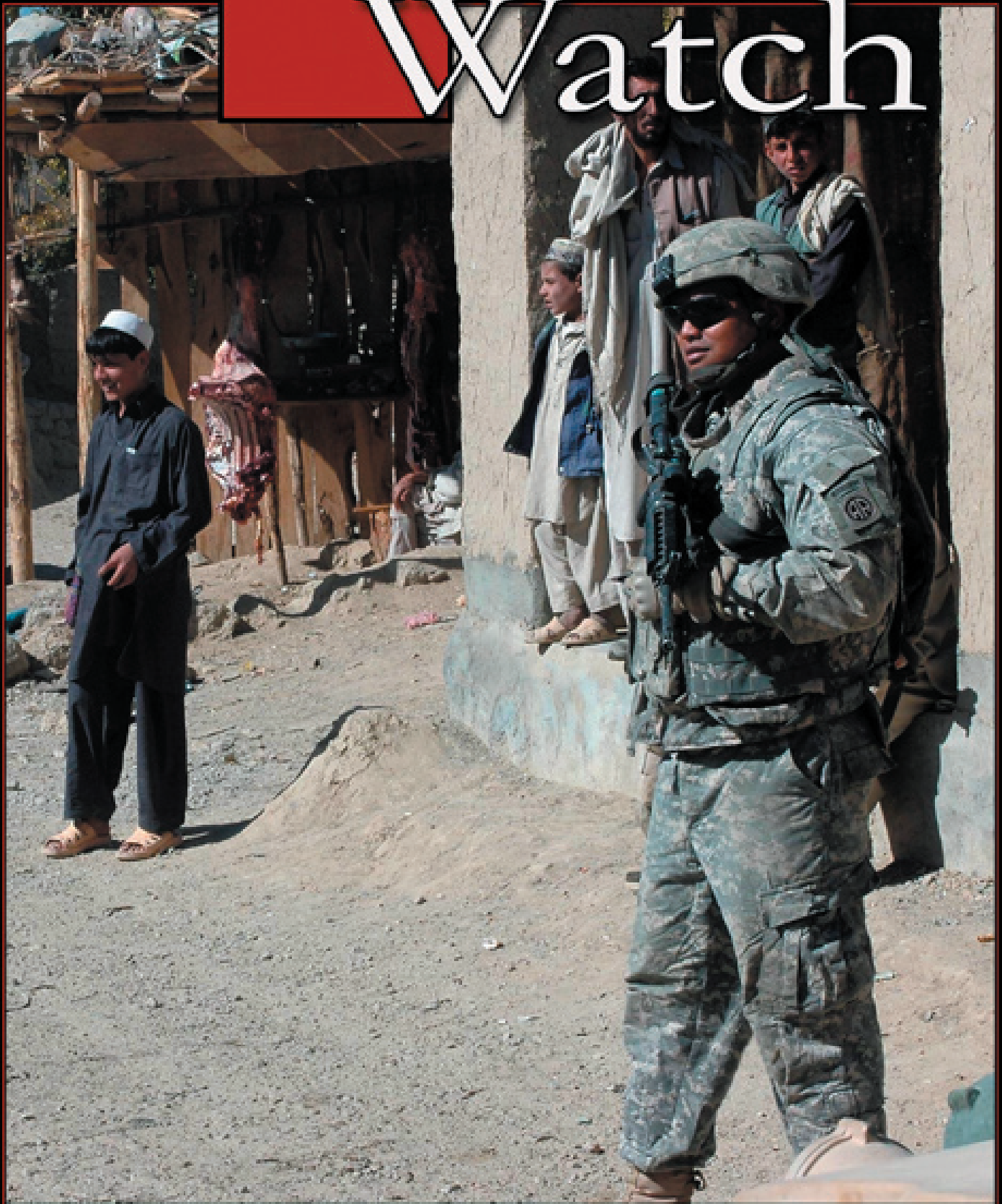


November 19, 2007

# Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN



Earning trust ■ Airstrike ■ Bamiyan Buddhas

# Defense Digest

News from the DoD

## Navy

### Final multiple scores increase for Sailors with degrees

WASHINGTON - Recognizing the importance of a strong educational foundation for career progression, Vice Adm. John Harvey Jr., chief, Naval Personnel, announced the introduction of education points into the E-4 through E-6 final multiple score for advancement.

Beginning with advancement cycles in August 2008, E-3 through E-5 Sailors will be awarded two points for an accredited associate degree and four points for an accredited baccalaureate degree. For those going before the E-7 through E-9 selection board, education will be recognized by emphasizing on education in the selection-board precepts.

Documentation is required for degree completion to count toward advancement. Official transcripts that indicate proof of degree completion must come directly from the degree-granting institution to the Navy College Center in Pensacola, Fla.

Sailors eligible for advancement to E-4 through E-6 must ensure the NCC receives official transcripts no later than the first of the month in which their advancement exam takes place.

Transcripts for Sailors competing for advancement to E-7 to E-9 must be received by the NCC by the cut-off dates specified in the corresponding selection board NAVADMIN.

"It's always been important to document education in your records," said Cmdr. Sharon Bemis, Naval Education and Training Command Voluntary Education Program Manager. "CNP's announcement makes documentation even more crucial. This new policy should give Sailors a greater incentive to validate all of their education records and ensure they have the highest FMS possible toward advancement."

To assist Sailors in pursuing a degree, the Navy has developed an education roadmap available through Navy Knowledge Online. Sailors using the roadmap will first verify their existing academic transcripts in their Electronic Training Jacket on NKO. This information is compiled from the individual's Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript.

Once this information has been verified, Sailors can consult with their local Navy college officer or the NCC to develop their specific education plan.

The Navy's educational initiatives are designed to support a continuum of learning and development throughout a Sailor's career, including distance learning available in multiple formats almost anywhere around the globe.

Under the Navy College Program, several opportunities are available that give Sailors a head-start in earning their college degree. A visit to the local NCO is a logical first step to learn about the wide variety of college-level examinations available, such as the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support Examination Program, the College Level Examination Program and the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests Program.

In these programs and others, Sailors can take tests in a variety of subjects and receive recommended college credit for each test successfully completed. There are also several college-admission tests gov-

en through NCOs, including the Scholastic Assessment Test and the American College Test. The Graduate Record Exam may be taken at certain testing sites off base and DANTES will reimburse the Sailor for the cost of the test. The Sailor must personally fund the test administration fee.

NCPDLP degrees maximize acceptance college credit recommended for Navy training and experience as well as credit by examination, and offer distance-learning opportunities to complete the remainder of degree requirements.

The tuition assistance program is one of the Navy's most popular educational-assistance programs. Through TA, Sailors can apply for financial support to help them complete their college degree.

The Navy funds 100 percent of tuition and mandatory course fees (max of \$250 per semester hour) for up to 16 semester hours per fiscal year. The \$250 per semester hour (or semester hour equivalent) payment applies only to tuition and mandatory course fees related to course enrollment. TA does not cover books or other expenses, and this policy applies to all pay grades.

For additional information on advanced-education programs, visit the local NCO or online at <https://navycollege.navy.mil>.

## Army

### Veterans enroll in Registry of American Soldier

WASHINGTON - Veterans have the opportunity to record details of their service for their descendents and future generations of the American public on the Registry of the American Soldier, managed by the Army Historical Foundation of Arlington, Va.

Every registry entry will include a Soldier's name, rank, hometown and service history. Registrants may also share their stories through anecdotes, memories and photographs.

The registry will be an essential historical link between those who have served and the American public, according to a foundation official who encourages Army veterans to share their stories and memories. He believes their memories and personal experiences will bring Army history to life and make it memorable for future generations.

Retired Army Col. Dave Fabian, who serves as director of communications for the foundation, said the registry is something the organization wanted to make as a feature piece to the National Museum of the United States Army which will be constructed at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Plans call for registry kiosks to be built in the museum where visitors and Soldiers can sign up their relatives or themselves. Meanwhile, those eligible may enroll through the historical foundation's Web site. Spouses, parents, children and friends may also enroll Army veterans, including those who are deceased. Those who are unable to visit the future museum may still enroll via the Internet.

"We have Army veterans signing up from 10 major wars and 178 campaigns throughout 232 years of the Army," Fabian said. "We have individuals represented by their relatives that go back to the colonial militias and, to date, more than 52,358 currently serving Soldiers and veterans have enrolled to record their service histories in their own words."

Enrollees may also include a photo, though a \$10 processing fee is required. Fabian said the foundation will add audio and locator services to the registry. Visitors will be able to plug in a Soldier's name, see with their history and hear the voice of that Soldier, he said.

Of the 52,000-plus who have signed up since the registry began in 2005, 35 percent are World War II-era vets, 20 percent fought in Korea, 25 percent represent Vietnam- service Soldiers, 15 percent are currently serving and the remaining 5 percent go back as far as 1775.

## Freedom Watch Staff

### **Commander**

Air Force Maj. Elizabeth Ortiz

### **NCOIC**

Tech. Sgt. Aaron Cram

### **Print Chief**

Air Force Staff Sgt. Daniel Bellis

### **Editor**

Air Force Staff Sgt. Sarah Gregory

### **Staff Writer**

Senior Airman Christine Collier

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CJTF-82 Commander Army Maj. Gen.  
David M. Rodriguez

RC East Public Affairs Officer Army Lt.  
Col. David A. Accetta

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**COVER:** Spc. Desiderio Zapato-  
tos III, Military Police Platoon,  
Headquarters Headquarters  
Company, 4th Brigade Special  
Troops Battalion, 82nd  
Airborne Division, provides  
security as Paratroopers walk  
through Padhbab Shaneh.  
*Photo: Army Sgt. Tony Spain*

**BACK COVER:** An Afghan  
girl in Khowst Province shyly  
watches from a distance as  
Soldiers and Sailors from the  
Khowst Provincial Reconstruc-  
tion Team drop off school sup-  
plies. *Photo: Senior Airman  
Christine Collier*

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Air Force completes historic project at Bagram

**5** **Remembering**  
Bagram honors fallen Soldiers

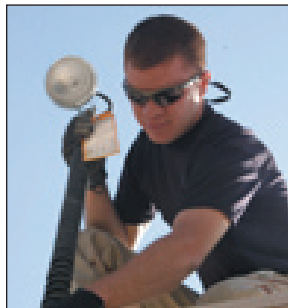
**6** **Meeting the neighbors**  
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11

# Air Force team completes historic project

Story and photos by Air Force Capt. Michael Meridith  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

**B**AGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – A historic accomplishment here is simply part of the job for a traveling team of Airmen who have been enhancing Air Force missions throughout the region for the last two months.

The nine-person team recently made history with the erection of the largest deployable aircraft shelter in the Air Force.

The 225-by-70-foot aircraft hangar, which is intended to simultaneously house three of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing's HH-60 Pave Hawk combat search and rescue helicopters, dwarfs the Air Force's 150-by-70-foot "standard model."

"Normally, these shelters are designed to hold one aircraft. This is basically two and a half shelters grafted together and is the largest one like it in the Air Force," said Air Force Master Sgt. Samuel Tran, who leads the team.

Tran's team is the only one of its kind in the region and, as such, stays in high demand. Because of their busy operations tempo, Tran said accomplishments like the hangar are "just part of the job."

Prior to their arrival here, the team had already tackled several large projects including the erection of three 6,000 square-foot shelters and one 4,000 square-foot shelter and the dismantling of one 4,000 and one 8,000 square-foot shelter.

"It's very exciting, especially being part of a unique team that goes out and does stuff like this," said team member Air Force Staff Sgt. Adam Boubede. "We go out and get the job done as fast as we can, then move on and do it again. Everywhere we go it's something new: whether it's repairing, reconstitution or building the biggest [deployable aircraft hangar] in Air Force history."

The four-month deployment is a first for several of the team members, but many are satisfied to put home-station training to use in support of expeditionary missions. "It's a good feeling," said Senior Airman Brad Hellberg. "Without us, they wouldn't have the shelter. Back at home we train for this, then we come out here and do the work."

According to Tran, the team has received a tremendous amount



**Senior Airman Brad Hellberg attaches a light to the Air Force's largest-ever deployable aircraft hangar here.**

of positive feedback for their work, but added that their motivation is something that comes from within the team itself.

"We look at each job as a challenge and see if we can beat our own record. Our motivation is internal; it's not something that comes from the outside. We don't compromise safety for speed, it has to be a marriage between the two," Tran said.



**Senior Airman Brad Hellberg puts the finishing touches on the Air Force's largest-ever deployable aircraft hangar at Bagram Airfield. The hangar is intended to simultaneously house up to three of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing's combat search and rescue HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters. A nine-person team erects and tears down similar structures throughout the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.**

# More than 200 honor fallen Soldier

Courtesy of Combined Joint Task Force-82 Public Affairs

**K**ANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – More than 200 Coalition servicemembers gathered to honor a fallen Soldier during a memorial service here.

Army Maj. Jeffrey Calero, 20th Special Forces Group, died of wounds caused by an improvised explosive device explosion during a recent combat reconnaissance patrol and re-supply convoy.

“Jeff’s most impressive leadership virtue was the seminal trait of leading from the front,” said an Operational Detachment Alpha team member. “Jeff died saving my life. Jeff was clearing on foot the wadi [a depression in the desert] I was about to drive through. He stepped on the IED directly in my path. He gave his life and saved mine.”

The tribute to him began when more than 400 Coalition Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen from countries around the world attended a ramp-side service here to salute and pay respect to Calero.

“Maj. Jeffrey Calero gave his life defending the liberties and freedoms we hold so dear,” said Army Lt. Col. Heinz Dinter Jr., Special Operations Task Force-32 commander. “Our Nation has lost a highly respected Soldier and our regiment has lost a fearless warrior and dedicated leader. Calero’s family has lost a beloved son and a devoted brother. We will never forget the sacrifice and dedication of this great American hero.”

The memorial ceremony began with the playing of the national anthem and invocation by the task-force chaplain.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go,” he quoted from Joshua 1:9.

Shortly after the SOTF-32 commander shared his praise for Calero’s heroism.

“The motto of our regiment is ‘free the oppressed.’ Jeff willingly risked his life to ensure that others would have a chance to experience freedom. We live in safety and share the benefits of free-



**Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen gather to honor Army Maj. Jeffrey Calero, 20th Special Forces Group, at Kandahar Airfield. Calero was recently killed in action by an improvised explosive device. Photo: Air Force Capt. Joseph Coslett**

dom because of the commitment and dedication of men like Maj. Jeffrey Calero,” Dinter said. “His sacrifice will not be forgotten.”

Following the commander’s comments, the C Company, 1st Battalion, 20th SFG commander spoke of Calero’s attitude to tackle the toughest challenges and care for his team.

“I first met Jeff at the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force compound in Bagram in January 2003, fresh out of the Special Forces Qualification Course. At that point in the deployment, I needed a detachment commander to tackle a difficult situation in Asadabad,” he said. “While the specifics of that conversation have faded with time, Jeff’s basic message still remains clear: ‘Send me sir ... I can handle the mission. I can make a difference.’”

“Jeff knew where he wanted to go, and I had to ask why? His reasons were clear, succinct and heartfelt. He told me that where the mission was the hardest was where he wanted to be, then paused

and said, ‘My guys are as good as any team in the battalion; send us, we can handle the mission.’ There was no bravado or posturing in his statement.

“He died leading his men and serving his country fully knowing the risks he took. He has set an example for all of us. He will be dearly missed by myself and all of the men in Charlie Company and he will be remembered as a man who, throughout his life, truly made a difference.”

Other friends commented on his bravery and ability to lead from the front. The service ended with a 21-gun salute and every member stepping forward to pay respects to this warrior.

“Perhaps I can think of no more applicable verse than this: Greater love has no one than this, that he may lay down his life for his friends,” said a friend and fellow teammate. “As Jeff laid down his life for his friends, he was defending the poor and the needy, the weak and the oppressed. He sacrificed everything so we may live.”



An Afghan National Police member hands out candy to children in Padhvab Shaneh. ANP and International Security Assistance Force members have been working with the Afghan government to improve relations in the village.

## *Slowly but surely ...* **Improving relations in eastern Afghanistan**

**Story and photo by  
Army Sgt. Tony Spain**

*22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

**PADHVAB SHANEH, Afghanistan** – Members of the Afghan National Police and International Security Assistance Force paratroopers passed out candy to children and visited with locals as they walked through here.

Just a few weeks ago, the paratroopers were greeted by children throwing rocks, but they have been working with the Afghan government to improve relations in the area.

“Basically, the goal is to get a feeling about how the village feels about the government of Afghanistan, how they feel about [ISAF] forces and the Afghan National Police,” said Army Capt. Mike Syvertsen, Military Police Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division. “This is our second

time to this village in the last two weeks. We have done one nighttime visit and now a daytime visit because of the rock incident.”

A couple of the elders in the village would not come out to talk to the ANP or the paratroopers, which is a concern to ISAF forces.

“There is reason to believe there is some Taliban support in the village, but just from walking around through here you can tell there are some people who like us and support us,” Syvertsen said. “So there is probably some ideological conflict between those two groups in the village.”

The conflict within the village may explain the “hot and cold” relationship with ISAF troops.

“It is different day-to-day,” said Army Staff Sgt. Kevin Rathbun, MP Plt., HHC, 4th BSTB. “Some days, we go into the village and they want nothing to do with us at all. Other days, we are welcomed with open arms and they want to talk. They

walk with us down the street, just like today.”

As the paratroopers walked through the village, one villager voiced his concern about education for his daughter.

“I want to send her to school, but I don’t know where to send her,” he said. “There is no school for girls and, if you build one, the Taliban will burn it down.”

Syvertsen noted there was a girls’ school here that shut down six months ago because the Taliban threatened to kill teachers if the school didn’t close.

Syvertsen believes with an ISAF base a few miles away, it is just a matter of time before the Taliban influence here dies and support for the Afghan government and ISAF forces grows.

“It is going to take continuous missions like this and showing our face in there,” Syvertsen said. “It is going to take getting the ANP in there and helping the village anyway we can to help turn the village around.”



# Photos From the Field



**Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team member Tech. Sgt. Ralph Binion III, shares a game of frisbee with Roydara village boys. He and his fellow PRT members made an 11 mile round-trip trek over a mountain pass and into a river valley to provide medical care to Afghans living in the Shutol District of Panjshir Province. Photo: Air Force Master Sgt. Jim Varhegyi**



**Above: A little girl watches as toys and candy are distributed to students at a school in Mest, Paktika Province. Task Force Rugged members visited the site to check on the construction of a new eight-room school for boys and girls. Photo: Air Force Staff Sgt. Sarah Gregory**

**Below: The image of Spc. William P. Jones, a light wheel vehicle mechanic from Company B, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion (Airborne), reflects in an oil pan as he works on a wrecker in the company motor pool at Forward Operating Base Fenty. Photo: Army 2nd Lt. Monika Comeaux**



# PRESERVING HISTORY

*Leaders discuss Bamyan development, visit more*

**Story and photos by  
Senior Airman Dilia DeGrego**  
*Combined Joint Task Force-82  
Public Affairs*

**B**AMYAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – For more than 1,500 years they stood watch over the people of Bamyan Province. The Buddhas of Bamyan remained untouched, nestled in the heart of the Hindu Kush Mountains until they were destroyed by the Taliban in March 2001.

Since their destruction, the local government and people have sought to restore this cultural landmark.

Although various countries have come forth with an interest in restoring them, their remnants wait, guarded at the foot of the mountain in which they once stood and their future is a topic of discussion amongst the international and local community.

This topic, among others, was

highlighted during a meeting between Bamyan government officials and Coalition and International Security Assistance Force leadership.

German Maj. Gen. Bruno Kasdorf, NATO forces in Afghanistan chief of staff; Army Col. Jonathan Ives, Task Force Cincinnatus commander; New Zealand Col. Brendon Fraher, provincial reconstruction team contingent commander and other Coalition and ISAF leadership visited with the Bamyan deputy governor to discuss the province's overall progress, as well as the local government's development priorities for the area.

They found the people and government working hand-in-hand toward a brighter future for the region.

"In all six districts that we have in Bamyan, reconstruction is going on to the limit that [the governor] has in her power," said Bamyan's deputy governor. "There are also other sources that are helping her as well. We see the future of Bamyan very bright. We are not worried about the future of Bamyan because all of the people of Bamyan are united with their government.

"The governor, the leader of this area, is a very competent woman and she is a very hard worker," he continued. "The men and women of this area are very happy with her."

Working with their government, he said the people of Bamyan have turned the once war-torn area into

a peaceful one where there are no armed people walking around and the agriculture, although in need of modernization, is doing well. Additionally, there no longer is any poppy seed cultivation in the province.

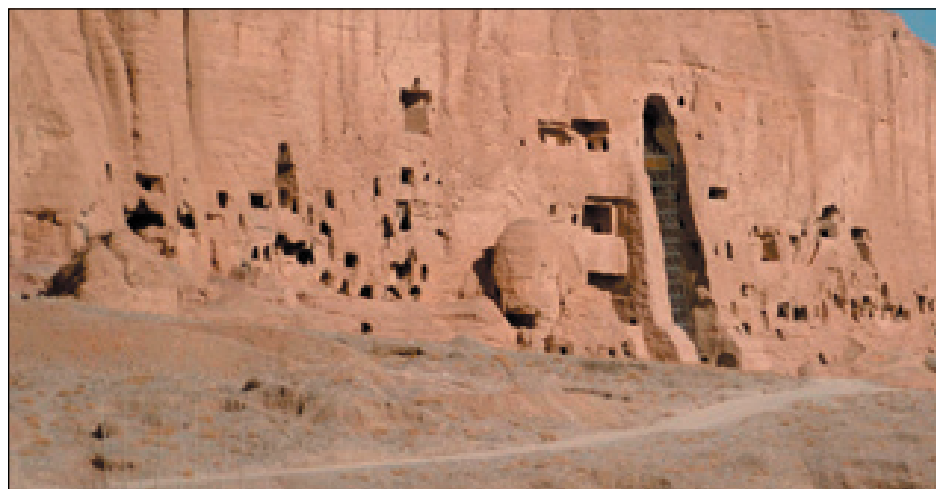
"We hope the government will see and realize that Bamyan is a very peaceful province and that is why we need the government to have more attention to this area," said the deputy governor. "We want more reconstruction in this area."

Kasdorf agreed "I am on your side; because it is a secure area, we should reinforce the success you've already had. This is a peaceful region, and we should show everybody else that we have these conditions here so we will have progress."

The leaders went on to discuss the needs of the people to continue with the successful development of the area. The deputy governor stressed some of the province's main priorities, to include the need for professionally trained teachers, schools for their children, markets for their vendors and, most importantly, roads to make it all possible.

"The schools can not be built here without roads, and the teachers can not come here to teach because we don't have roads," said the deputy governor.

Additionally, the leaders discussed boosting the economy, specifically discussing the area's natural resources, like coal and iron ore and





## ument ruins

what needs to be done to mine and market it – again, stressing the need for roads to transport and properly market the resources.

Last, but certainly not least, the leaders concluded their meeting discussing the region’s rich heritage: the Bamyán Buddhas.

“We want people to come help repair these statues,” said an Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture representative. “The people ask when they will be rebuilt. They are guarding and preserving the pieces of the Buddhas so in the future if they are rebuilt we can use some of the original pieces.

“We are doing what we can to preserve what is left of the historical paintings and writings as well, putting up doors to the rooms that those paintings and writings are in,” he said. “It is very important to preserve this historical area. Everyone wants this area to be preserved. We want to rebuild it so the others can come and see the area and its historical value.”

While it is still uncertain when the Buddhas of Bamyán will be rebuilt, the people of Bamyán will continue to guard their remains until the day they are restored. To them, their ruins have come to signify more than a historical memorial: the Buddhas of Bamyán represent the building blocks to a brighter future they are constructing with the help of their government.



**Above:** An Afghan National Army Soldier stands guard at the ruins of the Buddhas of Bamyán. The Buddhas of Bamyán were two monumental statues of standing Buddhas carved into the side of a cliff in the Bamyán valley of central Afghanistan

**Middle:** A series of caves remain where the Buddhas of Bamyán used to stand before the Taliban destroyed them in 2001.

**Far left:** Bamyán government officials and Coalition and International Security Assistance Force leaders discuss the history of the Buddhas.





# A NEW LINK: Bridge connects FOBs, district centers

**Story and photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Sarah Gregory**  
*American Forces Network – Afghanistan*

**P**AKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Digging, lifting heavy equipment and performing manual labor for hours on end is back-breaking work under the best of circumstances, but under the weight of 40 pounds of personal protective equipment, it can be grueling.

With the help of the Afghan National Army, members of the 585th Engineer Company, 864th Engineer Battalion, have been toiling for the past two months to build a bridge that will connect two major district centers here in Paktika Province.

After severe summer flooding washed away the Paltu River Bridge, Sharana's mayor and chief of construction collaborated with members of Combined Task Force Rugged, 864th Eng. Btn., to build a more permanent bridge.

The \$60,000 bridge will link two provinces – Paktika and Paktya – and thousands of people who use the route. The bridge will also re-connect the most direct route between Forward Operating

Bases Sharana and Gardez.

“The bridge is the only major avenue between the districts of Gardez and Sharana so the loss of it was pretty significant to not only the residents but to the military members who travel back and forth,” said Army 1st Lt. Robert Green, platoon leader, Equipment Platoon, 864th Headquarters Support Company, 864th Eng. Btn.

Without the bridge, making the trip between FOBs Gardez and Sharana took longer and was more dangerous for Soldiers to travel.

While the Paltu River is only a dried-up riverbed right now, the annual winter flooding season is about to begin, creating the need to have the bridge completed before the first snowfall.

“During the winter, which is the primary flood season, the waters can often be higher than the bridge at peak flood times,” explained Green. “Four months out of the year, the riverbed is full so it's important for us to get the bridge finished before winter sets in.”

When the riverbed floods, it cuts off the major trade routes between Paktika and Paktya Provinces.

“This bridge has a big impact on the flow of merchandise between the prov-

inces,” said engineer Khalid Bader, Sharana's chief of construction. “It's like a big highway. Even if it's closed one day, a lot of people can get hurt financially.”

The ANA, under the supervision of Army engineers, is providing the manning for operating heavy equipment and security of the bridge site.

“We are so happy the military is here working shoulder-to-shoulder with us, helping build our country into something better,” said ANA 2nd Lt. Nasimullah, engineering commander. “We try to work twice as hard as they do because this is our home.”

The Paltu River Bridge is designed to be temporary – it will last about five years until a permanent bridge can be constructed. Previously, the government would re-build a bridge every year after the winter floods washed it away.

“This is the only way people can get back and forth when the river floods, so this bridge is bringing a lot of comfort to the thousands of residents in the three big provinces: Paktika, Khost and Paktya,” said Sharana mayor Momen Akery.

Construction on the new bridge is expected to wrap up at the end of this month.

# Airmen honor veterans with silent vigil



Senior Airman Michael Salansky, 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, stands a silent vigil here in honor of Veteran's Day.

Story and photo by  
Air Force Capt.  
Michael Meridith  
455th Air Expeditionary  
Wing Public Affairs

**B**AGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Airmen here honored veterans past and present with a ten-hour silent vigil.

Following a formal wreath-laying ceremony, teams of two Airmen – a total of 80 in all – stood at parade rest near the flagpole of Camp Cunningham here as a constant reminder of the significance of Veteran's Day.

The vigil took place in the shadow of both a picture and monument to Senior Airman Jason Cunningham, the fallen pararescueman who is the camp's namesake, and who gave his life saving fellow servicemembers during combat in Afghanistan in 2002.

"It took me full circle," said Air Force Staff Sgt. San Juana Vasquez, 455th Expeditionary Mission Support Squadron, who was involved in setting up the vigil and who also served on the Air Force Honor Guard de-

tail that provided honors during the burial of Airman Cunningham. "Sometimes, back home Veteran's Day can seem like just a day off, but here it means more because you live it every day."

The vigil was given even more significance by the fact that it came shortly after the announcement of the deaths of several servicemembers serving in Afghanistan.

"I feel pride at being able to honor those who gave their lives for our freedom," said Senior Airman Michael Salansky, 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, who participated in the vigil. "When I stand out there I think about everyone deployed out here putting themselves on the line."

Those sentiments were echoed by Air Force Master Sgt. Richard Tallman, 455th Expeditionary Mission Support Group first sergeant, who organized the event.

"Those who have served and those who are now serving should have a sense of pride that their efforts will not be forgotten," he said. "No matter how small they think their role is, every person is a key to making the mission happen."

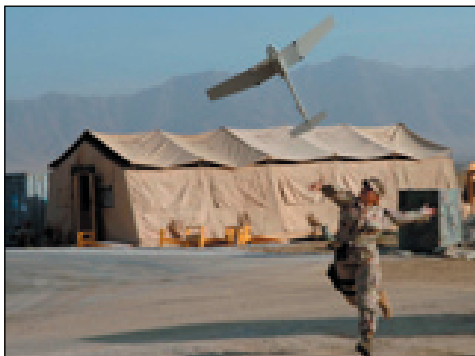
## Lookout: Unmanned aircraft has eyes in the sky

By Air Force Staff Sgt.  
Mike Andriacco  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

**B**AGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The little cousin of the MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper is making a big splash here as the RQ-11B Raven program takes flight.

The Raven is a small unmanned-aerial vehicle used to conduct visual reconnaissance several kilometers away, said Air Force Staff Sgt. Daniel Garcia, Force Protection Aerial Surveillance System Flight.

The unit itself is very small, a little more than four pounds, but packs a big punch in the area of surveillance. It can fly at a height of several thousand feet above sea-level and sends live footage back to the operator, where it is recorded for later evaluation.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Marie Garcia, Force Protection Aerial Surveillance System Flight, launches an RQ-11B Raven unmanned aerial vehicle during a demonstration.

"The Raven can fly in several different patterns," Garcia said. "It can fly in a predetermined pattern, circle an area or be controlled remotely by an operator."

And landing?

The Raven doesn't have landing gear but is designed to break apart on impact to prevent damage to the structure of the UAV itself and can be reassembled in minutes.

The RQ-11B also has several benefits over earlier models.

"This is a more durable UAV and it is much easier to launch," said Col. Steven Ross, U.S. Transportation Command Anti-terrorism Office chief. "The former model had to be launched like a giant slingshot. This one can be hand launched."

The biggest benefit of the UAV is its ability to create visual data for base-defense forces, without having to launch a regular-sized aircraft sortie.

The tactical advantage of having a small aircraft capable of transmitting images without putting pilots in harm's way can be summed up with just a few words.

"Being able to see the enemy first is key," Ross said.

# ANSF, Coalition forces reopen school

Courtesy of Combined Joint Task Force-82 Public Affairs

**ORUZGAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan** – Afghan National Security and Coalition forces reopened a school in Khas Oruzgan District here.

“We are committed to opening new schools and repairing the destruction caused by the Taliban,” said an Afghan National Army soldier.

The journey to open the school began after the Taliban came through the district, forced all of the schools to close and killed several teachers and students. Soon after securing the area, the combined force was on a reconnaissance patrol when a 12-year-old boy approached the patrol.

“The boy rushed up to the convoy and asked to be arrested,” a Coalition Soldier said. “This took us back at first; he said he needed help, but he couldn’t talk unless he was arrested because the Taliban would kill him.”

The boy pulled out a petition to open the



**An Afghan National Army soldier hangs up an Arabic and English teaching chart in a school in Khas Village, Oruzgan Province. Afghan National Security and Coalition forces reopened the school after the Taliban terrorized students away.** *Courtesy photo*

schools in the district. He had secretly gone around the village and had more than 70 children sign the petition.

Shortly after, ANSF and Coalition forces

opened a school in Khas Village. More than 225 students began attending classes. Three local teachers were hired to teach reading, writing and arithmetic. The local ANA commander taught the religious classes.

“The students love to learn and the effects can be seen throughout the village,” the Soldier said.

The summer came and, like before, the Taliban terrorized students out of the schools.

“We had to protect the teachers on the base because the Taliban were attempting to kill them,” the Soldier said. “The Taliban continually attempts to destroy all progress.”

After ANSF and Coalition forces secured the district, the combined forces reopened the school and planned to open the remaining schools in the district.

“This is another heartless attempt by the Taliban to impede progress,” said Army Maj. Chris Belcher, Combined Joint Task Force-82 spokesman. “It’s undeniable, these terrorists don’t support the future of the Afghan children.”

## Airstrike: Not just another day at the office

**By Air Force Capt. Michael Meridith**

*45th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs*

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** – Air Force Staff Sgt. “Dean” was not having a good day at the office.

As an Air Force joint terminal attack controller embedded with ground forces, his job was to serve as liaison between the ground commander and aircrews. On this particular afternoon, the convoy he was traveling with came under attack.

“We checked in with him [the JTAC] and found out that they were taking small arms and RPG [rocket-propelled grenade] fire,” said the pilot of one of two F-15E Strike Eagles that flew to the defense of the ground forces. “My wingman found the bad guys and we set up to strafe.”

After the pilot strafed the estimated 30-to-50 attackers with his 20mm cannon, both crews were startled by the JTAC’s next call.

“I had noticed the shots were getting closer and closer to my

truck, and, as I reached for some ammo, I was hit,” he said. At first he thought he had received only a glancing blow to his armor, but soon realized he had been shot through the abdomen.

After calling for a medic, “Dean” calmly informed the F-15E crews of his condition.

“It was definitely a gut check for us when we got the call,” said the weapons-systems officer aboard the lead F-15E. “But he spoke in a completely calm voice with no trace of fear or pain. It definitely keeps you calm knowing that he’s got things under control and he’s doing his best to make sure we can employ ordnance from our jet as quickly as possible.”

“Dean” attributes his calm radio manner to a need to communicate clearly with the pilots he’s directing.

“If I sound all excited and worked up on the radio, it makes it hard for the pilots to understand me,” he said. “I and the pilots don’t want to make mistakes and the best way to do that is to keep everyone calm. I just kept

my mind occupied on my mission – I wanted to see it to the finish.”

Despite his wound, the JTAC continued to work with the aircrews, asking for a damage assessment on the first strafe and calling for additional strikes from both aircraft as the enemy forces regrouped, attempting to flank the convoy. All the while, he dismissed suggestions that he hand over his duties.

“I know it sounds weird, but the first feeling that went through me when I was hit was embarrassment,” he said. “Everyone has their job and then all of a sudden you’re hit and all eyes are on you ... especially in a situation where everyone is getting shot at. You start thinking, ‘Why me? What did I do wrong?’ You just want to go back to doing your job. You don’t want to be a burden.”

“As a young wingman in the [336th Expeditionary Fighter] squadron with less experience than most, that day was an eye-opening experience that I’ll never forget,” said the pilot of the second F-15E. “The JTAC displayed the most courage, bravery and

professionalism I’ve ever seen. It’s people like him who make me strive to do what I do to the utmost of my abilities.”

After several additional strikes and low passes by the F-15Es, the convoy was able to rendezvous with a military helicopter, coordinated by lead pilot, to get the JTAC to medical treatment. After a day in the hospital, he was released and has since fully recovered from his wounds.

“We kept working with him and he never once stopped doing his job,” said the pilot. “The last thing he said to us was ‘Looks like they’re going to MEDEVAC me out of here. I’ve got to take the headset off and give it to somebody else. You make sure my boys get out of here okay.’ At the very end, all he cared about was that he got his guys safely out of there.”

“I feel that there is no more rewarding job than the one I’m doing now, because I see the immediate effects of it,” said “Dean.” “There’s nothing better than the satisfaction that I’ve done my job and done it well.”

# Farah PRT begins work on \$1.7 million bridge

Story and photo by **Gina Gillespie**  
*Farah PRT*

**F**ARAH PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN – In summer, the Farah Rud River meanders lazily through the desert rocks. But during the rainy season, the water levels rise up to 30 feet, spilling out of the channel and flooding the nearby plains.

The Farah Rud bisects the lower half of the province from north to south. It separates the people in the village of Tojg from the main road and their farmlands. The nearest crossing is several hours away, in Farah City. Eight to 10 people drown annually attempting to cross the river.

Construction is now underway for a \$1.7 million bridge across the river in Tojg. The project, funded by Provincial Reconstruction Team Farah, will employ several hundred local people for two years.

The project will benefit not only the 10,000 residents of Tojg, but also people from the districts of Shib Koh, Qalay Ka, Lashe Jowain and Farah City.

The masonry and reinforced-concrete bridge will span 300 meters (984 feet), and rise 12 meters (39 feet) over the center span. The bridge foundation will include two semicircular abutments, including headwalls, one central pier and 15 minor piers, all keyed into the bedrock.

The bridge will include two large ma-

sonry abutments, one masonry arch span and one central span. The bridge will support two lanes of traffic and two pedestrian lanes.

“If you live in Lashe Jowain and you want to cross the river to go see fields on the other bank of the river, then you have to drive all the way to Farah, a nine-or-10 hour drive, cross the river at Boghi Pol Bridge in Farah City, then come all the way back down,” said Navy Lt. j.g. Stephen Ramsey, Farah PRT engineer.

For the three or four months of the annual rainy season, villagers cannot reach the facilities and resources on the other side of the river without making the drive to Farah City.

“If anyone needs medical care during the winter months, there’s almost zero chance of getting across without traveling all the way to Farah City,” said Army Maj. Harry Lorenzi, Farah PRT Civil Affairs Team head. “You’re defeating the purpose of having schools and clinics there if the people can’t get 100 feet across the river.”

Due to the size and duration of the project, several local contractors joined forces to create a joint venture company, pooling resources, equipment and manpower for the bridge construction. The contractors who combined to form Nawin Joint Venture Company include Qayum Demokrat from Shir Pir Construction Company, Fazel

Ahmad from Bradaran Noori, Haji Satani from Kheyaban Construction Company, Engineer Anayat from Meihan Parwar and Juma Khan from Sadiqi Abad Construction Company.

“This is the first time this has happened,” said Ramsey. “It is a good way of building up one’s business. The project is bigger than any one of them could support.”

Or, as Haji Juma Khan, Bradaran Noori Construction Company owner puts it, “One Swallow doesn’t bring summer. This joint construction company has the ability to do any kind of project. We prefer five companies working together. One hand clapping makes no sound.”

By reducing travel time to the city center, this link will enhance economic activity and improve Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police response times and access to social services. The link will also extend the reach of the central government, allowing officials to conduct more frequent assessments of the outer districts.

“This project is right up there with some of the major projects we have done in Afghanistan,” said Ramsey. “It’s part of the foundation infrastructure, roads and bridges and dams, heavy infrastructure that allows transportation and goods and services to flow. Projects like this are critical for the functioning of the economy.”



**Engineers survey the site of the future Tojg Bridge which will span the Farah Rud River. Each winter, the river floods, cutting villagers off from the main highway and leaving them no option but to drive several hours to the next crossing in Farah City.**



## Photos From the Field



**Above:** An Afghan boy stands amid a sea of burka-clad women outside Bagram Airfield while waiting to see a healthcare provider at the Egyptian Field Hospital. *Photo: Air Force Staff Sgt. Daniel Bellis*

**Left:** An Afghan security guard pulls security in Qalandar for the Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team. The PRT supplied shoes to the children of the town and inspected a nearby district center. *Photo: Senior Airman Christine Collier*



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**Left:** Soldiers from 2/503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, prepare to hook up sling loads to a CH-47 (Chinook) Helicopter at Forward Operating Base Blessing. *Photo: Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Quarterman*

**Below:** An Afghan girl looks up at an Afghan National Army Soldier outside Bagram Airfield pulling security at the entry control point for the Egyptian Field Hospital. The girl waits for the opportunity to see an Egyptian healthcare provider. *Photo: Air Force Staff Sgt. Daniel Bellis*

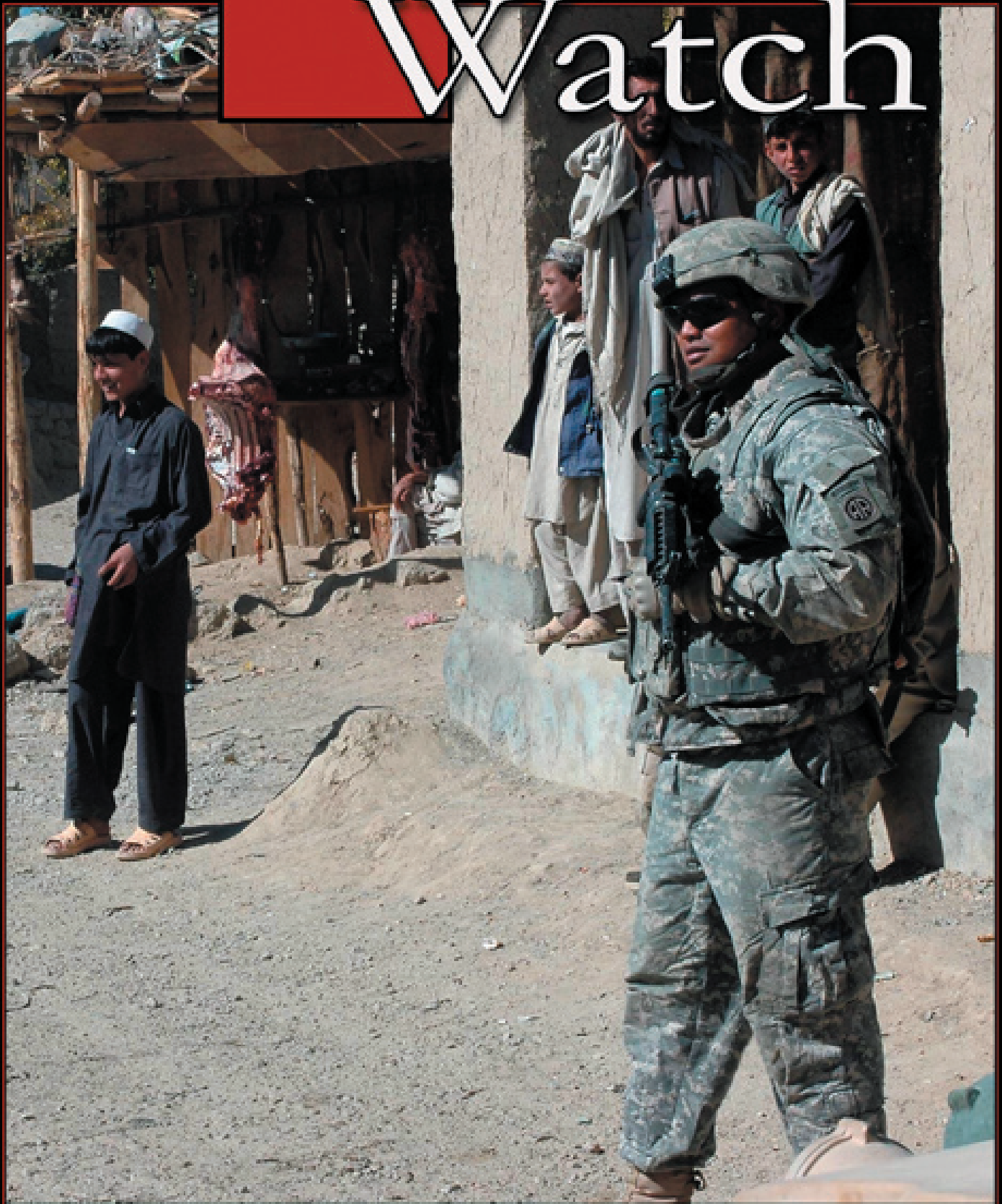






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