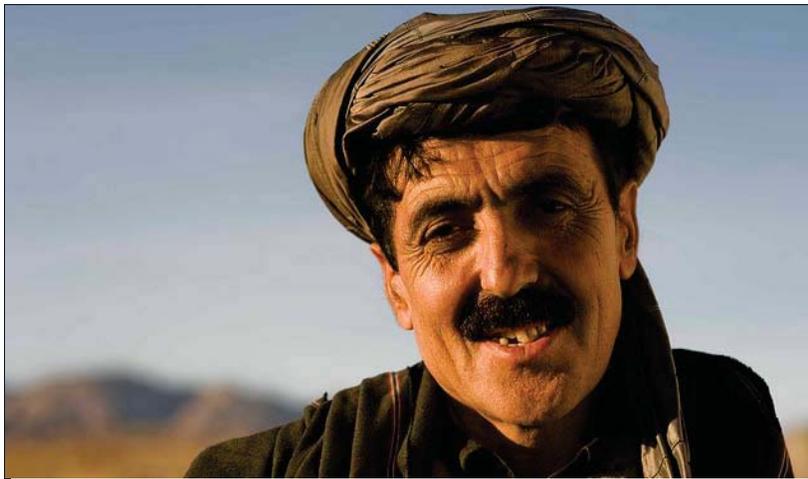




## ISAF Releases

Like 5 retweet PRINT

### Governor Confronts Challenges of Remote Life with Generosity, Creativity



**The District Governor of eastern Kandahar Province's Maruf District, Abdul Samat Durrani, pictured here Jan. 26, 2011, does his best to address the needs of a population estimated at 50,000 Afghan citizens. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ben Watson).**

#### Headquarters, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan Story by Sgt. Ben Watson Special Operations Task Force - South

**MARUF DISTRICT, Afghanistan (Jan. 27, 2011)** — In a compound in Afghanistan's southeastern mountains sits a man who has cultivated a reputation of generosity in a place where villagers get by on very little.

Abdul Samat Durrani is the governor of Kandahar Province's Maruf District – a district that has no paved roads, no clinics or hospitals and very little water for area farmers. And on this day, he is seated atop a thick wool blanket preparing to welcome local farmer, Sanwaar, and his three children.

Sanwaar arrives and removes his own wool blanket before taking a seat with the governor, the man who helped hand out blankets like Sanwaar's to Maruf citizens less than two months ago.

For as long as Durrani can remember, there has been little else to do here but farm and socialize; so the people know Durrani. They also know the District Chief of Police, Nader Khan, and the Maruf Afghan National Police, who are advised and assisted by members of Special Operations Task Force – South.

Durrani and the ANP are the face of governance in this austere place. And it is to the local government that Sanwaar has come with his blanket and his children clothed in the bright greens and reds of Pashtun cultural dress.

#### COMMANDER'S CORNER

UPDATES FROM GEN DAVID H. PETRAEUS



#### Petraeus Lauds Transition Efforts in Afghanistan at Conference



#### SHOHNA BA SHOHNA

UPDATES FROM CSM MARVIN L. HILL

CLICK TO ENTER >>

"It is my child's foot," Samwaar says. "She is in pain when she walks."

Durrani asks the child's father if he has taken his daughter to see the doctor who works at the bazaar. "The doctor is there on Fridays."

"But you have American doctors here," Samwaar says. "Can we see them?"

Durrani explains that yes, Coalition Forces in Maruf have doctors; but their services are used for emergencies only – that Maruf has doctors and pharmacists in the district.

"We have to use our local doctors first," Durrani says again.

Samwaar thanks Durrani for the meeting, and takes his daughter the short walk to the nearby bazaar so that a Maruf citizen can see a Maruf doctor. The local doctor would later help diagnose and treat the girl, who turned out to have a staph infection.

### **Difficulties of Life in Maruf**

Born to a family of sheep farmers, Durrani wanted to be a doctor when he grew up, but Afghanistan's last 30 years of conflict prevented that kind of life for him. He attended school in Maruf before Soviet forces entered the country in the 1970s. He later completed high school and even attended a few college courses in Pakistan, shortly before the Taliban's rise to power.

Today, few other citizens of Maruf have any schooling at all.

One resident, named Abdul, said Durrani's education helped make him a "good storyteller, a wise listener and a generous man – all good qualities a governor should have."

"[Durrani] was born in Maruf, fought the [Soviets] in Maruf, and now tries to help Maruf's poor citizens with food and blankets and anything he can," Abdul explained.

"He must be able to provide for the people to get their support," added Daru Khan, a Maruf policeman for the past ten years. "He has tried to do that this winter with the blankets and the wheat and cooking oils he passed out to farmers [in November]."

Durrani provides as best he can for the people whose Agriculture industry sees little water and is plotted with rough terrain. As well, there are few job opportunities in Maruf.

For years, many families have been forced to split up and seek jobs in either Pakistan to the south or Kandahar City, approximately 60 miles to the west.

Durrani knows well that Maruf is a poor and underdeveloped district. If he did not take measures to support citizens' basic needs, he'd be fighting an even harder battle against what he calls the "deception of the Taliban."

"Maruf's people are very poor, and the Taliban use this against Afghanistan," he said.

"Those who have stayed in Maruf are the people who have always been here – the people with no money and very little education," he explained. "The Taliban try to say they will protect these people, then take their sheep and livestock as a tax – but there is very little livestock to take. The people are poor and for years have been bullied into believing what the Taliban say."

One recent evening in January, a man was brought to the district center after having been shot in the leg. Why he was shot, Durrani said, shows the insurgents' desperation: "The man was a former policeman, and he said the Taliban came to his village to shoot him for supporting his government, even though he had been intimidated enough to quit almost two years ago. The Taliban's way makes no sense to me."

This incident gave Durrani the chance to show the victim's family that he is serious about helping Maruf citizens.

ANP and SOTF-South medics gave initial care, but the man still needed more comprehensive medical assistance. So Durrani paid for a taxi to take the man to a hospital in Kandahar City.

"The transportation service was something I established two months ago for medical emergencies since we have no clinics or hospitals," he said.

"Without services like that, it would be very difficult to show Maruf that we are trying to help them live better lives. In this way, they will not listen to the enemies of Afghanistan, and their children can have better lives."

### **Hope of Education**

Durrani said it's possible that he was among the last citizens here to finish a full year of school in Maruf.

"If a person goes to school, he will respect his parents and his community," he said. "An educated man will know about human rights and he will learn about humility. These are things we need to be teaching in Maruf."

Many of the area children have gone to Pakistan for an education and never returned.

"We want them to stay here and be educated here," said Police Chief Nader Khan.

Durrani has been in discussions with a teacher, and "it has taken some time to get everything right."

But a school is scheduled to open soon, and when it does, Durrani said, it will be one of his happiest days.

By providing a local school for Maruf residents, he and Durrani said they can get an educated population who can help open up the district's economic potential.

Coalition estimates put Maruf's population at approximately 50,000 residents.

"That is a lot of people who need to buy and sell to support their families," Durrani said.

Due to the lack of paved roads, there is much about Maruf's local economy that has been untapped. But that is changing, as the district's primary bazaar reopened in the past year and has been growing ever since.

### **Emerging Economics**

"You take a look at the map and you see Maruf is huge," said the SOTF – South officer working here.

"The bazaar is the economic hub for everybody around here. There's really not much else around unless you cross the border into Pakistan.

The bazaar provides citizens everything from motorcycle repair to veterinary supplies, and from vegetables to even a hotel and chai shop. Not long ago, however, it wasn't the most sanitary place to purchase goods.

That's where the SOTF – South team came in.

"We helped them build a couple latrines and showed them the importance of isolating their garbage in a place away from where they shop," the SOTF – South officer said.

The threat of spreadable illnesses loomed large until these basic sanitation needs were met.

"With hospitals so far away, cleaning up the bazaar was one of the first tasks which caught our attention when we arrived," the officer said.

It's these fundamental advances which pave the way for both a functioning Afghan society, as well as a local government which is seen as a problem-solver and means to a better future, the officer said.

They are some of the first steps; but in remote places like this, the first steps can be the hardest ones to complete, Durrani said.

"We must be realistic in what we can achieve to improve lives here, but we also try as best we can to work with the provincial government to help us provide for Maruf," Durrani said.

"I am optimistic, but I am only one man," he said. "As we begin to get more of Maruf involved in standing up for all of our security, and taking action to help those around them, then we can start to see some of the biggest changes in people's lives here."

Click [here](#) for more photos.



110124-A-8041W-018

By isafmedia ★ Favorite

The Maruf District of eastern Kandahar, as seen here Jan. 24, 2011, is a remote and mountainous district with approximately 50,000 residents. The district's people are led by District Governor, Abdul Samat Durrani. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ben Watson)(Released).



110117-A-8041W-027

By isafmedia ★ Favorite

Omar, an Afghan National Policeman, stands outside the Maruf District Center in eastern Kandahar Province's Maruf District, Jan. 17, 2011. The Maruf ANP are advised and assisted by U.S. servicemembers from Special Operations Task Force - South. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ben Watson)(Released).



110123-A-8041W-001

By isafmedia ★ Favorite

An Afghan man and his three children enter the Maruf District Center to see Abdul Samat Durrani, the district governor of eastern Kandahar Province's Maruf District, Jan. 23, 2011. Durrani helps direct district resources to meet the needs of approximately 50,000 residents. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ben Watson)(Released).



110123-A-8041W-056

By isafmedia ★ Favorite

Afghan farmers meet with the Maruf District Governor, Abdul Samat Durrani (second from right), to discuss the challenges of irrigation in the mountainous and dry district of eastern Kandahar Province, Jan. 23, 2011. Durrani drew up a petition with the farmer's signatures requested aid for Maruf's irrigation needs in order to boost corn, wheat, apple and grape yields. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ben Watson)(Released).



110126-A-8041W-300

By isafmedia ★ Favorite

The District Governor of eastern Kandahar Province's Maruf District, Abdul Samat Durrani, pictured here Jan. 26, 2011, does his best to address the needs of a population estimated at 50,000 Afghan citizens. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ben Watson)(Released).



110123-A-8041W-039

By isafmedia ★ Favorite

Afghan National Police conduct police training exercises in eastern Kandahar Province's Maruf District, Jan. 23, 2011. The Maruf ANP are partnered with servicemembers from Special Operations Task Force - South. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ben Watson)(Released).



110123-A-8041W-001

By isafmedia ★ Favorite

The bazaar in remote Kandahar Province's Maruf District, pictured here Jan. 23, 2011, reopened last year after years of inactivity. Reopening the bazaar provides a significant boost to the local economy, as most citizens had been forced to travel at least four hours by automobile to purchase or trade goods, said Abdul Samat Durrani, the district governor of Maruf. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ben Watson)(Released).