4180 E Sand Ridge Rd. | Morris, IL 60450
800.435.1636 tel | 800.767.7605 fax
sales@primuselectronics.com
www.primuselecronics.com

Kenyan Navy Attends Competent Climber Course

October, 2011
David Fuechsel, CSC

David Fuechsel, a Senior Project Manager for CSC and winner of the photo cover contest this quarter – recently took a trip to Kenya to train the Kenyan Navy on tower climbing. For your reading pleasure, he recounts the trip:

On our recent trip back to Mombasa, Kenya this past June, our focus was to complete the punch list items on the four towers (Cannon Point, Ngomeni, Lamu, and Kiunga) we constructed in February, and on a camera installation at the Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Kiunga. And, most importantly to conduct Basic Climber and Tower Maintenance Training.

This entire system was provided by the US Navy, courtesy of Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), located at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, in Lexington Park, Maryland. The majority of the in-country tower and sensor work was performed by the SureTrak office of Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), my employer. This system provides maritime technologies for the host nation, in this case Kenya, to provide security and protection of their waterways from the heavy piracy and illicit trafficking activity that exists there.

Logistically working in Africa is very challenging to say the least. We usually operate using 3 and 4 personnel teams and we rely on the host nation for support, for moving equipment, personnel, and for providing security. Personnel logistic and diplomatic support is provided by the U.S. Embassy in Kenya through the Kenya- U.S. Liaison Office. Through this organization we also get support from the in country (LNO) – usually a US Naval Officer – who conducts continuous coordination with host nation personnel during our visits as well as when we are not there.

Front row - students (l-r): Justus Wechuli, Harold M. Kangea, Dickson K. Ndungu, Victor Mwakio, Naftary Murage, Kennedy Muli, Robinson Ngare
Back row (l-r): Lt. Edward J. Khasenpa, David Fuechsel Instructor, Andy Furey Asst. Instructor, Major Benjamin Kiprop

4180 E Sand Ridge Rd. | Morris, IL 60450
800.435.1636 tel | 800.767.7605 fax
sales@primuselectronics.com
www.primuselecronics.com

Major Benjamin Kiprop, stationed at Cannon Point, is the commander for all of the coastal Masura (Sensor) Stations in Mombasa. Lt. Edward Khasenpa is the local Officer in Charge (OIC). Both of these officers were instrumental in our success on this trip. The Lt. accompanied me, Andy Furey (CSC), and the rest of the Kenya Navy (KNAV) team for basic tower and tower maintenance training and also made the trip with us to each site along the coast. We were also accompanied by some electricians and technical personnel during this 22-day trip.

I have been a Competent Climber Trainer since 2003, and I have taught successfully - and not so successfully - a myriad of very different people. The amount of information that is presented the first 8 hours is immense. While it is not rocket science, there is a lot of information to retain within a short amount of time and the practical portion of the training tests one's ability to perform and use the equipment properly at all times. In order to provide a good classroom environment, we conducted the first day of training in a conference room that I rented at the hotel where we were staying.

The training I used for this was based on the same material I have used in the past, developed by a very reputable training company. I had 11 students who never received any training on this material before. In the beginning of the class, the enlisted men's officer was present, and they were reserved in answering questions, which is understandable. Trust me: these men are very disciplined and respectful to their superiors and to me and Andy. I have never taught a class of students who were as quiet as were these KNAV personnel.

However, as the day went on they became more relaxed and started participating in questions and answers. We broke for lunch at the hotel, which they thoroughly enjoyed as this "luxury" is not a common occurrence for them. Meals for these men consist of a lot of rice and tomato sauce, and meat. Their MRE's consist of beans and franks, crackers, and a can of fruit. After the break I asked if anyone had any questions; no one had any so I went over a few points again just to make sure they understood this information, and the test was handed out. They completed the test within 30 minutes.

On the first test I graded, the student amazingly missed only one question! The rest followed shortly thereafter, and the most that was missed by any one student was four questions, which ends up being 80%, a passing grade to all that took the written test. I am still impressed by these students and proud of them. I had ages ranging from early 20's to early 40's and based upon their success during this training, I believe they will be very capable of maintaining these sensor systems and towers. The idea was to have these newly trained individuals travel with us to all four sites to complete the punch list items, which included installing the light systems and leg caps, along with the camera installation at Kiunga.

4180 E Sand Ridge Rd. | Morris, IL 60450
800.435.1636 tel | 800.767.7605 fax
sales@primuselectronics.com
www.primuselecronics.com

We began in Mombasa at Cannon Point for the practical climbing portion of the training. We took two climbers up with us while the others observed donning the harness and properly fitting it to each individual. Once we were completed at Cannon Point, the next movement was to Kiunga: this is the furthest North FOB in Kenya, just south of the border with Somalia. It takes two days to travel by 4-wheel drive and is very slow going. Due to the road washouts, you cannot go faster than 15 to 20 miles per hour on average. Since it takes so long, we had to stay over in Lamu - the third Masura station. To get to Lamu we took a speed boat to get us to our lodging – the house of a local resident.

The house has a staff of two and is owned by an Italian family whose son managed the Lamu tower foundation and erection for us, and with whom we became good friends during our previous trips. It was nice to be able to have a cold shower and decent bed to sleep in before we began our camping adventure in Kiunga. The next morning we all met at Mkowe port and began our 5-hour drive to Kiunga. The Somalia border is less than five kilometers away and poses a serious security threat with refugees coming across the border illegally by foot daily. We set up camp and began rigging the tower to prepare for the camera installation.

We were in Kiunga for two nights and departed for Lamu midday. We had to rent a cargo boat locally to carry all of our equipment. We got everything loaded and shortly into the trip to Lamu, we saw the rains beginning to build. Within five minutes, we were in a deluge in an open cargo boat - what an adventure for sure! So we huddled under a small covered area and watched the boat operators get pelted with hard driving rains, shielding themselves with plastic sheets with slits cut out so they could see. We completed the Lamu site and moved to Ngomeni, near the city of Malindi, primarily an Italian-influenced area due to the San Marco Space Agency located there.

We completed this site and moved back to the city of Mombasa. The training went better than I expected in light of the volume of information they had to absorb, but they were up to the task and during our OJT portion of the training, KNAV personnel became more confident, familiar, and, most importantly, trustworthy of the equipment we trained them to use. The safety equipment for our host nations as well as for me and my team is purchased from Primus and I have to thank Shannon O'Connor, Chris Pleibel, and the entire Primus staff for their dedication to our industry and their knowledge of what they are selling to their customers. It shows their commitment to the importance of safety, and to the tower industry as a whole, and to providing important information for those who work at heights. I look forward to returning to Kenya in the near future to extend the

4180 E Sand Ridge Rd. | Morris, IL 60450
800.435.1636 tel | 800.767.7605 fax
sales@primuselectronics.com
www.primuselecronics.com

capabilities towards the southern coast of Kenya, but for now it is off to Nigeria for a new sensor installation in October.

David Fuechsel is a Senior Project Manager for CSC and customer of Primus. CSC develops smart, technology enabled solutions to solve clients' toughest challenges, demonstrating a commitment to excellence and a passion for exceeding expectations. Fuechsel's previous contributions include, "Safety in the Industry" article featuring the harness and lanyard safety checklists in the 1Q and 2Q 2011 PrimeConnection newsletters. For more information about CSC, visit www.csc.com.