

FREEDOM WATCH

DECEMBER 2010

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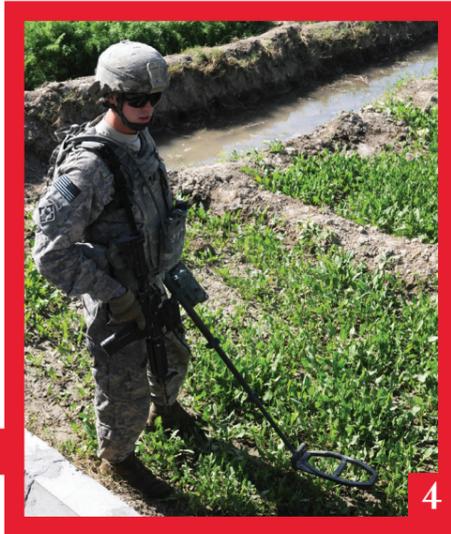
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(Cover photo) U.S. Army Pfc. Randall Kinnaman of Norman, Okla., with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, provides security behind a log pile in a village in the Charbaran District during Task Force White Currahee Toccoa Tikurah. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Lorenzo Ware, Task Force Currahee, Public Affairs)

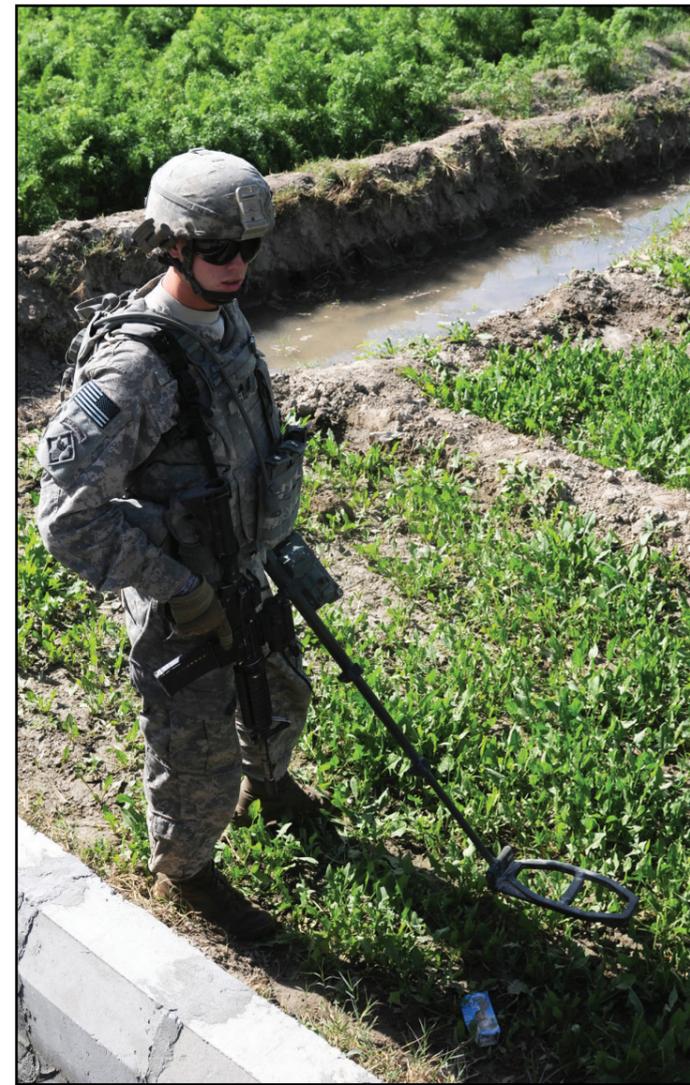
Out in Front: Soldiers hunt for hidden enemy

Story and photos by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte, 300th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Those who think a combat knife no longer has a use on the battlefield have not traveled with the route clearance units of Task Force Bastogne.

U.S. Army Spc. Robbie D. Nuttle II of Galena, Kan., who works as a “sweeper” for Route Clearance Package 36, Task Force Bastogne, under the 161st Engineer Company out of Fort Bragg, N.C., spends much of his time waving a mine detector back and forth in front of him as he walks the roads of eastern Afghanistan.

When he or fellow sweeper U.S. Army Pfc. Patrick F. Governale of Mastic, N.Y., get an indication some-



(Above) U.S. Army Pvt. Jamie L. Gack of Brainerd, Minn., a “sweeper” with Route Clearance Package 36, Task Force Bastogne, checks a field for hidden improvised explosive devices near Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan’s Nangarhar Province.

thing might be of interest in the path ahead, they pull out their knives and begin digging for it.

“It’s a little more convenient than a shovel,” Nuttle said. “It’s also more precise.”

For Nuttle, his worn knife is more than just a tool. He discovered 15 improvised explosive devices with it during his time here and refers to it as his “lucky knife.”

Such blades are a common sight among these route clearance teams, as is the dismantled process the Soldiers often use to uncover hidden devices designed to destroy armored vehicles.

Walk a few steps and prod at the ground. Walk for yards and prod at the ground. Walk for miles and prod at the ground. Sometimes the Soldiers travel in the road and sometimes alongside it, wading through rivers, moving through muddy farmlands and climbing hillsides.

“It’s probably one of the toughest and most dangerous jobs in the whole Army,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Kevin L. Sutton of Kinston, N.C. “Who else wants to look for something that will blow up?”

Sutton, a team leader who previously worked with a route clearance team in Iraq, said their work is aimed at protecting their fellow servicemembers as well as the civilian population.

“By us finding (an IED), it won’t hurt anyone else,” he said.

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Michael C. Neuman of Wheeling, W.Va., the platoon leader for RCP 36, said his Soldiers taught him the techniques to – carefully – dig up IEDs.

Step one is to know when something suspicious might be there.

“Step two is not setting it off when you’re on top of it,” Neuman said.

It is a bragging right for the Soldiers that they hunt down IEDs rather than working to avoid them. U.S. Army Capt. Andrew S. Glenn of Carthage, N.C., the company commander, said units can spend anywhere from eight to 14 hours on the road each day they go out.

With hard work comes success.

When one compares the number of explosive devices found compared to those detonated, the company has a 90 percent success rate, the highest among its parent unit, the 27th Engineer Battalion, Glenn said.



(Above) U.S. Army Pfc. Patrick F. Governale of Mastic, N.Y., walks ahead of his unit’s convoy to search the road for hidden improvised explosive devices near Bati Kot Village in eastern Afghanistan’s Nangarhar Province.

Meanwhile, the battalion’s overall success rate of 85 percent gives it the highest in Afghanistan, he noted.

Traditionally, route clearance packages seek IEDs from the protection of mounted convoys. However,

many Soldiers with the 161st Eng. Co. feel safer hunting their quarry in the open rather than looking for the explosive devices from enclosed vehicles.

“You’ve got a better chance of finding them,” said U.S. Army Spc. Anthony C. Pfaff of Oak Harbor, Ohio, a squad leader with RCP 36. “It’s more practical.”

The terrain can be a challenge and varies widely depending on the area being checked.

“It has moments when it can be really tricky,” said U.S. Army Spc. Devin T. Boyd of Banning, Calif. “You really have to have your eyes peeled and you have to

know what to look for.”

The number of IEDs have steadily increased in Afghanistan, and so has the work faced by the men and women who conduct route clearance each day.

“It’s probably one of the toughest and most dangerous jobs in the whole Army.”

Who else wants to look for something that will blow up?”

*-U.S. Army Sgt. Kevin L. Sutton
161st Engineer Company Team Leader*

Their constant patrols set a grueling pace marked by dangerous finds and the additional risk of enemy ambushes each time they go outside the wire.

Neuman said previous route clearance units told him finding four IEDs in a year was typical.

Now, one can find six of them in one day and all in

a two-kilometer stretch.

Soldiers with route clearance have become accustomed to the increased hazards, even as they pursue their continual hunt.

“It’s just an everyday part of life now,” Neuman said “You just expect it.”

Working Together

101st Soldiers, ANA conduct combined airborne assault into Charbaran Valley

Story by U.S. Army Spc. Luther L. Boothe Jr.,
Task Force Currahee Public Affairs Office,
4th Brigade Combat Team

The autumn air was cold during the early morning hours as more than 250 U.S. and Afghan National Army soldiers, each with more than 120 pounds of equipment on their backs, waited for helicopters to take them on an air assault into an area known for harbouring anti-coalition militants.

Soldiers from Company E, 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, successfully conducted a combined air assault into the Charbaran Valley.

Story continued on page 8



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Luther L. Boothe Jr., Task Force Currahee Public Affairs Office

(Above) U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ian J. Baker of San Diego, 2nd Squad leader, 3rd Platoon, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, provides security from behind a rock in a village in the Charbaran District during Toccoa Tikurah, the largest combined air assault 4th BCT has conducted this year in the province.

(Previous page) Task Force White Currahee Soldiers move over rough terrain conducting searches through the villages in the Charbaran District during the Toccoa Tikurah, the largest combined air assault mission the 4th BCT has conducted this year in the province. The Soldiers conducted the mission in conjunction with the ANA, providing training for the Afghans along the way. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Lorenzo Ware, Task Force Currahee Public Affairs)

The mission was to enter an area known to be occupied by the Taliban and to clear the enemy from the area, ultimately disrupting their freedom of movement.

"It is not a suspicion that (Charbaran Valley) is a Taliban controlled area; it is known," said U.S. Army

1st Lt. Aaron A. Taylor of Tecumseh, Mo., 3rd Platoon leader. "Every time other companies have patrolled through the area, they have made contact with the enemy.

"We were essentially doing a clearing operation," said Taylor. "We push through the objective, get security and

then conduct a deliberate search to look for things like (improvised explosive devices), weapons caches or any other (intelligence)."

The Currahees faced many challenges on the air assault. Working with any group for the first time can be challenging, said Taylor.

"It is that much more difficult when working with the ANA because of the language barrier," said Taylor. The mission also had many moving parts and was the most complex the TF has done since arriving in Afghanistan.

"We had an air assault, a combined force, multiple (landing zones), several different movements and it all had to come together in the end," said Taylor.

The Afghan terrain was another obstacle the units found themselves up against.

"In this terrain, route selection is essential in the planning phase," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Bartley C. Cardwell of Pineville, La., 3rd Plt. platoon sergeant, E Co., 2-506th Inf. Reg., 4th BCT. "A lot of times when you get out there, the terrain is different than what you see on the map."

Cardwell also explained how traveling through mountains made the trip seem longer than it was.

The air assault allowed the Soldiers from Company E to spend valuable time with their ANA counterparts and to use that time as a training opportunity.

"A big part of the counterinsurgency process is to give the ANA ownership of the fight," said Taylor. "We want to show the people that the government of Afghanistan and their military is legitimate, and they are out there working for their own people."

ANA soldiers were paired up with U.S. Soldiers equivalent to their rank, allowing ANA soldiers to shadow and learn from their U.S. counterparts.

"The majority of (the ANA) that we work with are eager to learn from us," said Cardwell.

"We make them the primary when searching and clearing houses because it gives them the training, and it lets the local populace know they are here to help," said U.S. Army Spc. Anthony C. Stegmeier of Ritzville, Wash., an infantryman and Alpha Team leader with 3rd Squad, 3rd Plt.

After 24 hours and covering more than seven kilometers of terrain, the air assault was complete, and the soldiers had successfully met the mission's goals.

"As long as you accomplish your objectives and we get everyone back home safely without getting hurt, then I would say that it was definitely a successful mission," said Taylor.

"I have been extremely proud of the platoon since day one of the deployment," said Cardwell. "Since we got here, (everyone) has done an overwhelmingly good job." 🇺🇸

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Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Lorenzo Ware, Task Force Currahee Public Affairs

Task Force White Currahee Soldiers search through a village in the Charbaran District during Toccoa Tikurah, the largest combined air assault mission the 4th BCT has conducted this year in the province. The 101st Soldiers helped provided training to members of the ANA while on the mission.

Distributing Hope: Operation Outreach Gardez brings candy, school supplies to local children

Story and photo by U.S. Army Spc. Derek Nelson,
17th Public Affairs Detachment

It was sometime in late summer, recalled U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Robert Thelen of Oconomowoc, Wis., a senior advisor with the NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan - CJ4, that two goat herders from Ghazni Province arrived at the Paktya Regional Medical Hospital. They had been injured by indirect fire - collateral damage in the crossfire of war.

A few days after their arrival at the hospital, the news reached Thelen. He immediately went to his storage container.

"We went to our conex and got a couple of backpacks," Thelen said. "We filled them with shoes, a

wristwatch, school supplies and a couple of other things. We brought it over to them and just chatted with them for about an hour."

Thelen called his experience with the two goat herders an "eye-opening event."

"One kid got to go to school," Thelen said. "The other one has been working since he was six or seven because his parents died of illness. He'd never been able to go to school."

This was Thelen's inspiration for Operation Outreach Gardez, an outreach mission supporting the community around Forward Operating Base Lightning, where Thelen is stationed. OOG's mission targets primarily women and children, supplying them with aid

such as school supplies, shoes and toys.

OOG is an adaptation of a larger program, Operation Outreach, at Camp Phoenix. That program involves Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and civilian contractors working to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people by volunteering their time to assist Afghans with complicated medical needs and supply them with basic survival items. By changing the focus from medical to education, Thelen was able to adapt the larger program to FOB Lightning's smaller size. Though focused on education, OOG also distributes basic survival items as well as toys and stuffed animals for children.

Since its inception, OOG has supplied a girl's school with backpacks and school supplies, aided two hospitalized goat herders and recently made a trip to a Kuchi encampment to deliver toys, stuffed animals, blankets, candy and backpacks filled with school supplies to local children.

"A lot of (Afghans) are underprivileged and don't have the opportunity to be educated or don't have the supplies," said U.S. Army Sgt. Richard Hammons of Greenwood, Ind., with the 2-44th Air Defense Artillery who was part of the recent mission to the Kuchi encampment. "This is just one way of being able to help empower the local people so their children can have a better opportunity and a better chance for an education."

Programs like these are an example of how servicemembers are partnering with local communities to form symbiotic relationships. Servicemembers support local communities and, in turn, gain their support. 🇺🇸



Members of Operation Outreach Gardez mingle with children from a local Kuchi encampment near Gardez District, during their recent mission to the encampment.



Soldiers, ANA make valley safe

Story and photos by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell,
Task Force Bastogne, 210th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Aleef Jan, the white-bearded Dag Mene village elder in the Shalay Valley, hardly ever sees International Security Assistance Forces. He lives a secluded life in the valley where he ignores most of the fighting around him. He is a farmer, but cannot grow enough to support his family. To earn a living, his relatives, who live with him in the village, travel down the road to labor as unskilled workers for income.

Story continued on page 12

“We are poor people here, and we are helpless, so we need help from the Afghan National Army and U.S. forces,” said Aleef Jan between the mountains of eastern Afghanistan’s Kunar Province.

While helping to secure the valley, a patrol of ANA and Task Force No Slack Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, found an improvised explosive device on the outskirts of his village Nov. 4.

“It’s a bad thing when the enemy plants IEDs, but good when ANA find them,” said Aleef Jan.

The Soldiers on the joint patrol were wary of the road before going out and took precautions to search for IEDs.

Merdad, an ANA soldier, spotted an area that looked suspicious and quickly signaled to the joint patrol about his find. They established security around the area before calling up an explosive ordnance disposal unit.

U.S. Army Sgt. James T. Schmidt of Decatur, Ill., an infantry squad leader, assigned to Co. C, 2nd Bn., 327th Inf. Regt, noted

Finding cover behind a rock wall in the village of Dag Mene, U.S. Army Spc. Joseph Kintz of Longmont, Colo., an infantryman, assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, Task Force No Slack, pulls security in the Shalay Valley of eastern Afghanistan’s Kunar Province Nov. 4.



the importance of finding the IED and how it saved many lives that day.

Schmidt and his Soldiers said the ANA soldiers they work with on a daily basis are some of the best they’ve seen.

“A lot of times when people think about ANA, they think we’re trying to lead them,” said U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Jacob Sass of Chatfield, Minn., an infantry platoon leader assigned to Co. C, 2nd Bn., 327th Inf. Regt. “But I think instances like today really show they’re coming along and can really start fending for themselves in the future.”

As the joint patrol continued into the rock-strewn village of Dag Mene, the ANA searched the ramshackle houses for weapons. They soon found extra weapons the villagers were hiding.

“When we actually get back into the valleys like this and start talking to people, they start realizing we can provide security for them,” continued Sass. “Today, for example, the village elder had a lot of weapons because he thought he needed to provide security for his own village.”

The ANA soldiers explained they were there to provide security and

extra weapons were illegal. They gave phone numbers to Aleef Jan to contact their base in case anything happened.

“We are happy when they come by, and they work well together,” said Aleef Jan, despite having his weapons taken from him.

As the Soldiers loaded up their trucks to return to Combat Outpost Penich, EOD set off a huge explosion that echoed in the valley and plumed smoke over the horizon. The joint patrol was over, one less IED was on the road and the Shalay Valley took one more step toward peace. ☺



U.S. Army Sgt. James T. Schmidt of Decatur, Ill., an infantry squad leader, smiles after watching an explosive ordnance disposal team detonate an improvised explosive device his Afghan National Army counterparts spotted while patrolling the Shalay Valley in eastern Afghanistan’s Kunar Province together Nov. 4.

Through the Veil



Soldiers work to build relationships with Afghan women

Story and photos by
U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes,
Task Force Wolverine Public Affairs,
86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

When U.S. Army Warrant Officer Caitlin Purinton lifted up the thin blue cloth of the burka, she would not have been surprised to see despair in the eyes of the woman who spends most of her life hidden under the head-to-toe garment. Instead, she ducked under the burka and saw the vibrant smile and heard the giggle of a young woman, who, like most Afghan women, is as curious about the American female Soldiers as they are of her.

As a member of the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Female

Engagement Team and a North Hero, Vt., native, Purinton has the rare opportunity to see beyond the shield of the burka that separates most Soldiers from Afghan women. The 10-woman FET was created to allow female Soldiers to act as ambassadors to the 50 percent of the population that is off-limits to male Soldiers, and build personal relationships, which are a cornerstone of the Afghan culture and a key to the success of counter-insurgency strategy.

“The FET mission to me is so critical that if I had to exchange blood for it, I would,” said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Sawyer Alberi of Eden, Vt., the medical operations non-

commissioned officer in charge for the 86th IBCT, and a FET team leader. “Women find strength in other women’s presence. The FET mission is nested very closely in the COIN mission, and unless you do it, you’re not doing the whole COIN mission.”

Pioneers of FET

Before coming to Afghanistan, the leadership of the 86th knew that most of the units who would go “outside the wire” and interact face to face with the Afghans would be in combat arms units, which are mostly male. These interactions, called “key leader engagements,” are essential to making inroads

into the Afghan culture, and give the units providing security insight into the problems, concerns and attitudes of the Afghans in the villages they are assigned.

“We basically said ‘let’s get in line with their culture,’” said U.S. Army Capt. Cathy Cappetta of Middlebury, Vt., the officer in charge of the FET. “There was an entire half of the population that the male Soldiers couldn’t interact with, and it is the part of the population that needs the most help.”

In order to ensure that the team was prepared for the delicate, yet essential mission, she helped facilitate and organize a 30-hour training course in Afghan history and culture, information collection, research methods, first aid and military tactics for the female Soldiers.

The Victories

During their nine months in Afghanistan the FET performed eight missions, ranging from air assaults to medical assistance operations. Although all of the missions were critical to facilitating the brigade’s

operations, both Cappetta and Alberi feel the largest success was their work with a local birthing clinic in the city of Charikar in Parwan Province.

The team paid two visits to the clinic. The first was to assess the facility, which had never been seen by U.S. Soldiers. The second visit was to deliver much-needed medical supplies.

“Once women get into a place and they figure out that it is OK that we’re there, it’s a whole lot easier for other people to enter the door, and I think that’s one thing that FET can be really good at,” Alberi said.

The Obstacles

Even for female Soldiers, there were plenty of barriers between them and the Afghan women. For instance, in certain parts of the brigade’s area of responsibility in the Bamyan, Parwan and Panjshir provinces, women are not allowed to leave their homes without a male escort, they must get permission from their husbands even to

speak to the female Soldiers, and they are not allowed to participate in the all-male shuras that are the foundation of local society. So, the Soldiers had to seek out the female voice.

Cappetta recalled a male shura where she was called out to talk to a group of Afghan women who were grouped in a corner in the hall outside the shura room.

“She motioned for me to come over, and it was like it was a big secret,” said Cappetta. The women had to get permission from their husbands, who hovered outside while she met with them. Once she was able to actually get to talk one on one with the women, she was surprised by their inclination to get right down to business, especially when it came to family matters.

“They know that they won’t get many chances to talk to American females, so they get right to the point,” she said. “They don’t think about themselves as much as they do their families. Their focus is how they can make their family or their village better.”

Underneath the Burkas

Despite the obstacles, planning and forethought it took to put themselves in situations where they could interact face to face with Afghan women, they found it was well worth the wait.

Most of the female soldiers expected the Afghan women to be downtrodden and defeated, but were surprised to find the shy smiles of women who epitomize survivors.

“There are strong people under those burkas,” said Alberi. “It’s a testament to the women of Afghanistan that they have managed to endure the Taliban rule here, that they have stayed, and have lived and have survived. There’s inspiration in that.”



U.S. Army Capt. Cathy Cappetta of Middlebury, Vt., the female engagement team officer in charge, shows a woman pictures during a medical aid mission at the Totem Dara Bala School.

ANA partners with local agencies in Paktya

Story by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Sybil Taunton, Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs Office

Leadership from the Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team and the Oklahoma National Guard Agribusiness Development Team met with key personnel from the Afghan National Army 203rd Corps Nov. 4 to discuss opportunities for increased ANA leadership in addressing local issues.

“Every week, we want a mission with you,” said ANA Col. Syed Wagif Shah, commander of the Religious and Cultural Advisors for the 203rd Corps. “We will be more successful and move forward easier if we work together.”

Paktya PRT has worked throughout the province for nearly seven years, and integrating Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Afghan National Security Forces has been a key factor in their successes. The main purpose of the PRT is to help the Afghan government increase its legitimacy in the eyes of its people. The Paktya PRT accomplishes this mission through the integration of Afghans, at all levels, in development and security operations.

“The Afghan government and security forces must be in the lead with everything we do,”

said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Marchal Magee of Issquah, Wash., Paktya PRT commander. “This is their nation, and their people must build that connection and trust in their government. The Afghan military is growing into an effective and capable force and we are just here to advise and aid them where they need our help. Continued partnership with the ANSF will build the mutual trust and respect this nation needs to ensure their future.”

The first joint operation following the Nov. 4 meeting took place Nov. 9 and consisted of a humanitarian aid delivery for distribution to Afghans living in the Waze Zadran District. ANA soldiers loaded the food and blankets into cargo trucks at Forward Operating Base Gardez Nov. 8 and delivered the supplies jointly with the Paktya PRT to Combat Outpost Wilderness the following day.

“ANA forces are critical to the PRT mission to help bolster our security and provide that local understanding of the security situation and culture not inherent in our own forces,” said Magee. “ANA forces, over the next year, will be vital to our escort and development mission throughout the province.”



Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Barry Loo, Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

(Above) Afghan soldiers load humanitarian relief supplies onto a truck at Forward Operating Base Gardez Nov. 8. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan will supply Afghans in Paktya Province with supplies including blankets and food. Future operations will continue to give the GfRoA and ANSF the opportunity to take the lead, demonstrating to the residents of Paktya that they are ready and able to continue the long-term development and protection of their province.

(Below) Afghans unload flour from an Afghan National Army truck at Combat Outpost Wilderness Nov. 9. Flour and other humanitarian relief supplies will be distributed to Afghans of the Waz Zadran District. This was the first combined operation with the PRT and the Oklahoma National Guard Agribusiness Development Team.



Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Barry Loo, Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

Assessment reveals lack of homegrown food

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

The bazaar in Asadabad, the capital of Afghanistan’s Kunar Province, is a noisy, chaotic stretch of shops and stands that extends the length of the city’s main thoroughfare.

There are many items for sale, including fresh fruits, vegetables, bolts of colorful cloth, finished clothing and electronics. Poultry stands will slaughter and quarter a chicken for a customer on the spot.

Several members of the Iowa National Guard’s 734th Agribusiness Development Team conducted a patrol through the bazaar and assessed the market. They found that very few of the products originate in Kunar Province.

“We were mainly there to get an idea how the local market works and find out what’s available at what kind of prices,” said U.S. Army Capt. Pat Birgy of Mt. Pleasant, Mich., contracting officer for the ADT and leader of the mission. “You could get about anything you needed there, but most of it got there from somewhere else.”

A poultry stand toward the end of the bazaar exemplified the issue.

Mohammed Amin’s poultry stand exemplified the problem discovered by the team.

The owner explained that the few chickens grown in Kunar Province were usually produced by individual households, and their owners wanted a higher price for the chickens than large-scale producers located in Pakistan and Nangarhar Province.

The net result, according to Amin, was that he simply could not buy chickens locally for resale.

“It’s not good. The chickens here all come from other places,” Amin said. “We want to buy locally grown



U.S. Army Capt. Pat Birgy of Mt. Pleasant, Mich., the contracting officer for the Iowa National Guard’s 734th Agribusiness Development Team, checks his watch after getting fruit prices from a vendor at the Asadabad bazaar. Asadabad is the capital of Afghanistan’s Kunar Province. Birgy and other ADT members conducted a market survey of Asadabad food prices during their visit.

chickens. Right now, if prices are good or bad, we have to buy from the guys in Pakistan or Jalalabad because we have no local source.”

The same was true of many fruits, vegetables, breads, candies and finished products in the bazaar.

The issue is an important one because selling imported goods does not generate the same level of economic activity as the production and sale of local agricultural products. Indeed, boosting local agricultural production is a top priority of the Government of the

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Birgy pointed out that because most farmers in Kunar Province operate on a subsistence basis, most do not have enough left after harvest to take to market. But Birgy said there is more to the story.

“Honestly, we still have a lot to learn about how this market works,” Birgy said. “We’re not going to get it all figured out in one visit. We’re going to have to come back several times over a long period of time.”



Peace brokered by Afghans, coalition forces

Story and photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Chris McKenna, Task Force Rakkasan Public Affairs, 3rd Brigade Combat Team

For more than 100 years, there has been a battle ensuing within the Gorbuz District.

The Nasradin and Bouri Kheyl tribes have been fighting over rights for occupancy and ownership of Natgul Village. With multiple regime changes throughout the past century, each tribe holds some type of legal documentation that says the village belongs to them.

In June, the fighting escalated with a total of seven tribal members being killed between the feuding factions. The two groups set up fighting positions in the mountains resulting in a stalemate lasting several months.

"When they were up in the mountains, you couldn't tell the difference between them or the (insurgents)," said U.S. Army Capt. Joseph Malone of Hamilton, Ohio,

commander, Company A, 3rd Special Troops Battalion.

Through intense talks, coalition forces were able to bring the tribes into an agreement to meet one another. From that point, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan members began to handle negotiations.

After much debate, each side partially agreed to a set of conditions that will help make the Gorbuz District one of the safest zones in Khowst Province, Malone said.

The first condition was to bring their fighters out of the mountains and relinquish their fighting positions. The tribes abandoned those positions in accordance with GI-RoA's Oct. 26 deadline.

The second condition came to fruition Nov. 7 when each tribe turned in their weapons in Khowst.

"The biggest thing is now the Gorbuz District government can focus elsewhere," Malone said.

"They can focus less on fighting and more on reconstruction and rebuilding."

While the dispute is far from settled, the tribes are taking steps toward peace, allowing GI-RoA the opportunity to take the lead and attempt to settle the conflict.

"It is a great pleasure that tribal chiefs from both sides came to me and promised they would dismantle all their posts and lay down arms," said Gov. Naimi, Khowst provincial governor. "They also promised they would resolve their disputes through dialog in a peaceful way."

The land dispute is set to be determined through the Khowst court system; both tribes are willing to allow the judicial system to determine rightful ownership.

"The two tribes swore they would accept all the resolutions of the mediators and would live in peace and harmony with each other after that," Naimi said. 🇦🇫

(Above) Members of the Nasradin and Bouri Kheyl tribes stand by weapons they turned in Nov. 7 as a step toward resolving a more than 100-year-old land dispute.

Cavalry troopers keep the pressure on

Story and Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes
86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) Public Affairs

Since the beginning of their tour in Afghanistan, the troopers of C Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment, have been a force to be reckoned with when it comes to putting pressure on the insurgents in their area of operation.

The insurgency felt this pressure in the form of an air assault operation when the troopers, Macedonian Rangers and Afghan National Army soldiers flew in by CH-47 Chinook helicopters and were met by Afghan

National Policemen to conduct a search operation in the Koh-e Safi District of Parwan Province.

During the operation, the troopers recovered two land mines, a rocket-propelled grenade, bomb-making materials, Afghan National Army uniforms, a possible vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, and detained four suspects for questioning, one of which tested positive for potential explosive residue on his clothing.

"We wanted to ensure that the insurgency here isn't able to regain any momentum following some of our other successful air assaults," said U.S. Army Capt. Jack Lehneman of Milton, Vt., the commander of the troop.

So far, C Troop has conducted five air assault operations. These are large-scale operations that use helicopters for the element of surprise, and are conducted to search for insurgents, weapons and munitions.

"(The insurgents) have been dealt some serious blows in this province and we aim to disrupt their reorganization over the winter months. This will allow for an expansion of the security footprint in the province, which will lead to increased stability," added Lehneman.

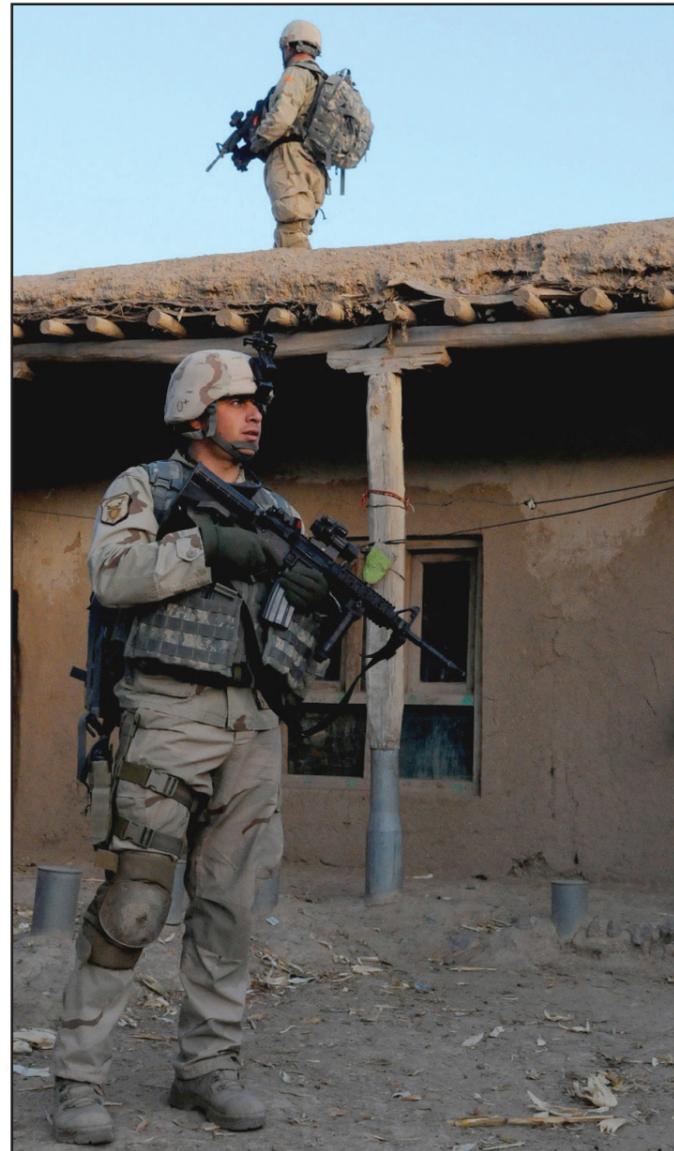
In addition to demonstrating their ability to disrupt insurgent activities, this operation also proved the respect C Troop earned among not only the civilian population, but their enemies as well.

As soon as the Soldiers approached the first building, which they later found bomb-making materials in, three individuals ran out of a house and surrendered.

"I believe the insurgents both fear and respect the abilities we bring to the fight. This has become apparent in the fact that the insurgents flee or surrender at the arrival of C Troop, and during encounters they have continuously broken contact or surrendered; rather than stand and fight," said the U.S. Army 1st Sgt. John Digby of Swanton, Vt., C Troop first sergeant.

This air assault operation served as proof that the Charlie troopers have not only become air assault veterans, but have also been key role players in improving the security in Parwan.

"These operations are the capstone to the shaping operations that we've been conducting all year. The interagency cooperation between coalition forces, ANA and ANP is a shining example of Gen. Petraeus' guidance (for combined action) executed in real-time," said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Scott Mathewson of South Burlington, Vt., a platoon leader with C Troop. 🇦🇫



Macedonian Rangers stand guard on a rooftop during an air assault operation conducted in Pacha Khak village with members of the 1st Squadron of the 172nd Cavalry Regiment, of the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), Afghan National Army, and Afghan National Police. During the operation the Soldiers found bomb-making material, land mines, a rocket-propelled grenade, and the makings of a possible vehicle-borne-improvised explosive device.

Strengthening the Walls

Ghazni PRT looks to improve prison security

Story and photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Katherine Roling, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

The Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team surveyed the Ghazni City prison to look for potential improvement projects while also bringing blankets for the upcoming winter and concertina wire for extra security.

The prison's warden, Afghan Col. Naeer Ali, who has been working in the prison section for 10 years, told the team the prison needed repairs for its walls, guard towers, sewage, cells and power system.

The prison, originally designed for 66 people, is overcrowded with about 300 men, 11 women and nine children. The children, ages 1 to 6, are not inmates, but are staying with their mothers who have been jailed for various crimes.

"Half of the prisoners are insurgents, half are common criminals," Ali told the team. "We just sent 20 of the more dangerous inmates to Kabul."

In a previous visit, the Ghazni PRT brought along Afghan Lt. Gen. Amir Mohammed Jamsheed, central prisons director; Habibullah Ghallib, Afghan Minister of Justice and U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Robert Harward, Joint Task Force-435 commander, to see the conditions of Ghazni's prison. The latest visit allowed them to learn more about the needs of the prison.

"We need a new wall outside the previous one to stop outsiders from helping inmates break out," Ali said.

Many of the prisoners are insurgents who belong to the Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin and al-Qaeda. The facility is not capable of separating the dangerous insurgents from the common criminals.

"The dangerous inmates are teaching the other ones," Ali said.

The warden thanked the PRT for a carpentry project that allows the inmates to create furniture.

"We want to keep them busy," Ali said. "I'd like to have you help us start up a carpet weaving project too."

Magdalena Brzozowska, the PRT rule of law specialist, said that the team was trying to start up a project for the women.

"The PRT is looking into a tailoring course for women at the jail because the women don't participate in the carpentry course," Brzozowska said.

PRT engineers also learned the jail needed a visitor's center. They also walked through the prison yard, where the septic tanks were overflowing with sewage that sat in the open air next to a volleyball net.

"We noticed that some of the physical infrastructure could use some help," said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Philip Kapusta of Valrico, Fla., Ghazni PRT commander. "The good news is that the Minister of Justice and the Ghazni Prisons Director have some money to help the prison, and we would like to help as well."



Story by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Steve Horton, International Security Force Joint Command

Afghan and coalition forces engineers recently completed a 10-day course on the construction and use of Mabey-Johnson bridges as part of a larger training and development mission in Afghanistan.

The course was designed to give coalition and Afghan members the knowledge to go back to their respective units or regions and help teach others the skills they learned.

"It is very useful to cooperate with different nations and help the Afghan National Army to organize this training," said Maj. John Velegrakis, Company Commander, Greek Engineers. "It makes you a better engineer, working here with everyone."

"The mission of the Hellenic Forces here is to offer humanitarian help

to the Afghan people, especially in the schools or the local community," he said.

From more than three decades of war and unrest throughout Afghanistan, many bridges were either destroyed or have structural damage. The Mabey bridge is a temporary fill for those areas in immediate need of a bridge until more permanent infrastructure can be built.

"This is a very good course," said Jawid, and NCO in the Afghan National Army. "We came

(Above) An Afghan soldier works along side NATO soldiers on a Mabey-Johnson Bridge on Camp Gazi, Afghanistan. NATO and Coalition forces are training the Afghan Army in how to assemble and disassemble the bridges for future use around the country.

(Right) U.S. Army Cpl. Suzette Bowman of Friendsville, Md., waits, ready with her tools, to go to work on a Mabey bridge on Camp Gazi, Afghanistan.

Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Jason Carter, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command

the same thing, building bridges."

The course is taught at the Engineer Resource Park at Camp Gazi in Kabul and managed by ISAF Joint Command engineers. The object of this course, and others, is to involve the Afghans as much as possible so they can train other Afghans in the future.

"Currently we invite ANA engineers from all of the regional commands," said Macedonian Army Capt. Tome Peev, Engineer Resource Park and Training officer. "We try to teach two to three classes per year to familiarize the students with the basics, and hopefully, they'll be able to learn more in the future."

With more and more Afghan engineers learning the intricacies of bridge building, the more access and freedom of movement the population will have, and the more they will be able to grow and develop into a prosperous nation.



Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Jason Carter, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command

Addressing Women's Issues

Servicemembers, local women partner to discuss future

Story and photos by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Amy Abbott, Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team, Public Affairs

In Asadabad, a city located near the Pakistan border in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province, women are seldom seen outside their homes. But that changed as a foot patrol predominately made up of females worked its way through the crowded streets headed to a women's shura.

The patrol included 18 females and a few males, most of them members of female engagement teams at the district and

provincial levels from Task Force No Slack. Members from the Army, Navy and Air Force represented, for the first time, a large joint effort that was put together to address women's issues in Asadabad.

"I think women's affairs are probably the highest priority out here," said U.S. Army Maj. Mary Parmenter of Perry, Iowa, the Iowa National Guard's 734th Agribusiness Development Team operations officer and a member of the Forward

Operating Base Wright FET. "Education of women and children is what's going to change the future of Afghanistan."

Around 50 Afghan women joined the females from No Slack, leaving standing room only as they crowded into the Women's Affairs building, right next door to the Fatima Girls School. The meeting, led by Kunar Women's Affairs Director Nasima Sadat, allowed the Afghan females to identify issues and discuss solutions directly with members from the Kunar Pro-

vincial Reconstruction Team, the ADT and representatives from the local battle space owner.

"Their biggest concerns are the lack of female-ran businesses, training and of course, their education level," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Christina LeMond, the Kunar PRT civil affairs noncommissioned officer in charge and member of the FOB Wright FET originally from Camden, N.J. "Kunar is very, very traditional. The women are not as free to do the things that other provinces are. Security is an issue, and women's abuse is also an issue."

Many programs are already in place to address these issues. There is an established pen pal program with local girls schools, connecting both the students and teachers with other females in the United States.

The U.S. Agency for International Development has sponsored many gender development programs in the area. One of these is the World Food Program's Food for Education, which gives families of young girls who attend school oil as an incentive to further their education. Education is also being addressed with the construction of new girls schools throughout the province.



(Above) U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Jacqueline Riner, Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team communications department officer in charge and member of Forward Operating Base Wright's Female Engagement Team from Tifton, Ga., introduces herself during the women's shura in Asadabad.

(Below) A woman wearing her burqa looks through the first edition of Loopata, the first women's magazine published in Kunar, while attending a women's shura in Asadabad. The magazine includes novels, poetry and informative articles.

Another large concern for the women in this area is how to provide care for their livestock. They expressed a desire to take animal care classes and also asked the ADT to provide high-quality seed in order to improve the production of their small farms.

Parmenter made no specific promises at the shura, but she said the ADT is currently assessing the effectiveness of existing women's agricultural programs in Kunar and evaluating the feasibility of proposals aimed at giving the women of Kunar agricultural related micro-business opportunities. Those proposals include small-scale poultry, dairy and honey production, as well as carpet weaving.

In addition, the women of Kunar are making strides on their own. In September, they published the first women's

magazine in the province, Loopata, which means Shawl.

"The purpose of the magazine is to express the voice of women and their requirements," said Brishna, the director for Loopata Magazine. "It is very important because (the magazine) raises the voice of the women."

The magazine includes novels, poetry and informative articles specifically aimed at women. It's free and distributed throughout the province.

At the end of the meeting, the FET members from FOB Joyce handed out scarfs and the PRT members distributed radios.

As the FET members headed back through the streets of Asadabad, they assured the ladies that this would not be the last time they saw them, and as they continue to work together they promised better things to come. ☺



U.S. Army Sgt. Latoya Winham of Anniston, Ala., a human resources sergeant with the 64th Military Police Company, 205th Military Police Battalion and a member of Forward Operating Base Wright's Female Engagement Team, listens as women introduce themselves at the women's shura in Asadabad.



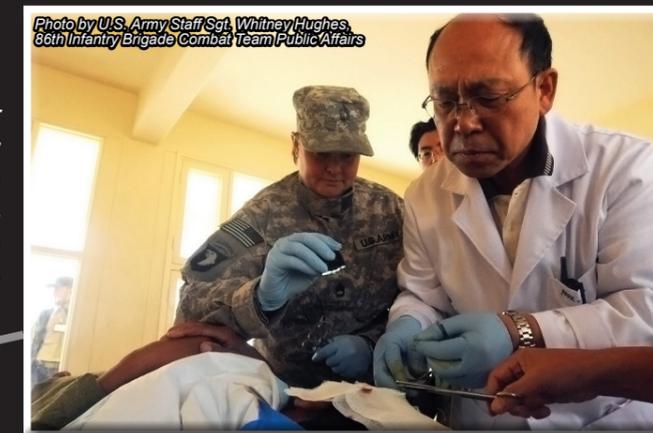
Goodwill Across Afghanistan:

ISAF and ANSF Reach Out



Petty Officer 1st Class Anthony Esquibel, a Navy corpsman and advisor to the Afghan National Army's 209th Corps at Camp Shaheen, practices conversational English with children of ANA soldiers. Esquibel became a volunteer of the Camp Mike Spann English Conversation Club to augment existing English classes and help students practice their pronunciation skills while strengthening coalition and host nation relationships.

Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Casey Martin, Regional Support Command-North Public Affairs Advisory Team



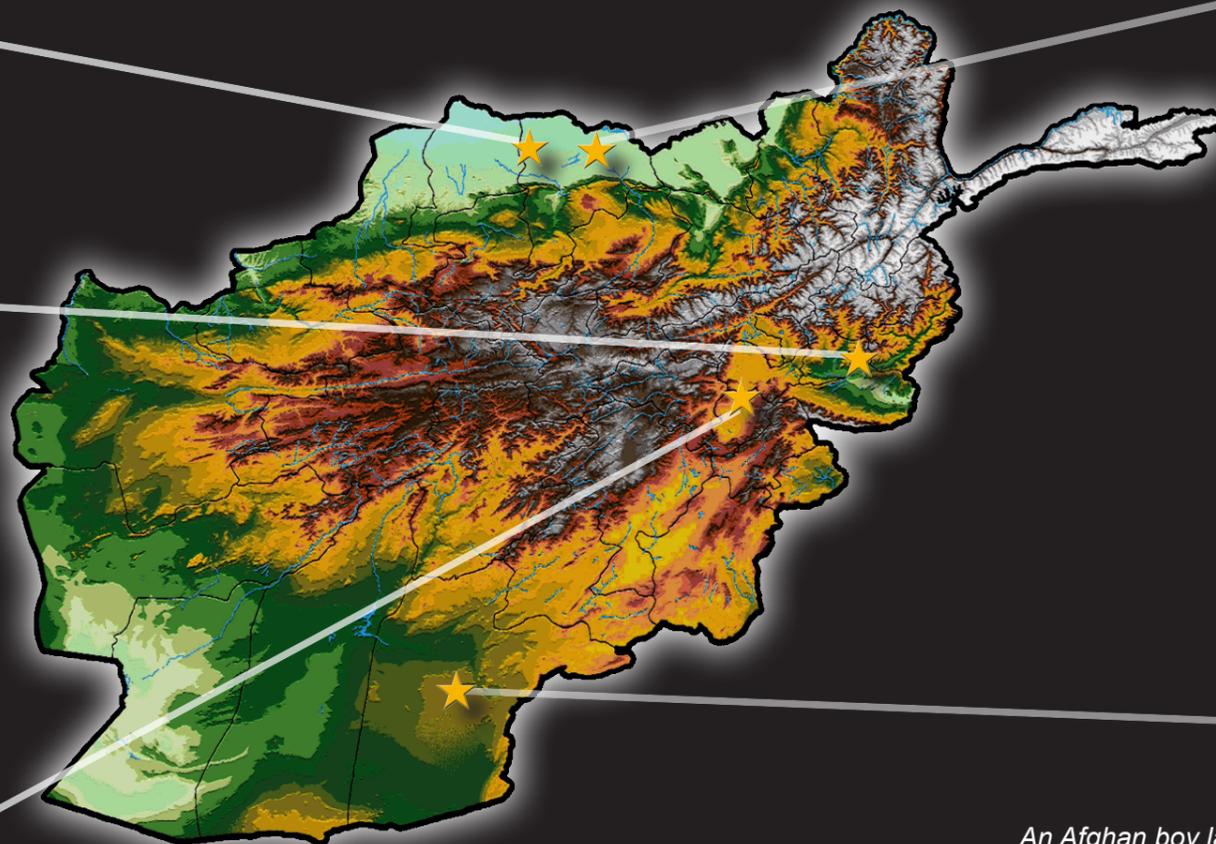
U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Sawyer Alberi of Eden, Vt., the medical operations noncommissioned officer for Headquarters Company, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and Suksam Park, the Director of the Korean Hospital and a member of the Republic of Korea Provincial Reconstruction Team, stitch a cut on an Afghan man's head during a medical assistance program in the Charikar District.

Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs



U.S. Army Spc. Jessica Walker from Killingworth, Conn., shares a hug with an Afghan child at a Girl Scout meeting on Forward Operating Base Finley Shields, Nangarhar Province.

Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Cameron Boyd, Task Force Bastogne Combat Camera



U.S. Army Sgt. Stephanie Tremmel, 86th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and an El Paso, Texas, resident, plays patty cake with a young Afghan girl while visiting a Bagram District village Nov. 1. Soldiers from Company A (Sappers), 86th BTSB, 86th IBCT, visited the village to finish dismantling an old Russian tank. The village malik will sell the scrap metal to buy food to help the villagers get through the winter.

Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Kristina L. Gupton, Task Force Wolverine Public Affairs, 982nd Combat Camera



An Afghan boy latches on to a new soccer ball donated to the KAF Bazaar School by Operation Seabeelieve. Naval Mobile Construction Battalions 18 and 40, also known as SeaBees delivered more than 30 boxes of school supplies to Kandahar Airfield Bazaar School as part of the operation.

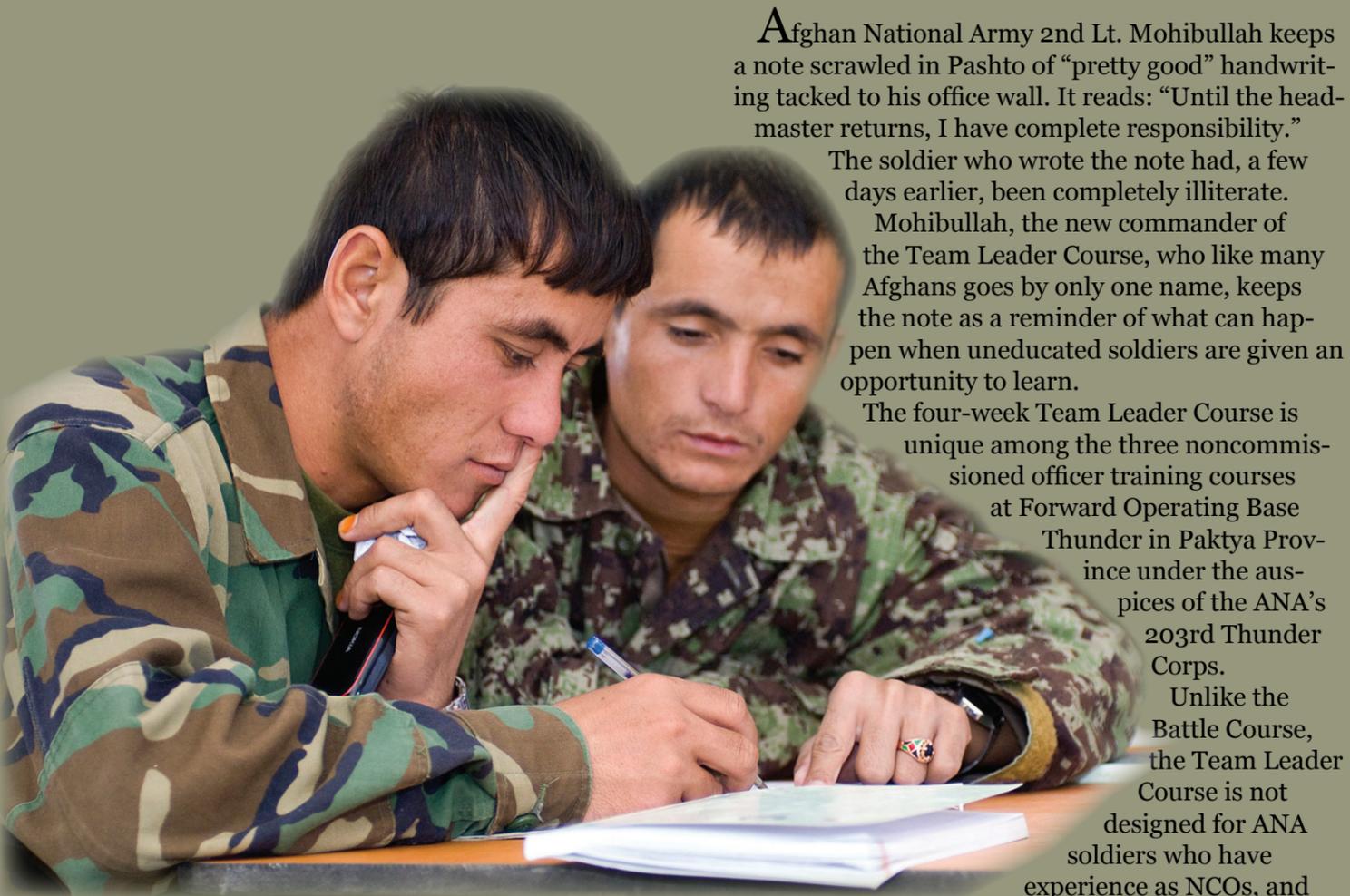
Photo by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Jason Carter, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command

The Backbone of the ANA

PART 3: FIGHTING ILLITERACY

Story and photos by U.S. Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th Public Affairs Detachment

Editors note: This is the third 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.



Afghan National Army 2nd Lt. Mohibullah keeps a note scrawled in Pashto of “pretty good” handwriting tacked to his office wall. It reads: “Until the headmaster returns, I have complete responsibility.”

The soldier who wrote the note had, a few days earlier, been completely illiterate.

Mohibullah, the new commander of the Team Leader Course, who like many Afghans goes by only one name, keeps the note as a reminder of what can happen when uneducated soldiers are given an opportunity to learn.

The four-week Team Leader Course is unique among the three noncommissioned officer training courses at Forward Operating Base Thunder in Paktya Province under the auspices of the ANA’s 203rd Thunder Corps.

Unlike the Battle Course, the Team Leader Course is not designed for ANA soldiers who have experience as NCOs, and

unlike the 1U Course, it does not assume the students have had any prior experience with reading.

Much like the Warrior Leader Course in the U.S. Army, the Team Leader Course is designed to prepare enlisted Afghan soldiers for their first taste of leadership.

ANA officers choose 10 percent of their soldiers to attend the Team Leader Course at regional training centers like FOB Thunder.

Upon graduating, the soldiers are eligible for promotion to sergeant and, eventually, higher NCO ranks.

(Above) Afghan National Army soldiers Mohammed Qasim and Seenatullah, both natives of Takhar Province, study during the literacy block of the Team Leader Course on Forward Operating Base Thunder, Paktya Province. The first week of the Team Leader Course is dedicated to literacy and basic education, a first opportunity for many ANA soldiers.

“A man who can’t read or write can’t read signs to know where he is going.”

- Tajudin, student in the Team Leader Course

“We’re not just training (NCOs), we’re creating them from Afghan soldiers,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Gary E. Smith of Kendallville, Ind., a training officer with the Indiana National Guard’s Regional Corps Training Team 2, who oversees the training at FOB Thunder. “It’s very analogous to what we do in our Army: same type of discipline standards, attention to detail and basic squad-leading skills.”

The Team Leader Course retrains ANA soldiers on basic soldiering skills, such as weapons qualification, and introduces them to NCO skills like responding to an ambush, as well as conducting searches of houses and vehicles. The first week, however, is dedicated to literacy.

The literacy block consists of 36 hours of classroom training taught by retired ANA officers rehired as civilian instructors. The block includes instruction on the alphabets and basics of both Pashto and Dari.

The block is particularly significant to soldiers like Tajudin, son of Imamqul, a native of Takhar Province,

who was forced to withdraw from school several years earlier due to economic problems.

“This course is very important for us; it teaches us how to read and write,” said Tajudin through an interpreter. Tajudin is one of more than 150 students in the current cycle of the Team Leader Course, which ran from Oct. 16 to Nov. 11. “A man who can’t read or write can’t read signs to know where he is going; if it is the right way or the wrong way. He doesn’t know his name or his father’s name. Now, we can write our names and know what way is the right way, and what way is the wrong way.”

With UNICEF reporting a literacy rate in Afghanistan of about 30 percent, Tajudin is not alone. Many hard-working ANA soldiers are among the illiterate because they are often in the field and unable to take advantage of the literacy programs offered by their units. Others are more fortunate, so soon after their arrival, the students divide into three sections based on ability, Mohibullah said.

At the end of the first week, all students are tested with their section. Mohibullah said many of the students do not pass the test, but they are all given passing grades for the literacy section nonetheless. He justifies this policy on the basis that in Afghan culture, brutal honesty so early on would discourage rather than help soldiers who have still not received enough education.

“One week is not enough,” he said.

Fortunately, the test is only a formality, and book learning continues informally throughout the duration of the course. Since the training day is only about six hours, many troops take the initiative to study, sometimes with the assistance of the instructors, Mohibullah said

“Our soldiers are good,” said Mohibullah, who recently transferred from the Kabul Military Training Center. “I visit them during the evening and see that they are reading and writing. I saw one soldier reading from a newspaper and another soldier writing down what was read.”

Mohibullah said Tajudin, whose regular unit is 6th Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 203rd Thunder Corps, based out of Qaraba District, Ghazni Province, is among those who have shown great diligence in their studies.

“He was very excited to get the opportunity, so we will help him out,” Mohibullah said. “If he keeps up his good attitude, we can help him.”



An Afghan National Army soldier enrolled in the Team Leader Course on Forward Operating Base Thunder, Paktya Province, answers a mathematics problem. The first week of the Team Leader Course is dedicated to literacy and basic education, a first opportunity for many ANA Soldiers.

Needing to be heard:

PRT lays fiber optic cable at FOB Morales-Frazier

Story by U.S. Air Force Capt. Kirsten Udd, Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team, Public Affairs Office

Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team personnel raced against the clock to build and install a fiber backbone that will provide vital lines of communication and expand the PRT's capabilities at Forward Operating Base Morales-Frazier.

The potential freezing ground of the upcoming winter necessitated the surge in activity, so the team called in reinforcements from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and subordinate units, Task Force Wolverine's Charlie Company's 86th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, L-3 Communications Corporation, the FOB's local Af-

ghan workers and Fluor, the FOB's contracted construction crew.

"The visible progress is exciting because we've been waiting to implement this project," said U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ryan Phillips of San Antonio, Kapisa PRT's client systems administrator. The \$160,000 cable and fiber project started in April with a site survey and installation commenced July.

The team soon realized they'd be able to combine the main power cables into the existing fiber backbone installation, saving hundreds of man-hours and additional excavation in the area. Initial stages of the project required 500 man-hours to complete, with teams traveling from Bagram Airfield to the FOB on several occasions to

work with the PRT.

"Working with the PRT on this project over the course of the year has been both challenging and rewarding," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Richard Briggs of Langdon, N.H., TF Wolverine's communications procurement/projects non-commissioned officer. "It was great to complete this project, have the added satisfaction of working with Fluor to complete the main power line installation, and give the new PRT the added benefit of not having to worry about that part of the project."

"There's nothing like seeing your blood, sweat and long hours in the sun finally coming to fruition," said Kapisa PRT's NCO in charge of communications, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Kerktan Rowe of Bronx, N.Y., deployed from Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. "It's been a pleasure working with all the different entities."

Teaming up with outside assets enabled the PRT to maintain focus on their missions within the province and continue training their newly arrived replacements.

"One of our goals has been to improve the FOB for our replacements and leave Afghanistan a better place for future generations," Rowe added. "I can confidently say we have accomplished that goal; it's a great feeling!"

Kapisa PRT conducts operations from FOB Morales-Frazier near Nijrab, FOB Kutschbach near Tagab, FOB Tora in Surobi District, and Bagram Airfield. The civil-military operation is comprised of more than 100 members, including active-duty Army, Air Force, Army Reserve, Army National Guard and local national interpreters. 



Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Joe Laws, Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team and Task Force Wolverine personnel worked to install a 640-volt underground power cable into a ditch on Forward Operating Base Morales-Frazier. The new backbone which will provide vital lines of communication and expand the PRT's capabilities.



Marines, Afghans make one community safe

Story and photo by U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Andrew Johnston, Regimental Combat Team 1

When the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment arrived in Marjah, parts of the region were unstable from months of fighting with Taliban forces. Many locals fled.

After months of intense fighting, Marines and Afghan National Security forces have started to see signs of stability. Farmers are returning to their fields, empty school desks are filling up and elders are participating in shuras to discuss how they can protect themselves against the Taliban.

As part of the stabilization process, key leaders in International Security Assistance Force and the local government of Helmand Province traveled to Sistani, where they hosted several shuras at various Marine Corps and Afghan National Army bases. The goal of the shuras was to show residents that freedom of movement has improved in the district and locals can permanently stabilize the area by getting politically involved.

"It has been seven or eight months that security forces have been here in Marjah," said Marjah Dis-

trict Governor Abdul Mutalib Majbor to a crowd of elders. "They have established many posts and vehicle checkpoints in order to bring peace to the region. It is my request that all of you be serious about security. Focus all of your energy on the cooperation with coalition forces so we can bring peace and prosperity to our homes."

U.S. Marine Maj. Dallas E. Shaw, the operations officer of 2-9, explained that when his unit arrived here, they were receiving a weekly average of 80 significant activities reports, which account for direct-fire and IED attacks. Thanks to the combined efforts of Marines, partnered with the ANA and ANCOF, the number has dropped to approximately 30, allowing locals to get back to work and open schools, he said.

"One of the best indicators we have of stability is kids going to school," said Shaw. "Nowhere in the U.S. would parents allow their kids to go to school if they thought it was even a little bit dangerous. Now, across the area in some private schools, in combination with public schools, there (are) anywhere between 200 to 300 kids attending school." 

(Left) Abdul Mutalib Majbor, district governor of Marjah, addresses a crowd in front of members of the Afghan press during a security shura at a Marine Corps Base in northern Marjah. As part of the stabilization process in the region, key leaders of Helmand Province, joined by the provincial governor's security advisor, Afghanistan national director of security, and the district chief of police traveled to Sistani to host several Shuras.

Safety Watch

Cold Weather

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

Hypothermia

Last month we talked about winter injuries from falls on ice, accidents from slick roads and breathing problems caused by cold air. This is only one part of the overall cold weather safety prevention program. Exposure to cold weather temperatures poses a risk for everyone, especially those that must work outside. Understanding how to recognize this before it happens can help prevent injury.

Afghanistan's winter chill can lower the temperature inside your body. This drop in body temperature, called **hypothermia**, can be deadly if not treated quickly.

Hypothermia can be complicated. Some Soldiers may not want to complain. Some Soldiers may not even be aware of how cold it is or how chilled they have become. For some, just a short time outside can cause hypothermia.

The best way to combat this problem is to be **pro-active**. If you suspect someone could have hypothermia, take his or her temperature. If the temperature doesn't rise above 96° F (35.5°C) call for emergency help. The person must seek medical attention immediately.

While you are waiting for help to arrive, keep the person warm and dry. Move him or her to a warmer place, if possible. Wrap the person in blankets, towels, coats — whatever is handy. Even your own body warmth will help.

Prevention is the best way to fight hypothermia. The nature of our jobs here in Afghanistan put us at risk for becoming cold, but there are some things that put us at greater risk. Sometimes the dynamic nature of combat missions makes it harder to feel when you are getting cold. It may also be harder for your body to warm itself.

There are some simple things you can do to keep yourself warm and safe from a cold injury.

Make sure you eat enough food because this is what your body uses to generate heat. If you don't eat well, or regularly, you don't have energy to burn. This may

be hard to say, but people that have a little more fat than others have an easier time staying warm. Fat can protect your body from the effects of cold. It keeps the heat inside your body. With everything, moderation is the key, so please eat healthy.

Studies have shown that **dressing in layers** is the best way to control body temperature. The Army has adopted a new generation of the extended cold weather clothing system or Gen III ECWCS. This updated cold weather clothing system includes 12 components from underwear to parka and trousers, all intended to protect battlefield soldiers from cold, snow and ice. This gives the individual a vast advantage in combating the cold.

Cover with a blanket or poncho liner when sitting still. Wear a hat and gloves. Tight clothing can keep your blood from flowing freely, which can cause loss of body heat, so unblouse your boots.

Stay healthy. Visit the medics to keep any illnesses under control. Some illnesses may make it harder for your body to stay warm.

Understand how any medicines you are taking affect body heat. Some medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter, can increase the risk of accidental hypothermia.

Avoid alcoholic drinks during cold weather. Some cold medicines contain alcohol. They can make you lose body heat faster.

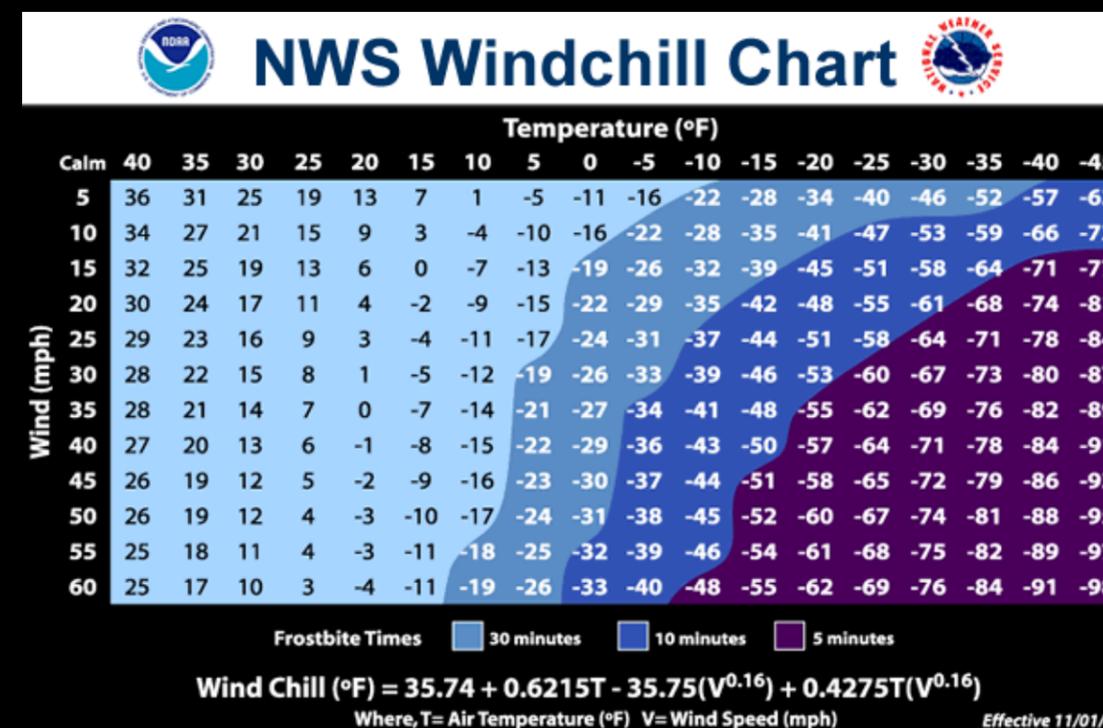
From living in Afghanistan, you already know that people can get cold inside buildings too. Living areas that are not heated adequately can lead to illness. Staying warm in your room is very important at night or when you sleep.

Living in a B-Hut, tent or some other "temporary" housing has a unique set of heating challenges. It is recommended that you set the thermostat to at least 68° to 70° F or 20° to 21° Celsius. ☺

Warning Signs:

- * Confusion or sleepiness
- * Slowed or slurred speech, mumbling
- * Skin color changes, bluish color changes
- * Shallow breathing
- * Weak pulse or low blood pressure
- * Chilly areas or signs that they have been in a cold place
- * Stiffness in arms and legs
- * Stumbling, fumbling
- * Unusual behavior – grumpiness, refusal to take fluids

Windchill



The wind plays a big role in how much heat your body will lose. It goes without saying that you lose more body heat on a windy day than a calm day. Weather forecasters call this the wind-chill factor. They often suggest, even when the outside temperature itself is not very low, that the wind-chill factor is cold enough for people to stay indoors. If you must go out, dress correctly. Cover any exposed skin and be sure to cover your head, ears and hands, as well as wearing warm clothes.

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

STORY

SNAPSHOTS

Soldiers deliver Afghan newspaper

Afghan, U.S. forces repel attack on FOB



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) Public Affairs

U.S. Army Spc. Ryan Hubbard of Cushing, Okla., with the Oklahoma Agribusiness Development Team, keeps watch over the tree line where insurgents retreated after attacking the gate of Forward Operating Base Gardez, during which at least five insurgents were killed.



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Kristina L. Gupton, Task Force Wolverine Public Affairs, 982nd Combat Camera

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Wojciehowski, a unit supply specialist with Company A, 86th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and a Vergennes, Vt., resident, passes out International Security Assistance Force newsletters to the villagers of Janquadam.

Ghazni PRT provides education for women



Photo by Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team

Approximately 250 women attended two courses offered by Forward Operating Base Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team. During the courses, women learned about wool spinning, vegetables, insects, types of infectious diseases, human rights and the economy.

Fireman's Carry

U.S. Army Sgt. James Rem-pala of Chicago, assigned to the Military Police Platoon, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), participates in teaching members of the Afghan National Police the fireman's carry during a medical training exercise for the ANP Academy on Forward Operating Base Rushmore, Paktika Province.



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Lorenzo Ware, Task Force Currahee Public Affairs

Marines clear explosives in Helmand

Engineers with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division (Forward), sweep a dirt road during a route reconnaissance mission in Helmand Province. With a history of improvised explosive device activity, the route needed to be cleared by engineers to ensure safe travel for coalition forces and the local populace.



U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. John McCall, 1st Marine Division, FAO

Working for security, better community



Photo by U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Richard Simonsen, Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

U.S. Army Sgt. David Sterin of Boulder, Colo., security force member of the Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team, stands guard at the district center in the Alingar District of Laghman Province. The Nuristan and Laghman provincial reconstruction teams work together to help the government in Alingar improve the security and increase the infrastructure in the district.

Paving the way to Gardez



Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Barry Loo, Paktiya Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

Afghans mix and transport concrete for a road construction project at Rabat Nov. 7. The road will facilitate all-season foot and vehicle traffic for two isolated mountain villages to Gardez, the province's capital.

Afghan National Police cadets graduate

Afghan National Police cadets participate in practical training, which is a main part of the 10-week police course at the Troop Sustainment Site on Forward Operating Base Ghazni. The course included training in reading and writing, personal hygiene, drill, shooting, law and the Afghan Constitution.



Photo by Polish Warrant Officer 2nd Class Slawomir Wardach, Task Force White Eagle

On the look out



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Matson, Task Force Bastogne Public Affairs, 210th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

U.S. Army Sgt. James Small from Milton, Fla., and U.S. Army Spc. Andreas Plaza from Freeport, N.Y., combat medics with Troop A, 1st Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, scan the area from mountain top Nov. 6 in the Tour Gahr Pass.

Soldiers investigate supply burning



Photo by U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Richard Simonsen, Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team, Public Affairs

U.S. Army Capt. Garrett Gingrich from Waterloo, Iowa, commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment, talks to an Afghan child at a mounted patrol base in Alingar District Nov. 10. The Commandos were investigating an incident in the district where anti-government elements burned supplies, including more than 400 copies of the Quran at a girls school in the district. The Commandos operate out of Forward Operating Base Kalagush in Nuristan Province.

Get the rest of the story

CJTF101.COM

Unit Spotlight

Task Force Thunder

Mission:

Task Force Thunder provides enterprise operations and command and control support capabilities to meet the USFOR-A commander's operational requirements. Thunder provides communications planning, engineering, coordination, oversight, and management of the Combined-Joint Operational Area-Afghanistan Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Coalition infrastructure, while serving as the Joint NETOPS Control Center-Afghanistan. The Task Force also provides command and control for two subordinate signal battalions, a U.S. Air Force Engineering and Installation Squadron, and technical control of the Regional NETOPS Control Centers.

History:

The signal mission throughout Afghanistan is commanded by the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade (Task Force Thunder), an Army Reserve unit headquartered out of Fort Gordon, Ga. The active duty signal units covering down on the separate regional commands are: the 86th Expeditionary Signal Battalion (RC-S & W), the 25th Signal Battalion (RC-C), and the 307th ESB (RC-N). Task Force Thunder also includes signaleers from the Air Force, Marines and contractors.

Why we are the best:

Task Force Thunder supports all Coalition communication needs in the CJOA-A. Without the ability to communicate effectively, warfighters across the country would be more challenged to accomplish their missions and possibly in more danger. Our job as signaleers is to provide all coalition servicemembers with networks that allow them to succeed in assisting our Afghan partners with a better future. To date, the Task Force Thunder team has:

- increased bandwidth throughout the CJOA-A by 65 percent, drastically increasing transmission speed
- installed more than \$500 million dollars in signal equipment
- planned and built Thunder University, the first Signal School at Bagram
- maintained an accurate outage log of more than 1,600 outages in a 10 month period while coordinating and processing over 3,000 Authorized Service Interruptions
- ensured quality voice, data, and VTC communication across the Secret Internet Protocol Router Network (SIPRNet), Non-classified Internet Protocol Router Network (NIPRNet), and the Centrix-ISAF (CX-) with a reliability rate of 99.9 percent
- distributed more than 500 Iridium telephones to key leaders throughout the CJOA-A
- distributed, trained, and upgraded 5,115 Netted Iridium Radios to combat and combat support units throughout the CJOA-A
- managed more than 90,000 US and NATO users, 60,000 workstations and 1,700 servers on the NIPR, SIPR, and CX-I networks

Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Paullus Manomaitis,
86th ESB



Making a marksman

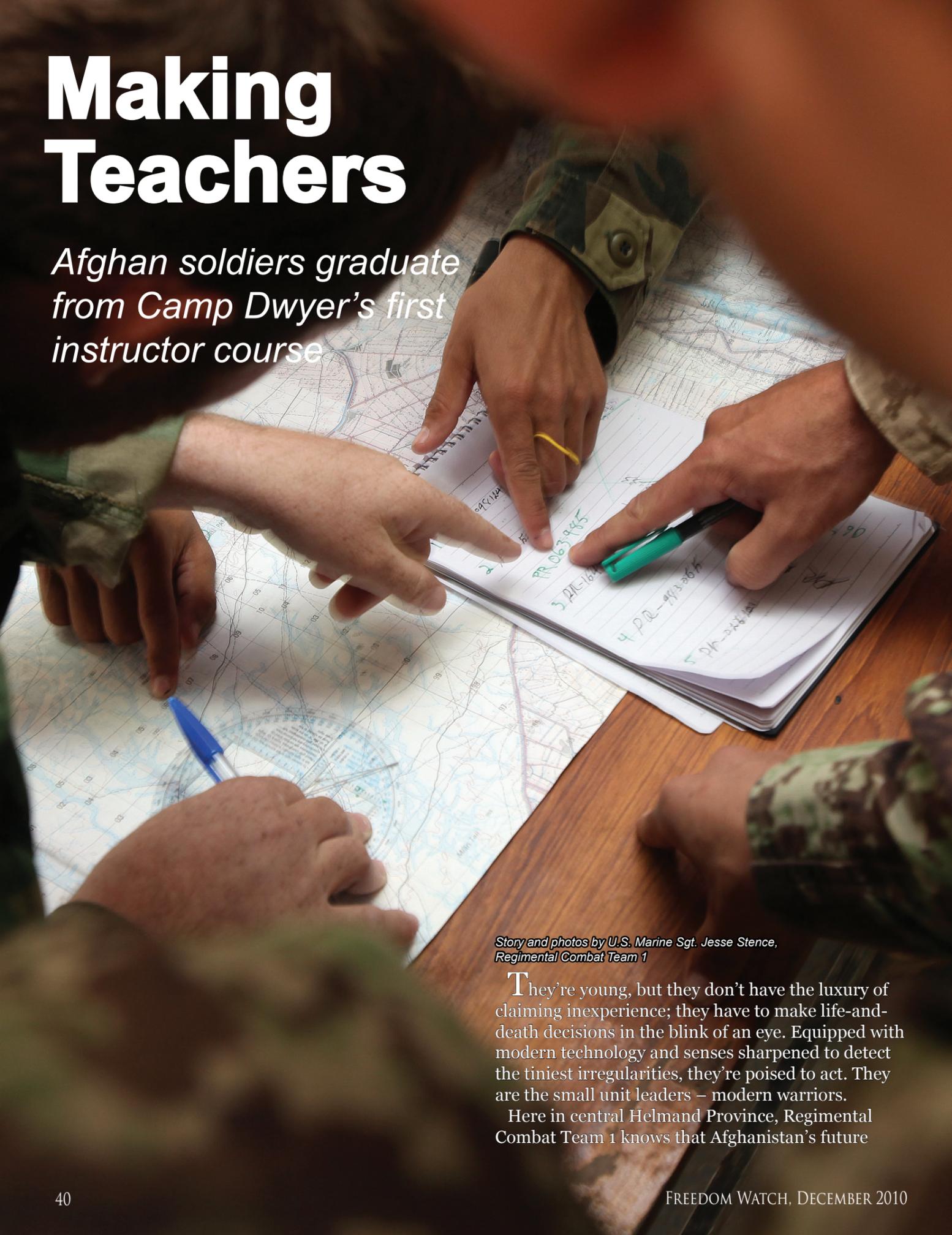
Army's best marksmen advise ANA instructors



(Top) An ANA soldier fires an M-16 rifle during the Basic Rifle Marksmanship Instructor Course at Kabul Military Training Center, Nov. 06. During the ten-day course, the soldiers were advised by the United States Army Marksmanship Unit and once finished they will be able to set up and run ANA basic training ranges. (Left) Afghan National Army soldiers prepare to fire as ANA student-instructors and members of the United States Army Marksmanship Unit look on. (Above) U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Brandon Green of Bogalusa, La., United States Army Marksmanship Unit member, explains to ANA soldiers how to make proper front-sight adjustments. (Photos by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joseph Swafford, International Security Assistance Force.)

Making Teachers

Afghan soldiers graduate from Camp Dwyer's first instructor course



Story and photos by U.S. Marine Sgt. Jesse Stence, Regimental Combat Team 1

They're young, but they don't have the luxury of claiming inexperience; they have to make life-and-death decisions in the blink of an eye. Equipped with modern technology and senses sharpened to detect the tiniest irregularities, they're poised to act. They are the small unit leaders – modern warriors.

Here in central Helmand Province, Regimental Combat Team 1 knows that Afghanistan's future

security depends largely on sharp, tactically sound noncommissioned officers within the Afghan National Army. So, the RCT-1 Embedded Training Team started Camp Dwyer's first ANA instructor course. Nine students graduated, and the ETT hopes the grads will continue to hone their NCOs' skills – NCOs who will be taking a progressively larger role in their nation's security.

Primarily, the course provided additional infantry training and leadership techniques to ANA staff NCOs, said U.S. Marine Sgt. Michael Mondt, the lead instructor with the Regimental Combat Team 1 Embedded Training Team.

"I think it's one of the best things we can do – equip their NCOs to teach their own people," said Mondt of Winnemucca, Nev. "Eventually, they are going to have to make it without us."

During the four-week course, the ANA students, most of whom are staff sergeants, received training in land navigation, weapons maintenance, weapons handling, patrolling and sensitive site exploitation. The mornings were dedicated to classroom instruction. In the afternoon, they tested their new knowledge through practical application scenarios modeled after the current battlefield.

"If we're working on searches, we'll set up improvised explosive device lanes, vehicles that have IED making materials, and personnel who have weapons hidden on them," said Mondt.

U.S. Marine Capt. Stephen Kulas, the operations officer with the ETT, said the course supplemented the graduates' core war fighting skills.

"I think they (already) had a pretty decent understanding of how to be a basic infantryman," said Kulas of Ludlow, Mass. "I think what we did was just work on the foundation that was built and ... maybe give them a different train of thought on how to do business in a (counterinsurgency) environment."

U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Edward Allier, the senior enlisted Marine with the ETT, called his experience here thus far "a wave-top of a 20-year career." He believes the ETT's role here is invaluable.

"You can preach all you want," said Allier of Ft. Myers, Fla. "Once you get down and start living with the people you train, you start sharing their risks. You start reducing the cultural barriers that are there."

The graduation ceremony drew several distinguished ANA officials, including Brig. Gen. Shujaee and Col. Abdul Kareem, the commanding general and operations officer for 1st Brigade, 215th Corps. Shujaee was the featured speaker at the ceremony. Afghan National Army Col. Mustafa, the Garrison Support Unit Commander for 1-215, was also in attendance.



(Above) Afghan National Army Staff Sgt. Dost Mohammad waits to be dismissed, with the rest of his class, after the first ANA instructor course graduation at Camp Dwyer.

(Previous page) Afghan National Army soldiers practice land navigation during the first ANA instructor course at Camp Dwyer.

U.S. Marine Maj. Derek Wastila, the officer in charge of the ETT, was present as well. He called the ANA a tough, capable force and said he feels comfortable fighting the Taliban beside them.

Kulas said the ANA soldiers weren't the only ones who learned something during the course. The Marines gained a better understanding of Afghan language and culture – lessons that will serve them well in the immediate future, he said.

"We all bleed the same blood," said Kulas. "We're all here to fight a (counterinsurgency) fight against terrorists." 

W P A R O F I L E B R I O B



“It kind of felt like Chuck Norris kicked me in the side,” is how U.S. Army Pfc. Phillip Mexcur describes what it feels like to get shot. But that is the extent of the theatrics Mexcur will offer in his narration of the day he was hit by two rounds of sniper fire; a story he tells in such a subtle tone his voice barely reaches above a whisper, as if he were telling a bedtime story rather than a near-death experience.

For most Soldiers this would be the end of the story, but not for the 22-year-old fire support specialist from Concord, N.H., with 1st Platoon Charlie Company 3rd Battalion of the 172nd Infantry (Mountain) Regiment. During a patrol near the village of Yazeen, Sept. 25, which happened to be the two-year anniversary of his graduation from basic training, he was hit with two rounds of sniper fire. The rounds were stopped by the side plate of his body armor.

Immediately after realizing he wasn't injured, he performed a casualty assessment of his platoon sergeant, gave the distance and direction of the sniper fire and directed close-air support, all within two minutes of being shot.

“I wasn't hurt, so there was no point in not doing my job. Even if I was bleeding out, I'd still want to do my job,” said Mexcur.

After the second shot, he dropped to the ground and his squad leader, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert Smith of North Haverville, N.H., checked him out.

After Rogers determined he was OK, Mexcur's first concern was his platoon sergeant, U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mike Keirnan, of Merrimack, N.H., who was hit by the sniper fire in the foot.

Then Mexcur's training as a fire support specialist kicked in and he got on the radio.

“He instantly got on the radio and started calling in CAS. That's when the F-16 (Fighting Falcon) came out of nowhere,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Dustin Rogers of Peterborough, N.H., Mexcur's team leader.

“That's the type of guy he is; he's way more mature than his rank. He is really into his job.”

Story and photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes
86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) Public Affairs

Mexcur wanted to call in a medical evacuation helicopter for Keirnan, but Keirnan wouldn't allow it.

“He did not want to give the enemy the satisfaction of knowing they wounded one of us,” said Mexcur.

So instead, Rogers went to a local villager and bought a wheelbarrow for \$10 and used that to get Keirnan back to their trucks.

Keirnan was still able to give some direction to his Soldiers. However, Mexcur saw he needed help, and the private first class, with just two years in the Army, stepped in to lead alongside his platoon sergeant.

“Thirty percent (of the orders) were coming out of his mouth. For the rest, I just knew what needed to get done,” said Mexcur.

For Mexcur, it was not a big deal.

“I have a different way of looking at things. I respect the rank, but I didn't do anything that a person my age, with my experience, shouldn't have. I guess it is just the way our parents raised us,” said Mexcur.

Some of the other Soldiers say Mexcur is blessed with the luck of the Irish. Mexcur even wears a Celtic cross he found in his Kevlar band.

“I kept it in my pocket until that day, when I put it in my Kevlar band ... and then I got shot,” says Mexcur as matter-of-factly as if he were telling you his favorite color.

Despite any luck that may have been involved on Sept. 25, it was his even-keeled nature and uncanny maturity that gave him the ability to rise to the occasion and perform well above his rank, Rogers added.

These qualities, combined with his intense commitment to his job and fellow Soldiers, are what make Mexcur's future in the Army a bright one, said Rogers.

“He really is a professional; one of the guys who gets stuff done. He's one of the few guys you can really rely on,” said Rogers. 🇺🇸



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Calhoun (center left) of Visalia, Calif., 2nd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Strike, was selected as the 101st Airborne Div. Career Counselor of the Year; and U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Yelixa Mawhorr (center right) of Brooklyn, N.Y., 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, was selected as the RC-East Career Counselor of the Year.

Region, 101st Career Counselors of the Year selected

U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Willene Orr, Combined Joint Task Force-101, 101st Airborne Division Command Career Counselor

The best were recognized in October when Combined Joint Task Force-101 hosted the first Regional Command-East and 101st Airborne Division Career Counselor of the Year Board.

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Calhoun of Visalia, Calif., 2nd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Strike, was selected as the 101st Airborne Div. Career Counselor of the Year; and U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Yelixa Mawhorr of Brooklyn, N.Y., 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Falcon, was selected as the RC-East Career Counselor of the Year.

There were 10 participants who competed at the board, which mirrored the components and events of the Headquarters, U.S. Forces Command Career Counselor of the Year board.

U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder, the RC-East and CJTF-101 command sergeant major, served as president of the board, which included five other members.

The participants were assessed in several areas that included the Army physical fitness test, warrior tasks,

a 50-question exam, several Army programs, policies and procedures.

The warrior tasks tested members in several first-aid procedures and identifying visual indicators of improvised explosive devices.

"The improvised explosive device lane was the best, and it was noteworthy that Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy Brown (board grader) put in a lot of time and effort to make it as realistic as possible," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Cody Waltman of Milton, Pa., 101st Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, Task Force Gladiator. "He did an outstanding job!"

The winners each received the Army Commendation Medal, a plaque and the CJTF-101 command team's coin. U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, the International Security Assistance Force command sergeant major, also gave each winner a coin and a note of congratulations.

Calhoun and Mawhorr will attend the Headquarters, Department of the Army, Secretary of the Army Career Counselor of the Year Board in January 2011 at the Pentagon in Alexandria, Va. 🇺🇸



**CJTF-101
Command
Retention Officer**
MG John F. Campbell

**CJTF-101
Command
Retention NCO**
CSM Scott C. Schroeder

**CJTF-101
Command Career
Counselor**
SGM Willene Orr

**Oath of
Reenlistment**
I do solemnly swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
So help me God.



CJTF-101 DIVISION RETENTION

See What's Happening in the Retention Corner!

Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB)

- Message will expire in December 2010
- Current SRB Msg – MILPER Msg 10-249
- Bonus payments will not exceed 16 years of service
- Encourage Soldiers to reenlist before message expires
- High propensity for some SRBs to decrease or terminate
- Payments are "LUMP SUM" and are "Tax-free" in the areas of Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait

Current SRB Zones - A, B, and C

- **Zone A** – Includes Soldiers who have between 17 months and 6 years of service at time of reenlistment
- **Zone B** – Includes Soldiers who have between 6 and 10 years of service at time of reenlistment
- **Zone C** – Includes Soldiers who have between 10 and 14 years of service at time of reenlistment

Current Reenlistment Window for FY11

- Reenlistment window: ETS prior to 30 September 2012
- Reenlistment window closes 90 days prior to Expiration Term of Service (ETS)

Bagram Retention Contacts

- SSG Cody Waltman - DSN: 431-2841, 101st HHB, Motel 6
- SSG James Coffey - DSN: 431-3025, 25th Sig Bn, Motel 6
- SFC Eric Crist - DSN: 481-6541, 10th CAB, Camp Albert
- MSG Michael Bonfardine – DSN: 481-6784, 101st SUS

For additional information see your servicing career counselor or visit www.armyreenlistment.com

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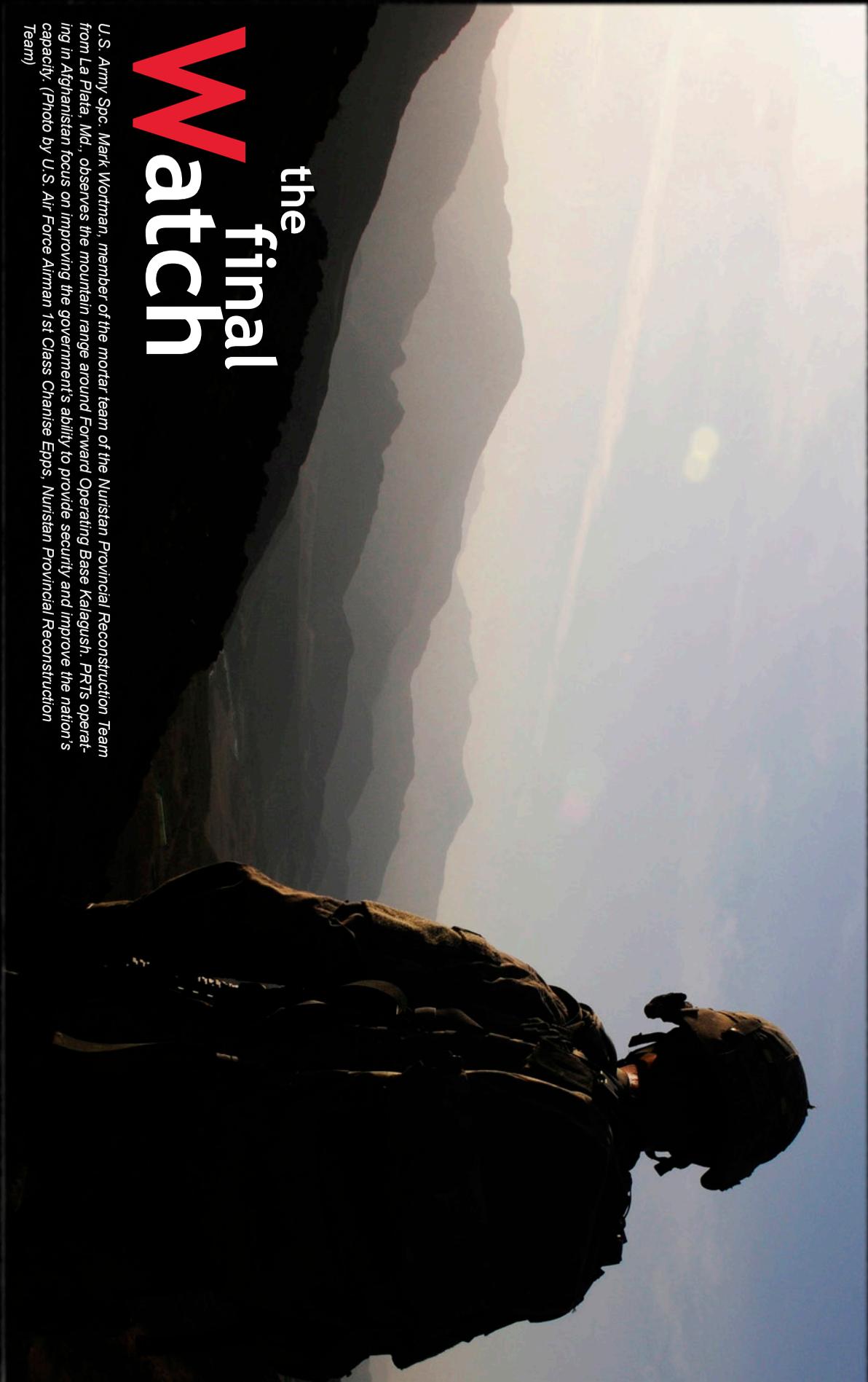
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the final Watch

U.S. Army Spc. Mark Wortman, member of the Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team from La Plata, Md., observes the mountain range around Forward Operating Base Kalagush. PRTs operating in Afghanistan focus on improving the government's ability to provide security and improve the nation's capacity. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Chanise Epps, Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team)