



'One Island, One Team, One Mission'

Prime BEEF Increases Forward-Operating Capabilities on Diego Garcia

by Capt Melinda A. Moss
36th CES

A 24-person Prime BEEF detachment from the 36th Civil Engineer Squadron, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, deployed to the Navy Support Facility, Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean Territories, in June to complete facilities construction as part of the Air Force's bomber forward-operating location (FOL) initiative. The Air Force is establishing forward-deployed bomber beddown support at key locations throughout the world and Diego Garcia, a small island in the Indian Ocean, is one of two critical locations in the Asia-Pacific region, according to Air Force officials. The other is Andersen AFB.

Limited man-hours available to the Air Force from the local base operating support (BOS) contract at Diego Garcia meant one thing — using Prime BEEF to do the bomber FOL work.

"This was the only way to execute this fiscal year," explained SMSgt Douglas Papineau, 36th CES Prime BEEF team chief. "The PACAF [Pacific Air Forces] detachment on Diego Garcia is only allotted a limited amount of work from the Navy's base operating support contract on the island, and budget timelines for the bomber FOL initiative required immediate project execution," Papineau continued. "Using troop labor was the solution."

"Headquarters PACAF ensured that Navy command was well-informed of the goals and objectives of the Air Force bomber FOL, which smoothed out the approval processes

both on and off the island," said Papineau.

The team constructed a land mobile radio repeater facility, supply and maintenance secure storage rooms and a generator pad; tested grounding points; and repaired the tent city electrical system during the 45-day deployment.

"These items each play an important role in making Diego Garcia capable as a bomber forward-operating location," said Papineau. The bomber FOL is an instrumental part of Aerospace Expeditionary Force implementation.

The team also helped Detachment 1, 613th Air Support Squadron (ASUS) by taking care of some smaller projects for them in their spare time.

"The 36th CES was a tremendous asset to 613 ASUS by knocking out some small-scale but mission-critical jobs for me in their spare time," said Maj Hoot Gibson, Det 1, 613th ASUS. "The Commanding Officer and the British Representative are both impressed with how hard the team worked. They set the pace here on island."

The Navy Public Works Department on Diego Garcia helped the Air Force team by providing concrete and backhoe support through their BOS contract. The department also generated and tracked site approval documents for three of the assigned projects. "Here on Diego Garcia we all work together to accomplish our mission objectives," explained Commander Jim Souba, Public Works Officer. "The Diego Garcia motto is, 'One island, one team, one mission'."

Being on a Navy-run, BOS-contracted, British island in the middle of the Indian Ocean offered some unique challenges. "One of the biggest challenges for the team was locating materials and spare parts, the little things you usually don't give a second thought," said TSgt Mark Feste, 36 CES

TSgt Benanthony Rosario, A1C Jake Coffman and SSgt William Light build mechanical rooms for tent city electrical repair.
(Photo by John Castiglia, DG21 Photographer)

logistics guru. "We did a lot of improvising and bartering."

Many airmen on the team were exposed to multiple crafts that they would not usually work in.

"I enjoyed learning new skills on the job. It kept things interesting," said SrA Darrel Gomez. A1C Laureano Solis, Jr., a Heating Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) troop, helped with the block work in addition to working on environmental control units. SrA Tracy McBride, a horizontal troop by training, spent nearly all his time with the electricians, laying conduit and pulling cable. A1C Sean Schaefer, a liquid fuels maintenance (LFM) apprentice, helped with block work and with pulling cable on the electrical job. SSgt William Light, another LFM troop, also did paving and structural work. SrA Kenton Ellis, a supply troop by Air Force Specialty, mastered ground point testing and worked on a sizable repair to a compressed air line.

Others fine tuned the skills and trades they have been trained in, and some were given a chance to enhance their leadership skills. SMSgt Papineau ensured each person was gainfully employed and each foreman had what they needed to get their job done.

TSgt Robert Webber enjoyed the special challenge he was given — planning and executing an on-the-spot, full replacement of a critical corroded compressed air line at the munitions build-up area. He came up with innovative ways to do his job without parts availability. He and SSgt Joseph Perez, Jr. combined plumbing and HVAC methods to complete the job.

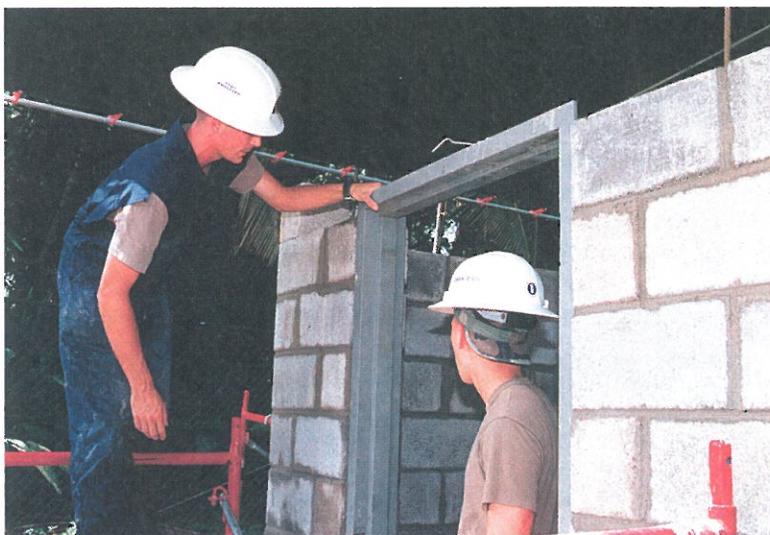
The team was also fortunate to have along SSgt Romar Balaoro, whose Tagalog language skills helped him establish a tremendous relationship with the local Filipino population.

Overall, the team members were proud of what they achieved in their short time on the island — improved relations with British military personnel and excellent wartime mission training. *Call 911 Prime BEEF!*

Capt Melinda Moss, 36th CES, Andersen AFB, Guam, was commander of the Prime BEEF team during this deployment.



(Left) SSgt Joseph Perez and SrA Kenton Ellis paint grounding points on the south ramp at the Naval Support Facility on Diego Garcia. (Photo by Capt Melinda Moss)



36th CES Prime BEEF team members SSgt Thomas Phillips and A1C Sean Nelson inspect a door jam during construction of a land mobile radio repeater facility at Diego Garcia. (Photo by John Castiglia, DG21 Photographer)

Where is Diego Garcia?

Diego Garcia is part of the British Indian Ocean Territory formed in 1965. The tropical island is 7 degrees south of the equator, one of 56 in the Chagos Archipelago south of India.

The island is a narrow coral atoll with a land area of about 11 square miles, nearly enclosing a lagoon. It stretches 34 miles from tip to tip.

In December 1966, the United Kingdom and United States signed a bilateral agreement making the islands of the British Indian Ocean Territory available for defense purposes to both governments. Both British and American flags fly over the island.

In 1977, the Navy Support Facility became responsible for maintaining and operating facilities and providing services and materials in support of several tenant shore activities and units of the operating forces. There are currently four Air Force detachments on Diego Garcia.

Recent world developments have highlighted Diego Garcia's importance to the defense posture of U.S. and Allied Forces. Commencing with the Yemen crisis in the spring of 1979, the Iranian crisis of 1979-81, and continuing with Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990-91, Diego Garcia has played a primary role in the support of units operating in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf areas. (From www.dg.navy.mil)