

September 8, 2008

Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN



Purple Heart



TF Phoenix



Ramadan



Editor's Note

Have you received a card of thanks that would be applicable to your deployed comrades?

If so, send your submission to freedomwatch.swa.army.mil for possible future inclusion on this page.



From Clayton, 10

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The *Freedom Watch* magazine is a weekly publication of CJTF 101 and AFN Afghanistan.

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Freedom Watch, a U.S. Department of Defense publication, is published each Monday by the AFN Afghanistan's Print Section located in Bldg. 415, Room 205 at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan. Printed circulation is 5,000 copies per week. In accordance with DoD Instruction 5120.4, this DoD magazine is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas. Contents of the *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government or the Department of Defense. Deadline for submissions is noon local each Friday. All submissions are subject to editing by AFN Print Section staff, which can be reached at DSN 318-431-4458.

FRONT COVER: Army Lt. Col. Martin Scott, a medical officer with the Task Force Phoenix Troop Medical Clinic, falls victim to a young child intent on smudging his glasses. Scott and his team were



able to provide immediate care and follow-on treatment for the child after suffering severe burns. (U.S. Air Force photo by Maj. Katherine Oliver)

BACK PAGE: An Afghan elder poses for the camera at the Afghan Elder's Day at Bagram Air Field's Clamshell Gym Aug. 27. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jean-Paul Li)



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Shindand investigation complete

A Coalition forces' investigation into allegations of civilian deaths resulting from an Afghan National Army and U.S. Coalition forces incident in western Afghanistan on the morning of Aug. 22 is complete.

The investigation found that ANA and U.S. forces began taking fire from Taliban militants as the combined force approached their objective during a planned offensive operation, in the early hours of darkness on Aug. 22 in the Herat province.

The intensity of the enemy fire justified use of well-aimed small-arms fire and close-air support to defend the combined force. The type and application of fires were used in accordance with existing rules of engagement.

The investigation found that 30-35 Taliban militants were killed including evidence suggesting a known Taliban commander, Mullah Sadiq, was among them. Five to seven civilians were killed, two civilians were injured and subsequently treated by Coalition forces, and five Taliban were detained.

The range in the casualty numbers were determined by observation of the enemy movements during the engagement as well as on-site observations immediately following the engagement.

Investigators discovered firm evidence that the militants planned to attack a nearby Coalition forces' base. Other evidence collected included weapons, explosives, intelligence materials, and an access badge to a nearby base as well as photographs from inside and outside of the base.

U.S. Marines care for Afghan child

A 10-year-old child was severely

injured in the Garmsir District Aug. 26. He was working in the fields when he attempted to pick up an object, which turned out to be an explosive of an unidentified type.



Marinesevacuatedthechild, his father and brother-in-law to British Forward Operating Base Dwyer where the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit has a Forward Resuscitative Surgical Site.

The child was treated at the site and was transported to Lashkar Gah for follow-on treatment.

Lithuanian PRT donates furniture

The Lithuanian-led provincial reconstruction team (PRT-7) recently donated school furniture to the Ghowr province education department, providing 330 tables and 660 chairs to the five schools of the Ghowr province. The idea to provide furniture for schools was born after the schools were built by the Lithuania PRT. The furniture donation will complete the construction of these buildings.

"We are really very happy to work with the PRT in our education process," said Muhammad Naeem, education department director. "The Soldiers and civilians have already done a lot to help our pupils. Our children used to learn under the open sky. Now they can study at schools, which have furniture too."

Spanish ISAF soldiers save lives

Early in the morning of Aug. 22, an Afghan National Army vehicle struck an IED in Badghis Province, killing two Afghan soldiers and seriously wounding two others. The Spanish medical service of the provincial reconstruction team saved their lives due to the response of the medical team. Both Afghan soldiers were later evacuated by Spanish medical

helicopters to the Spanish Air Force Military Hospital in Herat, where they are currently recovering.

Czech PRT launches 14 projects

The Czech Republic-led provincial reconstruction team in Logar announced 14 new development projects at a bidders' conference held Aug. 19 at FOB Shank, Pole Alam. The projects range in scope from the reconstruction of roads and bridges to the extensive retrofit of the Surchab dam.

"Our people are happy that the PRT helps us and we are ready to assist and support the construction companies which will undertake the projects," Hakim Abdul, head of the provincial council, said during the meeting with the civilian part of the PRT. Following a number of consultations with local players, assessments and consequently the bidders' conference, the Czechs will chose the Afghan companies that will undertake the reconstruction. Work on the projects will start within a month.

Besides the retrofit of Surchab dam, the only working dam in Logar province, four water and irrigation structures will be repaired. Reconstruction of three roads and several bridges as well as surveys of the reconstruction roads are among the new development projects prepared by the Czechs and their Afghan partners.

Water and irrigation, as well as support of agriculture and education are the priorities of the Czech PRT in Logar province. The team has already assisted the people in Logar with the reconstruction of six schools and the construction of two health clinics.

The donation of solar dryers and the refurbishment of two water structures are among the other ongoing projects of the team, which consists of eight civilian experts and 200 Czech soldiers.

FOB Thor Soldier receives Purple Heart

By Army Sgt. Jessica Dahlberg
382nd Public Affairs Detachment

Army Spc. Vicente Torres, a motor vehicle operator from Alpha Co. 201st Brigade Support Battalion was awarded the Purple Heart Aug. 18 at a Forward Operating Base Thor in Northeastern Afghanistan.

The Purple Heart was presented to Torres by Lt. Col. Bradley White, 201st BSB commander, for his efforts and the wounds he received July 17.

"I was honored to get to pin him," White said. "Not only because he is my Soldier, but because he is a Soldier who did well."

Torres said he does not feel like he did anything special to receive the Purple Heart, he was just doing his job.

He and his team members from the Combat Logistics Patrol section of the BSB conducted a convoy up to a FOB in Northern Nuristan to bring them the remaining supplies that could not be airlifted.

On the return trip the lead vehicle spotted a freshly painted white rock. The convoy stopped, and the lead vehicle went to go check out the suspicious rock. They flipped it over, and found nothing underneath.

They got back in their trucks and proceeded along the narrow, unpaved mountain road. After about 100 meters, the convoy was attacked from both sides by anti-Afghan Forces.

For approximately half an hour the enemy continuously hit the convoy with multiple Rocket Propelled Grenades and Small Arms Fire.

Torres was the gunner in a humvee, which was struck by an RPG immediately after the attack began. He received shrapnel in his right wrist from the blast, but stayed in the fight. He continued to return fire with his left hand while a medic bandaged his wounded wrist.

"The actions of everyone that day, not just Torres, proved we were trained and ready for this deployment," White said. "The fact that he kept fighting even though he was injured is



Courtesy photo

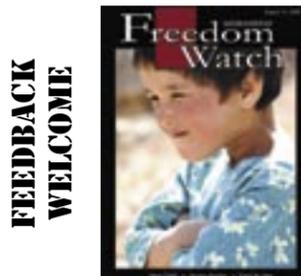
Spc. Vicente Torres receives the Purple Heart.

proof to the kind of Soldier Torres is."

While Torres might be recognized for the wounds he received that day, he would like to praise his fellow Soldiers who were with them that day. They might not have gotten an award, but they still did their job, Torres said. We made it out of that attack because we all worked together as a team.

"Torres performed heroically that day," Staff Sgt. Kevin Vaughn, said, "and if he had not done what he did people would have died."

Your *Freedom Watch* magazine is in a period of transition.



E-mail the editor at freedomwatch@swa.army.mil with your ideas.



Dari & Pashtu Phrases 101



Congratulations!

Dari
Tabrig
(tah-bree-ck)

Pashtu
Mu baraska
(moo-bah-rock-shaw)



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Afghanistan, Iraq airdrops reach all-time high

By Air Force Staff Sgt.
Andrea Thacker
AFCENT Public Affairs

Resupplying U.S. and coalition forces on the ground is a critical logistical component of combat operations. Seven months into 2008, the Air Force had already supplied forces in Iraq and Afghanistan with more than 8.5 million pounds of goods. This surpasses the 2007 total and reaches an all-time high, in what promises to be a historical year for tactical airdrops.

In comparison to airdrops in 2005, the Air Force has dropped more than six times that amount so far this year, and three times the amount airdropped in 2006.

“Airdrop capability is indicative of the asymmetric advantages of airpower throughout the U.S. Central Command’s area of responsibility,” said Lt. Gen. Gary North, U.S. Air Forces Central commander, and CENTCOM Combined Force Air Component commander. “Our U.S. Air Force and Coalition air force’s capability to airdrop supplies to our ground forces in isolated environments allows the collective forces to maintain the pressure on the enemy.

“In many places in Afghanistan, our airdrops are the sole source of resupply to ground forces,” he said. “The ability to provide this resupply in both routine and emergency situations is very rewarding for our aircrews and the joint service support crews that prepare the airdrop cargo, from rigging the bundles to loading the aircraft.”

By providing troops on the ground with the necessary supplies, it enables ground forces to promote safety and security for the people in both countries.

“This particular airdrop milestone marks the greatest amount of combat resupply in a single year since hostilities began in 2001,” said Maj. Andrew Purath, air mobility division tactics chief at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center. “Our ability to airdrop supplies and equipment from our C-130’s and C-17’s allows us to continually take the fight to enemy ground forces, because



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Samuel Morse
Cargo is unloaded from a C-17 Globemaster III. The aircraft provides rapid intra-theater cargo, airdrop and aero-medical evacuation support throughout southwest Asia.

“It has to be frustrating for an enemy to know we can choose the time and place that we resupply our forces on the ground...”

Maj. Andrew Purath

friendly forces get the supplies they need, when they need them.”

While airdrops directly support coalition forces, they also help Iraqi and Afghan civilians. Air Force airdrops and those from other Coalition nation’s airlifters routinely resupply coalition forces by airdropping cargo such as food, water, fuel, ammunition, medical supplies and building materials. Cargo can be airdropped in a variety of methods, each tailored and mission planned for the specific area and mission specific requirements.

“The airdrop mission has been focused in Afghanistan, because the lack of infrastructure there has made it difficult to resupply overland,” Purath said. “As Coalition forces have increased their presence at forward operating bases

throughout Afghanistan, the demand for combat airdrop resupply has increased as well.”

The major said the Air Force’s ability to resupply its personnel can be frustrating for the enemy.

“It has to be frustrating for an enemy to know we can choose the time and place that we resupply our forces on the ground,” said Purath, “particularly when the enemy must receive their supplies from overland sources in some of the most inaccessible real estate on the planet.”

Since 2004, combat airdrop operations have dropped nearly 19 million pounds of cargo and supplies within an average of 185 meters of the requested point of impact with a 98.5 percent recovery rate, according to the major. Coincidentally, this airdrop milestone comes at a time when the Air Force is observing the Berlin Airlift’s 60th anniversary.

Since 1948, Air Force air mobility forces have brought the supplies needed to troops on the ground and to local civilian populations. Today’s airdrop mission in the CENTCOM AOR is a key part to on-going combat operations. It provides needed logistics to military members and results in a more stable environment for the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.



U.S. Army photos by Capt. James Reid

(Left) Australian and American combat engineers construct the Mabey Johnson Bridge. (Below) Spc. Corey Thompson, 420th Engineer Brigade, works with Australian combat engineers as they align two sections of the bridge.

Australian, TF Castle engineers bridge gaps

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

Members of the Australian Reconstruction Task Force and Task Force Castle’s 420th Engineer Brigade recently completed the emplacement of two Mabey Johnson bridges near Andar and Moqur in eastern Afghanistan.

Insurgent attacks during the summer months left the bridges in each location impassible to both civilian and military traffic, forcing Afghans and Coalition forces to use single-lane bypasses.

Work progressed quickly once the Australian and American combat engineers arrived on site. In just over two days, the first bridge in Andar was quickly erected and forces moved on to Moqur, where they emplaced the second bridge.

The stretch of Highway 1, or Kandahar to Kabul road, that the engineers worked on, is a paved route originally built in the 1960’s that joins the two major Afghan cities. The 300-mile stretch that the bridges are located on was refurbished in 2002 and 2003 as part of President Bush’s Af-

ghanistan Road Initiative. According to USAID, the work was credited with reducing the transit time between Kandahar and Kabul by half.

In recent months, Highway 1 has become a focal point for insurgent activity. Both Taliban fighters and common bandits are targeting supply convoys and merchant traffic up and down the route. The bridge attacks were the latest in the Taliban’s efforts to impede Afghanistan’s reconstruction and stability.

The bridge attacks are a serious concern, but not a serious engineering problem to solve.

“Each section of the bridge is called a bay and is about 10 feet long,” said Capt. James Reid, Task Force Castle’s assistant operations officer. “We were able to do a 10-bay bridge in two days.”

Reid, an Arkansas native, has seen a great deal in his 20 years of military service, with multiple tours in Iraq

and now building bridges in Afghanistan.

“I’m excited to be involved in this,” Reid said. “It’s helping everybody. It’s helping Afghanistan, it’s helping the Coalition forces, and it’s just a win-win for everyone.”



Task Force Phoenix Troop Medical Clinic

Caring for Afghanistan, one injured child at a time

By Air Force Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt
American Forces Network Afghanistan

The Troop Medical Clinic (TMC) at Camp Phoenix near Kabul evokes images of the 70's TV show, M*A*S*H. All the stark theatrical elements are there – personality, humor, human drama and a keen sense of duty. Except, the Soldiers, Airmen and Sailors at the TMC aren't acting. And the casualties are all too real.

Airman 1st Class Rebekah Crawford relishes the camaraderie and spirit of her team. And, she depends on it.

"We're a unique crowd here," she said. "We're from all branches and come from all over the country, but we all have a common goal. So, when we focus our energy, we make amazing things happen. Are we making a difference here? You bet."

The primary mission is troop medical care in direct combat support of Task Force Phoenix Soldiers who patrol much of central Afghanistan. But, Crawford and her team also spend much of their 'space available' time caring for Afghan kids with traumatic injuries.

"We have kids come in almost daily and we're authorized to treat life, limb and eyesight-threatening injuries," she said. "That's exactly what we do."

Sometimes the work is heart wrenching and emotional. The TMC often treats disfiguring burns.

"After the first time I treated a burned child, I went back to my hut and had a good cry," Crawford explained.

"I really like helping out the kids and it's easy to grow really fond of them because we have to sort of share their pain."

She explained burn injuries are especially painful compared to other types of trauma due to the prominence of nerve endings in the epidermis of the skin. Among the many complications associated with burns is the susceptibility to life-threatening infections.

"Burns are deadly and require a lot of care and attention," she said.

Like the crews of many combat support medical outfits, Task Force Phoenix medics often venture into unorthodox areas and perform procedures which might normally be done by nurses or physicians in traditional stateside environments.

"We don't necessarily practice medicine or anything like that, but it gets pretty hectic here sometimes and it's an all-hand-on-deck team effort," Crawford explained while cleaning herself up. "It requires us to develop a skill set pretty quickly and the Army does a great job of training us."

She had just assisted a physician and three other technicians with the task of debriding the arms, legs and stomach of a 4-year-old boy with second-degree burns of more than 60 percent of his body.

During the extremely painful debriding procedure, she



U.S. Air Force photo by Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt
An Afghan man and his son seek care at the Task Force Phoenix Troop Medical Clinic.



U.S. Air Force photo by Maj. Katherine Oliver

Army Sgt. Marla Sifuentes, Task Force Phoenix Troop Medical Clinic medic, applies burn dressings to an Afghan boy.

managed to comfort the small boy with encouragement and kindness. After the skin was removed the medics administered a sterile wash in the austere conditions of the hot and dusty hut. She then assisted with the application of soothing cream designed to provide a protective barrier and promote healing of the exposed tissues – just as soothing and cool as the thickly applied ointment was her tenderly applied compassion.

"Kids need to see confidence and get assurance from us," she said. "They need to know someone cares."

For their strength and sanity, the medics must erect a permeable but rigid wall between themselves and their kids.

"You can't separate yourself from the situation and you have to feel for that child," Crawford explained. "On the other hand, you can't become too attached, especially not knowing what's in store for these kids when we walk them to the gate and release them."

"It's very difficult to know the eventual outcome of many cases," she said. "Hopefully they come back, and many do. We often get hugs and kisses. That's when we get our true reward and see the contributions we're making here."

Saddened by what she had just done and seen, Crawford was also encouraged and upbeat.

"We often get hugs and kisses. That's when we get our true reward and see the contributions we're making here."

Airman 1st Class Rebekah Crawford

"We saved his life and this little guy can now grow up," she said. "He could be known for greatness in his country some day. You never know."

She wiped away a tear, a 'Ctrl-Alt Del' for her emotions and her professional decorum. Next, preparing the small hut space for the next small patient. Her mentally exhausted teammates also gathered themselves and pitched in. Smiles soon returned to everyone's face.

Like the 4077th characters in M*A*S*H, Crawford and the rest of the Camp Phoenix TMC gang miss their kids, homes and families. Yet, they soldier on here despite nearly daily encounters with suffering and pain.

Selflessly giving lifesaving care and compassion are the story lines for every episode of TF Phoenix, T*M*C.

Airmen, Soldiers to brighten future for Afghan youth

By Air Force Staff Sgt.
Tammie Moore

U.S. Air Forces Central News Team

Airmen and Soldiers of the Zabul Provincial Reconstruction Team are overhauling a local boy's middle and high school campus to help provide a brighter future for youths in Qalat.

The team worked directly with Afghan community leaders recently to discover sustainable projects that directly improve resident's quality of life.

The undertaking, primarily funded by the Commander's Emergency Response Program, was selected based on the impact it could have on the community.

Since 2003, those deployed to this PRT have been working to build bonds in the local community by forming relationships with key leaders, village elders and contracting construction work through local companies to help stimulate the economy.

"It is important to work with the local contractors because they are really tied into the community. They can make things happen, especially if you get some influential contractors who are tied into the different tribes and the government," said 1st Lt. Adam Lazar, a PRT civil affairs engineer. "It really is a delicate balance between who you choose and your success. If you choose the wrong contractor, your whole project can just be at a standstill because he is working in a different tribal area or does not have the connections in the area to get he project going."

Members of the PRT had numerous conversations with the locals and government officials to determine what assistance they could provide.

This summer, the PRT facilitated the installation of a well, electrical upgrade and provided a month of food subsidies for students. Current construction on the grounds includes adding a sewage system to the school complex.

The scheduled campus improvements also include the construction of a dormitory, allowing the student body to double to 1,800, all housed on the grounds. The CERP is investing more than \$1 million



U.S. Air Force photos by Master Sgt. Keith Brown
(Above) Army 1st Lt. Adam Lazar, Zabul PRT engineer, discusses progress on the construction of a new fire station in Qalat. (Below) Contractors mix cement at the Qalat boy's middle and high school campus for the construction of a soccer stadium.



into improvements at the campus.

"Our emphasis here is to push education in the local community," the lieutenant said. "This project and others like it are legitimizing the Afghan government to the locals as well as showing the government's support to the people."

Another key piece to the work being done on the school grounds is a complete overhaul of the soccer field. This project came about after PRT members watched a large tournament take place on the school's wavy, dirt field littered with large rocks.

"There were about 600 people at the game and there was no seating," said Army Sgt. Steve Wentzel, a PRT civil affairs specialist. "We were told other teams hated playing there because the

field was uneven. So we took our ideas for a new stadium to the Afghan department of education, and they loved it."

The new stadium will have a leveled field, five-tier seating, locker rooms, bathrooms and space for vendors.

The stadium, located on the campus, will be not only be used by students but also for city games and governor's events, as well. The soccer stadium's location on the school grounds also provides the youths something to do in a secure environment, Lieutenant Lazar said. As the team travels to the school periodically to review construction progress, they are often greeted by students who circle around them curiously. The PRT's presence on the campus not only allows them to monitor construction but also reinforces their commitment to the community.

"Education and recreation are key aspects to a child's life," said Sergeant Wentzel said. "This project will affect the children in such a positive way, allowing them to learn and grow while having fun with friends. It can create such a positive future for so many children."

"Education and recreation are key aspects to a child's life," said Sergeant Wentzel said. "This project will affect the children in such a positive way, allowing them to learn and grow while having fun with friends. It can create such a positive future for so many children."



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Ray Lewis

Looking for threats

Marine Cpl. Jose Campos inspects an Afghan road for possible threats in the Farah province. Campos and other Marines and Sailors assigned to Task Force 2d Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division were on a mission to survey the area. TF 2/7 is currently serving a 210-day deployment to train, advise and mentor the Afghan National Police.

Messages of support www.americasupportsyou.mil

Howdy and thank you to you fantastic troops. Ya'll are the best. I play banjo for you every Thursday at the U.S.O. in the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. I brag on you every day.

— Richard D. Simms, Ft. Worth

I would like to say thank you so much for fighting for us. I know you probably don't hear that enough. We all love and appreciate you so much and don't ever give up. God bless you all.

I wish I could say more, but words could never describe how much we love you!! Thank you!

— Jazmine Chilo, Maple Valley, Wash.

I just wanted to say "Thank You" for everything ALL of you do. Many of us

take for granted what all of you consider to be precious. There is a bulletin going around MySpace for support to all of you who fight for us every day of your lives and it is very much appreciated.

I can't say "I know what you are going through or I know what you mean" because in reality I have absolutely no clue what all of you go through. But I can say that I do know that the only way my family and I can live the life that we do is because of all of you.

None of you are related to me and I don't know any of you but all of you protect me, my family and every American citizen as if you knew us or if we were your family and that means more to us than you could ever realize.

All of you troops are very honest, loy-

al, brave and very much respected and I hope all of you know that. There are many selfish people who don't support what you are doing but live life every day pretending that you guys aren't the ones making it safe for them to live that way and that is a very sad thing but you have the people like me and my family and so many others who support all of you and who appreciate everything you do to make our country safe.

Thank you so very much for what you have done, are doing and will continue to do on a daily basis. You are all wonderful heroes and someday I hope that me and my family can meet some of the heroes that make our living as safe and free as possible. Good luck on all you do and please come home to your families safely. God bless all of you.

— Chris, Shauna and Brooke Aaron
Birmingham, Ala.



Ramadan: Veterans offer tips, expertise on conducting operations

By Army Staff Sgt. Michael Carden
American Forces Press Service

The Islamic holy month of Ramadan, which continues through sunrise on Sept. 30, has historically been one of the most complex periods for coalition forces to conduct operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Being culturally aware of the environment is critically important, military officials at the Pentagon said.

Although cultural awareness and sensitivity always are important facets of military operations, Ramadan poses particular challenges for which coalition forces should consider and prepare, said Army Maj. Pat Work, aide de camp for the Army secretary.



Ramadan 2008

Because Ramadan is a time of fasting, there is less opportunity for interaction with the local populace.

Local citizens, security forces and even insurgents spend their days praying, reading the Koran and participating in other Ramadan traditions. However, insurgency doesn't stop; attacks simply occur more often at night, said Work, who has

deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan as a company commander with 2nd Ranger Battalion and as a battalion operations and executive officer with the 82nd Airborne Division.

"The situation changes, but the mission doesn't change," Work said. "The most effective leaders are going to recognize this immediately and prepare for it accordingly."

The lack of social activity among the citizens during the daytime will offer less opportunity to gather intelligence. Units may have to adjust their patrol schedules and focus security efforts to after sunset, when Muslims gather to celebrate breaking their daily fast, he said.

Leaders should be extremely flexible with all their assets, Work said. They should consider their evacuation plans, traffic control plans, intelligences plans, curfew-enforcement plans and influence Iraqi security forces to change their schedules too. Insurgents are more vigorous when society is livelier, and large gatherings present greater targets for terrorism, Work said.

"The enemy is going to go where the people are, so [coalition forces] need to be there too," he said. "People are where the fight is won or lost, and insurgents are very aware of that. If the people gathered at night, that's obviously going to weigh into your tactical planning."

Since the window to conduct combat operations is smaller, managing operations may be more difficult. However, Army Maj. Brett Sylvia, a joint-staff officer for the Iraq Political

Military Affairs Division at the Pentagon, said his experiences deployed during Ramadan found the insurgency very predictable, because they, too, have limited opportunity to operate.

"[Attacks] did follow a very predictable cycle, which people, I think, are familiar with at this point," Sylvia said.

Typically, attacks occurred often during feasts and after the holy day of Friday, said Sylvia, who spent the past two Ramadans deployed to Iraq with the 82nd Airborne Division. Sylvia recalls Saturdays and Sundays as heavy attack days.

Although many challenges in combat operations arise during the month, the celebration creates opportunities to build and foster relations with local leaders and citizens. Ramadan presents the chance to maximize their efforts in other ways, such as expressing respect and understanding of Islam regardless of religious preference, Sylvia said.

From a rapport-building standpoint, being able to break the fast with certain key people is important, because that's something Muslims do with close friends and people they feel are important, Sylvia said. Military leaders should set up some type of engagement with local leaders to invite Iraqis to break the fast with them, Sylvia said as he reflected on his most recent deployment and the effort his former brigade commander put into observing Ramadan with local leaders.

"It's an important step in terms of rapport building, in terms of demonstrating who [coalition leaders] feel is important," he said. "It was a great opportunity to build up the stature of certain members of the community, but also to build up your own personal power base as you work yourself in with them culturally."

In today's counterinsurgency environments in Iraq and Afghanistan, having cultural awareness and sensitivity is vital to the overall mission's success as coalition forces are constantly interacting with the local populace, he said.

"Having good cultural awareness is as essential as marksmanship, because it's about the populace, and it's about intelligence," he said. "You can build trust so much more rapidly if you have demonstrated cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity."

Ramadan is considered the holiest month in Islam, as Muslims commemorate the birth of their holy scripture, the Koran. The observance is a celebration of peace, prayer and reconciliation. Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset as a means of purification to attain consciousness of Allah, or God, and guard against the influence of Satan.

According to Islamic tradition, Muslims fast for the entire month, abstaining from eating, drinking, sex, smoking or becoming ill-tempered during the daytime.

"Having good cultural awareness is as essential as marksmanship, because it's about the populace, and it's about intelligence."

Maj. Brett Sylvia



Courtesy photos

A local contractor counts desks with villagers in Kohi Sofi District, Parwan province, as Task Force Gladiator Soldiers distribute school supplies on Aug. 26. The village received 75 desks, 10 chalk boards and 150 sets of basic school materials.

TF Gladiator delivers school supplies to Parwan villages

By Army 1st Lt. Lory Stevens
Task Force Warrior Public Affairs

Task Force Gladiator, together with Afghan National Police and a contracted construction and supply company, recently delivered 75 desks, 10 chalk boards and 150 sets of school supplies to three villages in Kohi Sofi District, Jurghati, Hasanzi and Shawo Katay.

The Commander's Emergency Response Program funded supplies after Capt. William Coulter, Alpha Company commander, visited and assessed a number of local communities.

"All three villages had absolutely no school supplies and the only one with any furniture was Hasanzi," said Coulter. "The furniture at Hasanzi was old, rotten and falling apart."

Coulter's team sprung into action.

"The cost of supplies distributed is over \$15,600, with the majority of money being spent on wood and metal for the desks," said Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Miller, CERP manager. Task Force Gladiator worked closely with the local contractor to ensure materials could be accessed and distributed quickly.

Children of each village were given two sets of school supplies, to include a backpack, paper, coloring book, crayons, and other basic classroom materials.



A child from Shawo Katay Village laughs at Sgt. Jeremy Smith of Alpha Company. In addition to delivering school supplies, Soldiers fostered relations with local villagers.

"The road system in this region is very bad and locals have no way to commute to Bagram Air Field or Kabul to work," said Coulter.

Task Force Gladiator plans to distribute farming tools and several water wells to residents in these villages.

Shawo Katay Village, resting upon a mountain top, has no school building and uses a mosque for meetings and instruction. Jurghati Village has a school,

although it is based out of someone's house and the structure of the building is poor. Projects for school buildings are badly needed, especially in Jurghati where children from four villages gather together for instruction.

"Many projects to improve the lives of Afghan people take a long time," said Coulter. "School supplies, farm equipment and wells make a positive impact quickly on communities."



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Andrew Carlson



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Ray Lewis
Col. Abdulah Nazim, Afghan National Army, preaches to Muslims at Camp Barber in the Helmand province. The Marines and Sailors from Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix hosted the fellowship so the religious leader could help Muslims strengthen their spiritual beliefs. Nazim told the attendees to be good Muslims who abide by the Koran, they must work with American forces to better Afghanistan and not to follow the ways of the Taliban.



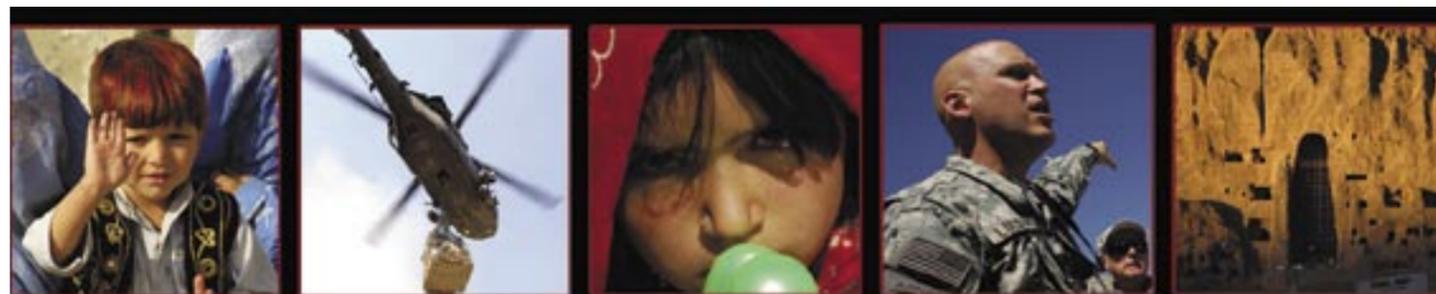
U.S. Army photo by Spc. George Welcome
Soldiers of Task Force Out Front secure a rope after fast roping from a CH-47 during a fast-rope insertion and extraction system training exercise at Jalalabad Aug. 28.

(Above) A Marine from Charlie Company, Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, conducts combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan. (Right) Staff Sgt. Sean Loose performs pre-flight inspections on an HH-60 Pave Hawk's mini-guns at Kandahar Air Field.



U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Keith Brown

Photos From the Field



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