

ON POINT!



CONTENTS

Major Jon Rittenberg Receives AUSA Sixth Region Award

Story and photo by
 Carlene Joseph
 VP/Community Engagement

AUSA Sixth Region Award.....Page 3
 ANP Basic Officer Course.....Page 4
 Voice of Shinkai.....Page 6
 ANSF Security in Panjwai.....Page 8
 Photo PagePage 10
 Happy to be Infantry.....Page 12
 Walking the Lonely Walk.....Page 14
 Photo page.....Page 16
 Crazy Horse - ANA Partnership.....Page 18
 Stryker Still All That.....Page 20
 Chaplain's Corner.....Page 22
 Arrowhead Remembers.....Page 23

COVER

A Stryker vehicle of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division passes a mosque while on patrol in southern Afghanistan, April 19, 2012 (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg, Combined Task Force Arrowhead Public Affairs)

Each year the Sixth Region of the Association of the United States Army recognizes the best soldiers, civilians, and community leaders of its region. Chapters from the States of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and parts of California submit nominations and this year, multiple awards were given to personnel on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The Captain Meriwether Lewis Lacey Subchapter nominated Major Jon Rittenberg for a Certificate of Commendation and he won. The award will be presented to Major Rittenberg when he returns in February 2013, by an executive committee member of the Sixth Region.

Major Rittenberg won this award based on his contribution to the Arrowhead Adopt-A-Unit project, which was launched prior to his departure to Afghanistan. Even today, businesses and schools have embraced their partnerships and together their relationships have developed favorably. Major Rittenberg also played an important part in ensuring the Lacey subchapter successfully hosted the 3-2 SBCT leadership social by ensuring the communications within the Brigade remained clear, leading to a successful event with exceptional attendance.

The Captain Meriwether Lewis Lacey Subchapter congratulates Major Rittenberg for a job well done and they look forward to presenting the award to him when the 3-2 SBCT returns home.



3-2 SBCT Commander
 Col. Charles Webster Jr.

3-2 SBCT Command Sgt. Maj.
 Command Sgt. Maj. Samuel G. Murphy

3-2 SBCT Public Affairs Office

Capt Troy Frey.....Public Affairs Officer
 Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg.....NCOIC/Photo Journalist/
 Layout and Design
 Sgt. Christopher G. McCullough.....Photo Journalist
 Sgt. Nathaniel D. Phillips.....Broadcast Journalist
 Spc. Mark E. Neace.....Illustrator

Contributors

Chaplain (Maj.) Edward I. Choi, Maj. David Mattox,
 Capt. Marius Dinita, Staff Sgt. Nazly Confesor, Sgt. Marc Loi,
 Sgt. Kristina Klosinski, Carlene Joseph

The ON POINT! is a command information magazine authorized for members of the U.S. Army and the 3-2 SBCT community. Contents of the ON POINT are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or Department of the Army. The editorial content of the magazine is the responsibility of the 3-2 SBCT Public Affairs Office. Any story or photo submission should be forwarded to the editor at troy.scott.frey@us.army.mil

Afghan National Police officers gain skills, knowledge during basic officer course

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Nazly Confesor

As coalition forces begin their plan to withdraw from Afghanistan, the need to bring mid-level and senior-grade Afghan National Police officers to a common knowledge level is critical to achieve stabilization internally and to the Afghan population.

For the past week, 15 ANP officers gained new knowledge and skills at Multi-National Base-Tarin Kot during a week of police training, April 8-12. The week-long course was the first ANP officer course held in the Uruzgan province.

The week-long training was organized by Sgt. 1st Class Wilfredo Cabili and Lt. Col. Eric Hefner, the last combat advisor team, Scott Alward, law enforcement advisor. The course was based on insight

from Uruzgan's Provincial Chief of Police, Motalah Khan.

"The men were receptive to the lessons and quickly adapted to the new skills," said Alward, a law enforcement advisor to the U.S. Army for the past 14 months.

Cabili, assigned to the 4-70th Armor Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division from Baumholder, Germany, has been mentoring and training Afghan National Security Forces in the Uruzgan province for the past 15 months.

According to Cabili, Khan shared with the combat advisor team which training and skills he felt would make ANP officers more effective.

In the week of training, these officers completed

seven sets of tasks: improvised explosive device exploitation, search procedures (vehicle and personnel), vehicle maintenance, crime scene management, community integration, close quarters battle, and combat lifesaver training.

Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment provided classes on tactical training, first aid and vehicle maintenance.

"By showing the proper way and standards on close quarter battles, vehicle maintenance and any other lessons we've taught, they will be confident and well informed in teaching their own peers and trainees," said U.S. Army Sgt. James A. Lopez, a cavalry scout assigned to Alpha Troop, 1-14th CAV based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord and a Redlands, Calif., native.

Cabili said the overall goal of the class is to 'train the trainer' so that they can effectively engage and train their own national police officers.

"Not only will they be trained, they will become the trainers for the police officers," said Cabili.

Zekrodin Noorludin, a twenty-year-old ANP officer, said he was very impressed with the level of training given to the leadership of the combat advisor team and the 1-14th CAV, as well as how well it was managed and implemented.

"When members of the ANP see ISAF's professionalism and leadership, it encourages us to learn and train," Noorludin said.

Noorludin also noted that this was the training necessary for the ANP to one day take the place of American Soldiers in Afghanistan.

Besides training to become effective and knowledgeable leaders, these men are not your ordinary ANP recruits; they are educated officers and have one thing in common, to see Afghanistan change its course of action toward a more secure and, peaceful republic.

Before receiving the training, the men were enrolled



Sgt. James A. Lopez, assigned to 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, explains and teaches the functions and mechanics of a range rover during a lesson on vehicle maintenance at Multi-National Tarin Kot, Afghanistan, April 10, 2012. Over a course of two days, Afghan National Police officers received vehicle maintenance and familiarity lessons, patrol procedures and driver's training and certification.

in the police academy in Kabul and endured eight months of schooling.

Noorludin and the rest of the group agree that education is the key for Afghanistan to progress. He emphasized establishing a literacy program for his subordinates once he reaches his first police post.

Despite the lack of amenities, having only one uniform and overcoming internal challenges, the men arrived at the training with enthusiasm and a drive to learn.

"Although we have internal problems, we cannot place those issues as our priority; we are here for our community," said Noorludin. "We are getting the most professional training from the coalition forces."

With the successful completion of the training, Cabili hopes the five chosen to be trainers and the rest of the group will share the knowledge and the drive they have learned in the past week.



Afghan National Police officers conduct security after entering a compound during close quarters battle training, April 12. The officers received their first lesson on correctly entering and clearing a building, while undergoing basic policing and community integration training at Multi-National Base-Tarin Kot, Afghanistan. The week-long course was the first ANP officer course held in the Uruzgan province.

The 'Voice of Shinkai': Rock Star status in a box

Story by Sgt. Chris McCullough
CTF Arrowhead Public Affairs

Part 3 of 3 Many radio stations throughout Afghanistan have a call-in show, or an office with a telephone for the public to call and state their opinions to the radio station, said Sgt. Kat Klosinski, a non-commissioned officer from Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul, 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion, Green Bay, Wis. The Shinkai district, however, is devoid of phones, so we had to come up with some other means of reaching out to the local populace.

"Atta Muhammad (a 21-year old Afghan who works as the local Radio in a Box disc jockey in Shinkai District) had the excellent idea of creating a box to hang in a populated area where people could write notes for the radio, as phones are non-existent here," said Klosinski. "We decided to paint an old ammo box blue (and) Atta used a black permanent marker to write in Pashtu, 'Voice of Shinkai Letter Box.'"

"We hung it on a HESCO (basket) in the bazaar, just outside of the clinic, in front of the District Center, (and) then we held our breaths to see how long it would be until someone destroyed or vandalized (it)," Klosinski said. "To our delight the box still hangs there unaltered in any way."

"After that, I got the letters about the Literacy Program," said Atta. "Really, they were very thankful, and they were appreciating my

PRT Team ... and they were saying that they need this kind of help to provide for our children."

"The first week we got about 15 letters; then 50; then 120; then too many to keep counting," said Klosinski.

"Most letters are requests for Atta to find certain songs that people like," said Staff Sgt. Jeffery Mader, 432nd CAB. "He (Atta) has a live show every evening from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. where he reads the letters and plays the songs. Sometimes people write poems for him to read."

"Atta actually gets a bunch of 'hey thank you, you're awesome, we like hearing your voice' messages," said Mader. "He's kind of reached rock star status out here. Of course that's a motivator for him to keep doing what he's doing."

Some of the letters even praise the literacy program and ask questions about the lessons.

"A LOT OF IT DEPENDS ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE DJ"

Since its revitalization, the Radio in a Box program in Shinkai has been a success story. The proof is in the populace's reaction when the local RIAB was off the air in mid-January due to technical problems. The problems have since been resolved.

"We know that this (RIAB) is important to the people in the area, as the last foot patrol into the bazaar had many people asking what the problem was with the radio," said Klosinski. "Also the letter box that is up in the bazaar was filled with at least

20 letters from people asking what is wrong and requesting we start broadcasting again."

So what is it about the Shinkai model that has allowed it to thrive and be a model for success for other RIAB programs in Afghanistan?

"A lot of it depends on the personality of the DJs and how willing they are to work," said Mader. "I think that was (the) key to it being successful here; having a DJ who understood the program (and) is really into it himself. He's a rather energetic person, he doesn't mind going out there and talking to the village elders and putting his face out there for people to see."

Another factor in the success of the Shinkai Radio in a Box program was the decision by the PRT at FOB Sweeney to place the RIAB on the base and allow their deejay to live on the FOB. This ensures the program is not susceptible to Taliban influence.

"It also helps to have the actual DJ station here (and) a secure place for him to live," added Mader. "Some of the other districts where it's failed, they were trying to run it out of another location but those people (the DJs) were getting night letters (threatening letters from the Taliban) and decided to quit."

TRANSITION

The 432nd CAB's time in Afghanistan is drawing to a close, but their mission is not. Even as they plan to depart for home in a few months, they are working to ensure they leave the people

of Shinkai district with the best radio program in Afghanistan.

They are working on a new program that involves interviewing the children, said Klosinski.

"We want people to feel they are a part of the radio, especially in a non-political way, and recording children saying their ideas or answering various questions seemed a great way to do this."

Such approaches help the people of the Shinkai district develop a relationship with the Radio in a Box and the programs it has to offer, such as the Radio Literacy Program.

"I'm very excited to see that they are eager and willing to

learn, because we all know that knowledge is what pushes people to make changes; to (do) better things for themselves," said Mader. "It's exciting to see them moving in that direction."

Perhaps most importantly, the 'Voice of Shinkai' is not going anywhere. Both, the RIAB and Atta, have become a fixture in the Shinkai community. The villagers have seen the benefits of the Radio Literacy Program and have embraced the RIAB as their own. "Atta will still be here, so it will be completely transparent when the new PRT comes in and takes over out here," said Mader.

The Radio Literacy Program is

part of the "Knowledge is Light" Campaign, which was designed to raise literacy awareness and is being run in some capacity across most of Afghanistan. The target audience is largely women and children, though many men participate. The participants can complete the Radio Literacy Program from their homes and villages. The 116th IBCT, Fort Belvoir, Va. introduced the Radio Literacy Program to Zabul province in 2011. The 432nd Civil Affairs Battalion, Green Bay, Wis., and the Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul, Combined Task Force Arrowhead is currently running the program in Shinkai district.



Soldiers of Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul, Shinkai District, affixes the "Voice of Shinkai Post Box" to one of the HESCO baskets in the Shinkai District bazaar, just outside the clinic, in front of the district center, a heavily trafficked area. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kristina Klosinski)

Afghan National Security Forces lead the way in providing security for Panjwai District

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg
CTF Arrowhead Public Affairs

With hardly a cloud in the sky the Afghan soldiers of 1st Company, 2nd Kandak, 1st Brigade, 205th Corps, Afghan National Army and local police stepped out of Forward Operating Base Spirwan Ghar's southern gate. This dismounted patrol was like many of the ones before. It had a straightforward objective – search and clear over a half dozen villages in the Spirwan area of the Panjwa'i District in southern Afghanistan.

However, it was one of the largest foot patrols conducted by the 1st Company, 2nd Kandak and was planned and organized without any assistance from International Security Assistance Forces. The patrol's objectives and implementation were briefed to the leadership of Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment,

1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division and Company B, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division the day before.

"It was one of the first ANA lead missions we've had," said 1st Lt. Robert Churchill, 3rd platoon leader of B Co. 1-5 Inf. Reg. "And what that really entails is that ANA planned, ANA prepared and ANA executed the mission."

On April 1, 2012, with more than 100 Afghan National Security Forces, 1st Co., 2nd Kandak set off to reach their first objective with 30 U.S. Soldiers from both companies in the back of the formation who were there to advise and mentor.

As the formation neared the first village, car horns could be heard and a flock of doves were seen

released, both of which are signals to insurgents in the area warning them that ANSF and ISAF forces are near. If these signs of enemy activity fazed the Afghan soldiers or police they did not show it, for they continued on with their mission without hesitation and in good spirits. The single file formation, as the region is littered with land mines and improvised explosive devices, moved slowly down the narrow streets and stopped randomly as the ANSF soldiers in the front entered and cleared the homes of the local villagers.

"As they (ANSF) would go up to compounds, ANA would secure it and ANP would search inside," said Cpt. Len Blaylock III, commander of B Co., 1-5 Inf. Reg.

It had not always been this way before added Blaylock. He went on to say that his company has seen a lot of improvement from their ANA counterparts. At first every mission was planned and executed by ISAF. The ANA soldiers would rely on U.S. Soldiers to take the front of any formation and just follow along in the rear. A lot of this was due to the IED threat in the area, as U.S. Soldiers would conduct counter IED maneuvers with mine detectors in the lead. Blaylock goes on to say that by the end of their first month in country they were conducting classes on the mine detectors, teaching their ANA counterparts how to identify IEDs and that in a few short weeks they were just as proficient as his own troops. Now the Afghan Soldiers always take

the lead and clear the front of the formation, finding IEDs before they can do any harm with U.S. troops following along at the rear of the formation.

"My platoon received no casualties from enemy IEDs," said Churchill, of Flushing, Mich. "That says a lot about the ANA."

The air was dry and hot; the sun unrelenting with its golden rays, but still the Soldiers of 1st Co., 2nd Kandak showed no signs of slowing as they cleared through one village and entered another. Foot after foot, step-by-step Afghan soldiers and police cleared homes, businesses, orchards and fields in search of caches, IEDs and any insurgent activity.

The ANA and ANP forces completed objective after objective and passed phase lines gaining more confidence with each home they cleared. The patrol took about eight hours to complete and covered 90 percent of their operational area, all with little to no help from their U.S. brothers in arms.

"We asked them. What do they want to do? What are their objectives?" added Blaylock, of Nimrod, Ark. "They identified what the problem is in the area and they conducted the clearance." The mission did not find much in the terms of caches, IEDs or any insurgent activity but did show that the Soldiers of 1st Co., 2nd Kandak and their ANP partners are more than capable of securing the Spirwan area and conducting



Afghan National Security Forces conduct a dismounted patrol of the Panjwai District in southern Afghanistan, April 1, 2012. The patrol consisted of clearing more than a half dozen villages and was planned, organized and executed by the ANSF.

missions without any assistance from ISAF.

"Our presence here, we might be holding them back," added Blaylock. "If we were not here, I think not only would they succeed in securing this area, but they would take on roles maybe they haven't with us being here."

The ANSF will plan, organize, execute and lead all future missions in the Spirwan area with little to no assistance from ISAF forces. U.S. Soldiers will continue to support Afghan patrols but more as advisors and mentors while the Afghans will lead the way.



An Afghan National Army Soldier operates a radio in order to check on the statuses of other ANA squads and keep them on their objectives, while on patrol of the Panjwai District in southern Afghanistan, April 1, 2012. The patrol consisted of clearing more than a half dozen villages and was planned, organized and executed by the ANSF.



Afghan National Security Forces and U.S. Soldiers conduct a dismounted patrol of the Panjwai District in southern Afghanistan, April 1, 2012. The patrol consisted of clearing more than a half dozen villages and was planned, organized and executed by the ANSF.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Christopher McCullough



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Christopher McCullough



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Christopher McCullough



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg

Happy to be in the infantry

Story and photos by
Sgt. Marc Loi
319th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Pfc. Austin Schwab woke up cold. He'd spent the majority of the previous day marching through the thick marshes of southern Afghanistan. Later that night, when the platoon in which he serves took over a compound, Schwab spent the majority of the night sleeping on the ground, his rifle next to his side. The early-rising Afghanistan sun woke him. The soldier quickly threw on his protective gear and equipment, and in a matter of seconds, climbed on a ladder toward the compound's roof to provide security over-watch. He is just 20.

While his friends are busying themselves in college with political and international theories about Afghanistan, the Rock Island, Ill., native is living it. While others see Operation Enduring Freedom through the tidbits of information on the evening news, Schwab sees it through his own two eyes.

"I've always wanted to be in the military," said Schwab, who was in elementary school when the first bombs dropped on the insurgents in Afghanistan. "I wanted to join at 18, but I was working and didn't join until I was 20."

War is different through the eyes of a 20-year-old, and especially as an infantryman, Schwab is

the prime example. While others wrestle with philosophical questions about the meanings of war and life, Schwab said he is just happy to be in the infantry. What's more, his experiences, despite being harsher than experiences others have endured, made him more disciplined and allowed him to embrace, rather than push away, the experience of war.

"People ask me what it's like being over here, and I tell them that there are just no words for it," he said. "It's a lot more intense than it is back home – being in the middle of a war zone is a lot different than being home in America."

One of those differences, said

Schwab, is the freedom and autonomy to do whatever he would like. When stationed at a tiny combat operating outpost without so much as indoor plumbing, hot showers become a luxury for soldiers.

"Hygiene – not being able to shower whenever you want, that's one of the challenges," he said. "And not being able to talk to my family whenever I want. You could go to the MWR and find out the Internet is down or something."

Yet, the lack of Internet service and hot showers are the least of his worries. As an infantryman, Schwab is stationed in one of Afghanistan's most "kinetic" areas – a term soldiers often use to describe the amount of physical threats they face. On any particular day, whether patrolling villages in combat vehicles or on foot, it is unusual for Schwab and the soldiers in his squad to not have contact with the insurgents, he said.

Like many other firsts, Schwab still remembers the first time his squad was shot at. They'd just left the outpost, headed west, when bullets came whizzing by, hitting the dirt around them.

"We just saw dust clouds and heard the cracking of the bullets," he said, recalling the event. "It was our first and only contact that day, but I remember it." Then, there was the time he was involved in a firefight that lasted nearly two hours.

"It was pretty intense," he said. "It was our first big firefight – I just went through my training, scanned

my sector and when they told me to shoot, I took well-placed shots."

In war, there is no time to think, and it's no different for Schwab. In that firefight, for example, he fought back based only on instinct; it was only afterward when they were safely back in the protected confines of the tiny outpost did he start to think about the inherent danger of his actions, Schwab said.

"I just went through my training," he said. "It was only after the firefight that I thought about it."

"My family, they're scared for me," he continued. "But they know I am doing what I love and they think it's really good for me."

The ability to do what he loves while still earning a living from it, said Schwab, is what fuels his affinity for the infantry.

"The money is nice, but I just enjoy doing this," he said. "The infantry is one of the tougher jobs in the Army and when I joined, I told myself I wanted to push myself to the limits. I plan on going to the Rangers after I get back."

Another added benefit to the infantry, is the camaraderie he has experienced, Schwab said. "One of the things I've learned here is that everyone has their ups and downs," he said. "But in the middle of a firefight, everyone's got your back – it's a different kind of brotherhood."

"I love being in the infantry," he added. "It's exactly what I thought it would be."

Pvt. Austin Schwab, an infantryman with 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, Fort Lewis, Wash., looks back for instructions while pulling security duty during a combat mission in Didar, southern Afghanistan, April 13. Of Rock Island, Ill., the 20-year-old is deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom since January.



Pvt. Austin Schwab (center), an infantryman with 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, Fort Lewis, Wash., takes time out for tea with a soldier from the Afghan National Civil Order Police, April 14, after a combat operation. Of Rock Island, Ill., the 20-year-old is deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Walking the “lonely walk.” Who is EOD?

Story and photos by
Sgt. Chris McCullough
CTF Arrowhead Public Affairs

Part 2 of 3 - Becoming an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician is no easy matter. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal course involves attending a 10-week pre-course held at Fort Lee, Va., followed by another 8 months of training at the Naval School Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., but that's only if you go straight through. The attrition rate for aspiring EOD techs is high; a lot of students are held back and have to repeat some of the schooling, even then, not

everyone makes it.

The curriculum at EOD School is varied and intense. Students are schooled in ordnance recognition, bomb searches, how to disarm hundreds of types of conventional ordnance, such as grenades, mines, mortars and rockets, as well as other ordnance related courses. They are also instructed on how to collect forensic evidence such as fingerprints, DNA and samples of explosive material used in improvised explosive devices. Such data allows experts to determine how insurgent bomb makers are creating their IEDs, and where they are being manufactured so they can be

tracked down and stopped from making their wares.

How they roll

Even with these super sleuths on the job, the bad guys are still able to get their bombs out onto the battlefield much of the time. That is when EOD technicians, like Marvin and Conard, really earn their paycheck.

“Once a call comes in for an IED, whoever my number one team is has 15 minutes to roll out the gate,” says Marvin. “So that means their truck is already loaded, they’ve done all their pre-combat checks

and pre-combat inspections and they’re ready to roll.”

Once they are out the gate, Marvin and Conard’s Soldiers could be out 30 minutes or 30 hours.

“In the past we could be out and back in a half hour,” says Conard. “We’d go out with the robotics, get all the evidence we could off it (and) we’d dispose of whatever ordnance or HME is present.”

But with increased regulations, Conard explained, technicians these days go out to the scene of an IED and have to call up to higher headquarters for air clearance; to ensure that there is no aircraft in the area that could be damaged by any ensuing explosion. That means they have to get the “okay” from their higher headquarters before they are able to go ahead with their procedures.

“It’s all dependent on outside effects,” Conard says. “So there’s no set time. It could be a quick half hour there and back (or) you could be sitting out there... waiting for clearance.”

Planning for every possible contingency

Even when the Soldiers of 787 EOD successfully disarm and destroy an IED, that does not mean they head back to base right away. Depending on insurgent activity in the area, there may be multiple IEDs throughout a province or district. If another

unit on patrol discovers an IED while EOD is already on a call, it could mean they might go from one job to another and then to another.

“I’ve been out for 24 hours just clearing IED after IED,” says Conard. “As soon as I get done with one, ‘hey, they got another one they found out here,’ and you move to that. And you move and move; all day long you’re out. There is no set time for us. It’s (a) 24 hour response. You could be called at a moment’s notice and you could be out for 5 to 10 days sometimes. You prepare for everything.”

That means an EOD team has to plan for every possible contingency. In order to do so each truck has multiple robots onboard, as well as an 80 lb. bomb suit. They also have different kits that allow them to accomplish the various procedures that they need to do. Likewise, each team has a variety of different charges that they use to expose, disrupt or detonate an IED or ordnance.

“When you think about all the different ordnance that is out there in the world, we have procedures for about 98% of it,” Conard says. “So if it’s a rocket propelled grenade and we can’t blow it up, we have equipment that we could use that will shear the fuse off this way, shape charge the nose off that way.” The reason EODS is so long is because “every piece of ordnance out there is

handled differently.”

Still, rendering an IED ineffective is as much an art as it is a science. “An IED is made to detonate,” explained Conard, “but how it is made is up to the ingenuity of the bomber. He can make it anyway he wants. He can booby-trap it if he wants. There is no set book that says ‘this is how an IED works, this is how the guy’s going to manufacture it, and this is how you can take care of it.’ It’s random. The bomb maker can make it any way he pleases.”

“Dealing with conventional ordnance is simple,” Conard goes on to say. “We know how it works; we know how to take care of it. With an IED you have to think outside the box in how you approach it, and every time you



Staff Sgt. Elo places a 1-pound block of Composition 4 plastic explosive atop 3 Russian PMN and 3 Russian PMN2 anti-personnel mines slated for disposal by detonation at Forward Operating Base Wolverine, Feb. 26, 2012. The mines were X-Rayed and found to be too unstable for safe keeping.



1st Lt. Dan Marvin, 787th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion, places a thermite grenade atop homemade explosives in a hole, Feb. 15, 2012.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Christopher McCullough



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Christopher McCullough



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



ROU Army photo by Capt. Marius Dinita



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua S. Brandenburg



U.S. Army photo by Maj. David Mattox



ROU Army photo by Capt. Marius Dinita

Crazy Horse Troop, 1st Squadron-14th Cavalry Regiment-ANA partnership 'going very well'

Story and photos by
Sgt. Chris McCullough
CTF Arrowhead Public Affairs

Part 2 of 2 - In order to have good neighbors, you need to be a good neighbor, which is what Crazy Horse Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment set out to do when they conducted a partnered patrol with the 4th Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps, Afghan National Army, Feb. 28, 2012.

The patrol to the village of Muslim Zai, a small village located a short distance from FOB Wolverine, where Crazy Horse Troop is based, was done to conduct an infrastructure assessment of sewer, water, electric, academic, trash, medical and security conditions within the village, commonly known as a SWEAT-MS assessment, said Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Merritt, the platoon sergeant for 2nd platoon, Crazy

Horse Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment.

"It's good to start local because the locals around the FOB (Forward Operating Base) are the ones directly impacted by our presence, and they could have the ability to directly impact our presence," said Merritt.

The mission was a joint patrol with the 4th Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps, Afghan National Army, and just one of many that have become the routine for Crazy Horse Troop.

"With the Afghan Army & Police, every day when we go out on a mission, they're there with us," said 1st Lt. Joe Fontana, Crazy Horse Troop executive officer, of the partnership with the ANA 4th and 6th Kandaks.

Such joint missions are the new

norm as coalition forces prepare to shift the focus of the war strategy in Afghanistan from a combat to a partnered mission, with Afghans in the lead, ahead of the transition at the end of 2014. Joint missions, such as this one, serve a dual purpose. Not only do they allow International Security Assistance Forces to determine the needs of a village, but it also gives the ANA and ISAF the opportunity to learn from each other's techniques so far as dealing with the local population is concerned.

"They're very good at...talking to these local leaders," Fontana said, when asked how the ANA's techniques measure up when dealing with the village elders. The same could be said of the Soldiers of Crazy Horse Troop. According to Capt. Brian Rieser, Crazy Horse Troop commander, whenever Crazy Horse goes on



Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Merritt (right), 2nd platoon sergeant, Crazy Horse Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, along with an Afghan Soldier from 4th Kandak, Afghan National Army, patrols the village of Moslem Zai, Afghanistan, Feb. 28, 2012. Troops from Crazy Horse partnered with ANA Soldiers from the 4th Kandak in order to conduct a key leader engagement with village elders from Moslem Zai.

An Afghan Soldier (left) from 4th Kandak, Afghan National Army, pulls security during a tactical pause while conducting a partnered patrol with 2nd platoon, Crazy Horse Troop, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, Feb. 28, 2012. The future of Afghanistan depends on how well Afghan National Security Forces are trained in correct tactics, techniques and procedures, such as proper patrol posture, that are necessary to stop a Taliban resurgence.



patrols the Soldiers are always courteous and treat the villagers with the utmost respect. Villagers have made it known on numerous occasions that they appreciate the professionalism of the Troopers. Such professionalism makes all the difference too when it comes to obtaining information from villages where an American presence is sometimes not welcome.

"We've been in some villages where they just didn't want to talk to us, they didn't want us there, they wanted us to leave," said Merritt. "This village (Muslim Zai) didn't give me that impression."

When asked why some villages push back when offered assistance, Merritt said there is

reluctance to cooperate based on the Taliban presence in the area.

"The Taliban is still a significant presence here and there's a significant threat for them," said Merritt. "If they cooperate with us the Taliban will retaliate eventually. Maybe not tonight, maybe not next week, but eventually they will retaliate if they find out they cooperated."

Such reasoning underscores the importance of joint patrols with the ANA. Such measures help embolden the ANA and increase security to the point where the Taliban has trouble infiltrating an area, which gives the protected village, or villages, a sense of security. In turn, villagers are more willing to help ANA and ISAF

identify and destroy the Taliban's influence in the area.

"Once we identify the Taliban's network and support system within the region, and we start attacking it, then they'll focus less on the villages...," Merritt said. "Hopefully that will help increase the security of the area."

Such reasoning stands to be seen, but in the interim, Merritt explained, the key is to make sure the ANA have the right equipment and training needed to execute the necessary operations that will hinder the Taliban's influence on an area and provide a degree of protection not seen in some parts of this province in decades.

At 10 years old, Stryker still all that

Story and photos by
Sgt. Marc Loi
319th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

When the Stryker Combat Vehicle first debuted during the training exercise Millennium Challenge in 2002, it was built as a combination of the future and legacy force – a sustainment of the good of the past and a look into the future.

Tested in some of the harshest training conditions the Army had to offer at Fort Irwin's National Training Center and Fort Polk's Joint Readiness Training Center, the eight-wheeled vehicle was praised by combatant commanders and soldiers as the light, versatile vehicle that would not only swiftly carry soldiers throughout the battlefield, but also be able to withstand the rough terrains it would navigate.

In one of its final certification exercises at JRTC during Operation Arrowhead Lightning II, the Stryker Brigade took an objective in less than half the time it normally would take a light infantry unit, a feat its soldiers and leaders then attributed to the vehicle's troop-carrying capacity as well as speed.

A decade and two wars later, the Stryker still stands as one of the most useful vehicles in the Operation Enduring Freedom's theater of operation. Its effectiveness is especially evident to the soldiers of Joint Base Lewis McChord's 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, which has a large fleet of Stryker

vehicles in southern Afghanistan.

One of those vehicles belongs to Pfc. Wellington Sturrup. A driver for the battalion's Attack Company, Sturrup drives other infantry soldiers to and from the battlefield in one of the most dangerous areas in Afghanistan where IEDs are a constant threat and enemy fighters are constantly planning small-arms attacks. The Stryker, he said, is an ideal vehicle for the area because its speed allows him to take an entire squad to and from objectives very quickly while its agility provides better handling in Afghanistan's mountainous terrain.

"We can carry more soldiers, so there are fewer vehicles out there," Sturrup said. "I can haul a whole squad in one vehicle, which means that they are ready to go when we get to the objective."

Having an entire squad of soldiers arrive in one vehicle not only helps with maintaining accountability of all personnel – a paramount aspect in combat – but also gives the soldiers an added tactical advantage, said Sgt. Brandon Bedard, another infantryman from Attack Company.

"I can have my squad ready to go as soon as we get to the objective," said Bedard. "It's a big factor – we can prep the equipment in the vehicle, and the space [in the vehicle] allows us to have everything ready to go. Once we get to the objective, all we have to do is move out."

It isn't just the speed at which the Stryker delivers soldiers to and from the battlefield that has soldiers gushing. The vehicle's low-riding body, along with its eight wheels, also reduces the rollover rates.

"A wider body and riding lower means that it's less likely to rollover," Sturrup said. "It's peace of mind for me – I feel more at ease driving it because there isn't that added pressure. I feel like I am able to focus on the task at hand. This entire deployment, I haven't had to worry about rollovers."

More than just preventing rollovers, the vehicle's build also helps reduce the rate of casualties from the enemy's direct action. Afghanistan's roads are especially hazardous for military vehicles because of IEDs. While the Stryker's weight won't prevent it from triggering an explosion should its driver run over an IED, Sturrup said its double-V-hull helps prevent the vehicle and soldiers inside from taking the full brunt of the blast – a feature critical in both saving lives and equipment.

"It's better than other vehicles because it's going to take a lot less of the blast," Sturrup said. "The blast doesn't have the time to fully develop. One thing I've noticed is that the ones that get hit may get one of the wheels knocked off, and it still has seven left. "Take out one of the wheels and you still have a lot left to use," he added. Having eight wheels instead of four also helps the soldiers in other aspects of transportation



Sgt. Brandon Bedard, an infantryman with Attack Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, stands in front of the Stryker vehicle to which he is assigned during a break from mission on Forward Operating Base Pasab, Afghanistan. A 3-year Army veteran with a previous tour in Iraq, Bedard is just one of the many soldiers who praise the Stryker for its versatility as well as the ability to carry troops to and from the battlefield with ease.

– especially during Afghanistan's rainy months when roads become marshlands that make the terrain unmanageable.

The ability to traverse through muddy terrain, which other vehicles are more likely to get stuck in, reduces the rate of soldiers exposing themselves to the enemy and allows them to still be able to accomplish their mission, Bedard said.

"We haven't had to stop and change vehicles during a mission during this tour or last," said Bedard. "We haven't had any issues that hold us back [from our missions]."

Besides its ability to help soldiers accomplish the mission at lightning speed there is also the added comfort systems that allow soldiers to relax and be more ready for the missions at hand. Since its inception, the Stryker has undergone several upgrades,

including receiving better air conditioning systems to protect both the equipment inside as well as help soldiers cool down. This is especially important during Afghanistan's summer months, when temperatures can be as high as 120 degrees.

"During my last tour in Iraq, it was hot during the summer – and I mean it was hot," said Bedard. "But they've added new air conditioning systems and they're amazing – it helps put everyone at ease and in the mood for the missions."

For Sturrup, the added bonus is not only the air conditioning, but also the reclining driver's seat that he's found to be of particularly good use when on long, overnight missions. "Being a driver, my most favorite feature is the driver's seat," he said. "On long missions, I can lay the seat all the way down to rest. I am

a tall guy, so my joints lock up after a while – this way, on overnight missions, I can get a good night's rest and be ready for when we push forward on an objective."

Although these soldiers do not remember a time when the Stryker was not in the Army's inventory – it was first introduced seven years before Bedard even joined the Army – they, like the soldiers who first tested them in 2002, see the vehicle as not only a luxury, but also a tool to help them better accomplish their missions as infantrymen.

"It's a great troop carrier," Bedard said. "Transporting troops over crazy terrains isn't going to be a problem for the Stryker.

"I've been using the Stryker my entire Army career, and I haven't had any problems with it at all."

Chaplain's Corner



A lot has changed in the NFL in the last thirty years. In the 1980's when players made a great play, they got right back in the huddle and moved on to the next play, it was part of their job. In the 1990's, players would celebrate their own individual great play when it made a difference in the outcome of the game. But today there is a different kind of attitude in the NFL. Players now celebrate everything from a seven-yard catch, to a first down, to a great tackle; even if their team is losing by three touchdowns. Some even point to the name on the back of their jersey as they cross the goal line. I have to admit, some of the players' antics are entertaining. But what's really going on here? It seems the days of selfless team ball are gone. It's now become "all about me."

I love team sports, and I love competition. For a team to win, everyone on that team has to play their role and do their job. Can you imagine what the game would look like if a player celebrated like crazy every time he or she made a play? It would be complete chaos! We all have a tendency to want to be seen, to be appreciated. We want people to think we're better than we really are. We want everyone to notice the good things we are doing and we want the credit, too. But is that really what life is about? Or could there be something better?

The truth is, trying to look good in front of others is an attitude rooted in pride. Because of our wrong motive, we turn what could be a good thing into a bad thing. When we seek the attention

and praise of others, sure, we get our reward in the here and now (sometimes, at least). But when the applause ends, so does our reward.

However, doing good things in secret has eternal rewards. The Bible says in Matthew 6:1-18 to do good things-like pray, fast, and give; but to do them in secret. Even when Jesus performed miracles, He often told those He healed not to say anything. Why is that? Because the reward of "well done" from God is worth far more than any earthly reward ever could be. God rewards the good things we do in much greater ways than we could ever imagine when we don't seek the credit for them.

- Chaplain (Maj.) Edward I. Choi, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division

Arrowhead Remembers



Spc. Philip Schiller

Specialist Philip Schiller, born in Connecticut, joined the US Army in June 2010 as an infantryman. He went to Fort Benning, Georgia where he completed basic combat training and AIT. He arrived at joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA to 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment in November 2010.

He is posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, and Combat Infantry Badge.

His other awards include: Army Commendation Award, Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon and the NATO Medal.

He is survived by his father, Erik Schiller, and his sister, Courtney E. Schiller.



