
Defense Security Cooperation Agency is a Key Player in Providing Wheelchairs to Afghanistan

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“You have changed my life. I now have freedom and mobility,” said one grateful recipient. “It is comfortable, it is easy to steer. My life will be much easier now,” said another. These statements could be heard coming from disabled Afghans during a ceremony in Kabul to highlight Project Afghanistan.

As part of an exceptional team effort, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) office of Humanitarian Assistance and Mining Action (HA/MA) collaborated with several organizations to provide a large shipment of wheelchairs to Afghanistan. In September 2003, more than 5000 wheelchairs were delivered to Afghanistan in an effort appropriately titled Project Afghanistan. One hundred and fifty of the red and black wheelchairs were distributed in a ceremony held in at Camp Watan, a high security counter terrorism training facility in Kabul. This ceremony launched the distribution of the projected 5,000 wheelchairs to the people of Afghanistan.

The Wheelchair Foundation, a non-profit organization established in June 2000, joined forces with the Afghanistan Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled, the United Nations Comprehensive Disabled Afghans Programme, and U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense to lead a private sector delegation that distributed the wheelchairs. Hundreds of people from around the world gathered together for the official ceremony presided over by Mr. David Sedney, U.S. Embassy Kabul, Charge Affairs; Wheelchair Foundation founder, Kenneth E. Behring; and Afghanistan Minister of Martyrs and Disabled, Mr. Abdullah Wardak. Minister Wardak announced the formation of an official committee to oversee the continued distribution, training and maintenance of the wheelchairs. Various non-government organizations are currently working with the disabled in Afghanistan and have assisted in this worthwhile effort.



Pictured above are Minister Wardak and Mr. Sedney at the wheelchair distribution ceremony.

The Department of Defense’s support for this effort focuses on people whose disabilities resulted from landmines. Many of the recipients were victims of landmines who literally crawled to the event to receive a wheelchair. Others were carried on the backs of family members and friends. In this emotion filled ceremony, Mr. Sedney stressed that the Wheelchair Foundation, and its goal to assist anyone in the world who needs a wheelchair, but can not afford one, is part of the American spirit of giving and sharing.

The role of the DSCA managed Humanitarian Assistance Funded Transportation Program was a critical component in transporting and delivering the wheelchairs to Afghanistan. Ms. Judith McCallum, transportation expert in the DSCA HA/MA office, arranged for the transportation and delivery of the wheelchairs to Kabul, and accompanied them to the distribution ceremony. Ms McCallum coordinated the shipment of wheelchairs to Afghanistan under the auspices of the Funded Transportation Program. Once the program was established and approved by the Department of Defense, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency HA/MA office

facilitated the transportation by matching the size of the shipment with the mode of transport, within the required delivery date.

Some of the wheelchair recipients.



The Department of Defense administered Humanitarian Assistance and Landmine Action Program includes a family of activities under the authority of Title 10 United States Code, funded by the Department of Defense's Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster and Civic Aid (OHDACA) appropriation. DoD manages OHDACA-funded Humanitarian Assistance programs in cooperation with the Department of State, and the Agency for International Development (USAID) and in compliance with national security and foreign policy interests. Among other initiatives, the OHDACA appropriation includes funds for the cost of transportation in support of humanitarian projects and Department of Defense objectives.



Distribution of wheelchairs in Afghanistan.

The Funded Transportation Program is a means by which donors can apply for transportation paid for by Department of Defense of privately donated goods. This program permits the shipment of humanitarian assistance materials donated by vetted non-government organizations, international organizations, and private volunteer organizations for humanitarian relief, and includes the actual costs and payments.

Project Afghanistan serves as a model of American public and private partnerships working to help in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The massive level of effort of all concerned with this project resulted in an overwhelming success. More information regarding the Defense Security

Cooperation Agency's managed Funded Transportation Program, and other Humanitarian Assistance programs is available on the Defense Security Cooperation Agency's website www.dsca.mil, in the section marked HA&MA. Additional details regarding the transportation programs of privately donated cargo can be found at www.dentonfunded.ida.org.

About the Author

Virginia Caudill is the Director of Management Studies at the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management. She has over twenty-five years of security cooperation and foreign military sales management experience. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of the Americas in Mexico and her MPA from the University of Dayton. She acknowledges the support of Mrs. Diane Halvorsen, Director of Defense Security Cooperation Agency/HA&MA and the assistance of Mrs. Judith McCallum in the preparation of this article.