NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF THE COMMANDER'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM IN HERAT PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

by

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December 2016

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			*Form Approved OMB No. 0704–0188*

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	**2. REPORT DATE** December 2016	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's thesis

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF THE COMMANDER'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM IN HERAT PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN	**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**
6. AUTHOR(S) David B. Williams	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000	**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A	**10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB number ____N/A____.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.	**12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE**

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

The purpose of this thesis is to determine if the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) achieved its intended goals in Herat Province, Afghanistan. The thesis uses a qualitative approach, gathering information and observations from CERP projects completed in Herat Province, Afghanistan. Satellite images of projects initiated in 2008 and 2009 were investigated to determine if they have produced long term, positive effects for the people of Herat province. Utilizing a list of 52 projects, it was determined that 54% of the projects had been successful while 6% were judged to be failures; the results of 40% of the projects are unknown. The program was effective at achieving its short-term goals; however, the long-term results will not be known until the Afghan government becomes self-sustaining. In future conflicts utilizing CERP-like systems, it is recommended that commanders and managers receive more thorough training prior to administering the program.

14. SUBJECT TERMS Commander's Emergency Response Program, Herat, Afghanistan,	**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 59
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE**	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT**	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UU

NSN 7540–01-280-5500 Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2–89) Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239–18

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EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF THE COMMANDER'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM IN HERAT PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(STRATEGIC STUDIES)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2016**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to determine if the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) achieved its intended goals in Herat Province, Afghanistan. The thesis uses a qualitative approach, gathering information and observations from CERP projects completed in Herat Province, Afghanistan. Satellite images of projects initiated in 2008 and 2009 were investigated to determine if they have produced long term, positive effects for the people of Herat province. Utilizing a list of 52 projects, it was determined that 54% of the projects had been successful while 6% were judged to be failures; the results of 40% of the projects are unknown. The program was effective at achieving its short-term goals; however, the long-term results will not be known until the Afghan government becomes self-sustaining. In future conflicts utilizing CERP-like systems, it is recommended that commanders and managers receive more thorough training prior to administering the program.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AOR	Area of Responsibility
ARSIC-W	Afghan Regional Security Integration Command–West
CALL	Center for Army Lessons Learned
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program
CRRT	CERP Reviewing/Reporting Database
DoD	Department of Defense
FY	fiscal year
ISAF	International Security Assistance Forces
JP 3-07	Joint Publication 3–07 Stability
JPEL	Joint Prioritized Effects List
MAAWS	Money as a Weapon System
MoA	Afghan Ministry of Agriculture
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
MGRS	military grid reference system
O & M	operations and maintenance
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
TTC	Teacher Training Center
TTP	tactics, techniques, and procedures
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professors James Russell and Zachary Davis for their guidance throughout the thesis process. I would also like to thank my wife and our two children for their unwavering support throughout the last 15 months.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this thesis is to determine if the Commander's Emergency Response Program achieved its intended goals in Herat Province, Afghanistan.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The significance of the research question is to gain a better understanding of stability operations executed by United States ground forces. U.S. Army doctrine states that, "stability tasks are part of every operation."[1] As part of stability operations, the Commander's Emergency Response Program was created. Established in 2003, CERP funds were allocated with legislation that specified that commanders could spend the funds for urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction projects.[2] These projects had to immediately assist the Iraqi and Afghan peoples within a commander's operational area.[3] Since 2003, the United States Congress has appropriated over $3.7 billion for CERP in Afghanistan.[4]

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

The major problem addressed by this thesis is determining if the Commander's Emergency Response Program has achieved its goal of responding to urgent civil support relief and reconstruction requirements within an Area of Responsibility (AOR) and whether the program assisted the indigenous population. There are two hypotheses that can be formulated in the examination of CERP's success. The first hypothesis is that the people of the Herat Province have benefitted from the Commander's Emergency

[1] U.S. Army, "Field Manual 3–07, Stability Operations" (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2014), 1–1.

[2] Director for Strategic Plans and Policy (J-5), "Joint Publication 3–07: Stability Operations," Joint Staff, Washington, DC (September 29, 2011), E-10.

[3] Ibid., E-10.

[4] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *SIGAR Inspection Report 16–22: Department of Defense Reconstruction Projects: Summary of SIGAR Inspection Reports Issued from July 2009 through September 2015* (Washington, DC: SIGAR, March, 2016), 2.

Response Program. The people of Herat are better off now than before the program began. The second hypothesis predicts that the people of Herat are not better off than before and that CERP has been an unjustified expense for the U.S. government. If the first hypothesis is correct, despite its cost, the effects of the program are hugely beneficial to the Afghan population as well as to the standing of the U.S. government in the eye of that population. If the second hypothesis is correct, CERP and programs like it need to be reevaluated before the U.S. becomes involved in future stability operations.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis evaluates the U.S. military's approach to stability operations. The thesis develops hypotheses that helps determines the effectiveness of an aspect of stability operations: The Commander's Emergency Response Program. The outcome of this research will theorize how U.S. ground forces better conduct future stability operations. In addition to analyzing CERP projects completed in Herat Province, this thesis will evaluate Department of Defense policies to formulate how the U.S. military's stability operations can better support host nation populations.

In early 2003, U.S. ground forces patrolling in Iraq found more than $1.2 billion in U.S. currency stashed by fleeing Iraqi government officials.[5] The U.S. Central Command quickly seized the money and understood that the money was the possession of the Iraqi people. They acted quickly to return the money in the form of projects built by Iraqis, maintained by Iraqis, and intended to benefit the people of Iraq. By the fall of 2003, the money had been depleted but the positive effect it was having on the population was apparent.[6] In November 2003, Congress passed House Resolution 3289 which allocated $180 million in operation and maintenance funds to be used for "urgent Iraqi humanitarian and reconstruction relief and assistance for the people of Afghanistan."[7]

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[5] Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Commander's Emergency Response Program: Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures.* Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Center (2008), 1.

[6] Ibid., 1.

[7] H.R.3289—Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004 (Section 1110), Library of Congress, last accessed September 16, 2016, https://www.congress.gov/bill/108th-congress/house-bill/3289/text?resultIndex=3.

President George W. Bush signed the bill in to law and began the flow of taxpayer money to be allocated to the Commander's Emergency Response Program. "Today, the purpose of the CERP remains unchanged—to provide commanders a capability to effectively respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements within their areas of responsibility by carrying out programs that will immediately assist the indigenous population."[8] To this day, as CERP begins to wind down in Afghanistan, the purpose of the program has remained the same.

The introduction of the CERP concept preceded, by nearly five years, the publication of the U.S. Army's first field manual specifically focused on stability operations.[9] The same precedence can be said for the Center for Army Lessons Learned handbook on CERP.[10] About the same time the author had arrived in Afghanistan, commanders in the field should have been receiving their first copies of both documents. In September 2008, the Commander of Afghan Regional Security Integration Command–West (ARSIC-W) received a 34-year-old Navy lieutenant to become his CERP manager. With no experience in civil affairs, engineering, or stability operations, the assignment of a Navy helicopter pilot to conduct humanitarian relief and reconstruction projects was perhaps an indication that CERP doctrine was still being digested by senior military leaders.

The Commander's Emergency Response Program was designed to assist commanders in a number of ways but there were restrictions. CERP projects had to fit in to one of nineteen different categories:[11]

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[8] Under Secretary of Defense, Comptroller, *Memorandum: Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) Guidance.* Washington, DC: Under Secretary of Defense, Comptroller, May 9, 2007, 1.

[9] U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3–07, Stability Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2008).

[10] Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Commander's Emergency Response Program.*

[11] Comptroller, *Memorandum*, 1–2.

1. Water and sanitation
2. Food production and distribution
3. Agriculture
4. Electricity
5. Healthcare
6. Education
7. Telecommunications
8. Economic, financial, and management improvements
9. Transportation
10. Rule of law and governance
11. Irrigation
12. Civic cleanup activities
13. Civic support vehicles
14. Repair of civic and cultural facilities
15. Repair of property damaged by coalition military operations
16. Condolence payments for next of kin of police or defense personnel killed in coalition military operations
17. Payment to personnel upon release from detention
18. Protective measure for critical infrastructure
19. Other urgent humanitarian or reconstruction projects

In 2007, project costs were capped at $500,000 per contract but projects could exceed that amount as long as the project was approved at the U.S. Central Command level.[12] Projects were identified and nominated by commanders or their staff, local authorities, U.S. government agencies, or Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Ideally, projects would be recommended by local government authorities that would be responsible for maintaining the project after completion.[13] Ultimately, however, every project was to be signed-off by the AOR commander regardless of nominating individual. The locations and scope of the projects were vast as evidenced by the 9657 projects reported throughout Afghanistan from 2004 to 2014.[14] Projects were selected from each

[12] Comptroller, *Memorandum*, 1–2.

[13] Army Lessons Learned, *Commander's Emergency Response Program*, 16.

[14] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *SIGAR Special Project 15–49: Department of Defense Commander's Emergency Response Program: Priorities and Spending in Afghanistan for Fiscal Years 2004–2014* (Washington, DC: SIGAR, April, 2015), 8.

of the 19 categories and completed in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, with a large portion of the projects taking place in volatile Kandahar and Helmand Provinces.[15]

Problems with the approval of certain CERP projects were experienced because of a rule that was attached to the program by the Undersecretary of Defense: "Appropriated funds made available for the CERP shall not be used for direct or indirect benefit to U.S., coalition, or supporting military personnel."[16] It is difficult to assume that a commander would spend money in his AOR, on Afghan projects, without having some thought that it would benefit his forces either by ensuring security or gaining cooperation from the population. This assumption is compounded by the advent of Money as a Weapon System (MAAWS) and its relationship to CERP. The MAAWS Standard Operating Procedure for CERP states that the program, "helps the coalition alleviate human suffering without conditions or impartiality and create a positive impression of coalition forces and the (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan)."[17] This statement appears to be an effort at shaping the battlefield in Afghanistan with CERP funds and partaking in stability operations helping U.S. forces. This thesis will not speculate on the benefit of the CERP on U.S. forces but rather the humanitarian benefit to Afghanistan.

Criticism of the Commander's Emergency Response Program usually revolves around the poor accounting that has taken place in Afghanistan and the unknown nature of the majority of the projects completed.[18] Additional criticism is often focused on projects that were completed but are unsustainable.[19] Commanders occasionally approved of projects that had unintended consequences. For example, before the spring

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[15] Special Inspector General, *SIGAR Special Project 15–49*, 3.

[16] Comptroller, *Memorandum*, 2.

[17] U.S. Forces, Afghanistan, "USFOR-A Publication 1–06: Money as a Weapon System, Commander's Emergency Response Program SOP," http://info.publicintelligence.net/USFOR-A-MAAWS-2012.pdf, 5.

[18] Special Inspector General, *SIGAR Special Project 15–49*, 8.

[19] Kevin Sieff, "In Afghanistan, clinic funded by U.S. military closes because of lack of government support," The Washington Post, last accessed September 17, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-afghanistan-clinic-funded-by-us-military-closes-because-of-lack-of-government-support/2013/11/17/64560b2a-4ad1-11e3-bf60-c1ca136ae14a_story.html.

planting season of 2009, the author used CERP funds to purchase over 370 tons of wheat seed and 166,000 fruit trees.[20] The intent was to decrease Herat Province's dependence on poppy growth. A donation of this size would give farmers a head start and put valuable money in their pockets. At the time, wheat seed was becoming cost prohibitive and criminal elements were pushing poppy seeds on farmers. The unintended consequence of the CERP purchase was that we drove up the price of wheat seed and fruit saplings across western Afghanistan and eastern Iran. The Commander of ARSIC-W had purchased nearly every wheat seed and fruit tree in the region. Those farmers unfortunate enough not to be on the receiving end of our donation were left unable to afford seeds for that growing season. Poppy fields continued to be grown in the province.

Much criticism of the CERP does not explain if the program was successful or not. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reports have undoubtedly shown that CERP has provided jobs, infrastructure, and income to a country that did not previously have them. Afghanistan is an evolving and complex country that is still undergoing transformation. Determining if CERP achieved its goal of "providing commanders a capability to effectively respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements" is a difficult task.[21] As Dr. Michael Fischerkeller wrote in *Prism*, "There are as many perspectives on the desired effect of CERP employment as there are conclusions regarding CERP effectiveness."[22] Perhaps the answer to the question of whether CERP has worked or not is yet to be determined.

Further examination is needed to determine if the CERP program has been successful in Herat Province, Afghanistan. Has the Commander's Emergency Response Program helped the people of Afghanistan or has it been nothing more than a waste of money for the United States government?

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[20] ISAF Public Affairs Office, "ARSIC-W donates wheat seed to reduce poppy growth in Herat," International Security Assistance Force, last accessed September 17, 2016, http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/pressreleases/2009/02/pr090222-171.html.

[21] Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Commander's Emergency Response Program*, 1.

[22] Michael Fischerkeller, "The Premature Debate on CERP Effectiveness," *Prism* 2, No. 4 (August, 2011): 142–143.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

This thesis uses a qualitative approach, gathering information and observations from projects completed in Herat Province, Afghanistan. Observations of projects will be investigated to determine if they have produced long term, positive effects for the people of Herat province. The author possess imagery from CERP projects from his tour in Afghanistan, a small sample of those projects will be investigated to see if they have endured or produced as they had intended. Additionally, material critical of the CERP campaign will be examined to determine if the program has been valuable from a cost-benefit standpoint. As U.S. forces continue to operate in Afghanistan, it's difficult to forecast what will happen after they leave. Perhaps only then can we truly understand the effects CERP had on the population. Unable to adequately forecast, this thesis will examine completed projects and determine if they are still operational or performing as intended; successes will be annotated if they are still functioning properly and assisting the Afghan population.

This thesis will use a variety of sources including scholarly journals, policy papers, U.S. government documents including Center for Army Lessons Learned reports, and reports from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. This thesis will use U.S. military doctrinal publications to more fully understand the U.S. military and government's role and approach to stability operations and CERP. Additionally, this thesis will review U.S. and Afghan news sources to determine the current level of stability in western Afghanistan as well as various images to determine the current material condition of CERP projects managed by the author in 2008 and 2009.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Following the introductory chapter, Chapter II explains the legislature and doctrine that helped establish the Commander's Emergency Response Program. Chapter III is an analysis of the process by which projects were selected and monitored in Herat, Afghanistan. Chapter IV is an analysis of whether the projects succeeded in achieving their intended purpose. Chapter V is the conclusion and outlines implications for future stability operations.

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II. ORIGINS AND GUIDANCE FOR THE COMMANDER'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM

A. THE CREATION OF THE COMMANDER'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM

In order to better understand the successes or failures of the Commander's Emergency Response Program you need to take a look at how the program came to existence, how it continued to be funded, and how it was integrated in to doctrine. Born from an unlikely source, the program had an obvious appeal for commanders on the ground. Leaders in the field had a flow of funds they could use to help the local populace, gain trust with them, and hopefully shape the outcome of the conflict. With little oversight, and the dreaded red tape associated with nearly every other source of funding, commanders were free to do as they please, within the rules of the program, to sway the people in their favor. There would be no way that the adversary could compete with the deep pockets of the local American commander. Generals requested the continuation of the program and Congress was happy to oblige. CERP provided an excellent opportunity for quick, low-cost, public relations successes. Groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings for CERP projects were covered by Combat Camera and provided tangible results for military leaders and policy makers. Large sums of money were allocated to CERP and doctrine fell in line.

CERP began in early 2003 as United States ground forces worked their way through Iraq looking for high-ranking individuals loyal to Saddam Hussein. Working off leads from intelligence sources, Iraqi leaders were found and so were large sums of money. The 3rd Infantry Division was successful in securing $1.2 billion in U.S. currency found in hiding places owned by former Ba'athist and Republican Guard leaders.[23] Ground forces continued to find money throughout Iraq so the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) was forced to make a decision about what to do with the money. This money was obviously not the possession of the United States but rather pilfered by the

23 Army Lessons Learned, Commander's Emergency Response Program, 1.

Saddam regime from the citizens of Iraq. The United States Army V Corps was quick to issue orders giving the money to ground forces for, "humanitarian assistance under the name Brigade Commander's Discretionary Recovery Program to Directly Benefit the Iraqi People."[24] Lieutenant Colonel Mark Martins describes the positive results experienced in Iraq: "Thousands in Baghdad received a daily wage to clean streets, alleys, buildings, and public spaces, far exceeding what U.S. forces alone could do. Iraqis repaired and installed hundreds of small generators in municipal buildings—many confiscated from abandoned Ba'athist buildings and villas—enabling communities to resume basic functions despite slow progress on the electrical grid."[25] By November 2003, however, the $1.2 billion had run out and Congress would get involved in legislation that would continue to fund the program.

B. LEGISLATURE CREATING AND SUSTAINING THE CERP

On November 6, 2003, Congress passed House Resolution 3289, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004. In it, $180 million was allocated for CERP with the explicit instructions that the funds be used "for the purpose of enabling military commanders in Iraq to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements within their areas of responsibility by carrying out programs that will immediately assist the Iraqi people, and to establish and fund a similar program to assist the people of Afghanistan."[26] The loan caveat attached to the funding of CERP was that, "the Secretary of Defense shall provide quarterly reports, beginning on January 15, 2004, to the congressional defense committees regarding the source of funds and the allocation and use of funds made available."[27]

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[24] Army Lessons Learned, *Commander's Emergency Response Program*, 1.

[25] Mark S. Martins, "The Commander's Emergency Response Program," *Joint Force Quarterly* Issue 37, 2nd Quarter (2005): 48.

[26] Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, Pub. L. No. 108–106, § 1110, 117 Stat. 1209, 1215 (2003).

[27] Ibid.

Appropriated money was distributed as operations and maintenance (O&M) funds because, as LTC Martins writes, "commanders were familiar with its use, accountability, and management" and the use of O&M funds "was essential to keeping CERP flexible, responsive, and unencumbered by procedures associated with procurement, payment of claims, or other actions that involve the expenditure of appropriated funds."[28] Perhaps most important, using O&M funds allowed CERP to stimulate the local economy by using local labor being paid in local currency and thus avoided the bureaucracy and red tape found in spending programs that must run through Washington, DC.

Of the $180 million appropriated for CERP in fiscal year (FY) 2004, $40 million was appropriated for use in Afghanistan with $35 million disbursed. The disparate amount given to Afghanistan is indicative of the commitment and troop levels experienced in the country. At the time of funding, there were 15,800 U.S. troops in Afghanistan compared to 134,000 in Iraq. The size and scope of CERP was to increase in the years following FY 2004 as ground commanders realized the benefit of the funds.

For FY 2005, the amount of money dedicated to CERP increased to $854 million.[29] Only $136 million was allocated to forces in Afghanistan where troop levels had increased only slightly to 17,500. Conversely, troop levels in Iraq were increased by 14,000 to 148,000. In Iraq, casualties began to increase as improvised explosive devices became more sophisticated.[30] Commanders and congressmen felt that CERP funds would be an ideal source of income for Iraqi citizens who would otherwise be employed by elements aligned against the coalition. In Afghanistan, International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) were still getting a foothold in the country. While U.S. troops were successful in disbursing nearly the entire $136 million given to them for CERP, large U.S. bases were still being conceived. For Herat, Afghanistan, they would not see a major

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[28] Martins, "The Commander's Emergency Response," 50.

[29] Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief § 1006, 119 Stat. at 243; Ronald W Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 *§* 1201, 118 Stat. at 2077; Department of Defense Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2005 § 907, 118 Stat. at 1007.

[30] "Terrorists retool carnage in Iraq," *Washington Times*, June 12, 2005, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/jun/12/20050612-123836-8551r/.

U.S. presence for some time. Iraq would remain the focus point for much of the CERP funding for the next couple years as casualties there began to mount.

In FY 2006, some adjustments were made to legislation regarding CERP. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2006 authorized $500 million to be used in FY 2006 and another $500 million in FY 2007. For each of the fiscal years, Iraq would again take priority over Afghanistan. Approximately $210 million of the total allocated $500 million for each year would be doled out to efforts in Afghanistan. In 2006 and 2007, the United States was facing heavy casualties in Iraq with eight times more fatalities than in Afghanistan. In the United States, the public had become quite concerned about the situation in Iraq; however, President George W. Bush was determined to solve the situation with an increase in troops. A shift in focus to Afghanistan would not occur until 2009. Of note, the Act required that the Secretary of Defense create official instructions on the use of CERP. The Act states, "Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the congressional defense committees a copy of the guidance issued by the Secretary to the Armed Forces concerning the allocation of funds through the Commanders' Emergency Response Program and any similar program to assist the people of Afghanistan."[31] The NDAA for fiscal year 2006 was enacted on January 6, 2006 and the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) was quickly able to provide Department of Defense (DOD) Financial Management Regulation 7000.14-R which fulfilled the reporting requirements set forth by the act.[32] The defense committees were now informed of the DOD guidance used to administer CERP; the program would continue for the foreseeable future.

In Afghanistan, the author would experience the tail end of funding for FY 2008 but would feel the full effect of funding for FY 2009. Like Congress had done in 2006, CERP was funded for two fiscal years and it was funded for both Iraq and Afghanistan.

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[31] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006, Pub. L. No. 109–163, § 1202, 119 Stat. 3136, 3455 (2006).

[32] Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation, Volume 12, Chapter 27 (April, 2005).

Both fiscal years saw dramatic increases in funding; FY 2008 saw $1.7 billion and $1.5 billion for FY 2009.[33] CERP funding had increased nearly ten times from its first version in 2004. Iraq remained the focus for allocation but the pendulum was beginning to shift over to Afghanistan. Troop levels in Iraq were decreasing after the surge there and troop levels were increasing in Afghanistan during this period. It would appear that Congress was also becoming a bit concerned about the CERP in Iraq. A number of caveats were put in place that required reporting by the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). The Pentagon now had to report project descriptions, justifications, completion dates, sustainment, and involvement of the Government of Iraq.[34] Congress, it would appear, was looking closely at closing out the program in Iraq with an eye on withdrawing U.S. troops. Meanwhile, $408 million would be spent in FY 2008 and $500 million would be disbursed to the Afghan population in FY 2009.[35] The amount of money appropriated to CERP in Afghanistan was about to increase dramatically in FY 2010.

Fiscal year 2010 signaled the last major push for CERP in Afghanistan; funding from Congress would decrease from this point forward. For FY2010, $1 billion was appropriated for CERP in Afghanistan (and only $300 million for Iraq) under a new one-year extension and expansion of the Commander's Emergency Response Program.[36] As part of the expansion, Congress introduced a stipulation that CERP funds, not to exceed $50 million, could be shared with the State Department. The 2010 NDAA reads, "If the Secretary of Defense determines that the use of Commanders' Emergency Response Program funds to support the Afghanistan National Solidarity Program would enhance counterinsurgency operations or stability operations in Afghanistan, the Secretary of Defense may transfer funds, from amounts available for the Commanders' Emergency

[33] Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Pub. L. No. 110-417, § 1214, 122 Stat. 4356, 4630 (2008).

[34] Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 § 1214(c), 122 Stat. at 4630.

[35] Special Inspector General, *SIGAR Special Project 15–49*, 6.

[36] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, Pub. L. No. 111–84, § 1222, 123 Stat. at 2518.

Response Program for fiscal year 2010, to the Secretary of State."[37] According to the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, it would appear that the $50 million was forwarded on to the Afghanistan National Solidarity Program.[38] Congress was obviously getting concerned with the administration of CERP by the Department of Defense and was interested in seeing what the State Department could do with the funds. Further highlighting Congress' concerns about the execution of the program, it stipulated, "Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall conduct a thorough review of the Commander's Emergency Response Program and submit to the congressional defense committees the results of such review."[39] Surprisingly, the Department of Defense was not even close to disbursing the full $1 billion appropriated to Afghanistan in FY 2010. CERP managers in Afghanistan were only able to distribute one-third of the funds, or $328 million. It would turn out that 2010 would be the deadliest year in Afghanistan for United States servicemen and women. With 499 fatalities, Congress understandably wanted to see a return on the investment; if the people of Afghanistan were unwilling or unable to return the goodwill provided by CERP, Congress would have to pull the plug on the program. Appropriated funds for CERP would quickly decline in the years following 2010.

C. CERP DOCTRINE

In 2008, there was no training for individual augmentees who would go on to become CERP managers in western Afghanistan. Individuals responsible for CERP would have to learn through on-the-job training. Overall, guidance on the execution of CERP has been minimal. The first document providing guidance was a memo from the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) dated November 25, 2003; the

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[37] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, Pub. L. No. 111–84, § 1222, 123 Stat. at 2518.

[38] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *SIGAR Audit 11–08: Economic and Social Development/NSP: Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program Has Reached Thousands of Afghan Communities, but Faces Challenges that Could Limit Outcomes* (Washington, DC: SIGAR, March 22, 2011), 5.

[39] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, Pub. L. No. 111–84, § 1222, 123 Stat. at 2519.

Comptroller would go on to revise the memorandum in 2005 and 2007.[40] At only six pages in length, the memo briefly discussed responsibilities, execution procedures, reports, and notification requirements. The Comptroller was the obvious choice to supervise the CERP because of the large amounts of money that would be handled as part of the program. With the Comptroller's memo short on specific guidance for tactical units, The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) created a handbook for commanders in the field.

Released in March 2008, CALL created the most comprehensive guidance for the administration of CERP at the tactical level. Although classified as tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP), rather than doctrine, it is a thorough document and would have been a great help had it been made available in 2008 to the CERP manager in Herat, Afghanistan. As was the case with the Comptroller memos, the CALL handbook delineates what the CERP can and cannot be used for and how projects are approved. It diverges from the Comptroller memo in that it provides a step-by-step process by which projects move from nomination to closure (Figure 1). The clearly stated procedures are geared toward the tactical-level decision maker and are supported by examples of forms and documents required by higher headquarters for projects to be completed.

Released in August 2016, the most recent iteration of Joint Publication 3–07 Stability (JP 3–07), briefly mentions the Commander's Emergency Response Program. It recommends that the Joint Force Commander, "should coordinate early to request flexible and immediate funding for work initiatives similar to the Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) utilized in Afghanistan and Iraq to quickly implement post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction programs."[41] JP 3–07 is smart in pointing out that when utilizing a program like CERP, commanders should make informed decisions about how to spend the money. Although time consuming and somewhat difficult to gauge, JP 3–07 states that commanders, "must ensure that

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[40] Comptroller, *Memorandum: Commanders' Emergency Response* (2007).

[41] Director for Strategic Plans and Policy (J-5), "Joint Publication 3–07: Stability," Joint Staff, Washington, DC (August 3, 2016), III-34-35.

maximum goodwill is created. Commanders must verify that the extra cash does not create harmful effects in the local economy. One such side effect would be creating unsustainable wages that divert skilled labor from a host nation program essential to its legitimacy. Commanders must also ensure that projects can be responsibly administered to achieve the desired objective and that they avoid inadvertently financing insurgents."[42] In Herat, Afghanistan, the CERP manager did not fully understand the ramifications of some projects. As mentioned in the example in Chapter I, the bulk purchase of wheat seed by the CERP manager was not understood from a fiscal standpoint. The large purchase created a harmful effect on the local economy by creating a scarce resource and driving up prices. Also of note in JP 3–07 is its mention of transitioning away from CERP as the conflict transitions from stabilization efforts to enabling civil authority. Commonly referred to as the transition from Phase IV to Phase V, the JP 3–07 notes that ongoing projects should be completed during the transition.[43] This is clearly the case for Afghanistan as evidenced by the decrease in funding for CERP since 2010.

[42] Ibid., E-10.

[43] Ibid., E-12.

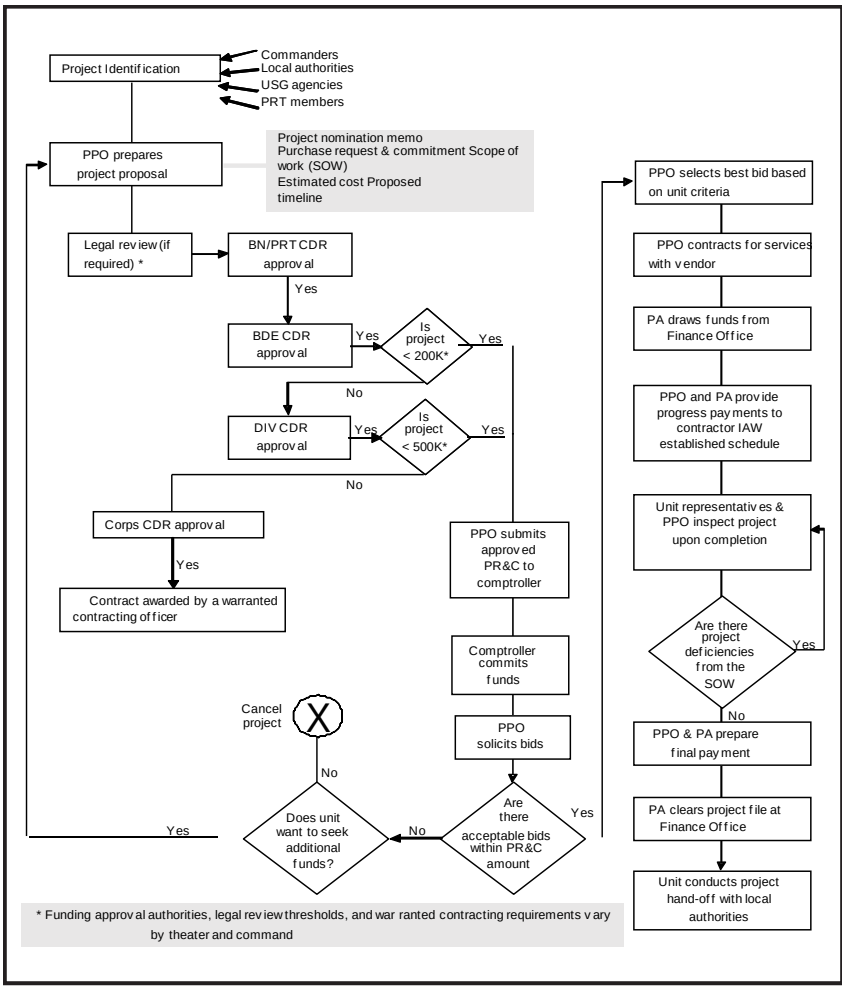

Figure 1. General Project Approval and Management Process[44]

[44] Source: Army Lessons Learned, *Commander's Emergency Response Program*, 15.

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III. HOW PROJECTS WERE SELECTED AND MONITORED: THE HERAT CASE STUDY

A. PROJECT SELECTION IN HERAT, AFGHANISTAN

In 2008, a number of CERP projects were passed on to the incoming program manager in Herat.[45] Eager to get to work, the new manager met with the AOR commander to assess his needs and make sure they were fulfilled. The colonel's orders were simple: "Spend as much money as you can and don't get killed." The outgoing manager was a reservist Navy commander who had been involved in humanitarian missions in Africa before his tour in Afghanistan; this experience served him well. The commander understood the dynamics of assisting the population of a third-world country. The incoming manager was a young lieutenant with no experience in humanitarian operations; he would be given one week to absorb as much information as he could from the outgoing commander. The inherited project list included an electrical grid, numerous road projects, various school structures, and irrigation projects. These projects had been nominated through various means but they all fit the requirements set forth in guidance. In addition to the building projects, the ARSIC-W commander maintained a large warehouse filled with clothing items, rice, beans, flour, and tarps to be used for villages in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The total budget for projects was never fully disclosed and it was understood that cost should not be factor in the selection of a project, only in its approval process. With one week of on-the-job training, the new lieutenant began his one-year tour as the CERP manager in western Afghanistan.

Soon after assuming the position as CERP manager, the phone started ringing and guests started to arrive at the base front gate. Word was out that there was a new manager in town and previously denied projects could be readdressed. The manager needed filters to delineate what was worthy and what was not. Filters were found in three people; the first was an Afghan Army lieutenant colonel that the lieutenant was tasked with

[45] The author is referred to as the "incoming program manager" and "lieutenant" in this chapter. The execution of CERP in Herat province was performed by the author from October 2008 to September 2009.

mentoring. The other two people were the lieutenant's interpreters. They were all local nationals and had lived in Herat for years. For the most part, they all were in agreement on which projects were better than others. Without a means of determining their allegiances, most of their recommendations were taken to the AOR commander for sign-off. It is safe to say that the interpreters and lieutenant colonel could have been benefitting monetarily from the approved projects but the CERP manager did not have the resources to pursue their backgrounds. They were all thoroughly recommended by the outgoing commander. Without question, however, each project met the requirements set forth in CERP guidance. On occasion, though, there could have been some inadvertent benefit to U.S. and coalition troops.

Herat province is roughly the same size as the state of West Virginia. There were numerous U.S. combat outposts spread across the province and each was usually collocated with Afghan Army or Police units for mentoring purposes. From these outposts, the U.S. and Afghan forces would patrol their particular area and ensure that enemy forces were not in the vicinity. Patrolling units would often run in to village elders that were interested in handouts. Outpost personnel would contact the CERP manager to see what could be done to meet the village's needs. This was a regular process and one that made the manager's job easier. The combat outpost personnel would be in charge of checking on the projects as they were being executed. As a shop of only four personnel, unable to quickly move to the project site, the CERP manager would use the downrange assets as eyes and ears. The remote outpost personnel often made their recommendations based on villages that supported them with intelligence or by not allowing Taliban or Al-Qaeda elements in to their area. This project recommendation and selection skirted the edge of rules that stipulated CERP could not be used for the benefit of U.S. or coalition forces. As in all cases, each project was carefully scrutinized by the AOR Judge Advocate General to ensure that they met all legal requirements set forth in guidance. Each situation involving CERP funds eventually met the requirement of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. The downside to all projects, whether downrange or local, was having the engineering knowledge to determine if a project was structurally sound.

B. PROJECT MONITORING: CHALLENGES FOR MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Monitoring CERP construction projects in Herat province presented some problems. Security concerns and low manning levels contributed to the difficulties. When the CERP manager arrived in Afghanistan in October 2008, there were 32,400 troops on the ground there; meanwhile, in Iraq, there were 151,000. Iraq, clearly, was the focus for manpower and resources.

Problems started with the requirement to have three, fully manned vehicles for all movements outside of the base perimeter. The requirement was a legitimate one; combat patrols in western Afghanistan were susceptible to roadside bombs, small arms fire, and various other forms of attack. The security provided by a large group of vehicles was welcomed, however, the manning required was difficult to acquire on a regular basis. Each vehicle would require at least four individuals: a driver, a truck commander, a gunner manning the crew-served weapon, and a dismount-capable shooter. Additionally, one combat medic was required on all movements outside the wire. With only four individuals in the CERP shop, an additional nine people were needed to check on projects. Nearly every mission would also be joined by a large contingent of Afghan Army personnel in order to add to the legitimacy of the projects. Coordination and significant effort was required to just get out the gate. It was commonplace for CERP personnel to lend their services to the border patrol and police mentors in order for them to complete their missions; manpower was scarce and so there was an expectation of reciprocity if personnel were loaned to other groups.

Of greater concern was the lack of engineering experience amongst U.S. forces in western Afghanistan. A small cadre from the Army Corps of Engineers had been dispatched to Herat but they were involved in major building projects worth millions of dollars and had no time available to assist the CERP manager. Quality control for construction projects was difficult to judge. It became immediately clear that the expectation that structures would be built to U.S. standards was out of the question. Quality building materials like concrete, lumber, and hardware were non-existent. Wells were often dug by hand or with antiquated techniques. Demanding western-level building

materials would drive prices well above the caps set for CERP. Ultimately, the village elder for the project site was usually the one that would be the best judge of quality. If he was happy with the project, work would proceed and if it was seen to be sub-par, the project would be corrected. As the CERP manager became more experienced, he could produce more detailed scopes of work and hold contractors accountable. There were, however, projects that were going to fail because of the lack of engineering experience at the command.

IV. DID PROJECTS ACHIEVE THEIR INTENDED GOAL?

A. RECALLING THE INTENDED GOAL

Ongoing security concerns in Afghanistan continue to plague the United States. Al-Qaeda is a persistent threat in at least seven different provinces in Afghanistan.[46] Despite enormous amounts of money and bloodshed, the enemy continues to be a threat. For someone not familiar with CERP, it would appear to be an enormous waste of money and effort. How could the U.S. spend so much money on such an ungrateful populace, completely unwilling to take the steps necessary to secure its own security? But was CERP created to secure the country? It is the author's opinion that the role of CERP was never to be a security apparatus. As guidance stated from the very beginning, "CERP is designed to enable local commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements within their areas of responsibility by carrying out programs that will immediately assist the indigenous population."[47] If it was meant to further the efforts of the United States military, the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) would never have stipulated, "appropriated funds made available for the CERP shall not be used for . . . direct or indirect benefit to U.S., coalition, or supporting military personnel."[48] According to the Under Secretary, what was created with CERP was an extremely large bank account that U.S. commanders could access to help people in their AOR. At no point should the ground commander expect anything in return that would be construed as a benefit to his forces. However, it would appear that the stipulation pronounced by the Under Secretary was largely ignored as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated in testimony to the U.S. Senate in 2007:

> "Commander's Emergency Response Program or (CERP) funds are a relatively small piece of the war-related budgets…But because they can be dispensed quickly and applied directly to local needs, they have had a

[46] Bill Roggio and Thomas Jocelyn, "US military is hunting al Qaeda in at least 7 Afghanistan provinces," *Long War Journal* (September 24, 2016), http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/09/us-military-is-hunting-al-qaeda-in-at-least-7-afghan-provinces.php.

[47] (Comptroller), Financial Management Regulation, 27–3.

[48] Under Secretary of Defense, Comptroller, *Memorandum*, 2.

> tremendous impact–far beyond the dollar value—on the ability of our troops to succeed in Iraq and Afghanistan. By building trust and confidence in coalition forces, these CERP projects increase the flow of intelligence to commanders in the field and help turn local Iraqis and Afghans against insurgents and terrorists."[49]

For the purpose of this paper, I have assumed that the commander of U.S. forces in western Afghanistan approved projects with the intent that they may assist U.S. forces in successfully performing their mission.

B. HAVE PROJECTS "WORKED"? CONFLICTING STANDARDS PRODUCE MIXED MESSAGES

"Urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction" can be interpreted in a number of different ways, but the Under Secretary of Defense helped commanders by delineating in his guidance on what could and could not be done with CERP funds. Those project types are delineated in Chapter I, but confusion was found in the definition of "reconstruction." The term implies that the U.S. would use CERP to build things that had been previously damaged or destroyed. There is no known guidance that provides a timeline for that damaged property. Should AOR commanders use their funds to repair a building damaged during the first Anglo-Afghan War of the 1840s? Do we rebuild the hotel damaged during the Soviet occupation in the 1970s? In 2008 and 2009, there were no instances of reconstruction of property damaged prior to U.S. involvement in the AOR. The AOR commander in western Afghanistan, however, was prepared to fix property damaged by U.S. forces. On a few occasions, payments were made to individuals whose property was damaged by U.S. forces. The largest disbursed sum was $2500 for a totaled Toyota van, the victim of a collision with a Cougar Mine Resistant Ambush Protected truck. Aside from those few instances, however, most projects involved new buildings and not reconstruction.

Reconstruction is better explained if you understand that Afghanistan is a primitive place with weak infrastructure; one major paved road, little electricity, and rarely running water. Whether stuck in time because of nearly constant conflict or

[49] Army Lessons Learned, *Commander's Emergency Response Program*, 1.

because of rampant corruption or perhaps due to a brain drain, Afghanistan has never been able to absorb and build on U.S. assistance. People travel long distances by donkey to reach a market, homes are usually made of mud, and life expectancy is 51 years. The correct term to use should be “construction” rather than “reconstruction.” U.S. assistance, to include CERP, is not reconstructing anything; we are building entirely new infrastructure, where none had existed, and thus by process of elimination, providing “urgent humanitarian relief.”

As part of the author’s pass down to his replacement, the author produced a spreadsheet that documented 52 projects that were in various stages of completion in late-summer 2009 (Figure 2). The list provides a glimpse in to the wide range of projects that were part of the CERP in Herat province. Structural enhancements or the construction of new buildings have been analyzed to determine if they still stand and appear to be functioning as intended. Utilizing open source, geospatial intelligence gathered by DigitalGlobe's Enhanced View Web Hosting Service, it can be determined with a moderate level of certainty that these projects have been successful. Successful projects have been annotated in green in Figure 2. Unable to accurately locate projects without a reliable military grid reference system (MGRS), those ventures have been listed as having unknown results and are shown as yellow in Figure 2. Three projects are clearly failures and are annotated as such in the list with colored markings of red.

Five projects were one-time contracts that did not call for ongoing support or maintenance. Canal (or karez) clearances were required following the warm months in western Afghanistan. These canals were hand dug and ran from major waterways to provide irrigation to area crops; they often became overgrown or filled with silt and required upkeep before the winter storms. These canal clearances were generally an inexpensive way to employ local nationals, for a short term, while assisting area farmers. The list also includes pharmaceuticals that were purchased on the local economy to support humanitarian efforts conducted by the Afghan Minister of Health.

The list concludes that 54% of the projects can be deemed a success while 6% are failures. In the sections below, two projects that have been determined to be failures will be highlighted followed by two successful projects. Forty percent of the projects that

were ongoing in September 2009 have unknown results. Unknown results appear to be in keeping with SIGAR and their assertion that, "according to data provided by DOD, the largest group of completed CERP projects lacked specific categorization and remain unknown."[50] The CENTCOM Command Inspector General highlighted the shortfalls of the CERP Reviewing/Reporting Toolset (CRRT); the central reporting database for the program: "(SIGAR) lists 6,400 projects as 'unknown' category, totaling $.5B. Without the source documentation, we are unable to confirm if these are indeed uncategorized, as CRRT does not keep records for the entire timeframe."[51]

[50] Special Inspector General, *SIGAR Special Project 15–49,* 3.

[51] Ibid., 18.

	NAME	LOCATION	STATUS
1	AHMADI VILLAGE GRAVEL ROAD	41S MT 22280 99654	SUSTAINED
2	AQUACULTURE, AG STATION MAINTENANCE, POULTRY PROJECT	SHINDAD	FAILURE
3	ASIA BAM DISABLED REHAB CTR	ALMAHDI TOWN, JEBRIEL VILLAGE	UNKNOWN
4	AZIZABAD FRUIT DRYING	AZIZABAD (41S MS 36455 91999)	SUSTAINED
5	BALA BALUK BOYS AND GIRLS SCHOOLS	BALA BALUK (41S MS 62603 23712)	SUSTAINED
6	BALA MURGHAB BRIDGE EMBUTTMENT		UNKNOWN
7	BAY KHABUT KHAN SCHOOL WALL	BAY KHABUT KHAN (41S MT 27900 67200)	SUSTAINED
8	BOOKS FOR BETTER TOMORROW	HERAT	UNKNOWN
9	DELARAM IED BLAST REPAIR	DELARAM (41S NR 20100 70100)	SUSTAINED
10	DIZAK BOYS SCHOOL REPAIRS	DIZAK (41S MS 55473 09419)	UNKNOWN
11	DIZAK GIRLS SCHOOL	DIZAK (41S MS 55081 07885)	SUSTAINED
12	GANJABAD (GHERANI) WELLS (5)	GHERANI (41S MS 43043 06005)	UNKNOWN
13	GOZARA BRIDGE REPAIR	GOZARA (41S MT 37547 88138)	SUSTAINED
14	GOZARA SCHOOL WALL	GOZARA (41S MT 39121 87812)	SUSTAINED
15	HASNABAD WATER TOWER	GOZARA (41S MT 11437 83183)	UNKNOWN
16	HERAT TO SALMA DAM ROAD IMPROVEMENT	HERAT TO SALMA DAM (HWY 2)	SUSTAINED
17	INJIL ELECTRICAL GRID	24 VILLAGES IN INJIL DISTRICT (41S MU 20000 99400 to 41S MU 45800 93200)	UNKNOWN
18	KAMIZAN ROAD IMPROVEMENT	KAMIZAN (41S MT 20500 97500)	SUSTAINED
19	KAROKH MARTYRED WOMENS CENTER	KAROKH (41S MU 62624 16817)	SUSTAINED
20	KAROKH RELIGIOUS SHRINE REFURBISHMENT	KAROKH (41S MU 62624 16817)	SUSTAINED
21	KHAIRABAD DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM	KHAIRABAD SOFLA (41S MS 62731 65410)	SUSTAINED
22	KHAIRABAD SCHOOL REPAIRS	KHAIRABAD SOFLA (41S MS 62731 65410)	FAILURE
23	KHAMENJ SCHOOL	KHAMENJ (41S PT 25000 05000)	SUSTAINED
24	KHARCHAN WELLS	KHARCHAN (41S MT 34246 21812)	UNKNOWN
25	KHOSAN INTAKE	KHOSAN (41S LU 40451 29457)	SUSTAINED
26	KHOSAN IRRIGATION CANAL CLEARANCE	KHOSAN (41S LU 37655 34726)	SUSTAINED
27	KLATE BARICHY KAREZ CLEARANCE	KLATE BARICHY (41S LU 30010 38040)	SUSTAINED
28	KOHE ZUR KARIZ CLEARANCE	KOHE ZUR (41S MS 48633 78450)	SUSTAINED
29	KOHE ZUR SCHOOL	KOHE ZUR (41S MS 48633 78450)	UNKNOWN
30	KOHE ZUR WELLS (31)	KOHE ZUR (41S MS 48633 78450)	UNKNOWN
31	MISC ADDITIONAL AG PROJECTS		UNKNOWN
32	MOSOM MERAN BRANCH ROAD	MOSOM MERAN (41SMT 28260 89468 to 41S MT 32815 89180 to 41S MT 33874 86439)	SUSTAINED
33	MOSOM MERAN SECONDARY ROAD	MOSOM MERAN (41SMT 28260 89468 to 41S MT 32815 89180 to 41S MT 33874 86439)	SUSTAINED
34	NAWYE SCHOOL WALL AND SECOND STORY ADDITION	HERAT	UNKNOWN
35	NEW MEDCAP PHARMACEUTICALS	VARIOUS	SUSTAINED
36	PHARMAKHAN SCHOOL REPAIR	ZERKO VALLEY	UNKNOWN
37	QANATI TO EAST SHINDAD ROAD IMPROVEMENT	SHINDAD (41S MS 29224 93555)	SUSTAINED
38	QAREMEER CANAL/KARIZ CLEARANCE	QABRE-E-MEER (41S NS 04869 78885)	UNKNOWN
39	ROUTE 515 PAVING	SHINDAD	UNKNOWN
40	ROUTE LITHIUM WELLS	BADGHIS (VARIOUS)	UNKNOWN
41	RTC "BUMP" ROAD	GOZARA (41S MT 28355 87422 to 41S MT 43600 88262)	SUSTAINED
42	SHAYDAY ELECTRICAL POWER	SHAYDAY (41S MU 34912 03041)	UNKNOWN
43	SHINDAD 50-BED HOSPITAL	SHINDAD	UNKNOWN
44	SHINDAD AG RESEARCH STATION PHASE III	SHINDAD (41S MS 32000 95100)	FAILURE
45	SHOUZ WELLS (10)	SHOUZ (41S MS 52881 64338)	UNKNOWN
46	SHOVEL PURCHASE	HERAT (VARIOUS)	UNKNOWN
47	SOLAR/WIND WATER PURIFICATION SYSTEM	HERAT (VARIOUS)	UNKNOWN
48	TTC WALL	HERAT (41S MU 28826 02828)	SUSTAINED
49	TTC WOMEN'S CENTER	HERAT (41S MU 28826 02828)	SUSTAINED
50	WHEAT SEED/FRUIT SAPLING DISTRIBUTION	THROUGHOUT HERAT PROVINCE	SUSTAINED
51	WOMENS PRISON VOCATIONAL TRAINING	HERAT (41S MU28000 02000)	SUSTAINED
52	ZENDA JAN NESWAN SCHOOL	ZENDA JAN (41S LU 84000 00500)	SUSTAINED

Figure 2. Herat province CERP Projects, September 2009.[52]

[52] Source: author's collection, Excel spreadsheet, "ARSIC-W CIMIC PROJECTS," September 2009.

C. FAILED PROJECT—SHINDAND AGRICULTURE RESEARCH STATION

Images show that some projects have fared quite well while others have not. One example of the latter is the Shindand Agriculture Research Station. This facility was a shining example of new construction, filled with much promise. The southern district of Shindand was a troubling place for U.S. forces. With adequate irrigation, the area was known for its poppy production. Situated against the eastern border of Iran, it also represented an ideal location for the smuggling of arms in to Afghanistan. Shindand was of great importance to the Afghan government because it held an airstrip that would later become a major facility for Afghanistan's fledgling air force. Stabilization in Shindand was important for the future of Herat Province. In order to move the local population away from poppy production, and hopefully away from criminal activity, the Herat Province representative for the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) requested CERP funds be used to build a facility that could train local farmers to cultivate something other than poppy. With the full support of the local United States Agency for International Development (USAID) representative, the AOR commander approved CERP funds for the construction of the new facility.

Completed in May 2008, the facility was purposely built inside the fence line of the military base at Shindand. The facility would provide a safe learning environment to local farmers, free from the intimidation expected from arms smugglers and opium producers. At the request of the MoA representative, the facility was built with fish ponds, fruit tree groves, gardens, a bee keeper station, classroom, and living quarters for instructors (Figure 3). Subsequent CERP funding was allocated for equipment purchases, seed procurement, and the staff was paid by the Minister of Agriculture.

There appears to be a point where the ability to sustain the project was not possible. In September 2009, a sustainment request of $400,000 was requested but never fulfilled. The land that the agriculture station occupied was not chosen carefully. Unbeknownst to the MoA and the AOR commander, the land had already been earmarked for an airbase extension. The fruit tree grove was bulldozed and replaced by a

field hospital, the fish ponds were drained, and the other building were reclaimed by the Minister of Defense for Shindand base operations (Figure 4).

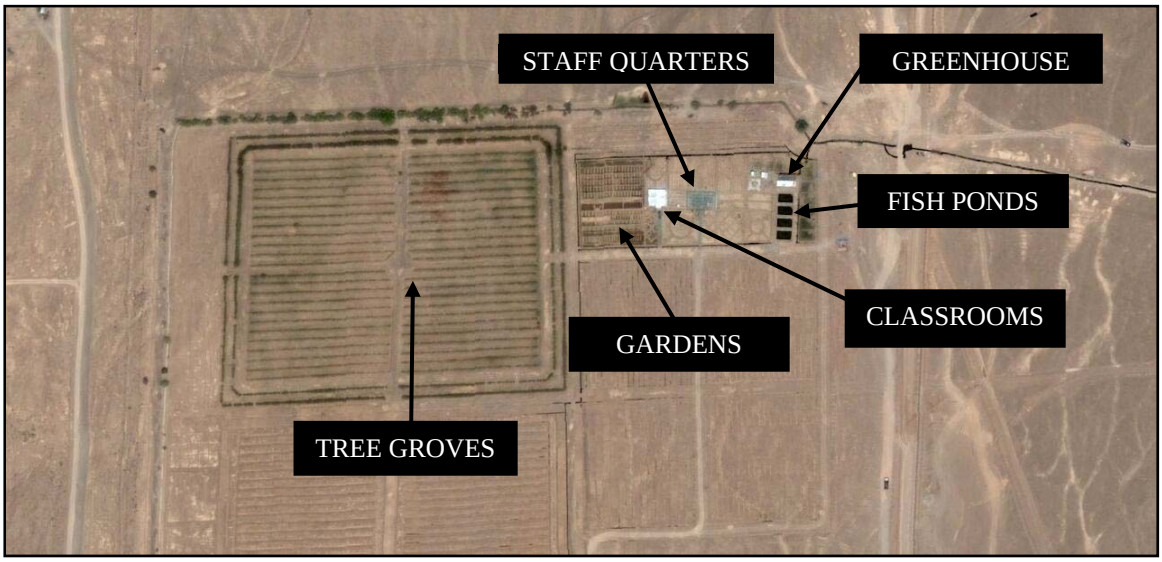

Figure 3. Shindand Agriculture Research Station, August 29, 2008.[53]

Figure 4. Shindand Agriculture Research Station, October 1, 2016.[54]

[53] Adapted from Shindand–Enhanced View Web Hosting, Digital Globe, last accessed October 21, 2016, https://evwhs.digitalglobe.com/myDigitalGlobe/#18/33.39139/62.26689.

[54] Adapted from Shindand–Enhanced View Web Hosting.

D. FAILED PROJECT—KHAIRABAD SCHOOL REPAIRS

The small village of Khairabad is located in a remote section of southern Herat province. The village is situated approximately five miles from the Shouz Afghanistan Police Training facility. In 2008, the training facility was run by a seasoned U.S. Army captain that had served multiple combat tours in Afghanistan. The captain had established a relationship with the local community and often held shuras, or meetings, with village elders to discuss security concerns. He realized that many of the elders tended to defer their thoughts and opinions to one man, Faisal Ahmad (Figure 5). Mr. Ahmad was an interesting gentleman who had a tenuous relationship with coalition forces. Thought to be an arms smuggler moving weapons into Herat from Iran, he was rumored to be on a coalition Joint Prioritized Effects List (JPEL). This designation could not be confirmed; however, being a JPEL target would have most certainly led to his death or capture. In 2008 and 2009, he was very much alive and working closely with the Army captain in Shouz. According to Faisal Ahmad, he became powerful because of his family. In the early 1980s, the U.S. government identified Ahmad's father as being the lucky recipient of a Stinger missile system. Having gained access to the decisive weapon in the war against the Soviets, the elder Ahmad became an instant warlord. The Ahmad family was set for the foreseeable future.

Figure 5. Faisal Ahmad with the Author in front of the Khairabad School, January 2009.[55]

Faisal Ahmad approached the author in early 2009 to discuss an issue he had with a school that was built by Turkish forces a few years earlier. Located a short distance from Ahmad's property, he stated that the roof had been torn off of the structure by a violent wind storm. An assessment was made on the structure and it appeared that indeed the roof was gone and that a large number of windows, fixtures, and electrical systems had been stolen from the facility. Ahmad assured us that the security of the facility would be substantially increased by adding a security wall and that he would take personal responsibility for the facility remaining intact should it be completed again. With the U.S. Army captain's confirmation, CERP funds were allocated to making the facility complete again with the addition of a security wall and bathroom facilities (Figure 6). The completion of the project would take place after the author's departure from theater.

[55] Source: author's collection.

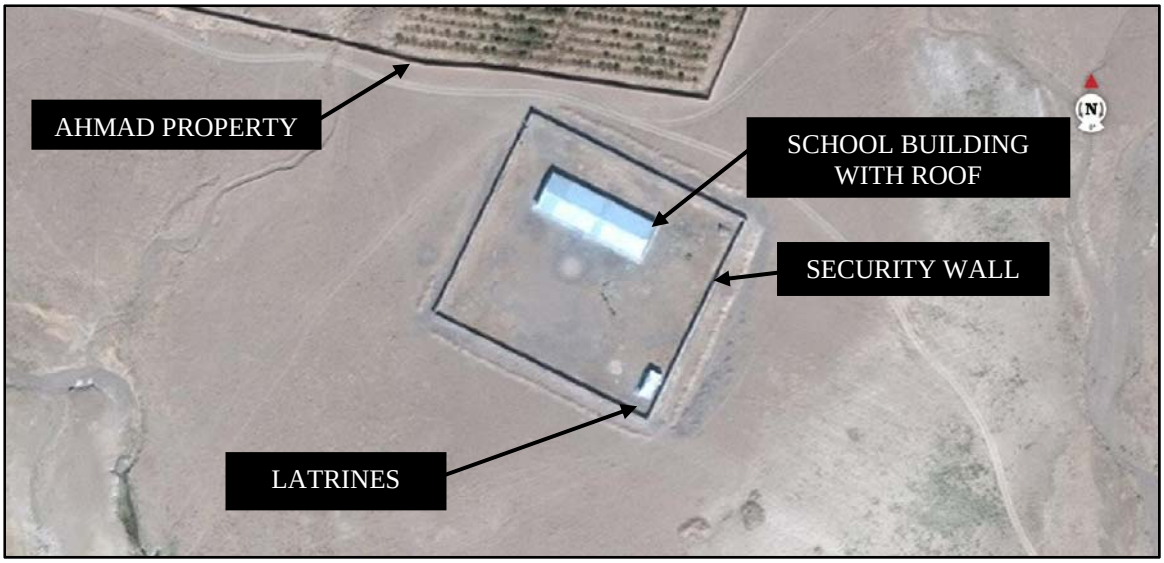

Figure 6. Khairabad School, September 29, 2013.[56]

Analysis of imagery taken in October 2016 reveals that the Khairabad School CERP project has been a failure (Figure 7). The roof of the school facility has been removed and it is assumed that classes are no longer being conducted in the facility. With harsh summers and very cold winters, the ability to conduct classes in a facility without a roof would be difficult. It also appears that the wood support beams for the roof have been removed and most likely used for alternative purposes. No doors are present at the entrance to the facility and no doors are evident at the entrance to each classroom. It is unknown if the demise of Faisal Ahmad led to a lack of security oversight and the subsequent failure of the Khairabad School.

[56] Adapted from Khairabad–Enhanced View Web Hosting, Digital Globe, last accessed November 18, 2016, https://evwhs.digitalglobe.com/myDigitalGlobe/map#18/33.12675/62.60047.

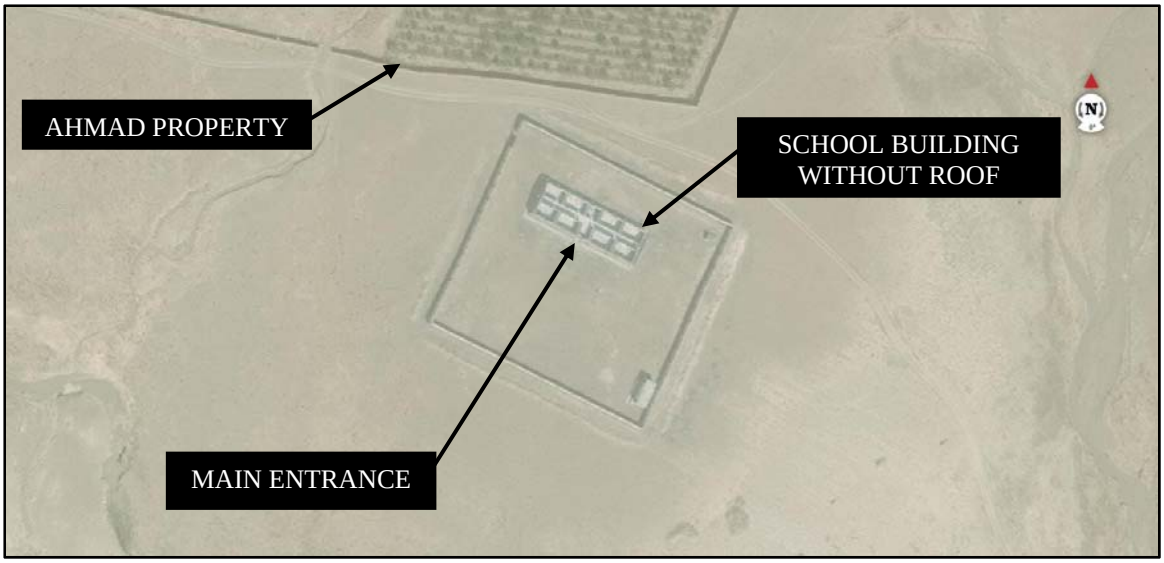

Figure 7. Khairabad School, October 1, 2016.[57]

E. SUCCESSFUL PROJECT–HERAT TEACHER TRAINING CENTER

ARSIC-W was the main handler of CERP funds in western Afghanistan in 2008. During the period between 2008 and 2009, the commander for ARSIC-W received many requests for CERP fuds to be allocated to the building of new schools. The issue with schools in Herat Province was that qualified teachers were difficult to find. In order to remedy this situation, a Teacher Training Center (TTC) was established. As is still the case, security concerns were prevalent throughout the country. The Herat Minister of Education and the Dean of the Herat Teacher Training Center approached the ARSIC-W commander about building a security wall and guard tower at the entrance to the Training Center grounds. Avenues of approach to the Training Center were clear and straight and were assessed to be ideal for vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (Figure 8). Women were being trained at the facility and hardline, former Taliban members had voiced their displeasure at the reintegration of women in to Afghan society. Compounding the security concerns was the fact that many of the women attending the center had school age children. The center offered schooling for these children while their mothers studied so all parties involved wanted a safe learning environment.

[57] Adapted from Khairabad–Enhanced View Web Hosting.

The ARSIC-W commander quickly approved the use of CERP funds to finance a 900-meter perimeter wall, guard station, and entry control point for vehicles and pedestrians. Work began in the fall of 2008 and was completed in February 2009. Wisely, the Dean of the Training Center requested a wall that was substantially larger than the existing facilities. Expansion of the Herat Teacher Training Facility would occur again in 2012 using CERP funds. Two, two-story, twenty-classroom buildings were constructed at a cost just under $1 million and the original 900-meter perimeter wall completed in 2009 would continue to protect the students and faculty attending the Center (Figure 9).

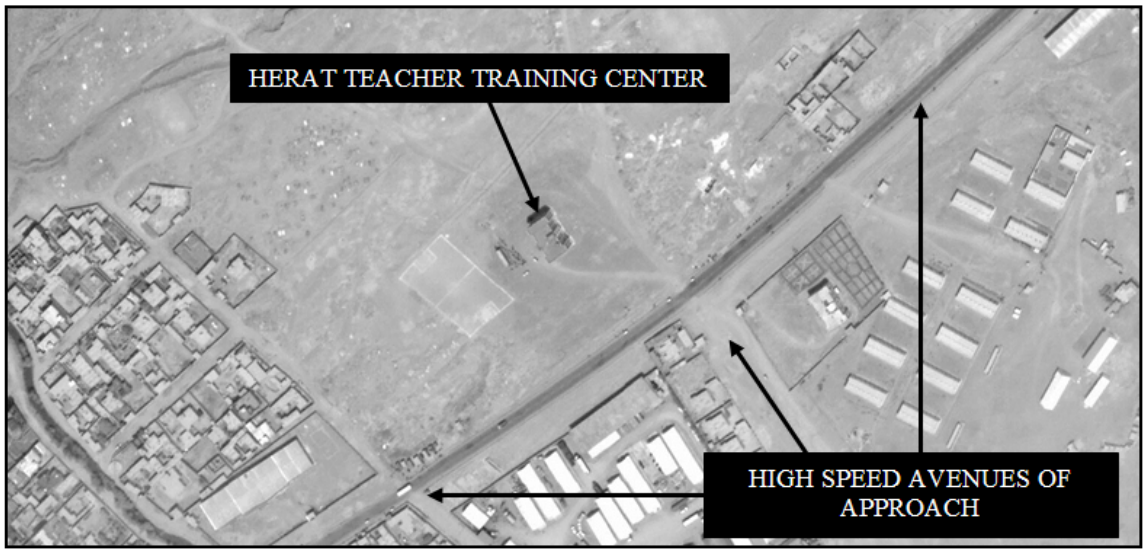

Figure 8. Herat Teacher Training Center, August 29, 2008.[58]

[58] Adapted from Herat–Enhanced View Web Hosting, Digital Globe, last accessed October 21, 2016, https://evwhs.digitalglobe.com/myDigitalGlobe/#18/34.36436/62.22597.

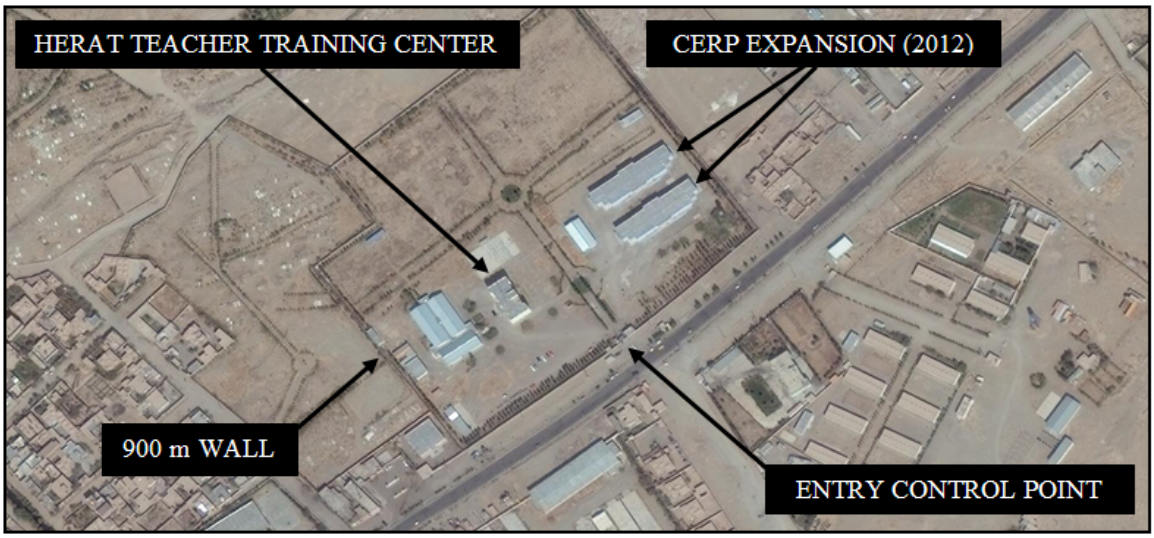

Figure 9. Herat Teacher Training Center, September 29, 2016.[59]

F. SUCCESSFUL PROJECT–ZENDA JAN NESWAN SCHOOL

Zenda Jan is a village on the road between the city of Herat and the Iranian border. Additionally, the village is situated along the banks of the Hari River. Zenda Jan benefits from the abundant trade travelling to and from Herat and Iran; the river provides the resources to grow a large variety of crops. In 2008, Zenda Jan was expanding at a rapid rate. People originally from Herat, who had fled to Iran during the Taliban regime, were returning in great numbers and they were settling in Zenda Jan. The ARSIC-W commander was fond of Zenda Jan because it was peaceful and quickly becoming a shining example of potential and success in an otherwise challenged province.

In mid-2008, the ARSIC-W commander was approached by the Herat Minister of Education and introduced to the idea of funding a school complex in Zenda Jan. The Minister pledged to provide properly trained teachers and administers while the sub-governor of Zenda Jan district pledged his commitment to providing a safe learning environment. Further enticing the commander was the commitment to provide education to boy and girls, something not seen with the Taliban government. The ARSIC-W commander was quick to pledge his support for the project and the CERP process was

[59] Adapted from Herat–Enhanced View Web Hosting.

underway. Property was allocated by the Zenda Jan district governor and construction began in the summer of 2009 (Figure 10).

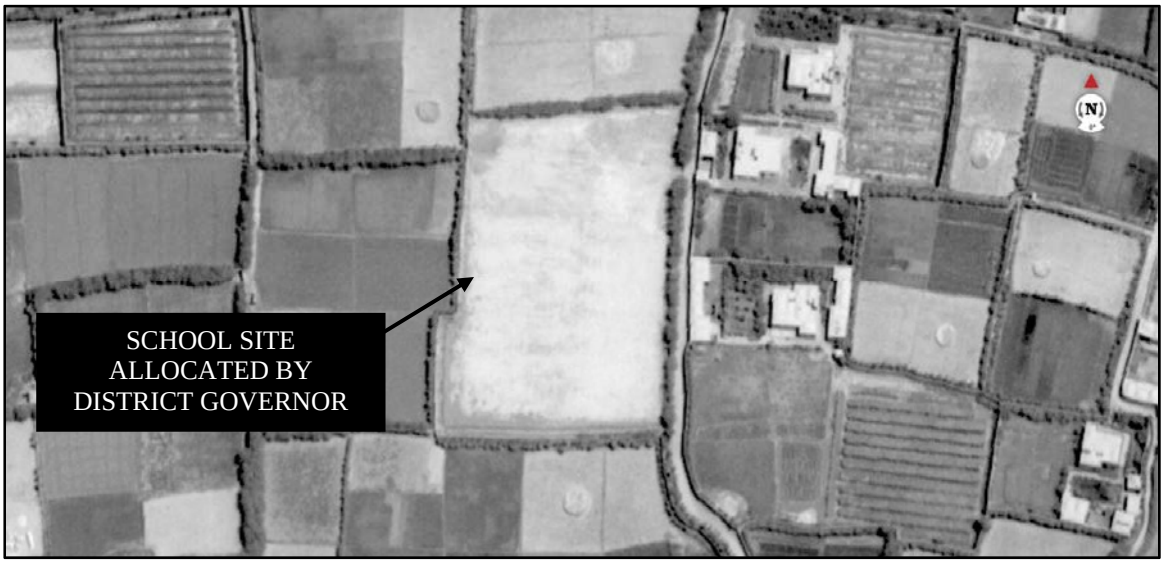

Figure 10. Zenda Jan School Site, April 6, 2009.[60]

As the author was departing Afghanistan, the Zenda Jan school was in its final stages of construction. One school building was constructed for boy and one building was constructed for girls. In between the two buildings were a large recreation area and a small area for a garden. Vocational training for farmers could be conducted at the facility utilizing the garden. A guard house and security wall was constructed to protect all occupants. Restroom facilities were part of the contract, as was a small building for staff. Recent overhead imagery shows that the school has been a success and it appears to be operating as intended (Figure 11).

[60] Adapted from Zenda Jan–Enhanced View Web Hosting, Digital Globe, last accessed November 18, 2016, https://evwhs.digitalglobe.com/myDigitalGlobe/map#18/34.34079/61.74372

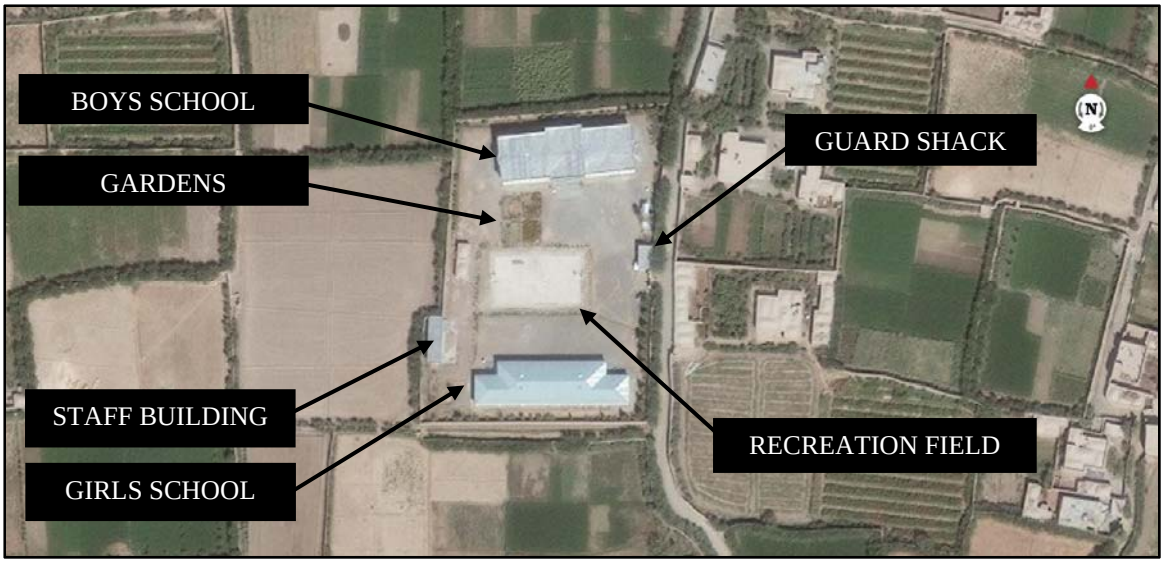

Figure 11. Zenda Jan School, September 23, 2016.[61]

[61] Adapted from Zenda Jan–Enhanced View Web Hosting.

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V. CONCLUSION

The Commander's Emergency Response Program was designed to assist military leaders engaged in stability operations. Easily accessible funds were made available to assist the people of Afghanistan. When determining if the CERP was successful, any finding must assume that the program benefited the Afghan people. American dollars were paid to Afghan contractors to build structures in Afghanistan. These structures and services were almost always new and not rehabilitation efforts or repairs. Goods and services were paid for by the United States and they were given, free of charge, to the people of Afghanistan; these facts are undeniable. Problems arise when the United States determines accountability and finds that many of the projects are unaccounted for or in an unknown status. The program, however, was not designed to produce structures that were to have a particular lifespan. In Herat province, there was no contract written that stated a school or clinic had to be built to withstand 10 years of use. Thousands of fruit trees were purchased but they were not required to produce fruit for 5 years. Sustainability, however, was always a concern when spending CERP money. Schools were built only if the Afghan government could ensure teachers would be available to teach. Clinics were built only if doctors and medicine were available. A reasonable amount of prediction was needed to determine if CERP projects could survive after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

While short-term gain to the people of Afghanistan is apparent, the long-term results are to be determined. The security situation in the country remains volatile and the strength of the government continues to be questionable. Without a government willing or able to maintain the facilities built using CERP funds, the program could become a failure of enormous proportions. In the future, CERP may be deemed a failure if the Afghan government fails and the Taliban regain control of the country but analysts will need to recall that the program was never intended to benefit U.S. or coalition forces. The program was not designed to keep the Afghan government in power and it was never intended to promote anything put in place by outside entities. The fact remains, the Commander's Emergency Response Program was designed to provide urgent

humanitarian assistance to Afghans. Needs were addressed in the near term using large sums of money; perhaps the long-term results are irrelevant.

Future stability operations would benefit from a program like CERP. Giving ground force commanders a tool to help the local community is important. Readily accessible funds, with minimal strings attached, managed by a capable officer can benefit a host nation ravaged by war. Future programs, however, must be managed by individuals properly trained to run the program. Pre-deployment training should include rudimentary lessons on construction techniques used in the host country. CERP managers would benefit from having instruction in contracting, procurement, and the legal aspects of the program. A strong CERP manager should also be familiar with the decision makers in the AOR such as host nation government officials, U.S. government representatives, and leaders in non-governmental organizations. Establishing personal relationships early would preclude any duplication of efforts. Also important is the establishment of a measure of effectiveness. Understanding what a well-run program looks like will help keep all projects on track and on budget. Lastly, future CERP must have a computer-based system that tracks all projects from start to finish. Much of the criticism of the Afghan CERP program has focused on a lack of accountability. Many of the projects categorized as unknown could have easily been tracked and accounted for using a simple theater-wide computer system. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, that program was lacking and is evidenced by SIGAR reports.

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