



**AED Engineer, Sonny Jadun, discusses quality assurance with an Afghan contractor working on culverts and bridges for the Sharana to Paltu River road project. Jadun has been embedded with the Sharana PRT for more than two years building roads, bridges, schools, clinics and district centers.**

# AED, supporting the PRT mission

By Bruce J. Huffman

A few months after the first Provincial Reconstruction Team was established in 2002, the Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Area Office embedded one of its engineers with the PRT there to provide Corps quality engineering and construction expertise. Today, both the PRT and Corps' missions in Afghanistan have grown substantially, and the Afghanistan Engineer District has more than 40 engineers, construction, and quality assurance representatives directly supporting the PRT mission throughout Afghanistan.

Since their inception, the PRT's have been the primary vehicle for U.S. and international aid to reach the more remote and often unstable provinces of Afghanistan. Their mission is to facilitate reconstruction efforts that empower local

governments, making them more effective and extending the reach of the centralized government of Afghanistan into the provinces.

Currently, there are 26 PRT's in Afghanistan; of which 12 are U.S. led. The U.S. led PRT's are comprised of both military and civilian personnel such as civil affairs, force protection, and reconstruction subject matter experts, along with members from the State Dept., the Dept. of Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. The PRT's led by other Coalition countries are configured slightly different, but the overall mission is still the same; win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, and extend the reach of the centralized Afghan government by providing engineering and reconstruction solutions.

## PRT Locations in Afghanistan



“It’s very important to bring the provincial government and the local Afghan population together during the process, because it instills confidence in the government’s ability to lead and provide for the people,” said Sonny Jadun, an AED engineer assigned to the Sharana PRT. “That’s the overarching mission of the PRT, and you get a lot of satisfaction, because you see immediately how your efforts impact the lives of the local population.” Jadun has been embedded with the Sharana PRT for more than two years, building projects like roads, bridges, schools, clinics, and district centers.

The PRT reconstruction process begins with identifying the needs of the community. Civil affairs officers and reconstruction subject matter experts meet with the village elders and members of the provincial government to determine what needs to be done. “We look for small projects that will produce a high impact,” said Jadun.

Once a project has been identified and determined feasible, the engineer team drafts a comprehensive scope of work and requests funding. According to Jadun, the funding acquisition process has been streamlined for PRT’s, in order to facilitate quick results and underscore the provincial government’s ability to care for its constituents. Funding requests that would normally take months in the United States can be processed in seven to ten days.

In addition to building much needed schools, clinics and other infrastructure projects, the PRTs also bring economic benefits to remote villages by hiring local contractors and laborers to do the work. According to Danny Potter, an AED construction representative assigned to the Gardez PRT, usually about 80% of the workforce on PRT projects are hired from the local village where the work is being

done. “Money talks, especially in these poor villages,” said Potter. “You’d be surprised how effective improved living conditions and economic opportunities are at eroding enemy support.” Once work begins, technical advisors like Potter provide quality assurance while training and mentoring the contractors in order to expand Afghan construction capacity.



**Members of the Gardez PRT watch closely as villagers from Jani Khel construct a stone channel that will divert water for a micro hydro power station in Paktia.**

The Gardez PRT, where Potter is assigned, was the very first PRT ever established, and most of the doctrine used by today’s PRT’s was tested and refined there. Potter lives in the original 100 by 125 foot mud-walled compound where the original Gardez PRT was established in 2002. The mud and straw guard towers of the original inner compound loom above rows of B-Huts and other support facilities that have been built as the PRT expanded its perimeter.

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**The Gardez PRT was the first ever established. The mud and straw walls of the original compound are completely surrounded by B-Huts and other support buildings that have expanded its perimeter since 2002.**



**Soldiers from the Gardez PRT head out to the field to check projects along the Khowst-Gardez pass in Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAP). This seven ton vehicle is capable of carrying up to six combat loaded passengers.**

“Work at a PRT is very demanding, but has many rewards,” said AED PRT Program Manager Greg Hales. “Think of it as engineering on steroids. You have several times the number of projects and work twice as many hours as engineers back in the states. The projects are in remote and sometimes hostile locations, and it can be hard to get building materials and supplies; especially in bad weather. However, engineers assigned to PRT’s work closely with the Afghans and gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the Afghan culture. The work is fast-paced, but personnel assigned to the PRT’s can see first-hand how their efforts are positively changing the lives of the Afghans. It takes a special kind of person to work at a PRT, and we are always looking for qualified engineers and construction representatives with a can-do spirit for these assignments.” 🇺🇸

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