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Sailors advise Afghan garrison

by Petty Officer 1st Class David M. Votroubek
CSTC-A Public Affairs

LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan—The 14 sailors of Navy Embedded Training Team 3-205th Garrison began learning soldiering skills before they came to Afghanistan ten months ago, and the learning hasn't stopped.

While doing weapons familiarization training in Afghanistan, their instructor was incredulous. "You've never thrown a hand grenade before?" he asked two of the team. "No," they replied. It's a soldier skill sailors don't normally learn. After getting some instruction, they took turns throwing grenades over the berm at an Afghan training range.

The sailors needed to learn not only soldiering skills, they also had to learn about army facilities management to advise the Afghan National Army how to run the new Shorabak garrison. Although the team lacked garrison experience, they did have a lot of organizational and mentoring skills.

"Before I set foot in Helmand Province, I didn't know what a garrison was," said the team's executive officer, Lt. Cmdr. Tom Gorey, who is a submarine weapons officer.

The sailors didn't teach the Afghans according to a strictly American model, according to the team's senior enlisted advisor, Senior Chief Petty Officer Larry Williams. They developed methods with their Afghan counterparts that were better suited for the ANA.

Over the last year, the ETT has helped the garrison create or improve many of the management processes it needs. Tasks like security patrols, submitting a budget, dispensing fuel and holding weekly meetings may be routine for both the Army and Navy, but are new for the ANA.

The team has seen progress with the garrison staff. An example is their computer support. A year ago they didn't even have computers. But Lt. Micheal Yelanjian trained them to the point that they can operate, and even maintain, their own computer systems.

Cmdr. James Haley commands the ETT and mentors the garrison commander, Col. Shir Ahmmad Samadi. Haley encourages Samadi to develop his own ideas and do more planning. He does so, but still asks his mentor's advice.

"I ask my mentor because two ideas are better than one," he explained.

Construction of the \$68 million garrison was finished before the team arrived in March 2007, but ongoing projects include: furnishing the buildings, upgrading their communications capability and modernizing a dining facility that feeds more than 2,000 205th Corps soldiers.

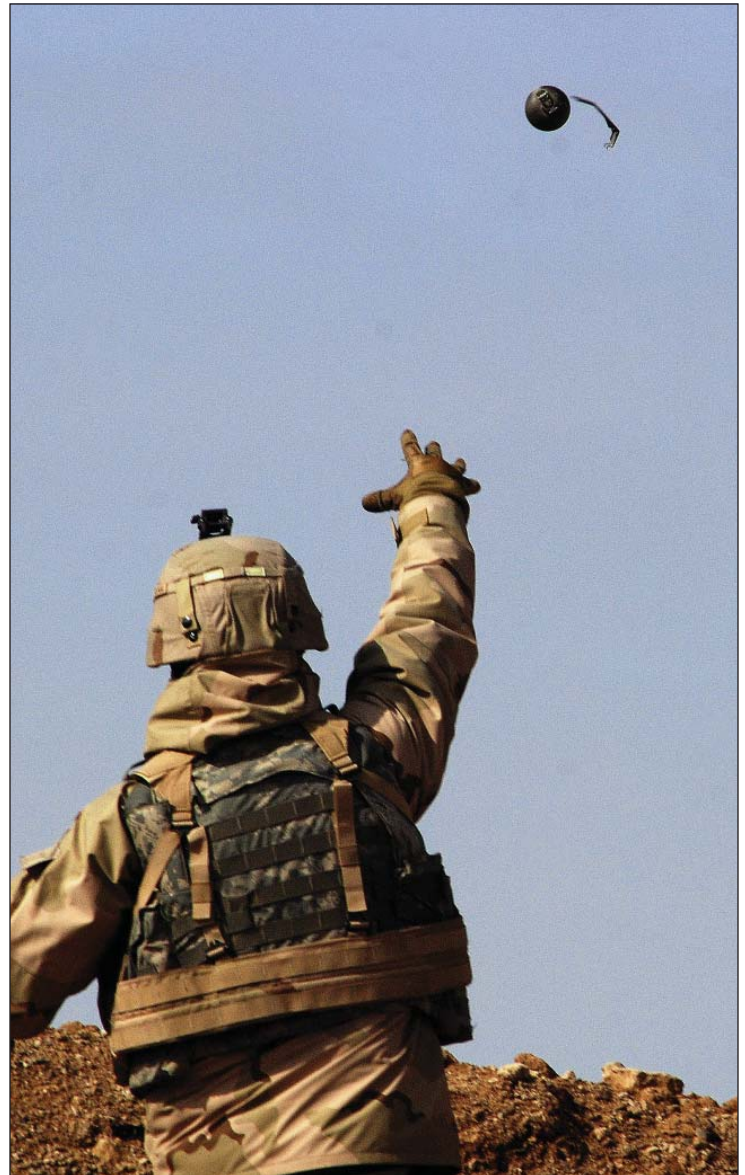


photo by Petty Officer 1st Class David M. Votroubek
LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan - Petty Officer 2nd Class David Crabb of Navy Embedded Training Team 3-205th Garrison, throws a hand grenade during weapons familiarization training. Crabb is part of a 14-man team that mentors the Afghan National Army's Shorabak garrison in Helmand Province. The team, lead by Cmdr. James Haley, is helping the ANA to outfit and improve maintenance at the new \$68 million facility.



photo by Marine Staff Sgt. Luis P. Valdespino Jr.

Brotherhood of the Badge

Army Sgt. Thomas G. Hogan, an Afghan National Police mentor for a Khowst District Police Mentoring Team reaches for some of the gear recently donated to the Afghan Ministry of Interior for the ANP from the Brotherhood of the Badge International. Also pictured are Maj. John R. Cunningham, Team Chief for the Khowst Provincial PMT (center), ANP Brig. Gen. Mohammad Ayoub (behind Hogan), Khowst Provincial Chief of Police 5, an ANP representative from the Afghan M.O.I., and an interpreter. The Brotherhood of the Badge, whose president, Michael Harris, visited from Fresno, Calif., with three fellow American police, donated about \$40,000 worth of police gear to the M.O.I., at the M.O.I. in Kabul, Afghanistan, Feb. 6. Harris said this is the first of many donations they hope to make to help the ANP. Hogan and Cunningham are both deployed to Afghanistan from the Iowa Army National Guard.



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Mission Statement

The mission of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community, is to plan, program and implement structural, organizational, institutional and management reforms of the Afghanistan National Security Forces in order to develop a stable Afghanistan, strengthen the rule of law and deter and defeat terrorism within its borders.