

445 CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

445 Installations Squadron constituted, 24 Jun 1952
Activated in the Reserve, 8 Jul 1952
Redesignated 445 Civil Engineering Squadron, 1 Jul 1960
Ordered to Active Service, 28 Oct 1962
Relieved from Active Duty, 28 Nov 1962
Discontinued and inactivated, 11 Feb 1963
Activated in the Reserve, 15 Nov 1978

445 Civil Engineering Flight constituted, 15 Jul 1976
Activated in the Reserve, 1 Jan 1977
Inactivated, 15 Nov 1978

445 Civil Engineering Squadron and 445 Civil Engineering Flight consolidated, 3 Oct 1984.
Consolidated organization designated 445 Civil Engineering Squadron.

Inactivated, 30 Sep 1993
Redesignated 445 Civil Engineer Squadron, 9 Sep 1994
Activated in the Reserve, 1 Oct 1994

STATIONS

Buffalo, NY, 8 Jul 1952
Niagara Falls Muni Aprt, NY, 15 Jun 1955
Dobbins AFB, GA, 16 Nov 1957-11 Feb 1963
Norton AFB, CA, 1 Jan 1977-30 Sep 1993
Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, 1 Oct 1994

ASSIGNMENTS

445 Mission Support Group

COMMANDERS

Maj W. G. King

Lt Col Christopher Cunningham

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

1 Sep 1985-31 Aug 1987

1 Oct 1999-30 Sep 2001

1 Jan 2008-31 Dec 2009

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Getting an opportunity to work somewhere pleasant and build something real for friendly people is a privilege. For civil engineers, it's a rare privilege. Civil Engineers usually can be found at bases working in the heat, repairing runways, old sewer systems, and roofs among other maintenance and repair actions. Otherwise, they can be found at either Silver Flag receiving expeditionary engineer training or at an Operational Readiness Inspection demonstrating their Base Emergency Engineer Force skills highlighting their combat capability. In the case of the 433rd and 445 Civil Engineer Squadrons recently, annual tour is being spent on the southernmost tip of the Eastern Caribbean island nation of Saint Lucia.

The job is to build a facility for the Saint Lucia Special Services Unit, a branch of their police that resembles a cross between a S.W.A.T. team and the U.S. Marine Corps. But the nice location doesn't take away from the seriousness of the job. "It's a bonus that they are able to do the job in a nice location but the job has to come first," said Lt. Col. Richard Matthews, commander of the 433rd CES. "To their credit, each rotation has put the project a little farther ahead of schedule." Lt. Col. Matthews said that the first group of 12 planned annual tour rotations immediately got the project jump-started and each rotation added to the lead time on the completion schedule. The work days are about nine hours long and the tropical sun can be "SPF-75" intense. The reservists are only promised one day off during their rotation and their time off is spent on basic important issues.

"My first thing (when I got off work) is a shower and eat," said Staff Sergeant Troy Brock, a heavy equipment operator with the 433rd CES. Even though the project is ahead of schedule, the consistent pace is necessary due to the sheer size of the project. "We have been tasked to construct a 5,300 square foot building which will include a dormitory, operation center, offices,

laundry, restrooms, kitchen and a conference room for the marine police in Saint Lucia,” Senior Master Sgt. Sergio Medellin, the project manager from the 433rd CES, describes in his weekly reports. According to Master Sgt. Steve Roper, the U.S. Southern Command project manager, usually a project of this scope would be contracted out or an active-duty unit would lead and reservists would play in an augmentation role.

On this project, all the work is being done by Reservists on annual tour including the airlift of equipment and supplies. Flyers are performing currency training while flying the supplies too expensive or unavailable locally. Sergeant Roper explained the project came up on the schedule near the end of the fiscal year and there were limited funds available. The call for bids from civilian contractors was made and the bids came in way over budget. Sergeant Roper said the next step for SOUTHCOM was to put out the project to reserve units to see if they could help. “When we put out the help wanted, we got all we could handle,” Sergeant Roper said.

In fact, the reply gave a \$600,000 savings in direct costs to SOUTHCOM. There is labor augmentation on the project – that too is an Air Force Reserve function. “Due to the large scale of this project and the limited time we will be on site, the 445 CES from Wright-Patterson, AFB was asked to support us in this mission,” wrote Senior Master Sgt. Sergio Medellin. So far, the group from Ohio makes up 35-50 percent of the project manning on each rotation. “Our last IGX (Inspector General Exercise) was with them (the 445 CES),” said Master Sgt. Jade Villareal, a heavy equipment supervisor who recently returned from Saint Lucia.

“There were a lot of familiar faces and we meshed very well.” The familiar faces of the Wright-Patterson reservists aren’t the only friendly faces the Alamo Wing CES troops are meeting. “It is truly a nice little clean island and these people are very supportive,” said Sergeant Roper. “They are proud of what they have.” The local population and tourists are very friendly to the Airmen working on a project that will help them keep their island clean and the crime low. Sergeant Brock, who worked on the first rotation, credits the reception by the locals to the very basics of human relations. “First impressions are important and I think we made a good impression,” said Sergeant Brock.

The good impression wasn’t only on the local citizens but also on their officials. “The police commissioner and his assistant, the airport manager and a facilities engineer all toured the project and there is a lot of positive feedback (about construction methods),” said Lt. Col. Matthews. Lt. Col. Matthews said the local government representatives are now working to arrange to have their personnel observe the Prime BEEF construction. More formal hands-on training sessions for the Saint Lucians on construction techniques may happen before the July completion date. For all involved parties this annual tour is a positive experience by broadening skills across the varied career fields under the CES squadron.

For example, firefighters, working on site as Emergency Medical Technicians, have been learning construction skills while assisting on the project, heavy equipment operators are learning about construction techniques and reservists are learning skills useful to their civilian employers. “I learned a lot about concrete, and from the plumbers,” said Sergeant Brock who also has experience to take back to his civilian job as an equipment mechanic in San Antonio. His experience helped him see the equipment out in the field and helped him understand what the operators need. “I can see the equipment working on the job, see how they use it,” said Sergeant Brock. “Like on a backhoe with its electronic controls. In the shop I’d think ‘what do they need that for’.

Now I see how helpful it is." The civilian experience reservists bring to the Air Force mission also helps on the project and with the first impressions left on the local population. "You have to be able to deal with people in that environment," said Sergeant Villareal, about his civilian job as a corrections officer at the Dominguez State Jail. Sergeant Villareal acknowledged that having people skills really helps in getting to know the local population and the customers for the project. 2006

2008 Sixty members of the 445 Airlift Wing left Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio for Southwest Asia on Tue., Sept. 9. The reservists, part of the 445's Civil Engineer Squadron, will be deployed to Southwest Asia for the next six months providing construction support. Fifty six of the Airmen will deploy to one area of Southwest Asia with the remaining four heading to another area. "We are focused and ready," said Lt. Col. Chris Cunningham, commander of the team. "We bring to the table our civil engineering skills and now, after our training at Ft. Lewis, Washington, combat skills. Our goal is to leave everyone better than we found them."

The squadron has sent teams to Kirkuk, Iraq where they worked with the Air Force but this is their first "in lieu of" duty which places the Airmen under the direction of the U.S. Army. In this case, the Air Force Reservists are filling job slots that the Army is unable to fill, hence the "in lieu of" title. About 50 family members and friends were on hand to send-off the CES members. The Airmen flew on a contracted jet from Wright-Patt to Naval Station Norfolk, Norfolk, Va. before heading overseas. For Tech. Sgt. Sean Collins this marks his fourth trip overseas. For his wife of just two years, Kimberly, this marks her first experience with deployments.

"I'm feeling a lot of emotions," Mrs. Collins said. "I support him whole heartedly and I'm proud to be his wife. I'm actually very excited, too, because this is something he loves." Kim Trivett's son Staff Sgt. Scott Trivett, 24, has been to Iraq twice and is now on his third deployment but it's still hard to see him leave, she said. "I'm anxious but I'm very proud," Mrs. Trivett said, adding that the combat readiness training with the Army at Ft. Lewis has made both her and Scott feel more comfortable. "I was impressed with the Army and the training," Sgt. Trivett said. "They had a great 'We are all in this together' attitude."

The sergeant had the largest group of family at the send off with both his parents, two sisters, a brother and a niece there to wish him well. One of the few remaining Vietnam veterans in the 445, Master Sgt. Dale Shellenberger, is part of the team. "I'm the oldest one on this deployment," the sergeant said, smiling. "I'm still good to go. I have plenty of life left in me." Sergeant Shellenberger, who turns 59 while in Southwest Asia, had a 16-year break in service before joining the Air Force Reserve in 1986. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1969. For Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Clark, this marks his second deployment. His wife Sue said she already can't wait for him to return.

"This is a very emotional time, I can hardly talk about it," Mrs. Clark said. "I'm comfortable with the deployment because he feels good about it and that really helps me CES commander Lt. Col. Thomas Kuepper will lead the four-man team. The colonel will serve as the commander of the civil engineer squadron there and be in charge of about 150 Airmen. "It feels like we are going home, so to speak," joked Captain Kelly Shields who will serve under the colonel as engineering officer. For both the colonel and the captain, this marks their third deployment to Southwest Asia. Even though the four man team's mission is separate from the larger groups mission, Col. Kuepper said he will keep in contact with his troops.

While CES sent 60 members of its squadron for the six month deployment, they could have sent more, Col. Cunningham said. "Although this is an activation I had to turn people away," the colonel said. "People fought to get on this deployment; I actually had a waiting list." In the past few years well over 100 members of the CES have deployed overseas for duty in support of ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq

In the past eight weeks, more than 50 civil engineer specialists deployed from Wright-Patterson's 445 Civil Engineer Squadron have been putting together a training program to recruit and certify local workers for construction projects on base. The Training Afghan Craftsmen program, or TAC, also aims to build up job résumés for local skilled workers with the goal of getting them higher paying jobs.

Staff Sgt. Mike Nelson, a readiness management specialist working as a structural craftsman who developed the training program, said the idea came a few months ago when a local worker providing unskilled labor told Nelson's unit that he was a skilled mason and could help on construction projects. The unit let the contractor demonstrate his skills and was surprised to find an untapped resource. "He did a great custom job that we could not have done," Nelson said. "He knew how to incorporate some of the local natural resources into the project. [After that] we realized we could use workers with these hidden talents as force multipliers on various construction projects."

Sergeant Nelson said his unit saw an opportunity to help workers they had come to know through various unskilled labor projects - while also providing certified labor continuity for the next rotation of Airmen who could use their skills sets. Rather than start a training and certification system from scratch, Sergeant Nelson decided to use the Air Force enlisted Career Field Education and Training Plan as a template. "The only thing that was missing was a verifiable system and training program," he said. "Now we're taking workers through a series of verifiable and quantifiable training events with core tasks just like in the CFETP." Sergeant Nelson said the new TAC program has four major phases.

The application phase screens workers with at least some experience in a skill set from the pool of local workers who apply for work on Bagram. After the screening process, Sergeant Nelson said the applicants are given a few days worth of safety and basic engineer skills training and taught basic English speaking for use in the workplace. "We teach them things like how to work safely, or how to use a tape measure ... basic skills they'll need for any of the specialties we are training them in," explained Sergeant Nelson.

"We also teach them English words used at the workplace like hammer, safety or lunch." The workers then go on to the upgrade training phase, similar to enlisted upgrade training in the Air Force. "We pair the workers up with one of our Airmen in the corresponding career field they're interested in for 12 to 18 months," he said. "Like Air Force upgrade training, we'll document their training and certify them on tasks for upgrade training on several different skill levels." Sergeant Nelson said his unit then provides training certificates for the workers and also helps them write résumés in English and their native language, Dari, with the goal of fetching a higher paying contract job on- or off-base.

"The skills and training we give them will help them more in the long run than if we just built something for them," Sergeant Nelson explained. Tech. Sgt. Clay Bucy, a structural craftsman for the 755th ECES, is training three carpenter apprentices how to cut dry wall for the first time while

building a new mortuary affairs facility here. "We've been showing them a few tricks of the trade," he said. "Once they're trained, we give them their tools and let them go at it." Tech. Sgt. Jonathan Lemaster, a structural craftsman for the 755th ECES, supervises six TAC workers working for a month to expand Entry Control Point One where local villagers wait in line each day for random job opportunities.

"They've helped us with a lot of the big projects we're working on here at Bagram," the Independence, Ky.-native said of his carpenter apprentices who have developed their own friendly handshakes when they greet each other. "We're doing our part to win the hearts and minds of the local population. We have developed great relationships with them." While Sergeant Nelson said developing the program took a lot of effort - building up relationships with his workers and finding creative ways to make contacts and get the resources needed to implement the program - but it was all for a good cause. "It's all about engaging the system for their sake and finding people who want to know how to make themselves better and taking the initiative to help them do it," Sergeant Nelson explained.

"If TAC helps these workers find a contractor who will pay them what they deserve, then I'm more than willing to put forth the effort," he said. "We hope this program will have a long-lasting effect on the workers and their families.

2009 The scene was all smiles and applause as friends, family and unit Airmen welcomed home approximately 60 members of the 445 Airlift Wing March 15. The Airmen, from the 445 Civil Engineer Squadron, returned from a six-month deployment at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, where they worked as part of the 755th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron. "It's the best feeling in the world," said Staff Sgt James Epley, who was greeted by more than 20 family members after his second deployment.

755th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron In the past eight weeks, more than 50 civil engineer specialists deployed from Wright- Patterson's 445 Civil Engineer Squadron have been putting together a training program to recruit and certify local workers for construction projects on base. The Training Afghan Craftsmen program, or TAC, also aims to build up job résumés for local skilled workers with the goal of getting them higher paying jobs.

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USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

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Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.