

Navy Entomology Center of Excellence officer recognized

By Lt. j.g. Ryan Larson
Navy Entomology Center
of Excellence PAO

Lt. James Dunford of the Navy Entomology Center of Excellence (NECE) was presented the Defense Meritorious Service Medal in a ceremony held at the center March 10, for his outstanding service as an Individual Augmentee while deployed to Afghanistan.

Dunford deployed with the U.S. Army 62nd Medical Brigade Task Force from March to November 2010 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

He served as the entomologist for the Cooperative Medical Assistance (CMA) Team; a small unit tasked with planning, coordinating and executing medical, veterinary, and public health humanitarian civil-military operations.

Dunford facilitated and exported sustainable Health Sector Development initiatives in order to assist Afghanistan in the establishment and management of self-sustaining medical, veterinary and agricultural entomology programs.

As part of the CMA Team, he also provided training to more



Photo courtesy of Lt. James Dunford
Lt. James Dunford (center) walks with Afghan children while performing tick surveillance during a veterinary outreach and sustainment operation.

than 1,000 secondary, graduate and professional medical and non-medical Afghan nationals.

The CMA team executed a "train the trainer" strategy to disseminate medical and agricultural knowledge throughout Afghan villages by educating village elders.

These tactics are part of a larger counter insurgency operation to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people by upholding the country's infrastructure and ability to sustain themselves in the absence of coalition support. "Lt. Dunford's recognition for

his deployment to Afghanistan in support of the CMA is well deserved," said Lt. Cmdr. Jeffrey Stancil, NECE technical director.

"He proactively designed and implemented agricultural, veterinary and medical capacity building programs that were the model for this type of counter insurgency operation."

In the summer of 2010, the team travelled to Bamyán Province to teach entomology, veterinary, and human health and hygiene courses to schools in the region. The team also



Photo by Jose Medina
Navy Entomology Center of Excellence Officer in Charge Cmdr. Eric Hoffman (right) presents Lt. James Dunford with the Defense Meritorious Service Medal for his outstanding service while deployed to Afghanistan as an Individual Augmentee.

worked with students on speaking general entomology and medical terms in English.

"It was a great honor to teach in Bamyán," said Dunford.

"After sharing information on medically and agriculturally important insects with hundreds of junior high and high school students in several remote valleys, I see that the bright, yet isolated culture in this part of the word is eager to learn."

"Being able to teach at some of the schools in the region was especially memorable, and

learning that several students in each class were already asking questions in English was a testament to their dedication to education," said Dunford. "I look forward to hearing good things about this part of Afghanistan in the future."

Due to CMA mission requirements, the team frequently travelled "outside the wire" and relied heavily on external security teams to mitigate hostile situations, which Dunford referred to as "snippets."

According to Dunford, none of the CMA missions outside the wire would have been possible without the support and expertise of the security teams and civil affairs personnel located across the country.

"Many of my most memorable experiences involved working with the men and woman at the small installations much closer to the frontlines— I sincerely appreciate and am humbled by all that they do," said Dunford.

In April, Dunford will be departing the Navy Entomology Center of Excellence for a Duty under Instruction fellowship at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.