

October 8, 2007

# Freedom Watch

AFGHANISTAN



Playin' in the band ■ Airman author ■ Ramping up Bagram



## Army

### All Soldiers to become combat lifesaver-certified

**FORT JACKSON, S.C.** - The Army is about to change the way it ensures Soldiers injured on the battlefield receive access to life-saving techniques.

"Soldiers who were recently redeployed, and those who are currently deployed, told us that the first 10 minutes are the most critical for keeping a wounded Soldier alive," said Fort Jackson's deputy commander, Army Col. Kevin Shwedo.

Beginning Oct. 1, Soldiers entering Basic Combat Training will receive combat lifesaving training and be CLS-certified before graduation. The change adds seven-and-a-half hours to the current curriculum.

Soldiers will learn to perform advanced first-aid and conduct potentially lifesaving procedures from controlling bleeding, conducting CPR and reintroducing fluids into the body to keeping a serious injury from worsening until professional medical help arrives.

"That means you are going to have to start an IV in your buddy and your buddy is going to have to start one in you," Shwedo said.

The deputy commander said the change has two benefits.

"One, we are training Soldiers on mission-essential tasks that will keep them and their buddies alive in combat," he said. "Not only will they be able to save a life, but they will have the confidence that their buddies can do the same for them."

The second benefit is stress reduction.

"There are very few things in life more stressful than watching a newly-trained person put a catheter in your arm," Shwedo said. "Almost as stressful is introducing a catheter into your buddy's arm because you don't want to get it wrong."

Introducing artificial stress in BCT is thought to prepare Soldiers for the stressors of war, but Shwedo said that stress should be directly related to what Soldiers endure in war.

"Yelling at a person at the top of your lungs for five minutes does virtually nothing. Human nature says 'I will shut you down in the first 30 seconds,' so I've just wasted the last four-and-a-half minutes of my life," Shwedo said. "Whereas, if I put a Soldier in a stressful environment that has something to do with keeping him or her alive in combat, or killing the enemy, it makes him that much more successful."

Previously, only 20 percent of Soldiers in each unit were required to be CLS-certified.

"At the end of the day we want to make sure we have a Soldier who is proficient in a few critical tasks - weapons proficiency, discipline, being physically fit, confident he or she can save a life on the battlefield and equally confident that their buddy can save their life," Shwedo said.

## Navy

### Wear testing for new Navy uniforms announced

**WASHINGTON** - Selected Sailors will begin limited wear testing of new uniform prototypes, service-dress khaki for chiefs and officers and service-dress blue and white for E-6 and below, late this fall or early winter.

"The service-dress khaki uniform is in a traditional style, last worn during the Vietnam era," said Robert Carroll, head of the Navy Uniform Matters Office.

The E-6 and below service uniforms, which still look much like the "Crackerjack" of today, will feature hidden zippers for ease of dressing and new piping for service-dress white. The service-dress blue will be for men only, he explained.

Uniform testing is expected to run for 90 to 120 days. The selected Sailors will evaluate the uniforms' functionality, appearance and acceptability and provide their feedback to the UMO, according to Carroll.

Testing of the dress khaki and service blues and whites will be in Norfolk, Va., Washington, D.C., Millington, Tenn., and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. An overseas testing site may be added later according to Carroll. The service-dress whites will have limited wear tests in Key West, Fla., and Pearl Harbor. About 225 Sailors are expected to take part in the wear tests.

Carroll also said delivery of a single Navy working uniform for wear by all Sailors E-1 to O-10, and a year round service uniform for all Sailors E-6 and below is on track to get to the Fleet in summer 2008. The new Navy physical training uniform is on track for spring 2008.

For more information on Navy uniforms, go to <http://www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/USNavyUniforms/>.

For more news from Chief of Naval Personnel, visit [www.news.navy.mil/local/cnp/](http://www.news.navy.mil/local/cnp/).

## Air Force

### Gen. Chilton confirmed to head USSTRATCOM

**WASHINGTON** - The commander of Air Force Space Command received Senate confirmation to be the new commander of U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

"I am humbled by the confidence that the secretary of Defense and the president have put in me with the nomination, and humbled by [the Senate's] consideration for this very important position," said Air Force Gen. Kevin P. Chilton.

Chilton is a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy Class of 1976. A Guggenheim fellow, he completed a master of science degree in mechanical engineering at Columbia University. He flew operational assignments in the RF-4C and F-15 Eagle and is a graduate of the Air Force Test Pilot School. Chilton conducted weapons testing in various models of the F-4 and F-15 prior to joining NASA in 1987. At NASA he flew on three space shuttle missions and served as the deputy program manager for operations for the International Space Station program.

He has served as the commander of AFSPC since June 2006, where he has lead more than 39,700 space professionals providing combat forces and capabilities to North American Aerospace Defense Command and USSTRATCOM.



**COVER:** Army Sgt. Kevin Quinones, guitarist for the 82nd Airborne Division rock band Riserburn, performs for a group of servicemembers during a concert in Salerno, Afghanistan. More on Riserburn: pg. 8. (Photo: Senior Airman Christine Collier)

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**Army Lt. Col. Christopher Schirner, deputy commander of the 36th Engineer Brigade, and Perlita Laurel, manager of the new AAFES PX, open the new store at Forward Operating Base Sharana.**



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**A Soldier from the 70th Engineer Battalion welds pieces of a 110-foot bridge at Jaji, Afghanistan. The bridge will allow Afghans to cross a river and use a prevalent supply route.**

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RC East Public Affairs Officer Army Lt. Col. David A. Accetta

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# Afghan media visit RC-East, progress in Panjshir

Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Sarah Gregory

American Forces Network - Afghanistan

**P**ANJSHIR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – In an effort to showcase Panjshir's development, security and education progress to the country's media, Regional Command-East hosted 30 Afghan journalists for a media day.

The event kicked off with a welcome from the RC-East commander at Bagram Airfield.

"As you know, security, development and education go hand in hand," said Army Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez. "Today is an opportunity to see firsthand how the PRT (provincial reconstruction team) and governor work together to coordinate projects that improve the lives of the Afghan people."

In the last six months, more than 200 kilometers (124 miles) of roads have been built in Panjshir – something that has boosted the local economy, brought technology to the region and encouraged development, said Air Force Lt. Col. Christopher Luedtke, the Panjshir PRT commander.

In addition to road enhancement, there has been tremendous improvement to the educational programs in the valley. Seven new schools have been constructed and a \$2.1 million renovation was recently completed on the Teachers Training College. Today, Afghanistan has 5.5 million students enrolled in school, including 2 million girls and women.

While these accomplishments may be impressive, without the Afghan media to spread the word, they could go unnoticed.

"Without active media involvement,



**Panjshir Provincial Gov. Haji Bahlol responds to questions from journalists during a media day hosted by RC-East.**

none of these successes would be known to the public, and people would not be aware of the progress being made here," said Rodriguez. "The media is so important to the future of Afghanistan."

After Bagram Airfield, the media members were flown to Panjshir Valley in Army helicopters to view development and governance in action, including a new consolidated government district center, a provincial government printing press facility, irrigation

canals, schools, bridges and paved roads.

"Panjshir is a very successful and wonderful mission that the rest of the world needs to hear about. It's what we would call a model province," said Luedtke. "They (Panjshiris) are good about reporting things that are wrong, the governor is very professional and willing to learn, and the people and the governor work together to get the economy to flourish."

Luedtke added that for the past 30 years, Panjshiris have been determined to stand against not only the Soviet occupation, but the recent insurgency as well.

"Afghans have taken a very firm stand against the Taliban, al-Qaida and other insurgent elements," he said. "They're an example for the rest of the country that if they want to have the prosperity and the development that they've seen up here in Panjshir, then they're going to have stand on their own against the illegal elements."

All the new development and stability in Panjshir is only leading to more progress. With the help of several micro-hydro plants, electricity is now available. The paved roads have allowed companies access to build cellular phone and radio towers. Plans to bring television to the region are also on the horizon.

This growth is something Panjshir Provincial Gov. Haji Bahlol considers hope for the future.

"Communication is important today," said Bahlol. "We want our people to hear the news of the world and for the world to hear our message. We want peace, prosperity, democracy and freedom."

The same could be said for the intent of the media day.



**With the recent development boom, Panjshir is flourishing into a prosperous and stable region.**

# Syracuse Police Department gives gift of life

**By Army Sgt. Jim Wilt**  
*Combined Joint Task Force-82*  
*Public Affairs*

**K**APISA PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Going through life while living in a world of bullets, rocket-propelled grenades and suicide attacks on a daily basis can be a harrowing experience.

As a citizen of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, a senseless act of violence by the Taliban could end your life in a heartbeat.

For members of the Afghan National Police, life can be even more dangerous as they strive to protect the citizens of Afghanistan.

In an effort to help protect fellow policemen, the Syracuse Police Department donated more than 70 Kevlar vests to the ANP officers serving in Tag Ab Valley.

“It is police helping other police halfway around the world,” said Army Capt. Ryan Kerwin, a Combined Joint Task Force-82 operational law attorney who helped coordinate the donation of the vests.

Kerwin said his father, who is the deputy chief of police, chief of detectives

for the SPD, wanted to donate something to the Afghan people.

After talking with the Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team, Kerwin said he told his father, Michael Kerwin, the police here need equipment to help do their jobs.

Mr. Kerwin responded saying he had previously used Kevlar vests he could send.

“My son ... asked me if we had any discarded police equipment that might be used by the police in Afghanistan,” the elder Kerwin said. “I checked and found that we really didn’t have any belts, holsters, etc., but we did have 70-80 Kevlar vests that had been turned in by retiring officers.

“All new officers get a brand-new vest so the used vests would be simply destroyed,” the 29-year police veteran said.

Despite being used, Mr. Kerwin said he believes they are still serviceable.

“We believe that they are still valuable and we routinely test the older vests to prove that,” he said.

In Afghanistan, Soldiers are required to wear body armor to protect them-

selves. The protective equipment they wear has been proven to save lives.

“These guys clearly need this stuff,” the captain said of the vests.

“If only one ANP life is saved, it will definitely be worth it,” he added.

For the SPD, it is a good use for vests that would have been destroyed.

“The possibility that our vests may save the life of an ANP is overwhelming,” Mr. Kerwin said. “We are in the business of protecting life and so [is the military].”

“Kevlar vests save lives. That’s a fact,” he added.

The donated vests also protect the officers from other weapons besides small arms, Mr. Kerwin said.

“That is why we issue a vest to each officer and that is why they are required to wear the vest. We check the officers every day, every shift,” he said.

The Kevlar vests will be given to the ANP in an effort to save lives: both the ANP and the citizens they protect.

“To paraphrase Ben Kingsley from the movie ‘Schindler’s List,’ ‘the vests are life, they represent life,’” Mr. Kerwin said.

## Task Force King mechanics keep Golf Battery moving

**Story and photo by**  
**Spc. Henry Selzer**  
*173rd ABCT Public Affairs*

**F**ORWARD OPERATING BASE MEHTAR LAM, Afghanistan – Mechanics of Golf Battery, 4th Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, do everything it takes to keep their company moving forward.

Even though the first few months of the deployment were spent organizing the motor pool and storage facilities, Soldiers of the 4-319th maintenance team did everything possible to make sure their company had the equipment needed to complete their missions, working 24-hour shifts and changing numerous amounts of engines and transmissions for the first



**Spc. Sherard Green, Golf Battery, 4th Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, turns a wrench while fixing the brakes of an Army M1114 HMMWV at Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam.**

three months.

“I have been in the Army for 14 years and have never had a maintenance team that

worked this well together,” said Sgt. 1st Class Raymond Stimson.

The heat and mountainous

terrain the trucks operate in every day cause them to need attention more often than normal, with Golf Bty. mechanics doing anything from operator-level to level-three shop work.

“This is the best crew and shop I have ever been involved with,” said Spc. Donald Davidson, of Ontonagon, Mich., also with Golf Bty.

With constant attention needed by the trucks, the mechanics of the 4-319th have had to learn what to look for first and how to get the trucks turned around and back out of the maintenance bay in a timely manner, according to Spc. Sherard Green.

“It was a lot of work. As we would get one truck done and pushed out, another one would be on its way in,” said Green.

# Bagram 'first' means new capability for region

By Air Force Capt. Michael Meridith  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

**B**AGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The recent speedy landing and launch of one of the world's largest aircraft promises to bring "tremendous" capability for the movement of critical cargo across the region, according to 455th Air Expeditionary Wing officials here.

An Air Force C-5 Galaxy landed here without interrupting wing flying operations, a first for Bagram Airfield, according to Air Force Col. Jon Sutterfield, commander of the 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Group. Previous landings have required the movement of other aircraft on the flightline to accommodate the massive plane.

The C-5 is the largest airlifter in the Air Force inventory and has the ability to carry 36 pallets of cargo. In comparison, the wing's C-130 Hercules aircraft can only carry six to eight pallets, depending on configuration. In addition, the C-5 has the benefit of nearly unlimited range through aerial refueling.

"One of the big advantages of bringing the C-5 here is bypassing the main AOR [U.S. Central Command area of responsibility] hubs to get cargo to the warfighter faster," said Sutterfield. "It's a huge force multiplier."

Sutterfield also noted the landing was the culmination of months of effort involving teamwork among personnel at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in the AOR, the Tanker Airlift Control Center at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., and a host of organizations at Bagram Airfield to include maintenance, security forces,



**A C-5 Galaxy lands at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, without interruption to flight operations for the first time.** (Photo: Air Force Master Sgt. Jamie Cabral)

transient alert and airfield management.

"It was a true team effort with a great result," agreed Air Force Master Sgt. Jamie Cabral, transient alert quality-assurance evaluator, who noted it took less than three hours for the aircraft to land, offload nearly 16,000 pounds of cargo and take off again.

According to Belinda Williams, airfield manager, the completion of runway upgrades last December helped make this landing and launch possible and opened the door for more visits. "We're definitely ready to see more C-5 landings in the future," she said. "Everything went smoothly."

"The bottom line is that bringing the C-5 here enables us to bring in more cargo, tools and personnel, enabling the 455th to continue to take the fight to the enemy," added Cabral.

## Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



### Can I help you?

#### Dari

Maun maytawanam shoomara  
koomak kunum  
(Mawn may-tah-wah-nahm  
shoo-mah-rah koo-mahk kun-  
um)

#### Pashtu

Zu cowalashum ta ta kumaq  
wacoum  
(Zuh cow-al-ish-um tah tah ku-  
mack wah-coum)

Afghans traditionally use only a first name. Afghan male first names are frequently Arabic names, reflecting Islamic values. For example, any male name starting with Abdul- is an Arabic construction with the last word being one of the names for God. Afghan girls are usually given traditional Arabic or Persian feminine names.

# Remembering Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Blaskowski

Story and photos by  
Sgt. 1st Class  
Jacob Caldwell

173rd ABCT Public Affairs

**KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan** — Soldiers from Task Force Rock gathered to remember the life and service of Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Blaskowski at a memorial ceremony at Camp Blessing here.

Blaskowski died Sept. 23 from gunshot wounds when his platoon's forward-operating base was attacked by extremist enemy fighters.

Blaskowski enlisted as an infantryman Nov. 17, 1998. His first duty station was at Fort Drum, N.Y., with the 10th Mountain Division. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry, as a rifleman and a scout. He was later assigned as a team leader in 4th Bn., 31st Inf., in the same division.

After completing Airborne School in 2002, he reported to the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vicenza, Italy, where he was assigned to the 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. (Airborne).

Blaskowski served in multiple leadership positions at "The Rock." Those positions included team leader in Battle Company, battalion assistant

operations sergeant in Headquarter and Headquarters Co., 2-503rd, and rifle and weapons squad leader in Chosen Co. during Operation Enduring Freedom VI, where he earned a Silver Star. His most recent leadership position was as platoon sergeant for 1st Platoon in Battle Co.

His personality and long tenure with "The Rock" left a lasting impression on the battalion and all of the people with whom he served, particularly Army 1st Lt. Bradley Winn, 1st Platoon leader, Battle Co. The two worked closely together since they met in March during a training rotation in Grafenwoehr, Germany.

"It was hard to not get along with Sergeant 'Ski' because his personality and humor were so infectious to so many people," Winn said dur-

**“The magnitude of his life is a testament to the kind of man he was.”**

*Army Staff Sgt. Jeremy Carey  
Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 2-503rd*

ing the ceremony.

"He was the mentor and platoon sergeant that I had always dreamed of," Winn said, "leading from the front and being an everyday hero that all of the Soldiers, including myself, looked up to. Sergeant Ski was the epitome of a professional Soldier who will forever set the bar for Battle Company, Chosen Company

**The helmet, rifle, ID tags, boots and photo are displayed in memory of Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Blaskowski during a memorial ceremony at Camp Blessing, Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Blaskowski died in combat Sept. 23.**



**Paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) render honor to Sgt. 1st Class Matthew D. Blaskowski during a memorial ceremony at Camp Blessing, Kunar Province, Afghanistan.**

and the whole Rock family.

"Sergeant Ski passed away doing what he did best; taking charge and being the great

player in sports, he could help elevate his team to excellence. This was Sergeant Ski."

"He was the kind of man who would immediately light up a room with his presence and personality," wrote Army Staff Sgt. Jeremy Carey, Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 2-503rd, in remarks written for the ceremony.

"He was never the center of attention, but it wasn't the same without him around," Carey said. "He could bring something to a crowd that no one else could: a true, honest, take-me-as-I-am personality.

"Matt loved being a Soldier. His unmatched leadership and professionalism are what non-commissioned officers in the United States Army should strive to match. He was a Soldier's Soldier," said Carey.

"The magnitude of his life is a testament to the kind of man he was," he said, adding, "He will be missed greatly."

Blaskowski is survived by his wife, Daniela, of Vicenza, and his parents, Terry and Cheryl, and family of Levering, Mich.



# Rockin' out with Riserburn

Story and photos by Senior Airman  
Christine Collier  
*American Forces Network – Afghanistan*

**F**ORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Notes of music filter through the air, causing a hush to fall over the groups of people milling about. As the audience focuses their attention toward the small stage, the 82nd Airborne Division musical group Riserburn begins its performance, bringing live music and a little bit of Americana to the troops at Salerno.

"We play country, classic rock, alternative, Top 40 and some pop," said Army Sgt. Stephanie Doehr, Riserburn's vocalist. "We try to hit a wide variety to please any audience."

Riserburn, assigned to Bagram Airfield, travels all over Afghanistan performing for servicemembers at many different locations.

"We try to go anywhere there are 82nd Soldiers or Coalition forces," said Army Staff Sgt. James Donahue, Riserburn's bassist and NCOIC. "We spend a few days at each place we go to, allowing time to visit the provincial reconstruction teams and other forward-operating bases nearby."

The mission of the band is to boost morale at FOBs by providing musical en-

tertainment for servicemembers; however, the members of the band also benefit from their frequent excursions.

"The trips are very rewarding for me," said Army Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Dudzienski, Riserburn's drummer. "I will look back at this time and know that I was able to perform my mission, and I'll feel very proud of the group and the fact that we were able to [perform our mission] by playing music together and entertaining the Soldiers of ISAF."

"There's nothing that makes me feel better than playing for the troops in Afghanistan," added Army Sgt. Kevin Quinones, Riserburn's guitarist. "I believe when we do that, we let them know we really care enough to come and play for them. I think it's a great thing what we do."

The band, which performs "as often as possible," according to Donahue, also practices frequently in order to keep the songs on their current play list sharp, as well as to learn new songs for their performances. The members of Riserburn make their play lists based on personal favorites, recent releases and audience requests.

"If we have the music and the MP3, we can have at least the 'skeleton' of a song the same day," Quinones said. "The rest would come the next day, and we would have the song in its entirety ready for the

next show."

The band members practice their songs individually, as well as during group rehearsals. Most of the time, they are also accompanied by Army Sgt. Andre Yanniello, Riserburn's sound engineer, who maintains the sound board during many of the band's performances.

"My job is to make the band sound as good as possible," Yanniello said. "[The band] does the bulk of the work by learning the song and performing it. I make all the little changes in the sound to make it as close to the original as I can. Everything from the effect the guitar is using, to vocal effects for a lot of Steph's songs. I am the first person to hear the finished song every time, and if it just doesn't sound right, I give suggestions to make it better."

Despite their hard work and the amount of practice they get, moments before each show can still be nerve-racking for the band.

"When we go out to play at different FOBs, we never know how people are going to receive us," Doehr said. "Usually, the first performance is the hardest. We don't know what to expect from the crowd and they don't know what to expect from us. Whenever we perform, I just want people to be able to relax and have a good time with us while we're making fools of ourselves onstage."

Audience participation is also highly encouraged by Riserburn, with bandmembers even going so far as to invite servicemembers onstage to sing their favorite songs.

"We had a couple of jobs on this trip when six to 12 people came to hear us," Dudzienski said. "Those were great because of the interaction. When the band and crowd are into it together, that is the best."

"The best part of the job is when the band and the audience feed off of each other and make the show an interactive process," Donahue added.

While the band develops relationships with their audiences throughout the course of a performance, they have also developed strong relationships with each other during the past year.

"We all have a very honest relationship with one another," Doehr said. "I know that if I don't sound my best on something, I'll hear it from at least one, if not all of the members. I prefer that rather than hav-



**Above:** Army Sgt. Kevin Quinones, Riserburn's guitarist, strums his guitar in preparation for a performance at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

**Right:** Army Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Dudzienski, Riserburn's drummer, keeps the beat during a show at Forward Operating Base Salerno.





ing them sugar-coat it and tell me something just so it won't hurt my feelings. It's one big love-hate relationship. I know that I could count on them for anything."

"I love these guys, I truly do," Quinones said. "We are like family – Sometimes you hate each other and argue, but when it's time to work it out, we just sit down and do it."

Riserburn, with their fun-loving performances and family ties, will continue performing throughout Afghanistan for the next several months.

"If we can get a flight, we can go almost anywhere," Donahue said. "All someone has to do is contact the unit and request us. If the time slot they are requesting is open and we can get a flight, we're there."

"We really are here for the servicemembers," Doehr said. "We're here to put on a show for the troops so they can relax and chill out. We do what we can onstage to have fun, but the more fun the audience has, the more fun we have. It's always a nice trade."

For more information on scheduling Riserburn for a performance, contact Army Master Sgt. Brandon Helms at DSN 481-6598.



**Top:** Army Sgts. Stephanie Doehr, Riserburn's vocalist, and Kevin Quinones, Riserburn's guitarist, perform the popular Violent Femmes' song "Blister in the Sun" during a concert at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

**Above:** Army Staff Sgt. James Donahue, Riserburn's bassist, performs with the band at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

## New ramps provide BAF increased airpower capability

**Story and photo by Air Force Capt. Michael Meridith**  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

**B**AGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Two new flightline ramps opened at Bagram Airfield and bring new capabilities to Coalition air operations, NATO and Air Force officials said.

The \$9.3 million joint venture between the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency and the Yuksel Construction Co. provides significantly more parking space for helicopters and the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing's F-15E Strike Eagles and A-10 Thunderbolts, said Kevin Cullen, the project manager.

"These ramps represent a vision of continuous improvements in our warfighting capability," said Royal Netherlands Maj. Gen. Freek Meulman, the International Security Assistance Force's deputy commander for air. "They will serve as launch pads and resting sites for the long-term commitment of our Coalition in the fight to achieve safety and security in Afghanistan."

The project helped to provide a boost

to the local economy, while at the same time met its stringent requirements, Cullen said.

"We employed about 80 Afghan workers for the project," Cullen said, which was finished on time, on specification and within budget.

"These ramps represent quite a bit of capability for Bagram," said Air Force Col. Dan Debree, the vice commander of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing. "I fly in the F-15E and this is something we desperately needed. Although ramp space here has increased by 70 percent in two years, it doesn't matter because a quick look will show you that every bit of it is used up."

Meulman said the ramp was just the latest in a continuing series of projects designed to increase BAF's ability to support coalition efforts throughout Afghanistan.

"We will continue to work together in building what I call an overwhelming capability in our common mission toward security and stability throughout Afghanistan. This new ramp will provide a long-lasting base for our dedicated Airmen, who are committed to executing their challenging job here in Afghanistan," Meulman said.



**Air Force Master Sgt. Jamie Cabral, 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Group, helps land an International Security Assistance Force helicopter on the new ramp at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. The ramp adds significant capability for air support of Coalition forces.**

## Bagram Airman makes difference on two fronts

**Story and photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua Jasper**  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

**B**AGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - An Airman deployed here is not only making a difference in the Global War on Terror, but also in his hometown.

Tech. Sgt. Bruce "Bee Jay" Johnson, an information manager from Barksdale Air Force Base, La., deployed here with the 755th Air Expeditionary Group, has been positively impacting the lives of children and adults in the Orleans Parish School system for more than a decade.

"When I was in school, my teacher used to tell me, 'there aren't enough books for little boys,' so I decided to help change things," said Johnson. In 1994 he embarked on his mission by writing a series of books called "The Bee Jay's Book Series" to distribute throughout the school system. The books were inspired by his own childhood memories and experiences.

Since that time, he has written more than 20 books, including one with his friend and co-worker Toni Tanner Castillo, which compiled first-hand accounts of Hurricane Katrina victims.

"I lost everything during Katrina," he said, describing what inspired him to co-write the book, with the proceeds going toward rebuilding schools in the New Orleans area.

"I am also working on a book here," added Johnson. "It's called 'On the Road to Afghana Baby,' and it will be about my experiences, from the time I left home station, through combat skills training at Ft. Dix, N.J., until I leave."

Despite a busy work schedule, he still manages to find time to write,

often staying up late after work, as well as keeping a notepad with him to jot down ideas during the day.

"I encourage everyone to keep a journal," Johnson said. "You'll be surprised how interesting your day can be when you look back at it. Writing can be like therapy; everyone needs a little bit once in a while."



**Tech. Sgt. Bruce Johnson sits for a moment to record his thoughts as part of his writing. Johnson, 755th Air Expeditionary Group information manager, is currently working on a book called 'On the Road to Afghana Baby', detailing his deployment experience in Afghanistan.**

# AAFES opens at Forward Operating Base Sharana

**Story and photos by Army Pfc. Nathan Veach**

*Task Force Rugged Public Affairs*

**F**ORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan – Hundreds of Soldiers and civilian contractors lined up outside the doors of the new AAFES Post Exchange here in preparation for its grand opening.

“Getting the AAFES PX here in Sharana makes us feel like we are back at home,” said Army Staff Sgt. Ian Roberts. “I no longer have to have my wife send me personal-hygiene products.”

After much anticipation for AAFES to arrive in Sharana, the manager of the new PX here, Perlita Laurel, proudly announced the grand opening to the troops at the base.

Prior to the AAFES-run PX opening, Sharana relied on an AAFES imprest fund store, which is a military-operated site usually in small, remote places where direct-operation exchanges can not be provided. The imprest fund store was open only a few times a month and was not stocked with enough merchandise to serve the growing population the FOB.

The leaders of Task Force Rugged decided that an AAFES-run PX would better serve the Soldiers here.

With a team effort by the Soldiers of TF Rugged and AAFES employees, the store was fully operational in just a few months. The Rugged Personal Security Detachment built temporary shelves for both the store and a warehouse which held the merchandise prior to the arrival of metal shelves supplied by AAFES. The Rugged communications specialists assisted the management in setting up the cash registers, Internet connections, Eagle Cash dispensers and satellites needed to complete the set-up of the exchange.

“Not only will this PX serve Soldiers here on Sharana, it will also serve as a warehouse site for merchandise at remote, smaller bases such as Ghazni, Ghardez and Orgun-E, which are closer to FOB Sharana than to Bagram Airfield. These sites will more easily stock their stores from FOB Sharana rather than Bagram,” said Command Sgt. Major Frank Busch, TF Rugged. “We are trying to help Soldiers all over the battlefield.”

Just before the grand opening, AAFES employees prepared the opening of the

shop for personnel on the base.

“I came to Afghanistan to help the Soldiers the best I can and make their lives easier,” Laurel said. Laurel, an AAFES employee since 1979, joined the company while her husband served in the Army and has been working in exchanges ever since. Originally, the North Shopette manager at Bagram Airfield, Perlita was promoted to store manager to run the new PX here.

Soldiers agreed that the store provides an improvement to the base and makes their lives easier.

The store sells everything from candy and snacks, to health and beauty supplies,

to electronics and DVDs.

On opening day sales totalled more than \$45,000. Laurel and the Sharana AAFES team said they were very pleased with the turnout at the store for the first day. They hope the business continues.

With the traditional ribbon-cutting, Army Lt. Col. Christopher Schirner, deputy commander of the 36th Engineer Brigade at Fort Hood, Texas and Laurel enabled “a better life for the Soldiers of Sharana.” As the forward operating base grows, life is getting better for the Soldiers here at the base.



**Above:** Army Lt. Col. Christopher Schirner, deputy commander of the 36th Engineer Brigade, and Perlita Laurel, manager of the new AAFES PX, open the new store at Forward Operating Base Sharana.

**Left:** Hundreds of Soldiers and civilian contractors line up outside the doors of the new AAFES Post Exchange at Forward Operating Base Sharana in anticipation of its grand opening.

# Dual commander stays 'rugged' while he 'stands and fights' with Coalition, Afghan forces

By Army Capt. Ashley Dellavalle  
Task Force Rugged Public Affairs Office

**F**ORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan – Task Force Rugged welcomed its commander back here after his four-month stint at Kandahar Airfield, where he was the commander of KAF and the U.S. National Command Element – South. All the while retaining his duties as the TF Rugged commander.

When Army Col. Richard Stevens, the 36th Engineer Brigade commander, deployed, he never imagined he would have to split his time between more than one command.

Less than two months after his arrival in theater, the Combined Joint Task Force-82 commander, Army Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez, told Stevens he was needed in RC-South to fill a gap in the command and staff element to give U.S. Central Command the time necessary to fill the unit with individually augmented troops.

Stevens renamed the unit Task Force Anzio, in recognition of the battle at Anzio, Italy, during World War II. The battle was fought not only by troops of the 82nd Airborne Division, but also by the 36th Engineer Brigade.

Stevens immediately notified his TF Rugged staff of his duties in Kandahar, but assured them he would continue to command the engineer task force from his new location. In addition to Stevens, TF Rugged sent Army Maj. Doug Brown to be the TF Anzio operations officer and Army Sgt. Maj. Earl Brown as the TF Anzio operations noncommissioned officer. Within days, Stevens and his new staff were in Kandahar transferring authority with the outgoing unit, Task Force Grizzly, incidentally on Stevens' 25th anniversary in the Army.

On that day, Stevens stood ready to take on his mission with his new unit.

"Today we commit to 'stand and fight' beside our Coalition partners, but more importantly, beside the strong, brave and independent people of Afghanistan who are standing and fighting against the enemies of security and progress," said Stevens.

Stevens proved that he and his Soldiers stand and fight against the enemies of security and progress. Overall, he and his "melting pot" of Soldiers were a "bridging force." Stevens managed to pull together personnel from across all four services, all corners of the U.S. CENTCOM area of responsibility and Fort Bragg, N.C., forming a fully capable team. Not only did he team up with the military, he integrated the Department of State and United States Agency for International Development into his fight. Stevens was focused on increasing the manning requirements of U.S. participation in operations in RC-South.

The team he built transitioned the infrastructure, equipment and services at KAF to NATO control in an official transfer of authority this summer. Stevens relied on the flexible nature of military personnel and contractors to quickly adjust and assist the new NATO-controlled airfield when necessary.

In his short stay as commander, Stevens and TF Anzio managed \$5.9 million dollars in commander's emergency response projects for the provinces of Farah and Zabul and the Ground Defense Area of KAF. The CERP projects extend the influence and positive perception of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, as well as provide opportunity for furthering Afghan economic development.

Most importantly, Stevens supported Soldiers in the field while in



**Army Col. Richard Stevens, outgoing commander RC-South U.S. National Command Element, accepts the colors from Command Sgt. Maj. Willie Williams to pass to Army Col. Pat Crowder, the incoming commander, at a change-of-command ceremony at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. (Photo: Army Capt. Vanessa Bowman)**

command of TF Anzio. He had oversight of multiple combat logistics patrols and managed numerous aerial re-supply missions. Stevens insisted on upgrading life support at forward-operating bases in RC-South. He created an ad hoc engineer cell to facilitate meeting each FOB's needs. On many occasions, TF Anzio expedited medical evacuations and close air support missions to ensure Soldiers on the ground were being supported to the maximum.

Back at FOB Sharana, Stevens' Rugged staff continued its engineer missions as normal. The staff made a few changes to account for the loss of the commander and key staff members. The TF Rugged deputy commander, Army Lt. Col. Chris Schirner, took the reigns as commander when Stevens was unable to attend meetings or events. Schirner moved here from his station at Bagram Airfield to ensure he could adequately take on this responsibility.

Every Soldier in TF Rugged pulled together in the absence of Stevens to continue and accomplish the mission.

"When I arrived here four months ago ... I knew two things for sure. First, that I did not want to be here, and second, that this is not where I wanted to be," Stevens jokingly admitted in his farewell remarks at Kandahar. "Now four months later, it is extremely difficult and even painful to say goodbye. Four months ago, I left behind Soldiers that I love in RC-East, but in these short four months at Kandahar, I came to know a team of dedicated Americans, steadfast Coalition partners and loyal Afghan friends that have enriched my life beyond description."

RC-East and TF Rugged Soldiers are happy to welcome back their commander.

"I do not think anyone can truly appreciate how difficult this four-month separation was on TF Rugged, in particular the command team. Colonel Stevens is my battle buddy. I am very proud of his accomplishments as the TF Anzio commander. But I am truly glad to have him back!" said Command Sgt. Major Frank Busch, TF Rugged's senior enlisted leader.



A Soldier from the 70th Engineer Battalion welds pieces of the 110-foot bridge at Jaji, Afghanistan.

## Army engineers complete Jaji bridge

**Story and photo by Army Capt. Ashley Dellavalle**

*Task Force Rugged Public Affairs Office*

**PAKTYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan** – U.S. Army engineers completed construction of a bridge at Jaji, a small village in eastern Paktya Province near the Pakistan border.

Soldiers with the 70th Engineer Battalion emplaced a 110-foot Bailey bridge in less than three days.

“Our mission was to construct this bridge for the local population,” said Army Staff Sgt. Joseph Preski, a squad leader in 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 70th Engineer Battalion.

The platoon pulled together and worked as a cohesive, well-oiled team to finish such a large bridge so quickly.

“The bridge has a 60 military load clas-

sification [withstands 60 tons]. It is one car width and will last at least a year,” said Preski.

Every Soldier on the construction site knew exactly what their piece of the mission was and how they needed to accomplish that mission.

“We trained for two and a half months on the Bailey bridge,” said Army 1st Lt. Andrew Lowery, the platoon leader overseeing the bridge construction. “We built the bridge over and over again in Bagram.”

The heaviest bridge parts weigh over 600 pounds and required teams of six to eight Soldiers to lift them. It is hard work, and takes a lot of hours.

The site of the completed bridge lies in a valley. Just on the other side of the river, Soldiers of the 864th Engineering Battalion are building a small fire base for Coalition forces. Without the bridge, it

is almost impossible to get vehicles to the base.

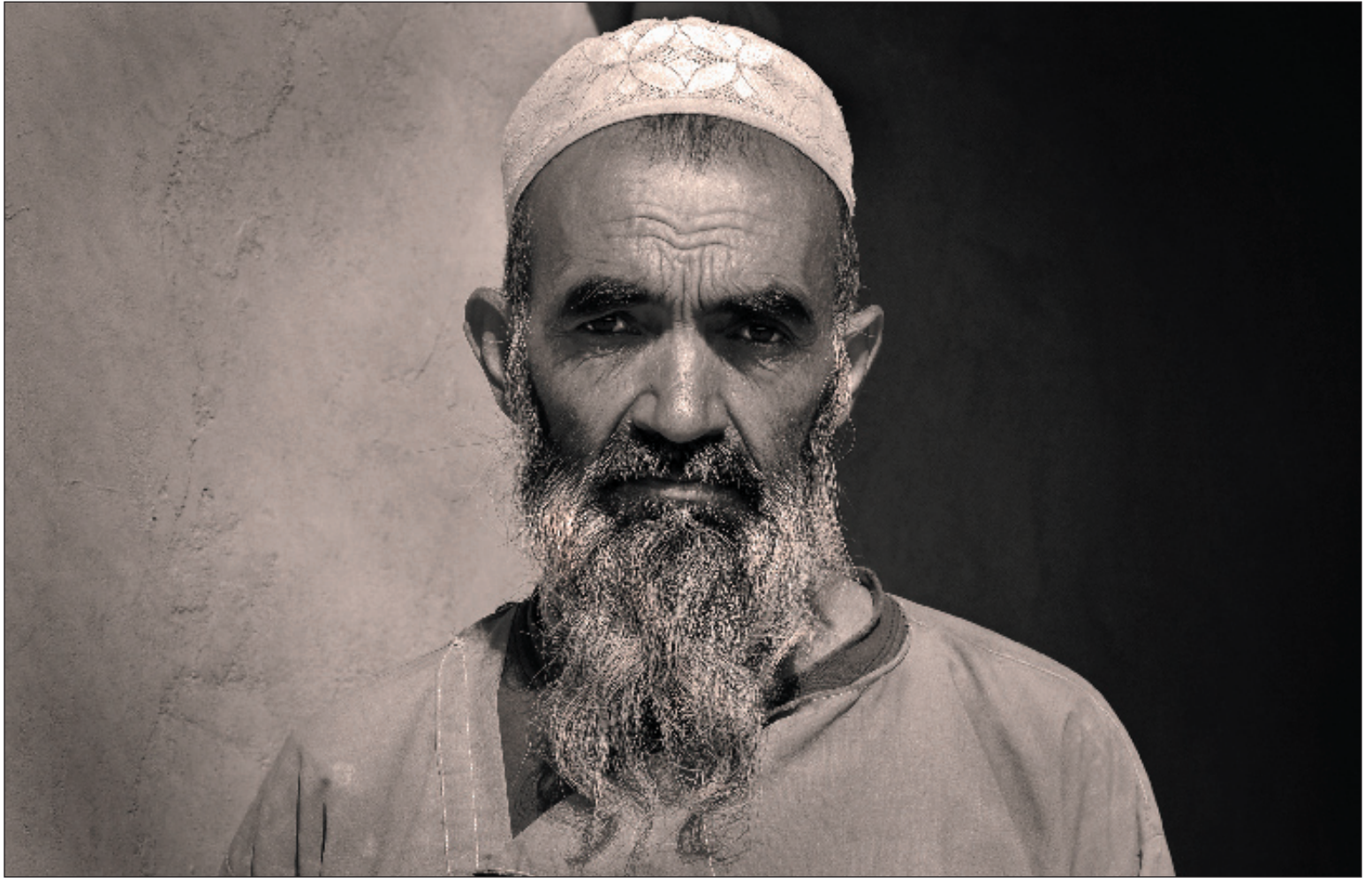
The crossing is also a prevalent supply route for Afghans. Just a few miles away through the passes of the mountains lies the Pakistan border, where many Afghans conduct trade.

“This route is impassable for the [Afghans] without this bridge. It is both the main road to Pakistan [from this area] and the primary means for access to the fire base,” said Army Staff Sgt. David Austin, the platoon sergeant overseeing construction at the fire base.

Austin also built the abutments for the bridge.

“The bridge will help the economy of the Afghan people by increasing their trade capability,” he said.

“It feels good to complete the bridge,” said Preski.



**Top:** An Afghan man poses for the camera in a displaced persons' camp just outside Bagram Airfield. Operation Care, an all-volunteer organization, brought donations of toys, clothing and school supplies to his camp. (Photo: Air Force Staff Sgt. Daniel Bellis)

**Left:** (front to rear) Army Sgt. Brittan Inman and Spc. Brian Lorichon of Bravo Company, 2/508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, patrol the mountains in Barla. (Photo: Army Staff Sgt. Marcus Quarterman)

**Above:** A Soldier pulls security at a displaced persons' camp just outside Bagram Airfield while Operation Care volunteers distribute donations to the camp residents. (Photo: Air Force Staff Sgt. Daniel Bellis)

# Photos from the Field Afghanistan

**Right: An Afghan construction worker hammers a board on a district center in Musa Khel, a village in Khowst Province. Members of the Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team mentor the workers and inspect their projects for quality. (Photo: Senior Airman Christine Collier)**

**Below: A Blackhawk helicopter from Bagram Airfield lands on a mountaintop in eastern Afghanistan during an aircraft operation training mission. (Photo: Army Sgt. Justine Ruddell)**

**Back cover: An Afghan girl looks curiously at the camera while members of Operation Care distribute supplies to her village. For more about Operation Care, e-mail: [reuben.breaux@afghan.swa.army.mil](mailto:reuben.breaux@afghan.swa.army.mil) (Photo: Air Force Staff Sgt. Daniel Bellis)**



