



**US Army Corps  
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## **Civilian Details Deployment with the Corps**

**By Lacey Justinger, Honolulu District Public Affairs**

(FORT SHAFTER, HI NR 07-10) Steve Stello spent May through December 2009 in Kabul, Afghanistan, working as a project engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

“I miss the sense of accomplishment and adventure to get out and see the work; it’s more intense than you’ll find in Hawaii,” Stello said. “There is no experience here that is like it at all.”

Due to his job in construction, Stello often left the compound and traveled throughout the country with a couple of host-nation guards in a pair of trucks, visiting work sites to ensure the projects are built according to code and design.

“The first impression of Afghanistan is intimidating,” said Stello. “New people are wide-eyed especially since you’re covered in Kevlar on the drive to the compound. But after the first week, it is completely different, you get used to it.”

Stello worked as a quality assurance inspector and oversaw contracted companies mainly from Afghanistan but also from Turkey, Korea and Pakistan.

“Security is the main focus, so if it wasn’t mission essential you didn’t risk leaving the compound,” said Stello. “Most of Kabul is anti-Taliban and people are just happy to have jobs, make a good living and care for their families.”

Stello added that the security guards were often highly-educated locals who knew English and were happy to be working with the Army and the Corps.

“There is a whole lot of work to be done, but everyone is so focused that it is pretty efficient,” he said. “Sometimes it feels like there is a magnifying glass on the work so you have to be motivated to consistently get the job done.”

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## **Deployment 2-2-2**

Although some people do have trouble adjusting to the living conditions with roommates or the stress of working long days without time off, most people do a good job as long as they don't let the little things get to them.

“In this situation, you form good relationships,” Stello said. “Having good people around you helps you deal with it all. It is six months of high intensity and long hours on edge. Somehow you get used to working seven days a week and learn to take advantage of the half day off, once a week.”

To alleviate deployment stress, Stello said people often join volleyball or basketball teams, work out in the gym, play pool, watch movies or visit the bazaar when cleared to do so.

To access information about USACE deployment opportunities in Iraq and Afghanistan visit <http://cpolwapp.belvoir.army.mil/coe-gwot/> or choose COE GWOT from the special programs options at <https://cpolwapp.belvoir.army.mil/public/vabSelfNom/index.jsp>. The Honolulu District will provide family and deployment support to any federal employee in Hawaii who deploys in support of an USACE Overseas Contingency Operations mission.

“I did what I set out to do and learned a lot of valuable stuff about the Corps and what they do overseas,” Stello said.

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### **Cutlines:**

Afghanistangroup: Steve Stello (center row, third from left) and Tim Inouye (back row left), two U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees from the Honolulu District, trained at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Deployment Center in Virginia before departing on six-month Overseas Contingency Operations deployments to Afghanistan.