



New Well-Drilling Rig Arrives In Djibouti

By Captain Jerord E. Wilson

It was like a prayer being answered when an eagerly awaited new well-drilling truck arrived at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti in May 2007 to be used by the 1132d Engineer Detachment. The North Carolina Army National Guard unit, working as part of the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa (CJTF–HOA), accepted the rig and performed preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) to identify any mechanical problems with the system and prepare the equipment for the difficult conditions it would face in Djibouti.

In the past, well-drilling equipment took a long time to set up and, because of the thick geological structure of the rock formations in Djibouti, the equipment was subject to severe maintenance problems. Those problems delayed the creation of much-needed wells because repair parts had to be ordered from the United States. The capabilities of the new equipment are impressive. It travels with two large trucks, and the drill can reach depths of more than 2,000 feet. It can use either 6- or 12-inch steel roller cone drill bits designed to chew through the toughest geological formations in Djibouti.

The new well-drilling truck is manufactured by the Laibe Corporation, Indianapolis, Indiana. A representative from the company spent several weeks at Camp Lemonier to train members of the 1132d on the equipment. Temperatures in Djibouti can reach 100 degrees by midmorning, and the increase

in temperatures could have some effect on the operation of the equipment. The crew operating the new machine will have to take precautions against the effects of the heat on the equipment and on themselves as operators.

Previously, the equipment used by the 1132d took about a week to set up before drilling could even begin. To drill 100 feet with the old drilling rig could take a considerable length of time, depending on soil composition. The new drilling equipment can be set up and ready to drill in just one day. Also, the new rig can drill 100 feet in five hours, even in the toughest soil in Djibouti, increasing the number of wells that can be drilled at locations throughout the country.

The mission of CJTF–HOA is to prevent conflict, promote regional stability, and protect coalition interests in order to prevail against extremism. The CJTF–HOA organization began operations at Camp Lemonier on 13 May 2003. It works with partner nations on humanitarian assistance; disaster relief; consequence management; and civic action programs, to include medical and veterinary care, school and medical clinic construction, and water development projects. 

Captain Wilson worked for the CJTF–HOA civil-military operations section until July. He is now back in the United States.