

Panjshir ETT prepares police for the future

Written by U.S. Army Sgt. John Young, Task Force Wolverine Public Affairs
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PANJSHIR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – When the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team took on the mission of having an Embedded Training Team in Panjshir, they embraced the opportunity to train the Afghan National Police and also to teach them the advanced skills needed for the future.

When the ETT arrived, they knew the ANP had training in basic skills but they wanted to focus on the needs of the Panjshir valley.

“We had to start at ground zero when it came to community policing in many areas in order to effectively enforce the laws around here,” said Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Jennings, an infantryman assigned to the 86th IBCT Embedded Training Team.

After only two months at Forward Operating Base Lion, the team has graduated the first class of ANP in advanced police tactics and wasted no time in starting the next phase of training.

“Once we finish here, we plan on introducing more advanced classes on rescue techniques and medical training because there is a tremendous amount of car accidents here. Up until now, there has not been the ability to go and help the victims and stabilize them,” said Jennings, a Vergennes, Vt., native.

“Police in other countries have the ability to give first aid until medical help arrives and that is what we have in mind,” added Jennings.

The mission to take the police force to the next level is not without its challenges.

“We have people who can’t read or write and we have some educated people,” said Jennings. “We are trying to level out the group so all of the police force has the ability to function effectively for the people.”

Another challenge for the ETT is the competing demands for the police officers’ time as they also have to work their regular shift.

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“There is a finite time that we have to teach them. Most days it is about three to four hours, and there is just so much you can teach in that amount of time,” said Jennings.

Despite all the challenges, the ETT trainers were surprised by the amount of enthusiasm the ANP have toward learning new skills.

“It has been very impressive, they are like open books and eager to learn. They like action so we keep the classroom time to a minimum, and we get them out doing things hands on,” said Jennings.

The team has high hopes for the next phases of training and believe that the police have established a good foundation to work toward a better future.

“My goal when I got here was to leave them with not only the basics in police work, but to get them to go beyond the basics with rescue skills because they have earthquakes, avalanches and car accidents here,” said Jennings, an instructor at Vermont National Guard’s Mountain Warfare School. “The police have to get to the scene and assess the problem without further endangering anyone else’s life.”

The trainers envision this to be a perpetual process – a sort of “training-the-trainers” concept of doing things.

“We want them to have the skills to go forward with what we teach them and train the next generation of officers,” said Jennings.

The ETT is in the process of getting a core group of the Panjshir police together to go out to other districts and teach the lessons they learned.

The 86th IBCT Embedded Training Team takes great pride in the positive direction the training has had thus far.

“We can see progress every time we go out,” said Jennings. “Everyone here wants to improve the valley, and we are happy to be here and to do our part. We will be sad to leave because of the strong friendships we made in the short time we have been here.”