



## Afghanistan Engineer District North



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### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers meets growth at Afghan army base

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KHOST, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials handed the keys to 13 new buildings at an Afghanistan National Army base to Afghan officials on Jan. 20, bringing the country's army closer to self sufficiency in one of the deadliest regions of the country.

The scope of work included an office and barracks building for firefighters, another office building, a gym, five laundry facilities and five weapons storage buildings. The projects took 1½ years to build at a combined cost of \$9 million.

The buildings are within an Afghan army base called Camp Parsa, which is near the Pakistan border, a region of Afghanistan where the Taliban still operates. The new facilities are designed to accommodate the Afghan army as it increases its strength at the base.



The Afghan army had approximately 2,500 troops stationed at the training base in January. The number is scheduled to increase.

Corps officials, who oversaw development of the buildings, gave the facilities a final inspection on Jan. 11, ordered some minor renovations, and transferred them to Afghan army officials on Jan. 20. Michael Tuttle, the Corps' project manager for the developments, noted that Afghan army officers were eager to occupy the buildings.



tional organization that's helping to develop and train Afghanistan's security forces.

"More and more, we're trying to adapt to fit their needs, so even though we're trying to get them a step higher, we have to back up on some other things, and meet their culture, their standards, what they're used to," Bouchard said.

For instance, the laundry buildings house deep sinks to wash laundry, and hand-operated rollers to wring water from wet clothes and linens. Afghan soldiers are comfortable with that equipment, said Mark Miller, a Corps construction manager based at Camp Clark, a small U.S. camp within Camp Parsa.

"They wash things by hand here," he said. "They don't have washing machines and dryers in the typical way that we think of things in America. They wash things by hand and hang them out to dry."

Similarly, the floors in nearly every room in the new buildings received the same treatment -- acrylic-painted concrete. The approach was so similar, garage floors and office floors received the same treatment. Even the color of the paint is identical from one building to the next. It's tan.

"Keep in mind that the use of these buildings is for the Afghan army. These buildings are utilitarian. In the greatest definition of the word 'utilitarian,' that's what these buildings are," Miller said. "They've got to be heavy duty."

Corps personnel specifically designed the buildings to be simple. Painted concrete floors are both easy and inexpensive to clean.

"Right now, the Afghan government doesn't have much money for maintenance," Bouchard said. "That's something that we're trying to make them aware of how much it costs to sustain, so these facilities will stand a long period of time."



Overall, Afghan soldiers need to familiarize themselves how to operate and repair electrical and plumbing systems and how to clean floors, bathrooms and other interior spaces, he said.

Corps personnel also purposely designed the gym to accommodate volleyball, which is a passion in Afghanistan, rather than basketball, which is only an oddity. The gym's restrooms are equipped with feet-washing stations and Eastern-style toilets. Similarly, the soldiers play soccer, rather than baseball, on a near-by field.

On certain other matters, the Corps insisted on U.S. standards. Upon inspection, Corps personnel discovered that in many instances, the Afghan contractors who constructed the buildings hadn't properly grounded electrical outlets in rooms where water could be present, and that they hadn't installed P-traps in some plumbing fixtures.

“The buildings were in good shape as a whole. We came across a lot of smaller issues, but they were overriding issues,” Miller said.

Properly grounded electrical outlets prevent shocks, while sideways P-shaped dips in drainage pipes block sewer gasses from escaping into public areas. Corps personnel ordered contractors to correct both deficiencies before the buildings were turned over to the Afghan army.

Tuttle said it was important for the Corps to ensure that the buildings were fully functional and in good condition before transferring ownership, in order to help set the standard for the Afghan army.

The Corps’ work at Camp Parsa continues. As the Corps turned over the keys to the new buildings, plans were being finalized for a two-year construction project for a new shooting range. Construction was set to begin later in January.

