

MEDIA ADVISORY

USDA Satellite Features Feed

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FEATURE – USDA AG EXPERTS IN AFGHANISTAN, Part 5 - PANJSHIR

INTRO: Experts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture are making progress in the rebuilding of Afghanistan. The USDA's Patrick O'Leary has more in the final report of a 5-part series. (2:04)

Schlenz: A little history of the Panjshir valley. During the Russian occupation of '79 to '89, there were nine separate offensives where they tried to come up and take the valley. All nine times, they never were able to do it. Following that with the Taliban years, the same thing. They're a very proud people.

They all look like they're all sprouting.

GREG SCHLENZ USUALLY WORKS IN WASHINGTON STATE FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. BUT NOW HE'S IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN, HELPING TO RE-ESTABLISH ORCHARDS AND DIRECT OTHER PROJECTS.

Greg Schlenz, USDA Ag Expert: My background with USDA is I've been with the Natural Resources Conservation Service for twenty seven years. I'm lucky enough to have a very good spouse, and an agency that has allowed me to come over here and take part in this terrific effort.

Schlenz: One of the projects that we started last year is we brought in nine hundred bee hives.

There's the queen. Short wings, long body.

The main reason that we brought these bees in was for pollination. With all the fruit trees that we have in the valley, all the vegetables, it was needed. The secondary benefit of that is excess honey that they can harvest and will generate income.

THIS PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, WHICH INCLUDES MULTIPLE U-S AGENCIES, HAS SOME ADVANTAGES OVER THOSE IN OTHER PROVINCES.

Tom Kelsey, U.S. Department of State: The security threat is much lower here. It's a much more secure environment. We use civilian vehicles and we get out a lot more. So it's a real opportunity for the PRT to get a lot more done on behalf of the people here.

Daniel Kelley, U.S. Army: The long term is, ultimately, self reliance. We have to build them back an infrastructure and let them go on their way and do their thing as far as governance.

Keep up the good work.

Schlenz: Schools are very important. Clinics are very important. But if they're hungry, none of those do any good for anybody. So part of the big security situation here is to keep the people fed and happy. And I'm working very hard to do that.

FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M PAT O'LEARY.

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