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Afghan hospital holds first mass casualty exercise

by Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Wollenberg
CSTC-A Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan — More than 300 Afghan National Army medical personnel participated in a mass casualty exercise April 24 at the National Military Hospital compound in Kabul, Afghanistan.

This exercise was the first of its kind to be conducted at the facility and marks the beginning of a new era in mass casualty medical treatment practices for Afghan army medics, nurses and physicians.

“The Afghans have had decades of experience with trauma and war, but have not had the opportunity to develop a preparedness plan that can be practiced, exercised and repeated,” said Cmdr. Mary Nadolny, one of 20 Navy Medical Embedded Training Team members working with the ANA here. “The medical ETT brought the ANA medical staff new ideas to incorporate into a plan that will work for them.”

The scenario for the exercise was a bus of ANA soldiers hit by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, which resulted in 30 injured soldiers and civilians.

Once the volunteer “casualties” donned their artificial wounds, and with cards describing their symptoms pinned to their clothing, they headed to the emergency room area to be triaged and treated accordingly.

As the medical staff triaged the victims, based on their injuries, other medical support staff moved the injured on gurneys or led them to one of several areas for treatment. The medical staff moved the most critical patients to the ER to be stabilized before moving them to either the intensive care unit or surgery. The staff moved the victims with less serious wounds to the wards, while others were evaluated and released.

“The importance of this [exercise] that the people of Afghanistan know a lot of stuff, but don’t have any practice,” said Mujibullih Waseem, Afghan medical physician and interpreter to the METT. “The mentors work very hard, and their



photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Wollenberg

Lt. Cmdr. Bradford S. Volk (center), command surgeon Embedded Training Team member, observes treatment of a patient during a mass casualty exercise April 24 at the National Military Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan. This exercise was the first of its kind to be conducted at the facility

ideas for Afghanistan doctors and ANA hospitals are very useful.”

The exercise tested triage, various medical treatments, functions of a medical emergency operations center, CPR and focused abdominal sonography testing.

“The goal of these drills is to see where we have deficiencies, see what we do well, see what should be changed so everyone does better,” Nadolny said. “The drill did exactly what it was supposed to do, and by far was a success. It gave us many objectives, many things to work on in the future, and that’s why we’re here.”

photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Wollenberg
(Right) An Afghan National Army medic prepares to move a patient into the emergency room during a mass casualty training exercise at the National Military Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Marines patrol in Farah

by Marine Cpl. Ray Lewis

2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division combat correspondent

FARAH PROVINCE, Afghanistan — In their first weeks on the ground, the Marines of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, met with the village elders in the Golestan District, arranged for key-leader engagements and laid groundwork for future civil military projects, making immediate progress with Afghans here.

Having traveled here to meet with provincial and district leaders of the Afghanistan National Police, the Marines also met with the governor of Farah and village elders to open lines of communication with the Afghan people. The visit culminated with the battalion's first combat patrol.

"I wanted the Afghans to know that we're here to help improve their quality of life," said Marine Lt. Col. Rick Hall, 2/7, battalion commander. "Their mission is our mission; their success is our success."

Hall commands a reinforced light infantry battalion of approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors based out of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twenty-nine Palms, Calif. Among the battalion's reinforcements are a combat engineer platoon, a shock trauma platoon, a radio battalion unit and personnel who specialize in civil military operations.

Sent to Afghanistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom, 2/7's mission is to provide security for the ANP while mentoring and assisting with their training.



photo by Marine Capt. William V. Osborne

Marines of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, conduct their first combat patrol with the Afghanistan National Police. A reinforced light infantry battalion, the 2/7 Marines deployed to Afghanistan to train, advise, and mentor the Afghan National Police in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Although the unit has not yet received all the equipment and personnel it needs to be fully operational, the battalion commander said his personnel have embraced their mission and are committed to achieving success.

"We've started our mission and have reaped positive results," Hall said. "The people were thankful for us coming to address their needs and very surprised to know that we have come from so far away to help improve their quality of life."

Gaining support from the ANP's regional and corps commanders was a huge benefit for the Marines. Although Hall said his Marines are "starting from scratch," he is confident they will draw from the lessons they learned during 2/7's support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In 2007 the battalion served seven months in Fallujah, Iraq, and surrounding areas.

After forging a bond with the ANP, Hall hosted a shura, or meeting, with the village elders of the Golestan District, located in western Afghanistan.

"I think the meeting served as a good introduction for both of us," said Marine Capt. Victor A. Lomuscio, Company G, 2/7 commander. "They seemed pretty positive and receptive and labeled out in order what their concerns were."

"No sooner did we finish the shura, we started patrolling," Hall said. "It was truly a combined joint patrol, and it proved to our alliance partners how committed we are to this mission."

The patrol also helped instill confidence in the ANP. Hall and his team of staff officers were impressed by the tactics displayed by the ANP during the combat patrol. The ANP has gotten stronger, said Lomuscio, and will get even better when his Marines start training with them.

"I'm confident that we've made a positive effect in the area that needs it," Lomuscio said. "The potential to do a lot of things is amazing. I think we'll really leave a positive impact on the Golestan Valley."



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Mission Statement

The mission of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the international community, is to plan, program and implement structural, organizational, institutional and management reforms of the Afghanistan National Security Forces in order to develop a stable Afghanistan, strengthen the rule of law, and deter and defeat terrorism within its borders.