

2^D Engineer Brigade News Release



JTF Trailblazer begins final engineering chapter in Afghanistan

By Capt. Richard Packer
2d Engineer Brigade

Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan – Soldiers from the headquarters of 2d Engineer Brigade have taken responsibility as ISAF's Theater Engineer Brigade, forming the core of Joint Task Force Trailblazer.

Responsibility for being the TEB was transferred to the Alaska-based brigade from their predecessors, Hawaii's 130th Engineer Brigade, during a ceremony here May 29, 2014.

At the ceremony the command team of 2d Engineer Brigade, Col. Pete Andrysiak and Command Sgt. Maj. Brad Houston, uncased the brigade colors

on a stage above scores of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines.

Following the colors portion of the ceremony, Andrysiak expressed his gratitude to the 130th Engineer Brigade team and thanked the generals in attendance for bringing the Arctic Trailblazers to the fight in Afghanistan.

"I know there are a lot of hard decisions being made about what the right mix of units and capabilities are as you manage the drawdown," Andrysiak told the generals.

"My team and I are grateful for the opportunity you have afforded us to contribute to your missions here in Afghanistan. Thank you for bringing us to the fight and allowing us to devote our solutioneering expertise towards meeting ISAF's strategic goals."

While in Afghanistan, JTF Trailblazer is assigned a complicated mission covering a wide range of engineer responsibilities. They will also be operating across a large portion of the country.

Their number-one priority is mentoring and developing the Afghan National Army's newly-formed National Engineer Brigade.

The task force is also responsible for managing construction, deconstruction, drilling wells to provide drinking water, demining and bridging operations.

Upon arriving in Afghanistan, they were also tasked with managing the large deconstruction effort on NATO's largest base in the region, Bagram Air Base.

This work will help prepare the installation for the next phase of ISAF's mission in the region.

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey N. Colt,

the deputy commander, operations, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, referred to BAB as a "Frankenstein" which had been built piecemeal over the length of the war.

He then laid responsibility for making sense of it on Andrysiak and the Trailblazer team.

JTF Trailblazer will play a large part in the engineering aspects necessary to meet President Obama's recently-stated goal of reducing America's military commitment in Afghanistan to 9,800 uniformed service members.

Since the TEB was not selected to continue operations past 2014 JTF Trailblazer will also be managing the draw-down of their own people and equipment.

As projects are completed they will be sending subordinate units and gear home before finally heading back themselves.

The 2d Engineer Brigade is expected to return home to Alaska by the end of the year.

The brigade will inactivate shortly thereafter having written a second chapter of service to our nation.

"Thank you for bringing us to the fight and allowing us to devote our solutioneering expertise towards meeting ISAF's strategic goals."



The command team of 2d Engineer Brigade and Joint Task Force Trailblazer, Col. Pete Andrysiak and Command Sgt. Maj. Brad Houston, uncased the brigade colors during a transfer of authority ceremony May 29, 2014, on Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.