



PHOTO BY LT. CMDR. JOHN DANIELS

The Afghan National Army judge advocate generals listen to questions their lawyers ask during a legal seminar recently held at the Ministry of Defence.

# ANA focuses on adapting legal core

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**KABUL, Afghanistan** — Almost 200 Afghan National Army judges, lawyers and paralegals received training in December on legal core principles at the Ministry of Defense.

Seminars for these representatives of the ANA Justice System were held by a joint working group over a three-day period. The speakers gave detailed information on all facets of legal procedure. The goal of the joint working group, composed of Afghan judges and instructors from the U.S.-based Defense Institute of International Legal Studies, is to communicate the rights of an ANA individual and how they differ from those under the former military legal system.

The new ANA Military Justice Code was signed into law Dec. 17, 2005. Since then, the ANA justice system has made great strides in implementing the legal system throughout its military. The purpose behind the ANA's adoption of this new system is to prevent crimes and protect Afghan values.

“By having such a strong system, we can create stability for our soldiers and allow the army to focus on other objectives,” said Gen. Shir M. Zazai, the ANA judge advocate general.

The legal system allows for the accused individual to have defense council available at all questioning sessions and to be protected from being coerced to testify against himself. In the former system, investigators were able to use excessive means to ensure a confession.

“There are benefits to this new format for our justice system,” said Gen. Abdul Majid Khoweri, an ANA/JAG. “It makes us more effective because it allows a person to rely on the facts not theories.”

The legal seminar was an exchange of information between the ANA and the U.S. military. Members of the ANA's justice system learned the responsibilities of prosecutors, defense lawyers and appellate judges under the redefined legal format of the ANA. They were also trained in staff judge advocate trial procedures and investigative work.

The Afghans hope to preserve cultural traditions while incorporating protection of an individual's rights, said Khoweri.

“We recognize the importance of protecting our people and making sure the fair and honest thing is done,” said Zazai. “This system compliments both the Afghan way of handling things and the (integrity) of the American legal system.” 