



A conceptual drawing of the new dining facility which is under construction at Qalaa House, the AED Headquarters.

Qalaa House welcomes new dining facility

By Joe Marek

To accommodate an increase in Corps personnel living, working and transitioning through Kabul, the Corps of Engineers is building a new state-of-the-art dining facility at Qalaa House, the Corps of Engineers Headquarters in Kabul. The new DFAC will be about four times larger than the existing facility and is scheduled to be completed this fall.

"There's been so much growth here, that the old DFAC seems to get smaller each day," said Tracy Hunter, Afghanistan Engineer District Dining Facility Manager. In the last year, AED has grown from 200 to about 500 personnel, and there's even more growth planned with a second District being formed in Kandahar in August. According to Hunter, the influx of new people at Qalaa House is pushing the old space past its intended limit, and the cooks struggle each day to prepare enough meals in the existing small outdated kitchen. "What's needed is more space; more space for cooking and eating," said Hunter.

According to Hunter, AED Employees get their food, eat, and barely notice the workings behind the scene, sometimes without full appreciation for the

advanced food preparation involved. The original kitchen, designed for around 120 meals a day, now serves close to a thousand. In some situations, this small area makes cooking on the outside grills inevitable. The eating area in the old DFAC is limited to around 48 patrons, which is not enough space for



Mark Patterson and other AED cooks work in close quarters to prepare a meal in the current DFAC kitchen.

the amount of people living and traveling through the compound. Personnel are forced to eat anywhere they can, from the outside picnic tables, their offices or wherever they can find a seat and a table.



Scaffolding surrounds the new DFAC which is currently under construction. The new facility will be four times larger than the current DFAC, and is scheduled to be completed in fall 2009.

However, all this is about to change. A considerably larger, two-story masonry building, with plenty of room for dining, meetings and other functions is currently under construction. According to Bernard McCain, project manager here at Qalaa, this building will definitely be the focal point and highlight to camp life. With a proposed kitchen area of 1660 square feet, more than double the current cooking area, preparing food will be more efficient and take less time than it does in the current cramped kitchen. State-of-the-art equipment and a better floor plan will make the cooks jobs much easier.

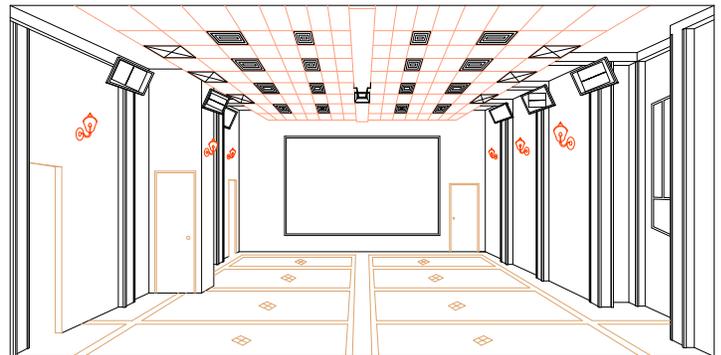


Farin McFarland (Construction Rep) and Tracy Hunter (Food Service Specialist) posing in front of the new DFAC construction sign.

Hunter has been working very closely with the architects and the project managers to get the details just right, and create the ultimate working space for the cooks on her staff. The new DFAC will be a union between design and function, architect and chef.

Construction on the building started in early March 2009, and is scheduled to be completed this

fall. The structure is a two-story block and stucco building designed to match the existing elements of the main Qalaa House headquarters building. The interior will feature stylish trim and molding and terrazzo flooring making it consistent with the other permanent structures located on the compound. The size difference compared to the existing DFAC is very noticeable when entering the building. The new dining area has 12 foot high ceilings and considerably more space to move around and sit. There will be two hand-washing stations at the entrance, and plenty of room for diners to comfortably wait in line as they approach the serving area. The food bar will run the width of the



Conceptual drawing of the second floor dining room, featuring six flat screen TV's and a built-in projector and big screen. (Drawn by Ahmad Reshad Bahaduri)

building and divide the space approximately in half; on one side the kitchen, and on the other, an 840 sq. ft. dining room with seating for about sixty people. The upper level dining room will be 1,556 sq. ft., and will seat about 120 people.

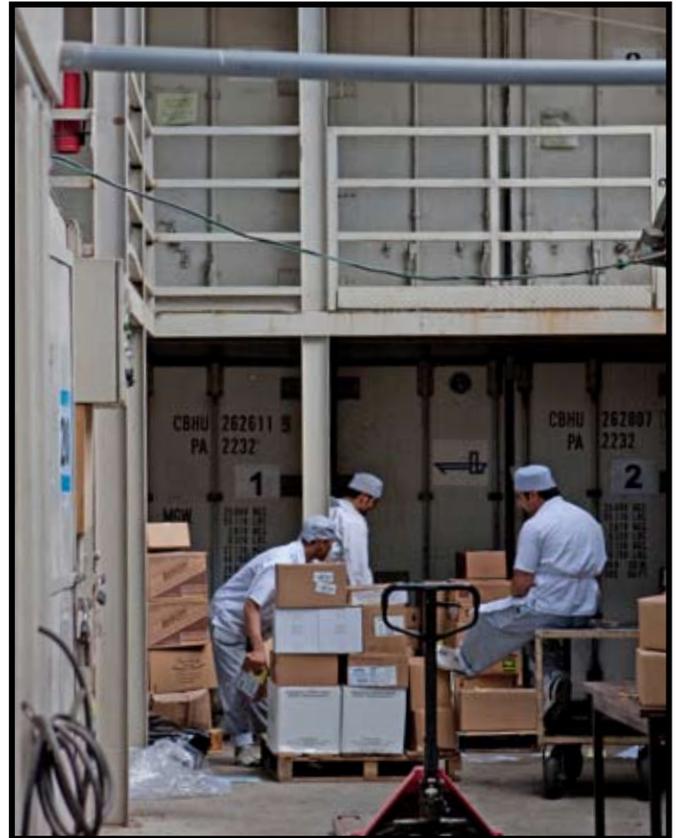
According to McCain, the new design will be aesthetically pleasing, with a relaxing atmosphere. Upstairs there will be six large flat screen televisions in the dining room, and a large built-in screen and projector at one end for dinner meetings, conferences and even entertainment. There will also be office space on the second floor for Hunter and her staff.

The food will continue to be stored in the CONEX containers outside next to the facility. More storage was recently added to accommodate the increased demand. There are two levels of CONEX boxes with six freezer units, five refrigerated units, and ten dry storage units just outside the DFAC.

Even the storage was designed with efficiency and function in mind. Extra storage space has been

built, in case a CONEX unit fails. If this happens, the problem can easily be resolved by transferring the failed unit's contents to another CONEX box; eliminating the possibility of food loss. "We have 45 pallets of food delivered each week," said Hunter. "If a refrigeration unit goes out, the loss could be catastrophic. You have to remember this is Afghanistan, and we have to plan for things like this. Sometimes it can take up to a month for a repairman to show up."

With this new facility, the cooking staff will be able to focus on food, allowing them to utilize their creative know-how in preparing tasty meals. With the buildings aesthetically pleasing décor and open floor plan with more seating, for dining, meetings, and entertainment, life here will be more enjoyable. In the near future going to the DFAC will be a pleasant and relaxing experience. The Corps of Engineers is making a difference here in Afghanistan and the new Dinning Facility will be a comforting place to help remind us what were working hard for. 🇺🇸



Kitchen staff loading food into CONEX storage Units.



Each week 45 pallets of food and kitchen supplies are delivered to Qalaa House. This time last year, there were only 20 pallets being delivered each week. AED has grown from 200 to about 500 personnel in the last year, and is expected to grow even more in FY10. It's true, an Army marches on it's stomach.