

FREEDOM WATCH

MARCH 2010

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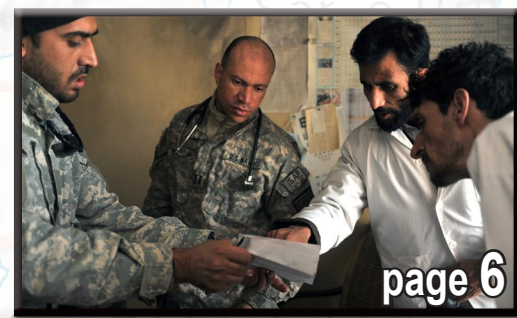
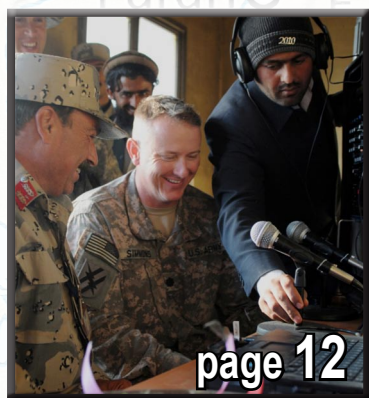
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FREEDOM WATCH

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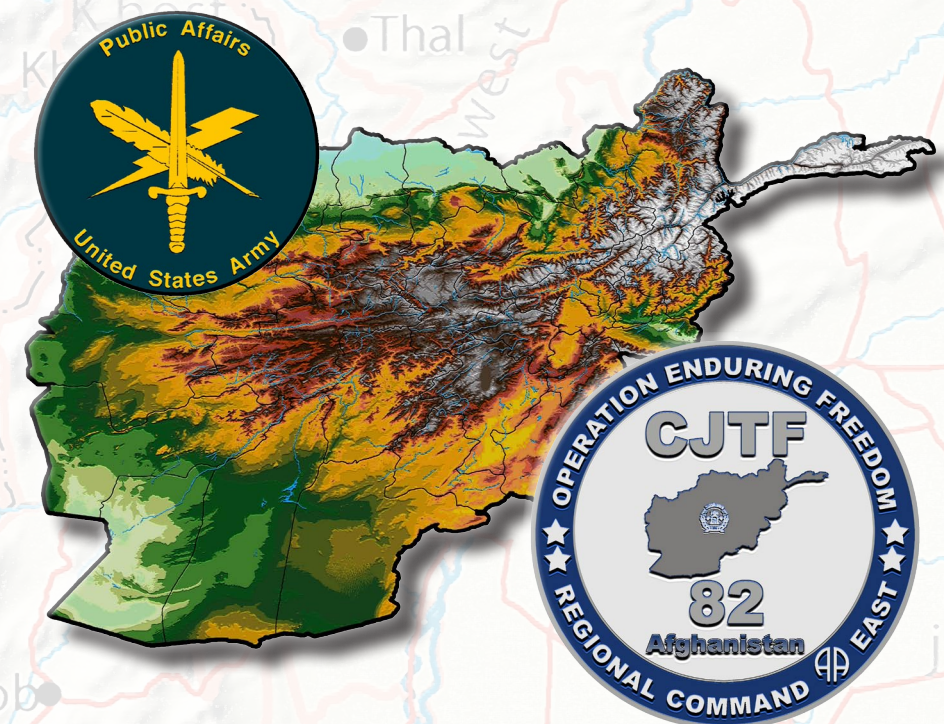
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Fighting a Thinking Enemy

Story and photo by Lance Cpl. James W. Clark, Regimental Combat Team-7, 1st Marine Div. PAO

Beleaguered and tired, with combat boots half filled with water, Marines with Charlie Co., 1st Bn., 6th Marine Regt. and the ANA Soldiers attached to their unit trudge through flooded canals in the Shorshurak region of Helmand province, Jan. 29.

Sucking and sloshing sounds follow in their wake as the members of the patrol wrench one foot out of the mud, only to embed the other in wet clay moments later.

Making their way out of the damp, uneven gully, the Marines and Soldiers stalk across fields, where farmers have begun to emerge from their homes in the early morning to tend to their crops.

In the distance, men on foot and others on motorbikes trail the patrol, but are watched cautiously by designated marksmen, peppered throughout the column. At every compound where they stop, the unit leaders meet with the heads of the household, trying to get a sense of the community's concerns.

Having recently moved into the region, replacing Alpha Co., 1/6 Marines, the Marines with Charlie Co., conducted census patrols in order to get acquainted with their surroundings, and their neighbors. The near-constant harassment and attacks by insurgents operating in the area makes the the Marines' efforts to build rapport with local communities more hazardous and challenging.

"It's a difficult area – it directly borders the Taliban (stronghold) adjacent to us," said Marine 1st Lt. Aaron B. MacLean, 2nd Plt. commander, Charlie Co. "It's stressful, but it's what we do – pleased to do, to be here at

the front of the fight. Our goal, which is to kill the enemy while reducing civilian casualties, is difficult because the (Taliban) know that's our priority. It's difficult to go out and be manipulated like we are, but we follow the rules.

"A lot of foreign fighters have been moved into our area of operations," said MacLean. "As we flooded in, so did they. The Taliban sent in a crack group of insurgents to counter ours. Their preferred method of killing is through the use of improvised explosive devices. Marines are in heavy combat out here and facing the (insurgent) A-team, but we're defeating them regularly and protecting the locals."

The fighting in the area has intensified in recent weeks for Charlie Co., he said.

"Our platoon was hit hard and we lost key leaders," said MacLean. "Our hearts go out to their families and we think about them all the time."

In addition to facing imminent danger, the Marines are frequently finding themselves in positions from which they cannot engage

"We're facing a thinking enemy; they adapt to our tactics in order to counter them. They are very cynically taking advantage of our rules of engagement."

-- Marine 1st Lt. Aaron B. MacLean, 2nd Plt. commander, Charlie Co., 1/6 Marines

insurgents due to their enemy's manipulation of the rules of engagement.

"We're facing a thinking enemy; they adapt to our tactics in order to counter them," said MacLean. "They are very cynically taking advantage of our rules of engagement. We've seen them multiple times fleeing the area with women and children as human shields. Their spotters frequently have kids on the backs of their mopeds to deter us from firing."

Lance Cpl. Joseph S. Jones V, a team leader with Charlie Co., said, "Improvised explosive devices are the biggest threat right now, coupled with them accurately firing and maneuvering on us."

Jones, who was with 1/6 on their last deployment to Afghanistan where they served in the Garmsir District under the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, added, "Compared to last year the Taliban is more organized this time. They're ready for us this time – they know it's tough for us to use air, and even once helos showed up, they kept firing. They weren't scared at all. It really does suck, when we could take them out with indirect fire or air support, but we can't because they're near a compound or have civilians with them – now we have to maneuver under heavy enemy fire."

"We're forced to rely on the organic weapons in the platoon and not on outside assets," said Jones. "It definitely messes with our heads. It generates doubt instead of letting us focus on engaging the enemy, so you have to work at keeping your Marines' heads in the game and keep them focused on their job."

Despite the difficulties posed by insurgents in the region, the Marines have been able to interact with locals who want the Taliban expelled.


"Some parts of the area of operations you can sit down and hold a shura or speak with key leaders," said MacLean. "They want the Taliban gone, but are scared and need them pushed away."

The ANA Soldiers are able to represent the government and its role in fighting insurgency in the region.

"I spoke with the villagers in order to build relationships and rapport with them, mostly speaking with the children," said ANA Maj. Shakatklah, a Soldier with Charlie Co., with the aid of an interpreter.

"It's not our first time doing this; we've been at it for years," continued Shakatklah. "I can talk with the people and speak with them. This is a good area; the enemy can't succeed here. It's our job to fight for our country and to fight this enemy."

As the troops on the patrol met with the villagers and took notes on their concerns and grievances, both parties had the opportunity to get to know each other more personally.

"We wanted to let them know we're here and why, which is to get them the freedom they need, not take their land like the Taliban says," said Marine Cpl. Jarrod St. Onge, a squad leader with Charlie Co. "We were definitely welcomed. The Afghan National Army Soldiers being there helped to put an Afghan face on our efforts here. Our partnering with them helps to strengthen their faith in the Afghan government." 



Village Medical Outreach

Story and photos by Air Force Master Sgt. Sarah R. Webb
Ghazni PRT PAO

Afghan, American and visiting Polish medical providers from FOB Ghazni treated 270 patients during a village medical outreach mission at the Janda Comprehensive Health Clinic in the Gellan district, Feb. 13.

Gellan, a designated focus district with a high level of insurgent activity, was chosen as the VMO site because of the lack of female providers and quality care.

"The clinic is an old structure with no female providers at all," said Navy Lt. Joseph Baugh, a physician's assistant assigned to the Ghazni PRT. "We brought three female care givers to the VMO to provide care for however many female patients that showed up."

Of the 270 patients seen at the VMO, 100 of them were females.

"When I saw the patients' faces, they were laughing and smiling. They were so happy to be there," said Shabnam, a local midwife employed by the PRT.

During winter months, the clinic provides care for 20 to

30 patients per day.

"In the summertime, gastro-intestinal problems are the most common illnesses treated in the clinics because of the extremely poor water quality," said Baugh. "There is a disproportionately high level of dysentery in this area compared to a lot of places in Afghanistan."

The most common problem being treated at the clinic during the VMO was upper respiratory illnesses such as colds, bronchitis and pneumonia, which affected many children.

A handful of ANP were among the patients seen at the clinic.

One policeman showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.

"PTSD and mental problems are widespread among the ANP here," explained Baugh. "We just don't associate Afghans with having those types of problems. But they're out there fighting insurgents every day. Some of these guys are so affected, even a car horn can scare them."

The troops also saw a policeman who sought treatment for opium addiction. They referred the policeman to Ghazni Provincial Hospital in Ghazni City where there is a drug treatment program.

Many patients seen during the VMO were referred to specialists at the larger hospitals in Kabul.

"I referred patients to Kabul and explained to them that it is impossible to treat them with just medications," said Dr. Masood, a local physician employed by the PRT.

"Most people think their problems will just go away with medications. Some of these problems are too serious for that, and there is not the definitive care available here for them that they need."

"We explained exactly where they need to go to receive care for their problems. By giving them that information, we have given them confidence and hope to go and receive the free medical care that they need."



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AFGHAN WOMEN: WORKING FOR EQUALITY

Standing just over five and a half feet tall, Gulandama Dina, the director of women's affairs for Paktika province, wears a black hijab, or traditional headscarf, though many find her words about the rights of women far from traditional.

For the last 16 months, Dina has been the representative of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in a province which UNICEF's "Best Estimate" fact sheet ranks among the five worst of Afghanistan's more than 30 provinces in both "overall primary school" and "women's primary school" categories. UNICEF also ranks the province among the bottom 15 in maternal health. The most optimistic numbers place the literacy rate below 10 percent.

"It's a big challenge working as director of women's affairs in this community," she said with the aid of a translator. Nevertheless, she added later, "Males and females working together will solve this problem."

The Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs and "line director" positions at the provincial level, like Dina's, help the Afghan government fulfill the promises to women made in the Afghan Constitution. The constitution, which became official after the Loya Jirga (Great Council) approved it by consensus Jan. 4, 2004, states that all Afghan citizens will have equal rights before the law (Article 22.2) and that the government will implement effective plans to foster the education of women and eliminate illiteracy (Article 44).

When the Afghanistan's parliament convened for the first time in 30 years during 2005, 68 of the 269 representatives in the lower house were women. This compares favorably to the 1964 Loya Jirga which established Afghanistan as a constitutional monarchy under Zahir Shah. Then, only six of 452 participants were female.

Six years after the passage of the new constitution, the Afghan government and partnering members of ISAF are struggling to fulfill its promises. There are few places this struggle is more difficult than in the region comprising the Paktika, Paktya and Khost provinces. UNICEF rates all three among the bottom 10 of Afghanistan's 32 provinces in terms of girls' primary school education. Two of the three provinces, Paktika and Khost, are also below the Afghan average maternal health, though Paktya fares better.

Many people working closely with women's affairs issues have said progress has been slow to take root.

For instance, Army Lt. Col. Clayton Morgan, who is in charge of civil affairs for Paktika PRT, described the traditional Pash-tun-dominated culture in the region, and Paktika in particular, as "repressive beyond anything you can imagine."

However, others, such as Genevieve Libonati, a State Department representative for Gardez PRT in Paktya province, are beginning to see hope, especially in education.

"There's an ever-increasing demand both from men and women... to learn more about their rights," Libonati said. "That has been a surprise and a success."

This demand has been growing since ISAF began implementing civics training courses in the summer of 2009. The courses, which are funded through the U.S. military's Commander's Emergency Response Program, train village elders and tribal leaders in the basics of law, human rights and the prevention of corruption. Those who complete the six-day course are encouraged to spread the information to those in their villages who do not have direct access to civil education.

"Ultimately, the goal is to reach the local people, not only the officials who already should have some basic knowledge of their government," said Air Force 1st Lt. Brooke Brzozowske, a public affairs officer for Paktika PRT, which uses the same program.

The civics training has been successful in Paktya province, said Army Staff Sgt. Quitze Garcia, a civil affairs noncommissioned officer who specializes in women's affairs for the Paktya PRT. She added that radio has been helpful toward this end.

"Women have been calling (the disc jockeys) and asking for the civics training," she said. "Even more remarkable, men have been calling the DJs and asking where they can send their wives and daughters to training."

On the importance of radio, Morgan and Garcia agree.

"What could actually help them? Radio," Morgan said, later adding, "Radio is the only thing that's going to impact (Paktika women) in significant numbers."

ISAF has distributed hundreds of thousands of hand-crank radios to Afghans. They have also encouraged government-friendly voices to broadcast.

Dina is aware of the power of radio and hopes to establish a weekly show to discuss women's hygiene and rights.

On Jan. 3, several ISAF troops showed her a new 300-watt "radio in a box" that has the power to broadcast to everyone in the eastern half of the province. The station is not far from the governor's compound where she often comes on official business. The Afghan DJs there said they were happy to give her some time.

Khost province boasts a number of recent successes with regard to women's affairs, said Air Force Capt. Angela Webb, a public affairs officer for Khost PRT.

A number of female journalists are broadcasting in Khost, though they need body guards much of the time. Khost City, the capital of the province, has a girls' school with a female teacher. Eighteen graduates of this school are expected to be the first female students at Khost University once living quarters can be built; ISAF troops like Libonati hope to see the positive trends continue, she said.

"I think the education opportunities here, difficult though they are, are still better for most girls," Libonati said. "In time girls and women will have more equal rights and more equal roles in society, so I'm still an optimist."

Garcia said she believes that her service in Afghanistan is already changing the minds of Afghans. With her mixed Puerto Rican and Guatemalan ancestry, Garcia is the same complexion as the women here. Locals take notice, she said.

On a humanitarian aid mission, Afghan children pointed to her and shouted something in Pashto, which the interpreter conveyed as "Woman soldier! Woman soldier!"

On a separate mission to a women's clinic, the Afghan women tried talking to her through pantomime. Garcia, who was suited up in her body armor, realized what they were saying was "you're strong!"

"You're strong, too," she said. "You don't even know how strong you are."

U.S., Pakistan Combine Forces to Counter Common Enemy

Story and photo illustration by Spc. Jay Venturini, 304th PAD

“A lot of people think there is a rift between our two countries; there isn’t. The leaders might not agree with this or that but we are working together towards the same goal -- to eliminate insurgents and IEDs from here in Afghanistan and Pakistan.”

**- Flight Lt. Akhtar Abbas
Pakistan air force**

U.S. EOD experts hosted a 10-day counter-IED training event for their Pakistani military counterparts at Bagram Airfield beginning Jan. 29.

The training represents a collusion between the two countries to defeat the threat of IEDs in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite perceived military tension, both sides are united in their fight against terrorism.

“A lot of people think there is a rift between our two countries; there isn’t,” said Flight Lt. Akhtar Abbas, of the Pakistan air force. “The leaders might not always agree with this or that, but we are working together towards the same goal -- to eliminate the insurgents and IEDs from here in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.”

The partnership between the two countries has been established mostly through a tri-partnership with Afghanistan since 2001. However, beginning in October 2009 the U.S. started working directly with the Office of Defence Representative, Pakistan to share information and coordinate joint training.

“We are trying to get a partnership going with Pakistan. We have a shared interest here to defeat the enemy of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, and that enemy uses IEDs against our forces,” said Army Col. Bert Ges, TF Paladin commander.

The Taliban and other insurgent groups have ties to

Pakistan and Afghanistan. Their elimination from one country won’t necessarily mean their extinction, said Army 1st Lt. Joshua Watson, TF Paladin combined explosives exploitation cell triage OIC and training instructor.

“There are plenty of bomb builders that live in Pakistan and bring them into this country, so whatever we see here usually has militant ties to Pakistan,” said Watson. “That is why it is vital for us to work together against this threat.”

The Pakistani EOD program, which began in 1967, instituted an IED speciality program in the early 2000’s to keep current with ever-changing threats. Pakistan is hoping to strengthen and expand the current program through training and dialog with U.S. EOD personnel.

“We have been achieving small successes over the past seven or eight years, but it hasn’t been well organized,” said Maj. Imran Javaid, a member of the Pakistan Corps of Engineers of the Pakistan Army. “I think these training opportunities will enhance our capabilities and efficiency, which will enable us to quantify the probability of success.”

This mutual conclusion resulted in the first counter-IED training event between U.S. and Pakistani forces, Ges said.

Twelve EOD experts from the Pakistani army and air force participated in the 10-day training event.

“These are 12 of the best Pakistani EOD operators that they have. We found very quickly that they are very competent. They know their stuff and are very professional,” said Watson.

Despite the obstacles of training on foreign soil, all participants viewed the experience as invaluable.

“I was glad I came here into the warzone. If I want to get training about IEDs, I think Afghanistan is the best place to do it. Here you get real, serious situations; there is no faking it,” Abbas said.

A main focus of the training was forensics and data collection from a scene after an IED detonation.

“We have realized through the training the use of forensics is very important,” said Javaid. “It can help us in preventing future incidents. We now know how vital forensics is and will incorporate its use into future operations.”

Along with the forensics training, there were discussions about the standard operating procedures for both countries, as well as robot training and practical exercises.

Students and instructors took the training seriously, with the realization that IEDs are responsible for more

ISAF casualties than any other weapons system.


“We are not talking about theories here; it is something that is real and on the ground,” Abbas said. “Everything the instructors are teaching us is from their experiences they have gone through.”

Through the 10 days of lengthy discussions and training, both sides gained an appreciation for the other and left better prepared to face the IED threat, Ges said.

“When we’re able to share what we’ve learned, what works for us and they do the same, we can take the best of the ideas and techniques, pull them together, and improve our working capabilities, both for us and for them,” Watson said.

Both countries plan on expanding their partnership through future operations, training events and dialog in the hopes of eradicating the threat of IEDs in Pakistan and Afghanistan, said Javaid.

The major emphasis throughout the training was teamwork between the two countries. Both sides understand that success can’t be achieved if the countries don’t support each other.

“The biggest thing is we are one team, one fight. We wouldn’t be doing this unless we cared about trying to figure out how to stop this cowardly way of fighting,” Ges said. 



On the Air in 3...2...1... The Gift of Radio



Story and photos by Army Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT PAO

ABP 6th Kandak commander Col. Niazy and 1st Sqdn., 108th Cav. Reg. Commander Army Lt. Col. Russell V. Simmons, Georgia National Guard, prepare to broadcast a message in the Shinwar district's new radio station. The message was a follow-up to an anti-Taliban Shiwari Pact Jirga at the kandak headquarters. The radio station is a gift to the people of that region and part of a media information initiative.

Georgia Army National Guard Soldiers of 1st Sqdn., 108th Cav. Regt. gave radio broadcasting stations to villagers living in two districts of Nangarhar province. The two stations, located in the Shinwar and Muhmand Dara districts, will provide communication to outlying villages while countering Taliban propaganda.

The technology popularly known as "radio in a box" will allow for radio programming that belongs to the Afghan people. It is one of the initiatives of the counterinsurgency process, said ABP 6th Kandak commander, Col. Niazy.

"It will not be a facilitator of military or security mandates," he said. Rather, it will be "a powerful tool to give our people a voice, a resource.... Our mullahs, district government leaders, or our local shop keepers and villagers will have full access and know that they can come to us in a crisis for honest information."

The kandak headquarters is a temporary location for the Shinwar radio station. It was also the site for Radio Spin Ghar, part of the 2005 media project, Support for Independent Radio Stations in Afghanistan, which the U.S. Agency for International Development co-sponsored.

Both stations are fully funded by ISAF with ANSF partners. They employ locals as full time station managers and on-air personalities.

"The Gate" (102.1 MHz FM) began airing full time Jan. 17 at FOB Torkham in Muhmand Dara district, which borders Pakistan.

The Shinwar station (95 MHz FM) celebrated its debut Jan. 21 during the anti-Taliban Shinwari Pact Jirga.

The gathering of about 170 tribal representatives, a first of its kind, was organized by the 6th Kandak ABP and prominent tribal leaders. It was held embracing the strictest traditions of the six-district Shinwari tribal councils to denounce Taliban tyranny and current concerns about passive governance. The radio station gave prominent Afghan leaders and security forces a platform to announce their solidarity during the station's first broadcast.

"It brings us together as one community," Malik Usman said of the opening and the reading of the council's decision. "We can share information with the people immediately when a crisis is identified and ensure their safety."

Council elders received hand-held radios at the conclusion of the Jirga. The same radios will also be distributed by ANSF and ISAF troops during patrols to outlying villages.

Niazy welcomes the new medium as a service to the people. He he said programming will be created by lo-



A young Afghan searches on the dial of a hand-cranked radio for programing from the new Shinwar district radio station. The Shinwar and Muhmand Dara districts of Nangarhar province received radios from ANSF and ISAF troops. The radios and new radio station are part of a media information initiative sponsored by ISAF's counterinsurgency program.

cal people with call-in segments and unique on-air radio talk shows that will engage government and village officials.

"The station will have a strict traditional format, from the reading of mourners' names, to Jirga results and the distribution of public service information," Niazy said. "They will celebrate with music programs, but we can reinforce their personal security with information." 📻

UNIT SPOTLIGHT

32ND TRANSPORTATION COMPANY

Mission

The 32nd Trans. Co. conducts convoy operations in support of the 524th CSSB, 82nd SB and the CJTF-82 throughout Regional Command East and South. The 32nd provides logistical support to all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces and occasionally to ISAF partners

History

The 32nd Trans. Co. was activated on April 12, 1942 at Fort Bliss, Texas. The 32nd Trans. Co. has participated in World War II, Persian Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom and currently Operation Enduring Freedom. The unit's current home station is Fort Carson, Colo.

Why they stand above the rest

The approximately 150 members of the 32nd Trans. Co. arrived in Afghanistan during April 2009, providing logistics planners with an integral transportation asset which eventually eased the strain on air assets.

Upon arriving in theater, the 32nd Trans. Co. was re-tasked to perform internal and external convoy security in addition to line-haul transportation. The 32nd Trans. Co. accepted this change of mission and developed a number of tactics, techniques and procedures that became standard operating procedure for several units throughout RC-East. In addition to their doctrinal mission, the 32nd Trans. Co. has coached, taught and mentored six incoming logistics units on convoy operations.

Soldiers of the 32nd Trans. Co. have adapted to the Afghan environment and fended off enemy forces in numerous engagements. Troops of the 32nd Trans. Co. have driven over 600,000 miles in Afghanistan so far delivering supplies to more than 20 bases. Soldiers in the 32nd Trans. Co. have been awarded 11 purple hearts and more than 70 first-time Combat Action Badges during this deployment.



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Faces of Hope

ANP Recruit Sets the Standard

Story and photos by Spc. Spencer Case, 304th PAD



"I like to work hard and serve my people; the people of Zormat are in danger."

-- Hamyun Angar
ANP Recruit



ANP recruit Hamyun Angar, 18, demonstrates how to search a suspect at the Zormat District Center, Feb. 9.

Last December, a young ANP recruit began making an impression on his ISAF trainers at COP Zormat, Paktya province.

Eighteen-year-old Hamyun Angar has been working as a police officer in Zormat district—an area where rule of law has been slow to take root—for about two months. Though he has not yet had an opportunity to attend the eight-week academy, Hamyun participates in the field training courses offered at COP Zormat and the nearby district center.

Army Staff Sgt. Reginald Howard, a squad leader of 3rd Plt., 92nd MP Co. and a native of St. John, Barbados, first noticed Hamyun during a class he taught on weapons handling and retention. When the class ended, most of the recruits went back to carrying their weapons in unsafe ways. Only Hamyun had internalized the information and adjusted his habits.

Since then, Hamyun has continued to show interest in the other classes as well, including unarmed combat training, first aid, basic patrolling and how to handle domestic dispute cases. Virtually all of the ISAF trainers have come to know and respect Hamyun, fondly dubbed "the little guy."

"Every time he sees us he wants to train," Howard said. On the days they are not training Hamyun asks when they are going to train next, he added.

Howard said he wished he saw many more recruits like Hamyun, who especially excels

in combatives training.

During his class on how to apprehend a suspect on Feb. 7, Hamyun had no trouble bringing down DynCorp employee Eric Shaver, who is much bigger.

Army Sgt. Michael Morris, who is a team leader for 3rd Plt., 92nd MP Co., taught a class on apprehending a suspect in which Hamyun took part. Morris quickly came to share Howard's opinion.

"He's one of the few we have who isn't here for the pay check. He wants to help his government succeed."

--Army 1st Lt. Michael C. McKiernan,
Platoon Leader,
3rd Plt., 92nd MP Co.

"He actually showed he was retaining the information well," Morris said. "It may have been more relevant to him because he is such a small guy."

Hamyun said he was born in Afghanistan but moved to Pakistan with his family at such an early age that he has no memory of Afghanistan prior to his return to Paktya province about six months ago.

He has been educated up to eighth grade, learning how to read and write. He can speak some English and he makes an effort to communicate directly with U.S. troops even when an interpreter is available. Hamyun said his dream is to work in the ANP criminal investigation department.

"I like to serve my people and I like to learn and I want to have a high rank," Hamyun said with the aid of an interpreter.

When asked what he likes to learn about, he said, "Everything."

"I like to work hard and serve my people; the people of Zormat are in danger," Hamyun added.

"He's one of the few we have who isn't here for the pay check. He wants to help his government succeed," said Army 1st Lt. Michael C. McKiernan, a platoon leader with 3rd Plt., 92nd MP Co.

McKiernan believes in Hamyun's potential to excel, quickly achieve rank, and has

high hopes for Hamyun's future career with the ANP.

"As long as he puts his best foot forward and does everything according to the law, I think he can do it," McKiernan said. "I hope he has a long career in the Afghan National Police, I really do."



With the aid of an interpreter, Spc. David Silva, a medic for 3rd Plt., 92nd MP Co., teaches ANP recruit Hamyun Angar, 18, how to stop bleeding in the extremities at COP Zormat, Paktya province, Feb. 9. Hamyun gained the respect of his trainers because he participates in all his courses with enthusiasm.

Avalanche Response

Story and photos by Spc. William E. Henry,
TF Cyclone PAO



Avalanche evacuees exit a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Bagram Airfield's flight line in Afghanistan, Feb. 9. Servicemembers with TFs Cyclone, Falcon, Med and the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing medically assisted hundreds of people rescued from the avalanche. (photos above and below)

Soldiers with TF Cyclone assisted with the medical evaluation and logistical coordination of approximately 260 evacuees from an avalanche stricken area in the Salang district of Parwan province, Feb. 9.

Evacuees were airlifted to Bagram Airfield where professionals from TFs Cyclone, Falcon and Med, the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing and other units aided the local nationals with medical attention, shelter and hot meals.

The TF Cyclone medical NCOIC, Army Staff Sgt. David Irving, said those service members who assisted benefitted from a practice exercise.

"We had a MASCAL exercise in November. I think that actually helped a lot of people realize how to handle something like this on a smaller scale," said Irving, a resident of Kokomo, Ind. "There were a lot of people who you could tell had never done anything like this before. They instantly started (following the example of) the people who had done this before. You could tell the training actually kicked in for some of the people."

According to the TF Cyclone brigade commander, Army Col. Richard Shatto, ISAF troops of many nationalities, including 400 to 500 U.S. members, are assisting the people of Salang.

"At this point it has nothing to do with the war on terror. This is a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, no different than what we would do back in the



states or what we're doing currently in Haiti," said Shatto, a Columbus, Ind. resident.

The process for relief assistance is similar to that of the U.S. The governor requested assistance through the proper channels to organize efforts to help the people, Shatto said.

"The governor of Parwan, the district sub-governors, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense have all been coordinating efforts to respond to this emergency," he said. "We have been nothing but a supporting element to them."

"The Afghan government is competent and capable of taking care of their citizens and they care for their citizens."

Shatto said the efforts are similar to most any emergency response around the globe.

"I think day one and two into the response effort is just like any other response anywhere across the world," he said. "There are a lot of people doing great and wonderful things. All of it came together very well and we executed what we needed to. We got those people off the mountain and got them first aid, shelter and food."

Irving said that their rescue efforts were appreciated by the evacuees.

"You could see it in their faces," he said. "You could see they appreciated what we were doing. A lot of them were thankful because they were still alive."



Army Pvt. Randall Bone (above), a medical Soldier with the 82nd Airborne Div. STB, and Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Osborne (below), a medic with 3rd Inf. Div. CAB, render medical aid to people evacuated from an avalanche in the Salang district area in Parwan province at Bagram Airfield, Feb. 9.



Hundreds of people evacuated from an avalanche in the Salang district area in Parwan province gather in a temporary resting area for follow-up treatment, a hot meal and a place to relax at Bagram Airfield, Feb. 9. Servicemembers with TF Cyclone, Falcon, Med and the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing medically assisted hundreds of people rescued from the avalanche stricken area.

Goodwill across Afghanistan: ISAF and ANSF Reaching Out

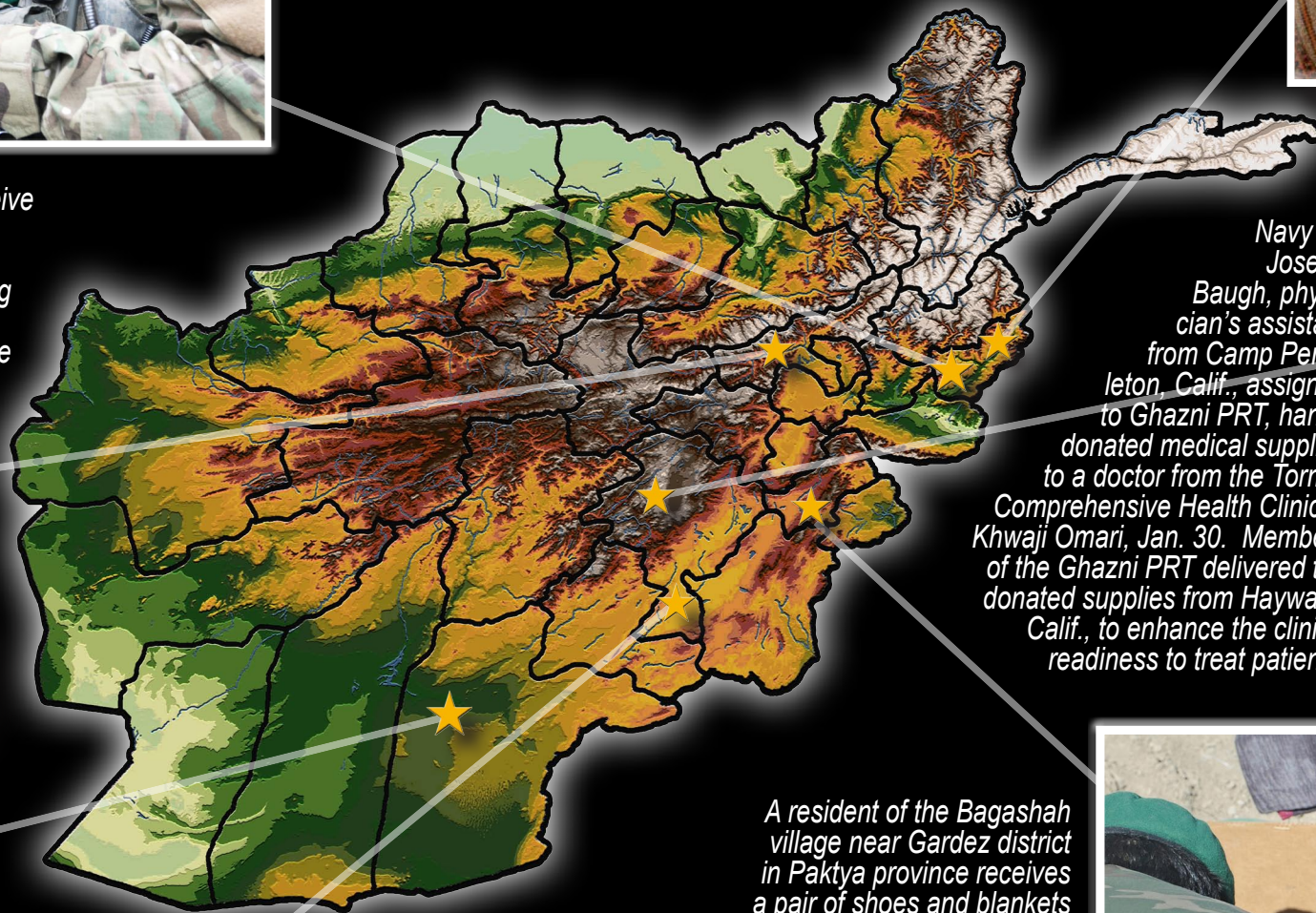


Photo by Army Sgt. Derec Pierson, Joint Combat Camera



Photo by Spc. Albert L. Kelley, 300th MPAD

Afghans wait their turn to receive goods from the U.S. military for the winter months on the road which leads to the Salang Pass near the Salang Tunnel, Parwan province, Feb. 10. The goods were handed out by the 410th MP Co., out of Fort Hood, Texas.



Army Staff Sgt. Paul D. Ballesteros with Bear Troop, 8th Sqdn., 1st Cav. Regt. passes out colored pencils to Afghan children during a population engagement in Haji Mohammed Kalay, Kandahar province, Jan. 28.



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Sarah Webb, Ghazni PRT PAO

Members from Battle Group Alpha, Civil Military Cooperation Group officers and doctors representing the Polish Non-Governmental Organization, Patients Safety Foundation, delivered medical supplies to Ghazni Provincial Hospital in Ghazni City, Feb. 6.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Henriques R. Ventura of Colorado Springs, Colo., the platoon sergeant for 3rd Plt., Chosen Co., 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Regt., 4th BCT hands out candy to children during a patrol in the Wata Poor district, Feb. 6.

An Afghan man helps a young child balance items in his hands for the walk home after attending an informal youth group at COP Penich in the Khas Kunar district of Kunar province, Jan. 19. More than 150 children from an area displaced person camp gathered at the COP to learn about Afghan citizenship, practice their English and learn about American culture. During this class, the kids participated in a children's shura to discuss topics ranging from the disaster relief in Haiti to local issues on land and health care for their families. After the meeting, the children received healthy snacks, radios and shoes.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Brian Boisvert, Kunar PRT

Navy Lt. Joseph Baugh, physician's assistant from Camp Pendleton, Calif., assigned to Ghazni PRT, hands donated medical supplies to a doctor from the Tormai Comprehensive Health Clinic in Khwaji Omari, Jan. 30. Members of the Ghazni PRT delivered the donated supplies from Hayward, Calif., to enhance the clinic's readiness to treat patients.



Photo by Tech Sgt. Rebecca F. Corey, Ghazni PRT PAO

A resident of the Bagashah village near Gardez district in Paktya province receives a pair of shoes and blankets from an ANA Soldier during a combined civil assistance mission between ANA and U.S. Soldiers, Jan. 20. Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Tompkins of Frisco, Texas, a provost marshal mentor to the ANA's 203rd Thunder Corps on FOB Thunder, organized the donation of the shoes with families and corporate sponsors back in the U.S.



Photo by Army Sgt. Andrew A. Reagan, 304th IPAD



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Francisco V. Govea III, Joint Combat Camera



Transfer of Benefits Under the New Post 9/11 GI Bill

By SFC Stuart Morgan, Bagram Career Counselor

In accordance with DoD-Type Memorandum (DTM) 09-003: Post 9/11 GI Bill, dated June 22, 2009, the DoD authorized the new Post 9/11 GI Bill. This new education incentive is a revised version of the previous Montgomery GI Bill. This new program applies to all members of the Active Army, the Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve.

For those Soldiers who are eligible to elect the new Post 9/11 GI Bill, there is an added benefit... you can now transfer your education benefits to any dependant currently enrolled in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System.

To be eligible to transfer Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits a Soldier must meet three requirements:

- * Be eligible for the Post 9/11 GI Bill.
- * Not have an adverse action flag.
- * Have at least six years of military service when the request to transfer benefits is submitted; all military service counts towards the six year requirement except time in the Individual Ready Reserve.

If all three requirements are met, a Soldier is eligible to submit a request to transfer benefits. If a Soldier elects to transfer their education benefits, they will incur a four year service obligation (SO). This four-year obligation is effective the date of request to transfer benefits.

The following exceptions apply to the four year service obligation from Aug. 1, 2009 to Aug. 1, 2013:

If on Aug. 1 2009 the Soldier has obtained 20 or more years of service, there is no SO. If the Soldier has an approved retirement date between Sep. 1, 2009 and June 1, 2010 there is no SO. If on Aug. 1, 2009 the Soldier has obtained 19, but fewer than 20 years of service, the SO is one year from date of request to transfer. If on Aug. 1, 2009 the Soldier has obtained 18, but less than 19 years of service, the SO is two years from date of request to transfer. If on Aug. 1, 2009 the Soldier has obtained 17, but less than 18, years of service, the SO is three years from date of request to transfer.

Once a Soldier has elected to transfer their education benefits, the request is automatically submitted to the service representative who either approves or disapproves the request based on the eligibility criteria listed above to include any incurred SO. It is imperative all enlisted Soldiers contact their unit's career counselor to complete the transfer request.

Soldiers who have questions pertaining to this new program can contact their Unit Career Counselor or the Bagram Retention office at DSN 318-431-3025/2841/2099.

Field of Dreams

Story and photos courtesy of TF La Fayette PAO

French Army Brig. Gen. Marcel Druart, TF La Fayette commander, visited the Tagab Valley with members of the Kapisa PRT to inaugurate a new sports stadium, Feb. 4.

The project was jointly financed by the PRT and French Bde. and constructed by more than 50 workers from the region.

For the inauguration, a volleyball competition was organized with teams from throughout the province taking part.

"People from Tagab are delighted to have this new sports (stadium); young people will be able to practice their sports in better conditions, but this project also (provided jobs) to local craftsman," said Mr. Najibul-

lah, the head of the event. "It was really a good opportunity and we wish to take on a similar project."

After the match and the distribution of awards, Druart gave the closing remarks.

"I am happy to be here today with all of you in order to assist to this sportive competition. It's a happy and peaceful day. This stadium, it's yours, it's you who built it and it's your athletes who will make it living. Today a big step (has been taken) because it's clear that the Tagab population wish to take charge of their future. Thanks again for inviting me. This day will stay in my mind." 🇫🇷



... Pay ... Promotions ... Re-deployment ... Mobilization ... Equipment ...

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Warrior Profile #86 *Soldier's Heritage Impacts Locals*

Story and photo by Spc. Albert L. Kelley 300th MPAD

Army Staff Sgt. Fahad A. Khan didn't need a translator to make small talk with the local baker.

Khan ordered a delicacy of sweet bread and chai tea for himself and four others in his unit as he and the owner of the shop exchanged pleasantries in Urdu. Afterwards, Khan accepted the foil-wrapped sweet bread, which was pulled out of a stone oven only seconds before.

During his deployment in Afghanistan as a squad leader with 2nd Bn., 503rd Parachute Inf. Regt., Khan discovered locals react very favorably when they realize he speaks their language.

"(They are) extremely happy," he said. "Very welcoming. And they are always wondering why the others don't speak Urdu or Arabic."

Khan was born in Karachi, Pakistan. His family left the country when he was only a few months old. He was raised primarily in Bronx, N.Y., eventually moving to Buffalo, N.Y. His family spoke Urdu in the household and Khan initially struggled with English.

"I was in (English as a Second Language) up until the third grade," he said.

Eventually he mastered not only English and Urdu, but also Arabic.

Khan, who joined the Army in 2005, has already deployed to Iraq. His language skills were in demand during his time in Baghdad and Ramadi. Now he normally lets the interpreters do their job without him, but occasionally steps in, especially when there's trouble.

Khan, only after being urged by his fellow Soldiers, described a recent incident known among them as "the riot." He was riding in the lead vehicle during a convoy back to their base when the unit found that villagers had blocked the route with huge stones, burning tires and tree trunks.

"People are starting to throw rocks but I dismounted,

and took off my Kevlar just to show no hostile intent," he said. "I walked up to them and sort of calmed things down."

The villagers were protesting reports of a shooting during an operation in another district. Eventually, Afghan forces arrived and helped disperse the crowd.

Other encounters with locals have been more pleasant and brought Khan some personal satisfaction.

"The first time I went to the Nawa Valley, we were dropping off concrete for a mosque reconstruction project, and were going up this hill and I noticed the name Kahn ... spray-painted on the side of a house and it turned out this dude had the same last name as me," he said. "I told him that in Urdu and immediately he tried dragging me inside his home to feed me and give me chai."

During another mission to an ABP post at the border, he and a few other Soldiers were given permission to cross into Pakistan to briefly speak with officials there.

Khan explained it was the first time he had visited his native land since he was an infant.

"It was a pretty good feeling," he said.

Although he is using his unique abilities to help others, Khan's decision to enter the military has not been an easy one for everyone in his family to accept.

"Some of the family support me, some refuse to talk to me," he said. "My mother fully supports me. (And so do) all my friends."

Khan joined the military for its financial and educational benefits, but said there are other aspects to his service.

"There's an idea within my family – since they came over as immigrants – what rights besides just paper do they have to be here? So I kinda feel like I'm buying the franchise and buying my right to citizenship." 🇺🇸



STORY

Snapshots

Cementing Ties with Village Visits



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte, 300th MPAD

A child from Angla Kala village, Kunar province gives a high five to Spc. Jesus B. Fernandez of San Jose, Calif., an assistant team leader of 3rd Plt., Chosen Company, 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Regt., 4th BCT, during a unit visit, Feb. 6. ISAF troops regularly meet with village elders to improve communication between residents and government officials.

ANP Cadets Graduate to the Force



Photo by Senior Airman Brian Ybarbo, NATO Training Mission Afghanistan

The ANP commander marches to greet distinguished visitors at the graduation of ANP Academy cadets. Upon graduating the three-year course, cadets become ANP officers and earn a degree in criminal justice. The academy trains men and women from 34 provinces.

HTT Conducts Cultural Assessments

Army Sgt. Matthew Nesheim, from Northwood, N.D., assigned to 82nd Div. STB, B Co., 2nd Plt., TF Gladius, TF Cyclone, speaks with a young boy during a patrol in the village of Bagram, Parwan province, Feb. 4. The Human Terrain Team provides village assessments and facilitates cultural understanding of the area of operation.



Photo by Spc. Charles J. Thompson, 300th MPAD

92ND MPs on Patrol in Zormat



Photo by Spc. Spencer Case
304th PAD

Specs. Nicholas Prince and Jeffrey Nauta conduct a foot patrol from the Zormat District Center to COP Zormat, Feb. 10. Soldiers of 3rd Plt. have been visiting the DC regularly to train members of the ANP.

ANA, French Assist Locals in Tagab



Photo by French Army Master Sgt. Sylvain Petremand
TF La Fayette PAO Joint Staff

A doctor from the French Army's Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team treats a village elder in the village of Nezam Khel, Kapisa province, Jan. 28. The OMLT worked hand-in-hand with Kandak 34 of the ANA's 201st Corps to deliver medical help to hundreds of villagers despite poor weather conditions.

Population Engagement in Kandahar



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Francisco V. Govea III,
Joint Combat Camera

Army Sgt. William Golden with 8th Sqdn., 1st Cav. Regt. greets an Afghan man at the beginning of a population engagement mission in Mullahzai, Kandahar province, Jan. 28.

U.S., Afghan Troops in Yawez

A Soldier from A Co., 1-503rd Bn., 173rd Airborne BCT, conducts a patrol with a platoon of ANA Soldiers to check on conditions in the village of Yawez, Wardak province, Feb. 17. Partnership between the U.S. Army and the ANA is proving to be a valuable tool in bringing security to the area.



Photo by Army Sgt. Russell Gilchrist,
Joint Combat Camera

Mission Interrupted, Not Prevented



Photo by Spc. William E. Henry,
11F Cyclone PAO

Members of the 82nd Airborne Div. STB, and the 168th Engineer Co. from the Alabama National Guard keep warm in plummeting temperatures in the highlands of Jabal Saraj district, Parwan province, Feb. 11. The group was on their way to assist in the avalanche-stricken area when the convoy came upon impassable icy road conditions in the area.

Clearing the Way in Khost



Photo by Spc. Spencer Case,
304th PAD

A MRAP vehicle from Route Clearance Package 37, 1141st Engineer Co. of the Missouri National Guard, approaches two IED blast holes during a routine mission in Khost province, Jan. 24. The unit's increased battle tempo has contributed to the disruption of insurgents in the region.

Czech Sniper Provides Overwatch



Photo by Army Sgt. Russell Gilchrest,
Joint Combat Camera

A Czech army sniper watches for possible threats from an observation point next to a TCP run by ANP officers near the city of Pole-elam, Logar province, Jan. 30. Operations like this one prove to be a valuable tool in the effort for providing security in the area.

ANP Training Facility Opens in Logar



A Czech soldier demonstrates how to run the obstacle course in the new training and educational facility for the ANP which was completed Jan. 31 in the center of Logar province. The project included construction of a new building with classrooms, training tower for climbing and roping down, and an obstacle course.



Photos courtesy of Logar PRT PAO

Firefighter Training with ANP



Photos by Air Force Staff Sgt. Stephen J. Otero
Khost PRT PAO



Army Staff Sgt. Lawrence Taylor, Khost PRT Security Force truck commander, demonstrates how to use a rescue saw, fire hose and other equipment during a training session at the Civil Military Operations Center, Khost province, Jan. 20. The training sessions are being held to strengthen the rescue capabilities of police officers and firefighters throughout the region.

82nd CAB, SF Air Assault in Zabul



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Aubree Clute,
82nd CAB

U.S. Special Forces are extracted from a mountain pinnacle in Zabul province, by a UH-60 Black Hawk from A Co., 2nd Bn., 82nd Aviation Regt., 82nd CAB after executing an air assault mission to disrupt insurgent communications in the area.

Putting Radios in the Hands of Afghans



Photo by Spc. Albert L. Kelley,
300th MPAD

A young boy hides behind a new radio given to his family by Soldiers in Kunar province, Feb. 5. The radios were given to members of the Anderson village so that they could listen to a newly established radio station, operated by Afghans in the Watapur district.

Get the rest
of the story
CJTF-82.com

Shinwari Elders Take Stand Against Taliban, For Afghanistan

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Tracy J. Smith,
48th IBCT PAO



Malik Niyaz, an influential tribal leader of the Mohmand Valley, appeals to his peers to take action through unification during a historic tribal meeting in Nangarhar province, Jan. 21. The Jirga included Maliks, or tribal leaders, and 170 village elders from six districts in Nangarhar province. The elders met to denounce the Taliban and corrupt governance by signing the anti-Taliban Shinwari Pact.

ABP and ISAF troops hosted Shinwari tribal elders of Nangarhar province at a meeting, Jan. 21.

The Jirga, a meeting of elders held to make a specific decision, was held to unite the Shinwari sub-tribes and gain their support in the fight against insurgents, corruption and illegal actions that threaten the Afghan people and their government.

More than 170 Maliks, a title of respect for tribal elders, from six districts in Nangarhar province put aside tribal differences to form the alliance and bring

stability to Afghanistan's eastern border region.

The Jirga was organized by the ABP's 6th Kandak headquarters and gave the tribes confidence that their concerns would be heard.

Army Lt. Col. Randall V. Simmons, the commander of the 1st Sqdn., 108th Cav. Reg., TF Rough Rider, applauded the leaders for their bravery in continuing to fight oppression and dispelled rumors that ISAF would leave Afghanistan before sustainable security and a stable economy could be achieved.

"America has donated its most prized possession, its sons and daughters, to this mission and we will not leave until our mission is complete," Simmons said.

During previous key leader engagements in TF Rough Rider's area of operation the Maliks voiced common community concerns: security, education, health care and a reliable governance.

Malik Niyaz, an influential tribal elder from the Mohmand Valley, opened the Jirga's discussion and spoke to their common purpose as representatives for the peo-

ple of their villages.

"Is it only me who dares to speak out? I do not have the power to remove a corrupt governor but I can expose him and so must you," Niyaz said. "I appeal to you today because we must stand together to purge our community of corruption and the thumb of tyranny."

During the open discussions the chieftains signed the anti-Taliban Shinwari Pact committing to unification and pledging to resist militants.

The Shinwari Pact allowed the sub-tribes to publically announce their cooperation with their Afghan National Security Force brothers to bring peace to Afghanistan.

ABPZoneOnecommander, Brig. Gen. Zaman Mamozai, said the elders' willingness to commit to their own defense is a source of personal pride for him as a Muslim and an Afghan.

In his speech Zaman invited the Maliks to further reinforce their security by empowering their people economically. He announced the formation of the ABP's

8th Kandak to be headquartered in the Achin district. The new headquarters will bring jobs and service opportunities to the people of the region.

The Kandak, actively seeking to recruit from the local community, will bring 500 jobs to the region. Zaman said he and the Ministry of Interior will also increase each ABP Soldier's pay by roughly 15 percent.

"This is an opportunity for the people of Shinwar to step forward and give new life to the new battalion and keep jobs in the community," he said.

Zaman, a former Mujahedin, or Holy fighter, reflected on the collapse of governance during the Soviet occupation and subsequent attacks by the Taliban on what he referred to as "Afghanistan's innocents" in the 1990s.

Taking ownership of their own security now does not mean taking a handout, but a helping hand from partners in the fight.

"Take advantage of coalition force resources to re-

build what we have lost," Zaman encouraged. "The United States was not considered an infidel country when it assisted Pakistan in the development of nuclear power, so it should not be considered such as they look to help our beloved Afghanistan."

As one of Nangarhar province's three most influential tribes, the signing of the Shinwari Pact will set precedence for future defense and economic growth planning and implementation for Afghanistan.

Yet the outcome must be worth more than the paper it is printed on.

Simmons reiterated the need for action-based solidarity with tough, encouraging talk.

"(Your signature) indicates that your tribe is united and will resist the Taliban or other insurgents at all costs," Simmons said. "I applaud you for taking responsibility for your own security and I stand ready to fight to the end for peace and victory alongside you and our (ANSF) brothers in arms."



A tribal elder prepares to apply his ring stamp over his signature, thereby agreeing to the mandates of an anti-Taliban Shinwari Pact during a Shinwari tribal meeting in eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, Jan. 21. More than 170 Maliks, or village elders, met for the traditional Afghan council hosted by Nangarhar province's Afghan Border Police's 6th Kandak. The Shinwari sub-tribes gathered to show unity in providing security and economic progress in their communities. Failure to follow the mandates of the pact, according to the agreement, would be met with dire consequence to those found guilty of harboring the Taliban or cultivating poppy products.



Courtesy of Ms. Caryl Church's Art Class, Newbury Elementary, Newbury, Ohio

SAFETY WATCH

Grenade Safety

Every day obscurant grenades are being used to provide concealment for troops when moving in the open or fragmentary grenades for operations such as clearing a building. Unfortunately, servicemembers continue to injure themselves by not properly employing the grenades.

During this fiscal year, CJTF-82 already had two incidents involving servicemembers who attempted to "cook off" an M106 Fast Obscurant Grenade during a training exercise. Both servicemembers were seriously injured; one lost use of his hand and the other lost his fingers.

The FOG uses the M201A1 fuse. This fuse is near instantaneous and functions between .7 to 2.2 seconds. If you ever attempt to "cook off," i.e. pull pin, release spoon and count to two, the FOG will denote prior to you finishing your count.

Grenade timers are generally unreliable and can vary in time up to about two seconds once the safety lever is released.

The dangers associated with hand grenades should not deter their use. Leaders must ensure that servicemembers are properly trained, familiar with grenades that are issued to their unit and understand the risks associated with using hand grenades. Remember to use Composite Risk Management in determining if the benefits outweigh the risk.



IAW CJTF-82 FRAG 1501, units must ensure all servicemembers using the FOG receive new equipment training. Information on the FOG can be found on the CJTF-82 Safety Portal. For additional information, contact the CJTF-82 Safety Officer, phone 431-3016 or 431-4213.



We Want Your Story

Photo Of The Month

Your photo could be featured next month!

Entries must include:

Who, When, Where, and What
Branch, Rank, Full Name, Unit and FOB.

Put your Unit in the

Spotlight!

Include your unit name, mission, history and why your unit stands above the rest.

See page #14

Send all submissions to

FreedomWatch@afghan.swa.army.mil or call DSN 481-6367



Photo of the Month
A UH-60 Black Hawk flies past the mountains
at dusk as seen from Bagram Airfield, Feb. 2.
Photo by Pakistani air force Flight Lt. Akhtar Abbas