



“Heroes of Peace” 31st Division Disarms in Kabul

By US Army

Col. Randy Pullen

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN – The 31st Division (Afghan Militia Forces) of the Central Corps disarmed in a DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) event held at the division’s barracks in Mataw Qala, West Kabul, August 23.

Crew-served heavy weapons (mortars, rocket launchers, anti-aircraft guns, machine guns), individual weapons and ammunition were turned over to the Afghan New Beginnings Program’s mobile disarmament unit. The 170 officers and soldiers of the 31st Division were then provided with temporary DDR identification cards and the paperwork needed to allow them to visit the ANBP region office starting on August 24 to select their reintegration packages.

The commander of the soon-to-be demobilized division, Brig. Gen. Alhaj Shah Mohammad Zakery, said that the division was obeying the decree of President Karzai and the command of the Ministry of Defense to undertake the DDR process.

He also said that the coalition and the UN were working for the peace and security of Afghanistan and that he agreed with their aims.

“We are eager to help them,” Zakery said. “DDR is good for Afghanistan.”



Photo by Army Col. Randy Pullen

Heavy weapons of the 31st Division are loaded on an UN truck during the August 23 disarmament of the division in West Kabul.

Zakery said that between 600-700 of his best soldiers had already left the division to join the Afghan National Army and that he, too, was waiting to see if his nomination for a command in the ANA would be approved.

Former and present soldiers of the 31st Division agreed with the division commander as to the necessity to disarm.

“We must turn in our weapons to the government,” said former commander Abdul Rahman. “It is the time for peace.”

“I want our country to be a safe place,” said Capt. Abdul Magid as he turned in his AK-47 and received his ANBP paperwork. “I am happy to do this.”

The soldiers of the 31st Division were praised by several officials at the ceremony, both for their heroism on the battlefield against the enemies of the Afghan people and for their being “heroes of peace” today in choosing to take part in the DDR process.

Maj. Gen. Orya Khail of the Central Zone disarmament program, said to the disarming soldiers: “You officers and soldiers here fought the Russians and al Qaeda and defeated them with your bravery. Now you take another step in bringing peace and security by submitting your weapons and

participating in the reconstruction of the country as heroes.”

The 31st Division’s Political and Theological Director, Gen. Sayed Azghar Aalammi, also noted the division’s fine record against the Russians, the Taliban and al Qaeda, and said that turning in weapons and starting the DDR process was one more fine achievement for the division. He also requested that the demobilizing officers and men of the division be given proper jobs and careers according to their talents and qualifications.

In response, Mr. Ahmad Jan Nawzadi of the Afghan New Beginnings Program explained to the disarming soldiers that those who have little education or are illiterate, they will receive professional education. For those who have adequate literacy, they will have the opportunity to take short courses of teaching, communication, agriculture and small business.



Photo by Army Col. Randy Pullen

Col. Bert Key, Director of Security Sector Reform, Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan, examines some of the weapons being turned in by the 31st Division (Afghan Militia Forces) during the division’s disarmament in West Kabul August 23.



Photo by Army Col. Randy Pullen

31st Division soldiers line up to turn in their individual weapons and receive the paperwork that will allow them to choose their Afghan New Beginnings Program reintegration packages.

He also added that the purpose of DDR was not to disarm Afghans but to collect weapons from irresponsible persons and unnecessary places and place them under the control of the government and by that control, the weapons still belong to the people of Afghanistan.

According to Mr. Manoel de Almeida e Silva, spokesman for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the total number of AMF soldiers disarmed in both DDR’s pilot and main phases is 13,381. The numbers of those demobilized and reintegrated are 13,022 and 11,549, respectively.