



1/181st Infantry Regiment

Around the Powder Horn

"Keep Your Powder Dry"



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Volume 11

B Co., Nuristan PRT Prepares To Move To Kandahar Province

U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Richard Simonsen

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – A small group of Soldiers from the Nuristan PRT continued joint operations with the Canadian-led Kandahar PRT Mar. 22 to prepare for full-scale operations by the Nuristan PRT next month.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command is relocating the Nuristan PRT from Forward Operating Base Kalagush in western Nuristan Province to various locations in Kandahar City. Beginning Apr. 1, this American-led PRT will operate in Kandahar in response to the ISAF's effort to focus on population centers and key terrain districts.

"My goal with these missions in Kandahar is to learn the area of operations and how the current security forces are tactically employing their assets," said 1st Lt. Michael Lutkevich, platoon leader for the PRT's security force (SECFOR) from Medford, Mass. "It gives me a good understanding on how I might set up my forces during our stay here."

The SECFOR is made up of men from 2nd Platoon, B Co. They have operated in Nuristan, Laghman and Nangarhar Provinces in eastern Afghanistan since last October.

"It is a lot more wide open down here," said Staff Sgt. Phillip Wonkka, squad leader of 4th squad from Erving, Mass. "We are not stuck with the one way in and one way out like we were in Nuristan. I like that."

The mounted combat patrol this day consisted of a combined U.S. Army and Canadian Forces team. They visited a clinic construction site in Masum Ghar and a future school construction site in the Panjwa'i District.

"I think we need to be more flexible and run more missions than in Nuristan," Wonkka said. "We are going to spend a lot more time on the road. [In Nuristan] we only really had one road, but here we have hundreds, and a million places we need to go."

The job for Lutkevich and Wonkka includes seeing what local techniques

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Photo by Chief Master Sgt. Richard Simonsen
Squad Leader Staff Sgt. Phillip Wonkka of B Co., talks with local Afghan children during a mission to a clinic construction site in Masum Gar Mar. 22. The Nuristan PRT is relocating to Kandahar to be in line with the ISAF focus on key terrain districts and population centers becoming an American-led Kandahar PRT Apr. 1.

Striking Balance

By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Emily Chilson

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Fighting on foot while winning hearts and minds seems like a tall order, but that's exactly what many Soldiers have been ordered to do.

For Sgt. Christopher Willis, a squad leader from C Co 1/181 assigned to provide security for Paktika PRT, adapting to the mission is what he and his fellow Soldiers are called to do, no matter what.

"This is what the infantry prides themselves on," Willis said. "There is no mission too big or too small. The whole COIN (counterinsurgency) concept is just a piece to the bigger picture."

Counterinsurgency, more commonly referred to as COIN, is an effort currently implemented by Coalition Forces to build relationships with the Afghans and ultimately, to "win their hearts and minds."

At first glance, it may appear that these two extremes – fighting and befriending – require security force (SECFOR) Soldiers to lower their guard, but according to Willis, that train of thought is on the wrong track.

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Photo by 1st Lt. Emily Chilson
Team Leader Sgt. Christopher Willis, C Co., Paktika PRT, ensures vehicle equipment is working properly prior to a mission Mar. 2. Willis is one of a handful of team leaders who briefs his team before each mission to ensure everything and everyone is prepared.

Assisting Engineering Projects in Uruzgan

By 1st Lt. Matt Schroff

TARIN KOWT, Afghanistan — Engineers with Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team and civilian contractors recently conducted a string of worksite inspections for major construction projects underway in the area.

The Sorkh Murghab Mosque, Tarin Kowt Prison and Malalai Girl's School are all proceeding on track and on timeline for their respective opening times this spring, said Capt. Andrew Oxlade, Project Engineer for the PRT.

"Since we first arrived here and received the handover from the works team of MTF-1 (Mentoring Task Force) there's been a significant development in most of the projects" Oxlade said. "Construction is really moving forward, and the projects are not too far off completion. Generally we're pretty happy with how they're progressing."

The first stop on the assessment was the Sorkh Murghab Mosque, a circular building capped with a giant tiled blue dome, and a ten-meter minaret outside.

"The biggest challenge was the dome," said Engineer Mohammad Wasil, the contractor who has been working on the project for more than six months. "Another thing is that it's a round building, which is a challenge for me."

Oxlade agreed, and noted that it's one of the more interesting designs around.



Photo by 1st Lt. Matt Schroff

Local Afghan workers move dirt and gravel up a series of platforms to the roof of the new Tarin Kowt Prison, Feb. 1. The contract for the project specifies that a percentage of laborers be local residents. The prison uses professional workers from outside of Uruzgan not only as skilled laborers, but also to provide guidance to their unskilled partners.

"Previous teams contended with the challenge of the design...there are a lot of arches and curves, and it's a bit architecturally challenging for the contractor as well," he said.

Despite these obstacles, the mosque is on schedule to be completed in March. In anticipation, the area around the mosque has already shown signs of increased construction and development.

"People are very happy, and as you can see people are moving into this area," said Wasil, gesturing to the expanding market area and nearby dwellings under construction. "They want to start living here, so they really like this, they're really happy."

Another project, started by the Netherlands and now augmented by the Australian Agency for International Development, is the new Tarin Kowt Prison on track for a completion date in April. Heavy construction is nearly complete, with rendering, door and window installation and electrical work now in progress.

"There's quite a lot of focus on this project, since the other prison facility in Tarin Kowt is not really suitable," Oxlade said, referring to the current Tarin Kowt prison which is in a small, uncovered area surrounded by mud walls. The new project promises additional security.

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Implementing Counterinsurgency Strategy

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"The infantry doesn't have to lower their guard, they just have to be more observant to their surroundings and adapt from there," Willis explained. "The security will always be as tight as it can be given the different factors that come into play."

While the rules of engagement always allow Soldiers to defend themselves in threatening situations, COIN is an aspect of the mission that asks them to take more than just perception into account.

Willis said he was required to do just that during one mission to the Sharana Hospital when several unidentified individuals were pointing multiple weapons at him and his platoon members while posting security outside the hospital.

"I had to make a decision between going after them, which is fully acceptable, or showing a stronger front and getting everyone out of the hospital and back to base," Willis said. "This is a split-second decision."

Had he chosen to engage the threatening individuals, Willis said there would have been a fight and possible civilian casualties given the heavily-populated location. Although he would have been justified in his decision to pursue the enemy, Willis explained that he

opted not to with COIN in mind.

"I chose to show a stronger front, evacuate all our personnel and leave with no incident," Willis said. "It was hard to walk away because I am used to the fight, but being a leader I had to think of the bigger picture. We all made it back safe and there was no disruption in the city."

Currently on his fourth deployment, Willis said experience and leadership kicks in when making these spur-of-the-moment decisions.

Spc. William Brown, who works alongside Willis, said there's a way to treat people and interact with them that gets the security point across, but isn't forceful or disrespectful.

"It's not too hard once you get used to it," Brown said. "On this deployment we're directly working with the civilian populous and seeing what they need to help build their towns."

Security Forces are a critical part of the PRT mission of working hand-in-hand with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to rebuild their country.

"I think my troops inspire me and from that I drive," Willis explained. "If I am the best leader I can be, then they will follow and become the best soldiers they can be." ✂

HHC Organizes Infrastructure Reconstruction in Kabul

By Spc. Michael Broughey

KABUL, Afghanistan – Kabul is a capital city with a sprawling downtown surrounded by low-income, traditionally rural villages with little infrastructure to support a rising population. Ud Khel, a village that borders the walls of Camp Phoenix, is one of those villages in need.

The recent completion of two newly reconstructed drainage sewers in the neighboring village marks another milestone for civil relations between Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 1/181 Infantry and the people of Ud Khel, who were hired as laborers by an Afghan contractor to build the sewers in March.



Photos by Capt. Quentin Carmichael

(Left) The unsanitary condition of the ditch in the northern end of the village Jan. 2. (Right) Soldiers of 3rd Plt., HHC traverse the narrow, eroded paths along the ditch in the southern end of the village Jan. 17.

Capt. Andrew Prewitt, an intelligence officer for Headquarters explained that the entire process all began with HHC Soldiers identifying the village's need for improved drainage in two separate spots by patrolling the area and interacting with the locals on a regular basis.

Residents of Ud Khel informed the Soldiers of one ditch that was eroded on both sides, creating a narrow and dangerous path to a mosque on the southern end of the village that flooded in the spring. Said Omar Hotak, a native of Ud Khel and an elected member of the Kabul Provincial Council, a government body equivalent to U.S. state legislature, coordinated the Afghan side of the construction efforts.

Another eroded drainage ditch on the side of another mosque on the northern end of the village was improperly dug and far too flat. The project for this comparatively smaller drain was coordinated with the help of Ustad Bashir, the respected leader of the Ud Khel Youth Council and past coordinator with the 1/181 for humanitarian aid delivery missions in the neighborhood.

"They ran it from the village area all the way to the main road," said Spc. Austin Allgood, a rifleman with 3rd Plt., Headquarters Co., who patrolled the area daily with his squad throughout the construction to ensure the safety and security of the resident workers. Once complete, the improved drainage sewers will provide more sanitation to the area, he added.

Once the eroded sewage ditches were identified the trash clogged



Photo by Pfc. David Alves

Soldiers of 3rd Plt., Headquarters Co., stand with resident workers at the new sewage drain in progress outside a mosque in the northern end of Ud Khel Feb. 24. Soldiers of 3rd Plt. patrolled the area daily to ensure the safety of the villagers and laborers of the project throughout its construction.

at the sides of the ditches had to be removed, followed by leveling the dirt, and finally masonry, to place the stones and create the walls of the drainage ditches.

Funding for the projects came directly from the Commander's Emergency Response Program or CERP. This program gives authority to Lt. Col. Anthony Couture, commander of the 1/181, to approve the release of funds for projects such as these where the health and well-being of local nationals is at risk.

CERP projects are coordinated by Civil Military Operations Officer Capt. Quentin Carmichael, whose job it is to have the concept approved by U.S. Forces - Afghanistan, "to ensure the project is nested with the overall reconstruction strategy in Afghanistan."

Once approved by both the commander and U.S. Forces - Afghanistan, the project is announced and local contractors place a bid of sorts to take the job, based on their company's experience, the number of resident workers they will hire for labor, and the cost of the project.

"The relationships built by helping them with their infrastructure helps increase their security and the safety of our patrols as well," said Carmichael on the two successful projects in an area overlooked in the past despite its proximity to Camp Phoenix. ✂



Photo by Capt. Andrew Prewitt

A resident of Ud Khel stands before a partially completed section of the new sewage drain outside the southern mosque of the village Mar. 11.

Street Hockey Comes to FOB Ghazni

By U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Julie Brummund

FOB GHAZNI, Afghanistan – For many people, hockey is more than just a game. For a retired master sergeant, it is a way to carry on worthwhile tradition of supporting his son who is once again serving overseas.

Spc. Ross Dalton and fellow members of D Co. 1/181 assigned

to provide security for Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team wasted no time in turning the streets of the FOB into a makeshift hockey rink after he received a rather large shipment in the mail Feb. 14.

This was the second time Dalton received boxes upon boxes of hockey sticks, a goal and full goalie gear from his father, retired Master Sgt. William Dalton, who sent him hockey equipment while he was first deployed to Kosovo in 2006.

“We just bought a little bit of gear that time,” Dalton explained.

Thus father and son determined to continue the tradition, but this time Dalton’s father coordinated with a few businesses around Yarmouth, Mass., which helped collect donations and ship the gear to Ghazni.

Among these were Longfellow’s Pub, the Yarmouth Moose Lodge and the Yarmouth Veterans of Foreign Wars. After a month of collecting donations, his father went to Play It Again Sports, which also contributed to the hockey mission with a discount on the purchase.

Dalton said the equipment will be left here for the next rotation of security forces, also from Massachusetts, but from the sounds of it, they may need new equipment before they leave.

“We played for a few hours the first day the equipment arrived and then had another game the very next day against some Polish Soldiers,” Dalton said. “We’re also planning on having a tournament later on after a few of the guys return from leave and the snow clears up.”✂



Photo by Chief Master Sgt. Julie Brummund

Members of D Co. assigned to Ghazni PRT take time off to enjoy the sun and snow with a game of street hockey Feb. 14. Spc. Ross Dalton (red) from Yarmouth, Mass., takes the ball out with Spc. Marcelo Gomes (left), and Spc. Benjamin Cote in pursuit.

Local Afghans Hired for Construction

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with stone walls, more concertina wire and strong steel doors and bars.

“The steelwork for prison doors has been quite good, meeting the requirements for prison security,” he said. “Despite some initial obstacles, the contractor has shown improvement and a desire to achieve a successful result.”

The Malalai Girl’s School is another highly anticipated project, which has progressed quickly since it began only a few months ago. The 23 classroom school has had minor setbacks, but the director of the construction company is confident in meeting the opening deadline.

“I’ve had some problems with delivering supplies from Kandahar here, since gasoline prices have gone up,” said Haji Hameedullah Hammedi, director of the Hammedi Construction Company, builders of the project.

Hammedi did cite the lack of professional workers in the area, saying that he brings down skilled laborers from areas such as Jalalabad and Kabul, and uses local unskilled laborers per the contract.

“As part of our contract we specify to maximize the use of unskilled labor local to the area, which helps generate employment and other effects as developing the local economy through improved trade and commerce,” said Oxlade.

He explained that since Uruzgan has fewer skilled workers than other provinces, it’s also the responsibility of the contractor to train some of the unskilled workers.

“We also encourage contractors to use graduates from the local



Photo by 1st Lt. Matt Schroff

Engineer Mohammad Wasil and Capt. Andrew Oxlade inspect the interior of the dome capping the Sorkh Murghab Mosque, Feb. 1. The new place of Muslim worship has helped to create development in Sorkh Murghab, a village 12 kilometers from the provincial capital of Tarin Kowt.

Trade Training School, to not only use the skills they’ve developed there, but to get them out into the workforce.”

He also stressed that although the PRT inspects and checks their progress, they’re also mentors to the contractors.

“There are always challenges with construction work, and some projects are more technically challenging than others,” he said. “We make it a point to work with the local contractors to find solutions to some of those problems, and we’re pretty happy with the way things are going.”✂

B Co. Soldiers with Nangarhar PRT Get to Know Local Afghans

By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Casey Osborne

ZANGOU, Afghanistan — Members of Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team got to know more about villagers and their concerns while talking a walk to a neighboring community March 7.

“We’re out here trying to connect to the people and show them that we have a vested interest in, not only our security but theirs as well,” said U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Kevin Peterson, Nangarhar PRT security advisor.

According to one villager, one of the most prominent issues in Zangoui is a lack of power.

“We don’t have electricity from the government, so we use personal generators, which cost 70 rupees (about 80 cents) per kilowatt,” said Dawo Jan, painter and resident of Zangoui.

Other villagers cited concerns ranging from security to agricultural challenges.

The PRT also engaged with the local children, who are normally the first to engage Soldiers and Airmen, who become the friendly face of coalition forces in the area, according to Peterson.

At one point, Peterson found himself surrounded by a crowd of kids near a school. He learned from them how to count to 10 in Pashto and showed the children how to count in English.

“You guys have to tell me if I’m doing it wrong,” Peterson said to the children after struggling to say eight in Pashto. “You guys are my teachers.”

Given the close proximity of Zangoui, the PRT often makes these missions on foot, which enables the PRT to talk and interact with more villagers than in a mounted convoy.

At one time during the visit, the PRT had four separate conversations going on along a relatively lengthy stretch of road. While this defies the traditional definition of security, this is the key to



Photo by 1st Lt. Casey Osborne
Platoon Leader 1st Lt. Rico Piatelli, B Co., Nangarhar PRT, plays catch with Afghan children during a mission to the village of Zangoui Mar. 7.

Counter Insurgency operations — getting to know the people.

For 1st Lt. Rico Piatelli, who’s responsible for keeping fellow members of the PRT safe, dismounted missions are great opportunities.

“I love getting out here and talking to kids,” Piatelli said. “A lot of times, you go on missions and everything moves quickly. This gives you a chance to get out here and talk to these kids and the adults. You get to have a good time and relax a little bit, even though it is a heightened security risk.”✂

HHC Soldiers Train With Portuguese Forces on the Snowy Mountains of Kabul



Photo by Spc. Michael Broughey
(Right) Spc. Dustin Pratt, Headquarters Co., trades his M4 rifle for a Portuguese soldier’s G3 rifle at an improvised range on the snowy, barren mountainsides of Kabul Military Training Center, Feb. 28. Each Portuguese Fuzileiros (Marines) and Commandos (Special Forces) soldier brought extra magazines of 7.62 mm ammunition for their G3 rifles while members of the 1/181 brought extra 5.56 mm ammunition for their M4 rifles for the joint-nation weapons familiarization training.



Photo by Spc. Michael Broughey
(Above) Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Headquarters Co., and Portuguese Fuzileiros (Marines) and Commandos (special forces) form a firing line during a joint-nation weapons familiarization training day at an improvised range on the snowy, barren mountainsides of Kabul Military Training Center, Feb. 28. Despite the snow, visibility allowed the Soldiers to train with Portuguese standard-issue G3 rifles to fire at targets up to 300 yards away.

Commander's Corner

Spring is here. The weather is getting warmer. The air is becoming dry and dusty. The winter planning sessions and meetings have brought actionable projects that will soon be underway. Although most platoons are conducting missions six or seven days a week, the operational tempo and activities will increase. During this time it remains imperative that every Soldier in the battalion implement some time management skills in order hone combat skills and sustain a strong physical fitness program during “off duty” hours. Everyone should conduct period communications with family and friends. We should all continue to focus on the mission at hand and not look forward to redeployment. Stay on track mentally. There is still a great amount of work ahead.

The recent news from Japan brought about horrific stories of an earthquake and the affects of the tsunami. Although every day we see a different level of suffering in Afghanistan, we should pause and reflect, hoping for the best for the families impacted by the terrible event. In another news event, there was coverage of five Army Soldiers charged with murder and conspiracy while deployed with their unit in Afghanistan. These Soldiers decided to act on their own and conduct activities that were “contrary to the standards and beliefs of the Army.” Seeing both of these stories made me think about the Army Values. In Japan, many citizens were out trying to save others or work diligently trying to mitigate the consequences of the disaster. Their continuous DUTY, fulfilling their obligation to work, even though their families may have been impacted is a great achievement. Their SELFLESS SERVICE to put the welfare of the community before their own in an attempt to seal the nuclear reactor may seem crazy, but is quite noble. On the other hand, the actions of a few Soldiers can have implications that are detrimental to many. The lack of RE-

SPECT in how they treated the Afghans, are contrary to treating others with dignity. This is something we heard when we were young, the “Golden Rule” of treating others as you would like to be treated. The Soldiers also showed a lack of INTEGRITY to do what is morally right. Their actions were completely against everything the United States and Coalition Forces are trying to achieve in Afghanistan.

These are only a few examples of how events can be linked to our value system every day. Sometimes it is easier to learn from others. Unfortunately, it takes a significant event or incident to bring about attention to the subject. In the 1/181, that is not completely true. As I conduct battlefield circulation to visit Soldiers or when I observe them in Kabul, Soldiers throughout the command continually practice the Army Values. I will focus on a few. I see the LOYALTY of our Soldiers supporting the unit's mission. I see leaders at all levels of the battalion who are committed to supporting their Soldiers and subordinates, looking out for their well being and ensuring everyone is treated fairly. There is no doubt of everyone's PERSONAL COURAGE, facing danger on patrols or as they perform a variety of mission oriented tasks on a daily basis. The Soldiers, leaders and collective elements are performing admirably across the formation. I take pride to say Soldiers of the 1/181 display many attributes of the Army Values. They continually show the moral character and exhibit traits of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Integrity and Personal Courage. Don't be naive; there have been isolated instances in which a few have exercised poor judgment. But I can confidently say the overwhelming majority of the members of the battalion exhibit HONOR, the term I will use to describe “one who lives up to all of the Army Values”.

Keep Your Powder Dry!

— Lt. Col. Tony Couture, Powder Horn 6



Photo Courtesy of Khost PRT

Members of Khost PRT security force prepare to board a CH-47 Chinook following a mission in February.

Relocating to Kandahar

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are employed by the incumbent team.

One of the challenges is to meld the group coming into Kandahar from Nuristan into current operations, Wonkka said.

“We have already been conducting the same kind of missions, but in a different environment,” Lutkevich said. “More or less we already know how we might use our forces. I can focus my attention on seeing what normal looks like.”

A lot of things are going to be different for the SECFOR platoon with deserts instead of mountains and urban cities instead of rural villages. But some things will remain constant.

Children everywhere are the same. They always come up to us and ask questions, Lutkevich said.

PRTs are a joint civil-military organization working in semi-permissible environments to improve governance, security and infrastructure capacity. ✂



BOSTON

The 1/181 carries a streamer from the regiment's involvement in the Battle of Boston, a siege which lasted from May 17, 1775 to March 17, 1776. The battle ended when British forces left the city, an event which is still recognized in Massachusetts as Evacuation Day.

