

US Army Corps
Of Engineers®
Afghanistan District

TAA TIDBITS

USACE - Transatlantic Afghanistan District

Vol. 5, May 2017

Commander's Corner



Team,

April was a remarkable month with many notable events including Lt. Gen. Semonite's first visit to Afghanistan as the Chief of Engineers.

His visit was remarkable on many levels. He was very pleased to recognize many of you for your outstanding efforts which included presentation of lifetime achievement De Fleury awards, end of tour awards, Chief of Engineer Coins for Excellence and the coveted TAA Awards Closet inaugural awards. Congratulations to all the awardees and we look forward to recognizing more of you in the future.

The Chief was also very impressed with all the progress we have made since the last time he was in theater. He saw firsthand the growth of Kabul as we flew him around by helicopter. During that flight he had the opportunity to see the completed Marshal Fahim National Defense University Phase II and III complexes. Phase II is also our USACE Project Development Team of the year submission, so we got some free advertisement for that prestigious award.

His visit was very timely in re-enforcing many of our efforts. At his key leader engagements, which included meetings with Ambassador Llorens and Deputy Commander Resolute Support Lt. Gen. Castellano, he highlighted the districts' contributions and capabilities.

Lt. Gen. Semonite committed to us, and to senior theater leaders, that he would continue to support the theater with great engineer colonels and USACE employees, as well as ensured that a district would be in theater supporting the our U.S. effort in

see Chytka: page 4

Chief presents Etters, Newman with top engineering honor

Arnold "Rob" Newman, deputy chief for the Programs and Project Management Division (PPMD), and program manager for the Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund (AIF), and Maj. Jennifer Etters, operations officer (J-3), were presented with the Bronze order of the de Fleury medal from the USACE commander and Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite during a town hall on Apr. 7.

"I was extremely surprised to learn I was being recognized with such a distinct honor," Etters said. "The de Fleury medal means a great deal to the Army enlisted and officers, so I was honored to become part of the group of great engineers and supporters of the Engineer Regiment before me."

"It's a very humbling experience. I feel extremely grateful to work with a great group of people who make my job easier," Newman said. "Everything we accomplish is a team effort, especially in a contingency environment like Afghanistan. To be nominated from your peers and receive an award like this makes you feel proud to work for USACE."

The de Fleury is one of the highest honors awarded by the engineer regiment. It is named for a French engineer Francois Louis Tessedre de Fleury; who volunteered to serve with the Continental Army during the



Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, USACE commander and chief of engineers, addresses the TAA town hall Apr. 7 at the Jirga Center. Semonite was on a three-day visit to Afghanistan.

Revolutionary War.

At the Battle of Stony Point, New York, in 1779, de Fleury was in command of a battalion of the 1st Regiment of the Corps of Light Infantry. He led an American charge up a rocky slope to retake the outpost on the point. The first over the wall, de Fleury rushed to flag pole, cutting the British colors from their staff, turning the tide of the battle.

For his actions, the Continental Congress awarded a medal struck in de Fleury's honor. It is believed that the de Fleury Medal was the first Congressional Medal produced. There are four levels of the de Fleury Medal: steel, bronze, silver and gold. Only one gold medal is awarded each year by the U.S. Army Chief of Engineers.

"This is really an honor that goes to every Soldier and civilian I have served with," Etters said. "I've been blessed to have the

see de Fleury: page 3

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 britney.l.walker@usace.army.mil. The deadline is the 25th of each month.

Meet our new teammates



Name: Jon Offen
Home District: Omaha
TAA position: Resident Engineer
Duty location: KAF

Let Me Entertain You

During the recent town hall in Kandahar, John (being a newbie) showed off his singing talent with this original tune set to "Pfft You Were Gone" from *Hee Haw*.

*Our kids were off to college and I thought we'd travel
 But you said you like it there at the homeland.
 That left me traveling all by my lonesome.
 So I volunteered for Afghanistan.*

*Where-Oh-Where are you tonight.
 Why did I leave you there home all alone?
 I asked you to travel and thought you'd go with me.
 But I got tasker and pfft
 I was gone.*

*Where-Oh-where are you tonight.
 Why did you leave me here all alone.
 I searched the world over and I thought I found true love.
 But you met another and pfft
 You were gone.*



Name: Britney Walker
Home Station: Military District of Washington
TAA position: PAO
Duty location: BAF

Time for TAA to Brush up on Summer Safety Tips

Team, as we all know the summer months are here for USACE-TAA. Summers in Afghanistan can be extremely hot at times and it is important to be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat injuries.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the average age of our TAA employees is 56. As you get older, it is more difficult for your body to regulate its temperature and your body does not perspire as much as it did when you were a younger.

Health Factors that increase your Risk:

- Poor circulation, inefficient sweat glands, and changes in the skin caused by normal aging
- High blood pressure or other conditions that require changes in diet; people on low salt diets may face added risks
- Taking several drugs at once for various conditions
- Being substantially overweight or underweight

Heat Cramps – knotting up and seizing of muscles in the arms, legs and abdomen,

BE A BUDDY and recognize heat illness in others.

HEAT CRAMPS

Often the first sign that your body can't handle the heat. These muscle cramps usually affect the legs, arms, or abdomen.

HEAT STROKE

Medical Emergency! The body's systems for cooling itself are shutting down, and body temperature can rise to 106 degrees.
Look for: Red, hot, dry skin - rapid, strong pulse - throbbing headache - dizziness - nausea - confusion - unconsciousness.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Can come on gradually (possibly over several days). Symptoms may include skin that is cool, moist, and pale; dizziness, nausea, fainting, headache, and muscle cramps. People with heat exhaustion may also develop fast, shallow breathing and a rapid, weak pulse.

TIPS - avoiding heat illness

 Air conditioning Use air conditioning or cool showers to keep your body cool. If you don't have air conditioning, call your public health department to find out if there's a heat-relief shelter in your area.	 Fluids Drink plenty of fluids. When you're well-hydrated your urine should be very light or clear. This is especially important when you're active.	 Planning Schedule outdoor activities during the coolest parts of the day, usually mornings and evenings.
 Clothing Wear lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothing.	 Caffeine or alcohol Avoid caffeine and alcohol. They can both dehydrate you.	 Summer extras When outside, wear a hat or visor, sunglasses, and sunscreen.

caused by loss of salt in the body

Heat Exhaustion – feelings of exhaustion, nausea, dizziness, pale and clammy skin, quick pulse, and low blood pressure

Heat Stroke – perspiration stops, the body temperature rises, the heart pounds, and the skin becomes flushed and hot

Here are some tips to ensure your safety

during the summer months:

- First and foremost, drink plenty of water. If you feel thirsty you are already dehydrated
- Avoid drinks with large amounts of caffeine or sugar
- Hats, and sunglasses help to protect your eyes, neck, ears and head
- Doxycycline causes sunlight sensitivity so be sure to put on your sunscreen
- Do NOT mess with the wildlife, Afghanistan has several varieties of venomous snakes, so be sure to stay away. Most are more active and aggressive at night.
- Keep Cool, stay indoors if at all possible during the hottest part of the day, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable

clothing such as cotton.

• Malaria CAN KILL YOU, take your Doxycycline. The best time to take your pills is in the morning with your breakfast.

Please look out for yourself and each other, we don't want to lose a teammate over something that is preventable.

Page 2

TAA Tidbits

May 2017

de Fleury

continued from page 1

opportunity to serve our country alongside great Americans working to assist the Afghanistan people in rebuilding and developing their country.”

Semonite said that Newman’s and Etter’s work in Afghanistan displays the same attitude that de Fleury showed at Stony Point, the ability to adapt and succeed in trying circumstances.

“Sometimes in Afghanistan nothing is easy, nothing gets done on time and nothing happens the way you think it is going to happen. You can’t find a harder place to make things happen. Someone has to step up and slash through the BS and be able to accomplish the mission. These two have been great leaders helping cut through the BS to make TAA what it is today, one of our best engineer districts and an outstanding organization,” Semonite said. “I thank you for your aggressive leadership of continuing to take care of our people, while at the same time accomplishing the mission.”

As he prepares to redeploy back to Texas, Newman said he is most proud of his work on the AIF program.

“The work we are doing on the Northeast and Southeast Power Projects will reestablish the national power grid in Afghanistan. Getting those systems up and running will be an integral piece in the stability and long-term security of Afghanistan,” he said. “Likewise, with agriculture representing 90 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of Helmand Province, overseeing the construction of the Kajaki Irrigation Project which will ultimately provide reliable irrigation water to farmers in the southern part of the country is a great accomplishment.

“What TAA has accomplished over the past year, and will continue to accomplish, is truly a team effort,” Newman added. “I’ve been fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a part of something that will benefit a large number of Afghan people now and for generations to come. It could have never



Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, USACE commander and chief of engineers, presents the Bronze Order of the de Fleury medal to Maj. Jennifer Etters (above) and Rob Newman (below) during the TAA town hall Apr. 7 at the Jirga Center.



happened without the hundreds of USACE employees that volunteer to come over here to complete projects like these.”

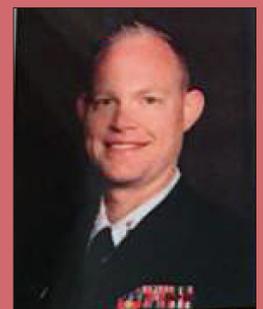
Semonite was in Afghanistan for a three-day visit where in addition to participating in

TAA’s town hall, he met with several senior U.S. and NATO military leaders, senior U.S. and Afghan civilian leaders, the Hunstville District on Bagram Arifield and Soldiers from the 41st Route Clearance Company.



Like father, like son

Coast Guard Petty Officer First Class Brady Adkins, son of TAA’s internal review officer Bob Adkins, will deploy to Bahrain in May in support of the U.S. Coast Guard mission in the Persian Gulf. The younger Adkins is a 17-year veteran of the Coast Guard. This will be his first deployment.



Adkins

Chytka

continued from page 1

Afghanistan through 2020. He stated that he would use his discretion to ensure the district stays appropriately funded, but expected supported command to do the same via their programs.

The chief also announced to the district that Col. Kim Colloton, former commander and district engineer for the Albuquerque and Los Angeles Districts, will be the next TAA commander. Col. Colloton and I have already talked about our transition. She should be arriving in late July, with our change of command to follow soon after. In the coming weeks the district senior leaders will brief her on their areas.

So, I guess the really great news is I have bonus time with you all in order to perhaps butcher a few more great songs and achieve other great TAA milestones. For example, I think Lt. Col. Banks and her team will, as an encore of the first 886 MATOCs, will award the first 886 Regional SATOCs prior to her departure. Please feel free to cheer her on... HOOAH!

You all should be very proud of your

corporate board and the J9 team for their excellent briefing to Dr. Qayoumi, Chief Advisor for President Ghani on Infrastructure. Our Resolute Support and embassy counterparts were also in attendance. The briefing was meant to address GI-RoA requests of us and prep for a meeting with Lt. Gen. Semonite. It was well received and may lead us to conduct internships for GIROA government employees. Lt. Gen. Semonite told Dr. Qayoumi that he is willing to execute a pilot this summer. As many of you are tracking, we are undergoing a major effort in determining how to reduce time to award projects for several programs that CSTC-A is wanting executed including Parwan Prison expansion, Afghan Special Security Forces, and Aviation Transition (Recap). I have sent out emails to all the district commanders requesting to determine capacity and interest.



TAA awards closet items includes backpacks, coasters and boxes with the USACE logo.

Finally we turned over a few facilities this month. We celebrated one of them the AAF Munitions-Combat Aircraft Parking Area at Marmal with a ribbon cutting. Several members of our team, along with Brig. Gen. Ashraf, AAF commander, Brig. Gen. Bode-mann, TAAC-N commander, and others took part.

Again thanks for all you do...and for those who are leaving thank you for your contributions as we look forward to seeing you in the future.

ESSAYONS!
-COL Chytka

Top Honors



Congratulations to Lindsey Evers, daughter of our own deputy commander, Lt. Col. Jason Evers, for being recognized as one of the top graduating high school seniors in the Yakima, Washington area.

Lindsey graduated with a perfect 4.0 GPA, putting her in the top one percent of all seniors in the Yakima area. She was only one of four students from her school (West Valley High School) to receive such an honor.

Lindsey will follow in her father's footsteps and enroll at Gonzaga University in the fall on an academic and ROTC scholarship. She plans to study engineering.

Photo of the month



Darren Dyer, construction control representative, Marmal Resident Office, operates a backhoe on Camp Shaeen Apr. 15. Dyer was part of the team that was investigating recent damages to several buildings at the Afghan National Army Engineer School at the base just outside of Mazar-e-Sharif.