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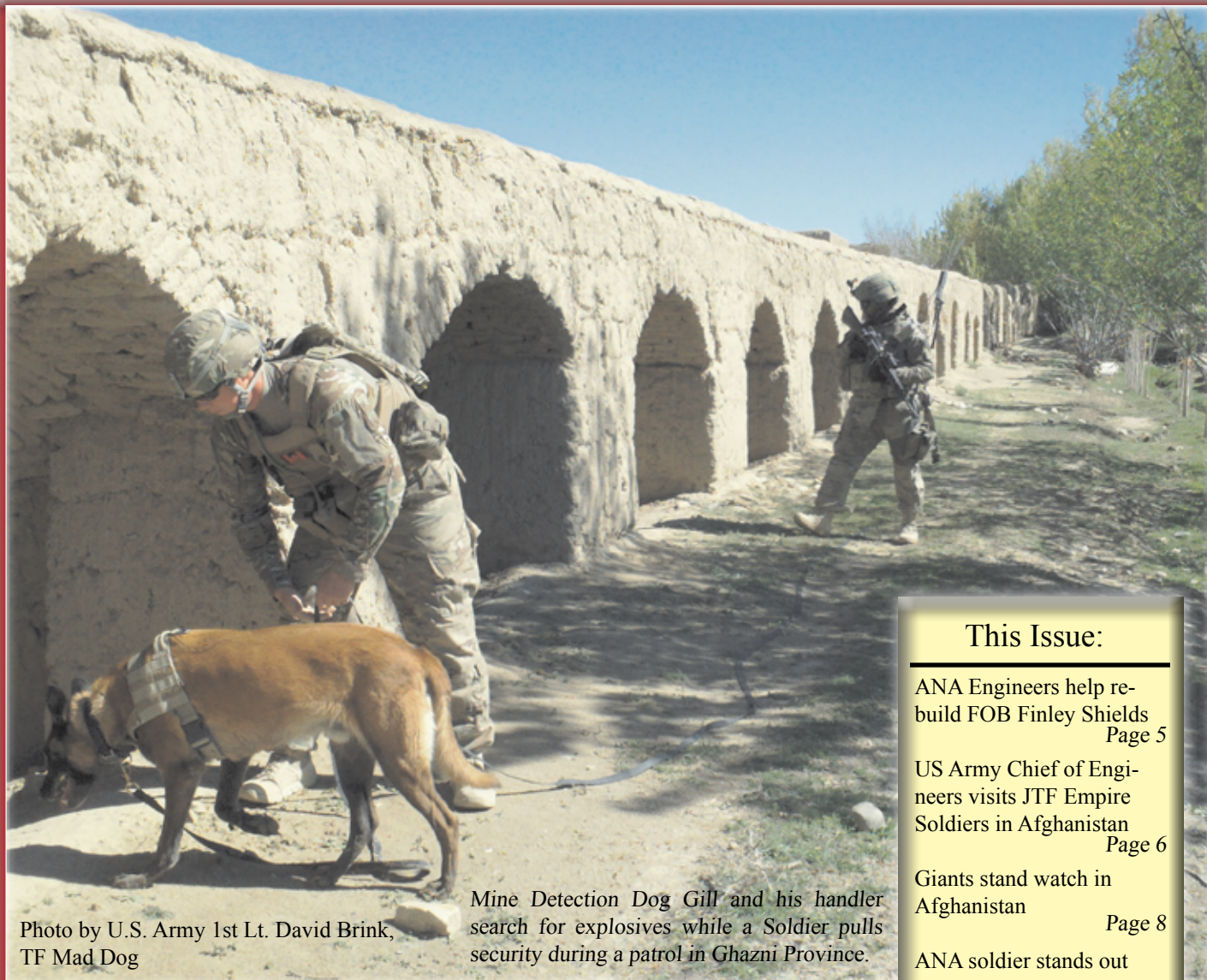


Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. David Brink,  
TF Mad Dog

Mine Detection Dog Gill and his handler  
search for explosives while a Soldier pulls  
security during a patrol in Ghazni Province.

## Mine dogs clear the way

The 49th Engineer Detachment maintains a constant presence in Afghanistan, neutralizing the threat of IEDs, mines and unexploded ordinance in support of tactical operations. The Mine Detection Dog Teams of the 49th Engineers are this month's feature story on page 3.

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# General Knowledge

From the desk of the Commanding General, JTF Empire

During Battlefield Circulation over the last several weeks, I see the dedication and determination that all the Empire Soldiers put forth to accomplish the mission. We must not forget why we are here. We must be committed to the prosperity of the people of Afghanistan and we must help to build a strong and self-reliant Afghanistan for all Afghans.

We must set the conditions for the Afghans to take the lead. One step in this process, is the unification of engineer assets under one single, joint engineer brigade. At the end of this month, this will become a reality as we assume engineer responsibilities from the 22d Naval Construction Regiment. We are well under way to making this significant milestone. It is through the hard work and dedication of Soldiers and staff that we will be successful in this endeavor. This will allow us to coordinate our resources, maximize and synchronize engineer effort across the Combined joint Operational Area - Afghanistan.

We have yet much to do. There remain challenges ahead and change is constant. We must adapt and overcome. The tasks may seem daunting, but having seen firsthand what many of you are doing, I have the utmost confidence in your abilities to reach the desired outcome. Whether you clear the roads of IEDs, swing a hammer, design projects or manage operations, you are a critical member of the team.

The brigade headquarters will ensure we are establishing coherent policies and procedures that will foster an environment for success, both for the Empire team and for those units that follow us.

For the past several weeks and for the next several weeks, we will continue to see some turbulence in our formations with units coming and going with several Transfers of Authority. The "RIP" process is critical for units and Soldiers. We must ensure that proper training and lessons learned are passed to incoming units in order to preserve and enhance what we have accomplished. We must sustain the momentum and ensure a seamless transition occurs between the outgoing and incoming unit.

I also want to stress to our First-Line Leaders the importance of Safety, accountability, discipline, PCCs and PCIs. You are the key to our success. Everybody has a Sergeant and Sergeants step up and take charge. The safety and well-being of our Soldiers are in your charge.

Keep up the good work. I look forward to visiting with you and seeing firsthand the great work that you are doing. There is no obstacle that we cannot breach or mission that we cannot accomplish as long as we work together.

Essays!

DAVID L. WEEKS

Brigadier General, USA

Commander

Joint Task Force EMPIRE and

411TH Engineer Brigade

Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan



## The Empire Report

Joint Task Force Empire - 411th Engineer Brigade  
Public Affairs Office



Commanding General  
Brig. Gen. David L. Weeks



Command Sergeant Major  
Command Sgt. Maj. Andrew C. Krom

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First Base: Bugs Bunny

Second Base: Bugs Bunny ...

### Contributing Units

841st Engineer Battalion, Task Force Hurricane

7th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Red Devils

578th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Mad Dog

223rd Engineer Battalion, Task Force Knight

14th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Rugged

49th Mine Dog Detachment

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derek.m.smith@afghan.swa.army.mil



# Mine dogs clear the way

By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jeffrey Vlietstra  
49th Engineer Detachment (K9)

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Andrew Black moved back toward the Huskey mine clearance vehicle to watch from a safe distance as a team traced the wire of a suspected improvised explosive device back toward the road. His military working dog, Lobo, was held on the end of a leash and the pair was taking a short break after searching the last 500 meters.

Suddenly, enemy forces unleashed AK-47 fire from a position 400 meters away. The team tracing the wire hit the ground and returned fire. Support vehicles joined in engaging the enemy and after five minutes, forced the attackers to withdraw.

The team lost the wire during the engagement and was now scrambling to reacquire it. Black brought Lobo up front to search. Lobo walked out front, nose to the ground, Black still on the leash close behind. After no more than 70 meters, Lobo stopped. Black called Lobo back, marked the site and called for support. The site was interrogated and 200 pounds of homemade explosive was found buried four feet down.

Black and Lobo are a Mine Detection Dog team belonging to the 49th Engineer Detachment from Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Military working dogs are trained to search for, detect and warn of buried mines, explosives and other casualty-producing devices. Handlers are experienced combat engineers who work with and direct the dog during searches.

The 49th En. Det. has maintained

a constant presence in Afghanistan since 2004, neutralizing the threat of mines and unexploded ordinance in support of tactical operations. The detachment deploys squads of dog teams. Since their involvement began in Operation Enduring Freedom, MDDs have proven effective; capable of area reduction and delineation of minefields, route clearance, clearance verification, creation of safe lanes through mine fields, and mine field casualty extraction.

Potential handlers go through the six-month Mine Detection Dog Course at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. and graduate with the additional skill identifier “K9”. Potential handlers must also interview with a kennel

master, during which expectations are defined. Once accepted to the school, handlers spend months with their new four-legged partners, training on obedience, explosive detection and minefield clearance, as well as studying canine behavior and behavioral conditioning techniques.

Teams arriving at the 49th En. Det. immediately begin training for deployment. The senior trainer of the detachment, an experienced MDD noncommissioned officer, leads the training, implementing real-world scenarios. Teams also conduct training missions with units on post, units conducting predeployment

*Mine Dogs Page 13*

*Mine Detection Dog Viktor and his handler conduct mine clearance quality control and quality assurance on Bagram Air Field.*

*Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Holly Braun, 49th Eng. Det.*



# GRUFFLY SPEAKING

Straight Talk from the Command Sergeant Major, JTF Empire

Greetings,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Staff Sgt. Smith for his hard work and effort he has put into the production of this newsletter. I hope that you share our thoughts with friends and family back home.

First, I would like to welcome Master Sgt. Novielli, and Capt. Roker to our Brigade Headquarters at Bagram, and welcome all of our fellow Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen that have joined the JTF Empire team.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize and congratulate the following Soldiers on their well-deserved promotions: Staff Sgt. Evans, Staff Sgt. Shatas, Staff Sgt. Elwyn, Staff Sgt. Cush and Sgt. Mack.

Staff Sgt. Jados, Spec. Abbott, and myself have visited the following locations to check on our Soldiers' progress across the country. We have traveled to Leatherneck, Kabul, Fenty, Shank, Warrior and Ar-ian to conduct battlefield circulations and talk to our Soldiers to ensure we as the brigade are supporting them properly.

We have also traveled to Spann, Vulcan, Ghazni, John Pratt and the Afghan National Army Engineer School House to take a look at partnership. Our ANA counterparts are stepping up to every task given to them by the Coalition Forces. Don't get me wrong, we have a ways to go yet, but we are on the right

track and need to continue down this path to ensure we secure a feasible exit strategy for Coalition Forces.

We have also had the honor of presenting numerous awards, participating in NCO induction ceremonies and multiple transfers of authority.

I encourage everyone to introduce themselves to me when I am visiting your units. I am interested in your duties, responsibilities and your thoughts. Tell me what you see and what we need to improve across our formations. We must all work together to help our organizations grow and improve.

I ask at this time we all take a second to remember all our Brothers and Sisters in arms that have given the ultimate sacrifice like SFC McNabb from the 562nd Eng. Co., Staff Sgt. Povilaitis from the 22nd Clearance Co., and all the others that I did not mention.

Thank you all for what you do.

CSM Andrew Krom



## From the editor:

We'd like to thank you for taking the time to read this premier issue of "The Empire Report." Our intent is to give all members of Joint Task Force Empire the opportunity to see what our engineers are accomplishing across Afghanistan.

We encourage you to share this publication with all members in your command, fellow service members, as well as family and friends back home.

We look forward to telling more of your stories.

We invite you to be an interactive part of this process.

Please feel free to contact us and share your thoughts. Letters to the editor, submissions, photos and general feedback are all welcome and encouraged. You can contact us through the editor at the email address below.

All submissions to staff are subject to publication.

Also note that this is an interactive publication. Click right on the banners to go to their websites.

We want to hear from you and look forward to telling more of the historic mission of the dedicated members of Joint Task Force Empire!

derek.m.smith@afghan.swa.army.mil





# ANA Engineers help rebuild FOB Finley Shields

By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Juan Delgado  
Task Force Red Devils Public Affairs



Photos by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Juan A. Delgado

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – In the middle of April, insurgents attacked Forward Operating Base Finley Shields, damaging multiple structures. As a result the Afghan National Army Construction Engineer Soldiers from 2nd Brigade, 201st Corps helped the U.S. Army rebuild the wooden structures. The structures ranged in size throughout the life support area and command centers of the FOB.

Throughout the winter training phase, ANA engineers from 2nd Brig. developed their partnership with help from Soldiers of the 236th Eng. Co., 7th Eng. Battalion. Finley Shields provided the partnership an opportunity for the ANA Soldiers to continue to develop and fine tune their vertical construction skills, which will lead toward independent operations.


During the construction process ANA noncommissioned officers continued to develop their building skills with training support and advising from the 236th Eng. Co. Training involved layouts, floor construction,

(Above) Afghan National Army construction engineer Soldiers assigned to 2nd Brigade, 201st Corps install lighting in a B-hut in one of the life support areas on Forward Operating Base Finley Shield. (Inset) ANA construction engineers help the U.S. Army rebuild a B-hut in one of the life support areas on the FOB.

wall framing, hanging rafters and basic electrical installation.

“The training we received will be useful, as we plan on taking it back to train our Soldiers” said Staff Sgt. Ibrahim Bakhtiar, a native of Kabul.

“This was an excellent ANA development situation, where engineers were able to work side by side on a daily basis for a very large construction project”, said Capt. David Bird, 236th Eng. Co. commander. “We took a Taliban attack and turned it into an ideal ANA development project.”

“I’d like the partnership to last longer and not just until the project at Finley Shields is finished,” said Sgt. Mohammed Rahim a Jalalabad native. 

## US Army Chief of Engineers visits JTF Empire Soldiers in Afghanistan

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith  
Joint Task Force Empire Public Affairs

Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan – Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, U.S. Army Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers visited the command and Soldiers of the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, here recently.

This was Bostick's first visit to units in Afghanistan since he became the 53rd Army Chief of Engineers and USACE commanding General on May 22. He serves as the senior military officer overseeing most of the nation's civil works infrastructure and military construction.

Bostick received operational briefs from staff and spoke with Soldiers on issues concerning engineers specifically and the state of the Army in general. He stressed the importance of working in a deployed environment and each Soldier's role as "ambassadors of the Army."

"You have to work as a team," Bostick advised. "There's no experience like the forward (deployed) experience. The experience you have here will carry you through the rest of your lives."

Bostick said he spoke with military commanders in Afghanistan about the vital role of military engineers play in operations. He said he was impressed by the amount of knowledge and interest command maintained concerning engineer missions.

"They really know what you're doing," Bostick explained. "You're in the day-to-day fight supporting

commanders. They deeply value the engineer assets.

"Make sure your priorities are in line with their priorities," he advised. "Show them how we help support the mission."

Bostick emphasized not all issues were operational in nature. He expressed a growing concern for the care of Soldiers and Veterans on the homefront. He remains involved in the restructuring of Soldier care and said many states were lacking in standardized care. The Department of Defense's solution started with choosing a hospital in Georgia as its basis for standardizing treatment.

"We found out where we thought the standard should be," Bostick pointed out. The process here became the seed which expanded to six more locations. The ultimate goal is to take the final standard for care and return it the states to effectively control.

Bostick also addressed the persistent dangers of harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault. He implored all Soldiers to hold a high standard and maintain a zero tolerance on these issues.


"It's not good order and discipline," Bostick said of harassment. "We've got to get back to basics on how we treat each other. The way you win in this environment is with good teams. It's something you have to work on every day."

Another concern Bostick addressed was the unemployment rate of reserve-component Soldiers.

"We are facing an economic situation like no other," said Bostick. "We have a huge issue with unemployment. Unemployment of young Soldiers (20 to 24 years of age) is higher than any other category. It's about 30%. It's about half that in the civilian population."

Bostick encouraged Soldiers to use resources available to them through the military, including job fairs in which employers hire veterans and service members on site.

Bostick concluded his visit with the JTF Empire engineers by thanking them for their service, encouraging them to take advantage of their deployment and of assets available to them upon their return home.

"You have a great organization and a great mission," Bostick smiled. "I wish I could be with you and I'm proud of you." 



**Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, U.S. Army Chief of Engineers and Commanding General of USACE talks with Soldiers of the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, at Bagram Air Field recently.**

Photo by Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith

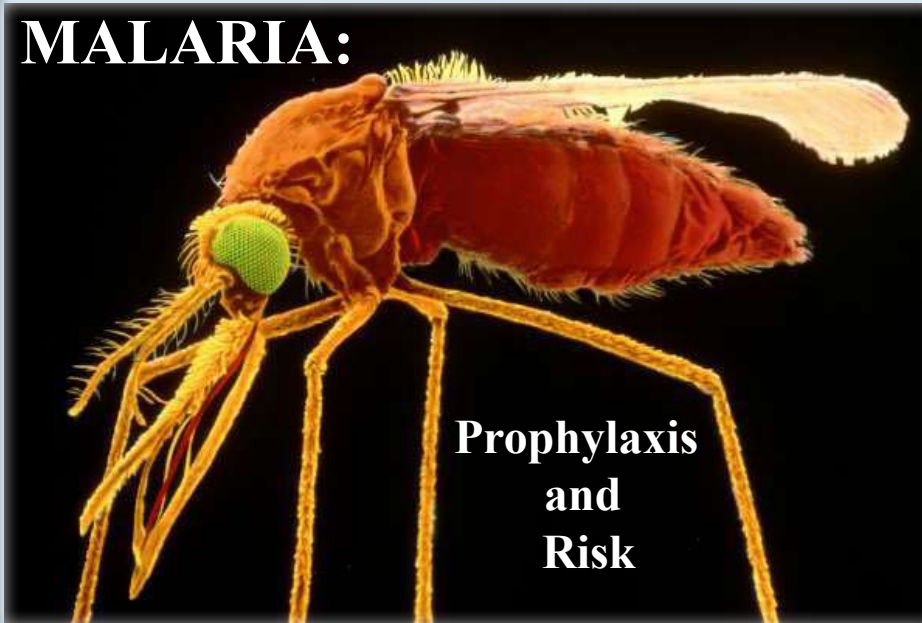




# EMPIRE MEDICAL

Preserving Joint Task Force Empire's greatest weapon

## MALARIA:



### Prophylaxis and Risk

The Malaria prophylaxis currently used is Doxycycline, an antibiotic that is commonly used to treat acne in teenagers in the U.S. The most common side effect is nausea, but this can be made better by taking it with food, such as after breakfast. Medications used previously could cause unusual side effects such as vivid dreams, depression and panic attacks, but these were rare.

#### *But what about...?*

If you have questions or concerns, your medical support personnel are there to help.

Remember, you owe it to yourself, your family at home, and your fellow Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines whose lives depend on you here to take care of yourself. Malaria prophylaxis is one way you can do just that.

#### *What is Malaria?*

Malaria is a protozoan parasite (a bug) which enters your body through a mosquito bite, and then takes up residence in your blood and liver. It causes severe recurring fever, chills, flu-like symptoms and anemia. Basically, it grows inside your blood cells and then kills the cell. It can also take up residence in your liver, where it can continue to reoccur.

#### *Why should I worry about it?*

Every year about 2.7 million people die from malaria. According to the World Health Organization, a child is killed almost every 60 seconds. In Afghanistan there were 843,000 suspected cases of Malaria in 2010, and more than

450,000 confirmed or provable cases. Among military members, there were 75 confirmed cases, 55 during deployment, and 20 after. Doxycycline is more than 95% effective at preventing malaria.

#### *Isn't Afghanistan too dry and the altitude too high to get malaria?*

Obviously not. Though the risk is lower for those over 7500 feet, it only takes contact with one mosquito to become infected. If you are in lower-lying areas, such as urban areas, farmland and near the river valleys, you are at a much higher risk.

*But the Malaria prophylaxis has side effects. I have heard that it causes nightmares.*



# Giants stand watch in Afghanistan

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith  
Joint Task Force Empire Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Silent sentinels, they stand as testament to history. They have many names, given to them by many people. To some, they are protectors. To others, they are grave reminders of times best forgotten. They have hindered some while assisted others. They are majestic, threatening, beautiful, barren, nurturing, oppressive, barriers or home depending on whose eyes one looks through. From their eyes one may watch history unfold. They are the Hindu Kush Mountains.

As one travels north in Afghanistan, the Hindu Kush is a sight to behold. Travelling by land over or through the range can be treacherous at times. The terrain and weather can both be daunting to the wary traveller. By air can be equally discomforting. Turbulence and ominous cliffs keep pilots vigilant as they pass through the high peaks. At times, one may get the impression the walls of rock are closing in, ready to envelop the craft.

The Hindu Kush is a 500 mile-long mountain range stretching between central Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. Its highest point, Tirich Mir, overlooks the town of Chitral, Pakistan, bordering on the northeast extension of Afghanistan. Local legend warns would-be adventurers that the 25, 289 foot-high peak is impossible to climb because it is inhabited by Jinns, demons and witches. Fueling such legends,

tourists are killed nearly every year trekking around the mountain, some of which are never found.

Legend aside, the range has hosted a varied and tumultuous history. The name Hindu Kush can be literally translated as “Hindu Killer.” It is a harsh reminder of an era when slaves from the Indian subcontinent died in the unforgiving terrain and weather of the Afghan mountains en route to Central Asia.

The range formed from the collision of the Indian and Eurasian continental plates approximately 50 million years ago. The Hindu Kush remains one of the most seismically active earthquake zones in the world. The nearly barren range produced countless mines for the lapis lazuli rock and emeralds.

These mountains host a mosaic of peoples to include Tajik in the northwest, Uzbek and Hazara in the central and western valleys, Kyrgyz nomads and Pashtun around the major towns. Melting ice from the peaks feeds tributaries to the major waterways in the area. The mountain system feeds the Helmand, Hari and Kabul Rivers.

High passes transecting the mountains form an important transit network. The most prominent is the Salang Pass linking Kabul to northern Afghanistan. With the completion of the Salang Tunnel in 1964, travel time along the route was reduced to a few hours. The tunnel was drilled 1.7 miles through the heart of the Hindu Kush.

Military actions are believed to have begun in the range during the reign of the Achaemenid King Darius the Great between 550 and 486 BC. Alexander the Great explored the area after his conquest of the Achaemenid Empire in 330 BC. Alexander’s Seleucid Empire ultimately fell to the Maurya Empire in 305 BC.

The Hindu Kush became the unofficial dividing line between British and Russian Empires’ ar-

*A mountain peak of the Hindu Kush range pierces the cloud ceiling over Northern Afghanistan.*


Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith





east of influence from approximately 1813 until the end of World War II. The Cold War brought its own turbulence to the region. Soviet Union forces occupied Afghanistan in 1980 and were in constant conflict with Mujahedeen forces until the Soviet withdrawal in 1988.

Northern Alliance forces under the command of Ahmed Shah Massoud became intimately familiar with the Hindu Kush as Mujahedeen against the Soviets. "The Lion of Panjsher" and his allies took up arms against the Taliban regime after it took power in 1996. He successfully defended northern Afghanistan, effectively using the mountains as a line of defense until his death on September 9, 2001.

A relative calm has settled over the range since the beginning of the current military operations in Afghanistan. Life in the villages nestled between the peaks continues on as it has for years as the giants keep vigil. The sentinels stand as they have for ages. They maintain their silence, but in their silence, they still speak volumes. 

(Left) Villages abound around and nestled within the Hindu Kush Mountains. (Right) Melting ice from the peaks of the range in Afghanistan feed into the tributaries of the major rivers in the area.



(Bottom) These rocky cliffs keep pilots vigilant as they pass through the mountains. One may get the impression the walls of rock are closing in.





# ANA soldier stands out among peers

By: U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jessica Jackson  
Task Force Knight Public Affairs

Kandahar Province, Afghanistan – Members of the 3rd Battalion, 205th Brigade of the Afghan National Army trained with members of the 22nd Engineer Clearance Company, learning the capabilities of mine detection equipment, recently.

The training event was a part of an ongoing program which covers different facets of being a combat engineer.

During the training, one ANA soldier, Samiullah, stood out in particular because of his proficient use of the mine detector, according to U.S. Army Spc. Justin Manchester.

Samiullah's expertise with the Minehound, a mine detector, greatly helps the unit's mission to eradicate the country of improvised explosive devices threats. It is a great asset for the members of the 3rd Bn. to have one of their own to help teach them the importance of mind hounds. His knowledge and skill set helps facilitate training led by the ANA for the ANA.

"I really like using the mine detectors," said

Samiullah. "I studied them in Marza-e-sharif."

The Minehounds are used to help dismounted soldiers locate mines. The device combines ground penetrating radar and metal detection systems to help soldiers identify the threat of potential mines in their path.

"It's important for me to do a good job. I really like clearing my routes and doing well on my missions. I just really want to do well for my country," Samiullah said.

The 22nd ECC has been working hard with the ANA to get them prepared for the challenges ahead. As the U.S. looks toward its withdraw from Afghanistan, it is imperative that the ANA is ready to take the lead. The weekly training will help ensure the soldiers of the 3rd Bn. are ready for this task.

"The ANA will have one of the hardest jobs in Afghanistan," said Samiullah. "We will have to train harder and be professional for the war. When the Taliban tries to bring terrorism the Afghanistan, we will have to beat them."



**U.S. Army Spc. Justin Manchester of the 22nd Engineer Clearance Company assists an Afghan National Army Soldier with the controls on the Minehound equipment during a training event held by the 22nd ECC recently to help the ANA master skills of detecting mines while on dismounted patrols.**

Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Larry Hester, TF Knight



# Empire Soldier conferences with students back home

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Courtesy of Rebecca Herz  
The Schreiber Times

Port Washington, N.Y. – The sound of air traffic and sights of sand and military uniforms were only an arm's length away from seven sophomores from Schreiber High School in participating in a Skype conference with Soldiers in Afghanistan.

Skype connected otherwise disparate lives recently when Ms. Shantay Betty-Denton's Global History and Geography II class spoke with her brother, Master Sgt. Gregory Betty.

After students showed interest in learning more about Master Sgt. Betty, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of logistics for the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, Ms. Betty-Denton arranged for students to use the video-chatting equipment in the conference room. Students prepared questions to which Master Sgt. Betty and four others in his brigade gave answers and feedback.

"Skype wasn't available when my brother was first deployed, and



Photo courtesy of JTF Empire PAO

Master Sgt. Gregory Betty, noncommissioned officer-in-charge, of logistics, 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, video conferences with students from Schreiber High School in Port Washington, N.Y. recently.

it would have been great to be able to talk to him," said Ms. Betty-Denton.

When he was first deployed to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Storm, Master Sgt. Betty was not much older than the students with whom he video chatted. Now he has 49 companies entrusted under his logistical supervision.

Students asked questions about everything from "Are U.S. Soldiers a welcome presence in Afghanistan?" to "When do you work out?"

Through the video conference, students learned about Soldiers' daily routines and living conditions, and also received information about joining the military when they are older.


"The military has changed me in that it made me more responsible and in touch with the world around me," said Betty.

After this exchange, there was still time for casual conversation about the Soldiers' diets and exer-

cise regimens.

"Right now we're on an operating base with 24-hour (dining facilities) so we have a place to eat all of the time if we want. But when we're in the desert, not on a base, we use the Meals Ready-to-Eat," said Betty. "We work out two hours a day in the morning. We have a full gym. We also have yoga."

Teachers and administrators plan to use Skype for this sort of lesson in the future.

"Our goal is to connect the students," said Principal Ira Pernick. "Maybe the next step is to create liaisons between colleges and universities and the students who want to learn more about them, or maybe Skype can even work to make ties between classrooms at Schreiber and others around the world." 

# Personally, Personnel

The Sexual Harassment and Response Prevention (SHARP) Program is here to serve the Commander by educating leadership, advocating and caring for victims of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Assault. How the program can serve you:

As commanders and leaders, you are essential in creating an environment that reinforces prevention, promotes safety, and holds accountable those who violate the rights of others. We have information for leaders on the SHARP process and a commander's checklist should you have a case of sexual harassment or sexual assault.

It is vital to follow the proper procedures to protect the rights and care for all affected. If any incident takes place, immediately notify the JTF Empire Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) for assistance.

As fellow Soldiers, you are part of the team effort to promote a positive and safe environment. You have the ability to act by stopping sexual innuendos and behavior which allows harassment or assault to take place. If someone you know becomes a victim, you can help by making sure they are safe and referring them to your unit SHARP Specialist or contact JTF Empire SARC.

If you become a victim of sexual assault, you have two reporting options, restricted and unrestricted.

In unrestricted reporting, you would contact the SARC, who will inform the command and CID to launch an investigation. With this option, the offender can be held accountable. You will be assigned a SHARP specialist or victim advocate to help you access supportive services and guide you through the process. You have the right to receive medical care and receive counseling.

With restricted reporting, no investigation is initiated. Your SHARP specialist or victim advocate will ensure access to supportive services, such as chaplain, medical care and counseling.

1st Lt. Gessy Nixon is your DSARC:

NIPR: [gessy.c.nixon@afghan.swa.army.mil](mailto:gessy.c.nixon@afghan.swa.army.mil)

SIPR: [gessy.c.nixon@afghan.swa.army.smil.mil](mailto:gessy.c.nixon@afghan.swa.army.smil.mil)

or call NIPR 318-481-4464, Roshan 079-525-3114.

Note: This week, a movie documentary called the "Invisible War" is being released in theaters. The documentary tells the stories of sexual assault victims who have served in the military.

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Websites for more information:

<http://www.sexualassault.army.mil>

<http://www.myduty.mil>

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## From Page 3 Mine Dogs

training and field training exercises. MDD teams are also utilized for UXO clearance in support of range control. Prior to deployment, MDD teams must gain certification. MDD teams travel to Yuma Proving Grounds, Ariz. where officials certify the MDD teams.

The 49th engineers deployed to Afghanistan work with the Mine Action Center, performing quality assurance and quality control tasks for the mine clearance of Bagram Air Field, one of the most heavily mined areas in the world. Since 2004, the MDD teams assisted in the clearance of 6.7 million square meters on BAF.

"It's here where they show their true capability beyond the instrument search limitations," explained Australian Maj. John Riley, Mine Action Center officer-in-charge. "We would not be able to achieve the quality assurance that we provide without their support."

The 49th En. Det. also assists the MAC with quick reaction force missions for vehicles, aircraft or personnel caught in minefields. MDDs are able to search more rapidly and deploy to areas unreachable by manual and mechanical means so an MDD team is always on standby for these missions. MDD teams have been called upon many times to clear safe lanes through potentially mined areas to reach downed aircraft or stranded vehicles.

The U.S. Military also uses MDD teams for quality assurance and quality control of potential sites during builds and expansions of bases and outposts. Prior to construction, MDD teams deploy to the potential build site to ensure the area is free



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Darrell Vassey, 49th Eng. Det.


*Mine Detection Dog Jim and his handler lead the formation during an operation in Ghazni Province*

of explosives prior to construction. This additional request for MDD support required the detachment to deploy another squad. Since 2010, MDD teams have cleared over 250,000 square meters in preparation for site construction.

In 2010, MDD teams started integrating heavily into Route Clearance operations due to the constant improvised explosive device and mine threat along routes in Afghanistan. Route clearance units continue to see the added value to having a mine dog team. MDD teams are able to detect the deep-buried explosives mechanical means may not pick up. They are able to traverse routes not accessible to much of the route clearance equipment and they provide a faster means of search for deliberate clearance.

Because of their growing reputation, versatility and effectiveness record, the mine detection dog teams have made an enduring impact on

the Global War on Terrorism and are sought after by Engineers, Infantry, and Special Operations to support route clearance and maneuver operations. MDDs have deployed to all regions of Afghanistan and have proven effective in any environment.

With Operation Enduring Freedom drawing to a close, the job of MDDs will certainly not be over. With over 20,000 people being killed by land mines annually, MDDs are an asset which could be used around the globe. Afghanistan is the fourth most heavily mined country in the world, and while over 158 countries have signed the Ottawa Agreements banning the production of land mines, there are still nations who continue production. As the United Nations continues to conduct humanitarian demining all over the world, the MDD teams could prove to be an even greater resource. 

# SAFETY STOP

JOINT TASK FORCE  
EMPIRE SAFETY OFFICE



This Month:

## “Create a Safety Culture”

By Mr. Marcus M. Heard  
Joint Task Force Empire Safety Officer



The Army’s Training and Doctrine Command Culture Center defines culture as a “dynamic social system” containing the values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms which are learned, shared, internalized and changeable by all members of a “specific group, organization, society or other collectivity.”

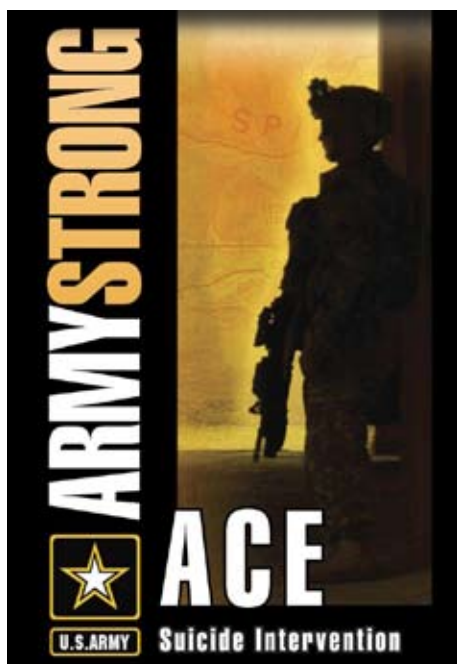
One of the many reasons I enjoy working for the Army is that it has culture and set of common core values that are prevalent across all units. I also believe in a safety culture; A culture that’s not focused on regulatory compliance, but one where safety is instinctively integrated into all missions, operations and individual behavior. This belief initiated prior to my arrival to JTF Empire from the U.S. Army Reserve Command in late February.

One of my primary duties at USARC was accident reporting which consisted of collecting data and conducting trend analysis. I reviewed more than my fair share of accident reports ranging from bumps and bruises to fatalities. Most accident investigations concluded individual human error as the primary cause of the accident. The reports often cited fatigue, failure to maintain situational awareness, speeding etc...as the “human errors.” The analysis typically stopped there, but I believe there is more to it.

While at USARC, I noticed the units with lower accident rates were the ones that had vibrant safety cultures; meaning support from senior leadership that was embraced all the way down to the youngest Soldiers. These units maintained safety awareness on relevant issues and constantly emphasized Composite Risk Management. These units were a true example of the motto “safety is everyone’s business.” The safety culture was evident when I would conduct unannounced safety inspections and program evaluations.

So what does this mean for JTF Empire? There is a definite relationship between accident rates and a unit’s safety culture. The primary cause of units with high accident rates is not individual human error, but the collective behavior of Soldiers within the unit. Simply put, it is the culture of the organization that permits these behaviors. Senior leaders set organizational priorities, behavioral norms and standards. Safety starts at the top, but should be embraced throughout the chain.

Safety is often treated as a regulatory requirement, another box to be checked off. Creating a safety culture and making it’s a fundamental value requires changing the way we think and that should start with our leaders at all levels.





# The Chaplain's Cup



This month, we take a look at a constant problem which plagues our military: Suicide.

Soldiers are encouraged to take action to effectively reduce and/or eliminate suicidal behaviors.

## Fact or Fiction ?

People who talk about suicide are at greater risk to attempt or commit suicide

## FACT!

Nearly 80% of those who attempt or commit suicide give some warning of their intentions -

## Fact or fiction?

The risk of suicide decreases as the suicidal person's mood improves-

## FICTION!

Most suicides occur within 3 months following the beginning of improvement. Often there is a period of calm that may follow a decision to commit suicide

## Suicide: Who is most at risk?

- AGE: highest #'s: 18-25, highest rate: over 36
- RACE: White
- SEX: Male

## TRIGGERS:

- 1) Relationship break-up
- 2) Pending/recent UCMJ action
- 3) Problems with money

## Common Indicators

-Depression, feelings of hopelessness, expressed suicidal thoughts with intent or plan, recent significant failure or loss, obvious drop in performance, personal neglect, previous suicide attempts, drug or alcohol abuse

## Asking About Suicide/Suicide Intervention

- Ask your buddy. Have the courage to ask the question directly: Are you thinking about killing yourself?
- Care for your buddy. Calmly control the situation; actively listen, be safe
- Escort your buddy. Never leave your buddy alone, escort them to their chain of command, chaplain, behavioral health or primary care provider.

## Take Home Message

- Be aware of signs/triggers
- Make sure Soldiers know resources
- Be proactive
- Encourage help-seeking behavior and seek help if needed



Photo illustration by Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith




**COMPREHENSIVE  
SOLDIER FITNESS**  
STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES



# ANA engineers conduct route recon



Photos by 2nd Lt. Brittany N. Ramos,  
Task Force Hurricane Public Affairs

(Top) Engineers of the Afghan National Army Route Clearance Company, 1st Brigade, 209th Corps, use mine detectors to search for possible improvised explosive devices and other hazards during a recent route reconnaissance mission in the Faryab Province, Afghanistan. (Right) ANA engineers prepare their equipment for the route recon. (Bottom) ANA engineers set positions to conduct route recon. These Soldiers continue to save lives by identifying and neutralizing explosive threats which endanger security forces and civilians within the province. 





# Operations at a glance

## Images from around JTF Empire



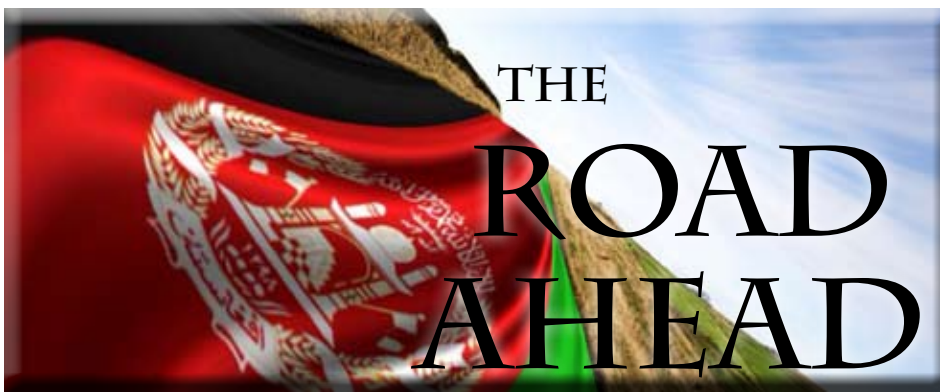
(Top and Left) Photos by Maj. John A. Coppola, JTF Empire



Photo by 1st Lt. Brett A. Knutson, JTF Empire

(Top) U.S. and ANA Soldiers provide security during the opening of the Ghormach river crossing July 11. (Above) Villagers from the Ghormach area arrive to thank ANSF and ISAF forces for their contributions to the completion of the crossing. (Left) Members of the 132nd Multi-Role Bridge Company emplace a military standard bridge over culverts that washed out during a flood in Jalalabad.





## Engineer conference paves the road ahead

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith  
Joint Task Force Empire Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Engineers from across the Afghan theater met to discuss and review engineer operations at the first senior engineers conference hosted by the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire here, July 9.

More than 50 representatives of NATO engineer leadership from throughout the country addressed issues and coordination of operations to synchronize engineer efforts in the combined joint operations theater. Attendees from the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command down through individual regional command levels met with the purpose of consolidating engineering operations and increasing Afghan National Army engineer capacity.

“Our purpose as engineers remains the same; to provide freedom of action,” explained U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Bryan Watson, Director of Engineering, Joint Civil-Military Operations, United States Forces-Afghanistan. “Each commander looks at the battlefield just a little differently. They all serve a single purpose, just a slightly different focus.”

Areas of discussion included engineering lines of effort, RC over-

views, ANA development, combat effects, route clearance and base transitions. According to the conference organizer, U.S. Army Maj. Tony J. Struzik, JTF Empire future operations officer-in-charge, the varying aspects from across the country opened the forum to open discussion and free flowing ideas from many different perspectives.

“It’s a good opportunity to see what (the various units) are thinking, and what their struggles and needs are,” said Struzik, a Waterloo, N.Y. native. “It gives a little more fidelity as to what the focuses are in each RC, so we have a better understanding of what the battle space owners and their engineers are looking for so we can better support them.”

Struzik added that this and future conferences stressed the main effort of engineer operations is still going

to be the transition of the ANA to the lead; getting the Afghans out in front as NATO engineers maintain supporting roll.

“We’re going to focus on bringing up their capacity,” said Struzik. “It’s going to be a significant point of transition, but the Afghans and IJC have a good plan.”

Watson cautioned attendees to maintain a clear vision the operation. The “puzzle” of military operations, he maintained, is better solved by keeping the overall goal in focus.

“The most important piece of any puzzle is not the corners, it’s not the sides. It’s the box top,” Watson pointed out. “You don’t know what it looks like until you look at the box top. You have to have something that gives it some organization and structure; you have to have the box top.”

Looking ahead, Watson summed up that coalition forces have to finish what was started.

“Building the ANA, we’ve got to be all in. Their success is our success” he asserted. “There’s a tremendous amount of experience here. Now is the time to think about what this is going to look like. What should we do now that sets those conditions?”



*Engineers from across Afghanistan discuss engineer operations at the first senior engineers conference hosted by Joint Task Force Empire here, July 9. (inset) U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Bryan Watson, Director of Engineering, Joint Civil-Military Operations, United States Forces-Afghanistan, explains his vision of successful mission planning.*



Photos by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith