

'Taliban hotel' destroyed

Written by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Stephen J. Otero

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KHOST PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Soldiers located at Combat Outpost Spera partnered with members of the Afghan National Army to destroy a multi-room building, used to protect insurgents as they travelled through Khost province, Dec. 18.

U.S. Army 707th Explosive Ordinance Disposal Team, out of Fort Lewis, Wash.; 3rd Scout Platoon, Troop A, 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, out of Fort Richardson, Alaska; and members of the Afghan National Army destroyed the multi-room building, nicknamed the “Taliban Hotel,” to restrict insurgent freedom of movement and logistic support.

"In theatre, as a whole, my team and I are responsible for the safe mitigation of explosive hazards, ranging from unexploded ordinance to improvised explosive devices," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Dennis Speek, 707th EOD team leader. "Our current mission at COP Spera is to explosively destroy a complex known as the 'Taliban Hotel' that is being used by insurgents for safe haven while conducting attacks in the vicinity of COP Spera."

Securing the surrounding area is the main priority of the 707th EOD Team and ANA.

"I am tasked with conducting border patrols to deny insurgent weapon and supply smuggling capabilities," said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Kevin Jewell, Jr., platoon leader for the 3rd Scout Platoon. "Along with that task comes mentorship and partnership with ANA counterparts to create a safer environment for the people of Afghanistan."

"The destruction of the 'Taliban Hotel' helps show the people of Afghanistan that insurgent forces are not tolerated in this area," Jewell said.

Demolishing the hotel took a large amount of explosives, and the mountainous terrain called for unconventional methods of transportation in order to get equipment to the location. In this situation, the ANA provided the solution; the combined forces team loaded the backs of donkeys to carry 300 pounds of C-4 explosive charges.

"We are happy to help stop insurgents from entering our country in any way we can," said Baaz Mohammad, Afghan National Army medical soldier. "With the help of the ANA-supplied donkeys, the trip is made more bearable."

According to Jewell, his unit's presence with the Afghan National Security Forces allows them

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to conduct missions that would conventionally be out of ANSF's grasp. Being partnered with American forces allows the ANSF opportunities to conduct missions that would otherwise be out of reach, such as the EOD destruction of the "Taliban Hotel," giving them something to work towards.

"We are supporting the ANSF to build a strong military presence that can support and defend their government against insurgents and criminals," he said. "That way, one day, they can conduct missions on their own at the same level, which is ultimately our goal in Afghanistan. And levelling the 'Taliban Hotel' prevents the insurgents from relying on another avenue to spread violence and turmoil with the borders of Afghanistan."

[I the safehouse. \(Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Stephen J. Otero, Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs\)" hspace="5" width="495" align="left" src="images/stories/feature_stories/images/2009_12/104/taliban-safehouse-afghanistan.jpg" />](#)