to fish the Bering Sea.

The trip was smooth sailing, remarkably different from passengers

headed home who passed around motion sickness pills with stories of woe.

"We left Adak at 6:30 this morning and we've been on the boat for 10 hours, so in about an hour we will be at Lash Bay," said Richard Ragle, project manager at the Alaska District.

Tanaga's Lash Bay hid in a thick cover of fog. It is home to 128,000 acres of waist-high grass, brush-covered rolling hills, rugged coastlines and an active volcano. This island is part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge with portions designated as wilderness areas. On Tanaga Island, and nearby Ogliuga Island, significant archaeological and cultural resources can be found as well as a number of threatened and endangered species.

They also are home to remnants of World War II. This is why the Alaska District and AECOM Environmental Inc. spent almost an entire year just coordinating a home away from home on this lonely site with no roads, lodging, food, services or emergency-response capabilities. It cost \$2.6 million merely getting equipment and

supplies to Tanaga to support a 40-person field camp for almost five weeks. Satellite communications, water/waste treatment, laboratory services and equipment were transported via barge.

The complex logistics were all in an effort to identify the environmental contaminants as well as possible unexploded ordnance and buried munitions dating back to the 1940s. A diverse team assembled on the island for the remedial project to perform soil, water and sediment sampling and testing. The lineup of technical experts included an archaeologist, a biologist, chemists, environmental engineers, scientists, a geophysicist, civil engineers, a hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste specialist, a medical doctor and the most popular: the camp cook.

The site's remoteness challenged the testing.

"The weather out here is severe because we're sitting between the Bering Sea and the North Pacific. There is very little land mass to stop the wind," Ragle said.

The maritime climate meant working



Photo by AECOM Environmental Inc.

This hillside view shows the base camp at Tanaga Island on a rare sunny day. The district and AECOM Environmental Inc. spent almost an entire year coordinating the camp, which has no roads, lodging, food, services or emergency-response capabilities.



Photo by AECOM Environmental Inc.

(Above) A helicopter transports a six-passenger vehicle across streams with collapsed bridges. (Below) Will Mangano, environmental engineer, (left) and Jacob Sweet, chemist, operate an Ultraviolet Optical Screening Tool on Tanaga Island to characterize subsurface fuel contamination.

“When we drive the rods down into the ground, the computer will be able to tell us the extent of the concentration of the fuels that may be underground and at what depth,” Mangano said. “So if you watch the screen, you’ll be able to see a graph that shows depth vs. concentration of fluorescence.”

The remedial investigation served the purpose of defining how much material needs to be removed. With plenty of abandoned heavy equipment on the runway, such as old cranes and bulldozers, the team was frequently asked about removing them, Ragle said.

“That is not contamination. That is history to preserve for future generations,” he said. The State Historic Preservation Office deemed that the remnants needed to be protected to conserve the history of World War II in Alaska.

The team’s hard work paid off as the Tanaga Island and Ogluiga Island Formerly Used Defense Sites project won the 2009 Secretary of the Army Environmental Award for environmental restoration.

Among the team’s successes was conducting three different projects—a hazardous, toxic and radioactive waste investigation on each island, and a military munitions response program project on Tanaga—to view areas with potential for military munitions and related components during one field season, saving more than \$5.2 million in mobilization costs and accelerating the project’s timeline by three years.

“We have a small break in the weather,” announced the helicopter pilot, which sent people scurrying to pack and then squeeze into the bright orange arctic flight suits, required fashion when flying over the icy waters of the Bering Sea. For some, this was the fifth time they had gone through the drill only to fly back to Tanaga because weather denied landing at Adak. The sixth time was the charm.

Mary Cochran is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers video correspondent with Defense Media Activity. Her video report is available online at www.army.mil.



Photo by Richard Ragle

in rain, fog, high winds and chilly temperatures not to mention the difficulty of getting to the 13 different testing sites on the soggy island. Nonetheless, 21,134 man-hours were clocked collecting data using innovative technology, such as the Ultraviolet Optical Screening Tool and Geoprobe drill rig. The team used these devices to determine the location and extent of the contamination, said Will Mangano, Alaska District project engineer, about the ear-grating process.

Engineer asset

Temporary team evolves into permanent expeditionary unit

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

The colors of the 62nd Engineer Detachment were unfurled for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District-based unit during an activation ceremony Feb. 22. Two weeks later, the unit deployed on its first assignment in Iraq.

The activation marked the conversion of a temporary volunteer Forward Engineer Support Team-Advance (FEST-A) into a permanent deployable Army field unit composed mostly of civilian employees. Unchanged is its role of supporting combat, stability and disaster operations around the world.

Civilians in the 62nd Engineer Detachment are assigned full-time to the unit. Previously, under the former FEST-A structure, they volunteered for a mission and then returned to their normal duties once their service was no longer needed.

The 62nd Engineer Detachment is responsible for providing engineer planning and limited execution capability to supplement other engineer staff from the combatant command to brigade combat team level. The team may also be assigned to a Forward

Engineering Support Team-Main (FEST-M), which is similar to a Corps district and directly supports another military unit or command, or federal department or agency.

Activation of a military unit is a rare event for the Corps, said Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander.

“(Feb. 22 was) a big day because it was the first time we got their guidon out and officially recognized them as part of the Army,” he said. “We are marking a moment in time of an organization that is going to do great things not only for Alaska, but for our Army and nation as a whole.”

Forward deployed

The detachment is staffed with civilians in the following positions: geographic information system specialist, contract specialist and civil, environmental, mechanical and electrical engineers. Other engineering disciplines can be augmented depending on the mission. On the military side, the team is led by a field grade officer and senior noncommissioned officer on three-year assignments. At full strength, the unit has eight people.

It conducts initial critical infrastructure assessments; assists

with technical engineering and design; provides limited contracting services; and offers reachback—the ability to talk directly with experts in the United States when a problem in the field needs quick resolution—to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Koenig said the evolution of an on-call, all-volunteer FEST-A to an established military unit was motivated by the Corps’ No. 1 goal in its Campaign Plan, which is delivering USACE support to combat, stability and disaster operations through forward deployed and reachback capabilities.

The detachment is important because the Army’s needs have changed since the Cold War, Koenig explained. With military deployments to nations such as Somalia, Bosnia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Afghanistan since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, one of the gaps the Army and USACE discovered was the ability to rapidly provide facilities that U.S. servicemembers needed to conduct operations in these austere environments.

USACE responded by ensuring the top priority was executing the concept of field force engineering. It started in 1999 with the establishment of the FEST-As and FEST-Ms, and teams for logistics, environmental support, contingency real estate and infrastructure assessment.

The FEST-A based at the Alaska District was the first in the Corps to deploy to Iraq in 2003. It also participated in tsunami and hurricane disaster relief missions. By 2009, field force engineering became a formal part of the Army.

“That’s an important milestone

Maj. James Thompson, 62nd Engineer Detachment commander (left) and Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, case the colors during the unit’s deployment ceremony at the district headquarters building March 8. Two weeks earlier, the unit’s colors were uncased in an activation ceremony in the same location. In the background, other members of the team are (from left to right) Tom Baker, cartographer; Tray Cashman, mechanical engineer; Rey Singson, electrical engineer; Sgt. 1st Class Keith Baltozer, noncommissioned officer in charge, and Jacob Sweet, environmental engineer.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf



Courtesy photo

The 62nd Engineer Detachment is composed of (left to right) Maj. James Thompson, team leader; Rey Singson, electrical engineer; Doug Sterk, civil engineer; Sgt. 1st Class Keith Baltozer, noncommissioned officer in charge; Morgan Benson, environmental engineer; George Cashman, mechanical engineer; Mathew Holtschlag, contract specialist, and Tom Baker, cartographer.

because it shows that the Army recognizes how important the role that these types of organizations have played in the past,” Koenig said.

Team building

Maj. James Thompson, 62nd Engineer Detachment commander, recalled during the activation ceremony some hectic moments with personnel changes and short-notice travel in the 18 months since arriving in Alaska to take on this leadership opportunity.

“It’s been a whirlwind that has not stopped since that day,” he said. “I think our combined air miles are close to a million.”

He thanked everyone in the district who worked to build the team into one that has a reputation for accomplishing the mission and is prepared to deploy wherever it is needed. Among the unit’s leading supporters is the Emergency Management Office.

“We’re proud that we have proved the Field Force Engineering program is viable and necessary,” said Debbie Fletcher, military planner in Emergency Management, who manages the district’s program. “You see their success is a result of what our current team and past teams have accomplished.”

Thompson added that his unit appreciates the contributions of past team members who have proven the concept and intends to build upon that foundation.

After months of planning, recruiting and training, the first opportunity to do that came when the detachment deployed to Iraq in March for a one-year assignment to provide technical engineering support to the 3rd Infantry Division, which is in the process of

transferring control for rebuilding that nation to the Iraqi government.

Thompson praised the talent and quality of his team members.

“Each of these people...brings a lot of knowledge, a lot of skills, some great abilities, some outstanding experiences, and they bring a lot of personality,” he said.

For George Cashman, mechanical engineer, the deployment is a chance to return to where he spent more than four years as a contracted project manager for the Corps. He said the difference now is that instead of “building up and pushing projects, this mission will be closure and turnover of projects.”

Tom Baker, cartographer, said he is honored to be a part of the team. “I’m glad to be here. I’m glad I got picked for this opportunity.”

Other 62nd Engineer Detachment members are Rey Singson, electrical engineer, who gained experience on the FEST-A as a volunteer with the group that assisted with hurricanes Ike and Gustav, and Jacob Sweet, environmental engineer, who deployed with the team for 120 days and previously served as an environmental engineer in Afghanistan in 2009.

Sweet was replaced by a new permanent member, Doug Sterk, civil engineer. Since then, two more members were hired and have joined the unit in Iraq—Mathew Holtschlag, contract specialist, and Morgan Benson, environmental engineer.

When the detachment operates outside of a secure compound, Soldiers and Marines provide necessary protection. Civilian members are unarmed, but otherwise contribute to the mission and make the same

sacrifices as Soldiers, said Brig. Gen. Mark Yenter, former commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Pacific Ocean Division.

The risks don’t concern Cashman.

“The biggest thing won’t be bombs or bullets,” he said. “It’s being around each other for 24 hours per day and being able to work together for that amount of time.”

Reachback

One capability the team plans to use heavily is “reachback.” It enables the team to communicate with the Corps up to 10 times per day through tele-engineering.

For instance, team members can take photographs of an engineering project, such as a water purification plant, and transmit these digital images to the appropriate Corps office. After the problem is analyzed, technical experts at home can deliver a solution to the team.

“It’s almost immediate turnaround, very similar to the process for virtual surgery that can be done in the medical community,” Yenter said.

Other unit capabilities are engineering planning and design for a 500-person base camp and infrastructure assessments of urban facilities at a daily rate of one-half square kilometer.

“We are going to continue to support you every day you are deployed,” Koenig told the detachment personnel. “You will continue to be a part of our team.”

When the unit returns to Alaska in March 2011, its members will have an opportunity to rest and recover before engaging in training and performing work for the district until the next mission calls.

Transitional troops

Soldiers develop skills, assist district in new program

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

The Warrior Transition Battalion-Alaska at Fort Richardson in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District launched the Arctic Warfighter Trainee Program to provide new skills and experiences for Soldiers who will eventually return to duty or start a civilian career after suffering a combat or service-related injury or illness.

Since the battalion was unable to participate in Operation Warfighter, a Department of Defense program for servicemembers recuperating in the National Capitol Region, the battalion decided to provide similar opportunities by initiating a local program in cooperation with another federal agency, said 1st Lt. Ian Cabbage, civil affairs officer.

The battalion's partner is the Alaska District, which is the first district in the nation to establish a trainee program, according to Capt. Matthew Johnson, project engineer at the Denali Resident

Office and trainee program leader.

This effort is a priority in the district's 2010-2011 Operations Plan, which fits into the Corps' larger campaign goal of making a positive impact on the armed forces and nation. At the same time, the Soldiers in transition are helping the Corps accomplish its mission.

Soldiers in the battalion are in a holding period of waiting for the medical evaluation board's decision to return to duty, medically separate or retire, Johnson said. The first four Soldiers were placed with the district in mid-February, and three more reported for duty a few weeks later. As of August, 14 Soldiers either have completed a training period, are currently onboard or are interested in participating but not yet assigned.

"It's been easy to place them," Johnson said.

One of those Soldiers is Sgt. 1st Class Jessie Occhino, an artilleryman who is an electrical engineer and construction representative trainee at the Southern Area Office. He has been visiting job sites that require an electrical systems

inspection by a Corps quality assurance representative.

"It's great. It lets you test the waters of getting back into work full-time," said Occhino, originally from Riverside, Calif.

He said most of his days for the past year have consisted of attending appointments. Worksite agreements and trainee programs open new possibilities, especially for those Soldiers who are looking for a more fulfilling job choice during their transition, Cabbage said.

"Ideally, they can acquire a skill set they can use in civilian employment whether it is with the Corps or elsewhere," Johnson said.

The unit encourages continuing education, and Occhino started classes in the construction management program at the University of Alaska Anchorage in the summer. "It's been fun working here, and I would like to get hired here as a civilian in the future," he said.

As the program was developing, some managers expressed concerns about the cost, Johnson said. However,



Photo by Michael McKimney

Master Sgt. John Zaremba, infantryman, helps dredge the Port of Anchorage as a participant in the Arctic Warfighter Trainee Program. It provides new skills and experiences for Soldiers who will eventually return to duty or start a civilian career after suffering a combat or service-related injury or illness. The program also helps the district accomplish its mission.

expenses are minimal for items, such as office supplies and safety gear, and those “soft” expenditures of training time spent with mentors and supervisors.

The investment has been well worth it for Gordy Osgood, civil engineer in the Technical Integration Section and mentor to Spc. James Beyer. An artilleryman, Beyer was interested in cartography, and he’s made a positive impact in the district as a geographic information systems and computer-aided design specialist.

“He’s moved very quickly into getting work done on our projects,” Osgood said. “This is something we should do. I’m happy to be a part of it.”

To align the Soldiers with the right job, the battalion identifies and screens for candidates who are prepared, motivated and capable. Each job supports and facilitates the warrior’s individually-tailored plan that outlines the road to recovery, Cubbage said.

Then the prospective trainees arrange an interview with Johnson where he learns about their career goals, special skills, limitations and availability.

Finally, after seeing how they line up with the district’s needs, he selects a position and schedules a meeting with their would-be supervisor. To identify job possibilities, Johnson uses a list summarizing dozens of position descriptions available in the district and also receives requests from supervisors in various offices, such as environmental resources, program management and contracting.

The supervisor and trainee discuss goals and develop a work schedule taking into consideration medical appointments or other obligations since the Soldiers’ care and recovery are the priorities.

After new employee orientation, they are assigned for a length of time ranging from one week to several months or years. Johnson said most Soldiers are assigned for two or three months, which can be extended for the length of their transition if the situation allows. Evaluations consist of an informal outprocessing interview with the trainee and supervisor.

With the Warrior Transition Battalion-Alaska split into a company of Soldiers at Fort Richardson and Fort Wainwright, the program will be implemented soon at the district’s Northern Area Office, Johnson said.

“There are only so many Soldiers to pull from for this program, and I can only assign so many people to an office,



(Above) Spc. Christopher Bean, motor transport operator and trainee in the Soils and Geology Section, operates a drill rig at the Fort Richardson Combat Pistol Range site. (Below) Spc. James Beyer, artilleryman, turned his interest in cartography into a geographic information systems and computer-aided design specialist trainee position in the Technical Integration Section. (Photos by Capt. Matthew Johnson)



but it has room to grow,” he said.

The battalion also plans on expanding outside of the Corps. “I’m still in contact with Operation Warfighter and anticipate they will send me a list of federal employers, such as the Department of Interior, in the near future for us to work with,” Cubbage said.

Johnson added that Brig. Gen. Mark Yenter, former Pacific Ocean Division commander, expressed interest in adopting this program throughout the division and promoting it as a template for the rest of the Corps to follow.

“I like this job a lot,” Johnson said. “They’re definitely proof of the impact we’ve made as a district.”

Employee profile

Attorney guides work force through nuances of ethics

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

As much as he may have dreamed about it, playing for the Boston Red Sox was not in Carl Olson's future. Instead of playing baseball for a living, he hit the books and became a lawyer.

"When I realized in 11th grade that I couldn't hit, I knew that I wanted to go to law school," said Olson, assistant counsel in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District's Office of Counsel.

Arriving in Anchorage in May 2008, Olson has supported the work force on ethics, labor law and the Freedom of Information Act. He also assists other staff attorneys on civil works, regulatory and contracting cases, but his most visible role is that of ethics counselor.

"In the big picture, if ethics is not on people's radar, you can have the ethics violations that happened at the Minerals Management Service or Securities and Exchange Commission," he said. "Those are good examples of what can happen when ethics take a back seat."

To ensure the work force stays informed on various ethics topics, Olson manages a multipronged approach of annual training along with regular briefings, lunchtime presentations, intranet postings and e-mail messages throughout the year.

These efforts were rewarded with the 2010 Office of Government Ethics Education and Communication Award, which he accepted on behalf of the Alaska District at the 2010 National Government Ethics Conference in Chicago May 12-14.

The path to Alaska for the Starksboro, Vt., native began after graduating with a degree in history from Brown University in 2002. Olson decided to wait a few years before enrolling in law school and took a job as a project associate for a public health consulting firm in Denver, Colo.

In 2005, he moved to Cleveland, Ohio, to attend Case Western Reserve University School of Law. Interested in working for the federal government, Olson completed a student summer internship for the U.S. Department of Justice in Cleveland.

After graduating in 2008, he was hired through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chief Counsel's Civilian Honors Program, which places a limited number of highly qualified graduating law students and judicial clerks in offices worldwide. When he filled out his geographic preference form, he selected locations covering everywhere except the South and Afghanistan. A position was offered in Alaska, and he accepted it.

"It's been good working here," Olson said. "In this job, I like the mix of research and also working with people and providing advice."

Weather during his first summer in Anchorage was cool and wet, so it was a good time to study and prepare for the Alaska bar exam, which he passed in October 2008.

The conference in Chicago and speaking at the Freedom of Information Act conference in Washington, D.C., last December were highlights for him. Besides professional development opportunities at work, Olson said he likes the year-round recreational options available in the state.

A downhill skier, he's noticed that compared to Vermont's steep runs and Colorado's sunshine, skiing in Alaska is dark come December and January. However, the amount of snowfall offsets the lack of winter daylight.

Olson said summer hiking is convenient because mountain trails around Anchorage are no more than a 30-minute drive away, and the daylight lasts long. He also continues to play rugby, a sport he picked up in college.

Back in the office, Olson attempts to stay in front of the changes and trends that may affect ethics, such as social media, as well as practicing "preventive" law to handle personnel matters that could escalate into a problem. Open and regular communication is an essential part of being proactive.

"(Office of Counsel) can't be the ethics police. It's on the employees to develop an ethical culture," Olson said. "If there's any question or doubt, we're always here. No question is too small."



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Carl Olson, assistant counsel in the Alaska District, leads a lunchtime presentation on ethics and social media for employees at district headquarters. Olson received the 2010 Office of Government Ethics Education and Communication Award for his multifaceted approach to informing the work force about various ethics topics.

ACTIVE IN ALASKA



Tom Lubeck, supervisory civil engineer in the Civil Sanitary Section, skis a loop around Eagle Glen Golf Course on Elmendorf Air Force Base in March.



Members of the Engineering Division compete in the tug of war during the district picnic at Fort Richardson's Otter Lake in June.



Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, displays a king salmon caught during a trip to Yakutat in May.



Michael Pierce, engineering technician in the Structures and Architecture Section, fishes at Otter Lake during the district picnic in June.



Kirk Stickley, information technology specialist with the Army Corps of Engineers-Information Technology, launches a kite at Otter Lake during the district picnic in June.



Alaska District officers and noncommissioned officers view a 20-foot titanium starburst memorial atop Engineer Hill at Attu during a military professional development trip to the Aleutian Islands May 25-28.

Retracing history

Soldiers reflect on battle for Attu during World War II

Story and photos by Maj. Justin De Armond

Sixty-eight years after the battle for Attu, seven officers and two noncommissioned officers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District went on a powerful journey into history as they retraced the steps of the “Thousand-Mile War” during a military professional development trip May 25-28.

Attu, as well as the Aleutian Island of Kiska, is notable for being the only parts of U.S. territory occupied by a foreign army during World War II and marked the first time the nation was occupied by foreign invaders since the War of 1812. The Thousand-Mile War reflects the distance from Dutch Harbor near the Alaska Peninsula to Attu at the far western tip of the Aleutian Islands, and in preparing for the trip, participants read a book by the same title.

It was apparent that many of the names associated with military history in Alaska were leaders involved in the World War II effort and played a significant role at Attu. A few of

them were Gen. Simon Buckner, who established Fort Richardson and was the first commander of the Alaskan Defense Command; Brig. Gen. Benjamin B. Talley, known as the “father of military construction in Alaska”; and Col. William Eareckson, Army Air Forces commander during the Aleutian Islands Campaign.

Before flying to the Aleutians, the group visited the Anchorage Museum’s permanent exhibit “Alaska at War: World War II and the Aleutian Campaign” and temporary exhibit “Kiska and Adak: War in the Aleutians.” Though small, the exhibits helped fill in extra details of the war through photos and artifacts. More on the military history in Alaska, including Attu, is found at the museum in Whittier, located about 60 miles south of Anchorage, which itself has historical significance as it became the port of entrance for U.S. soldiers in Alaska during the war.

After a commercial flight to Kodiak, the Coast Guard flew the group to Attu

aboard a C-130 cargo aircraft for a four-and-a-half-hour supply run to its Long Range Navigation (LORAN) station, which has been decommissioned since then.

The commander, a resident expert on Attu having been there for nearly a year, provided a tour of the battlefields by driving the group in a snowcat tracked-vehicle.

With just a few hours to explore the island, the Soldiers stopped at Massacre Bay, Jarmin Pass, and Artillery and Engineer hills that seemed unaltered since the time of the battle.

On Engineer Hill, the visitors found signs of combat—expended ammunition, fighting positions, underground shelters and bomb craters in fields of overgrown grass and vegetation along with snow-filled trenches. They saw where Japanese Army Col. Yasuyo Yamasaki committed suicide after a failed Japanese banzai attack. Amazingly absent was the foul weather that U.S. and Japanese troops



Rifle casings lie on the ground on Engineer Hill, one of the remnants of the Battle of Attu.

fought in during the war.

Yet, low clouds covered a good portion of the island, specifically Fishhook Ridge, the last stronghold of the Japanese. They saw the valley the Japanese counterattacked up onto Engineer Hill but failed to take because of the quick action of American support units.

Touring the battleground eased the group's understanding of the hardships that soldiers there endured. The terrain offers no concealment other than the natural undulation. Fog evident during the visit gave a better appreciation of the uncertainty U.S. Soldiers felt trying to gain the high ground when they could not see the enemy, but the enemy from above could see them moving through the low cloud cover.

All but 28 of 2,351 Japanese soldiers stationed on Attu died from battle or suicide. A total of 549 U.S. Soldiers were killed in the fight. In 1987, the Japanese government erected a 20-

foot titanium starburst memorial atop Engineer Hill to honor the soldiers who fought and gave their lives in the islands and seas of the North Pacific during World War II.

After a brief tour of the battlefield, the team stopped at the last standing Quonset hut, which served as the island jail. The group then hiked onto the tundra and explored remnants of the former post-war 25,000-Soldier installation. Wooden pathways in front of the huts still exist, and the group peeked inside a few of the corroded remains of hundreds of buildings.

If not for some foresight, these areas might have lost a piece of the past.

Cleaning the remains of old military locations is one responsibility of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which began administering the Formerly Used Defense Sites program after Congress created the Defense Environmental Restoration Program in 1983. Before identifying places for remediation, the Corps asked the National Park Service and Alaska Office of Archaeology to survey and determine the historical significance of these sites. Talley, who landed with the invasion force that recaptured Attu, also encouraged preservation. In 1985, 12 sites were designated national historic landmarks, including the Attu battlefield and Japanese occupation site on Kiska.

After a LORAN station tour, the group left for its next destination. The aircraft flew at low altitude to nearby Eareckson Air Force Station in Shemya. This provided passengers



Capt. Matthew Johnson, project engineer at the Denali Resident Office, peers inside a bunker on Engineer Hill while Lt. Col. Matthew "Rusty" Dooley, contract officer in the Contracting Division, looks toward Jarmin Pass during the tour of a World War II battlefield on Attu.

a clear view of Attu's Massacre Bay and the ridgeline to the northeast that Soldiers climbed in order to engage the Japanese entrenched on high ground.

Today, about 175 personnel are stationed at Eareckson at any given time. Here everyone "double-dipped." This team-building event entailed submersion in the Bering Sea followed by a 400-yard run south along the tiny peninsula for a plunge into the Pacific Ocean. Everyone received a personalized certificate in recognition of the feat during checkout the next morning.

On the return to Anchorage, the group saw another aspect of Coast Guard operations as the flight crew conducted a surveillance mission to the International Date Line to check on fishermen and identify any violations of international waters.

Combat is difficult no matter where it is conducted, and Attu had to be one of the more harsh environments to fight a war. Without the proper gear and training, fighting would have been extremely difficult. Weather obviously played a major role in the way the battle was fought on Attu. In fact, it was the most difficult thing to fight.

Stepping back in time to learn about warfighting in the Aleutians left an everlasting impression. The trip was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Maj. Justin De Armond is a contract officer in the Contracting Division.



During a professional development trip to Attu, district officers and noncommissioned officers traverse the valley that leads to Jarmin Pass in the area where U.S. forces fought Japanese soldiers during the World War II.



U.S. Army Signal Corps photo

District flashback

Col. Benjamin B. Talley, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Alaska (second from right) and Lt. Gen. Simon B. Buckner Jr., commander of the Alaska Defense Command (third from right), enter the Whittier Tunnel during a holing through ceremony Nov. 20, 1942. The Army began construction of the railroad spur from Whittier to Portage in 1941, which became Alaska's main supply link for the war effort. The main advantages of using Whittier as a rail port were a shorter voyage, reduced exposure of ships to Japanese submarines, reduced risk of Japanese aircraft bombing the port facilities because of frequent poor weather and avoiding the steep railroad grades required to traverse the Kenai Mountains. Workers completed the spur April 23, 1943, which consisted of a 1-mile tunnel through Begich Peak and a 2.5-mile tunnel through Maynard Mountain, thus linking Whittier to the Alaska Railroad's main line at Portage. In 2000, motor vehicle access was established, creating the longest combined-use tunnel in North America.

U.S. Army Engineer District-Alaska

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