

DRAGOON Magazine

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CTF 4-2

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For more on the brigade please visit:



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On the cover:



**Hands In
FARAH DISTRICT, Afghanistan**
U.S. Navy photo by Lt. j.g. Matthew Stroup

Soldiers, sailors and civilian team members for Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Farah, rally before departing FOB Farah for a graduation ceremony in Farah City, Feb. 17. PRT Farah attended the graduation ceremony for a two-week photojournalism course for Farahi journalists to recognize the achievements of the graduates and to further develop relationships built during the program. PRT Farah's mission is to train, advise, and assist Afghan government leaders at the municipal, district, and provincial levels in Farah province Afghanistan. Their civil military team is comprised of members of the U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).



DRAGOON (6)

Col. Michael Getchell



Greetings to all 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team Soldiers, Family Members, and friends of the Raider Team of Teams.

This month's report brings with it some encouraging news from the front, and represents a key milestone for all to be in good spirits about: we are over 1/3 of the way through our scheduled deployment! I am proud to report that Raiders are performing magnificently across southern and western Afghanistan. Their strength and resolve is evident, and it's very recognizable that it's due in no small part to the love, support, and prayers you send every day.

While most struggle with what "winning this war" truly means, I can offer you some of the perspective we've had the opportunity to view recently. As the winter season lifts from this area of Afghanistan, it is becoming clearly evident that with the blossoming of spring comes a new sentiment towards the enemies of this nation. Afghan citizens, as well as their security forces, are readily exhibiting discontent over the abuses suffered at the hands of insurgents and are finally ready to hold the enemy accountable. While tenuous and growing, this Afghan-led movement is largely enabled through the diligent and committed service of the Dragoon Raiders, regardless of where they are serving in Afghanistan. Building upon the success of the Arrowhead Brigade (3-2 SBCT) and others, Raiders and

our Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) partners have cleared insurgents from strongholds across Panjwai while retaining security in Dand, Daman, Takt-e-Pol, and Spin Boldak districts. Our cavalrymen of the Blackhawk Squadron are shouldering the same heavy load in the Zabul Province, and Beast Battery of 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment protects our west flank in their operations in Farah province. For the first time in many years, Afghan flags are flying across our area of operations and stand as a solid indicator that perhaps the Taliban may not continue to find a comfortable home in this region for much longer.

Given these events, we Raiders are approaching a critical point in the path leading to mission success. As Afghan National Security Forces continue their movement to independence, we are beginning to understand that our current personnel requirements here in Afghanistan will probably diminish. By sending some selected Raiders and units home earlier than scheduled, we actually contribute to increasing Afghan responsibility. We will do this while still reinforcing them through sound advising and the contribution of resources for their continued tactical success. Redeploying some Raiders early places increasing lev-



els of responsibility into the hands of the Afghans, and they are ready and willing to receive it! Most of our teammates will complete a nine month deployment. Those that do in fact depart early still have the critical mission of receiving the remainder of the BCT, and setting the conditions for the Raiders to make a rapid return to readiness following this tour.

Now the million dollar question that is on all your minds: "When will my loved one return home?" The answer to this question - is simply, "When the security conditions permit departure without jeopardizing the mission, or the safety of U.S. or Afghan Soldiers and citizens." As we drive forward I ask you to remain patient, and to keep in contact with Raider Ready Reserve at Joint

See Raider 6 pg. 5...



DRAGON 7

Command Sgt. Maj. Oscar Vinson



Family and friends of the Raider Brigade,

Another month has passed and we are officially moving into the spring season. It is with determination and dedication that we start this season ready to accomplish our missions and begin preparations for moving equipment across our area of operations.

By now you have probably heard from your Soldiers that we are beginning the retrograde process and transferring some of the Combat Out Posts and Check Points in our area of operations to our Afghan National Security Force partners. These next few months come with some hurdles we must overcome, but your Soldiers are pushing through and making progress.

We have more work to do, more roads to clear and more training to conduct for the Soldiers and police of Afghanistan. It falls upon them

to secure their country when U.S. Forces are gone, but first it falls upon us to help them be the most trained and prepared they can be. It's a huge responsibility but a rewarding one and the Soldiers of the Raider Brigade are doing a tremendous job.

The Task Force is excited to start this new phase of our deployment. Dragon 6 and I are seeing improvements and changes made throughout our formations every day. As a result of your Soldiers, their dedication, hard work, and absolute determination we are successful as a team. I am proud of them and the progress that has been made across our brigade.

Keep up the support from home; we're proud to call you our Family. May God bless you and your loved ones. To the Objective-



Dragon 7

...Raider 6 from pg. 4

Base Lewis-McChord. These dedicated leaders will publish information regarding returning elements as soon as the information can be responsibly released. Rest assured, we'll get the details out to ensure that families, friends, and loved ones have an opportunity to be there to greet their returning Raider.

Our Soldiers and teams continue to press forward and represent

themselves honorably in service to our nation, and to this one as well. They have been working hard to make a positive impact on Afghanistan's future and I want to personally thank you for your continued love and support as we navigate through our journey. We cannot continue to do this without your support, encouragement, and strength. To The Objective!

Dragon 6



1/205 Security Force Assistance Team



The 1st Kandak, 205th Afghan National Army Corps Security Force Assistance Team is nearly halfway through its deployment and is going strong. We remain busy, meeting daily with our counterparts and Soldiers remain highly motivated and focused on the mission. We continue to make steady progress as we push the ANA toward independence. Every day we see further signs of progress as we move towards a safe and secure Afghanistan. Afghan Army and Police continue to take responsibility for larger areas of Kandahar Province from United States and Coalition Forces. The individual Soldier skills of our counterparts continue to improve with our training. ANA units also are improving their capabilities with increasingly independent operations.

1/1/205th SFAT, led by Lt. Col. Brad J. Herman, has spent the last month focused on training their partnered Kandak's soldiers in first aid, reconnaissance, and mortars. 2/1/205th SFAT, led by Lt. Col. Garry W. King, has provided Counter-improvised explosive device training for their counterpart

soldiers. The team has also trained soldiers in basic rifle marksmanship and has trained several as forward observers. 3/1/205th SFAT, led by Maj. David Fagergren, remains busy transferring U.S. bases to Afghan National Army and Police Forces. 4/1/205th SFAT, led by Maj. Mike Singleton, has conducted first aid train the trainer classes to enable Afghan Army noncommissioned officers to train their own soldiers without U.S. support. The Engineer Company has also made significant improvements. It has increased its counter IED capabilities as well as demonstrated its ability to plan, resource and execute road improvement missions independently. 5/1/205th SFAT, led by Cpt. Eric Zepeda, continue to train their counterparts in maintenance and supply procedures. With the enthusiasm of the Afghan Army for the training, the advising team has planned a follow-on class for company commanders and coordination with brigade and corps mentor teams, allowing additional levels of leadership to interact with the students during the capstone event.

6/1/205th SFAT, led by Lt. Col. Floyd Sheldon, has established an ANA Light Fighters Course modeled after the U.S. Army's Light Fighters Course. The course culminated in combat operations. Of note, during the training the Non-commissioned Officers often took over the classes and instructed their own soldiers. The 205th Corps MP Company SFAT continues to professionalize its counterparts with prisoner search and medical training.

Despite only being in Afghanistan for several months, we are already seeing the difference that our operations are making. Afghan National Army and Police patrols are entering towns that used to be all but conceded to the Taliban and Afghan civilians themselves are now standing up to the Taliban. As we look forward to our redeployment, we confidently see a positive future.

We continue to celebrate the numerous promotions throughout the SFAT. We will continue to do our best to keep you informed through the Family Readiness Group, and through our Facebook page.

1st Kandak, 205th ANA Corps Security Force Assistance Team

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/4SBCT2IDSFAAT>





Army Chief of Staff meets with CTF 4-2

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – On his recent visit to Afghanistan, Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Raymond Odierno, met with leaders from Combined Task Force 4-2 Feb. 22, here.

Odierno travelled to Afghanistan to view first-hand how the Army is preparing for the reduction of forces in country.

On one of the highest points surrounding the FOB, Odierno received briefs from Capt. Troy Yoho, the future operations officer, and Capt. Ashley Nicolas, the assistant intelligence officer, both with CTF 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division).

The hill, named “OP 6,” overlooks the terrain that lies just outside the FOB, and gave the briefers a good vantage point of standard terrain on which operations in the brigade take place.

Yoho briefed operations in the area that the unit completed in their four months of being in Afghanistan.

Nicolas provided the intelligence portion of the operations and intelligence update.

She gave an overview of the ene-

my situation in Panjwa’i in the winter season and explained what the unit can expect over the next couple of months, both in Panjwa’i and the outer areas of CTF 4-2’s area of operations.

“(Odierno’s) at a point where he’s able to make strategic decisions in the Army, and so when he’s informed on the tactical level of what

6 what the terrain looks like and the kind of terrain, the kind of obstacles that soldiers deal with and the complexity of the fight that we’re dealing with in Panjwa’i,” she said.

Odierno awarded four soldiers Purple Heart Medals, one Bronze Star Medal with a V-device, one Combat Infantryman Badge, two Combat Action Badges, reenlisted five Soldiers, and recognized several others.

Following the ceremony, he spoke to the group of CTF 4-2 soldiers.

In his speech, Odierno highlighted the soldiers who reenlisted and said that service members will witness a lot of changes over the next several years in the Army.

“It’s important for us to continue to have those who have

we’re seeing on the ground, we’re able to inform his decisions,” Nicolas said.

Nicolas said she thinks briefs like that give Odierno an appreciation for what CTF 4-2 Soldiers are going through.

“He did the (Purple Heart Medal) presentations for some of the soldiers injured in (improvised explosive device attacks) in grape rows and we’re able to show him from OP

the experience to re-enlist in this great Army of ours,” Odierno said. “We need soldiers that are seasoned soldiers, that are dedicated, and soldiers that are willing to serve in the most difficult situations to help lead us into the future.”

As CTF 4-2 soldiers continue their deployment, they will work with their Afghan National Security Force partners and support them as they lead operations.





Photo by Staff Sgt. Tiffany Monnett/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno, left, administers the oath of enlistment to Soldiers assigned to Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Feb. 22



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tiffany Monnett/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno, left, presents the Purple Heart to Spc. Austin Noriega during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Feb. 22



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tiffany Monnett/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno, left, presents the Bronze Star with "V" Device to Pfc. Brelian Rosenberg during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Feb. 22



Photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno speaks to a group of Soldiers with Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) following an award ceremony Feb. 22 at Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

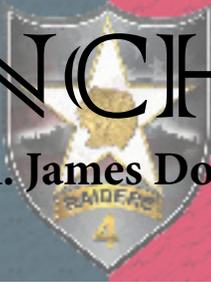
Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno, left, presents the Purple Heart to Spc. Shawn Ravens during a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Feb. 22



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tiffany Monnett/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

MANCHU 6

Lt. Col. James Doohan



The Manchus have made significant progress in the Horn of Panjwa'i since we brought in the New Year from various locations across Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. We continued to serve with honor and demonstrate to both Americans and Afghan citizens alike the true meaning of being a living testimony to honor and respect. We have been fortunate to have already witnessed some of the fruits of our labors through the progressive transition of areas of control to our Afghan partners while maintaining security for Manchus, the Afghan National Security Forces, and Afghan civilians. Every Soldier in our formation has been vital to this successful transition and we remain vigilant in every aspect of our daily lives. As your Task Force Commander (or TF CDR of your Manchus abroad for the family audience back home), I am extremely proud of the manner in which the Manchus have conducted their daily business and the myriad of monumental achievements made possible only through the effective leadership and disciplined Soldiers of this formation.

We wanted to share some of the highlights on behalf of the deployed Manchu since my last update. The Manchu Raider Ready Reserve demonstrated their ability to train and maintain a cohesive platoon and dispatched a platoon to us that was capable of effortlessly assuming the responsibilities and duties of Able Company's SFAAT (Security

Force Advise and Assistance Team) Security Platoon. Moments upon arrival, the leaders and Soldiers quickly assimilated to the combat conditions and assumed their duties. Also, U.S. and Afghan leaders across the region witnessed the results of Able Company's incredible partnership and training abilities through the achievements of their Afghan counterparts. Blow "Torch" Company was the first in the brigade to physical transition aspects of our responsibilities to the Afghans and established an extremely high standard for all to reference. Comanche Company managed to execute their normal security missions while pushing the envelope on cutting edge equipment to increase safety levels for Soldiers and Afghans alike. Havoc Company continued to operate the best operations center in the region (a little bit of bias), with the Scouts executing "odd jobs" (hard missions) for the battalion, mortars developing the Afghan mortar capabilities, medics providing emergency medical care to Afghans in need, RST providing religious support to Manchus dispersed all across our area of operation, and our Liger platoon adding thousands of miles on their odometers to support our Manchus. Members of our Female Engagement Teams (FET) provided invaluable support for an Afghan led medical mission for local villagers. Dawg Soldiers continued to manage connectivity for the entire brigade

across hundreds upon hundreds of miles. Our SFAAT "Peacemakers" rapidly improved the capabilities our kandak (battalion) partners in all things mortar, maintenance, and medical...a significant step forward towards Afghan independence as ANA Soldiers complete their training and stand ready to protect their country.

Thank you for your overwhelming support over the past three plus months and for the overflow of cards and candy so we could enjoy the Valentine's Day tradition from Afghanistan. We continue to encourage the Manchus to maintain close contact with their loved ones through electronic, telephonic, and even traditional "snail mail" mediums to keep everyone informed (of course, while maintaining operational security (OPSEC) and without starting or promoting any rumors). Continue to look to each company, battalion, and brigade's Facebook page for the next batch of photos and we promise to do our best to capture our Manchus at their best!

Please continue to keep our Manchus who were redeployed for various reasons and keep the prayers going for all of our servicemen and women in uniform.

Keep Up The Support, Keep Up The Prayers,

KEEP UP THE FIRE!





TEDD handler, dog go on first mission

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ZANGABAD, Afghanistan – After hours of climbing over the rugged grape rows of Afghanistan in search of a weapons cache, Pfc. Franklin Sena and his platoon heard the familiar sound of small-arms fire coming at them.

Since Sena could not positively identify the shooter to return fire, he got down and demanded his battle buddy lie low as well.

That is when Livee, his Tactical Explosives Detection Dog obediently listened and got down next to her handler.

Sena and Livee went on their first mission as a deployed team Feb. 7, in Shubazai, Afghanistan.

Soldiers in the TEDD program arrived almost two months after the brigade was already in country and had to stay on Kandahar

Airfield to acclimate their dogs, said Sgt. 1st Class Adrian Copeland, a Provost Marshal Office noncommissioned officer and the TEDD program noncommissioned officer in charge for Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division).

“Because we came in a little late in the game...I believe maybe that

the units are just trying to figure out how to work (the TEDD teams) in,” he explained.

“I just hope they get the chance to go out and do something and maybe find an (improvised explosive device) or two,” said Copeland. “I think that’ll make their deployment.”

During Sena’s first deployment, his role is not only as an infantryman, but also a TEDD handler for his company, Company C, 4th Bat-

The training was not all fun and games for Sena.

There were a lot of challenges during the training because it is not like any other class like a Minehound or Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment (HIIDE) or any other military class where it is a piece of machinery, Sena said.

“You can’t push a button to turn it on and then it works,” he said. “It takes a lot of time and practice and dedication to be able to work a dog,

just because it has a mind of its own.”

Some things that he did not see the purpose of during TEDD training began making sense on their first patrol.

“I wasn’t expecting her to be able to walk along the narrow tops of the grape rows especially when the branches of the ... grape (vines) were in the way,” Sena explained.

Livee pushed right through them, which Sena credits to training the two did before deployment.

During training, Sena would have Livee jump over the net at a tennis court to increase her jumping abilities, he said.

“She pretty much proved me wrong like all day,” he said. “I was pretty impressed.”



Photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Pfc. Franklin Sena, an infantryman and Tactical Explosives Detection Dog handler with Company C, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division), and his dog Livee, work together during their first mission as a team during a dismounted patrol Feb. 7, in Shubazai, Afghanistan. Sena received nine weeks of training to be a TEDD handler and is currently deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

talion, 9th Infantry Regiment.

Livee’s job is to sniff out explosives and Sena is there to tell the rest of his company what she finds.

At the nine-week training he attended, he learned how to read things about Livee to include when she is tired, hot or has found something that could threaten the lives of the people around her, he said.

Though she handled the grape rows well, there was one thing Sena couldn't really control, he said.

When soldiers go on dismounted patrols, they clear a footpath with a Mine Hound, which detects the presence of IEDs buried underneath the ground.

Once the footpath is cleared, the left and right limits of the path are marked with spray paint. Soldiers call this the "Path of Life." No one is to step outside those lines for any reason.

However, sometimes Livee would momentarily step outside the lines, which didn't worry Sena too much, he said, because he knew that if there was something dangerous beneath the ground, Livee would have detected it.

Another aspect of training that Sena grew appreciation for during the first mission was when he and other TEDD handlers had to carry

the dogs around and help them over walls and obstacles while still providing security for an element.

"Now that I'm out here and I see the terrain and what we had to go through today on my first mission, a lot of the training was really, really helpful," Sena said. "It was like one of those 'method to your madness' kind of things."

Sena said being a TEDD handler is like having a kid on the deployment, something Copeland said he agrees with.

"The closest thing to having a child is probably having a pet, like a dog," said Copeland.

It is a big responsibility and for some of the people, especially a lot of the soldiers that are in the TEDD program, because they are junior-enlisted Soldiers, he said.

"They're not used to having any kind of real responsibility because their only real responsibility in the

Army up until now is taking care of themselves, but now they have the dog," he said.

Copeland said, to him, it's more of a benefit than an inconvenience for the soldiers because it gives them an opportunity to have some kind of responsibility early on in their careers.

Caring for Livee includes feeding and watering her, so Sena carries double the load when going out on mission because he has to be able to sustain himself and his TEDD.

The responsibility that comes with being a handler has positive outcomes, he said.

"I think it develops some pretty good leadership skills in a way," Sena explained.

"I'm just glad that I got picked for this because it's really a big part of my life," he said. "I don't know what I'm going to do when I have to give her back."

Afghan Police receive trainer's certifications



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann/ 102nd MPAD

Story by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann
102nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan – Nearly one dozen Afghan Border and Uniform Police from the district of Spin Boldak completed a Counter-Improvised Explosive Device train-the-trainer course Feb. 19, near Spin Boldak, Afghanistan.

By completing the course the policemen earned a trainer's certificate that enables them to teach what they have learned to their units.

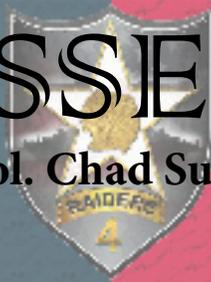
The training taught the ABP and AUP the tactics, techniques and procedures used by the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan to counter the improvised explosive device threat and can help save Afghan soldiers' lives,

See C-IED pg. 25...



ROSSIER (6)

Lt. Col. Chad Sundem



To all the Rock Family and Friends,

Another solid month for your Soldiers as they continue to press forward with undaunted courage, and work diligently to provide enduring solutions to problem sets once thought to be unsolvable.

There isn't a day where a difference isn't made here in Panjwai, and that is a credit to the leaders and Soldiers in this formation who truly put the unit and our mission above self.

We were thankful for the Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Raymond Odierno, to visit and take the time to honor a few of the many heroes that stand in our ranks. Special congratulations for Doc Rosenberg, deservedly awarded the Bronze Star for Valor. An incredible young man, whose superior courage is matched by his humility. Doc is the perfect representation of all his brothers and sisters who proudly make up this family.

We remain grateful for the steadfast and unwavering support of all of you – it allows us to maintain a laser focus here knowing you all stand behind us.

Today, we stand humble and proud as the Rock of the Marne.

Tomorrow, Let 'Em Come!

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bartlett and Lt. Col. Chad Sundem



Rosser leadership receiving a briefing from the B Company Commander about the way ahead for the road being built. This road, just over 3 miles long, provides opportunities for security and governance to follow into areas once considered untouchable.





Operation Winter Road opens new pathway for Afghans, coalition forces

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – After more than a month of hard work, soldiers from Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) and the 229th Engineer Company of the Wisconsin Army National Guard completed a road project, Feb. 13, in the Panjwa'i district of Afghanistan.

Each of the units involved provided a critical piece to the road building.

Company B, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, provided two platoons and borrowed a battalion mortar platoon to secure the area around the sites being constructed.



Photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

A Soldier with 229th Engineer Company of the Wisconsin Army National Guard ground guides a 10-ton truck full of gravel backwards during road construction Jan. 30 in Panjwa'i District of Afghanistan. The engineers worked with Soldiers of Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) to complete the 4-mile-long road.

Two Afghan National Army platoons also patrolled the road and

helped secure the area.

The combat engineers of the 38th Engineer Company used Mine Clearing Line Charges to clear any obstructions from the projected road path and get rid of any improvised explosive devices that might have been buried along the old path.

Sgt. 1st Class Hayden Eckelberg, the platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon, 229th Eng. Co., and fellow horizontal engineers of 229th Eng. Co. built the



Photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, clear a path from their over watch position to a road being built, Jan. 30, in Panjwa'i District of Afghanistan.



road.

They used bulldozers to clear away any debris from the combat engineers' blasts and leveled the roadway. They would then shape the road and lay a base layer of fill followed by a layer of gravel. Due to small canals that crossed through the road, the horizontal engineers had to emplace culvert systems to create stronger and more stable roadways.

The new four-mile-long road stretches through an area known as the "Horn of Panjwa'i" and gives the local populace a direct route to the district center, said Eckelberg.

Engineers also widened the road for easier access by Afghan locals, Afghan National Security Forces, and coalition forces.

"It was a one season road where maybe a donkey and a cart could've passed," explained Eckelberg, a Tomah, Wisc., native. "Now, we're turning it into a three season road and it's going to be passable here by a Stryker, an 1151 (Humvee) that the ANA rolls with, (and) anything that we've got."

The road serves not only as a means of transportation to nearby marketplaces and government structures, but it also has tactical relevance.

"It's important to both forces because what it does is it gives the ANA a fighting chance once Bayonet Company leaves this (area of operations) ... to get to the enemy faster," said Eckelberg. Eckelberg said working on the project gave him a sense of satisfaction.

"It really gives me great pride to be able to build a road for these guys and make it easier for them to bring the fight to the enemy rather than just (having) to stop because of IEDs and whatnot," he explained.

Capt. Matthew Boise, the company commander of B Company,



Soldiers with 229th Engineer Company of the Wisconsin Army National Guard emplace a culvert system in a canal Jan. 30, in Panjwa'i District of Afghanistan.

Photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

1st Bn., 38th Inf. Regt., said he and his soldiers, who patrol in the area, started seeing affects immediately.

Boise said his soldiers have already patrolled the area both mounted and dismounted, something they could not do before the road existed.

"(We) see a vast difference in the AO just because of the road," said Boise.

The Afghan police created one checkpoint during road construction

and began patrolling road, Boise said.

One week after completing the road, the Afghan police set up another checkpoint, he said.

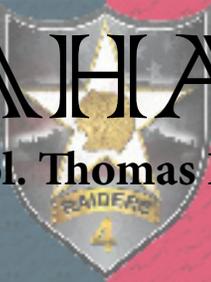
In the end, it took everyone's support to complete the project that will benefit all parties involved.

"It really brought all the forces together to build an amazing road and secure it along the way," Eckelberg said.



TOMAHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Thomas Feltey



Greetings Tomahawk families and friends!

I wanted to go ahead and write you an update on how we are doing in our mission here. Now that Assault Battery from 2nd Bn., 12th FA Regt. has joined our task force and been settled in to Checkpoint 2, combined with our SFAAT teams from the Texas National Guard, we have a sizeable team with which to accomplish our mission. I was also proud to welcome a new detachment from the Albanian Special Operations Forces, Eagle 6, which is taking the place of Eagle 5. They are outstanding warriors, and I am proud to welcome them to our partnership. As far as our mission, things are going extremely well, and we are seeing real progress not only in our partnership with the Afghan National Security Forces and our combined success on the battlefield, but in the positive effect our presence here is having on the local population. Numerous civil projects are being conducted with our assistance, which is going a long way toward improving the quality of life for the people in our area.

We are doubling our efforts to ensure that while we are here, we will leave a lasting and positive effect on our area.

On the homefront, things are also



going well. The Tomahawk Ready Reserve, Family Readiness Group and volunteers, all of whom are instrumental to us achieving mission success here on the battlefield, are

also achieving success in their mission at home. Bridging the gap between families and their deployed family members on Valentine's Day, our battalion had some of the highest participation in the brigade during the "Brigade Sweetheart Run", as part of the Raider Run to Afghanistan. Events like this which tie families together with their deployed family members are extremely important during a deployment, especially during holidays. As I have said before, the buddy system is the key to maintaining morale. We will continue to do our part to keep families tied together through the Family Readiness Group, Monthly Newsletter and our Facebook page.

While we have done well so far both here and at home, our mission is not yet over, and the key now is to keep up our efforts through to the end of our deployment. I feel confident that when that time comes, we will come home to JBLM knowing that through our actions and in accomplishing our mission, we have made a major contribution to the safety and security of Afghanistan.

Tomahawks Win!!

Tomahawk 6 and 7





Small village leader makes big impact

Story by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann
102nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan – The village of Baki Tanna, Spin Boldak District, Afghanistan may look like just another small village. A speckle of buildings made out of earth and bricks with a road of dirt running through the middle.

The villagers gather in small circles and the children play outside, feet and faces covered in a thin dust that the members of Combined Task Force 2-23 refer to as moon dust. It is whipped up by the winds, covers everything and disguises what this village really is.

The soldiers of CTF 2-23 arrived at Baki Tanna Jan. 30 along with the Afghan Uniform Police district

chief, the Afghan Border Police Quick Reaction Force Kandak commander and the district Executive Director to meet with a man who is transforming his village into a model of success.

Haji Razaq, the village elder, is making a big impact by turning a small village into a shining example of how the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is working to better the lives of its citizens from the smallest villages to its bigger cities.

“He has done a lot of great things for his village,” said Army Cpt. Megan E. Piene, the commander of A Company, 81st Civil Affairs Battalion from Ft. Hood Texas, which makes up part of Spin Boldak District Support Team. “The key is that

he has been able to utilize the GI-RoA system to get all these great things.”

Some of the great things Razaq has accomplished are the construction of a 1st through 12th grade school for boys and girls and a medical clinic that never turns anyone away. Soon there will be an all girls’ school and a religious school, or mudrasa, which some parents prefer their children to attend.

“What he has noticed is that a lot of parents have been sending their kids to Pakistan,” said Piene. “Unfortunately a lot of those kids come into contact with insurgents.”

The mudrasa will allow children to receive a religious education without leaving Afghanistan and the safety of Baki Tanna, which has



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann/ 102nd MPAD

Lt. Col. Thomas M. Feltey (right), commander of Combined Task Force 2-23 and members of the task force District Support team, meet with Spin Boldak District, Afghanistan government and police leaders shortly before village elder Haji Razaq hosted a lunch shura Jan. 30 in Baki Tanna, Afghanistan.

resisted the influence of the Taliban.

“He’s insulated his village and his villagers from insurgent influence,” said Piene. “There was really was no reason for us to patrol down there because he is doing such a good job of protecting his people.”

The village has drawn the attention of International Security Assistance Force and district leaders because of its successes. When Razaq reached out to Cpt. Piene to set up a meeting to show what he had accomplished it was recognized as a chance to get Afghan district leaders more involved.

“Our job is to identify what we call resilient leaders,” said Piene. “We identify key people and connect them to the government.”

“This type of stability operations, security assistance, is all about relationships,” said Lt. Col. Thomas M. Feltey, the commander of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment and CTF 2-23 “We’ve worked very hard establishing relationships and nurturing those relationships and we are starting to see some tangible benefits.”

The relationships garnered at the meeting here involve familiar associates and new partners. Lt. Col.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann/ 102nd MPAD

Lt. Col. Thomas M. Feltey, commander of Combined Task Force 2-23, listens as village elder Haji Razaq tells an interpreter about the new school for girls being constructed Jan. 30 in Baki Tanna, Afghanistan.

Haji Janan, the QRF commander, and Razaq have had previous meetings but Col. Abduhl Quayoum, the district chief of police, has never visited before.

“I wanted them to come here because they are the best people in this area for security,” said Razaq. “They do a good job.”

“Col. Quayoum was the lead guy,” said Feltey. “This is his area of operations.”

Feltey ensured that they key lead-

ers in the area could attend by using his relationships with them to gather support for the meeting. It was an opportunity for him to be an observer while the Afghan government

leaders discussed how they could help each other.

“All we’re doing is connecting Afghans with Afghans, and helping them develop relationships so they know who the key and strong players are within their own communities,” said Feltey. “All I was doing was pulling them in and showing them that we are just one team.”

“I was so happy to see all of the people that came,” said Razaq. “The meeting was good and I was happy to share with everyone.”

Razaq does a lot of sharing to make sure his village is taken care of. He donated his land for the schools and clinic to be built. He uses his own resources to travel to Kabul to ensure that projects progress. He shares his knowledge with other elders so that they can have the same success that he does by working with government.

“Baki Tanna is just a great example of what goes well if you’re willing to work,” said Piene. “Economic prosperity will come to your village and your village will be ok.”

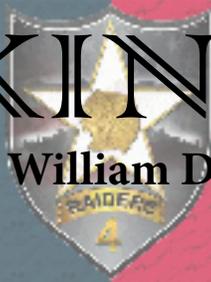


Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann/ 102nd MPAD

An Afghan worker watches a brewing dust storm from the roof of the girls’ school being constructed Jan. 30 in Baki Tanna, Afghanistan. Village elder Haji Razaq donated the land being used for the school.

VIKING (6)

Lt. Col. William Downing



To the Soldiers, families, and friends of Task Force Viking:

We've reached the 90-day mark in our deployment and the Task Force continues to grow stronger and angrier with each passing day. Our team has grown with the addition of the 3rd Romanian Mountain Infantry Company (the Angry Hawks). The integration of these "Romanian Vikings" absolutely strengthens our team and reminds us of just how many countries are still contributing to the efforts in Afghanistan.

Our work continues with the Afghan Uniform Police in efforts to enable them to transition to independent operations that do not require coalition force assistance. As this happens, our Soldiers living at our smaller, more austere, outlying bases will no longer be required to remain co-located with our Afghan counterparts. This will allow us to shut down these locations, move our Soldiers back to larger bases, and "patrol to work." Not only will

this support our efforts to get the police to independent operations, it will also support overall efforts to reduce the footprint we occupy across the country.

The 90-day period normally marks the first "wall" a deployed unit hits both in country and at home. The newness of the deployment has worn off and the realization of just how long we will be away from our families sets in. It is during these times that truly good teams like this one stand out. We recognize the hardship associated with our mission and power through the challenges like good teams do in the fourth quarter of a tough football game. The leaders across Anger Nation continue to remain engaged with their Soldiers, motivating them, holding them to the standards we built Task Force Viking on, all the while caring for one another like good teammates do. The thousands of burpees and daily crossfit workouts we do contribute to our combat readiness, help fight complacency,

and promote the competitive spirit in every Angry Viking. The Soldiers of the Task Force know that if we are sound in the body, we will be sound in the mind.

The support we continue to receive from our families and friends back home never ceases to amaze me. From the care packages and letters, to the burpees and miles run, walked, biked, or hiked in support of one Viking or the whole Task Force, we cannot thank you enough. It goes without saying, Soldiers who have a strong support network at home, are able to remain focused on their combat tasks because they know their families are being taken care of. The Viking Ready Reserve and our amazing Family Readiness Group have gone above and beyond to establish that network and we feel the benefits every day here in theater. Thank you for what you do – you are a critical part of this team.

May God bless Task Force Viking, its families, and the United States of America.

Stay Angry,

Lt. Col. Will Downing

Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Kerns (the original Angry Viking)





CTF 4-2 FET assists in women's shura



Photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth/ 4th SBCT PAO, 2nd Inf. Div.

First Lt. Christina Rath, the officer-in-charge of 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment's Female Engagement Team, speaks with local Afghan women during a womens' shura Feb. 15 in the Dand District of Afghanistan. FET Soldiers with Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) assisted a female Afghan Uniformed Policewoman in teaching local Afghan women about feminine hygiene.

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

COMBAT OUTPOST EDGER-TON, Afghanistan – Afghan Uniformed Police sergeant Gul Shreen Tajeck is the only female working as an AUP in the Dand District. She is also the link between Combined Task Force 4-2's Female Engagement Team and the women of the district.

Soldiers of CTF 4-2's FET and Tajeck held a women's shura, Feb 15, at the Dand District Center in Dand, Afghanistan.

Tajeck led the shura and discussed women's hygiene, education, and safety in the area.

During the shura, she told the attendees that if any of the women are having issues or if they are feeling threatened, they can approach the AUP or go to the district center and report any problems.

"That's my job because I am a sergeant working and defending my country," said Tajeck. "This is important to women's rights."

Sunita Norzai, a local Afghan woman, attended the shura with her friend after hearing about the gathering from an AUP commander's wife.

"We want to learn more about our country and we want to help our country and our family," said Norzai. "Also, we want to think about our kids' futures and our futures for progressing."

Tajeck said it's important that the women get together and work toward developing their country and understanding.

The 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment FET officer-in-charge, 1st Lt. Christina Rath, assisted Tajeck during the shura.

"Right now in this area, they

haven't had (a women's shura) in a while," Rath said.

"We're trying to build a way to create a sense of community for them as they try to raise their children," said Rath. "They're a pretty big influence. If they value education, their children will value education."

Rath said helping with the shuras is rewarding and eye-opening for her because the women who attend the shuras are more similar to American woman than one would think.

"In America, people are always concerned about the health of their families and that's how women are here, too," said Rath.

According to Tajeck and Rath, the shura was successful.

"I think they were pretty receptive to the idea of health and hygiene and education for their kids," said Rath.

help save Afghan soldiers' lives, said Kharullah Habibullah, an ABP member who completed the course.

Task Force Paladin members who specialize in training Afghan National Security Forces to defeat improvised explosive devices, travel around Afghanistan teaching the course in order to build a cadre of Afghan trainers.

The course was set in crawl, walk and run phases that consisted of classroom lessons, sand tables and a practical exercise, said Bill Whitlock, the leader of the TF Paladin team that taught the course.

"They caught on real quick," said Whitlock. "You could tell right from the start they were engaged immediately."

The individual ABP and AUP commands in the district sent hand picked members of the their units to complete the training. The commanders further enabled it by providing a training area and assisting ISAF units in securing it.

"Their command was involved," said Whitlock. "Everybody either



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann/ 102nd MPAD

did training or provided security."

To receive a certificate the students had to demonstrate their knowledge by conducting briefs for the cadre, creating their own sand tables and walking the training lanes to identify hazards.

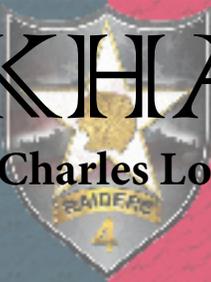
An awards ceremony was held for the students where they received praise from their commanders, a class picture and the coveted trainer's certificate that will allow them help their fellow police members stay safe.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann/ 102nd MPAD

BLACKHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Charles Lombardo



Greetings Blackhawk Families,

It's been nearly four months since we left, but it's not hard to account for the time when we have been so busy. Any method you select, it is all about continuous contact. Notes and photos are just as much a morale boost as a big care package. We may not be confronting the tough times side by side, but we are still with you and want you to know that we are sharing your hardships too. Your letters, phone calls, emails, and packages keep us motivated.

The Squadron rolled through the first waves of missions in 2013 according to 1st Cavalry Squadron tradition: Courageously and Faithfully! Throughout the past three months, we have been building momentum into our current operations. The troops have invested their efforts into partnered operations with our Afghan National Army partners and security force operations for our SFATs with exceptional performances. I could not be prouder of our troopers' ability to execute and get the job done right.

We welcome two new troop commanders – Capt.

McAdams as Blackjack Troop's new commander and Capt. Purcell as Arrow Troop's new commander. These two great cavalrymen will make outstanding additions to the Blackhawk Team. On a more somber note, we bid farewell to a few great leaders on the team. Capt. Brian Robinson of Blackjack Troop and Capt. Jeff Mills of Arrow Troop left have 2nd Sqdn., 1st Cav. Regt. after commanding the great Soldiers in these two units, but pass off the baton to their successors with great impetus and motivation already built into their troopers. These new leaders will have big shoes to fill, but we are confident they will excel on the drive and dedication provided by the Soldiers in their formations.

To those of you who continue to support us back at JBLM, I say thank you for your continued efforts to inspire and comfort us in our everyday endeavors as the deployment pushes on. I know our troopers could not have a finer support network and your care is felt here everyday. We look forward to the challenges of our upcoming missions and also to continuing to

serve with the best Soldiers, civilians and families in our Army. Happy Valentine's Day from the heart of Zabul Province!



Blackhawks! Animo Et Fide.

LTC Charles T. Lombardo
"Blackhawk 6"



FORGE 6

Lt. Col. Scot Doboszenski



To the Forge Families, Friends, and Soldiers,

Another busy month has passed for the Forge Battalion in Southern Afghanistan. We continue to work well with our Afghan counterparts. Each day our Afghan partners increasingly demonstrate their eagerness and enthusiasm when their nation calls. Command Sgt. Maj. Fourtunia and I were able to visit some of the Forge Soldiers at the Forward Operating Bases in Panjwa'i, Zabul, and Spin Boldak this month. We were able to extend our thanks and gratitude for their sacrifice and dedication especially being so far away from the battalion, but knowing that we keep them in our thoughts and prayers every night.

We have nothing but praise for our Soldiers' performance as we continue to overcome enormous obstacles after four months in Afghanistan. We have had 59 well deserving, dedicated, and selfless Soldiers re-enlist as they recommit to their families, our prestigious unit, Army, and

nation. As well, we have had many well deserving promotions, awards, and recognitions of our Forge Soldiers hard work and professionalism. One such operation that exemplified this was our Operation Clean Hero. In cooperation with 205th Afghan National Army Corps Logistics Training Assistance Team and the 495th Combat Service Support Battalion the Forge Soldiers moved 178 vehicles and equipment in two days. It was a great opportunity to cross-train, build friendships, and foster partnerships. It was a great success and everyone involved receive division recognition and thoroughly enjoyed accomplishing the mission. Our very own Charlie Company designed and headed up a brigade competition called the "Raider Challenge." It encouraged physical fitness, friendly competition, brought Soldiers from around the brigade together.

We cannot thank all of our Forge

Families enough for their continued support back at home. Your actions greatly affect morale of the Forge Soldiers. The care packages, letter, and emails lift spirits with pictures from the past or new memories being made. This was especially apparent during Valentine's Day where we were not able to spend time with special someone. It is motivating to see the feeling of achievement in every one of our Forge Soldiers' eyes as they realize they have become part of a group of Americans who have dedicated this part of their lives and time to defending our great nation. These actions support our leaders' commitment to safeguarding the extensive progress made during the past decade in assuring rights and freedoms for the people of Afghanistan. As we close, once again we thank you all for the amazing support you are providing to us. The command sergeant major and I know it is not just us who are fighting this battle, but also the families and friends back home, as well!

Forge 6 and Forge 7

"Mend the Broken Sword"





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Chaplain's Corner

Chap. (Maj.) Jim Combs

US and Afghan religious leaders meet

Story by Sgt. Stephen Wright
102nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan - Maj. Said Rahim Hakmal, the Religious Cultural Affairs Officer of the 6th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 205th Corps, Afghan National Army, met with key leaders at Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in the Panjwa'i district, Kandahar province, of Afghanistan to discuss the relationship between the Afghan National Army and the International Security Assistance Force in the area.

Key players at the meeting included the Combined Task Force 4-2 Chaplain, the Chaplain assistant, and other ISAF personnel. The meeting focused on how ISAF can assist in the transition of power once International Security Assistance Forces draw down from Afghanistan.

"I'm glad we got to meet today, especially in the chapel. Every time we meet, our relationship is getting closer and closer," said Rahim. "I pray that peace comes quickly so you can go home safely to your family."

Rahim informed ISAF personnel that the major problem he sees in his area is a severe lack of education. Most people have not been trained in a school, nor do they pos-



Maj. Said Rahim Hakmal, the Religious Cultural Affairs Officer for the 6th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 205th Corps, Afghan National Army meets with members of the Combined Task Force 4-2 Religious Support Team to discuss transitioning during the upcoming draw down of U.S. forces on Feb 7.

sess literary skills. In order to counter that issue, high ranking soldiers from the ANA go to schools to teach children, they also go into villages to help educate other citizens.

When asked how the population felt about the presence of coalition forces, Rahim replied, "You guys brought schools and hospitals. You did a lot to improve the Afghan lifestyle. That is why you are accepted here."

"We need to focus on gaining support for our soldiers, and (acquiring) equipment, so we can successfully

defeat the Taliban," said Rahim. "There will always be strong and weak; therefore there will never be true peace. How can man solve world problems when man cannot solve family problems?"

As the meeting drew to an end, Rahim closed by saying, "as humans, we are drawn together by God; God loves us and we have to love each other. We must forgive. I am nothing alone, but we together as brothers are strong. I cannot guarantee what will happen in the future, only God knows."



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*



*Pfc. Markie Sims
Dec. 29, 2012
38th Eng. Co.*



*Sgt. David Chambers
Jan. 16, 2013
B Co., 1-38 IN*