

# FREEDOM WATCH

MAY 2010

 **AFGHANISTAN**



(COVER STORY)  
HOLDING GROUND  
AT THE "NEW ALAMO"



# FEATURES

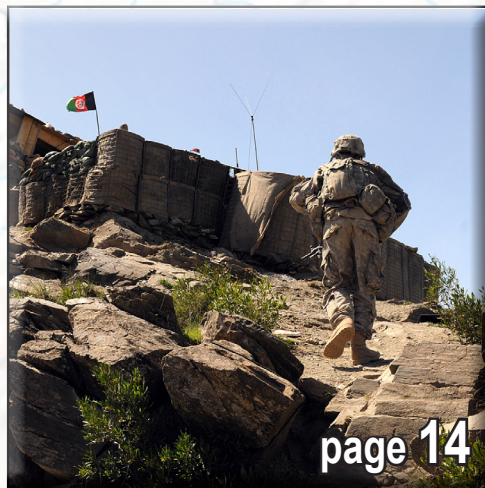
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## FREEDOM WATCH

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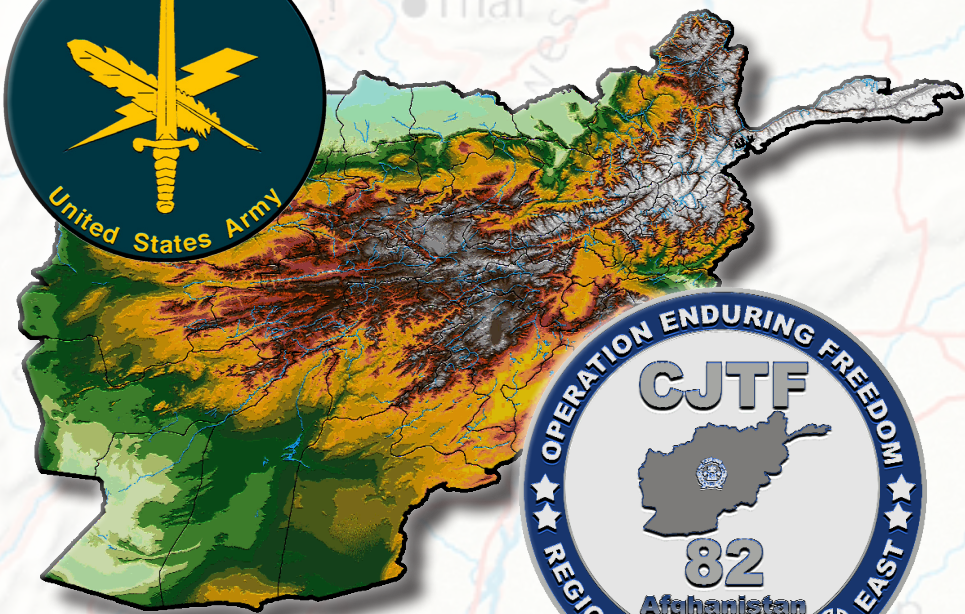
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# Roads Less Traveled: Reaching Out to Remote Villages

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th PAD

The western edge of Khost province near the Pakistan border is a labyrinth of mountains, dry riverbeds and far-flung villages. Governance and infrastructure are still developing.

The region is the perfect hideout for members of the Taliban and the Haqqani network, a lesser-known, but equally dangerous organized crime organization that operates in the Zadran tribe-controlled areas of Afghanistan.

Since late January, Soldiers of Scout Plt., A Troop, 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav. Regt. and their ANA counterparts have helped bring this region into focus for ISAF and GIROA.

The troops convoy to remote villages to make connections with village leaders and obtain information about enemy whereabouts.

"A baseline of information hasn't been established in (Dwomandah district), so we are basically building things from the ground up in conjunction with other government agencies," said Scout Plt. leader, Army 1st Lt. James R. Rudisill.

On March 20, Scout Plt. left Camp Clark with support from the ANA 6th Co., 1st Kandak, 203rd Corps to visit four areas of interest over the course of two days.

After making two peaceful stops at villages, the troops followed a narrow gorge to the third area of interest. The gorge seemed an ideal place to stage an ambush so the troops fanned out in two squad formations and

## "That's the biggest issue we have--getting out and being able to engage all these villages."

--Sgt. 1st Class Richard J. Edwards, platoon sergeant for Scout Plt.

combed the hill for traces of enemy movement, such as fire pits, dugouts and spent shell casings. This time nothing turned up.

The Scout Plt. troops spent the night at COP Wilderness and were happy to sleep with a roof over their heads. They often sleep in their vehicles or on the ground.

The following morning, Scout Plt. visited a village called Seyyed Kheyl. Unlike the others, Seyyed Kheyl is large enough that Smith describes it as an "urban environment" that spans both sides of the riverbed.

The troops dismounted and patrolled the village, crossing over a large stream by a bridge made of a log and some rocks that the locals had been using.

The unit did not encounter the enemy en route, but they were in a constant battle against the terrain. Many of the areas of interest can only be reached by traveling off-road through riverbeds, called Wadis. Wadis are normally dry, but are prone to flash flooding and often carry water during the spring.

Given the life-threatening nature of rollovers near water, the drivers must be on guard when crossing river beds cut out from flash floodss thatwadis,

Once, an axle of a Mine-Resistant, Ambush Protected vehicle broke while trying to navigate a difficult area of a wadi. The same vehicle tipped over while it was being towed, though no one was inside.

"The terrain is our biggest enemy--that pretty much sums it up," said Army Pfc. Michael J. Smith, an MRAP driver for Scout Plt.

"That's the biggest issue we have--getting out and being able to engage all these villages," said Sgt. 1st Class Richard J. Edwards, platoon sergeant for Scout Plt.

Once the Soldiers reach an area of interest they pull security while the platoon leadership seeks out village leadership and ask about the village's civil and security needs.

"The willingness to cooperate is there," Edwards said, adding that the relationship between the unit and the villagers is a "young relationship with a lot of potential."

The area remains difficult, but Edwards said there is reason to believe things will get better.

"There is noticeable improvement every time we go out," he said.



Spc. Alex Masteller, a mortarman for Scout Plt., A Troop, 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav. Regt. crosses a makeshift bridge at Seyyed Kheyl village, Dwomandah district, Khost province, March 21.



Army Pfc. Michael J. Smith, an MRAP driver for Scout Plt., A Troop, 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav. Regt., overlooks a wadi in Dwomandah district (background), and patrols the Seyyed Kheyl village, (right) Khost province, March 21.



# ANSWERING THE CALL



Story and photos by Spc. Albert L. Kelley, 300th MPAD

Editor's Note: Spc. Kelley was also the author for the "Mujahedeen: Protectors of Panjshir" Article in last month's issue of FWA.

(Above) A little girl from Mehtar Lam hugs her father as they depart the aid station at FOB Methar Lam, Laghman province, March 29. The father brought her to the aid station after receiving substandard care at a local hospital for second degree burns received on her feet.

(B) The child was treated by Army Sgt. Cornel Sampson, of Winstead, Conn., a medic with HHC, 1st Bn., 102nd Inf. Regt. TF Iron Grays; medics at FOB Mehtar Lam occasionally provide medical care to villagers who have no access to doctors or have received sub-standard care.

Medics at FOB Mehtar Lam, Laghman province recently treated Afghan children suffering from a variety of medical problems including second-degree burns and polio, March 29 and 30.

Last week, a father appeared at FOB Mehtar Lam's front gate seeking medical assistance for his 2-year-old daughter. She had sustained second-degree burns on her feet when one of her cousins pushed her too close to an open fire.

Army Pvt. Joshua M. Koplowitz, of Amston, Conn., a medic with HHC, 1st Bn., 102nd Inf. Regt., TF Iron Grays, assisted in her medical treatment the first day as well as her follow-up visits. He vividly recalled the emotions of that first day.

"When she first came in, I felt horrible," Koplowitz said. "She was in tears and screaming."

Initially, the family went to the Mehtar Lam hospital, but received very basic service at best. Fortunately, the family found their way to FOB Mehtar Lam where they received proper treatment, including an offer for follow-up visits.

"If we hadn't been here for them, it could have been a lot worse," Kopowitz said. "She could have lost her feet or she could have died from infection."

During their most recent follow-up, the family brought a neighbor with them. The neighbor was concerned because his son's growth was stunted and he could not walk despite being 6 years old.



(A,D) Air Force Capt. Philip M. Hotchkiss, of Panama City, Fla., the senior medical officer with the Laghman PRT, examines a young boy who was brought to FOB Mehtar, Laghman province, March 29. At age six, the boy is unable to walk and his growth is stunted. After an examination, Hotchkiss diagnosed the young boy with polio. (C) Army Sgt. Cornel Sampson, of Winstead, Conn., carefully removes an old bandage from a young villager's burned arm. The girl was brought by her father after receiving inadequate care.

Air Force Capt. Philip M. Hotchkiss, of Panama City, Fla., the senior medical officer with the Laghman PRT, gave the young boy an examination and diagnosed him with polio.

"Unfortunately, we cannot undo the growth issues," Hotchkiss said. "However, we are providing vitamin supplements to help him in the future and are coordinating with operation care to obtain braces for his legs to help him walk again."

The medics are more than happy to treat the locals, however, they are also committed to helping them develop and implement long-term solutions to their health care system in order to allow villagers to be adequately cared for by local health care providers.

After treating the two young patients, Hotchkiss met with the Laghman the provincial line director of public health to discuss the capabilities and limitations of the local hospital.

During a tour of the hospital, the director pointed out factors that were limiting the hospital's capabilities such as an undersized sewage tank that prevented the entire hospital from being utilized.

The PRT now has engineers working with local engineers to develop a solution for the issue.

"Ideally, this will lead to improvements in their health care system, and the locals will have more options for timely care, independent of foreign assistance," Hotchkiss said.



# Taliban Leaders Lay Down Arms, Pledge Allegiance to GIRoA

Story by Army Capt. Rebecca Lykins, CJSTO TF, Media Operations Center

Something remarkable happened in Khas Uruzgan district, April 11: Taliban leaders voluntarily laid down their arms and pledged support for the Government Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during one of the largest shuras ever held in Uruzgan province.

Members of the GIRoA, ANSF and U.S. Special Forces organized the shura to gauge for the Afghan government and reiterate the importance of area residents' support.

The shura's locale, the Matakzai School, was particularly significant because it has long been a hub of insurgent activity. The Taliban has used the site as a rallying point for its fighters and a weapons cache. Not so long ago, senior Taliban leaders weighed down by automatic weapons would prowl the school's halls without fear of coalition forces.

Change has been ushered into the region with the late-January arrival of Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha who implemented a non-kinetic approach to fostering peace and stability in the region.

This progressive strategy, which was specifically crafted for the area, has facilitated a productive partnership between government and military forces and local tribal leaders.

District Chief Sadar Wali and the leaders of the Matakzai tribe played host to the shura; the Matakzai is one of the area's most powerful tribes, dominating the eastern portion of Khas Uruzgan.

"Local elders know we are committed to providing security to the area and supporting their needs and vision for the community," a Special Forces intelligence sergeant said.

"We want to help bring the district of Khas Uruzgan together, and facilitating shuras with the villagers offers one avenue for accomplishing this goal."

The mid-April event was particularly significant because the school was finally opened to villagers and full of children. Coalition forces were under no threat of attack, and it was widely attended by local villagers.

Approximately 75 Matakzai men participated in the shura as well as three suspected Taliban supporters,

Dr. Zabit Salam, Dr. Hamidullah and Zabit Nafi – each of whom attended willingly and agreed to cease their roles in aiding Taliban efforts. Tribal elders pledged their support for the GIRoA and voiced a desire for peace in the area during the shura, saying they have grown weary of decades of fighting.

The leaders vowed to assume responsibility for the 88-square-kilometer area they control, and promised to refrain from supporting insurgents and to encourage insurgents within their tribe to lay down their arms and join with the GIRoA.

Those who refuse to comply, the leaders declared, would be banished from the tribe.

"The Matakzai people have realized the Afghan government and U.S. Special Forces are here to help them achieve their goal of peace," said a Special Forces team leader assigned to the region.

To see the Matakzai School teeming with children offered another sign of progress: The shura was the first time in three years the Khas

Uruzgan children have had the opportunity to attend classes. Taliban leaders issued a standing order several years ago that prohibited school administrators from teaching a non-Taliban-approved curriculum.

Not only did Matakzai children attend classes during the shura, but several also received an English lesson.

With the school full of villagers and tribal elders, the threat of violence was low, allowing the combined forces to move freely to and from the school.

Throughout the past few years, the single road leading to the school has been the site of countless enemy engagements and IEDs. The dangers associated with this avenue of approach are compounded by high ground to the north and dense forests to the south.

At the conclusion of the April 11 shura a new sight greeted the region.

Matakzai leaders got into their vehicles and led the convoy of ANSF and Special Forces back to the firebase without incident, offering a promising glimpse of a future in which Khas Uruzgan residents, tribal leaders and GIRoA personnel can move about their homeland freely, safely and peaceably. 🌍

# Operation Leader Zalzalalah II

Story and photo by Army Pfc. Christopher McKenna  
3rd BCT 101st Airborne Div. PAO

ANA Soldiers partnered with Soldiers from 1st Bn., 187th Inf. Regt., 3rd BCT, 101st Airborne Div., and Soldiers with the Paktika PRT to conduct Operation Leader Zalzalalah II March 23 through 28.

Soldiers from 1st Bn., 187 Inf. Regt. provided security while the ANA troops and PRT members went throughout the Pirkoti and Bibycott villages conducting area reconnaissance, presence patrols, key leader engagements and human intelligence gathering.

"While we were there the people told us what they feel their needs are," said Army Staff Sgt. Arin Wilson, HHC, 1-187 Inf. Wilson led the unit's information gathering efforts on the mission.

While the people of Pirkoti were stand-offish with the troops, the people in Pirkoti eventually warmed up and told the PRT about their needs for a bigger medical clinic, paved roads and a bigger school.

"The area hasn't had a big American presence," said Spc. Brabham Garrick, 1st Bn. 187 Inf. Regt., PRT security. "The kids were both scared and interested at the same time, while I feel the adults were happy to see us for the most part."

This is the first assessment of Pirkoti. Wilson said the PRT gained information it can use to help determine what the priorities for development are.

ANA Capt. Momand Ashaquallah, commander of 3rd Bde., 2nd Kandak, 203rd Corps, said providing the people of Pirkoti with both jobs and projects would be an important step toward progress.

"Two and three years ago these people weren't interested in anything; now they are asking for things," Ashaquallah said through the aid of an interpreter.

"They understand that the coalition has done a lot of projects through Orgun, and they would like to get projects for themselves."

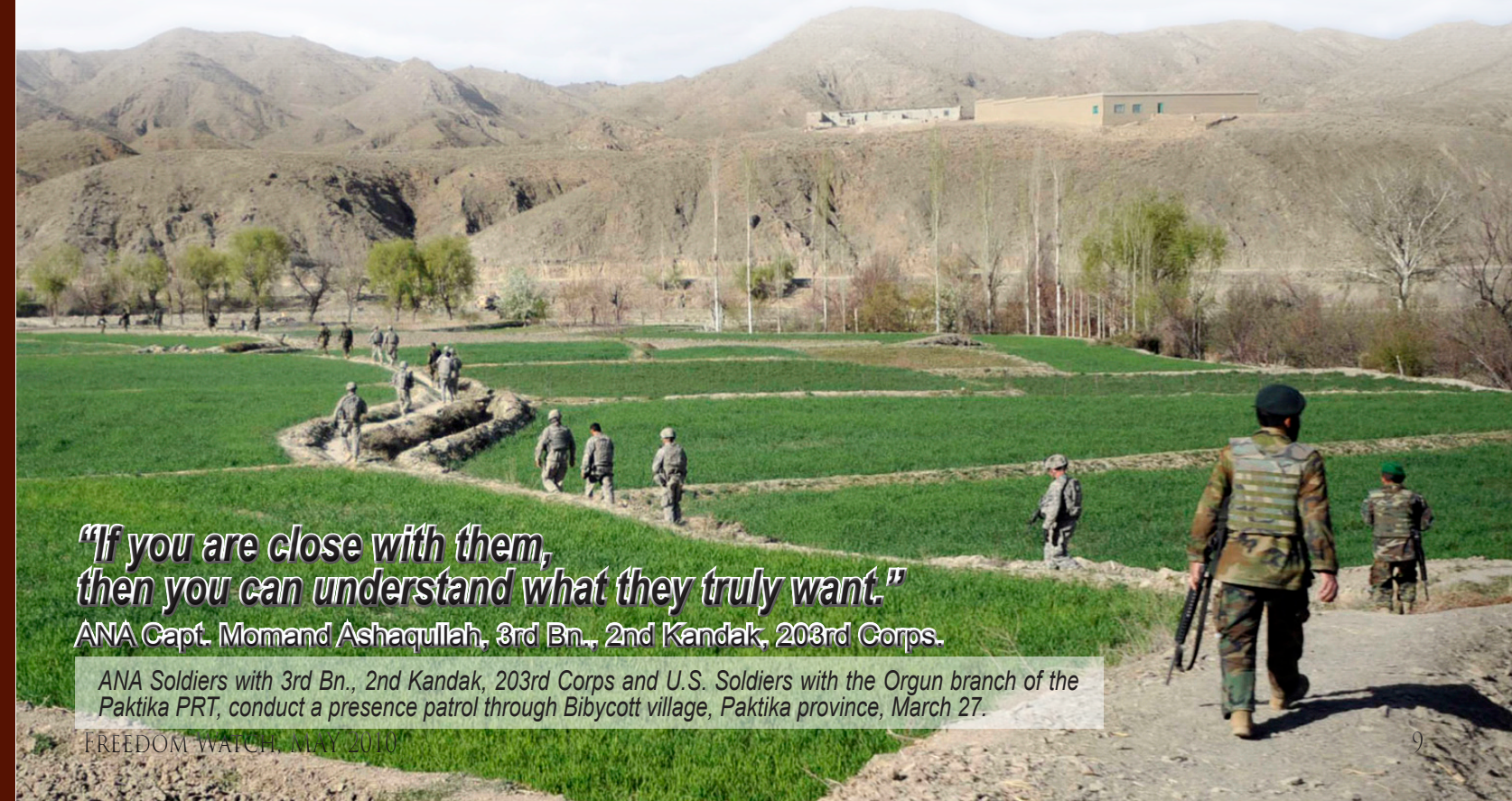
He said it is important for the ANA not to make any promises that can't be kept, as to the people of Afghanistan a man's word is his bond.

He emphasized the importance of being close to the people.

"If you are close with them, then you can understand what they truly want," Ashaquallah said. "And they can understand what can actually be provided for them."

The last time the ANA were in the Pirkoti area was roughly eight months ago, and the changes between now and then are drastic said Ashaquallah.

"Before when we came the people were completely stand-offish with us," Ashaquallah said. "Over the past days we have been here, they have warmed up and begun to accept us." 🌍



*"If you are close with them, then you can understand what they truly want."*

ANA Capt. Momand Ashaquallah, 3rd Bn., 2nd Kandak, 203rd Corps.

ANA Soldiers with 3rd Bn., 2nd Kandak, 203rd Corps and U.S. Soldiers with the Orgun branch of the Paktika PRT, conduct a presence patrol through Bibycott village, Paktika province, March 27.



# Piece of WTC Finds Home in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th PAD

An I-beam that was once a part of the World Trade Center now has a home in Afghanistan, where senior terrorist leaders were taking refuge when the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack occurred.

As a tribute to the beam's arrival at Bagram Airfield, troops at BAF flew a CH-47 Chinook around the installation with the beam displayed hanging in a cargo net, March 31.

Soldiers from the 612th Quartermaster Detachment sling-loaded the beam and attached a U.S. flag to the aircraft, which was then piloted by aviation troops from TF Falcon. Several troops who were first responders to the attacks on the World Trade Center accompanied the TF Falcon troops on the half-hour flight.

The U.S. flag that flew with the beam, along with another displayed from the back hatch of the helicopter, will be given as a token of appreciation to the residents of Breezy Point, N.Y., who shipped the beam at a cost of approximately \$5,000.

Army Sgt. Timothy Nast, a sling-load NCOIC in the 612th, said he was happy to support the mission.

"When my chief brought it to my attention, I of course said, 'Yes, I'll take the mission.' It's a part of history, and not just that—it lets all of us that are here remember what we're here fighting for," Nast said. "We will never forget 9/11, so it was an honor for me and my Soldiers to be part of this."

Residents of Breezy Point donated the beam through an organization called "Sons and Daughters of America, Breezy Point." The City of New York had given a number of beams to the residents of Breezy Point after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks that killed 29 residents of the small neighborhood in Queens.

After the residents erected a permanent monument facing Manhattan, Sons and Daughters donated the remaining three beams to the U.S. military. One is at the recently opened infantry museum at Fort Benning, Ga., and the other is aboard the aircraft carrier, U.S.S. Nimitz, along with Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Brian Quinn Jr., whose father was instrumental in organizing Sons and Daughters.



The plan to send the third beam to Bagram was conceived around Memorial Day last year, but due to complications the beam didn't arrive in BAF until March 12, said Army Maj. Stephen J. Ryan, a governance planner for CJTF-82 from Breezy Point.

Ryan, who responded to the attacks as an off-duty police officer and was activated for three months with the New York National Guard in recovery efforts, said the display of the third beam in Afghanistan is "a fitting tribute."

Army Lt. Col. Jeff Cantor, team chief of the Special Issues Team, Stability Operations, CJTF-82, who also assisted in the recovery efforts at the site of the World Trade Center attacks, said he took the experience personally.

"To me it's very important that I salute (those who risked or gave their lives as 9/11 first responders)



(Bottom left) This beam from the World Trade Center, which is 9-feet long, 2-feet wide and weighs more than 950 pounds, was donated to the U.S. military by the residents of Breezy Point, N.Y. through an organization called Sons and Daughters of America, Breezy Point.

(Middle left) Spc. Mario Palencia of Houston, a parachute rigger for the 612th Quartermaster Detachment and Army Sgt. Timothy Nast, Troy, Ill., the sling load noncommissioned officer in charge for the 612th Quarter Master Detachment, help transport a 9-foot I-beam at Bagram Airfield, March 31.

(Middle right) Parachute rigger troops from the 612th Quartermaster Detachment prepare to hook a 9-foot I-beam from the World Trade Center to a CH-47 Chinook flown by aviators from TF Falcon at Bagram Airfield, March 31.

(Below) A CH-47 Chinook flown by aviators from TF Falcon carries a sling-loaded I-beam from the World Trade Center and displays an American flag above Parwan province, March 31.

for what they did on 9/11," said Cantor, a resident of Marlboro, N.J. "And now I'm here (in Afghanistan) to show my support and hopefully we'll have the unveiling right here and that piece of history will live on forever."

Cantor said the beam will soon be put on display in front of the CJTF-82 command center in BAF along with a stone engraving, also donated by the organization, dedicating the beam to the Armed Services of the U.S. and admonishing them never to forget the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

A ceremony for the beam's arrival at the CJTF-82 command center is tentatively scheduled for the beginning of May.

In accordance with the organization's vision, the beam will remain at BAF as long as U.S. troops are deployed to Afghanistan, Cantor said. After that, it will most likely end up in a museum at Fort Bragg, N.C., similar to the beam at Fort Benning.

"I think this is going to be very symbolic to show our response and how we responded to the attacks, and how we're helping the people of Afghanistan," said Army Maj. Lisandro Murphy of Middle Village, N.Y., another Sept. 11, 2001, responder who now works as information operations planner with CJTF-82 Future Operations.

Ryan, who had been working with Sons and Daughters, said the date of the flight was not significant, but that it was long in coming.

"I just want, again, to thank the residents of Breezy Point, New York. I know they probably got impatient with me because this was a long time coming," he said, "It's been more than a year since the time they envisioned this project... but it's finally gotten to its destination."





# Keeping Vigilance High

## Post-Offensive Operations in Marjah

Story and photo by Marine Staff Sgt. Luis Agostini Regimental Combat Team-7, 1st Marine Div. PAO

More than two months after the Operation Moshtarak offensive began, the Marines who breached the Taliban stronghold of Marjah, Helmand province remain vigilant.

Marines from 81 mm Mortar Plt., Weapons Co., 1st Bn., 6th Marine Regt., patrol through Marjah daily alongside their ANA counterparts, keeping their presence known to both friend and foe throughout the area.

“We’re letting the locals know we are here, and using the Afghan National Army to communicate with the locals,” said Marine Staff Sgt. Nelson A. Adames, a mortarman with 81 mm Mortar Plt.

Adames hopes enemies will take notice of their continued presence throughout Marjah as well.

“We’re making it hard for the Taliban to do their job,” said Adames, 35, from Victoria, Texas. “We aren’t going anywhere.”

The mortarman have been here before, patrolling through poppy fields, alongside tree lines, into residential areas and on barren roads. Local faces are becoming familiar as Marines leave footprints through dusty roads and neighborhoods.

Still, the Marines know each step outside the wire is laced with danger.

“We might go through areas where we’ve already swept through, but the enemy is always watching,” Adames said. “The moment they see us get complacent is when the enemy changes their [tactics, techniques and procedures] when they see us again. If you don’t do the little things, that’s when you are going to get hurt.”

The presence of Afghan children waving at the patrolling Marines and Afghan Soldiers brought a sense of comfort to Adames, father of three.

“You come out here and see these kids (are) as happy as can be, with whatever they have. I’d never allow my kid to sit in the middle of the street like that. It definitely makes me focus on the mission at hand, to do what we have to do, to go home,” Adames said. “Some of the Marines have wives that are pregnant, so I want to get them home so they can enjoy what I have for the past 11 years of being a parent.”

The comfort was short lived, as Adames knows the Taliban do not abide by NATO rules of engagement.

“The Taliban doesn’t care, even when the kids are out there,” he said.

In the face of such an enemy, every decision made on a patrol of less than a dozen Marines can carry strategic implications.

The patrolling mortarman encountered a poppy stack in a residential area. After clearing the brush, Lance Cpl. William L. Ward, a mortarman with 81 mm Mortar Plt., received a high metallic hit from his minesweeper. The patrol leader, Cpl. Joshua D. Sepanski, peeked into the nearby window and noticed a wired propane tank.

Sepanski suggested a search of the house by the Afghan Soldiers. As the patrol closed distance with the locked doors of the compound, a local Afghan notified the patrol that the building was a mosque. Adames, the senior-ranking Marine on patrol, made the strategic decision, pulled his Marines back and ordered the patrol to continue its planned route.

The squad departed the residential area, alongside wadis, crossing foot bridges and occasionally making the leap of faith over a valley to cross onto another side. The Marines reminded the Afghan Soldiers to keep proper dispersion. Ward and Sepanski continued investigating high metallic hits from the minesweepers with empty results.

After patrolling nearly six miles of neighborhoods, roads, riverbeds and poppy fields, the patrol returned to the FOB. All Marines and Afghan Soldiers were accounted for, and it turned out, it was just another routine patrol through Marjah.

“My biggest goal is to get these guys back in one piece,” Adames said. “I don’t care if we get contact for the rest of the time we are here. At the end of the day, as long as we did our job and everyone is safe, that’s the most important thing.”

A few days later, Adames relaxed with his Marines at FOB Marjah. An explosion broke the mid-morning calm. Marines sprinting to the mortar platoon’s tent confirm it’s not a controlled detonation but an IED. The device detonated near a squad of Marines patrolling in Marjah.

“I didn’t go out today; I figured I’d give my legs a rest,” Adames said. “That’s the last time I’ll ever let my Marines go out without me again.”

**“We’re making it hard for the Taliban to do their job. We aren’t going anywhere.”**

*Marine Staff Sgt. Nelson A. Adames  
Mortar Plt., Weapons Co., 1/6 Marine Regt.*

*Lance Cpl. Felipe ZapataSierra, of Orlando Fla., a mortarman with 81 mm Mortar Plt., Weapons Co., 1st Bn., 6th Marine Regt., patrols through a residential area of Marjah, March 27. Marines with 1st Bn., 6th Marine Regt., have partnered with and mentored ANA Soldiers through training, joint patrolling and counterinsurgency operations.*



# Holding Ground

## COP Bari Alai: the “New Alamo”

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



(Above) Soldiers with 2nd Plt., C Troop, 3rd Sqdn., 61st Cav. Regt., TF Destroyer, return to COP Bari Alai after accompanying an ANA patrol to overwatch a mission to Nishigam village, Kunar province, April 6. (Right Page) An Army helicopter checks the area near COP Bari Alai after firing air-to-ground missiles into a cave while responding to an extended complex attack by insurgents in Kunar province, April 10.

Anti-Afghan Forces call it “Sinful Base,” while a message painted above the doorway to the command post reads “Welcome to the New Alamo.”

This is COP Bari Alai.

Hostile sniper and automatic weapon fire is a normal part of life here, provided by an enemy who strains to dislodge ANA and ISAF from the mountaintop in Kunar province.

For example, in a 74-day period starting in February there were more than 50 recorded attacks against the base, Army officials said. The Soldiers who live here are well aware of how contested the base is.

“If you freeze up in combat, you’re either not ready to be a leader or you aren’t ready for a place like this,” said Spc. Shawn D. Hufford, of Evansville, Ind., the mortar NCO attached to 2nd Plt., C Troop, 3rd Sqdn., 61st Cav. Regt., TF Destroyer.

The base was established in the Ghazibad district March 2009 and manned by the ANA. It was named in honor of an ANA Soldier killed earlier that year.

It has been almost a year since a subsequent attack killed five Afghan Soldiers, five ISAF advisors and a civilian interpreter, causing a fire that leveled much of the post. Despite persistent efforts, the enemy has not been able to duplicate that act since.

The base – 3,000 feet above sea level – overlooks three valleys and at least 10 major villages, providing a view of the surrounding territory, according to Army 1st Lt. Richard R. Rowe, platoon leader for 2nd Plt.

“It’s all about terrain,” Rowe said. “It’s a pretty volatile stretch.”

This position helps provide protection for neighboring communities, the nearby district center and ANSF – as well as ISAF – during operations.

**“If you freeze up in combat, you’re either not ready to be a leader or you aren’t ready for a place like this.”**

*Spc. Shawn D. Hufford,  
2nd Plt., C Troop, 3rd Sqdn., 61st Cav. Regt., TF Destroyer.*







Army Pfc. Timothy D. Prescott, of Mineral Wells, Texas, a squad automatic weapon gunner with 2nd Plt., C Troop, 3rd Sqdn., 61st Cav. Regt., TF Destroyer, returns fire while responding to a complex attack against COP Bari Alai, Kunar province, April 10. ANA and ISAF fought off anti-Afghan forces throughout the afternoon of April 10. An estimated 30 Insurgents fired on a dismounted patrol near Nishigam village, wounding three, and attacked Bari Alai with small arms and heavy machine gun fire from the surrounding territory.

The installation's appearance of isolation is an illusion, as ANA at the post maintain contact with ANP who secure the communities below.

"We have a good partnership between the ANA and ANP," Rowe said. "Now that (the COP is) established, I can't imagine not having it."

Although there are taller mountains nearby, the post's position is high enough to protect the Soldiers and low enough to help protect the community, Rowe said.

This coverage is key to allowing the government breathing space to build their institutions and community cohesion in the area.

"That's why we're here," Rowe said. "We allow them to do that safely."

This, however, requires a lot of time and a lot of watching from the mountaintop.

For the Soldiers at Bari Alai, days and nights are parcelled out in constant guard shifts, work details and the single hot meal served each afternoon.

Flies are constant companions to everybody on base. Traps help, but a person can kill two dozen flies in an area and not see a difference an hour later.

Compared to the previous year, the living condi-

tions have improved, said Spc. Colin T. McTamaney, of Pittsburgh. Previously, Soldiers stayed in an area covered only by dirt-filled Hesco barriers and a tarp. Now they have huts to sleep in.

"It's not that bad," McTamaney, a team leader, said of the Spartan environment. "You pretty much get used to it."

Improvements are a constant process at Bari Alai. They range from Army engineers building overhead cover to the Soldiers who live there filling protective barriers. Structures and upgrades can literally appear overnight as a result of their work.

Stone walls and overhead cover give much of the base the atmosphere of a true fortress, including tunnel-like passageways lined by boxes of food rations and stacks of bottled water.

Army platoons with TF Destroyer have rotated through the post every four months or so, while many of the attached personnel have been there longer.

While boredom can sometimes be more common than enemy fire here, Soldiers learn to deal with both. Conversations roam through all manner of topics – relationships, food, family, life at home, movies, weapons and the absurd.

Spc. Shawn D. Hufford, who has been stationed at Bari Alai for 11 months, said during one three-day stretch in January all personnel were required to stay full-time in their battle positions and in their protective gear.

Soldiers spent the time asking each other "would you rather" questions.

For instance, would you rather be bitten in the stomach by a bulldog or have a bee sting your eye? It was a game of worst cases that only escalated with dark humor as the time stretched on without contact.

"If you can't laugh about it, you aren't going to be able to handle it," Hufford said.

Soldiers at Bari Alai normally answer the whistle of missed enemy shots with the rapid percussion of .50 caliber machine guns and automatic grenade launchers. Then come the massive hammer blows of 120mm mortar shells.

This can be followed by the thunder of 155mm artillery support from FOB Bostick or 2,000-pound bombs that shake the mountainside called in by Bari Ali's Air Force Tactical Air Control Party.

Night time usually brings the more mundane sounds of construction and digging. Soldiers enjoy quiet when they can.

"It's the frontier of battle," Army Sgt. Rory K. Davis, of La Puente, Calif., said. "There are two moods up here. Either your adrenaline is pumping or you're really tired."

Davis, who serves as both the cook and an assistant

gunner in the mortar pit, said everyone here concentrates on two goals – destroying the enemy and looking out for their fellow Soldiers. He said it does not matter what your military specialty is.

"You better stick to your guns and be ready," Davis said.

Americans are not the only ones prepared for battle. The Afghan troops with Weapons Co., 1st Kandak, are just as quick to grab their weapons when trouble starts.

"They don't shy away from a fight," Rowe said.


ANA 1st Lt. Mohammad Hazim, the kandak commander, said through a translator that he appreciated the help ISAF provide the area.

He said his men stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the U.S. Soldiers.

"If we didn't have an [outpost] here, the enemy could easily move through the area," Hazim said. "If we were not here, we're pretty sure the enemy would use this against the community and against the government."

When insurgents are not attacking the base from hidden positions, they attempt to smear the reputation of Bari Alai, telling locals the Soldiers are jackals.

Soldiers shrug off the enemy name-calling and continue to keep watch.

"[They say] there's no way the Americans have families, because no human being can go a year without seeing their families," Spc. Josh L. Hastings of Brandon, Fla., said. "I think it's a testament of how much we sacrifice." 



Spc. Brandon L. Mullins, of South Boston, Va., a squad-designated marksman with 2nd Plt., C Troop, 3rd Sqdn., 61st Cav. Regt., TF Destroyer, returns fire while responding to a complex attack against COP Bari Alai, April 10. ANA and ISAF fought off insurgents throughout the afternoon of April 10 in Kunar province.



# The Life of Bees

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes, TF Wolverine PAO



(Above) Local women receive training April 6 about how to manage bee hives for the Kapisa Honeybee Project that the Kentucky Agricultural Development Team, attached to the 86th Inf. BCT facilitates. The project involves supplying women in Kapisa with bee-hives and training on how to manage the hives so that they can harvest and sell the honey. (Bottom right) Pictured are the active honeybee hives at the office of the Kapisa Director of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock compound.

Afghan women are no strangers to the role of worker bee, but with the help of the TF Wolverine's Kentucky Agricultural Development Team, they are now putting bees to work for them.

The Kapisa Honeybee Project teaches local women how to manage, care for, and harvest the honey from beehives.

The project began humbly in 2009 when the Nebraska ADT, the Kentucky ADT's predecessors, gave

four beehives each to 25 women of Kapisa along with training on how to cultivate the hives.

Troops in the Kentucky ADT have been working to maintain and expand the program.

On April 1, troops from the Kentucky ADT paid a visit to key leaders to discuss how to proceed now that spring, the peak honey season, is upon them.

Army Sgt. Jo Ashley, the NCOIC of aiding the women with the proj-

ect, said the program is helping to unite Afghans with their government.

"The women are recognizing problems in the hives and know to contact the Director of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock office for assistance," she said.

"This is our biggest accomplishment with the project, as we are trying to help the people trust that the government will assist them. The beneficiaries (or hive manag-

**"I have a plan to help 1,000 women on this project."**

**Suhaila Kohistani, Kapisa province Director of Women's Affairs**

ers) are contacting the DAIL and the Director Of Women's Affairs offices with issues in agriculture, this indicates they are seeing they need to rely on their government."

The project is eventually supposed to be self-sustaining. The benefactors, or hive managers, will manage their four hives for three years, then split them to increase production and the number of hives. At the end of three years, they expect double the amount of hives and return the original four hives to the DAIL. The original four hives will then be redistributed to 25 other women, starting the process all over.

In addition to the materials that the ADT provides, they also provide training, which the women then disseminate to other women. So, much like the hives themselves, the project scope is constantly expanding.

"I have a plan to help 1,000 women on this project," said the director of women's affairs for Kapisa, Suhaila Kohistani, through the aid of an interpreter. Kohistani has been involved with the project since its inception in 2009.

"I have 10 to 15 women applying for this project each day," added Kohistani during a telephone interview she conducted while three applicants stood waiting in her office.

One bee hive can produce up to six pounds of honey per year, and in local markets it is selling for 400 to

1,000 Afghanis per kilo, or about \$6.60 to \$21.70. One bee hive is worth about \$39.60 per year.

To the average American this might not seem like a lot. But for the average Afghan household, whose annual income is about \$400 according to the UN, this almost amounts to a 10 percent raise. However, in addition to the immediate financial benefits the Kapisa Honeybee Project also brings more long-term benefits. Bees can pollinate up to a three-mile radius from their hive, so one woman with four hives can have a significant impact on the agriculture on a larger scale.

"The women are all excited about the project and their involvement," said Ashley. "From the DOWA to the children of the beneficiaries, all have gained knowledge that not only helps them manage their own hives, but also allows them to teach others. They know they have a monumental role in Afghanistan's agriculture."

The project allows the women to play a pivotal role in their families, communities and ecosystem, but its impact doesn't end there.

The women also gain a new sense of independence through economic development, according to Army Maj. Jim Rush, a member of the ADT

Ashley agreed, and stressed the social significance of the project.

"The women are rebuilding the self-confidence that was lost in the 30 years of war, tearing their families and social status to pieces," she said. "With projects such as this the women are working their way back up via the country's agriculture foundation to show they too are instrumental in the reconstruction of a war-torn country."

With the help of ADT Soldiers, the women of Kapisa are using the project to harness the potential of these minute workers to make an enormous impact on their future, changing their role from worker bee to queen bee.





# Goodwill Across Afghanistan:



A village resident greets Air Force Staff Sgt. Ndeye Silla, 577th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Sqdn. Base Emergency Engineering Force, known as Prime BEEF, during an Operation Care humanitarian aid mission at Bagram Airfield. Silla is deployed from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and is a native of Dakar, Senegal.

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Richard Williams  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

# ISAF and ANSF Reach Out

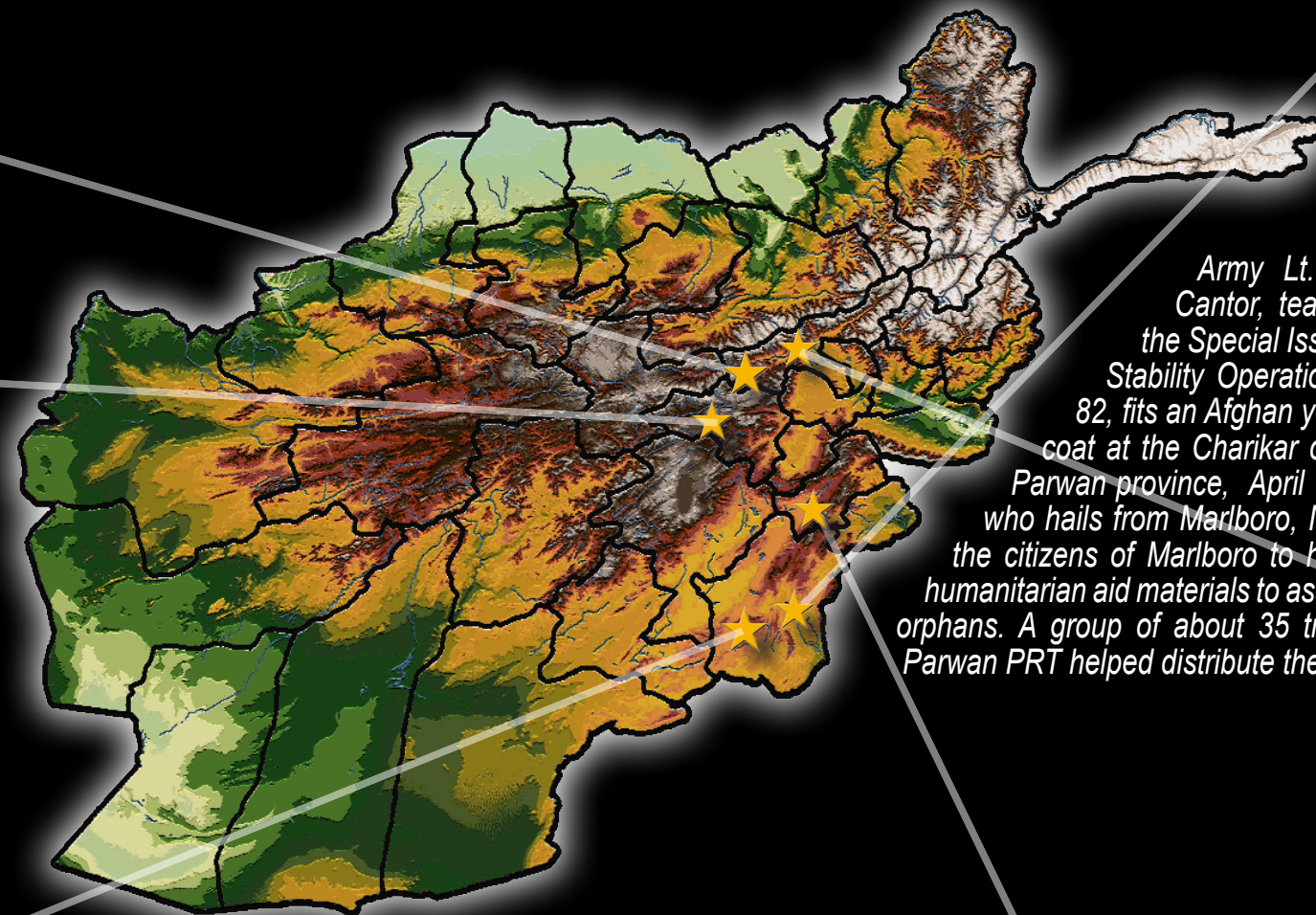
Army Sgt. Terrance Ray reads a book to local children while on a mission in Orgun, Paktika province, April 11. Ray, a native of Bennettsville, S.C., is a member of the security force element for the Paktika PRT's Orgun detachment. The PRT is a joint task force whose mission is to help legitimize the government of Afghanistan through development, governance and agricultural initiatives. Ray is deployed from Btry. B, 1st Bn., 178th FA Bde., S.C. National Guard.



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester,  
CJTF 82 PAO



The headmaster of the Heydar Kheyl village primary school passes out hand-crank radios to students from the back of a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle in Sayed-Abad District, Wardak province, March 26. Radios are one of the most popular items given to locals by the U.S. forces.



Army Lt. Col. Jeff Cantor, team chief of the Special Issues Team, Stability Operations, CJTF-82, fits an Afghan youth with a coat at the Charikar orphanage, Parwan province, April 11. Cantor, who hails from Marlboro, N.J., asked the citizens of Marlboro to help collect humanitarian aid materials to assist Afghan orphans. A group of about 35 troops from Parwan PRT helped distribute the materials.



Photo by Army Sgt. Spencer Case  
304th PAD



Photo by Airman 1st Class Laura Goodgame,  
RC-E/PAA Advisory Team

Children go through a line to pick up school supplies handed out by the ANA during a civil assistance mission along the Khost-Gardez Pass, March 29. The ANA organized the mission with the aid of coalition forces, coordinated the movement of supplies and controlled the mission's security element while passing out supplies to villagers.

Army Sgt. Stacy Hector, HHC, 3rd Bde., STB, 101st Airborne Div., spends time with a group of female students at the Road-e-Ahmad High School in Qadar Khail village, Paktya province, during a shura and humanitarian aid distribution, which included food, clothing and other items April 15. The event was the battalion's second humanitarian aid distribution at the school in three days.



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Jimmy Norris,  
TF Rakkasani PAO



# UNIT SPOTLIGHT

## 453RD INLAND CARGO TRANSFER COMPANY

### MISSION

The troops of 453rd Inland Cargo Transfer Co. provide general cargo transfer in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. In a nutshell, when units deploy or redeploy, their cargo and containers come through a yard at Bagram Airfield where 453rd troops process and stage it for its follow-on destination. The destination could be stateside, or anywhere in RC East. Soldiers of the 453rd can also be found hard at work at seven other installations: Fenty, Shurana, Salerno, Phoenix, Shank, Spann and Marmal.

### HISTORY

The 453rd is an Army Reserve company based out of Texas. The unit's headquarters is in Houston and there is also a detachment in Corpus Christie, Texas. The company first deployed from October 2003 to October 2004 to Bagram Airfield and Kandahar. They deployed to Camp Anaconda, Iraq from April 2004 to April 2005 and again to Afghanistan from February 2007 to March 2008. Their current deployment began September 2009. The troops' missions have varied somewhat due to battlefield contingencies. The 453rd troops are currently spread across more installations than during any previous deployment in order to provide support for troops on the edges of the battle space. The deployment to Iraq was a bit different as the company was on the road conducting convoy operations.

### WHY WE ARE BETTER THAN THE REST

With fewer than 100 Soldiers, the 453rd has been able to facilitate RSOI command and control over a battle space spanning more than 200 square miles, consisting of eight separate locations. More than 20 U.S. and ISAF bases benefited from the expertise of this company. Throughout the current deployment, support to customer units totaled more than 12,360, 463-L pallets handled, 12,872 connex containers processed, 1,270 quad-cons, 3,560 tri-cons, 35,365 passengers manifested, 2,232 units of blood processed for shipment, 2,440 tons of munitions handled, 2,410 tons of mail processed, more than 26,000 miscellaneous pieces of stock moved with internal FOB requests and more than 2 million gallons of fuel escorted.



453rd Inland Cargo Transfer Co., Crane Naval Base, Ind. Sept. 2009.

FREEDOM WATCH, MAY 2010

# Command Partnership

## U.S., Afghan Forces Find Success in Shared Command Center

Story and photo by Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th PAD

Partnership and independence may seem like conflicting goals, but the Combined Action Tactical Operations Center at Camp Parsa, Khost province shows they can be complementary.

The Camp Parsa CATOC is a brigade-level command facility that allows ANA and ISAF to integrate all stages of military operations from planning to execution. Directives in flowing Pashto script and blocky English are passed from hand to hand. At the CATOC no one is ever far from his or her counterpart.

"Everything they know we know instantly. Everything we know, they know instantly," said Lt. Col. Steve Lutsky, the commander of the 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav. Regt. and the CATOC counterpart of ANA Brig. Gen. Esrar Quds, "it's information sharing at the highest level."

The CATOC, which came into existence in November under 1st Sqdn., 40th Cav. Regt., is now under the command of 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav. Regt., and the ANA 1st Bde., 203rd Corps.

Although the ANA are now working more closely with ISAF than before, brigade-level leadership on both sides said the CATOC has helped foster ANA self-sufficiency. A disruption operation based out of Borgay village, March 8, 9 and 10 is evidence that the CATOC has helped increase Afghan self-sufficiency, Lutsky said.

The operation was planned and conducted with only one platoon outside support, 2nd Plt., A Troop, 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav. Regt., who were needed mainly to coordinate air support.

ANA Brig. Gen. Zaheer Wardak, the executive officer for 1st Bde. and counterpart to Army Maj. Timothy P. Payment, the executive officer for the 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav. Regt., said he has seen an enormous amount of progress since the CATOC came into being.

"If we were working before we were making plans on maps," he said through the aid of an interpreter, "but the coalition forces were not in the picture and we had a lot of casualties and mistakes because coalition forces were not in the picture."

Wardak said he could think of at least five advantages that the CATOC has brought to 1st Bde., the first being the integrated intelligence that is conveyed to both parties during a morning battle update briefing.

"It's a very strong cooperation we have with coali-



ANA 1st Sgt. Emdad Ullah, an intelligence and reconnaissance NCO for HHC., 1st Bde., flips through some intelligence reports prior to a briefing at the Combined Action Tactical Operation Center, at Camp Parsa, Khost province, March 25.

tion forces," he said, "which is why we beat the enemy in their operations every time."

Another advantage of that strong cooperation is with civil relations. With a single unified party, the ANA is better able to negotiate with tribal elders. Since the CATOC was established, more than 20 shuras were held and significant progress has been made on issues like education, he said.

Yet another advantage of the CATOC is that it allows the ANA to use computer technology that the Army has taken for granted. Wardak said the simple abilities to print and copy memos has been invaluable to 1st Bde.

Last year, Nowruz, the new year on the Persian calendar, was met with 15 explosions. Wardak credits the CATOC for the lack of attacks this year.

"From the blessing of the CATOC we had no IED attacks, no rocket attacks, no incoming attacks," he said.

Lutsky said of the CATOC, "I think it's building capacity with the ANA because since we eat, sleep and fight together. The (standard operating procedures) we've developed together are starting to be emulated by the ANA."

Army Sgt. Maj. James R. Lemon III, brigade operations sergeant major at the CATOC, added, "It's rewarding when you coach. You share your ways of doing things and you see both sides grow. Ultimately you become a mentor to them and that's rewarding."



# STORY

## Snapshots

### ISAF Commander visits Tagab Valley



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

**Army Gen. Stanley McCrystal, ISAF commander, is welcomed by French Army Brig. Gen. Marcus Druart, TF La Fayette commander, and ANA Maj. Doud, commander of 4th Kandak, 3rd Bde., 203rd Corps, to COP 42 in Tagab valley, Kapisa province, March 30. While in the valley, McCrystal, the ANA and TF La Fayette leadership visited the village of Ghazik Han Khel, to meet with brigade members and leaders of a local school.**

### U.S., Afghan Loadmasters Hit the Mark

**Air Force Master Sgt. Chris Ringland, 438th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group standards and evaluation loadmaster, and ANA Air Corps Master Sgt. Sheer Aqa Karimi, a C-27A loadmaster, congratulate each other after successfully unloading cargo to Camp Bastion, March 28. Karimi, the first Afghan C-27 loadmaster was evaluated by Ringland during the almost two-hour mission to deliver more than 2,400 pounds of weapons and supplies to ANP.**



Photo by Army Pfc. Michael Sword, TF Bayonet PAO

### Fallen Polish President, Leaders Mourned



Photo by Tech. Sgt. JT Nay III, TF White Eagle PAO

**Personnel stationed at FOB Ghazni kneel during a memorial service April 10 at FOB Ghazni. The service honored Lech Kaczynski, Polish president, his wife and some of their country's top military and civilian leaders who died in a plane crash April 10.**



# Bringing the Fight Anywhere, Anytime



Photo by Army 1st Lt. R.J. Peek  
3rd Bn., 187th Inf. Regt.

*Army Staff Sgt. Erik Padilla, 3rd Bn., 187th Inf. Regt. scans the area near the village of Jakarna as members of his unit exit CH-47 Chinooks during a joint air assault operation, April 13. "The AUP and NDS have demonstrated today that the [insurgents] can be hit anywhere and anytime," said A Co. commander, Army Capt. Josh Powers. "Even in the mountains, insurgents are not safe from the justice brought by Afghan National Security Forces."*

# Medical Care Outreach



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

*Local Afghans line up for free medical treatment, Tara Village, Paktya province, April 14. Coalition forces provided a medical outreach to a village that had no doctor. The outreach was able to provide more than 500 immunizations, treated 343 patients, and handed out 979 prescriptions.*

# Khost PRT Patrols Khost City



Photo by Senior Airman Julianne M. Showalter  
Khost PRT PAO

*Army Staff Sgt. James Miller, Khost PRT, hands out candy to children during a presence patrol through downtown Khost City, March 30.*

# Soldiers Get in Touch With Locals

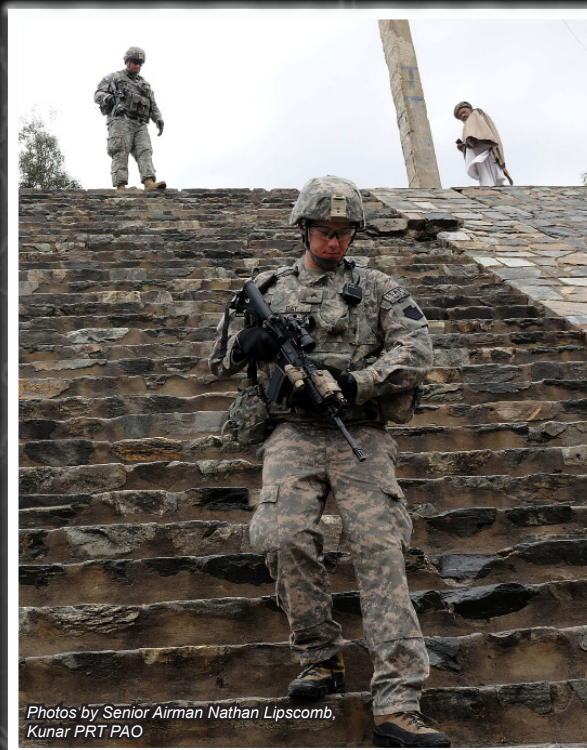


Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes,  
TF Wolverine PAO

*Army Sgt. John Young, an infantryman with the HHC, 86th Infantry BCT, greets a child in a local bazaar during a patrol in the village of Qal'eh ye Golay, Parwan province, April 4.*



## On Patrol in Asadabad



Photos by Senior Airman Nathan Lipscomb,  
Kunar PRT PAO



Army Cpl. Stanley Piecuch (above), and Army Cpl. Levi Day (left), members of the Kunar PRT Security Forces, inspect vehicles and pathways in the city of Asadabad, Kunar province, during a presence patrol, March 29.

## ISAF, ANA Supporting Local Schools



Photo by Senior Airman Kenny Holston,  
509th Bomb Wing PAO

A young Afghan boy reads from a chalk board for his teacher during class, March 31, Morgan Kacha village, Kandahar province. Army and ANA Soldiers visited the village to deliver school supplies to children and conduct counterinsurgency operations.

## CST Connects with Servicemembers

Air Force Maj. Kim Floyd (left), a psychologist with the 92nd Medical Group of Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash., speaks with a soldier at FOB Lightning. Floyd, operates out of Camp Goode in Paktya province and regularly travels to eight bases in the province to get to know servicemembers.

"A lot of people think combat stress is related strictly to combat, when in fact it's stress related to being deployed, whether it's issues on the home front, sleep difficulties, leadership frustrations, or peer relationships and interactions," said Floyd.



Photo by Army Sgt. Andrew Reagan,  
304th PAD

## Women ANP Officers on Target

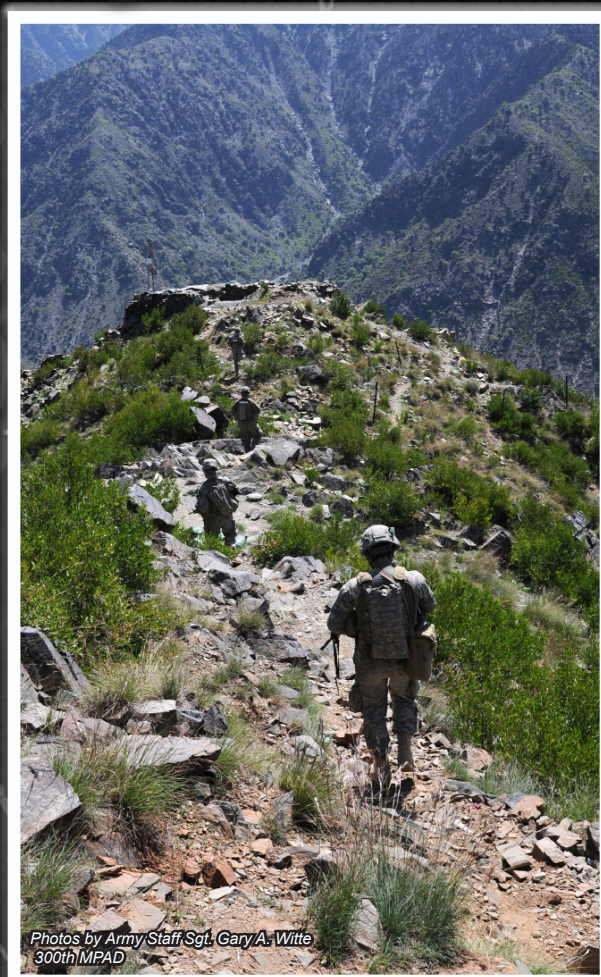
ANP women load, fire and check their targets at the AK-47 rifle tactical training program portion of the basic training course at Kabul Military Training Center, April 13. During the eight-week course, trainees learn police-specifics such as penal and traffic codes, use of force, and IED detection. The course also covers the Afghan constitution, human rights, weapons and tactical training.



Photos by Air Force Staff Sgt. Sarah Brown,  
NTM-AV/CSTC-AFAO



## Afghan Patrol Protects Meeting at Village



Photos by Army Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte  
300th MPAD



*Soldiers with 2nd Plt., Troop C, 3rd Sqdn., 61st Cav. Regt., TF Destroyer, accompany an ANA foot patrol to provide security to the Nishigam village in Kunar province, April 6. The ANA-led mission involved meeting with villagers at important community gathering places, such as the school and local bazaar. The over watch position near COP Bari Alai is used to prevent insurgents from attacking ANSF as they work with residents.*

## Khost PRT Checking the Roads

*Navy Lt. j.g. Anthony Delgadillo and Master Chief Petty Officer Glenn Niematalo, Khost PRT engineers, talk to the construction site engineer about some of the villager's concerns, April 5. The road construction must not affect irrigation or integrity of the buildings that run alongside it.*



Photo by Senior Airman Julianne M. Showalter  
Khost PRT/PAO

## Boy Scouts of Afghanistan

*Spe. Carvin Tam, of Philadelphia, a civil affairs team member for the Nangarhar PRT, shows Afghan Boy Scouts how to tie different types of knots outside FOB Finley Shields, Nangarhar province, April 10. Tam volunteers to mentor the Afghan Scouts during their weekly meetings.*



Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Bill Gomez  
Nangarhar PRT/PAO

## Basic Airborne Refresher in Afghanistan



Photo by Army Sgt. Troy P. Johnson  
304th PAB

*Paratroopers of the DSTB, 82nd Airborne Div. refresh their skills during a basic airborne refresher course held at Bagram Airfield, April 2 - 10. The class was held in preparation for the paratroopers' upcoming return to Fort Bragg, N.C. After being deployed for a year and no jumps for more than six months, paratroopers are required to refresh their skills before resuming their airborne operation responsibilities.*



## Taking Census in Laghman Province



*Army Sgt. Jeremiah J. Washington, of St. Louis, a psychological operations specialist with the 318th Psychological Operations Co., TF Iron Grays, writes down information pertaining to shop owners in the city of Mehtar Lam, Laghman province, March 25. The unit was conducting a census of shop owners operating in the city.*

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

## Inaugural Class Graduates NCO Course



*An ANA Soldier from the 4th Kandak, 201st Corps proudly lifts his diploma after graduating from the first Combined Action NCO Academy in Logar province, April 8.*

*"It is understood in militaries around the globe that non-commissioned officers are the backbone of an army. The fact that TF Repel and the 4th Kandak are taking the time to establish a non-commissioned officer education system, speaks volumes of the dedication these commands have to the success of our partnership," said Army 1st Sgt. Richard Carullo, A Co. 173rd BSB.*

Photo by Spc. Daniel Haun, TF Bayonet PAO

## Basic Training in a Combat Zone



*ANA Staff Sgt. Mahamat Parwiz, a drill instructor for the Training Kandak, 1st Bde. at Camp Parsa, Khost province, corrects a recruit during drill and ceremony training, March 27. Of the six ANA basic training locations in Afghanistan, Camp Parsa is unique in that it is the only major basic training center to exist in a location where the war rages at close proximity, said ANA Lt. Col. Abdul Ahmed, the executive officer for the Training Kandak*

Photo by Army Sgt. Spencer Case, 304th PAD

# Get the rest of the story

*CJTF82.COM*



# WARRIOR

## Profile

Story by Air Force 2nd Lt. Mark Lazane, Paktika PRT PAO

Spc. Joseph Carter, an infantryman and scout with the 4th Bn., 189th Inf. Bde. currently deployed with the 1st Bn., 178th FA Bde., South Carolina National Guard, had no real thoughts of joining the military until his best friend, Anthony Owens, enlisted and encouraged him to join the Army.

"Anthony came home right after basic training and talked about how great the Army was," said Carter.

"I was so impressed that before he left town, he took me down to the recruiting station and encouraged me to enlist. Besides my dad, who told me to do what I felt was right, no one else in my family wanted me to join the Army. But I knew it was the right thing to do."

The Newport News, Va., native, enlisted as an infantryman just like his best friend and was jetted off to basic training at Fort Benning, Ga., within weeks.

While Carter was in basic training, Owens received deployment orders to Iraq.

Upon graduation from basic training, Carter was sent back home to await advanced individual training with high hopes of joining his best friend on the battlefield, serving the country they loved.

Sadly, Carter's hopes would be dashed, as Owens' first deployment to Iraq would also be his last.

South of Baghdad, Iraq, Feb. 1, 2006., Owens' convoy was attacked with small arms fire and he was killed.

"I was at work when his family called me and told me that Anthony had died," said Carter. "It surprises you because you never expect that to happen. You think about all the Soldiers who deploy and come home without a problem, you just don't think that one won't. His death had a major effect on me and my family."

To honor his friend's life, Carter wanted to dedicate his young military career to his fallen friend, a gesture that he felt would be the highest honor he could personally bestow.

But just as Carter's renewed focus for military service was on track, it went up in smoke—literally.

One day, Carter was burning trash in his backyard and a hairspray can exploded in front of his face.

In a flash, Carter went from soon to be fighting for his country to fighting for his own life. Carter suffered burns to 85 percent of his face and hands, and received endless treatments of cadaver and pig skin replacements.

But Carter continued fighting for his recovery.

Upon his first medical checkup after about a month of recovery, he had exceeded doctors' expectations and was 90 percent healed, he said.

"The medical folks were completely surprised by how much I had healed in such a short time," Carter said. "They had already reserved me a bed there in anticipation of further in-patient treatment. They thought for sure they were going to check me back in. However, they said at the first appointment that I had healed well enough to not have to go back for any checkups."

With his speedy recovery, Carter had one thing on his mind and was intent on continuing with his decision to enlist in the Army.

"I thought my chances of serving in the Army after my accident were slim-to-none," Carter said. "But I had to give it a shot, and not just because of what happened to Anthony."

"It's unreal. You meet someone on a deployment and you feel like you've known them your whole life. You build a camaraderie that you can't get anywhere else. I really wanted to keep both relationships for as long as I could."

Carter healed enough to pass the Army physical, and the Army took him back.

Because so much time had elapsed between Carter's military schools, the Army asked Carter to go through basic training again and serve in the National Guard

**"The hair on the top of my head won't grow back, unless I want to pay for surgery, so that kind of sucks."**

**Spc. Joseph Carter,  
1st Bn, 178th FA Bde., Infantryman**

to ensure he had the mental, physical and emotional stamina to still be a Soldier.

True to his nature, Carter accepted his new assignment with determination.

"Basic training the second time was a little easier because I knew what to expect," said Carter.

Because Carter's commitment with the 4th Bn., 189th Inf. Bde, S.C. National Guard was almost up, he volunteered to augment another S.C. National Guard unit on their deployment to Afghanistan.

Today, Carter is a gunner inside his Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle, much the same person as he was a few years ago, except for some subtle changes.

"The hair on the top of my head won't grow back, unless I want to pay for surgery, so that kind of sucks," Carter said.

"I figure, you only live once, so you might as well set yourself on fire," Carter joked. "I have no regrets whatsoever in my life. I mean, I'm still here to talk about it. That's all I can ask for."

Through all the turmoil Carter has experienced, his promise to honor his friend's legacy has not been forgotten. To remind himself why he is doing what he doing, a picture of Owens is kept in his wallet and it accompanies him wherever he goes.

"If I could talk to him right now, I hope he'd tell me that he's proud of me and my service, because I'd definitely tell the same to him," Carter said.

Spc. Joseph Carter holds a photo of his best friend, Anthony Owens, who was killed in combat south of Baghdad, Feb. 1, 2006. A Newport News, Va., native, Carter is now deployed as part of the Paktika PRT. Carter enlisted in the Army to serve his country and honor the life of his friend. Carter now carries a photo of his fallen friend in his wallet on every mission.

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



# SAFETY WATCH *Malaria*

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

There were 47 reported cases of Malaria in RC-E alone in 2009. Every case was due to failure to take anti-malaria medication. USAFOR-A Policy states every soldier in Afghanistan must take their anti-malarial medication year round as directed.

Malaria is a serious mosquito-borne illness that is caused by a microscopic parasite which infects red blood cells.

There are four species of malaria parasites that can affect humans. The most common form in Afghanistan is *P. vivax*. A more severe form, *P. falciparum*, which occurs in approximately ten percent of the cases in Afghanistan, can be fatal.

Symptoms of malaria include, fever, shaking chills, sweats, headache, muscle aches and exhaustion. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also occur. Anemia and jaundice (yellow coloring of skin and eyes) can occur. Infection with *P. falciparum* can lead to kidney failure, seizures, coma and death if not promptly treated.

Malaria parasites are spread by the bites of infected female mosquitoes (sp. *Anopheles*). These mosquitoes are night-time biters, most active between the hours of dusk and dawn. Malaria is not spread through person to person contact.

Typically symptoms begin 10 days to

four weeks following the bite of an infected mosquito, but the range can vary from seven days more than a year. It is diagnosed based on symptoms and blood tests.

There is no vaccine against malaria, but it can be prevented. Oral antibiotics such as Doxycycline and Mefloquine are effective at preventing infection.

All military personnel in Afghanistan are required to take their anti-malarial medications year round as prescribed. This includes taking anti-malarial medications during R&R and post deployment as prescribed. There have been confirmed cases of malaria during R&R due to soldiers not taking their medications as prescribed.

The most important action Soldiers can take is to prevent insect bites to the greatest extent possible. Servicemembers should use the DoD Insect Repellent System, which includes using DEET on exposed areas of skin; proper wear of the uniform; and treating uniforms with permethrin.

Unfortunately we can't treat the current FRACU's because they do not absorb permethrin well. But, the next generation of FRACU and the new Multicams will both be factory-treated with Permethrin. Both new uniforms should arrive in Afghanistan this summer. 🌐



**All military personnel in Afghanistan are required to take their anti-malarial medications year round as prescribed.**

# STRONG FOOD: Fighting Against Malnutrition

*Story and photo by Army Staff Sgt. Donald L. Reeves, 300th MPAD*

In the country with one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world, U.S. military and civilians are teaming with local government officials to combat malnutrition and save the lives of children.

On March 28, members of Panjshir PRT delivered a shipment of ingredients to make a concoction dubbed, "Strong Food" to Charmaghzak Basic Health Clinic in the Dara district of Panjshir province.

According to Air Force Capt. Michael Calnicean, a physician's assistant with the Panjshir PRT, the delivery of almonds, sugar, sunflower oil, soy flour and multi-vitamin enriched milk will be mixed together to form a low cost nutritious food with a long shelf-life.

Figures from UNICEF place the average lifespan for an Afghan at 44 to 45 years old. According to the UNICEF Web site, one in four Afghan children doesn't live past the age of five and more than half the children in the country are malnourished.

Calnicean points to Strong Food as a way to help solve the medical crisis affecting Afghanistan. Strong Food is a medicinal product that is appealing to children.

Calnicean describes the mixture as "kind of like cookie dough." The amount needed is based upon the height and weight of the individual, added Calnicean.

The mixture was originally formulated by a PRT in another province, as malnutrition in Afghanistan is widespread.

Currently, Strong Food is only distributed at two clinics in the Panjshir province. Dr. Samad Karim, Line Director of Public Health for Panjshir Province, is looking to expand distribution of the product.

"Dr. Karim is looking at ways of getting Strong Food out to all the clinics in the district, including two mobile clinics," said Calnicean.

One way to increase distribution according to U.S. Agency for International Development Field Program Officer Elizabeth Smithwick, is for the Panjshir PRT to train women to manage Strong Food through a program called Strong Women.

Smithwick said the Strong Women program will help distribution in many ways.

"One is that it employs women," said Smithwick. "It will employ three women per clinic to mix it, distribute, administer, keep the records and everything else," Smithwick said. "Hopefully, by doing this, it expands it throughout the province, all seven districts."



*Dr. Amed Abdullah and helper unload supplies at the Charmaghzak Clinic, in Panjshir province. The stores of almonds, sugar, sunflower oil, soy flour and multi-vitamin enriched milk are mixed together to make a nutritional supplement called "Strong Food" used to fight malnutrition in Afghanistan. Abdullah said most of the patients he sees are in some way affected by poor nutrition.*

Another advantage is that it will free up clinic personnel to handle the normal case load of an all-purpose clinic in Afghanistan.

"It will help reduce the strain on the clinic. On the days that they do Strong Food, it's insane," said Smithwick. "They have difficulty addressing all the Strong Food needs as well as all the people who are regularly coming to the clinic." 🌐



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# PHOTOS

*From the Field*



**Army Maj. Beau Spafford of S.C. National Guard, Civilian Military Operations, 178th FA Bde., sits inside the Familihai Reshkhori School, Kabul, April 14. He is waiting for a meeting to begin with school officials to discuss a construction project.**



**101st Airborne Div., 1/187 Inf., D Co., 2nd Plt., TF Mustang, live fire training.**



**Texas flag flying in the Afghan sunset at FOB Ghazni, Ghazni province, April 4.**

**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:*

*ANA Commandos from the 1st Kandak, Command Bde. conduct an air-assault training mission at Camp Pol-e-Charki, Kabul province, Mar 30. The commandos were transported by the Afghan National Air Corps M-17 helicopters.*

*Army Sgt. Brent Powell, Gavin TAC*