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USACE set to begin electricity improvement project in Helmand province

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Afghanistan’s electric company will be able to deliver more reliable electricity with fewer interruptions at the end of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers construction project set to begin this week in Helmand province.

USACE engineers and contractors are working with Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), Afghanistan’s electrical company, to perform surveys and identify specific areas along main transmission lines and substations in Helmand province that contribute to power outages and interruptions.

“Existing electric power lines and substations need significant upgrades, repairs and maintenance,” said Jim Murray, Afghanistan Engineer District-South project manager.

“Our contractor will fix problem areas along the transmission lines and at certain facilities. When the project is done, DABS will have an infrastructure from which to distribute more reliable electricity with fewer interruptions,” Murray continued.

“Two substations and portions of existing power lines in Helmand province will be repaired or replaced,” Murray said. “The project also includes construction of a new substation and an additional switchyard.”

Although some residents and businesses may experience power outages during repairs and upgrades, the contractor is developing a plan to minimize the frequency and duration of outages, said Murray. “There are no outages scheduled until February 2013 as a result of our contractor’s efforts.”

When finished, the transmission lines will be capable of transmitting 51 megawatts of power. The existing lines only transmit 18 megawatts and are plagued with excessive line loss and inadequate protection devices which are the leading causes of power interruptions, Murray explained.

“Imagine a water hose full of holes and cracks all along its length. Water seeps out the holes and cracks so you lose pressure and only a little water actually moves through the hose. When you fill the holes and mend the cracks, more



Aging electric transformers, like this one in Helmand province, will be replaced as part of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers construction project set to begin in mid-October. The project, when complete, will enable Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, Afghanistan’s electrical utility company, to transmit more consistent and reliable electricity with minimal outages. (USACE Photo)

water travels through the hose and pressure is retained. Repairing and replacing these transmission lines is a lot like that. As we repair the lines, they will be capable of carrying electricity more efficiently,” Murray said.

Interruptions will be fewer too as the switchyard and substations are brought online said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robert Hopkins who is the USACE liaison to DABS.

“This is good news for those residents of Helmand province who receive power generated at the Kajaki Dam Power House. Currently, power can be interrupted several times per day. Once the project is finished, power outages due to faulty electrical equipment at the substations will be reduced,” Hopkins stated.

“The SEPS-Helmand project is one of our highest priority infrastructure projects,” said Army Col. Vincent Quarles, the South District commander. “USACE is working with DABS to create the foundation for delivering more consistent, reliable and safe electricity and this project is a good first step.”

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