



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
Oct. 26, 2012

Contact:
Jasmine Chopra-Delgadillo (540) 667-5705
jasmine.a.chopra-delgadillo@usace.army.mil

Experiential learning program prepares Afghans for facilities operations, maintenance

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan —

Through its Afghan National Security Forces Program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has designed and constructed high-quality military and police facilities to support the transfer of security operations to the Afghans. But as Lawrence Petrosino, a USACE program manager with the Afghanistan Engineer District- South explained, “developing skilled Afghan personnel capable of maintain their own infrastructure is crucial to making sure these facilities will last for years to come.”

Lessons learned from a decade of reconstruction operations in Afghanistan have shown that local, institutional and human resources capabilities are vital in order to achieve stable, sustainable infrastructure. To that end, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has implemented training programs that will teach Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan civilian employees the crucial basics of facilities operations and maintenance at hundreds of newly constructed installations.



Afghan military personnel learn how to use basic tools while constructing work benches and sawhorses. Personnel learn basic carpentry skills in preparation for an on-the-job training program which will support their ability to operate and maintain newly-constructed Afghan National Security Forces facilities. (Courtesy photo)

According to UNICEF, the adult literacy rate for male Afghans aged 15 and above is just 39 percent; for women aged 15 and above the rate is just 13 percent. With that in mind, a training curriculum had to be developed that would meet the unique needs of Afghans, explained Petrosino, a 41-year veteran of USACE who deployed to Afghanistan from the North Atlantic Division in Brooklyn, NY.

Thus the curriculum is practical, involves experiential, on-the-job training, and topics covered include plumbing, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, painting, carpentry, masonry, welding, pest management and more, he said.

For ANA who will be responsible for military installations, training is in-depth and lasts eight months. For ANP who will be responsible for police department facilities, the training is six weeks.

Through private-sector contracts and with the support of Infrastructure Training Advisory Groups comprised of coalition troops with the technical expertise to assess facilities and mentor ANSF public works staff, USACE has already trained more than 200 ANA, ANP and Afghan civilian personnel. And this is just the beginning. The South District Operations and Maintenance team plans to train at least two personnel at approximately 150 ANP sites and hundreds of ANA soldiers and civilian employees at installations across southern Afghanistan.

“We want to set the Afghans up for success,” said Albert Soliz, the South District Operations and Maintenance program manager. “Supportive strategies, including educating and empowering the soldiers and police so they can appropriately operate and maintain their facilities will go a long way to preserve these installations for decades to come,” said Soliz, who also serves as a major in the U.S. Army Reserve.

U.S. funded contracts that are in place now to provide operations and maintenance support for ANSF facilities will come to an end, “so we must train Afghan personnel to assume responsibility for operating and maintaining the facilities,” said Soliz, who deployed to Afghanistan from Irvine, Calif. where he works as a senior project manager in the city’s community services division. “I am confident that if we use the curriculum and can attract the students, we can help the Afghans become prepared to assume responsibility of the operations and maintenance of these facilities.”

These efforts are significant because they offer Afghans the ability to learn new vital skills while creating sustainable infrastructure and a more secure and stable environment here in Afghanistan, added Petrosino.

-30-

For more news and information on USACE construction in Afghanistan, visit our website at www.aed.usace.army.mil/aes, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/US-Army-Corps-of-Engineers-Afghanistan-Engineer-District-South or on Flickr at www.flickr.com/photos/usace-tas.