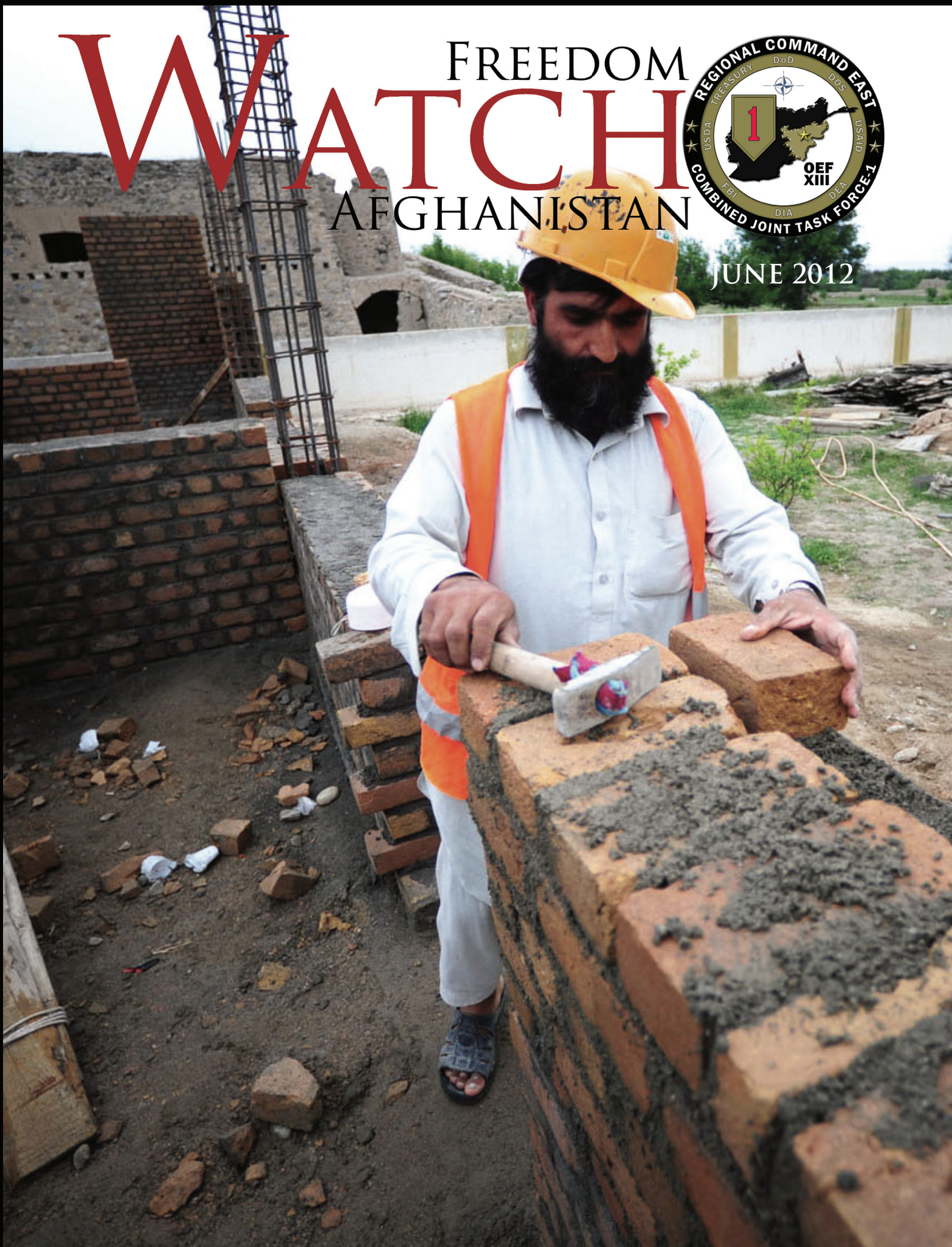


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FREEDOM
AFGHANISTAN



JUNE 2012



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FREEDOM WATCH

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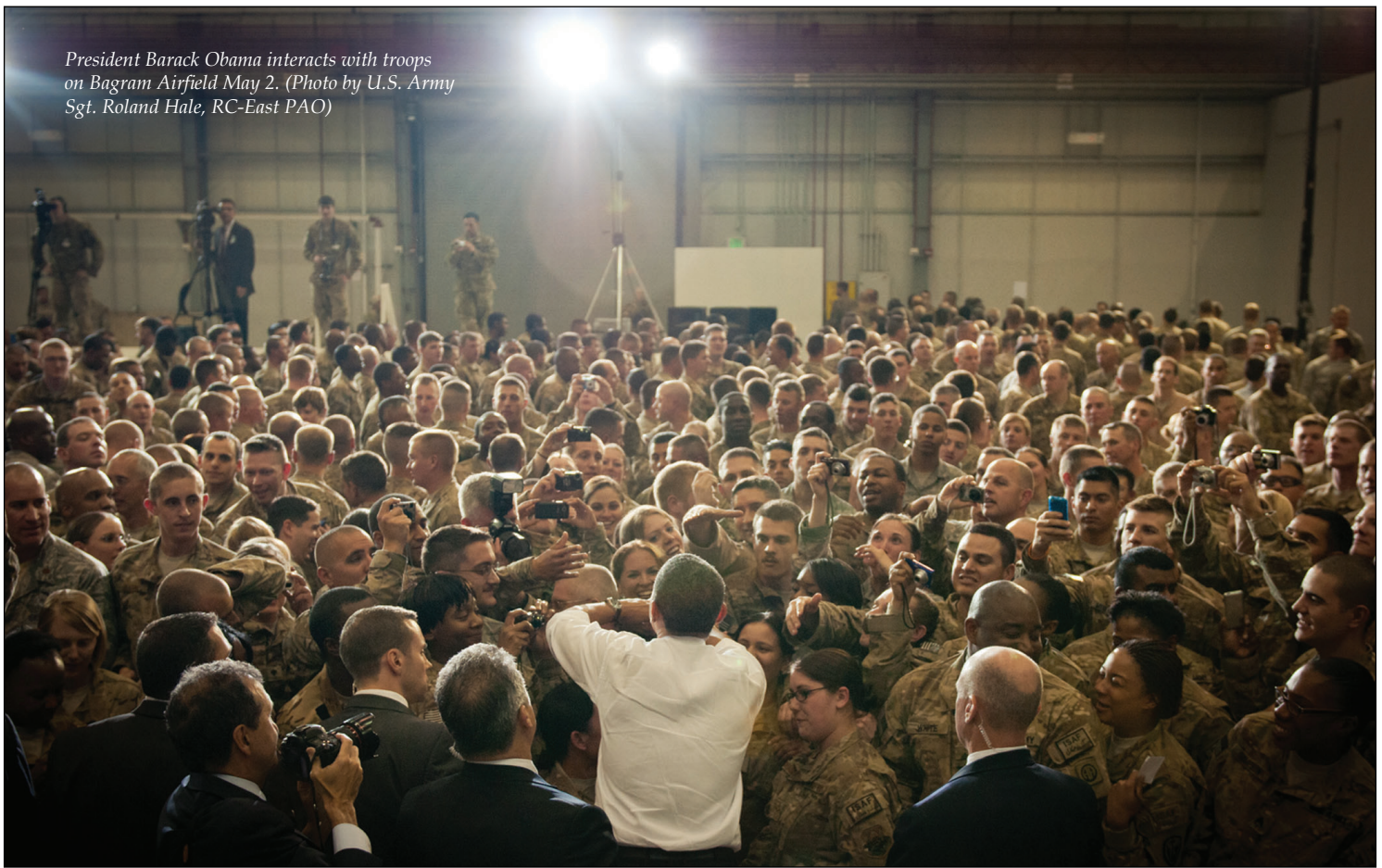
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An Afghan worker helps with laying bricks for a health facility in the Laghman Province April 19. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Denoris Mickle, U.S. Air Force Central PAO)

President Obama speaks to

President Barack Obama interacts with troops on Bagram Airfield May 2. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Roland Hale, RC-East PAO)



*By U.S. Army Sgt. Roland Hale
RC-East PAO*

President Barack Obama made a surprise visit to speak with U.S. troops at Bagram Airfield during his trip to Afghanistan, May 2.

At 1:30 a.m. local time, in a flight hangar decorated in red, white and blue, Obama addressed more than 1,000 servicemembers.

The president visited troops minutes after signing a strategic partnership agreement between the U.S. and Afghanistan with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

"[This] signals the transition in which we are going to be turning over responsibility for Afghan security to the Afghans," said Obama.

"We're not going to do it overnight; we're not going to do it irresponsibly," he continued. "We're going to make sure the gains — the hard fought gains — that were made are preserved."

He also shared his thoughts about the sacrifices U.S. servicemembers




President Barack Obama speaks to 1st Infantry Division and other Regional Command-East Soldiers on Bagram Airfield May 2. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Roland Hale, RC-East PAO)

have made in Afghanistan over the last eleven years.

"Because of the sacrifices of a decade, and a new greatest generation, not only were we able to blunt the Taliban momentum, but slowly and systematically we were able to decimate the ranks of al Qaeda," said Obama. "A year ago we were able to finally bring Osama bin Laden to justice. That could have only happened because each and every one of you in your own way were doing your jobs."

Before leaving the President addressed the road ahead in Afghanistan, and while he spoke about the transition of responsibility to the Afghan government, he acknowledged that there are still hard days ahead for U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

"There's going to be heart break and pain and difficulty ahead, but there's a light on the horizon because of the sacrifices you've made already," he said. 



o troops on Bagram Airfield

President Barack Obama tells U.S. troops about the way ahead in Afghanistan and how he feels about their sacrifices on Bagram Airfield May2. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Roland Hale, RC-East PAO)



Laghman PRT beg

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terrance Rhodes
RC-East PAO

With the summer season around the corner in Afghanistan, there's change in the air.

The Provincial Reconstruction Team and Coalition Forces will close down this summer at Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam.

More than nine years ago, the PRT was established to promote effective governance, economic development, rule of law and specific technical support in Laghman Province.

The Afghan National Security Forces will take full control of the province once American forces leave.

Governor Mohammad Iqbal Azizi, the Laghman Provincial Governor has been impressed with the transition thus far.

"The work and progress we have achieved has exceeded my expectations," said Azizi. "We have created an infrastructure that will help the local people for years to come."

The PRT has completed different projects ranging from building community hospitals to sub-governor housing, but Azizi knows what effect it can have on his people.

"Of all the projects we have completed in the last few years, I'm most proud of the sense of ownership that it has given my people," said Azizi. "We now feel as we can move forward as a people without any restrictions."

Azizi also said the ANSF would continue to secure and monitor the same areas that American forces currently watch over. He knows that transition will bring some minor setbacks.

"There are some small challenges that we have to overcome; we still need to build schools and hospitals, and continue to unite as a people, but nothing we can't overcome," said Azizi.

Tom McDermott, the State Department senior civilian and rule of law advisor, agrees with Azizi.

"The biggest setback is overcoming their fear of standing on their own and having a government to run without any help. The Laghman government is responsible for the security of this province and I believe they are capable of overcoming any




An Afghan family walks over a loose bridge during a joint security sweep with Afghan National Army Soldiers in Laghman Province April 19. U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force members are deployed to the Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team, tasked to help increase local government infrastructure in the Laghman Province. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Denoris Mickle, U.S. Air Force Central PAO)

setback," the Anchorage, Alaska native said.

Azizi is confident in the current ANSF who has served on the front line, defending his country.

"I'm proud of our ANSF because they have shown confidence, morale and professionalism," the governor added.

Regardless of what the future holds, Azizi is proud of the work and relationship that has forged over the years.

"I've been fortunate to see the ANSF and Coalition Forces bond together in this province," said Azizi. "We have built a functioning government that addresses the needs of the people." 

gins final transition



U.S. Air Force civil engineers Capt. Hans Winkler of the 633rd Civil Engineer Squadron, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., and 1st Lt. Jasmine Pettie of the 60th Civil Engineer Squadron, Travis Air Force Base, Calif., talk to children in Laghman Province April 19. The engineers are deployed to the Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team, tasked to help increase local government infrastructure in the Laghman Province. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Denoris Mickle, U.S. Air Force Central PAO)



U.S. Air Force civil engineer Capt. Hans Winkler of the 633rd Civil Engineer Squadron, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., conducts inspections of Afghan building projects in Laghman Province April 19. Winkler is deployed to the Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team, tasked to help increase local government infrastructure in the Laghman Province. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Denoris Mickle, U.S. Air Force Central PAO)

W^{PHOTO} WATCH



Paratroopers with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, pay respects to U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jonathan Walsh and U.S. Army Pfc. Michael Metcalf, during a memorial on Forward Operating Base Arian, Ghazni Province April 27. Walsh and Metcalf, who served with 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, were killed by a roadside bomb April 22 . (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Mike MacLeod, 1st Brigade Combat Team, TF 1-82 PAO)



Earth Day: Bagram



U.S. Army Col. Gary Kamauoha, garrison commander, U.S. Army Garrison Bagram, cuts the trash bag made ribbon opening the Solid Waste Management Complex April 22. The facility houses two new incinerators that reduce air emissions and are overall more environmentally friendly. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Cody Barber, RC-East PAO)

By U.S. Army Spc. Cody Barber
RC-East PAO

Each year on April 22, Earth Day, marks the anniversary of what many consider to be the birth of the modern environmental movement established in 1970.

Events are held worldwide on this day to increase awareness and appreciation of the Earth's natural environment and Bagram Airfield held an event to do just that.

BAF residents participated in Earth Day by holding the grand opening of the Solid Waste Management Complex.

"We're kicking off Earth Day and spring cleaning by opening this facility," said U.S. Army Col. Gary Kamauoha, commander of U.S. Army Garrison Bagram.

The facility houses two newly installed incinerators which process waste more efficiently and more environmentally friendly, the Apia, Samoa native added.

"[Bagram] generates approximately 300 tons of waste daily and these incinerators will really help cut down on [waste] and pollution," said Kamauoha.

The incinerators are more environmentally friendly because


they cut down on the emissions of harmful toxins into the air, said Thomas Lonkouski, a native of Las Vegas, the solid waste supervisor.

"There is about a 98 to 99 percent capture ratio of emission releases for these incinerators making them more environmentally friendly," said Lonkouski. "That means cleaner air to breathe."

Adding to the benefits, the incinerators destroy or detoxify hazardous gases, significantly reduce fuel costs, eliminate odors, have low space requirements and require minimum operation attention, said Lonkouski.

The two incinerators are only the beginning of a three-phase project which will eventually add nine more incinerators and relocate seven incinerators to the new area.

When all three phases are complete, BAF's Solid Waste Management Complex will efficiently process more than 137 tons of waste daily in an environmentally friendly way.

"This is a historic day for Bagram," said Kamauoha. "Cutting down on emissions in the air will not only greatly benefit the people of Bagram but also benefit the native people who surround Bagram." 

n opens new facility

Robert Chartier, Chief of operations, maintenance and environmental divisions, dumps trash into the newly installed environmentally friendly incinerators at the Solid Waste Management Complex grand opening April 22. Eventually after adding more incinerators the facility will be able to process about 138 tons of trash daily. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Cody Barber, RC-East PAO)



REACH FOR THE STARS



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Spc. Reese Flory, keyboard player for Aggression Without Limit, a rock band within the 1st Infantry Division Army Band, sings along with the crowd at Forward Operating Base Lightning during a performance April 27. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Richard D. Sherba, RC-East PAO)



AWOL brings the Thunder to FOB Lightning

*By U.S. Army Sgt. Richard D. Sherba
RC-East PAO*

If you were to ask a servicemember stationed at Forward Operating Base Lightning what their plans were for a Friday night, the typical response might be, "there are no weekends when deployed."

All that changed, at least for one night, when Aggression Without Limit, a rock band within the 1st Infantry Division Army Band, flew into FOB Lightning April 27.

AWOL not only brought guitars, drums, keyboards, microphones and speakers, but they also brought a Friday night with them as well.

"It felt like a Friday night, almost like a club scene," said U.S. Army Pfc. Arick Brown, Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1st Infantry Division. "They played popular music. Music that is in, so to speak, and had everybody dancing."

AWOL's mission is to travel throughout Afghanistan performing at various FOBs and combat outposts to entertain troops and boost morale.

"It was something the FOB needed, it was something the FOB hasn't had for years," said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Nelson Gamio, DHHB, 1st Inf. Div., and FOB Lightning's first sergeant. "It wasn't just about the Soldiers, and the Airman, and the Sailors who are here but the contractors that work here and the locals who support the FOB who've been here for years."

"Maybe somebody was needing [AWOL's performance] to feel free for a little bit," said Gamio. "Those small things that make you feel at home, or can let you let loose, can make you feel alive sometimes."

Let loose is exactly what the crowd did.

"We originally planned to play two 45 minute sets, but everyone was having so much fun that we combined them and played one big set," said U.S. Army Sgt. Gunnar Kallstrom,

guitar player for AWOL. "They [the crowd] yelled for an encore, and we actually didn't have one ready so we kicked into a techno style funk jam and they [the crowd] loved it. That's when everyone went crazy and started dancing."

AWOL played a wide variety of music for the crowd at FOB Lightning; ranging from modern rock, classic rock, country, R&B, alternative rock, and pop.

"We try to play a little bit of everything so everyone in our audience will enjoy it," explained Kallstrom.

Song after song, the crowd and the band seemed to feed off each other's energy, intensifying both the night and the atmosphere.

"This is easily the best gig I've played," said U.S. Army Spc. Reese Flory, keyboard player for AWOL.

"[Tonight] was just mind blowing, awesome," said Flory. "I changed careers to join the Army, and I changed it because I wanted to get out and actually do something with music, and tap into how to make people feel better."

The crowd at FOB Lightning showed their appreciation for AWOL during and after the show.

"We go out [on mission] pretty much everyday. After we started having fun, it just completely took my mind off that. I didn't even think that I was in Afghanistan," said U.S. Army Pfc. Christopher Hurley, Ops. Co., DHHB, 1st ID.

"Everybody needs motivation here and there, and the motivation might not be the music. It might be the reaction to those Soldiers having fun with that music," said Gamio. "That's what helps, that's what makes you feel good."

AWOL band members were just as appreciative of the crowd at FOB Lightning.

"This audience here, and this place, is great. I did a year in Iraq doing the same thing, rock band tours around the theater, and this was one of the best shows I have done. That's because the support, the hospitality and audience were awesome," said U.S. Army Sgt. David Champagne, drummer for AWOL.



Shoot straight, fly high: TF Poseidon

By U.S. Army Sgt. William Begley
RC-East PAO

As the days get warmer and longer it's a signal the spring fighting season is about to begin and routine maintenance is highlighted.

Doing their part to keep a very powerful weapon online and ready to go, members of 1st Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, made critical adjustments to an AH-64D Apache Longbow attack helicopter April 14-16.

They just replaced one of the main rotor blades on the helicopter and had to track and balance the new blade, said U.S.

Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Adam Kozel, a native of Arlington, Ill., a maintenance test pilot for 1st Bn., 82nd CAB.

"On a track and balance you are trying to reduce the amount of vibration that the aircraft takes from the wing rotation," said Kozel. "We get all the blades to fly level with each other and then we make adjustments with weights or to the angle of the blade to smooth it out."

One of the mechanics compared the adjustment to balancing a ceiling fan in your house, only this fan is as wide as your house.

Kozel prefers to use car repairs to describe to nonprofessionals what is going on with the aircraft.

"It's a lot like balancing the tires on your car," he said.

Earlier that week the team had a new 30mm, M230 automatic gun installed on the helicopter. Like any other weapon, it had to be zeroed.

"The other day we were firing the 30mm, M230 automatic gun. Basically the aircraft wants to pull one way or another when you fire the weapon, so we make adjustments similar to when you zero a hand held or shoulder fired weapon," said Kozel. "It's called dynamic harmonizing, and it's a lot more complicated than zeroing a rifle."

U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 William Highland, a native of Rockville, Md., is Kozel's mentor and has flown Apache's for 14 years. He is an aviation material officer,

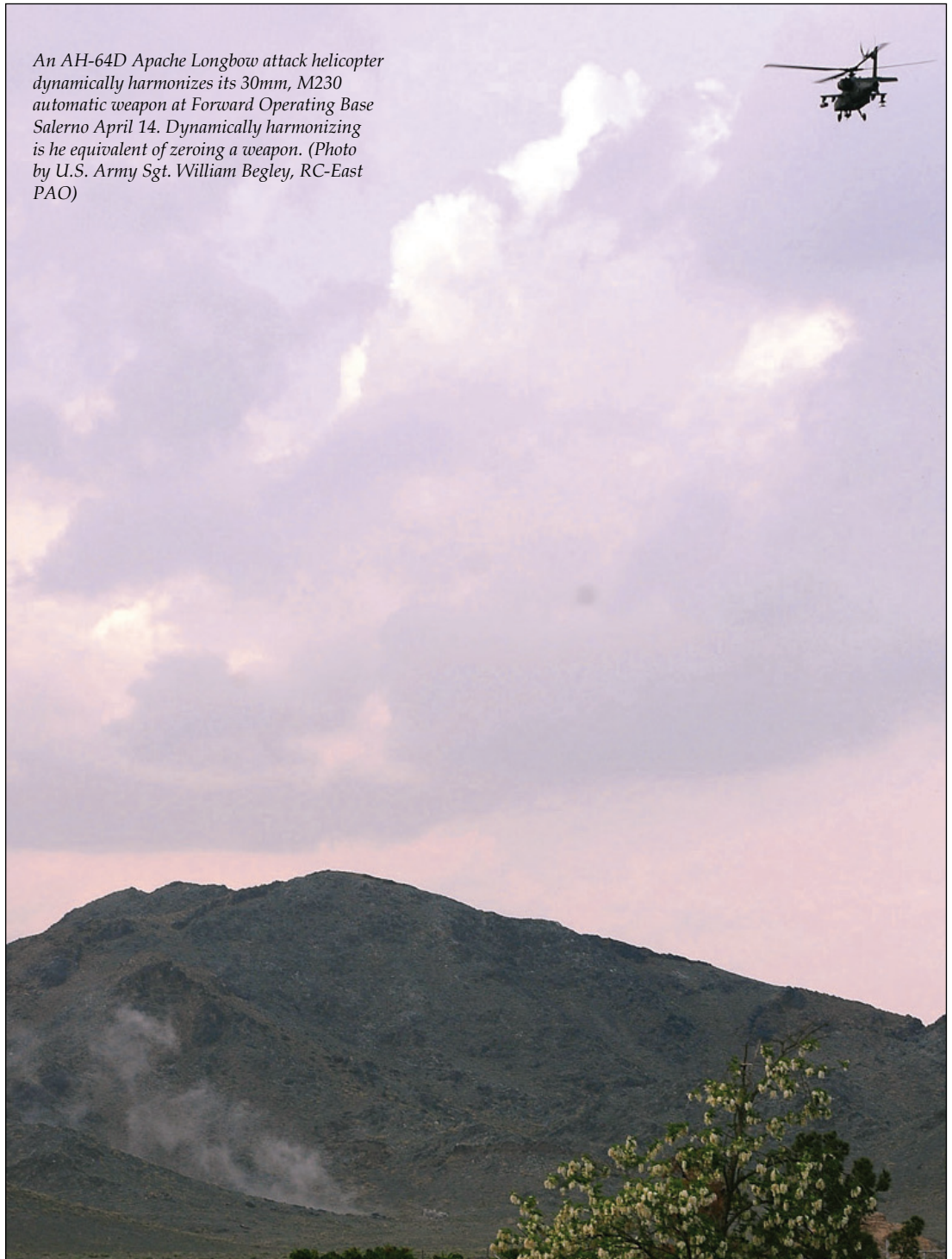
maintenance test pilot, and maintenance examiner for 1st Bn., 82nd CAB.

Flying around in an aircraft that cost over \$24 million and is the most advanced attack helicopter in the air today is awesome, said Highland.

However, he keeps his Soldiers in the right frame of mind when it comes to their job and the Army's most valuable assets its Soldiers.

"I always ask Soldiers what the most valuable asset is in their unit, some Soldiers say it's a particular tool or a certain technology, some say it's the aircraft, but I remind them that it's the people," said Highland. "If you don't have the right guy

An AH-64D Apache Longbow attack helicopter dynamically harmonizes its 30mm, M230 automatic weapon at Forward Operating Base Salerno April 14. Dynamically harmonizing is he equivalent of zeroing a weapon. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. William Begley, RC-East PAO)



don keeps Apache's ready to fight

in the right job, or the right leader providing mentorship, somebody's going to get hurt or equipment is going to get damaged. It's important that these young Soldiers know what right looks like."

A lot of young Soldiers eyes gloss over at the thought of doing any kind of maintenance. It's the unglamorous part of the job that no one sees. Highland sees it differently.

"Without the maintenance, nothing else happens. That's the bottom line," said Highland. "You can have the pilots ready to fly, the bird fuelled up and loaded with ammunition, but if the aircraft isn't maintained properly it isn't worth anything. Maintenance is where the rubber meets the road." 🇺🇸



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ethan Cross an electronics and avionics technician for 1st Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade and a native of Walden, Vt. unloads ammunition from an AH-64D Apache Longbow attack helicopter at Forward Operating Base Salerno April 16. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. William Begley, RC-East PAO)

An AH-64D Apache Longbow attack helicopter fires rounds from its 30mm, M230 automatic gun at Forward Operating Base Salerno April 14. The helicopter gets dynamically harmonized after the new machine gun was installed. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. William Begley, RC-East PAO)



Welders from 725th BSB master their trade

Story by U.S. Army Spc. Eric-James Estrada
TF Spartan PAO

Welding has long been a valued job skill, and for the paratroopers of Company B, 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, it's an art form they've mastered.

Army welders work in machine and repair shops fabricating and repairing parts and in some cases using their creative side to make parts for tanks, jeeps and other vehicles and equipment to aid units in accomplishing their mission.

"I get to use my artsy side," said U.S. Army Pfc. Jacob Edgell, with the Weld Shop for Co. B, 725th BSB, 4th BCT, 25th Inf. Div., a native of Fallsburg, Ohio. "I get to create stuff out of pretty much nothing. I just really like making things. I've been doing it as a child. My father was a welder and as soon as I picked it up it was really fun. I signed up [for the Army] out of high school and when I found out I could be a welder, I was really tickled about that."

Army welders are also called upon to perform on-site construction and repair work in the




Pfc. Jacob Edgell, with the Weld Shop for Company B, 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division and a native of Fallsburg, Ohio, prepares a wheel mount for a spare tire to be welded onto a trailer at Forward Operating Base Salerno April 25. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. William Begley, RC-East PAO)

field and for the paratroopers of Co. B, they are honored to say they have never met a task they could not accomplish.

U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Hammons, noncommissioned officer in charge for the Weld Shop hails from Pino Valley, Ariz. "We just did a bunch of 240 mounts for towers around RC-East. Anything anybody else can't fix, they bring to us. And we've never had to [evacuate] anything. We can fix or fabricate nearly anything as long as we have the supplies."

In some cases, Army welders have to make equipment and vehicle repairs, work on bridges and conduct construction projects and structural repairs.

U.S. Army Sgt. Adam Mireles, also with the Weld Shop for Co. B, from Petersburg, Texas, said, "You want to take your time whenever you're doing a certain type of job like this because if you half-speed everything it's not going to come out right. You've got people's lives that are on your hands with your types of welds. If you weld pretty, it's going to stay, but if you don't weld it right, somebody could get hurt, or injured." 



U.S. Army Pfc. Jacob Edgell, with the Weld Shop for Company B, 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division and a native of Fallsburg, Ohio, welds a wheel mount for a spare tire onto a trailer at Forward Operating Base Salerno April 25. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. William Begley, RC-East PAO)





Air Force Lt. Col. Chas Tacheny, the deputy commander of the 438 Air Expeditionary Advisory Group, monitors two Afghan pilots as they use a new MI-17 simulator at Kabul International Airport, April 18. The state-of-the-art simulator is able to recreate numerous different challenging scenarios to test and enhance the pilot's aviation abilities. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Larlee, 438th Air Expeditionary Wing PAO)

New simulator pushes Afghan pilots' capabilities

Story by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Larlee
438th Air Expeditionary Wing PAO

Afghan pilots now have a state-of-the-art MI-17 simulator in Kabul to hone their aviation skills in a safe environment.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Chas Tacheny, 438 Air Expeditionary Advisory Group deputy commander, said he has been involved with bringing the MI-17V5 No-Motion Level 5 Simulator to Afghanistan since July 2011.

"In 21 years I don't think I have flown in a better simulator. Afghanistan has an extremely challenging environment for helicopters," he said. "The high altitudes in Afghanistan push the performance envelope of the MI-17."

Tacheny said the simulator provides a remarkable reproduction of the Afghanistan air space and it's important the aviators are able to practice their craft in a low-risk environment. Instructors are able to recreate numerous types of challenging weather conditions through the simulator.

Aviators are able to train on night operations using night vision goggles and formation flying and they can practice brownouts during landings which are one of the biggest risks to aviators in here, said Tacheny.

The dusty climate here can cause dust storms to kick up with no notice and often blind pilots to all of their visual reference points. These situations have been the cause of a few helicopter crashes in Afghanistan, Tacheny explained.

"In our history in Afghanistan we have gotten a lot of experience dealing with difficult situations," he said. "We can put before the Afghans those challenging scenarios and not have to worry about hurting personnel and damaging aircraft. We can repeatedly do this to further develop their capabilities."

Tacheny said a certain percentage of the flight deck had to contain original equipment that is in the actual MI-17 helicopters. He said this level of realism will provide positive benefits as well.

"The Afghans are touching the actual controls," he said. "So when they go to fly the aircraft there is not a habit transfer issue because it is the same material."

Afghan Air Force 1st Lt. Nasrullah Khosti said he has enjoyed his time in the new simulator and he feels it is an important step for his country.

"Every air force has to have simulators," he said. "This helps

us fix our problems before we get in the aircraft."

He said the training he has gotten from advisers has been crucial to his development as an aviator.

"The advisers are very kind people and they help us a lot," Khosti said "They have motivated us and shown us how to be the best pilots possible for our country."

Afghan Air Force 1st Lt. Waheed Sedique was impressed with his time in the simulator as well. He said it felt just like he was in the helicopter. He is excited to use it help him accomplish his life-long dream.

"I'm very excited to be a pilot for my country, it has been my wish since I was a child," he said. "Every day when I wake up and I put on my uniform I'm proud because today is a day I can help my country." 🇦🇫



Afghan Air Force 1st Lt. Waheed Sedique pilots a new MI-17 simulator at Kabul International Airport, April 18. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Larlee, 438th Air Expeditionary Wing PAO)

Critical Care Nurses save lives in Afghanistan

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Catrina Dorsey
RC-East PAO

A team of Soldiers sit around a picnic table playing a board game, some play ping pong and others just talk getting to know each other, all waiting on an unwanted call. When the call comes in, they all drop what they're doing to get their gear and run out to an aircraft ready to pick up the wounded.

This team is the en route critical care nurse team made up of experienced, skilled Soldiers who are completely committed to the mission and take pride in what they do... save lives.

"The ECCN program is approximately 2-3 years old," said U.S. Army Maj. Graham Bundy, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade. "The character of the program has evolved continuously and one of the more recent changes was attaching the nurses to the Medical Evacuation Company."

The mission for the ECCN teams is to provide intra-theater critical care transport of casualties between medical treatment facilities at company and brigade level, to MTFs normally at division level or higher, such as the Craig Joint Theater Hospital located at Bagram Airfield.

The ECCN teams may also assist with injury extractions from the battlefield on a limited basis.

According to U.S. Army Capt. April Ritter, ECCNs ideally have a minimum of two years of intensive care or emergency department experience and have earned military qualifications in either field.

Working together with the flight medics during the transport of patients, the ECCNs and medics share their knowledge to provide the best level of care.

"During deployment, training is dictated by the medevac unit and includes aviation specific training as well as medical training," said Capt. Colleen Adams.

The advantage of having ECCNs attached to medevac units, said Adams, is to improve casualty care through reciprocal, ongoing training between flight medics and critical care nurses.

"I believe the addition of ECCNs on the medevac missions has improved outcomes for patients," said Adams. "A dedicated ECCN allows for two trained medical providers on most medevac missions and has improved the quality of care a patient



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Ashley Keiser, an en route critical care nurse from West Springfield Mass., assigned to Company C, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, snaps her helmet in preparation for flight to pick up critical patients. ECCNs are playing a major part in saving lives in and around Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Catrina Dorsey, RC-East PAO)



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Ashley Keiser, an en route critical care nurse from West Springfield Mass., assigned to Company C, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, performs function check on medical equipment aboard a UH-60 Black Hawk. ECCNs are playing a major part in saving lives in and around Afghanistan (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Catrina Dorsey, RC-East PAO)

receives during intra-theater transport through collaborative, continuous care.”

Adams also stated that, “on every flight I have participated in, patients conditions were either maintained or improved upon during critical care transfers.”

“Not only do we have unique medical skills on board the aircraft, we also have vigilant operations personnel, highly skilled aviators, and well trained crew chiefs,” said Ritter. “Our ability to rapidly respond to medevac requests and provided high quality, [on board] based care has proven to save lives and give ground units peace of mind.”

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Ashley Keiser, an en route critical care nurse from West Springfield Mass., assigned to Company C, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, prepares space to place a wounded patient on aboard UH-60 Black Hawk. ECCNs are playing a major part in saving lives in and around Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Catrina Dorsey, RC-East PAO)



Petlah villagers learn new construction skills

Story by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Nicole Howell,
CJSO TF-A PAO

Jaji District held two seminars to enhance selected individuals basic knowledge on construction skill sets, April 25.

The seminars taught eight Petlah villagers basic skills in masonry, carpentry and construction techniques in order to generate long-term development solutions.

“The students from Petlah were very knowledgeable with some of the basics, so we added some critical skills needed to make their efforts solid,” said a Coalition Special Operations Forces Soldier. “They were very excited to build on what they knew.”


The next step for the students is to expand on what they initially learned from the construction seminars and apply it with hands on tasks.

Based on skills and experience, the CSOF detachment also identified a student who may qualify for a small business grant through the U.S. Agency for International Development. Small construction businesses in the area can aid in the expansion of Jaji’s infrastructure.

The USAID program provides economic, development and humanitarian assistance around the world to support the U.S. foreign policy goals.

Azad Khan, the District Sub-Governor of Jaji, supports all efforts that aid Afghan development and has shown personal interest in the progress of his district as a whole.

“The DSG is enabling the people of Jaji to increase their economic opportunities and infrastructure expansion by coordinating the training of locals in construction related skills,” said the CSOF detachment commander.

Due to the inherent dangers of holding a seminar, Afghan Local Police provided security for the event, ensuring the safety of all attendees. This also instills confidence among villagers in the capabilities and competence of the ALP. 



A village elder from Petlah demonstrates how to measure length and verify leveling from two stakes planted in the ground April 18. By teaching basic construction skills, members of Petlah can benefit Jaji District by helping to build-up the infrastructure. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Nicole Howell, CJSOTF-A PAO)



Students from Petlah attending the skilled labor seminar in Jaji District lay screening under the supervision of one of the Petlah elders April 18. By teaching basic construction skills, basic masonry, carpentry and form construction, members of Petlah can benefit Jaji District by helping to build-up the infrastructure. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Nicole Howell, CJSOTF-A PAO)

Students, recognized for their academic performance, receive book bags in the Jaji district during an educational seminar held at Jaji District Center April 15. The district sub-governor for Jaji, the minister of education, and teachers from Jaji district were present for the recognition event and also held an educational shura prior to the seminar to discuss the future of their education. (Courtesy Photo)



Educational seminar in Jaji District rewards students

Story by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Nicole Howell
CJSOTF-A PAO

In recognition of their academic performance during this school year, top students from 43 schools in the Jaji District received book bags and school supplies at an educational seminar held near Jaji District Center, April 15.

The intent of the education seminar was for students to understand how important their academic achievements are to their community. Students from all levels of education were identified and rewarded by the district sub-governor, the minister of education, and teachers from the district.

“The children were extremely happy about being recognized,” said Azad Khan, the district sub-governor for Jaji district. “When you identify children when they make achievements, it makes them want to achieve more and reach for the next level in their education.”

Prior to the seminar, the minister of education held an educational shura with the principals and educators to discuss the future of their education system.

Coalition Forces Special Operations Soldiers helped organize the supply of bags; however, it was the Afghans in the community who took charge of the ceremony.

The Afghanistan National Army special forces, located in Jaji district, coordinated the pick up and drop off of the bags and provided security for the seminar. From there, the minister of education, along with the educators in the district, distributed the book bags to the deserving recipients.

“It was an excellent opportunity for the district representatives and the ANASF to take the lead and represent the district’s encouragement for educational opportunities and excellence in the area,” said a Coalition Forces Special Operations Soldier.

Community engagements like this are becoming more common, especially with education. The children of Afghanistan are the future of their country and recognition opportunities in academic achievements are a key component for successful Afghan sovereignty, security and governance.

“Opportunities like the education seminar allows the children to see their government cares about their education, said Khan. “It helps to build trust from our youth up, and trust is what this government needs to survive.”

C-17 recovered in joint effort



Vehicles pull the C-17 Globemaster from its location to the staging area on Forward Operating Base Shank March 9. The aircraft ran off the runway and crashed due to inclement weather and freezing during the winter months. Boeing plans on recovering the aircraft to sustainable levels, so it can be flown back to America, where it will be reconstructed and reintegrated into the Air Force fleet. (Photo by U. S. Army Sgt. Victor Everhart, TF 3-1 PAO)

Story by U.S. Army Sgt. Victor Everhart
TF 3-1 PAO

In February there was an incident where a C-17 Globemaster III, landed and overran the runway due to inclement weather, in which the landing gear and other critical parts were damaged.

Through months of planning and teamwork by the joint forces located on Forward Operating Base Shank, this 282,500-pound aircraft was moved with no incidents from its location after the crash to a site where the servicemembers and Boeing employees could get the aircraft back to

operational readiness.

“As soon as the aircraft overran the runway, we were looking at planning and how to recover the aircraft,” said Air Force Maj. Mel Ibarreta, the officer in charge of the 777th Expeditionary “Prime Beef” Squadron on FOB Shank. “We contacted the aircraft maintainers at Boeing and got an understanding of what they needed. Once we finalized our planning, the heavy equipment operators, Tech. Sgt. Albert Fanini, Tech. Sgt. Robert Livingston, and Staff Sgt. Johnny Resendez were able to execute the construction of the engineered wadi bridge ahead of schedule.”

“We were tasked with building the bridge the aircraft was going to be moved over to stage for repair,” said Air Force Tech Sgt. Ursula Rothweiler, an engineer assistant assigned to the 777th EPBS. “Also included was completing dynamic cone penetration testing to assure that the bridge would hold the weight of the aircraft without sinking or giving way.”

With the necessary equipment and personnel named, and the tasks being given, all that was left was the execution of the plan, moving the aircraft from the crash site to the repair site a little more than a mile away.

“By the time I got on the team, the plan was set and it was mostly time for execution of mission,” said Army Sgt. Dennis Stout, the project non-commissioned officer in charge of personnel and equipment. “We were out here everyday busting butt moving dirt and filling the areas needed to hold the weight of the huge bird, plus the equipment needed to pull the aircraft from its location to the objective.”

The preparation was done and everybody working on the project knew the plan. All that



Army vehicles do a dry run of the C-17 movement where they build the confidence to move in unison on Forward Operating Base Shank April 15. The C-17 movement was expected to take around six hours, has taken forces from the Army and Air Force as well as civilians. Boeing plans on recovering the aircraft to sustainable levels, so it can be flown back to America, where it will be reconstructed and reintegrated into the Air Force fleet. (Photo by U. S. Army Sgt. Victor Everhart, TF 3-1 PAO)



Army vehicles pull the C-17 Globemaster from its location to the staging area on Forward Operating Base Shank April 16. The aircraft ran off the runway and crashed due to inclement weather and freezing during the winter months. Boeing plans on recovering the aircraft to sustainable levels, so it can be flown back to America, where it will be reconstructed and reintegrated into the Air Force fleet. (Photo by U. S. Army Sgt. Victor Everhart, TF 3-1 PAO)

was left was the rehearsal and the move itself.

“The move went 100 percent better than I could have ever anticipated,” said Sgt. 1st Class Pierre Dye, the construction operations sergeant for the 7th Engineer Battalion. “We planned on the move requiring around five hours and I was amazingly surprised it took less than an hour. But that goes to show you when Soldiers, Airmen and civilians alike all put their minds and effort into a joint task that nothing is impossible”

“What stands the most to me about this whole affair is that it was a mixture of many, many people from many different sources, who all meshed together and worked extremely hard,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Gilbert Mestler, the FOB Shank Garrison commander. “Around 200 people were involved in the planning and execution of this move, from construction engineers, design engineers, Boeing employees, Air Force security police, Army military police, Army pathfinders all kinds of Soldiers, Airmen and civilians from many different fields have been involved in this effort.

“For a lot of those people this will be the culminating point of many weeks of effort from people of divergent fields,” said Mestler. “And we’re really proud of having successfully moved the aircraft without doing any more damage to the aircraft. As well as getting a C-17 back into the fleet, the runway should be back opened up to C-17 use for redeployment and deployment for Soldiers making use that more combat ready.”



A C-17 Globemaster III is pulled down a runway built to help move the aircraft to an area where employees of Boeing will repair it April 16. The move, which took weeks of planning and around 200 Soldiers, airmen and civilians to accomplish took around an hour from start to finish. (Photo by U. S. Army Sgt. Victor Everhart, TF 3-1 PAO)

CIED platoon overcoming obstacles

By U.S. Army Sgt. Andrea Merritt
RC-East PAO

Cavalry scouts are experts in the art of reconnaissance, trained to observe the battlefield and gather vital information about an area and the enemy forces that operate within it.

The scouts of the counter-improvised explosive device platoon with. 1st Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, use their training as expert observers to find IEDs before they detonate and cause harm to coalition or Afghan National Security Forces.

“As cavalry scouts, we are already trained to look at the terrain and try to recognize areas that would be best suited for an attack,” explained U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert Pethes, a squad leader with the CIED platoon.

“All of this equates to hours of walking around in full kit and trying to remember details while looking for signs of digging and or emplacing of IEDs,” said Pethes, a native of Imperial Beach, Calif.

When the CIED platoon arrived in country seven months ago, they made Wardak Province their stomping ground and Forward Operating Base Airborne their home.

While there, the platoon performed a wide array of missions to include VIP escort, casualty evacuation, quick reaction force, route clearance, as well as escort for explosive ordnance disposal forces.

“Whenever an IED is found or employed, we will escort EOD to the site, set their security and assist them in gathering intelligence about the device,” said Pethes. “They never leave one in the ground, and we never leave them.”

Four months into their deployment, the platoon moved to Laghman Province to replace the outgoing unit as the quick reaction force at Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam.

Even though the grass was literally greener in Laghman, the platoon had to face a new set of challenges once they arrived.

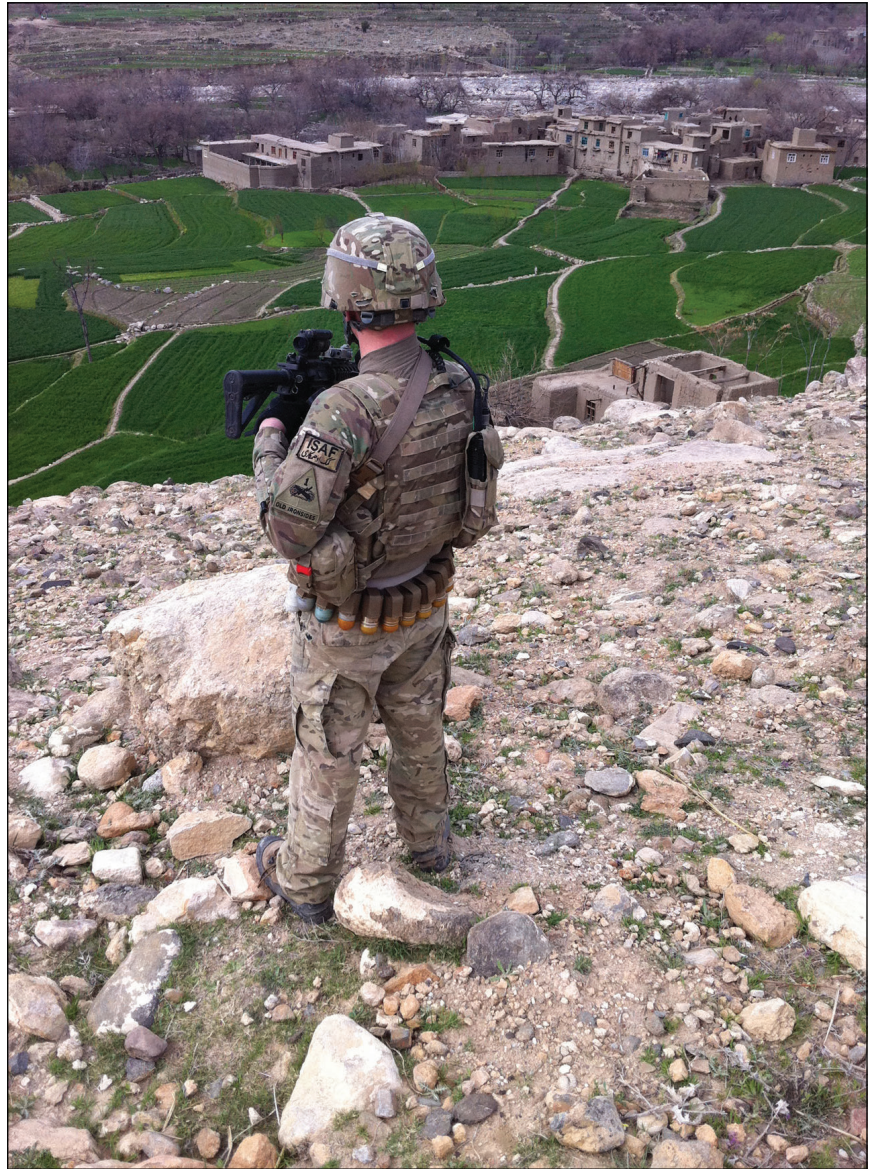
While still performing the same duties they performed in Wardak, the scouts had to complete their tasks with fewer personnel and vehicles in an area that was twice as large and more hostile than the one they left behind.

“People in Wardak were more welcoming and grateful to what we are doing over here. They were more willing to work with us and report things,” said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jamin Williamson, the CIED platoon leader. “Here, we can’t get anything except rocks thrown at us by kids and adults.”

In addition to unreceptive locals, the scouts faced a more significant obstacle – the IEDs in Laghman proved harder to find.

Enemy fighters in the province were more elaborate with their emplacements. The platoon went from finding the IEDs to the IEDs finding them.

“It’s a shock,” said Butte, Mont., native U.S. Army Spc. Jared Peters, a scout with CIED Platoon. “One minute you’re driving down the road, talking with your buddies and the next



A U.S. Army scout with the Counter Improvised Explosive Device Platoon, 1st Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Task Force Bulldog, stands watch over a village during a mission in Laghman Province May 4. The scouts operate out of Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam as a CIED platoon. Trained in the art of reconnaissance, the scouts keep a watchful eye on the roads they travel, watching for IEDs before they can detonate and cause harm to Coalition or Afghan National Security Forces. (Courtesy Photo)

thing you know, you’re on your side in a rollover when your vehicle gets hit.”

Despite the challenges the CIED platoon has faced since arriving to Laghman, the scouts remain determined to hunt down the hazards that lie in wait on the roads they travel.

After long hours on the road, the scouts hardly rest. When they return after a mission, the platoon preps their vehicles and equipment so they can stand ready to answer the next call whenever it may come.

With just a few months left in their deployment, the CIED scouts remain focused on their mission – to keep open ears and watchful eyes over the battle space in which they operate.

“Home is the furthest thing from our minds. We can’t take our mind off the mission,” said Pethes. “Our mission isn’t complete. You have to stay in the game until you’re out of here.”

“We can’t ever relax,” added Williamson. “That’s the reality in Afghanistan.”



A French Soldier of Battle Group Tiger observes with his night vision system during Operation Basha. (Photo by French Army Jérôme Bardenet, TF La Fayette PAO)

ANSF conduct Operation Basha, supported by French battle group

*By French Army 1st Lt. Guillaume Epp
TF La Fayette PAO*

The Afghan National Army's 33rd Kandak led an operation to disrupt insurgent groups in the Afghanya and Ghayn valleys, east of Forward Operating Base Nijrab. This action of the 33rd Kandak was supported by French elements of Battle Group Tiger April 25-26.

The valleys east of FOB Nijrab have seen the deployment of 270 men from the ANA 33rd Kandak supported by an element of the Task Force La Fayette.


During the security operation, Afghan National Security Forces carried out excavations of suspected compounds, mainly south of the Afghanya valley. An AK47, sniper rifle and 7.62 ammunition were discovered and seized.

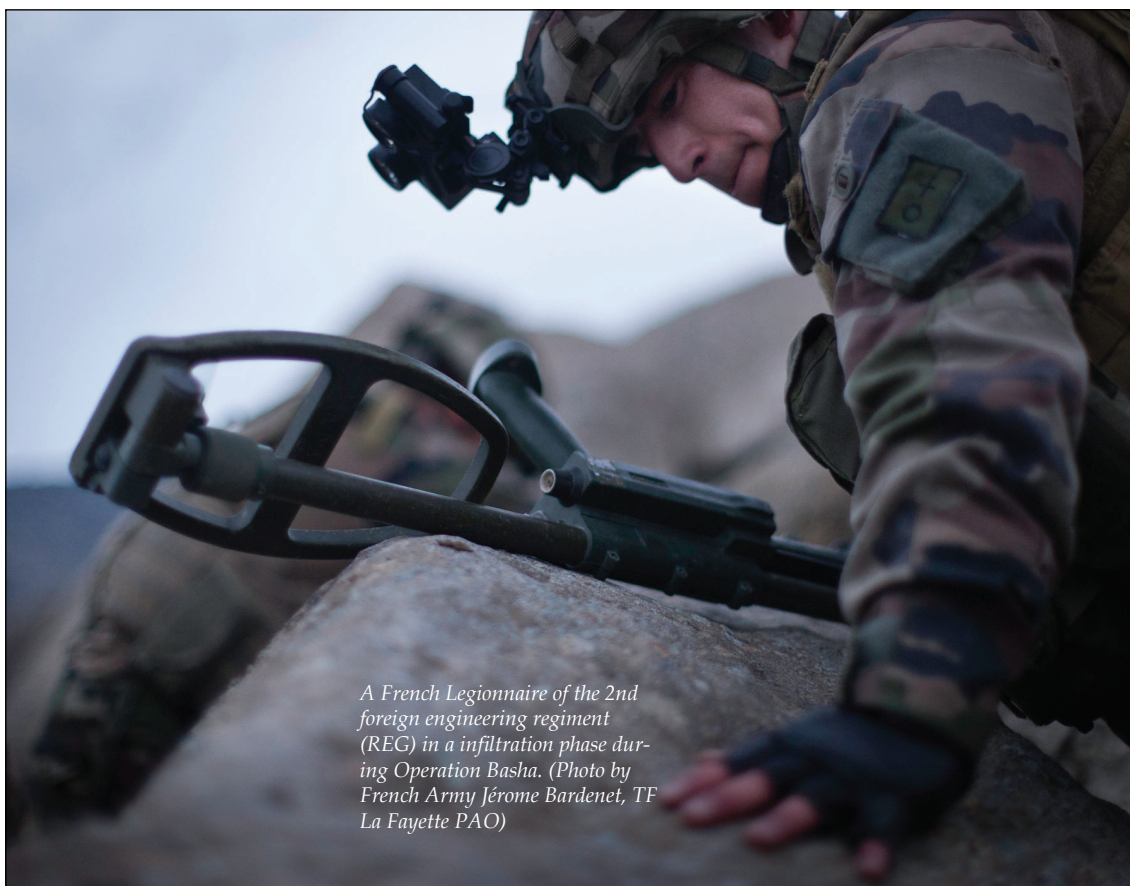
The ANA also conducted in an autonomous humanitarian operation by distributing school materials and clothing for the benefit of the population in the Ghayn valley.

From two DLAS (liaison, support and back detachment), Battle Group Tiger supported this operation

on the ground and from the hills.

The ANSF and BG Tiger operation discouraged any insurgent action.

"This is an example [of how] the partnership should be and show us the level of autonomy the Afghan National Army has gained," said French Brig. Gen. Eric Hauteclouque- Raysz. 



A French Legionnaire of the 2nd foreign engineering regiment (REG) in a infiltration phase during Operation Basha. (Photo by French Army Jérôme Bardenet, TF La Fayette PAO)



U.S. Army Spc. Louis Morales, a mechanic with the 307th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, explains to Afghan National Army drivers how to properly read a dipstick during preventive maintenance training April 26, at Forward Operating Base Arian, Ghazni Province. Morales and fellow paratroopers deployed to Ghazni Province in March. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Michael J. MacLeod, TF 1-82 PAO)

Afghan Soldiers learn preventive maintenance

By U.S. Army Sgt. Michael J. MacLeod
TF 1-82 PAO

For Mohammad Dawood, a 35-year-old Afghan Soldier, lessons in automotive maintenance feed a passion he has held since he was a boy.

"Since I was 13 or 14 growing up in Mazar-i-Sharif, I loved automobiles," said the wiry-built Afghan National Army driver as he moved beneath the open clamshell hood of a Humvee that had a history of overheating.

American paratrooper U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jesse Thompson, was at the wheel, revving the engine to heat the block. He and his fellow mechanics with the 307th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division's, were teaching drivers of the ANA 6th Kandak the basics of preventive maintenance.

"We learn how to change the brake pads ourselves and so much more," said Dawood, wiping grease from his hands. "We are the only mechanics we have," he said of his fellow drivers.

U.S. Army Capt. Nick Carelas, Thompson's company commander, put that into Afghan context: "Basically, they are used to using something until it breaks," he said. "Parts are very difficult to come by, so they really make things last. The problem is, they have no mindset for preventive maintenance. Our guys push PMCS every day."

PMCS is an Army acronym for Preventive Maintenance, Checks and Services, a systematic routine that U.S. Army Soldiers use to guarantee vehicles receive care at regular and necessary intervals.

"[Dawood] is always hands-on with whatever we are learning," said Thompson, who deployed with his unit to Forward Operating Base Arian in Ghazni Province in March.

While the infantrymen of 307th BSB, 1st BCT, 82nd Airborne Div., partner with Afghan infantry to increase security along Highway 1 just outside the FOB gate, Thompson and fellow mechanics fight their fight in the maintenance bays.

"Sometimes they just want us to fix things for them," he said, "and not all the drivers want to be here, but for the ones that do, like [Dawood], you can tell we are getting through."

The training is part of a comprehensive plan to improve the combat power of the 6th Kandak of the 203rd Corps, according to U.S. Army Lt. Col. William Ryan, leader of the 6th Kandak Security Force Assistance Team, part of the 82nd Airborne Division.

"By the end of our deployment, we want to have trained mechanics, informed operators capable of finding deficiencies, parts flow that is functioning, and to have completed services on all of their equipment," said Ryan. "When we leave, they will not only have equipment that is functioning, but enduring capacity to sustain it."




Parts flow has been enough of a frustration that a proposal to temporarily bypass the acquisition process with a flood of parts at the user level has gained traction at the corps level, said Ryan. Dubbed Operation Abselab, meaning “to flood,” it would push prescribed load lists of parts to end users like Dawood so that he is able to fix and maintain ANA vehicles while American combat power is still available for partnered operations in Ghazni.

The Afghans have the parts, Ryan said. Clearly there is demand.

“Somewhere between the demand and the inventory is the bureaucratic process that is denying maintenance from taking place,” he said. “However, as of yesterday, that operation is in a holding pattern. There’s a balance between training the Afghans to have a system that’s effective and leveraging the fact that Coalition Forces are here for another X number of months.”

“We have to move with care because we don’t want to throw out the process before they know what right looks like,” he said.

In the meantime, mechanic training at Arian will continue four days a week, he said. 



Mohammad Dawood, a driver with the Afghan National Army’s 6 Kandak, stands proudly before a Humvee that he and fellow drivers are repairing April 26, at Forward Operating Base Arian, Ghazni Province. The Soldiers are getting lessons in preventive maintenance from mechanics with the 307th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division’s, Task Force Devil (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Michael J. MacLeod, TF 1-82 PAO)



Mohammad Dawood (left), a driver with the Afghan National Army’s 6 Kandak, assists another driver in repairing a Humvee April 26 at Forward Operating Base Arian, Ghazni Province. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Michael J. MacLeod, TF 1-82 PAO)

1-143rd Infantry security force guards PRT Ghazni missions

By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. April Quintanilla
35th Fighter Wing PAO

Providing security for the Provincial Reconstruction Team Ghazni rotation falls to Texas Army National Guard Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment.


PRT Ghazni's security force started training for their mission to Afghanistan in July 2011 before joining PRT Ghazni staff in Oct. 2011 at Camp Atterbury, Ind., to complete final training prior to deploying Feb. 28.

"The annual extended combat training we received at McGregor Range, N.M. was geared towards the deployment," said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jose Garcia, 2nd Platoon, Co. A, 1st Bn., 143rd Inf. Regt. SECFOR squad leader.

Since arriving at Forward Operating Base Ghazni, SECFOR has been working constantly to prepare for missions, provide security to FOB Ghazni and PRT members while on mission, maintain their equipment and vehicles, and provide sling-loading expertise for the FOB airfield.

"We are here to help the Afghans take control of their own country and establish a working government that will be sustainable in the long run," said Sgt. Ty Wenglar, 2nd Plt., Co. A, 1st Bn., 143rd Inf. Regt. SECFOR medic. "I feel it is a worthwhile cause and I'm proud to be part of this historical change."

The U.S. PRTs are joint interagency units drawing from the Army (active and reserve component), Navy, Air Force and Army National Guard. As well as incorporating U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of State and U.S. Department of Agriculture representatives. Each PRT works in a specific province in Afghanistan functioning as a bridge between the Afghan government and the people, ultimately building a better Afghanistan. Additionally, PRT Ghazni is a uniquely combined PRT where its U.S. component works side-by-side with their Polish counterparts.

"It is important to act professional, maintain our situational awareness and composition at all times out here, especially with all the negative acts that have been done lately," said Staff Sgt. Jozef Retana, 2nd Plt., Co. A, 1st Bn., 143rd Inf. Regt. SECFOR team leader. "This shows the Afghan people that the acts of some Americans don't represent all Americans, and we are here to help." 



Texas Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Bryan Vannet, Company A, 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, security forces squad leader, stands guard at the Ghazni provincial governor's compound, as Texas Agribusiness Development Team 5 holds agriculture extension agent training for the Ghazni Province DAIL and local agriculture specialists April 18. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. April Quintanilla, 35th Fighter Wing PAO)



Texas Army National Guard Spc. Erik Swindell, Company A, 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment 36th Infantry Division, security forces member, provides security on a hilltop at Jungal Baugh demo farm, Afghanistan April 16. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. April Quintanilla, 35th Fighter Wing PAO)



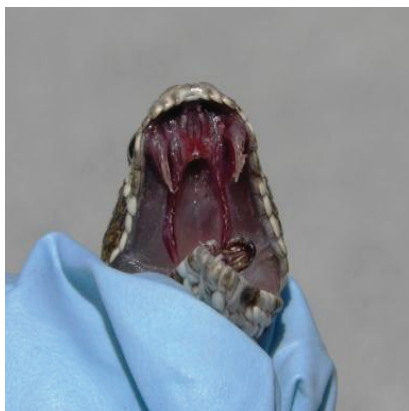
Wild life in the AOR



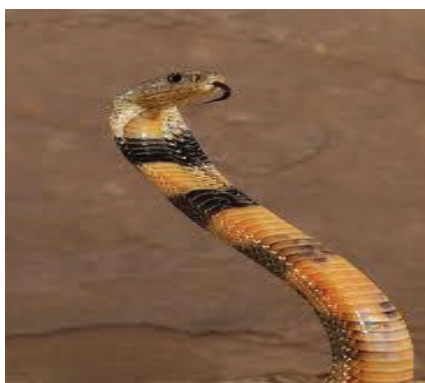
We may be at the top of the food chain thanks to our reversible thumbs but in hand to hand combat with a hyena the smart money isn't on us. We nibble at our claws and hardly any of us show our teeth when we're angry. We have no protective fur and we can't get around on four legs before our bad backs play up. Moral of the story? Don't get into scraps with wild animals unless all negotiation has failed



Insects, not only give irritating Bites, they transmit malaria and dengue fever. Wear long trousers and shirts to give them less of a target and cover your head at night with a cloth. Insecticide sprays work an alternative is to apply lemon grass oil or, in extremis, oil and tobacco juice. Don't scratch!



Snakes, aren't all poisonous and would rather not meet you at all. You can come across them by accident though and they may attack you in a bite-first-ask-questions-later response. If you come across a snake just back away slowly



Dogs, are a common threat to the military member because they've are found surviving in the streets and carrying diseases like rabies. Symptoms include:

- Drool with thick saliva
- Aggressive, combative
- Mental confusion

Dogs like their owners, dogs can often be neurotic and aggressive ready to defend their territory.



Some easy tips

to remember be very careful when overturning anything in scorpion Country. Keep your boots and clothing off the ground at night and shake out your boots in the morning. Animal bites may pass on infections caused by bacteria in the animal's mouth.



SrA Edward Toscano

Plea for Socks provides opportunity to

By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Fahey
NTM-A PAO

One day while a Department of Defense employee walked from Camp Eggers, Kabul, to the International Security Assistance Forces headquarters, a young Afghan girl said three words that inspired three months of aid for hundreds of Afghans.

"She asked politely 'give me socks?'" said Marc DiPaolo, a DoD civilian with NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan. "When I looked at her feet, on that chilly 35-degree day, I saw that she was wearing something like [canvas] shoes, probably too small, with no shoelaces and no socks. I looked at her friend—she was wearing dirty pink Crocs, also with no socks."

From that point, DiPaolo contacted friends and family state-side through his Website-driven foundation "Give Me Socks" [www.givemesocks.wordpress.com]. In all, the site generated aid from 25 states and three countries tallying nearly 400 boxes of winter garments, hygiene products and school supplies, which were in turn given to Afghan children.

"Afghans are people just like us," said DiPaolo. "I just wanted to be able hand out some socks and other practical stuff while it was still so cold outside. I love it, but in the big scheme of things, it's not even a dot. But this winter, a bunch of kids had gloves and socks, so that's real."

For Tamana, a 12-year-old female Afghan refugee and student at the Kabul Aschiana School – an independent aide foundation dedicated to providing care and education to thousands of displaced Afghan children – the free box allowed her to continue attending school.

"I really hope to get stationary to write and take notes, but we all need clothes and boots the most – it's what I need to keep coming to school ... I want to be a doctor and this school is where I begin learning," Tamana said through an interpreter.

"Give Me Socks" also serves as an opportunity for Camp Eggers' personnel to build relationships and inspire hope in those most affected by the insurgency.



Tamana, A 12-year-old Afghan refugee, waits in line as Camp Eggers personnel participating in a volunteer community relations mission with the Aschiana School in Kabul drop off clothing and school supplies. Kabul Aschiana School – an independent aide foundation dedicated to providing care and education to thousands of displaced Afghan children. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Fahey, NTM-A PAO)

Abdul Wakim, a community liaison officer for volunteer community relations missions throughout Kabul said, opportunities to build trust can be just as critical as providing essential supplies.

"In Afghanistan, everything is built through relationships, trust and teamwork," he said. "These programs build that trust and allow servicemembers to work shoulder-to-shoulder with

Afghan families. I was raised in a refugee camp. I know how these families feel – like the international community has forgotten them. Seeing the servicemembers from all countries come out and support the Afghan children, it allows us all to hope that one day all that has been destroyed will be rebuilt – that we have a future."

Inspiring a future full of opportunities is a critical goal for Joint Visitor Bureau Personal Security Detail Chief USMC Lt. Col. Julia Hunt and Team Leader U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Ashley Hickerson.

Both have participated in several volunteer missions for the "Give Me Socks" foundation. They each noted the importance of showing Afghan women that they can be strong leaders, make a difference and set a positive example.



Four Afghan girls show off their bags full of donated clothing April 10 at the Aschiana School in Kabul. More than 400 Afghan children received clothes and school supplies. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Fahey, NTM-A PAO)

to offer aid, build trust, inspire women

“It’s important to be a good role model,” said Hickerson, “to be an outstanding individual and show these women that there is strength in our gender, in our numbers and to be positive ... especially the teenage girls,” added Hunt. “They are staring the rest of their life directly in the face and will most likely be married in no time at all with no other choices made available to them. It makes me appreciate so much what I’ve been able to do with my life and to have a chance to show these young girls that they can do it too.”

“Give Me Socks” has completed their final drive for supplies and has officially rolled their sleeves back down as the governing members prepare to return stateside.

What began as a gesture to provide one small girl with a pair of winter socks turned into an opportunity to help hundreds of refugees, build trust between coalition forces and the Afghan community, and show the younger generation of Afghan women that there is hope.

“I was looking for a place to educate people back home about Afghanistan,” said DiPaolo, “and to put some events into proper context. The socks project simply emerged as a good way to do that. Little things mean a lot to people trying to survive and again, the Afghans are people just like you and I – they deserved our help.” 🇦🇫



More than 400 Afghan children attending the Aschiana School in Kabul each received a bag of donated clothes, school supplies and hygiene products delivered by Camp Eggers personnel during a volunteer community relations mission April 10. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Fahey, NTM-A PAO)



Afghan boys wait in line as Camp Eggers personnel participating in a volunteer community relations mission with the Aschiana School in Kabul drop off clothing and school supplies April 10. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Fahey, NTM-A PAO)

Cujo' sights locked on transition

By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Fahey
NTM-A PAO

As Task Force Cujo's armored tactical vehicles rolled up to the secure gates of the Afghan National Police's District 11 headquarters, the mood grew ominous — a sense that indicated the 11-person coalition ANP advising unit was there to help but on a higher state of alert.

"If something pops off sergeant, just hit the ground," said TF Cujo 3 Gunner U.S. Army Spc. Eric Saunders.

"Relax, Saunders," replied TF Cujo team leader U.S. Army Sgt. Scott Shively. "Just stay alert and ready."

Afghan security forces have killed more than 70 NATO personnel since 2007, an act known as a "green on blue" attack.

In response, Coalition advisers are taking added precautions to ensure their lives aren't lost while helping their Afghan counterparts assume full control of their country's security.

These precautions were not lost on the ANP. As TF Cujo parked inside the headquarters' walls, Afghan police secured their rifles inside a small room and maintained an observable distance — a voluntary demonstration of trust. Smiles and handshakes were offered as Deputy Police Chief Col. Mohammad Arif welcomed Shively and his security detail inside his office.

"We have a good, close relationship with our Coalition partners," said Arif. "It's unfortunate when you hear about violent events happening between our two organizations, but these actions, are the actions of individuals — not our police force. Without a good relationship between the ANP and the Coalition, good security cannot be provided."

According to a U.S. Defense Department report to the House Armed Services Committee, the majority of "green on blue" incidents were due to personal disputes between Afghans and NATO advisers, not insurgent activities.

With Afghan anger spurred after the accidental burning of several Qurans in February and photos surfacing of Coalition members posing with dead insurgents, TF Cujo must apply an Afghan-first mentality while also maintaining a vigilant security posture.

"We discussed the Quran burning specifically with the ANP who immediately understood it was a mistake, that mistakes are made on both sides and are unfortunately going to happen,"



Afghan National Police Officer Sahab Shak inspects a vehicle for drugs, weapons and other illegal materials at a routine checkpoint in Northern Kabul as coalition advisers from Task Force Cujo standby to assist. Task Force Cujo is comprised of 28 men and women from Oregon's 1186th Military Police Army National Guard Unit. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Fahey, NTM-A PAO)

said Shively. "Despite the problems, we are still being received extremely well — that's huge for us on the team because we can still go anywhere in Kabul to any of the police districts, trade intelligence and work together. They still appreciate us and want us to help them do their jobs."

That job, according to platoon leader U.S. Army 1st Lt. Brian Fike, is a "phased approach to a successful transition."

"Right now, we're assessing the entire Kabul City cluster in how close they are to transition — where they are with their training, their infrastructure and overall what places they are 100 percent ready to take control," said Fike. "The next phase is having the local Afghan reporting systems fix the issues instead of us writing reports and sending them up to the Ministry of Interior. They need to be the ones who do that."

At the ground level, Shively said trust keeps them safe and progressing toward their mission.

Although ANP leaders were relieved to see Cujo, they were discouraged by only hearing about reports and not seeing results. Out of the 10 police districts and three city gates patrolled by TF Cujo routinely, two district headquarters need only internet and computers to be fully functional. The others have sporadic power, no indoor plumbing or septic systems and use bombed shelters as buildings.

To fix these issues, TF Cujo is employing alternative methods of interaction and reporting. Lead Coalition advisers are hitting the streets with TF Cujo to close the loop on the reporting process. These advisers interact directly with Afghan MOI officials to ensure reports are not filed blindly or ignored.

“When you work through an interpreter to get a concrete answer on what the chiefs have issues with and what they need is very tough,” said Shively. “To increase our ability to deliver specific answers in our reports, we developed Dari information packets. From start to finish, everything is in Dari. Nothing is lost in translation.”

These packets contain the questions they would normally ask when engaging ANP leadership. The district chiefs have the opportunity to fully describe their issues, articulate what they need and provide Afghan MOI officials with a better picture of their problems and how to solve them.

Despite the progress, increased trust and a shared dedication to teamwork between the ANP and their coalition advisers, one last hurdle remains: corruption.

“You can see the corruption,” said Shively. “There is a very uneven distribution of materials authorized by MOI to the different police districts. When you go to one district headquarters and they have clean uniforms, running trucks, no fuel issues, full magazines of ammo then you go to another that has

none of these things or even an indoor bathroom, you have to wonder why. They are stockpiling what they feel they will need to sustain independently. They are making sure their district is locked down and have what they need to survive after we pull out.”

With strategic partnerships between many coalition nations and Afghanistan still in the draft phase, many Afghans fear what will happen after 2014. For Cujo and their advising mission, they work each day to inspire trust and develop a sense of security based on the Afghans’ abilities as professional police officers. The Cujo team stays proactive, joining the ANP on patrols led by Afghan officers.

During routine presence patrols at ANP checkpoints, Cujo stands in the rear, allowing the ANP to check for threat indicators, drugs, illegal weapons and other violations of Afghan law. This type of support provides a sense of security to the ANP.

However, during the recent April 15 attacks on Kabul instillations, the training wheels were removed. The Afghan National Security Forces successfully countered insurgent attacks, neutralizing all threats while sustaining minimum casualties, with little help from Coalition Forces. The effectiveness of the ANP and ANSF during the attacks showed the Afghan community that they are well protected and security can be assured through their own means.

“We always let them take the lead during our joint patrols to show the community that they are more than capable of leading the mission,” said Shively. “They know how to back each other up and win a fight – no question there. If we can ensure the upper leadership is being held accountable and corruption is combated, then the overall police mission will continue to progress.”



Task Force Cujo team leader U.S. Army Sgt. Scott Shively laughs with District 11 Deputy Police Chief Col. Mohammad Arif after a key leader engagement to discuss successes, failures and needs of the Afghan police. Task Force Cujo is comprised of 28 men and women from Oregon's 1186th Military Police Army National Guard Unit. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Fahey, NTM-A PAO)



Au Revoir
 do svidaniya
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 Na shledanou

سەنەبتي
 Mirupafshim
 Farvel



안녕
 Head aega
 Goodbye

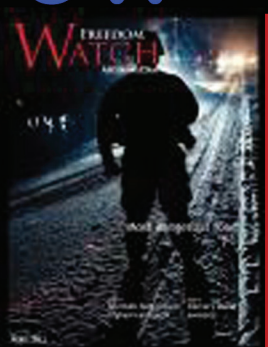


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 Auf Wiedersehen

From the FWM crew



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 before



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W LEADER WATCH

Characteristics of great leaders

Commentary by U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Jim Fisher, Ph.D.
TF Longhorn

Are leaders born or are they trained? This discussion, dialogue and debate continues to rage on. Yet, there is a better question.

What are common characteristics of quality leaders? The number of traits may vary and synonyms abound, but the basics and basis of leadership are readily known.

Communication



Few subordinates have mind-reading ability. Leaders must ensure that the message is articulated well, again and again. This broadcasting ensures the signal is sent. A mangled message promises chaos.

Relationships

Associations can be a tangled weave of deception. Leaders know the validity of professional and personal relationships.

Separating the two are necessary to prudent work environments. Crossing the line sends confusing signs and diminishes the capability to effectively lead.

Integrity

Perfection is not the goal, but direction most certainly is. Solidarity and consistency are hallmarks of leadership.

Who a leader is out of the spotlight is who they really are; the rest is a façade.

Persuasion

Leaders influence people. This is a central tenet of guiding organizations and people.

Care must be taken in distinguishing conviction and preference.

It's the difference between passion and one-sidedness; the divergence between "THE way" and "A way". The former must be quenched; the latter is optional. Everything cannot be a conviction.

Adaptability



To no one's surprise, not all plans go as intended. Flexibility and malleability are ropes that secure the plan, without losing it to the winds of change.

Failure to understand this principle will lead to frustration and stress.

Teamwork

A team approach will facilitate commitment and produce creativity.



Each member of the team can contribute from unique backgrounds and diverse experiences. Silencing voices will only stifle giftedness.

Coaching

Leaders are placed in positions for various reasons. Chief among them is the privilege of mentoring others towards personal and professional growth. The privilege of sharpening and shaping others must not be taken for granted.

Decision-making

Leaders are called upon to be in a perpetual decision-making mode. The leader, who hesitates or falters, still makes decisions. It is a choice to allow turmoil to rule rather than truth.

Vision

The ability to forecast the future, see the trend and get ahead of the curve are vital skills. Inspiration, preparation and implementation are inherently connected. The leader must understand direction and destination. Insight includes hindsight and foresight.

Planning

Diagramming the way ahead provides comfort and security to subordinates.

Contingencies must be thought through and viable options preserved. Leaders who do so will find the support of people who appreciate the investment of resources, even if a detour erupts.

Leaders may be born, but they can also be trained. And leaders, whether born or trained, must train the next generation of leaders.

Successful leaders will seek to ensure the success of others. An authentic embodiment of these characteristics will be seen in everyday living. The impact will reverberate throughout the generations.



WEMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ATCH Afghanistan Flood Facts

By U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Shawn S. Oommen
Installation Emergency Management

Many Afghans fear the coming of spring. For them, as well as the coalition forces, it means an upsurge in hostilities.

In addition to warfare, nature itself often makes spring a terrifying time of year. As welcoming as the warmer temperatures may be, the change of the season has also brought additional catastrophes to the country.

Typically, flood season begins in March and continues until May affecting more than 20 provinces in Afghanistan. The thawing of heavy snowfall in the mountainous regions brings floods to the farmlands below, which destroy livelihoods, agriculture and displace people from their homes. The floods can be dramatically sudden and unpredictable in their ferocity.

In April, at least sixteen people were killed



Villagers from Qhargah District, Laghman Province, observe as an Afghanistan International Air helicopter prepares to land and rescue them from the floodwaters, April 1. AIT transported the villagers to the Zangaray Refugee Camp nearby. Coalition Forces from Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam assisted with humanitarian assistance goods and helped coordinate rescue efforts by AIT and U.N. helicopters. (Photo by Air Force Capt. Gerardo Gonzalez)

Disease risk in water

The primary risk following a flood is diseases spread by contaminated water:

Initial risk

Diarrhea

Acute watery diarrhea causes dehydration

Most at risk Age 5 and younger, the sick, the old and the pregnant

Cholera

Causes severe diarrhea, vomiting, organ failure

Risk Can spread rapidly in areas with poor sanitation; bacterium spreads in human feces

Typhoid

Causes fever, headache, abdominal cramps, diarrhea

Risk Passed on by contaminated food, water

Hepatitis A

Flu-like symptoms, high fever

Risk Passed on by contaminated food, water

Within two weeks

Malaria

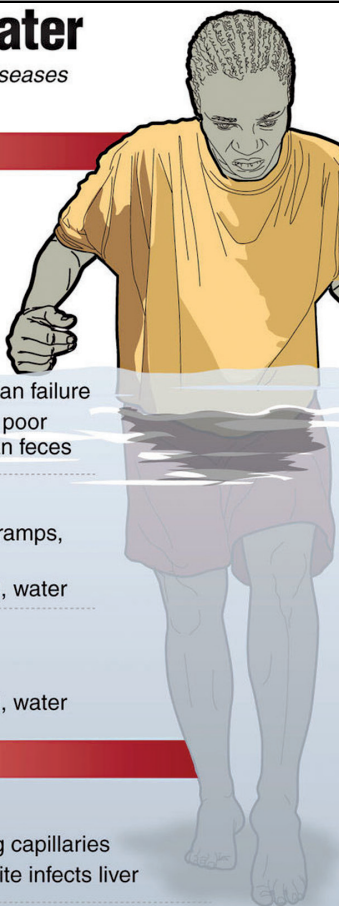
Can kill by causing anemia or clogging capillaries

Risk Passed on by mosquitoes; parasite infects liver

Dengue fever

Causes fever, joint and muscle pain, severe bleeding

Risk Passed on by mosquitoes; disease is endemic



because of severe flash floods in northern and eastern Afghanistan. More than 1,000 mud-brick houses were believed to have been destroyed and washed away by the torrents.

Slow flooding causes delayed deaths and injuries. When floodwaters recede, areas are often blanketed in silt, mud and hazardous materials such as sharp debris, pesticides, fuel and untreated sewage.

The water and landscape may be contaminated with potentially dangerous mold booms that can quickly overwhelm water-soaked structures. Residents of flooded areas are often left without clean drinking water, leading to outbreaks of deadly waterborne diseases like Typhoid, Hepatitis A and Cholera.

Sudden landslides, have immediate health effects. Depending on the scale, by burying hillside houses and villages, they can cause injuries, suffocation and severe trauma.

The year 2010 saw some massive destruction in the Eastern regions of the country, where provisions were made for temporary shelters for hundreds of families.

Then in 2011, Khaki Jabar in Kabul Province saw some of the worst flooding in years, with rivers cresting at extreme levels. In response, a new retaining wall is being built to protect against any future swelling of the river.

In addition, there have also been major reconstruction efforts towards homes, community resources, and agriculture and irrigation systems throughout Afghanistan.

Also there has been improvements to Afghan livelihoods, health, education and responsiveness to emergencies that spring flooding may create.

Such rehabilitation leads to reduction in water waste and flooding. This in turn limits the damage to an area's local infrastructure and increases local people's access to much needed irrigation. Water can thereby regain its more welcome role of benefiting, and not harming the community. 🌱

W^{UNIT}ATCH

When accidents happen, legal assistance helps

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terrance D. Rhodes
RC-East PAO

During a deployment, there are many different things that can happen to cause accidents. Sometimes these accidents affect many Afghans and their families.

Unfortunately, accidents occur throughout Afghanistan. In order to reimburse individuals for the damages, Regional Command - East Client Services and Claims Office handles civilians' claims to compensate for their loss.

"We want to show the Afghan nationals that we want to take responsibility for our actions," said U.S. Army Master Sgt. Joe Mazey, a native of Tacoma, Wash., and the chief paralegal nocommissioned officer for RC-East. "We want to try to make things right."

Claims can be filed for damaged cars or houses, for injuries or torn power lines or anything else that might be damaged or destroyed by accident or in the line of duty by the U.S. military.

"We're not here to injured or damage the local Afghan property," said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 William J. Teeple, a native of Sault Saint Marie, Mich., and the senior legal administrator for RC-East. "We're here to give them a sign of home while addressing their claims."

Filing of claims for damage caused by U.S. forces in a foreign country falls under an act passed by the U.S. Congress known as the Foreign Claims Act, which states that if the U.S.



U.S. Army Capt. Aleksandr V. Podolskiy, a native of Queens, N.Y., coordinates with an Afghan interpreter and a client April 21. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terrance D. Rhodes, RC-East PAO)

government does anything in a foreign nation that damages property or injures people, it will reimburse them for damages.

This act, however, will not pay out for injuries or damage caused during combat, and claims filed that fall in this category are generally paid out by the Commander's Emergency Response Program funds, which can pay up to \$2,500 by brigades, with anything more requiring higher command approval.


"When an incident or accident occurs, we brief all personnel that comes into Afghanistan to give out claims cards that give instructions on where to file a claim," said U.S. Army Capt. Aleksandr V. Podolskiy, the chief of client services and claims for RC-East.

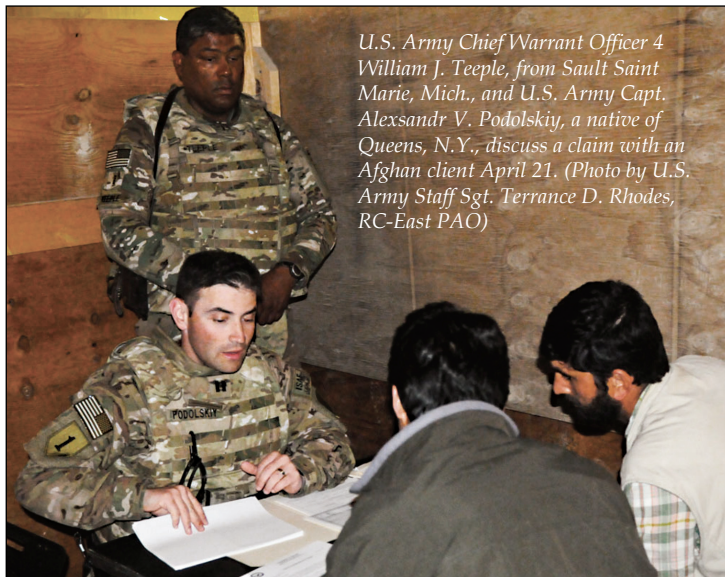
"Claims that are not combat-related, such as accidentally side-swiping a vehicle, are reviewed by a higher legal team who, depending on the dollar amount, can approve or deny them," the Queens, N.Y., native added.

Throughout Afghanistan, all claims are processed and paid out by the U.S. Army, even if the damage was caused by other U.S. military services.

"It's great that we can pay back the Afghan people for the damages that we caused," said Podolskiy.

The Foreign Claims Act has brought stronger bonds between the Afghans and American Coalition Forces.

"I strongly believe that the whether the act was wrong or right, or regardless of what some Afghans may think about the American forces, if we caused an accident, we will right our wrong." 

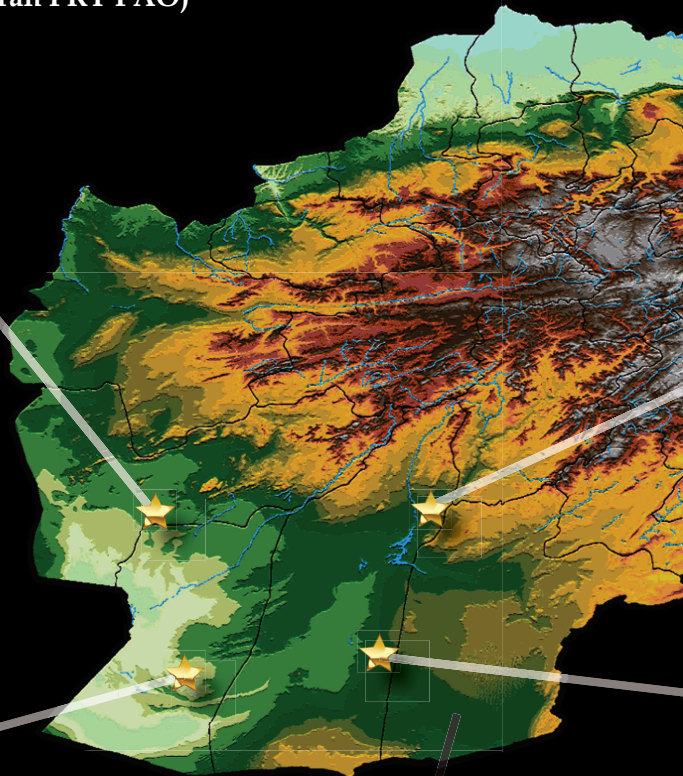


U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 William J. Teeple, from Sault Saint Marie, Mich., and U.S. Army Capt. Aleksandr V. Podolskiy, a native of Queens, N.Y., discuss a claim with an Afghan client April 21. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terrance D. Rhodes, RC-East PAO)

Goodwill across Afghanistan:



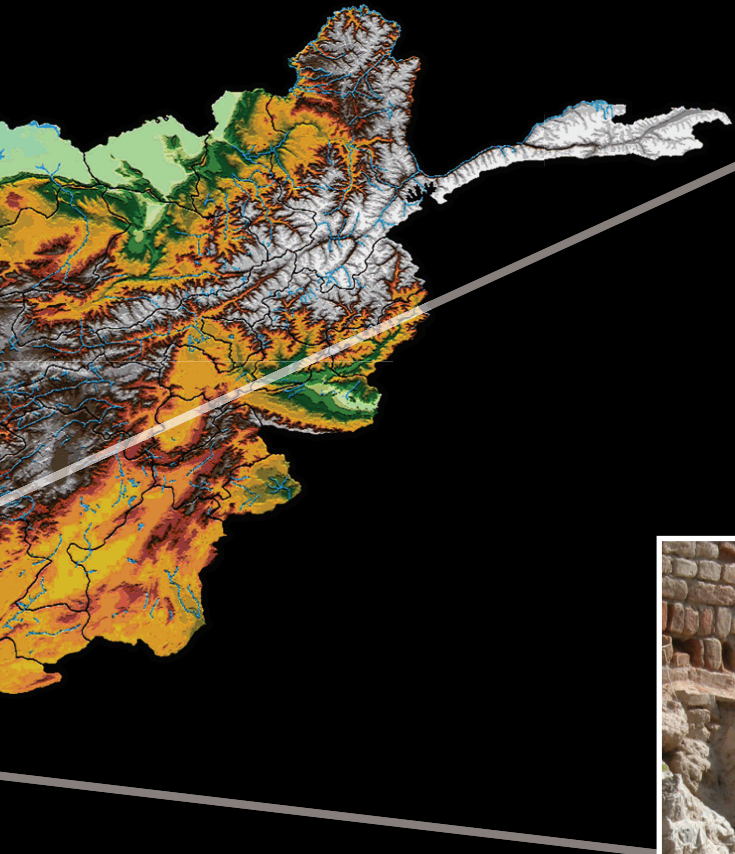
U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Carl Coles, a civil affairs member of Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team, hands out magazines while greeting local children and other members of the community during a mission in Farah City May 8. Farah PRT is a unit of Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen working with various Government and non-government agencies tasked with facilitating governance and stability in the region by working hand in hand with local officials and the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jonathan Lovelady, Farah PRT PAO)



U.S. Marine Corps 1st Lt. Luke Forelle, a platoon leader with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, speaks with a local elder during a security patrol in Helmand Province April 28. The New York native is one of the faces of a historic transition in Helmand province's Garmsir district. He's a crucial ingredient in the melting pot of service members preparing the Afghan National Security Forces to assume security responsibility. In addition, Forelle uses his ability to speak Pashto to contribute to the ongoing mission. (Photo by Marine Cpl Reece Lodder, Regimental Combat Team-5 PAO)

ISAF and ANSF Reach Out

Afghan medics prepare a Soldier for evacuation during a train-the-trainer course conducted at Multi-National Base Tarin Kot May 2. U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Joe Buatti, flight medic trainer, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, watches over the Soldiers to ensure they properly secure the patient. (Photo by U.S. Army Cpl. Ray Vance, 319th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



An Afghan Uniformed Policeman from Police Sub Station 1 helps a young Afghan girl who is lost find her way back home in Sub District 1 April 24. The police officer was pulling security during a cordon and search when he came across the little girl. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. April York, 4th Inf. Div. PAO)



STORY SNAPSHOTS



Fixing

U.S. Army Maj. Murray Reefer Jr., a dentist with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division's, Task Force Devil, applies a Tofflemire instrument to the tooth of a patient on Forward Operating Base Arian April 17. The instrument keeps the patching material contained on the tooth until it cures. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Michael J. MacLeod, TF 1-82 PAO)



Training

Infantry instructor Manha Judin of the Afghan National Army scrambles through Kabul Military Training Centre's new obstacle course. "I am Tarzan," yells Manha Judin, as he effortlessly negotiates the Weaver, a daunting structure on the new obstacle course at the KMTC. One of eight ANA instructors being introduced to the course, Manha is easily the most enthusiastic. (Photo by Canadian Army Capt. Ian McIntyre, KMTC PAO)



Playing

U.S. Army Pfc. Steven Olson and his Tactical Explosive Detection Dog, Alex, take a break over an array of tennis balls. The TEDDs are normally calm and collected until they see a tennis ball. The balls, nearly 3,000 of them, were donated to the TEDDs team by a family member taking donations. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Allie Scott, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division PAO)

Looking

U.S. Army Spc. Alvin Escobar, from Oakland, Calif., serving with 2nd Platoon, Blackfoot Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry Regiment, Task Force Spartan, looks through binoculars at a mountain top in Khost Province April 16. U.S. Soldiers and members of the Afghan Border Police patrolled Patira Mila village along the border of Pakistan in order to deny insurgents freedom of movement. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Amber Leach, JCC-A)



Defending

U.S. Army Maj. Kent Solheim, 4th Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group Company commander, defends his position from insurgent small arms fire during a fire fight in Kunar Province. Solheim is one of two special operations Soldiers profiled in "Warriors stand tall in combat once again" published on May 12. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Clayton Weis, CJSOTF-A PAO)



Patrolling

Sgt. 1st Class Raja Richardson, platoon sergeant with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade, leads a patrol across a ridgeline outside of Forward Operating Base Tillman April 22. Located just 3.5 kilometers from the border, the terrain around Tillman is some of the most rugged, remote and hostile terrain in Paktika Province. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Charles Crail, TF 172 PAO)



Securing

U.S. Army Spc. Jeremy Mulloy with the 15th Psychological Operations Battalion, 2nd Psychological Operations Group, Tactical Psychological Operations Team 1556, provides security at an entry control point at Contingency Operating Post Pirtle King April 18. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Trey Harvey, JCC-A)



Hydrating

U.S. Army Pfc. Nicholas Morton, a medic with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division's, places the needle of an IV into the arm of a dehydrated Afghan Soldier, Ghazni Province April 29. U.S. and Afghan Soldiers had just returned from a combined clearing operation of a nearby village. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Michael J. MacLeod, TF 1-82 PAO)



Smiling

A Afghan boy from the Gorbuz district, Khowst Province, smiles into the camera at a traffic control point April 26. U.S. paratroopers and counterparts of the Afghan Border Police set up a traffic control point while waiting for Explosive Ordinance Disposal to destroy a found improvised explosive device. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Amber Leach, JCC-A)



Giving

An Afghan National Army Soldier distributes radios during a security patrol in Janda district, Ghazni province April 30. The portable radios are used to encourage villagers to participate in the Radio Literacy Program. Security patrols are used to gain atmospherics and assess security and stability in local villages and to determine potential future operations. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class David Frech, CJSOTF-A PAO)



Scanning

U.S. Army National Guard Specialist Timothy Shout, a native of Austin, Texas, scans the nearby ridgeline along with other members of the Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team Security Force element, following an engagement with insurgents. Shout is deployed with Company A, 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry (Airborne), 36th Infantry Division. The unit took small arms fire from a nearby mountaintop during a routine patrol, and was able to suppress the enemy with the assistance of local Afghan National Security Forces. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Christopher Marasky, Kunar PRT PAO)

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- ✓ Have no legal obligations to support dependants
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Start Here

If you want to apply, start by allowing enough time for the process. Classes start each July, so it's best to apply the preceding summer to allow enough time to complete the entire admissions process.

Next, consider whether you meet the basic eligibility requirements. Those who have SAT scores in the 500's or ACT scores in the 20's and achieved average grades or better in high school are especially encouraged to apply.

As a Soldier you must be recommended by your company commander. Even though a company commander endorsement constitutes a nomination, Soldiers are still encouraged to obtain additional nominations from your congressional nomination sources.

To request an application or more information, please contact:

MAJ Brian Wire
DSN: 688-5730
(845) 938-5730
Brian.Wire@usma.edu



SOLDIERS' FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS DIFFERENT FOR SOLDIERS?

The application steps are the same for Soldiers and civilians who apply. However, Soldiers can obtain nominations from their company commanders and are automatically considered for the preparatory school if not directly admitted to West Point.

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY?

You can apply at any time. The class starts each year in July, which means admissions decisions are made usually no later than April. It is best to apply early (Aug/Sep) to give yourself time to complete the required tests and evaluations and to complete the Admissions packet.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I COMPLETE THE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE (CQ)?

Once you complete your CQ and the admissions office reviews it, you will receive some type of correspondence. Competitive candidates will receive an admissions packet that must be completed by mid-March. Other Soldiers will have to turn in more information (e.g., SAT/ACT scores, high school transcripts).

WHERE CAN I TAKE THE SATS OR ACTS? CAN I USE THE ASVAB INSTEAD?

West Point only accepts the SAT or ACT. You can use your post education center for the test. They have study materials and offer more test dates than are available for civilians. No ASVAB scores are required. NOTE: If you take the ACTs, you must take the optional writing section; USMAPS/West Point will not consider ACT scores without a writing score.

WHO COMPLETES MY COMMANDER'S ENDORSEMENT?

Your first-line commander should complete the recommendation (i.e., company commander).

DO I GET PAID WHILE AT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY PREP SCHOOL?

Yes. You will receive pay at your current enlistment grade. The time at USMAPS counts as time in service, too.

IS THERE A SERVICE REMAINING REQUIREMENT FOR THE PREP SCHOOL? DO I HAVE TO REENLIST TO GO TO USMA/USMAPS?

Yes, you must have enough time remaining in your enlistment to extend 13 months past the scheduled USMAPS graduation (usually late May). If directly admitted to West Point, you must have enough time to complete one year (Active Duty Soldiers, only).

IS IT HARD TO GET ACCEPTED?

You will never know unless you apply. West Point values the life experiences Soldiers have and how they enhance the Corps of Cadets. Take your SAT/ACT early and often, if need be, and complete your packet ASAP. If you want to be an officer in the US Army, West Point will give you a comprehensive education and training to lead Soldiers.

WHAT MUST I SCORE ON THE SAT/ACT?

Keep in mind there is not a dedicated score, as we evaluate several areas. Academics are 60 percent of our evaluation, while 30 percent is your leadership potential (based on high school and Soldier experiences), and 10 percent is your physical aptitude.

CAN I USE MY GI BILL TO PAY FOR WEST POINT?

No — there's no need, since all tuition, room and board, and medical and dental care are paid by the Army. Plus, the value of your education at West Point (more than \$250K) will far exceed your GI Bill benefits. Additionally, you can use the GI Bill for graduate school after West Point.

ARE THERE AGE WAIVERS?

No. You must not be older than 23 on 1 July in the year you enter West Point and not older than 22 on 1 July when entering USMAPS.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA?

You can apply with a GED. Be aware your SAT/ACT scores will carry more weight in your academic evaluation.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY UNIT IS DEPLOYING?

Every year we work with Soldiers who are forward deployed. Many of these areas have education centers and medical facilities. You still can complete the admissions process while deployed. It is imperative to start early and do as much as possible while in garrison.

HOW LONG IS THE PREP SCHOOL?

The prep school is 10 months long.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY PREP SCHOOL?

Visit www.WestPoint.edu/USMAPS for more information.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Complete the candidate questionnaire online at admissions.westpoint.edu/apply.html; that opens your Admissions file and begins the process.

THE FINAL WATCH

U.S. Army Sgt. Austin Murphree (left), U.S. Army Pfc. Cory Tilghman (center) and U.S. Army Pfc. William Bowers, infantrymen with 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade, out of Forward Operating Base Tillman provide supporting fires for their fellow infantrymen who are under attack at one of the base's outposts. Insurgents attempted to use rain and fog to mask their movement. They were greeted by a hail of accurate and timely 120 mm mortar and Howitzers 105 mm artillery fire, which were instrumental in dismantling the enemy attack, according to company commander U.S. Army Capt. Charles Sietz. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Charles Crail, TF 172 PAO)

