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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. Civilian Dedicates Career to His Country

By Polli Barnes Keller
Gulf Region North

TIKRIT, Iraq- Living on the edge or just answering the call of a chosen path; life is as exciting or as dull as one makes it. Working as an engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sounds a bit dull, but after reading through Thomas L. Armstrong's 34 years of accomplishments with the Corps, dull does not apply.

Traveling to exotic places or answering the call for volunteers during disaster response missions, Armstrong's career has taken him to Europe, the Middle East and four combat tours - Kuwait, Afghanistan and twice to Iraq.

"Each deployment renews my respect for those in our military," Armstrong said. "I can't begin to express my appreciation for what they do for our nation. They exemplify the best of the best."

During his tenure this past year as the Gulf Region North engineering and construction chief, Iraq benefited greatly from Armstrong's commitment to improving the country's infrastructure.

"There are many Iraqis that see a better future for their country and are dedicating their lives to work toward that goal," Armstrong said. "I really admire what they are doing and enjoyed working alongside them."

With his wife, Gwen, of 38 years by his side, this Texas Aggie from the Fort Worth District successfully completed projects valued at more than \$350 million, awarded projects in excess of \$420 million and managed an ongoing workload of more than 225 active projects valued at approximately \$700 million.

"They think we are crazy," exclaimed Gwen Armstrong, when asked what the family thinks of them working together in a war zone.

"I'll go anywhere with Tom," Gwen said. "We've deployed together three times; two years in Germany, five years in Saudi Arabia, and seven months in Iraq. I've met some of the best people in the world and learned it is great to be an American!"

Exposing himself to security threats, Armstrong was confronted with a few close calls. While visiting and mentoring offices in Iraq, he was hit by an improvised explosive device. But still, he continued on.

"I enjoy the variety of the work and the rapid pace of the work execution," explained Armstrong. "I also enjoy going to new places."



meeting new people and being a part of, what I believe are, significant programs contributing to the security of America.”

Nominated by Col. Frederick S. Wolf, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region North; Armstrong was honored in November 2006 for his significant contributions to Army engineering by receiving the prestigious bronze de Fleury Medal.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers adopted this medal as an award because of the values demonstrated by the man for whom it is named, Francoise Louis Tesseidre de Fleury, for his bravery and courage shown during the revolutionary war; values of special engineer Soldiers.

Asked if he would do it all again, Armstrong said, “In a word, absolutely. Am I planning to do it again? Not really, but I wasn’t planning on not deploying on the previous deployments. Who knows what opportunities the future will bring?”

Looking to the future and the opportunity it brings, Armstrong looks forward to retiring.

“In December 2007, I will have worked for the Corps of Engineers for 35 years. This has afforded us the opportunity to live in a way never expected to live and to have experiences we could only imagine. While I have enjoyed being a part of the Corps family over the years, I’m reaching the point where I’m thinking more and more of other endeavors. Retirement is probably one of those endeavors.”

Like de Fleury, Armstrong’s commitment to the Corps mission is demonstrated through his professional path and undertaking

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