



Huntsville Center Bulletin

U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville

That's a wrap...

**Afghan munitions disposal
mission comes to a close** ————— **Page 6**



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Hails & Farewells

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Farewell: Robert Ruch, **Executive Office**; Janice Jamar, **CT**; Plyler McManus, **OE**; Julie Shaddock, John VanDiver, Scott Akin, **CT**; Heidi Connelly, **ISPM**; Joseph Smith, **ED**

On the cover

Chase Hamley, Joint Munition Disposal-Afghanistan project manager in Huntsville Center’s Ordnance and Explosives Directorate International Operations Division snapped this 2013 photo of a large disposal ‘shot’ in Southwest Afghanistan using C4 and MICLIC donor charges.

Commander's thoughts



The Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville, continues to have a lot going on as we enter into the summer season.

I hope you all enjoyed the Engineer Day Awards Ceremony and Organization Day picnic June 10; I know my family and I did. We call it our Organization Day picnic in honor of our activation as an organization even though the actual activation date is in October. It was a joy for me to be able to recognize some of the exceptional employees we have here at the Center and induct Ralph Schuler into the Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees. Congratulations to all the winners.

I also want to thank the Activities Association and volunteers who put a lot of time and effort into planning the picnic activities for the day.

The Center was established as the Huntsville Division in October 1967 to support one mission: the Sentinel ballistic missile defense program. We'll celebrate our 50th anniversary next year. We've come a long way and it's because of you, and employees who came before you, that Huntsville Center has grown into the organization it is today.

To mark the occasion we are developing a 50-year history of the Center. You may be asked for information, documents, recollections,

etc. If you have historically important documents, please ensure they get to Public Affairs.

In June we also celebrated the Army's 241st birthday and Flag Day June 14, and the Corps of Engineers' 241st birthday June 16.

We'll continue the theme of patriotic celebrations with the Fourth of July holiday.

We think of July 4, 1776, as a day that represents the **Declaration of Independence** and the birth of the United States of America as an independent nation, but that's actually the date the Continental Congress approved the final wording of the Declaration of Independence.

You can find interesting information about July 4 and the Declaration of Independence online at: <http://www.constitutionfacts.com/us-declaration-of-independence/fourth-of-july/>.

This month we'll be having a change of command ceremony July 29 at 1:30 p.m. in the Chan Auditorium, on the University of Alabama-Huntsville campus.

Col. John Hurley is coming to us from the Japan Engineer District, where he has been the commander since July 9, 2013. I'll be resuming my duties as your deputy commander.

Since the relinquishment of command ceremony May 13, Lt. Col.



Lt. Col. Burlin Emery

Kelton Pankey has been serving as our deputy commander, and he has done a great job. We'll have a meet the new commander reception July 28. More information will be coming out about that.

I'm sure I don't have to tell you that it's been hotter than usual. Whether you're outside celebrating a special historic date or having fun with family and friends, it's important to keep summer safety in mind. Be sure to stay hydrated, wear sunscreen and act responsibly while conducting summer activities.

Thank you for all the great work you do every day. Blessings on us all.

Take note

- **Col. John S. Hurley assumes command of Huntsville Center at 1:30 p.m., July 29 during a ceremony at the Chan Auditorium, University of Alabama-Huntsville.**
- **Threat Awareness and Reporting Program (TARP)/ Active Shooter training is set for July 13 at 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. in the cafeteria.**



US Army Corps of Engineers

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BULLETIN

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Employee Spotlight

Matthew Urbanic

By Kaitlyn Davis
Public Affairs Office

What animal has four legs but only walks on two and teaches children about the dangers of unexploded ordnances? Hint: there are two answers.

If you guessed Sergeant Woof or Matthew Urbanic, you are correct. Urbanic left his human form behind and adopted a much furrer one at this year's Organizational Day June 10 and again for Team Redstone in the Park June 18.

The contracting officer with Huntsville Center's energy division entertained children at both events by transforming into Sergeant Woof.

Woof is a dog who teaches children about the dangers of unexploded ordnances and the three R's of ordnance safety: recognize, retreat and report.

For children living on military bases, the lessons are valuable because the older the base is, the higher the chances are of finding unexploded ordnances, Urbanic said.

In the office, Urbanic is not only praised for his ability to create a successful workforce team but also to create balloon animals – a talent that came in handy when not entertaining children as Sergeant Woof at this year's Organizational Day.

"I signed up to do it because I knew as a parent, and I knew as a former commander, that making the families, especially the children happy, is a key element of success for one of these Org Days to work well," Urbanic said.

Confined within the hot canine suit and disguised as Sergeant Woof, ironically, Urbanic found freedom,



Matthew Urbanic makes a balloon animal for a child during this year's Organization Day.

he said.

"The first Organizational Day I'd had in easily two decades where I had zero responsibility," he said. "I'm not in charge of anybody; life is great. I realized that I was completely free."

Though trying to keep his identity hidden, Urbanic made it his mission to provide children with entertainment so their parents could enjoy the event, too.

"The kids are really important because when you're a parent, if your kids aren't happy you probably aren't going to be happy, either," he said. Urbanic's own happy attitude aids him in the workforce. Recently, he received a nomination for the Employee of the Year Award.

His positivity helps build strong teams in any office he works in, said Center Chief of Contracting Colleen O'Keefe in a memorandum for Urbanic's nomination.

"He adds that intangible edge that makes everyone around him better through patient, skilled execution and knowledge sharing," O'Keefe said.

Volunteering his time to don the Sergeant Woof costume, for both Organizational Day and Team Redstone in the Park, is just Urbanic's latest

contribution to the Center, said Lt. Col. Burlin Emery, Huntsville Center commander.

"Anytime you're looking for someone to volunteer, he's there," Emery said. "He's volunteered to be a part of the Union Negotiation Team. He's helped out on the change of command."

Despite his many job accomplishments, he has only been out of service and working at the Center for a little over a year.

"He's really making a difference," Emery said. "Urbanic is a good example of someone who successfully transitioned from active duty military to the civilian world."

Serving runs in the family. After 21 years in the Army, Urbanic retired as a lieutenant colonel.

"(I'm) the first officer of our bloodline although every male has been in the service, every single one of us," Urbanic said. "As my grandpa used to tell me, he saw it as a way to reaffirm citizenship."

His grandfather immigrated to the United States in the 1920s from Croatia.

"He worked in the steel mill his entire life; his son (Urbanic's father) worked in the steel mill and then joined the Air Force and went to Korea," Urbanic said.

Urbanic tries to downplay his contributions and success, but he is a valuable asset, Emery said.

"He'll tell you, 'oh I don't want to be nothing; I'm perfectly content being a nobody,' but he's really not," Emery said.

Though Urbanic insists he is nothing special, his actions – whether in human or animal form – certainly prove otherwise.

The **Employee Spotlight** is intended to let Center employees shine for positively impacting the organization through mission achievements. Employees are featured quarterly in the Huntsville Center Bulletin. If you'd like to nominate someone within your office for this recognition, please contact William S. Farrow, Public Affairs Office, at 256-895-1694, or email: william.farrow@usace.army.mil.

The Bulletin asks: *What do you hope to gain from your experience as a Huntsville Center summer hire?*

“ I hope to gain in the knowledge, skills and abilities that will equip me to be a contracting officer.”

Breunna Jones (University of Alabama-Huntsville)
Center Contracting



“ To be honest, just experience working in the government. That’s something not a lot of people my age can say they’ve done. So it’s kind of neat to go back and say ‘oh yeah, I worked for the government for the summer, and I helped close out contracts.’ ”

April Emmanuel (University of Alabama-Birmingham)
Center Contracting

“ Getting selected as a summer intern in contracting on the Preaward Team is exciting. Along this journey, I hope to gain a newfound knowledge of the contracting process, while learning and accomplishing new milestones along the way. ”

Flossie Vaughn (Alabama A&M)
Engineering Directorate



“ Experience in working for the government, as well as working in an engineering environment. So that after I graduate from college, I will be well prepared to apply for a permanent position. I look forward to making connections with and receiving advice from individuals who have succeeded in my field of study. ”

Olivia McCoy (University of Alabama-Huntsville)
Engineering Directorate

Afghan munitions disposal mission wraps up



Courtesy photo

Contracted unexploded ordnance technicians finish capping in a 5-ton demo shot outside of Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

By Julia Bobick
Public Affairs Office

Huntsville Center's Joint Munitions Disposal - Afghanistan (JMD-A) team has wrapped up its mission disposing of more than 5,629 tons of U.S. and coalition forces NATO Condition Code H unserviceable and "do-not-return" munitions, as well as captured enemy munitions and explosive remnants of war (ERW).

"It's been awesome to work on this program," said Chase Hamley, JMD-A project manager in Huntsville Center's Ordnance and Explosives Directorate (OE) International Operations Division, who has been on the program since it began.

"It was a very easy thing to get out of the Army and move into a job that deployed me to support Soldiers. I wouldn't have it any other way."

In support of U.S. Forces – Afghanistan, Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade and 1st Sustainment Command (Theater), the JMD-A team coordinated disposal efforts with the military units leaving country and managed the munitions disposal contract with Sterling Global Operations Inc., headquartered in Lenoir City, Tennessee, which specializes in

demining, ERW clearance and management of ammunition physical security and stockpiles.

Hamley summed up the biggest challenge with one word: logistics. Security and safety were top concerns every step of the way, as there were a lot of moving pieces and a high level of risk.

"Being in multiple locations throughout Afghanistan, having to build the [demolition] shots within the ammunition supply point into shot boxes, then having to transport them out to a demolition area off post, and keeping civilians away from the area when we are setting up and detonating the shots – and the security and coordination that go along with that."

Huntsville Center OE teams were first involved in captured enemy ammunition disposal in Iraq from 2003 to 2006. They transitioned their expertise to coalition munitions clearance and disposal programs destroying more than 400,000 tons of ammunition in Iraq through 2011.

Joint munitions disposal efforts in Afghanistan began in 2012. With demolition completed in April, all that remains are a few administrative and logistical functions that should be closed out by the fall, Hamley said.

Energy team earns sustainability award

By Julia Bobick
Public Affairs Office

Huntsville Center’s Energy Division has earned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ 2016 Good Neighbor Award for its collaboration and partnership with Energy Huntsville, a non-profit dedicated to growing the region’s economy in the energy sector and establishing the city as the “go-to” technology center for solutions to energy programs and projects.

“The team award, part of the Army Corps of Engineers’ national Sustainability Awards Program, recognizes Huntsville Center’s success in sharing experience and technical expertise with the local community in five key segments: local, industry, utilities, government and academia.

“We had a tremendous competition, and it is inspiring to see all of the great work that supports our first USACE Environmental Operating Principle: Foster sustainability as a way of life throughout the organization,” said USACE Environmental Division Chief Karen Baker in a June 12 email announcing the winners. This program “provides the opportunity to mark significant contributions the USACE is making in implementing energy efficiency and sustainable solutions to reduce our impacts to the environment and surrounding communities, and preserve the quality of our natural resources.”

Through the Energy Huntsville forum, Huntsville Center has been able to deliver an important message for local neighbors on long-term energy sustainability and economic growth for businesses by leveraging and implementing products and services that support Executive Order 13693 “Planning for Federal Sustainability in the Next Decade,” according to Paul Robinson, chief of the Energy Division, who was named in the award.

Robinson and former Huntsville Center Commander Col. Robert Ruch actively coordinated with Energy Huntsville on the November 2015 Energy Summit, which featured participants and speakers from across the federal sector – to include Honorable Katherine Hammack, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy & Environment, presenting the “Army Energy Program, Government and Industry State of Energy Markets and Opportunities.” Jeffery Watts, chief of the division’s Energy Planning Branch, who was also named in the award, delivered a presentation on Executive Order 13693 (EO13693) and how Huntsville Center programs build a vision for the future.

Huntsville Center “has been an important member of Energy Huntsville,” said Jay W. Newkirk, Energy Huntsville Initiative’s Board Chairman, in a recommendation letter to the award panel. “The organization’s presence here has been rewarding for our community... This collaborative relationship brings combined solutions to the Corps’ constituents and supports them in satisfying their energy conservation mandates and at the same time supports the private sector energy companies growing in the energy sector.”

One of the Energy Division’s Strategy and Business Management Branch missions is to help other agencies and communities develop similar partnerships to achieve federal sustainability goals detailed in EO13693. As a result of the Center’s partnership with Energy Huntsville, other members from the city of Huntsville, NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center, the U.S. Army Materiel Command, and the U.S. Army Garrison Redstone Arsenal and its tenants are now also proactively sharing lessons learned and strategies for meeting federal sustainability requirements.

Additional 2016 USACE



Courtesy photo

Jeffery Watts, Huntsville Center Energy Division, speaks during an Energy Huntsville meeting in April.

Sustainability Award recipients:

Sustainability Hero - Neil Anderson, Pittsburgh District

Climate Champion - Patrick O’Brien, San Francisco District

Green Dream Team Award – U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center’s Construction Engineering Research Lab (CERL) for their partnership with U.S. Army Garrison Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, on the installation’s sustainability program

Green Innovation Award - Net Zero Planner and CAMPS Tool Integration, a partnership between Fort Worth District and ERDC-CERL

Lean, Clean and Green Awards - USACE Logistics Activity’s Transportation Division Fleet Management and the Washington Aqueduct Sustainability Team, Baltimore District

Building the Future Award - Omaha District for their partnership with the 13th Combat Aviation Brigade on the ASB Hangar at Fort Carson, Colorado.

Huntsville Center is scheduled to receive the award during a virtual awards ceremony hosted by USACE Headquarters this fall.

Sun shines on Redstone Arsenal energy



Photo by Bryan Bacon

David Williams, chief, energy programs integration for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Chip Marin, Huntsville Center Installation Support and Programs Management director; Maj. Gen. Ted Harrison, director of operations, assistant chief of staff for Installation Management Command; Bill Kelly, SunPower vice president; Richard Kidd, deputy assistant secretary of the Army, energy and sustainability; Col. Bill Marks, former Redstone Garrison commander and Michael McGhee, executive director, Army Office of Energy Initiatives symbolically break ground on Redstone Arsenal's solar project June 3.

By Amy Guckeen Tolson Redstone Rocket

The future of readiness and resilience is solar.

Officials symbolically broke ground at the Community Activity Field June 3 on a renewable energy solar project designed to bolster Redstone Arsenal's energy security.

The 10 megawatt solar power system, which will be located on approximately 66 acres off Redstone Road, is expected to be operational by December.

"We have to be prepared," said Richard Kidd, deputy assistant secretary of the Army, energy and sustainability.

"We have to build resilient installations. Energy is the key to all that the Army does. Disruptions in our supply either on the battlefield or here on our installations in the United States undermine our mission capabilities and represent a strategic vulnerability. We know that the bad guys are going to take advantage of this vulnerability. That's why it's so important that the Army must have confidence in our

energy supplies and that we have the security and resiliency we need to perform our mission."

Kidd cited three reasons for the renewable energy project – first and foremost energy security, followed by cost and federal mandates. The April 27, 2011, tornadoes, which left the installation without power for nine days, highlighted vulnerabilities in Redstone's power supply. The impact of such an outage has the potential to not only be felt here in Alabama, but on a global scale as well, as many of the installation's tenants have missions that not only span the globe, but into space as well.

"They cannot be without power. They cannot be left to rely on backup generators. Projects like this get us to the path where we have assured energy security," said former Garrison Commander Col. Bill Marks.

The project, developed by Redstone Arsenal's Directorate of Public Works, the U.S. Army Office of Energy Initiatives and Huntsville Center's Energy Division, is the first power purchase agreement project solicited

through a renewable and alternative energy Multiple Award Task Order Contract (MATOC) awarded by Huntsville Center.

The Army's third large-scale renewable energy project on Alabama installations involves a 27-year Renewable Energy Services Agreement and lease with SunPower, which will manufacture, design, install and operate the system.

Under the power purchase agreement, SunPower will annually deliver approximately 18,000 megawatt hours of electricity to the Army – enough energy to power about 1,650 homes per year.

Once the facility is installed and operating at 100 percent, the installation will purchase the electricity produced at a rate equal to or less than current and projected utility rates, according to Bill Kelly, SunPower's vice president of Commercial Americas.

The solar plant is also being designed as micro-grid ready so it may be connected to a future micro-grid and thereby contribute to the overall energy security of the installation.

OE representatives engage military munitions association

By William S. Farrow
Public Affairs

Representatives from the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville (Huntsville Center) Ordnance and Explosives (OE) and Contracting Directorates spoke to more than 30 members of the National Association of Ordnance Contractors (NAOC) during their mid-year board of director's meeting in Huntsville, Alabama, June 8.

Betina Johnson, OE Military Munitions Design Center chief; Suzanne Wear, OE contracting chief; and Ashley Roeske, OE project manager, provided briefs for the group and fielded questions from NAOC members.

NAOC is the industry trade association representing companies performing munitions response and related services including: site characterization and remediation; engineering and geophysical services; technology development; GIS mapping; laboratory analysis and equipment sales.

Huntsville Center's Military Design Center works in conjunction with local Corps districts to safely eliminate or reduce risks from ordnance, explosives and recovered chemical warfare materiel.

Johnson said it's important for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Huntsville Center to engage with NAOC since the organizations' members collaborate in the development and application of military munitions response technology and execution of cleanup programs.

"NAOC is instrumental in ensuring federal government policy associated with any type of military munitions response is conveyed to its membership and throughout the industry so we can all be on the same page in how we execute our programs," Johnson said.

Johnson said since USACE is a premier organization that supports the use of small businesses and maximizes their opportunities to participate in procurements, NAOC's enhanced membership benefits are instrumental in assisting small and upstart businesses connected to the military munitions response industry.

"NAOC membership not only helps these smaller businesses find work and helps them understand the complexity of the programs, but it also helps USACE reach its goals set for working with small business which in turn strengthens our nation's economic development," she said.

Johnson's overview included an update of current Huntsville Center projects and touched on potential



Photo by William S. Farrow

Betina Johnson, Huntsville Center's Military Munitions Design Center chief, briefs members of the National Association of Ordnance Contractors during their mid-year board of director's meeting.

opportunities, future initiatives and current challenges regarding the Center's military munitions program. She also provided tips to ensure enriched relationships between contractors and the federal government.

Following Johnson, Wear briefed the audience regarding USACE contracting and Army acquisition process, strategy, plans and potential long- and short-term policy changes.

Roeske ended the hour-long session by providing an overview of Redstone Arsenal's installation restoration program and the planning considerations, projected execution schedule and potential contracting mechanisms associated with the project.

Kyra Donnel, NAOC vice president, said the representatives attending the meeting are primarily business managers for companies in the munitions response services, and they all have interest in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' munitions projects and appreciate periodic industry assessments and recommendations by Huntsville Center personnel.

"They (NAOC members) are looking to get information on the good, the bad and the ugly to make improvements, and the (Huntsville Center) briefs certainly helped with that.

However, their primary interest is in procurements as they spend a lot of time and energy on submitting proposals; so there is a lot of attention on timing and value of future projects," Donnel said.

Huntsville Center honors employees, Corps of Engineers, Army at annual “org”

By Debra Valine
Public Affairs Office

Though it was extremely hot – mid-90s – employees of the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville braved the temperatures to attend the annual organization day picnic at Monte Sano State Park June 10.

The annual event serves as a celebration of the Huntsville Center’s origins back in October 1967, the Army’s Birthday – June 14, number 241 this year – and the birthday of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – June 16, also 241.

The day kicks off with an awards ceremony honoring Huntsville Center employees who have been doing an outstanding job for the past year, as well as a retired employee who is inducted into the Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees.

“I would like to have said some words about everyone,” said Col. Robert Ruch, Huntsville Center’s former commander who returned for the day to present the awards and say thank you one last time. “How do you say who is the best in the Center – it’s so hard, we have so many great people here.”

Anyone can nominate a fellow employee for an award. Individual winners received a trophy; team winners received a medallion. This year, the winners are:

- Administrative Support Employee of the Year – Diana Gregory
- Employee of the Year – LaShonda Smith
- Contracting Professional of the Year – Geordelle Charles
- Project Manager of the Year – Tara Clark
- Innovator of the Year – Bob Selfridge
- Resource Management Employee of the Year – Sarajane Rubert
- Engineer of the Year – Brian Spear
- Commander’s Leadership Award – Crystal Bennett Echols
- Commander’s Diversity Award – Valerie Clinkenbeard
- Commander’s Leadership Diversity Award – Gina Elliott
- Project Delivery Team of the Year – Environmental Footprint Reduction, Afghanistan
- Volunteer of the Year – Juan Pace
- Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees – Ralph Schuler

The rest of the day featured food trucks, softball and volleyball games, bingo, corn hole, horseshoes, card games and a variety of activities for children.



Photo by Julia Bobick



' day



Photo by Julia Bobick

Photo by Julia Bobick



Photo by William S. Farrow



Photo by Rusty Torbett



Photo by Rusty Torbett



Photo by Julia Bobick

OEI director visits Huntsville Center



Photo by William S. Farrow

Paul Robinson, left, Huntsville Center Energy Division chief, and Mike McGhee, Army Office of Energy Initiatives executive director, engage with the Huntsville Center Energy Division team during a program overview at the Center May 6.

By William S. Farrow Public Affairs Office

The recently appointed director of the office focused on the Army's renewable energy program sat with U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville directors, program and project managers, information technology specialists and contracting officials for a synopsis of the Center's mission and capabilities during a visit here May 6.

Tapped as OEI executive director in January, Mike McGhee met with the Center's Energy Division team, which works closely with OEI to procure and manage large-scale renewable energy projects bringing energy security to Army installations worldwide.

Huntsville Center's Energy Division recently teamed with OEI and other agencies to award a large-scale solar array project for Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.

According to Paul Robinson, Huntsville Center Energy Division chief, McGhee's visit allowed his team to provide more in-depth looks into all Energy Division programs as well as meet with others to facilitate a better understanding of the Center's mission.

"We allotted time for Energy Division staff to meet with Mike McGhee, but we also thought it would be an excellent opportunity for him to learn holistically about the Center's operations," Robinson said.

Throughout the day, McGhee met with leadership from

the Center's Installation Support and Programs Management (ISPM), Engineering Directorate (ED), and Contracting Directorate (CT), as well as representatives from the Center's Office of Counsel and Resource Management.

From his first day on the job at OEI, McGhee said it was apparent that the relationship between OEI and Huntsville Center is extremely important to achieving mandates identified in Congress' 2007 National Defense Authorization Act for the Army to consume 25 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2025.

"This is a fantastic group of people that are service oriented and have the Army's interest at heart, and coming here and meeting all the folks is only strengthening my understanding of how valuable Huntsville Center is to us," McGhee said.

Although the scope of OEI is large-scale renewable energy, McGhee said it's likely his office and Huntsville Center will expand work on future energy security projects.

"With energy security you need renewable energy as a generating asset but you also need to couple that with a storage component and a microgrid component," McGhee said.

"What we're talking with the folks at Huntsville Center about today is how we can fulfill that larger expansion into complete energy security so there is definitely more opportunity with Huntsville Center and our office to work together on projects into the future," McGhee said.

Semonite takes command of USACE

WASHINGTON—The 53rd Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, retired from military service at an Armed Forces Full Honors Change of Command and Retirement Ceremony May 19 at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Virginia.

Bostick relinquished command to Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite during the change of command and retirement ceremony.

Semonite is the 54th Chief of Engineers and Commanding General, of USACE. The chief of engineers is the principal adviser to the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) on civil and military engineering, geospatial sciences, water resources, real property and environmental sciences. He serves as the senior military officer overseeing most of the nation's civil works infrastructure and military construction.

As the USACE commanding general, he leads more than 32,000 civilian employees and 700 military personnel who provide project management, construction support and engineering expertise in more than 110 countries.

Previous to this assignment, Semonite established the Army Talent Management Task Force and served as its first director. In this role, he was responsible for reforming the way the Army acquires, develops, employs, and retains a talented workforce.

Prior to these duties, Semonite was the commanding general for Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, responsible for the building of the Afghan army and police through management of a \$13 billion budget to support a 352,000 individual force.

During his tenure, the mission focused on sustainment of that force and training, advising and assisting the Security Ministries toward establishing



Photo by Leanne Bledsoe

Command Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Antonio Jones and Connie Semonite, spouse of Todd Semonite, pin a third star to Semonite's uniform promoting him to Lieutenant General and 53rd Chief of Engineers May 19.

an enduring culture of fiscal discipline, transparency and accountability, while continuing to fight and win against a significant enemy threat.

Previous to that command, Semonite served as the deputy chief of engineers and the deputy commanding general of USACE. Semonite has also served as commanding general, South Atlantic Division.

Prior to assuming Command of the South Atlantic Division, Semonite was the commander of the USACE's North Atlantic Division in New York City serving the states from Virginia to Maine as well as the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command Areas of Responsibility.

He also served as commanding general, Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood and as assistant commandant, U.S. Army Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Additionally, he served in a wide variety of command and staff positions including: director, Office of the Chief of Engineers, Headquarters, Department of the Army at the Pentagon; deputy commander, Task

Force Restore Iraqi Electricity and executive officer to the commanding general, U.S. Army Europe (USAEUR) and 7th Army.

Semonite also served as commander of the 130th Engineer Brigade and the V Corps engineer, Hanau, Germany; chief of Military Operations and Topography and chief of International Operations, both with USAEUR; battalion commander, 23rd Engineer Battalion, 1st Armored Division, Friedberg, Germany (with a one-year deployment to Bosnia); construction and design supervisor, 416th Engineer Command, Chicago, Illinois; staff officer for logistics (S4), 937th Engineer Group and staff officer for Operations (S3) and executive officer, 1st Engineer Battalion, both at Fort Riley, Kansas; and operations officer, USACE Office, Fort Drum, NY.

Semonite is a native of Bellows Falls, Vermont is a registered professional engineer in Virginia and Vermont.

He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy, West Point in New York and was commissioned into the USACE in 1979.

IO&T program equips Fort Hood hospital

By Amy Newcomb
Public Affairs Office

The April 3 opening of the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center (CRDAMC) at Fort Hood, Texas signaled the completion of a Huntsville Center project to equip and transition staff to the new facility.

Huntsville Center's Initial Outfitting and Transition program, which has played a major role in equipping the new hospital over the last four years, awarded the \$90 million Fort Hood IO&T services and equipment procurement contract to Military Healthcare Outfitting and Transition (MilHOT) in 2012.

Huntsville Center and MilHOT have continuously worked together with the U.S. Army Health Facility Planning Agency and CRDAMC leadership to provide complete turn-key project support for the equipping and transitioning of staff and patients into the new hospital, said Wes Johnson, IO&T program manager.

"This support included 'day in the life' training exercises for the hospital medical staff, concept of operations development, move guide plans, and procurement, delivery, and installation of over 30,000 new items to support patient care in the new facility," Johnson said.

Two full-scale "day in the life" rehearsals in February and March allowed staff to practice health-care delivery scenarios, which became very useful on day one when the first baby was born within one hour of opening the new hospital.

Johnson received positive feedback from CRDAMC personnel after the move was complete. One hospital staffer who has made four hospital moves during her career, said both the movers and the Information Technology crew were the most



Photo by Kelby Wingert

Paramedics and emergency department staff rush in a volunteer patient for a simulated trauma case during the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center "Day in the Life" event preparing the staff for a move to the new hospital facility in April. Huntsville Center's IO&T program awarded a \$490 million services and equipment contract in 2012 to to equip and transition staff to the new hospital.

professional she had experienced.

"This is a testament to the work put in by Gladston Hall and Brian Bezilla who both served as Huntsville Center project managers (PMs) for this effort," Johnson said.

"The daily communication that our PMs and contracting team had with MilHOT and the HFPA team onsite was tremendous throughout the project. The value of that communication became evident when critical equipment and outfitting issues were quickly resolved during the last few weeks leading up to Sunday's hospital opening."

Some of the new equipment outfitted at the hospital was ophthalmology equipment, hospital beds, stretchers, exam tables, cystoscopes, operating microscopes, a Radiology Imaging System, endoscopes and furniture.

"Our mission is to provide quality, safe, patient-centered care every day," said Col. Mark Thompson, hospital commander. "We do great work at the current facility, but the new one gives us a great opportunity to work in an updated environment that only stands to benefit the Fort Hood Soldiers, Family members and retirees we serve."

Roughly 60 percent larger than the previous hospital, the new facility is almost 1 million square feet and encompasses six floors.

Several departments gained significant space including the Emergency Department, which expanded from 26 patient beds to 58 patient beds with an additional six beds available for triage.

Editor's Note: Some information in this report was taken from an article written by Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs.

Next phase of environmental remediation project underway on Redstone Arsenal

By Debra Valine
Public Affairs Office

Work is underway on Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, to determine the nature and extent of contamination associated with the disposal and suspected burial of World War II-era munitions and explosives of concern (MEC), including chemical warfare materiel (CWM). This includes, but is not limited to, bombs, mortars and projectiles that may have been filled with chemical and industrial agents.

“The first site being investigated is within Marshall Space Flight Center’s (MSFC) West Test Stand Area and is designated as MSFC-003-R-01,” said Ashley Roeske, the project manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville’s Chemical Warfare Design Center.

Huntsville Center is providing support to the Directorate of Public Work’s Environmental Management Division’s Installation Restoration Program.

The test area is the first of 17 Arsenal sites to be addressed in the 20-to-30 year, \$500+ million cleanup program. The goal is to remove the sources of contamination from the environment and reduce the risk of future exposure.

Employees have worked safely in the area for decades. The buried material is not considered a health hazard because of land use controls that prevent contact by workers.

The intrusive investigation began June 5 and is taking place through late July. Intrusive fieldwork will be conducted 7 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. Sunday-Thursday to minimize the impact to surrounding MSFC operations. The Army contracted and is using highly qualified teams to safely remove



Photo by Debra Valine

Mark Atkins, left, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Safety Office, and John (Jay) Lewis, Ordnance and Explosives Safety Specialist with Huntsville Center, walk through the decontamination tent set up to support an environmental remediation project at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, June 6.

the minimum amount of MEC and CWM necessary in order to adequately characterize the site, according to Roeske.

Through records, historical research, sampling and previous cleanup efforts, the Army has put together a detailed picture of what was potentially buried in approximately 6 miles of trenches at Redstone Arsenal after World War II. They include U.S. mortars and projectiles as well as ordnance brought from Great Britain, Germany and Japan for disposal.

Detailed below-the-ground assessments have already been done by Army and Corps of Engineers-contracted experts using ground penetrating radar and other non-intrusive methods to locate and characterize buried materiel.

Flags have been placed to mark locations for later excavation and examination. A mobile command post has been set up on Dodd Road for the crews to stage daily operations and supplies.

It is extremely unlikely the teams will come into contact with an item that is unacceptable to move. In 20 years of Army experience at projects like this across the country, an onsite detonation of a liquid-filled item has rarely been required. Exclusion zones or perimeters have been established to protect the public from an unintentional detonation or release of a chemical agent. Some items once contained liquid chemical agents, but all are expected to have been emptied and defused before burial. The Army is preparing for any contingency, with personnel decontamination stations staged and ready.

Results of this investigation will be used to develop a final Recommended Action Plan for subsequent remediation efforts that are currently scheduled to begin in 2020.

Editor’s note: Some information taken from an article that appeared in the Redstone Rocket May 4, 2016.

Volunteers talk vocations during Mill Creek Career Day

By Amy Newcomb
Public Affairs Office

Volunteers from Huntsville Center discussed their careers with students at Mill Creek Elementary School April 8.

The school's career day is an annual event that is required under the career development domain of the American School Counselor Association standards.

"We have standards that say kids should know about different careers, the education needed for those careers and the salary range of those careers," said Raley Fountain, Mill Creek Elementary counselor. "We want them to be able to see what they are working towards and the purpose of why they attend school."

Jennifer McDowell, Huntsville Center interior designer, hoped her presentation helped students better understand what they will need to prepare themselves once they reach the high school and collegiate levels.

"As early as 9th grade, today's students are being required to pick a direction of study with the intent that their high school courses will better prepare them for their college degree programs," McDowell said. "This puts so much pressure on our young people, who in many circumstances don't even know half of the employment opportunities that exist."

McDowell said sharing vocational knowledge with students is invaluable for organizations such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers because it allows Corps personnel to introduce students to potential career opportunities. The event was fortunate to have a big turnout with a wide variety of volunteers willing to share their experiences, Fountain said.

"It's really important for students to see a real life example of something they think they may be interested in," she said.

"I think it's really important for them to hear about a job and what type of education they will need from someone who is actually doing it."

To find out what careers students are interested in, Fountain gives them a survey to get feedback on what careers they are most interested in, she said. One of those careers was engineering.

Jerry Henley, a Huntsville Center electrical engineer, said he volunteers because throughout his education and career, others took their time to influence and encourage him.

"I feel a similar responsibility to encourage those who are facing similar choices for their education and chosen career field," he said. "I particularly like to encourage those who are considering careers in science, technology, engineering and math."



Photo by Amy Newcomb

Jennifer McDowell, an interior designer with Huntsville Center's Furnishings Program, discusses the differences between interior designers and interior decorators with fourth graders during Mill Creek Elementary School's career day April 8.

During his presentation, Henley not only discussed the engineering career field, but he also showed students several tools he uses to fulfill his duties as an electrical engineer, such as an infrared thermometer.

"This infrared thermometer will read the temperature of anything you point it at, and I use it because a lot of times we want to know what the temperature is of something that is operating like a motor or an air conditioner," he said.

Henley explained that if a motor or air conditioner were running too hot it could be about to fail and may need to be replaced.

To give the students an example, he pointed the laser at the floor, which read the floor's temperature at 70.2 degrees Fahrenheit.

Henley said he hoped that showing examples of what he does each day helps students appreciate the importance of choosing their career field wisely, and as an engineer, he hoped he conveyed enthusiasm for his STEM career.

"Students should see that success in these careers is directly related to the school subjects they are studying now, and that these careers can be both rewarding and fulfilling," Henley said.

Training sessions SHARPen employees awareness of sexual harassment, assault

By Julia Bobick
Public Affairs Office

Huntsville Center wrapped up mandatory Sexual Harassment Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) training the last week of April. A final presentation, of seven presentations offered, by Victor Roberts, the Center's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, was April 29.

The annual training on this serious and sensitive topic helps ensure every employee knows the potential signs and understands his or her role in ensuring the Center remains a workplace free of sexual harassment and sexual assault, according to Stephanie Caldwell, Huntsville Center's Equal Employment Opportunity specialist, who opened each of the seven training sessions.

"For management I always say, 'Do

the right thing' – not because someone is watching, but because it's the right thing to do," Roberts said. He added that he tells employees to "take responsibility for the part that you have played in whatever the situation is."

He said the final thing is trust the process.

"The processes are in place for a reason, and they actually work. They may take some time, but they work," Roberts said. "Trust the process. Trust the people you work with to do the right thing in your best interest. I can't stress that enough."

The SHARP program is a peer-driven program, according to Roberts, who serves as the SARC for both Huntsville Center and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' South Atlantic Division out of the division headquarters in Atlanta.

He said he is available 24/7 to

employees calling his helpline: (404) 803-7041.

"This is your program, that's why we need you to be a part of it. If you become aware of something – whether you are a supervisor or leader, or even a fellow employee, you become duty bound to put it in the hands of someone who can do something about it."

It's equally important to support individuals when they come forward, Roberts added.

He said if employees don't take care of each other, then an organization can never truly eliminate issues of sexual harassment and assault in the workplace.

"Your role is so important. This is your organization – take control of it. Each of you should feel responsible for solving the problem."



Photo by William S. Farrow

Well written

Gary Harper, Huntsville Center Engineering Directorate, receives congratulations from Lt. Col. Berlin Emery, Huntsville Center commander, and Angela Morton, Center Equal Employee Opportunity chief, for placing first in the Team Redstone Asian American/Pacific Islander essay contest.

Ruch looks back on 30 year career

By William S. Farrow
Public Affairs Office

In three decades of Army service, Bob Ruch has served with four engineer battalions and a division, training Soldiers at the Army's premiere training center, was staff officer for NATO, and commanded two U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Districts (Philadelphia and Omaha).

Most recently he has commanded the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville.

He's deployed to combat zones in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan, attended the Army War College and Command and Staff College and the Sapper Leader Course.

Not a bad career for a man who never thought he'd never wear an Army uniform. He retired May 13 after 30 years of military service.

As a student at Shippensburg University studying geo-environmental science, Ruch recalls signing up for a Reserve Officer Training Corps' military science course just to pad his GPA. The next semester he was taking another military science course and showing an interest in ROTC. As he asked the instructors about ROTC, they explained the benefits of ROTC and explained that if he were to continue, he would get a uniform. "I asked if we had to wear it," Ruch said, adding that when they said "yes" he immediately dropped the course.

However, Ruch came from a large Catholic family—he has eight siblings—in the Philadelphia suburbs. His dad was in sales, his mom worked at a local business. Although his parents made sure all their children went to college, they expected the kids to help pay their way. Ruch knew an ROTC scholarship would certainly help.

"Once I realized ROTC would pay for school—and I was running out of money fast—I realized it was what I needed to do," Ruch said.



Photo by William S. Farrow

For nearly four years Col. Robert Ruch commanded Huntsville Center, and in those years Ruch said he believes his legacy has been explaining Huntsville Center's capabilities to other USACE districts and divisions.

Ruch went the ROTC route at Shippensburg, knowing he would owe the Army several years of service after graduation. He said he never thought he would give the Army more than four years, but when he went home to his parents for holidays, some of his older neighbors who had served in the military heard Ruch was in ROTC and they began to influence his mindset.

"These were old World War II and Korea vets and they recognized the opportunity the military provided and they would say, 'It's a good career Bob, do 20, you won't regret it.' I guess in a way those old guys influenced me to make a career out of it," Ruch said.

Ruch was a distinguished military graduate from Shippensburg in 1986 and began his military career with the 7th Engineer Battalion, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), at Fort Polk, Louisiana, as a platoon leader and later as a company executive officer. His next assignment was as company commander with the 2nd Engineer Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division at Camp Castle, Republic of Korea. After his assignment in Korea, Ruch took a special duty assignment as the live-fire engineer trainer at the

National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. According to Ruch, teaching Soldiers doctrine-based live-fire combat maneuvers and operations might have been the most satisfying assignment in the Army.

"The Soldiers I helped train at NTC were the Soldiers who went on to push back Saddam Hussein in Gulf War I," Ruch said. "Great to know I had a direct effect on their way of fighting a war. Doctrine-based training."

As Ruch climbed the ranks, he began taking on more staff-level positions and soon got his first taste of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as an operations officer at the Pittsburgh District "learning about rivers and dams and the important role USACE plays in reducing disaster risks and energizing the nation's economy," he said. After his district assignment, Ruch was back to the regular Army serving as the S3 (operations) of the 1st Engineer Battalion, and then of the 937th Engineer Group, Fort Riley, Kansas. After Kansas, Ruch's next assignment was serving at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Belgium, where he was the senior staff officer for NATO Infrastructure in Crisis Response Operations dealing with construction in Afghanistan and in the Balkans.

"Neat tour," Ruch recalls. "As a crisis action officer I was seeing over jointly funded projects in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. We scoped projects and pitched them to the NATO infrastructure committee, that's where I learned a lot about consensus." After 9-11 and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Ruch began overseeing that part of the world working to improve NATO Headquarters in Kabul.

"We did a lot of good things like improve force protection at the

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compound and resourcing a neglected Kabul Airport,” Ruch said.

After NATO, Ruch came back to the states to take command of the Philadelphia District in 2004 where he oversaw operations managing the water resources of the Delaware River basin while providing construction oversight for Army and Air Force projects within the district’s geographical area of operations.

“It was a great assignment because of the scope of what we did there, but it was also a great assignment because I was home and close to family,” he said. Ruch was at the helm of Philadelphia District for a short time before the Army required his combat services and he was off to Fort Hood, Texas, as the division engineer for the 1st Cavalry Division. As the division engineer, he deployed to Iraq and served as the deputy of the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team under the State Department.

“It was a tough deployment but I was very proud of the work we did in Iraq in helping improve their infrastructure,” Ruch said.

After his assignment with the 1st Cavalry Division, Ruch was back in Pennsylvania—only this time to Carlisle Barracks as an Army War College student.

Ruch said he never was too studious.

He was a B and C student through his primary school years, admittedly more focused on friends and following his beloved Eagles, Flyers, 76ers and Phillies.

“I wasn’t a good student, but I could have been better had I been more focused. But as I grew older I learned how to become a better student and my grades improved in high school and college and by the time I was in the Army, I had become a much better student,” Ruch said.

The ability to improve his academic skills led Ruch to a master’s degree in engineering management from St.



Courtesy photo

Ruch began his military career with the 7th Engineer Battalion, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized), at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Martin’s College and a master’s degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College.

After graduating from War College, Ruch took command at USACE’s Omaha District in Nebraska. It was in command at Omaha that Ruch made decisions that were some of the most significant accomplishments of his career as he led efforts to alleviate the damage of the 2011 Missouri River Flood.

Triggered by record snowfall in the Rocky Mountains and with near-record spring rainfall in central and eastern Montana, six major dams along the Missouri River released record amounts of water to prevent overflow which led to floods threatening several towns and cities along the river.

“It was as challenging as any day in combat,” said Ruch. “We had (thousands of) people’s lives and livelihoods in our hands. My life became the flood. But all the (federal and state) agencies came together to accomplish the mission, and we worked very hard to reduce the damage. Our work saved two state capitals and the city of Hamburg, Iowa. I was very proud of what we accomplished.”

From Omaha, Ruch moved on to command Huntsville Center.

Nearly four years have passed since Col. Robert Ruch assumed command of Huntsville Center, and in those years Ruch said he believes his legacy has been explaining Huntsville Center’s

capabilities to other USACE districts and divisions.

From briefing district commanders to teaching the pre-command course, Ruch spent a lot of time telling the Huntsville Center story and familiarizing people with the Center’s mission and how it has evolved. “Technical expertise with project expertise built around it,” was his elevator pitch.

However, Ruch admits he wasn’t too familiar with the Huntsville Center mission when he first arrived. Several weeks passed after he assumed command here before he said the light bulb came on.

“I began turning 180 degrees and focusing on an ‘enterprise vision’ to see where the value lies in what the Center does,” he recalls.

Boyce Ross, director of Huntsville Center Engineering Directorate, said Ruch’s enthusiasm for the Center’s mission has improved how the Center works with others in the Corps of Engineers.

“He’s been a big enabler in the arena of helping us work with other districts and emphasizing the importance of doing so,” Ross said. “He helped us become recognized more as a force multiplier among other Corps districts.”

Ruch said there is a certain pride in knowing that during his command here he had a part in helping the sun-setting of the chemical weapons demilitarization program and the Iraq and Afghanistan munitions disposal projects.

He also said he takes tremendous pride in knowing he commanded an organization that improves U.S. military installations around the world.

“We make installations better and enhance the quality of life for the Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines and their families as well as civilian employees supporting the missions at installations. You can’t drive on an installation anywhere without seeing some project that Huntsville Center had a part of,” Ruch said.

Hatch Act guides feds political activities

By Clay Weisenberger
Office of Counsel

Another four years has passed, and once again the next Presidential election is just around the corner.

National conventions will be held in late July, followed by debates, and finally we go to the polls to vote on Nov. 8.

The Hatch Act, passed by Congress in 1939, limits the partisan political activities of federal employees. All civilian employees in the executive branch of the federal government, except the President and the Vice President, are covered by the provisions of the Hatch Act.

As the races heat up this fall, keep in mind the following checklist of permitted and prohibited activities when engaging in political activities:

Federal employees:

May be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections.

May register and vote as they choose.

May assist in voter registration drives.

May express opinions about candidates and issues.

May contribute money to political organizations.

May attend political fundraising functions.

May attend and be active at political rallies and meetings.

May join and be an active member of a political party or club.

May sign nominating petitions.

May campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, municipal ordinances.

May campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections

May make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections.

May distribute campaign literature in partisan elections.

May hold office in political clubs or parties including serving as a delegate to a convention.

Federal employees:

May not use their official authority or influence to interfere with an election.

May not solicit or accept or receive political contributions unless both

individuals are members of the same federal labor organization or employee organization and the one solicited is not a subordinate employee.

May not knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who has business before the agency.

May not engage in political activity while on duty (includes use of government computer/email).

May not engage in political activity in any government office.

May not engage in political activity while wearing an official uniform.

May not engage in political activity while using a government vehicle.

May not be candidates for public office in partisan elections.

May not wear political buttons on duty.

NOTE: The Office of Counsel provides guidance on Hatch Act implications for the use of social media by federal employees. <https://osc.gov/News/pr15-23.pdf>

If you have a question, email clay.weisenberger@usace.army.mil.

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