



For Immediate Release  
March 18, 2007  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## **A Special Partner**

By MSG Mark W. Rodgers  
Afghanistan Engineer District

Gardez, Afghanistan – We all work for some one – even if it is just for our family. Would you do it if that job was endangering your life? The answer does not surprise if you know the passion to have consistent work - the passion to provide for your family and the passion for engineering.

One member of the Afghanistan Engineer District (AED) family knows this passion. The slightly shy and unassuming Masood is a contracted Quality Assurance Representative (QAR) at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Gardez. Masood received his engineering degree from Nangarhar University at Jalalabad.

AED extends the effort to help build engineering capacity through the hiring of Afghan citizens in various disciplines, to include quality assurance representative (QAR). Masood was hired in 2004 and started work in the Gardez area.

Upon arrival from Jalalabad, he noticed a stark difference in what he was accustomed to back home. Jalalabad is a bustling city of well over one hundred thousand people on the eastern edge of Afghanistan – forty-six miles from Pakistan. Jalalabad, referred to by some as an oasis, has all types of amenities and is known by many for its mild winters.

Not so in Gardez. “When I arrived here, there were only four Afghan National Army (ANA) Soldiers in a tent,” Masood said. “That night there was some trouble and the Soldiers ran away to the mountains.” Since that time, respect for the ANA brigade at Camp Thunder has grown immensely as the force structure and facilities have increased.

FOB Gardez, the first FOB the US Army Corps of Engineers built facilities on, is where Masood and the Corps team lives. His work here with the Corps at Camps Thunder and Lightning is a model for all. The facilities at Camp Thunder boast exceptional quality and plenty of room for expansion. The ANA Soldiers follow suit, setting a nationwide standard for discipline, organization, and aggressiveness. Displaying the valorous effort of an army standing united to fight for Afghanistan.

Masood was the QAR for most of the 100-plus buildings at Camp Thunder and almost 50 B-huts, wooden structures the size of a medium army tent, on Camp Lightning. Camp Lightning, the temporary home of the ANA brigade, is home to the 203<sup>rd</sup> Embedded Training Team (ETT), which works directly with the ANA.

Masood said the hardest buildings to inspect were the ones with tile. “I would go over there and there would be cracks, hollow or broken tiles like in bathrooms and showers.” Hollow refers to the tiles not properly placed or lacking mortar behind them.

But “hollow” doesn’t apply to Masood’s heart, and there is plenty of mortar in his character. He has six brothers, three sisters, a wife, two children and a second son due next month. Masood has seen his family only seven days out of a month for the past 2.5 years due to his work in Gardez. Five of his six brothers are in school and he is paying for their education. This is not an easy task on his salary. With his level of education and experience, Masood could make a better living in private industry. What keeps him here is what keeps most people at a job – regular work for regular pay checks and the passion to contribute to a greater good.

Masood has experienced many things while growing up in Jalalabad. “When I finish high school, they made us take a test” Masood said. “There were people from the ministry there and they look at the paper and tell me what discipline I will take.” While Masood attended the university, the Taliban closed the university for a year, harassed Masood for hair that was too long and a beard that was not long enough.

His goals for Afghanistan are stability and education. His goal for his family is self-reliance. His personal goals are to work in Jalalabad, further his education, and travel to the United States. “Maybe I will go to the United States and get my master’s degree.”

*For further information about the US Army Corps of Engineers in Afghanistan, visit [www.aed.usace.army.mil](http://www.aed.usace.army.mil)*