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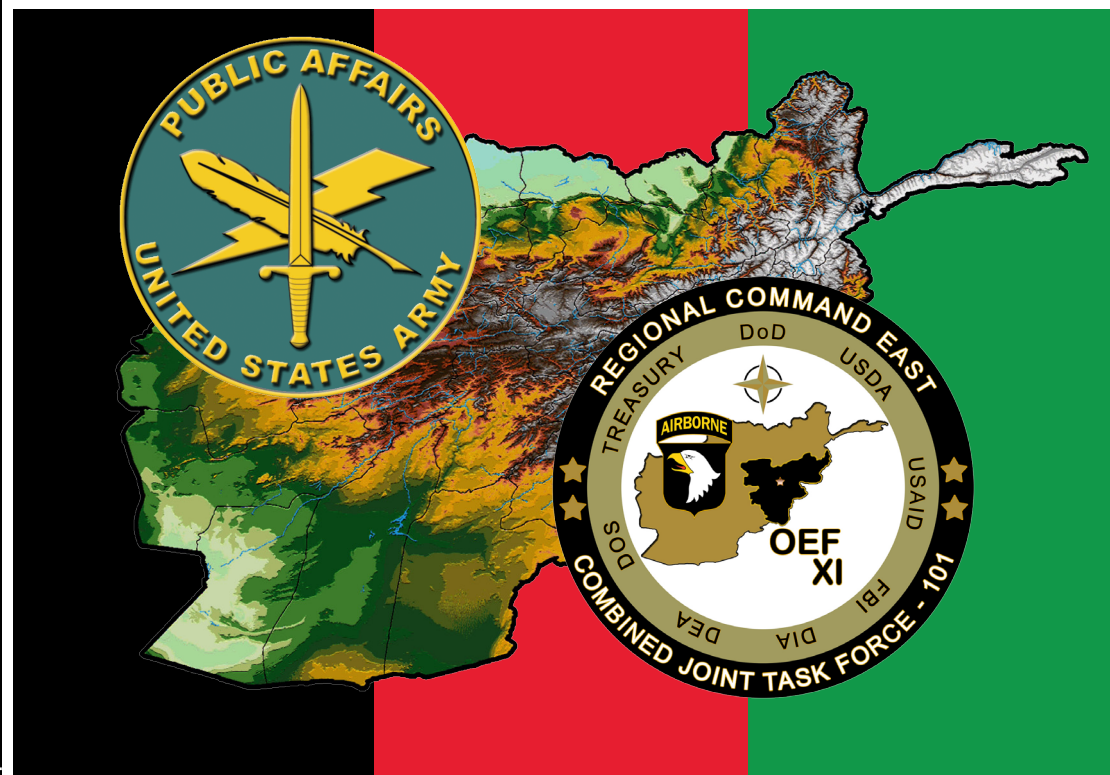
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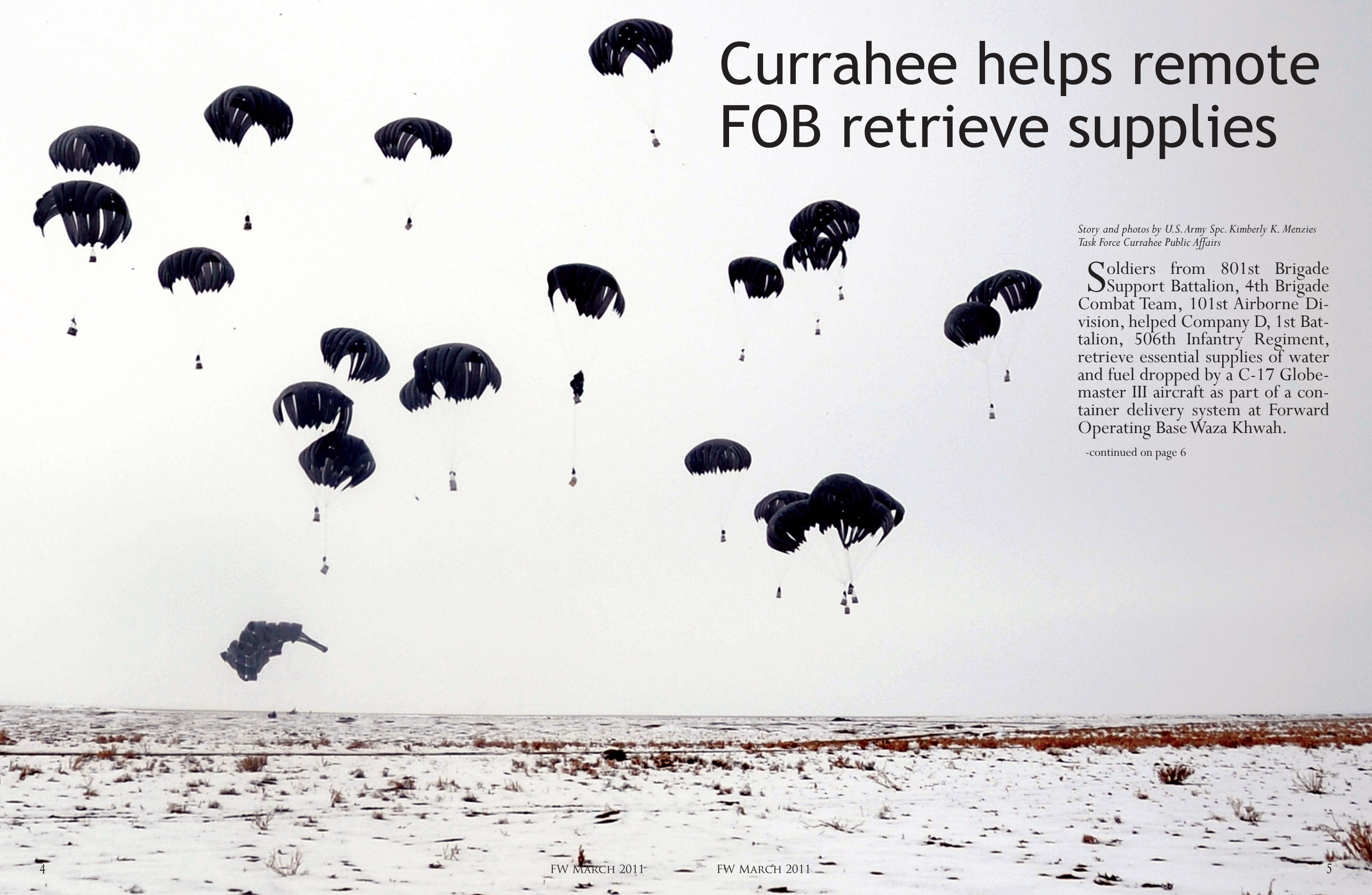
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(Cover photo) Kathleen Reedy, a human terrain team social scientist and resident of Red Lion, Pa., listens as Afghan women tell her about the challenges they face on a daily basis during a women's shura at Jaji Maidan Feb. 10. The shura was the first women's shura held in the area to discuss women business opportunities. The meeting helped initiate dialogue between the women of Jaji Maidan and their government. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Tobey White, Task Force Duke Public Affairs)



Currahee helps remote FOB retrieve supplies

*Story and photos by U.S. Army Spc. Kimberly K. Menzies
Task Force Currahee Public Affairs*

Soldiers from 801st Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, helped Company D, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, retrieve essential supplies of water and fuel dropped by a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft as part of a container delivery system at Forward Operating Base Waza Khwah.

-continued on page 6



A C-17 Globemaster III drops essential supplies of water and fuel by the container delivery system method at Forward Operating Base Waza Khwah.

“The CDS drop is a supply method in which an aircraft flies low to the ground and releases cargo on pallets from the aircraft’s rear cargo doors. Once the pallets exit the aircraft, parachutes release and slowly lower the cargo to a specified location on the ground.

This drop was much larger than FOB Waza Khwah normally receives, according to U.S. Army Lt. Col. David J. Preston, 801st BSB commander and native of Belchertown, Mass. The drops consisted of 101 bundles of fuel and 19 bundles of water; about 40 bundles per aircraft,” said Preston. “The fuel should help sustain them for a little over 30 days.”

Preston said his Soldiers supported Co. D, 1st Bn., 506th Inf., in the supply pick-up for a variety of reasons.

“First, it is the Soldiers’ at Waza Khwah job to conduct combat missions,” he said. “If they are all out retrieving the cargo from a drop this large it would detract from their mission. Second, it is my battalion’s job to provide support for other battalions within the brigade, and I was the one who signed them up for such a large drop.”

Since Waza Khwah is a land-locked FOB, all supplies are flown in via helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft.

“To drive through the Gwashta Pass

would put Soldiers at a significant risk due to the hazardous terrain,” said U.S. Army Maj. Scott W. McLellan, 4th BCT plans officer. “The terrain in the area favors the enemy and the mitigation of this hazard is utilizing air support.”

“We only are able to receive resupply by air,” said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Brian D. Gemmil, Co. D, 1st Bn., 506th Inf., and native of Carmel, Ind.

“Using these new drop systems is important and very efficient,” Gemmil said. “These drops also reduce the risk to my Soldiers because they do not have to travel too far out of the wire to get supplies, and the fuel makes it so we are able to maintain our mission.”

To the unit, this drop was a lifeline extended to their forward operating base.

“We need fuel; without it we cannot survive,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ricky R. Reaser, squad leader from Co. D, 1st Bn., 506th Inf., of Grand Rapids, Mich.

“It may be hard for some to gain perspective on it, but you have to think without the fuel they have no heat, no power, no transportation, no communication and no security,” said Preston.

The supplies are a critical aspect to mission success, he said.

“With fuel, we can fill our trucks and conduct operations,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Ricky J. Spencer, fire team leader from of 2nd Platoon, 3rd Squad, Co. D, 1st Bn., 506th Inf., and native of Amarillo, Texas. “Without it, we will have no heat and will be unable to meet our mission here in Waza Khwah.”

Soldiers from Company D, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, and 801st Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, roll barrels of fuel into a vehicle at Forward Operating Base Waza Khwah. The barrels were dropped as part of a container delivery system, an alternative supply delivery system in which an aircraft flies low to the ground and releases cargo on pallets from the back of the aircraft cargo area.



Currahee, ANA forward observers conduct live fire

Story and photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Luther L. Boothe Jr.
Task Force Currahee Public Affairs

U.S. Army Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, conducted a live fire with forward observers from 2nd Kandak, 2nd Infantry Brigade, 203rd Corps, Afghan National Army, at Forward Operating Base Sharana Jan. 31.

The 4th Bn., 320th FAR has been training the ANA forward observers for nearly two months on the basics and this live fire was a good way to gauge their progress.

“The class started on Dec. 1 and we plan on continuing the training throughout the deployment,” said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Chad Copsick, the FO instructor/trainer with 4th Bn., 320th FAR, and native of Binghamton, N.Y. “What we have been doing the past two months is teaching them map reading, land navigation, call for fire and the adjustments for indirect fire and this gives them the opportunity to practice.”

Forward observers provide an invaluable asset to military fires cells by increasing their capabilities.

“(They) help with the long-range fight,” said Copsick. “If you don’t have FOs you are only going to shoot what you can see. FOs go further out and use the full capabilities of the guns to shoot 14 or 15 (thousand meters) out there instead of two (thousand meters).”

The trainers have developed a program that aims at longevity and continuity.

Copsick said the course will end in early April and another class is planned to begin immediately.

“The second class will be the exact same course, but we are going to take one (ANA) soldier from the first class and he is going to conduct the second class,” said Copsick. “We will be standing by in case he needs assistance, but they will teach it for the most part. Once they learn that, they will be able to teach it well after we (have redeployed).”

So far, the ANA FOs seem eager to learn more and ready to contribute to the security of their country.

“The training is really good and we hope to continue it for a long time,” said ANA 2nd Lt. Shamsu Rahman, a forward observer with 2nd Kandak, 2nd Inf. Bde., 203rd Corps. “This is our duty and we will try to get going as soon as we can and I will do my best.”

“The more training and the more classes the better,” said ANA 1st Lt. Mohamad



U.S. Army mortarmen with Mortar Platoon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, fire 120mm mortar rounds during a forward observer live-fire training event for Afghan National Army soldiers at Forward Operating Base Sharana.

Raza, another 2nd Kandak forward observer. “We want to do all we can to help (Afghanistan) and I am looking forward to making a difference.”

Now that the ANA FOs have completed the basics and shown competency in the practical setting they will begin the advanced portion of the course.

“After these shoots, we will get into crater analysis, how to determine a crater on the ground and find out where the round actually came from so they can locate the

enemy by where they shot,” said Copsick. Overall, the training went well and the FOs demonstrated their ability to learn and successfully put into practice what they learned.

“I shot the registration round and after that they shot the rest,” said Copsick. “I am supervising and double checking, but so far so good—no mistakes so far and they are even calling it up themselves and saying it in English.”



Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officials board a CH-47 Chinook after a women's shura held at Jaji Feb. 10. They attended the first women's shura held in the area with coalition forces. The women discussed with their government officials issues and challenges they faced in daily life.

WOMEN'S SHURA CONVENES FOR FIRST TIME IN 2 YEARS

Story and photos by U.S. Army Staff Spc. Tobey White
Task Force Duke Public Affairs

An all-female delegation of eight Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officials, a 330th Military Police Company personnel security detail, members of Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team and the 3-19th Agribusiness Development Team from Indiana gathered in Jaji Maidan Feb. 10.

As the CH-47 Chinook touched down on a patch of green farmland, which stood in stark contrast from the otherwise brown countryside, local men and children lined the roads and hills staring at these newcomers while military personnel secured the surrounding area.

The group was in Jaji Maidan for one purpose: conduct the coalition's first women's shura, or formal meeting, in the last two years.

Jaji Maidan

Jaji Maidan, a town situated in eastern Khowst Province, was recently named a peace district because it experiences fewer attacks than surrounding territory. It is known locally as the land of milk and honey. Because of the relative stability of the area, the shura's goal is to further that stability by targeting members of the population who don't really have a voice, said U.S. Army Maj. Rosemary Reed of Tacoma, Wash., 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, working with Khowst PRT.

The women of Jaji Maidan possess the skill to turn a common plant in the territory into rope and use it to make intricate beadwork. It is a skill the coalition forces and government members hoped could be leveraged into small business opportunities for the women and surrounding area, said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Pam Moody of Indianapolis, 3-19th ADT.

By bringing GIRoA representatives, such as the director of Women's Affairs, the participants hope to create a sustainable

project. Reed said the representatives got the chance to speak directly to the women in their region and hear what challenges and issues these women face.

The idea for the shura began when the provincial governor requested something be done for the local women, Reed said. It took lots of coordination between many different units to be able to hold a shura of this magnitude.

"The shura is a very traditional way to solve problems," she said.

Shuras are a way for elders and key leaders in the community to address issues in the area. In the U.S., it would be the equivalent of attending a meeting between council members of a town. Since the area is tribal, their members are elders who have been elected to represent the tribes and villages in the area. Shuras can cover a wide range of topics such as security, law issues and in this case, women's rights.

"We have some very important women here," Moody said. "It is important to show the women at Jaji Maidan that women can be strong, can be studious, can go to high school and better themselves and their families."

A time for firsts

The meeting wasn't just a first for the women of Jaji Maidan. For the female Soldiers attending, it was the first time they had conducted an all-female mission. The mission entailed escorting the VIPs to the meeting, clearing the building where the meeting was conducted and securing the immediate area from all threats, said U.S. Army Sgt. Priscilla Salazar of Santa Ana, Calif., noncommissioned officer in charge for the PSD of the 330th MP Co.

"None of us had pulled high security on high females," Salazar said. "It lets Afghan women know that females are strong enough to do what we're here to accomplish."

It was by no means easy getting the number of women required for the mission, Reed said. The Army has no all-female companies. The planners for the meeting faced a challenge of gathering enough women with the capabilities and specialties needed to secure the site, providing security for the government officials and women attending the meeting, and conducting the shura.

Since in Afghanistan only women can engage women, they had to reach out to sister companies all over Khowst Province to get the women they needed.

"It's hard to be a female in the military, period; so being able to come out here with no males, with only a few weeks training and not knowing the area to do this feels pretty good," Salazar said.

To be part of the PSD team, the females had to be at the top of their game. For U.S. Army Spc. Araceli Carrill of San Diego, Calif., who served as point for the PSD, 330th MP Co., the mission was different from any other she'd undertaken in the 10 months she's been deployed to Afghanistan. Being picked as point meant her team felt safe enough with her in that role.

"The shura is important so people know, not just Afghans but Americans, too, that women are coming up, that they do have rights, are important and have a role in society," Carrill said.

To prepare for the mission, her team trained on how to keep their VIPs safe and how to move as a unit. Although it was the first time they had done an all-female mission, she said the training was not much different than the preparation she'd received back home and in basic as an MP.

"It's important that the mission was conducted by females because the Afghan women feel more comfortable with us," Carrill said. "This way they weren't intimidated by males."



Hakmina, a female provincial council member, addresses local women at a women's shura held in Jaji Maidan in Feb. 10. She attended the first women's shura held in the area to discuss challenges and issues the women were having. The meeting helped initiate dialogue between the women of Jaji Maidan and their government.

Lessons learned


While simply having the shura was progress from previous years, the participants found themselves having to take a step back once the meeting got started. Although they had a turnout of about 60 women, the women had more urgent concerns than economic growth.

Many of them were suffering from medical needs such as diarrhea, malaria, skin problems and asthma, said U.S. Army Col. Marilyn Moorose of Indianapolis, 3-19th ADT. For the next meeting, the team promised to bring a doctor to address the women's health concerns.

One of the things the Soldiers learned was how important it was for the women to have a meeting before the shura. There are 21 villages in Jaji Maidan.

For everybody to have their voice heard, the Afghan women decided two representatives from each village would be elected to bring the concerns of their area to the DOWA at the next meeting, said Moody.

"I'm honored to give these women of the government the opportunity to engage members of the population," Reed said. "The dialogue has been initiated. Now these women have a better understanding of what these people need and will be able to develop projects to help them."

The meeting shed light on how best to conduct future women's shuras. While the original objective was to help the women of Jaji Maidan sell their products in larger bazaars and make money for their families, the focus had to be adjusted to take care of more pressing needs first. Reed said the meeting was a first step toward having regular shuras to address women's needs. 

Exercise strengthens surgeon, medic bond

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

A couple of months ago, an Afghan road worker was using dynamite to clear a section of road in a village in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar Province.

The dynamite went off early and hit him in the eye. He went to the closest hospital at Forward Operating Base Bostick, located in Naray District.

"He came in with, basically, his eyeball hanging out," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Steven E. Spencer, a Bastrop, La., native and squadron surgeon for 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Bandit, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. "What do you do in this case? So we practice (treating) the penetrating eye injury."

On Feb. 3, they did just that. The "voodoo medics," assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, Task Force Bandit, along with newly arrived Soldiers from the 102nd Forward Surgical Team, conducted a mass-casualty exercise to hone their skills.

Simulated injuries from a mortar attack and a suicide bomb came pouring into the aid station and chaos ensued.

"You fall back on training and repetition," said Spencer. "Even though things look bad and scary, you fall back on doing things in a certain order. Yes, there's a hand missing; that's not what we're worried about right now. Have we controlled breathing? Is the patient in shock or not? Is the patient breathing or not? Does the patient have an airway where he can breathe? You follow your training algorithm first, and then move over to the scary-looking wound."

That's exactly how the medics worked with the FST Soldiers to categorize the patients coming in the doors. They quickly sorted a Soldier with an amputated left leg, an Afghan guard with shrapnel in his eye and a Soldier with mild traumatic brain injury.

"Where's a tourniquet?" yelled one medic.

"Let's get an IV in this one," said another medic.

"Was it a blast injury? Do we need X-rays?" added a third medic.

"I try to call it controlled chaos," said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Derrick W. Duff, a field medical assistant from Adel, Iowa, with the voodoo medics. "The main thing we try to do is get the patients triaged. The most urgent patients go into the FST and



U.S. Army Pfc. Keely S. Layne, a medic from Goochland, Va., assigned to 102nd Forward Surgical Team, attached to 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Bandit, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, checks on a simulated patient during a mass-casualty exercise at Forward Operating Base Bostick in eastern Afghanistan.

the others go to the aid station medics."

Duff explained that the reason for the MASCAL exercise was twofold: it gave new FST Soldiers a chance to learn some of their procedures and provided aid station medics an opportunity to enhance their procedures through practice.

Spencer explained the main differences between an FST and an aid station.

Forward surgical teams are trained under advanced trauma life support guidelines. This training is geared toward blunt-force trauma that would occur in the U.S.

On the other hand, the combat medics are trained with tactical combat casualty care.

These two different training guidelines sometimes call for different methods of care, Spencer added.

"The thinking on the battlefield is different, because of the big explosions and the mechanism of injury that Soldiers get and the fact that we're wearing body armor," said Spencer. "So we tend to get a different pattern of injuries than people back home get. So whenever you get a new FST with a combat unit, the training of the medics and the personnel is completely different. We have to make sure we're not butting heads and going against

each other in what we're trying to do for the patient, so we have to practice integrating together."

He explained that integrating into a cohesive team is critical for what is defined as the "golden hour."

The first 60 minutes after injury that usually determines whether or not a patient is going to survive is considered the most critical time.

"Wheels up from JAF," yelled Duff, referring to the medical evacuation flight coming from Jalalabad Airfield, which is an indicator of how much time the medics have to prepare a casualty for transport to the larger hospital at Forward Operating Base Fenty.

Spencer explained time is paramount for a patient and placing medics and surgeons at the point of injury, like FOB Bostick, saves a lot of lives on the battlefield.

As the simulated casualties were being prepped for their MEDEVAC flight, an Afghan man walked into the aid station with a swelling hand.

"I pretty much wrapped up my section and reset my area," said U.S. Army Pfc. Keely S. Layne, a medic from Goochland, Va., assigned to 102nd FST. "Then there was a real patient here with an opportunity to get some real-life training. So I



An Afghan man simulates a penetrating eye injury during a recent mass-casualty exercise as a medic checks his condition at Forward Operating Base Bostick in eastern Afghanistan.

peeled off and went over to see how the doctors ran things in the aid station."

She quickly learned that a large piece of wood crushed his hand. He was at risk of infection as well as fracture.

Layne volunteered to give him an intravenous injection of medication while the doctors took some X-rays.

The patient flinched and contorted his face when the needle penetrated his skin.

"In the end, he's going to think, 'Thanks,'" said Layne. "He's going to be very grateful. It sucks getting stuck. I don't like getting stuck. I don't think anybody likes it. But in the end, as long as his pain is gone and we helped him get back


to where he was, then the next time he comes in here he'll look at us as people who can get the job done."

That's exactly how other people have felt about the Soldiers who work in the white concrete building with the medical guidon waving patients inside.

"It helps relieve some of the tension Soldiers might have about going outside the wire because they know that the FST and the aid station are ready to treat them in case the worst does happen," said Duff. "They know that we're prepared. So when Soldiers see stuff like this going on, they know that we're practicing. They know that we're training. The same

way that they do their battle drills to go outside the wire, we're doing our battle drills to receive casualties."

After the IVs were pulled out and the simulated patients went back to work, the Soldiers gathered together to compare how the exercise went.

For being in Afghanistan for just under a week, the new FST Soldiers were adapting well. The MASCAL exercise brought attention to things that needed to be fixed, but more importantly, it highlighted the strength of these two units, working together to help save lives at the point of injury on the battlefield. 

ANA basic trainees fire weapons for first time

Story by U.S. Army Sgt. Derek Nelson
17th Public Affairs Detachment

Afghan National Army recruits qualified on their M16 rifles for the first time as basic trainees at a Forward Operating Base Thunder shooting range Feb. 1. “The trainees have been in training for three weeks,” said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Armando Astello of Brownsville, Texas, Regional Military Training Center-East noncommissioned officer in charge. “They’ve learned some basic soldiering skills, and now they’re moving on to marksmanship.”

For many of the basic trainees, this is the first time they have ever shot in a formal military training environment.

“It’s the ANA’s first time out here shooting weapons,” said U.S. Army Spc. Dennis S. Padgett of Sheffield Village, Ohio, Afghan National Army adviser. “It’s a new experience for them, and we’re hoping they’ll learn a lot from what we teach them.”

The knowledge the students learn can help them serve their country in the future, said Padgett.

“When we leave here, we hope they continue to practice what we teach them so they can continue to defend themselves and their country,” he said.

The training takes a lot of work and organization between the ANA and their U.S. Army counterparts; however, at the end of the day the payoff is worth it, said Astello.



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Armando Astello, senior noncommissioned officer in charge for the Regional Military Training Center-East clears a recruit's weapon after firing on the range. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Maritza Freeland, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)

“The training continues to move forward as we work shoulder to shoulder with the ANA instructors to coach and teach the trainees,” said Astello. “We are teaching them how to properly apply the fundamentals of marksmanship. Learning these things helps them to defend their country.”

The trainees expressed pride in their new skills as they walked off the range,

smiling after having qualified on their weapons.

“I joined the ANA to protect my family and defend my country,” said Dost Muhammad, a basic trainee with the ANA’s 203rd Thunder Corps. “I’ve been in training for three weeks, and being able to shoot my weapon today made me very happy.”



U.S. Army Capt. Phillip A. Durkin, senior military adviser for the Regional Military Training Center-East, instructs new recruits on how to properly apply the fundamentals of basic rifle marksmanship. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Maritza Freeland, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)



Afghan National Army Operations Sgt. Maj. Akhtar Muhammad takes questions from new recruits during Basic Warrior Training at Forward Operating Base Thunder. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Maritza Freeland, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)

New recruits join Afghan army

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

The newest members of the Afghan National Army traveled to Forward Operating Base Thunder, home of the ANA 203rd Thunder Corps, to attend the Afghan version of basic training.

The initial batch consisted of 600 recruits to attend Basic Warrior Training; by March the numbers are expected to double.

Soldiers from the 4th Platoon of the 1st Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Regiment, stationed at Forward Operating Base Lightning advise Afghan instructors and train new recruits.

“Nothing prepares you to train like this,” said senior adviser, U.S. Army Capt. Phil Durkin of Sparta, N.J. “This is not the American Army, they have their own standards.”

The adjustment for the Afghans is difficult as well. Afghan recruits must adjust to both life in the military and working with the American servicemembers who partner with Afghan instructors.

“It’s the first time many of these guys have worn western clothes, been around Americans or visited an army base,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Scott Hannah of Fort Worth, Texas, an instructor who trains with the ANA 203rd Thunder Corps’ 3rd Basic Warrior Training Company.

Afghan soldiers learn the same basic skills taught to U.S. recruits. They are locked down in sparkling barracks. Each cot

is meticulously made; shoes, towels and sandals are lined up evenly.

“It’s pretty much the same as American basic training, but the Afghan instructors are a lot more, ‘hands-on,’” said advisor U.S. Army Cpl. Brandon Metzger of Colorado Springs, Colo. Afghan instructors do not do a lot of yelling, but they are quick to grab hold of new recruits and get them moving in the right direction.

ANA Operations Sgt. Maj. Akhtar Muhammad personally trains many of the recruits.

“I feel good about these guys. They are the best I have worked with,” said Muhammad, who has trained more than 58 Afghan companies in the last six months.

ANA Pvt. Gul Nazim of Kapisa Province is excited about the training he is receiving and expressed pride in his decision to join the Afghan army.

“I decided that I must help my country,” he said.

Nazim is the first person in his family to join the army. He claims that he is ready to serve anywhere the army sends him, but hopes to serve with the Afghan infantry. He, like Muhammad, is optimistic.

“We will have a great future and the Afghan army will be strong if we continue to train like this,” said Nazim.

The ANA continues to grow each day. American and Afghan Soldiers serving with the 203rd Thunder Corps appear determined to make the Army a large and capable fighting force as well.

ANA tip leads to weapons cache

Story by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Nicholas Rasmussen
Task Force Lethal Public Affairs

A tip generated by the 3rd Coy, 1st Kandak, Afghan National Army pointed ANA and U.S. Army soldiers from Task Force Lethal to a large weapons cache in Sarmast Kheyl, Zormat District Jan. 31.

The ANA and 1st Platoon of Company C, TF Lethal, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, uncovered a significant amount of homemade explosives, improvised explosive device-making materials, several pressure plate IEDs, triggering devices for IEDs and miscellaneous IED parts.

The ANA received the information from a villager during a joint patrol with coalition forces in eastern Zormat a week before the discovery.

While patrolling in a nearby village, the ANA informed coalition forces of the information. As a result, 1st Lt. Khasim, an ANA platoon leader, and U.S. Army 1st Lt. Joel Sage of Ankeny, Iowa, platoon leader of 1st Plt., Co. C, moved their patrols to Sarmast Kheyl.

While the ANA searched the suspected location for the cache, U.S. Army Sgt. Michael Jenkins of Ames, Iowa, a team leader for 1st Plt., Co. C, was helping provide security. He and his ANA partner saw barbed wire covering a tarp across a field by a nearby structure and decided to investigate.

“He looked around, pulled some brush aside and then I saw the shock on his face,” said Jenkins, describing the ANA soldier’s inspection.

The soldier looked at Jenkins, saying only, “Boom.”

They discovered a vest for carrying equipment and a handful of modified anti-personnel mines reinforced with extra homemade explosives and retrofitted with a pressure-plate device.


This find sparked further investigation.

The ANA found switches and wires, IED manufacturing materials and a significant amount of an illegal fertilizer.

Jenkins was outside the building with a handheld metal detector when the ANA approached Sage and asked for help searching inside.

A small team from 1st Plt., Co. C, including Jenkins, went into the building and began searching.

Inside the building, they found large steel drums and a 55-gallon barrel full of grain. The barrel had a pressure switch hidden inside.

In the end, the ANA, partnered with the U.S. Army, found and removed anti-personnel mines, improvised explosive device manufacturing materials and ingredients to create homemade explosives. 

(Top right) A sample of the cache of explosive contraband found by Afghan National Army and U.S. Army soldiers after a tip led them to an area in Sarmast Kheyl, Zormat District, Jan. 31. (Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Joel Sage, Task Force Lethal)

(Bottom right) A vest used to carry equipment, batteries and anti-personnel mines retrofitted with additional homemade explosives and a pressure switch was found by Afghan National Army and U.S. Army soldiers in Sarmast Kheyl in eastern Zormat District Jan. 31. The items were found by an ANA soldier from 3rd Coy, 1st Kandak, which partnered with 1st Platoon, Company C, Task Force Lethal, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry Regiment, on the mission. The ANA and coalition forces acted on a report generated by the ANA during a patrol the week before. (Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Joel Sage, Task Force Lethal)



Afghan National Security Forces soldiers pull security with a cover disposal during Operation Storm Lightning in Bedraou Valley Feb. 2. (Photo by French Army Staff Sgt. Eric Lepichon, Task Force Lafayette)

Afghan, French forces bring security to Bedraou Valley

Story by French Army 1st Lt. Audrey Chauchiel
Task Force La Fayette liaison to Regional Command-East Public Affairs

Afghan National Security Forces and French Task Force Lafayette soldiers conducted a combined security operation in the Bedraou Valley, Kapisa Province Jan. 29 to Feb. 8.

Approximately 1,800 soldiers from the ANA’s 3rd Brigade and the French TF Lafayette conducted Operation Storm Lightning to neutralize insurgent networks in the area and preserve freedom of movement on the main north-south road that runs through the province.

The French Richelieu Battle Group based in Tora positioned their first troops in January to search and hold Pashakari Village, located south of Tag Ab. At the same time, an Afghan National Army kandak deployed north of the village to prevent insurgents from returning to the area during the mission.

While moving toward Pashakar to reinforce the battle group, an armored platoon received fire from insurgents. Air support suppressed the attack, allowing the battle group to search the village.

Afghan National Police and French advisers of police operational mentoring and liaison teams maintained checkpoints at the Pashakar’s entrances to provide security and prevent insurgents from returning.

Following a tip indicating an insurgent leader and a group of heavily armed combatants had taken refuge north of the village, TF La Fayette and ANA soldiers mobilized to capture the leader.

At the insurgent’s compound, French Tiger helicopters neutralized the guards surrounding the compound, allowing the troops to enter safely, according to a task force spokesperson. The ground forces apprehended seven insurgents, including the leader who was carrying two AK-47s, several ammunition magazines, and grenades.

During the operation, the combined forces searched 60 compounds and confiscated several caches of weapons, shells, rockets, grenades, improvised explosive devices, and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition.

According to both Afghan and French chiefs of operation, the ANA’s 3rd Kandak found the most important cache: 21 mortar shells and a rocket launcher.

The insurgent’s arsenal found there by the combined forces was valued at more than \$11,000, the loss of which will significantly diminish the insurgent’s capacities, according to French TF La Fayette intelligence.

“Neither the Russians nor the coalition forces had ever succeeded in (securing) this zone,” said an area resident.

“The operation seems to have disorganized the insurrection and should facilitate the establishment of the Afghan security forces in the area, and made it possible to establish an ANP station,” said French Army Brig. Gen. Jean-François Hogard, TF La Fayette commander.

The end result allowed officials to determine the needs of the population and begin development projects. 



French Task Force Allobroges soldiers pull security during Operation Storm Lightning in Bedraou Valley (Photo by French Army Staff Sgt. Eric Lepichon, Task Force Lafayette)



An Afghan woman works outside in the village of Tili Jan. 20. During the three-day mission, the female engagement team interviewed several female members of the village, marking the first time a U.S. presence had been in the village in more than a year. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Jodi Marti, Task Force Red Bulls)

FET plays vital role in Mayl Valley operations

Story by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Matson
Task Force Red Bulls Public Affairs

When U.S. Army Capt. Jodi Marti got a call Jan. 18 from the 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment operations section requesting her female engagement team go to Najil, she knew she was dealing with a big mission. At the time, she just didn't know how big.

Marti, from Knoxville, Iowa, is the commander of Company E, 1st Bn., 133rd Inf., part of the Iowa National Guard's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, Task Force Red Bulls.

"I was called in the middle of the night," Marti recalled. "They requested a FET and, with Soldiers on leave and so forth, I only had so many to pick from. The mission was to air assault in northeast of the village of Tili and push through the Mayl Valley."

Twenty-four hours later, the team was in the air.

During the mission, dubbed 'Operation Rock Star', the seven female Soldiers and infantry Soldiers from Co. A, 1st Bn., 133rd Inf., as well as other U.S. and Afghan assets, swept in and through the Mayl Valley.

"In the Islamic culture, men cannot search women, and a lot of times men cannot engage in conversation with the women," said U.S. Army Sgt. Shannon Osterholm, a truck driver with Co. E, 1st Bn., 133rd Inf., and FET member from Mason City, Iowa. "So the overall goal of the FET is to get information out of the female population because they know a lot about what is going on, sometimes more than what the men will give up."

There are numerous cultural considerations the FET members had to consider and adhere to during the mission, according to U.S. Army Sgt. Samantha Kauffman, a signal support systems specialist with Co. E and FET member from West Union, Iowa. She said no man, other than a woman's husband, is supposed to see the woman's face or hair.

If a piece of clothing such as a scarf needed to be removed during a search, the FET would have to take the woman into a room or concealed area to do so, with security being in place around the room.

The females completed FET training at their mobilization station prior to deploying, including cultural awareness issues taught by Afghan women.

"We didn't just search the Afghan females, we let them know we were not there to harm them," said U.S. Army Spc. Kimberly Lindsey, an administration specialist with Co. E and FET member from Eldora, Iowa.

"Some females didn't even want you patting them down in the presence of a male, so that got a little challenging," Kauffman said. "Then you'd be attempting to find a discreet place to search them, away from everybody, but you're in the middle of the mountains, so you didn't have a lot of places to go."

The team proved even with cultural sensitivities, Afghan women could be searched and valuable information found. The enemy has been known to conceal information and items with their women.

On one woman, who the team members said was visibly nervous at the time of the search, the team found a cell phone with numbers of a man making improvised explosive devices in the area, as well as the information of several of his insurgent colleagues.

The man, who was hiding in a closet in his shop, was located during the mission, along with a large amount of homemade explosives.

"They did a controlled detonation in a cave on the mountain of some of the explosives we found in a pressure-cooker," Osterholm said. "All of a sudden, you heard this massive boom and could see and feel the shockwaves move down from the mountainside through the valley."

It was a good find, and one the team members said they know may have saved U.S. and Afghan lives.

With the knowledge that the explosives were destroyed and couldn't be used to harm coalition forces, Osterholm said the mission was a satisfying experience, especially from a truck driver's perspective.

"For me, it felt like I had helped to do something to keep the convoys I'm on a little bit safer," she said. "It was just unreal."

"When our guys would find weapons and stuff, we knew it was a good thing," Marti said. "We thought, maybe because of this, some Soldiers and civilians won't get harmed."

During the mission, Marti said her team of seven Soldiers separated into three small groups.

The first group included of U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jennifer Voegtlin, a combat medic from Altoona, Iowa, with Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 1st Bn., 133rd Inf., U.S. Army Pvt. Olivia McBride, a production control specialist with Co. E from West Union, Iowa, and U.S. Army Pfc. Shannyanne Adame, a truck driver with Co. E from Bettendorf, Iowa.

Their task during the operation was to search females at a traffic control point just northeast of Combat Outpost Najil.

The second and third teams moved with the mission's maneuvering elements through the mountainous Mayl Valley. Osterholm and Kauffman paired together and moved through the south end of valley. Marti and Lindsey moved through the northern part of the valley.

"We searched females throughout the valley and helped talk to them," Osterholm recalled. "There were a few situations where the matriarchs of the village were quite helpful in giving us information on where the Taliban had been."

The mission was also a very physically demanding one, especially for the teams moving through the valley. They arrived in enemy territory in the middle of the night in an area unfamiliar to them or anyone in the operation.

"We immediately scaled the face of this cliff to go down into Tili," Marti recalled. "The females we came across were a little different from those the other team



Afghan women stand obscured in the village of Tili Jan. 20 during a three-day mission to the area. It was the first time for a U.S. presence in the village in more than a year. Female engagement team members participated in the mission dubbed "Operation Rockstar" in which coalition forces eliminated several insurgency members, as well as seized hundreds of pounds of homemade explosives, weapons and other pieces of the enemy operating in Northeastern Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Jodi Marti, Task Force Red Bulls)

encountered; they didn't want anything to do with us. Tili was the hardest village."

The team hiked up and down the steep cliffs with full rucksacks numerous times during the course of the mission.

Osterholm and Kauffman's team was at the foot of a mountain which was a known enemy hideout just outside Tili. The enemy was identified and engaged by coalition aircraft.

At the end of the day, several Taliban members were confirmed killed during the battle damage assessment and numerous weapons caches were collected.

"The light show we watched was very close, very loud and bright!" Osterholm said. "It was much closer than we anticipated. This mountain we were beside just got lit up."


The FET members worked their way from one village to another throughout the valley, interviewing women after

coalition forces cleared the towns. They also catalogued and photographed evidence found in the searches.

In the village of Kanday, the Soldiers searched the house of a known high value target where several pieces of enemy information/propaganda were seized.

"It was chaotic," said Marti. "No matter what village we went into, it seemed like there was something going on."

"We didn't know what to expect, no one knew," Lindsey said. "We knew what our overall mission was, but no one had really done this before."

But, after three challenging days, coalition forces had killed more than 10 insurgents, seized hundreds of pounds of explosives, weapons, money and other information from the insurgency, and the FET showed they could go into uncharted waters, and contribute to a highly successful mission. 

Warrior Watch

U.S. Army Sgt.

Toby Hall

Story and photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Matson Task Force Red Bulls Public Affairs

He said he wanted the national anthem to mean something more to him when he heard it at rodeos. That's why U.S. Army Sgt. Toby Hall, a team leader with Company A, 413th Civil Affairs Battalion out of Lubbock, Texas, said he joined the Army.

"Before I joined, you'd hear the national anthem and hear the speaker talk about Soldiers while I was trying to get all fired up to ride a horse or a bull. I'd think to myself, 'Man I'm nothing but a big sissy; they're over there fighting for my country and all I'm doing is getting on some horse that's going to buck for eight seconds,'" Hall said. "That was kind of a reason I joined, I wanted it to mean something more to me when I heard that song play. If it wasn't for us over here, I wouldn't be able to ride back home."

Presently, Hall is a civil affairs Soldier deployed to Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam as part of Task Force Ironman. Ironically, the task force is under the command of the 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment, a part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, nicknamed the "Red Bulls."

Back in his hometown of Amarillo, Texas, however, Hall earns his living as a professional rodeo cowboy, competing in the bull riding and bareback bronco riding events. He competes in rodeo circuits throughout Texas and the Midwest, to include the Texas Cowboys Rodeo Association, the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, and the Kansas Pro Rodeo Association, for which he is the bareback riding director.

Possibly the only thing about Hall that doesn't scream cowboy is his height. He's about 6 feet tall, a good height for a movie cowboy, but not the ideal bull rider or bareback bronco rider's build.

"Most of those guys are between 5 feet 6 and 5 feet 8, 130, maybe 140 pounds," Hall said.

Everything else about Hall is the genuine article. He has a stockpile of 63 cans of Copenhagen in his room and always a dip in his mouth. He has a deep voice with a bit of a Texan twang and, though he's very polite and friendly, always laughing, he walks with a bit of a swagger. His room is lined with cowboy magazines, Louis L'Amour books, John Wayne sayings, pictures of family and friends and their horses and ranches. He can talk for hours about country music.

Hall said he's rode in rodeos all his life and he's got the scars, bumps and bruises to prove it. About two inches above his right eye on his forehead is a slanted scar from where a bronco kicked him in the head. His left pinky is mangled into a u-shape and won't straighten anymore, he's broken his nose three times along with his right wrist several times on bareback riggings.

"To be a cowboy," Hall said, "you gotta be tough."

In Afghanistan, Hall is not riding bulls. Instead, he is riding along with the Red Bulls infantry Soldiers, going out on missions to villages throughout their area of operations.

Hall, who joined the Army Reserve right after he graduated from college with a degree in agricultural engineering in January 2008, tries to assess the climate of the town by talking directly with its people.

"I try to find the village elder or malik and try to find out what they think of us," he said. "I also try to see what kind of problems the village has and if the enemy is there. I have my own way of doing (what) I've been trained to do without coming straight out and saying, 'Where's the Taliban?' I try to build a relationship with these people."

The relationship is key, Hall said, because the people need to know they can trust him and the coalition's Soldiers. He said in the past, civil affairs teams built projects in villages just to say they've contributed to the towns. He said his team tries to find ways to help the villagers improve their town and make it more stable in the long-term.

"I try to ask them about their farms, livestock, wells, hydro-electric power, all sorts of things," he said. "Without us going in and talking to them, they're scared to death of us, and I would be too if somebody was rolling through my town in big old trucks with big old guns on them."

"We let them know we're not here to hurt them, we're here to protect them from the Taliban and give them work so they don't have to join the Taliban. I let them know we're not going to be here forever, and we're not giving out handouts, so we ask them, 'What can I do to help you out, so you can do this on your own?' I like that I actually get to interact with the people here, and see firsthand how they lives in their homes."

Traveling to the town involves stepping into any role needed in the convoy. Hall has served as truck commander or gunner on the missions before. He and his team dismount and engage the villagers. When the convoy or the dismounted Soldiers take fire, Hall puts aside his civil affairs role to engage the enemy.

"If somebody's shooting at us, I'm not going to stay back and be scared, we'll be right up with the infantry guys doing our thing," Hall said.

As for the rodeo, Hall doesn't see himself quitting riding anytime soon.

"It all depends on how tough you are and how long you wanna keep taking that beating," he said. "I'm going to ride until my body won't let me anymore." 🐾



Brotherhood at the top of Afghanistan

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

At the highest observation post in northeastern, a brotherhood of U.S. Army Soldiers protects a small valley that feeds into the Kunar River Valley.

Surrounded by snow-capped mountains and freezing winds a few kilometers from the Pakistan border, Observation Post Mustang weathers storms and waves of Taliban fighters.

Soldiers from Troop C, 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Bandit, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, stay vigilant day and night at the small outpost located in the Hindu Kush Mountains 6,500 feet above Kunar Province.

“That ridge over there is Rocket Ridge,” said U.S. Army Spc. Brian S. Ellis, an MK46 machine gunner from Canyon Lake, Texas, as he pointed toward a snow-lined ridge in the distance.

“In the past, that’s been (the Taliban’s) main point of attack as far as rockets,” Ellis continued. “They like it up there because they used to sit on the other side of the ridge and not really worry about getting hit. Since we’ve been up here in the past few months, we’ve been raining .50-cal machine gun fire down on them and calling for fire pretty accurately.”

Ellis turned to pick up a pair of binoculars, quickly for someone wearing more than 30 pounds of combat gear. Quickly, because the Soldiers up here, like Ellis, wear their gear so often it’s a second skin to them.

He scanned the rugged terrain and the few villages tucked in the shadows of the valley.

“The biggest task is finding the bad guys,” said Ellis. “We look and look and look every single day. Since we keep raining down on them with bombs and mortars, it’s harder and harder to find them. So we have to look in specific spots in those little nooks and crannies in the mountains, on top of ridges, and on the other side of spurs just to try to find these guys. We know they’re out there, and we know they’re moving.”

The Soldiers up here live in one of the most unforgiving places in the world at the base of the Hindu Kush Mountains.

“Our mission is basically a force protection mission,” said U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Dave J. Cocchiarella, an infantry platoon leader and highest-ranking Soldier at OP Mustang. “We observe the valleys leading toward the forward operating base to make sure insurgents aren’t coming from Pakistan to shoot mortars and rockets at FOB Bostick. Lately, our mission has been a little more offensive than defensive.”

During the past month, the Soldiers here have taken the fight to the Taliban, with more than 40 insurgent fighters killed or suppressed, said Cocchiarella, a Woodbury, Minn., native.

“I think lately they’ve got the message they can’t just come through here anymore,” added Cocchiarella. “They’re going to be found, and they’re going to be killed.”

Back on guard duty, Ellis confirmed their job wasn’t just to observe but to engage.

“We’re trying to let the Taliban know we’re here and we’re not going to let them freely move around our (area of operations) without us seeing them,” said Ellis. “There’s nowhere they can go. We’re constantly watching them and they know it. So they’ve been trying to move around at night, but we see them.”



As was the case one night when one of the battle positions, perched overlooking the valley, called up some suspicious movement.

U.S. Army Spc. Andrew M. Dickerson, a team leader from Clarksville, Tenn., was on guard. He said, after intelligence reported movement in his sector, he saw three males with weapons.

“They were close enough you could see it clear as day,” said Dickerson. “One had an AK-47 (assault rifle) slung over his shoulder and another one was at the low-ready, tactically moving.”

The Soldiers quickly received approval to engage the enemies and took them out explained Dickerson.

As the Soldiers look out for the inhabitants of the valleys below, they also look out for each other.

“We’re all pretty much like family,” said Ellis whose only personal time is in the plywood outhouse or on guard duty. “You’re living not even 5 feet away from the guy next to you. We’re pretty much all best friends, like family. We joke around with each other, like brothers.”

With the sunshine melting the snow, two Soldiers wrestled in the mud for entertainment and exercise. Cocchiarella stood back, chuckled and jeered his brothers.

“When I actually got here and realized how small it was, I was a little shocked at first,” said Cocchiarella. “I’ve gotten used to the fact that there aren’t many places you can go up here....

This is home and family is up here. When I talked to my wife, it was a little hard for her to understand at first — she felt like she was being replaced. But now she understands there’s a home back in Minnesota and there’s a home here up with my guys.”

The brotherhood on the shelf of Afghanistan tucked between ‘Rocket Ridge,’ Pakistan, and the Kunar River Valley, has a mission to accomplish.

Defending its home is on the top of that list. 🇺🇸

(Above) U.S. Army Sgt. Connor J. Quinn, a combat medic from San Martin, Calif., assigned to Troop C, 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Bandit, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, screams after a shower with cold bottled water at Observation Post Mustang in eastern Afghanistan. Since there are no showers at the observation post, Soldiers have to take cold showers with bottled water to stay clean.



U.S. linguist Shafiq Ansary (left) of Union City, Calif., reunites with Qadrie, her sister's husband's sister, after a 48-year separation. The two reunited during an animal care training seminar for women conducted by the Iowa National Guard's 734th Agribusiness Development Team in the Chowkay District Jan. 31.

Relatives reunite in Chowkay after 48 years

Story and photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Peter Shinn
734th Agribusiness Development Team

It took 48 years and an unusual set of coincidences, but a U.S. linguist born here found her sister-in-law during an animal care training seminar for Afghan women in the Chowkay District.

U.S. linguist Shafiq Ansary, 54, of Union City, Calif., attended the training in her capacity as an English-Pashto interpreter. She normally works for the Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team, but was detailed that day to assist the Iowa National Guard's 734th Agribusiness Development Team, which conducted the animal care training.

According to Ansary, she did not know the training would take place in Chowkay until she arrived at the training site. During introductions at the beginning of the class, Ansary mentioned her brother-in-law was from Chowkay, and that she had spent a considerable amount of time in Chowkay herself until the age of 6.

Ansary then began recalling the names of family members she had spent time with in Chowkay, including her sister's husband's sister, Qadrie.

A woman attending the class told Ansary, "Qadrie still lives here! I'll go get her."

Less than a half-hour later, Qadrie arrived, and the training briefly stopped amid a flurry of hugs, kisses and tearful remembrances. Qadrie quietly attended the remainder of the training, and afterward, she and Ansary reminisced.


"When I was just a little girl, I would sit by Qadrie's (oven) for hours, and she would bake me the most delicious corn bread," Ansary said. "I never dreamed that I would see her again.

"My family moved to Kabul when I was 6," Ansary continued. "I married when I was 18, and my husband and I lived in the U.S. for several years in the '70s while he finished his doctorate. We left Afghanistan for good when I was 23, after the revolution," she added. "When I decided to become a linguist, I had no idea I would come back to this place and find dear Qadrie."

Qadrie expressed equal astonishment at becoming reacquainted with Ansary, and she reflected on the reunion's larger personal implications.

"So many of my family were killed or became refugees during the revolution and civil war," Qadrie said. "When I look at Shafiq, I see my entire family."

Qadrie also described the reunion with Ansary as a symbol of the positive nature of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan.

"If the U.S. had not come here, I would never have seen Shafiq again," Qadrie said. "We are poor people, and we need so many things that only the Americans are helping us with." 

FW MARCH 2011

Cupid's pre-Valentine strike: *Couple finds love, commitment at FOB Lightning*

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

They did not play, 'Love is a battlefield,' at their wedding, but it would have been appropriate.

U.S. Army civilians, Tony Humphreys of Pittsburgh, and Lisette Bonano of Tampa, Fla., participated in a marriage commitment ceremony at Forward Operating Base Lightning Feb. 7.

The commitment ceremony was held in lieu of a wedding because coalition chaplains cannot perform weddings in Afghanistan.

Bonano is the senior adviser for the Afghan National Army's 203rd Thunder Corps inspector general's office. Humphreys works as a contractor with World Language Resources where he advises the 203rd Corps' education office.

The two met in Afghanistan after they retired. Humphreys is a retired U.S. Army command sergeant major. Bonano is a retired lieutenant colonel who worked with a provincial reconstruction team in Iraq before retiring last year.

Bonano smiles as she remembers her first encounters with Humphreys.

"He was always trying to waive at me and get my attention, but I just ignored him and walked away," said Bonano. "I avoided him like the plague."

Humphreys had been working at FOB Lightning for about two years when he first encountered his future wife.

"A van pulled up and I saw this lady," said Humphreys. "I felt something, but I still had to maintain my professionalism."

Humphreys insists he and Bonano have been entirely professional despite their obvious affection for each other.

It wasn't until Bonano left Afghanistan that things began to happen between the couple.

Humphreys had a friend ask Bonano to come to his office to receive a coin; supposedly, the coin was to reward Bonano for her good work at the FOB.

"He just wanted an excuse to touch my hand," said Bonano. "I have brothers; I knew what was going on."

Humphreys and Bonano began to correspond by e-mail. They found that they had a great deal in common. They both have adult children, they are both of Italian descent, and they are both deeply committed Christians.

FW MARCH 2011



Tony Humphreys of Pittsburgh, and Lisette Bonano of Tampa, Fla., light the unity candle during their marriage commitment ceremony at Forward Operating Base Lightning Feb. 7. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Maritza Freeland, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)

After a short stay in the states, Bonano decided to return to Afghanistan. She believes it was more than just a career decision.

Bonano felt compelled to return.


"We were drawn together by a shared faith in a difficult place," said Bonano. "I know (Humphreys) was sent to me by God."

U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Karen Hallet of Vernon, N.J., presided over the commitment ceremony. She, like Bonano, recognized the hand of a higher power in the couple's union.

"God is the author of love ... God can lead us to our life companion," said Hallet. "God found this couple in a little FOB in Afghanistan."

Humphreys becomes wistful when he thinks of the odd circumstances that brought him and Bonano together.

"It took me 25 years to find her, but I found her here in Afghanistan," said Humphreys. "I am a blessed man."

Conditions at FOB Lightning are tough, but for at least one couple, this unassuming corner of Afghanistan will be the place, 'we first met.' 

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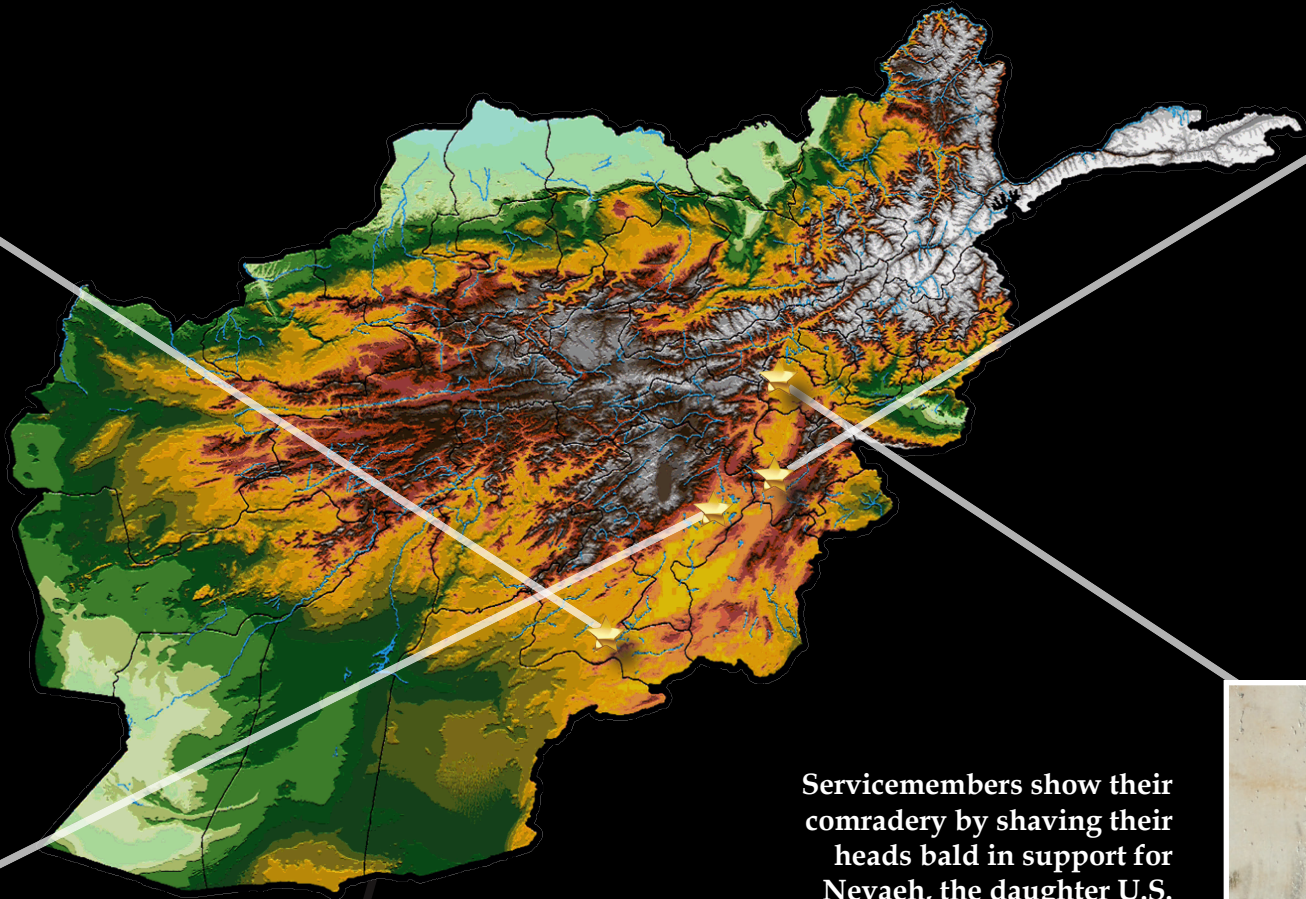
Goodwill across Afghanistan:



One of the teachers working at Rahim Kalay's new classroom tutors one of his students. As the Taliban's grip on Rahim Kalay quickly loosens more every day, the town's youth are able to attend lessons in their newly built classroom more frequently. (Photo by U.S. Marine Cpl. Brian Gabriel Jr., Regional Command Southwest Public Affairs)

ISAF and ANSF Reach Out

A boy from Jaji District, who fell more than 15 feet and struck his head, is stabilized with a cervical collar and kept warm with a wool blanket at the Company A, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Lethal aid station at Combat Outpost Herrer. Medical officials on site monitored the boy's heart rate, blood pressure and other vital signs until transportation to a larger hospital arrived. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. John Edwards, Task Force Lethal)



A young boy at an orphanage in Khowst City waits to get a blanket and other warm weather clothing provided by the medical team of Provincial Reconstruction Team Khowst. PRT Khowst assisted Afghan National Police handing out donated clothing attire to 73 children that reside at that orphanage. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Matthew Lohr, Khowst Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs)

Servicemembers show their comradery by shaving their heads bald in support for Nevaeh, the daughter U.S. Army Capt. Chris Gideon, of Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Nevaeh has been receiving chemotherapy treatment for a rare blood disorder called hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. David House, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)



RCP 43 practices the “Golden Rule”

Story by U.S. Army Spc. Rosalind Arroyo
Task Force Dolch

To help prevent violent extremism and turn potential enemies into friends, 54th Engineer Battalion route-clearance Soldiers donated supplies to Afghan school children in Baraki Barak, Logar Province Jan. 30.

Task Force Dolch Soldiers of 54th Eng. Bn.'s Route-Clearance Patrol 43 believe in practicing the “golden rule” of treating others the way they would like to be treated when attempting to win the hearts and minds of Afghans. Donating supplies to a school in the Baraki Barak valley of western Logar is a perfect example.

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Otto Valdez, TF Dolch's RCP 43 platoon sergeant from Rio Grande, Puerto Rico, asked friends and family to donate school supplies for Afghan children. Valdez collected nearly \$1,500 worth of school aid, saying his mother and brother sent about 80 percent of the supplies and the other 20 percent came from his friends.

RCP 43 Soldiers distributed school supplies, toys, shoes and boxes of winter clothes in an effort to help the children enjoy a better quality of life.

This is not the first time Valdez conducted this type of mission.

“It was something I did before on other deployments - twice in Kosovo, twice in Iraq and now in Afghanistan,” said Valdez. “I am willing to do it again as long as God provides me with the strength.”

Valdez's RCP 43 discovered the school while conducting route-clearance patrols in their area of operations. RCP 43 Soldiers received help from local Afghan interpreters to choose the most appropriate gifts for the children and establish rapport with the school officials.

One benefit for the Soldiers conducting this mission was seeing the smiles and happiness in the children of the west Logar Province school.

“I have two kids of my own, and I know the greatest thing to me is to see them happy,” said Valdez. “These Afghan children are not as lucky as Americans. If we can help them, that's our biggest benefit from the missions.”

The principal of the boys' school appreciates the assistance from American Soldiers. In fact, this help changed his views of their presence in his area.



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Otto Valdez, a Route-Clearance Patrol 43, 54th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Dolch, platoon sergeant from Rio Grande, Puerto Rico, establishes rapport with local villagers during a mission to distribute school supplies and toys to Afghan children in the Baraki Barak valley of Logar Province. (Photo by U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Michael Chigbrow, Task Force Dolch)

“I am feeling thankful that these Soldiers are supporting our people. I also feel that we can improve our relationship with the military,” said Ahmadi, the school's principal. “I never really thought much of the American military. Now it's different, I like them very much.”

Valdez plans to broaden awareness of the school-support missions in the near future using word of mouth and signs around Forward Operating Base Shank to inform his comrades about the support he hopes to bring to local residents.

“I think the simple way is to put the word out to people in the dining facility. There are a lot of people who stay on the FOB who don't know what we're doing,” said Valdez. “We can put a point of contact on signs to inform people they can help the children by donating school supplies and clothes.”

RCP 43 will include Afghan National Army forces in future school-sponsorship missions. Valdez plans to have ANA soldiers help distribute shipments to the schools and interact with the local populace.

“I think working with ANA is a great idea. This is their country, and they should be the ones dealing with their (people),” said Valdez. “It promotes community cohesion and helps the locals improve their relationship with the ANA.”

RCP 43's Soldiers enjoy the school sponsorship. It gives them a healthy approach to making a difference in the local community.

“It felt great, because these kids have less than we do,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Newsome, TF Dolch RCP 43 squad leader from Tampa, Fla. “Anytime we can help the kids by giving them stuff, it's good. Anytime we can help these people, it will help stop future attacks and help win the hearts and minds of Afghan communities.”

“If the circumstances are right, I definitely would sponsor a school to help them out,” continued Newsome, who said he plans to conduct similar missions during possible future deployments. “When Soldiers sponsor schools, they take on a different mindset that helps them build character.”



A fully grown pomegranate is shown during a hands-on proper pruning training for local farmers of Tagab District in order to produce a greater yield of their fields.

Tagab residents learn proper pruning techniques

Story and photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Kyle Brasier
Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs

Members of the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team joined members of Kentucky and Missouri Agribusiness Development Teams to conduct agricultural training for more than 70 local residents in a pomegranate orchard near the Tagab District Center Jan. 25–27.

“This training was a bigger success than we could have ever envisioned. We had hoped to be able to train around 30 farmers, but we were able to train over 70,” said Erik Jacob, of Roseburg, Ore., a U.S. Agency for International Development representative. “The government of Kapisa really stepped up to allow this training to happen.”

Throughout the training, local residents were able to learn proper pruning techniques that will help to provide a more fruitful yield in the upcoming years. This training is part of an ongoing campaign to help the Tagab District increase the economy through agriculture.

“By cutting out excess branches you force the tree to put more energy into the fruit and you will develop a higher quality fruit,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Garland Goodrich of Wakefield, Va., Kentucky ADT.

Farmers started their training on young trees and were shown how to properly mold the tree from the beginning. On the second day the training moved to an overgrown orchard where they discussed how over time the trees can be trimmed to be the most productive.

“It was a very good training and we are very happy with it. We are farmers and we want someone to help us. We need to be taught how to reduce the diseases that damage our yield and how to increase the fruit that we produce. The training was amazing for me,” said a local farmer through an interpreter.

This training was conducted to help the farmers of Tagab understand practices that will better help the care of their gardens and trees.

Most farmers weren't familiar with proper pruning techniques to increase the yield of their orchards, Tagab District subgovernor Akhumzada explained. Through this training they've learned these things and their trees will produce very good fruit.

One of the concerns going into the training was that many of these people were farming the way they had been taught by generations of farmers before them.

“We are teaching them something that we think is basic but is completely foreign to them and may be greatly resisted at first,” said Jacob. “They are going to see trees that are large, bountiful and fruit-bearing and then prune them into a skinny, little, chopped-down version of that. The results are not immediate. It may take nine months before they see why we made it into these skinny trees.”

The farmers didn't resist what they were being taught but embraced it.

“They were very involved; they started off quiet at the beginning of the training but became very involved with the hands-on section. They were very eager to learn about the pruning techniques,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Guadalupe Rios of Foley, Mo., Missouri ADT.

“This training has been in the works for over three months,” Jacob said. “Due to the improved security we were able to conduct it and we are hoping to conduct even more in the future.”

This training is part of a global pomegranate development project carried out by the stability operational office of French Task Force Lafayette. It consists of improving the pomegranate production in the Tagab Valley. There is a plan to install a storage warehouse and to sell products on the local market.

Kapisa PRT assists the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in providing a secure, stable environment for reconstruction efforts. The Tagab pomegranate training project is an example of the development projects the PRT is using to connect the government to the people and to improve quality of life in the province.

Kentucky ADT, Afghans conduct sheep study



Research like this hasn't been done in Afghanistan since the 1970s and is necessary in a country with 20 million sheep and goats.

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

To help move Afghan agriculture forward, U.S. Army Col. James Floyd had to become thoroughly familiar with the back end of a sheep during a visit to the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Parwan Province Feb. 3.

Floyd, Kentucky Agribusiness Development Team II veterinarian, demonstrated the proper technique to obtain the necessary fecal matter used to assess the intestinal health of the animal.

Floyd's demonstration was part of a trip by the Kentucky ADT II to the Parwan DAIL to deliver supplies and provide technical advice in preparation for a study of the effects of deworming medicine on Afghan sheep.

Research like this hasn't been done in Afghanistan since the 1970s and is necessary in a country with 20 million sheep and goats.

"If (Afghan farmers) have not dewormed before, they may see a big difference, however we are not sure if deworming makes a big difference in every location," Floyd said.

Floyd's uncertainty is due to the lack of data. He and other U.S. Army military veterinarians found no studies on gastrointestinal worms in Afghan sheep since the mid-1970s. This created a problem: without data, Floyd and other experts had no way of knowing if deworming treatments should be routinely recommended to improve the health of sheep.

As a result, Floyd and the other veterinarians proposed a deworming study of sheep that could help Afghan farmers and demonstrate to the government the benefit of applied scientific studies in the field.

"We realized we could make this into a project to answer that question ... and get the Afghan government and universities involved," said Floyd of Shreveport, La. "We have the goal of demonstrating that this type of research is valid for them to do to generate useful information for the Afghan agriculture."

Generating this information is relatively simple. In three Afghan provinces, three flocks of sheep will be studied. On the first day, the sheep are tagged, weighed, given a physical evaluation and have their feces sampled to determine the amount of worm eggs present. This procedure is repeated 10 days later to determine if deworming on the first day effectively reduced the amount of worm eggs. The data and samples will be collected by Afghan collaborators and analyzed at a Bagram Airfield lab.

"It is very helpful," said Sayed Mahmood, animal herd manager for DAIL and in charge of collecting the data in Parwan, through an interpreter. "Afghans keep cattle and sheep for everything."

Floyd hopes that this study has more benefits than just helping sheep. After 30 years of war and devastation in Afghanistan, he hopes this encourages the Afghan people to invest in applied scientific research on farm animals.

"(Afghanistan's) been disrupted for so long that this type of systematic research on animals is pretty well all gone," Floyd said. "So, this is a new thing for Afghan veterinarians and farmers."

Modernizing an important component

Hoosier Soldiers share poultry knowledge in Khowst Province

*Story and photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. John P. Zumer
Task Force Duke Public Affairs*

Members of the Indiana National Guard's 3-19th Agribusiness Development Team spent the last several months of their deployment assisting Afghan farmers in improving agricultural practices.

The 60 National Guardsmen of the ADT support the Fort Knox, Ky., based 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division's Task Force Duke. Skills and education among the ADT members include forestry, engineering, general farming, pest management, horticulture, marketing and education.

A mission to Combat Outpost Terezayi Feb. 2 saw members of the ADT facilitating a class on poultry, an important component of the Afghan agricultural economy.



According to one 3-19th ADT Guardsman, it was time and resources very well spent.

"There is a lack of understanding here on nutrition and vaccinations for poultry and other livestock," said U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Samuel Rance, rangeland manager for the 3-19th ADT and a native of Rensselaer, Ind. He helped coordinate the ADT poultry mission which was designed to improve health management, vaccination practices and production techniques in the poultry field.

However, the ADT Soldiers brought more than agricultural knowledge and experience to the poultry training location.

Fifty chickens, very much alive and kicking, and purchased beforehand through Afghan contractors, accompanied the Soldiers on the ride from Forward Operating Base Salerno.

Five chickens were given to each farmer as an incentive to attend the training. Farmers spent a morning in the classroom listening to Haji Mohammed, the Afghan agricultural agent for the Terezayi area.

In all, Rance said there are 18 agricultural agents in Khowst Province operating under the authority of the Afghan director of agriculture, irrigation and livestock.

A \$200,000 grant from the Commander's Emergency Response Program, which allows local U.S. military commanders to devote funds to needed projects, helped fund the classroom instruction at Terezayi. Remaining funds will be used for similar projects designed to provide additional poultry-related courses to area farmers. Follow-up missions will chart progress made in the interim.

Metrics for success, commonly known as benchmarks, previously hadn't been established properly, said Rance. Now, more focus will be put on safer, efficient and modern poultry management techniques.

"The farmers will learn that it's important to keep accurate records on how many chickens were still alive, sick, eaten, sold or stolen," Rance said.

The training is designed to provide background knowledge for a five-day seminar to be held later this winter at Khowst University. During the seminar, instructors will train 100 people in many of the same poultry techniques discussed at Terezayi.

The ADT will also facilitate future training in compost and forestry techniques.

Earlier projects included the building of a greenhouse at the Afghan National Army's COP Parsa, located near the U.S. Army's Camp Clark, which allows for controlled horticulture experiments.

U.S. Army Sgt. Brandon Reese, also a native of Rensselaer, Ind., and an infantryman attached to the 3-19th ADT, has farming experience back home. While many of the agriculture techniques which are taken for granted in the states are just being learned in Afghanistan, he's comforted to know there's a collaborative effort to help others learn the principles, no matter the distance or culture.

"It's nice to know we're helping. Our main goal is to put an Afghan face to the training, where they can conduct the training on their own without our support," said Reese.

(Left) An Afghan man holds chickens he received at Combat Outpost Terezayi. The chickens were distributed to local farmers who attended a poultry management class sponsored by the Afghan Director of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock.

W Safety Watch

Environmental Safety

Story by U.S. Army Ron McKimmy, CJTF-101 Safety

Environmental safety is defined as the act of protecting you from hazardous materials in the environment where you live and work. There are a lot of things that exist in our environment that qualify as HAZMAT, but we will focus on the more commonly found here in Afghanistan, asbestos, lead, JP8 and diesel fuel.

The two most commonly found hazardous materials found in Afghanistan are asbestos and lead. Old buildings pose the greatest risk. Most buildings and structures in Afghanistan locally constructed prior to 2001 contain these materials.

After the arrival of NATO forces, US forces brought with them their building standards and updated structures to meet the Western building codes wherever assigned or stationed. The U.S. raised the standards for new construction and renovation to ensure compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Association standards. These standards laid the groundwork for a better system and changed how contractors built coalition facilities in Afghanistan. New facilities built under US supervision usually comply with the current OSHA standard. Currently, not all of the older buildings have been renovated to remove the hazardous materials. We still use these older buildings and facilities. They may contain hazardous materials so it is very important that you know how to recognize the hazards and take precautions.

Asbestos is a mineral that is mined. It is also the name given to a group of naturally occurring minerals used in certain products, such as building and construction materials and some vehicle components like brake shoes and pads. Asbestos has the natural ability to resist heat and corrosion.

There are dangers with exposure to asbestos. Many of the older buildings in Afghanistan potentially contain materials made of asbestos. The inhalation of asbestos fibers can cause serious diseases of the lungs and other organs that may not appear until years after the exposure has

occurred. Asbestosis can cause a buildup of scar-like tissue in the lungs and result in loss of lung function that often progresses to disability and death. Asbestos fibers associated with these health risks are too small to see with the naked eye, and smokers are at higher risk of developing asbestos-related diseases.

Before it was known that inhalation of asbestos fibers causes several deadly diseases, asbestos was used in a large number of building materials and other products because of its strength, flame resistance and insulating properties. Asbestos causes a disease called asbestosis, which is a progressive and often fatal lung disease. It also causes lung and other cancers. Asbestos was used in fire-resistant clothing and protective equipment.

Additionally, asbestos was used in asbestos-cement pipe and sheeting, floor and roofing felts, dry wall, floor tiles, spray on ceiling coatings, and packing materials. When buildings containing these materials are renovated or torn down, or when the asbestos-containing materials themselves are disturbed, minute asbestos fibers may be released into the air. The fibers are so small that they often cannot be seen with the naked eye. The fact that you can inhale these fibers without knowing it makes asbestos an even more dangerous hazard. Containment is the best defense against exposure to asbestos.

It is your responsibility to protect yourself from being exposed to asbestos. When moving into established buildings and facilities, inhabitants must understand there is a potential for exposure and that exposure can occur when asbestos-containing materials are disturbed during the renovation, modification or demolition of these buildings or structures. In addition, personnel may be exposed through contact with deteriorating asbestos-containing materials in buildings.

Lead poses a health risk to personnel in Afghanistan. The dangerous health effects from lead exposure warrant education and training to understand the risks.

Exposure can happen in many different



Damaged Afghan tile work from the Soviet occupation

ways. Lead is an ingredient in thousands of products widely used throughout the building industry, including lead-based paints, lead solder, electrical fittings and conduits, tank linings, plumbing fixtures and many metal alloys. Although many uses of lead have been banned in the Western world, lead-based paints continue to be used on steel structures because of its rust and corrosion-inhibiting properties. Many Afghan structures were painted with paints containing lead so there is a potential risk of lead exposure. Significant lead exposure can also occur when paint is removed from surfaces previously covered with lead-based paint. These include demolition of structures, flame-torch cutting, welding, use of heat guns, and abrasive blasting of steel structures. Precautions must be taken when doing operations that can generate lead dust and fumes. We can mitigate the hazard encapsulating the paint by covering it with a non-lead-based paint. This effectively seals in the lead and, unless the paint starts to peel or flake, it makes the area safe. Sometimes a simple act of sweeping the floor in an older building can potentially cause exposure to this hazardous material. Understanding is the key to prevention.

Hazardous liquids

Most vehicles in Afghanistan use **diesel** or **JP8**. There are other fuels like gasoline and propane, but we will focus on the two most common fuels used here in Afghanistan.

JP-8 or JP8, Jet Propellant 8 is a kerosene-based jet fuel. Originally designed to power aircraft, JP8 is used by coalition forces in Afghanistan as a fuel for heaters, stoves and vehicles. The U.S. Armed Forces uses JP8 as a replacement for diesel fuel in the engines of nearly all tactical ground vehicles and electrical generators, and as a coolant in aircraft engines and some other aircraft components. The use of JP8 greatly simplifies logistics.

JP8 is formulated with icing inhibitors, corrosion inhibitors, lubricants, and anti-static agents, which makes it very toxic. JP8 has an oily feel to it. Personnel have complained of smelling and tasting JP8 for hours after exposure. As JP8 is less volatile, it remains on contaminated surfaces for a longer time, increasing the risk of exposure.

Important things to know about JP8:

- It is clear to light yellow liquid with petroleum odor
- It is a combustible liquid and vapor
- It is harmful or fatal if swallowed and can enter lungs and cause damage
- It may cause respiratory-tract irritation if inhaled
- It causes skin irritation
- It is toxic to aquatic organisms

Immediate health effects of JP8:

Eye: Not expected to cause prolonged or significant eye irritation.

Skin: Contact with the skin causes irritation. Symptoms may include pain, itching, discoloration, swelling and blistering. Contact with the skin is not expected to cause an allergic skin response and not expected to be harmful to internal organs if absorbed through the skin.

Ingestion: Because of its low viscosity, this material can directly enter the lungs if swallowed or if subsequently vomited. Once in the lungs it is very difficult to remove and can cause severe injury or death. May be irritating to mouth, throat, and stomach. Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Inhalation: Breathing this material at concentrations above the recommended exposure limits may cause central nervous system effects. Central nervous system effects may include headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, weakness, loss of coordination, blurred vision, drowsiness, confusion, or disorientation. At extreme



Diesel powered Afghan trucks

exposures, central nervous system effects may include respiratory depression, tremors or convulsions, loss of consciousness, coma or death. Mists of this material may cause respiratory irritation. Symptoms of respiratory irritation may include coughing and difficulty breathing.

Diesel fuel is a petroleum-based fuel refined from crude oil and is naturally found in the Earth.

If you have ever compared diesel fuel and gasoline, you know that they are different. They certainly smell different. Diesel fuel, sometimes referred to as diesel oil, is heavier and oilier and evaporates much more slowly than gasoline. And this increases the potential for exposure.

Diesel fuel is used as a substitute for JP8 to power a wide variety of vehicles and operations. Some vehicles are not designed to operate with JP8 so they must use diesel.

Important things to know about Diesel:

- It is straw-colored to dyed red liquid with petroleum odor
- It causes severe skin irritation
- It is hazardous if swallowed.
- It should be used with adequate ventilation
- Contact with eyes, skin and clothing should be avoided
- There is a possible skin-cancer hazard
- It is harmful or fatal if swallowed and can enter lungs and cause damage

Immediate health effects of Diesel:

Eye: Contact may cause mild eye irritation including stinging, watering, and redness.

Skin: Severe skin irritant. Contact may cause redness, itching, burning, and

severe skin damage. Prolonged or repeated contact can worsen irritation by causing drying and cracking of the skin, leading to dermatitis (inflammation). Not actually toxic by skin absorption, but prolonged or repeated skin contact may be harmful.

Ingestion: (Swallowing): There is a low degree of toxicity by ingestion. This material can enter lungs during swallowing or vomiting and cause lung inflammation and damage.

Inhalation: (Breathing): No information available. Studies by other exposure routes suggest a low degree of toxicity by inhalation.

Signs and Symptoms: Effects of overexposure may include irritation of the nose and throat, irritation of the digestive tract, nausea, diarrhea and transient excitation followed by signs of nervous system depression (e.g., headache, drowsiness, dizziness, loss of coordination, disorientation and fatigue).

Target Organs: There is limited evidence from animal studies that overexposure may cause injury to the kidneys.

Health hazards/precautionary measures:

- Do not taste or swallow
- Combustible liquid and vapor
- Wash thoroughly after handling.

Physical hazards/precautionary measures:

- It is a flammable liquid and vapor. Keep away from heat, sparks, flames, static electricity or other sources of ignition.

It is up to you to make sure you are safe.

“Safety starts with you”

Story Snapshots



On patrol

Spc. Nicholas Francioso, armored crewman, assigned to 2nd Squad, 3rd Platoon, Company C., 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, crosses a small irrigation canal Jan. 31 in an orchard in Arghandab District. Francioso, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, was conducting a foot patrol with his squad to search orchards throughout the district and interact with the local population. During their foot patrols, 2nd squad must maneuver their way through the Arghandab's many obstacles, including: farmer-built mud walls, irrigation canals, densely populated orchards, foot-wide pathways through long stretches of boggy flats and even a 30-foot-tall wall they must climb during their patrol. (Photo by Spc. Breanne Pye, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division Public Affairs)

Assistance

Residents of Qara Bagh District in Ghazni Province wait to receive humanitarian assistance provided through their district center. The district's recipients were chosen by representatives of their villages. (Photo by U.S. Air Force photo by Chief Master Sgt. Julie Brummund, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team)



To pave or not to pave

Haji Ibrahim, an Orgun tribal elder and member of the Peace Council greets U.S. Army Col. Sean M. Jenkins, commander of Task Force Currahee, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, before the start of a peace conference hosted by Paktika Province Gov. Moheebullah Samim and the Peace Council at the Governor Provincial Center Jan. 22. Jenkins, a native of Ridgefield, Conn., and Ibrahim discussed the possible plan to begin the paving of a highly travelled route in Paktika Province. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Kimberly K. Menzies, Task Force Currahee Public Affairs)



Graduation

Afghan National Army Col. Mohammad presents a maintenance course graduate with the coveted red hat worn by maintenance technicians at Forward Operating Base Thunder Feb. 2. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Maritza Freeland, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)



His bite is worse than his bark

U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Enyzi, a 3-year-old Belgian Terouren military working dog attached to Task Force Currahee, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, practices a patrol or attacking during a drill at Forward Operating Base Sharana, Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Luther L. Boothe Jr., Task Force Currahee Public Affairs, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division)



On the river front

A Soldier from the U.S. Army 10th Mountain Division's 3rd Battalion, 6th Field Artillery battery based at Combat Outpost Qaisar, Afghanistan stands guard along the banks of the river that flows through the village of Hazara Qala. Erosion caused by the river had placed various buildings including a school and a mosque at risk. (Photo by U.S. Navy Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class Eric S. Dehm, International Security Force Public Affairs)

Keep it moving

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Travis Bougher of Des Moines, Iowa, and Mayor of Joint Combat Out Post Pul-e-Sayad Utilizes a forklift to unload supplies off the back of a Heavy Expanded Mobility Truck, Parwan province, Afghanistan, Jan. 30, 2011. A Co. visits JCOP Pul-e-sayad to drop off supplies of food, fuel and repair parts. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Kristina Gupton, TF Red Bulls Public Affairs)





Security

An Afghan National Army Commando with the 203rd Thunder Corps, Commando Kandak, provides security from the new commando observation post at Forward Operating Base Thunder. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Derek Nelson, 17th Public Affairs Detachment)

Pumping Iron

U.S. Army Sgt. Shaun Gibbs of Leesville, La., presses 430 lbs at Semi-annual bench press competition at Forward Operating Base Lightning. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Kenneth A. Stewart, 17th Public Affairs Detachment).



Fighting sand

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Beck, from Fort Campbell, Ky., U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Lucas Pedigo, of Schererville, Ind., and U.S. Army Spc. Richard Magee, of Wildomar, Calif., all from 3rd "Distribution" Platoon, Company E, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, straighten out large woven mats used to combat soft, deep sand in a wide wadi allowing heavy trucks to cross safely during a combat logistical patrol from Forward Operating Base Sharana to FOB Kushamond in Paktika Province Jan. 24. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Christina Sindors, Task Force Currahee Public Affairs)



Land partnership

Haji Hazrat Ali Gull, a prosperous fruit producer, explains the improvements he has already made to a proposed orchard training farm site he owns to U.S. Army Master Sgt. Bill Dunbar of Plymouth, Iowa, value-added processing specialist for the Iowa National Guard's 734th Agribusiness Development Team. Gull signed a land use agreement with the ADT to develop the site just north of Asadabad into an orchard training farm. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Capt. Peter Shinn, 734th Agribusiness Development Team)

Donated suits help Iowa Soldiers fight fires

*Story and photos by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Matson
Task Force Red Bulls Public Affairs Office*

When a person calls a local fire department for help, the hope is firefighters respond as quickly as possible. But no one knew a Waterloo, Iowa, fire department would respond to a fire more than 4,000 miles away. That's essentially what happened when the Waterloo Fire Rescue sent two firefighting suits to Iowa National Guard Soldiers of Company C, 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, at Forward Operating Base Kalagush in eastern Afghanistan. The Soldiers fought a large fire Dec. 28, one in which no Soldiers were injured but the base's maintenance building was destroyed.

"I expressed through my wife that we could really use some of the gear we had back home for the jobs we have to potentially do here," said U.S. Army Capt. Garrett Gingrich, the Co. C commander who has been a Waterloo firefighter for three years. "So my fire department, which has been extremely supportive of everything I've done through the military, and with the department as well, without hesitation sent two full sets of turnout gear over here for us to use."

Within two weeks of mentioning that gear would be helpful, Waterloo Fire Rescue sent flame-resistant overcoats and pants, gloves, hoods and fire helmet complete with face shield.

Gingrich, who grew up in Dysart, Iowa, said the Dec. 28 fire was a major fire, which his Soldiers, along with the help of the Nuristan Provincial Reconstruction Team's security forces, extinguished.

The fire was caused when fuel was struck during a mortar attack on the base. The Soldiers worked with what equipment they had – a small pump truck, water buffalos and shovels – to put out the fire. Gingrich said he can't say for certain whether the gear would have saved the maintenance building, but it definitely would have helped.

"The gear is really important because during that fire, the heat was tremendous from the fuel," Gingrich said. "The guys fighting the fire weren't able to get close enough to the fire to keep it from spreading. This greatly increases our ability to get in there and attack a fire. You can get right on it, or closer to it, because you don't feel the heat as much. There's not as much chance you'll get burned or catch on fire, so this gear helps to keep our Soldiers safe and helps our overall readiness."

Larger FOBs have dedicated fire departments on base with full-time professional firefighters. At smaller locations like Kalagush, however, there are no assigned fire-fighting assets, so Soldiers have to extinguish fires themselves.


Co. C Soldiers put out three fires including the large one Dec. 28.

Two of the fires involved shipping containers set ablaze after enemy fire ignited the materials inside. The infantry Soldiers, though not firefighters by trade, responded quickly to douse the flames.

As a firefighter, Gingrich knows the risk of fire is still present on the FOB. Like bases throughout the country, many of the buildings are constructed of wood and could be ignited by lightning or any number of other factors. Thanks to the equipment donated by the Waterloo Fire Rescue, the Soldiers said they are more prepared to fight a fire should another occur.

One Soldier who will be more prepared is U.S. Army Sgt. Joseph Sawyer, an infantry team leader from Davenport, Iowa. A volunteer firefighter for two years, Sawyer is also undergoing emergency medical technician paramedic training and hopes to become a professional firefighter when he returns from this deployment.

Sawyer seemed to sum up the sentiments of the Soldiers on the fire response team.

"The main thing I'd like to say is 'thank you,'" Sawyer said. "We get a lot of stuff from people back home, and a lot of it we put to use, but this is one of the more generous gifts we've received that we're going to be able to put to good use. So really, all we can say is, 'thank you.'" 

*Photo illustration by U.S. Army Sgt. David House
17th Public Affairs Detachment*

Aviation crew’s selfless service saves lives

Story by U.S. Army Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown
Task Force Phoenix

The DUSTOFF Association’s motto is “dedicated, unhesitating support to our fighting forces.” This Task Force Phoenix Medevac Company displays this support every day in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Company C, DUSTOFF, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, displayed its duty, selfless service, and personal courage Feb. 3 during the evacuation of a wounded Soldier from an area under fire from the enemy.

“Without hesitation, the crew launched into a known engagement area to retrieve a fallen comrade. In talking to the crew after the incident, each of us identified having a sense of fear seeing the battle unfold and knowing we would have to fly into the heart of it to retrieve the Soldier,” said U.S. Army Capt. Andrew Wilson, a native of Edmond, Okla., one of the pilots that day. “However, the second we were cleared in for extraction, we all pushed aside those feelings and were focused on the task at hand.”

The medevac crew assessed the situation before extracting U.S. Army Spc. Ronnie Vargas, a wounded Soldier with Co. C, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry, TF No Slack, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division. Vargas and his unit had been bogged down by enemy fire on top of a ridgeline that day. As the battle continued, the medevac crew found themselves making difficult decisions.

U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Richard Ernst, a native of Islip, N.Y., was the pilot in command. Ground forces guided Ernst to a landing zone to pick up Vargas; however, he was unable to land on the confirmed area due to difficult terrain.

The aircrew remained in the air and identified a more suitable location to attempt a landing. After confirming the location with ground troops, Ernst again attempted to land. However, as they approached the new landing area, the aircraft began taking rounds. Ernst immediately broke off to reassess the situation.

U.S. Army Sgt. Elena Romero, the flight medic from Vernon, N.J., received minor shrapnel wounds on her left arm and near her left knee.

“While we continually asked about her condition, she adamantly reiterated that she was okay,” said Wilson.

The crew received word that the original landing zone had been cleared for landing. Ernst flew a second time to the original landing zone.

Once there, he determined he would not be able to do a complete landing. He also determined using the high hover for a hoist rescue was too risky. The crew decided the best option to extract Vargas was a low hover. This required Ernst to hover approximately five feet from the ground.

“We do not normally hover to pick up anybody, but it was the only option to get the patient and not sustain loss of aircraft or injury to the flight crew,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Abe Cutsinger, the UH-60 Black Hawk crew chief.

U.S. Army Spc. Brit Jacobs, a combat medic with TF No Slack, treated Vargas while they waited for the medevac.

“He was just so happy (when the aircraft arrived),” said Jacobs, a native of Sarasota, Fla. “He was joking around and stuff. He was really calm for the situation.”

When DUSTOFF arrived, Jacobs helped Vargas up to the aircraft.

“I could hear rounds pinging off of the aircraft,” said Jacobs. “I had it in my mind that I was going to get hit.”

The wind from the helicopter’s rotors made getting Vargas into the aircraft difficult. Cutsinger and Romero struggled to pull Vargas into the aircraft by his hands. Vargas dangled, fighting

to get into the aircraft for at least a minute.

“You could see him giving everything he had to get into the aircraft,” said Jacobs. “He never gave up and was determined to get in there.”

With help from Jacobs, the DUSTOFF team pulled Vargas inside. Ernst took flight as soon as Vargas was inside and cleared the area.

“(Vargas) was very thankful and in high spirits once on board the helicopter,” said Cutsinger, a native of Copperas Cove, Texas.

Despite her own wounds, Romero administered aid to Vargas. She bandaged the wounds and determined Vargas was stable enough to make the flight to Jalalabad Airfield.

“Sgt. Romero had the capability and supplies to stabilize him enough to return him to JAF,” said Wilson. “If she, or any other flight medic, is unable to sustain a (patient), we will fly (the casualty) to the nearest forward surgical team.”

The DUSTOFF crew removed Vargas from the hostile area and took him safely to Jalalabad Airfield. Romero accompanied Vargas to the forward surgical team where he received further care for his wounds.

“The medevac team was very professional,” said Jacobs, “They were trying everything possible to get to him. They were pretty brave and didn’t back out, even under fire. They were heroes.”



Soldiers in Company C DUSTOFF, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, TF Falcon, remove a patient from a UH-60 Black Hawk medevac helicopter at Jalalabad Airfield Feb. 3. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Andrew Wilson, Company C DUSTOFF)

W Nutrition atch

Take charge of your nutrition: Awareness is half the battle!

Story by U.S. Army Major Renee E. Cole, PhD, RD, LD.

March's national nutrition month's theme "Eat Right with Color" is another reminder to include fruits and vegetables in a balanced diet. This article will expand on why fruits and vegetable are more than just a colorful addition to your plate.

Foods and caloric beverages provide the energy needed to exist and for success in our military mission. Energy balance and blood sugar levels are controlled through a complex system of hormones, of which some regulate appetite (sense of hunger) and satiety (sense of fullness).

When we consume more than our body needs, no matter how healthy the food is, the excess is stored as fat. Just an extra 100 kilocalories a day beyond what your body needs can lead to a 10 pounds weight gain at the end of the year.

Thus weight management partially depends on how well we listen to our hunger and fullness signals. In today's society our foods are very energy dense and portions are much larger than in the past, making it more difficult to find a balance unless you are very mindful of your habits.

Carbohydrate and proteins supply four kilocalories of energy per gram, whereas fat supplies nine kilocalories of energy per gram. So, for the same volume, fat-containing foods pack more than twice the energy as carbohydrates and proteins. Fruits and vegetables are mostly comprised of carbohydrates.

Fruits and vegetables also contain bioflavoids, vitamins and minerals needed for optimal health and performance, however it's the fiber that helps provide bulk and contribute to stomach expansion. Stomach expansion is another facet of fullness recognition.

A concept known as volumetrics, coined by Dr. Barbara Rolls, emphasizes increasing bulk (volume) through low calorie foods

to trigger stomach expansion. Fruits and vegetables fit beautifully within this concept because they can easily displace foods high in fat. Think about the size (volume) of a snack bag of chips (typically 1 ¾ oz); they can range from 200-500 kilocalories depending on the type.

Now let's think about the amount of calories in fruits and vegetables. Fruit averages 50 to 65 kilocalories per medium piece of fruit, one cup of diced, or half cup canned. One cup of raw leafy or half cup of cooked non-starchy vegetables (most veggies) contains 25 kilocalories whereas half a cup of starchy vegetables (corn, potatoes, peas, beans) contains about 100 kilocalories.


Thus you would need to eat two to five cups of cooked non-starchy vegetables, one to three cups starchy vegetables, or four to eight pieces of fresh fruit to meet the calorie content of that small bag of chips.

Which will provide more fullness?

It would be very hard to eat five cups of cooked veggies or eight pieces of fresh fruit in one sitting, compared to the small bag of chips. Add the chips to a double cheeseburger and a milkshake and you've now consumed between 1000-1600 kilocalories, almost the entire daily need for a person.

The best advice is to try to fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables, but be cautious of added fats through butters, cream sauces, cheese sauces, regular fat salad dressings, and bacon bits.

Look for tomato based sauces and low calorie condiments. Every teaspoon of fat contributes about 50 kilocalories and it adds up fast!

Don't expect to be a perfect eater. All foods have a place in our dining experience when in moderation. However, by making smarter choices through mindful eating, you can feel satisfied without getting an unexpected high amount of calories, making weight management efforts more successful. 



Runners start their time as the whistle blows for the start of the Aramco Houston Half Marathon satellite run at Forward Operating Base Ghazni Jan. 30. The marathon was introduced by a Texas Agribusiness Development Team-IV member, U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Laura Childs. The race provided a change of pace for 147 runners.

Houston run mirrored in Afghanistan

Story by U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Julie Brummund
Task Force White Eagle Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team

Military members and their families find many ways to stay connected to loved ones back home. For U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Laura Childs of the Texas Agribusiness Development Team-IV one of these ways was introducing the Aramco Houston Half Marathon to Forward Operating Base Ghazni Jan. 30.

The Katy, Texas, resident and 146 others on the small FOB ran it in Afghanistan while her husband Craig ran the race back home in Texas.

Childs was not the only ADT member to run the race with a spouse also running it back in Houston. U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Justin Mitchell from Tyler, Texas, and his wife Kacy also participated.

"My wife beat my time by a minute," he confessed.

While not run simultaneously as originally planned, the Ghazni version of the Houston run also took place the same day as the one in Houston.

But a simultaneous event would've had the runners in Afghanistan running in complete darkness on roads covered with large rocks passing for gravel, a recipe for falls and twisted ankles.

The race brought a bit of home to many participants.

"It brought a bit of normalcy here. This is something I would do on the weekend back home," said U.S. Navy Lt. Alex Dietrich from Washington, D.C., an engineer with the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team. "For a couple of hours I could forget I was on FOB Ghazni."

The race came with a few additional challenges for the runners here. The FOB is at an elevation of 7,200 feet and, as mentioned, the roadways are covered with very large gravel. Runners covered the same route nearly eight times to make up the 13.1 miles of the race in near-freezing temperatures.

Along with the additional challenges, the runners also had great support both on the FOB and from back in Texas. When Childs mentioned the idea to her team, they were immediately

on board and went to the FOB's mayor to ensure there were no problems with their group running the race here.

Management of the FOB is in the hands of the Polish military who wholeheartedly took on the task of managing the satellite race. Soon, the number of participants rose from the 23 Texas ADT runners to 147 runners as word spread to the rest of the base populace.

Back in Texas, Childs' local sports store, Luke's Locker in Katy, Texas, heard about the Ghazni connection and sent the ADT a supply of hats, gloves, shirts and socks for the race.

Meanwhile, U.S. Army Maj. Patrick Flood, also from Texas ADT and a resident of Austin, Texas, mentioned the event to a friend back at Clif Bar and soon the participants received a supply of Goo and other energy foods from the health food giant.


"We were overwhelmed by the support we've received from the race organizers in Houston, Luke's Locker, CLIF Bar and the FOB," said Flood.

An unexpected bonus came in the form of a coincidental F/A-18E Super Hornet fly-by in the middle of the race. "As an F/A-18 Hornet pilot, the fly-by was the highlight of the race for me," remarked Dietrich, "It gave me an extra boost of energy during the race."

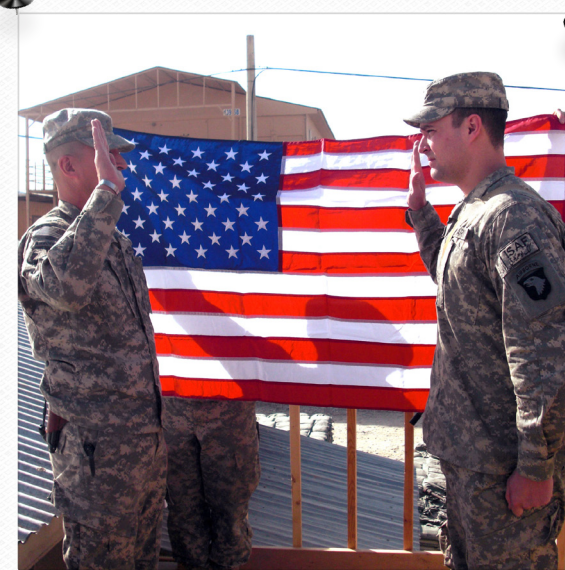
The top finisher was Polish Army Warrant Officer Mariusz Plesinski of the 10th Armored Cavalry Brigade in Swietosow, Poland, with a time of 1 hour, 26 minutes, 22 seconds.

Second place went to Polish Army 2nd Lt. Lukasz Bogdal at 1:31:54 and third place to Polish Army 1st Lt. Marcin Pawlowski at 1:36:36, both also from the 10th Armored Cavalry Brigade.

The top female finisher was Polish Army Master Cpl. Wioletta Sliwka from the 49th Combat Helicopter Regiment from Pruszcz Gdanski, Poland, with a time of 1:54:19.

Dr. Katarzyna Pierun, a health care specialist with the Ghazni PRT from Lodz, Poland, was right on her heels with a time of 1:54:40. Taking third place was Angela Szyszlo, the education specialist for the Ghazni PRT, with a time of 1:58:08. 

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

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Reserve Transition Contacts

- MSG Clarence Johnson - DSN: 431-3025 Bagram
- SFC Kyle Jackson - DSN: 431-3025 Bagram

Retention Control Point Changes

Years of Active Federal Service

New RCP (Effective: 1 June 2011)		Current RCP	
PVT-PFC	5	PVT-PFC	8
CPL/SPC	8	CPL/SPC	10
CPL/SPC (P)	12	CPL/SPC (P)	15
SGT	13	SGT	15
SGT (P)	15	SGT (P)	20
SSG	20	SSG	23

Reference ALARACT 020/2011





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the final Watch

Mine Clearing line explosive charge launches from Company A, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division vehicle on route dodge, Paktika province, Afghanistan, Feb. 10. The route clearing procedure was to deploy a mine clearing line charge to destroy possible improvised explosive device. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Zachary Burke, 55th Combat Camera)

