



THE

FREEDOM BUILDER

March 2010

MAGAZINE

Big Shots

**MRAP procurement aids
Quality Assurance checks,
movement security**



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
Afghanistan Engineer District

Surge Support

AED-N's Bagram Area Office keeps up with the Coalition's demand for more troop facilities in light of strength increase

District Commander
Col. Michael McCormick

AED-North District Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Calvin T. Williams

Chief of Public Affairs
David A. Salazar

Layout & Design
Joseph A. Marek

Staff Writer & Multimedia Specialist
Hank G. Heusinkveld

Staff Writer
Paul R. Giblin

The Freedom Builder is the field magazine of the Afghanistan Engineer District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and is an unofficial publication authorized by AR 360-1. It is produced monthly for electronic distribution by the Public Affairs Office, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Afghanistan Engineer District. It is produced in the Afghanistan theater of operations.

Views and opinions expressed in The Freedom Builder are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Articles or photographic submissions are welcome and should arrive in PAO by the 15th of each month preceding publication. They can be mailed to the below address or they can be e-mailed. If electronically submitted, all stories should be in Word document format and all photographs should be high resolution and include photo caption information.

All photographs appearing herein are by the Afghanistan Engineer District Public Affairs Office unless otherwise accredited.

The mission of The Freedom Builder is to support the Commander's Internal Communication Program for the Afghanistan Engineer District. It also serves as the Commander's primary communication tool for accurately transmitting policies, operations, technical developments, and command philosophy to the Afghanistan Engineer District.

Submissions can be e-mailed to:
AED.PublicAffairs@usace.army.mil

Submissions can be mailed to:
Public Affairs Office
USACE-AED
ATTN: Qalaa House
APO AE 09356

COM: 540-678-2984, DSN: 312-265-2984

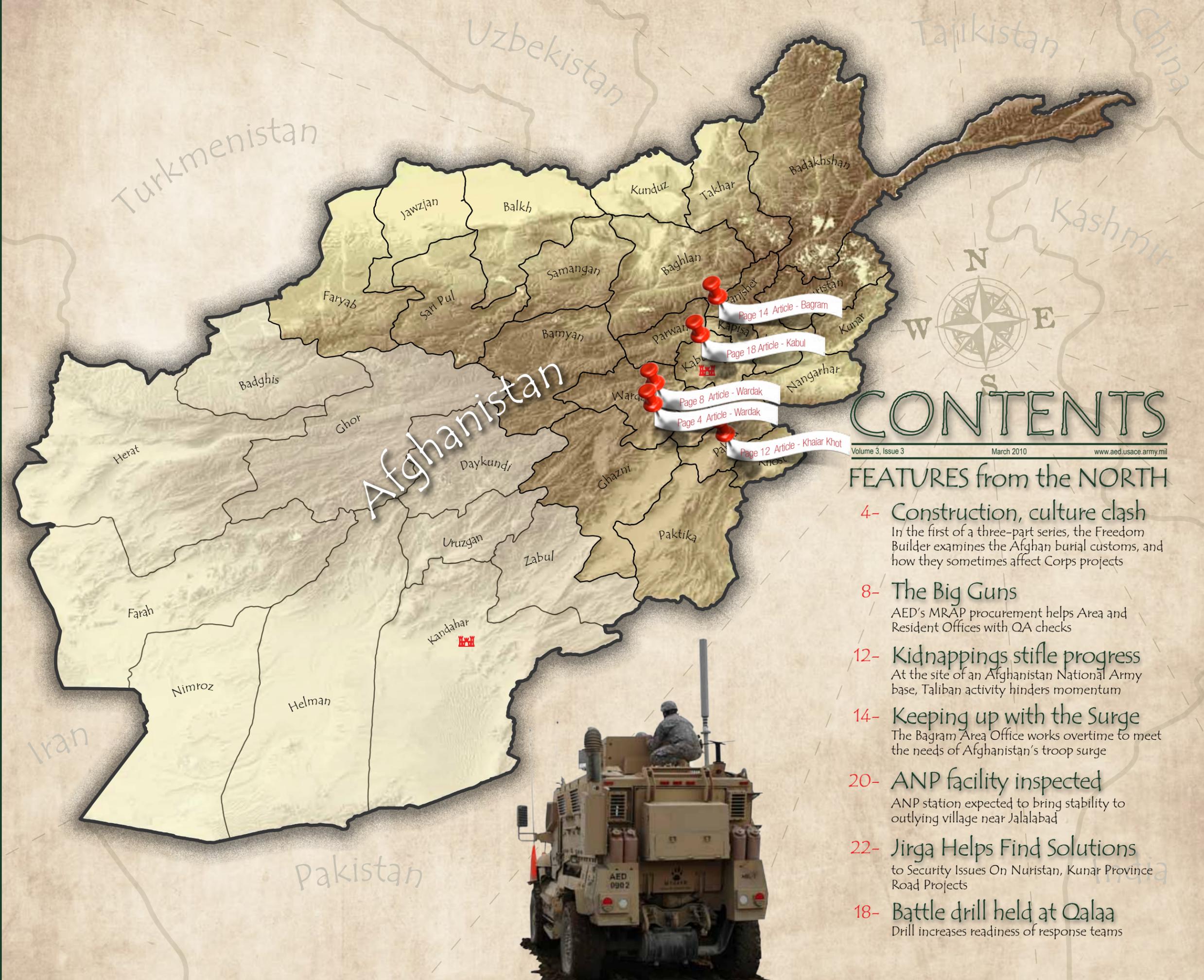
The Freedom Builder Magazine is available online at
www.aed.usace.army.mil

Cover Image:



SPC Evan Smith coaches a fellow Soldier during the team's MRAP shoot. (Full story on pg. 8)

Photo by | David Salazar



CONTENTS

Volume 3, Issue 3 March 2010 www.aed.usace.army.mil

FEATURES from the NORTH

- 4-** **Construction, culture clash**
In the first of a three-part series, the Freedom Builder examines the Afghan burial customs, and how they sometimes affect Corps projects
- 8-** **The Big Guns**
AED's MRAP procurement helps Area and Resident Offices with QA checks
- 12-** **Kidnappings stifle progress**
At the site of an Afghanistan National Army base, Taliban activity hinders momentum
- 14-** **Keeping up with the Surge**
The Bagram Area Office works overtime to meet the needs of Afghanistan's troop surge
- 20-** **ANP facility inspected**
ANP station expected to bring stability to outlying village near Jalalabad
- 22-** **Jirga Helps Find Solutions**
to Security Issues On Nuristan, Kunar Province Road Projects
- 18-** **Battle drill held at Qalaa**
Drill increases readiness of response teams

Grave Concern

When regional lore dictates where and how the deceased are buried, it sometimes leads to clashes between Afghan culture and the Corps' mission

Story and Photos by | David Salazar

“If a person lent out land so that a deceased may be buried in that land, he may only claim the land back once the body has been completely annihilated. In the case where the deceased is a Nabi or a Shaheed (martyr), the land can never be claimed since the bodies of these two never decay.”- a passage from “Book of Martyrs,” a website dedicated to “Sharing the Jihad Experience.”

KABUL, Afghanistan – Months after breaking ground at the site of the future Afghanistan National Logistics Center in Maydan Shahr, Wardak Province, the low roar of the backhoes and graders came to a stop, and workers gathered around a dirt pile to inspect a peculiar and unexpected find.

A backhoe moving dirt to help flatten the land enough to build on it, had scraped up a human skeleton. Bone fragments from the remains of two bodies had been accidentally disburged – some in the freshly exhumed

dirt pile, some still in the shallow graves they were buried in.

Less than 60 kilometers away, a similar event unfolded at the construction site for the Uniformed Police District Headquarters in Charkh, Logar Province.

In both situations, construction came to a halt as the Ministry of Archeological Affairs conducted investigations at both sites to determine the significance of the finds; the Maydan Shahr site closed for 28 days, Charkh for 26.

Normally, graves are marked with piled

rocks or single, flat stones and adorned with flags made of sticks and scarves. According to Islamic customs, graves are to remain undisturbed until such time that it is certain the entire body has decomposed to dust.

In this case, “it was initially determined that the remains found were buried in the traditional (Muslim) custom and that the remains appear to be in excess of 25 years old,” said Bernard Wright, project manager for ECCI, the construction company contracted to build the Ministry of Interior’s logistics hub. Prior to building, hundreds of tank round casings were found on the site, as was a Russian tank, fueling speculation that the bones were those of Russian soldiers killed during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. Since they were buried in accordance with Islamic tradition, no such conclusion could be confirmed by Ministry officials.

Islamic tradition dictates that the remains of Muslims are buried in graveyards after being thoroughly washed by family and friends of the same gender, and put in traditional white clothing. Prayer and a ceremony take place before the body is laid facing the direction of Mecca and buried, said a translator who wished not to be identified.

The exception to this is when the death occurs in a place too far from a graveyard, or if the situation does not allow prompt preparation and transfer of the body. Under these conditions, it is permitted that they are buried where they die.

“Individual graves (those not buried in graveyards) are usually made out of necessity and due to lack of time or accessibility to gravesites in different situations,” he said. “For example, drivers or passengers who are killed in accidents along the highway and cannot be identified and transferred to their

families, are mostly buried in the roadside by other drivers or passengers.”

The practice of burying bodies where they’re found or where the person dies is what leads to issues like those encountered at Maydan Shahr and Charkh.

“If we know there are graves on a piece of land we’re going to build on, we do everything we can to make sure the graves are not disturbed, and as much as possible, exclude them the actual construction site,” said Flo Jordan, AED-N’s Chief of Real Estate. If graves are marked and are adjacent to a potential construction site, and a fence is to be constructed, the graves are usually left outside the perimeter.

The Shaheed

Islamic code in Afghanistan is largely based on the writings of the Quran, as well what’s known as Qasahaid Islami, a form of folklore passed through word-of-mouth and repeated so incessantly that it is

regarded as fact.

Several anecdotes refer to the graves of shaheed, or martyrs. The Arabic term shaheed, refers to Muslims who died fulfilling Allah’s will, a religious commandment, or while waging war in the name of Islam. The term is also used for Muslims who die in a variety of ways, including accidents such as fire or drowning, during childbirth, while defending one’s property or due to disease.

One of many tawaaturs regarding the graves of shaheed is listed in an article posted on islamicawakening.com, entitled The Signs of ar-Rahmaan in the Jihad of the Afghan. The article simply states “it is Haraam (forbidden) for the earth to consume the body of a shaheed.”

Testimony cited in the article included that of Umar Hanif, a man the article’s author claims was his commander during his time



Photo illustration by | Joe Marek

group. Hanif claimed “I have never seen a single shaheed whose body gave off a bad odor,” “I have never seen dogs touching a single shaheed even though they devoured the bodies of the communists,” and “I have seen many a shaheed more than a year after their burial. Their wounds were fresh,

In Kandahar, at the Cemetery of the Arabs, the men, women and children buried there, many of whom perished during the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom, are regarded as shaheed. According to a 2008 report by the BBC, thousands of people flock to the site every year in hopes to become cured from a litany of diseases and handicaps by consuming a pinch of salt from the graveyard, said to share a special connection with the interred shaheed.

Since this graveyard’s creation and before it, having a family member become a shaheed has been considered good luck, said a student in Kabul who also works for AED-N Headquarters as a maintenance worker, who preferred not to be identified. Some people also believe that having a shaheed buried on one’s property is even better, as it allows unfettered access to the grave at all times, he said. Some people pray near them, believing the act brings them closer to Allah by association.

In some parts of the country, family members of the deceased go as far as to mark every drop of blood spilled by the wounded person with a flag, he said. Once the

person dies from his or her wounds, the deceased is usually memorialized with larger flags to distinguish their graves from others.

In a small village west of Maydan Shahr, flags of various sizes stand in close proximity to one another along the outer wall of a house made of beige clay bricks. The flags form a trail that disappears into the house’s doorway; A larger flag is posted atop the house.

“To me, this looks like someone was shot or wounded outside the home and then went inside, where he died,” the student said.

The home faces the village’s only thoroughfare near the site of an IED blast that killed three U.S. Soldiers in January. After the incident, eight more IEDs were found on the same road and destroyed by Coalition Forces.

It was not known whether the flags marked the grave of an innocent villager or one involved in the IED attack.

To date, no graves like those of the shaheed described in the article on islamicawakening.com have been unearthed on Corps project sites.

The way ahead

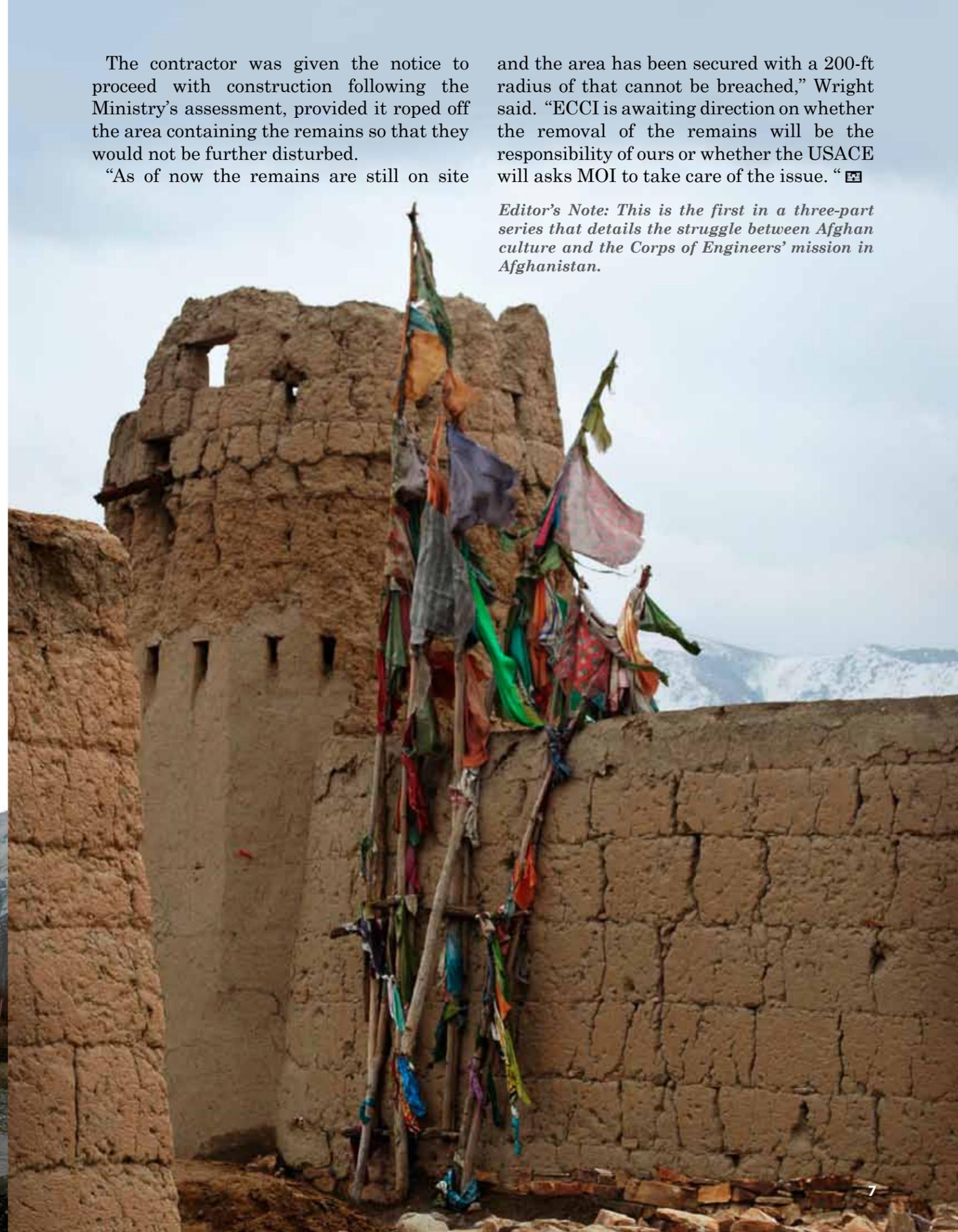
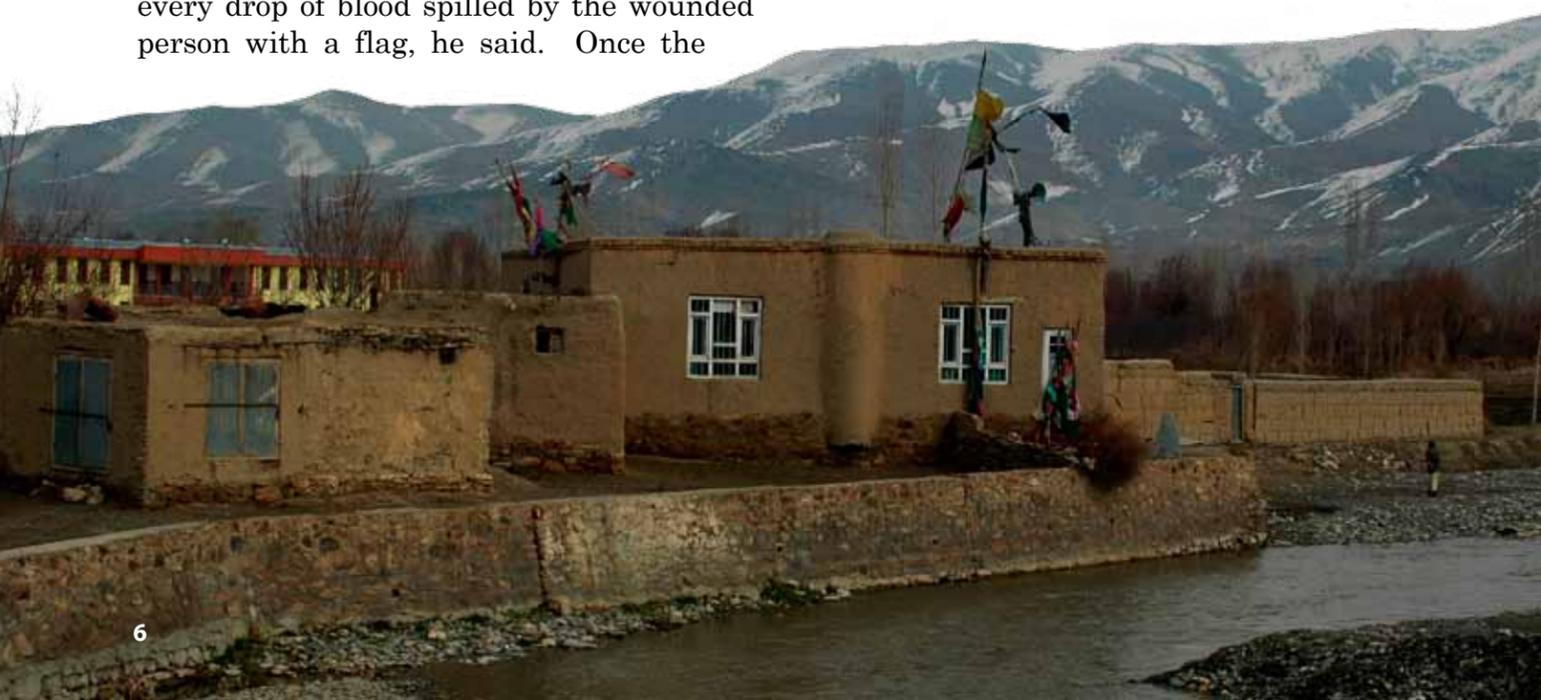
While construction has been ongoing at the National Logistics Center project, the skeletons continue to hinder progress around their immediate locations.

The contractor was given the notice to proceed with construction following the Ministry’s assessment, provided it roped off the area containing the remains so that they would not be further disturbed.

“As of now the remains are still on site

and the area has been secured with a 200-ft radius of that cannot be breached,” Wright said. “ECCI is awaiting direction on whether the removal of the remains will be the responsibility of ours or whether the USACE will asks MOI to take care of the issue.”

Editor’s Note: This is the first in a three-part series that details the struggle between Afghan culture and the Corps of Engineers’ mission in Afghanistan.



Big Shots

AED's MRAPs aid Quality Assurance checks, preparedness

Story and Photos by | *David Salazar*

Kabul, Afghanistan – The winter snow began to melt in the foothills surrounding Forward Operating Base Airborne, creating a muddy mess.

But it didn't deter members of the Wardak Resident Office's Mine-Resistant, Ambush Protected vehicle team from taking in some much-needed time on the range.

The team of three Soldiers, one contractor and a Corps civilian navigated the short distance from the Resident Office's compound to the FOB's range, trudging up the hilly, mud-covered road.

Since acquiring their own MRAP in mid-January, the team received a new barrel and safety system for the vehicle's .50 caliber machine gun, as well as a new mount for its M240G machine gun. It was time for the Soldiers to make sure the new parts worked the only way they can – by firing the weapons.

This past summer, the Afghanistan Engineer District was issued 11 Maxx Pro model MRAPs to support Area and Resident Offices located on Coalition FOBs. The MRAP program is meant to provide protective vehicles, similar to those already in use by ground forces, to help protect our engineers Corps personnel better integrate with their Coalition partners.

Having an MRAP helps construction reps, engineers and others get out to hard-to-reach project sites under the Alignment, Movement and Security Plan – an agreement between the Corps and combat units that allows AED to accompany maneuver convoys en route to locations at or near project sites. The plan allows Corps officials to make more frequent Quality Assurance visits than what they were relegated to prior to obtaining the vehicles, since the MRAPs and MRAP teams are assigned directly to the area and resident offices.

“Having the MRAP allows us to visit two of my project sites weekly instead of bi-monthly, when the district’s rotary wing asset is available to us,” said MAJ Robert Kurtz, officer-in-charge of the Wardak Resident Office. The district’s more convenient, but high-in-demand helicopters currently serve both AED-N and its sister district, the Afghanistan Engineer District – South.

With snow-capped mountains as the backdrop, the Soldiers fired a combination of .50 caliber, 7.62 caliber and 5.56 caliber rounds at their targets downrange – a de-militarized Russian tank and human silhouette targets.

Although AED-N is not a combat unit, MRAP team members are ready and capable of assisting Coalition partners if an attack were to occur during a movement. That’s all the more reason why the Wardak RO’s MRAP team treated this range trip with such diligence.

“It’s very important that we get out to fire these weapons, because you never know when the system might fail or something might go wrong with the

weapon,” said Sgt. Terence McLaughlin, an MRAP team member. “It’s very important to keep checking up on it, making sure it’s ready, functional and clean at all times.”

Essentially, the only differences between AED’s MRAPs and those of combat units are its passengers: Combat units transport troops in their MRAPs; AED transports its mostly civilian personnel in theirs. This presents the necessity for civilians to be familiar with how the team operates.

McLaughlin and his fellow team members, Staff Sergeant Marques Cales, the team’s leader, and Specialist Evan Smith, who have since redeployed, brought along Andy Hovey, a construction representative, to observe the training. To McLaughlin, this will pay off in dividends if they

ever need to make contact with the Taliban, which is still very much active in the province.

“If civilians are able to observe and interact with us when we train, they’ll have an idea of how things would go if we were to find ourselves in a combat scenario,” McLaughlin said. “They may be able

to use that knowledge to be of assistance to MRAP team members.”

The team shot approximately 100 each of .50 cal, 5.56mm and 7.56mm rounds – just enough to ensure that each weapon system functioned properly.

For Hovey, who has no prior military experience, the trip was an opportunity to learn something new.

“It was a very unique experience. We got to disassemble, clean and reassemble the weapons,” said Hovey. “It made me feel more prepared to have watched the training -- I’m aware of how the weapons work now.”

After their allotted time on the range, the team gathered up their belongings, cleared the area of brass casings and cardboard ammo wrapping. They began their trek back down the muddy hill in their hulking tan vehicle -- reassured that their equipment was operational and that they were prepared to use it if they need to. 🇺🇸



Construction Continues

in spite of kidnappings in eastern Afghanistan



Story by | Paul Giblin

Kidnappings by the Taliban have disrupted construction at this ANA post in Khair Khot.

KABUL, Afghanistan – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a Lebanese-based construction company are pushing forward to build a base for the Afghanistan National Army in the lawless eastern region of the country, despite a rash of kidnappings, threats and violence against workers at the site.

The assaults underscore the need to complete the Khair Khot Garrison quickly so that Afghan soldiers can move in and help bring stability to the area near the Pakistan border, according to Corps officials. The base is designed to house as many as 4,000 Afghan troops upon completion.

Kidnappers abducted 27 workers affiliated with the construction company, Nassar Group International, during a 10-day period starting on Feb. 8. The kidnappers released one worker, a security guard, a few days after his capture, but only after cutting off his fingers.

Nassar Group executives negotiated the release of about 20 of the workers by March 21, said Roger Bullock, resident engineer in Forward Operating Base Sharana, who

oversees construction at Khair Khot. The executives continued discussions to secure the release of the remaining workers, he said.

In the meantime, Nassar Group has pledged to pay the workers for the time they spent in captivity. “That’s pretty doggone noble,” Bullock said. “There’re certainly contractors out here that would not do that for their workers.”

Initially, insurgents kidnapped workers one or two at a time, but on Feb. 17, they captured 22 workers in a single day on a road near the village of Shardiwal near the Pakistan border, said Georges Nassar, the company’s president. The workers, who are supervisors, foremen and specialists, were returning to the construction site after taking vacations.

Kidnappers dressed in Afghanistan army uniforms set up a bogus checkpoint and abducted the workers, who traveled in three vehicles, when they stopped, Nassar said. It appeared the kidnappers knew the workers’ travel route and schedule, he said. The kidnappers allowed other motorists to pass.

The next day, the kidnappers passed a message to company executives demanding \$50,000 for each of the men.

Executives hope to negotiate a peaceful settlement for the remaining hostages. “Life is nothing for them,” Nassar said about the insurgents. “If they kill, they kill.”

Nassar believes the kidnappers are members of the Taliban and that their intent is to slow or halt construction of the base.

The first phase of the base is scheduled for occupancy by the ANA in early to mid-May, with the remainder scheduled to be largely complete in the late summer. The scope of work features barracks, offices, dining facilities, a water-treatment plant, sports fields and other amenities.

Several hundred workers are employed on the site, which is more than a square mile in size. The workforce includes armed guards who patrol both inside and outside the site’s perimeter walls, and escort workers.

Also in recent weeks, insurgents have threatened to shoot a group of roofers and the roofers’ families if they continued to work on the site. Since all the roofers were from the same village and their families would be easy targets, Nassar allowed the roofers to return home without completing their work assignment. He later found replacement workers to finish the job.

Furthermore, insurgents have rocketed the construction site several times, though the damage has been minimal, Bullock said.

Nassar remains undeterred. “I will stay here and finish this compound, this base, because it is very important to this area,” he told Bullock and other Corps of Engineers personnel during

a site inspection on Feb. 13.

It’s possible that both members of the Taliban and ordinary criminals are causing problems at the site, said U.S. Army Capt. Abbas Elegba, a project manager for the international organization that’s funding the project, the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan.

The Taliban probably is responsible for threatening to shoot the roofers in an effort to stall construction, he said. However, it’s

possible that the kidnappers are simply criminals looking to extort money, Elegba said. He noted that the kidnappers demanded \$2,000 to \$3,000 in ransom for each of the first four workers who were abducted. Later, the kidnappers increased their demands to \$50,000 for each worker.

“They keep upping the ante to see how much money they can get,” Elegba said. “And sometimes there’s a cross between the Taliban and the

criminals, because the Taliban needs to raise money, too.”

The best solution, he said, is for work to continue on the base, so that Afghan soldiers can move in as soon as possible.

Bullock credited the company for keeping the project on track, despite the dangers associated with working in a war zone.

“They’ve done some things right. They have good leadership on that site,” Bullock said. The contractors treat their Afghan laborers with respect, and they work closely with the Corps’ on-site quality assurance inspectors

In addition, the company has put a well trained security force in place, he said. Many of the guards are former Lebanese special forces personnel, he said. ☒



Mike Tuttle, left, speaks with Nassar during a recent trip to the site.



Troop Surge

BAGRAM AREA OFFICE KEEPS PACE WITH TROOP SURGE AT BAGRAM ARMY AIR FIELD

Story and Photos by | *Hank Heusinkveld*

Soldiers from the Vermont National Guard board a C-130 for a trip down south to support the surge. Troops like these are part of a transient population that arrive and depart daily at Bagram Army Air Field.

KABUL, Afghanistan – Bagram Army Air Field is the hub for U.S. Servicemembers who in-process for the Operation Enduring Freedom troop surge.

The permanent population at this massive installation northwest of Kabul continues to rise, and the transient population hovers around 3,000.

Space is a commodity, and there's constant juggling and shifting of areas where buildings need to be constructed to house the growing

populations as well as dining facilities and other buildings and facilities that support the populations.

Down on the flight line there's also major construction going on. Afghanistan Engineer District-North members at the Bagram Area Office are helping to support the surge by managing the construction of a hangar for the U.S. Air Force that will accommodate more and larger aircraft complete with a maintenance facility. With an operations

tempo that seems off the scale at times, the hangar will keep congestion limited by providing the extra space.

"This hangar project is tied to what we call the 6 in 1 Project," said Project Manager Earl Smith, III. "This will be the upgrade for everything as far as hangars, airfield runways, taxi ways, helicopter pads...just basically trying to get Bagram up to par with the demand that it's facing with an increasing number of individuals coming into Afghanistan."

Smith said that with so much ground traffic planners have to ensure that every square inch of the tarmac is used wisely.

Smith said U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project managers have to coordinate with base operations daily to keep things in balance.

"We have to be able to affect change and stay ahead of the ball to make sure that our military is able to keep up with the increasing demands. That's what we're here for. In addition to the 6 in 1 project we also have a bulk fuels projects which is going to be increasing the availability to get fuel and everything that Bagram needs in order to function smoothly and efficiently."

Across the tarmac, the Bagram Area Office is also managing the construction of a



An Air force ground crew gives a U.S. Air Force C-130 a once-over before taking off for another mission.

massive helicopter hangar for the U.S. Army. It, too, will have its own maintenance facility and decrease the amount of helicopters on the open tarmac.

In addition to supporting the surge with the hangars, the Corps of Engineers is making life easier for transient troops before they ship out to duty locations.

Currently, most troops live in a tent city on the far end of the installation. Whole units are cramped three-bunks high with little room to walk around. But a new dorm-style barracks provides not only comfort but added protection because it's a hardened structure.

"As you can imagine tent living with the

number of personnel coming in and out is very tough not only logistically for trying to get them all the support facilities that they need, but then also for the Soldiers themselves being cramped in such a small space which is not necessarily hardened or permanent."

Smith said that the pace of life and work is intense at Bagram Army Air Field with an influx of permanent and transient troops and Civilian government workers and contractors. But with projects that aim to make good use of limited real estate the Corps is doing its part to help keep things running smoothly and efficiently in support of the surge. [E]

The new dormitory-style barracks provide a hardened structure for added protection, as well as close proximity to dining and other facilities for transient troops.



The hangar will not only house aircraft such as a C-130, but larger aircraft such as the C-17. It also features its own maintenance facility.





Quality Assurance Training

AED-N's QAB takes training to where it's needed - the field

Story and Photos by | David Salazar

Tom Urbaniak talks to attendees of his two-day Quality Assurance class at FOB Airborne.

KABUL, Afghanistan -- Members of the Wardak Resident office, contractors and Soldiers received Quality Assurance/Quality Control training at Forward Operating Base Airborne March 1 and 2.

The training, given by Tom Urbaniak, a civil engineer with Afghanistan Engineer District – North's Quality Assurance Branch, is part of the QAB's mission to bring training out the people who need it – those who deal with contractors and visit the project sites.

"I came out here to provide some training to the Corps Quality Assurance reps out in the field and help them with the Resident Management System, as well as some of the technical processes that the Corps has used for a number of years," said Urbaniak, who normally works for the Kansas City District.

"(The course) is to train up our new guys here who are not as familiar with RMS and general Quality Assurance/Quality Control

out in the field. We also invited military members and their CORs for FOB Airborne," said Jan Bovier, Resident Engineer for the Corps' office located on the FOB.

Some Corps personnel, including Andy Hovey, a construction rep with the Wardak Resident Office, were already somewhat familiar with the content, but were eager to refresh their knowledge.

"It's a reiteration of what I've already been through," said Hovey, a 30-year-old native of South Sioux City, NE. "It's been quite a while since I received training and I haven't had to use it in the work I've done so far."

1LT Jeff Seitz, Executive Officer, G Battery 4319th Airborne Field Artillery and Contracting Officer's Representative for FOB Airborne, had no training on the topic before attending this class. As the COR for the FOB's continuing construction projects and service contracts, Seitz is glad the training was made available to him.

"The only construction training I ever received before was for my previous job in the Army as a construction engineer. So this is a new experience for me," Seitz said. "When I'm in charge of the disbursement of tax payer dollars for these projects -- these are things my family and the folks back home are paying for, -- so I want to make sure these buildings are (up to standard)."

The two-day training session covered several topics, including construction quality management, use of RMS and payment disbursements, among others.

"We're learning features of work, and how to define what's acceptable, what's poor quality that we can never accept," said Seitz, an eight-year veteran of the Army and native of Milwaukee. "If we identify that they're doing the wrong thing, we need to tell him that he needs to correct it at the earliest possible stage in the construction."

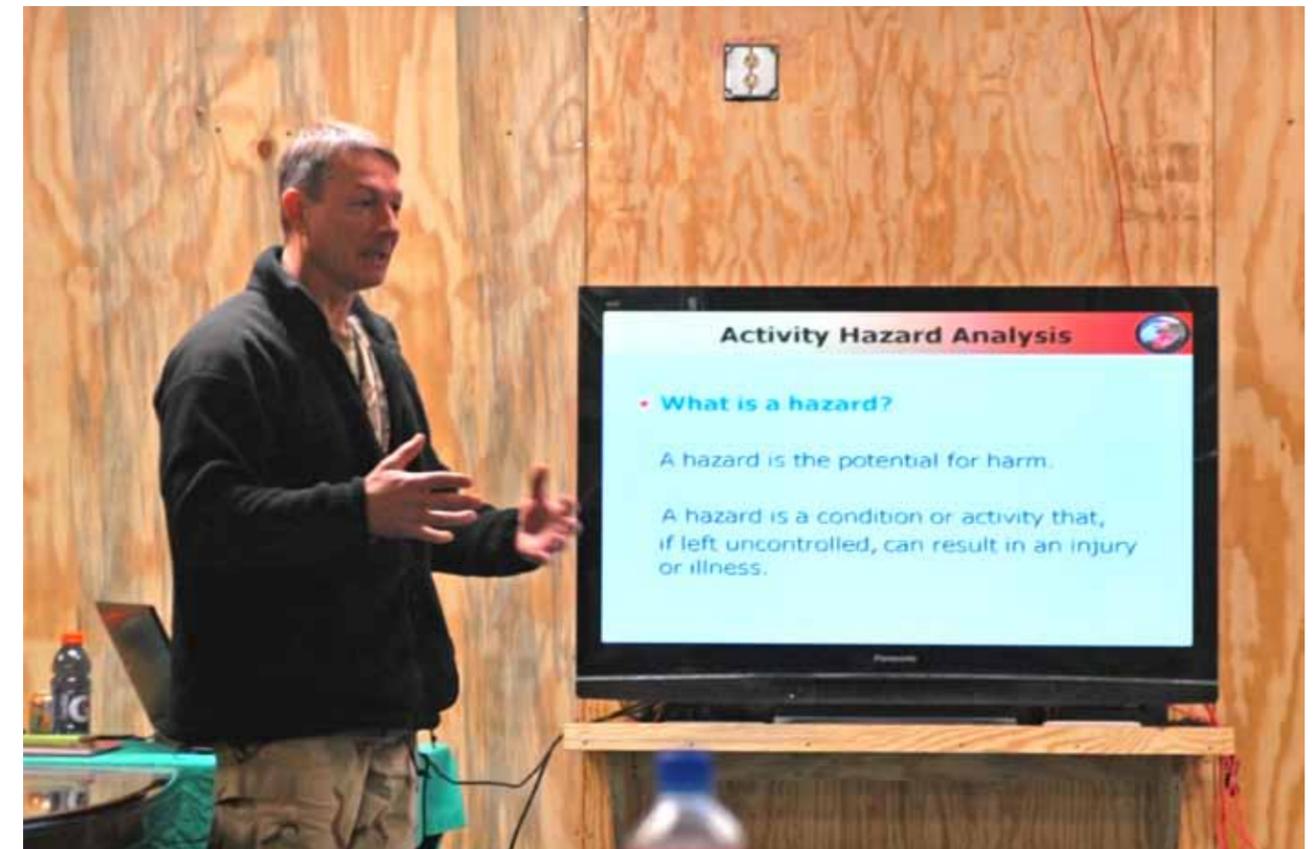
For Urbaniak and AED-N's Quality Assurance Branch, the training is part of a bigger goal for the district – to increase the

timeliness and efficiency of Corps projects in the country, by training people on the proper methods of executing a contract from beginning to end.

"The hope is that we start a contract correctly with pre-construction meetings where there's an understanding of the scope of work between the contractor and the Corps reps in the field, how payments are going to be made, how the contract is going to progress, how we're going to come and make QA checks to make sure there's safety on the job and that Quality Control is being performed," he said. "The prime goal is for the contractor to finish on time and within budget with a good quality product."

For Seitz, the training was invaluable.

"I've learned to inspect as often as you can, so that if the contractor is in error, you stop him as early as possible so that the contractor is not wasting his time, money and resources," he said. "It's a valuable skill I could use here and when I get out of the Army if I choose to." 📷



Urbaniak is one of many members of the QAB team who travel throughout the AO to teach.

New station set to bring stability, pride to rural village

USACE conducts final inspection of facility in Deh Bala in preparation for turnover



Story and Photos by | *Hank Heusinkveld*

Site inspectors Navy First Class Petty Officer Shawn Poff, center, and First Lieutenant Stewart Cathey, right, talk with Afghan contractors at the Kot ANP facility.

KABUL, Afghanistan — Deh Bala, Afghanistan is located just a few kilometers from the Pakistan border south of Jalalabad. The area is ripe with Taliban activity, and has its share of harassment by insurgents.

But a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-built facility for the Afghanistan National Police will give a better sense of security for the people of this small, isolated village. Right next to the new facility is a crumbling fortress that's believed to be about 70 years old.

While its foundation is solid the walls look as if they could come crashing down at any time. The new facility is equipped with four guard towers that will provide strategic vantage points to view any suspected activities. Afghanistan Engineer District-North site inspectors traveled through the Taliban-active area by MRAP with help from

the Vermont National Guard's 86th Brigade Combat Team to do a final inspection before handing it over to the ANP.

"This facility shares a wall with the district center right outside the village of Deh Bala," said First Lieutenant Stewart Cathey, the Jalalabad Resident Office's Officer in Charge for Nangarhar Province. "The main function of the police facility is security for the village and to disrupt any supply routes into Afghanistan from Pakistan that the Taliban may use."

Cathey said that because the facility is modern and brand new it will give the ANP here not only a well-fortified compound, but a comfortable place in which to operate. Esprit de Corps is valued by the ANP and the facility will also give them a source of pride.

"It's a modern facility with all the basic amenities. It's something they can be proud to come to work in every day and really boost morale which will then, in turn, strengthen the abilities of the ANP helping to keep the Taliban out."

At another ANP facility in the village of Kot which is located between Deh Bala and Jalalabad, U.S. Navy First Class Petty Officer Shawn Poff is walking the grounds of the new ANP facility with two Afghan contractors to take note of any discrepancies before turning it over. This facility is also heavily fortified with four guard towers, and it's equipped with an industrial-type kitchen, offices, bathroom facilities and sleeping quarters.



The new facility is self-sufficient with its own potable water supply storage, power generators. It also provides ample security with fortified walls and guard towers.

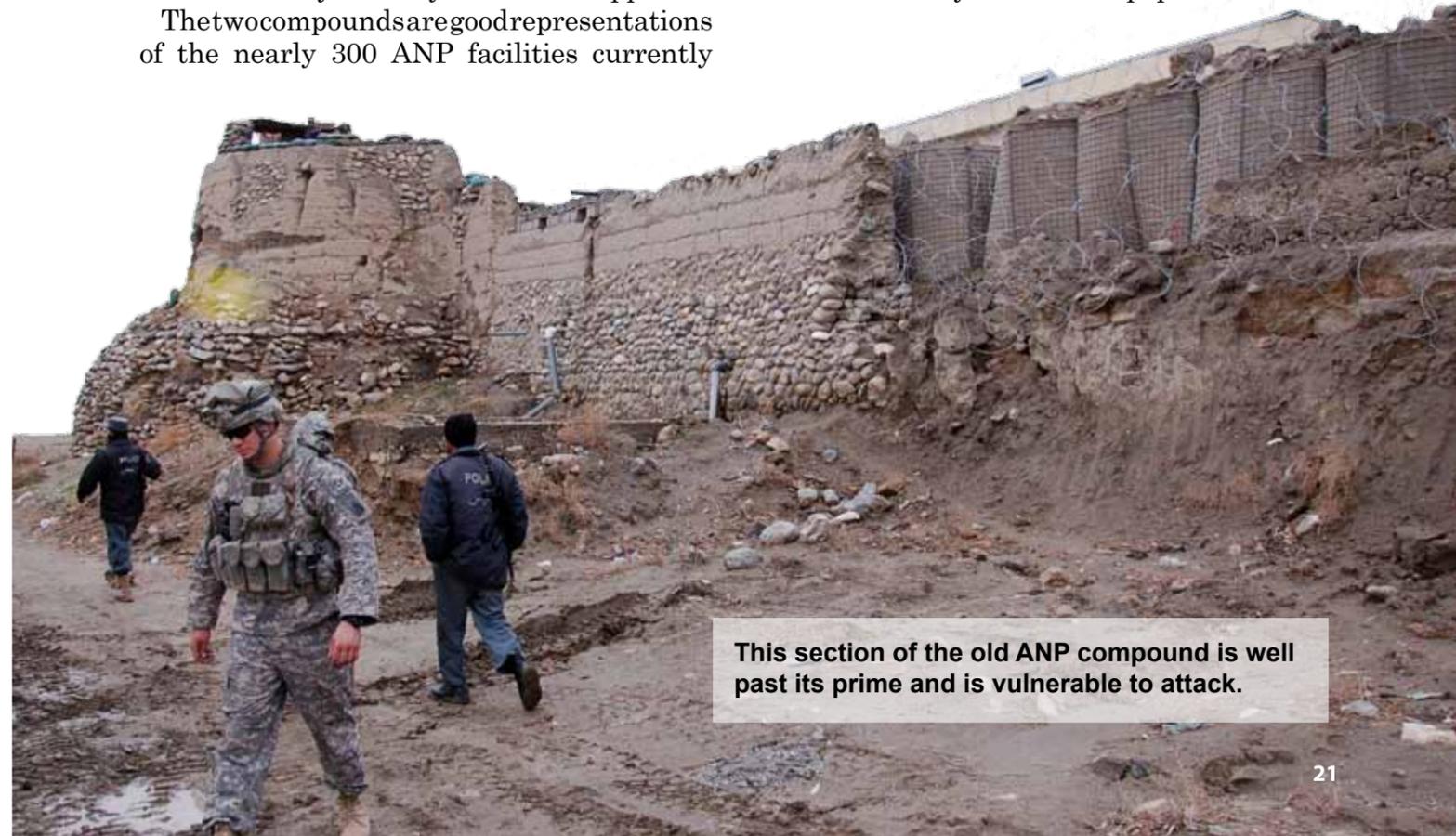
This facility, like the one in Deh Bala, is also located next to the district center which Poff said gives local officials better access to the ANP if any security incidents happen.

Thetwocompoundsaregoodrepresentations of the nearly 300 ANP facilities currently

being built by the Afghanistan Engineer District-North. They not only provide a solid structure with modern amenities, but a place that will add to the overall stability of key locations in Afghanistan.

"When we build the facility it enables the maneuver forces and the coalition forces to properly train the Afghan National Police," said Lt. Col. Matt Cadicamo, the officer-in-charge of the Jalalabad Area office. "Now they will have a facility from whence they can do their operations. The idea is to teach, train, mentor and coach and without their own building, without their own facility, it's increasingly difficult to do that."

The facilities are critical to helping the Afghanistan National Police reduce Taliban harassment and Talban influence. And with the ability to do that in a modern, secure fortress it will add one more element of stability and add a sense of security to the local population. [E]



This section of the old ANP compound is well past its prime and is vulnerable to attack.



Story and Photos by | Hank Heusinkveld

Village elders participating in the Jirga listen intently to security issues that have stalled road construction.

Jirga helps Find Solutions

to Security Issues On Nuristan, Kunar Province Road Projects

The exchange was a bit heated at times amongst local and regional political representatives and tribal elders. The issue? Road construction has come to a halt on some key U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed road projects in Nuristan and Kunar provinces because of harassment by insurgents. The problem? Finding out just how contractors will find protection for themselves, their workers and their equipment from attacks so that road construction can begin again. At stake are remote villages in

mountainous areas that need roads to spur economic activity that will lead to stability, and a vital transportation link that will connect Nuristan province with the rest of the country.

“I think the Afghan people understand that we’re not going to be here forever”

To find a solution to the problem members of the Asadabad Resident Office helped facilitate a Jirga, a body comprised of political figures and tribal elders who makes decisions by consensus. Common in Afghanistan, they’re used extensively by Pashtuns and are similar to a town meeting. Facilitating the Jirga was

Major William Lewis, the Officer in Charge of the Asadabad Resident Office. Kicking off a speech to the Jirga he encouraged the members to take control of their roads. He likened building the roads in Nuristan and Kunar provinces to the U.S. transcontinental railroad that unified America from East to West.

“These roads will connect the provincial capitals of both provinces when completed, and with that connection it will allow commerce to flow more freely from province to province. It will also allow a quick response for emergency situations. Right now it takes days to get from some areas in the mountainous areas to Asadabad. Once the roads get built it will take hours.”

Lewis urged the Jirga to come up with a solution for providing security immediately so that contractors can continue with the projects because time is not on their side.

“I think the Afghan people understand that we’re not going to be here forever,” he said. “They understand there’s a timetable involved. Whenever we pull out of this country a lot of the funding and a lot of the expertise that go along with these construction projects are going to be gone. If they want these roads built in the Kunar and Nuristan provinces they’re going to have to get a handle on the security. Otherwise, these contracts will be more than likely terminated and the funding will go away and we’ll fund projects

in provinces that we can complete.”

During the Jirga, one political member hit home the fact that his countrymen know how to pull together when there’s a crisis. He reminded them that as Mujahadin various tribes came together to defeat the Soviets to drive them out of their country. He stated that all Jirga members from village to village need to communicate with each other with the same intensity they did 20 years ago during the Soviet occupation so that

they and their families could begin to reap the benefits of a completed road system.

After the Jirga, Lewis saw a shift in attitudes that he hadn’t seen in previous Jirgas. Dialogue started happening immediately, something that he said was a great start to finding a solution.

“I heard some commitments by both the Kunar provincial governor and the Nuristan provincial governor to provide checkpoints along the roads. That’s something I had not heard before. So there was some positive

movement to secure and provide a more stable environment for the contractors to build the roads.”

Navy Lieutenant Commander Jay Burgess, an engineer with the Provincial Reconstruction Team-Kunar, also saw some hints of progress after the Jirga.

“I’m always looking for some concrete plans and solutions. I think there was a definite step in the right direction. We got



Two local government officials discuss road security details during the Jirga.



Roads like the one shown above in Kunar province are vital for providing economic stability in Afghanistan.

the Afghans who are responsible for security talking with each other to discuss ways to make things happen.”

Burgess stressed that connecting all roads will spur economic activity and simply make life easier for Afghans who live in semi-remote areas once the areas are united by a single road system.

“One of the important things about the roads that we talked about today is the province to the north, Nuristan, really has very little connection to any of the other provinces. It’s very mountainous and there are very few river valleys and they have very poor roads. So, the main importance of this road is being able to connect Nuristan with the rest of Afghanistan through a road network. It will really make the people of

Nuristan feel connected as well, along with taking the people in the far western part of Kunar and connecting them with the rest of Kunar province.”

Taking ownership of their roads is a key issue that Lewis said is vital for Afghans. He said the Jirga resulted in some headway, but the security issue needs to be dealt with now to get a stronghold on security and stability.

“This is an Afghan issue. The Afghans want the road. My job was to facilitate the Jirga and manage the Afghan contractors. They’re responsible for security, but if they can’t get to the areas where the roads are being constructed then the work will never get done. I’m hopeful that it will get done.”

15-21



Major William Lewis addresses the Jirga through an interpreter in an assembly hall at the Kunar provincial governor’s compound in Asadabad

BATTLE DRILL

Drill helps prepare special teams in case of emergency



Story by | David A. Salazar Photos by | Joe Marek

Newly-trained combat life savers, Charlie Bechtold, left, and Steve Baker, right, tend to the simulated injuries of Carroll Correl during the Special Teams Battle Drill.

KABUL, Afghanistan—The Afghanistan Engineer District – North held a Special Teams Battle Drill on the Qalaa House compound in Kabul March 24.

Emergency response teams from the Administrative, Intelligence, and Operations branches of the headquarters element, as well as volunteer combat life savers, responded to the mock drill, designed to test the abilities of each element in preparation for a real case attack.

“The premise of the drill was to have three people wounded after a rocket impact in the front square (of the compound) and have different typical injuries you’d have from that scenario that combat lifesavers need to fix,” said Mark Hill, AED-N’s emergency operations manager. “Then we’d run through the drill so that the ops guys, the intel guys and the personnel accountability folks can run through their drills of what they’d do in

an actual event.”

The drill came at an opportune time for AED-N, as normal turnover of personnel on the compound created a need for such training. In addition, a new group of volunteers graduated the Combat Life Savers Course March 18, making the drill the first test of their new knowledge.

“For some of them, this was their first exposure to any sort of simulated casualty,” said Barbara Smith, AED-N’s Occupational Health Nurse and instructor for the CLS course. “Some didn’t do everything correctly, but I think they actually would have saved the casualty’s life. I think there’s always room for improvement, especially when it comes to the medical field. Practice makes perfect.”

In the training scenario, a rocket made direct impact in the center of the compound, critically injuring two personnel and killing

another. Each of the victims had make up and moulage applied to create a more realistic experience for combat life savers. Fake blood was also applied to the injured’s clothing and poured around them to produce puddles.

“We had three different casualties with all blast-related injuries,” Smith said. “The first patient had a large abdominal wound and a piece of glass stuck in her neck, which severed the carotid artery.”

This particular casualty ‘died’ in the scenario, simulating what combat life savers could potentially encounter in a real life scenario.

“You do what you can to help them, but sometimes, their injuries will be beyond what you could do for them,” Smith said.

The other two mock casualties suffered sucking chest wounds, amputations and blood loss.

For the participants, the drill offered a training scenario that was realistic, and allowed them to work with actual people instead of dummies.

“That was the first drill I’d ever been in – it was off the charts,” said Charlie Bechtold, a civil engineer in AED-N’s Operations and Maintenance Branch.



Smith, left, and Hill

“ You really get a sense of the time element and how important it is.”

Bechtold,

was among the group that recently graduated the CLS course. The practical application of his recently-acquired skills were the best part of the drill for him, he said.

“My opinion of the training was that it was

really hands-on – stuff you do not get in the classroom. You really get a sense of the time element and how important it is,” Bechtold said. “Instead of us standing around a dummy, sterilized and cleaned up, the idea of cutting someone’s clothes open to access a wound – they can tell you that in class, but when you actually have to designate someone to cut their clothes off and expose all the wounds, it’s really different.”

With the surge of 30,000 additional troops expected to arrive in Afghanistan in the coming weeks, Coalition Forces anticipate a higher volume of attacks over the summer months, when Taliban activity is at its peak.

“In the past, people didn’t really want to do battle drills, it was viewed as an extra thing to do. This camp has never really been hit, but this exercise has inspired people to take this a little more seriously,” Hill said.

While the scenario was handled well by all parties involved, Hill said both the operations response and combat life saver components experienced some procedural snags that only offer those involved more experience to learn from.

“Inside, the staffers went through some stumbling blocks like the (camp’s voice alert system) didn’t work quite right, they weren’t sure of the procedures, the bunker phones’ conference call didn’t work correctly the first time, they had to do it again,” Hill said. “Now all the new people know how to do ‘big voice’ alerts and they know how to get a hold of bunkers, so it was effective inside, as well.”

Hill plans to coordinate similar drills with some added components to help bring the realism to new levels.

“We plan to have another battle drill – but it will be a full battle drill – from the alert to going to the bunkers to having injured and we’re planning to have a helicopter come in and do a dust-off and take the sick and wounded away,” he said.

Hill said he plans to hold these more comprehensive drills on a monthly basis. 

Parting Shot



Boncile Smith, a contracting specialist, awaits a flag flown over AED-N headquarters in honor of her granddaughter.

Photo by | Joe Marek