

THE RED BULL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY



Lt Col James Starnes, 122nd CES/CC

Air National Guard CEs mobilized in 2007 for a special mission — constructing a legal complex for Camp Justice at Guantanamo Bay. PRIME BEEF civil engineers from the Guard worked with active duty RED HORSE engineers as the “Red Bulls” of the 474th ECES to complete this important mission.

In 2007, the Office of Military Commissions needed a legal complex to conduct commissions, or trials, for detainees held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. A short timeline made it impossible for the Department of Defense to effectively negotiate a contract with civilian firms for construction of the complex, so military construction units were assigned the task. Because of worldwide operations activities and the fixed time frame, active duty units weren't available. The National Guard Bureau volunteered for the mission, and Air National Guard CEs were given the task of constructing the legal complex.

As the commander of the 122nd Civil Engineer Squadron in Fort Wayne, Ind., I received a phone call in the spring of 2007 informing me that our unit would lead this high-profile mission. We would be joined by CEs from five other Guard units — the 121st CES from Columbus, Ohio; the 128th CES from Milwaukee, Wis.; the 150th CES from Albuquerque, N.M.; the 158th CES from South Burlington, Vt.; and the 163rd CES from March ARB, Calif. — to make up the construction team. Engineers from the 823rd RED HORSE Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla., were responsible for most of the design work. The 474th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, attached to the 474th Air Expeditionary Group out of Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., was established and with a PRIME BEEF construction team and a RED HORSE design team, we quickly became known as the “Red Bulls.”

The advance party — consisting of the first sergeant, the chief of operations, the engineering officer, the engineer-



Maj Chad Warren, 474th ECES, examines the plans for the new Expeditionary Legal Complex where military commissions will resume pending court review. (photo by Army Sgt. Sarah Stannard)

ing noncommissioned officer-in-charge, the electrical NCOIC, and me — arrived in Cuba in mid-July. A Joint Task Force Guantanamo liaison showed us the proposed location for the complex: an old, abandoned airfield with waist-high grass, overgrown weeds, and many small trees. A lot of coordination and preparation was necessary to get the site and the rest of the naval base ready for the arrival of the construction team and project materials.

Red Bulls in Action

Air Force CEs built a total of 150 structures to complete the legal complex, consisting of a courthouse, 15 administrative support facilities, and an expeditionary lodging facility (tent city) to house up to 500 personnel. The project occurred in two phases: Phase I was installation of the lodging facilities and utility infrastructure, and Phase II was the legal complex facility construction.

Phase I began on July 25, with the arrival of over 40 shipping containers of BEAR assets for the tent city. Due to the nature of the project, all utility and support infrastructure had to be installed with temporary expeditionary assets.

As the team started receiving and staging the tent city assets, we also coordinated with the local naval station base facilities command for water, sewer, fuels, waste, and various operations supply support activities.

Construction at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, located in a communist country and on an island, presented many supply challenges. We had to add all of our

project materials to the normal supply delivery methods (a biweekly barge and a twice-weekly cargo plane) or develop special delivery methods. Because the naval station is primarily operated by civilian contractors, schedules had to be carefully planned to minimize costs.

The abandoned airfield was cleared and prepared, and most of the tent city facilities were up and operational by the end of August. The 474th ECES began improving the lodging facilities even before all of them were erected. Because of the time required to order and deliver the courthouse and other legal complex facility materials, we had most of the month of September to prepare the foundation of the courthouse, make tent city quality-of-life improvements, and support the naval station with various projects.

Work on Phase II began on September 11, an interesting coincidence in relation to our mission. The courthouse foundation work progressed throughout the months of September and October. Supply difficulties and weather put the project almost two weeks behind schedule. On two separate occasions, storms dumped upwards of 12 inches of rain on the project site, thoroughly testing the expeditionary housing. Rivers of water ran through the tents and high winds tried the stability of the tie-down ropes and stakes. Fortunately, there were no injuries or facility damage from the severe weather.

Once the bulk of the construction materials arrived in late October, we started a multi-shift operation that allowed us to catch back up. By the middle of December, the project



“Dirt Boys” from the 474th ECES prepare to lay a permanent foundation for Naval Station Guantanamo Bay’s new military commissions courtroom. (photo by Army Sgt. Sarah Stannard)



SrA Nick Skinner and SSgt John Heiser weld a detainee cell door at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. Both are members of the 474th ECES, which was assigned the task of building the Expeditionary Legal Complex. (photo by Army Spc. Shanita K. Simmons)

was officially back on schedule. Through the rest of December and into January 2008, the entire legal complex was completed to 100% of initial design requirements.

In addition to completing the assigned legal complex mission, the 474th ECES assisted the naval station with various other projects. We provided vital power generator support for a runway repaving project, allowing it to be completed on time. We assisted the Navy Seabee detachment with several barracks demolition and remodeling projects, and improved several base MWR park facilities.

Harnessing a Team

The Camp Justice legal complex project was a unique collaborative effort. It was a Department of Defense/Office of Military Commissions project; designed by active duty Air Force engineers from Hurlburt Field in Florida; managed by U.S. Southern Command, located in Miami; supported financially by U.S. Army South out of San Antonio; and constructed by Air National Guard engineers from six different states on a U.S. naval base operated by civilian contractors, located in a communist island country.

Partnership was essential to completing this important project ahead of schedule and under budget. A large group of people, from the suppliers in the States, to the

local civilian contractors, to the JTF engineers who provided purchasing support and the suppliers at the naval station's various material acquisition points (e.g., scrap and junk yards), worked with the project team to successfully complete this project.

But the Airmen of the 474th ECES, the "Red Bulls," really made this project happen. Members of many of the civil engineer trades — engineering, HVAC, electrical, power production, structures, heavy equipment and utilities — as well as supply and admin control, contributed immensely to the success and accomplishments of the 474th ECES. They worked tirelessly as a team to complete the historic project and when supply delays, equipment shortfalls, and material deficiencies seemed to impede progress, they always found a way to get the job done.

Editor's note: See page 32 for an update on the legal complex at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay.

Lt Col Starnes is the commander of the 122nd CES, Ft. Wayne, Ind. He was the commander of the 474th ECES, which is attached to the 474th Air Expeditionary Group based out of Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.