

FACT SHEET

Heavy Weapons - Cantonment

March 2006



Cantonment heavy weapons



Artillery piece at Resh Kore, Kabul



Only repairable and serviceable heavy weapons formed part of the cantonment program

PHOTO: POST CONFLICT REFORMS

Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program, whilst undertaking cantonment efforts in Gardez, assumed formal responsibility for the nationwide cantonment of all known Heavy Weapons in March 2004. A national survey, conducted in early 2004, identified 4,368 heavy weapons (HW's) and categorized them into armored personnel carriers, artillery, anti tank, main battle tanks, multi launch rocket systems, mortars, surface to air missiles and others. The individual weapons inspected were further categorized as either a wreck, repairable or operational. Due to the numbers involved the wrecks were left in situ.

The actual number cantoned has far exceeded the original estimates. This is partly due to the relationships and trust that were developed during the negotiations, re-categorization by the MoD to include weapons with a 14mm+ caliber and operated by more than two men, the fact that many HW's were hidden during the survey in the early days of the DDR program and the realization that it is not economic or practical to maintain the HW's nor viable to use them, without air support, in any potential future conflicts. Fast moving troops using light weapons, will fight the battles of the future. The speed of ANBP's cantonment program was stepped up in the summer of 2004 by an offer of logistical assistance from ISAF and the Coalition together with funding from USAID. The partners provided nationwide coverage through their network of Provincial Reconstruction Teams. The partnership built upon ISAF's earlier success in Kabul. ISAF V volunteered in January 2004 to assume responsibility for cantoning all known HW's in its Area of Operation, in and around Kabul - subsequently declaring Kabul - Heavy Weapons free - in September 04.

The locations of the 15 regional cantonment sites, Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul (6), Kandahar, Kunduz (4) and Mazar, were agreed in advance between the MoD and ANBP. Cantoning the larger HW's was a huge logistical issue. The problems involved in locating, negotiating, transporting, fueling and lifting the vehicles were considerable and compounded further, by the distances, poor infrastructure and the restrictions imposed on the Program by the terrain and weather.

All HW's stored in the guarded cantonment sites were immediately deactivated by removing and relocating the weapon's breech block, fuel pump, and light weapons. The HW's were then catalogued and are regularly inspected to ensure that all remains in order.

To date, the 12,273 HW's are jointly held by ANBP and the MoD in ANA guarded cantonment sites. The intention is to ultimately hand the HW's over to the Afghan National Army as and when its capacity increases and the need arises. To date, 530 pieces, classified as artillery, anti aircraft, anti tank and mortars, have been handed over to the ANA but the bulk, comprising over 20% of the total, of communist era main battle tanks, armored personnel carriers and other vehicles, although functioning, are unlikely to be called into service. ANA personnel are currently being trained by NATO to establish modern Afghan armored units that use the latest technology that meet the demands of modern warfare.

Further detailed information is available on www.ddrafg.com