The Spartan Scroll

APRIL 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Commanders Memorandum

4-5

10-11

14-15

18-19

6-7

12-13

16-17

8-9

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Seth Curry, Baker Company's executive officer and native of Toulon, Ill., secures the entrance to a qalas in the village of Sader Kheyl, located near Combat Outpost Rahman Kheyl March 17. Baker Company is part of the 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Gold Geronimo.

Commander's Memorandum

By Col. Morris Goins

Dear Family and friends of our Airborne Brigade Combat Team,

I must begin this letter with a heavy heart. We lost one of our own just a few weeks ago - SPC Jeffery White, JR. To the White Family, no words can take away your pain but know that SPC White and you will forever be a part of us... May God continue to comfort you.

We just passed our 100 day in charge mark. This mark is important because the first 100 days are easy as all things are new. The next 200 days are the ones that separate good units from great units. Why do I say this? Because between 100 - 200 days we wake up a little more tired today than we did yesterday. This mean we must ensure while we may be tired we do NOT cut corners, because it is cutting corners that will cause or allow for mistakes. I would ask that you ask us, "Are you remaining focused?"

The Paratroopers of 4-25th are leading the way in many areas. We are leading the way in biometric enrollment, caches found, number of level II CONOPS and many other areas. The most important category to lead in is love and support for the home front!

The number of boxes, letters, Facebook postings, cards and mail from organizations such as Give2theTroops, Inc. is why we are able to execute our missions with a smile on our faces because we know we are loved. On behalf of the Soldiers of Task Force Spartan, Thank You.

We want to say thank so much for a job well done to the Soldiers of 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry Division as their tour of duty in Combined Joint Task Force 1 comes to an end. Well done and enjoy your reunion with your loved ones.

Lastly, we continue to do as Soldiers have done for years, help those who need help and detain those who are criminals. I ask for your continued prayers as we provide a blanket of protection to the people of Afghanistan, America and the free world. We will make you proud!

CSM's Report

By Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Gardner

As leaders, we all have many tools that can be used to build and maintain our teams. Among them are praise, correction, discipline and recognition. Each is important and can build a person if used correctly.

This month I had the honor of recognizing several Paratroopers who excelled at the Soldier and NCO of the Quarter Boards. Even while deployed, these Paratroopers took the time to engage their profession at a deeper level, and showed that they are driven to be better leaders in this great military organization. As the Command Sergeant Major of this brigade, I am filled with pride when I see the next generation of NCOs and Soldiers stepping up to new levels of challenge and responsibility.

There are thousands of great Paratroopers in the Spartan team. Even though I can't be there to give every one of them a pat on the back, their local unit leaders can. A simple "hey, you're doing a good job" can mean a lot to your subordinates, especially this far from home. Watch for those opportunities to build their confidence and morale.

There is always a time and place for recognizing what your Soldiers are doing. Take the time. It's an investment that always pays dividends.

Joint airdrop operation resupplies Combat Outpost Chergotah

Story and photos by Spc. Eric-James Estrada

KHOWST PROVINCE, Afghanistan - A joint airdrop operation between Task Force Spartan, the U.S. Air Force, the Afghan Border Patrol and local militia Arbici was conducted to resupply paratroopers of Task Force Blue Geronimo at Combat Outpost Chergotah, a first for the area, Feb. 28.

Paratroopers from 2nd Platoon Comanche Company, Task Force Blue Geronimo, recovering supplies from the recent airdrop mission outside of Combat Outpost Chergotah Feb. 28.

Paratroopers from Task Force Blue Geronimo conducted a drop zone survey two weeks prior in an effort to find a safer alternative method to re-supply Combat Outpost Chergotah.

"This particular drop sets up for future drops, especially for the rebuilding of the COP. It really sets up the unit for success in being able to supply them with more equipment," said Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Botts, assistant S-3 operations NCO, assigned to HHC, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry (Airborne), 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, a native of Hermiston, Ore.

A C-130 was used in the joint effort to test drop 20 bundles of container delivery systems containing water and Meals Ready to Eat, known as MREs, using low cost high velocity parachutes.

"None of the parachutes failed, making for an easy recovery," said 1st Lt. Casey Dschaak, platoon leader for 2nd Platoon, Comanche Company, Task Force Blue Geronimo, a native of Belle Fourche, S.D.

"This method allows for more supplies to get in here, definitely giving us more 'bang for the buck.' It's safer."

"You're not moving huge convoys out here on the roads and there's so many supplies that you're able to store for future operations," added Dashaak.

Despite taking two rounds of indirect-fire, the operation continued and there were no further incidents to jeopardize the paratroopers, or the operation.

"I feel that the airdrop is safer, more expedient than a convoy because a convoy has to get mission prepped," said Spc. Larry-Pablo Flores-Berrier, a paratrooper with 2nd Platoon, Comanche Company, Task Force Blue Geronimo, hailing from Las Vegas. "And on top of that, the road has many dangers, which can be IED's, or anything and that brings more complications, where as [the airdrop] took a max three hours."

(Top) Paratroopers from 2nd Platoon, Comanche Company, Task Force Blue Geronimo, recovering supplies from the recent airdrop mission outside of Combat Outpost Chergotah Feb. 28.

Sgt. Brian Castellion with 2nd Platoon, Comanche Company, Task Force Blue Geronimo, from Caledonia, Wis., (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Nathan Botts, assistant S-3 operations NCO, HHC, Task Force Blue Geronimo and native of Hermiston, Ore., (right), coordinating the airdrop mission outside Combat Outpost Chergotah Feb. 28.

Task Force Denali Blackjack Troop hit jackpot

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Shrewsbury

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Patrick O. Reilly, a native of Coventry, Conn., and the Blackjack platoon leader, lays out discovered ordnance that was part of a suspected enemy cache found by the Blackjack Troop in the Nadar Shah Khot District March 15.

KHOWST PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Paratroopers of Blackjack Troop, 1st Squadron (Airborne), 40th Cavalry, Task Force Denali discovered three weapons caches, during an air-assault mission in the Nadar Shah Khot District of Afghanistan March 15.

The Cavalry paratroopers air assaulted from a CH-47 Chinook into the district the previous night to conduct dismounted operations in and around several villages on a mission scheduled for several days.

The purpose of the mission was to develop census data of the local Afghan population. The unit also searched the villages and their surrounding areas for possible cache sites, discovering three weapons caches.

"They were in separate locations but were both in cave sites," said Sgt. 1st Class John Lambson, the 3rd platoon sergeant, a native from Farmington, N.M., assigned to Blackjack Troop. "In the first cache site, we found many components. There was one homemade type [improvised] explosive device. There were also seven magnetic IED's. They all consisted of [unknown bulk explosive]".

Lambson said the caches were ready to be used by insurgents at any given time.

"We have been seeing that threat in the surrounding districts. They utilize them to place on the doors of personnel that they don't like and possibly vehicles too." said Lambson.

Blackjack Troop commander, Capt. David T. Deviese, from Charlottesville, Va. said that his team found several types of munitions and other materials that are often used by insurgents.

Deviese said that it was uncommon to find so many caches during one mission.

"This valley is known for its ability to have caches. We kind of knew, going in, that there were a lot of caves out here. We wanted to climb up and clear the caves. A lot of them are very far out of reach."

Deviese said that some of the caves were as high up as 2000 feet.

"We got to the ones we could, but after a while, the physical toll on your body of walking up and down these mountains made it hard to get to all of them," Deviese said. "We got to most of the caves out there and cleared what we could. Overall, the mission was very successful."

The Afghanistan National Army and Afghan Uniformed Police were partnered with the operation.

(Top) Paratroopers assigned to Blackjack Troop, 1st Battalion, 40th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Denali, assist a paratrooper in boarding a UH-60 after sustaining injuries during a unit air assault mission in the Nadar Shah Khot district March 15.

Paratroopers assigned to Blackjack Troop, 1st Battalion, 40th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Denali, signal with smoke before assisting a paratrooper in boarding a UH-60 after sustaining injuries during a unit air assault mission in the Nadar Shah Khot district March 15.

Task Force Warrior mechanics train Afghan counterparts

Story by Staff Sgt. Jason Epperson

PAKTYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Fourteen members of the Afghan Border Police and Afghan Uniform Police received certificates of completion for a five-week maintenance and recovery course from vehicle mechanics assigned to Headquarters Company, 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Task Force Warrior on Forward Operating Base Goode, March 15.

The course is designed to teach the ABP and AUP basic maintenance and vehicle recovery skills needed to maintain their equipment after coalition forces leave Afghanistan, according to Chief Warrant 2 Terry Ruppe, 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion maintenance technician.

"I think we are going in a positive direction," Ruppe, a native of Anchorage, Alaska, said. "We have refined the program quite a bit. Initially, recovery wasn't part of the curriculum, so we added that and I think that's helped tremendously."

Mojad Folad, a member of the Afghan Border Patrol, received the recognition of honor graduate. This distinction is for the student who displayed the highest skills and test scores in the class.

Folad said when he started the class he didn't know much about vehicle maintenance, but learned how to repair various vehicles types. After taking the course, his confidence has grown.

"If it's broken, I can fix it," Folad said. "I was very happy with the maintainers class and the instructors did a good job [teaching] us."

U.S. Army Sgt. Philip Smith, the recovery non-commissioned officer in charge assigned to Headquarters Company, 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and a native of Glendale, Ariz., gave the recovery instruc

U.S. Army Pfc. Eric Grzegorczyk, an electronic equipment repairer assigned to Headquarters Company, 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion and a native of Pittsburgh, shows members of the Afghan Border Police and Afghan Uniform Police basic preventive maintenance checks and services at Forward Operating Base Goode, March 2. PMCS is one of the classes given during the five week course designed to familiarize the Afghans with their equipment. (U.S. Army photo by Chief Warrant 2 Terry Ruppe)

to provide them a basic understanding of their own equipment.

"They have the Ford rangers, HMMWV, Crane recovery vehicle and rollback vehicles," Smith said. "We are training them on there own equipment so they can get used to it and are able to recover and fix [the vehicles] themselves."

Smith says that with practice, they will be able to support themselves.

"I don't know how long it's going to take for them, but I know it takes practice with mechanics. For them to take on this responsibility is a big step for this country.

(Top) U.S. Army chief warrant officer 2, the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion maintenance technician and native of Anchorage, Alaska, hands a certificate of course completion to Mohammad Nabi, a member of the Afghan Border Police at Forward Operating Base Goode, March 15.

Members of the Afghan Border Police and Afghan Uniform Police learn vehicle recovery operations at Forward Operating Base Goode, March 2. Vehicle recovery operations is one of the classes given in the five-week course designed to familiarize Afghans with their equipment. (U.S. Army photo by Chief Warrant 2 Terry Ruppe)

TF Gold Geronimo; Chosen Company train ABP

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Epperson

PAKTYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan - With summer quickly approaching, paratroopers of Chosen Company, 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Gold Geronimo, wasted no time in sharing their skills and training the Afghan Border Police at the Taji District ABP headquarters located near Combat Outpost Herrera March 27.

Javin Morton, an Afghan Police Mentor from Fayetteville, N.C., traveled with the paratroopers assigned to 2nd Platoon less than a quarter mile from COP Herrera to the ABP headquarters to provide basic police training.

"We are showing them how to handle weapons properly and how to search people," Morton said. "After the searching, we [teach] handcuffing. We wanted to show them that not everyone is going to be compliant every time they go out to search somebody."

This training teaches the ABP how to keep positive control over somebody while searching them and how to remain safe, according to Morton, who said they are trying to start from the ground up.

Morton admits there are certain challenges training the Afghan border police.

"The language barrier definitely," Morton said. "Sometimes you'll say one sentence and your interpreter will say a whole paragraph."

Morton has experience both in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I've been a cop for five years with the Fayetteville Police Department, near Fort Bragg, N.C.," Morton explained. "Before that I did this same mission in Iraq when I was with my unit back then. I trained Iraqi police and Iraqi National Guard. "

Morton said the Afghan counterparts are catching on to the new tactics, "Every time we do training, we try to go back over what we did the last time and then add more to it. It seems like they're starting to catch on to our training now."

The Jaji districts ABP Sergeant Major Kheyal Mohammad says the ABP have a strong coordination with ISAF, Afghan National Police and National Directorate Security.

"We all together are a strong force and can effectively defend this country." Mohammad said.

Mohammad was satisfied with the training his policemen received and hopes his men will receive more training in the future.

"We appreciate the efforts and sacrifices of the U.S. military as they have helped us in restoring peace and stability to our country," Mohammad added. "We can effectively assume the security responsibilities of our country, only when we have enough training, air support and heavy weaponry."

U.S. Army Sgt. Eric Ure, who hails from Long Beach, Calif. and is a squad leader assigned to 2nd Platoon, TF Gold Geronimo, gave the ABP instructional training on American infantry tactics.

U.S. Army Spc. Justin Donk, a team leader from Livermore, Calif., assigned to 2nd Platoon, Chosen Co., demonstrates bounding and traveling overwatch techniques to Afghan Border Police at the Taji district ABP headquarters located near Combat Outpost Herrera March 27.

"We covered moving techniques, both bounding and traveling overwatch," Ure said. "We also covered the importance of bounding as well as separation and remaining in control of your group. "

Ure patrols regularly with the Afghan counterparts and notices differences between their forces and the Americans.

"A lot of times we go out with them and they group up or they'll do some things that we generally don't do and discourage doing for safety reasons," Ure said. "A lot of times, they're just doing what feels right rather than what they're trained to do. They haven't gone through the training we've gone through. Most things we do is as a group or with them, so anything they're doing different is what we're doing differently.

"We need to work together as a team," Ure added "As good as they are, is as good as we are."

(Top) U.S. Army Sgt. Eric Ure (left), who hails from Long Beach, Calif. and is a squad leader assigned to 2nd Platoon, Task Force Gold Geronimo, an interpreter and Javin Morton, an Afghan Fielded Police Mentor from Fayetteville, N.C., discuss searching and infantry tactics to Afghan Border Police at the Taji district ABP headquarters located near Combat Outpost Herrera March 27.

U.S. Army Spc. Justin Donk, a team leader from Livermore, Calif., assigned to 2nd Platoon, Task Force Gold Geronimo demonstrates bounding and traveling overwatch techniques to Afghan Border Police at the Taji district ABP headquarters located near Combat Outpost Herrera March 27. TF Gold Geronimo is part of the Spartan Brigade deployed to support Operation Enduring Freedom.

TF Spartan Steel supports COP Herrera

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Epperson

PAKTYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Chosen Company, 3rd Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Gold Geronimo, has a majority of its troops on Combat Outpost Herrera patrolling the area of operations. Providing fire support for them is the task of 4th platoon from B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 377 Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Spartan Steel.

"Out here our primary mission is to support the 509th," said 1st Lt. Frank Worsham, a native of Dallas, and B Battery's 4th Platoon leader.

Herrera is located in a heavily mountainous region north in Paktya Province. During the winter months snow blankets the region.

"The difference between this COP and the others is this COP is higher in elevation," Worsham said. "It stays colder longer, and because we are so high it affects the trajectories of the rounds a lot. We have to [consider] that a lot more than the other COPs."

Worsham says that one advantage of the mountainous terrain is the natural cover it provides. "We can have our [forward observers] take cover as they call in for fires [munitions]."

"We are near the Pakistan border," Worsham explains. "There are a lot of weapons smuggling coming in through this area, so we really have to watch out for that. We have to keep our eyes on the mountains. "

Worsham said being in an isolated and high-elevated COP has its advantages as well as disadvantages.

"There was a lot of trouble in the beginning getting our equipment out here," Worsham said. "The snowy weather made it difficult to transport supplies"

The 4th platoon has been at COP Herrera since December and according to Worsham, aircraft were only able to fly once a week throughout the winter, thanks to weather.

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Matthew Scott (left), a native of Ventura, Calif. and section chief; U.S. Army Sgt. Philip Nommay, a gunner who hails from Indianapolis; and U.S. Army Pfc. Enos Mowatt, an assistant gunner from Seattle, all assigned to B Battery, fire an M1NC high-explosive round out of a 105mm howitzer at Combat Outpost Herrera March 26.

"Other than getting supplies out here, this COPs been perfect," Worsham added. "I can't complain at all."

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Michael Hargis, a 4th Platoon section chief and Oklahoma City native, anticipates more activity as the climate grows warmer.

"We don't really shoot [the 105mm howitzers] that often," Hargis said. "Right now, we make sure our rounds are registered and calibrated. We make sure we have all our data right … We know exactly what the rounds are going to do. We have time to do maintenance and make sure everything is tight."

(Top) U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Sherniel Taganas, a native of Honolulu, and 4th Platoon Sergeant (smoke) assigned to B Battery, gets a site picture out of a 105mm howitzer while U.S. Army Spc. Luis Reyes, from Yuma, Ariz., and U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mark Shrewsbury, from Panama City Beach, Fla., watch at Combat Outpost Herrera, March 26.

U.S. Army Spc. Adam Baughman Linton, who hails from Linton, Ind., and a 4th Platoon, B Battery team chief, screws a fuze to a M84A1 Hydrochloric smoke round at Combat Outpost Herrera, March 26.

The sky is the limit for artillery on the move

Story and Photos by Spc. Eric-James Estrada

KHOWST PROVINCE, Afghanistan- Paratroopers from Task Force Spartan Steel coordinated the transportation of an M777 howitzer on Forward Operating Base Salerno to Combat Outpost Chamkani, March 27.

The move was conducted to upgrade the capability of indirect fire support for members of Task Force Gold Geronimo, which is based in Paktya Province. Riggers from the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, Task Force Centurion, provided the expertise to ensure the weapon system could be moved safely, using a CH-46 civilian-contracted helicopter.

The M777 howitzer has a weight close to 10,000 pounds and a combat length of roughly 35 feet. U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Michael Strate, C Battery, TF Spartan Steel, from International Falls, Minn., said the howitzer isn't a typical gun that can be replaced at an arms room.

"We were out there because that is our equipment and even though it may be a tough piece of artillery, it also is delicate," Strate said. "I believe that it needed special attention to ensure the howitzer would be emplaced without any damage and be ready to fire."

The mission also gave the soldiers of TF Spartan Steel and TF Centurion an opportunity to execute live training that they have been tested and drilled on time again through instruction according to Strate.

While TF Spartan Steel was there to ensure the safety and proper loading of their equipment, the paratroopers from TF Centurion were there to handle the rigging of the howitzer.

The M777 howitzer was transported to Combat Outpost Chamkani from Forward Operating Base Salerno by a CH-46 civilian helicopter March 28.

"We use BSB because when we're back at home station, they're the riggers," U.S. Army Sgt. Mark Barber, a motor transport operator, Lake Jackson, Texas, with Headquarters Battery, TF Spartan Steel said. "They're the ones that go through this. They're all slick qualified. They're all sling load qualified."

Barber went on to say that, "they're very familiar with the proper way of rigging these systems to help it to fly safely whenever we maneuver it and they pretty much run the HLZ for that reason."

(Top) U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Michael Strate (right), C-Battery, 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 377th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Spartan Steel, from International Falls, Minn., prepares to transport the M777 howitzer from Forward Operating Base Salerno to Combat Outpost Chamkani March 28.

Paratroopers of Task Force Spartan Steel and Task Force Centurion work together to sling load an M777 howitzer. The M777 howitzer was transported to Combat Outpost Chamkani from Forward Operating Base Salerno March 28.

PRT Khowst welcomes new commander

Story and photos by Spc. Eric-James Estrada

KHOWST PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team welcomed a new commander at Forward Operating Base Salerno during a transfer of authority ceremony March 14.

U.S. Navy Cmdr. and Texas native, Mitchell Albin, officially took command of the Khowst PRT from U.S. Navy Cmdr. Bradley Brewer, born and raised in western Ohio.

As the new commander of the PRT, Albin inherits a team that consist of military officers, diplomats and subject matter experts working to support reconstruction efforts in unstable regions. Its common purpose is to empower local governments to oversee their citizens more effectively.

The outgoing commander extended his appreciation to members of Task Force Spartan for their support and leadership in the short time they worked together.

"I would like to thank all of Spartan Brigade for their support these past few months. Although we only worked together for a short time, I have nothing short of the highest respect for the leadership and staff," said Brewer. He added his admiration for his team and the great professionalism they showed while in Afghanistan.

"For my departing team, I'm humbled by the professionalism and leadership displayed by the diverse collection of warriors that I have had the privilege of serving alongside for the past fifteen months," Brewer added.

The incoming commander expressed his appreciation to those in attendance and reminded them of the continued mission Team Trident is dedicated to accomplish.

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Mitchell Albin, a Texas native, acknowledges his responsibility as commander of the Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team, Task Force Spartan, in a transfer of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Salerno, March 14.

"Thank you for honoring my team with your presence at today's ceremony," said Albin. "This transfer of authority has less to do with me assuming command and more with the Team Trident taking charge of the PRT to continue influencing positive governance and development with our Afghan partners."

The changing of responsibility also brought about a new found experience for the outgoing senior enlisted adviser. "It was an incredible experience working and serving with all five branches [of the U.S. military] and I'll cherish this time with them for the rest of my career," said U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. James Jenkins III, outgoing Khowst PRT sergeant major, from Yazoo City, Miss.

U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Elliott Fillippini, the new senior enlisted advisor for the PRT, hailing from Bristol, Conn., said, "I'm looking forward to our mission and I'm glad to take over. The outgoing team left us in great hands and we have a great incoming team."

PRT Khowst is part of Task Force Spartan, the brigade task force responsible for the provinces of Khowst and Paktya, in Eastern Afghanistan.

(Top) Members of the Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team stand in formation with incoming U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Elliot Fillippin after completing the transfer of authority to U.S. Navy Cmdr. Mitchell Albin at Forward Operating Base Salerno, March 14.

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Mitchell Albin, a Texas native, acknowledges his responsibility as commander of the Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team, Task Force Spartan, in a transfer of authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Salerno, March 14.

Paktya PRT absorbs ADT-2 during TOA

Story and pictures by Staff Sgt. Jason Epperson

PAKTYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan - U.S. Army Col. Lynn M. Heng, a native of Nebraska City, Neb., and the commander of the Nebraska ADT-2, and U.S. Army Master Sgt. Dennis Krecklow, from Elkhorn, Neb., cased their colors, signifying the end of their deployment to Afghanistan during a formal ceremony at Forward Operating Base Gardez, March 15.

While the majority of the unit will redeploy, 12 of the national guard soldiers will join the Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team, bringing a new mission to the already versatile team.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Robert J. Morse, a native of Tucson, Ariz., assumed responsibility of PRT Paktya from Col. James M. Forand, in a Transfer of Authority ceremony.

Forand, the outgoing commander and native of Auburn, Mass., bid farewell to the Paktya province.

"I leave here with mixed emotions because the people [and] leaders of Paktya have been absolutely welcoming, heartwarming and supportive for our entire time here…," Forand said. "It's been the highlight of my career in 22 years to be here on behalf of the people of the United States of America and on behalf of the people of Paktya province, Afghanistan."

Forand mentioned a return in the future to Paktya.

"I look forward to coming back to Paktya someday without my weapon and my uniform on and as your friend," Forand said.

The incoming commander expressed his eagerness to work alongside the freshly trained staff.

"Now to the men and women of Paktya PRT," Morse said. "Remember your training. Continue to maintain the high standards you have developed over the last six months. Your talents and your professionalism in executing the PRT mission are vitally important at this

U.S. Army Col. Morris Goins, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Spartan who hails from Southern Pines, N.C., passes the Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team guidon to U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Robert J. Morse (right), incoming Paktya PRT commander during a Transfer of Authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Gardez, March 15.

The Paktya PRT was established Jan. 15, 2003. This unique organization combines active Army, Army Reserve, Army and Air National Guard, active Air Force and U.S. government agencies. Their mission is to provide governance, security and reconstruction for Paktya province and 14 provincial districts across a 4,000 square-mile combined joint operational area. This joint, interagency and multi-national organization is the world's war fighting commitment to peace and stability in a region that once was host to the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

(Top) U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Raul Torres, Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team senior enlisted adviser and native of Caguas, Puerto Rico, stand before the formation rendering honors as U.S. national anthem is played during a Transfer of Authority ceremony at Forward Operating Base Goode, March 15.

U.S. Army Col. Lynn M. Heng, a native of Nebraska City, Neb., and commander of the Nebraska Agribusiness Development Team 2, and U.S. Army Master Sgt. Dennis Krecklow, a native of Elkhorn, Neb., case their colors at Forward Operating Base Goode, March 15. The casing signified the end of the unit's deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom 11-12.

The Legal Beagle

TASK FORCE SPARTAN LEGAL TEAM

Story and photos by Spc. Antonio Bowers-Marietta

Task Force Spartan is full of Soldiers with many different specialties who support the team in different ways. Although the legal section is commonly associated with assisting Soldiers with personal issues and assisting commanders in dealing with Soldiers who commit misconduct, there are many other assets the legal section brings to the fight. One unique way the legal section assists Task Force Spartan is by conducting foreign claims missions.

A foreign claim is a claim made by a civilian local national for damage or destruction of their property caused by United States forces. Afghan Nationals will travel from far off provinces, cities, and or villages to file a claim. Many of them do not have jobs to be able to replace damaged or destroyed property and providing them with a method to recoup their damaged property is essential to promoting good relations with our Afghan partners.

A typical claims mission results in a variety of stories: from a cow being shot, to the most common claim, that the claimants car was hit by a vehicle in a U.S. convoy. No matter how ridiculous or wild the claim may sound, the Task Force Spartan legal team gathers and reviews evidence to confirm or deny the claim. To assist in verifying claims, the Task Force Spartan legal team provides "claims cards" to units maneuvering through our battle space.

These individually numbered cards have areas for U.S. Soldiers to write the time, place and type of damaged they caused and are given to the Afghan whose property is inadvertently damaged. When presented by an Afghan national during a claims mission, these claims cards greatly increase the legal team's ability to differentiate false accusations from valid claims.

If the evidence evaluated indicates that the U.S. Military was at fault, the legal team uses the best available methods to determine the value of the damage and determines the amount the claimant is entitled to.

When a claim is valued at less than $15,000, an organic Task Force Spartan Claims Commissioner is authorized to make the payment. If the claim is over $15,000, a Division level three-person claims panel is authorized to pay up to $50,000.

Once all the details of the claim are determined, an interpreter calls the claimant and either explains why the claim was denied, or sets a date for them to receive their payment. On the day of the payment, the claim is documented with photos and signatures and is logged into a tracker to prevent future claims for the same accident.

Conducting the foreign claims mission is just one way that the Task Force Spartan legal team helps to assist with the fight. We all must maintain a good relationship with Afghan nationals and conducting the foreign claims mission helps build our already strong relationship.

Paratroopers of the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion eat lunch with their Afghan counterparts. (U.S. Army photo courtesy of facebook)