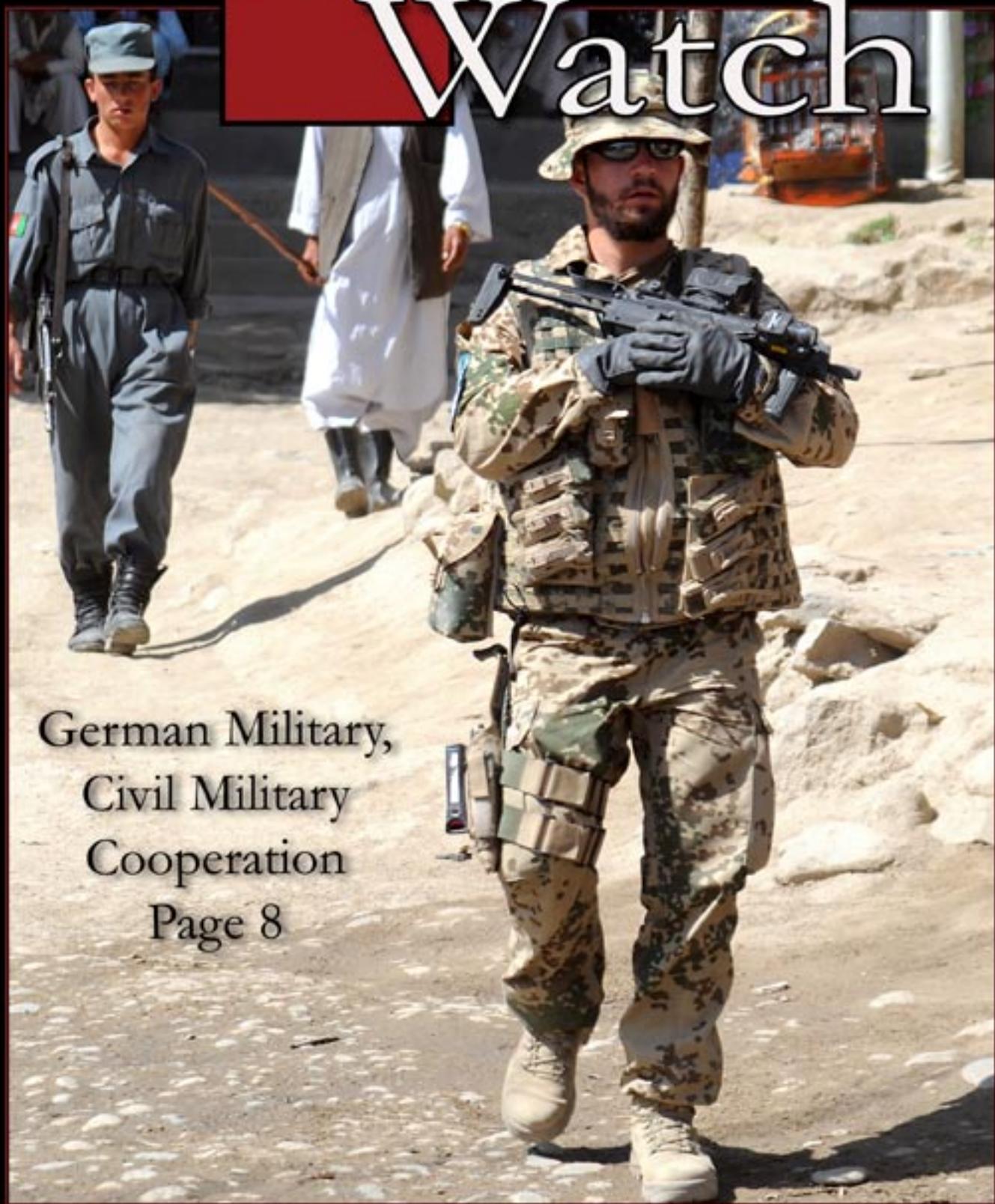


June 23, 2008

Freedom AFGHANISTAN Watch



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Gates begins NATO deliberations in Belgium

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan is the most important issue facing NATO defense ministers, to include U.S. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who met in Brussels, Belgium, June 12, a top U.S. military official said.

Border security is a topic of discussion, and the ministers also examined the way forward, not only with Afghanistan's border with Pakistan, but also the other six countries with which it shares borders, Navy Vice Adm. William D. Sullivan, the U.S. military representative to NATO's military committee, said.

"The difficulty in the eastern and southern border with Pakistan is well understood, particularly along the loosely governed areas -- if you can even take it that far -- of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas," Sullivan said.

More ISAF forces will be needed to deal with the border problems, Sullivan said. The U.S. has led the way in encouraging other alliance members to contribute more forces, but the manpower isn't in place there now, he said.

The Combined Joint Statement of Requirements -- a NATO document that lays out the military requirement for every operation -- shows the operation in Afghanistan is still three battalions short. "One of those battalions is meant to be a force that would secure the border," Sullivan said.

NATO's most important role is to provide the security and stability that will allow the other pillars of security in Afghanistan to succeed, the admiral said. Organizations are working to build governance and the economy. The security NATO ISAF provides helps the central government in Kabul extend its reach to all the provinces and provide what the people of any nation would expect from a central government, he added.

"It's not a purely military solution, it's a combined solu-

tion," the admiral said. "You need the other elements to come together in conjunction with the security to achieve your goals. But security is the vital part of that, because things can't happen without a safe and secure environment."

Sullivan said the ISAF commander's assessment is that the problems in Afghanistan can be addressed, but it will take longer without more troops. "It will likely result in more casualties to allied troops in the time it takes to achieve these goals without more forces," he said.

Roughly 52,700 troops from 40 countries are in ISAF today. "We've actually had more forces generated even since Bucharest," Sullivan said.

And more have been promised, he added. France, the United Kingdom and Poland will ship more forces to the country along with smaller numbers of troops from other nations.

"The total footprint has grown by about 8,000 troops, including U.S. contributions," Sullivan said. "The U.S. has also committed, when we are capable, to providing more troops for Afghanistan."

NATO and U.S. leaders are concerned about Pakistan's negotiations with tribal elements in the federally administered areas, the admiral said. "We are concerned that the Pakistani military may be pulling troops out of the region," he said. "We are concerned that the agreements allow the opposing militant forces the opportunity to regroup, resupply and retrain themselves. So, we think it gives some breathing room for those groups without being threatened by troops on the border."

Sullivan said the alliance has made progress in reducing the number of restrictions that hamper ISAF operations in Afghanistan. Some countries send troops to Afghanistan but put limits, or caveats, on how they can be used. Most of these caveats are a result of legislation in the home country; in others, they may be because of capabilities. For example, some national forces cannot be used at night. Others cannot be used in certain areas or in performing certain missions.

"We have encouraged all countries to send their troops to Afghanistan with no caveats," Sullivan said. "We would like to see, and so would the commander on the ground, forces that are completely flexible and used whenever and wherever they are needed, depending on what the commander on the ground determines."

Improvements have been made in this area, Sullivan said, but caveats still limit the commander's flexibility "if there are certain troops that he can't use for certain things or can't send to certain areas."

Editor's Correction: *In the June 2 and June 16 issues of Freedom Watch Magazine a note on the following stories by Air Force Master Sgt Collen McGee was omitted; June 2 "The food here is simply 'Mmm, Mmm, good'" and June 16 "Small steps lead from war to water." The omitted note annotated the stories as the first and second in a series on life at Forward Operating Base Lion in the Panjshir province in northeastern Afghanistan. The relationship between the Provincial Reconstruction Team, local government and the people, allows the PRT to live and work as members of the community. See "Expecting the unexpected," the third installment of the series, on page 11.*

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**COVER: A German Army Protection
Company soldier patrols the market of
Feyzabad with members of the local Af-
ghan National Police, June 4. (U.S. Air
Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ian Carrier) See
related story on page 8.**

**BACK COVER: Tech. Sgt. Leo Ro-
bles, Provincial Reconstruction Team
NCO-in-charge of intelligence, hands
out bubble gum to the local Afghan
children, May 29. Robles, deployed
from the 388th Intelligence Operations
Squadron, Hill Air Force Base, Utah,
was on hand to provide medical atten-
tion to local villagers. (U.S. Air Force
photo by Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester)**

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New contracting process begins with breaking ground

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

A groundbreaking ceremony was held in Charikar, Parwan province, Afghanistan, for the construction of a new road, June 7.

This construction project is the first project to be awarded to a contractor chosen through a new contracting process created by the Kapisa and Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team, here.

The winning bidder for the road building contract was the Kabul Heart of Asia Construction and Road Building Company, owned by Syed Hakim.

The old contracting process only gave the governor and a few key players control of the contracting process. Now, the governor will be disassociated with the contracting process.

“This elimination of the governor was decided for two reasons,” said Air Force Lt. Col. William D. Andersen, Parwan PRT commander. “First, is to get the governors out of this line of work so that they can work on more governance as apposed to the nuts and bolts of contracting. Secondly, it eliminates the appearance of impropriety in the contracting process.”

The local officials are now in charge of the contracts, specifically the Provincial Council, who are the elected representatives of the people from each district in a given province. They are the mandated body that, by law, is charged with prioritizing and developing projects for the provinces.

“Our expectation is that if they are in charge of prioritizing then they probably need to have some sort of say into the execution of those projects,” said Andersen. “And as elected officials, it provides transparency into the process by making them part of the process of working on the projects.”

They saw immediate benefits to the new process, said Andersen. The line directors and the Provincial Council selected the same contractor.



“That really made us feel they certainly came up with the right guy,” said Andersen. “Because they came up with the same contractor independently, it will eliminate a lot of the quality-control issues that we’ve had on projects in the past.”

The new road will be approximately five kilometers long and seven meters wide, and will connect old Kabul Road with Ofyan-e Sharif Road in Charikar.

“The building of this road is going to make a lot of jobs available to the Afghan locals in these areas,” said Sakhi Shakori, the engineer for the contracting company. “I feel this is going to make a good impact in the life of the people in Afghanistan.”

“We require 70 percent of the labor to be given to the local nationals,” said Andersen. “So, it makes it a huge benefit in terms of employment.”

There are three major benefits that this road is going to have on the Afghan people, said Abdul Jabar Taqwa, the governor of the Parwan province.

“First, it is going to create direct transit from Kabul to north Parwan, creating better access to areas,” said Taqwa. “Secondly, the business in the areas in between there and here will increase; third, the cities will grow and flourish creating a better life for the Afghan people.”

The new road will also create opportunity for better communication.

“(Afghanistan) is very much a verbal society and radio coverage is spotty in areas, so information travels mainly by word of mouth,” said Andersen. “As people have more access back and forth between communities, I think information will have a chance to flow better, and the government will have the ability to get their key messages out to the people better.”

The PRT is involved in seeing that the right things are being done in the right areas of these provinces and support these projects fully when done properly and honestly.

“We are a major funding source for a lot of these projects,” said Andersen. “We try to take the approach of behind the scene players though, so that we can let the Afghanistan people get out there and make more of their own decisions.”

Allowing the Afghans to take charge of such projects saves American taxpayers money, said Anderson.

“We actually reduced the amount of this contract by an estimated \$500,000 based on what we expected the bids to be priced out at,” he explained.

This is a very positive thing, and is the first time the PRT has gone out of its way to work with the elected officials, the people’s voice, and it’s really going to build the future in the Afghan government’s credibility with the Afghans as we move forward, said Anderson.

This road is estimated to be completed within 180 days.

New road brings prosperity to Afghan province

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

By Air Force Capt. Jillian Torango
Task Force Cincinnatus Public Affairs

More than 1,000 people attended the groundbreaking ceremony for a new \$6 million road in Barak, Bazarak District, Panjshir province, May 28.

During the ceremony, Afghan officials from the highest levels of government discussed the critical importance of the road, which will extend from Barak to Khenj, to Panjshir and to all of Afghanistan.

Ahmad Zia Massoud, Afghanistan's first vice president and the brother of famed Panjshir martyr and Afghan national hero Ahmad Shah Massoud, was the main speaker during the hour-long ceremony. The ceremony was held adjacent to the construction site.

Massoud, as well as other dignitaries from the Afghan Parliament, local government and the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team, spoke to the crowd about the history of Panjshir and the benefits the new 18-kilometer stretch of paved road will bring to the people in the central reaches of the province.

"This road provides two main benefits to the people of Panjshir," said Mohammad Tarik, former Khenj district manager. "The finished road will help people sustain and improve their lives in the future, provide a lot of near-term jobs and the people of Panjshir will be paid for their work."

Massoud spoke on the subject.

"I am very happy that we will have more vehicular traffic and increased construction projects in this beautiful valley of Panjshir," said Massoud. "One of my brother's hopes was that one day there would be construction in Panjshir and that he would see a paved road that would improve the lives of the people here. We are seeing that now in the Panjshir valley and I know that we are making my brother's dream come true."

Another of Ahmed Shah Massoud's hopes was to connect Panjshir with the other provinces of Afghanistan.

"This portion of the paved road will take us up to the Khenj District Center," Massoud explained. "We wish to have the third part of the road to Paryan built after this portion is constructed and then, someday connect Panjshir to Badakshan and then to Tajikistan. "We think that the Panjshir road will be very popular route from Kabul to Tajikistan when it is fully complete."

Professor Mohammed Yousef, Engineer from Unique Construction Company, the contractor building the road, agreed with the first vice president.

"This is a new step for the reconstruction in Afghanistan," said Yousef. "The road is very important for connecting the villages and provinces of Afghanistan together; it will be the artery that carries the lifeblood throughout Afghanistan."

The lifeblood of Afghanistan is not only its people, but its economic capacity. Often, travel time is a hindrance to development.

"The road not only offers greater access to Kabul, providing economic security for the people of Panjshir, it also brings quicker and easier access to lifesaving providers such as ambulances and the Afghan National Police," said Air Force Lt. Col. Russell T. Kaskel, Panjshir PRT commander.

Tarik focused on the fact that this road represents more than the solution to a lot of basic transportation problems. In the eyes of Afghans, it represents freedom and independence.

"This road is important because the people of Afghanistan want freedom," he explained. "So many other oppressed places in the world such as Berlin and the former USSR re-



ceived their freedom, and now we can add Afghanistan to that list.

"We have had to fight for so long," continued Tarik, mentioning the past 30 years of struggle. "We no longer have to do that here in Panjshir. I promise, as a representative of Khenj, that as we fought hard these past 30 years, we'll work just as hard to help the construction company build this road and make it a success."

Success for the Panjshir road means success for the country as a whole.

"Security is the responsibility of all Afghans and the economy causes a lot of the security issues," said Massoud. "This road will create economic capacity if the people of Afghanistan work and try to make a good economic situation for themselves. We have many needs and we can't solve all of the problems of the people, but if we stand united we will succeed."

The two-lane road is scheduled to be completed March 2009.



Idaho Guardsmen train Afghan National Police

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Jessica R. Dahlberg
382nd Public Affairs Detachment

A team of deployed Idaho Army National Guardsmen, working as a Police Mentoring Team, travel throughout Parwan province, Afghanistan, to train and advise the Afghanistan National Police.

As part of the training, the Guardsmen conducted traffic-control-point and vehicle-search classes, June 3.

“If the Afghanistan Police stay on the same track they are on now, in five years, I see them being full capable of functioning on their own,” said Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Junier, PMT member.

Junier has previous training as a military police investigator and 20 years of civilian police force experience, which qualified him to train the ANP.

“My previous experiences fall right in line with the training I give the ANP,” said Junier. “The ANP want to do a good job. They are willing to put in the time and effort it takes to train.”

Before they practiced searching a vehicle, the ANP attended a class taught by Junier. After that, the ANP performed a mock vehicle search on one of their work trucks.

“They receive the training from us, afterwards the ANP trainers can develop a pro-



gram,” said Army Maj. Miguel Lopez, PMT leader.

The training the ANP receives is like baby steps, it keeps building on top of what they already learned, said Lopez.

Last week we gave the ANP mirrors to check under cars with. This week we’re teaching them how to search a vehicle inside and out. Next week we’re going to teach them what to do if they find an object in the vehicle, said Lopez.

The Idaho Guardsmen each have a different way of conducting business, but when you combine their skills they make for a productive team, said Lopez.



Soldiers test new off-road prototypes

Story and photo by Army Sgt. Jessica L. Sheldon
382nd Public Affairs Detachment

Afghanistan is a country made of natural barriers like mountains and valleys, which make it difficult for Coalition forces to maneuver through the terrain. Recently, Soldiers from Combined Task Force Currahee test drove a new vehicle that could help alleviate their maneuverability constraints.

The Enhanced Logistic Off-Road Vehicle may be the answer to navigating Afghanistan's rugged terrain.

Three prototypes are currently being tested. The terrain in Afghanistan is made up of rocks, which make supply routes, evacuation and basic ground transportation difficult and slow.

"This vehicle was brought on as an operational need," said Charlie Copsey, one of the engineers that built the ELSORV. "Rapid Equipment Force funded the building of the prototypes."

All three prototypes are currently in Afghanistan so Soldiers can learn how they handle the terrain. Over the last year, the ELSORVs went through operational assessments in the U.S. and now they are here for a real-world assessment by the Soldiers who could end up using the vehicles.

"The ELSORV is unlike any other military vehicle I've driven, it goes where ever you want it to go," said Army Sgt. Lance Davis, one of the

test drivers.

According to Copsey, ELSORVs can carry 2,700 pounds, and have modified humvee engines that can conquer approach angles of 90 degrees and climb slopes at 80 degrees.

"As long as they have power going to one of the wheels, they're going to stay mobile," said Copsey.

The ELSORVs allows Soldiers to go over obstacles without getting hung up on the undercarriage. The vehicle can go 90 miles per hour safely on a hard surface.

"The best place for these vehicles is here in Afghanistan," said Davis.



German Army conducts efforts to s

Story and photos by Air Force Staff Sgt. Ian Carrier
American Forces Network - Afghanistan

German Army soldiers of the Provincial Reconstruction Team, Feyzabad, are striving to bring the three pillars of security, governance and reconstruction to the area in and around the capital city of Badakhshan province.

On June 4, members of Protection Company conducted a presence patrol through the city of Feyzabad itself. The patrol was conducted with the cooperation of the local Afghan National Police. German Army Master Sgt. Andreas Z., Mobile Observation Liaison Team platoon leader, explained the mission.

“The main goal was to do a joint mission with the ANP,” said Andreas. “The first aim was to show the people we are here. The second aim is to provide security. The third aim is to show the people that we are conducting the patrols with their own security forces.”

After linking up with the ANP, the soldiers patrolled the village from one end to the other, down the main street and through the main market. Occasionally a villager would say hello. Children would ask for water or to have their picture taken.

“From my point of view, the people are quite lucky we’re doing these joint patrols,” explained Andreas. “It makes them feel safer, and the reaction is good.”

From time to time many people have expressed their gratitude to the German soldiers for being there, said Andreas. Occasionally, there are bad reactions, but that is unusual, he said.

“My aim is to provide security for people, that people have freedom and feel safe,” said Andreas. “If these things happen, everything else will run better.”

The next day, a Civil Military Cooperation team conducted a multi-pronged mission in the area northwest of Feyzabad.

A convoy of German vehicles set out early in the morning on a road along the river Kokcha. The road is as rugged, dusty and hazardous as any in Afghanistan. The river cuts through a valley that is lush and greener than most. The river not only brings life to the area, but is also a major source of problems.

In the spring and summer, when the snow and ice melts off of the mountains, the river rises greatly and becomes a rushing torrent. Riverbanks are eroded, and anything that has been planted close to the water is washed away.

The first stop for this day’s mission was the village of Quara Kamar. This is one of such places where the river is destroying crops. The CMIC team delivered over 120 Gabions to the village, carried on the back of a 7 ton truck. Gabions are similar to HESCO barriers. They are heavy wire baskets which can be filled with rocks and placed along the river to prevent erosion and flooding.

“The village elder requested Gabions from CMIC,” said German 2nd Lt. Sven L., leader of Liaison Monitoring Team 4. “CMIC paid for the Gabions and we’ve delivered them. The

villagers will set them up and fill them with stones,” he said.

During a key leader engagement with Sven, the village elder also discussed the building of a school for the village in the future. A German organization will pay for the building and build the structure.

Aside from the rising Kokcha River, the other main problem along the route is the road construction. The road along the river is being improved and widened, a much needed improvement to the infrastructure in the area, but many homes and other buildings have been destroyed to make way for the new road.

Such is the case in Eska Salm, where the village school is in ruins due to the construction. The second phase of the mission was to perform reconnaissance in the village, scouting for a location to erect a school tent that will be donated at a later date.

The CMIC team found a sufficient flat area near the river, said Sven. The tent will accommodate the village’s 25 students and one teacher.

Also, in Eska Salm, German Command Sgt. Major Gunther E., Military Police special investigator, handed out shoes and clothes that were donated by his children.

The last stop for the day is Samatee. The CMIC team will donate four tents for a school annex for children who live in the hills. The team performed a recon on the trails into the hills and judged that vehicles could not negotiate the paths. Therefore, the tents will be delivered by donkey to an area roughly one hour into the hills. The grounds of the Samatee school will lose some area to the encroaching road expansion, but luckily the school house will not be affected, said Sven.

The CMIC team had also donated computers, a printer and a generator to the school.

“It is not important for us to bring gifts,” said Sven. “... But it is important for me that there is someone there to listen to their problems. It is important to know what is in people’s hearts and minds.

“The main problems here are schools, drinkable water and infrastructure,” added Sven. “We can look for solutions to problems or speak to someone from the district or higher level person [to get a resolution to the problem].”

Many schools are not registered, explained Sven, therefore they do not receive money from the government. This is one of the problems the German CMIC teams are working to resolve.

Sven continued by stating that though CMIC does donate things, it is not a charity organization. One of the main goals is to work between people and their own provincial council.

As with the rest of Afghanistan, the eventual aim is to have Afghans helping Afghans without the help of foreign intervention. The security and CMIC teams of the German Army are working with the people and government of Badakhshan province to help make this a reality.

stabilize Feyzabad region

Civil Military Cooperation Core Functions

1. Support to the Force. Any activity designed to create support for the military force from within the indigenous population.
2. Civil-Military Liaison. Coordination and joint planning with civilian agencies in support of the mission.
3. Support to the Civil Environment. The provision of any of a variety of forms of assistance (expertise, information, security, infrastructure, capacity-building, etc.) to the local population in support of the military mission.



Afghan women heard at medical engagement

By Air Force Capt. Jillian Torango
Task Force Cincinnatus Public Affairs

During a medical engagement in the remote village of Dah Khawak, Afghanistan, May 29, 48 burqa-clad women found their voices as they were treated by female healthcare providers; some for the first time.

Each appointment started out the same. A local Afghan woman came into the woman's clinic, removed the all-concealing blue burqa and sat down in front of a female healthcare provider. Two of the female healthcare providers are assigned to the Cooperative Medical Assistance Team at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan.

Once in the clinic, a female interpreter welcomed each patient and asked her about her health concerns. Almost all the women echoed the same complaints: headaches and pains in their kidneys and backs. Each thought her pains came from drinking the local water. Because of this belief, the women limit themselves to drinking less than one cup of fresh water per day.

Many of the women brought their young children, some were still breastfeeding. They didn't understand why their children were small and not seeming to grow.

Navy Chief Petty Officer Quala McGhee, a CMA provider deployed from Great Lakes, Ill., handled those issues. Through her interpreter, McGhee tried to explain that the women and their children were all malnourished and suffered from severe cases of dehydration. She then provided them with prenatal vitamins so both the mother and the child would benefit from the extra vitamins and nutrients.

The Afghan women all started with common complaints, but once they were comfortable with the healthcare provider, their real medical issues or concerns were voiced, said Navy Cmdr. Betsy Myhre, a nurse practitioner deployed from the U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington, D.C.

"These women come to us with basic

health complaints, but once we address those issues, we have an opportunity to assess them further and identify other women's health issues that can be treated and improve their overall health," said Myhre. "This might be the only opportunity these Afghan women have to be seen by women providers. We can consult with them and let them know their issues are important to us."

The engagements empower women by giving them an opportunity to seek care for themselves and discuss their health issues in confidence with a women's healthcare provider, said Myhre.

"We discuss their issue and if there is a health problem that requires a capac-



U.S. Air Force photo by Capt Jillian Torango

ity we don't have available, [like] radiology or surgery, we explain the issue and write a referral to the local Ministry of Public Health hospital or the Egyptian Hospital on Bagram," said Myhre.

Typically, once the referral has been written, most of the women find a way to get to an Afghan doctor to be seen.

Medical engagements are also an opportunity to get the local Afghan medical providers involved. McGhee said that by having local medical providers partner with the Coalition providers, they are building capacity as well.

"Working side-by-side with local Afghan health care providers helps ensure that follow up medical care will occur in the communities where we do provide medical care," McGhee said.

Local providers might also then be able to assist with basic tasks such as

providing immunizations or teaching about the importance of good hygiene. During the medical engagement, CMA teams brought teaching aids produced by The U.S. Agency for International Development, the organization responsible for most non-military foreign aid. The CMA teams also enlisted local Afghan health care workers to teach the women in line for the clinic. Every opportunity was used to incorporate Afghan health care workers into the medical engagement and teach the patients.

Both Myhre and McGhee agreed the conservative posture of Panjshir province could potentially limit the amount of interaction they could have with their patients. Still, this medical engagement was much more permissive than their last.

"The great thing about Panjshir is that the women are coming to the medical engagements and we are able to treat them," said Myhre, who just returned from a 14-day engagement in another province.

"The men from our last engagement didn't allow their women to be seen by the U.S. forces and they had to remain inside their houses until our mission was over," said Myhre, who fought hard for the

women to be seen at that earlier engagement, but the village elders staunchly said no. Even though the practitioners were not able to treat women at that engagement, the door may be opened to allow it in the future.

"One man said to me that when the Coalition forces first arrived in the village, he didn't know if we were there to do good or bad," she explained. "But after he saw how we took care of their children, he and the other men knew that we were there for good — that's just one small thing we bring to the fight."

It is a combination of logistical and cultural factors that make these medical engagements critical.

"There are so many people who will

See *Medical Engagement* page 13

Expecting the unexpected

Note: This story is the third in a series on life at Forward Operating Base Lion in the Panjshir province in northeastern Afghanistan. The relationship between the Provincial Reconstruction Team, local government and the people, allows the PRT to live and work as members of the community.

Story and photos by Air Force Master Sgt. Collen McGee
American Forces Network -- Afghanistan

After a hike up a ravine, above a small village in the Panjshir Valley the team headed down the hill, back through the small village. They had just seen a location for a reservoir proposed by the local community development council. This visit isn't over. The Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team members have something for the village children.

Army Sergeant First Class Michael Granville, a civil affairs specialist, asks about the availability of school for the children as the group returns from the hike.

"In this village is a school serving the children from first to third grade," he is told by one of the elders of the community development council. "(There are) about 60 students, half girls, half boys."

He is also told that there is a school for the next level that is a shared school and the high school is a cooperative for about 11 villages. Not many of the girls go on to high school as the culture is still very traditional in its views. Those who do continue mostly become teachers at schools for girls.

"How many students are in the high school?" asks Granville.

"More than 1,000," is the answer.

"How many teachers and what subjects?" asks Granville.

"14 or 15 teachers, the basic subjects but books are still a mystery," said the elder. In the weeks ahead, about 15 million textbooks, printed in the Dari, Farsi and English languages, will begin making their way from Kabul, Afghanistan, to the nation's schools.

Granville said that the children go to school in two, four-hour shifts.

The elders, Granville and the rest of the PRT continue their walk and their easy conversation until they reach the road just outside the village.

The team brought a load of backpacks and coloring books from the International Security Assistance Force. Children come out of almost every open door, followed by fathers and grandfathers. The mothers remain out of sight. Smiling children of every size appear from all directions and line up on one side of the road. They are a colorful collection wearing bright pink scarves and floral print dresses; shades of blue, white and brown.

"The children are the real hope for this country because they are open and friendly and have such obvious hope," said Air Force Senior Airman Brandon Armstrong, a driver with the PRT.

One little boy, no more than three-years-old, couldn't

keep up with his legs and ended up in an unhappy and unexpected position. The boy fell; face first, into the gravel of the road. Pieces of dirt and gravel embedded in his chin and he suffered a small cut on his forehead.

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Dawn Tiemann, a medical technician with the team, and Granville took care of the boy's injuries.

"He's such a brave little guy," said Tiemann. "I just want to hug him."

And as the little boy bravely tries not to let out any tears, she does, letting her instincts as a mother come out while she cleans the little boy's chin.

Once the first aid is done, Tiemann hands the boy over to his father who has a coloring book and a backpack ready for his son.

"Look," she said, pointing to the chin of the father and the bandage on the boy. "Now you have a beard just like your Daddy."

Mission morph is nothing new for the members of the PRT.

"As you can see, a reconnaissance mission can easily turn into a school supply drop and then into a medical mission," said Capt. Jillian Torango the PRT's Information Operations officer. "We plan out each mission in advance and try to ensure that we have the right mix of folks on each one."

There is usually a medical technician and a civil affairs specialist on each trip.

"While we don't ever want to have to use our medical technician's skills, it's great to have them around on days like today where they could help that little boy's quality of life," said Torango. "And, if you think about it, everything we do involves community interaction so, our civil affairs technicians are always helpful no matter what type of mission we're on."

Due to the number of missions and amount of community interaction by each member of the Panjshir PRT, they all get to stretch their experience and earn new skills.

"By the time this PRT's tour is over, I'm pretty sure we'll



Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command provides fitness anywhere kits for deployed Soldiers

Story and photos by Tim Hippias
FMWRC Public Affairs

Less space than needed to park a Jeep, a sturdy mount and a willing body are all it takes to perform hundreds of exercises that help build strength, balance and core stability with a TRX Suspension Trainer Force Training Kit.

The Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command purchased 3,205 of the kits for deployed Soldiers to get complete-body workouts wherever they can find a beam, doorway or tree limb to anchor the resistance-training device. Soldiers already have mounted several of the systems to Humvees, tanks and cargo crates.

MWR employees at Fort Belvoir, Va., will send 205 of the combat-boot-sized systems to Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the recreation kits for deployed troops. Three-thousand more were issued to Army units for a pilot program at Fort Bragg, N.C., where about 100 Soldiers volunteered for train-the-trainer clinics with instructors from Fitness Anywhere, Inc.

Those Soldiers, in turn, will train other Soldiers in their respective units, which will be issued more of the systems before deploying to the Middle East.

"I'm never going to walk away from free weights, but for somebody that wants to maintain, especially during deployment, it's great," Army Sgt. Wes Bard said after completing a 3-hour,

train-the-trainer session at Fort Bragg. "I was doing the chest-press, and compared to a bench-press, it's working all those little stability muscles. It's a lot harder."

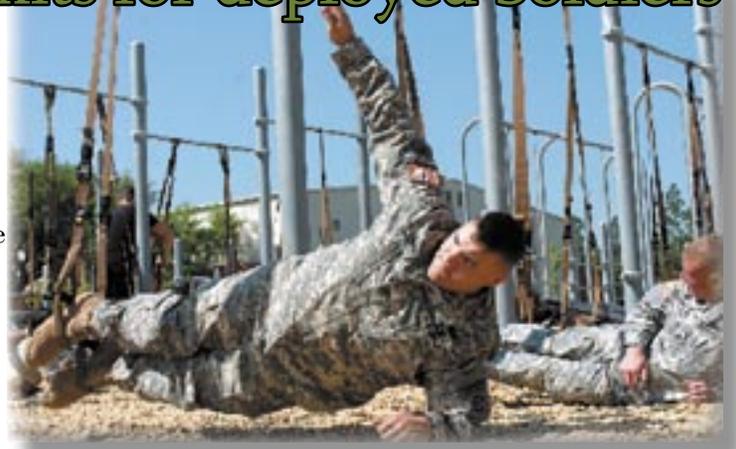
Bard, a 6-foot tall, 260-pound former football player, wrestler, and track and field competitor from York, Pa., who tossed high school girls high into the air as a competition cheerleader, said he would use this system – even if free weights were available.

"There's no doubt at all," Bard said. "Don't be fooled by its appearance. I walked out here and looked at it and thought: 'Yeah, I think pretty much anybody could figure out how to rig it up and use it.'"

"But don't think it's going to be a cakewalk. It works the core great. And because we run every day, I really liked using it for the legs because you want to keep your legs in shape but you don't want to add mass. Weight training for your legs isn't really going to help you with the distances we run."

Army commanders already have requested more of the kits, which include a quick-start guide, basic training DVD, 12-week strength and cardio training manual and a mesh carry bag.

"Our missions take our Soldiers worldwide in some of the most austere environments," a mission commander wrote in an e-mail to Janet Mackinnon, the acting sports, fitness and aquatics director at FMWRC in Alexandria, Va. "In the past we have been taking bulky equipment with the unit, or in some cases, actually building equipment from existing materi-



als. We think the TRX will fit the bill for our command's fitness needs."

Mackinnon has been down this road before. In 2004, she began issuing troops a much simpler workout tool called Army Fitness Deployed, a resistance-training kit that consisted of a strand of elastic tubing in a pocket-sized package. She sent more than 680,000 of those kits to Army units and Soldiers around the world.

"I wanted to do something that is the next evolution, if you will, that's a more intense workout for the people that really need it and just don't have access to the other things," she said.

Mackinnon is excited about this pilot program, and hopes to expand its scope.

"I can only do as much as the funding allows me to do," she said. "Basically, I want to make sure this is worth it. Do the Soldiers like it? Are they getting a good workout? Are they also getting some recreation in?"

The Fitness Anywhere folks believe their system is the answer.

"This could be an unprecedented launch of awareness into the Army on suspension training and the TRX," said Ken Taylor, a former Navy SEAL who helped instruct the train-the-trainer clinics at Fort Bragg. He knows firsthand how difficult it is to train in the field and can't wait to see the reactions of the Soldiers using total-resistance training.

"All the credit goes to Janet Mackinnon," Taylor said. "She took a step in the direction of change for the Army



and this piece of equipment. Fitness Anywhere, TRX and suspension training has been taking off in a variety of different channels – from professional sports to collegiate sports programs to the club industry.

“There are hundreds of servicemembers that on their own have recognized the value of the suspension training and have been purchasing these via our Web site.”

The Soldiers at Fort Bragg were delighted to receive the training and experience the full-body effects of a TRX workout.

“It was a big surprise to just see how much stuff we could do,” Army Sgt. Tavares Wilson said. “Not just the different exercises, but the different exercises for every body part. I’m going to go home and show it to my wife and we’re going to work out at home. This will save us some trips to the gym.”

Wilson, 23, who deployed to Baghdad in 2004-05 and Balad in 2006-07, said the TRX system couldn’t replace working with free weights, but it could supplement his regimen. He said the MWR gyms on developed bases in Iraq were “top-of-the-line.”

“Once MWR got up and running, the facilities were outstanding,” said Wilson, who added that isn’t always the case in forward operating camps. “I personally love the gym, so I’m not going to stay out of it. But this definitely will give it some competition. Say I want to do a two-a-day workout: in the

morning, I would go to the gym; and my second workout would be this.

“This is definitely a gym right here.”

That’s music to the ears of TRX inventor Randy Hetrick, a former Navy SEAL.

“The success of the TRX is way beyond anything I’ve ever envisioned that it could become, and that’s pretty cool,” Hetrick said.

TRX instructors have conducted orientations at Fort Jackson, S.C.; Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; Fort Riley, Kan.; Fort Benning, Ga.; Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; and Fort Richardson, Alaska.

“This is a paradigm shift because Soldiers usually only have the ground to work out off of when they’re doing something out in the field, or in a remote or outdoor location and there’s not a whole lot of variety available to them when they’re going to do an exercise,” Taylor said. “With this one piece of equipment, the idea that you can vary the amount of resistance you have for any exercise, do hundreds of exercises and all do it from a single anchor point is actually kind of overwhelming and can be daunting just trying to remember everything.

“If they grasp the main principles and the main concepts of what we were trying to put out today, I have a great feeling that they’re going to be really successful using the TRX and remain injury-free at the same time.”

Taylor says wounded Soldiers are prime candidates for using resistance

training because it can help them throughout the progression of an exercise.

New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees used a TRX to rehabilitate his injured shoulder.

“It’s just your body weight working against gravity, so you won’t get injured,” Brees said. Now my wife uses one at home, and I’m addicted.”

“That would be a big reason for a wounded warrior to be able to do this injury-free,” Taylor said. “And maybe one of the Soldiers’ idols or sports heroes is using suspension training and it’s something they can relate to.”

NFL stars LaDainian Tomlinson, Reggie Bush and Carson Palmer use the TRX system, as do NBA players Carmelo Anthony, Corey Maggette, Pat Garrity and MLB’s Jamie Moyer and Justin Morneau, among others.

“As one of the oldest players in Major League Baseball, I find the TRX to be a good addition to my workouts,” said Moyer, 45, a pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies. “I will definitely use the TRX as part of my conditioning.”

The NHL’s Carolina Hurricanes and San Jose Sharks are both using the TRX, as are the NCAA’s Ohio State Buckeyes.

Mackinnon likes adding the U.S. Army to that lineup.

“I’m very proud that MWR took the initiative to do this,” she said. “It’s really reaching Soldiers directly, and I know it will have a positive impact.”

Medical Engagement

Continued from page 10

not receive any medical care just because they are in remote locations like here in Dah Khawak,” said McGhee. “It’s not only providing on-the-spot medical care, it’s providing medical and hygiene education to help prevent medical problems from happening during those times when no care is available.”

Myhre said that women’s health starts with nine- or ten-year-old girls and education is the key.

“We can teach them hygiene at an early age and they’ll use that information and have those habits for a lifetime,” said Myhre. “If we can treat a child for malnutrition issues, and also teach the mothers about the need for proper hydration and nutrition for the sake of their babies, then we can start to decrease infant mortality rates here in Afghanistan.”

Both providers note the need to continue augmenting the local medical capacity with these medical engagements.

“As we are seeing the patients, it gives us an opportunity to get a really good assessment of the village from the patient’s point of view,” said Myhre.

They can assess everything from the distance to the nearest basic health center; if there are International or non-governmental organizations providing healthcare in the local area; the propensity for domestic violence and the need for infant vaccination clinics. This information is then included in the after action reports and relayed to the Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health representatives in that area.

By assisting local health-care providers through medical engagements, the CMA team can ensure Afghan women are provided for and continue building capacity within the Ministry of Public Health.

“You have to improve the mother’s overall health status, otherwise the children of Afghanistan will never have a fighting chance to succeed,” said Myhre.

Photos From the Field

Courtesy photo



Army Gen. David D. McKiernan, International Security Assistance Force commander, shakes hands with Brig. Gen. Francesco Arena, Regional Command-West commander, during a visit to RC-W, June 15.



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

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U.S. Navy photo by MC1 John Collins



An Afghan National Army Air Corps AN-32 cargo plane makes a successful landing after completing the first International Security Assistance Force mission by the Afghan National Army Air Corps. The flight departed Kabul Thursday morning to deliver supplies to another ISAF base and returned later that morning to Kabul with a cargo bay filled with ISAF supplies.

U.S. Army photo By Sgt. Zach Otto



Army Col. Jon K. Buonerba, the 401st Army Field Support Brigade commander and Army Col. Dennis Thompson, the former 401st commander, along with other Soldiers, prepare to transfer responsibilities and the colors of the 401st.

U.S. Army photo by Tech. Sgt. Kevin Wallace



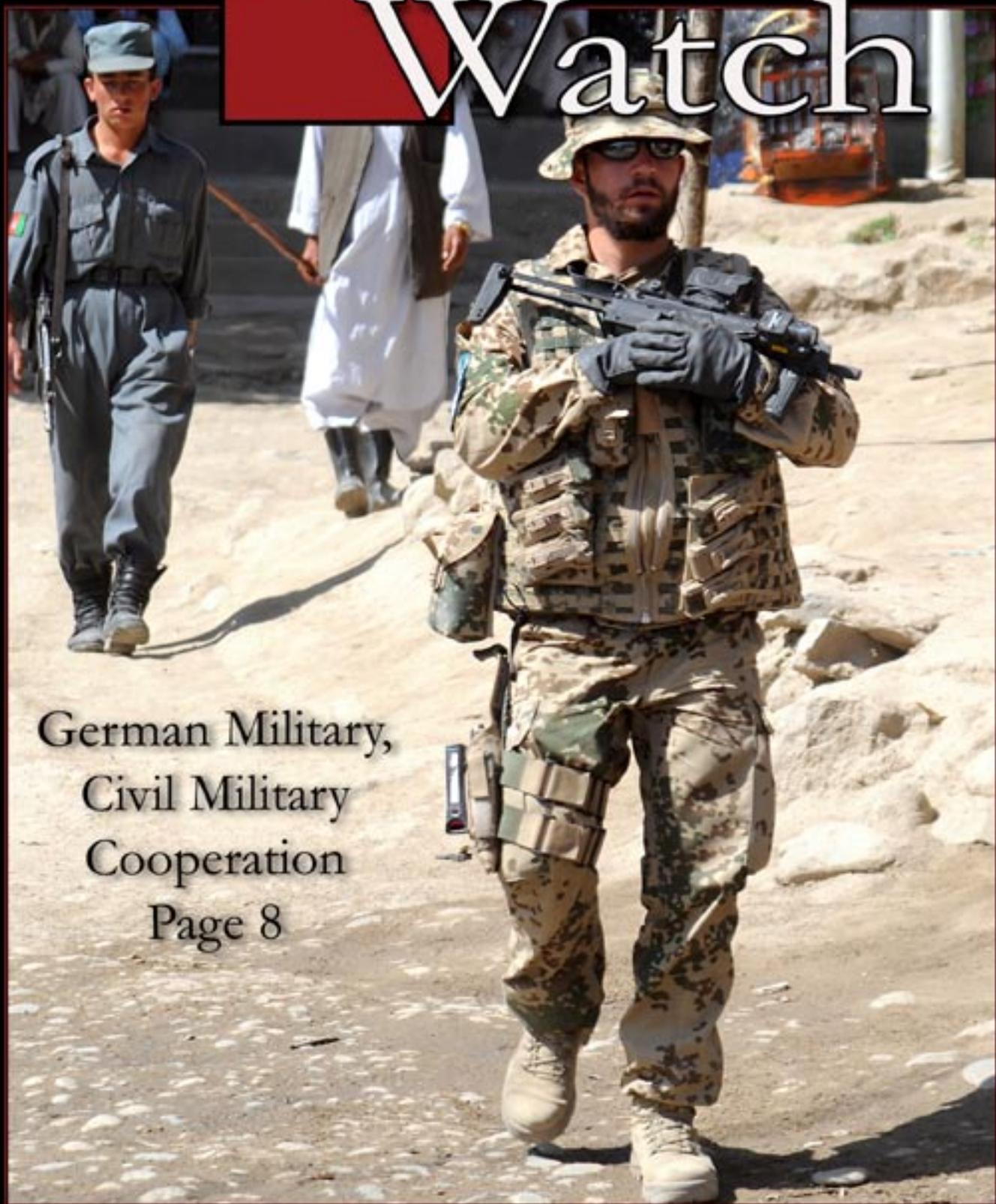
Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey J. Schloesser, Combined Joint Task Force-101 commander, Army Pfc. Giselle Howard and Command Sgt. Maj. Vincent F. Camacho, CJTF-101 command sergeant major, cut the Army 233rd birthday cake at a dining facility on Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, June 24.



June 23, 2008

Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN



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