



FUBAR Fighters feel the Blaze

by 1st Lt. Jamie Mulder

Task Force Phoenix Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan - Bringing a slice of home to the troops is what it's all about for the members of the FUBAR Fighters, a morale, welfare and recreation band made up of two airmen, one soldier, one Marine and a sailor. All are members of Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan.

Buddy Blaze is known worldwide for making guitars for groups such as Aerosmith and Whitesnake. So when he decided to create a guitar for the FUBAR Fighters, the group could hardly believe it.

“I was honored by the notion that I could possibly do something that directly affected the moral of the men and women who stand between my country and harm,” Blaze stated. “The decision to make the guitar was automatic, but it had to be something special.”

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photo by 1st Lt. Jamie Mulder

Lt. Col. Donald Meeker and Capt. Michael Dye, two members of the FUBAR Fighters band based at Camp Eggers, Kabul, Afghanistan, admire their newly delivered guitar. The FUBAR guitar is an original by Buddy Blaze that will soon be available as a model.

Combat engineers clear the way

by Petty Officer 1st Class

David M. Votroubek

CSTC-A Public Affairs

QALAT, Afghanistan – When the 4-2 embedded training team trained at Fort Riley, Kan., they had no idea where in Afghanistan they were going, or what it would be like.

When the mentors got to Afghanistan in Feb. 2007, they were assigned to the 4th Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps Afghan National Army in Zabul Province. Two of them, Army Capt. Douglas Solan and Sergeant 1st Class Thomas Garcia, were assigned to the kandak's engineer company.

The two combat engineers

teach their ANA counterparts how to use both heavy machinery and explosives. The explosives training is especially important, since combat engineers often deal with the improvised explosive devices that insurgents are using against the ANA and coalition forces.

The Afghan leaders of the 4th Kandak's Engineer Company were anxious for the training, which includes a working knowledge of IEDs, route clearance procedures and basic mine detecting.

The 4-2's tactical training plan taught them that slowing the convoy down and using everyone to look for IEDs significantly

reduces the threat.

“The TTP (tactics, techniques and procedures) that we developed is working,” said Garcia. “We have reduced the number of injuries and strikes, when the TTP is used.”

Recently, Garcia and his former Afghan student, Sgt. Dost Mohammad, did counter-IED training with the 2-2 Kandak. They shared the training responsibilities at first, but eventually Mohammed was doing it all. The 2-2 Kandak seemed attentive, and Garcia enjoyed training them.

But Solan and Garcia do more than instruct the ANA about the IEDs. When a device is found,

they go out with the ANA and the quick reaction force to check the area and collect evidence. These mentors also watch their students apply the “five Cs” of mine clearance: clear, cordon, confirm, call and consolidate.

The threat is still considerable. During the deployment, the team encountered 50 IEDs in their area, and once, found three in a single day. So many IEDs have been found along one route, the soldiers nicknamed it, “IED Alley.”

Many were found and disabled before they could detonate. Occasionally the combat engineers destroy the IEDs when the Explosive Ordnance Disposal squad isn't available.

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“Mark and by-pass is not an option, because the Taliban will come back and take (the IED) out of the ground and put it in a new location,” said Solan.

The 19-year Army combat engineer also sees the Afghans’ procedures improving, and sees them searching for threats rather than letting themselves become victims.

“They’re conducting deliberate route clearance and mine-sweeping now,” Solan said.

When 4-2 ETT got here, all the kandak had for finding mines was what Garcia calls a, “Radio Shack metal detector.” Now they have six actual mine detectors.

ANA Lt. Col. Abdullah Nazari, commander of the 4th Kandak, sees the progress since the 4-2 ETT started training his combat engineers.

“I don’t want to exaggerate, but I am sure we have improved,” he said. “When I got here we couldn’t spot any IED’s, now we can.”



Soldiers from the Afghan National Army 205th Corps 4th Kandak Engineer Company use an AN-PSS12 mine detector and probe for mines during training.

-- photo by Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Garcia

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After weeks of conceiving the idea and two weeks of building, Blaze finished his originally designed, Honduras Mahogany guitar.

“The challenge was to make it look FUBAR but perform like something I would make for a rock star like Vivian Campbell of Def Leppard. I visualized a Humvee that had come under fire and looked like it, but still performed as if it was new,” stated Blaze.

The next hurdle was getting it

7,500 miles to Afghanistan. As luck might have it, Army Maj. Gen. Robert Lee, the Hawaii Adjutant General, was making a trip to Afghanistan to visit his troops. The FUBAR guitar made the trip with him.

Lee presented the guitar to Air Force Lt. Col. Donald Meeker and Air Force Capt. Michael Dye, two members of the FUBAR Fighters based at Camp Eggers, Afghanistan.

Meeker said, “Please pass on

our extreme gratitude for what Buddy’s done.”

The FUBAR Fighters play for the troops at Camp Eggers. The band plays mostly cover songs from Lynyrd Skynyrd to Stone Temple Pilots to Green Day and Breaking Benjamin. Recently they started writing their own material.

“It’s a great feeling when the crowd gets involved on a song they’ve previously heard. Of course you are your own worst critic when it comes to writing

original material, but it’s very rewarding when someone asks us the name of the cover song we just played,” Dye said.

The FUBAR guitar will be introduced as a BuddyBlaze model in the near future. Buddy Blaze Fine Stringed Instruments will make a contribution to an armed services oriented organization for each guitar sold.

“The thought that we can fight the Taliban with rock music is awesome,” said Blaze.



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Mission Statement

The mission of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community, is to plan, program and implement structural, organizational, institutional and management reforms of the Afghanistan National Security Forces in order to develop a stable Afghanistan, strengthen the rule of law and deter and defeat terrorism within its borders.