



# New DDR Work Trailer Facilitates Small Arms Repair

Story and photos by U.S. Army  
Sgt. 1st Class Darren D. Heusel  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**POL-E-CHARKI, Afghanistan**—Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration are at the forefront of helping to provide for a more secure and stable future for all Afghans.

Now, with the recent unveiling of a new DDR work trailer, small arms experts with Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program will be able to work around the clock in any type of weather to help speed up the process.

"This marks an historical event for DDR," said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer Steve Gerald, a logistics planner with the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan Defense Resources Sector. "This is a great benefit for us working out here on site, especially having been working out in the elements for all this time."

The ANBP DDR program, which is partially funded by the International Observers Group and supported by the United Nations, allows militia forces in Afghanistan to turn in their weapons in return for a new life of service within the mainstream society.

The new work trailer located at Pol-e-Charki on the outskirts of Kabul will help provide small arms DDR representatives a better working environment at the ANBP site.

Before the arrival of the new 40-foot by 8-foot working trailer, also referred to as "The Boom Boom Room," Ministry of Defense personnel worked on flat tables in an open area in a variety of weather conditions.

If the weather was too extreme, DDR operations were suspended for an indefinite period of time.

The new modernized work trailer, complete with insulated paneling, work tables, lights, parts bins,



**An Afghan man dismantles a machine gun in the new DDR work trailer. Useable parts are removed from non-serviceable weapons and stored in bins in the trailer for future use.**

electrical connectivity, heating and air conditioning, will allow additional weapons to be pushed to the National Supply Depot in Kabul and into the hands of the Afghan National Army.

The new trailer also has a separate 11 kilowatt generator included in the setup to power the unit. It is fully transportable by air or truck and can be set up in any remote region in Afghanistan for DDR operations.

Gerald said the DDR process began in October 2003 in Konduz, with operations at Pol-e-Charki beginning in September 2004.

"Since that time, we've been working in this environment and in these conditions, so we hope this will make the working conditions a lot easier," said Gerald.

Of the weapons turned in throughout the country, Gerald said the small and medium weapons are handed over to the small arms handlers at Pol-e-Charki for inspection and to determine whether they are serviceable.

The weapons that are serviceable are then taken to the supply depot in Kabul. Small arms experts with the 76<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, of the Indiana Army National Guard, further inspect and, if necessary, complete minor repairs of the weapons.

These Task Force Phoenix Soldiers are primarily responsible for training the ANA.

The weapons are then delivered to the various ANA kandaks, or battalions, stationed throughout the

four regions of the country.

“The Afghan government has given us 12 good workers and I wanted to establish a comfortable environment for them to work in,” said Sgt. Maj. David Tindall, a co-worker of Gerald’s who is credited with coming up with the idea for the new trailer.

“What we have is the culmination of a month’s worth of planning and execution to see this project to fruition,” Tindall added.

Staff Sgt. Robert Taylor, a member of B Company, 113<sup>th</sup> Support Battalion out of Columbus, Ind., who heads up the team of five small arms handlers at the depot in Kabul, said his crew will go through up to 1,300 weapons a week.

“What this does is gives the ANA a fighting force,” he said. “A soldier is nothing without a weapon and, honestly, I want them to be able to stand on their own.”

The ANA currently stands at 22,000 troops, with an ultimate goal of 70,000 troops and support workers by the end of 2007.

Spc. Kristen Grigsby, a small arms repairer from Evansville, Ind., echoed her comrade’s comments.

“The sooner this Army can take care of itself, the better for Afghanistan,” she said.

However, she admitted, “It makes time go by a lot faster. We stay very busy, and it’s something I never thought I’d be doing in a million years.”

With the new \$18,610 work trailer already paying dividends, Tindall said he



**Workers of Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Program unload a large weapons cache at Pol-e-Charki on the outskirts of Kabul as part of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program to encourage warlords and other militia members to lay down their weapons and reintegrate into society.**

has been talking with Task Force Phoenix Deputy Commander Col. Dave Harris about having another trailer built for his guys at the depot.

“The DDR system has been our salvation for standing up the ANA early,” Harris said. “The donations of weapons haven’t been coming in nearly fast enough and so this DDR program has been invaluable.”

**“A soldier is nothing without a weapon and, honestly, I want them to be able to stand on their own.”**

**-- Staff Sgt. Robert Taylor,  
NCOIC of U.S. small arms repairers**

Harris said the only thing left to do now is speed up the process even more. He said 40 percent of the weapons received at the depot are serviceable, while the others are used for parts.

“We’re also working with the regional commands

throughout the country to provide ammunition and determine how we can make this happen,” he said.

Col. Jack Stankiewicz, who manages the Defense Resources Sector at OMC-A, said the DDR process is actually a twofold one.

“With this process, the first thing we are doing is getting the weapons out of the hands of the warlords and militias, and the second thing we’re doing is meeting the needs of the ANA,” he said. “Unfortunately, it’s very labor intensive.”

The primary small arms brought into the depot under the DDR process include the AK-47, PKM machine gun, 75 mm and 82 mm recoilless rifle, SPG 9, 122 mm D30 artillery pieces, heavy 12.7 and 14.5 machine guns and RPG 7s.

“The good thing about this

trailer is that it can be moved to any site in Afghanistan,” Stankiewicz said. “Now that we have the prototype, others can be built, funding permitted.”

Tindall didn’t see this as a problem, with more than \$2 million already having been saved through the DDR process to date.

“If we had to go out and purchase these weapons on the economy, we’d probably have spent well over that,” he said.

Ahmad Massood, a 19-year-old ANBP worker who goes to high school part-time and earns \$40 a month working 40 hours a week on the DDR program, is just one of the dozen workers who is grateful for the new trailer.

“We’re very happy to have this section assisting us with this container to make our jobs easier,” he said. “It’s very difficult to work in extreme weather and I just hope I can do more for my country.”