

Civil Affairs teams, accompanied by Military Police Soldiers, visited a school in the town of Sharabad (Shindand District of Herat Province) to visit with children, provide much needed school supplies, and extend the reach of Operation Dreamseed.

Photo by Cpt. Brian Heverly



### **Operation Dreamseed in the heart of Herat Province**

Story by Cpt. Brian Heverly

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On Monday, May 16, 2005, in the town of Sharabad in the Shindand district of the Herat Province in Western Afghanistan, Operation Dreamseed helped reach out to the hearts of several hundred school children. The generous donations of ODS supporters and contributors, coupled with the hard work of Soldiers of the Civil Affairs team from Task Force Peacekeeper, made life a little easier for the local school children.

TF Peacekeeper conducted the Humanitarian Assistance drop of the supplies. Escorted by MPs for security, the CA team distributed a nearly a ton of supplies received this year sent by ODS into western Afghanistan. The kids were immediately grateful and just like most children wanted more. The backpacks were a huge hit. Frequently, other organizations and church groups will donate basic school supplies, which are greatly appreciated and needed, but it is rare for the kids to get the kinds of supplies that ODS donated, backpacks loaded with school supplies and water bottles. The CA team leader said, "The kids loved it. We all had a great time."

The CA team consisted of Staff Sgt(s) Davis and Lockwood and Sgt Strachman. These individuals are Task Force Peacekeeper's link to local contractors as well as other non-governmental organizations. Their job is to nominate and oversee any reconstruction project paid for with Coalition funds. They facilitate building everything from irrigation and drinking water wells to roads and bridges to the five schools that TF Peacekeeper is currently refurbishing, building, or has completed in western Afghanistan since arriving in February of this year.

The school in Sharabad is one of the schools being rebuilt by Coalition forces and will be completed by the middle of July. Right now, both the boys' and girls' schools meet in tents donated by the Coalition and the United Nations. During the Taliban years, the boy's school (girls were not allowed to go to school and only had the Afghan equivalent of homeschooling) met in small mud huts, only some of which had roofs. The accommodations would not be unusual for this area. Imagine trying to educate 200 school age boys, meeting in small rooms.

Since the Northern Alliance and US Forces liberated Afghanistan in 2001, the school has grown to 300 total students, still 200 boys, but now it can boast 100 female students. When the building is complete they will have a school with chalkboards, desks, windows, and yes, a roof over their heads.

TF Peacekeeper's commander, LTC Hayes, was proud to have had the opportunity to be a conduit for ODS. It is an opportunity for the Coalition to impact the lives of Afghans in a way that without ODS would not be possible. Much of the aid that TF Peacekeeper receives is not "focused," a few shoes with some pencils and a blanket or two. The unit waits until enough of that type of aid adds up before they can make a drop. With ODS however, enough school supplies arrive to make an immediate impact. Thank you, yet again, to all our Heartland Heroes, for making a difference in the lives of Afghan children.