



USACE

# Transatlantic times

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## USACE AFGHANISTAN DISTRICTS COMBINE: TRANSATLANTIC AFGHANISTAN DISTRICT

USACE TAA Photos by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo/Released

### Construction of Afghanistan National Police Compounds in Kandahar Underway



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by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo, USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan District

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — The U.S. Army KANDAHAR , Afghanistan – Construction is underway on an Afghan National Police provincial headquarters and provincial response company compound here. Once complete, the headquarters will accommodate 200 police specialists and the company compound will accommodate 135 personnel. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Transatlantic Afghanistan District project consists of two adjacent sites. Included in the design and construction are administration buildings, training buildings, dining halls, separate barracks for men and women, force protection measures, wastewater collection and treatment systems, electrical generation and distribution systems, detention cells, fuel points, and more. The project is about 40 percent complete.

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# Construction of Afghanistan National Police compounds in Kandahar underway



U.S. Army, National Guard and Reserve soldiers provide transportation and security so that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers technical experts can go 'outside the wire' to inspect project sites under construction. Without these soldiers, it would be nearly impossible for USACE to safely complete its mission to deliver critical infrastructure for the Afghan people. (USACE TAA photo by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo/Released)

by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo,  
USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan District

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Construction is underway on an Afghan National Police provincial headquarters and provincial response company compound here. Once complete, the headquarters will accommodate 200 police specialists and the company compound will accommodate 135 personnel.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Transatlantic Afghanistan District project consists of two adjacent sites. Included in the design and construction are administration buildings, training buildings, dining halls, separate barracks for men and women, force protection measures, wastewater collection and treatment systems, electrical generation and distribution systems, detention cells, fuel points, and more. The project is about 40 percent complete.

"Infrastructure like the kind currently under construction in Kandahar will enable Afghans to provide increased security and stability in the province because these facilities provide adequate places for Afghan National Security Forces to live, work and train," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. John Connor, officer in charge of the Transatlantic Afghanistan District South Area Office.

Although a contractor is building the facilities, USACE personnel, including Jason Riharb, conduct thorough inspections of the construction site



Jason Riharb, a civil engineer with the USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan district, meets with an Afghan engineer at the construction site of an Afghan National Police provincial headquarters. Although a contractor is building the project, Riharb conducts thorough inspections of the construction site several times weekly to help make sure construction is progressing in accordance with the International Building Code and the site's plans and specifications.



Construction is underway on an Afghan National Police provincial headquarters and provincial response company compound here. Once complete, the headquarters will accommodate 200 police specialists and the company compound will accommodate 135 personnel. (USACE photographer Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo/Released)

several times weekly. As a young civil engineer with five years of experience, including nearly two in combat zones, Riharb has the education and expertise required to identify potential problems and coordinate corrective actions.

"My objective is to make sure the contractors here build safe and reliable facilities that comply with the International Building Code and project plans and specifications, within the time and budget allotted," said Riharb. "These facilities will support Afghan National Security Forces as these forces serve and protect their communities," he said.

The project is expected to be completed in January of 2014.

# 553rd FEST-A provides expert recommendations for how to expand, shrink, consolidate, close



Donna Johnson, an electrical engineer with the 553rd Engineer Detachment, Forward Engineer Support Team – Advance inspects a generator at a forward operating base in Southern Afghanistan. (USACE TAA photos by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo/Released)

by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo  
USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan District

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – As responsibility for the safety, security and stability of Afghanistan is being assumed by Afghan authorities, the U.S. footprint here is getting smaller. As a result, United States Forces– Afghanistan, which is responsible for most of the base transitions and closures in the nation, looks to technical experts to assist with shutting down bases. One group of specialists helping to facilitate transitions and closures is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 553rd Engineer Detachment, Forward Engineer Support Team – Advance, based out of New York.

The team's unique blend of engineering, environmental, geospatial and construction management professionals make them an apt choice for recommendations on how to expand, shrink, consolidate and close bases.

The 553rd is one of eight FEST-A teams in the world. Each is composed of one officer in charge, one non-commissioned officer in charge and six highly-skilled USACE civilian technical experts. The teams quickly produce a wide-range of engineering products and services.

Members of the 553rd were recently consulted on how one base in southern Afghanistan should accommodate troops and equipment from other, nearby bases that are shutting down. Members included cartographer/surveyor Richard Allahar, electrical engineer Donna Johnson, engineering geologist Sandy Zelen, and construction engineer supervisor U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Roland Tajalle.

Base closures, expansions and transitions involve much more than a knack for organizing and moving things. There are many directives and policies to consider. Questions that commonly surface include how best to configure structures, questions about capacity to produce electricity to accommodate the needs of residents and questions about environmental assessments.

"We look at regulations, including "The Sand Book," explained Zelen, who deployed to Afghanistan from the USACE Baltimore District where she nor-

mally serves as the district's enforcement (Regulatory Division) program manager.

The "Sand Book" is the colloquial term for the U.S. Central Command's "Regulation 415-1. Construction and Base Camp Development in the US-CENTCOM Area of Responsibility."

Zelen, who has worked at USACE for some 25 years, also teaches college science and engineering courses.

In a process that bears some resemblance to Defense Base Closure and Realignment or BRAC, some bases in Afghanistan will expand to accommodate American troops and equipment from closing bases before the troops depart for the U.S. and equipment, materials and supplies are retrograded. Retrograde, from a defense logistics perspective, is the return of military materiel to the United States.

"It's expanding to shrink," explained Allahar.

Whenever practical and within regulations, the team incorporates customer's preferences into designs.

The base where Allahar conducted a recent geospatial survey needs to accommodate two additional company-sized elements. A company is a military unit consisting of 80–250 soldiers. The base that is scheduled

to absorb these troops will not gain any new real estate, so the reconfiguration will have to happen within the existing parcel of real estate.

Although he has only worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for three years, Allahar deployed to Iraq prior to his current tour in Afghanistan. He previously served with the U.S. Agency for International Development on road design and construction projects in Sumatra following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami.

Johnson volunteered for the team from the Europe District. Her specialty, electrical engineering, is one of the most sought after in Afghanistan since electrical production and distribution are essential to the country's development.

For Tajalle, his current deployment marks his fourth combat tour in eight years. His knowledge and experience in construction management and logistics in a contingency environment are essential to accomplishing the team's missions, said Johnson.

Consolidating bases, closing some and expanding others is necessary as more than 34,000 troops are scheduled to depart Afghanistan by the close of 2013 and Afghan National Security Forces assume full responsibility for safety and security operations in their homeland.

USFOR-A seeks the technical expertise of specialists, including the 553rd Forward Engineer Support Team– Advance to make sure the process is done right.



Richard Allahar, a surveyor and cartographer with the 553rd Engineer Detachment, Forward Engineer Support Team – Advance conducts geospatial survey work at a forward operating base in Southern Afghanistan.

**TAS**  
inactivation  
photos



U.S. Soldiers assigned to the Afghanistan Engineer District-South color guard display the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flag during the inactivation ceremony at Kandahar Airfield, Kandahar province, Afghanistan, July 11, 2013.

(USACE TAA photo's Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo, released)



Afghanistan Engineer District-South Commander U.S. Army Col. Vincent V. Quarles addresses an audience during the inactivation ceremony for the district at Kandahar Airfield, Kandahar province, Afghanistan, July 11, 2013. Engineer District-South marked its inactivation after four years of delivering critical infrastructure projects in Afghanistan.



U.S. Soldiers assigned to the Afghanistan Engineer District-South color guard display the cased colors, which signifies the inactivation of the district in a ceremony at Kandahar Airfield, Kandahar province, Afghanistan, July 11, 2013.

# Last district standing—TAA continues Corps' mission in Afghanistan

by Todd Lyman  
USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan District

KABUL— In three days the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers went from having three districts in Afghanistan to only one...one district with a huge mission—part of which is to continue the Corps legacy begun in late 2002 with only an area office.

Transatlantic Afghanistan District, the last district standing, was activated July 9 under the command of Col. Michael J. Price, who returns to Afghanistan from St. Paul District, which he commanded from July 2010 to this month. Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, Transatlantic Division commander, hosted and presided. In the next two days Transatlantic District North in Kabul and Transatlantic District South at Kandahar would be inactivated and all responsibility to complete the Corps mission in Afghanistan would rest on the new district.

More than 150 people assembled at Camp Phoenix Patriot Square. The color guard presented the cased colors. Command Sergeant Major Roy Ward, Transatlantic Division, retrieved the cased colors and positioned himself before Eyre and Price. As the senior enlisted leader, the command sergeant major is the custodian of the unit's colors. In this role Ward retrieved the cased Corps colors from the color guard and presented it to Eyre, who uncased the



U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Transatlantic Division Command Sergeant Major Roy Ward assists division commander Maj. Gen. Michael R. Eyre to uncuse the colors for Transatlantic Afghanistan District as Col. Michael J. Price prepares to assume command during a ceremony at Camp Phoenix, Kabul province, Afghanistan, July 9, 2013.

(USACE TAA photo by Todd Lyman/Released)

colors and presented the TAA colors to Price, signifying the transfer of command responsibility and authority.

"The passing of the unit colors demonstrates to the members of the unit that the mantle of leadership has been passed on to the new commander," the narrator explained to the audience as Priced received the bright red flag emblazoned with the Corps castle.

Eyre addressed the crowd, "There was much accomplished by the two districts that we are inactivating on Wednesday and Thursday. They have served with distinction. But it is time to pull together a new team working as one, to stand up a new district...with a new identity. Working together we will move forward through 2014 and set . . .

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# Afghanistan Engineer District-South inactivates after four years of delivering critical infrastructure projects



(USACE TAA photo by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo/Released)

by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo,  
USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan District

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Afghanistan Engineer District-South marked its inactivation after four years of delivering critical infrastructure projects in Afghanistan with a ceremony held on Kandahar Airfield July 11.

Over the course of four years, the district's technical experts completed nearly 200 projects valued at \$1.4 billion that improved the safety, security and well-being of Afghans, U.S. and coalition forces.

During his remarks, Afghanistan Engineer District-South Commander Col. Vincent V. Quarles, a resident of Stafford, Va., thanked Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Maj. Gen. Michael

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# Transatlantic District North inactivated during Kabul ceremony



U.S. Army Col. Alfred A. Pantano, Jr., commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Transatlantic District North (TAN), addresses his unit for the final time following the TAN inactivation ceremony at Camp Phoenix, Kabul province, Afghanistan, July 10, 2013.

(USACE TAA photo by T.W. Lyman/Released)

by Todd Lyman  
USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan District

KABUL, Afghanistan - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers bid farewell to the Transatlantic District North and the unit's commander during the last year, Col. Alfred A. Pantano, Jr., under a bright Afghanistan sky Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, Transatlantic Division commander, hosted and presided over the colors-casing ceremony.

TAN began as an area office. In late 2002 USACE received a request to assist the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan (OMC-A) and Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 180 in their mission to develop facilities for the new Afghan National Army (ANA). The Transatlantic Program Center (TAC) responded quickly by assembling and deploying a team to Kabul to help develop a master plan for standing up the ANA's Central Corps. Their arrival in October 2002 established the roots of the future Afghan Area Office (AAO) and became the foundation for the Afghanistan Engineer District (AED). AED was renamed Transatlantic District North in 2011.

During TAN's final days, the district was comprised of approximately 370 civilian, 32 military and 161 contractor personnel located in three area offices and 14 resident offices. At its peak TAN maintained nearly 550 professionals on the rolls. This month TAN contracted to two area offices (Bagram and Kabul) and ten resident offices in the process of forming the

new district, Transatlantic Afghanistan District.

More than 150 people assembled at Camp Phoenix Patriot Square. The color guard presented the district colors. TAN Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald F. Flubacher and Pantano cased the colors by rolling the flag on the staff and enclosing it with a sheath. The general received the cased colors from the colonel, and passed the colors to Flubacher, who remounts the colors in the color sergeant's harness.

The order directing the inactivation of TAN was read. "By order of the commanding general, Transatlantic Division, the following action is directed. Transatlantic District North Afghanistan is inactivated and assigned to control, headquarters, Transatlantic Division, United States Army Corps of Engineers effective 10 July 2013."

The colors will be preserved in the event the district is reactivated.

Eyre explained to the assembly, "This ceremony reflects the rich traditions of the Army and the Army way of life and to formally say farewell to a highly principled, and experienced and successful leader, Col Al Pantano. Today's ceremony represents recognition and commemoration combined with change and continuity. We recognize the outstanding efforts and delivered results of this district and we welcome its historic accomplishments."

He congratulated the command and complimented its leadership, which he

said has led this team through what is arguably the most difficult year in a deployed district's history ... preparing for the end of mission.

The general said, "While previous commanders had the luxury of focusing mostly on the present, knowing there was still time, TAN's team was forced to concentrate on the 'here and now' and with one eye looking out 18 months to two years. TAN has prepared TAA for success."

Reflecting on the command's accomplishments, Eyre stated, "Col. Al Pantano has brought you safely and successfully to this day of transition, a transition that signifies a closure of a nine-year chapter and the standing up of a new district. We are all part of an historic Army Corps of Engineers event today. Col. Pantano did an absolutely superb job. He led this team of nearly 550 military and civilian professionals representing so many others in executing a \$3.3 billion construction program in support of the U.S. and coalition strategy in Afghanistan. With Al's guidance, and keen insights the TAN became a more flexible US Army Corps of Engineer contingency organization."

Pantano stated that he was honored and privileged to serve with TAN in Afghanistan and thanked Eyre. He wished blessings for the team members and their families and thanked them for their service.

The ceremony concluded as all sang the Engineer song "Essayons" and Army song, "Army Goes Rolling Along."

**TAN**  
inactivation  
photos



Maj. Gen. Michael R. Eyre, Transatlantic Division commander, addresses the audience during the Transatlantic District North inactivation ceremony at Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan, July 10. (USACE TAA photo's by T.W. Lyman, released)



U.S. Army Col. Alfred A. Pantano, Jr. and Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald R. Flubacher case the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Transatlantic District North colors during the unit inactivation ceremony at Camp Phoenix.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Transatlantic District North (TAN) color guard takes its post during the inactivation ceremony for TAN at Camp Phoenix.



U.S. Army Col. Alfred A. Pantano, Jr., right, receives the Army Corp of Engineers Transatlantic District North (TAN) colors from TAN Command Sergeant Major Ronald F. Flubacher for the final time as he prepares to case them at Kabul.



The audience at the Transatlantic District North inactivation ceremony listens to the speakers.



(USACE TAA photo by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo/Released)

# Safety a Vital Element of Corps Construction Success

by Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo,  
USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan District

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan - Building is a dangerous business, no matter where it occurs. Safety and occupational health specialists work hard to prevent accidents like those reported world-wide so far this year.

In the U.K., a construction worker plummeted off scaffolding 50 feet to the ground. In the U.S. a boom on a poorly-maintained crane dropped and crushed a worker. Geronimo Gomez, a safety and occupational health specialist with the USACE Transatlantic Afghanistan District is part of a team dedicated to preventing such events here.

In Afghanistan, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is building water, power, and transportation projects as well as Afghan National Security Forces facilities to enable security and stability in the nation. Although the district contracts with competent, experienced, Afghan-owned and operated as well as American firms, construction remains one of the most dangerous industries in the world, explains Gomez. Safety is the district's top priority, but sometimes accidents, incidents or near misses happen, Gomez said.

He urges the best defense against near misses or worse is prevention through education, training and awareness. When an accident, incident, or near miss occurs at a district job site, Gomez investigates; identifying all the possible factors in his pursuit to determine the cause in order to prevent future occurrences.

"We have to ask who, what, when, where, why, and how did the event occur," says Gomez of investigations. "It is necessary to identify factors such as work pace and work load, whether or not machines and equipment have received proper maintenance, whether or not personal protective equipment was used, physical working conditions such as temperature, and how well-informed workers are about hazards," Gomez says.

During investigations, Gomez follows a rigorous checklist, interviews relevant parties to the event including witnesses, reviews pictures and footage, visits the event site, takes measurements and carefully evaluates all of the data.

"The purpose of my investigation is not for punitive measures, it's to determine the root cause of the event for the purposes of eliminating hazards and preventing recurrence," Gomez said.

Safety and occupational health standards in developing nations lag behind those in developed ones according to the United Nations International Labour Organization.

"Striving to impart a culture of safety is really important if we want to reduce and eliminate accidents here," explained Gomez, who for 25 years worked for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and has taught workplace safety courses at the University of Texas in Arlington.

Although firms contracted by the district to build critical infrastructure must have safety and occupational health specialists on job sites daily, Gomez inspects job sites, the related environment and equipment at sites weekly. He observes labor practices to promote adherence to safety regulations too. He educates workers about the benefits of maintaining a good safety and occupational health program. Benefits include reduced absenteeism due to illness or injury, fewer lost days, less damage to property, overall costs savings and most importantly, fewer fatalities. When workplace-related unfortunate events occur, Gomez investigates and recommends preventive actions to curb and eliminate future accidents, incidents or near misses.

"One loss of life is one too many, especially when the loss is preventable," Gomez said. "If we can determine root causes, recognize and eliminate hazards and promote a culture of prevention and awareness, we can save lives."