



# An Afghan education from the ground up

by Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian P. Seymour  
CSTC-A Public Affairs

**MAZAR-e-SHARIF, Afghanistan**—Coalition mentors stationed in northern Afghanistan continue to take interest in the country’s future by investing time and money in the “younger generation.”

An embedded training team assigned to Afghan Regional Security Integration Command—North has partnered with members of the Afghan National Army’s 5th Kandak, 209th Corps, to provide a better education for local children from the Balkh District.

In a construction project that supports procedures outlined in the Afghan National Development Strategy, the coalition and Afghan partnership erected a 10-room school from the ground up in the nearby village of Deh-i-Qazi.

The project, which broke ground last summer by the hands of the Jama Balkh Construction & Road Rehabilitation Company, took less than four months to complete. It was known formally as the “Deh-i-Qazi School and Bridge Project” by the coalition mentors who received, processed and implemented the town’s request.

Originally, village elders and the principal of the school’s previous location – on a mosque floor, or outdoors – came together and asked the ANA for a better equipped and more centralized location for a children’s secondary school. The ANA then sent



photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Wollenberg

## Camp Eggers receives USO donations

**CAMP EGGERS, Afghanistan** — Petty Officer 3rd Class Jessica Brewer (right), CJ1 support TDY clerk deployed from Port Hueneme, Calif., helps Sophie Grandmont, Camp Eggers education counselor from Ottawa, Canada, pack a box of USO donations for the Kabul Military Training Center Dec. 5. The USO sent 400 boxes of food items, personal hygiene items, electronics, games, phone cards and more to be distributed to Kabul area coalition facilities. The USO also sent a Playstation 3 and Nintendo Wii for MWR sign out and use.

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the request to ARSIC-N, who formally requested the project be approved by the Balkh Provincial Ministry of Education.

The ARSIC-N Civil Military Operations Officer, Air Force Capt. Todd McDowell, requested funding from the Commander's Emergency Response Program; a program designed to enable local commanders to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction needs.

"We were eager to help the residents of Deh-i-Qazi," McDowell said. "Once we initially visited the village last spring, we witnessed their conditions first hand. They were sitting on carpets in the shade under a tree. It was obvious that the kids were enthusiastic about attending school and they definitely needed a permanent structure to call their own."

It is unclear precisely how many children will eventually become students at this new site, which opened Dec. 3 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. It is estimated some 1,200 children reside in as many as four villages surrounding the new facility.

Optimistic about this recently completed venture is none other than the project manager himself, Army Sgt. Maj. David Stevens, non-commissioned officer in charge of the 5th Kandak ETT to the ANA's 209th Corps.

"Being able to actually

learn inside a classroom verses outside with no desks, chairs or blackboards, and temperatures exceeding 100 degrees, is a tremendous step forward," Stevens said. "Also, with the new school, it is expected more children will attend school."

Guests in attendance for

the ribbon-cutting ceremony were: Maj. Gen. Murad Ali, commander of the 209th ANA Corps; Brig. Gen. Abduraf Taj, Balkh Provincial chief of police; Tamoursha Faez, Balkh District governor; and several local elders and faculty members.

Ali believes that this school

indicates Afghanistan's future.

"In the past, the younger generation has been taught to take up arms," Ali said. "We are now building universities and great institutions for them to learn about their culture. We must continue to make education of our younger generation a priority."



photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian P. Seymour

**U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. David Stevens, NCO in charge of the 5th Kandak embedded training team to the 209th Afghan National Army Corps, cuts the ribbon alongside 209th Corps Commander, Maj. Gen. Murad Ali, commemorating the grand opening of a new secondary school for children of the village Deh-i-Qazi in Balkh Province. The four-month construction effort is part of the Commander's Emergency Response Program, designed to enable local commanders to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction needs.**



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**Editor:** Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Wollenberg

**Writer:** Marine Staff Sgt. Luis P. Valdespino Jr.

**Writer:** Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian Seymour

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The mission of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community, is to plan, program and implement structural, organizational, institutional and management reforms of the Afghanistan National Security Forces in order to develop a stable Afghanistan, strengthen the rule of law and deter and defeat terrorism within its borders.