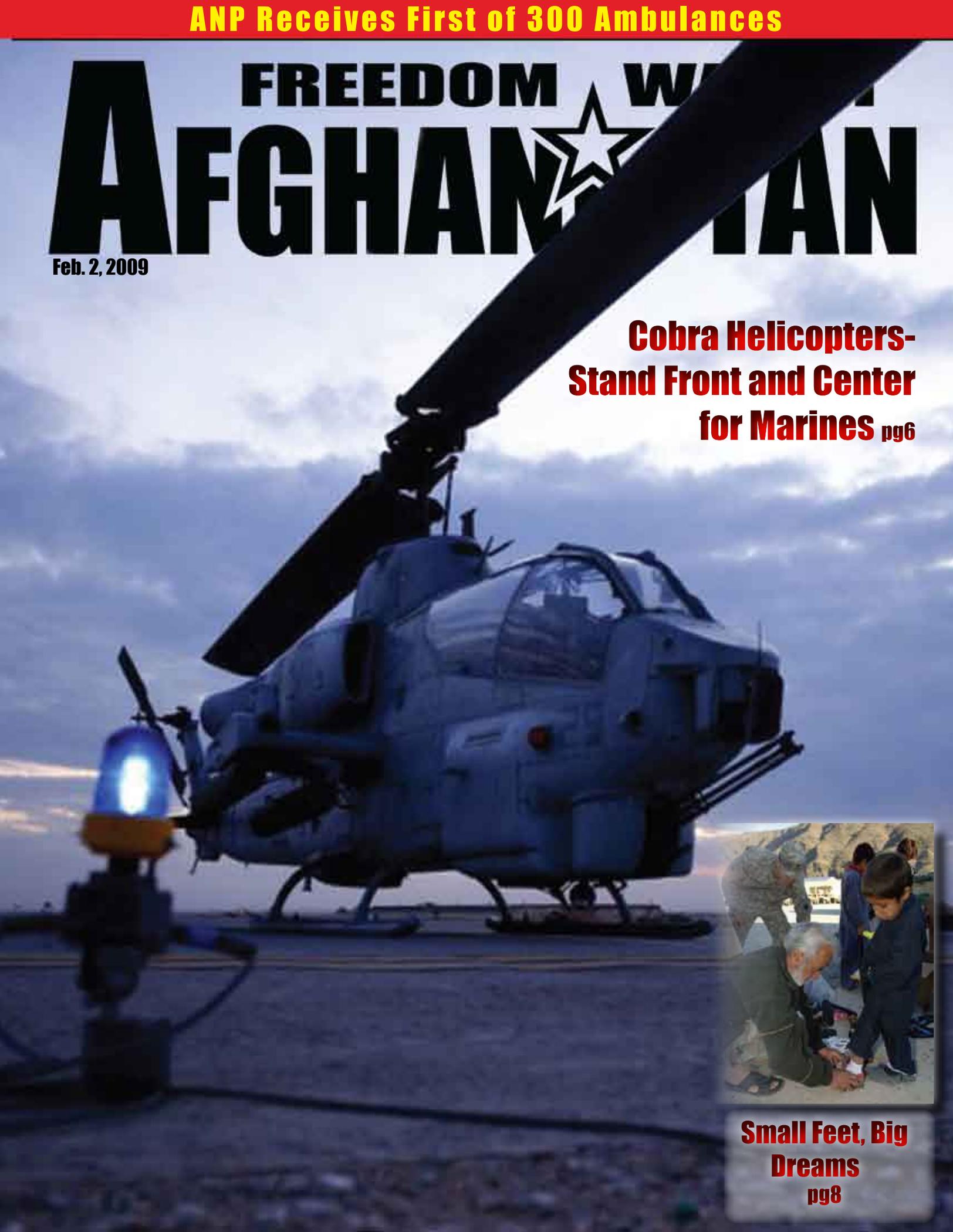


FREEDOM WARRIOR **AFGHAN IAN**

Feb. 2, 2009

**Cobra Helicopters-
Stand Front and Center
for Marines** pg6



**Small Feet, Big
Dreams**
pg8



2 February, 2009

Dear Friends:

Since November 2004 Freedom Watch Afghanistan has served as the premier military publication delivering news and features about Coalition Forces operations in Afghanistan. Journalists from AFN-Afghanistan worked diligently to make this happen. AFN-Afghanistan has now relinquished the production of the magazine to the 40th Public Affairs Detachment (PAD) from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The 40th PAD is excited to produce such a quality magazine.

As part of the transition a few changes in the magazine will occur. The magazine will become a monthly publication. The content will soon double, allowing us to publish more feature articles, and we are increasing the circulation from 8,000 copies to at least 10,000. Most of the featured articles will focus on RC-East, but we will reserve the right to print stories about any key event taking place throughout all of Afghanistan. These changes come at a key time when more forces are arriving in Afghanistan. A larger magazine with increased circulation will allow us to highlight all of the great accomplishments of our Coalition and ensure the magazine is available at all new Forward Operating Bases.

One thing that will not change is that Freedom Watch Afghanistan is a magazine that highlights the efforts of our Joint and Coalition Forces, and Afghanistan's forces, government, and its people as we all work together to accomplish our missions. This magazine will continue to draw its stories from the bottom up through unit level Public Affairs Officers. My journalists from the 40th PAD will also cover stories from units where PAOs are non-existent or need coverage. Through teamwork we can spread the message of success.

Thank you once again for reading the Freedom Watch Afghanistan. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions, and will do our best to continue providing you a quality magazine.

Sincerely,

MARK A. LASTORIA
Major, Infantry
Commanding

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Public Affairs Director, CJTF-101
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All submissions are subject to editing by the 40th PAD, which can be reached at DSN 318-431-4458 or via email at freedomwatch@swa.army.mil.



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Nuristan PRT works with Zirat villagers

Story and Photo by 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division Public Affairs

The Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team recently visited Zirat village to assess the effectiveness of completed projects and work with villagers on solutions for overcoming hardships.

Until February of last year, the main income for villagers was earned by harvesting poppies. Since the eradication of poppy production, the villagers have turned to other methods to provide for their families.

To assist in the effort, the PRT recently constructed a canal that feeds into the villager's farmlands, allowing them to maximize their production.

"With the canal they are able to spread the water and grow wheat in the winter and corn in the summer as well as saplings, fruit trees and nut trees that we planted for them," said Master Sgt. Ryan Bodmer, PRT non-commissioned officer in charge, from Temecula, Calif.

Farming is not the only means of financial income for the villagers. Kathrin Lauer, a representative for the U.S. Agency for International Development assigned to the PRT, met with a group of women whom expressed an interest in earning an income.

"What they told me was with the eradication of the poppy, they simply do not have enough money," said Lauer, from

Washington Terrace, Utah.

Lauer suggested making money by learning an intricate Afghan embroidery technique used by women in Kabul and Jalalabad to earn up to \$300 a month.

"An Afghan-American, living in New York and working in the fashion industry, saw that the embroidery the Afghan women do is so unique that it sells well in the United States," said Lauer.

To Lt. Col. Lawrence Pickett, executive officer and PRT senior civil affairs officer, the only thing to do in Nuristan is build from the ground up.

"The focus here in Nuristan is construction. There have been no schools or road networks built [here] in the last 30 years, so the PRTs are constructing new roads, schools and medical facilities that never existed in this province," said Pickett, a Macomb, Ill., native.

Things are looking up for the people of Nuristan as giant steps forward are being made daily.

"We put in a tremendous amount of work in a day," said Bodmer. "We

work from sun up to sun down and beyond. I know each and every one of us here is going to work hard toward handing over a better, safer and more stable Nuristan to the next PRT."



Members of the Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team inspect the condition of a canal built for the Zirat villagers that enables them to irrigate their wheat and corn fields.

French soldiers give blood

(Story courtesy International Security Assistance Force - Afghanistan Public Affairs Office)

KABUL, Afghanistan - Six French soldiers from Camp Warehouse gave their blood to save an Afghan civilian who was injured in the suicide bombing in Kabul on January 17.

The process of the blood donation started very quickly after the victim was transferred to the military hospital at Camp Warehouse on January 20.

The victim had an urgent need for a blood transfusion before he could undergo an operation. All compatible French donors present on the camp were contacted. Four hundred and fifty milliliters of blood were taken from each of the six volunteers and before being transfused, the blood was analyzed by a biologist.

"It is completely normal to give blood for a victim," said Lieutenant Romuald, one of the six donors.

Gerard, a doctor in the unit added that this gift will doubtlessly contribute to saving the victim. He also recalls that the generosity of other donors had saved the life of a patient after another attack at the beginning of November 2008.

The Warehouse Medico-Surgical Group devotes part of its activity to the Afghan population through consultations, hospitalizations or medical aid. In 2008, more than 7,000 consultations and 630 hospitalizations were carried out.



Servicemembers deployed to the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, command surgeon's office, provided seven modified Ford Ranger ambulances to the ANP office of the surgeon general, Jan. 3.

ANP receives new ambulances

Story and Photo Courtesy
U.S. Forces Afghanistan

Servicemembers assigned to the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan command surgeon's office presented seven modified Ford Ranger ambulances to the ANP surgeon general's office.

The ANP presently has 76,000 members with an end-goal of 82,000. Afghanistan has no pre-existing concept of police forces, and ensuring

medical treatment is a critical mission, explained Brig. Gen. Qandahar, ANP surgeon general.

"The situation (medical) in Afghanistan is critical. These ambulances will help us transport patients quicker in order to save more lives," said Qandahar.

The new ambulances, which will be distributed throughout the Kabul region, can be configured to carry up

to six patients.

"It makes me very happy for the police to have these ambulances," said Col. Par Wan, ANP deputy surgeon general.

The ANP hospital, ANP Police Academy, and other ANP organizations can now offer police personnel reliable transportation to a medical facility.

According to Air Force Major David Andrews, CSTC-A

ANP senior medical advisor, this is just the beginning.

"This is where the rubber hits the road," said Andrews. "We have to keep pushing forward with better training, more people and getting out in the field."

In addition to the seven urban ambulances recently delivered, 283 tactical ambulances designed for rough terrain are scheduled for delivery later this year.

NEWS ARTICLES MAY BE SUBMITTED TO THE 40TH PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT, WHICH CAN BE REACHED AT DSN 3 18-431-4458 OR VIA EMAIL AT FREEDOMWATCH@SWA.ARMY.MIL.

Citizen-Soldiers sow future's seeds

By Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill
National Guard Bureau

Troops on the ground in Afghanistan are reaching back 372 years to the roots of the National Guard to help the Afghan people to improve agriculture.

Agricultural Development Teams use equal parts of the term often used to describe members of the Army National Guard: citizen-soldier.

“The symbol of the National Guard tells the story,” Secretary of the Army Pete Geren said during a Pentagon briefing on Thursday. “The National Guard Minuteman has a musket in one hand, and his left hand is on a plough. This is the history of the citizen-soldier, and the history of our nation. And we’re taking that same combination of skills and applying it to needs in Afghanistan.”

Col. Stan Poe is commander of the Texas ADT currently at work in the Ghazni province of Afghanistan.

The Soldiers who Poe leads were selected based on their citizen agrarian skills, education and experiences, the commander said via satellite from Afghanistan.

Out of uniform, they are farmers, agricultural extension agents, academics and engineers.



Courtesy Photo

As Secretary of the Army Pete Geren, left, looks on, Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, director of the Army National Guard, addresses media members during a press conference on the mission of the Guard's Agricultural Development Teams at The Pentagon, Thursday, Jan. 22.

In uniform, they are helping the Afghan people improve the water and power supplies needed for farming; they are developing high

“There are really few other resources that we can offer as a nation that offer as much practical benefit as what the Citizen-Soldier offers.”

—Secretary of the Army
Pete Geren

school-level agricultural education programs; and they created an experimental farm at their forward operating base.

“The magic of this approach is the civilian skills that you’re able to bring to bear on the economic development in Afghanistan,” Geren said. “There are really few other resources that we can offer as a nation that offer as much practical benefit as what the Citizen-Soldier offers.”

About 60 National Guard members from the Texas team have helped the residents of Ghazni province build a slaughter facility and a place to tan hides, which creates jobs in Afghanistan rather than having them exported. They also have helped establish an agricultural infrastructure that includes feed mills and sale barns.



Afghans harvest poppy-reduction awards

By Maj. Kimberly Garbett
Combined Joint Task Force - 101

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – More than 100 Afghans attended the good performance initiative ribbon-cutting ceremony, signifying the official handover of agriculture machinery and irrigation system projects at governor's compound in Bazarak, Panjshir province, Jan. 13.

The good performers initiative was established by the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2006 to provide development assistance awards to Afghan governors who exhibit political will to substantially reduce or eliminate poppy from their provinces.

“Our core objective is to

implement projects which will improve stability with the intent that more traditional forms of private investment can resume,” said Lt. Col. Mark Stratton, Panjshir PRT commander.

Last year, Gen. Khodaidad Khodaidad, minister of counter-narcotics, awarded Provincial Governor Haji Bahlol Bahej and the people of Panjshir \$1.4 million for being a poppy-free province.

The award money was invested in five development projects identified by members of the Panjshir Provincial Development Council, district committee, village shuras and the provincial governor. The projects included the construction of irrigation systems, structures and water supplies, provision of

agro-machinery and the establishment of greenhouses and fruit orchards.

“About 95 percent of the Panjshir population is currently practicing subsistence agriculture,” said Greg Schlenz, Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team's U.S. Department of Agriculture agricultural advisor. “The overall objective is to provide long-term livelihood for farmers, so they [can] earn more crops from their fields.

Members of the Panjshir PRT spoke with pride about the accomplishments of the government and people of Panjshir.

“Panjshir is a model province and sets the example and standard for other provinces in Afghanistan to follow,” said Stratton.

Snake Charmers: Marine



Story and Photos by Lance Cpl. Brian D. Jones, Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force - Afghanistan

The Marine Corps' 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, originally scheduled to deploy to Iraq, was re-directed to Afghanistan a month prior to deployment. They found themselves operating in the Helmand province of Afghanistan. Tasked with the mission of training and mentoring the Afghan national police, 2/7 was baptized under the full assault of Taliban and insurgent forces.

The mission of 2/7 was to establish, train and mentor local ANP units in order to build confidence in their ability to deter and interdict the insurgency. Reinforcements assigned to assist 2/7 with its mission included a combat engineer

platoon, a shock trauma platoon, a radio battalion detachment, reconnaissance Marines, DynCorp civilian contractors and personnel specializing in civil military operations.

Ultimately, a decision was made to deploy Marine Light/Attack Helicopter Squadron 269, Detachment B, Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force 2/7. The detachment, comprised of four AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopters, ten pilots and approximately forty aircraft maintainers, ordnance men and support Marines, arrived at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan, in August of 2008.

Upon its arrival to Kandahar, HML/A-269, Det. B, was initially placed under operational control to the 24th Marine Expeditionary

Unit's air combat element formed from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 365, stationed out of MCAS New River.

That first week in-country was filled with a variety of briefs with topics ranging from rules of engagement to first aid. In addition to theater in-briefs and acclimatization, pilots began their orientation flights while the maintainers quickly got acquainted with the aircraft. Frequent IDF attacks reminded everyone that even though Kandahar Air Field was a sprawling multinational base hosting thousands of service members and civilian contractors it was still located in the middle of a combat zone.

Within one week of arrival, HML/A-269, Det. B,

Corps' Lethal Cobras



repositioned from Kandahar to its present home at Camp Bastion and began conducting flight operations in support of 2/7. The mission was simple: provide close air support in direct support of 2/7, 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week. With no end date established, the Marines of HML/A-269, Det. B, were ready to get to work.

In late November, after eight months of daily combat operations, 2/7 was replaced by 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment (Reinforced). Since HML/A-269 and 3/8 are both stationed in Jacksonville, N.C., the arrival of 3/8 brought a number of familiar faces to Camp Bastion, to include two Cobra pilots from HML/A-269 who were on one-year FAC tours. With their relief-in-place with 2/7 complete, 3/8 rapidly got to work, picking

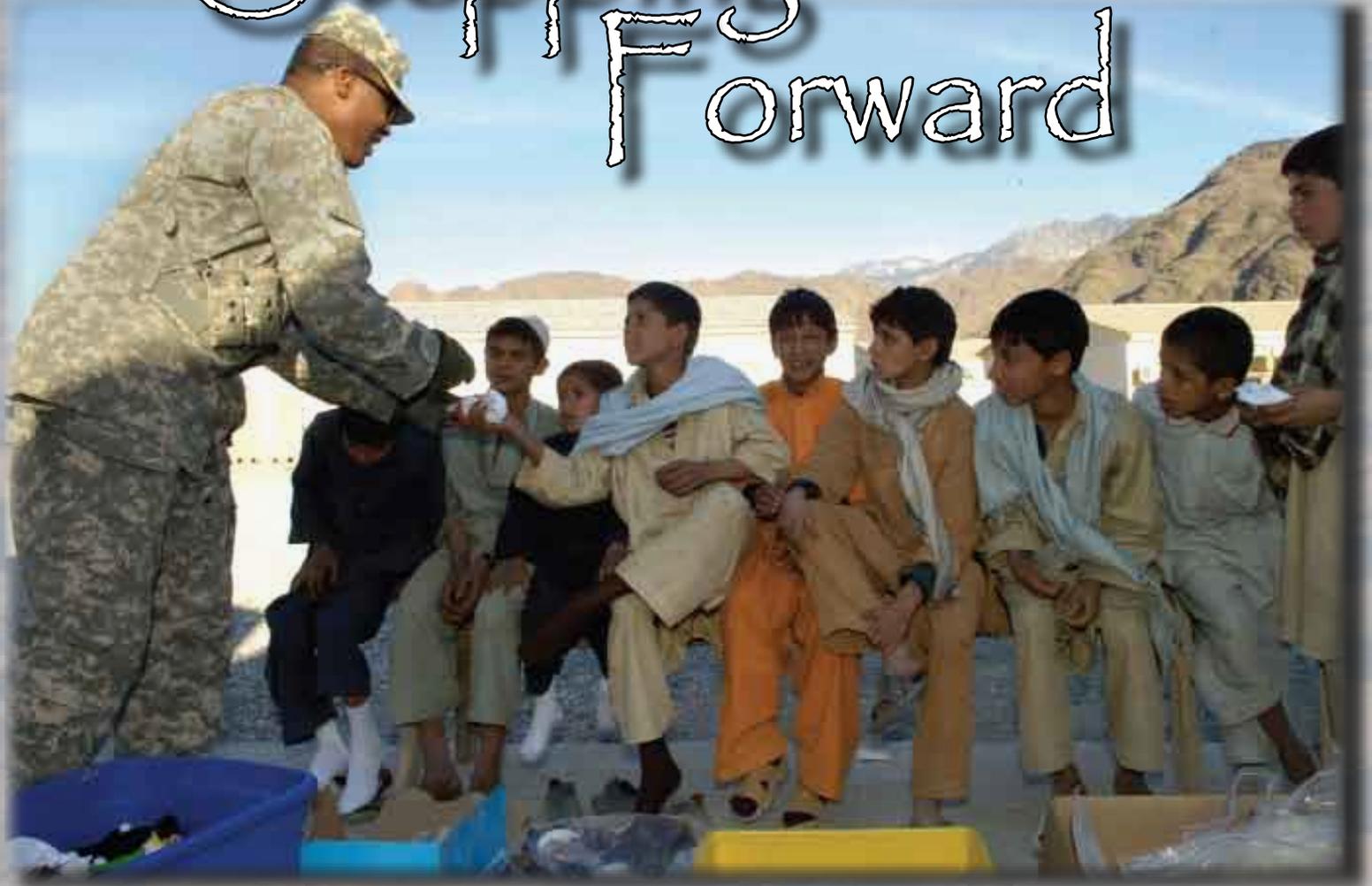
up where their predecessors left off.

In spite of the worsening weather, the mission and operational tempo did not change. The expected slowdown in insurgent activity that normally arrives with the Afghanistan winter never materialized. In fact, through the first half of December, the squadron detachment flew nearly as many hours at it had in any previous full month. HML/A-269, Det. B, found itself being requested by external agencies and multinational forces even more than usual during periods of poor weather, when fixed-wing aircraft couldn't fly. The detachment's capabilities and training allowed it to operate in conditions considered unworkable for other rotary wing assets in theater.

The AH-1W Super Cobra's all weather capabilities make it absolutely vital to the fight in Afghanistan, especially during the winter months when the weather traditionally takes a turn for the worse. The pilots of HML/A-269, Det. B, realized their enemies were bound and determined to hold onto any and all tactical and geographical advantages they had secured throughout the recent months.

Looking back on the time HML/A-269, Det. B, spent in Afghanistan, it is hard to ignore the improvements made by U.S. and alliance ground forces. The balanced use of the mission capabilities of the MAGTF demonstrated again why the Marine Corps and AH-1W Cobras are so valuable when combating an insurgency.

Stepping Forward



The Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team hands out shoes to local Afghan children at Forward Operating Base Kala Gush. The shoe give-away takes place every Friday while children are seen for medical treatment.

*From the 3rd Brigade
Combat Team, 1st Infantry
Division Public Affairs*

The Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team holds a “shoe-drive” every Friday at Forward Operating Base Kala Gush, supplying 60-70 Afghan children with needed socks and shoes.

The project began when 1st Sgt. Terry Pittman, Nuristan PRT, saw two Afghan children leaving the FOB

after receiving medical care. He noticed the older child carrying the younger child barefooted. He learned the children had come from miles away, over harsh terrain, so the younger child could be treated for cold symptoms.

“It touched me because I imagined my 12-year-old son walking that distance, with no shoes on and carrying his little sister,” said Pittman.

After bringing the children back into the

FOB and rounding up sandals for them to have, Pittman decided he had to do something.

While looking into support from humanitarian aid resources, Pittman decided they didn’t have time for that approach and had to do something for the children quickly.

“I want to help the children of Afghanistan by making sure every child that walks on [to] this FOB, leaves with shoes and socks,” said

Pittman.

Pittman called everyone he knew and asked them to send shoes. When members of the PRT heard the plan they instantly supported it. Since then, shoes, socks, coats and toys have been coming in from across the United States.

“Without these people and their contributions this wouldn’t happen,” said Pittman. “I want to thank them all because they have really gone beyond the

call of duty to help the people here.”

For some of the children, the shoes are replacements to battered sandals with holes worn through the sole; to other children they are the first pair of shoes they’ve ever worn.

“If these children don’t remember anything else about us being here, they might remember that an American Soldier gave [them their] first pair of shoes or socks,” Pittman said.



Safarjan Rahmanzy holds a recorder to Capt. Amanda Cuda, a doctor with 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, during a weekly Nari Radio medical show. The show provides locals the opportunity to ask questions and obtain medical advice.

NARI RADIO REACHES OUT TO KONAR PROVINCE

*Story and photo by Staff Sgt.
David Hopkins
3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st
Infantry Division, Public Affairs*

Daily broadcasts from Nari Radio provide citizens with information to improve their lives as International Security Forces help them rebuild Afghanistan.

“We have been operating for three and a half years,” said Safarjan Rahmanzy, a Nari Radio broadcaster, “and the people of the area seem to get a lot of information and entertainment from us.”

The radio station reaches a large audience, including parts of Pakistan.

“We have about 200,000 listeners,” Rahmanzy said. The programming runs daily from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., with short breaks throughout

to allow the broadcast equipment a chance to cool. The broadcasts provide listeners with music, news, police reports, medical advice and informational programs. “The commander will sometimes talk on the radio if something happens in the area so he can inform the people,” said Rahmanzy.

“We also have local nationals come and speak about different things.”

The medical show consists of local people writing in with their health concerns and problems. Capt. Amanda Cuda, a doctor with 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, answers the questions through an interpreter.

“The people in the area tell me that they wait all week for the medical show to come on,”

Rahmanzy said. “They say it is very helpful and the most helpful program we have.”

The medical show is broadcast once a week and is one of the station’s most popular programs.

“In my perspective, I see the medical program as valuable because there aren’t many medical assets in the area,” Cuda said. “I’m not able to go out in the area as much as I’d like because of security, but people here have radios so we can reach them that way.”

“We have a quiz every week for the kids in the districts,” Rahmanzy said, “and we give them prizes for correct answers.

The station asks four questions, and children have a week to answer them and send in their answers. The station receives more than 100 responses weekly.

“We ask questions about politics, religion and about the radio station,” Rahmanzy said. “If they get all four questions correct we give them prizes.”

The prizes include things like Afghan flags and school supplies.

“Many people in the area purchase radios at bazaars and the people who can’t afford them come to the post and we give them radios,” said Rahmanzy.

The radio station hopes to reach even more people, many of who can’t read, with additional news and information.

“We would like a better building and better equipment so we can do better shows and give the people more information,” said Rahmanzy. “We are doing important work and want to keep doing this.”

Photos from the field



Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Aramis Ramirez
International Security Assistance Force HQ Public Affairs

British Secretary of State for Defense John Hutton points to a L115-A3 sniper rifle that was on display for him at Camp Roberts near Kandahar Air Field by the 42 Commandos of the Royal Marines on Jan. 20. Hutton is currently touring Southern Afghanistan to meet with British troops deployed to the area.



Photo by Cpl. Pete Thibodeau
Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force - Afghanistan

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, fire mortars during Operation Gateway III, Jan. 2, in the Farah province of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.



Service members from the Joint Theater Trauma System take a moment from their hectic schedules to smile for the camera. The unit is entrusted with improving the organization and delivery of trauma care for Servicemembers injured in Afghanistan. Photo courtesy of JTTS

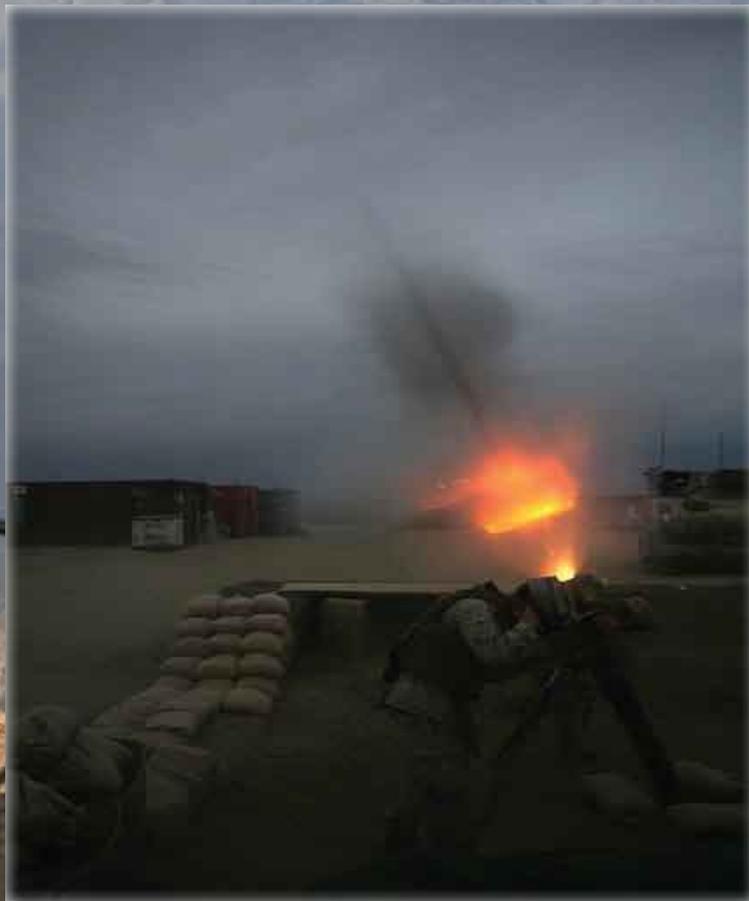
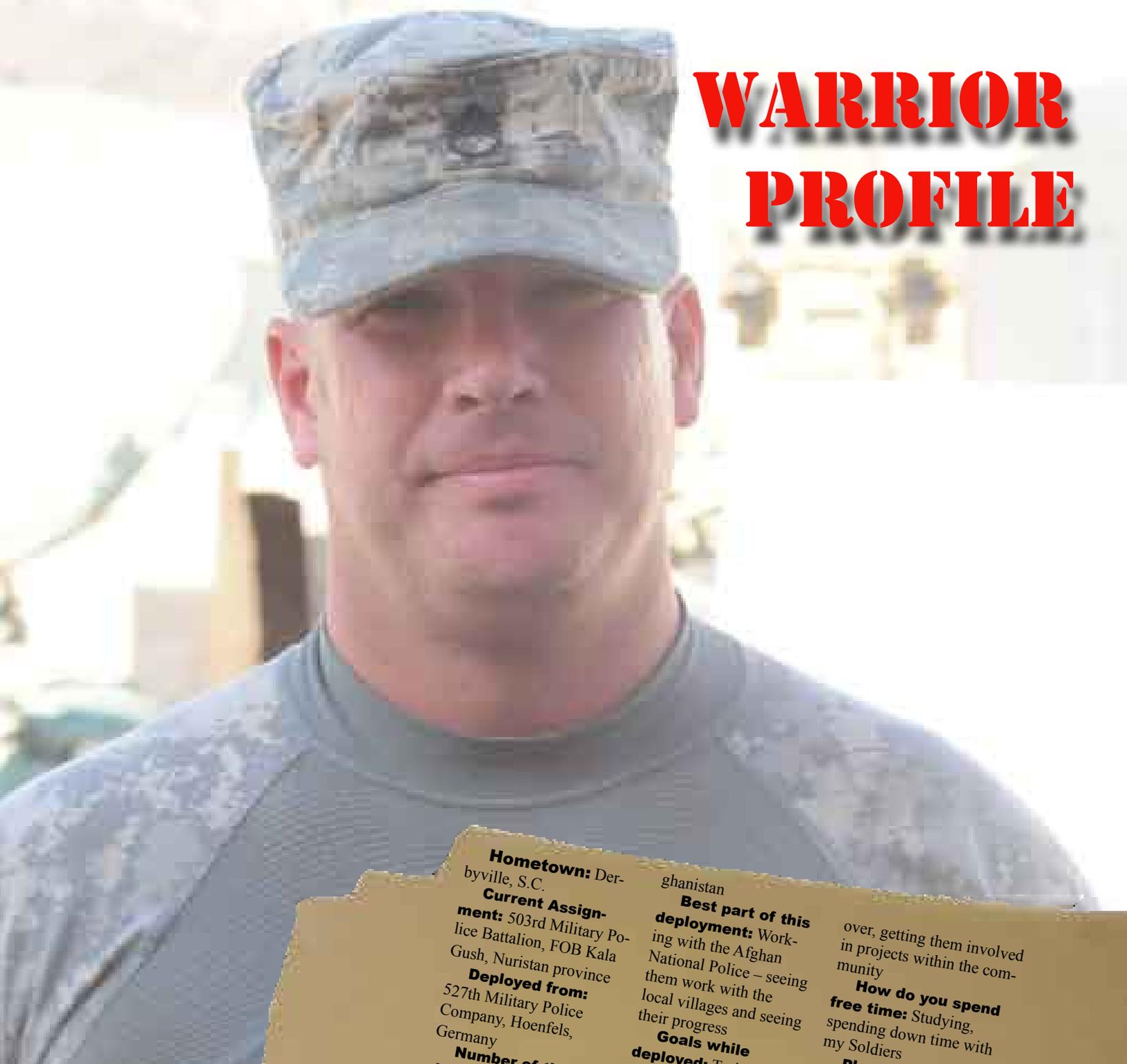


Photo by Cpl. Pete Thibodeau
Special Purpose Marine Air
Ground Task Force - Afghanistan

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine
Regiment, fire mortars during Opera-
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province of the Islamic Republic of
Afghanistan.

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EMAIL AT FREEDOMWATCH@SWA.ARMY.MIL.

WARRIOR PROFILE



STAFF SGT. ROBERT EVANS

Hometown: Derbyville, S.C.
Current Assignment: 503rd Military Police Battalion, FOB Kala Gush, Nuristan province
Deployed from: 527th Military Police Company, Hoenfels, Germany
Number of times deployed: Three – twice to Iraq and once to Af-

ghanistan
Best part of this deployment: Working with the Afghan National Police – seeing them work with the local villages and seeing their progress
Goals while deployed: Train the ANP for them to take

over, getting them involved in projects within the community
How do you spend free time: Studying, spending down time with my Soldiers
Plans upon return: Apply to Drill Instructor school at Fort Jackson



UNCLASSIFIED

from the kids





UNIT SPOTLIGHT

Branch of service: Singapore Armed Forces Engineering Team

Mission: The Singapore Armed Forces have been conducting numerous patrols and assistance missions this month in Bamyán Province. The Singapore Army personnel are part of a six-member construction engineering team who oversee numerous infrastructure and development projects in the province as part of Singapore's overall contribution to the international humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

Would you like to have your unit in the spotlight? If so, email the 40th PAD at freedomwatch@swa.army.mil. Please include your unit's name, mission, history and any interesting facts.