



**US Army Corps
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Kosovo Adds to Geo-Tech's Worldwide Deployment Resume

By Sarah H. Cox, Honolulu District Public Affairs

(HONOLULU – NR-10-07) Several years ago as part of the Joint POW/MIA

Accounting Command, he deployed to Vietnam to assist in bringing home the remains of fallen American Vietnam War Soldiers. In 2005 he deployed to Banda Aceh, Indonesia to assess infrastructure damage after the devastating tsunami killed an estimated 220,000 people. In February 2006 he deployed to Leyte, Philippines as part of a Forward Engineering Support Team (FEST) after a massive landslide swept away Guinsaigon village, killing an estimated 1,800 people. One month later he joined an emergency Preliminary Damage Assessment team in providing immediate geological reconnaissance after the earthen Kaloko Dam breached causing the death of seven people on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.

And now - after nearly 30 years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers providing his expertise worldwide - Honolulu District's Geotechnical Engineer Ray Kong is living and working for the Corps at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.

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2-2-2 KONG KOSOVO

“I hope to make an impact by my example, words and program implementation, however small the impact may be," Kong said. "I've had opportunities upon opportunities to hit even higher goals.... Who says you can't experience new things when, like myself, you are in the later years of your career.”

Kong says one of his higher goals has been to become the best engineer he can be.

"This will really help my engineering judgment," Kong said. He strongly believes that improved engineering judgment can be gained by getting into different situations that require thinking outside of the box.

Kong, who has never served on active-duty but has deployed all around the world after typhoons, hurricanes and earthquakes, says being able to have this on-the-ground experience with Soldiers has been a real eye-opener and given him a first-hand understanding of the operations side of engineering and a keener insight into the “whole picture.”

It has also given the opportunity to put his life into proper perspective and given him a greater appreciation for America and its blessings.

“The Soldiers are here to provide freedom for the Kosovars, how fortunate we are in the U.S. with our affluence and freedom. I essentially wanted to experience everything and at the same time hope I can give back as much as I gain,” Kong said.

Kong says aside from the cold weather and the rapid pace of work, his job in Kosovo is not too much different from his Honolulu District job.

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3-3-3 KONG KOSOVO

“It surprisingly isn’t much different from my regular job, only answers are required more quickly,” Kong said. “Sometimes my work requires long hours to complete because everything here is required to be done quickly.”

Kong left Honolulu in December for the four-month deployment to serve as Deputy Director for the Directorate of Public Works (DPW) for the Area Support Team. After two months he was promoted to Director for DPW. He helps oversee the work of contractor Kellogg, Brown and Root Services, Inc. (KBRS). KBRS provides most of the infrastructure and utility services on Camp Bondsteel, Camp Monteith and other remote sites in Kosovo.

“I enjoy helping to run the base more efficiently so that our Soldiers and others can concentrate on doing their jobs better,” Kong said.

Overseeing the buildings, electricity, water, heating, air conditioning and roads for Camp Bondsteel and its 2,000-plus U.S. Soldiers is no easy task, but gives Kong a great sense of accomplishment.

Kong's supervisor, Erick Kozuma, Chief, Technical Support Branch, says Kong continues to help the Schofield Barracks Resident Office resolve current issues with paving requirements for the Corps Drum Road Phase I project in Oahu.

"Even though he has been working long days and weekends (in Kosovo), when we do have issues, he has been providing guidance via email," Kozuma said. "Since I've worked with him, he rarely says no to any request."

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4-4-4 KONG KOSOVO

Camp Bondsteel was established in 1999 following NATO Operation *Allied Force* in which Serbian troops were forced out of Kosovo and replaced by international peacekeepers to ensure refugees could return to their homes. The camp grew from a farming area to a 900-acre camp in order to support the NATO-led peacekeeping mission.

The military and KBRS have worked quickly to improve service members' quality of life by building wooden "South East Asia-style" huts to replace the tents, several dining facilities, two chapels, a 24-hour fitness center, a library, plus American pizza and hamburger restaurants.

Kong plans to return to Honolulu in April to his wife and three children to resume his work as a geotechnical engineer in the Technical Support Branch.

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