KALA GUSH RADIO: TURN ON, TUNE IN, STAY TUNED

FREEDOM WATCH AFGHANISTAN

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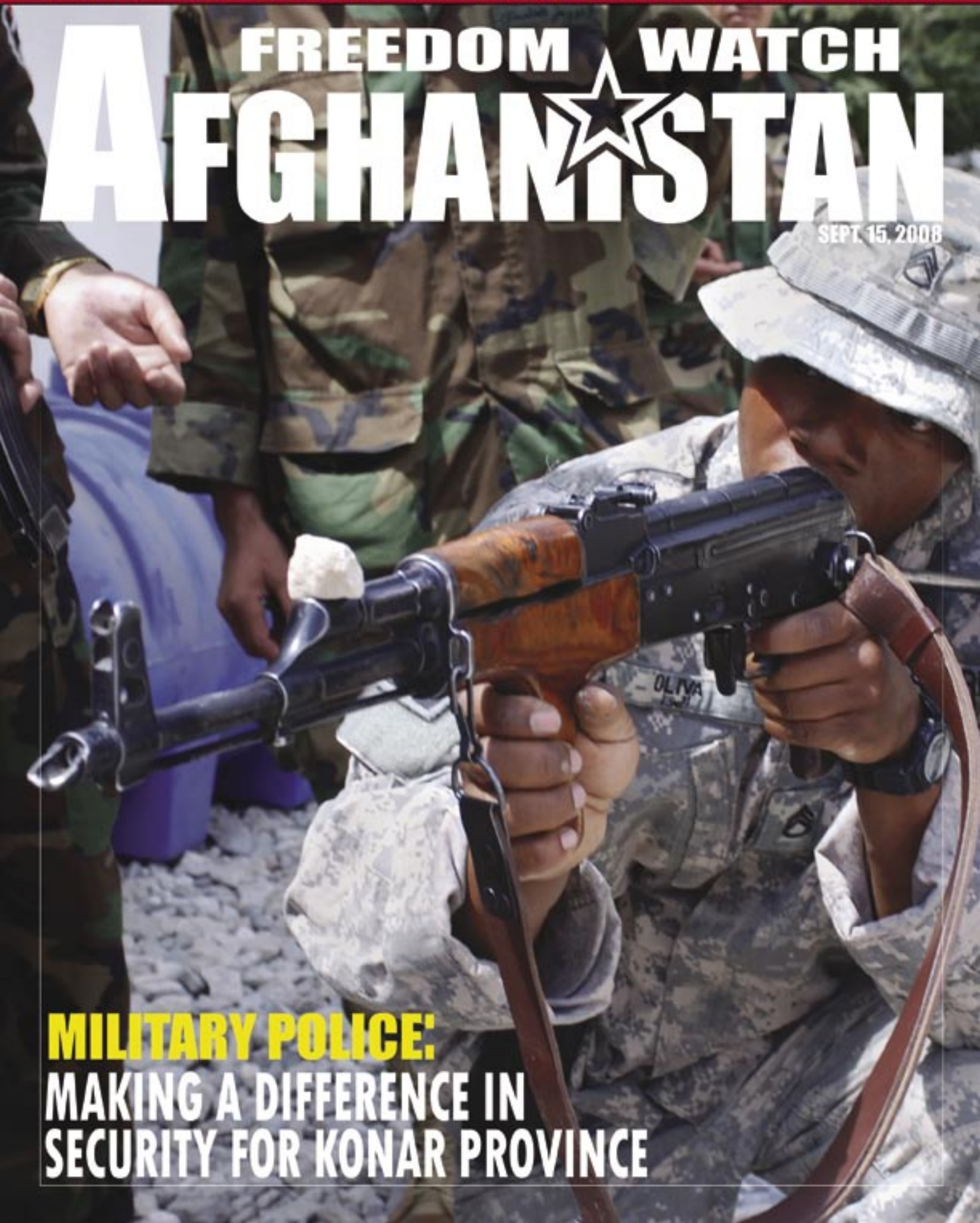

MILITARY POLICE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SECURITY FOR KONAR PROVINCE

from the kids

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FRONT COVER: Army Staff Sgt. Modesto Olivia, 2-207 Embedded Training Team, demonstrates how to hold an AK-47 during marksmanship training. *(U.S. Air Force photo by Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt)*

BACK COVER: U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Fenlason fixes the front sign of an M-4 rifle at Bagram Air Field's Padgett Range Complex. *(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jean-Paul Li)*

Contents

SEP 15, 2008

3 Afghan commandos ready to battle Taliban

5 New clinic opens in Parwan province

6 Female medic leads by example to redefine roles of Afghan women

9 MPs make a difference in security for Konar province

10 Tuning into Kala Gush Radio

Afghan sentinels respond first in Nangarhar

By Air Force Capt.
J. Elaine Hunnicutt
Nangarhar PRT Public Affairs

The Afghan Border Police captured a suicide bomber last month in the Chapahar District before he was able to kill countless innocent civilians.

This capture took place because a local citizen was brave enough to call the Nagarhar Operational Coordination Center – Province.

"The OCC-P has been able to contribute to keeping drugs off the streets, clearing the country of land mines and IEDs, and helping with the fight against terrorism," said 2nd Lt. Kenneth Pospisil, the OCC-P liaison officer.

The Nangarhar OCC-P opened its doors and turned on its phone lines four years ago, and since that time the combined effort of the Afghan police, border police and army have responded to emergency calls throughout the province.

"The OCC-P is a critical organization for the continued application of security and emergency services in Nangarhar," said Lt. Col. Pat Daniel, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Special Troops Battalion commander. The center has 10 Afghan-manned positions and two U.S. coordinators.

It mirrors the 911 system in the United States, but their number in the Nangarhar province is 1-0-0. The center gets more than 1,000 calls per week on the 1-0-0 number, but usually only 10 percent are emergencies.

"The people have confidence that if they call the 1-0-0 number, they'll get help," said Col. Abdul Ghafoor, Afghan National Security Forces. "We receive many calls on a daily basis."

"Many people are just curious to see if the number works or are confused what constitutes an emergency," said Army Staff Sgt. Landroval Reliford, OCC-P liaison NCO. "We are working to educate the populous, but at least people are comfortable calling the number."

"The people have confidence that if they call the 1-0-0 number, they'll get help."

Col. Abdul Ghafoor

Ghafoor said the OCC-P enables successful communication and allows for joint missions. "We are sharing information and helping each other," he said.

"The center also provides a direct link to the different security departments, which allows for an easier flow of communication and intelligence reports," said Pospisil.

"Now we are working side-by-side to achieve the goal and trying the best to eliminate civilian casualties," Ghafoor said.

The OCC-P has seen many success stories since 2005.

"A couple of months back we received a call from an anonymous Afghan caller about a big load of narcotics that were traveling from Kot District to Jalalabad City," Ghafoor said.

The caller provided the details and location.

"We immediately went to the area and surrounded the suspects," he continued.

After searching the cars, 165 kilograms of narcotics were confiscated and seven people were arrested.

Another caller revealed insurgents were planning an attack in the Sherzad District, so the OCC-P sent in more security troops to the area.

They have successfully fought and kept the insurgents out of the area.

The center is currently in the process of converting to a regional concept to include a new facility that will coordinate responses in Nangarhar and Konar provinces with plans to expand even further.

"The modern equipment and design will vastly improve the already effective emergency response telephone system and operations," Daniel said.

"As we transition to the regional concept, we will need reps from each province and the ability to communicate freely," said Pospisil.

"Currently, we have no representative from the other provinces," Pospisil said, "but once they start to trickle in, it will take some training to get everyone on the same page."

Dari & Pashtu Phrases 101

Is it safe here?

Dari: Ainja mason ast? (in-jamaf-soozast)

Pashtu: Delta aman dae? (del-ta a-ma da)

ANSF, ISAF defeat attack

Afghan National Security Forces, with support from the International Security Assistance Force, defeated an insurgent attack on the Zadran District Center in the Paktia province Sept. 8.

About 20 insurgents attacked the district center with light weapons and rocket-propelled grenades. The ANSF guarding the district centre returned fire and called for ISAF assistance.

The combined force, including air support, killed most of the insurgents while neither ANSF nor ISAF troops suffered casualties.

Afghan, Brits take control

Following a ceremony Sept. 8, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit returned responsibility for keeping order in the northern part of Garmsir district, once an area infested by insurgents, to the Afghan 4th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps and their British mentors.

The northern part of Garmsir district along the Helmand River was long a vital area to the insurgents — serving as a staging and transit area for insurgent, their equipment and their weapons.

U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class John Collins

Swarming around

A Royal Australian Regiment soldier with the International Security Assistance Force provides security in the village of Tarin Kowt while children swarm around him in hopes of getting a treat.

Czech development projects

The Czech Republic-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Logar province launched several new development projects at a bidders' conference at Forward Operating Base Shank Sept. 7.

The projects include the construction of several girls' schools, the construction of a training center for Afghan National Police and the retrofitting of all main check points on the highway from Kabul to Gardez.

The PRT will build two primary schools in Khushi district. When they are completed, all girls from the central villages in Khushi will be able to attend.

Scientific research project

The first joint science research project between Afghanistan and Germany occured when International Security Assistance Force soldiers delivered a laptop and digital camera to the Balkh Leishmaniasis Centre in Mazar-e-Sharif.

During the next three years, Afghan doctors at the center will use the laptop and camera to archive data on Leishmaniasis patients. The information and deep-frozen blood samples from infected patients will then be sent to the Tropical Institute in Hamburg, Germany, for further study.

New clinic opens in Parwan province

U.S. Army photos

A local farmer who donated land for the Chinaki Uyla Medical Clinic poses for a picture with his son during the Sept. 6 ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Gov. Abdul Jabbar Taqwa speaks at the ceremony.

Facility expected to serve 29,000

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

More than 80 people attended the opening of the Chinaki Uyla Medical Clinic in the Sayed Khail district of Afghanistan's Parwan province Sept. 6.

Gov. Abdul Jabbar Taqwa of Parwan province and Army Lt. Col. William Andersen, Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team commander, were on hand for the ceremony.

From start to finish, the facility took a little more than six months to plan and complete.

The Bagram PRT funded the $106,000 project, a medical facility for a community receiving fragmented care by providers traveling house to house. The community agreed on a site location.

"The Chinaki Uyla Clinic will service an estimated 29,000 people over the next five years," said Army Capt. Marshall Fiscus, a physician assistant for the Bagram PRT.

A farmer who recognized the need for the clinic donated land from his own property.

This provided a location for the eight-room facility, which includes a bathroom, two generators and a well, with a surrounding boundary wall.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, a contracted construction company honored the land donor with bags of rice, tea and sugar.

"The PRT is very proud to be part of this project and effort," Andersen said.

Several Afghans living in the area contributed by working together to complete tasks not covered in the contracting proposal.

Although the clinic offers limited bed space, staffing and supplies, villagers now have a place to go in time of medical emergency.

The new medical facility will provide improved infant and maternal care by a professional midwife, birthing table and medical instruments to assist with childbirth.

During the ceremony, an elder thanked the PRT and contractor for their assistance, but also voiced concerns about for the delivery of medicines, reconstruction of the local road and construction of a bridge that would connect the provinces of Parwan and Kapisa.

"We need time to build all the things we need in Afghanistan," Taqwa said. "There are 57 health clinics in this province, and only 21 have buildings."

The remainder of the health clinics are based out of mud huts.

The governor praised the community for having good security, which has allowed for more development.

Afghan commandos ready to battle Taliban

By Petty Officer 1st Class Shawn Graham
Combined Security Transition Command
Afghanistan Public Affairs

Afghanistan is known for its rugged terrain and harsh climate, but with the successful creation of the Afghan National Army commandos, the country will be known for soldiers who are even more rugged.

During a ceremony held at Camp Morehead, a battalion from the ANA was recognized by top officials as a new, combat-ready kandak (battalion).

The Afghan Ministry of Defense director of training, Gen. Hamayon Fawzi, was pleased when reviewing the kandak, touting their toughness and resolve to complete any mission.

"These soldiers are the best we have to offer," said Fawzi. "They can chase the Taliban anywhere. Soon there will be nowhere for the Taliban to hide. The commandos will make sure of it."

Commando units have a variety of special capabilities which enable them to conduct covert operations. Each kandak is partnered with U.S. Special Operations Forces.

"This is a great thing for Afghanistan," said an Army Special Forces commander. "They will be the driving force that maintains peace and order in remote areas of the nation. Getting their hands on that certificate means a lot to each one of them. They deserve it."

Together, Fawzi, and Maj. Gen. Jay Lindell, Combined Air Power Transition Force commander and Brig. Gen. Anthony Ierardi, chief of staff Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, presented certificates of validation to the commanders of the three units.

U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Petty Officer 1st Class Shawn Graham
Afghanistan National Army commandos stand in formation during a graduation ceremony at Camp Morehead.

Upon receiving their certificate, each commander turned, faced the formation of soldiers and yelled, "I will serve my country."

The ANA's Commando Program is modeled after the standards, discipline and leadership of the U.S. Army Ranger battalions.

"The recognition of their validation provides a sense of accomplishment," said Army Capt. James Price, operations officer. "And it shows why this program continues to be the most successful in the country. They are in the front now, leading their operations and being successful. They're the future of this country."

2-2 declared ready for operations in RC-South

Commander of Regional Command-South has given operational control of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division to Brig. Gen. Denis Thompson, Task Force Kandahar commander. 2-2 was declared ready for operations and assumed responsibility for their designated area of operations in the Kandahar province Aug. 27.

"The addition of 2-2 Infantry to our team will have a real impact on the insurgency and on the overall security picture here," said Brig. Gen. Denis Thompson, commander of the International Security Assistance Force task force operating in the Kandahar province.

The battalion will work closely with Afghan leaders and security forces to disrupt insurgent activity.

Improvement of security in the area will allow for more development and governance work to occur. All of this should serve to increase the local population's confidence in their government and make it easier for the people to reject the insurgency.

"Our mission is to bring enduring security to Maywand District," said Lt. Col Daniel Hurlbut, 2-2 Infantry's commanding officer. "We are speaking with key leaders and the people of the Maywand District to ensure we are respectful of their plans for the future of the area. We're enlisting their support to ensure our security operations are a success." *(Courtesy of ISAF Public Affairs)*

Opening the Way

A female medic in Helmand province is leading by example on the long road to redefining the roles of Afghan women

By Senior Airman George Cloutier
Freedom Watch Asst. Editor

Big things are happening in a small clinic in the Gershk district of Helmand Province, a few miles outside Camp Bastion; the kind of things that change the collective ideas of a group of people.

At the Shorabak clinic, everything looks like business-as-usual, at first. People come in, many of them locals, get treated and leave a little healthier and hopefully a little better informed than when they came in.

The facility itself isn't anything out of the ordinary. The building belongs to the Afghan National Army and is shared between a group of ANA medics and a small team of medics with the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force.

Sit down and stay a while though and someone might see something that isn't seen every day at military clinics-- local

females coming in for care. That's because at the Shorabak clinic, they have something special, a team of female medics who treat local females.

Women coming to military bases for care may not seem strange to those from other areas of the world, but in Afghanistan, especially in Helmand province, this is the first time women have been allowed to seek treatment at a military facility, according to an interpreter who works with the CJSOTAF team.

One of the members of the female treatment team is an Army captain who has been working at the clinic for approximately two months. For security reasons her name will not be mentioned in this article. In her job at home, she's a primary care provider at her base's medical clinic.

The captain said she provides the same basic primary medical care she does back home. Diseases are often more progressed than in the U.S. due to lack of available health care, however the extent of service she provides is the same. The big difference from her job in the U.S. is that here she's creating an opportunity for a whole sector of the population to receive care that would have been otherwise unavailable.

As an example, an elderly woman came in for follow-up checks on three gun shot wounds. She was shot by the Taliban while working in the fields by her home. The captain and another medic from the team checked her wounds, which were healing well.

The captain said she sees her work as not just providing medical care to the men, women and children who come to the clinic, but also helping to change how Afghan society views the role of women.

One way the captain said she is changing this collective mind set, is that she is doing a job that many Afghanis are not accustom seeing females perform.

"I think it's extremely valuable just for the men that come here to see me as a female," the captain said.

(Story continued on next page)

(Photos by Senior Airman George Cloutier)

"It changes their definition. In their culture, for any type of change to occur --because it's a patriarchic society -- men have to accept the changes, so for them to be able to see me as a female in the roll of a professional health care provider helps them to see that change might be a good thing," she explained. "It's just something they're not ever exposed to here within their own culture."

The captain said the men who come to the clinic don't have any problems being treated by a female. If anything, they're glad to receive care first and perhaps secondly surprised to be receiving care from a female.

An interpreter who works directly with the captain agreed with her statements. He also added these changes in perception are allowing women to be allowed to seek treatment for the first time on military bases.

The captain said if it wasn't for the changes in perception the FTT is making, it would not be possible for people such as the woman with the gun shot wounds to come to the clinic to get help. They would have to either wait until a medical team went out to them or simply go without.

It's not just about today though. The captain said it is her hope that her presence and work is changing the perception of the roles available for women and that perhaps one day these changes will grow into a better quality of life for Afghans, specifically in the mortality rates associated with childbirth.

"According to the World Health Organization, there are only a couple nations in sub-Saharan Africa with worse maternal and infant mortality rates than Afghanistan," the captain said. "Most women in Afghanistan, especially here in the Helmand valley, give birth in the home without a midwife, without a doctor, with no medical care at all."

The captain said the solution is getting more young women into midwife schools, such as the one currently running in Kabul. The problem, however, is the girls need a high school diploma to attend and many areas in Afghanistan have just recently started allowing women to progress their education as far as high school, which is something else she hopes her presence will help reinforce.

More than anything, the captain said her goal is to make lasting changes in the lives of the Afghan people and for that reason, the focus of their mission is reinforcing the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

"We try to put an Afghan face on what we do because we want people to accept the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan," the captain said. "It's very important that the people support and work with the government. That's the long term goal."

MPs make a difference

By Navy Lt. Neil Myers
Konar PRT, 3rd BCT, 1ID PAO

The 3rd platoon, 527th Military Police Company arrived in Konar Province six months ago with a mission to train Afghan National Police officers in one of the most challenging regions in the country.

The 3/527 MP Company, based in Grafenwohr, Germany, support the mission of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, also known as Task Force Spader, in Konar Province.

Sgt. 1st Class Tommy Davis, from Leeds, Ala. said his MPs are training the ANP in Kabul, Torkam Gate, Naray and Asadabad.

The Soldiers teach the ANP to perform proactive policing in an environment that demands the police react to terrorist activity.

The MPs train the ANP to conduct proper personal and vehicle searches, apprehension and detainment. They also concentrate on individual and squad movements, building entry procedures and reaction to improvised explosive devices.

"In addition to counter terrorism training, we are training the ANP to perform problem oriented policing," said Sgt. Nathan Byrd from Catawba, N.C. "We're getting them off the checkpoints and into the community to conduct basic police work."

The MPs believe getting the ANP to interact with the community will go a long way toward changing their image in the minds of the Afghan people.

"They're tied up at the checkpoints. Once the security situation improves to the point where they can function as police they will do fine," Davis said.

"The ANP are motivated and honestly want to learn" said Pfc. Benjamin Warnick from Knoxville, Tenn.. "It's nice to know we are making a difference. It's motivating to watch the officers properly clear a building, practice good muzzle discipline and safely handle their weapons."

Davis said he is proud of his men.

"I have been to Bagdad in some of the worst places you can imagine," Davis said. "My platoon is the best I've ever worked with. They're combat trained and experienced. About one third have previous tours in either Iraq or Afghanistan. We're a family. We are a very close unit."

(Courtesy photo)

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Adora Medina)

Tuning in to: Kala Gush Radio

By Staff Sgt. Adora Medina
3rd BCT, 1st ID, PAO

With steady hands, Mohibullah, a broadcaster for Kala Gush Radio, held his cell phone up to a microphone to pick up the voice of a local Afghan, who was calling in to make a request. Out his window the purple mountains stood tall against the two small connexes housing the station. The signal carries far--reaching the entire province of Nuristan.

About a year ago, the Provincial Reconstruction Team had a vision to create a radio station for the people of the Nuristan province. After months of planning and coordination the dream became a reality. Kala Gush radio aired for the first time March 2008.

"The people are so happy, they are so glad we have a radio station," Farooq, radio broadcaster, said. Everyone you see is talking about the radio. They're calling on the phone to ask for songs, or introduce themselves or read some poetry."

For many people living in secluded villages throughout the Nuristan province, Kala Gush Radio is the only means of getting accurate information. Since the literacy rate is so low in the province, newspapers and other publications aren't as beneficial.

For years it has been thought the Taliban used the illiteracy rate to their advantage, changing the meaning of the Koran to promote their own agenda. This is something the PRT and the Kala Gush broadcasters plan to change.

"I know very little about the Koran, but I have never met anyone who told me that it says anywhere in the Koran that it's ok to put on a suicide vest and blow up people," said Maj. Rory Aylwood, Nuristan PRT, to the broadcasters during a visit.

"When the Mullah [Islamic cleric or mosque leader] comes we will question him if suicide is against the religion or not," Farooq said.

"It'd be nice to hear it from the Mullah that it's not good," Aylwood said in response.

The Mullah is only one of many guests who have been interviewed at Kala Gush Radio. The PRT and broadcasters have been working hard, lining up informative speakers, creating segments on medical tips and advice, providing pertinent security information, and interacting with the community to find out what more can be done to get the right information out.

"Every Wednesday there's a flea market where people bring in their animals to sell in Nengaresh. They come from all the villages and we're going to interview these people to find out what they want, what they need and find out what kind of problems they have," Farooq said.

One of the challenges in distributing information is the limited amount of radios in the area. The broadcasters explained how the village women always send their children over to their house to see if they can get a free radio. They figure since the broadcasters work at the station, they must have extra radios to give away, unfortunately this isn't the case.

"Please give us more radios so we can give them out as rewards during our question and answer show, it encourages more people to listen," Mohibullah asked of the PRT.

Although the PRT has already made numerous trips to the surrounding villages to hand out radios, and the broadcasters have given several away as prizes, radios are still scarce in the province.

When Task Force Centaur arrived in country, Kala Gush Radio was already up and running, but the unit wanted to do something to contribute to the success of the station. In their first joint operation with the Afghan National Police, the 527th Military Police Company, Hohenfels, Germany, and the PRT, handed out radios to the people of the small village of Nengaresh, Jul. 28.

When they arrived at the village, word spread quickly as a crowd of villagers stood, with outstretched arms for the chance to own a radio. U.S. forces and the ANP stayed until the last box was empty, and it seemed as though every villager had a radio in hand.

photos from the field

U.S. Navy photo by Cmdr. Erik Etz

An F/A-18C Hornet of Strike Fighter Squadron 113 "Stingers" gets a fill up over Afghanistan from an Air Force KC-135R tanker aircraft while two F/A-18E Super Hornets fly alongside. The F/A-18Es are assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron 115 'Eagles.'

U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 1st Class John Collins

(Above) U.S. Army Sgt. Jason Arion with the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade plays a harmonica and guitar for an audience of Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Fenty in Jalalabad.

(Left) A military working dog takes instructions from his handler to check a culvert for explosives during an International Security Assistance Force clearing operation for a major highway with the Royal Air Force Regiment. The RAF routinely patrols the area surrounding Kandahar Air Field to prevent rocket attacks to the base.

ASON