



THE

# FREEDOM BUILDER



MAGAZINE

January 2010



## Partnering with Coalition Forces

**Re-Inventing Water  
Towers in Afghanistan**

**Taking Oath for  
Elected Office**

**Engineers Meet Growth  
at Afghan Army Base**



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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.

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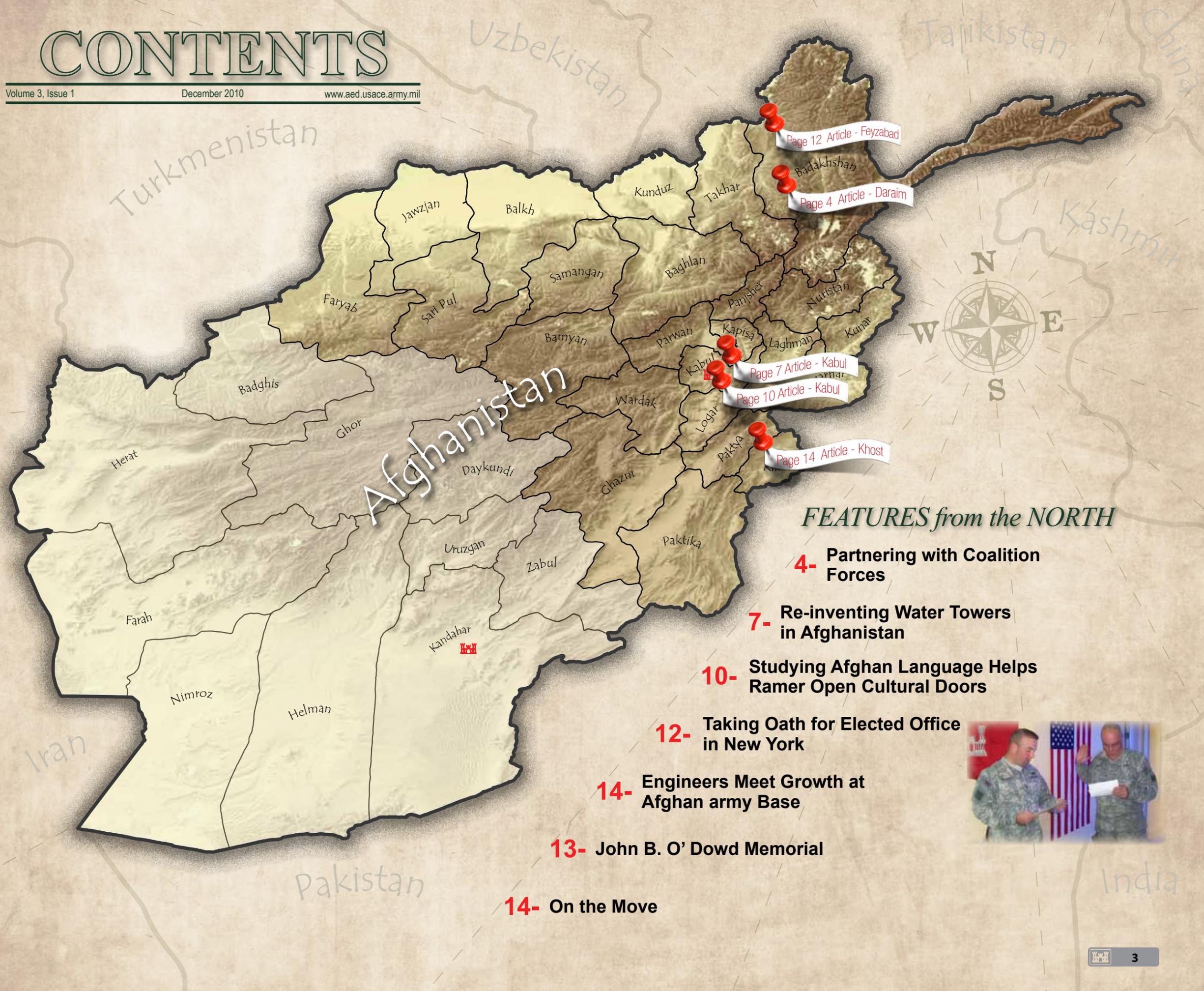
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## Cover Image:



**German soldier at Dariem ANP compound guarding main gate. (Full story on pg. 4)**

Photo by Paul Giblin



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# Partnering with Coalition Forces



Story and photos by Paul Giblin

German police officials Klaus Hofmann, left foreground, Michel Ehleret, center background, and Tony Kirchmair, right foreground, help provide security for Corps civilians who include Roy Tindall, left background, John McLain, center background, and John Cannon.

**D**ARAIM, Afghanistan – A Russian-made Mi-8 transport helicopter carrying U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Afghanistan Engineer District-North members and German policemen thundered from the sky onto a field guarded by German soldiers.

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Peter Stabile and the three German policemen, all carrying automatic rifles, jumped off as the rotors still whirled overhead. Stabile turned back and held up his hand, signaling the unarmed civilian Corps employees to remain aboard as he and the German policemen conferred with a team of German soldiers who already were on site.

A moment later, Stabile returned to the chopper and motioned for the Corps team to disembark. The German soldiers and policemen surrounded the U.S. civilians and escorted them on a short walk to a partially built Afghanistan National Police (ANP) compound in northern Afghanistan.

The Corps personnel split up and spent 90 minutes inspecting different aspects of the nearly \$1 million complex, all under the Germans’ protection.

The visit was a product of a new initiative called the Alignment, Movement and Security Plan, an arrangement that partners the Corps of Engineers with military forces that secure different

regions of Afghanistan. In the northern portion of the country, the Corps has partnered with German coalition forces that operate bases in the Regional Command-North.

In exchange for providing security for Corps of Engineers personnel during site visits, the coalition forces are invited to ride in the helicopter, which is contracted exclusively by the Corps of Engineers. German and U.S. officers snapped hundreds of aerial photographs that the Germans planned to use for mapping.

Both the Corps and coalition forces benefit from the partnership, said Lt. Col. Steven Jordan, who serves as the officer in charge of the Corps’ regional office in the city of Mazar-i Sharif.

The German, Swedish and Norwegian armies secure the northern regions of Afghanistan. The partnership with them is strictly an exchange of services, with no other financial arrangements between the sides, said Rex Goodnight, the Corps’ Chief of Engineering and Construction in northern Afghanistan.

The visit to the Afghanistan National Police station in Daraim marked the fifth Corps site visit under foreign protection since the new program began in September 2009. The Corps is overseeing the construction of hundreds of Afghan police stations and army facilities across the country.

The site visits would be impossible without military protection, said Sta-

bile, who is serves as the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Corps’ office within a German base in Feyzabad. “This is a war zone. At any time, something can happen here,” he said. “If you let your guard down for one second, someone could get hurt.”

Stabile spent two weeks working with the Germans to plan the Daraim excursion.

German soldiers left their base in Feyzabad a day earlier to make the overnight drive on rugged terrain to Daraim. The soldiers spent the night in another Afghanistan National Police station under construction in the village of Argo. The following morning, they completed the trek to Daraim.

Once they arrived, they secured the compound.

The Corps employees entered the walled complex and inspected its electrical and plumbing systems, its floors, roofs, finishes and more.

The site visit offered a reality check, said Corps project manager Roy Tindall, who traveled from the Corps’ headquarters in Kabul for the site tour. The Daraim police station, which features a two-story building with offices, storage facilities and jail cells, was 78 percent finished.

“Some places have been built with few boots on the ground for site visits due to the remote locations and high threat levels,” Tindall said. “We prefer, at least once a week, some kind of visitation at every job site.” At sites where security for Americans is an issue, quality assurance inspections typically are handled by Afghans hired by the Corps.

Tindall, engineers Yvan Nobile and



John Cannon, and construction representative John McLain completed their inspection in 1½ hours. The men re-boarded the helicopter and flew off without incident. Mission accomplished.

The key to developing the partnerships with the foreign forces was building relationships, Jordan said.

“A lot of times, that’s all it is – for the Europeans to believe that you’re genuine, that you truly want to partner, that you don’t just want to take,” he said. “You just take the time to really develop a relationship with them and let them know that you’re not just a forceful person coming in and wanting something.”

By all accounts, the strategy has paid off. “It’s very easy,” said German police 1st Lt. Tony Kirchmair, who’s based in Fayzabad and accompanied the Americans to Daraim. “We communicate almost every day. Cooperation between us, I would say, it couldn’t be better.”

Kirchmair noted that the Germans also invite Corps employees to ride along in ground vehicles when the Germans are on missions to destinations near their base. He said, “Every time when we are going in our district, we ask, ‘Is there a need for you to join us?’ or

‘Do you want to join us to inspect the police HQ?’ And if they want, they can join us.”

In addition to obtaining aerial photos, the Germans benefit from gaining better insight into the development of Afghan police stations, he said. That’s important because German police officers are training Afghan police recruits in the northern portion of the country.

For example, Kirchmair said, the relationship helped the Germans identify that basic maintenance practices need to be part of the police training program. Most of the Afghan recruits come from humble living conditions, often from homes with dirt floors, so they have to be taught how to care for tile and concrete floors.

The relationship also has benefited the foreign forces by giving them greater access to the police stations while they are still under construction. They use the compounds as meeting places for conferences with village leaders and local police officials.

The Germans are comfortable providing security for Corps employees and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, Kirchmair said. “Why not? I think we have the same aim, the same target, the same goal. And it would be worse for us not to work together,” he said. 🇩🇪

## Re-inventing water towers in Afghanistan



Story by: Paul GIBLIN  
Photos by: Joe MAREK

Engineers Christa Besing, left, Mark Hoague, center, and Peter Schei review plans for the weld-free water towers.

**K**ABUL, Afghanistan – Structural engineers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Afghanistan Engineer District-North (AED-N) went back to basics to design water towers to be built in Afghanistan, a country where construction methods remain archaic by U.S. standards.

Engineers in Kabul and Mobile, Ala., worked together to design 15-meter-high and 20-meter-high towers fastened entirely with nuts and bolts. “As far as putting it together, you don’t realize how difficult it is when you can’t weld,” said structural engineer Michael Thompson from the Mobile District in Alabama.

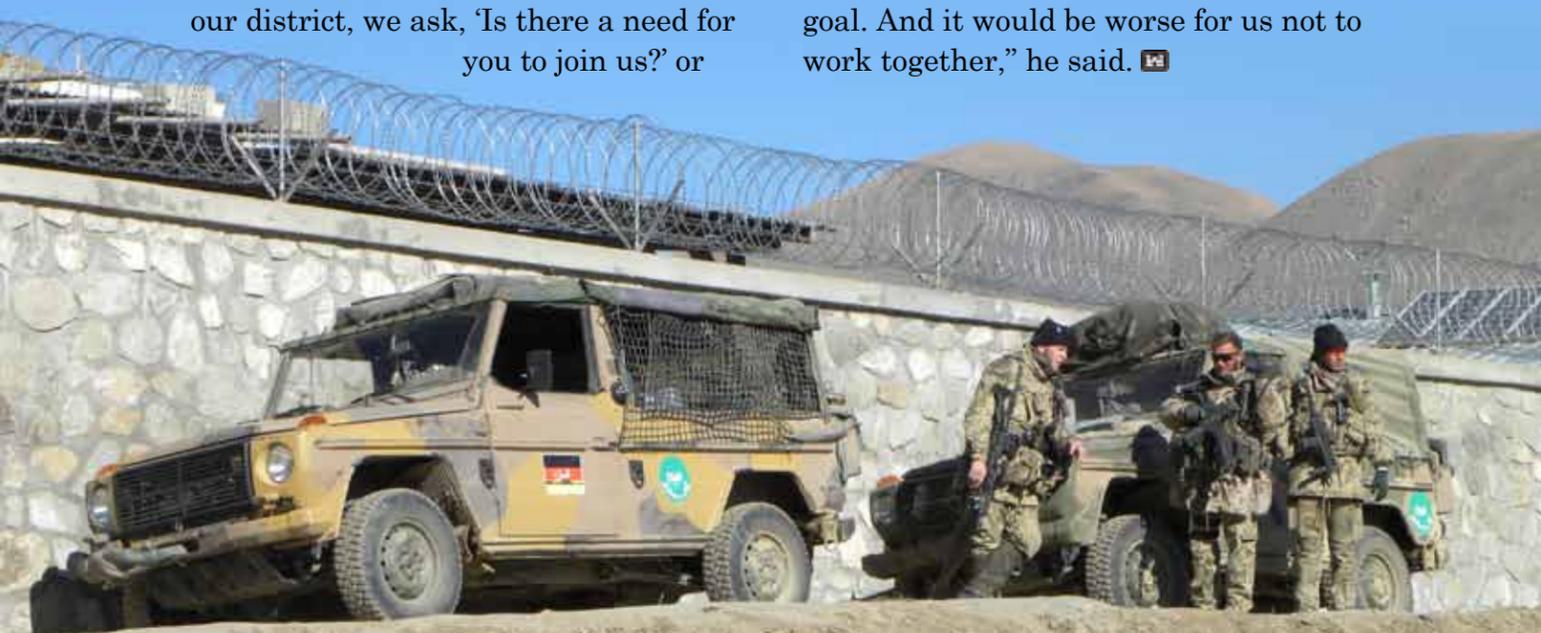
The challenge for engineers was designing towers that could be built and maintained in remote locations where electricity is un-

available, construction expertise is scarce, and materials are limited by what can be transported by donkeys.

The water towers will be included at dozens of Afghanistan National Police (ANP) bases being built throughout the arid country. Hundreds of policemen will live and work at each compound, and water stored in the towers will be used for everything from sinks to showers.

Before designing the towers, Corps engineers debated whether the water storage tanks should be located underground or above ground, said Mark Hoague, AED-N Chief of Engineering in Kabul.

Underground tanks are easier to build, but require working pumps to provide pressurized water for sinks and showers. In



German soldiers provide security outside the police compound as Corps personnel inspect construction inside.

contrast, above-ground tanks are more difficult to build, but can get by with gravity to provide pressurized water.

The deciding factor was the spotty availability of electricity, Hoague said. Engineers opted for above-ground tanks. “It was an intelligent debate, but you’ve got nothing if the water’s underground and there’s no power. You can have a hand pump, but for 700 people, you can’t hand pump water every day,” he said.

The engineers reasoned that large quantities of water can be pumped from wells to above-ground tanks in quick bursts, even if electricity is available only intermittently. Once water is stored in above-ground tanks, gravity can be used to dispense it.

The engineers determined they need two types of towers – 15-meter towers with 9,000-gallon tanks, and 20-meter towers with 7,000-gallon tanks. But the engineers knew that traditional U.S. construction techniques would have presented serious obstacles for many Afghan construction contractors.

Dozens of the police stations are accessible only by narrow mountain passes. That ruled out the use of heavy-duty mechanical cranes. The lack of reliable electricity, welding expertise and materials ruled out welding as well. Furthermore, the towers had to withstand Afghanistan’s seismic activity.

Corps employees opted for assistance from their colleagues in Mobile after contractors in Afghanistan struggled to produce a reliable design, said AED-N engineer Christa Besing. “Hundreds of design submittals were received and all were rejected due to deficiencies in the seismic analysis and skepticism over the quality of the field welds,” she said.

Hoague, Besing and fellow engineer Doug

Jamieson outlined the requirements and sketched preliminary concepts. They forwarded the material to Corps colleagues Thompson and Allison Pierce in the Mobile District to design simple, yet reliable, towers held together with nuts and bolts.

The teams in Afghanistan and Alabama made accommodations for the 102½-hour time difference between their locations for carefully scheduled conference calls. Initially, they spoke once a week. As the concepts came along and the sides exchanged more detailed plans, they teleconferenced even more frequently.

Pierce said, “It was just a constant communication with Afghanistan back and forth on different parts of design, what would work and wouldn’t work. We’d try one thing and go back and try another way with something that was available in Afghanistan. It was just constant putting our heads together.”

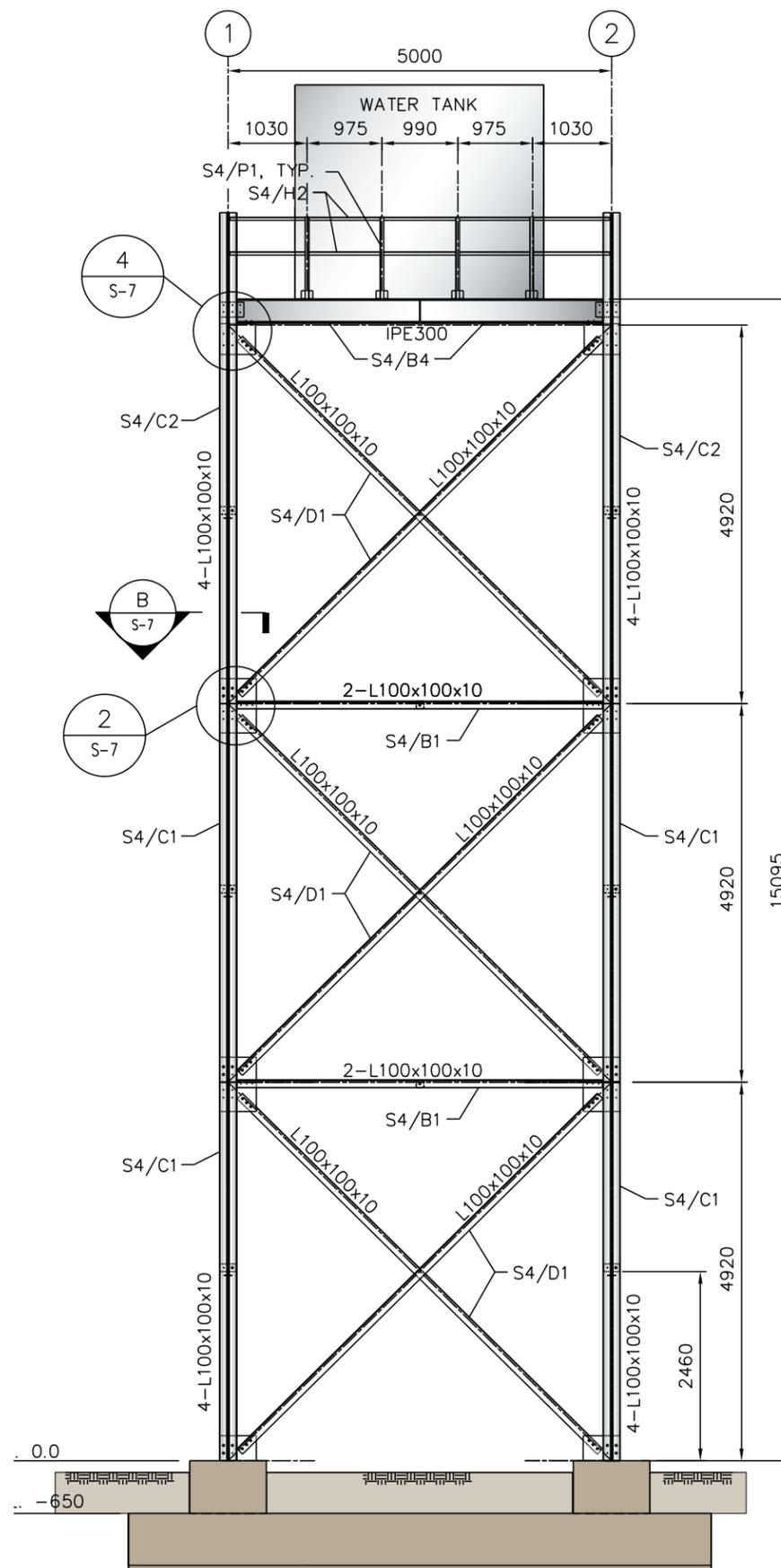
Together, they came up with four-sided towers constructed with 3½-inch by 3½-inch steel angle bars, affixed to concrete foundations. The design calls for a series of stacked five-meter sections with cross-bracing on all four sides.

The 15-meter towers use three stacked sections and 1,458 sets of nuts and bolts, while the 20-meter towers require four stacked sections and 1,752 sets of nuts and bolts.

A critical aspect of the design work was determining where each and every hole should be pre-drilled in metal shops before the parts are even brought to the construction sites. The intent was to eliminate any guess work by laborers.

“It’s all designed. They don’t have to do a thing,” Hoague said. “Contractors will order tower pieces from steel fabricators, transport them to the job site and use labor

**“It’s all designed. They don’t have to do a thing”**



to erect both the tower and the tank.”

The pre-fabrication work will be critical, said Peter Schei, a structural engineer in Kabul, who reviewed the final design.

“It has to be very accurate,” he said while examining a set of plans. “Look at all these details. When they punch that gusset right there, it has to match up perfectly to the mated part. It’s like an Erector set.”

The most meticulous portion of the tower was a built-in ladder and a metal cage around the ladder, Thompson said. “That was quite a challenge to get it put together and get the bolt holes matched up. Every time you did something, it affected something else. It was like a domino effect,” he said.

The Corps of Engineers also was careful to ensure that the component pieces were light enough that they could be hoisted with a pulley system with two or three men. The water tanks will be assembled atop of the towers and fastened with nuts and bolts.

The results of the trans-Atlantic collaboration will appear across Afghanistan. The water tower design will be included in all 171 construction packages for ANP compounds that are expected to be awarded sometime this year. In addition, the towers may be added to as many as four dozen national police stations that were started during fiscal 2009, officials said. ■



## Studying Afghan Language Helps Ramer Open Cultural Doors

Story and Photos by: Hank Heusinkveld

At an AED-N project site north of Kabul, Jean Ramer chats in Dari with an Afghan contract security guard.

One of the best ways to understand a culture and its people is to know the local language and customs. And once you learn the basics the doors open wider for greater communication.

Jean Ramer is a project manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District-North in Kabul. She's immersing herself in an aggressive, self-paced curriculum to study Dari taught by her Afghan teacher. While she isn't required to learn one of Afghanistan's largest and

most difficult languages, she has taken the initiative to be able to read, write and speak Dari. As a project manager in Operations and Maintenance, she visits Afghan National Army bases in the Kabul area, to assist the ANA with coordinating repairs and minor construction projects on their facilities.

"It's voluntary and I want to do it," she said. "I do get outside the compound and I have a chance to talk with Afghan National Army folks and other locals and it's useful," she said. "If you happen

to be out on a site and if you happen to need something like water or if you need to know where a certain person is you are fortunate to have a translator with you most of the time. But when you don't, knowing the language comes in handy."

Ramer is diligent with her studies. She spends a considerable amount of her free time learning new words and practicing how to write in Dari.

"I study just about every day, sometimes an hour and a half, sometimes maybe a half hour. I at least review my notes every day. I plan to study for the duration of my tour, so hopefully by the end of the year I should be able to go outside the wire, exchange some information to the people I deal with in a technical and practical way without looking or sounding silly, and effectively communicate with the people we were sent here to serve."

Her teacher, Mustafa Alami, a Kabul University student, is just as enthused about teaching Ramer Dari as she is learning it. His native language is Pashtu, but in addition to Dari and English he also knows Turkish.



"One way to understand the culture of a country is when you know their language," he said. "I'm entrusted to teaching Jean and I love teaching her," he said. "There are more than 20 different languages in Afghanistan. There are two formal languages that are used in areas like offices. Those are Pashtu and Dari. Another language is Uzbek. These three are the formal languages. All of the people know one of these languages."

Ramer, an Omaha District Regulatory Project Manager based out of Helena, Montana, plans to extend her deployment in Afghanistan. While she finds Dari very difficult, she's committed to learning the language to the point of going beyond casual conversation.

"I think that Dari-speaking civilians would be in very high demand, but not so much in Helena, Montana," she said with a smile. 📷



Jean Ramer practices sounding out words in Dari with her instructor, Mustafa Alami.

# Taking Oath for Elected Office in New York



Story by Paul Giblin

Peter Stabile provides security for Corps employees in Feyzabad, Afghanistan, and manages roads in Woodbury, N.Y.

**F**EYZABAD, Afghanistan – Army Master Sgt. Peter Stabile took the oath of office for the elected position of superintendent of highways for the town of Woodbury, N.Y., despite being more than 6,700 miles out of town at the time.

Stabile is serving as the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' office within a German army base called Provincial Reconstruction Team Feyzabad, in the northern region of the country. His year-long tour ends in October.

Army 1st Lt. Mathew Benasuly administered the oath on Jan. 12, meeting provi-

sions of New York state law that allows a commissioned officer to swear in a deployed member of the military. Stabile's Corps colleagues served as witnesses.

Stabile, who won the office in November, will spend the first 10 months of his fourth two-year term in Afghanistan. He has taken steps to ensure Woodbury's streets are maintained while he's away. He designated town supervisor John Burke as acting superintendent of the town's

highways department and assigned foreman Johnny Jones to handle the day-to-day responsibilities of the post.

The department's 13 employees are re-

sponsible for plowing snow along 48 miles of roads during winter months, and collecting bagged leaves and clearing tree limbs along 60 miles of roads during summer months. The Woodbury highways department's annual budget is nearly \$3 million.

"I can be here with a clear conscious knowing that they are taking care of things," Stabile said after taking the oath in front of a U.S. flag in the Corps' office. He stays in regular contact with town officials through e-mail.

The Woodbury job pays \$72,000 annually, but Stabile has asked the town council to withhold half his pay during 2010.

Stabile, a 58-year-old Army reservist, decided to run for re-election before receiving orders to deploy to Afghanistan, where he is in charge of security for Corps employees in Feyzabad. He arrived in Afghanistan a month before Election Day, and left his campaign in the hands of his wife Joann, and his daughter and son-in-law, Joann and Eric Stopanio.

Benasuly shaved and dressed in a just-

cleaned uniform to administer the oath. He had sworn in enlistees and re-enlistees for military service about 25 times previously, but he never before had been called upon to administer the oath of office for an elected official.

"It just makes you more aware of the number of people here and the larger role of the dual citizen," Benasuly said.

Benasuly conducted the short ceremony during the evening, after both he and Stabile had put in regular 10-hour work days. Stabile accepted congratulations from his Corps colleagues, then he and Benasuly signed a certificate to document the occasion and sent it to the Woodbury town clerk to officially record.

Stabile plans to return to retire from the military at the end of his tour in October, concluding a 37-year military career of active and reserve service in the Army and Army National Guard. No word yet on whether he'll seek a fifth term as Woodbury superintendent of highways in 2012.



Photo credit  
John M. MCLAIN  
PROJECT ENGINEER /COR  
FEYZABAD PROJECT OFFICE

Army 1st Lt. Mathew Benasuly, left, administers the oath of office to Stabile on Jan. 12.

# Engineers meet growth at Afghan army base



Story and Photos by Paul Giblin

A new office and barracks building for the fire department at Camp Parsa was designed with Afghan tastes in mind.

**K**HOST, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Afghanistan Engineer District-North (AED-N) officials handed the keys to 13 new buildings at an Afghanistan National Army (ANA) base to Afghan officials on Jan. 20, bringing the country’s army closer to self sufficiency.

The scope of work included an office and barracks building for firefighters, another office building, a gym, five laundry facilities and five weapons storage buildings. The projects took 1½ years to build at a combined cost of \$9 million.

The buildings are within an ANA base called Camp Parsa, which is near the Pakistan border, a region of Afghanistan where the Taliban still operates. The new facilities are designed to accommodate the ANA as it increases its strength at the base.

Corps officials, who oversaw development of the buildings, gave the facilities a final

inspection on Jan. 11, made some minor renovations, and transferred them to ANA officials. Michael Tuttle, the AED-N project manager for the developments, noted that ANA officers were eager to occupy the buildings. He said he wouldn’t be surprised if ANA soldiers had completely moved in two days after receiving the keys.

The buildings were designed with Afghan tastes, traditions and practices in mind, a USACE practice called austere design, said U.S. Army Capt. Andrew Bouchard, the ANA program manager for Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan,

which is a multinational organization that’s helping to develop and train Afghanistan’s security forces.

“More and more, we’re trying to adapt to fit their needs, so even though we’re trying to get them a step higher, we have to back up on some other things, and meet their

“ I can be here with a clear conscious knowing that they are taking care of things. ”

culture, their standards, what they’re used to,” Bouchard said.

For instance, the laundry buildings house deep sinks to wash laundry, and hand-operated rollers to wring water from wet clothes and linens. Afghan soldiers are comfortable with that equipment, said Mark Miller, an AED-N construction manager based at Camp Clark, a small U.S. camp within Camp Parsa.

“They wash things by hand here,” he said. “They don’t have washing machines and dryers in the typical way that we think of things in America. They wash



New laundry buildings house deep sinks and hand-operated rollers.

things by hand and hang them out to dry.”

Similarly, the floors in nearly every room in the new buildings received the same treatment -- acrylic-painted concrete. The approach was so similar, garage floors and office floors received the same treatment. Even the color of the paint is identical from one building to the



An Afghan contractor inspects an electrical system during a Corps site tour.

next. It’s tan.

“Keep in mind that the use of these buildings is for the Afghan National Army. These buildings are utilitarian. In the greatest definition of the word ‘utilitarian,’ that’s what these buildings are,” Miller said. “They’ve got to be heavy duty.”

Corps employees specifically designed the buildings to be simple. Painted concrete floors are both easy and inexpensive to clean.

“Right now, the Afghan government has limited funding for maintenance,” Bouchard said. “We’re trying to make them aware of how much it costs to sus-



Corps employees and Afghan soldiers take time out for a short game of volleyball while inspecting the new gym.

tain, so these facilities will stand a long period of time.”

Overall, Afghan soldiers need to familiarize themselves how to operate and repair electrical and plumbing systems and how to clean floors, bathrooms and other interior spaces, he said.

Corps employees also purposely designed the gym to accommodate volleyball, which is a passion in Afghanistan, rather than basketball, which is only an oddity. The gym’s restrooms are equipped with foot-washing stations and Eastern-style toilets. Similarly, the soldiers play soccer, rather than baseball, on a near-by field.

On certain other matters, the Corps used U.S. standards. Upon inspection, Corps employees discovered that in many instances, the Afghan contractors who constructed the buildings hadn’t properly grounded electrical outlets in rooms where water could be present, and that they hadn’t installed P-traps in some plumbing fixtures.

“The buildings were in good shape as a whole. We came across a lot of smaller issues, but they were overriding issues,” Miller said.

Properly grounded electrical outlets prevent shocks, while sideways P-shaped dips in drainage pipes block sewer gasses from escaping into public areas. Corps personnel worked with the contractors to correct both deficiencies before the buildings were turned over to the Afghan army.

Tuttle said it was important for the Corps to ensure that the buildings were fully functional and in good condition before transferring ownership, in order to help set the standard for the Afghan army.

The Corps’ work at Camp Parsa continues. As the Corps turned over the keys to the new buildings, plans were being finalized a two-year construction project for a new shooting range. Construction was set to begin later in January. 



The number of Afghan troops at Camp Parsa is projected to increase by 10 percent a month for the foreseeable future.



## *In Memoriam*

### John B. O' Dowd

26 January 2010

**Former Afghanistan Engineer District** Colonel John Bellis O'Dowd (U.S. Army Retired) died on Tuesday, January 26 from an apparent heart attack. He was 53 years old.

COL O'Dowd was born in Bergenfield, New Jersey. He was commissioned into the U.S. Army after graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1978.

His most immediate prior assignment was Chief of Staff, US Military Staff Committee, J5/JCS, U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York as Ambassador Bolton's Military Advisor.

O'Dowd commanded U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District from July 2004 to July 2005. During his time as commander, AED was responsible for a comprehensive infrastructure program for the reception and training of recruits, and subsequent stabilization of up to 70,000 soldiers of the Afghanistan National Army. The program included construction, rehabilitation and refurbishment of barracks, dining facilities, administration centers, clinics, motor pools, multipurpose training ranges, and support facilities. It also included construction of a military hospital, military academy, entrance processing station, and training center. The District is also building new facilities for U.S. Forces in Afghanistan and provided technical and mentoring support to USAID and other Federal agencies. In addition to serving as commander of the District, Colonel O'Dowd was also the Staff Engineer for Combined Force Command-Afghanistan. In this capacity, he oversaw all engineering activity for the Department of Defense including construction of roads, bridges and forward operating bases.

Colonel O'Dowd is survived by his wife Francesca, his two daughters Elizabeth and Katie, his son Scott, as well as his brothers William and Daniel and his sister Kathryn.

Please visit our website to see Colonel John B. O' Dowd at the 5 year AED Anniversary.

<http://www.aed.usace.army.mil/playvideo.asp?ReleaseID=9>

# ON THE MOVE

## Moving in

Gerry J. Boyle	Bogdan Figiel	Jack Janney	Herbert Scheuerlein	MAJ Daniel Hamilton
1LT Steven Potter	Mark Aldrich	Hugo Betzwieser	Colleen Hickey	James Landgraff
Leon Lundy	John Myers	Paul Ocker	Jean Pharaon	Peter Russin
Henry Sim	Michelle Smith	Sean Walsh	SGT Terence McLaughlin	

## Moving out

Bryce Bishop	Tyrone Crear	Arthur Kunigel	Richard Newton	LaVonne Baker
Harry Pham	SSG Dennis Burke	Jason Kim	Curt Murdock	SGM James Smetana
Ignacio C. Borja	Stanton L. Shirk	Yong Kim	Teresa McCarthy	MSG Brett Thompson
Martin Reed	Miow-Yu Siow	Roy Clark	Crafton Beene	Joseph Kellett

## CAC Cards at Qalaa House

**Common Access Cards (CACs)** can be processed at the Qalaa House J-1 Office

Monday through Thursday and Saturday from 0800 to 1600 hrs.

CACs will not be processed on Fridays and Sundays.

For more information, contact CPT Stacy Goodman, AED-N J-1 at 540-723-4995 or by e-mail at [stacy.l.goodman@usace.army.mil](mailto:stacy.l.goodman@usace.army.mil).