

A HOME IN THE VASTNESS: FARAH PRT

FREEDOM WATCH AFGHANISTAN

Oct. 6, 2008

THE EDUCATION EDGE
MARINES JOIN THE SHURA

from the kids



*Thank you for your service and sacrifice. Your
bravery and strength of character represent what
America stands for. Bless you!*

Steve & Faye Rockswold
Litchville, North Dakota

Freedom Watch Staff

Commander, AFN Afghanistan
Air Force Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt

Superintendent, AFN Afghanistan
Senior Master Sgt. Brent Squires

Editor/Print NCOIC
Tech. Sgt. Kristina Barrett

Assistant Editor
Marine Corps Cpl. Kimberly Crawford

News Layout/Design
Air Force Staff Sgt. Marcus McDonald

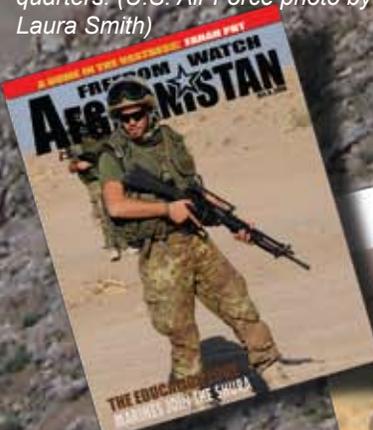
Features Layout/Design
Senior Airman George Cloutier

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Commander, CJTF-101
Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser
Public Affairs Director, CJTF-101
Army Lt. Col. Rumi Nielson-Green

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Italian soldiers conduct a foot patrol during training at Camp Arena, ISAF Regional Command-West Headquarters. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Laura Smith)



A teenage boy rides his donkey in the village of Khormelq in Farah Province. (U.S. Air Force photo by Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt)

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U.S. troops assist turbine movement



A 2-2 Infantry, 3rd Combat Team Soldier secures a main road in the Maywand District as a Kiowa scans the area below.

By Army Staff Sgt. Adora Medina
3rd Brigade Combat Team,
1st Infantry Division

Those who reside in the smaller villages of southern Afghanistan have limited or no electricity.

Even though rows of power lines stretch for miles across the desolate sands of the region, major cities are the only ones to actually benefit from these sources.

U.S. forces joined with Afghan National Security Forces and the International Security Assistance Force in August, to participate in an operation that would lead to the eventual establishment of power for the smaller communities.

The combined forces transported a new Turbine 180 km across southern Afghanistan to the Kajaki dam, located in the Helmand district.

On Aug. 28, Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, escorted the turbine as it passed through their area of operations.

The light infantry unit cleared a path and secured about a 30-km vicinity, enabling safe travel within the Maywand district of Afghanistan. The vast open area presented a challenge for the light infantrymen who began operations in



U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Adora Medina
1st Sgt. Mark Kane, Company C, 2-2 Infantry, 3rd BCT, helps direct a British and Canadian convoy transporting turbine materials into Afghanistan.

the district months ago.

“We’re still not sure what villages are pro-ISAF or pro-Taliban or where some of the areas along the route are worse than the others,” said Capt. Trevor Voelkel, Company C, 2-2 commander.

Despite Taliban attempts to deter the operation, the turbine safely arrived to the Kajaki dam where engineers would begin the construction process and provide electricity for the remote areas of Afghanistan.

Airpower integral to turbine delivery

By Air Force Lt. Col. Gregg Bottemiller

Air Forces Central Command

Coalition airpower focused on a critical part of southern Afghanistan to protect more than 4,000 ground forces and to support the delivery of an electric turbine for the 30-year-old hydroelectric Kajaki dam in Helmand province.

“Our Coalition Airmen meticulously planned how to have the right airpower overhead at the right time to provide ground commanders 100 percent assurance for the safety and security for both the Coalition ground

forces and the very valuable cargo,” said Lt. Gen. Gary North, U.S. Air Forces Central commander and U.S. Central Command’s Combined Force Air Component commander.

Coalition troops from England, Canada, Denmark, Australia, Afghanistan and the United States continuously aided the 100-vehicle convoy more than 100 miles from Kandahar to the dam site, north of Lashkar Gar.

Coalition airpower, under the International Security Assistance Force mission, included close-air support, tanker and airlift/airdrop sorties, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.



U.S. Army photos by Spc. Mary Gonzalez

On tour in Afghanistan

Country star Trace Adkins performs for troops at Bagram Air Field Sept. 28 as a part of a USO tour to Afghanistan.

Marines use 'Cop on the Beat' tactics to strengthen Afghan relations

By Marine Corps Cpl. Steve Cushman

Task Force 2d Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division

The process of patrolling the bazaars and building rapport with locals is similar to the way the police officers in major cities operate to root out criminal activity.

The Marines of Company E, Task Force 2d Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, learned the techniques of patrolling like a "Cop on the Beat" from Ralph Morten, a senior counterinsurgency advisor with Lockheed Martin.

"Saturation of the society enables us to know when and how the Taliban are operating, and deny them access to materials they need to build IEDs," Morten said. "We do that by always being present in the marketplaces where the components for the bombs they use are sold. The Echo Company Marines have been fantastic at adapting to Cop on the Beat patrols, especially after having already been in the area of operations for five months before receiving the training."

Within the first week, Echo Company Marines were able to identify the stores where Taliban bomb makers could acquire the electronics and components to build IEDs.

"Before we learned the Cop on the Beat patrolling system, we would patrol through the bazaar and back without stopping," said Cpl. Michael Brown, Jr., 2nd platoon squad leader. "Now, we have a reason to go into the shops. We know we're not going to find the Taliban in the shops, but we now know what to look for."

The Cop on the Beat patrolling system has been used with



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Steve Cushman

Ralph Morten, senior advisor for counterinsurgency with Lockheed Martin, shows a Marine wire and other components needed to construct an IED he was able to purchase at a local bazaar.

great success in Iraq's Al Anbar Province. The same concept was used in Fallujah, and is one of the reasons the province has since become a model city.

"If we can apply the same things in Afghanistan that have been used in Anbar, we'll see improvements in our ability to deny the enemy the materials they need to attack us," said 1st Lt. James McKendree, 2nd Platoon commander. "The situation here is more complex than in Iraq, because the networks are harder to track. This is going to be a lengthy process."



U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo Jr.

(Above) Airmen react to a simulated improvised explosive device attack at Fort Bragg, N.C. (Right) Petty Officer 3rd Class Armondo Longoria flushes out an intravenous line in preparation for administering an IV during Combat Lifesaver Skills training.



Servicemembers prepare for Afghan deployments

**By Air Force
Master Sgt. Eric Grill**
Air Force News Agency

Airmen, Sailors and Soldiers formed 12 Provincial Reconstruction Teams and are receiving training at Fort Bragg, N.C., as part of a 270-day rotation to Afghanistan in an effort to help rebuild the infrastructure and support the Afghan government.

Each PRT, consisting of a main body of Airmen or Sailors and an Army security platoon, will deploy to different provinces within Afghanistan and will be self-sufficient to perform their civil affairs mission. Of the 12 PRTs, six of them are led by Air Force officers with the other six led by Naval officers.

“Once they get to Afghanistan, they’ll have a myriad of tasks that they’re responsible for,” said Army Col. Harry Glenn, the commander of the 189th Infantry Brigade. The brigade is responsible for training not only Airmen, Sailors and Soldiers for



An Airman reacts to a scenario during the Combat Skills Training.

potential combat in Afghanistan, but also Department of State workers, Department of Agriculture workers and their contractors who are part of the PRTs.

“Primarily they’ll be working reconstruction, so they will be committing U.S. and other donor-nation dollars to assist in the actual reconstruction of Afghanistan,” he said. “The other aspect is they will be working heavily with their counterparts in the Afghan government particular in those provinces. So they’ll handle engineering issues, governance

issues, assist in law and order issues and really try to help and extend the capability of the Afghan government.”

Lt. Col. Daniel Moy is the commander of one of the PRTs.

“Counterinsurgency has an objective to separate the population from the insurgents,” Moy said. “The population really is the center of gravity and we’re there to convince those people who live in those villages that resisting the threats and intimidation of the insurgents is going to be worth their while.”

Moy said he has a unique perspective of the PRT mission.

“I just came from three years at the Pentagon where I had a chance to work in the joint staff,” Moy said. “I kind of watched the evolution of how the military was beginning to put more focus on the mission of the PRT. So the opportunity to come out here and actually be a part of that mission and be with troops going into a combat environment was something that I thought would be a great challenge and also very rewarding.”

U.S. troops help build Afghan Air Corps

By Navy Seaman William Selby
American Forces Press Service

A team of 170 U.S. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines have been tasked with recruiting, training and equipping the Afghan National Army air corps.

“Our goal is to develop this air corps to be fully independent and fully operational, capable to meet [the] security requirements of Afghanistan,” Air Force Maj. Gen. Jay Lindell told bloggers during a teleconference on Sept. 23. Lindell is commander of Combined Air Transition Force, Combined Security Transition Command.

The air transition force is developing mobility missions including presidential airlift, medical evacuation, casualty evacuation, and a general battlefield and logistical support capability, Lindell said.

The force is insisting on qualified recruits to populate the air corps, and only the top 20 percent that come through the Kabul Military Training Center are selected, he said.

New recruits tapped to be airmen or technicians must be literate, with at least an eighth grade education, he said.

While most of the Afghan airmen lack additional formal education, they are motivated and eager to learn, Lindell said.

“Their motivation and their willingness and desire to learn, and desire to be part of this national army air corps, makes up for maybe their lack of education,” he said.

Even among those selected for the overall air corps, pilot selection requires another layer of filtering. Out of the 105 pilot candidates, Lindell said only the 48 most qualified will attend training in the



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo Jr.
Afghan National Air Corp maintainers wash down an MI-17 helicopter on the Kabul International Airport flightline.

United States next year.

“All have university degrees, and all are recommended by commanders, and all have passed an initial medical

screening exam,” he said.

Further tests include a flight aptitude exam and a board selection process to see who is the most qualified.

The transition force also has helped supply newer aircraft, which was a concern for the Afghans.

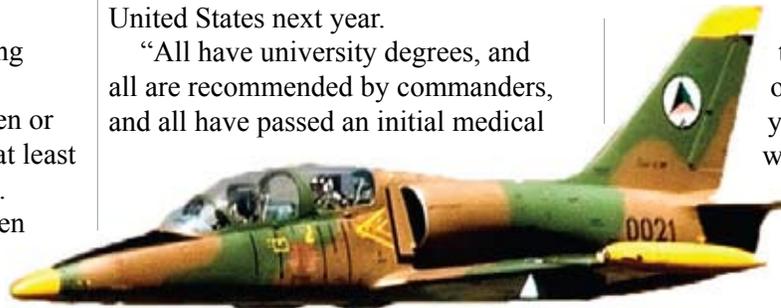
“Currently, we have 27 total aircraft with the national army air corps, and we

have a campaign plan that builds this air corps over the next eight years,” Lindell said. “We will build it to roughly 125 aircraft throughout our campaign plan.”

The number of aircraft

has tripled since September 2007, with planes coming from the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, the United Arab Emirates, and Ukraine, Lindell said.

The aircraft from the Slovak Republic, Czech Republic and Ukraine were refurbished and financed through the Afghan Security Forces Fund, while the others were donated by the United Arab Emirates, he said.



Have your say - email the editor at freedomwatch@swa.army.mil

Submissions will be edited for content and length. Authors will be identified by initials only.

Moving Peace and Stability

By Air Force Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt



1st Lt. Edward Dudick of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard provides security overwatch in Khormelq village during a recent shura meeting with village elders and Farah Provincial Governor Azadi Roohul Amin. (Photos by Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt)

Forward

The men and women of the Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team call one of America's most remote military outposts home. More than 430,000 local people also call the vastness of Farah province home. Together, the people of Farah and the people of the PRT are working feverishly to make home life better for all in one of Afghanistan's most austere regions.

Farah is no stranger to the destructive ravages of war. After 28 years of continual strife including a long Soviet occupation, civil war and harsh Taliban rule, the people are tired and weary – anxious to rebuild.

Moving peace and stability forward is no easy task given the harsh surroundings and inhospitable conditions of the farthest reaches of Western Afghanistan. But, under the watchful eye of Navy Commander Shoshana Chatfield, the Farah PRT is making impressive strides and drastically improving the lives of people here.

Chatfield explains how the PRT works along three main lines of operation. “We’re helping maintain security, helping increase the capacity of local government, and helping with reconstruction and development.”

The most important thing the Farah PRT does is connect the people with their own government, she said. “We’re not really as interested in connecting the people to us. Helping strengthen the systems, services and the offices that exist within the provincial government are what’s essential to our mission.”

Farah’s provincial Governor Azadi Roohul Amin, outlined what he believes to be the most tangible benefits for the people of Farah. “I want to focus on water projects, roads and electricity for Farah province.”

Amin has worked hard to reach the position of governor. He was educated in Afghanistan until 1980 when his family fled to Pakistan. During his time as a refugee in Pakistan, Amin contemplated things that might help his country recover from years of war.

The governor feels his visions of improved infrastructure in Farah are essential to the long-term peace and stability in the region. “The completion of these projects will improve conditions in the health, education, security and business sectors.”

The Farah PRT directly supports the governor’s objectives and lends a hand at every opportunity. “In some cases it’s not reconstruction, but rather construction,” Chatfield said. “Many things are being built from nothing.”

Chatfield and her Civil Military Operations staff recently traveled to Khormeleq village with Governor Amin to meet with elders to discuss work on a PRT road improvement project and a water dam. “The governor was eager to hear their concerns and will shape these projects to meet their needs,” Chatfield said.

Education is seen as the most far-reaching strategic priority by the provincial government. Director of Education, Atiqullah is charged with this element of Farah’s recovery. “Education in Afghanistan will become grafted with the education all over the world,” he said. “We will see much



progress here and that will require our educational system to match other countries of the progressive world.”

One of many unique programs undertaken by the Farah PRT is the construction of a \$1.2 million Center for Excellence in the village of Nan Gab. According to Army Lt. Col. James Campbell, Civil Military Operations Center Leader, the school is essentially a university for higher learning, or what can be called a madrassa.

“This institution will be localized to Farah,” Campbell explained. “We want to give students an opportunity to stay here which not only helps strengthen Western Afghanistan now, but far into the future.” He sees other collateral benefits. “A school this large will also generate some localized economic activity.”

Campbell and his team don’t stop at road and school construction. “We currently have about 30 various projects we’re actively coordinating with,” he said, adding that he works closely with other development partners such as the US Army Corps of Engineers, USAID and the USDA.

“We all work toward a better Farah and a sound investment for the generations to come.” Campbell said. “What we’re doing is trying to reverse nearly 30 years of atrophy in education and infrastructure here.”

Security and soldiering is the responsibility of the PRT Security Forces and soldiers such as Spc. Abram Wright, 3rd / 103rd C Co. “We support the mission by making sure everything is safe which allows the PRT to get more of their work done,” Wright said.

“These PRT missions really help the people out and let us get a lot of face time with the villagers which builds better relations.” Wright said. “We really like being out here.

Just by looking around and being visible, we’re showing the people we want to keep them safe and be their friends.”

Capt. Jeffrey Simmons works daily to build trust and productive relationships with villages across the vastness of Farah Province. As Humanitarian Assistance Administrator, he administers a Work for Food Program. “Instead of creating a welfare program we’re encouraging community participation in projects that need to be done and that they identify,” Simmons said.

In a recent visit to Masow village, Simmons’ team partnered with the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police to deliver promised stoves and staples to more than 60 workers. “These people cleaned up debris in the Shaqamamood canal to get ready for the coming snow-melt runoff,” he explained “They did an excellent job with this tough project which will pay dividends later. It gives them hope and opportunity by taking an active ownership of their village.”

Chatfield’s passion and enthusiasm for her team’s job is contagious. “I truly believe in the mission of the PRT,” she said. “It’s pretty clear that guns alone aren’t going to create peace and stability in Afghanistan. The infrastructure of this country has to be strengthened and we can help.”

Despite the harsh living conditions, the Farah team is exceptionally motivated and upbeat. “There’s a lot of personal payback in what we do, but some of it is a little bittersweet because we invest a lot of ourselves in the relationship here,” Chatfield concluded. “And, it won’t all be finished while we’re here this year and maybe not next year. So, we have to carry that unfinished business around with us when we leave. But we’ll also carry the pride of accomplishment.”



U.S. and Afghan engineers review blueprints for an Afghan National Army garrison currently under construction in Farah province.

The Competitive Edge

By Marine Corps Cpl. Kimberly Crawford

Freedom Watch Asst. Editor

Whether a servicemember decides to fulfill their four years of duty or stay in until retirement, they'll eventually leave the military, making it important to consider their future.

The experience gained from a military career is invaluable. However, it doesn't always act as a difference-maker when servicemembers move into the civilian marketplace. The certainty of military pay and benefits is replaced by job seekers pushing for the competitive edge.

Higher education can provide job applicants that edge. Since many servicemembers join without prior college experience, it's important to make continued education a top priority while serving.

Deployments can further complicate the decision to take on college courses, especially when the service member isn't fully aware of the options and services available to them to simplify the process.

"A lot of people feel that they wouldn't have time for college courses because they think it will be a traditional classroom experience," said Tamisa Griffin, the Embry-Riddle University of Aeronautics assistant director of academic support at the Bagram Air Field education center. "I don't think they understand the full spectrum of the classes that are offered in deployed locations."

Online courses are 12 weeks and are flexible to the operational tempo that tends to fluctuate within a unit. There are, of course, deadlines when assignments need to be turned in, but students likely find they have a lot more flexibility than they originally thought, said Griffin.

There are currently four established education centers at Kandahar, Salerno, Camp Phoenix in Kabul, and Bagram. Also there are three satellite locations in Serona, Venti and one at Camp Eggers, which are all projected to become full service education centers in 2009, said Norbert Renz, the education services officer at the Bagram education center.

In the event that a student needs to travel to another forward operating base in Afghanistan, as long as they have internet access they can continue their studies there. If no internet is available, the student will need to request an extension, said Griffin.

"Most instructors completely understand that education's not the priority out here," she said. "We are at war and people have demands that are much more pressing than completing a paper."

Sometimes, however, internet can be a problem because the bandwidth in Afghanistan is limited. Even at Bagram it's limited and worse the farther out you get. On the small and medium FOBs, it's difficult for students to take online courses because of the internet situations there, said Renz.

The education center allows servicemembers the opportunity to fill their many off-duty hours with something as productive as working toward a college degree.

"Education in general is a plus because it shows people you're motivated," said Griffin. "If you're up for a board, it's not just points but it also shows the determination to be in a deployed location and still continuing to perfect yourself and achieve things academically."

The education center offered nearly 400 onsite courses and had more than 4,000 enrollments through Bagram this past fiscal year, said Renz.

"I ran 71 classes on small FOBs with more than 750 enrollments," he said. "There's a great thirst for this. We've doubled the number of people in school and the amount of classes being offered throughout the last year."

There are options to suite most servicemembers currently deployed to Afghanistan. Embry-Riddle offers a certificate program, which gives those individuals deployed for a year the opportunity to go home with a brand new piece of paper stating they're certified in whichever program they choose.

"For those with shorter deployments, the courses will easily transfer back to their home base. It's a good start because you don't have to pay an application fee here, unlike if you were back stateside," explained Griffin.

The college experience obtained while deployed could make a huge difference in your life during and after the service. When the time comes to make the decision to leave the military, whether with four years or 20 plus under your belt, instead of relying just on having military service on your resume, higher education can make it an easier hiring decision for your future employers.



Fatbardh Murati, Army learning center operator, checks out a book at the Bagram Learning Lab.

(Photo by Cpl. Kimberly Crawford.)

Joining the Shura

By Marine Corps Cpl. Steve Cushman

Task Force 2d Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division



At a patrol base near the Sangin District Center here, a group of Marines joined a “shura,” or meeting, held by local village leaders, Sept. 3.

By participating in the shura, which is similar to a town hall meeting, the Marines can determine what the villagers’ need and identify the best ways to improve quality of life for local residents.

Since deploying here in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Task Force 2d Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, has focused its efforts on bringing peace and prosperity to the Afghan people. Organizing and working with local Afghans on various civil military operations projects is one of many tools used by civil affairs Marines to strengthen relations with local residents.

“The people think highly of the Afghan National Army; they want to support the government, and they want the Taliban out,” said Maj. Mark DeVito, team leader, 3rd Civil Affairs Group, TF 2/7, and San Diego,

Calif., native. “As a community, they need to determine what affects the most people. They sometimes have a hard time working on the prioritization for the projects they want completed. Their biggest concerns are improvements to irrigation and the renovation of several mosques.”

While the primary focus of the shura was to meet with Afghan leaders and adult males in the community, civil affairs Marines are also engaging young adult men in separate shuras. CAG Marines have found that trying to influence the young men is important because they feel they are more likely to be negatively influenced by the Taliban.

“We had around 20 young adults show up for the first teenage shura. One of the biggest things they all wanted was jobs. They were all willing to work,” said Cpl. Eric E. Cuevas, a civil affairs NCO.

“When we asked them what they needed to benefit their community, they responded by saying a mosque. No matter how we tried to get around it, they kept saying they wanted more mosques,” Cuevas explained. “They also said they needed a water pump, because they haven’t had power for almost a month. We asked what other things they wanted,

Major Dan DeVito, team leader, 3rd Civil Affairs Group, TF 2/7, talks to local village leaders at Patrol Base Nabi during a shura meeting. (U.S. Marine Corps photos by Cpl. Steve Cushman)



and they said they wanted a school.”

Helping the Afghans rebuild their schools is one of the Marines’ top initiatives, as education is very important to the local people. The parents all seem to understand the importance of education and they want their children to go to school. Likewise, the teens and younger children have also expressed a desire to return to school.

“The teens all said they wanted a school. They said they haven’t been going to school since the Taliban destroyed their school,” Cuevas said. “Out of the 20 kids who showed up for the teenage shura, only one was attending school.”

Another tool the CAG Marines have at their disposal is the Civil Affairs Transition Training Team, which teaches civil affairs practices to the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and Afghan Nation Civil Order Police which are all invited to accompany the CAG team during its patrols – a concept that proved effective in Iraq.

“We need to teach and mentor civil affairs operations to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF),” said Staff Sgt. Kelly R. Hughes, the CAG team chief and Carlsbad, Calif., native. “If we can teach them how we conduct business, they can monitor the projects, gather information from the villagers, and handle humanitarian aid. It’s just a process of teaching them the right way to do it.”

“It’s working out here,” Hughes continued. “We’ve got our ANP officers with us. They’re going through the same motions as we are. Everything we do, they’re doing along with us – patrol briefs, debriefs and humanitarian aid. They’re starting to pick it up pretty well.”

The CAG team gets plenty of opportunities to host shuras and train ANSF in civil affairs operations, as they are constantly meeting with local residents and checking on projects.

While shuras and other engagements with the local populace have resulted in a more meaningful relationship, the Marines have embarked on a host of other civil affairs projects aimed at educating the people, teaching and equipping doctors, and building roads to provide jobs and aid commerce. Showing its commitment to helping the Afghan people, TF 2/7 has conducted countless operations that are centered on creating a stronger foundation for Afghanistan’s future.

“The biggest thing is that we hit the ground constantly,” said Sgt. Brian A. Blumenthal, a civil affairs NCO and Corona, Calif., native. “We’re seeing a lot of success. It’s slow, but we can definitely see it. These people are trying to survive, because there is a heavy Taliban influence in the area. But, because we’re constantly going out, we’re getting the ‘fence sitters’ to turn to our side.”



photos from the field



U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis Hejlik, II Marine Expeditionary Force commanding general, listens to a briefing at Camp Barber on current and future operations of Task Force 2d Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, part of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix. The task force, which is serving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, is operating throughout the Helmand and Farah provinces. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. James Mercure)



An Afghan man gets medical treatment at the International Security Assistance Force Role 2 Medical Center on Camp Arena. The center provides medical treatment to military personnel assigned to the camp as well as local residents. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech Sgt. Laura Smith)



Royal Australian Regiment Lieutenant James Horigan, 1st Battalion platoon leader, patrols the streets of a mock Afghanistan village with Staff Sgt. Brandon Hamlyn, human intelligence collector, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, during training at the Joint Multi-National Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson)



A member of the 207th Afghan National Army Air Corps honor guard presents the flag of Afghanistan during a change of command ceremony at Camp Zafar. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech Sgt. Laura Smith)



U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Jim McConville, deputy commanding general-support for Combined Joint Task Force-101, has his blood drawn during a CJTF-101 blood-screening drive in the hallway of the Joint Operations Center at Bagram Air Field. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Paul David Ondik)

