

Kandahar welcomes new coalition partners

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KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Troops from the 738th Air Expeditionary Advisor Group welcomed forces from Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine and Belgium to Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, Feb. 12.

More than 30 countries support the operations in Afghanistan and 50 nations continue to contribute both money and humanitarian aid. These Coalition partners have been essential to the development of the Afghan Air Force.

“We are excited to have more countries contribute to the overall well being of Afghanistan,” said Maj. Gen. Abdul Razik Sherzai, the Kandahar Air Wing commander. “As they help us improve our Air Force, we will be better able to support our ground forces.”

Sherzai reflected on the advancements made by the AAF at KAF since the unit was formed little more than a year ago.

“I remember when our Air Force started with nothing but dirt and land. We didn’t have any hangars and very few pilots were trained to fly; however, once our coalition partners stepped in, they helped us grow and become a formidable force,” Sherzai said.

Each country provides unique capabilities to the training mission and helps the Afghans develop their own military standards.

“We look forward to working with the Afghan Air Force,” said 1st Lt. Rodolphe Godbille, a maintenance officer from Belgium. “We know that each country brings unique skills to the mission and that diversity is important.”

Godbille said it is important to build upon the structure already in place and focus on improving the weakest areas of the Afghan forces. Cooperation between the coalition forces will allow the Afghan Air Force an opportunity to find a method that works best for them.

“As we increase the number of contributing nations to this mission, the world has demonstrated that it will not leave Afghanistan behind,” said Col. Michael Outlaw, 738th Air Expeditionary Advisor Group commander.

Outlaw said these partnerships will provide the foundation to build lasting strategic relations throughout the world and allow Afghanistan to become a safe and successful member of the global community.

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KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The 451st Air Expeditionary Wing honor guard prepares to post the colors Feb. 12 at a ceremony to welcome Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine and Belgium forces to the NATO's Afghanistan training mission in Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Cardell Brown, Public Affairs Office, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division)

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KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Maj. Gen. Abdul Razik Sherzai, the Kandahar Air Wing commander delivers his welcome speech Feb. 12 as new countries join NATO Training Mission Afghanistan in Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Cardell Brown, Public Affairs Office, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division)