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Afghan villages get  
solar power

FEBRUARY 2011



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This month's



## Father, daughter united by President's promise

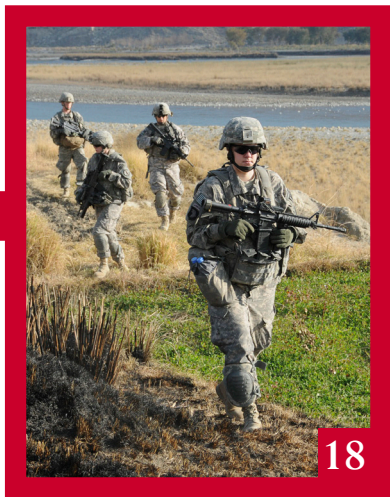
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## FREEDOM WATCH

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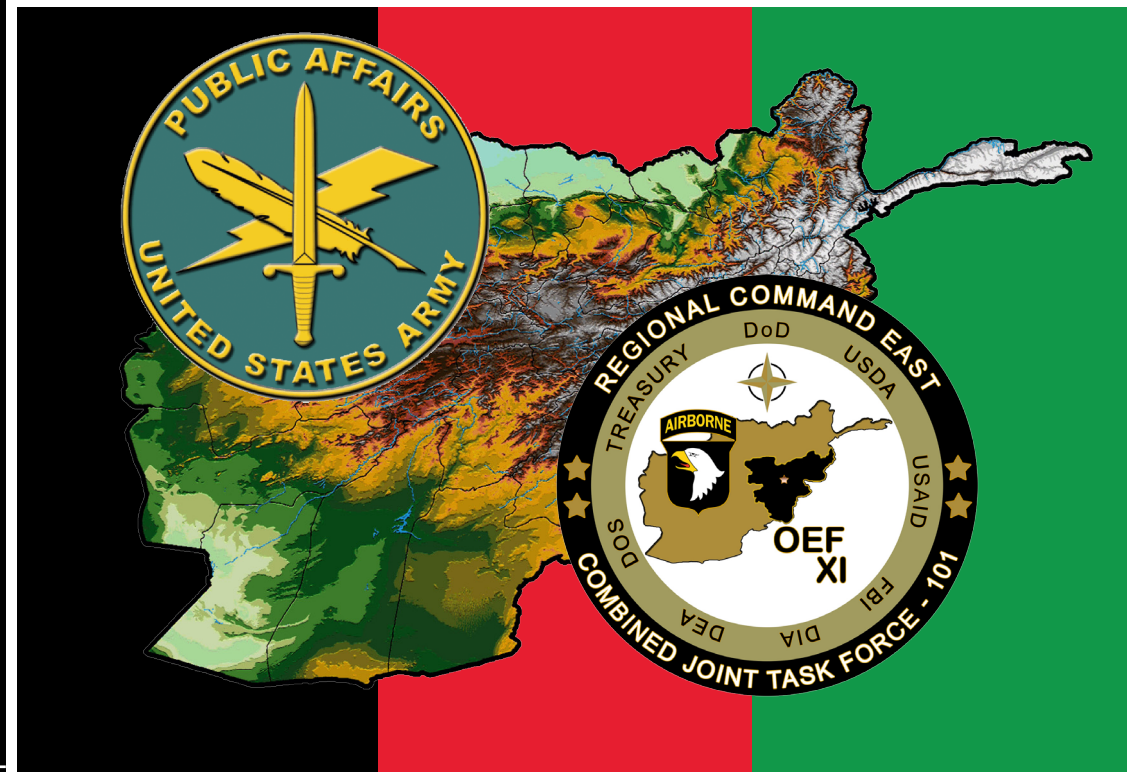
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*(Cover photo) Ajamal Hazrat, a 1-year-old burn patient, plays with U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Mabel Aguirre, a 455th Expeditionary Medical Operations Squadron medical technician, while waiting for his discharge paper at the Craig Joint Theater Hospital at Bagram Airfield. A large majority of the Hazrat family was badly injured after the propane tank used to heat their home exploded. During the time they were treated, they touched the hearts of many doctors and medics who interacted with them each day. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Shelia deVera)*





Story and photos by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michael Voss, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

Recently a father's Christmas wish to see his deployed daughter came true thanks to a call from President Barack Obama.

Thanksgiving Day at Kandahar Airfield, U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Kevin Laursen received a call from Obama wishing the deployed medical technician happy holidays.

During the course of the brief conversation, the president asked Petty Officer Laursen what Christmas wish he wanted. "To see my daughter," he replied.

A week later, thanks to the support of his deployed chain of command, Petty Officer Laursen was on his way for a three-day visit with his daughter, U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Andrea Laursen, also serving in the medical field as a registered nurse deployed to the Craig Joint Theater Hospital at Bagram Airfield.

Although Petty Officer Laursen knew he was chosen to receive the President's holiday call a few weeks before lifting the receiver, he was not prepared to answer the question. The answer about seeing his daughter was spur of the moment, but an answer he is glad he gave.

"I am really grateful to see her again," said the 15-year Navy veteran. "I am just so proud of her and the work she does every day here. She is saving people's lives and doing everything she can so they can get home to their families."


Over the years, the father of three; Andrea, 24, Dennis, 22 and Erica, 11, from Meridian, Idaho, has become the head of a contemporary military family.

"I originally signed up for the military in '81 as a dental technician," he said. "I got off active duty in 1990 to pursue a career as a biomedical repair technician. It was after the events of 9-11 I felt repatriated and rejoined the reserves."

Lt. Laursen was born in 1986. She went to nursing school, following in her stepmother and father's footsteps and was commissioned in the Air Force, and her younger brother joined the Coast Guard.

Petty Officer Laursen has left his family on three separate occasions, filling deployments on the USS Midway, USS Comfort and now working with the U.S. Army at Kandahar.

"I wouldn't say we came from a military family, but we have become one. I couldn't have been more proud of her when she joined the Air Force.

"She has so much to offer the Air Force, especially in the medical field," he explained. "She is good at her job, she cares and she just lightens a room." 

(Top left) U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Kevin Laursen holds hands with his daughter, U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Andrea Laursen, a registered nurse deployed to the Craig Joint Theater Hospital at Bagram Airfield and her father, hold hands here during a visit Jan. 4. (Left) U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Kevin Laursen stands with his daughter, U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Andrea Laursen. The visit happened after President Barack Obama called Laursen and asked what he would like for Christmas. (Above) U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Kevin Laursen embraces his daughter, U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Andrea Laursen, after being separated by a deployment.



# AFGHAN FAMILY SAVED BY BAGRAM MEDICS



Story by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michael Voss  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force health professionals train continuously, from medical school to retirement, to provide lifesaving treatments to patients.

In most cases, they count on providing those treatments to servicemembers, but Airmen assigned to the Craig Joint Theater Hospital here are finding themselves working to save an Afghan family.

For nearly two weeks the hospital's staff worked around the clock to save the lives of Ghulam Hazrat, his 2-year-old daughter Satara and 1-year-old grandson Ajamal.

Around 6 p.m. Dec. 24, Ghulam Hazrat's family and friends were spending time together talking about the day's events, but as the women worked to prepare the family's dinner, the propane tank used to heat the home caught fire and exploded.

Within minutes, the entire house was completely destroyed. Two were killed, including Ghulam's wife. Six

others, including Ghulam and five children, suffered life-threatening injuries.

Overwhelmed by the extent of the injuries, local Nijrab Hospital officials looked to the area's most technologically advanced medical facility for help. By nightfall, three trauma beds at CJTH were occupied with surgeons and medics working tirelessly on Hazrat, who experienced third-degree burns to his hands. His daughter Satara and his grandson Ajamal both received severe burns to the face, legs and feet.

Thanks to the countless hours of caring for burns and more than six hours of surgeries for multiple skin grafts, they have begun the long road to recovery.

"I have seen burns before, but it's always hard when it happens to babies," said Staff Sgt. Dequijamin Roberson, of Houston, a 455th Expeditionary Medical Operations Squadron medic stationed at Randolph Airforce Base, Texas. "There's really nothing you can do to get over the shock of

**(Top)** An Airman at the Craig Joint Theater Hospital repositions the hand of a 12-month-old Afghan boy during a procedure in the operating room. The boy was brought to the hospital with significant burns from a propane tank explosion at his home in Kapisa Province. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Erick Saks.)  
**(Right)** A doctor at the Craig Joint Theater Hospital removes the cast from a 12-month-old Afghan child who received significant burns from a propane tank explosion at his home in Kapisa Province. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Erick Saks)





seeing it, whether it is children caught in the cross-fire or accidents like this. It is the reality of where we are. We just focus on doing what we are trained to do."

Many staff members at CJTH develop bonds with their patients; Ajamal and Satara are no exception.

"This is the reason I joined," said U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Mabel Aguirre, of Dallas, a 455th EMOS medic stationed at Lackland Airforce Base, Texas. "I almost cried tears of joy when I got my tasking letter. I love waking up and coming here every day. Obviously, it bothers you to see patients in pain. We try not to focus on that.

"Just like with the U.S. servicemember amputees we see here; if I focus on what caused them to be here it would kill me, but I focus on the progress we make for them. You see the differences in their behavior as they get better."

As Satara clings to her father after the surgery, Ajamal passes the time coloring and being held by medical staff members, the Airmen prepare the family for their final procedures before they leave to go home.

"Satara is going to have follow-up surgery ... to check on her skin grafts, but now most of the lifesaving procedures are behind us," Roberson said. "Now we only have cosmetic stuff to try to give them back their natural look, or as close as we can."


Thanks to the efforts of medical staff at the hospital, these three patients were able to be discharged and returned to their lives.

On their last day in the hospital, the head nurse picked up the doctor's orders for discharge and Hazrat called for a ride home: the future is uncertain for the family.

And staff members said the sting of not seeing them everyday has begun to set in.

"Will it sting when they leave? Of course," Aguirre said. "When I first got here, Satara had dressing all over her legs, now she can walk across the room.

"When they go home you never forget them, you are reminded all the time - whether it's a toy or a spot where they were sitting," said Aguirre, the medic who spent enough time with Ajamal to be able to identify why he cries.

"It's how much you have impacted their lives. Giving them a chance makes all the sacrifice worth it," added Aguirre. 



**(Top)** Ghulam Hazrat hands show the results of third degree burns even after weeks of treatment. Mr. Hazrat, his daughter Satara and grandson Ajamal are patients at the Craig Joint Theater Hospital located on Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, Jan. 10. (Photo by U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Michael Voss)

**(Middle)** Medical technicians, Senior Airmen Mabel Aguirre and Staff Sgt. Dequijamin Roberson deployed to the 455th Expeditionary Medical Operation Squadron tend to Ajamal Hazrat, a patient at the Craig Joint Theater Hospital at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, Jan. 10. (Photo by U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Michael Voss)

**(Right)** Satara holds on to her father, Ghulam, as the Hazrat family leaves the Intensive Care Ward after being discharged from the Craig Joint Theater Hospital at Bagram Airfield Jan. 11. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Sheila deVera)



U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey pins a Silver Star Medal on U.S. Army Spc. Nicholas Robinson of Tacoma, Wash., during a brief ceremony at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

# Silver Star medal presented for herorism

Story and photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Chris McKenna, Task Force Rakkasan Public Affairs

U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey presented a Task Force Leader Rakkasan Soldier with a Silver Star Medal for combat heroism at a brief ceremony at Forward Operating Base Salerno Dec. 23.

"I feel honored to receive this medal," said U.S. Army Spc. Nicholas Robinson, M240B machine gunner with Company D, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. "It's a great opportunity for me to be able to represent my battalion and the division, as well."

Robinson, of Tacoma, Wash., received the medal in what he said was the first combat action he had seen in Afghanistan.

"I bet you can remember the first time each of you saw your first action," Casey said to the formation. "Now, did you all respond the same way Spc. Robinson did?"

Casey went on to tell the stories of recent Medal of Honor awardees and how Robinson's actions were also in keeping with the finest tradition of heroism and courage under fire.

The Army chief of staff said Robinson's actions are an example of what kind of courage is spoken of when talking about heroes.

Robinson explained the events that resulted in his receipt of the Silver Star Medal from actions at the 5th Afghan Border Police compound near Combat Outpost Zerok.

"I was on guard and it was a typical morning. I think I had a

six-hour shift that night. There was a (combat logistics patrol) that was driving to COP Zerok, where the rest of my company was and they had been getting hit that morning," Robinson said. "I heard Apaches firing and .50-(caliber machine guns) all morning, and then it got quiet."

He said it was about 15 minutes before he got off of his guard shift when a mortar round landed roughly 20 meters in front of his guard tower.

"It knocked me back and when I got up I saw an explosion like nothing I had ever seen before going off," Robinson said. "Then gunfire erupted from every possible side you could imagine."

Robinson grabbed a PKM machine gun, fired, and killed an insurgent who carried a rocket-propelled grenade launcher about 35 meters outside of his guard tower.

"There were about 15 more (insurgents) who were coming closer with PKMs, RPGs and AKs," Robinson said. "So I just shot all the ammo I could at them. Then a 240 was brought up because more people were coming up, so I used that."

Another mortar round went off about the same time he ran out of ammunition on the M240B. He then grabbed an AK-47 from one of the border policemen and began shooting, eventually killing a suicide bomber who was nearly 50 feet away.

Even though the incident lasted only about seven minutes, Robinson said he was able to fend off 15 to 20 insurgents.

"Always expect the unexpected," Robinson said. 





## Biden joins servicemembers for breakfast

By U.S. Army Spc. James Wilton  
Task Force Red Bulls

Vice President Joe Biden dropped in on servicemembers stationed at Bagram Airfield, Jan. 12 during breakfast at the Dragon dining facility.

The visit came during an unannounced trip to Afghanistan to meet with top U.S. and Afghan personnel about the status of U.S. forces deployed to Afghanistan and assess progress toward the transition to Afghan-led security.

The vice president first worked his way to a table of Soldiers and Airmen from his home state of Delaware, grabbing a piece of bacon from the buffet table en route. He joked with servicemembers commenting, "We're kind of neighbors," telling stories of back home and joining in the disappointment over some recent sports setbacks.

"We talked about our love of the Philadelphia Eagles and how they had a

disappointing season," said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Chris Cummings, of Dover, Del., with Combined Joint Task Force-101. "It was good to see some of our civilian leadership come in and express their gratitude for the sacrifices the Soldiers and their families are making."

Once he finished with his fellow Delawareans, Biden worked his way around the room asking troops where they are from, making small talk and thanking them for serving their country.


He kept up the conversational and personal feel, sliding in a joke where he could.

"It was a pleasure to get a chance to see Biden, he's a very nice and personable guy," said U.S. Army Spc. Patrick Valant, of Dyersville, Iowa, and a member of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, Task Force Red Bulls.

"He jokingly referenced the fact he had lost the caucus in Iowa during the previous election."

The servicemembers were happy to meet the vice president, many posing for pictures or shaking hands with Biden as he visited their table.

"He is a very warm and wonderful person. Talking to him, it's almost like he has known you before," said U.S. Army Sgt. Mildred Batiste, a Middletown, Del., native with the 131st Transportation Company when asked about meeting the vice president. "He asked me where I was from, and I thanked him for the educational policies he put into place because I am a teacher."

Biden made sure to take his time and visit with each and every one of the approximately 500 servicemembers eating breakfast before he left. On his way out, Biden grabbed a plate of food for the road. 



(Previous page) Vice President Joe Biden bids farewell as he departs at Bagram Airfield, Jan. 12. Biden arrived in Afghanistan on an unannounced visit to assess progress toward the transition to Afghan-led security and to demonstrate the United States' commitment to a long-term partnership with the government of Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Senior Airman Sheila deVera, 1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs)

(Above) U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden pins a Bronze Star Medal for Valor on U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Chad Workman of Visalia, Calif., a platoon sergeant assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division's Task Force Storm based out of Fort Polk, La., during Biden's surprise visit to Forward Operating Base Airborne in eastern Afghanistan Jan. 11. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Brian P. Glass, TF Patriot Public Affairs)

(Right) Vice President Joe Biden jokes with U.S. Marine Cpl. Caitlyn Baker of Orlando, Fl. Biden personally greeted and thanked nearly 500 servicemembers during his surprise breakfast meeting to the Dragon dining facility on Bagram Airfield Jan. 12. (Photo by Sgt. David House, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)





# COMMANDING THE CENTRAL UNIT

*Story by Jon Connor, DCOM-Regional Support,  
NTM-A/CSTC-A Public Affairs  
Photos by Petty Officer 2nd Class John R. Fischer*

Add in the ingredients of father, gardener, carpenter, house cleaner and dynamic leader, and what do you have? In this case, you have the commander of the elite police unit known as the Central Unit located in the southern area of Kabul.

Brig. Gen. Ahmed Fahim Qayem, commander of the Central Unit, Police Zone 101, is setting an example that few in Afghanistan have seen. The general truly cares what everything looks like, the perception it conveys and, most importantly, the unit personnel he leads.

From watching the platoons drill, the unit's level of training and discipline becomes quickly apparent. They march with legs kicking high in the air and in sync with one another. They're attentive and responsive and look to the platoon leaders, and especially Qayem, in a way that shows everyone is trying to do their best. They're not just trying to please, but to be a professional.

*-continues on page 14*

*A member of the Central Unit shows his enthusiasm for Gen. Ahmed Fahim Qayem, the unit's commander. Qayem is a veteran of war, having fought against the Russians.*



Even Qayem can't contain his pride as he claps in joy as his unit marches by him during a demonstration drill.

"If you sweat in training, you well bleed less in the fight," he said.

Qayem commands an elite, quick reactionary force of 325, the mission of which is to break up riots raging out of control in Kabul, for example.

For Qayem, this is an opportunity to lead his way, an opportunity to make a big difference in the lives of those Afghan men who volunteer to serve to bring order to their nation amidst a war-ravaged environment.

"Since I was 8 years old, my intent was to be a good soldier and officer," Qayem said in his office through an interpreter. "To be honest, professional, and do what I was told."

This comes from a leader who has served as a soldier – and artillery officer – and fought with the Mujahideen, the guerrilla fighters who battled the Soviet army from 1979 to 1989, when the Soviets withdrew in defeat. The Soviets invaded in December 1979 to support a recently installed pro-Soviet prime minister. He was also a cavalry officer and fought as a commando as well.

He brings all of this to his command, in a discipline some in the coalition forces might find strict: you can't drink alcohol,

Central Unit personnel are trained to be an elite, quick reactionary force, used for example to quell riots. A new recruit for the unit earns \$165 a month. An average Afghan makes \$8.19 a week.



Gen. Ahmed Fahim Qayem, Central Unit commander tries to serve as an inspiration to his men. Qayem served as a soldier, fighting against the Soviets from 1979 to 1989. As commander of the unit, Qayem tries to maintain a high standard of discipline and training for his men. "If you sweat in training, you well bleed less in the fight," he said.

dip, nor smoke while serving, otherwise you'll be fired.

"Instead of this, I will motivate them to eat and drink healthy foods," Qayem said. Of course, when on leave to visit one's family, your business is your own, he said.

This is the template of the type of person Qayem wants to lead. He wants his men to be disciplined above and beyond the call of duty, and want them to take pride in themselves. For many of his police personnel who come from the mountains and small villages across Afghanistan, this is a rare opportunity for someone looking to change his life.

As a commander, Qayem said his concerns are having an educated police force, the right equipment and making sure his men are well-trained, much like any Western police force.

Part of this training, not surprisingly, involves literacy training taught by three teachers from the Ministry of Interior, Qayem said. Currently, only 14 percent of the recruits for the Afghan National Security Forces are literate.

Asked what his biggest concern is, Qayem said, "That every problem gets solved," citing there are not enough showers and there is the need for improved laundry facilities. His goal, is to make things look like they are in their neighboring countries, he added.

It's apparent that Qayem asks a lot from his unit. But he also gives a lot too.

"This country has to do good," he said. "Friends on the coalition forces support

me. I have good support from my higher officers."

What the future holds, Qayem can't say. But he does know how to get there.

"Your police are for the service of the people. Come join to help and make this country stand by its own feet," he said to his countrymen.

"Back in the day," Qayem reflected, doctors, engineers and other like professionals would join the military and passed their advanced knowledge to the soldiers they served with which paid dividends. In fact, it used to be mandatory that a minister's son serve in the military.

Serving was mandatory as the government used send 18-year-old men a letter informing them of their service, which back then, meant a soldier received a prized benefit like a passport.

"All the good-looking girls would marry a soldier," he said. "Now they're not interested in the uniform. It was not like it is now."

That being said, things are definitely looking up for the Afghan National Police.

A new recruit starts at 8,250 Afghanis or \$165 a month. Pay, of course, goes up with rank and time service. And, those in this unit receive a hazardous duty incentive, which brings in another \$45 a month.

In comparison, Aziz Shams, a spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Finance, said in an article published last year, said the average Afghan income was \$426 a year or \$8.19 a week.

# U.S., Polish forces capture materials, insurgents in eastern Ghazni Province



Material seized from an improvised explosive device factory is displayed. Soldiers from Task Force White Eagle's Battle Group Alpha and Company C, conducted a combined patrol in a village in Andar District, and discovered the IED factory, killed two insurgents and detained three insurgents. (Courtesy photo.)

Story by Artur Weber, Task Force White Eagle Public Affairs and U.S. Army 1st Lt. R.J. Peek, Task Force Rakkasan Public Affairs

Soldiers with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division conducted a combined operation with Polish Battle Group A in Bashir Village, Andar District, in eastern Ghazni Province to cordon and search an insurgent safehaven.

Polish and U.S. forces and local Afghan Uniformed Police worked together to find four caches of bomb-making materials, a military chest rack, three AK-47s and two hand grenades. They also detained three insurgents.

Intelligence reports shared between Polish and U.S. forces indicated the village serves as a staging point for numerous insurgent attacks along Highway 1, the main highway in Afghanistan.

"The integration of our respective liaisons working with each other's headquarters has allowed us to greatly advance our information sharing," said

U.S. Army Capt. Robert Kellum from Nashville, Tenn., intelligence officer for 3rd Bn., 187 Inf. "By working together, we have successfully located insurgents and their caches that we could not have found on our own."

After the discovery of the caches and while en route to their home base,

Soldiers from Task Force White Eagle and from Polish Battle Group A seized materials used to create improvised explosive device in Andar District in eastern Ghazni Province. The joint forces combined with local Afghan Uniformed Police to seize bomb-making materials, hand grenades and AK-47s. The area is a known safe haven for insurgents, allowing them to attack Highway 1. The appearance of insurgents after the raid indicates the materials were very important to the enemy. (Courtesy photo)



soldiers identified two insurgents moving on a motorcycle with a machine gun and an AK-47. They positively identified the two as threats, engaged them and killed both insurgents in a firefight.

The appearance of insurgents after the discovery of the improvised explosive device factory gave coalition forces an indication of how important the cache was to area insurgents.

"Today's operation (was a) thoroughly prepared action, which significantly weakened the potential rebels," said Polish Lt. Col. Jaroslaw Górowski, TF White Eagle's Battle Group A commander. "It is very possible that the IEDs from this (cache) were used a few days ago to conduct attack on my soldiers. The consistency in action and active cooperation with U.S. Soldiers from the TF Iron gave measurable results."

U.S. Soldiers echoed the comments.

"This combined mission with the Polish near the seam of our respective areas of operation was very successful," said U.S. Army Capt. Trevor Saunders of Phillips Ranch, Calif., executive officer of Co. C, 3rd Bn., 187 Inf. "Continued cooperation between Task Force White Eagle and Task Force Iron Rakkasan will prevent the use of these seams as safe havens for insurgents. This operation also paved the way for future combined operations with the Polish battle group."

"By working together we have successfully located insurgents and their caches that we could not have found on our own."

-U.S. Army Capt. Robert Kellum



# Warrior Watch

U.S. Army Spc.  
**Brian Stowe**

*Story and photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Janell Emerson, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade*

The origin of U.S. Army Spc. Brian Stowe's military career isn't much different from other Soldiers' stories. Like many troops, Stowe, of Elkmont, Ala., joined the Army in June 2008 and attended basic and advanced individual training as a human resources specialist at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Stowe has deployed twice since his enlistment. He spent seven months in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and is currently deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom at Forward Operating Base Shank with Task Force Knighthawk, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division.

But this is where his story becomes a little bit different.

Stowe's musical ambitions have led him to earn a recording contract in the Christian contemporary genre.

"I sent my song to (a record label), not really looking for a contract so much," Stowe humbly explained. "I was really hoping for a critique and just wanting to know what they would think."

In June 2010, Stowe received a reply and feedback from the record label in the form of a personal phone call where executives offered him a recording contract.

"I was a bit overjoyed, then a little disappointed because we were about to deploy," added Stowe.

The company's executives decided they were willing to wait.

"They told me we could start recording once I returned, so it looks like November or December of next year I'll take some leave and start recording," he said.

Stowe is not alone in his endeavor. As the lead singer of his group, Sanctify Me, his band includes his younger brother Johnathan on bass and school friend Brittany Gibson on guitar. The trio has played together since high school.

He laughed as he recalled the moment when his band and family reacted to the news.

"They were very happy and excited, of course. They were almost more overjoyed than I was," said Stowe.

Stowe credits his wife Evelyn and the rest of his family in Elkmont as the sustaining factor for his music and ambitions.

"I have awesome support with everything... You know, this is our dream," he said.

The dream began during his sophomore year of high school. Stowe was given his first instrument, a white First Act electric guitar.

He quickly discovered his natural affinity with music by teaching himself to play the guitar, along with picking up the drums, keyboard and bass soon after.

Creating a band was a natural evolution.

For now, Stowe said he enjoys the camaraderie and support of his unit and looks to their continued backing as he moves forward with his music. The soft-spoken Soldier said his fellow troops encourage his musical aspirations.

"They support me, they keep my morale up," said Stowe.

At the prompting of his co-workers, Stowe works on his lyrics and sharpens his skills with several instruments available at the local chapel and, at times, in the office.

Spc. Nicholas MacAlpin, TF Knighthawk chaplain assistant, said his friend's goal of becoming the next success in contemporary Christian music is a no-fail aspiration.

"He is the most amazing guy I have ever known in my life," said MacAlpin, a native of Painesville, Ohio. "He is a man who encompasses the Army Values and his music surpasses most artists for his age."





“These are all my brothers. They take care of us.”

-U.S. Army Spc. Lauren Hyman

# BROTHERS, SISTERS IN ARMS

Story and photos by U.S. Air Force Capt. Peter Shinn,  
Task Force Bastogne Public Affairs

The Soldiers of the 64th Military Police Company assigned to Combat Outpost Fortress in Afghanistan's Kunar Province have seen plenty of action since they arrived at the outpost nearly nine months ago.

*continues on page 19*

Since then, the MPs have been in contact with the enemy roughly 100 times while conducting route clearance patrols and during dismounted operations with infantry elements.

Fortunately, the MPs at COP Fortress have a couple of “combat multipliers” in U.S. Army Spc. Cristine Gallagher and U.S. Army Spc. Lauren Hyman.

Gallagher, of Victorville, Calif., is a machine-launched grenade gunner. Hyman, of Texarkana, Texas, is an armored vehicle driver. They are the only female Soldiers assigned to COP Fortress.

Teammates and superiors alike praise Gallagher and Hyman's professionalism and competence.

“Spc. Hyman and Spc. Gallagher have been complete combat multipliers. We've been able to do a lot of things you wouldn't normally be able to do,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Andrew Hagerman of Lewisville, Texas, Hyman's and Gallagher's squad leader. “For example, during Operation Enterprise, when searching for a female, it was a lot easier for us to get through villages having (them) with us, because we were able to go into female rooms and search...”

Another squad leader, U.S. Army Sgt. Logan Curry of Harrisburg, Ill., echoed Hagerman's assessment of Hyman and Gallagher, though Curry did have one caveat.

“They just flat, outperform everybody sometimes; except me, of course,” Curry said with a grin.

“They're squared away,” said Pfc. Mark Diaz of Sacramento, Calif. “They know exactly what they're doing, and they do 110 percent all the time.”

When told about how superiors and peers lauded her and Gallagher, Hyman reacted modestly.

“You know, I feel like we're just like anybody else,” Hyman said. “We're just Soldiers. We do what they ask us to do and we try to get the job done. I don't think we're anything special from any of the guys.”

Gallagher, who has 28 confirmed enemy kills, described her combat experience in similar terms.

“I think of it as a learning experience,” Gallagher said. You're put in a situation where you have seconds to think on something and you just have to react. I enjoy it, but it's also something I won't forget.”

Gallagher and Hyman both spoke of their fellow Soldiers with a respect forged under fire.

“They're like my brothers,” Gallagher

said. “I protect them and they protect me.”

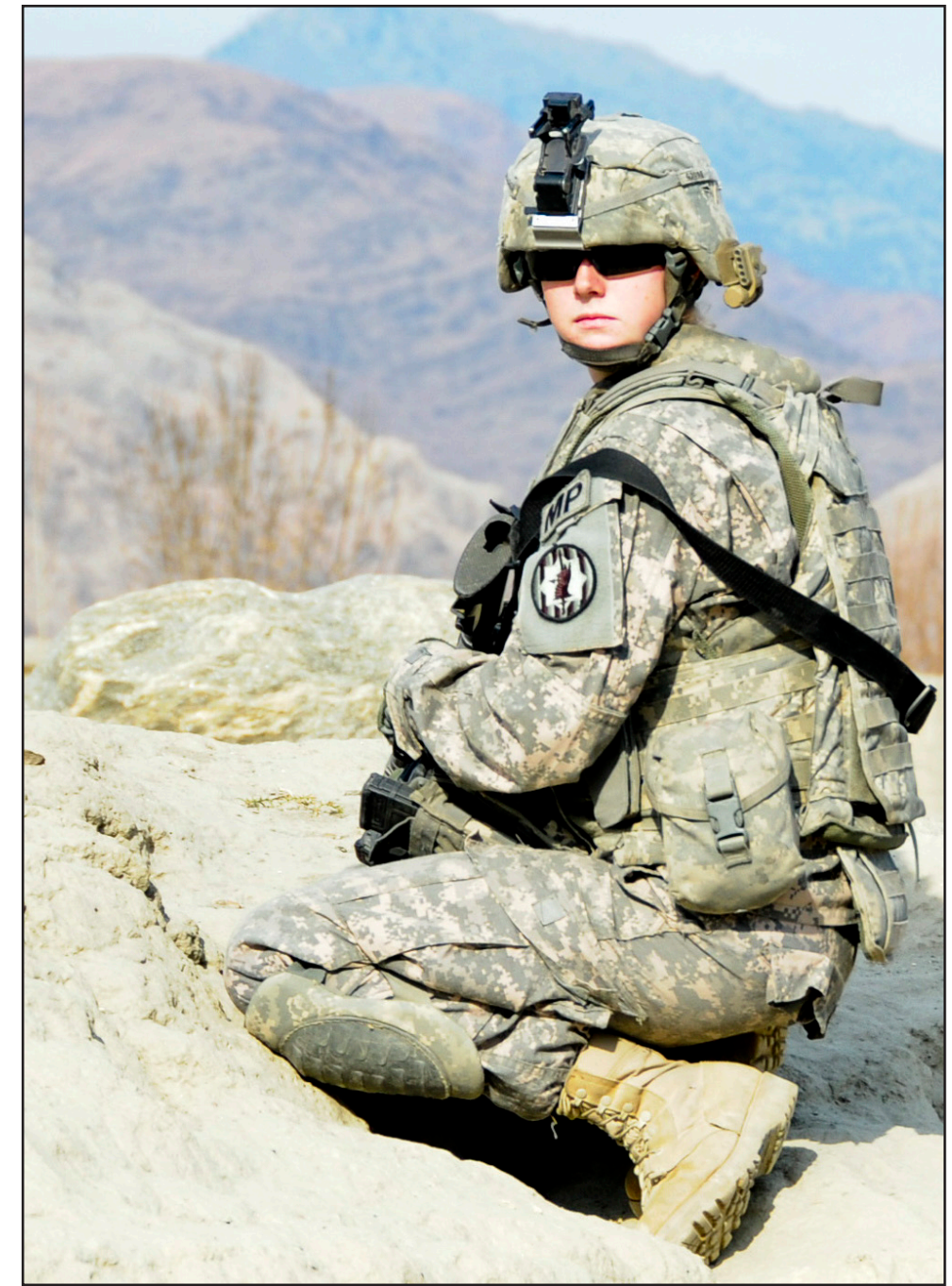
“These are all my brothers,” said Hyman. “They take care of us. They treat us just like they would them.”

Diaz responded with the same sentiment. “I consider them to be sisters because we've been with each other so long that you just can't react anyway else,” he said.

Gallagher and Hyman both have dangerous jobs. A fellow Soldier with the 64th MPs, Pfc. Barbara Vieyra of Mesa, Ariz., died of wounds suffered when

insurgents attacked her convoy with an improvised explosive device and rocket propelled grenades Sep. 18. Hyman could not talk about her friend's death while Gallagher shared her feelings about their fallen comrade.

“As much as you don't want things like this to happen, it does, and you have to keep going,” Gallagher said. “I mourn her when we can, and she's always in my thoughts, but I also go out each and every day knowing, that one day, the people who did it will get their due.”



(Above) U.S. Army Spc. Cristine Gallagher of Victorville, Calif., machine-launched grenade gunner for the 64th Military Police Company at Combat Outpost Fortress, takes an overwatch position during a foot patrol through the Noor Gul District of Afghanistan's Kunar Province. Gallagher is one of two females assigned to COP Fortress. (Previous page) U.S. Army Spc. Lauren Hyman of Texarkana, Tex., armored vehicle driver for the 64th Military Police Company at Combat Outpost Fortress, takes part in a foot patrol through the Noor Gul District of Afghanistan's Kunar Province. Their team has been in contact with the enemy approximately 100 times in the nine months they have been assigned to COP Fortress.



# Unsafe for the Taliban

## *ANA takes the lead with Soldiers to clear a former Taliban stronghold*

Story and photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell,  
Task Force Bastogne Public Affairs

Getting in position behind some rocks, U.S. Army Sgt. Jeremy A. Godkin of Lyons, N.Y., a sniper assigned to Troop A, 1st Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Panther, attached to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division uses his M14 rifle to check out a village for Taliban activity during a joint patrol in the Sherzad District Dec. 23.

It was dark in a small village in the Sherzad District in eastern Afghanistan on the night of Dec. 23.

But not dark enough for a Soldier in Troop A, 1st Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, attached to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, to see two heads silhouetted in a house eyeing the joint patrol.

“The gunner spotted a couple of people looking over what looked to be a wall at us,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Eric D. Vantyle, a cavalry scout team leader assigned to Troop A, 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav., Task Force Panther. “All he could see was there were two heads and they were peeking over the wall. He hit them with a spotlight and they ducked out of sight.”

The joint patrol spotted the two people after coming across a possible improvised explosive device on a small road during a recent operation to clear western Nangarhar Province.

Quickly, Afghan National Army soldiers from 2nd Company, 3rd Kandak, 2nd Infantry Brigade, 201st Corps, and Vantyle’s troops went to find out who the two heads were.

“We knocked on a couple of doors and it turned out to be couple of little girls,” Vantyle said. “I think it should make the villagers feel a little safer and have a little security in their life. That’s how I’d feel if I were in their shoes. I’m sure that’s how my kids would feel.”

Vantyle, a father of two from Walton, N.Y., said they were in the area because it has traditionally been a Taliban stronghold, but the Taliban are no longer safe there.

“I think it’s definitely telling them that we’re coming for them, but the Taliban already knows that,” Vantyle continued. “I’d like to think that it’s also telling them that we’re not leaving ‘til the job’s done. We’re going to get their army trained up and have them doing missions so we don’t have to.”

The joint operation was just another example of the ANA soldiers stepping up to help their own country, Vantyle added.

“If the villagers can see us down here working together, then they can think that they also can help rebuild this country together with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,”

explained ANA Capt. Amid Mohammed, commander of 2nd Co., 3rd Kandak, 2nd Bde., 201st Corps.

Since the beginning of the operation, there has been no sign of the Taliban. Mohammed said that’s because they were scared to fight so many soldiers during such a show of force.

“We are here together to do this mission and it shows that we are strong, so the Taliban doesn’t want to fight us,” said Mohammed. “The important thing is that we are working together and learning from each other to get better every day.”

U.S. Army Capt. Jordan G. Bradford, a TF Panther plans officer from Little Rock, Ark., shared the same view as Mohammed.

“Right now the resistance we have received in Sherzad has been significantly less than we initially thought,” he said. “We’ve gone out there in such force that the Taliban has run away from the area... We tell the people, ‘We’re here to help you out and these Taliban guys have run away.’”

Right now, Bradford said what people want is safety and roads clear of IEDs.

“If there’s an IED in the area, the women and kids didn’t put that IED there,” said Bradford. “Someone who wanted to do someone some harm put that IED there. The best thing that we can do is to go in there with our assets and safely clean up and dispose of the IED. Then make sure we tell the local population that these Taliban guys put this IED in the road to hurt somebody.”

That’s exactly what the ANA and Vantyle do: make it safe for Afghans.

“We’re working with the ANA and putting our faces out there together,” Vantyle said. “We checked out an IED that ended up not being one; all in all, mission accomplished.”

After more than 24 hours driving Vantyle and the other troops returned to Forward Operating Base Connolly for a rest. But, as soon as they parked their vehicles, they were already loading it up with new supplies to depart on another joint patrol. With the Taliban on the run in Sherzad District, the ANA and Soldiers of Troop A aren’t giving them any time to get very far. 🇺🇸





Soldiers assigned to Company C, and Afghan National Security Forces work to gain high ground before moving into a hostile village on the third day of a six-day dismounted operation

## Soldiers, Afghans work to secure Baraki Barak

Story and photos by  
U.S. Army Sgt. Cooper T. Cash  
Task Force Patriot Public Affairs

Afghan National Army soldiers took the lead as U.S. and Afghan forces quietly moved from the gates of the combat outpost, over fields and through villages toward known hostile regions.

Soldiers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Task Force Storm, and Afghan National Security Forces pushed through western Baraki Barak on a six-day foot patrol to eliminate Taliban influence and establish a Government of the Islamic

Republic of Afghanistan presence. “We are working with the ANSF to secure the populace and deny enemy influence in the Cheheltan subdistrict of Baraki Barak to legitimize GIRoA,” said U.S. Army Capt. Paul A. Rothlisberger, Co. C commander.

Soldiers assigned to Co. C have been working hand in hand with Afghan National Police and the ANA in the district. Until recently, coalition forces have led most operations.

“This mission was led by the ANA from the beginning. It has been planned and is being executed by the ANA,” said Rothlisberger of Arlington, Va. “This is the largest operation this ANA brigade has planned.”

Historically, the winter has seen a decrease in Taliban influence.

“The winter campaign is taking advantage of the lull of insurgent operations to expand the security provided by the ANSF,” said Rothlisberger. “Significant progress has been made by the ANSF in planning

and executing a night and day presence in the (area of operations).”

The extensive mission took the patrol through remote areas in the district.

“Some villages have not been visited by us in quite a while,” said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Daniel G. Walters, a platoon leader assigned to Co. C. “Having the ANA roll into the remote villages shows they care about them, regardless of how isolated they are.”

Walters of Greensboro, Ala., explained it is different to see ANSF leading operations in villages.

“The people saw ANA and ANP leading the mission, which seemed to instill confidence in GIRoA.”

During the operation, the ANSF detained 13 suspects, recovered about 200 pounds of ammonium nitrate, which is used to make explosive devices, confiscated 25 kilograms of hashish and uncovered one weapons cache. ☺



U.S. Army Spc. Mark E. Fielding of Benton, La., and rifleman assigned to Company C, provides security for Afghan National Security Forces on day five of a six-day dismounted operation. Soldiers of Co. C and ANSF pushed through western Baraki Barak on a six-day foot patrol to eliminate Taliban influence and establish a Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan presence.

## Classes, dog help servicemembers fight stress while in Afghanistan



U.S. Army Sgt. Shawn Fouste of Decatur, Ill., noncommissioned officer in charge of the Freedom Restoration Center with the 455th Expeditionary Wing, Task Force Med, plays with Timmy, a therapy dog, at Bagram Airfield. Petting a dog can help lower stress, a tool that the center's staff uses to help servicemembers dealing with stress-related issues.

Story and photo by U.S. Army Spc. Adam L. Mathis,  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

Before coming here, I was having more difficulty being myself and reacting like I normally would to everyday situations,” said U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Spencer Ledyard of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C.

Ledyard had two months left in Afghanistan, meaning two months of difficult situations and the feeling of having lost himself. So, like more than 500 servicemembers before him, he accepted help from a place with a 97 percent success rate: the Freedom Restoration Center at Bagram Airfield.

Any number of hardships can drive servicemembers to the center. For some, the problems may be temporary. But for others the problems may be more long-term and can lead to even more problems, such as a loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, and a tendency to avoid people. Eventually, these problems can affect job performance.

“... we all have that ability to be resilient, some of us just don't use it.”

-U.S. Army Capt. Jason Judkins

The main mission of the Freedom Restoration Center is to get servicemembers back to duty, said U.S. Army Capt. Jason Judkins of Greenbay, Wisc., officer in charge of the center and serving with the 455th Expeditionary Wing, Task Force Med. “So, when they go back—which is the expectation, back to duty—they have these new coping skills that they can use upon to facilitate completion of their duty.”

Getting people back to duty involves two things. The first is a series of classes on topics such as stress, anger management, sleeping and resiliency. Judkins said these classes are not designed to cure the problems of those in the center, but to provide tools servicemembers need to deal with everyday issues.

“One thing we focus on is a warrior mentality. A lot of people think a warrior is just someone who wears a uniform and carries a weapon,” Judkins said. “Well it's actually the mentality: What are they going to do? What's going to be the thought process when things aren't going the best? Are they going to kind of crumble, or are they going to be able to ... get past that? You know, we all have that ability to be resilient, some of us just don't use it.”

The second aspect of the center's curriculum is relaxation. A typical day at the center always involves time for attendees to relax and have some fun. This includes games, television or, for those in need of some affection, Timmy.

Timmy is a golden Labrador retriever, one of two therapy dogs currently in Afghanistan and a coping tool for those at the center. U.S. Army Capt. Theresa Schillreff of Thuckahoe, N.J., OIC of outreach and prevention at the center with the 254th Medical Detachment, Task Force 62 Med, said simply petting a dog lowers the heart rate, reducing stress.

“Just seeing people interacting with the dog, you will see people's personality change, their whole body relaxes, they're smiling; they're in a better mood once the dog leaves,” Schillreff said.

The work and relaxation has combined to produce positive results. Schillreff said the center has returned 97 percent of those who come to duty and has been able to improve the lives of those who even the staff does not expect to be able to help.

“We had one servicemember when we first got here, about March-April time frame, this really big, rugged infantry guy, just not the kind of guy you would think would do a program like this,” Judkins said. “He just had a stern look, didn't smile, we were just like, ‘Wow, are we going to be able to help this guy out.’ And by day two he was like a big teddy bear. I mean, literally, he just opened up and.”

The same tools that helped this servicemember also helped Ledyard. With the course ending for him, he was able to look confidently ahead to his remaining two months in Afghanistan.

“The primary message of the course, as I understand it, is resiliency to be achieved through the phrase ‘I am in control of my attitudes and emotions and therefore I can deal with each situation by stabilizing internal and external conflicts,’” Ledyard said. ☺



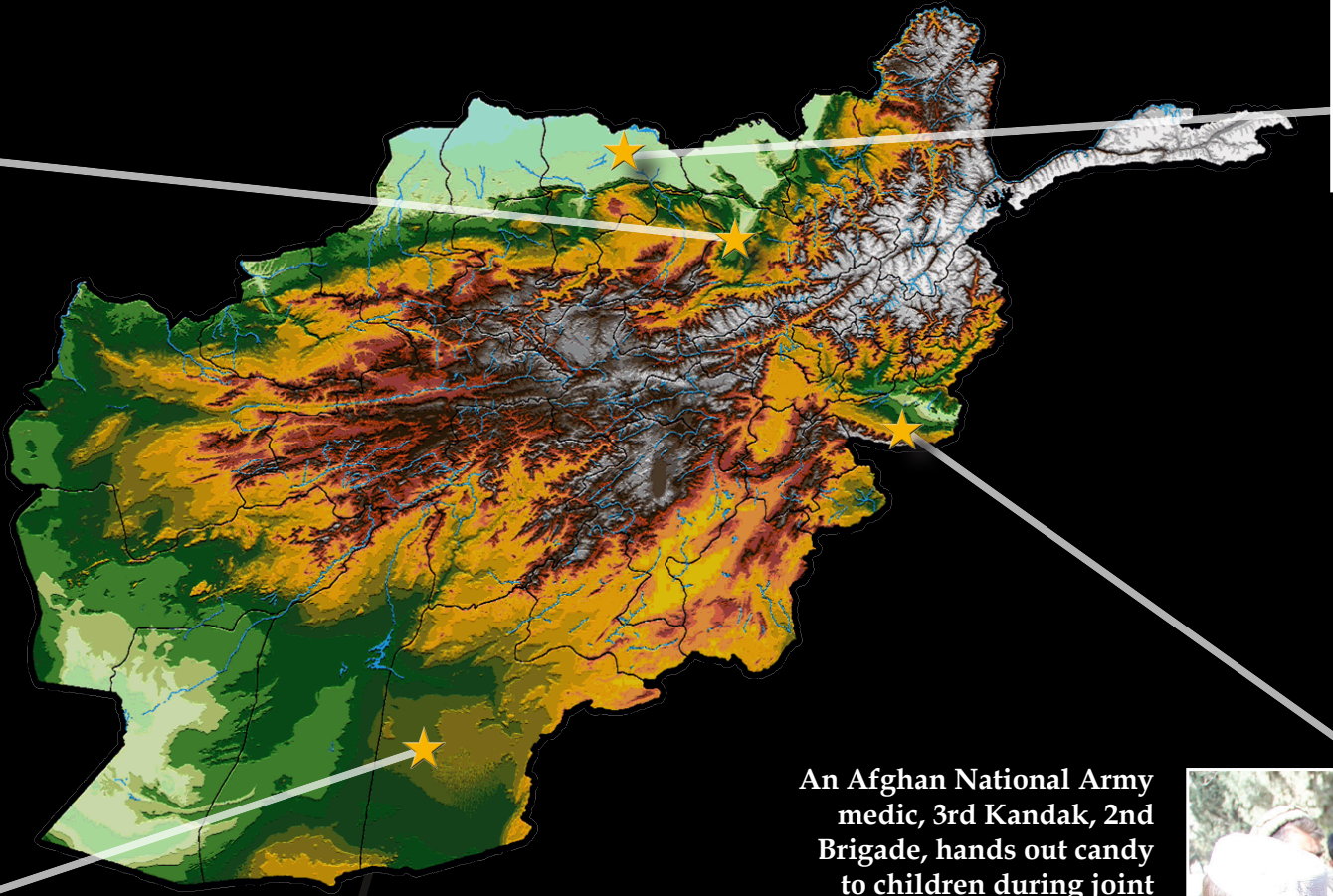
# Goodwill across Afghanistan:



After completing a two-day course on beehives, graduates receive their beehive and supplies in hopes of making honey and splitting their hives in the spring for extra income. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Kristina L. Gupton, Task Force Red Bulls Public Affairs)

# ISAF and ANSF Reach Out

Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team civil affairs specialist U.S. Army Sgt Patrick Reilly of Troy, Mich., explains to a Nawan Dak clinic leader how vitamins are used during a visit to the clinic. Upon learning that some local Afghans suffer from vitamin deficiencies during the winter, Reilly's friends and family took it upon themselves to send vitamins. (Photo by French Army Staff Sgt. Romain Beaulinette, Task Force Lafayette Public Affairs)



An Afghan National Army medic, 3rd Kandak, 2nd Brigade, hands out candy to children during joint operations in Sherzad District, Nangarhar Province. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Andy Barrera)



Sayed Anwar, a local shop owner, discusses the current economic situation in Mata Khan. Due to the construction of a new road, shopkeepers have already seen progress in the availability of supplies from Sharana, the capital of Paktika Province. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ashley N. AVECILLA, Paktika Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)



# Programs fight malnutrition in Paktika



An Afghan child carries a bag of Strong Food paste, a combination of flour, sugar, vegetable oil and essential vitamins. The Strong Food program makes and distributes a nutritional supplement for malnourished children. This program not only gives jobs to the local Afghans, but also gives the Afghans a way to improve their own community. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Ashley N. Avecilla Paktika Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)

Story by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Emily Chilson,  
Paktika Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

Thanks to the Strong Food and Clean Water programs the health of Paktika’s women and children is improving. The Strong Food program provides families with Strong Food paste, a combination of flour, sugar, vegetable oil and essential vitamins that is mixed with water to nourish children. The Clean Water program ensures the

water used in conjunction with Strong Food is clean by running it through ionizers. More than 300 patients in Sharana, Paktika’s capital city, are currently registered with Strong Food, while nearly 200 are registered with Clean Water. Although the programs were initiated by the Paktika Provincial Reconstruction Team, they are managed by Afghans. “We started this program one year and three months ago,” said Dr. Baaz

Mahmmadi, the contractor for Strong Food and Clean Water in Sharana. The doctor demonstrated how he weighs and measures babies enrolled in the program. The age, weight and height of each baby is recorded and then re-recorded at subsequent visits to monitor progress. The PRT medical officer, U.S. Navy Lt. j.g. Tamora Holland of Pittsburgh, works with Mahmmadi on a regular basis to ensure the programs are on track. “I’m here once a month to come and taste the food and inspect the process,” Holland said. “Just as in any country, health is an important part of Afghanistan. There are many children who have died being here just from food and water alone.” Holland explained that the Afghan Ministry of Public Health is making these health issues a priority right now. “Although they are trying very hard, Afghanistan is having a hard time implementing this into their own medical system,” she said. “In the meantime, they don’t want any more of their people to suffer.” Strong Food is intended for children age 5 and under, as well as for lactating mothers, as needed. However, those who qualify for Strong Food must be stable and meet specific criteria. The yellow Strong Food powder comes in individual plastic bags that families can take home and mix with water to form the Strong Food paste. According to Holland, the water mixed with the powder is just as important as the powder itself. As for the Clean Water program, Holland explained that water essentially becomes a hypo-chlorite solution, which is basically bleach, after running it through an ionizer with table salt. “It’s safe to consume when diluted,” Holland said. “That’s why they get the small bottles of concentrate and add only 10 milliliters to the water they acquire from the wadis and wells for consumption. It makes the water clean and perfectly safe. “The program is really good as far as addressing nutrition, but it’s also very good for the community in general,” Holland explained. “All the supplies are obtained locally. This helps the local vendors, which helps the economy and also gives jobs to the local people as well. It also makes them feel like they are giving back and participating in building their own system of healthcare.”



An elder from the Manogai District gathers with others to elect the members of the officially recognized U.S. Agency for International Development Afghan Social Outreach Program shura. The ASOP shura program provides salaries for the elected members of officially recognized shuras known as District Community Councils. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Adam Grant, Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)

## Elders elect shura representatives

More than 250 gather in Mangai District to fill 45 seats on local council

Story by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Nicholas Mercurio  
Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team

More than 250 elders from the Manogai District descended upon the governor’s compound in Asadabad Dec. 9 to hold elections determining the 45 members of the official district shura, formally called the District Community Council. The transition of the pre-existing Manogai shura, formed in April, to the officially recognized community council brings the total of U.S. Agency for International Development Afghan Social Outreach Program-funded community councils in Kunar to seven. Manogai, located in the heart of the contentious Pech Valley, is currently the epicenter of violence in Kunar. However, the danger did not stop the elders from

attending the elections, a positive sign of their willingness to participate in the legitimized Afghan process. Opening the ceremony, Haji Sher Badir, Manogai District subgovernor, spoke in glowing terms of the previous shura and shared his optimism for the future. “The previous shura was very successful,” he said. “I am proud that we can come here together as brothers to choose our new shura.” The previous shura Badir spoke of began as a response to corruption in the Pech Valley when 150 community leaders and elders held a public jirga in the Nangalam Hotel, Manogai District, March 5. However, instead of ostracizing their community from the Afghan government, in effect, the people of Manogai became closer to the legitimate parts of the

government by formalizing a community role in development and governance. These ties, which were strengthened in April when 250 key leaders from numerous tribes in Manogai established the district shura, were further reinforced by achieving the official recognition of their representative body by the provincial government during the elections Dec. 9. Two members of the provincial administration even call Manogai District home. One, Mea Hassan, the director of the Provincial Council who was born and raised in Manogai, provided encouragement to the elders assembled. “Manogai District is the most diverse in Kunar, and we will make its shura something to be proud of, an example for Gov. (Fazlullah) Wahidi and for the rest of Kunar.”



# Coordination centers take shape



Afghan Uniformed Police Col. Fazel Ahmad Wasiq, Deputy Operational Coordination Center, Regional East Commander Afghan Army Col. Agha Muhammad and Lt. Col. Michael Kelley, senior advisor to the Gardez OCCR and OCCR Operations Officer, listen to a morning battle-update-brief at OCCR East. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Derek Nelson, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)

Story by U.S. Army Capt. Kenneth A. Stewart, 17th Public Affairs Detachment

Think of it as an Afghan version of the Department of Homeland Security. The mission of the Operational Coordination Center, Regional East is to coordinate the efforts of an alphabet soup mix of Afghan security organizations in response to national and local crises. The OCCR is led by Afghan National Army Brig. Gen Muhammad Daood (Andarabi) and Afghan Uniformed Police Col. Fazel Ahmad Wasiq. Daood and Wasiq have a combined 61 years of public service. Each officer brings specialized skills to the OCCR. Daood's years of military service complement Wasiq's decades of police work. Daood and Wasiq are assisted by U.S. Army Lt. Col. Michael Kelley of Sarasota, Fla., senior advisor to the Gardez OCCR. He works side by side with Daood and Wasiq to solve complex problems that require coordination between the coalition and various Afghan national security forces. Kelley is uniquely suited to serve in the OCCR. He is a member of Afghan Hands, a language and cultural immersion

initiative intended to build trust between the military and local populations in Afghanistan. Kelley also has years of special operations and civil affairs experience. He has taught graduate-level courses on terrorism and has a passion for connecting to multicultural audiences. The layout of the Gardez OCCR reflects its unique mission. Representatives from nearly every security force in eastern Afghanistan surround a large central room. Staff members sit side by side to share information and plan future operations. The integration of American, Polish and Afghan units at the OCCR is a model of successful international partnership. Despite the group's diversity, there is a genuine sense of cooperation that pervades the organization. Western and Afghan forces at the OCCR even put aside their religious differences to pray together prior to each mission. "We are a big family," said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Rolando Colon Jr. of New York, operations sergeant major and non-commissioned officer in charge of the OCCR East. "Our ANA partners know us at a personal level."

Colon described the manner in which he and his Afghan partners joke with one another and share tea as well as office space. He attributes his ability to work with other cultures to his Latin ancestry. "As a member of the Latin culture, I know what it feels like to have to overcome communication and cultural barriers," said Colon. In Ghazni Province, the Operational Coordination Center, Provincial performs OCCR duties at the provincial level. The OCCP Ghazni shares the OCCR's philosophy: "We are not politicians just exchanging words," said Polish Naval Cmdr. Jaroslaw Wypijewski, senior advisor to the Ghazni OCCP. "We are brothers in arms. When you put boots on the ground, that speaks louder than words." Wypijewski brings a unique perspective to the OCCP and OCCR missions. He witnessed firsthand his nation's transition from totalitarianism to democracy and seeks to apply the lessons learned by his nation to Afghanistan. "We have learned how to use nonkinetic solutions from our own (Polish) history," said Wypijewski. "We were able

to transition from communism to a free and democratic Poland without violence. Those same lessons can be applied here in Afghanistan." Wypijewski's OCCP sits alongside a stretch of Highway 1 in Ghazni. It is not an isolated outpost. By sitting in the heart of the city, the OCCP maintains access to the people it serves. This level of access poses challenges, but it also pays dividends. Despite the relative infancy of the organization, it still has neither an operations or an intelligence officer, the OCCP has been able to defuse some potentially deadly situations. In one example of nonkinetic combined action, OCCP staff members learned of a planned demonstration in the heart of the city. Two local politicians felt they had been treated unfairly during recent elections and threatened to take to the streets. OCCP officers recognized a demonstration in a congested area could quickly get out of hand. They met the demonstration organizers at their homes to discuss their grievances and helped them to organize a media conference in lieu of a mass demonstration. Their solution defused a potentially dangerous situation and offered the aggrieved parties a healthy venue in which to vent their frustrations. The OCCPs and OCCRs blooming across Afghanistan are still a work in progress. They are in the first phase of their development, but they have lofty goals. In the future, they will have their own quick reaction forces and be able to take tips from local nationals. (Right) Afghan Border Police Lt. Col. Muhammad Salim, an intelligence officer listens during a meeting of the Operational Coordination Center, Regional East. The provincial side of the OCCR, the Operational Coordination Center, Provincial, has been practicing non-violent operations, convincing two politicians to not hold a potentially dangerous rally. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Derek Nelson, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)

"We are brothers in arms. When you put boots on the ground, that speaks louder than words."

Dispatchers are being trained in Kabul for the Guardians of Peace, an OCCR initiative that provides monetary rewards to local citizens for reporting criminal and insurgent activity. Despite the cooperation and recent successes of the OCCRs and OCCPs, there are still significant challenges that must be tackled. Polish servicemembers at the Ghazni OCCP sleep six men to a room built for one and have to share cots. They have also had to work as carpenters, plumbers and electricians to keep the OCCP functioning due to maintenance contract issues. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Larry Daley of Preston, Mass., senior advisor to the Wardak OCCP, described similar challenges but seemed unfazed by the austere conditions. "Sometimes less is more," said Daley. "If we had more space, we'd need more power, more power means more generators; more generators create a greater demand for fuel. After a while, we would be spending all of our time maintaining

ourselves and be unable to focus our mission." Challenges aside, staff members are hopeful. "In the two months I have been here, (the Afghan staff at OCCP Ghazni) have become well orientated to task and organization. The staff knows our priorities and expectations," said Wypijewski. Kelley pointed to the successful organization of combined logistics patrols as a sign of progress. He also noted the recently approved selection of a site in downtown Gardez, which will eventually serve as the permanent home of OCCR. Daley gave his team high marks. "Our ANA, AUP and ISAF personnel work together extremely well." He also lauded the relationship between OCCP Wardak and local battle space owners. The future of the OCCR program is yet to be written, but after spending several days traveling with OCCR staff and visiting their subordinates units, the future seems bright indeed.





# W Safety Watch

## Fire Prevention

Story by Capt. Ron McKimmy, CJTF-101

Fire prevention is a very important area. This is the biggest danger to anyone who resides in wooden structures, i.e., B-huts or other combustible structures. Studies have shown that fire and smoke will consume a typical B-hut in less than four minutes. It will be fully consumed in less than 16 minutes and nearly burn it to the ground in less than 29 minutes. B-huts were originally constructed to serve as temporary housing but they continue to serve well past their expected service life, so the wood is very dry and extremely susceptible to fire. We mitigate the risk by installing smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. Each room must have a smoke alarm. Rooms that are partitioned with walls that do not extend to the ceiling are not required to have an individual smoke alarm; instead the smoke alarm just requires a central location to be effective. Some areas in Afghanistan have problems with dust. This dust is very fine and can set off the smoke alarm. Soldiers have been known to remove the batteries so the alarm won't go off as a result of dust. These actions disable the smoke detector and leave them without any fire detection capabilities. Disabling the smoke detector for any reason is very dangerous and is prohibited. To mitigate the dust problem, keep the smoke alarm clean by removing the battery and blowing it clean with canned air. Regular maintenance is important to maintaining the smoke alarm. Replace the batteries as soon as the smoke alarm starts beeping or replace the battery a minimum of twice a year. Maintenance and testing work together to ensure the smoke alarm is ready and working when required. A good maintenance routine is to test the smoke alarms when the monthly fire extinguishers checks are completed.

**Heating** is also a major factor in fire prevention. Space heaters with an exposed electric element are major causes of fire. When something flammable comes into contact with this element, fire ensues.

Any type of heater is prohibited in accordance with the CJTF-101 Safety SOP. I'm sure most of us in shared living quarters would like to cover up some of the

foul odors that emanate from our neighbors. Some use scented candles and pot-pourri cookers to do this. These things are prohibited because they create fire hazards. Burning any type of candle is prohibited.

**Fire extinguishers** are required for every living area. At a minimum, one fire extinguisher should be mounted by each entrance/exit door. Additional fire extinguishers can be located in other areas where there is a potential for fire.

All fire extinguishers require a monthly inspection to ensure they are serviceable and ready for use. Most of the time you will find fire extinguishers mounted on brackets on the wall. Occasionally, you will find fire extinguishers sitting on wooden stands. This is authorized. At no time should you see a fire extinguisher sitting on a floor or used as a door stop.

There are different types of fire extinguishers. The most common type of fire extinguisher used in Afghanistan is the dry chemical type. These are filled with foam or powder and pressurized with nitrogen. The type A, B, C is required for the billets or housing.

### Four types of fire extinguishers:

**Class A** extinguishers are for ordinary combustible materials such as paper, wood, cardboard and most plastics.

**Class B** fires involve flammable or combustible liquids such as gasoline, kerosene, grease and oil. You will see this class in Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles, as well as in other vehicles.

**Class C** fires involve electrical equipment, such as appliances, wiring, circuit breakers and outlets. Never use water to extinguish class C fires - the risk of electrical shock is far too great! The C classification means the extinguishing agent is nonconductive. You will find these next to generators in Afghanistan.

**Class D** fire extinguishers are commonly found in a chemical laboratory. They are for fires that involve combustible metals, such as magnesium, titanium, potassium and sodium.

### Electrical safety

Power strips and surge protectors are something we take for granted. It has been found that some individuals are using power strips and surge protectors that are not safe. Additionally, it was found that individuals are using extension cords with multiple end connectors as power strips.

***There is a big difference between a power strip, surge protector and extension cord.***

It is important to know the difference. Surge protectors and power strips look similar but they are not the same.

A power strip allows a person to connect multiple plugs into one outlet. It may have a switch and light but it has no circuit breaker, fuse or surge protection.

A surge protector has a built in circuit breaker that will trip if the voltage exceeds a predetermined amount. Most surge protectors are rated for between 10 to 20 amps.

The CJTF-101 Safety Standing Operating Procedure authorizes power strips and surge protectors for use but they must have an Underwriter Laboratories

(UL) or "CE" the abbreviation of French phrase "Conformité Européenne" written or embossed somewhere on the item.

There are other types of power strips and surge protectors in use in Afghanistan that do not have this certification. These units have been known to fail, melt, short out and catch fire. These types of power strips do not have the CE/UL markings. Most of these power strips and surge protectors have fancy dials, meters, colors or lights. If you have any question about the certification of these power strips and surge protectors, do not use them.

By using power strips and surge protectors with this certification, you know that the unit has passed stringent testing and can be trusted to perform as needed. We can mitigate the risk and eliminate the fire potential by using only power strips and surge protectors with this certification.

Extension cords are another necessary item here in Afghanistan. There are extension cords in use which have a three-plug connector on one end. This type of extension cord is similar to a power strip in use and it must have the same UL/CE certification as power strips.

It is important to remember that these extension cords do not have any circuit breaker safety mechanism, and will overheat and burn if used incorrectly. It is also wrong to use extension cords as a substitute for permanent electrical wiring.

Most living quarters have rooms which are limited to one outlet consisting of two plugs. One outlet is nowhere close to meeting the needs of the tech savvy individual.

Most people use the two plug outlet to power everything in their room. It is not uncommon to see the two plug outlet powering their desk light, laptop, coffee maker, refrigerator, microwave, flat screen TV, Xbox or play station, DVD player, battery charger, cellular phone charger and fan. These items draw electrical power that puts a stress on the existing wiring. When the total amount of electricity drawn exceeds the amount available, the surge protector circuit breaker is tripped.

This reinforces the necessity of power strip UL/CE certification. When you plug a power strip or surge protector into another power strip or surge protector it creates a condition called daisy chaining. The condition can cause electrical circuits to fail and circuit breakers to trip and could potentially lead to a fire.

The safety protection provided by a UL/CE certified surge protector cannot be under estimated.



This non-UL/CE power strip/surge protector was overloaded and burned causing significant damage.

### Do-it-yourself projects

Unless you are fortunate enough to live in newly constructed living quarters, you reside in quarters that have been used for several rotations. These older quarters are the primary focus of our discussion. As people live in their quarters, they add little things to make it more livable. Some install coat hooks, while others install a shelf. These improvements rarely cause safety problems. It is the other self-improvement projects that cause problems. These do-it-yourself projects start with the best intentions but ultimately cause problems. Here are a few of the most common issues found with the do-it-yourselfers:

Internal partitions inside living quarters cannot be modified. Most B-Huts designed as living quarters were built with interior partitions to create individual rooms. Some tents also have these types of partitions.

Individuals choose to modify these. The do-it-yourselfer chooses to increase their privacy in their rooms by adding or extending the room partitions up to the ceiling. Many times these home-improvement warriors build various types of extensions on top of the interior partitions that connect to the ceiling.

By doing this they improve their privacy, but they create problems with heating, cooling and smoke and carbon monoxide detector effectiveness. They use various materials to extend the partitions, such as plywood, bed sheets, tarps, plastic, poncho liners or blankets.

Some of these materials are made of synthetic materials that produce toxic fumes when burned. Partitions are not authorized because they will isolate areas from fire safety systems.

Pathways, stairwells and exit routes must stay clear in case of emergency. Hallways seem to be the overflow area for stuff that will no longer fit in the room.

Soldiers choose to turn the hallway into a storage area but the can't be used as the overflow, catch-all area. Installing shelving or cabinets in hallways constricts the exit path and can block the exit route in emergencies.

Heating is another area of concern. The Wilms automatic oil-fired heater or other fuel powered heating units are used to provide building heat.

These units use JP-8 or diesel fuel to generate heat. The burning process creates carbon monoxide gas. This gas is poisonous and deadly. Venting these heaters is important to use them safely. The heating ductwork must not be rerouted to feed directly into one room. Repairs to the flexible ducts must be made with nonflammable materials.

The heater exhaust stacks must be clear and free from overhead obstructions and far enough away from the building so that the exhaust will not be a hazard. In addition, carbon monoxide alarms are required in all buildings using oil-fired heaters.

The CHIGO-type heating and cooling units do not pose a safety risk and are the first choice when available.





# Story Snapshots



## Simulation

U.S. Air Force Capt. Nick Morgans, with the 46th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron, protects a simulated casualty as an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter takes off during a mass casualty exercise near Kandahar. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Eric Harris, Department of Defense)

## Army strong

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Brendan Roche of Plainfield, Conn., Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team security force platoon leader, has a friendly arm-wrestling match with a member of the Afghan National Police assigned as an escort during a foot patrol through Asadabad. (Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Nicholas Mercurio, Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)



## Checking

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Cody Bellefleur, assigned to the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, ensures the engines of a C-130H Hercules aircraft are operating properly during engine startup at Bagram Airfield, Parwan Province. (DoD photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Eric Harris, Department of Defense)





## Graduation

*The newest group of Afghan Local Police graduate basic training at Combat Outpost Chamkani Dec. 16. The Chamkani District Support Team has worked with local officials to increase the safety of their population through community policing initiatives, placing 200 Afghan police graduates into the Ministry of the Interior's security program. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Barry Loo, Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)*



## Let it snow

*A treat for winter in Afghanistan, snow fell in the mountains across Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. David House, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)*



## Rear security

*A donkey is tied to an old Russian tank in the Daymirdad District, Wardak province, Afghanistan. U.S. Army soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, provided security during a meeting to discuss improvement projects in the district. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Sean Casey, 982nd Combat Camera Co (ABN))*

## Ready for takeoff

*U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Justin Shults, 444th Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, and Staff Sgt. Bryan Costerisan conduct pre-flight checks on an Mi-17 helicopter at Shindand Air Base. Costerisan and Shults are Mi-17 flight engineers with a program to teach Afghan Air Force pilots. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Eric Harris, U.S. Air Forces Central Public Affairs)*







## Marking time

*An Afghan National Army band keeps time as recruits march on the parade grounds of Kabul Military Training Center. At any given time, more than 10,000 recruits are training at KMTC to serve in the Afghan national army. (U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Brian Brannon)*

## Watching progress

*U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Jeffrey C. Holt, left rear, the commander of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, points out sites to Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn III, in blue shirt, from the roof of the Nawa District Governor's Center during their visit to Nawa. Lynn visited Forward Operating Base Jaker and toured the surrounding area. (Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Mark Fayloga)*



## Urban training

*Afghan National Army commandos assigned to 3rd Company, 6th Kandak conduct squad urban operations training at Camp Morehead, Afghanistan.*

*During the training, squads ranging in size from four to eight members focused on team tactics and building clearing procedures. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Ryan Whitney, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force – Afghanistan Media Operations Center)*



## Construction

*Members of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 3 lift a concrete screed in preparation to pour and smooth out concrete for a large building here, in Camp Leatherneck. NMCB 3 is deployed to Southern Afghanistan to support regional commanders with construction and engineering operations. NMCB 3 is part of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command's warfighting support elements, providing construction operations and security in support of overseas contingency operations. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Christopher Carson, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 3)*



# PRT, officials deliver solar panels to three villages in need of power



A village member loads solar panels into the back of his car to transport them back to his village from the Tag Ab District Center. The solar panels, delivered by the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team and the Kapisa Provincial Development Council, allows the villagers to end the depence on candles, propane, and a generator that cost too much to fuel for light and electricity. One solar panel can power two residences for one night. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Kyle Brasier, Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team)

Story by U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Ashley Skillman  
Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

With the arrival of the season of giving, it seemed fitting to Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team to do its fair share by partnering with Kapisa government officials to provide a renewable energy source to villages in Tag Ab District Dec. 21.

During a visit to the Tag Ab District Center, Kapisa PRT and the Provincial Development Council Representative for Tag Ab District Najibullah delivered 16 solar panels and dry cell batteries to village elders of Khels, Malekan and Temor Khel as a supplemental source of energy.

Less than a day before, power was a limited resource and the villages relied on candles, lanterns and propane for light, explained a Malekan village elder, Haji Sabz Ail Khan, through an interpreter.

The original energy supply, a generator, proved to be very problematic for the villagers since it required constant refuelling and maintenance, which was too expensive for the people, said Abdul Hadi, a village local.

“Now the locals can heat their homes with electricity, cook or have electric lights,” said U.S. Army Maj. William Kerr, Kapisa PRT civil affairs from Chelsea, Mich. “This means they can work at night, their children can read or study in the evenings, and they can do a number of other things in their homes we often take for granted as Americans.”

“Each panel and battery set will provide approximately 80 watts of power on a daily basis, which is enough to supply power throughout the night for two residences,” said Kerr.

This means approximately 32 families now have inexpensive renewable electricity.

“I don’t have words to explain how happy I am,” said Haji Sabz Ail Khan during the delivery of the solar panels. “There are more than a hundred reasons why I’m thankful for this.”

Coordination for this project began six weeks ago with the PRT, Provincial Development Council Representative for Tag Ab Najibullah, District Development Association Chief Sabrullah and local village elders.

Through this collaboration, the group was able to identify solar panels as the best solution for the villages’ electricity needs due to their low maintenance costs. ☺



Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team members meet with Gul Haidar, the Shast village elder and a former Mujahedeen commander, along with Shast villagers and former Mujahedeen members in Rokha District. The PRT commander, sergeant major, civil affairs and engineering teams visited the Shast village to discuss the concerns in the village. One issue discussed was the best way to distribute power from the micro-hydro dam system. (Photo by French Army Staff Sgt. Romain Beaulinette, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command Public Affairs)

## PRT evaluates power, hears concerns

Story by U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Ashleigh Peck,  
Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team

Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team members met with Gul Haidar, the Shast village elder and a former Mujahedeen commander, as well as Shast villagers and numerous former Mujahedeen members in Rokha District.

The PRT commander, sergeant major, civil affairs and engineering teams visited the Shast village to discuss the main concerns in the village.

“Commander Haidar is working to improve relationships between Rokha and the PRT and Rokha and the government,” said Panjshir PRT Sgt. Maj. Mark Byrd of El Paso, Texas.

Approximately 25 former Mujahedeen members and three former commanders attended the meeting.

“People found out this morning and drove from Kabul to be here,” said Haidar through an interpreter.

While village issues were discussed, the Mujahedeen members could not let the meeting conclude without telling a

few stories of their past experiences of fighting.

“It was almost eerie to be around that many Mujahedeen commanders who ran through these hills and fought with everything they had,” said Byrd. “With 30 years of fighting the Soviets and the Taliban, the Mujahedeen have endless stories.”

In between the war stories, three main concerns were addressed: power distribution from the micro-hydro dam system, healthy drinking water, and roads.

“We want the power addressed before anything else,” said Haidar.

The micro-hydro system was built by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development more than two years ago, but a distribution plan was never put in place, said U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Phil Compton of Doty, Wash., a Panjshir PRT engineer.

“Village elders agree that the best use for the micro-hydro system is to distribute the power to approximately ten mosques in the Rokha area,” Haidar said.

After the meeting, the PRT engineers

surveyed the canal leading to the micro-hydro dam and the circuit breaker to evaluate how much power can be produced.

Daniel Fredrickson of Battleground, Wash., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers member with Panjshir PRT, estimates the micro-hydro system can provide between 45 and 60 kilowatts of power.

“Panjshir PRT engineers conducted a site survey Dec. 29 to map out the potential distribution system for the mosques. The next day, the team verified the actual capacity of the micro-hydro system during the winter months,” said Compton.

“The site survey confirmed the system is fully operational,” said Compton. “The difficult part will be distributing the power between the mosques, as some of the mosques are up to two to three miles away from each other over rough terrain.”

Over the next couple months, the villagers will work with the PRT to acquire materials and execute a plan to provide power from the micro-hydro system, said Compton. ☺



# Dogs take on land mine, IED detection



U.S. Army Pfc. Raborne Vines of Abbeville, Ala., 54th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Dolch, chaplain's assistant, spends some quality time with Sir Fred the Mine Dog, a working dog assigned to 49th Mine Dog Detachment, TF Dolch, before a training exercise designed to keep mine-detection dogs' senses sharp at Bagram Airfield.

Story and photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Robert Larson, Task Force Dolch

Ever heard the phrase, “Every dog has its day”? Well, the mine-detection dogs and handlers from the 49th Mine Dog Detachment, 54th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Dolch, based at Bagram Airfield know that better than most. These highly trained animals are used to help Soldiers on the ground find some of the most elusive enemies in theater: landmines and improvised explosive devices. The 49th MDD, attached to TF Dolch for its deployment to Afghanistan, consists of only a handful of Soldiers who are responsible for conducting clearance operations alongside multiple route clearance patrols and many other missions

that TF Dolch Sappers execute. Sappers are elite Ranger-like combat engineers who work with demolitions. The dogs are tested regularly to ensure they can maintain the high find rates required of their job. Using actual land mines and munitions found around Bagram that coalition explosive ordnance detachment members rendered inert, the handlers built training lanes designed to help keep their companions mission ready at all times. “We have anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines (and) anti-personnel landmines that are used as boosters for anti-tank mines, hand grenades, artillery rounds and everything in between,” said U.S. Army Sgt. John Bornhoff of North Prairie, Wis., with the 49th MDD. There are 10 training and testing lanes, which are one meter wide by 10 meters

long each. Bricks divide the lanes, and random ordnances are buried throughout the course. “The dogs will key on even the slightest explosive scent that, (when) combined with a visual signature, will give the dog more than it needs to know that something is there,” said Bornhoff. The presence of the MDD gives the Soldiers of TF Dolch a bit more confidence and a nice morale boost. “Just being able to be around the dogs makes the morale of the Soldiers that much better,” said U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) William Robinson Jr. of Youngstown, Ohio, chaplain for the 54th Eng. Bn., TF Dolch. The MDD is a great asset for TF Dolch Soldiers to remove at least some of the unexploded ordnance and IED threats people face in Afghanistan. ☺



## Panjshir PRT delivers cement for irrigation

Story by U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Ashleigh Peck, Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team

A truck full of cement bags and gabions, rock-filled baskets used for fortification, were delivered to the Shutol District Center by a local contractor and Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team civil affairs members to assist in the re-creation of a solid Dehe Kalan irrigation canal. “A large section of the canal was completely destroyed by the annual flooding in the spring of 2010,” Shutol District Governor Gulab Shah said through an interpreter. Shah said the canal supplies irrigation and drinking water to approximately 600

to 1,000 families in the villages of Dehe Kalan, Janajoy, Bostan, Chelanak and Ghoran. “The affected families collected money and worked together to create a fix for the canal which consisted of wooden frames and metal troughs,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Joshua O’Keefe of Athens, Mich., Panjshir PRT civil affairs. However, the wooden frames will not be able to withstand the spring floods, so the PRT offered materials to permanently repair the canal. “Once the PRT discovered the project’s importance, we immediately started work to supply \$5,000 worth of materials consisting of 400 cement bags and 100 gabions to be used as building blocks to

support the canal,” said O’Keefe. “The materials will be put into use as soon as the weather permits.” “If this is not fixed by the next growing season in the summer of 2011, several families will no longer be able to support themselves,” said O’Keefe. “The affected locals know the importance of this canal, and have been laboring to start re-creating a solid canal again.” The village started the project on their own and the PRT is assisting to expedite the process and provide a more permanent solution. “The locals are performing the labor but don’t have all the required supplies, otherwise the project would’ve already been completed,” said O’Keefe. ☺



(Left) Two Local villagers unload cement bags to be used in the re-creation of a solid Dehe Kalan irrigation canal in Shutol District Center. (Top) U.S. Army Sgt. Patrick Reilly of Troy, Mich., Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team civil affairs, gives a hand to a local villager while delivering materials to assist in the recreation of a solid Dehe Kalan irrigation canal in Shutol District. Thanks to the common effort of villagers, the district governor and the PRT civil affairs team, a canal is planned to be rebuilt in the Shutol District before the winter weather prevents work. (Above) A local villager helps unload a truck full of cement bags and gabions delivered by a local contractor and civil affairs members of the Panjshir PRT. The village started the irrigation project, and the PRT decided to provide assistance in order to provide materials that would permanently repair the canal. (Photos by French Army Staff Sgt. Romain Beaulinette, Task Force Lafayette Public Affairs)



# W Unit atch



## Task Force Allobroges

### Mission:

Task Force Allobroges' mission is to secure Kapisa Province by supporting operations by Afghan security forces. It also participates in the local development and growth of governance capabilities there.

### History:

It is mainly composed of the 7th Mountain Infantry Battalion, which was created in France in 1840 and has since been considered an elite unit of the French Army. The name "Allobroges" refers to a Celtic population settled in the French Alps at the beginning of the third century BC. They were brave and rustic warriors who rebelled from the Roman authority trying to enslave them and one of the richest and most powerful populations of ancient France, "La Gaule."

### Why we are the best:

Allobroges is one of French Task Force Lafayette battle group and arrived in Forward Operating Base Morales-Frasier and Forward Operating Base Kutschbach in November. The TF began its preparation to come to Kapisa province last January, through realistic and intense exercises, referring to the combats and issues experienced in Afghanistan.

French mountain troops train in the Alps, and are used to the particular conditions found there. Using the relief as an advantage is very useful in Kapisa province, and more generally in Afghanistan. The attributes of mountain troops are undeniable assets in the context of modern combat: physical resistance to climate and terrain hardness, endurance, composure, and high sense of camaraderie. TF Allobroges has experienced multiple conflicts all over the world; its people were in Bosnia and Kosovo in eastern Europe; in Africa's Chad, Ivory Coast and Central African Republic, and Middle East's Lebanon and Kuwait.

TF Allobroges is under command of Col. Bruno Gardy, who is in charge of the 7th Mountain Infantry Battalion in Bourg Saint Maurice, France, and situated in the Alps. Its motto "De fer et d'acier" translates to "Of iron and steel" and refers to the soldiers' rusticity and resistance abilities, but also to its equipment.

The French mountain troops have a significant difference with the other militaries: the mountain beret, called "tarte."

This specific beret was originally worn by the French Pyrenean shepherds, to protect them from mountain rain and sun. The military mountain troops adopted the "tarte" for the same reasons in 1889, and also used it to protect their feet from the cold when they had to spend the night in the mountains.

They don't use it this way anymore, but still the "tarte" is a high symbolic element the mountain troops are proud to wear.





# Retention Watch



**CJTF-101  
Command  
Retention Officer**  
MG John F. Campbell

**CJTF-101  
Command  
Retention NCO**  
CSM Scott C.  
Schroeder

**CJTF-101  
Command Career  
Counselor**  
SGM Willene Orr

**Oath of  
Reenlistment**  
I do solemnly  
swear to support  
and defend the  
Constitution of the  
United States against  
all enemies, foreign  
and domestic; that I will  
bear true faith and  
allegiance to the same;  
and that I will obey the  
orders of the President  
of the United States  
and the orders of the  
officers appointed over  
me, according to  
regulations and the  
Uniform Code of  
Military Justice.  
So help me God.



## CJTF-101 DIVISION RETENTION

### See What's Happening in the Army Retention Corner!

#### Army Application Shortage MOSs

● Soldiers may request reclassification in the following military occupational specialties (MOSs) regardless of the In/Out Calls for current MOS:

- Career Management Field (CMF) 18
- MOSs 21P, 31D, 35L, 37F, 38B, 79R and 89D

#### Transferability of Education Benefits

- To be eligible to transfer benefits a Soldier must:
  - Accept a four year additional commitment if they transfer benefits.
  - Have 6 years of service (all service except time in the IRR counts towards this six years)
  - Sponsor's spouse can begin using transferred benefits immediately
  - Sponsor's children cannot use transferred benefits until the sponsor has 10 years of service
  - For more information, see your career counselor or visit <http://www.va.gov>

#### Retention Contacts

- MSG Christopher Gish - DSN: 831-6051 FOB Fenty
- MSG Robert Theriot - DSN: 481-5304 FOB Shank
- MSG Craig Martin - DSN: 424-6029 Camp Marmal
- MSG Larry Benedict - DSN: 421-6130 Kandahar
- MSG Nakia Nelson - DSN: 303-794-9023 Kandahar



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# the final Watch



U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Beau Barnett of Demopolis, Ala., and U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Griffith, of Silas, Ala., overlook the Jaji Maidan District (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Matthew Lohr, Khowsat Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)