

DRAGOON Magazine

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CTF 4-2

Commander
Col. Michael Getchell

Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Oscar Vinson

Public Affairs Officer
Maj. Edzel Butac

Public Affairs NCOIC
Staff Sgt. Tiffany Monnett

Photojournalist
Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth

Broadcast Journalist
Sgt. Kyle Burns



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<http://www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil/4SBCT2ID>

Any story suggestions or questions can be sent to the PAO at edzel.l.butac@afghan.swa.army.mil or the PAO NCOIC at tiffany.m.monnett@afghan.saw.army.mil

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Landing Zone

PANJWA'I DISTRICT, Afghanistan

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth

Soldiers of Company C "Chaos", 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, Combined Task Force 4-2, and Weapons Company, 6th Kandak, 205th Afghan National Army Corps prepare to load a CH-47 Chinook helicopter May 4, following a company-sized mission, in the Panjwa'i District of Afghanistan.



DRAGOON 6

Col. Michael Getchell



Family, friends, and Soldiers of the “Dragoon” Raider Stryker Brigade Combat Team,

Welcome to another installment of our unit’s magazine! I enjoy writing this letter every month because it reminds me of the strong connections that this Team of Teams shares, and it allows me to reflect on the past while looking ahead to the next month with anticipation. Notice I used the singular form “month”; June now stands as the only, full calendar month left in this deployment! Most of our forces will be back or enroute to JBLM by the mid-point of July. That means that next month’s issue will be the final one in this volume of the Dragoon Magazine. Now that is an Objective to get excited about.

There’s much to be excited about these days. As temperatures spiked over 100 degrees for much of the month, the changing conditions across our environment haven’t deterred the Raider Soldiers and the Afghan Army and Police forces that they stand alongside. The Taliban’s perennial spring and summer offensive is most certainly underway, but the Afghan citizens and Security Forces give us all indication that the situation is already looking different this year. It’s different because the Afghan Army and Police know it must be.

We arrived to theater and talked in terms of “Afghans in the lead.” In January we transitioned our mindset

and our efforts towards helping them become “Afghan Independent.” This past month provided numerous opportunities for our partners to test their gains toward independence, and the Afghan Army and Police rose to the occasion by stemming the tide of the Taliban’s push to re-establish momentum following the winter season.

May, also saw the transition of three more of the bases that we’ve operated from since November. To many Afghans, the idea of us departing seemed rooted in talk, not action. International forces have operated in this area since October of 2001, and seeing the uniforms of International Security Assistance Force nations has become commonplace for Afghan civilians. However, as Raiders drove away from these three bases, ISAF’s diminishing role in operations has become a stark reality for the Afghan forces that are responsible for the security of their nation. These Afghan forces are increasingly confident in their security roles – a confidence born out of demonstrated competency that taking the fight to the enemy on a daily basis yields.

With this drawdown of bases comes our drawdown of Raider in theater. Shortly after publication, the Rock of 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment returns to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., having completed their mission in Southern Kandahar. Later in the month of June, the Blackhawks of 2nd Squadron, 1st



Cavalry Regiment follow suit. Not long after that, the rest of the units begin their sequencing of platoons and companies, troops, and batteries through Manas and back home. In closing, I ask that each of you continue to remain patient and supportive of your deployed Raiders. We still have important work to do for our partners and for our relief, and the Raiders continue their march To The Objective until our mission is complete. Thanks for all that you do for that mission, and for our Soldiers, Families, and Team of Teams!

To The Objective!

Dragoon 6



DRAGON 7

Command Sgt. Maj. Oscar Vinson



Soldiers, families and friends of the Raider Brigade,

The Raiders are rapidly nearing the end of this deployment and with less than 60 days remaining the Soldiers of the Raider Brigade have a very busy schedule ahead. The movement of Soldiers and equipment throughout Kandahar Province is a lengthy process and will continue through the near future. We must responsibly close or transfer most of the remaining forward operating bases and combat outposts in our area of operations.

May was a very productive month for Combined Task Force 4-2. Each of the battalions played a significant role in the success of our partnerships and in the milestones we have achieved thus far. We made great advancements toward closing three combat outposts, conducted multiple government and security shuras with our Afghan partners. Raiders continued to train many Afghan Soldiers, and moved Soldiers and equipment hundreds of miles across the Panjwa'i and Spin

Boldak Districts.

May marked the return of approximately 200 Raiders to JointBase Lewis-McChord, Wash.. Dragon 6 and I are very proud of the work those Soldiers performed and the achievements they made while in theatre. The time they will spend at home with their loved ones is well deserved and I'm sure it will be a very welcome change from the stresses of deployment.

June will be an exciting month for CTF 4-2. Not only will many of the FOB and COP closures and transfers occur, but we will also continue to redeploy a good portion of our team back to JBLM. We ask that family and friends remember the importance of practicing good operational security regarding dates of Soldiers returning. We want to ensure that our Raiders get home safe so everyone can enjoy their reunions with their loved ones.

The brigade has much work left to be done and little time to complete



it. We're not finished yet but we're getting closer every day. Please continue to keep the Soldiers of 4-2 in your thoughts and prayers.

**To the Objective-
Dragon 7**



1/205 Security Force Assistance Team



Security Force Assistance Teams continue to advise the 1st Brigade, 205th Afghan National Army Corps. All team members are excited that our time in Afghanistan is drawing to a close and we will soon be home with our families. A farewell barbecue was held for Capt. Alex Dorf and Maj. Kelly Mitchell. Maj. Mitchell moved to 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division staff and assumed the S2 position while Capt. Dorf will leave the Army and attend graduate school at Emory University. We are extremely proud of both teammates and wish them the best of luck in all future endeavors.

Near Forward Operating Base Zangabad, Afghan National Army Soldiers from the engineer company recently built a road through the heart of a Taliban stronghold in the Panjwa'i District. ANA Lt Moujed, the Engineer Heavy Equipment Platoon Leader, reported that building the road was the first opportunity to utilize the unit's construction skills and heavy equipment in a combat environment. The road was approximately one mile in length and was cut through a variety of terrain including grape rows and wheat fields. Its construction gives Afghan

National Security Forces direct access to previously restricted terrain and the ability to increase their security presence. In addition to added security, the road directly benefits the local populace by allowing local farmers to transport crops to market and significantly reducing the threat of improvised explosive devices. Engineers were supported by infantrymen from the 2nd Kandak, who provided security for the operation. The combined efforts of 2nd Kandak and the engineers resulted in the successful completion of the road, which is a win for the 1st Bde., 205th ANA Corps and the people of the Panjwa'i District.

High levels of illiteracy remain a problem for the ANA. However, 31 students from the 5th Kandak recently graduated from literacy training. The two noncommissioned officers and 29 soldiers had been studying since November 2011. The literacy training requires about 300 classroom hours to complete. The 5th Kandak has had significant success with its literacy program. ANA Gen. Habibi, the 1st Bde., 205th ANA Corps commander, told the graduates that education and literacy are essential to the survival and improvement of the Afghan

National Army. He said his goal is to continue supporting the program by any means. ANA LTC Talib, the 5th Kandak Commander, told the graduates he was proud of their accomplishment. Lt. Jacob Willis, Religious and Cultural Affairs Advisor for 5th Kandak, reported that graduating from the class will also help the soldiers get promoted. Maj. Yaya, 5th Kandak Religious and Cultural Affairs Officer (responsible for Literacy Training), said each company in 5th Kandak can select 3 Soldiers who have completed the Literacy Program to attend an upcoming English Language Course.

Forty-nine soldiers from the Military Police Company successfully graduated from the Advanced Search and Site Exploitation class. In addition to this, four Soldiers also graduated from a train-the-trainer counter-IED course. These courses enable the Military Police Company to better perform its mission in support of 205th Corps operations. The MP company commander will soon be promoted and be moved to a new position. The military police advisors are looking forward to working with the new company commander and continuing the forward progress.

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





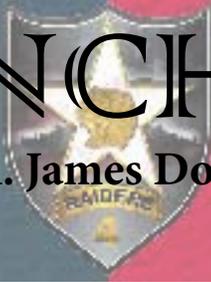
LIONS OF THE SOUTH
CTF 4-2 DRAGOON

شیرها از جنوب
1-205TH ANA CORPS



MANCHU 6

Lt. Col. James Dooghan



Our Manchu Family,

By the end of this month, we will be closing a significant chapter in Combined Task Force 4-9 (Manchu's) deployment to southern Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) 12-13. International Security Assistance Forces, to include the Manchus, have shifted efforts to an advisory "support" role in line with President Obama's State of the Union Address he delivered earlier this year. Our complete focus to the "support" role, combined with a rapidly approaching redeployment, has kept our Manchus extremely busy and working extremely hard to complete all necessary preparations. Our incredible workload brings an added benefit of seemingly making our time go faster as we look to complete our mission.

What does this mean for Manchu families anxiously awaiting the return of their Soldier? It means some have returned home to JBLM, some are en route to JBLM, others are starting their redeployment, while others must remain to complete the transition with our Afghan partners and transfer with our replacement battalion. As a battalion, we have started the conditions based, sequential, and deliberate redeployment while simultaneously executing our assigned mission. If everything goes as planned, we will

continue to redeploy elements as scheduled at the end of this month. We must retain select Manchu units and welcome Rosser (Rock) units into our fold to continue our partnership with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and prepare for our transition with our replacement organization. Manchus are known for effectively shaping future missions, and we have done so with our first redeployers and they are preparing for the arrival of the rest of their companies. The departure of some of our Manchus has been bittersweet, but sending them home early allows us to jump start and stagger our battalion reintegration plan.

We are extremely proud of our exhaustive efforts to prepare combat outposts (COPs) for transition to ANSF. Our Afghan partners will continue to support and defend their countrymen against insurgent forces well after the last American leaves. By the end of this month, we should complete improvements to COPs for our Afghan partners, select units should be done packing up their remaining equipment, and designated platoons should conduct movement to Kandahar Airfield (KAF) in preparation for their return home. Several VIPs visited our COPs, to include Maj. Gen. Robert Abrams, 3rd Infantry Division commanding general, and all providing universally positive feedback for the Manchus efforts and for continuing

to set the example of what "right" looks like.

The weather continues to increase dramatically beyond the comfort left of most (though local Afghan citizens claim 100+ temperature is merely warm...not hot!). Fortunately for our Soldiers, our experienced and battle hardened noncommissioned officers are making sure every Soldier remains hydrated with "high quality H2O". Please continue to remain patient for the return of the remainder of the Manchus. Although it can be emotionally draining to welcome home parts of our units, the support provided by the Manchu Family to those of us remaining in theater is a testament of the strength of our family and we want to extend our collective gratitude for your continued support and prayers.

Keep Up The Support, Keep Up The Prayers,

KEEP UP THE FIRE!

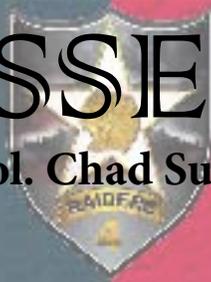
Lt. Col. James K. Dooghan
Manchu 6
Combined Task Force 4-9





ROSSIER (6)

Lt. Col. Chad Sundem



To all the Rock Family and Friends,

Your Soldiers continued their incredible and selfless service to the betterment of the Afghanistan people by exploiting every opportunity, and in doing so, continued to make historic changes in Panjwa'i. Some circumstances require persistent and orchestrated chaos before stable and secure conditions can emerge, and that is exactly what this team along with our courageous Afghan partners did the past month.

Across a wide spectrum of critical efforts, visible and tangible progress was made. Each day brought a wide breadth of events to include retrograde operations, partnered patrols, precision missions, school openings, civil projects, road improvements, Soldier technical skill training, and partnered training academies. All of these collectively created a synergy of momentum towards an enduring and positive change here.

Collectively, everyone has contributed to the progress and growth through a comprehensive and selfless commitment. It is humbling to see the power of this organization and gratifying to know the thirst for greatness continues. The team is laser focused and delivering less than what we came here for is not an option.

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

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



Operation Rising Sun III ends company-sized ops for ANA, U.S. partners

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



COMBAT OUTPOST KHEN-JAKAK, Afghanistan – Following a four-day operation May 1-4, soldiers of Company C “Chaos”, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, Combined Task Force 4-2, and Weapons Company, 6th Kandak, 205th Afghan National Army completed their final company-sized operation of the unit’s nine-month deployment.

During “Operation Rising Sun III,” the joint team air assaulted near the Kheybari Ghar ridgeline in the Panjwa’i District of Afghanistan and traversed more than 32 kilometers of terrain while searching 82 Kuchi camps and 12 structures of interest, said Capt. Ralph Parlin, the Company C commander.

At each camp, soldiers enrolled all adult males’ biometric data into the Automated Fingerprint Identification System databases, including the Automated Biometric Identification System using the Secure Electronic Enrollment Kit II (SEEK).

Over the four day operation, a total of approximately 200 individuals were enrolled in AFIS and ABIS.

Using the SEEK, the operator takes digital pictures of each of a person’s ten fingerprints, his or her irises and facial images.

Once a person’s biometric data is enrolled in the system, the SEEK checks fingerprints and iris scans against watchlists and remote databases, according to the manufacturer’s website.

This has helped the company detain wanted persons before, said Pfc. Andre Samson, who is one of the SEEK operators for his platoon.

“Biometrics is what’s winning the war right now,” Samson said. “Us being the type of people we are ...

we all use technology and that’s what we’re relying on right now.”

Parlin said the soldiers who operate the SEEK are technologically savvy and usually are language enabled so they can communicate easier with the local Afghans.

“The fact they don’t speak English is hard, but you get used to it after a while,” said Samson. “You catch on to what they normally do and you roll on with it.”

Typically the SEEK operators are junior-enlisted soldiers who are between 19 and 24 years old.

Samson, a 21-year-old from Palm Beach, Fla., has had to enroll Afghans into the database who are nearly triple his age.

When individuals being enrolled are hesitant to let Samson do his job, he doesn’t take it personally, he said, because of all the good the company has done for the area.

“We changed a lot of stuff out there, which a lot of us are happy about, but then again, at the same time, a lot of us are happy to go home,” Samson said.

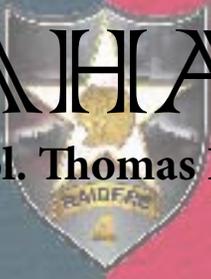
The operation isn’t the end of the partnership between the Afghans and C Company, said Parlin, but it was meant to be the last big step toward the ANA fully taking over operations in the area.

“It was really our last attempt to show and work with our partners through a company operation that was focused on ... allowing them to increase their security area as well as put pressure on the enemy network along seams and boundaries (in order to support) the brigade’s retrograde out of the west and as well as our future transition and retrograde out of Khenjakak,” said Parlin.



TOMAHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Thomas Feltey



Greetings Tomahawk families and friends!

It has been a month since I last wrote you an update, and in that period we have accomplished a great deal. As Battery A transferred Checkpoint 2 to our Afghan National Security Force partners, we successfully completed our mission in Tahktepol. Following the recon by our replacements in 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Regiment from Fort Knox, Ky., we are maintaining communication with them to ensure they arrive fully informed and prepared to execute their mission following our relief-in-place. Looking ahead, we are also preparing to return home to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., and reintegrate with our families, the Raider Ready Reserve and the 7th Infantry Division. Company C “Crazyhorse” has been in the lead in this effort, and we will leverage their key insights to ease our transition to home station. We are all excited to return to our families, but we are just as excited to see our ANSF partners take the initiative and execute independent operations on a daily basis. While we remain here supporting them, we are impressed with the progress our partners have made and it is a sign that our mission is nearly accomplished. I particularly want to add a special thanks to our Security Force Assistance Teams from the Texas Army National Guard, as they are prepare to either change mission or head home. As our decisive effort, you enabled our task force to create competent, confident and independent Afghan Forces. It has truly been an honor serving with you!

On the homefront, the Tomahawk Ready Reserve and the Family Readiness Group have been working hard since the arrival of Crazyhorse Company to ease the reintegration process. This is vital, as we will apply the lessons we learn now to refine the reintegration process for the rest of the battalion as they arrive at JBLM. I cannot state the importance of an effective reintegration process for the wellbeing of our Soldiers and their families; additionally, a seamless reintegration is critical to ensuring our readiness for future missions, whatever they may be.

Your Soldiers never fail to impress me every day, and you should be very proud of them. I know we are!

Tomahawks Win!!
Tomahawk 6 and 7





U.S. medics teach Afghan police how to save lives

Story by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann
102nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan – Afghan Uniformed and Border Police attended a train-the-trainer medical class put on by Security Force Assistance Team medics April 29 through May 1 here.

The class, which was similar to the Combat Lifesaver Course for non-medical U.S. Soldiers, taught the police to treat a casualty in the field, the importance of those procedures and how to improvise.

“We’re trying to give them a little bit more advanced class than CLS,” said Sgt. David A. Hixson, a medic from Arlington, Texas serving with SFAT 20, Texas Army National Guard. “Kind of explaining why they need to stop bleeding. So that they can understand the importance



Spc. Jacob R. Garza, a medic with Security Force Assistance Team 8, Texas Army National Guard, observes as Afghan Border and Uniformed Police demonstrate treating a broken bone during medical training April 29 at Forward Operating Base Spin Boldak, Afghanistan. The train the trainer class taught police leaders advanced knowledge of the human body and field medical procedures.

about medicine,” said Spc. Jacob R. Garza, a medic from Waco, Texas who is deployed with SFAT 8, Texas Army National Guard. “They understand the medical aspect is important, but they need to understand the reasons why.”

The police advanced their knowledge by learning about the internal workings of the human body

and out on patrol.

“This kind of training is very important in the battlefield and police stations,” said ABP Lt. Col. Gharibyar Sharafudden, the Chief of Staff for 4th Kandak, 3rd Zone. “We have to learn this and teach each other.”

“This is very important,” said AUP 2nd Lt. Dost Mohammed, the executive officer of the Spin Bold-

“This kind of training is very important in the battlefield and police stations.”

**-ABP Lt. Col. Gharibyar Sharafudden
Chief of Staff, 4th Kandak, 3rd Zone**

of it, and so that they can spread the knowledge to the other troops.”

“We’re trying to get them a little further along about their knowledge

through slide presentations, handouts and taking detailed notes in order to share what they learned with their unit’s checkpoints, police sta-

ak Highway Patrol. “We had medical training in the academy but that was not as sufficient as this is.”

What made the training more



than the basics taught at the police academies is learning to improvise and use materials that they have on hand or can find in the wilderness.

“The biggest benefit for this training is also showing the improvised,” said Hixson. “It’s good that they can use our medical supplies but it’s not always going to be consistent for them. So during this training we showed them a lot of improvised tourniquets, improvised splints; stuff that they can do even when we’re not here. It’s to make it sustainable for them if they’re out on the battlefield or at a remote checkpoint and they can’t get to a hospital. If they can teach that to their soldiers it will help preserve

their force.”

“We basically tailored it down to a remote medical course,” said Sgt. Anthony G. Beavers, a medic from Temple, Texas serving with SFAT 9, Texas Army National Guard. “We’re trying to get them to think outside the box.”

Abstract thinking is not the normal way for Afghan soldiers and police due to the rigid command structure but that isn’t necessarily a bad thing. By having leaders such as Mohammed and Sharafudden attend the class it shows the U.S. and Afghan personnel how important they see the class.

“It’s important that their commanders think it’s important, be-

cause it’s a commander-down driven force,” said Hixson. “So, if the commander is all about medical training the troops will actually listen to it.”

It’s also important to have the students believe in what they are learning so that they will be excited and ready to pass on what they have learned. After completing the hands-on training the police will be able to train others on saving lives and make an impact in their units.

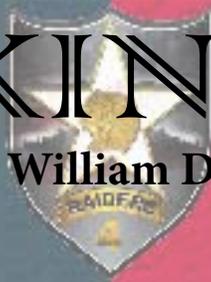
“It will pretty much just give them the confidence and ability to train other soldiers and to hopefully save another person’s life,” said Hixson. “It’s giving them the ability and having them believe in it.”

Spc. Jacob R. Garza, a medic with Security Force Assistance Team 8, Texas Army National Guard, discusses the human body with Afghan Border and Uniformed Police during medical training April 29 at Forward Operating Base Spin Boldak, Afghanistan. The train the trainer class taught police leaders advanced knowledge of the human body and field medical procedures.



VIKING (6)

Lt. Col. William Downing



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

May has all but come and gone with the month of June right around the corner. June...the month before most of the task force will redeploy. I'm sure some of you thought that day would never come and yet, here it is, almost within reach. Some say this can be the most dangerous part of a deployment, when Soldiers start to "smell the barn" and become complacent or lose focus on the mission at hand. I'm here to report that across the Anger Nation, this is not the case. Your Vikings are as focused on the "inches" as they were when we first arrived in theater. Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Kerns and I are humbled daily by the dedication, professionalism, and Anger displayed by the Soldiers of this Task Force.

The summer months brought with them temperatures over 100 degrees along with an increase in enemy activity which I'm sure most families are aware of from the daily news broadcasted back home. Rest assured, the rough men of Task Force Viking remain vigilant, focused, and continue to rely on the warrior skills they have honed since arrival in theater. These, coupled with the outstanding leadership that exists across this formation and some healthy Anger levels, have ensured both our Soldiers' safety and an incredible ability to get after the enemy where it hurts him most. Company A "Attack"'s combined

operations with Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) continue on a daily basis and have resulted in the successful removal of several critical players to the insurgency. These operations, along with the constant, unyielding pressure of C Troop "Cherokee" patrols designed to deny the enemy's ability to launch attacks against our bases, have been the keys to our success. Concurrently with our security operations, we continue to reduce our Task Force footprint with the successful retrograde of Battery C "Chosen"'s D30 Afghan Artillery trainers at Forward Operating Base Wolverine and hot gun platoon at FOB Shoja. Both elements are back under their battery guidon with Chosen Battery fully formed at FOB Lindsey. And last but certainly not least, the resilient Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery "Hammer" continue the sometimes thankless job of securing our FOB as well as managing daily operations there.

May also brought with it a change of mission for Battery A "Assault" who will now take a large portion of its formation out to Farah Province to relieve Battery B "Beast" in place so that they can return home prior to extending past their nine-month deployment (Beast deployed a little over a month earlier than the rest of the battalion). While I'm sure this came as bad news for some of our Assault Battery fami-

lies, I know we all can appreciate the need to get our Soldiers home on time and to your Soldiers' credit, they were more than ready to take on the challenge of a new mission for a short period and then redeploy with the rest of the Viking team.

The task force saw some of its first Vikings return to JBLM, Wash., this month marking the beginning of our redeployment which will stretch between now and the end of July with most Soldiers returning in July. I know it is frustrating for families not knowing exactly when their Soldiers will return home. The fact is, based on constant changes in the environment here and the process for scheduling aircraft to support our redeployment, exact dates will not be known until, most times, a couple of weeks prior to departure. While I feel confident in being able to tell you what month a battery, company, or troop will return, it would be wrong for me to guess at specific dates that families would then plan off of. As always, communication with your FRG leaders or our VR2 commander or first sergeant is your best bet. They have immediate access to your Soldiers' commanders and first sergeants in theater who will always have the most updated information as we know it. As the redeployment timeline starts to firm up, our families will be the first to know about it.

On that note, make sure you think about redeployment when sending



packages and mail to your Soldiers. While we have established June 15 as the general cut-off date for when you should stop sending packages and July 1 for letter mail, each Soldier's situation will be different based on when he is scheduled to redeploy. For most of our Soldiers redeploying in July, these dates will work. We will do our best to identify Soldiers as soon as possible that are redeploying in June. Obviously for these Soldiers, the packages and mail should stop a lot sooner. As always, communicate with your Soldier prior to sending anything

unusually important to ensure it will be received.

I leave you with a line from our Battalion/Task Force Vision: Great teams are good in the fourth quarter....

That is what we've entered. And while it is the final phase of this deployment, fourth quarters can be the toughest part of the game. That's when truly good teams are able to pull it all together for one final push. They gut through the fatigue, the cuts and bruises, and find a way to win. For our team, it's the insurgency we fight every day, the

long days and nights away from the ones we love, and our families' constant worry and stress associated with not knowing if their Soldiers are okay and when they are coming home. All these things make this fourth quarter a tough one, but I am extremely confident this great team will make it through as long as we stick together, both here and at home, and stay focused on the "inches." The ones that we need are everywhere around us.

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)**



BLACKHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Charles Lombardo



Greetings Blackhawk nation,

As the temperature rises in Zabul our time here as a squadron is drawing to a close. With less than two months remaining, you can be sure the Blackhawks will keep the pressure on the enemy to ensure a smooth handover of the battle space to our replacement unit. I am very proud of the effort put forth every day by all the troopers, and I make sure that our level of focus remains high as we sprint to the finish.

the Afghan Army becomes more confident and capable, and this is due to the great example set by your troopers. The hard work of the troopers is shaping the future of Afghanistan, and I could not be more proud of the legacy we as a squadron will leave behind as we depart. Your troopers will be home soon. Their expertise has made a difference in the fight against the insurgents here in Afghanistan, and

and support is the driving force behind the unrivaled work ethic of the troopers. If it were not for you the squadron would not be able to accomplish its mission of protecting our great nation. I look forward to reuniting you with your loved ones, and I commend your toughness during this time of separation. You are truly a group of families second to none.

“The squadron continued to show the Afghans ‘what right looks like’ with our actions on patrol and during gunnery training.”

**-Lt. Col. Charles Lombardo
2nd Sqdn., 1st Cav. Regt. commander**

During the past few weeks the squadron conducted several highly successful operations with our Afghan partners. We removed a significant amount of material and equipment from the battlefield, setting the enemy back months in its capabilities. The squadron continued to show the Afghans ‘what right looks like’ with our actions on patrol and during gunnery training. Every day

the troopers know they are leaving behind a country that is safer and more secure than it was when they arrived. The squadron will not give the enemy any rest during these last remaining weeks, and will continue to embolden the Afghan Army to stay aggressive. As always, I would like to personally thank the family and friends of the Blackhawk Nation. Your love

Blackhawks! Animo Et Fide.

**Lt. Col. Charles T. Lombardo
“Blackhawk 6”**







Photo by Spc. Jason Morgan/ 102nd MPAD

TF 2-1 CAV Blackhawks train the 2nd Mobile Strike Force (MSF)

A Troop “Arrow”, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment and the 2nd Mobile Strike Force Security Force Assistance Team partnered with the 2nd MSF to conduct a combined arms live-fire exercise, or CAL-FEX, May 7-13.

The partnership began six months ago when Arrow Troop troopers began instructing the Kandak soldiers on operating and maintaining their

Mobile Strike Vehicles (MSV) as well as how to operate and maintain the onboard .50 cal and MK19 grenade launchers.

Last month’s training was a culmination of months of long and in depth training.

The MSF soldiers ran through two lanes designed and run by Arrow Troop where they had to integrate their movement and maneuver

along with engaging targets with direct fire weapons and indirect fire systems.

Arrow Troop provided realism to the training by firing 60mm and 120mm mortars at the range to simulate the conditions of combat.

The training that Arrow Troop provided the MSF over the past six months clearly paid off with the MSF’s stellar performance.



Photo by Spc. Jason Morgan/ 102nd MPAD



Photo by Spc. Jason Morgan/ 102nd MPAD



Afghans meet to discuss reintegration

Story by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann
102nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan – Afghan leaders from southern Kandahar Province and International Security Assistance Force leaders gathered to learn about the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Program May 2 in Takhteh Pol district, Kandahar province, Afghanistan.

The meeting brought together local leaders and administrators of the reintegration program to discuss why it is being implemented and how it may benefit the province.

“Our goal is to focus on peace and how to ensure no more terrorist attacks on our villages,” said Mohahammed Satai, the head of the Joint Secretariat of Kandahar Peace Council. “It’s time for change in the new Afghanistan.”

“It’s encouraging to see the Afghans doing this, because what it means is that the Afghans are serious about this,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Thomas M. Feltey, the commander of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment who hails from Kearny, N.J. “Peace is going to be solved at the village and the district level and the Afghans understand that. They’re not waiting for peace to come from Kabul.”

Feltey’s unit makes up a Task Force that advises and mentors Afghan National Security Forces and government leaders in the Spin Boldak and surrounding districts in order to increase their capability. The reintegration program confirms to Feltey that the efforts here have not gone to waste.

“It’s significant,” said Feltey. “It’s



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann/ 102nd MPAD

Afghan civilian, government, and military leaders greet each other before the Reintegration and Reconciliation Program shura May 2 at the Takhteh Pol district center, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

a sign of success, an indicator of success for our campaign plan.”

The reintegration program itself is a testament of the GIRoA successes in the area because it is offering insurgents the opportunity to join a successful, growing society.

“What the Afghans want to do is, they want to give [the insurgents] a way out,” said Feltey. “Now with this reintegration, it allows them an honorable way to reintegrate back into society.”

“It’s time to get together and build this nation,” said Satai. “If you are Taliban or any type of terrorist, let’s come together in peace and start to build this nation.”

Bringing the insurgents back into society means a more stable government. Increases in security have made Afghans more confident about their government and the reintegration

program is proof of that.

“To me it shows that they are comfortable with the security situation to offer that olive branch to the insurgents,” said Feltey. “They are part of society. They are not going away anytime soon so they have to have a peaceable process to bring them back into the legitimate Afghan government.”

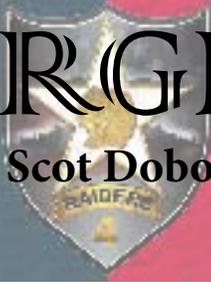
“So just by that, that means that there is a legitimate government,” said Feltey.

During the shura, Satai passed out information to the village elders and leaders in attendance to highlight the government’s progress and commitment to the program. A question and answer session followed by a meal ended the shura and the attendees left armed with information on how to institute the program in their villages and districts.



FORGE 6

Lt. Col. Scot Doboszenski



To the Soldiers, Families, and Friends of the Forge Battalion,

As temperatures rise in Afghanistan, the Forge Battalion's days in theater continue to drop, bringing us closer to returning home to family and friends. This past month our Spark and Torch flights, a total of 75 Forge Soldiers, redeployed to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. These flights are part of a phased and deliberate drawn down of forces to construct a formation comparable to our replacement unit. The Forge task force now consists of two main companies, Company A "Arsenal" and Headquarters and Headquarters Company "Honor". Honor Company has been supplemented with a large Company B "Bruiser" platoon and a Company C "Cold Steel" platoon. This task organization will facilitate an easy transition with the Regimental Support Squadron.

Forge staff and command teams are working in concert with the Regimental Support Squadron in order to keep them informed with current events and changes in our day to day operations to provide a well informed and smooth transition between units. During this preparation, we remain focused and steadfast on our current mission. Arsenal continues to provide critical sustainment supplies and retrograde excess equipment to Kandahar Airfield as we support the transfer and closure of forward operating bases and combat outposts. Bruiser Company is averaging 50 maintenance work

orders daily and has completed reset well over half of the brigade's weapons systems, which is a tremendous effort ensuring our equipment is in the best possible condition for the Soldiers of the Dragoon Raiders Task Force. Cold Steel Company distributes 250 lines of medical supplies a month and has crested the \$5 million mark worth of excess medical supplies. The Brigade Medical Supply Offices set the standard across Regional Command-South in the requisition, delivery and excess reduction of medical supplies, often being recognized by the Combined Joint Task Force 3 Headquarters. Our behavior health and preventative medicine personnel are continually circulating the brigade area to ensure the health and welfare of our Soldiers. Although many of the Cold Steel Soldiers have returned to the Forge formation at JBLM, Wash, this month, at the highest point during this deployment, Cold Steel Soldiers augmented aid stations in nine different locations across the brigade. Honor Soldiers continue to manage and cook at 11 forward operating bases, down from 19. Although the feeding mission is locations are decreasing, Honor Soldiers continue to perform a diverse mission set to facilitate redeployment and reintegration. Their efforts have a very positive impact on morale through feeding and support to returning Soldiers to family

and friends.

The Forge Battalion hosted a couple distinguished visitors in the month of May, Brig. Gen. Robert White, Deputy Commanding General for Sustainment and Col. Joseph Novack, Commander, 3rd Sustainment Brigade. We briefed Brig. Gen. White and Col. Novack on our progress in equipment and area reduction, upcoming changes to our concept of support, and our redeployment/reception plan as we transition with the Regimental Support Squadron. Both commanders were highly impressed by the professionalism of our Soldiers and appreciative of the efforts and accomplishments of the Forge Battalion over the past months.

In line with our emphasis on healthy living and fitness, the Forge Battalion conducted its last sessions of Combative Level One and Two Training. Combative training, not only is a good work out and team building event, it teaches our Soldiers a valuable method to defend themselves against an attacker. These skills are useful in their military and civilian life. To date we have trained 40 Soldiers in Combatives Level One and 30 Soldiers in Combatives Level Two. A special thanks to Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Jones for being an outstanding instructor for our Soldiers and congratulations to him on his recent promotion to sergeant first class.



Each one of our Soldiers shines in their own way as they do great things on a daily basis. This month, one in particular, Sgt. 1st Class Preyer, was recognized for his outstanding achievements and dedication to duty. He was one of two Dragoon Raiders inducted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club. The Sergeant Audie Murphy Club is a highly prestigious group of non-commissioned officers who demonstrate and represent the ideals of the

Army, devotion to duty and excellence.

We continue to build our team each month. We reenlisted 17 Soldiers and promoted 20 Soldiers since the last newsletter bringing our total to 108 and 117 respectively, during the deployment. As our team continues to grow stronger here, we also remember and appreciate our team back home, especially all of the supportive mothers, which we wish a belated Happy Mother's Day!

Remember, without your constant support we would not be able to do our job. The Forge Battalion thanks you for a job well done. We hope you were able to see some of the Mother's Day "shout outs" recorded by our chaplain and talk with your Soldiers on the very special day! We will continue to make our families, unit, and country proud here in Afghanistan as we transition into our final months in theater. We will see everyone soon!

Forge 6 and Forge 7 "Mend the Broken Sword"



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Chaplain's Corner



Chap. (Maj.) Jim Combs

The Danger of Keeping a Pet Tiger

Would you ever keep a Siberian tiger for a pet? I recently heard the story of a man who bought a Siberian tiger cub as a pet. As the tiger grew, others became concerned regarding the obvious dangers presented in having a big cat living so close to their homes. At one point, the man actually went to court to defend his right to keep the exotic pet and won. He continued to live naively under the delusion that the tiger was his friend until one unfortunate morning the “pet” acted in his true nature and killed his “master”.

Many of us would never consider keeping such a pet, yet we will hold dearly to thoughts and feelings that can be just as dangerous as a Siberian tiger! Unforgiveness is one example of such a beast. Will Smith once rapped about unforgiveness: “Throughout life, people will make you mad, disrespect you and treat you bad. Let God deal with the things they do, cause hate in your heart will consume you too.”

Just like the man with the tiger, we can choose to adopt unforgiveness...feed it...love it...and even defend the right to keep it, but in the end it will turn on us with razor sharp claws and penetrating fangs.

Have you adopted unforgiveness in your heart? If the answer is yes, you might even insist that you have a good defense as to why you are justified not to forgive. But please take caution, being true to its nature, the beast of unforgiveness seeks to devour you and those around you. Consider returning this beast to the wild before it is too late. This doesn't mean that we approve, condone or accept how we have been wronged or who has wronged us, but we choose to actually live the words Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer: “and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.” God bless...

Chap. (Maj.) Jim Combs
Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan

“Throughout life, people will make you mad, disrespect you and treat you bad. Let God deal with the things they do, cause hate in your heart will consume you too.”

-Will Smith
Actor/musician



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*