

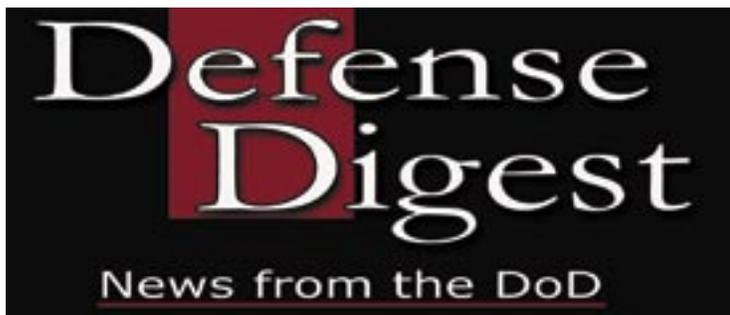
May 12, 2008

Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN



Shock Trauma Platoon Page 8



Afghan army making progress; police force needs work, U.S. general says

By Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

Afghanistan's growing army is starting to take the lead in battles against Taliban insurgents, but the country's constabulary still requires work, the U.S. commander in charge of training and equipping those forces said April 18.

The pace of Afghan army development has been "quite remarkable in terms of their ability to field a force," said Army Maj. Gen. Robert W. Cone, chief of Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan.

In addition, Afghan soldiers have been taking the lead in most of the major operations against the enemy over the past three months, Cone told Pentagon reporters during a satellite news conference.

"This is critically important, because the Afghans learn by doing, and when they're out in front, it reinforces the classroom learning that they've had on staff planning, anticipating and synchronization," he explained.

Cone took command of CSTC-A on July 16, 2007. Based on Camp Eggers in Kabul, the command's mission is to train, equip and advise the Afghan National Army and national police force.

The ANA now has about 63,000 soldiers on duty and in training, Cone reported, with a projected force-growth to about 76,000 troops by the end of this year. The ANA's strength is expected to reach 80,000 soldiers in 2009, he said.

Today, the ANA has fielded 12 of 14 authorized brigades and 33 infantry battalions, Cone said. Last month, the Afghans certified one of their infantry battalions as trained and ready to conduct independent operations.

"This is a positive milestone for this relatively young army, and it says something about the leadership of this specific unit and the commitment of the Afghan National Army and of its leaders," he said.

The ANA didn't have any commando battalions at this time last year. Today, however, the Afghans have trained and stood up four commando units that are the equivalent of the U.S. Army's elite Ranger light-infantry units. A fifth Afghan commando battalion is slated to come on line this summer, he said.

Cone praised the fighting spirit of Afghanistan's soldiers.

"I would tell you that the Afghan fighter is in my view, a top-ranked individual; this is a martial people, they are very good at fighting at the individual level," he said. Afghan troop leaders, he noted, are being taught how to incorporate command-and-control, communications, as well as, military logistics systems.

Meanwhile, Afghan troops are very happy with ongoing deliveries of M-16 rifles and armored Humvee trucks to replace old or obsolete equipment, he observed.

"We are very optimistic that this summer, we will resolve all of their equipment shortages," Cone said, in time for anticipated increased confrontation with Taliban insurgents with the coming of warmer weather.

However, training Afghanistan's police remains a work in progress, Cone acknowledged, citing past resource priorities including the availability of trainers.

"The shortfall in trainers has specifically affected the police [training] program ... we can only cover down on about 30 percent of the police districts in Afghanistan," Cone explained. The shortage of trainers, he said, has prolonged the development and reform of the police.

"To date, we've been able to meet the requirements for the Afghan National Army," said Cone. "That was our first priority and that has been covered by a combination of U.S. and NATO trainers. But, the police program is clearly where the shortfall is felt most."

The Focused District Development program that was launched in October targets deficiencies in police conduct and performance, he said.

"This strategy is aimed at reforming the way that policing is done at the district and community levels," he explained. Seven police districts have completed the program's eight weeks of formal training and those officers have returned to duty under the mentorship of U.S. trainers.

Cone's organization is working with the Afghan Ministry of Interior to train the police. The goal, he said, is to reform 52 of the more than 300 Afghan police districts by the end of 2008. He estimated it will take about five years to complete the program.

"It is important to note that the police are the 'face' of government to the Afghan people, and for so long, that face has been associated with corruption and unprofessionalism," Cone observed.

"Focused District Development is the first real, major step in breaking this cycle of corruption and [to] provide Afghans a professional, well-led and well-trained police force," he said.

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COVER: Members of the Shock
Trauma Platoon attached to 2nd Bat-
talion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine
Division, deployed to Qalat to assist
Romanian and U.S. Army doctors with
the higher volume of patients it has re-
ceived due to increased violence. (U.S.
Marine Corps photo by U.S. Navy Hospi-
talian Dan K. Marker) See related story
on page 8.

BACK COVER: A Soldier from the
Headquarters Company 2-503rd RCP
surveys their area for possible impro-
vised explosive devices while on a route
clearance patrol outside Asadabad, Af-
ghanistan. The soldiers have to be in a
constant state of readiness to combat
the tactics of the Al-Qaeda terrorists.
(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jordan Carter)

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Airmen, Soldiers honor fallen comrade

By Air Force Capt. Toni Tones
455th AEW Public Affairs

Airmen and Soldiers from Bagram honored an Airman, warrior and leader who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country, with a memorial ceremony on Bagram Airfield, May 1.

Senior Airman Jonathan A.V. Yelner, a convoy driver assigned to the Kapisa and Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team, died April 29, near Tag Ab, Kapisa province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device.

Yelner, a B1-B weapons load crew member assigned to the 28th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., volunteered to deploy and serve as a Humvee driver for the Army as part of a PRT whose missions are security, reconstruction and governance for the government and people of Afghanistan.

“A young, but mature man who understood that freedom is not free, and wanted to make a difference however he could...a warrior who understood the risks inherent in the ground combat environment, yet raised his hand volunteering to serve in that crucible,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Bill Andersen, Kapisa and Parwan PRT commander.

“His mother and father relayed to me that Jonathan was ‘thrilled to be with you guys’ and considered it an honor to be a member of the Provincial Reconstruction Team,” said Andersen. “Let me tell you the honor was mine and the PRT’s to have Jonathan on this team...his contributions were many, varied and made a difference.”

Army 1st Sgt. Felipe Richards remembered meeting Yelner for the first time when the team came together for training earlier this year at Fort Bragg, N.C.

“He was a young, smart, vibrant and full-of-life person who brought a smile to my face,” said Richards. “He once asked me what I would take away from this experience, since I have deployed several times. I told him it was simple; ‘changing lives’ and he said, like ‘making a difference.’ So that became our motto ‘Making a difference beyond the

Berm.’ You (Jonathan) can be truly proud of the difference you made and we will continue the mission.”

Army Capt. Casey McCausland, Kapisa South Civil Affairs Team leader echoed those comments.

“Yelner strongly believed in what were doing down at FOB Kutschbach, and he loved going out on missions and making a difference,” said McCausland. “Yelner never thought twice about going out...we even gave him the opportunity to not go on some missions, but he would look at us like we were crazy and insist that he was going. Yelner was a warrior and will be greatly missed by many.”



U.S. Air Force photo by Army Sgt. Kevin M. Gibson



I am an American Airman.

I am a warrior.

I have answered my nation's call.

I am an American Airman.

My mission is to fly, fight, and win.

I am faithful to a proud heritage,

A tradition of honor,

And a legacy of valor.

I am an American Airman,

Guardian of freedom and justice,

My nation's sword and shield,

Its sentry and avenger.

I defend my country with my life.

I am an American Airman:

Wingman, leader, warrior.

I will never leave an Airman behind,

I will never falter,

And I will not fail.

Afghan, Coalition forces provide medical care in Kandahar

Story and photos courtesy Combined Joint Task Force-101

Afghan and Coalition medical personnel provided free medical care to local citizens in Kandahar Province, April 21.

A joint Afghan and Coalition medical team conducted medical screenings and provided routine treatment to



more than 490 local citizens, including 230 children.

Working with local leaders, the team set up a temporary treatment facility at an Afghan National Civil Order Police station in Kandahar City. The team treated citizens suffering from various health conditions, such as back and joint pain, stomach ailments, common colds and skin disorders. They also provided citizens with free clothing, blankets, first aid kits and school supplies.

“This was the most rewarding mission I have personally



been involved with since I’ve been here,” said one Soldier who participated in the medical treatment. “I saw the reactions of mothers as their children received necessary care, and it made me think that we all just want what’s best for our families.”

As a safety measure, Afghan and Coalition forces escorted the medical team.

Detained Helmand province militant identified

Story and photos courtesy Combined Joint Task Force-101

Coalition Forces recently identified an extremist detained during an operation, conducted April 1, to disrupt militant operations in Helmand province.

The extremist, identified as Hajji Abdullah, was apprehended during an operation in the Kajiki District targeting Abdul Haq -- a Taliban sub-commander who was killed during the operation.

Abdullah, 45, was a weapons smuggler and militant transporter under the command of Abdul Haq. He was also known to use his residence as a safe house and storage for weapons.

CF recovered a weapons cache consisting of several AK-47 assault rifles, ammunition vests and associated ammunition during the operation in Abdullah’s house and a vehicle parked outside.



Outside the comfort zone: 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit goes outside the wire

By Marine Cpl. Randall A. Clinton

24th MEU Public Affairs

Condition one on first load. It feels surreal as the command echoes over the radio. The Marines understand the words, but are still coming to terms with its meaning as they feed rounds into their weapons. There is a new sense of urgency in the way the driver grips the steering wheel. The passengers stare out windows and the radio operator strains to hear each new message. Each piece of trash blowing around the Afghanistan countryside is an improvised explosive device, each movement of the locals is suspect, each boarded up window hides a sniper – the mind plays awful tricks on a man. All vehicles stop. The radio mutters “possible,” as in possible IED. Marines don’t flinch, but in this moment you realize the frailty of life. As soon as you process that “possibility” the convoy continues.

Somehow the farther out the vehicles travel the easier it is to digest, anxiety turns to alertness – this is outside the wire.

“It was like, I have no idea what is out there,” recounted Pfc. Conan Hudson, turret gunner, Personal Security Detachment, Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, NATO International Security Assistance Force. “I have no idea what is going to happen.”

From his seat he saw it all transpire, his mind already racing with possibilities.

Skewed reality

Marines have unique perspectives about life and its limitations. They are ‘born’ at recruit training, reciting the names and accomplishments of heroes -- Dan Daly’s stamina, Chesty Puller’s bravado and Jason Dunham’s sacrifice. So when they talk about driving into a war-zone to practice firing machine guns, their perspective of danger is slightly skewed.

The built-up anxiety of a seven-month pre-deployment training cycle, coupled with weeks spent preparing for missions, unleashed fury on Hudson. Once outside the gate it was “exactly what I’ve seen” and yet completely unreal.

Perched atop an armored humvee in a gun turret, Hudson did the basics, “I made sure my ballistic shield was clear and my weapon was good to go. That’s all I had on my mind. As long as that was good, I’m good.”

These were the first 24th MEU Marines leaving the wire and Hudson was in front.

“It is extra scary because you are the first one who sees everything,” he said. “Visibility is bad; there is dust, especially for the gunner. You have no windows, no shields, you just have to take it all in and look out for these (insurgents) guys.”

He was searching the vast Afghan desert for everything and anything.

“I had like super hearing and super sight,” he said.

This was different from every other humvee ride Hudson had ever been a part of... this was real. “It’s your life! Back there (home) no one is shooting at you,” he said, explaining his amplified awareness.

But he is here not “back there,” and his vision is essential for more than just himself. “I’m the eyes for the whole convoy. I’m the first one, so I’ve got to look out for anyone on the side of the road, IEDs, potholes and wires.”

“Man, there are too many potholes,” he quipped, still feeling the bruises from being tossed around.

Hudson’s vantage point allowed him to view the terrain, scanning for danger, but that’s not what he saw.

“At first it’s like, you’ve got ears and eyes and all you are thinking about is bombs, guns, enemy, enemy, enemy; when you see those kids you are like, wow,” Hudson said. “It changes your mind, you have to stay focused no matter what.”

See *Marine Convoy* next week’s issue



Courtesy photo

335th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron pilot reaches 335th Mission, 1000th hour

By Senior Airman Daniel Delgado
455th AEW Public Affairs

Rewind 17 years to 1991. Then Air Force 1st Lt. Travis Willis flew his first combat sortie in an F-111F Aardvark on the first night of Operation Desert Storm.

Fast forward 1,000 combat hours to March 31, when aircrew and maintenance members of the 335th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron congratulated Air Force Lt. Col. Travis “Flak” Willis. The F-15E Strike Eagle weapon systems officer achieved an aviation milestone on an Operation Enduring Freedom mission over the skies of Afghanistan, which happened to be his 335th mission.

From his first combat hour to his 1000th, Willis credits his success to two things: training and maintenance.

“The way we train day to day is the key to our success in war,” said Willis. “It takes about 2.5 years to train an F-15E pilot or WSO to be combat ready. We have folks on the deployment that just completed their training and are mission ready. I know for a fact because I see them flying over in OEF doing a fantastic job. Our success depends heavily on Air Education and Training Command teaching them their basic flying skills and earning their wings.”

The students then head to the 333rd Fighter Squadron and 334th Flying Squadron at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., where they’re taught to fly the F-15E Strike Eagle.

“The job these two training squadrons do impact the entire F-15E fleet across the world,” said Willis. “Finally, the young F-15E pilots and WSO’s are trained on how to employ the F-15E in combat by the 335th. In fact, the pilots and WSO’s today are better prepared than when I was a young WSO.”

It’s also the maintainers who keep today’s aging aircraft in the air and in the fight. Throughout his career, Willis has always been impressed by Air Force maintainers.

“Even though our jets are starting to get a little long in the tooth, you know

they are the best maintained aircraft in the world,” he said. “The crew chiefs, back shops and weapons loaders are all top-notch and have pride in their jobs. They go into combat with us every day. You have absolute faith in your maintainers and the aircraft.”

Previously, Willis was the VT-10 Wildcats Skipper, or squadron commander, at Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla. VT-10 is a joint Navy and Air Force squadron that trains officers to



Courtesy photo

be WSO’s and naval flight officers for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.

“It’s brilliant; some of the young WSO’s I trained two years ago in VT-10 are flying here today with the 335th Chiefs, and it is great to see what a wonderful job they are doing,” Willis said.

“Flying in the Air Force is open to anyone and we need the best and brightest,” he added. “A lot of people don’t imagine themselves flying jets in the Air Force. All you need is the desire, drive and focus...the Air Force will provide the training and the opportunity.”

Air Force Lt. Col. James Jinnette, 335th EFS commander, appreciates Willis’ influence in his unit.

“We’re a very young squadron, with 22 first-time deployers,” said Jinnette. “Flak’s incredible breadth of combat experience, gained over nearly two decades and multiple tours in two aircraft types, really inspires our aviators at all experience levels. He’s a fantastic instructor, and I credit him with helping many of our youngest officers achieve

remarkable things here in Afghanistan. They have been exceptional, and it’s due in no small part to his leadership.”

Willis has flown combat missions in Operations Desert Storm, Provide Comfort, Northern Watch, Deny Flight, Allied Force, Southern Watch and Enduring Freedom.

This wealth of experience has given Willis a deep understanding of the importance of air power in the combat zone.

“We bring massive firepower into the fight quickly, with precision and flexibility,” he said. “If needed, we can strike deep, well beyond the ground forces ability to project power or engage the enemy in conjunction with the ground forces. My hat goes off to the great job the folks on the ground are doing here in Afghanistan. The combined air-ground team is very effective.”

Over the years, Willis has not lost his enthusiasm for his job and looks forward to deployments.

“Everyone should want to deploy, regardless of your job,” he added. “Some of my best memories in the Air Force are from deployments.”

History of combat flight

From the onset of military aviation, significant achievements have been recognized. Beginning with the First World War, flyers credited with 5 kills or more were awarded the designation of “Ace”. This tradition continues to this day.

During World War II, due to the intense danger of the job, 25 combat missions was the milestone for bomber crews. The movie *Memphis Belle* was made as a document to such an event.

The Vietnam War created a new mission, new challenges, and the advent of “100 Sorties” patches.

Current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq are producing heroes of their own kind. Modern day Aircrews are quietly and bravely flying their way into the history books.

2/7: 'Making a difference'

Shock Trauma Platoon offers enhanced, life-saving capabilities

By Marine Cpl. Ray Lewis

Combat Correspondent 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division

An increase in violence in the southern part of Afghanistan between Taliban forces and the Afghanistan National Police has led to a higher volume of patients requiring advanced trauma treatment in Qalat, Afghanistan.

Many of these patients are critically wounded and transported here for treatment by the U.S. Army's 2nd Forward Surgical Team. Army surgeons here operate alongside Romanian doctors on a rotational six-month schedule.

As the numbers of patients continue to grow in this isolated area, military commanders were acutely aware of the danger that the medical staff could easily become inundated beyond its capabilities. If this were to occur it would require patients to be medically evacuated to the next higher level of care which in turn, would delay care further.

This concern led to an ideal opportunity for the Shock Trauma Platoon of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, to do what it does best – save lives.

"We've been here a week, and we're already making a difference," said Navy Cmdr. James L. Hancock, who was selected by the Bureau of Medicine to lead the elite group of medical professionals. Given very short notice, Hancock was pulled from his duties as the emergency medicine department head at the naval hospital at Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, N.C., to incorporate a shock trauma unit at the battalion level for distributive operations in a combat environment – something that had never been done before.

Upon 2/7's arrival in Afghanistan, Hancock immediately employed his STP to meet this emerging requirement in Qalat, while the rest of the battalion was in transition to start operations.

"It was really a win-win situation for us and them," said Navy Lt. John T. Spannuth, an STP trauma nurse who supported the medical staff here through both STP rotations. "We acted as a combat multiplier for the Army's medical capabilities. During our time at FOB Lagman, we increased their medical capabilities for the Coalition to sustain ongoing combat operations."

"The transition was seamless," Spannuth said. "The whole 'One team; One fight'

concept was evident with complete professional support. The 2nd FST truly welcomed us with open arms.

The STP worked side-by-side with Army surgeons, treating numerous critically wounded casualties. One patient was a 12-year-old boy who was caught in the crossfire between the ANP and Taliban forces.

The boy was wounded by a bullet that went through his stomach and liver, and then exited through his right arm. His chances of surviving the injury if not treated were remote at best, Hancock said. The STP's most immediate life saving procedures to stop the bleeding or bleeding to death. Ultimately, he received surgery from FST-2, after which he was transferred to a hospital with a full recovery expected.

It's moments such as this that highlight the importance of the STP to extend the "golden hour." The golden hour is the time between injury to the time the patient receives treatment.

Studies have shown that a trauma patient has a 50% chance of survival if they reach the "Docs" in the first 60 minutes. The STP is capable of extending the time necessary to respond, treat and transport the patient to advanced care. The STP is capable of extending the time necessary to respond, treat and transport the patient and preventing them from going into shock.

This gives "wounded warriors" a better chance of survival. "This can be a logistical nightmare – getting a patient from the point of injury to medical stabilization, to a facility where they can receive prolonged care, our nurses can function as a team." Lt. Tony A. Wade, an STP trauma nurse at the 2nd FST Hospital. "This feature is an added benefit to the STP's resuscitation during transport which enhances the patient's survival."

While the STP will make the necessary adjustments to the current level, the process has turned out to be quite successful.

"This is all new, uncharted territory for us," said Navy Lt. Officer Kelly E. Richardson, STP's leading trauma nurse. "To join the STP from Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, N.C. is an honor and a privilege." Richardson's experience and background.

"This is the first time we've worked with a Shock Trauma Platoon. I've worked with a lot of medical units, but we've never absorbed a shock trauma platoon," Richardson explained. "It's a challenge to scratch to develop plans and procedures that will work well with the Army's medical assets to the frontlines to allow them to receive the support and confidence necessary to sustain ongoing combat operations into harm's way."

The STP is comprised of two medical units, a physician's assistant and 14 medical personnel from military units around the world. The STP was on short notice to report to the 2nd FST Hospital at Twentynine Palms, California for training at Mojave Viper



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Navy Hospitalman Dan K. Marker

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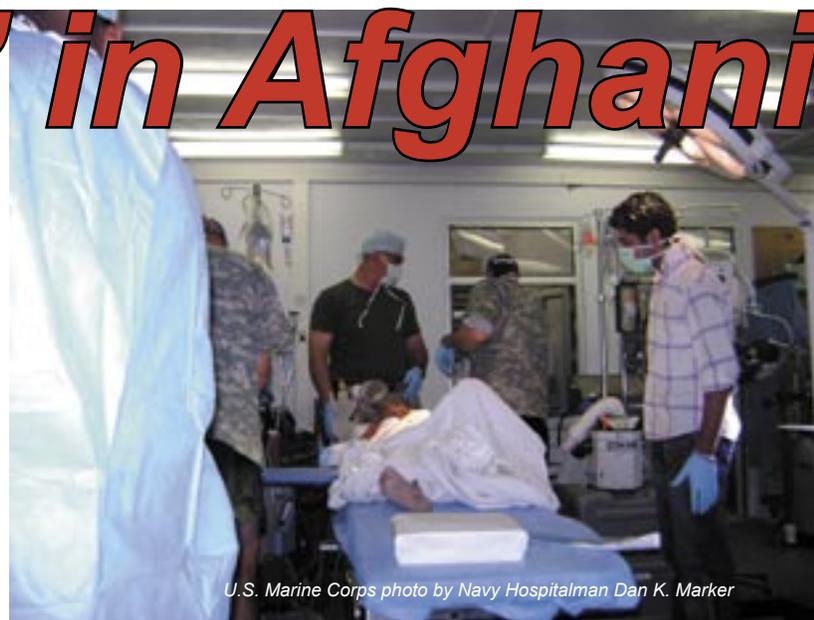
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of different division units, but
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d. “We've had to start from
procedures to establish proto-
an infantry unit spread over
loing is bringing more medical
w the Marines and Sailors the
ary to do their jobs as they go

o medical doctors, two nurses,
corpsmen chosen from various
ld. The platoon was organized
the Marine Corps Air Ground
e Palms, Calif., for pre-deploy-
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U.S. Marine Corps photo by Navy Hospitalman Dan K. Marker

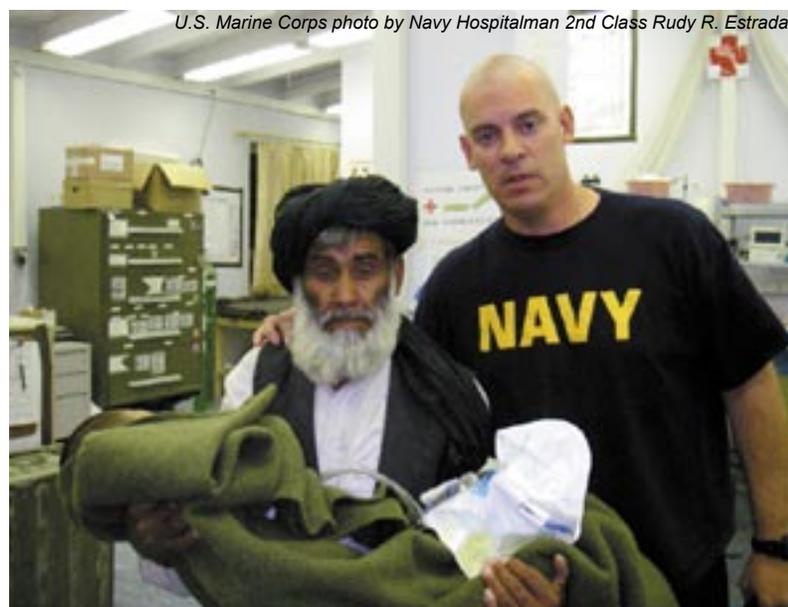
with the Marines and come into an environment such as this, you just get re-ener-
gized,” said Hancock, who is serving on his fourth deployment with the Marines. “It
just doesn't get any better than this. Anytime you get the opportunity to take a group
of Sailors into combat to support the Marines...I gotta' say there's no better job in
Navy medicine.”

Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Rick Hall was completely in favor of deploying
the STP and immediately rendered his support. While the trip would enable the STP
personnel to sharpen their skills of administering trauma care, it was yet another
“great” opportunity for Hall's Marines and Sailors to do something good for the Af-
ghan people.

“The message I want to send to the Afghan people is clear – We are here to help
you,” said Hall, expressing genuine sincerity in reaching out to Afghan residents.

“Our focus is on the people,” he explained. “We are trying to connect with as many
of the people as we can in a limited amount of time, and are following through on a
number of civil military operations projects to demonstrate our commitment to im-
proving their quality of life.”

The battalion, which deployed here in support of Operation Enduring Freedom,
was assigned the mission of mentoring and training the ANP to extend the Afghan
government's authority and influence during security, stability and regional develop-
ment – an assignment the commander doesn't take lightly.



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Navy Hospitalman 2nd Class Rudy R. Estrada

“Mojave Viper allowed us
to come together to plan the
operation and discuss how
the platoon would be em-
ployed,” Richardson said.
“The training was inval-
uable.”

Hancock agreed, adding
that he was quite proud of
his selection to lead the STP.

“In the United States, it
is our job as emergency med-
icine professionals to save
lives, but when you deploy

Although he is fully aware
of the dangers that lie ahead,
Hall said he embraced his mis-
sion and hopes everyone sees
the great things his Marines are
doing for the Afghan people.

“We're actually saving lives,
and the people are beginning
to see that we want to help
them,” said Hall, extending
his message to the opposition.
“We did not come here to fight
the Taliban. Instead, we want
them to come forward and lay
down their weapons so we can
continue to help the Afghan
people.” See *Shock* page 11

Afghan contractors, Provincial Reconstruction Team engineers work together to ensure quality construction

By Air Force Capt. Jillian Torango
Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team

More than 80 Afghan contractors participated in a workshop hosted by Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team engineers, April 16, at the Provincial Director of Communications building.

The engineers hold the annual workshop to discuss the Commanders Emergency Response Program, its contracting process and to present upgraded construction standards.

Engineers explained the project bidding process and presented new quality-control concepts and procedures. They used the forum as an opportunity to explain any contract process differences as well as any upgrades or improvements required for construction projects in the province.

“By working with and providing this information directly to the contractors, they’ll be able to better manage their projects,” said Air Force Capt. Kenneth McGinnis, deployed from Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D.

“They’ll have better situational awareness and will be better able to ensure that they provide the best project possible,” he said.

The engineers guarantee they get the contractors who are most knowledgeable about the processes and requirements by limiting who can submit project bids.

“Only the contractors who attend this workshop will be able to bid on PRT projects throughout the next year,” said Air Force Capt. Jason M. Aftanas, deployed from Anderson Air Force Base, Guam. “This is because they’ll understand exactly what we are asking for and we know that we’ll get a good quality project completed for the people of Panjshir.”

There are a few major differences that were the focus of this year’s workshop. The first was the completion of the bid proposals submitted by the contractors.

“We will be looking for five major items now when we receive bid proposals,” said Aftanas. “We’ll review the packages to determine if the design drawings

are competent, the contractor’s proposal meets the scope of work, the cost estimate is complete and within budget and if there’s a work plan that addresses a work schedule, quality assurance and control plan and a worksite safety program.”

To help guide the contractors with their bid proposals, the engineers include a cost-estimate sheet, provided by the local government, that shows the specific areas that need cost estimates. They also provide a statement of work.

A statement of work is basically the blueprint for the contract and states what is supposed to be included in the project. If something is wrong or missing, it needs to be addressed and corrected immediately.

The next topic was how the engineers rank, order and select the winning contractor. There are two main differences with this process. First, projects will eventually be evaluated on merit and not the lowest bidder.

“Even though cost is important, once we rank order the bids by price and select the first 10 acceptable bids, we stop looking at the bid price,” said Aftanas. “It’s more important to ensure we get the best project possible for the people of Panjshir.”

“We’ll look at the cost estimates, work plan and design,” said Aftanas, a Pa., native. “We’ll also review the contractor’s experience, their available equipment and the number and quality of the projects they’ve completed in the past.”

The second difference is that only five percent of the final “score” correlates directly to where the contractor is from.

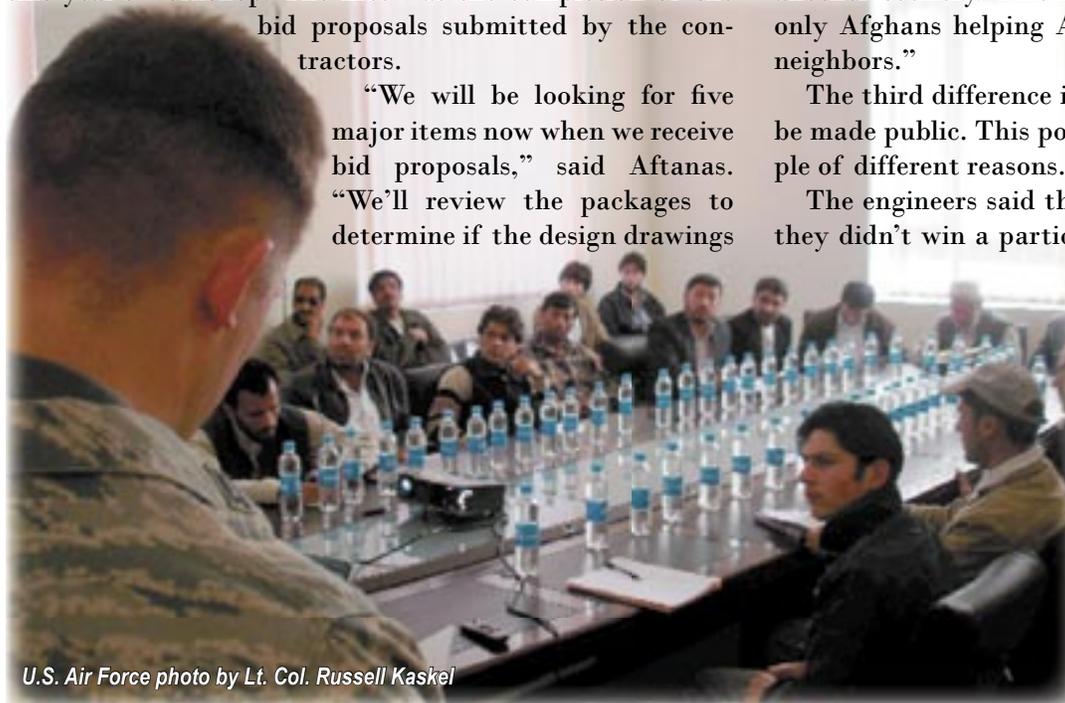
“If a contractor is from Panjshir, they’ll receive a higher percentage than if they are from another province in Afghanistan,” said Aftanas. “If they are from Afghanistan, they’ll receive a better percentage than if they are from another country. This is one way to ensure that it is not only Afghans helping Afghans, but neighbors are helping neighbors.”

The third difference is all winning bid packages will now be made public. This policy is being incorporated for a couple of different reasons.

The engineers said that contractors often ask them why they didn’t win a particular bid. By making the bid packages public, the contractors will be able to see all the aspects of the winning bid for themselves.

“We can sit down with a contractor now, review the contractor’s scores in our best-value matrix, and show them why they did or did not get a bid,” said Aftanas. “This will help the contractors become better at their jobs as well as be able to submit better packages in the future.”

When the engineers discussed



U.S. Air Force photo by Lt. Col. Russell Kaskel

this new aspect of the contracting process, many of the contractors smiled and nodded. Numerous contractors said that seeing the winning packages and knowing where theirs fell short would allow them to be more competitive in the future.

The engineers also committed a portion of the workshop to upgraded construction standards that would immediately take effect for any of the PRT's projects.

They wanted to focus on raising some of the construction standards after seeing numerous construction sites where bad habits caused deficiencies in the quality of the overall construction.

For instance, in the two months the engineers have been working side-by-side with contractors here, they've been to work sites where bags of concrete were stored outside in the rain, sites where the concrete was mixed on the ground instead of in a mixing machine and sites where there were no on-site managers.

"By storing concrete outside or by mixing it on the ground, we can be positive the concrete will not be consistent and there will be eventual failures in the construction," said McGinnis. "This is when you see cracks in the walls and flaking, popping and chipping in the floors.

"By taking that extra step of properly storing the concrete and utilizing the proper equipment, the contractors can ensure a good-quality final product they can be proud of for their client, who is the government and the people of Panjshir," said McGinnis.

The last topic covered at the workshop was the institution of the Professional Engineering and Science Association of Panjshir province.

The association is the brainchild of Jerry Maurseth, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilian, assigned to the Panjshir PRT.

"A professional association works together to determine agreed-upon standards and then publishes them to be used in the community," said Maurseth. "By helping the engineers of Panjshir province create their own professional association, we're hoping to enable them to not only share ideas between themselves, but to possibly provide their expert council and guidance to members of their local governments when necessary."

"This way, the engineering community will be able to create and institute some of their own construction upgrades and standards just like the ones introduced at today's workshop," said Maurseth. "There's a great deal of opportunity ahead, and if we all work together we can ensure many great things can be accomplished – not only here in Panjshir, but throughout Afghanistan."

The first meeting of the Professional Engineering and Science Association of Panjshir province is scheduled for later this month at the Provincial Director of Communications building in Parakh, Panjshir province.

"What we want the people here to remember is that we work for the government of Panjshir and we help support the governor's plans for continued stability and development," said Aftanas. "By having these workshops and helping the local engineers create a professional association, we are ensuring that everyone knows they can support the governor's plans as well."

"I used to work at another PRT here in Afghanistan and I could immediately see differences in how projects are chosen and supported by the government of Panjshir," said McGinnis. "One of the reasons the project quality is so good here in Panjshir is the secure environment.

"Contractors and laborers are not afraid to work here like they are in other provinces," he said. "They know that when they build a quality project here, it'll last for a long time."

Shock

Continued from page 9

Hall, who commands a reinforced light infantry unit of roughly 1,000 Marines, said he is pleased to have the STP as one of his supporting attachments. His battalion is also reinforced with a combat engineers platoon, a radio battalion unit and personnel who specialize in civil military operations.

The STP however, was assembled at Hall's request for additional medical support before deploying his Marines into combat. Knowing his Marines would be operating in areas where clashes with Taliban forces are imminent, the battalion commander was adamant about gaining the support necessary to

return his troops home safely.

In addressing his concerns, BUMED offered him a shock trauma unit with such capabilities as combat triage, advanced resuscitative trauma support and the ability to hold patients or provide enroute care. In laymen's terms, the STP can basically function as a mobile emergency room.

The "Docs" actually brought along their "Mobile E.R.," which is a dual tent-based field expedient emergency room with airway managing, hemorrhage control and minor surgery capabilities that can be constructed in a moment's notice. It houses such state-of-the-art equipment to aid treatment and diagnosis of patients as advanced cardiac life support equipment, portable ultrasound machines, ventilators,

defibrators and a blood bank.

"We can keep more seriously-injured patients alive for longer," said Navy Cmdr. John G. Crabill, a board-certified physician who specializes in family medicine. "This is especially important in the event our 'casevac' takes longer to get to us in such a remote and austere environment such as Afghanistan. If the Marines can make it to the STP, they have a great chance of survival."

The STP has proven to be a valued asset for the battalion in a relatively short period of time. While helping to save lives here, the STP has simultaneously sharpened the skills ultimately needed to support the Marines and Sailors of 2/7 going into harm's way despite embarking on a mission to bring peace and prosperity to the Afghan people.

USA Express seeks Soldier-performers to entertain deployed troops

Story and photos by Tim Hippias
FMWRC Public Affairs

Soldier-musicians, vocalists, technicians and drivers are needed to put USA Express back on tour.

Army Entertainment Music Director, Cordell Hall, is eager to assemble an All-Army show band that will entertain fellow troops.

Soldiers who play keyboard, guitar or drums are needed – along with vocalists and an audio technician – to put the show on the road. Other instrumentalists may apply. Vocalists must be strong audience communicators who are comfortable with a variety of musical styles and dance. Audio technicians must be able to operate a public address system, a digital audio sound mixing board and have an understanding of audio equalization.

USA Express, a revolving door of deployable musical-performance groups, began entertaining Soldiers in 1992. They often changed faces and toured different places, but the mission remained the same: to provide “entertainment for the Soldier, by the Soldier,” the working motto of Army Entertainment Division.

After a two-year hiatus, the traveling cover band will be reinvented by a group of Soldiers that will tour this summer. May 20 is the deadline to apply for a spot on the deployable musical performance team.

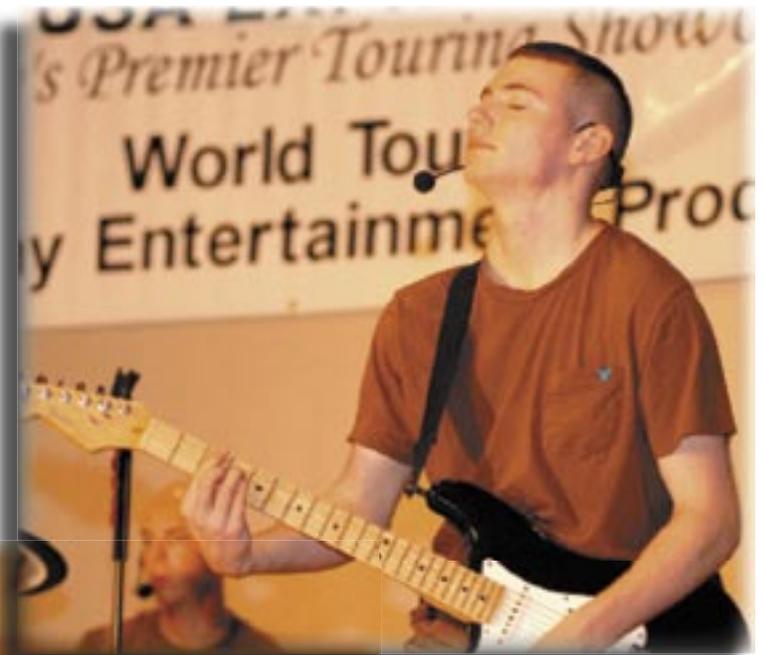
“I’m totally excited about this,” Hall said. “After being away for two years, you get that itch,

and this is my first love.”

In 2005, USA Express covered tunes by the Commodores, Green Day, Faith Hill, Beyonce, Gwen Stefani, Whitney Houston and Tony Toni Tone among others. The Soldiers selected for this group will help determine its artistic direction.

“Some of the music will be what is commonly referred

to as combat music because we take it right to the troops and give them a little piece of home,” Hall said.



“Every place that we’ve gone, the Soldiers just loved the show because they got to see other Soldiers performing in a light like never before.”

To audition for USA Express, men and women of the U.S. Army with the rank of sergeant or below must mail a demo tape or CD and current copy of their Enlisted Record Brief, Physical Training Test and military license to U.S. AED Attention: USA Express, P.O. Box 439, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060.

Once notified, a letter from the unit commander releasing the Soldier for temporary duty with AED will be required. For more details, contact Hall via e-mail at Cordell.Hall@us.army.mil or phone (703) 806-3220 or fax (703) 806-5251.

ART OF WAR

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Demetrius A. Lester
455th AEW Public Affairs

When the Taliban took power in 1996, they imposed a new way of life and removed basic freedoms from the people of Afghanistan. Among those freedoms was the banishment of art.

For more than a decade, art has been missing from this historic society. So a group of 39 artists from Task Force MED wanted people to understand Afghanistan's colorful culture, and what better way to convey this but through art.

Master Sgt. Al Greig was assigned as the art director for painting a cultural Afghanistan mural in the conference room of TF MED along with the other artists.

"I don't want this to come off as a one-man show by any means," said Greig, who's deployed from the 1st Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla. "This project was a complete team effort of 39 artists."

"I thought this was going to be a quick paint job, but it turned into part of the Global War On Terror mission because of the Taliban's ban against art," said Master Sgt. Cruz Torres Jr., who is deployed from the 710th Medical Squadron, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. "I learned how beautiful Afghan culture really is and I tried to capture it."

After a series of panoramic photos were taken and stitched together, Greig and his crew began working. They completed etching the mountain panorama, true in both direction and size, in a single day.

Although getting paint became an obstacle because of its limited supply in Afghanistan, that didn't prevent the group from accomplishing their task. The task force's morale committee donated \$220 to purchase artist-quality

paint shipped from the U.S. Other donors added \$200 in paint and supplies.

According to Greig, who's taken formal art training since the age of 10, the 864-square foot mural is appraised at \$178,000, based on the art industry cost standard of \$200 per square foot.

Nearly 290 man-hours later, the entire conference room wall space is vibrant in color and culture, while all 39 artists' dream was realized. Their satisfaction comes from the feedback they get from the local Afghan nationals.

"I enjoyed it," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Jessica Newcomb, a medical technician deployed from Scott Air Force Base, Ill. "From what I've seen, all the locals who come in to see the work enjoy it and that's a good feeling. It's so nice...I really wish my parents could see it."

"When the locals come in here, they are speechless" added Greig. "I hope this art continues to bring peace and prosperity here even when the military is gone. I believe this painting is absolutely significant to the Global War on Terror. Culturally, it's that important."



Photos From the Field

U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester



Jason Armstrong (center) accepts his promotion certificate to Staff Sgt. from Brig. Gen. Mike Holmes. Also pictured is Chief Master Sgt. Ray Clark



Have a photo you'd like to see in
Freedom Watch Afghanistan?

freedomwatch@swa.army.mil

U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Master Sgt. Larry Schneck



A color guard from the Czech Republic looks toward a set of flag poles on Forward Operating Base Shank in eastern Afghanistan. The soldiers are preparing to raise their nation's flag during a dedication ceremony.

Courtesy photo



Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, commanding general of Regional Command East and Coalition Forces in Afghanistan, participates with the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team in a "Haka," a ritual war dance.

Courtesy photo



Two U.S. Air Force F-15E Strike Eagles fly in formation.



May 12, 2008

Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN



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