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Corps employees perform upgrades at the National Zoo

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. – Security systems upgrades completed at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C., Dec. 19 make the zoo compliant with modern standards.

The Army Corps of Engineers, Engineering and Support Center-Huntsville, Engineering Directorate’s Electronic Security System Branch completed renovations that were part of an ongoing federal requirement implemented in 1998.

The Smithsonian Institution, an independent trust instrumentality of the United States, is the world’s largest museum complex and encompasses 19 museums and the National Zoo. While most of the Smithsonian’s museums, its zoo, and its nine research centers facilities are located in Washington, sites are also located in Arizona, Maryland, New York City, Virginia, Panama and elsewhere.

Project engineer Daryl Britton, Huntsville Center ESS Branch, said although this is the first time Huntsville Center has performed work at the National Zoo, it is not the first time work has been done at the Smithsonian Institution. He said the program supported projects at the Smithsonian Institution in 1998 and 2002.

Britton said ESS projects for the Smithsonian Institution were handled differently from most projects managed by Huntsville Center. Taking the appropriate security measures while working on the projects was very important. Gaining access to specific information about security upgrades on ESS projects is limited, and not releasable to the public. One of the unique challenges presented to the team was performing surveys, installing systems and testing the installed systems while not disrupting the public from having access to the displays at the museums.

The ESS branch was careful to follow a strict regimen of security while completing the projects at the Smithsonian, since an estimated 40 million visitors each year pass through the security gates at this government organization, said Steve Willoughby, chief of the Electronic Security Branch at the center.

“These projects involve creating standards of protection that allow security (Smithsonian Police) to maintain a safe and secure environment for its patrons while permitting appropriate access to the Smithsonian complex of museums, galleries and exhibits,” Willoughby said. “My team can’t discuss specifics about security upgrades to structures on the Smithsonian grounds (or any other ESS project for that matter) because the systems we put in place help protect visitors, staff and the property of the customer. We must meet this requirement for all our customers.”

Huntsville Center has completed work at the Smithsonian on schedule and within budget, according to Britton. His team is pleased to have made a contribution to such an important and challenging project.

Britton said the Smithsonian project has been a great success for the ESS branch. Their team welcomes any future opportunity to do business with the Smithsonian again.

“Our team strives to foster long-standing relationships with our customers,” Britton said. “We’ve worked on projects for the SI for more than 14 years, and would like to continue meeting their needs.”

Huntsville Center became the Mandatory Center of Expertise for Electronic Security Systems in 1983. The center supports Headquarters, Army Corps of Engineers in criteria development for design, construction, procurement and evaluation of electronic security systems. The center offers its customers “cradle-to-grave” electronic security

system technical services. When requested, the center will survey, design, procure, install, test, monitor and maintain unique electronic security systems worldwide.