

THE FIGHTING *48th*

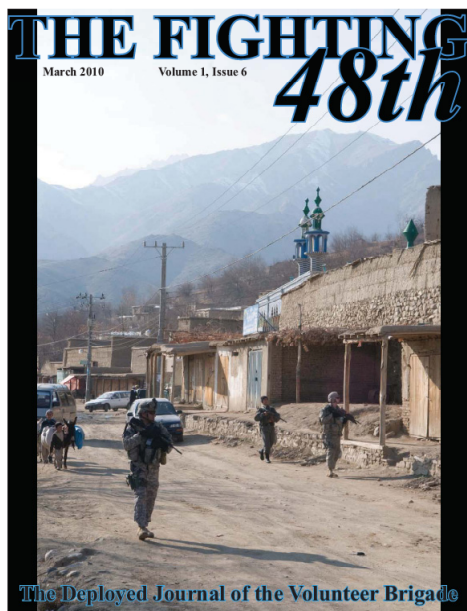
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The Deployed Journal of the Volunteer Brigade

Table of Contents



Soldiers of Police Mentor Team 6 of Task Force Kabul conduct a joint dismounted patrol with Afghan National Police through a village in the Estalef District of Kabul. These joint patrols are conducted throughout the country of Afghanistan to demonstrate that the Security Forces and the Soldiers of the Volunteer Brigade. (Photo by U.S. Navy MCC Rodney Furry, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)

- Page Two:**
- Commander's Column
- Page Three:**
- Combined Action in Qara Baugh
- Page Four:**
- Operation Mountain Delivery
- Page Five:**
- New school in local village
 - Afghanistan's newest Soldiers
- Page Six:**
- Task Force Geronimo forges new partnership with ANA
- Page Seven:**
- 48th mentors achieve counter-IED milestone
- Page Eight:**
- Shinwari tribal headsman honor tribal pact
- Page Nine:**
- Legendary guardian of Camp Phoenix
- Page Ten:**
- Community backs Soldier after robbery
 - Father and son share war stories and birthdays
- Page Eleven:**
- Chaplain's Corner
- Pages Twelve-Fifteen:**
- Photos from the field

THE FIGHTING 48th

"The Fighting 48th" is the command newsletter of 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. It is produced by the Public Affairs Office on behalf of the 48th IBCT commander and is intended to inform the members of the 48th IBCT of the activities of the brigade and the command messages of the leadership team.

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Commander's Column



My name is LTC Reginald "Reg" Neal. I'm the commander of the 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery Regiment. I've commanded the fine Soldiers of this battalion since August 2007, and served with them proudly as a member of Joint Task Force Kabul, here in Afghanistan. Collectively, we have achieved significant accomplishments during our deployment to the Kabul Province of Afghanistan. Our Soldiers have represented the 48th Infantry Brigade and the Georgia Army National Guard in an outstanding manner, since we first arrived last spring.

Our primary focus has been to mentor and develop the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). We achieved this mission by improving their ability to sustain themselves in continued operations.

In spite of a complicated mobilization process, the "Old Hickory" Soldiers reorganized and were able to fully integrate, with the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA). There are over 16,100 ANSF in Kabul Province, trained by our Headquarters Battery, Alpha and Bravo Howitzer Batteries, and G Company, 148th Support Battalion. Additionally, Alpha Company, 2-121st Infantry was attached, along with Air Force and Navy personnel. This combined team fully functioned in all operational areas of the Task Force, including primary staff positions.

The Kabul Province contains 31 Police Districts, many of which had not been visited by mentors since shortly after the fall of the Taliban. Our brave Soldiers have established and maintained continuous combat and training exercises, as well as dismounted community presence patrols with the ANSF in all

districts. Our teams work closely with the Afghans to ensure we are out among the population on a daily basis. This strategy is key to making the population feel secure, and winning their support of the ANSF forces and the government of Afghanistan.

As an Army combat arms unit, we are well suited to train the ANSF's uniformed personnel. And with the added benefits of our civilian skills as National Guard Soldiers, we are able to relate very well with the administrative and technical issues involved with public service. Quite simply, the National Guard Soldier is able to contribute quite a bit more than our stated mission.

In the period before the Afghan National Elections, we mentored the ANSF on critical tasks such as checkpoint operations, detainee operations and rendering medical aid. Beginning with the crucial election period, all of our teams have continued full partnering and embedded operations. The success of the elections, especially in Kabul-the political, social, and economic center of the country, is a testimony to the efforts of the ANSF and our "Hickory" Soldiers.

The leaders in this battalion under-

Story continued on page 3

Commander's Column continued

stand the importance that Humanitarian Aid (HA) and Civil Medical Assistance (CMA) have on operations in Kabul. They recognize that the key to defeating the insurgency is a focused, combined Counter Insurgency (COIN) effort, which involves influencing the local citizens of the country. Each team worked with our Civil Military section to conduct 73 HA missions, distributing over 65 tons of material to needy Afghans. The elders from the local villages and key members from each district were engaged to identify exactly where these efforts should be focused. Our mentors worked closely with the ANSF, and ensured they played

a key role in the planning and execution of these missions. The battalion also initiated, managed and/or completed over 9 million dollars worth of Commander's Emergency Relief Projects (CERP) in Kabul Province during our deployment. These vital infrastructure improvement projects which included schools, medical clinics, wells, bridges and an orphanage among others, had a lasting impact on Afghanistan and helped shape the Afghan people's perception of U.S. and Coalition Forces.

As we prepare to complete our mission, we will transfer authority to the oldest Field Artillery Regiment in American history; the 1st Battalion, 101st FA.

This event is significant, because we are the second oldest Field Artillery Regiment, established in 1751. Our two units fought with each other during the American Revolution. We were on opposing sides during the Civil War, and together again, during WWII. And now one will follow the other, as we both continue our nation's mission here in Kabul, Afghanistan.

As a result of our hard work, dedication, and selfless service, this battalion has made significant and lasting contributions to the future of Afghanistan. These achievements are directly related to the Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, and families of Joint Task Force Kabul...Old Hickory!

Combined Action in Qara Baugh

Story and photo by MCSC Kevin Elliott
48th IBCT Public Affairs



1st Lt. David Esra speaks with new Qara Bagh District Chief of Police Abdul Rauf at the Qara Baugh District Center Feb. 21. Esra is the platoon leader of 3rd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard. (Photo by U.S. Navy MCSC Kevin Elliott, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)

At the Qara Bagh District Center, 3rd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team quickly got to work. The former police chief had been charged with corruption but found not guilty. Col. Gaufor had served as police chief for 2 ½ years. Now he was transferring to Nawa Province and tasked with starting a police force.

The new Afghan National Police (ANP) Chief of Police, 3rd Lt. Abdul Rauf, is a friendly, slender man with a fairly close-cropped beard by Afghan standards.

Over a lunch of rice, potatoes, flat bread and lamb, Rauf spoke of an incident as a teenager that turned him against the Taliban. "At age 17, the Taliban beat me and cut off all my hair, so I just put it in my heart and from that day I swore I would fight the Taliban. That's the only reason I am here, to fight the Taliban."

Rauf was motivated to work with the Americans and against the Taliban. "The first day Americans came here, I am working for you," he said.

But the Americans do more than just wirj wutg tge ANP. They are conducting combined action.

"In combined action, the spectrum is bigger," explained 3rd Platoon Leader 1st David Esra, Athens, GA. "It's the whole government, not just the police. With Combined action, we also work with the village elders and sub-governors in each district. The idea is to develop a government that the people see works for them."

Esra's unit works hard to get the Afghan people to take responsibility for their country.

"Everything is supposed to be Afghan lead," he said. "The Combined Action piece is where we run missions with the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF). We still mentor them through the military decision-making process and we guide them through the planning process, but they lead the way. People see them in front."

Capt. William Broach, Commander, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, reinforced the importance of the ANSF and 3rd platoons work.

"It's putting the ANSF out there and letting the people see them and getting the people to gain confidence in their security and the ability of their government to support them," Broach said. "3rd platoon has led the way in mentoring and teaching the ANP in Qara Bagh, taking them from a sub-standard force to a highly proficient fighting unit."

Operation Mountain Delivery

Story and photos by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith
48th IBCT Public Affairs

"If you look there, that is one of the Pakistan border positions," said the Afghan Border Police (ABP) officer, pointing across the valley of the Safid Kho Mountain Ranges where a green flag was visible.

The image of the crescent and star weren't clear, but the 6th Kandak ABP live near it every day, and know the flag well, because they are responsible for this remote Nazyan district outpost.

They had been attacked days earlier, leaving two of their officers dead. The blood that was shed now embedded in the earth mere feet from a reinforced position where they live and fight is now a tragic stain on the rocks. A reminder that the terrain's jagged incline was not enough to deter their assailers.

The night of the attack, the border policemen radioed for reinforcement from the Soldiers of Troop B, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, who weren't able



An Afghan Border Police officer assigned to the Nangarhar Province 6th Kandak scans the perimeter during an aerial assault mission at an Afghan outpost near an Afghanistan-Pakistan mountain border in Nazyan.

to react quickly enough. In spite of the attackers determination, the commitment of the ABP to hold their position and protect their borders proved stronger.

"We need to make sure we can get them the help they need using all our assets," said Sgt. 1st Class Flint Weathers, a mentor and partner for the 6th Kandak headquartered in Ghanikheyl, Shinwar district.

The two outposts, Nakhtor Now and Shah Khot, are strategic points that extend the ABP's overwatches of the many trails and passes connecting the Kyber Pass and Hindu Kush.

Operation Mountain Delivery, a joint Afghan and coalition air assault and re-supply mission Jan. 23, was a live-action answer to future quick reaction needs.

"Our ability to conduct quick insertions and reinforcement for our Afghan partners in the fight will, ideally, eliminate loss of life," said Lt. Col. Randall V. Simmons, Commander, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment.

Neither site had been visited by coalition forces in nearly five years. Simmons and his operational partner Col. Niazy, Commander, ABP 6th Kandak did detailed surveys of the outposts and discussed opportunities for improvement.

"The most important thing we can do is be here with them," Weathers said. The platoon sergeant walked with the commanders and shared the Warrior's perspective of where the partnership's next steps should go.

"If we embed with them here and give them that added layer with aerial support, there will never be a question that we are

a ready, unified force"

Additional supplies of water, food and barriers were also delivered with additional provisions delivered during future visits.

"It is a show of force!" Niazy agreed, "a message to our enemies and a reassurance to my men that their coalition partners will be here when they are needed."



A U.S. Army cavalry scout right, with Lt. Col. Randall V. Simmons, Commander, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and Col. Niazy of the Afghan Border Police pay respects at the site where an ABP officer was killed during an attack on a border outpost in Nazyan.



An Afghan National Border Police officer looks deep into the Selseleh-ye Spin Ghar mountain ranges west of the Khyber Pass.

New School brings bright future for local village

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. David Bill
48th IBCT Public Affairs

The Charysab District, south of Kabul, has a shining new light for their children and for the future of their district as a new school facility provides a fresh direction for the future of the village of Nonis.

This new school will support 400 students as it is currently designed. The design of this school allows for future growth if required, by allowing for additional floors to be added which will provide more classroom space as the population continues to grow. The current village's population is approximately 2,200.

"As the students enter here, they will be offered the opportunity to grow all the way through high school level," said Jamal-Mir Jamal, Chief of the local police district.

"This district is a great example of cooperation between local leaders and the central government," said Asif Nang, Communications Director for the Ministry of Education. "Working with Americans has brought this school here and the local leaders of this village have been a large reason for the success of this project."

Lt. Col Reginald Neal, Commander of Task Force Kabul, expressed great excitement for the completion of this project.

"As an educator, I appreciate the cooperative spirit of the Afghan government and the local leaders to make this project come to fruition. It is an excellent opportunity for the future of this region," Neal said.

The local elders came together to show their appreciation of all those who brought this school to their area.

"We are extremely grateful to the government for looking to Charysab for this school. Our children will benefit from this school for years to come," said Nazar Mohamad one of the local elders of the village.

"The children who attend school here will be the future elders of



Children from the local village of Nonis in the Charysab district stand in front of their new school after the ribbon cutting ceremony which was held on 12 Feb. These children will be some of the first to attend this school.

this district. So the better educated they are, the better they will be prepared to lead this village," said Neal.

As schools like this open all over the country, the future will continue to burn bright for the country of Afghanistan. It is the children who will be the future leaders of their country and as they become better educated citizens, they will have the opportunity to take their country in a positive direction.

1-121 Soldiers prepare to deploy Afghanistan's newest Soldiers

Story and photo by MC2 Donisha Burns
48th IBCT Public Affairs

An Embedded Training Team (ETT) of 16 Soldiers from Company B, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) have recently relocated to forward operating base Blackhorse to begin training with 6-1 Kandak, the newest group of Soldiers in the Afghan National Army's (ANA) arsenal.

The training team is made up of administrative, operations and logistic experts. They must meet the course prerequisites determined by the Consolidation Fielding Center to enhance their ANA counterparts' skills for validation.

Staff Sgt. Joe Bowden, non-commissioned officer in charge of the team said, "The Fighting 48th isn't just fighting. We're training the ANA and giving them more options to better assess each situation they run into."

One of the biggest challenges was getting the ANA efficiently trained to pass validation in a short period of time. The primary skill-sets they focused on were first aid, communications, reporting, admin-



Sgt. Buddy Mansfield, an Embedded Training Team member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team explains the process of issuing M-16 weapons to 6-1 Kandak Soldiers during a training evolution, Feb. 16.

istration and supply.

"With our strong band of non-commissioned officers we have the ability to educate our equals in two ways; show them other tactical ways of combating adversaries and how to adjust to the unexpected changes through proper planning," said Sgt. Buddy Mansfield, one of the many 48th IBCT trainers.

By making the ANA more versatile through improved planning, communication and logistic accountability, these Soldiers will continue to mould Afghanistan and make a better future for generations to come.

Task Force Geronimo forges new partnership with Afghan National Army

Story and photo by MC2 Donisha Burns
48th IBCT Public Affairs

In a critical time of change for Afghanistan, the American and Afghan National Army (ANA) partners of Task Force Geronimo are embracing the ever-changing nature of the battlefield in Paktika province. This latest development in the continually evolving training initiative is designed to build a tighter bond than ever between the mentors and Soldiers in the fight against insurgency in the region. The initiative is also an example of Combined Action, the doctrine of U.S. military training and fighting at all levels with Afghan forces.

The New Partnership program was recently instituted at Camp Rushmore by the Georgia National Guard Soldiers of Company B, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment of the 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) and their ANA partners of 4-2 Kandak (battalion).

The redesigned training program was developed to get better results through more direct and personal relationships between the Soldiers. With the program in place, each platoon has been paired up with an ANA company. Further, each American Soldier directly mentors up to three Afghan Soldiers of a similar rank.

Capt. Shilo Crane, Commander, Company B, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment described how the change has provided both sides of the training team a more holistic approach to improving the Afghans' strengths.

"Instead of having a small group of 15 high-ranking Americans mentoring an ANA battalion's staff, we have a large force of Soldiers at every rank partnering



Company B, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment poses with a field artillery platoon from the Afghan National Army's 4-2 Kandak. These platoons have been working together at Forward Operating Base Rushmore in Paktika province, Afghanistan.

at every level," Crane said.

Sgt. 1st Class James Moore, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, recon platoon sergeant knows how critical it is for him and his Soldiers to set the right example for their Afghan partners every day.

"We train ourselves by conducting battle drills, pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections regularly. It's important for us to be at our best, because mentoring the ANA is not just about teaching. They also observe how we deal with our troops and they follow the example we set," Moore said.

Working with the Afghan Soldiers on a daily basis allows the American Soldiers to create a stronger bond that doesn't intrude on their cultural differences. They've worked to build effective procedures and techniques that work within the boundaries of how the Afghans instinctively operate. Being able to share procedures while encouraging the Afghans to choose what

works better for them is proving to be a system that works for everyone.

Crane further described how he can see the results of the program when his Afghan counterparts tell him what they need to get results.

"The ANA tells us what they need more training on and we provide it. We've even created a weekly training contract," Crane said.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Toomey, platoon sergeant, remarked on the progress he's seen in the short time the program has been in place.

"When the mission began there was a lot of guiding being done. The ANA have improved to the point where they need minimal assistance with routine missions," Toomey said. "This is an important on-going mission- one that the next unit will pick up and we are proud to have a sense of completion and know that we made it better for them."

Safety Message

The Barn Door is ever closer. Our first unit has already landed in the U.S. of A. From then our 48th Brigade units leave until the beginning of Spring. Now is not the time to lose focus at all. It only takes a quick second for carelessness to take a life or cause a permanent injury.

Shortly after the 48th Brigades arrival here in Afghanistan, some Illinois Soldiers were prematurely celebrating their soon to be departure. Drinking some forbidden beverages and playing around with what ended up being a loaded handgun. One of those soldiers went home almost on schedule perhaps a little earlier, but it was to Dover Air Base. His friend ended up staying here with us for almost an extra four months. A delayed homecoming was the least of his worries, far worse is the fact that he is facing a felony charge and what that will do to the rest of that young man's life. All of that pales in comparison that he must live with the knowledge that he killed a good friend and a fellow Soldier because they were acting foolishly and irresponsibly.

Since our last publication, we have had a rash of heavy vehicle doors falling on hands and fingers. Remember the force with which those doors close and how much each door weighs. There is no question as to the importance of not being in between the door and the door frame when those two heavy metal items meet. Coming from the mechanized world as many of us did in the Brigade's past life we know all too well how those hatches and armored doors can come down with nothing but gravity and cause quite a hurting.

Just a few days ago in a brand new building there was a latrine fire here on Camp Phoenix. A small ventilator fan caught fire.

Story continued on page 7

48th mentors achieve counter-IED milestone

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Christopher DeWitt
Regional Command, North Public Affairs Mentor Team

On a long, dusty road littered with potholes and winding ruts, one Afghan National Army (ANA) unit came into its own by conducting its first ever route-clearing mission.

Soldiers from Camp Shaheen's 209th Corps Route Clearing Company (RCC) tediously cleared more than seven miles of road outside the city of Mazar-e-Sharif recently with assistance from their Embedded Training Team (ETT) mentors from Georgia National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. The mission was the culmination of nine months of training and providing a new capability for the unit in the northern regions of the country.

When recent intelligence called for a route-clearing mission, the Afghan Soldiers were given the opportunity to spread their wings and display the fruits of their mentors.

Staff Sgt. Nicholas Ives, the training team non-commissioned officer in charge, and his team have had the daunting task of training the ANA soldiers through interpreters, but the need for training required no translation.

"IEDs (Improvised Explosive Device) are our biggest threats," Ives explained. "Route clearing teams will be important to all ANA, U.S. and other NATO forces because they are the tip of the spear - before operations begin they will go clear routes."

"We heard a couple of reports that this route is suspicious," said Capt. Mohammad Ali Yazdani, Commander, 209th RCC. "The Taliban are so weak that they cannot directly fight with the ANA or U.S. troops, so they are trying to put in mines or ambushes, and that's why we are trying to clear this route."

Providing safe passage for Afghan and coalition forces will also have benefits for the country as it struggles to grow and its people look for new opportunities.

"We clear this route for the civilians too, so they can cross easier," Yazdani commented, adding that the citizens are also able to see the ANA trying to provide help for the people of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's history has created a need for the 209th RCC, which is just one of six ANA teams currently being trained.

"During the previous wars in Afghanistan, there were bombs dropping all over, lots of ammo, IEDs; that's why we are trying to help the people," said 1st Lt. Mohammad Farrazad, Commander, 1st Platoon. "We are clearing the route to save someone's life. It is very important for everybody because if it isn't clear, it's going to be dangerous for everybody."

Hurdles lay ahead as the ETT continually learns new ways to effectively train new Soldiers in the fledgling Afghan Army. The challenges often force the team to start with the basics.

"They could barely drive a vehicle or shoot and now they are out here clearing live routes," Ives, from Statesboro, Ga., said, who has been with the group since their initial training in Kabul. "We started in the crawl phase at Kabul, now we are getting to the run phase and trying to get them to run missions on their own."

Yazdani explained how training with the Americans has left a memorable impression on his Soldiers. "I am appreciative of the training team because they are training us well and they are now our friends."

Farrazad agreed. "We are lucky to have trainers from the

USA and we hope when they leave that we will be able to clear our routes all over our country," he said. "We are like brothers."

"We were hoping to stay longer with them," stated Ives. "I feel that we've actually done something. It's really good seeing these guys start from the bottom, and now they're up at the top."

The ANA 209th Corps is proving the ANA is truly a national Army representing all the people of Afghanistan. By training and growing with coalition forces, they will soon be able to take the lead in securing and defending the independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of their home.



Capt. Mohammad Ali Yazdani and 1st Lt. Mohammad Farrazad inspect an area of concern during the Afghan National Army 209th Corps Route Clearing Company's first mission.



Shinwari tribal headsmen honor tribal pact

Story and photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith
48th IBCT Public Affairs

A clause in the historic Shinwari Jirga tribal pact signed by Maliks, or tribal headsmen, representing more than 170 villages at the Shinwar district headquarters of the 6th Kandak Afghan Border Police (ABP), Jan. 21, imposes severe consequences for those giving safe harbor to Taliban or anti-Afghan forces (AAF).

As a show of faith and adherence to the pact, the Shinwari Jirga, or council, delivered a high value individual (HVI) to their coalition force partners at Camp Hughie, Feb. 9, escorted by 6th Kandak ABP officers and the commander, Afghan Col. Mohammed Niazy D.

The HVI, Qari Rahmat, was visibly nervous and subdued as he was introduced to the commander of the Georgia Army National Guard's 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, Lt. Col. Randall V. Simmons, Jr.

Rahmat is one of the top ranking operatives within the 1-108th, Task Force Rough Rider area of operation. The desire to apprehend the self-described 'simple man' predates the Rough Riders' mission in Nangarhar.

"Qari Rahmat has been a person of interest to the military for quite some time," Simmons stated. "We (Afghan and coalition) had several options for apprehending him, but we also wanted to be respectful of the village community where he based his operation."

Four days prior to his being delivered to Forward Operating Base Hughie, in the presence of the jirga, Rahmat signed a tribal proclamation denouncing the Taliban and any narcotic related activity. In exchange for his promise to cease AAF activity, Rahmat will be given a clean slate to peacefully reintegrate with his community and an opportunity to assist the Afghan government with introducing



Qari Rahmat, foreground, listens as tribal headsmen and Afghan security force leaders discuss next steps in the reconciliation process Feb. 9, at Forward Operating Base Hughie in Jalalabad Afghanistan.

others to the reconciliation process.

"Reconciliation is an Afghan government initiative but it is also a tribal responsibility and gives the Shinwari jirga and the Afghan government a unified focus," Simmons said.

Task Force Rough Rider's role is to act as a bridge facilitating reintegration and allows President Hamid Karzai's reconciliation initiative to work in concert with Afghanistan's tribal tradition of governance.

The Pashtunwali way, a pre-Islamic honor code practiced by Pashtun tribesmen in Afghanistan and Pakistan, is to find a peaceful solution for conflict and the reconciliation process is designed to honor that tradition.

The Shinwaris have a cross-border tribal connection and within the next few weeks work will begin to unite the tribes

living on the other side of the border regions.

The next step in Rahmat's reconciliation: the Shinwari Tribe will present Rahmat to Nangarhar Province Governor Sherzai and the Peace and Development Council.

Mullah Imuddin Hashimi accompanied Rahmat to provide religious and spiritual support. He has faith that the process of reconciliation will bring peace.

Hashimi thanked the Rough Rider squadron for giving the mountain border villagers hope and a chance to earn an honest living through community managed cash-for-work programs.

"The seed you have planted will grow and give shade bearing fruit. As long as we continue to nurture it the leaves will never turn and you will enjoy the apples from this tree even in the United States."

Safety message continued

There was no significant damage as it was discovered by a Soldier during waking hours. Everyone needs to check their room and office to verify that they have a smoke detector and that it works. It is smoke inhalation that will take a person down especially if you are not awake to react to the distinct burning smell.

As Soldiers arrive home and demobilize, spending time with friends and family, remember that we are all still mortal human beings. Though it may feel like it none of us have earned any sort of personal immunity from the forces of nature and the accidental forces we may inflict upon ourselves. Even if you have survived countless IED and RPG attacks, that does not grant you immortality while you drive down Interstate 16 or I-95, the road from your house to the milk store, or the city street you have driven all your life, more times than you can remember. The laws of physics still apply.

So far this fiscal year beginning on October 1st, 41 Soldiers have been killed in accidents, nearly all of which were preventable. Seven of these accidents occurred here in theater the rest at home station. So far this January, five Soldiers have died in five separate accidents at home. Eighteen Soldiers died in POV accidents while four died in motorcycle accidents. One died from a personal weapon negligent discharge. Alcohol simply does not mix with personal weapons or heavy machinery. Likewise swimming and water sports do not mix well at all with alcohol. In this fiscal year one Soldier died from a swimming accident and one died from a boating accident. As I have taught my six year old son: Stay Alert...Stay Alive!

Legendary guardian of Camp Phoenix gate forges new alliance Louisville Slugger

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. David Bill
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Entering the Camp Phoenix compound, visitors will see a mighty centurion, standing along-side the American Soldiers, ready to defend the camp from any possible harm. Jamal Undin, “Rambo”, as he is called, is always prepared to swing into action against any possible disruptive action. His only weapons in defense of the camp are his unyielding intensity, his unwavering courage and now, a new aluminium Louisville Slugger bat.

Rambo has become a legend around Camp Phoenix. His background includes service in the Afghanistan military under the Russian occupation and driving a transport truck with a Russian trucking company on the site that is now Camp Phoenix. He has traveled throughout the country and region, including Iran, Pakistan, and the other Afghanistan border countries.

He had a good life with his wife and six children and an apartment in Kabul but that all changed in the late 1990’s. HeS is not sure about that date now, when a Taliban rocket slammed into his apartment, killing his wife.

He took the rest of his family to Pakistan where his wife, Shahgull, had family. “We loved each other, that is why I will never remarry,” Rambo said.

While in Pakistan, he saw President George Bush say they would rebuild Afghanistan, and Rambo said that is why he likes Americans. “That’s why I work for them.” He returned to Kabul and began working at Camp Phoenix in 2001.

He works tirelessly seven days a week, from sun up to sundown, watching over the entry control point for any possible attack.

He checks vehicles and people, keeps locals from disrupting the flow of traffic in and out of the camp and serves as a local traffic cop when it is needed.

Since the Georgia Guardsmen, of the 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) arrived at Phoenix last June, Rambo has averted several suspected vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices including a suspected bomber, he physically dragged out of his vehicle. He has also saved the life of a local Afghan who was being brutalized by his countrymen after applying for a job on the camp.



Rambo holds his new Louisville Slugger bat given to him by the Soldiers of the 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team as a token of their thanks for his unwavering support and loyalty at Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan. “I’ve promised to protect Americans,” said Rambo.

On one recent occasion, an accident occurred at the median in front of the camp entrance. Rambo was first on the scene, directing drivers around the accident while keeping curious onlookers from getting too close to those injured in the accident. Keeping his eye on the surrounding activities, he maintained control of the situation until local police arrived to secure the scene.

“His ability to work with the locals is something we could not do without,” said 1st Lt. Brian Arrowood. “He is a great asset with the locals.” Arrowood and his platoon are the Soldiers who work with Rambo daily.

“He has blended in with the Soldiers of the security forces who maintain the entry control point,” said Sgt. Timothy Ellestad, of McFarland, Wisconsin. “He works with the new Soldiers. He’s like one of us.”

In a ceremony held recently, Rambo was honored by the Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 48th Brigade Special Troops Battalion (BSTB), 48th IBCT for his dedication to the defense of the camp and his loyalty to those he serves with on a daily basis.

Arrowood’s platoon contacted the

Louisville Slugger Company, telling them about Rambo and his allegiance to the American Soldiers.

The Kentucky-based company obliged by sending a wooden bat with the engraving, “Rambo, An American Hero” 1st Platoon, 48th BSTB, HHC Camp Phoenix 2009-2010.” The entire platoon signed the bat as well. As a bonus, the company also delivered an aluminium bat for Rambo’s daily security duties.

During the ceremony, Arrowood said, “the first bat is from the Soldiers you have worked with, the second bat is so you can continue to do what you do best.”

Rambo’s dedication and devotion to the American Soldiers is sincerely demonstrated in his own words, “Since I started working with Americans, I promised to protect them. I will stay here as long as they will allow me.”



Community backs 48th Brigade Soldier after robbery

Story and photo by MCSC Kevin Elliot
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Spc. Jeffrey Farmer, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team was scuba diving in Australia during his Rest and Recuperation (R&R) leave last August when he got a message to call home. "I was told I'd been robbed and everything was taken," he said. "Needless to say my R&R went downhill from there."

Farmer is the owner of 2 Man Rental, a tree trimming and home repair service in Trenton, Georgia. "They stole two pickup trucks, all my tools, an engine lift, air power tools, four chainsaws, all my clothes and even all my scuba gear," he said, shaking his head.

Nothing was insured, so Farmer made contact with his friend Bill Lockhart, Executive Officer of American Legion Post 106 in Trenton. Lockhart quickly got to work. Joe Smith, a friend of Lockhart's in Bangor, Maine, threw a fundraiser for Farmer. There was a \$10 cover charge, a silent auction, a band and a tattoo contest. They raised \$1,488. The American Legion in Trenton threw a fundraiser with a silent auction, a poetry reading and two bands. They raised just under \$1,200. Farmer was able to appear from Afghanistan during the benefits through the power of Yahoo Messenger. He got up at 3 a.m. to catch them at the right time.

Donations are still coming in. "There is now just under \$7,000 total donated plus a 1992 Dodge pickup truck. A retired Lt. Col. even donated a complete set of scuba gear," he said. "And a motorcycle club in Chattanooga is even taking me on a \$500 tool buying spree when I get back."

"I'm extremely grateful," Farmer said. "But just to say thank you doesn't seem to be enough. They tell me that being over here is enough gratitude, but I look at it as a job. This is what I do. They have given up items and money and time. I guess you just need love in your heart."



Spc. Jeffrey Farmer, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

Father and son share war stories and birthdays

Story and photo by Capt. Phillip Mabe
Task Force Dahlonga Public Affairs

February 19 is a special day in the Bowen family, when father Charles and son Robert celebrate a shared birthday. This year, however, the day is particularly significant. Not because Robert is 21 and finally old enough to legally buy beer, but because even if he wanted to, he couldn't.

Spc. Robert Bowen and his father Sgt. Charles Bowen, 43, of Loganville, Ga., are spending their birthdays this year in Afghanistan. Both men are members of the Georgia Army National Guard – assigned to the 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team – and are serving in the eastern part of the country near the Pakistan border.

To mark the unusual occasion, their command gave both men the day off and flew Charles in from Ghazni Province to be with his son at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Gardez in Paktya Province, about



Sgt. Charles Bowen (left), and Spc. Robert Bowen were together on their shared birthday, February 19, at FOB Gardez. The father and son celebrated together this year deployed with 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team in Afghanistan.

Story continued on page 11

Father and son continued

50 miles away. The men spent the day in a makeshift cinema watching bootlegged movies from a dusty leather couch. That afternoon, a projector beamed a grainy version of *The Boondock Saints* on a plywood wall.

"This is a lot easier than if I was just here by myself," Robert said, noting that there would be no cake or ice cream on this particular birthday, just movies, Pepsi and a little down time before getting back to work.

While sharing a birthday with a parent is rather uncommon, joint parent-child service in the National Guard is less so. Robert and Charles joined up together in the spring of 2006. That May, Charles signed a waiver for then 17-year old Robert to enlist. A month later, father followed son into the ranks.

"I said, 'Well hell, I'll just come back in, too,'" said Charles, who had previously served four years on active duty from 1986 to 1990. "I'd rather be over here to take care of him anyway."

While happy to be together in Afghanistan, the two have spent most of their deployment apart. Charles works as a wheeled vehicle mechanic for the battalion's Delta Company in Ghazni, and Robert has spent his entire tour in Gardez, first working on a team that mentored the Afghan National Police and later as an air coordinator at FOB Gardez's helicopter landing zone.

They stay in touch, talking every four of five days on their Afghan cell phones to check up on one another or just to chat.

Both Bowens have had their brushes with danger, whether attacked by improvised explosive devices, mortars or small arms fire. But whenever an incident occurs, one is quick to reassure the other that he's safe.

"Sometimes, I worry," Charles said. "But I always just call to make sure he's all right."

Sometimes, they said, the men spend more time consoling Charles' wife (Robert's stepmother), who isn't

exactly thrilled about the arrangement. One time, she called Robert to ask, half-jokingly, if there was anything he could do to get his father home.

"I told her, 'There's nothing I can do about it, momma,'" Robert said.

Today, after almost nine months on the ground in Afghanistan, Charles and Robert are preparing to redeploy home. Neither is sure exactly what he'll do upon returning to Georgia, where Charles once worked as a diesel engine mechanic in Conyers and Robert had a job as a supply tech in Winder. Both are thinking about shifting gears and trying out something new for a change.

But one thing is for certain, they look forward to more days like today, when they can spend quality time together. For starters, Robert plans to "drag" his father to Panama City for Bike Week in May.

"I don't even own a motorcycle," Charles said grinning.

"Well, we'll get you one," Robert said.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

By: *Chaplain (CPT) Mark Edwards*



It has come that time for us to prepare for redeployment. I would like to impose a few questions to you: How has the last ten months shaped your spiritual walk here in Afghanistan? Have you fought the good fight as a Soldier? These are important questions you can share with your Battle Buddy.

As a Religious Support Team member, I would like to share the importance of keeping a healthy view on life after deployment. During this deployment the Religious Support Team formed cell groups. Our cell groups became more like a family atmosphere. When we met, the question was asked is it well with your soul. As a Soldier, I hope it is well for you to be in good physical health, mental health and spiritual health when you reunite with your loved ones. This has been a great first deployment for me because the Religious Support Team has been there for the Soldiers. Our job is to keep our Soldiers spiritually fit for their families after deployment.

Finally, I pray that our Soldiers will press on toward a better tomorrow. The Apostle Paul stated that he forgot about those things behind him, but he pressed toward the goal of a higher call-

ing. Yesterday is gone, and we look for a better tomorrow. The journey has been long and at times challenging; however, we have found great comfort in each other during this deployment. I pray that you would invest the time in being with your families because they deserve every moment with their Soldiers. Also, you need that time to relax and find the joy of living each day closer to God.

Now, for all of us who are still in the fight, we must keep our focus on the fight until the wheels are down on America soil. "And I heard the voice of the LORD saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I! Send me." (Isaiah 6:8)



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



Staff Sgt. Nicholas Ives and Capt. Mohammad Ali Yazdani discuss the progress of the Afghan National Army 209th Corps Route Clearing Company's efforts on its first mission. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Christopher DeWitt, Regional Command, North Public Affairs Mentor Team /Released)



Afghan National Army Soldiers of 4-2 Kandak, Field Artillery Company prepare 122mm rounds during a night live-fire of their Russian D-30 howitzer. (Photo by U.S. Navy MC2 Donisha Burns, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Afghan National Army Soldier Khan Ali uses a metal detector while conducting the 209th Corps Route Clearing Company's first mission. (Photo by U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Christopher DeWitt, Regional Command, North Public Affairs Mentor Team/Released)

Soldiers of the Afghan National Army's 4-2 Kandak, Field Artillery Company complete maintenance checks prior to a live-fire exercise of their Russian D-30 howitzer. (Photo by U.S. Navy MC2 Donisha Burns, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Lt. Col. Randall V. Simmons, Jr., Commander, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment from Gray, Ga. listens as Edward Vowell, far left, U.S. State Department, Shinwar District Support Team Advisor to the commander, responds to a question from a Malik, or tribal headman, on Afghanistan's reconciliation process for former Taliban fighters and supporters, Feb. 9. Seated to Vowell's left is Qari Rahmat, a high value individual, turned in by the Maliks as part of the reconciliation process. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Lt. Col. Randall V. Simmons, Jr., Commander, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, and 6th Kandak Afghan Border Police commander, Col. Mohammed Niazy D. congratulates Malik Yaghistan, Feb. 9, in Jalalabad for sustaining their tribal unification agreement and adhering to the mandates to work with the Afghan government to peacefully dispel anti-Afghan forces. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Rambo (center), stands with his new Louisville Sluggers among the Soldiers of 1st Platoon, HHC 48th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, who he works with daily securing the Entry Control Point for Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. David Bill, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Two Afghan National Army Soldiers from 203 Corps review a weapons inventory sheet before handing out weapons to the new troops of 6-1 Kandak, Feb. 16. (Photo by U.S. Navy MC2 Donisha Burns, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Lt. Col. Reg Neal (left), commander of Task Force Kabul, explains the details in his command coin to Asif Nang (second from right), of the Ministry of Education, before the ribbon cutting ceremony of the new school in Nonis, Afghanistan. Neal presented the coin to Nang as a gesture of friendship between Coalition and Afghan leaders. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. David Bill, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Release)



Lt. Col. Reg Neal, Commander for Task Force Kabul (left), talk with Jamal-Mir Jamal, Police Chief for Charysab District (center), before the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new school in Nonis, Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. David Bill, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



The Battalion Commander of 6-1 Kandak, gives a motivational speech to his troops, explaining what he expects from the Kandak during a weapons inventory, Feb. 16. (Photo by U.S. Navy MC2 Donisha Burns, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Lt. Col. Thomas Bright (left) representing Camp Phoenix and Brig. Gen. Levent Colak (right), Commander of Regional Command Capital, along with three other major command representatives sign a memorandum of agreement defining the command and control relationship of first responders within the Kabul area, placing the Afghan National Security Forces at the forefront of securing the population of Kabul. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. David S. Bill, 48th IBCT Public Affairs.)



Command Sgt. Maj. Jackie Faulkner (left) and Lt. Col. Thomas Bright, the command team for the 48th Brigade Special Troops Battalion display their new battalion colors after a reflagging ceremony held at Camp Phoenix, Afghanistan. The new colors were designed to demonstrate their new mission with the motto “Give me the Mission” (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. David S. Bill, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)

U.S. Servicemembers and Coalition forces participate in a “Fun Run” at Camp Phoenix, Afghanistan February 26 in support of Black History Month. The proceeds from the run will be donated to a relief fund for the families of the Georgia National Guard 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, who are from Haiti. (U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Jeffrey M. Richardson, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Maj. Gen. Timothy McHale (left), Deputy Commander USFOR-A presents the Purple Heart Medal to Staff Sgt. Rodney Ellison of Headquarters Company 48th Brigade Special Troops Battalion. Ellison, of Cedartown, Georgia, and eight other Soldiers were conducting a dismounted perimeter patrol around Camp Phoenix on 26 Jan. when a VB IED impacted the concrete barriers outside the camp. All nine Warriors were presented the Purple heart. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. David Bill, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



CW05 Paul Huber, briefs Soldiers on the benefits of becoming a Warrant Officer in the Georgia National Guard. The opportunity to become a Warrant Officer allows non-commissioned officers to become a subject matter expert and provides them personal and professions development. (Photo by U.S. Navy MCC Rodney Furry, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)