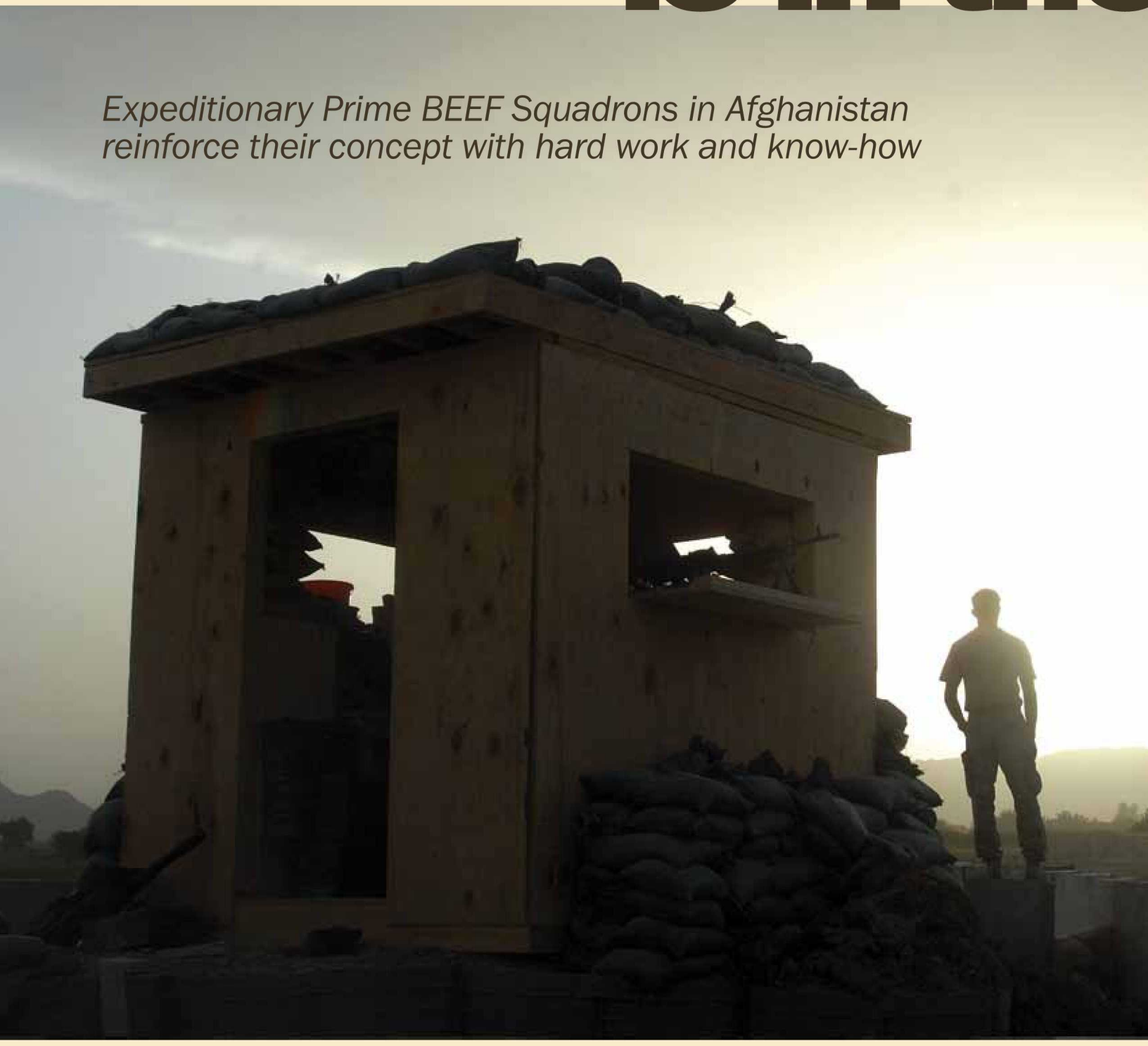
the PROOF is in the

Expeditionary Prime BEEF Squadrons in Afghanistan reinforce their concept with hard work and know-how



PRODUCT

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Air Force civil engineers have consistently been in high demand to satisfy CENTCOM requests for forces in support of ground operations in Afghanistan. In the past, civil engineers were most often deployed as members of Facility Engineer Teams (FETs), under the operational control of specific sister service units at specific forward operating bases (FOBs). Because of their accomplishments, the demand for Air Force engineers threatened to outpace the availability of the manpower to sustain them, yet Air Force senior leaders had no authority to balance FET manning to address differences in workload or changes in operational missions.

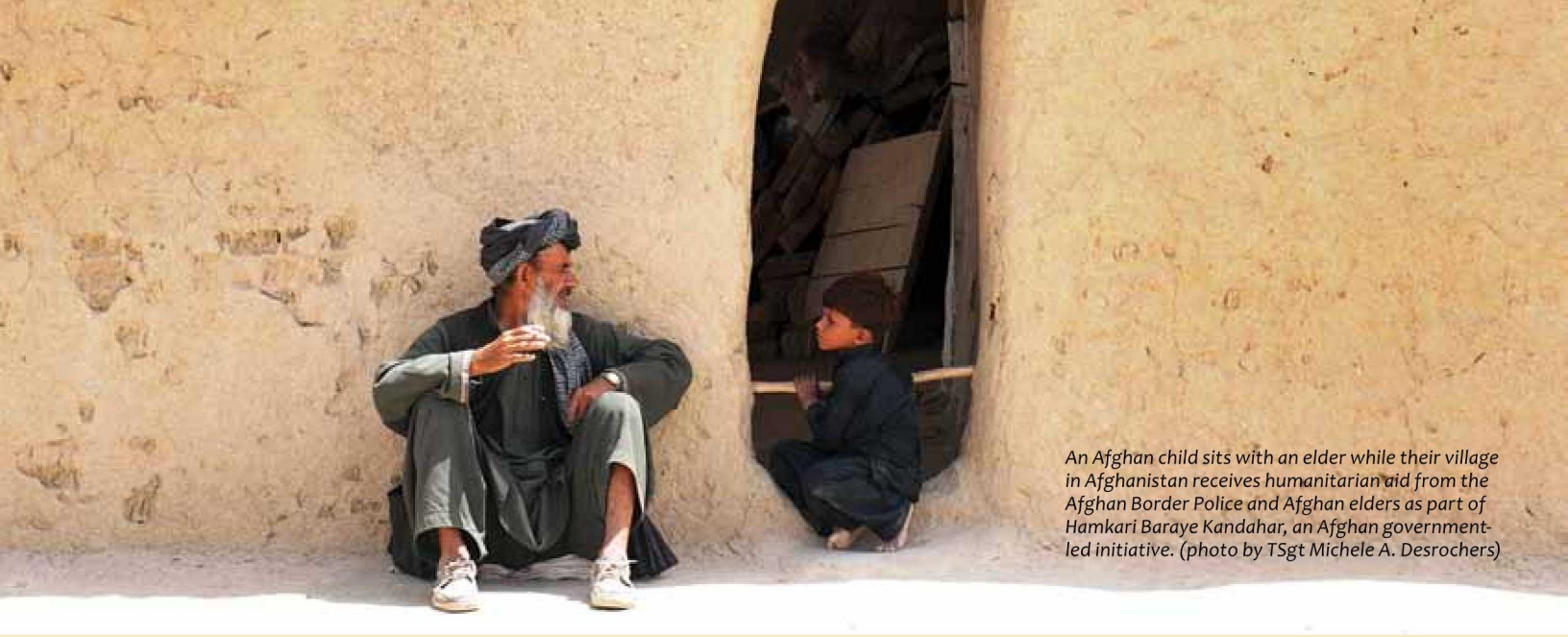
The Air Force Civil Engineering community envisioned a new approach focused on theater and regional priorities, with Airmen working for Airmen having the flexibility to move among FOBs and across regions to satisfy the most pressing operational requirements of the ground force commanders. Thus, the concept of the Expeditionary Prime BEEF Group was born.

Established at Bagram Airfield on Sept. 18, 2009 — coincidentally the Air Force's birthday — the 577th Expeditionary Prime BEEF Group (EPBG) was given operational and tactical control of two subordinate squadrons: the 577 EPBS at Bagram and the 777 EPBS at Kandahar Airfield. Following the announcement of further U.S. force expansion, in March 2010 a third unit, the 877 EPBS, was established at Mazar-e-Sharif. Each EPBS was organized to provide master planning, programming, design, surveying, contract construction management, and light vertical construction.

Supporting Hamkari Baraye Kandahar

In February 2010, an early "proof of concept" opportunity arrived with a tasking to expand five existing, but undersized, FOBs in support of Hamkari Baraye Kandahar (Cooperation for Kandahar). This Afghan partnering initiative reinforces the counter-insurgency tenets of securing the local populace and aiding the Afghan government's ability to care for and govern the citizenry of this key city. Engineers from the 777th moved forward to assess the FOBs, then returned to Kandahar Airfield to master plan, program, and design all construction activities for the force expansion ahead of surge forces.

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Steven Reis surveys the area beyond the walls of Access Control Station 2, Kandahar City, Afghanistan. Civil engineers from the 777 EPBS helped build and fortify the guard station. (photo by MSgt Samuel V. Ameen)



An Afghan child sits with an elder while their village in Afghanistan receives humanitarian aid from the Afghan Border Police and Afghan elders as part of Hamkari Baraye Kandahar, an Afghan government-led initiative. (photo by TSgt Michele A. Desrochers)

Using this "hub and spoke" approach allowed the engineers to simultaneously plan the five (later nine) FOB expansions with a consistency of approach and standardization of design. Squadron craftsmen used the same approach to provide light vertical construction talent. Small teams of experts flew out to FOBs, directed construction and beddown activities, and served as a force multiplier by coaching infantry soldiers to erect their own tent cities.

The heart of the Hamkari Baraye counter-insurgency effort is helping the Afghan government connect with Kandahar's people, to listen and respond to their needs and deliver improved security, governance, and economic opportunity. This requires safe facilities for Afghan security forces and ministerial civil servants within Kandahar's communities. In the spring of 2010, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command identified Hamkari Baraye as the number one theater priority, and U.S. military engineers were enlisted to deliver the Afghan vision for a Security Ring Protection Force around the city, located at critical entry points, and upgrade key government ministry facilities.

In May, the 577 EPBG realigned engineers from the 877 EPBS to augment the 777th's Hamkari effort. Working with their Army and Navy counterparts in Task Force Alliance (TF-A), these Prime BEEF engineers conducted site reconnaissance and assessments at dozens of police traffic checkpoints and substations throughout Kandahar. Most locations were little more than a dilapidated building and a small compound surrounded by deteriorating sandbags, gabions, and concertina wire. The teams recorded, measured, and scoped numerous site and force protection improvements. Multiple survey-grade GPS "rovers" enabled engineers to quickly capture precise data at each site while under the watchful eye of U.S. or Canadian military police security details. Executing EPBS design with TF-A troop labor, the first security stations were upgraded and expanded within weeks of reconnaissance.

Prime BEEF engineers also convoyed to numerous government facilities to assess force protection measures and recommend enhancements. Mindful of the effect of a community building walled off from the citizens it serves, EPBS engineers and planners avoided using the gabion barriers and stark concrete T-walls common in "war-zone" designs and incorporated force protection features such as landscaped berms, architectural stone and screening walls, bollards, blast-resistant glazing, and other less obtrusive elements.

Prime BEEF Muscle Seals the Deal

While the squadron juggled the engineering demands of Hamkari, Triple-Seven troop labor earned a reputation as Regional Command-South's premier beddown assistance team after bedding down more than 3,000 2nd Brigade 101st Airborne Division (2/101) personnel in less than three weeks. Craftsmen from the 777th traveled to combat outposts and provided technical expertise to the 2/101 and the 864th Engineer Battalion, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion. More than $28M in war reserve materiel assets were inventoried and soldiers and sailors were taught tent deck construction, small shelter system, and TEMPER tent erection, and electrical and utility distribution, as well as proper preventative

maintenance and inspection of generators. Structures craftsmen pre-cut almost 240 trusses for Southwest Asia huts to house the 2/101 at a forward combat location, then Prime BEEF from every trade deployed to this location for more than a month to complete the largest vertical construction project the 777 EPBS has seen to date.

The 777th also took on efforts to beddown personnel of the 1st Battalion of the 71st Cavalry Regiment (1-71 CAV) in direct support of Hamkari Baraye Kandahar. Deploying south of Kandahar City, the Engineering Flight validated the master plans before turning the project over to the Operations Flight. A separate team traveled to four additional 1-71 CAV strong point locations to conduct life, health, and safety (LHS) repairs and electrical upgrades. As of mid-September, the 777 EPBS had assessed, repaired, and improved LHS at 47 FOBs, supporting 10 separate combat units within 7 separate task forces and a total of nearly 25,000 Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen.

As the Kandahar City Hamkari security ring reached initial operational capability, 777 EPBS troop labor played a key role in the beddown of ISAF and Afghan National Civil Order Police forces. Personnel traveled to staging areas at FOBs in Kandahar City to test power generation systems and small teams of skilled craftsmen deployed forward to construct tents, place electrical and power generation assets, and install utility systems.

Acclaim and Fame for Squadron and Group

In late-May, a team of 777 EPBS craftsmen was presented on-the-spot Army Achievement Medals by a grateful 2nd Army regiment commander at a combat outpost. In five days, the six-person team completed major electrical repairs that the customer had been trying to accomplish for five months.

The leadership of the 22nd Naval Construction Regiment, the lead unit of TF-A, has called the 777 EPBS "Afghanistan's 9-1-1 Engineer Force," for their outstanding engineering support across the TF-A area of operations.

The successes of the 777 EPBS in Southern Afghanistan exemplify the impact of the 577 EPBG as a whole. The group and its squadrons have provided significant support to Afghanistan's commands. Prime BEEF engineers have made a difference in the lives of U.S. military personnel at more than 80 FOBs, combat outposts, camps, and strong points and ensured the safety of the Afghan government and its citizens at scores of police facilities and government buildings. While there never seems to be enough engineers to meet every demand, the Expeditionary Prime BEEF construct has emphasized that when it comes to providing contingency engineering support there's a good way, and then there's better.

Capt Carlson is the Operations Flight Chief, Lt Col Whitecotton is the Deputy Commander, and Lt Col Brands is the Commander, 777 EPBS; Maj Sosa serves as the 777 EPBS Hamkari Planning Cell OIC.

Photo left: *A member of the 777 EPBS records GPS coordinates while surveying a location near Kandahar. (U.S. Air Force photo);* ***Photo center:*** *At Access Control Station 2, Kandahar City, Afghanistan, SSgt Joel Carrera, left, and TSgt Mathew Bashaw, both utilities technicians assigned to the 777 EPBS cut trusses for a medical aid station.* ***Photo right:*** *777 EPBS Airmen build a medical aid station. (photos by MSgt Samuel V. Ameen)*