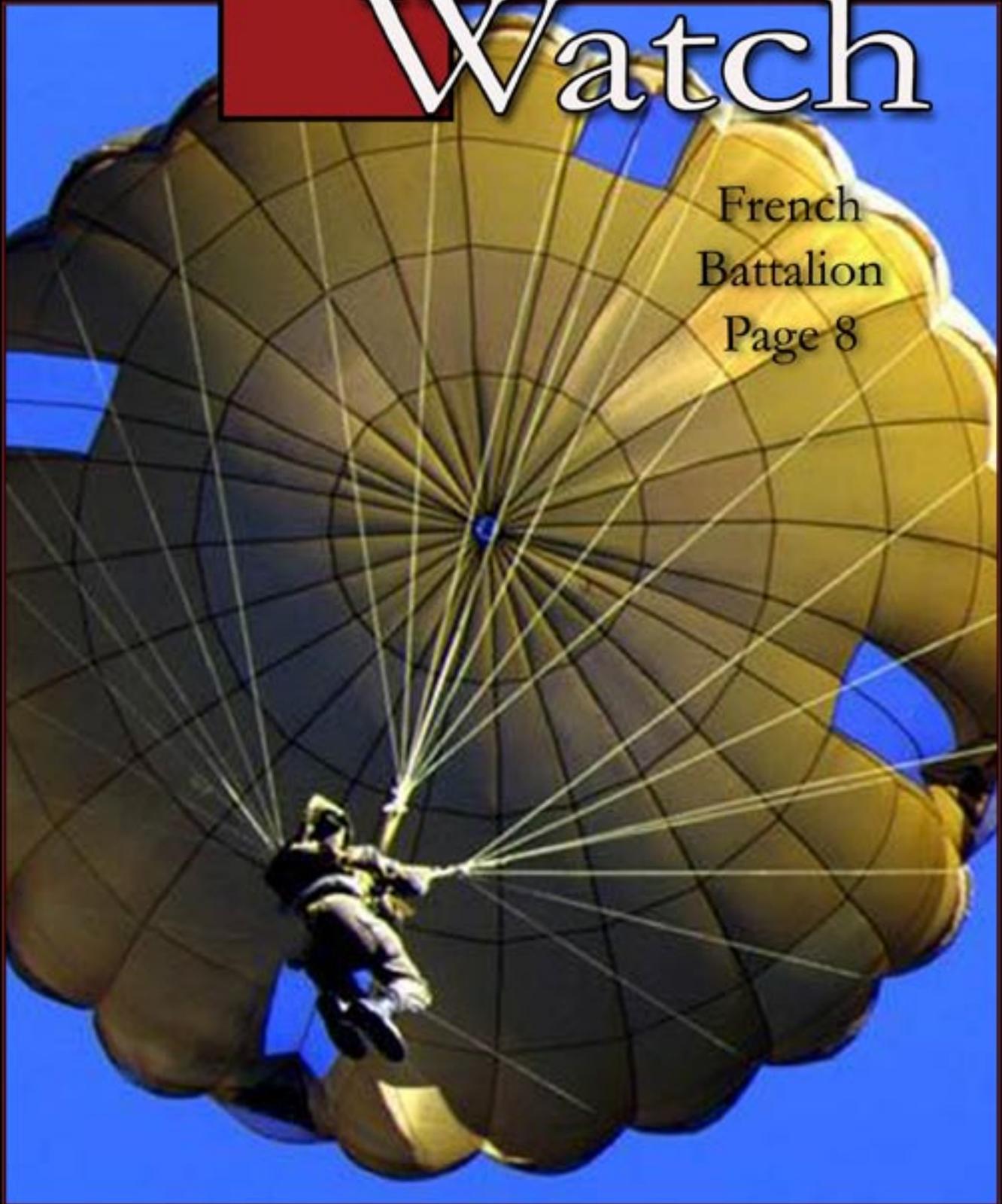


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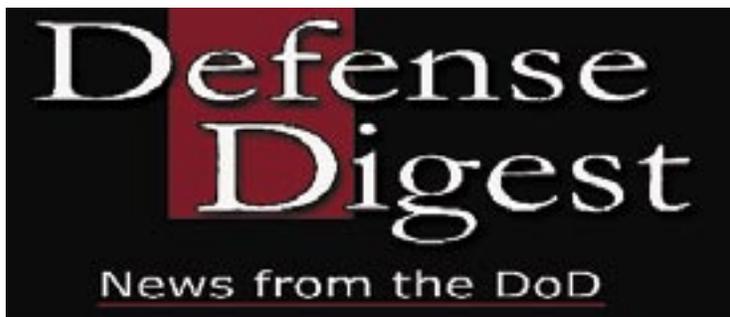
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Fallen Comrade ■ 49ers ■ Ready, Aim, Fire



Reports detail progress in Afghan Security, National Forces

By John J. Kruzal
American Forces Press Service

A pair of Defense Department reports published today on Afghanistan describe progress with regard to the country's security and national forces.

The studies, which analyzed results of Operation Enduring Freedom through March, were mandated by Congress and represent the first installment of what are slated to be semi-annual progress updates.

The Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan depicts a fragile security environment in much of the country. It concludes, however, that Coalition forces' counterinsurgency approach has demonstrated how a hybrid of military and nonmilitary resources can create stability and connect Afghan citizens to their government.

Underscoring the fragility of the situation in Afghanistan and its tendency for rapid change is the fact that some of the report's assertions about security success, based on information available several months ago and earlier, no longer are as solid as once believed.

For instance, the report highlights Khowst province in eastern Afghanistan as an example of a once-troubled region transformed by counterinsurgency operations.

"Khowst was once considered ungovernable and one of the most dangerous provinces in Afghanistan," the report states. "Today, tangible improvements in security, governance, reconstruction and development are being made."

But Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates expressed concern that attacks in NATO's Regional Command East section of Afghanistan, which includes Khowst province, rose 40 percent from January to May.

Gates, in a news conference, attributed the rise in violence to militants using Pakistan's North West Frontier Province as a staging ground for launching attacks in Afghanistan. The report does not identify threats emanating from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, which Gates called a recent phenomenon, as a primary security challenge.

Challenges outlined in the report include the narcotics trade and the Taliban. The militants regrouped after their fall from power and have coalesced into a resilient insurgen-

cy, according to the report, which notes a rise in insurgent violence in 2007. More than 6,500 people died as a result of suicide attacks, roadside bombs and combat-related violence, it said.

Despite coalition success in combating them, Taliban operatives are likely to maintain or even increase the scope and pace of terrorist attacks and bombings in 2008, the report concludes.

"The Taliban will challenge the control of the Afghan government in rural areas, especially in the south and east," it states. "The Taliban will also probably attempt to increase its presence in the west and north."

The security report credits a plus-up of U.S. forces over the spring, reinforcing Afghan and international forces' momentum, and for enabling the Afghan national security forces to grow quickly – from 70,000 to 80,000 army personnel by 2010.

Meanwhile, the report states, the deployment of a U.S. Marine Corps Marine Air Ground Task Force is bolstering the ability of NATO's International Security Assistance Forces to maneuver troops in Regional Command South.

The other security and stability highlights outlined in the report are:

- The Afghan National Army took the lead in more than 30 significant operations at the time of the report, and the force demonstrated increasing competence, effectiveness and professionalism.

- Since 2001, Afghanistan has made significant progress rebuilding its national political institutions. Afghans wrote and passed a new constitution in 2004, 8.1 million people voted in the nation's first presidential election, and 6.4 million voters helped reestablish the National Assembly after 32 years without a legislature.

- The gross domestic product, per capita income and foreign direct investment all are up since 2001. Afghanistan's domestic revenues have grown considerably, and international reserves have nearly doubled since 2004.

Key points from the report titled, "United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghanistan National Security Forces" include:

- The capabilities of the Afghan National Army are improving steadily, with a long-term army posture that also may include a more robust army air corps capability and a larger force.

- The Afghan National Police force is making steady progress, but its capabilities still lag behind those of the national army. The current police force has not been sufficiently reformed or developed to a level at which it can adequately perform its security and policing mission; however, coalition governments are working to improve the police capabilities, with a target force size of 82,000 personnel.

- An independent, capable army and police are critical to counterinsurgency effort, thus it is crucial that coalition partners dedicate the necessary resources and personnel to ensure that the mission to develop the Afghan national security forces is a success.

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COVER: This summer a new
French battalion will be deployed
in Kapisa province side by side with
the US Task Force Gladiator. This
TF 700 will be mainly manned by
the “8e Régiment de Parachutistes
d’Infanterie de Marine.” (Courtesy
photo) See related story on page 8.

BACK COVER: Nazia, an Afghan
toddler from Gardez, sits in the lap
of a family member at the Craig Joint
Theater Hospital on Bagram Air Field,
Afghanistan, June 16, after receiving
throat surgery. Nazia swallowed a bat-
tery, which corroded in her throat. (U.S.
Army photo by Pvt. Tamara Gabbard)

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Special Operations Warriors carry on fight in western Afghanistan

By Army Spc. Anna Perry

Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force- Afghanistan

Courtesy photo

The United States Special Operations Command has a reputation for being comprised of the most capable warriors in the world, men who have the amazing ability to switch from being relentless fighters to compassionate peacekeepers in the blink of an eye. If a complex mission needs to be accomplished, this fighting force will do it under any circumstances.

The mission given to a Marine Special Operations and a U.S. Army Special Forces team on May 28, was no different, and was subsequently carried out with the same grit and audacity that makes the Special Operations Forces a legendary and revered fighting force.

A Special Forces team leader, who participated in the mission, agreed to provide an insightful glimpse into the daily lives of the extraordinary American warriors who are changing the course of history by assisting with the development of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

“I love this profession ... I have fought in Iraq once and Afghanistan twice now and, yes, I believe it is for a good cause,” the team leader said.

What follows is a description of the



events of May 28, in western Afghanistan's Farah Province.

The MARSOF and USSF team, partnered with an Afghan Commando element. They left a coalition base in the evening to reinforce Afghan National Army elements who had already spent hours under fire in the village of Kanask.

The Commandos are an elite Afghan unit trained by SOF warriors. Despite having existed only one year, the Commandos' reputation for unwavering discipline, adherence to the Law of

War, and unprecedented success preceded them wherever they go.

After driving for hours under the cover of darkness, the teams received word that an enemy leader was located in the town of Shewan. The element diverted there to search that person's last known location. During the operation, a number of insurgents were seen moving to advantageous firing positions. Coalition aircraft immediately responded with precision air strikes that neutralized the enemy.

The teams continued to move and linked up with the friendly forces. While enroute, they were diverted to clear another village. Several more armed militants were killed.

The team leader said he was particularly impressed with the Commandos' performance throughout the clearing operations.

“I thought we did really well working with the Commandos, considering the short amount of training time leading up to the operation. We will continue to combat advise and assist them as we work together to build a country that welcomes freedom and democracy,” he added.

With the clearing mission complete, the team headed back east, unaware of the fight that lay ahead, not knowing

Courtesy photo



the decisions and sacrifices that would soon be made, but ready for anything nonetheless.

“As we came to the village of Shewan, we saw women and children leaving by foot and on a tractor,” the team leader explained. “We also had our movements slowed down by a large truck that kept moving back and forth across the road, which was no doubt a stalling technique to allow for additional time to set up the ambush.”

Two rocket propelled grenades suddenly exploded about 50 meters in front of his vehicle, followed by the crack of small arms and machine gun fire.

“My thoughts at this time were echoed by my turret gunner, who said ‘here we go again,’” said the team leader. The pair encountered many ambushes on a previous deployment in Afghanistan.

Due to the heavy enemy presence on both sides of the road, the team leader immediately issued the order for all weapons to begin firing at enemy locations.

The vehicle in front of the team leader’s was struck by two RPG’s, leaving it disabled and trapped in the middle of the ambush. Under a constant barrage of RPGs and bullets, the team leader instructed his driver to push to the front of the disabled vehicle, with the intent to initiate towing operations.

“As we moved to the front of the vehicle, I witnessed our warrant officer completely expose himself by moving over from the troop commander side of the truck to the driver’s door to save the driver’s life and stop him from burning,” the team leader said.

The vehicle was burning rapidly and an explosion was imminent, making it difficult for the warrant officer to

get to his wounded comrade. The team leader said he believes that in the dust and smoke, the blazing vehicle was also bumped by another truck, causing it to slowly roll off the road.

“I was beginning to run after the vehicle to my Soldier when I saw three Marines cross the ambush line, completely exposing themselves in an attempt to save him, but they couldn’t because the vehicle was completely engulfed in flames,” said the team leader, who then

switched gears and began laying suppressive fire for the Marines.

In the vehicle rode a hero.

Sgt. 1st Class David Nunez, a Special Forces senior engineer sergeant, died during the engagement. According to his team leader, he died the same way that he lived- doing his best for the ones he loved. This was Nunez’ third combat deployment. He leaves behind his parents and two young sons.

The MARSOF and USSF team soon brought the conflict to an end through

deadly and accurate small arms fire and precision air strikes.

Hours later, after returning to the base, the team leader reflected upon the loss of his Soldier while watching from his computer as his infant daughter rolled over for the first time.

“What makes me so sad about this is the fact that my wife and I had our first child in December and I can’t imagine never hugging or kissing her again ... and his two little boys will not get to see or kiss Daddy or ever really know him,” the team leader explained.

“With all that being said, I would trade places in a heartbeat to have him here and me dead ... as a leader I guess that is something you automatically feel because every one of your men and their families is expecting you to get them home safely,” he added.

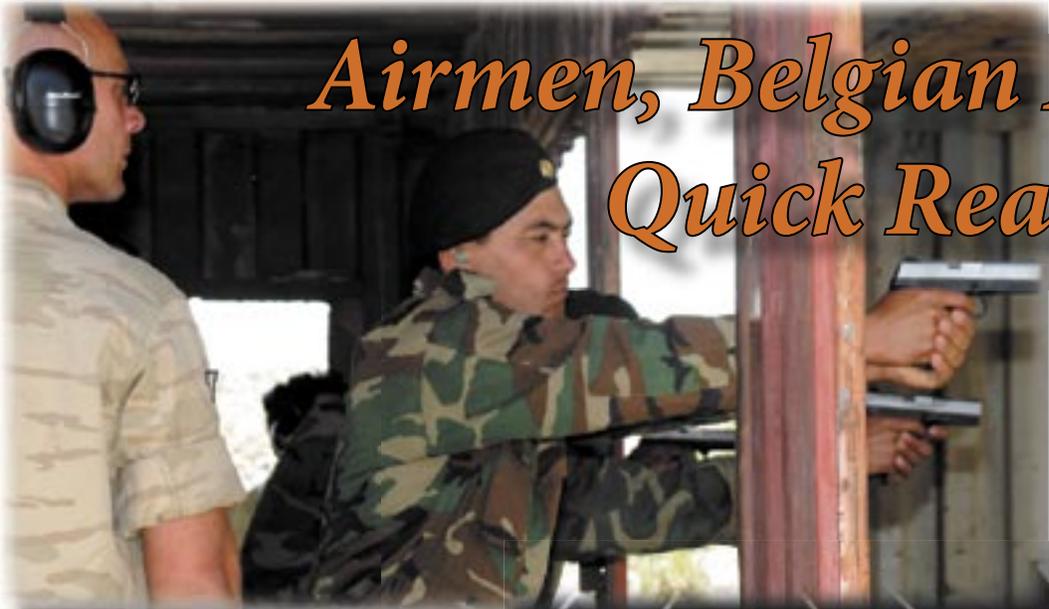
Though they continue to deal with the pain of losing a fellow Soldier and friend in combat, the Soldiers and Marines of the two teams will honor their fallen brother by maintaining their dedication to helping establish a secure and stable country for the people of Afghanistan.

“At the end of the day, I do this for the men on my left and my right. Simply stated, you will never find such a closely-knit group of men who would do anything for you and ask for nothing in return,” the team leader said.



U.S. Army photo by Army Spc. Anna Perry

Airmen, Belgian Army train Quick Reaction Force



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

Members of the U.S. Air Force Security Forces and Belgian Army Commandos conducted a 9mm pistol qualification session at Kabul International Airport, June 3, for Afghan National Army Air Corps Quick Reaction Force soldiers.

This is the first time the ANAAC QRF qualified with pistols. They use Smith & Wesson 9mm pistols, which are lighter and less expensive than Beretta 9mm pistols.

The QRF is mentored by Air Force SF Airmen. The goal, as with every operation conducted by NATO mentors, is to eventually have the Afghans training themselves.

“In previous years, the Afghans have had very little weapons training,” explained Air Force Staff Sgt. Otis Chatham, a combat arms instructor. “With the Afghan supply system, it’s difficult to get bullets for training. We’re trying to get them more ammunition,” said the Madison, Indiana native.

Members of the Belgian Army volunteered to assist the Airmen in training the ANAAC, making this a true joint environment.

“It’s a good idea and a good project,” said Belgian 1st Sgt. Jean-Sebastian Dupuis, 2nd Commandos Battalion, from Namur, Belgium. “We are happy to help the Americans and the Afghans. We have the same objective and the same aims.”

Belgian Capt. Delhaie (no first name

given), chief of Belgian Mentoring Team, 2nd Commandos Battalion, also from Namur, Belgium, added: “The future of the airport is for the Afghan people. It is important to train the people to defend it. It was difficult at first, but with a lot of cooperation and training, things have improved.”

“I would like to say that we are very grateful to the Americans and Belgians,” said Afghan 1st Lt. Abdul Matin Hammdark, Base Defense Company. “They will help us have a powerful army and air corps.”

Hammdark imparted an Afghan proverb: “If you sweat in training, you will avoid bloodshed on the battlefield.”

At the end of the day, 12 Afghans had fired. 11 qualified, with two soldiers achieving expert.



U.S. Special Forces aid Afghan boy

By Army Sgt. Lynne Steely

CJSOTF-A Public Affairs

Jaweed Noor said he was tired but in good spirits when he arrived at Bagram Air Field's Craig Joint Theater Hospital, June 9.

The 10-year-old Afghan boy, escorted by his father, Ahmad and a U.S. Special Forces Soldier, was flown to the facility for tests after Afghan National Security and Coalition forces medics diagnosed a tumor on his upper arm.

The ordeal began several months ago. Ahmad sold much of his land, seeking the help of numerous physicians and travelling as far as Pakistan for help. Ahmad's every effort was denied.

"No one could help him," said Ahmad.

When Ahmad heard about the Coalition clinic he immediately sought their help.

The doctors at the Bagram facility weren't sure if they could help Jaweed but they were more than willing to try.

Unfortunately, just as clinic medics had suspected, U.S. doctors diagnosed Jaweed with Ewing's Sarcoma, a rare and aggressive cancer most commonly found in young males between the ages of 10-20.

Further tests revealed that Jaweed's cancer had aggressively invaded his chest cavity and his prognosis was grim.

"He has about three to four months left," said Lt. Col. Andrew Landers, a U.S. doctor who recently became involved with the case and who coordinated his movement to Bagram.

Upon learning of Jaweed's tragic fate, Special Forces Soldiers collected donations and presented him with a portable DVD player because Jaweed said that he loves to watch movies.

"He didn't talk or eat much when he first arrived," said one Soldier, "but he has begun to open up to us."

When it was time for Jaweed to return home, his new American friends sent him off with an elaborate fanfare.

Several events were held in Jaweed's honor including a special showing of Jaweed's favorite American movie.

Soldiers collected other donations for the family, including clothes, food and movies and presented them prior to his departure.

"We want to make him as happy as possible throughout his last days," said Landers.

Jaweed was flown aboard a U.S. aircraft, along with his new gifts, to spend his final days with his family.

"We don't understand Americans," said Ahmad before departing. "We have

yet to understand how compassionate Americans are and how they want to help the Afghan people. When I go back I'm sure to call my village together and tell them how they (the Americans) are here to help and we should openly embrace them."

Coalition medics will remain in contact with Jaweed and his family and continue to care for him throughout his ordeal.



Courtesy photo

TF 700- TF CHIMERA / FRENCH DEPLOYMENT IN KAPISA

This summer a new French battalion will be deployed in Kapisa province side by side with the U.S. Task Force Gladiator. This Task Force 700 will be mainly manned by the “8e Régiment de Parachutistes d’Infanterie de Marine”, supported by the heavy mortars of the “35e Régiment d’Artillerie Parachutiste”, by the engineers of the “17e Régiment de Genie Parachutiste” and the medium battle tanks of the “1e Régiment Etranger de Cavalerie”



8e RPIMa MOTTO
« VOLONTAIRE »



Le 8e Régiment de Parachutistes d’Infanterie de Marine

Originally the 8e colonial airborne battalion, they were created in Indochina where they fought from 1951 to 1954. Almost all the battalion disappeared during the battle of Dien-Bien-Phu. Rising from its ashes, they became the 8e colonial airborne regiment in Algeria where they fought the local insurgency until 1961.

Since their return to France, the development of conflicts around the world has frequently caused it to cross horizons to guarantee French interests, take part in peace operations and bring assistance to threatened populations.

Located in Castres(France) since 1963, professionnalisé since 1970, it is a battalion tailored for prevention and crisis management. It was very efficiently deployed in Chad, Uganda, Benin, Rwanda, Gabon, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Lebanon, Kurdistan, French pacific islands, Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo and soon in Kapisa, Afghanistan.

It is identically equipped as the three other airborne infantry battalions of the 11e Brigade Parachutiste.

Next issue; a more in depth look at the three support battalions for Task Force Chimera.

Multipoint Multichannel Distribution System brings AFN Service to Afghanistan

Story and photos by Air Force Staff Sgt. Stephen Ocenosak
American Forces Network - Afghanistan





Phone calls home, letters from a loved one, the internet and American Forces Network television all provide a link home for those serving downrange. The Multipurpose Multichannel Distribution System provides AFN service via a wireless cable system.

“The MMDS install at Bagram couldn’t have happened without the help of Task Force Med and the men and women of Prime Beef, the 755th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron,” said AFN maintenance manager Air Force Staff Sgt. Helen Ortiz. “We really appreciate everything they did.”

To ready the site the team poured a slab of concrete with a “hand dig only” order, limiting the equipment they could use. They overcame this obstacle and layed the electrical to power the system in the conex Task Force MED provided.

Already installed at Forward Operating Base Sharahna and Camp Eggers, MMDS is scheduled to be up and running at Bagram Air Field by the end of July. Forward Operating Bases with at least 500 people will also receive the new system, bringing a bit of home to servicemembers throughout Afghanistan.



Team Lead Capt. Munera from Task Force Med, bottom row second from right, and Prime Beef Team members from Lackland’s 433rd Civil Engineer Squadron and Niagara Falls’ 914th CES; Senior Master Sgt Stefanowicz, Senior Master Sgt Shedrock, Master Sgt Calvert, Master Sgt Barclay, Master Sgt Pytlik, Technical Sgt Gustafson, Technical Sgt Mortensen, Staff Sgt paine, Senior Airman Nuccio, and Senior Airman Woods.



San Francisco 49er's touchdown in Kabul

Story and photos by
Navy Seaman Tim Newborn
CSTC-A Public Affairs

San Francisco 49er's head coach Mike Nolan and former defensive back Eric Davis, paid a visit to U.S. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines at Camp Blackhorse, June 23.

The visit was sponsored by the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

The two sports celebrities were joined by sports radio talk show host, Ron Barr of Sports ByLine.

Barr, a veteran journalist and sports broadcaster, kicked off the first leg of their three-day visit by introducing Nolan and Davis to a gathering of approximately 100 sports-crazed troops.

"It's a real privilege to be here," said Nolan. "Not everybody has the opportunity to come over, and I feel fortunate that I have been asked."

Nolan added it is especially enjoyable to see the joint teamwork between the four services. Camp Blackhorse is home to servicemembers from four of the five branches of the U.S. military.

"We all know that teamwork is important in any sport, but here the importance of teamwork goes without saying," said Nolan.

Davis, an Anniston, Ala., native, was acquired by the 49ers in the



second round of the 1990 National Football League Draft. He played with the team for six years, including Super Bowl XXIX.

All three joined the military members of Camp Blackhorse for lunch and told stories about the team and how excited they are on their first trip to Afghanistan.

Davis shared how he got started in the NFL.

"You see guys, it all started with one of those speeches," said Davis. "I listened, worked hard and pursued it to the best of my ability, and I did it. You can too, if there's something you want badly enough."

Nolan, Davis and Barr hosted an impromptu question and answer session after lunch. The troops had the opportunity to ask about the team and learn about some of their favor-

ite 49er players.

"These guys are great," said Navy Cmdr. Jeffrey Menne, a San Diego native and director, Joint Operations, Afghan Regional Security Integration Command-Central. "Their willingness to take time out of their personal life is awesome."

"I think it means a lot for all of us," said Menne. "To see people from the states come to visit, gives us a little touch of home and ensures that we're still linked up with the things that we enjoy, like sports."

Army Maj. Enrique Young, AR-SIC-C personnel officer, agreed that the trip was appreciated and will not be forgotten.

"To have them here is a great morale booster for the soldiers who are doing day-to-day COIN (counterinsurgency) operations here in Afghanistan," said Young. "It's also been a worthwhile treat that the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines truly appreciate."

The day ended with a "live" broadcast from Camp Eggers, headquarters of CSTC-A, in Kabul. Nearly 100 servicemembers attended the live show to hear Nolan and Davis, and to ask questions of the two.

Nolan, Davis and Barr took their show on the road, June 24, and visited more U.S. troops serving throughout Afghanistan.



A little bit of everything

Story and photos by
Air Force Master Sgt. James Law
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

He can be found each morning hustling from one humvee to the next, ensuring the communication equipment is operational before fellow Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team members convoy into the mountainous terrain here.

“Basically, we’re in charge of all the communication equipment in the vehicles,” said Senior Airman Brian Lowie, Laghman PRT communications technician, deployed from 81st Training Support Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.

Lowie explained the equipment is the vital link PRT members use to communicate with each other when moving through communities, as well as to receive intelligence and threat information from the base. Maintaining this equipment is only one of the duties Lowie performs filling an ‘in-lieu-of’ tasking with the PRT.

Lowie also contributes to the mission by routinely going out with the convoy as a gunner.

“It’s a little bit of a rush because the gunner is the eyes and ears of everybody in the vehicle,” said Lowie. “We’re watching for things that might be out of place...for people who might be out there to do us wrong.”

When Lowie is not looking at the world behind a M2 .50 caliber machine gun, he is looking at it through the lenses of a camera.

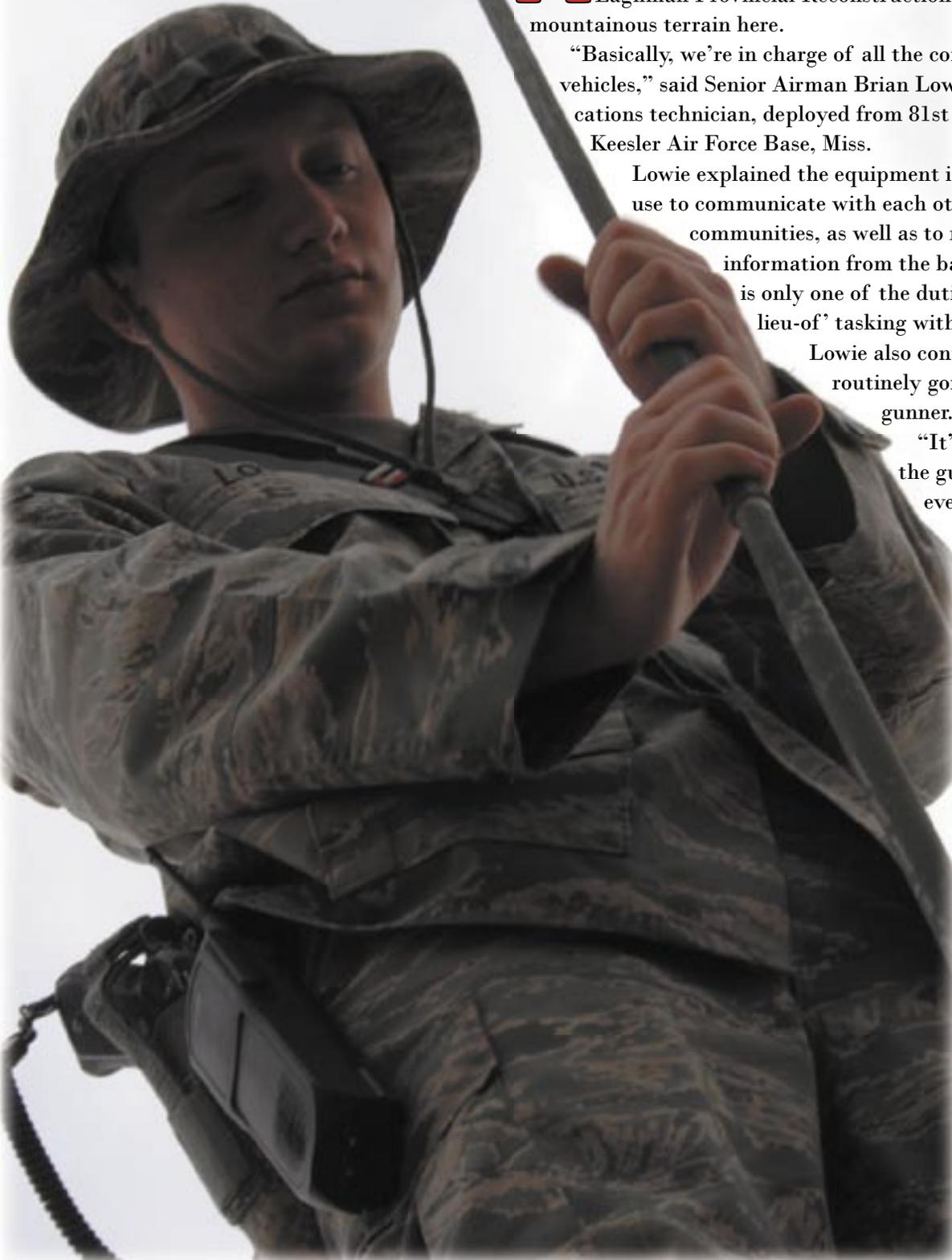
“I’ve always had an interest in cameras,” said Lowie. “I’ve always had the point and shoots, the little disposable cameras.”

Lowie’s photography interest is so great that he is pursuing a degree in photojournalism and recently purchased a professional-quality camera while deployed here. He uses his new camera to capture the PRT’s interaction with the local community as they help develop the infrastructure, and later posts the photographs on

a website he created to inform others of the PRT’s mission.

“The website is more or less a photography website,” said Lowie. “We take the pictures we have and put them out there to grab people’s interest and inform them of what we do.

“I actually love this deployment,” said Lowie. “It’s what I think is going to be a once-in-a-lifetime kind of thing.”

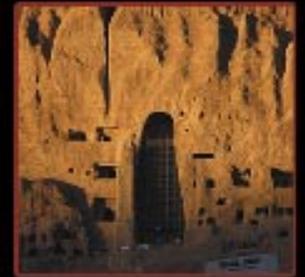


Photos From the Field



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

Tech. Sgt. Miafarah Kelly, Provincial Reconstruction Team Services NCO-in-charge, makes pizza for the Airmen, Soldiers and civilians of the PRT, May 28. The Panjshir PRT's primary mission is to help reconstruct Afghanistan and build U.S. and Afghan relations. Kelly is deployed from the 355th Services Squadron, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.



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

freedomwatch@swa.army.mil



U.S. Army photo by 2nd Lt. Monika Comeaux

Spc.'s Lee Gaskell (right) and Luis Velez-Casiano (middle,) both small-arms/artillery repairmen in the Armament Shop of Company B, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion show how to load the M249 to an Afghan National Army mechanic as part of a weapons maintenance class held at Forward Operating Fenty, Afghanistan, March 3.



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

Air Force Capt. Glenn Little, Pansjhir Provincial Reconstruction Team chief medical officer, talks to an Afghan villager about a prescription during a medical engagement, May 29. Little, who is deployed from the 92nd Medical Operations Squadron, Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash., examined more than 40 patients.



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