Engineering In Europe

Building Bonds in Bulgaria

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Designing World-Class Care

An Engineer's Sahara Run

Ramping Up Aid In Albania

US Army Corps of Engineers
Europe District
Vol. 10 • Summer 2010

Message From

THE COMMANDER

John S. Kem
COL, EN
Commanding

Europe District team,

So far, 2010 is shaping up to be one of our busiest years. Our workload is high, our contractor hours are through the roof and the project turnover rate is certainly above average.

Although some colossal undertakings like Efficient Basing Grafenwoehr are wrapping up, others – like the replacement hospital in the Kaiserslautern Military Community or the upsurge in DoDDS projects – are more than filling the void.

We're forming new partnerships that are keeping us busy. And simultaneously our district is undergoing changes like renovating our headquarters and restructuring our offices to match incoming work.

We have more people deployed now than we've ever had – almost 3 percent of our DAC workforce – and we aren't expecting that to slow down either. For some, this means picking up the slack for others while doing your own job.

This is the environment that we live in – and it can be stressful and overwhelming at times.

I encourage you to find the discipline to work hard. Our customers depend on us every day to solve their engineering challenges – and we need to deliver. I also encourage you to start planning how you're going to de-stress to ensure you don't get overwhelmed. Some examples include participating in the Army's "Comprehensive Soldier Fitness" program (which is highly encouraged for civilians), participating in our Civilian Fitness Program, or starting your own personal fitness regimen.

Work hard, play hard is a creed I believe in. And with the end of the fiscal year approaching, each of you should ask yourselves what you can do to increase your resilience and achieve more balanced and healthy lives.

One thing I've always found that helps is surrounding yourself with great people you can talk to – either for advice or as a sounding board. One of the hallmarks of our district is having a tight-knit family of smart, supportive and hard-working people. Some are eager to help by taking on more responsibility, like the newest members of our Leadership Development Program: Sibylle Ballnath, Lisis Batista, Danielle Brooks, Carol Davis, Daniel Gilstrap, Anthony Korves, Krescenty Nowacki, and Jorge Pachas. Many others who have been here for a while can offer sage advice on professional or personal matters.

And if you're stuck with a professional issue and can't find a solution locally, see what other Corps districts have done by checking out the USACE Quality Management System site (just double-click the yellow star on your desktop).

And if there's anything I can do to empower the right people to enable a successful mission or project execution, my door is open. We're one family and we're here for each other.

Finally, I want to mention and thank our outstanding public affairs team and everyone else who has played a role in making our *Engineering in Europe* such a success. This is our final print edition as we transition to an electronic magazine for the future based on the feedback from all of you.

The end of the fiscal year is upon us. The pace has quickened, deadlines are a little more pressing, and everyone has a lot on their to-do list. Open communication, saying what and when you are going to do somthing – and then doing it and looking ahead at potential issues is more important than ever ... but so is remaining professional and considerate. Be kind!

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ON THE COVER

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During a visit to the Novo Selo Training Area in eastern Bulgaria May 14, 2010, the USACE North Atlantic Division Commander Brig. Gen. Peter "Duke" DeLuca met with several USACE Europe District employees overseeing a roughly $50 million design-build project that consists of constructing a training base to be used by Bulgarians. **Photo By Justin Ward**

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RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRESS

Lack of a records management program for 10 years resulted in a buildup of electronic files and an abundance of boxes. Since December 2008, the district has revamped its program allowing roughly 2,400 boxes to be processed and reducing electronic clutter by 79 percent. A new records holding area is now located in the basement of Europe District's headquarters. **Photos courtesy of Ross Goodspeed**

DECEMBER 2008

SEPTEMBER 2009

NOVEMBER 2009

USACE PUTS

Europe District sets records straight with information management programs

By Rachel Goodspeed

Since December 2008, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District has processed more than 2,400 boxes of physical records, reduced network server clutter by 79 percent, and renovated roughly 3,400 square feet in the district's headquarters building to make room for a new records holding area.

"Last year at this time, we had two large basement rooms filled to the ceiling with no standardized form or method of tracking what was inside those boxes," said Ross Goodspeed, the district records manager. "In the past 12 months, we've developed a system where we can retrieve boxes quickly and can manage these important records accurately."

The effort is part of a district-wide initiative to revamp its records management, which it lacked for nearly 10 years. The goal, Goodspeed said, is to establish systems that allow for the efficient and legal management of all district records, including field sites, regardless of media throughout their life cycle.

"We can't approach the storage of information with, 'We need more space,'" he said. "We're not just talking about filing cabinets and overcrowded storage areas. In today's electronic age, it goes far beyond that. We're talking about server space, e-mail, back-up tapes – all of which have a cost associated. Space costs money."

But it's more than just a storage issue. The district has the responsibility of being able to find pertinent information when requested, Goodspeed said.

"Many people don't see the importance of the program until they need to go back to find documents for legal reasons – a scenario that is more common than people realize," he said. "Records management programs are developed to ensure we don't dispose of critical and historical information prematurely, as well as to make sure we don't keep information longer than we're legally required."

The effort began locally with headquarters offices. This year, the program is being pushed out to the field offices.

"Our offices are spread out across Europe and Israel with projects in even more places. Trying to make one standardized system and process when there are many existing is challenging," Goodspeed said. "That's why we're starting with the foundation laid out by the Army and adjusting as users provide feedback."

Goodspeed said he hopes to meet with all offices to provide

JANUARY 2010

MARCH 2010

APRIL 2010

MAY 2010

DATA IN ITS PLACE

the tools necessary for the program's success and have the entire district set up by the end of the year.

"We may not have every record where it's supposed to be by that time, but the system will be in place for offices to continue working until we get to the point when we're out with the old and in with the new – records that is," he said.

Another system working hand-in-hand with records management is the Projects and Acquisitions Portal, a centralized location for data and documents on projects from beginning to completion.

"Like the records management program, this program was implemented based on command directive to centralize documentation," said Bernice Hazelwood, the district's PnA portal manager. "This program is more focused on projects, but the goal is similar – to eliminate document duplications."

The PnA portal allows users to see every document related to their project, every edit made to that document, by who and when, and even allows users to compare documents. Right now, the portal is being used for pre-award and awards for direct contracts. Once that's ready, Hazelwood said the team will focus on indirect contracts.

"PnA has so many good things about it, but we can't make it a fully-functional, user-friendly tool without the users using it," she said. "We want to hear what the PMs have to say, any problems, feedback."

And feedback as well as support from leadership is critical to ensuring both the PnA portal and records management programs are successful.

"When any new program is put in place, there is bound to be push-back," Hazelwood said. "When people started using it [the PnA portal], they didn't like it, but now they love it and are trying to get others to use it."

When both programs are fully-functional, individual users won't see much of a change in their day-to-day operations with either program. The only difference is in terms of where a document is saved.

"Instead of saving project data to a network drive, users save it directly to the portal and to the specific project," Hazelwood said. "We are also in the process of getting the Army records management system to accept Sharepoint pages as records so once a project closes out, we can archive the entire site."

For all other documents, including those where wet signatures are needed, the user only needs to place or save a document to the correct folders, which have been set up by records coordinators, Goodspeed said.

"Employees generate historical and business data that creates a history of our transactions and our history as a district," he said. "We have a very important mission here. All the information in the world is great, but if you can't find anything, then what's the point?"

Although both programs still have a long road ahead, the framework is in place to help put information where it belongs.

"In an organization that has a high turnover rate due to limited tours, knowing where to find data is even more important," Hazelwood said. "And when someone new comes on board, it's important that they're able to start using the system immediately."

BUILDING BONDS IN BULGARIA

Work on Bulgarian joint military training facilities intensifies

By Justin Ward

ABOVE: Steady progress continues on the $50 million design-build project at Novo Selo Training Area that will provide a training base to be used by Bulgarians, U.S. and international Allies. **Photo by Justin Ward**
TOP: An eight-wheeled Stryker mechanized unit from the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment performs in a training exercise under the Joint Task Force-East in the Novo Selo Training Area in Bulgaria. **U.S. Air Force Photo by Master Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo**

More than 75 buildings, roads and maintenance areas are under construction at a military training site in eastern Bulgaria that, when complete in 2012, will host up to 2,500 U.S. and international soldiers during military training activities that are expected to build better long-term relations with our international allies.

The $50 million design-build project, overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District, will include 23 barracks buildings, a chapel, post office, fitness center, several administrative, operational, maintenance, storage, dining and medical facilities, and basic infrastructure such as utilities, roads, walkways and parking areas, all of which are expected to have a lifespan of at least 20 years.

"[The contractor] is going to be building shells so hopefully in the fall he can start working on the interiors," said Pat Klever, district resident engineer on the site whose team is overseeing the work. "They're continuing to do grading, putting in roads and associated infrastructure that will service the base, but it's all happening at a very rapid pace."

The scale of the undertaking is massive, said Brig. Gen. Peter "Duke" DeLuca, commander of the USACE North Atlantic Division, during his visit to the site in May.

"This training base is phenomenal. There are barracks, there are battalion and company operations facilities, aid stations, vehicle maintenance facilities that are fixed and that will be very modern. So it's not like you'll be maintaining something in the mud without any support," he said. "It's a great project and it's very rewarding to be a part of it."

The project is part of U.S. Army Europe's Task Force-East initiative, which supports the U.S. European Command's Theater Security Cooperation Program that offers participating headquarters staff and units significant training opportunities for possible future operations between U.S. forces and partner nations.

Construction in support of Task Force-East is also occurring in southeastern Romania, where similar operational and support facilities designed and built through oversight from USACE are expected to be complete late this summer.

Although the facilities at both sites will be simple, expeditionary structures, they will be functional and modern enough so units will not have to expend as much effort sustaining themselves as they would at more remote training sites, DeLuca said.

"The focus will be to maximize training time once you're here," said DeLuca. "Units can come here, maximize their training, [and] they don't have to worry about absorbing a huge amount of their personnel or their time on life support activities, which can happen if you're go to really austere training sites. … Here they're going to be able to … focus on the maneuver and fire training that's done here."

Already, both sites have hosted units that have resided and trained in temporary life support areas consisting of facility tents for dining and recreation, sleep tents, and containerized headquarters buildings. This summer, about 100 U.S. Marines were deployed to Romania for Black Sea Rotational Force, a Security Cooperation Marine Air-Ground Task Force with the mission to promote regional stability, build partner-nations' military capacity and build enduring partnerships with nations in the Black Sea, Balkan and Caucasus regions.

"Not everybody thinks exactly the way we do. So being able to bridge those communications gaps, those doctrinal gaps and learn how to operate together very easily is extremely important to us," said DeLuca. "It's important for our mission in Afghanistan today. It's important for the training mission that we will remain in Iraq to do after September 2010, and I think it remains important for other training missions that are likely to be adopted by us to help stabilize regions of Eurasia that are not inherently stable. And since none of us really wants to run another set of wars anywhere, the more we can help those other militaries … at training sites like this, close to a region where it's not too expensive for them to move to, where we're able to do a lot of interoperable training, I think that is going to be hugely beneficial to American interests, military and political, throughout the world."

ABOVE: During a May 14 visit, USACE North Atlantic Division Commander Brig. Gen. Peter "Duke" DeLuca met several Europe District employees overseeing construction of the forward operating site at Novo Selo Training Area. **Photo by Justin Ward**
TOP: A U.S. Army fire team from the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment scouts a simulated enemy obstacle during a Military Operations Urban Terrain training exercise under the Joint Task Force-East in the Novo Selo Training Area in Bulgaria. **U.S. Air Force Photo by Master Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo**

Bridging communication gaps is also something the district is working on in Eastern Europe, DeLuca said, where it is learning valuable lessons about interacting with foreign governments and contractors. In early 2010, internal contractor disputes caused construction delays at both sites.

"The more experience we have in navigating the abstract terrain – the legal, political and economic terrain of foreign countries – the better the Army Corps of Engineers, which is a global organization, will be able to execute projects like this around the world," he said.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Tucson couple deploys to Bulgaria as 'learning experience'

By Justin Ward

Deployments can be tough for any family. That's why when John Taylor was offered a position working on a large military construction project in an isolated region of eastern Bulgaria, he gave one caveat.

"Not unless there's a job for my wife as well," said Taylor.

As the office engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District's Bulgaria Project Office, Taylor oversees the plans for a $50 million design-build project to construct or renovate more than 75 buildings, roads and maintenance areas amid the Novo Selo Training Area.

His wife, Diane, is a civil engineering technician who specializes in quality assurance. They spent the past six years working together in the Corps' office in Tucson, Ariz., and for Taylor, working without his wife was not even an option.

Lucky for them, his new boss had the same idea in mind.

"We actually had someone accept and then back out of a quality assurance position," said Patrick Klever, the district's resident engineer in Bulgaria. "So when we heard that his wife has a good reputation and long-term experience in the QA field, we jumped at the opportunity to bring her to Bulgaria as well."

Together, they are part of a team supporting U.S. Army Europe's Task Force-East initiative to build projects that will support training opportunities with U.S. forces and partner nations.

According to Diane Taylor, even though there would be a position for her, she was still hesitant to make such a big leap of moving to another continent.

"First we talked about it as husbands and wives do," she said. "We talked about it and prayed about it, and we decided we'd just do it together. Our kids are grown up. So we just decided, 'Now's the time,' because if we don't do it now at our age, pretty soon we'll be old."

They arrived in January, in the middle of one of the coldest winters in decades. It was a far cry from Tucson, said Taylor.

"It was a culture shock," he said. "[Diane] cried for a couple days and said she was going home."

But after the weather warmed, so did their attitudes about being more than 6,500 miles from home.

"We like to drive and see new sights," said Taylor. "There is a lot of history in the area."

Diane Taylor said they've enjoyed exploring the country and the region, including taking several road trips to Greece.

"It's interesting, it's beautiful," she said. "We like learning about Bulgarian culture and history."

And according to Diane Taylor, learning is the main reason they came.

"We both love to learn, love to be out in the field," she said. "And being here, working in a different country, with a different language, on such a unique project, that's quite a learning experience that I'm sure will help me in the long-run, whether it's in the knowledge itself or in the flexibility we learned to adapt to change."

John Taylor, office engineer for the Bulgaria Project Office, and his wife, Diane, a quality assurance technician, review plans on one of the district's construction projects for U.S. Army Europe's Task Force-East initiative. **Photo by Burton Slack**

The LRMC provides primary care, specialized consultative care, hospitalization and treatment for more than 245,000 U.S. military personnel and their families within the U.S. European Command. It is also the evacuation and treatment center for all injured U.S. servicemembers, civilians and contractors, as well as military forces from 44 coalition countries serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.
Photos Courtesy of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center

DESIGNING WORLD-CLASS CARE

USACE Hosts US, German Firms For Overview On Hospital Replacement Project

By Rachel Goodspeed

More than 230 architects and engineers representing 57 U.S. and German A/E firms attended an Industry Day June 2 to receive information on an upcoming project that will eventually replace the aging Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and Ramstein Air Base Clinic.

During the event, hosted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District, TRICARE Management Activity, U.S. Army Health Facility Planning Agency, U.S. Air Force Health Support Division and district representatives provided attendees an overview of the U.S. hospital project as well as the various contracting requirements for firms.

"Today is the first day of a multi-year effort for everyone here in the room and at the table for us to develop and build a world-class U.S. hospital here in Germany – a cooperative effort between the U.S. government and the German government," said Robert Haddix, chief of TMA's Acquisition and Management Office.

The hospital replacement project, estimated to cost $1.2 billion, will provide joint venture design opportunities available for U.S. and German firms.

Not only is the project large, there are substantial complexities in designing a hospital for the U.S. in Germany, said Rick Flansburg, the district's senior project manager.

"We're going to need a team that has the experience and capabilities that the design of this facility will require and will ensure the design captures both U.S. and German requirements," he said.

The Europe District, which will oversee design on behalf of TMA, is required to utilize the process outlined by the Auftragsbauten Grundsätze 1975, or ABG 75, an agreement between the U.S. and German governments that defines the process of how to accomplish construction works in Germany, said Col. John Kem, district commander.

"The ABG process has been around for a long time. Both the U.S. and Germany are comfortable with it," he said. "But with a project of this magnitude we want to make sure the project is done successfully, on time, on budget, and that we collectively share all the risks. So we've been collaborating on how we can do that and it's been pretty successful so far."

A Home Away From Home

"This Is More Than Just A Place...
When Wounded Warriors Land In Landstuhl, They're Home."
— Lt. Col. Steve Wooldridge

The end state, said Jim Noble, chief of the district's engineering branch, is a world-class health care facility that not only meets standards, but exceeds them to allow for future growth and changes needed to keep up with technology requirements.

"We do that by executing quality design and construction. That's what the reputation of the Corps of Engineers is and that's what we'll do throughout this project," he said. "This will require a huge, collective team creating a seamless partnership with the host nation and all the partners, including the A/E design team, construction team and everyone else involved."

The LRMC is the largest American medical center and the only level II trauma center outside the continental U.S. It is also the only American tertiary care medical center in Europe. **Photo courtesy of the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center**

The district anticipates creating a joint office located near the project site where highly-qualified professionals from both U.S. and German sides would come together and dedicate their time solely to the hospital program – an effort utilized to bring the U.S. Army Europe's $700 million Efficient Basing-Grafenwoehr program to its successful completion earlier this year, Kem said.

"We are looking for an A/E consortium that will take this project from 0 to 100 percent design and throughout the duration of the project," he said. "When you have a project at this price tag, of this duration, of this importance, that's very important to do."

The district plans to approach the project with a U.S. firm leading initial design in coordination with a German firm to ensure lessons learned from similar stateside projects are incorporated while adhering to German construction laws and codes. Once the initial design is reviewed by all stakeholders, design lead will then transition to the German firm.

"The Europe District, USACE, health facility planning officials and TRICARE Management Activity have been doing a lot of work over the last year just to get to this point on setting the conditions for this project to succeed," he said. "Behind the scenes, there's been a lot of work between the U.S. and the German federal ministry of construction on trying to figure out what is the right way to execute this project and how to do it and bring it to a successful conclusion."

Currently, medical officials at the Office of the Secretary of Defense and health care planning administrators for the Army and Air Force are finalizing operational requirements for the new hospital.

"What makes this project different is the incorporation of this contingency mission with normal hospital operations," said Air Force Maj. Matt Sakal, director of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe Surgeon General's Medical Support Plans and Programs Office. "When you see the troops coming off the plane on the flightline, you truly understand why this project is different from a traditional hospital project. It really is a unique operation. And we have some unique partnerships with this project, not just with the host nation, but also with the Army and Air Force."

The LRMC is the largest American medical center and the only level II trauma center outside the continental U.S. It is also the only American tertiary care medical center in Europe. The center provides primary care, specialized consultative care, hospitalization and treatment for more than 245,000 U.S. military personnel and their families within the U.S. European Command.

Additionally, the LRMC is the evacuation and treatment center for all injured U.S. servicemembers, civilians and contractors, as well as military forces from 44 coalition countries serving in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A new combined facility is the most efficient long-term solution to continue providing quality medical care for wounded warriors, servicemembers and families for decades to come, said Lt. Col. Steve Wooldridge, commander of the U.S. Army Health Facility Planning Agency.

"This is more than just a place – this is a home away from home. When Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Sailors, when wounded warriors land in Landstuhl, they're home," he said. "This is long-term planning about how we can make this environment something that our Soldiers, our wounded warriors, our families stationed here, what they really deserve."

Running the Sahara

District Engineer Races Through Africa's Dunes

By Rachel Goodspeed

Achim Knacksterdt, chief of the Technical Engineering Section at the USACE Europe District, holds up his medal received upon completion of the 25th annual Marathon Des Sables in the Sahara Desert. He completed the race in 38 hours, 48 minutes, 50 seconds earning him 201st place out of the 923 who completed the race and fifth place out of the 35 German runners. **Photos Courtesy of Achim Knacksterdt**

By day, Achim Knacksterdt is chief of the Technical Engineering Section at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District managing 18 architects and engineers of multiple technical disciplines who support construction projects across the district.

After hours, the German engineer straps on his running shoes to complete a portion of the 50 to 90 miles he runs each week in preparation for multi-day marathon races.

Most recently, Knacksterdt's ambitions took him to the valleys and dunes of the Sahara Desert April 4 to compete in the 25th annual Marathon Des Sables, or Marathon of the Sand – a 250 km (155 mile), seven-day race, equivalent to running almost six regular marathons.

According to the event's website, the marathon is one of the very first endurance races established and has the reputation of being one of the toughest, if not the toughest. More than 1,000 men and women from over 40 countries compete in this six-stage race.

Knacksterdt completed the race in 38 hours, 48 minutes, 50 seconds earning him 201st place out of the 923 who completed the race (90 runners did not complete the race) and fifth place out of the 35 German runners.

"On the first day, you don't really care about how fast you're running. On the second day, you realize you actually can do it and you see how fast you can be," he said. "So when I realized I could do it, I tried really hard to improve. You run 38 hours and you can get upset by three minutes."

Unlike the endless miles of sand many people imagine, Knacksterdt found himself running through a desert full of mountains, dunes, muddy river beds, a large valley, and more gravel and rocks than sand.

"You have this picture in your mind about what the desert looks like and I was surprised by how different it was. The ground was more like 20 percent sand. And suddenly you see a house and kids in the middle of the desert and you wonder about them," he said. "You also have no idea about distances. On the first day, I came over a mountain and saw the camp and you think, 'Oh, just five minutes.' It ended up taking 45 minutes."

Marathon organizers provide runners a simple canvas tent at each stage's end-point shared with seven other participants and up to 2.6 gallons of water. The runners carry everything else to sustain themselves over the desert run, including food, medical supplies, toiletries, a sleeping bag and equipment

they're required to carry to meet the minimum 14 pounds. Knacksterdt's bag weighed just under 20 pounds.

"The good part is that the backpack gets lighter every day," he said. "The bad part was that I had no appetite for the food I brought. What you eat here in Germany doesn't necessarily mean you can eat it in Africa. And even if something was good the first day, it gets old by the seventh day. If I could do it all over again, I would definitely do some things differently."

Another challenge Knacksterdt faced was the monotony of the desert. According to the marathon's website, the race consists of a classic marathon stage (26 miles), a day across some of the tallest sand dunes in Africa and an endurance day (51 miles) that leads runners into the desert night in addition to four other stages with distances between 13 and 25 miles.

"It gets pretty boring out there. You're out in the middle of nowhere. There's nothing to do. You have the same guys in your tent every night and all you can do is talk," he said. "But you find that because you live with the same people for a week in an atmosphere where you have nothing, you build a good team with people you don't even know."

Why does Knacksterdt put himself through the endless training, the unpredictable weather conditions and the blisters that come with the multi-day runs?

"It helps me relax. All you're doing is running, eating and sleeping, so it's easy to let go of all the stress and work that weighs you down throughout the year," he said. "I tried to keep that feeling of complete relaxation going after I got back, but reality came rushing back too soon. So I just have to keep running."

But it's more than just running, Knacksterdt said. It's about the experiences he gains through these competitions.

In 2009, he ran the Swiss Jura Marathon, a 350 km, 7-day race from Geneva to Basel. Next up, Knacksterdt has the Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc, a 163 km race in Chamonix, France, and the Transalpine run, a 295 km through Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

"You start with running and build up to your first marathon. Then you think, 'Can I run it faster?' And as you add things like mountains and multiple stages, I started asking myself, 'How far can I go?'" he said. "T.S. Elliot said, 'You have to risk going too far to discover just how far you can really go.' I'm still waiting for the day when I say, 'No more, that's too much.'"

Time Well Spent

Knacksterdt Completed The Race In 38 Hours, 48 minutes, 50 seconds. He Earned 201st Place out of 923 Runners And 5th Place Out Of The 35 German Runners.

Runners rest after the completing the fifth stage of the 25th annual Marathon Des Sables, a 243 km (151 miles), seven-day race, equivalent to running almost six regular marathons.

Hundreds of runners race through the Sahara Desert, which proved to be full of mountains, dunes, muddy river beds, a large valley, and more gravel and rocks than sand.

Dilapidated basketball courtyard is a part of the renovations to rural school projects that are estimated to be completed by Winter 2010. **Photos by Justin Ward**

Ramping Up Aid In Albania

Humanitarian Assistance Efforts Begin With Renovations On Rural School And Telemedicine Project

By Justin Ward

Construction crews in Albania are busier than ever working on U.S.-funded humanitarian assistance projects that seek to improve educational and medical facilities in several isolated communities.

The projects, overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District, are part of a U.S. European Command program that partners with U.S. Embassies in Eastern Europe to support the continued development of the country's infrastructure.

"Personally, this is the most rewarding part of my job," said Col. Martin Perryman, chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy Tirana, who works with the U.S. ambassador's country team to select the projects that will provide the most support with limited Department of Defense dollars. "[HA projects] make the longest lasting contribution to not only the development of Albania but to cementing and maintaining the relationship that Albania and the U.S. have, which is probably one of the best relationships in the world right now. Our approval rating here is just through the roof."

Currently, the district is overseeing more than $1 million in renovation contracts in Albania making the small Balkan country the largest recipient of EUCOM's HA funds in fiscal year 2010.

"Humanitarian assistance, at least here in Albania, is one of the most cost-effective, valuable tools for U.S. foreign policy here in the Balkans that we have going," said Perryman. "To redo a school is just a few hundred thousand dollars, but the impact it has far exceeds that much investment."

EUCOM's HA program has been active in the former Eastern Bloc country since 1996, while the district's HA support began in November 2007 with a contract to renovate a clinic in Bulqize. Since then, the district has overseen roughly $2 million to rebuild schools and medical facilities in several isolated communities.

"I believe this is the most work we've ever done in the country," said Darrell Cullins, a district project engineer. "I'm proud to be part of the team helping assist such an important ally."

Repairing Bedrock Institutions

A five-hour drive from Tirana up zigzag roads peppered with potholes, sinkholes and large rocks leads to Kastriot, a small municipality in the highlands of northeastern Albania where the Europe District is overseeing a $322,000 contract to refurbish a school for use by several small municipalities in the region with a total population of about 14,000, including several hundred students – many of whom walk up to four kilometers to school.

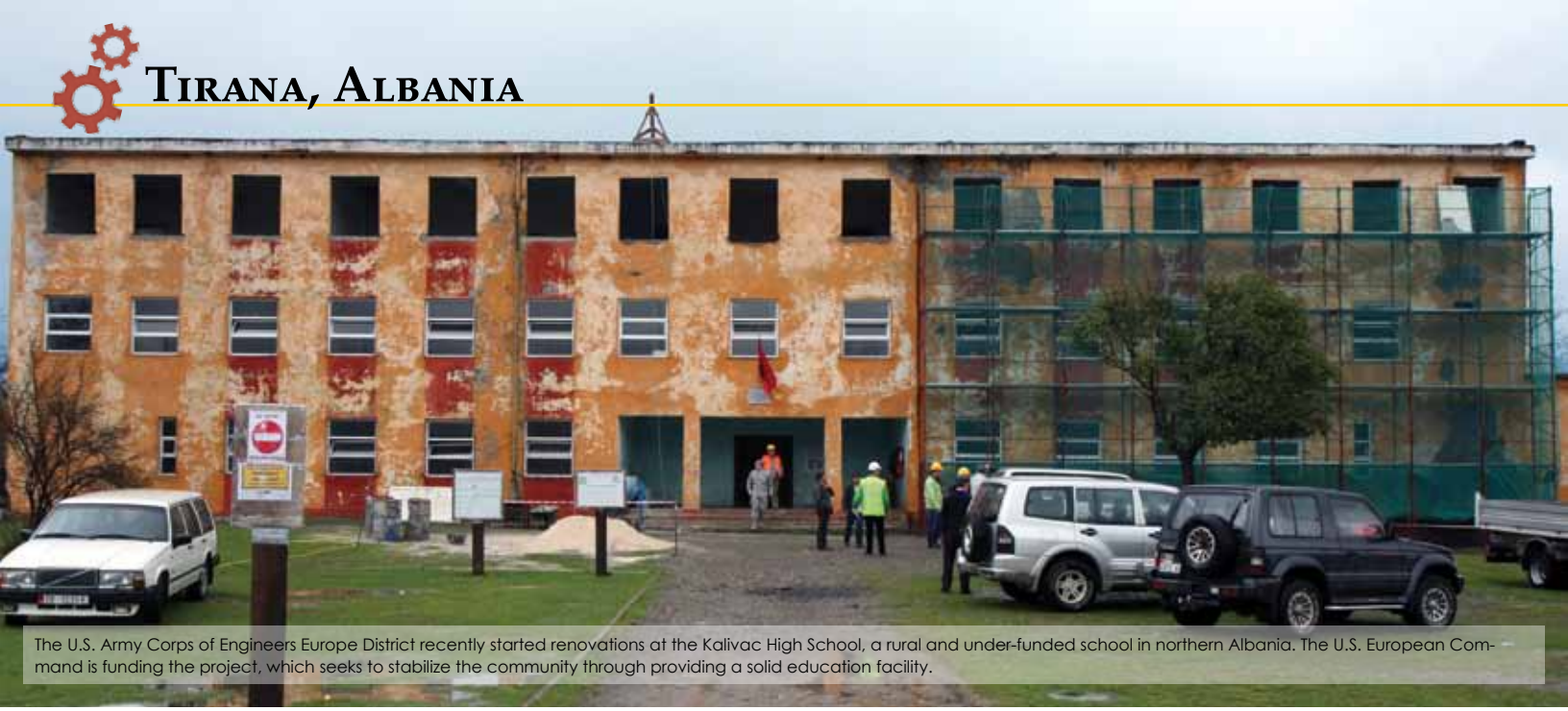
Students 6-18 years old can attend the school. However, according to the school director and mayor of Kastriot, who both appealed for the repairs, the poor condition of the school caused many students to abandon it. Its isolation also encumbered nongovernmental organizations from funding other projects in the region.

"The schools in this region have been, pretty much, in a state of non-repair since the end of the communist regime in the early 1990s," said Perryman. "So they've been sitting for 20 years, still in use; windows are being broken and not repaired; heating systems are falling into disuse for lack of fuel; wood-burning stoves are being stuck in the classroom for use in the winter; complete floors of these buildings have been abandoned due to water seepage."

The repair of this school is part of an integrated approach to reinforce regional stability, said Perryman, as it not only improves educational facilities to bring children back to school, it also promotes future sustainability efforts by bringing attention to the needs of these communities.

"It's very significant in terms of community development because schools are just one of those bedrock institutions where you're going to win the next generation and improve conditions on the ground," said Perryman. "So what we're going to do is seal up the building … [and] give them a really good, solid outside structure. And then to the extent possible with our funding, we'll start working our way through the electricity, the plumbing, the flooring, the walls on the

The USACE Europe District recently started plans for a "telemedicine" project at the Mother Theresa University Hospital, which is slated to be the nerve center for 14 other hospitals in outlying regions of the country that will be able to use interactive audiovisual media to get and transfer medical information for the purpose of consultations and examinations.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District recently started renovations at the Kalivac High School, a rural and under-funded school in northern Albania. The U.S. European Command is funding the project, which seeks to stabilize the community through providing a solid education facility.

inside until eventually we'll wind up with a viable, usable space where they can educate children."

A second school in repair is in Kalivac, about three hours from Tirana. Renovations to the three-story school, estimated at about $310,000, include repairs to the roof, façade, floors, stairwells, bathrooms and fire escapes. The project also calls for new furniture, including desks, cabinets and blackboards, and the installation of new water lines and a new exterior fence.

According to the embassy, an estimated 30 percent of all schools in the prefectures of northern Albania have damages that result in loss of adequately clean water and toilets as well as broken doors, windows, roofs, walls and floors.

The communities in northern Albania also have high unemployment rates, some as high as 25 percent.

"An added benefit of these projects is the economic assistance they provide the region," said Darrell Cullins, a district project engineer. "We've been working with the contractor – SKE Romania – to use local materials and labor when possible in order to provide as much economic assistance to the local communities as possible."

Barim Shini, a laborer assisting with repairs at the Kastriot school agreed that the projects help the local citizens. "I guarantee this project has a positive impact on the local economy," said Shini, who is from Kastriot. "There are a lot of people who are looking for jobs."

Both school projects are estimated to be completed by winter 2010.

Helping Mother Teresa

The final ongoing renovation project seeks to upgrade a section of the "Mother Teresa" University Hospital Center in Tirana to accommodate enough communications infrastructure to allow it to be the center of a spoke-and-hub telemedicine program. Once complete, this network will be used to improve the quality of general medical care as well as strengthen the nation's disaster preparedness and response network.

This $400,000 project, funded through EUCOM and the U.S. Agency for International Development and shepherded by the University of Arizona's College of Medicine, is the first of several projects that seek to link 14 isolated hospitals and clinics via Internet communication tools to allow for training, counsel and access to previously inaccessible medical libraries. According to Perryman, it is a major feat for a country with a poorly developed transportation system and difficult living conditions, including one of the worst infant mortality rates in Europe.

"This is going to be a big improvement in the quality of medical care here in Albania," said Perryman. "It's another great example of how we collaborate and bring the different strengths of the different agencies together."

Ultimately, the program seeks to improve basic public health outcomes in outlying areas by allowing citizens with complex or rare medical conditions to receive immediate high-quality care. USAID is purchasing the necessary equipment and garnering an NGO to set up, train and sustain the program, while DOD is funding hospital improvements needed to house and maintain the system.

"I'm really excited about this project, even though I won't be here when it comes to completion," said Perryman. "This is probably my best work in Albania."

HA projects in Albania completed in 2009 include renovations to the Kucove school in central Albania for about $585,000 and renovations to the Bregu I Lumit clinic for about $411,000. In addition to expected renovations at hospitals and clinics throughout the country, upcoming HA projects in Albania include a renovation of a kindergarten in Erseka for $100,000 and a schoolyard renovation for $150,000.

The district is also managing 25 other HA projects throughout EUCOM in FY10. Valued at roughly $9 million, the projects include sites in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Latvia, Moldova, Croatia and Serbia. The district is also managing 15 projects for the U.S. Africa Command – worth about $4 million – in Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Zambia.

Rolling Out Welcome Mats!

Out With The Old, In With The New – Base Housing That Is! USACE Delivers Key To Incirlik's Eagle Housing Community

By Rachel Goodspeed

U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District representatives officially opened the doors to 44 new homes during a ribbon-cutting ceremony June 15 in the Eagle Housing area.

The ceremony marked the completion of the final phase of the three-phased $15.2 million Eagle Housing project that delivered a total of 100 energy-efficient, code-compliant homes to the Incirlik community.

"We went through a circuitous path to get here, but we were successful nonetheless," said Col. Eric Beene, 39th Air Base Wing commander. "When Gen. [Roger] Brady [U.S. Air Forces in Europe commander] came through a few months ago, we were proud to show these off, and they were impressed when they saw the quality of the houses we're able to provide our Airmen."

The Eagle Housing project started as an idea built around overcoming massive damage to the Eagle housing infrastructure due to an earthquake in 1998, according to Air Force officials. The housing area's 150 houses, built in the 1960s, were condemned due to the damage and plans were instituted to demolish the homes and rebuild the housing area from the ground up. Congressional appropriations soon followed and USACE spearheaded the new project.

Each new unit is a four-bedroom, 2.5-bath home with family, living and dining rooms as well as exterior and interior storage areas – double the size of the former units and valuable space for the families that move their entire lives overseas, said Col. John Kem, Europe District commander.

"We are glad to be here to celebrate today in the completion of what really is a great project," he said. "For the people who have to move overseas, it's nice to give them a house that meets the quality of their service and that's certainly what we've done here."

Coupled with the on-going Phantom and Falcon Housing renovations being managed by both the district and 39th Civil Engineer Squadron, Incirlik will have a grand total of about 650 housing units when complete in 2013.

Kem said the completion of this project, as well as the ongoing teamwork on other projects here are examples of the things USACE and USAFE can do together to bring a better quality of life to servicemembers, civilians and families stationed overseas.

"It was nice to see these projects [on Incirlik] are pretty much on time and on target, and we're committed to keeping them going that way," he said.

Other USACE projects on the installation include a Consolidated Community Center that will house the community activity center, base theater, library and education center; infrastructure repairs to the Base Medical Clinic; and renovations of classrooms at the Incirlik Unit School.

The end-goal of these projects is for the well-being of our military families, Beene said.

"I'm hoping for more folks coming down, bringing their families and enjoying the great quality of life that all of you have helped us to provide to our Airmen and their families," he said.

INSERT: (From left) Col. John Kem, Europe District commander, Okan Nalbant, TUSEG Resident Engineer, Mark Nedzbala, Mediterranean Area Office Area Engineer, Lt. Col. Dwayne McCullion, 39th Civil Engineer Squadron commander, and Col. Eric Beene, 39th Air Base Wing commander, open the final 44 units of Eagle Housing June 15 at Incirlik Air Base **Photo by Francisco Colon**

ABOVE: Replacing facilities built in 1961, Incirlik is in the final stages of the housing project which will improve the quality of life for its members. With help from the USACE, Incirlik will soon have 650 new housing units to include renovated homes in the Phantom and Falcon housing areas. **Photo by Justin Ward**

RESHAPING SHAPE SCHOOLS

USACE Improves Quality Of U.S. Educational Facilities, One New Construction At A Time

By Carol E. Davis

INSERT: In a joint venture with Mitchell-Giurgola of New York and ABATEC of Belgium, the Europe District is managing construction of a $146 million project that will bring new DoDDS elementary, middle and high schools, and an international school to the SHAPE community. **Renderings by Mitchell-Giurgola/ABATEC Joint Venture**
ABOVE: As part of his visit to the USACE Europe District, North Atlantic Division Commander Brig. Gen. Peter "Duke" DeLuca visited several school construction projects underway at the U.S. Army Garrison Brussels, including this $7 million classroom addition, which includes a new gym and a new art and music room. **Photo by Carol E. Davis.**

After decades of piecemeal construction, maintaining and repairing old educational facilities that have exceeded their intended life spans, the Department of Defense Dependents Schools and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe International School are working with Army engineers to replace their school and childcare facilities here, including all new elementary, middle and high schools that serve students from almost 40 nations.

New American facilities include a community youth center that will offer local students fun and educational skill-building activities as well as additions to the Brussels American School, including a gymnasium and arts building that can be divided to provide teachers the flexibility to hold two classes at once.

SHAPE facilities, which will break ground in 2011, will replace the integrated French-language kindergarten, elementary schools administered by eight different countries and secondary schools administered by three different countries.

During a recent site visit to Brussels, Brig. Gen. Peter "Duke" DeLuca, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers North Atlantic Division commander, said the new American facilities will not only ensure a high quality of education, they will also add flexibility to class scheduling.

"This gymnasium is going to double the capacity and the ability of teams to practice simultaneously here," said DeLuca. "That is a huge scheduling relief to teachers who had to schedule one group in the morning and one in the afternoon."

The new $6.3 million, 13,300-square-foot gym is 90 percent complete and is expected to be ready for use in time for the 2010/2011 school year.

"We needed a new gym desperately. We are very well known for our academics, but we also have some of the best athletes in DoDDS. We hold a lot of Division III titles," said Eric Goldman, principal of the Brussels American School. "We needed a new facility, something state of the art."

In addition to the gym, students will soon reap the benefits of a modern arts and music building. Strategically located between the middle and high school, the facility offers students from both schools an opportunity to hone their music skills or perfect their artistic talents. The building offers flexibility with a variety of room sizes, from a large center room for group rehearsals to smaller rooms for individual groups.

The 6,800-square-foot building offers an acoustically reinforced area with angled wall panels designed to reverberate and contain sound while ensuring outside noise stays out.

"Our kids were operating in small facilities. They were sufficient, but we needed something larger with more flexibility," said Goldman.

In addition to the Brussels American School construction, U.S. Army and USACE officials broke ground on a new youth center in January. The $6.4 million facility will accommodate about 150 students and provide children the opportunity to participate in various after-school activities.

"Between the new gymnasium, art and music building, and the youth center that is under construction a few hundred feet away, these facilities are really enhancing the quality-of-education and the qualify-of-life for our students," said DeLuca.

Since the 1960s, the SHAPE International School and DoDDS American schools in Mons have not changed much. School facility upgrades consisted of a series of makeshift add-ons driven by increasing student numbers, but with funding from DoDDS and several NATO countries, students can look forward to new schools.

In a joint venture with Mitchell-Giurgola of New York and ABATEC of Belgium, the Europe District is managing construction of a $105 million project that will bring new DoDDS elementary, middle and high schools, and an international school to the SHAPE community.

"The plan is to replace the antiquated, mismatched buildings with a new design that will not only be contemporary, but will also provide a unified campus for all of the students," said Steve Umbrell, a district project manager.

Currently, the elementary and middle schools' designs are at about 50 percent, he said. All three American schools are expected to be complete by 2015 with the international school scheduled for 2016.

"SHAPE is going to be very busy with construction over the next couple of years," said Umbrell. "Our biggest challenge is going to be constructing the elementary and middle schools, relocating as many students as possible to the new school while doing demolition and construction on the high school while keeping as many of the existing schools open."

The new schools will also provide students with a new band room, music room, auditorium and other modern educational and common facilities to provide students with more educational opportunities and a better learning environment.

"The bigger, the better the facility, the more flexibility the teacher has, and that has a huge impact to the length and quality of the school day," said DeLuca. "The one thing we can't get more of is time and the enhanced facilities offer teachers, students and parents a bit more flexibility with scheduling and time."

USACE, Just A Click Away!

Army Engineers Utilize Google Earth Around Europe For Project Security

By Evan Duncan

Analysts at the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization, who study IED attacks all over the world, maintain their information in a database that links to intelligence agencies as well as other federal agencies. People involved in attacks can then be cross referenced and flagged.

While the U.S. African Command and U.S. European Command already use Google Earth as a database to display this data, as do many major intelligence agencies, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District currently has no database that can be linked with other intelligence databases for security and data sharing.

But that will soon change with the help of Google Earth.

Tom Rodehaver, the district's computer-aided design (CADD) and geographic information systems (GIS) administrator, along with Maj. Sean Hurst, a U.S. Army intelligence officer, are heading up a project to develop a database that aims at making district project data easily accessible by simply zooming in on a virtual globe.

Rodehaver said he wanted to display these necessary security details along with project data in a visually-appealing and manageable way in a GIS system that could be accessed Corps-wide and could link to other government security systems. Eventually, the district's database will be linked to these existing ones.

"Aside from basic project data, this database will allow users to see who the A/E [design team] is as well as construction contractors, which helps district personnel with security and force protection requirements," Hurst said. "It gives us a visual idea of what we're doing and where we are doing it."

The new database will take more than 3,000 seemingly-endless fields of district project data from the Resident Management System along with its associated latitude and longitude for the project location, and put them into a more user-friendly database.

"We work with a lot of personnel throughout the world in the form of contractors and subcontractors. What if one was under investigation or being sought by the government for a federal crime or, worst-case scenario, a suspected terrorist? We wouldn't know," Hurst said.

The system will not only assist in force protection, it will also provide details on Corps projects in one location.

"Not only do we, the Corps of Engineers, have a variety of personnel that we work with throughout Europe and the Middle East– we also have people who come and go due to overseas tour restrictions," Rodehaver said. "Projects can take anywhere from a year or two to five years or more. If that information is not all in one place and easily accessible, we can lose data."

Once the system is fully operational, project managers and security personnel will be able find Corps projects labeled with location, A/E, contract number, customer, project manager, funding source, status and a photo with a click and drag of the mouse.

At this point the project is still in development, but Rodehaver and Hurst said they are hopeful that it will be available for employees and anyone with a .gov or .mil e-mail address soon.

With AFRICOM and EUCOM already using Google Earth as a database to display security and project data, the Europe District is working on a system that will interact with these databases, as well as with other federal agency security systems. **Images Courtesy of Tom Rodehaver**

DISTRICT PROMOTES HEALTHY LIVING

Like the Army's focus on maintaining physical fitness among its Soldiers, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is ensuring its civilian employees are maintaining healthy lifestyles.

In April, the Europe District implemented the Army Health Promotion Program to encourage employees to participate in healthy fitness activities to improve morale, relieve stress and minimize health risks, said Raelene Hampton, the district equal employment officer and program coordinator.

An aerobics instructor leads district employees and family members through a Zumba class as part of a three-day Health Fair. **Photo by Carol E. Davis**

So far, 52 employees have signed up for the program, which allows civilian employees to be excused from work for three one-hour sessions each week for up to six months, including Heidi Boone, chief of the district's finance section.

"This gives me the chance to keep physically fit, but still do my job," she said. "My days go much better now. I think the exercising helps me get rid of my stress so that I'm more productive at work each day."

Raquel "Q" Blankenhorn, a district contract specialist, said the program gives her time to incorporate elements into her workout she didn't previously have time for.

"I do aerobics in the morning, but I didn't have time to incorporate weight training, which is necessary for improving my overall fitness," she said. "Now I have time for it. I'm very grateful for the program."

To participate in the program, employees must coordinate the terms of their fitness program times with their supervisors. Exercise periods may be combined with either one of the employees' breaks or their lunch periods.

"The program is designed to help employees jumpstart a personal health and fitness plan to motivate employees to exercise and live a healthier lifestyle," Hampton said. "The program is a one-time deal to get people started while they are here and, hopefully, encourage them to continue on."

ADVANCING MINORITIES' INTEREST IN ENGINEERING

In the world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, minority students are just that – a minority in an already depressed national average. But a partnership between government agencies and academia is striving to help diversify the workforce.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District is hosting seven students from three different historically black colleges and universities from June 7 through August 13 as part of the Advancing Minorities' Interest in Engineering program, designed to give the students the opportunity to apply their engineering knowledge in a hands-on environment.

Picked from dozens of applicants, the students include Rikita Bonner, Lore'al Spear and Aaron Williams from Tennessee State University, Joanna Smith and Brandon Randolph from Morgan State University, and Tariq Walker from North Carolina A&T State University.

"I've done well in college so I have the knowledge, but I'm here to get the experience and practical application to make myself well-rounded," said Bonner. "I just want to get on as many projects and sites as I can so I can absorb as much information as possible."

The 10-week program provides the students housing and salary while they work alongside district engineers to gain both professional skills and personal development.

"This is a once in a young lifetime experience," said Darren Walls, a district project manager and assistant AMIE program coordinator.

(Bottom left) Elaine Lawson, program coordinator, Rikita Bonner, Joanna Smith, (back left) Tariq Walker, Lore'al Spear, Brandon Randolph, Annette Johnson, assistant program manager, and Kyle O'Connor. **Photo by Carol E. Davis**

"Unemployment is high right now and participating in this program could help students to get a foot in the door. But at the very least, the experience they receive here will strengthen their resumes."

For Elaine Lawson, a district manpower specialist and AMIE program coordinator, the program is not only an opportunity to help the students learn how to perform in a business environment, it's a very fulfilling experience.

"Coordinating this program is fun for me," she said. "I have the opportunity to help provide a positive impact on the future of not only the industry, but these students' lives."

Organizational Day 2010

Celebrating Europe!

Jolene Hedgecock, a district project manager, and her daughter enjoy a break in the shade during Organizational Day 2010 on July 16. Org Day activities included food, music and events such as a Texas Hold 'em tournament, volleyball, horseshoes, tennis, ping pong and a dunk tank. Photo by Carol E. Davis