

TIP OF THE SPEAR

TASK FORCE SPARTAN MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



AFGHANISTAN 2009



A LOOK BACK

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2009





COMMANDER's CORNER

A message from Spartan 6

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Tip of the Spear is the official newsletter for
Task Force Spartan – 3rd Brigade Combat Team,
10th Mountain Division.



Fellow Spartans,

As we begin to close out this historic deployment for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, I want to briefly touch on several key and important points.

First is a look back at all that we have accomplished here in Logar and Wardak. Just 12 months ago, these two provinces were firmly in control of the enemy. Several horrific acts and the perceived threat to Kabul led our nation's leaders to decide to place the Spartan Brigade at "The Tip of The Spear" in these two critical provinces. Our challenges were immense: brutal terrain and weather, a determined and ruthless enemy, and even the challenge of the unknown. Unlike most other brigades moving into theater, we did not assume battle space from another brigade here in force. It was up to us to move into new territory, determine who the enemy was and how they operate so we could kill or capture him, and build relationships with villagers who initially were wary and occasionally hostile.

We conducted an unparalleled Ground Assault Convoy just to get here, moving 500 vehicles and 1,500 personnel over a combined 4,500 kilometers into our battle space. During this past year, we steadily moved north to south, protecting Highways 1 and 2 and separating the enemy from the people. We gained their trust by showing that we were here to stay, providing

medical and veterinary care, jointly working with their government, and operating closely with the ANSF to make them better each and every day. We all know this country is undeveloped and archaic: through our efforts, many miles of roads were built, wells were dug; schools were refurbished. All of this is at the heart of counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. Whether I was addressing the U.S. Army War College, an undergraduate class at Harvard, or an elementary school class, my articulation of philosophy on COIN wouldn't be that much different. Essentially we went into a village and made friends with who needed help and became the worst nightmare for those who meant us harm.

It's been said, however, that "You can't kill or capture your way out of a counterinsurgency fight, but you also can't get out of a counterinsurgency fight without killing and capturing." Make no mistake, Spartans: while the "soft side" of COIN was critically important, we were extremely lethal in removing the enemy from the battlefield. In every single engagement in which the enemy chose to fight toe-to-toe with us, we were overwhelmingly victorious. While protecting the populace, our precision strike operations in all three provinces we operate in (Wardak, Logar, and 1-32 Infantry in Konar), yielded approximately 675 enemies killed, 190 wounded, and 202 captured.



"Sprint to the Finish!"

That's the challenge that I set for each Spartan as we transition responsibility for Logar and Wardak to the soldiers of the 173rd Airborne. Impart every bit of knowledge that you can to your counterpart. I want you to treat them like your own brother, as if what determines if they live or die here depends on you passing along every valuable lesson learned. I expect this to be carried out down to the most junior Soldier, to the level of detail in this example: where one of you on a left-seat, right-seat ride might say, "if you come around this corner and there are not kids playing soccer in this field, STOP! There are always kids playing there...if they're not, then something is wrong."

Be proud of what you have accomplished here, finish strong, and know that we did exactly what we came here to do: "To do good things for good people and bad things to bad people."

"With Your Shield or On It!"

- *Spartan 6*



Ambassador tours village of Baraki Barak

Story by Spc. Matthew Thompson
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

U.S. ambassador Karl Eikenberry, accompanied by Logar provincial governor Attiqullah Lodin and Lt. Col. Thomas Gukeisen, commander, 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, walked together down the busy street of the Baraki Barak bazaar, Nov. 10.

Smiling faces, warm handshakes and even a cup of Chai tea were just a few of the indicators from the local nationals that the partnership efforts between the U.S. and Afghanistan has crawled from the battlefield and reached the local population in one of the busiest districts of the Eastern province.

Eikenberry, a former U.S. Army Lt. Gen., previously served as the commander of the Combined Forces Command in 2006, remarked how protective measures had improved in the area.

"After the past year, with the hard efforts of the Afghan National Army, Police, National Directorate of Security, and I'll say very proudly with the hard work of the U.S. and the Czech military forces, there have been noticeable improvements in the area," added the ambassador. "Last year, I could not have dreamed of walking through the bazaar of Baraki Barak."

Echoing his statements, the Logar chief of police, Gen. Mustafa Hussein added, "Now we can maintain good security. It's all because of good coordination and partnership."

However, success for the ambassador wasn't just limited to a peaceful stroll through the crowded market.

His interaction with local merchants and several young children further emphasized the success of the U.S. and Afghan partnership which is paving the way for better commerce and more education.

As a result of Operation Extreme Makeover projects in the area, Task Force Iron Titan Soldiers from 3-71 have improved relations with their neighbors and security throughout the district.



Karl Eikenberry, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, discusses security in Logar province with Gen. Mustafa Hussein, the Logar province police chief, during a visit to the village of Baraki Barak, Nov. 10. (Photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).

"A lot of the development is focused on the most secured area around Baraki Barak," Eikenberry explained. "In the last 4 months there has been more than \$1 million of U.S. developmental assistance in Baraki Barak."

At a shop, the ambassador noticed a grade-school child attempting to peer through the crowd assembled at the front door.

Upon learning the young boy was in 3rd grade, the ambassador leaned in

"Last year, I could not have dreamed of walking through the bazaar of Baraki Barak."

and asked, "Are you a good student?"

The smile and a nod from the smallest person in the crowd put a smile on the ambassador's face.

A few minutes later, the ambassador stopped at a produce stand. "Where do you get your apples?"

The response was Logar. He then chose 10 from the pile and continued his walk through the market.

According to 3-71 records provided to the ambassador, other projects include 18 schools in the Baraki Barak district that have benefited from almost \$7,000 for desks and repainting of the schools and two greenhouses that will improve agricultural development in Baraki Barak.

The ambassador went into further detail of the completed projects the TF Iron Titan Soldiers have finished including the renovations of 24 mosques in the area.

"That's the United States of America that has provided assistance to 24 mosques. The extremist

Ambassador, continued on page 10



Petraeus visits, sits down with Baraki Barak leaders to hear the voice of the people

Story and photos by Sgt. Jaimé De Leon
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Gen. David Petraeus, commander of United States' Central Command, met with U.S. and Afghan Soldiers, as well as Baraki Barak Sub-Governor Mohammed Lodin and local businessmen at Combat Outpost Baraki Barak, Oct. 30.

Petraeus removed his body armor and made his way out the gate into the bustling marketplace. He shook hands, waved to children and invited shoppers down the block to a local bakery for bread and chai.

Once seated, with Lodin standing nearby, Petraeus spoke to several locals about their government. Baraki Barak's district center, which officially opened the day before Petraeus' visit, was a topic of many discussions.

"What do you think of your sub governor?" and "How do you feel about the election?" were among the many questions Petraeus asked while sipping chai tea.

Although the Baraki Barak's district center just barely opened its doors, but the government is already eager for citizens to begin to use the new center to broach their concerns and ideas.

"We're trying to give them a positive image of what the government is doing here," said Lodin.

Petraeus let the people know how pleased he was with the progress being made in the area.

"The American people have felt privileged to help the people who want to provide for their families," Petraeus said. "We want nothing more than to help the people who reject the

extremism that has caused problems here and elsewhere."

Although the new district center is a positive start, the work is not done.

The Afghan government is still in its early stages and extremists still live amongst the people of Logar province.

"It's going to take time and it's going to take cooperation," Petraeus said, in regards to attaining complete success in ridding Logar of extremism and improving its economy and infrastructure. "It's going to take sweat from the community, not just money from the outside."

"This has to be your work," he added, addressing a local shopkeeper.

"We are privileged to help, but as you know, it means more if you build it. We call this sweat equity when you invest your own sweat, your own work."



Gen. David Petraeus, commander of United States Army Central Command, met with U.S. and Afghan Soldiers, as well as Baraki Barak Sub-Governor Mohammed Lodin and local businessmen at Combat Outpost Baraki Barak, Oct. 29.



Rule of Law Conference works to build trust, credibility for Afghan judicial system

Story and photos by Sgt. Jaime De Leon
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Attorneys, judges, police officials and other members of the Logar province justice system met with their Task Force Spartan counterparts at the Pul-E-Alam Operation Coordination Center-Province, November 12, to discuss ways to improve the nation's new justice system.

"One of the big questions we have is how can we integrate the Shura and the Jurga system with the formal system," said Army Maj. Laura Wells, Task Force Spartan Brigade Judge Advocate, to the Afghan officials present. "That is one of the things I want to talk to you about, as the people who have been working with this system."

Establishing a reliable justice system is key to helping the people of Afghanistan have faith in their government.

"I recognize that establishing a trust in the rule of law is critical in nation-building," said Army Col. David Haight, commander of Task Force Spartan.

However, setting up a reliable justice system isn't easy, and it isn't something that can be done by outsiders.

Only the people who work with the system on a daily basis and know the culture to which the system is supposed to cater can accurately identify problems and solutions.

"You are all on the front lines," Wells said to the Afghans. "You know and see the deficiencies. That is why you are here, so we can work on fixing the deficiencies so the people can trust the system."

"If we have the people trust the law we will have civilized rule of law," said Haight.

Even though the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has a justice system in place, in many rural areas the people fall back on traditional tribal justice.

"If we have the people trust the law, we will have civilized rule of law."

"We should have a system where people are prosecuted by the rule of law, not just by people's impression or opinion," said Haight. "This is why we're here; this is what we need to get better at."

Many members of the Afghan National Police already work closely with American Military Police, who help train them in basic police techniques. However, more advanced classes on investigation and evidence gathering are still rare.

"We will put together the curriculum and work together to develop a program that will benefit the judiciary system," said Wells.

"We have to improve our investigation techniques," said Abul Quayom Norzai, the Logar Province Provincial Attorney General. "Where we're really failing is that the

prosecutor is not there when people are arrested. We need a better form for the police to fill out saying who, what, where and when. By the time the prosecutor gets the paperwork he is pretty much just guessing at what happened and the police are out of the picture."

The effective prosecution of criminals in Afghanistan is vital to ensuring security.

"If bad people who will hurt Afghanistan are captured and released without being prosecuted, that is a huge problem," said Haight. "That is what we are trying to avoid."

Even with proper evidence, many prosecutors and judges fear for their lives, according to many of the Afghans who attended the conference.

"One of my goals is to actually build a security wall around the courthouse and increase security so the judges feel more secure," said Wells.

While much was accomplished at the conference, it was only a few steps down the long road to success.

"We need to continue to have conferences like this and continue to speak openly, so we can find resolution," said Wells. "Every meeting is a little closer to success. It takes baby steps."



Maj. Laura Wells, the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division Judge Advocate for Task Force Spartan, listens as Abul Quayom Norzai, the Logar Provincial Attorney General, explains the problems with convicting criminals in Logar Province. During the meeting, Wells informed those present, "We will put together the curriculum and work together to develop a program that will benefit the judiciary system."



Afghans open Baraki Barak district center

Story and photos by Sgt. Jaime De Leon
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Baraki Barak's District Center officially opened in Logar province, and was marked by a special ceremony, Oct. 27.

"The district center houses offices for the district sub-governor, the local mayor and three judges who handle everything from land disputes to criminal issues," said Ronald Barkley, U.S. Department of State Representative currently serving as team leader for the Baraki Barak district.

"We're trying to give them a positive image of what the government is doing here," said Baraki Barak Sub-Governor, Yasin Ludin.

Barkley added that the District Center represents government at the lowest level.

"The whole idea is for people to experience government at their level," added the representative, going on to say that sometimes it is hard for people in the smaller villages to immediately feel the impact of what their local and national government is doing to meet their objectives.

Sub-Governor Yasin Ludin then cut a glimmering green ribbon strung across the doorway to the facility.

At the end of the ceremony, a plaque was placed at the base of the district's flag pole, which was flying the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's flag high above.

Recalling the momentous occasion for the key leaders and villagers of Baraki Barak, Barkley added, "Its local government at its lowest level and hopefully at its best."



The Baraki Barak Sub-Governor, Yasin Ludin, cuts the ribbon strung across the entrance way at the Baraki Barak district center Oct. 27. "We're trying to give them a positive image of what the government is doing here," added Ludin.

COP Carwile makes improvements to accomodate Spartan Soldiers

By Pfc. Melissa Stewart
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Soldiers in Company D, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, work hard every day to seek out and stop the enemy in southern Wardak.

When they return to their home at Combat Outpost Carwile, they have the chance to relax and even have some fun. One of the benefits, according to Soldiers, is how their living conditions have improved immensely during the past year.

"When we first got here we showered once a month," said Spc. Joshua Gabbard, Headquarters and Headquarters Company. "Now, I definitely feel cleaner and more at home."

Carwile also has two buildings that provide Morale, Welfare and Recreation opportunities for a way to

relax, contact home and even enroll in online college courses.

"Soldiers have stuff to do," said Staff Sgt. Dave Gardner, COP mayor. "They can go to the MWR and keep in contact with their families."

"It's nice to come back here and get on the internet and talk to your parents, and just get a break from all of it," added Gabbard.

Other improvements include a helicopter landing zone, a gun line, a larger fuel station and better force protection for the COP.

"This is definitely an improvement for Soldiers living out here," said Gardner.

"We've had challenges, and daunting as they were, the men have adapted well," added Gabbard. "It's a credit to the men and women who serve here."



Task Force Mountain Warrior humanitarian aid continues to assist Pakistani refugees

Story and photos by Sgt. Matthew Moeller
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Mountain Warrior service members are continuing to work closely with Afghan government and security officials, as well as international aid organizations to help address the humanitarian needs of the growing number of Pakistani refugees crossing the border into Afghanistan's Kunar province.

Recently, Task Force Mountain Warrior Soldiers distributed tents and medical supplies to Afghan government officials for the displaced persons, and dropped off large amounts of additional medical supplies to the International Committee of the Red Crescent, who maintain a medical clinic near the refugee camp.

"So far we've provided them with food, blankets, tents, medical supplies, odds and ends you would need around the house, and school supplies for the children," said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Aaron Malcolm, a platoon leader with Company C, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, one the units spearheading the relief operations.

What originally began as several hundred refugees earlier in the week is now estimated at several thousand, with more on the way.

All are believed to be trying to escape the ongoing fight between Pakistani military forces and insurgent groups, while their government continues its massive military operation aimed at disrupting anti-government forces in the country.

"We walked during the night, because during the day they were shooting at us," said one Pakistani refugee, describing traveling through insurgent strongholds to cross the border into Afghanistan.

TF Mountain Warrior will continue to coordinate with the Afghan government and international aid organizations until the displaced persons feel safe enough to return to their homes.



Local children hold their hands out to graciously accept food from a Sgt. with Company C, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment during their humanitarian aid mission in Kunar province, Afghanistan. The children are refugees who have crossed the Pakistani boarder into Eastern Afghanistan.



A Pakistani refugee has his temperature taken by a U.S. Army medic during a recent humanitarian aid mission in Kunar province, Afghanistan. TF Mountain Warrior has been spearheading humanitarian aid efforts to help the refugees during the past week.



Extreme Make Over continues with new fuel point at FOB Altimur

Story and photos by Sgt. Rob Frazier
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Several months ago, Titan Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment implemented a new program called Operation Extreme Make Over. The goal was to coordinate Afghan-led, quick projects to improve areas within the local villages, instill pride and build on the U.S. and Afghan partnership.

At Forward Operating Base Altimur, the Soldiers are using their own version of EMO as they continued the renovation of their base by relocating and resizing the fuel point area, Nov. 7. This is the latest improvement project for the unit, who has worked steadily for the past 11 months, to ensure they leave the FOB better than they found it.

The change, according to Capt. Kamil Sztalkoper, commander, Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, offered multi-faceted benefits.

"Today we are installing two

new fuel billets to increase the fuel capacity," stated the Cleveland, Ohio officer. "Additionally, this will also strengthen the force protection and improve the distribution and reception points at Altimur."

Until recently, 3-71 had been using the area that was created when the 101st Airborne Division established the FOB in late 2008. However, growing concerns over its location prompted the unit to make moving it a priority before they finished their year-long tour in Logar province next month.

Sgt. Luke Morgan, a petroleum supply specialist, was sent from the 710th Brigade Support Battalion at FOB Shank to supervise the construction. He noticed right away the new location would be a huge asset by providing better service to traffic and a more convenient spot to refuel.

"The old point was a road block and created a traffic jam," added the Springfield, Mo. Soldier. "With the new

location, vehicles can pull off to the side of the road, refuel and be on their way without causing any slowdowns on the route."

Morgan, using the help of local national workers, supervised the construction of the barriers that will serve as the perimeter for the two fueling points.

"The Hesco walls were a big challenge," stated Morgan as an Afghan worker lowered dirt into the last remaining barriers from a front-end loader. "We have to make sure we have the right dimensions to prevent slack in the liners."

Every detail is meticulously thought out and planned which, according to Morgan, will go a long way to ensuring the efficiency and durability of the fuel point for Soldiers.

An added benefit to moving the fueling point to the new location is placing it on level ground. "The earth work is very important," stated Morgan as he and his workers pulled the 1,000-pound liner tight over the Hesco walls. "When something like this is on a slant it messes with the gauging of the bags and the fuel count."

Due to the operational tempo, the Soldiers are installing two 50-thousand gallon bladders, which will encompass an area that measures 100 feet long and 60 feet wide.

Sztalkoper added that the size will ensure Soldiers have more than enough fuel to carry them through the long, weekly stretches of a deployment when the grueling tempo promotes an increase in movement.

Soldiers have also factored in the harsh weather that hits the region hard during the winter months by installing a backup drain system.

"We've installed two drains for each fuel point," continued Morgan. "This is essential for snow and water build-up so we can be certain the area will drain properly to prevent problems."

Within the next several days, the bladders will inflate with thousands of gallons of fuel, and the last major project for the Titan Soldiers on Altimur will be completed.

Fuel point, continued on page 11



Sgt. Luke Morgan, a petroleum supply specialist with 710th Brigade Support Battalion and Springfield, MO native, pulls the liner of the new fueling system tight Nov. 7. The new fuel point will increase the fuel capacity, strengthen the force protection and improve the distribution and reception points at Forward Operating Base Altimur.



VETCAP corrals livestock

By Sgt. Jaime De Leon
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Local veterinarians of Baraki Barak teamed up with the district's sub-governor, Mohammed Yasin Lodin, U.S. Army and Czech Republic Soldiers to provide much needed veterinary aid to area livestock at the Baraki Barak District Center, Oct. 25th.



An Afghan child tries to control his cow while waiting to see a veterinarian at the Baraki Barak district center, Oct. 25.

Farmers of all ages attended the veterinarian clinic. Small children toddled along holding ropes tied to the necks of goats big enough to look them in the eyes, while gray bearded men dragged anxious cattle to be vaccinated and examined.

The animals were led one at a time to Afghan veterinarians waiting under canopies set up in the grassy common area at the district center.

"At the beginning, we didn't have a lot of animals show up," said 1st Lt. Erick Malaske, Troop A executive officer, with 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade

Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division. "But then, we told some of the local elders, and they went out and gathered up more people."

The large procession of animals included cows, goats, mules and donkeys.

"We helped 492 animals and more than 200 villagers," said Staff Sgt. Dwaine Hood, Fire Support non-commissioned officer for Troop A.

Although 3-71 CAV and Czech soldiers from the Logar Provincial Reconstruction Team provided security and helped direct traffic, the veterinarians were all Afghan and the medications for the animals were bought on the local economy, Hood said.

"Farming and livestock are a huge deal in this area," said Hood. "Many people's whole livelihood is based around their livestock."

"It's important for us to provide for the animals," said Dr. Bashire, a local physician who treats people as well as livestock.

The animals were immunized and treated for an array of ailments.

"Some of the medicine is to increase the animals' appetites," Bashire said.

The treatment of the animals was intended to benefit the farmers and their livestock.

But most importantly, the VetCap introduced them to their own local veterinarians, who will be responsible for the medical upkeep of their livestock in the future.

"It shows we care for the local populace and the hard work they do," said Hood, reiterating the fact that many locals depend solely on their livestock for an income.

"Our plan is to help as many of the local nationals as we can before the harsh winter," said Hood.

Ambassador, continued

militant enemies of the government and people of Afghan say through propaganda we are enemies of the great religion of Islam," Eikenberry said. "I give this as evidence of what my country stands for. We stand for religious freedom and for respect of great religions like Islam."

During a press conference, Eikenberry highlighted the success of the partnership between the U.S. military and Afghan National Security Forces.

"I see tremendous progress that's been made over the past year between the ANSF and NATO forces," Eikenberry said. "The US Army is proud to be leading NATO efforts to further develop, train and equip the ANA and ANP."

According to Hussein, through the efforts of the ANSF and ISAF they have accomplished a lot.

"If we continue like this, I can assure you we will have a strong ANP and ANA, and we will have better security and prosperity in our country," Hussein added.

"We stand here ready to continue to help the people," Eikenberry said. "We are proud of the accomplishments and are trying to provide hope against an enemy that only destroys."



Karl Eikenberry, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, greets Logar provincial governor Attiqullah Lodin during a visit to the village of Baraki Barak, Nov. 10. (Photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).



Artillerymen interact with local shopkeepers

Story by Spc. Matthew Thompson
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

In the village of Zaywalat outside of Combat Outpost Garda, Battery B Soldiers with 4th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, talked to the local shopkeepers and interacted with the villagers during a patrol, Oct. 24.

"It helps for them to see us here in a less kinetic fashion interacting with the shopkeepers, especially with the kids," said 1st Lt. Charles Anderson, a platoon leader. "It shows that we're here not as a force to oppress them

but as someone here to help them."

The Soldiers step out of their Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles and began the walk through the quarter-mile stretch of shops along the road.

Anderson's main mission was to ask the shopkeepers how and where they store their money.

"I'm just trying to get an idea of where the money goes in these bazaars," the Buffalo, N.Y. native added. "We're trying to find out what they do with the money here or if they

take it to a bank in Kabul.

"We're just trying to track down and make sure the money stays in Afghanistan and it's not going to bad people," Anderson said.

According to Anderson, when the Soldiers arrived in the area in July, the villagers had been hesitant with offering any assistance to them.

"We're trying to push through and let the people know we're here to help them and partner with their government," Anderson said after talking with a business owner.

Staff Sgt. Rodney Turner, a cannoneer, added that he's seen a slow change in the way the villagers react to the Soldiers as they patrol through the village.

"We get a lot more done with being kind to these people rather than being aggressive," the Buffalo, N.Y. native said as several children ran over to shake his hand. "We came in a little aggressive and nervous. Right now they're warming up to us."

Normally Turner and his fellow Soldiers patrol through the streets with little to no interaction with the locals. "Sometimes you have to just come in, sit down and shake hands," Turner said. "This right here is what will make our mission successful."



1st Lt. Charles Anderson talks with a local shopkeeper in Zaywalat's bazaar, Oct. 24. (photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).

Fuel point, continued

Sztalkoper added that the new fueling system, along with the finished construction of the new chapel, hard structure billeting, and the doubling of the helicopter landing zone, will go a long way to helping the 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment when they assume operational control of the FOB in the next few months.

"We've definitely done a lot of good things here over the past year," added Sztalkoper. "The most important thing is that each project we've done impacts the Soldiers directly in a positive way. We can confidently say that we have left this FOB better than we found it."



Sgt. Luke Morgan, a petroleum supply specialist with 710th Brigade Support Battalion, along with help from local nationals, pulls out a new bladder for the fuel point at FOB Altimur, Nov. 7.



Catamount Soldiers disseminate radios to locals, encourage anti-Taliban message

Story and photos by Pfc. Melissa Stewart
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Soldiers from Company D, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, TF Spartan, 10th Mountain Division, teamed up with Afghan National Police to improve local nationals' information opportunities by distributing radios to the Salar bazaar and the village of Ab Naray in Wardak province, Oct 25.

The radios were strategically distributed to shop keepers and village elders and the head of most families in the village. Cultural dynamics deem these individuals the most likely to glean and spread the information put out by the simple radios.

"We just picked up radios from Forward Operating Base Airborne, and this is the first time we have started handing them out," said Sgt. 1st Class George Weill, platoon sergeant and Syracuse, N.Y. native. "We handed out 40 radios so we could evenly distribute them to older males and shop keepers."

The radio station, 101.5, which is run by locals, broadcasts live from Combat Outpost Carwile. They play music, take calls from locals on live radio, and most importantly read anti-insurgent messages.

"The main point is to boost the morale of the local community," said Sgt. Alexander Hoffman, a Largo, Fla. native and communications non-commissioned officer in charge for Company D. "They play music to make people happy and send out anti-insurgent messages."

The radio station also broadcasts the number to the tip line in the Wardak Governor's compound, where locals can report criminal activity.

According to Hoffman, since the radio station has been broadcasting the number to the tip line, locals have



A member of the Afghan National Police gives a radio to a shop keeper in the Salar Bazaar, Oct 25. Company D Soldiers, along with the ANP provided the radios to promote radio station 101.5, operating out of Combat Outpost Carwile, that plays news, music and anti-Taliban messages.

started to call to report criminal activity more frequently.

"Since we have been in Wardak province, we've gotten people off the fence, and on the side of the Afghan government," said Weill.

While the radio station may improve the life of local villagers, it also helps Soldiers accomplish their mission.

By keeping people informed, the Afghans are able to make informed decisions against the Taliban.

In helping locals come over to the side of their local government, Taliban activity will start to decrease, and the people of Afghanistan can move towards a safer and more synced society.

Even though this is the first time radios have been distributed, and the station has only been broadcasting since August, it is already well known to the locals.

According to Hoffman, locals call the station and thank them for broadcasting.

They appreciate the fact that they can hear music and news. Locals even call the station and ask to sing songs or read their own poetry.

"They say that they are glad that people are not afraid of the Taliban, and they are happy to hear the broadcasts," said Hoffman.

The radios are solar powered, so the lack of power in villages will not have an effect on information distribution. The distribution of the radios empowers the people, which enlivens a hope that many of these people have lacked for a long time.

"Most information is word of mouth; they have limited power and no TVs," said Weill. "By handing out radios, we can start getting word out to the locals while giving them a voice," added Hoffman.



Forward Support Company inspects, emplaces culvert protection systems in Wardak province

Story by Spc. Matthew Thompson
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

En route to a combat outpost, Company G Soldiers with 4th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment stopped periodically to inspect and emplace steel grates in the culverts that line one of the roads in Wardak province, Oct. 23.

"So far in our area, all the culverts we've placed the protection systems in have not had improvised explosive devices in them," said 1st Lt. John Young, a platoon leader with Company G. "We started in known hot-spot areas or in areas that don't have eyes on."

For Young, his Soldiers and local Afghan National Security Forces, the steel grates covering the 24-to-36-inch culverts prove to be a benefit.

"With the culvert protection systems in place, it makes their job easier because they can see that yes this culvert has been cleared, it has

the protection system in it," added the Marianna, Fla. native. "Without it, Soldiers and the ANSF have to search the ground to see if there has been an IED emplaced which puts someone in great harm's way."

While the rest of the platoon fanned out to provide a secure area, a welder and his assistant inspected the culverts.

Sgt. Salvatore Fatta, who came into the Army to weld, considers this to be his part of the fight in Afghanistan. "I think just by doing this small thing, protecting these culverts, it will help everybody do their job a little faster and a little better," said Fatta, a Buffalo, N.Y. native. "I believe it's a great deterrent."

As Spc. Jody Conger, a mechanic, removed the tools necessary to install the protective grates, Fatta drilled into the concrete sides of the culverts. Conger, who started working as a welder about a week ago, stated that

he enjoys learning and applying his new skill.

"I'm learning the trade," said Conger, a West Haven, Utah native. "Being in a Forward Support Company, it helps to know more than one job."

Fatta and Conger construct the steel grates on Forward Operating Base Airborne and then head out on patrols.

"I love coming out here and doing stuff most people see as job being done only in the rear and doing it out here in the action," Conger added. "You're right in the fight with everyone else."

After emplacing the steel grates on both sides of the road, Fatta began to weld them into place.

"The protection system is a tool to make that inspection process easier for everyone involved," Young said as he headed back to his Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle.



Sgt. Salvatore Fatta, a welder with Company G, 4th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment, welds a steel grate over a culvert in Wardak province, Oct. 23. "I think this is my part of the fight," said the Buffalo, N.Y. native. (photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).



Airmen provide connectivity for Soldiers

Story and photos by Pfc. Melissa Stewart
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Shoot, move and communicate. That's a Soldier's motto on the battle field, but without stable internet connection, communication would not be possible.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeremy Emond, at Combat Outpost McClain does his part in aiding Soldiers communicate by providing internet access.

"Here I'm supporting the war fighters at ground zero," said Emond.

Although having internet access may not seem to be important, nearly everything from tracking intelligence reports, planning operations, and tracking troops outside the wire depend on internet connectivity.

"Before he came out here the Secure Internet Protocol Router was really slow, and with most of my job I use SIPR," said Spc. Daniel T. Bailey, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Spartan intelligence analyst. "Since he's come,

everything has been really fast."

Emond is one of nearly 80 Airmen from around the world that deployed to various locations in Afghanistan to operate the Virtual Secure Internet Protocol Router, Non-Secure Internet Protocol Router, Access Point, which provides much needed internet access for Soldiers.

"This is probably the most fun I'll ever have on deployment," said Emond. "It's given me a chance to see how the war is being fought from inside a command post."

VSNAP is a system developed early this year to provide Soldiers in remote locations with internet connectivity.

"It's a great system because the disc can be set up in about 15 minutes and you can probably be passing traffic in a half an hour," said Emond. "It can pull from the power of a running humvee. You don't even need a generator to operate the system."



Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeremy Emond inspects the satellite dish of the Virtual Secure Internet Protocol Router, Non-secure Internet Protocol Router Access Point system at during his routine inspection at Combat Outpost McClain.

1-32 celebrates Thanksgiving

Story by Spc. Matthew Thompson
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Company D Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment sat down with the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division commander during a Thanksgiving lunch at Forward Operating Base Joyce, Nov. 26.

"I really appreciate the opportunity to come here to see you guys on Thanksgiving Day," said Col. David Haight. "I realize that everyone would rather be at home with their families, but if you can't do that, there's no better place to be than with your family that wears ACUs."

After Haight finished his speech, the Soldiers were dismissed to go eat lunch.

Turkey, mashed potatoes and other traditional Thanksgiving foods were on the menu.

As their deployment winds down the Soldiers are reminded during the holiday season of what they are thankful for.

"I'm thankful that I have more family than when I left," said Spc. Kyle Nichols, a squad automatic weapon gunner and Greeley, Colo. native about the Soldiers in his platoon.

"I'm thankful for family, my kids and all of the Soldiers I'm able to get home safe," said Sgt. Steven Pruitt, a team leader with 2nd squad, 3rd platoon.

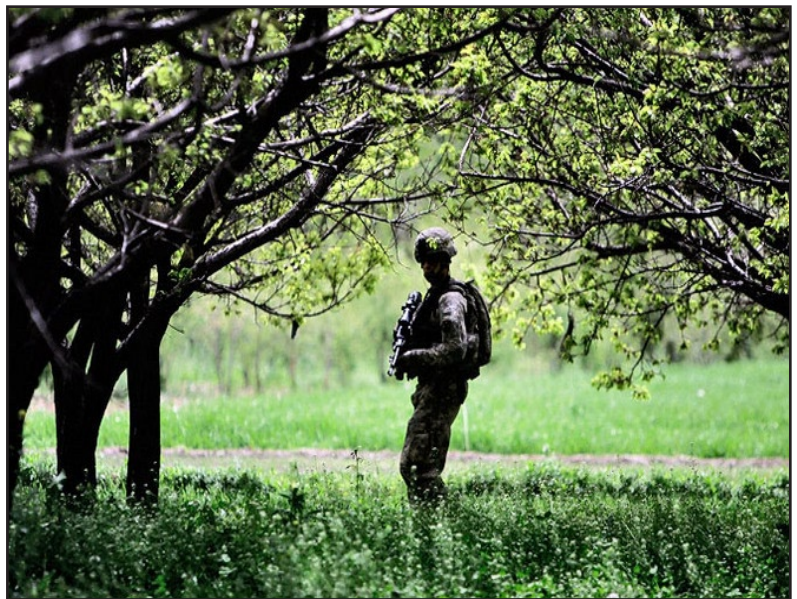
"I'm thankful that we've been safe throughout this entire deployment," said Spc. Michael Smith, a vehicle mechanic and Poughkeepsie, N.Y. native. "I'm thankful for the experience of the deployment. It's something I'll never forget."



Spc. Kyle Nichols, a squad automatic gunner with 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, tears into a turkey leg during Thanksgiving lunch at Forward Operating Base Joyce, Nov. 26. (Photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).









TIP OF THE SPEAR

THE YEAR IN PHOTOS









Spartans arrive at FOB Shank, take command of Wardak, Logar provinces from TF Currahee

Story by Staff Sgt. Amber Robinson
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Soldiers of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Spartan, recently took command in Logar and Wardak Provinces within Regional Command-East.

Ceremonies at Forward Operating Bases Shank and Airborne officially marked the transfer of authority from 4th Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Task Force Currahee, to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Spartan.

FOB Shank is now commanded by Lt. Col. George Pitt, commander of 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion; Lt. Col. Kimo Gallahue, commander for 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, and Lt. Col. Michael Gable, commander for 4th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment. TF Currahee will continue its mission with Khost, Gardez and Paktya Provinces.

The transition between units was smooth, as the outgoing unit provided strong support and guidance while Spartan troops settled into their new areas of operation, according to the inbound leadership.

"Soldiers of Apache Battalion, 4th Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, will leave here having ensured the Soldiers of Task Force Spartan will seamlessly continue the work they have started," Pitt said.



Armored security vehicles move into Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan, as part of a convoy that carried Soldiers of 3rd BCT, 10th Mountain Division (LI), from Bagram Airfield to the FOB. Soldiers will continue to move into their respective FOBs until early February. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Amber Robinson)

As Spartan leaders bade farewell to Currahee Soldiers, they said they look forward to the rapport they will form with Afghan leaders.

"I'd like to thank (TF) Currahee for the outstanding work they have done over their time in (these provinces)," Gable said. "They have established a firm foundation which we can build upon to bring security, stability and sustainability to the people here."

Provincial governors of Logar and Wardak each attended their respective ceremonies. Governors Attiqullah

Lodin, Logar province, and Mohammad Halim Fidai, Wardak province, were each honored guests during the ceremonies. They expressed their gratitude to TF Currahee for their efforts during the last year and welcomed TF Spartan into Logar and Wardak.

"The hope has returned to Afghanistan," said Fidai, governor of Wardak Province. "With your coming, you have discouraged the bad guys – the enemies of peace, stability and prosperity."

"We look forward to working side by side with all the citizens of Wardak (and Logar)," Gable said. "We look forward to supporting their efforts to develop the villages and towns into communities full of opportunities for its citizens and a better life for its children."

TF Spartan will remain in the Wardak and Logar Provinces until the beginning of next year as the first unit to illustrate the influx of military troops into all areas of Afghanistan.



Lt. Col. George Pitt, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion commander, Task Force Spartan, and Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Johnson, 3rd BSTB command sergeant major, unveil their battalion colors as they formally take command of Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar Province. TF Spartan will oversee Logar and Wardak Provinces until early next year. (U.S. Army Photo)



Organizations meet to discuss, outline future plans for Wardak, Logar provinces



An elder from Logar province sits next to Lt. Col. George Pitt, commander of 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, as they listen to projected plans for the future of Wardak and Logar during a commander's conference hosted by TF Spartan leaders on Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar province Feb. 9-11. (photo courtesy of 10th Mountain Division)

**Story by Staff Sgt. Amber Robinson
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division**

Leading organizations from Afghan provinces Wardak and Logar met for a Commander's Conference on Forward Operating Base Shank Feb. 9-11 to shape a 90-day joint plan for the provinces.

The conference was hosted by Army commanders of Task Force Spartan and included members of the Afghan National Army and Police, Czech Republic and Turkish Provincial Reconstruction Teams, with the governors of Logar and Wardak joining the group on the last day.

The conference lasted three days during which time these organizations discussed current issues and joint resolutions. Afghan officials brought concerns to the table as military and non-governmental agencies talked through future efforts for the next three months.

"We discussed lack of logistics and communication equipment for the police," said Col. David Haight,

commander, 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. "There is also a lack of sufficient ANA to partner one-for-one with our large brigade."

Security-based issues are prominent in Regional Command-East, but they are paralleled by the region's deteriorated economy. Afghans and U.S. military officials feel the economic strife of the nation feeds insurgent activity. Afghans desperate to feed their families will turn to crime, helping the Taliban for much needed money.

"We determined that they feed off each other. Without security, the economy suffers. A suffering economy facilitates bad security," added Haight.

All organizations voiced their role in helping to improve and secure Wardak and Logar.

"Our plan is to do missions with the ANA and the ANP," said Haight, during a press conference directly following the Commander's Conference. "This will help us to be more precise when we are conducting our operations, not only precise toward the Afghan culture,

but precise against those who are the enemy and those who are not."

Progress toward positive change seems imminent, especially with the influx of Spartan Soldiers working side-by-side with Afghans to affect change. However, Americans and Afghan officials understand that the change will not be instantaneous.

"I think if a country takes 30 years to be destroyed, it will take longer to rebuild," said Wardak Governor Mohammad Fidai. "But hope is here, resources are here. With all these resources and readiness, we can overcome the situation and improve it further."

The governors agree the situation in Wardak and Logar is not ideal. In the last two years, Taliban activity has escalated in the provinces and seems to have taken a firm hold on the populace. Afghans are afraid to support U.S. troops for fear of the Taliban's repercussions.

Currently, TF Spartan has experienced little aggressive enemy contact. Haight lends this to the bitterly cold weather, but feels once winter begins to subside, enemy activity will increase.

"I expect enemy contact to increase in the next three months," said Haight. "Not only will we receive more attacks because of the warmer weather, but there are more troops in the area."

While the Commander's Conference focused on security and economic evolution, once the region begins to experience more stability, commanders and joint organizations will begin to focus along other lines of effort, such as governance and infrastructure.

The brigade plans to continue to host a commander's conference every 90 days to remain synced in their efforts for a more secure and economically developed area of operations.



S.M.A.R.T. program improves medical knowledge for Afghan National Army



Story by Pfc. Melissa Stewart
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Afghan soldiers are saving lives on the battlefield thanks to some valuable training from 10th Mountain Division medics.

Company C, 710th Brigade Support Battalion, Task Force Spartan, 10th Mtn. Div., medics trained soldiers and medics from the 5th Kandak Support Battalion, in tactical field medicine in the Spartan Medical Afghan National Army Readiness Training program.

According to Sgt. Amanda Marion, medical training non-commissioned officer in charge, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, the goal of the program is to provide basic combat life saver training for ANA soldiers and more advanced training for medics and doctors.

"The U.S. has learned a great deal in the course of our conflict about battlefield trauma and the things which injure and kill Soldiers most on the battle field," said Army Maj. Matthew Pantsari, 710th BSB surgeon. "We've been able to use that knowledge and share it with them."

The classes are conducted with interpreters who speak either Dari or Pashtu. The ANA soldiers go through a six-day course that includes a wide variety of medical training; starting with basic hygiene and disease prevention and then on to tactical treatment of casualties.

ANA soldiers perform the necessary steps of evaluating and treating a casualty during their simulation exercise with 710th BSB at Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan. The S.M.A.R.T. program is six weeks long and covers medical care that ranges from routine health concerns at home to treatment of casualties on the battlefield.

"They have learned preventative medicine on the battle field; simple things like hand and dental hygiene; things that contribute to disease and non-battle injuries," said Pantsari. "As the week progressed we went into field care; if a soldier is injured, the type of care that's appropriate at the point of injury."

In the final training lane, soldiers performed in a simulated "treatment under-fire" situation while they were observed by instructors. First, they had to retrieve a casualty from a vehicle that had been damaged in combat.

The soldiers then carried the casualty to a "secure location" where medics could perform tactical field care, including basic treatment of injuries and administering an intravenous tube. Soldiers had to work quickly, just like they were in a real combat situation. Finally, they had to evacuate the casualty to a level one or two treatment center, where medics and doctors gave further treatment to the casualty.

"One of the most heartwarming things that has come out of training is the close friendships that have been formed between the Spartans and the 5th Kandak," said Pantsari. "We have enjoyed many cups of tea, and many games of cards after the training was done. It's developing more than just a collegial relationship. It's a friendship."

Country artist performs, helps re-enlist Soldier

Story by Spc. Matthew Thompson
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Toby Keith performed five of his hit songs and helped in the re-enlistment of a Soldier during the USO's America's Toughest Tour at Forward Operating Base Shank, Apr. 27.

Spc. Brian Teal, a logistics specialist with B Company, 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mountain Division, saw a Toby Keith video in which he held the flag during a Soldier's re-enlistment ceremony and wanted Toby Keith to do the same for him when the country music star visited.

"I got the idea from a friend and decided I'm just going to give it a whirl and go from there," Teal said. "I brought it up to the retention NCO that I wanted to re-enlist when Toby Keith performed."

According to 1st Lt. Natalie Withers, the executive officer and platoon leader for B Company, the whole brigade made it possible for Teal to have Toby Keith present for his re-enlistment.

After Keith's performance, Withers and Teal joined him on stage. The Billerica, Georgia, native re-enlisted for six years and a change of pace by changing his job from logistics specialist to military police. Teal added he enjoys being a Soldier and intends to stay in the Army for 20 years.



Toby Keith poses for pictures with Spc. Brian Teal and 1st Lt. Natalie Withers, at Forward Operating Base Shank. (Photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).

Re-enlistment, continued on next page



HEADLINE STORIES FROM THIS PAST YEAR

Re-enlistment, continued

"I thought it was awesome that Toby Keith took the time to be present for a Soldier's re-enlistment," Withers said.

This was also the first time Withers carried out a re-enlistment ceremony. Teal, a big country music and Toby Keith fan, said he felt great and was really pleased that Toby Keith took time out of his schedule to be present for his re-enlistment.

"I want to thank everybody for making it possible, especially Toby Keith," Teal said.

Toby Keith and Scotty Emerick are on tour with the USO's America's Toughest Tour. This is the seventh time they have been in combat zones to support the troops.



Officers with 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, TF Spartan, sing along with country music artist Toby Keith during his performance at FOB Shank April 27. (Photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).

Army Chief of Staff receives MRAP success briefing

**Story and photos by Sgt. Rob Frazier
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey began a tour of bases in Afghanistan with a visit to Forward Operating Base Altimur, April 23.

According to Army Col. David Haight, the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division commander, Gen. Casey's mission was to follow up on his Title 10 responsibilities.

"He's traveling around to forward operating bases and getting information and briefings from local commanders on how the equipment is operating; how has the training base supported us; and to find out about any adjustments that need to be made as we prosecute the fight here in Afghanistan," added Haight.

One of Gen. Casey's primary goals was to get a close look at the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle Soldiers are using on tactical missions.

"His concern was the safety of Soldiers and the survivability from the last three IEDs we hit," said 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Delosa. "It shows that he really cares what the Soldiers are doing at our level."

IEDs are improvised explosive devices, or homemade bombs, that insurgents manufacture. They are often placed on the sides of the roads or underneath bridges, targeting vehicles such as the MRAP. Its predecessor, the humvee, did not hold up well to explosions, and the amount of Soldiers injured as a result prompted the military to create the MRAP.



Pfc. Michael Keister discusses the Driver's Viewer Enhancer with Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey as a part of his briefing on the Mine Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle at FOB Altimur, April 23.

The MRAP has now become the primary vehicle for transportation on tactical missions, and it has increased the safety of Soldiers maneuvering through combat zones.

"The way the MRAP is designed, with its elevation from the road and the shape of its hull, and the amount of protection it offers, it's able to safely deflect the blast of an IED or mine strike away from its occupants," added Capt. Kamil Sztalkoper, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop Commander.

2nd platoon Soldiers from Charlie Troop told Gen. Casey about the effectiveness of the MRAP while also providing a few suggestions they felt would make a difference on the battlefield.

"One of the things we discussed was the Driver's Viewer Enhancer," said Pfc. Michael Keister, a grenadier and driver for the platoon.

The DVE is a night vision screen that Soldiers use to navigate when they conduct maneuvers in blackout conditions.

"We talked about the added possibilities that could be made if there was a zoom on it," added Keister.

Chief of Staff, continued on page 25

Wolfpack trains Afghan artillerymen

Story by Spc. Matthew Thompson
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

An Afghan forward observer, located at one of the observation towers lining the walls of Forward Operating Base Airborne, radioed coordinates back to the fire direction control team.

Within seconds, the Afghans' 122mm D-30 Howitzer roared sending a round into the side of a mountain.

Five forward observers with the 4th Battalion, Afghan National Army Artillery, were trained during a 30 day program with 4th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment and graduated May 5.

"This was a tremendous achievement for Afghanistan and the U.S. Army," said Master Sgt. David C. Rogers, a master gunner with 4th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment.

The ANA, French and U.S. forces partnered up to instruct, train and learn from each other. The French Operational Mentor Liaison Team had already been training with the Afghan artillery on how to call for fire, perform combat patrol and conduct check points.

"We're just adding to their program," Rogers added. "We're partnering in a different way than the French being that we have a different howitzer to use."

The U.S. Army uses more advanced equipment than their Afghan counterpart, like the M777 howitzer. With help from the 4-25, the ANA's cannoners were able to learn more about field artillery.

"It was very useful to work with the other Armies," said Afghan Lt. Sayed Hamed a field artillery officer with 4th Battalion, ANA. "It was very good training, and we learned a lot of new things."

Calling for fire was something the observers hadn't done for a long time, Rogers said.

"We had the FOs calling back to their cannons for the first time," Rogers said. "They are used to shooting direct fire instead of indirect fire."



A soldier with the Afghan National Army sends a 120mm howitzer round down range with the pull of the handle during a joint training exercise with 4th Battalion, 25th Field Artillery Regiment at Forward Operating Base Airborne May 5.

The partnership was established between the U.S. and Afghans four months ago when the Afghans came to visit FOB Airborne. It didn't take long before the Soldiers from the two countries became friends. For Rogers, it was a little easier as this is his third time in Afghanistan and over the years he has managed to learn enough for casual conversations.

"Within 15 minutes, they were split up into various groups, laughing, looking through the sights and talking about the ammunition with each other without knowing what the other one was saying," Rogers said with a chuckle.

According to Rogers, the trainers were fortunate to have a class who were well educated.

"We haven't had any real problems with working with them," Rogers said.

This was the first class scheduled for the year with more classes to start in the near future.

"Knowing the Afghans will take this training and eventually be able to manage on their own as a country has been the most rewarding part of this training," Rogers said.

"We learned a lot," Hamed said. "The things we learned here we can use to teach to our units."

Chief of Staff, continued

General Casey said, "We have them on the tanks, I don't see any reason we can't get them in the MRAPs."

"We also spoke to him about the suspension and more storage in the back," said Sgt. 1st Class Allan Reome, the platoon sergeant. "We told him it could be stiffer which would make for a smoother ride on the uneven terrain in Afghanistan, and we also suggested that if the MRAP had more room in the back we could more easily medically evacuate Soldiers off the battlefield."

Sztalkoper said Gen. Casey's visit with the Soldiers acknowledged their hard work and generated feedback that can be applied to improve the force for future deployments.

"Overall, it was a very receptive and informative time for Gen. Casey," Sztalkoper said. "He got the boots-on-the-ground perspective from the actual end users. It gave him a chance to see all the positive aspects of the MRAP and potential future improvements that can be made with the same vehicle."



Afghan leaders, Catamount Soldiers initiate Public Protection Program in Wardak province

Story and photos by 1st Lt. Chris Stachura
2nd Battalion, 87 Infantry Regiment

Task Force Spartan Soldiers have recently taken a role in a new program designed to increase security, empower local residents and encourage them to play a larger role in protecting their villages and keeping insurgents out of Wardak province.

Soldiers with the 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Catamount have launched a new program in the area known as the Afghan Public Protection Program, a move initiated and supported by local, elected officials. The program is a collaborative effort between the Afghan government and International Security Assistance Forces to encourage responsible young men to assume a larger role in determining their future and securing a greater level of independence.

"We support their effort and play an important developmental role," said Capt. Marco Lyons, Headquarters Company commander. "The Afghan Public Protection Program is an Afghan-requested, initiated, and developed program. It enables respected young men of local communities to become public protectors."

Graduation events for Afghan Public Protection Force officers are

occurring in several areas of Wardak, most recently in the Jalrez Valley. Approximately 100 graduates recently advanced from trainees to Afghan Public Protection Force officers. AP3 officers are instructed on several topics including: integrity, ethics, use of force, discipline and the constitutional and police law of Afghanistan.

Keeping insurgents out of Wardak is a goal of this pioneer program and its most recent graduates are establishing greater independence in the areas where they are located.

"This program is about empowerment and improving security and governance in Wardak," said Lyons. "Wardak was chosen in particular so that it can be assessed during our deployment and we can accomplish the initial wave of success. It is a program that has been petitioned by Shura members, local officials, and political leaders across the country and therefore has a strong cultural and legal foundation."

In addition to creating greater independence, AP3 establishes a stronger relationship between distant districts and the Afghan government. The program creates several benefits; improved security, enhanced local governance, and greater central gov-

ernment influence.

Recently, children in the Jalrez valley reported the location of an improvised explosive device to Afghan Public Protection Force officers. ISAF was alerted and safely disposed of the device.

"Local residents are embracing the Afghan Public Protection Program and the concept of safeguarding their neighborhoods," said Sgt. Maj. Patrick Corcoran, TF Catamount Operations Sergeant Major. "Their cooperation shows a commitment to the coalition, their country, and the Afghan government. It has had very positive effects throughout the region, especially in the Jalrez Valley. Local residents are very receptive and the Afghan Public Protection Force is thought of as a beneficial program."

In many areas, villagers have been coerced into providing insurgents refuge, supplies, and subsistence because they lack the ability to defend themselves and often are beyond the reach of Afghan National Security Force assistance. The AP3 program helps to remedy this problem by allowing local authorities to deny insurgents safe haven in their villages and to impede insurgent activity in their areas.

"Afghan Public Protection Force presence decreases the probability that insurgents will intimidate local villagers," said 1st Lt. Tyler Kurth, TF Catamount ANSF officer.

"I've spoken to local residents in the Jalrez bazaar, they appreciate that local villagers patrol the area and they believe the Afghan Public Protection Program will work," Kurth said. "The local shop owners in Jalrez think it's a great program because it enables local residents to provide for their own security while simultaneously defending their communities and their country."



Afghan volunteers for the AP3 program fall into formation as their commander prepares for a Pass and Review as a part of their graduation ceremony at Forward Operation Base Airbone. The program according to Capt. Marco Lyons, "has been petitioned by shura members, local officials, and political leaders across the country and therefore has a strong cultural and legal foundation."



New joint Operation Coordination Center officially opens in Wardak province

By Sgt. Jaimé De Leon
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

When a report comes in that someone in Wardak needs help, the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police are trained to spring into action. Until recently, however, they didn't have an easy way to coordinate with each other. June 14, marked a turning point on better communications as the grand opening of the Operation Coordination Center-Province facility will make their synchronization efforts easier.

"The OCCP is a place for the ANA, ANP, and International Security Assistance Force forces to have a centralized location in order to better coordinate between all three forces, but with the ANA and ANP spearheading efforts," said Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Trimble, acting officer in charge of the OCCP for ISAF.



Wardak Governor Mohammad Fidai (far right) along with ANA Gen. Nezamuddin Choopan (far left) cut the ribbon on the new OCCP in Wardak province, Afghanistan during the center's official opening ceremonies June 14. The OCCP will allow ANSF and ISAF servicemembers the opportunity to coordinate their efforts to strengthen security and increase development opportunities from one centralized location.

The building itself is small and neat, surrounded by high stone walls that obstruct the view of the picturesque Wardak countryside. Within the walls of the compound geraniums bloom in neat planters and small trees provide needed shade. The beautiful setting makes it easy to forget the imminent threat nearby. That is, until the radio begins to crackle with the sound of

reports coming in.

In a split second, men of all three forces leap from their chairs and set down their cups of chai. The report warns of a possible vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack. Instantly a member of the ANA sits down at one radio and a U.S. Soldier sits at another to spread the word. It

OCCP, continued on page 29

710th BSB provides education amenities to Logar schools

By Sgt. Chris Baker
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Afghan National Police from Pul-e-Alam, supported by Soldiers of the 710th Brigade Support Battalion, Task Force Spartan, delivered approximately 2,000 pounds of school supplies to the Darwesh and Karzai Elementary Schools, near Pul-e-Alam, June 2.

Notebooks, pens and soccer balls were handed out, along with many other items in an attempt to provide more amenities for Afghan students.

The most significant gift given during the day were work desks for the otherwise empty Darwesh Elementary.

"When we found this school, it had no furniture whatsoever. What we've

done, using Commander's Emergency Relief Program funds, we've brought furniture in order for them to have a better learning experience," said Lt. Col. Eugene Shearer, Commander, 710th BSB.

"I've never been in school and tried to read and write while sitting on the floor. The desks will create a more organized classroom," Cpt. William Bennett, commander, Company A, 710th BSB.

Battalion leaders hope the basic supplies will help make the learning process easier for Afghan children, who are accustomed to having very little.

As Afghan children ran around excitedly and asked Soldiers for pens,

Bennett explained the progress his unit has made in Logar.

"We've made great strides to build trust and relationships in this area. Today's a good day. We actually have furniture and supplies for the children who would otherwise be sitting on the ground," said Bennett.

Bennett says one of the biggest requests from local leaders were the desks. With that request fulfilled, the battalion focus can shift towards other projects in the area like power, well and building projects.

According to Shearer, many more improvements are on the way.

"In our area of operation we've planned projects for several schools, mosques and roads," said Shearer.

Shearer also mentioned International Security Assistance Fund's dedication to helping in Afghanistan.

"It's a long-term commitment. You can't get everything done right away. It takes time," said Shearer.



Captain continues career 20 years after retirement

Story by Staff Sgt. Amber Robinson
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

The average Army career, if a soldier chooses to make a life of the service, is a little more than 20 years. But for one jovial 62-year old Army captain, 20 years hardly seemed like enough.

Capt. Samuel Carlson, an intelligence officer with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force Spartan, is on his second voluntary tour to Afghanistan. For a Soldier to volunteer to come to a combat zone twice is one thing; but to voluntarily deploy after being retired for more than 20 years is quite another.

Carlson came into the Army on May 9, 1967 as an infantryman and later transitioned to intelligence operations. He served in various conflicts until he officially retired on Oct. 1, 1987.

"I was an infantryman that could type," he said. "I was sent to work for the personnel sergeant major of my unit, but made the mistake of pronouncing his name wrong when I went to report for my new job."



Army Capt. Samuel Carlson (left) and Army Maj. Ryan O'Connor, Combined Joint Task Force-101, pose at Bagram Air Field in 2005, during Carlson's first tour to Afghanistan. (Photo courtesy of Samuel Carlson).



Samuel Carlson, now an Army captain, receives his commission to 2nd Lt. at Daley Barracks, Bad Kissingen, Germany, in front of the unit's Sherman Tank memorial. Carlson was 31 when he received his commission. (photo courtesy of Samuel Carlson).

The sergeant major, apparently very sensitive about the pronunciation of his name, sent Carlson away to work for the intelligence officer, where he began to foster an interest in intelligence. His small mistake led to a long career in the intelligence field.

In 1991, Carlson volunteered to return and serve in Operation Desert Storm. Although his mission to Kuwait was cancelled due to the short duration of the fight, he chose to stay on active status.

Carlson served with the Texas National Guard from 1992 to 1995, working as the executive officer of the 502nd Military Police Battalion out of Fort Worth, Texas. He commanded the unit after it reorganized until his second retirement. He volunteered to come into the service again after the attacks of 9/11.

"That ticked me off," Carlson said. "I took that personally. I had family that worked in the World Trade Center, so that made it personal."

Carlson served with the 308th Military Intelligence Battalion, 902nd Military Intelligence Group, on his first tour in Afghanistan from 2005 to 2006. He returned to the United States for a

short period before serving with Task Force Spartan with the 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan's Logar province this time around.

Carlson's love of the service is based on simple principles, he said, but it keeps him going.

"I missed Soldiers," Carlson said. "In the civilian world, it's hard to find the same camaraderie, teamwork and sense of brotherhood that you find in the Army."

Carlson's conventional military career spanned the globe. He served in El Salvador, Honduras, Germany, South Korea, and a short stint in Vietnam.

Carlson's call to duty was passed down through a legacy of soldiers, starting with his grandfather, a Norwegian immigrant who joined the American military in World War I. Too old to attain the position he desired, he lied and said he was younger, allowing him to receive his desired position.

"Grandad was not of military age when he came to America from Fredrikstad, Norway," Carlson said. "So to join, he indicated that he had been born in 1891, as opposed to his

Carlson, continued on next page



HEADLINE STORIES FROM THIS PAST YEAR

Carlson, continued

real birth date of 1889. He registered for the draft in 1917 and served in the Air Service, Signal Corps. He went to France for World War I in 1918, and was still on the front lines when the Armistice was signed on Nov. 11."

Carlson's father joined the Army in 1937, received his commission in 1942 and fought in Normandy in 1944 during the invasion of France.

"Dad was on the northern edge of the bulge during the Battle of the Bulge," Carlson said. "He was also involved in the crossing of the Rhine and Ruhr rivers, as well as the encirclement of the Ruhr industrial region."

Carlson's father left the Army as a first lieutenant in 1946, but, much like his son, missed the service and re-entered as a noncommissioned officer a few months after his initial departure. He was recommissioned shortly thereafter, and took off to serve in the Korean War. He retired in 1963. Still harboring the desire to serve, his father now is a volunteer deputy sheriff in his community.

Not only have Carlson's ancestors served faithfully, but his son and now his grandson have answered the call of their country.

"My son will soon come to Afghanistan to be the first sergeant for the Laghman provincial reconstruction

team," Carlson said. "He is finishing up training at Camp Atterbury in Indiana."

Carlson's son will be in Afghanistan at the end of June, to serve in the same war at the same time as his father. Carlson said he is proud to be a part of the struggle in Afghanistan, as he hopes his son will be as well.

"I can understand this war," Carlson said. "It makes sense to me. It's well thought out as opposed to the other conflicts I have been a part of."

Carlson said he hopes he will be able to see him while both are in Afghanistan. "It may be a little difficult, but I'd like to make it happen if I can," he said.

To cap the long line of Carlsons serving in the military, the captain's grandson, Sgt. David Carlson, is stationed in South Korea.

The Carlson tapestry of military service is tightly woven. Throughout the ages, the men of Carlson's family have served in the armed forces.

"My Norwegian grandfather came overseas and joined the American Army, but my Swedish grandfather and forefathers also served in the Swedish military, which is mandatory there," Carlson said. "It was never anything planned, but for as long as we can trace back, the men of our family have served."

Carlson has been referred to as the "OCITA," or, "Oldest Captain in the Army." He smiles warmly at the jokes.

"I may be old, but the Soldiers I work with help me to feel much younger than my age," he said.

Carlson plans to retire for the third and final time when Task Force Spartan completes its deployment at the end of the year. He said he hopes to settle down and take some time to catch up with his family and engage in some of his favorite pastimes, such as playing music in his rock band.

"It's been a long career, but I'd do it all again," he said.



Army Capt. Samuel Carlson, as a private, during his basic training at Ft. Lewis, Wash., in 1967. (Photo courtesy of Samuel Carlson).

OCCP, continued

didn't take long for the OCCP to reach this level of competence.

"The ANA and ANP are very dedicated to making their country a better place, and they are really jumping in with both feet," added Trimble.

Provincial Governor Mohammad Fidai; members of the ANA, ANP and Spartan Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, all came to the OCCP for the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Guests were greeted outside the gate by ANP officers entrusted with event security. Under the colors of the Afghan flag were dozens of chairs all filled with people anxious to witness the historic event.

As the ceremony began, ANA Gen. Nezamuddin Chooan greeted the guests. After several speeches in Dari, the time had come to cut the ribbon. With the help of Fidai, Chooan cut the ribbon officially opening the OCCP.

"Today is a happy day," said Chooan. "We now have the OCCP to work together in, as we work together in Afghanistan."

Chooan was not the only one feeling the excitement of this momentous occasion. ANA, ANP, along with U.S. Soldiers and civilians, toured the OCCP while drinking chai and talking excitedly with each other.

"We are happy the Americans are coming to our country," said Col. Fazalrahim Rahimi, ANA air force operations officer. "This new building is allowing us to work together with them and our own ANP much easier."

"The U.S. is just here to mentor and help the ANA and ANP out, but they definitely have the lead on this," Trimble said.

With ISAF's continued assistance, the ANA and ANP will move forward to counter insurgents with the new OCCP as a stable base.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing what we can get accomplished here," Trimble said with a smile.

Afghan elders, officials meet to discuss governance, future of Kherwar district in Logar province



By Sgt. Jaime De Leon
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Logar provincial Governor Attiqullah Lodin spoke to local tribes at the Kherwar District Center as part of a plan to bring a stronger government presence to the area during a large meeting with the sub-governor and other local elders, July 27.

Lodin, although broaching a plan for change, doesn't plan on changing Kherwar on his own. He hopes to gain the support of all the people of Kherwar, while continuing to work with the International Security Assistance Forces.

"This time is the time of opportunities," said Lodin. "Let's take these opportunities now and build a future for our children. I am telling you now, let's work together, shoulder to shoulder," said Lodin.

Part of Lodin's plan for Kherwar involves upgrading the infrastructure. Kherwar currently has a crisscross of dirt roads with a district center made of metal containers and qalats.

"Kherwar is far from Logar and government," said Lodin. "If you're driving on dirt, it takes three to four hours to get to Logar. When we get the roads paved, it will take 20 minutes."

His plans for building does not

Logar Governor Attiqullah Lodin (left center), listens as elders from the Kherwar district ask questions about the security, governance and development of the area. "This is the time of opportunities," said Lodin. "Let's take these opportunities now and build a future for our children. I am telling you now, let's work together, shoulder-to-shoulder."

merely end with the building of roads.

"We can build hospitals for our wives and our children," said Lodin. "We can build schools for our children."

But roads and buildings can't change everything. Fighting between ISAF troops and locals, as well as locals with each other has also been a problem.

"If people are having problems, have them come to me," said Lodin. "Let's solve problems with talking, not guns and fighting."

Lodin also made a point of letting the people of Kherwar know that ISAF is part of the solution, not a part of the problem. In a crowd of men who are old enough to remember the Russian invasion, Lodin made sure to make a clear distinction between the former Soviet superpower and the current foreign forces.

"The Russians were here to colonize and make us part of their kingdom," said Lodin. "ISAF is here as our guest, to help us. They left their brothers and sisters and children far away. They came to help. Don't believe that they came to hurt us."

3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, who currently occupies Combat Outpost Cherokee near the Kherwar District Center, has no plans to leave anytime soon. With Kherwar's security stabilizing, the unit will maintain a presence to ensure the progress made at the Shura does not backslide.



A village elder from Kherwar district, along with other tribal leaders, address their questions and concerns to Logar provincial Governor Attiqullah Lodin during the Mega Shura July 27. The meeting was the first opportunity for the elders to speak to the governor in more than nine months.

Violence on election day less than expected in Logar

**Story and photos by Pfc. Melissa Stewart
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division &
Spc. Matthew Thompson
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

For only the second time in their history, the people of Afghanistan participated freely in a democratic election process, Aug. 20.

Afghan National Security Forces successfully secured approximately 6,500 polling sites across the country with 69 polling sites in Logar province.

"We take voting for granted in the states," said 2nd Lt. Dan Jendrich, personal security detail platoon leader with 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mountain Division. "I think it is a good thing to have in this country. I like seeing how many people are out there, taking ownership for their country and security so people can come out and vote."

ANSF took the lead in securing and maintaining safety at the polling



Soldiers with 3rd BSTB and the Afghan national army speak to locals on election day during a quick reaction force mission, Aug. 20. (Photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).

sites, International Security Assistance Forces, including Soldiers from Task Force Spartan were circling the outlining areas of the polling sites throughout Logar province.

"Our job was to provide outer security as the Afghan people moved to the voting poles," said Staff Sgt. Derek Smith, 118th Military Police Company. "It looked like there was a good turnout, and ANP were doing a good job interacting with the locals."

ISAF was geared for possible violence and, although American troops provided merely an outer cordon of security, forces were ready to step in and provide sound back up if enemy voter opposition became too volatile for ANSF to handle.

"I think what the enemy has been trying to do in the last couple of days

is harass the people in order to intimidate them and get them not to vote," Lt. Col. George Pitt, commander, 3rd BSTB, said to a group of Afghans who had just finished casting their ballots. "It is a testament to all of you coming out and actually standing up to the enemy."

"I want to help my country, I want to choose my president because we want a good Afghanistan," said Farha Dullah, a local voter.

The locals were so dedicated to electing their future leaders, locals with vehicles drove back and forth from polling sites so their neighbors had a chance to vote.

"In every country people have a right to vote and choose a president they want," said ANP Maj. Abdul Mktin, who also voted. "This time there will be more changes."

There was an escalation of violence across Task Force areas of operations. Although few polling sites were attacked, ISAF troops weathered an increase of attacks during election day.

"Everybody was supportive and glad to have us there," said Jendrich "They have a complete understanding of what needs to happen, and a willingness to continue forward. It's good to help enable the people, but today they did this themselves."



An Afghan national police officer points out the direction of recent rocket attacks for U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Dan Jendrich, the personal security detail platoon leader with 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mountain Division, Aug. 20. International Security Assistance Forces assisted Afghan National Security Forces during the elections by providing a quick reaction force. (Photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).



10th Mountain Division Soldiers remember, rededicate outpost for medal of Honor recipient

Story and photos by Sgt. Rob Frazier
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Thursday morning, Sept. 24, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division Soldiers gathered to remember the life, sacrifice, and selfless service of Sgt. 1st Class Jared Monti at the Combat Outpost that bears his name.

"President John F. Kennedy once said, 'a nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but by the men it honors,'" said Chaplain Capt. Kevin Mucher, the chaplain for 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, of Ft. Drum, N.Y., at the beginning of the ceremony.

As a show of support and unity, Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment and Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, sat in their red chairs, filling the gaps between the walkways, at the center of the compound, to rededicate the COP nestled in the mountains of Eastern Kunar province.

According to the command sergeant major of 1st Bn., 32nd Inf. Reg., Command Sgt. Maj. James Carabello, a Boston native, the ceremony was "only fitting...and the right thing to do" for the Raynham, Mass., Soldier.

At the White House, Monti's family, along with Service Members, past and present from 3rd Sqd., 71st Cav. Reg., were on-hand for another assembly as President Barack Obama posthumously bestowed the highest award for military valor to Monti's family, the Medal of Honor.

"We honor him by continuing the fight and believing in the same things he believed in," said the executive officer of 1st Bn., 32nd Inf. Reg., Maj. Pete Granger, who served as the Master of Ceremony for the tribute at COP Monti.

Those things, according to the Canandaigua, N.Y., Soldier, were, "his Soldiers, friends, family; country."



Monti's name will forever be linked with the bravest of America's Service Members including: Pfc. Jacob Parrot, the initial recipient in 1863, Dr. Mary Walker, the only woman to receive this honor; 1st Lt. Audie Murphy, the most decorated Soldier of WWII and Spc. Ross McGuinness, who was enshrined last year by President George W. Bush.

Monti is the sixth Soldier since 2001 to receive the Medal of Honor as a result of his actions displayed, while in support of the Global War on Terrorism encompassing both Iraq and Afghanistan.

"June 21, 2006, Sergeant First Class Monti, other forward observers and snipers were engaged in a fire-fight in the mountains near Guardesh," stated Staff Sgt. Matthew Wolfhanger, as he recounted the events of that evening. "We listened as Chaos3-5 [Monti's call sign] called round after round on a seemingly endless enemy."

According to several Soldiers who served with Monti, they state that in between calling for fire and directing his troops, Monti made the decision to retrieve Pfc. Brian Bradbury, who had been hit. After several attempts, Monti was mortally wounded when a rocket propelled grenade landed near him.

"When the team returned, they gave us the rest of the details of what

had happened that night," continued the Branchville, N.J., Soldier. "Sergeant First Class Monti had not only devastated the enemy with a mix of coolness and precision, but he had also made the ultimate sacrifice. He had given his life to save one of his own."

1st Sgt. James Reese, who served as a Battle NCO with Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 3-71 CAV, the night Monti died, said he is comforted by the personal and professional memories he has of Monti.

"He was a Soldier's Soldier," added the Monroe, Wi., Soldier. "He epitomized what a non-commissioned officer should be."

Granger implored his troops to remember that the actions of Monti went far beyond one firefight mission on June 21, 2006, and his enshrinement as a Medal of Honor recipient serves as a final tribute to a person who was always held in the highest regards by the men and women he served with.

"Please remember him as a hero for everyday he served his country and for how he lived his life," added Granger. "There can be no higher recognition bestowed on any of us than to be remembered as a person of honor, a selfless leader, devoted son and dedicated friend."

Staff Sgt. Matthew Wolfhanger, far left, and 1st Sgt. James Reese, far right, both with Troop B, 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, unveil the new sign that will be posted at the Combat Outpost recognizing Sgt. 1st Class Jared Monti, as a Medal of Honor recipient, Sept. 17, in Kunar province.



10th Mountain Division Soldiers implement their version of 'Extreme Makeover' in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Pfc. Melissa Stewart
3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division

Soldiers with Combined Joint Task Force 82 are bringing their own version of the hit ABC-TV reality show "Extreme Makeover" to this eastern Afghan province.

But instead of entertainment television, Soldiers operating in the Charkh district are on a humanitarian mission they hope will give residents better options than turning to the Taliban for help. The Soldiers recently began working with local nationals to improve their communities, one project at a time, through the Extreme Makeover program.

Their goal is to communicate with village leaders and encourage them to develop their communities on their own. After the projects are completed, NATO's International Security Assistance Force will reimburse the money that was spent on each project up to \$5,000.

"We are trying to just talk to the locals and see what they need because they are turning towards the enemy, just looking for simple handouts," said Army Spc. Justin Morris, who serves with 10th Mountain Division's Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment.

"We are just trying to give them jobs and help them out where we need too," Morris added.

By providing the locals with jobs in their own community, people may stop turning to the Taliban for financial assistance and become more self-sustaining.

In the past, when locals have turned to the Taliban for financial assistance, they were given money to attack NATO troops, local residents and military, officials said.

Although the locals may have had no malicious intent toward ISAF forces, their financial needs sometimes



A Soldier with Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, prepares to make his way over a make-shift bridge in Logar province, Afghanistan. Afghans will soon be hard at work building a permanent walkway across the area thanks to the creation of Extreme Make Over, which allows local nationals the opportunity to complete hand-on, quick impact projects in their local villages.

make it easy to do what they see as necessary to provide for their families.

"Some of the reasons they fight right now is because they don't have enough water to grow their crops," said Capt. Jason Wingart, Company B commander. "Therefore, it lowers the amount of money they are going to earn and if they don't have money, they can't put food on their table."

Hopefully, the projects not only will help decrease Taliban influence, but also encourage locals to take responsibility for the development of their own communities.

"What we want to do is tell you to start work on that project," said 1st Lt. Ryan Adams, 3rd Platoon, B Company, executive officer, to a village elder who expressed concern about building a footbridge. "Once you are finished with that project, you are going to call us and we are going to come down here and look at the project and then we can give you the money for it."

While Extreme Makeover projects have been well received, it still will take time for marked progress to be

seen in villages.

"There is a change in the people," Wingart said. "It's sometimes hard to see, but they are starting to come on board."

Task Force Spartan troops with 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, are implementing the Extreme Makeover project. If the project catches on in Logar province, ISAF officials hope to implement it throughout Regional Command East.



Local nationals apply mortar to the bricks of a new building at Forward Operating Base Altimur. Soon, these workers will be able to implement the same skills in their own villages with the creation of Extreme Make Over in Logar province, Afghanistan.



With hardships and loss in tow, Blackhawk Soldiers forge on, complete missions in Nerkh valley

Story by Sgt. Rob Frazier
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Legendary Green Bay Packers football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "The success of an organization is the direct reflection of the individual efforts of its members."

Perhaps at no other time has the definition of that quote been better represented than at Combat Outpost Blackhawk in Wardak province, Afghanistan, where an element of 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division Soldiers call home.

Four months ago, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment's Company B drove into the small deserted compound to set up operations, and over the past 20 weeks, the Blackhawk Soldiers have faced one uphill battle after another.

In the beginning, the only things present, according to Blackhawk Company 1st Sgt. Timothy Dailey, a Syracuse, N.Y. native, were two unfinished buildings and a brick wall surrounding the compound.

In between the drudge of performing daily missions that included miles of dismounted foot patrols, route clearing procedures and training the Afghan forces, Dailey tasked the troops with a large list of must-do projects needed for the COP to be functional.

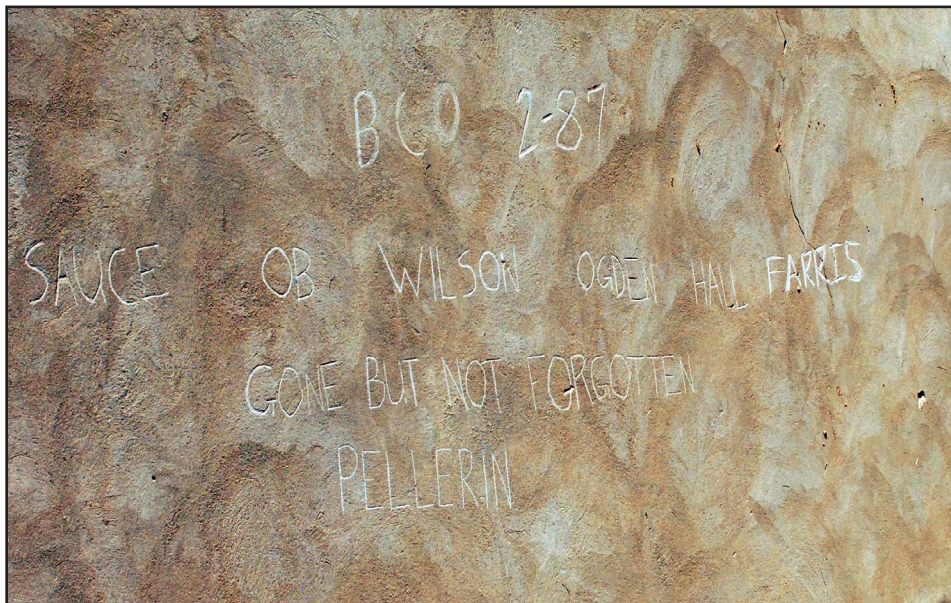
"We built and filled by-hand the Hesco barriers, because we couldn't get an excavator back there far enough, to provide protection around the entire COP," added Sgt. 1st Class Jason L. Sabatke, platoon sergeant and Merrill, Wis., native. "We also built the helicopter landing zone, fuel points, and mortar pits; ran the wiring and installed the generators. Those things were just to make this place liveable."

Initially, there was no Morale, Welfare, and Recreation tent for the Soldiers to e-mail family members or call loved ones back home. Soldiers brushed their teeth and shaved using their water bottles and showered in makeshift stalls built from leftover Hesco barriers. Laundry would have to be hand-washed and the dining facility encompassed one tent, about the size of a barracks room back at Fort Drum, N.Y.

However, according to Sabatke, the lack of amenities many people take for granted didn't deter the Soldiers and they kept a high morale during the initial building phase of the COP.

"When your guys deal with an amazing amount of suck and they're still doing their job, filling sandbags by hand and joking with one another, I couldn't ask for more," added the platoon sergeant. "Less than one percent of their generation does what they do; that in and of itself is an amazing fact. You can look at them and know they have such a sense of pride in who they are; what they are doing, and they display it every day."

Some additional changes for the company stemmed from a conversation between Spc. Brandon Huber and one of his platoon sergeants during a guard shift.



Blackhawk Soldiers chose to honor their fallen Brothers by engraving their names on the wall that outlines a portion of their COP. To date, 7 members of their team are etched into the concrete portion of the structure. (Photo by Sgt. Rob Frazier).

"I made the mistake of telling Staff Sgt. Derrick Martin, from 3rd platoon, that I ran a framing crew before I joined the Army," added Huber with a sly grin. "The next thing I knew, I was living a double life as an infantry team leader and as a carpenter building tables and desks."

Those small projects graduated into larger ones that included the construction of the Entry Control Point and Tower 4. Then, around mid-May, Dailey became so impressed with Huber's work he tasked Huber with erecting the Blackhawk's Command Post from one of the unfinished buildings on site.

"It was a shell of what was basically going to be a home inside this qalat," stated Dailey. "We saw something there we could add to, and our goal is to have it completed by the end of September."

According to Huber, obtaining material requests took time and the company had to become resourceful to get what they needed. Supply requests were sent up to the battalion headquarters at Forward Operating Base Airborne and the Soldiers utilized their additional funds to buy some of the other supplies they needed from local nationals to begin the construction. Huber oversaw the work of six local nationals to complete the carpentry tasks while Soldiers worked tirelessly with concrete to level the structure and transform the rock pit foundation into a sturdy floor.

"Aside from the fact it's been hard to get supplies, I'm very happy with the success of this project thus far," added the carpenter from Toledo, Ohio.

"They've all put in a remarkable amount of

work," added Sabatke. "I think the best accomplishment is that when the next unit comes to replace us, they'll have everything they need to hit the ground running."

In between construction projects and working to train the Afghan national police and army forces, the Soldiers remained focused on their primary mission: the safety and security of the people and the villages that encompass the 20-km long winding roads that weave through the Nerkh valley. However, the Blackhawks quickly learned the obstacles they faced on the COP would only magnify once outside the wire.

"When we first got here, we were rock stars," said Staff Sgt. Bryce Leek, a weapons squad leader from Corry, Pa. "Once the fighting season hit, nobody wanted to talk to us; we go day-by-day to see what happens."

Soldiers confessed that insurgents often roam through the villages within the Nerkh valley and threaten the locals, prompting them to become less friendly around U.S. Forces.

"When we enter a village or walk through a bazaar, and there are a lot of people there, it usually means it's going to be a good day," said Pfc. Mitchell Hodges Jr., a squad automatic weapon gunner with 2nd platoon and Springfield, Ga., native. "It's when nobody's around that puts you on your toes, because it normally means something bad is going to happen."

That 'something' is usually an ambush, normally initiated by an Improvised Explosive Device.

"There's a lot less direct fire contact and more IEDs," said Sgt. Andrew Belet, a team leader for 1st platoon, who served with the 2nd



HEADLINE STORIES FROM THIS PAST YEAR

Battalion, 3rd Marine Division in Jalalabad from 2005-2006.

While the Soldiers worked diligently conducting dismounted patrols, looking for command wires, potential trigger points and following up on leads, they could not escape the devastation that would begin June 1.

That Monday, Blackhawk Soldiers said goodbye to Staff Sgt. Jeffery Hall, Sgt. Jasper Obakrairur, Spc. Matthew Ogden and Pfc. Matthew Wilson following two separate IED attacks.

"Staff Sgt. Hall, Sgt. 'OB' and Wilson were out on a humanitarian aid mission assessing what local villagers might need," said Pfc. John Pedraza, a squad automatic weapon gunner with 2nd platoon. "While they were out there, they hit an IED. Sgt. 'OG' responded with the Quick Reaction Force team from Blackhawk and was killed when their element hit another IED."

A week later, word came from the states that Spc. Israel Saucedo had died while home on leave.

The following month, July 9, another IED took the life of Spc. Joshua Farris, who had been tasked to work with the Counter IED Team.

"The first thing you think is, 'not again'," said Sabatke, who somberly admits that he has 14 metal, Killed-in-Action bracelets from his three deployments to Afghanistan. "I haven't forgotten a single Soldier; it's a reminder that you can't



Pvt. 1st Class Mitchell Hodges Jr., from Springfield, Ga., speaks at the memorial for Spc. Justin Pellerin at COP Blackhawk on 27 August. "Pellerin and I were close friends," said Hodges. "We had a lot of things planned for when we returned from the deployment." (Photo by Spc. Matthew Thompson).



The New Command Post is near completion at COP Blackhawk. The brickwork was the only portion of the structure completed when the Soldiers arrived in April. Since that time, Soldiers have worked countless hours on construction and laying concrete to level the facility and replace the rock pit that once stood as the flooring of the building. (Photo by Sgt. Rob Frazier).

forget guys died so their buddies didn't have to."

On August 20, an IED took the life of Spc. Justin Pellerin bringing the total number of Blackhawk Soldiers lost to seven.

According to Leek, who was sitting in the passenger seat next to Pellerin, their team had just successfully fought off an ambush attack with no casualties and was moving forward in their Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle when the IED struck underneath the driver's seat where Pellerin was sitting.

"We were talking, and I just told him how good a job he did," added Leek.

In addition to the seven Soldiers lost, 15 more have been injured to the point that they will not rejoin their Blackhawk brothers until the end of this tour and everyone is back at Fort Drum.

"Losing seven Soldiers is a lot to ask of a battalion, much less a company," said 1st Lt. Colin Riker, the company executive officer, at the memorial for Pellerin. "But, the Soldiers of Blackhawk Company will continue the fight."

"Nobody can really understand what we're going through over here," said a soft-spoken Hodges. "They might think they do from the reports on the news and things in the paper, but unless you are actually here, there's no way to comprehend this."

"Through everything, I couldn't ask for better morale," added Dailey. "They understand what we're doing here and they have persevered through it all. I couldn't be prouder."

Soldiers admit emotions are high as they lean on each other for support inside the COP and while they are on mission.

"It's all about the brotherhood," added Belet. "It's about the guys you live with; you rely on them for everything to keep you going."

No matter what, the Soldiers forge on, completing missions, not so much as a platoon, but more so as a family.

"I'm really proud with everything we've been through," said Leek. "Nobody wants to quit. We've been enduring over and over, and we keep coming back doing our job every day, giving 100 percent! You can't ask for anything more."

"They draw from each other, and I believe they don't want to let anyone down," added Sabatke.

When asked to provide one word that might define a Blackhawk, Soldiers provided a variety of answers ranging from perseverance to heart; aggressiveness to endurance – all characteristics of warriors, who against all odds, with their backs seemingly against the wall, gear up daily with the memory of the fallen and the determination to see the mission completed.



The mobile kitchen used by Soldiers at Combat Outpost Blackhawk as a dining facility. The size of it is just slightly larger than a barracks room at Ft. Drum, N.Y. (Photo by Sgt. Rob Frazier).

It's through their bond of brotherhood, and unwillingness to quit the Soldiers of Blackhawk Company continue to stand guard over the Nerkh Valley, demonstrating the strength, durability and pride synonymous with being a part of the 10th Mountain Division's 3rd Brigade.



TIP OF THE SPEAR

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN



SPC Alexander Miller



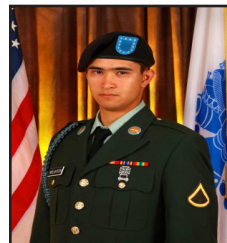
PFC Anthony Lightfoot



SGT Jerry Evans



SSG Eric Lindstrom



PFC Brian Wolverton



PFC Brandon Owens



SPC Matthew Swanson



SPC Justin Coleman



"We Spartans have descended from Hercules himself. Taught never to retreat, never to surrender. Taught that death in the battlefield is the greatest glory he could achieve in his life. Spartans: the finest Soldiers the world has ever known."



SPC Rodrigo Munguia



SGT Gregory Owens



SPC Andrew Roughton



SPC Abraham Wheeler



PFC Matthew Ogden



PFC Matthew Wilson



PFC Peter Cross



SGT Aaron Smith



SGT Carlie Lee



SGT Jasper Obakirairur



SPC Robert Charlton



SGT Terry Lynch



SPC Darby Morin



SSG Dennis Hansen



SPC Daniel Cox



SPC Isreal Saucedo



SPC Joshua Ferris



SSG Jeffery Hall



SGT Esau Delapena



SPC Justin Pellerin



SSG Nekl Allen



PFC Dennis Pratt

REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS, BROTHERS, AND FELLOW SPARTANS



“It’s been a long war, it’s been a tough war. You’ve fought bravely, proudly for your country. You’re a special group. You’ve found in one another a bond, that exists only in combat, among brothers. You’ve shared foxholes, held each other in dire moments. You’ve seen death and suffered together. I’m proud to have served with each and every one of you. You all deserve long and happy lives in peace.”

-Band of Brothers