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9th Commando building project nears completion, turnover to Afghan Army

HERAT PROVINCE, Afghanistan – A large building project managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South will be crossing the finish line before the end of the summer, according to the two USACE employees overseeing the work.

Work on the \$13.7-million 9th Commando compound, located in the outskirts of Herat City, will become the home for a battalion-size element, or kandak, of the Afghan National Army Special Forces later this month said Jackson VanPelt, the project engineer.

“We should be ready to turn it over to the Afghan National Army very soon,” he said. “The contractors are wrapping up some finishing work and we’ll conduct our final inspection soon.”

VanPelt said remaining work at the site includes touch-up painting, finishing concrete roadways, sports fields, perimeter walls and anti-vehicle ditches, installing windows and interior hardware on several the site’s 55 buildings and installing stoves and other appliances in the dining facility.

This project, which kicked off in January 2011, is for the Afghan Army and is being built by an Afghan contractor with Afghan workers, VanPelt said. Arao-Fellgroup Joint Ventures, Inc. has about 250 men working on the day shift and 100 working overnight to get the final work done.

A formal final inspection will take place later this month and a “punch list” of last-minute and fix-up tasks will be given to the prime contractors. A formal ribbon-cutting ceremony, to officially mark the project’s turn over to the Afghan Army, will take place later this summer when all the punch list items are checked off as completed.

Members of the South District’s Operations and Maintenance Division will team up with Afghan maintenance crews to decide the best plan for use and maintenance of the site’s buildings, generators and other equipment, VanPelt said.

“These guys will be set up pretty well,” he said. “They will be completely self-sufficient.”



Jackson VanPelt (left), project engineer, and Tariq Taheri, Afghan Project Engineer, inspect a recently finished classroom in one of several buildings nearing completion on the 9th Commando compound in Herat July 2. Work on the \$13.7-million project is scheduled to be completed by late July. (USACE photo by Dave Melancon)

The compound boasts two wells, its own power generators, bunkers, dining and storage facilities, recreation areas, parade field, entry control points, roadways, medical clinics and security systems, he said. Only the waste water will be piped to nearby Camp Zafar for treatment.

In addition to the main battalion area, USACE engineers supervised the construction of several buildings on an adjacent compound used by U.S. Special Operations Command “mentors,” VanPelt said.

“This project will help our people because it helps improve our Army,” said Tariq Taheri, Afghan project engineer and one of two Afghan USACE employees assigned to the project. “The Army will protect the people.”

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Eraj Akbarpoor, Afghan quality assurance representative, (left) and Tariq Taheri, Afghan project engineer, inspect a floor in one of several buildings nearing completion on the 9th Commando compound in Herat July 2. (USACE photo by Dave Melancon)