

HEARTBEAT

The Official Magazine of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division



OPERATION: Bloodhound

First Strike removes massive firepower from insurgents
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STRIKE *Illustrated*

3/2 Wolfpack Soldier draws for release
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OBJECTIVE: ARGHANDAB

Strike's Top Guns reflect on deployment
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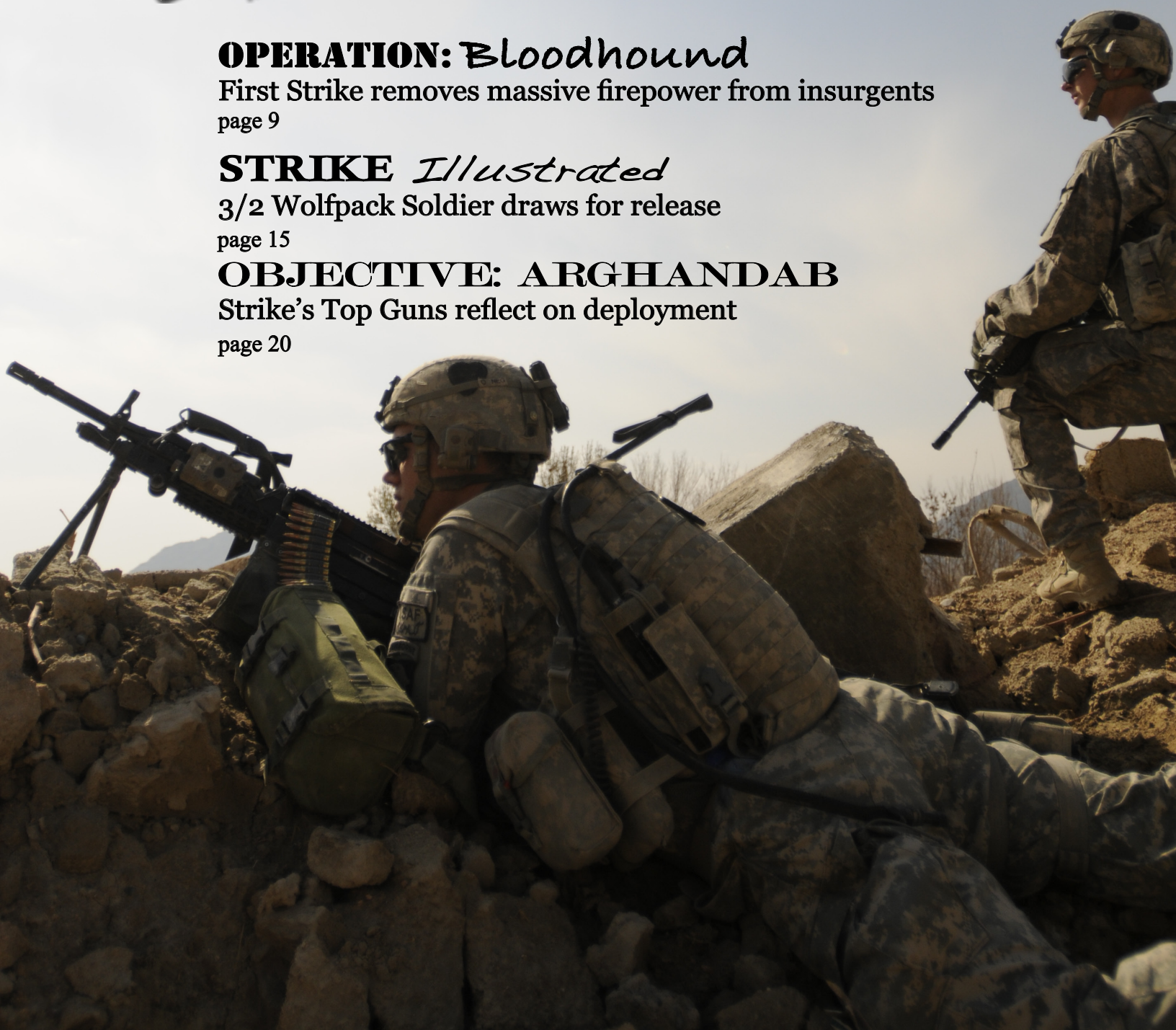


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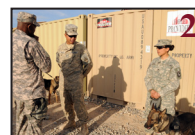
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Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers with Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, provide security in a Kandahar field while searching for weapon caches during Operation Bloodhound, Feb. 19.



CONTRIBUTORS

OIC|Lt. Col. Larry Porter

SENIOR EDITOR|Sfc. William Patterson

EDITOR|Sgt. Joe Padula

STAFF|Sgt. Charlene Moler

STAFF|Sgt. Mike Monroe

STAFF|Sp. Shawn Denham



Words from the Top



STRIKE Soldiers, Leaders and STRIKE Families and Friends,

CSM Smith and I are extremely proud of the incredible job you have accomplished over the past year. Combined Task Force STRIKE fought and won on the Afghan plains and among the grape rows and fields due to your focus and determination. Our deployment and our fight will soon be part of our Regiment and BCT's history; like the 502nd and STRIKE Soldiers before us in World War II, Viet Nam, Desert Storm, Kosovo and our BCT's three combat tours during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We answered our nation's call, deployed as part of the surge to Afghanistan and fought as the main effort for Regional Command South for a majority of our deployment. Each of you served for those who could not or would not answer the nation's call. When historians write about Afghanistan, they will write about Combined Task Force STRIKE and what we accomplished fighting, clearing, winning, holding and securing key terrain and the people of Maiwand, Zhari and Arghandab districts. We did this together through Operations DRAGON STRIKE, DRAGON DESCENT and DRAGON WRATH and countless other operations, missions and battles and we now stand strong in places the insurgents used to call home.

We have made progress but there is still much to do and our brothers in 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (CTF SPARTAN) will continue making forward progress.

As we prepare to transition our mission to CTF SPARTAN and begin to redeploy we must remember 4 key points:

1. Our re-deployment does not signal a time to switch off. We must keep our heads on a swivel, remain switched on, finish strong and complete our mission with honor.

2. 2-502 will continue combat operations in support of CTF SPARTAN in Afghanistan until the end of May. While they are in the fight the rest of STRIKE (minus 2-502 and select HHC/2BCT and select STB Soldiers) will take leave from 6 May to 5 June. Based on the air flow, some battalions may arrive back at Fort Campbell before others and as the flights arrive at Fort Campbell each flight will conduct a 7 day re-integration period that involves requirements like medical and dental surveys, personnel transactions, Soldier counseling, drug and alcohol awareness, mental toughness and resiliency, receiving household goods, single Soldier billeting, and drawing our privately owned vehicles from storage. The Brigade (minus 2-502 and select HHC/2BCT and select STB Soldiers) will take leave from 6 May to 5 June. I made this decision to enable families to spend some time with their children

once the school year ends. This is balanced with meeting our mission requirements to initiate reintegration and reset of our Soldiers and equipment. 2-502 will complete their deployment, return to Fort Campbell and take leave from 7 June to 7 July.

3. You are not alone; remember you are part of a Team, and a Winning Team. After we return if you start having thoughts about hurting someone or yourself, let someone know. The Army, the Division and this Brigade have numerous systems and medical care professionals available to assist you. Asking for help or telling someone you need to talk about issues is not a sign of weakness. Each of us counted on one another throughout this deployment and that does not end when we return, or when we take leave. Remember when CPL Bixler (HHB/1-320) wrote about his Company's slogan they established after close fighting in the Arghandab when the battle

was tough? The Company started the slogan of "Everybody Fights, Nobody Quits!" to steel themselves with the daily dangers they faced head on. There is nothing you may go through at home that can ever compare to the sting of battle with your fellow Soldiers at your side. If you feel you need help, ask for it, tell someone and don't make a selfish and permanent choice; "Nobody Quits".

4. CTF STRIKE Families and Friends of STRIKE, thank you for your tremendous support. Your letters, packages and email kept STRIKE Soldier spirit and morale high and enabled CTF STRIKE Soldiers forward in the fight on the Afghan Plain to focus on our mission. Thank you.

Again, we wrote history, we fought and won in the enemy's birthplace, now back in the hands of the Afghan people because of STRIKE Soldiers.

We will never forget our fallen nor our wounded who continue to recover and strive to return to our ranks. We will honor them by continuing our mission, returning home with honor and pride that we wrote pages of history, accomplished assigned tasks and missions, maintained our reputation as a Brigade Combat Team and made contributions improving security for the Afghan people during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

CSM Smith and I are extremely proud that we had the privilege to serve with each of you during arguably one of the most complex and toughest fights the 502nd and STRIKE ever fought. Each of you should hold your head up and be proud of what this incredible Brigade Combat Team accomplished together. When you walk by and see the signs across the STRIKE Area at Fort Campbell you will read the saying and think that they should read "We are STRIKE Soldiers, we fought where told, and won where we fought!"STRIKE!



The Doctor's Orders with Lt. Col Michael Wirt

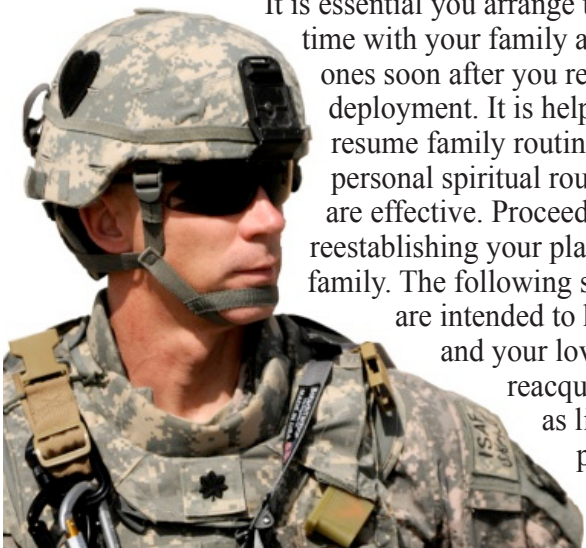
As CTF STRIKE prepares to redeploy from Afghanistan, it is important to identify redeployment issues and concerns you or your family might have. Over the time you have been away, you have undoubtedly undergone changes based on your experiences. Your family, friends or loved ones have also experienced changes. This is normal. Knowing what to expect, how to deal with the changes and where to get help, can make homecoming enjoyable and less stressful for everyone. Redeployment is also a time to take care of yourself, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

MEDICAL STATUS - Medical Requirements for redeployment include: -Completion of a Post-Deployment Health Assessment Form (DD Form 2796).
-Completion of the Eagle Risk Assessment Tool (ERAT)
-Completion of all malaria medication, if prescribed.
Continue Doxycycline for 4 weeks after departing theater. Also take 14 days of Primaquine, if prescribed, 1 tablet daily, issued at reverse SRP.
-Post-deployment tuberculosis skin test (TST) is required at the time of re-deployment.

POTENTIAL CHANGES IN YOUR HEALTH - Most Soldiers experience minor, temporary changes in their health after redeployment. This can be due to the stress of the mission, deployment travel, jet lag, and adapting to a different schedule and diet. You may feel tired, with sore or achy muscles, or experience a change in appetite. These effects should be temporary, if these symptoms do not improve, or if they seem to be getting worse, be sure to see your health care provider. The first symptoms of some illnesses, especially some infections, may not appear until days, weeks, or even months after contact. For this reason, it is very important that you tell your physician where and when you were deployed.

REUNION WITH YOUR LOVED ONES - Returning home can be every bit as stressful and confusing as leaving.

It is essential you arrange to spend time with your family and loved ones soon after you return from deployment. It is helpful to resume family routines and personal spiritual routines that are effective. Proceed slowly in reestablishing your place in the family. The following suggestions are intended to help you and your loved ones get reacquainted with as little stress as possible.



Soldiers

-Take time to listen and talk. -Make time for each child and for your spouse. -Support the good things your family has done. -Manage money carefully. -Don't overdo the "reunion parties."

Spouses -Avoid a busy schedule. -Go slowly in making adjustments. -Remind your spouse that they are still needed. -Discuss division of the family chores. -Stick to a budget until you have time to talk about money matters. -Make time to be alone with your spouse. -Be patient in rebuilding your relationship.

Children -Slowly resume the old rules and routines. -Be available to your child, with time and emotions. -Let the child be the first to renew the bond. -Expect some changes in your child. -Focus on successes; limit criticisms. -Encourage your child to tell you everything that happened while you were away

EXPECTATIONS FOR SOLDIERS -Even though you may want to talk about your experiences, your family may not. -Roles may have changed with regard to basic chores and household duties. -Face-to-face communication may be difficult after a separation. -Closeness may be awkward at first. -Children grow up during separations; they may seem different. -Spouses become more independent, and may need more space. -You may have to change your outlook on priorities in the household.

EXPECTATIONS FOR SPOUSES -Soldiers may have changed. -Soldiers may feel "closed-in" or claustrophobic and may need space to feel comfortable. -Soldiers often feel overwhelmed by the everyday noise and confusion of home life. -Soldiers may need time to resume sleeping patterns. -Soldiers may feel left out and need time to adjust. -Soldiers may feel hurt when small children are slow to hug them and show emotions.

WHAT CHILDREN MAY FEEL -Babies less than 1 year old may cry when you hold them; toddlers may not know you at first. -Preschoolers 3-5 years old may be afraid of you. -School-aged children 6-12 years old may demand more of your time than other children. -Teenagers may seem moody, and act as if they don't care. -Some children may be anxious, fearing your expectations of them. -Children may have symptoms of minor illnesses. -Children may be torn by loyalties to the spouse who remained at home.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE HEALTH CONCERNS?

Information was adapted from the US Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine at:
<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil>.

The Chaplain Says... *by Chaplain (Maj.) David Beavers*

“They didn’t plan to fail; they failed to plan” -- We’ve all heard this expression before, but that doesn’t mean that we all take it to heart. What does it take to be successful on a patrol? You have the plan for the mission giving you your task and purpose which fits into the larger plan for the overall operation. You have the logistical support supplying the patrol element with everything from ammunition to food to special equipment needed for the operation. You have training, meaning the Soldiers going out are trained for what role they will perform ranging from how to use an APOBS to how to react during contact. You have coordination meaning that supporting and commanding elements are aware of your patrol and stand ready to assist as needed. As you can easily see, the list is long, but could go much longer.

The challenges we face as we move toward reintegration are sometimes as stressful as a patrol in combat: People, opinions, locations, and many other things have changed over the course of our deployment; New patterns may have developed in the lives of those we love; Adjustment time will need to be spent to move from a “war zone” to a “home zone”.

An approach to having a successful reunion with friends, family, and loved ones fits well with planning for an operation in Afghanistan. (Aside from the explosives and the firearms.)

Your first step will be identifying your desired end state. A good example herein would be “my wife, children, dog, and I are living, working, and having fun together as a close-knit family”. Your next step will be your and your family’s plan of how to move from where you are now (separated by approximately 8 time zones) to reach your desired end state. This will need to be separated into different steps along the way. A good breakdown of these steps might look like the following:

Step 1: Focus on physically reconnecting with your family.

Step 2: Talk through changes that have occurred.

Step 3: Take time to emotionally reconnect with each family member.

Step 4: Negotiate a joint way-ahead.

Step 5: Live based on your joint plan.

Step 6: Reevaluate emotions/feelings as you continue moving forward as a family.

As with any plan, these steps will have sub-steps in support of them. For example, under “Step 1: Focus on physically reconnecting with your family” supporting steps might include: A. Soldier and family are physically in the same location. B. Soldier returns home with their family. C. Soldier interacts with family.

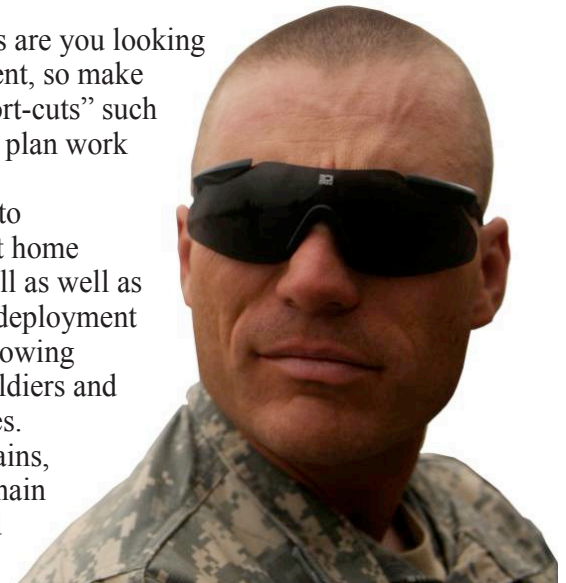
Will planning all this out take a lot of time? “Yes”; however, you will find what you gain from something is generally in proportion to the amount of time you invest into it. Once you and your loved ones/friends, have come up with a solid plan leading to your end state, there is still more you can do to ensure success.

A major first step is to ensure you have good “comms”. Commo folks always like saying “you can talk about us, but you can’t talk without us” so what is your communication plan? Start talking now about your plan, your goals, and your expectations. Plan to invest a large amount of time in talking through issues, changes, wishes, plans, etc. A good rule of thumb is to incorporate the use of a “time out” if needed. This is a code between you and those you care about that allows for a brief cooling-off period if things are getting too heated. It is important to remember that if there is a time out, there needs to be a time in when the conversation continues. A time out is not a chance to avoid forever a topic that may be uncomfortable. Take the time to share and to listen. A very good method of communication is to restate back and forth what it is that you are hearing. This ensures that everyone is “on the same page” in a conversation and reduces stress and confusion.

The second thing you can do is to take a look at your logistics. What funds are you looking at being able to spend? Your finances will be quite different upon redeployment, so make sure you plan out anything you want to buy and steer clear of purchasing “short-cuts” such as maxing out credit cards. Look at the resources you will need to make your plan work and develop and adhere to a budget.

Take advantage of the training you and your loved ones can get both prior to redeployment and following. Briefings are given to Soldiers in country and at home station and training is available for family members in person at Fort Campbell as well as online. (You can even go to the STRIKE FACEBOOK page and view the Redeployment Read-Aheads which highlight redeployment issues and keys to success.) Following redeployment, there will also be numerous Strong Bonds Retreats to assist Soldiers and families as well as many opportunities provided by Army Community Services.

You don’t have to execute your reintegration mission on your own. Chaplains, Chaplain Assistants, Behavioral Health counselors, Army OneSource, your Chain of Command, your battle buddies, and many other persons and agencies stand ever ready to lend assistance. Never hesitate to request help!



Combat Stress Column

Resiliency is the ability to bounce back from adversity and suffering and become stronger. It is a fact of life, and a fact of deployment, we will encounter adversity and suffering, no matter our rank or MOS. When we encounter a weak spot in a piece of equipment, we naturally fix the equipment and reinforce it. We often test the equipment to make sure that it will withstand the stress it was designed to handle.

The strength that comes from adversity and suffering is a better appreciation for the simple pleasures that most people take for granted. We will soon be able to enjoy the liberties that our families, friends and neighbors take for granted. We will encounter frustration when we perceive that others are ignorant and ungrateful. In those situations, remember that our civilian citizens won't have suffered for these freedoms; thus we must not condemn them for what they do not know.

The returning Warrior often struggles with anger when confronted with the complacency and entitlement of others. Therefore, our appreciation of the simple pleasures in life can also become one of our weak spots when we are angered. When anger becomes intolerance, resentment, hatred or rage, it is time to seek advice. Don't let one of your strengths become a sore. Enjoy your return home. Be patient with yourself and others. Be proud of your endurance.

Let the normal freedoms of being a citizen remind you of your strength; that you are a Warrior who has suffered so that others may not.

STRIKE LEGAL

Combat Zone Exclusion

For every month you serve with CTF STRIKE in Afghanistan, you exclude your basic pay, your BAH, and any Special Pay you receive (Hostile Fire/Family Separation).

This will automatically be reflected on your W-2.

If you are an officer, you can only exclude your basic pay up to the highest Enlisted pay grade. (This will only affect O-4's and higher).

- Your command will have notified the IRS of your deployment to a combat zone, but you may want to notify the IRS directly through its special e-mail address. Email your name, stateside address, date of birth, and date of deployment to combatzone@irs.gov

Extension to File your Taxes

You have 180 days from your last day in a combat zone to file your taxes, plus the amount of time you had to file your taxes before you deployed. For example, if you deployed to

Afghanistan on 6 June 2010 and returned to Fort Campbell on 15 April 2011, you have to file your 2010 taxes by 20 August 2012. (393 days between 6 June 2010 and 15 April 2011 + 180 days for the combat exclusion).

- State taxes vary by state, but most offer an extension of 90 days or more. You need to check with your tax preparer.

The Good News- You can get your Taxes done for free at Fort Campbell. The Fort Campbell Tax Office offers free Tax Preparation when you return from Deployment, so there is no need to go to H&R Block or any other Tax Preparation Business. The tax preparers at the Fort Campbell Tax Office are welltrained and cost you nothing.

Your spouse can also file your taxes for you at Fort Campbell using a Power of Attorney. See Brigade Legal for more details.

Safety Standards with Safety Mike

Are you in a hurry to go home? I know I am; but let's not get in such a rush that we put safety aside and start taking short cuts in our tasks. Back in the day we had the acronym STOPP which stands for stop what you're doing, think about the task and hazards involved.

Observe your task and determine any required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Plan to execute the task to standard. Proceed to get'er done. Personal injury accidents increase during preparation for redeployment. Let's break that trend by conducting good risk assessments and executing all tasks to standard. Wear your Kevlar when on roofs taking down equipment

such as cables and antennas. Always have your STRIKE battle buddy with you when working on roofs of buildings.

Use your battle buddy to lift heavy tuff boxes while loading containers. Ensure ground guides are used for forklift operations in and around staging areas. Wear reflective vests during hours of limited visibility. Ensure all drivers are licensed on vehicles used to move equipment. Hook up trailers correctly including the safety chains even if you are only going across the FOB.

Keep safety at the forefront during all operations. Have a safe redeployment.

***STRIKE* Retention Update** by Sgt. 1st Class Matthew D Calhoun

RETENTION UPDATE

STRIKE and the 101st have completed their FY 11 Active Duty Retention Mission not even half way through the fiscal year. STRIKE Brigade has conducted 430 Reenlistments since 1 Oct 2010, paying a total of \$1,486,500 in bonuses.

REENLISTMENT WINDOW

Soldiers are in the reenlistment window if they have an ETS of 20120930 or earlier. Soldiers who incur a Service Remaining Requirement, (SRR) may reenlist outside the reenlistment window if entitled a Tier 2 or higher Bonus.

CATEGORIES

Initial Term Soldier- have never reenlisted or have less than 180 days of prior active service

Mid Career Soldier- have reenlisted at least once, or have more than 180 days prior active service and have less than 10 years active federal service at ETS

Careerist- have previously reenlisted and have more than 10 years active federal service at ETS

NEW CHANGES TO REENLISTMENT POLICY

*Soldiers are not authorized to reenlist once they are within three months of their ETS

*Mid and Career Soldiers who incur a SRR will reenlist/extend or sign a Declination of Continued Service Statement

*Soldiers in a balanced MOS with an ETS date prior to 20111001 are restricted to the Regular Army Reenlistment Option for a minimum of 3 years

*A Private First Class is NOT authorized to reenlist unless they are receiving a tier 2 or higher bonus

*Initial term and Mid Career Soldiers are not offered the Army Training option unless they are in an over strength MOS

REENLISTMENT OPTIONS

- A. Regular Army – reup 2 to 6 years
- B. Current Station Stabilization- minimum 3 year reup
- C. Army Training- minimum 3 year reup
- D. Overseas Assignment- minimum 4 years long tour, 3 year short tour
- E. CONUS Station of Choice- minimum 3 year reup



Initial and Mid Career Options

Shortage or Balanced MOS- Regular Army, Current Station Stabilization, Overseas Assignment, CONUS station of choice

Overstrength MOS- Army Training option only

Career Options

Regular Army option only, SSG and above with 10 or more years active federal service must reenlist indefinite

Stay STRIKE!

Equal Opportunity for STRIKE - Sgt. 1st Class Ta Mouton -

Equal Opportunity Program's mission is to ensure equal treatment of Soldiers and Family members without regard to race, color, religion, gender or national origin and provide an environment free of sexual harassment.

Also to serve as the commander's representative and primary staff advisor on EO matters concerning all assigned or attached personnel within 2BCT-STRIKE

Sexual assault can be prevented. As Soldiers, our core values demand that we act. There are no passive bystanders. We must protect our Team Members. When you see or sense the risk of sexual harassment or sexual assault, it is your duty to intervene and protect your fellow Soldiers.

VICTIM'S RIGHTS

- The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for their dignity and privacy.
- The right to immediate and effective medical care and attention, including long-term follow-up treatment, if eligible.
- The right to be reasonably protected from the accused offender.
- The right to be notified of court proceedings.
- The right to be present at all public court proceedings related to the offense. (unless the court determines otherwise)
- The right to talk with the attorney for the Government in the case.
- The right to restitution, if appropriate.
- The right to information about the conviction, sentencing, imprisonment, and release of the offender from custody.
- The right, if desired, to confidential or restricted reporting of the sexual assault incident.

POINTS OF CONTACT ABOUT ANY QUESTION OR CONCERNS

2BCT EOA/DSARC (SFC Mouton) (270)798-7317

DIV SARC (Ms. Christina Lopez) (270)798-6383

STRIKE'S OEF FALLEN SOLDIER MEMORIAL

The legacy of our fallen Soldiers has a large impact on the military and civilian society. Statues, monuments and memorials are created with the greatest detail and designed to honor those who've made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom.

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), known as the STRIKE Brigade, has always paid respect toward its fallen heroes. Inside the gates of Kentucky's Fort Campbell, STRIKE displays large sculpted memorials, etched with the names of those who died while wearing the hearted helmet during operations in the Second World War, Viet Nam, Sinai and Iraq.

Their accomplishments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom have put insurgents in southern Afghanistan on the run and Strike Soldiers have fallen during the effort. Just as before, Strike plans to honor its fallen by purchasing a 2nd BCT Operation Enduring Freedom Fallen Soldier Memorial to be erected at Fort Campbell upon the brigade's redeployment.

"This memorial, like the others we have at Fort Campbell, is important for the history of this unit," said 1st Sgt. Jerry Morales, the Forward Operating Base Wilson mayor with STRIKE's Headquarters and Head-

quarters Company. "It tells the people about the fallen Soldiers who have fought for our brigade. We had a lot of support from the Soldiers and civilians in the brigade and collected over \$20,000; they know the importance of this for our organization."

A raffle for prizes was held throughout CTFS's Area of Operation, where tickets were sold at \$5 a piece. From the larger FOBs like Pasab to the smaller Strong Points like Maquan, the Soldiers made donations for their fallen comrade's memorial. Company E, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, as a whole, contributed the most.

"We've been selling tickets for about a month or so to raise money for the brigade memorial for the fallen Soldiers that have given the ultimate sacrifice in the country for a greater cause," said 1st Sgt. Johnny Carter, the first sergeant of Company E. "We ended up selling almost \$3,000 worth of tickets amongst the company and I am very proud of my Soldiers."

The raffle was held Feb. 11, on FOB Wilson. Barbeque, beverages and live music was provided as



Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers pay respect to a fallen comrade while deployed in southern Afghanistan, Sept. 14. Soon a memorial will be erected in Fort Campbell, Ky. to honor the CTFS fallen Soldiers. The Soldiers and civilians of CTFS raised over \$20,000 for the monument.

many Soldiers of Combined Task Force STRIKE and civilians attended the event. The Soldiers were excited for the prizes and the honoring of their friends.

Flat screen TV's, an X-BOX 360, a Play Station 3, iPods, 500 minute calling cards are some of the raffle prizes to be won, but the Soldiers are here to honor their fallen comrades with the memorial, said Spc. Tanner Gilbertson, a truck driver with Company E. "I think the memorial is going to be amazing, nothing can ever give us back our lost comrade, but we are doing them justice with this memorial," said Gilbertson.

The 2nd BCT's OEF Fallen Soldier Memorial will soon be available for the public as the STRIKE Brigade continues the tradition of honoring its fallen heroes.



The 10th Mountain Division rock band, Avalanche, jams at Forward Operating Base Pasab, Feb. 11, during a raffle event that raised money for a Combined Task Force STRIKE Fallen Soldier Memorial to be erected in Fort Campbell, Ky. The donations came from CTFS Soldiers and Civilians operating in southern Afghanistan.

Pir Mohammed School Handed Over

In a country ravaged by a war for more than 30 years, hope for a better future is hard to find. The Pir Mohammed School, seen as a symbol of possibility for the future, was handed over to the Afghan National Police, Feb. 12.

Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), took responsibility in April for bringing security to Senjaray and to Pir Mohammed School. The Soldiers built trust with the locals as well as constructed ANP checkpoints to help provide a defense.

“Nine months ago Pir Mohammed was in ruins,” said Capt. Nicholas Stout, commander of Company A. “We have all bled on this ground. This has been a joint effort of Afghan National Army, ANP, and the United States Army.”

The Soldiers of Company A have worked closely with the ANA and ANP to build up and bring safety to the school so the people of Senjaray and surrounding villages will send their kids to be educated.

“Pir Mohammed is the way forward for Afghanistan and Zharay,” said Stout. “This is about improving the quality of life, and future for Afghanistan.”

Showing the people their government is there to support and provide for them creates stability. Soldiers work closely with the ANA and ANP teaching them how to provide safety for the people of Senjaray.

“Conduct yourself as the coalition forces do,” said Lt. Col. Berhan, commander of the ANA 3rd Kandak. “This will help you earn the trust of the people.”

Soldiers of Company A have built a foundation for the ANP to build upon, a way to protect the school and gain the support of the people of Senjaray.

“We started this together,” said Stout. “We will see it through. I appreciate all the efforts you have put into securing the school.”



Capt. Nicholas Stout, commander, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, shakes the hands of the Afghan National Police after the official handover of the Pir Mohammed School, Feb. 12.

To conclude the handover ceremony Stout called individuals forward, shook their hands and presented them with certificates of appreciation. He congratulated the police officers on all they have accomplished and assured them of continued support from coalition forces.

STRIKE's STRONG MAN PT



1st Sgt. Johnny Carter and Staff Sgt. Joseph Isgrow, both with Company E, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, flip a tire during ‘Strong Man’ Physical training at Forward Operating Base Pasab, Feb. 19. The tire weighs around 400 pounds and requires teamwork to flip.

Physical training is a cornerstone of Army life. It builds strength, endurance and camaraderie between Soldiers and contributes to individual well-being.

Company E, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) conducted ‘Strong Man’ physical training throughout their deployment to Afghanistan, 2010-2011.

The training is designed to strengthen and tone muscles while building company cohesion and boosting morale. The series of exercises focus on teamwork to achieve specific goals.

“This is about teambuilding,” said 1st Sgt. Johnny Carter, a native of Jamison, Ala., and Company E’s first sergeant. “This PT encourages the Soldiers to work together to accomplish the exercises.”

The challenges include flipping tires of different sizes, pulling sleds loaded with weights across sand and gravel, hitting tires with sledgehammers, push-ups, pull-ups, chin-ups and flutter kicks. The soldiers break up into two-man teams to complete each event of the workout.

“The 400 pound tire flip is a beast,” said Carter. “You have to have a buddy help you flip it, it’s very difficult.”

This is their normal Saturday workout and on Thursdays the Soldiers conduct a cardiovascular workout. Company E Soldiers train regularly to maintain their fitness level.

“It’s all very challenging,” said Staff Sgt. Joseph Isgrow, a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, and platoon sergeant with the company. “This training is a great way to get in shape and the Soldiers benefit from the teambuilding aspect as well.”

Constantly working together builds trust between the First Strike Soldiers and keeps them prepared, both physically and mentally, for their next mission during their time in Afghanistan.

OPERATION BLOODHOUND:



Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers with Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, search a Kandahar field with Vallon Metal Detector. Webster defines a cache, a French word, as a hiding place especially for concealing and preserving provisions or implements. Partnered US and Afghan forces patrolling southern Afghanistan often find weapon caches hidden by insurgents. The stockpiles of weapons are buried in farms, on the side of roads and near religious structures.

The Soldiers of Combined Task Force STRIKE with Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment and the Afghan National Army Soldiers of 4th Coy, 3rd Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps, have taken a massive amount of firepower away from the insurgency with Operation Bloodhound.



Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers with Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, also known as Wardog, discover a large weapons cache in a Kandahar field during Operation Bloodhound, Feb. 19.

“Operation Bloodhound has been a series of operations in the green zone near Kandalay to deny the enemy caches insurgents have emplaced,” said Capt. James Carrier, Wardog commander. “First Strike’s Company D recovered a multitude of weapons and munitions that will no doubt, directly affect the enemy’s ability to conduct attacks on Coalition forces and our Afghan

National Security Force partners in the future.” The operation began late in 2010 with much success. The mission persists as CTFS continues to find hidden weapons. “We found a dozen weapon systems to include Recoilless rifles, 82mm Recoilless rifle rounds, over 200 RPGs, numerous caches of IEDs and IED making materials, pressure plates, various rounds, 50 hand grenades probably, a bunch of AK-47s; it’s almost countless,” said 1st Lt. Charles Ragland, a 25 year old native of Boynton Beach, Fla. and a pla-



Wardog Soldiers pull grenades from a discovered weapons cache during Operation Bloodhound, Feb. 19. The discoveries have taken stockpiles of firepower from the enemy.

STRIKE Hunts Down Insurgent's Firepower



ectors and Military Working Dogs for weapon caches during Operation Bloodhound, Feb. 19. The Soldiers have found massive amounts of weapons hidden by insurgents.

toon leader attached to Company D. “Most of the stuff they bury is what they’re going to be coming back for and using, so it will be a safer area, hands down.”

The finds made by Company D, also known as Wardog, have been the largest within the CTFS Area of Operations and are preventing potential casualties to the Soldiers operating in eastern Zharay.

“We’ve lost brothers over here and anything we can do to keep another brother from going down, well, it’s a good feeling,” said Spc. Bobby Warren, a 29 year old native of Lyles Tenn. and a team leader with Wardog. “They’re not storing them for a rainy day, they’re storing them for use on Coalition forces.”

The process of finding the hidden caches starts with the Afghan and American forces receiving intelligence, many times from the local Afghans, and then conducted dismounted patrols out from Combat Outpost Kandalay into an area of Zharay called the green zone.

“Us with our ANA partners and Explosive Ordnance Demolition team head out towards the enemy

cache, set up security and with Vallon Mine Detectors, start to hunt down the enemy cache,” said Ragland. Tips from villagers and checking the most logical hiding areas have brought success to Wardog, said Ragland.

Recently on Feb. 19, Wardog and their ANA partners conducted a mission in support of Operation Bloodhound by patrolling a suspicious area near Zharay’s Route Red Stripe.

“For the last two days, we’ve been in Operation Bloodhound III and we went onto Red Stripe and found all kinds of things,” said 1st Sgt James Bobadilla, Wardog first sergeant. “Weapons, ammunition, explosives and the more we take out today, the better it is for everybody here, not only for the ANA and ourselves, but for the people who live here.”

Uncovered weapons and ammunition are either brought back to COP Kandalay for exploitation, or brought to an area where EOD teams destroy them.

The combined efforts in Operation Bloodhound have removed AK-47s, bolt-action rifles, RPG launchers, shotguns, anti-aircraft weapons, hand grenades, DSHKs, Recoilless rifles, mortars, rockets, mines, detonators, chemical pencils, detonation cord, pressure plates, bayonets, assembled IEDs, flares, radios, medical supplies and other mechanisms used to kill.



A Wardog Soldier with Company D, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, searches a suspected area in a Kandahar field with a Vallon Metal Detector for a weapon cache during Operation Bloodhound. The Wardog Soldier discovered grenades and munitions in the soil underneath his metal detector.

STRIKE'S COMBAT UNIT MINISTRY TEAM



Spc. Christopher Rivers and Chaplain (Capt.) Jeremy Blanford, the 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment's Unit Ministry Team, conduct spiritual missions in a combat zone.

Kandahar's central Zharay was a nest for Taliban and since the arrival of Combined Task Force STRIKE, villages there like Pashmul, Sablughay and Spin Pir have been the fighting edge against the insurgency. Roadside bombs, suicide attacks and rounds from AK-47s are dangers throughout the landscape.

Walking throughout this harsh terrain is a Unit Ministry Team with 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), set on accomplishing their mission, no matter where they may be. One patrols to his objectives with the "Strike Cav" scouts without a firearm; he is the Widowmaker's combat chaplain.

Chaplain (Capt.) Jeremy Blanford, an Ithaca, NY native who has been on more than 30 dismounted missions and has seen five kinetic engagements while providing spiritual guidance to the Widowmaker Soldiers, doesn't cower from his obligations.

"My mission is to meet the spiritual needs of our Soldiers primarily by pro-

viding religious services to the Soldiers, wherever they are," said Blanford. "My first deployment I did not see combat, but even at the first firefight here I did not cower behind a rock or a tree, I was calmly there with my guys. The time I spend with the Soldiers is important because it allows me to get to know them and their spiritual needs."

One of the first ministry team's missions was to connect and experience what the everyday CTF Soldier endures. This patrol took them to Sablughay, a once highly kinetic area.

"When I go out with the Soldiers on patrol it's simply to be where they are, to experience what they experience and it helps me build better relationships with them," said Blanford. "It helps me better understand what they're doing, what they're going through and find a sense of relevance. When talking to them, I can put myself in their shoes."

The team of a chaplain and a chaplain assistant conduct battlefield services and key leader engagements with Afghan mullahs. Their patrols sometimes take con-

tact from enemy fire and the role of the chaplain assistant is to aid the chaplain and provide him protection.

"My job is to support Chaplain Blanford with his religious duties in the unit and provide him security during missions," Spc. Christopher Rivers, a 21-year-old native of Portsmouth, Va. and the squadron's chaplain assistant.

"Providing him the needed security is the most important job while here. I have to make sure he comes back safe, I am his weapon."

Blanford and Rivers conducted many battlefield services for the Widowmaker Soldiers and have seen every platoon in the squadron. The Soldiers of Widowmaker who've patrolled with Blanford respect his team for stepping outside the wire performing their duties in a combat zone.

"Chaplain Blanford went to Kolk with us to do a population engagement and we took contact that day," said Spc. Robert Frisina, a Columbia, S.C. native and on the Widowmaker's civil affairs team. "It really seemed out of place to see a chaplain there without a weapon and I respect him and his motivation to do his job. He takes a big risk, but he is so well received by the scouts because of it."

Recently, another insurgent attack occurred while Blanford and Rivers were a part of a patrol in Sablughay. One Soldier was shot in the leg and the unit ministry team stayed by the wounded Soldier's side.

"I was out when a ser-

geant got injured and everybody else was shooting, my job was to hold his hand and talk, while the doctor was treating him," said Blanford. "I'm not here to fight a war, I'm here in the middle of a war. Even in the middle of a fire fight, I'm not concerned about the enemy, I'm concerned about safety and well being of the Soldiers, so I focus on them."

The grape walls and large irrigated canals make patrols a physical challenge for the chaplain team, but the hardest times for Blanford are not the patrols or a firefight. Memorial services held for STRIKE's fallen Soldiers hit the chaplain the hardest.

"Emotionally, memorials are the most difficult part," said Blanford. "You always think it's going to be the people you don't know, but I have the privilege of knowing each and everyone of our fallen. To have walked with them and their squad has been an honor."

The Widowmaker's UMT puts itself through the same situations their scout brothers of "Strike Cav" go through so their ministry can reach and be trusted at every corner of the battlefield.

"The challenge is to meet the Soldiers where they are and to continue to help them build their spiritual fitness," said Blanford. "Not every chaplain goes out there and I'm not saying they should, but for my guys, they need me out there to build trust and a relationship. I don't do anything special, but I am willing to go with them and do what they do."

STRIKE Force Reopens Sangsar School



Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, look on as the Zharay district governor speaks to a crowd of parents and children during the Sangsar High School Opening Ceremony in the village of Howz-E-Madad, Mar. 6. The school will teach Pashto writing, reading and mathematics.

The sounds of young Afghans laughing, Zharay district officials speaking to their people and a ribbon being cut in a doorway with a picture of Afghan president Hamid Karzai in the main entrance, the Sangsar High School was open again.

Seven years ago, a Japanese team came into the Kandahar village of Howz-E-Madad and built a school for the Afghan youth. The attendance was high; about 2000 Afghans filled the structure ready to learn. Taliban shut it down. Refusing education to their own people is a Taliban custom and they turned the closed school into a base for stockpiling weapons.

The Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, Afghan National Army Soldiers of 1st Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps and the Afghan National Civil Order Police, ended the oppression of education in Howz-E-Madad, by removing the Taliban threat from the school, allowing the Zharay district to reopen its doors, Mar. 6.

“To be able to come out here and open the school up again is important and could not have been done without our ANA brothers and our ANCOP support,” said Staff Sgt. Eric Ammerman, a State College, Pa. native and a scout reconnaissance team leader with HHC. “A year’s time ago, this area was seeded with IED’s and had Taliban influence on it, but here we are today standing with the ANCOP, the ANA, the district governor, everybody’s out here and it’s a great accomplishment from us and from our Afghan partners.”

It took a lot of work to set the conditions for the ribbon cutting ceremony. The schoolyard was filled with IEDs and land mines.

“When we first came in here there were IEDs and we had to demine it,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Troy Henderson, the Strike Force command sergeant major. “It took a lot of effort, but the effort paid off and our scouts cleared the area so we could have this great event.”

Now with the school opened, classes on Pashto writing, reading and mathematics will be taught to the Afghans attending. Preventing Taliban from again shutting down the

only high school in Zharay will take more than the presence of forces.

It takes more than just forces, the whole community must be involved for the education system to work, said Henderson. “With security the attendance will return, but it’s going to take all of the people and the elders to keep the school up and running,” added Henderson.

Niyaz Mohammed Sarhadi, the Zharay district governor, supports the operations of CTFS and knows how effective an educated community can be against the insurgency.

“My main priorities as the district governor are the schools and rebuilding the people’s connection to its government,” said Sarhadi during the ceremony. “We’ve had a lot of security operations with ISAF, and force won’t be enough, but by opening a school is like firing a cannon right into our enemy.”

Places of education inside of southern Afghanistan are rare and the CTFS Soldiers are excited for the Afghan’s new opportunity.

“Everyone of us remembers what it was like being a kid and growing up,” said Ammerman. “We’ve all had the fortunate luxury of being able to go to schools, public or private, so being able to come out and show the kids there is something more out there for them is great. Education is huge, it’s the only way a civilization and a culture is going to improve themselves and these guys out here are ready and they’re willing and they want it, they want to learn.”



Niyaz Mohammed Sarhadi, the Zharay district governor, cuts the ribbon in the doorway of the reopened Sangsar High School in Howz-E-Madad, Mar. 6.

Operation Shoe Drop

On a cold February Afghan morning, on the shaded side of the Nowruzi Mountain, Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, along with the Zharay district's Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army Soldiers from 3rd Coy, 3rd Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps, put on their body armor, held a mission brief and loaded the back of an ANP Ford Ranger with large boxes filled with footwear and new socks; Operation Shoe Drop had begun.

The day's mission was to take a dismounted Afghan and US patrol from Combat Outpost Durkin, down the mountain into a heavily populated village called Nowruzi and provide shoes, boots, sneakers and socks to barefooted Afghans. The architect of the operation was not a commander or a senior enlisted, but a young Soldier with a good heart.

"Right before I went on leave

in October, we were in West Nowruzi and I noticed there was a lot of kids running around with no shoes on and no good clothes; I realized winter was coming up and how miserable it would be running around the wet muddy streets with no shoes on," said Pfc. Erik Ortiz, a 23 year old from Green Valley, Ca. and a gunner with STRIKE's Cobra Company. "The people here are our number one concern and that's why we're here."

During his leave in California, Ortiz spent a part of his time coordinating with his family and local church in helping out with Operation Shoe Drop. He told them of the Nowruzi people's condition and how could help their situation.

"I went to my church, made an announcement and put a big box in the back and people gave donations," said Ortiz. "By the time I was ready to go back to Afghanistan, I had about 180 pairs and had them sent over here."



Pfc. Erik Ortiz, a 23 year old from Green Valley, Ca. and a gunner with Combined Task Force STRIKE's Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), hands a child a pair of socks to go along with his new pair of shoes in the Kandahar village of Nowruzi, Feb. 18. The mission was called Operation Shoe Drop and was created when Ortiz collected shoes during his leave time to pass out to the local villagers.

About 30 minutes into the patrol, the combined forces reached the outskirts of the village and told the elders of their intent and the word spread throughout Nowruzi. Ortiz, Capt. Jamal Khan, 3rd Coy commander and Karim Jan, Nowruzi ANP commander, began distributing the donated shoes and the people's reaction was positive.

"The kids were ecstatic," said Ortiz. "They were ecstatic to see nice, quality, American shoes that will fit them, last for awhile, keep the cold out of their feet and keep the mud off of them."

Tennis shoes, sandals, boots, sneakers, athletic socks, and wool socks were among the items given to the excited young villagers. The Afghan National Security Forces



Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, load up an Afghan National Police truck with boxes of new pairs of shoes to be handed out to Afghans in the Kandahar village of Nowruzi in support of Operation Shoe Drop. Feb. 18.



Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), hand out new pairs of shoes to Afghans in the Kandahar village of Nowruzi, Feb. 18. The mission was called Operation Shoe Drop and was created when Pfc. Erik Ortiz, a 23 year old from Green Valley, Ca. and a gunner with the company, collected shoes during his leave time to pass out to the local villagers.

took pride in taking care of their people.”

“It is my honor to help provide a better life for the people of Nowruzi here today,” said Karim Jan in his Pashto language while handing out gifts. “Even these shoes we are giving to the children are making them live better. Taliban will not take care of these people, we will.”

CTFS fight for the Afghan people with humanitarian acts and kinetic battles against insurgents. The STRIKE Soldiers know the importance of both tactics.

“We’re trying to tie the people back to their government,” said 1st Lt. Doug Patterson, a native of Falmouth, Mass. and a platoon leader with Cobra Company. “One of the main ways to do that is to link them to their army and their police force. It’s very important to build up a good relationship with the Afghans.”

The reactions were similar as the troops continued the patrol along Route Rendezvous to more villagers and more children. Operation Shoe Drop was a success and Cobra Company is proud of Ortiz’s involvement.

“It is good to see Soldiers internalizing the counter insurgency concept and striving to improve

Afghans’ lives even during their time off,” said Capt. Paul Deleon, Cobra’s commander. “Pfc. Ortiz is

just one example of many outstanding Soldiers who are committed to success over here.”



Pfc. Erik Ortiz, a 23 year old from Green Valley, Ca. and a gunner with Combined Task Force STRIKE’s Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), hands out new pairs of shoes to the Afghans in the Kandahar village of Nowruzi, Feb. 18. The mission was called Operation Shoe Drop and was created when Ortiz collected shoes during his leave time to pass out to the local villagers.

STRIKE illustrated

The constant cracks of AK-47s being fired nearby, the sweat during long patrols in the hot day, the numb toes while on guard during the cold, shivering nights, deployments in southern Afghanistan can be challenging for a Soldier. Sometimes a Soldier needs to find a way to escape from the daily stresses of war.

A Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldier with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, uses his artistic abilities to get his mind straight during stressful times.

“On my down time I draw; I find things that interest me and I draw it and I have a really good time when I’m off,” said Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Sabo, a native of Benton, Pa. and a battalion liaison with CTFS. “This helps me cope with the stresses here in Afghanistan. I can completely take my mind off of what’s going on, which is a really good break from the reality of this place.”

Sabo’s normal day-to-day duties are to track the

action in STRIKE’s area of operations and the job has him involved in all missions within the Maiwand district.

“The best thing about the job is I get to see the entire battlefield versus just that one single engagement,” said Sabo. “I’m able to affect what’s going on in the battlefield.”

When Sabo is not focusing on actions in theater, he takes out a sketchpad, his arsenal of pencils, pens and markers and draws, a passion of his since he was a child.

“The first time I actually drew something worth anything was when I was ten years old and of course it was a military vehicle,” said Sabo, who referred to himself as an Army brat. The first sketch was an Anti-Air System M113 battle tank and he still has the drawing to this day, said Sabo.

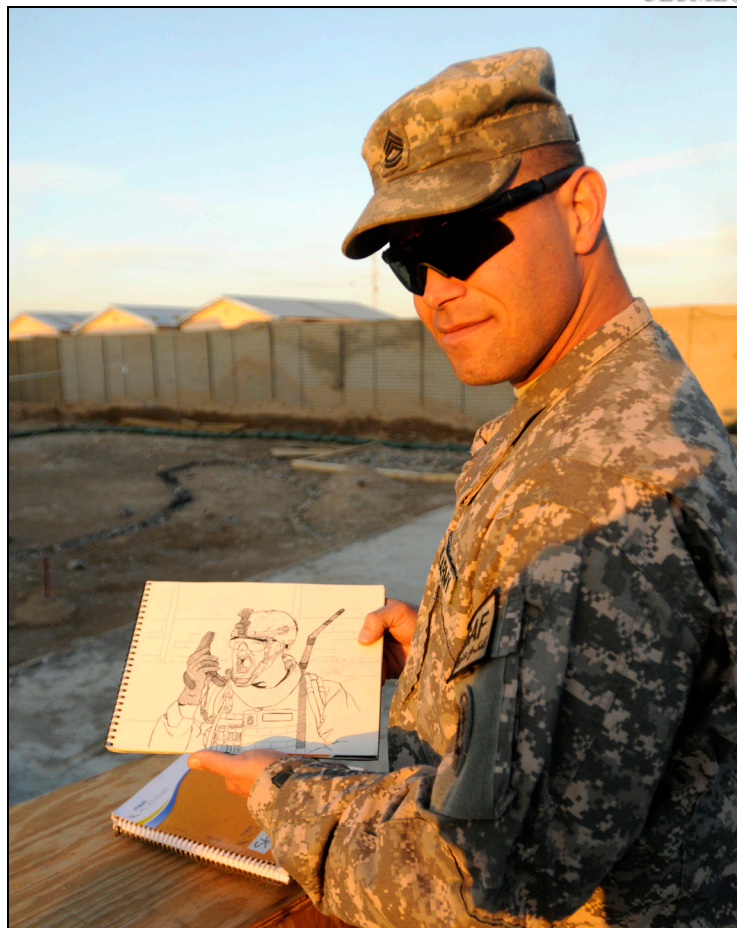
Sabo’s library of sketches includes images seen in the military, cartoons, comics, pop culture icons and family members.

“More often than not, I find myself drawing military vehicles, landscapes, people whatever sparks my interest,” said Sabo. Lately pictures of combat photos have been drawn, like a CTFS Soldier calling for fire support during a battle, said Sabo.



Staff Sgt. Katherine Yocom-Delgado, the STRIKE Brigade’s operations noncommissioned officer, points at an illustration of her created by Soldier artist, Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Sabo, a battalion liaison with 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.

The STRIKE Soldiers working with the illustrator have often been the subject for Sabo’s



Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldier Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Sabo, a native of Benton, Pa. and a battalion liaison with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, holds a sketch of a STRIKE Soldier he drew during his deployment to southern Afghanistan. Sabo uses his artistic abilities to clear his mind and boost the morale of the CTFS Soldiers.

sketches and they have responded well towards the caricatures.

“This is definitely going home and being put up in the house,” said Staff Sgt. Katherine Yocom-Delgado, an Urbana, Ohio native and the brigade’s operations noncommissioned officer, as she held a Sabo drawn illustration of herself. “I know he’s done drawings of other people here, family members, children, spouses and they’re all outstanding. He does great work and he is truly blessed.”

The Soldiers who know of Sabo and his talent like the way he uses his gift to help overcome deployment stress and agree with his thought process.

“I think it’s necessary to escape, even if this is your

first tour, you still need something to break away because you can’t be turned on all the time,” said Yocom-Delgado. Soldiers have to stay alert all the time, but breaking away now and then also needs to happen, said Yocom-Delgado.

Illustrating gives Sabo the needed break from war and he recommends other Soldiers find a way to use their passions to keep a clear mind throughout their deployment.

“In this environment, to find an escape is almost a necessity, they have to find something to take them into their own little space so they can diffuse themselves,” said Sabo. “It is imperative that you find an out, so you can release your emotions.”

Petraeus Awards More **STRIKE** Soldiers



Gen. David H. Petraeus shakes hands with Pfc. Philip Wysocki, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, at Forward Operating Base Pasab, Feb. 14.

The International Security Assistance Force commander awarded medals to Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during a visit to Forward Operating Base Pasab, Kandahar province, Afghanistan, Feb. 14.

Gen. David H. Petraeus pinned 25 awards including one Silver Star, six Bronze Star Medals with Valor, six Army Commendation Medals with Valor and nine Purple Hearts. The medal recipients appreciated the visit from the four star general.

"It's really exciting to be getting pinned this award and to be getting pinned by General Petraeus, what an honor and all I was just doing was my job," said Pfc. Philip Wysocki, a Silver Star recipient with Combined Task Force STRIKE's Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment. "Today is a good day for me and my brothers."

Petraeus took pleasure in awarding the Strike Soldiers for their actions in and before Operation Dragon Strike.

"Along the way there has been a lot of individual heroics, numerous valorous acts and acts of sacrifice," said Petraeus to the awardees and an on looking crowd. "Today we're privileged to recognize a handful of those kind of individuals."

Before pinning the medals onto the chest of the STRIKE Soldiers, Petraeus spoke about how important the successes of the 2nd BCT and the Afghan National Army's 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps are to Afghanistan.

"As one of our national leaders said, this is a big deal, and it is," said Petraeus when talking about CTFS's operations in southern Afghanistan. "We've talked at various times along the campaign that this is historic... and others can learn from and be inspired by what the STRIKE Brigade, Combined Task Force STRIKE has accomplished."

Silver Star Medal

-Pfc. Philip Wysocki, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, for his valorous actions Nov. 1, after a suicide bomb attack. Wysocki contributed significantly to facilitating the evacuation of casualties under heavy enemy fire and repelling the enemy attack.

Bronze Star Medal with Valor

-Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Tucker, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Staff Sgt. Derek Leach, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -Staff Sgt. Christopher James, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -Sgt. Jesse Hattesoehl, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -Sgt. Dustin Hennigar, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Spc. William Blair, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.

Army Commendation Medal with Valor

-Capt. Daryl Murton, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.
 -Staff Sgt. Jason Redick, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.
 -Staff Sgt. Brandon Griffis, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Staff Sgt. Timothy McKinnis, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -Sgt. Victor Faggiano, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -Sgt. Jesse Hattesoehl, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -Pfc. Thomas Pedigo, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Pfc. Mark Drake, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -Pfc. Corey Doty, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.

Purple Heart

-1st Lt. Samuel Orlan, Troop A, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -1st Lt. Philip Ficken, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Sgt. 1st Class John Allison, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Staff Sgt. Christopher James, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.
 -Sgt. Anna Stumpf, Company C, 526th Brigade Support Battalion.
 -Sgt. Victor Lapierre, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Spc. Mitchell Comer, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Spc. Dietrich Christenson, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.
 -Pvt. Miles Baker, Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.

STRIKE Soldier Fills Need to Help Afghans



Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldier Sgt. George Ellis, a tactical communications team leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), helps a village elder put on a new pair of socks at Kandahar's Zharay District Center, Feb. 17. Ellis, with the help of his wife Kathleen, collected and distributed clothes for local Afghans.

A Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldier working with the brigade's tactical communication teams decided months ago he needed to do more than his normal tasks in the war effort in southern Afghanistan.

Sgt. George Ellis, a 42-year-old native of Pevely, Mo. and a communications team leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), is a charismatic person who has made friends with southern Afghans. Despite the language barrier, Ellis bonded with a local village elder at the Zharay District Center in October and took it upon himself to help with the village's needs.

"My family and I don't

have much, but we got what we could," said Ellis. "These people here are no better than us, no worse than us, they're worse off than us. There's no reason why we can't

them help out, then mailed the boxes out here," said Ellis. "It's cold, it gets wet and they don't have any shoes, they don't have any clothes

give a little bit to them."

Ellis told his wife Kathleen of the Afghans' poor condition and she then put the word out and had boxes filled with shirts, hats, shoes and soccer balls. With the help of his battle buddies and new Afghan friend, the items are distributed to the people.

"My wife gathered our children's spare clothes, she contacted her friends and had



Sgt. George Ellis, a 42-year-old native of Pevely, Mo., helps Afghan children put on new pairs of socks at Kandahar's Zharay District Center, Feb. 17. Ellis, with the help of his wife Kathleen, collected and distributed clothes for local Afghans.

and now it's here."

Once Ellis receives the care packages, he and colleagues go to the Zharay District Center and meet with Ellis' Afghan friend, the village elder. Together they organize and distribute the clothes, mostly to Afghan children.

"I started getting involved with the kids and I got to know each and every one of them and they are fantastic," said Ellis. "They're full of joy, they love to run and they love to play, just like normal kids."

The Zharay village elder at the district center also has children who are fond of Ellis. He and his family are thankful for their American friend.

"Since Ellis came here, he's been helping us a lot and the people like him, my kids like him and I like him; he is my friend," said the village elder. "Ellis gave one of my daughters a dress and she likes it so much. We are so very thankful for his generosity."

Soldiers in Ellis' communication team assist with the distribution. To them he is a good leader at work and an inspiration as person.

"I hardly knew anything about my job, but Sgt. Ellis trained me and had me on the radios over and over until I got it; now I'm proficient with everything," said

Pfc. Terrance Holmes, a Marion County, S.C. native and one of Ellis' Soldiers. "Sgt. Ellis and his wife saw people in need and helped them out, they should be blessed for that. He now makes me want to help other people."

Whether it's with his communication team or his family, Ellis gives it his all. His actions set a

good example for his colleagues, local Afghans and his family.

"If I didn't try to do my best and if my wife and my kids didn't know that I'm helping, I wouldn't be a good father and I wouldn't be a good husband," said Ellis. "My family is my motivation and the reason why I need to help the less fortunate."



Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldier Sgt. George Ellis, a tactical communications team leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, smiles with a village elder at Kandahar's Zharay District Center, Feb. 17.

Sgt. George Ellis, a tactical communications team leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, smiles as an Afghan child thanks him for a t-shirt given at Kandahar's Zharay District Center, Feb. 17.

CERTIFYING TACTICAL EXPLOSIVE DETECTION DOGS FOR PATROLS



Dog handlers with 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), prepare their working dogs for validation at Forward Operating Base Pasab, Feb. 17. The dogs train daily to meet validation standards and maintain their explosive-identification capabilities.

With thousands of mines, unexploded rocket-propelled grenades, in addition to improvised explosive devices emplaced by insurgents, Kandahar province is a dangerous place for Soldiers. The hidden threats are often difficult to locate and account for many casualties during 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)'s deployment to the region.

Soldiers trained and certified Tactical Explosive Detection Dogs at Forward Operating Base Pasab, Feb. 17.

The TEDDs, one of the several different types of military working dogs, work alongside a handler to seek out explosives while on patrol. The dog handlers are selected from different battalions throughout STRIKE Brigade and are trained on proper handling techniques. These Soldiers

work daily with their dogs to make sure they can seek out and find hidden explosives.

"Dogs are just like people," said Staff Sgt. Brian Ruggerio, a native of Houston, Texas, and trainer with the dog handlers, 92nd Military Police Company, attached to 2nd BCT. "They get rusty if you don't train them daily."

The dogs train at FOB Pasab alongside their handler to 95% effectiveness before being certified to go on patrols, said Ruggerio.

"The dogs aren't perfect," Ruggerio said. "But they give Soldiers an advantage they wouldn't have without them."

Dogs have a heightened sense of smell, allowing them to differentiate between odors in an area. Training on the FOB gives dogs experience in identifying the smell

of potentially harmful explosives from non-threatening odors.

"When they go outside the wire on patrol, they'll be exposed to even more smells," said Sgt. Charlie Person, a native of Birmingham, Ala., and dog handler-in-training. "[The dogs] need to be able to identify the right smell before they go out so they can be effective at their job."

The validation process for the dogs confirms their ability before they are assigned to a unit, said Person.

Tank, Person's pit-bull working dog, searched the training area thoroughly for explosives buried under rocks. Tank found the

explosives and was rewarded with a tennis ball to play with.

"He did awesome today," said Person. "[Tank] should be ready to go in a week or so."

The TEDDs have impacted Combined Task Force STRIKE's operations throughout the Kandahar province, protecting Soldiers from homemade explosives buried by insurgents.



Pfc. Charles Brooks, a dog handler with Combined Task Force STRIKE and his working dog, Isi, receive instructions for the validation course from Staff Sgt. Brian Ruggerio, a dog handler with the 92nd Military Police Company.

OBJECTIVE ARGHANDAB: Top Guns Reflect on Deployment



1st Sgt. Jose Banueloreynoso, the first sergeant for Top Guns' Battery A and Sgt. Scott Woods, a team leader for Battery A, discuss operations while at Strong Point Lugo. The base was owned by Taliban before Battery A overtook it late summer.

The first boot print in the Arghandab moon dust at Terra Nova, the Battle of Bakersfield, the Battle for Babur, Route Mad Dog engagements, the Nolan expansion; these are what was seen by the STRIKE Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, who spear headed the war in southern Afghanistan since their arrival in July.

Now in the final weeks of their deployment, the Top Gun Soldiers reflect on the time, sweat and blood spent in Kandahar's Arghandab district.

"I remember when we first entered Arghandab and it was hot, filled with moon sand and the conditions were just miserable," said Spc. Joseph Wallace, a Greenville, Fla. native and an artilleryman with Top Guns' Headquarters and Headquarters Battery out of Combat Outpost Stout. "The battalion just sucked it up, went to work and did what we had to do. We weren't going to quit."

The engagements were daily and winning the initial fights against insurgents was crucial for the artillery turned infantry units' success. An offensive push on Objective Bakersfield made in late July is considered to be the turning point for the Top Guns fight for Arghandab. "The Battle of Bakersfield, where our HHB were fighting for a week in six inches of moon dust, was the first big operation and a lot of credit goes out to those guys for taking over that Taliban strong point," said Staff Sgt. Thomas Alberico, a Glens Falls, NY native with HHB's human resource team. From there the enemy was pushed outward allowing the battalion to build other bases which are still expanding, said Alberico.

As the Top Guns continued to take away key terrain from insurgents, strong points and outposts were built, increasing the security for the Afghan people. "It was a big operation, but once we cleared much of the enemy threat, the build up started," said Sgt. 1st Class Randy Serna, a platoon sergeant with HHB. "We started

building up the strong points, like Strong Point Castro and Strong Point Stansbery. From there we were able to expand out and let the people know we were there to help."

The Arghandab River Valley was a key location for the insurgency, due to its access into Kandahar City, Taliban's goal city. The successes on the ground did not come easy as insurgents fought hard to keep the land. Top Guns have been victorious, but have seen heroes fall during their battles.

"We've lost some good men along the way; great NCO's and great leaders and they were all a huge loss for us," said Wallace. "It showed a lot of character in our unit that so early along, we could take such great losses and still stay together, not quit and complete the mission."

The response coming from the Arghandab people towards the Soldiers is positive and noticeable, a complete turn around from when the Soldiers first stepped into the villages.

I've seen a huge change in the Afghan people," said Wallace. "They were throwing rocks at us when we first got here, but we've made a big change in their eyes. They're more friendly with us, they joke with us, shaking our hands and befriended us. Just look at our Cash for Work Program with 20 workers then to 300 workers now."

In the nine months of patrolling, securing, building and providing, the maneuvering Top Guns have accomplished more in Afghanistan's Arghandab, than any unit before them. When they return home they will leave behind a better Arghandab.

"The Afghans have thanked us because they couldn't go into their own fields for five, six years due to the dangers of the Taliban," said Wallace. "It's unbelievable the change that happened here. We've changed this region and we've changed this whole area and we will leave Arghandab with our heads held high."



Capt. Matthew Day, commander of Top Guns' Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, shakes hands with an Arghandab village elder near Combat Outpost Babur. STRIKE's Top Guns sacrificed much to help secure the Arghandab people during their deployment.

PEO CSM Visits Combined Task Force STRIKE



Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard McPherson, the Program Executive Office Soldier CSM, is briefed on the Anti-Personnel Obstacle Breaching System by Sgt. Dwayne Taylor, a combat engineer with 595th Engineer Company attached to Combined Task Force STRIKE.

Modern technology contributes to success on the battlefield. It's one thing to read reviews and reports on the performance of equipment being used; it's completely different to hear testimonials from Soldiers whose lives depend on the equipment.

Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard McPherson, the sergeant major of the Program Executive Office Soldier at Fort Belvoir, Va., visited Forward Operating Base Pasab, Feb. 17.

The PEO Soldier is a unit focused on equipping Soldiers with the best gear to create an integrated system, with all parts working together. As the Army's need for equipment changes, the PEO Soldier program works to meet those needs.

McPherson toured Combined Task Force STRIKE's headquarters and was given demonstrations on current bomb-finding equipment, military working dogs and Anti-Personnel Obstacle Breaching Systems by the CTFS Soldiers. He asked Soldiers about their experiences with the equipment and dogs,

and their usefulness in combat situations. The Soldiers briefed McPherson on the benefits of the equipment to their missions.

"These [mine] detectors are very sensitive," said Staff Sgt. Patrick Smith, a native of Oceanside, Calif., and combat engineer with 595th Engineer Company,

from White Sands, NM., attached to 2nd BCT. "We can sweep an area on patrol and find pressure plates hidden as we move."

McPherson explained how new versions of metal detectors are more compact and lighter due to advances in technology. He described how Soldiers in the near future may be using tools once considered part of science fiction.

"They'll be using things like what's in Buck Rogers," said McPherson. "There could be detectors that mount to their [protective lenses] and do everything [modern] detectors do, but barely weigh anything."

The combat engineers presented McPherson with a photographic explanation of the APOBS. The system launches a rocket followed by a trail of small explosives used to destroy hidden bombs in its path. This gives Soldiers better freedom of movement through fields and compounds.

McPherson also attended an exhibition of the military working

dogs to demonstrate their ability to locate hidden explosives. The dogs sniffed around cargo containers and located explosives hidden by their handlers.

"These dogs are a great asset," said Staff Sgt. Hardenio Abdon, a native of Newport News, Va., and kennel master with 92nd Military Police Company, attached to 2nd BCT. "They can smell the chemical composition in the explosives they find, whether its detonation cord or homemade explosives. They help save lives on the battlefield; that's what we're all about out here."

McPherson's visit allowed him to see the techniques, equipment and tactics CTFS uses during its deployment in Kandahar and where advances in technology may lead.



Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard McPherson, the Program Executive Office Soldier CSM, tests a mine detector with Staff Sgt. Patrick Smith, a combat engineer with 595th Engineer Company attached to CTFS.

Faces of Strike

A collage of 20 photographs of U.S. Army soldiers in various settings, including combat, training, and personal moments. The title "Faces of Strike" is written in a large, stylized font at the top. The photos show soldiers in full combat gear, in uniform, and in civilian clothes, smiling and interacting with each other and the public. One photo shows a soldier holding a young child. Another shows a soldier in a bucket hat. The background is a warm, orange-brown gradient.

STRIKE

WE WILL NEVER FORGET



Honoring Our Fallen



1st Lt. Daren Hidalgo, 24, of Waukesha, Wis., died of wounds sustained when insurgents attacked his unit using an improvised explosive device in Kandahar's Maiwand district, February 20. He was assigned to Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.



Cpl. Loren M. Buffalo, 20, of Mountain Pine, Ark., died of wounds sustained when insurgents attacked his unit using an improvised explosive device in Kandahar's Zharay district, March 9. He was assigned to Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.



Pfc. Andrew Harper, 19, of Maidsville, W.V., died of injuries sustained in a non-combat incident in Kandahar's Maiwand district, March 11. He was assigned to Company I, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.



STRIKE's Fallen Heroes



Operation Enduring Freedom 10-11





STRIKE ZONE AFGHANISTAN



STRIKE Zone Afghanistan is the brigade's Tv show dedicated to keeping its viewers up to date with unit's events and missions during its deployment to Kandahar Afghanistan.

Learn about each company, battery and troop and be a part of their high-speed missions by checking out the STRIKE Zone Afghanistan. Look for it on the Brigade Facebook Page.


STRIKE HONORS



*A weekly look
at STRIKE's History*

The Brigade Facebook Page

The STRIKE Brigade is in the social networking world with the Brigade Facebook Page. On it are images and videos of the great missions and actions involving the 2nd Brigade Combat Team. Join to start conversations and leave comments about everything the Team is doing. Watch the Brigade's Tv show, the 'Strike Zone' with monthly updates of our time in Afghanistan, read about the illustrious history of 2nd Brigade in the weekly edition of 'Strike Honors'. The page is an awesome way to stay close your Soldiers, even while they are far away.

To be a part of the STRIKE Brigade via the internet; log onto your Facebook page, click in the search box and type 2nd Brigade Strike. When the 502nd  comes up click on it and then click 'like'. Join the already thousands of viewers keeping up with the STRIKE Brigade!

First Name:

Last Name:

I am: Select Sex:

Birthdate: Month: Day: Year: