



FREEDOM **BUILDER**

May/June 2012



Bostick knows
Civilians often overlooked
in war effort, general says

Clean sweep
Explosives pro inspects
junked Soviet tanks

Police action
Afghan police move into
national training center

Eyre outlines changes
General envisions 4 steps to shape the division



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The Freedom Builder is available online at:
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Cover image:



Intelligence officer Maj. Pedro Borges (left), Afghanistan National Police program deputy manager Elana Sattin (center) and police program lead project manager Johnny Grandison Jr. exemplify Transatlantic Division commander Maj. Gen. Michael R. Eyre's plans to reshape the division.

(Full story on Page 4)
Illustration by | **Joe Marek**



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Imperatives to shape the division



Mission

- Bring projects to completion
- Support military, federal and host nation partners

Affordability

- Execute the mission aggressively within fiscal constraints

Transition

- Set the framework to meet future requirements

Transformation

- Right size the force

Story by | Paul Giblin

Illustration by | Joe Marek

Eyre discusses change, leadership and running

KABUL – Maj. Gen. Michael R. Eyre thrives in the midst of change.

While serving as commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq in 2008 and 2009, he devised four imperatives to reassess and reshape the former Gulf Region District as the United States wrapped up its mission in the country.

Eyre succeeded Maj. Gen. Kendall P. Cox as commander of the Transatlantic Division on April 26 and promptly revived his four imperatives for a second round of reassessment and reshaping.

This time, he's evaluating the entire division, which currently is comprised of three districts – Afghanistan Engineer District-North, which is based in Kabul; Afghanistan Engineer District-South, which is based in Kandahar; and the Middle East District, which is based in Winchester, Va.

There are similarities between the drawdown in Iraq a few years ago and the on-going drawdown in Afghanistan now, Eyre said. He's in the process of soliciting feedback to update and adapt his imperatives for Afghanistan.

In a wide-ranging 45-minute question-and-answer session in his office in Kabul on May 11, Eyre discussed his four imperatives for change, his four C's of leadership, and an idea that he freely admits he filched from former Corps of Engineers commander Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp Jr.

He also revealed an extraordinary long-term benefit he's enjoyed since starting a jogging routine back in his college days.

First, for the record: Eyre has served in the Army for 33 years, with stops in Germany, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia, among other locations. He holds a bachelor's degree in manufacturing and engineering science from the University of Vermont in Burlington, and a master's in packaging science from the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York. He and his wife Sue live in Winchester, Va.

Question: Let's start with your four imperatives for the district – mission, affordability, ransformation and transition – and hit them one at a time.

Answer: Sure. My whole intent with putting them under the acronym MATT is that it brings focus. Everything that we do at the division headquarters and at the districts somehow falls under those four letters and those four areas, and they should be mutually supportive.

Q: OK. The first imperative is mission. What's your intent concerning the mission?

A: That is the No. 1 objective we have here in theater. That supports what Gen. Ray Odierno, the chief of staff of the Army, talks about. We've got to win the current fight. We're part of making that happen.

Associated with that is that we have to be prepared for the next contingency, wherever that may be. We should be working toward that already, not waiting to get a phone call at 2300 hours one night and guess what? We have to be ready early the next morning.

Q: Alright. How do we finish the mission here in Afghanistan?

A: Based on current conditions, combat operations will end in December of 2014. We have to see how our project workload supports that. We're working to identify projects that will be completed prior to that versus those that potentially will go beyond that. Based on security conditions, what do we do with those projects? Do we turn them over? Are we going to have them completed by local nationals who we've trained?

We really have to define what that's going to be and plan for that. When you look at Iraq, we have an Iraq Area Office

there that's part of the Middle East District. Are we going to have an Afghanistan Area Office?

Q: What's your best guess right now?

A: I think long term we probably will. Right now in Iraq we still have about 30 projects valued at \$300 million. If that's the model, we need to plan for that now.

Q: The next contingency operation seems harder, since by definition it will be a temporary district and no one knows when or where it might be. How do you plan for that?

A: We don't know where will be, but we know that if we have to stand up a contingency district, it's going to take people, equipment, resources. What I envision is that we're going to have to do some sort of exercise. Obviously, it's not going to be live. But if we stand up a division, how do we identify the people who will be the core leadership of it and where they're going to come from?

We need to figure out the mission command of it. Is it going to be the Transatlantic Division because it's another contingency district? Or, since the focus now goes toward the Asia/Pacific region, does it go to the Pacific Ocean Division? Will they have the lead? Will that district be assigned to them? Do they have the capabilities?

We just need to work our way through all that.

Q: The next imperative is affordability. What's the outlook there?

A: In Iraq, we had significant affordability issues we had to overcome. Even though we're in a contingency environment, there are still practices, laws

and policies. I don't want to go through that again. That was a very difficult situation. We worked our way through it, but we don't have to repeat that.

Let's start looking at how we maintain that affordability. That ties into workforce levels, what projects we have.

Q: What are your initial thoughts?

A: We're going to have to define what that workload really is going to be for the future – or as close as we can. Obviously, things change. What's the right workforce here in country versus back in the United States with reachback to ensure that we are affordable? We just need to make sure we're looking ahead.

Q: That ties into the next imperative, transformation.

A: Transformation is really Army-wide, but it impacts the Corps of Engineers. Then you narrow it down further and it impacts the Transatlantic Division and the two districts in Afghanistan and the Middle East District in Winchester.

Q: *Impact?* Can you define *impact*?

A: Specifically for here, at some point we're going to go back to a single district. That really needs to be event driven. It could be how the workflow changes, how the project requirements changes. It could be affordability. I think it will be a combination of those factors.

Really, my objective is to build the overall plan looking at the Transatlantic Division and the districts, and not just for 2012, but out to 2014 and beyond.

I'm confident that the Transatlantic Division will be around for the long term, but it's going to look different than it does today. At some point, it probably will be just the division headquarters and the Middle East District.

Q: That ties into the last imperative,

transition. Your thoughts?

A: The transition is really here in country as we go from the North and South districts into a single Afghanistan Engineer District and beyond that.

Q: What's your timeline for merging the districts?

A: I don't have one yet. Again, it needs to be event driven.

Q: Oh, c'mon. You don't get two stars on your chest without having some idea.

A: OK, I do have an idea.

I'm going to try to tie it into the changes with the district commanders. We know we have new district commanders coming in this July. If we look toward 2013, do we bring two district commanders in? Do we bring one in? Or do we bring in a senior commander and a junior commander?

Q: So there're still details to work out, but five years from now, the division is going to be much different, right?

A: It is, absolutely. Can we predict what it's going to be now? No. But we sure have some indicators.

Q: Thanks for the wrap-up. Changing topics, what's your leadership philosophy?

A: It's based 35 years' worth of experience. I try to keep it very simple, because it's easier for me to talk about. And more importantly, it makes it easier for others to understand.

I have my four C's, which are communicate, coordinate, cooperate and the fourth one, which came from a brigade chaplain who said, "You really need to consider this," compassion.

The communicate, coordinate and cooperate components are up and down, they're across, they're individual, they're important. You have to have coordinated

staff actions as the higher headquarters that make sure that you're giving the appropriate direction, guidance and resources to the districts, because at the end of the day, the districts get the job done.

As for the compassion part, we ask an awful lot of folks and at times you have to put that into perspective. Part of that focus is taking care of people. If we don't, we can't get our jobs done.

We're kind of a unique organization because we have military, civilians, contractors and local nationals. We've got make sure we're taking care of them.

Q: How did you come up with your leadership philosophy? Was there a particular moment of inspiration that led to it?

A: No. I've refined it over the years. The base probably started when I was a battalion commander. As I observed others, I incorporated more.

For example, one of my base principals is walk the talk. A lot of people can talk all day long, but what do you show with your actions? I mean, that's what people see. I've used that since I was a battalion commander. I have to do that all the time. If I don't follow up on stuff we discuss in meetings or plans that we put in place, and if I don't take the next step to make them happen, then what have we accomplished?

Q: On similar track, how do you personally motivate people?

A: A lot of it is relationships, letting people know that I'm very approachable and that we can discuss things. I'll take input, but when the decision is made, OK, now it's time to go get it done.

Q: How do you develop those kinds of relationships with people further down the line?

A: I go out and talk to folks. That's part of the reason I go on unit visits and

project site visits – to get that feedback.

I go to town hall meetings to share my message. A lot of times my biggest message is to say "Thank you" for what they have done, what they are doing, what they will be doing in the future. I get feedback and their concerns. They may not like the answer I come back with, but at least I've addressed that concern. Or sometimes, that feedback may change how we do a certain policy or procedure.

Another thing – and I stole this from Gen. Van Antwerp – I hand out index cards at town hall meetings, because not everybody likes to talk publically or bring up a sensitive or personal issue.

Usually, it's about three to five items. We'll take a look at them and we know that we owe everybody some type of response. Now if it's an individual issue, we're not going to make that public.

Q: So you hand out the cards and respond to the comments during the same meeting?

A: No. I take a look at them and consolidate them. Then I either talk about them at a future town hall, or I send out a message across the command that an issue came up and my response to it.

Q: What motivates you?

A: No. 1 is that this is just a tremendous job and a great opportunity – what our mission is, what we're trying to accomplish. It's really that mission focus of what we're trying to accomplish. It's what we're trying to do for the country of Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan.

No. 2 is the people. We just have some tremendous people. That's why I like going to the project sites. People are real proud of what they're accomplishing under some very challenging circumstances. Here we are in a combat environment and look at what they're getting done.

I think the longer you're in, the more you appreciate your career, especially if you

know you're coming toward the end of it. You think, "Boy, I just want to continue to do this."

Q: Switching topics again, tell me a bit about your family.

A: Sure. My wife Sue and I met at the University of Vermont. She was there when I got commissioned. Then I went off to Germany. I came back six months later and we were married. So Sue was there for 2½ years of my tour in Germany. That was our start.

Q: How did you meet?

A: We actually met through our college roommates. My roommate was dating her roommate. He said, "Lisa's roommate Sue kind of likes you." I said, "OK, that's nice." Then we started running together, so it started as a friendship.

Q: Running together? You mean your dates were jogging around campus?

A: Yes.

Q: How did that work?

A: I was trying to get back in shape. You know, college days can be a little rough on you. I'd say, "I'm going for a run" and she'd say, "Can I join you?" and off we'd go. As we were stretching before, we'd chat about things. Afterwards, I'd say, "We're going to go out to eat," or "We're going to go to a bar. Would you like to go with us?" That's just kind of how it evolved, especially since we had each other's roommates helping us along the way too.

Q: And here I thought cardiovascular health was the best long-term benefit of jogging. Whatever happened to the roommates? Are they still a couple?

A: No. They're still great friends, but they married others and have their own

families.

Q: Tell me about the rest of your family.

A: We have three children. Our oldest is Michael. He's married to Christie and they live in upstate New York near Rochester. Michael's 29. He works for Beam Mack, a heavy-duty truck sales and services company in Rochester.

Our second son is Patrick. He's 25. He lives with us in Winchester. He came back when I got deployed to Iraq in 2008, so that was good. He currently works at Trex Co., which makes composite decking and railings. He loves that job.

Our youngest is Megan, who just turned 23. She's 2nd Lt. Megan Eyre, so she's a third generation 2nd Lt. Eyre. My dad was a World War II vet. When I got to do her commissioning last May, I had a set of my dad's bars that I gave her and a set of my bars. That was really a great experience.

Q: What do you do outside of work?

A: I like a lot of outdoor activities. We have a camp in northern New York. The only way you can get to it is by boat, unless you want to walk for 2½ hours through the woods. My dad bought 60 acres when he got back from World War II for \$5 an acre, \$300 total.

My parents sold it when I was born, figuring they needed a house. Then they bought it back when I was 11 for the same amount as they sold it. Plus they got a motorboat in the deal.

Q: No kidding? A camp. Does it have a name?

A: Yes, it's Traumerei. *Traum* in German is *dream*.

Q: That sounds about right. That also wraps up our interview. Thank you.

A: Thank you. It's been a pleasure. 

Bostick highlights civilians' service

Story by | Paul Giblin

Photos by | Joe Marek



Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick speaks to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees at the Qalaa House compound in Kabul on June 8 during his first visit to Afghanistan since being named head of the Corps of Engineers.

KABUL – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilian employees are making important contributions to the war effort in Afghanistan, even if their contributions aren't widely recognized by fellow Americans, said Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, the top commander of the Corps of Engineers.

Their efforts, however, are widely recognized and appreciated by both U.S. political and military leaders, and by the Afghan people, Bostick said during a town hall meeting at the Corps of Engineers' headquarters compound in northern Afghanistan on June 8.

U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker, commander of U.S. and NATO forces Marine Gen. John R. Allen, and deputy commander of U.S. forces Army Lt. Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, among others, conveyed their appreciation to Bostick during his first trip to Afghanistan since becoming the top officer for the Corps of Engineers on May 22.

"They deeply value the work that you're doing – deeply," Bostick said.

"They thank you for what you've done and they thank you for what you will do, because their success here in their overall strategy to win this fight in Afghanistan

depends not only on the trigger-pullers in the kinetic fight, but it really depends on the work that you do each and every day," he said.

The Corps of Engineers is the primary organization building military bases, police stations and other infrastructure projects that will allow Afghan forces to provide security against insurgent forces in the country.

While nearly all Americans respect Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Guardsmen who have served during the war, most Americans simply are not aware of the civilians who have served alongside

them, Bostick said.

"People have sacrificed a lot. Whether you're Soldiers, Army civilians, contractors, other services, other organizations, we count on you. We've got 1 million people that wear this uniform," he said while tugging at his own camouflaged Army uniform, "but we count on all the civilians that help us win this fight."

Civilians have deployed approximately 30,000 times to Afghanistan during the decade-long war, he said.

"You all are the unsung heroes, the 30,000 civilians. And a third of that have been Corps of Engineers civilians," he said.

Their work is substantial.

In the northern portion of the country, Corps of Engineers personnel manage more than \$10 billion worth of construction projects in 21 provinces.

"When you go home, you can hold your heads high and we will deeply, deeply appreciate you for the rest of our lives, because this war is going to be won by the

people on the ground here, so God bless you," Bostick said.

The timing of the general's tour underscored the importance of the mission in Afghanistan, said Col. Christopher W. Martin, the commander of the Corps of Engineers in the region.

"The chief got confirmed by the Senate and has been the chief now for all of about two weeks. Just to show how much he thinks of what we're doing, he came over here," Martin said during the meeting, which was broadcast throughout the district.

In turn, Bostick thanked Martin, whom he has known for years. Bostick called Martin a great leader and joked that he was 6 feet tall before the district's heavy responsibilities were placed upon his shoulders. Martin stands 5-foot-5.

Bostick commended Martin for accepting the overseas post as his final assignment in a career that began at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

"For an officer to come over here and

take on this job, knowing that he's going to transition into civilian life, that's a tough assignment to take, but he took it on," Bostick said.

The general also presented coins to four district employees in recognition of their innovative, timely and cost-effective work. The four: information technology planner Dale Barker, construction chief Edwin Cuebas, procurement technician Rona Parker-Anderson and project engineer Derek Martowska.

Bostick succeeded Corps of Engineers senior officer Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp Jr., a frequent visitor to Afghanistan, who retired in 2011. As the 53rd leader of the organization, Bostick oversees 37,000 civilian employees and 600 military personnel in more than 100 countries around the world.

Bostick is a registered professional engineer in Virginia. He holds a bachelor's degree from West Point and two master's degrees from Stanford University. 



Col. Christopher W. Martin (left) exchanges words with Bostick as the general loads into an armor-plated SUV to continue his tour in Afghanistan on June 8. Security contractor Zyn Davidson (right) assists Bostick.



Police academy

Corps of Engineers finishes national training center

Story and photos by | Paul Giblin

Romanian instructors (in tan) instruct Afghan police trainees at the National Police Training Center on May 13.

MAYDAN, Afghanistan – The National Police Training Center buzzed with activity on May 13.

Romanian trainers taught Afghan recruits how to conduct identity checks along a street on the base. U.S. instructors showed recruits how to handle assault rifles at a gun range. And Afghan instructors drilled recruits on marching on a parade field.

Meanwhile, a few U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees packed up computers, file cabinets and construction helmets as they closed their office on the base. After overseeing construction of 111 buildings and facilities for 2½ years, the \$97.6 million base was complete.

The final construction project was building a large sign outside the facility that's along Highway 1, which is also known as the Ring Road, in Wardak Province. The sign was completed three days earlier.

"That was our last turnover. There's no reason to keep us here any longer. We'll go onto other jobs," said project engineer

Dennis Carey, who along with other Corps of Engineers personnel, was stationed at the site during construction.

The camp serves as the primary training center for Afghanistan's national police force, which has multi-faceted duties. Police



officers are responsible for maintaining civil order and conducting standard law-enforcement tasks, like any other police force.

However, Afghan police officers also

fight well-armed terrorists.

Trainees arrive at the center as raw recruits in classes of 300 to 400. International and Afghan mentors give them instructions in police procedures as well as in literacy, driving, and human rights during three-month training sessions.

Then the newly trained personnel are dispatched to U.S.-built police stations across the nation.

"That project is exactly what the name says, the National Police Training Center," said Col. Christopher W. Martin, the commander of the Corps of Engineers in northern Afghanistan.

"It's where they train their police. We gave them that capability by turning that facility over to them," he said.

The project turned out so well, Afghan and coalition forces cancelled other regional police training centers around the country and instead concentrated the vast majority of the training for the entire police force at the center, Martin said.

Afghan Minister of Interior Bismillah Khan Mohammadi said his countrymen have high expectations for the police force as Afghanistan prepares to take over security functions from the international coalition in 2014.

"I believe in the five coming years, the people of Afghanistan will consider their police to be honest, accountable, brave, impartial, professional and striving to create a secure and lawful society," he told reporters during a conference about the future of the police on May 3.

"My long-term vision is that the police will uphold the constitution of Afghanistan and enforce the prevailing laws of the country to protect the rights of all people of Afghanistan, and will perform their duties in a professional, non-discriminatory, trustworthy and accountable manner," Mohammadi said at the Afghan Ministry of Interior complex in Kabul.

The National Police Training Center is about 25 miles southwest of Kabul and located in a sweeping valley between scenic mountain ridges.

The base was designed to accommodate 4,000 trainees simultaneously.

International mentors have been training officers at the base since the first buildings were completed in February 2011, but only 1,000 trainees were on site in May. It's expected to be at full capacity before the end of the year, said Carey, who's from Scottsbluff, Neb.

The training center was built in a region of the country that previously was controlled by insurgent forces. In fact, insurgents fired dozens of rockets at the compound and tried numerous drive-by shootings in an effort to slow or stop construction.

They fired rockets on the camp as often as four times a week. "From July to about December of last year, it was Rocket City," Martin said. One rocket flew down the hallway of a barracks building.

The attacks destroyed property and slowed construction, but no workers were killed. The number of attacks dropped dramatically after coalition forces located

the terrorists and took military action against them, Martin said.

A significant feature of the training center is that the base was fully master planned before the first building went up. As a result, the training center is widely recognized as one of the finest large-scale projects to be completed since the start of reconstruction efforts a decade ago, Carey said.

"The whole facility was designed at one time, so all the utilities got laid out properly. There're utility holes for the electrical. There're utility holes for the sewage. It all makes sense. The roadways were all laid out," he said.

"When they started building it, they knew exactly what the site was going to look like and everything went into place, so nobody started digging a trench and 'Oh! There's a communication line buried underneath there.' We know where all the communications lines are, where all the electrical wires are and where everything else is," he said.

The roads within the base are straight, wide, smooth and lined with sidewalks, unlike most city streets in Afghanistan, which are bone-jarring patchworks of broken asphalt, ungraded dirt and trash.



Logar Resident Office officer in charge Capt. Gary Graig (left), project engineer Dennis Carey (center) and Shank area engineer Dale Campbell inspect a residence building at the National Police Training Center.

The National Police Training Center essentially is a self-contained city.

It's outfitted with classroom buildings, headquarters and administration buildings, barracks buildings for men and women, three dining facilities, three shooting ranges, a deep-water well, a waste-water treatment facility, a power plant, a fire station, a medical facility, ammunition bunkers, maintenance shops, a fuel station, a helicopter pad, a gym and a sports field, among other amenities.

Furthermore, the base has separate compounds within its walls for international instructors and the Afghan special police.

The training center is protected by several security measures, including a rock perimeter wall topped with coils of razor wire, a trench large enough to swallow bomb-rigged cars, an outer fence lined with razor wire, and guard towers positioned along both the rock wall and wire fence.

"It's a great facility. Our contractor did well. It was behind schedule, as a lot of the projects are, but the quality is there," Martin said.

Technologists Inc., which is based in Rosslyn, Va., served as the prime contractor. Construction started in January 2009 and

originally was scheduled for completion in June 2011.

The delays were manageable, because the Afghan police force initially wasn't able to hit its recruiting goals, so it sent fewer than expected trainees to the site. "Even though we weren't absolutely on time with the entire facility, we met the requirement," Martin said.

One important design change was made after construction began, Carey said.

The first buildings were constructed with metal walls, but the threat of flying shrapnel from rocket attacks prompted designers to switch to more protective concrete block construction, he said.

Terrorists and regional crime lords caused other delays, Carey said. They hijacked numerous cargo trucks transporting equipment and supplies in the country before the deliveries reached the camp.

Afghanistan is a land-locked nation the size of Texas without an adequate railroad system, so materials must first be shipped to Pakistan, which has a seaport, or to other neighboring countries with railroads. Then goods are trucked across international

borders into Afghanistan and to individual construction sites.

"Anytime we get a bunch of trucks with construction supplies, they become targets," Carey said.

Even under the best of circumstances, getting equipment such as generators, transformers and certain building materials can be challenging, because of the long lead times required to order and transport the supplies from other countries.

Delays at international borders, particularly the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, also complicated matters.

During the peak months of construction in summer 2011, as many as 2,500 laborers worked at the site each day.

Initially, construction foremen often had to teach the locally hired workers modern construction techniques that included the use of power tools such as skill saws, concrete saws, rebar-tying guns and paint guns.

Several special design considerations were made in response to the setting and to accommodate Afghan practices, Carey said. For instance:

- ▶ The barracks buildings have individual living quarters for top officers, multi-person quarters for mid-grade officers, and open bays for enlisted personnel.

- ▶ The barracks are equipped with ceiling fans rather than air-conditioning systems.

- ▶ The lavatories have ground-level sinks for Afghans to wash their feet before prayers.

- ▶ The laundry facilities have large built-in tile sinks rather than washing machines, and outdoor clothes lines rather than dryers.

- ▶ The diesel tanks at the power plant are equipped with filters to skim off water, which Afghan truck drivers sometimes mix into their fuel deliveries as a way to increase profits.

- ▶ Large bomb shelters are located in the courtyards between the barracks buildings.

The Afghan police have been adding their own flourishes. They've planted grass outside the main headquarters building, and trees and shrubs alongside the streets and atop of the ammo bunkers. 



The \$97.6 million National Police Training Center in Wardak Province, southwest of Kabul, is open for business.

Here comes the law



Story and photos by | Mark Rankin

Civilian employees Bob Weiland (front), Todd Smith (left) and Dale Littlefield enter the Old Glory building during a police training exercise with U.S. military personnel and Afghan security guards on June 28.

U.S., Afghan teams train together

KABUL – Police work is police work, no matter if it's done in the United States or Afghanistan. For the most part anyway. A group of U.S. military policemen, who are stationed at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' headquarters in northern Afghanistan, are teaching universal police tactics and techniques to

Afghan security guards.

It's important that the groups think and act alike because they work side by side to provide 24-hour-a-day protection to about 350 civilian personnel who live and work at the district's headquarters, the Qalaa House compound, in downtown Kabul. The U.S. service



Marine Staff Sgt. Joel Billingsley demonstrates various ways to enter a building to the team of quick-reaction force members outside the Old Glory building during a police training exercise with U.S. military personnel and Afghans.

members presented a three-day course in special law-enforcement procedures to a select and well-armed group of Afghan guards called quick-reaction personnel at Qalaa House from June 26 through 28.

Marine Staff Sgt. Joel Billingsley, who serves as the head of U.S. military service members assigned to protective duties at the compound, said he expects good results from the training.

“The Afghan team helps protect us and keep us safe every day,” he said.

“Many of them had never learned these types of techniques or taken part in intense drills, so we had to spend time teaching them and providing them hands-on skills that allowed them to be comfortable in this environment,” he said.

Billingsley and civilian emergency management specialist Joel Ramos led the seminars, which involved U.S. military



personnel, U.S. civilians and Afghan security guards. The training featured three simulated scenarios:

► An active shooter, in which an enemy combatant has engaged in gunfire and threatens to kill or harm to personnel in the area. The training was team oriented and geared toward allowing first and second responders to gain access to the suspect.

► A hostile environment, which involves developing awareness to potential threats and learning proper radio usage. That’s particularly relevant in a warzone.

► A barricaded suspect, in which a gunman or gunmen hides and holds one or more hostages.

The training also featured instruction about a wide range of tactics and guidelines, including the range force that can be used against suspects and each option’s purpose, the proper use of restraints such as handcuffs and zip ties, rapid response protocols, emergency entry tactics, crisis negotiations concepts, hostage rescue options, tactical weapons use, and stronghold and vehicle defense and attack options.

The purpose of the training simulations was to provide the Afghan team members realistic opportunities to learn new skills they can use if the need arises, said

Billingsley, a 12-year Marine reservist from Richmond, Va., who’s serving a yearlong deployment in Afghanistan.

“Repetition and muscle memory is important,” he said.

“We got pretty intense and covered some advanced topics that normally military policemen won’t ever get a chance to train on, unless they actually respond to an incident, which is too late,” Billingsley, who serves as full-time police officer with the Prince William County Police Department and drills with the Marines’ 2nd Law Enforcement Battalion at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

The law-enforcement training is essential because U.S. military service members and Afghan quick-reaction force members at Qalaa House must serve many of the same functions as police working the streets of any major city, plus the additional duties of working in a hostile environment, said Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Joseph Saia, who also served as an instructor during the training.

In addition to detaining law offenders, military policemen typically perform a variety of day-to-day duties, such as operating security posts, patrolling their bases, going undercover and teaching weapons use. The order of responsibilities differs in Afghanistan though, Billingsley said.

“The protection of the compound is always going to be at the top of priorities,” he said. “With both our military and personal security detail, we are going to ensure they have the highest caliber of training and qualifications that we can achieve in order to protect our compound.”

The training sessions culminated with an active shooter crisis enactment at the Old Glory building, where two shooters staged a threat.

In the scenario, two gunmen, Saia and Ramos, holed up in an empty office.

The U.S. forces and Afghan guards, who carried blue plastic weapons rather than real rifles for the drill, responded to the scene in force and worked on communication,



Billingsley shows team leader Ashrif Sadat (right) and Wasim Nasimi (back) maneuvers to enhance mobility during the three-day course.

including hand signals. Then they organized themselves into smaller groups.

They assessed the situation from different vantage points, all the while remaining in communication with each other and the situation commander. They put the building on lockdown to protect potential victims from stumbling into the scene.

Then they devised a strategy and a plan to overtake the suspects. They carefully approached the suspects, and in a blaze of glory, faux killed the suspects, or at least filled them with faux bullet holes, to end the simulated emergency.

Quick-reaction force team member Wasim Nasimi said he enjoyed learning from the instructors, and plans to use the new techniques to make himself better by paying attention to details when entering buildings.

“This was great training for all the Afghan teams and we will use the maneuvers, self defense, weapons and active shooter drills to make us better,” Nasimi said.

“We really value this type of training and look forward to future training with them.”

Afterward, the instructors discussed potential alternatives, possible solutions and gave the responders constructive feedback.

Ramos said having instructors with

civilian experience helps military policemen develop approaches to scenarios that they typically don’t encounter on military bases in the United States or in war zones like Afghanistan.

“I’ve dealt with the combat side of being an MP, so this definitely has given me a better perspective of the garrison portion of my job,” said Saia, who has been a military police officer for five years and has a combat tour in Iraq.

“It’s helped me as a young leader. And it’s helped me realize that there are potential threats out there,” he said.

The training was current and extensive, he said. “It’s taught me different types of techniques. I’m very grateful for it and very excited about it, especially that our Afghans feel better about doing their jobs.”

Saia and Billingsley both said their work in Afghanistan and exposure to different responsibilities in a combat environment will benefit them back home.

Billingsley’s choice to make a career out of the Marines through the reserves and working as a civilian policeman has allowed him to experience the best of both worlds, he said.

“Once you’re a Marine, you’re always a Marine,” he said. 

Getting together

U.S., Afghan engineers to partner on projects



Story and photos by | Paul Giblin

U.S. and Afghan engineers will work side by side on large construction projects, like this one at Camp Shaheen near Mazar-e Sharif, as part of a program being administered by NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan.

KABUL – Plans are underway for engineers affiliated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Afghan Ministry of Defense to work side by side on some of the largest infrastructure development projects in Afghanistan.

The program is being administered by NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, which is the coalition entity that directs the Corps of Engineers' construction program and trains Afghan soldiers and policemen.

Particulars of the arrangement are still being finalized, but the partnership between the Corps of Engineers and the Ministry of Defense will mark the highest level of coordination and cooperation among the organizations to date.

Previously, only U.S. engineers served in the top oversight positions for construction projects developed by the Corps of Engineers.

When the program is put into place, Afghan engineers will take supervisory roles directing work at Afghanistan National Army bases across the country. The Afghan engineers will be embedded in Corps of Engineers' offices and work alongside U.S. engineers, but they'll remain employees of the Afghan government.

The program is expected to start some time after mid-July, said U.S. Air Force Capt. Jason Aftanas, deputy of training and transition within the Operations and Maintenance Division for the Corps of Engineers.

"It's basically to have them as a partner in finishing the construction. We'll get more project oversight because we'll have additional project engineers working for us," Aftanas said. "So with more oversight, we'll get higher quality projects."

The underlying objective is to prepare

Afghan engineers to take over management of the projects in anticipation of U.S. military forces and civilian employees withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2014.

The details of the Corps of Engineers' long-term role in those projects has yet to be determined, but certainly it will be smaller, and consequently, the Ministry of Defense's role will be larger.

The Afghan engineers are affiliated with the ministry's Construction and Property Management Department. They already are responsible for maintaining Afghan army facilities and other infrastructure projects, but overseeing construction of multi-million-dollar construction projects will be new.

"We're trying to give them large-scale management experience," Aftanas said. "Since they don't have their own big projects, we're letting them work on ours,

so that in the future they know how to do it for themselves."

The intent is to allow Afghan engineers to take the lead in specific projects, while U.S. engineers stand by ready to step in to assist if needed. "That's what we're hoping for – to teach them as they go, on a real project," Aftanas said.

The Afghan engineers will review plans, participate in contract negotiations and monitor construction projects. They'll also direct teams of Afghan quality-assurance representatives who already inspect construction at Corps of Engineers sites.

U.S. officials are looking for suitable projects. Ideally, the projects will be spread across the country and will be affiliated with both of the Corps of Engineers districts that operate within the country. Afghanistan Engineer District-North is based in Kabul; Afghanistan Engineer District-South is based in Kandahar.

Col. Christopher W. Martin, the commander of the North district, wants to place the first Afghan engineers at two of the biggest Afghan military bases under construction in the district – Camp Shaheen near Mazar-e Sharif by the Uzbekistan border, and Gamberi Garrison near Jalalabad by the Pakistan border.

If the partnership works well at those locations, it will be expanded elsewhere in the North and in the South. The target date is sometime in the fall.

U.S. officials expect the Afghan engineers to provide assistance in instances when language or cultural differences come into play, Aftanas said.

Those types of problems sometimes involve Afghan army generals who refuse access or charge entrance fees to contractors who build U.S.-funded facilities on their bases, or contractors who refuse to pay their sub-contractors, Aftanas said.

U.S. officials also expect the Afghan engineers to assist in more routine workplace matters, such as questions concerning quality standards, contract requirements and schedules, he said.

Currently, those sorts of issues typically

are handled with round-about chains of discussions that can include subcontractors, prime contractors, Corps of Engineers officials, Afghan government officials and Afghan military commanders.

"That takes a long time. It could be two or three weeks to resolve a land dispute or a problem with an Afghan commander," Aftanas said.

"The thought is that if we have someone who's directly in the commander's chain of command and who's assigned to us, we could fast-track a lot of these problems straight to him, because everything comes from the top in Afghanistan."

The arrangement builds upon previous programs in which Corps of Engineers personnel have trained Afghan workers as operations and maintenance craftsmen and as quality-assurance representatives.

The operations and maintenance craftsmen are stationed at Afghan army and police stations across the country where they maintain facilities built by the Corps of Engineers. They're trained in plumbing, carpentry, masonry, air conditioning and heating repair, among other trades.

Large Afghan military bases have as many as 80 operations and maintenance officers and craftsmen on staff. The top levels typically are comprised of Afghan army officers, but the vast majority of the workers are civilian employees.

On June 18, Martin, Aftanas and other

U.S. personnel visited a Ministry of Defense facility in Kabul where about 60 men were being trained in operations and maintenance.

Martin and the others reviewed a brightly painted recreation center that the trainees had renovated using their newly acquired skills. The structure originally had been a barn that was on the verge of collapse.

The renovation job required the trainees to use a full spectrum of construction trades.

Martin and his group also observed a classroom where an Afghan instructor was giving lessons in three-digit addition, which is another skill that's part of the program. Following three decades of war, only about 28.1 percent of the country's population is literate, according to the CIA World Factbook. Basic math skills similarly are lacking.

"This is the first building block and it starts with basic reading and writing skills, and it goes all the way up to building buildings, and repairing them," Martin said.

Meanwhile, the quality assurance representatives serve as construction inspectors who are assigned to work at sites where the Corps of Engineers oversees new construction.

The reps serve as liaisons between the contractors and Corps of Engineers officials. They inspect the quality of laborers' work and help monitor construction schedules, among other duties. 



Air Force Capt. Jason Aftanas is working on the partnership program.



Story and photos by | Air Force Senior Airman Samantha Krolkowski

Kabul Women's Garden director Karima Salik (left) discusses the benefits of the facility to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employee Raelene Hampton (right), as others prepare a meal. Hampton and other Corps of Engineers employees delivered donated goods to the women's center on June 18.

U.S. women help Afghan women find comfort

Employees group makes donations to Women's Garden

KABUL – A trio of women assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in northern Afghanistan distributed 50 boxes of blankets, clothes and other supplies to Kabul Women's Garden, an 8-acre haven of freedom for Afghan women, on June 18.

The walled garden offers women a place to find respite from the country's strict doctrines and traditions that limit their employment, wardrobe and social interactions.

The garden offers a gym, sports classes, a computer lab, vocational training, literacy classes and an area for the women

to buy and sell goods. Only women, girls and boys younger than 12 are allowed in the garden.

The Corps of Engineers employees who made the trip were personnel chief Air Force Maj. Tracy Daniel of Scott Air Force Base, Ill., equal employment opportunity chief Raelene Hampton, of Weisbaden, Germany, and district deputy commander Air Force Lt. Col. Yvonne Spencer, of Columbia, Md.

After they dropped off the donated materials, they toured the site, which has a checkered history.

Seventy years ago, the garden opened as a venue for women to interact with other women.

However after decades of war and Taliban rule, it became a garbage dump. More than a year ago, with international funding, the garden was revitalized back

into a safe, comfortable place for Afghan women.

The garden is important because Afghan men typically do not allow their wives and daughters to go unaccompanied to places where other men may be, said Karima Salik, director of the garden.

"Because of that, we made the Women's Garden. Many women who come here stay because they are safe and free and don't need to wear their scarf or burqa," she said.

She told the Corps of Engineers personnel that some of the most essential programs at the garden are sessions that teach women about the rights that are promised in the Afghan constitution.

The government grants women the ability to work outside the home in a professional environment, to be politically active and to seek educations, among

as many as two children and are often beaten by their husbands," she said.

"The garden brings hope, comfort and peace – even for just a moment – to Afghan women who are uneducated and dealing with extremely horrible possibilities," Hampton said.

It struck the Americans that Afghans who visit the garden know full well that women enjoyed far more freedoms in Afghanistan until about the 1950s.

"I definitely keyed in on that part," Spencer said. "It was interesting to see they were aware that women had more rights, as far as being able to go outside of the house, to go to school and to shop on their own."

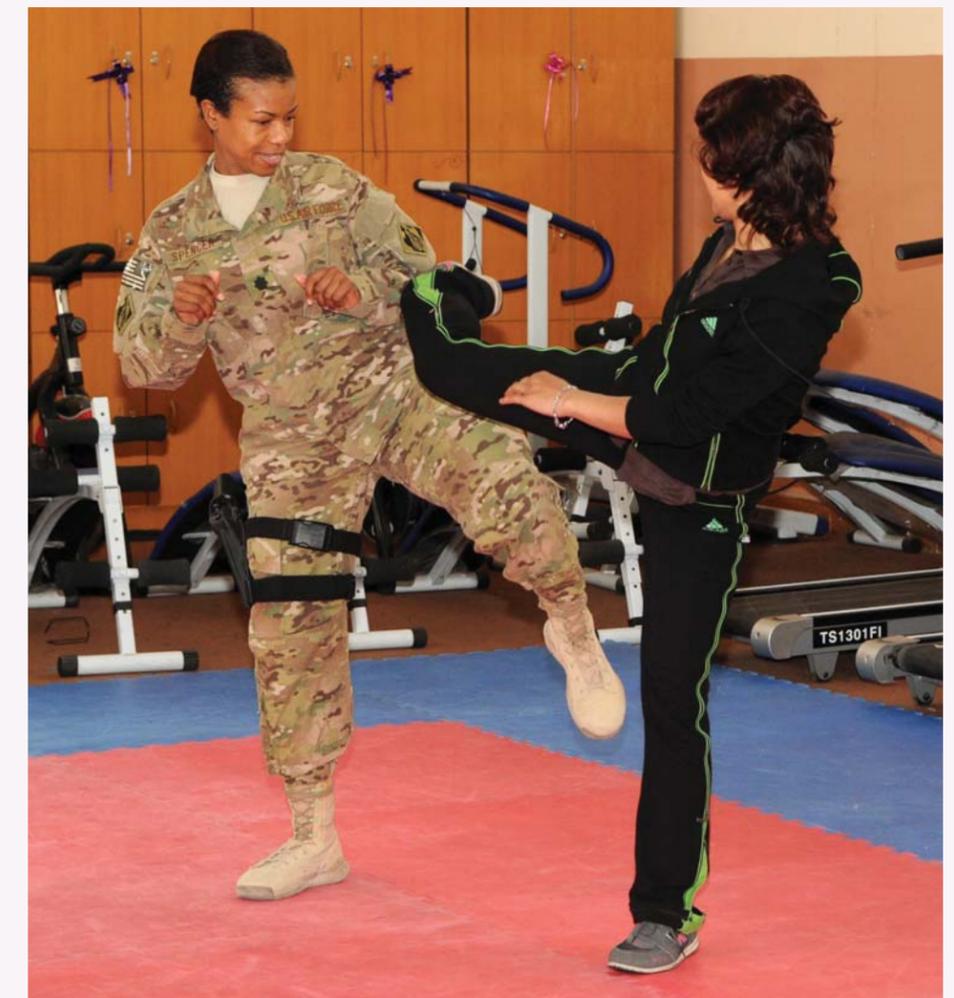
The Corps of Engineers personnel also noted the differences in opportunities between modern-era American women and Afghan women.

"It's opposite ends of the spectrum," said Spencer, who serves as the second in command of an organization comprised of nearly 500 military and civilian employees.

"For me, it's always been a challenge understanding how I would actually be able to operate if I lived in Afghanistan. I can't imagine not having freedoms, not being able to speak my mind, not having the choice to marry who I want to marry, and those types of things," she said.

The group's donations to the Women's Garden were part of a larger volunteer program by district employees who give goods to charitable organizations that benefit women and children in Afghanistan.

The donations are collected and shipped by district employees' co-workers and family members in the United States and elsewhere. 



District deputy commander Air Force Lt. Col. Yvonne Spencer (left) spars with a martial arts instructor at Kabul Women's Garden during the visit.



Story by | Paul Giblin

Photos by | Joe Marek

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employee Albert Whittington inspects decommissioned U.S.-made cargo trucks that are parked alongside abandoned Soviet military vehicles at an Afghan army base east of Kabul on May 15.

Safety pro clears junked tanks

PUL-E-CHARKHI, Afghanistan – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sent an explosive expert to an Afghan military compound to perform a job that's been neglected for decades.

The civilian explosives and safety pro, Albert Whittington, inspected dozens of abandoned Soviet tanks and other heavy military vehicles looking for unexploded ordnance, ammunition and other potentially deadly explosives.

The derelict vehicles had been sitting mostly inoperative on the Pul-e-Charkhi military base east of Kabul since Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. Whittington inspected them in May – 23 years after they had been abandoned.

The vehicles became an issue this year

because Corps of Engineers officials intend to use the space to build an improved lot for the Afghan army's motor pool. Plans call for the new lot to have a gravel surface with proper drainage and fencing.

Before contractors could safely transfer the Soviet vehicles to a scrap yard, someone needed to check the rigs to determine what threat they posed, said Jerry Cummings, the safety chief for the Corps of Engineers in northern Afghanistan.

After the Soviets retreated, Afghan forces moved into the base, but mostly left the vehicles where they stood.

Mixed among the rows of tanks are abandoned heavy military vehicles fitted with anti-aircraft guns and trench-digging equipment, personnel carriers, cargo trucks,

bridge-laying vehicles, Scud missile launchers and large artillery guns.

Other abandoned Soviet vehicles that were found elsewhere and remnants of a few ruined U.S. and coalition vehicles had been added to the collection over the years as well.

As wild thorny bushes grew between the vehicles during the past two decades, no one ever bothered to inventory them to determine what, if any, unexploded ordnance remained inside, said Whittington, 39, a Baltimore District employee who's on a year-long deployment to Afghanistan.

Inspecting them was labor-intensive work that required looking for bombs that might have been placed on their exteriors, and rummaging through their interiors

checking every cannon and gun chamber, ammo storage compartment, tool box and equipment storage area for unspent ammunition or other explosives.

"I went through each one to verify they were free of UXO," Whittington said using an acronym for unexploded ordnance.

"That way, I was able to assure the contractors that it was safe for the vehicles to be moved," he said.

He spent several days in May inspecting and cataloging the vehicles. He worked about four hours a day in triple-digit heat under the eyes of well-armed U.S. security contractors who served as body guards. Standard procedure dictates that civilians who work outside of coalition compounds are accompanied by armed military personnel or security agents.

In total, the work took 18 hours. "It was quite hot," said Whittington, a resident of La Plata, Md.

He came across a few fuses, but nothing more dangerous than that.

Mostly, Whittington found discarded tools, nuts and bolts, plastic water bottles and other litter stuffed into interior and exterior crevices. The most interesting discovery, he said, was a Soviet crank-powered telephone, which he found in a junked communications truck.



The abandoned rigs at Pul-e-Charkhi include Soviet bridge-laying vehicles.

Pul-e-Charkhi is just one place where abandoned military equipment was left in Afghanistan. It's everywhere. Soviet vehicles dot the country, rusting alongside other deserted compounds, and elsewhere.

Many Soviet vehicles have been booby-trapped by insurgents hoping to kill or maim coalition military personnel and salvage hunters.

Whittington said he was fairly confident that the tanks and other vehicle at the

Afghan base were not wired to explode. "I wasn't as concerned about booby traps as much as things that might have been left behind," he said.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance are a serious problem throughout Afghanistan.

According to the United Nations' Mine Action Coordination Center of Afghanistan, landmines and unexploded ordnance, such as discarded rockets and grenades, are located in 32 of the country's 34 provinces. The devices killed 208 Afghans and wounded an additional 563 Afghans in 2011 alone.

The Corps of Engineers located and destroyed 1.1 million individual pieces of unexploded ordnance and mines in 2010 and 2011.

Cummings said Whittington's work on the project underscored the organization's wide scope of responsibilities in the country.

"We need people like him to perform those sorts of tasks to protect people from unexploded ordnance hazards," he said.

Whittington returned to the site at Pul-e-Charkhi on June 21. A crew of Afghan workers operating a large crane was busy loading the junked vehicles onto a flat-bed truck for removal.

All the vehicles are expected to be removed by mid-July. 



Dozens of Soviet tanks were left to rust in place more than 20 years ago.

Runners take on Kabul Marathon

Warzone conditions add spectral to race in the Green Zone

KABUL – Some marathons feature music, bands and cheering crowds along their routes, but for the Kabul Marathon, the defining elements were frequent sounds of helicopters above, the scorching sun and constant dust in the air.

A trio of four-person teams from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers endured the conditions and completed the relay event in the marathon at the International Security Assistance Force headquarters compound on May 4.

The base within the Green Zone in downtown Kabul is the command center for coalition forces fighting the war.

More than 300 people participated in the 26.2-mile race. The majority were military personnel from countries all over the world, including Australia, France, Germany, Macedonia, New Zealand, Poland and the United States.

For the half marathon, the course was a mini lap followed by 14 figure-8 loops around the base, while the full marathon was a mini lap and 28 figure-8 loops.

The loops were slightly longer than nine-tenths of a mile. Each member of the Corps of Engineers relay teams ran seven laps around the perimeter of the base.

The route led along the base's main road past a strip of shops, a gym, workplaces,

“hooches” or living quarters, and a dining hall, through a parking lot, then along another major road and around the base's headquarters building.

Corps of Engineers district assistant counsel Lauren Turner, who ran with a team named Wii Not Fit, said that initially she felt like the race was back in Buffalo, N.Y.

“I forgot we were thousands of miles from home,” she said.

“We had all the elements of running a race at home with cheers, the crowds and music, however it clicked in my head that we were right in the middle of a war zone when the announcer instructed what we should do in case of an attack while running,” she said.

The heat also was a significant factor. The temperature rose to a warm 77 degrees.

“It was an easy run, but it was hard because it was hot and dusty,” said Turner, a former college rowing coach. “I felt the elevation. It was hard to breath.”

Other runners also said they felt shortness of breath because of Kabul's elevation, which is nearly 5,900 feet above sea level. That's higher than Denver. As a result, Kabul's air has about 21 percent less oxygen than air at sea level.

Contractor Chris McGinty, who's from Palacios, Texas, said when he heard about the Kabul Marathon just six weeks before the race, he started to prepare.

“I conditioned for the adjustment and it never bothered me,” said the senior scheduler for the construction management firm Michael Baker Jr. Inc., which is based in Moon Township, Penn. McGinty lives and works at the Corps of Engineers compound.

He said he enjoyed the camaraderie

with his teammates and the company of so many people of different nationalities all running, working and surviving together in Afghanistan. “It's good to see a variety of people you don't normally see.”

The course was rough compared to other race courses, said Brett Elder, a resident management system lead for Baker from Avondale, Ariz. “The course is broken into three sections – dirt, gravel and pavement.”

The Corps of Engineers teams were comprised of six employees from the Corps of Engineers, four from Baker and two from Global Strategies Group, a defense and security firm based in Reston, Va.

Wii Not Fit finished first among the Corps of Engineers teams with a time of 3 hours, 25 minutes, 58 seconds. The team members: supply technician Prather Alexander, cartographer Jeanie Gaudette, contracting specialist Nick Hass and Turner.

A team called the Cupcakes came in

second among the three teams at 3:31.15. The line-up: deputy commander Air Force Lt. Col. Aaron Benson, public affairs specialist Mark Rankin and two Global security agents who asked not to be identified.

The Baker team finished in 4:15.46. The team: Elder, McGinty, database analyst Jim Washabaugh and resident management system technician Diane Wheeler.

U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker, an avid runner himself, presented the post-race awards and thanked the organizers and volunteers who worked for months to stage the race.

“This is a great event and I'm happy to see everyone here,” he said.

Crocker also commended all the runners for enduring the strange combination of elements to complete the race. “Remember to take it easy today, for you'll be sore tomorrow,” he said. 📷



Story and photos by | Mark Rankin

Corps of Engineers contracting specialist Nick Haas (left) awaits the tag during the relay event at the Kabul Marathon on May 4.



District assistant counsel Lauren Turner makes the connection after completing her portion of the race at the International Security Assistance Force headquarters base.



Haas takes off for the final seven loops around the base in Kabul. Three Corps of Engineers teams participated in the event.



Parting shot

Photo by *Paul Giblin*

MAYDAN, Afghanistan – A powerful dust devil went down to Wardak Province on May 13. The swirling column of sand danced outside the Afghanistan National Police Training Center for a few minutes before a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers helicopter touched down inside the base.