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southern Laghman
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TF Duke Soldiers continue
mission sparked by 9/11

SEPTEMBER 2011

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(Cover photo) Soldiers from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Cacti, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Bronco, take up a security position in a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle during a joint operation in the Pech River Valley in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province, July 28. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell, Task Force Bronco Public Affairs)



Afghan National Army Lt. Col. Quari Jielani, 33rd Kandak commander, verifies the identity of man in the Ghayn Valley, July 29 after clearing the area of insurgents. (Photo by French army Master Sgt. Isabelle Helies, Task Force LaFayette Public Affairs)

ANA demonstrates abilities against insurgent attack

Story by 1st Lt. Ludivine Laujac,
Task Force LaFayette Public Affairs

Afghan National Army soldiers led a combat operation to relieve a local Afghan Police force under attack by insurgents in the Ghayn Valley, July 28-29.

With air support and limited guidance from Task Force LaFayette soldiers, ANA coordinated and led the operations themselves, demonstrating the growing operational capacity of the ANSF against insurgents, said French army Capt. Dominique Olivier, French operational mentoring liaison team adviser.

The ANA 33rd Kandak deployed a quick reaction force after approximately 60 insurgents targeted the Afghan local police outpost in the Ghayn Valley. With some assistance from French Battle Group Raptor soldiers, ANSF fended off three full-scale attacks over a two-day period.

“During the morning, they just finished a week of training to confirm their capability,” said Olivier. “The same day, later in the afternoon, they fought for real against the insurgency with success. It’s amazing!”

This success marked a milestone for the ANSF, who are becoming tactically capable of leading their own operations, said ANA Lt. Col. Quari Jielani, 33rd Kandak commander.

“Today, following the combats in Afghanya and Ghayn, I know that my army is able of fighting on its own, without relying on mentors against the Taliban. It makes me so proud,” said Jielani. 🇦🇫



Afghan National Army soldiers secure the Ghayn Valley after insurgents attacked an Afghan local Police outpost July 28. The ANA repelled approximately 60 insurgents over two days of fighting. (Photo by French army Master Sgt. Isabelle Helies, Task Force LaFayette Public Affairs)

Poles, Afghans work shoulder to shoulder against insurgents

Story and photos by Maj. Szczepan Gluszczyk,
Task Force White Eagle Public Affairs

Polish soldiers partnered with Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police to conduct Operation Gothmoghs Nafas in the Waghez District.

The Afghan National Army 3rd Brigade, Afghan National Police, 3rd Police Operation Mentoring and Liaison Team, 1st Infantry Company from Battle Group Alpha and Civil Military Co-operation group from Task Force White Eagle began before midnight July 22. The combined task force reached Sarkhak Village by dawn to cordon off and search the area for insurgents, weapons and gain information about insurgent activities in the neighborhood.

To avoid detection, the commander chose to travel a difficult path, moving almost entirely through the wilderness using night vision devices.

Despite these precautions, Polish army Capt. Damian Kidawa, 1st Infantry Co. Commander said the opponent managed to detect the presence of troops in the territory.

“A lot of places in Afghanistan are often monitored and observed by insurgents who plant improvised explosive devices,” Kidawa said. “When the rebels have confirmation that the coalition troops or Afghan National Security Forces are approaching they link up a power source and the device is ready for use.”

Kidawa said with good training, experience, intuition and perceptiveness his patrol was able to detect the IED and dispose of it. Two days earlier, 1st Co. also dismantled IEDs of much greater size.

Near the exit of the gravel road to an asphalt artery linking Kabul to Kandahar, soldiers discovered two 40kg IEDs. They called for an explosive ordnance disposal unit, who destroyed bombs.

At dawn, the Polish-Afghan patrol entered the village. The presence of children and young people making their way to the local school gave the first impression that Taliban presence was unlikely, Kidawa said. After searching several compounds and talking with the residents of the Sarkhak, soldiers returned to their vehicles.

Just a few kilometers from the village, one of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles hit an antitank mine. Nobody was hurt, but the explosion destroyed a wheel. Moving more slowly, the convoy was attacked a few hundred meters north of the village, Mohamman Khan.

Insurgents fired several grenades and mortar shells at the convoy which moved into a defensive posture and returned fire.

“We immediately responded with fire and all armament assets, including a 30mm cannon transporter Rosomak,” said Kidawa.

Polish army Lt. Col. Rafal Miernik, Battle Group Alpha commander said the Afghan soldiers were well prepared for the fight.

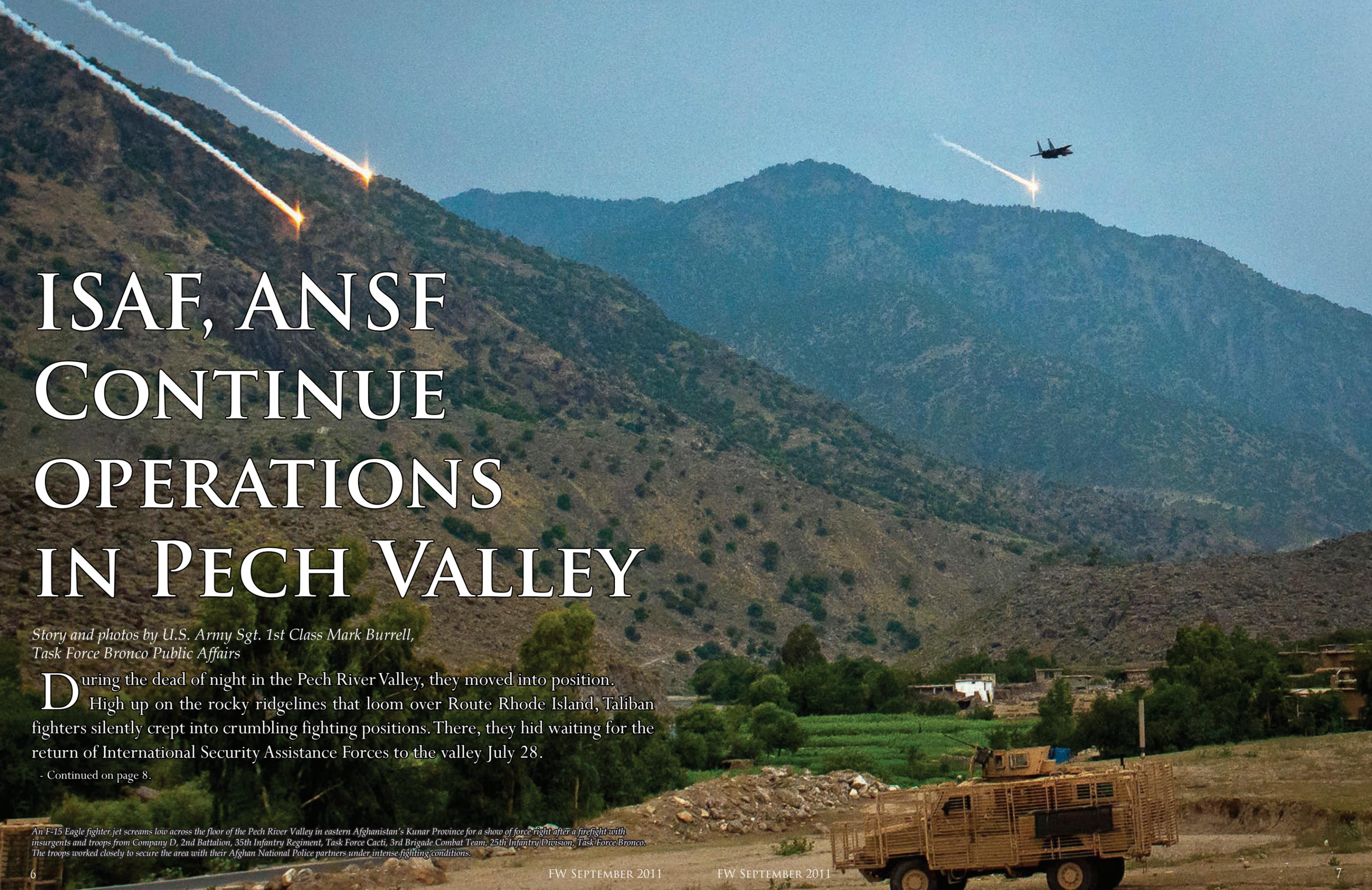
“Arm in arm with my soldiers, Afghans fought with the insurgents. Such events remind me that the ANA is becoming better trained and well prepared,” said Miernik.

ANA soldiers sustained minor shrapnel injuries but the convoy remained otherwise unharmed. A fate not shared by the insurgents.

The next day, Ghazni Province police chief, ANP Col. Zahid Zorawar confirmed Afghan and coalition forces killed at least seven insurgents during the firefight. 🇦🇫



(Top) A Soldier from 1st Infantry Company, Battle Group Alpha, Task Force White Eagle provided security for an Afghan National Policeman while he searched a village for weapons during Operation Gothmoghs Nafas in Sarkhak Village. (Middle) Mortar crew from the 3rd Afghan National Army engage insurgent’s fire positions in the vicinity of Mohamed Khan Village, Waghez District. (Bottom) Afghan National Policemen ask villagers about insurgent activities in the neighborhood during Operation Gothmoghs Nafas in Sarkhak Village, Waghez District.



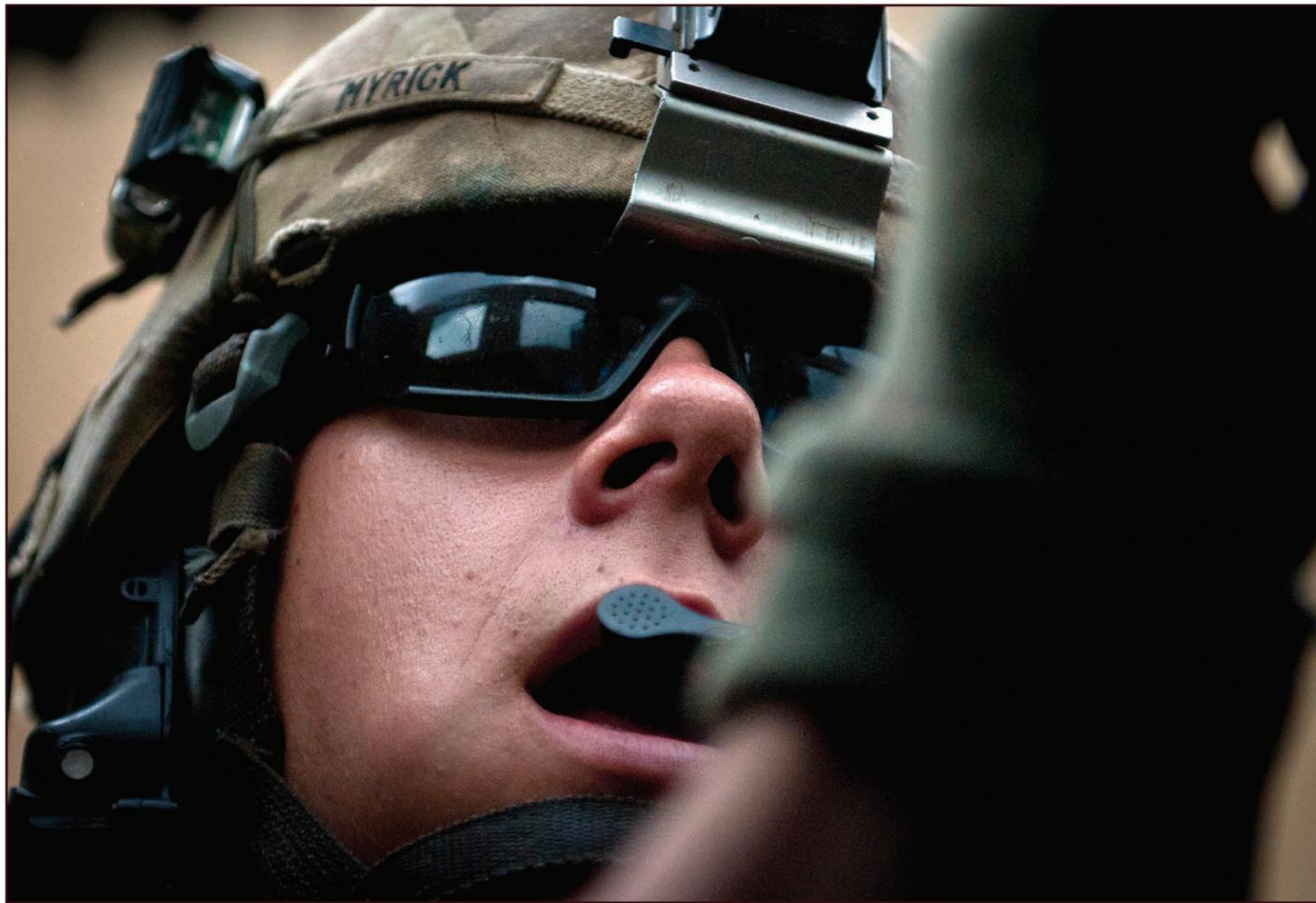
ISAF, ANSF CONTINUE OPERATIONS IN PECH VALLEY

*Story and photos by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell,
Task Force Bronco Public Affairs*

During the dead of night in the Pech River Valley, they moved into position. High up on the rocky ridgelines that loom over Route Rhode Island, Taliban fighters silently crept into crumbling fighting positions. There, they hid waiting for the return of International Security Assistance Forces to the valley July 28.

- Continued on page 8.

An F-15 Eagle fighter jet screams low across the floor of the Pech River Valley in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province for a show of force right after a firefight with insurgents and troops from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Cacti, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Bronco. The troops worked closely to secure the area with their Afghan National Police partners under intense fighting conditions.



U.S. Army Pfc. Joshua B. Myrick, an infantryman from Elwood, Ind., assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Cacti, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Bronco returns fire from a .50-caliber machine gun from his mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle at a checkpoint in the Pech River Valley in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province.

On the winding road below, Afghan National Security Forces and their U.S. counterparts took up fortified security positions at various checkpoints throughout the valley.

The sun rose showering the valley with light, as bullets rained down from above. But Soldiers from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Cacti, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Bronco and their ANSF counterparts were ready for a fight.

"It shows that the enemy is not in charge here," said U.S. Army Capt. Brian P. Kalaher, commander of D Co. "The enemy thinks they are, and they say it's the world's worst valley with all the media covering the Pech, but obviously not. I mean, if they controlled the valley, my ass wouldn't be sitting here, you know. If they controlled the valley, I wouldn't live here."

Kalaher, based out of Combat Outpost Honaker-Miracle on the edge of the Pech River Valley in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province, isn't shy when talking about his company's dangerous mission of controlling Route Rhode Island.

"There are a couple of (improvised explosive device) hotspots in there, and we're there to really make sure that the enemy cannot hinder a humanitarian aid convoy," said Kalaher, a Plymouth, Mass., native on his third combat tour.

To regain a foothold in the Pech River Valley and Nuristan Province, Kalaher and his Soldiers were tasked to help ANSF set up checkpoints along the route and allow safe passage of more than 200 tons of humanitarian supplies to isolated Afghans.

"The only real clear and direct way up into Nuristan is through the Pech River Valley. It's the lifeline from Asadabad all the way up north," continued Kalaher. "This convoy is further proof of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's ability to assist and provide a service to the people of Afghanistan. A large part of that is securing the area."

With the sun now directly overhead, the first of many firefights during this weeklong joint-operation died down. U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ramses Martinez, an infantry squad leader from Bronx, N.Y., assigned to D Co., wiped the dirt and

sweat off his brow in the blistering heat.

His platoon had been swapping 24-hour shifts at an exposed checkpoint deep within the valley for a few days now.

The smell of gunpowder wafted heavily through the small interior of a mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle as Martinez evaluated the situation. Were there any dead Taliban after that initial exchange of fire?

"Maybe. I've seen three guys," he said. "One over to the right and two over to the left. We hit them pretty hard and they haven't shot back. So maybe, maybe not."

Cars passed by seemingly oblivious to the earlier fighting as Afghan National Police stopped and searched each vehicle at the checkpoint.

The sun moved across the sky and the hours droned on and on.

Whiz. Snap. Crack.

Afghan National Police troops returned fire almost immediately with AK-47 and PKM machine guns.

Martinez quickly swung the .50-caliber machine gun around and gritted his teeth as the heavy gun barked back at the insurgent fire.



U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Trey VanWyhe, an infantry platoon leader from Hills, Minn., assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Cacti, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Bronco does the "Jersey Shore" fist pump with an Afghan National Police counterpart during a lull in the fire in the Pech River Valley in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province.

Then, it was quiet again.

"He doesn't want to poke his little head up and play anymore," Martinez radioed to the other trucks pulling security.

"The other day, they attacked us in this same spot," said ANP Sgt. Ubiad Rahman, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the checkpoint. "We used teamwork to fight the insurgents and cooperation to help secure this place. The Taliban come down from the mountains and try to attack us. They plan to capture us and take us alive. But once we started firing our PKM machine guns and the American's started firing their .50-caliber machine guns, then the Taliban got the message."

The message was clear: this isn't Taliban country anymore, and the locals don't need to be afraid.

"We must take care of the villagers here first," Rahman said. "The Taliban will attack us, but as much as possible we will fight them and make them run away. The Taliban attack here frequently, but they are not brave. We make them run and hide in the mountains."

As the days passed, more and more locals approached the checkpoint to talk to

the U.S. and Afghan soldiers. Many of the kids asked for brass from depleted ammo to sell or candy. Some of the locals offered rice and bread to the troops.

"Indirectly, they see that the enemy does not control this valley. And when we leave, the enemy will not control this valley," said Kalaher. "I don't think we need to directly say that to the villagers because they know it."

But control of the Pech has its costs.

"Yeah, we've taken casualties, but the number is small compared to how many people are in that valley," explained Kalaher, who recognized the sacrifices made by U.S. and Afghan counterparts for the humanitarian aid convoy.

"These people up there haven't had supplies in such a long time, they need it," said Martinez.

Whiz. Snap. Crack.

Their combat concerto began again. "Where the [expletive] you going?" yelled Martinez in between controlled bursts of the .50-caliber. "Shoot at me again!"

Artillery rounds pounded the ridgelines and an F-15 Eagle fighter jet screamed

through the valley 200 feet off the ground. Amid the chaos of the firefight, the coordination was impressive.

Kalaher said the coordination between his troops and the ANP also exceeded his expectations.

"A lot of the patrols that we ran, we'd be stationary and over watching the ANP in a mutually supporting position to make sure the route was secure," explained Kalaher. "They've been phenomenal during this operation. They've made pretty large gains since we've gotten here. I think they see the timeline and know that the ball's in their court, so they're starting to step up."

And step up they did.

The humanitarian aid convoy passed through successfully delivering grain, rice, school supplies and other aid to locals.

Though deemed the most dangerous valley in the world, the joint operation proved once again that GIROA's reach, with coordination between ANSF and ISAF, could extend out to even the most isolated villagers in Afghanistan, Kalaher said. ☺

TF Knighthawk supports Operation Dagger Fury

Story and photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Todd Pouliot,
Task Force Falcon Public Affairs

Throughout Afghanistan, ground forces are fighting daily to disrupt insurgent activity and protect civilian populations. Due to the extreme terrain of Afghanistan, safe and quick movement of ground personnel and supplies depend on aviation assets.

Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, provided aviation support to Operation Dagger Fury July 25-30. The objective was to insert personnel from TF Dagger, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mtn. Div., along with Afghan National Army soldiers, to disrupt insurgent activity in the Araban Valley in Wardak Province, resupply them throughout the operation and pick them up when the mission was complete.

“Knighthawk ensured that we, as the ground force, were able to rapidly mass our combat power,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Blace C. Albert of Charlottesville, Va., TF Dagger, 4th BCT, commander. “Before the sun came up, we owned the Araban Valley in Chak.”

With CH-47 Chinook, AH-64 Apaches, and UH-60 Black Hawks helicopters, the 10th CAB inserted personnel from TF Dagger and the ANA at night into several landing zones July 25-26.

“We infilled nearly 450 personnel the first night plus we sling-loaded a 20-foot container which was used as a forward command post during the operation,” said U.S. Army Maj. Rich Tucker of Tampa, Fla., TF Knighthawk, 10th CAB, operations officer-in-charge. “81mm mortars, water, ammo and an all-terrain tactical vehicle were internally loaded on one of the Chinooks.”

This was the largest air assault operation TF Dagger accomplished since they arrived in theater last fall, said Albert.

Air weapons teams consisting of AH-64 Apache helicopters, protected the troops for the duration of the operation.

“The Apaches provided over-watch throughout,” said U.S. Army Capt. Steven Lancianese of Canton, Ohio, an AH-64 Apache helicopter pilot with TF Knighthawk, 10th CAB. “We also marked landing zones, provided troops in contact support and close combat attack support.”

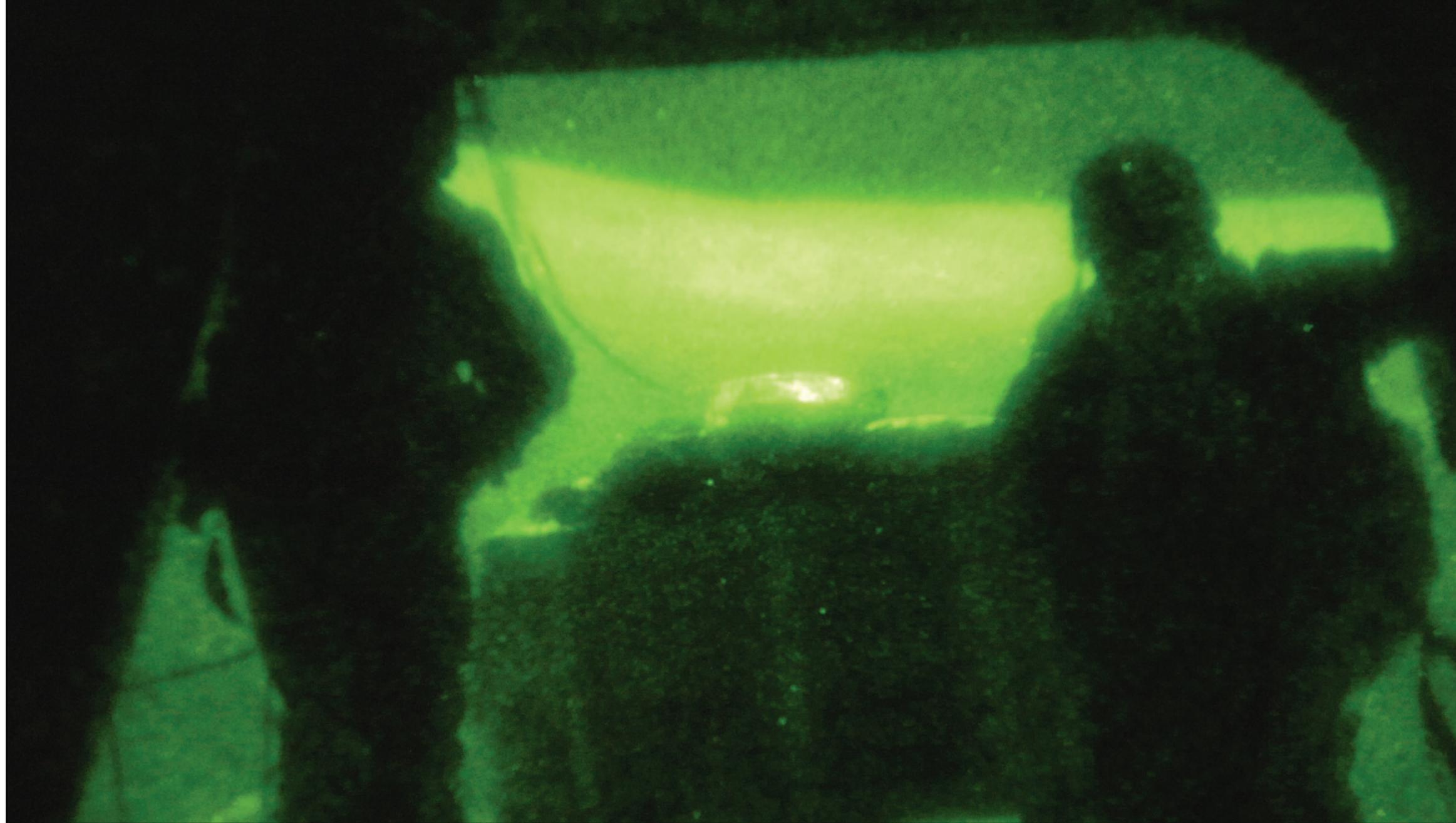
TF Dagger called the Apaches into action the first day of the operation, after elements came under heavy fire from numerous areas.

“We were launched immediately upon coming on shift,” said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steve Donahue Jr. of Leesburg, Fla., an AH-64 Apache helicopter pilot and master gunner with TF Knighthawk, 10th CAB. “Upon arrival, we immediately provided aerial security, identifying the enemy’s location and engaging with close-combat attack support with three Hellfires. This allowed the unit to safely maneuver through the area.”

On the fourth night of the operation, Apaches provided security and illumination in support of a complex medevac extraction.

“The (injured) Soldier was located on a pinnacle observation post with 150-500 foot cliffs on each side,” said Donahue. “(Our medevac crew executed) a hoist extraction with the aircraft at a hover, during extremely low illumination and with a light wind gust.

As the medic and the patient moved toward the hoist, the patient slipped and began to slide to the edge of the cliff. The



medic was able to grab the Soldier by his collar and stop him from sliding closer to the cliff only 10-meters away.

Over the course of the operation, the Apaches were called upon several times to do what they do best; attack enemy positions.

“Knighthawk’s air weapons team responded on multiple occasions to engage the Taliban with Hellfires,” said U.S. Army Maj. Heather Levy of San Jose, Calif., an operations officer-in-charge with TF Dagger, 4th BCT. “After a few days, the insurgents wouldn’t attack when AWT was in the air - that was pretty important for us since no other platform had the same deterrent effect.”

In addition to the fire power of the AH-64 Apaches, Air Force fixed wing aircraft dropped several tons of guided munitions on insurgent positions.

TF Knighthawk made nightly low-cost, low-altitude drops of water and food for the troops on the ground throughout the operation. Parachutes were attached to pallets which were pushed out at the precise time so they would land at pre-established drop zones. The task force dropped a total of 45 LCLA bundles. In addition, UH-60 Black Hawks delivered 38 Speed Balls - pre-packaged containers of supplies to troops.

“Most of our resupplies were done in cover of darkness except emergency resupplies,” said Tucker.

The pre-planned resupply operation coupled with timely emergency resupply missions kept the ground forces fit and equipped to continue their mission.

“Knighthawk conducted emergency UH-60 supply runs into the green zone when our forces were out of ammo after a long day of fighting,” said Levy. “It was exactly the kind of teamwork between aviation and ground forces that is essential to coalition force success in the remote areas of Afghanistan.”

After five days, TF Dagger achieved their objective and sent the message that the insurgents are not safe from pro-government forces, said Levy. It was time for TF Dagger and their ANA counterparts to prepare to be picked up and to return to their respective bases.

During exfiltration, all personnel inserted the first night were picked up plus several detainees the unit had on the ground.

“We made five lifts during the exfil, again using CH-47 Chinooks, AH-64 Apaches, UH-60 Black Hawks, and Air Force close air support aircraft,” said Tucker.

The exfil began just before midnight July 30 and continued

(Above) A crew chief with Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, and a rigger, push a pallet of water off the back of a CH-47 Chinook July 29. TF Knighthawk delivered 45 Low-Cost Low-Altitude bundles over the course of the five-day operation.

for several hours into the early morning the next day. The 10th CAB picked up and returned all personnel safely to their bases.

The success of the operation was the result of several days of in-depth planning and preparation, said Tucker. They planned varying routes to minimize predictability and a detailed flight schedule orchestrated the many aircraft in the air.

“It was an extremely complex operation since we were pulling companies from all over Patriot’s area,” he said. “It was critical everyone knew what we were doing.”

In addition to 16 enemy killed-in-action, TF Dagger found four caches, which included weapons and bomb making material, in addition to extensive documents and equipment that may be exploited, said Tucker.

“This is one of the best executed air assaults yet,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Lars Wendt of Watertown, N.Y., TF Knighthawk, 10th CAB, commander. “We minimized the threat to aircraft through in-depth planning. The area is one of the most dangerous places in Regional Command-East.”



Park Falls, Wis. native U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Chase L. Vuchetich, a machine gunner with 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, walks through a branch of the Helmand River in the early morning of Aug. 5, returning to Patrol Base Fires following a helicopter-borne insertion and clearing operation in the Northern Sangin green zone.

Real life helicopter-borne insert puts video games to shame

Story and photos by U.S. Marine Cpl. Benjamin Crilly, Regimental Combat Team 8, 2nd Marine Division

The Marines of 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, executed the type of operation most people only see from the backside of a video game controller. From that perspective gamers only see the firefights and the destruction of targets to achieve some notional mission. What game enthusiasts don't see on their flat screens are the logistical challenges, social constraints and cultural considerations the Marines of 1/5 overcame to accomplish their mission.

Intelligence and surveillance told the Marines that a small compound on the east side of the Helmand River was being used as an enemy command and control center. Enemy fighters cross the nearby river, and are dispatched throughout the

area to survey and harass coalition forces with small-arms fire and other guerrilla warfare tactics throughout the Northern Sangin green zone.

"It was like a coordination point for them. They would cross the river from the west side to east and link up at that coordination point," said Capt. Ryan Hunt, the commanding officer of Company B. "At the coordination point, some type of (insurgent) commander would basically issue areas of operations for the men. 'You folks are going here today, you two are going here to work today and you are going way over there.'"

Unlike the briefs gamers get, the Marines receive their final marching orders huddled around a chow hall table as they scratch down the timelines, radio frequencies and grid coordinates in their notebooks. The Marines knew the mission was straightforward, show the

enemy fighters that Afghan-Marine partnered forces can present themselves anywhere, anytime throughout the area of operation despite the rough terrain.

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 464 flight crews operated the dual CH-53E Super Stallions that supported the operation. The initial lift inserted supporting elements from 1/5's Scout Sniper Platoon and Weapons Company into blocking positions across the Helmand River. The remaining 1st Platoon Marines piled onto the helicopters and took an unexpected detour to Camp Bastion's flight line where the Marine Corps Air Station New River-based helicopter squadron is deployed to.

The two-hour delay and refueling at Camp Bastion is just one part of the logistical side that gamers don't experience. The Marines rolled with the last minute changes.

"Going to Bastion first actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise and was well worth the time," said Hunt, from Grand Coulee, Wash., and a 2003 alumnus of Washington State University.

Hunt went on to explain that the pit stop enabled the helicopter pilots and small-unit leaders to talk face-to-face about the operation, how the pilots and crew chiefs could best support the Marines of Bravo Co., and get them where they needed to go.

Once inserted near the objective the Marines hit the deck loaded down with enough water and meal rations to last them the two days they would be operating. A character in a video game will carry an endless supply of ammunition and weapons with no discernible effect on the character or video gamer effortlessly manipulating the controller. A video game does not replicate the more than 85 pounds of gear carried by Marines when humping a full combat load and packs. There is no sprinting to the objective in real life, the Marines move swiftly but methodically to the target compound, sweeping for improvised explosive devices as they go.

When the Marines reached the compound they didn't kick down doors, throw any grenades, they didn't even shoot anything or anyone like depicted in the games.

They posted security for the Afghan soldiers who cautiously walked into the compound. The Afghan soldiers had to enter the houses and conduct the searches to observe and respect the socially accepted norms of the Islamic culture.

"With clearing operations they (Afghan soldiers) are always the first ones in the buildings, but usually we are more involved," said Lance Cpl. Chase L. Vuchetich, a machine gunner. "It was more important for them to be searching the buildings and interacting with the people."

Fifteen compounds were searched during the operation.

First-person shooter style video games incorporate intelligence collection in the form of easily collected objects and tasks strewn throughout a level. For the Marines of Bravo Co. completing their tasks and collecting information wasn't as simple. They followed in trace of their Afghan National Army counterparts to collect valuable biological data to help distinguish local residents from enemy fighters. Collecting fingerprints, iris scans and facial recognition data bogged the partnered forces down but was important to the Marine's mission in Afghanistan.



"The biometric data was a big ticket success of this operation," said Hunt.

The operation took place during Ramadan, when most people are close to home and spend time with their families. Ramadan is the Islamic religious month of fasting and reflection to focus believers on the spiritual realm vice the world needs of the flesh.

It meant the Afghan people could not eat during the daylight hours so more people tend to stay in their homes.

Waiting in helicopters full of hot exhaust, laden with gear and performing repetitive tasks differentiates these Marines from their age cohort playing war in sedentary fashion.

The heat from the Afghan summer affected Marine and ANA soldier alike, and the Marines had to ensure the safety of their Afghan counterparts by looking for signs of heat illness. The Afghan soldiers combated the brutal heat by climbing into irrigation canals allowing themselves to cool off during breaks.

"Since it was Ramadan the ANA being out with us showed to the Afghan people that we are not the only ones trying to help them," said Vuchetich, 20, from Park Falls, Wis. "The ANA are still going to do their job regardless."

As Muslims the Afghan soldiers could have sat idle during the daylight hours, fasting for a month saps strength and will quickly. They knew that it was important to press through the physical hardships to build the trust and confidence of the Afghan people. The soldier's example

U.S. Marine Capt. Ryan M. Hunt of Grand Coulee, Wash. and a 2003 alumnus of Washington State University, company commander of 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, walks through a branch of the Helmand River in the early morning of Aug. 5 following a two-day clearing operation in the Northern Sangin green zone.

allowed the partnered Marines to demonstrate leadership and camaraderie that no video game can portray. Marines supported and motivated the soldiers to keep pressing on to finish the mission.

Unlike a game where you can press a few buttons to convey words and action, the Marines had to inspire the soldiers with leadership by example fueled with sweat and effort.

"We had to keep them motivated which made us work harder to help them be the best they could be," said Vuchetich, a Park Falls High School graduate. "It's just like anything else when you are trying to motivate someone else. You stay motivated yourself."

At the end of the operation, it was a success but not for the reasons a gamer plays a mission: no one leveled up, unlocked a new weapon system or improved their ratio.

The partnered forces accomplished a far more important mission that will leave a lasting impression on the local residents and sent a clear message to enemy fighters.

"This heliborne operation shows that we have the means to get anywhere, anytime we want to in this AO," said Hunt. "The ANA toughed it out all the way and sent a strong message that they can still operate with little food and water." ☺

Learning to blow things up

Story by U.S. Army Spc. Adam L. Mathis,
17th Public Affairs Detachment

A 203rd Corps Afghan National Army soldier peers through the aiming device. In front of him, a green D-30 howitzer glows in the sun of Paktya Province; behind him and to his left, a black and white striped pole gives him a point of reference.

He turns a wheel and the artillery piece begins to move into what this artillery student believes is the correct position. Behind him, Polish trainers watch his work and the work of the other 203rd Corps students as they move several artillery pieces into position.

"I can say that they're really good," said Polish army Capt. Przemyslaw Witwieki, chief of gun and mortar security training group with the Artillery Mobile Education Training Team at Forward Operating Base Lightning, Polish Military Contingent. "I'm really surprised. I thought that it would be hard because the majority of them don't read and that's the main problem ... but with practice they are really good. The manual skills, they have are on a high level, and this kind of knowledge they get very quick."

Nationwide Effort

The Polish effort to develop an artillery section for the 203rd Corps is part of a larger plan to increase the size and capacity of the ANA, said Royal Australian Artillery Lt. Col. Tim Griggs, commander of the Artillery Training Team-Kabul. The development of artillery faces the challenge of years of disorganization and a methodology that is no longer practical.

"There has been no structure, no capability [for artillery] for a long, long time," said Griggs.

Part of the answer to that lack of structure is the artillery training school in Kabul, where Griggs works. Griggs said the students have responded enthusiastically to the training, which has been tailored to allow Afghans to take the lead.

"The Afghan students at the school of artillery respond well to instruction by ANA instructors, which is what we're really trying to promote more and more," said Griggs.

The school is also an effort to modernize artillery training that is no longer applicable to Afghanistan. Griggs pointed



(Above) A 203rd Corps Afghan National Army soldier works to align his artillery piece Aug. 2 as part of a training program conducted by the Polish Military Contingent. The training is part of a larger effort to train the ANA across Afghanistan in the use of artillery. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Adam L. Mathis, 17th Public Affairs Detachment) (Right) Afghan soldiers from the 203rd Thunder Corps align a Howitzer D-30 to the proper angle during artillery training held by Polish soldiers Aug. 2. The instructors timed each of the students' exercises to show their progression over the four month class. The artillery can be used by the ANA for detonating mines, protecting bases, supporting infantry, and other purposes. (Photo by U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Chad C. Strohmeyer)

out that the Soviet system of artillery, which dominated Afghan thinking until recently, does not deal with the combat environment of today. The Soviet system is based on large groups of artillery. Coalition forces are trying to instill a system that deals with small forces.

"What we're talking about here is small amounts of artillery operating from forward operating bases," said Griggs.

Something to Enjoy

While the Polish effort to teach the 203rd Corps about artillery began "from scratch," as Witwieki said, the students are doing well.

"Almost all of the students are really interested and involved in the training," said Polish army Maj. Grzegorz Jopek, deputy commander of the Polish artillery training team. "They want us to give them that artillery knowledge."

In fact, at least one of their students is already looking to becoming an artillery instructor. ANA 1st Lt. Mohammad Faqeer plans to teach artillery skills to his countrymen after graduation. When he arrived, Faqeer could not find targets on the grid.

"Now, I don't have any problems; I learn a lot of things from the Polish people," said Faqeer through an interpreter. ☺





Capt. Brent Weece of Miami Okla., commander of in Co. D 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team sits under the shade of a tree with village elders during a recent Shura to talk about the security and possible ways to improve infrastructure in and around the village.

Partnered operations to secure southern Laghman

Story and photo by U.S. Army Spc. Leslie Goble,
Task Force Thunderbird Public Affairs

With Afghan National Army in the lead, Task Force Thunderbird recently conducted a combined air assault, securing southern Laghman Province.

The 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, soldiers with the Afghan National Army's 1st Brigade, 201st Corps and members of the Afghan Uniform Police secured several valleys surrounding Bad Pakh District.

U.S. Army Capt. Brent Weece, commander of Co. C, 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry, said this was the first battalion-wide combined operation with their Afghan partners.

"They have a great advantage here," said Weece, referring to Afghan forces taking the lead in navigating through the terrain. "That's why we are partnered."

The units air lifted in and made their way down the mountains to search villages for improvised explosive device making materials, small-arms caches and illegal drugs.

The mission was to search the valleys for illegal activity and to re-establish security.

A fire fight broke out early in the operation resulting in five insurgents killed by air strikes. No civilians received injuries during the week-long operation that resulted in the confiscation

of several weapons caches, more than 200 pounds of opium, along with IED and suicide vest material.

In another valley, combined forces spoke with local village leaders about the safety and security of the region. Weece said village elders were humble and allowed the Afghan forces to search the villages for caches. The leaders in the shura also discussed expanding basic amenities deeper into the rural areas in the valleys. The elders spoke of needing roads, electrical power and a medical clinic when the area becomes more secure.

Agribusiness development and provincial reconstructions teams, who are responsible for sustainable infrastructure, are planning for a research and development farm and a district center in the area.

The 45th IBCT also conducted the largest aerial resupply since arriving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. They flew in more than two tons of water, food and supplies for coalition and Afghan forces in several different locations. U.S. Army Capt. John Fagan, the Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 179th Infantry logistics officer, said crews on ground along with UH-60 Black Hawks worked night and day to make sure the units were properly resupplied throughout the operation.

"Resupply is the lifeblood of the operation," he said "Without being resupplied; Soldiers cannot stay in the field for more than a few days." ☺



Khowst Provincial Gov. Abdul Naeemi and ISAF Force Reintegration Cell Director Maj. Gen. Phil Jones address the Khowst Provincial Peace Council at the governor's residence Aug. 10. The council is made up of key village elders and who work with former fighters on their issues and grievances as part of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program.

Khowst Province embracing reintegration of insurgents back into their communities

Story and photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. David Tomiyama,
Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

Khowst Province is embracing the peace process by placing a great deal of attention on the reintegration of former insurgents back into their communities.

Provincial Governor Abdul Naeemi met with ISAF Force Reintegration Cell Director, British army Maj. Gen. Phil Jones, to discuss the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program at the governor's residence Aug. 10.

As part of reintegration activity support, Jones was also briefed on plans underway in Khowst City to build a reintegration center for former fighters who step forward and return home.

The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) is an Afghanistan government peace initiative that provides an opportunity for insurgents to stop fighting and return to their communities with honor and dignity. To be accepted into the program, insurgents must renounce violence, break ties with the insurgency, and agree to abide by the Afghan Constitution. The implementation of the program at a village level is carried out by local community leaders who work with insurgents to vet their claims for admission into the program and then work to resolve outstanding grievances as they seek to rejoin their communities.

Jones, along with his deputy, Christopher Landberg; ISAF Joint Secretariat Chief of Operations Aziz Ahmadzai; and Regional Command-East Deputy Commanding General for Development Canadian army Brig. Gen. Karl McQuillan, listened to the governor's thoughts on how the programs can be successful in Khowst Province.

Naeemi also addressed the importance of insurgents being

able to maintain their honor and dignity when leaving the battlefield for the new Afghan society.

"These insurgents want a guarantee of safety and a means to hold their head up high after entering the program," said Naeemi.

The requirements for successfully implementing the program vary from province to province, but the key is the flexibility to meet local requirements. The APRP provides safety for former fighters who enter the program who no longer have to fear being apprehended or killed by Afghan or coalition forces.

A provincial peace council has been established in the province to help with the reintegration process.

Made up of village elders from around the province, the council addresses grievances by former fighters and seeks to find ways to solve their issues as they transition from the battlefield.

Ahmadzai held additional meetings with the Khowst council to seek ways to make the APRP more effective.

"These councils could be some of the most influential and can draw in people across society, including alienated ones," said Jones following the meeting.

"The Khowst reintegration center will give GIROA a place to document former insurgents and serve as a safe haven for former fighters as they negotiate a return to their villages," said U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Scott Rivera, Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team lead engineer from Sidney, Iowa.

As Khowst moves forward with the peace process, ISAF is there to support.

"We see this as something incredibly important from an ISAF point-of-view; we really want this to work," Jones said. "The more we (ISAF) can bolster the confidence of the Afghan people, the better the transition process." ☺

Warrior Watch

U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.)

Emmanuel Woods

Story and photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Joe Armas,
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs Office

It's another hot and dusty Sunday morning, and service is about to begin at the Camp Kunduz Chapel.

No, this place of worship isn't nestled in a small town in the heart of the Bible belt. It's about as far away from there as one can get. Furthermore, the small plywood structure is nothing reminiscent of a massive cathedral capable of housing a huge congregation of worshipers.

Still, for Soldiers of faith stationed in the heart of northern Afghanistan, the place serves its purpose quite well.

It's a place where Cpt. Emmanuel Woods, chaplain for Task Force Guns, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, charismatically finds a way to get his message across to the troopers in attendance, with sermons that emphasize spiritual resilience.

The emotion Chaplain Woods invokes during his sermons makes for a lively atmosphere, according to Pvt. Brandon Blocker, originally from Tuscaloosa, Ala., assigned to Company D, TF Guns.

Another Soldier who normally attends church service at Kunduz agrees. "He has a unique and humorous way of delivering his messages," said Spc. Shyteria Miller, a supply specialist, originally from Houston, assigned to Headquarters Company, TF Guns.

Blocker added, "You can tell that everyone is engaged during the service when he is preaching."

Woods' message of spiritual resilience is one that he attributes to personal experiences that tested his ability to endure hardships earlier on in his life.

He cites spiritual resilience as one of the main factors that allowed him to overcome an impoverished lifestyle and the loss of his father in war-torn Liberia back in the 1990's.

"It was my belief in a higher power [during tough times] that gave me hope," he said.

As a refugee, he managed to make his way to the United States and eventually became inspired to join the Chaplain corps.

Now as a chaplain, Woods has a way of connecting with people, said Sgt. 1st Class Chaka Grant, the brigade chaplain's assistant, originally from Jacksonville, Fla.

"He establishes a comfort level with people and that makes him very approachable at any time," said Grant.

Grant said she appreciated the opportunity to practice her faith alongside Woods this Sunday morning, and says her faith is what keeps her moving forward.

As Woods concluded his sermon, the Sunday service ended in song. An abundance of smiles filled the chapel. It was obvious that he had achieved his objective on this day, which was to imbue those in attendance with a message of faith that resonates in each and every one of them.

Afterwards, Woods talked about why he feels spiritual nourishment is important in a combat theater like Afghanistan.

"One of the basic human rights that we have in our Constitution is religious freedom," said Woods. "If we can exercise that right here in Afghanistan, it shows that we are a powerful country." 🇺🇸



Philadelphia doctor reconstructs Afghan girl's hand

Fareeda's gift

Story by Army Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Matson,
210th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

It was a discovery that would bring together people from across the world, and change the life of a little girl forever.

In October, 2010, an Afghan Soldier came across an 8-year-old girl named Fareeda while patrolling through the area of her remote Eastern Afghanistan village. About 100 families live in the village, but Fareeda was especially noticeable.

That's because Fareeda suffered from hemihypertrophy – a rare condition in which extremities on one side of the body grow to enormous proportions.

Fareeda's hand was the size of a watermelon. Her thumb, index and middle fingers were massively bloated, as were portions of her right arm, which was almost twice the length of her left. Only her pinky and ring finger were unaffected by the relentless growth. If left untreated, the condition would eventually become fatal.

"She was having difficulty with her hand in that condition," her father, Mohammed, a doctor in the village, said. "She tried to play with the other kids but her big hand got in the way so she became very shy."

The Afghan Soldier and members of the coalition saw Fareeda's massive deformity and wanted to help the girl. But it would take a lot of work and a concerted effort between the U.S. military, the Global Medical Relief Fund, Shriners Hospital and a leading hand surgeon before any of that would be possible.

In late June, the journey began. Fareeda and Mohammed took their first helicopter and airplane rides when they were flown to New York City, where they stayed at the Ronald McDonald House.

"She liked the plane, she would do that again, but she didn't like the helicopter because it was loud," Mohammed said with a smile.

The Global Relief Medical Fund, in conjunction with the Shriners Hospital in Philadelphia, helped make Fareeda's trip and surgery possible.

Fareeda and Mohammed spent about five days both before and after the surgery in Philadelphia, including the Fourth of July fireworks celebration in the city.

"The trip was a big moment in my life," Mohammed said. "I was really impressed with the outside world. I saw a country with religious freedom. I saw the people there applying rules by themselves. I saw a different kind of people and they were all respecting each other and respecting me, so this was a huge moment in my life."

Another memorable moment was when Mohammed met Dr. Scott H. Kozin, a professor of orthopedic surgery at Temple University, and one of the world's leading hand and upper extremity surgeon's at Shriners Hospital for Children in Philadelphia. Kozin would perform the surgery that gave Fareeda her new hand.

"As a doctor, the modern machinery and things that I saw at the U.S. medical clinics was amazing," Mohammed said.

Kozin said it was easy to talk with Mohammed, whereas Fareeda, who is very shy, was much more of a challenge.

"When Fareeda got here, number one she was shy - number two she was scared," Kozin recalled. "Number three, I think just



(Above) Fareeda, an 8-year-old Afghan girl, sits on a hospital bed. Her enlarged right arm and hand are a result of a condition known as hemihypertrophy. An Afghan National Army Soldier discovered Fareeda on a patrol, and through the help of the U.S. military and various charitable organizations, corrective surgery on her hand was performed by Dr. Scott Kozin at the Shriners Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, Pa. (Right) A close-up of the right hand of Fareeda, an 8-year-old Afghan girl, which was surgically repaired in the United States. (Courtesy photos)



Fareeda, an 8-year-old Afghan girl, left, sits with her father Mohammed, right, on a hospital bed in Afghanistan. Fareeda had a severely-deformed right arm which was surgically repaired in the United States. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Matson, 210th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

being a female, being away from her family (her siblings and mother did not accompany her) made it more difficult.

While she was here, she stayed up in New York in the Ronald McDonald house and then as time went on she started to play and play with more kids.

Then she started to interact with more adults and started to come out of her shell.

With the doctors she was still very shy but apparently with the other people she was very engaging and very interested in playing with the other kids and that was very new because initially she wouldn't do any of that."

Kozin said Fareeda's case of hemihypertrophy was the worst he'd seen. Fixing it was not a particularly life-threatening surgery for Fareeda, Kozin said, but it was challenging. He said the corrective surgery required him to remove the large, nonfunctional digits from her hand, while preserving blood supply to and not destroying any of the functional parts of her hand and arm.

"In Fareeda's case, we noticed that her ring and small finger functioned fantastically – everything was normal," Kozin said. "So what we opted to do was to remove the grotesquely-enlarged thumb, index and long-finger and then leave her with a little bit of an enlarged palm to act as a post so that when she curls her ring and small fingers she can grab objects between those fingers and her palm. What we opted to do with the arm

was to remove as much redundant tissue as possible to make the arm a more appropriate size."

Fareeda was immediately able to use her surgically-repaired hand, Kozin said.

"When she first saw it, we didn't know how she was going to react – was she going to be happy, sad... who knows because it's difficult with a language barrier," Kozin said. "But she was happy. It was lighter. She could move those two digits and she was already beginning to grasp items between those two digits and her palm before she left."

Mohammed said he has also seen noticeable changes in his shy daughter.

"After the operation she was very happy and she was able to play with the other kids. Before that she tried to play but her big hand got in the way," Mohammed said.

When Fareeda returned to Afghanistan Aug. 5 with her father, she was able to do something else she never could previously.

"She has a younger sibling, so one of her complaints was that she couldn't hold her younger sibling because her arm was so heavy and then adding a baby on top of that just made it impossible for her to lift the baby," Kozin explained.

Now, thanks to the efforts of Kozin, the U.S. military and a host of charitable organizations, that is just one of many things Fareeda will now be able to enjoy. ☺

Female engagement team helps child recover from cancer

Story by U.S. Army Spc. John Iasiello,
Task Force Creek

The Female Engagement Team from Company D, 1st Battalion, 279th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Creek, and medics from Operational Detachment Alpha, both under Task Force Duke, helped save the life of a local female child stricken with cancer.

Company D's FET was invited by Operational Detachment Alpha medics to assist with the care and treatment of "Bebe," the name given to her to protect her family from retribution from the Taliban.

Bebe had a cancerous tumor just below her knee, which resulted in infection and bone separation. The separation of the bone prevented her from walking.

Initially, Bebe was nervous around the Soldiers. "She was very shy and timid around us, mostly due to our uniforms," said U.S. Army Cpl. Ruth Howe, a native of Philipsburg, Pa. and the squad leader of the Co. D FET.

The next day the women of the FET returned in civilian clothing, and much to their satisfaction, Bebe was much more outgoing, even willing to hold hands with the FET members.

The FET assisted in Bebe's care, keeping her comfortable and occupied, while the ODA medics took the lead on medical care.

Bebe had two requests of the FET, a flashlight so she could see at night to use the restroom and a doll. The FET found her a flashlight and ODA acquired a baby doll for her.

The soldiers of ODA arranged to have Bebe transported to Bagram Airfield July 19 to receive treatment at a Korean-run hospital, where her leg was amputated. The surgery was a success, and she has since returned to her home village.

"Her quality of life has significantly improved since the medical treatment," said Howe.

Aftercare, such as infection prevention and redressing of the wound, is being provided by ODA, with assistance from the Co. D FET. Her father, "David", said he is very glad to have his daughter back with him.

"We paid the shaman a lot of money, and she does not get well. The Americans protect us, and make her better for no money. We are very glad to have American help," said David, who is from a local village near Combat Outpost Dand Patan. ☺

(Top right) "Bebe," a girl from a local village in northeast Paktya, cuddles with her doll before being transported to Bagram Airfield for surgery July 13. Her leg was amputated at the Korean Hospital there, due to a cancerous tumor that had infected her right leg and severed the bone.

(Bottom right) "Bebe," a local girl from a village in northeast Paktya, and her father "David", pose for a photo after her dressings were changed. Bebe underwent surgery in July to remove a cancerous tumor that had infected the lower half of her right leg. Members from the female engagement team of Company D, 1st Battalion 279th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Creek, helped her get medical treatment. (Photos by U.S. Army Cpl. Ruth Howe, Task Force Creek)



(Above) Afghan citizen Noor Ahmad shows a laminated picture of his son, Samir, 3, who was injured by a U.S. convoy last year and treated by U.S. medics.

(Right) Medics assigned to forward operating base Mehtar Lam transport a bed to the front gate for Afghan citizen Noor Ahmad. The bed was designed and built for Ahmad's son, Samir, 3, who was injured last year by a U.S. convoy and treated by U.S. medics. Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team medics recognized the child's need for a safe place to sleep.



Custom-made bed helps Afghan family cope

Story and photos by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ryan Crane,
Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

A local father rejoiced with overwhelming emotion and relief when members of the Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team presented him with a custom-made bed for his special-needs son.

Noor Ahmad is the father of Samir Ahmad, 3, who was involved in a life-changing accident in May 2010. Like most Afghan children, Samir was playing near his home in the city of Mehtar Lam, the capitol of Laghman Province. He ventured too close to the busy street and too far away from his family to react as a U.S. convoy moved through the city.

The driver of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle could not see the boy as his vehicle struck the child.

Samir lay on the road motionless. Medics from the convoy rushed to the child and found that he was miraculously still alive. They evacuated him to nearby Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam. Because his injuries were too serious for local treatment, medical personnel evacuated him to Bagram Airfield where a team of medical professionals worked for hours to save Samir's life.

It is more than a year later, and Samir's injuries have changed his life. He has been diagnosed with a form of neurological paralysis, which causes sudden, uncontrollable body movements.

Ahmad still brings his son to the base weekly so the medics can clean the child's feeding tube and check on his condition. He needs constant supervision and care, especially at night when those sudden movements have caused him to fall out of his bed.

During a recent treatment visit to the medics at FOB Mehtar Lam, Ahmed relayed the story of how his son falls out of bed during his sleep.

Capt. Deana Porter, physician assistant and medical officer for

Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team, recognized the need for a larger bed with rails and more padding due to Samir's condition. She turned to U.S. Air Force Senior Airman John Fitzgerald, medical technician, to discuss the possibilities of building a new bed for Samir.

He took charge of the project and met with the local carpenter in charge of maintaining the facilities for FOB Mehtar Lam, known only by his first name, Igor. Together, Fitzgerald and Igor designed and built a new bed specifically for Samir.

The six-foot bed with padded rails will protect Samir, prevent him from falling and is large enough to accommodate him for many years to come.

"I got with the contractors, gathered the wood, tools and hardware and, together, we built the child a bed that will keep him safe and last a long, long time," said Fitzgerald.

Since the child is essentially bedridden, explained Fitzgerald, the new bed will provide him a safe place and allow his parents to rest peacefully, knowing their son won't fall out of bed in the middle of the night. Medics presented the bed to Ahmad July 20, which, coincidentally, was Samir's third birthday. When he laid eyes on it, Ahmad's face brightened and his infectious smile brought a mixture of smiles and tears to the medical staff.

Ahmad also managed to muster two simple words in plain English, "Thank you."

He said it over and over as he pulled out a laminated photo of his son to show off to everyone.

"We just wanted to help mend a wrong," said Fitzgerald. "We can't change what happened, nor can anyone be blamed for that terrible accident, but we can offer everything we have to make life a little better for Samir and his family."

The medics carried the bed out to the front gate and helped Ahmad load it into his transport truck to take it home with him. Ahmad never stopped smiling. ☺

10 years later:

TF Duke Soldiers continue mission sparked by 9/11

Story by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. John Zumer,
Task Force Duke Public Affairs Office

Ten years after the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001, some New Yorkers with close ties to the tragedy now wear a military uniform.

They chose to do their part on the front lines, honor the memory of fallen Americans, and fight against terrorism overseas.

U.S. Army Spc. Jose Vallejo, an infantryman with the Focus Targeting Force, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, grew up in Queens, N.Y. He remembers the September morning 10 years ago when terrorists struck his hometown.

"It was a pretty scary moment, not knowing what to think," said Vallejo.

"That was one of the greatest influences. I felt we had to do something. It was like the whole city froze. I wanted to have something to do with stopping any more terrorism," said Vallejo.

Another Queens native, U.S. Army Sgt. Leonel Vazquez, a communications specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 1st Inf. Div., TF Duke, was a plumber on Long Island when the planes struck the Twin Towers.



U.S. Army Spc. Jose Vallejo, an infantryman with the Focus Targeting Force of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, poses outside his BCT headquarters on Forward Operating Base Salerno. Vallejo, a Queens, N.Y., native cites the attacks of 9/11 and his resulting desire to help fight terrorism as major reasons behind his joining the military. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Ben K. Navratil, TF Duke Public Affairs)

"I remember saying what a beautiful day it was," said Vazquez, noting the stark contrast between the day's weather and the events unfolding mere miles away.

"9/11 was one of the main reasons I joined," said Vazquez.

After the horrific events of that day, Vazquez spent considerable time with his Army recruiter about Army options. He also spoke at length with his wife, about how any decision to join would also impact their then 6-year old daughter.

Ultimately, he decided to answer the call and put on a military uniform.

U.S. Army Spc. Justin Wiggin, an infantryman with 1st Infantry Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, and a native of Smithtown, N.Y., has a similar story to tell.

Wiggin was in the 5th grade at the time. His school had been dismissed because of the attacks, and when he was picked up by his parents, he heard the news on their car radio.

"I couldn't really understand what was going on," said Wiggin.

Being so young at the time, he didn't think much about a future in the military. But as he approached the end of high school, thoughts about joining the military became more prevalent. His grandfather had served previously, and the tragedy of 9/11 had remained in the back of his mind.

"It became more of a viable option, and I wanted to do my part," said Wiggin.

Like many protective parents, his mother was initially upset that he was leaving. Once his decision was made, however, there remained little doubt about where she stood on the matter.

"She has supported me 100 percent since then," Wiggin said.

The mastermind behind those attacks, Usama bin Laden, was killed last May in a U.S. strike against his compound in Pakistan. His death has brought a sense of closure to some of those affected, but their mission here continues.

"We still have to continue what we're doing over here," said Vazquez, concerned about leaving before the job is done and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan being fully capable of providing all internal and external security functions.

As for Bin Laden, Vazquez said "he was just a figurehead now, anyway."

Vallejo was also reluctant to gloat or get too excited over the news.

"Had it been earlier it would have had a greater impact on me," he said. "He's just a symbol now."

Still, there was one thing to be grateful for now that greatest manhunt finally came to an end.

"I am happy because I know many families who lost loved ones when the towers hit," said Vallejo.

Wiggin looked upon the news mostly from the perspective of not only being deployed, but how it might affect his fellow squad members.

"I was immediately happy we got him," said Wiggin. "It was a good morale booster," he said.

After ten years of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, it might be tempting to think that all service members look upon Bin Laden's death as an early ticket home. That isn't the case. Some feel there's a final chapter to be written.

"Now we just have to go on and finish the fight, and complete the mission," said Wiggin. ☉



This beam from the World Trade Center, which is nine feet long, two feet wide and weighs more than 950 pounds, was donated to the U.S. military by the residents of Breezy Point, N.Y., through an organization called Sons and Daughters of America, Breezy Point. It is currently on display in front of the Joint Operations Center at Bagram Air Field. (Courtesy photo)

Malaysian medical team delivers innovative healthcare

Story and photo by U.S. Army Capt. Kenneth A. Stewart,
17th Public Affairs Detachment

Tucked away into a corner of the Bamyán Provincial Reconstruction Team Headquarters is a small compound housing members of the Royal Malaysian Medical and Dental Force.

The Malaysian army is working with the civilian community to improve health care and the quality of life for residents of Bamyán Province.

“We are treating many diseases that have been eradicated in other parts of the world,” said Royal Malaysian Medical and Dental Force commander, Malaysian army Lt. Col. Rusman Bin Sanip.

Malaysian healthcare providers are teaching local midwives, providing dental care, training park rangers and purifying water.

“We are here to assist in the reconstruction of the Bamyán health care system, by enhancing capacity, mentoring and training,” said Rusman.

He said providing medical care in Bamyán Province poses many challenges. Bamyán residents experience health-related issues due to a variety of environmental factors including: geographical isolation, poor immunization support and impure drinking water.

The Malaysian medical team is using a variety of innovative techniques to defeat these challenges. Perhaps the most daunting of which is access to safe drinking water.

“Waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in Bamyán,” said Malaysian army Maj. Muhammad Arshil.

Arshil began researching inexpensive and sustainable means of delivering clean water to local residents. He and his team fashioned a small water filtration system using a steel drum and clean sand from the bed of a local river.

Arshil said locals were initially reluctant to purify their water over fears that the chlorine used in the purification process was not “halal” or religiously permissible. “Because we are also Muslims, they listened to us,” said Arshil. “We were able to convince them that chlorination was halal.”

Another example of innovation is the Malaysian medical team’s dental outreach program.

Faced with an extreme lack of access to quality dental care, the Malaysian team once again was forced to improvise by training assistants to perform procedures normally conducted by licensed dentists.

“There is only one dentist in Bamyán,” said Malaysian army Capt. Rina Sumira.



Local residents gather at Badi Amir National Park to enjoy the pristine waters of Badi Amir. Recently members of the Royal Malaysian Medical and Dental Force saved a local girl from drowning while teaching a basic life saver course to a group of Afghan National Park Rangers.

“I am teaching dental assistants to do extractions, fillings and cleanings.”

Malaysian medical team members are also working to increase access to immunizations and to conduct blood drives.

“One in five children under the age of four die in Afghanistan due to lack of immunizations,” said Malaysian army Capt. Rauhah Muhammad Salleh.

Recognizing a critical need for blood in the local hospital, Malaysian team members embarked upon a campaign to convince locals to participate in blood drives.

Donating blood is a relatively new idea in Afghanistan. Locals were fearful of the process and resisted efforts to organize a drive. To overcome this challenge, the medical team enlisted the assistance of Mullah Hajji Ahmadi, the Grand Mullah of Bamyán Province. Ahmadi gave public service announcements about the importance of donating blood and brought people to the clinic to make donations.

“One of our donors was too eager to

give blood,” said Arshil “His blood pressure was not suitable for donation, but he refused to leave. We waited for his blood pressure to reach acceptable limits and allowed him to donate.”

In addition to providing medical care, Malaysian professionals are also training local park rangers. Bamyán Province is home to some of the most scenic areas in Afghanistan, including the stunning Badi Amir National Park. Medical team members are training Afghan park rangers to provide basic life support and first aid. Ironically, while conducting training at Badi Amir a young girl nearly drowned in one of the lakes.

“A girl drowned and two of our Soldiers had to conduct CPR,” said Arshil. “We managed to save her, this occurred while we were teaching basic life support.”

Although small in number, members of the Royal Malaysian Medical and Dental Force said they are determined to make a difference in Bamyán Province. ☺



Ghazni Provincial Gov. Musa Khan, cuts the ribbon during a ceremony at the Deh Yak District Center to officially launch a large watershed management project in the district.

Ghazni officials launch watershed management project

Story and photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura G. Childs,
Ghazni Texas Agribusiness Development Team IV Public Affairs

The Ghazni Texas Agribusiness Development Team-IV helped launch one of the largest watershed management projects in Ghazni Province during a ceremony hosted by Ghazni Gov. Musa Kahn and Deh Yak Shura leader Chief Nasrullah. July 25.

U.S. Army Maj. John L. Davis, Texas ADT-IV Agriculture team leader said this project is a significant step in developing successful watershed management in the Kauyian region of northern Deh Yak District. It is a massive series of check dams throughout the Kauyian flood plain designed to slow the water and measure the silt build up in the river bed for future dam projects in the region.

Davis, from Austin, Texas, said, “Upon its completion, the waters from spring runoff will remain in the region longer and will permeate further into the ground allowing for late season karez and well recharge.”

The process for developing this project highlights the gains key Ghazni leaders have made in identifying and executing projects in the province.

As head of the Deh Yak Shura, Chief Nasrullah identified the need for water management in his district during a shura attended by the Texas ADT in November 2010. The project was then approved by the Ghazni governor and vetted and approved by the Ghazni Provincial Development Council.

“It is one of the many projects initiated this year that has been completely implemented and designed by the Afghan Government to help the people of Afghanistan,” said San Antonion native U.S. Army 1st Lt. William Hosket Texas ADT-IV project manager. They selected this project as a priority, designed the project, selected the contractor, and will manage the project to its completion.”

Through the mentoring of TX ADT-IV, a committee of key agriculture leaders in the district conducted the contractor selection which included representatives from the Ghazni Governor’s office, the Provincial Council, the office of the Director of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, and Deh Yak District.

Using key Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan representatives in this way is an important step in increasing the capacity and capability of GIRoA said Hosket.

“This process gives them ownership of the project which will not only increase the success of the project, but will increase their ability to execute future projects in Ghazni Province,” he said.

While this project will improve water management in the district, it offers other benefits to the local populace.

Due to the large scope of this project, it will gainfully employ more than 500 men for six months, offering them an alternative to potential influence by the insurgents. It will also employ more than 30 skilled laborers from Ghazni.

Nasrullah said as local Afghans see their leaders successfully addressing the needs of the district, they will have greater confidence in their government’s ability to solve the problems they face.

This is a significant step in increasing the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

“This is an exciting project for Deh Yak District, and we are very pleased with the assistance we have received from the Texas ADT,” Nasrullah said. Not only is this project important for improving the water management of our district, but it will offer employment to many of the men here. We hope to use what we have learned during the process and conduct other projects in the future.” ☺



Afghan workers from a nearby village lay bricks for one of 21 buildings being built for Task Force LaFayette at Forward Operating Base Nejrab Afghanistan, July 24. (Photo by French army ADC Isabelle Helies, Task Force LaFayette Public Affairs)

French construction projects improve local economy, skills

Story by 1st Lt. Arthur Volkoff,
Task Force LaFayette Public Affairs

The operational base of Nijrab is at the very heart of a partnership with the nearby valleys, employing many local civilians who prepare their professional future by learning specific sets of skills.

The local support cell of Task Force LaFayette employed more than 300 Afghans to develop its operational base in Nijrab. Mostly from the neighboring valleys, the Afghan employees work alongside French soldiers to build 21 rocket-proof buildings.

Its budget is more than one million euros and allows the local population to earn wages while developing construction skills. Once the job is done, the workers will be able to boast a hard-earned experience and find themselves full-time jobs, said Afghan contractor Hebdul.

"It is a good experience for us, Afghan civilians," he said.

The TF LaFayette local support cell subcontracted local construction companies without using foreign agencies to favor local development. In addition, the raw materials used on the construction sites all originate from the region which allows the industrial networks to benefit from the economical outcome of the work site.

Thus, this economical and development initiative has given birth to a true exchange between the valley and the operational base, said French army 1st LTN Philippe Pierrejean, TF LaFayette infrastructure officer.

"This allows the military base and its civil environment to peacefully coexist while putting to work many Afghans who will be able to put their know-how upfront once the time for transition comes," Pierrejean said. ☺



An Afghan worker from a nearby village works on one of 21 buildings being built for Task Force LaFayette at Forward Operating Base Nejrab Afghanistan, July 24. (Photo by French army ADC Isabelle Helies, Task Force LaFayette Public Affairs)

Soldiers take Afghan boy under their wing

Story and photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell, Task Force Bronco Public Affairs

A few years ago, Shahidulla's father, an Afghan National Army soldier, worked as a cook on a base in Kunar Province's Korengal Valley in eastern Afghanistan.

One day, his father and another ANA soldier went to a nearby village to get a lamb for dinner. They were ambushed and killed by the Taliban, leaving Shahidulla, 9, to take care of his mother and younger sister.

Today, a scruffy Shahidulla, now 14, stands on top of a shipping container on Combat Outpost Honaker-Miracle and directs other Afghan workers on where to put a pallet of bottled water.

His life, as well as the lives of thousands of Afghans, has been unequivocally altered because of war.

Yet, the Soldiers at COP Honaker-Miracle assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Cacti, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Bronco are trying to make a positive change in the lives of Afghans here.

"When Shahidulla first came to us, I immediately saw an opportunity to bring someone in to work with us as a day laborer," said U.S. Army Spc. German de la Roche, the COP mayor. "Rather than him having a bad experience with us and possibly making other choices in life ... I wanted us to take that opportunity and seize it."

Shahidulla, otherwise affectionately known as JJ, was offered a job by a contractor that helps run the busy combat outpost.

After previously working at another base, but not making enough money to support his family, he traveled from district center to district center before winding up at COP Honaker-Miracle's gate.

The fact he spoke some English stood out to New York City native, de la Roche.

He saw an opportunity to help this Afghan teenager at a crossroads in his life. Too many young Afghans fall in league with Taliban said de la Roche and he didn't want to see that happen.

"When I see a boy like JJ," said de la Roche. "I say, what can we do to help him so he can tell his friends and one day say, 'I worked with the Americans. I saw them every day. I saw how they lived, how they ate, how they treated us. They wanted to do the best for this country and for our people.'"



Shahidulla, 14, listens to instructions from U.S. Army Spc. German de la Roche, an infantryman and COP mayor assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Cacti, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Bronco at Combat Outpost Honaker-Miracle in eastern Afghanistan.

"If he uses those words one day; that's all we can ask for," continued de la Roche. "If he spreads that message, at the end of the day, that's much more effective than whatever information campaign that we have."

Working with the Americans at one of the most dangerous combat outposts in eastern Afghanistan hasn't always been easy for Shahidulla.

A few days ago, rockets blasted the small combat outpost.

Shahidulla was hit with some shrapnel while getting into a bunker. He fell unconscious as other Afghan workers carried his limp, bleeding body to an aid station.

"Of course, the first reaction was 'Oh God, somebody just died,'" said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Matthew G. Bartel, a native of Salem, Ore.

The medics began evaluating him when the company commander came to check on him. After the commander tried to talk to Shahidulla, he woke up and gave the thumbs up.

"Of course it was a big relief when he woke up, and we found out he was all right," explained Bartel.

Shahidulla only had some shrapnel in his arm and would be OK.

"An hour later, he was back out there doing work and ordering some guys around," said Bartel with a smile. "All day, he was giving us the big thumbs up

letting us know he was doing all right."

It was a scare for some because, as Bartel said, he has been sort of adopted by the company of Soldiers here.

Bartel added it's the little things that can potentially have a big impact.

"If nothing else, if we can be the factor that gets him headed in the right direction and gets him to understand that America isn't that bad and we're here to help," Bartel said. "We'll take a small victory like that."

Here, it's the small victories that can have lasting impressions, added de la Roche.

"I think that at the end of the day, what we're facing here, it's only through generational change that the overall picture can stabilize," explained de la Roche. "These kids are the ones that can change a country when they grow up."

Bartel agreed and said their relationship with the locals has been good.

"The bottom line is taking care of each other and looking out for each other," said Bartel. "That's a strong message that this company has and as long as I'm here that'll be our mission and our focus."

For now, JJ seems to be in good hands. But Shahidulla said he doesn't know what his future holds, because his main concern is to provide for his family. Whatever happens, he knows, his adopted family will be sure to help him out. ☺

W Chaplain Watch

Are you going the extra mile?

Commentary by U.S. Army Chaplain (MAJ) Eddie Kinley, Jr.,
CJTF-1 Family Life Chaplain, Regional Command East

I spend a fair portion of my day counseling married and single soldiers here at Bagram. One concept I have incorporated into my counseling practice is the concept of going the extra mile.

Not everyone I talk to is prepared to undertake such a challenge, because it involves giving even when you are not receiving.

Jesus once said: It is more blessed to **give** than to **receive**."

When my mom first quoted this passage, I was not a happy camper, because I loved receiving and not giving. As a father and husband, I have learned the value and importance of giving.

By nature we are a selfish race of people. Everyone loves to receive. Regardless of rank or status, everyone loves to be recognized and affirmed.

Whether the gift of giving is emotional, physical or even spiritual, we love receiving. Women love compliments and words of affirmation, men love to hear how much they are needed and respected. Children love to hear how well they are doing in school and how much they are appreciated and valued. We love being reaffirmed and reassured.

However, the blessing is in the giving and not the receiving. When was the last time you have something to your spouse. I am not necessarily referring to a bouquet of flowers or some other monetary gift, but something simple.

Giving goes a long way, especially when it is unexpected. If you want to keep the flame aglow in your marriage, develop the habit of going the extra mile with your spouse. Going the extra mile is not about receiving, it is all about giving.

How does this work in marriage? First, develop the habit of giving when it is unexpected. I found a box of blank greeting cards in my office one day. I was tempted to throw them away

as I was office cleaning, but thought of the benefits of the cards. So what did I do with them? I mail one home every month for my wife.

It takes about ten minutes for me to write a few romantic lines, then I drop it off at the post office. It's simple, it's free and it yields maximum dividends. She loves it! Could I have sent an email, of course but there is nothing like a good old fashion letter.

The first time I wrote my wife a letter with pen and paper, she was in tears. Today she still holds dear that first letter. Develop the habit of giving when it is unexpected.

Secondly, be willing to give often. The more I give to my wife, the more it benefits me personally. Giving does not necessitate a gift. You can give her a few more minutes on the phone, a few more compliments, a few more words of admiration, but never stop giving. When you give, it takes the focus off of you.

I find myself less consumed with my needs and desires, when I focus on giving to my wife. I need to hear more about her day, her stress and her happiness. In the end, she is grateful to have a husband who takes the time to listen.

Finally, always give with the right motive.

I was talking to a young man about the importance of giving and he said: "Sir, when is she going to start giving to me?" His motive for giving was only to receive. When this occurs, you never reap the reward of sacrifice. This act of giving requires patience, because whether the recipient is your spouse, a parent or a child, the benefits may not be immediate, but as long as you invest in the concept of giving, in time you will reap a bountiful harvest.

I guess Jesus had a point when he uttered: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." ☺

Amazing facts:

- Did you know that fathers tend to determine the height of their child, mothers their weight?
- Did you know that people spend more than 7 billion dollars a year on chocolate?
- Eskimos use refrigerators to prevent their food from freezing.
- The adhesive on stamps contains 2-8 calories.
- They have square watermelons in Japan.
- Did you know that rats are a very clean animal; they spend several hours per day grooming themselves?

Avoid Negligent Discharge

T.H.I.N.K

Treat every weapon as if it's loaded.

Handle every weapon with care.

Identify the target before you fire.

Never point the muzzle at anything you don't intend to shoot.

Kkeep the weapon on safe and your finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.

Story Snapshots



Clearing

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Michael Drago, Provincial Reconstruction Team Paktya security forces team leader, from Plymouth, Mass., inspects a room to ensure it is clear for an inspection by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Brian Donatelli, PRT Paktya engineer, from Pittsburgh, in Paktya Province, Aug. 2. PRT engineers performed a quality check on the Mirzaka community center construction project. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Wesley Farnsworth)

Donating

U.S. Navy Lt. j.g. Reynaldo Reyes, physician assistant from San Diego, Calif., assigned to Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team, Task Force White Eagle, sticks a needle into the arm of U.S. Army Spc. Jorge Enriquez, machine gunner from Rockland, Mass., also assigned to the Ghazni PRT, during whole blood drive Aug. 17, at Forward Operating Base Ghazni, Afghanistan. The base asked all A positive blood members to donate blood to save the life of a surgery patient. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Darnell T. Cannady, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)



Navigating

U.S. Army Spcs. Kyle Graves and Michael Bartolo attached to Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team, navigate through a series of rice paddies and corn fields while on a combat patrol to sweep for roadside bomb triggermen in Alingar District, Laghman province, Aug. 8. The PRT is serving as the quick reaction force, ready to respond at a moment's notice to unexpected incidents in the province. The QRF was called up to escort the explosives ordinance disposal team to a found improvised explosive device site while clearing previous blast sites along the way. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Crane, Provincial Reconstruction Team Laghman)



Studying

U.S. Army Sgt. Dennis Magnasco, a Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team medic from Boston, assigned to Task Force White Eagle, helps village children with their English homework during a recent mission. Soldiers from Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team often have the opportunity to interact with children during missions. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Whitney Hyde, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team)



Watching

U.S. Army Soldiers from Company D, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, and Afghan National Army Soldiers display illegal material found at a tactical control point in Musa Khel July 29. The contraband was confiscated during Operation Tofan I, a combined effort between U.S. and Afghan forces. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Joseph Watson, Task Force Duke Public Affairs)



Flipping

U.S. Army Spc. Brendan McDonald, infantryman from Franklin, Mass., and U.S. Army Spc. Nicholas Kole, infantryman from North Dighton, Mass., both assigned to Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team, Task Force White Eagle, rolls a tire during the combat stress firing course July 13, at Forward Operating Base Ghazni, Afghanistan. This course consisted of six mission-oriented events that gave participants the feel of operating under stress. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Darnell T. Cannady, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)



Maintaining

U.S. Marine Cpl. Pedro Guzman, a Marine Attack Squadron 513 avionics technician and El Paso, Texas, native, performs maintenance on one of the squadron's AV-8B Harrier's 30 KVA generators in the squadron hangar at Kandahar Airfield. (Photo by U.S. Marine Pfc. Sean Dennison, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward))



Controlling

Jackson, Tenn., native, U.S. Army Spc. Andrew B. Clement, an explosive ordnance disposal technician assigned to 129th EOD, attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Bronco, maneuvers an EOD robot through a computer viewfinder at Combat Outpost Honaker-Miracle in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province, Aug. 1. Clement said the robot is designed to keep Soldiers at a safe distance as possible from suspected improvised explosive devices. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell, Task Force Bronco Public Affairs)

Snacking

A group of Afghan kids are all enjoying a nice cold ice cream on a hot day in Paghman which is located just outside western Kabul. The Corps of Engineers South Resident Office personnel were checking up on the construction progress of some Afghan National Security Force facilities being built in the area when this group of kids was encountered nearby. (Photo by Eric Aubrey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE))



Recovering

Eid Muhammad, Bak Afgan Uniform Police Chief, explains to U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Clay Mudge (right), Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team civil affairs team leader from Bath, Mich., and Staff Sgt. David Ellis, from Kenosha, Wis., a new way of recovering improvised explosive devices during a discussion at the Bak District Center Aug. 3. The discussion also touched on district center security and potential projects. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Sandra Welch, Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)



Inspecting

U.S. Marine Cpl. Benjamin Corke, a Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 40 aviation ordnance systems technician and Scottsville, N.Y., native, inspects a group of GBU-54 bombs at Kandahar Airfield. (Photo by U.S. Marine Pfc. Sean Dennison, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward))



Soldiers to begin 2012 with nine-month deployments

Story by Rob McIlvaine,
Army News Service

Beginning Jan. 1, deploying Soldiers will go for nine months, meaning more time at home with their families.

Secretary of the Army John McHugh signed a directive instituting a nine-month "boots on the ground" policy for deployed Soldiers, providing more "dwell" time at home for Soldiers and families.

"Implementation of this change is based on the projected demand for Army forces, and remains contingent on global security conditions and combatant commanders' requirements," said Lt. Col. Peggy Kageleiry, an Army spokesperson.

Corps units and above, and individual augmentee deployments will remain at 12-month deployments.

The goal for the corps units is to eventually get to nine-month deployments.

Most augmentees -- those with particular skills or those in low density skill sets and grades -- will remain on 12-month deployments.

This change in policy, to be fully implemented by April 1, will affect Soldiers in all named operations, including Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Operation Noble Guardian in Kosovo, and Multi-National Forces Sinai in Egypt.

Reserve and National Guard unit tour lengths will be the same as active duty -- nine months. In their case, though, deployment and mobilization are two different issues. Even though these units may still be mobilized for 12 or more months, they will only spend nine months of that mobilization deployed.

It is clear to Army senior leadership that there are still issues tied to Guard and Reserve Forces that will need to be worked out, said Kageleiry.

Soldiers deploying under the change in policy will not be granted environmental morale leave -- known as R&R, but commanders will retain the option of granting emergency leave and leave for special circumstances, according to Army regulations and local policy.

"This policy will enhance operational success by reducing the friction that comes with having 10 percent of a commander's personnel being away on leave in the middle of a deployment," Kageleiry said.

"Operational continuity is enhanced and risk to the individual Soldier is reduced by not having to move a warrior around on the battlefield to go on leave," she said.

Also, Kageleiry said, the reduced deployment length could potentially improve Soldier and family quality of life while continuing to meet operational requirements, and is an important step in sustaining the all-volunteer force.

The goal of the policy is to reduce the amount of time Soldiers are deployed and provide more time for them to spend with their families, depending on the needs of the combatant commander and the potential of decrease operations. Units deployed before the policy takes effect, January 2012, will continue to have 12 month deployments.

Currently, deployment has been 12 months with a goal of 24 months at home.

However, the Army will continue to review how to increase the amount of time Soldiers spend at home depending on the amount of time they are deployed.

"We are constantly analyzing all range of policies to address the issues of the mission, Soldiers, and Families. We believe that the current operational environment allows us to adjust the deployment policy in a way that meets all mission requirements and better serve our Soldiers and Families," Kageleiry said. ☺

Personal opinions of the change

From the reactions of people I've met and talked to it's a good thing.

-U.S. Army Pvt. Kyle Cirkl of Marion Iowa, a forward observer with the 2nd Company, 30th Infantry Battalion, 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division



I think its good just because the Soldiers want to be on the ground nine months and spend more time with their families.

-U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Greg Floyd of Chesapeake, Ohio, Company A, 1st Battalion, 169th Aviation Regiment



I think its a great idea as long as they up the dwell time ... just to give Soldiers a chance to live a normal life.

-U.S. Army Spc. Jessica Goettl of Mosiwee, Wis., a human resources specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division.



It'll definitely be better than doing the 12 months because you'll get more time with your family and you'll get more train-up time.

-U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Douglas Wagner of Fort Belvoir, Va. an intelligence analyst with the International Joint Command



U.S. Army Capt. Benjamin March of Saint Johnsbury, Vt., the officer-in-charge of a Downed Aircraft Recovery Team mission, watches as members of the team prepare a downed AH-64 Apache helicopter for transportation back to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, where it can be assessed for repairs. March deployed from Fort Drum, N.Y., with Task Force Mountain Eagle, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. (Courtesy photo)

Mountain Eagle team recovers damaged aircraft

Story by Army Pfc. Michael Syner,
Task Force Falcon Public Affairs

While helicopters have proven their value during Operation Enduring Freedom, from protecting Afghans and Soldiers to delivering supplies, sometimes these versatile aircraft are forced to the earth, unable to continue their mission. This is where downed aircraft recovery teams come in, rescuing the remains of aircraft to investigate what happened, to bring the aircraft back to coalition forces and in some cases to repair and return the aircraft to duty.

DARTs are responsible for the extraction of grounded aircraft from the downed location to a nearby post where inspections and assessments take place.

Soldiers of Task Force Mountain Eagle, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, recovered an AH-64 Apache helicopter July 7, thanks to the efforts of the task forces' DART.

"We were notified around 5:30 a.m.," said U.S. Capt. Benjamin March of Saint Johnsbury, Vt., the officer-in-charge of the operation with TF Mountain Eagle who deployed from Fort Drum, N.Y. "Our prep time was about five hours between notification and our (launch time)."

In those five hours, they held briefs and made plans. "We gathered information about the crash site and the condition of the aircraft; getting our tools and equipment ready based on (the information), linking up with our convoy elements, and doing the necessary mission briefs and pre-combat inspections," March said.

Due to the location of the aircraft, the DART determined a vehicle convoy would be the best choice for the mission and brought in Co. A, TF Mountain Eagle, as well as a recovery team

with 584th Maintenance Company, 101st Sustainment Brigade.

Once the convoy made it to the crash site, the first thing on the agenda was the inspection. Subject matter experts took photographs of the site, getting images of the downed aircraft from all angles and documenting the damage the aircraft sustained.

"They took pictures of everything before we touched anything," March said.

After the inspection, the DART began its work.

"Once we could start, we de-armed the weapon systems and removed a number of components, such as the main rotor blades, to allow it to fit onto the trailer," March said. "Then we worked with the 584th SMC guys to get all the pieces hoisted onto the trailers and strapped down. Altogether, we spent about two hours preparing and loading the aircraft onto the trailers, which is pretty good."

After loading everything up, it was a smooth ride back to the safety of the base. Getting back to Bagram didn't mean the job was complete, however.

"Once we got back to BAF, download was essentially the same as loading. The only difference was that we had to set the AH-64 down on some cradles so that it could be moved as needed," March said.

"After we were done downloading all the pieces, we ended mission," March said.

Now that the aircraft has been returned, a thorough investigation can be performed to determine the cause of the crash, as well as an assessment as to whether the Apache can be repaired.

"It's important to conduct DART missions," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Morgan of Bluemont, Va., a standardizations instructor with the 10th CAB. "Because of their work, we can recover U.S. property, and may even be able to repair it." ☺

USFOR-A Radiation Safety Program

Safe Handling of Tritium—³H Devices

RADIATION

Radiation Safety start with the individual.

If you don't know or don't understand then talk with your Unit Radiation Safety Officer. If he/she doesn't know then contact the Installation Radiation Safety Officer.

When it comes to the equipment you are issued, YOU are responsible for it. There is no excuse for mistreating or maltreating your equipment.

The U.S.Army has many types of equipment that contain limited quantities of radioactive materials. This equipment is safe and risk free as long it is used and handled for its intended purpose. Tritium is used in illumination of watches, compasses and fire control devices.

When you see or even suspect a broken Tritium Device, contact your Unit Radiation Safety Officer (RSO). If you don't have one then contact your Chain of Command.

Steps to secure the item: **1.** Wearing gloves, pick the item up with an invert bag. **2.** Revert bag over item. **3.** Twist and seal the bag. **4.** Repeat the procedure using a second bag. **5.** Tag the bag stating—Broken Tritium Device, Contact RSO, Your name and date. **6.** Place in a secure, well ventilated area, away from people and work areas till the RSO take care of the device.

Your **Unit** is responsible for the **device**. Your **Unit's RSO** will take the **correct** procedures to disposed or turn-in the device in for repair.

MAJ Joseph M. Beckman USFOR-A Radiation Safety Officer



US FOR-A Radiation Safety

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ALARA.

M224 Mortar	M58 & M59 Aiming Post Light	5.0 / 9.0	
M64A1 Range Indicator	Sight Unit w/ M9 Elbow Telescope	6.69	
M1A2 Gunner's Quadrant		3.2	
		0.075	

W Nutrition Watch

A pinch of salt goes a long way

Story by U.S. Army Major Renee E. Cole, PhD, RD, LD.

Table salt is a mineral known as sodium chloride, which is mined and refined from sea water or rock deposits. Salt has been used as far back as 800 B.C. to flavor foods, for trade of wine and luxury items, and to preserve meats before canning and refrigeration preservation methods were developed. Unrefined sea salt contains the same amount of sodium, but is used for its unique flavors due to impurities trapped during crystallization. In 1924, iodine was added to refined salt in an effort to prevent iodine deficiency contributing to thyroid disorders like goiter.

Salt plays an important role in our body's fluid balance. Unfortunately it can also wreak havoc within the body when too much or too little salt is consumed, resulting in symptoms such as muscle cramps, dizziness, electrolyte imbalance, water retention, and elevated blood pressure. High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is defined as a blood pressure greater than 140/90 mmHg.

Hypertension often goes unnoticed due to minimal symptoms but is a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure, and kidney disease. We've used salt for centuries so why is hypertension now plaguing 33 percent of adults in the U.S.? In the early 1970's there was a boom in the food processing industry, which uses salt as a common ingredient to make the food last longer and taste better.

One teaspoon of salt contains about 2400 milligrams of sodium. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2300 milligrams of sodium per day but no more than 1500 milligrams a day for those with existing kidney and heart problems. About 80 percent of our sodium comes from common processed foods such as deli meats, cheeses, bacon, corned beef, sausage, hot dogs, frozen meals, and salted snack foods.

Other sodium culprits include sauces (i.e. soy, Worcester), condiments (i.e. ketchup, mayo, salad dressing), pickled foods, seasoning salts (i.e. meat tenderizers, MSG), canned foods (i.e. sardines, hash, vegetables), and soups. A rule of thumb when looking at a nutrition label is to limit sodium to 400 milligrams per serving; this will be difficult with many soups, frozen meals, and snack foods.

Many people are looking for a magic pill to fix the problem, but one very effective method to reduce blood pressure is sodium control in the diet. Curbing table salt addition to your meals as well as choosing foods that are naturally prepared can help to reduce sodium in the diet. There is increasing pressure on food manufactures to reduce sodium in packaged and restaurant foods; a new National Salt Reduction Initiative has many companies vowing to cut salt in there process by 20 percent in the next five years.

Another option is natural herbs/spices or a salt-substitute (i.e. Mrs. DASH, NuSalt, NoSalt) to season foods. Salt substitutes are made of potassium chloride, another mineral considered healthier for the body.

As a matter of fact, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention recommend consuming foods higher in potassium, which are naturally lower in sodium.

Potassium is found in many whole foods in the dining facilities such as fruits (i.e. grapes, berries, citrus, banana, cantaloupe, kiwi), leafy greens, cabbage, broccoli, beans, seeds, nuts, and fish. Most of these foods contain between 500-1000 milligrams of potassium per serving, and can help reach a recommended daily potassium amount of 4500 milligrams.

We owe it to ourselves to become more aware of our habits and slowly make healthier food choices. This should include reducing intake of high sodium foods by replacing them with high potassium food choices. If you're used to a lot of salt, don't worry, your taste buds will change!

For more nutrition information, tune into AFN Freedom Radio 94.1 with DJ Chance Smith, Maj. Renee Cole and Capt. Stephanie Vanneman on Monday mornings at 0700.

W Unit Watch

Egyptian Field Hospital

Story and photos by U.S. Army Sgt. Derek Nelson,
17th Public Affairs Detachment

On Bagram Airfield there are three major coalition hospitals, represented by three separate coalition forces: American, Korean, and Egyptian. In the scope of local relevance to surrounding communities, the Egyptian Field Hospital truly stands out.

“We have real patients and fake patients here,” said Egyptian army (Capt.) Dr. Ahmed Gamal, the dentist and oral surgeon for the Egyptian Field Hospital. “We have people who will make the long journey here just to say hi; just to get a toothbrush and some toothpaste.”

Local Afghan citizens come from all around, often making long, arduous journeys to receive care at the hospital. All medical care provided by the hospital is free-of-cost, providing a large incentive for locals to travel there.

It isn't just the cost that is drawing Afghans, however, it is the level of care that is being provided. A level of professional, personalized care that is largely unavailable in the local economy.

Each morning Afghans come from all over to receive exceptional care from the hospital which services an average of 50 patients a day.

A 15 month old child and his mother know this level of care better than most. At only two months old, the child, who's family asked not to be named, began to have swelling on his face. As the swelling continued, the family earnestly sought out medical care at local Afghan hospitals.

After more than a year of searching, the family still had no idea what was wrong with their child. Luckily, the family was referred by word-of-mouth to the Egyptian hospital where Dr. Gamal and his staff quickly identified the swelling as a tumor and rushed to perform a biopsy. Despite the tragedy, it is certain that even if the diagnosis turns out to be fatal, the quality of life for the child and its family will be greatly improved thanks to the staff at the hospital.



An Afghan woman receives an admittance slip upon her arrival to the Egyptian Field Hospital at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Aug. 3. A doctor with the hospital is assigned to greet patients on their way in each morning and to quickly triage them ensuring they receive care from the proper hospital clinic as needed.

The staff at the hospital is comprised of 65 Egyptian servicemembers covering all areas of medical care from pediatrics, dental and obstetrics to major surgery and inpatient care. The hospital even provides midwife and delivery services, who in early August performed an emergency caesarian section for a mother and her premature child, born at only two kilograms.

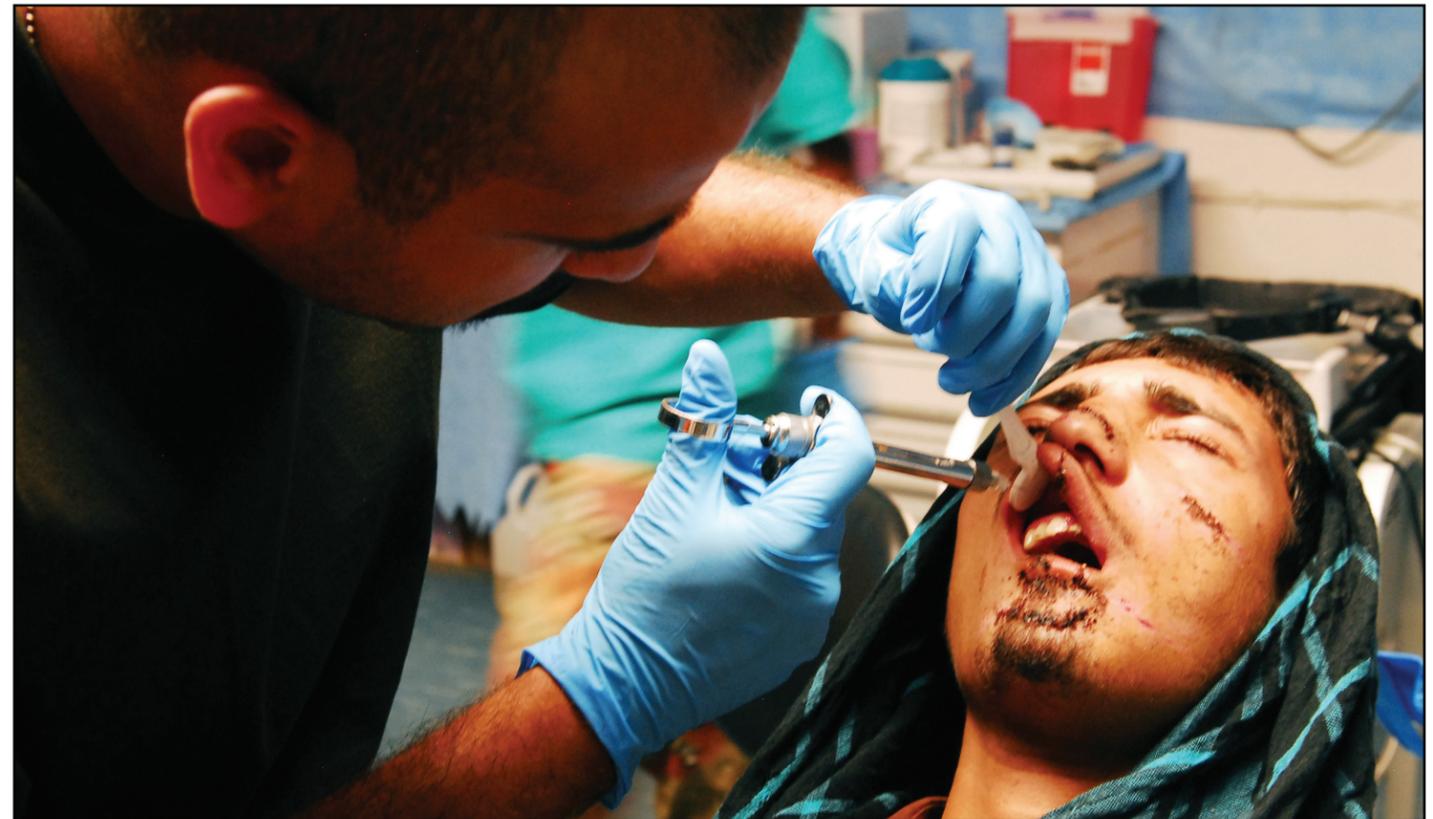
Three days a week the hospital focuses on male care, with another three dedicated solely to female care.

Each day, a doctor meets patients at the gate and begins triaging them. He listens to the patients as they describe their pains and aches, looks them over and then

writes a slip recommending them to the correct clinic inside the hospital. This is yet one more example of the depth of the personalized care that the Egyptian Field Hospital staff strives for each day.

Though the hospital maintains set hours for patient admittance, they will never leave a patient unseen and will stay as late as necessary to ensure each patient receives the proper, personal care that they came to receive.

“We don't have a set time that we close our clinics,” said Egyptian army Col. Ashraf Khozayem, the hospital commander. “We don't leave until every patient gets seen and gets the care they deserve.”



(Above) Saddam Hussein, a local Afghan worker, undergoes extensive oral surgery under the care of Egyptian army (Capt.) Dr. Ahmed Gamal, after having a machine explode right in front of his face. The treatment occurred in the Egyptian Field Hospital's dental clinic, located at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

(Below Left) Doctors with the Egyptian Field Hospital at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan perform child birthing services to Afghan families. This child was delivered prematurely in early August in a caesarian section operation and weighed only two kilograms at birth. The mother and child are healthy and receiving follow-on care from the hospital, free of charge.

(Below Right) Sigad Aga, 3, receives treatment for a recent head trauma from Egyptian Army Maj. Dr. Samir Negmedin, a surgeon with the Egyptian Field Hospital at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, Aug. 3.



Retention Watch

Leadership

FM 6-22, Chapter 1-2 defines **Army Leadership** as anyone who by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals. Army leaders motivate people both inside and outside the chain of command to pursue actions, focus thinking, and shape decisions for the greater good of the organization.

Throughout my career in the United States Army I have been fortunate enough to assume several of these leadership roles but by far my most challenging role as a leader did not take place during a deployment, as many might assume but rather as a detailed recruiter in the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC).

I'm sure that there are several of you reading this and thinking to yourself "Whatever" and I will admit that on the surface my statement does sound bold, after all many of you are seasoned veterans with four or five deployments to combat zones.

So how in the world could anyone ever say that being a leader in Recruiting Command was challenging? That's a fair question and if what we were talking about was simply leading "Soldiers" in combat verses leading them within Recruiting Command I would completely agree.

So what are we really talking about...

Take another look at the definition of Leadership, you'll notice that nowhere does it refer to "Soldiers" instead it uses the word "People" that may seem like a relatively small distinction but when you are discussing the leadership differences between the conventional Army and Recruiting Command that small distinction becomes a big difference.

First, let me say that I truly believe the United States Army has the best leadership in the world.

Our leaders, at all levels do their very best to inspire, influence and motivate their subordinates to pursue action and accomplish the mission and I believe that our leaders do all of this with the greater good of the organization in mind.

Unfortunately, we all know from past experiences that despite our best efforts this does not always happen. There are times when we cannot give our subordinates all of the facts and there are occasions when time simply does not permit us the opportunity to inspire and motivate our troops.

When we find ourselves in those situations we rely on the Military Authority that our grade and or position give us. In those times many of us (myself included) tend to replace "Army Leadership" with "Nike Leadership" and will tell our soldiers to "Just do it".

This is where the leadership challenge of Recruiting Command comes into play. Soldiers have all sworn an oath to obey the orders of the Officers appointed over them and because of that if Maj. Jones tells Sgt. 1st Class White to do something I am going to do it whether Maj. Jones inspired me or not.

In Recruiting Command you will not have the benefit of grade or position because you will be leading civilians, high school students, college students and young adults most of whom are between the ages of 17 to 24 years old and they don't know the difference between a Staff Sergeant and a Major General.

Because of this, recruiters have to rely on their ability to lead. Telling a civilian that they have to be in your office at 1400 simply does not work. They need to know why they are required to be there and why should they take time away from their friends and family to come to see you?

The bottom line is that if you as a leader cannot provide them with a reason or benefit that motivates and inspires them to come see you they probably won't.

So will a tour of duty in Recruiting Command make you a better leader? I don't know. But I do know that it will give you a different perspective on leadership and a new skill set that you can bring back to the conventional Army to help you lead some of the very soldiers that you helped enlist.

My name is Sgt. 1st Class Jeff White I am the Division Outreach NCO for the First Cavalry Division. A 79R (professional Recruiter) with more than 11 years experience in recruiting. One of my duties is to assist Soldiers with the information needed to determine whether a recruiting assignment is right for them. ☺

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Mailing something home?

A few things to keep in mind to make the process quick and painless.

- Have your box ready for inspection.
- Be sure your container, box or footlocker is in good shape with old markings blacked out.
- Items may not be larger than 108 inches in combined size (length+width+depth).
- Items may not weigh more than **70 pounds**.
- Have your address label and customs form already filled out, be sure include a copy of the address label inside the package.
- No checks or credit cards, only cash or the Eagle Cash Card is accepted for payment.

Some items that cannot be mailed include:

- Alcohol of any kind
- Plants, plants products, sand or soil
- Live or dead animals
- Live poisonous insects (camel spiders)
- Cigarette lighters
- Weapons (pistols, rifles, replicas, toy guns)
- Weapon parts (magazines, barrels, bolts, receivers, stocks)
- Ammunition (live or spent, including brass)
- Exploded and unexploded ordnance (mines, grenades, fragments there of)
- Switchblades or knives with a blade longer than 6 inches
- Military equipment (TA-50, radios, any chemical defense equipment, compasses)
- No War trophies

For more information, please contact your unit mail clerk, a postal customer service representative or call DSN 318-431-3023.

You like FREE stuff?

CJTF-1 is giving away an

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The winner's story will also be featured in Freedom Watch magazine,
RC-East's Web site and Facebook page.

Contest Rules:

- Only non-public affairs trained servicemembers may enter
- Send submissions to rce.paosub.org@swa.army.mil by Sept. 20
- Story must contain at least 300 words,
at least two quoted sources and at least one photo with cutline.
- Submissions will be judged on:
 - Story subject
 - Appropriate quotes/attribution
 - Structure (lead, bridge, body, conclusion)
 - Photo content

For more information please contact your task force's public affairs office.

the final Watch

U.S. Army Spc. Jacob Seace, rifleman, secures an area in Qalat City, Afghanistan, Aug. 9. Seace is a member of Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul's security force and is deployed from the Massachusetts National Guard. PRT Zabul is comprised of Air Force, Army, Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel who work with the government of Afghanistan to improve governance, stability, and development throughout the province. (Photo by Senior Airman Grovert Fuentes-Contreras, Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul)

