

April 28, 2008

# Freedom AFGHANISTAN Watch



School Saved ■ Linking Children ■ Spring Break

# Bush, U.K. Prime Minister Talk Tough on Terrorism

By John J. Kruzel

American Forces Press Service

During a joint news conference at the White House Rose Garden, following a closed-door meeting, President George W. Bush and U.K. Prime Minister Brown pledged continued multilateral military commitment in Afghanistan and spoke critically about Iran's uranium enrichment.

"Prime Minister Brown understands our enemies remain determined to strike our countries and to kill our people."

President George W. Bush said, calling the prime minister his good friend. "He and I share a determination -- a fierce determination -- that these evil men must be stopped and that we can defeat their hateful ideology by the spreading of liberty and freedom."

Invoking Winston Churchill's famous phrase, Brown said no bilateral bond has better served the world than the "special relationship" between the United States and United Kingdom. "And following our excellent meeting, I'm able to report that the bond between our two countries is stronger than ever," he added.

Brown praised his American counterpart for leading the crusade against global extremism. "The world owes President George Bush a huge debt of gratitude for leading the world in our determination to root out terrorism and to ensure that there is no safe haven for terrorism and no hiding place for terrorists," he said.

On Iraq, the president said the two nations are working together and lauded recent efforts by British troops in Basra.

"During the recent fighting in the Basra province, our nations coordinated our support for the Iraqi security forces as

they took on extremists and criminals," he said. "I'm most thankful for the brilliance of the British helicopter crews that fired under courage and helped evacuate wounded Iraqi soldiers."

Brown agreed that his nation's overwatch role in Basra in southern Iraq is making "substantial progress." He added that much of the leaders' discussion involved U.S. and U.K. forces serving together in Iraq and Afghanistan. "We praise the commitment of the troops of both America and Britain and all who serve in these two countries," he said.

America and Britain, respectively, have the first and second largest number of forces in Afghanistan and are determined on the success of our missions, the prime minister said. He added that he and Bush agreed at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, early this month to match the military effort in Afghanistan with proposals that will enable economic and social development there.

Bush said he appreciates the 7,900 British troops bravely serving in Afghanistan. "We talked about the very successful NATO summit that we just concluded in Romania," he said, referring to his afternoon discussion with Brown. "We talked about our commitment to see to it that we succeed in Afghanistan."

The heads of state also agreed on mounting multilateral opposition to Iran's defiant pursuit of nuclear capabilities.

"Our position is clear: that we're going to work together, along with other nations, to make it abundantly clear to

the Iranian regime that they must not have the capability of developing a nuclear weapon," the president said.

Echoing Bush, the prime minister said, "Iran continues to defy the will of the international community, and we are agreed on the need to strengthen the sanctions regime and ensure these sanctions are effectively implemented."

Brown said he will meet with other European leaders over the next few days to discuss moving forward with the issue across the continent.

*"Our position is clear: that we're going to work together, along with other nations, to make it abundantly clear to the Iranian regime that they must not have the capability of developing a nuclear weapon,"*

*President George W. Bush*



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**COVER:** Afghan elementary school  
girls from Jan Qadam School wait pa-  
tiently for the beginning of their first  
video teleconference with students  
from Calvert City Elementary School in  
Calvert City, Ky. (U.S. Army photo by Ma-  
rie Shult) See related story on page 8.

**BACK COVER:** Soldiers from the  
Afghanistan National Army display skills  
in both weapons and communications,  
during a demonstration of their capa-  
bilities earlier this year in Camp Joyce,  
Afghanistan. The ANA man four obser-  
vation points in Camp Joyce and run  
missions in the surrounding areas. (U.S.  
Army photo by SPC Carter, Jordan)

# Freedom Watch

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# Afghan villagers save school, clinic from insurgents

By Army Capt. Ashley Dellavalle  
Task Force Rugged Public Affairs

**PIRCUTI, Afghanistan** – A village elder and his sons saved a school and clinic after insurgents attempted to burn the infrastructure in the village of Pircuti, Paktika province, April 1.

The school, which was constructed by the Swedish government in 1996, educates more than 1,100 children from the village and surrounding areas.

Recently, the school's headmaster requested assistance to fix a leaking roof, and the provincial government, in coordination with Coalition forces, replaced the flat roof with a pitched roof to prevent leaking.

Villagers told Coalition forces that 20 – 25 attackers broke into the school in the middle of the night and chased away a teacher who was on guard.

The insurgents then gathered books, chairs, desks, computers and the school's generator, piled the items in the center of the school and set them on fire. They left the school to burn and moved to the village's immunization clinic; which was still under construction.

Villagers also said that the insurgents doused the wooden window



**Pircuti village elder, Zarif, stands with his eldest son Hazkhim April 12. Zarif and his three oldest sons fought off more than 20 insurgents who attempted to burn down Pircuti's school and health clinic. (U.S. Army courtesy photo)**

frames with gasoline and set them on fire. By this time, villagers had alerted the area's security commander and village elder, Mr. Zarif.

Mr. Zarif, along with his three eldest sons, surprised the insurgents at the clinic. A fire-fight ensued, and Zarif and his family fought off the insurgents.

There was no apparent injury to either group. The attackers abandoned the site, and Zarif put out the fire at the clinic while teachers quelled the fire at the school.

Despite the attack on the school, classes resumed the next day.

"I was concerned about the clinic and school; I just wanted the attackers to leave us alone," said Zarif. "We don't want the insurgents coming to our village and destroying our property. The clinic and school are important to our village."

"Thanks to the rapid and valiant efforts of the village residents to counter this insurgent threat, the insurgents' attack had only limited success," said Army Lt. Col. Frank Morrison, Combined Task Force Rugged civil military officer assisting Pircuti village. "By attempting to destroy the school, the insurgents are trying to undermine the Afghan government's efforts to provide an education to their youth and health care to their citizens."

The Afghan government, in coordination with Coalition forces, plans to replace and repair the damaged supplies and infrastructure at both the clinic and school.



**Destroyed computer monitors litter the floor of a school in Pircuti, Paktika province. More than 20 insurgents attempted to burn the school and health clinic April 1, but were stopped by Zarif, a Pircuti village elder, and his three oldest sons, who fought them off. (U.S. Army courtesy photo)**

# Private receives Purple Heart, CIB

By Army Capt. Elizabeth Casebeer  
Task Force Cincinnatus Public Affairs

**BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan** – Army Pvt. Joseph Miner graduated Advanced Individual Training at Fort Benning, Ga., shortly before Christmas 2007 and reported to his Guam Army National Guard Unit, Alpha Company, 1-294th Infantry, which was scheduled to deploy here to Afghanistan shortly thereafter.

After pre-deployment training at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, the 22-year-old infantryman deployed in February.

Miner, who is stationed at Forward Operating Base Ghazni, was manning an M-240 machine gun in the turret of a security vehicle. He was supporting a six-day combat patrol escorting “lowboys,” flat trailers often used to move heavy equipment like Humvees and tanks from place to place.

Late on the second day, April 14, Miner’s team was setting up lookout towers and bedding down for the night when they heard a report on the radio of a jingle truck receiving small-arms fire. Jingle trucks are large trucks brightly painted with scenes from the Koran and Afghan or Islamic culture and often decorated with bells.

Miner’s unit rolled out to investigate the incident. Reportedly, several insurgents attempted to hijack the jingle truck and failed.

According to other reports, about twelve suspected Taliban were involved in the attempted hijacking and subsequent shooting. Two were shot by Coalition soldiers and Afghan National Police.

The two injured insurgents ran away from the scene, while the remaining attackers hopped onto motorcycles and sped away. Coalition forces and the ANP followed the motorcycle tracks off the hardball road into a small bazaar.

Upon arriving at the bazaar, the soldiers and ANP members took fire from an unidentified location. The ANP personnel quickly spotted the insurgents and fired rocket-propelled grenades at their location.

That’s when Miner felt what he described as a sharp punch in his rib that stung a little but didn’t really hurt all that much.

“I immediately ducked into my turret and told the driver I’d been shot,” Miner said.

The driver, who was a little shaken, immediately contacted their home unit over the radio.

“They all continued to fight back and the squad leader made a decision to get his guys out of the kill zone due to overwhelming fires from the enemy,” said Army Capt. David P. Santos Jr., Alpha Company commander.

“In my vehicle, there was myself, the gunner; the driver, Spc. Gary Santos; the truck commander; and my NCO, Sgt. Dell Alvarez, who held pressure to the wound to prevent further bleeding,” said Miner, who said he expected to feel certain symptoms he’d learned often occurred to gunshot wound victims. “I wasn’t dozing off, and I wasn’t coughing up blood, so I knew it would be okay.”

According to Santos, the team conducted a short halt to

check on Miner.

“At that time, they again began to receive small-arms fire and they fought their way out of it again and continue to the FOB,” Santos said.

While returning to FOB Ghazni, the humvee Miner was riding in overheated and the team had to switch vehicles, yet Miner didn’t panic.

“Being with my fellow Soldiers, I wasn’t worried; I knew everything was going to be alright,” said Miner.

Santos agreed. “If they didn’t react the way they did, Pvt. Miner’s situation could have been worse than it is today,” he said.

The round traveled through Miner’s right arm, exited out his tricep, and lodged itself near his ribcage.

“Miner’s equipment, especially the DAPS, was key in slowing the bullet down from penetrating through Pvt. Miner,” said Santos. “The Army gives us a lot of equipment to protect us from enemy fire, and many times it is uncomfortable but it does its job.”

DAPS or Deltoid and Axillary Protectors, are an added component to the Interceptor Body Armor that provides additional protection from fragments and projectiles to the upper arm and underarm areas.

“All my Soldiers understand the importance of the equipment we have been issued with and we will not trade Soldier comfort for Soldier safety,” said Santos. “My only advice on this is to wear it all because it will save your life.”

Miner will retain the round near his ribs until it works its way closer to the surface. Doctors said it was too risky to attempt to remove it, and this is a common course of action with gunshot wound victims. It is unclear how long it will take for the round to surface, but Miner is not worried. He’s more worried about when he will return to duty.

“Private Miner is a very quiet and hard working Soldier,” said Santos. “He does not complain about anything you ask him to do and is extremely dedicated to his fellow Soldiers and his job.”

Miner received a Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman Badge the day after he was wounded.



**Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, Regional Command-East and Coalition forces commander, presents Army Pvt. Joseph Miner a Purple Heart April 15 at Craig Joint Theater Hospital. Miner received a Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman Badge for his actions April 14 near Forward Operating Base Ghazni. (U.S. Army photo)**

# Small Rewards Program pays big dividends in insurgent weapons finds

*Courtesy of Combined Joint Task Force-101 Public Affairs*

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** – An Afghan man assisted Afghan National Security Forces and Coalition Forces in uncovering more than 325 pieces of ammunition, when he led them to a weapons cache in a cave in Northern Afghanistan, April 13.

According to a Coalition soldier who participated in the ANSF-led mission, the cave was “very effectively covered up” and required a great deal of digging to get to the entrance. Inside, the cave opened up to reveal neat stacks of unburied munitions in almost pristine condition. The combined force confiscated some of the munitions and destroyed the rest in place.

The man will receive a monetary reward for the information he provided, as part of the Small Rewards Program.

ANSF-led forces have considerable success with the SRP.

Approximately \$65,000 was paid to individuals who provided information, resulting in locating and destroying weapons caches throughout Afghanistan.

With the help of intelligence reporting and local villages, the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, Afghan Commandos and Coalition forces were able to locate or destroy more than 7,000 enemy weapon systems, including rocket-propelled grenades, land mines, rifles and various types of ammunitions.



**Afghan National Security Forces and Coalition Forces uncover 109 Chinese and Russian 82mm mortars in a cave in Northern Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo)**

## Insurgents destroy Afghan school in Faroq

*Courtesy of Combined Joint Task Force-101 Public Affairs*

**BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan** – Insurgents blew up a school built by Afghan citizens and sponsored by Coalition forces in Farouq, Pakitka Province, April 3.

School was not in session and no one was hurt in the blast.

Afghan National Police responded to the incident and began an investigation, talking with villagers and collecting evidence.

Villagers told the police and Coalition forces that a man with his face veiled exited a taxi in front of the

school. The detonation occurred approximately twenty minutes after the taxi departed.

On multiple occasions, insurgents in Afghanistan have destroyed schools and threatened to murder teachers in an attempt to undermine Afghan government efforts to provide a better education for Afghan youth.

“Last year, we lost 220 students and teachers in the violence,” said Hamid Elmi, an Afghan education spokesman.

The Afghan Ministry of Education and Coalition forces plan to build more than 1,100 schools in 2009.

## Weapons cache discovered, destroyed in Helmand Province

*Courtesy of Combined Joint Task Force-101 Public Affairs*

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** – Coalition forces disrupted Taliban weapons-facilitation operations April 3 during an operation in Helmand province in which a number of weapons and Improvised Explosive Device materials were seized.

Coalition forces conducted a search of compounds in the Garmsir District. They were targeting a Taliban insurgent associated with weapons-facilitation operations, including the procurement and smuggling of various types of small-arms, munitions, fuses and explosives.

Coalition forces discovered multiple small-arms, rockets, rocket-propelled grenades, large caliber rounds and Improvised Explosive Device materials in what initially looked to be an abandoned compound. All items were destroyed on-site to protect innocent civilians and prevent the items’ use by extremist forces.



**Afghan National Police and Coalition forces investigate the ruins of a school blown up by insurgents April 3 in Farouq, Pakitka Province. No one was hurt in the blast and ANP are conducting an investigation. The school was built by Afghan citizens and opened in August 2007. (U.S. Army courtesy photo)**

# 101st Soldiers visit village for the first time since Soviet occupation

Story and photos by  
Army Pfc. Scott Davis  
CJTF-101 Public Affairs

Soldiers from 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Division Special Troops Battalion conducted the first foot patrol in Qalehyegolay village, directly outside Bagram Air Field, in 20 years, April 12, according to Afghan Col. Crolam Myjtabe Quais, the Afghan National Police chief for Parwan province.

The intention of the patrol was to meet with village leaders near BAF and create a working relationship between the community and the U.S. military.

“My Soldiers were extremely motivated and well disciplined,” said Army 1st Lt. Michael Skuski, platoon leader for Entry Control Point 1 platoon, Headquarters and Support Company, 101st DSTB. “They executed the patrol almost flawlessly.”

Army Capt. Stan Goligoski, HSC commander, went on the patrol to meet with the village elders face-to-face and learn more about their needs.

“We want to reach out to the community for them to understand we



One of the leaders of Qalehyegolay village outside the gates of Bagram Air Field discusses village needs with Soldiers of the 101st Division Special Troops Battalion, April 12.

are in this together,” said Goligoski. “They provide us information and we provide them with necessities; it’s a great relationship.

“At first, we felt like we were infringing on their area,” said Goligoski

after being welcomed, “we will continue to do this.

The village members took in the Soldiers and offered tea, milk and cookies. Once Goligoski and the village leaders introduced each other, explained their needs and offered assistance to one another, the Soldiers thanked them and headed back to BAF.

“As we were walking out, the entire village came out and was there to see us off,” said Skuski.

Overall, the mission was a success for Goligoski, Skuski and their troops.

“The reception from the people was phenomenal,” said Goligoski. “I’m looking forward to working with the surrounding villages after a reception like that.”

The Soldiers plan to visit Qalehyegolay and other villages surrounding BAF in the near future, to bring humanitarian assistance and medical supplies to the people who are their neighbors.



A Soldier from the 101st Division Special Troops Battalion waves to Afghans as he and other Soldiers conduct a foot patrol in Qalehyegolay village outside the gates of Bagram Air Field, April 12. The Soldiers are the first to conduct a foot patrol in Qalehyegolay village in 20 years.

# Special Forces bring Afgh



Afghan elementary school children from Jan Qadam School wait patiently for the beginning of their first video teleconference with students from the U.S., April 16. Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan facilitated a video teleconference between elementary school children from Bagram, Afghanistan, and children from Calvert City Elementary School in Calvert City, Ky., on Bagram Air Field.



Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Marie Schult (Combined Joint Task Force-101 Public Affairs)

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Elementary school children from the U.S. and Afghanistan met face to face April 16, over video teleconference facilitated by the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, as part of a partnership program and cultural exchange.

CJSOTF-A worked with village elders, teachers, parents and students of the Jan Qadam Elementary School, outside the gates of Bagram Air Field, to make the school a more effective center of education. Coalition troops were able to supply more than 1,200 students with notebooks, pens, pencils, backpacks, rulers and glue, to get them started on a good school year, with the help of Calvert City elementary school in Calvert City, Kentucky,

The Jan Qadam students used a conference room on Bagram Air Field, while the Calvert City students used a conference room at Fort Campbell, Ky.

Young Afghan girls, wearing black dresses and white scarves, excitedly whispered to each other about the pretty, colorful shirts and long loose hair of their American counterparts. The Afghan boys, dressed similar to any American child, with jeans, shirts and baseball caps, fidgeted as they waited their turn to talk and answer questions.

One of the highlights of the conference was when a young, confident Afghan boy stood up and read a letter he wrote to the American students in almost perfect English. At the end of the letter he said he

# an, U.S. students together

hoped the American students would try to learn Dari and talk to him some day.

“We have been enriched by this program,” said Phyllis O’neill, Calvert City Elementary School Principal. O’neill said she encourages her students to do volunteer work and explore other cultures to gain an understanding of those cultures.

This is important for the U.S. students because it really shows them it’s not easy for other students to go to school and get an education, O’neill said.

“I appreciate all the students for sending these items,” said the Jan Qadam Headmaster. “We are relatively poor and all the kids here are really happy for the supplies.”

Most students wanted to know simple things about each other. They asked about school, choice of favorite foods, sports, animals and what activities they do during recess.

Some of the Afghan children tried to stump the Calvert students with riddles and they clapped joyfully when the answers came over the airwaves.

However, this is not the first communications these students have had. A few months ago, some of the Calvert City students wrote letters to the Jan Qadam students and their Afghan peers are in the process of writing them back.

According to a Coalition representative, the goal is for the relationship between these schools to continue in order to enrich all of the students and show the importance of education. The partnership is meant as an exchange that will continue for years; enriching the lives of both sets of students.



**ABOVE:** A young girl from Jan Qadam Elementary School talks to students from Calvert City Elementary school in Calvert City, Ky., over a video teleconference. **BELOW:** A young boy from Jan Qadam Elementary School reads his letter to students from Calvert City Elementary school in Calvert City, Ky., over a video teleconference.



# Retired 20th Special Forces Group Soldiers send aid to Afghanistan

*Courtesy of Combined Joint Task Force-101 Public Affairs*

Afghan National Security Forces, assisted by Coalition forces, distributed aid donated by the retired 20th Special Forces Group Soldiers to the Tarin Kowt Hospital in Oruzgan province, April 6.

The donation was made possible with the help of \$11,750 in funding, clothing donations, school supplies, the help of National Guard trucks, 20th Special Forces Group retirees and the coordination of current Special Forces Soldiers.

According to one of the event organizers, the money and supplies were mainly donated by U.S. citizens.

Retired 20th SFG Soldiers used the money to purchase blankets, school supplies, socks and winter clothing. Private companies also donated clothing and additional school supplies.

Once the supplies arrived in Afghanistan, members of the Afghan National Police assisted Coalition forces in distributing the goods.

Afghan National Police forces delivered the goods to the Tarin Kowt Hospital and met with Dr. Esa, the hospital's assistant director. The ANP explained that the supplies were gifts to the Afghan people from families and businesses in the United States.

The hospital will make announcements on the radio to inform the local village elders of the available aid.

The school supplies were presented to Ramatullah, the Tarin Kowt minister of education. He intends to distrib-



**Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan Soldiers distribute aid, donated by retired 20th Special Forces Group Soldiers, to the Tarin Kowt Hospital in Oruzgan province, Afghanistan, April 6. The donation was made possible with the help of \$11,750 in funding, clothing donations, school supplies and the help of National Guard trucks, 20th Special Forces Group retirees and the coordination of current Special Forces Soldiers. (U.S. Army courtesy photo)**

ute the supplies to all the schools in the province. He was pleased when informed there would be more shipments of school supplies for Oruzgan province.

Ramatullah thanked the ANP for their support and for the supplies.

## *West Point Military Academy Founders Day commemorated*

**Story and photo by Marine Staff Sgt. Luis P. Valdespino**  
*CSTC-A Public Affairs*

Army West Point Military Academy graduate Lt. Col. Scott Hamilton, chief of the National Military Academy of Afghanistan support team, and NMAA staff plant apple trees March 27 at the NMAA in commemoration of West Point Academy's annual Founder's Day celebration. Three trees were dedicated to the memory of three West Point graduates who were killed in Afghanistan during the past calendar year. The event was held shortly after NMAA students and staff celebrated the beginning of the academy's fourth academic year.



**Army Lt. Col. Scott Hamilton, chief of the National Military Academy of Afghanistan support team, and NMAA staff plant apple trees March 27 in commemoration of West Point Academy's annual Founder's Day celebration.**

# Soldiers celebrate spring break at Forward Operating Base Sharana

By Army Capt. Kenya V. Saenz  
Task Force Pacemaker  
Public Affairs

Soldiers from Task Force Pacemaker, out of Fort Lewis, Wash., celebrated spring with an organizational day, "Spring Break 2008!" Soldiers were relaxed, enjoyed live music, food and participated in a pie-eating contest.

Soldiers at Spring Break enjoyed live music from the 101st band, "Out of Uniform." They performed for the first time at FOB Sharana on April 10th. The band, led by Army Staff Sgt. Carlos Llanes from Miami, Fl. played everything from rock and hip-hop, to country and latin.

"Our mission changes when we are deployed," said Llanes. Instead of the Army Band doing ceremonies and historic events, we are here to support our troops and bring 'home' to them. I was surprised how

the chains of command had fun with the Soldiers and, for one moment, forget that we were in Afghanistan. This was a great opportunity to support our deployed Soldiers."

"I enjoyed putting on the show and having the crowd respond," said Army Spc. Jessica Krzmarzick, the lead female vocalist of "Out of Uniform." "It is a nice way to support troops."

"Affording the Soldiers of Task Force Pacemaker and other members of FOB Sharana a little down time at the 14th month in their deployment was a great morale booster," said Army Maj. James Delapp, the Task Force Pacemaker executive officer. "These Soldiers have worked extremely hard, constructing new facilities for Soldiers throughout RC-East, and deserved to let their hair down and have some fun.

Besides live music provided by the band, TF Pace-



Friendly competition was the main theme as things got a little messy while Soldiers participated in the pie eating contest during "Spring Break 2008" festival at FOB Sharana. (Courtesy photo)

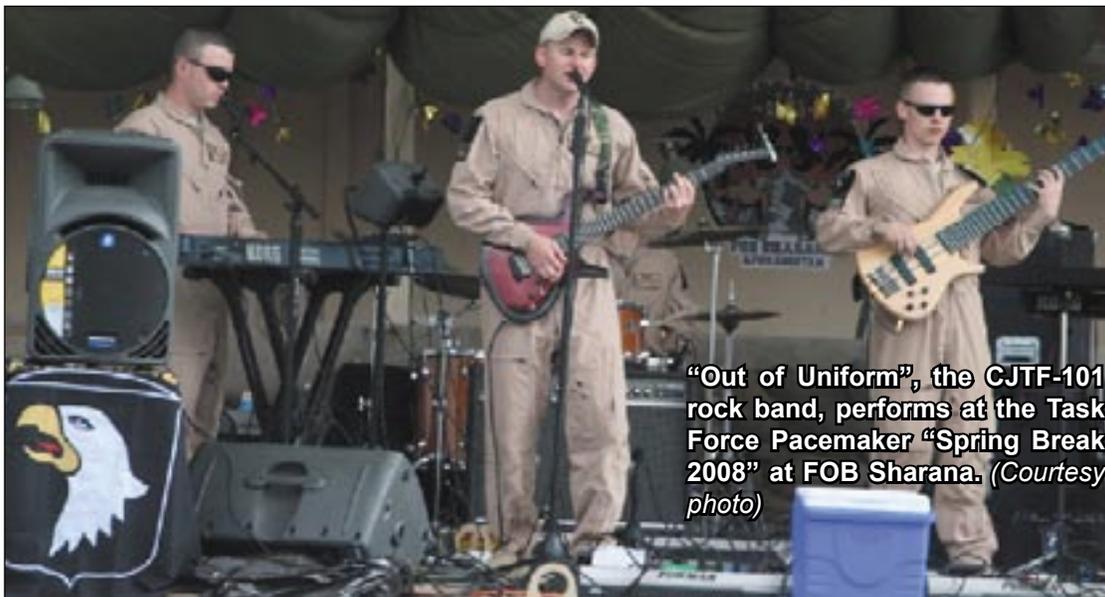
*"These Soldiers...deserved to let their hair down and have some fun."*

-Army Maj. James Dunlap

maker Soldiers also enjoyed the food, participated in a pie eating contest, played

flag football, soccer and launched softballs at a dunk booth where Soldiers had a chance to dunk their chain of command in cold water. Soldiers also enjoyed riding and taking pictures with a camel throughout the day.

Task Force Pacemaker provides general engineering services, assured mobility and survivability operations to Coalition forces in support of International Security Assistance Force and Afghanistan. The TF is getting ready to transition the mission to 62nd Engineer Battalion from Fort Hood, Texas, as they get ready to redeploy.



"Out of Uniform", the CJTF-101 rock band, performs at the Task Force Pacemaker "Spring Break 2008" at FOB Sharana. (Courtesy photo)

# Army recognizes military children

By Margaret McKenzie  
FMWRC Public Affairs

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – April marks a special month in the lives of military families.

The Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command joins the military community in recognizing April as the “Month of the Military Child,” a time to honor military Families and their children for the sacrifices they make and challenges they overcome every day of the year.

In 1986, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger recognized the importance of military children and their role in military Families when he established April as “Month of the Military Child” in a Defense Department commemoration.

Active-duty military families move



The Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command honors military children and the sacrifices they make and the challenges they overcome throughout April – “Month of the Military Child.” (U.S. Army photo)

often, uprooting children, changing schools and saying goodbye to friends. The children learn to adapt with each transition as they gain new experiences in their new environment.

“Sometimes we forget that military children ‘serve’ as a result of a parent’s military career,” Director of Army Child and Youth Services M.A.

Lucas said. “A military Family averages nine moves through a 20-year career, and in doing so, their children must say goodbye to friends, change schools and start all over again.”

Deployments are difficult for everyone involved, from Soldiers who are being deployed, to the children who are left behind, to the community of family and friends who must take on new responsibilities and provide support and services.

Military children undergo hardships and face many obstacles by having a parent deployed for long periods at a time. These children make sacrifices and serve their country as much as anyone in uniform. By doing their part quietly, they make their parents realize that what they do is just as important.

According to the “Month of the Military Child” web site, more than one million American children have at least one parent actively serving in the military.

Throughout the month of April, military communities hosted special programs and events to salute military children. These programs included festivals, tournaments, carnivals, health screening for children, youth talent shows and more.

In 2007, garrison events stressed the importance of providing quality services and supporting children. Families, installations, schools and communities have come together to provide a stable environment for children.

“We have found, in previous years, that we need to provide a balance between community and Child and Youth Services in-house activities,”

said Sally Haskell, chief of Child and Youth Services at Fort Belvoir, Va. “Both entities provide awareness to everyone about the importance of children in general, as well as emphasize the importance of spending time with children. We believe once parents are provided with training and appropriate options that they will make the right choices when interacting with their children and selecting activities for their families.”

Last year, installations, world-wide, celebrated children in different ways. Fort Belvoir filled the entire month of April with events and activities for both parents and children. They had a spaghetti dinner for more than 300 families, inaugurating a partnership with the Armed Services Young Men’s Christian Association and Operation Kid Comfort, coordinated with the libraries and schools to provide guest authors and readers to read to the children. Volunteers joined in by providing children quilts or pillows with pictures of deployed parents so children could “sleep with their Soldiers.”

“We have decided to continue with the programs that were most successful last year,” Haskell said. “Some of the programs include a free community spaghetti dinner, Parent University and our family fun day, as well as, crafts, stories and much more.

Child and Youth Services also partner with Army Community Services to recognize “Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month” during the month of April, Haskell said. She said that by doing that, they improve the success of both programs and attracts attention of the community and command to children and families.

“Every military child is a source of pride to all of us,” Lucas said. “We recognize children as the future of our nation and use the Month of the Military Child to let them know they are treasured and appreciated.”

The “Month of the Military Child” web site, <http://www.monthofthemilitarychild.com>, has arts and crafts projects, scrapbooking, journaling and more.

# Locks of Love

By Tech. Sgt. James Law  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – She had long hair all of her life, but, during a deployment here, she decided to donate 13 inches of it to Locks of Love.

“I never had short hair,” said Staff Sgt. Jenet Akerson, 451st Expeditionary Communications Flight Network Control Center technician. “I was raised in Hawaii; my mom has long hair, so it’s part of my heritage.”

Akerson said the decision was difficult to make, but one influenced by her admiration for her mother-in-law after learning she had alopecia. Alopecia is a condition of patchy hair loss, most noticeably on the scalp.

“I never would have even thought to do something like that had it not been for her being an influence in my life,” said. “She has a heart of gold and is the strongest woman I know, so really it was a dedication to her.”

She explained she wanted to be with her mother-in-law when she cut her hair, but decided to cut it while deployed because she wanted to donate healthy hair and the water here was damaging hers.

Although she was unable to be with her mother-in-law at the time, her husband was deployed with her and cut her hair.

“It meant a lot to be apart of it and to actually be the one to cut her hair,” said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Akerson, 451st ECF planner. “I know (from) being around her family the heritage with her hair and cutting it was a big deal.”

Jenet Akerson said it took her awhile to learn how to work with short hair, but it is something she will get use to.

“We’ve decided that as long as my hair grows healthy, as soon as it gets up to a decent length, we’re going to cut it off every year,” said Jenet Akerson. “I don’t color my hair,



**Staff Sgt. Jenet Akerson, 451st Expeditionary Communications Flight Network Control Center technician, holds 13 inches of her hair she recently cut off to donate to Locks of Love. Akerson is deployed from the 435th Communications Squadron, Ramstein Air Base, Germany. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Akerson)**



**Staff Sgt. Jenet Akerson, 451st Expeditionary Communications Flight Network Control Center technician, looks at her new hair style. Akerson donated 13 inches of her hair to Locks of Love. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester)**

so I guess they will have some white streaks in it when I get older.”

Jeremy Akerson explained it was coincidence and luck they were both deployed at the same time to the same location, especially since they have not been stationed together since December 2006.

The couple met May 2005 at Ramstein Air Base, Germany where they were stationed together. The two were married in September 2007 after he was reassigned to Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas in December 2006.

“It has put a different view on my deployment,” said Jeremy Akerson. “Time has just caught on fire and I don’t want to leave because I am leaving my wife.”

The two are hoping to be reunited on a joint assignment in March 2009 after Jenet Akerson meets the time on station requirement and can be reassigned.

## Photos From the Field



Pfc. Rebecca Ploharz, a medic assigned to Task Force Med on Bagram Air Field, gives a young Afghan girl a dose of anti-worm medication while her mother and sister look on. The children also received a month's supply of vitamins to help supplement their diet. TF Med and elements from other BAF units conducted a Veterinary and Medical Outreach Operation in Tag Ab Valley April 19. Ploharz is deployed from Fort Sam Houston, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Elizabeth Casebeer)



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*Freedom Watch Afghanistan?*

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**Soldiers from the Afghanistan National Army display skills in both weapons and communications, during a demonstration of their capabilities in February at Camp Joyce, Afghanistan. The ANA man four observation points in Camp Joyce as well as running missions in the surrounding areas. (U.S. Army photo by SPC Carter, Jordan)**



**Airman 1st Class Ryan Amos, 451st Air Expeditionary Group Air Transportation journeyman, drives a 10k all-terrain forklift in the Air Terminal Operations Center outbound yard. Airman Amos, who is deployed from 437th Aerial Port Squadron, Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., was recently selected as a 'Warrior of the Week' for his outstanding work. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester)**



April 28, 2008

# Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN



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