

THE HEARTBEAT



The official magazine of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division

1-502nd IN AFGHANISTAN

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The Colonel's Corner



“STRIKE Soldiers and Leaders,

We are at a pivotal point in history, where we, the STRIKE Soldiers will make a difference in Afghanistan. Six times before, our nation has called on STRIKE to help people in a far away land. We were there in France, Holland, Belgian and Germany for WWII, in the Republic of Viet Nam, in Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait and most recently three combat deployments to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Again, our nation has called upon us to help those oppressed. We will help the Afghan National Security Forces defeat the Taliban and give back the country of Afghanistan to the people.

Though this mission is complex and challenging, each and every one of you has a vital role to play. I know each of you will perform your mission to their best you are capable of, while maintaining your honor, integrity and protecting our reputation. Together we will continue to move the ball forward and complete this vital mission. We won't do this mission alone; we will have our brothers in arms from the 1/205 and 3/205 Afghan National Army. We will stand “Shonaa ba Shonaa” or “Shoulder to Shoulder” with the Afghan National Security Forces ensuring the people of Arghandab, Zhari and Maywand can live their lives free from oppression.

We will face this challenge and many more like the STRIKE Soldiers before us with honor and courage.
STRIKE!”

-Col. Arthur Kandarian

“Why am I here?”
“Why is this happening to me?”
“What more can go wrong?”

There have probably been many times in our lives when we've uttered these very questions. Maybe it's been in the past or maybe it's been recently, but these questions are quite common throughout the scope of our lives. Let's first take a look at an historic example and then how we can address these questions today.

It is easy to imagine the Biblical figure Joseph asking these very questions during the course of his lifetime. Here was a guy who was loved by his father, but had to deal with some pretty significant sibling rivalry. So much so, that his brother's threw him into a hole, tore his cloths, put blood on them and were going to tell their father that he had been killed by wild beasts. Mercifully(?) they instead sold him into slavery to some passing travelers.

During his slavery, Joseph worked diligently and gained a significant level of trust and responsibility; however, he also gained the notice of the lady of the house who tried to entice him. Joseph resisted, but was accused of inappropriate actions and subsequently thrown in prison. In prison, Joseph continued to work hard and do the right things and, again, gained a position of prominence. At this time, he used his God-given abilities to interpret dreams and helped out two other inmates asking only of the one that he would remember him after his

release and try to help him. This guy forgot about Joseph for two years! Then, when Pharaoh was having troubling dreams, Joseph was finally mentioned; he interpreted the dreams, was released from prison and found himself placed in the position of being the second most powerful man in Egypt.

Here the story takes an interesting turn as in the course of a severe famine, Joseph's brothers show up asking for assistance. In the movies, we would now expect Joseph to get his revenge on those who wronged him, but he forgave them. Even later his exact words to them were, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (Genesis 50:20)

Bottom Line: God brought about “good” even out of so much “negative”. I don't believe anyone would complain if Joseph had ever once thrown up his hands and asked the questions from earlier, but he trusted all would work out and it did!

Today, as we find ourselves either deployed or the loved one of someone in harm's way; we may be asking ourselves these very questions. First, it is normal and natural to ask these questions; however, it is important that we not become so focused on them that it prevents us

from functioning or living our lives. If this becomes the case, please don't hesitate to get assistance from a Chaplain, Medical Provider, or www.ArmyOneSource.com.

Second I firmly believe that God continues to bring about “good” even in the midst of challenges. The scriptures are replete with examples of this fact as are countless personal examples shared by men and women throughout the years. Not everything will be pleasant, not everything will be “fun” and not everything easy, but if we persevere in our faith, God will bring about positives and make a difference in the world through us. If you are interested in reading more about Joseph, please take a look at the book of Genesis, chapters 37 to 50.

The Chaplain says...

provided by:
Chaplain (Maj) David Beavers



FIRST STRIKE ASSUMES CONTROL OF ZHARI DISTRICT WITH TOA CEREMONY

Lt. Col. Johnny Davis and CSM Brandon Haywood uncase the battalion colors during a TOA ceremony at FOB Wilson, May 29.



With the combat boot prints of First Strike Soldiers now upon the rugged terrain of the Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), has officially taken control of operations in the Zhari District within the Kandahar Province during a Transfer of Authority ceremony held at Forward Operating Base Wilson, May 29.

A Transfer of Authority ceremony, most commonly known as the TOA, occurs when an existing unit hands over its control and responsibilities of their area of operation to an incoming unit. On this day, the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, relinquished its control and responsibility of Zhari.

“The men and women of the First Strike on this historic day assume responsibility to protect the people, strengthen the local government and help build a stronger economic environment in East Zhari,” said Lt. Col. Johnny Davis, commander of First Strike, while addressing the audience of US and Canadian Soldiers, Afghan National Security Forces and the local leaders of the Zhari District. “We stand ready to assume the mission.”

First Strike is deliberate with its intentions in Zhari, putting much emphasis on their partnership with their Afghan counterparts while looking to improving the overall quality of life within the district.

“Our goals here in Kandahar are to join forces and to fight along shoulder to shoulder with the [Afghan National Army] and the [Afghan National Police] to make the government of Afghanistan better than what it is right now,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Brandon Haywood, First Strike’s command sergeant major, “Some of the things we are doing now that the TOA is complete, is improving on our footprint force protection and ensuring our Soldiers are protected.”

The battalion is not hesitating in obtaining its end-state and has already performed operations with Afghan forces. “They’re already working with us right now and we’ve already conducted two missions with the ANA and the ANP in the area of Zhari,” said Haywood. “That’s our priority, join forces and work with them in everything we do.”



First Strike Soldiers along with 1-12th Soldiers, watch a UH-60 Black Hawk take-off at FOB Wilson moments before the Transfer of Authority Ceremony began, May 29.

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For the past year, have also been operating with the Afghan forces, insurgents near the villages, or securing the on the highways in the districts” and ANA forces now so will the Soldiers

“Today’s ceremony Eastern Zhari district from Warriors to the trained, Strike Soldiers of Task Col. Reik Andersen, commander, 1st Bn., 12th

Sending a Afghan Mohammed in their name support in respect you “The most turned and him in director of exactly the how to do battalion acknowledging



the 1st Bn., 12th Inf. Regt., ing in a cooperative manner Whether it was combating lages, defending the grape much needed trade routes district, the “Red Warriors moved together, and of First Strike. is to transfer the authority of the battle hardened Red ready and professional Force Talon,” said Lt. mander, 1st Bn., 12th

message to the local leaders whom were at the ceremony, including Gov. Miaz Sarhadi and District Gov. Karim Jan, Davis said to them tive Pashto tongue, “We will continue our help and the Zhari District and will take care of the locals. We and all of Afghanistan.” impressive thing was when Lieutenant Colonel Davis looked directly at the district governor and spoke to Pashto,” said Brigadier Gen. Frederick Hodges, operations, Regional Command South. “That captures right spirit and more importantly the right mindset on this. Because this is about the Afghans and there is a commander leading by example reaching out to and the district governor; very impressive.”



Lt. Col. Johnny Davis, commander of “First Strike and Lt. Col. Reik Andersen, commander, 1st Bn., 12th Inf. Regt., nicknamed the “Red Warriors,” shake hands after the ceremony.



Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, salute the colors during a Transfer of Authority Ceremony at FOB Wilson, May 29. A Transfer of Authority ceremony, most commonly known as the TOA, occurs when an existing unit hands over its control and responsibilities of their area of operation to an incoming unit.

COMBINED TASK FORCE STRIKE

BUILDS BOND WITH AFGHAN VILLAGE

The southern region of Afghanistan is well known for its extreme temperatures and miles of desert filled with violent sandstorms. But amongst the rugged and unpleasant terrain amazingly lies a chain of breathtaking tan mountains, complimented with beautiful rivers and streams at its base, which are surrounded by rich,



fertile soil. Many villages have formed in this part of the land and exist vibrantly while harvesting large fields filled with grapes, pomegranates and squash. One particular village is called Ashoqa and has a small population made up of playful children and devoted elders. Large trees shade their homes which are built from the earth itself and the settlement has a deep stream running through it, used often by the villagers to 'cool-off' on the many days when the temperature reaches into the triple digits. Its natural beauty and fresh bloom aroma makes the village a pleasant place to be.

The quiet town has recently been a target of intimidation by Taliban forces and the people there have been bullied into cooperation. Use of their food, water and supplies has been unwillingly granted to the oppressors and repeated threats have been made on locals to prevent interaction with the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and the American Forces.

In a "stone throw reach" is a combat outpost where ANA and US Forces base their joint operations for that local area. COP Ashoque houses the units from ANA's support company, 6th Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps and the First Strike Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). *(continued page 6)*

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On their mission boards are patrols to the roughed up village and meeting with the town's people to earn their trust and confidence.

With its ANA partners, "First Five Oh Deuce's" HHC recently made one of these visits to Ashoqa to have a key leader engagement with the village elders, June 12 and accomplished much while there.



Village Elders of Ashoqa meet with Soldier of First Strike's HHC for a key leader engagement, June 12.

the leaders of the village and help them regain ownership of their town," said Bearden during the brief.

After the brief and despite the village being near the combat outpost, the dismounted units chose a long and difficult route for the patrol, not allowing the enemy to pattern their movements. So with full magazines locked and loaded into their weapons, the combined forces moved through thick foliage and crossed rivers with strong currents to reach the village. The hour long journey took the patrol to outskirts of the town where upon arrival, the Soldiers received "high-fives" from the town's children.

"The change from the first visit is definitely noticeable and we've actually seen more of the woman and children coming out and waving to us," said Cpl. Jack Williams, a Pawnee, Mont. native and one of the company's assistant squad leaders. "Whereas the first

"We're connecting with the key leaders of Ashoqa and we're trying to make it so they are free to make choices on their own and not just telling us what we want to hear or just telling the Taliban what they want to hear," said Cpt. Brant Auge, HHC commander. "We don't want the people there to be afraid and that's our first priority," said Auge, a native of Ocean Springs, Ms.

The operation began with a patrol brief early that morning, where during the brief, information was provided on the background of the village, its current situation and what the short and long term goals are for Combined Task Force Strike concerning the area.

"We know of Taliban influence there and that's what we want to end," said Staff Sgt. Michael Bearden, native of Quartersville, Ga., and a reconnaissance squad leader with the company's scout platoon. "So along with our ANA counterparts, we will meet with



First Strike and ANA Soldiers share a laugh together during a patrol near the village of Ashoqa before a key leader engagement, June 12.

time, they were quiet and the kids were real shy, but now they act like we're their older brothers."

With security in place, the village elders met with the ANA and First Strike's scouts and talked in the epicenter of the small community at undersized water dam built by the Afghan government. They discussed many topics involving a new school, the harvests, water conditions and Taliban presence and influence. The units even offered assistance at their COP's medical station to those in need. Much information was exchanged and the talks were quite lengthy and with each new visit, the discussions grow longer.

"Our presence is becoming more effective and the key leader engagement meetings have progressively gotten longer," said Sgt. Curtis Boldman, a former quarterback for Arizona State University and now an assistant squad leader within HHC's scout platoon. "The first ones were real short not even twenty minutes, but now they are



Capt. Daniel Lockett, HHC's XO, looks back at his patrol during a key leader engagement mission to the village of Ashoqa.

between one or two hours. I expect to see this progress continue."

During the KLE, a suspicious looking individual was noticed by the units and was described as a man wearing black eye-liner, which is an out-dated, but not uncommon trade-mark worn by some members of the Taliban, possibly signifying that the Taliban may still have a presence inside Ashoqa's borders. (continued page 7)

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“We will continue to put heat on some of the locals whom we suspect to influence the populace in a negative way,” said Boldman. “I saw what this brigade did in their last tour in Iraq and I’m seeing the same thing here. We’re winning the confidence of the population and that will defeat the Taliban.”

Hours after arriving in the village, the key leader engagement was complete for that day. Exchanging handshakes with the elders and waiving and Afghan units left Ashoqa closer to Taliban.

The route back to COP the morning’s, but now with the trek back was truly testing the limits devotion to readying Soldiers for Brigade conducted extremely exercises, like Strike Blitz, and Fort Campbell, Ky.

“Strike P.T. has definitely Williams. “Jumping walls, full battle rattle, going through ‘wadies’ chest deep, it is a real smoker and the P.T. we trained for back in the states, has made us very capable. We knew it was going to be rough here and it is.”

Despite the unforgiving terrain and the temperatures in the low one hundreds, the units completed the patrol back to COP Ashoque. To the sounds of weapons being cleared and checked in the background, the ANA and American Forces reentered their base. With beads of sweat covering their face and canteens and camel back water



back to the children, the American to eliminating the town’s fear of the

Ashoque was just as difficult as Afghanistan sun at its strongest, the of the Soldiers’ endurance. With its such harsh conditions, the Strike demanding physical training Strike P.T. while back in garrison at

physically prepared us for this,” said



HHC and ANA climb over and through thick foliage during their patrol.

sources just about empty the mission also created a stronger bond between the two joint forces.

“I feel as I am a part of the US Army and when we accompany each other, we are one,” said Sgt. Amanullah Nasery, an ANA sergeant with the 6th Kandak, from the Zhari district. “Whenever the Taliban attacks the US Army it is the same as if they are attacking me and we all have one aim, to destroy the Taliban,” said Nasery, in his native language of Pashto.



HHC and ANA patrol through deep water ways when returning to their base.

In a war torn part of the world where explosives fill the soil and the sound of weapons exchanging fire is a daily occurrence, the determined people of Ashoqa can soon be freed from the fear of Taliban intimidation due to their newly formed bond with the ANA and First Strike’s HHC. Physical proof of such progress came a day later, when in broad day light, a small child and his father came to the COP’s entrance seeking minor medical attention proving that some no longer fear the Taliban’s threat.

“Medical support has been offered before and on day one their answer was straight out no,” said Pfc.

Jarrold Kapp, a medic with the company. “Now they are here in the station and we are glad they are here. If they opened up that much to us so quickly then I know we’re making progress.”



STRIKE in AFGHANISTAN,

STOP #1: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD



Kandahar Airfield is a military base located just outside the capital city of Kandahar and is attached to Kandahar International Airport. The airport was built in the 1960's for commercial traffic, but has since been redesigned for both commercial and military flights. Currently, Kandahar airfield is maintained by the Canadian armed forces and with the recent surge of troops, a large presence of NATO's International Security Assistance Forces are now there. The base is prominent for the US and Canadian



of a mine resistant ambush protected vehicle, also known as the MRAP, and experience for themselves what to do in an over-

turned situation. Pvt. Dennis Petersen of Strike's Headquarters and Headquarters Company said that the hands on training is what really made it special and is more confident now than before.

Another class the Soldiers must go through is the counter improvised explosive devices course and this is a big one. Countering IED's is what all soldiers operating in Kandahar must



be aware of and the course provides in-depth information. Soldiers are taught how to identify IED's, how they are made, with

what materials, how to locate where they are and how to handle a situation when alerted. The course even has actual explosives found in Kandahar, unarmed of course. The course and its instructors provide great training that makes sure their students are ready to operate in the province.



forces but many different Soldiers from many different nations are

there as well. The Brits, the Australians, Soldiers from countries like Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia and more. Now some are stationed there and some are in transit preparing to go their forward operating bases and combat outposts. But before leaving the airfield, they must complete some crucial training.

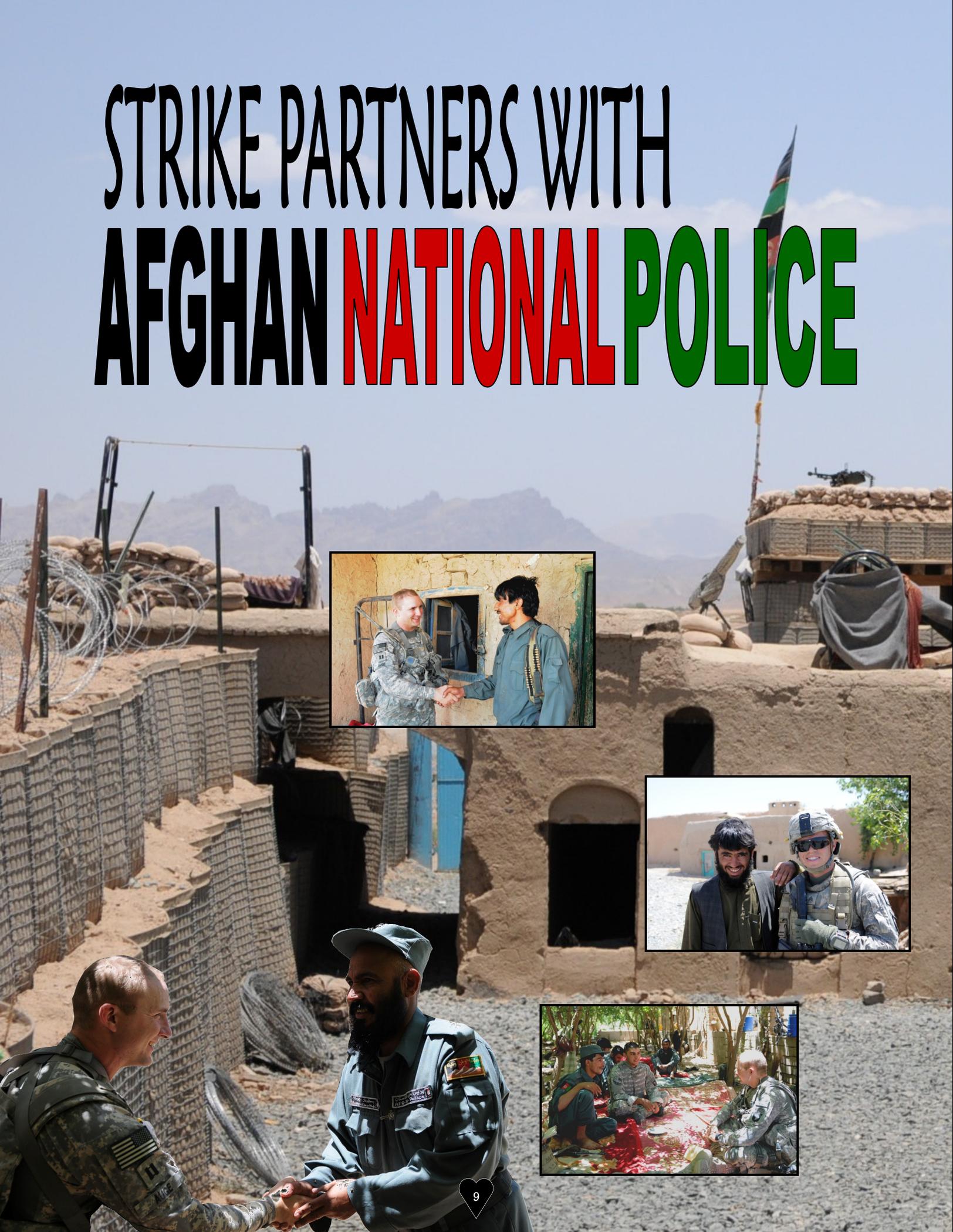
One of the required courses is vehicle roll-over training where soldiers receive great information on the how's, the why's and what to do when a rollover happens. After the instruction part of the course, they enter a simulator which takes the Soldiers inside



Kandahar airfield is a unique base with many valuable assets and continues to better soldiers every day.



STRIKE PARTNERS WITH AFGHAN NATIONAL POLICE



During any deployment many Soldiers are asked to do something that they are not normally trained in. For the mortar men of First Strike's Headquarters and Headquarters Company that means patrols and conducting assessments of the local Ashoque. The mortar platoon visited the Afghan National Police "We wanted the ANP station and do an assessment there of the station itself and the people there to see what can be done, what support we can give them to help secure that area," said Capt. Brant Auge, commander, HHC, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). As the tactics in Afghanistan shift towards counter insurgency, the partnership between US and Afghanistan forces has become more vital than ever before. "They are in a tough situation," said Auge. "They are in a pretty bad area. They have some good things there, the actual station is good, but they are kind of short on people, and there are some things up there that we can definitely fix and help them out with."



Being able to sit down and break bread with both of the forces allows the opportunity for each to learn about the other and build the trust and confidence which is needed for success when securing the people of Afghanistan.



WHAT IS...

KANDAHAR

Kandahar is one of Afghanistan's thirty-four provinces and is located in the country's southern region. It shares a border with Pakistan and has a population of over nine hundred thousand people, most of which live within the capital city of Kandahar.

Both the province and its capital have deep roots in history and is one

of the oldest settlements known to man dating back to

5000 B.C.

Due to its strategic location in Asia, connecting the southern, the central and the southwestern parts of the continent, it has been a frequent target for conquest by many civilizations throughout its existence.

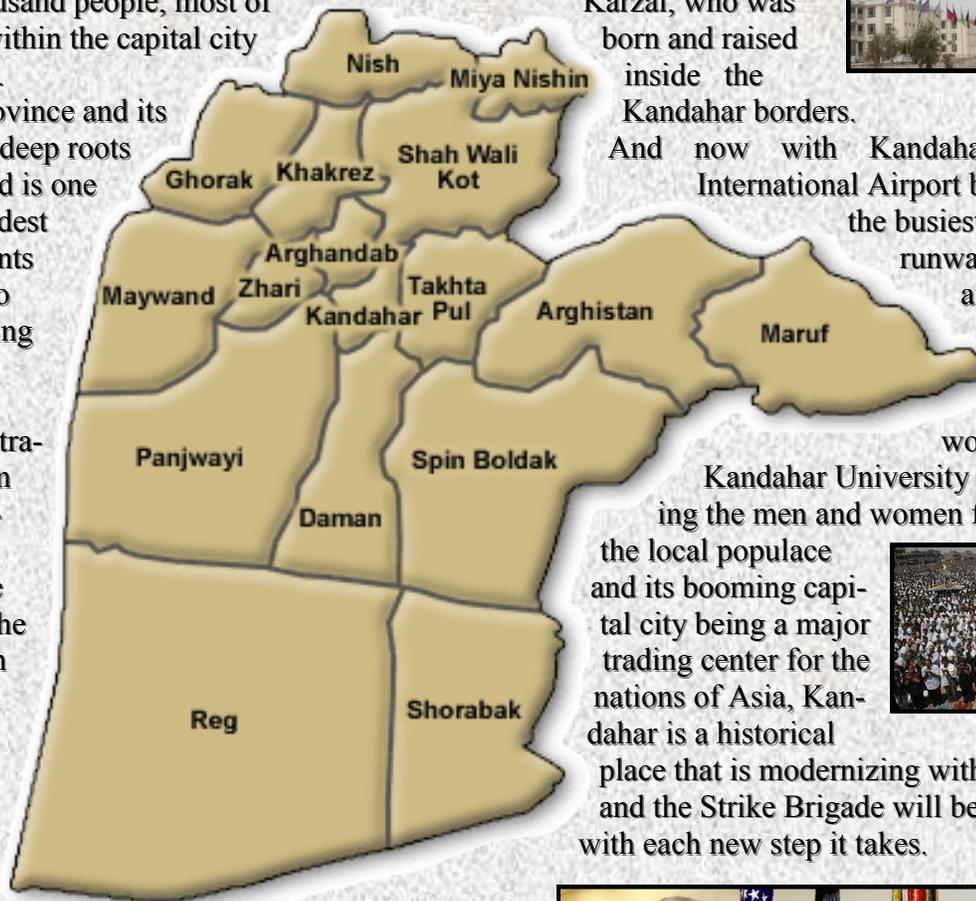
The Persians originally controlled the region and then the Greeks. The list continues. From Indian emperors, Arabian kings, to Ottoman sultans, including history's most famous leaders like Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan, many cultures have impacted the area.

In recent history, Kandahar has seen British empires and soviet occupiers; Mujahedeen rebels and Taliban rule. Even today, with Afghanistan's current president, Hamid

Karzai, who was born and raised

inside the Kandahar borders.

And now with Kandahar International Airport being the busiest one-runway airport in the



world, Kandahar University enrolling the men and women from

the local populace and its booming capital city being a major trading center for the nations of Asia, Kandahar is a historical

place that is modernizing with time and the Strike Brigade will be there with each new step it takes.



F O B W I L S O N G R O W S



STRIKE ZONE Afghanistan



Strike Zone Afghanistan is the brigade's TV show dedicated to keeping its viewers up to date with the unit's events during its deployment to Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Learn about each Company, Battery and Troop and be a part of their high-speed missions by checking out the next Strike Zone Afghanistan. Look on it for the Brigade Facebook Page.



STRIKE HONORS



a weekly look at Strike's history



Strike Honors is a weekly look back the regiment's history. From its beginnings dating to World War II, to its actions in Vietnam, the Middle East and everything in between, Strike Honors keeps its readers informed on those who paved the way for today's Strike Soldiers.

Look for it within the unit's office and on the Brigade Facebook Page.

the brigade facebook page

The Strike Brigade is in the social networking world with the Brigade Facebook Page. On it are images and video of the great missions and actions involving the 2nd Brigade Combat Team. Join and start up topics of conversations and leave comments about the information provided. Watch the brigade's TV show, Strike Zone and now Strike Zone Afghanistan and read about the amazing history of Strike with posts of Strike Honors. The page is a great way to stay close, even when so far away.

To be a part of the Strike Brigade via internet, log into your facebook page, and in the search box type in 2nd Brigade Strike and when the 502nd crest comes up, click it and then click Like. Join the already thousands of viewers who are keeping up with the Strike Brigade.

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