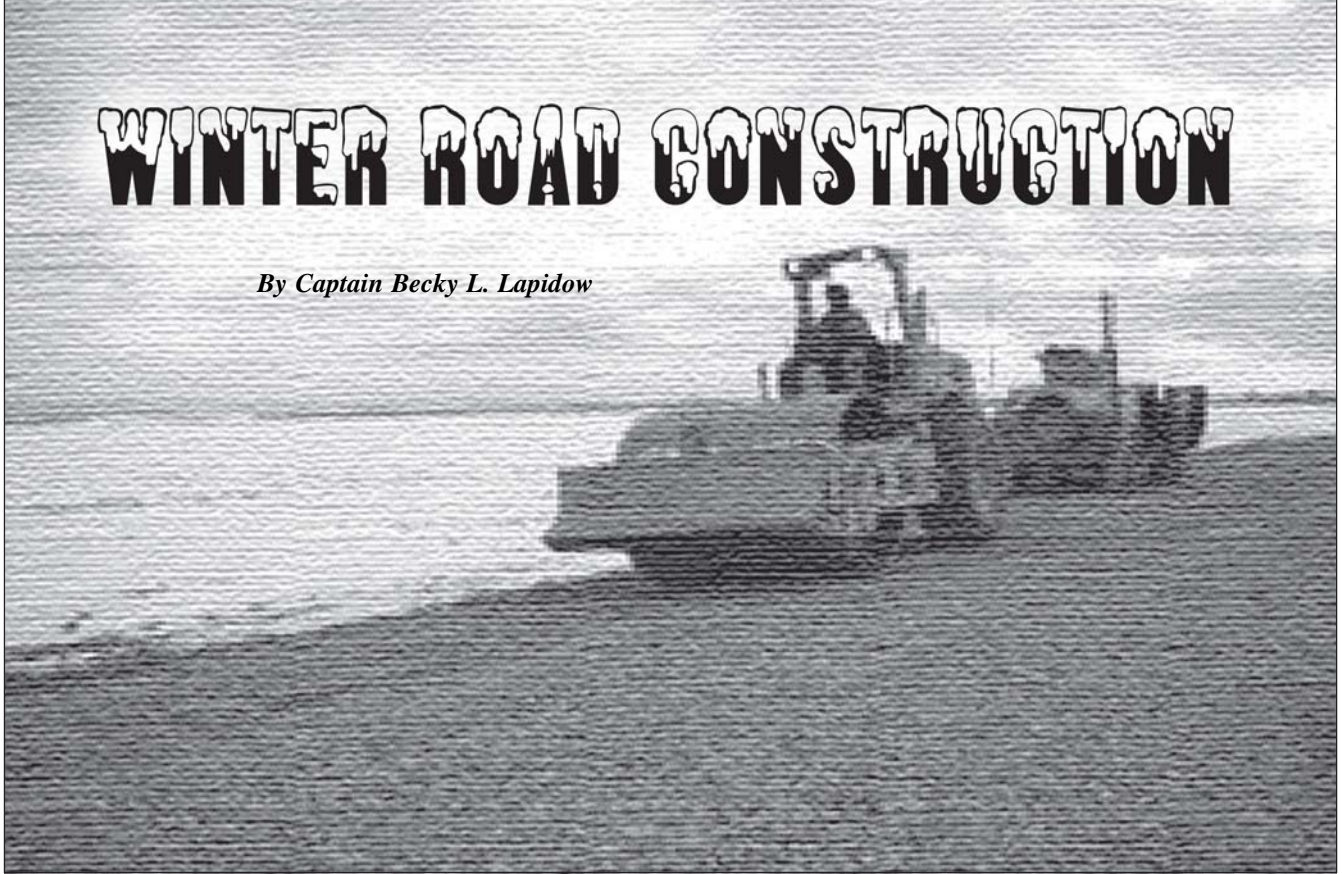


WINTER ROAD CONSTRUCTION

By Captain Becky L. Lapidow

Photo by Sergeant First Class Mark Ferron, Task Force Eagle



While cold weather and freezing temperatures may stop the Taliban, harsh conditions don't stop Task Force Eagle. These Soldiers are committed to building roads to help the people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Although at times the ground is freezing and road construction is limited because of the bad weather, the local nationals of Afghanistan and American Soldiers continue their work when the weather permits because they know that

accomplishing this mission will benefit many. They use four different types of equipment, including a dozer to cut the ditches and push fill onto the road, a sheep's foot roller to break up frozen dirt and start compaction on the 18 to 24 inches of fill, a smooth-wheel roller to finish the soil and compact the gravel, and a grader to cut the final grade on the road and spread the gravel.

First, snow is removed from the existing area far enough for

two days of work. Then, dozers are used to rip up the frozen ground in small increments. Workers are careful not to rip open too much earth in case snow falls overnight and fills the holes with frost and moisture. The dozers then push fill material into the existing road and push frozen and dry material onto the road. The sheep's foot roller is then used to roll over the material to break up the frozen chunks of dirt and mix the dry and frozen material together. After a base course (the subbase layer of an asphalt roadway) is compacted, the grader is rolled over it to ensure that the road is even. The smooth-wheel roller is used to compact the top 4 to 6 inches of road.

The next day, the top 2 inches of the road are final-graded, and 3 inches of well-graded #5 gravel are spread, graded, and compacted once more. While this is being done, other

Photo by Sergeant First Class Mark Ferron, Task Force Eagle



A high-speed compactor breaks up frozen chunks of soil and compacts it to strengthen the subbase.



Photo by First Lieutenant Keith Muehling, Task Force Eagle

After graders smooth the road and create ditches, the smooth-wheel roller compacts the dirt.

Soldiers grade and compact the ditches along the side and complete the finish work. This process may sound easy, but when the top 12 inches of road are frozen, it is not a simple task.

The road that Task Force Eagle is working on is important to the local population for many reasons. First of all, it connects towns (over a 100-kilometer stretch) that were previously isolated from one another. This has significant economic impacts because these towns can now trade and export among each other. The road allows the small village governments to communicate and become a stronger government. The road also impacts education and health care because it is now easier to get to school or see a doctor when needed. But most importantly, Afghan local nationals are helping with the project by providing gravel, fuel, and water used in construction, which creates jobs for the local populace. In turn, the Afghan workers learn how to care and maintain the roads themselves, helping to make them autonomous once coalition forces leave the country.

This is why Afghan local nationals and Task Force Eagle Soldiers, although facing harsh and at times impossible conditions, continue their construction efforts. Afghanistan needs the benefits of roads, no matter what the season. Afghan workers and coalition forces understand this and will continue building this road until their project is completed.



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