



DRMS International News

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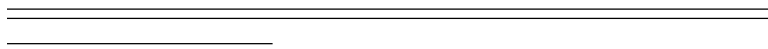
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Success equals teamwork at DRMO Bitburg

An interview with the chief, Wes Vaughn



DRMO Chief Wes Vaughn

DRMO CHIEF WES VAUGHN has seen continuous improvement at the Bitburg facility since his arrival from DRMO Livorno in September 1999. “The challenge now is to maintain what we have — an excellent crew and an excellent facility.”

During his time at the DRMO, new construction has continued on a daily basis, including work on an administrative-warehouse complex, a second large warehouse and two smaller storage areas. “At one point, we had to use a loaner building for bulk storage. It’s taken a lot of extra effort to work around the construction and get things done,” said Vaughn.



Whether it be working around construction projects or assisting customers, Vaughn attributes his success to the support provided to him by his staff. “A DRMO chief is nothing without the people behind me. You have to care about your people or they aren’t going to work for you,” he said.

Including Vaughn, the DRMO is comprised of an eight-person staff. “At larger DRMOs, individual people do specific jobs. At a small DRMO like ours, everyone has to do a bit of everything,” he said. “If you need help, everyone pitches in. All you have to do is just say the word.”



The DRMO is a one-hour round trip from its host facility, the U.S. Air Force base at Spangdahlem, Germany. This has meant an ongoing challenge for the DRMO Bitburg staff. “It’s difficult for host base personnel to get down here on a regular basis when we need assistance. They have to balance their schedules with what we require and the travel time involved,” he said. “That in mind, we try to make the most of each visit, particularly when it comes to support for our construction projects.”

In the “truth-is-stranger-than-fiction” category, one of the DRMO’s 30-year veteran German employees does not speak English. “One of our other German employees, who speaks fluent English, provides him guidance and training. This works, and our non-English speaking local national is a dedicated and hard-working employee.”

The DRMO supports a far-flung customer base. “We have local Air Force customers at Spangdahlem, and Bitburg, as well as Army, Navy, Air Force and NATO units in Luxemburg, Holland, Sweden, Belgium and Finland,” said Vaughn.



Building progresses...

“Meeting customer requirements can sometimes be a real balancing act,” Vaughn noted. His staff recently coordinated a detailed furniture move that involved the Feed the Children charity and Spangdahlem Air Force base. “The base had a number of dorms filled with used furniture, enough to load up four or five 16-wheel trucks,” said Vaughn “We were working toward donating this property to Feed the Children. But people were living in the dorm rooms! The trick to this one was to coordinate movement of the old furniture out of the dorms on the same day that the new furniture was moved in – quite a drill!”



...at DRMO Bitburg.

Another on-going challenge cited by Vaughn is to find a way to better educate military customers on turn-in procedures, reutilization and use of the DRMS Web site. “We don’t have a training room, with computers, that is big enough to support 20-25 people. We’re working with the 52nd Supply Customer Service to use their training room,” said Vaughn. “We’re down here in the woods, in the middle of nowhere. It’s difficult for customers to get here. We want them to understand how to use the Web to find property. It will really make a difference to them.”

In the meantime, Vaughn has developed a method that supports customers unfamiliar with a Web-based approach to finding property. “We do a monthly inventory and e-mail it to a number of our regular customers,” he said.

“It’s a lot of hard work,” he said, “None of us could do it alone. The success of any DRMO is based on the ability of its people to get the job done. I’m very fortunate to have extremely talented, ‘can-do’ people here.”

DRMO Bitburg

“Around the Office”



John Wade,
property disposal specialist.

John has worked at DRMO Bitburg for a short time; he had worked at DRMO Okalahoma City for six years prior to coming to Germany. “We really keep after keeping the place up and running. I can’t say enough about the people here – this is a real “A-Team.”

He said one of his biggest challenges is turn-in paperwork. “There is a big turn over of personnel at Spangdahlem, meaning generators don’t always understand how to turn in property correctly. It’s critical to continually educate our customers and keep the paperwork in order.”



Gertrud Fandel,
property disposal technician.

Gertrud began at the DRMO on October 15, after spending three years doing administrative work for the Spangdahlem security force. “I’ve learned everything through OJT so far.”

She has developed a reference notebook she calls her “study book,” to which she often refers, particularly when ensuring a document has been filled out correctly. “I’m really looking forward to getting the ‘big picture’ at an upcoming DRMO Basic Course I’m enrolled in.”



Massimo Marongiu,
a receiver at the DRMO.

Massimo is an Italian national who worked at DRMO Livorno for eight years prior to coming to DRMO Bitburg. “I moved here because I was looking for new experiences and travel.”

He said that moving to DRMO Bitburg has been a good choice for him. “We have excellent working relationships here and it’s a great facility. My professional focus is to give the right support to customers and train them how best to use our system. It’s an ongoing process that makes it easier for all concerned.”



Garfield Tolbert,
a material identifier and handler.

Garfield has been with the DRMO for five years and served for 24 years in the Air Force as a heavy equipment operator. “Scrap management takes a lot of work. You have to take a close look at what comes through the door. Different types of metals can be mixed together and sometimes demil items or useable property are mistakenly added to a delivery.”

Though retired, Tolbert’s military experience is not forgotten. Regardless of working in the often dusty DRMO yard or warehouse, his highly polished boots are kept “inspection ready.”



Walter Nitz,
supervisory property disposal specialist.

Walter is Wes Vaughn’s “right hand man.”

He spent 27 years at DRMO Seckenhiem before coming to DRMO Bitburg in March 2000. “I do a little bit of everything here! I work local and national sales as well as the R/T/D program.”

He considers R/T/D to be the DRMO’s most difficult mission. “I consider it the hardest aspect of our mission. We can’t wait around. We have to go out and find a home for the property as quickly as possible.”

He is particularly pleased when helping provide donations to charities. “I’ve worked with Feed the Children to help send furniture to Romanian schools. The schools there have nothing to work with, nothing at all! It’s great to help them out.” Nitz routinely works with the National Guard, providing Guard units with five-ton trucks and other vehicles.

The bottom line for him is simple: “To keep the DRMO rolling along, we have to stay on top of whatever area of our mission we’re focused on, day after day.”



Looking for the DRMO?

You won't find it on base. As a matter of fact, you won't find a base in the Nuernberg area. The DRMO is now in the middle of a large German commercial area. The DRMO sign, above, can be found just past a Daihatsu dealership, the white building in the foreground in the picture below.



The tan building with brown roofing at the right of the picture is part of the DRMO. It's the last pre-WWII building still standing in what was once a sprawling U.S. Army Base, Johnson Barracks.



Empty shelving tells a vivid tale of today's DRMO Nuernberg: The level of property being turned in doesn't support keeping the facility open.

Sunset at DRMO Nuernberg

The once large facility now near closure

“THE ARMY COMMUNITY in this area numbered around 65,000 back in the Cold War days,” said Dennis Collins, Sr., DRMO Nuernberg’s acting station manager. “But close-down of the area’s bases began in 1993, and we’re pretty much all that’s left.”

“There was so much happening here in the old days, that we often had trucks parked around the corner waiting to unload,” he said. Large commands, such as the 1st Armored Division, were then located in the Nuernberg area.

The DRMO can be found on a piece of land that was once part of Johnson Barracks. Collins estimates the former base, now home to such civilian pursuits as a brewery and a car dealership, once occupied about 1,000 square meters of land.

Thirteen buildings at the former base have been torn down to make way for German businesses. “The DRMO’s old warehouse is the last of the pre-World War II structures remaining in the area,” Collins said. Before the war, the building was part of a German Army base and had been used to store grain. It also once served as the U.S. Army’s regional post office.

The old building has been used in a number of different ways since becoming part of the DRMO. “We held auctions there, seating as many as 150 people,” said Collins. Another large room was used as an employee training area. The employee’s break room was big enough to include a pool table. Electronics and other high-value items were stored in yet a larger area. “We just don’t need the space for anything at this point,” he said.

Few pictures remain of the DRMO’s early days, said Warehouseman Erich Derrer, a German national and 39-year veteran of the U.S. civil service who has worked at the facility since 1994. “We don’t have a lot of pictures because they were forbidden back in the Cold War days due to security precautions.”

“We have seven employees currently on the staff,” noted Collins. “We averaged 23 until the wall came down.”



Who will feed the cats?

Like other DRMOs, the employees have adopted stray cats as a way to keep the rodent population at bay. Like the other cats at the DRMO, this calico will have to find a new home.



DRMO Grafenwoehr Chief Ben Benavides, who oversees the Nuernberg operation, (left) discusses plans for closure with Dennis Collins, Sr., DRMO Nuernberg's acting station manager (right).



“In the past, we held outside sales in a German fest tent the size of a warehouse,” Collins noted. “Now we’re a satellite of DRMO Grafenwoehr and closure of the DRMO is expected in the future.”

“It’s been a long and sometimes difficult process,” said DRMO Grafenwoehr Chief Ben Benavides, who oversees the Nuernberg operation. “But Dennis has done a great job leading the charge. He’s one of my key players, and personifies the DLA ‘One Team, One Focus’ motto.”

“It’s not easy closing down. We Americans are use to moving around. Some of my German employees have been here for the whole of their work lives,” said Collins. “But the level of property coming in just doesn’t support continuing operations at the DRMO.”



Lots of empty spaces at the DRMO: the once busy auction room (left) and a cleaned-out office (right) provide silent testimony to the DRMO’s fate.

Attention to detail is the name of the game

Pierside removal “exemplifies Diamond Service”

The inport pickup promotes clear sailing for the Navy
And a clean bill of health for the environment



USNS Sirius moored at Augusta Bay, Italy.



The pierside hazardous waste off-load begins.



Giuseppe Zaffino (left), representing the Italian contractor Intergreen, goes over the details with DRMO Sigonella’s Dino Garofalo (right).

“TO ME, PIERSIDE REMOVAL exemplifies our Diamond Service concept,” said Dino Garofalo, DRMO Sigonella property disposal specialist. “We come to the customer. We’ve developed a timely and smooth process. When it’s over, so is a major headache for our Navy customers. Hazardous waste is not something you want to keep for any length of time on a ship. We know how to handle it and we like getting the job done.”

Though the actual pierside removal may take as little as one hour, getting it right requires lengthy planning. It’s a detailed operation. Close coordination is required between representatives from DRMS, the contractor and the Navy to ensure that each shipment of hazardous waste is properly managed.

Garofalo coordinated a recent pierside removal in support of the *USNS Sirius*, a supply ship manned by U.S. Navy and civilian personnel. Thirty-four barrels of hazardous waste were off-loaded, including material such as used oil and used hydraulic fluid.

The first phase of this pierside removal started far at sea. “We picked up this shipment from the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise* while at sea,” said Navy Ensign Mike Bruce, material officer aboard the *USNS Sirius*. “First, I flew to the *Enterprise* to inspect the material. I had a list of the hazardous waste we were set to receive. I matched this list with the actual material. Once I knew everything was correct and in order, the material was prepared for an at-sea transfer to our ship.”

Once onboard the *Sirius*, a message is sent from the ship’s task force commander, CTF 63, to the DRMO requesting a pierside removal. It’s a standard Navy message – in the same format the Navy has used for years – but sent in an updated way. In the past, Garofalo would have had to go to his local communications facility to pick up a hard copy. Not any more. The DRMO receives the message directly via e-mail.



Intergreen's Giuseppe Zaffino places identification stickers on the barrels of waste. The "R" stands for "rifuti," which means waste in Italian.



The material is loaded on a truck for removal to a recycling center.



U.S. Navy Ensign Mike Bruce (front) finalizes the documentation with Dino Garofalo (back).

Garofalo begins coordinating an off-load at once. The material is added to DRMS' computerized hazardous waste tracking system. The contractor doing the actual removal, Intergreen, is contacted. Intergreen must be prepared to carry out the disposal within 48 hours. One day before the event, Italian customs is notified.

With the ship pierside, inspection of the material begins. "Normally, we do this onboard the ship," said Garofalo, "but the cargo officer asked if we could do this on the pier." The barrels of waste material were located on a deck just below a shipboard crane, and other cargo couldn't be moved until the inspection was complete.

Since Garofalo and a representative from Intergreen were present, and a trucker was standing by to move the material, the request could be granted. "We try to do whatever we can to accommodate our customers, as long we can meet the terms of the contract and follow Italian law," said Garofalo.

He and the contractor's representative began at once to compare the delivery order with packing lists attached to each barrel. "We also make sure that the barrels are properly labeled," added Garofalo. Stenciled on the barrels are such things as the item's stock number, type of hazardous waste, the ship of origin's name, and, most importantly, the Document Turn-in Identification number.

"Included in this load from the *Enterprise* was a barrel of oily rags from the *Sirius*," said Garofalo. An addition can sometimes be made to the removal if like material is on the delivery order. "I have to make some phone calls on the spot, but it can be done," he said. Since oily rags weren't part of the original delivery order, the barrel in question had to be returned to the ship. "We do whatever we can to help a customer, but in this case, it just wasn't possible."

Giuseppe Zaffino, the Intergreen representative present, noted satisfaction with the recycling effort. "Recycling is the future for Italy," he said. "We've improved our laws over the past few years, and recycling such things as oil and other fluids has become an everyday event. This also means more jobs for our young people. Our country has made some important changes."

Once the review of the material content is completed, the barrels are readied for loading aboard a waiting truck. But first, the driver's credentials must be inspected. "We check to see if the driver is authorized to transport hazardous waste of this type, and if the vehicle has been properly certified to contain the material," said Garofalo.

When the loading is complete, the truck is driven directly to a nearby Italian customs office. The paperwork is reviewed and seals are placed on the vehicle's cargo doors.

"Then it's back onboard the ship to work with Ensign Bruce and have the paperwork signed, completing our transaction, so that the contractor can be paid," Garofalo noted.

But the final act is one of pure customer service. Shaking Ensign Bruce's hand, Garofalo thanks him for working with DRMS International: "Thanks for letting us handle your hazardous waste, I hope we can do business with you again in the future." With that, it's back to the DRMO and on to his next assignment.

"I couldn't have come to a DRMO and asked for a better staff!"

An interview with Ed Schwenk, DRMO Sigonella Chief



DRMO Sigonella Chief Ed Schwenk.

"MY BIGGEST CHALLENGE here currently is moving scrap metal and vehicles," he said. Along with complying with complex Italian laws concerning scrap, a new Italian directive requires that all scrap metal must be tested for radioactivity.

"After the testing is complete, the results must be forwarded to Italian customs officials for review. It takes about two weeks to complete the process. We can't receive any other scrap until the property tested has been removed," he said. "It's a safer way of doing business, but it does put an added burden on our generators. We just can't take in new scrap material on a daily basis as we did in the past."

Moving used vehicles can also be a time-consuming process. "When I arrived here in October 2000, we had 35 used vehicles stored in a yard near the DRMO. It took two months to complete the appropriate paperwork to start the job, then a full two weeks for the contractor to remove all the vehicles," he said. "But, finally, they were gone!"

Ed has specific long-term goals for his DRMO. "It will take about three years, but once we have a new, large DRMO constructed, we'll really be able to do more for our customers. Right now, because of the small size of our

facility, lots of property has to be signed for in place by our generators. It's a burden on them, and one I'd like to overcome."

For instance, next fiscal year, 15- to-20 buildings are scheduled to be torn down on base. "We've asked the generator to give us a two-month window to dispose of the large amount of used furniture involved," he said. "Since we're under a deadline, and we have no place to store a large amount of furniture, the property will have to be signed for in place. We'll try to R/T/D as much as possible, but the remainder will have to be moved out by our term contractor."

The Mediterranean Zone is the first zone in DRMS International to experiment with the use of term contracts for removal of useable property. If successful, other zones will follow suit. "We have two contractors, one for autos and automotive supplies, and another for all other useable items," he said.

During his first winter onboard, Ed was faced with a unique challenge – keeping his new covered storage area intact! "To have some kind of reasonably-sized covered storage area here, a large tent was put up. Unfortunately, after two wind storms, the sides blew out. To make it a really sound structure, we had to have a hard top put on. We were able to use the canvas from the top on the sides, though, so at least we saved some money on the repair job."

In the few months that he has been at DRMO Sigonella, he has become quite impressed with his staff. "I couldn't have come to a DRMO and asked for a better staff! My people are great. Real professionals. I'm looking forward to continuing an excellent tour here."

Ed came to Sigonella from DRMO Ft. Meade, after serving there for 10 years as environmental chief and assistant DRMO chief.



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