



## New Engineer Dive Team kept whirlwind pace in 2012

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Four countries, three continents, eight cities and towns and two islands; this hectic schedule is that of the newly formed USACE Forward Response Dive and Survey Team (FRDST) during its 2012 inaugural season.

By the end of the year, the team and its members, including New England District's Coastal Engineer John Winkelman, traveled more than 50,000 miles executing six separate underwater and two survey missions, the last being a wharf / bridge inspection at the U.S. Army Garrison Camp Darby in Livorno, Italy.

"When people heard we went to Italy for diving they instantly assumed we were in the crystal clear Mediterranean," said Winkelman, musing about the team's work site in Livorno Canal. "I had to correct more than a few people on that ... We could have been diving in the Hudson River. We were actually diving in a glorified drainage canal."

In addition to his dive duties checking the structural integrity of Camp Darby's Tombolo Dock, Winkelman and the team performed above-water bridge inspections.

Aside from Winkelman, members of the Camp Darby FRDST team included Adam Hamm of Buffalo District, Dan Meyers of Honolulu District and Geraldo Velazquez, team lead for bridge inspections from the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) in Vicksburg, Miss.

"It was great working with divers from different districts and with different backgrounds," said Hamm, who served as a diver and report writer on 2012 missions to Naha Port, Okinawa, Japan in September and Camp Darby. "Everyone was very professional and it was great networking and meeting other divers."

"Yeah, you can say we've been just a little bit busy," said FRDST Program Manager Rick Benoit. "However, it's been a labor of love getting the program off the ground to the point where we are working underwater wherever and whenever we are needed."

Originally scheduled to lead the mission, Benoit was deployed at the last minute by HQUSACE to New Jersey in support of the USACE Hurricane Sandy relief mission as a member of the debris PRT.

Overseas missions are in collaboration with the USACE Cold Regions Engineer Research and Development Center of Hanover, N.H. to provide structural inspections and surveys of ports and waterfront facilities managed by the Army's Installation Management Command (IMCOM). Funded by the Army Transportation Infrastructure Inspection Program (ATIIP), which is managed by Kevin Haskins of ERDC, the team also inspected ships berthing, wharfs, seawalls and

landing ramps at Akizuki, Hiro and Kure, Japan in June 2012; Okinawa's Naha Port, as well as Pier 8, Busan, South Korea. In all, there are 15 Army installations with waterfront facilities requiring inspections at least once every four years.

"The (Camp Darby) dive team was great. I fully enjoyed working with everyone," said Winkelman. "I would work with (the Camp Darby) team again in a second."

Additionally, Winkelman is also a member of the Buffalo Regional Dive Team and facilitated similar stateside inspections in 2011 at Ft. McNair in Washington D.C. and Ft. Belvoir, Virginia.

Conceived shortly after arriving in Portland District six years ago from the U.S. Coast Guard Training Center in Cape May, NJ, the team Benoit envisioned did not see action until January of 2012. That mission was jointly facilitated utilizing USACE divers from Portland and San Francisco as well as from the Navy Dive Locker in Bangor, Wash., was ironically, an emergency operation to assist the U.S. Coast Guard at Station Coo Bay.

Since its inception, the Forward Response team has worked with divers, dive supervisors and surveyors from throughout USACE, including New England, Buffalo, Portland, Philadelphia, Nashville, San Francisco and Honolulu.

According to Benoit, three major developments allowed the FRDST team to materialize as it has: the hiring of Portland Deputy District Dive Coordinator Todd Manny; collaboration with ERDC to serve as its dive and dive safety officer; and participation of USACE-certified divers from throughout the Corps.

"Without a doubt, working with Todd as well as John helped us move forward with this program," said Benoit. "Engaging guys like Todd and John was truly the final piece to the realization of this exceptional dive team."

Manny, a retired U.S. Navy Senior Chief brings to USACE Portland and the NRDST 22 years of military experience as a first class and saturation diver as well as operational expertise with remotely operated vehicles, underwater robotics and cameras known as ROV's.

"We have an exceptional dive program made up of very dedicated people including John," says Manny who joined the Portland District in 2009. "Together we've been able to safely and efficiently accomplish a lot of good work for the benefit of USACE as well as other military and federal agencies."

During 12 days in October, Manny and Benoit led a team of seven to Busan, South Korea, where a bottom SONAR survey as well as a surface and below-water inspection to check the structural integrity of Pier 8 berthing and seawall was performed.

This inspection was truly an international, multi-agency effort as the bottom survey was performed by Portland District specialists Allen Stewart and Lee Loomis, along with divers Chader, Gawarecki and Kyle Tanner of Nashville District. Moreover, the dive team was escorted daily by a boat crew of four South Korean Soldiers while the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command and Army's 837<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion provided logistics.

“In working with Rick and his team, I have been amazed by their persistence to get the job done,’ said Haskins. “All inspections have been completed on time and well under budget. In the first OCONUS inspection alone Rick and his team saved my program one third the estimated cost. While each OCONUS effort has many unknowns, not only has Rick realistically anticipated these in the planning phase, he has done an outstanding job to mitigate new issues quickly and effectively.”