



By US Army

Sgt. 1st Class Mack Davis, OMC-A PAO

Herat, Afghanistan – The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process requires a great deal of tact, patience and persistence.

That is what two U.S. Army Embedded Training Team soldiers learned when they accompanied an Afghan National Army (ANA) commander on a DDR mission to a town along Afghanistan's border with Iran recently.

Maj. Rex Sohn and Master Sgt. Tom Kryniki are part of the 4th Kandak (Battalion), 1st Brigade, Embedded Training Team (ETT). They went with ANA Lt. Col. Mohammad Taheed, 1st Brigade Commander, when he led the ANA's 1st Brigade to Ghurian, Afghanistan.

Taheed's mission was to persuade the villagers of this border town to turn in their weapons in order to implement the DDR program for their village.

Once the team arrived in Ghurian, a town hall-type meeting was organized, to be held in the local mosque. As happens most of the time when dealing with several different ethnic groups, things started to get unmanageable.

To settle things down, the villagers were sent outside to select two representatives for each ethnic group. Once the

representatives returned inside the mosque, Taheed requested that the villagers contact the militia fighters in the mountainous region outside the village and persuade them to come in and lay down their weapons.

Taheed spent several hours speaking with elders on the benefits of the DDR program and how it would be beneficial to voluntarily relinquish the weapons rather than to wait for the ANA to return and take them by force.

After the meeting, both Taheed and the village elders were upbeat about its outcome. The villagers had agreed to approach the militia and tell them that the village was

going to undergo a DDR program for itself, as well as to demand the surrender of illegal weapons.

"We step back as trainers in these situations and become more of an advisor," said Sohn, the ETT commander. "Lt. Col. Taheed is a good spokesman and is very persuasive with the Afghan people."

It is meetings and interaction between the Afghan people and dedicated soldiers like Taheed taking place all across Afghanistan that will lead to the ultimate success of the DDR program.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mack Davis

Afghan National Army Lt. Col. Mohammad Taheed meets with village representatives of the Afghan border town of Ghurian to persuade them to implement the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program.