



# THE **FREEDOM** **BUILDER**

January/February 2011

**MAGAZINE**

## **Streetlights**

District, mayor's office open Kabul street to the night

## **Shadow day**

Shadow Day helps Afghan kids build towards a better future with the Corps

## **General's visit**

Gen. Van Antwerp urges district employees to keep up the mission in Afghanistan following his retirement

## **Gamberi**

Corps of Engineers finishes Gamberi facilities, Afghan soldiers move in

## **Personalizing MLK day**

Corps of Engineers celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Afghanistan



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

**District Commander**  
Col. Thomas Magness

**AED-North District Command Sergeant Major**  
Chief Master Sgt. Forest Lisner

Chief of Public Affairs  
David A. Salazar

Layout & Design  
Joseph A. Marek

Staff Writer - Acting Chief  
Paul R. Giblin

Public Affairs Specialist  
LaDonna Davis

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

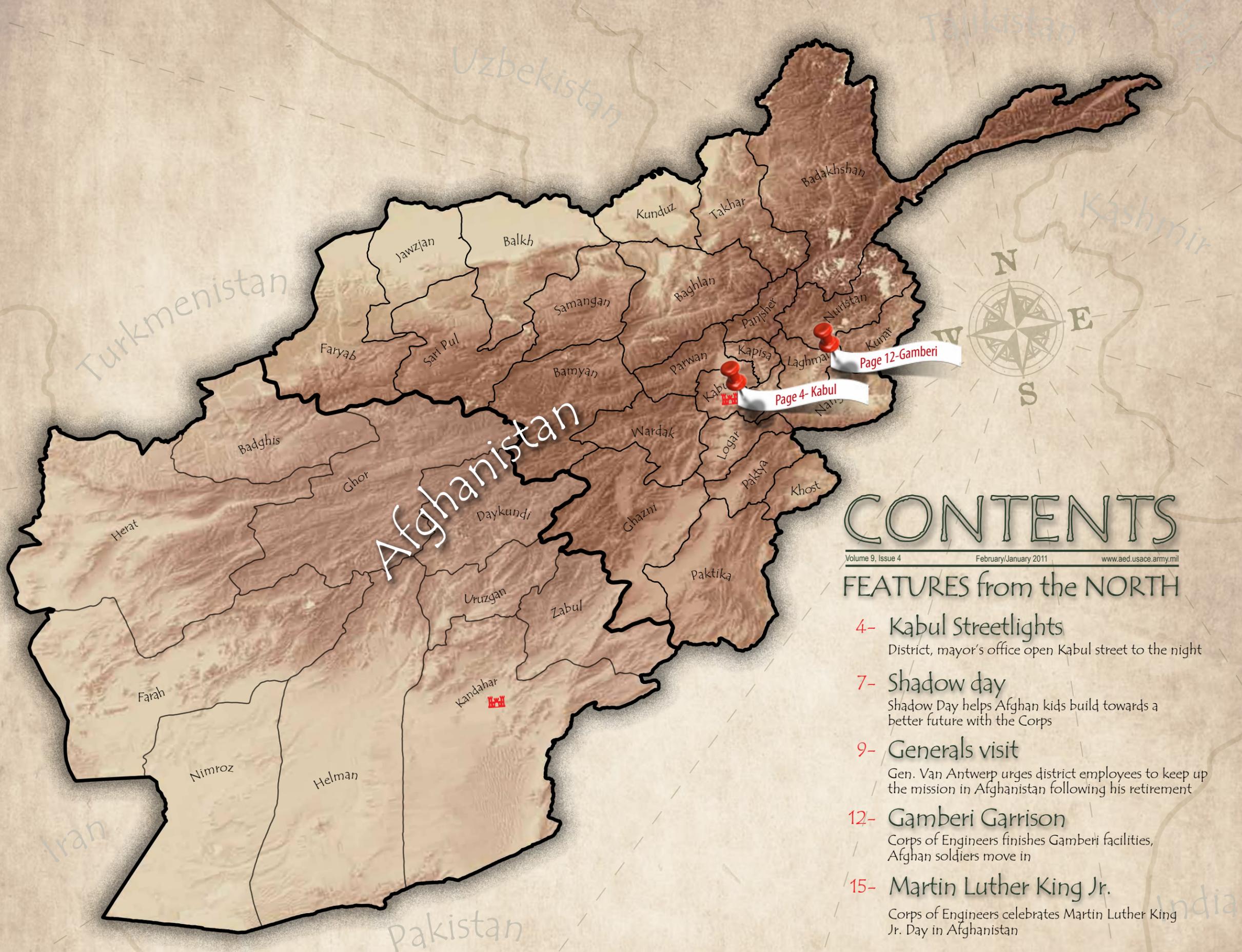
## Cover Image:



Kabul Mayor Muhammad Yunus Nawandish (left) and U.S. Army Col. Thomas Magness talk about lighting the busy street in downtown Kabul.

(Full story on pg. 12)

Photo by | David Salazar



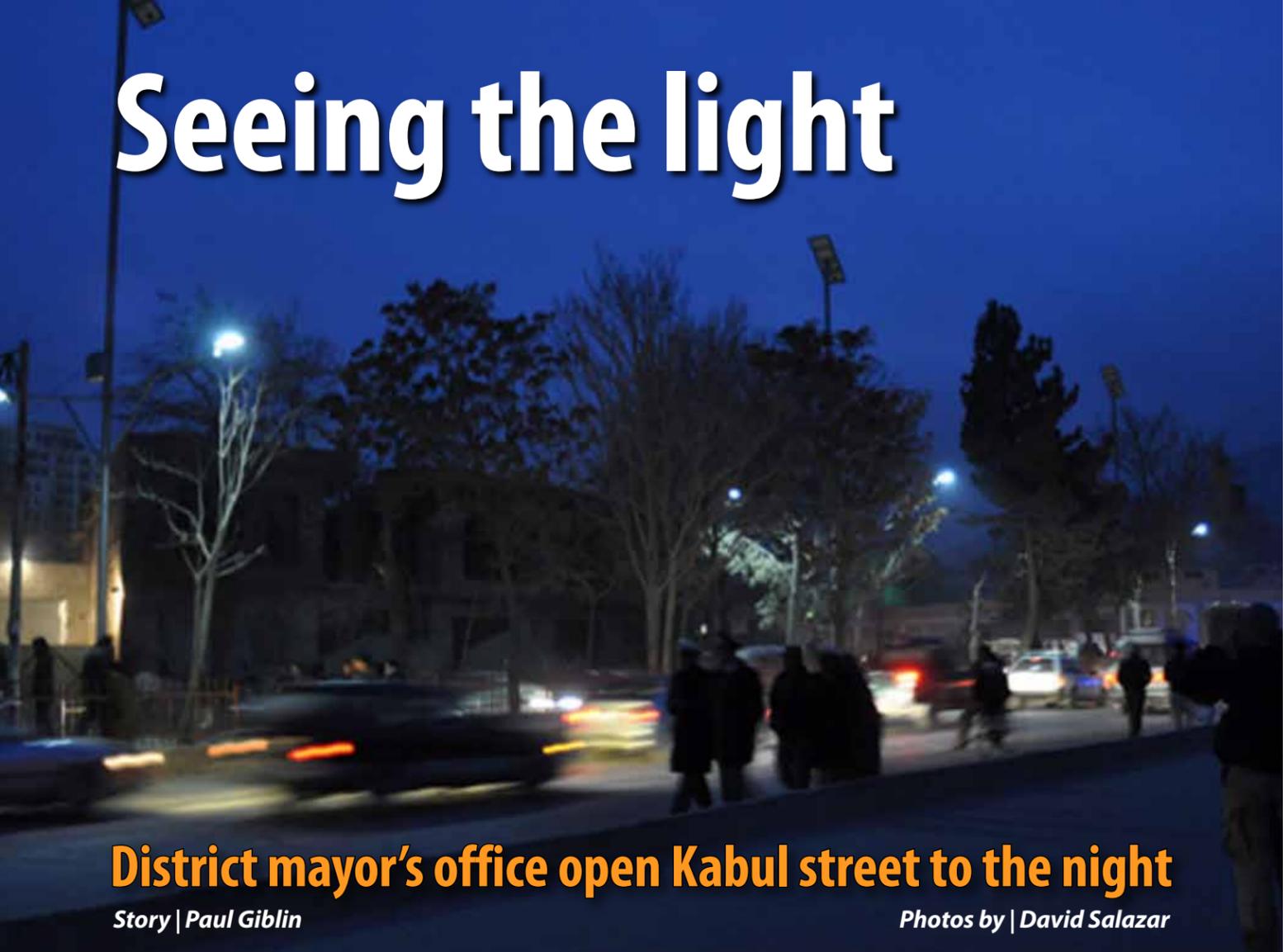
# CONTENTS

Volume 9, Issue 4 February/January 2011 www.aed.usace.army.mil

## FEATURES from the NORTH

- 4- **Kabul Streetlights**  
District, mayor's office open Kabul street to the night
- 7- **Shadow day**  
Shadow Day helps Afghan kids build towards a better future with the Corps
- 9- **Generals visit**  
Gen. Van Antwerp urges district employees to keep up the mission in Afghanistan following his retirement
- 12- **Gamberi Garrison**  
Corps of Engineers finishes Gamberi facilities, Afghan soldiers move in
- 15- **Martin Luther King Jr.**  
Corps of Engineers celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Afghanistan

# Seeing the light



## District mayor's office open Kabul street to the night

Story | Paul Giblin

Photos by | David Salazar

Motorists and pedestrians pass under newly installed solar-powered streetlights as night falls in Kabul.

**K**ABUL, Afghanistan – Kabul Mayor Muhammad Yunus Nawandish and other Afghan and U.S. officials flipped a switch at sunset to light up solar-powered streetlights on one of Kabul's most important commercial corridors on Wednesday, Dec. 29.

The mayor was joined by U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry's wife Ching Eikenberry, U.S. Army Col. Thomas Magness and U.S. Agency for International Development deputy mission director Kevin Brownawell, among others, to formally launch his "Open Kabul's Streets to the Night" initiative. : The goal is to boost economic development in downtown Kabul

by creating a safer environment for nighttime commerce. Officials with the mayor's office and the Corps of Engineers are drawing up plans for 10 phases of streetlights that will light up several major thoroughfares in the capitol city.

**“I think there are a lot of people who will benefit from it.”**

“A solar-light system like this is very important to light the streets,” Nawandish said through an interpreter during a press conference under one of the streetlights near Jumhoriat National

Specialized Hospital. “It is very important for people's lives. The lights make security, the economy, everything much better,” he said.

Nawandish thanked the United States and the international community for helping to improve the quality of life in Kabul and throughout Afghanistan. The first 28 streetlights illuminate a nearly 1-kilometer stretch of Jumhoriat Road, which the officials noted is just the first phase of a larger project.

They also outlined plans to expand the program across the major sections of the city. The proposed routes, distances and schedule for the most immediate work:

**Phase I** Jumhoriat Road, from Jumhoriat National Specialized Hospital to Sherpoor traffic circle, 0.88 kilometers, completed.

**Phase II** Foreign Affairs Road, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, connecting to Wazir Akbar Khan Road, past Wazir Akbar Khan Mosque, to Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital, 2.05 kilometers, expected to be complete in 2012.

**Phase III** Wazir Akbar Khan Road, from Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital past Massoud and Shahid Abdul Haq traffic circles, to a point near Kabul Stadium, 2.35 kilometers, \$897,000, expected to be complete in 2012.

The first phase proved that solar-powered lights are a viable option for Kabul, a city that has an inadequate electric grid, said Magness, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' district in northern Afghanistan.

Much of the capitol city is dark at night following three decades of war that have crippled the city's electrical grid. Each of the streetlights will generate its own power without drawing from Kabul's overall power supply.

“We're confident that we've identified a way ahead,” Magness said. “When you hear about the mayor's vision of lighting up the city at night, you realize that renewable energy and this sustainable little effort here could amount to a lot.”



The streetlights unveiled on Dec. 29 represent the first of 10 planned phases of streetlights for Kabul.

Ching Eikenberry, who is a member of a Kabul planning committee headed by the U.S. Agency for International Development, congratulated the mayor and members of his staff for working with the international community to develop the idea. “I am very, very grateful that I have this opportunity to witness the brightening of the city with my Afghan brothers and sisters,” she said.

Brownawell said the United States is committed to working with Nawandish to improve services for Kabul residents.

“We pledge to spend approximately \$120 million to support your plan and your leadership here in Kabul through many projects – lights, markets, roads, and I'm sure you have many other good ideas,” Brownawell said.

The stand-alone poles use light-emitting diode lamps that are energy efficient, low maintenance and environmentally friendly. Solar panels collect power during daylight hours to power the lights during nighttime hours. The project also includes training for Kabul public works employees to maintain

the lights.

The streetlights, which are 9 meters tall, feature Lithium ion batteries with an expected lifespan of 20 years. The batteries are secured in a locked container on top of the light fixture to prevent tampering. The bulbs within the light fixtures produce 3,500 lumens at street level.

They produced a clear white light for vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the street that is lined with shops specializing in stationary supplies, electronics, photo supplies and other goods; and street vendors selling fried potatoes and bananas, among other food items.

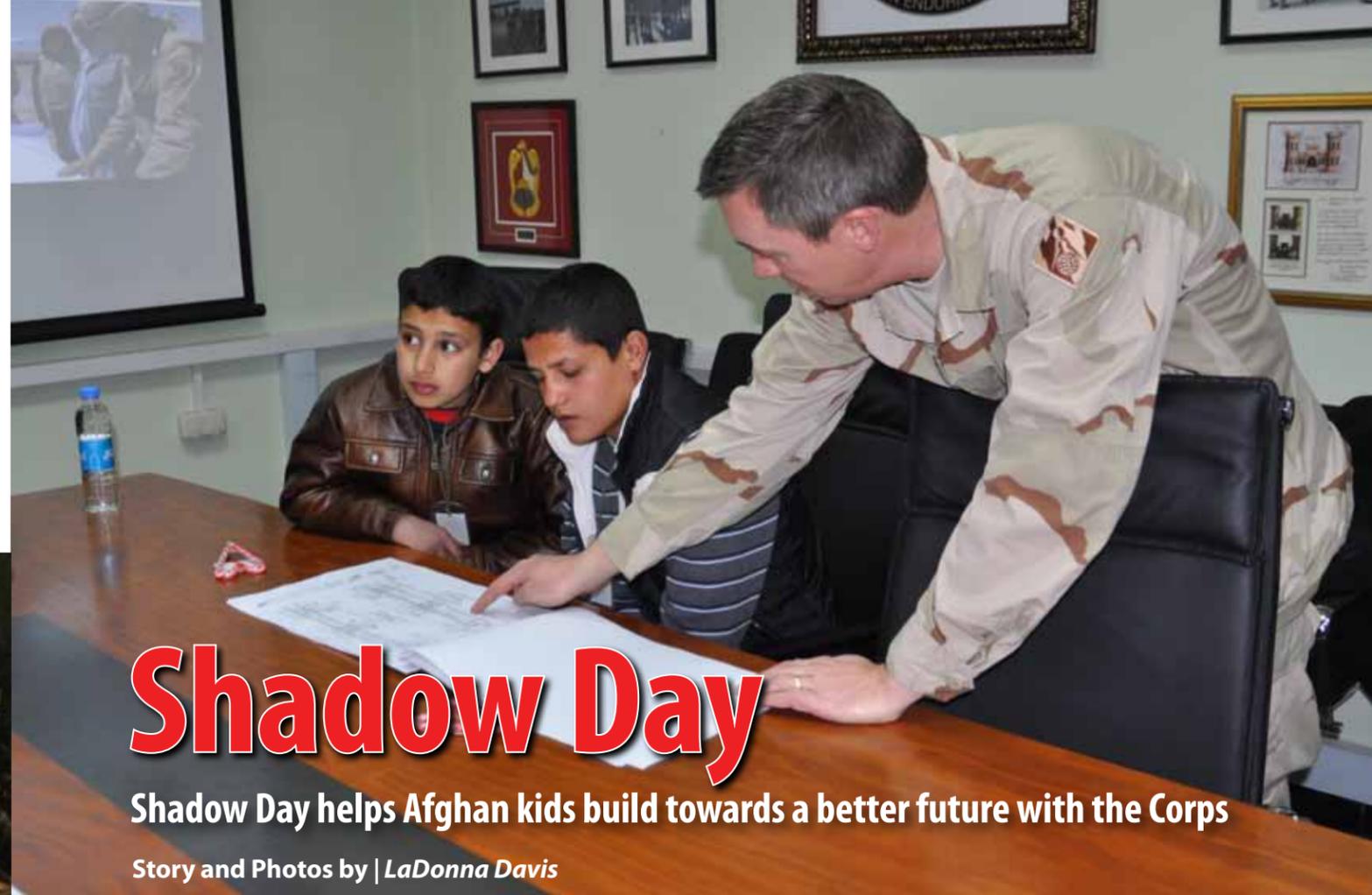
Magness said he has no doubt residents will be pleased to find they can walk the street more safely when it's lit.

"This is just part of a larger vision the mayor has for security, for safety, for commerce that can go on later at night. I think there are a lot of people who will benefit from it," Magness said.

Officials broke ground on the \$181,000 first phase of the project on Nov. 9 in front of Jumhoriat National Specialized Hospital. The phase was funded through the Commander's Emergency Response Program at Magness' direction. 📷



Kabul Mayor Muhammad Yunus Nawandish (left), U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry's wife Ching Eikenberry (center), and U.S. Army Col. Thomas Magness spoke to members of the Afghan press during the official unveiling in the center of a busy street in downtown Kabul.



# Shadow Day

Shadow Day helps Afghan kids build towards a better future with the Corps

Story and Photos by | LaDonna Davis

Engineering Technician, Lance Faerber shows two Afghan children how to read a blue print of a construction project as one of Shadow Day's activities. Other activities included building bridges from toothpicks, piecing together puzzles and taking a site tour of one of the district's projects.

**K**ABUL, Afghanistan -- Local Afghan children got a first-hand look at what the Corps of Engineers is doing here during the Afghanistan Engineer District-North's first shadow day Feb 21.

The kids, ranging in ages 10 to 19 years old and who all have parents working at AED-N, participated in a day filled with games, puzzles, bridge building and engineering presentations in an effort to spark their interest in the engineering, science and technology fields.

"What we want to do today is spend a little time teaching you what engineers do and even get you guys to build some things," said Col. Thomas Magness, AED-N commander.

Prior to splitting the kids up in to groups, Magness gave the could-be engineers some

words of advice.

"If you want to be an engineer you have to be good in math," he said. "You have to be able to build things and work as part of a team. If you can do that then maybe you can be an engineer."

**"It is very important, even in the states, to have shadow day because you bring in the interest of the intermediate and high school female students."**

As is custom in the Afghanistan culture, the kids were split up in to boy groups and girl groups and given a tour of the AED-N compound along with a tour of one of the districts project sites. The groups all rotated through various activity stations where they got to do hands on projects like building a bridge from

toothpicks and putting together puzzles.

Each of the days' activities put the kid's critical thinking, math and logic skills to the test and even gave them a chance to do something that they had never done before.



10-year-old Selsala and 9-year-old Liza work together to put together a puzzle as one of the group activities local Afghan kids participated in during Afghanistan Engineer District North's shadow day.

"The reason we do puzzles is to exercise your mind," said AED-N Deputy Chief of Quality Assurance branch, Sandy Higgins to the kids. While puzzles are a traditional American game, in Afghanistan it is a foreign concept to most families.

"The kids love to do puzzles," said Higgins. "Once they figure the puzzle out, they don't want for you to take it apart."

Learning something new while having fun is what shadow day is all about according to Raelene Hampton, the equal employment opportunity specialist with AED-N. "We want to motivate the kids to stay in school, or for those kids that have already graduated, go back to school and pursue a career in the engineering and technology fields," Hampton said.

That message is especially true for the female students that participated in shadow day, not only because the engineering, science and technology fields are male dominated in most parts of the world, but more importantly, because here in Afghanistan females aren't given the same education and career opportunities as males.

"It is very important, even in the states, to have shadow day because you bring in the interest of the intermediate and high school female students," said Hampton. "But I think it is even more important here at AED because of the culture difference. Women are not even allowed to come out of the house basically, so it was challenging just to get the female students here. But it is very important because they need to know that they can be engineers just like the guys can."

"Today is a very good day," said 17-year-

old Mahommada Ameri, "I hope other people get to do this program, not just here in Afghanistan but other countries. I think after today I want to become an engineer."

Not only did shadow day help get the kids interested in the engineering field, it also helped the children learn more about the construction process.

The children donned yellow construction hats during the walking tour of an AED-N project site and were given a lesson about safety. "Do you know why we have to wear hats and why safety is so important here?" asked Clint Hanker, the AED-N safety chief. "So you don't get hurt" responded one Afghan boy.

During the bridge building session, the children used toothpicks and tape to design a bridge that could hold weight. At the end of the day each of the teams bridges were weighed down with pennies to see whose bridge was the strongest. "I never built a bridge in school, said 14-year-old," Farhad Sayed. "That was my favorite part."

At the end of the day, each of the children received certificates and their own puzzle to take home with them. But, the one thing Magness hopes each of the children got out of the day was a sense that no matter where you come from, or what your background, you can be an engineer.

"On our engineer team you see there are men and women. Some wear uniforms, some don't. Some are American, some are Afghans, and this is our team, we all work together as a team," said Magness. "I hope you all had fun but that you all worked your very best because that's what engineers do."



AED-N Commander, Col. Thomas Magness talks with a young Afghan boy about being an engineer during the district's first shadow day.



# The magical mystery tour

## Gen. Van Antwerp urges district employees to keep up The mission in Afghanistan following his retirement

Story by | Paul Giblin

Photos by | Joe Marek

Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp (right) speaks to members of the Afghanistan Engineer District-North during an all-house meeting in the K-Span, a large multi-purpose room on the Qalaa House compound in Kabul.

**K**ABUL – Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp, the commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, commended military and civilian personnel on Wednesday, Feb. 9, for their "amazing" efforts to help rebuild Afghanistan under unrelenting expectations.

Speaking during a town hall style meeting at the Afghanistan Engineer District-North's headquarters compound, Van Antwerp played off district commander Col. Thomas Magness' oft-repeated refrain that district employees are completing a project a day.

"When you look at the program here and what you're executing – your one project every day – it is just amazing. It is amazing," Van Antwerp told more than 300 district employees and contractors who attended the meeting at the Qalaa House compound.

He noted that the district is just one of five districts in the entire Corps of Engineers

organization that is scheduled to place more than \$1 billion worth of projects during fiscal 2011. In fact, the district is expected to place \$1.5 billion worth of new projects in the region that spans the northern portion of Afghanistan, a country the size of Texas.

Van Antwerp, the 52nd chief of engineers, made the remarks during what is expected to be his final official tour of Afghanistan before retiring in the spring after a 39-year military career, the final four years as leader of the Corps of Engineers.

The general told his audience in Kabul that expectations for Corps of Engineers workers, particularly those in Afghanistan, have changed dramatically in recent years. Simply performing engineering work no longer is good enough.

"The business today is a lot about relationships. It's really amazing what engineers and others have to do to build

relationships. You all have a lot of customers out there,” he said.

In Afghanistan, the Corps of Engineers has two missions: 1) Build police stations, army bases, roads and other infrastructure projects; and, 2) Build the country’s workforce by teaching engineering and construction job skills to Afghan nationals.

The Corps of Engineers’ primary mission to develop facilities for Afghanistan’s security forces plays a vital role in the United States’ and coalition forces’ plans to withdraw military operations from the country in 2014, he said.

“We have a huge part in that. In fact, if you had to prioritize whether you’re going to do something for the security forces or do something for milcon on one of our enduring bases, that milcon is going to take a second seat,” Van Antwerp said using a term for “military construction.” The first priority has to be assisting the Afghan security forces, he said.

To emphasize the Corps of Engineers’ mission to develop Afghanistan’s workforce, the general showed a Budweiser beer commercial that depicts a young Clydesdale horse aspiring to pull the famous red beer wagon. After struggling to pull the oversized carriage without budging it, two adult Clydesdales push the wagon from behind as the young horse huffs in triumph.

“I don’t drink Budweiser, but I love that commercial,” Van Antwerp said.

He told members of his audience that they likewise should seek to train Afghan workers to fill positions currently filled by Americans. He also urged older workers within the Corps of Engineers to train their younger colleagues. “They’re our bench for the future,” he said.

He noted that during just the past two years, 8,900 Corps of Engineers employees retired or otherwise left the organization, taking years of know-how and expertise with them. For example, the Corps of Engineers

has top-caliber 45 dam-safety experts, but virtually all 45 are nearing the ends of their careers.

“Here’s what I’ve been telling them: ‘You can’t leave until you teach somebody.’ So we have this little university going on right now – I know you have some universities that are going to help build capacity that you’re running right here – but we have one that’s called Dam University,” he said as the audience chuckled at the name.

The Dam University program is developing eight new geo-technical professionals, each of whom have been assigned to study under mentors to learn the nuances of the trade. Those eight new professionals will be looked upon as the top dam-safety experts in future years, Van Antwerp said.

In the same way, the heavy workflow in Afghanistan provides an ideal environment for experienced engineers and other professionals to teach those around them. He issued a challenge to senior employees: “There are two benches to build. One is the Corps bench that you’re building. The other is the Afghan bench.”

The general also noted that while he’s retiring soon, the mission in Afghanistan will continue for years, so he urged his audience to help recruit other civilians to serve in the future.

“When I go around, I just can’t tell people what you’re like. It’s hard to describe. I guess you’ve got to do that when you go back,” Van Antwerp said. “You’re our best recruiters. We’re going to be here for a while. And we’ve got a huge program to deliver.”

Jo-Ellen Darcy, assistant secretary of the Army for public works who oversees the Corps of Engineers, said Van Antwerp has left a lasting impression with the organization.

“I’m fortunate in the fact that I’ve been in this job for a year and a half, and I got to be the assistant secretary of the Army with Gen. Van Antwerp as the chief, so you all are very lucky to have known him,” she said.



Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp toured project sites during what is anticipated to be his last visit to Afghanistan as chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

10

Darcy told the audience that she never stepped foot in Afghanistan before making the trip with Van Antwerp. The experience had been eye-opening and she praised the district’s personnel for serving in the war-torn country.

“I thought that probably the biggest honor of my life was to be appointed by the president of the United States to this position, but when I come to a place like this and I see all of these people and everything that you do for the country, that’s my biggest honor,” she said. “Thank you for all that you do. Thank you for your service.”

Coincidentally, 2010 marked a milestone year for civilian service in Afghanistan and Iraq. During that year, the total number of civilian deployments exceeded 10,000 dating back to when the Corps of Engineers joined the counter-insurgency operation in 2004. The actual number of people who have worked in Afghanistan and Iraq is somewhat less, because some workers have deployed more than once.

Van Antwerp credited the 10,000-deployments figure to an array of

civilian personnel that includes Corps of Engineers employees from across the United States, workers from other government agencies, and new-to-government workers called Schedule A’s.

He said, “What that shows is the culture of the Corps of Engineers. It’s an incredibly expeditionary culture. That is a milestone – 10,000 deployments.”

During a question-and-answer session following the general’s remarks, project engineer Marcus Garcia asked Van Antwerp and Darcy for their impressions of public opinion in the United States concerning Corps of Engineers’ work in Afghanistan.

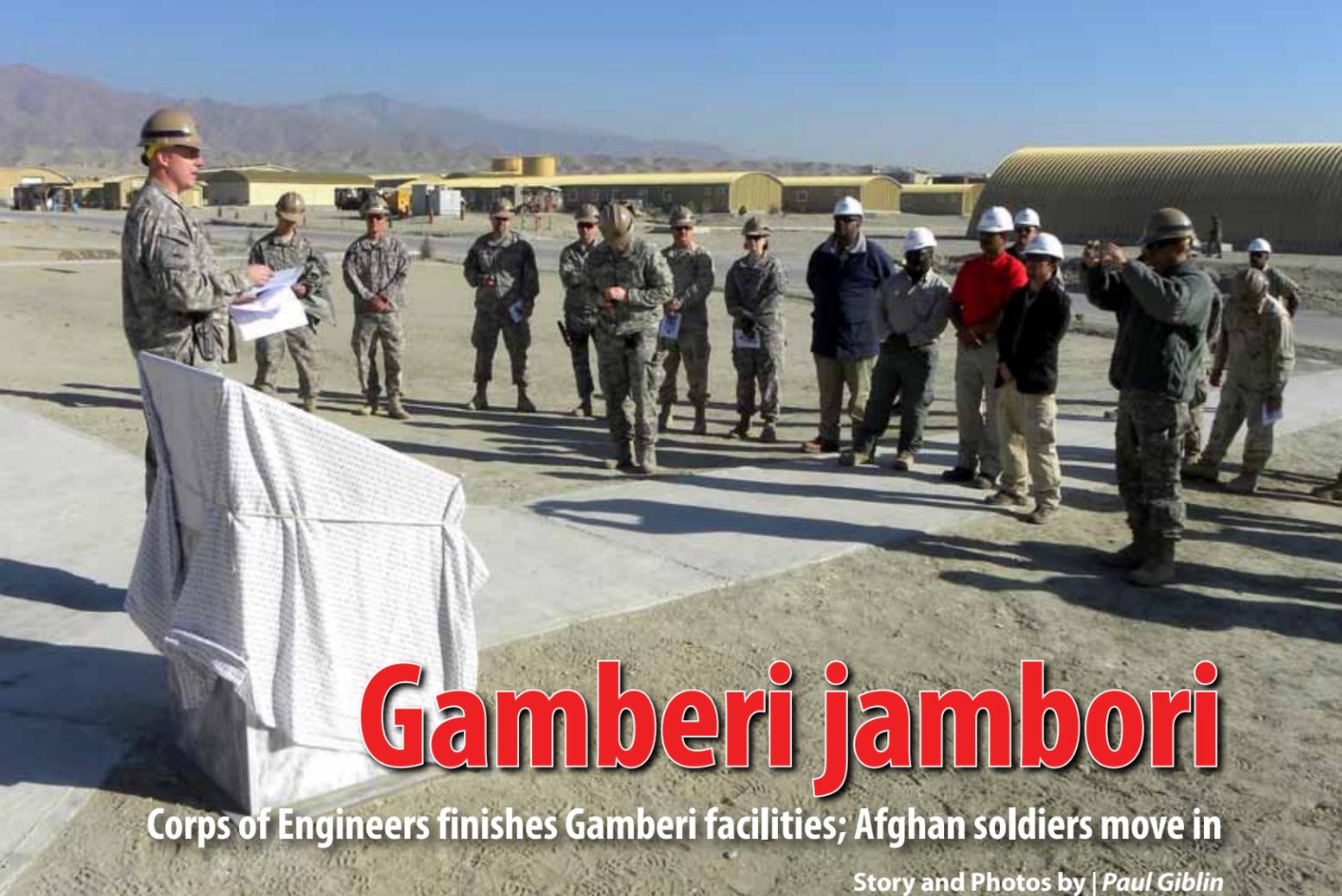
Darcy replied that the public generally is supportive, but after years of fighting and reconstruction following the 2001 terrorist attacks, the public’s memory of the cause and purpose of the job is growing short. “Part of my mission and my responsibility is to make sure the American people are aware of what you’re doing,” she pledged.

Van Antwerp said that he too feels that some members of public have lost sight of the United States’ purpose in Afghanistan, and as a result, are less supportive than they were years earlier. Indeed, people’s attitudes have shifted inward during the decade since the attacks, he said.

“America has got to be bigger than that,” he said. He too thanked the employees for their commitments to the cause.

Magness presented the retiring general a number of gifts on behalf of the district’s employees: a green ceremonial Afghan robe signifying his leadership position, a coffee table book of Afghanistan signed by district employees and a T-shirt with the district’s logo.

Following the town hall meeting, Magness led Van Antwerp, Darcy, Brig. Gens. Jeffrey J. Dorko and Mark W. Yenter and others on a tour of on-going projects and initiatives around the district. The highlights included the new Afghanistan Ministry of Interior compound, Kabul University and along downtown Kabul streets where new solar-powered lights have been erected. 



# Gamberi jambori

Corps of Engineers finishes Gamberi facilities; Afghan soldiers move in

Story and Photos by | Paul Giblin

Thomas Magness prepares to dedicate a plaque to members of the Afghan army who moved into new facilities at Gamberi Garrison, a base being constructed in the heart of a former Al Qaeda stronghold near the Pakistan border.

**DARUNTA, Afghanistan** – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and contracting firm DynCorp International Inc. marked the completion of a major phase of development Gamberi Garrison, a massive Afghan army base that's being built on the site of a former Al Qaeda training camp in northeastern Afghanistan on Sunday, Jan. 9.

Gamberi Garrison already is one of the largest Afghan army installations in the country. It's strategically located within view of the mountainous border with Pakistan, where fighters associated with the terrorist network operate.

Corps of Engineers and DynCorp unveiled a plaque in a plaza by a training building that dedicated the new facilities to the Afghan soldiers who live and work at the installation. The new facilities comprise the second of four major phases for the garrison,

which is designed to accommodate as many as 12,000 Afghan soldiers when completed.

Phase II features more than 40 buildings and support facilities valued at \$41.3 million. The scope of work included barracks for 1,167 soldiers and officers, administration buildings, a helipad, a fire station, a medical clinic, a training center, a warehouse, ammunition storage facilities, a detention facility, toilet and shower buildings, a sports field, roads and more.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began turning over the facilities to Afghan forces on Nov. 15 as individual buildings were completed and passed final inspection. The process is expected to continue through Jan. 15.

Approximately 700 Afghan army soldiers moved into the barracks on Dec. 13 and 14. An additional 700 Afghan soldiers are expected

“We've reached that tipping point where we're now starting to see stuff get done.”



The plaque reads: “May all those who live and work on this base always be successful in their mission and may their training here help win and sustain peace in their country and bring hope to the people of Afghanistan whom they serve.”

to take up residence soon, said Roger Green, a resident engineer in the Jalalabad Area Office of the Corps of Engineers, which is overseeing the development. The soldiers outfitted the buildings with furniture and other equipment.

When complete, Gamberi Garrison will be Afghanistan's version of Fort Hood, said U.S. Army Col. Thomas Magness, the commander the Corps of Engineers' district in northern Afghanistan. Fort Hood, which is located in central Texas, is the largest military installation in the United States. Afghan army and getting them set up like this

Gamberi Garrison is an important component of presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama's strategy to build the Afghan army into the primary force provider. “If we don't get Afghan soldiers under these roofs, you're not going to have the security situation that you might hope for,” Magness said. “They're not going to re-enlist; they're not going to join. They're going to go back home where they're warmer at their fireplaces than they are here.”

The installation is a self-contained mini-city and will be used for several purposes by the Afghan army, which is in the process of taking over the lead role in the fight against insurgents. The garrison will serve as a permanent base for regular and commando units, and as a boot camp for new recruits. It also will have a regional army hospital.

Plans are in place to provide for even more Afghan forces at the compound near

the Russian-built Darunta Dam. There are provisions to increase the garrison's power plant, well system, sewage facilities, roads and other infrastructure systems. “We built Gamberi to accommodate future expansion,” Green said.

The existing facilities already get good marks from a 19-year-old Afghan soldier who uses the single name Riza. Water is plentiful, and the barracks, showers and other facilities are comfortable and clean, which he believes will boost recruitment and retention.

“If you provide them the basics like that, a lot of young people will join the Afghan army,” Riza, who has lived in the garrison for a month, said through an interpreter.

DynCorp International Inc., which is based in Falls Church, Va., served as the prime contractor for Phase II. The firm and its subcontractors employed about 700 Afghans and 70 non-Afghans during the peak of construction.

The four main phases with prime contractors, completion dates and costs:

- Phase I** – DynCorp, September 2009, \$51 million.
- Phase II** – DynCorp, January 2011, \$41.3 million.
- Phase III** – BYA International, scheduled to be complete in July 2011, \$27 million.
- Phase IV** – Asian Atlas Construction & Engineering Network, scheduled to be complete in September 2011, \$18 million.

In addition, a \$12 million training range is slated to be complete in March 2011, while a \$2.8 million building that will be used as an interim headquarters for the Afghan army's 201st Corps before being converted to other purposes, also is set for completion in March. Furthermore, a regional hospital, a floodwater diversion system, road upgrades and a bridge, among other projects, are in planning stages.

The first two phases of the project overcame significant challenges, said Peter Wilcox, DynCorp's director of construction for Afghanistan.

Insurgents attacked the site 12 times since construction began 2½ years ago, he

said. The assaults ranged from rockets and mortars to small-arms fire from near-by hills. The attacks damaged structures, but did not result in serious injuries or loss of life. The frequency of attacks diminished after the first Afghan army soldiers moved in, Wilcox said.

Much of the construction work involved on-the-job training. After decades of war, most workers were inexperienced and unaccustomed to building to U.S. standards, particularly with modern materials such as electrical wiring and drywall. As a result, quality assurance representatives worked closely with the crews to ensure they understood and met U.S. requirements, Wilcox said.

“They don’t have what I would call in the construction industry, the superintendents and the foremen with lifetimes of practical experience. Most of the engineers, even the ones we employ, are graduates with three to five years of experience. They know the theory, but they haven’t had a lot of practice of doing it,” he said.

The opening of Phase II came at a time when the Corps of Engineers’ district in northern Afghanistan is completing a project almost daily, Magness said. The Corps of Engineers is the primary organization building army bases, police stations, roads, airstrips and other infrastructure projects in Afghanistan to increase the country’s stability and economy.

It has two districts in the country – Afghanistan Engineer District-North, which

is based in Kabul; and Afghanistan Engineer District-South, which is based in Kandahar.

“We’ve reached that tipping point where we’re now starting to see stuff get done,” Magness said. “Things that were planned a few months ago, a few years ago, now they’re getting completed. Every single day, we’re seeing another project – maybe not as big as this one – but certainly we’re turning projects over every day.”

Most of the Afghan soldiers who moved into the new accommodations previously were stationed in Kabul, where they were out of their proper battle positions, said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Mark Edelson, who serves as Afghan army program manager for the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan.

“It’s dynamic. We’re building an army at the same time we’re building facilities at the same time we’re fighting a war,” he said. NATO forces are training new Afghan troops so fast the Afghan army needs housing equivalent to two Las Vegas-sized hotels every month to accommodate them, Edelson said.

It’s important to note, Magness said, that the Corps of Engineers and its contractors are teaching Afghan soldiers how to maintain the new facilities, duties that range from technical jobs such as operating water pumps and electrical systems to routine tasks such as mopping concrete floors. 🇺🇸



# Keeping the dream

## Corps of Engineers celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Afghanistan

Story by | Paul Giblin

Photo by | Joe Marek

Air Force Chaplain Maj. Calvin D. Dixon urges Corps of Engineers employees and guests to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day personal by identifying and following their own bold dreams.

**K**ABUL— Air Force Chaplain Maj. Calvin D. Dixon challenged U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel and their guests to continue Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s legacy by daring to dream of a better future for themselves and for others on Monday, Jan. 18.

Speaking to a crowd of more than 100 during the King Day celebration at the Qalaa House compound, Dixon recalled the famous “I Have a Dream” speech, which King delivered in Washington, D.C., at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in 1963.

Dixon reminded the audience that included in King’s call for racial harmony, he spoke of his dream for all people to overcome difficulties and crookedness; to rise up together to achieve brotherhood, freedom and justice. Dixon told the military personnel and civilians at Qalaa House that King was captivated and driven by his dream.

Dixon said King worked tirelessly to achieve his dream and that he made a lasting and profound impression on the lives of Americans and people worldwide. Dixon encouraged those at the King Day event to

keep the civil rights leader’s spirit alive by pursuing their own dreams.

“All great achievements must be started as a dream,” said Dixon, a wing chaplain from Los Angeles Air Force Base in California. “If you don’t have a dream, how are you going to have your dream come true?”

He asked them to persevere through whatever obstacles and challenges they encountered in their personal quests. “The next worse thing to not having a dream is not holding onto that dream,” he said.

Dixon told members of his audience that they are well positioned to make lasting contributions of their own, because King’s message was universal and wasn’t limited geographically to the United States or anywhere else.

He commended those in the audience for serving in Afghanistan as part of the coalition forces’ efforts to restore basic human rights to the country’s population. He said their very presence in the war zone speaks volumes about their willingness to make positive changes. 🇺🇸

# Parting shot



The first snow of the new year fell at the Qalaa House compound on Feb. 12, President Abraham Lincoln's Birthday. The snow accumulated to 2½ inches deep, but only last a day.

Photo by | Joe Marek