



Photo by Jessica Schoplick, AMEC GmbH

**The rural lands surrounding the MK site in southeast Romania will soon be the backyard of an estimated 2,100 troops rotating through the site at any given time. The first stirrings of development began recently, with personnel from Europe District arriving to plan for the influx of rotating troops.**

well as on what's called 'sniffing' the soil, which she said helps determine the most likely areas of contamination.

During the inspection, Baker said her team found a burn pit, a small landfill, a forgotten munitions bunker with various unknown types of ammunition inside, and various under- and aboveground storage tanks, all of which were potential environmental hazards. These sites, and more, were chosen as drilling sites, she said, where soil samples will be taken to about 10-12 meters.

Although the actual results

from the samples won't be known for another couple of months, ultimately, the findings will both provide a snapshot of the present environmental condition, including any potential health hazards or environmental concerns, as well as serve as a record for post-deployment environmental actions.

On the logistics side, Kevin Anderson, the District's logistics chief, went to the site in early November for a boots-on-the-ground fact-finding tour.

Anderson said his job there was manifold, from setting up

the lodging contracts, to purchasing basic supplies, to figuring out how Corps employees will get to work every day.

"We are the initial party going in," he said. "We are the first steps on the ground ... starting in the middle of nothing. No military support, nothing. It's like throwing us in the middle of the desert and saying, 'make it happen.' "

Logistically, Anderson's task is to set up an office to support up to 11 people.

"We're thinking about getting a big container for the office –



Photo by Jessica Schoplick, AMEC GmbH



Photo by Jessica Schoplick, AMEC GmbH

**A 1910 casino stands as a main attraction in the downtown area of the Eastern Romanian port town of Constanta, located only about 25 miles from the MK site. In summer, tourism is a principal industry here.**

probably about 20 feet by 40 feet. Then we can load it up with office furniture, supplies. You know, enough to get them by for a couple of months. I'm thinking about pallets of papers, pens, you name it. Just for daily operation."

Another big issue Anderson is facing is how the employees will get to the office each day.

His options, he said, are leasing vehicles, renting vehicles, or using General Services Administration (GSA) vehicles. None of these options, he said, were easy.

"The information I found out was that leasing vehicles was outrageous. First, it's lease-to-own. They won't have just a plain old lease option. And the rental companies ... You're looking at 24,000 euros a year just to rent vehicles. The other option is taking GSA [vehicles] down there. But then we have to transfer it down there, figure out the insurance and licensing and the Romanian laws."

While Anderson's work may be cut out for him, he said he enjoyed the trip and saw it as a big learning experience.

"This whole first trip was like

– wow – an eye-opener," he said. "An amazing experience."

He said the Romanians he met served as great hosts, catering to his every need. "They'll do translations for you or whatever else you want," he said. "They are bending over backward to help."

He further explained his amazement through one

particular illustration: "There was a 14-year-old little kid going down the road passing cars on a horse. Bareback," he said. "I don't know if that was common, but still."

He said scenes like these bring up unique safety challenges.

"Horses don't have taillights and headlights," he said.

From his experiences, Anderson said he is determined to create a welcome packet, informing newcomers of the peculiar and sometimes anachronistic safety issues that may arise on their visit to the region.

Both Anderson and Baker agreed that the experiences they had were interesting and educational, giving them a better idea of the significance of the military's movement to go east.

"It's probably the most interesting TDY I've ever done," said Baker.

"We're building this super high-tech facility in the middle of where people are riding around like this," she said pointing a picture of a farmer riding around on a horse cart.

Momentum is expected to continue in the Black Sea region, with talks already underway on where to locate another training base in Romania's neighbor to the south, Bulgaria.

"You can really feel this kind of energy of like, wow this area's really going to change," Baker said. "It's going to be interesting just to see how it develops."



Photo by Jessica Schoplick, AMEC GmbH

**A view from the air base reveals a windswept plain. The area, about 10 miles from the Black Sea, is situated near the Danube River Delta, a large, fertile everglade that is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.**