



## District welcomes new commander

*By Curt Biberdorf  
Public Affairs Office*

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District welcomed a new leader during a change of command ceremony at the headquarters building July 2.

Col. Christopher Lestochi became the district's 26th commander, replacing Col. Reinhard Koenig, who had served in that role since June 23, 2009.

Lestochi moved to Alaska from the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa., where he completed a master's degree in strategic studies.

Previously, he served as chief of construction and executive officer of the engineer division at the U.S. Central Command Headquarters on MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Koenig's next assignment is executive officer to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works in Washington, D.C.

It's been 11 years since Lestochi left Alaska after serving as the district's deputy chief of the Construction Division from 1998-2001, and he is pleased to be back.

"This assignment is a realization of a dream that I had to return to Alaska and to again serve with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers," Lestochi said.

Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, Pacific Ocean Division commander and the ceremony's presiding officer, praised the Army's selection of Lestochi and said he brings the necessary experience, values and leadership for the position.

"It's an honor to welcome you back to Alaska, back to the Pacific Ocean family," Stevens said. "You join a hard-working and winning team that is bent on success, and I have no doubt that you will continue to take this district to greater heights."

Stevens summarized some of the district's accomplishments the past three years, including nearly \$1 billion worth of military construction that supported U.S. military power in the Asian-Pacific region and a multimillion dollar humanitarian assistance program in Asia.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

**Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Pacific Ocean Division commander, passes the unit guidon to Col. Christopher Lestochi, incoming Alaska District commander, during a change of command ceremony in front of the headquarters building July 2.**

He said these achievements are possible because of a quality work force, led most recently by Koenig.

"Rhino has handled the pressures of command absolutely magnificently," Stevens said. "He leaves behind a legacy of

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## Two engineers find new jobs at Far East District

*By Curt Biberdorf  
Public Affairs Office*

Job announcements posted on the intranet and recruitment visits at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District aimed at beefing up staffing for billion-dollar military construction programs in Japan and Far East districts are leading to results.

Nearly two months after Corps senior leaders from Japan and South Korea visited Anchorage and Fairbanks

to discuss the virtues of working and living in those districts, the first two employees from Alaska are on their way to Korea.

George Kalli, civil engineer in the Civil Works Branch, accepted a position July 3 as a civil engineer in Programs and Project Management, and Tu Nguyen, geotechnical engineer in the Geotechnical and Engineering Services Branch, was hired as a supervisory civil engineer for the Geotechnical Section July 25.

Taking positions in these districts helps Alaska reshape itself under Operation Crossroads, the district's seven-year plan to meet the needs of an evolving mission and declining workload, while at the same time bringing much needed help to Japan and Korea.

As bachelors with few responsibilities outside of work, the decision to move was easier for Kalli and Nguyen. They were drawn to Korea because they

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# Commander

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service, dedication and achievement that few others can equal.”

During his remarks, Koenig recalled some of the many missions, programs and projects during his time in command.

He said the entire team, including industry partners, created a great organization that will continue into the future.

“I will take away with me great pride in having watched this occur, and miraculous things happened all around me every day,” Koenig said.

Even with the district’s achievements, Koenig assured Lestochi that he left him “plenty of opportunities” and that Lestochi is going to lead the district to new levels of success.

Some of those opportunities are working with partners in industry and government on climate change adaptation, an Arctic deep-draft port, the Port of Anchorage and the regulatory process for more than 10 major resource development projects.

Alaska is also in the heart of the nation’s new defense strategy focused on the Asian-Pacific region.

Furthermore, the United States has yet to realize the challenges and opportunities it faces in the Arctic, and to recognize that with Alaska, this country is part of the Arctic, Koenig said.

Looking back more than 70 years ago, the nation understood the importance of building the Alaska Highway to connect

the territory by land to the Lower 48.

“In many respects, it began the district’s long and continuing effort to build and preserve Alaska’s future in support of our nation’s priorities,” Lestochi said.

He is confident in the commitment of the work force, in partnership with industry and the community, to make a difference in Alaska and the nation even in difficult times, just like those engineers who built the Alaska Highway.

“I see this command as a tremendous responsibility, but more importantly as a privilege, an opportunity to continue to serve,” Lestochi said. “I will give my all to lead this team and assist you in the tough challenges that lie ahead.”



## Generally briefed

Col. Christopher Lestochi, district commander, is thanked by Brig. Gen. Matthew Dzialo, director of Logistics and Engineering, North American Aerospace Defense Command Headquarters and U.S. Northern Command at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., after receiving a command briefing at district headquarters July 17. Lestochi updated him on Missile Defense Agency projects at Clear Air Force Station and Fort Greely. Dzialo discussed the challenges for USNORTHCOM if the military is required to assist civil authorities in the Arctic and expressed interest in the district’s Arctic Deep Draft Port study. Both staffs updated contact information to facilitate preparations for future emergency management exercises. (Photo by Curt Biberdorf)

## GOLD NUGGETS

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### Deputy Commander

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### Director of Programs and Project Management

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# Engineers

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could live in Seoul instead of on a military installation, which is required in Japan.

"I want to live overseas and experience life there and not just live on an American base," Kalli said. "I want to live in Seoul in the center of it all. They found me a job where I could work in the city."

"I want to experience the culture," Nguyen said. "It was always something I wanted to do, to live overseas."

Another attraction was the work itself. Kalli has been with the district for 11 years in civil planning and believed it was time for something new. He said his lack of military construction experience was not a deterrent because Korea is looking for engineers with any kind of experience.

Nguyen saw the job as an unprecedented opportunity. In the Far East District, most of the work is being generated by the relocation of the Yongsan Army post in Seoul to U.S. Army Garrison-Humphreys.

"They are pretty much building a city," Nguyen said. "Where else in your career can you do that?"

Both attended the recruitment briefings and followed up with the Far East District representative.

Because Nguyen was seeking a promotion, he applied through USAJobs and interviewed. As a lateral transfer, Kalli's hiring was less formal.

The process was fast, Nguyen said, who joined the Alaska District in December 2009. One day after his interview, he received and accepted an offer. Kalli said he too was surprised

## Jobs, benefits plentiful in Japan, Far East districts

The latest jobs in Japan and Korea are easily found at the USACE vacancy announcements board on the intranet. More information about working in these districts is posted on the Operation Crossroads site at <https://team.usace.army.mil/sites/POA/opcross/default.aspx>.

Temporary duty assignments are available in various career fields, which can be used to see if a move to a permanent position is worthwhile.

Benefits extend beyond the usual federal government perks for those considering full-time employment overseas. These include:

- Shipment of one vehicle and up to 18,000 pounds of household goods at government expense.

- Housing allowance, foreign post differential and allowance, and educational travel.

- Five days of home leave to return to the United States.

- Commissary and post exchange privileges.

- Department of Defense schools through high school, child development centers, youth sports and other activities for family members.

- Access to state-of-the-art athletic facilities, golf courses and parks.

at how quickly an employment offer came in.

Nguyen expects to land in Korea as soon as late August while Kalli plans to arrive about a month later. New employees have as many as 60 days to find permanent housing. Kalli also said furniture is available on loan, and he can store some belongings in Alaska at government expense.

"That gives me time to get a feel for the city," Kalli said. "The housing allowance is generous, and I can pick a place as long as it's approved."

Kalli sought the chance to work overseas before the hiring push in Asia, and moving to Korea should satisfy his passion for travel. In 2005, he took a year off to tour across South America. He has visited France and vacationed in Hong Kong. Now he figures he can see the rest of Asia.

"I've met people who lived in Korea and am looking forward to being part of the expatriate community," he said.

Kalli appreciated the testimonials by district employees who formerly worked in Korea at the briefings. Based on what he heard at these meetings, Nguyen is confident about moving to a new part of the world.

"They will take care of you," he said. "I'm not worried from what they told us."

Employees who work in Japan or Korea can return to Alaska in three to five years with statutory re-employment rights. Kalli said he can see himself coming back because "Alaska has been an amazing place."

For Nguyen, it's too soon to think about returning although he is happy working with the interesting mix of people in his section.

## Cleared for takeoff

Mary-Beth Murray, Executive Office administrative officer, releases a rehabilitated raven on the district headquarters lawn July 2. The bird, weakened by parasites, was rescued nearly a month earlier on the front steps by Becky Breeding, engineer in the Structures and Architecture Section. Executive Office staff rallied with supplies to assist Breeding in capturing the injured animal. She then took it to the Alaska Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center in Houston where it remained until healthy enough to return to the wild. (Photo by Becky Breeding.)



# After action reviews gain district attention

A new effort aimed at increasing the district's implementation of After Action Reviews is under way.

The Alaska District Corporate Board directed the 2011-2012 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Leadership Development Program Level II group to recommend ways to help resolve issues with the current policy and educate the work force on the need for and benefits of AARs.

Another task assigned to the group is to identify methods to monitor how and when AARs are being conducted.

An AAR is a quality management process used to document overall performance or level of success achieved on a project or activity. When AARs are conducted consistently, the information gained provides critical feedback to team members and may be used to raise the level of quality for future projects and activities of a similar nature.

Army engineering regulations require that AARs be conducted at certain stages of all projects. The district has a standard operating procedure that directs all project managers to complete AARs and provides a template to document them.

Since 2004, the district has incorporated AARs into district processes but has struggled to routinely conduct and document them.

An AAR can be completed informally via email or formally in a meeting arranged specifically for that purpose. Either way, the objective is to identify any key issues that affected the project.

These may be an innovation that resulted in significant project success or an error. Other significant changes that caused delays, increased costs or hurt quality should also be identified and documented.

Dissemination of any lessons learned during the process is the essential last step of an AAR.

Lessons captured by the district while conducting AARs result in improved coordination between divisions and elevated design and quality control process.

The Pacific Ocean Division identified inconsistent AAR completion as an area that needs improvement in the Alaska District. Last year, the division concluded that AARs were not being conducted according to Army or district policy.

Although AARs are required at the end of each project phase, no evidence is available to show that AARs are consistently being planned or conducted.

While informal AARs likely are being conducted within existing district processes, such as blue zone meetings, Project Delivery Team meetings, charrettes, review conferences and topical discussions, the lack of documentation renders this assumption impossible to prove.

Without documentation, the critical last step of providing information to other PDTs, and thereby improving quality on other projects, does not occur.

District policy directs that all AARs will be collected by the AAR/lessons

learned coordinator, stored in the project files and posted in a centralized electronic database. The Quality Management Information System is currently being used by the civil works program to collect AAR/lessons learned documents.

AARs/lessons learned can be separated into folders labeled internal, programs and projects. The group was tasked with identifying a suitable location for these on a centralized electronic database.

The group presented its recommendations to the corporate board in April. Inconsistencies between the Alaska District standard operating procedure and Army policy, and no centralized storage location were identified as the main detriments to increasing the completion and documentation of AARs.

Among the recommendations made to the corporate board were that each district program presents AAR information during project review boards. The corporate board requested further investigation into identifying potential methods to capture and measure successfully completed AARs for future reporting to the PRB and corporate board.

The ULDP Level II group continues to work on this challenging project and expects to be finished by January.

*This article was provided by the current ULDP Level II group members. They are Steve Curren, Marion Dawag, Mike Gaulke, Michelle Harris, Yolanda Ikner, Katie McCafferty, Scott Olson and Richard Ragle.*



## Port progress

Two long-stick excavators dig a breach during construction of Akutan Harbor July 21. Rock placement continues on both the south and north breakwaters as well as along the side slopes of the inner harbor. Dredging within the entrance channel is ongoing. The \$31.9 million project—funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Aleutians East Borough—will establish an entrance channel and mooring basin along with two rock breakwaters. The contractor, Knik Construction Co. Inc. of Anchorage, began work in May 2011 and is scheduled to complete the project in September 2012. (Courtesy photo)



Photo by Luis Menendez

## Fun and games

(Left) David Gerland and Eric Marcellus, of the Construction and Operations Division, participate in a sumo suit wrestling match during the district picnic at Cottonwood Park on JBER-Richardson June 28. Marcellus advanced to win the single-elimination competition.

(Middle left) Mary-Beth Murray, administrative officer in the Executive Office, fires a softball at the dunk tank in an attempt to soak Julie Ebben, Alaska District Credit Union manager, at Cottonwood Park.

(Middle right) The Northern Area Office gathered for its picnic under sunny skies at the Chena Lake Recreation Area in North Pole June 22.

(Bottom) Children and adults compete in the balloon toss at Cottonwood Park. Other activities for children included a sack race, game table, inflatable bouncing castle and face painting.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf



Photo by Doug Hart



Photo by John Budnik

## Across the district

### Employees of third quarter named

Outstanding employees and teams of the Fiscal Year 2012 third quarter are listed below.

**Engineer/Scientist GS-05-12**—Tuan Lai

**Support GS-02-10**—Elizabeth McLean

**Support GS-11-15**—Terry Stone

**Managerial/Supervisory/Team Leader**—Mark Coburn

**Celebrate Safety Individual Award**—Charles Livers

**Internal Team, Strategic Management Cell Resources Project Delivery, Administrative Consolidation Study**—

LaQuida Barlow, Tami Bronn, Amy Burke, Heidi Clay, Tim Clapp, Rita Couch, Steve Curren, Mark Hackworth, Audrey Harrop, Sharon Hottenstein, Debra McGinnis, Lisa Pooler, Lori Scalas, Danielle Shack, Della Smith, Clay Williamson

**Safety Performance Team, Celebrate Safety**—Buster Godwin, Craig Lance, Charles Livers, Andre McMillan, Christopher Morgan, Michelle Sappa, Paul Schneider

### Construction management excellence

Steve Mandt, civil engineer at the Elmendorf Resident Office, earned the 2012 Pacific Ocean Division Construction Management Excellence Award. Each year, every major subordinate command and center nominates and selects recipients for this and the Hard Hat of Year award based on their outstanding contributions to military and civil works construction, and quality management programs during the previous calendar year.

### Golf tournament planned

Alaska District's annual golf tournament is set for Aug. 24 at Eagleleg Golf Course. Competition is open to 32 teams with entry forms accepted first-come, first served. Contact Herschel Deaton or Renee Sedlak for details.

### Contracts awarded

**Buckner Field House Expansion**—The district awarded this FY2012 project to Bethel Federal Services LLC June 22 for \$21,994,200 under a competitive 8(a) solicitation. The project will construct a new 36,720-square-foot addition to the existing physical fitness facility on JBER-Richardson. The addition will include a new indoor swimming pool adjacent to the existing facility with all required infrastructure support. The project also will construct one baseball field, two softball fields and a multipurpose athletic field.

**Brigade Combat Team (Light), Phase 1A Nike Site Summit Building**—The district awarded this FY2012 project at JBER-Richardson June 22 to Advanced Blasting Services LLC for \$1,874,106 under a competitive economically disadvantaged women-owned small business set aside solicitation. This is one of two contracts for this project. It will demolish, remove and dispose of the two-story wood frame barracks portion of the existing Nike Site Summit building; demolish and dispose of all equipment

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## Retirements



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Barbara Burg, electrical engineer in the Programs and Project Management Division, receives a certificate of retirement from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, during a ceremony at headquarters June 27. Burg also received the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service for her efforts to help ensure the success of the military program during its historic years of growth. She retired with more than 35 years of federal service.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Roberta Sutton, administrative assistant in the Cost Engineering Branch, receives a certificate of retirement from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at headquarters during a ceremony June 27. She also received the Army Commander's Award for Civilian Service for her contributions to the Alaska District in the Logistics Management Office and Engineering Division. Sutton retired with 25 years of federal service.

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and hazardous materials; seal all openings in the remaining portions of the building; and remove and relocate security cameras.

**Upgrade Rail Line**—The district awarded this FY2012 Defense Logistics Agency project at Eielson Air Force Base July 6 for \$12,209,852. The project replaces rail and constructs secondary line to and at-grade crossings, signage, road markings and switches. It also constructs a railcar off-loading catwalk with swivels and a header capable of supporting six railcars; overhead shelter to protect off-loading vehicles and system from snow and ice; and realigns and corrects flaws in the main road crossing at Quarry Road.

**More mitigation banks approved**

The Regulatory Division approved six mitigation banks and In Lieu Fee programs, and is evaluating five more. Staff also met with four additional potential bank and ILF program sponsors who anticipate submitting their proposals in the near future. Each proposal requires a minimum of nine months review and coordination. The Regulatory program allows permittees to use Corps-approved banks and ILF programs to satisfy requirements to compensate for the impacts to aquatic resources authorized by Army permits. The impact of evaluating, approving, and managing mitigation banks and fee programs continues to increase as interest in development of them grows in Alaska.

**Deployments**

**Afghanistan**—Juliet Brown, Roger Green, Heather Moncrief, David Purdy, Jessica Skinner, Sharon Thomas, Jim Wolfe

**Returned**—Patricia Lora

**Upcoming events**

- Aug. 1-31** Antiterrorism Awareness Month
- Aug. 24** Alaska District Golf Tournament
- Aug. 26** Women's Equality Day
- Sept. 26** FEST-A Deployment Ceremony



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

**Farewell**

Chris Tew, Contracting Division chief, presents a metal sculpture of an Air Force C-17 aircraft to Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, as one of two gifts from his team during Koenig's farewell luncheon at the JBER Arctic Warrior Events Center June 26. Each division chief spoke briefly about Koenig and gave a gift in appreciation of his service.



Photo by John Budnik

**Fried feast**

Michelle Sappa, administrative assistant in the Construction and Operations Division, cooks rockfish, cod and halibut in a deep-fat fryer during the wild game potluck after the Alaska District change of command ceremony July 2. Besides fish, caribou and musk ox were other main dishes at what has become a traditional welcoming event for new commanders.



Photo by John Budnik

**Smoked success**

Greg Vanagel, Formerly Used Defense Sites Program project manager, displays his trophy for taking top honors in the smoked salmon contest at the wild game potluck after the change of command ceremony July 2. His teriyaki sockeye jerky received the most votes from attendees during a blind taste test. Lt. Col. Bobby Stone, deputy district commander, finished second and Robert Jobson, Regulatory Division archaeologist, took third place.



Courtesy photo

## Bang-up job

John Schaake, Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project manager, tows a ceremonial cannon with a tractor during the annual Independence Day parade in North Pole July 4. He was joined by volunteers Margarita and Ed "Hutch" Hutchison, who pulled a float featuring mascots Bucky and Bucklet the Moose that promoted water safety.



Courtesy photo

## Weed warriors

Doug Hart, Northern Area Office civil engineer technician (second from right), joins other local residents participating in the 2012 Weed Smackdown for Fairbanks July 14 at the Tanana Lakes Recreation Area. Started in 2010 in conjunction with the city's Weed Awareness Week, the event is organized to clean up wildlife habitat at Tanana Lakes, the newest recreation area in Fairbanks, which is a stopover for migratory waterfowl. The Smackdown's goal is help contain the spread of invasive plants and to educate residents about common invasive weeds in the Fairbanks area. Targeted weed species were white sweetclover, perennial sowthistle, bird vetch, narrowleaf hawksbeard and foxtail barley.



Photo by John Budnik

## Longevity

Employees receiving length of service awards gather at district headquarters June 28. Fairbanks area employees were recognized with their certificates June 22. These awards are presented in appreciation of federal civilian and military service in five-year increments to employees with at least five years in the U.S. government.

Available since 1988, career service certificates provide honorary recognition to employees for their diligent service as they complete these milestones. The following employees met one of these milestones from the period July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012:

- *Five years*—Christy Baez, Patricia Bowen, Coleman Chalup, Steven Dahl, Meseret Ghebreslassie, Benjamin Johnson, Heather Moncrief, Cindy Renner, Casey Smith, Jennifer Sprott, Jacob Sweet
- *Ten years*—Mike Alley, Mark Arena, Heather Boyer, Estrella Campellone, Bob Hazlett, William Mangano, Jennifer Martin, Kenneth McNally, Melanie Peterson, Alona Schue, Reynaldo Singson, Robert Stolzman
- *Fifteen years*—LaQuida Barlow, Mark Coburn, Michael Gaulke, Cheryl Hilton, Diane Hunt, George Kalli, Eric Marcellus, Julie McLaughlin, Thomas Underwood, Monica Velasco
- *Twenty years*—Randall Bowker, Becky Breeding, Dave Casey, Patrick Fitzgerald, Christopher Floyd, Deirdre Ginter, Audrey Harrop, Marcia Heer, Alan Jeffries, Ze Jong, Nathan Machacek, Phillip Mack, Thomas May, James Nguyen, Robin Norby, Joel Spano, Gregory Vanagel, Patrick Zettler
- *Twenty-five years*—Alan Berry, David Case, Herschel Deaton, Mark Estes, Diana Gerland, Ronald Green, Sharon Hottenstein, Denise Koopman, Jeannine LaDuke, Jackie Leseman, Debra McGinnis, Elizabeth McLean, Lynn Meyers, David Purdy, Alvinia Quarles, Gregory Smith, Roberta Sutton, Robert Tedrick, David Williams
- *Thirty years*—Allen Churchill, Christopher Dalsfoist, Kenneth Eisses, Christina Galles, Steven Geppert, Mark Hackworth, Jack Hewitt, Kevin Maloy, David Piening, John Schaake, Gregory Schmidt, Thomas Sloan, Deborah Uhlinger, Mark Viotto
- *Thirty-five years*—Barbara Burg, Alexander Dalsfoist, Glen Justis, John Klutz, Roger Lapham, Thomas Lubeck, Roberta Schowen, Barbara Verrier, William Walters
- *Forty years*—Stephen Boardman, Roger Hess, Rusty Rubeck