

Engineering IN EUROPE

Morón Air Base The Navy, Air Force, and Army join forces on Morón Air Base in Spain to deliver quality housing

**Cultivating capacity-
building in the Caucasus**
Engineers team with embassies and EUCOM to build and repair basic facilities for the most vulnerable sections of society



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Europe District
Vol. 3 Summer 2008

From the Commander



Europe District welcomes new commander

On June 10, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, received a new commander, Col. John S. Kem.

Kem, the former Executive Officer to the Director of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization, which seeks to focus all DoD actions in support of Combatant Commanders' and their respective Joint Task Forces' efforts to defeat improvised explosive devices as weapons of strategic influence, assumed command from Col. Margaret W. Burcham at a ceremony at the Community Activity Center on the Wiesbaden Army Airfield.

Burcham left the district to become the commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region North District, headquartered at Camp Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq.

Presiding over the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers North Atlantic Division commander, who praised Burcham for her success in overseeing many engineering and construction efforts in the almost three years she was in charge, including the Efficient Basing Grafenwoehr effort, the Joint Task Force-East forward bases in Romania and Bulgaria, the "tremendous" workload in Israel, and the startup facilities for the U.S. Africa Command. He also commended her for the District's efforts in planning the 7th Army Headquarter's transition to Wiesbaden and the Missile Defense Agency's construction efforts in Poland and Czech Republic.

Semonite, facing Kem, continued: "John, as you assume the tremendous challenges and responsibilities of the Europe District, I know we can count on you to propel the Europe District to even greater accomplishments. You certainly have the background and knowledge of our missions!"

Kem, commissioned from

the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in the Corps of Engineers in 1985, has held a variety of key positions throughout his career.

He has served as the Patrol Leader for the VII Corps team that won the 1988 Boeselager NATO Cavalry Cup; the commander of Alpha Company, 307th Engineer Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, including service during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm; the S3, 10th Engineer Battalion, and later as the Engineer Brigade S3, 3rd Infantry Division (Mech); and the commander of the 16th Armored Engineer Battalion, 1st Armored Division, where he led the battalion for 13 months during combat operations in Baghdad and Karbala.

Kem also served as an assistant professor of economics and Executive Officer in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point; was selected for a Congressional Fellowship and served for one year as a staff fellow on the United States Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittees on Defense and Military Construction; and served as a Congressional Budget Liaison in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management and Comptroller.

Kem holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and a Master's degree in Environmental Engineering from Northwestern University and is a graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and the Command and General Staff College.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (1 oak leaf cluster), Meritorious Service Medal (6 oak leaf clusters), Senior Parachutist Wings, Pathfinder Badge, Air Assault Badge and Ranger Tab. He is a registered Professional Engineer (Va.) and a Chartered Financial Analyst.



Col. John S. Kem
Europe District Commander



Col. John Kem takes the Corps flag from Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite, North Atlantic Division Commander, while the District's outgoing commander, Col. Margaret Burcham, and the Deputy District Engineer, Mark Roncoli, look on.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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Engineering in Europe is an unofficial publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. The editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the Department of the Army. *Engineering in Europe* is a command information publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District. Circulation is 800 copies. Articles, photographs, and other contributions are welcome. The editor reserves the right to make changes to all material submitted. The submission deadline is the 1st of the month preceding quarterly publication. Send submissions to: Editor, *Engineering in Europe*, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, CMR 410, Box 1, APO AE 09096. Details may be obtained from the PAO at (011) 49-611-9744-2720 or DSN 570-2720. Material may be sent via e-mail to: justin.m.ward@usace.army.mil An electronic version of *Engineering in Europe* may be viewed on the Europe District Internet homepage at: www.nau.usace.army.mil

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On the Cover



Yasemin Henry and daughter, Samantha – family members from Air Force Staff Sgt. Kory Henry of Morón Air Base – are excited to be the first residents of a newly renovated family housing project on the installation in southern Spain.

Cover photo by Justin Ward

Humanitarian Assistance:

Cultivating capacity-building in the Caucasus

Photo by Justin Ward

Story by Justin Ward

“If there’s anyone who needs our help, it’s these people.”

- Charles Samuel
Chief, Georgia project
office, U.S. Army Corps of
Engineers, Europe District

A small boy of eight or nine peers through a square windowless opening in a drab gray cinderblock home at the construction workers across the street. Squinting from the sun, his deep brown eyes are barely high enough to peek over the ledge at the men hammering, shoveling, and painting away in the dry afternoon heat.

The site – a new, nondescript one-story building – sits alone in the middle of a fetid, neglected, and cheaply constructed refugee community near Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. To Westerners, the edifice may not seem like much. But to the boy next door and the neighborhood children like him, it signifies the future. And the help of Uncle Sam.

The project, managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is a \$445,000 school for children up to 16 years old. When complete this fall, this 12,000-square-foot school – with 11 classrooms, administration offices, male and female bathrooms, and boiler and electrical rooms – will offer the children of families displaced by fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in the 1990s a warm, dry, and safe location to learn. Something they’ve never had.

Currently, the children go to school in a small, unheated, dirt-floor building with missing windows replaced by wood and missing bricks replaced by trash bags.

“This community is very poor – probably one of the poorest in the country,” said Charles Samuel, chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, Georgia

project office. "If there's anyone who needs our help, it's these people."

The school is financed by the U.S. European Command's (EUCOM's) Humanitarian Assistance (HA) program. It is an unusual use of U.S. military funds, as there are no military units nearby.

Yet it is one of several HA projects spread throughout the former Soviet states of the Caucasus deemed valuable enough to get the attention of the Stuttgart-based combatant command.

"They're addressing things that could be at the heart of instability," said Charles Brady, EUCOM's HA program manager, referring to projects like the school near Baku. "It's in despair that you'll see crime, lawlessness, or see children not going to school."

According to the U.S. government's HA program policy document, while "indirect" benefits such as improving a nation's capacity to provide essential services to its populace are important because they discourage susceptibility to terrorist or insurgent influences, the foremost benefit is to achieve U.S. security objectives by promoting DoD goodwill and interoperability with foreign counterparts.

"It's a DoD program," Brady said. "So the projects have to be in concert with the U.S. strategic goals of reinforcing stability and support operations."

As such, Brady said, countries in the Caucasus are more appropriate for HA than well-developed countries because they still benefit greatly from the transference of knowledge and skills and not simply donated supplies.

Samuel agreed, adding that HA projects like the one near Baku are "the most important we're doing in the District. They really mean

something."

In Baku, the U.S. Embassy personnel in the DoD's Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) act as EUCOM's eyes on the ground for humanitarian assistance funds, said Dora Avshalumova, a foreign service national and a local Azeri who works at the ODC.

The ODC seeks out the most vulnerable communities of society where U.S. support and dollars would provide the most stability, security, and friendship, Avshalumova said. And then they see what project would benefit them most appropriately.

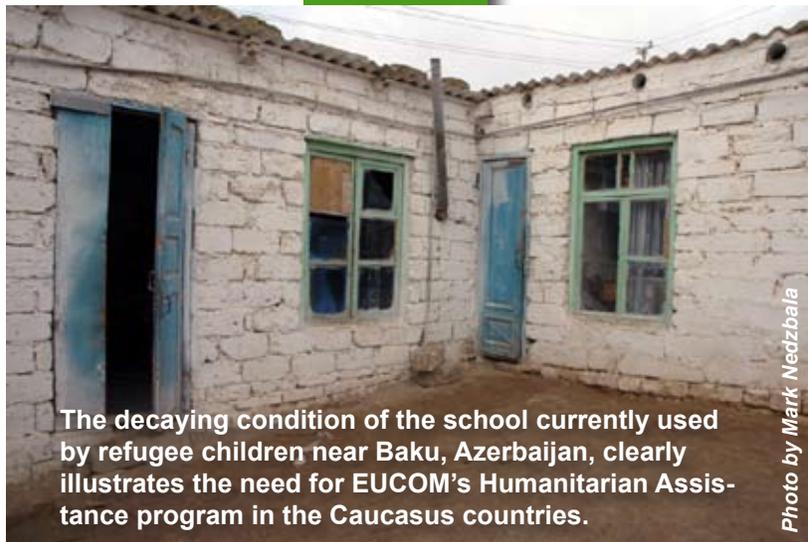
"This project was not chosen at random," Avshalumova said. "There are many people in our country that need this humanitarian assistance to help them with a better life. And that is why we do it. ... We have been [doing] this for several years and, even though each project is different, the end result is always to make lives better. That is why we're here."

About \$3 million in EUCOM's HA funds have gone toward much-needed projects in Azerbaijan, including new construction projects like schools and water projects as well as toward equipment like furniture, vehicles, and school supplies, Avshalumova said.

This school project, however, is the first in Azerbaijan that the Corps of Engineers has been involved in, said Samuel.

The able alliance that has formed between EUCOM, the Corps, and the representatives in the country have proved successful so far, he added. And he said he knows this project won't be the last.

"We work with the ODC embassy very closely," said Samuel, the Tbilisi, Georgia-based project engineer in charge of managing the HA



The decaying condition of the school currently used by refugee children near Baku, Azerbaijan, clearly illustrates the need for EUCOM's Humanitarian Assistance program in the Caucasus countries.

Photo by Mark Nedzbala



A construction worker smooths rebar on the second story of a new, \$137,000 child-care center for orphaned, disadvantaged, and handicapped children near the town of Gremi.

Photo by Justin Ward

SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE



Photo by Justin Ward

A new, \$445,000, 12,000-square-foot school for children living in a refugee community near Azerbaijan's capital of Baku nears completion. The school, for children up to 16 years old from the de facto independent Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in western Azerbaijan, will replace an unheated, dirt-floor school located nearby.

sites. "And we've already picked up a few more projects throughout the country that we're excited about."

Current plans call for Samuel's team to manage the construction of a new school in the town of Agjabedi and to investigate the likelihood of starting a few other projects in rural communities of the country's mountainous interior.

The ease of calling on the Corps to facilitate new projects like these, Brady said, is part of the reason why the program is so successful.

"There's no HA program without the Corps of Engineers," said Brady. "We would have some other form, with a lesser amount of creativity and functionality."

Around the neighborhood

Smashed between Iran and Russia, the countries in the Caucasus mountains – Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia – are full of porous pathways that have been used for centuries to traffic goods.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union – of which all these countries were members – the area has received special attention by the U.S. government to ensure the region begins to build and care for its infrastructure, stays stable, and understands that the United States is their friend.

In Armenia, for instance, Samuel's Corps of Engineers staff has been working with the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan on a \$300,000 HA project to help several small communities in the center of the country – Sevkar, Vaghashen, and Ttudjur – gain access to potable water.

And in Georgia, thanks to the strong partnership between Samuel's Corps of Engineers staff, the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, and the ODC, over \$1.5 million has

been earmarked for ongoing and upcoming HA projects varying from installing a small heating system at an orphanage to designing and constructing a half-million dollar special-needs youth camp.



Photo by Justin Ward

Thanks to the Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, and EUCOM, this orphanage bedroom in the town of Kodjori now has a heating system to keep the children warm in the winter.

"Instead of a microscopic view, we try to do a macroscopic view and identify the areas that will benefit the most from the assistance that we give them," said Lt. Col. Matt Shannon, the bilateral affairs officer with the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi's ODC. "At all these locations, our intent is to give these people a better opportunity."

His HA commission, said Shannon, EUCOM's humanitarian lead in country, is to coordinate the funding that comes from EUCOM and assist

the ambassador and his staff in setting up projects and coordinating with NGOs. "Working on these projects gives

Construction on the child-care center in Gremi – a necessary addition to the community, say officials – is expected to complete in November.

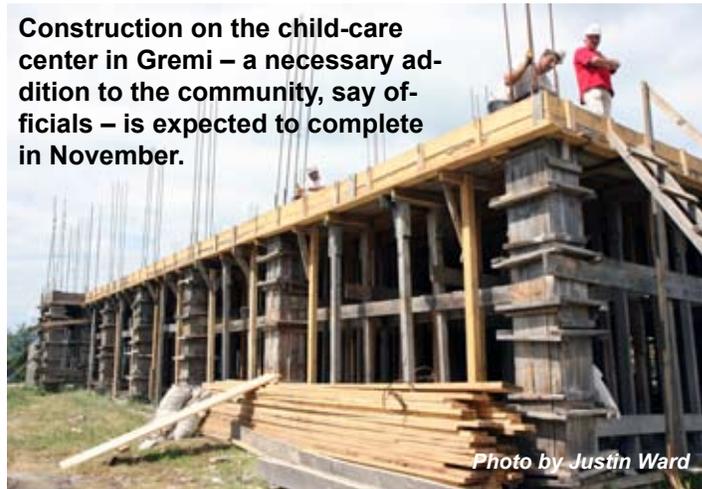


Photo by Justin Ward

me a great sense of pride.”

The smallest project, at \$58,000, is a heating system for an orphanage in Kodjori, located about 30 minutes from Tbilisi.

At the rural hamlet of Gremi – about two hours from Tbilisi by car – an entire child-care center for orphaned, disadvantaged, and handicapped children is being constructed because the currently-used facility is too small and rundown to guarantee the safety of its current residents.

At \$137,000, the Gremi project, scheduled to be complete by November, is one of the smaller ones Samuel and his team are executing. But he said it’s no less significant.

“For me, personally, these projects really do a lot more for me,” said Samuel. “I really feel good about these projects because you can see not only the end products, but the appreciation on the faces of the people who actually benefit from this.”

The largest project in Georgia is a \$500,000 special-needs youth camp in Manglisi, located near Kodjori, that will assist children with diabetes and asthma – controllable diseases in the States, said Shannon, but almost completely disabling diseases in Georgia.

“The humanitarian assistance we do for children is phenomenal,” Shannon said. “At all these locations, our intent is to give these people a better opportunity. It’s obviously one of the most rewarding things we can do while we’re here.”

Brady said he’s proud to have such a “well-trained” and intelligent team come together to address basic humanitarian needs and make these projects happen.

“This is truly is a team effort,” Brady said. “Our [combatant commanders] study the history, politics, and the transitional nature of their countries and think about the steps that we can help them take. ... And the Corps of Engineers I like working with because they understand what this is about. They don’t just say ‘length, width, height.’ They understand the purpose of it.”

Brady said he would gladly “put in a plug” for several Corps personnel involved in the program, citing that their assistance allows the program to function more like an efficient assembly line.

“[The Corps is] pretty much a one-stop-shop,” Brady said. “Once we get approval and get the funding in place, we want to be able to turn it over to the assembly line – to the guys who can go out and make sure that from inception through acceptance a high-quality project is turned over.”



A road sign in Georgian and Roman scripts points the way toward the villages of Kodjori and Manglisi, both of which have humanitarian assistance projects that will support a vulnerable youth population.

Photo by Justin Ward



A team of workers prepares the second story of a new, \$137,000 child-care center in Gremi, one of eight DoD humanitarian projects in the Caucasus countries.

Photo by Justin Ward



A poor refugee community near Baku, awaits the completion of a new 11-classroom school for local children. In total, Europe District is working on the design or construction of more than \$3 million in DoD humanitarian assistance projects in the Caucasus countries.

Photo by Justin Ward

Coming together

As construction at the Army's biggest worksite in Germany nears completion, officials try to put it in perspective

Story by Justin Ward

It's no secret that Bavaria has been called the Texas of Germany. It's down south, the locals occasionally play dress up, and people talk with what the rest of the country would deem a funny accent.

Most importantly, things are bigger in Bavaria. Not only beer, pretzels, and mountains; but also construction projects.

One of the largest ongoing construction efforts in the German state has been at the U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr – not surprisingly the largest U.S. training area in Europe – where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has managed roughly \$100 million in construction every year since 2003.

The largest project here is Grafenwoehr's unique gated community called Netzaberg, which will provide 835 build-to-lease family housing units with an integrated town center, including an elementary and middle school, chapel, child development center, youth services center, shoppette, and sports fields.

"It's huge," said Peter Barth, the District's regional program manager at Grafenwoehr. "The town center in

particular was a significant coordination effort because we have so many contractors, U.S. organizations, and host nation entities working very closely on schedules and on the same property."

The Corps' chunk of the effort at Netzaberg – totaling almost \$87 million – was primarily to manage the construction of the town center and set up the infrastructure for the entire neighborhood.

The largest share of this has gone toward constructing the elementary and middle schools, which cost about \$30 million combined.

"Once completed, the town center is really the heart of the community," said Barth. "I'm very excited about that, especially to see how the various puzzle pieces fit together. Six years ago we only had a concept: To create a little town next to a training area. And from paper to finished product – it's really amazing."

Completed recently at the Netzaberg town center were the \$7.7 million child development center and the \$5.4 million youth services center – two facilities

that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' chief, Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, dubbed "awesome," because they were the



During a dual ribbon-cutting ceremony in Grafenwoehr April 23 for a child development center and a youth service center, Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp (center) helps cut the ribbon with former Europe District commander Col. Margaret Burcham and USAG Grafenwoehr commander Col. Brian Boyle.



Photo by Matt McCullough

An aerial view shows the construction projects on the "MILCON Island" in the center of Grafenwoehr's Netzaberg community, including a new child development center, youth services center, and an upcoming elementary and middle school and a new access control point.



Photo by Justin Ward

A modern design for the main service counter of the recently opened \$5.4 million Youth Services Center in Netzaberg reflects the design of many new facilities constructed in Grafenwoehr.

first completed service facilities in the integrated town center.

Nearing completion at Netzaberg are the \$3.7 million access control point and anti-terror force protection gate – anticipated to be turned over in August – and the elementary and middle schools, which are scheduled to open for the fall 2008 school year.

The new schools are a boon to residents of the Netzaberg community – many of whom have been living there for about a year – who previously bussed their children to Vilseck Elementary School because there was no space at Grafenwoehr.

"I'm pretty excited," said Marie Vigue, an employee of the child development center whose daughter will be attending Netzaberg Elementary School when it opens in August. "I can't wait to go in and see it and get the orientation."

Still on slate for the community is the chapel. Its design combines the modern architecture of the town center with traditional elements of a chapel, say officials. This project, originally billed to be completed in 2010, is

expected to be turned over in 2012.

In total, the Netzaberg community is so financially large and universally recognized, that even former Installation Management Command – Europe Region director Russell Hall was quoted as saying his greatest success in the six years he was at the helm of the command was the construction of Netzaberg.

Barth agreed that the community's emergence has been a true success, saying he's been most amazed by the coordination of all the parties involved to keep construction on schedule and within budget.

"It's a huge and gigantic program. But it is also standardized," said Barth. "We have the standards, we have processes and communications, and we have the teams in place. But we also have a program culture. There is a mutual understanding for others' problems and the goals, needs, and expectations are communicated throughout. It's really a kind of respectful culture and motivation that can't be easily copied and pasted."

The Netzaberg effort, however, is merely part of what's called the "Efficient Basing Grafenwoehr" (or EBG) program, an initiative to consolidate command and control headquarters and six battalion-sized elements in support of U.S. Army Europe's transformation. EBG involves the relocation of units from multiple USAREUR installations to a consolidated complex located at East Camp Grafenwoehr.

The goal of the EBG initiative is to maximize readiness, operational control, force protection, and quality of life by capitalizing on efficiencies derived from consolidation on a single installation.

The initiative combines new construction and renovations of facilities, such as motor pools, operational facilities, barracks, family housing, and community support amenities.

More than 80 projects valued at close to \$1 billion in today's dollars make the EBG program one of the largest military construction programs on the continent.

When it's all complete in 2012, engineers say the complex in Bavaria is slated to be the Army's premiere facility outside the United States. And one of the biggest.



Photo by Justin Ward

Peter Barth, the District's regional program manager at Grafenwoehr, receives a coin from Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp April 23 for his construction support.

Flagship projects focus on troops

Story, photos, and graphic by Evan Duncan

While much news has been made of the transformation occurring in today's military, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is making sure the buildings and people that aren't undergoing the front-page makeovers don't get left behind.

During the Wiesbaden-based 1st Armored Division's deployment to Iraq, the nine barracks buildings these warfighters call home are being renovated. It's an effort to ensure the quality of these returning heroes' homes matches the sacrifice they're making for the nation.

Periodic barracks renovations are Army standard. Every four to five years barracks undergo a "patch-and-paint" refurbishing, which includes replacing any furniture that has become broken or damaged.

This time, officials say, the makeovers are more extreme, including brand new kitchens and a complete overhaul of

the bathrooms.

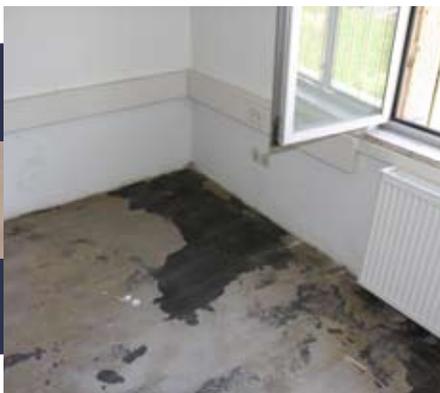
"The buildings are comprised of office spaces and many living quarters for single Soldiers who share rooms and bathrooms," said Ed Kim, project engineer and construction representative for the Wiesbaden flagship projects. "I feel for the Soldiers."

The bathrooms come first.

Each bathroom is connected to two rooms, said Kim, with specialists and below bunking two to a room and noncommissioned officers getting their own. That means up to four people potentially share one shower – and during busy times like PT hours, the bathroom may become the first casualty of a barracks room.

Luckily, the renovations are quickly regenerating these depleted barracks.

"The contractors are very cooperative in achieving our



goals," said Kim. "They understand what the customer, the end user, and the Corps of Engineers need. It has been excellent."

In addition to the new bathrooms, which include new toilets, showers, sinks, cabinets, and finishes, the "excellent" renovations include upgraded kitchens, sprinkler systems, suspended ceilings, and the standard spackle and paint.

Each building costs around 1 million euros and takes from 120 to 150 days, Kim said.

Troops still residing in the barracks slated to be renovated are moved to a pre- or post-renovated building while theirs is under the knife, Kim said. But, when the renovations finish, Soldiers – some new to the area – are moved in immediately.

"This is much better living conditions than what I had before," said Sgt. Anthony Cavella, who just moved to Wiesbaden from Darmstadt. "Its new renovations are a big change. I feel privileged to be in these new barracks."

Kim has first-hand experience with the war and keeps his mind on the Soldiers at all times.

"When you're down range, you're thinking about your car, your girlfriend or wife, your stuff, and your home. When they come back and see a brand new place with new paint and a new bathroom and kitchen, I think they will be very excited," said Kim who was deployed to Afghanistan as captain for the USARUER's 18th Engineer Brigade before his move to the Corps of Engineers.

"I was downrange, and the living conditions were pretty bad," Kim added.



Soldiers new to the installation or those returning from deployment have already moved into newly renovated barracks on the Wiesbaden Army Airfield. The quality of the new living conditions, officials say, will match the sacrifice deploying Soldiers are making for the nation.

"When they come back and see a brand new place with new paint and a new bathroom and kitchen, I think they will be very excited,"

-Ed Kim

**Project engineer,
U.S. Army Corps of
Engineers, Europe District**

"When I came home, I was so happy to be back and I didn't even have a new paint job – so I think it is pretty good for their morale."

Not only do these projects lift the spirit of the troops, they are also encouraging to everyone involved.

"This directly helps those down-range fighting for our freedom," said Kim of his project. "You can be in the private sector building homes or apartments, but the job we are doing now is very important because it supports our troops and does something for our nation. For all of us working for the Soldiers, we should take great pride in that and feel privileged in what we are doing."



MORÓN AIR BASE: an unusual but successful threesome



Story, photos, and graphic by Justin Ward



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, construction representative Pedro “Pete” Corona wears a Naval Facilities Engineering hardhat while inspecting the progress of housing renovations at Morón Air Base in southern Spain.

Tucked away among the olive groves, wheat fields, and occasional silhouettes of imposing iron bulls of southern Spain is the isolated Morón Air Base, a key stopping point for cargo and crews traveling to the Middle East. It’s here that one of the most unusual threesomes within the U.S. military is taking place: A partnership between the Navy, the Air Force, and the Army to raise the quality of life for the warfighters and their families stationed here. And the progress, say officials, has been *muy bueno*.



The \$5.48 million family housing renovations at Morón Air Base in southern Spain, the largest seen in the installation's history, will bring larger living areas, new appliances, and a higher quality of life to Airmen and their families stationed there.

When Pedro "Pete" Corona climbs to the top of the water tower to inspect repairs, he dons a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hardhat. When he oversees debris removal, manages the installation of wells, or helps remove runway impediments for NASA, Corona also wears his castle-branded safety gear. But when he enters the worksite for the renovation of 34 on-base family housing units, he swaps his red-and-white Corps' brand for a blue-and-gold Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) one.

"I also have NAVFAC business cards," said Corona.

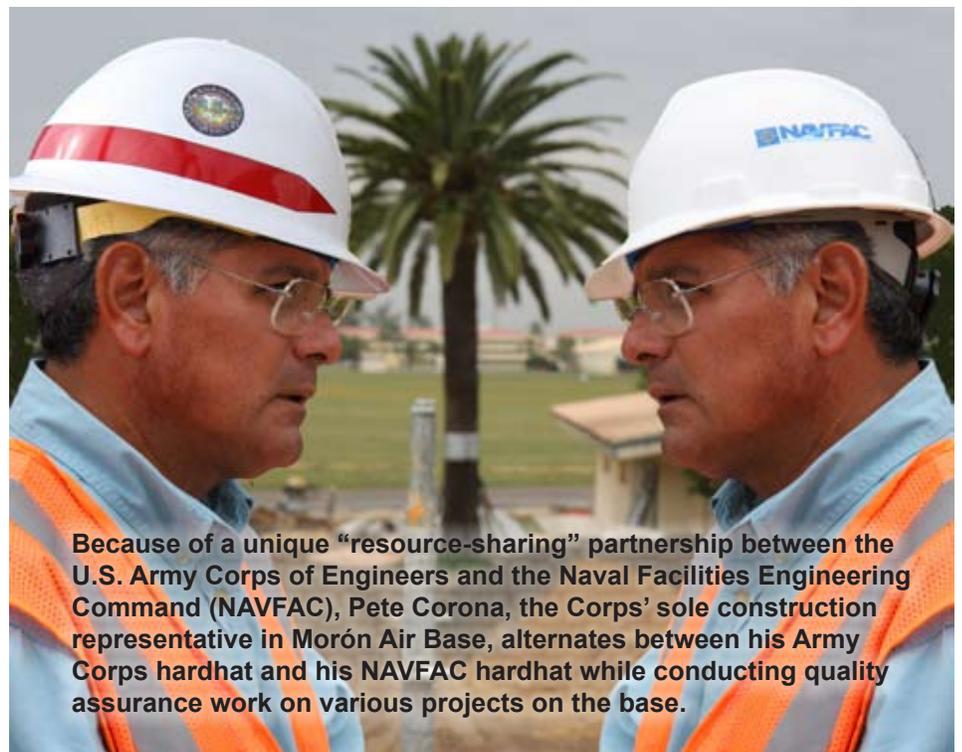
Corona, the sole U.S. Army Corps of Engineers representative on Morón Air Base in southern Spain, wears two hats – literally – because of a unique partnership between three U.S. military branches of service. And, according to officials, it's a partnership that works.

"Pete's been absolutely great keeping us informed as far as what's going on, any possible delays, as well as

looking at ways to minimize those delays as well so we can keep on the plan," said Lt. Col. Sean Gallagher, the 496th Air Base Squadron commander – the highest ranking U.S. Air

Force official on this Spanish-owned air base located 30 miles from Seville. "The partnership's really been great."

Officially, Corona represents the Navy – the DoD's executive agent for



Because of a unique "resource-sharing" partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC), Pete Corona, the Corps' sole construction representative in Morón Air Base, alternates between his Army Corps hardhat and his NAVFAC hardhat while conducting quality assurance work on various projects on the base.

SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

U.S. military construction in Spain – where he works as a quality assurance specialist for the \$5.48 million Air Force housing renovation, the largest ever seen on this base.

“I think it’s a very peculiar but interesting partnership – working for the Army Corps of Engineers on a NAVFAC project on an Air Force installation,” said Corona. “That’s unheard of.”

NAVFAC’s project manager for the housing renovation, Lt. j.g. Michael Hightower, said the prohibitive commute from his jobsite in Rota, Spain – almost 80 miles southwest – and other competing projects allow him to drive to the housing site only about once a week. Corona’s presence on base, therefore, has been a great benefit, he

said.

“Pete’s Army Corps experience has provided valuable quality assurance and safety support,” said Hightower. “He acts as our daily on-site representative for the Morón Housing Project. I’ve been thoroughly pleased with Pete’s performance here. ... He really provides assurance that the project is being run efficiently and safely. I think he’ll continue to be a valued member of the NAVFAC team.”

The partnership began just over a year ago, when Corona’s predecessor, Howard Shoun, heard about the U.S. Air Force’s plans for NAVFAC to renovate the on-base housing units and proposed a three-way alliance.

“We took a look at that situation, recognized the value of economizing

resources, and tried to partner with the Army Corps of Engineers to bring Pete on as part of the NAVFAC team,” said Hightower. “Thus far it’s been extremely successful.”

In addition to his experience and the ability to tap into the Corps’ resources, Corona also offered a skill that would weigh heavy on NAVFAC’s decision to use the Corps, Hightower said. As a Mexico City native, Corona speaks Spanish fluently.

“Spanish was huge,” said Hightower. “My level of Spanish is sufficient. I can get by. But it’s great to have Pete. It gives you that extra level of confidence that there are clear lines of communication going back and forth between our office and the contractor.”

The Corps’ Pete Corona watches a local welder repair damage to an elevated water tower on Morón Air Base. In addition to overseeing the safety and quality standards of the housing renovations on the installation, Corona provides engineering and safety support to the base on many other projects.



Corona said that working in Spain is like working at home in Mexico. “This is like motherland,” Corona said. “I mean I can communicate directly with the contractor and ... also the subcontractors. And it makes the work go much smoother. The communication is very important.”

Because of the tight partnership, progress has been smooth, officials say. They expect the project will continue to stay on time, on budget, and on scope.

“Between Pete and myself, we’ll turn over a quality end product to the customer,” said Hightower. “I’m always pleased with the cleanliness of the site, the safety standards on the site, [and] the level of quality that we have. Pete and I have been working well together to ensure that the Air Force is going to get a quality end product.”

Moving in

In late March, Air Force Staff Sgt. Kory Henry, a security forces airman, and his family – wife, Yasemin, and four-month-old daughter, Samantha – became the first family to move into a newly renovated duplex – the model home for the neighborhood.



An empty shaft leads up to the top of an elevated water tower on Morón Air Base – one of Pete Corona’s many other construction management projects – where roughly \$500,000 in repairs are being conducted. Other construction management projects, totaling over \$3 million, include the installation of wells, the remediation of fuel spill contamination, the removal of runway hindrances and solid waste debris, the repairing of roof drainage, and the replacement of doors and frames for a local DoDDS (Department of Defense Dependents Schools) building.

Henry, stationed in Morón once before as a single servicemember, said he knows firsthand the difference between off-base and on-base housing – and said he prefers living on base.

“I’ve lived in Seville, Los Molares, Utrera, and La Ramira ... but compared to the four previous locations I’ve lived, it’s definitely worth it,” said Henry about his move on base. “It’s a big jump in comfortability. And being able to have the luxuries provided by [the base] – easy-access laundry, dual voltage in the house, dishwasher, other appliances, hot water all the time, no language barriers – you kind of feel at home. Kind of like living Stateside. It’s definitely a plus.”

The extensive neighborhood renovations will continue in phases until the project finishes in spring 2009, officials say. Phase I, to be completed early 2009, anticipates the turnover of 12 renovated units in August to accommodate the housing office’s needs.

“We devised a smaller section of the area to assist some residents to be able to move in a little bit earlier,” said Hightower of Phase I. “That area in itself will look like a small neigh-

borhood. All the work that’s required of the project – from the sidewalks to the landscaping to the renovation of the house, streetlights, will all be done; residents will be able to move in there and we’ll get all the construction equipment away from them so they’ll have their own family neighborhood unit.”

When all phases are completed, the renovations will have delivered significant floor-plan improvements – such

ing so it’ll be safer to walk at night through the neighborhood here,” said Hightower.

Additionally, the renovations make the neighborhood more energy efficient; improve the buildings’ patios, carports, and exteriors; and enhance the Amigo Park and Playground areas next to the neighborhood.

“We’ve been very satisfied,” Henry said. “No complaints.”

The push for the renovation was to improve the quality of life for the airmen and their families, said Gallagher.

“I think quality of life is a big issue for us here in Morón,” Gallagher said. “We’re not a main operating base – so there’s certain things we just don’t have here. But the renovated housing will provide some of the best housing the Air Force has to offer.”

Corona, a retired Air Force master sergeant, said he, too, understands the importance of providing quality facilities for the

warfighter.

“The only reason I’m here and that the Navy is here is for the people,” Corona said. “It is a fulfillment in one’s career, doing a job directly for the warfighter. And I’m proud to do it.”



Pete Corona learns about a new reverse osmosis water purification system recently installed on Morón Air Base in southern Spain, one of several construction management projects Corona inspects when not on the housing renovation site.

as completely new layouts, flooring, and bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry rooms – as well as utility improvements – such as new water and sewer lines and new curbs and sidewalks.

“There’s also some new street light-

All for one one for all



Martin Ritzmann, project engineer (center), shows Terry Bautista, Europe District's chief of Engineering and Construction Division (right), and Scott Deetz, Ramstein regional program manager, a pop-up barrier at the new South Gate in Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany. The barrier is just one of many new features of the South Gate and Large Vehicle Inspection Station.

Photo by Evan Duncan

Story by Evan Duncan

One can easily overlook the small U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office on the U.S. Air Force base in Spangdahlem, Germany. Eyes are quickly drawn to the state-of-the-art air traffic control tower, the new houses under construction, and the new South Gate, which has an advanced large vehicle inspection station (LVIS – pronounced “Elvis”) to provide essential security to the growing base.

But shrouded by the shadows of these striking facilities are project engineers like Martin Ritzmann, Shaun Frost, and Louis Reagan, who humbly go about their daily business as the unheralded force of all this new base construction. It is because of them – and the projects they’ve been commissioned to execute – that this base has transformed. And it is because of them that this base will continue to transform to assist its host wing – the 52nd Fighter Wing – in continuing to project superior combat power across the globe.

Its transformation started simply enough. When the Rhein-Main Air Base closed in 2005, Spangdahlem went from an overlooked training site to a principal handler of heavy-duty aircraft like C-5 Galaxies and C-17 Globemaster IIIs.

At the time, \$175 million went to making the air base better equipped



Seven completed field-grade officer housing units await their tenants in Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany. Across the street, 132 other housing units are under construction.

Photo by Evan Duncan

for its new duties. Unfortunately, officials say, not everything needed was taken care of immediately.

In August 2008, for instance, Spangdahlem is scheduled to finally receive a \$6 million air traffic control tower that could provide a far enough “line-of-sight” to adequately guide and direct traffic.

The project, managed by Ritzmann, includes “two of everything” to provide essential backup of cooling and power units and to provide a training simulator that can mimic other U.S. Air Bases, allowing for outgoing operators to begin directing traffic on their first day at work.

The completion of this new tower – obviously an essential part of the base and something that would seem to have been given a high priority – denotes the magnitude of other improvements occurring here as well.

To wit, currently the community of Spangdahlem depends on the small and isolated Bitburg Annex for its base exchange, commissary, and schools. Although Bitburg is only a 20-minute drive away, the winding and often dangerous commute for daily essentials led planners to diagram the

best way to close Bitburg and make Spangdahlem self-sufficient.

And that’s exactly what’s happening, with over \$230 million in construction earmarked for all new facilities, including a base exchange and commissary complex and a highschool.

As for the airmen stationed at Spangdahlem, a whole new housing program managed by Frost and Reagan was put into place recently to offer them some of the comforts of home, including American wiring, new cabinetry, built-in closets, and a large American-style kitchen.

“I don’t want to say it’s like living back in the States,” said Frost, “because part of living here is getting to know the German culture and people. But it makes things nicer and more comfortable.”

The 139 new units – 63 duplexes, two triplexes, and seven senior officer quarters – seek to provide comfort and improved standards of living to all the Airmen and their

families stationed here, officials say.

The newest proof of progress to occur on base was the completion of the \$5 million South Gate and LVIS, which were both unveiled at a ribbon-cutting ceremony June 17.

Ritzmann, the engineer for the projects, said these were necessary improvements, as gate guards working at the old gate previously worked under a “small tent” with virtually no protection against weather, aggressive drivers, or terrorist activities. Even the road the gate was on was unable to support the weight of large vehicles.

The new site, however, saw the completion of a many new safety



Sharply dressed project engineers Louis Reagan, Shaun Frost, and Martin Ritzmann pose by Spangdahlem Air Base’s welcome sign. The engineers are preparing for roughly \$230 million in construction projects to hit in the coming months.

Photo by Julio Leon



The new state-of-the-art air traffic control tower is the keystone of Spangdahlem Air Base.

Photo by Martin Ritzmann

SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

features, along with a 45-degree berm, making any deviation from the main road impossible. Within the gate, cameras inspect every angle of oncoming vehicles.

In his speech at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Terry Bautista, Europe District's chief of engineering and construction division, remarked that, for about \$6 million, "We were able to construct a gate house and two small guard houses, a canopy, a guardhouse, a new barrier, and a new checkpoint system that requires fewer personnel to man. Plus, we now have new utilities, a new road, new parking areas, and better anti-terror and force-protection measures. I think that's pretty great."

If the current workload of these three Corps representatives seems daunting, it pales next to what could be coming. Soon, the District will tackle a new medical clinic, along with the infrastructure for the new school, BX, commissary, and fitness center, said Reagan, all of which will be placed on the relatively new 125-acre piece of land called the "Northwest Expansion" that the Air Force purchased after the Rhein-Main Air Base closure. "A lot of stuff is coming

out of the pipeline now," Reagan said.

Despite the full construction docket, things in Spangdahlem are running quite smoothly, officials say.

"For the most part, [we have had] nothing I would call an obstacle," said Reagan. "We run into glitches all the time. It has nothing to do with processes or personalities; it is just the normal things you run into on a project site."

Base officials even say they can't believe the rate of progress the District has been able to manage.

"It's been a pleasure working with the Army Corps of Engineers here at Spangdahlem," said Capt. Matt Welling, 52nd Civil Engineer Squadron Asset Management Flight Commander. "Their dedicated professionals truly kept our needs as the

customer as their highest priority. The Corps of Engineers ensured delivery of quality housing facilities on time and ready for immediate occupancy – a tremendous increase in quality of life for the Airmen living on Spangdahlem."

These engineers will continue their focus on their projects and on quality of life as their community transforms in front of their eyes.



From left, project engineers Lou Reagan and Shaun Frost show Europe District's Ramstein regional program manager Scott Deetz the housing projects on Spangdahlem Air Base.



Out with the old: The tent that used to serve as a gate and Spangdahlem's only inspection station (insert) has been replaced by a new, \$5 million South Gate and large vehicle inspection station.



Europe District creates web-based GIS server



Photo by Justin Ward

Thomas Rodehaver teaches a GIS course to the District.

If there is a geographic component to the Corps's work in Europe, Thomas Rodehaver has it or wants it. Rodehaver recently created a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) portal that Europe District employees can use to get precise information about Installation Management Command – Europe (IMCOM-E) facilities.

"I wanted to give everybody here the ability search on an installation or search on a building," said Rodehaver, Europe District GIS lead. "It's not at its final stage yet, but it's certainly at a point where users can get a feel for its ability."

By combining existing IMCOM-E data with an out-of-the-box spatial data management application called "ArcGIS Server," Rodehaver has made it easier for District employees to find installation or building data, calculate exact distances between U.S. facilities in Europe, or calculate exact areas.

"You can search by installation, zoom in, you can highlight a building and get all the data on that building – the building number, the installation it's on, what kind of structure it is."

Development on the site will continue as more data is made available.

"In the future what I'd like to do is create red-lining abilities for users. ... So [users] could pull the site up and do interactive planning on site by red-lining a washrack or a hardstand or a new gym."

The site is located at <http://nau-wk-pd-36742:8399/NAU-IMCOM-E>.

Course develops leaders overseas

In an effort to save time, money and hassle, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District, hosted a Base Camp Development Planner's Course (BCDC) at their Wiesbaden headquarters May 13 -16, allowing 17 students from across the Corps, U.S. Army Europe, and the Naval Facilities Engineering Command Europe and Southwest Asia, to train without crossing the Atlantic.

The course, hosted under the leadership of Mike Annand, former ISB chief, Paul Ramey, chief of planning section, and Phil Cohen, senior master planner, trains experts to enter areas that have no existing infrastructure and create a base camp that is able to sustain deployments and grow to meet ever-changing needs and missions.

These training sessions are usually held stateside, said Keith Cromartie, chief of operations, plans, and security, who presided over the completion ceremony. But the frequency of those in Europe having to set up base camps in Iraq and Africa made way for a cheaper, smarter decision, he added.

"We are going into Africa like we did in Europe during the '40s," Cromartie said, referencing the multitude of projects the District – along with other agencies – are working on with the newly-established U.S. Africa Command.

"These base camps are what we started with in Iraq," Cromartie added. "They were just little camps and now they have become functioning cities" that are essential not only in a wartime theater, but also in establishing humanitarian aid and relationship building missions.

With the familiar U.S. presence in Europe consolidating and the arms of America reaching out to a new continent, the BCDC made strides toward placing new, strong leaders on the ground to guide the Corps' footprint.



Terry Bautista, Europe District's chief of engineering and construction division congratulates Lt. Col. Gary Osborne for completing the BCDC.

Photo by Sgt. Gabriel Peterson

Like Boy Scouts, District shows it's "Always Prepared"

Being always prepared is not only applicable to the Boy Scouts. It's also applicable to the Corps' Europe District, which continually sends volunteers to train on FEST-A (Forward Engineer Support Team – Advanced) teams, which must be continuously prepared to deploy to support engineer planning and mission execution whenever, wherever called upon.

"Our chief obstacle in Europe is the five-year rule," said Ray Langdale, District operations officer. "And one thing we have to do is to continually build a bench of people."

The most recent selectees for the team – Maj. Landon Raby, Keith Cromartie, Martin Mann, Vanessa Bauders, Lawrence Ryan, Roger Smith, Francisco Torres, Louie Brackett, and Army Reservist Sgt. 1st Class James Mink – are seasoned professionals who must be capable of operating in dynamic and oftentimes harsh environments. They also represent a variety of District offices. Langdale said that's intentional.

"We always try to get a variety of skill sets on the team," said Langdale. "This makes us better equipped for anything that might come our way."

The team, which will train in Mobile, Ala., in late July, is the latest in a long line of teams. In August 2007, the District deployed its then-FEST-A team to the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif., to assist a Brigade Combat Team ramping up for their upcoming deployment.

In the simulation, the team became the engineer cell of an embedded provincial reconstruction team by replicating a regional office by reviewing contracts, conducting infrastructure assessments, attending committee meetings, and providing technical expertise.

According to Maj. Sebastian Pastor, military lead and environmental engineer for the team, the BCT was impressed by the professionalism of the team – and he foresees this current team of being able to provide the same professional and committed support. And to be "Always prepared."

A tent houses trainees at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif.



Photo by Maj. Sebastian Pastor



Making the cut

Students at the Child Development Center in Grafenwoehr's Netzaberg community stand ready to cut the ribbon of their new facility, which opened in April. This facility is one of many new construction additions to the installation, making it the Army's largest construction effort in Europe. Story about Grafenwoehr on page 8.