



ISAF MIRROR

Issue 47 March 2008



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Aid:
Helping
Those In
Need**



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COMISAF Intent

In full partnership with the growing institutions of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and within the means allocated by NATO and the many nations supporting the mission, ISAF demonstrates NATO's commitment to the **security, reconstruction** and the extension of **governance** in Afghanistan. Further, ISAF demonstrates both the will and capacity to apply irresistible force by, through, and in support of Afghan National Security Forces against the insurgents' strategy and others who forcibly oppose the progress of this campaign. We will assist in demonstrating the growing capacity of ANSF to meet the GIRoA's security challenges, and will operate in such a



Gen. Dan K. McNeil
Commander, ISAF

way as to demonstrate respect for the Afghan people and their culture in order to effect their direct support of our endeavor.

ISAF Mission

Conduct military operations in the assigned area of operations to assist the Government of Afghanistan in the establishment and maintenance of a safe and secure environment with full engagement of Afghan National Security Forces, in order to extend government authority and influence, thereby facilitating Afghanistan's reconstruction and contributing to regional stability.

ISAF operations are divided among five regional commands:

Regional Command Capital (approx strength 4,800)

- HQ ISAF in Kabul (Composite)
- HQ RC-C in Kabul (TUR)

Regional Command South (approx strength 11,600)

- HQ RC-S in Kandahar (CAN)

Regional Command West (approx strength 2,500)

- HQ RC-W in Herat (ITA)

Regional Command North (approx strength 3,300)

- HQ RC-N in Mazar-e Sharif (DEU)

Regional Command East (approx strength 13,900)

- HQ RC-E in Bagram (USA)



Front Page: Illustration representing ISAF humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan this winter. **Back Page:** ISAF forces provide security for Afghans using mules to cover rugged terrain.

ISAF Mirror is a Headquarters International Security Assistance Force Public Affairs product intended for the information and entertainment of ISAF and associated personnel. Though articles have been edited, opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of NATO, Joint Forces Command Headquarters Brunssum or ISAF.

The Mirror is published quarterly (March, June, September and December) and distributed among the regional commands. View it on-line at www.nato.int/isaf.

Submissions to ISAF Mirror should be related to ISAF operations; however, other articles may be run based on their appeal to an international military audience. Articles should be sent in Microsoft Word format and photos should be at least 4.5 cm at 300 dpi resolution. Include identifying information of authors, photographers and subjects. Email submissions to todd.wivell@hq.isaf.nato.int or pressoffice@hq.isaf.nato.int. The deadline for submissions is the 25th day of the month prior to publication.

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A husband's abuse nearly destroyed her. But many people committed themselves to heal and remove fear from the ...

EYES OF NAZIA

**By U.S. Air Force Capt. Bob Everdeen
Provincial Reconstruction Team Qalat**

Nazia Hookum Darr was beaten and disfigured by her 40-year-old husband of three months on Christmas Day. He smashed her mouth, shaved her head, cut off her nose and ears and poured boiling water on her hands and feet.

United States Army Lt. Col. James Bramble, Commander of Provincial Reconstruction Team Qalat, found out about the attack the day after it happened and knew 16-year-old Nazia had to be

foods and paying for some of her meals. Some of the time she was in excellent spirits and other times you could see the fear in her eyes.”

The hospital staff relayed Nazia's fears of retribution from her husband or his family members as part of *Pashtunwali*, a pre-Islamic-era honor code still practiced by some Afghans.

“(My husband) was an older man with gray hair, and he was mean to me from the time we met,” said Nazia. “I had no choice; my mother died when I was young

through Dr. Gary Davis, an American surgeon working with the NMH in Kabul. Dr. Davis obtained consent from Gen. (Dr.) Mohammad, a plastic surgeon, to accept the patient transfer. Meanwhile, Colonel Bramble worked the political side, obtaining permission of Zabul Province Governor Delbar Jan Arman to allow military transport for Nazia. Governor Arman coordinated with the Minister of Women's Affairs in Kabul to take care of her in Kabul.

She arrived in the capital city in mid-



Nazia Hookum Darr (Courtesy photo)

helped. “The story was so compelling that we immediately contacted the provincial governor and arranged a trip to the local hospital to visit the doctors taking care of the girl,” he said.

The following day representatives from the PRT met with Zabul Province Chief of Staff Gulab Shah and the local Director of the Interior, and then traveled to Zabul Provincial Hospital to meet Nazia in the women's ward. Due to Afghan sensitivities, only a female translator and chief physician were allowed to meet with the abused woman.

“Nazia's wounds were healing well and she was well taken care of by the Afghan physicians,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Gauron, PRT chief medical officer. “The hospital staff, especially the female nurses, really rallied around her. We made frequent visits, bringing soft

and my stepmother arranged the marriage. I'm afraid of him. He's a former Talib.

“In Qalat my husband was jobless and was always complaining about economic problems. Two weeks after we moved into our new home; he beat me for no obvious reason.”

Afghan National Police say the man's first wife died about a year earlier under suspicious circumstances.

According to Colonel Gauron, many people have reached out to help Nazia survive her ordeal. “We had American military surgeons, two international nongovernmental organizations and the Afghan National Military Hospital all volunteering to help,” he said. “After discussing the options, we elected to facilitate Nazia's transport to Kabul and have Afghans take care of her.”

Colonel Gauron worked medical issues

January.

“Once we were in Kabul, I immediately called Dr. Davis and the Minister of Women's Affairs,” said Colonel Gauron. “The doctor arranged a bed for Nazia, and the Director of Women's Affairs sent a male and female escort to bring her to the hospital.”

“When we made the transfer with representatives at the gate, Nazia cried,” said PRT Interpreter Spozhmae Karzai. “We will miss her, but we're so happy she is getting to the plastic surgeons. She deserves it.”

Nazia's ordeal showed cooperation among government agencies and a growing trust by the Afghan people. As the country continues to develop, this growth may ensure women such as Nazia will be able to live freely, with hope and choices, without fear.

An Officer and a Lady

Afghan general offers hope to women of her country

**Story by Staff Sgt. Amanda Delisle
HQ ISAF Public Affairs Office**

General Mohammadzai is an experienced Afghan National Army soldier with more than 35 medals and 40 letters of commendation. The general is also an accomplished parachutist with more than 5,000 jumps in 23 years of service. That is a commendable career for any one, even more so when one considers that General Khatol Mohammadzai is an Afghan woman.

During a recent visit to Headquarters International Security Assistance Force, the general spoke to military women of various countries to share her views and experiences as a woman in the Afghan military.

"I am very grateful to have sisters like you from far away countries," said General Mohammadzai. "I'm proud of all of you. We're all here to work for the betterment of Afghanistan."

As a leader and example for women of Afghanistan, General Mohammadzai said her advice to women everywhere is to finish their higher education, be good mothers, have strong self-confidence and ignore the negativity of others.

Women from the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Canada, Iceland, the United States and Germany asked the general's opinion on

changes she would like to see take place for women in Afghanistan.

To begin with, the general said she is hopeful to have more women in administrative affairs in her country's Ministry of Defense.

"All of us have somehow encountered discrimination in our own military," said General Mohammadzai. "We need your help to

overcome discrimination against Afghan women.

"If we work together, we can help women all over the world obtain their aims and goals in the future. By this, we can reach more opportunities for Afghan women."

She suggested the MOD dedicate positions just for women and that a high-ranking female be put in charge of women in these roles, to care for them. She believes this would help them to have freedom in their work affairs without criticism from men.

A woman knows another woman's situation and could help women to work freely and be able to do good work, the general said.

With an obviously strong sense of who she is and what she wants for Afghan women, General Mohammadzai made her way as a woman in the male-dominated Afghan military with a strong work ethic and strong character.

The tough woman and mother managed her work and took care of her family of 10 as she progressed through the ranks to her current position.

General Mohammadzai said the progress she sees in Afghanistan is proof her work hasn't been in vein. She expects to continue to be an example to women by living by her motto: "Don't fear anything, even if what you want is in the mouth of the lion."



General Mohammadzai (U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew Lynch)



Afghan and ISAF medical professionals treat an Afghan child. (HQ ISAF stock photo)

Advanced Medical Training

With their country's mortality rate one of the highest in the world, new medical training graduates give hope to Afghans

**By U.S. Air Force Capt. Bob Everdeen
Provincial Reconstruction Team Qalat**

Less than a month after a basic emergency medical technician training class graduated here, seven more Afghan men entered the medical field after graduating Feb. 5 from a nursing school program facilitated by the Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The 12-month training program teaches students the basics of nursing: taking vital signs, assessing overall health, initial patient screening, medical terminology and an overview of medications. The course is taught by an Afghan employed by the PRT.

The importance of the achievements of the seven young men was described by Afghan government representatives from Zabul Province, who attended the graduation ceremony. Dr. Nazir Ahmadzai, director of Public Health; Mr. Abdul Nabi Wadan, director of Education; and Dr. Fazul Rahman, director of Ibn Sina Medical, praised the graduates and

reminded them of the significance of their new careers.

"I have seen people who have completed this training in the past," said Dr. Rahman. "You are now the future to make things better for Afghanistan."

"We look forward to more classes like this in the future," said Mr. Wadan, during his address to the graduates. "You've studied hard, earned your certification and now employers will be eager to accept you into their practices."

"To the students, 'congratulations,'" added Dr. Ahmadzai. "To the PRT; thank you. This is a very special subject because you are helping humans. One person can make a difference, especially in Zabul where we don't have enough educated people in the medical field."

The graduates must complete a certification test in Kabul before being hired to practice in Afghanistan. Traditionally, graduates of the nursing program, who pass the test, enjoy a 100-percent employment rate.

Progress

System now tracks status of projects in Afghanistan

Courtesy of ISAF Staff Reports

Reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan are now managed in one database.

Information is gathered on all reconstruction and development projects in the country by Afghanistan Country Stability Picture, a database developed and managed by International Security Assistance Forces soldiers at HQ ISAF.

"We hope the system will increase the management of information systems capacity within the Government of Afghanistan," said a civil military cooperation expert at HQ ISAF.

With more than \$12 billion invested in country-wide reconstruction and development since 2002, ACSP has an estimated 70,000 activity records provided from more than 170 sources.

The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development is the largest contributor to ACSP and the military has provided more than 8,500 projects for the system.

This program has a common picture for these projects and helps eliminate duplication of efforts. Previously, more than one school was built in the same area due to a lack of oversight and coordination between agencies.

"Now, we can conduct our projects in the right places to get the right development in the most needed areas," said Ahdib Fahardi, Afghanistan National Development Strategy executive director.



Lt. Col. Lanza and the Badghis Governor cut ribbon officially opening clinic. (RC-W)

Improving Health Care

Reconstruction team and Afghan police inaugurate new medical facility in Badghis

**By Italian Captain Federico Collina
Regional Command West
Public Affairs**

Spanish soldiers of the Qala-e-Naw Provincial Reconstruction Team, along with Afghanistan National Policemen, opened a new medical facility Feb. 10 in Quipcak village, Ab Kamari district of Badghis Province.

The clinic is a great benefit for Badghis people, particularly women and children. Members of the Qala-e-Naw PRT were actively involved in the project from start to finish. And the PRT remains committed to helping residents enjoy safe, healthy lives.

Lt. Col. Jesús Lanza Mollá, the PRT deputy commander, and Badghis Governor Mohammed Ashraf Nasserri chaired the clinic opening ceremony. The coordinator for the Spanish Agency

for International Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional), the Provincial Chief of the ANP, the Head of the Provincial Public Health Department and the Ab Kamari District Administrator were among a large group of people who gathered for the event.

Governor Nasserri thanked members of the PRT for contributing to the improvement of public health in the village and province. Moreover, he encouraged all Afghan people to do their part to create a stable and secure environment that makes the reconstruction and development easier.

Analysis made at Baltimore University and the Afghan Ministry of Health showed that Badghis public health care system rose recently to second among all Afghan provinces. The province has the lowest mortality indexes in the country.

Education

Mahmood Raqi gets new school

Courtesy of ISAF Staff Reports

Kapisa Provincial Government representatives and members from the Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team recently opened a school and health clinic in Mahmood Raqi District, Kapisa.

U.S. Air Force Capt. Jordan Berry, International Security Assistance Force's Bagram PRT Kapisa Civil Affairs team leader, and Hatan, Afghan Ministry of Education representative, cut the ribbon on the eight-room, \$122,000 school.

"You can send your children to school now," said Hatan. "Please send your children here for an education."

The Zalmi Shahid Secondary School, which took more than 10 months to build, will house approximately 240 boys, ages 10 – 15.

The ISAF PRT builds clinics and schools where there are existing programs that don't have adequate facilities.

Construction on the clinic began Feb. 3, 2007, and although the province has officially opened the doors, some finishing work still needs to be done.

For his help rebuilding Kapisa Province, Hatan presented Captain Berry with a turban, which he says is a great honor in Afghanistan.

"This is a new year ... and we have many new projects planned for Kapisa," said the captain. "I would like to thank the people of Kapisa for giving us security and allowing us to put so many projects here."

According to Captain Berry, the PRT is looking to fund \$30 million worth of development projects in Kapisa this year.



New 'Way' Of Remembrance

A Bagram road helps to continue the legacy of a fallen Airman

By U.S. Air Force Capt. Michael Meredith
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

One U.S. Air Force Airman's commitment to a fallen comrade came full circle with the dedication of a road in his honor here Jan. 1.

The newly-named "Master Sgt. Randy Gillespie Way" owes its existence to the efforts of Tech. Sgt. Blaine Arsenault of the 455th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron here. Sergeant Arsenault once worked for Sergeant Gillespie, a career fuels specialist who died July 9, 2007 from wounds sustained during small arms fire near Herat.

"Sergeant Gillespie was my first supervisor," said Sergeant Arsenault. "When I heard he died, I took it personally."

Shortly after the news reached

him, Sergeant Arsenault found himself deployed to Afghanistan. Following a conversation with another Sergeant Gillespie co-worker, Senior Master Sgt. Dean Abbott, he had an idea.

"After Sergeant Abbott and I talked, I was walking down Disney Drive (named for Army Spc. Jason Disney) and I thought about the road being named for a fallen Soldier. I knew they were building a new road (on base) and thought there was no better way to honor Sergeant Gillespie's memory than naming it after him."

After weeks of research and coordination, Sergeant Arsenault's efforts resulted in the naming of road, including the Jan. 1 unveiling of a sign proclaiming "Gillespie Way" during a ceremony in the fallen Airman's honor.

"Master Sergeant Gillespie's memory will live on," Col. Barry Mines, 455th Expeditionary Mission Support Group

Commander, told the group gathered for the ceremony. "As our trucks drive around this fuel farm the drivers will remember one of their very own fuels specialists who gave his life in the service of his country."

Sergeant Abbott, who knew Sergeant Gillespie for 14 years, said he would have appreciated the efforts on his behalf.

"He would've loved it. He was a people person," said Sergeant Abbott. "We as a people, a profession and an Air Force have lost a great human being. He was the whole package. He was all about helping and he volunteered to come back to Afghanistan because he wanted to make a positive difference."

Admiring the new road after the ceremony, Sergeant Arsenault summed up the legacy of his fallen comrade: "He was a mentor, a wingman, a leader and a warrior. He will not be forgotten."

Getting Off The Ground

New facilities and aircraft give new life to the Afghan Air Corps



Mi-17 (U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew Lynch)

By Belgian Navy 1ste Meester-Chef Henri Lateste

Devastated by years of war, the Afghan National Army Air Corps is being rejuvenated thanks to aircraft donations from the international community, along with the teamwork and dedication of International Security Assistance Force and ANA personnel.

In early 2006 the ANAAC had 14 rotary-wing and 6 fixed-wing aircraft in serviceable condition. The inventory has steadily increased to a viable state, through combined foreign infusions of money, equipment and expertise. Due to Afghanistan's degraded infrastructure, the use of air transport capacity has proven to be extremely useful to the Afghan government. Daily helicopter and fixed-wing flights now provide an extensive support for medical and logistic operations all over the country.

An official delegation of leaders at Kabul Afghan International Airport, accompanied by key personnel from French Task Force COUGAR and Italian Task Force PANTERA helicopter squadrons gathered last December at the KAIA airfield for an ANAAC operational

demonstration. KAIA's operations center contained the organized chaos of planning schedules, maps, GPS positions, meteorological forecasts and aircrew life support equipment.

With a hundred pilots for fixed wings, some 62 helicopter pilots and an additional 20 pilots for the Presidential Squadron, all supported by a logistical staff, engineers and U.S. mentors, the ANAAC at Kabul contains a coherent group of well trained

personnel. A total of 20 aircraft, consisting of eight Mi-17 Hip helicopters, six Mi-35 Hind helicopters and six fixed winged airplanes (two L-39 Albatrosses, two An-32 Clines, and two An-26 Curls) stood proudly side by side during the meeting of task forces.

The deputy commander of the helicopter squadron gave task force members a historical overview of the ANAAC, after which he guided members around the compound for a closer look at the helicopters. The Mi-35 Hind F attracted the largest group of spectators and caused a great stir among the visitors.

Over the last year a remarkable increase of proficiency has been established by the ANAAC. It had 4,276 movements in 2007, proving of its full integration in air operations at KAIA.

A complete move of the ANAAC facilities to the North Side Cantonment Area is planned. This facility is under construction with completion due in mid 2008. It will house the command facilities for the Afghan Air Corps, and includes housing, administrative, operations, maintenance and recreation facilities. The project includes two hangar complexes, a taxiway and ramps. It will be the new core of the Air Corps.



Antonov An-32 (U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew Lynch)

Appreciation From Afghans

Returnees Minister commends Baghlan Reconstruction Team's assistance to displaced Afghans settling back into their homeland

By Camilla Algarheim
Forward Media Team

The Minister for Returnees, Mr. Sher Mohammad, and the Baghlan Provincial Reconstruction Team Commander, Hungarian Col. Tibor Rozsa, met Jan. 4 in Kabul to discuss support for Afghan returnees.

Mr. Mohammad began the meeting by expressing his gratitude for the PRT's efforts in ensuring people returning to Afghanistan had the support necessary to reintegrate.

"Thank you very much for your humanitarian assistance, your support was timely and effective," said the minister. "You saved the lives of the very young and the old amongst the most vulnerable in our society, and the people of Afghanistan will never forget. I hope we can continue our cooperation."

The PRT has organized large scale distribution of clothes and blankets to 900 families living in desperate conditions two years in a row.

Upon hearing news of the desperate conditions last November, the PRT sprung into action. Every soldier in the camp was involved in what can best be described as a humanitarian rescue mission. The distribution was executed in collaboration with the Department for Returnees in Baghlan, shura leaders from the camp and the Afghan National Police, who together with the force protection team at the PRT secured the distribution site.

The current rotation of soldiers led by Colonel Rozsa was eager to make a repeat of last years distribution with the same determination before the cold set in. Every soldier who took part in the distribution was touched by the people they met from



Members of Baghlan PRT met with Mr. Mohammad (third from left) (Combine Joint Special Operations Task Force)

The PRT has organized large scale distribution of clothes and blankets to 900 families living in desperate conditions ...

the settlement.

"We will continue to support the returnee settlement throughout the winter," said the colonel. "There aren't enough civilian organizations that can help such large settlement, so we as a PRT tried to do the best we can. These people had to flee from their homes due to war and returned to sometimes nothing, we are aware of the many problems they are facing. They have to start all over again and they need all the support they can get.

"The suicide blast at the sugar factory in Baghlan hit us all hard and our focus now is to try to avoid other big tragedies by creating a secure environment for the people of Baghlan," he said.

After handing over a certificate of appreciation to Colonel Rozsa, Minister

Etebari shed light on the fact that Pol-e-khumri is the city gate to the north. It is a city that people pass by without noticing that it has its own problems.

He is trying to convince non-governmental organizations to do more to help the returnee population of Baghlan, in hope that more national and international assistance will arrive, with thousands more returnees expected this spring.

"The people in the camp are in a desperate situation and we are trying our best together with international organizations to alleviate their suffering," said Naim Kakar, head of the department for returnees in Baghlan. "The first step is to provide emergency aid, which is what the PRT did today but we are also trying to create jobs and housing."

Patrolling the Skies

German Tornados in the north storm to a combat flying landmark in Afghanistan



Brig. Gen. Dammjacob congratulates pilots of the 1000th flight. (Courtesy photo)

Courtesy Operational Wing Mazar-e Sharif Public Affairs Staff Reports

Though the sun is shining bright, the air is bitter cold at the airport of Mazar-e Sharif in Northern Afghanistan. Several people gather on the apron awaiting the accomplishment of a milestone in International Security Assistance Force operations in Afghanistan.

German Brig. Gen. Dieter Dammjacob, Commander of Regional Command North,

and Lt. Col. Frank Hübenthal, Deputy Commander of the Operational Wing Mazar-e Sharif, stand among those waiting the completion of the 1000th operational flight of the Tornado in Afghanistan.

Flown by the German Air Force, among other European nations, the Tornado is a twin engine air-to-ground and air defense fighter capable of short takeoff and landing performance. The two variants of the Tornado, Interdictor

Strike and Air Defense Variant, use similar airframes and the same engines and aircraft systems, but different radar, avionics software and weapon suites.

The Tornado IDS attacks targets with high accuracy in all weather conditions. It carries a spectrum of weapons and defensive aids and is highly survivable by virtue of its automatic terrain-following and electronic counter-measure systems.

The Tornado ADV provides autonomous, all-weather air defense. It can patrol for more than two hours at 350 nautical miles from base and can climb to 30,000 feet in under two minutes.

Six Tornados arrived in Mazar-e Sharif April 5 of last year. Arrival of the aircraft marked the first time the German Air Force deployed Tornados to Afghanistan. Their task here is to ensure airspace reconnaissance over Afghanistan in support of ISAF operations. It is an important task which the air wing fulfils 470 personnel.

Upon their landing and departure from the plane, the two pilots who completed the 1000th mission were celebrated for their part in the accomplishment made possible by many people.

“On behalf of all soldiers of the wing I express my appreciation and my respect”, said the General Dammjacob. Lt. Col. Hübenthal, said, “You make an important contribution to the success of our mission; let me also express my gratitude for your performance – professional, at all times and always with the decisive bit of soldier’s luck.”

“It is the teamwork of the entire operational wing, which made this success possible, since only as a team can we cope with our tasks,” said Col. Christoph Pliet, MeS commander.

The operational wing has other several other routine tasks such as passenger and freight handling, security for the Bundeswehr field camp Camp Marmal, fire prevention, explosive ordnance disposal, surveillance of the flight control zone, and command and deployment of six large army helicopters. The pride of the personnel in their performance is obvious as well as safety of action and professionalism of servicemen and women.

**By Albert de Hoon MSc
Bird Strike Ecologist
Royal Netherlands Air Force**

Flight operations at Kabul Afghanistan International Airport present unique challenges as well as risks associated with any other busy airport. One such common threat is one that few people outside of the flying community think of ... birds, specifically bird strikes.

Last summer, a KDC-10 struck 130 small birds during landing. Striking a small bird generally doesn't cause

this vegetation is hardly present any more due to over-grazing by goats and sheep. Compared with the surroundings, the airport was a real haven for many birds of different species, coming to feed on insects and seeds.

During my visit, just after summer, I found only 17 bird species present. Since a one-week-visit is too short to get a feel for the bird population in a particular area, I interviewed as many people as possible to get information about the bird situation year-round. Most valuable was the bird strike database.

species struck the KDC-10, the volume of birds and collision velocity were enough to cause considerable damage.

One option for preventing future strikes is to remove all vegetation.

Because goats and sheep are not allowed at the airport for safety reasons, it has to be done mechanically. At one part of the airport, the vegetation was removed to create plots for hangars and aprons. This resulted in sand storms, and the so-called pioneer plants grew back quickly. These plants flower abundantly and produce a lot of seeds, attracting



Graphic illustration

Birds at Kabul's airport are a hazard to aircraft and present a unique challenge to those who try to eliminate the danger

damage to aircraft, but when 130 birds are struck simultaneously, that's a different story. As a result of the strike, the wind shield was covered in blood and the tail engine had to be cleared. It took four days to get the aircraft serviceable.

Bird control at KAIA is one of the many tasks of the flight safety office. After the incident last August, the FSO took steps to combat the threat of bird strikes, including purchasing bird repellent and distress calls. However, birds are different and so are their environments.

The methods used may have been effective with other birds at different locations but failed at KAIA. With that I went to Kabul Sep. 19-25 to help tailor a program specific to the airport.

The airport is covered with a vegetation that is typical for (the northern part of) Afghanistan. Outside the airport

Pilots had submitted only four bird-strike forms. However, the FSO presented data from January 2007 to the present that showed 98 bird strikes, involving 475 dead birds. However, before the August strike, information about the birds was limited to general names such as "sparrow" and "swallow." That strike resulted in visual evidence – frozen carcasses and photographs – that proved helpful in determining specific species, and therefore, developing a specific defense plan.

Since January 2007, I determined that most of the bird strikes at KAIA occurred in the summer, during daylight hours. The birds involved were Bee-eaters and Barn Swallows (insect eaters), and Tree and House sparrows (seed eaters).

The Barn Swallow, Tree and House sparrow are all around 22 grams, the Bee-eater 60 grams. Regardless of which

many birds.

In recent years, the soil was disturbed at many plots of the airport due to de-mining activities, creating ideal growing places for the pioneer species. For this reason it is important not to disturb the soil. Eventually, the pioneer species will be taken over by plant species that attract fewer birds. Since this process will take a few years, the pioneer plants will have to be mowed in the meantime. By doing this just before they start flowering, the number of birds is expected to decrease.

During my visit I spent a lot time teaching the FSO personnel the basics of bird control, especially conducting bird counts, expelling birds and determining proper preventive measures. When the FSO personnel will execute all recommendations properly (I am sure they will) the bird strike problem at KAIA should be history.

Developing Skills, Building the Future

Multi-purpose training center under construction in Farah

Gina Gillespie

Forward Media Team

Construction is underway on a \$1.2 million center for excellence in Nan Gab, in Farah Province. Nawi Arghawan Construction Company is the contractor for the center. Farah City native engineer Zulmi will oversee the year-long construction, which is expected to employ about 50 people.

When completed, the complex will include 10 buildings, including two dormitories, one hallway meeting room, a dining room, 10 classrooms, a vocational building with a sewing training area, a carpentry area and a metal training area. There will also be a communications/library room, a laboratory, a large, separate latrine, and a security wall.

The dormitories will house 250 students on site, but the center will have the capacity to teach three times that many students. The mosque will rival the grand mosque in Farah City.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Commander's Emergency Relief Funds.

"This is a well thought out, well executed contract that should yield something that will be very productive for the community," said U.S. Navy Lt. John Genta, an engineer for International Security Assistance Force's Farah PRT.

The contract also includes but



Stock photo of ISAF-supported construction in Afghanistan (HQ ISAF)

all furnishings for the facility. Each dorm room will have two beds, a set of dressers, a cabinet, a desk, lights and a small balcony area. The classrooms will have desks, chairs and blackboards. There will be books and computers, sewing machines, carpentry tools, electricity and running water.

The center will be the first institution of higher learning in Farah Province. The three operational centers of excellence in

Kabul cannot accommodate additional students, forcing many to seek a higher education in Pakistan. Students often fail to return to Afghanistan after graduation, sparking a "brain drain" that benefits foreign countries instead of the student's homeland. The curriculum taught in the Pakistan centers of excellence is also not supportive of Afghan development, said Mr. Atiqullah, Director of Education for Farah.

"The director of education has a good plan for the future of education in the area, so we're trying to reward that forward planning by giving attention to some of his projects," said Lieutenant Genta.

The new center for excellence will facilitate a two-year, multi-disciplinary program. It will not only encourage intellectual development that will remain in Farah Province, but will stimulate the economy through tuition requirements. Farah Province will draw students from surrounding provinces.

Farah province is fast becoming an educational center with a number of schools and educational institutes under construction.

Besides the current construction of the center for excellence and the funding of five high schools during the past year, Farah boasts an Agricultural High School, which draws students throughout the province.

There is also a women's dormitory under construction at the Farah Hospital, which will house 128 women for midwife and nursing training programs and a teacher's training facility.



MISSION COMPLETE

Bagram security forces squadron finish detainee support role

**By U.S. Air Force Capt. Michael Meridith
455 Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

U.S. Air Force Airmen from a dozen bases across the United States stood together here for the last time Jan. 11 to bid farewell to their squadron and to honor the passing of a piece of Air Force history.

The 755th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, originally formed in May 2006 in response to a U.S. Army request for support of its detainee operations mission, was inactivated during a formal ceremony.

“It is probably the most challenging mission that I could ever envision taking part in,” squadron commander Lt. Col. Frank Howard told the audience, including

the 123 members of his squadron, during the ceremony. “These Airmen made the mission happen without serious injury and with dignified, respectful treatment of detainees.”

Colonel Howard also noted that current squadron members excelled in nearly every facet of their performances during their eight-month deployment here. Among the accomplishments he cited were the award of 130 individual decorations and more than 300 organizational coins to squadron Airmen for superior performance, 40 squadron promotions and the recognition of a dozen individuals at higher organizational levels.

“The squadron showed just what can be achieved when we provide the structure that allows the freedom for our Airmen’s talents and strengths to be fully

brought to bear in the joint mission,” said Col. Thomas Huizenga, commander of the 755th Air Expeditionary Group.

Following remarks from Colonel Howard and Colonel Huizenga, the squadron guidon was cased, signifying the inactivation of the unit and the transfer of duties to the Sailors of Task Force Trident. Although there was a sense of relief among many squadron members as they prepared to return home, there was also a bittersweet element to the proceedings as a part of Air Force history passed.

“A squadron inactivation is always a time for reflection,” Colonel Huizenga told squadron members, adding a caveat. “The squadron designation remains available. If the call comes again, I pray that there will be Airmen equal to your mettle to answer.”

Show of Force Protection

Suicide bombing in Baghlan Province forces security officials to take a strong hand

By Camilla Algarheim
Forward Media Team

Baghlan Province, in northern Afghanistan, was in the news headlines in recent months for all the wrong reasons after a suicide bomber blew himself up at the sugar factory in Baghlan-e Jadid, killing 70 innocent children and several security personnel.

In the wake of the terrorist attack, the Hungarian Provincial Reconstruction Team in the province stepped up its security presence. The PRT joined the ANP in conducting security operations in Baghlan-e Jadid and the vicinity of the sugar factory.

During a three-day security exercise, the second phase of Operation Strong Hand, they conducted vehicle and body searches at various checkpoints on the main road between Pul-e Khumri and the neighbouring Kunduz Province.

During the operations they searched more than 1,000 vehicles, giving a clear signal to smugglers and people involved in insurgent activity that they are not welcome in the province. Stopping the flow of weapons “travelling” through the province and ending up in the hands of criminals who could link up with insurgents is seen as a key to establishing lasting stability in this northern province.

“With Operation Strong Hand coming to an end, I am pleased to say that it was a routine operation which left us with a positive impression of the current security situation,” said Lt. Col. Ghulam Haidar, an operational officer with Baghlan Police department. The colonel based his comments on the fact that the teams didn’t recover any illegal drugs, weapons or explosive materials during three days of operations.

Despite of causing interruptions to many people’s travels, most people were appreciative of the fact that the PRT and



Afghan police perform a routine vehicle search. (Courtesy photo)

ANP had gone to such lengths in an effort to create a safer environment for residents shaken by the bomb blast.

“They stopped my car and performed a search, but I am not involved in any kind of illegal activity,” says Saaduddin, a driver from Baghlan. “In spite of the inconvenience I am happy that they are taking measures to clamp down on crime, especially that of insurgents who are only causing death and destruction.”

Hungarian Col. Tibor Rozsa, the PRT commander, also brought in his civil military cooperation and psychological operations unit to bolster Operation Strong Hand, making it more people friendly and thus not appearing as a hostile force.

“We were one the spot distributing blankets and toys to the many people who were inconvenienced by the operations and our PSYOPS unit conducted road shows on various locations to inform local residents about PRT activities,” said Warrant Officer Nadas Gabor, a CIMIC officer at the PRT.

Since taking over as a lead nation in Baghlan province from the Dutch October

2006, the Hungarian contingent has focused their efforts on reconstruction, with a considerable CIMIC budget to play with, and security through the ANP. They have been extremely pro-active, not leaving a single black spot in the province. By doing so they’ve prepared the ground for not only their own CIMIC projects but also that of non governmental agencies.

Colonel Rozsa has led the PRT through the harshest winter seen in 30 years and his leadership has been characterised by a well planned and executed CIMIC projects and efforts to bolster the security, all with a humanitarian approach.

“After being five months in the mission I feel a bit tired, but I also feel satisfied,” said Col. Rosza. “Although we couldn’t meet all the requests put forward by people, I think we have completed our main objectives in Baghlan province.

“We had to keep people’s hope alive and somehow convince people to stay optimistic in regards to developments in the security picture. I think more help is needed in the near future to make a real change in Baghlan province,” he said.



An Afghan man dresses his son in warm clothing received through ISAF humanitarian aid efforts. (RC-N)

Insufficient weather data leaves many to speculate about whether this winter was the worst Afghanistan has seen in decades. It is clear that the bitter cold of the winter months cost many Afghans their lives and others their livelihoods. And the International Security Assistance Force, working with local and national agencies, provided humanitarian aid that helped countless people survive.

WHEN WEATHER IS THE ENEMY

By Tech. Sgt. Todd Wivell
HQ ISAF Public Affairs

While ISAF personnel, along with Afghan forces, continued to hunt, capture and kill enemies of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan over the past few months, extreme weather proved to be the greatest threat to Afghans. In a year when suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices were still taking lives, the

death toll from this year's winter weather conditions was well above the 1,000 mark.

Though numbers vary, this winter proved to be the worst in many years, costing many Afghans their lives, while others lost limbs, homes and/or livestock. However through these harsh winter conditions, members of ISAF still worked tirelessly to prevent even greater losses.

In an ISAF press conference conducted here Feb. 6, the ISAF spokesperson, Lt. Col. Claudia Foss, U. S. Air Force, commented that ISAF forces working with the Afghan National Security Forces had distributed more than 90 tons of humanitarian aid in a plan to help contrast the severe winter conditions for the people of Afghanistan. This aid

included 27 tons of coal, food and winter clothing in the Qeysar district and 50 tons of food, blankets, rain coats, boots and generators in the Badghis province. With the additional 13 tons of aid delivered throughout Afghanistan.

On the morning of Feb. 25, a doctor from the Qatar Red Crescent Organization, boarded a plane at the ISAF Heart Airport. The plane was loaded with a flight cargo of humanitarian aids to include 10,000 blankets, 6,000 jackets and 2,000 stoves ready to be transported and delivered in Heart. ISAF once again assisted by providing its airport as a safety point for humanitarian aid cargos during this period of extreme weather.

As the many different nations come together to form

ISAF, they worked together as well to provide humanitarian aid during the past few months.

During the month of February, eight pallets of wheat, rice, school supplies and winter coats were flown to Purchaman. Regional Command West provided the supplies, Provincial Reconstruction Team Farah prepared and loaded the pallets onto two Italian helicopters and two American soldiers accompanied the mission to document the event.

“The supplies were requested because of harsh winter weather,” said Adam Kordish, PRT Farah. “While the district centre itself is snow clear, we know that this isn’t the highest occupied place in the area, but there is still a need for the humanitarian aid.”

In addition to distribution of humanitarian aid, ISAF along with ANSF continues to provide assistance through the Medical Civilian Action Program.

During the month of February, several MEDCAP’s were conducted through out Afghanistan. In Regional Command West and Regional Command Capitol, more than 300 local nationals were screened and treated during the week of Feb. 6. Much needed medical care was provided to those who had very little previous care or none at all.

The next day doctors and nurses from Mazar-e-Sharif PRT worked intensively in the villages of Sorabi-Bain and Sorabi-Bala to provide the people there with treatment. Once again the team helped more than 300 local nationals with 60 percent of those being women and children.

On the same day the Afghan National Army and ISAF soldiers provided medical care to more than 70 villagers during a medial outreach patrol near the Kandahar Air Field.

“We can offer only basic medical care during these visits, but there were a couple of people whose conditions would have become quite serious had we not been there to intervene,” said one of the medial officers who assisted. “Treating in these conditions is very different to our normal surgeries, even back at base where things are quite basic; it is humbling to see the conditions people live in outside of the



Top: An ISAF Lithuanian soldier gives food to Afghans during a humanitarian aid mission in Chagcharan. (RC-W)
Left: An ISAF Italian physician treats an Afghan child during a MEDCAP associated with Operation MALEK. (RC-C)
Right: An Afghan woman in Aliabad protects herself against the cold as she awaits an air drop of food and blankets from ISAF helicopters. (RC-N)

air base, and very gratifying that we can help.”

Another way ISAF assisted Afghans is with veterinary assistance provided to farmers living in remote areas.

During a VETCAP Feb. 18 in the RC North, more than 330 sheep’s and goats were vaccinated. During another VETCAP in RC-N, 680 patients were treated, with 15 animals cared for and an additional 670 vaccinated.

“Thanks to German and Norwegian troops for this help,” said one local Afghan woman. “I was sick and my children were sick. They helped me a lot. I hope they continue to conduct such operations in the future.”

“After we surveyed this area we conducted this MEDCAP operation,” said Lt. Col. Dr. Dus, the director of German Field Hospital in Camp Marmal. “We want to help people here and provide them with health facilities. We are planning more MEDCAPs in the near future to reach remote areas as well.”

The rising temperatures have melted away the snow helping to start the process of renewal and rebirth in Afghanistan. Though the loses suffered this winter won’t soon be forgotten, neither will the spirit of cooperation between the Afghans and members of ISAF that prevented even greater loses. It is this same teamwork that is helping to defeat the Taliban.

The Farah Road

Reconstruction team tests new, old road building techniques

Gina Gillespie
Forward Media Team

There's a little strip of road outside the gates at Provincial Reconstruction Team Farah that may revolutionize the Afghan road building industry. Engineers at PRT Farah dug up a 30-meter stretch of road as a test bed for road construction bases and surface materials. The test encompasses eight different experiments.

The primary focus using cobblestone for roads, an ancient road building practice not commonly used in Afghanistan.

"The Romans were really good at building roads that lasted a long time, and they were all cobblestone, so why can't we do it here?" says U.S. Navy Lt. John Genta, an engineer at PRT Farah. "There's stone everywhere, and I'm frankly surprised they haven't done it yet."

Mohammad Aref, Chief of Bradaran Sadiq Barak Construction Company, is overseeing the experimental road project.

"For the first time this kind of test

road is being built in the province," he said. When I was in Iran as a refugee, the Iranian engineers were working on this kind of road construction."

The test road contains three separate base materials: gravel, cement and dirt or sand, to a depth of 45 centimeters. Each of these materials is tested using one of two stone surface materials, either round-edged river rock, or the flatter mountain flagstone. Zalmi is an engineering assistant working with Lieutenant Genta on the project. He explains the positive and negative aspects of each type of stone.

"The river rock is the most commonly used locally because it is free and can be picked up from the river," said Zalmi. "But when you put river rock inside cement, the smooth corners do not hold the cement very well. In contrast the mountain rocks have sides and corners, so there is better contact with the cement. However the mountain rocks must be dug out with picks and shovels, and carted

down from the mountain top."

The engineers will test the completed road for a two-month period, monitoring the amount of traffic passing by. A detailed inspection of the road will show the ruts or surface wear, and they'll break up sections to see how the road has held up to tire traffic.

The successful material will be determined through evaluating a number of factors, including surface wear, cost and speed of construction, and efficiency in terms of how many people employed. The results of the project will form a stone road template for future road construction projects.

"I don't have a lot of experience building roads, so with this base course I'm really interested to see which one works the best," said Lieutenant Genta. "It's more to test my own little road theory so I don't build something that's large, but ultimately fails in the end because we've never done it before."



An Afghan man lays stones for the section of test road. (Courtesy photo)



British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs David Miliband and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice speak to troops during a February visit to HQ ISAF. (U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew Lynch)



Gen. Dan K. McNeil, Commander ISAF, signs documents transferring authority RC-S from British to Canadian forces. Major Gen. Marc Lessard (left) assumed command of the region from Maj. Gen. Jacko Page. (U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew Lynch)



Maj. Gen. Hans-Lothar Domroese, HQ ISAF Chief of Staff, gets a operational brief from U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Damien Marsh, Chief of Operations, HQ ISAF Combined Joint Operations Center. The general assumed his position in January. (U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Rodney Miranda) (Note: Photo manipulated for security reasons)



French gunners survey the area enroute to a Medical Civilian Assistance Program mission in Surobi. (U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew Lynch)



Brig. Gen. Jim Hutton, Chief CJ3, cuts the haggis during Burns Supper festivities at HQ ISAF. Haggis is a traditional Scottish dish and the subject of one of Robert Burn's most famous poems. (U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew Lynch)



German forces provide security at a meeting of key ISAF and Afghan leaders in Kunduz Province (RC-N).

National Pride

Australian forces celebrate their country's day of recognition



Col. Alison Creagh, HQ ISAF Chief, CJ1 renders a salute during Australia Day ceremony at HQ ISAF. (U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Andrew Lynch)

Australian Maj. David Harris HQ ISAF Public Affairs

A NATO medal parade was the centerpiece of 2008 Australia Day celebrations Jan. 26 for International Security Assistance Force, Australian Defence Force members serving on Op Slipper in Kabul.

Australia Day is a national day for reflection and demonstration of pride in Australia's accomplishments.

Australia's acting head of mission to Afghanistan, Angela Tierney, joined International Security Assistance Force Commander Gen. Dan McNeill in presenting NATO campaign medals to 20 Australian service members assigned to HQ Joint Task Force 633-Afghanistan and HQ ISAF. Many others representing contributing NATO nations looked attended the ceremony.

Deputy Commander Joint Task Force 633-A Brigadier Stuart Smith told the gathering that Australia Day recognized the birth of our national identity represented by the qualities of love of country, courage despite adversity, self discipline, initiative, teamwork and adaptability.

Brig. Smith reminded those present that that identity had been shaped by waves of migration from the same nations that had gathered to form the coalition force in Afghanistan.

"As we stand together in Afghanistan, we are surrounded by the same countries that assisted us in developing pride and faith in our country," Brig Smith said.

"We join them in guiding another country (Afghanistan) to a fresh start, a renewed identity."



Out of the Elements

Afghan army contingent gets new and improved base camp

**By Captain Rune Thomas Ege
Norwegian Armed Forces in
Afghanistan**

International Security Assistance Force Norwegian members have helped create a new home for the Afghan National Army's 209 Corps.

Camp Qeysar is a small, strategically positioned compound. The Norwegian-funded camp is located in Qeysar, in the southern parts of the remote Faryab-province of north-western Afghanistan, bordering Turkmenistan. A few miles to the south, just over the border to Badghis province, are the areas where ANA and ISAF troops, amongst them Norwegian and German soldiers, fought insurgents in fierce battles this fall.

"The camp is of great importance to us," said Commander Majid, Lieutenant Kandak of the 209 Corps, "Qeysar gives us the opportunity for a permanent presence in the areas in the southern parts of the Faryab province."

This winter the commander has seen his soldiers living in tents in a temporary camp, which would have served better for mud wrestling than housing armed forces for most of the winter.

"With the new camp, the security

for our soldiers will be substantially improved," said Commander Majid. "In addition, the soldiers will enjoy warm and comfortable surroundings between missions."

The camp will make the planning and conducting of future operations in the area considerably easier. "Our presence in the Qeysar-area is important to prevent hostile elements to gain foothold in the region," says Majid.

Representatives of the ISAF in northern Afghanistan also welcome the new camp.

"It is important both for afghan authorities, afghan national security forces and for ISAF to secure the permanent presence of ANA forces in this area," said Lt. Col. Tore Ketil Staarvik, chief of staff for the Norwegian Provincial Reconstruction Team Meymaneh. "The ANA presence leads to stability and the necessary security needed for development of this part of Faryab province."

Construction of Camp Qeysar was performed by local contractors at a cost of \$430,000.

"For us it is of great importance to use local, afghan contractors," said

Captain Reidun Haaland Vandvik, chief engineer of the Norwegian Armed Forces in Afghanistan. "In that way, building new camps not only leads to better ANA presence it also provides employment for local workers and generates income to the local community."

The new camp provides soldiers of 1st Kandak will have specifically designed living quarters. They will have toilet and shower facilities, guard posts, a built-in kitchen, ammunition storage facilities and different tents used as command post, dining facility and place of worship.

"On behalf of ISAF, I am pleased that Norway chose to finance the construction of the camp," said Col. Morten Kolbjoernsen, Deputy Commander of ISAF's Regional Command North. "The camp will be an important contribution in increasing the cooperation between ANA and ISAF."

This is not a first time for Norway and the Norwegian-led PRT Meymaneh in financing the construction of military compounds in Afghanistan. The ANA-camp in the province capital of Meymaneh is built with Norwegian funding.

Days after deploying here, U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Stephen Thackery saw first-hand the cost of the Taliban's attacks, and responded as he was trained ...

by saving lives

**By U.S. Air Force Capt. Michael Meridith
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

On Oct. 13, about a week after his arrival, the 33rd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron medic and Hamilton, Va., native was on alert when the call came. A suicide bombing had resulted in a large number of casualties.

While two other squadron medics, Tech. Sgt. David Denton and Tech. Sgt. Nicholas Falcon, flew out to the scene on Army CH-47 Chinook helicopters, Sergeant Thackery flew out alone on one of the squadron's HH-60 Pave Hawks.

"I treated four patients in the course of two missions – all were critical," he said. "We had everything from fractures and shrapnel wounds to cardiac arrests."

Since February, 2006, Air Force HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters, like those assigned to the 33rd ERQS, have been flying alongside Army aircraft to help provide medical evacuation throughout Afghanistan. Although a new mission for the Air Force, the skills of Airmen like Sergeant Thackery have made them critical to its success.

"During a mission, my training sets in and I start doing triage in my head. I work on one patient, while I'm thinking about how I'll treat the other. I don't think about what I've been through until afterward," said Sergeant Thackery, who deployed from the 43rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., in early October.

For medics like Sergeant Thackery, whose experiences are with the Air Force's aeromedical evacuation mission, MEDEVAC is something entirely new. While MEDEVAC missions move patients via helicopter from the point of injury - where they are often in critical condition - to a nearby medical facility, AE missions usually fly stabilized patients aboard



Staff Sgt. Jason McDowell, 33rd ERS, inspects an HH-60 Pave Hawk. (Capt. Michael Meridith)

fixed-wing aircraft from a medical facility to a higher level of care.

Typical AE missions can have anywhere from one to three nurses and between two and four medical technicians. If a patient is in critical condition, with

burns or breathing trouble, a critical care transport team is added to the flight. The CCATT team usually consists of a doctor, a nurse and a respiratory technician. However, things are far different for the MEDEVAC mission.

“On our missions we are the only medical provider on the aircraft. Between us and the rest of the crew, we are the critical care team for the patient and we can make the difference whether the patient makes it to the next level of care or dies,” said Tech. Sgt. William Crain, a Riverview, Fla., native who deployed to Afghanistan from Macdill Air Force Base, Fla.

Crain, who is also a firefighter and paramedic with the Hillsborough County, Fla., Fire Rescue Department, says that the nature of the mission – sometimes flying directly into harms’ way to pick up patients from the battlefield – means additional responsibilities for the medics. It’s a part of the job that he doesn’t shy away from.

“We’re not just medics – we’re part of the crew,” Sergeant Crain said. “We’re always alert for danger and looking around until we get to the scene.”

That shared responsibility and interaction between the entire crew – medics, pilots, flight engineer, aerial gunners, and the maintainers back at the

base – is just one part of what Sergeant Thackery calls “the wheel,” where each person is a “spoke” that helps ensure the entire mission turns properly.

“For a lot of our maintainers, it’s a race to see who can get out to the helicopter first when the call to launch comes,” said Master Sgt. Sean Siegal, the squadron’s Maintenance Production Superintendent, a Moreno Valley, CA, native, deployed from the 718th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, at Kadena Air Base, Japan. “The person who launches it gets to paint a green foot on the door representing the ‘save’ when it returns.

Despite the dusty Kandahar weather, which makes maintaining the Pave Hawks a tough job, Sergeant Siegal says he and his maintainers are glad to be part of the mission. “We work hard but you don’t hear many complaints. When we look back, we’ll be proud of what we did here.”

Although the MEDEVAC mission is still fairly recent for the Air Force, most among the 33rd ERQS find the challenges personally rewarding.

“Most of the missions are very

challenging because of the terrain, weather and low-illumination [many mission are flown at night]. Every time you go out it is something different, but it’s rewarding to help someone who’s injured and needs your help,” said flight engineer, Staff Sgt. Zachary Gyokeres, a Farmington Hills, Mich., native, who deployed with the squadron from its home station, at Kadena Air Base.

Despite the rewards, the nature of the mission means that Airmen are often exposed to the harsh results of the Taliban’s violent extremism – both against Coalition Forces and the Afghan people. However, the camaraderie shared by this close-knit unit helps them keep a balanced perspective and maintain their focus on the mission.

“It’s part of our daily life,” said Sergeant Thackery. “But we talk about it among ourselves and it helps. The people we work with are extremely professional and our motivation is to help get patients safely back to their families. It’s a noble thing and it is the high point of my career.”

Partnership brings hope of prosperity to Laghman

**By U.S. Air Force Capt. Heather Kekic
Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team**

“I make promises and my job is to fulfill these promises,” Laghman Provincial Governor Gulab Mangal told more than 200 tribal elders during a shura, or tribal council, held here Nov. 14, 2007.

Six weeks later, that declaration came true with the Dec. 31, 2007 signing of an \$8 million contract between the Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team and the Mashriq Engineering and Construction Company to build the first phase of a major new road here.

The PRT meets weekly with provincial leadership to discuss the development of the province. The projects that gain the most interest are those – like the Alishang Road – that increase security and stability, explained U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Ricci, Laghman PRT commander.

“This is truly a historic day for Laghman and all of Afghanistan,” Colonel Ricci said. “An \$8 million project creates a lot of jobs for Afghan people, which inherently brings security and will hopefully enhance Laghman economic growth.”

Governor Mangal praised the partnership with the PRT,

noting the result would be an increase in the province’s ability to move people and goods more safely and effectively.

“The PRT and Provincial Government have a good relationship. My engineers and the PRT engineers worked together to provide the best quality of work and to select the best contractor,” Mangal said. “I am very happy for that.”

According to PRT officials, the road contract is expected to lead to decreased travel time between the province’s districts, increased economic exports and easier access to northern areas for government representatives.

“I see this project as a symbol of stability and peace for Laghman people,” said Governor Mangal. “I hope that the New Year will be full of peace, prosperity and full of reconstruction projects for Laghman people.”

The performance period for the contract begins Jan. 6 and the contractor has 485 days to complete the project. The first phase of Alishang Road will be 14.26 miles long, approximately 23 feet wide and will incorporate two bridges. The first bridge will be 393 feet long and the second bridge will be 295 feet long. Each bridge will be 27 feet wide. A proposed second phase to complete the road is awaiting approval and funding.

Blaze in Mazar-e Sharif

By Fridtjof Ludwig
Regional Command North

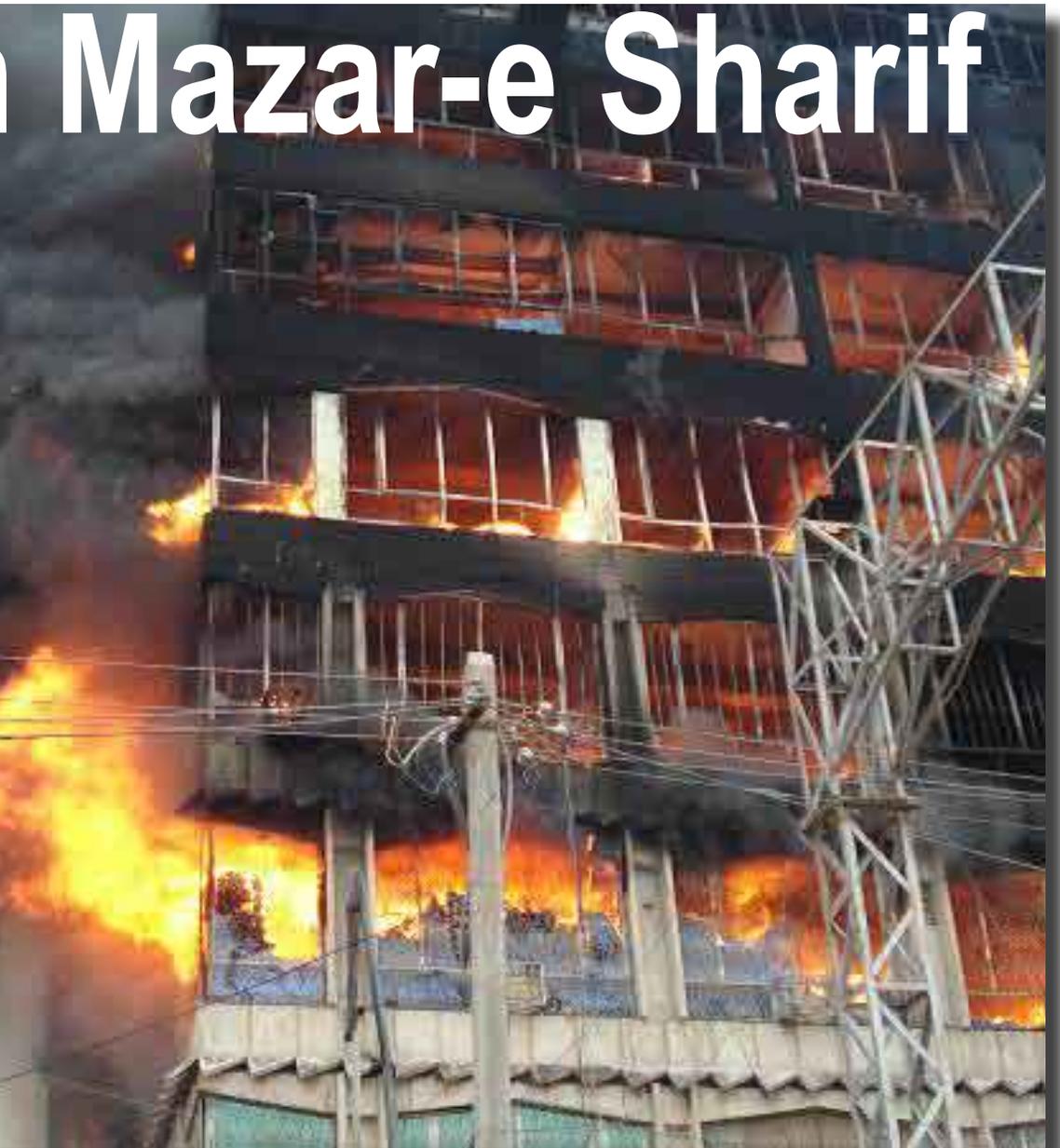
As with many other areas of Afghan life, ravaged by Taliban rule, fire protection fails meet the needs of Afghanistan. For this reason fires usually have devastating effects, especially when they break out in densely populated areas. Such was the case with a recent fire in Mazar-e Sharif.

The fire began at night in a department store in the central part of the city. A local fire brigade responded shortly afterwards and began fighting the fire, but the crew's modest means were not sufficient. The fire fighters lacked suitable extinguishing agents and respiratory protective devices to get fire inside the building under control. The blaze ripped through the building destroying people's livelihoods as it moved along. The local officials requested assistance from the International Security Assistance force, specifically Operational Wing Mazar-e Sharif through Regional Command North. However, by the time the German-led emergency response force arrived, flames had engulfed a block of stores and spread to an adjoining seven-storey building.

Afghans were running past local fire fighters into the burning building to salvage some of their possessions. Much was lost. Yet, there was still time to prevent even greater destruction.

The ISAF fire fighters quickly helped to re-establish a cordon to allow them to do their work and prevent civilian injuries. The fire chief quickly assessed the area and how the fire was spreading to determine an attack plan that would prevent the fire from further spreading. He noted the noted that most damaged would occur if the fire reached a large shopping and storage complex adjoining two burning buildings to the rear.

Gas cylinders were said to housed in the storage complex. The ISAF forces beat back flames with foam and lots of water.



Fire destroys building in Mazar-e Sharif. (Courtesy photo)

The initial response team brought 3,000 litres, while the Mazar-e Sharif Logistics Support Battalion brought another 23,000 litres. Within a few hours the fire was brought under control ... but finished.

Forces of the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army arrived on scene to support the cordon. With situation under control, the ISAF forces returned to camp. And as is routine, they immediately replenished water reserves and exchanged empty air cylinders. Little did they know they would need them so soon. Officials received a report that smoke from the sight of the fire was increasing and getting darker – a clear sign that fire was smouldering inside the ruins. The task force responded again.

“When we arrived flames blazed up again from the upper floors as well as from the basement of the larger building,” said German 1st Lt. Roland D., the fire

protection chief. “Without fuel and with frozen equipment the Afghan fire brigade had to discontinue the fire fighting operations.” After a short discussion with the on-scene commander, Capt. Thomas K., fire fighters start again.

Captain K. reassessed the situation to ensure fire fighters to the proper course of action, keeping the safety of fire fighters in mind. “As in the whole of Afghanistan, the threat situation is unpredictable here in Mazar-e Sharif,” said the captain. “We must keep this in mind. Although we merely provide help, we could become the target of an attack at any time.”

By nightfall all fires were finally extinguished, using 100,000 litres of water, a number of air cylinders, lots of fire extinguishing foam, several gallons of vehicle fuel and several hours of labor. Very small prices to prevent further loss of valued possessions and lives.

General Dammjacob takes charge in the north

By Fridtjof Ludwig
Regional Command North

Command of the German-led Regional Command North passed to Brig. Gen. Dieter Dammjacob, who replaced Brig. Gen. Dieter Warnecke during a ceremony in January. Maj. Gen. Bruno Kasdorf, (former) Chief of Staff, Headquarters International Security Assistance Force officiated the event.

General Dammjacob is a veteran of the German Air Force veteran with experience in an international environment. Since 2005 the general has served as deputy commander and chief of staff of the German Air Force Air Operations Command, in Kalkar in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. He has about 3,500 flying hours in jet aircraft.

General Warnecke was both reflective and optimistic when talking about his command of RC-N and the future of the regional command.

“The north of Afghanistan is a good example of security, stability, reconstruction and development to the whole of Afghanistan,” said the general of ISAF operations in the North.

He added that drug cultivation, organized crime and corruption jeopardize security and thus impede reconstruction.



Brig. Gens. Warnecke (left) and Dammjacob (right) greet each other during the change of command, while Maj. Gen. Kasdorf looks on. (Bundesweher)

In the future, it remains essential to push ahead with the build-up of the Afghan security forces, he said.

“ISAF sticks to its mission and will not stop supporting the development of the country intensively,” he said. “In particular, the national security forces must be enabled to accept an ever-increasing share of responsibility.”

According to General Warnecke, General Dammjacob can expect the

continued outstanding support from the 2,500 German soldiers under his command and the local population.

General Dammjacob assured the members of RC-N he would provide them clear guidance and support as they continued to complete the ISAF mission. He also committed to ensuring the Afghan people in the region would have the security they needed to continue their development as a free society.

Money spent on agriculture is a hopeful investment

By U.S. Air Force Capt. Heather Kekic
Mehtar Lam Provincial
Reconstruction Team

A \$300 thousand-construction contract promises economic growth for Afghans here, according to the Airman leading engineering efforts for the Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The contract for the construction of four agricultural buildings in the Mehtar Lam agricultural compound was signed Dec. 30, 2007, according to PRT engineer, U.S. Air Force Capt. Peter Joo.

One of the agricultural buildings will be for farm equipment storage and maintenance; the second building will be for general purpose storage (to include feed and fertilizer); and the third and

fourth will be used for cool storage.

“The cool storage facilities are a first for Laghman Province,” added Captain Joo. “We are building these facilities as a test. If they work well we are going to build more cool-storage facilities in surrounding villages.”

The cool-storage facilities will be powered by micro-hydro plants which require very little energy. Additionally, because the buildings are largely underground they also incorporate the Earth’s temperature to maintain coolness, said Captain Joo.

The Laghman government recommended this project to the PRT as a necessity to encourage growth in the province’s agricultural sector. The

new buildings will aid in the speedy distribution of seeds and fertilizer, allow greater control and increased lifespan of agricultural equipment and provide increased shelf life for fresh goods.

In addition to the long-term economic growth promised by enhancement to the area’s agricultural capability, the contract also provides an immediate boost to the local economy.

No less than 80 percent of the work force will be day laborers and at least half of the workers will be Afghans residing within a five-kilometer radius of the worksite.

The project was slated to start Jan. 6 and be completed within 240 days, sometime this fall.

