



HEADLINE NEWS

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
579th Engineer Detachment (FEST-M)**

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FEST-M fights flooding in the desert by Mark Abueg

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (Feb. 27, 2011) – They were happy with the result. They were proud of what they accomplished. More importantly, a group of engineers helped their own grounds flow a little bit smoother yesterday by removing a staggering amount of trash clogging their drainage project.

Afghanistan's rainy season brought about flash flooding throughout various parts of Kandahar Airfield (KAF), and while roads and ditches filled with water, a particular water grate wouldn't let any more water pass through.

"A couple of weeks ago we were inundated with rain and it brought a bunch of debris downstream," said Col. Richard W. Dean II, commander of the 579th Engineer Detachment (Forward Engineer Support Team - Main). "It plugged up the grate and created a scouring action and eroded part of the levee that's nearby."



Rick Ferguson, left, watches as Sgt. 1st Class Candido Aguilar removes debris from a water grate on Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. (Photo by Mark Abueg)

Dean and his detachment are leading the efforts to create a drainage canal and levee berm system that will alleviate flooding concerns and eliminate further erosion damage on KAF.

"The drainage project will keep the water in the canal and flow off the airfield expeditiously," he said.

But with the grate plugged up, drainage plans were going nowhere.

So all the team needed to do was just get the trash out, right? Not so fast.

"The contractor that's on base is only allowed to perform work up to the fence line and we're right at the fence line," Dean said. "We felt that it wasn't in the contractor's realm. Since a contractor couldn't be on board before more heavy rain came, I decided to take the initiative and try to find a way to make it happen."

And so Dean did.

With the help of 12 volunteers from his unit, Dean and his team proceeded to the grate full of rubbish.

"Wow," said Alfonso Santa, FEST-M architect. "That's a lot of trash and debris."

So much of it in fact that the team had to sit on the grate and literally kick it all out.

"I think I got my exercise for the day," Santa said.

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LEFT: A look before the 579th Engineer Detachment (FEST-M) cleared out nearly six inches of debris and trash from the water grate. RIGHT: Col. Richard W. Dean II observes the result of his detachment's efforts to clear out the grate.

After a lot of kicking, and perhaps a few bouts of screaming, the grate that was once filled with trash left little doubt that the FEST-M had accomplished its mission.

"I'm really glad we were able to get this done," Dean said. "In an hour and a half with a dozen people, we got a lot of work done. The debris was at least six inches deep full of all kinds of debris. It was a team effort that did a great job and hopefully we won't have a scouring action and more intense flooding like we did a couple of weeks ago at KAF."

Next up is for the already approved drainage design to be constructed.

"There are different phases to the project, but the hope is to have at least one level of protection for the next flood season," Dean said. "Cleaning up today is a step in the right direction."