

THE FIGHTING 48th

April 2010

Volume 1, Issue 7

"Georgia's Volunteers wrap up OEF 2009-2010"



(The Afghan National Security Forces) respect the fact that we have come from far away to build thier para-military force and they have made us feel invited. We are their guests.

Timothy P. Moran

1st Lt. Company B, 2nd Bn., 121st Infantry Regt.
48th IBCT, Georgia Army National Guard

Soldiers of the 'Fighting 48th Brigade Combat Team' stand in the shadows of the base of Gharib Ghar, a rigorous mountain backdrop that is the epicenter of the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTTC) a blended Afghan/ coalition combat readiness environment preparing the brave citizens of Afghanistan to take full control of their security.



The Deployed Journal of the Volunteer Brigade

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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

After a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan, it's time to welcome back the Georgia National Guard's 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT). Their mission has been to organize, train and prepare Afghanistan's security forces to manage their own nation's security operations. Taking on this task in the middle of a renewed Taliban insurgency has been quite a challenge. But 10 months after the 48th Brigade's entrance into the country, Afghanistan's security forces have seen tangible progress.

In a December address to Congress, the commander of U.S. and international forces in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, said there will be about 134,000 Afghan Soldiers and just over 100,000 Afghan police in place by this fall.

By July 2011, there should be roughly 300,000 total Afghan security forces, between Soldiers and police. The skills and confidence instilled in these early Afghan National Army and ANP forces by the 48th and other U.S. forces has been critical to a self-sustaining and stable Afghanistan.

Afghan leaders are stepping forward



Maj. Gen. William T. Nesbitt

en masse, courageously volunteering to protect their country against an enemy that has shown a persistent desire to do anything and everything to ruin the establishment of a stable Afghanistan.

In recent months, thousands of

Afghans have moved on from training to conducting numerous operations vital to their own nation's security. Operations like the one which took place last month, where the 48th IBCT mentored an Afghan National Army unit as it conducted its first ever improvised explosive device route-clearing mission.

Another example of the improved standing of Afghan forces is the success of "Operation Mountain Delivery," where joint Afghan and coalition forces — including Georgia Guardsmen — used air assaults to assure the capacity for quick resupply needs within the region.

Still another substantial development, our Citizen-Soldiers recently worked with tribal leaders representing more than 170 villages in the historic Shinwari Jirga to sign a clause that imposes severe consequences for anyone giving safe harbor to Taliban or anti-Afghan forces.

Our Guardsmen also have taken on several non-combat duties while serving abroad. Soldiers of Police Mentor Team 1, Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, have provided medical assistance to children of the Kuchi no-

Story continued on page 3

Commanders' Column, cont.

madic tribe who were staying in the area and needed medical care.

Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment opened two radio stations in the Muhmand Dara and Shinwar provinces to give the people of those regions a voice to counter Taliban propaganda. This new media program is an initiative of the International Security Assistance Force counterinsurgency process, and will belong entirely to the Afghan people.

Several Soldiers of the 48th volunteered their personal time to help with Operation Outreach — a program that provides humanitarian aid to Afghan villages. Georgia Guardsmen helped provide thousands of blankets to Afghan villagers.

Our Citizen-Soldiers also have been actively involved in civil-military projects designed to create Afghan jobs and offer military-age men a paying alternative to joining the insurgency. As Georgia's 1-108th "Roughriders" have come

to learn, such initiatives — in addition to bolstering the economy — also have led to increased cooperation and security.

McChrystal recently noted that the National Guard's effort in Afghanistan has been "extraordinary," adding that Guardsmen bring "unique skills and maturity," which are critical to the mission. I couldn't agree more.

But, tragically, not all of our Soldiers will be returning home to us. Georgia lost eight of its own this past year. These fallen heroes — and their families — made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure freedom for the Afghan people and greater security for the rest of the world.

We also have several Warriors who were severely wounded. Just a couple of weeks ago, a suicide bombing attack on a U.S. combat outpost in Afghanistan near the Pakistani border injured five Soldiers of the 48th. Their injuries will forever serve as a reminder, to themselves and others, of their great courage and dedication to the cause of freedom and the fight

against tyranny.

The families of all deployed Georgia Guardsmen also have sacrificed much. Families have given up their loved ones for an entire year now, and I know that they are eager to have them back. We all are.

Also important, has been the sacrifice of the employers of these Guardsmen. Unlike regular Army, most Guardsmen are not full-time Soldiers. The skills and leadership learned by these Soldiers allow us to return them to their employers more mature, worldly and better prepared to handle today's challenges.

As our Citizen-Soldiers from the 48th return during the next two months, I hope that their tremendous service, devotion and sacrifice — as well as the sacrifices of their loved ones and employers — will continue to be recognized, honored and respected. Congratulations 48th Brigade on a job well done. You have made all Georgians exceptionally proud.

48th IBCT medic treats motorcycle wreck victim

By MCCA Kevin Elliott
48th IBCT Public Affairs

"Hey Doc, grab your bag," came the call through the headphones from truck commander Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Palacio. Pfc. Michael McDonald's convoy had just pulled out of Forward Operating Base Vulcan when they came up on a motorcycle wreck.

Traffic was at a standstill and people were quickly gathering around a three-wheeled motorcycle on its side. The driver sat on the ground nearby, blood dripping down his face.

The Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, quickly set up a cordon around the injured civilian and McDonald got to work.

"When I got to him, he had a few minor cuts on his head and his knee was banged up," said McDonald. "I checked him from head to toe. His pupils were equally round and reactive to light. All the bleeding had stopped. I cleaned him up. That's the first time I've ever stopped in traffic to help a local national."

McDonald, 28, of Newborn, Ga., was fairly new to Company D. He had been with Company B at FOB Rushmore and replaced another medic in January who was redeploying back home. It didn't take long to get into the action.

"The first mission I went out on, we had an ANA Soldier get shot through the leg," McDonald explained. "An ANA medic was already treating him. I put a tourniquet on him, rewrapped it and put a pressure dressing on it and called in a medical evacuation. He's OK."

"Doc McDonald did a real good job of evaluating him," said 1st Platoon Leader, 1st Lt. Marcus Ruzek. "Some things we can just drive through. But if there is a potential for someone to be hurt, we will stop and make sure they are OK."



U.S. Army Pfc. Michael McDonald, 1st Platoon, Company D, 1-121, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, checks an Afghan man who wrecked his motorcycle on Highway 1, near Forward Operating Base Vulcan, Ghazni, Afghanistan, Feb. 24. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Senior Chief Kevin Elliott/Released)

48th Troops give HA under enemy fire

By U.S. Army Spc. Jennifer C. Eddy
48th IBCT Public Affairs

The sound of gunfire popped softly from distant rolling hills. All seemed relatively safe as 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldiers and Afghan National Police (ANP) convoy to small local villages in Faryab province in early March, providing humanitarian assistance (HA) to the local communities.

As the small arms fire heard faintly in the distance quickly became heavy, loud and close, the Soldiers and their counterparts quickly reacted.

Over the course of three days, between Mar. 6th and 9th, Soldiers of 2nd and 5th Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment and policemen of Faryab Province ANP conducted two HA drops that either started or ended with enemy fire.

On Mar. 6, before Co. C Soldiers approached the village of Kwaja Kinti in the district of Qeysar, they heard the shots of bullets bursting out of AK-47 muzzles.

"An hour before we rolled into the village we started taking small arms and RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade) contact on the road," said Spc. Andrew C. Watkins, a 48th Brigade Support Battalion medic currently assigned to 5th Platoon. "It became heavy contact as we approached the school."

The Soldiers and ANP were able to effectively react to the situation and identify enemy combatants.

"All gunners were able to positively identify targets and return fire until they gained fire superiority," said Watkins. "Once in town, we received contact, engaged the enemy and pushed the Taliban out."

The ANP proved their efficiency to their 5th Plt. mentors.

"The ANP performed very well, returning fire with nobody scattering," said Watkins. "They were the ones who cleared the village and buildings."



60 mm High Explosive Mortar rounds lay between used .50 caliber rounds on the floor of a Humvee of 5th Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, immediately after a two-hour long fire-fight against enemy combatants in Kwaja Kinti village, Qeysar district, Faryab Province March 6, 2010. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jesse L. Holmes/Released)



Sgt. Christopher Archer pulls security so Afghan National Police can hand out humanitarian assistance supplies in Gabala village, Alamar district, Faryab Province. Soldiers of 2nd and 5th Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, Norwegian Forces and Afghan National Police engaged enemy forces an hour after leaving the village March 9. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Samuel T. Weeks/Released)

The ANP were able to confiscate two motorcycles, 762 AK-47 rounds, two loaded rifles and an RPG launcher.

After the ANP confiscated the enemy equipment, they conducted the HA drop where 12 boxes of food, six boxes of clothes, four boxes of shoes and one box of school supplies were donated.

A similar situation occurred Mar. 9 in another district of Faryab province. About an hour after a second joint HA drop was conducted where they donated roughly the same amount of supplies in Gabala village, Alamar district, the ANP, 5th Plt. and Soldiers of the Norwegian Army were attacked.

"During the 2nd HA drop, we conducted in the village of Gabala, there was sporadic gunfire coming from the hills to the north of us, but we had no positive identification," said Staff Sgt. Jesse L. Holmes, a mortarman and member of 5th Plt.

Moments later, the ANP, U.S. and Norwegian Soldiers were able to accurately identify enemy combatants.

"The Taliban were on motorcycles. We could see them popping up on the hilltops 400 meters away," said Holmes. "We engaged the crew-served weapons, small arms, 60mm mortars- everything."

After flanking the enemy, they were able to confiscate weapons and other tools used against the joint forces during the attack.

"When the enemy fled, one Taliban member fell off and left his motorcycle. 1st Lt. Thomas Daly's truck flanked around the mountains and we were able to confiscate a motorcycle with RPK (light machine gun) and AK-47 rounds,"

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Combat action in Ghazni province

By Mass Communication Specialist Senior Chief Kevin Elliott
48th IBCB Public Affairs

COP BAND-E SARDEH, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan- 1st Lt. Marcus Ruzek's platoon was pinned down. They were outmanned, under heavy fire and cutoff. Ruzek and his 13 men had been fighting up to 70 Taliban for eight hours. They were unable to move, and fighting from a poorly defendable position. All they could do was hunker down. It was his darkest hour.

Ruzek had been with 1st platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard since February, 2007. "I've been fortunate enough to stay in the same platoon all the way through the deployment," he said.

"1st Platoon was sent here, (Ghazni Province) because it was the toughest mission within the company's area of responsibility," Ruzek said.

The platoon was originally split almost in half, and Ruzek was in charge of an Embedded Training Team (ETT) at Combat Outpost Band-e Sardeh. A change of mission to combined action in November, 2009 brought the platoon back together.

"With that switch, I was able to bring the entire platoon down here. We went from 16 to 27 Soldiers and it built a lot more capacity for us to excel with the Afghan National Army (ANA)," he said.

Ruzek learned the ANA owned battle space and were being used as an infantry Kandak (battalion).

"I was able to take that and run with it," he said. "From the middle of June until the end of September we were constantly patrolling. We taught the ANA patrolling, dismounted foot patrols, operating at night, operating in the day, establishing checkpoints, fighting out of offensive and defensive positions



GHAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan-- Sgt. James Allen, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team scans his surroundings during a firefight in Ghazni province, Sept. 10, 2009. (photo by Charles Eckert/Released)

and integrating close combat air resources."

1st Plt. saw a lot of enemy activity while conducting over 225 patrols. They'd been in over 25 direct fire engagements with the enemy. The biggest was Sept. 10.

"The day that will never be forgotten for this unit," Ruzek said thinking back to that long day.

While on patrol with the ANA and a Polish unit, they came under fire. After shooting a Taliban, all hell broke loose. "They opened up on us and we were in a three-hour fight with the enemy," he said. "We took several RPGs, machine guns, small arms and mortar fire. In three hours, we fired two AT-4s, 400 rounds of MK 19 grenades, over 400 rounds of 5.56, over 1,800 rounds of 7.62 and 800 rounds of .50 cal."

Air support finally showed up and took out a dozen Taliban fighters. Ruzek and his men started a battle damage assessment.

"We pushed north about 3km and in the middle of a village they hit our trail element, the Polish forces. They killed one Polish soldier, wounding five along with

two ANA," he said. "At that point we reconsolidated, organized and called in the medevac."

Ruzek had no option but to hold his ground and wait for the quick reaction force.

"We hunkered down and by the time our quick reaction force fought their way in after nine and a half hours, we had basically killed everybody the enemy sent. We found out the next day we had killed the most wanted Taliban leader in the area. It's the first time they've fought a losing battle. The Taliban doesn't fight losing battles. In guerilla fighting you only fight battles you know you can win."

It's been a tough deployment, but one Ruzek said he wouldn't change.

"All in all, I wouldn't trade the experiences here for anything," he said. "I wasn't obligated to come on this deployment, but after joining and training with 1st Plt., I realized I couldn't simply let them go to war without me. It's probably the best decision I've made in my life. I've been very blessed and I wouldn't trade it for anything. I couldn't ask for better Soldiers."

48th Warriors in Meimana fix pay for Gormach ANP

By U.S. Army Spc. Jennifer Eddy
48th IBCT Public Affairs

FARYAB PROVINCE, Afghanistan— In a small, cramped office at the Gormach district police department, U.S. Army Soldiers and the Afghan leaders they mentor huddle around each other, meticulously reviewing every detail of each Afghan National Police (ANP) form.

Sgt. 1st Class Darin R. Russell, Platoon Sergeant, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, Georgia Army National Guard and his counterpart, Gormach ANP Battalion administration officer Col. Ghausadin Nazami, worked tirelessly over the past nine months to successfully resolve ANP pay issues in the district and province.

In June, 2009, 1st Platoon conducted 'right seat-left seat' missions with the outgoing unit to get the Gormach district police department organized. The ANP leadership told them they had not received combat pay since May. It was July.

"The ANP contract was for 9,000 (\$191) Afghanis a month and they were only receiving 6,000 (\$127)," said Russell. "We were losing 15-20 cops a week. It was definitely our main focus for a few months to get them paid."

Lack of pay decreased morale in an area of Afghanistan already challenged due to enemy activity. In the most extreme case, eight ANP went absent without leave and stole government property.

"They took all their weapons, radios, Ford Ranger ANP trucks and went to the Taliban," said Russell. "The police who defected called the police department and said they defected because they weren't paid correctly and they would sell everything back if the government would pay more than the Taliban, the government refused so they sold it to the Taliban."

After the incident, 1st Plt. and their counterparts came to a very important conclusion.

"The Taliban and defectors are not motivated by ideology, but by money," said Russell. "All the intelligence we've received on the Taliban reverts back to



Sgt. 1st Class Darin R. Russell Platoon Sergeant, 1st Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, Georgia Army National Guard, and his counterpart Gormach Afghan National Police administration officer Col. Ghausadin Nazami review individual ANP pay forms at the Gormach district police department, Faryab Province Mar 13. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jennifer C. Eddy/Released)

money, whether they're able to raise it, they're short on it, or they're extorting it."

The ANP, with the help of 1st Plt., were able to organize, form and develop a \$2.5 million grant from Asian Development Bank (ADB) through the Afghan government.

On Sep. 29 and 30, 1st Plt. and representatives of the Afghan government ensured that each policeman had the correct pay that month and three months of back combat pay. To distribute the money safely, ANP pulled security along the 65 mile stretch from Meimana to Gormach. "Since then, there have been no defections and morale has remained high, especially since they've had 19 killed in action and 17 injured since late July," said Russell.

About 5.5 million Afghani (\$119,000) was distributed to 428 police, while 478 police also received combat pay. Since pay has been distributed, the ANP have received another pay raise, the average ANP now makes 11,680 Afghanis (\$254) a month.

1st Plt. has seen a significant change in the Gormach ANP.

"Once leadership figured out the problems, there was a complete turnaround in morale and work ethic," said Spc. Gerardo O. Rios of 1st Plt. "Whether it's working at the check points or regular patrols, they never say no to a mission."

With the pay raise, ANP leadership now has the power to pick and choose the most qualified applicants.

"The quality of the ANP is higher, everyone is volunteering, and there is a larger selection to choose from," said Nazami. "Even though we've lost people, the Soldiers still hold their positions and day by day we get stronger."

By solving local police pay problems, ANP leadership, with 1st Plt.'s help, has greatly improved the quality and combat readiness of ANP troops in the district of Gormach.

"They saw we were there to help them," said Rios. "They saw that we cared and were doing our job, it made them want to do their job."

Redlegs conduct historic transfer of authority

By U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Donisha Burns
48th IBCT Public Affairs

CAMP PHOENIX, Afghanistan – March 16th, 2010, history was made at Camp Phoenix with two of the oldest field artillery regiments in the Army, 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery Regiment (FAR), 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, transferred over their missions, responsibility and duties during a transfer of authority ceremony to 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Massachusetts Army National Guard.

Both regiments have served during the American Revolution, Spanish-American War, Civil War, WWI, WWII, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and now Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 118th FAR has spent the last 10 months setting up and conducting communications with every police district (Afghan National Security Forces) throughout Kabul Province, winning the trust of the Afghan people.

Lt. Col. Reginald Neal, Com-



U.S. Army Cpt. Kevin Nicklay, left, Commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, salutes during a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan, Mar. 16. The 118th transferred authority to 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Massachusetts Army National Guard. The 118th and 101st are the two oldest field artillery regiments in the Army. The 101st was formed in 1636 and the 118th in 1751. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Senior Chief Kevin Elliott/Released)

mander, 118th FAR and Command Sgt. Maj. Melvin Dover cased the colors, signifying the completion of their mission and duties.

“Long after we are gone, the history books will be written,” said Neal. “Every Soldier, Sailor and Airmen should be proud of changing Afghanistan.”

Col. Will Roy, Commander, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team later thanked Neal’s and the Soldiers of Old Hickory for building a strong foundation for his team’s mission.

Both battalions are filled with rich heritage. today they add to their already distinguished history with this TOA. For the past 258 years, 118th FAR Soldiers have been serving the nation, and the 101st FAR, better known as “The South Regiment,” have been serving the nation since 1636.

“We have set the conditions for success for the 101st, Hickory six signing off the net,” concluded Lt. Col. Neal.



U.S. Army Lt. Col. Reg Neal, center, Commander, 1st Battalion, 118th Field Artillery Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, cases his colors at Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan, as Lt. Col. James Hally, right, Commander, 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Massachusetts Army National Guard, looks on during a transfer of authority ceremony Mar. 16, 2010. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Senior Chief Kevin Elliott/Released)

48th Brigade Escorts ANA

By Mass Communication Specialist Senior Chief Kevin Elliott
48th IBCT Public Affairs

The 48th Brigade Personal Security Detachment (PSD) worked hand-in-hand with the U.S. Marine Corps Feb. 12 at the start of a four-day mission escorting 122 vehicles and nearly 300 Afghan National Army (ANA) Soldiers halfway to their new command at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Deleram in Western Helmand Province.

Moving the 5th Kandak (battalion), 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps of the Afghan National Army from Camp Blackhorse, through Kabul, down Highway 1 to Camp Leatherneck/Shorabak and later to FOB Deleram was not an easy task, but a challenge the 48th Brigade PSD was ready to meet.

"I thought it went well considering we've never worked with the Marines before," said 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Operations Sgt. Maj. Bryan Tyler.

"Keeping on the same route and coming out on the other side of Kabul with everyone in order and accounted for was good," Tyler said. "It took three hours just to get through Kabul. Keeping the ANA



48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Operations Sgt. Maj. Bryan Tyler checks a map before leading a convoy of 122 Afghan National Army vehicles halfway to Forward Operating Base Deleram in western Helmand Province, Feb. 12, 2010. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Senior Chief Kevin Elliott)

moving was a big challenge. Some of those guys only had two weeks of experience driving. That's why it took us 11 hours to go 102 miles."

Marine units are now partnering with the Kandaks of the 215th Corps. Every unit trained with the Marines will move down south. This was the second big move.

"The goal is to train them and move them south to Helmand

to Camp Leatherneck and Combat Logistics Battalion 6 (CLB 6) will partner with them to conduct missions," said U.S. Marine Capt. Patrick Williams, Partner Team Leader, CLB 6, at Camp Leatherneck.

The trip was fairly smooth, but tension was high as Highway 1 is a corridor known for enemy contact. Trucks broke down and a few ANA soldiers, inexperienced at driving, bumped into each other.

"The breakdowns I expected, but they're fused to drive fast," Williams said. "They got out of the vehicles at every opportunity. It wasn't as smooth as it should have been. Basically it was follow the leader."

The PSD escorted the ANA to FOB Warrior, about halfway to their final destination.

Despite a few breakdowns along the way, Tyler thought his Soldiers' experience contributed

to the success of the mission.

"More than half my guys were in the brigade in Iraq where we did these missions for six months," Tyler said. "We used our experience gained in Iraq and it paid off big."



U.S. Army Spec. John Deal, left, 48th Brigade Personal Security Detachment (PSD), speaks with Afghan National Army (ANA) Soldiers south of Kabul, Afghanistan during a convoy along Highway 1 of 122 ANA vehicles, Feb. 12. The 48th Brigade PSD escorted the convoy halfway to Forward Operating Base Deleram in Western Helmand Province. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Senior Chief Kevin Elliott/Released)

Georgia National Guard's long road home nearly complete

By U.S. Army Sgt. Andrew A. Reagan
304th Public Affairs Detachment

PAKTYA PROVINCE, Afghanistan- Soldiers from the Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade, 121st Light Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, Echo Company, Distribution Platoon from Winder, Ga., convoyed from their home Forward Operating Base Lightning in Paktya province, Afghanistan, to Combat Outpost Herrera, also in Paktya, March 17.

What made this mission special was the platoon also conducted it with their replacements, the Vermont National Guard's 172nd Infantry Division, 3rd Battalion, Echo Company, Distribution Platoon.

This hallmarked the near completion of the unit's tour in Afghanistan. The Georgia Guard Soldiers will leave FOB Lightning in the next few days and begin their journey home.

The Soldiers in the unit say that the most important things they will take with them from their time in Afghanistan are the strong bonds they formed with their Afghan National Army counterparts and each other.

"It will be sad to see everyone go their separate ways, but at the same time we know we can always rely on each other. We can call each other in the middle of the night if we ever need help. We're battle buddies for life," said the distribution platoon sergeant, U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Brian Mauro of Jackson, Ga. Mauro added the platoon is so close-knit because of what they accomplished and went through together.

Echo Co. drove more miles than any other company in the 48th Brigade. They delivered construction supplies, food and anything else that the units they supported needed. They drove through all seven provinces in the 48th's area of operation and through every type of terrain imaginable, Mauro said.

There is one specific mission that the members of the platoon point to as an event that changed the direction of their deployment. The unit embarked on a mission to deliver supplies to several nearby FOBs in early November.

However, not only did the scheduled week-long operation turn into a mettle testing 24-day ordeal due to poor weather and other factors, but the unit also encountered a complex ambush on the second day of the mission.

"The first time we got hit was a turning point. We became more serious about our mission and it brought us closer together. It turned us into one cohesive team. You couldn't separate us after that. We had to count on each other for everything... That bond will never go away. We went through this together and we came out of it together," said U.S. Army Sgt. Greg S. Wallace, of Atlanta, a medic with the platoon.

Another positive during the 24-day mission was the strengthening of the relationship between the Soldiers in the Distribution Platoon and their ANA counterparts.

"During those 24 days, we had some down time waiting to go from place to place and it made us really work with the ANA a lot... We spent a lot of time planning things with their staff and we built some good personal relationships with them," said the unit platoon leader, U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jerry M. Garner, of Dearing, Ga. "Those 24 days really solidified our relationship with the ANA."

Garner also discussed the development of the partnership between his unit and the ANA, as well as the important role the ANA played in his unit's mission.

"We started working with them back in October, especially with their (non-commissioned officers). We made it a point to pair our NCOs with their NCOs... The trust factor has gone way up between our unit and their unit.

"Whenever we roll out we do our best to take them with us, and when they roll out they do the same for us... We use them on the cultural side of things, assisting with the population... We're assisting their army and defending their country from people who want to do them harm. The ANA helps to get the message across," Garner said.

After travelling across thousands of miles of eastern Afghanistan and surviving enemy attacks, the Soldiers of the Distribution Platoon can't wait to get home. They are rightfully proud of all they have accomplished in the last year, but are proudest of one single accomplishment.

"We took 31 guys over here and 31 are going back," Mauro said.



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jerry M. Garner, of Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade, 121st Light Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, Echo Company, Distribution Platoon, addresses members of his platoon as well as members of the Vermont National Guard prior to a logistics convoy from Forward Operating Base Lightning, Paktya province, Afghanistan, to Combat Outpost Herrera, March 17. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Andrew A. Reagan, 304th Public Affairs Detachment/Released)

Guardsmen teach Afghans counter-IED route clearing

By Sgt. 1st Class Roy Henry
Georgia National Guard Public
Affairs

Standing inside the air terminal, waiting to board the bus that will take him and his fellow soldiers on the last leg of their journey home, Georgia Army Guard Sgt. Donald Hitchcock talked about what he experienced in Afghanistan.

Hitchcock, who lives in Rincon, said he performed his share of "other duties" like any soldier. The one he's proudest of, though, is the mission he and fellow combat engineer Staff Sgt. Nick Ives conducted as part of an embedded training team teaching route-clearing techniques to more than 400 Afghan soldiers. Before they finished, Hitchcock said, his team had "trained-up" six new Afghan combat engineer companies. Those units now have responsibility for keeping

military and civilian personnel safe from IEDs planted by insurgents bent on keeping control of that country's roadways.

"You gotta be proud of something like that," Hitchcock said. "I mean, you take six soldiers and give them 400 guys who had no idea of how to go about doing one of the most dangerous jobs there is on a battlefield and train them to do it right and do it as safe as you possibly can."

"I know I'm proud of that," he said.

"Better believe it," Ives added. "These guys couldn't even perform the basic soldier skills like driving or hitting what they shot at. And now, well now they can not only do that, but they perform one of the most dangerous jobs on the battlefield ... detecting and removing an IED."

Hitchcock and Ives, both with Statesboro's 48th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, are among the more than 2,000 members of Georgia's 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team who deployed last June in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Their yearlong mission was to mentor and train members of the Afghan army and national police.

When they arrived in Afghanistan in May 2009, Hitchcock and Ives were not in the country 24 hours before being assigned to the ETT team. Within the first three months, their team had established an academy to train their charges.

"Route-clearing is a defined art," Hitchcock explained. "It's slow going and every inch of ground has to be observed. One has to look for things such as a freshly repaired place in the road or shoulder, broken pavement where it wasn't broken before and trash left along the highway."

"You're suspicious of anything and everything," Ives said, "and that includes people standing near the road. The Afghans had to be taught how to be observant, how to employ mine sweepers and mine sweeping techniques, how to disarm the device, and how dispose of it."

With their deployment over, Hitchcock said he plans to return to Georgia Technical College to study economics. Ives, who lives in Statesboro, is doing the same, only he will be going after an accounting degree.



Combat engineer Sgt. Donald Hitchcock, left, a member of Statesboro's 48th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, turns in his M-4 rifle after arriving at Hunter Army Airfield departure and arrival terminal from Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Roy Henry/Released)

148th BSB turnover marks end of Volunteers OEF deployment

By U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Donisha Burns
48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

CAMP PHOENIX, KABUL, Afghanistan – The Soldiers of the 148th Brigade Support Battalion, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, formed for the last time at Camp Phoenix, March 28 to conduct a transfer of authority with the arriving 186th Brigade Support Battalion of Vermont's 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Better known as the Wishmasters, 148th BSB were established in 1829 as the Monroe Musketeers. The unit has served in the Spanish-American War, Mexican Expedition, World War I, World War II, Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom.

As the Wishmasters' Commander, Lt. Col. Perry Carter and Command Sgt. Maj. Barry Small-



Col. Lee Durham, Commander, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, congratulates the Soldiers of 186th Brigade Support Battalion during a transfer of Authority at Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan, Mar. 28. The 48th IBCT have been in Afghanistan since June, 2009. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Donisha Burns/Released)

wood cased the 148th colors, they marked the completion of their nine-month OEF mission in support of 48th IBCT and Combined Joint Task Force 82.

"148th, you provided the-

ater wide support for all classes of supply in the Kabul region. Each company took an extremely important mission and did an outstanding job- congratulations Volunteers!" said Col. Lee Durham, Commander, 48th IBCT.

The 186th BSB was formed in 1985 as a forward support battalion, assigned to the 50th Armored Division. After serving in an infantry division for 21 years, the Mountaineers were reorganized into a BSB in support of the 86th IBCT. This is the first time the battalion has deployed as a fully organic BSB.

"Mountaineers, we have a big job ahead of us and I look forward to it," said Lt. Col. Andrew Harris, Commander, 186th BSB.

Col. Perry A. Carter, Commander, 148th BSB added, "Success comes from strong leadership. Wishmasters, you have proven that. Your mission has been completed. Wishmaster Six, signing off the net."



LTC Perry Carter and command Sgt. Maj. Barry Smallwood cased the colors of 148th Brigade Support Battalion. This event signifies the end of the mission with Combined Joint Task Force 82nd. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist Donisha Burns/Released)

Alpha Transportation keeps wheels rolling

By U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jeffery Richardson
48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

CAMP PHOENIX, Kabul, Afghanistan – Soldiers of Georgia's National Guard, Company A (Transportation), 148th Brigade Support Battalion, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, have made a successful deployment out of safely moving servicemembers, coalition forces, DOD civilians and contractors around the Kabul area during their Operation Enduring Freedom tour.

Sergeant 1st Class Jeffery B. Ruff, a Platoon Sergeant for Co. A, describes the mission of his platoon as resupplying and transporting personnel around the Kabul area using a multitude of armored vehicles and equipment.

"Nothing moves safely in the Kabul area unless 'Alpha Trans' makes it move and takes a part in it," said Ruff. "We move commodities from all over Afghanistan, taking supplies and personnel to different compounds and forward operating bases (FOB) around Kabul."

Since the transportation company has become the primary way of transport around the Kabul area for so many people, they focus on safety as a key element to their success.

"We try to let everyone know what is going on," said Ruff. "We do deep intelligence briefs in order to let our Soldiers know what to expect once they leave the forward operating base utilizing situational awareness, and we are very vigilant once we go outside the gate."



U.S. Army Sgt. Charles L. Murphy of Company A, Transportation conducts an oil check on the engine of a vehicle as part of preventive maintenance to ensure their mission readiness. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jeffery M. Richardson/Released)



U.S. Army Sgt. Timothy R. Folsom, of Alpha Company Transportation conducts a unscheduled communications check on radios in a vehicle as part of preventive maintenance procedure. Alpha Company Transportation conducts preventive maintenance on their vehicles to ensure their mission readiness. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jeffery M. Richardson/Released)

By maintaining their vigilance, the transportation company has become an integral part of accomplishing the 48th Brigade's goals.

"One of the main goals is to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people. The friendlier we show ourselves, the more friendly they are to us," said Ruff.

Despite their diligent focus on safety, the company's drivers still face a multitude of occupational hazards on a day to day basis.

"Some of the challenges we face are running night missions or early morning missions where we have had a couple vehicle borne improvised explosive devices," said Ruff. He explains how, despite the dangers, it's important they respect the Afghan people they're driving alongside. So, the drivers are always mindfully balancing the security of their military convoys and the safety of the public.

"You have to keep the mindset that we are here to help the people, not frighten them away."

Ruff and his fellow leaders are now preparing to turn over their duties as their year-long deployment draws to a close. He noted how important it's been to stay focused on the mission, but can't help being proud of how well his Warriors and junior NCO's have performed.

Echo Company logistics support keeps 1-121 in the action

By U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class
Donisha Burns
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Deployed in June, 2009, Company E, Logistic Task Force, 1st Battalion, 148th Brigade Support Battalion, Georgia Army National Guard, inherited the dangerous mission of transportation and supply in Paktya Province.

Operating out of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Lightning, the team's primary mission is to provide logistical support to 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldiers throughout a four-province area. Company E partnered with 5th Kandak (battalion), 2nd Brigade, 203rd Corps of the Afghan National Army (ANA) combat services support Kandak in Gardez.

Company E taught the ANA convoy operations and supply forecasting; how to predict when people are going to need something so they can be re-supplied before running out.

"Basically we taught the ANA how to move supplies around their area of operations," said Capt. Stephen Johnston, Commander, Co. E. "We've also helped them move things by air, using their own ANA aircraft."

Johnston said the partnership has given the ANA the capacity to support their own Kandaks downrange.

Echo Company logistics support, cont.

"We've shown them the right way to conduct combat logistics patrols. Now they can support their own downrange units," he said.

"The end result is to get them to use their own supply chain to run their own missions and for them to run their own country," said Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Ferguson, acting 1st Sgt. for Co. E.

Faced with rugged terrain, improvised explosive device-laden routes, small arms fire and rocket propelled grenade attacks at any given time, Co. E still managed to transport \$22 million worth of supplies. They also partnered with the ANA in transporting food, water, ammunition, electronic equipment, automotive parts and construction materials.

One such mission lasted nearly a month and involved almost 100 vehicles.

"We took people and equipment to each of the Kandaks. It ended up being 25 days long," said Johnston. "There was enemy contact both going and coming back and the ANA did well. We were able to provide direct fire and air assets, but it was a combined reaction to a contact situation."

Johnston said the Afghans learn quickly. "They are almost fully capable of planning and conducting operations with their own assets and people," he said.

Johnston is proud of Co. E's accomplishments, but most proud of how his Soldiers conducted themselves during their deployment.

48th IBCT Troop keeps Warriors in the fight

By U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jeffrey Richardson,
48th IBCT Public Affairs

CAMP PHOENIX, Kabul, Afghanistan – The Georgia National Guard medics and doctors of Company C, 148th Brigade Support Battalion, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, have been keeping watch over the good health of the Soldiers, coalition forces, DOD civilians and contractors around the Camp Phoenix area during their Operation Enduring Freedom tour.

Col. Christopher A. White, the senior health care provider here described the Troop Medical Clinic's (TMC) mission as "treating ill and injured U.S. and coalition forces; also to take care of DOD civilians and contractors and select local nationals as well. We also support medical activities on outlying forward operating bases (FOB) and combat outposts (COP), and work with Afghans and embassy staff."

"The TMC is open 24 hours a day, so personnel are able to come in at any time to be treated for any number of ailments," said White.

With so many personnel seeking treatment each day, the staff has scheduled specific times for servicemembers to come in and address routine ailments that are concerning them.

"We have the normal routine sick call things; people that are sick, people that are injured, sports injuries, etc. Some have had something happen out on mission, so they come in to be seen," said White.

Though sick call isn't the only service the medical staff at the TMC

handles, they have a wide variety of services in order to support servicemembers at Camp Phoenix.

"We have a behavioral health section here with counseling available. We have ancillary services here too that people take advantage of," said White. "We have an optometry section that treats eye injuries and fabricates lenses and inserts. We have a dental section where people can get routine and emergency dental care done, and we also have a very robust physical therapy section where people can get their aches and pains addressed which are more of a chronic basis."

Sgt. Alyce S. Gillespie, a medic at the Phoenix TMC, deals with many of the patients at Camp Phoenix on a day to day basis.

"Being a medic is a very broad job," said Gillespie. "We take care of everything, from the sniffles to immediate trauma. Sometimes we just talk to people because they need someone to listen to them."

We cover sick call seven days a week as well as maintain health and readiness of the personnel at Camp Phoenix and the surrounding area," said Maj. Robert D. Walkup, the battalion surgeon and physician at the TMC. "Our job is to assess them and treat them. And if it's a life threatening issue that needs specialty care, we stabilize them for evacuation."

"It's very satisfying," said Walkup. "I feel privileged and blessed to have the opportunity to come here and take care of Soldiers."



U.S. Army Spc. Shawn C. Curavoo, a physical therapy assistant, checks on a patient's knee during a physical therapy session March 23, at the Troop Medical Clinic (TMC). The TMC provides all medical care for servicemembers, DOD civilians and contractors at Camp Phoenix. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jeffrey M. Richardson/Released)



U.S. Army medic, Staff Sgt. Paul M. Creech, checks on a patient's elbow March 23, during sick call hours at the Troop Medical Clinic (TMC). The TMC provides all medical care for servicemembers, DOD civilians and contractors at Camp Phoenix. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Jeffrey M. Richardson/Released)

Charlie Company in the mountains of Afghanistan

By MCCA Kevin Elliott
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Operating out of an isolated combat outpost (COP) high in the mountains of Eastern Afghanistan, Company C, 1-121, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard has partnered with Afghan forces to produce a positive impact.

"We've conducted over 100 combined action operations with our Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) counterparts," said Cpt. Jeffrey Moran, Commander, Co. C of COP Herrera. "The Afghan National Police (ANP) had a negative image with the local populace and now they portray a much better image. Prior to us getting here, they were holed up in their police precinct, guarding check points instead of getting out like you would see back home."

Moran said he is proud of his partnering with the ANSF, including manning a combined action Tactical Operation Center together.

"We've responded to several incidents in a combined action capacity," he said.

"They are using our technology along with their forces and we are a lot more effective than if we just did it ourselves. They enjoy the fact that we are out there with them, sharing information and including them as part of our team."

Moran said he is aware of the risk and is focused on long-term results. "They are partnered with us so they know most everything we know. We are on patrols with them in a combined mode, and they feel we trust them and we include them as a team instead of a separate entity. We accept risk that way, but it's all for the cause of getting these ANSF units self-sustainable. We want to focus on the long-term systems that will keep them alive, like how to get fuel and food; things that once we leave will keep them going instead of being totally dependent on us."



Col. Abib (left), Commander ABP Jaji Province, and 1st Sgt. Robert Callahan, right, build a latrine at COP Herrera Jaji Province, Jan. 8. (U.S. Army photo by Cpt. Jeffrey Moran/Released)

Living in the mountains only seven miles from the Pakistan border brings its own challenges. Company C has worked hard to improve their living conditions.

"When we first got here, the latrines were condemned but we still had to use them because that's all there was," said Sgt. John Potts, 27 from Gainesville, Ga. "Now we have new latrines and a chow hall. We've improved the living conditions by about 75 percent. We now have plenty of hot water for showers and we've improved hygiene by leaps and bounds over what it was."

Potts said shared hardships have brought the Soldiers of Co. C closer together. "Some of the situations we've been through have made us a more cohesive unit," he said. "It's made us realize how important each person is to the platoon. As far as I can tell, our platoon is one of the most close knit groups in the battalion."

COP Herrera is in the area where Osama bin Laden lived when he was fighting the Soviets. "A lot of the Afghan

Border Police leadership fought against the Russians as well, and they know all the caves," said Moran. "There are even parts where the walls were tiled in their living areas."

Moran said five years from now he will remember the friendships and bonds he developed with the local ANSF and government leaders. "It's stuff the Soviets never did, and they see it as a genuine concern for their culture."

1st Sgt. Robert Callahan, 40, of Gainesville, Ga., said he hopes Co. C's efforts have made a difference, but wonders about the future of the Afghan people. "It's hard to tell if we made a difference or not," he said. "Will they stick to the government that we've tried to give them, or go back to the old ways of the Taliban?"



Bravo Company on the Pakistan border

By MCCA Kevin Elliott
48th IBCT Public Affairs

Combat Outpost (COP) Dand Patan clings to the side of a hill about 200 yards from the Pakistan border.

"You can throw a rock and hit Pakistan," said 1st Lt. Timothy Moran, Executive Officer, Company B, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard. The outpost is so isolated, the first two weeks Co. B lived there, water and Meals Ready to Eat were airdropped in.

"When we first found we were coming to the Pakistan border, it was a little nerve racking," Moran said. "But actually coming out here and working with the Afghan Border Police (ABP) really wasn't as bad as what we had expected."

The ABP is a paramilitary force that controls border crossings. Company B worked hand-in-hand with the ABP to improve border checkpoints, searching incoming vehicles and personnel, and taught them how to keep unwanted materials and people from entering Afghanistan.

"This unit is one of the first units to push this far on the border," said Moran. "We've worked diligently to improve relations with Afghan National Security Forces."

Moran said they often sit down with their Afghan counterparts, talk about their families, personal relationships and drink Chai.

"One cup makes you an acquaintance," he said. "Two cups makes you a friend, and three cups of Chai is supposed to make you a family member. I've drunk more cups than I can count."

Working in a combined action environment with the Afghans is not without risk.

"The biggest risk of combined actions is taking for granted that they will do what we think they are supposed to do," said Staff Sgt. Andrew Huffman, Squad Leader of 1st Platoon, because combined action means we do everything together. "The biggest risk is a risk of



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. William Fulghum eats breakfast outside at Combat Outpost (COP) Dand Patan, Afghanistan, Feb. 18. COP Dand Patan is home to Company B, 2-121, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard. Fulghum is from Savannah, Ga. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Senior Chief Kevin Elliott/Released)

complacency. When we stop supervising is when bad things happen. The biggest benefit is that once you are their friend, they will die for you."

When Company B first arrived, there was only a rock wall surrounding the camp and a few empty buildings. The Soldiers had to rely on their own resources for everything.

"We've been very fortunate," said Sgt. Jason Abercrombie, the senior company medic. "We have several guys with civilian jobs that have been very useful; electricians, heating and air, carpenters. All of our civilian talents played a huge roll in making things function here."

Abercrombie's medical skills came into play when a suicide bomber infiltrated the camp and injured five Soldiers. Despite taking shrapnel to his back and legs, Abercrombie gave triage to the wounded and worked hard to save the life of an unresponsive Soldier who eventually came around and was flown to a hospital. That night in the shower, he pulled a piece of shrapnel out of his own

leg. He had been wounded before in Iraq when an Improvised Explosive Device blew up his Humvee. "It wasn't my first rodeo getting blown up, but I hope it's the last," he said.

The challenges of living on the front line have not been lost on Sgt. Lionel Mingo.

"It's living a dream, making memories," he said. "Being on the Pakistan border as opposed to being in the rear, I know where the frontline is now. It gives you a sense of heightened awareness. Five years from now, I'm going to remember that I was part of this experience, I was literally at the front line and I gave my all to the mission. I left nothing here."

1st Lt. Moran said it all comes down to trust. "I believe we've built a trust with the ABP," he said. "They respect the fact that we've come from far away to assist in building their paramilitary force and they've made us feel invited. We are their guests"

48th Soldiers gather intelligence from Afghans

By U.S. Army Spc. Jennifer C. Eddy
48th IBCT Public Affairs

KUNDUZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Local Afghans gather outside their homes, watching and waving, as U.S. Soldiers and Afghan National Police (ANP) walk together in a dismounted presence patrol and a warm sun sets over a rural farming village in Khanabad district, Mar. 6. Soldiers of Rockstar Team, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team work with the ANP to gather intelligence, show presence in the local community and train the ANP.

Making themselves accessible to the local community and showing a personal interest helps them gather intelligence.

“To maintain good relations with the local populace you have to humanize yourself. I show them respect by showing an interest in their culture and their language,” said Spc. Tracy S. Rollins of Rockstar Team. “It shows them I value developing a relationship with them beyond business and I am not there to exploit them.”

In an effort to build lasting rela-



tionships in local Afghan communities, Rollins has learned to speak Dari and Pashtu.

“The ability to communicate directly breaks down the language barrier and makes me less foreign to the common people,” Rollins said. “Establishing trust in the community goes beyond talking to key leaders; you have to talk to the people directly.”

By developing relationships in the local community, Team Rockstar can gather intelligence they may not be able to find elsewhere.

“Once you earn the trust of the people you get more credible information,” said Rollins.

“They see that it’s in their best interest and safety to help you gather information about the common enemy, the Taliban, so you can help rebuild their community.”

Locals can provide the team with useful information about the Taliban because they feel anonymous.

“Local people can talk about community problems without a filter to U.S. Forces,” said Nowroz, a village resident. “But it’s important to pull people aside individually. If someone is in a group of 10 people, there may be people in the group they don’t trust.”

Team Rockstar can also find information that will improve the community by making the ANP a stronger fighting force by weeding out the corruption among some town elders and police.

“Many elders just tell you what you want to hear. They care about the villages, but some elders care mainly about themselves, whereas the locals can anonymously tell you what they want the ANP to hear,” said Spc. Justice P. Bailey of Team Rockstar. “They can talk to us in private if the ANP is doing anything wrong.”

Spc. Michael B. Wilson of Rockstar Team, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and an Afghan National Policeman get thumbs up from a farmer in Khanabad district during a routine presence patrol. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jennifer Eddy/Released)



KUNDUZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan- Spc. Courtney J. Roberts of Rockstar Team, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team waves to local children during a routine presence patrol in Khanabad district, Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jennifer Eddy/Released)

48th Troops give HA under enemy fire, cont.

By U.S. Army Spc. Jennifer C. Eddy
48th IBCT Public Affairs

The sound of gunfire popped softly from distant rolling hills. All seemed relatively safe as 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Soldiers and Afghan National Police (ANP) convoy to small local villages in Faryab province in early March, providing humanitarian assistance (HA) to the local communities.

As the small arms fire heard faintly in the distance quickly became heavy, loud and close, the Soldiers and their counterparts quickly reacted.

Over the course of three days, between Mar. 6th and 9th, Soldiers of 2nd and 5th Platoon, Company C., 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment and policemen of Faryab Province ANP conducted two HA drops that



Locals of Kwaja Kinti village, Qeysar district, Faryab province, gather around an Afghan National Police Truck to receive humanitarian assistance supplies immediately following a fire-fight with enemy forces March 6. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jesse L. Holmes/Released)

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain (Maj.) Ed Docampo



48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Chaplain (Maj.) Ed Docampo Chaplain, takes a moment to smile for the camera Mar. 20. Docampo has been a Chaplain in the U.S. Army 20 years. He is also a minister for Southern Baptist Convention, North American Mission Board with headquarters in Alpharetta, Georgia. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jennifer C. Eddy)

WELL DONE, SOLDIER!!

Paraphrasing for the Soldier the pronouncement in Matthew 25:21: "His commander said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful citizen soldier; you were faithful with these things, I will put you in charge of many other things, enter into the joy of your home, state, and nation.'"

As the 48th IBCT comes to the end of our overseas deployment combat tour, it is fitting that the work done by Soldiers be acknowledged and appreciated. It is even better that each Soldier look at the sacrifice, work, and accomplishments of their tour and be proud!

As you return home, you have an opportunity to build on the experiences that have stretched you and be more confident to engage in greater things with your families, communities, churches, units, and nation. After being in this challenging environment and succeeding, you have earned the skills, honor, and determination to be one of those special unique individuals who are capable of shaping the future of our economy, society and nation. Let us enter into the joy of our homes and more fully enjoy

the blessings of our freedoms in the United States of America!

Prayer of a Returning Soldier:

"Lord, I now love life more than ever. The hard work that you guided me to do has strengthened me and I am proud to have been part of a noble cause. I pray that we have left our battle places better for those following in the next assignment, the situations better than when we received them. I pray for wisdom and courage of those who follow on after us so they can build and improve upon the work we have poured our efforts, hearts, and skills into. I am grateful and joyful to have completed my assignment and return to my routine normal life which I will never again take for granted, nor undervalue for its peace, comforts, and freedoms. Help me to understand that my toils on foreign soil have not been in vain and to believe that I have shared my life so that others can live better. Give me the wisdom to make the most of the rest of my days as I share my life and love with my family, friends, colleagues, and even strangers in my own country, just as you share your love with all of us. Amen.

PHOTOS FROM



U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Conner 1st Platoon, Company D, 1-121, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, makes a satellite call at Combat Outpost Band-e Sardeh, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, Feb. 24. Conner is from Batesville, Ark. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Senior Chief Kevin Elliott, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Sgt. Matt Tyree, 1st Sgt. Robert Callahan and Sgt. Matt Cooper, stand security during a patrol in the Jaji District, Paktya Province, Afghanistan, Sept. 19. (Submitted photo)



Spc. Courtney J. Roberts of Rockstar Team, Company D, 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team inspects an alley during a routine presence patrol in Khanabad district. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jennifer Eddy/48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)

THE FIELD

Pfc. Damon L. Pitman, Troop C, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment forward observer from Acworth, Ga. manages data in an MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush-Protected) vehicle during an overnight mission with the Afghan National Police in Khot district. The overnight missions, initiated by the Rough Riders to build on their relationships with the ANSF in their area of operations, reinforced the village's security. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



U.S. Army Sergeants Richard P. Fones and Christopher B. Hall work with concertina wire delivered via air drop on a remote mountain outpost for the Afghan National Police at the Khot district of Nangarhar province. The delivery was part of reinforcement and restructuring effort by the Georgia Army National Guard's 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



The Afghan flag proudly waves as a proclamation of resolve of the Afghan people as a CH-47 Chinook delivers an air drop of reinforcement supplies to an Afghan National Police outpost in the Khot district. The air drop was part of a Task Force Rough Rider, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 48th IBCT mission to reinforce outposts throughout their area of operations in Eastern Nangarhar province. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Staff Sgt. Scott F. McElroy, a Task Force Rough Rider communications non-commissioned officer from Canton, Ga., takes the reins of a horse seized during a joint coalition/ANSF patrol in a mountainous region of Shinwar district, Nangahar province. The 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, 48th IBCT Warriors partnered with the 6th Kandak Afghan Border Patrol to root out the Taliban and other disruptive factions. The horse, still rigged out in traditional saddle gear, was found with weapons, ammunition and explosives. "Instead of hauling ammo, this horse can help plow a field and feed a family," McElroy said. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



U.S. Army Sgt. Thomas Watson, 1st Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Georgia Army National Guard, cleans a weapon in the back of a truck at Combat Outpost Band-e Sardeh, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, Feb. 24. Watson is from Milledgeville, Ga. (U.S. Navy Photo by Mass Communication Senior Chief Kevin Elliott, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Afghan girls sing during an International Women's Day event at the municipal building, downtown Gardez, March 9. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Donisha Burns, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)



Looking to his Task Force Rough Rider hosts for hope and guidance, an admitted Taliban fighter explains to the 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment Troops, 48th Brigade, Georgia Army National Guard, why he elected to lay down his weapons and enlist in the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GIROA) Reconciliation and Reintegration program. The GIROA initiative works with coalition partners to offer Taliban and insurgent fighters a second chance, without reprisal, to work within their villages and with their traditional leaders. "We joined the Taliban fighters because there were no jobs or a way to care for our families," the youngest brother explained. "Now we have a chance to peacefully care for our families." The salary as Taliban fighters was inconsistent and averaged 8,400 Pakistan rupees a month or less than \$100 (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)

Loyalty



A Soldier of Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment (Light), 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team scans a street in Ghazni Province during a firefight Sept. 10, 2009. (photo by Charles Eckert/Courtesy Photo Released)



Spc. Corey Speck, Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment (Light), 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team throws a hand grenade into a Taliban fighting position during a firefight in Ghazni province, Sept. 10, 2009. (photo by Charles Eckert/Courtesy Photo Released)

Honor



Staff Sgt. Alden Williams, a medic with Company D, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment (Light), 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team maintains security as an Afghan National Army Air Corps MI-17 helicopter approaches for medical evacuation during a firefight in Ghazni Province. (photo by Charles Eckert/Courtesy Photo Released)

Selfless Service



Spc. Aimal Mangal, a Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment Scout, performs a 5 and 25 meter scan of the area during a dismounted search for reported roadside improvised explosive devices in Nangarhar province. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)

U.S. Army Capt. Jason Lewis, Cobra Troop, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment Troop commander presents the Purple Heart to the brother of slain Badi Khot district Afghan National Police (ANP) officer Mohammad Hassan. Hassan was killed January 6 as he and his coalition partners were providing security during a school survey mission with the Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and village leaders. "We don't step back and recognize the sacrifice of the people of Afghanistan and their fearless security forces," Lewis said. "This Purple Heart, one of our most treasured awards recognizing selfless sacrifice, is a way to show our appreciation in front of the honest people of Bati Khot." (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released).



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U. S. Army Capt. Jason Lewis
Cobra Troop, 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment
'Fighting 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team'



Respect

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Randall V. Simmons, Jr., 1st Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Rough Riders, 48th Brigade Combat Team presents the governor of Nangarhar province Gul Agha Sherzai a rug manufactured in the state of Georgia as a show of solidarity between the Peachtree State and the government of Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan is treasured for its history and traditions," Simmons said. "Your rugs are a creative extension of the Afghan people and our textile industry is part of our economic strength. I hope this will be a reminder, a bridge connecting us to possibility and what we can achieve as partners in development and security." (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Tracy J. Smith, 48th IBCT Public Affairs/Released)