

Rakkasan

A bi-monthly magazine for the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division

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Rakkasan is a bi-monthly magazine for the deployed Soldiers of Task Force Rakkasan.
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RAK 6 Remarks

To the Soldiers of Task Force Rakkasan,

It is past the half-way point in our deployment and I'm intensely proud of our Troopers' Herculean efforts across the board.

Normally at this point, based on my own experience, the relentless pace of combat would take a visible toll on the morale and discipline of a unit. I'm very proud to tell you that's not the case with our Rakkasan Troopers. In the most remote bases like Spera (War), Yaya Khel (Iron), Bori Tani (Solid), Narizah (Red Knight), Margah (Leader), and numerous other remote COPs that our great Assurgam Troopers live in and support, morale is truly at an all time high. In addition, discipline and standards remained stalwart.

I attribute this sense of duty and ethos of selfless service to our great Troopers and junior NCOs. Our junior NCOs have been carrying the burden of this war on their shoulders, not only for the last several months, but for years now. Every day when the sun comes up, our Sergeants are leading combat patrols under the most arduous combat conditions in the most complex environment. These twenty-something year old men control assets that ten years ago would only be pushed down to company commanders. They lead Shuras (tribal meetings) with tribal elders, conduct quality control of developmental projects, train Afghan security forces, and mentor district government leaders, while at the same time, killing bad guys.

As the Task Force Commander, I've had my down days in Afghanistan; however, when I think of our great Sergeants, I'm convinced that we can turn things around in Afghanistan. Our Soldiers have killed over 600 insurgents and captured over 250 other insurgents.

They have seized more weapons caches than any other unit in RC-east. Most importantly, they have also inculcated a trusting, respectful relationship with the ANSF and local populace. I'm in no way thinking that we can kill our way to success or bragging about numbers of enemy killed; however, the neutralization of insurgent networks has brought TF Rakkasan enough time and space so the people could make a choice.

I will tell you that the majority of Afghans do not want Taliban rule. With the space created, TF Rakkasan initiated hun-

dreds of developmental projects, civics training programs, and skills development training.

All the things we have executed collectively have already begun transforming the environment. In areas traditionally controlled by the enemy, Tribal Elders are beginning to come in droves to the District Shuras, so they could be part of the process. Although we still have an arduous road ahead, we are making great progress across the board.

Task Force Rakkasan has many big events coming up later in the summer and into the fall.

We'll be moving Iron Rakkasan into a new battlespace, helping out the Polish Brigade with their operations in another area. I'm confident our Iron troopers will make us proud and add a high level of professionalism and competence to the forces already there. September is also the month for elections.

Our primary job is to assist our Afghan partners ensure fair and secure national parliamentary elections. With all of the big moves and important events, we've been resourced with new members of the team at the Brigade staff. In addition to the new Soldiers we've welcomed into our ranks, we also have added two new members for our civilian-military board of directors. Mr. Greg Lawless, our new Department of State senior civilian representative comes to us from the U.S. Embassy in Cambodia where he served as a political-economic advisor. We also welcome Ms. Sue Jordan from the United States Agency for International Development, joining us for her second tour in Afghanistan.

Both Mr. Lawless and Ms. Jordan bring additional civilian "firepower" with them and we're fortunate to have them serving alongside us, lending their decades of expertise in building government capacity and developing infrastructure.

Being able to complete our mission means taking the time to recover – you owe it to yourself. While you're on mid-tour leave, take time to rest, recharge, and reconnect with your family and friends. Our mission is far from over; I'm asking for your continued vigilance as we move into the next five months of our tour.

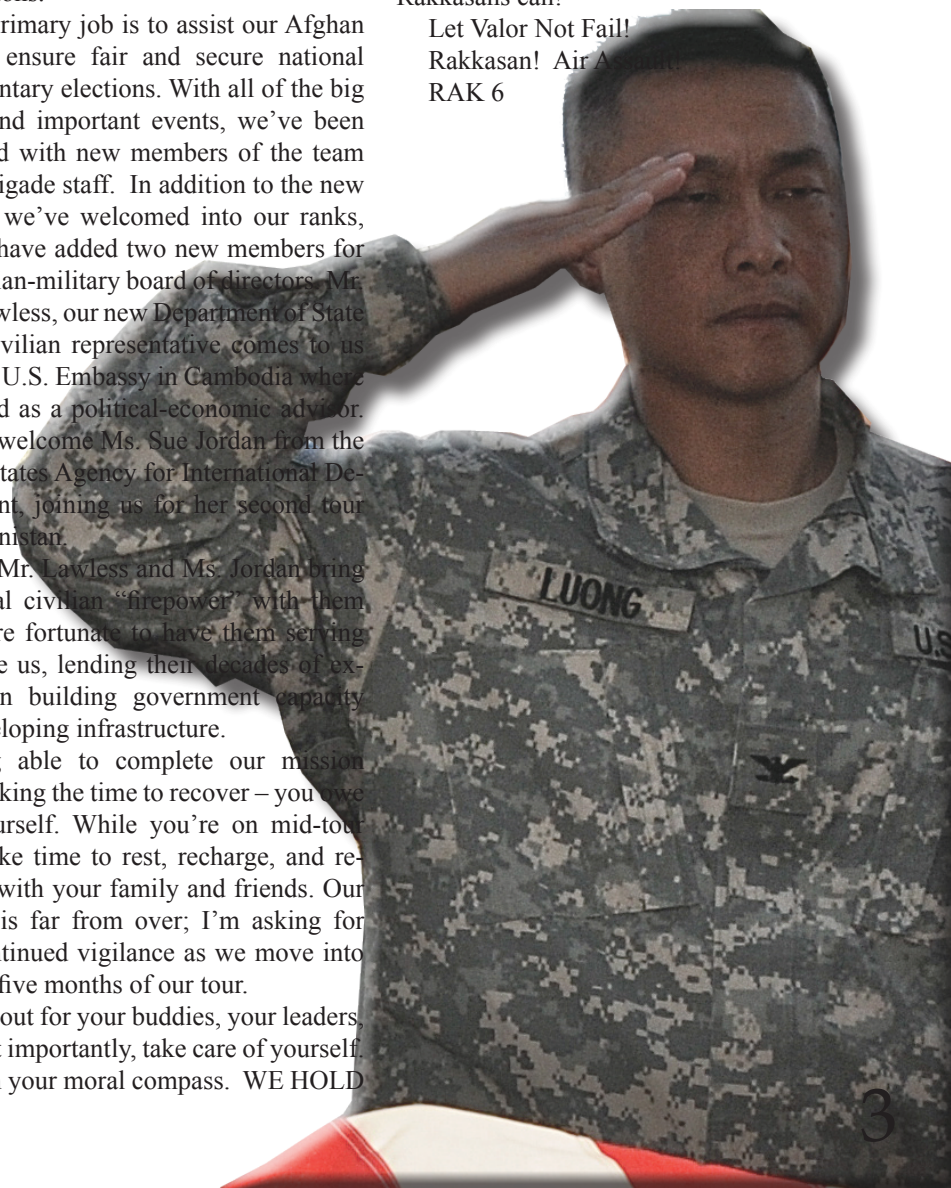
Look out for your buddies, your leaders, and most importantly, take care of yourself. Maintain your moral compass. WE HOLD

THE MORAL HIGHGROUND AND ARE BETTER THAN TALIBAN IN EVERY RESPECT.

I have empowered leaders at every level with the responsibility to make sure you have the right equipment, the right resources, and the right skills to succeed. Remember what I've told you: lead from the front; always do what's right; in the absence of orders, take charge; relentlessly pursue those who mean us harm, and most importantly, respect and protect the Afghan populace.

While you're remembering the days we've been here and the days still left to go, please take a moment to also remember our fallen heroes. Keep Staff Sgt. Weikert, Sgt. DeLuzio, Spec. Southworth, Spec. Oquin and their families in your hearts and prayers. They have made the ultimate sacrifice for our mission and we will not let them down. Continue to get after it as only Rakkasans can!

Let Valor Not Fail!
Rakkasan! Air Assault!
RAK 6





Chapel Chat

By Chaplain (Maj.) Tom Faichney

From time to time I like to read a verse from the Old Testament book of Proverbs for our Battle Update Brief. Each proverb is a stand alone gem that describes with clarity and practicality the application of God's law to life. The purpose of the book is stated simply at the beginning; for attaining wisdom. Wisdom is an attribute each Soldier requires up and down the chain of command. With our current environment of persistent conflict in the war on terror which demands so much of each member of the Rakkasans, soldier and family members alike, wisdom is needed in ever increasing measure.

In ages past, wisdom has been a highly sought after quality; but, perhaps not so much so in today's generation where quick and effortless gratification drives much of our decision making. Long term goals that require planning, sacrifice, effort and vision are sometimes jettisoned and the quick high becomes a replacement. This type of thinking is catastrophic and what James spoke of when describing the source of quarrels in the church. Yes, even the church wrestles with self-centered, short-term thinking that is not an expression of the wisdom that comes down from above.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

Solomon described wisdom as more precious than rubies, and to be sought after more than gold. In order to attain wisdom there needs to be a desperate hunger for wisdom - a passion that does not veer left or right and is not deterred by tough obstacles. The fool, Solomon says, thinks he is wise and enjoys his own words more than actively listening to truly learn.

Wisdom is not just knowledge, but rather the right application of knowledge. It is putting truth into action for the purpose of faithful obedience. It is the act of exemplifying the image of God that we bear through thought, word and deed. Wisdom is thus described by Solomon as starting with the fear of the Lord. When



(Left) Task Force Rakkasan Chaplain, Maj. Tom Faichney and chaplain's assistant Staff Sgt. Victor Will pose for a photo during battlefiled circulation in Khowst Province.

we declare on our currency; "In God we trust" we are affirming His right to define good and evil, right and wrong and to live according to His definitions.

The Chaplaincy was established July 29, 1775 to equip Soldiers with righteousness. Washington understood that the path to victory could only be achieved through a righteous army that acted with wisdom. Today's military leaders engaged in counterinsurgency warfare understand this same principle; that an ethical army acting to protect the population and reinforce respect and justice and compassion is what is required to establish permanent security. This requires patience and wisdom that runs counter to our inherent nature and it certainly runs counter to popular cultural thinking.

Rakkasans, pray that we would passionately cry out for wisdom as we are engaged in this fight and then pray that God would be pleased to provide.

The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

Halfway Through...

It's August and the Rakkasans have already finished more than half of their deployment in Afghanistan.

Soldiers from throughout the brigade continue to do great things.

The following pages provide a breakdown of accomplishments so far.

Keep in mind the Rakkasans never stop working to accomplish new missions.

The accomplishments listed at the time the magazine was put together and the accomplishments the battalions will have by the time you read this will not necessarily be the same.



Soldiers from the 3rd Special Troops Battalion conduct casualty training for members of the Afghan National Security Forces in early August at Forward Operating Base Gardez.



(Above) Soldiers from C Company, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, and soldiers from the Afghan National Army prepare to search Tut Village in the Andar District, Ghazni Province after reports of enemy activity August 8. Spc. (Right) Robert Whitlock, Troop A., 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, stands in the gunner's turret of a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle during a short halt in Khowst Province, July 29.



Sgt. 1st Class Amos Sward, Focus Tactical Force platoon sergeant, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, searches a room during an air assault operation in Bak, Khowst Province, July 7.



1-33 CAV

Missions Conducted: 711
Air Assaults: 21
Caches found: 10
IEDs cleared: 108
Insurgents captured: 34
Insurgents killed: 115
Rounds of indirect fire fired: 2938
Key Leader Engagements: 480
Development projects: 31

MVP - Pfc

During Operation War Ghar Tuffan Pfc. Jeremy Macleod, Shadow Company, 1st Battalion intense fire from 18-25 insurgents May 24, resulting in the death of nine enemy personnel. As a and was two feet off the ground when the northern ridgeline above Pickup Zone Quail erupted behind a rocky spur and engaged the northernmost machine gun position. Despite small arms fire behind which he had taken cover, exposing his body to enemy fire but enabling himself a clear line of sight in a hail of 7.62 rounds unleashed from Macleod's MK48. For more than 45 minutes Macleod fired for his fellow soldiers. Macleod's effective fire enabled his fellow Soldiers to move with and evacuate an injured soldier. With the injured Soldier successfully evacuated, Macleod maintained

3rd STB

Courses offered to ANSF - 13
Attended/Graduated
Focused Border Development Course: 427/382
Senior Leader's Course: 28/22
Tactical Leader's Course: 21/21
Medic Course: 31/31
Maintenance Course: 21/21
Intelligence Course: 51/48
Border Flag Meetings: 2
Key Leader Engagements: 18
Staff/Assisted Visits to Kandaks: 9
Gallons of fuel delivered: 72,700
Pieces of equipment fixed: 350

MVP - Sgt.

It is tough enduring the hardships of daily life in the remote areas of Afghanistan. In places on larger FOBs – are cherished in some locations due to their nonexistence. Adding a difficult many would not be able to meet. Not just any military intelligence professional would be able to the challenge. For Sgt. Anthony Pousson and his team, the difficulties encountered in this operation built his Low Level Voice Intercept team from the ground up, developing Tactics Techniques Training Center rotation before writing the LLVI standard operating procedure for the Rakka Khan at many of the remote outposts of Afghanistan, and a major key factor in a Commander's success in missions alongside the Soldiers he worked so hard to protect. On multiple occasions he provided enemy fire. His efforts to gather the best intelligence available and provide accurate analysis of equipment and overall knowledge of the battle space. Everyone hears about the "warrior first" rounded skill set encompasses this concept as he continues to pave the way for his Soldiers. His technical skills in a demanding combat environment is not only recognized by those that and dedication to duty he personifies. He doesn't do any of it for the recognition, but for the

3-187 INF

MVP - S

Missions Conducted: 2656
Air Assaults: 22
Caches found: 11
IEDs cleared: 156
Insurgents captured: 19
Insurgents killed: 41
Rounds of IDF fired: 1753
Shuras // KLEs: 1187
Development projects: 21

During combat operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Spc. Kyle Bear dispatched, Afghanistan May 21. An Afghan National Army vehicle conducting combined action with enemy initiated the intense complex attack with small arms fire, rocket propelled grenade fire, and triaging them. Bear, without regard for his own life, exposed himself to 270 degrees of and treating their injuries. For more than 30 minutes, he passed directly through heavy machine guns, he was forced to stop treating the Soldiers in order to return fire and resumed treating the wounded lay, Bear placed his own body over that of the most injured ANA Soldier to shield injured Soldiers, playing a critical role in suppressing the enemy until close air support arrived the ANA, acting bravely in the face of the enemy. As a result of his actions, five ANA Soldiers

626 BSB

MVP - Sgt. 1st C

ANSF trained: 91
Training courses offered: 2
Partnership projects started: 2
Convoys planned/conducted: 4
AMRs supported: 5,696
PAX moved: 9,007
LCLA drops conducted: 45
CDS drops conducted: 6
Fuel delivered: 5 million gallons
Supplies delivered: 8 million lbs.
Pieces of equipment fixed: 742

On July 3, during a 27-hour Combat Logistic Patrol, an improvised explosive device struck were temporarily knocked out due to the blast. Walton went on to treat another Soldier who had to set up helicopter landing zone, the convoy began receiving small arms fire. Walton's gun After trying repeatedly, the gunner could not clear the weapon. At this point, with rounds flying in un-jamming the MK19. Unjamming this weapon allowed the gunner to engage the enemy

1-187 INF

MVP - Pfc

Missions conducted, 78
Combined patrols, 533
Air Assaults, 27
Caches found, 16
IEDs cleared, 41
UXOs found, 37
IDF rounds fired, 3560
Key Leader Engagements, 517
Development Projects, 24

Pfc. Chris Turley performed far beyond the standard as a member of 1st Battalion, 187 Infantry his peers through his initiative and intense drive to see every mission accomplished. During position, five RPG rounds struck his immediate vicinity causing a deep laceration in his leg to suppress the enemy.

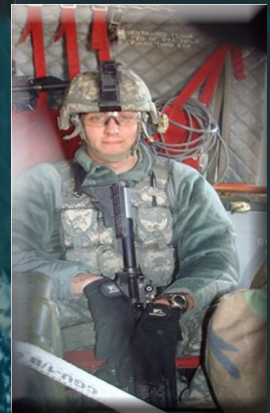
Sp. Jeremy Macleod

Sp. Jeremy Macleod, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, displayed immense valor and courage when his element became engaged by an MK-48 gunner. Macleod was securing PZ Quail for his squad. A CH-47 had landed and loaded 1st Squad in enemy fire from multiple locations. Macleod, under a heavy barrage of machine gun fire, took cover and fired rounds striking all around him. Macleod disregarded his own safety then moved higher on the spur near field of fire to engage the northern most enemy machine gun, where two enemy fighters disappeared and remained in an exposed position on top of the spur with only a small tree as cover providing covering fire. Macleod's actions provided greater freedom on the battlefield and enabled a medical evacuation helicopter to land on PZ Quail and gain fire superiority over the enemy allowing CH-47s to land and evacuate the remaining Soldiers.



Sgt. Anthony Pousson

Sgt. Anthony Pousson, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, faces where running water, hot meals and security – commodities often overlooked and taken for granted. His mission and great responsibility on top of the sub-standard living conditions creates a challenge that he steps into a role that demanded so much and returned so little, but there is one sergeant that rose to the operational environment that some would find to be insurmountable, have become commonplace. Pousson's actions and Procedures where there were none, and learning through experience at a single Joint Readiness Task Force. The unique benefit of LLVI equipment is an essential part of the intelligence gathering operation. Understanding of the enemy in his battle space. Pousson led his team on dismounted and air assault missions. He facilitated the capture of enemy combatants, the discovery and seizure of enemy weapons and equipment. He embodied this concept as well as Pousson. On any given day his leadership and well-being and future LLVI operators to set the bar higher than what most consider achievable. The application of his actions have the opportunity to work with him, but those that walk beside him strive to emulate the discipline of the Rakkasans to the left and the right of him.



Spc. Kyle Bear

Spc. Kyle Bear displayed courage and valor during a firefight while serving as a platoon medic in Dila District, Paktika Province. Bear's element struck an improvised explosive device resulting in five ANA wounded. Afterwards, the element was hit by direct and indirect fire. Bear dismounted and ran to the destroyed ANA pickup, removing the wounded Soldiers from small arms fire, and made himself a target for RPG fire when he focused on protecting the wounded. He moved between the casualties, each time putting his own safety aside. On multiple occasions he was wounded once the enemy was suppressed. When RPG fire and machine gun fire impacted close to where he was, he held him from the blast. He then returned fire. While administering treatment, he protected the other four Soldiers and forced the enemy to break contact. He was a stellar example to the Soldiers of his platoon and he survived the attack.



Sgt. Timothy Walton

Sgt. Timothy Walton, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, was the first on the scene. He immediately began providing care to two Soldiers who were hit by an IED. Walton had a gash in his chin, which later required 11 stitches. After recovering the vehicle and pushing forward, Walton's element immediately called it up and returned fire. While the gunner was returning fire the MK19 jammed. Walton dismounted the vehicle, ignoring the dangers to himself, and assisted the gunner in the area until the convoy could push through the kill zone.



Spc. Chris Turley

Spc. Chris Turley, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, Leader Rakkasans. Assigned to the battalion's Scout Platoon he set himself apart from his peers in combat actions in the East Paktika province of Afghanistan on 6 June 2010, while sitting in an ambush position. Turley displayed great valor and courage by maintaining his position and continuing to



WAR STORIES

STORIES FROM THE BATTLEFIELD BY

"I said to myself, 'we need to end this thing quick.'"



Team 3 (Recon), Scout Platoon, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment

"It was about 10:30 in the morning on August 6th," said recon team leader Sgt. Kevin Thaden "Our mission was to go out in the Sar Hawza District and confirm some insurgent kills that an air weapons team had engaged the day prior.

Our team air-assaulted in to a very rugged and mountainous area that no vehicle could even get to.

When we got off the helos and started walking to the objective, we realized we had to go down the ridge and cross a wadi to get to a ridge on the other side."

"When we go down into the wadi and start making our way across it, I see a fresh trail of footprints that are clearly not American," said Pfc. Ryan Safford, "I pulled our squad leader aside to show him the footprints and that's when I heard someone yelling that they had spotted a bunker. Then the firefight kicked off. I took cover behind a tree and immediately began laying down suppressive fire."

The first one to spot the bunker was automatic rifleman Pfc. Jessie

Hensley.

"As we were walking through the wadi, I looked to my right and saw something that just looked out of place," he said. "I realized very quickly it was a bunker that was danger close. I yelled 'bunker!' to notify Sgt. Thaden who about 10 meters in front of me. When I yelled, I saw movement inside the bunker 15-meters away. I took cover behind a tree and opened the bi-pod of my squad-automatic weapon. As I was getting into position, the insurgents opened up with a long stream of AK-47 fire. I immediately returned fire in a 10-15 round burst, and then just continued to pour a sustained rate of fire into the bunker."

"A minute or two into the firefight my squad leader informed me he had been hit," said, Pfc. John Olson. "He moved back to cover, and I took his position about 10-feet away from Hensley. He and I yelled back and forth to coordinate our sectors of fire."

"As soon as the shooting started I began laying down 40 millimeter rounds into the bunker with my M320 grenade launcher," said Thaden. "Over my radio I could hear that our snipers had set up on the ridgeline above us and were taking fire from the bunker as well. That's when I said to myself, 'we need to end this thing quick.'"

I picked up and ran across 20-meters of open ground to get to the left side of the bunker. Once I got there, I prepped a fragmentation grenade. I took a quick peek around the corner of the bunker, tossed the grenade in and waited for the explo-

sion. When it went off, I engaged the remaining insurgents with rifle fire. All four inside were killed.

Overall our team knew exactly what to do and what was going on. Everyone performed exceptionally well."

(The team's squad leader Staff Sgt. Erik Hartsell, received a bullet wound to his right shoulder in the attack, but is expected to make a full recovery.)

"They weren't expecting us to be out there and we caught them off guard and f'd them up."



Pfc. Josh Lanehart, A Troop, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, driver

"We were doing a three day mission at Spera COP and we had two ambush sites set up. Bravo section spotted these guys coming up a mountain side, attacking one of the OPs. They started laying down fire on them, and Alpha section was to the west, and we had a spotter up on the mountain about three hundred meters from us.

IES

Y THE SOLDIERS WHO WERE THERE

We just observed him for a while and then he raised up and shot [a rocket propelled grenade] at us, and [stuff] just kicked off. Our mortar guy was shooting 60 milimeter mortars from our position to where bravo was fighting.

Then there was a group between us and Bravo, of [insurgents], and they started maneuvering on us. We had to bound back, but before we did Spc. Shaw got shot.

In the fire fight I think we killed like nine [insurgents], and wounded some [others].

They weren't expecting us to be out there, and we caught them off guard and f'd them up."

"This wasn't the first ambush I've been in, but it was the best one I've seen."



Spc. Stephen Smith 211th Engineer Company (Sapper), Route Clearance Package 10

"My unit was doing a route clearance mission from Orgun-E to Sharana on the morning of Aug. 2," said Spc. Stephen Smith, combat medic and National Guardsman, 211th En-

gineer Company (Sapper), Route Clearance Package 10. "We were tasked with conducting dismounted patrols, checking for command wires and signs of Improvised Explosive Devices along the route.

It was early in the morning and we had two teams out doing sweeps. I was with Bravo team. Alpha team was about 50 yards in front of us.

Alpha team had just walked over the top of a small spur when they started receiving small arms fire from a couple hundred yards away. They immediately took cover behind the only thing they could, which was a burned out truck.

My team got on line and began trying to pinpoint where the enemy fire was coming from. The insurgents had the high ground. They were a good 150 meters above us on the side of a mountain.

Once we saw some smoke coming from the enemy's location, our gunner opened fire with the squad-automatic weapon, and we began engaging them with small arms.

As soon as we began engaging them, the enemy forces lit up our whole area. We were on the side of a mountain with little cover, and they starting hitting us with mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and machine-gun fire.

One RPG landed on the hillside above me and one exploded a few yards away. At that point we began moving and shooting trying to get to a better position.

While we were on the move, a RPG exploded a few feet away from me embedding shrapnel in my helmet and my radio. My SAW gunner

looked over at me and said, 'wow... that was close!'

We kept moving and shooting, trying to find some cover. All the while we were continuing to take indirect enemy fire, machine-gun fire and RPGs.

The fire fight lasted about five-minutes until our gun trucks arrived and started engaging the enemy forces.

This wasn't the first ambush I've been in, but this one was the best one I've seen. The enemy had a good position on us and it was very well-planned.

It's just really amazing that none of our guys were killed or injured. We were really lucky."

Editor's note: Pfc. Chris McKenna and Sgt. Brent Powell contributed to this feature by collecting stories and photos from the field.

If you have a War Story to tell, contact the Rakkasan Public Affairs Office at SVOIP 851-1994 or e-mail Staff Sgt. Jimmy Norris at jimmy.norris@afghan.swa.army.mil



Note: This is the first in a three-part series about maintaining specific workouts while in a deployed environment.

FIGHTING TO STAY IN SHAPE

By Pfc. Chris McKenna
3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

During a deployment some Soldiers may find it difficult to maintain a level of physical fitness they are used to. Whatever a Soldier's vice may be, whether they enjoy lifting weights, running or training in mixed martial arts, the obstacles can be overcome.

A group at Forward Operating Base Salerno has stepped up the game by training in Modern Army Combatives.

With monthly two week level one qualification courses being taught at the FOB Salerno 'Dojo', now all Soldiers there have the opportunity to push their limitations and increase their skills in hand-to-hand combat in a secure environment.

Staff Sgt. Garret Wildermuth, Company B, 3rd Special Troops Battalion, is FOB Salerno's primary combatives instructor, who has brought combatives into a deployment setting. Knowing the daily issues and constant battle rhythm Soldiers get accustomed to during a deployment, Wildermuth has the courses set for the most convenient time, not for everyone, but for the overwhelming majority.

"We teach the classes at night when most people have already finished their work for the day," Wildermuth said.

Being level three certified, an intermediate MMA fighter in the U.S. and having instructed combatives for five years, Wildermuth knows it's sometimes difficult to keep up with a workout schedule while deployed.

"I've had times where the mission has stopped me from being able to do my workouts," Wildermuth said. "But I just adapt and overcome; picking back up right where I left off."

In order to compensate for the high operational tempo, Wildermuth has forgone the usual week-long MACP course and extended it to two weeks of shorter,

three-hour sessions.

"Everyone should at least have the basic knowledge," Wildermuth said. "Not only is knowing [combatives] a confidence booster, but you never know, one day it could come down to a hand-to-hand fight with the enemy."

Even when the courses are not taking place, people are encouraged to go to the FOB Salerno 'Dojo' to receive training and practice techniques.

Pfc. Tyler Hetzel, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd STB was one of the initial courses students.

Hetzel had roughly a year of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu training prior to taking the course in July, and thought it to be a good course for a starting level.

"I'm hoping to actually get into level two and level three classes now," Hetzel said. "I want to do the whole MMA thing. It's kind of my dream."

Even for those who can't attend the classes, Wildermuth said martial arts are an important part of a Soldier's life.

For those without the facilities offered at Salerno, Wildermuth says it is important to practice technique with a partner, practicing punches, kicks and ground moves.

"Even while training, I still do more conditioning than anything here getting the moves and techniques etched into my head as muscle memory," Wildermuth said.



FIBER TEAM: KEEPING RAKKASANS CONNECTED

A fiber team member displays fiber optic wires used to provide clear and reliable battlefield communications. The team has installed more than 16,500 feet of fiber optic cabling since their arrival in February.



(Upper Right) Spc. Maria Hazel Pagan, C Co., 3rd STB, 3rd Brigade, pulls rope through a plastic pipe used to house fiber optic cable during a recent cable relocation project on FOB Salerno. (Above) Sgt. Martin Quiles, Company C, 3rd STB, watches as Sgt. David B. Deatley, C Co., 3rd STB uses a mechanical ditch digger to dig a trench to bury optical fiber cabling on FOB Salerno. (Right) Cpl. Luis A. Casanasdelapaz C Co., 3rd STB removes a plastic fitting from a pipe used to house fiber optic cable as part of a cable relocation project.



By Sgt. Brent C. Powell
3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

Digging hundreds of yards of trenches, climbing in and out of manholes, tromping and crawling through mud and muck to lay thousands of feet of optical fiber cable would challenge just about anyone. But for a special team of Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Salerno, it's just another day's work.

The Soldiers are from Company C, 3rd Special Troops Battalion. Together the nine-Soldier group is known as "The Fiber Team."

Their mission is to run optical fiber communications cable throughout the base to provide clear and reliable communication abilities to all those who need it.

It's a task that keeps the team busy.

"We provide fiber optic communications and maintenance for the whole STB at [Forward Operating Base] Salerno, Camp Clark and Forward Operating Base Ghardez,"



said Sgt. David B. Deatley, a 29-year-old Fiber Team leader, serving with C Co., 3rd STB. "When new units come in we also provide communication installation for them as well."

Since arriving in February, the team has completed 18 communications projects, maintained 23 communications buildings, provided communication abilities to more than 500 people and installed more than 16,500 feet of optical fiber cable.

"We provide a service to everyone in the brigade in one form or fashion," said 1st Sgt. Leigh N. Perry, C Co., 3rd STB. "The fiber team is a group of hard-charging, dedicated Soldiers who have adapted to their mission and their environment very well. They take a lot of pride in what they do, and in the quality of service they provide."

Being able to provide communication service is a process that takes planning and plenty of hands-on hard work.

"The first step is installing the cabling, and without a doubt it's the most labor-intensive step in the process," said Deatly. "It usually involves digging trenches, carrying and connecting large plastic pipes and pulling ropes and cabling through them."

The team has some mechanized equipment to make the task easier, such as a ditch-digger with a fork-lift and scoop attachment, but more often than not the team finds themselves with shovels and pickaxes in their hands.

"These guys are definitely hard workers," said Deatley. "One time they had to dig a 200-foot-long, two-foot deep trench with just shovels and picks. It just goes to show you their dedication to getting the job done no matter what."

Once the ditches are dug and the cabling is run from one point to an-



(Above) Cpl. Luis A. Casanadelapaz, C Co, 3rd STB holds plastic piping steady while another person pulls a black and yellow fiber optic cable through it. (Right) Spc. Maria Hazel Pagan, C Co., 3rd STB uses a pair of pliers to hold fiber optic cable.

other, the last step in the process is connecting the fiber wiring - a time-consuming challenge, especially since the wires are fragile and thinner than a single human hair.

"It's tedious, hard work," said Spc. Andrew T. Lanham, a 21-year-old cable systems installer, maintainer and repairer, and fiber team member currently attached to the 3rd STB. "It involves a lot of hands-on physical work, but I like being able to get the job done and making sure people can communicate."

Much like Lanham, all of the team members seem to enjoy what

they do.

"This is why we're here," said Deatley. "I like this type of work, and when a job goes right and gets done quickly, everyone is happy and it's all good."

Many more Soldiers are scheduled to arrive at Camp Salerno in the next few months, and the team has already started running cabling and preparing communication equipment for them.

"We've done a lot of preparation for the new units coming in," said Deatley. "We are ahead of the power curve, and I think by August or



While Spc. Andrew T. Lanham, C Co., 3rd STB, pulls fiber, another soldier uses a hacksaw to saw through a plastic pipe while Cpl. [name obscured] cable and rope out of the way.

September we will have most of the work done."

Despite working in mid-day temperatures that hover around 100-degrees, and facing constant challenges with equipment and terrain, the team never stops working and seems determined to keep battlefield communications up and running.

"I'm very proud to have such a great group of Soldiers," said Perry. "I could not ask for a better team. They definitely do us proud as a signal team and as part of Task Force Rakkasan."





FTF AIR ASSAULTS INTO BAK

By Pfc. Chris McKenna
3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

Combined forces with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team's Focused Tactical Force conducted an air assault operation into Bak, Khost Province, Afghanistan, July 7.

The FTF combines U.S. Army Soldiers, Afghan National Army Soldiers, Afghan National Police-men, civilian law enforcement professionals, Explosive Ordnance Disposal experts, a Multi-Functional Team and psychological operations Soldiers.

The mission resulted in the detention of four suspected insurgents, including one thought to be a key

member of the Haqqani network, according to U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Amos Sward, FTF platoon sergeant, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, from Galesburg, Ill.

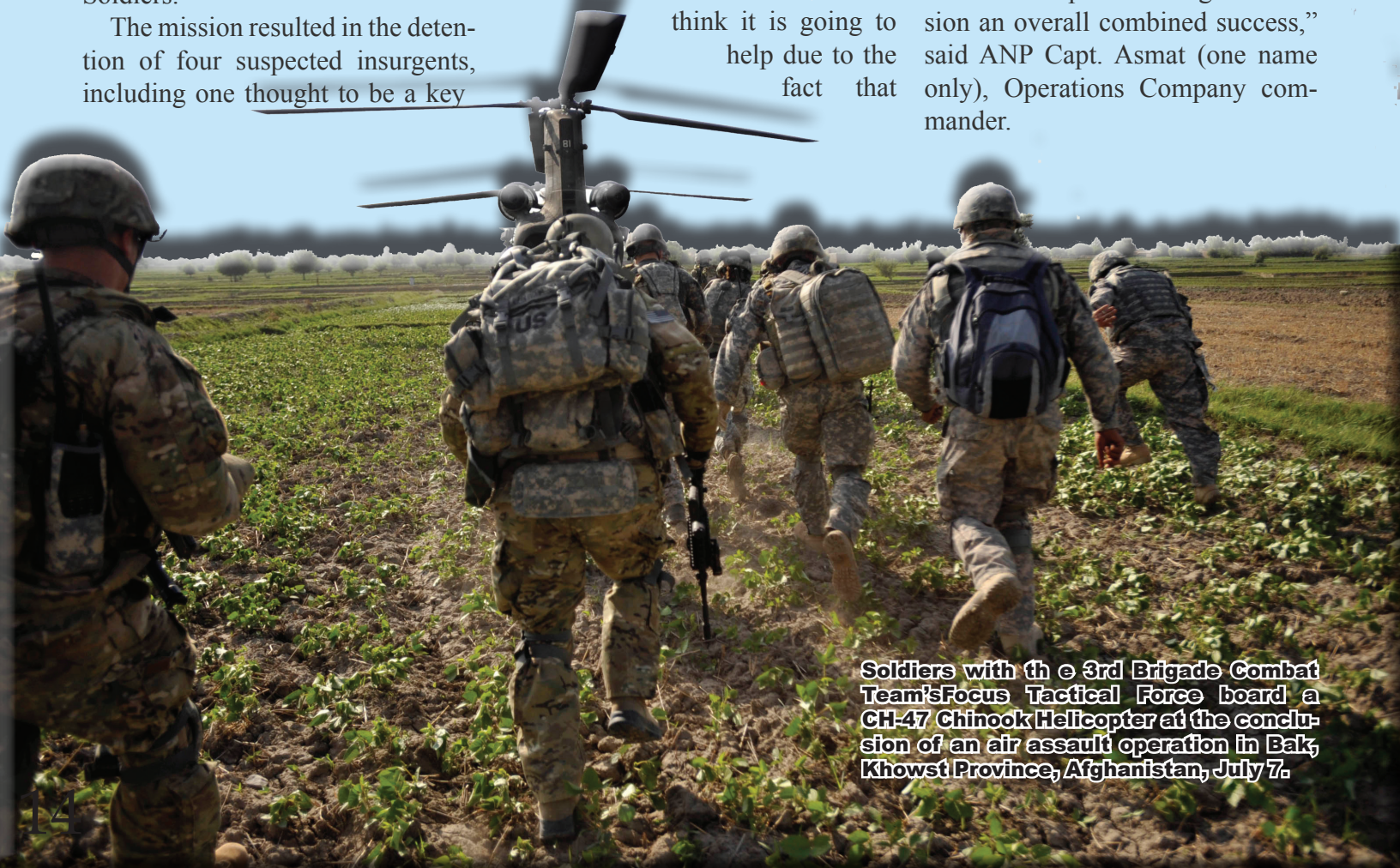
"Finding [him] will hinder the Haqqanni network's ability to fund their offensive," Sward said. While the ANA have always been a part of the FTF, the ANP have only recently been added, with this being the first mission with the group.

"Now that we have the ANP I think it is going to help due to the fact that

these guys go to jail when they go back," Sward said. "The Army is not police, so having the police here is going to help be able to prosecute these guys."

Besides detaining four suspected insurgents, the FTF also confiscated a sizable weapons cache including one improvised explosive device detonator, four timers, three switches, 20 feet. of copper wire, a shotgun, a pistol, various ANA uniforms and two AK-47 magazines.

"We accomplished what we set out to accomplish making this mission an overall combined success," said ANP Capt. Asmat (one name only), Operations Company commander.



Soldiers with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team's Focus Tactical Force board a CH-47 Chinook Helicopter at the conclusion of an air assault operation in Bak, Khost Province, Afghanistan, July 7.

PHOTO FEATURE

FOB WAZA KWAH

By Sgt. Jeffery Alexander
982nd Combat Camera Company

Every time you change the patches on your uniform, that ISAF patch on your left shoulder reminds you that you're part of a larger effort.

We're not just Soldiers, we're counter-insurgents representing the International Security Afghan Forces, right? As a result we're constantly assigned tasks that seem to go well beyond the scope of our Military Occupational Specialty.

For some, combat arms especially, its not unusual to feel that an assignment outside our job description "isn't my job". And this is understandable. As a Soldier, it isn't my job to fly airplanes. As a Combat Photographer, it "isn't my job" to kick doors.

(Continued on next page)



Pfc. Isaac Rittman, C Co., 3-137 clears a road using the Vallon Mine Detector during a patrol in Paktika Province, July 10.



Spc. Lee Garcia, C Co., 3-137 observes a nearby mountain during a mission in Paktika Province July 7.



Soldiers from C Co., 3-137 fire 60mm mortars during a mission in the Zirat Mountain Area, July 7.



Sgt. Joseph Wilson of C Co., 3-137 provides security during a mission in the Zirat Mountain Area, July 7.



Soldiers from C Co., 3-137 push barrels of fuel during a fuel drop at FOB Waza Kwah, July 11.



Technically, it isn't even my job to write articles like this one.

The Soldiers of Task Force Iron are all too familiar with having to complete tasks outside their MOS.

But spending a few weeks at Forward Operating Base Rushmore and FOB Wazi Kwah with the Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment has made my rethink the intersection between work and responsibility.

Some days the missions are more traditional, an air assault, clearing caves, searching for weapons and bad guys - the usual.

The next day, however, is spent delivering school supplies to a local high school or checking the progress of an Afghan National Army checkpoint.

Regularly, afternoons involve recovering upwards of 100 barrels of fuel from a Landing Zone. Some missions are just more "Hooah" than others.

But the Soldiers of TF Iron seem to have taken it all in stride.

While they're all about finding bad guys, they do presence patrols with all the enthusiasm one would expect from an air assault.

I can recall a particular incident at FOB Wazi Kwah when I was trying find out what the next patrol entailed. Staff Sgt. Thomas Nichols, an infantryman and platoon sergeant with C Company gladly told me it was "time to kiss the babies."

Ideally, cooks would cook, mechanics would fix and infantrymen would fight. But sometimes we're called to do more.

The Soldiers from TF Iron know this and they accomplish any task given to them.

So next time I receive a task I'm unfamiliar with or falls outside my MOS or "isn't my job", I'll take my cue from TF Iron and just do what needs to be done.



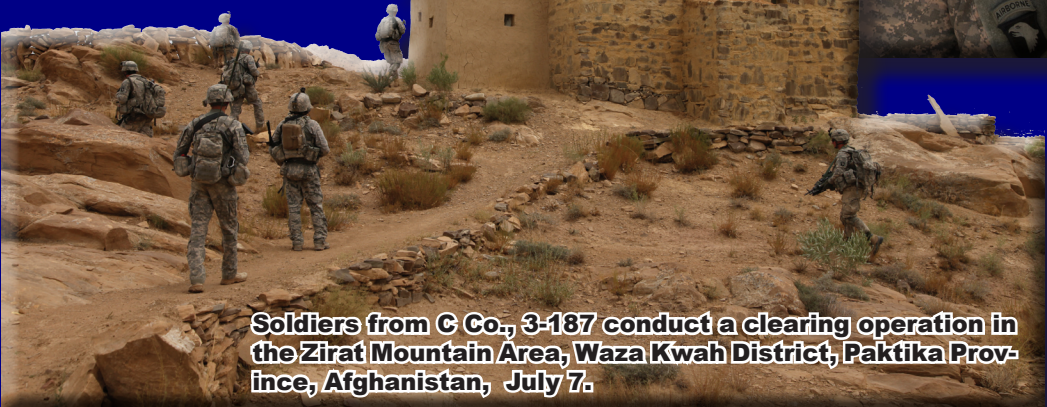
Air Force Staff Sgt. Brent Olson and military working dog, Blek, clear caves during a mission with Soldiers from C Co., 3-187, in the Ziraf Mountain Area, July 7.



Soldiers from C Co., 3-187 navigate mountainous terrain during a clearing operation in Paktika Province July 7.



(Above) A Soldier from C Co., 3-187 holds a puppy during a patrol in Waza Kwah District, Paktika Province, July 10. (Below) Left to Right: Staff Sgt. Tomas Montoya, Sgt. Phillip Johnson, Phillip and Spec. Edgar Carrilla C Co., 3-187 receive Purple Hearts and Bronze Stars at Forward Operating Base Waza Kwah July 12.



Soldiers from C Co., 3-187 conduct a clearing operation in the Ziraf Mountain Area, Waza Kwah District, Paktika Province, Afghanistan, July 7.



(Above) 1st Lt. David Hanson, C Co., 3-187, tells a resident about a local doctor on Forward Operating Base Waza Kwah.

(Below) Soldiers from C Co., 3-187 push barrels during a fuel drop at FOB Waza Kwah July 11.



A Soldier from C Co., 3-187 patrols through Waza Kwah District, Paktika Province, July 10.



2nd Lt. Phillip Divinski, C Co., 3-187, points toward the next objective during a mission in the Zirat Mountain Area, Waza Kwah District, Paktika Province, Afghanistan, July 7.



White Platoon: So Close

By Pfc. Chris McKenna
3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

The Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Troop A., 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment accentuate true brotherhood. Professionalism is the foundation on which this platoon has been formed, even while each individual knows key points on when to take a situation serious, or when to take it in stride.

It all starts from the bottom up, with the new Soldiers coming into the mix getting the opportunities that could be considered their birthrights, the chance to become a member of the family.

"This platoon is exceptionally good about bringing new guys into the fold and teaching them what they need to know," said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jim Rudisill, from Hickory, N.C., 2nd Platoon's platoon leader.

Many groups may say the exact thing without thinking twice about it, but with the Soldiers of Apache's White Platoon, it actually could go without saying.

A designated scout platoon; they have the task of balancing out their required scout missions with the same requirements added on as an infantry platoon would have; all while being undermanned.

"Our size is our biggest challenge," said Rudisill. "We're not as big as a traditional infantry platoon but are asked to do the same jobs, and more, on top of our traditional cavalry role which consists of a lot of recon."

Challenge or not, they make it work. Everyone has their role and performs their duties with precision said Rudisill.

"We work good together because



(Above) Soldiers from 2nd Platoon, Troop A., 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, stand together upon completion of a three day stay at the Spera District Center, Khost Province. (Below) Staff Sgt. George Shelton, 2nd Platoon, Troop A., 1-33 CAV, Sgt. Christopher Sneed and Sgt. Lashaun Joyner, platoon team leader, all provide security on the Spera District Center, Khost Province, Afghanistan, July 25.

we are small and all know each other's strengths and weaknesses," said U.S. Army Sgt. Jake Chitwood., 2nd Platoon's forward observer. "We're expected to do our scout recon mission and conduct actions on the objective as well; which can be very demanding on our Soldiers day in and day out."

Chitwood said the kinship shared by the platoon comes from their ability to adapt so easily to any requirement put before them.

"One day we can be called forward to do a route recon, and the next day we might be out doing dismounted three-day operations," Chitwood said.

The platoon's flexibility and ability to ensure newer guys have the tools needed to succeed are evident with each Soldier's overall performance.

"I wasn't with the platoon long before we went out to [Combat Outpost] Spera," said Pfc. Ryan Hall,



the platoon's designated marksman. "And that makes anyone a family; there is really no choice out there."

The experience of living together at Spera in a confined space and under constant threat brought this tight-knit group even closer together.

ose they're family

"Everyone has to work together out there to survive," Hall said. "Fire fights bring everyone together and there are a lot of them out there."

Being with the platoon only a short time before experiencing one of the most active sectors in country, Hall said his fellow Soldier's made the transition easier for him.

Transferring from 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment with four other Soldiers, the infantryman has found a niche within this cavalry platoon.

"Anyone here would do anything for each other," Hall said. "In a fire fight we always got each other's back and we would all lay our lives down for each other without question."

Rudisill echoed those sentiments.

"This platoon is that tight with all we have gone through together," he said. "The overall atmosphere we have come to expect in the platoon has built us into a tight family."



(Above) Sgt. Lee Durette, 2nd Platoon, Troop A., 1-33 CAV, eats a Meal Ready to Eat during some down time at the Spera District Center, July 25. U.S.

(Below) Spc. Jared Goodwin, medic with Troop A., 1-33 CAV, directs Pfc. Josh Lanehart, Troop A., 1-33 CAV, to pull security toward high ground during dismounted operations in Khost Province, July 29.



Staff Sgt. George Shelton, Troop A. 1-33 CAV, provides over watch on the Spera District Center, July 25.



"Anyone here would do anything for each other. In a fire fight we always got each other's back and we would all lay our lives down for each other without question."



LCLA: SUPPLIES



Staff Sgt. Carlos Gomez (right), and non-commissioned officer-in-charge, Low-Cost Low-Altitude drop team, 626th Brigade Support Battalion, and Pfc. Adam Garza, Low Cost Low Altitude team member and native of, attach parachutes to a pallet of food to be dropped from an airplane to troops in a remote base.

By Sgt. Brent C. Powell
3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

With the constant threat of Improvised Explosive Devices and insurgent attacks, as well as few usable roads and treacherous mountain passes, getting necessary supplies to troops at some of Afghanistan's most remote posts and bases can prove both challenging and deadly.

In order to combat those threats and still accomplish the mission, a special team of Soldiers and civilians are working together at Forward Operating Base Sharana in a unique partnership.

The team uses a highly-effective and battle-proven method of resupply called Low-Cost Low-Altitude air drops.

The technique involves attaching a variety of supplies to specially-designed parachutes, and then dropping them out the back of civilian owned and operated airplanes to the troops below.

"Our mission is to provide support to all ground troops for the 3rd Brigade as well as Special Forces and Afghan National Army Soldiers," said Staff Sgt. Carlos Gomez, non-commissioned officer-in-charge,

LCLA team, 626th Brigade Support Battalion. "The purpose is to supply the troops as quickly as possible, in the least expensive and safest way."

The process starts in a large hang-



Staff Sgt. Carlos Gomez, LCLA team, 626 BSB, wraps tape around parachute cords to keep them from getting tangled.

FROM THE SKIES

er bay on FOB Sharana. Using a variety of ropes, straps, shrink-wrap and cardboard, Gomez and the other three Soldiers of his team securely fasten supply items to small wooden pallets. Items the team commonly drops include bottled water, food, ammunition, construction materials, weapons and weapon parts.

Once the materials are properly packaged, the team attaches small, black, disposable, nylon parachutes to the top of each pallet. The parachutes cost about \$150 each, and the number attached depends on the weight of the pallet.

"Each parachute can support about 350 pounds," said Gomez. "Some of the pallets we use weight well over 400 pounds so we'll use two parachutes for those."

After the team has prepared all the pallets for a mission, they use a forklift to load them onto a flatbed truck.

They are then transported to the



Pfc. Adam Garza, A Co., 626 BSB uses an electric saw to cut cardboard into strips used to provide cushioning for supply pallets.

flightline and loaded into the back of a Casa 212 airplane, that is piloted and crewed by civilians.

Each drop usually entails two aircraft that fly together and drop loads at the same base one right after the other. The aircraft normally carry between three and four pallets each. The method the team uses to drop the supplies is one that can give passengers quite a ride.

"The planes will usually drop down to about 150 to 200 feet, level out and then when they are over the drop zone, climb sharply," said Gomez. "The steep angle and gravitational force assist in pulling the pallets out of the aircraft."

Much like a static line that paratroopers use when jumping out of aircraft, the parachutes on top of the pallets are attached by a line to the inside of the airplane.

When the pallets are forced out, the pressure on the lines causes the parachutes to open.

Although the process may sound relatively easy, the work that goes into it certainly is not. During the month of July alone, the team dropped more than 330 pallets, delivering supplies to about 32 forward operating bases.

"We have been doing these missions every other day, and sometimes we do as many as 40 loads a day" said Gomez. "It's physically demanding and it will definitely keep you busy. But it is well worth it."

Even though the Soldiers put in a lot of hours, they seem to enjoy the challenging work.

"It's really great," said Pfc. Adam Garza, LCLA team member, Co. A,



Staff Sgt. Carlos Gomez, LCLA NCO-IC, 626th BSB, pulls a strap taught around a pallet full of meals.

626 BSB. "It keeps you busy, especially since there is only four of us. But time goes by fast, and it's a good workout.

The part I enjoy the most though, is going out on the missions and being on the airplane. That part is very relaxing."

Other members of the team seem to share Garza's enthusiasm.

"I absolutely love my job," said Gomez. "Seeing how happy the Soldiers on the ground are after the resupply makes me feel really good. It's very rewarding."

Although they are a lot of work, Gomez says the drops have a lot of advantages over traditional convoy resupply missions.

"LCLAs are quicker and much less dangerous than convoys," he said. "Plain and simple LCLAs save lives, time and money, and we are going to continue to do these as long as needed."



CW2 Byrin Wheatley

Recovering the unrecoverable

By Sgt. Brent C. Powell
3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

Mountainous terrain, narrow passes, loose gravel and winding roads spell certain danger for U.S. and coalition forces here that must navigate them with a variety of vehicles and equipment.

When a 40,000-pound Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle costing nearly \$300,000, and its onboard equipment recently tumbled down a treacherous mountainside and lodged between a large boulder and a huge rock formation, recovering it seemed nearly impossible.

In fact, three wreckers were taken to the scene in an attempt to retrieve the vehicle. Ultimately all three were not only unsuccessful, but each piece of equipment broke during the recovery process.

When the situation looked the

darkest, the battalion commander knew that there was only one man he could count on to accomplish the mission and get the vehicle back - Chief Warrant Officer Byrin Wheatley.

Wheatley, who works as an allied trades technician in the Welding and Machine shop of Company B, 626th Brigade Support Battalion, has years of vehicle recovery experience under his belt and a perfect record for accomplishing the mission no matter how difficult.

"The battalion commander told me a vehicle had rolled down a mountainside and was stuck in a deep ravine," said Wheatley. "The owning unit was requesting that it be destroyed in place. The commander told me to fly out there to assess the situation, and that leaving it behind was not an option."

Wasting no time, Wheatley flew to Forward Operating Base Gardez where he met with members of the local Provincial Reconstruction Team, Army Corps of Engineers and members of the 3rd Special Troops Battalion to develop a plan and arrange for another wrecker.

The following morning the team went to the rollover site. "When I saw the vehicle and it's position, my first thought was this is going to take us about three weeks," said Wheatley. "The roadway above

the site was very narrow and had quite a few curves that wind along the side of the mountain. There was no possibility of pulling the vehicle back up the slope."

That left Wheatley with only one other option. Go down to the ravine and try to pull the vehicle downstream and out of the wadi. But even that option did not come without its own set of challenges.

"There were some large boulders in the ravine that the vehicle could get lodged against, and there was a 15-foot drop-off between the vehicle and where we had to position the wrecker," he said. "Fortunately the ACE coordinated with a local construction company to fill in the ravine and build a stable roadway for us to gain access to the overturned vehicle."

The first day Wheatley and his crew worked late into the evening moving the huge vehicle inch by inch. They managed to dislodge it from the boulder it was stuck against and get the vehicle upright. However, a storm moved in and began causing rockslides, forcing the team to quit for the night.

The next day the team was at it again. They pulled, moved the wrecker, and pulled some more. It was a painstakingly slow process, but that's what it took.

"This was the most complicated recovery I have ever experienced,"

At a Glance

The Machine

- ☐ Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle
- ☐ Weight: 40,000 lbs
- ☐ Cost: \$300,000
- ☐ Undeclared Vs. 3 Wreckers

The Man

- ☐ CW2 Byrin Wheatley
- ☐ Unit: Company B, 626th BSB
- ☐ Hometown: Plattsmouth Nebraska
- ☐ Vehicle Recovered: More than 500

The Mission

- ☐ Four Days
- ☐ 200 Man-Hours

Wheatley

said Wheatley. "Most vehicles you can recover in a few hours. This one took a lot of planning, coordination and hard work. The recovery crew and security team were absolutely exhausted by the time we got the vehicle onto a lowboy trailer."

It took the team four-days and more than 200 man-hours on scene to finally recover the vehicle, but Wheatley said it was rewarding.

"I was very satisfied after it was all done," he said. "Every mission has its own unique challenges and you learn something from every one of them. I've yet to find a vehicle that is unrecoverable."

Wheatley has recovered just about every vehicle the Army owns at one time or another, from humvees to the M1A1 Abrams tank. He gained most of his vehicle recovery experience during two tours in Iraq and one in Bosnia where he recovered more than 500 vehicles.

"The main reason we want to recover these vehicles is the cost," he said. "Some of them cost more than \$300,000. Also, we don't want to leave a vehicle that the insurgents can get even one piece of good intelligence from. If they do, we've lost our advantage allowing them to find and target weak points. We want to prevent that and save taxpayers a few dollars as well."

Everyone who works with Wheatley, including his com-

manding officer, is confident in his abilities.

"He is a tremendous asset to the battalion," said Capt. Tammy Bogart, commanding officer, Company B, 626th BSB. "Other units will call and ask for his advice. He's really engaged in everything he does. He has a very calm demeanor that allows him to truly assess a recovery mission and come up with the best solution."

Hopefully the battalion will not have any more vehicle rollovers or challenging recovery missions. But if they do, Wheatley stands ready to answer the call, no matter how difficult the mission.

"I was very satisfied after it was all done. Every mission has its own unique challenges and you learn something from every one of them. I've yet to find a vehicle that is unrecoverable."





SMOKER AT

By Sgt. Brent C. Powell
3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

In an effort to raise money for families of fallen Soldiers and to build camaraderie and morale, Soldiers of the 626th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division recently hosted a boxing tournament.

The tournament was the brainchild of Staff Sgt. Rachel

Thompson, non-commissioned officer-in-charge, Sharnan Medical Treatment Facility, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Coordinator, 626th BSB.

"I got the idea for a boxing tournament because the previous unit here had held one, and I was very interested in boxing," she said. "I also thought it would be a good way to help raise money for families of fallen Soldiers."

Raising money for fallen Soldiers holds a very personal meaning for Thompson.

Two Soldiers from the 3rd BCT, who have been killed in action, are memorialized at the FOB, and Thompson knew them both. She also sees injured Soldiers at the hospital. "We see Soldiers come into the treatment facility on a regular basis, and it makes you think about their families," she said.

After lots of coordination, planning and work by volunteers, the first punches were thrown June 12.

A total of eight





fights were conducted the first night, including one female match.

Each fight was broken down by weight-class, gender and experience level.

The fights themselves consisted of four two-minute rounds with a one-minute rest in-between.

There were three judges per fight who decided the winner based on number of punches thrown and technique.

The early spectator turnout was fairly small but still raised \$650 in donations.

By the following week, the tournament was the talk of the FOB and more and more fans poured in to watch the melee.

The second matchup included 19 fights, four of which were female matches. When the night's tally was over more than \$1,600 had been collected.

The tournament finale took place

July 3 and boasted 13 male and five female fights. By then the popularity of the event had exploded and nearly 500 fans crowded around to watch the action.

When the last bell rang more than \$4,000 had been raised.

"The last night of the tournament there was a big rivalry between the Army and Navy," said Thompson.

"They really went at it. Everyone was calling each other out and we even had to add five fights. It was a great night."

An award ceremony was held at the conclusion of the tournament. Winners from each weight class were presented with commander's coins by Lt. Col. James R. Becker, commander, 626th BSB, and Lt. Col. David G. Fivecoat, commander, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment.

Volunteers were also recognized for their hard work with certificates of appreciation.

"The boxing tournament was a great event for everyone here," said Capt. R. C. San Gil, company commander, Company A, 626th BSB. "Each week we would have that event to look forward to. These are definitely morale boosters not only for the spectators, but for the fighters as well."

Most in attendance seemed to share San Gil's enthusiasm.

"It was great to have entertainment outside of the usual events," said Capt. Darcelle Fielder, executive officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3-187. "It was evident that a great deal of effort went into the planning and training leading up to the event, and in the end, a very good cause was supported by all."



Cargo management Slinging supplies across

By Sgt. Brent C. Powell
3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division

Like angry bees buzzing in and out of a hive, a swarm of helicopters constantly swoops in and out of the landing zone at Forward Operating Base Sharana.

Instead of carrying pollen to the hive, they carry bellies full of cargo and supplies to FOBs all over Afghanistan's rugged landscape.

And just like helper bees in the hive, a special team of Soldiers are working non-stop to load and attach a vast array of cargo to the busy choppers, ensuring Soldiers in the field have the supplies they need.

The Soldiers are from the cargo management team, Company A, 626th Brigade Support Battalion,

They are among a select few who do aerial resupply missions on a daily basis. It's a challenging task that keeps the Rakkasans buzzing.

In fact, for the month of July, the cargo management team was responsible for loading 1,129,052 pounds of cargo. That figure is just

over the team's monthly average of one million pounds.

"It's definitely a lot of work," said Sgt. Bradley Denno, non-commissioned officer-in-charge of the cargo management team, assigned to Co. A, 626th BSB. "It's non-stop action from the time we get here until we leave."

The team is broken into two shifts with two Soldiers working together on each one. Together they send supplies and equipment to nearly 30 FOBs and combat outposts.

"Our mission here is to move supplies and equipment out to support the Soldiers in the field," said Denno. "We supply all the forward operating bases in Regional Command East's area of operation with food, mail, ammunition, weapons, repair parts and construction materials. We load pretty much anything they could possibly need or use."

Although the team occasionally loads military CH-47 Chinooks, they spend the majority of their time loading large, white, civilian-owned

and operated, Mi-18 helicopters they call "jingle birds".

Because the jingle birds are limited to carrying only 4,000 pounds at a time, they often have to make multiple trips to a FOB and back to transport all the needed supplies and equipment.

"Once a bird lands, we try to have it loaded and back in the air within 20-minutes," said Denno. "That's not always possible, but that's our goal."

When the wheels of the helo touch down the team moves into action. Using a forklift, the team will usually put between four to six pallets on each aircraft depending on the weight. However, sometimes the team has to load the helicopters the hard way - by hand.

"It's a difficult and physically demanding job," said Pvt. William Foote, cargo management specialist assigned to Co. A, 626th BSB. "But we are going to accomplish the mission no matter what."

Although a majority of the helos

nt team- ross Afghan skies

are loaded by forklift or by hand, those aren't the only methods the team uses to get supplies out; occasionally they use a special method called sling-loading.

Sling-loading involves using netting, ropes and hooks to attach various cargo to the bottom of the helicopters. In order to pick up the supplies, the aircraft hover above them, while a Soldier standing below attaches the load. The team conducted more than 70 sling-loads during the month of July.

"We will sling-load anything that won't fit inside the birds," said Denno. "Some of the common sling-loads we do are fuel bladders, artillery pieces, generators and construction supplies. As long as the load meets the weight requirements we will find a way to get it on the bird."

"I have a great team out here and I'm very lucky," said Sgt. Patricia A. Oconnell, non-commissioned officer-in-charge of FOB Sharana's helicopter landing zone, assigned

to Co. A, 626th BSB. "Everyone is well-versed and skilled in not only their specific job, but they are also capable of doing every job out here."

Although the mission keeps the Baskasans busy, they all seem to find something they like about it.

"One of the things I like most about the job is the Soldiers I work with," said Foote. "They are really good at what they do, and I've learned a lot from my NCOs."

No matter the challenge ahead the Soldiers of the cargo management team stand ready to meet it head on.

"This job takes a lot of dedication and devotion to the mission as well as patience," said Denno. "My team works hard and gives everything they have to support the troops outside the wire, making sure they have what they need to sustain the fight. It's a mission we've been working hard on since we got here, and it's a mission we will continue to work hard on until we leave."

"This job takes a lot of dedication and devotion to the mission as well as patience. My team works hard and gives everything they have to support the troops outside the wire, making sure they have what they need to sustain the fight."



Legal

Family Support

Every Soldier has an obligation to support their family members as specified in AR 608-99. A family member is defined as one's present spouse, minor children of the marriage, minor children born out of wedlock, legally adopted children and another person a Soldier may have a legal obligation to provide support under applicable laws.

AR 608-99 is a punitive regulation, which means that your commander can punish you with Uniform Code of Military Justice action for failing to follow it.

If your family lives in private housing, you are required to provide financial support that is no less than the amount specified in the BAH-With table unless you have a written agreement or court order that states otherwise.

Please note that it makes no difference if you are receiving BAH in the amount reflect on the BAH-With table or receiving no BAH at all; the BAH-With table is simply the "yardstick" the Army has decided is a fair amount to provide to your family.

If your family members are living in government housing, you are not required to provide any additional financial support.

However, if your family is residing in different locations, then you must divide the BAH-With amount equally

amongst your dependents.

If you are divorced or in the process of a divorce, then any written agreement or court order that address financial support trumps the BAH-With table.

The BAH-With table is simply a gap-filler in the absence of a court order.

If there is a court-ordered separation agreement in place, but it does not mandate support, then you do not have to provide any support.

Your battalion commander may relieve you of your support obligation if:

- Your spouse earns more than you do
- You directly pay for rent or mortgage on your family's behalf (you must be legally obligated on the mortgage or lease for this to apply)
- Your spouse has physically abused you (must be established by court finding)
- Your spouse is in jail
- You are legally divorced from your spouse (unless your divorce decree requires you to pay alimony); however, you must still provide for your children
- Your child is in the custody of another who is not the legal custodian

Your Brigade Commander has a little more leeway and may relieve you of support obligations, if a court order or dependent child is not involved and the weight of the evidence presented for consideration supports approving a relief based on fundamental fairness.

The following are not grounds to relieve you of your obligation:

- You do not receive BAH
- Your spouse is cheating on you, has abandoned you, etc.; your spouse's conduct makes no difference (other than established abuse, as stated above)
- You "cannot afford" the payment
- You pay other bills on your family's behalf (unless your family has agreed in writing to accept payment of those bills in lieu of normal support payments)
- You have a court order in place specifying support; you must pay the amount specified in the order (your battalion commander cannot relieve you of your obligations under a court order)

Please note that commanders must receive a supporting legal review before granting relief.

BAH-With Table

O-6	\$1565.70	W-1	\$858.30
O-5	\$1509.30	E-9	\$1129.80
O-4	\$1330.20	E-8	\$1042.50
O-3	\$1101.00	E-7	\$967.50
O-2	\$939.00	E-6	\$894.00
O-1	\$840.90	E-5	\$804.00
W-5	\$1284.60	E-4	\$699.00
W-4	\$1177.50	E-3	\$650.10
W-3	\$1079.40	E-2 & E-1	\$619.50
W-2	\$991.80		

Key Points

- ☐ Punitive regulation
- ☐ Serves as a gap-filler when no court order is in place
- ☐ Court order trumps BAH-With amount
- ☐ Does not matter if you do not actually receive BAH
- ☐ Spousal misconduct makes no difference (unless there is proven history of abuse)

Stuck on Safety

By Skip Stuck

3rd BCT Safety Officer

Half of our deployment is over and it's time to go on leave. And like every Rakkasan, you are looking forward to indoor plumbing with hot showers, real toilets and real beds.

The key points to remember during your government travel for leave are never lose your cool, be prepared for delays, never leave your gear unsecured, always be early, ensure you know the correct times for briefings and formations, catch some sleep when possible, and within the best of your abilities keep your family and unit informed of your location.

It took the Army seven years to figure it out, but the system for going on leave works, and you will make it home.

When you get home or to your vacation location, give yourself time to adjust to the climate, time zones, and the changes that occurred since you left.

Don't just hop on your motorcycle or in your car and start driving without giving yourself a chance to adjust to your surroundings.

Get some sleep first, then take a ride a couple times around the block on your motorcycle to get feeling back for safe riding and remember always wear your helmet and safety gear. When driving your car for the first time, always wear your seatbelt, don't drive like you're on Route Alaska, and remember there are now traffic laws you must obey. Your will not have a great leave if you wreck you vehicle.

The brigade is having several



problems with Soldiers going on leave.

The first is driving under the influence. Do not drink and drive. It is not worth you losing your career or even worse causing a traffic accident because of reckless, undisciplined behavior. Always remember there is a cost for actions and the secondary effects from those actions can affect you for the rest of your life.

The second problem is drug abuse. Again is it worth your career to use illegal drugs? You will get caught and everyone will have a urinalysis test upon returning to

Afghanistan.

The third problem is just not adjusting to being home. If you are feeling stressed, can't sleep, angry or depressed, talk to your family or our rear detachment. They will help you.

You are on leave to unwind and relax, have fun, and to enjoy the reasons why you're serving in the military.

And lastly don't rush your leave. Fifteen days is 15 days.

Ensure you enjoy yourself and return fresh, alert and ready to complete the rest of this tour in Afghanistan.



Greetings From Home

Friends, family members and fans of the Rakkasans have been following the deployment closely through the brigade's Facebook page.

They've also posted dozens of messages, greetings and wishes for our safe return.

This page features just a small sample of the outpouring of support that's come in for the Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

Check out more of their comments or follow the latest news, video and photos from the brigade's ongoing mission at <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/3rd-BCT-Public-Affairs-Office/317563029214>.



Tina Kay Casteel I love you Rakkasans and can not wait until you guys come home for good!

7 hours ago · [Comment](#) · [Like](#) · [Flag](#)



Misty Knight Barone Warm thoughts and hugs sent to all the troops over there but kisses to our son, David, and c company. We are so appreciative of the sacrifices you guys are enduring. Stay safe and come home to families that love you.

11 hours ago · [Comment](#) · [Like](#) · [Flag](#)



William Rusty Christy Proud of you all!!! Keep setting the standard and taking the fight to the enemy.

SEC (R) Christy

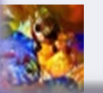


Justin Phillips god speed to all the 3/320th soldiers in afghanistan that I proudly served with until january 2010... hope you all come home safe and all in one piece... take care of yourselves.



Cindy Kilbourn King WE ARE PROUD OF YOU ALL!! RAKKASAN

July 7 at 9:58pm · [Like](#) · [Delete](#) · [Flag](#)



Maria Becker Love my Rakkasan!!!

July 8 at 12:50am · [Like](#) · 41 person · [Delete](#) · [Flag](#)



Teresa Tindoll Happy Birthday America-Thank you all veterans and soldiers past -present-future! Special thank you to all of the Brave Rakkasans!

July 4 at 7:41pm · [Comment](#) · [Like](#) · [Flag](#)



Renny Dee Just wanted to say THANK YOU to all of our troops and especially my son, for their service and sacrifice ! Because of you , we are able to be FREE!! Happy 4th of July ! Stay safe and God Bless you, hurry home. We love you!!



Beth Thompson keep up the good work all of you soldiers be safe god bless you and I THANK each and everyone of you for what you are doing for us back home God Bless you all

July 1 at 1:32am · [Comment](#) · [Like](#) · [Flag](#)



Christina VanMale With heartfelt pride and appreciation for all you are doing...God bless and protect you as you continue fighting the good fight! HOOAH!!



Jessica Dlugopolski I am so proud of all of the Rakkasan soldiers .. everyone be safe and stay strong

May 17 at 1:12pm · [Comment](#) · [Like](#) · [Flag](#)



Karen York Stephens Thank you for your service.

April 26 at 4:17am · [Like](#) · [Delete](#) · [Report](#)



Coral Wallace May God bless you and keep you safe - you are missed



William Hamann from a former rakkasan yall keep your heads up. we're all back here supporting yall.

April 17 at 8:55am · [Comment](#) · [Like](#) · [Flag](#)

[Teresa Tindoll](#) and 5 others like this.

IN MEMORY OF FALLEN RAKKASANS

SGT VINCE OWENS
F CO., 626 BSB
KIA 1 MARCH, 2010

PFC JASON KROPAT
C CO., 1-197 INF REGT
KIA 8 MARCH, 2010

SGT JONATHON RICHARDSON
C CO., 1-187 INF REGT
KIA 8 MARCH, 2010

PFC JONATHON HALL
HHIC, 5-187 INF REGT
KIA 8 APRIL, 2010

SPC JEREMY BROWN
HHIC 1-187 INF REGT
KIA 9 MAY, 2010

PFC CHRISTOPHER BARTON
C TROOP, 1-53 CAV REGT
KIA 24 MAY, 2010

SGT ERICK KLOSACEK
B TROOP, 1-53 CAV REGT
KIA 8 JUNE, 2010

SSG MATTHEW WEIKERT
D CO., 1-187 INF REGT
KIA 17 JULY, 2010

SPC JAMES OQUIN
B CO., 1-187 INF REGT
KIA 25 JULY, 2010

SGT STEVEN DELUZIO
5-172 INF REGT, 86TH BDE COMBAT TEAM
KIA 22 AUGUST, 2010

SGT TRISTAN SOUTHWORTH
5-172 INF REGT, 86TH BDE COMBAT TEAM
KIA 22 AUGUST, 2010

