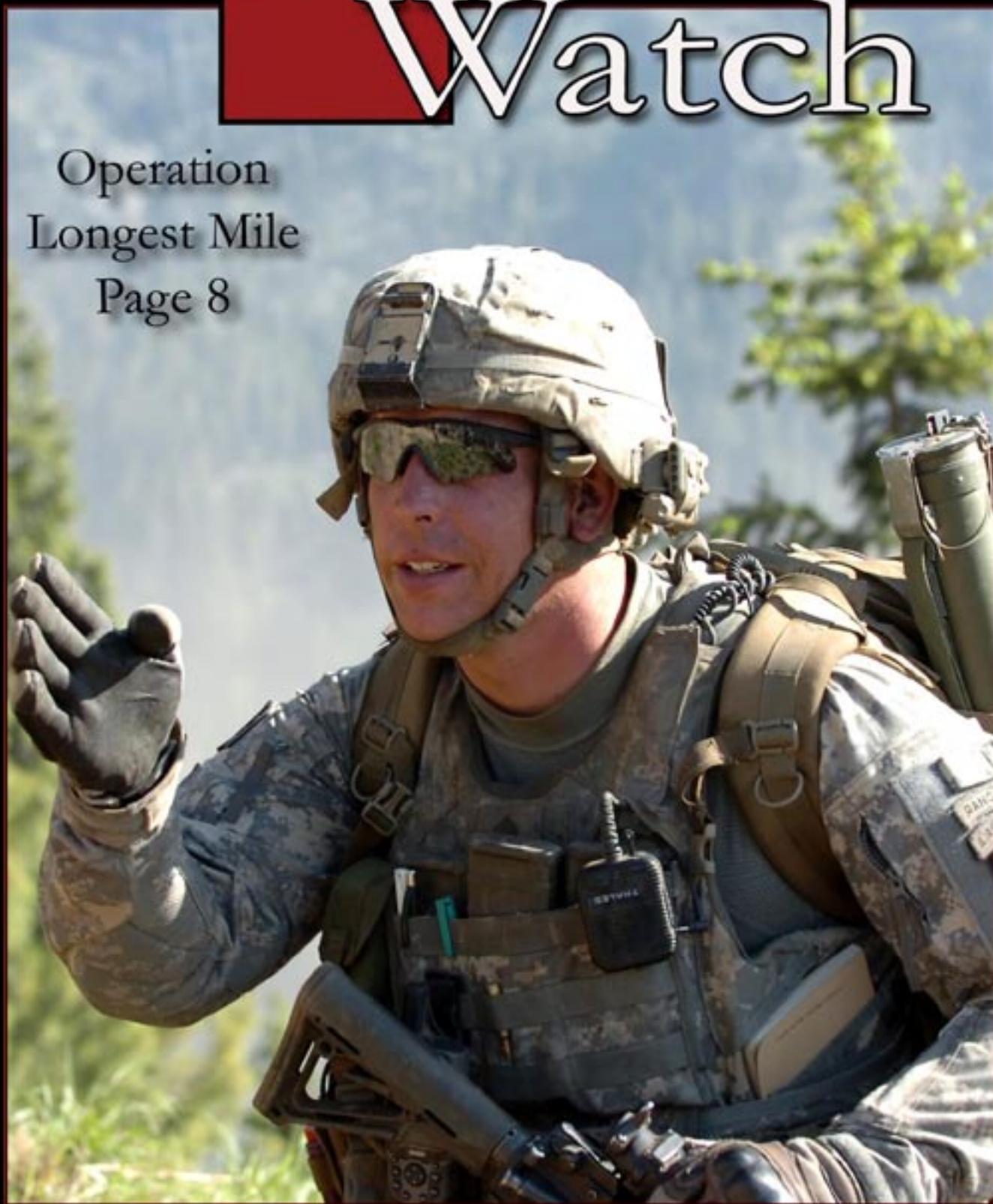


June 9, 2008

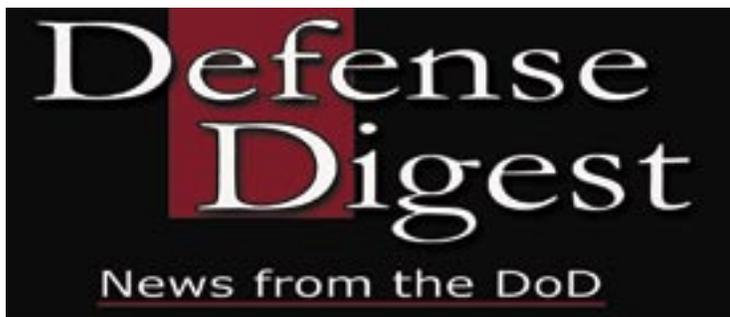
# Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN

Operation  
Longest Mile  
Page 8



Weapon Repair ■ COP Dedication ■ Iron Chefs



## President foresees tough fight ahead in Afghanistan

By Jim Garamone  
*American Forces Press Service*

The U.S. and its allies are making progress in Afghanistan, but there is a long, tough road ahead, President Bush said during a White House Rose Garden news conference, April 29.

The Taliban and its al-Qaida allies continue to fight in Afghanistan and want to re-impose an “incredibly dark” regime in the country, the president said. The recent Taliban assassination attempt on Afghan President Hamid Karzai is their latest attempt to retrieve their failing campaign, he added.

“It’s very important for the American people to remember what life was like in Afghanistan prior to the liberation of the country,” Bush said. “The Taliban denied basic human rights to the women of the nation. They didn’t believe in women’s rights. They didn’t let little girls go to school and they provided safe haven to al-Qaida,” he said.

The liberation of Afghanistan eliminated an al-Qaida safe haven and replaced the repressive, extremist Taliban with an elected government, the president said.

“It’s difficult in Afghanistan,” he said. “If you know the history of the country ... it’s hard to go from the kind of society in which they had been living, to one in which people are now responsible for their own behavior.”

Bush said he is pleased with some of the progress in the country, with the number of roads that have been built, the number of schools and health clinics now operating and the fact that young women can attend school.

He said he also is impressed with the progress Afghan Security Forces are making. “I’m pleased with the Afghan army, that when they’re in the fight, they’re good,” Bush said.

Bush said the U.S. will continue to stand beside its Afghan allies in the fight against extremism.

The bottom line, he said, is that the Afghans, NATO and the U.S. are making progress in Afghanistan, but still face hard fighting.

“I’m under no illusions that this isn’t tough,” Bush said. “I know full well we’re dealing with a determined enemy. I believe it’s in our interest that we defeat that enemy. The U.S. and its allies must stand up to an enemy that encourages people to strap bombs on themselves and kill innocent people.”

“Is it in our interest to confront these people now, whether it be in Afghanistan or Iraq or Europe or anywhere else? And the answer is absolutely it’s in our interests,” he said. “The notion that somehow we can let these people just kind of have their way or, you know, ‘Let’s don’t stir them up,’ is naive or disingenuous. And it’s not in our nation’s interest. We’re in a global struggle against thugs and killers, and the United States of America has got to continue to take the lead.”



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## Editor’s Correction

In the May 26 issue of Freedom Watch Magazine the “‘Bridging’ the lifeline of Panjshir Province” story was accredited to Army Capt. Ashley Dellavalle. The story accreditation should have read “Story and photos by Air Force Capt. Jillian Torango.”

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**COVER:** Army Sgt. 1st Class Jere-  
miah K. Smith, platoon sergeant for 3rd  
Platoon, Able Company, 2nd Battalion,  
503rd Infantry Regiment readjusts his  
security perimeter by moving Soldiers  
to secure the high-ground along the  
western mountainside, during Opera-  
tion Longest Mile, May 11, in the Water-  
por Valley, Kunar province, Afghani-  
stan. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Gregory J.  
Argentieri) See related story on page 8.

**BACK COVER:** Senior Airman  
Kathryn Wissmiller, Panshjiir Provincial  
Reconstruction Team information man-  
ager, takes a photo of a mural she drew  
in the dining facility. Wissmiller is de-  
ployed from the 6th Communications  
Squadron MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.  
(U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. De-  
metrius Lester)

# Freedom Watch

**June 9, 2008**

**4 Remembering the fallen**  
*Soldier immortalized in combat outpost name*

**5 Security is a must**  
*Keeping Afghan National Police checkpoints safe*

**7 ‘Git er dun!’**  
*Weekly shuras bring progress to Pech River Valley*

**8 Operation Longest Mile**  
*Afghan National Security Forces, Able Company show flexibility*

**10 Still hungry?**  
*“Iron Chefs” spice up Bagram Air Field*

**11 Learning new tricks**  
*173rd Brigade Support Battalion instructs Afghan Border Police on weapons-repair skills*

**12 Showing compassion**  
*Volunteer operation ‘cares’ for Afghan youth*



4



8



10

# Fallen Soldier immortalized in Combat Outpost name

By Army Staff Sgt. Brandon Aird  
173rd Airborne Brigade Public Affairs

Soldiers from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment renamed their combat outpost, located in a remote area of Nuristan province, Afghanistan, to remember a fallen comrade, May 12.

Combat Outpost Kamu was renamed to Combat Outpost Lowell to remember Spc. Jacob Lowell, who was killed in action June 2, 2007.

Lowell was manning a .50-caliber machine gun on a reconnaissance mission in the Gowardesh Valley, when he was killed while engaging insurgents who ambushed his convoy.

“Lowell was a heroic paratrooper that did his duty all the way up until the end,” said Army Capt. John Page, Bravo Co. commander. “His actions saved my life and others in his platoon. If Lowell had not gotten back up on his 50 Cal., even though he was shot in the leg, I probably would not be here today.”

Page and Army Lt. Col. Christopher Kolda, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment commander, dedicated a large plaque on COP Lowell during the ceremony so future Soldiers will remember his sacrifice.

Lowell was awarded the Bronze Star with “V” for valor and the Combat Infantryman’s Badge for his actions during the firefight. Lowell was from New Lenox, Ill., and is survived by his parents Raymond and Bernadine Lowell.

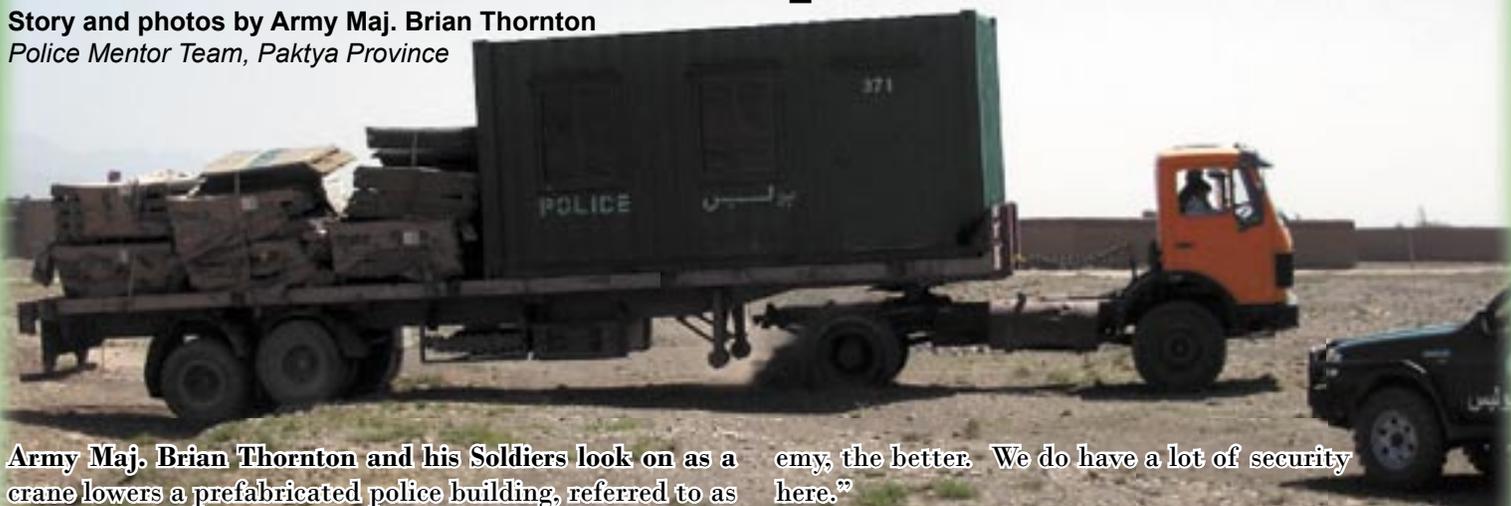


Courtesy photo

# COP Lowell

# Keeping Afghan National Police Checkpoints Safe

Story and photos by Army Maj. Brian Thornton  
Police Mentor Team, Paktya Province



Army Maj. Brian Thornton and his Soldiers look on as a crane lowers a prefabricated police building, referred to as a “Cop-in-a-Box”, into a fortified checkpoint beside an Afghan village.

The Coalition forces Soldiers mentor their Afghan National Police counterparts and are helping them gain influence in the villages. It bears a resemblance to community policing efforts back in the U.S., where Thornton is a Providence, R.I., police officer.

“Our assisting the ANP with emplacing fortified checkpoints at Chawney, Ibrahim Khail, Kalay Zagar, Sath-ee Kandow and at the top of the Khyber Pass does bear some resemblance to community policing,” said Thornton. “You’re manning offices right in their villages. You develop some relationship with your community. They grow to trust you and the fact that you are doing work for them, and in return, you get information about Taliban activity and criminal activity. You’ve put a legitimate Afghan face on solving the community’s problems.”

“It’s not really nerve-wracking due to the fact that we have a lot of open space,” said Sgt. 1st Class Scott Beaupre, police mentor team noncommissioned officer-in-charge. “The more open space you have between you and your en-

emy, the better. We do have a lot of security here.”

Well-trained police are vital for the war, and their numbers are increasing. But to be effective the police must first survive and gain legitimacy. Coalition force Soldiers say these steel checkpoints will help.

“It’s a steel shipping container, or CONEX, converted into a building, by adding windows and a door,” said Thornton. “It’s better than a building made out of mud, brick or sticks, like other building materials used here. Once in place, it is surrounded with Hesco barriers, which are dirt-filled fortifications that provide them with a level of security so that they can do their jobs more safely.”

The PMT Soldiers move routinely around the Paktya area, mentoring, inspecting and advising. As they prepare to go to the next checkpoint, they say they hope the police can handle any sudden attacks without assistance from Coalition forces.

“When we leave here it’ll present a challenge because there’s probably going to be only 10 ANP here manning this point,” said Beaupre. “That’s when it will be scary for them, because they won’t have the amount of security that we have here now.”



# Engineers rebuild Afghan Border Police checkpoint

Story and photos by Spc. Paul David Ondik  
4th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

Engineer and cavalry Soldiers worked together in April and May to build living quarters and a security checkpoint for Afghan Border Police at the Gowardesh Bridge, during Operation Mountain Highway II in eastern Nuristan province.

Spc. Jason Marlowe, a Wisconsin native, and Spc. Ben Kavanagh, from Iowa, built the ABP checkpoint living quarters, bunkers and fighting positions next to the Gowardesh Bridge and Landay River.

“We’re building bunkers and quarters so they can stay here to protect the bridge and the immediate area,” explained Kavanagh, who said their previous living quarters were destroyed by insurgents late last summer.

Afghan National Army soldiers provided security for two weeks while the engineers worked around the clock to complete the ABP checkpoint and living quarters.

“Were trying to get this built as soon as possible so the ABP can move in here,” explained Marlowe. “Right now everyone is sleeping outside on the ground.”

The ABP checkpoint and living quarters were the main efforts of Operation Mountain Highway II. While Marlowe and Kavanagh constructed the ABP station, hundreds of Soldiers provided security in seven observation posts around the valley.

“It takes an enormous amount of over-watch to safely come up here due to the terrain,” explained Army Capt. John Williams, Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry

Regiment commander.

Construction on the ABP checkpoint and living quarters was completed in mid-May. The new checkpoint will improve security and open the way for government, development and construction projects in the region.

“Now that we have security in this area we can restart construction on the road,” explained Williams.

A \$40-million road project was halted last fall when four road-construction workers were killed by insurgents in the area.

“Two of the observation posts can see miles down the road,” explained Williams. “Once the road is built, it will open up the area to new projects which weren’t feasible before.”



# Weekly shuras bring progress to Pech River Valley



**Story and photos by  
Spc. Gregory J. Argentieri**  
*173rd Airborne Brigade Public Affairs*

Soldiers from Able Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, welcome local Afghan village elders from the Pech River Valley onto Forward Operating Base Able Main every Thursday morning to conduct a weekly shura.

The shura, conducted May 15, gave 25 village elders from the surrounding area and senior leadership from Able Co. a chance to sit down together in the “shura shack” to share thoughts and concerns covering a host of topics. They spoke together for about two hours.

“We try to get as many people here as possible, and put out as much information as possible; talking about as many things as we can,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah K. Smith, 32, from Lewistown, Pa., platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon.

“It’s our shura, no single person should be taking charge,” said Smith. “It’s every one of ours and we share equally in anything and everything we do.”

The meeting started off with good news, the arrival of more bags of cement earmarked for the villagers and discussing current events, but the meeting quickly turned to more serious topics.

FOB Able Main had taken some small arms fire and an indirect round in

the days prior. The elders were asked if they knew anything about the incidents.

The villagers responded saying they had heard nothing. Smith urged the elders to make sure if they hear anything to come out of their houses and look around and if they see anything, to let the Soldiers know.

“It’s very odd to have one person shooting at the FOB especially with as many weapons systems as we have,” said Smith. “As accurate as we are, to have one person up there with an AK or some other weapon system to put a couple rounds in this FOB really upsets us. Whenever we receive rounds on this FOB, of course, we’re going to return fire in the same direction and hopefully none of your goats are in that area.”

Then Smith eased the elders concerns by reminding them that if any of their goats were killed due to the firing of weapons by Able Co. they would be reimbursed for them.

Smith added none of this would be happening if it weren’t for militants up in the mountains coming down and trying to attack them. He said that every day his unit does more and more to try to rid the area of the Taliban.

One elder expressed his appreciation for the Soldier’s efforts in the area.

“We are a lot happier because we have this help and support,” he said. “We sit at the government, we belong to the government, and the government belongs to us.”

The conversation turned to poppy growing and opium.

Recently, area elders had turned in some opium to Able Co. Soldiers, but today the elders assured Smith that no one was growing poppy anymore. The elders said they would talk to all of the

people and tell whoever has opium to get rid of it.

The elders then expressed their concern, explaining the man who had the opium was very poor and had no other way to make a living; a common problem being dealt with in many areas of Afghanistan.

Able Co.’s mission in Pech Valley does not include counter-narcotics and they handled the situation delicately. These recent events were a first for the company.

“That’s why we didn’t arrest him,” said Smith. “We are helping him to the best of my, 1st Lt. (Brandon M.) Kennedy and the (Afghan National Army’s) ability.”

The last topic discussed in the shura was ongoing and future development projects. Smith assured the elders that all of their project requests were being processed through the proper channels and pending approval or funding. The process can take as long as two months.

“Everyone is saying ‘I have this project in, we have a bunch of projects in and we’re still not seeing results,’” said Smith. “Starting tomorrow, we’re going to start seeing results. Things are starting to happen. Things are starting to happen in this area and this area will continue to improve.”

The first large scale construction project for Pech River Valley elders and Able Co. is a new road project going up a large mountain, scheduled to begin in May, according to Kennedy, 24, from Shelton, Conn., platoon leader for 3rd Platoon, Able Company.

“Just like the Pashtu proverb, ‘one flower does not mean the spring is here,’ just having one project started doesn’t mean I’m going to stop my efforts to get all the projects done,” said Kennedy.

Many believe their capability is developing very fast.

“For their army to be all of five years old, they are moving in the right direction very quickly,” Williams said. “They are doing exactly what needs to be done in order to take the fight to the enemy. They are very well disciplined, interested in learning and want to learn.”



# Operation Longest Mile

## SECURITY FORCES, ABLE CO

Story and photos by Spc. Gregory J. Argentieri  
173rd Airborne Brigade Public Affairs

Servicemembers from the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and Able Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, air assaulted into the Watapoor Valley under the cover of darkness, May 10, to start Operation Longest Mile, in Kunar province, Afghanistan.

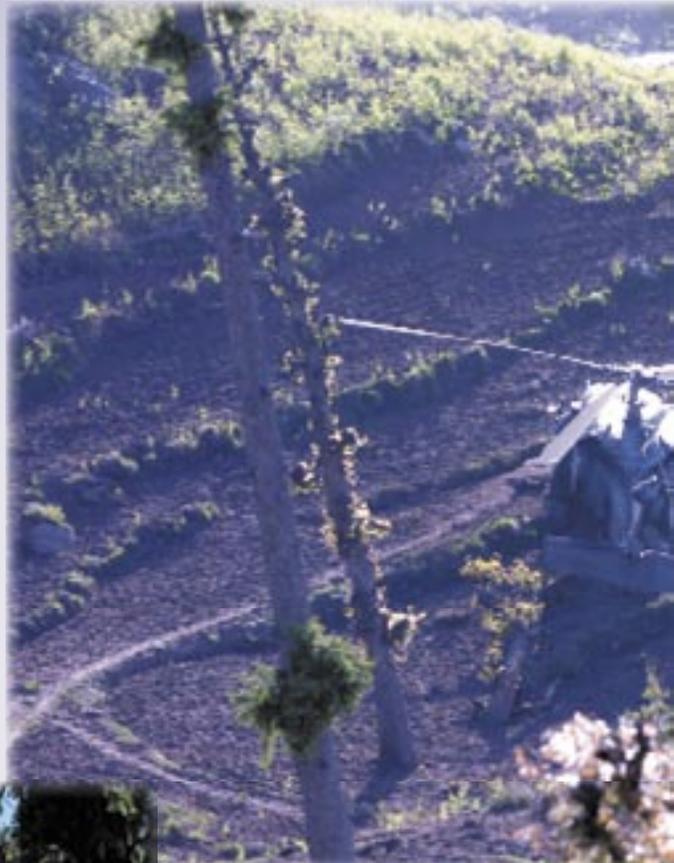
The Afghan National Security Forces took the lead in the search-and-clear mission of the village of Kur Baugh to search for weapons, ammunition, explosives and other contraband. They were also there to find and question three local Afghan men designated as “high-value targets,” believed to be assisting enemy fighters. Servicemembers from the 2-503rd, also known as Task Force Rock, maintained supporting positions.

“We have had a lot of intelligence, both collected by us, and brought in by locals, saying that the enemy is in the village of Kur Baugh,” said Army 1st Lt. Brandon M. Kennedy, 24, from Shelton, Conn., platoon leader for 3rd Platoon, Able Co.

In three different waves, Chinook and Blackhawk helicopters flew approximately 150 Afghan and U.S. Soldiers from Forward Operating Base Honaker-Miracle, to the west of Kur Baugh Village.

After the elements landed and diligently navigated through 200 meters of steep, rocky and mountainous terrain, the mission changed.

One of the Blackhawks started experiencing mechanical problems and



had to make a hard landing after dropping the 3rd platoon. The pilots and crew were picked up by a Chinook and flown back to Jalalabad Air Field.

Immediately, Operation Longest Mile changed. The 3rd platoon was moved to Kur Baugh Village to secure and rescue a disabled soldier. The 2nd platoon, 3rd platoon and Able Company were moved by air to the disabled soldier's location. A Quick Reaction Force (QRF) was activated.

“That’s the good thing about Able Company’s reaction is, no matter what the operation requires, we can overcome and complete the mission,” said 1st Lt. Brandon M. Kennedy, 24, from Lewistown, Pa., platoon sergeant for 3rd platoon.

The QRF air assaulted to the disabled soldier's location, after reports that the enemy knew they were going to attack. The remaining elements landed and established a defensive perimeter.

“When we first arrived at the downed soldier's location, we moved quickly, making sure we had a good defensive perimeter, establishing secure fighting positions to make it harder for the enemy to attack us and to prevent their approach,” said Senior Airman Gabriel O’Connell, 24, from the 1st Operations Squadron joint terminal attack controller with the National Guard. “It was a lot of planning

# File: AFGHAN NATIONAL COMPANY SHOW FLEXIBILITY



ing off the servicemembers of 1st  
up by one of the helicopters

changed from search and clear Kur  
ed aircraft. While the servicemem-  
Headquarters and Headquarters  
d helicopter, a quick reaction force

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quires, Able Company will adapt,  
Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah K. Smith,  
t for 3rd Platoon.

l Blackhawk to reinforce 1st Pla-  
a helicopter was down and was go-  
ded shortly afterwards and set up

helicopter the focus was execut-  
perimeter, getting the dominant  
ions on the high ground to make  
determining probable avenues of  
. Bird, 28, 122nd Air Support Op-  
controller, from the Louisiana Air  
y. We all worked through the night

to make sure that if we got attacked we could speedily and effectively counter-attack.”

TF Rock called for a Downed Aircraft Rescue Team, which was able to repair the disabled helicopter.

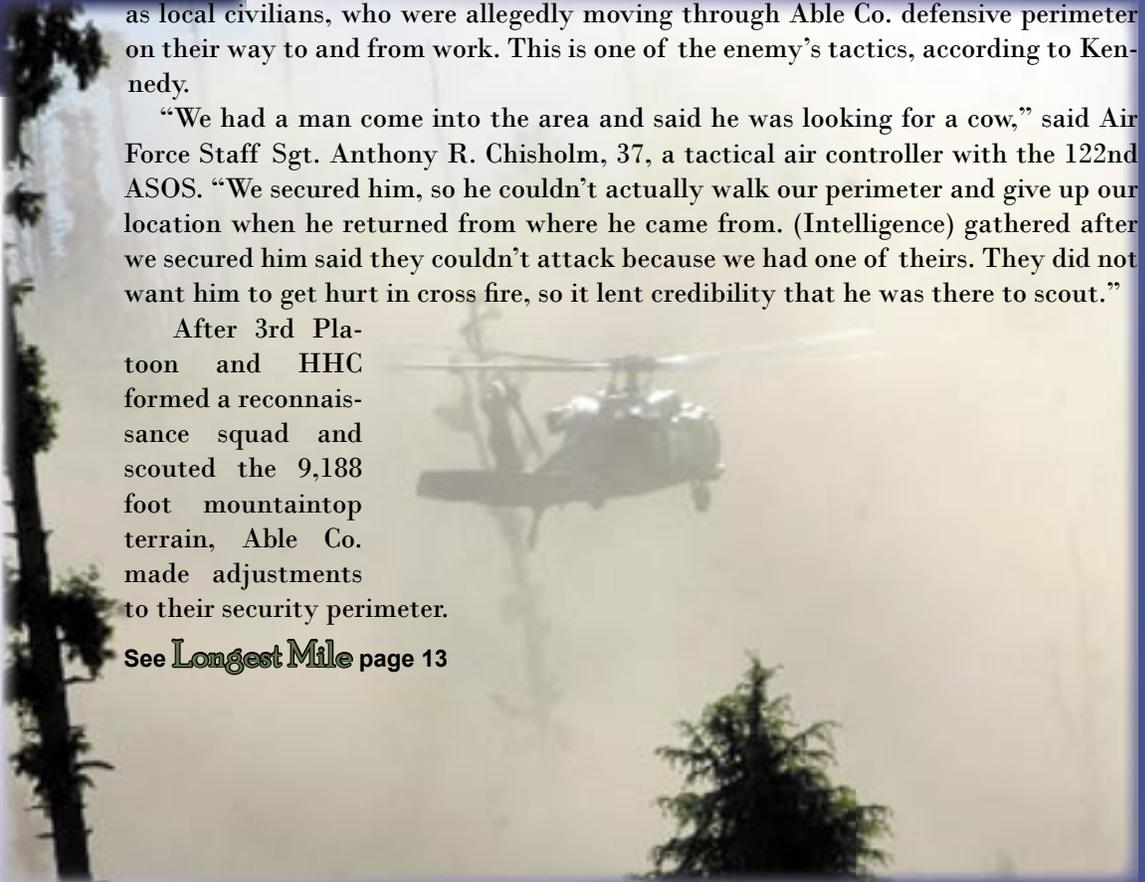
Early the next morning, the pilots and crew were flown in and were able to get the helicopter safely off the ground and fly it out. Now, with a very defensible position and with the extraction helicopters not scheduled until the evening, the mission changed to disrupt any enemy activity in the northern Watapoor Valley.

During the day, the enemy began sending up scouting parties disguised as local civilians, who were allegedly moving through Able Co. defensive perimeter on their way to and from work. This is one of the enemy’s tactics, according to Kennedy.

“We had a man come into the area and said he was looking for a cow,” said Air Force Staff Sgt. Anthony R. Chisholm, 37, a tactical air controller with the 122nd ASOS. “We secured him, so he couldn’t actually walk our perimeter and give up our location when he returned from where he came from. (Intelligence) gathered after we secured him said they couldn’t attack because we had one of theirs. They did not want him to get hurt in cross fire, so it lent credibility that he was there to scout.”

After 3rd Platoon and HHC formed a reconnaissance squad and scouted the 9,188 foot mountaintop terrain, Able Co. made adjustments to their security perimeter.

See [Longest Mile](#) page 13



# “Iron Chefs” spice up Bagram Air Field



U.S. Army photo by Spc. George Welcome

By Army Pvt. Tamara Gabbard  
282nd Public Affairs Detachment

Service members with Task Force Destiny and Task Force Lifeline competed in an Iron Chef Competition at the aviation dining facility, Bagram Air Field, May 28.

The competition was four-hours long and started off with the unveiling of a secret ingredient that had to be used throughout the main course, which was the bell pepper.

The competition was organized to help boost the morale of the service members in the kitchen and give them something fresh to do, commented Army 1st Lt. Nathan Schroeder, the competition’s officer-in-charge.

“The cooks are constantly making the same things daily and this really gave them an opportunity to spice things up a bit,” said Schroeder.

The first three hours were spent preparing meals out of ingredients that were given to them without prior knowledge.

The teams were judged on presentation, taste and originality.

“It really made us think about what we were going to make, not knowing what was available,” said Army Staff Sgt. Billie Afflick, the team leader of TF Destiny.

The orders for the food were put in

and were chosen by what was able to be ordered, according to Sgt. 1st Class Monica D. Davidson, the dining facility manager.

“They told us what utensils they needed and we did what we could to get those items,” she said.

After the meals were ready, an area was set up for the judges to taste them.

The judges were Army Brig. Gen. James C. McConville, Robert W. Maggi and Air Force Brig. Gen. James M. Holmes. They were accompanied by the commanders of TF Destiny, Army Col. James R. Richardson, and TF Lifeline, Army Col. Jeffery P. Kelley.

Before the judges dug in, a coin was flipped to determine whose food was to be tasted first. The winner of the coin toss was TF Destiny.

TF Destiny’s meal was a four-course home-style meal with a Western approach.

“We wanted to bring a flavor from home to Bagram,” said Afflick.

The main course was sautéed and grilled turkey with a rice filled bell pepper on the side, which was complimented with asparagus and a flower designed onion making the plate of food pop with color and design.

The desert, which was just an extra and not judged, was a scoop of ice cream.

“The desert is a French twist to an American classic that is a fruit- and nut-filled shortbread,” said Army Sgt. William Smetak, a cook with team TF Destiny.

As the judges ate, the room was filled with only the sounds

of chewing and the occasional compliment.

With the completion of the first tasting, it was now time to taste what turned out to be the talk of the show.

TF Lifeline stepped up and presented their meal.

“We really are the underdogs in this competition,” said Sgt. 1st Class Catherine B. Heidrich, TF Lifeline team captain. “So, we made it a point to perform above and beyond our norm.”



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

The meal started off with a vegetable-stuffed beef roll appetizer, topped with a cranberry bell pepper sauce that seemed to be a favorite with the judges.

It ended with a desert that was displayed with culinary perfection. An orange zest torte surrounded with a strawberry mouse.

After the meals were done, the judging began and comments flowed.

“There is something almost magic about food,” said Richardson. “It really brings people together.”

Bringing everyone together for something like this is wonderful and keeping up the morale of the soldiers really was something that was done here today, remarked Holmes.

Before the final decision, a small medal ceremony was held. All the competitors were given Army Achievement Medals.

See *Iron Chef* page 13

U.S. Army photo by Spc. George Welcome

# 173RD BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION TEACHES AFGHAN BORDER POLICE WEAPONS-REPAIR SKILLS

Story and photos by Spc. Gregory J. Argentieri  
173rd Airborne Brigade Public Affairs

Bravo Company, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion Soldiers, taught Afghan Border Police advanced small-arms repair and maintenance during a week-long course at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Jalalabad, Afghanistan, May 1-8.

This U.S. Advanced Instructed Small-Arms Repair Course is the second course this group of border police attended. The first month-long basic course was held in March.

The weapons maintenance course includes repair, cleaning and inspection procedures on nine different types of small arms.

The ABP mainly trained on U.S.-made weapons, said the primary instructor, Army Sgt. Micaiah T. Ragins, Bravo Co., 173rd BSB. Many of the weapons used by ABP and Afghan National Army soldiers are currently being swapped out for the U.S. standard issue weapons like the M-16 rifle and M4 carbine.

“We are very attentive and focused during the weapons class and we try to memorize everything – so we can always remember,” said Staff Sgt. Ghaljay, ABP officer from Kunar province. “This is exactly the training we need. Our instructor is very good and he gets along well with us.”

The goal of this training is similar to many other U.S.-led Afghan-training classes. Upon graduation, this group of specially schooled ABP officers will return to their separate Kandaks to train their Afghan counterparts in weapons repair and maintenance, a practice commonly referred to by Soldiers as ‘train the trainers.’

According to Ghaljay, the ABP had little weapons repair experience before this training, but will now set aside Thursdays for weapons cleaning.

“Weapons repair and maintenance is very important to us because this is our profession,” said Pvt. Mohammad Taheer, ABP officer from Jalalabad. “This weapons course is a great help to us in defending our country and for the future security of Afghanistan.”



As a result of weapons-repair training, this group of ABP officers will possibly have as much knowledge in small-arms maintenance as the average U.S. Soldier, said Ragins.

“I think we’re doing our part in increasing cultural awareness and relations between U.S. and Afghan (forces),” said Ragins. “Our objective is to keep more weapons in the fight by maximizing the reliability of the ABP weapon systems.”

After the ABP students completed their week-long advanced course and passed the final exam, the ABP officers received certificates of proficiency in small arms repair and two weapons-repair tool kits.

“For the ABP, coming to (Jalalabad Air Field) for training is very good,” said Najeebullah Haleem, ABP interpreter. “The ABP officers will talk to their neighbors about the weapons training by the U.S. and how it is very different from when the Soviet Union was here.”

Additionally, this course allowed the curious ABP officers to witness some U.S. culture, said Haleem, who believes this training at JAF will attract more people to the ABP ranks.



# Volunteer operation 'cares' for Afghan youth

Story and photos by Army Pvt. Tamara Gabbard  
382nd MPAD Public Affairs

Servicemembers here care for the future of a free and democratic Afghanistan, and a peaceful and nurturing environment for Afghan children, by distributing donated items to local youth.

Operation CARE, a Bagram Air Field-based humanitarian effort, was created in May 2006 and strives help the Afghan people – one child at a time.

Three times a week, volunteers sort and distribute numerous items donated from all over the U.S. and parts of Europe, to Afghan youth.

“The volunteers give a lot of their free time,” said Navy Lt. Sara A. O’Neil, Judge Advocate General officer and Operation CARE’s president. “Giving their time to this organization is a very selfless thing.”

Common donations include clothing, candy, toys, shoes and school supplies. According to O’Neil, the donations have impacted people’s lives.

“It’s amazing when you see the reactions of the kids,” she said. “They really grab onto the gifts and smile and seem to be so happy with all they have been given.”

In addition to distributing goods to the people of Afghanistan, the operation has extended its outreach to support servicemembers stationed at forward operating bases in remote areas, by providing them with comfort items and amenities, which are not always readily available.

Highly inconvenient and irregularly scheduled flights used to be the only means of getting supplies to these areas. Now, a travelling chaplain delivers 10-15 boxes per week.

Army Capt. Anthony S. Kazarnowicz, known by many as ‘Father K,’ began taking items to servicemembers when he would go on missions to such areas.

The servicemembers receiving Father K’s boxes have sometimes not been in contact with anyone from the outside for long periods of time, said



O’Neil. Many times they do not even have post exchanges, she said.

“In bringing packages to the servicemembers, we show them that we care very much for them,” said Kazarnowicz. “We don’t want them to be without any of the basic necessities that we ourselves have.”

The success of the program hinges on dedicated men and women who work behind the scenes to ensure its success, said Kazarnowicz.

“To those who prepare and send packages, I say thank you very much,” continued Kazarnowicz. “Even more important than the contents of the boxes is the awareness that someone back in the states took the time to care.”

For more information, visit [www.operation-care.net](http://www.operation-care.net).



# Longest Mile

Continued from page 9

“One of the things we’re taught is always, going into any kind of position, you always want the high ground,” said Smith. “If you have the high ground you have a better vantage point than anybody else does.”

The high ground proved vital as armed insurgents came around a bend. The paratroopers engaged the enemy.

“They started running east and it put them right in my sector,” said Spc. Benjamin W. Goins, 3rd Platoon, Able Co. “I told myself I’ve got to stop him. I can’t let him get away.”

When the shots rang out, Smith and the servicemembers near him, immediately rose up and began rushing up the mountainside toward the gun fire.

“Once you start hearing shots fired you’re not thinking about anything else but getting up to where you need to get up to,” said Smith. “You don’t care how steep the hill is. You don’t care how far you have to go. You’re just going to get up there, and do what you have to do. I look at it this way, my Soldiers are there and that is the biggest concern for me.”

ANA detained three fighters, whose status was later confirmed by intelligence. They were taken to an ANA base for further questioning.

“If those guys would have escaped and got back to their

leadership, they could have easily identified our positions and brought critical information to their commander,” said Kennedy. “By 3rd Platoon’s actions of capturing and detaining the three scouts, we stopped what could have been an attack by up to 100 fighters based on the intelligence we were getting.”

Towards the end of the afternoon, intelligence indicated an attack was going to come around 3 p.m. Able Co. took the initiative and fired first. Firing 60mm mortars, 155mm artillery rounds and dropping bombs on suspected enemy locations on the surrounding ridgeline, and on the position 3rd Platoon identified as the most dangerous for the enemy to occupy, according to Kennedy.

“By Able Company’s show of force with the bomb strikes and the heavy artillery drops, along with the precision mortar rounds and the defensive posture, we prevented the enemy from attacking,” said Kennedy.

“Able Company went from a planned 24-hour search and clear of a village that was rehearsed and had been in the works for a long time, to immediately transitioning into the securing and recovery of a downed helicopter,” said Kennedy. “No one got hurt, no casualties and we went from a very confusing situation to setting up in a secure posture and capturing three enemy scouts. I think that speaks in high regards for Able Company’s ability and the battalion’s responsiveness to give us the assets we need. Even though we had a change of mission, it still was a very successful mission that followed.”

# Iron Chef

Continued from page 10

Giving the soldiers a healthy meal every day is overlooked, and without the jobs that the cooks do, morale would be a lot lower, said McConville.

The final decision was made and the winner was TF Lifeliner with best taste and originality.

TF Destiny won the presentation section but didn’t match up to TF Lifeliner in the other areas of the competition.

TF Lifeliner received a specialized plaque with large silver utensils accenting the script engraved in the center.

“In my mind all the contestants are winners,” said McConville.

“I have been all over the world and eaten, and not one meal was better than these presented today,” said Maggi. “It’s amazing the hidden skills that come out from these uniforms when you need them.”

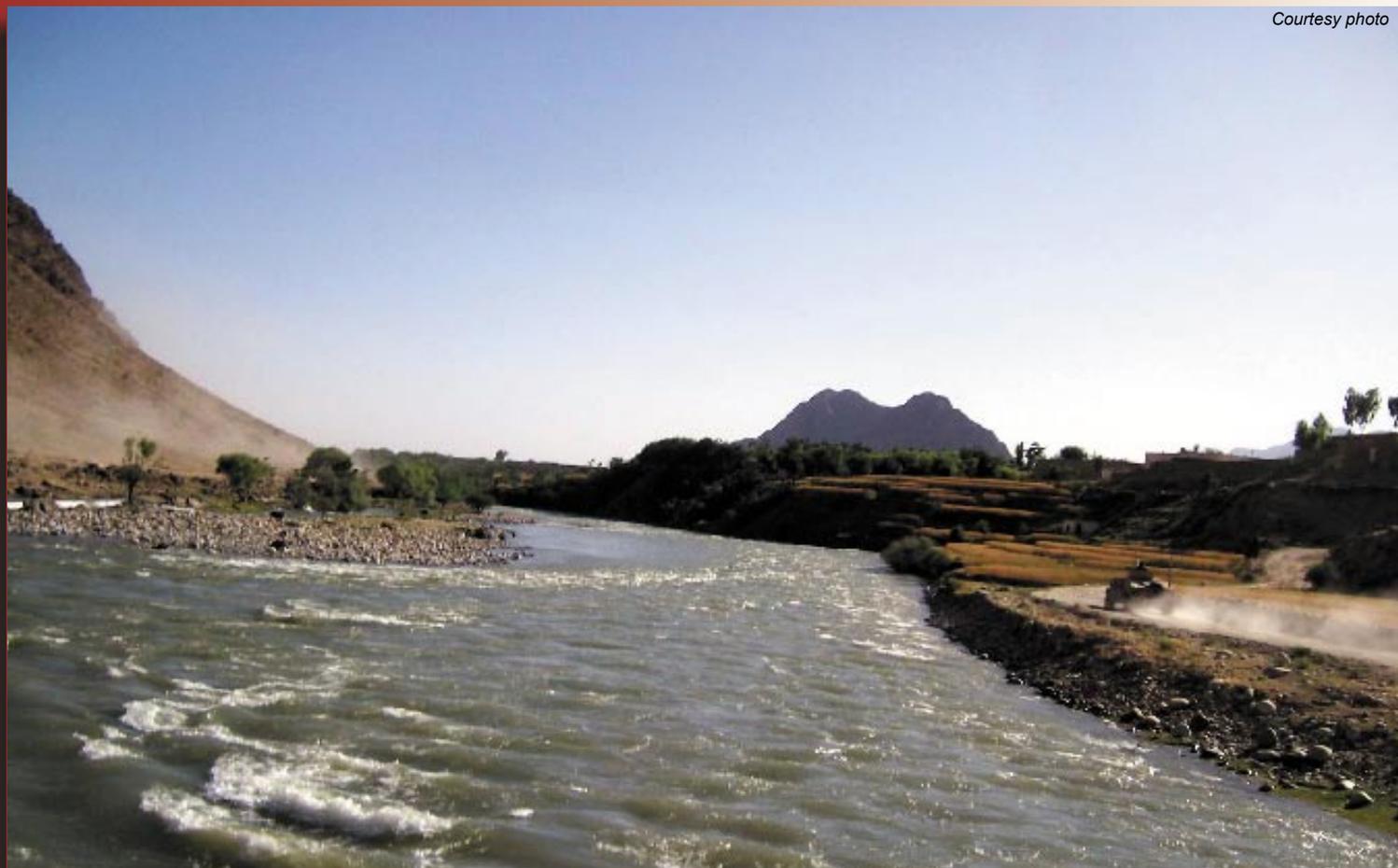


U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Master Sgt. Larry Schneck

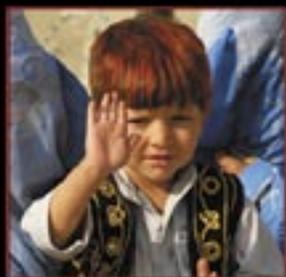
Task Force Lifeliner rated the top  
“Iron Chefs” of Bagram Air Field May 28.

# Photos From the Field

Courtesy photo



A Provincial Reconstruction Team HUMMWW drives beside the Alingar River, May 17, after completing a quality assurance visit of several projects in Laghman Province, Afghanistan. Army Corps of Engineers experts led the mission, examining progress on the police headquarters, a retaining wall, a bridge, and a new road in Alingar District. The Alingar Road, a particularly important project for the region, is set for completion in August. The 42-kilometer highway has only 10 kilometers left before completion.



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Air Force Staff Sgt. Jason Armstrong proudly displays the plaque he and the members of the Task Force Lifeliner team won during the Iron Chef competition at Bagram Air Field, May 28. Armstrong and five other servicemembers beat the Task Force Destiny team in three of the four judged categories of culinary expertise.



Air Force Staff Sgt. Carl Ziemer, 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron, installs a fan shroud on a self generating nitrogen servicing cart. Ziemer is deployed from the 48th Equipment Maintenance Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, England.



Afghanistan Border Police pull security at the Gowerdesh Bridge, Nuristan province, Afghanistan on April 25, during Operation Mountain Highway 2.



June 9, 2008

# Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN

Operation  
Longest Mile  
Page 8



Weapon Repair ■ COP Dedication ■ Iron Chefs