



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
July 23, 2011

Contact:
Karla Marshall (540) 722-6263
karla.k.marshall@usace.army.mil

USACE creates a new opportunity for joint U.S. military, Afghan police cooperation

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Whenever the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers travels to project sites in Afghanistan, a security team accompanies them. Until mid-July, the teams who accompanied the Afghanistan Engineer District-South were always American. However, thanks to the efforts of Lt. Col. John Carpenter, the AED-South intelligence chief, one personal security detail team had a new composition.

“The PSD team was my idea,” said Carpenter. “I’ve been reading about COIN (counterinsurgency) operations for a long time now and how General Petraeus placed emphasis on developing host-nation security forces. I just leveraged the training the Security Force Assistance Team provides to the Afghan National Police with a practical exercise that benefits everyone.”

U.S. Army Gen. David Petraeus, the former commander of International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, made COIN the overarching military strategy for ISAF. For Carpenter, that was the inspiration he needed to help AED-South develop a better relationship with its customer, the Afghan Uniformed Police and a group of Afghans in Daykundi province.

On July 13, AED-South inspected a project site high in the mountains near Ashterlee with a partnered U.S. Army and AUP security team. The mission started the day before at Kandahar Airfield. Part of the team assembled at KAF and via Chinook helicopter flew to the Afghan National Army’s Camp Hero, just a few kilometers from KAF and adjacent to Forward Operating Base Lindsey. There they picked up the partnered security team and continued on to Tarin Kowt.

The team included U.S. Army Maj. David Steele, 1st Lt. Ross Creel, Staff Sgt. Jonathan Irwin, Spc. Christopher Hess, Spc. Justin Gleisner, Pfc. Daniel Salcido and Pfc. Jonathan Goodluck. Accompanying them were an AUP colonel from the 404th Maiwand Zone in Kandahar an AUP sergeant and two patrolmen.

After landing at Tarin Kowt, the team unpacked their gear at the USACE camp, joked with one another and planned the next day’s mission. “This is a great opportunity for the AUP to perform a new skill,” said the Afghan colonel through an interpreter after the mission briefing. “My U.S. mentor told me of this opportunity and I wanted my men to do something new and important.”

The colonel, who served in the Afghan army for 18 years and with the AUP for eight, said although the security situation in the area was unclear, the people living near the construction site were friendly so Ashterlee was an ideal place for the first mission of this type.

“AUP leadership does not get to that area often, so this is a good chance for us to evaluate the situation at the district and bring any concerns to our headquarters,” he said.



American Soldiers together with Afghan police team members board a Black Hawk helicopter to perform their first joint security detail for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers July 13.

One of the patrolmen, a fresh-faced, 18-year-old who had been with the AUP for one year, said that for him, this mission was important because he wanted to do his part to secure Afghanistan.

“If the younger generation joins the police, we can make things better. I will do anything to make Afghanistan better,” he said through the translator.

Nodding in agreement, the sergeant added, “we want to help our people and help our country improve.”

The Americans, who are veterans at performing this type of security detail, have a primary mission of training Afghan soldiers at Camp Hero.

“This is a change from our regular jobs; we get to see places we otherwise wouldn’t see, so we like doing USACE missions when we can,” said Creel, a 25-year-old from Lubbock, Texas. “We’ve accompanied USACE about five times now, but this is the first time we’ve gone with Afghans on our PSD team.”

Early the next morning, the team assembled. Irwin, the team’s NCOIC and a combat-wounded veteran of the U.S. Marines’ Second Battle of Fallujah in Iraq, reviewed the mission plan with the team.

“This is a pretty straightforward mission,” said Irwin before renewing his banter with the 21-year-old team medic, “Doc Gleisner,” and downing another bottle of water. “I’m confident the team will work well together.”

After checking and re-checking their radios and equipment, the PSD team packed their gear and departed for the airfield. Following a short wait, the group boarded two Black Hawk helicopters en route to Ashterlee where AED-South is building an AUP district headquarters compound.

With doors wide open and team members securely buckled in, the two helicopters flew to the construction site 8,000 feet high in the mountains of Daykundi. For the Afghans, this was a day of firsts—their first ride in a Black Hawk and their first PSD mission.

The Afghans were in the first helicopter and the first out the door. They were followed closely by two American counterparts and began setting up perimeter security before the second helicopter, carrying the balance of the team and the USACE employees, arrived.

“It’s good for Afghans to be first out the door,” said Carpenter.

Not only were they the first faces seen by the local AUP and area residents, but the Afghan colonel was the first to shake hands and greet them.

“Putting an Afghan face on our PSD puts the residents at ease,” Carpenter said. “I’ve worked really hard to get this mission going and I’m thrilled that it is now a reality.”

The ANP colonel and the local residents conducted a shura (meeting) while the AED-South project manager, Hans Miller, deployed from USACE’s Fort Worth District, checked on construction progress.



Pfc. Daniel Salcido (left) and Spc. Justin Gleisner (center) synchronize radios as an Afghan Uniformed Police patrolman looks on. The Soldiers and patrolman were part of a team who provided security for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Daykundi province July 13.

“They (the construction contractor) have come a good way since I was here last,” he said. “We’ve got our challenges, but construction is moving forward.

“Traveling to this remote region can only be accomplished via helicopter, so I don’t get to inspect the site as often as I’d like,” Miller said. “I wasn’t expecting what I see here today. The progress is a pleasant surprise.”

After a short meeting with the local AUP chief to discuss the project and concerns, Miller, the PSD and the other AED-South employees remounted the Black Hawks and returned to Tarin Kowt, Camp Hero and KAF, respectively.

“This was a successful mission,” said Carpenter. “It went really well and the partnered PSD team worked together smoothly. When AED-South shows up at a construction site unannounced and without language skills, sometimes the encounter is tense and uncomfortable. With Afghans leading the team, it’s a win-win. The Afghan government’s credibility grows and we get to inspect sites unobtrusively.”

-30-