



LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

March 2024

What a great start to the new year! We have all been extremely busy since the holidays and there's no sign of things letting up. It's proposal season again! Always better to be busy.

The Foundation has really gone global. In the European theater, we received a \$1 million dollar grant from PM/WRA to conduct PSSM in Georgia. The PSSM team is staying extremely busy keeping up with multiple demand signals. We are reaching out to USAFRICOM and offering our support. Lee and Afifa visited Peru last month to discuss the potential for PSSM work there with the Ministry of Defense.



Mr. Al Vosburgh, CEO

Paul Eldred is back in Fiji cranking up that project and Adan and Dan are in Majuro, RMI confirming schedules and setting up logistics for the Wotje deployment later this year. Wayne and CJ are leaning into projects in the Philippines, and we have high hopes those will kick off very soon.

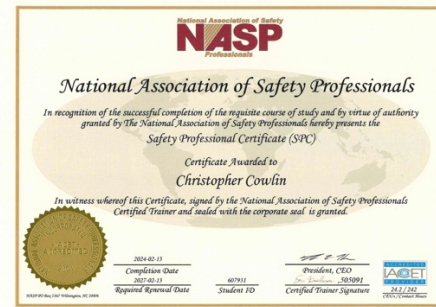


Prof. Rutherford w/ Adan Morones present one of our excellent recent graduates with their certification

We have been fortunate to host distinguished visitors from the U.S. Embassy at both the KCTC/EHP and the K4 Project in Cambodia. In Vietnam, our friend, Dr Ken Rutherford visited our team in Quang Tri and observed the Provincial Military Command conducting bomb cutting operations in Cam Lo.

I had the opportunity to do an interview last week to talk about the Foundation with a Journalist here in Hawaii and we talked about our pretty humble beginnings when I joined back in 2005. We went from four people in 2005 to the big organization we have today. Lots of mistakes and hard lessons learned, but some great work along the way.

All of you are what make Golden West great!



Dr C.J Cowlin has been awarded the SPC by the NASP

As we head into the busy summer season, stay safe and don't get distracted. We have a new safety program we will be promoting and all of you will have the opportunity to work on different aspects of safety and gain certifications that will enhance our professional standing.

Hope to see you somewhere in the world soon! Take care – be safe!

AI

TEAM PSSM VISIT PERU

[Afifa Spoke at the War Materials School of the Peruvian Armed Forces](#)

Afifa Habbassi, the PSSM Moldova Country Manager, recently had the privilege of speaking at the War Materials School of the Peruvian Armed Forces. She visited Peru along with our own Physical Security and Stockpile Management Director, Lee Moroney, in response to a request for support in PSSM.

It was opportunity for Afifa to share her extraordinary journey with the new Logistics cadets. As a qualified female Ammunition Technical Officer from the Tunisian Armed Forces, who has seamlessly transitioned into the humanitarian sector, Afifa embodies resilience and success amidst the industry's challenges. Her story is testament to overcoming barriers and demonstrating that with determination, the hurdles in the path of females in Ammunition Management can be overcome.



Afifa speaking to the new Logistics cadets at the War Materials School of the Peruvian Armed Forces

We extend our sincere gratitude to the War Materials School of the Peruvian Armed Forces for this collaborative opportunity. Golden West is enthusiastic about nurturing this relationship, anticipating a future of mutual growth and shared successes in Ammunition Management.

TEAM THAILAND HONORED BY TMAC

John Kelsch & Jim Shelstad honored with TMAC EOD Instructor badges

The Royal Thai Armed Forces #RTAF have officially approved the TMAC EOD personnel to wear the distinguished TMAC EOD Insignia.

In a proud moment for our team, GySgt Pierce Draper, John Kelsch, and Jim Shelstad were honored with the TMAC EOD Instructor badges by #TMAC Director General, Lieutenant General Nattawut Sabyeroop. This accolade is a testament to their decade-long dedication to Thailand's demining efforts and their impactful roles in training, mentoring, and operational support with Golden West.



Jim Shelstad, Lieutenant General Nattawut Sabyeroop, GySgt Pierce Draper, John Kelsch

Our heartfelt thanks go to US MARFORPAC and US HDR&D for their continuous support in funding this vital project.

INTERVIEW WITH DAN KOCH

From Iraq to HMA: Dan Koch's Impactful Journey

In our ongoing series of interviews with our team members making a significant impact in humanitarian efforts, we had the privilege of sitting down with Dan Koch, an ex-military EOD technician turned humanitarian worker with the Golden West Humanitarian Foundation (GWHF). In this article, we dive deep into Dan's experiences, motivations, and the challenges he faces in his mission to make affected areas safe.

Dan's journey into the world of EOD began when he enlisted in the military in 1998 as an infantryman. As a young recruit, he quickly found himself training infantry students during the early days of the Iraq War in 2003. The pressure of EOD inspired him and put him on a path that intrigued his challenge-focused mindset.

Dan was deployed to Fallujah, Iraq, in February 2007. His deployments included some of the most perilous regions, such as the Anbar Province, known for its hardcore militias and the notorious Triangle of Death. His deployments were marked



Dan home from deployment in 2002, meeting his daughter for the first time

by relentless encounters with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), where rotations changed from non-stop encounters to relative calm as tribal leaders took control.

Over his military career, Dan had seven deployments, including stints in Afghanistan, participation in marine expeditionary missions, and assignments in Spain and Djibouti, Africa. His journey through these intense and high-stress situations forged his resilience and expertise in dealing with explosive ordnance.

In 2018, after nearly two decades of service, Dan's intense military service eventually took its toll, with injuries including a shot in the knee in Afghanistan, two spine injuries, and rotator cuff problems, he submitted his paperwork to retire.

His transition into humanitarian work began as he signed with PAE, returning to Iraq as a contractor. There, he helped set up an EOD program and worked with Special Operations Forces in Syria, collaborating with Kurdish allies who impressed him with their eagerness to learn. He led an intensive training program, having to condense a 30-day curriculum into just 15-days and conducting real-life situation analysis during nighttime tests to prepare his cohort.



Prepping ordnance for disposal



An IED lane with Iraqi soldiers

However, life took a turn during Covid. Dan found himself as a stay-at-home dad for 18 months before venturing into a radically different field — forensic work in Djibouti, which involved processing info and checking evidence of EOD related activities across Africa.

In January 2023, Dan joined us at Golden West Humanitarian Foundation (GWHF). His first assignment with the organization was in Macedonia, where he trained three elements of the PRD Interior and Defense. Dan's journey from a military EOD technician to a humanitarian worker has been marked by diverse experiences and an unwavering commitment to making the world safer.



With Syrian Kurd graduates after course completion

Dan's transition from a military EOD technician to a humanitarian worker with GWHF demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of individuals committed to making the world safer. His journey has been marked by challenges, personal growth, and a profound dedication to protecting communities from the threat of unexploded ordnance.

In the world of humanitarian mine action, Dan's story is a testament to the positive impact that individuals can make in the most challenging of circumstances.



On ops in the Marshall Islands



PROGRAM UPDATE

Swim For Life has had a busy month of meetings at the offices of four district Bureaus of Education and Training (BOETs) briefing the achievements of 2023 and discussing the workplans for 2024. Participants included the Provincial Department of Education and Training (DOET, Project Coordination Committee – PCC) members, BOET leaders and staff, and Headmasters from the pool-based schools.



All agreed that the DP process can be started earlier this year, ensuring the maximum number of children are enrolled in the program, and soliciting their commitments to stay until the end of the swimming courses.

There will also be meetings with parents in Trieu Phong district – where there is a very high rate of children dropping out - and introducing them to our Drowning Prevention program and educating them regarding the lifesaving significance of survival swimming and water safety classes for their children.