



# The Freedom

# BUILDER

MAGAZINE

May 2009



## Supporting the PRT Mission



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers®  
Afghanistan Engineer District



# The Freedom BUILDER MAGAZINE

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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.

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www.aed.usace.army.mil

## Cover Image:

**Spec. Alexander Baron, a member of the Gardez PRT Security Forces, plays "America the Beautiful" on the bagpipe. (See story on page 4. Photo by Bruce J. Huffman)**



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www.aed.usace.army.mil

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## Postcards from Afghanistan

The Public Affairs Office is expanding AED's Internal Communications Program with "Postcards from Afghanistan."

The postcards will appear on AED's Internet Site in PDF format and a copy will be sent to your home District Public Affairs Office.

The postcards consist of a 3 to 4 paragraph write up along with 2 to 3 photos with a photo caption describing what is happening in each photo. The write-up is similar to a personal note from you to your family and friends, that focuses on a specific project or event, or that provides an overview of your total experience here in Afghanistan.

The Public Affairs Office will provide help needed to write these.

If you would like to be featured on one of these postcards, please contact the Public Affairs Office at 540-662-6578 or come visit us in the basement of the Azadi House, room 7, or e-mail [bruce.j.huffman@usace.army.mil](mailto:bruce.j.huffman@usace.army.mil).



# From the Commander ...

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nations' service. This holiday has significant meaning to me personally even more now as I approach the end of my tour of duty in Afghanistan.

Wars have touched the lives of Americans of all ages, all races, and all social classes. Fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, mothers, sisters: they were killed in action, they were wounded, and thousands who returned were forced to live the rest of their lives with the physical and mental scars of war. The people who stayed in the United States also served - in factories, in voluntary service organizations, wherever they were needed.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit wounded soldiers recovering and rehabilitating at Walter Reed Medical Center. It was a very powerful and moving experience. I met with a soldier and his spouse that were thrilled with the medical technology that will help the soldier keep his leg and have use of it through muscle grafts and physical therapy. This experience gave me a renewed appreciation for both our service members and their families and also for civilians who deploy and their families

We often take for granted our American values and institutions, our freedom to participate in cultural and political events, and our right to live under a government of our choice. The Americans who went off to war in distant lands went in the belief that the values and beliefs enjoyed by Americans were being threatened. They truly believed that "Without freedom there can be no ensuring peace and without peace no enduring freedom."



**Col. Thomas E. O'Donovan**

By remembering their service and their sacrifice, we recognize the tradition of freedom these men and women fought to preserve. They believed that their actions in the present would make a significant difference for the future, but it is up to us to ensure that their dream of peace is realized. On Remembrance Day, we acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of those who served their country and acknowledge our responsibility to work for the peace they fought hard to achieve.

I am very proud to serve with all of you who serve with USACE, Afghanistan Engineer District. 

**BUILDING STRONG<sup>SM</sup>**  
Essayons!

# From the Command Sergeant Major ...

Memorial Day.....a day of remembrance ... means many things to many people. What does it mean to you?

In our culture, when reflecting on this day, it's easy to visualize children playing in the yard, families arranging festivities, backyard barbecues, trips to the beach, and a myriad of other activities that represent joyous times and celebration. The men and women of the Afghanistan Engineer District also close their eyes and see the euphoric visions of times when they participated and indulged with families and friends.

But, Memorial Day is more than barbecues and happy times; we know this as Americans and citizens of a world that prefers peace to war. The men and women of the Armed Forces currently engaged in our current war also are responsible for keeping the peace while assisting in the reconstruction of nations in difficult parts of the world. Their

everyday tasks are a bit more complicated.

Today's warriors find themselves simultaneously in seasons of war and peace -- where dying and killing, mourning and dancing, and rebuilding of nations and the corresponding human spirits are everyday realities.

It is not only fitting to reflect and remember our fallen warriors during this time of the year. But we must focus, as well, on honoring their sacrifices with both joyful and contrite hearts. Their sacrifices are the prices paid for our liberties -- for family and friends to enjoy their lives in seasons filled with peace and quiet laughter; where children can run free without fear, and the elderly can enjoy their families, young men and women can aspire to fruitful futures, moms and dads can take pride in their families, business people can support themselves and stimulate our economies, and people of all faiths can worship their God without persecution.

On May 25th, we remember our fallen. We mourn and honor them, and thank them, their families, and friends for their sacrifices. We do so with tearful and joyful hearts.



**Command Sgt. Maj. Harry D. Farris**

For the men and women of the Afghanistan Engineer District, this is a time of sacrifice as well as a time to work hard and deliver the reconstruction of Afghanistan. It is a time to share with the Afghan's as they rebuild their nation and their dreams.

May God bless the men and women of our Armed Forces and the men and women of the Afghanistan Engineer District as they collaborate with the world community and the Afghan people during this bitter-sweet time. 



**AED Engineer, Sonny Jadun, discusses quality assurance with an Afghan contractor working on culverts and bridges for the Sharana to Paltu River road project. Jadun has been embedded with the Sharana PRT for more than two years building roads, bridges, schools, clinics and district centers.**

# AED, supporting the PRT mission

By Bruce J. Huffman

A few months after the first Provincial Reconstruction Team was established in 2002, the Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Area Office embedded one of its engineers with the PRT there to provide Corps quality engineering and construction expertise. Today, both the PRT and Corps' missions in Afghanistan have grown substantially, and the Afghanistan Engineer District has more than 40 engineers, construction, and quality assurance representatives directly supporting the PRT mission throughout Afghanistan.

Since their inception, the PRT's have been the primary vehicle for U.S. and international aid to reach the more remote and often unstable provinces of Afghanistan. Their mission is to facilitate reconstruction efforts that empower local

governments, making them more effective and extending the reach of the centralized government of Afghanistan into the provinces.

Currently, there are 26 PRT's in Afghanistan; of which 12 are U.S. led. The U.S. led PRT's are comprised of both military and civilian personnel such as civil affairs, force protection, and reconstruction subject matter experts, along with members from the State Dept., the Dept. of Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. The PRT's led by other Coalition countries are configured slightly different, but the overall mission is still the same; win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, and extend the reach of the centralized Afghan government by providing engineering and reconstruction solutions.

## PRT Locations in Afghanistan



“It’s very important to bring the provincial government and the local Afghan population together during the process, because it instills confidence in the government’s ability to lead and provide for the people,” said Sonny Jadun, an AED engineer assigned to the Sharana PRT. “That’s the overarching mission of the PRT, and you get a lot of satisfaction, because you see immediately how your efforts impact the lives of the local population.” Jadun has been embedded with the Sharana PRT for more than two years, building projects like roads, bridges, schools, clinics, and district centers.

The PRT reconstruction process begins with identifying the needs of the community. Civil affairs officers and reconstruction subject matter experts meet with the village elders and members of the provincial government to determine what needs to be done. “We look for small projects that will produce a high impact,” said Jadun.

Once a project has been identified and determined feasible, the engineer team drafts a comprehensive scope of work and requests funding. According to Jadun, the funding acquisition process has been streamlined for PRT’s, in order to facilitate quick results and underscore the provincial government’s ability to care for its constituents. Funding requests that would normally take months in the United States can be processed in seven to ten days.

In addition to building much needed schools, clinics and other infrastructure projects, the PRTs also bring economic benefits to remote villages by hiring local contractors and laborers to do the work. According to Danny Potter, an AED construction representative assigned to the Gardez PRT, usually about 80% of the workforce on PRT projects are hired from the local village where the work is being

done. “Money talks, especially in these poor villages,” said Potter. “You’d be surprised how effective improved living conditions and economic opportunities are at eroding enemy support.” Once work begins, technical advisors like Potter provide quality assurance while training and mentoring the contractors in order to expand Afghan construction capacity.



**Members of the Gardez PRT watch closely as villagers from Jani Khel construct a stone channel that will divert water for a micro hydro power station in Paktia.**

The Gardez PRT, where Potter is assigned, was the very first PRT ever established, and most of the doctrine used by today’s PRT’s was tested and refined there. Potter lives in the original 100 by 125 foot mud-walled compound where the original Gardez PRT was established in 2002. The mud and straw guard towers of the original inner compound loom above rows of B-Huts and other support facilities that have been built as the PRT expanded its perimeter.

*cont. on page 6*



**The Gardez PRT was the first ever established. The mud and straw walls of the original compound are completely surrounded by B-Huts and other support buildings that have expanded its perimeter since 2002.**



Soldiers from the Gardez PRT head out to the field to check projects along the Khowst-Gardez pass in Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAP). This seven ton vehicle is capable of carrying up to six combat loaded passengers.

“Work at a PRT is very demanding, but has many rewards,” said AED PRT Program Manager Greg Hales. “Think of it as engineering on steroids. You have several times the number of projects and work twice as many hours as engineers back in the states. The projects are in remote and sometimes hostile locations, and it can be hard to get building materials and supplies; especially in bad weather. However, engineers assigned to PRT’s work closely with the Afghans and gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the Afghan culture. The work is fast-paced, but personnel assigned to the PRT’s can see first-hand how their efforts are positively changing the lives of the Afghans. It takes a special kind of person to work at a PRT, and we are always looking for qualified engineers and construction representatives with a can-do spirit for these assignments.”

For more information about the PRT program email: [aed.prtprogram@usace.army.mil](mailto:aed.prtprogram@usace.army.mil)

# Safety Bits

## Preventing Occupational Fatalities in Confined Spaces

By Jon Fentress  
AED Safety Specialist

Exercise extreme caution when entering and working in containers, tanks and other confined spaces, because the atmosphere is oxygen deficient and can be extremely toxic. You only have to look at the statistics to understand how serious this problem is. For example: In normal work places, for every 1,400 accidents reported; only one will result in death or serious injury. In confined spaces, it is one in 10. Also, for every one worker killed in a confined space accident, an average of about two rescuers die.

In 1993, the U.S. became the first country to enforce dedicated confined space regulations on a national scale. Since then many countries have followed suit, but Afghanistan is not one of them.

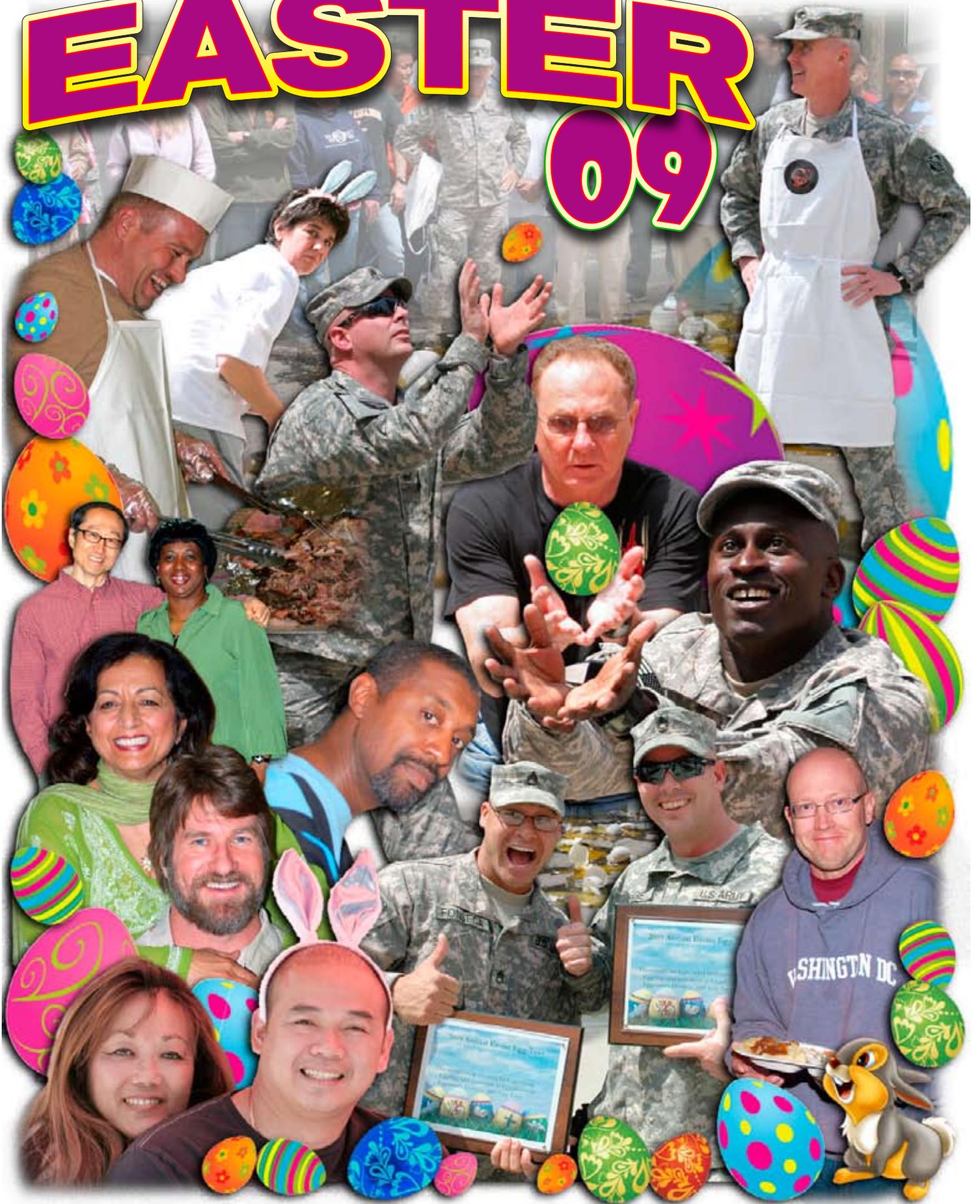
Occupational Safety is serious business in confined places. Here’s what you can do to prevent accidents:

1. Increase awareness and recognition of confined space hazards.
2. Test the atmosphere for oxygen and toxicity levels and evaluate the risk before entering.
3. Monitor the atmosphere continually during the work.
4. Have a rescue plan in place before entry.



Afghan workers prepare a bulk fuel tank to be buried at Bagram Airfield.

# EASTER 09



# Five Year Anniversary Coins



Staff Sgt. David Holcomb hands ANA Program Manager Curt Murdock an AED 5th Anniversary Commemorative Coin.



James Banks, an AED mechanical Engineer, displays the front of the AED 5th Anniversary commemorative coin, which features an Afghan flag and Corps castle.



Each person currently serving with AED was given one of the commemorative coins that were designed by GIS Specialist Mary Craig for the 5th Anniversary celebration. Each of the five coins represents a major Corps program that has been established in Afghanistan over the past five years. From left to right, the coins represent: U.S. & Coalition Forces Construction Program, Afghan National Army Program, Afghan National Police Program, Strategic Reconstruction Program, and the Water and Infrastructure Branch Program. AED personnel were each given the coin that represents the specific program they work in.

# ON POINT...

**Why did you deploy to Afghanistan and what does it mean to be here?**



**SSG Jennifer Hilley, J1 Personnel**

“This was an Air Force assignment; my second overseas. It’s been a great experience, unlike any other deployment. Here at AED I hope to get a better understanding as to how the joint environment works 24/7.”



**SSG Andrew King, AED Force Pro**

“I came to Afghanistan to serve my country and help the people of Afghanistan. It’s so emotional that it’s hard to put into words. Frankly, it’s the right thing to do.”



**Tracy Hunter, DFAC Mgr.**

“I like to give a taste of home here. I’m a person who serves those who serve. It’s important to teach Afghans about continental cuisine.”



**Diane Wheeler, Baker Group**

“I have already spent three years in Iraq, and I wanted to do the same thing here; to do my part. It’s a great feeling to make a difference, and help the people of Afghanistan.”



**Doug Pine, O&M Proj. Mgr.**

“I came to Afghanistan to serve. It’s just a great opportunity as a veteran to help out the Afghan people. AED is making a huge difference, and I am proud to be a part of history.”



**LTC John Schultz, AED J3**

“I deployed here to round out my career. I wanted to experience another culture and all aspects of the military overseas. This experience is one I’ll never forget.”

# Construction surge in Gardez

By Bruce J. Huffman

A 50 bed addition to the Afghan National Army hospital at Camp Thunder in Gardez is the first of many Corps of Engineers construction projects that will take place there during the next 12 to 18 months. Strategically located in the highlands of the Hindu Kush Mountains 60 miles south of Kabul, the nation's capitol, and just 50 miles west of the Pakistan border; a buildup of Afghan

Forces in Gardez has ignited a construction surge at Camp Thunder.

“The trauma center, operating rooms, and X-Ray lab are all in the existing hospital, but the \$5 million addition to the Paktia Regional Military Hospital will provide a troop medical clinic, additional patient rooms, office space, laundry facilities, a

barber shop, and a store for the patients,” said Master Sgt. Ed Walton, Noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Afghanistan Engineer District Resident Office in Gardez. According to Walton, this state-of-the-art facility will accommodate the influx of ANA Soldiers and also provide quality medical care for the local Afghans living near the base. “This hospital is top-notch and comparable to a hospital you might find in the United States,” said Walton.

In addition to the hospital extension, other projects currently under construction at Camp Thunder are a Commando Kandak (Pashto for battalion), a forward supply depot, a second dining facility and a barracks for medical staff. There are also several garrison upgrades planned for the next 18 months such as a new laundry facility, a Dept. of Public Works compound, a garrison fitness center, an athletic



The Paktia Regional Military Hospital was built at Camp Thunder by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2004. AED is currently building a 50 bed addition to the hospital that will be used by ANA soldiers and local Afghans that live near the base.

field, running track, and several vehicle and weapons maintenance and storage facilities. According to Jon Allen, AED construction representative, the new upgrades in Gardez will more than double the size of the current base, and provide ample power, water, housing and support facilities for the additional soldiers.

Camp Thunder is home to the ANA 203<sup>rd</sup> Corps, and the base was built by the Corps of Engineers in 2004. According to Allen, Camp Thunder was the second ANA base the Corps built in Afghanistan. “We’ve learned a thing or two about construction in Afghanistan since we started, and we’re incorporating those lessons into what we are designing and building now,” said Allen. “I have to admit that these are some very impressive buildings being built. This is good, solid, quality construction.”

Some of the facilities in Gardez are also being built by the Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency. Once they are finished, they will all be maintained by the Corps of Engineers through an Operations and Maintenance contract. The Corps of Engineers O&M program provides funds, expertise and training to the Afghan engineers and facility managers, so they can operate and maintain the facilities for themselves someday.

Currently there are about 86,000 soldiers serving in the ANA with plans to grow to more than 130,000. President Obama recently called for an expansion of the ANA to almost 260,000 troops over the next five years.

*cont. on page 12*



**Afghan workers prepare to place concrete along the corridor that connects the new addition to the existing hospital.**

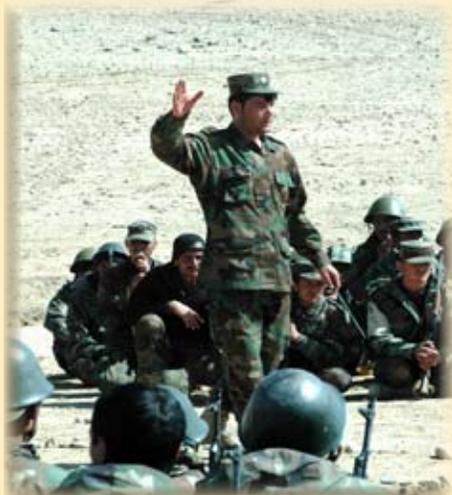


**The 50 bed hospital addition in Gardez is equipped with patient rooms, offices, a laundry facility, barber shop, and a store for the patients. The corridor above is ready for finishing touches on the sprinkler and electrical systems so technicians can run the lines for the computers in the cable trays above.**



**Corps of Engineers personnel Master Sgt. Ed Walton and Jon Allen watch Afghan workers prepare a drainage trench that will divert excess water from a nearby wadi away from the hospital addition construction site.**

The ANA is being equipped with modern weapons and state-of-the-art facilities, and is taking a



**ANA soldiers at Camp Thunder train for combat operations in Paktia.**

larger role in Afghanistan's security as its numbers and capabilities increase. There are six ANA Corps throughout Afghanistan; the 201<sup>st</sup> and the National Air Corps based in Kabul, the 203<sup>rd</sup> Corps in Gardez, the 205<sup>th</sup> Corps in Kandahar, the 207<sup>th</sup> Corps in Herat, and the 209<sup>th</sup> Corps in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Originally ANA soldiers received \$30 per month during their 10-week training, and \$50 per month upon graduation, but pay for trained soldiers has grown to more than \$120 per month now. ANA numbers are up and continue to grow, so facility and capacity planning efforts are rapidly adjusting to the significant

increases in national recruiting and manpower needs.

The Corps of Engineers provides construction and engineering expertise, building facilities for the Afghan National Security Forces and for other program areas throughout Afghanistan to help establish a secure and stable environment. AED is looking for qualified personnel in various fields such as engineering and construction, quality assurance, contracting, administration and logistics. To find out more about the Corps of Engineers mission in Afghanistan visit [www.aed.usace.army.mil](http://www.aed.usace.army.mil) 

# Mentoring Future Leaders



**Left: AED Commander Col. Thomas E. O'Donovan is welcomed to the National Military Academy of Afghanistan by NMAA Commander Gen. Mohammed Sharif. The NMAA is a four-year military development institution for Afghan National Army and Afghan National Air Corps officers. It is based upon principles similar to that of the U.S. Military academy at West Point. Since NMAA's establishment in 2005, the Coalition has provided visiting professors to mentor and train the academy professors and cadets.**

**Right: Col. O'Donovan gives a PowerPoint presentation explaining the Afghanistan Engineer District's structure and mission to a room packed with Afghan National Army Cadets. The NMAA cadets will earn a bachelors degree during their four-year training at the academy and be commissioned a second lieutenant in the Afghan National Army in one of six basic branches: Infantry, Armor, Artillery, Combat Engineer, Logistics or Communications.**



**Left: Later, Col. O'Donovan gathered around the sand table with a small group of Engineer Cadets. AED sponsors an On-the-job-training program where engineer cadets from the NMAA spend two weeks shadowing Corps personnel, and participate in various real-world exercises that test and refine their engineering skills.**

**It's up to you to safeguard your  
unit's critical information**



**SHUT YOUR  
PIE HOLE!**



Members of the Afghanistan Engineer District watched an informative Operations Security Video featuring Marine Gunnery Sergeant R. Lee Erney during the April 27 house meeting at Qalaa House in Kabul. This OPSEC training is part of an ongoing awareness campaign aimed at eliminating spillage of critical information that can be exploited by the enemy.

# THINK OPSEC

- Identify the critical information that the enemy wants
- Figure out how the enemy might get critical information
- Determine how we might be giving information to the enemy
- What are the risks if critical information falls into the wrong hands?
- How can we deny the enemy access to critical information?

## REMEMBER

Personal information, unit information and details  
about the AED mission are valuable to the enemy!

- AED personnel, equipment and mission success are at risk if you don't protect critical information
- Talking about your mission over an unsecured line or radio is STUPID
- Sending critical information out in unsecured emails is STUPID
- Publicly displaying or carelessly tossing rosters, flight schedules, web pages or phone books provides a wealth of knowledge for the enemy
- Release of critical information can create vulnerabilities that affect the mission in many ways
- If critical information about personnel or equipment is compromised, the entire mission could fail

The AED OPSEC Officer is LTC John Schultz  
Email: [john.c.schultz@usace.army.mil](mailto:john.c.schultz@usace.army.mil)  
Afghan Cell: 079-819-7468

# News briefs

## Swine Flu

Cases of H1N1 influenza “Swine Flu” continue to rise. The World Health Organization now reports that total cases worldwide are at 2,384 with cases in the United States up to 896 as of the first week in May. The death toll has risen slightly to 44, most of those being in Mexico during the initial outbreak. The Center for Disease Control is now reporting that most people will recover without needing medical treatment which is significantly better than earlier when they were advising anyone who became infected to seek medical treatment immediately, a sign that this influenza is no more deadly than the typical influenza.

### Prevention

- Avoid contact with people if you, or they, are sick
- Stay at home -- from work, school or other public activities when you are ill
- Shield others from your coughs or sneezes by using a tissue
- Wash your hands often
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Maintain healthy habits -- get ample sleep and exercise, drink fluids and eat well

Currently there is no vaccine to prevent H1N1 “Swine Flu”, but scientists are monitoring the situation and working on one.

## From J1

-Effective immediately all military travel packets sent to AED Travel need to be courtesy copied to the J1 Military Personnel Distro at:

[J1.Military.Personnel@usace.army.mil](mailto:J1.Military.Personnel@usace.army.mil)

-Personnel checking-in or returning from R&R after normal working hours need to go to the J3 Shop inside Qalaa House to sign-in on the clip board for accountability

## Rehired Annuitants

**Question:** “OPM requires that rehired annuitants take an assignment of at least 13 months to be able to obtain health insurance and other benefits. Is there any flexibility?”

**Answer:** There is no flexibility to granting benefits to anyone on a 12 month appointment. You must be hired for 13 months or more to obtain benefits.

## From J3

If you still have not taken phase II of the mandatory suicide prevention training, contact your area office and get a copy of the 12 minute training video. We encourage Soldiers and Civilians to watch it in groups of 6-12 and participate in the answer and question session afterward. The video provides awareness to warning signs of suicidal behavior and offers suggestions for dealing with this serious problem. Additional copies of the video can be obtained from Command Master Sgt. John Milford in J3 DSN 312-265-3087/4664 or Commercial at 540-678-3087/4664



# Memorial Day is May 25th

## America honors its fallen heros...

# ON THE MOVE

## Moving in



Peter Russin



Theresa McCarthy



Toni Agustin



Connie Byer



Milton Murphy



Daniel Savard



Larry Powell



Brian Ball



Mark Curry



Jose Echevarria



John Gletner



Michael Duboise



Leslie Diane McCoy



Delores Rohm



SSG Kwasi Gyamfi



Kathy Driskill



Marris Smith



James Collins



Allen Grant



Kevin Marker



Marc Graham



Damian Salazar



Sheri Ellis-Smith



Paul Beaver



Charles Hopkins



Faron McFarland



James Hadden



Aaron Rader



Steven Reed



PS1 Kearsten Jones



Evan Carter



Diedreinne Fauser



Catherine Gentry



Catherine Nipper



Gloristine Price



Allen Sebastian



Joan Selves



Lawrence Evans

## Moving out

Brian Ball  
Michael Conner  
Robert Curd  
Mark Curry  
Conrad Doroha

John Gletner  
Ahtesham "Sonny" Jadun  
John Richards  
Peter Russin  
Michiel Holley

SFC Todd Duncan  
SSG Myron Ward  
SSG Roberto Gonzolas  
SGT David Baker