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Contact:
Paul Giblin, (540) 678-4944
paul.r.giblin@usace.army.mil

Corps of Engineers finishes Gamberi facilities, Afghan soldiers move in

DARUNTA, Afghanistan – Hundreds of Afghan soldiers are taking up residence in newly opened sections of Gamberi Garrison, a massive military installation under construction near Jalalabad in the northeastern portion of the country close to the Pakistan border.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is turning over \$41.3 million worth of new construction to the Afghanistan National Army during a several week period as the individual buildings are completed and pass final inspection. The Corps of Engineers began the turn-over process on Nov. 15 and is expected to finish on Jan. 15.

The new facilities comprise the second of four major phases for the garrison, which is designed to accommodate as many as 12,000 Afghan soldiers when complete. In addition to Phases I through IV, there are related developments.

Phase II features more than 40 buildings and support facilities. They include barracks for 1,167 soldiers and officers, administration buildings, a helipad, a fire station, a medical clinic, a training center, a warehouse, ammunition storage facilities, a detention facility, toilet and shower buildings, a sports field, roads and more.

Approximately 700 Afghan army soldiers moved into the barracks on Monday, Dec. 13, and Tuesday, Dec. 14. An additional 700 Afghan soldiers are expected within days, said Roger Green, a resident engineer in the Jalalabad Area Office of the Corps of Engineers, which is overseeing the development. The soldiers brought furniture and equipment into some of the new buildings, as well.

When complete, Gamberi Garrison will be Afghanistan's version of Fort Hood, a spacious U.S. Army installation in Texas, said Col. Thomas Magness, the commander the Corps of Engineers' district in northern Afghanistan.

"This is a huge monster ANA garrison," Magness said, using an acronym for Afghanistan National Army. "I'm really proud of all of the work that the team has done to get us this far. There is still more to come, but it really does look fantastic," he said during a tour of the site.

The garrison will be used for several purposes by the Afghan army, which is in the process of taking over the lead role in the fight against insurgents. The installation will serve as a permanent base for regular

and commando units, and it will serve as a training facility for new recruits and as a site for a regional army hospital.



Afghanistan National Army soldiers unload a truck as they move into one of the new barracks at Gamberi Garrison on Dec. 14. Photo by Roger Green, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“The fact that you’ve got ANA here currently occupying parts is the best part of the story because that means they have ownership of it already,” said Col. Mike Wehr, chief of the combined joint engineers at Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

“Building a military from scratch takes a dedicated location like this with all the resources you bring into it,” Wehr said.

Plans are in place to provide for even more Afghan forces at the installation near the Russian-built Darunta Dam. There are provisions to increase the garrison’s power plant, well system, water storage facilities, roads and other infrastructure systems. “We built Gamberi to accommodate future expansion,” Green said.

DynCorp International Inc., which is based in Falls Church, Va., served as the prime contractor for Phase II. The firm and its subcontractors employed about 700 Afghans and 70 non-Afghans during the peak of construction. DynCorp also was the lead contractor for Phase I, which opened in September 2009.

Work is underway by different prime contractors in several other areas of the garrison. Phase III, at a cost of \$27 million, is projected to be complete in July 2011; while Phase IV, at a cost of \$18 million, is scheduled to be complete in September 2011.



Newly arrived Afghanistan National Army soldiers take in the view on Dec. 14 from a guard tower at Gamberi Garrison, an Afghan military installation under construction near Jalalabad. Photo by Roger Green, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In addition, a training range, at a cost of \$12 million, is slated to be complete in March 2011, while a \$2.3 million building that will be used as an interim headquarters for the Afghan army's 201st Corps before being converted to other purposes, is set for completion in February 2011.

Overall, approximately 850 Afghans and 95 non-Afghans currently are employed at the various projects around the garrison. The Corps of Engineers uses seven Afghan quality assurance representatives, who are on the site daily.

The Corps of Engineers is the primary organization building army bases, police stations, roads, airstrips and other infrastructure projects in Afghanistan to increase the country's stability and economy.

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