

Construction surge in Gardez

By Bruce J. Huffman

A 50 bed addition to the Afghan National Army hospital at Camp Thunder in Gardez is the first of many Corps of Engineers construction projects that will take place there during the next 12 to 18 months. Strategically located in the highlands of the Hindu Kush Mountains 60 miles south of Kabul, the nation's capitol, and just 50 miles west of the Pakistan border; a buildup of Afghan

Forces in Gardez has ignited a construction surge at Camp Thunder.

“The trauma center, operating rooms, and X-Ray lab are all in the existing hospital, but the \$5 million addition to the Paktia Regional Military Hospital will provide a troop medical clinic, additional patient rooms, office space, laundry facilities, a

barber shop, and a store for the patients,” said Master Sgt. Ed Walton, Noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Afghanistan Engineer District Resident Office in Gardez. According to Walton, this state-of-the-art facility will accommodate the influx of ANA Soldiers and also provide quality medical care for the local Afghans living near the base. “This hospital is top-notch and comparable to a hospital you might find in the United States,” said Walton.

In addition to the hospital extension, other projects currently under construction at Camp Thunder are a Commando Kandak (Pashto for battalion), a forward supply depot, a second dining facility and a barracks for medical staff. There are also several garrison upgrades planned for the next 18 months such as a new laundry facility, a Dept. of Public Works compound, a garrison fitness center, an athletic



The Paktia Regional Military Hospital was built at Camp Thunder by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2004. AED is currently building a 50 bed addition to the hospital that will be used by ANA soldiers and local Afghans that live near the base.

field, running track, and several vehicle and weapons maintenance and storage facilities. According to Jon Allen, AED construction representative, the new upgrades in Gardez will more than double the size of the current base, and provide ample power, water, housing and support facilities for the additional soldiers.

Camp Thunder is home to the ANA 203rd Corps, and the base was built by the Corps of Engineers in 2004. According to Allen, Camp Thunder was the second ANA base the Corps built in Afghanistan. “We’ve learned a thing or two about construction in Afghanistan since we started, and we’re incorporating those lessons into what we are designing and building now,” said Allen. “I have to admit that these are some very impressive buildings being built. This is good, solid, quality construction.”

Some of the facilities in Gardez are also being built by the Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency. Once they are finished, they will all be maintained by the Corps of Engineers through an Operations and Maintenance contract. The Corps of Engineers O&M program provides funds, expertise and training to the Afghan engineers and facility managers, so they can operate and maintain the facilities for themselves someday.

Currently there are about 86,000 soldiers serving in the ANA with plans to grow to more than 130,000. President Obama recently called for an expansion of the ANA to almost 260,000 troops over the next five years.

cont. on page 12



Afghan workers prepare to place concrete along the corridor that connects the new addition to the existing hospital.

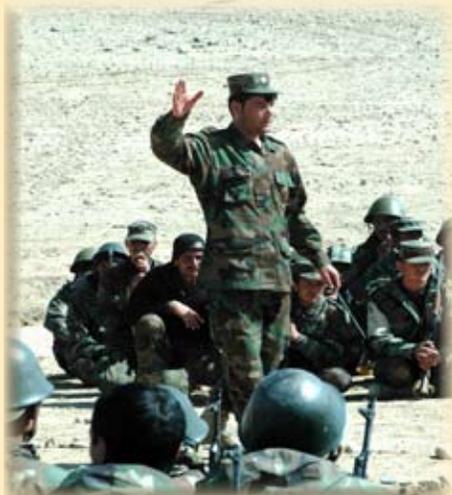


The 50 bed hospital addition in Gardez is equipped with patient rooms, offices, a laundry facility, barber shop, and a store for the patients. The corridor above is ready for finishing touches on the sprinkler and electrical systems so technicians can run the lines for the computers in the cable trays above.



Corps of Engineers personnel Master Sgt. Ed Walton and Jon Allen watch Afghan workers prepare a drainage trench that will divert excess water from a nearby wadi away from the hospital addition construction site.

The ANA is being equipped with modern weapons and state-of-the-art facilities, and is taking a



ANA soldiers at Camp Thunder train for combat operations in Paktia.

larger role in Afghanistan's security as its numbers and capabilities increase. There are six ANA Corps throughout Afghanistan; the 201st and the National Air Corps based in Kabul, the 203rd Corps in Gardez, the 205th Corps in Kandahar, the 207th Corps in Herat, and the 209th Corps in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Originally ANA soldiers received \$30 per month during their 10-week training, and \$50 per month upon graduation, but pay for trained soldiers has grown to more than \$120 per month now. ANA numbers are up and continue to grow, so facility and capacity planning efforts are rapidly adjusting to the significant

increases in national recruiting and manpower needs.

The Corps of Engineers provides construction and engineering expertise, building facilities for the Afghan National Security Forces and for other program areas throughout Afghanistan to help establish a secure and stable environment. AED is looking for qualified personnel in various fields such as engineering and construction, quality assurance, contracting, administration and logistics. To find out more about the Corps of Engineers mission in Afghanistan visit www.aed.usace.army.mil 