

ISAF MIRROR



NATO mission in Afghanistan:
Assisting democracy
Poised for expansion
October 2005



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The deadline for the next edition is:
Monday 7 November 2005

Have you got a camera ?
Send your pictures to the Editor and they could be on the next cover! Submit your contribution anyway, we will check them all and if deemed worthwhile will be published them.

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A statement on NATO's expanding role in Afghanistan

by ISAF VIII Commander

Earlier this month, I was honoured to host a visit from NATO's Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who headed a delegation of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) visiting Afghanistan and NATO's priority mission, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Indeed, a representative from each of the 26 NATO contributing nations was present, illustrating NATO's strong and continued commitment to peace, security and the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The Council's visit occurred during a crucial time for Afghanistan, which is in the latter stages of the successful National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections, the conclusion of the Bonn Process and at a time when NATO is discussing its expansion to operate in the South of the country. We face a challenging task ahead, in support of the Afghan people and together we will establish a safe and secure environment.

It is my sincere hope that Afghanistan will become a beacon in Central Asia; a land of peace, unity and friendship among different cultures.



NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL VISITS AFGHANISTAN



NATO's Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, arrived in Afghanistan earlier this month, at the head of a delegation of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) for a 3-day visit to the country and NATO's priority mission, ISAF. The delegation consisted of the permanent representatives of each of the 26 NATO contributing nations and was accompanied by NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General James L Jones.

During a series of comprehensive briefings and visits, the Council met President Karzai and senior representatives from the Government of Afghanistan, the Group-of-8 nations involved in reforming Afghanistan's security sector, the United Nations, the European Union and Combined Forces Command Afghanistan and ISAF. This allowed each member to review the situation within Afghanistan and to be able to inform any future debate on NATO's involvement in the international contribution to assist the future prosperity of a democratic Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.





Mr. Cetin and Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer



Gen. Jones, Gen. Henault,
Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Mr. Cetin



Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer meets
Chaghcharan Governor Mohammed Ibrahim



Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in the
Chaghcharan Officials meeting



Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer arrives at Kabul Airport

THE LITHUANIAN PRESIDENT VISITS AFGHANISTAN



Lithuanian President, Mr. Valdas Adamkus, headed a delegation from his Government to Afghanistan during early October. The purpose of the visit was to meet the President and Afghan Government, ISAF and NATO authorities and to gain first-hand experience of Lithuania's contribution to the UN-mandated security assistance mission in Afghanistan.

During the visit, the delegation met the Lithuanian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Chaghcharan, who are fully committed to the framework of the ISAF mission namely, to extend the authority of the Afghan Government in the Ghor Province.

Following a series of comprehensive briefings and visits, the Lithuanian delegation met the Afghan President Hamid Karzai, ISAF's Commander, Lt General Mauro Del Vecchio,

NATO's Senior Civilian Representative, Mr Hikmet Çetin and the Commander of Coalition forces Lt General Karl Eikenberry.

Lithuania is the latest nation to take the lead in one of ISAF's nine PRTs across the Northern and Western Regions. They are working with provincial authorities to create a stable and secure environment and to assist with the reconstruction of the country within ISAF's area of operations.

Lithuania joined NATO on 4th April 2004 and has readily taken on one of the Alliance's most demanding challenges; to lead a PRT in the heart of Afghanistan's Hindu Kush mountain range. The Lithuanian PRT was established on 1st July 2005 after a troop deployment phase throughout June.







The Blue Mosque in Masar-e-Sharif

The Blue Mosque in Masar-e-Sharif is the third holiest site in Islam and the main dome was built 970 years ago to house the coffin of Khalif Ali, the son-in-law of Prophet Mohammed. The ancestors of the Ansari family travelled to Samarqand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan to learn how to make the tiles. They returned to North Afghanistan and started making tiles by hand from local materials. The largest dome has 30000 tiles; the smaller only 20000 and the Ansari family still make replacement tiles in Masar-e-Sharif today. The tiling on the Rowza Sharif, as it is known by the Afghan people, took 70 years to complete but thankfully the shrine has never been damaged during the country's long periods of war. Prophet Mohammed is buried at Madina in Saudi Arabia, the holiest site after Mecca.

Men pray in the Mosque 5 times a day with up to 3000 people attending prayers on Fridays. Men, women and children visit the Shrine throughout the day but on Wednesdays it is open to ladies only. The Blue Mosque is the focal point for the whole community and all visitors to the PRT (NW) request a look at this remarkable sight. Similarly, Afghan people enjoy wandering through its gardens, sheltering from the sun in the shade or simply relish in the purity, holiness and beauty of the Blue Mosque.



MILITARY OBSERVATION TEAM CONDUCTS PATROL ON HORSEBACK

A British Military Observation Team (MOT) has successfully conducted their long-awaited horse patrol across the remotest areas of Samangan Province, which is impassable by vehicles. At the start, there were a few nervous faces but once the team had mounted their horses, the nerves soon went and everybody looked forward to the trek.

The MOT passed through valleys and over hills with breathtaking views during their six-hour patrol to the remote village of Rom. On their arrival at ROM, the MOT E's Commander, Lt Yogesh Rai held meetings with the village commanders, which had never been visited by any ISAF troops before. This was a great moment in itself never mind the fact that the team were the first MOT to carry out a patrol on horseback.

Reflecting on the journey, CSgt Yadhu Chandra Lawati, the MOT 2IC said "there were sore legs and backs but nobody was moaning about it - everybody had smiles on their faces trying to hide what they were going through with the saddle sore". He summed up the MOT's trek by saying: "the patrol was good fun but a lot harder than we expected plus with the added factor of getting somewhere nobody had been before". After a well-earned rest and recovery, the team plan to do a similar patrol in the near future.

By Capt.Emma Schofield
Media Officer Mazar-e-Sharif



209 FALCON CORPS CELEBRATION



Brigade General Keisheyer
RAC North Commander



CO 1 NLD ESF BN, Lieutenant Colonel Oppelaar
receives gift from Governor Atta

On Saturday 1st October, the 209 Falcon Corps of ANA, based in the Balkh province, celebrated its first anniversary. Major General Tadj Mohammed Jahed the Commanding Officer of 209 Falcon Corps invited a large number of important guests to participate in the celebrations including, Governor Atta and other representatives from local, regional and international organizations, namely, COMRAC(N) Brigade General Kiesheyer, COM USA Embedded Training Team Colonel Harris, CO PRT MeS Colonel Brittain and CO 1 NLD ESF BN, Lieutenant Colonel Oppelaar.

The “happening” started at 09:00 hours in a new building on the base that was built near Dehdadi. A large number of soldiers from 209 Falcon Corps, joined the VIPs who were seated on couches at the front of the hall, which was decorated with banners in blue, red and green. With the arrival of Major General Tadj Mohammed Jahed the formal part of the ceremony began. A number of speeches, expressing thanks to and the importance of 209 Falcon Corps were made. The speeches were alternated with children and soldiers stepping up to sing in honour of the 209 Falcon Corps’ first anniversary.

At the end, Major General Tadj Mohammed Jahed thanked everybody and presented a number of people from different military units and civilian organizations with a special thank you gift as a sign of his appreciation for their support and cooperation with 209 Falcon Corps. After the formal celebrations, the General invited his guests to follow him to another building where a traditional Afghan lunch was served. It was a tasty closure to the ceremony.

By Capt. Mrn Mathieu Nagelkerke Media Ops NLD
Mazar-e-Sharif



CO 1 NLD ESF BN, Lieutenant Colonel Oppelaar
arriving at the celebration building



Maj.Gen. Tadj Mohammed Jahed
209 Corps Commander

CANADIAN MINISTER OF DEFENCE VISIT'S ISAF

The Canadian Minister of National Defence, W.C. Graham P.C., Q.C., M.P. visited Afghanistan during 11-13 October 2005 to meet with members of the Canadian Forces and Afghan officials. This was Minister Graham's first visit to Afghanistan as Minister of Defence. His last visit to Afghanistan was in September 2003 as the Foreign Affairs Minister.

Mr. Graham visited the Canadian Forces based in Camp Julien, just before this military facility was about to close and move to Southern Afghanistan. He met Canadian Army Officers, discussed the future detachment and attended a ceremonial dinner held in the Camp.

Mr Graham also met His Excellency the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Hamid Karzai. The main topics of discussion were the continuing future role of Canadian Troops in Afghanistan and Canada's role in helping the development of the Asian Country, with a very strong emphasis on Kandahar and the surrounding areas.



His Excellency Mr. Hamid Karzai and Canadian Minister of Defence Mr. Graham



Mr. Graham with Canadian Officers



Canadian Ambassador in Afghanistan Mr. Sproule

ICELAND CONTRIBUTE TO ISAF'S MISSION

The Icelandic contribution to the NATO led ISAF force is a non-military operation. Although personnel are trained in military skills in Norway, they are only used for self defence. They use the same equipment as Norway and wear body armour again, only for self protection.

The MOTs in PRTs Meymana and Chaghcharan are teams that consist of civilian specialists with the necessary background and experience to meet the challenges of each mission. Each MOT consists of policemen, fire-fighters, a variety of craftsmen and paramedics. They are the Icelandic Foreign Ministry's tool for peacekeeping operations, and are a part of Iceland's Crisis Response Unit.

Iceland does not have its own military troops therefore, their contribution to NATO's peacekeeping missions are civilian teams who have specialist skills. The specialist skills here in Afghanistan are based on the technology and experience to provide the capability to visit places normal troops cannot reach. They are able to gain access to new areas because they use specially modified vehicles with very experienced drivers, allowing the PRT's Area of Operation to expand, especially during the winter time.

In addition to the two MOTs, Iceland has one Logistics officer in Kabul.



V8 4.4, cc. gas.
Transmission: Auto, 4 speed.
Body lift: 4"
Tires: 33.50x16
Wheels: 15 x 10" Reinforced steel
Flares: Extra Wide Fibreglass fender flares
Shocks: Rancho H.D. Gas Nitrogen
Springs: H.D., Extra Length



NATO HOUSE: THE NEW RESIDENCE OF THE SENIOR CIVILIAN REPRESENTATIVE



NATO's continued commitment to Afghanistan and its expanding role, together with a stable logistic situation, demanded dignified housing for executives and officials. The top diplomatic figure, the Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) is currently a Turkish National, Mr. Cetin. The need for welcoming accommodation for the visiting diplomats and SCR, lead the logistics team to over sixty different locations around Kabul, but none were considered up to the desired role, nor suitable for security reasons. Therefore, the decision to build a new house was taken and the most suitable site was identified as being inside the ISAF HQ Compound, near the much appreciated Destille Garden. It took over one year to build the large and beautiful mansion and it was subsequently inaugurated in the presence of Mr. Cetin, NATO's Secretary General, Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, ISAF Commander, Brig. Gen. Del Vecchio and SACEUR Commander Gen. J.L. Jones.

The mansion comprises of four bedrooms, an office, a large dining room, a reception area, the lovely Afghan Room, which is traditionally furnished in the typical local style, with carpets and pillows. NATO House also has a lush garden and security personnel accommodation. The inauguration took place during the month of October and was followed by an official dinner in the new Morale and Welfare building.

By Maj. Di Grazia



DANCON MARCH

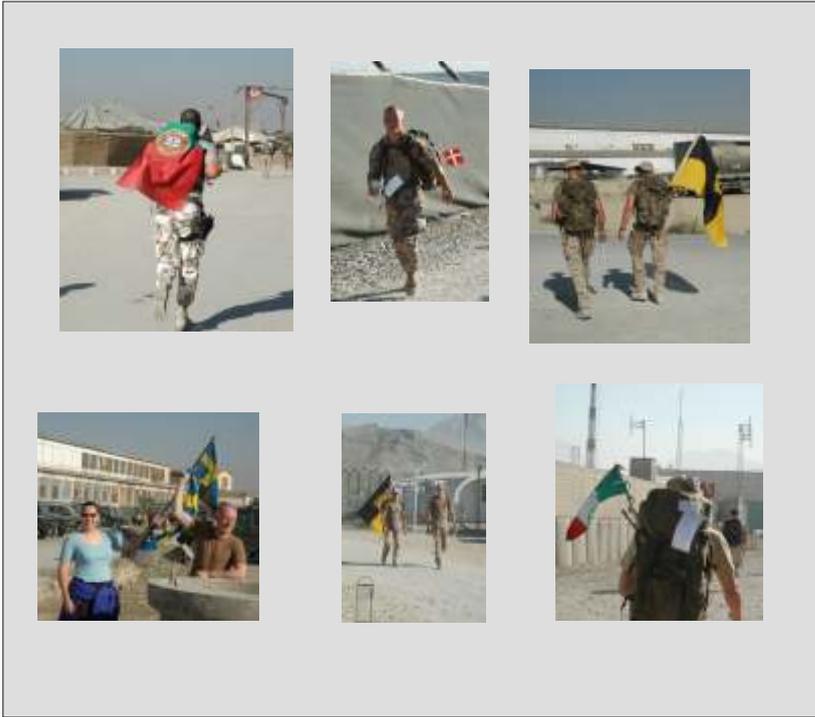


During September 2005 members from the Danish contingent in Camp Warehouse held the traditional DanCon March. The march has been a tradition since 1972 when it first started as the Danish contribution to the mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP). During every peacekeeping mission since then, every Danish contingent has arranged its own DanCon March.

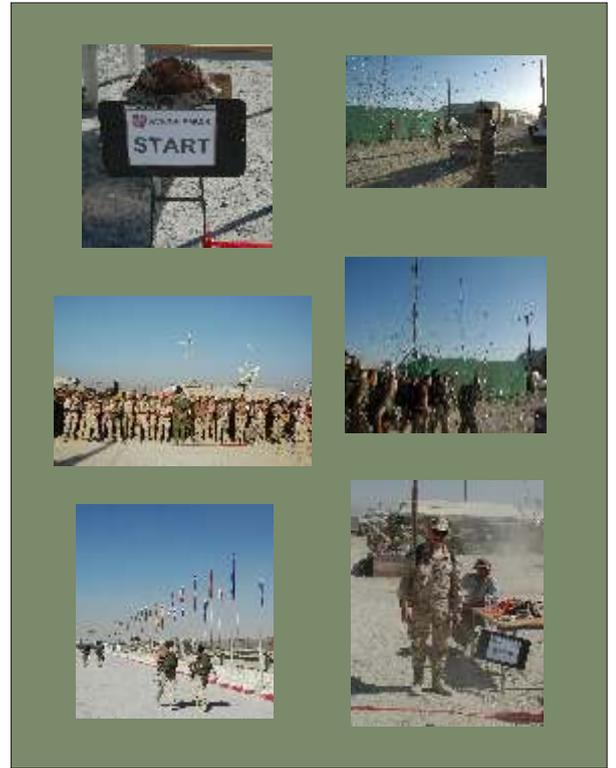
The march was very well organized and controlled. Although the route was hard and surprisingly long, it was a pleasure to march because there was enough water and fruit at the “filling station”. Also, the medical services worked extremely hard, treating those with blistered feet. The DanCon March, was full of smiling faces and everybody had twinkles in their eyes (even when they were receiving medical attention). Many new friends were made during the trip and even though there were many nationalities we all pulled together. If someone ran out of water, there was always someone who would share some of their own. At least during these few hours, all of the participants were part of the same family.

Yes, everybody was happy and smiling; the sun was hot but it was rewarding, even if your time exceeded four or five hours. Even the “other half” of ISAF provided a strong number of marchers; at least 30% of all participants were women. Many soldiers also showed a strong patriotic feel to their involvement, displaying national flags throughout the march.

Another two DanCon marches will be held during this year, one in October and one in November. See you there!!!!



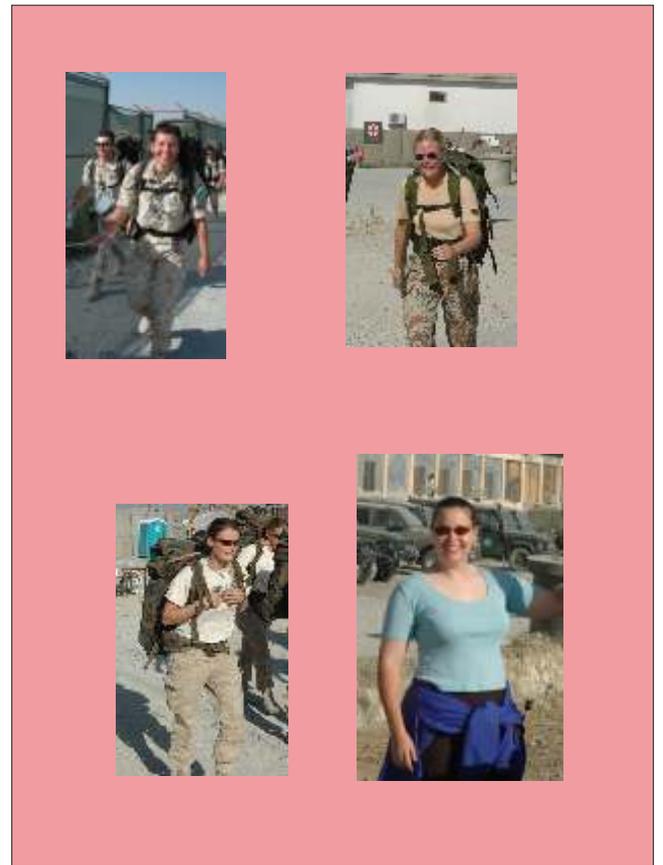
Flags at the Dancon March



Yours truly: from start to finish



Military athletes



Dancon Girls

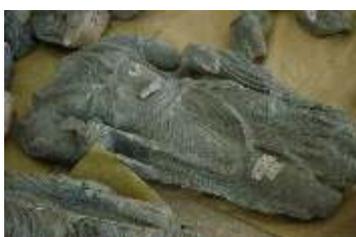
KABUL NATIONAL MUSEUM



Along the road that leads from downtown Kabul to the museum, there are many signs of the scars left by the wars. Houses were bombed and torn down and many of the breeches created by rockets and bombs in the walls are still visible, which explains fairly well how war became part of everyday life for many Kabul citizens. Beyond the houses, what struck the visitor even more was the atmosphere; the air, the dust and the buildings from soviet times. As he departed from the town centre, the visitor noticed the side of long alleyways laid out in a rigid grid format, which reminded him of the former foreign ruler's rationalism. Here and there laid ruins from soviet times, such as rubble in the road, the carcass of a concrete dinosaur.

A few kilometres further on, on top of a hillside, near to what had been the Ministry of Defence building and not far from King's Palace, stands a two storey building, with some signs of remodelling: The Kabul National Museum. That burnt architecture, in an oriental-baroque style, and a neo-classic touch, still reminds the observer of a rich past. But with just a little bit of imagination you can recall the colours, since the reality is a mix of greys and blacks. On either side of the entrance, visitors are greeted by two stone carved lions, now beheaded, a testimony of really dark times.

Omara Khan Masoudi, long time museum director, briefly recalls the history of the Institution. His face darkened with anger, as he tried to communicate the ferocious acts, the damage caused and the current situation of the serious loss of many artefacts; which further underpinned the violence and the strong intellectual pressure that had deprived the Afghan people of their individual freedom since 1978.





Following the fall of the Soviet backed regime in 1992, the Mujaheddins seized and raided the museum, stealing many of the most precious artefacts with the single aim of selling them to private collectors, in order to raise funds for their struggle to buy weapons.

In 1996, under Taleban rule, the bias was moved away from the actual value of these items towards the intrinsic function of each piece, such as the representation of human figures, which is prohibited by the Holy Quran. Therefore, the museum remained unharmed but continued to be a target through which to enforce and to pursue the Taleban orthodoxy. In 2001, when the Taleban were about to fall, over 2500 pieces were destroyed, among them some extremely interesting Buddha statues, precious Aramaic engraved stones, vases and other Indian inspired artefacts.

Due to their specific regional origin, such as from Tadjik, Uzbek, Turkmen and Chinese areas, some of the artefacts were dated back to 200 A.D. and were extremely refined specimens of the cultural melting pot whose development and preservation was only permitted by the obvious Afghan geographical isolation. What actually remains in the museum is still restricted information, which will not be released until the Museum keepers can trust 'Institutions' and visitors, then other areas will also be opened. All we could visit, were just two partially opened areas on the ground and first floors. The first area was full of large Buddha statues, beheaded or disfigured. A large stone engraved with Greek writing, was propped against the left hand wall, and was made by the Paktya population, south of Kabul, dating back to the 2nd century A.D.. Still visible was the side entrance at the end of a decorated room from an ancient mosque, in situ in the museum area. On the upper floor, there was a section completely devoted to Kafiristan arts, with various engraved wooden objects dating back to the 18th and 19th century. The word 'Kafiri' is Arabic and means religious infidel. The Kafiristan people lived on the southern Afghan side of Hindukush mountains, a territory divided by isolated valleys and where people living on either side of the valleys spoke different dialects from each other. This inaccessibility was very fruitful in creating a substantial pagan independence of the "religious infidels" from the centralised power and therefore a certain impermeability was also created from the superimposed Islamic religion. In 1895-1896 Amir Abdur Rahman put a halt to this situation, through a bloody military raid against Kafiristan, the land of the Infidels; after a successful expedition and a compulsory Islamic transformation the territory became known as Nuristan, from the Arabic word "Nur", meaning the 'Land of Light and Faith'.

By Lt. Elena Croci, IT A
Translated by the Editor



ISAF MEDICAL TEAM DONATES BOOKS



+ INDIRA GANDHI INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH +

During September, Dr. Arkadius Kosinsky, a Col. from the Polish Army, with his exceptional medical team, donated a large quantity of medical teaching books and CDs to the Afghan National Army Hospital in Kabul. This is where the brave soldiers from the ANA and the Afghan National Police receive treatment for their wounds and various diseases caused by the war on terrorism and from the harsh environments in various areas of Afghanistan.

On a second occasion, the same team delivered a large quantity of books and CDs to The Kabul Children's Hospital, which is a clean and modern facility donated to the Capital by Indira Gandhi, the former Indian Prime Minister. The situation for children in Afghanistan is probably worse than that for women because children are defenceless and therefore the subject of many threats, like abuse or early marriage and even premature pregnancy, which could need surgical intervention. All of the donations were gratefully received by the Directors of both hospitals, who expressed their desire to receive further assistance and to continue to build good working relationships.

Maj. Di Grazia



KAIA DUTCH CHANGE OF COMMAND



On 14th October the command of the Dutch F-16 detachment stationed at Kabul International Airport (KAIA), was taken over by a new detachment from Leeuwarden Air force base. In the presence of the Deputy Commander International Security Assistance Force (DCOM ISAF), Major-General Jaap Willemse, Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Tankink gave the command of the 1st Dutch Belgium European Participating Air forces Expeditionary Air Wing F-16 detachment ISAF (1 NLD/BEL EEAW F-16 DET ISAF) to Lieutenant-Colonel Wido van de Mast. The ceremony was attended by KAIA's Commander, Colonel Luis Rivo and the Dutch Ambassador, Martin de La Bije. Major-General Jaap Willemse thanked the detachment for their "Important contribution to a successful mission". The F-16 detachment takes part in the ISAF operations in order to contribute to a safe and secure Afghanistan. The F-16's supported the ISAF ground troops by conducting Close Air Support (CAS), a 'show of presence' and a 'show of force' operations.



INAUGURATION - MORALE & WELFARE BUILDING IN HQ ISAF



Sunday 23rd of October marked a significant step for all ISAF personnel: the new Morale & Welfare building, named "MILANO PALACE" was inaugurated in the HQ ISAF Compound, just on the side of the lush Destille garden, which is already renowned for its pleasant appearance. But as the winter season is approaching, even though October in Kabul is still warm during the day, a practical facility was deeply needed for the evenings. That is why it was decided to create an area where ISAF personnel could spend time together, in a warm and friendly atmosphere. ISAF Commander, Lt. Gen. Mauro Del Vecchio and NATO Senior Civilian Representative, Mr. Hikmet Cetin inaugurated the building at noon, in the presence of a multi-national audience who sincerely enjoyed the hospitality, which immediately followed the opening ceremony, indeed pizza, salami and Italian Spumante, were very welcomed by all. The new facility is enriched by a bar with a Pizza restaurant, a general shop, a large dining room, a conference room that could double as a cinema hall, a barbershop, a hairdresser and a billiard/lecture room. All of these facilities are complemented by a terrace, which stands a few steps above the aforementioned garden. In sum, a well deserved facility for all of the HQ personnel and guests that was made possible by the forethought of enlightened planners. Thanks everybody!

Maj. L. Di Grazia



AFGHAN CHILDREN....



ISAF: Working for their future



Jam minaret