

FREEDOM WATCH

NOVEMBER 2010

AFGHANISTAN

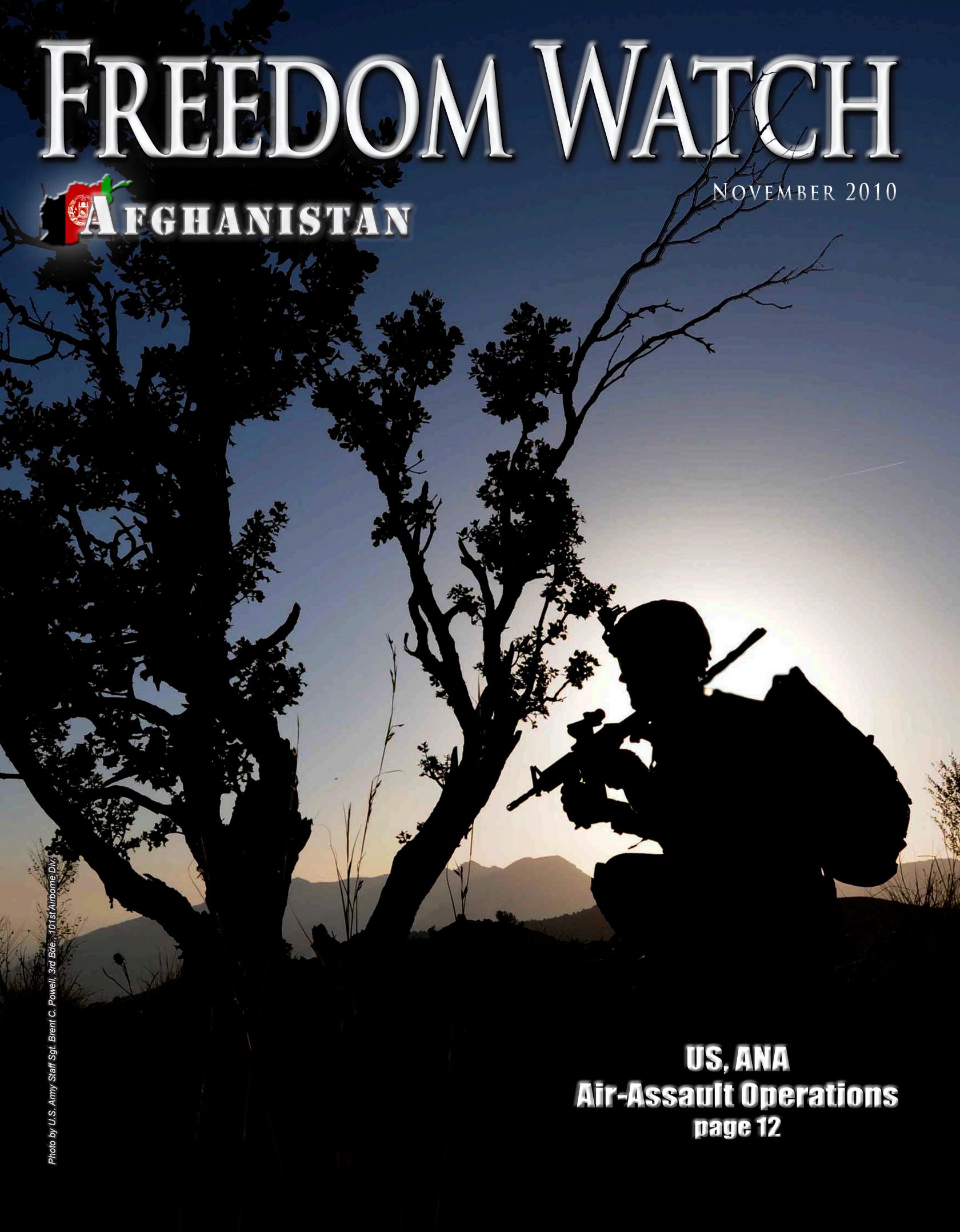


Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brent C. Powell, 3rd Bde., 101st Airborne Div.

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FREEDOM WATCH

STAFF/ 304TH PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT
VOL. 6, NO. 11

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The *Freedom Watch* is a monthly publication of the 304th PAD and Combined Joint Task Force 101.

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Freedom Watch, a U.S. Department of Defense publication, is published the first Monday of every month by the 304th PAD located at building 815-F Dragon Village at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Printed circulation is 20,000 copies per month. In accordance with DoD Instruction 5120.4, this DoD magazine is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas. Contents of the *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government or the Department of Defense.

All submissions are subject to editing by the 304th PAD and the CJTF-101 Public Affairs Office, which can be reached at DSN 318-481-6367 or freedomwatch@afghan.swa.army.mil

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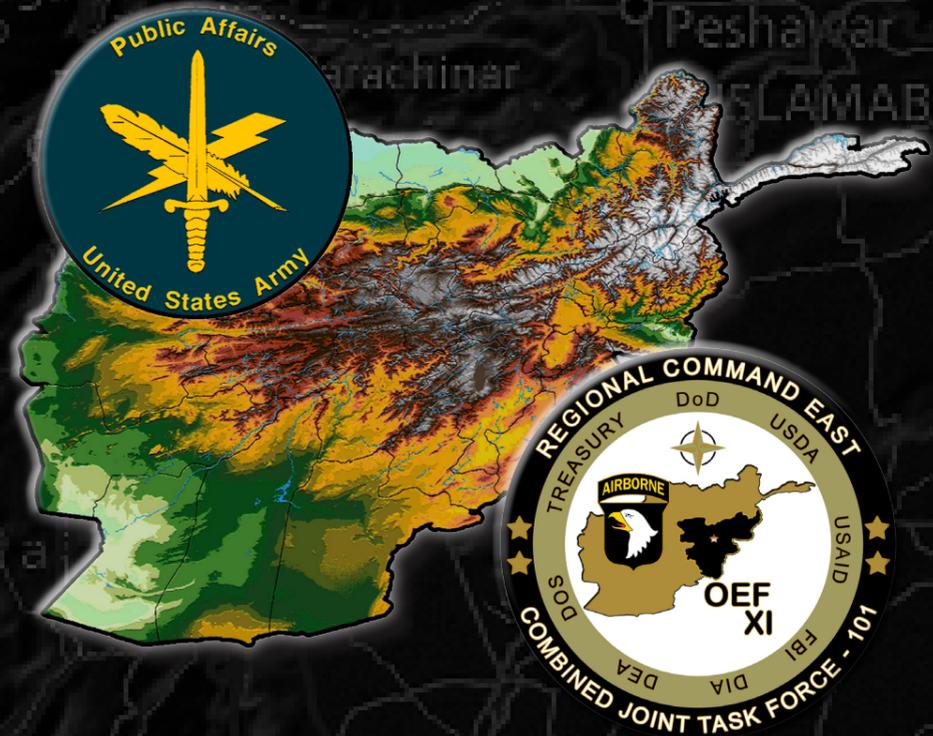
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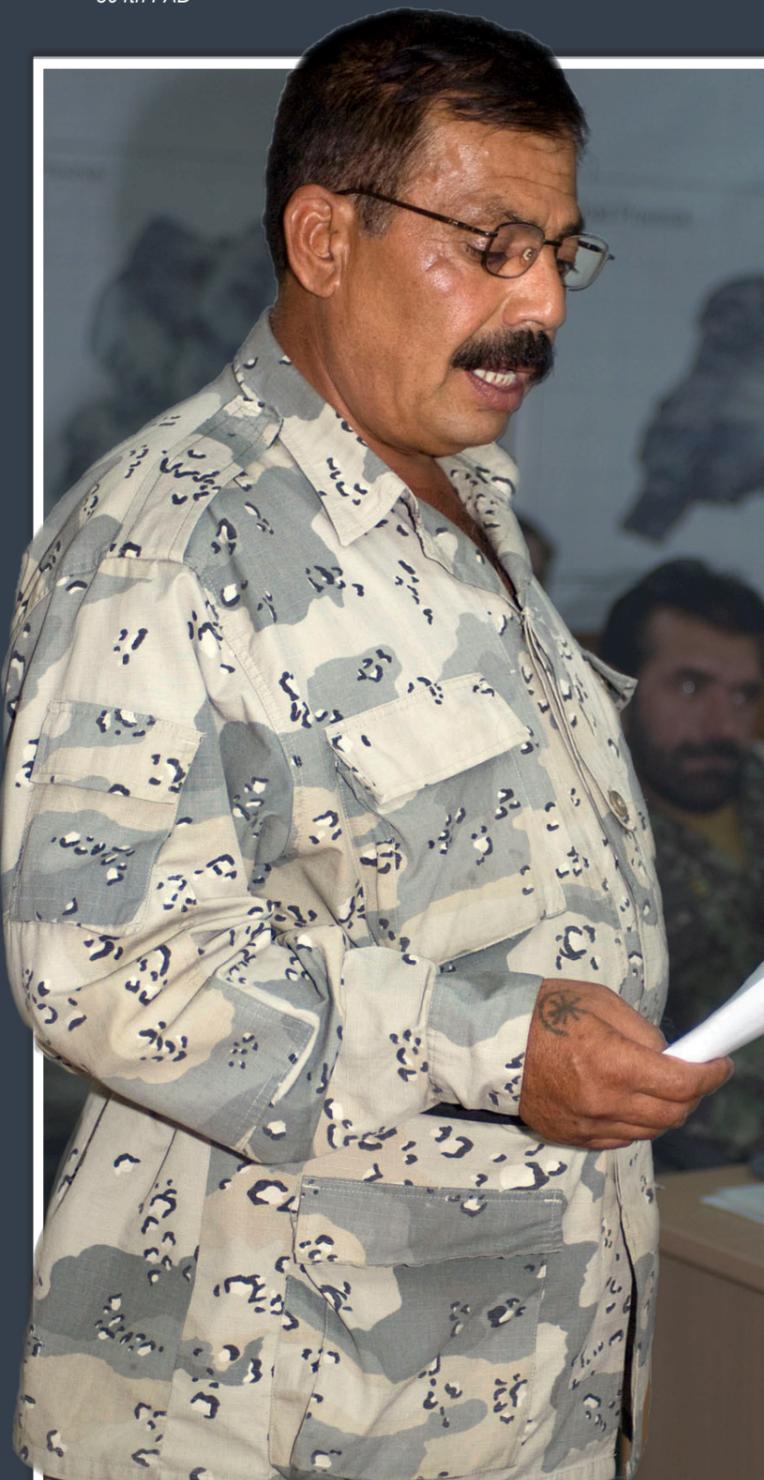
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(Cover Photo) A U.S. Army Soldier from Troop A, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, keeps an eye out for insurgents during a combined air-assault mission with Afghan National Security Forces in the mountains of Khowst Province Oct. 8. The successful operation resulted in the location and destruction of two insurgent weapons caches containing recoilless rifle rounds, rocket-propelled grenades, small-arms ammunition and a machine gun.

OCC-R Unifies Afghan Agencies

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



ABP Lt. Col. Muhammad Salim, an intelligence officer, presents his morning briefing at the OCC-R on FOB Thunder in Paktya Province Oct. 5. Part emergency management center, part military intelligence hub, the OCC-R is the central coordination center for the ANA, the AUP, the ABP and the National Directorate of Security at Paktya, Paktika, Khowst, Logar and Ghazni Provinces.

In the center of the room is a 7 by 8 foot plastic relief map of Paktya and surrounding Afghan provinces surrounded by tables and about a dozen desktop computers. Above the map, a mounted television broadcasts Pashto-language news.

The humble setting of the Operational Coordination Center-Regional at Forward Operating Base Thunder in Paktya Province can be deceiving. Part emergency management center, part military intelligence hub, the OCC-R is the central coordination center for the Afghan National Army, the Afghan Uniformed Police, the Afghan Border Police and the National Directorate of Security at Paktya, Paktika, Khowst, Logar and Ghazni Provinces.

"We have coordination here," said ABP Lt. Col. Muhammad Salim, an intelligence officer who reports to daily briefings at the OCC-R. "If we don't communicate, the enemy will be successful. If we continue like this and communicate well, the enemy will fail and we will succeed."

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jon L. Stephenson, an advisor at the OCC-R, is one of only a handful of U.S. troops tasked with advising the Afghans at the OCC-R. Stephenson said the creation of the OCC-R filled a major vacuum in Afghan information coordination.

"When I embarked on being the senior partner for the OCC-R ... (what) I ended up finding out was there is no agency within Afghanistan that actually brings together the Afghan National Security Forces, government agencies, non-governmental agencies and also lower-level provincial and tribal leadership ... " said Stephenson, a resident of Whiteland, Ind. "There's no organization that's bringing them together, and this is the organization that needs to be doing that."

The facility began under the direction of 82nd Airborne Division-Operations Deputy Commander U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Kurt Fuller as an extension of the Joint Operations Center at FOB Thunder. When the 101st Airborne Div. replaced the 82nd Airborne Div. as the battle space owner of Regional Command-East in May, U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, deputy commander-operations for the 101st Airborne

"We have coordination here. If we don't communicate, the enemy will be successful. If we continue like this and communicate well, the enemy will fail and we will succeed."

-ABP Lt. Col. Muhammad Salim, an intelligence officer

Div., encouraged the facility to become independent.

"They wanted to separate (the OCC-R) from the tactical command post, so it isn't an Afghan National Army facility," said U.S. Army Capt. Urayoan Pomaes of 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Div., the Task Force Rakkasan liaison officer at the FOB Thunder OCC-R, and a Ponce, Puerto Rico, native.

Since then, things have accelerated rapidly.

"In the last seven weeks, we went from nothing to ... being about 40- or 50-percent (closer to achieving our goals), which is pretty good for seven weeks," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Samuel L. Guimbellot, Headquarters, Headquarters Battalion, 101st Airborne Div., and an intelligence advisor at the OCC-R.

At the beginning of the seven-week period, the Afghan partners often showed up late, said Guimbellot, a resident of Alexandria, La. Now, Afghan intelligence officers show up on time and accurately report significant incidents in their respective areas.

During the Sept. 18 parliamentary elections, the U.S., Afghan and other coalition force troops at the OCC-R kept track of information on about 700 polling sites scattered across five provinces and under constant threat of enemy disruption.

"It was our first test in coordinating operations across the entire battle space," Guimbellot said.

ANA Brig. Gen. Mohammad Daud (Andaraby), acting commander of the OCC-R, said he was proud his troops handled the situation so no coalition and few civilian casualties occurred.

"I am very pleased and very happy that, on the day of the election, our troops did an outstanding job, and the election took place under good conditions," Daud said. He added that he did not think the election would have gone as smoothly in the 203rd Thunder Corps area without the OCC-R.

It is hoped the OCC-R will eventually move off base to a local district center, where it can incorporate non-military agencies and even village elders, Stephenson said. In the meantime, however, those working at the OCC-R are willing to take things one step at a time.

"Everything in Afghanistan moves relatively slow," Stephenson said. "In America, our culture moves fast and we want instant results. It's not that way here. ... It's evolved to the point where they are functioning, but they are not where we want or need them to be right now ... but they have a functioning facility."



ANA Brig. Gen. Mohammad Daud (Andaraby), acting commander of the OCC-R on FOB Thunder in Paktya Province, sits in on a briefing Oct. 5. Part emergency management center, part military intelligence hub, the OCC-R is the central coordination center for the ANA, the AUP, the ABP and the National Directorate of Security at Paktya, Paktika, Khowst, Logar and Ghazni Provinces.

THE CITY BEAT

In the still of the helicopter landing zone at Forward Operating Base Walton, a convoy of military policemen prepared to depart to a police substation in Kandahar City Sept. 30. Leading them was U.S. Army Sgt. Skye Ortiz who is on his first deployment to Afghanistan.

Ortiz is part of the 170th Military Police Company based on of Fort Lewis, Wash., and deployed to Walton. He leads one of three squads working to accomplish the 170th's dual mission: protecting the local populace and mentoring the Afghan National Police into a mature force that can enforce the law and protect Afghan communities.

"I'll be out front so if someone blows up, it'll be me," said Ortiz, before dismissing the convoy briefing with a question. "Anyone got a problem with that?"

No one did but it was unclear whether the question was rhetorical or not. Coalition troops commonly come under attack in Kandahar City, and the enemy's preferred weapon system is the improvised explosive device.

While the MP's are relatively protected from IED's in the heavily armored vehicles they use to convoy from base to base, at the police substations the MPs are forced to park and exit. These police stations are where the hammer meets the nail; here the MP's live with Afghan patrolmen with whom they conduct combined patrols.

That day Ortiz' team was escorting the 170th commander as he met with key leaders at different locations including Police Sub-Station Six in district six of Kandahar City. The police substation is home to several Afghan patrolmen and a squad of MPs led by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Briscilla Taylor, 170th MP Co. Taylor's soldiers protect PSS Six along with ANP patrolmen stationed there.

"PSS Six isn't bad. They have three rooms so there's plenty of space and beds for all my Soldiers," said Taylor. "The ANP were very receptive to us and we have given them a lot of training."

Taylor has been embedded at three other police stations. At PSS Six, located under a military outpost built under Alexander the Great, her soldiers protect the local populace and work to develop the local patrolmen's law enforcement skills and ability to help their own communities.

"It's an important job. We want to go home and the only way to do that is by helping the ANP step up to provide security," said Taylor. "When we go out on missions, I always remind my soldiers of that and it pumps them up. I know we're not going to win the war during our time here but at least we can help improve security for the people."

In the area surrounding several police sub-stations throughout Kandahar City, including at PSS Six, her squad routinely conducts combined dismounted patrols.

The patrols are a chance for ANP patrolmen to hone their skills while showing citizens of Kandahar an ANP and Coalition presence, instilling confidence and encouraging the population to cooperate with their local police sub-station.

"Every patrol is different; on mounted patrols there isn't much to fear because you have the protection of the vehicle, but on a dismounted patrol there is some fear," said Taylor. "You never know what is going to happen because you are out in the open. At the same time it's kind of exciting because you are out interacting with the locals and the ANP."

Out of their vehicles the MP's are vulnerable. Every pile of dirt, fresh mud wall, culvert or even piece of trash can contain an IED, booby trap or mine. However, they do have the tools necessary to defeat the insurgents including metal detectors, signal jammers, local intelligence, knowledge of enemy tactics, and most importantly a lot of guts.

"As the point man I stop traffic and ask the ANP to search people. At the same time I use the mine detector to try to find the pressure plate (IED) before anyone steps on it," said U.S. Army Spc. Wesley Neubaur from Lake Havasu City, Ariz. "Knowing that we don't catch all of them makes the job kind of intimidating, but I don't see it as being different than any other spot in the patrol."

Armed with a metal detector and keen observation of his surroundings, Wesley led the patrol with an Afghan patrolman in tow, stopping vehicles and searching personnel as they approached. Taylor, armed with an interpreter and another patrolman, engaged the community.

"Do you have the phone number of the police sta-

tion," said Taylor to a father as she was surrounded by a large group of village children intrigued by a female soldier. "If you see something suspicious you need to let the police station know. You don't have to go to the police station you can just call. Do it for your children as they play in the street."

As the patrol went on, Wesley continued checking fresh dirt or rock piles with his metal detector.

"When my team has point, I guard Neubaur since he is the mine sweeper," said U.S. Army Spc. Anthony Moreno, who is the point team leader from Hedgesville, W. Va. "When we encounter something that has to be cleared, since I'm his team leader if anyone is going to take the risk I'd rather it'd be me."

After getting the signal to "check this one" Moreno would approach the dirt pile and prod it with his knife finding nothing but junk.

"At first I was kind of nervous but now it's second nature, you just have to be careful with it," said Moreno about checking the dirt piles with his knife. "Being out there heightens your senses. Occasionally you get a nervous feeling, but as a team leader you have to dismiss that."

But Taylor's Soldiers aren't always so lucky; two previous patrols were hit by IEDs triggering some bitterness in the unit towards the people they protect.

"The worst part about IED attacks is that (the insurgents) just set them off and walk away. They usually do it around other people and you never know who it was," said Neubaur. "When you pick up witnesses, no one knows who did what and most deny that an explosion happened, even though they were only about 100 meters away. No one tells the truth."

Mines or IEDs usually target indiscriminately, resulting in 557 civilian deaths so far, according to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan's Mid Year Report 2010 Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. Even though the insurgency works to turn their homes and streets into minefields, many of the locals fear aiding coalition forces. Insurgents are known to conduct assassinations and abductions of suspected collaborators with 183 executions and 165 abductions already recorded this year according to the same report.

Yet, here are Taylor's soldiers again, out on the Kandahar City streets, though this time missing two of their fellow soldiers. Two of her Soldiers are recovering at Kandahar Airfield from the last IED blast. Every walking patrol is one patrol closer to going home for the men and women MP's, so they continue on the Kandahar City beat. ☺

Story and photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Ernesto Hernandez Fonte, ISAF Regional Command South

U.S. Army Spc. Michael Born, assigned to 170th Military Police Company, walks in a patrol near Police Sub-Station Six in Kandahar City Sept. 26. The 170 MP Company embeds squads at police sub-stations throughout Kandahar as part of its dual mission: protecting the local populace while at the same time advising the Afghan National Police into a mature force that can enforce the law and protect Afghan communities.

The Skills to Make It Happen

Story by U.S. Air Force Capt. Tristan Hinderliter
Laghman PRT PAO

The Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team's civil affairs element includes a social worker, a police officer, a trauma nurse and an expert on public health policy – an array of backgrounds suited for the diverse mission in Afghanistan.

Like most civil affairs personnel, Laghman's CA team is made up entirely of reservists, which makes them uniquely suited for a PRT, said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Christopher Possehl a Newnan, Ga., resident and the Laghman PRT commander.

"Our civil affairs team has been an excellent force multiplier for us," he said. "They bring unique skill sets to the team, and we are able to leverage their civilian expertise and talents and apply them to our civilian-military mission."

U.S. Army 1st Lt. David Moore of Barrington, N.J., Laghman PRT civil affairs officer, is the CA team's expert on public health policy and education. At home in New Jersey, Moore works operations for public health policy for Medicare, the health insurance program administered by the U.S. government. A self-described "bureaucrat," with a bachelor's degree in political science and

a master's degree in international relations, he said he has been able to draw on his civilian background as the CA team helps stand up Laghman Province's fledgling government.

Moore has been elected president of his local school board twice, an experience that has proven useful for his work here mentoring the provincial line director for education, he said.

Another Laghman PRT civil affairs officer, U.S. Army Capt. Chadwick Lester of Campti, La., is an emergency room nurse in his civilian job. He has spent most of his deployment at Combat Outpost Najil, which is responsible for a remote area in the northern part of Laghman Province.

At COP Najil, Lester worked with Afghan leaders at the village and district level to support the PRT's mission in the province, regularly meeting with mullahs and village elders. Among other things, he worked

with local schools, provided villagers with newspapers and radios, as well as a radio station in their local dialect of Pashai, and trained Afghan National Army soldiers in civil affairs. His efforts yielded tangible results: In five months, the number of villages in the area deemed friendly to coalition forces increased fivefold.

"The 102nd (the U.S. infantry unit at the COP) really supported our mission," Lester said. "We worked hand-in-hand with them. They believed in the PRT mission, and the PRT had a big influence in that area."

In addition to tactical CA work, Lester was the senior medical officer on the COP and had many opportunities to put his medical skills to use, he said, treating fellow U.S. troops as well as Afghan civilians.

As a civilian, U.S. Army Sgt. Sherrita Hall of Tinton Falls, N.J., is an investigator for the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services. As a CA Soldier, she specializes in women's issues and is currently working on a project to procure computers for the Mastoori Girls High School in nearby Mehtar Lam.

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mario Clarke of Irvington, N.J., Laghman PRT civil affairs noncommissioned officer in charge, is a police officer in New Jersey whose law enforcement skills have been put to good use in the province. Early in the deployment, the FOB was attacked with indirect fire. Clarke was part of the consequence management team that responded, a traditional CA function. When the patrol arrived, local police were recovering the body of one of the attackers. As a trained police officer, Clarke gathered forensic evidence at the scene, which he turned over to law enforcement personnel on the base.

"Although his objective was simply to assist with the key leader engagement in the village, he was able to fall back on his civilian skill set and materially contribute to the overall mission," said Moore, citing it as an example of how reservists' unique skill sets often prove valuable.

"Because this society is so personality and relationship-driven, we try to develop and maintain good relationships with the elders and maliks (tribal leaders) in villages near the FOB."

- U.S. Army 1st Lt. David Moore
Laghman PRT civil affairs officer



Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ave. I. Pele, Laghman PRT PAO

U.S. Army 1st Lt. David Moore of Barrington, N.J., Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team civil affairs officer, listens as a young man reads from an International Security Assistance Force newspaper during a Good Neighbor visit to the village of Nawlam Sept. 6. The PRT distributed newspapers to villagers helping the population stay informed of local news and events.

In addition to overseeing projects and mentoring provincial line directors, other key CA functions include hosting shuras, coordinating with non-governmental organizations and managing linguists. The team also regularly conducts "good neighbor" visits to nearby villages.

"Because this society is so personality, and relationship-driven, we try to develop and maintain good relationships with the elders and maliks (tribal leaders) in villages near the FOB," Moore said. "Once we develop a rapport with them, they are more likely to stop people from attacking the FOB, contact the Afghan National Police if they know of an attack, or just let us know if there are people moving through their village they don't recognize."

The program is also valuable, he said, because it gives the PRT insight into patterns of life in the nearby villages. "You don't know about what's going on in the community unless you're out there," he said.

U.S. Army Maj. Carlos Martinez of Walla Walla, Wash., Laghman PRT operations officer and a Civil Affairs-branched Foreign Area Officer, said CA is crit-

ical to keeping the PRT connected to the population.

"The reason I think they're important is because civil affairs is the one entity that ties the civilian population to the commander," Martinez said. "They are our cultural experts and our liaison with the population; they facilitate the perspective we need as a reconstruction team, and that is critical to our mission."

Still engaged in CA activities, Martinez sometimes accompanies CA personnel on good neighbor visits and has met with the provincial governor and religious affairs line director on behalf of the PRT commander.

"It's been a rewarding experience getting to know the governor," Martinez said. Having recently returned from his mid-tour leave in Mexico, he brought the governor a gift as a sign of their friendship: an enormous sombrero in Afghanistan's national colors.

"Our CA personnel all possess valuable skills for this environment," said Possehl. "Their unique training and skill sets really enable our mission to build governance through development and security in the province." 🇺🇸

The Backbone of the ANA

PART 2: THE “ONE UNIFORM” COURSE

Story and photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th PAD

Editors note: This is the second of a three-part series detailing the training of the Afghan National Army noncommissioned officer corps at Forward Operating Base Thunder. This piece focuses on the One Uniform Course.

Of the three Afghan National Army noncommissioned officer courses offered at Forward Operating Base Thunder, the most dramatic is the 1U course (pronounced ‘one uniform’), which fast tracks Afghans from civilian to a U.S. Army staff sergeant equivalent in one 12-week block of training.

Unlike other courses administered by the ANA’s Training Kandak, 203rd Thunder Corps, the 1U course has no equivalent in either the British or U.S. militaries. Much like U.S. Army basic training, the course begins with instruction on marching and facing movements, as well as classroom instruction on things like rank structure, discipline and military bearing, said Afghan National Army Staff Sgt. Dost-muhamad Noori, a 1U course instructor.

Once the troops have mastered the basic principles of soldiering, they train on M16A2 rifles, which have come to replace AK47 rifles as the standard weapon in the Afghan National Security Forces. As the course progresses, recruits take on more complicated military tasks, such as leading squads through fire maneuvers, the construction of miniature terrain models to aid with maneuvers, and convoy and counter improvised explosive device operations, said Noori, who is from Kapisa Province.

Abdulrab Rasul Cobandi, 1U student, said his favorite moment of the course came during the segment on searching vehicles. When one of the trainees bent down to look under the vehicle for explosives, an instructor yelled, “Boom!” The soldier was startled, and everyone had a laugh at his expense.

Cobandi, who has had prior service with the Afghan Uniform Police and lost part of his thumb during an ambush in Ghazni Province two years ago, said he expects to be given an instructor position upon graduating the 1U course, though he has no other ANA experience. Both Noori and the coalition forces advisers confirmed the practice of promising and awarding instructor positions to students is common in the 1U course.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Gary E. Smith, a training officer with the Indiana National Guard’s Regional Corps Training

Team 2, said the training was until recently done by private contractors. The creation of designated instructor slots and a vetting process for instructors are new developments that still have bugs to work out, he said.

“It’s their army,” said Smith, a resident of Kendallville, Ind. “The only way they are going to learn is by doing the training themselves. We just need to keep improving (the training) and stabilize the instructors here ... There are still blemishes, still things to be worked out ... but we’re building an army here, and that’s not an easy thing to do.”

Education is prerequisite for entrance into the 1U course, which in Afghanistan, a country with a literacy rate of less than 30 percent according to UNICEF, means basic literacy.

“If they can read and write, they’re at the top,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Ryan Ronning, of Headquarters Support Battalion, 117th Field Artillery Regiment, who works with the British-led advisor team.

The current cycle has about 80 students who come from all parts of Afghanistan.

Tensions often run high between the Pashto- and Dari-speaking elements. Ronning, born and raised in La Pine, Ore., said he witnessed multiple fights break out among the Afghan troops from different areas, though they were usually quelled by instructors before serious damage could be done.

Noori confirmed ethnic tensions were a problem, despite the fact instructors teach in both languages to alleviate tensions between Dari- and Pashto-speaking soldiers.

While the squad-sized element of British and U.S. Soldiers is unable to change some of the fundamental problems with the course, they continue to work with the ANA administrators to improve the quality of its final cycle, which began on Aug. 21, and will continue until graduation Nov. 11.

U.S. Army Cpl. Brandon R. Metzger, who like Ronning, is originally part of the HSB, 117th FAR, is the member of the British-led advisor team most directly involved with the 1U course.

“It’s their Army. The only way they are going to learn is by doing the training themselves.”

- U.S. Army Lt. Col. Gary E. Smith, training officer, Indiana National Guard’s Regional Corps Training

When Metzger, a resident of Colorado Springs, Colo., arrived, he noticed the Afghans in the 1U course wasted an hour a day marching down to the battalion armory to draw weapons and other training equipment. The advisor team helped move the equipment closer.

“When I got here, nothing was going well. We had no conex, no supplies and no body armor,” said 21-year-old ANA Capt. Nabiullah Qaridaza, a newly-arrived course officer, through the aid of an interpreter. “Now we have everything.”

Metzger said he found considerable success both educating Qaridaza on how to do supply paperwork and advising training NCOs on how to do their work. Qaridaza who hails from Kapisa Province, added that the quality of the instruction depended critically on maintaining a good supply chain.

“If we have good instructors and good materials,

they are going to pay attention,” he said. “If they are learning about radios and there are no radios available to practice on, they will just chill with each other.”

Metzger’s view, based on his experience with the course officers, is somewhat more optimistic.

“It was extremely difficult ... but now (the ANA officers) see the importance of having NCOs lead soldiers,” Metzger said. “It’s not where it needs to be, but it’s on the right track.”

Noori, who spent five years in the ANA, said he had seen improvement in the recruits since the course began.

“This course is going really well, and I’m grateful for the British soldiers, they are really helping us,” Noori said. “When I ask the students questions, they are giving good answers.”



Soldiers in the Afghan National Army’s 1U (“one uniform”) course practice their drill and ceremony skills near the 203rd Thunder Corps Training Kandak buildings at Forward Operating Base Thunder, Oct. 9. The 1U course is the only ANA course that takes recruits from civilian to NCO in one 12-week training period. The course is designed to fill the ANA’s NCO gap.

US, ANA Air-Assault Operations

Story and photos by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brent C. Powell,
3rd Bde., 101st Airborne Div.

In the early morning hours of Oct. 8, U.S. and Afghan National Army Soldiers conducted a successful air-assault operation in the mountains of Khowst Province, resulting in the location and destruction of two insurgent weapons caches.

The operation, named War Old Coffee, came after weeks of intelligence gathering, planning and mission rehearsals by U.S. Soldiers of Apache Troop, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, with assistance from their ANA partners.

“We previously gathered intelligence from many sources on a cache site located along logistic supply routes we knew the insurgents were using,” said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Paul Corcoran, 1st Platoon leader for Apache Troop and native of North Attleboro, Mass. “We developed a mission plan with our ANA partners, and then we used an air-assault to execute the plan and move on the objective.”

The troops were transported to the site by CH-47 Chinook helicopters, using a technique known as a pinnacle landing to off load them high in the mountains. The special type of insertion allows troops to immediately claim high ground and gives them a tactical advantage over insurgent forces.

Once off the helicopters, the joint forces climbed even higher, fight-

“It’s a great relief getting these weapons off the battlefield. When you know there are weapon systems out there that endanger the lives of your Soldiers and others, and you are able to remove that threat from the hands of insurgents, that’s a great feeling at the end of the day.”

- U.S. Army 1st Lt. Paul Corcoran, 1st Platoon leader for Apache Troop

ing their way over sharp rocks, up steep inclines and around potentially deadly cliff faces.

“One of the biggest challenges of this mission was definitely terrain,” said Corcoran. “Terrain is always an issue during any type of mission here in Afghanistan. It was tough, but we overcame it.”

After making their way through the unforgiving terrain, the Soldiers arrived at their first objective, a bunker complex of wood and dirt, located along a winding mountain trail.

The Soldiers established security on the site and then moved in. After quickly clearing the objective and ensuring no enemy forces were present, they searched the bunkers and found what they were looking for – a recoilless rifle, rifle-propelled grenades, a machine gun, ammunition, clothing, sleeping bags and various cooking items.

A thorough inventory was conducted, then an explosive ordnance team was called in to destroy the items. The clothing and sleeping materials were brought outside and burned to prevent future use by insurgent forces.

Although everyone seemed excited and relieved to have destroyed the objective, the day was far from over.

“After successfully clearing the first weapons cache, we received intelligence of another cache in the area,” said Corcoran. “Being flexible, we were able to adjust our mission and move on that objective as well.”

The determined forces picked up their gear and began the trek to their next target. They hiked down the side of a mountain, traversed a deep wadi, and marched nearly a mile across open ground before reaching a heavily wooded and secluded area.

In a completely harmless-looking dirt area, an Afghan citizen, whom the troops brought with them, pinpointed the spot he said contained insurgent weapons.

AIR-OP page 14

(background) U.S. Army Pfc. Seth Zimmer, an M203 gunner and native of Marionette, Ohio, assigned to Troop A, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, keeps an eye out for insurgents during a joint air-assault mission with Afghan National Security Forces in the mountains of Khowst Province Oct. 8. The successful operation resulted in the location and destruction of two insurgent weapons caches containing recoilless rifle rounds, rocket-propelled grenades, small-arms ammunition and a machine gun.

(Right) U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Michael Wade, company intelligence support team member and native of Auburn, Mass., assigned to Troop A, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, inventories items found buried at a weapons cache during a joint air-assault mission with Afghan National Security Forces in the mountains of Khowst Province Oct. 8.

AIR-OP CONTINUED

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Stephen Lutsky, a native of Clinton, N.J., and commanding officer of 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav. Regt., began the search by digging for the suspected cache with the only tool he had, a sharp rock.

Others quickly joined in, digging with their hands and anything they could find. After a few minutes, their exhausting efforts paid off in a big way.

Hidden under about two feet of dirt, the team located more than 40 recoilless rifle rounds, three rifle-propelled grenades, nearly 20 pounds of powdered explosives, two pressure plates, medical supplies, identification cards, clothing and various paperwork.

After inventorying all the items, EOD again stepped in to destroy them with high explosives.

“We’ve been working this area quite a bit, but the enemy forces have been making these weapons caches difficult to find,” said Lutsky. “Having an (Afghan citizen) who knew where these caches were come on the operation with us helped us be successful today. By destroying these caches we were able to take a huge chunk of weapons capability from the enemy.”

The success of the operation was something everyone was proud of.

“It’s a great relief getting these weapons off the battlefield,” said Corcoran. “When you know there are weapon systems out there that endanger the lives of your Soldiers and others, and you are able to remove that threat from the hands of insurgents, that’s a great feeling at the end of the day.”

After destroying the second cache, the joint forces called in air support to transport them back to Camp Clark, finally allowing them to relax and reflect on the success of the mission.

“One of the things that made this operation successful was we were able to plan and do rehearsals with our ANA partners and have them execute many tasks during the operation,” he said. “They performed very well, and were able to take our guidance and the pre-mission rehearsal information and execute without any major issues.”

By working together, the U.S. and Afghan National Security Forces sent a powerful message to insurgents.

“The message we sent today is that coalition forces are able to work closely with the ANSF, allowing us to effectively move on these areas,” said Corcoran. “There really is no safe place for insurgents to hide their weapons or information from us. We have the upper hand right now and we plan to keep it.”



U.S. Army Soldiers from Troop A, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, cut open plastic cases containing recoilless rifle rounds found buried at a weapons cache during a joint air-assault mission with Afghan National Security Forces in the mountains of Khowst Province Oct. 8. The successful operation resulted in the location and destruction of two insurgent weapons caches containing recoilless rifle rounds, rocket-propelled grenades, small-arms ammunition and a machine gun.



U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to Troop A, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, watch as explosives detonate inside an insurgent weapon cache during a joint air-assault mission with Afghan National Security Forces in the mountains of Khowst Province Oct. 8. The successful operation resulted in the location and destruction of two insurgent weapons caches containing recoilless rifle rounds, rocket-propelled grenades, small-arms ammunition and a machine gun.

Making Their Mark

Story and photos by G. A. Volb, NATO Training Mission Afghanistan



The Sarco Abad management team from left to right: 19-year-old Arzoo, floor supervisor; Sharifa, manager; and deputy managing director, 29-year-old Angela. Together, the team of junior businesswomen are striving to make the new Afghanistan a better place for all Afghans.

Women-owned-and-operated businesses supporting Afghan National Security Forces have signaled gender empowerment, social progress and improved industrial infrastructure.

For 29-year-old Angela, deputy managing director of Sarco Abad, it's a bit more than a job. While the company produces some 64 products --from sleeping bags to socks -- and plans on growing from 12 employees to more than 200 in the near future, she has a far greater goal in mind.

"Our mission is to empower all women and children," she said with pride. "Especially in rural areas where there is very little in the way of classes for women, we want to teach them the law, about human rights and skills they can use in life."

But first things first, as Angela knows her goals won't be realized unless the business succeeds in meeting customer demands for quality, quantity and timeliness. Despite the threats to her business in today's Afghanistan, highlighted by a small army of security personnel dotting the factory landscape, they're mak-

ing the most of the opportunity.

"We're having fun," Angela said. "But as is the case with any business, it's difficult in the beginning while we're still developing our strategies, our plans to succeed and expand. It's very important that we focus on the quality of materials, produce products acceptable to our customers and that we meet their deadlines for delivery."

It was in August that the group of women put their plans into motion after being awarded one of three contracts for women-owned businesses from the Kabul Regional Contracting Contingency. Such successes are the culmination of initiatives from International Security Assistance Force's Afghan First Policy, NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan and Combined Security Assistance Command - Afghanistan's local acquisition program management team, and the Central Command's Contracting Command.

NTM-A's chief of acquisitions and contract management agrees Angela and her company face certain challenges, but not insurmountable ones.

"Entrepreneurs who take up the challenge have to work extremely hard to adopt new manufacturing infrastructure and processes to produce products that meet our demand for quality as well as affordability," said U.S. Army Col. Anthony Pelczynski, a 1983 graduate of Virginia Tech. "Many companies are now building brand new facilities or significantly upgrading existing facilities, purchasing new equipment and hiring new work forces to meet the demand for locally produced commodities for the ANSF."

"There is a new spirit of optimism in these factories and facilities," he continued. "The large orders we place for items such as uniforms, boots and other individual clothing items to meet the rapid fielding of the ANSF enables the businesses to cover a lot of the risks associated with new starts. It is the first step to self-sufficiency."

Pelczynski also pointed out there are collateral benefits associated with these contracts. As requirements transition from initial fielding to sustainment-rate quantities, the companies will have the resources and skills to branch out - to develop new markets and new opportunities with reduced risks.

"Some even invest in local vocational education centers to develop people with the specific skill sets needed to operate and sustain their business; skills

required include accounting, program management, production control and quality inspections, plant facility management, and information management," said Pelczynski. "Some manufacturers are starting to offer literacy classes, child care and meals for their employees. This is very progressive management."

Both NTM-A and CSTC-A want to encourage positive examples like this one -- companies who manage their assets and human resources with exceptional results.

It's hoped that over time this positive movement will permeate and lift up a culture and people who have been in an armed struggle for more than 30 years.

That fits right into Angela and the rest of her management team's plans, as they're already preparing for the future when the company will diversify and offer programs that benefit her employees and Afghan society as a whole.

"We've spent a long time in war, so there are a lot of women in Afghanistan who are uneducated," said 19-year-old female manager Arzoo. "In fact, many don't even know their own religion or what their rights are under Islam -- so education is a priority. If we're able to educate them, they will educate their children and the rest of their family, and that will make for a better Afghanistan." ☺



A Sarco Abad employee works on pillows destined for ANSF.

A Second Chance: The Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program

Story by U.S. Army Sgt. Andrew A. Reagan,
304th PAD

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan recently launched the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program. The program aims to reconnect members of the insurgency with Afghan communities and GIRoA through social outreach, economic programs and community development projects.

The program offers antigovernment combatants full recognition of their rights as Afghan citizens, a dignified way to renounce violence, and avenues to peacefully reintegrate into their communities.

The program is available to all persons and communities willing to live in peace and abide by the laws of Afghanistan.

"(The GIRoA is) trying to move to a post-conflict environment where they want former insurgents to stop fighting, go back to their communities and support the national government," said U.S. Marine Maj. Brent W. Stricker of Bakersfield, Calif., Rule of Law Chief for Regional Command-East.

At the community and district level, the program focuses on local peace processes. These do not reward the insurgent or former combatant, but benefit all according to the needs of the community as determined by community elders.

At the lowest levels, APRP focuses on three stages of activity: social outreach and negotiation, demobilization, and consolidation of peace.

Reintegration is an essential part of the counterinsurgency campaign and coalition forces and GIRoA will pursue it alongside their ongoing efforts to protect the Afghan people, enable the ANSF, support the extension of governance and improve socio-economic development.

**Journalist's Note: The information contained in this article is derived from the International Security Assistance Force's Reintegration Guide.*

SOCIAL OUTREACH & NEGOTIATION

Under this stage, district and provincial leaders will conduct outreach to those who want to join the peace process and their communities.

Outreach involves the use of shuras to increase awareness of the program and promote peace and reintegration amongst villagers, community leaders, Afghan National Security Force partners and those in authority at district and provincial levels.

It is also essential to reach out to former combatants and their communities. This may involve mediators nominated by former insurgents.

DEMOBILIZATION

This stage involves the individual's transition from insurgent to reintegree. It includes initial contact, assessment and vetting, registration and weapons management. It also involves the individual's renunciation of violence and his acceptance back into the community and the provision of political amnesty.

-Initial contact: Reintegration is likely to begin with dialogue, either directly between former insurgent and community leaders, directly to GIRoA or through a mediator. It is also possible for contact to be made via the International Security Assistance Force. In these cases, a GIRoA link must be found since insurgents cannot reintegrate with ISAF.

-Assessment and vetting: Once contact is made by a reformed insurgent wishing to reintegrate, vetting and assessment takes place. At this stage, the potential reintegree may have concerns over his security, GIRoA harassment and the prospect of reprisals. He may also be concerned about being accepted back into his community and about his immediate livelihood, such as housing, food and employment.

Furthermore, the community the former insurgent wants to reintegrate into will also have concerns. Its members will have to decide whether they are willing to permit the insurgent to return and whether they are willing to take responsibility and vouch for him.

Not every fighter will be accepted for reintegration, and the Ministry of Interior will conduct a vetting process. The MoI or NDS will take identifying infor-

"(The GIRoA is) trying to move to a post-conflict environment where they want former insurgents to stop fighting, go back to their communities and support the national government."

- U.S. Marine Maj. Brent W. Stricker, Rule of Law Chief for Regional Command-East

mation from the individual, such as biometrics, and share them with ISAF. The insurgent will also be interviewed to gather personal data, identify immediate humanitarian needs and grievances, and confirm which community the potential reintegree wishes to return to and whether he will be accepted there.

-Weapons management: Concurrent to vetting, weapons management will take place. This is the collection, registration, licensing and securing of weapons. However, surrendering weapons is not required for reintegration. The decision to return a weapon to the reintegree lies with the MoI.

-Determination: Once vetting is complete, a decision on whether to accept the individual for reintegration will be made at the provincial level.

-Sustainment, security, monitoring and transition: Concurrently, provisions must be made to meet the immediate life support needs of the individual and any accompanying family. This includes food, accommodation and clothing.

Continued security will be key and is planned by ANSF in conjunction with district and provincial governors. The reintegree will undergo a transition program, which includes literacy, education and moderate religious instruction.

-Reintegration shura and registration: The basic reintegration process concludes with the reintegree being granted political amnesty and an identification card, guaranteeing him freedom of movement and freedom from arrest for past armed actions against GIRoA. He is then formally accepted into his community in a Community Reintegration Shura.

"(A key aspect) to the project is you need to have the community take these guys back," said Stricker. "As these events occur, you'll have reintegration shuras and Jirgas. The reintegree says, 'I'm renouncing violence, I want to come back in.' The Afghan leadership will be there and so will the local elders, and the elders say, 'We're going to take care of this guy and we accept him into this community and vouch for his future behavior, and he's going to behave himself as a point of honor with us.'"

CONSOLIDATION OF PEACE

Communities, districts and provinces will be able to select from several recovery options. These options include community recovery, integration into the ANSF, vocational and literacy training, moderate religious education and transfer to a Public Works Corps or Agriculture Conservation Corps.

"(The ISAF) portion of the program is supposed to be community development projects," said Stricker. "Say we have 50 guys we want to reintegrate, they have to have something to do for a living. We'd look at an area and say, 'This town has no bakers, let's do a project and build a bakery and give these guys vocational training.' The idea is you're going to give them a skill, an economic opportunity and moderate religious instruction. (We're) trying to improve these (ex-combatants) through a wide spectrum of training and economic programs." 🌟

"People need to understand, this is not surrender. This is not a way for the coalition forces to get your name and number and go get you, it's really not. This is not blanket amnesty, either. It's Afghan society trying to reconcile."

- U.S. Marine Maj. Brent W. Stricker,

Rule of Law Chief, RC-East

Demonstration Farm Takes Root

Story and photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Peter Shinn, 734th Agri-Business Development Team



U.S. Army Sgt. Tanner Ruble of Winterset, Iowa, a military policeman with the Iowa National Guard's 734th Agri-Business Development Team, provides security as U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Bennett Groth, production agriculture specialist for the ADT, speaks through an interpreter to Mohammed Ismael, manager of the Salar Bagh Demonstration Farm Sept. 21.

The Iowa National Guard's 734th Agri-Business Development Team got some lessons in the complexity of Afghanistan's agriculture and governance when its members paid a visit to a demonstration and experimental farm near Asad Abad Sept. 21.

The agricultural experts of the ADT found the Salar Bagh Demonstration Farm, which is owned and run by the Kunar provincial government, in immaculate condition. They also discovered the farm's manager, Mohammed Ismael, to be an expert on local agronomic techniques, soil conditions and production practices.

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Bennett Groth of Merville, Iowa, is a production agriculture specialist for the ADT, and he commanded the mission to the demonstration farm. According to Groth, the farm's condition and the manager's technical prowess caused him to rethink his assumptions about the ADT's approach to the project, which originally called for an assessment of ways to help the farm.

"We realized they're far ahead of where we thought they were. The cropping we saw today was pretty advanced," Groth said. "We're going to have to kind of switch our

focus and figure out a way to motivate them to teach each other how to farm."

The demonstration farm produces corn, soybeans and a type of locust tree for timber and tea, which thrives in soil with high acidity. U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Eric Pugh, the ADT's forestry specialist, advised Ismael to mix needles from pine trees growing on the farm's edge with soil around the tea plants to increase the soil's acidity. Ismael informed Pugh he was already doing so.

"I think it's obvious they have a high level of expertise," Pugh said. "I think it's to our best interest to try to leverage that expertise to get it to their own people so they can be trained and understand it."

Ismael, however, urged the ADT to help him on a range of matters, especially in digging a well to provide a continuous source of irrigation for the farm. He noted water from mountain runoff is available only half the year, leading to reduced farm production the other half of the year.

"When we don't get enough water, it hurts the crops here and we get lower yields," Ismael said. "It's clear; without enough water, this demonstration farm gets hurt."

Additionally, Ismael asked the ADT to construct a building on another government-owned demonstration farm across the road for secure storage of implements and to provide a classroom for agricultural instruction. Part of that suggestion contained another lesson for the members of the ADT, who had not previously known of the existence of the second government-owned demonstration farm.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Neil Stockfleth of Sergeant Bluff, Iowa, leads the ADT's Agriculture Section. He welcomed his team's positive assessment of the Salar Bagh Demonstration Farm and pointed out personal contact with Kunar agricultural officials is vital as the ADT conducts its mission.

"Seeing the sophistication of these existing facilities is going to have an impact as we discuss additional demonstration farm sites with the provincial government," Stockfleth said. "We feel there's value in replicating this type of farm in other parts of the province, but first we need to determine what the Kunar government is already doing for its people, and we can only do that by meeting with the provincial agriculture officials on a regular basis." ☺

Refocusing Law Enforcement

Story and photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte, 300th MPAD

The bunkers, sandbags and razor wire common to any police checkpoint in eastern Afghanistan attest to the daily challenges law enforcement faces here.

The latest effort by International Security Assistance Forces aims to refocus the Afghan police mission back toward the public.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. David J. Goetze of Roseau, Minn., commands the Kunar Security Forces Assistance Team, one of several teams now working under Task Force Bastogne.

"Afghan police officers are already motivated, but what my team will do is help focus their training and operations to be more community oriented," Goetze said. "This will help the police gain the trust and respect of the people they are sworn to protect."

Goetze and his team partnered with the Kunar Province police chief to improve the ANP system. This task is not only beneficial to Afghan civilians, but also a way of starving insurgent forces of manpower.

If a stable police force can be provided, it will keep a lot of Afghan males from joining the insurgency, Goetze said.

Members of his team are each assigned to a different

aspect of the provincial police, ranging from logistics to intelligence, in order to help improve each section from the top.

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class James E. Tembrock of Elizabethtown, Ky., the noncommissioned officer of the team, said one of the challenges they face is clarifying the various techniques taught to Afghan officers by previous advisory teams and then going beyond those standards.

"You have to learn what was done in the past," he said

During a recent meeting with officers from various police checkpoints in the Watapur District, Goetze emphasized the need to concentrate on community policing rather than heavier armament.

"The Army should be fighting the bad guys, but the police should be establishing law and order," he told the officers.

Goetze, who is now located at Forward Operating Base Fiaz with the provincial police headquarters, previously led a counterinsurgency course at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., for two years.

"I've taught all this stuff," he said. "Now I'm putting it into action." ☺



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class James E. Tembrock of Elizabethtown, Ky., shakes hands with an Afghan police officer during a Sept. 25 visit at the Watapur District Center in Kunar Province. Tembrock is the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Kunar Security Forces Assistance Team, Task Force Bastogne. The team plans to help the provincial police focus their efforts on community law enforcement.

GIRoA Implements Budgeting System

Story and photos by U.S. Army Spc. Richard Daniels Jr., TF Bastogne PAO



District and provincial leaders discuss a solution to a budgeting scenario intended to familiarize them with a new program introduced at the East Region Provincial Budgeting Workshop in Nangarhar Province Sept. 21. The workshop introduced the Commanders Emergency Response Program as a Budget, a program designed to better manage funds, understand present and future costs, and increase stability within Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has undergone heavy development over the past nine years, resulting in vast improvements in the areas of education, health, living conditions, travel and security.

These positive changes are due in part to partnering projects coordinated by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Afghan National Security Forces and U.S.-led Agribusiness Development Teams and Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and co-

alition forces. Like any worthwhile program, there are associated costs.

Foreseeing the future monetary needs of Afghanistan to continue these projects, Regional Command-East created a program to assist GIRoA in understanding the budgeting process that will ease the transition from the U.S. dollar to the Afghani. The program is designed to legitimize GIRoA and assist in creating stability within Afghanistan.

“This is a step in that direction to explain the budget, to discuss with the ministries their priorities and issues with the budget process.”

- Joanne Jensen, a Department of State representative.

Task Force Bastogne is the first to implement this program in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan’s Ministry of Finance along with Soldiers and civilians from the ADTs, PRTs, and TF Bastogne gathered at the governor’s compound Sept. 20-21 for the East Region Provincial Budgeting Workshop in Nangarhar Province.

Leaders from Nangarhar, Nuristan, Kunar and Laghman Provinces attended the conference that introduced the “Commanders Emergency Response Program” as a Budget program.

“This is the first time the Central Ministry of Finance Budget office is coming down to discuss with a group of provincial ministries the development of the budget,” said Joanne Jensen of St. Augustine, Fla., a Department of State representative. “What everyone has been pushing for is that the central ministries start pushing down the budget and working with the provinces and the districts.”

Most of the funding for projects and sustainability come from donor nations, various task forces and other organizations. The prospect of removing such funding created potential for instability within Afghanistan. This program is designed to prevent that.

“This is a step in that direction to explain the budget, to discuss with the ministries their priorities and issues with the budget process,” said Jensen. “It is also very helpful for TF Bastogne, both civilian and military mentors, to know how the money is flowing down from the central ministries to the provinces and to the districts.”

The intent of CERP

“The intent of CERP as a Budget is not to work on the development in terms of building projects and those types of initiatives,” said U.S. Army Maj. David Kaczmarek of Aurora, Ohio, TF Bastogne civil affairs officer. “That has been done for the last nine years. We have been constantly building things, to the point now where we have to go back and repair the things we built.”

It has been a challenge to assess how well the Afghan government and its people can maintain what they have. The program aspires to alleviate this issue several ways.

“CERP as a Budget is designed to ... get the Afghans to do an inventory of all the things that have been done, all of the things that have been built for them,”

said Kaczmarek. “To capture the cost associated with it so they know how much it’s going to cost (them) every year to run and maintain all of these projects that have been built.”

The program also teaches the Afghans how to put together a development plan with short-, mid- and long-term goals. These plans must support the objectives addressed in the Afghan National Development Strategy.

Finally, CERP as a Budget is designed to train district, provincial and national leaders in the way their government is designed to work by the Afghan sub-national governance policy.

“A lot of times, if you ask some of the locals, they’ll tell you the PRT is the government because they gave the service deliveries up until this point,” said Kaczmarek. “The point of this is that we transition the management piece to the Afghans. But, we have to train them. That’s really what CERP as a Budget is going to do for them.”

Transition to mentor

GIRoA financial advisors eagerly took the initiative to begin teaching district and provincial officials on budgeting effectively. By taking the front, they hope Afghanistan will soon be able to stand on its own two feet.

“In order to be a successful Afghanistan government, they have to change their budget system,” said an Afghan representative to the district and provincial leaders. “... We hope with the hard work, one day we will be able to improve a little bit and cover our own budget.”

Since the start of the program, coalition forces placed Afghans in the lead, advising them where needed and stressing the importance of the program.

“Any project that comes out of this will be completely based on the Afghan government’s developmental efforts,” said Kaczmarek. “The coalition is now going to play the role as mentor to make sure they are looking at the right things for projects and sustainability.”

“Making sure they are good quality projects, understanding the difference between needs and wants -- everything that does come out of this is going to be an Afghan product,” he said. “More importantly, it’s going to be based on the Afghan system that is supposed to be in place, not the one we would like to be in place.”

Goodwill Across Afghanistan:

ISAF and ANSF Reach Out



Afghan National Army Sgt. Said Masood, 209th Corps, distributes school supplies to approximately 400 Kaka Kot School students in Nahr-e Shahi District, Balkh Province, Oct. 4. The ANA and the 10th Mountain Division's Female Engagement Team worked together to donate approximately \$3,000 worth of school supplies to the students in Nahr-e Shahi.

Photo by Sandra Arnold, RC-North Public Affairs Advisory Team Director



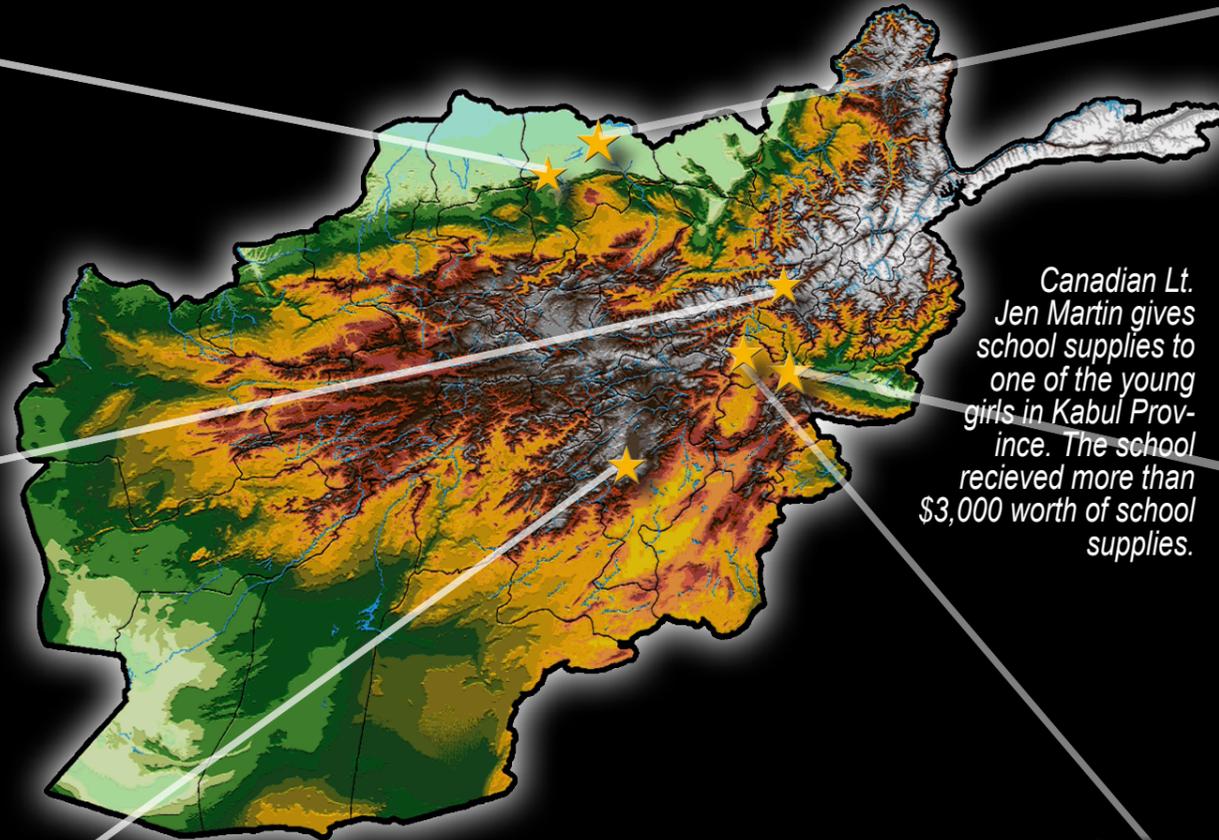
A member of the Afghan National Army passes out notebooks to students of the Aliabad School in Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh Province. The ANA and the International Security Assistance Force are working together as partners to help the school with the construction of two new 10-classroom buildings.

Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class John Queen, 1st BCT, 10th Mountain Div. PAO



A village elder from Astana village, Panjshir Province, helps children try on new winter coats, Oct. 6. Members of the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team hiked 12 kilometers to the remote village of Astana to deliver humanitarian aid in the form of winter coats donated by family and friends of the PRT. The village of Astana isn't reachable during the winter months due to large amounts of snow.

Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Sean Mateo White, Panjshir PRT Photographer



Canadian Lt. Jen Martin gives school supplies to one of the young girls in Kabul Province. The school received more than \$3,000 worth of school supplies.



Photo by G.A. Voib, NATO Training Mission Afghanistan



U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Katherine Roling, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team public affairs officer from Eldersburg, Md., hands out toys donated from Enid and Vance Air Force Base, Okla., to girls at the girls orphanage in Sanga Masha village, Jaghori District here Oct. 12. The PRT flew to the remote district for four days to check on projects, but also visited the girls orphanage when there was free time.

Photo by Angela Szyszlo, Ghazni PRT PAO

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Steve Horton, ISAF Joint Command, hands out candy to an Afghan boy during the fourth International AgFair held in Kabul, Afghanistan, Oct. 7. Afghanistan is home to one of the fastest growing agricultural markets in Central Asia and the fair was a great opportunity for Afghans to show and sell their products.



Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joseph Swafford, ISAF Joint Command

THANK YOU FROM THE 304TH PAD



Photo illustration by U.S. Army Spc. Aquilla Reed, 304th PAD

FREEDOM WATCH AFGHANISTAN STAFF DEC 2009 - NOV 2010

From Fighting Fire to Fire Fights

Story by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes,
86th Inf. BCT PAO

No matter what rank he wears, what title he is called or what uniform he is in, "A leader is a leader" in U.S. Army Sgt. Jason Marsella's eyes.

Though Marsella is a relatively new team leader with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, he is no stranger to giving orders in life or death situations--Marsella is also a lieutenant with the Merrimack, N.H., Fire Rescue Department.

In the civilian world, one of Marsella's responsibilities is training newly recruited firefighters. In fact, two of the firefighters he trained are also members of Charlie Company -- U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mike Keirnan, who was sent home after a sniper hit him in the foot, and U.S. Army Capt. Dan Newman, the company commander.

"People ask me all the time if it's weird. It's not. (Newman is) a professional Soldier and a professional firefighter," said Marsella. As a commander and a team leader, Newman and Marsella's distance in the chain of command prevent them from spending much time together, but they still have the occasional cigar together at night.

Marsella and Newman first met when Newman was still a volunteer firefighter; he remembered one job where Newman stuck out in his mind.

"It was him, me, and an off-duty medic. He came in right behind me, and we fought the fire and put it out," said Marsella. Later, Marsella was on both Newman and Keirnan's hiring boards. "They had just come back from Iraq and I remember their professionalism as Soldiers stuck out to me," said Marsella who was still a civilian at this point.

Brotherhood

Newman and Keirnan had just come home from their first deployment to Iraq with Charlie Company in 2005.

"I came off active duty, and I missed that camaraderie," said Newman, who started out on the rescue squad and then became a firefighter. "Once getting into fire fighting I knew it was something I wanted to do as a career."

Once they were all on board as fulltime firefighters, Marsella learned more from them about the National Guard and saw the opportunity to fulfill a lifetime

goal. In 2007, at age 30, he decided to become a citizen Soldier.

"I joined to deploy," said Marsella. "I didn't want to go through life knowing I had never served my country in a time of war," said Marsella.

Trading Places

For Newman, the transition in 2005 from the responsibility of platoon leader in combat in Iraq to a rookie firefighter was almost seamless.

"It wasn't weird at all; it was a good transition. We're a small department so you're depended on to make decisions just like you are in the military," said Newman.

Marsella had a few more growing pains in his transition in 2007. He admitted the transition from his leadership role in the fire department to his role as a private first class in the company was difficult for him, not for the need to be in charge, but rather a desire to contribute

"Whenever there's an emergency somewhere, these are the guys who are running in while everyone else is running out."

*U.S. Army Capt. Dan Newman,
Charlie Co. commander*

more, said Marsella.

"It was a bit of a struggle; I wanted more responsibility and to show how I could be a better Soldier," said Marsella. He sought advice from Kiernan, who was a staff sergeant at the time. Kiernan helped him understand how to play his role as an enlisted Soldier.

The Call to Serve

After about seven months at Combat Outpost Zornat in eastern Afghanistan, as their tour begins to wind down, both Newman and Marsella are glad they all had the opportunity not only to deploy, but to do it together.

"Us going to combat together, no matter what happens, we will still always have that bond," said Marsella.

Newman also pointed out that they are not the only members of Charlie Company who serve in the civil service. He guessed the company has about 30 police, fire and rescue workers.

"What draws you to be a police officer and a firefighter is probably the same thing that draws you into being mountain infantry," said Newman. "Whenever there's an emergency somewhere these are the guys who are running in while everyone else is running out."

STORY

SNAPSHOTS

Currahee Medics Advise ANA Soldiers



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Luther L. Boothe Jr., TF Currahee/PAO

U.S. Army Spc. John C. Humphries, a combat medic from Company I, 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, instructs Afghan National Army soldiers on the various locations to check a casualty's pulse. Humphries taught ANA soldiers how to check for a blocked airway and circulation of the blood and to ensure the casualty is still breathing during a class held Sept. 27 on Combat Outpost Munoz.

"Teaching these soldiers first aid is a necessity for the (operational tempo) because, out on patrols, our medics cannot be everywhere at once," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Adam J. Hendrickson, of Co. I, 2-506th, 101st Airborne Div. "So, the more guys we have out there who know how to do the initial treatment on ground, the better it is for everyone."

Soldiers Train Tomorrow's Leaders Today



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brent C. Powell, 3rd Bde., 101st Airborne Div.

U.S. Army Pfc. Jacob Whetstone, a combat medic and advisor for the Afghan National Army's Troop Medical Clinic, assigned to 2nd Platoon, Company A, 2-22 Infantry, 10th Mountain Division keeps a watchful eye on ANA Soldiers who are preparing for live-fire exercises at a range near Camp Clark, Afghanistan Oct. 3. Whetstone and approximately 40 other Soldiers from his unit have been in Afghanistan for nine months advising, teaching, training and coaching ANA leadership at their Regional Basic Warrior Training at Camp Parsa.

Training the Trainer in First Aid

U.S. Army Spc. Tom Schenk, a combat medic and native of Chula Vista, Calif., assigned to Headquarters, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, demonstrates how to properly apply a splint to Afghan National Army soldiers enrolled in a five-day combat life saver course on Camp Parsa Oct. 5. For the past five months Schenk and two ANA combat medics have been teaching the course to ANA soldiers to help prepare them to save lives on the battlefield.



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brent C. Powell, 3rd Bde., 101st Airborne Div.

English Class for Afghan Children



Photo by Sandra Arnold, RC-North Public Affairs Advisory Team Director

U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Rodolfo Duque, a Navy corpsman and advisor to the Afghan National Army's 209th Corps at Camp Shaheen in Balkh Province practices conversational English with children of ANA soldiers, Nazir, 13 (left) and Asad, 11 (center). Duque became a volunteer of the newly established English Conversation Club last month to augment existing English classes and help students practice their pronunciation skills while strengthening coalition and host nation relationships.

Engaging with Goshta Leaders

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Dan Konopa of Kokomo, Ind., platoon leader with 1st Platoon, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 327th, Infantry Regiment, Task Force No Slack, talks with an Afghan leader about a project proposal in the Goshta District in Nangarhar Province. TF No Slack met with local leaders to discuss current and future projects within the Goshta District Sept. 26.



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Richard Daniels Jr., T/F Bastogne PAO

Soldiers Train, Fight with Afghan Partners



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brent C. Powell, 6th Bde., 101st Airborne Div.

U.S. Army Sgt. Pedro Rodriguez-Ortiz, a squad leader for 1st Squad, 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry, watches as his Afghan counterpart Staff Sgt. Zaratgul Tofan, an Afghan National Army squad leader and native of Kabul Province, currently assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 203rd Corps, gives instructions to one of his squad members during patrol training at Camp Parsa Oct. 4.

Soldiers Walk Through Charikar Market



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Kristina L. Gupton, T/F Wolverine PAO, 982nd Combat Camera

Soldiers with the Civil Military Support Team and the Republic of Korea Provincial Reconstruction Team visit Charikar Village, Parwan Province, on a walk-through of the market Sept. 28. The CMST and ROK PRT browsed through the various vendor booths.

Keeping an Eye on ANA Recruit Training



Photo by Sandra Arnold, RC-North Public Affairs Advisory Team Director

U.S. Army Spc. Mike Crank, 10th Mountain Division, captures an iris scan of an Afghan National Army recruit using the Biometrics Automated Toolset at Camp Shaheen, Balkh Province Oct. 6. More than 1,400 recruits who make up "Class 142 M" spent day three of an eight-week rigorous basic training program completing biometrics profiles. Though this is the last 209th Corps graduating class of 2010, it is the first 209th Corps recruit class led by ANA soldiers.

Afghan Army Recruit Training



Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Brian Brannon, NATO Training Mission Afghanistan

Afghan National Army recruits practice marching and formation drills at Kabul Military Training Center. With up to 12,000 Afghan soldiers going through training at any given time, KMTC stretches across 22,000 acres along the rugged foothills of the Hindu Kush.

Contractors Pay Road Compensation

A young boy signs road compensation paperwork with a blue-ink thumbprint to receive his family's road compensation payment from shura members Sept. 29 at the Nijrab District Courthouse. Villagers affected by the development of roads in Kapisa Province have received payments ranging from \$40 to \$729.



Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Joe Laws, Kapisa PRT PAO

Nangarhar Cub Scouts get New Sponsors

U.S. Army Capt. Glenn Battschinger, former scout master of the Nangarhar Cub Scouts and a soldier with the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion, talks to a Nangarhar Cub Scout Oct. 12 before a ceremony took place transferring responsibility of the scout program from the Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team to the Ministry of Education and Afghan Strategic Research and Services organization. The ceremony was held at the governor's palace and was attended by many of the senior government and U.S. military officials.



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Scott Davis, RC-East PAO

Afghanistan's Future Takes Root



Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Holly Hess, Panjshir PRT PAO

Hashmatulah Enayat, Panjshir Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, hands Panjshir Gov. Keramuddin Keram the first seedling to be planted in the Panjshir greenbelt project during a ground-breaking ceremony Oct. 10 on a hillside near Massoud's Tomb in Bazarak. Approximately 35,000 trees will be planted throughout the province as part of a reforestation project over the next three months.

Panjshir Children Receive Literacy Books



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Ryan, Panjshir PRT

A young Afghan boy from Sangin Primary School reads a literacy book Sept. 27. The Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team delivered 4,000 illustrated books written by Afghan author, Idries Shah, to the district directors of education, where they were distributed to the children throughout the districts of Shutol, Anaba, Rohka, and Bazarak.

U.S. Troops in Paktya Plan Bridges



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th FAD

U.S. Soldiers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team use a measuring tape to measure the distance of one point of the Darya-ye Chamkani River, Danda Patan District, Paktya Province Sept. 27. The troops surveyed two sites on the river for future infrastructure projects. Among the projects being considered are two bridges, which would help locals have access to government services.

Get the rest of the story

CJTF101.com

ISAF Joint Command – One Year Anniversary

Story and photos courtesy of IJC PAO



Photo by U.S. Marine Sgt. Brian A. Tutthill, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regt.



Photo by Australian Sgt. Mick Davis, 1st Joint Public Affairs Unit



Photo by Australian Sgt. Mick Davis, 1st Joint Public Affairs Unit



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Micah E. Clare, 4th BCT PAO, 82nd Airborne Div.

It has been a year of innovation, creation and challenges - but mostly progress - for the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command, or IJC, as it took over the command and control of tactical operations throughout Afghanistan.

At the recommendation of Joint Forces Command - Brunssum, members of the 47 troop-contributing nations stood-up IJC Nov 12. The combined joint team, is located at the Kabul International Airport and is made up of more than 900 personnel.

The command oversees six individual Regional Commands, more than 350 forward operating bases and four major medical centers in the Afghan area of operations.

"IJC has the responsibility to oversee the day-to-day operations of coalition forces in Afghanistan," said U.S. Army Lt. Gen. David Rodriguez, commander of IJC. "This focus allows the ISAF commander, Gen. David Petraeus, to focus on strategy in Afghanistan and across the region."

As the operational arm of ISAF, IJC conducts comprehensive counter-insurgency operations, helps build the capacity and professionalism of the Afghan National Security Forces through embedded partnering, and supports the training and expansion of effective

governance and economic development down to the district level.

"We have made great strides in partnering with ANSF and other organizations to conduct counterinsurgency operations," said Rodriguez. "Afghan National Security Forces are achieving noticeable gains in capacity and professionalism and are increasingly assuming the lead in mission planning and executing operations through the Combined Joint Area of Operation."

"The insurgent momentum has been halted and reversed in many key terrain districts throughout the country, and we are seeing clear signs of progress."

The security of Afghanistan is a top priority for ISAF and has been the focus of coalition forces at IJC for the past year. In Kabul, with the establishment of 25 Afghan National Police checkpoints, highly visible and legitimate security measures can be seen throughout the city.

In Helmand Province coalition forces, the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, worked together to remove improvised explosive devices from Helmand's second largest town, Gereshk. The successful operation - Operation Omid Sey, cleared IEDs at one an hour. The increased security seen in

many key terrain districts has allowed the people of Afghanistan to participate in activities many people around the world take for granted, from engineering projects to government elections.

"Recently, due to the capabilities of the Afghan National Police, the people of Afghanistan participated in successful provincial elections with more than 4.3 million ballots cast," said Rodriguez. "Marjah, in particular, saw more than 400 locals cast ballots in six separate stations. This is significant because there were no ballots cast in this area last year. The people are making clear their wish to develop a democratic, stable and secure Afghanistan."

As the ANSF continue to enhance their ability to provide security to the people of the region, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan can focus on engineering and agricultural projects which will improve the stability of the area.

This past year, in Musa Qal'ah District in Helmand Province, the bazaar reopened after five years and now serves more than 500 shop owners. Meanwhile, Afghan women in Jalalabad have taken it upon themselves to reconstruct a nursing hostel.

"Another example of a successful developmental program is the \$165 million project to construct

a 75-kilometer railroad main line between Hairatan and Mazar-E-Sharif near the Uzbekistan border," said Rodriguez. "This project, under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works, will have a significant economic impact as almost half of Afghanistan's imports pass through Hairatan."

Increasing the credibility and capacity of the Afghan government is important to the overall mission of IJC. Whether through security initiatives or engineering projects, the of the IJC team continues to move forward.

As transition continues to be the focus for the GIROA and ISAF, IJC will work to shift from a military-based stabilization effort to a predominately civilian-led element capable of enhancing long-term economic development across Afghanistan. With a focus on a joint goal, IJC will continue to strive for success in Afghanistan.

"We continue to engage in an extremely tough fight with a resilient enemy," said Rodriguez. "However, thanks to the hard work and fortitude of many men and women of ISAF Joint Command, Afghanistan will emerge from this period of turmoil and will be a proud, independent and peaceful nation." 🇦🇫

(left) U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. John B. Kavanaugh, a member of Guard Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, explains to an ANA soldier how his firing stance can affect his balance and accuracy near Forward Operating Base Geronimo. The Marines took a squad of ANA soldiers through a combat marksmanship drills to improve their combat effectiveness. (right) ANA 1st Lt. Fazal Rabi chats with an Afghan in the Mirabad Valley region.

(right) An Afghan soldier teaches soldiers from the Polish Battle Group how to play an Afghan card game at their patrol base after a long day of patrols in Andar District, Ghazni Province. (middle) Australian Cpl. Cameron Butler an engineer with the First Mentoring Task Force shares a joke or two with ANA Sgt. Gulrahman.

WARRIOR PROFILER

Story and photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Spencer Case
304th PAD

**Afghan National Army
Command Sgt. Maj.
Habiibullah Chamkani,
CSM of the ANA's
203rd Thunder Corps**



Standing about six feet tall and sporting a short dark beard that makes him look older than his 31 years, Afghan National Army Command Sgt. Maj. Habiibullah Chamkani, command sergeant major of the ANA's 203rd Thunder Corps, is a hard figure to miss.

U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. James M. Brown, Chamkani's U.S. advisor, said his character stands out as much as his stature. The sergeant major's friendly demeanor, proactive leadership style and sense of presence make him one of the most respected non-commissioned officers in the ANA's 203rd Thunder Corps, he said.

"He's approachable, very friendly and very, very popular (among Afghan soldiers)," said Brown, a resident of Indianapolis, currently serving as a part of Regional Corps Training Team 2. He added Chamkani "has an outgoing, friendly manner and wants to be around his people at all levels" and is popular for "his willingness to make contact with the Soldiers at all levels."

If anything, Chamkani's amicability can even seem a bit excessive to cultural outsiders.

"It's like he's running for mayor," Brown joked.

Chamkani hails from a district of the same name in Paktya Province. In the 1990s Chamkani completed his high school education—not something to be scoffed at in Afghanistan—and went on to attend Mashriq/Maghrib English Language School in Kabul. Shortly after the U.S. invasion and the fall of the Taliban, Chamkani joined the ANA.

"I didn't have any military experience," he said through the aid of an interpreter, "but I had the feeling I was going to join the Afghan National Army to help the country."

Chamkani's leadership skill and presence helped him advance through the ranks quickly. In 2006, a little more than four years after he enlisted, Chamkani was promoted to sergeant major of a kandak in the 203rd Thunder Corps. Not long after, Chamkani advanced to the position of 203rd Thunder Corps sergeant major, a position roughly equivalent to a division sergeant major in the U.S. Army.

With the age and military experience of an average U.S. Army staff sergeant, Chamkani faced an enormous jump in responsibility many would have found overwhelming. However, Chamkani was untrammelled and threw himself into the work at hand. One of his most pressing challenges was helping to build the ANA noncommissioned officer corps, which was essentially nonexistent in the Soviet era, he said.

"The Russian system was inappropriate for this time," he said. "This new (NCO-centered) system is appropriate for this situation."

Brown, speaking of the idea of showing respect for NCOs, said, "Older officers are just now beginning to absorb that kind of thinking."

In his relatively short time in the ANA, Chamkani witnessed dramatic change in the emphasis the ANA places on NCOs. Chamkani said he believes much of the progress is due to the new NCO development courses offered at Forward Operating Base Thunder.

"Before, we didn't know how to conduct operations and we didn't have a combined command center (as we now have at the FOB Thunder Tactical Operations Center,)" he said. "Now, even our E-5 sergeants know about planning and the procedures for conducting operations."

The expansion and improvement of the ANA's NCO corps continues to be one of Chamkani's biggest missions. He can regularly be seen supervising the NCO courses and making sure NCOs conduct checks before ANA convoys leave the wire. He often volunteers to go outside the wire with troops, as he did on two recent missions to his home district.

At times, his official duties have taken him much farther. In December 2008, Chamkani visited the United States for three weeks. He visited the Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas and also visited Fort Hood, Texas, where he observed how the U.S. Army's G-sections are organized. He described the quality of life, education and military discipline in the U.S. as "one hundred times better" than in Afghanistan, a thought which inspires him to improve his own country.

He continues to look with gratitude to his U.S. counterparts.

"My partnership with the Americans has been good," he said. "Without their help, I would definitely be behind schedule."

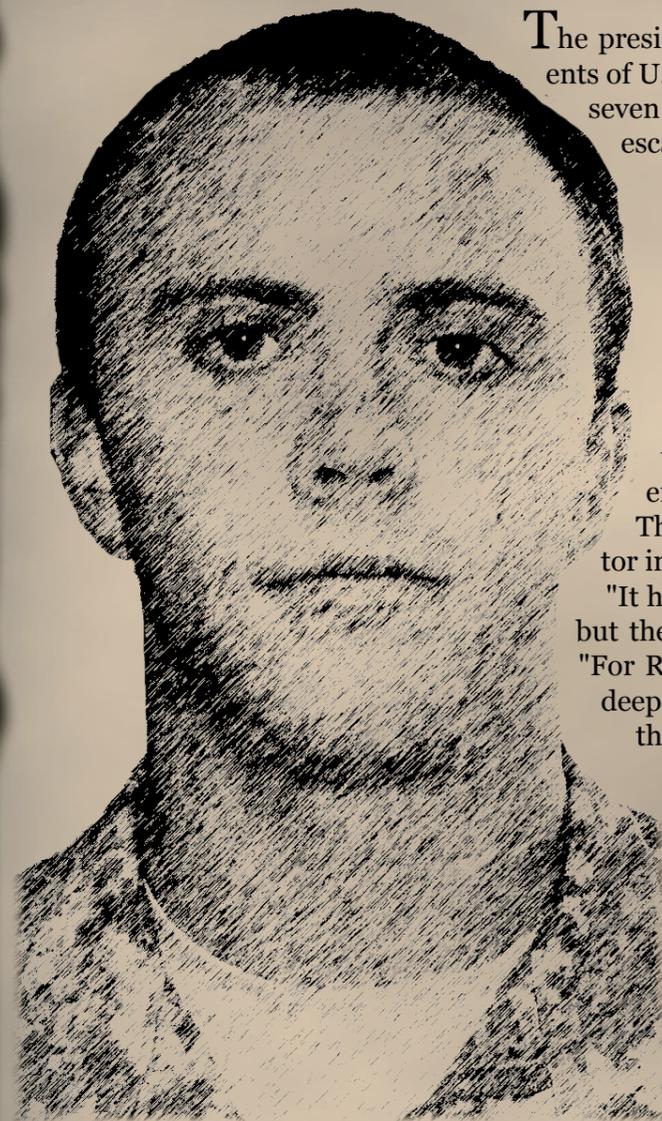
Brown, a former sergeant major of the Indiana National Guard, honored Chamkani by presenting him with the Indiana Sergeant Major's coin and certificate in front of the commander of the 203rd Thunder Corps, ANA Maj. Gen. Abdul Khaliq.

"Toward the end of my deployment, this is what I've found: I want to express my appreciation to him in some small way in front of his boss for his faithfulness and service to his country. We are all very proud of him," Brown said. 🇺🇸

The Road to Valor

A Tribute to Heroism

Story by J.D. Leipold, Army News Service



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor Oct. 6 for his actions on January 24, 2008 in Kunar Province.

The president bestowed the Medal of Honor Oct. 6 upon the parents of U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller, whose actions allowed seven of his Special Forces teammates and 15 Afghan soldiers to escape an ambush kill zone.

At a ceremony in the White House west wing attended by more than 100 members of Miller's family, his friends and fellow Soldiers, President Obama said that in a nation of more than 300 million, only 1 percent wear the uniform, and of that, only a select number have the privilege to wear the insignia of Special Operations forces.

"Today, it is my privilege to present our nation's highest military decoration -- the Medal of Honor -- to one of these remarkable Soldiers, Staff Sergeant Robert J. Miller," Obama said.

The president went on to say that courage was a defining factor in Miller's life.

"It has been said that courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point," Obama said. "For Rob Miller, the testing point came nearly three years ago, deep in a snowy Afghan valley. But the courage he displayed that day reflects every virtue that defined his life."

Also at the presentation were Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen, Secretary of the Army John McHugh, and U.S. Army Chief of Staff George W. Casey Jr.

The president told them Miller was a true leader, as demonstrated by two previous commendations for valor during his first tour in Afghanistan.

On his second tour there, Miller -- known simply as Robby to his teammates, family, friends and teachers -- was killed after he volunteered to serve as point for a night patrol with Operational Detachment Alpha 3312, in the Chenar Khar Valley near the Pakistan border Jan. 25, 2008. He was just 24.

Miller's fellow Green Berets remember the nightmare of how everything went down on that freezing winter night on the other side of the world.

'Ambush Alley' Mission

Around 9 p.m., on Jan. 24, ODA 3312 received word that a Predator unmanned aircraft system feed had picked up enemy fighters armed with RPGs moving into a house. Miller's unit was ordered to link up with Afghan soldiers and proceed into "ambush alley," traveling as far as possible in their uparmored Humvees, then dismounting and moving toward the compound.

Once the unit was able to confirm the Predator was on the money,

the team's Air Force joint tactical air controller would radio for a few 500-pound bombs to be dropped. Once the bombs had been dropped, the team would move in and conduct a battle-damage assessment -- at least that was the plan.

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Eric Martin recalled that as his team moved up the mountain in their vehicles, with practically vertical 300-foot cliffs to the left and the right of the road, there just wasn't much wiggle room for protection or for

counter-attacking because their guns were already angled up to max elevation. To make matters worse, the convoy came across two boulders at different intervals that had to be blown with C4.

"I was thinking, okay, we're gonna get hit from here, so we were trying to be as quiet as possible until the explosion obviously," he said. "The second boulder was nearly within sight of the objective, so we had to come to a stop again and blow that boulder. I believe that's when the enemy was tipped off."

Attack goes forward

The Afghan soldiers and ODA 3312 moved on until they positioned themselves where they could begin to attack. Then Martin and his team noticed through night-vision devices, fighters emerging from the house and taking up new positions.

When the firefight began, Martin thought everything was going great because the unit hadn't received any effective fire; nothing was impacting close to the team. The unit was returning heavy volumes of fire, so it seemed pretty one-sided and like the enemy was trying to bug out of the area, he recalled.

"Nothing unusual about it," Martin said. "It became unusual after the initial bombs were dropped and we'd opened with heavy fire." The unit then sent a dismounted element ahead of the vehicles which Miller was point for.

"This was Robby's second trip over and he had picked up Pashto on the first deployment ... he had

a talent for languages, he knew French, German, a little bit of Russian," Martin added. "He just had a gift which is why he was out front talking to the Afghans and in the position he was in, because the ANA soldiers had moved out too quickly and we needed to slow them down to gain command and control."

The dismounted element led the convoy across a bridge. Still everything seemed good, no shots had been fired, more than a few bombs had been dropped, so the assumption was the unit had taken out the enemy forces ... until the sound of a Russian-built PKM machine gun split the air, answered by an M249 squad automatic weapon and M4 carbine fire. The entire hillside erupted into muzzle flashes and chaos.

Covering fire saves team

Martin knew the high-pitched cracks of the SAW, and he also knew Robby was behind the trigger, because he had left base without a suppressor, rolling heavy with extra 200-round 5.56mm drums attached to his kit.

"He didn't care about the weight ... it was that mentality he had that characterized the whole team ... 'we're gonna roll heavy; we're gonna make sure we're ready to fight and that we're prepared for it,'" said Martin.

When the hillside exploded into a firefight, the Special Forces team found themselves in a close-quarters ambush less than 50 feet from Taliban fighters. Almost immediately, the team's leader, U.S. Army Capt. Robert B. Cusick, had gone down after being wounded.

That's when Miller took command, taking out a machine-gun nest, always moving forward, firing constantly and throwing grenades while his teammates moved in reverse from the kill zone with their wounded captain, radioing for a medevac helo and working to regain control of the situation. It was the last time any of Miller's team saw him alive.

"I think he wanted to provide that extra firepower for his buddies so they could get out of the kill zone," said Cusick. "He bounded forward; we moved back ... he saved lives that day. It was just in his personality and got passed on from his former team leader and team sergeant that he was a go-to guy, very reliable, very eager and one of the better in-shape guys on the team because of his gymnastics background."

A real gem

Cusick said Miller was always quick to volunteer and to take on more responsibility, recalling his weapons sergeant's last night when the team picked up the Afghan soldiers: "As soon as I said we're good to go, he went over and introduced himself to the Afghans, speaking Pashto to get them up for the mission."



Aside from his physical capabilities, knowledge of tactics, desire to speak Pashto fluently, Miller in his off-time served as the detachment's resident gemologist, the guy his teammates deferred to when they wanted to make sure a gem was a good deal, added Cusick.

"After he was killed the team passed Robby's gem detecting kit back to his family ... that meant a lot to them," Cusick said. "Many of the gems he'd bought, others had been gifts and a kind way for the Afghans to thank us."

Several of those gems have since been mounted, one of which Miller's mother Maureen wears from a necklace, while a few others were turned into earrings worn by his sisters in memory of their oldest brother.

Brother in arms

While no one will ever know what Miller was truly, absolutely thinking when all hell broke loose, Martin, his teammates and the captain all believe what was going through their buddy's head was complete and utter concern for the team.

"I think we were all feeling concern for each other that night," said Martin. "I think in combat the biggest fear I have and I think the other guys have, is letting down the guy to the left and right. It's not getting shot; it's about doing the right thing and not letting our brothers down."

Philip Miller, Robby's father, said his wife, three other sons and four daughters knew a large part of Robby's responsibility was working and training with local nationals, and heard about some of the day-to-day activities.

But the family didn't really hear too much about combat actions, because Robby didn't want to worry his family or divulge secrets about what he was doing specifically.

Between deployments at his parent's home in Oviedo, Fla., he would share photographs and video clips with his family – he loved the scenery of Afghanistan and talked about his passion for learning Pashto and sipping tea and interacting with the Afghans.

"He was enthusiastic about his involvement and what was going on in the country," his father remembered. "We're very, very proud and somewhat humbled, but very appreciative of those kind words we heard about our son's actions in Afghanistan, but it's more than that, it's the pride and satisfaction that one of your children did something so remarkable."

Historic Moment

"All of us wonder if we can perform the same way and keep our head and do what we have to do in an extreme situation like that and take a calculated risk that you know you'll have to take and which may mean you won't survive," he said. "You start to look at all the stories of what people do, including the people in this same firefight and then you realize how remarkable it is that they're keeping their heads under incredible, intense, dangerous conditions and doing the right thing – it's amazing to imagine anybody could behave like that."

"I'd like everybody to remember that he loved what he was doing and he was very good at it; he was extremely enthusiastic about it and it was very clear he really embraced the work, the mission and the people he worked with, American and Afghan," Miller's father said.

"When we learned about the details of what Robby had done to receive the Medal of Honor nomination, we weren't surprised and we also weren't surprised at his reaction (in the field), because that was the sort of person he

was, that's what his training taught him to do and be," said Miller's mother Maureen. "I think the fact that he died doing something that he loved and thought was worthwhile was an important factor in helping us deal with the situation."

"Rob always wanted to be a Soldier. I think there are several factors that influenced him to join the Army – one was his sense of adventure, another one was his sense of the importance of military service, it's something that runs in our family," she added. "Another important factor was Rob's sense of appreciation for the freedom and opportunity that we have in this country -- something he learned after hearing the stories when he was 8 or 9 of some friends who were Cambodian refugees."

"Being a stand-in and receiving the Medal of Honor on behalf of our son is obviously extremely important to us because it represents the gratitude of the country to one of their Soldiers who performed so well and effectively in combat," added Miller's father, who was also a Soldier. "Our son will become part of the written history of the United States." 

Safety Watch

Cold Weather

Story by U.S. Army Capt. Ron McKimmy, CJTF-101 Safety

Cold Weather Injury Prevention

Living in Afghanistan has its challenges. In just a few weeks, winter weather will hit us and before it does, we should review a few things to help keep us safe.

At Bagram, you can see snow in the mountains, while over at Jalalabad, it is still quite warm during the day and in Kandahar it's just plain hot. Morning PT may find a person needing their PT jacket and cap, but later in the day, they may be working up a sweat walking to the dining facility.

When the sun sets, the temperature cools down and gets chilly on the walk back to the hooch. Geography plays a big part in this. Depending on where you are in Regional Command East, you will experience different weather patterns.

No two areas are completely alike. Your location will determine how you protect yourself from the cold. How you prepare for and handle the cold weather will determine mission success or failure.

Why is this important to you? Cold weather affects armies in battle. Military history is full of examples of how winter weather has turned the tide on the battlefield. Seemingly unstoppable armies have been stopped cold (forgive the pun) because they failed to prepare for the challenges of fighting in winter.

Napoleon Bonaparte made this mistake when he began his Russian campaign in June 1812. All went well for his Grande Armée until the winter of 1812. Napoleon did not anticipate the early arrival of the Russian winter, and it caught his army unprepared. This led to his withdrawal in October. The same thing happened to the Germans during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1942.

The most important thing you can do is prepare for the cold temperatures. If available, check weather reports for the area. Important things to note are rain, snow, and winds, since wet conditions and wind-chill greatly increase the chance of cold weather injuries.

Persons with a previous cold injury, especially recent injuries, are at higher risk for a subsequent cold injury. Individuals more sensitive to the cold should take actions to protect themselves.

Most cold injuries are suffered by military personnel from 17 to 25 years of age. The exact reason is unknown although these troops are generally "front line" troops who experience more exposure and are generally less experienced dealing with the cold.

Well-trained and disciplined personnel are better able to care for themselves through personal hygiene, care of their feet, changing clothing, and other simple, effective preventive measures.

Military studies suggest that dark-skinned soldiers and those from warmer regions are more susceptible to cold injuries. This relationship between race and cold is related to the greater susceptibility of pigmented cells to freeze compared with non-pigmented cells. However, with proper training and experience, a person can compensate or overcome this predisposition.

Poor nutrition or incomplete meals contribute to cold injuries. During cold weather operations, personnel should eat well-balanced meals.

Medications that cause vasoconstriction (narrowing of the blood vessels resulting from contraction of the muscular wall of the vessels), increase urinary output, or produce sweating should be avoided. Tobacco and caffeine products (tea/coffee/energy drinks/supplements) cause vasoconstriction and poor circulation.

Your environment can be a contributing factor to cold weather injuries. The weather and temperature are predominant factors and will modify the rate of body heat loss.

Freezing temperatures are not necessary for a cold weather injury. Humidity affects the rate of freezing and nonfreezing injuries. Precipitation increases the rate of body heat loss. Wind greatly accelerates body heat loss.

Too much or too little activity may cause or contribute to cold injuries. Over activity creates large amounts of heat loss through rapid and deep breathing, and perspiration trapped in clothing reduces its insulating value. Conversely, immobility causes decreased heat production with resultant cooling in the extremities. ☹

Types of Cold Injuries:

Chilblains (Pernio) – are small skin lesions that are mild but uncomfortable inflammatory lesions on skin that is exposed to damp, nonfreezing ambient temperatures. The hands, ears, lower legs, and feet are involved most commonly.

Snow Blindness - the burning of the conjunctiva and superficial cells of the cornea by ultraviolet light from exposure to bright reflections from snow.

Hypothermia - condition in which the core body temperature is below 95°F. Hypothermia renders a casualty unable to generate sufficient heat production to return to homeostasis or normal bodily functions. Hypothermia can occur in environments with temperatures well above freezing. Inadequate clothing and physical exhaustion contribute to the loss of body heat and the development of hypothermia.

Frostbite - actual freezing of tissue fluids in the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Ice crystals form between and inside the cells with resulting tissue destruction. The most susceptible body parts are those areas farthest from the body's core, such as the hands, fingers, feet, toes, and male genitalia.

COLD

The acronym "COLD" is used to describe the cold weather protection principles and preventive measure:

- C** - Keep clothing CLEAN and free of oil and dirt. Oily and dirty clothing quickly loses its insulating effectiveness.
- O** - Avoid OVERHEATING. There are more heat exhaustion cases in a cold environment because of over dressing for the type of work performed. Overdressing and over-exertion cause an increase in body heat production and decrease heat dissipation. As the body temperature increases, there is a corresponding increase in perspiration, which causes saturation of clothes with sweat. Both conditions lead to cold injuries.
- L** - LAYER correctly. Clothes should be loose to trap air between the layers, which produces the insulating effect necessary for survival in the cold. Tight and constricting clothing produces cold injuries. There can be as many as seven layers of clothing used to protect personnel in a cold environment.
- D** - Keep clothing DRY. If clothing becomes wet so does the skin, which will promote cooling and frostbite. Change wet clothing at the first opportunity.

References

For more information please refer to the following:

- TB MED 508 PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF COLD-WEATHER INJURIES
- TC 21-3 Soldier's Handbook for Individual Operations and Survival in Cold-Weather Areas
- FM 31-70 Basic Cold Weather Manual
- FM 21-10 Field Hygiene and Sanitation
- FM 21-11 First Aid for Soldiers
- TB MED 81 Cold Injury

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