Army Reserve command moves all US troops, supplies into Afghanistan

BY SPC. ELISEBET FREEBURG
Victory Sustained Staff Writer

In February, President Barack Obama authorized almost 20,000 additional troops to deploy to Afghanistan as part of the Global War on Terrorism. As thousands of American troops arrive in Afghanistan weekly, the 143d Expeditionary Sustainment Command is an integral force in Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 143d ESC, an Army Reserve command and the first ESC to deploy to Afghanistan, controls the arrival and movement of troops and supplies by leading the Joint Sustainment Command-Afghanistan in sustainment operations.

“If we were a Fortune 500 company, the 143d would be the CEOs,” said 1st Lt. LaMeika Grayson, a human resources operations officer.

Since sustainment previously was operated on a brigade level, the 143d ESC pioneered sustainment operations on a command level.

The approximately 300 Soldiers of the 143d ESC are divided into many sections. The heart of the command is the section called support operations.

“Support operations [SPO] is the major information hub for the unit,” said Master Sgt. Michelle J. Jackson-Hanner, the distribution integration branch noncommissioned officer in charge. “There are eight cells in SPO, and each one has a different function.”

The eight SPO cells are the distribution integration branch, human resource operations, mobility, contracting, plans, supply and services, ammunitions and the material readiness branch.

The distribution integration branch is the internal information center through which all the SPO cells funnel their information. The DIB collects the information and then passes it on to the party for which it is intended.

Human resource operations handles personnel travel, such as emergency leave, and rest and recuperation leave. HR Ops is also responsible for all the mail coming into Afghanistan for U.S. troops, according to Grayson. For Kandahar Airfield alone, the cell tracks mail for nearly 10,000 people.

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The Commander’s Corner

On June 15, 2009, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, became the new commander of the United States Forces-Afghanistan – the mission we were sent here to support. A top priority for our new commander is a review of the entire Afghan mission and force structure. McChrystal brings a fresh perspective to the theater that no doubt will result in some changes. I don’t foresee any major changes for sustainment; however, I urge you to remain proactive, anticipating logistical needs based on a more keen situational awareness of both the Afghan battlefield and the surrounding air, sea and land routes upon which we depend to transport supplies vital to our fight. In the coming weeks, your work will enable combat forces to take the fight to the enemy. Those who are not ideologically committed to the insurgency will see that the risks of supporting the Taliban are great. You are enabling the coalition to show a strong presence in the Kandahar and Helmand provinces as Coalition and Afghan National Security Forces together seize the initiative, take back villages and cities, and hold them until ANSF can assume full control. Your efforts will create favorable conditions for governance, re-construction and development. Regarding ANSF, your work enables more trainers for the Afghan army and police forces. In the future, some of you may even find yourselves providing mentorship and training support to Afghanistan’s fledgling sustainment structure. There is still a lot of work ahead of us, so remain focused. Work hard to maintain the mission, but also make sure everyone has sufficient downtime.

I want everyone to remain productive – doing all we can to meet the objectives of our new leader. Enclosed is McChrystal’s initial guidance with his eight imperatives. Please read it so you understand the essence of our efforts. Sustaining Victory – Army Strong!

The CSM Message to the Troops

We are approaching our half way point. You have achieved several great things over last six months. As the Joint Sustainment Command-Afghanistan, you have laid the foundation for all future Expeditionary Sustainment Commands here. You should not rest on your laurels. Many times, Soldiers at the half way point of a deployment tend to get complacent. Safety must be our number one priority!

All Soldiers must stay focused on the mission. I understand that all have made some type of personal sacrifice to come on this deployment, but we are Soldiers! We must always place the mission first! Never accept defeat! Never Quit! Never leave a Fallen Comrade! This is OUR Warrant Ethos! You have worked through some adverse conditions thus far during the deployment. You have answered the call simply by doing your job at peak performance.

The success of our mission depends on how “WE” as Soldiers work together as a TEAM. Not one person within our unit is responsible for the mission accomplishment or failure. It takes a combined effort on everyone’s part. The rules apply to everyone equally. We must all follow the standard. Once we begin to deviate from the standard, we lose ourselves open to perceived favoritism and inequality. We all need teamwork! NCOs lead the way!

Medics shoulder healthcare responsibility

BY STAFF SGT. MARCOS ALICES
Victory Sustained Editor

U.S. Army combat medics for centuries have carried the responsibility of tending the health of the American Soldier on the battlefield. The 45th Sustainment Brigade Aid Station will carry that obligation as they provide medical care for more than 2,000 Soldiers in Afghanistan.

“The 45th SB Aid Station is the health provider for Joint Sustainment Command-Afghanistan personnel and service members traveling on combat logistics patrol.”

“It’s great,” said Capt. Donald T. Stevenson, a 45th SB physician assistant. “We can medics out there, so that way everybody can do their mission. They know if something happens to them, like if they get hit with an IED or anything else, the medics are there, they are fully trained, they are fully trained, and they will be in good hands.”

The JSC-A is responsible for the movement of supplies and personnel into and through-out Afghanistan. In fulfilling that role, the JSC-A moves convoys filled with equipment and gear daily. The 45th SB Aid Station provides two combat medics for many of these convoys. The standard range from no more than a day to four days.

“My job is to help the injured and sick in combat,” said Spc. Jermaine, a 45th SB combat medic. “We are open our doors to provide medical care for no more than 200 Soldiers. Originally slated to only provide care for Soldiers of the 45th SB, the medics now open their station doors to Soldiers of the 143rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command and other units who do not have medical support. They see about 35 to 40 patients each day, according to Stevenson. Since they now serve more than 2,000 Soldiers, the medics have extended their hours of operation and added their facility to accommodate the larger patient population.

“A medic skill set is so much larger than just doing vital signs,” said Stevenson. “The aid station, it is routine for medics to have a tentative diagnosis and treatment plan prepared for the physician, according to Stevenson. “I enjoy doing my job,” said Franklin. “There is a lot to learn and still, this is the best learning environment.”

The 45th SB medics are constantly learning new techniques and skills as they rise to the challenge of saving lives on the battlefield. Their mission does not just include tending to the injured on the battlefield but also providing healthcare to Soldiers as well.

45th SB Soldiers, ANA Soldiers spread cheer at local orphanage

BY PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS DANIEL A. BRISTOL
45th Sustainment Brigade

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — U.S. Soldiers and Soldiers of the Afghan National Army visited a local orphanage to pass out some much needed supplies and spread a little cheer on May 14.

Causimg a stir in the local neighborhood, Soldiers of the Hawaii based 45th Sustainment Brigade and Soldiers of the ANA drove up in Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles to the front of the Taya H A Haskan, an all-boy orphanage near downtown Kabul. The Soldiers backed up an MRAP and a trailer as they prepared to pass out school supplies, toys and some candy to the children.

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Victory Sustained. The official voice of the Joint Sustainment Command Afghanistan
Soldiers dedicate chapel at FOB Ramrod

BY SPC. ELISBETH FREEBURG
Victory Sustained Staff Writer

After almost a year in Afghanistan, the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Ramrod have experienced many hardships, including dozens of improvised explosive device strikes, a suicide bomber and the deaths of fellow Soldiers. The newly built FOB Ramrod chapel fills a spiritual and emotional need for Soldiers. In a special service May 31, the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Inf. dedicated chapel at FOB Ramrod May 31.

Annamaria Cardinalli, senior social scientist for the Army program Human Terrain System and classically trained flamenco guitarist, sings and plays the hymn "Amazing Grace" during a chapel dedication service at FOB Ramrod May 31.

During the ceremony, Chap. (Col.) Stanley E. Packert, the command chaplain of Regional Command-South, delivered the dedication sermon and prayer, while Conner prayed the invocation and benediction. Brown presented the commanders' remarks, and Annamaria Cardinalli, a senior social scientist for the Army program Human Terrain System and a classically trained guitarist and singer, sang the national anthem and the hymn, "Amazing Grace."

Soldiers worked until late afternoon or evening most days. They spent five days mixing cement by hand in a wheelbarrow, and the chapel woodwork alone took five weeks to complete.

The chapel will benefit troops coming in who go to church, said Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Kohn, the 2-2 Inf. joint network super-visor who attended the dedication service. It will give them a place to go. For those who don't go to church, it will give them a place of refuge.

According to Conner, the chapel took six weeks to build. Although there were several volunteers who participated in the building, the majority of the work was completed by Staff Sgt. Travis Martin and Staff Sgt. “Bobby Jack” Crenshaw.

"Staff Sgt. Crenshaw wanted to build [a chapel] as soon as we got here," said Conner. "We tried to order a pre-built chapel kit, but couldn't get one, so we decided to go ahead and build our own."

Crenshaw, the 2-2 Inf. repairs and utilities noncommissioned officer, drew up the plans on a basic computer program.

“I knew [the chapel] would be a hard structure that would stay here," said Crenshaw. "I also knew it would be the one building that would serve everyone." Once the building location had been determined and materials found, Crenshaw began work on the chapel and was later joined by Martin.

Starting at 7:30 a.m., the two Soldiers dedicated chapel at FOB Ramrod.

Soldiers fly “Old Glory,” honor loved ones

BY SPC. ELISBETH FREEBURG
Victory Sustained Staff Writer

After receiving a Red Cross message that his grandfather was ill, Spc. Ronnie L. Kahler flew the U.S. flag April 25 above Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan in honor of his grandfather, a World War II veteran. Days later, Kahler presented the flag to his grandfather on his deathbed.

The flag of the United States of America universally represents justice, liberty and democracy, according to President Franklin Roosevelt’s 1944 Proclamation No. 2605. Kahler, the driver for the commanding general of the Joint Sustainment Command-Afghanistan, flew his flag in memory of his grandfather as part of a service the JSC-A provides for Soldiers who wish to fly an American flag for varied reasons. Holidays, birthdays or in memory of a loved one are just a few of the reasons flag bearers are accustomed to seeing.


“He was engaged to the daughter of a friend of mine,” said Prebich.

Together, components of the JSC-A have flown more than 200 U.S. flags since April. The 286th Combat Support Sustain-ment Battalion, a JSCA element, flew 91 flags on Memorial Day.

“There were two of us on the flag pole, four soldiers, and one alternate,” said 1st Sgt. Kevin L. Bennett, senior enlisted Soldier for the 286th CSSB Headquarters and Headquarters Company. Bennett emulated a flyer to 286th CSSB Soldiers, and also fastened flyers to doors at troop quarters informing them about flying flags Memorial Day. Troops purchased their own flags and then brought them in to Bennett.

“My arms got sore, but it was fun.” said Pfc. Robin W. Larlee, a 286th CSSB food supply representative and one of the flag raisers.

Larlee directed all passersby to render honor as the flag-raisers hoisted flags one by one. She assisted all 91 flags.

Besides flags in tribute of family members or someone special, some flags for organizations that have supported troops or for patriotic reasons. Prebich believes this service helps boost the morale of troops.

Soldiers may personalize the wording of certificates, which are signed by the commanding general and officially confirm the flag has been flown over Afghanistan.

“It meant a lot to my grandfa-ther,” said Kahler. “I’m the only one in the family that has carried on the military, and he was really proud of me for that.”

Kahler’s grandfather passed away about three weeks later. He plans to continue raising flags for others who have also lost loved ones.

OPINION

US must respect our symbol of freedom

BY SPC. ELISBETH FREEBURG
Victory Sustained Staff Writer

As U.S. Marines courageously fought their way forward across the beach, thousands fell,.moved down by the heavy guns of the Imperial Japanese Army. After 36 days and nearly 7,000 American lives lost, legend tells us that Marine Sgt. Mike Strank of Easy Company ordered his troops to raise a U.S. flag so big that “every Marine on this bloody island can see it.”

Fols 23, 1945, five Marines and one Navy corpsman raised that flag on Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima. Within weeks, Strank and two other flag raisers died on that sandy island.

The flag of the United States of America universally represents justice, liberty and democracy, according to President Franklin Roosevelt’s 1944 Proclamation No. 2605.

The flag Code, U.S. United States Code: Title 36: Chapter 10, mandates how our colors should be respected. According to the Code, “The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.”

How far our noble flag has fallen today in our minds!

Recently, British-born artist Benjamin Shine created a portrait of President Barack Obama by cutting up an old American flag and weaving it through mesh fabric to craft Obama’s likeness. Shine considered this mutilation of the American flag to be an “appropriate” reflection of positive changes in the United States and named his work “Changing States.” Although it is admirable that Shine intended to honor the U.S., slicing our sym- bol of liberty into small pieces is not.

More disturbing, Barnes & Noble Inc. plans to capitalize on this deficiency by selling puzzles, posters, and t-shirts created after Shine’s portrait.

There are a few things about the U.S. flag that most Soldiers probably know. For exam-ple, if the flag is flown at night, it must be illuminated. Another familiar statute is to fly the U.S. flag higher than other flags when flown together. But many people do not real-ize that the American flag is never to be used as a decoration, nor even on athletic uni-forms, the exception being military uniforms. As well, the flag should “never be used for advertising purposes in any manner,” render-ing the monetary plans of Barnes & Noble Inc. completely inappropriate.

As Soldiers, citizens of the United States of America, we should all do our part to respect our flag. Read the Flag Code. Educate your family and others back home. Correct your peers. We are giving a year of our lives here to justice, liberty and democracy. Many give more. Let us at least do our part to respect “Old Glory,” our emblem of freedom, as it proudly flies above.

OPINION
Cheer
Continued from page 3

Sound advice from the Security Manager
Operational Security and Cell Phones

The answer: use of these items creates a security vulnerability. Let's look at cell phones.

Cell phones have three major vulnerabilities:

(1) Vulnerability to monitoring of your conversations while using the phone.
(2) Vulnerability of your phone being turned into a microphone to monitor conversations in the vicinity of your phone while your phone is inactive.
(3) Vulnerability to “cloning” or the use of your phone number by others to make calls that are charged to your account.

Real world example: One of the most highly publicized cases of cellular phone monitoring concerned former Speaker of the House Representative Gingrich. A conference call between Gingrich and other Republican leaders was “accidently” overheard and then tapped. The conversation concerned Republican strategy for responding to Speaker Gingrich’s pending admission of ethics violations being investigated by the House Ethics Committee. The intercepted conversation was reported to the New York Times and other newspapers.

Yes, you have seen people use cell phones and other electronic devices in restricted areas. “We have met the enemy.” Is it you?

How do we overcome this enemy? We police ourselves. Practice good OPSEC.

MRAP rollover training simulators save lives

BY SPC. ELISEBET FREEBURG
Victory Sustained Staff Writer

According to Army statistics, 144 non-hostile related Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle rollover incidents were reported from Nov. 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008. U.S. servicemembers increasingly use the MRAP in combat because of its ability to withstand improvised explosive devices. However, because of growing concern about the MRAP’s susceptibility to rollover, the MRAP Egress Trainer was designed and is currently being fielded in Afghanistan.

“The MET gives the gunners an 80 percent better survivability rate in a rollover,” said Tracy G. Watkins, a government-contracted senior trainer for the MET here.

With 12 years of Army experience behind him as an infantry officer, Watkins was involved in several military vehicle rollovers. “In the past, we were woefully unprepared for events like rollovers to happen,” said Watkins. “Although, they did happen pretty frequently, we didn’t have any formal training for it.”

As thousands of troops arrive in Afghanistan during the troops expansion, they are processed through the Joint Sustainment Command-Afghanistan’s Reception, Staging, Onward movement and Integration system before moving out to their final locations. Most Soldiers process at Kandahar Airfield and are required through RSOI to experience the MET, said Watkins.

“Normally, the second day in country is when they do the MET,” said Watkins.

There are four basic scenarios Watkins simulates with the MET. In each simulation, the gunner jumps down into the cab, while his crewmembers grasp a tight hold on him to make certain he does not move around the vehicle.

“I was the gunner,” said Pvt. Kristin L. Rodriguez, a human resources specialist for the 57th Expeditionary Signal Battalion who trained here June 18. “So I had to get down. It’s a little rough, but it was fun.”

In the first simulation, Watkins rolls the vehicle to a point where the occupants feel if the driver is about to lose control of the vehicle.

During the second scenario, he directs the machine to rotate 360 degrees to familiarize them with sensations they would feel in an actual rollover.

The third setting forces the crew to egress through the gunner’s hatch, as the vehicle is turned 90 degrees onto its side.

 Watkins turns the vehicle over several times in the final simulation before ending with the vehicle completely upside down. MET trainers lock all doors but one from the outside, simulating jammed doors and forcing troops to find the single open door. After exiting the MET, the Soldiers simulate standard operating procedures such as securing the area, assessing injuries and calling medics.

“I went twice,” said Sgt. Rodney E. Bertrand, a multi-channel transmission systems operator for the 57th ESB, “Practice makes perfect in case we go outside the wire. In case of real world events, you need to have training like this.”

The MET simulator consists of an interchangeable MRAP cab on a special frame high enough to allow the cab to rotate 360 degrees, much like an amusement park ride.

“We'll have a copy, a version, of every MRAP that is out in the field in strategic locations throughout the theater,” said Watkins. “So that the Soldiers can actually train on the vehicle that they are most likely to operate in.”

Although current cabs are being designed and manufactured distinctly for the simulator, initially, damaged MRAPs from the field were used.

In the MET, the Soldiers have the simulator power options. The MET runs on a multi-power source. For example, if it has an electrical motor and could run on batteries, generators or be plugged into a power source.

There are two simulators at KAF, one at Bagram Airfield, and many on their way to forward operating bases, said Watkins, making a total of 12 or 15 METs in Afghanistan.

“People learn a lot while they are in here,” said Watkins. “Everybody leaves smiling. They all enjoy it. They all recognize the training value of it once they’ve been in it.”

The MET plastic crews into physically and mentally stressful situations in which they must egress the vehicle. Despite disorientation, Soldiers must unfasten seatbelts and unlock door combat locks while hanging sideways or upside down. As greater numbers of troops continue to arrive here, the MET helps combat accidents resulting in injury or death due to MRAP rollovers.
Many of our Soldiers have started going home on Rest and Recreation Leave. No one’s second guessing the necessity of a much needed break from Kandahar. Even so, R&R may have a few stresses of its own. Who could stress about the perfect vacation, the ideal time at the house, or the family reunion? After all, homecomings should be happy, joyful occasions, times when families and friends share smiles and laughter.

Homecoming from deployment also is a time when Soldiers and family members attempt to bridge the emotional and physical distance experienced during the deployment. The Army uses the expression “Reunion Stress” to explain the demands experienced by all family members around the time of homecoming. Going home means getting to know each other all over again and both sides of the deployment have experienced very different challenges.

How will we ever share just how much dust we live with or how awful the pooh pond stinks or what wearing body armor on a hot day is really like? How can we describe the stinks or what wearing body armor on a hot day is really like? How can we describe how awful the pooh pond stinks, how much dust we live with or how awful the pooh pond stinks?

The material readiness branch is responsible for receiving materials to distribute, such as electrical equipment, drilling equipment for wells and large containers of water to be used for bathing.

One challenge the SPO faces as a whole is the constant adaptation to a changing theater as the troop influx grows.

The Army uses the expression “Reunion Stress” to explain the demands experienced by all family members around the time of homecoming. Going home means getting to know each other all over again and both sides of the deployment have experienced very different challenges.

Some of the difficulties that come with deployments include emotional distance, feeling isolated or alone even with those we love, having difficulty sleeping, and most definitely feeling a little irritable. Our fellow Soldiers certainly have a higher tolerance for those days we feel a little grouchy; our families may not. During deployment, our adjectives become a little more colorful. Our demeanor becomes a little more direct, and we are more likely to speak our minds, unfiltered.

I know from previous deployments, my family is there to remind me – not everyone is in the Army nor would they care to be. And you know that’s not so bad. So when you go on your R&R, remember to take a deep breath of fresh air, and enjoy just being where you are for the moment.