

News from the Savannah River Site

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Energy Department Teams with Operation Warfighter, Hosts Military Interns at Savannah River Site

Aiken, SC (March 19, 2014)-- The Department of Energy's Savannah River Operations Office (DOE-SR) formed a partnership with the Department of Defense and returning veterans through the Operation Warfighter (OWF) Program, offering active-duty veterans 120-day internships, working among the federal workforce at the Savannah River Site.

The Savannah River Site (SRS) is a key DOE industrial complex dedicated to: environmental cleanup, nuclear weapons stockpile stewardship, and nuclear materials disposition, in support of the U.S. nuclear non-proliferation efforts. The site also develops and deploys technologies to support radiological and chemical cleanup activities following 40 years of producing materials used for nuclear weapons, primarily plutonium and tritium.

For the last six months, DOE-SR has hosted a small group veterans based out of the Army's Ft. Gordon in nearby Augusta, Georgia. The OWF veterans serve internships in occupational disciplines like contracting, safety and information technology.

"Operation Warfighter federal internships help recovering service members



Veterans gaining intern experience at Savannah River Site, (from left) Yadira Bonilla-Cuevas, Terry Harris, Jonathan Ginsberg-Regional Coordinator, Operation Warfighter Program, Mark Spurlock, Dirck Moise and Deanna Yates, of the DOE Savannah River Operations Office, Office of Human Capital Management, recently met to discuss the intern program. Bonilla-Cuevas recently was hired as a federal employee after serving an Operation Warfighter internship. (DOE-SR Photo by Doug Aiken)

develop valuable work experience during their recovery” said Jonathan Ginsberg, Region Coordinator, Operation Warfighter Program. This experience aids both their wellness and readiness to transition to post-service employment or return to duty.

The OWF Program is run by the Defense Department’s Office of Warrior Care Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense. The OWF veterans sign up for the program seeking to gain experience and skills in a non-military environment.

“Through the Operation Warfighter program, we hope to give these veterans, who have served our country in combat zones for the last decade, a chance to see first-hand the opportunities that federal employment offers,” said Dr. David Moody, DOE-SR Manager. “We fully support the program because we know the difficulties our veterans often face in transitioning to the civilian workforce.”

OWF veteran interns remain on active duty while performing their internships. The DOE-SR organizations and the OWF service members design an Intern Development Plan. The development plan provides feedback and a Record of Achievement, noting the interns’ accomplishments, goals, training certificates and learned skills, that builds on their work experiences in addition to the military skills.

“DOE-SRS has become a great supporter and partner of the Operation Warfighter Program,” said Jonathan Ginsberg. “Since DOE-SR partnered with OWF, they have shown a high level of commitment to our service members and community.”



Then Army Staff Sergeant Yadira Bonilla-Cuevas while serving in Afghanistan.

Participating in the OWF program comes with no guarantees of future employment; however one OWF veteran was recently hired as a full-time federal employee at DOE-SR. Former Army Sergeant First Class Yadira Bonilla-Cuevas is now a chemical engineer with the DOE-SR Salt Waste Processing Facility Project Office, transitioning in early February 2013, following an OWF internship.

“So far it’s been a great experience,” Yadira Bonilla-Cuevas said. “There’s great support, communication and cooperation from the engineering team. Their motivation creates a positive team environment, with their help and support of each other, which in my opinion is a great quality.”

Bonilla-Cuevas was born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. Yadira moved to Hartford, Connecticut when she was four with her parents and sister. She has more than 10-years military experience, serving tours in both Iraq (2004-2005) and Afghanistan (2012) as a Human Resources and Mortuary Affairs Supervisor. She holds a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering, from the University of Mayaguez, Puerto Rico.

“We like that the Department of Energy can play a small role in helping the Operation Warfighter veterans in our local area,” said Helene Taylor, DOE-SR Director of Office of Human Capital Management. Almost every manager at DOE-SR has requested an OWF intern. It has been a very positive experience, meeting and working with these OWF interns. ” Taylor said. “We hope to give these veterans, who have served our county in combat zones over the years a chance to see first-hand the opportunities that federal employment offers.”

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