

DRAGOON Magazine

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CTF 4-2

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For more on the brigade please visit:



<http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/4SBCT-2ID>



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DRAGON (6)

Col. Michael Getchell



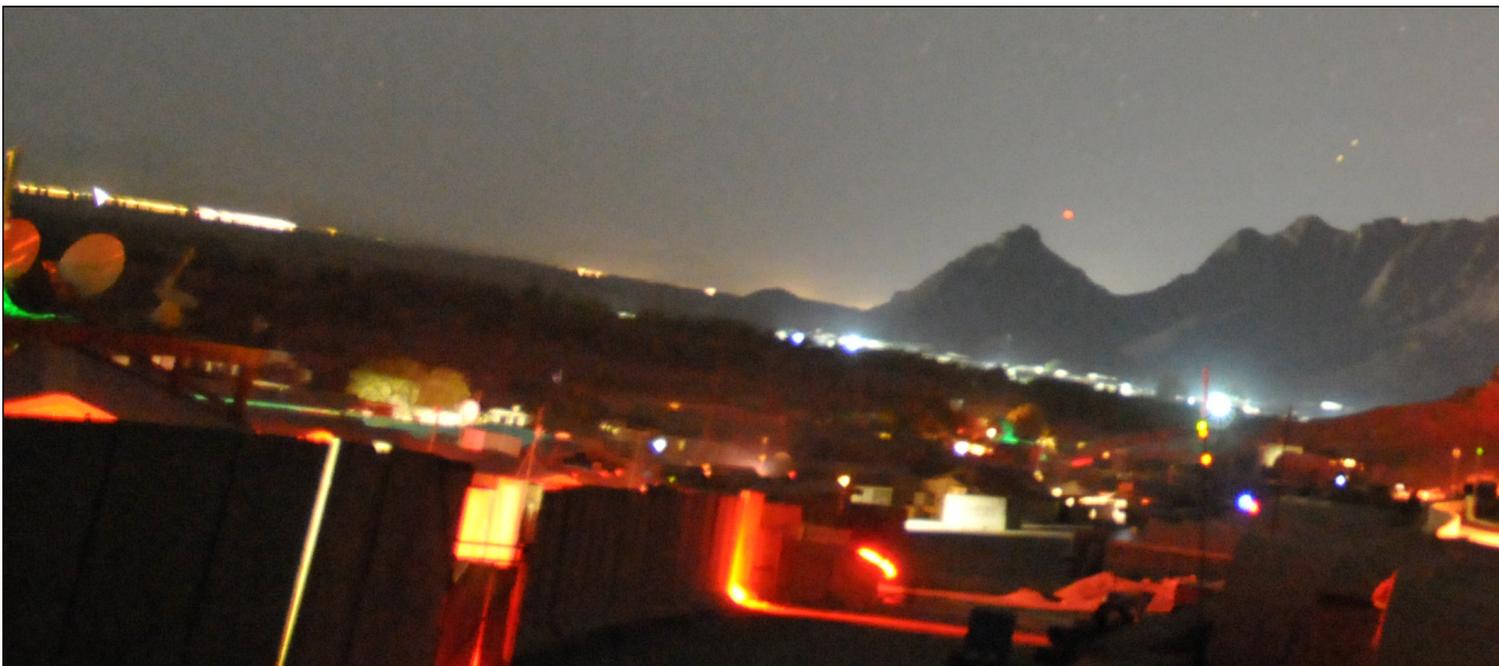
Greetings from Kandahar, Afghanistan, and Happy Holidays to our Raider Family!

I'm writing this short note between trips on our "sleigh" (our Strykers and helicopters) to spend the holiday season visiting as many outposts and Raider Soldiers as we can in the next few days to offer our greetings, encouragement, and thanks. We sit two months into this deployment, and the progress that we have made is undeniable. The men and women of this Combined Task Force have taken on our mission in the most professional fashion, and they are making meaningful gains across southern Afghanistan during a very critical time of this campaign. While the early months of the new year will

bring the decisions that will steer ISAF towards the end of this conflict, it's imperative that we pause and reflect on where we've come from and what we tackle every day that we are here. From partnering with Afghan Forces that grow in independence daily, to working to connect small farming villages to larger governmental seats, Raiders have clearly demonstrated that Discipline and Expertise are indeed touchstones across this formation. As our Team of Teams celebrates through the winter holiday season, know that the sense of family that exists across this formation comforts us while we remain separated from our loved ones at home. Thank



you so much for remaining the strength of our Soldiers, who in turn stand as the strength of our Nation as well as the nation of Afghanistan. Have a wonderful Holiday Season, and a prosperous start to 2013. A great year stands in front of us!



DRAGON 7

Command Sgt. Maj. Oscar Vinson



To the Family and Friends of the Raider Brigade,

Happy Holidays! From my Family to yours, we extend our warmest wishes for a joyous holiday season and prosperous New Year. We send our sincere appreciation during this time of separation and we thank you for your commitment and dedication to our Great Nation that is founded on selfless service and unwavering perseverance.

Our Country has spent many holidays on the battlefield dating back to George Washington crossing the Delaware, December 25, 1776 to our current deployment. As I

have traveled throughout our area of operations, I am astonished by our ability to quickly establish our partnership with the Afghanistan Security Forces to achieve lasting peace and prosperity. From Spin Boldak to Panjwa'i in this vast area of operations where our Soldiers are serving proudly, I express my sincerest gratitude. Our unique camaraderie during this season flows throughout the ranks as the Raiders stand READY so our loved ones back home can celebrate in a peaceful nation.

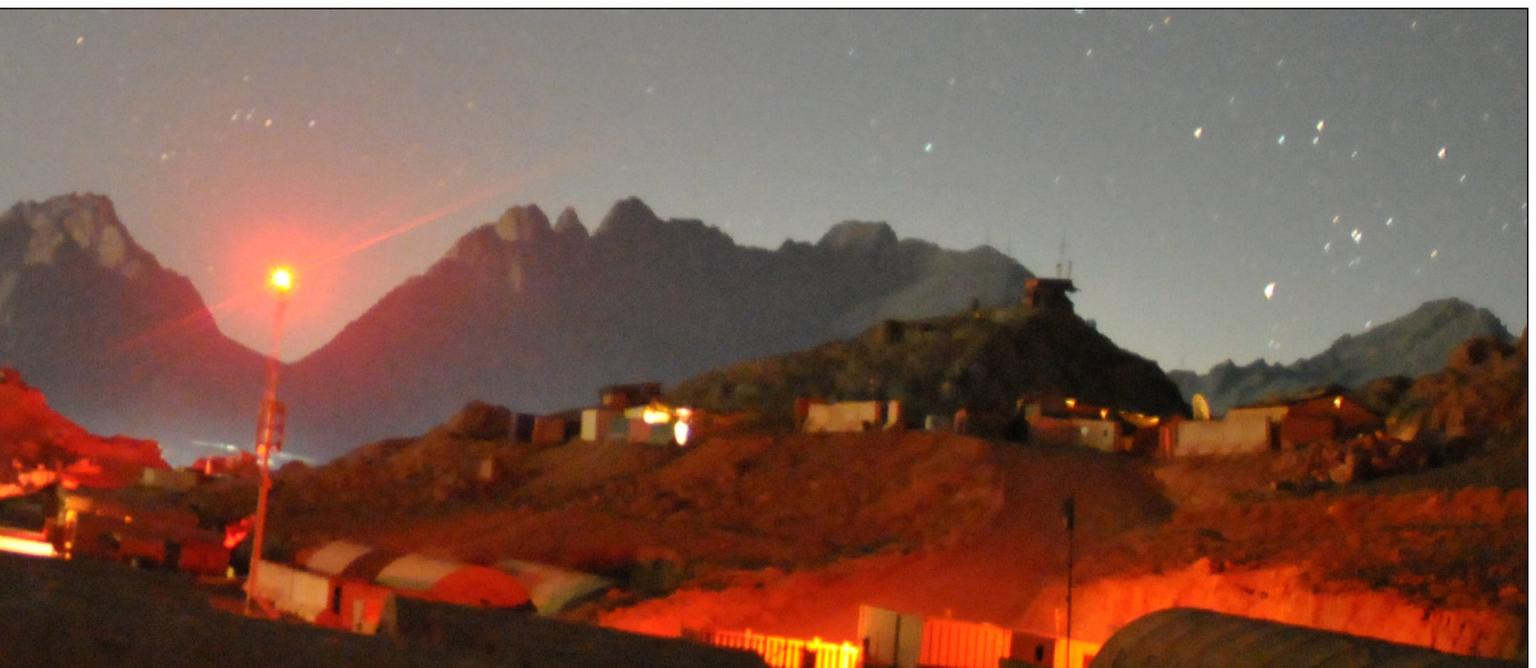
A special remembrance to our Fallen Comrades, Wounded in Action and their Families, as they have



made the ultimate sacrifice.

May God continue to bless you and your loved ones.

TO THE OBJECTIVE!



CTF 4-2 takes over for sister brigade in Afghanistan

Story by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – In front of local Afghan provincial government officials and the Regional Command-South command team, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division unfurled its unit colors and obtained command from its sister brigade, 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., during a Transfer of Authority ceremony here, Nov. 24.

The brigade, now called Combined Task Force 4-2 for the duration of its nine-month deployment, will operate out of RC-South in southern Afghanistan.

In his speech, Col. Michael Getchell, commander of 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., alluded to the two month-long Yakima Training Center, Wash., rotations and one month-long National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., rotation that the brigade accomplished in preparation for its first deployment to Afghanistan.

“In the 27 months that have elapsed since this Raider Brigade Combat Team’s completion of its last deployment, we’ve steadfastly readied ourselves for our next rendezvous through ruthless repetition of tasks under varying conditions to build expertise,” Getchell said.

Leaders and soldiers in the brigade will collaborate with their Afghan partners and continue the momentum their sister brigade started nearly one year ago.

“We have done duty with (Col. Charles Webster, the commander of 3rd SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.), now we want to start with Col. Getchell,” said Afghan Brig. Gen. Ahmed Habibi, the 1st Brigade, 205th Af-

ghan National Army commander, through an interpreter. “We will work together to take out the enemy from Panjwa’i.”

After Webster and Command Sgt. Maj. Samuel Murphy cased their brigade’s colors, Webster shared words of advice with the leaders who will now operate where he left off.

“As you uncase your colors and assume your mission of supporting our Afghan partners, remember we are all here for one reason and one reason only; to support the district and provincial governments and the Afghan Security Forces achieve this lasting peace and prosperity,” said Webster.



CTF 4-2 witnesses road opening

Story and by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – Local Afghans in Panjwa'i District now have better access to markets and a safer way to travel as district leaders officially opened the Salahan-Demrasi-Muhajerin Road in Salahan, Afghanistan, Nov. 25, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Soldiers of Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division), attended the ceremony and interacted with their new partners, including the leaders of the District Development Assembly shura council.

David Brantley, a field program officer with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), also attended the road opening and said the project was important to locals.

“For the first time the people along the road have better access to their markets,” Brantley said. “Until now they really didn’t have a road for their tractors or trucks to take produce to market.”

USAID provides many forms of support to foreign countries including the development of agriculture, education, and economic growth.

Approximately two and a half months ago, where the road now lies used to be nothing but a donkey trail that would get washed out whenever it rained, Brantley explained.

The workers added gravel for more stable ground for vehicles headed to and from the local marketplaces.

Allowing nearby villagers an established road was just one of the benefits of the project.

“It was also important because it employed, at times, as many as 500



Panjwa'i District leaders and village elders officially open the Salahan-Demrasi-Muhajerin Road in Salahan, Afghanistan, Nov. 25, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Local Afghans in now have better access to markets and a safer way to travel because of the road. Soldiers of Combined Task Force 4-2 attended the ceremony.

workers from the surrounding villages and it put (money) in the pockets of the villagers,” Brantley said. “So it’s an economic development thing also.”

According to Brantley, the projects are a part of the Community Development Program under USAID.

Brantley and other USAID members meet with district governors and with the DDA to discuss different possibilities for projects.

Projects are rank ordered based on which projects are most important for Afghan development, but also which projects fit into Central Asia Development Group (CADG) standards.

“One of the requirements of CADG to do the programs is that their staff and the project will be secure,” explained Brantley. “There is a process

they go through to get guarantees of security from the villages or it may be from Afghan Local Police to secure the projects.”

CADG has been doing similar projects in Panjwa'i for the past three years, he said.

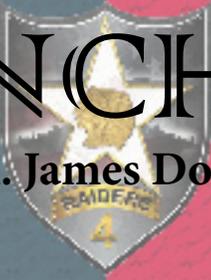
During a DDA shura council meeting following the ribbon cutting, Haji Naik Mohammad, the leader of the shura council, reassured his latest American partners from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., that he was ready to work with them.

“I am right beside you to help you specifically on the development projects,” Mohammad said through a translator. “I’m working here beside the district governor to make sure there are more development projects implemented here for Panjwa'i.”



MANCHU 6

Lt. Col. James Doohan



On behalf of the deployed Manchus in Afghanistan, the Ready Reserve Manchus at JBLM, and the extended Manchu family across the globe, CSM Young and I would like to wish you a very happy holiday season and a prosperous New Year from our temporary abode in Southern Afghanistan. Despite our physical separation, we have so much to be thankful for during this time of year. I continue to count my blessings to have the opportunity to work with, for and alongside each of your loved ones as we continue to work towards transitioning activities in our area of Afghanistan to the Afghan government and forces. This is a very demanding time in our area; however, please know that our mutual sacrifices and the work each of us execute on a daily basis is essential and definitely not in vain.

As I take the time to reflect and celebrate this holiday season, my pride for our Soldiers and Families becomes apparent and I would not pick any other unit to be part of like the Manchu Formation. You are all well aware we participated in some of the toughest and most realistic training preparation during two training deployments in 2012 prior to our deployment to Southern Afghanistan; one to the Yakima Training Center in the height of central Washington's winter, and the other to the National Training Center in the extreme heat of the Mojave Desert. In the face of every challenge, the Manchus excelled in these con-

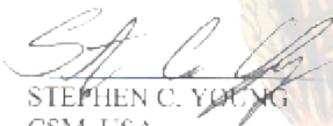
ditions and demonstrated our professionalism and commitment to excellence. We remain confident that we will continue this streak of excellence in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

To the families back at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, I thank each and every one of you for your support, prayers, and the sacrifices you make each and every day while your loved one is away. You, the Families, play a vital and essential role in our mission's success by supporting your loved ones during this effort. I understand the hardship you and your loved one will face during the holiday season and assure you, as you are with your Family at home, your loved one is with his/her Manchu Family in Afghanistan. CSM Young and I will do everything possible to ensure the holidays are a memorable time for your Soldier. As a reminder, please remember to

take advantage of the numerous resources and opportunities afforded to the Families of deployed Soldiers by the installation. If you are unsure of these benefits, please feel free to contact your Soldier's Company Raider Ready Reserve chain of command or Family Readiness Group Leader.

During this festive time of the year, I ask you to reflect upon and honor the sacrifice your loved one is making to preserve the security... from the security of his or her brothers and sisters here in Afghanistan, to the security for our Nation. We want to extend our genuine appreciation for your commitment and continued support to your Soldier and to our country. CSM Young and I sincerely wish you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year as we complete our mission here in 2013. Keep Up The Support, Keep Up The Prayers, Keep Up The Fire (KUTF)!




STEPHEN C. YOUNG
CSM, USA
Command Sergeant Major


JAMES K. DOOGHAN
LTC, AR
Commanding





Thanksgiving



in Afghanistan



Holiday photos



ROSSIER 6

Lt. Col. Chad Sundem



Members of the Rock Family,

The Rock battalion has closed its forces in Afghanistan and today we officially begin our chapter in this dynamic and critical mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

We are privileged to serve in the Panjwa'i District where some of the bravest and most courageous leaders and Afghanistan National Security Forces heroically work to build a better Afghanistan. It is our solemn duty to stand with them during this historic time, match their passion with our commitment and capability, and advance their interests for the betterment of all.

This battalion has grown two years, focused on being a unit of choice while maintaining a humble confidence. Our formation has changed our standards of discipline and brought our hallmarks and brought opportunities that lie

Over the past two weeks I have had the opportunity to see your Soldiers as they settle into their company areas. If you have not yet heard from them, know that they all are doing magnificent, living and extremely busy. I am grateful and humbled in

The Rock Family is incredibly proud and has fiercely protected its reputation through selfless service. And the same unbreakable core that got us here today – each other – is what we will lean most heavily on the next few months both here and at home. The resolute faith of our families at home forever remains our strength forward.

For this deployment we found a small way in which to honor one of our Regiment's legends – Honorary CSM of the 38th Infantry Regiment – Ron Rosser. To other units serving across the country with us for this mission, we will be known to them by the call sign "Rosser" instead of "Rock". There is no other way to create new history for this honored Regiment than to link it to our glorious past.

Finally, I ask everyone to remember the deep sacrifices and selfless work of our predecessors, the Tomahawks of the Arrowhead Brigade. Their monumental gains in security and governance have set a foundation for which our Battalion can carry forward. In doing so, we will earn a historic position next to our Regimental forefathers whose indomitable spirit permeates the culture of our organization today.



together steadily for over earning a reputation as being walking with a quiet While some faces in the along the journey, the rig-pline and training stood as us here today ready for the ahead.

I have had the opportunity they settle into their com-not yet heard from them, ing magnificent, living ok grateful and humbled in ing them.

incredibly proud and has utation through selfless

Rock of the Marne.....Let 'Em Come!

LTC Chad Sundem

Rosser 6

Combined Task Force 1-38





Fallen CTF 4-2 Soldier “will always be remembered as a true American hero”

Story by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

COMBAT OUTPOST SPERWAN GHAR, Afghanistan – One of the things that 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment “Rock of the Marne”, leaders stressed to the men in their unit was that when they deploy, the Army doesn’t issue a Superman suit for combat, so they needed to be at their best in every facet of their personal and professional lives for when that day comes.

Staff Sgt. Wesley Williams, a squad leader in Company B, 1st Bn., 38th Inf. Regt., didn’t need a suit to be issued; he already had one, said Lt. Col. Chad Sundem, commander of 1st Bn., 38th Inf. Regt.

Soldiers of 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division celebrated the life of Williams during a memorial ceremony Dec. 15, here.

Williams died Dec. 10, during combat operations in the Panjwa’i District.

He was born in Texas but grew in Ohio and joined the Army in 2005. After attending One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning from July 2005 to June 2006, he was stationed in Vilseck, Germany from March 2006 to October 2008.

Following he transferred to Joint

Base Lewis-McChord where he was assigned to B Co., 1st Bn., 38th Inf. Regt.

In the years he spent in the company, he left a lasting impression on Soldiers and leaders.

“Generations of Soldiers will now bear his likeness to his leadership traits and his culture of character,” Sundem said. “And that legacy left with (3rd platoon, Co. B) and the others he’s influenced, will ripple through the Army’s ranks forever and we all will be better served for it,” said Sundem.

Staff Sgt. Edward Cizik, a squad leader with B Co., and good friend of Williams, spoke on behalf of other Soldiers in the unit during his speech.

One Soldier Cizik spoke for said he had met Williams in 2010 and that Williams “spent countless hours teaching and mentoring me on how to be the very best soldier I am today, and for that I am eternally grateful.”

“Staff Sgt. Williams will always be remembered as a true American hero,” Cizik quoted.

Another thing people said about Williams was that he was selfless and a strong leader.

“He always displayed great loyalty and true passion to be a Soldier,”

said Sgt. 1st Class Donald Register, Williams’ platoon sergeant.

“Just the other day, prior to mission, he told me there’s absolutely nothing else he would rather be doing than serving his country,” Register continued. “He was a true patriot and died leading his soldiers in combat.”

Williams’ company commander, Capt. Matthew Boise, spoke highly of Williams and his determination.

“Several of us will remember how hard Staff Sgt. Williams fought, in his most desperate moment, for his own life and more importantly, for the lives of his Soldiers,” Boise said.

“Staff Sgt. Williams clearly loved his profession, and he dedicated himself toward serving his nation for a lifetime,” Boise added. “In too short a period of time, he gave more than just his nation a lifetime worth of service.”

The service and sacrifice of Williams was also mentioned by Cizik who, once again, quoted a Soldier from the company.

“(People back in the United States) rest easy due to the sacrifices that brave men make to keep (U.S. citizens and their families) safe.” Cizik said. “So on Monday, this past Monday, one of those





Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment platoon mourn the loss of their fallen comrade, Staff Sgt. Wesley Williams after the memorial ceremony Dec. 15, here. Williams, a squad leader with 1st Bn., 38th Inf. Regt., 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division (Combined Task Force 4-2), was killed Dec. 10 during combat operations in the Panjwa'i District. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Office)

brave men gave his all just to take those out that wanted to hurt us. He put his life on the line just to make sure his Soldiers made it back safely.”

Cizik continued with a quote from a Soldier who spoke about what most perceived to be the most important thing in Williams’ life: his family.

“For the family he leaves behind I say this: your husband and father never stopped fighting and he never quit on us. He wanted us to all return safely and more than

anything he wanted to return to his loving family,” Cizik read.

Sundem ended his speech with a bittersweet appreciation to Williams’ family.

“Krista, Faith, and all of Will’s family, know that you are forever part of this family, the “Rock” family,” Sundem said. “We want to humbly thank you for sharing your Superman with us.”

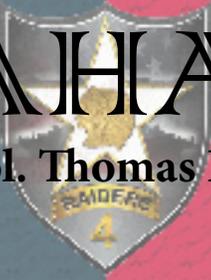
His awards include the Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Achievement Medal with 4 oak leaf clus-

ters, Army Good Conduct Medal with one knot, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, Iraq Campaign Medal with two Bronze Service Stars, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Noncommissioned Officers Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon with two bronze stars, Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge, and the Parachutist Badge.

Williams is survived by his wife.

TOMAHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Thomas Feltey



Greetings Tomahawk families and friends!

With the holiday season here, I just wanted to write an update for you about how our task force is doing so far. We have grown significantly with the addition of our Albanian Special Forces partners, and six Security Force Assistance Teams from the Texas National Guard. From the start we have hit the ground running, and it has been a busy time, but our results speak for themselves. We have worked hard from the start advising and supporting the Afghan National Security Forces, and every day they have been getting closer to taking the lead in independent operations, taking responsibility for creating and maintaining a secure Afghanistan. In several recent operations, Afghan National Security Forces have formed the main effort and performed extremely well. Even in the short time we have been here, we can see we are making a difference. Nevertheless, we can recognize that Afghan National Security Forces will benefit greatly

from working alongside the Tomahawk Battalion through the rest of our deployment. Once our mission is complete, I am confident they will be operating at a significantly increased level of proficiency. We can clearly see that our mission is as important as ever to success here.

One of the most important contributing factors to our success is the strong support base back at home.



While we are working hard here, our Family Readiness Group, volunteers and Tomahawk Ready Re-

serve are also working hard on the home front. In the coming holiday season, their work and continued support will be as important as ever. The Holiday season in particular can be one of the hardest times for a family with a deployed soldier. Just as the battle buddy system is an integral part of achieving success on the battlefield, it is just as integral in maintaining morale the home front. Former Chief of Staff of the Army General George C. Marshall once said "It is not enough to fight. It is the spirit which we bring to the fight that decides the issue. It is morale that wins the victory." Nothing keeps a soldier's morale higher than to see their family safe and secure, and to see how much support we have from home. We will continue to do our best to keep you informed through the Family Readiness Group, through our Newsletter and through our Facebook page.

With our efforts here and with strong support from home, I have no doubt that when our deployment is complete, we will leave Afghanistan knowing that we have achieved our mission.

Tomahawks Win!!

Tomahawk 6 and 7





CTF 4-2 holds memorial for fallen Sapper



Story by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ZANGABAD, Afghanistan – Soldiers of 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division held a memorial ceremony in memory of Staff Sgt. Rayvon Battle, Jr., Nov. 18, here.

Battle died Nov. 13, in a noncombat related incident here.

He was born in Rocky Mount, N.C. and joined the Army in June 2005.

After completing basic combat

training and advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., Battle arrived at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. in 2005 where he served as a gunner with 1st Special Forces Group.

Four years later, he was assigned to 38th Engineer Company, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. He deployed with the unit to Iraq from 2009-2010, where he met Sgt. George Fuller.

The two bonded over their similar childhoods and even had a special handshake when they greeted each other, said Fuller in his memo-

rial speech in front of many of his fellow Sappers and distinguished guests including the Regional Command-South commander and command sergeant major.

Fuller would go over to Battle's house and hang out with him and Battle's family. Their close friendship triggered a promise between the two during their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan.

"We always promised each other that if something were to happen to one of us, that the other would look after the girls," Fuller said.

“Don't worry Battle, 38th Engineers are going to because we know you'll be with us in every mission”





Sgt. George Fuller, a combat engineer with 38th Engineer Company, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division speaks during a memorial ceremony in memory of Staff Sgt. Rayvon Battle, Jr., Nov. 18 at FOB Zangabad, Afghanistan.

“We always said we’d be okay, but just to reassure ourselves, we made that promise. I’m going to keep that promise.”

Lt. Col. Thomas Feltey, the battalion commander of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, the unit to which 38th Eng. Co. is attached, spoke of how highly praised Battle was in the unit.

“Staff Sgt. Battle has served the Sappers as a team leader and a squad leader,” Feltey said. “He was one of the company’s go-to (noncommissioned officers) because of his vast experience and stellar leadership.”

“Staff Sgt. Battle was a true professional that young Sappers trustingly followed and looked up to,” Feltey continued.

Sappers and other attendees paid their last respects to Battle at the end of the ceremony.

“Don’t worry Battle, 38th Engineers are going to hold it down, 2nd platoon’s going to finish strong because we know you’ll be with us in every mission in spirit,” said Fuller. “More importantly, I’m going to praise your name and make sure everyone remembers you.”

Battle’s awards include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster, National Defense Service Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal with three campaign stars, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, the Combat Action Badge, and the Parachutist’s Badge.

Battle is survived by his wife, his parents and his sister.

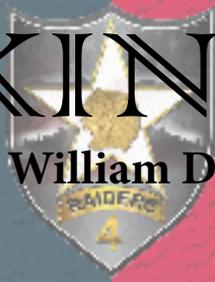
**hold it down, 2nd platoon’s going to finish strong
on in spirit.”**

**- Sgt. George Fuller
38th Eng. Co.**



VIKING (6)

Lt. Col. William Downing



Dear Viking Family and Friends,

Our time here in Afghanistan is moving right along. By the time many of you read this, we will have had Vikings deployed for just over a month. All of your Soldiers have made it safely to their different bases, and we're adjusting well to our new environment. Soldiers are receiving mail, and I encourage you keep the mail coming; it really brightens our day and keeps our "anger levels" high.

On 01 December 2012, we executed our Transfer of Authority (TOA) ceremony with Task Force 1-64 Armor "Desert Rouges," and officially assumed responsibility for operations here in Kandahar, Afghanistan. (A few pictures from that ceremony accompany this article, and you can see other pictures on the battalion's Facebook page.) It was truly a pleasure conducting our relief-in-place with Task Force Rogue. Their efforts have significantly contributed to the success that we have experienced, to date. We wish the Rogues all the best as they embark

upon their reintegration with friends, family, and loved ones back at Fort Stewart, GA.

Our strength over the next nine months will come from the foundations this Task Force was built on – a team approach to every challenge encountered with the understanding that it will take every player, every play to accomplish our mission. We remain highly motivated and optimistic about our role as advisers, trainers, and partners to Afghan security forces. Bridging the cultural divide that separates us from the Afghans has its challenges, but we have already witnessed evidence of common understanding and a mutual desire to work together. The Viking team wholeheartedly embraces its mission and understands that its efforts are part of a larger plan to facilitate stability in Afghanistan and, ultimately, enable all forces to return to their homes.

Please, follow us on Facebook, as we will be posting a "Weekly Dose of Anger" each Sunday. You'll be able to see your Soldiers in action doing what they

have trained and prepared themselves to do. Thank you for your continued support; you are constantly in our thoughts.



Stay Angry





A QUILT TO SPAN THE YEARS OF WAR



“I had this idea that the quilt had a much higher calling than to lie in a box.”

- Keith May
VFW member

Story by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – Military traditions are often time-honored events that represent a part of military history. One civilian started a subtler tradition nearly two years ago when he mailed a hand-stitched quilt made by members of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4884 from the small town of Spiro, Okla., to Afghanistan.

“I had this idea that the quilt had a much higher calling than to lie in a box,” said Keith May, the original owner of the quilt, via email.

May, who spent nearly 30 years as a sheriff in the Seattle area, won the quilt in a raffle for the Post and decided that instead of letting it collect dust in his home, the quilt could be a source of comfort and warmth for service members in war zones.

The 5-feet by 6-feet, blue blanket adorned with stars and American flags arrived in Afghanistan in the mail just before Christmas 2010 for Sgt. Maj. Aldo Galeana, who became the quilt’s first of many deployed owners.

Galeana cared for the quilt until the end of his deployment when he left the quilt in the hands of a sailor. Before leaving Afghanistan,

the sailor passed it off to a soldier who mailed the quilt to another soldier in Afghanistan around January 2012, said May.

That soldier gave the quilt to Sgt. 1st Class Enicka Williams, the assistant operations non-commissioned officer for 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.

For Williams, the quilt was an important aspect of her first deployment.

“It was an honor for me to care for it for the year because too often we may think that a lot of people back in the States don’t care about us or they don’t understand what we’re going through, but this says yes, we care,” the Bronx, N.Y., native explained.

She physically continued the tradition and handed off the quilt to Spc. Niomi Wright, a human resource specialist with 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division “Raiders,” here, Nov. 8.

“I feel in passing her the blanket we’re ... carrying on kind of like a hope,” said Williams. “It didn’t stop with me; it’s continuing with (Wright).”

To Williams, the blanket was a representation of support, she said.

“Until we all come home, (May) just wants the blanket to stay here,” Williams said. “It’s something to

keep us warm (and) to remind us that there are people back home that care about us and believe in what we’re doing.”

Wright said she felt the same.

“I just like the fact that somebody out there that I’ve never met ... cares enough about us to build a tradition like this and let us know that even though they don’t know us that they’re supporting us,” she explained.

May’s hope is that he will be able to fly the last soldier to own the quilt in the last unit in Afghanistan to his town to bring the quilt back home and complete the circle, he said.

“The quilt will be home at last and my file will be there to speak of its travels and to bear witness to each and every person who has been its guardian, and to all of the men and women who have served with them,” said May. “My heart has been thrilled and also deeply saddened by the personal accounts that have been written to me.”

Once 4th SBCT, 2nd Infantry Division prepares to leave, Wright plans to carry on the tradition and pass the quilt on to the next unit.

Until then she said she will take care of the quilt as the brigade partners with Afghan National Security Forces to provide security and promote a safer Afghanistan.



BLACKHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Charles Lombardo



Blackhawk Family,

On behalf of the Task Force 2-1 CAV Blackhawk command team I would like to extend my warmest holiday greetings to the families of our deployed Troopers. I appreciate and am in awe of the performance, and attitude of our Blackhawk Troopers during our preparation for Operation Enduring Freedom throughout the past 2 years. Your Troopers are working hard to strengthen the Government of Afghanistan to take the lead in order to prepare for our eventual transition out of Afghanistan. I am continually impressed by the courage and professionalism of the Troopers I serve with. Despite this being the first deployment for many in the Squadron, they have demonstrated the same foresight and dedication to duty as our experienced combat veterans.

As we settle into our new homes for are with our family and friends back from your loved ones can be a difficult for those of you who have endured deployments, missed birthdays, and mas morning without your loved for your perseverance and ability your shoulders. Your support on the strength and confidence they need

Just like adversity forges strong-deployed Troopers, so too does a same concerns and issues. The Family-connect with others in the Black-your concerns and come together to the FRG volunteers' hard work and portunities to connect with other family members and provide support to your deployed Trooper. Stay tuned to our Squadron Facebook page for events in the local area.

Thank you for your support and dedication, your encouragement and your sacrifices in support of our great nation. It is through you that we remain the most powerful Army in the world. I hope you and your family enjoy a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Blackhawks!



the next nine months our thoughts home. Spending the holidays away difficult time. This is especially true through the stresses of multiple the opening of presents on Christmas. I can only express my gratitude to carry the weight of the family on home front gives your Troopers the to see our mission through.

nger bonds and friendships amongst connection to those who share your ily Readiness Group allows you to hawk family in order to express answer common questions. Through dedication, there are immense op-

Charles T. Lombardo
LTC, AR
Blackhawk 6





New district police chief takes strides for self-sustaining future

Story by Spc. Tyler Meister

117th MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan - The newly appointed district chief of police, Col. Abdul Quayum, met with his International Security Assistance Forces police assets here for the first time to discuss current issues and strengthen their relationship at the District Police Center Dec. 3.

The purpose of this meeting, or key leader engagement, was to assess the new police chief's management of his organization and develop ideas for a more self-reliant Afghan police force. This KLE was also the first time all partnered police assets, including representatives from the offices of law enforcement professionals, rule of law field forces and police mentors, attended one meeting simultane-

ously.

Security Forces Assistance Team 20, comprised of soldiers from the Texas National Guard, organized the event to bring the partnered entities together and showed the Afghan Uniformed Police the numerous resources available in the district. SFAT 20 recently arrived in the district and its officials said they have seen an improvement in the AUP after Quayum took over in August following an insider attack.

"Having all of our assets present was important because it showed Quayum what he has available," said Maj. Bryan Carrico, the SFAT 20 commander currently deployed with 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team. "We wanted to emphasize our presence and that we are here and available to help the Afghan Uniform Police."

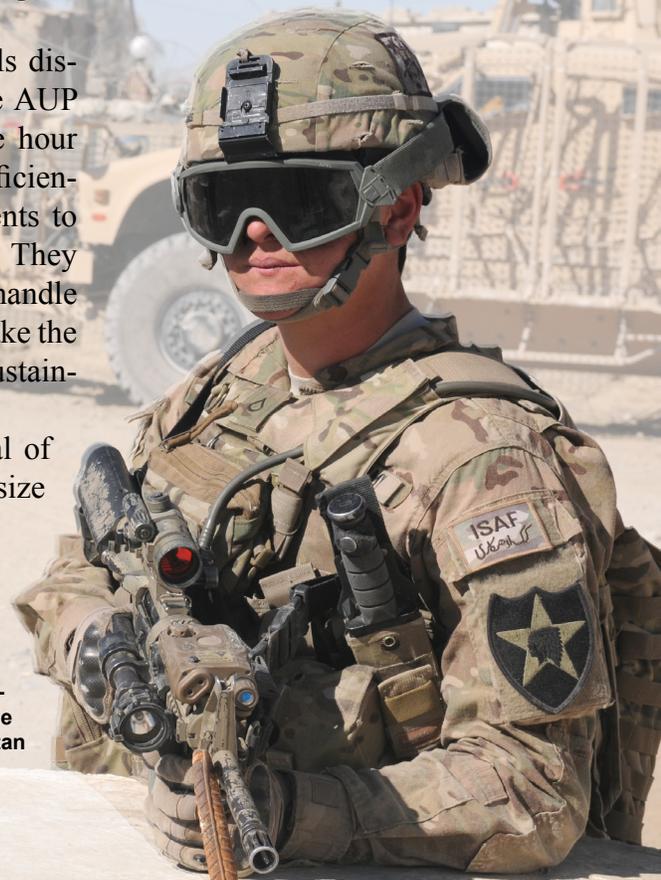
Quayum and other officials discussed the current issues the AUP were facing during the three hour meeting, including fuel deficiencies and needed improvements to compound infrastructure. They also proposed initiatives to handle current issues and ways to make the district's police more self-sustaining for the future.

Carrico said the main goal of the KLE was to re-emphasize

the need for Afghan police forces to develop self-sufficient processes and improve their utilization of the Afghan government's system for aid.

"We are here to help walk them through the door of success, but ultimately we are here to instill their need to achieve future success independently," Carrico said. "By the end of our time with the AUP, I hope to be passive at future meetings and simply listen to the Afghan leaders discuss issues with little ISAF input."

Quayum said he maintains excellent communication with his men at all eight of the checkpoints within his district and he remains confident the force will continue to improve and succeed in the future.



Pfc. Roberto Solares, a rifleman with 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, scans his sector during a key leader engagement at the Spin Boldak District Police Center on Dec. 3. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the new police chief's management of his force and help develop ideas for a more self-reliant Afghan police force. Solares' brigade, Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division), is currently deployed to Southern Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



Albanians celebrate 100 years of independence

Story by 1st Lt. Veronica Aguila
117th MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan – A night of manning defense and fighting positions into the early morning didn't stop Albanian and American soldiers at Forward Operating Base Spin Boldak from recognizing Albania's 100th year of independence in a celebration held here, Nov. 28, 2012.

The event, hosted by soldiers with Contingent Eagle V of the Albanian Special Operations Force, brought together international service members and civilians from across Regional Command (South). Colors of black and red were displayed throughout the venue with Albania's flag taking center stage.

"The red color of the flag symbolizes the bloodshed throughout our history of fierce wars. The black color symbolizes the mourning of mothers, daughters and sisters of fallen heroes in the field of battle and defense of our freedom. The eagle represents freedom and our ancient origins," said Albanian Lt. Col. Ekland Dauti, the commander of Eagle V.

During the ceremony, Dauti spoke of Albania's history, long struggle for independence, and fight against injustice. Albania won its freedom from the Ottoman Empire after 500

years of rule. Dauti remarked on the events of 1919 when U.S. President Woodrow Wilson dismissed a plan to divide Albania which helped confirm its territorial integrity.

Guest speakers included Australian army Brig. Gen. Mark Brewer, Regional Command (South) deputy commanding general for force development, and U.S. Army Lt. Col. Thomas Feltey, commander of the 2nd Infantry Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. Both commended the Albanians on their achievements and contributions to the war in Afghanistan.

"I am convinced this day has brought together all Albanians," Dauti said. "I would like to greet all Albanians on this day of our national history, wherever they are, in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Monte-

negro, Europe, America, and around the world to wish them a happy independence day."

Following those words, Albanian civilians and service members gathered to perform a traditional dance and sing songs from their country. The dancers, dressed patriotically, made a ring of red and black and invited their coalition counterparts to join hands in dance, song and celebration.

However, the celebration was not complete without sending their loved ones and home country a very special message. The Eagle V soldiers sang one of their traditional songs via a live video feed to an Albanian news affiliate. Dauti thanked deployed soldier's families for their sacrifice, and finished with the message of "may God bless Albania."



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Thomas Feltey (starting 4th from left), commander of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, Albanian Lt. Col. Ekland Dauti, commander of Contingent Eagle V of the Albanian Special Operations Force Army and U.S. Army Col. Michael Getchell, commander of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, cut a cake with members of Eagle V during a celebration in recognition of Albania's 100th year of independence at Forward Operating Base Spin Boldak, Afghanistan, Nov. 28, 2012.



FORGE 6

Lt. Col. Scot Doboszenski



Greetings to Forge Families,

On behalf of all the Soldiers of Forge Battalion, both deployed to Afghanistan and our Ready Reserve Soldiers at JBLM, CSM Fourtunia and I want to wish you a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. CSM and I are honored to have the opportunity to serve with your loved one while we provide support to our Brigade in assisting and advising the Afghanistan Security Forces.

We want to thank the families for the support that you have provided and continue to provide. The



Forge Battalion trained for our mission during two Yakima rotations in Washington and at the National Training Center in California. The challenging training prepared the Forge Battalion for this deployment evident by the demonstrated professionalism and standard of excellence they have maintained. Our nation called and the Forge Soldiers are answering the call supporting our Army brothers and sisters in the Dragoon Brigade.

While the Soldiers of Forge Battalion face challenges and hardships here in Afghanistan we know you face adversities as demanding. Your support and the sacrifices you have made and continue to make allow us to focus on the mission. Just as you are our support network, you have a support network as well. Please take advantage of the services provided by the family readiness group and other support organizations on JBLM. Do not hesitate to ask for assistance. If you have any questions or concerns please contact your Soldier's chain of command on JBLM or the family readiness group. They will make sure that you are taken care of.

Forge Soldiers have been hard at work since our first boots hit the ground in October. They have an enormous responsibility providing the logistical support our Brigade requires to accomplish their mission. Alpha Company is moving supplies by ground and air utilizing all resources available. Bravo Company is keeping our equipment in excellent condition and recovering those pieces that fail to meet the standard. Charlie Company is keeping the Soldiers healthy providing health care across the Brigade. Headquarters Company is providing field feeding throughout the area of operation, and mission command of all sustainment operations.

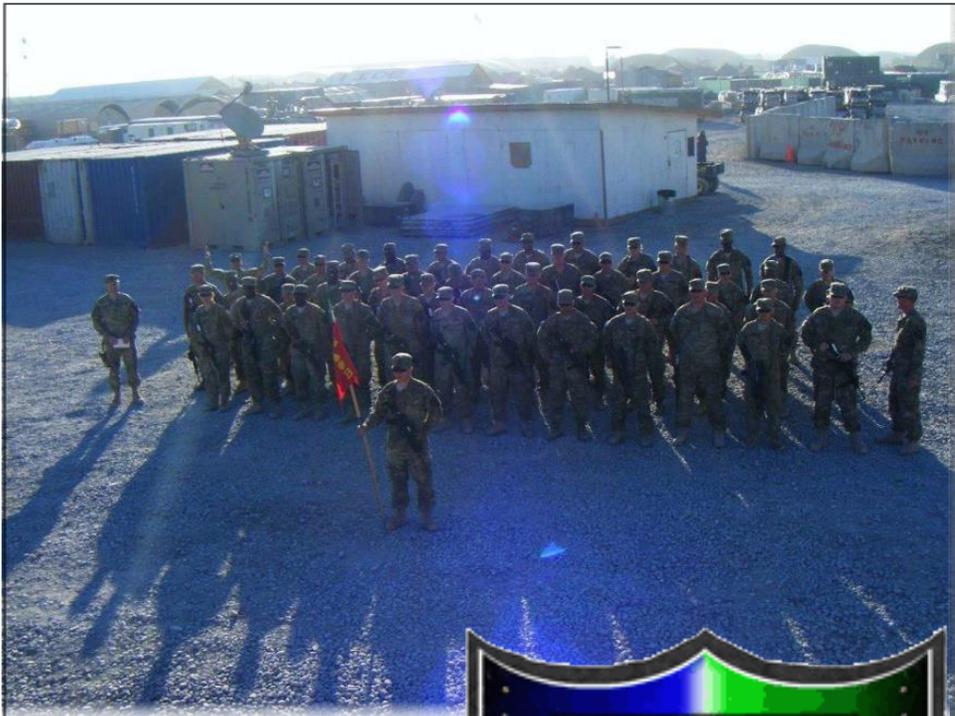
While we are far away from our family and friends, know that you are always in our thoughts and prayers as we know we are in yours. Once again, CSM and I want to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

With much respect and gratitude,

LTC Scot Doboszenski
Forge Battalion Commander

CSM Anthony Fourtunia
Forge Command Sergeant Major





USO tour comes to Masum Ghar

Story and photos by
Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – Two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters landed on a small FOB in Southern Afghanistan, kicking up dust and causing a buzz from those on the ground.

Word around the base was that they were going to have some very special visitors, and not of the general officer type.

Celebrities with the United Service Organizations (USO) tour visited Soldiers of Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) Dec. 16, here.

Soldiers brought various items to be signed by the athletes and entertainers.

One Soldier, Spc. Shawn Kanyer, a satellite communication systems operator maintainer with 472nd Signal Company, had a hockey stick that he brought with him to Afghanistan signed by Matt Hendricks of the National Hockey League team the Washington Capitals.

“It’s nice to see really anybody from the team, so it’s really nice that he came all the way out here to Afghanistan,” said Kayner, a Tampa Bay, Fla., native.

“It helps keep the morale up,” Kanyer added. “There’s not a ton (of recreational activities) to do out here to keep us busy and whatnot, so any kind of event like this (to) remind us of how it is back home (is) real nice.”



Country singer Kellie Pickler signs a guitar for Spc. David Saenz, a civil affairs specialist with 426th Civil Affairs Battalion based out of California during a United Service Organizations (USO) tour Dec. 16, here. Celebrities on the tour visited Soldiers with Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division).

Spc. David Saenz, a civil affairs specialist with 426th Civil Affairs Battalion based out of California, asked country singer Kellie Pickler to sign his guitar.

“I know Kellie Pickler from watching American Idol with my mom back home,” said Saenz. “So, I was really psyched that I got the opportunity to see her out here.”

The visit was more than just a highlight for the deployed Soldiers; it was an eye-opening experience for the celebrities, including Major League Baseball team Washington Nationals pitcher, Ross Detwiler.

“These are the Soldiers that have it the worst really because they’re kind of in the battle zone at all times,” said Detwiler. “So, for us to be able to come out and thank them, it’s a real honor because they’re the ones that keep us free at home.”

In order to visit the troops overseas, Detwiler had to cut his own honeymoon short.

“My wife wasn’t mad,” said De-

twiler. “We wouldn’t have been getting married to each other ... we wouldn’t have had a honeymoon without the troops.”

Conflicting schedules is often what stops a lot of celebrities from participating in USO tours, said Sloan Gibson, the president chief executive officer of the USO.

One of the most important things for the people who are able to make it on the tour is to get out to some of the smaller bases because those Soldiers don’t get a lot of visitors, he explained.

“It’s a real treat, especially this time of year, to come out here and remind everybody that we’re thinking about them and that we appreciate what they do for us every single day,” Gibson said.

After visiting for nearly an hour, the tour ended and the celebrities left the small FOB with a better idea of how deployed service members live and the Soldiers of CTF 4-2 went about their daily lives with the knowledge that they are not alone.



Chaplain's Corner

Chap. (Maj.) Jim Combs

The nights in Afghanistan can be so dark that it takes faith just to take your next step! But if you are willing to stand still, to stand in faith, your reward will come when your eyes gain focus on the beauty and brilliance of the stars scattered across the black sky. And whereas the darkness is a reminder that we can find ourselves lost in life and without hope, the stars are just as much a reminder of God's encompassing presence leading us to hope, to the Light of the World.

Many years ago, on a cold dark night, a young couple was far away from home and in need of a place of refuge and hope. She was carrying their first child and had entered the pangs of labor. Without a place for his young wife to deliver their child, the desperate husband laid her in a stable upon the straw reserved for cattle. There she delivered the child and placed him in a manger. They named him Jesus and "in him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the



darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4, 5).

Wise men who sought after the child, were to follow a special star placed in the night sky by the hand of God. Their faith and determination in following this brilliant herald of the night was to be rewarded when they found the child and worshipped him with great joy.

This Christmas, the sacrifice of the brave has once again drawn them away from the ones they love. As we feel the pain of separation, know that it is a common experience to at times find oneself in a dark, lonely place. But always remember that there is an eternal light that leads to hope. Whether you find yourself

this Christmas in the security and warmth of your home or in a foreign land in the defense of loved ones, know that the Light of the World is here for all who seek. Step out in faith into the dark night. Search for diamonds in the sky and pray for loved ones who do the same oceans away. And may we all find hope together this Christmas in the eternal knowledge that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Merry Christmas from FOB Masum Ghar, Afghanistan!

(Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version NIV. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.)



OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM 2012-2013

IN LOVING MEMORY



*Staff Sgt. Rayvon Battle, Jr.
Nov. 13, 2012
38th Eng. Co.*



*Staff Sgt. Wesley Williams
Dec. 10, 2012
B Co., 1-38 IN*