

FREEDOM WATCH

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AFGHANISTAN



Photo by Angela Szyszlo, Ghazni PRT education specialist

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FREEDOM WATCH

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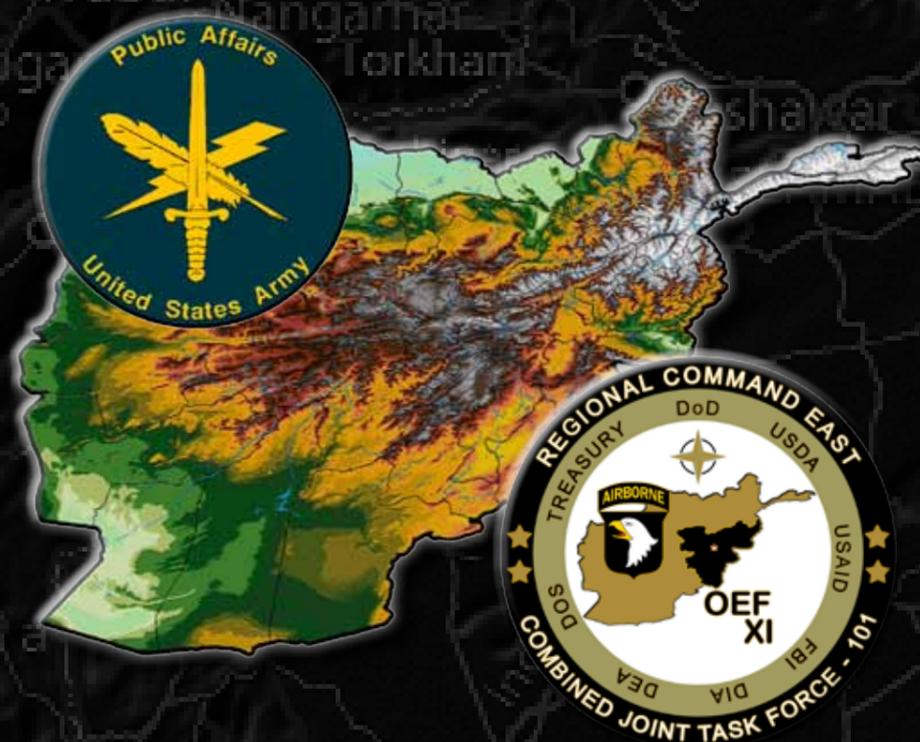
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(Cover Photo) Spc. James Munroz, Texas Agribusiness Development Team infantry member from Fredericksburg, Texas, gives a thumbs-up to Afghan children from the M-ATV turret as the Texas ADT leaves Qala Now village June 23 in Kwajah 'Omari district. The team was providing security for the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team, who was visiting schools to learn how they could help improve learning conditions.

OUTPOST THOMAS

Story and photos by Spc. Albert L. Kelley, 300th MPAD

“Safety is number one. We pick safe times to work, like when it’s overcast. When the sun comes back out, we are back down again.”

-Army Staff Sgt. Oretheous O. Reed, 2nd Plt., 2nd Bn., 327th Inf. Reg.



Army Pfc. Johnathan R. Villarreal, of San Benito, Texas, an automatic rifleman with 1st Sqd., 2nd Plt., D Co., 2nd Bn., 327th Inf. Regt., TF No Slack, scans the area below from the security of a fighting position that he and his squad built at COP Thomas above the Marawara district July 7.

The Soldiers continuously work to improve their fighting positions while ever mindful of the extreme weather conditions that surpass 100 degrees daily. Coalition Forces pushed insurgents out of the district only days earlier and are setting up permanent outposts to prevent insurgents from returning to the area.

The back of the Chinook opened and the small team of scouts, mortarmen and infantrymen exited over knee-high piles of MREs and bottled water into the darkness of Helicopter Landing Zone Hawk July 7.

Days earlier, some of these same Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, Task Force No Slack, helped expel insurgents from the valley below during Operation Strong Eagle. Now they were back to ensure insurgents did not return by helping the Afghan National Army build a permanent outpost high above the Marawara district.

“This particular ground is important because it allows us to provide over-watch and security,” said Army Maj. Eric D. Anderson, the executive officer of 2nd Bn., 327th Inf. Reg., stationed out of Fort Campbell, Ky. “We are also denying the enemy the ability to use that terrain. Time and time again throughout history, the enemy has rushed to the high ground [during military operations].”

There are no hardened buildings, no dining facilities, no morale, welfare and recreation centers and no bathrooms on this new OP. Despite the lack of amenities, the Soldiers enthusiastically make do and carry on with their mission.

ANA and U.S. Soldiers begin working early before the temperature surpasses the 100-degree mark. Army Staff Sgt. Oretheous O. Reed, of Blakely, Calif., a squad leader with 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, 2nd Bn., 327th Inf. Reg., fills sandbags alongside his squad and ANA Soldiers.

“We are helping the ANA secure their area,” said Reed. “Helping them to build better fighting positions. They get excited when we work with them.”

The Soldiers build their fighting positions with sandbags, large rocks and indigenous vegetation. They maintain situational awareness of both the elements and possible enemy movement in the area.

“Safety is number one,” Reed said. “We pick safe times to work, like when it’s overcast. When the sun

comes back out, we are back down again. We never stop drinking water.”

He also takes the time to mentor the ANA soldiers.

The ANA, in turn, show their appreciation by sharing a traditional Afghan lunch of cooked rice, potatoes and beans with the American Soldiers.

During the long hot days, the Soldiers do their best to keep morale up with occasional debates about the best actors, movies and singers.

Evenings present new challenges. Soldiers create guard duty rotations and double check their nighttime optical devices before being completely enveloped in darkness. The winds pick up considerably and temperatures drop substantially.

There are no mattresses. Soldiers do their best to find a comfortable spot in the dirt, ignoring the tiny rocks that poke at them through the night.

One Soldier showed ingenuity by constructing a small blanket from material found during the day and 550-cord. Some use empty MRE boxes, uniform tops

and poncho liners to provide additional protection from the wind.

Although, the valley below is almost completely desolate, the Soldiers understand the importance of being alert during their shifts.

“You do not want to let your buddy down,” said Army Pfc. Frank K. Copass, of Thompkinsville, Ky., a radio telephone operator with the scout platoon.

“You don’t want someone to sneak up on you because you weren’t scanning your sector,” said Copass.

When daylight breaks, the Soldiers start the process all over. For four days they continue improving fighting positions, pulling guard duty, keeping cool during the scorching day and keeping warm at night.

“Local nationals have ownership of security, static posts, patrolling and the town itself,” said Anderson. Eventually this OP will be turned over completely to the Afghan National Security Force.

Until then, the Soldiers continue their rotations high above the district of Marawara. ☺

Care, Where There is None

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Megan Sindelar, Regimental Combat Team-7, 1st Marine Division PAO



After being seen by medical professionals, a young Afghan girl attempts to apply extra ointment from a package used to treat the rash that covers her body during a village medical engagement just outside COP Reilly, Marjah, Helmand province July 9.

Due to cultural sensitivities, medical treatment for Afghan women is extremely difficult, forcing them to travel to the Helmand provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, or even crossing national borders into Pakistan.

To improve the quality of life and health care for this sect of Afghan society, a team consisting of female Marines and sailors embarked on a 10-day mission throughout northern Marjah July 5, to provide medical care to the Afghan people.

With the medical engagement consisting of female medical personnel, this was the first time most of the visiting Afghan women received medical care.

The team, including a Marine female engagement team from Regimental Combat Team 7 and medical personnel from Combat Logistics Battalion 5, set up medical tents for approximately two days each at four Marjah locations.

The medical officer and corpsman treated 97 patients, primarily women and children.

Site 1: Initial disappointment

Upon arriving at Combat Outpost Coutou late July 5, the Marines and sailors crashed in their tent on field cots to relax and get some much needed sleep before their first medical engagement.

The next day, after struggling to set up two tents and preparing their medical equipment, the Marines waited seven hours for patients to arrive. To their disappointment, no one came out and they decided to head back to the COP.

The next morning, the Marines headed back out to the tents anticipating Afghans seeking medical aid.

"If we only see one person, this will be a success," said Navy Lt. Jisun Hahn, a CLB-5 medical officer.

The day proved to be successful, with 13 people coming to receive medical attention. After breaking down both tents and medical equipment, the Marines headed back to the COP for rest before their departure the next morning.

Site 2: Just a couple more

The Marines jumped on an early-morning convoy headed to COP Reilly, July 7. Having arrived late in the afternoon, they relaxed and got some sleep before setting up their next site.

The Marines awoke around 6 a.m., got ready and headed out to the new site to, once again, set up their medical tents.

This site saw five Afghans the first day, including a small child whose body was covered in a horrible rash. Although it resembled chicken pox, her feet were peeling so badly, she couldn't walk.

"I felt sorry because she looked so miserable," said Lance Cpl. Yvienne C. Yumol, a FET member with 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.

The Marines treated six more Afghans before packing up the tents and jumping on an outgoing convoy to Patrol Base Siapan.

Site 3: From obstacles to great progress

Upon arrival at PB Siapan, July 11, the Marines threw their packs under a Hesco shelter and went straight to the next site.

As the Marines began to set up the medical tents, a massive sandstorm hit their area, pelting them with debris. Pushing through the sandstorm and effectively putting up one of tents, which was difficult enough without the wind and sand, the Marines sat on each leg of the tent to hold it down until stakes and sandbags were brought to take their places.

The Marines headed back into the PB, knowing the villagers were not going to visit the site during the sandstorm.

The next two days proved very successful for the team, as they saw about 70 patients come through the medical tent. The Marines split up into separate groups with some searching the local Afghans before entering the site, others playing with the children and speaking, with what little Pashtu they had learned during training, to the Afghans waiting to be seen by the medical staff.

"We've made some great relations with families and it can only get better from here," said Yumol, from Los Angeles.

Yumol and the other FET Marines handed out toys and snacks to the children while their mothers received medical treatment. Some of the children ran around giggling, while wearing the Marines' Kevlar helmets.

"They were very happy to come see us because there are no female doctors around," said Hahn. "I believe we helped the females become more familiar and grateful of us being around."

Site 4: Further progress, improved relations

The last stop on the medical engagement tour was at COP Sistani, where the Marines of Lima Company, 3rd Bn., 7th Marine Regt., called home. The Marines were happy to find a building they could use instead of the tents in which they were working.

The Marines were able to see 10 patients in the two days they spent at the site. They saw mostly Afghan men and children with aches and pains from farming. One woman suffered from a horrible tumor and had to be pushed to the site in a wheel barrow.

Hahn, from Enid, Okla., felt that her team provided great medical care to locals who were in eminent need of medical aid.

"We definitely made a positive effect," said Hahn. "I'm not sure how much though, as we were only at each location two days." 🙏



A young Afghan child receives medical treatment during a village medical engagement, just outside Patrol Base Siapan, Marjah, Helmand province July 10.

LIFE IN THE PECH RIVER VALLEY

ENGAGING THE POPULATION AND THE ENEMY

Story by Army Capt. Jonathan J. Springer,
1 Bn., 327th Inf. Regt.

Many Soldiers within the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment – over 800 strong and a part of the “Bastogne” Brigade, the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, from Fort Campbell, Ky. – are finding out that this part of Afghanistan is different than others and much more convoluted than Iraq ever was.

The 1-327th, or Task Force Bulldog as they are known, operates in a very complex environment. The Pech River Valley, the Bulldogs current area of operations, is a very rural area in the remote Kunar province of northeastern Afghanistan, where the insurgent base remains strong despite the efforts of the Afghan National Security Forces and Coalition Forces.

The “Pech” is comprised of about 100,000 people spread across three districts: Chapa Dara, Manogai and Wata Poor.

Daily life for the locals revolves around farming, raising livestock and fighting to stay alive.

“Our daily focus is on combat operations that aim to increase an ever-elusive ‘security’ for the population that farms and lives in this rural area. This means, in basic terms, that we fight – everyday,” said Army Lt. Col. Joseph A. Ryan, commander of 1st Bn., 327th Inf. Regt.

Ryan, who has seen this part of Afghanistan many times before, mainly with the 75th Ranger Regiment, seems to have a keen understanding of how the Pech River Valley works.

“It’s my unscientific estimate that a good 90-95 percent of the population in the Pech River Valley is ‘indifferent’ at best to their government’s efforts and the coalition’s efforts to secure peace in the valley,” said Ryan. “Now, this is not entirely unexpected, nor is it a bad thing. These are the survivalists; people who’ve grown up in a war-torn country for their entire lives.



They know nothing but war.”

“The remaining 5-10 percent of the population falls into one of three categories. One group plays both sides; I call them the ‘entrepreneurs.’ They are willing to take what they deem is acceptable risk to make money or gain influence by engaging the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the coalition on one hand, and the enemy on the other. As you might imagine, this can be a lucrative or a dangerous undertaking.”

Another group, Ryan said, is very similar to the first, but different in the fact that it has chosen a side to support. Some will aid Coalition Forces by passing intelligence to Soldiers, or by actively supporting GIROA’s efforts to gain a foothold in the area, while others will support the enemy and their efforts. He said the trick is finding out who is who.

“The final group, in my opinion, is comprised of those hard-line insurgents who believe in their jihad and see the implementation of a democratic GIROA with support from the United States as a fate worse than death. These are the same people who provided sanctuary to al-Qaeda and those who facilitated the World Trade Center attacks in 2001,” said Ryan.

For TF Bulldog, the majority of each day is spent engaging with the population, spending time actively learning about the local villagers’ concerns with security in the Pech River Valley. Another focus area during engagement with the population is development, and trying to determine priorities for various projects that will help stimulate the local economy.

Throughout the months of June and early on into July, the Soldiers of TF Bulldog have focused a vast majority of their time and effort on an operation aimed at improving the lives of farmers by providing an alternative means of growing crops in the valley.

This operation, dubbed “Operation Crop Diversification,” is one

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that has been met with wary but open arms by many in the Pech. The concept is a simple one: give local farmers the opportunity to grow a variety of crops other than corn, through the help of GIROA, in order to develop an agri-business in the province and, as a side but important benefit, limiting attacks on civilians, ANSF and Coalition Forces.

“We already know that (insurgent) forces use corn fields to cover and conceal their movement to ambush sites used against US and ANSF forces,” said Army Capt. Jonathan Peterson, commander for Charlie Company, 1st Bn., 327th Inf. Regt. “Unfortunately, when one of these ambushes takes place, it puts innocent people’s lives in danger, and we are trying to stop that with this operation.”

Operation Crop Diversification’s primary focus is giving farmers the opportunity to grow various crops, which can lead to economic development in the area, something that the Pech River Valley and many parts of the country, can benefit from.

“Growing different crops can have a stimulating effect on the economy,” added Peterson. “Villages are volunteering to be a part of the program because they understand it is a good thing for the Pech River Valley, but some villagers remain hesitant to participate because growing and harvesting corn is a major staple of their way of life here.”

As with all things in a Counter-

insurgency, there is risk involved. However, the operation will remain a top priority for the battalion and GIROA for many months, and it will continue past harvest season and into the winter.

Peterson is confident that this GIROA-led operation will be a success, and remains hopeful that it will continue to future growing seasons.

THROUGH THE SADNESS

Though the battalion has seen much success with Operation Crop Diversification and other efforts within the Pech, the Bulldogs have also experienced sadness and setbacks.

During a routine patrol that was escorting Ryan to a meeting in nearby Asadabad, insurgents attacked his personal security detachment in the morning hours of June 25.

Rocket propelled grenades and small arms fire were shot at the Soldiers, with some striking their vehicles and also targeting the Soldiers on patrol.

The Bulldogs fought back by engaging the enemy with their organic weapon systems, but after suppressing the enemy and the smoke had cleared, two Soldiers were killed, and four others were wounded in the attack.

“Sadly, we lost two Soldiers killed in action, Specialist Blair Thompson and Specialist Jared Plunk, on that day. It is my personal charter to honor their memory by ensuring we accomplish our mission,” noted Ryan.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Only one road runs through the Pech River Valley, leaders within 1st Bn. recognize the significance of this road, known in the task force as Route Rhode Island, and understand the impact it has on the locals’ way of life in the Pech.

“The terrain is very mountainous and forbidding here; valleys are narrow and there is but one road leading into or out of the east-west running Pech River Valley from Asadabad, the provincial capital city of Kunar,” said Ryan.

“We are on that road every day, because it is ‘peace’ on the road, and, in military parlance, ‘freedom of movement’ along that road shows the people that their government can protect them. The enemy knows that they can find us on that same road, so we are always ready.”

The battalion is deployed at a crucial time in the war in Afghanistan, a time where a battle of wills, along with the hearts and minds of the people are at stake. There is a reason why the battalion’s motto is, “Above the Rest!” Soldiers within the unit take that motto to heart day in and day out.

“After over 40 days, I couldn’t be more proud of these Soldiers. They are truly heroes and perform their work with a calm, professional demeanor,” said Ryan. “They aim only to help build Afghanistan into an environment where its people can live a life that barely, if at all, just begins to approach so many of those things we take for granted in the United States.”

The Work After Taliban Retreat

Story by Army 1st Lt. Robert C. J. Parry, 40th Infantry Division Agribusiness Development Team

A specialized team of Soldiers from the California Army National Guard's 40th Infantry Division Agribusiness Development Team joined with the Afghan Border Police and Task Force No Slack to bring relief supplies to the people of Daridam Village in Marawara district, Kunar province.

The supplies arrived after a violent battle between the Taliban and a combined team of Afghan National Army forces and 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment Soldiers. The battle resulted in a large force of insurgents defeated and fleeing the village, leaving the residents shaken and in need of assistance.

Following a shura with the Marawara District sub-governor and Pacha and Daridam village elders, ADT Soldiers accompanied by ABP officers went to the village and began efforts to reinforce the local economy, which is almost entirely agriculture based.

The 40th Inf. Div. ADT first sergeant, Army 1st Sgt. John A. Hanson of Salinas, Calif., led a team to conduct a field-expedient repair to a pipe, which is the residents' only source of water. Meanwhile, Army Sgt. Scott Flynn, of Redwood City, Calif., and Army Sgt. Jason Stevens, of Lynchburg, Va., led a group of ABP officers and U.S. Soldiers on a patrol inside the village to assess the health of the local livestock population and talk to residents about their needs and concerns.

Flynn and Stevens found that the livestock suffered from malnutrition and parasites, both of which are common throughout the province. They also assessed a local watershed area, which is subject to periodic flooding causing damage to the crops, and began developing an initial plan to control the problem.

"The people of Daridam have obviously been through a lot after having their village occupied by the Tal-

"The people of Daridam have obviously been through a lot after having their village occupied by the Taliban ... They are mainly concerned about putting their lives back together and getting to planting."

-Army Sgt. Scott Flynn, 40th Inf. Div. ADT

iban," said Flynn, an ADT agronomist who works with the U.S. Forest Service in northern California. "We were able to talk to a few villagers during our patrol, and they are mainly concerned about putting their lives back together and getting to planting. Our work will help them do that," he said.

Before the ADT departed, the ABP officers and Soldiers delivered agriculture supplies to the villagers to ensure they can maximize the productivity of their fields and livestock as they recover from the battle.

Among the supplies were high-quality animal feed, anti-parasitic medication, nutritional supplements, high-quality seed, and tools such as pick-axes and shovels so the villagers can replant fields damaged in the fighting.

"Daridam is one of the better areas of Kunar province in terms of its agriculture

capabilities," said Stevens, who works in his civilian life as a horticulturist with Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate in Virginia. "The supplies we delivered will help them recover more quickly, and strengthen their village to resist the Taliban's influence."

In addition to the supplies delivered, the ADT has coordinated with contractors for additional repairs to irrigation systems.

The Afghan Veterinarians' Association will also go to Daridam to vaccinate livestock as well as implement a program, which will set the villagers up in a self-sufficient poultry business, giving them additional strength to resist the Taliban on their own. ☺



Kevin Kock, U.S. Department of Agriculture representative for the Kunar PRT, assesses a broken water pipe that was damaged during a coalition offensive against Taliban and al-Qaeda forces who were staged in the Marawara district July 1. Just days after the strike on the insurgent forces, Afghan and U.S. forces worked to stabilize the area in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province.

Photo by Senior Airman Nathan Lipscomb, Kunar PRT PAO

Sun Sets on Insurgent Blockade

Combined Forces End Enemy Grip on Village

Story by Army Pfc. Chris McKenna, 3rd Brigade Combat Team PAO

A blockade on a local bazaar that threatened to starve Waza Khawa residents into supporting the insurgency recently ended thanks to Soldiers from Company C, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment and Afghan Uniformed Police in the area.

The blockade began in early June, with insurgents using a combination of improvised explosive devices, indirect fire and small arms in an effort to keep food shipments and coalition forces away from the area, said 3-187 spokesman Army 1st Lt. R.J. Peek, from Fort Campbell, Ky.

In response, coalition forces began construction of a checkpoint June 9.

During the construction process, U.S. Soldiers, AUP and members of the Afghan National Army provided security. The checkpoint was completed June 28.

Over the first two weeks, security forces engaged in several firefights with the insurgents attempting to attack and destroy the checkpoint with rockets, mortars, IEDs, rocket propelled grenades and AK-47s, said Army Capt. Scott Harris, C Co., 3-187, executive officer, from Fayetteville, N.C.

Each attack by the insurgents had the same result with combined forces maneuvering on the attackers and forcing them to flee, Harris said.

“The Marjaneh AUP checkpoint has provided a significant degree of security to the area and will allow Sub-Governor Ramazan to better help the people of the area.”

-Army Capt. Scott Harris, C Co., 3-187, executive officer

With the addition of Afghan security forces, the insurgents’ efforts to blockade the bazaar were thwarted. Convoys now roll into Waza Khawa unscathed and the shop owners are able to restock their shelves and resume business, said Peek.

The events culminated with Waza Khawa Sub-Governor Mohamed Ramazan holding a shura in Marjaneh, June 28, to discuss the opening of the checkpoint and the overall security situation in the district.

As ANA and AUP provided security, Ramazan gathered the people of the bazaar to discuss the future of Marjaneh stressing the importance of education and supporting the government.

“The security shura demonstrated the ability of ANSF to secure a government venue for the sub-governor to address the people,” said Harris. “The Marjaneh AUP checkpoint has provided a significant degree of security to the area and will allow Sub-Governor Ramazan to better help the people of the area.”



ANSF and ISAF members gather together at the new location of the Marjaneh Afghan Uniformed Police checkpoint. The checkpoint was constructed in response to an insurgent blockade on a local bazaar that threatened to starve Waza Khawa residents into supporting the insurgency. During the construction process, Soldiers from C Co., 3rd Bn., 187th Inf. Regt., AUP officers and ANA Soldiers provided security.

ADT Teaches Farming in Panjshir

Story and photo Air Force 2nd Lt. Jason Smith, Panjshir PRT PAO

Two Guardsman from Kentucky and their U.S. Department of Agriculture counterpart are trying to make Afghanistan a better place by teaching farming.

Army Lt. Col. Jeffrey Casada, Kentucky National Guard Agribusiness Development Team leader with Provincial Reconstruction Team Panjshir, Army Staff Sgt. Joshua Hancock, Kentucky ADT, and Jim Hoffman, U.S. Department of Agriculture advisor to PRT Panjshir, oversee the Astana Demonstration Farm in Panjshir province.

The farm, initially established in 2008, is used as a teaching center for American experts in agriculture to share their knowledge of farming with Afghans. In addition, the farm allows the workers to experiment without incurring any personal cost.

“Right now we have nine workers and a manager,” said Casada, a London, Ky., resident. “We pay the workers \$6 per day and the manager makes \$10 per day. We come out at least weekly to make sure the workers are doing a good job. We also handle any problems with pay, irrigation or other issues.”

The three-man team had multiple tasks on their July 8 mission to the farm. Among them were showing the workers how to use newly-purchased hoes, evaluating some of the crops and counting the total number of grape plants.

“We need to figure out how many grape plants there are because Roots of Peace, a non-profit organization that works to remove landmines and build crops in developing countries, will teach the workers how to set up grape trellis systems,” said Hancock. “We’ll purchase the posts and wire, Roots of Peace will set up one row to demonstrate how it’s done. Then, Roots of Peace will observe while the workers finish the rest of the grape vines.”

Although funded through the ADT Commander’s Emergency Response Program, the farm is scheduled to be handed over to either the Panjshir Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock or the Afghanistan Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock in February 2011 to become part of the nation’s research farm. Even after the handover, Hoffman said he expects to have a partnership at the farm.

“There are still things we’re working on here,” said Hoffman. “We’re experimenting

with forage for livestock. We’re looking for animal feed that can be stored and fed to animals during the winter.”

Hoffman said that better feed in the winter will make for better lactation for cows and bigger, stronger calves in the long run.

Currently, the farm grows grapes, apricots, cherries, almonds, walnuts, hybrid poplars and other plants. The fruits of their yield aren’t significant at the moment, but Shafe Makli, farm manager, said he has big plans for the future.

“If it’s a lot of fruit, we’ll eat some and send most of it to the bazaar to sell,” said Makli. “Then bring the money back from the bazaar and put it back into the farm.”

Makli was a farmer prior to taking the job as the manager here. He said he has learned things at the farm that will help him be an independent farmer in the future.

“There are some new techniques I tell people about,” said Makli. “For example, planting trees in one line 2-3 meters apart instead of other methods.”

The soil conditions are far from perfect and some of the techniques are primitive. However, Casada calls the demonstration farm a successful venture between Coalition Forces and their Afghan partners in Panjshir.



An Afghan worker waters grape plants at the Astana Demonstration Farm in Panjshir province. The farm, initially established in 2008, is a way for the American experts in agriculture at Panjshir PRT to share their knowledge of farming with Afghans.

World Class Trauma Care

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Brent C. Powell, 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division PAO



Army Lt. Col. (Dr.) Paul Phillips, an orthopedic surgeon assigned to the 344th CSH at FOB Salerno, performs surgery on a 14-year-old local Afghan boy who sustained a gunshot wound to his arm. Phillips is one of four surgeons at the Salerno Hospital.

“Attention on the FOB. Attention on the FOB ...” These seemingly harmless words blare from an array of loud speakers and echo across Forward Operating Base Salerno, and are usually followed by code words that describe the number of patients inbound on a medical evacuation flight.

Most people continue about their daily business unaffected, but for the medical staff of the Salerno Hospital the code words mean two things: mass casualties are coming in, and it’s about to get very busy.

In the past 38 days as of July 13, the hospital staff has responded to 39 trauma events and admitted 47 patients. They took nearly 600 x-

rays, performed 57 surgeries, conducted 259 CT scans, and treated 56 battle-related injuries.

“This is a trauma hospital,” said Army Lt. Col. (Dr.) Gregory A. Kolb, commanding officer, 344th Combat Support Hospital. “It’s not a typical hospital like we have in the U.S. Most of our patients are trauma patients.”

Approximately 90 percent of those who arrive at Salerno Hospital do so by a medevac helicopter, and are coming to get treatment for injuries sustained in battle. “Most of the injuries we see here are from improvised explosive devices, shrapnel and gunshot wounds,” said Kolb, a native of Atlanta.

Once patients arrive, the hospital is equipped to provide the best care available. The facility has its own labs, CT scan equipment, radiology section, operating room, pharmacy and more.

“This hospital is completely on par with hospitals in the U.S.,” said Army Lt. Col. Paul J. Schenarts, a trauma surgeon and deputy commander of clinical services for the 344th CSH. “We don’t lack anything. We are able to get diagnostic results back very quickly here, usually within a matter of minutes. That doesn’t happen in the states.”

In addition, the hospital also has some of the most highly-trained staff available.

“Our staff here is very professional and very compassionate,” said Kolb. “But, in a trauma hospital it all boils down to the quality of the surgeons, and, without a doubt, I have the best surgeons out there.”

One of those surgeons is Schenarts, a reservist, who brings a wealth of knowledge and medical expertise with him. He is a professor of surgery and critical care, as well as the assistant dean for clinical academic affairs at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C.

“To work here, you need your funny bone, your back bone and your brain bone,” he said. “I feel like it’s not only my duty, but an honor for me to be able to do this. Being able to provide critical care to Soldiers is really wonderful.”

Although their main focus is saving Soldiers’ lives, the hospital also treats contractors, coalition forces, detainees, Afghan National Security Force members and local nationals on a case-by-case basis.

Recently, they treated several civilians who had been the target of an insurgent ambush and massacre that claimed 12 lives. One of the survivors was very happy to be treated by the hospital staff.

“I thank the ISAF forces so much,” said Gula Gha, a 28-year-old Pakistan native from Parachinar district, Pakistan. “If it was not for their help, I would have died. I had lost a lot of blood, but the American doctors saved my life. I will never forget them.”

With the combination of the latest technology and highly-skilled medical staff, Soldiers can rest assured they will receive the best care available if they find themselves at the CSH.

“This is a great hospital with a great staff,” said Schenarts. “We provide excellent, quality care, and we treat the best patients in the world ... the Soldiers.”

Army Sgt. Jeffrey Harvin, a surgical technician assigned to the 344th CSH at FOB Salerno, places surgical instruments into a tray during a trauma surgery at the Salerno Hospital.



Districts Take the Reins of VETCAPs

Story by Army 1st Lt. Robert C. J. Parry, 40th Inf. Div. ADT

In a significant sign of progress, officials from Khas Kunar district, Kunar province executed a Veterinary Civil Assistance Program with minimal assistance from coalition forces.

The June 13 event, which occurred in the village of Haquimabad in the northern part of the district, was a giant step forward in terms of the district providing services to its residents.

According to Army Maj. Mike Leeney, executive officer of the 40th Infantry Division Agribusiness Development Team, previous VETCAPs have been planned and executed throughout Kunar province by the ADT, with various officials of the local district governments in attendance in a learning capacity. In the first five months of the year, the ADT executed approximately 15 programs, often treating more than 1,000 head of livestock in a given day. Their record was 3,000 in the Khas Kunar district last March, a day which saw the

ADT request its own quick reaction force to deliver additional medications and supplies as they faced an onslaught of animals and farmers.

However, according to Leeney, a resident of Calabassas, Calif.,

the ADT's focus all along was really on training the local government to do the job themselves.

"The number of animals we treated was irrelevant," said Leeney. "The only important thing was our effect in improving the local government's ability to provide services to the people. Often, we'd get so focused on providing the service that we had to remind ourselves what the real task was and its desired effect – a better government for the people of Kunar province."

Realizing the need to shift the operations squarely onto the local government, 40th Inf. Div. ADT Commander, Army Col. Eric Grimm, of La Habra Heights, Calif., decided the unit would no longer execute VETCAPs and would only serve as a mentoring and re-sourcing force for the local governments. The first district to be the focus of the new model was to be Khas Kunar, the same district that saw the overwhelming 3,000-animal day.

In order to ensure success, the ADT and leaders from Cougar Company, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, Task Force No Slack, met several weeks in advance with Dr. Gulab Rang, the Khas Kunar district Agriculture Extension Manager and the district veterinarian.

In a change from previous practice, which had used a dedicated team from the Afghan Veterinarians' As-

"The number of animals we treated was irrelevant. The only important thing was our effect in improving the local government's ability to provide services to the people."

-Army Maj. Mike Leeney, 40th Inf. Div. ADT executive officer

sociation, the Khas Kunar officials hired local vets for the project, using AVA personnel only for additional help. This ensured that the local vets didn't lose any income to outsiders, and that the event truly was a local delivery of services.

On the morning of June 13, Soldiers from Cougar Co. worked with Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police personnel to establish security in Haquimabad, while the district officials, joined by their provincial counterparts, organized and set up the site. ADT soldiers arrived an hour later to deliver the required medicines and ensure the setup was effective. They quickly discovered their presence was largely unnecessary.

"The district government had really done a great job," said Sgt. 1st Class Elias Medina, the ADT's Agribusiness platoon sergeant. "We had to make only minor adjustments, primarily because the area they'd cordoned off was too large, which is a mistake we've made more than once."

According to Medina, a resident of Baldwin Park, Calif., who works as a production supervisor for Inland Empire Foods in Riverside, Calif., it quickly became clear that the Afghans had the situation well under control.

"As soon as they started letting animals in, we were standing around with nothing to do," said Medina. "They were capable and prepared and executing well, so we left within an hour. And that was exactly what we'd hoped to see."

The Khas Kunar vets gave inoculations against eight different diseases as well as treatments for parasites that are a common affliction throughout the province.

"We have never received this kind of service from our government," said Ahmad Zia, son of the Haquimabad village elder. "We are very pleased with the district government."

By the end of the day, some 1,600 head of livestock

had received inoculations and medical evaluations. In all aspects of the operation, the Afghan government leaned forward to execute, said the ADT soldiers.

"Just after we arrived, we set up a tactical check point to check cars that were coming near the VETCAP site," said Army Sgt. Jeffrey Johanson, a dismount team leader for the ADT Security Platoon from Redding, Calif. "A team of ANA soldiers came over and motioned for us to leave, 'we got this' they said. It was clear they were taking pride in doing the job themselves, and doing it right." ☺



A young Afghan girl leaves with her goat after receiving vaccinations for her animal during a Veterinary Civil Assistance Project held by the Kunar Provincial Government in the Khas Kunar district, Kunar province June 13.

Photo by Senior Airman Nathan Lipscomb, Kunar PRT



A young Afghan boy waits to have his mule vaccinated during the first Veterinary Civil Assistance Project ran by the Kunar Provincial Government, held in the Khas Kunar district June 13.

Photo by Senior Airman Nathan Lipscomb, Kunar PRT

UNIT SPOTLIGHT

255TH MEDICAL DETACHMENT

Mission:

The 255th is a Level III Preventive Medicine asset based out of Bagram Airfield responsible for all preventive medicine issues in Regional Command-East. The unit performs base camp assessments for over 24 forward operating bases and combat outposts in RC-East. Areas of emphasis include air, soil and water sampling/testing, vector control, health and sanitary inspections, and field sanitation team training.

History:

The 255th Medical Detachment, constituted on Feb. 25, 1944, at Camp Grant, Ill., has served in a variety of locations, some in combat and some in a humanitarian role. During World War II, the 255th participated in the Northern France, Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns. In February 1951, it was redesignated as the 255th Medical Gas Detachment and served in the Panama Canal Zone to help out with malaria control. After moving to Germany in 1962, the unit participated in numerous operations in locations to include Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, the United Kingdom, Norway, Slovakia, Moldova, Guinea and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom I and III). In July 2008, the 255th rebased to Fort Lewis, Wa., and subsequently deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom X in July 2009.

Why We are the Best:

Preventive medicine units are unlike most Army units, as they are led by either an entomologist or an environmental science officer. The unit is allotted 10 preventive medicine Soldiers and a mechanic in addition to the two officers, but has had four PM Soldiers, two veterinary food technicians and a mechanic through the majority of its successful deployment in support of OEF 09-10. They started off with nine Soldiers, and are leaving with nine Soldiers. They won the Craig Joint Theater Hospital March Madness Pushup Challenge in March with 50,269 pushups completed in the month and also won the per capita award with 5,027 pushups per Soldier, based on the 10 assigned Soldiers.



(Background) Band-e-Amir Lakes National Park, Bamyan province

Korean Soldiers Take Flight

Story and photo Army Sgt. Monica K. Smith,
3rd CAB, TF Falcon PAO



A soldier with TF Taegeuk, the Republic of Korea Army aviation unit working with the 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, looks on as a ROK Army Black Hawk prepares to take off from Bagram Airfield July 8. TF Taegeuk's deployment to Afghanistan marks the first time Korean aviators will fly their own aircraft outside of their country.

Soldiers from the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, had the opportunity to join their Republic of Korea counterparts in the ROK Army's first aviation mission in Afghanistan July 8, out of Bagram Airfield.

Task Force Taegeuk, the ROK Army's aviation unit, preceded their history-making mission with a ceremony on the Bagram Airfield flight line.

"I am proud of all of our [provincial reconstruction team] soldiers and for our friends for taking the time to be here with us," said ROK Army Lt. Col. Myong Ho Choi, commander of TF Taegeuk, from Seoul, South Korea. "I'm glad to start and I am sure we will be able to proceed and complete our missions successfully."

Korean aviation began 40 years ago and though their soldiers served in Vietnam, they did not use their own aircraft. Their deployment to Afghanistan marks the first time Korean aviators will fly their own aircraft outside of their country.

"It makes me really proud to be a member of TF Taegeuk," said ROK Army Cpl. Yong Gee Hong, an air traffic controller for TF Taegeuk, from Seoul, South Korea. "I'm part of making history in Korea."

The first mission for TF Taegeuk was a land orientation flight and included their two UH-60 Black Hawks led by a U.S. Black Hawk from Company A, TF Knighthawk, 3rd CAB, TF Falcon. TF Taegeuk will be deployed for six months and will support the 3rd CAB, TF Falcon, from their base in Bagram Airfield. 🇰🇷

Look Out Below!

ANA and U.S. Soldiers Combine for Resupply Air Drop

Story and photos by Spc. Jay Venturini,
304th PAD

Resupplying U.S. and Afghan National Army units spread out across Afghanistan, many at remote forward operating bases and forward outposts, with basic necessities can be a daunting task.

Many of the roads to the remote locations are unpaved and potentially filled with improvised explosive devices; some locations use a safer and usually quicker solution: air drop.

Soldiers of the 82nd Special Troops Battalion, headquartered at Fort Bragg, N.C., and the ANA 201st Flood Corps combined for the first joint air drop at FOB Gamberi in Nangarhar province July 10.

"We wanted to show the ANA something they haven't done before and the process and coordination of conducting an air drop," said Army Sgt. Michael Gaffney,

82nd STB intelligence noncommissioned officer in charge and Sherman, Ill., native.

Soldiers from the 11th Quartermaster Company, from Fort Bragg, N.C., packed the supplies and equipped them with parachutes.

Coordination between the 82nd STB at FOB Gamberi and the parachute riggers of the 11th QM Co. started weeks before the actual drop occurred. Flight operations at Bagram Airfield scheduled the drop.

"It's good to be involved in this," said Spc. James Munns, 11th QM Co. air drop specialist and Little Rock, Ark., native. "When people need things to get in fast, that's what we are for. Plus, it doubles as training for the ANA, so they will be able to see how to set up a drop zone and how to recover the drop."

"Understanding how an air drop operates is very important to the ANA here at Gamberi because this is the future site of the 201st headquarters. The hope is they will soon be able to conduct the missions without any assistance from us."

-Army Maj. Gary Brock, 82nd STB executive officer

The ANA and U.S. Soldiers watched from the gate of FOB Gamberi as the back of the U.S. Air Force C-130 opened up and parachutes deployed as the pallets of supplies made their way to the ground.

From there the ANA raced out with a forklift and flatbed trucks ready to retrieve the resupply from above.

"The ANA did really well recovering the air drop," said Army Cpl. Douglas Roberts, a platoon NCO with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 82nd Main Support Battalion and a Richmond, Va., native. "After helping them recover a couple parachutes and pallets, we let them take over and they were very fast and efficient. They did a great job."

"This was great training and we got a lot of experience by working with our U.S. Army counterparts,"

said ANA Sgt. Shaiullah Shahir, a logistics NCO for the 201st Flood Corps.

The air drop consisted of wood to build new buildings, barriers for base security, water and Halal meals, the ANA's version of Meals Ready to Eat.

The building supplies will be put to good use as FOB Gamberi is expanding and is going to be the future home of the 201st Flood Corps headquarters and the regional military training center for Regional Command East, said Army Maj. Gary Brock, executive officer for the 82nd STB and an Athens, Ala., native.

"Understanding how an air drop operates is very important to the ANA here at Gamberi because this is the future site of the 201st headquarters," Brock continued. "The hope is they will soon be able to conduct the missions without any assistance from us." ☺



U.S. and Afghan National Army Soldiers work together to fold a parachute that was used during a resupply air drop mission at Forward Operating Base Gamberi July 10. The air drop consisted of wood to build new buildings, barriers for base security, water and Halal meals, the ANA's version of Meals Ready to Eat. The building supplies will be put to good use as FOB Gamberi is expanding and is going to be the future home of the 201st Flood Corps headquarters and the regional military training center for Regional Command East.



(Top left) Army Cpl. Douglas Roberts, a platoon noncommissioned officer with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 82nd Main Support Battalion explains the process of recovering an air drop to Afghan National Army soldiers from the 201st Flood Corps before conducting a resupply air drop mission at Forward Operating Base Gamberi July 10. (Top right) Afghan National Army soldiers from the 201st Flood Corps work together to attach a resupply pallet to a forklift during a resupply air drop mission at Forward Operating Base Gamberi July 10. (Bottom) Afghan National Army soldiers from the 201st Flood Corps roll outside the gate of Forward Operating Base Gamberi to recover resupply pallets during a resupply air drop mission July 10.

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Bastille Day in Afghanistan

Story by Army Sgt. Scott Davis, CJTF-101 PAO

The French celebrated their independence on La Fête Nationale or Bastille Day July 14. While Paris was enjoying traditional festivities from the military parade on Champs Elysées to Firemens' Galas, the French forces in Afghanistan were celebrating within the constraints of their mission.

In French forward operating bases across Regional Command-East, small ceremonies were held in the morning to celebrate. This day was also chosen by the outgoing French Foreign Legion Task Force Altor and the incoming infantry TF Bison for their transfer-of-authority ceremony held on FOB Tora in Kabul province.

"It is an honor for our TOA ceremony to fall on La Fête Nationale," said French Army Col. Eric Bellot des Minières, commander of TF Altor. "I can't help but think of the soldiers we have lost during our tour and the sacrifice they made to help make Afghanistan a better country."

French Army Brig. Gen. Pierre Chavancy, commander of TF Lafayette, headquarters for the French forces in RC-East, handed over authority from TF Altor to TF Bison during the ceremony.

"Task Force Altor has completed a difficult mission here and can go home with a sense of pride," Chavancy said. "Task Force Bison has a rough road ahead in continuing the mission in RC-East, but there is no other task force more prepared to take on the challenge."

The ceremony was broadcast throughout France in coordination with the military parade.

"This was the first time we've been able to link our troops in Afghanistan with all of France during La Fête Nationale," said French Army Lt. Col. Pierre-Yves Sarzaud, communication advisor for all French forces in Afghanistan. "The soldiers were proud to be seen in France and were well received by people attending the parade."

A French soldier with TF Lafayette, the French brigade in RC-East, stands during a transfer-of-authority ceremony July 14. TF Bison is in charge of the southern sector of TF Lafayette's area of responsibility, which includes the Surobi district, Kabul province, and Kapisa province.

The Combined Joint Task Force-101 Commander for RC-East, Army Maj. Gen. John Campbell also attended the TOA ceremony.

"I'm very honored to be here on this special day for the French people and I'm particularly proud to be celebrating with the French soldiers," Campbell said. "While I'm not French, I can certainly appreciate what Bastille Day means to the soldiers serving with us in Afghanistan. I'm very proud of the work the French have done in Kapisa and the Surobi district of Kabul province. The situation in the district has improved significantly over the past couple of years and it is in no doubt due in part to the sacrifices made by the French military who serve here."

This is a critical time for all International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan and this will be a very crucial six-month deployment for Task Force Bison, as ISAF partners have started putting deadlines on their support for Afghanistan. ☺



Photo by French Army Adjutant Arnaud Karaghezián, TF Lafayette

Goodwill Across Afghanistan:

ISAF and ANSF Reach Out



Army 1st Lt. Michael O'Neill from Narberth, Pa., a member of the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team, hands out toys to the children of the women teachers at the Gullabudin Girls' School in Shutol district, Panjshir province June 26. Previously the children of the women teachers spent the day in the classrooms with their mothers while they instructed class. This day care room is the first of its kind in this province.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Peter Ferrell, TF Wolverine PAO

Camp Phoenix Soldiers deliver 60 boxes of children's books to the Mehrabudin School for the creation of the school's first library. The Soldiers are volunteers with Operation Outreach Afghanistan, a Soldier-led volunteer organization designed to provide humanitarian aid to Afghans. The books were donated by the founders of Judith's Reading Room, Scott and Cathy Leiber of Lehigh Valley, Pa. More than 9,000 students at the Mehrabudin School will benefit from the donation of the books.

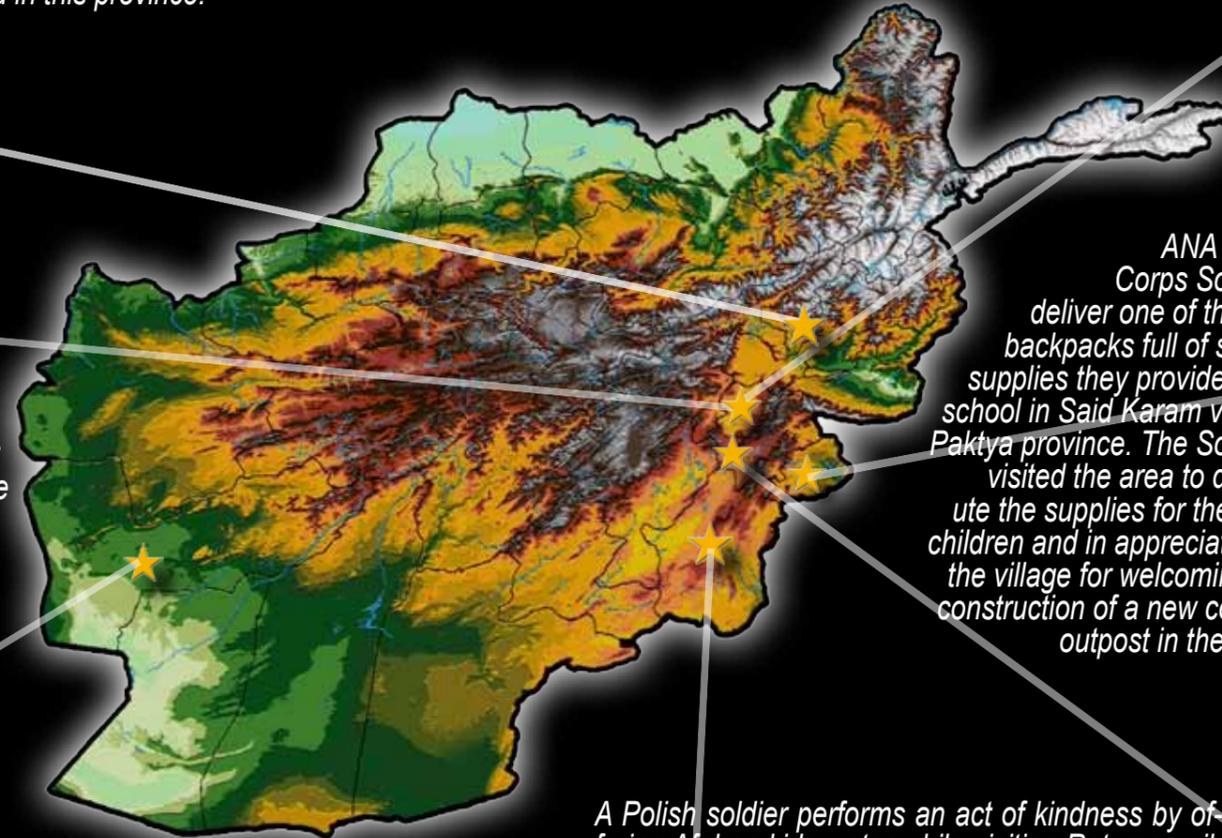


Photo by Army Capt. Chris Neeley, 1-178th FA Bn.



Spc. Magan Lindsey Girr of the 1-178th FA Bn., South Carolina Army National Guard, hands a stuffed bear to a young Afghan girl during a humanitarian assistance mission July 15 in Kabul province. Girr, a medic at Camp Phoenix, was there to assist in the distribution of aid to more than 450 people of the Naw Abad Village.

Photo by Army Capt. Chris Neeley, 1-178th FA Bn.



ANA 203rd Corps Soldiers deliver one of the 300 backpacks full of school supplies they provided to a school in Said Karam village, Paktya province. The Soldiers visited the area to distribute the supplies for the local children and in appreciation to the village for welcoming the construction of a new combat outpost in the area.



Photos by Army Capt. William Geddes, 304th PAD



Georgian Sgt. Zaza Chapodze, a fire support chief with Company B, 31st Georgian Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 2, hands a stuffed toy polar bear to a young Afghan boy from Bogholabad village in Bakwa district, Farah province July 6. The Georgian soldiers carried out their mission during Operation Desert Penguin in 110-degree heat, in order to bring smiles to Afghan school children.

Photo courtesy of Regimental Combat Team-2, 1st Marine Division Public Affairs

A Polish soldier performs an act of kindness by offering Afghan kids water while visiting Returnee village located in Ghazni province, June 26.



Photo by Tech Sgt. JT May III, Ghazni PRT PAO

An ANA doctor hands out ointment to the local Afghan children after he explained about maintaining personal hygiene during Operation Healthy Hands at a school in the village of Padkhab Shana near FOB Shank, Logar province July 17.



Photo by Army Sgt. Derec Pierson, JCC Afghanistan

Mining for the Future

Opening the Door for New Industries

Story by Air Force 2nd Lt. Jason Smith, Panjshir PRT PAO



Photo by Jim Hoffman, USAID advisor to Panjshir PRT

Afghan workers cut raw marble at the Panjshir Marble mine in Panjshir province. Some Afghan entrepreneurs are working with the USAID and PRT Panjshir to develop the industry.

There are hundreds of millions of dollars worth of marble in the Panjshir province, and some Afghan entrepreneurs are working with the U.S. Agency for International Development and Provincial Reconstruction Team Panjshir to develop the industry.

According to Curtis Rose, USAID field development officer with PRT Panjshir, marble is currently being mined in the Anaba, Rokha, Dara and Khenj Districts of the province, but the profits are a small fraction of their potential.

“There are some issues right now with being able to mine,” said Rose. “First, there are some problems with the land rights. Who owns the land? How can you lease the land? Also, you have to be a registered company. Finally, the Ministry of Mines, which only allows a three-year lease for a mine, charges high export taxes.”

Rose said the only way to meet the requirements of becoming a legitimate mine is to have outside invest-

ment. And outside investment requires complying with all standards - a difficult task for mine owners.

“The mining is primitive now,” said Rose. “The miners really need a new skill set, but every time someone gets trained, they go to another country for more money.”

“There are three entrepreneurs who run the Panjshir Marble mine, and they want to train and keep miners,” he said. “They understand mining techniques and mining safety, but they can’t get investment without a business plan and without complying with all standards.”

Rose said business plans are a new idea in the Panjshir province, and USAID is getting involved by bringing in experts who can teach international business methods.

Shiekh Ahmad, one of the entrepreneurs, said the Panjshir Marble Mine is pushing out about 30,000 meters of marble per year.

“This has the potential to create a lot of jobs here. If the people here are able to cut, design and polish the marble, there is opportunity for increased profits. The only industry in Panjshir right now is agriculture, and this could open a whole new industry.”

-Air Force Lt. Col. Curtis Velasquez, Panjshir PRT commander

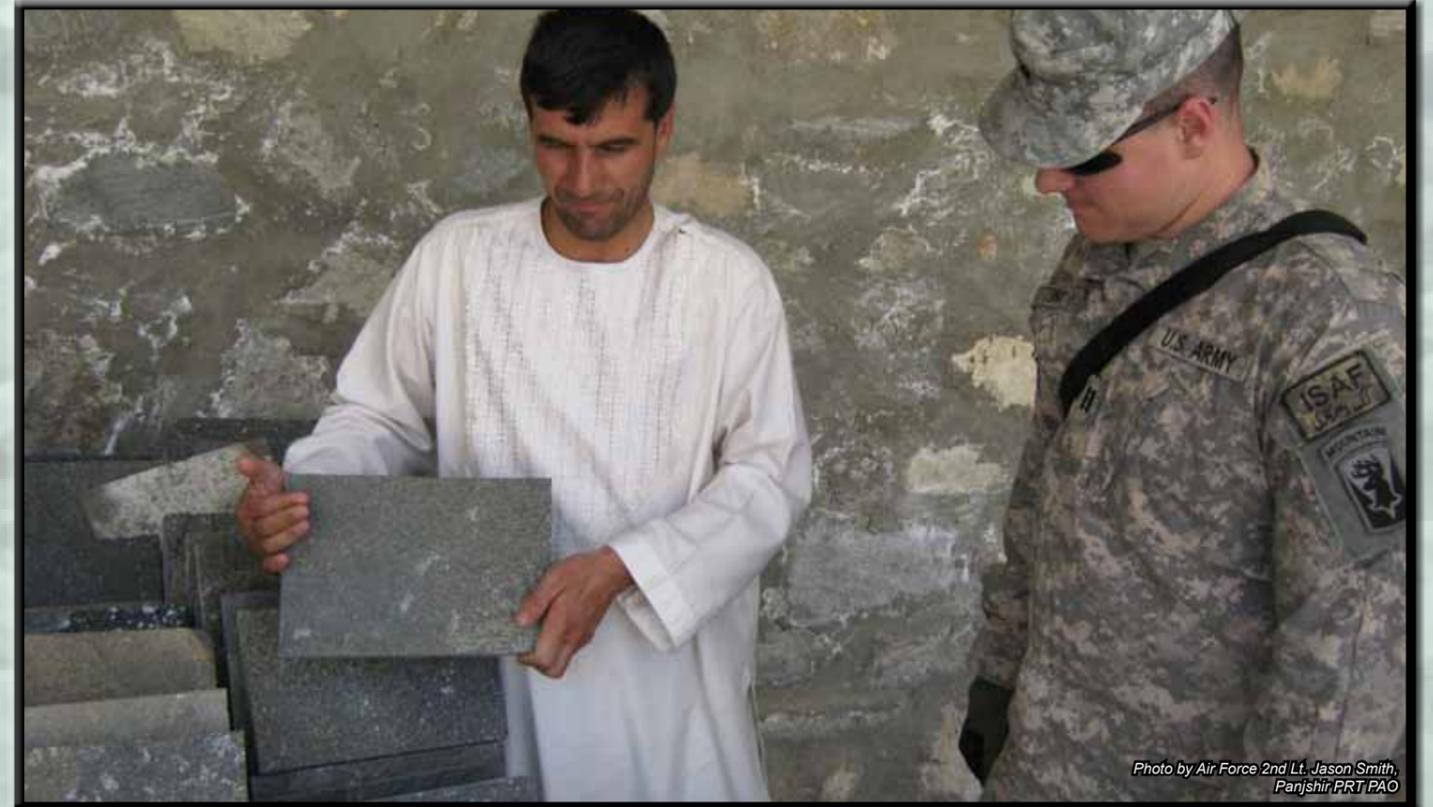


Photo by Air Force 2nd Lt. Jason Smith, Panjshir PRT PAO

Army Capt. Benjamin Fitting, Panjshir PRT executive officer and Burlington, Iowa, native listens to Shiekh Ahmad, Panjshir Marble mine manager, talk about some of the different types of marble the company cuts. There are 16 different colors of marble mined in Panjshir.

“We get 3,000 to 5,000 afghani per meter, depending on the type of marble,” said Ahmad. “We are the only mine company in Panjshir. We have more than 10 mines we operate.”

Currently, the miners cut the marble here by primitive means and take it to Kabul to sell, said Rose. They have contracts with businesses in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Italy, Russia, and the United States.

“This has the potential to create a lot of jobs here,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Curtis Velasquez, PRT Panjshir commander. “If the people here are able to cut, design and polish the marble, there is opportunity for increased profits. The only industry in Panjshir right now is agriculture, and this could open a whole new industry.”

The first step to opening the industry is transportation, said Rose. The main road through the valley, a USAID and PRT project, is the only way the mine owners can get their goods to Kabul.

“None of this would be possible without the road that USAID and the PRT have built and are continuing to build in the north,” said Rose. “The road was the first step to getting to all of the resources here. In addition to marble, there are gems, iron and granite that can be mined.”

As the mining business expands, USAID and the PRT want to make sure it’s done in the right ecological way, said Velasquez.

“It’s going to take education, safety and mindfulness,” said Velasquez. “The Panjshir River provides water to 14 million people. We need to teach proper mining with the watershed plan in the forefront to protect the water source.”

There are 16 different colors of marble mined in Panjshir. Ultimately, Rose said he would like to see the local mine owners have the people and equipment to properly mine and polish the marble. ☺

STORY

SNAPSHOTS

CJTF-101 CG Welcomes New ISAF Commander



Photo by Army Capt. John A. Gabriel, CJTF-101 Aide-de-Camp

Former 101st Airborne Division commander Gen. David H. Petraeus and current 101st commander Maj. Gen. John F. Campbell share a quick conversation at the reception following Petraeus' assumption of command ceremony at International Security Assistance Force headquarters in Kabul July 4. Petraeus was confirmed by Congress as the new commander of the ISAF Afghanistan mission. Both commanders share the common bond of leading the Fort Campbell, Ky., based 101st during major combat operations.

CJCS Answers the Tough Questions



Photo by Spc. Richard Daniels Jr., TF Bastogne PAO

The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, answers questions from Task Force Bastogne Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Fenty in Nangarhar province July 25. More than 200 Soldiers attended the question-and-answer town hall meeting.

Local Radio Station Gains Popularity

Abdulsalam Om-ary, "Voice of the Pech" broadcasting manager, reviews a press release with U.S. Army 1st Lt. Aaron Barker of Key West, Fla., from Task Force Bulldog's fires and effects coordination cell, before going on the air July 19. The "Voice of the Pech" at 101.1 FM is a popular radio station in Nangalam and is heard by thousands of locals in the Pech River Valley.



Photo by Army Capt. Jonathan J. Springer, 1st Bn., 327th Inf. Regt

ANA Soldiers Graduate Medic Course



Photos by Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th PAD



(left) Painda Mohammad, an Afghan National Army Soldier, is tested in bracing a broken leg on the final training day of an eight-week combat medic course at Forward Operating Base Thunder, Paktya province July 6. (above) An ANA Soldier displays his certificate during the graduation ceremony for the course, July 8. The iteration was the first in which Afghan trainers taught the course.

Patrols Help Keep Peace in Kunar



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte, 300th MPAD

Children from Kandigal village Kunar province follow U.S. Army Pfc. Richard J. Sandoval, radio operator for 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Bulldog, as the patrol moves toward the village of Kolack July 13. The unit, based at Combat Outpost Michigan, routinely patrols to help Afghan officials assess the vicinity and check for trouble.

Khost PRT Inspects School Construction



Photo by Senior Airman Julianne M. Showalter, Khost PRT PAO

Members of the Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team quality check the Hassan Khot boys and girls school rebar work on the roof, July 3. The school will support around 3,000 children from the Matun district.

Rakkasans Search for Enemy Cache

Sgt. 1st Class Amos Sward, Focus Tactical Force platoon sergeant, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, from Galesburg, Ill., shines a light as two U.S. Army Soldiers dig in search of a cache during an air assault operation in Bak, Khost province July 7. The mission resulted in the detention of four suspected insurgents, including one thought to be a key member of the Haqqani Network, said Sward.



Photo by Army Pfc. Chris McKenna, 3rd BCT PAO

Business Development in Panjshir



Ali Rezayi, the Panjshir Beverage Industry Ltd. quality control manager, shows Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Peter Johnson, 72nd Medical Detachment Veterinary Services, one of the chemical tests the plant runs on bottled water. Johnson spent July 11 pre-auditing the water bottling plant in the Khenj district of the Panjshir Valley.

Photo by Air Force 2nd Lt. Jason Smith, Panjshir PRT PAO

ANP Look For Baaaaad Men



Photo by Senior Airman Julianne M. Showalter, Khost PRT PAO

Afghan National Policemen and members of the 330th Military Police Company, Police Combined Action Team, search a goat herder's house for illegal weapons and evidence of insurgents being sheltered there July 19. The area within the Dwamanda district, Khost province, is believed to be a safe haven for insurgents.

Ghazni PRT Assesses Provincial Hospital

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Turner, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team medic and Kasia Piervn, Ghazni PRT medical doctor take notes as Dr. Mohammad Ismail, director of the Ghazni Provincial Hospital in Ghazni City, addresses concerns about the hospital June 26.



Photo by Air Force 1st Lt. Katherine Roling, Ghazni PRT PAO

ANP Recruits Learn Baton Defense



Photo by Chief Petty Officer Brian Brannon, NATO Training Mission Afghanistan

Future Afghan National Police officers practice baton defense at Recruit Training Center-Kandahar during a visit by Army Gen. David Petraeus, International Security Assistance Force commander and NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

MPs Train AUP in Basic Police Skills



Spc. Paolo Flores, from San Diego, Khost Provincial Headquarters squad medic, 330th Military Police Company, conducts combat casualty care and first aid training with Afghan Uniformed Policemen at the Khost Provincial Headquarters June 27. Soldiers from the 330th MP Co., 95th MP Battalion, Task Force Sheriff, led the two-day course, which taught law enforcement skills including basic weapons handling, safety, combat casualty care and first aid.

Photo by Army Pfc. Chris McKenna, 3rd ECT PAO

KY ADT Inspects Bee Hive Project



Army Capt. Bobbie Mayes, women's empowerment coordinator for the Kentucky Agribusiness Development Team, examines the condition of a bee hive at the Kapisa Director of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock July 6. The Kentucky ADT made a trip to check on the development of the bee hive project, which was started by the previous ADT in 2009. The project is aimed at providing a source of income for women through the sale of the honey produced by the bees.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Peter Ferrell, TF Wolverine PAO

Training the Trainer in Panjshir



Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Jennings, an Underhill, Vt., resident assigned to Embedded Training Team Panjshir, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Wolverine, works with Afghan National Police officers at the Bazarak district police station. Jennings has helped train the instructor, ANP Capt. Sefatullah Sangi, to teach the map reading class. Jennings is assisting by showing points on a map while the Afghan instructor explains to the class of 22 students how to plot a six-digit grid coordinate.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Peter Ferrell, TF Wolverine PAO

Get the rest of the story

CJTF107.COM

IEDeductive Reasoning...

Story and photo by Marine Sgt. Mark Fayloga, Regimental Combat Team-7, 1st Marine Division PAO

It became the catchphrase of the day — “I might as well be Godd---ed Sherlock Holmes.”

A bit vulgar with a touch of arrogance, but the Marine saying it had a right to be cocky. Marine Sgt. James R. Humerick had tracked down an improvised explosive device cache as if he'd had a premonition. The squad leader from Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, didn't just call the compound it was in, he narrowed it down to the room.

Shortly after departing the company's newly established observation post in Southern Shorsurak for a patrol as part of Operation New Dawn June 20, Humerick led his squad east toward empty compounds. No more than a minute after telling his Marines to sweep a room, the handheld metal detector emitted a high-pitched whine. A little digging revealed an IED cache: two directional fragmentation IEDs weighing 35 pounds each, 15 feet of detonation cord, and 15 pounds of ammonium nitrate and aluminum powder.

Triggered by the rush of the find, the Sherlock Holmes line was born. It would be repeated through the day, often as a joke, sometimes variations would take form, “Sgt. James Humerick, AKA Sherlock Holmes the most.”

The patrol that day was a success, and other patrols by other squads during the first week of the operation would also yield cache finds.

For Humerick, from Great Falls, Mont., the find was a welcome change of pace. He is on his fourth deployment and in previous experiences, “We didn't really find the IEDs, they kind of found us.”

Even though Humerick seemed to be a natural detective that day, he'd lat-

“Everyone wants to find a fight, but bringing everybody back is the most important. Finding those IEDs, you're saving lives.”

-Marine Sgt. James R. Humerick, squad leader, L Co., 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Regt.

er admit the find was part luck, part experience. The discovery came on just the fourth day of Operation New Dawn, a joint operation between Marine Corps units and the Afghan National Army to disrupt enemy forces which have been using the sparsely populated region between Marjah and Nawa as a safe haven.

The Marines had limited their patrols to the north and south of their position for the first few days of the operation. Humerick's patrol was among the first to head east.

“I decided to go straight east and see what was out there,” Humerick said. “We came upon that compound and it just looked like somewhere where I'd hide something. It was run down, nobody lived there. That's what I try to think like, ‘What would I do? Where would I put it?’ If you do that, usually you're pretty accurate.”

According to Marine Master Sgt. Jeffrey A. Bratch-

er, an explosive ordnance disposal staff noncommissioned officer in charge from Marine Wing Support Squadron 274, the IEDs were similar to what has been found in Helmand province. They are primarily used to hit Marines on dismounted patrols.

The Marines were able to see what the IEDs are capable of when Bratcher and his fellow EOD technician destroyed the cache during a controlled detonation just hours after it was found.

As the blast sent shockwaves through the earth, and smoke and sand high into the sky, Humerick had the same thought he'd had in the back of his mind since finding the cache.

“Everyone wants to find a fight, but bringing everybody back is the most important,” Humerick said. “Finding those IEDs, you're saving lives. Well, somebody else might find them, but when you find them you're pretty much keeping someone in the fight.” ☺

Lance Cpl. Joshua J. Melendez, a squad automatic weapon gunner with L Co., 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Regt., provides security during a break in his squad's patrol to the east of their newly established observation post in Southern Shorsurak, Helmand province, Afghanistan, during Operation New Dawn June 20. Melendez, from Anaheim, Calif., and the Marines found two directional fragmentation improvised explosive devices weighing 35 pounds each, 15 feet of detonation cord and 15 pounds of ammonium nitrate and aluminum powder during the patrol. Operation New Dawn is a joint operation between Marine Corps units and the Afghan National Army to disrupt enemy forces, which have been using the sparsely populated region between Marjah and Nawa as a safe haven.

WARRIOR

PROFILER

Story by Marine Cpl. Ryan Rholes, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Fwd) Public Affairs

Marine Staff Sgt. Oliver Salder earned his place as a Marine well before he stepped on the famed yellow foot prints at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C. So when recruit Salder piled off that bus in 2000 amidst terrified peers, this salty, rugby-playing Brit was probably more entertained than scared. Or maybe he was just glad it was only going to take him 13 weeks to graduate this time.

Salder, born in Bath, England, enlisted as a British Royal Marine at 16 - his parents agreed to sign his age waiver because they believed he would fail out of boot camp.

Of 50 recruits, Salder was one of 28 to graduate the 8-month cycle, earning his title as a Royal Marine commando.

Salder took a train to Lympstone, Devon, for basic training and spent his first two weeks learning to wear and maintain his uniform, fold his clothes and shave like a Royal Marine. He spent the next 15 weeks learning basic infantry tactics, close-quarters battle, how to swim like a Royal Marine and endured three-, four- and five-mile runs wearing about 30 pounds of gear.

"I think [Royal Marine training] was a little more physical than when I went to boot camp in the United States," he said. "The only time we walked was uphill. Everywhere else we were running."

U.S. Marine recruits speed walk while hiking with gear. Speed walking instead of running reduces injuries, teaches them to open their strides and helps reduce noise.

After acclimatizing to military lifestyle and establishing some basic infantry skills, Salder and his crew moved on to the advanced portion of their basic training, which included night inserts and movements, larger-scale raids, urban combat training, crew-served weapons training, communications training, and survival and evasion training.

One of the things Salder remembers most was a three-day survival exercise that pitted him and his classmates against nature. To survive, Salder had to catch wildlife with snares and build shelters for protection. The only time he was given food was at the completion of the exercise.

"We were given a rabbit, a chicken and a fish, and then taught how to skin and use all three of them," said Salder.

Killing, skinning and preparing live game is definitely outside the box of what happens in boot camp in the United States, explained Salder. Opening a MRE is the most work a U.S. recruit puts into getting a meal during basic training.

To graduate, every Royal Marine must complete the famed commando test, which is a four-day series of grueling exercises.

The test includes a nine-mile speed march in 90 minutes, an endurance test, the Tarzan Assault Course and a 30-mile forced march carrying a full combat load.

The test is comparable to the Crucible, a 54-hour test U.S. Marines endure at the end of basic training.

After graduating Royal Marine training, Salder was sent to northern Scotland where he served in security forces. Later, he retrained as an anti-tank man and moved to Diego Garcia, a British territory in the Indian Ocean heavily populated by the U.S. military, where he served as a military customs officer. It was there Salder met his first wife and turned in his notice to the British government to leave duty as a Royal Marine.

After leaving the Royal Marines, Salder and his wife moved to the states to be closer to his wife's family. Salder found various jobs to support his family, but his true passion was serving in the armed forces. With encouragement from his wife, Salder was ready to join the U.S. military.

"Of course there was no other choice than becoming a Marine again," said Salder.

In April 1999, Salder began an arduous process of applying for permanent residency status. After months of waiting, he was able to start boot camp in January 2000. Salder says his boot camp experience was interesting because "every time something went wrong, it was 'get on the quarter deck, and you can join them too, Brit.'"

"There were a few different times that they actually made me take the guidon and run back and forth through the squad bay yelling the British national anthem, but it was all in good fun," said Salder.

Although he had endured one of the toughest training regimes in

"They never believe me when I tell them I am British and I always have to pull out my driver's license to prove it. Then they start making the same jokes calling me a traitor."

-Marine Staff Sgt. Oliver Salder, on his interaction with British Royal Marines

the world in commando training, Salder said he encountered some challenges with the training at Parris Island.

"I hadn't done anything that physical in years," said Salder. "After I moved to the states I just enjoyed life."

After boot camp, Salder went to school to learn to serve as aircrew aboard KC-130 cargo aircraft.

"My wife didn't want me to be a grunt and there were only certain jobs open to me because of my status," said Salder.

Salder quickly saw action after completing training. He deployed to Pakistan in 2002, to Iraq in 2003 and participated in disaster relief efforts during 2004 and 2005.

It was after these deployments that Salder turned in a reenlistment package late and decided to move to the Osprey community. When asked why he didn't move to the infantry, Salder just laughed with a wistful look in his eyes.

"My body is old and too broken now," he said.

But it is easy to see that he misses his days on the ground. He lights up every time he talks about his infantry training and the time he spent serving as an infantryman.

However, he also enjoys his time in the air, especially when he gets to spend time with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward)'s U.K. counter parts here.

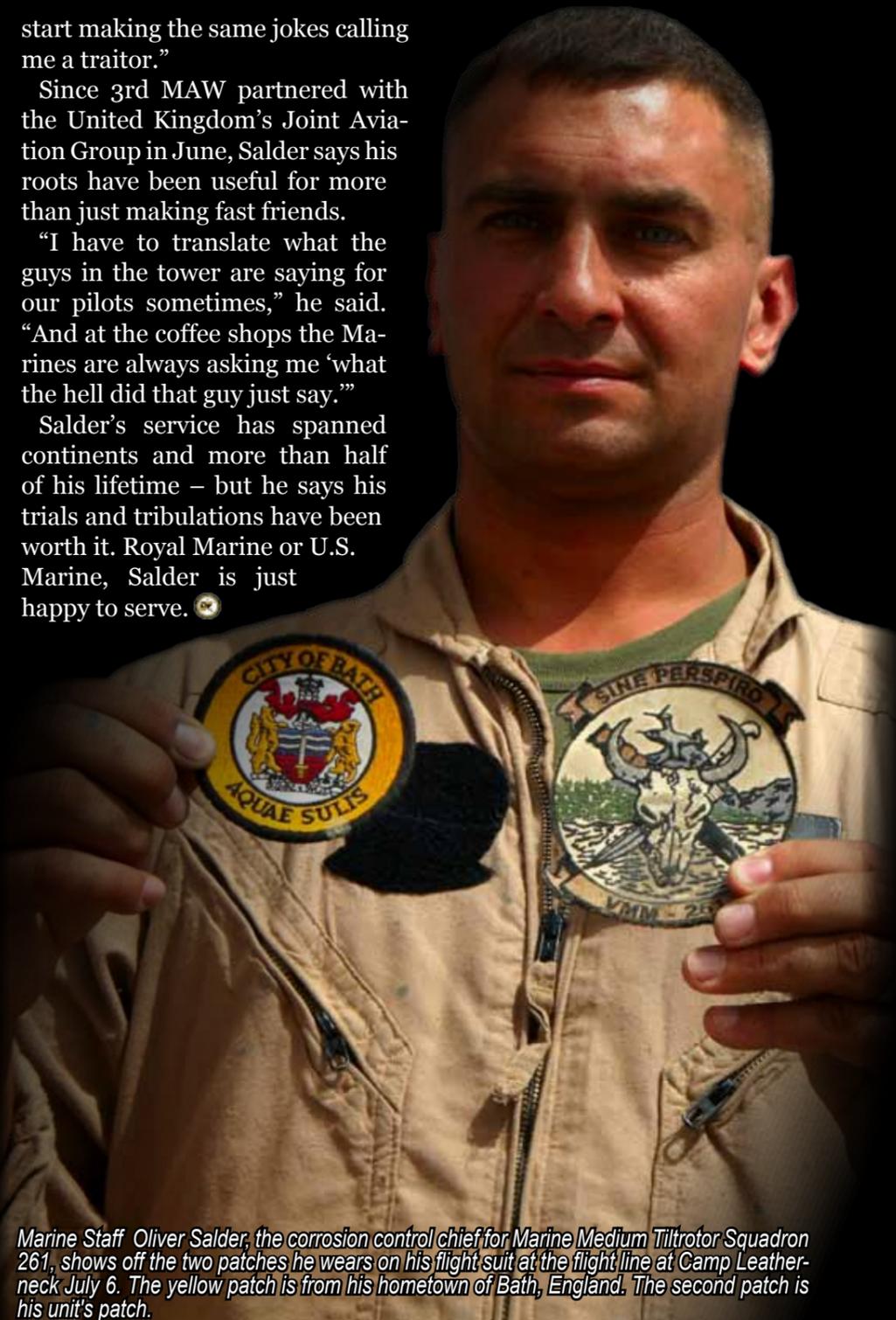
"They never believe me when I tell them I am British and I always have to pull out my driver's license to prove it," said Salder. "Then they

start making the same jokes calling me a traitor."

Since 3rd MAW partnered with the United Kingdom's Joint Aviation Group in June, Salder says his roots have been useful for more than just making fast friends.

"I have to translate what the guys in the tower are saying for our pilots sometimes," he said. "And at the coffee shops the Marines are always asking me 'what the hell did that guy just say.'"

Salder's service has spanned continents and more than half of his lifetime - but he says his trials and tribulations have been worth it. Royal Marine or U.S. Marine, Salder is just happy to serve. 🇺🇸



Marine Staff Sgt. Oliver Salder, the corrosion control chief for Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 261, shows off the two patches he wears on his flight suit at the flight line at Camp Leatherneck July 6. The yellow patch is from his hometown of Bath, England. The second patch is his unit's patch.

Through Thick and Thin

Close-knit Mississippi Guardsmen Fight Roadside Bombs

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th PAD



Soldiers of 1st Plt., 287th Engineer Co. pray before leaving on a route clearance mission from FOB Lightning, Paktya province July 18. Since their arrival in theater in May, Mississippi Army National Guardsmen of the 287th Engineer Co. have been searching for roadside bombs in southeastern Afghanistan.

Army National Guardsmen of the Lucedale, Miss.,-based 287th Engineer Co. are serving their deployment to Afghanistan as professional bomb hunters.

The wooden shack that serves as the unit's headquarters at Forward Operating Base Lightning, Paktya province, is not hard to find with the Mississippi state flag flying above it. From here, the Soldiers launch out on the roads in a variety of vehicles that appear to have been designed for use on another planet. Equipped with mechanical arms, mine rollers and plenty of well-worn intuition, the Soldiers seek and disrupt Taliban booby traps.

"We've (taken) roads that were not safe to travel on, and we've made them into safe avenues for Soldiers," said Sgt. 1st Class Marshall Davis, platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon. "So, really that's our job—to take roads that are impassable because of the enemy threat and

turn it into something that is usable for Soldiers or for coalition forces, and we've done that – we've seen that."

Less than two months into their yearlong tour, most Soldiers of the 287th Engineer Co. have either been in a vehicle that has been hit by an improvised explosive device or has been near an explosion. Fortunately, the newer vehicles, Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected vehicles, have proven so resilient that no one in the unit has been seriously hurt.

"It's a pop, and it's over before you know it," said Spc. Cody Puckett, a gunner for the 287th Engineer Co., who hails from Bay St. Louis, Miss., describing what it's like to take a direct hit by an IED.

Puckett said the most disconcerting part of the attacks is not the initial impact, but the eerie silence that comes afterward while the dust is settling.

"We've (taken) roads that were not safe to travel on, and we've made them into safe avenues for Soldiers,"

-Sgt. 1st Class Marshall Davis, platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon, 287th Engineer Co.

"That anticipation and everybody waiting...that sucks," Puckett said during a July 18 patrol on a road not far from Combat Outpost Zormat, Paktya province.

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel E. Talley, the platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon, agreed.

"It gives me the chills just thinking about it," Talley said.

Neither Talley nor Puckett knew they were minutes away from the next such episode.

It was past noon when the explosion enveloped the vehicle in front of them in a cloud of brown dust and stabbed the eardrums of those hundreds of feet away, headsets notwithstanding. The blast damaged the vehicle's radios so that it took more than a minute before the gunner of the target vehicle, Spc. William Eric Welford, could signal to the rest of the convoy that everyone was OK.

The vehicle that was hit had to be towed back to FOB Gardez for repairs, and Welford relocated to Puckett's vehicle. Welford, who had taken the worst of the blast, did not complain. He admitted to having a headache only when pressed.

"That's the third one this week," he said nonchalantly.

Even when their job isn't harrowing, it can be taxing. Because the consequences of missing an IED can be catastrophic, the convoy must advance at a glacial pace. Staying entertained in such circumstances requires a sense of humor and an ability to take things in stride.

On long patrols, the troops will kill hours by making fun of each other. Everyone knows who's a bad driver and who's a bad aim with a pen flare.

"It's fun, and it doesn't cause any rifts in the unit, which is good," said Army Sgt. Timothy J. Ingram, leader of A Team, 2nd Squad, 3rd Platoon, who hails from Hattiesburg, Miss.

When weather keeps them stranded at other bases, sports are a source of amusement. The troops in 1st Platoon used to carry a soccer ball on the outside of one of the vehicles for that contingency. Once, an IED hit the vehicle that was carrying the ball, knocking it loose. Talley determined dismounting to retrieve the ball would be too dangerous, but all were reluctant to leave it behind.

"We didn't want to lose our soccer ball," Talley said.

The platoon made a spirited effort to scoop up the soccer ball with the mechanical arm of the buffalo that Soldiers call the "spork." Unfortunately, the ball that survived the explosion didn't fare as well in its first encounter with the spork prongs.

Some days later, the same platoon made a surprise pit stop at an unfriendly Afghan village to buy watermelons for an Independence Day celebration. Talley, who knew the troops missed Mississippi watermelons, thought it would be good for unit morale. He also knew that Taliban had been shaking the village down for money the day before, and he saw an opportunity to help the Coalition image. Amid suspicious glares of the locals and hushed Pashto words, several troops dismounted from the vehicle, approached a vendor and bought a dozen watermelons for \$2 each. It was a cramped convoy back to FOB Lightning.

"They missed watermelon season in Mississippi this year, but they made up for it in Afghanistan," said Army Capt. Marty Davis, the commander of the 287th Engineer Co. and brother of Sgt. 1st Class Marshall Davis.

Capt. Davis said the unit is able to maintain good humor in part because they are so close-knit.

"One thing I see in them, they are accountable to each other, probably more so than most units," he said. "They know each other, they know each other's families, they work well together. I think they know each others' hardships and tendencies, even outside of things that are going on here in the unit."

Many of the troops served together in a 2004 to 2005 deployment to Iraq. Moreover, most of the Soldiers in the company are from the Lucedale area, so many are related. The company contains two sets of brothers, two father-son pairs, and a smattering of cousins, uncles and nephews.

Davis was deployed to Afghanistan as recently as last summer on a general's personal security detail, but when he heard that his "home unit" was deploying, he had to go with them. Despite being a National Guardsman who had been on federal orders since 2004, he knew he had to join his brother.

"I just felt, since because it is my home unit, that I was obligated to come with them," said Davis. "This is my home platoon and the people that I've worked with, so it was not a very hard decision for me to say, 'no, I'll just do another one with them, too.'" ☺

Kunar Elders Discuss Constitution

Story by Air Force 1st Lt. Amy Abbott
Kunar PRT

More than 100 elders affected by the recent operations in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province gathered together in the Shura hall of the Marawara district center July 10 to discuss the Afghan constitution.

Less than two weeks after coalition forces and Afghan security elements rid the district of a large group of insurgents, the meeting was an unprecedented show of security and support for the Afghan government. Meshrano Jirga member Rafiullah Haideri, Kunar governor Fazlullah Wahidi and Marawara district sub-governor Sayed Mehboob Pacha joined numerous provincial-level and district-level government officials at the event.

"You have to be like a bridge between two sides so people can cross--telling people not to fight and encouraging them to go to the government," said Amir Mohammad Safi, tribal affairs advisor to the governor, during the meeting.

They planned the gathering after about 150 men from Marawara came to the governor's compound in Asadabad

July 3 at the invitation of Wahidi. During this meeting, the men announced their support for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

The meeting at the Marawara district center, scheduled by Abraham Sutherland, Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team Department of State Rule of Law advisor, and attended by members of the PRT, tutored the elders about Afghan law and government.

The event highlighted the role of local government and the elders' own role in promoting security and working with their local government officials.

"Where there is rule and law, there will be no problems," said Noor Mohammad Khan, deputy governor of Kunar, in the meetings opening remarks. "We are thirsty for better security."

He went on to urge the audience of elders, seated quietly along the floor of the hall, to be "against people who are against our country."

Haji Mohammad Wahab, Kunar Hoquq director, conducted the classroom portion of the event. He reviewed basics of the Afghan constitution with the elders discussing how the citizens of Afghanistan--whether man, woman or child--have equal rights and duties before the law and that no one will be deprived the right of life other than by provision of the law. ☺

"Where there is rule and law, there will be no problems. We are thirsty for better security."

-Noor Mohammad Khan, deputy governor of Kunar

An elder reads a copy of the Afghan constitution as he joins more than 100 elders affected by the recent operations in eastern Kunar province who gathered in the Shura hall of the Marawara district center July 10. The Kunar PRT tutored the elders about Afghan law and government. The event highlighted the role of local government and the elders' own role in promoting security and working with their local government officials.

Photos by Abraham Sutherland, Kunar PRT

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Safety Watch

Sleep Deprivation

Courtesy of Armando M. Alfaro
TF Provider Safety Officer

Too little sleep could be more dangerous than you think. Getting by on six hours of sleep? Don't. Military sleep experts say not getting a full eight hours can put you and your battle buddies at the same risk as having a few beers before driving an Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle, shooting an M-2 .50 caliber machine gun or trying to determine whether a target is friend or foe.

Commanders who don't have plans to ensure their troops get eight hours of sleep are misusing resources and asking for trouble. We give our troops the best uniforms, weapons and equipment but the one thing they really need for operational readiness and combat effectiveness is as much sleep as possible.

In the old days, military training involved sending troops to the field for three days and expecting them to perform well with no sleep. Such exercises gave little consideration to what would happen in a sustained conflict that lasted for several years.

That began to change when the military began longer pre-deployment training, such as the three weeks many units now spend at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., or the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

Commanders came to realize that their troops were not performing up to standards, and sleep became as important as fuel, food and ammunition to a battle plan.

Researchers have found lack of sleep contributed to friendly fire incidents in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, as well as to a navigational error that led to the capture of Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch in Iraq in 2003.

Going 24 hours without sleep impairs someone in the same way as blood-alcohol content of 0.10, legally drunk in all 50 states. Studies have found that chronic sleep loss makes it impossible to think clearly, han-

dle complex mental tasks, form memories and solve problems. Research shows that getting two or three hours of sleep for several nights causes a "sleep debt" that eventually has the same effect as not sleeping for 24 hours straight.

Trying to catch up on the weekend isn't the answer; several full nights of rest is required to make up the debt.

And forget the "four-hour rule" that says troops working in high-tempo operational environments can function on four hours of sleep. The reality is performance will be poor. At less than four hours, cognitive abilities continue to degrade. Sleep is equal in importance to a healthy diet and exercise.

The older generation seems to think that if a person needs sleep, he's weak or unmotivated. This old school mentality must change so that leaders realize troops need eight hours of sleep in every 24-hour period. This may include naps as long as each person gets eight hours total in a day.

One of the main causes of sleep deprivation for troops is staying up late to play video games. Not only should they be sleeping, but video games can be so stimulating that they affect the Soldiers' sleep.

Soldiers also stay up until 2 a.m. or later to wait for calls from home. The person back in the States should be the one staying up late for the phone call, and not the Soldier. Limiting calls to short conversations and saving the honey-do list or the unpaid insurance bill for an e-mail so a phone call doesn't turn into an argument is strongly recommended; no one can sleep after a distressing phone call.

Leaders must be aware of what their Soldiers are doing and look for those habits and limit the Internet, phone calls, video game times and set up a schedule when Soldiers must be in bed. ☺

Forget the "four-hour rule" that says troops working in high-tempo operational environments can function on four hours of sleep.

EXPERTS SAY IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND:

Sleep is a necessity.

The culture that says it's weak to need eight hours of sleep must change.

Commanders must develop sleep plans.

Researchers don't yet fully understand the long-term effects of not getting enough sleep.

Taking care of sleep problems, such as nightmares and insomnia, may be the first step toward addressing mental health issues that could come later.

If you can't sleep, get out of bed. Don't condition your body into believing bed is for thinking.

As a leader, keep good sleeping habits as an example for your troops.

Don't oversleep. It can be hard to fall asleep the next night.

Find an alarm clock that is not obnoxious out of respect for your battle buddies.

Commanders must plan to ensure all troops get at least eight hours of sleep.

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PHOTOS

From the Field



Photo by Eric Aubrey,
USACE Civilian

A Special Operations MH-60K Blackhawk goes by directly overhead as it makes a low-level pass by the U.S. Embassy in Kabul.



Photo by Army Maj. Bill Zielinski
CJTF-101 IO Planner

A view from a 23 millimeter Russian anti-aircraft gun at Torkham Firebase June 9.

Spc. Howell Pugh, flight medic from Charlie Company, MEDEVAC, Task Force Knighthawk, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, trains an Afghan National Army Air Corps flight medic on proper in-flight medical procedures in the skies over Bagram Airfield.



Photo by Army Warrant Officer 1 Robert Renny
TF Knighthawk

Your photo could be featured next month! Entries need to include Who, When, Where, and What, also your Branch, Rank, Full Name, Job Title, Unit and FOB.



Photo by Warrant Officer 1 Robert Renny, D Co., 2-3, TF Knighthawk, 3rd CAB

A U.S. Army Black Hawk from A Co., TF Knighthawk, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, kicks up dirt while coming in for a landing at Bagram Airfield.