

# FREEDOM WATCH

APRIL 2010

 **AFGHANISTAN**

INSIDE:

COWBOY DUSTOFF

A "NEW DAY" FOR  
AFGHANISTAN

TF LAFAYETTE:  
MAKING OF A COP

PUSHING FOR PEACE  
AND SECURITY IN MARJAH

COVER STORY:

WINNING  
OVER KUNAR

PAGE 18



# FEATURES

- Dustoff Medics Saddle Up page 4
- Pushing for Peace and Security page 6
- Sharing Medical Wisdom page 8
- ISAF, Afghans Celebrate Nowruz page 10
- Making of a COP page 12
- District Development Program page 14
- Winning Kunar page 16
- A Better Way to Build Afghanistan page 20
- Mujahedeen Protect PRT base page 24



## FREEDOM WATCH

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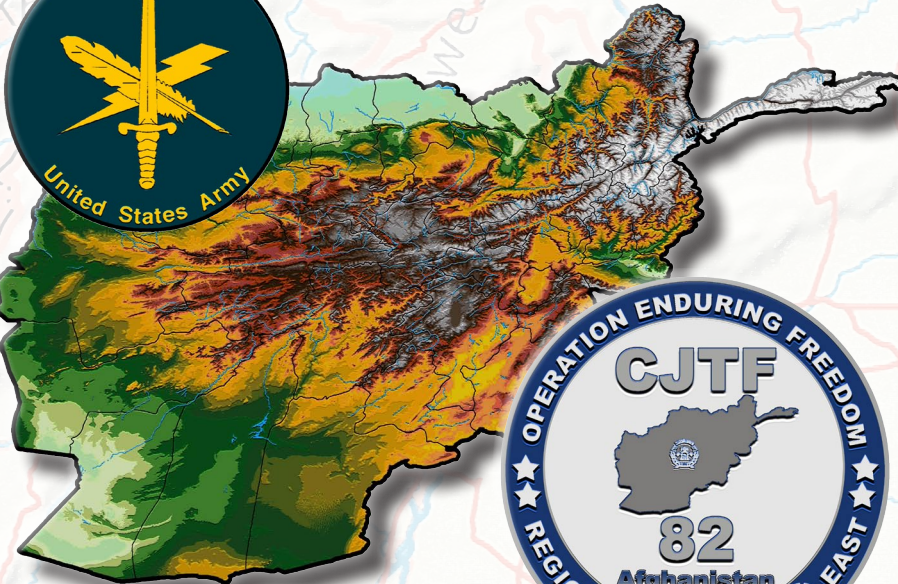
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# DEPARTMENTS

- Unit Profile page 11
- Goodwill Across Afghanistan page 20
- Story Snapshots page 26
- Warrior Profile page 34
- Safety Watch page 36
- Photos from the Field page 39
- Photo of the Month page 40





# “Cowboy Dustoff” Medics Saddle Up

Wyoming’s “Cowboy Dustoff” troops know the rush of excitement and dread that accompanies receiving an urgent medical evacuation call.

“Your heart starts beating,” said Spc. Wesley E. Morris, a medic for C Co., 5 Bn., 159th Aviation Regt., Wyoming National Guard and a resident of Douglas, Wyo. “You run over to the TOC to get what information they have from the nine-line and you run out to the aircraft going to expect the unexpected.”

By the time Morris reaches the flight line, the pilot and crew chief have already donned their gear and started the twin engines of the UH-60 Black Hawk.

The 8,000 pound aircraft rises from the concrete. If they do not reach their destination within an hour, someone may lose life or limb.

“It really comes down to our ability to sprint to the aircraft... and push the aircraft to its limits in order to get the patient to the hospital in time,” said Army Chief Warrant Officer Christopher M. Arnold, a pilot with C Co. who lives in Denver.

The second rotation of C Co. Soldiers, consisting of about 20 Soldiers from the Wyoming National Guard and several more active duty add-ons, arrived in Afghanistan last September.

Operating out of FOB Salerno in Khost province and FOB Orgun-E in Paktika province, the troops of C Co. are responsible for providing MEDEVAC support in a swath of southeastern Afghanistan that

*The experience and training of the troops in C Co. reflects well on the National Guard.*

—Army Lt. Col. Mike Musiol, the commander of TF Viper

covers two-and-a-half provinces.

Being a National Guard unit, C Co. consists of troops from a variety of civilian backgrounds such as electricians, mechanics and medical technicians.

Army Chief Warrant Officer Gary Heyne, an engineer as a civilian, lives in St. Louis, and flies to Cheyenne, Wyo. once a month to attend monthly Battle Assemblies.

Army Maj. Matthias E. Greene, C Co. commander, Laramie, Wyo., sees this diversity as an asset.

“We do bring a different skill-set than an average active duty unit,” he said.

Since their arrival in theater, C Co. has flown more than 500 flight hours, completed almost 400 patient movements, and received close to 200 urgent missions. They have provided support for three mass casualty incidents, which all occurred within a three-week period. According to the unit’s log, less than 40 percent of their patients have been American troops; the rest have been ANA, ANP, ABP, civilians, other ISAF troops or enemy prisoners.

Army Lt. Col. Mike Musiol, the commander of TF Viper, a command umbrella that oversees a diverse array of air assets including C Co., said that the experience and training of the troops in C Co. reflects well on the National Guard.

“Charlie Company is a pretty unique unit,” Musiol said. “They don’t have the turnover that other conventional units have, so you’ve got a very experienced set of aviators and crew chiefs and medics that have worked together for a fair amount of time compared to most conventional units.”

He added, “They are a disciplined, well-trained unit and I am very grateful to have them as a part of my unit.”

Even troops who are part of a well-trained, disciplined unit like C Co. can find dustoff operations a demanding business. Before the medic can begin treating patients, the

pilot has to navigate the difficult Afghan terrain at high speed. The Khost bowl is situated at about 3,000 feet elevation and many of the surrounding Bases are at elevations as high as 8,000 feet, so the pilot must be ware of the tensions being put on the aircraft.

“When you’re flying in these conditions you always have to be ready to think four or five steps ahead,” Arnold said.

On one of his first missions in Afghanistan, Arnold had an urgent call to the narrow Khost-Gardez pass. Upon arrival they lost communication with the rest of the company and made a decision to land the aircraft on the crowded road with a rock wall on one side of them, and a drop-off on the other.

The first time they tried to land they got a “brown out” as the aircraft rotors stirred dust in the area, but they extracted the patients successfully on the second attempt.

Once the patients are on the aircraft the medic goes to work stabilizing the patient until he or she can reach a higher level of care. This involves stopping bleeding, unblocking air flow, treating shock and reassessing the first aid that has already been administered.

“The most difficult part of my job would be treating some of the patients that we see,” said Morris, who has been working as an EMT-Intermediate at Memorial Hospital in Douglas, Wyo. since 2005.

“No patient’s ever the same and... this is my first time seeing some of these injuries. And treating them in the back of the helicopter—it’s a lot tighter space and I don’t have the room to move around the patient like I do in my civilian ambulance.”

The most rewarding part of the job, he added, is getting Soldiers to where they can go out and fight again and getting the local nationals so that they feel better and can live their lives more normally. 🇺🇸

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

Army Sgt. Christopher Beck, a crew chief for the Wyoming National Guard’s C Co. 159 Aviation Regt., stands outside of a Black Hawk helicopter in Khowst province, Feb. 26.



# Pushing for Peace and Security

## Marines, ANSF Set the Stage in Marjah

As the sun sets in the west, deep sets of foot prints snake behind a platoon of Marines like a trail of bread crumbs, as they make their way through the abandoned Choorachareh Bazaar, in the western part of Marjah, Helmand province, March 3.

The joint patrol of Marines and Afghan soldiers stalk past stalls where merchants used to sell their wares. The shops themselves are straw shanties, held together by flimsy sheets of metal, most of which have fallen to the wayside without their owners to look after them over the past weeks of fighting.

The same time the following day, the patrol moves back through the marketplace, but this time they are greeted by a host of children and older men who have returned to their shops after Afghan forces and Marines on patrol began to bring security to the area. With that, many hope that stability will follow.

"In this area, people are pretty happy with us. They want to see change. They want to see stability without the Taliban," said Lance Cpl. Mark Middendorf, who gathers intelligence for B Co., 1st Bn, 6th Marine Regt. "We've talked with the local mullah and malik, who want to see an increased presence of the Afghan government. They want the government to bring them infrastructure in the form of clean water, schools, medicine, better roads and most importantly security."

The Marines and ANA Soldiers with B Co., 1st Bn., 6th Marine Regt., have been conducting census patrols in the western part of the city to identify local leadership and meet with key leaders, such as mullahs,

who are the spiritual figureheads of the community, and maliks, who are often elders or prosperous businessmen who take on important roles in the region. These meetings give coalition forces a sense of whom the power brokers are within the city, as well a forum where locals can state their concerns.

"They want the younger generation to be literate, have access to medicine and have a government that will take care of Afghanistan's problems," said Middendorf. "It shows that they're ready to be done. They're just tired of not being represented."

The concerns of civilians returning to their homes range from one to the next, but one remains constant – security.

"As it seems right now, the area and the people are accepting of the Afghan government and are interested in getting local elders to work with government representatives to solve problems," said Marine 2nd Lt. Richard Janofsky, 3rd Plt. commander, B Co. "We're still in the phase of identifying who the political and religious leaders are so we can establish a better relationship with them. Once we do, we can bring them together and establish a voice, empowering them to solve their own issues."

With the support of the local populace, the Marines and Afghan soldiers with B Co. have set about working on civic projects in order to strengthen key infrastructural aspects of the city.

"Right now we're working on plans for projects in the area, like cash-for-work programs, where we'll give an

"For anyone that comes over here, try to understand their problems, don't just throw them to the wind. Realize that we have just as much at stake and have a vested interest in this working out."

Lance Cpl. Mark Middendorf, B Co., 1st Bn., 6th Marine Regt.

elder or local businessman at the bazaar funds to pay others for civic work," said Janofsky.

Other projects include hardening the structure of the bazaar. Many of the stores are made from sticks and brush. Some will focus on mosque repair, and fixing key points of infrastructure, such as a turbine nearby which is in disrepair.

"For anyone that comes over here, try to understand their problems, don't just throw them to the wind," said Middendorf. "Realize that we have just as much at stake and have a vested interest in this working out."

Bringing immediate security and stability to the city is the primary concern of most locals and they have expressed hesitation over the ability of the Afghan government to provide, and most importantly, maintain it.


"Today I was speaking with the local pharmacist, who shared his main concern, which is, what will happen when the Marines leave," said Middendorf. "[They asked] will the Afghan forces be strong enough to ensure stability?"

In an effort to assuage these fears and assure the Afghan people of their intentions, ANA officers with B Co., along with members of the ANP presided over a meeting in the bazaar, called a shura, where roughly 50 men, the heads of the village households, attended.

"What is the benefit of brothers fighting," said Capt. Said Israr, an ANA officer attached to B Co., during the Shura. "It is time we put

war to an end in Afghanistan. It is time to return our country to a place of beauty. If you want a calm life, a life of peace, you must come together for your country. We will pave the way for you to have schools, hospitals. We come to help you. You must help us for us to help you."

There are Marines, ANA, and ANCOP – they are all your servants, refer to them to solve your problems," said Israr. "Come tell us if you have information on the Taliban, or IEDs. We can help you. Never hide these dangers."

When a member of the shura shared his skepticism about the ability of the Marines to help the Afghan people return to a life of normalcy, due to the dramatic differences in culture, Israr vouched for their intentions, saying only, "The Marines left their homes and families behind to come help you." 

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

Marines with B Co., 1st Bn., 6th Marine Regt. set out on patrol in western Marjah, March 1. As fighting draws down throughout the city, Marines and ANA have set out providing security to social and economic centers in the area in an effort to make the area safe for locals.

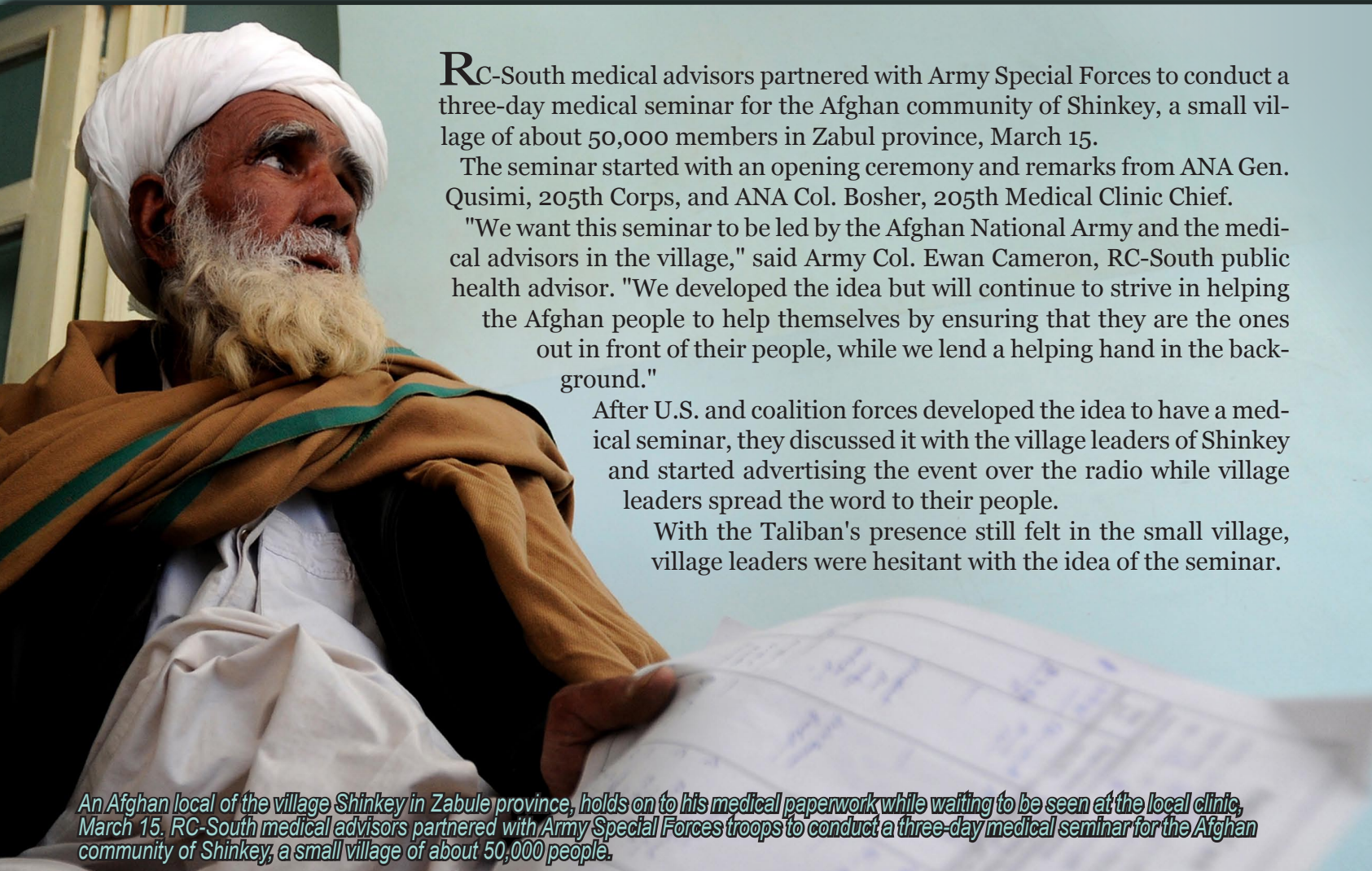


# Coalition Forces Spread Medical Wisdom to Afghans

Story and photos by Senior Airman Kenny Holston, 509th Bomb Wing PA

*"We are now taking a more efficient and long-term method to solve the consistent health problems with the Afghan people. That method is teaching them simple medical skills, so they can learn and apply their knowledge to be able to take care of themselves."*

Col. Ewan Cameron, RC-South Public Health Advisor



An Afghan local of the village Shinkey in Zabul province, holds on to his medical paperwork while waiting to be seen at the local clinic, March 15. RC-South medical advisors partnered with Army Special Forces troops to conduct a three-day medical seminar for the Afghan community of Shinkey, a small village of about 50,000 people.

RC-South medical advisors partnered with Army Special Forces to conduct a three-day medical seminar for the Afghan community of Shinkey, a small village of about 50,000 members in Zabul province, March 15.

The seminar started with an opening ceremony and remarks from ANA Gen. Qusimi, 205th Corps, and ANA Col. Boshier, 205th Medical Clinic Chief.

"We want this seminar to be led by the Afghan National Army and the medical advisors in the village," said Army Col. Ewan Cameron, RC-South public health advisor. "We developed the idea but will continue to strive in helping the Afghan people to help themselves by ensuring that they are the ones out in front of their people, while we lend a helping hand in the background."

After U.S. and coalition forces developed the idea to have a medical seminar, they discussed it with the village leaders of Shinkey and started advertising the event over the radio while village leaders spread the word to their people.

With the Taliban's presence still felt in the small village, village leaders were hesitant with the idea of the seminar.

"A lot of the village locals are still heavily influenced by Taliban forces so they were a bit hesitant to participate in the seminar," said ANA Maj. Asa Dula, ANA religious and cultural affairs officer. "But, as the seminar went on and people in the village realized the amount of medical knowledge and help being given, they were able to see what a great opportunity this is for them and their families."

Another concern village leaders expressed involved who would be teaching the Afghan women.

Out of respect for the Afghan culture and religion, the seminar was divided into two separate groups, pairing female advisors with the Afghan woman and male advisors with the Afghan men.

After getting each group settled, local Afghan medics along with U.S. and coalition forces began the advise-ment portion of the seminar.

They focused on giving the females simple medical and hygiene advice, such as how to properly wash their hands before meals to prevent sickness through germs and how to keep open wounds clean to prevent infection.

While the local Shinkey clinic has 11 doctors, it is the simple hygiene tasks that can sometimes keep the villagers from having go to the clinic.

According to World Health Statistic Report, one in

four Afghan children die before reaching the age of five, and one in 57 women die during child birth from simple infections that could be solved if they had knowledge of simple hygiene.

One saying rang true, "knowledge is power," as the advisors urged the Shinkey locals to pass on the information they had received to help maintain good health and hygiene.

"We have moved away from the method of just giving out medication," Cameron said. "We are now taking a more efficient and long term method to solve the consistent health problems with the Afghan people. That method is teaching them simple medical skills, so they can learn and apply their knowledge to be able to take care of themselves."

Throughout the first day of the seminar, Shinkey locals warmed up to advisors and were happier and more comfortable with the information being taught.

Participants vocalized their appreciation of the training freely by the end of the seminar.

"I'm thankful to be a part of this training seminar," said Nooruldin Mohammad, a Shinkey villager. "I have a wife and nine children who will all benefit from this. Our children are the future of Afghanistan, and we must take care of them and teach them material like this while they're young." 🇦🇫



RC-South medical advisors partnered with Army Special Forces troops to conduct a three day medical seminar for the Afghan community of Shinkey, a small village of about 50,000 people, March 15.

(Far Left) Army Lt. Col Brian Petit, Special Operations, TF South, shakes hands with a young Afghan boy prior to a medical seminar.

(Left) Afghan doctors and medical technicians stand at the entrance of their small clinic during the first day of the medical seminar.

(Right) Dr. Mynan Rooze Muhammad reviews and fills out paperwork for local Afghan patients prior to seeing them.





# A New Day for Afghanistan: ISAF, Afghanistan Celebrate Nowruz

Story by Army Sgt. Troy P. Johnson, 304th PAD

Spring is here. The snow is melting, the trees are blooming and days are getting longer. And here in Afghanistan, spring marks the beginning of the Afghan New Year, Nowruz.

Nowruz, a Persian word meaning “a new day,” is an ancient Persian tradition. It marks the first day of spring and the beginning of the new year on a solar calendar, and celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox, which typically lands on March 21.

In honor of Nowruz, ISAF hosted ANSF and Afghan government officials at a formal dinner and a celebration, “Afghan Night Live,” at Bagram Airfield, March 18.

“The event was organized by CJTF-82 to celebrate the Nowruz with our Afghan partners so they all can get together informally and celebrate,” said Roya Sharif-soltani, research manager for the CJTF-82 Human Terrain Advisory Team.

“New Year’s is such an important celebration for the Afghans, we wanted to share it with them,” said Army Lt. Col. Carolyn Hooper, the deputy chief of staff for CJTF-82. “This gives us an opportunity to bring all of these people together as partners in fellowship.”

The Nowruz celebration, Afghan Night Live, began as a BAF-wide celebration for U.S., Coalition and Afghan partners to share in this important Afghan tradition.

“We are all working very hard together. It is good to enjoy each other’s company; it is one of the things that solidifies our partnership,” said Army Maj. Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, commander of CJTF-82.

There are several reasons for celebrating Nowruz here on BAF, explains Dr. James Emery, a cultural anthropologist with the Human Terrain Team, and Afghan Night Live founder and director.

“This will make our troops more motivated, comfortable and confident in spending time with Afghans outside the wire,” said Emery. “This is crucial to the success of our mission, since everything good in Afghanistan happens through personal relationships.”

The celebration also exposes aspects of Afghan culture to those unfamiliar with it. Emery’s hope is to influence how our troops plan and execute missions by countering negative stereotypes.

Emery added that the celebration also improves relationships with the Afghans working on BAF.

“A warm smile and pleasant greeting go a very long way with our Afghan employees.

It can create a groundswell of goodwill that will carry outside the gate and into the surrounding towns and villages,” Emery said.

The celebration featured a variety of traditional Afghan food, musicians and Atan dancers.

“The dinner was followed by a national Afghan dance, which was very interesting with a lot of head and neck movement. For many people this was the first time they have seen the dance,” said Sharif-soltani.

With the exception of Taliban rule, Nowruz has been celebrated and observed in Afghanistan since the adoption of the Persian calendar, in 1957.

“Nowruz was banned during Taliban rule and as soon as they were gone the celebration started again,” said Sharif-soltani.

It is hoped that Nowruz celebrations, like Afghan Night Live, will take place on other ISAF bases.

“My wish is to help others experience even a fraction of the kindness, generosity, humor and friendship that I have enjoyed over many years of interaction with Afghans,” said Emery. ☺

**“New Year’s  
is such an important  
celebration for the  
Afghans, we wanted to  
share it with them.”**

Army Lt. Col. Carolyn Hooper,  
CJTF-82 Deputy Chief of Staff

# UNIT SPOTLIGHT

## BRAVO COMPANY, 82ND SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION

### Mission

B Co. 82nd Div. STB trains and partners with the ANP to build capacity at the district level and to disrupt insurgent elements in order to transition AO Gladius from a semi-permissive environment to a non-permissive environment.

### History

B Co. is a maneuver company comprised of support, combat support, and combat arms paratroopers. This company was formed for the purpose of executing the battalion’s battle space responsibilities as the battle space owner of Parwan Province. This is the second time this company has been formed to perform such duties. In 2006-2007 the paratroopers of B Co. managed battle space in both Parwan and Kapisa provinces.

### Why we are better than the rest

Over the last 12 months the paratroopers of B Co., “RUFFRIDERS” have recovered more than 25 weapon caches, captured 12 enemy personnel, trained 147 ANP and conducted four successful interdictions of enemy indirect fire attacks against coalition forces. The Ruffriders have conducted more than 3,000 patrols that have resulted in more than 100 humanitarian aid operations and a measurable increase in the ANP’s ability to secure their districts. The paratroopers of B Co. have also assisted the soldiers of the United Arab Emirates in their mission, as they provided assistance to the Afghan populace by conducting humanitarian aid operations and projects to improve the quality of life of the Afghan citizen.





# Making of a Combat Outpost: Growing Stability in Kapisa

Story and photos by TF LaFayette PAO

Afghan and French flags were raised on a new COP in the southern Tagab valley in Kapisa province during an inauguration ceremony celebrating the completion of COP 46, March 7.

Military and civilian authorities in the district attended the ceremony along with TF Lafayette commander, French Army Brig. Gen. Marcel Druart.

“We organized this shura to show to local authorities what we have done for COP 46. We wanted them to know what our intentions are and why we set it up here,” explained Druart. “Henceforth, we have the ability to ensure a permanent presence here with ANA to bring the people of the valley security and to work with them on development projects.”

The 201st ANA Corps Chief of Staff, ANA Maj. Gen. Haider, congratulated the French military on their quick construction of the new COP, then gave a message to residents of the valley.

“I want to say to Tagab’s sub-governor, Mr. Akhunzada, that ANSF will do the maximum to ensure the security of the population because it’s our duty. However, we need the people to support each other to improve the situation in the valley.

“Two years ago, I came here and the security was not effective. Now, with French forces’ help, Afghan soldiers are in place on two COPs -- I really think that ANA is the essential link between the population and Afghan government,” Haider said.

“The building of this combat post

was necessary for our security. Now, we are able to rebuild the school and ensure the education of our children.”

While the completion of the COP will aid the ANSF and TF Lafayette in their efforts to assist area Afghans in such developmental areas as education and the economy, these efforts are not new and have been ongoing throughout the planning and construction of COP 46.

In neighboring villages, French Army Col. Bellot des Minieres, who serves with a civilian-military actions team, used the opportunity to consolidate some development projects that were started before the construction operation began.

“The general idea of our engagement is not to precede our arrival by fire but by the explanation and



French Army Brig. Gen. Marcel Druart, TF La Fayette commander, welcomes local officials and members of the 201st ANA Corps, to the inauguration ceremony of the new COP 46 in southern Tagab valley in Kapisa province, March 7. A shura was held to mark the completion of the COP and to explain that the COP will provide better security of the valley and neighboring villages.

the concrete action that the local population will benefit from,” Minieres said.

As Minieres and his team were able to complete these projects Mohammad Ajan, from nearby Kam Shen-

kai village, confirmed the good relationship between the military and civilian population. Ajan made note of recently completed development projects, such as a new well, which was financed by French forces and

built by a local business, and a new wall to prevent flooding in another village nearby.

“These are projects that meet the needs of people in the district,” Ajan said. 🌍





# District Development Program Takes Hold in Watapur

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

The Shenigam Footbridge, which spans the Pech River in the Watapur District is about 30 years old and will soon be replaced through the District Development Program.

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

**S**oldiers often refer to the Shenigam Footbridge as the “Indiana Jones Bridge.”

It does not take much imagination to see why the 30-year-old bridge in the Watapur district in Kunar province has a reputation, assembled from a seemingly random assortment of old broken planks, piled stones and worn lumber.

No deaths have been reported, but children and animals have been injured falling from the narrow pathway into the Pech River below.

This will soon change with the building of a modern footbridge by the Afghan government under the supervision of the District Development Assembly. It will be the district’s first large-scale project under the program.

Gulkhan, sector director for the Watapur DDA, said he expects the bridge will be replaced in about three months.

“It was a big problem for the villagers,” Gulkhan said of the old bridge, noting residents were enthusiastic when told of the new construction. “They became really happy.”

In Watapur, there are 13 DDA members, representing about 60 Afghan villages, meeting on a weekly basis with an ISAF civil affairs team.

Previously, ISAF units would determine needed projects and then handle their construction through the Commander Emergency Relief Program; now the village representatives decide on priorities and oversee their implementation.

Army Capt. Shaun Conlin, commander of C Co., 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Regt., TF Lethal, said it has taken time for the national DDA program to gain a strong foothold here.

It has done so by initially concentrating on smaller, high-impact, projects that take less than a month to

complete, such as wells and retaining walls, he said.

A total of 27 out of 42 proposed projects have been completed in the district using this program, giving validation to the Afghan officials using it.

“They can see the results within a month,” Conlin said. “It builds the capacity and the legitimacy of the local government.”

While the DDA still uses the Commander’s Emergency Relief Program as a budget for its projects, this money will eventually be replaced by funds from the Afghan government, he said.

The DDA is not just responsible for identifying needs for the community. It also comes up with the projects, requests local bids from contractors, and then provides both quality assurance and quality control.

“Until the Afghans see the local government is capable of taking care of the needs of the district, there will always be some friction,” Conlin said.

One sign of hope is that about half of the DDA representatives come from areas of the district considered hostile to government and ISAF officials.

“It speaks volumes that representatives from villages that normally don’t want anything to do with the Afghan government want to get involved in this process,” Conlin said.

The unit at COP Honaker-Miracle is continually seeking more involvement in the DDA. During one of several weekly meetings, Army 2nd Lt. Florent A. Groberg, a platoon leader with C Co. talked to elders of Ander Seil village.

The elders discussed their desire for electricity and even street lights for their community.

“It’s our job to let them know what’s going on and get them involved,” Groberg said prior to the weekly meeting. “That’s the only way we can be successful in our mission.”



# WINNING KUNAR

## THE JOURNEY OF TF LETHAL

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte  
300th MPAD

Army Soldiers from 3rd Plt., C Co., 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Reg., TF Lethal, return from a visit to the Angla Kala village in Kunar province, Feb. 6. ISAF troops regularly meet with village elders to improve communications between residents and government officials.

It was quiet for about a week after the 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Reg., TF Lethal, took over responsibility for the Pech River Valley, Kunar province in June 2009.

"After that, it was kind of intense," said Army Maj. Ukiah C. Senti, the battalion executive officer.

The attacks began – a daily diet of aggression against ANSF and ISAF that included small arms fire, heavy weapons, indirect fire, rocket-propelled grenades and IEDs.

Nearly a year later, the violence has lessened, and some locals once known for their hostility towards the government, now deal with its representatives regularly.

Many of the methods used to reduce the attacks are evident each time ISAF and Afghan officials sit down to chai tea with village elders.

### - Reaching for higher ground -

TF Lethal Warrior covers an estimated 1,000 square kilometers of operational area with 11 FOBs COPs and OPs.

From the farmlands of the Wata-pur valley to the wooded Korengal valley, the concept of high ground depends on where you stand. The region's main travel routes are overshadowed everywhere by peaks and acres of mountainsides.

The battalion itself comes from Fort Carson, Colo., where the mountainous terrain mirrors that of the eastern Afghanistan territory the unit now patrols – chiefly the Kunar province.

Many Soldiers comment on the impressive landscape, even though they regularly face steep climbs up inclines while weighed down with

about 50 pounds of body armor, weapons and ammunition.

Senti said when the battalion started its work here, most of their efforts were focused on the kinetic operations. Then about a month in, the unit began holding more meetings with village elders.

"(The elders) were probably the most helpful element of the whole process," he said.

During these discussions, village leaders helped the battalion narrow down the areas where the attacks were coming from – the "seams" of terrain where anti-Afghan forces lurked.

By targeting these seams – on both high ground and low – the battalion and ANSF have sought to reduce civilian casualties. By disrupting enemy operations, it helped reduce

the insurgents' influence over the communities, Senti said.

Army Staff Sgt. James M. Combs, a squad leader with 1st Plt., A Co., said the more the unit visits certain villages, the more accommodating the residents become.

"That's the first indicator," Combs said. "When the kids like you, the adults start to come around."

### -Growing developments-

According to Senti, the battalion is currently spending about 70 percent of its time on stability operations. These efforts range from new fruit orchards to development councils, and have become key in the effort for peace in the region.

Where the unit used to simply ask residents about the projects they needed, then managed the process through contractors, now village

representatives work with Afghan government officials to make developments happen.

Army Capt. Edward Y. Park, a team leader with the 405th Civil Affairs Bn., said the goal is to empower the Afghan officials, known as line directors, who work with village leaders.

"We want the people to be seeing their line directors, not us," he said.

Each village has a Community Development Council, which in turn appoints a representative to a District Development Assembly.

The assembly is not just responsible for identifying needs for the community. It also requests local bids from contractors, then provides both quality assurance and quality control, ensuring the work

is also done by locals.

While the assembly still uses the Commander's Emergency Relief Program as a budget for its projects, officials expect this money will eventually be replaced by funds from the Afghan government.

Getting villagers to participate has been one of the challenges. U.S. Soldiers continue to meet with elders throughout the area and encourage them to take part in the weekly assembly meetings.

Army 2nd Lt. Florent A. Groberg, the platoon leader for 4th Plt., D Co., said he wants to bring as many villages into the process as possible.

See KUNAR  
Page 18





Army Pfc. Robert Goggins, a gunner with 2nd Plt., D Co., 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Reg., TF Lethal, returns fire after his patrol was attacked by insurgent forces near the Tantil Village in Kunar province, March 13. ANSF and INSF visited the community and its elders because of a high number of recent militant attacks in the area. No ANSF or ISAF members were wounded during the small arms attack.

## KUNAR: continued from page 17

"It's our job to let them know what's going on and get them involved," Groberg said. "That's the only way we can be successful in our mission."

In turn, the battalion created Development Support Teams last year to help mentor line directors and other Afghan officials on the law and other issues.

One indicator of progress came in November, when the battalion began seeing tribe members from the Korengal Valley – traditionally an area of severe resistance – coming to talk to the district governor about projects on a regular basis.

"The fact that they're there is a huge success for us," said Army

Maj. Chris T. Owen, training and operations officer for the battalion.

### -High costs-

Through mid-March, the battalion has lost eight U.S. Soldiers from various attacks throughout the AO. Their photos and identification tags line the main hallway of the battalion headquarters.

Senti said losing their comrades has been hard, but their ultimate sacrifice would not be in vain.

"I think the number one thing is, how can we do better next time to prevent this from happening in the future?" he said.

Combs, who knew three of the eight fallen Soldiers and has previously served tours of duty in Iraq, paused as he tried to talk about the losses. He said some Soldiers wear

bracelets engraved with the names of their friends.

"It's still a touchy subject," he said. "You just kind of grab it, accept it, pick it up and take it with you. We've still got our missions."

Fatalities and injuries haven't been limited to U.S. troops. In February, ANA Lt. Col. Aziullah, the commander of the ANA's 3rd Kandak was killed in an 82mm mortar attack on FOB Blessing. ANP officers as well as private contractors have also been killed.

Senti said there have been several cases where Afghan security guards were pulled from vehicles and murdered when they were travelling to visit their homes.

"Across the board, obviously, people have given blood," he said.

### -Long-term solutions-

Although there have been attempts, anti-Afghan forces have not been able to overrun an ISAF post in the area during the past year.

They even tried to overrun the Chapa Dara District center in February, before being beaten back by ISAF and ANSF.

Last summer, intelligence pointed to a massive attack aimed at FOB Blessing, Senti said. Using the radio station on base, the Afghan officials were able to talk to the public about the rumors and the attack never materialized.

"It allowed us to beat it without firing a shot," Senti said.

The radio station enables residents to call in information about potential attacks and helps ISAF and ANSF spread facts to the public. This includes the cost of community projects, which helps make the process more transparent.

Other efforts to reach the public have taken more tangible form.



Army 1st Lt. Gabriel C. Dearman, the platoon leader of 2nd Plt., D Co., 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Reg., TF Lethal Warrior, discusses future water projects with community leaders in the Kandigal village in Kunar province, Feb. 13. The ISAF is dedicated to helping Afghan citizens work with their national government to improve their communities.

The unit has arranged the planting of 20 orchards of fruit trees as well as a forestry effort to prevent soil erosion along the rivers. Both proj-

ects are expected to be complete by time the battalion leaves.

"The concept of rich and poor here are completely different," Senti said, noting how money means less to the Afghans than tangible goods that can be traded or used.

The fruit trees, which include five orchards planted by previous units, can eventually become a source of economic strength for the communities, he noted.

"All the economic functions of any of the stability operations we do, really, you have to look at it long-term," Senti said. "You get continuity between units, so development stays the focus."

Combs said at his level he's seen improvements and progress. Instead of Soldiers having to fight blind, residents call in tips and information. A rapport has developed between the battalion, the Afghan forces and many villages.

The battalion has made headway in the region, Combs said.

"Hopefully, leaving it better than we found it," he added. 🌱



A child from the Angla Kala village in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province, gives a high five to Spc. Jesus B. Fernandez, an assistant team leader with 3rd Plt., C Co., 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Reg., TFLethal, during a unit visit, Feb. 6. ISAF troops regularly meet with village elders to improve communications between residents and government officials.



# Sub-governor Budget Program: A Better way to Build Afghanistan

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Troy P. Johnson, 304th PAD

The governor of Paktika along with eight sub-governors of the province gathered at FOB Rushmore in Paktika province, Feb. 22, to discuss a new budget program that will help the sub-governors improve their communities.

The ultimate goal of the program is to build the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan by enhancing sub-governors' ability to provide basic services within their districts.

The meeting provided Paktika sub-governors, also referred to as district governors, with a block of instruction on how to use the Sub-governor's Budget Program.

The meeting also served to transition management of the program from 1st Bn., 501st Parachute Inf. Regt., 4th BCT, 25th Inf. Div., TF Yukon, to the, 3rd Bn., 187th Inf. Regt., 3rd BCT, 101st Airborne Div., TF Rakkasan.

This new budget program is intended to help local Afghans help themselves and legitimize the government of Afghanistan, said Army Capt. Christopher Drescher, project manager, 3rd Bn., 187th Inf. Regt.

In the past, the U.S. would just come into a town and tell villages what they will build for them, or what they think the villages need repaired, Drescher said.

"The communities never have a say, all they see is the U.S. Army providing services that their government is supposed to supply," said Army Maj. Jeffrey S. Crapo, executive officer for 1st Bn., 501st Inf. Regt. "They don't want to see that, they want to see Afghans doing it."

The program keeps money in the community by using local labor and the system often fosters a sense of ownership, an approach that hasn't been previously tried.

When outside contractors arrive in village

**"The future of Afghanistan is not the Afghans working with the U.S. Army. The future is in the people solving problems, themselves, at the community level,"**

**Army Maj. Jeffrey S. Crapo,  
executive officer for 1st Bn., 501st Inf. Regt.**

es for a building or repair project, the community has contributed to nothing to the project, said Army Sgt. Maj. Ken Wolf, the 1st Bn, Inf. 501st Regt. command sergeant major.

"They didn't invest any time or money, if it gets blown up. Who cares," Wolf added.

Using this program, the members of a Waza Kwah community recently repaired a schoolhouse, previously damaged by a Taliban bomb.

"The workers from the community actually wrote their names into the wall of the school as a message to the Taliban," said Crapo.

"The future of Afghanistan is not the Afghans working with the U.S. Army. The future is in the people solving problems themselves at the community level," added Crapo.

The program's intent is to target a gap at the district level by connecting the local populations with their government

and it is ultimately designed to teach good community level governance.

If you want to know how to help the people of Afghanistan, you have to ask the people on the street; and right now all these people want is for their government to work, said Wolf.

"We believe this is the one project that ties the people to their government," he added.

This new system for requesting projects is designed to be much like a city council meeting. The community identifies a need, votes on it and submits a project proposal all with the district sub-governor facilitating the process.

The money for the sub-governor budget program is requested through Commanders Emergency Relief Program Funds. These funds are channelled directly into the community, instead of an outside contractor.

The sub-governors of Mata Kan and Waza Kwah both agreed that the use of local labor and planning is essential to the program's success.

If you give this project to contractors, they will charge \$50,000 to \$60,000 or more. This town completed a project of better quality than

a contractor and did it for about \$2,000, said Mohammad Ramazan, the governor of Waza Kwah.

"This is the first time the community has used any government money and this is the first time the project was completed," said Ramazan.



A sub-governor from Paktika speaks with a representative from the 3rd Bn., 187th Inf. Regt., 3rd BCT, 101st Airborne Div. . The Governor of Paktika along with eight sub-governors gathered at FOB Rushmore to discuss a new budgeting program, Feb. 22.



The Governor of Paktika along with eight sub-governors of the province speak with pay agents from the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Div., 3rd BCT, 3rd Bn, 187th Inf. Regt, at FOB Rushmore, Paktika province, Afghanistan, Feb. 22. The goal of the Sub-governor's Budget Program is to build the GoIRA by enhancing a sub-governor's ability to provide basic services within their districts.



# Goodwill Across Afghanistan:

# ISAF and ANSF Reaching Out



Photo by Army Capt. Jason Quash,  
3rd CAB, TF Falcon PAO

An ANA Commando distributes school supplies to students of Khanjarkhel, during their first day of performing air assault missions, March 10.



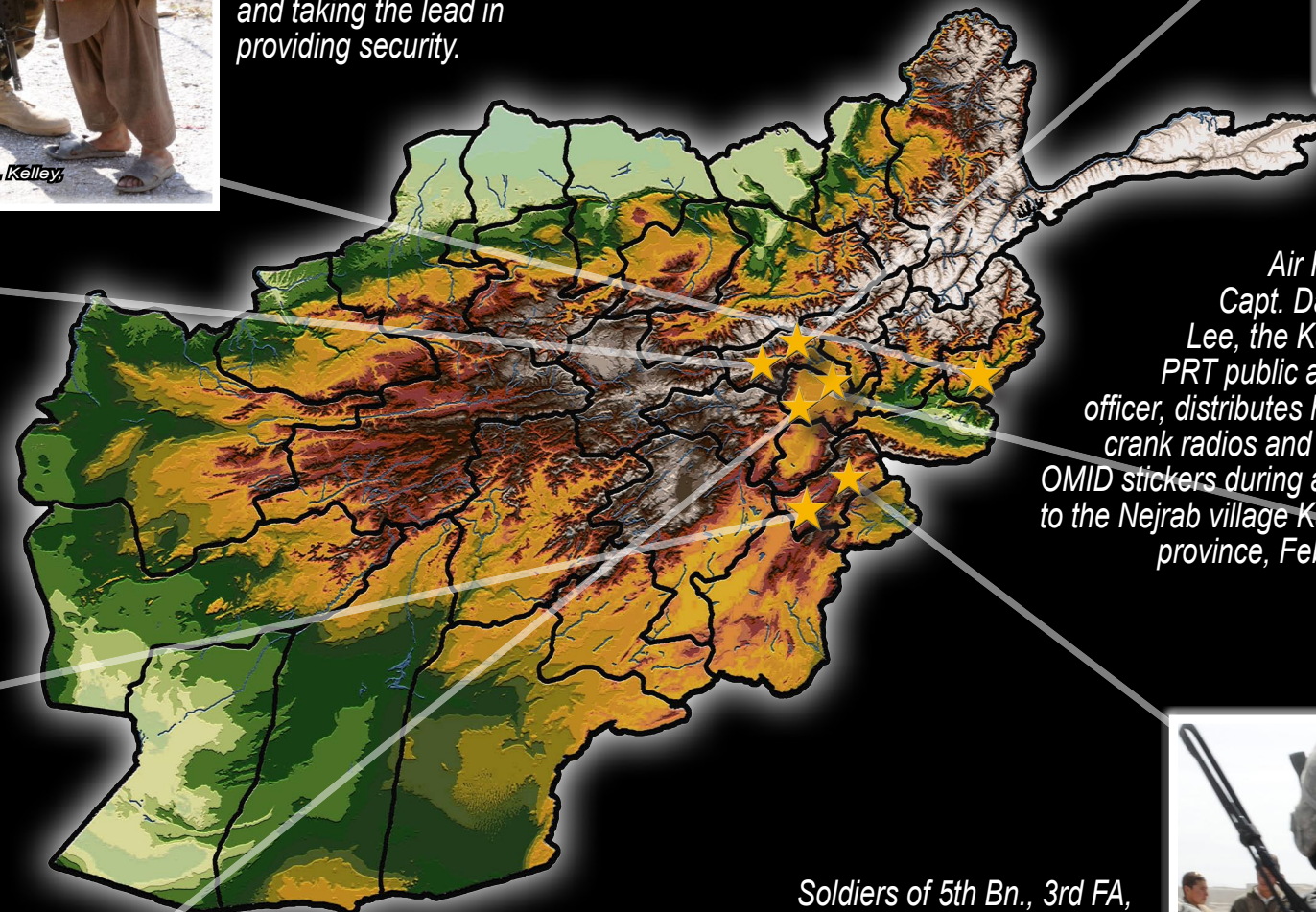
Photo by Spc. Albert L. Kelley,  
300th MPAD

ANA Sgt. Said Hu-sain, with the 2nd Kandak, 2nd Bde, 3rd Co., lets a young boy wear his hat during a patrol through the Manogai District of Kunar province, Feb. 16. ANA Soldiers continue developing community relationships and taking the lead in providing security.

An ANA commando of the ANSF Air Assault Academy gives candy to a child of the Nawdeh village, Parwan province, during a humanitarian aid mission, March 15.



Photo by Spc. Lorenzo Ware,  
Joint Combat Camera



Air Force Capt. Darrick Lee, the Kapisa PRT public affairs officer, distributes hand-crank radios and radio OMID stickers during a visit to the Nejrab village Kapisa province, Feb. 16.



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



Photo by Spc. Jay Venturini,  
304th PAD

An ANA soldier from the 203rd Thunder Corps hands school supplies to a headmaster of a school outside of Gardez City in Paktya province, during a humanitarian aid drop, March 16. The ANA distributed school supplies, clothing and sporting goods to the school.



Photo by Army 2nd Lt. Jordan Breau,  
101st Field Artillery, PAO

Soldiers of the 1st Bn., 101st FA are surrounded by excited children as they distribute boxes of clothing, toys and school supplies at an orphanage in Kabul, March 11. The orphanage teaches children from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Soldiers of 5th Bn., 3rd FA, hand out candy while on patrol during a combined forces civil assistance mission to pass out school supplies to several schools in Paktya province, March 15.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Laura Goodgame,  
RC East PA Advisory Team



# Mujahedeen: Protectors of Panjshir

The fierceness of the fighters and the security of the valley have allowed FOB Lion to be one of the few, if not only, bases in Afghanistan guarded solely by ANSF.

Panjshir province has been a center of resistance for Afghanistan. The people of Panjshir pushed back the Soviets in the 1980s and resisted Taliban rule in the 1990s.

FOB Lion draws its security force from a group of fighters known as the Mujahedeen. The name comes from the Arabic word for “one who struggles,” and is often used to refer to Islamic fighters from all different sects around the world.

In Panjshir the locals know the Mujahedeen as the group that ousted the Russians and kept their province from falling to the Taliban according to several Panjshir interpreters.

FOB Lion houses the Panjshir PRT. This U.S. multi-service and civilian team works with the local government on strengthening Panjshir’s security, governance, and reconstruction. Having a local

guard allows them to move about the province freely and accomplish their work.

Jamie Bowman, a civilian member of the PRT, travels about the province in her job as a field development officer. Her team never goes far without an interpreter and a mujahedeen guard. She touted the professionalism of the security force.

“They are always alert,” she said. “They are always attentive to what they have to do.”

Bowman told a story about an incident when a misunderstanding had local civilians upset and blocking the road. Before she could figure out what was happening, the mujahedeen sprang into action.

“Our guard was out of the car so fast,” Bowman said.

The Mujahedeen, who was also a local resident, quickly took control of the situation and “made sure that we were able to deal with the people in a professional, non-confrontational way,” said Bowman.

FOB Lion draws its security force from a group of fighters known as the Mujahedeen. The name comes from the Arabic word for “one who struggles,” and is often used to refer to Islamic fighters from all different sects around the world.

All of the Mujahedeen guards are from the area. They are specially selected by the provincial governor and rely on a tight-knit community to keep the peace.

Ahmad Jan, one of two team leaders of the Mujahedeen guard force said through an interpreter, “The provincial government all know us, and they picked us to be here. All of the guards that they have here are from different districts of this province, not from other provinces.”

Being part of the community allows the guards to spot anything out of the ordinary.

“Most of the guards here know about 80 percent of the population,” said Jan.

Air Force Lt. Col. Curtis Velasquez, PRT commander, says that this link to the population gives them advantages over Coalition guards.

“They can anticipate because they are indigenous to the area and are familiar with the atmospherics,” said Velasquez. “They know the issues with the local population and villagers.”

The strong sense of community is a large part of the stability in the valley. After decades of war, Jan said the people work together to keep the peace.

“We are tired of Taliban,” said Jan. “Our people don’t want them here. The locals, they know each other from this valley. If they see someone from another province looking suspicious they ask him what they are doing here. They will grab him and take him to the (ANA) or (ANP) and let them know that this guy is doing something suspicious.”

Army National Guardsman Sgt. Tommy Olivio from Crossville,

Tenn., said the guards have a vested interest to protect the forces at the FOB.

“They don’t want the Taliban here. This is one of the safest places in Afghanistan,” said Olivio. “What would this place be like for them if they let something happen?”

The Mujahedeen security force is made up of proven fighters with years of experience. Most of the

**“The (Soviets) did very bad things. Then everyone, if they had a weapon, became a mujahedeen and started fighting.”**

Ahmad Jan,  
Team Leader  
Mujahedeen guard force

Mujahedeen who guard FOB Lion have fought against the Taliban. Many of the older guards resisted the Soviets.

Jan said, “I joined because I needed to be a person of good discipline. But during the Soviets the reason a person became a Mujahedeen was because the (Soviets) attacked their provinces.

“The (Soviets) did very bad things,” continued Jan. “Then everyone, if they had a weapon, became a Mujahedeen and started fighting.”

Before becoming one of the elite guards, Jan said that his troops went through extensive training.

“Before we came here, we already knew how to fight,” said Jan. “The Americans taught us to search suspicious vehicles and people, and gate guarding procedures.”

Afghan troops also went through background checks.

“The provincial government will only pick a person who has never had a criminal background. He needs to have a clear background and be well respected,” said Jan.

Tech. Sgt. Lawrence McKnight, in charge of security at the FOB, has been won over completely. McKnight has worked closely with the Mujahedeen on security issues concerning the base.

“These guys would get in front of a bullet for you,” he said.


Jan said, “A person can only be a Mujahedeen if he is a good guy, if he never bothers people. He needs to defend his own country, his own people.”

And now, in addition to defending their own country, they are defending those trying to help them rebuild it.

Velasquez said the mujahedeen have accepted the PRT as their extended family and that he has full confidence in their capability to accomplish the mission.

According to the counterinsurgency guidance put out by Army Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, commander, ISAF, in 2009, “We must get the people involved as active participants in the success of their communities... Live and train together, plan and operate together.”

This is the model displayed in the relationship between the Panjshir PRT and its Mujahedeen protectors

“It’s the people in Panjshir that ultimately guarantee our security in this permissive environment and it is a privilege to be part of the community,” said Velasquez. 



Two mujahedeen guards keep watch during the Panjshir PRT transfer of authority, March 9. The Mujahedeen guard force is made up exclusively of local Panjshiris.



# STORY

## Snapshots

### President Obama Visits Bagram



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jeromy K. Cross, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing PAO

*The President of the United States Barack Obama thanks a crowd of deployed servicemembers and civilians for all their hard work and dedication to the United States during a surprise visit to Bagram Airfield, Sunday March 28. Prior to speaking to the troops, Obama flew to Kabul to meet with Afghanistan's president Hamid Karzai.*

### Training for Security, Development

*Soldiers from 2nd Plt., C Troop, 1st Sqdn., 91st Cav. Regt, 173rd Airborne BCT, meet with their Afghan counterparts before a patrol, Feb. 16. "We're trying to help develop the Afghan army to be able to patrol the countryside on their own without us," said Army Staff Sgt. Jeremy Pine, a squad leader.*



Photo by Army Pfc. Michael Sword, 173rd Airborne BCT PAO

### TF Lethal Patrols Manogai District



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

*Spc. Edgar A. Rios, of La Puente, Calif., an M-48 gunner with 2nd pln., Co. D, 2nd Bn., 12th Inf. Regt., TF Lethal, patrols in Tantil village in the Manogai District in Kunar province, Feb. 21.*



# International Women's Day

Over 600 women attend the International Women's Day Celebration held March 8, at Farah Province Gov. Rahool Amin's compound. The audience enjoyed watching seventh-grade female students from the only private school in Farah, Cosar, sing songs about mothers and women, a skit about family life in Afghanistan, and a tug-of-rope competition between American female military members and a group of Afghan women, which the Afghan women won.



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Tracy L. DeMarco, Farah PRT PAO



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester, Pakitka PRT PAO

The director of Women's Economic Development in Kapisa province, Suo-hailla Kohistani, speaks with women at the DAIL headquarters area during the International Women's Day celebration in Kapisa province, March 7. The Kentucky Agri-business Development Team's Women's Empowerment Program coordinator, Army Sgt. Jo Lisa Ashley, was also present for the ceremony.



Photo by Spc. Daniel D. Haun, TF Bayonet PAO

ANA Gen. Khatol Mohamadzaï, the first female parachutist and general in the ANA, greets the TF Bayonet command group on International Women's Day, March 8. "Becoming a general, especially in Afghanistan as a female, is not an easy thing. I wanted to work hard and show other Afghan females that a woman can be a general," said Mohammadzaï.

# Communication - The key to success



Photo Senior Master Sgt. Jessica D'Aurizio, RC East PA Advisory Team

A training seminar conducted by the Wise Corporations at FOB Thunder, took place March 14 through 16. The training better equipped the attendees with skills to communicate with the public through the media. Attendees included spokespersons from the ANA, ABP and ANP, the National Directorate of Security, local Afghan media and soldiers from the Religious Cultural Advisory office and operations office. Each participant received a certificate of completion presented by ANA Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Mir Saheb Gul.

## ANA Battlefield Circulation

Gen. Qs Ime, ANA 205th Corps vice commander, greets and shakes hands with 2nd Bde 205th Corps ANA soldiers at FOB Lane during the first stop of a battlefield circulation, Feb. 25. Ime and Army Lt. Col. Matthew Bedwell, 205th Coalition Mentor Team deputy commander, visited over 200 205th Corps ANA soldiers to discuss combat operations and quality of life issues.



Photo by Senior Airman Kenny Holston, 509th PAO



## Overlooking Afghanistan



*Sgt. 1st Class James Lee, an aerial gunner, B Co., 1st Bn. 169th Aviation Regt. and Ala. native, provides aerial security from the rear door of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter, Feb. 24. Chinook helicopters are one of the primary air platforms for moving troops and supplies throughout Afghanistan.*

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

## ANA Commados Clear the Way



*The 2nd Commandos search a home during a routine training exercise in East Paktia province Feb. 24. The Commandos are assigned to the 203rd Corps and train every day with Army Special Forces to learn small unit tactics and team building.*

Photo by Airman 1st Class Lara Goodgame, RC East PA Advisory Team

## Training Engineers in the IED Fight



*Army Staff Sgt. Mark Taylor, combat engineer with HHC, 3rd Sustainment Bn, 3rd Bde, 101st Airborne Div., prepares a Talon EOD Robot to investigate a simulated IED as part of the Blow in Place-Theater Specific Training, Feb. 24. The four-day training event is designed to equip combat engineers assigned to route clearance platoons with the knowledge and capability to identify and destroy certain types of IEDs without the help of EOD personnel.*



Photos by Spc. Jay Venturini, 304th PAD

## Marines Carry out COIN

*Lance Cpls. Daniel Garner (left), a rifleman, and Chris Ducharme, a mortarman, both with 3rd Plt., I Co., 3rd Bn, 6th Marine Regt., investigate a possible IED while on a patrol in Marjah, Helmand province, Feb. 22. Marines and ANA soldiers patrolled the city to carry out COIN operations.*



Photo by Lance Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde, 1st Marine Div. PAO



## MPs Patrol District of Beshood



*Spec. Donald P. Tubbs, of Pembroke, N.C., a driver with 2nd Sqd., MP plt., HHC, 4th Bde., STB, TF Gryphon, gathers fingerprints from a worker in Nangarhar province, March 11. The worker was part of an irrigation ditch-clearing project overseen by ISAF. ISAF regularly patrols the district, ensuring security and timely implementation of community development projects.*

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

## U.S. Public Affairs Train ANA

*Airman 1st Class Laura E. Goodgame, a photography advisor to the public affairs office for the ANA's 203rd Thunder Corps on FOB Thunder near Gardez City in Paktya province, reviews the photos of ANA Staff Sgt. Abdul Raouf, the NCOIC of the 203rd's PA office. The pair photographed an exercise involving ANA Commandos as part of the media training for the Soldiers in the 203rd's PA office.*



Photo by Army Sgt. Andrew A. Reagan, 604th FAD

## Unit assesses Afghan needs



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

*Army 1st Lt. Rahul N. Harpalani of Carbondale, Ill., 2nd Plt. leader, Troop B, 3rd Sqdrn., 61st Cav. Regt., TF Destroyer, meets with Naray Primary School officials at Jaba Village in Kunar province. The unit stopped by the village during a March 7 patrol to evaluate the condition of the school. ISAF funded the construction of the school, which was built in 2006.*

## ANA Conduct 1st Air Assault Mission



Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Jason Quash, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, TFFalcon

*Villagers watch as ANA Commandos load their Mi-17 after conducting their first air assault mission, March 10, in Qual 'Eh'ye Beland, outside of Bagram Airfield. "This was the first time that the ANA Commandos planned purely with Afghan air crews," said Army Chief Warrant Officer Chris Hinkle, HHC, TF Falcon, training leader for the air assault academy. "This was also the first time they performed an air assault from their own Mi-17s and the first time the commandos executed a ground tactical plan without following a U.S. Soldier. They planned it, they briefed it, they executed it on their own."*

# Get the rest of the story

CJTF-82.com



# Warrior Profile

*"Snake Man" Staley Known for humor, volunteerism*

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

Army Staff Sgt. Steven C. Staley, an information network analyst for the 580th Signal Co., is known for his selfless volunteerism and his sense of humor. Most of all, he is known by the Afghan vendors of the local bazaar as "Snake Man" for a beau-



tifully executed prank he pulled at the beginning of his deployment in August.

Each time he visited the bazaar, Staley would ask the vendors if they could catch a cobra for him. He told them he wanted to take a picture of one with its neck enlarged.

"They all agreed the second trip I went out there that they couldn't do it," said Staley, an avid hunter, a member of the Choctaw Indian Tribe, and a Seminole, Okla. resident. "But they pointed to the hills, north of us I guess, and said 'if you go over there, you can catch one.' Of course, I'm not authorized to leave the FOB, and I said 'OK, as a matter of fact I have to go on patrol next Monday; I'll see if I can't catch one.' And that's when I started cooking up this little plan."

Staley found an empty sand bag and placed a curled segment of a rubber fuel hose inside of it. He returned on Tuesday, and with some clever acting, convinced the vendors he had a live cobra inside.

"I held the sandbag away from my body just to give them the impression I had really caught one. And they saw me coming and they were like, 'Sergeant Staley, you got one? You got a cobra?' and I said 'Well, yeah but I didn't catch it' because they already knew I was scared of them. So, when I got closer to them, two of them started backing away and the other two put their hands on the top of the sandbag because they didn't want me to open it up."

As the vendors began to communicate frantically in Pashtu, the joke culminated in Staley's reaching his hand into the bag, pretending to get bit, and throwing the hose up. Two of the vendors screamed and a third began backpedalling in his sandals, kicking up rocks and dirt as he went. Two U.S. Soldiers watching the performance from a distance said if it had been caught

**"That's my deal, is to challenge NCOs and Soldiers alike to volunteer at something."**

- Army Staff Sgt. Steven C. Staley, information network analyst, 580th Signal Co.

on video it would have become a YouTube classic.

Now, as soon as Staley steps into the gate of the bazaar area he hears "Snake Man, come over here!" he said.

Staley stands out in his unit not only for his antics, but for his strong sense of duty to others. Staley is proud to part of a unit that fosters a volunteer-friendly command environment. He follows the examples of Army Lt. Col. Ivan Montenez, the commander of the 25th Signal Bn., and others in lending a helping hand.

When the first sergeant of the FOB Salerno Combat Surgical Hospital sent out a request for help during mass casualty events, Staley answered the call. Now whenever the C.P.A. system announces a mass casualty event, Staley can be found at the CSH helping the medics prep for the incoming patients. Following the Dec. 31 attack on the CIA compound at COP Chapman, Staley stayed behind to clean the stretchers and stretcher carts.

"If I can do that -- bring in wounded-- and that frees up the medical people to do the patching and repairing, I can do that, it's going to save somebody's life," he said.

Once the patients are brought in, Staley and his cohorts stick around to clean the litters and mats so the medics can respond quicker in the event of a follow-up attack. Staley also spends a few hours a week as a scribe for A Co., 405th Civil Affairs Bn., which meets with locals nationals who want to redress grievances and request humanitarian assistance. Staley believes that volunteering is the right thing to do and that it's contagious. Already three NCOs from his unit have 'caught the bug' and started volunteering with him.

"That's my deal, is to challenge NCOs and Soldiers alike to volunteer at something," he said. "It makes the time go by over here

faster and it gives you a good feeling."

Staley has had a long military career, which recently took a fortuitous turn. He joined the Army Active Duty 1990 and became an Oklahoma National Guardsman in 1994.

In his civilian career, he was a policeman in Seminole from 1995 to 2001 before he went Active Guard Reserve. Staley enjoyed his job in the Reserve, but was discontented because circumstances had separated him from his children, Patrick, 17 and Anna, 13, who live in Regensburg, Germany. So last year he decided to take a gamble and return to active duty in the hopes that he would eventually end up in Germany.

In his first year of the new active duty stint, Staley was shuffled around from Kuwait to Qatar to Bagram Airfield to FOB Salerno. Finally, it's beginning to look like his gamble is going to pay off, as his request for duty in Germany has been approved. At the end of January, Staley took leave to Germany, Austria and Italy to spend time with his kids. The trip doubled as a honeymoon for Staley and his new bride, Laura from New Orleans, whom he met camping at Stone Mountain, Ga., and married about three weeks before the current deployment began.

Staley looks forward to spending his future closer to his children when his deployment ends this July. He plans to stay in the Army until his twenty year mark and beyond, he said, because he loves it. He is also nearing completion of his Bachelor of Science in ethics and management at Mid-America Christian University.

"The man doesn't think about himself-- ever," said Army 2nd Lt. Kevin Kirk, who is a Direct Signal Support Team Officer In Charge in the 580th Signal Co.

He added, "He's a very funny guy; he keeps things light around here... We're very lucky to have him here." ☺



# SAFETY WATCH

## *Weapons Safety*

Courtesy of Mr. Armando M. Alfaro,  
TF Provider Safety

Complacency, inexperience and ignoring the basic fundamentals of safe weapons handling are usually the factors that lead to negligent discharges.

Everyone assumes responsibility from the leader to the Soldier to ensure everything is done to prevent a negligent discharge.

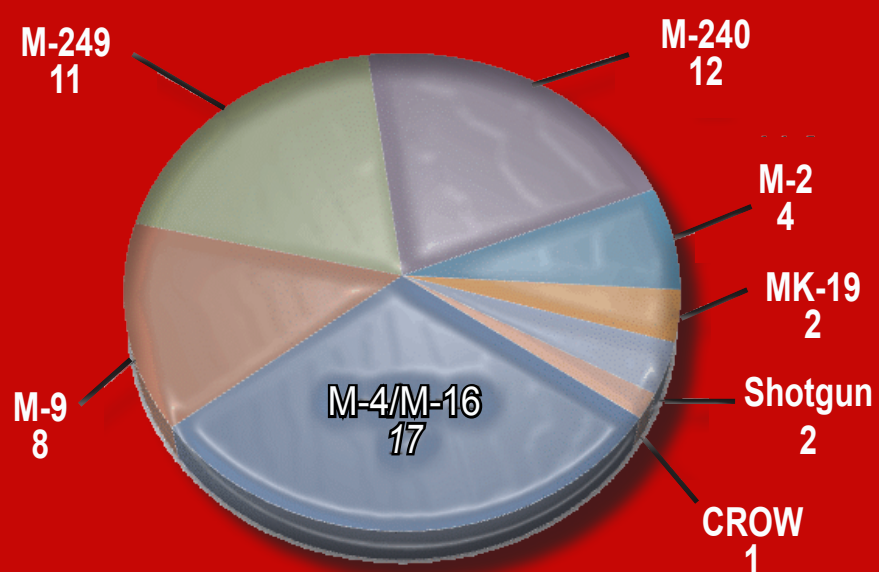
Everyone has the responsibility to ensure they remain proficient on their assigned weapon. This can be a very challenging task, but is essential. First line supervisors must always spot check their subordinates and ensure Soldiers are always thinking weapon safety.

The most common mistake leading to negligent discharges have been improper clearing procedures. Other factors that play a role are horseplay, incorrect weapon status, failure to keep the weapon on safe, trigger discipline, and lack of muzzle awareness.

Historically, during the first and last 90 days in country, Soldiers are extremely vulnerable to negligent discharges. During the first 90 days, many Soldiers carry their assigned weapon 24/7 for the first time. This inexperience of knowing weapon statuses, clearing procedures, and loading and unload-

ing puts Soldiers in an extremely vulnerable position that can very easily lead to a negligent discharge. During the last 90 days in country, many Soldiers become overconfident which can lead to complacency. They begin taking short cuts, skipping procedures, and in some cases completely disregard standards and discipline. During both of these time periods, it's important that the leadership, especially first-line supervisors, not only enforce standards and procedures but have a plan on how to mitigate these hazards to prevent negligent discharges.

### NDs from May 09 to Date:



There have been 57 reported negligent discharges since May 09, resulting in 10 gunshot wounds. Two of those wounds caused permanent disabilities. One soldier lost an eye and another was paralyzed from the waist down.

**“LIVING WITH YOUR MISTAKES IS HARDER THAN YOU THINK.  
...THINK SAFETY!!!”**

# THINK WEAPON SAFETY

**T**reat every weapon as if it is loaded.  
**H**andle every weapon with care.  
**I**dentify the target before you fire.  
**N**ever point at anything you don't intend to shoot.  
**K**eept the weapon on safe and finger off the trigger until you intend to fire.



### You Can Prevent Negligent Discharges:

Understand and know all weapon status codes.

Be proficient in properly clearing your assigned weapon.

Know how to properly load and unload your weapon.

Be able to perform a functions check and ensure the serviceability of your weapon.

Always keep the selector lever on safe, switch to fire only when you intend to fire.

Maintain trigger discipline, do not place finger on the trigger unless you're prepared to fire.

Never point the weapon at anything or anyone you do not intend to shoot.

Never engage in horseplay with your weapon.



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**Put your Unit in the  
Spotlight!**

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

See page #11

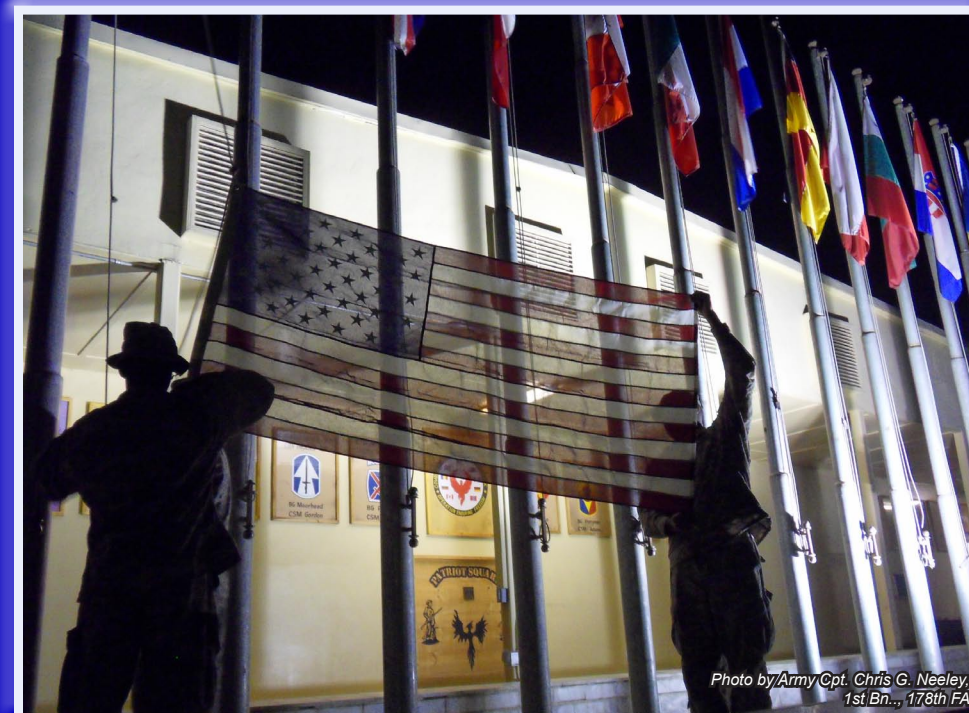
**Send all submissions and inquiries to  
FreedomWatch@afghan.swa.army.mil or call DSN 481-6367**

# PHOTOS

## From the Field



*82nd Pathfinders, search for weapon caches and conducting key leader engagement with the village elders, "shalib-e-kalan" Zabul province.*



*Two soldiers with the 48th IBCT retiring the Colors outside the DFAC at Camp Phoenix, AFG March 8.*



*A CH-47 Chinook sling loading another Chinook. It was the first time to happen in Afghanistan. The Chinook had to be sling loaded out due to a blade strike. So the Downed Aircraft Recovery Team went in and prepared the aircraft to be picked up.*

Your photo could be featured next month! Entries need to include Who, When, Where, and What, also your Branch, Rank, Full Name, Job Title, Unit and FOB.





Photo of the Month by Lance Mueller, TAC-DOMEX:  
101ABN I/187IN "D" Company 2nd Plt, TF MUSTANG live fire training