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USACE contributes to the counternarcotics mission in Afghanistan

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan —Afghanistan’s illegal narcotics industry undermines the country’s lawful economic development, erodes government legitimacy and threatens the nation’s stability and security.

One of the key components of the U.S. Government’s counternarcotics strategy, outlined in March 2010, is helping the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan develop self-reliant and effective counternarcotics law enforcement entities.

That critical piece of U.S. strategy was facilitated recently with the construction of a regional counternarcotics law enforcement center by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South’s Herat Area Office in the western province of Herat.

The completed construction was celebrated July 23 with a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by U.S. Ambassador Hans G. Klemm, coordinating director, Rule of Law and Law Enforcement; Herat Provincial Governor Daud Saba; Herat Provincial Deputy Governor Assilludin Jami; Chancellor Hosseini; U.S. Consul Brad Hanson; Counternarcotics Vice Minister Baz Mohammad Ahmadi; Counternarcotics Chief of Intelligence General Mirz; Counternarcotics Provincial Chief General Hoshimi; Counternarcotics General Director General Khoshman; AED-South Commander Col. Benjamin Wham II; and numerous other U.S. and Afghan officials.



From left to right: U.S. Ambassador Hans G. Klemm, Herat Provincial Governor Daud Sab and Counternarcotics Vice Minister Baz Mohammed Ahmadi. (Photo by Rachel Cooke, U.S. Consulate Herat)

“This facility is a flagship, and it will fully support the Ministry of Interior and their specialized units in the fight against drugs and terrorism in Afghanistan,” said Klemm. “But remember that this building, though beautiful, is merely bricks and mortar. The men and women of the Ministry of Interior and their partners are its heart.”

AED-South’s contractor, ECCI, began construction of the nearly \$11 million regional counternarcotics law enforcement center in January 2009 and completed it in March.

The end user is the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan, a special force under the control of Afghanistan’s Ministry of Interior.

“This was a great cooperative venture,” said Wham. “We designed and built this compound to be easy to maintain so

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Afghan law enforcement officers can focus on counternarcotics operations.” The facilities include housing, dining, training and administration buildings.

“The facility can accommodate up to 150 Afghan forces plus 20 coalition mentors from various counternarcotic organizations,” said Elliott Porter, AED-South project manager. “The law enforcement center hosts an international team of counternarcotics professionals, like the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, working with the Afghan National Police to develop a robust counternarcotics enforcement agency.”

In the past, the main focus of U.S. counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan was to fund and support large-scale eradication of poppy fields. In 2010, that strategy changed and became more closely linked to the existing counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy developed by the Department of Defense.

The U.S. Government’s counternarcotics strategy now includes breaking the narcotics-insurgency-corruption nexus and helping connect the people of Afghanistan to their government.

“This project is part of a national strategy to train a domestic, self-sufficient counternarcotics agency in Afghanistan. The new counter narcotics police will combat trafficking throughout the region,” said Porter.

Afghanistan produces approximately 90 per cent of the world’s opium, according to U.S. Government estimates. Law enforcement agents and mentors from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, U.S. Department of State International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, together with law enforcement agents from the Afghan National Interdiction Unit, Afghan Special Narcotics Forces and the Afghan Central Poppy Eradication Force stage out of the new facilities.

“Our nation’s goal is to increase Afghan capacity by helping build trust in Afghan institutions,” said Wham. “By constructing facilities such as these, where Afghan police can be mentored, the government of Afghanistan strengthens and ultimately all Afghans benefit.”

The USACE Afghanistan Engineer District-South provides design and construction services throughout southern Afghanistan to support the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan. Our work is carried out in Regional Commands South, Southwest and West with the goal of achieving counterinsurgency effects and bolstering the Afghan Government’s services to its people.

Please visit <http://www.aed.usace.army.mil/AES/news.asp> for more news and stories from the Afghanistan Engineer District-South.