



# Afghanistan Engineer District North



December 15, 2009

## Army Corps of Engineers reworks signs to support Afghan government

By Paul Giblin  
AES Environmental Specialist



The Afghanistan Engineer District is implementing the use of a standardized construction site sign that caters to the Afghan audience in efforts to bolster support for the national and provincial governments of Afghanistan. The new signs will omit traditional mention of the Corps of Engineers or the U.S. Government. (image courtesy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District - North)

KABUL, Afghanistan – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is doing its part to provide visible signs of life for the emerging Afghan national government.

The Afghanistan Engineer District – North is introducing a new practice to its operations in the war-torn country, requiring informational signs to be posted at hundreds of construction sites that highlight the Afghan government's involvement in the developments.

"We're going to tie the projects into

one of the local Afghan ministries and put a sign up that says 'Done by the Ministry of the Interior' or 'Ministry of Defense,' or whatever," said Darrel Johnson, the chief of contracting for the Corps of Engineers' northern Afghanistan district, which is based in Kabul. "It's sort of like, 'Your tax dollars at work,'" he said.

The construction billboards are roughly four feet tall and six feet wide, and are intended for Afghan audiences.

The signs are written in Dari, which is

one of two official languages in Afghanistan, and English. The color scheme features black, red and green, the colors of Afghanistan's flag. The redesigned signs omit any reference to the United States or the Corps of Engineers.

The strategy is to provide visibility and credibility to the Afghan national government for a populace that is largely tribal and clan oriented, Johnson said.

"If we can give face time to the central government for doing these projects throughout the country, maybe people will start recognizing that they do have a central government that does do good things for them," he said.

Corps officials consulted with Afghan construction executives to design the signs that are required at most construction projects awarded by the Corps of Engineers starting in Fiscal Year 2010. Within the next year, the signs are expected to be posted at hundreds of Afghanistan National Army complexes, Afghanistan National Police stations, roads, dams and other construction projects across the country.

Signs at some on-going construction projects will be replaced with the new signs as well. However, signs at construction sites on U.S. military installations in Afghanistan will retain their traditional look with the Corps' red castle logo.

Brig. Gen. John R. McMahon, the former director of engineering for U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, initiated the change in September after seeing a traditional construction sign along the Kabul International Airport Road, said Col. Michael McCormick, commander for the Corps' operations in northern Afghanistan.

"He said, 'Do you think it would be better if we weren't advertising the Corps?'" McCormick recalled. "It took us a long time to get the sign down; it took us longer than he would have liked. But that was the genesis of the idea."

Corps project engineer Steve Stello and Afghanistan national and Corps project manager Toryalai Alami led the redesign effort.



Signs, such as this one, will no longer be used at AED construction sites throughout Afghanistan in hopes of giving the national and provincial governments of Afghanistan more visibility and credibility.