

US Army Corps
Of Engineers ®
Afghanistan District

TAA TIDBITS

USACE - Transatlantic Afghanistan District

Vol. 2, February 2017

Commander's Corner



Team,

As we move forward into 2017 and continue to deliver great service to the Resolute Support mission, I feel I need to reemphasize, as you all know, that our job is one of the most

difficult within the Corps. Despite the inherent difficulties of the contingency environment in which TAA operates, including the kinetic environment and lack of continuity with supported USACE employees, and often our contractors, we do a great job given the circumstances.

However, with big dollar investments comes oversight and sometimes the oversight will paint our work in a different light. We want to learn from our mistakes and continue to improve. It is true that we can always do better which is true even with the security of the U.S.

Earlier this week, Col. McGowan (USFOR-A), Anjna O'Connor, Matt Ellis and I went to brief Dr. Qayomi, Senior Advisor to President Ghani on Infrastructure, and others, in regard to the challenges of Kajaki Dam. As we briefed our successes on past Dahla and Kajaki Dam projects, and the current issues with Kajaki Dam, it was evident that our commitment to castle quality impressed the audience. Our deliberate process to create

an interim fix and from ensure a quality and sustainable final solution is secured. In fact Dr. Qayomi has asked me to consider supporting them with several initiatives including helping them to develop a "Corps of Construction" like us. I told him we should discuss this with Maj. Gen. Carlson. However we should consider this as a huge complement. Getting back to us looking at ourselves, as the world's premier governmental A&E (+) organization, we are always looking to improve.

Currently, we are hosting a staff assistance visit from TAD to review our processes in several areas. My expectation is that a Tiger team will be assembled soon to go into greater analysis of closing some of the project and program process gaps. Again, this is good thing and will hopefully set up our successors for even more success. It should also make us proud that our organization is one that constantly strives to be better and embraces constructive recommendations.

What I would ask you all to do is to do your part, yes singing a song when you arrive is a part of that, but so is doing your job to the best of your ability, conduct yourself in a professional matter, complete your actions and commitments, and document our decisions. I believe providence guided you to be a part of this amazing team at this moment in time. It is up to you to fulfill your destiny... like Bruno Quirici recently shared on camera... someday in the future you will tell your incredible tale of being a member of this USACE District on freedom's frontier and express the difference you made for the good of the country.

Thanks for what you do!
ESSAYONS!

TAA teammate heads out for Greener pastures



TAA commander Col. Jon Chytka presents Theresa Green with her retirement certificate Jan. 2, during a ceremony here on Bagram Airfield. Green retired after more than 36 years of federal service, with more than 25 of those years with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Green returned to Alaska to begin the move to Tennessee, where she and her husband Roger will call home in their retirement years.

Submissions

TAA Tidbits is your monthly internal newsletter. It is a chance to share non-project good news (and photos) from here or back home, as well as upcoming activities at your duty station.

So whether you are in Marmal, Kandahar, or somewhere in between, be sure to drop the editor a line at michael.a.glasch@usace.army.mil. The deadline is the 25th of each month, so go ahead and mark your calendar with a reminder!

MWR Event



TAA Superbowl Party

Super Bowl Monday Feb 6th
0400 - 0800

Games, Prizes and food
Join in to watch and cheer on your favorite team...
FALCONS vs PATRIOTS

Location: ALOC
Uniform: Your favorite Team attire




TAA welcomes new top NCO

TAA welcomed a new top NCO, Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Blansett, during a change of responsibility ceremony Friday, Dec. 9, on Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

“Being selected to serve in this great district is truly a humbling experience,” Blansett said. “To the TAA family, I’m here for a year and I know without a doubt that I’ll be a better engineer, and a better noncommissioned officer for having this opportunity to serve with each of you.”

The Nocona, Texas, native comes to TAA from the 15th Engineer Battalion in Grafenwoehr, Germany, where he served as the Battalion Command Sergeant Major. This is Blansett’s third deployment to Afghanistan, having deployed in 2006 and 2010. He also deployed to Iraq three times, with single deployments to Kosovo and Haiti.

That experience is something Col. Jon Chytka, commander, TAA, said will help Blansett play a crucial role as USACE-TAA continues to build Afghanistan and the Afghan people.

“Command Sergeant Major Chad Blansett is a very experienced senior leader who has a proven track record of excellence and experience at many levels,” Chytka said. “He cut his teeth as a construction equipment operator, so once he finishes memorizing the two-inch binder of USACE unique acronyms, which will probably take until tomorrow, he will be fully up and running. One thing he will quickly grasp is our operational environment. He has eight peacekeeping and combat tours including Haiti, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan which he will use to continue to keep the district safe.”

Blansett replaces Command Sgt. Maj. John Hankins, who returned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Hankins said one of the most important things he learned during his deployment was to think from the head, but to speak from the heart.



TAA Commander Col. Jon Chytka passes the sword to incoming Command Sgt. Maj. Chad Blansett, marking the change of responsibility during a ceremony at the MWR theater on Bagram Airfield Dec. 9.

“I really don’t want to go. This is a great organization, and you are great people,” Hankins told the crowd. “You didn’t just volunteer to take care of America on the home front, you volunteered to take your expertise and bring it forward to other countries in a contingency engineering district. You’ve been doing it in Iraq, you’ve been doing it in Afghanistan, and what you’re bringing is a wealth of knowledge of what’s the best of us.”

That sentiment was echoed by Blansett.

“There is no doubt that the work we are going to do here for the next year is going to bear fruit. The very foundations, the brick and mortar that we are in charge of supervising and constructing is going to benefit Afghans for generations to come and I’m super excited to be part of this,” he said.

New Addition for Cruz Family



The Cruz family recently welcomed in a new addition, as Prixie and husband Raymond became grandparents for the third time.

Desiderio Yannello Cruz (Desi for short) was born Sept. 19 in Savannah, Georgia. He showed up at 9:29 a.m., weighing in at 7 lbs. and 4 ounces, and was 19.25 inches long.

Prixie says Desi is the new star of the family.

“He can easily be a Gerber baby with his chubby cheeks and adorable giggles and smiles,” she said.

Prixie is a contracting officer stationed on BAF.

76 Bits & Bites

Did you know that February is designated as “Data Privacy” month.



Everyone is encouraged to protect their digital privacy and at a minimum reassess their online login credentials.

A strong password is one that is at least 15 characters long consisting of; at least 2 upper case; 2 lower case letters; 2 special characters or symbols; and 2 numbers.

The stronger the login credential, the harder it is for a human or electronic hacker to obtain it.

Holiday Happenings



Jim Gatling puts the finishing touches on the Christmas tree.



Down at New Kabul Compound, Chris Shaidnagle woke up at 4:20 a.m. to get his tacky Christmas workout completed prior to going on shift at 7:00 a.m. He said he always tries to prioritize his day, so working out had to come early since he had planned on working the whole day. As a staff sergeant in the Army Reserves, Shaidnagle still has to stay current by completing duty here in Afghanistan on a monthly basis. He chose to use his holiday time off to give back and work with one of the Army units here on NKC, allowing some of their Soldiers downtime during their shift. Shaidnagle worked eight hours for four Soldiers, allowing them to work two hours less on Christmas. After posting this picture on social media he said the best quote he received was, "When Santa heads to a war zone...he ain't packin just presents," and the best hashtag was #santaswoltup.

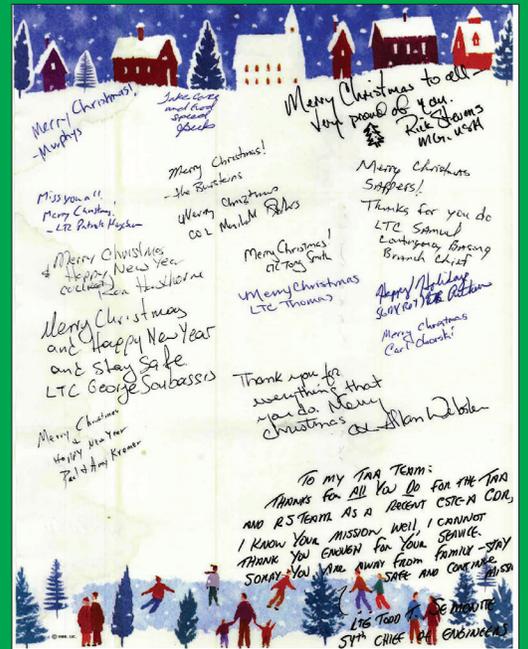
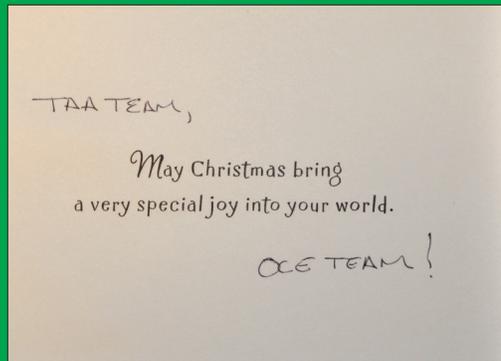
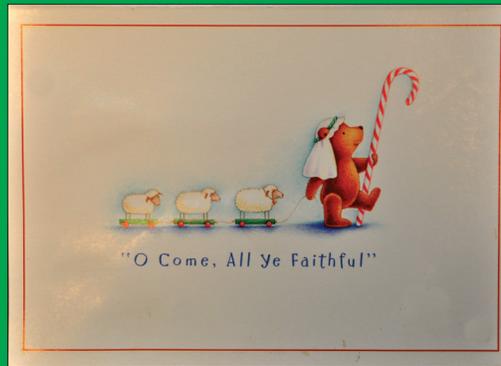
While many of us were fortunate enough to be able to go home and spend the holiday season with our loved ones, some of our teammates stayed behind to carry on the mission in our absence.

Fortunately they were able to take some time out and celebrate in their own way, including a Christmas party with a visit from the Jolly Old Elf himself, a team-building exercise and a New Year's Eve get together.

Here's a look at some of their fun, as well as a card to the entire TAA family from USACE Headquarters!



Lyn Gillespie searches for the perfect present as part of the White Elephant gift exchange during the TAA Christmas Party.



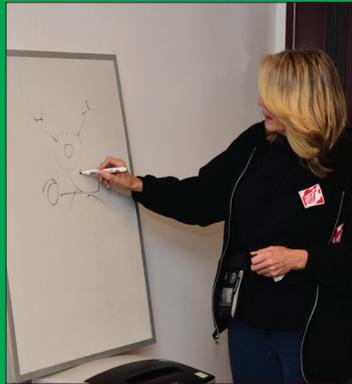
USACE Headquarters kept us in their thoughts this holiday season, sending this card and well wishes from the staff, including the Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite.



Holiday Happenings



Left, Kim Robinson tries to keep from laughing as she attempts to successfully complete the Oreo Challenge. Right, Ruth Riden-hour shows off her artistic ability during a game of Pictionary. Both events were part of the holiday team-building exercise.



The New Year's Eve celebration looked to start 2017 off on the right foot.



Adrian Gavins displays the holiday-themed coffee mug he received during the *White Elephant* gift exchange.



Above, Alex Colon unwraps a gift, while below, Dennis Lindemier digs through a Christmas stocking as Sal Saikali, master of ceremonies for the *White Elephant* gift exchange, looks on.



Santa contemplates who belongs on his naughty and nice lists.

Meet our new teammates



Name: Aaron Bloemsma
Home District: Galveston
TAA position: Office of Counsel
Duty location: BAF



Name: Clark Carroll
Home District: New Orleans
TAA position: Resident Engineer
Duty location: NKC



Name: Tim Conder
Home District: St. Louis
TAA position: Project Engineer
Duty location: BAF



Name: Bonnie Corbin
Home District: Rehired Annuitant
TAA position: Executive Officer
Duty location: BAF



Name: Pete Gauier
Home District: Los Angeles
TAA position: Resident Engineer
Duty location: Marmal



Name: Marco Goodman
Home District: Memphis
TAA position: Project Manager
Duty location: BAF



Name: Keith Halla
Home District: Galveston
TAA position: Con Rep/Project Engineer
Duty location: BAF



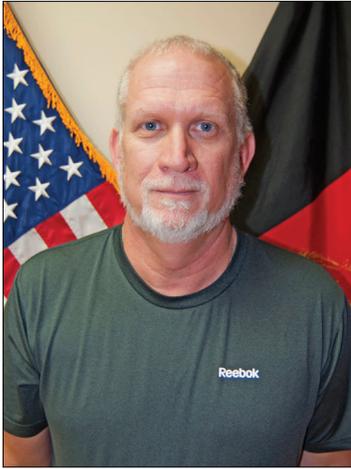
Name: Mary Harding
Home District: TAM
TAA position: Contract Specialist
Duty location: BAF



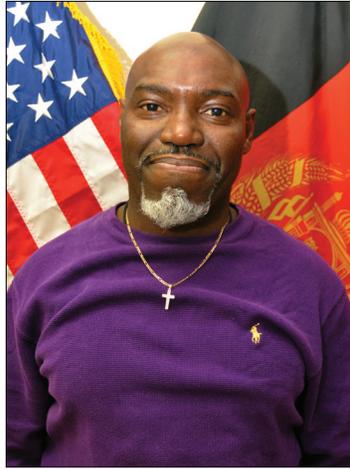
PHOTO OF THE MONTH

The photo of the month comes from Camp Shaheen where the final touches of a playground for daycare are being installed. Our Marmal Resident Office is overseeing the daycare project and a female barracks being built on Camp Shaheen as well. Both projects are part of the Women's Participation Program to build more facilities for the women of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police.

More new teammates...



Name: Dwayne McLallen
Home District: Mobile
TAA position: Quality Assurance Rep
Duty location: KAF



Name: Colin Peters
Home District: Ft. Stewart, Georgia
TAA position: Supply Tech
Duty location: KAF



Name: Chris Rusinko
Home District: Kansas City
TAA position: Resident Engineer
Duty location: NKC



Name: Staff Sgt. Andrew Williams
Home Station: Ft. Lewis, Washington
TAA position: J-3
Duty location: BAF

Safety Gram...

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS

Have you ever wondered what you can do to prevent accidents? Maybe, like many people, you believe accidents are bound to happen and there's not much you can do about them. Or, you may think they only happen to the other person. Well, the truth is that accidents do happen to everyone and can often be prevented.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Statistics show in many cases an accident could have been prevented by the victim, and, in most cases, by a co-worker. Think of accidents that happened to people you know. Usually it was a stupid mistake, Right? In other words, that person or someone else working on the job could have prevented it.

SEVEN EXCELLENT SUGGESTIONS

Here are seven ways you, personally, can do something to prevent accidents:

1. Make accident prevention a part of your daily routine: Plan safety in advance. Before beginning a job, be sure your tools are in good condition. Also, see that you have the required protective equipment.
2. Report unsafe acts or conditions to your supervisor: If you see something that's dangerous or someone working in an unsafe way, do something about it. If it's an unsafe condition, correct it if you can. Otherwise, report it to someone who has the authority or ability to do so. If you see someone doing an unsafe act, warn that person in a friendly way.
3. Avoid horseplay: Aren't you always telling your kids to knock off fooling around before someone gets hurt? Well, horseplay is dangerous for kids of any age. On a



construction job you can easily be injured if you're not strictly business all of the time. Often a person is killed or hurt when a "harmless" prank or a practical joke backfires.

4. Follow instructions: You'd follow instructions if you were dismantling a time bomb - and very carefully at that. Well, take the same attitude on the job. When we give you instructions,

it's only after we've considered the safest and best way to do it. Sometimes doing something just a little different from what you were told can get you or someone else in a lot of trouble.

5. Make suggestions: If you see a quicker or a better way to do something, let us know. We'll check it out and if it's practical, we'll use it. But first we'll make sure it's safe. And if you see a safer way of doing something, bring it to our attention, by all means.

6. Practice good housekeeping: Nobody likes a slob. Its upsetting to see someone with a messy work area; not only is it hard on the eyes, but it is a breeding ground for accidents. Trash and materials strewn around can result in trips, falls and fires.

7. Dress for the job: Besides wearing protective equipment, dress so you won't get hurt. Don't wear floppy clothing (such as loose sleeves or cuffs) or jewelry that can catch on something or get entangled in machinery.

When you see someone working unsafely, you need to recognize it and also raise the person's awareness of the unsafe act. Remember that a safety contact is an opportunity for an information exchange. Dialogue is an essential step in preventing injuries and raising safety awareness.