



Service Members Renovate School in Uganda: Dining Hall dedicated to Fallen Soldier



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"I think that he would have been thrilled and flattered and probably wouldn't want to take the credit." —Laura Sklaver, Mother of Capt. Benjamin A. Sklaver

Overview

U.S. Army Capt. Benjamin Sklaver, 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, worked in Kitgum, Uganda, in 2006, where his mission was to help refugees re-establish communities. Later, he founded ClearWater Initiative to provide water to areas affected by humanitarian emergencies.

Between 2002-2006, as violence escalated and the UPDF moved against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Kitgum High School, the LRA's headquarters four years prior, sustained damage in the fighting. In a two-week exercise in October 2009, Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) embarked on a project to renovate the school. Capt. Sklaver died in Afghanistan on 2 Oct. 2009, but the village remembered his efforts by placing a plaque on the renovated school in his honor.



Image reprinted from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution - Courtesy of Jake A. Herrle

The Bottom Line

Ugandans were grateful for Capt. Benjamin Sklaver's efforts to provide them with clean water. So, when U.S. Army Africa teamed with the Ugandan People's Defense Force to renovate a high school dining hall in Kitgum, the work was dedicated to him.

many missions of the CJTF-HOA geared to enable Uganda to improve the country's educational and security efforts.

Although Capt. Sklaver's mission in 2006 with the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion could have ended upon his redeployment, his efforts to improve the lives of Africans continued upon his return to the United States. Capt. Sklaver, through his own initiative, founded ClearWater Initiative, a New Haven-based nonprofit organization, which focuses primarily on conflict-affected areas of northern Uganda. The goal of ClearWater Initiative is to link up donors with partners to bring clean water infrastructure projects to remote villages like Kitgum.

Outcome

The Team

The U.S. Embassy, through U.S. Army Africa and CJTF-HOA facilitated the renovation of the school's dining hall, which was without a roof and windows. A construction crew made up of U.S. Navy Seabees and engineers from Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya and Burundi partnered to complete the renovations. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 3 led reconstruction efforts.

Objectives

CJTF-HOA conducts operations to strengthen partner nations' security capacity to enable long term regional stability. The Kitgum High School project was one of

The dedication and hard work of the East African Community engineers and U.S. Africa Command service members, through the coordination of the State Department, made the reconstruction of the damaged school a success. Approximately, 1,200 individual panes of glass were hand-cut by the African participants and used in the construction of the windows in the dining hall. The school currently has more than 43 teachers and 1,200 students from the Kitgum area.

In 2009, Capt. Sklaver was again serving his country, this time in Afghanistan, when he was killed Oct. 2 by a suicide bomber west of Kandahar. The village of Kitgum did not, and could not, forget the man who made such an impact on their lives as he tried to improve the quality of the lives of the Ugandan people through his water initiatives.