

The Fighting *48th*

December 2009



Volunteers
continue to
provide support
to the Afghan
people.

The Deployment Journal of the Volunteer Brigade



Commander's Column

Warrior 6, LTC Kenny Payne, Commander 2-121 IN

2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry, also known as TF Warrior has been an active force on the battlefield throughout the northern part of Afghanistan. The battalion is primarily supporting the mentorship and development of the ANP as a part of a coalition with 14 different nations under RC North which is

commanded by the German Contingent under BG Setzer.

The coalition in the North has vast challenges ranging from unique country caveats, and non-integrated data communications platforms to the fact that 2-121 IN is the only major US contingent in the North along with ODA counterparts.

These unique challenges coupled with the vast expanse of the largest RC in Afghanistan have allowed for 2-121 IN to step into the forefront of leadership. This has resulted in an innovative, coordinated effort that allows for situational awareness among the coalition and purpose driven operations in all facets within the RC-N Area of Responsibility.

During TF Warrior's short time in the North they have accomplished many firsts. The battalion was the first US force in the country to be invited to the "Blue Mosque" located in Mazar E Shariff. This was a huge step towards establishing good relations with the religious leadership within the North and will have long term positive effects with the population. In addition to these religious gains with the populace, the battalion has forged an enduring friendship with the Swedish government.

With the construction of the first US/Swedish/Afghan Forward Operating Base whose primary concept is the embedding of all mentors with their ANSF counterparts within the city of Sheberghan.

See Commander page 6

THE FIGHTING 48th

"The Fighting 48th" is the command newsletter of 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. It is produced by the Public Affairs Office on behalf of the 48th IBCT commander and is intended to inform the members of the 48th IBCT of the activities of the brigade and the command messages of the leadership team.

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Table of Contents

Page Two:

- Commander's Column

Page Three:

- Afghan Police and their Police Mentors Improve Kabul Security

Page Four:

- Headquarters Company Humanitarians (Cover Story)

Page Five:

- ANA Medics Making Progress

Page Six:

- Police Mentor Team Soldiers Deliver Humanitarian Aid

Page Seven:

Chaplain's Corner

Page Eight:

- 1-108th CAV Engages Afghan Tribal Leaders

Page Nine:

- 1-108th CAV Guards Gamberi Afghan Army Garrison

Page Ten:

- Thanksgiving Dinner With Georgia Legislators



On the cover:

1st LT Jacklyn Mott, an operations officer for the for the 48th IBCT S-2 section, from Bark River, MI, meets young Afghan children during a local patrol in Kabul as she moves to a location for a local humanitarian aid (HA) operation. Photo by MC2 Donisha Burns, 48th IBCT PAO

Afghan Police and their Police Mentors improve Kabul security

Spc. Jennifer C. Eddy
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan – Officers of the Afghan National Police, with the assistance of American mentors, placed a series of metal housing connexes at strategic vantage points among Kabul city’s rugged outlying cliffs and mountain ranges Nov. 7 in an effort to increase safety and security.

Kabul City Police Command (KCPC) and Kabul Ministry of Interior (MOI) created the event to enhance visibility of enemy activity and improve the well-being of the police tasked with guarding the mountainous terrain overlooking Kabul city.

After KCPC and MOI requested assistance from US forces, The Headquarters Police Mentor Team (PMT) of 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team organized the event. The event was made possible by enlisting the help of U.S. Army aviators and Pathfinders that provided the air transportation and physical labor.

"Despite the arduous hardship of this operation, we were able to execute our plan using available resources that they (US Forces) had on hand, and the skills of their pilots and service personnel," said Col. Abdul Jalil Famet, KCPC Chief of Staff and organizer of the connex drop.

Team 2 Pathfinders of the 7th Battalion, 101st Airborne Division sling loaded the connexes by strapping them to the bottom of Chinook helicopters. After sling loading, the Chinook helicopters carried and dropped off the connexes to their pre-determined sites.

The connexes will serve as a deterrent against enemy activity and attacks by increasing visibility for the ANP.

"It's necessary to establish posts in these locations, because there are some key strategic locations which can be vulnerable," said Famet.

"Anti-government elements or others who want to disturb Kabul security can use these locations as their decisive terrain," said Famet "by firing a rocket round, they can negatively influence the public and easily conduct their plans against the government."

"These connexes serve as another set of eyes for the ANP command," said Col. Sonny Hurtado of HQ PMT.

"If there is a rocket attack from these posts the ANP can quickly confirm or deny the attack and its whereabouts through observation, instead of sending police to an unconfirmed location."

See Security on page 4



A UH-60 Blackhawk sits precariously on the side of a mountain as Soldiers move to board the bird for the next iteration of loading connexes for security positions for the ANP forces around Kabul. Photo by SPC Jennifer Eddy, 48th IBCT PAO.



A CH-47 Chinook helicopter lifts a connex which will be placed for a security position for ANP forces around the mountains surrounding the city of Kabul. Photo by SPC Jennifer Eddy, 48th IBCT PAO.

Headquarters Company Humanitarians

Story and Photos by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Donisha Burns
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan-- With winter rapidly approaching the city of Kabul, Soldiers of Headquarters Company 148th Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BSTB) led a local humanitarian aid delivery Nov. 19 to the Kuchi Nomadic tribe in a neighborhood near Camp Phoenix.

The tribe is currently living just north of the base in tents donated by a previous unit. By scheduling regular foot patrols, the company has established a good relationship with the elders of the tribe in order to find out the needs of the people.

"Most of the people are friendly. We have already done medical aid and we try to get them food when we can. In return, they let us know when new people are in the area. They keep us aware of what's going on," said Staff Sgt. Gene Elliott, Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of the patrol.

Michele Cornett, Executive Officer of the BSTB added, "The purpose of foot patrols is to make our presence known. By aiding and assisting the local community, we're increasing security inside and outside the forwarding operating base."

To date, company patrols have delivered more than 300 pounds of clothing and shoes donated from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to the tribe as they prepare to migrate to the South where the winter is not as harsh.

"Humanitarian aid is one of the quickest and most effective ways of showing the Afghan people that we can help address their needs. We have gotten reports that when the Taliban try to come back in the community they have been rejected," said Capt. Patrick Spence, Civil Military Officer for Headquarters Company, 148th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Staff Sgt. Monty Eller, Headquarters Company, BSTB Operations Sergeant added "Our mission is to aid, assist and train, so Afghanistan is able to sustain itself when we leave. By being out there on the ground we are able to identify the short-falls of the people and continue to give the people what they need." Every month the Society of St. Vincent de Paul donates more than 2,000 pounds of clothing and school supplies from across America to help aid in Operation Enduring Freedom.



SSG Monty Eller, from Columbus, GA, meets with tribal elders during the humanitarian aid mission to discuss local tribal issues.



Sgt Rolando Borquez, from Bakersfield, CA, greets a local Afghan girl during the humanitarian aid mission.

Security from page 3

The connexes will also provide much needed shelter for ANP tasked with guarding Kabul against enemy rocket attacks.

"Since the weather tends to become colder day-by-day and winter is close, the weather is cold in these elevated locations. For better living accommodations, it was necessary to have covered posts, which are safe from dust and cold air," said Famet.

"Our soldiers, upon seeing these connexes in the air being transported by helicopter, became very cheerful and expressed their gratitude toward us and our international partners. With the establishment of these facilities they can conduct their missions better," said Famet.

KCPC and MOI are always working to enhance the safety and security for the citizens of Kabul. MOI and KCPC's leadership endeavor is to provide better security for Kabul and its citizens with their available resources. To meet their objectives they have established multiple layers of security cordons around Kabul and have enabled a mobile patrol system.

ANA Medics Making Progress

By: MSgt Steven Goetsch
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Camp Shaheen, Afghanistan-- A loud refrain of “Come on, let’s go,” frequently echoes across the Afghan Army’s medical training grounds at Camp Shaheen in northern Afghanistan, setting in motion a frenzy of activity during a medical training mission here. An Afghan soldier is trapped between two large stacks of concrete and needs serious help. “What are you going to do now? What are you going to do now?” rings out to several Afghan Soldier trainees.

It is the voice of Army Staff Sgt. Juan Cortez, an Afghan mentor who likes to add a little stress to the latest group of students going through the Afghan Medic Training program. “When I first started helping teach this course, I told them I was going to be yelling and screaming at you, and if I could, I would throw dust on you, just to give you that stress level,” said Sergeant Cortez.

It is techniques like that, that help Sergeant Cortez improve the course that is led by his Afghan medic counterpart, Sgt. 1st Class Mohammad Arif, who has seen the course improve since being a student himself. “I have seen big changes in the course over the last two years,” said Sergeant Arif. “Changes like adding cardio pulmonary resuscitation.”

The course covers everything a medic needs to support ANA Soldiers in the field. It is an eight-week program that covers airway management, breathing and circulation, anatomy, physiology, rescue breathing, rapid trauma assessments, splints, fractures, tourniquets, CPR and IVs.

Although their teaching style and language differ, Sergeant Arif and Sergeant Cortez make an effective team with a shared goal...put the best possible medic into the field. “When the Soldiers first come to the training, they know nothing about medical treatment, but when they leave eight weeks later, they are proficient and can save Soldiers in the field,” said Sergeant Arif.

That objective is what all 24 of Sergeant Arif’s students are working towards. “I like being a medic, and having the opportunity that we have to work within the International Security Assistance Force,” said soldier Gholam Rassoul, who is also known as 1-2-3 for his eager volunteering. “When I am done with this course, I hope I can help my people in combat.”

Soldier Nazrullah Pahlawanzada, is also excited to be a medic, for not only what he can do for the ANA, but for all Afghans. “I like to be a medic because I can help my people on the battlefield, and when I’m out of the Army, I can also help the people in my village.”

The course continues to improve, and may be extended to 10 weeks. Course curriculum is shaped by the students and their needs.

Sergeant Cortez has added 50 hours of hands-on he received from student feedback sessions he likes to conduct after every training session. “I really like the practical exercises,” said Gholam Rassoul. “We have seven training days in a week, and if we could do the practical for five, that would be great.”

The current class is gearing up for the tough final exam, but that does not sway the confidence he has in his students and himself. “I am confident that all of my students will pass their final exam,” said Sergeant Arif. “I couldn’t have taught this class before working with the mentors, but I can teach this class in the future.”

After 27 years in the medical corps, Sergeant Cortez knows what it takes to be an effective medic. “When these people graduate three weeks from now, they will be good medics, they are very motivated individuals and will do their job to the utmost of their ability.”



An Afghan National Army Soldier inspects an IV, during medical training in Northern Afghanistan at Camp Shaheen. The training emphasized teamwork and basic medical knowledge.



An Afghan National Army Soldier prepares to lift a liter during medical training in Northern Afghanistan at Camp Shaheen. The training emphasized teamwork and basic medical knowledge.

Police Mentor Team Soldiers Deliver Humanitarian Aid

Story and photos by Spc. Jennifer C. Eddy
48th IBC Public Affairs

Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan -- Soldiers of Police Mentor Team 8, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team provided medical supplies to the Babaqashkar Medical Center, Nawa Basic Health Center and tents to the Tarakhel Girls' School in the Deh Sabz district of Kabul province, Afghanistan Nov. 1st.

Team 8 soldiers donated over \$14,000 worth of medical supplies that Deh Sabz Afghan National Police (ANP) distributed to the Babaqashkar Medical Center and the Nawa Basic Health Center. The supplies included antibiotics and other prescription medications that can cure common illness and disease.

"Rural medical clinics experience great difficulty obtaining supplies," said Staff Sgt. Kerre S. Benbrooks of Team 8. "Antibiotics and other supplies will likely save the lives of many women and children this winter."

The basic care individuals receive in these clinics may be the only care reasonably available to them.

"Many people don't have the money or transportation to get medical treatment in Kabul," said Benbrooks. "Primary care at the clinics in these rural villages is the only medical care that most people have."

In addition to donating medical supplies, Team 8 was also able to donate four large tents to Tarakhel Girls School. Each large tent can hold 60 students at a time. Combined, the tents can serve as temporary classrooms for 240 schoolgirls until permanent classrooms can be constructed.

The Soldiers of Team 8 joined forces with the ANP and town elders of Deh Sabz to erect the first of the four tents on the day they were delivered to the girls school.

"The education of girls and young women is crucial for the future and stability of Afghanistan," said Benbrooks.

Team 8 plans to routinely visit the clinics and school at least once a month with assistance from the Deh Sabz ANP to watch and assist in their progress towards self-sustainment.

"It's good to be able to go out there and give them something that's difficult for them to get themselves," said Pvt. 1st Class Cliff A. Morash of Team 8. "It shows them that we care about their community, and it builds their level of trust."



Afghan children receive basic essentials from a Afghan police officer during humanitarian assistance program.

Commander from page 2

The U.S. is paying for the foundation and Security Forces (SECFOR) requirements while the Swedish government is responsible for the infrastructure and utility development, making this truly a unique project. The intended outcome is are in which both of our countries will have achieved their desired end state in conjunction with ANSF requirements while saving taxpayers vast amounts of money.

A case in point of TF Warrior's prowess within the counter insurgency (COIN) environment has been our ability to identify and address the root cause issues of the community while forcing the separation of the anti-Afghan forces from the greater Afghan population. An excellent example of this was the first ever playground built entirely with donations from local Afghan businesses, civil leadership, protected by the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF), overseen by the US and adopted by the community of Deh Dadi. Through their tireless efforts they were able to construct a 14+ acre park with concessions, park benches, slides, jungle gyms, a soccer field, a basketball court (the first ever seen in the North) and numerous memorials to the ANSF and the people of Afghanistan. This will provide a positive influence for ANSF recruiting as well as a venue for children to develop hope towards a more peaceful future.

Whether it be in a firefight on the outskirts of Konduz or on a humanitarian mission in the countryside, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry is representing the 48th BDE and the state of Georgia on an international stage with honor and distinction. You can be rest assured we will continue do so. FACIENDUM EST "It Shall Be Done".

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



For Christians, the Advent season, which starts with the first Sunday of Advent on 29 November and goes thru Epiphany on 6 January, is a time to open our hearts more to Christ, recommit to our faith in our Savior, and **share His love with people of all faiths**. Advent is an expectation that God is intervening, and a strong reminder that God has a plan that is unfolding, even if we don't see it. Even when some things in our world are not good. i.e. war, terrorism, diseases; we need to draw closer to the Giver of the Gospel-Good News. There are blessings taking place every day in subtle and powerful ways. Lives are changed every day because of Christ. As people are healed from sin and death, eyes are opened to new realities, yet too many of us allow ourselves to be too distracted by the other stuff.

Take time to find some solitude with the Savior. This is a wonderful season to draw apart for a little while, to read scripture; to take a few minutes every day to slow down, letting the promises of God fill your spiritual lungs with fresh air. Use this time for taking stock of what really matters and letting go of some things that don't. It is a time to receive and/or cherish the most important gift of Christmas: Jesus Christ born in our world to become our Lord and Savior. Fortunately this is a gift that you can share with everyone, as you allow Christ to love through you to everyone in your life, especially those without hope and in despair.

Many individuals and families may be under stress at Christmas. Observing the season of Advent offers some alternatives so you can relax and enjoy the season: an Advent wreath on the table, and its increasing shine as a new candle is lit each week; an Advent calendar to mark the days of waiting with a brief passage from scripture with the evening meal. Those of us far away from family may find it relaxing and significant to sit in front of a lighted candle and remember loved ones, call and write home during their activities, but also to share this season in activities with those around us. We can find joy and enlightenment by meditating on God who loves us and offers us so much. It is a time to prepare, a time to wait, and a time to remember that underneath all that seems to be crumbling is a firm foundation the One who is to come, again.

May this Advent be a blessed time for us, for all whom we love, and a time for us to show love for people of every Faith.

An online Advent calendar can be found at: <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Christianity/Advent/Advent-Calendar.aspx>). Other resources for people of all Faiths during this season can be found at <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faith>.



108th CAV Engages Afghan Tribal Leaders

Story and Photos by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith
48th IBCT Public Affairs

ACHIN DISTRICT, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan – Soldiers of the 1st Squadron, 108th Regiment and their Afghan National Army partners recently bedded down for the night at the Afghan National Police Achin District Center in preparation for a meeting with local Shinwari tribal elders and Afghan Security personnel. The meeting at the compound managed by the local Afghan National Police was something that had never been done before and it would prove historic for the Georgia-based Soldiers.

Major Andrew McDonald, the ‘Rough Rider’s’ operations officer met with a group of tribal elders, or Maliks, to discuss the border tribes’ ongoing efforts to thwart the insurgency, notably the Taliban.

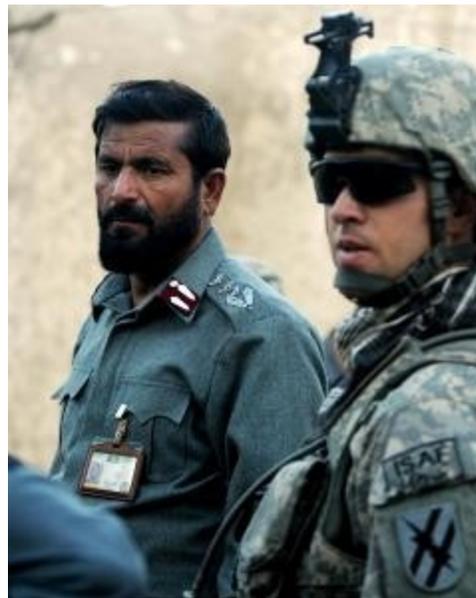
Shinwari tribesmen had been successful in routing disruptive factions by taking up arms themselves, and took great risk to meet with the U.S. military, the local governor and Afghan security forces. Attempts on the Maliks’ lives and kidnappings are not uncommon when insurgents discover they’ve been sharing information and taking steps to defend their country.

Rudyard Kipling once wrote of these people, “you can never tame the heart of a Shinwari,” and Major McDonald recognizes the necessity to capitalize on this spirit.

“This is the first time in the history of this country since the ouster of the Taliban that a group of villagers have defeated the Taliban repeatedly without government help,” McDonald said.

The officials of each group collectively decided that it was time to up the ante and introduce what will be a stronger tribal-government union while maintaining the traditions of daily life. In addition, the plan creates a stepping stone to unionizing other tribes with the Shinwaris, allowing them to find a common goal in defeating Afghanistan’s insurgent enemies.

Working in and among the people is a central tenet of the Army’s counterinsurgency doctrine, and has been at the forefront of the ‘Rough Riders’ mission. “They do counterinsurgency very well,” said Ed Vowell the U.S. State Department’s District Support Team Advisor embedded with the 108th Cavalry Regiment. These young guys are in the more remote areas every day engaging the people. We’ve already seen positive effects.”



A 108th Rough Rider Soldier discusses security of the Achin District Center in Nangarhar prior to a shura, or tribal meeting, of key community and U. S. military leaders with the district’s chief of police.



Maj. Andrew B. McDonald, 108th Cavalry Regiment’s acting commander and battalion operations officer, listens to the concerns of local Maliks during a shura, or tribal meeting, at the Achin District Center in Nangarhar. The meeting was a chance to bring together local government, security force and tribal leaders to encourage more community involvement in civilian defense.

108th CAV Guards Gamberi Afghan Army Garrison

Story and Photos by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith
48th IBCT Public Affairs

GAMBERI PROVINCE, Jalalabad, Afghanistan – As the convoy moves into the Afghan National Army (ANA) Gamberi Garrison one notices the orderly state of things. Everything is new and uniformly aligned. A handful of Soldiers from the 108th Cavalry Regiment’s “Rough Riders” are responsible for protecting the inner perimeter of the Afghan National Army’s 201st Corps headquarters where American training and support teams live.

Standing at the gate, Specialist Robert Maurice Jones, of Memphis, Tenn. monitors a squad of Afghan Soldiers marching into the walled inner compound. Jones, a Tennessee Citizen-Soldier volunteered to mobilize with the Calhoun, Ga. based 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

“You guys were deploying, so I said, ‘hey, I’m ready to go’.” It’s Jones’ third day on the job and he finds himself discussing his responsibility with Major Rafal Panasiuk, the commander of Gamberi Garrison and the Combined Action Training Team (CATT), a group of U.S. Soldiers who cohabitate with, and train Afghan forces.

“I depend on the 108th a great deal,” said Panasiuk, who is assigned to the Joint Logistics Command. “They watch over the entire base and their professionalism makes it easy to plan our next steps to stay safe.”

“It’s a model environment,” said Command Sgt. Major Joseph E. Recker, the unit’s senior non-commissioned officer. Reminiscing about his first observations upon arriving at the camp, he added, “The entrance has been reinforced and it looks like more work has been done to the inner compound.” Although it is structurally secure, the camp does lack some comforts. Phone and internet services are intermittent at the small camp, which can weigh on Soldiers’ minds.



Spec. Robert Maurice Jones of Memphis, Tn. monitors the movement of 201st Corps ANA Soldiers marching through the walled inner gates. Jones, a Tennessee Citizen-Soldier, volunteered to mobilize with the Calhoun, Ga. based 108th Cavalry Regiment



Spec. Robert Maurice Jones of Memphis, Tn. reassures the Gamberi Garrison and CATT commander, Major Rafal Panasiuk that the perimeter is in good hands on his watch. “I expect a great deal from my security guys,” Panasiuk said. “I depend on them to know their stuff and execute when necessary.”

“My fiancée’s little boy is having surgery today, and I’m eager to get in touch with her,” said Specialist William Jackson as he squinted towards the numerous mountains surrounding the camp while waiting for a chance to call home. Making the most of modest surroundings is something that these Soldiers have learned to do well.

“Humor helps a lot here,” Spec. Timothy Campbell, Jr. says. The ‘guys’ have pegged him as the clown as he is typically the one to lighten the worst situations. “We do little things to entertain ourselves. Joking around makes it easier but it’s our company that keeps us going.”

Thanksgiving Dinner With Georgia Legislators

Story and Photos by Sergeant Danny Durham
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan-- A group of political leaders from Georgia surprised the Soldiers of the 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team with a visit to Camp Phoenix on Thanksgiving. U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss, along with U.S. Representatives Tom Price, John Barrow and Lynn Westmorland joined the Soldiers for a taste of the holiday in a war zone.

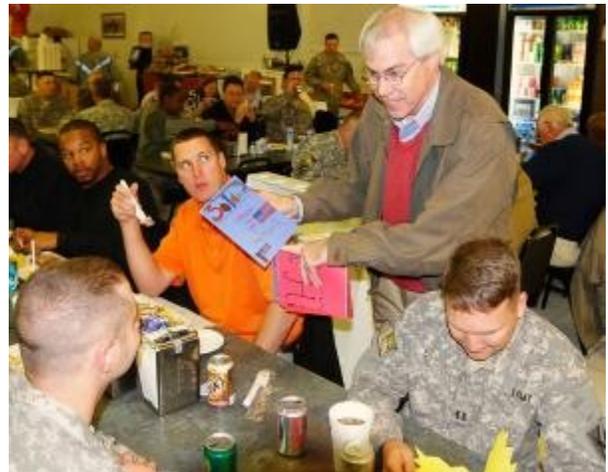
Senator Chambliss and the representatives sat among the Soldiers and enjoyed dinner as they expressed their gratitude for the sacrifices the Soldiers are making for their country.

Rep. John Barrow handed out and read hand-made Thanksgiving cards made by several elementary school students. He quoted from one, "Soldiers, I hope ya'll are safe. I wish you were here to celebrate Thanksgiving in Georgia so we can thank you for your work - signed Lauryn."

Rep. Barrow also presented a Georgia Bulldog Hat to Captain Herb Mihan of Headquarters Company, 48th IBCT and thanked him for his dedication and service.

"Sometimes you think people forget about us over here but seeing the senator and the representatives not just sitting, eating and leaving but actually mingling with the soldiers, handing out cards and shaking hands gives us a warm feeling. That goes along way," said Specialist Argo Smith of A Battery, 1/118th Field Artillery from Covington, Georgia.

Senator Chambliss and all the representatives expressed their deep and heartfelt appreciation for the tireless dedication and sacrifices that the soldiers are making for the great state of Georgia and their country.



Above: U.S. Representative John Barrow hands out cards and letters from Georgia school children to 48th IBCT Soldiers during the Georgia Congressional delegation visit to Camp Phoenix on Thanksgiving Day.



Above: U.S. Senator Saxby Chambliss (right) stands with Sgt Adam Hanners of Co. A, 2nd Bn, 121st IN. during the Congressional delegation visit to Camp Phoenix on Thanksgiving Day.

Right: BG Lawrence Dudney, Commander, ANSF Development Assistance Bureau (third from the left), conducts a briefing for the Georgia Congressional delegation visiting from Georgia on the progress made by Georgia's Citizen - Soldiers during their deployment to Afghanistan.

