



The Shield

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29th Inf. Div.
TF Spartan

CAS education center offers opportunities to learn, lead for evacuated Afghans

Story by Sgt. Marc Loi

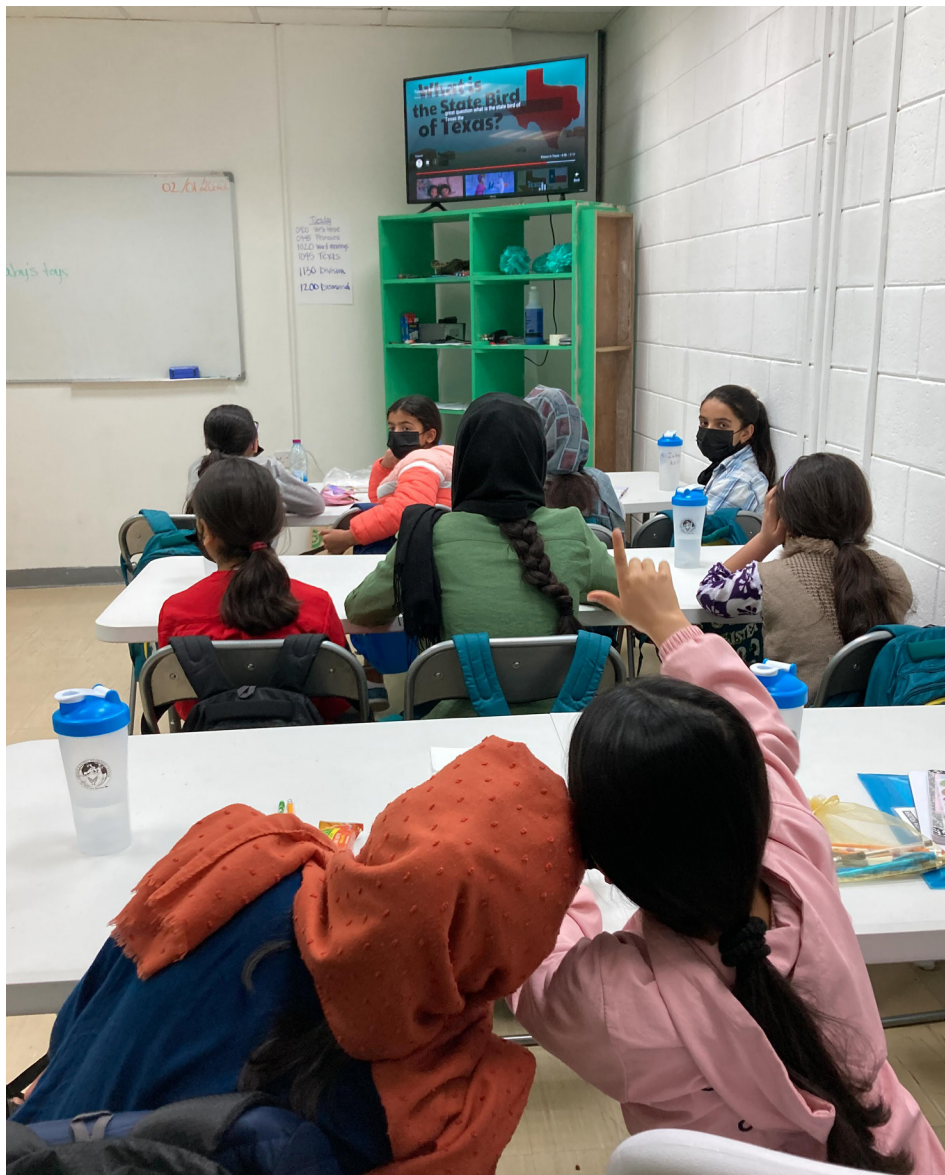
Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

CAMP AS SAYLIYAH, Qatar – Evacuated Afghan children who have been out of school since August are back in class, thanks to a newly-renovated community education center here.

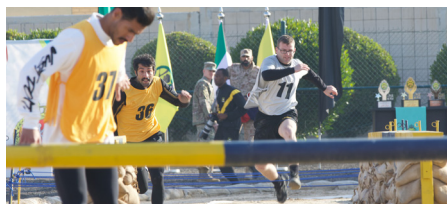
Located across the street from where Afghan evacuees are temporarily staying while awaiting processing for onward movement, the center is open to adults and children and a result of collaboration efforts among multiple organizations currently participating in the largest evacuation of at-risk personnel since the Vietnam War, said Chaplain (Maj.) Delphoney Kargbo, a 29th Infantry Division chaplain currently supporting Task Force Liberty.

Morning classes are reserved for children ages 4 – 18 and include basic math, English, as well as an introduction to American geography to help put them at ease about their prospective new home. In the afternoons, older guests receive English lessons and in-the-classroom driving instructions to help prepare them for full integration with their new lives.

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What's Inside



The Shield

TASK FORCE SPARTAN



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Maj. Gen. John Rhodes

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Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes
& Command Sgt. Maj. Daryl J. Plude
Task Force Spartan | 29 ID
Commander and Command Sergeant Major



Service Members, Families, and Friends of 29th Infantry Division:

The 29th Infantry Division will have served as Task Force Spartan, Operation Spartan Shield from July 20, 2021 to March 20, 2022. As our deployment comes to an end, DCSM Plude and I are extremely grateful to our Task Force Spartan team members for their devoted service in successfully accomplishing all of our assigned missions during this time period. Task Force Spartan has been a major contributor to the U.S. efforts in Operation Spartan Shield (Arabian Peninsula), Operation Inherent Resolve (Iraq & Syria), Operation Freedom's Sentinel (Afghanistan), and Operations Allies Welcome and Allies Refuge (Afghan evacuation and resettlement).

We thank our Task Force Spartan Service Members. We had the privilege of serving with the best that America has to offer. It is truly remarkable what these great Service Members accomplished. They achieved mission success everyday regardless of the conditions. Their efforts and contributions will have a lasting impact on our partner nations and to the security of this region. They proudly performed their duties because of who they are and what they represent. These Service Members have carried on the great traditions of the 29th Infantry Division.

We thank our fine Families. Your efforts are as commendable as those of us who wear the uniform. No one understands the hardships of deployments more than our families. Your lives have been disrupted as you had to shoulder the burden of taking care of your family. You were forced to assume the role of both mother and father and provide comfort to your children. You have fought the harder battle, and we are forever grateful for your enduring support.

We thank our Family Support Groups and Family Assistant Coordinators. You were the critical link between our service members and their families. We often relied on you to communicate with the families and media back home. You functioned in a major role, and your efforts were essential to our success.

We thank our communities for their great support. We received countless letters, cards, and packages from friends, churches, schools, and organizations. Your generous donations served a critical need and provided comfort to our lives. There was never any doubt that we were in your thoughts and prayers. This constant reminder was a major factor in maintaining our morale throughout our deployment.

We appreciate the Soldiers of the 29th ID rear detachment who

were responsible for maintaining operations back in home stations. They took great pride in ensuring that the needs of our service members and families were met. We also thank Maj. Gen. Tim Williams and the Virginia National Guard and Maj. Gen. Tim Gowen and Maryland National Guard for their support.

We have made tremendous sacrifices in providing aid and comfort to Afghan evacuees, maintaining regional security, and developing enduring relationships with our partner nations. We take great pride in being a part of this historical deployment. We have proudly represented our Nation, our home States, and our local communities.

Forever Grateful.

“29, Let’s Go! 🇺🇸



Lower left: Maj. Gen. John Rhodes, Task Force Spartan and 29th Infantry Division commander, and Kuwait Land Forces commander Maj. Gen. Mohammed Al-Dhafiri, listen to a briefing prior to the live-fire demonstration of Exercise Al-Tahreer, Feb. 22, 2022. **Below:** Command Sgt. Maj. Daryl Plude, Task Force Spartan and 29th Inf. Div. senior enlisted leader, converses with a Royal Saudi Land Forces counterpart during the culminating event of the U.S.-Saudi Platoon Immersion, Feb. 23, 2022, in which Soldiers from Task Force Spartan and RSLF spent more than a week together as an integrated force, learning from and living with each other.



29th ID Promotions

Please congratulate the following Soldiers on their promotions:

Sgt. Glenn Breedlove
Sgt. Jonathan Romero
Sgt. Joshua Sacra
Master Sgt. Shawn Smith
Chief Warrant Officer 2 George Snider
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Phillip Lacey
Maj. Christopher Larkin

from "EDUCATION" page 1

Students currently receive instructions from local and Afghan volunteers while Soldiers help facilitate when appropriate, said Sgt. 1st Class Nicole Edgington, the TF Liberty civil affairs noncommissioned officer-in-charge. For Edgington, the classes are critical because they provide children a sense of normalcy after their lives were interrupted in August.

"After all these children have endured, providing a supportive environment and routine is especially important for their mental health and emotional well-being," she said, adding that since families can stay at Camp As Sayliyah for up to two months, the activities offered at the education center give guests something to look forward to each week. While the classes are voluntary, there is already a waiting list because of Afghan guests' eagerness for the school.

An example of that excitement, said Kargbo, took place on the first day of class, when parents and students were in line 40 minutes before the center opened.

"I decided to get there early to take care of all the last-minute details and to greet the students during the first week," she said. "To my surprise, I was met by a group of excited children and parents. I asked why they were already at school 40 minutes early and the parents said, 'Yes, we know. But the children just wanted to get here early.'"

The excitement has also translated to many parents volunteering to teach classes. This Afghan-led approach is especially critical, said Col. Tim Culver, the TF Liberty chief of staff, because

it is the most culturally-appropriate approach that also empowers guests within their own community.

"The Soldiers are always glad to provide support to accomplish the mission of running the center," he said. "Ultimately, the subjects taught are decided through the U.S. Department of Education and from our travelers, students, and kids. Involving our guests as volunteers helps them get back a sense of control."



One of the volunteer teachers is 32-year-old Nasir who recently arrived with his wife and three children. A former professor in Kabul, Nasir said he volunteered to teach English and math to children ages 8-11 because many are still struggling with the language, and he wants to ensure they receive instruction during their free time. His daughter, 8-year-old Maryam, is one of his students, and Nasir said he is grateful that she and other children have a space where they can brush up on math and English, thereby ensuring they will be ready for school once they get to their destination.

"She is learning new things so that she will be ready to go to school once we get to America," he said. "As parents, we are always worried about their lessons and their future. I really appreciate that Camp As Sayliyah established a center like this."

Edgington, who helps to facilitate some of the classes, said students are already thinking of how they can give back to their new homes.

"Our room begins each day with a journal prompt to inspire creative thinking and develop writing skills. For the first daily journal, they were asked what they wanted to be when they grow up. So many chose to be doctors, police officers, or lawyers and described a desire to serve their community," Edgington said.

Although the education center is meant to enhance the lives of evacuated parents and their children, Edgington said Soldiers like her have also benefited because of the purpose it provides.

"From the moment we delivered the enrollment fliers for the education center, the joy and excitement displayed by

the parents and children gave me a sense of accomplishment," she said.

For Kargbo, the center's successes are particularly meaningful because the center provides young girls opportunities they otherwise may not have gotten, she said.

"There are no words to describe the joy that comes from knowing this is an opportunity the girls will cherish for the rest of their lives," Kargbo said. "For us to have an opportunity to be part of something much bigger than ourselves brings tears of joy to my eyes." 🌟

Above: An Afghan boy writes on the whiteboard during an English lesson held in the newly-created education center at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar. Front Page: Afghan children watch a video during a recent social studies class at the CAS education center.



Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise



Soldiers from Task Force Griz's 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 163rd Cavalry Regiment, transported an M1A2 Abrams tank from Camp Buehring, Kuwait, to Ali Al Salem Air Base, Jan 19, 2021, where it was loaded onto an Air Force C-17 Globemaster aircraft as part of a joint training exercise with Air Force logistics teams and load master crews. (U.S. Army photos by Spc. William China, U.S. Army Central (FWD) Public Affairs)

Exercise Al Tahreer 22: Combination training & celebration



Story by Maj. Scott Drugo

Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

UDAIRI RANGE COMPLEX, Kuwait – More than 100 Soldiers from Kuwait and the United States recently concluded a military exercise with a commemoration of the 1991 Kuwaiti liberation.

Military exercise Al Tahreer 22 is a unique combination of fire and maneuver training combined with a celebration of the liberation of Kuwait. The Arabic meaning of Al Tahreer loosely translated to English is “to liberate.” This year’s event involved soldiers from the Kuwaiti Land Force’s 6th Brigade and Task Force Spartan’s 1st Battalion, 163rd Armor Regiment training side by side as one fighting force, just as they did 31 years ago.

“I have participated in other partnership training events like this, but this one has a different feel. Our relationship with the Kuwaiti military has grown over the past few months, and it’s exciting to share

this important anniversary with our partners,” said Maj. Todd Morris, the Task Force Spartan exercise AL Tahreer planning lead. “Training engagements like this are prime opportunities to work together to meet current military challenges and to prepare for any future ones.”

During the exercise, the commitment of military interoperability was further honed with Kuwaiti Land Forces conducting area reconnaissance with support from attack aviation assets in coordination with a platoon of U.S. M-1 Abrams tanks and a Kuwaiti Land Force mechanized platoon.

“There is an extraordinary amount of planning involved in an event like this, and what we see on the final culminating event is the result of a full year’s worth of planning,” said Staff Sgt. Aaron Lund, the Task Force Spartan exercise planning noncommissioned officer. “The U.S. Army and Kuwait Land Forces share a common interest in providing security in this region, and the professionalism and focus of these Soldiers to address regional security challenges is remarkable.”

Exercise Al Tahreer builds on the relationship between Kuwait and the United States, which plays a primary role in the security of the region. 🌐



Top: Kuwaiti and U.S. Soldiers stand for a group photo prior to kick off Exercise Al-Tahreer, Feb. 20, 2022. **Left:** Kuwait Land Force BMPs in formation during the live-fire demonstration of Exercise Al-Tahreer, Feb. 22, 2022.



Clockwise, from top left: Master Sgt. David Pattarini, Maj. Nicholas Boykin, Jordanian Armed Forces Col. Mohammad, Mr. Pfaffenbichler, and JAF Maj. Obeidat, take a group photo during Invincible Sentry 22 in Jordan. Saudi and U.S. Soldiers celebrate at the conclusion of the Platoon Immersion event in Saudi Arabia, Feb. 23, 2022. U.S. M1A2 Abrams tanks on the Udairi Range with Kuwait Land Force scout vehicles, Feb. 22, 2022. Command Sgt. Maj. Jacinto Garza, U.S. Army Central senior enlisted leader, meets recently with Sgt. Maj. Lee Russell, senior enlisted leader of Task Force Liberty at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar. A group of Soldiers from across Task Force Spartan pose for a photo after winning the soccer trophy during the Kuwait Land Force's 15th Brigade Sports Day, Feb. 17, 2022. 1st Sgt. Robert Smolar, Headquarters Support Company, 29th Inf. Div., who turned 60 years old while deployed, poses for a recent photo at the Udairi Range.



Clockwise, from top right: 29th Infantry Division Soldiers selected to assist the incoming 35th Inf. Div. during their culminating training exercise, listen to speeches Jan. 22, 2022, during an award ceremony prior to their leaving for Fort Hood, Texas. Lt. Col. Susan Lyon addresses the audience during the U.S.-Kuwait Information Operations and Operational Security Symposium at the Kuwait Land Forces headquarters, Feb. 9, 2022. An Afghan girl asks a question during a recent class at the Camp As Sayliyah Education Center in Qatar. A U.S. Army platoon leader with 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 163rd Cavalry Regiment, stands next to KLF platoon leaders during Exercise Al-Tahreer, Feb. 22, 2022. U.S. and Royal Saudi Land Forces Soldiers celebrate during the Platoon Immersion culminating event, Feb. 23, 2022.



Task Force Hurricane Soldiers compete in KLF military pentathlon



Story by Staff Sgt. Marc Heaton
Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

KUWAIT CITY— Soldiers from the Florida National Guard's 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Hurricane recently had the unique opportunity to represent the U.S. Army in a military pentathlon hosted by the Kuwaiti Land Forces in and around Kuwait City, Jan. 30 through Feb. 3, 2022.

The competition consisted of five events: rifle marksmanship, a 4km run, grenade throwing, as well as individual and relay obstacle courses.

"Being able to participate with our partner nation forces in events such as this is imperative to building trust, relationships, and interoperability between our forces," said Lt. Col. Robert

Virant, commander, 1-124th Infantry and Task Force Hurricane.

This is just one example of the myriad of partnership exercises and engagements that occur between U.S. and Kuwaiti forces and helps to demonstrate the strong bond between the two nations' militaries.

"Events like this help to build morale, camaraderie, and partnership between us and the Kuwaiti military," said Command Sgt. Major Richard Rafford, the command sergeant major for 1-124th Infantry.

For most of the U.S. soldiers participating, this was quite a unique experience, one they most likely were not anticipating when they arrived

in theater.

"When I deployed, I never thought I'd be doing something quite like this," said Spc. Austin Ondrek, an indirect fire infantryman with A-Company, 1-124th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Hurricane.

"It was amazing that the Kuwaitis were nice enough to invite us to compete with them," said Ondrek. "The language barrier was a challenge at times, but it was cool working with them, and they were really happy to have us here."

Above: Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Hurricane, pose with Kuwait Land Forces Soldiers following the pentathlon award ceremony.



This page: Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, compete in the obstacle course and firing range events of Kuwait Land Force's military pentathlon competition.

"For these soldiers out here, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity," said Virant. "The experience and lessons learned from working with and competing against our Kuwaiti partners in this type of friendly and supportive environment isn't something you can learn in the schoolhouse or through reading a book."

"I feel our guys performed well," said

Rafford. "They only had about 45 days to prepare and had to do that on top of their regular duties."

Out of the ten teams competing, nine from Kuwait and one from the U.S., the U.S. team finished in fifth place overall.

"I think the whole team performed amazingly," said Ondrek. "It was a

tough competition and given the chance, I'd love to do it again."

The 1-124th Infantry is currently deployed to the U.S. Army Central area of responsibility as Task Force Hurricane, in support of Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Inherent Resolve. 🌐

REINTEGRATION

TIPS AND TRICKS



Successful reintegration is based on honesty, listening, love and cohesiveness.

During this deployment families and Soldiers have oftentimes had to do more with less. Families have had to maintain their routines without their Soldiers.

Soldiers have had to conform to their deployment routine while trying to keep a finger on the pulse at home.

This scenario can create stress on spouses, parents, children and Soldiers.

1. Allow your family to ask about your deployment when you return.

- Some family members, especially young children, don't have context for what we do as Soldiers and answering questions they have will allow them to feel closer to you.

2. Your family has been working just as hard as you have while you've been gone.

- Recognize your family has made sacrifices and are going to have to adjust to you returning.
- Articulate the sacrifices you've made and how you need to adjust to returning home.
- Listen to your family and allow them to share their experience with the deployment.

3. Focus on mental, emotional, spiritual health.

- Having discussions and receiving help is a sign of strength for the benefit of you, your family and your future together.

Encourage positive outlets

Gym
Sports
Outdoor activities

Discourage negative outlets

Video Games
TV/Movie
Bar

Present positive outcomes as an investment

In family
Success
Future

Reconnect with support

Churches/religious leaders
Social groups (outdoor activities,
hobbies, fitness.)
Fraternal groups
Volunteer groups



In addition to healthy communication and outlets here are some physical manifestations to be aware of that can indicate stress. Evidence of stress can be present in spouses, children and Soldiers.

Physical Responses:

Nausea, diarrhea, feeling uncoordinated, chest pains, difficulty breathing, rapid heart beat, muscle aches, headaches, chills, profuse sweating, sleep disturbances, dizziness, jumpiness.

Feelings:

Anxiety in crowded public places, fear, depression, feeling lost or abandoned, feeling isolated, irritable or angry.

Thoughts:

Difficulty making decisions or problem-solving, difficulty concentrating, confusion, disorientation to time or place, and/or poor attention span.

Actions:

Withdrawal from usual activities, restlessness, emotional outbursts, increased use of alcohol or drugs (including prescription drugs) and/or change in appetite.

Allow your family and community to assist and welcome you back into a healthy pattern of life. If you find yourself having any issues, no issue is too small, reach out to services available to you. Getting help is responsible and shows a strong commitment to your family, community and yourself. This applies to families, spouses and Soldiers.

REACH OUT!

To your chaplain or care provider for a referral if you feel you need professional help!

Saudi, U.S. forces 'survive' together during Protection Shield III

Story by Maj. Scott Drugo

Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

SAUDI ARABIA – The third iteration of military exercise Protection Shield concluded Jan. 27, following nine days of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) survivability training between the United States and Saudi Arabia at the 5th Air Defense Group Base.

During the exercise, more than 400 participants from multiple organizations were synchronized to train in a real-world threat environment demonstrating their readiness to respond as a team to regional threats. This biennial training event involved U.S. Army Central's Task Force Spar-

tan, U.S. Air Force Emergency Management, U.S. Air Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal, U.S. Air Force medical experts, Royal Saudi Land Forces, Royal Saudi Air Defense, Royal Saudi Civil Defense Force, Red Crescent, Ministry of Health, and other Kingdom of Saudi Arabia civilian organizations working side-by-side toward a common goal.

"Protection Shield III is a great opportunity for the U.S. military to come together with Saudi Arabia and represents a unique opportunity to both learn from and teach our training partners, honing our crisis response capabilities," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 John Hartley, the Task Force Spartan CBRN officer in charge. "We

remain committed to increasing our interoperability with our key partners. Such tactical cooperation maintains our ready, responsive forces and reinforces our commitment to regional stability."

The culminating event of Protection Shield III involved a response to an unmanned aircraft system (UAS) chemical warfare attack and a mass casualty event. During the event an enemy UAS was dispatched to deliver notional chemical munitions as friendly forces observed the threat and neutralized it. After the threat was neutralized, the U.S. and Saudi forces responded to decontaminate the area, vehicles, and each other to restore operations.





"We had to make a few adjustments to follow strict COVID-19 protocols that were implemented, but we adapted the training and we continued to practice measures to mitigate and minimize the spread of COVID-19," said Maj. Juan Rodriguez the lead exercise planner from the Build Partner Capacity Directorate at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. "Working with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provides a valuable opportunity to mutually improve our regional postures and cooperatively safeguard against specific threats."

During the exercise, participants were provided with interagency and mutual support components of a weapon of mass destruction incident from the Red Crescent and Ministry of Health. Leading up to the culminating event, Soldiers and airmen participated in mission analysis and command-post exercises, as well as training on detecting chemical agents, chemical munitions delivery systems, chemical decontamination practices, and major incident responses to chemical attacks. 🌐



Page 12: Soldiers evacuate a casualty during exercise Protection Shield III in Saudi Arabia. This page, top: U.S. forces participating in Protection Shield III pause for a group photo. Above: Royal Saudi Land Forces and U.S. Army Soldiers training together on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear survivability operations, snap a photo together in Saudi Arabia.