

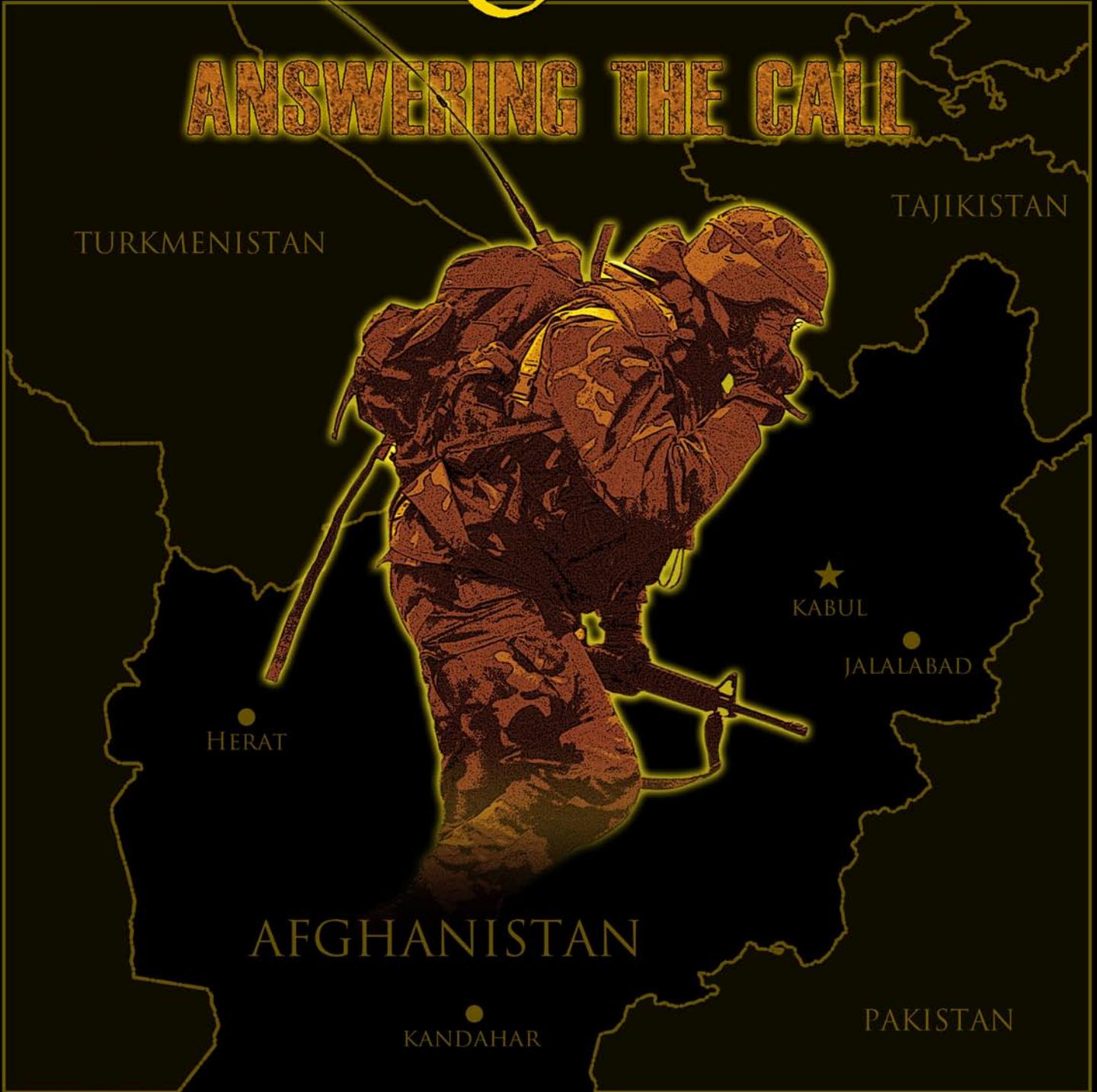
The Coyote

Volume 2, Issue 1

South Dakota Army National Guard

Winter 2004

ANSWERING THE CALL



SOUTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD - 109TH ENGINEER GROUP
OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

109th Engineer Group heads Task Force Coyote

**Sgt. 1st Class Kim Smith
and Spc. Mark Watson**
129th MPAD

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Thanksgiving was a significant time for more than 70 South Dakota Army National Guard soldiers from the 109th Engineer Group and their families. The November holiday to give thanks marked the midpoint of a scheduled year-long deployment for the soldiers sent to Afghanistan to support the war on terrorism.

Departing in mid-May, the soldiers left the familiar surroundings and lifestyles of South Dakota for the barren, sandy, mountain-surrounded valley of Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. For some, Bagram was but a stop before moving on to other locations – airfields, forward operating bases, or provincial reconstruction team sites – in the war-ravaged country.

The 109th serves as the headquarters for a Task Force affectionately called “Coyote” since the coyote patch is worn on the left shoulder of every South Dakota Army National Guard soldier. As the headquarters, the 109th has command and control of an international contingent of engineer units totaling more than 1,800 soldiers. Those



Photo by Spc. Mark Watson

Sgt. 1st Class Tim Hinker talks with Afgan contractors in charge of projects around Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

include active duty, National Guard and Army Reserve units; engineer soldiers from Australia, Poland, Slovakia, and Korea; and contracted civilians.

The 109th’s mission involves supporting

reconstruction within the war-torn country. That reconstruction includes providing tents, showers, and latrine facilities; building berms, bunkers, and guard towers;

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Local engineers receive 25th ID combat patch



Photo by Spc. Mark Watson

Task Force Coyote soldiers await their combat patch.

Spc. Mark Watson
129th MPAD

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Soldiers of South Dakota’s 109th Engineer Group received the shoulder patch insignia of the 25th Infantry Division Thursday, Nov. 11, during a combat patch ceremony on Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. The combat patch, worn on the right shoulder, identifies soldiers who’ve served in a war zone and the unit they served under.

During the ceremony, Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olsen, commander of the 25th Infantry Division, said the efforts of Task Force Coyote have made a visible impact on the country.

“Look around you, as far as the eye can see, you can see the contributions of Task Force Coyote,” Olsen said. “You have turned Bagram Airfield from a rundown

Soviet built air base to a Pallet Projection Platform, and there is no way we could have done that without Combined Task Force Coyote.

“I am absolutely proud of each and every one of you,” he added. “It is important for me to hand each of you the 25th I.D. patch because it takes each and every one of you to accomplish the mission.”

The ceremony took place on a concrete
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Commander's Corner

AG Comments

I am delighted to wish you Season Greetings. This year the holiday season holds special meaning for Americans, and I am particularly grateful for the members of the South Dakota National Guard and their families.

The role of the citizen soldier/airman becomes more important - and more appreciated - than ever. Our state and nation depend on the premiere, community-based force of the South Dakota National Guard. You are America at its best!

For many of our deployed servicemen and

women, this will be a season of separation from family, friends and loved ones. I appreciate your sacrifices and commend your willingness to serve and defend our country. Your presence across our homeland and abroad is a source of pride and reassurance for all Americans.

This holiday season, Americans are reflecting on what is most important to us:



our faith, our family and friends, and our freedom, which you defend with honor and dignity. Thank you again, and may God bless you and your families as you continue your service to this great state and nation.

Michael A. Gorman, MG, SDNG
The Adjutant General



CSM Comments

The following letter is from the Rapid City Journal dated 22 Nov 04.

Thank you, veteran

Dear Veteran, Thank you for your service to our country. I really enjoy being an American. I would like to thank you for fighting for our country.

I really like having the freedom to say the things I want to say and do the things I want to do and go the places I want to go to. I also like have the right to go to school.

So thank you again for fighting for our

country. - Austin Gutknecht, Age 10, Rapid City

I saw this letter and had him come into the office and gave him a coin for thinking and caring about our veterans. He is a fine young man. There is hope for our future generations. If any of your soldiers had the time to right him a letter. I know he would appreciate it.

Michael L. Birnbaum, CSM, SDARNG
State Command Sergeant Major

The Coyote

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Guardsmen help bridge language barrier

Spc. Mark Watson
129th MPAD

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Half a world away from home, soldiers of the 109th Engineer Group are helping to rebuild Afghanistan alongside soldiers from Poland, Korea, Slovakia and Australia.

Even though they face many challenges of serving in a war zone, some 109th soldiers are going out of their way to ease the challenge of working side-by-side soldiers who speak a different language.

One South Dakota soldier said what started as a requirement, handed down through his chain of command, soon became a pleasurable experience.

“I didn’t think I would enjoy (teaching),” said Sgt. Matt Christensen. “I thought it would be a pain because it was a requirement and not an option, and because of the language barrier. But since we began, it has been a lot of fun. I really enjoy the time we are able to spend together.”

Christensen, along with Spc. Andy Heymans, spend their Monday nights refining the English skills of their fellow Slovak engineers assigned to Task Force Coyote.

“Most of them speak very good English,” Heymans said. “The English they do speak is from Great Britain, and some of the words are different, so we just talk to them and correct their words or sentences when needed.”

They started out conducting the classes three nights a week, but have since slowed to just Mondays. Their teaching format has changed as well.

“We did (have formal classes) at first, and they were not much



Photo by Spc. Mark Watson

Spc. Andy Heymans, right, and Sgt. Matt Christensen share a laugh with Slovak soldiers during on of their weekly English classes.

fun,” Christensen said. “Then we chose to go informal and pretty much just talk, share stories and correct mistakes as needed.”

The sessions paid off and both said they have seen week-to-week improvement among their Slovakian students.

Just down the road more classes take place, this time with the Koreans. Since the previous group of Korean soldiers returned home, their American teachers haven’t had the chance to teach, but plans have been made to return to the classroom.

Sgt. Eric Luvaas will resume teaching English this time with the Korean engineers. Previously he taught at the Korean Hospital.

“I taught the Korean hospital staff,” Luvaas said. “I would find an article from the Internet that I thought they would find interesting and print them each a copy. Then I would have them

Continued Soldiers pg. 9

CURRENT SOUTH DAKOTA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENTS



Starting from ground zero: Provincial Reconstruction Teams build new beginnings

Sgt. 1st Class Kim Smith
129th MPAD

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM SITE SHARANA, Afghanistan – What was a barren, sandy landscape in early July is soon to be home to some 150 soldiers, thanks to the efforts of two soldiers activated to Afghanistan with the

South Dakota Army National Guard's 109th Engineer Group.

Maj. Patrick Pardy and Staff Sgt. Eric Jennings are part of a provincial reconstruction team (PRT) in an area near Sharana, Afghanistan. The two are the key engineers for a new PRT site being completed in the Paktika Province. Civil affairs and infantry soldiers round out the

reconstruction team.

The new site measures 500-feet by 600-feet. The walled site resembles a fort, complete with guard towers at each of the four corners. Everything the soldiers need to live is within the walls: living quarters, water from a newly-dug well, shower and laundry facilities, and a common area.

A key building within the new site is a Civil Military Operation Center (CMOC), where civil affairs soldiers will meet with contractors and local elders to discuss proposed projects such as schools, irrigation wells, latrines, and septic systems.

“Our primary mission here is to reconstruct the province,” said Jennings. “We’re here to support the Afghan people with new construction, build their trust in us, and win their hearts and minds.”

Jennings said none of the projects are pursued without the province governor’s approval. “We work directly with the (province) governor and make sure he approves of constructions done in his province.”

“We’re very proud of (the new PRT site),” said Jennings. “It was built up from nothing.”

As the lone engineers on the reconstruction team, Pardy and Jennings worked closely with the five contractors on the site project to ensure quality control, the project was completed to specifications, and any necessary adjustments were made to the contract.

Continued PRT pg. 9



Photo by Spc. Mark Watson

Staff Sgt. Eric Jennings talks to a local boy with the help of his interpreter, Assad. The boy, along with other locals, work in the Sharana Provincial Reconstruction Team site which will soon help rebuild the area in and around Sharana.

South Dakota soldiers eligible for bonuses

Spc. Mark Watson
129th MPAD

Some South Dakota National Guard soldiers may see a little extra green for their service. The South Dakota Veterans Bonus program is offering a bonus to South Dakota soldiers who have served on active duty.

Since 9-11, 2,573 South Dakota National Guard soldiers are eligible for the bonus.

“For service between the dates of

January 1, 1993 through September 10, 2001 payment will be made only to those who served overseas and were awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary medal, Southwest Asia Service medal, Kosovo campaign medal or any other United States campaign or service medal awarded for participation in combat operations against hostile forces,” according to a State of South Dakota press release.

This bonus isn’t just for soldiers sent overseas. Soldiers who served in non-

hostile areas since 9-11 are also eligible for the bonus.

This isn’t the first time the state paid veterans bonuses. Soldiers since World War I have received the reward. The most recent bonus was issued shortly after Operations Desert Shield and Storm. During that time 6,764 South Dakota residents received a total of 2.3 million dollars.

For more info on the bonus or to receive an application, contact a local veteran service office or call (605) 773-4656.

Rapid City soldier designs engineer projects



Photo by Spc. Mark Watson

Sgt. Teryl Stacey inspects a building under construction on Forward Operating Base Salerno, near the Pakistan border. Stacey, the lone South Dakota soldier on the base, was picked for the job because of his computer aided drafting skills.

Sgt. 1st Class Kim Smith
129th MPAD

FORWARDING OPERATING BASE
SALERNO, Afghanistan – Sgt. Teryl
Stacey is the lone soldier from the 109th

Engineer Group at a forward operating
base (FOB) near Salerno, Afghanistan.

Col. Nancy Wetherill, 109th Group
commander, calls Salerno “one of the largest
forward operating bases in Afghanistan.”
Because of its size and close proximity to

the Pakistan border, a large contingent of
engineers and supporting infantry soldiers
are stationed at the base.

Stacey works closely with the 416th
Engineer Command, U.S. Army Reserve,
to reconstruct the former air base. He
also oversees projects being done by local
contractors to ensure projects are being
completed according to specifications.

“I work as a city planner of sorts,” said
Stacey, who was a civil engineering student
at the South Dakota School of Mines and
Technology in Rapid City before being
deployed to Afghanistan with the 109th
Group to support Operation Enduring
Freedom. His computer aided drafting
(CAD) skills help engineers choose good
locations where new facilities should be
built on the base, where underground
utilities should be located, and with
structure and utility line design work.

“I do a lot of design work,” said Stacey,
who added that his CAD designs have been
used to build a military hospital at Bagram
Airfield and reportedly been used to build
three schools for Afghan children.

Other engineer projects at Salerno
include construction of a brigade-sized
tactical operations center, Marine command
operations center, regional interrogation
facility, and buildings to house soldiers
living at the base. Smaller projects include
pouring a large concrete slab to be used as a
wash point and the addition of a concrete

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South Dakota guardsman saves child's life

Sgt. Wes Nowitzki
129th MPAD

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE – Long
hours over many days were spent checking
identification cards and protecting the
valuable contents inside the gates perimeter,
each day playing over and over like a broken
record, until one day a life is saved and a
guardsman named Spc. Nicholas Patterson
became a hero.

Patterson was patrolling the Entry Point,
Liberty Gate, at Ellsworth Aug. 13, when a
frantic woman erratically drove up to him
in desperate need. Her child was choking
and his lips were becoming discolored.

Using his knowledge of the Baby
Heimlich Maneuver, Patterson immediately
helped dislodge the foreign object from the
baby’s air passage. With a medical
team on the way, Patterson and the mother
continued to watch over the baby until the
medics arrived on the scene.

Spc. Patterson received the Army
Commendation Medal for his meritorious
action. In February 2003, Patterson was
activated with South Dakota National
Guard’s 665th Maintenance Company,
Mitchell, with a detachment in Rapid City,
to provide security at Ellsworth Air Force
Base near Rapid City and Joe Foss Field in
Sioux Falls.



Photo by 1st Lt. Anthony Deiss

**Maj. Gen. Michael A. Gorman pins the
Army Commendation Medal to Spc.
Nicholas Patterson.**

Chaplain guides soldiers in Afghanistan

Spc. Mark Watson
129th MPAD

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people is a goal the coalition forces have to win the war on terrorism, but who wins the hearts and minds of the soldiers who face the stresses and difficulties of being away from home for more than a year?

A good portion of that task falls on the shoulders of the military chaplains. For the 109th Engineer Group, deployed to Afghanistan, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) John Holzhauser, a Roman Catholic priest, counsels soldiers and delivers words of spiritual peace on a daily basis.

“It has been quite rewarding to work with all the soldiers and airmen of the South Dakota Guard,” Holzhauser said. “But here it has been more rewarding because I am able to work with every branch of the service, as well as coalition soldiers from other countries.”

Holzhauser is the chief coordinator for all services in the Regional Command East section of Afghanistan covering more than a dozen bases in the east-central part of

the country.

Holzhauser tries to cover every area in his section at least twice a month, but there are always challenges he must overcome.

“Religiously the most challenging thing is to encourage the soldiers to keep their faith and trust,” he said. “But really the biggest challenge is the logistics in getting from one place to another.”

With very few roads in the war-torn country and the tremendous amount of distance between bases, ground transportation is virtually out of the question. Nearly all movement is done by aircraft.

While he tries to deliver only good news, hope and inspiration, Holzhauser encounters mixed reactions from time-to-time.

“I get two responses from the soldiers,” he said. “One is when they see a chaplain they respond hesitantly because he may



Holzhauser

bring a Red Cross message with negative news. The other is to embrace the chaplain because he brings a message of hope, encouragement and faith.”

Beyond delivering God’s word to the troops, Holzhauser also serves a crisis counselor.

Whenever a serious incident happens within the region he covers, he and his chaplain assistant, Sgt. Christian Johnson, head to the incident site as soon as possible. Once there, Johnson triages the people involved for mental and spiritual suffering, then Holzhauser works with the soldiers.

Following a recent ambush in the eastern part of the country, he traveled to the soldiers’ base camp and counseled all the soldiers involved. In this instance, Holzhauser also performed a memorial service and ceremony for an Iowa National Guard soldier who was killed in the ambush.

Although it is a difficult job, he added helping soldiers is fulfilling.

“It is very rewarding to help people recover and cope with their loss,” he said.

Engineers lead massive road building project through country

Spc. Mark Watson
129th MPAD

SOMEWHERE NORTH OF KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Deep in the heart of Taliban country members of the 109th Engineer Group help bridge the vast expanse of nothingness from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt with a road.

The road marks the start of a major north to south road system through the middle of the country.

“The road infrastructure here is very limited so any improvement is a big benefit,” said Lt. Col. Bill Freidel, Group’s operations officer. “A trip that took nine to ten hours will now take two to three hours. It will open up the ability of the central government to get to the people and for the people to get to the larger cities to market their agricultural products.”

The road project is a combined effort of a company and a

half of combat engineers, de-miners, surveyors, security forces and coordinators.

The construction began in August and throughout the next two years soldiers will pave the way over mountain passes to complete the 150 kilometer project. The soldiers will place gravel and culverts where needed, and a local national contractor will chip seal the road. This will create a road that coalition forces and locals can use to make travel more efficient.

“There have been a lot of challenges,” Freidel said, “material and culverts not being delivered on time, equipment breaking down and (repair) part shortages, the enemy and just building a road in a very isolated location.”

Ceremony marks half-way point of deployment

Continued from pg. 2

pad that members of Combined Task Force Coyote cleared, leveled and then poured for parking aircraft which will allow the airbase to take in more supplies, equipment and soldiers.

The task force includes members of the Army National Guard, Reserves and Air National Guard as well as soldiers from Korea, Poland, Slovakia, Australia and a group of civilian de-miners.

Receiving the patch means different things to different soldiers.

"It means that we've come together as one team and fought the war on terrorism here in Afghanistan," said Spc. Chelaine Knudson, a member of the 665th Maintenance Company until she volunteered to deploy with the 109th.

"I wanted to be a part of this and to protect my family from terrorism," she said. "The only way I figured I could do that was to come here for a year."

For some, receiving the patch gives them a sense of accomplishment.

"It gives me a sense of pride to be here," said Sgt. Chad Brooks. "Not every unit has had the chance to deploy and serve their country, so to be able to be here is doing something special by serving the United States."

From the lowest ranking private to the commander of the task force, most soldiers said receiving the combat patch was a significant moment.

"November 11th is a significant date in that it is Veterans' Day and the date that many Task Force Coyote soldiers, airmen, coalition partners and civilian contractors will receive their first Shoulder Sleeve Insignia for foreign wartime service," said Col. Nancy Wetherill, commander of the



Photo by Spc. Mark Watson

Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olsen, left, commander of the 25th Infantry Division, hands Spc. Chelaine Knudson, the shoulder sleeve insignia of the 25th ID. The patch will be worn on the right shoulder serving as her "combat patch."

109th Engineer Group. "For some it took only two years of service or less to earn a combat patch. For others it has taken longer. Timing is everything, they say; in my case it has taken 30 years. But no matter how long it has taken, it is still a significant moment to remember."

Some have said if they don't remember

their deployment, they won't remember anything in their lives. The patch will serve as a constant reminder of their service and sacrifice.

"This is definitely new, it's my first deployment," Brooks said. "I will always know whenever I glance down at my right shoulder at the patch what I did here."

PREP available for soldiers and spouses

PREP: The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program is a research based approach to teaching couples how to communicate effectively, work as a team to solve problems, manage conflicts without damaging closeness and preserve and enhance love, commitment and friendship. The PREP approach is based on 25 years of research in the field of marital health and success. The Family Readiness Office in conjunction with the State Chaplain's Office will be offering 3 couple's retreats in 2005. They are as follows: **January 14-16 in Rapid City, March 11-13 in Sioux Falls (tentative) or April 29, 30 & May 1 in Watertown (tentative).**

The first retreat will be limited to 12 couples, and the following retreats will be limited to 20 couples with members from returning deployed units having priority. There will be a nonrefundable registration fee of \$20. All other costs will be covered. Child care costs will be reimbursed, but child care will not be provided on site. Retreats begin Friday evening at 7 pm and conclude at noon on Sunday. To register or for additional information call or e-mail the Family Readiness Office at: 800-658-3930 or familyprogram@sd.ngb.army.mil.

PRT to win hearts, minds of locals

Continued from pg. 5

Barriers had to be overcome to accomplish a mission that involves interaction with the local population in Afghanistan. Among the barriers were additional protective equipment, language, and the threat of enemy attack. Whenever soldiers leave a base camp area they must put on several extra pounds of equipment that includes individual body armor, Kevlar helmet, weapon, and ammunition. The language barrier is overcome through interpreters contracted to help soldiers when dealing with

the local population. One of Jennings' interpreters, Assad, has been working with coalition forces for 18 months.

"I know that Americans are in Afghanistan to help Afghan people," said Assad, who learned English while studying in Pakistan, "and I like to help my people."

To offset the threat of attacks from the



Jennings

enemy when the team leaves the base camp, they travel in convoys of several vehicles, have at least one armored Humvee with a machine gunner, and often have air support checking the road ahead for potential danger.

The new PRT site is but one project the province reconstruction team will complete, but it is a key one from which the team's soldiers will operate until it is turned over to Afghanistan's army at some future point when the United States military leaves Afghanistan.

Soldiers help coalition members learn English

Continued from pg. 4

each read a paragraph."

Although most of the Koreans spoke good English to begin with, Luvaas, who is also half Korean, said he helped them with reading and writing.

"They made pretty good progress," he said. "When we would just sit and chat, they began to talk better after a while. It was mainly their pronunciation I had to work on."

He added he would also have to explain certain words to them.

"In English it seems as if one word can have eight meanings," he said. "It was challenging to explain the meaning of the words in certain sentences."

Luvaas said for example words like "their," "there" and "they're" were challenging. Also some slang words were difficult to explain.

"Words like 'cool' were tough," he added. "It wasn't cool to the

touch; it had a different meaning."

For all the soldiers involved with helping their coalition partners learn English, they said the satisfaction of helping bridge the language barrier is not as great as learning about each other's cultures, customs, and differences as well as the bonds made during the classes.

"The relationships we made were more rewarding to me than the classes," said Maj. Bryan Jacobson, who along with another 109th soldier, spent time teaching English to their Korean counterparts.

Christensen agreed and said learning about the different people was very rewarding.

"I really enjoy going," Christensen said. "The best part is the camaraderie, the friendship and learning about the different cultures."

"It's not a hassle for me anymore," he said. "Now I see attending the classes as a privilege and not a requirement."

Student inspects projects

Continued from pg. 6

batch plant on the base that can be used for the many concrete-related projects being done to reconstruct the base.

"Around this country, brick and mortar, and concrete are all that really last," said Stacey. "It's just not a climate for wood, because it deteriorates too fast."

While contractors generally build according to specifications, according to Stacey, he recalls one occasion where the contractor substituted pieces from the doors of an old pickup truck where 1/8th inch steel center plates were to be used under support beams. "I had to get with the contractor and tell him, 'No, you've got to get me some of the good stuff,'" he said.

Stacey also says Afghan masons are not accustomed to placing mortar between bricks. "We had to teach them about buttering in between bricks," he said. "Apparently, they never did that here, so we're teaching them that this is how we want it."



Photo by Spc. Mark Watson

Sgt. Teryl Stacey inspects a building at FOB Salerno.

Job well done 665th & 1085th!



Photo by Spc. Mark Watson

The 665th Maintenance Company of Mitchell, with a detachment in Rapid City, returned for a homecoming ceremony Dec. 5. The 665th provided security at Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City and Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls. The 1085th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) of Rapid City, returned for a homecoming ceremony Nov. 7. The unit provided air ambulance support during their 11-month deployment to Kosovo. (right) Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews



Christmas giving



Photos by Sgt. Wes Nowitzki

Lt. Col. Ronald Ward talks to a senior citizen after he delivered a Christmas basket. Members of the South Dakota National Guard delivered the baskets to two senior living homes in Rapid City. The baskets are put together by the United Way and have been delivered by the Guard for the past several years. Spc. Waylon Skelton delivers a Christmas basket to the elderly Dec. 5. (right)



Credit Union Raffles Wreath

The Army Guard Credit Union on Camp Rapid is proud to have their name displayed along with this meaningful wreath. Our theme "I'll be home for Christmas" was chosen to reflect the American Spirit not only in our community but around the globe.

This patriotic wreath includes a part of the very same uniform our troops are wearing as they fight the global war on terrorism.

The soldiers' sleeves represent the strength of our patriotism and the warmth of their family's embrace. The silver and gold that serve to decorate this wreath are the very same worn on our soldiers' uniforms.

The South Dakota Army National Guard created the personalized dog tag which reads: "Christmas 2004" and "United We Stand". Also included with the wreath is a print on canvas by South Dakota artist Terry Redlin titled "The Pleasures of Winter". This print was chosen to make a distinction between the soldiers' everyday situation in their world and the beauty and serenity of our world on this holiday season.

The South Dakota National Guard continues to have one of the highest deployment rates in the nation. We all know someone who has been affected by this war. This Holiday Season, as you enjoy the company of your family, let us remember our troops away from home who truly believe:

"I'll be home for Christmas - If only in my dreams".

The "I'll Be Home For Christmas" wreath will be raffled as a fund raiser for the South Dakota National Guard Family Assistance Program. Raffle tickets are available by calling 1-800-734-8273, or contact your local SDARNG Family Assistance Group Leader.



Task Force rebuilds war-torn nation

Continued from pg. 2

constructing living, learning, and working facilities; removing some of the estimated millions of land mines; and building roads.

"The biggest challenge in Afghanistan is getting the soldiers, the materials, and the equipment to the site," said Col. Nancy Wetherill, 109th and Task Force Coyote commander. "There are very few roads here. Any of the roads that are here are very rough."

Danger is a part of life for soldiers in Afghanistan as in all combat zones, but training, preparations, and protective equipment have made dealing with the dangers that are presented in Afghanistan almost second nature to the soldiers.

"Giant voice" booms over a loudspeaker warning all on Bagram to take shelter in a bunker when an attack on the base is imminent or occurring.

Although they are in a combat zone, one soldier even said it is safer in Bagram than at the Sturgis Rally.

Vehicles carrying soldiers travel in convoys whenever they leave a military site. Soldiers wear individual body armor, a Kevlar helmet, and carry a loaded weapon with accompanying ammunition. Ground vehicles are generally escorted by an up-armored Humvee with a machine gunner in the turret watching all directions for possible danger.

Mine teams diligently work daily to remove mines from identified mine areas throughout Afghanistan. On Bagram, those teams consist of active duty teams with trained mine dogs, Polish and Australian military de-miners, and civilian de-miners. Several types of up-armored and remote control de-mining vehicles are also used to remove mines.

For 109th soldiers on Bagram Airfield, the running joke is that it is "Groundhog Day," because each day is quite similar to the day before. Little changes in their daily mission, the weather, or the food from one day to the next.

Weekly highlights include Tuesday morning football, which is really "Monday Night Football" on Tuesday morning because of the 11-hour time difference from South Dakota, and "Steak and Seafood" night every Friday night to break the monotony of chicken and pork dishes served daily for lunch and dinner the rest of the week.

Some 109th soldiers are fostering international relations with other soldiers within Task Force Coyote.

Several teach English to soldiers from Korea and Slovakia on a weekly basis. And a small group of 109th members play soccer against the other nations that make up the task force.

"All in all, if we have to be activated to support the war on terrorism," said Wetherill, "there are a lot worse places than Afghanistan to be stationed."

Local businesses support Operation Yellow Ribbon

**1st Lt. Anthony Deiss
129th MPAD**

RAPID CITY – The success and strength of our armed forces doesn't just lie in its servicemen and women, it also lies in the communities that support them.

The support the soldiers and airmen of the South Dakota National Guard, and the airmen of Ellsworth Air Force Base, receive from family members, employers and their communities, positively effects their morale and well-being. This support gives the service member added peace-of-mind, and it allows them to be more successful in their duties.

Several Rapid City businesses have contributed to that support and received recognition on November 4 at Camp Rapid, for their participation in Operation Yellow Ribbon. Operation Yellow Ribbon is a program that uses money generated from the sale of magnetic ribbons to support deployed soldiers, airmen and their families.

It's hard to miss these symbols of soldier support, as you can see them on many vehicles on the road. With the words "Support Our Troops" printed on the ribbons they come in yellow, as well as red, white and blue and in a variety of styles.

The Operation Yellow Ribbon program is organized by the Family Readiness

Program of Joint Force Headquarters Detachment and partners with local businesses who sell the ribbons.

Local business that were recognized for their continuing support in Operation



Yellow Ribbon are: Graffiti's Car Wash, Black Hills RV Service Center, Winkler's Chiropractic, Army Guard Federal Credit Union, Best Western Town & Country Inn, Burger King and I-90 Amoco.

"These businesses have really made this program successful in generating

revenue for the troops and their families," said Eugene L. Deyo, lead volunteer for the Family Readiness Program.

The funds raised from Operation Yellow Ribbon support the deployed soldiers and airmen in several ways. It provides care packages for service members. It buys school supplies for service members to distribute to Iraqi children. The funds generated also supports those families of the service members who need a little financial assistance. Currently, the operation is establishing an endowment to support future service members who deploy.

These are just a few ways, which revenue generated from the selling of the magnetic ribbons, is supporting our deployed troops. However, the ribbons serve as something more.

"The primary purpose of the yellow ribbon is to serve as a reminder of the soldiers and airmen serving abroad," said Deyo. "We can never forget the sacrifices they are making for our country."

Everyday our communities are doing things to show support for our men and women in uniform. But regardless if a soldier receives school supplies for Iraqi children or an airman receives a care package, perhaps the greatest comfort to our service men and women lies in knowing that the American citizen is behind them.

Volunteer receives award

Barb Stout, a lead family support volunteer for the 200th Engineer Company, received the Very Important Patriot Award. Stout became a volunteer after her husband was activated to serve his country during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Not knowing what lie ahead, Barb also answered the call, and began to volunteer her time to the unit's support group.

Her duties and dedication to this truly just cause, led her into the vital role as the Unit Lead Volunteer. She spearheaded many activities to boost the moral of the troops deployed and the families at home. She coordinated community and family support by organizing care packages that were sent to soldiers on a monthly basis, started fund-raising efforts that paid for postage for care packages, supported families back home during difficult times and also supported soldiers that had to return during emergencies, and organized youth activities such as counseling for youth on a biweekly basis, various fun activities to include, bowling, swimming, picnics and various special holiday events.

Stout accepted the award in Washington, D.C., in early December.



Barb Stout with Army National Guard Director Lt. Gen Roger C. Schultz.