Commander ISAF IX takes the reins

Mujahedin Victory Day at Chaghcharan

Ex-Commanders hand in their weapons

ANP On Patrol

Powering TV Hill

plus lots more...

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This is my first ISAF Mirror and comes just weeks into our tour in Afghanistan. As such, I would like to pay tribute to ISAF VIII, under Lt Gen Mauro Del Vecchio, for their hard work, for their successes and for setting the conditions for ISAF IX and the expansion of NATO’s presence in Afghanistan.

I have spent much of the first few weeks engaging with the Government of Afghanistan and its Ministries. I have also spent time visiting RACs and PRTs throughout the country in order to get a better feel for the situation in Afghanistan. Everywhere I have gone I have been impressed with the warm welcome of the Afghans and the professionalism of our soldiers. I am quite clear that there is an overwhelming majority of Afghans that want us here to support the development of Afghanistan after over 25 years of war, and I am determined that they should be rewarded with the peace and prosperity that they deserve. It is only a small minority that stand in their way and we must ensure that they are not allowed to interfere as the future prosperity of the country depends on both a secure and stable environment.

NATO expansion is going to be one of the greatest challenges we shall face in our tour. No one should be under any illusion about our capability and determination to build successfully on the excellent work of the Coalition. Nor are we doing this in isolation; it is very much done in partnership with the Afghan Army and Police. There will be fighting, for which we are all trained and prepared. However, fighting is not the only thing we shall be doing and, clearly, the less we have to do the better. We are there to do much more and that is to expand and deepen the areas that the government’s writ runs and to allow the international community to do the things that the Afghan people really want, such as providing water, power and transport, to allow them to stand on their own feet as a proud and successful nation.

To finish, I would encourage you all to read my intent, which is on the next page. Read it carefully and understand it. It underpins all that we are doing here in Afghanistan; apply it appropriately, using your own initiative and drive, and do not wait for detailed orders. In particular, get out and about; engage with your Afghan and international partners and actively develop your relationships and thus improve the sometimes poor coordination between us all. Do not wait for the other person – lead the way!
COMMANDER’S INTENT
ISAF IX

My guiding intent is, through our actions and a linked information operation firmly rooted in substance, to reinforce the people of Afghanistan’s belief that long-term peace and growing economic prosperity from which everyone can benefit is possible if they continue to give their government, and its international partners, their support and encouragement.

ISAF, in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) and the International Community, is to think and plan for the long-term future of Afghanistan, seizing short-term opportunities as they occur but always in a way that is in step with the long-term vision for the country. We are to focus on action that actively assists the GOA in nurturing and further developing the consent of the people to the GOA (our centre of gravity) and its international partners, not least NATO. Respect for the people of Afghanistan and their faith is to be central to all we do.

Within this framework, ISAF will:

a. In step with GOA’s National Development Strategy, concentrate on those activities that will most clearly and quickly assist the GOA in its drive to establish the sustainable economic growth on which the future of the country depends. Some examples of this approach include:

   (1) Helping ensure the security of mineral resources, border crossing points, and the transport network, water and power supplies.

   (2) Supporting the GOA in the development and prosecution of its Counter Narcotics (CN) campaign.

   (3) Assisting in the GOA’s economic and human resource development strategy so as to enable Afghanistan to become increasingly self-sufficient.

b. Work to resolve conflict and reduce tension within Afghanistan, focusing on the holistic defeat of the residual insurgency threat to the country. Supporting and helping to train the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to a standard that will enable them in time to assume full responsibility for the internal and external security of the country will be critical to success.

ISAF is to be prepared to respond positively to requests to help the GOA and International Agencies (IA) with its guidance, advice and coordinating skills as required, in order to assist actively in the achievement of these aims.

My Main Effort is to extend and deepen the areas in which the GOA and IAs/NGOs can safely operate in the interests of the people of Afghanistan, enabling the ANSF increasingly to take the lead in achieving this aim. In this way too I will seize the initiative against those who oppose the GOA through violent means, by using appropriate and well considered measures - including the robust use of force should it be necessary - at times and in places of my choosing thereby forcing them to respond to my design.

SPANISH HISTORY IN KABUL UNIVERSITY

Maj José Manuel Esponera Román (SP Army)
ISAF HQ CJ3/7 SO Targeting TSC.

A Spanish History course has started in Kabul University as a collaboration between the Spanish personnel posted in HQ ISAF and the Kabul University Spanish Language Department. The course has been taught by Major Francisco Yanez Giner from CJ9 branch.

Recognising Major Giner’s previous experience as a former lecturer in the Spanish Military Academy and his History degree from Zaragoza University, D. M. Kabir Nezami, department chief, accepted with great pleasure the offer by Major Giner to give Spanish History lessons to the two last courses of students.

The lessons introduce the university students to Spanish culture. The students were all very interested in the lessons and were interactive with the lecturer and asked several questions. The other teachers of the department praised the initiative. It is very important to have a Spanish teacher in the department to help the students to perfect the language and to understand Spanish history from a native point of view.

Kabul University has been highly regarded in Spanish affairs, but with the Taliban regime some departments were closed, including the Spanish Language Department. Nowadays the University plays a very important role in improving Afghan Society and in moving forward from the long period of wars and conflict.

The collaboration by the Spanish Contingent in Kabul with the University stopped when the Spanish Contingent deployed to the northwest provinces. When Spanish personnel were commissioned into HQ ISAF the collaboration was re-established. It is important for the collaboration to continue in the future with personnel specialising in different areas.

It is very important to highlight the female presence in the University, as it contributes to the sense of normality. The lack of women wearing burkas is another important aspect. It is significant that the number of students joining the Spanish Language Department of the University has grown to forty-five this year.
COMMANDER ISAF IX TAKES THE REINS

S/Sgt Brian Lamar (US Army) 
HQ ISAF PIO

After training hard for over a year, the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps assumed the mission of the International Security Assistance Force IX, under the command of Lt. Gen. David Richards, during a change of command ceremony in Kabul on 4 May 2006.

Lt. Gen. Mauro Del Vecchio, the outgoing commander of ISAF VIII, relinquished his command with nostalgic comments about his time in Afghanistan and powerful words about the fallen soldiers during ISAF VIII.

The Afghan National Army Honour Guard attended the ceremony alongside scores of soldiers from within the ranks of ISAF IX.

The change of command comes at a pivotal time for ISAF and Afghanistan’s development. The Stage Three expansion into the southern region will test the new headquarters’ capability and mettle.

During the ceremony, Lt. Gen. Richards spoke of the challenges of expanding operations into the south, “I will seize the initiative by using well considered measures including robust military force whenever necessary,” he said.

The main goal of ISAF is to assist the Government of Afghanistan to further extend its authority throughout the country. During Stage Three, ISAF will take on responsibility for the six additional provinces in the southern part of the country. It will move on to extend its mission to the eastern part of Afghanistan.

Lt. Gen. Richards said although ISAF was well equipped for combat operations, its main aim was to support reconstruction and development. Missions include support to the Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups and support to the Afghan government in its counter-narcotic operations.

ISAF will play a key-supporting role in the Government’s balanced counter-narcotics strategy.

Questions have been raised in the minds of local and international journalists of the capability and size of the NATO forces in the southern region. The number of ISAF-led troops in Afghanistan will increase from 9,000 to 15,000.

“ISAF’s composition and the way we are organized makes us completely capable of accomplishing this mission and more so. ISAF IX went through a very difficult training regime and identified where we need to gain in capability. We acquired that capability and we trained. We arrived in Afghanistan trained and ready,” said Brig. Gen. Stephen Layfield, Deputy Chief of Staff Operations and Acting Deputy Commander of Security for ISAF IX.

As operations expand into the South, ISAF commanders will not hesitate to use appropriate military measures to stifle disruptive elements opposing democracy and the rule of law in Afghanistan, according to Lt. Gen. Richards.
Thirty international delegates attended a five-day course in April run by The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on the role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in improving stability and security in Afghanistan.

PRTs help the Government of Afghanistan extend its authority in the provinces, facilitate the development of a secure environment and provide a visible international presence that deters terrorist and criminal activities, especially in remote areas.

Afghanistan has 23 PRTs, nine in the north and west in the ISAF Area of Operation, and fourteen in the south and east, the area where the Coalition currently has primary security responsibilities. PRTs are structured as civil-military partnerships and the course focused on the need for civilian and military elements to work closely together to build strong relationships with local authorities, supporting all sectors of security sector reform and shaping the environment for reconstruction and development.

The course which began with an opening address by Tom Koenigs, the United Nations Special Representative for Afghanistan, included presentations on the political and security challenges for Afghanistan, international support to the Government of Afghanistan, Government development strategies and the harmonization of best practices between PRTs.

The military elements of RAC(W) and RAC(N) PRTs come under ISAF command and on the second day of the course the participants visited HQ ISAF in Kabul where they were welcomed by the Minister Hikmet Cetin, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative and the then Commanding Officer of the ISAF operation in Afghanistan, General Mauro Del Vecchio.

As part of the military day they also received presentations on Operation Enduring Freedom given by Major General Chris Wilson, Deputy Commanding General Combined Forces Command Afghanistan and Major General Benjamin Freakley of the Combined Joint Task Force 76 mission.

The course culminated in a visit to PRT Heart where the delegates met with the Governor and Provincial Council of Herat and were able to see at first hand the special relationship between ISAF, UNAMA and the military and civilian personnel working in the PRT.

The course included an opening reception at the Serena Hotel attended by Dr Zalmai Rassoul, the National Security Advisor, Minister Zarar Moqbil from the Ministry of Interior, Farouq Wardak, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Governor Arman, the Governor of Zabul, Gulab Mangal, the Governor of Lagman and Eng. Haji Mohammad Omar, Governor of Kunduz province.

Speaking after the conference COMISAF VIII, General Del Vecchio, said ‘It has been a very successful training course and the participants have had some extremely productive discussions. PRTs are the cornerstone of post-conflict development. They embody a joint military and civilian approach to stabilizing Afghanistan and this combined UNAMA, ISAF training course has provided a most informative insight into the unique and valuable relationship between the two and the PRTs in the field.’
This year, Easter holy holiday for the Orthodox Christians was on 23rd April. The celebration started on 21st and continued until 23rd April. During these days, Romanian soldiers who are part of KMNB IX attended a voluntary donation, as it is tradition to help people in need. The soldiers decided to give a small present to the children of Afghanistan and chose a school in Police District 3, which is located near the base of the TV Hill village.

The school was not specially selected by a superior; the soldiers were those who made the choice of the school. Every day they pass through the village, where most of the pupils live. They have seen how the children go to school and back, heading up the sloping road and they proposed to their commander to help those kind Afghan children. They collected around 500 dollars and with this money prepared an individual kit of a notebook, pencil, ball point pen, sharpener and eraser for 400 children. They did not forget the school’s teachers; they received some maps and other stationery for the teacher’s room.

The Chief of Staff of Kabul Multinational Brigade, Colonel Ionel Timplaru led the activity; he is also Senior National Representative of Romanian Army. He friendly explained to the Director of the School that there is special occasion for the people of his country on this day and they wanted to donate some gifts to the Afghan children. He explained that the goodwill of the holiday means they have to help other people. “...We are here not only as representatives of our country but also as a part of our South Eastern European Brigade. We are here for helping and supporting you, our soldiers decided to give some small gifts to Afghani children. The gift is small, but Kabul is big, Afghanistan is bigger, and people who need help are many, but our capabilities are limited”.

The Colonel also expressed that assistance activities like that one will continue in the future. The manager of the KMNB CIMIC events, Lieutenant Colonel Ionel Rado RO-A, Chief G9 (CIMIC) branch was the main organizer for the event also. He said, “…We are conducting a lot of projects, here everything started when our soldiers began to go to TV Hill. First, two officers from our brigade, one from Bulgaria and one from Turkey gave money for supplying the village with water, and after that our donation. We selected that school because most of the children are from the TV Hill village.”

Finally, we could say that the smiles on the children faces in that school, on that day were the best gratitude for our soldiers and their goodwill. The gift was small but given from the heart. It will be very nice to have more happy events like that one from all nations representing the international community here in Afghanistan. We are here as friends for helping the Afghan people to establish peace and security in their beautiful and great country and to have prosperity and a bright future.
POWERING TV HILL

S/Sgt Brian Lamar (US Army)
HQ ISAF PIO

On a wind swept and barren mountain that casts it’s shadow on the sprawling city of Kabul, about two-dozen soldiers from the Kabul Multi-National Brigade work as radio operators and communications repairmen on what most NATO soldiers know as TV Hill.

The International Security Assistance Force makes sure that these soldiers have water, cooking fuel and electricity on the 2,600-metre peak. All the power that the station is supplied comes from a small system of generators that run on diesel fuel.

Currently, the fuel is supplied to the land mine ridden area through a British-owned company supply truck that comes once a day to stock up small plastic fuel canisters. The soldiers on the hill then refill the generators with the cans.

ISAF has developed new contracts that will make life easier for the soldiers living and working on TV Hill. The new fuel storage facility will hold enough fuel to supply the hill for much longer with generated power. “This will help the soldiers on TV Hill greatly. They will not have to constantly fill the generators with fuel cans,” said, Maj. Andy Doig of CJ8.

The biggest benefit of the fuel storage facility will be in the winter. The trucks will not have to make the steep and narrow journey nearly as often, according to Doig.

Living conditions for the soldiers has been improving over the past several months. New accommodation complete with air-conditioned rooms and a dining facility were added to the compound three months ago. “Most of us (KMNB soldiers) like it up here. It is okay living. The kitchen has good food and the rooms are very nice,” said Hauptgefreiter (OR-3) Sebastian Hartmann.

“Living on the hill in the summer would be the best time to be up here. It is above the smog of the city and a lot cooler than the city,” said Doig.

MILITARY MARCH IN CAMP WAREHOUSE

Lt Orlin Garkov (BU Army)
PIO Plans, KMNB

The biggest International Military sport event, which ever happens in ISAF’s camps, is definitely the DANCON March. It is organizing by the Danish Contingent and takes place every 4 or 6 months, depending on the shifting of the contingent. According to statistics DANCON is one of the biggest sport events, which showed to us that on the last march, which took place on 15 April in Camp Warehouse, there were 279 participants representing 18 different nations.

The march is a Danish tradition, which comes from 1950 when a contingent of Danish troops was stationed as a Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. Since this date, the march has become a tradition for the Danish men and women and their international comrades. The distance is 25km, in combat uniform carrying additional weight of 10 kilograms. Most likely the purpose is to improve soldiers’ endurance but most of the participants just join in for the good idea to have run and competition in that variable multinational environment. Among the contestants, were servicemen of all different ranks and ages starting with young soldiers and NCOs and finishing with senior officers as colonels. It is worth mentioning that on the previous march, in December last year, ISAF VIII’s Commander LTG Del Vecchio also took part.

The march on 15 April was very well organised. Major Kim Berg from Danish Army was the key-organizing leader for the event. He took all necessary measures to assure the event. There were refreshments on the start/finish line, first aid was by the Danish Doctor and additional medical assistance was provided by the German Hospital. Signs directing the runners in the right direction marked the competition road. The weather was also on the side of the runners.

The competition began at 0700 and this time there were two people who crossed the finishing line first. OR-2 Roberto Mariano from Portuguese QRF and OR-8 Michael Kröger German Army finished together for 1:59hrs. They finished together with cached hands showing to the audience their comradeship. Four minutes, later OR-1 Joel Santos from Portuguese QRF won the second place with time of 2:03hrs. In third place was MSG Mir Wais from Kabul Military Training Center, Afghan Army who finished in 2:11hrs. All participants who managed to run the entire route of 25km (8 full laps of CW) received certificates for their contribution in the march.

To conclude, I would like to mention that sport initiatives like this one are improving the cooperation and understanding among the ISAF’s nations. It would be good to have them in the future more frequently.
On 23rd April was the beginning of a new happy event. The Turkish officers and soldiers in KMNB were about to donate some school materials in Mahmudzai Village School in Bagrami District. The Turkish Donation originated because of the National Children’s Day of Turkish Republic, which takes place on 23rd April.

Around 600 notebooks, 700 pencils and some maps of Afghanistan were our payload. The journey was around one hour, through very narrow streets that some time Toyotas barely fit through. The people of Mahmudzai Village in Bagrami district were very friendly and joyfully waving at us. These people really needed our help and assistance, I pondered. When we arrived at the school a bunch of children surrounded us immediately. Typical Afghan pretty girls and sun burned boys were trying to talk to us with some gestures and jokes. Then the Principal of the school and the teachers greeted us warmly by shaking our hands with both hands, meaning a warm welcome.

We gathered in the Principal’s office. The Turkish Senior Officer Colonel Kazim Daikiran made a speech to explain the significance of the day. On the way back Camp Warehouse, the Turkish Company in KMNB together with the Police in Sheberghan, but when the Swedes took over the lead in the middle of March he moved to the new camp Northern Lights in Mazar-e-Sharif. There he has worked in a small police team together with the Swedish and the Romanian police adviser.

A lot of his time he has spent out in the field. This day he is out on a patrol to visit the policemen in Dehdadi. After stopping by in the centre of the village, Thomas heads in to the police office. Meanwhile, the soldiers are watching the vehicles. And they are also being watched by the citizens of Dehdadi. Many curious children approach the soldiers, and some grown ups too. The soldiers use the opportunity to hand out some copies of the ISAF magazine Sada-e-Azadi, and to make contact with the people. Even though the interpreter is at the meeting on the police station, it’s possible to get a good connection with the people.

When Thomas comes out from the meeting he is satisfied. Two policemen, Gholam Nabi and Abdul Wahed, will join the soldiers on a patrol in the area. The police are keen to show their new police office at the other end of the village. On the way they meet another policeman, who comes on his bike. “We have a car but it is usually broken. So I bring my own bike to work”, he says. Thomas is disappointed. “I don’t know why he didn’t want to come with us. It would look good if they came back to the station in our vehicles, and they would have something to tell their colleagues. I bet that they, like us, are curious to see the equipment of others. Maybe they will come with us next time”, Thomas offers. But Gholam Nabi refuses the offer. “We are used to walking”, he says. Thomas is disappointed. “I really like to meet other policemen, we have a lot in common. I would like to come back here and work as a police adviser, in my police uniform. One thing I think is important for the police, and that I have stated many times in my reports, is their salaries. The policemen need better pay. That is one way to stop corruption”. He finds that the patrolling together with ANP is important and very rewarding. “When people see us together, it is good for ISAF and it is good for the ANP. It increases the trust for both of us”.

The soldiers and the police have reached the new police station, an impressive building. But, there is one problem: there is no fuel to run the generators, so the computers cannot be used at the moment, or the light. Thomas promises to do his best to get the message across.

He feels that he is helped a lot by the fact that he is a policeman at home. “I really like to meet other policemen, we have a lot in common. I would like to come back here and work as a police adviser, in my police uniform. One thing I think is important for the police, and that I have stated many times in my reports, is their salaries. The policemen need better pay. That is one way to stop corruption”. He finds that the patrolling together with ANP is important and very rewarding. “When people see us together, it is good for ISAF and it is good for the ANP. It increases the trust for both of us”.

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On the way back the patrol is met by the rest of the soldiers in the two Patrias. “Please, come with us and see what our vehicles look like and we can take you back to the station”, Thomas offers. But Gholam Nabi refuses the offer. “We are used to walking”, he says. Thomas is disappointed. “I don’t know why he didn’t want to come with us. It would look good if they came back to the station in our vehicles, and they would have something to tell their colleagues. I bet that they, like us, are curious to see the equipment of others. Maybe they will come with us next time”, Thomas hopes.
FOUNDATIONS FOR A NEW BEGINNING

Maj Lopez Morillo (SP Army)
PPT Qala-e-Naw

On 30th April, the Governor of Badghis Province, Enayat Enayatullah, participated in laying the foundation stone of a new co-educational school in Muqur City, with Colonel Jose Antonio Alonso, Commander of Qala-e-Naw PRT.

It is the first time that the Governor had visited Muqur, and he made a speech in which he said that the donation was an example to the population in which deceased fellow comrades can be remembered.

Ex-commanders affiliated to Islamic Jamiat fraction; Yousuf Bay from Sholgara, Mohammad Rafiq from Chaharkent and Doctor Nasruddin Hamdard (current Police Security officer in Mazar-e-Sharif) handed in 150 weapons to Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) process on April 13.

DIAG Secretary in Mazar-e-Sharif said: "Between theses weapons, there is one Law with 131 ammunitions which is very dangerous." According to Basir Arifi, These Ex-commanders aimed to insure security and live under ruling of law in their area so they handed in their weapons.

He mentioned: "There are other illegal commanders with their weapons in our responsibility area as well, but we hope that they will hand in their weapons and participate in reconstructing of their country in soon future."

Basir Arifi added: "If the Illegally Armed Groups don’t hand in their weapons, we will take over them by Afghan Governments force.

One of the Ex-commanders who didn’t want his name to be published said: "There is no need for weapons in our country any more. The Illegally Armed Groups should hand in their weapons by this opportunity (DIAG process) and they should start their normal life. Otherwise I am sure that Afghan government has the ability to take over all of them by force and punish them."

DIAG process in all Afghanistan has 3 steps; at 1st step the illegal groups should hand in their weapons voluntarily to Afghan government. At 2nd step if they don’t hand in their weapons volitional, Afghan government will negotiate with them to hand in. At last step if they don’t hand in their weapons that would be the time when Afghan government will seize their weapons by force.

Local people emphasized the event with the throwing of rose petals and in the villages, along the route of the Governor’s motorcade, were placards with welcoming messages. Security was provided by the ANP in coordination with the Spanish Legioinaire Infantry Brigade forces, who belong to the PRT.

As well as laying the foundation stone, the Governor, the PRT Commander and the Chief of the District distributed humanitarian aid consisting of clothes and school materials to one hundred people.

EX-COMMANDERS HAND IN THEIR WEAPONS

Yahya Najafizada (LN)
PPO Mazar-e-Sharif

According to DIAG secretary in Mazar-e-Sharif, Mohammad Basir Arifi, they collected more than 1400 different kinds of weapons in their responsibility area in last year.

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CONSTRUCTION OF FARAH CITY
VEHICLE MAINTENANCE BUILDING

Lt Rick Nye (US Navy)
PIO PRT Farah

The Farah City vehicle maintenance building has been as much of an educational experience as it has been a construction project.

Abdul Basir is the owner and operator of Rahmani Construction in Farah Province. He started his company five years ago after having left a life as an army officer, overseeing helicopter maintenance. His company, which regularly employs 20 people, is now a part of the reconstruction effort in Farah province. Currently, Rahmani Construction is working on two schools, funded by the Embassy of Japan and a Farah City vehicle maintenance facility funded by the United States’ PRT Commander’s Emergency Relief Program (CERP).

This building will provide the city of Farah with a place to maintain $125,000 worth of vehicles and equipment provided through CERP, which will be delivered in the upcoming weeks and includes a Bobcat skid steer loader, dump truck, excavator, trailer and all necessary attachments. The PRT recognizes that it’s not only important to provide assistance through support of vehicles and equipment but that its also equally important to provide training and the means for maintaining that equipment.

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The PRT Chief Engineer, who owns his own company and brings 18 years experience in the commercial construction business, has taught not only better construction techniques, but has advised numerous construction company owners in the area on the tools they need. This helps them to improve the overall operation of their companies. As noted by LTC Boyer, in the past they would mix just gravel with the cement, whereas now they know to use a mix of clean rock, sand, and cement, enabling greater control of the concrete. They have also been shown the latest methods for pouring concrete slabs using new tools introduced to them. This results in a concrete slab that is significantly stronger, longer lasting and less likely to fail.

Mr. Basir is thankful for the training he has received from the PRT engineers. He stated, "Now you will see that everybody in Farah will know how to pour concrete." The use of concrete started in Farah only seven years ago and he specifically noted the advice he has received on better methods for mixing and pouring concrete as well as new techniques in using tools that can be made from parts that are readily available in this remote province. He now acquires clean rock from a local quarry company and sifts out the gravel to get clean sand. As evidence of this strong relationship, Mr. Basir quoted an Afghan saying, "When we say we are buddies, we won’t mess it up."

The PRT’s Engineering department has been overseeing the construction of the vehicle maintenance facility, which started with a competitive bidding process, where 12 local construction companies competitively bid for the contract. Construction began in February and is about 3 weeks away from completion.

MUJAHEDIN VICTORY DAY
CELEBRATIONS AT CHAGHCHARAN

Maj Albertas Dusevicius (LI Army)
A/PIO Chaghcharan

Three days fiesta for the occasion of Mujadehin Revolution Victory Day celebrations took place between 28th-30th April in Chaghcharan. Among many activities played by locals was the tug-of-war between PRT Chaghcharan team and a local team. The event was arranged for Sunday 30th April.

The Friday and Saturday saw crowds of Afghans, who came from all regions of Ghor province, taking part in celebration. There were representatives from different tribes, former warlords and mujahideens but here they were rivals only on the buskashi field. The Ghor people enjoyed the festivities, which were performed in a calm and peaceful atmosphere.

The main event on Sunday, with no doubt, was the tug-of-war. With personal invitation of Governor of Ghor, Shah Abdul Ahad Atzali, the PRT Chaghcharan team, led by Cpt. Arturas Gimzauskas, took part in the competition. The local Chaghcharan team consisted of fit but light weighted athletes. They demonstrated outstanding will to win but was lost to the heavily built Lithuanians and Danes. On the second attempt the local team tried even harder but once again the PRT team succeeded.

After the tug-of-war the PRT team was granted a prize of 100 Afghani, which was immediately donated to Chaghcharan orphanage. The governor of Ghor, Shah Abdul Ahad Atzali, delivered a speech stressing the very cordial relationships established between PRT Chaghcharan and Chaghcharan community which make very positive impact on stability and security in whole Ghor.
On the 25th of April the Spanish Minister of Defence, José Antonio Alonso Suarez, visited the Legionnaires Infantry Brigade forces of the Spanish PRT in Badghis province. The Minister was accompanied by the Spanish Ambassador in Kabul, José Turpín and further personnel from the Spanish Ministry of Defence.

After being received by a guard of honour, the Minister met with the military and civilian personnel who work at the PRT. He received a number of briefings that exposed the organization and tasks of the Spanish Contingent.

Following on from the briefings he visited sites where the PRT have been involved. The PRT Commander explained the works carried out by the PRT, for example, the city now has electric light in its streets and official buildings. President Karzai, inaugurated this only three days ago.

Travelling round the city he went to the Power Station where the Minister had a meeting with the civilian authorities. He expressed his gratitude for the welcome of the Spanish troops in Qala-e-Naw and expressed the commitment of the Spanish, to the Governor, in maintaining their assistance in Badghis province. The Governor has thanked the role carried out by Spain and its soldiers in this area.

Before departing the Minister took the opportunity to visit the bridge over the city river, where an International Spanish Cooperation Agency revealed the finished project.

Following on from his visit José Antonio Alonso Suarez has recommended that Spain increase its troop commitment to "continue improving security and the mission we (Spain) are fulfilling in Afghanistan".

A civil-military meeting took place at the Forward Support Base (FSB) in Herat among civil and military representatives from the International Community’s organisations operating in Afghanistan’s western region.

The event was organized by Regional Area Coordinator West (RAC W) based in Herat, and was scheduled into multi-session engagement in which all the representatives had the opportunity to present an overview of their respective activities and future plans.

Italian Brigadier General Danilo Errico, Commander RAC W, chaired the meeting by introducing a presentation concerning the operational situation of ISAF’s mission in the region, with particular attention to security.

Afterwards, while civilian operators met separately, the four Provincial Reconstruction Teams and FSB commanders operating in the region - Italian, Spanish, American and Lithuanian – analysed the activities carried out in their respective AOO and confronted each other about common issues.