

TFBSO Launches First-Ever IT Incubator In Afghanistan
IBM, Google Assisting Department of Defense Venture

HERAT, AFGHANISTAN (May 24)

In an effort to connect US and international technology companies and entrepreneurs with Afghanistan's emerging high tech sector, the US Department of Defense's Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) today launched the Herat Information Technology Incubator Program.

Creation of the incubator comes after the TFBSO led tours of Afghanistan's technology sector for a variety of US companies in recent months, including IBM, Google, and a number of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. The IT incubator is being funded by the TFBSO, with technical support and assistance from IBM and Google.

Currently, nine of Afghanistan's public colleges and universities, including Herat University, offer degrees in technology; graduates of these programs have launched their own software companies. The number of Internet users in Afghanistan has grown from 300,000 in 2006 to 1 million in 2010, according to a report by the International Monetary Fund.

"This is an important step forward in helping Afghanistan's emerging technology sector accelerate its progress," said Deputy Under Secretary of Defense and TFBSO Director Paul Brinkley. "The goal here is to help Afghans realize their dreams of business success, while at the same time providing established companies around the world access to a stream of new talent."

IBM and Google have committed to provide business and technical guidance as the incubator launches, and have pledged to assist with other technical and management issues as this ambitious project evolves.

"Afghanistan is experiencing rapid change and development across a broad array of industry sectors. The Information Communications and Technology sector exemplifies this proud nation's entrepreneurial drive to move forward by connecting its people, integrating its commerce with the global digital economy, and providing business opportunities for its talented and qualified citizens," said Al Leung, Vice President of IBM's global services. "IBM is committed to supporting the Incubator in its vision to become a new center of gravity for technology, business and investor activity in the Herat region."

His Excellency Governor Daud Saba of Herat Province welcomed the opening of the Incubator.

"We have a forward looking vision for Herat over the next 15 years, which includes making Herat, and this province, the hub of IT services in Afghanistan," Gov. Saba

said. “The launch of the incubator today is the first step to put the foundation of this venture and dream into place.”

The Herat incubator houses, on one campus, a state-of-the-art technology center, as well as meeting rooms, common work areas and computer labs all designed to help representatives of resident and visiting companies connect with Afghan IT entrepreneurs, students and academics.

In addition to the Incubator’s equipment and technology, the Incubator will sponsor a Business and Technology Seminar Series, in which business leaders, government officials, academics and others will deliver lectures on topics related to IT and venture business development.

Also, each Afghan start-up technology company will have access to weekly one-on-one mentoring sessions with visiting or resident business consultants at the HITIP.

“What we hope to ensure is that each emerging company gets the kind of guidance and support that is specifically tailored to their own particular business,” Brinkley said. “We also expect that knowledge and information will flow in both directions at the same time.”

For more information, contact:

Dick Keil, +1.202.251.4470 or dick.keil@purplestrategies.com