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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
May 5, 2012

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Building Afghanistan

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Learning from the past and doing the right things in the right way for Afghanistan are the center of a joint NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decision to implement more austere construction standards in Afghanistan.

After several months of evaluation and planning, CSTC-A and the Corps of Engineers formally agreed to change the construction standards for two upcoming Afghan Uniform Police headquarters projects.

The Afghanistan Engineer District-South's contracting branch anticipates awarding contracts for the upcoming construction in August.

The engineering branch is developing requests for proposals for the two projects with the austere standards incorporated.

“The Letters of Direction USACE received from CSTC-A allow us to move ahead with changes that address three components: energy management, water and wastewater management, and miscellaneous cost-saving measures.” said Steve Osborn, the district's facilities engineering section chief.

The changes were the result of feedback from Afghans and observations by Corps of Engineers project managers, engineers and field offices personnel.

“The new austere construction standards are more appropriate for current conditions in certain provincial territories in Afghanistan,” said Fred Schelby, the South District's Afghan National Police program manager and austere standards team lead. “The new standards not only provide a quality build, but increase the ability for the Afghans to maintain their facility without assistance from the coalition or international organizations,” said Schelby who deployed from Albuquerque, N.M.

Eight Afghan National Police projects with similar requirements are under review by CSTC-A for austere standard construction said D'Lorah Small, the district's Afghan National Police project manager for several of the projects.



Afghan Uniform Police stations, like this one recently completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Kohsan, will be constructed with more austere features as a result of the new plan agreed to by the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in early May. (USACE Photo by Karla Marshall)

Other potential projects identified for austere construction are an Afghan Ministry of Interior supply point, border police facilities and district police headquarters in Daykundi, Helmand, Zabul and Farah provinces, she said. “The standards will maximize the use of locally available materials, simplify construction, and result in buildings that will be easier to maintain,” said Small who deployed from the USACE Savannah District, Fort Bragg, N.C. office.

“Although each project is independently analyzed, austere changes include such mandates as reducing power generation by 20 percent, reducing required lighting in occupied spaces by 50 percent, providing alternatives to interior plumbing, and reducing the space between buildings,” said Small. “By reducing the energy requirement, the facilities remain efficient, the purpose for the facility is met, and maintenance becomes less cumbersome for Afghans, which improves sustainability.”

Water treatment is simplified because the new standard reduces the number of buildings with indoor plumbing and changes traditional bathroom toilets to composting outhouses that produce no ‘black water,’ Schelby said. Black water is raw sewage that requires treatment before it can be re-introduced into the environment. With composting outhouses and exterior-only water outlets, less water is needed. The simple composting system with no interior plumbing is also easier to maintain and more economical, he said.

“Again, we save money and time because of the new water management plan,” said Schelby. “Outdoor spigots and dining facility sinks that drain to composting pits eliminate the need for costly indoor plumbing and reduce future operations and maintenance requirements.”

The final austere plan components include replacing interior door hardware with simple hinges and latches and other easy to alter plans, said Small. “For one project, we won’t be adding gutters and downspouts, except over entrances, and we’ll use french drains which divert water away from buildings instead of underground sewer systems.”

The austere standard designs are based on four criteria – location, accessibility, security, and affordability, said Schelby. “The entire team has worked diligently to bring innovative ideas to fruition throughout all of Afghanistan.”

“Our engineers, project managers and partners at CSTC-A have really been committed to implementing the new standards across the board,” said Air Force Col. Benjamin Wham, the district commander. “Our intent all along has been to provide more feasibility for contractors, speed construction of easily sustainable facilities and realize considerable cost-savings throughout the buildings’ life cycle.”

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