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## USACE delivers books to build Afghan engineering capacity

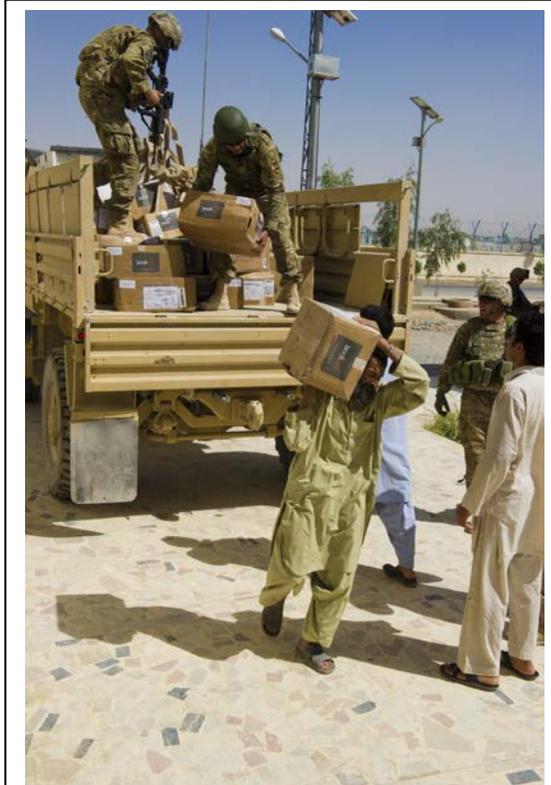
KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan—The Soviet occupation damaged Afghanistan's universities, and the reign of the Taliban nearly destroyed them. On Sept. 22, the [Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team](#) helped the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South repair some of that damage by delivering \$120,000 worth of engineering text books to [Kandahar University](#).

The [Commander's Emergency Response Program](#), which allows military commanders to meet urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements in their areas of responsibility, funded the purchase of the books, said Elliot Porter, a program manager with the district's Water and Infrastructure Branch. Porter, who deployed to Afghanistan from the [USACE Pittsburgh District](#), is responsible for coordinating CERP and renewable energy initiatives at the South District.

The books were the first of a series of efforts which will increase the capability of Kandahar University to provide quality engineering instruction to Afghans, Porter explained. Over the next year, the university will also receive:

- Equipment to help demonstrate key engineering concepts, such as erosion and fluid dynamics;
- A concrete testing laboratory;
- Office and classroom equipment.

The program to increase the capacity of the engineering department started with a visit to the university by former district commander Army Col. Anthony Funkhouser in March 2010, Porter said. Funkhouser wanted to discuss the possibility of establishing a program to hire locally-educated Afghan engineers. The district's Herat Area Office already has had significant success with a similar program with Herat University. In the course of the discussions, it became clear that the university had serious shortfalls in textbooks and equipment needed to educate its engineering students.



Afghans from Kandahar University work with Soldiers from PRT Kandahar to unload engineering textbooks. (USACE Photo/Mark Ray)

“Colonel Funkhouser asked the university authorities for a list of requirements,” Porter said. “Once we had the list, we reviewed it to see what we could do within the district’s CERP authority, and began to develop a program to meet the most pressing needs.”

“The faculty and students of the engineering department are very excited by the prospect of having up-to-date texts and demonstration equipment,” said a representative from the Kandahar University Authority. “These materials will help increase the capacity of our professors to teach, and our students to learn.”

“By helping the Afghan universities reestablish their ability to train engineers, we help create the conditions for Afghans to effectively build and maintain their national infrastructure, including the infrastructure that supports the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police,” said Porter. “Building the Afghan national capability to train engineers directly supports Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and coalition goals and furthers the establishment of security and stability in this country.”

-30-

USACE’s Afghanistan Engineer District-South provides design and construction services throughout southern Afghanistan to support the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan. The 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 features. For more photos of the book drop and other activities of the South District, see our Flickr page at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usace-tas/>. And be sure to follow us on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Army-Corps-of-Engineers-Afghanistan-Engineer-District-South/199033262376>