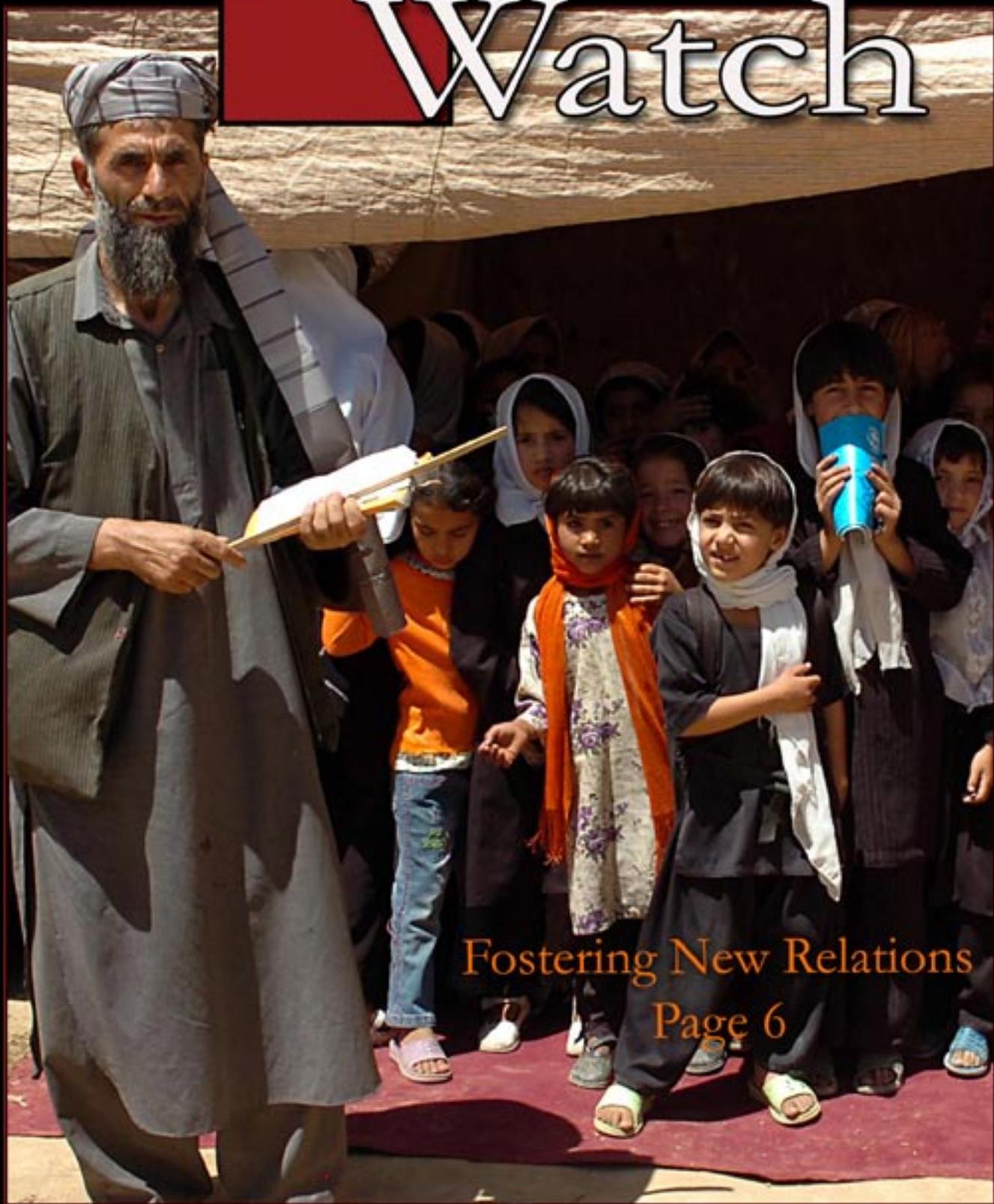


July 21, 2008

Freedom AFGHANISTAN Watch



Fostering New Relations
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U.S., Afghan Forces focus on Pakistani border

By Army Staff Sgt. Michael J. Carden
American Forces Press Service

The U.S. military's senior officer and the commander of international forces in Afghanistan met with reporters to discuss the situation and threats coalition and Afghan forces are facing.

Insurgent activities and coalition casualties have increased throughout the past months, with June the deadliest month for coalition troops in nearly seven years of conflict. Twenty-eight servicemembers were killed.

This is due partly to Coalition and Afghan troops taking the fight to the insurgency and the rising number of insurgents crossing the border from Pakistan into Afghanistan, said Army Gen. David D. McKiernan, commander of the International Security Assistance Force.

The lack of ability by the new Pakistani government to successfully monitor its borders has allowed militant and insurgent groups to find safe havens in the tribal areas, McKiernan explained.

"I have consistently said that we are seeing an increasing level of violence in Afghanistan, especially in the east and the south," he said. "I attribute part of that to the fact that there are sanctuary areas to militant groups that are across the [Pakistan] boarder in Federaly Administrated Tribal Areas and the North-West Frontier Province."

Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, added, "The new Pakistan government has a very difficult challenge and continues to work its way through, but has to enforce making sure foreign fighters don't exist out there and make sure the insurgents don't have the freedom of movement across the border."

U.S. military officials recognize the need for more troops in Afghanistan, but remain reluctant to deploy them because of commitments currently in Iraq, officials said. Officials also realize the need to increase "dwell time" after deployments for servicemembers, said Mullen, who was in Iraq the previous three days visiting troops and meeting with senior leaders there.

"I just came from Iraq, and the conditions continue to improve there," he said. "I am still very hopeful that those conditions will continue so we'll have forces available to do other things. The next priority would be to move forces into Afghanistan."

In early June, President Bush vowed to send additional forces to Afghanistan in 2009. However, there are no specifics about when that may take place, Mullen said.

"Exactly when the increase may occur will be based on decisions made about Iraq in the future," he added. "From the national perspective, we're given direction from the president, and it's the decision of the leadership in [the U.S.] that we prioritize accordingly."

Mullen noted that the recent addition of two U.S. Marine battalions in Afghanistan -- one training Afghan soldiers and police and the other participating in heavy fighting in the southern regions -- have made significant progress in the fight against terrorism.

However, he said he remains concerned about the number of additional forces from the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization that member countries have committed to Afghanistan throughout the past year, he said.

"We need that extra capability," he said. "[NATO] needs to do all they can do, as well."

Mullen reiterated his concerns about foreign fighters crossing the Pakistani border and their safe havens in the country's tribal areas. Insurgents flow much more freely into Afghanistan than they did a year ago, he said.

He said the Pakistani government and military have to put more pressure on their border in order for Afghanistan's government to develop and succeed.

"We all recognize that the challenges here continue to be significant," the admiral said. "The violence is up, but at the same time, coalition and Afghan forces are aggressively engaging the enemy, and we've had significant successes."



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COVER: An Afghan teacher stands
with his students at a new all-girl's
school opening ceremony in Gulam
Ali Village, Afghanistan, June 7. 101st
Headquarters Support Company Sol-
diers attended the school's opening to
show respect for the culture and village
elders, and even brought along the
101st Division Band to help celebrate
the event. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jes-
sica R. Dahlberg)

BACK COVER: Children from Gu-
lam Ali Village, Afghanistan, gather at
the opening ceremony for their new,
all-girls school, June 7. 101st Head-
quarters Support Company Soldiers
and the 101st Division Band attended
the school's opening and the HSC Sol-
diers provided wood for the school staff
to build desks. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt.
Jessica R. Dahlberg) **See related story
on page 6.**

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173rd Soldier receives Silver Star



Story and photo by
Army Pfc. Christina Sindera
CJTF-101 Public Affairs

A 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Soldier earned a Silver Star for combat operations and was presented the medal in a ceremony, July 12.

Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser,

Combined Joint Task Force 101 commander, presented Army Capt. William G. Cromie with the Silver Star, the third highest military decoration, and praised him for his valor.

Cromie was recognized for his actions during an ambush on Nov. 16, 2007, while acting as platoon leader for

3rd Platoon, Alpha Company, during a route-clearance operation along the Korengal Road in Konar province.

Third Platoon was called out to perform route clearance on a portion of the Korengal Road after receiving a tip that an improvised explosive device may have been placed there.

“While travelling down the road, our first vehicle struck an IED,” said Cromie. “Immediately, we were ambushed on three sides by heavily-armed militants.”

Two Soldiers managed to advance to an over-watch position to help cover the platoon, but were soon pinned down and running low on ammunition. Cromie personally moved more ammunition to the two Soldiers while running through the small-arms cross-fire.

Finally, after receiving close-air support, the platoon was able to mount a counter-attack and pushed the militants back to a house. The platoon then cleared the house, neutralizing the militants.

“I really would like to thank the squad leaders and the guys in 3rd Platoon for their bravery,” said Cromie. “They really acted professionally, even under a stressful situation like that.”

Bagram stands up new ‘Warrior’ Task Force, Cincinnatus stands down

Story and photos by Army Capt. Elizabeth Casebeer
101st Airborne Division Joint Visitors Bureau

A new task force assumed base operations authority here and at surrounding forward operating bases in a ceremony at Bagram Air Field Morale, Welfare and Recreation clamshell, July 10.

Task Force Warrior assumed mission responsibilities and officially stood up operations, replacing Task Force Cincinnatus, who sustained the operations mission since January 2007. The TF commander and command sergeant major were also identified.

Army Col. Scott A. Spellmon will command the new task force and Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur R. Vanwyngarden will serve in the top enlisted position.

TF Warrior is mainly comprised of Soldiers from the 1st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Fort Polk, La. Additionally, individual Air Force, Marine and Navy augmentees will support the 1st MEB’s mission to organize, train, equip and deploy combat-ready units anywhere in the world in order to protect the nation’s interests.

While here, TF Warrior will assist in building the capacity of the Afghan government in four separate provinces by pro-

viding security, sustaining economic development and exercising effective governance. The 1st MEB is the only active duty element of its kind.

TF Cincinnatus was comprised of Soldiers from the 101st Sustainment Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky., and military-wide individual augmentees. Prior to the 101st, the 23rd Chemical Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash., covered the task force.



Heroes Program recognizes Afghan National Army commander for uniting missions

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

The Heroes Program, an individual-recognition program for servicemembers who have performed in-the-line-of-duty acts of bravery against insurgents and criminals, recognized Commander Mohammad Ashraf, the Afghan National Army's 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps commander, recently.

Ashraf started his military career 22 years ago as a 2nd Lt. He now controls the ANA in 10 provinces, where his innovative mind came up with new ideas on how the ANA should work.

One of Ashraf's ideas was to coordinate missions with the Afghanistan National Police to get them more involved.

"I made it part of my standard operating procedure to make the Afghanistan National Police part of my missions," said Ashraf.

Ashraf created a Provincial Coordination Center in Laghman province. It was the first province where he tested his idea about the ANA and ANP working together.

Ashraf's idea has spread throughout all the provinces he has worked within. In Kapisa province, Ashraf and his friend of two years, Bakhtyar Padschagul, the Police Chief of the Nijrab District, worked together to make their province safer.

"The ANA just helps support the ANP," said Ashraf. "They have their own chain of command and system in place, we coordinate with the ANP to work together to make our province safer."

The ANP is responsible for the security of the district, and they ensure the safety and well-being of the district and peo-

ple by holding checkpoints and conducting patrols around the villages, said Padschagul.

While conducting these patrols, the ANA will secure the area, and then the ANP will be the ones who actually go in and search the houses.

The ANA and ANP in the Nijrab District meet often to coordinate and plan missions together for their joint team.

Along with his innovative ideas, Ashraf shows his bravery just by showing up to work everyday. He has had Taliban leaders try to murder him because of what he is doing for his country.

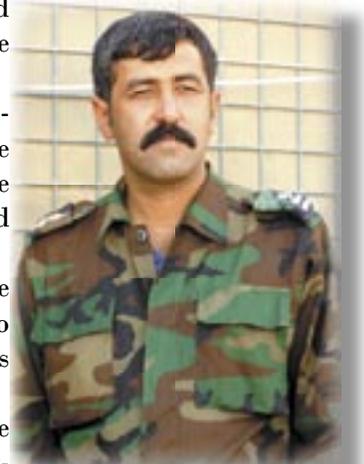
However, Ashraf does not fear the threats on his life because he puts his trust in his soldiers.

"They are like my family members, and they take care of me and protect me just as I do for them," he said.

The love that Ashraf and his soldiers have for each other is what makes the 201st Corps so successful.

"When the enemy comes up against Ashraf and his men they either run or die," said Marine Capt. Jesse Melton.

Ashraf is a brave and courageous man, and in every province he has worked in no one has ever been unhappy with his work. He takes care of his soldiers and his people by fighting everyday despite Taliban threats.



Headquarters Support Company Soldiers multitask, foster new relationships

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

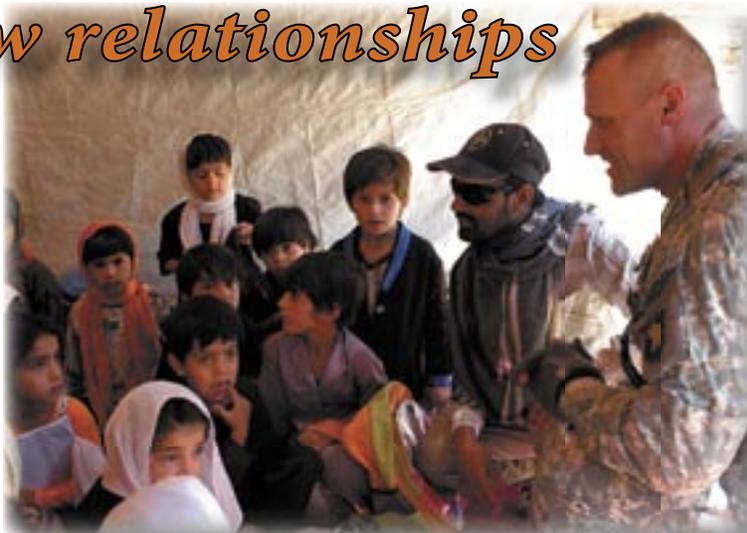
Task Force Gladiator Soldiers, 101st Headquarters Support Company, serve as the first line of defense at Bagram Air Field, manning entry control points and ensuring base security.

They adapt their tactics, which they labor at 24-hours a day, seven days a week to meet ongoing operations, often resulting in supplementing their guard role with envoy-related responsibilities.

“Maintaining security is not all just about the defensive posture,” said Army Capt. Stan Goligoski, 101st HSC commander. “We go out beyond the entry control points to interact and build relationships with the people in the local villages around us.”

As part of their Bagram Outreach Program, the HSC works to provide local villages with water, power, security fences and anything else that may help.

The Soldiers went to the village of Gulam Ali, June 7, and brought fuel for service generators which they acquired for



the village six weeks ago.

Later that day, on invitation from the village elder, they went to the opening of a new all-girl’s school.

On one hand, the Soldiers attended the school’s opening to show respect for the culture and village elders and even brought along the 101st Division Band to help celebrate the event. Still, their purpose in attending was two fold; they also went to check the school’s condition and resources.

Even though the school was new, it was in need of repairs, and was lacking standard items a school should have, said Goligoski. The HSC helped facilitate acquisition of the missing items. For example, they provided wood so the school staff could build students’ desks.

“We’ve established a good enough relationship with the village elders that we can go straight to them, if we have a problem, and they can do the same for us,” said Goligoski.

Acting as sentries and ‘pseudo-ambassadors’ are not the only tasks the HSC Soldiers are responsible for; they also sponsor the Small Rewards Program. In exchange for information about weapons caches, they provide monetary rewards.

“We get to know the peoples wants and needs and, in exchange they provide us with information,” said Goligoski, who noted the program has been very successful.

The Bagram Outreach Program and Small Rewards Program compliment each other, he explained.

For example, one village leader told HSC Soldiers of two weapons caches. In return, he received a cash award. Later on, the same village leader witnessed HSC Soldiers repairing his village’s windmills and generators. For their effort, he informed them of another weapons cache.

Two-sided helping relationships are being forged in many villages around Bagram Air Field.

Security is much more than manning a 24-hour ECP. It is also about establishing relationships with the local population and showing them Coalition forces can provide a positive alternative to the violence anti-Afghan forces offer.



WHAT IS “AEROVAC?”

Story and photos by
Air Force Staff Sgt. Samuel Morse
455th AEW Public Affairs

Many are familiar with the term medical evacuation or “medevac.” Army helicopters swoop in and transport personnel requiring medical treatment. Medevac flights are highly versatile but have limited carrying capacity. What happens when you have a large number of patients, need specialty care or need to move over longer distances?

Enter “Aerovac.”

Aeromedical evacuation, is a unique Air Force mission which uses fixed wing aircraft such as the C-130 Hercules, KC-135 Stratotanker and C-17 Globemaster III. These airframes allow for larger patient loads, transported over longer distances at higher altitudes with a greater ability to care for the seriously injured.

“Most people think medevac all the time even though that’s the heli-

copters,” said Tech. Sgt. Alexandria Young, duty controller for the 455th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Flight. “We have no problem with that; however it all depends on missions.”

The 455th EAEF at Bagram Air Field is tasked to care for and transport patients from all over Afghanistan to Bagram with litter space for up to 97 patients in the C-130J. They also run missions taking patients out of theater to Ramstein Air Base in Germany.

The “Bravo Crews” at the 455th EAEF are mandated to be airborne within three hours of receiving an aerovac request. This involves checking and loading 800 pounds of emergency equipment and converting the cargo hold of a C-130 or C-17 into a flying hospital. Despite the daunting time frame, Young has seen this complex task performed in as little as 45 minutes.

“This is always a team effort, work-

ing with the air terminal operations center, fuels, pilots and loadmasters,” said Senior Master Sgt. Adam Marks, 455th EAEF.

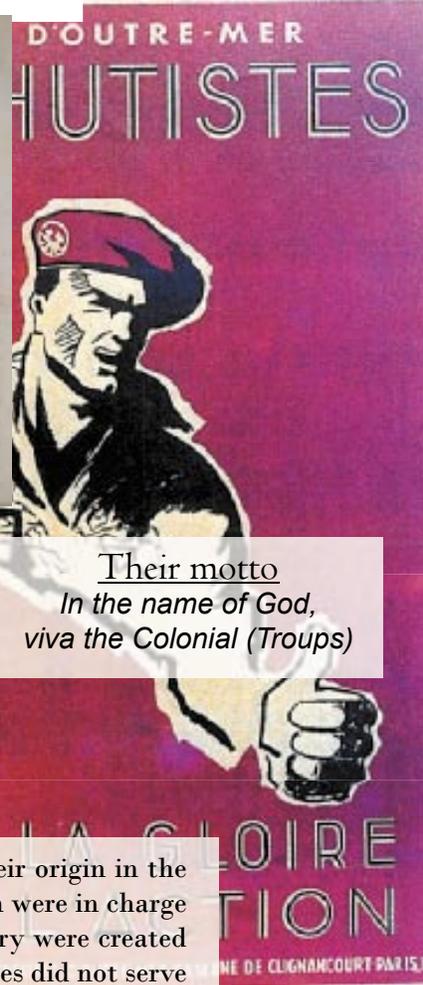
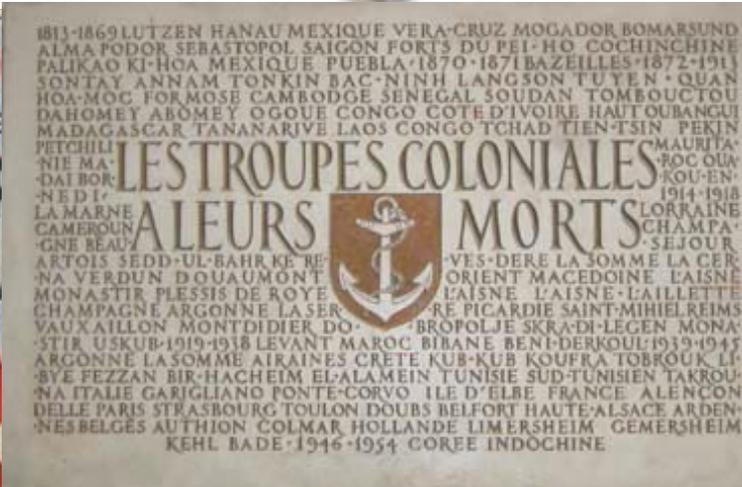
“One of the big strengths of the aerovac mission is to be able to cater to the patients needing critical care support,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Gainer, commander of the 455th EAEF. “Depending on patient acuity, the standard crew of nurses and EMT trained aeromedical technicians can be augmented with a Critical Care Air Transport Team, consisting of a critical care doctor, critical care nurse and a respiratory therapist, allowing patients to be moved, when required, from the operating room to the aircraft.”

The Army’s medevac teams remain a valuable resources to deployed members in the Area of Responsibility, being able to go just about anywhere to rescue injured Coalition forces, but the Air Force’s aerovac teams take medical evacuation to a whole new level.



LES TRADITIONS DES TROUPES DE MARINE

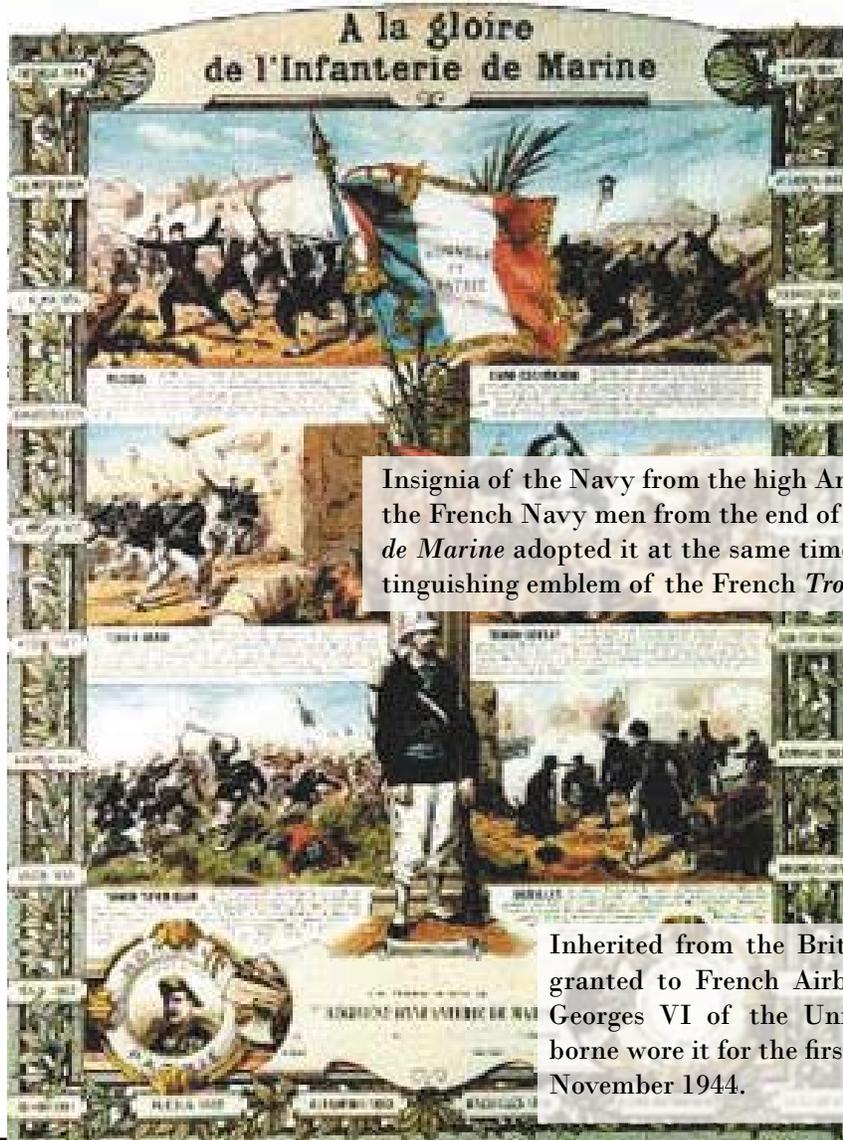
80% of the soldiers of TF 700 are from the French Troupes de Marine. On these two pages are presented their main traditions.



Their motto
*In the name of God,
viva the Colonial (Troupes)*

The French *Troupes de Marine*, created in 1622 by Cardinal Richelieu, find their origin in the Sea companies. Their duty was to fight on and from the vessels while navy men were in charge of the maneuver. In 1822 and 1831 the Marine infantry and the Marine artillery were created (nicknamed "*Marsouins / Porpoise*" and "*Bigors / bigorneau*") These two branches did not serve on vessels but within the new French colonies. During the French-Prussian war of 1870/1871, the "Division Bleue" became very famous after the Battle of Bazeilles. In 1900, the Troupes de Marine were attached to the Ministry of War (Army) and become the "Troupes coloniales." In 1967, the French Troupes de Marine was created within the French Army. Their mission is to be deployed rapidly in French overseas territories and to maintain a French military presence in countries linked to France by defense agreements.



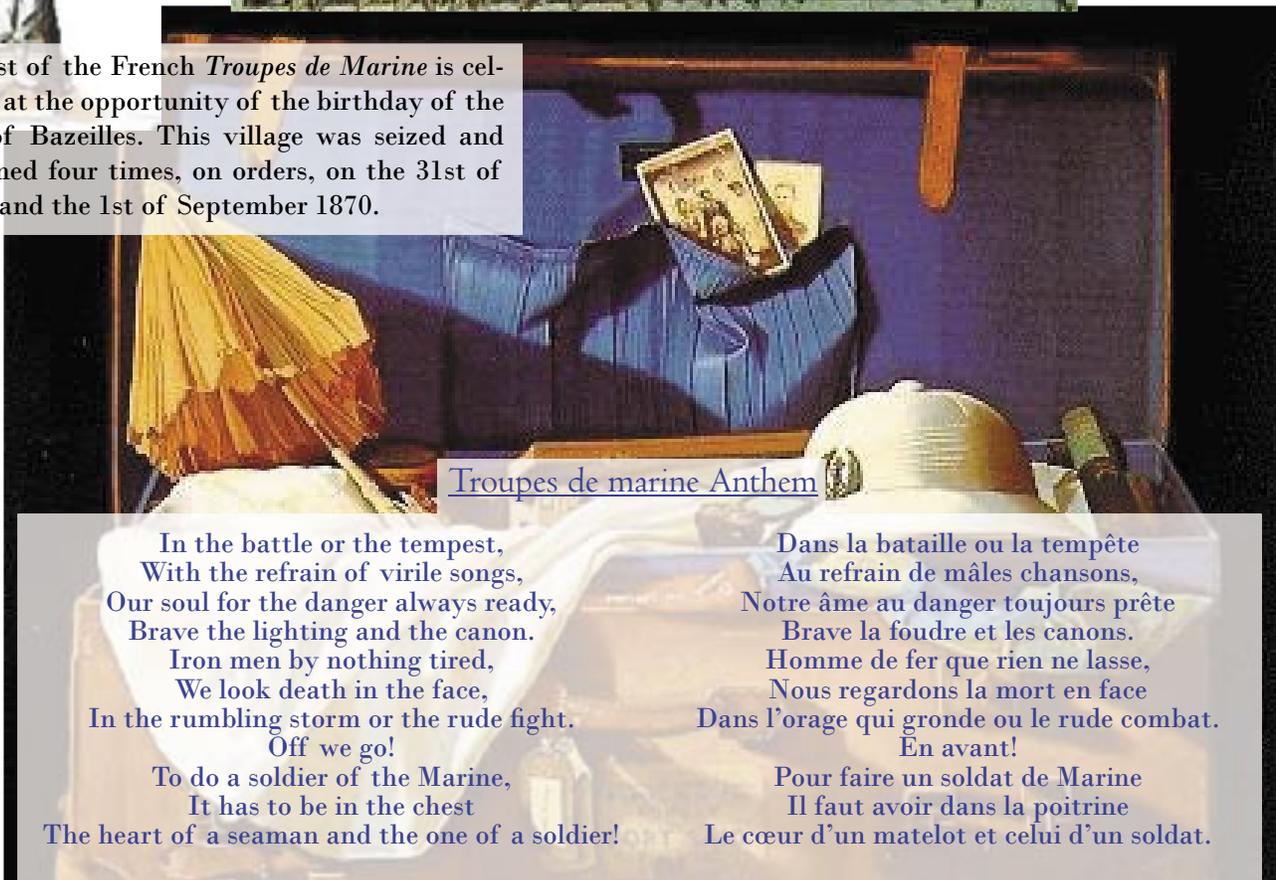


Insignia of the Navy from the high Antiquity, the anchor appears on the French Navy men from the end of the 18th century. The *Troupes de Marine* adopted it at the same time. Today the anchor is the distinguishing emblem of the French *Troupes de Marine*.



Inherited from the British SAS, the red beret was granted to French Airborne as an award by King Georges VI of the United Kingdom. French Airborne wore it for the first time during a parade on 11 November 1944.

The feast of the French *Troupes de Marine* is celebrated at the opportunity of the birthday of the battle of Bazeilles. This village was seized and abandoned four times, on orders, on the 31st of August and the 1st of September 1870.



Troupes de marine Anthem

In the battle or the tempest,
 With the refrain of virile songs,
 Our soul for the danger always ready,
 Brave the lightning and the canon.
 Iron men by nothing tired,
 We look death in the face,
 In the rumbling storm or the rude fight.
 Off we go!
 To do a soldier of the Marine,
 It has to be in the chest
 The heart of a seaman and the one of a soldier!

Dans la bataille ou la tempête
 Au refrain de mâles chansons,
 Notre âme au danger toujours prête
 Brave la foudre et les canons.
 Homme de fer que rien ne lasse,
 Nous regardons la mort en face
 Dans l'orage qui gronde ou le rude combat.
 En avant!
 Pour faire un soldat de Marine
 Il faut avoir dans la poitrine
 Le cœur d'un matelot et celui d'un soldat.

Drilling for Afghanistan's tomorrow

By Army 1st Lt. Tomas Rofkahr
TF Castle Public Affairs

The wind blows hot and harsh across Forward Operating Base Sharana, pushing a wall of dust in front of it. Flags whip in protest to the treatment and Soldiers across the FOB squint behind their eye-protection and pull caps down lower as dust devils spawn to brief chaotic life around them.

It's hot and dry and rain seems a distant memory to most, but to Air Force Master Sgt. Rick Grambo, 1st Expeditionary Rapid Engineer Deployable, Heavy Operational Repair Squadron, Engineer Group's Well Drilling Detachment and his team, FOB Sharana seems a veritable oasis.

After 30 days of work, the RED HORSE team tapped into a significant reserve of water deep beneath the FOB.

"We knew we'd hit water," Grambo said. "It wasn't until last week or so that we knew how much."

The team is currently pumping out about 115 gallons of water per minute, said Tech. Sgt. Nate Laidlaw, RED HORSE drilling team.

"That's around 165,600 gallons a day," explained Grambo, with a smile.

According to Laidlaw, with careful management of the aquifer that resides below the FOB, the water the well produces could last for a very long time.

"The well itself is good for 15 years," said Grambo. "After that, it will need some maintenance and cleaning, but that's all."

As he gazed up at the rugged pipe and lattice-work of the drilling rig, Grambo seemed less concerned with the impressive volume of water that the well could produce than he was with the fact that the giant machine works at all.

"About this time a year ago, this rig was in an accident as they tried to transport it from

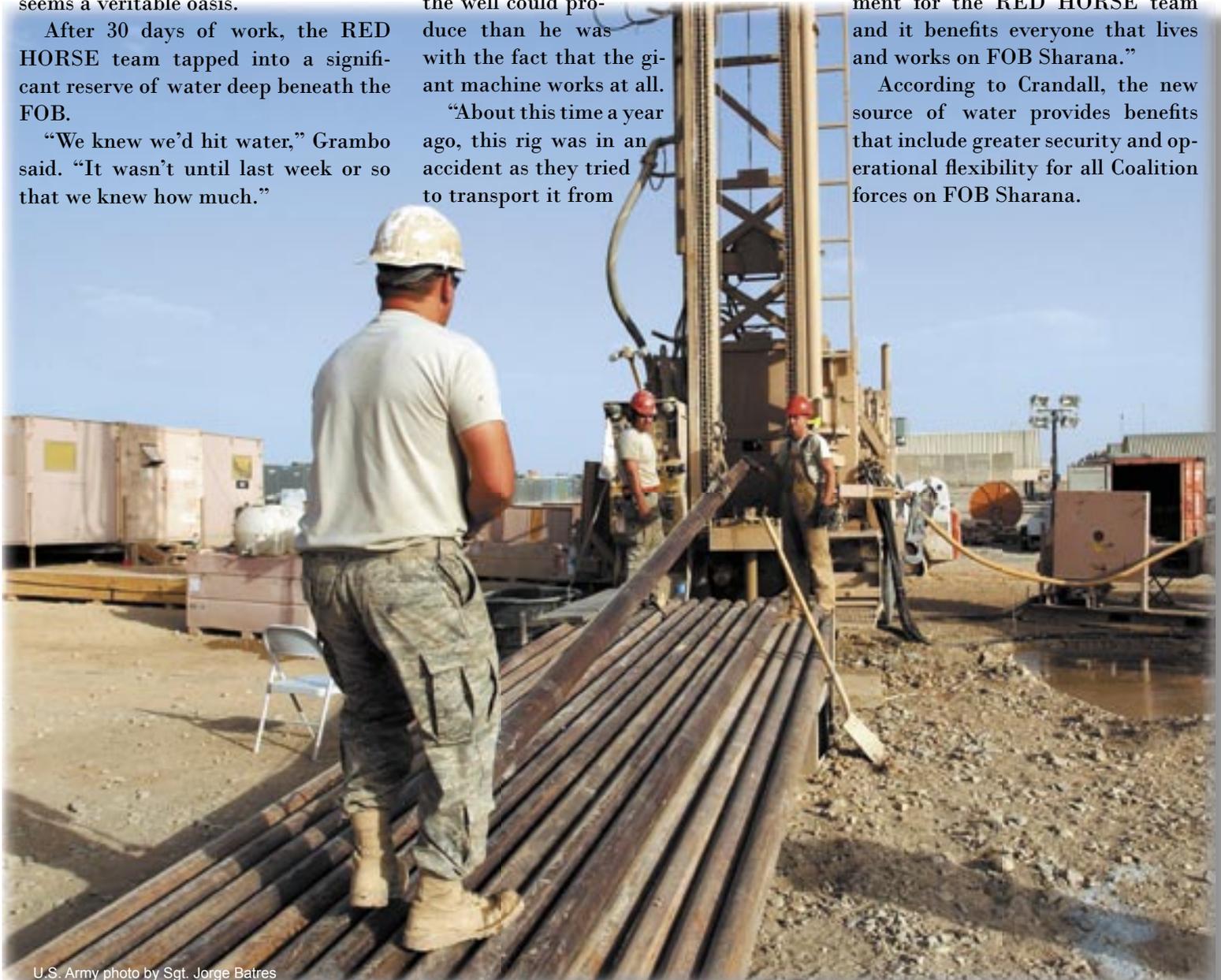
Pakistan," he said. "It was demolished – totalled. The manufacturer claimed it would take [more than] \$140,000 to repair it."

It ended up costing far less to repair the drilling system. Members of the RED HORSE team responsible for the rig fabricated their own parts and managed to rebuild the machine by hand, at almost no cost to the military.

For the residents of FOB Sharana, the water in this new well represents a significant opportunity.

"It's our first step to being self-sufficient and producing our own water," said Army Brig. Gen. Paul E. Crandall, Combined Task Force Castle commander. "This is a significant accomplishment for the RED HORSE team and it benefits everyone that lives and works on FOB Sharana."

According to Crandall, the new source of water provides benefits that include greater security and operational flexibility for all Coalition forces on FOB Sharana.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jorge Batres

Humanitarian Aid for the refugees camp in Ghazni



Story and photos by Polish Maj. Jacek Popławski

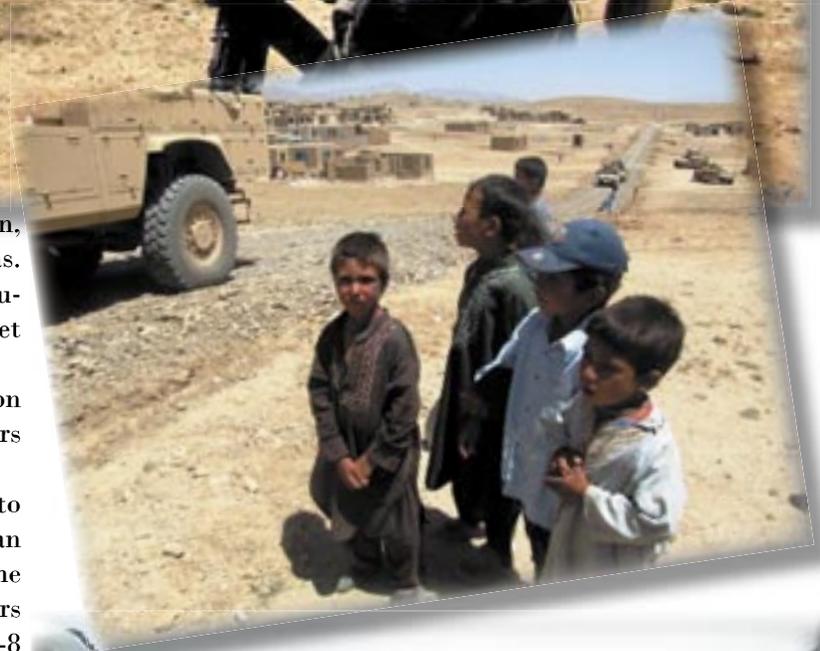
They came to Ghazni from different places – Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Pashtuns, Tajiks and Hazaras. According to Abdul Hamid Wafa, chief of the Refugees Office in Ghazni, despite cultural differences they get along well in the camp.

There's no tents in the camp, the refugees live in common Afghanistan buildings. On June 9th, a group of Polish soldiers arrived on the spot, planning to realize another aid project.

Cpt. Agnieszka Dolatowska explains: "We are going to build around 30 new wells in the camp. Currently, refugees can use 93 of them, but that's not enough. Unfortunately, some families are still using wells which are a few hundred meters away. It's a common practice that the water is carried by 7-8 year old kids. The Project, preliminary approved by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is going to cost about \$100,000."

There are about 6500 refugees in the camp. Only a few dozen of them were able to find work in Afghanistan. The situation for most of the families is hard. Local authorities lack means necessary to aid. It's not surprising that immediately after arrival, Polish soldiers were surrounded by local inhabitants searching for aid.

Stabilization in Afghanistan can be achieved when the position of local authorities is firm and strong. The inhabitants of the refugee camp in Ghazni hope for stabilization and security. They want to find jobs and support their families. Polish soldiers are sure that by building wells they can prevent refugees from taking the Taliban side, thus reducing the risk of finding improvised explosive devices on the routes of daily Polish patrols.



USO tour brings NFL stars to Camp Eggers

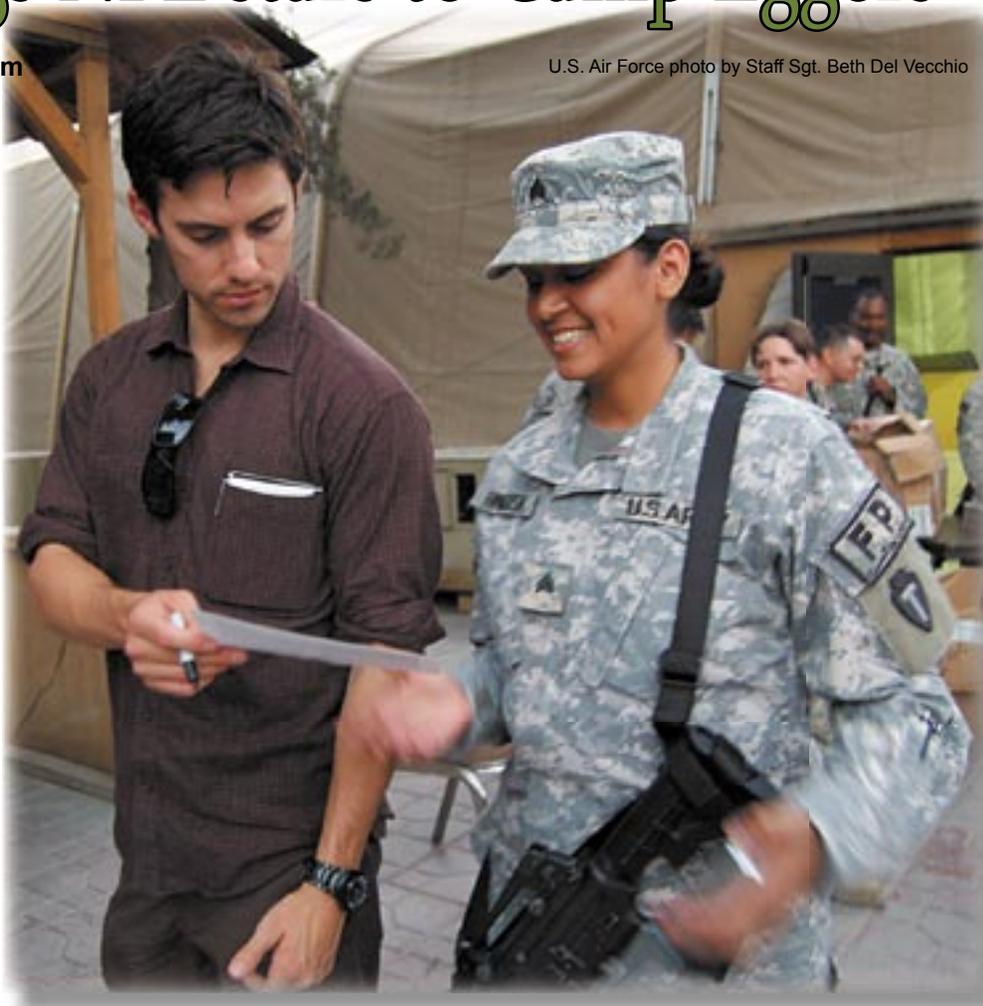
By Petty Officer 1st Class Shawn D. Graham
CSTC-A Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Beth Del Vecchio

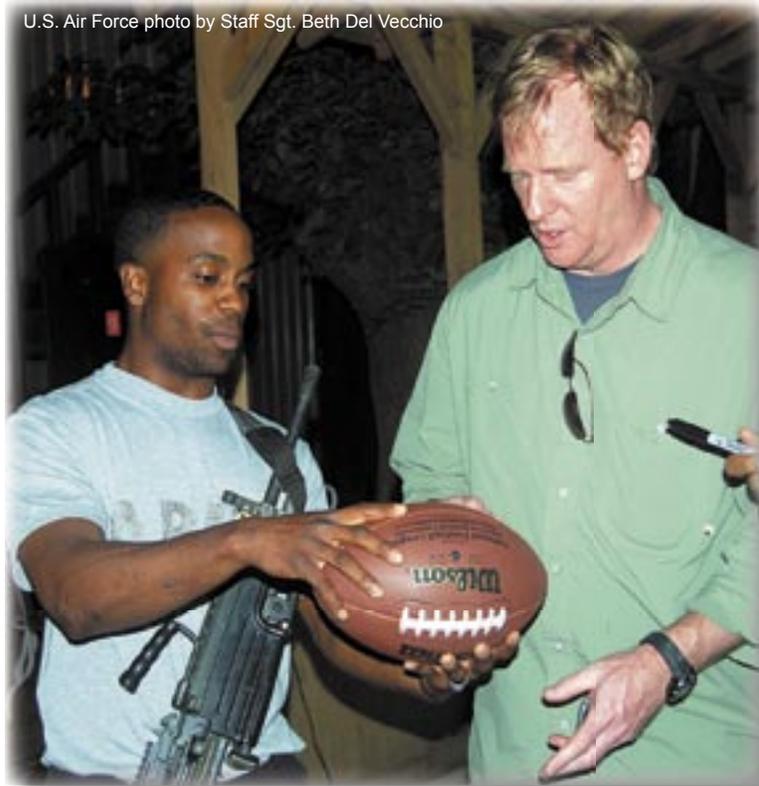
While National Football League players headed to training camps to prepare for the upcoming season, two players, along with the NFL commissioner, traveled around the globe to a different type of camp. They paid a visit to Camp Eggers, July 10, the home of the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines of Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

Roger Goodell, along with New Orleans Saints quarterback, Drew Brees and New York Giants defensive end, Osi Umenyiora, joined actor Milo Ventimiglia from the television show *Heroes* and Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders Christina Parker and Deryn Derbigny, on the 2008 Super Sunday USO Tour to U.S. bases in Qatar and Afghanistan.

"We're honored to be here," said Goodell. "We enjoy being with the troops to honor their courage, and I can't tell you how proud I am of the men and women of our military."



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Beth Del Vecchio



Goodell, an active participant in all of the league's community initiatives and endeavors, said he was excited about the visit.

"The NFL has a long history with the USO that spans more than 40 years," said Goodell. "We've sent more than 200 players and coaches overseas to show our appreciation for the troops' sacrifices."

Brees, no stranger to devastated areas, conducts various

community and fundraising efforts to benefit hurricane-ravaged New Orleans. For his outstanding community efforts, Brees was named a Saints' 2007 Community All-Star. This trip is one example of his desire to give back.

"It feels good to be giving back," said Brees. "The sacrifices the servicemembers make is incredible and shouldn't go unnoticed."

Senior Airman Timothy Ginás, a native of New York, N.Y., said he is a huge New York Jets fan but was happy to see the Giants bring back the championship to the 'Big Apple.'

"It's good to see that we're on the athletes' minds," said Ginás. "My brother likes the Giants, and I can't wait to send him my photos with Osi Umenyiora."

Many of the servicemembers were overjoyed to meet and spend time

with Brees and Umenyiora, but the Cheerleaders stole the show.

“They are beautiful and smart,” said Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Wayne Holloman of Bishopville, S.C. “I’m a big fan.”

Ventimiglia was amazed at how friendly the servicemembers were and how fond they were of the show.

“We give the servicemembers a needed break, and they appreciate us for it,” said Ventimiglia. “I truly appreciate all of the troops.”

Servicemembers enjoyed the candor of the group and the opportunity to share stories with their favorite athletes and celebrities.

“Meeting all the celebrities was great,” said Navy Lt. Florence Beato of San Diego, Calif. “Morale, Welfare and Recreation and the USO did a great job getting these ladies and gentlemen down here, and I would like to thank them.”

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Beth Del Vecchio



U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Shawn Graham



Photos From the Field

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Kelly T. Tobin



Sunset over the mountains near Bagram Air Field.



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

freedomwatch@swa.army.mil



A MEDEVAC helicopter from the Afghan National Air Corps's 377th Helicopter Kandak prepares to land, April 29, at Jalalabad Airfield in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. The Afghan pilots and medics responded to a suicide bombing in Nangarhar's Koghyani District and conducted the ANAC's first ever point-of-injury MEDEVAC mission.



Danielle Brooks, Project Manager, Afghanistan Engineer District, focuses as she cleans one of the pistols fired by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers civilians that were given the opportunity to attend a class on weapons familiarization conducted at the Kabul Military Training Center.



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AFGHANISTAN



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