

Huntsville Center CWM Legend Retires After 24 Years

Posted At : March 28, 2015 6:12 AM | Posted By : Admin

Related Categories: Other

Article Submitted By: USACE Huntsville Center representative.

Huntsville, Alabama After more than 24 years of civil service, Charles (Chuck) Twing, chief, Chemical Warfare Design Center, retires March 31. His accomplishments were recognized during a March 20 retirement ceremony attended by current and past Huntsville Center employees as well as representatives from Redstone Arsenal and other Army agencies outside the USACE and Huntsville Center realm.

"These people didn't have to come to the Center on a rainy day like today, but they showed up and that is a testament to you Chuck", said Col. Robert Ruch, Huntsville Center commander. "That speaks strongly to the support you've given."

Prior to his hiring in 1990 as the second UXO safety specialist brought on board at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntsville Division, Twing served 20 years in the active-duty Army as an EOD officer.

After retiring from the Army, Twing hired on with the then-Huntsville Division to assist with efforts to start an UXO Investigation and Remediation Program. Over the next 24 years, Twing was instrumental in the development and growth of Huntsville Center's Ordnance and Explosives Directorate and Military Munitions Response Program.

As Twing's career was initially focused on locating and removing munitions at BRAC and Formerly Used Defense Sites, he said in the early 1990s he noticed there was no real process for dealing with Non-Stockpile CWM discovered at these sites. It was then that he became interested in the CWM issues.

"I had a background in chemical weapons from the military as one of the aspects of EOD is chemical munitions", Twing said. "We were working on FUDS and ran into two or three of them that had chemical history and so we started to do remediation and investigation. Then, as we were working those projects, the Army said 'stop' because they didn't have any way of dealing with non-stockpile chemical munitions due to lack of policy and procedures."

Although the Army had moved forward since the 1970s with procedures to destroy its stockpile of chemical munitions, and Huntsville Division was actively involved in chemical demilitarization efforts, the Army hadn't addressed what to do with non-stockpile chemical munitions that were being found sporadically at sites across the nation. Often these sites were on former military installations (mostly World War II-era sites that had closed after the war ended).

Twing said as state environmental agencies and the Environmental Protection Agency pressed the Army to produce policy and guidance for the removal, transport and destruction of chemical

materiel.

"The Army decided to form the Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project to come up with a methodology of disposal of any munitions we found", Twing said. "I saw that as an opportunity for developing a niche program at Huntsville Division."

Twing and his coworkers then began working the issues of what to do with non-stockpile chemical munitions found at various sites. Twing then began building procedures to determine its potential danger, developing plans to reduce its risk and remove it, and guidance to oversee the execution of those plans.

It took a while to develop, but we worked with them hand-in-hand and it just kind of developed and grew into what it is now. Through the years as the OE Directorate and its CWM Design Center missions grew, Twing had become so knowledgeable regarding the niche of removing and transporting non-stockpile chemical munitions, he began providing briefs to Headquarters USACE and the Department of the Army.

In the 2007, he eventually spent four months on a special detail to the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment Safety and Occupational Health in the Pentagon writing more policy, guidance and procedures.

Being known as experts in removing chemical munitions, Huntsville Center has also been called upon by other nations to help in the removal and destruction of non-stockpile CWM. In 2001, Twing served as part of an Inter-Service agreement with the Royal Belgian Military cleaning up sites still contaminated with CWM from World War I.

"We took our system there and helped them get rid of chemical munitions and that was certainly a career highlight", Twing said.

However, when talking about career highlights, Twing said he couldn't be prouder of the growth of the CWM Design Center as the single executing agency for the investigation and recovery of chemical warfare materiel for the Department of Defense.

"It started as a Working Team with me as a Team Leader to a Division in the Ordnance and Explosives Directorate, doing \$69 million last fiscal year", Twing said.

"The people I've worked with over my career were always well tuned to our operations. In the early day, they picked up the ball and ran with it. They knew how to do their jobs very well. They still are today too. This is a well-oiled machine and as a supervisor I'm proud when I see them working well without me being involved."

When Bill Sargent, the current director of the Ordnance and Explosives Directorate, came to Huntsville in 1994, he recalls how the ordnance program was in its infancy and Twing was a leader in its development as well as the development of munitions remediation for USACE. "Chuck was the primary person who pushed and developed the chemical response program here in Huntsville and helped write the guidance documents that are in place today for the Army and USACE concerning chemical munitions response actions", Sargent said.

I guess you could call him one of the 'Founding Fathers' of the ordnance program within USACE and he will be missed. As with most programs, the initiators move on eventually and it's up to those that follow to carry on the legacy and continue to improve what was started.