



CJ9 in KANDAHAR striving to achieve more

■ by LTC NLD A Math Weijers & MAJ ESP A Jose Vazquez Pombo

Although HQ NRDC-ITA personnel are predominantly based in Kabul at the ISAF HQ, situational awareness is paramount if we are to conduct successful and informed operations against the enemy. With that in mind those NRDC-ITA personnel operating within the Stability Division in Kabul took the opportunity and departed to Kandahar RC(S).

The CJ-9 Branch was represented by LTC Math Weijers and Major Jose Vazquez Pombo, both were tasked to establish a working relationship within their subordinate Headquarters Stability Branch within Regional Command South (RC (S)) based at Kandahar Airfield. Some twenty Staff Officers were involved in the trip including many from Solbiate Olona. We deployed by C-130

from Kabul International Airport and arrived at a hot and dusty Kandahar after an uneventful flight. The first day of the visit was a chance to meet and discuss operational matters with the RC (S) G9 and CIVMIL cell. With so many different nations and forces involved in the Afghan theatre one of the major challenges is to ensure continuity and coordination. During the discussions that were held the staff from both Headquarters were able to exchange views and ideas on the challenges, experiences and ways ahead that will be required to develop better communications in order to enable ISAF HQ to provide more efficient support to the ongoing work being carried out by of RC (S). It was also an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others and to gain from them, the necessary information to properly plan future CJ9 orientated operations. Away from a busy meeting schedule, we were able to see for ourselves the much talked about restructuring of the Kandahar Airfield. This huge base in the middle of a barren and desolate part of Afghanistan is the home to over 15,000 coalition forces. A hugely impressive operating base it is currently undergoing a massive restructuring in order to be ready to receive the soon to arrive 17,000 troop reinforcement.

During the day two, we went to visit a Forward Operating Base in the Zahri District in Kandahar province, called FOB “Wilson”, with the rest of HQ ISAF personnel. A company of Canadians are doing an excellent job there, in hard conditions, providing support to ANSF, supporting the District Governor and facilitating the development in the area. The visit demonstrated to us the reality of current operations, the challenges our troops face on the ground and how they solve the problems within their capabilities, whilst operating in one of the most dangerous areas in Afghanistan. The visit showed us the very real differences between operating in the comparative safety of the HQ in Kabul and the reality on the frontline. For us the staff, it reinforced the need to take into consideration at all times the needs of those operating in the RCs, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs). After a short two days stay in Kandahar we flew back to Kabul, far more aware of the need for ISAF HQ personnel to take into consideration the soldiers that are operating under the most difficult of circumstances.

Picture: “Kandahar Airfield terminal” was the last Taliban stronghold in 2001.

