

THE HEARTBEAT

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



STRIKE's Combat Welders

STRIKE's Welding Teams in Kandahar
page 7

Ca\$h for Work Program

Kandahar populace works with STRIKE
page 9

STRIKE GIVES THANKS

"Top Guns" of STRIKE express gratitude
page 21

Table of Contents...

COLUMNS

2 | Words From the Top

A message from STRIKE's Col. Arthur Kandarian and Command Sgt. Maj. Alonzo Smith

3 | The Brigade's Surgeon & Chaplain

Information provided by Lt. Col. Michael Wirt and Maj. David Beavers

4 | Combat Stress, The Mayor & Safety

Guidance, direction and standards

FEATURES

5 | STRIKE's Personal Security Detachment

The teams that move the command group around the Strike battlefield

6 | Eagle 7 Visits STRIKE / COP Ahmed Kan

CSM Scott Schroeder patrols in Zharay / "Strike Force" builds new base

7 | STRIKE's Combat Welders

Combat Welders keeping Strike moving and growing in Kandahar

9 | CTFS's Cash for Work Program

3/2 'Wolfpack' building up Maiwand with Cash for Work Program

10 | "Wolfpack's" Night Raid in Maiwand

At night, ANP and 3/2's Hawk Company move in on Taliban

11 | ISAF CSM & "Strikeasans" in Panjwa'i

"Strikeasans" and CSM Hill share thanksgiving meal in Talukan

12 | STRIKE Chefs bring Thanksgiving to Soldiers

Soldier cooks work around the clock to provide holiday meal

13 | CTFS in Zangabad

ANA and "Strikeasans" fight Taliban in Zangabad, Panjwa'i

14 | Battlefield Service held by Unit Ministry Team

Religious ceremony held in Mushan for Soldiers on the ground

15 | Zharay District Governor conducts Shura

Karim Jan talks to village elders at Siah Choy

16 | STRIKE Leaders say thanks in Maiwand

Soldiers at Maiwand bases are visited by Strike's DCO and plans sergeant major

17 | Top Guns are Thankful

1-320th says what they're thankful for on Thanksgiving Day

18 | "STRIKE Cav" Change of Responsibility

1-75th holds a change of responsibility ceremony at FOB Wilson

19 | SeaBees build Checkpoints / 3/2 holds KLE

"First Strike" Soldiers and SeaBees secure Highway One / "Wolfpack" talks to leaders

20 | Senators award STRIKE Soldiers

Four US Senators visit the CTFS Soldiers on Veteran's Day

STRIKE SPECIALS

21 | Faces of STRIKE

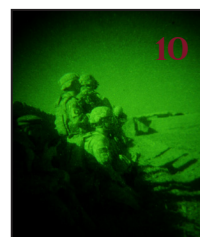
Snap-shots of today's STRIKE Soldiers

22 | We Will Never Forget

STRIKE honors its fallen

BP | Back Page

Check out other STRIKE products



Pfc. Nathan Bates, a combat welder with Delta Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, cuts through steel with a plasma cutter in a welder's shop at Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 13. The Strike Combat Welders are crucial to the repairing of tactical equipment and the development of Strike's FOBs and COPs.

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Words from the Top



STRIKE Soldiers, Leaders, and STRIKE Family, greetings. Command Sgt. Maj. Smith and I wish each of you a happy holiday season as we remain in the fight and on the offense and continuing our mission. Operation DRAGON STRIKE was a success and we remain on the offense while building our defense during Operation DRAGON WRATH. We recently said farewell to the LEADER RAKKASANS who were part of CTF STRIKE since September and their accomplishments were significant and extremely successful and they made a significant impact in the Horn of Panjwa'i.

The Soldiers of Combined Task Force Strike and 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps, Afghan National Army, have brought the fight to Taliban. Together we have pushed the insurgents on their heels. Our operations have resulted in tough losses of STRIKE lives, but we continue to honor their sacrifice by continuing our mission.

LEADER RAKKASANS recently departed and returned to Regional Command East with the rest of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). LEADER RAKKASANS, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, were the tip of the spear in the STRIKE Area of Operations and the contributions and impact they made were historic and we cannot thank them enough for their tremendous efforts. Our thanks to LEADER RAKKASANS!

Across the districts of Zharay and Maiwand, CTF Strike has not only been crushing insurgents, but we have also had a positive impact with the people as we continue with numerous developmental projects such as irrigation and road improvements. All of which increase security for the people. STRIKE's Cash

for Work Program is providing good paying jobs to the local populace and the number of workers participating is now in the thousands. Trends show as security increases, so do the amount of locals reconnecting to their government.

The Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, "FIRST STRIKE," continue combined operations and training and have recently graduated a platoon of ANA soldiers from its Cobra Academy; training Afghan Army Soldiers and units to improve their battle skills. "STRIKE CAV" Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment continue to find large amounts of insurgent supplies in central Zharay as they fight insurgents daily on our terms. "STRIKE CAV" recently said farewell to Command Sergeant Major William R. Hambrick after his selection as the Brigade CSM for 4-101, "CURRAHEE". 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, the Combined Action STRIKE FORCE, have added new bases in recently cleared insurgent areas and hold this key terrain. 2-502 was recently visited by the Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Dr. Robert Gates, and he awarded Soldiers with Valorous awards and Purple Hearts.

3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment and their Afghan partners continue to deny insurgents freedom of movement as they protect the left flank as an integral member of the STRIKE Team.

In Kandahar's Arghandab district, the TOP GUNS of the historic 1st Bn., 320th Field Artillery Regiment, continues to excel while attached to the "RAIDER" Brigade of 4th BCT, 4th Infantry Division.

On Thanksgiving day, CSM Smith and I visited STRIKE Soldiers and Leaders at many of our Company outposts and Strong Points. It was an honor to visit and thank them for their service, and remind all that our mission matters; we are making a difference.

2nd Brigade Special Troops Bn, "RAPTOR", enables CTF STRIKE with continued phenomenal support from the Military Intelligence Co, our outstanding communications company and the tireless dedication of our "SAPPER BEAST" Engineers. The battalions are doing exceptional and historic work. None of our successes would be possible without STRIKE's 526th Brigade Support Battalion

that exemplifies their motto "Best by Performance."

CSM Smith and I thank all STRIKE Soldiers and Leaders for your daily, selfless and tireless devotion to mission accomplishment; your selfless and honorable service to our Regiment and our Nation. We are making progress and we continue to win, but we can never let our guard down and be complacent. We are fighting evil savages who wish to kill us and intimidate Afghan people who have known nothing but war. Stay SWITCHED ON", disciplined, keep your head on a swivel and remain vigilant as our mission continues.

Many STRIKE Soldiers are familiar with the saying of "We are STRIKE Soldiers; we fight where told and win where we fight" that is emblazoned on many signs across the STRIKE Area back at Fort Campbell. I thought of this saying during Secretary of Defense Gates' recent visit and end my words with a quote of what he said to STRIKE on 8 December.

"You guys here are at the tip of the spear of the campaign of the last several months. It is a campaign in which you have taken new territory, cleared it, secured it, and held it. And you're tying together the battle spaces in southeastern and southwestern Afghanistan. This is a critical part of our strategy and of the current campaign. And you have been enormously successful." STRIKE!



The Doctor's Orders with Lt. Col Michael Wirt

The cold and flu season is upon us. Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever. There are several ways you can reduce the chance that you will get the flu.

Four Keys to Flu prevention include:

1) Getting the yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. While

there are many different

flu viruses,

the flu vaccine

protects against

the three viruses

that research

suggests

will be

most

common. According to the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC), the 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against influenza A (H3N2 virus), influenza B virus and the 2009 H1N1 virus that caused serious illness last season.

2) Cover your

nose and mouth

with a tissue or the crook of your

arm when you cough or sneeze.

Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

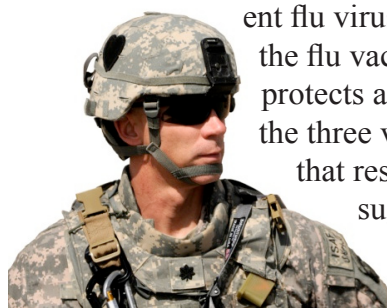
3) Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand gel. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs are spread this



way. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

4) If you are sick with flu-like illness, see your Battalion Medics or PA. While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

Follow these simple guidelines to preserve the fighting strength. Doctors Orders!



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

There are some things which we are taught as children which turn out to be a bit less than 100% accurate: We are told a large, bearded gentleman can traverse the world in one night while dispensing goodies and eating sweets; we learn that "lions are the King of the Jungle" only to later discover they live on the savannah; and we are taught that "Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt me."

Granted, our discovery of the truth in these situations is not earthshaking; however, I wish to address the power of words as noted in this maxim. Words are very powerful and can have a lasting effect. In fact, it was once noted that while bones

and bruises may heal, there are some effects of words that last an entire lifetime.

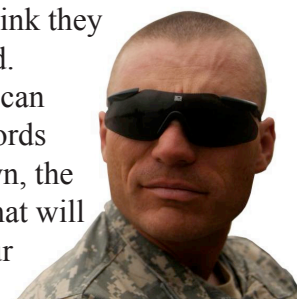
Proverbs 12:18 speaks directly to the power of words when it states, "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

Words of encouragement to a loved one or friend can bridge thousands of miles and draw Soldiers and their families closer to one another. Conversely, a snide comment or careless remark can build emotional "HESCO barriers" preventing closeness and understanding.

When we take the time to think through what we want to say and think about the appropriate way to

say it, our words can become powerful tools of connection. There are times we do have to share information, which may not be pleasant, but when worded appropriately, these words can "bring healing". There may also be times when we need to articulate positive words such as "I love you" or "I really appreciate all you are doing". It is important that we don't withhold these affirmations because we think they are not needed.

Again, words can build up or words can bring down, the question is what will we do with our words?



Combat Stress Column

Many STRIKE Soldiers, NCOs and officers are returning home for the holidays, taking mid tour leave. Most of us will remain here thinking about our families and past celebrations, longing to be with them. While the holidays generally bring us closer together, they also can be a reminder of the loss of our brothers. When we think about their families and their loss brings a touch of sadness at a time of hope.

The holidays can be a stressful time financially, leaving our spouses at home to make decisions without us. We may not agree with the holiday budget, the in-laws, and miss out on turkey, football, tree cutting, decorations, lights, candles and other rituals, but we must put the trust in our families to celebrate these rituals with or without us.

For those going home for the holidays, feeling a "part" after being apart, is a challenge. Returning home to a different routine, different set of rules, and older children can make us feel unsure, alone and sometimes unwelcome.

This can be intensified by the holidays. Service members feeling isolated by their "different" family will often withdraw, adding more stress.

Tips for going home for the holidays are the same for being apart: 1) Be curious: go slow in conversations, listen, and ask about the new routines, especially about how the family wants to celebrate the holidays. Try not to be judgmental. Ask what the deployment has been like for them. 2) Share: choose the right moments to share your experiences. It is important for you to share your life with your spouse and loved ones (aside from OPSEC violations). Sharing the strain and heartache while recognizing what each have you have done will help ensure you are part each others lives and not disconnected. Let the holidays bring you closer together despite whatever distance there has been.

The Mayor's Cell

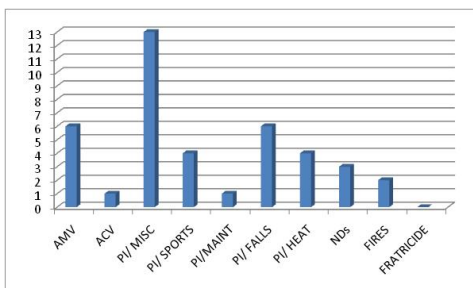
The Army Direct Ordering (ADO) System is an individual tool managed at the unit level to provide replacement uniform items for deployed Soldiers. Soldiers can request both Military Personnel



Appropriation (MPA) items and Organizational Clothing & Individual Equipment (OCIE) items that will be delivered by the postal system directly to the requesting Soldier. Each Soldier is authorized \$45.00 a month for MPA items and \$100.00 a month for OCIE items. The most common items ordered are ACUs,

Name/US Army tapes, Insignia, Boots, Patrol cap/sun hat/helmet covers, T-shirts, and socks. Physical Training uniform items may also be ordered. If you have not ordered any replacement items, contact your unit supply sergeant immediately. Go to this link <http://www.army.kyloc.com> to get started!!!

Safety Standards with Safety Mike



AMV: ARMY MOTOR VEHICLE
ACV: ARMY COMBAT VEHICLE
PI: PERSONAL INJURY
NDS: NEGLIGENT DISCHARGES

Thanks to your diligence in following standards our accident rate for the first 6 months of this deployment are the lowest STRIKE has had since deployed to Iraq in 2003. The trend across the Army shows accidents increase during the mid tour months of any deployment. STRIKE Soldiers can break that trend and continue to perform all tasks assigned to standard. The word

"COMPLACENCY" enters our operational cycle especially if nothing has happened yet during your daily activities. The best way to beat complacency is to plan and prepare every task/mission as it's your first. Use composite risk management to determine associated risks and effective control measures to reduce all risks to acceptable standards. Recently 2 STRIKE Soldiers received 2nd degree burns using JP-8. Most of us have heard that JP-8 is hard to ignite as it's a diesel fuel so we become complacent in the dangers involved. The vapors of JP-8 can ignite whenever there is an ignition source such as a match, lighter or electrical spark. Ensure a fire extinguisher is always available for emergencies. Stay vigilant, stay in the fight.

STRIKE's Personal Security Detachment Teams



Cpl. Andrew Lee, a squad leader for one of the Strike Brigade's personal security detachment teams, patrols a road in Zharay district while the PSD trucks roll behind him bringing the Strike Command group to Combat Outpost Durkan. The PSD teams transport the leaders around the Strike battle space.

Spread throughout southern Afghanistan is the Strike Brigade's Combat Outposts and Forward Operating Bases. Bases like Terra Nova, Ramrod, Durkan and Ashoque just to name a few and the Strike Leadership sees them all. Col. Arthur Kandarian, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Command Sgt. Maj. Alonzo Smith, the brigade's command sergeant major, supervises the development and operations of their military installations and visits occur often.

The Strike Command teams arrive to and from the bases safely and they do this through their Personal Security Detachment teams.

The PSD teams are made of drivers, truck commanders, gunners and medics and each of them contributes much to the fight.

"We provide protection and support to the command group wherever they go," said Brian Sabatier, a PSD gunner with the brigade's Headquarters and Headquarters Company. "We make sure he gets from one place to another and we work long hours and sometimes stay out for several days; it can be very dangerous out there."

The roads of Kandahar are

not the safest places to be and are filled with Taliban footprints. Roadside bombs, anti vehicle mines, rocket propelled grenades, concealed gunmen and other threats are factored in when driving from base to base, but these threats do not deter the PSD teams from accomplishing their missions.

They maneuver around the battle space with large up-armored Multipurpose All-Terrain Vehicles, which are designed to meet the challenges of the Afghan theater.

The boss of the MATV is the truck commander, a job with many responsibilities. The TC operates the radios, the global positioning systems, directs each team member, all the while scanning for signs of trouble.

Sitting behind the wheel is the truck's driver and with a front row view of Afghanistan, the driver stays aware of traffic, who and what are on the roads and any potential threats.

"As a driver, it's important for me to stay focused and alert to everything around the truck," said Pfc. Landon Cheatham, a driver in Command Sgt. Maj. Smith's PSD team. "The Soldiers out there need to see Sgt. Maj. Smith, it brings up their morale and makes them more

confident. Our job isn't easy and it's definitely needed."

Each truck has the capability to engage enemy targets through its gunner. The truck's gun turret is equipped with a heavy weapon system and allows the truck a full view of its surroundings.

Combat medics are also a part of the PSD teams and provide medical support. They roll out with the convoy with full medical kits and are able to render aid to whoever needs it, Soldier or civilian.

When the PSD teams are not on the roads they're either conducting maintenance on their trucks, weapons and equipment or relaying packages to some of the Strike Soldiers in remote places.

The men and women of Strike's Personal Security Detachments are an essential piece in securing the Afghan people as they bring the Strike Leaders around the battle space providing the needed guidance to the Strike Soldiers.



Pfc. Pedro Gutierrezaguair, a gunner for one of the Strike Brigade's personal security detachment teams, scans his sector during a mounted patrol in the Zharay district. The PSD trucks are equipped with heavy weapon systems with a 360 degree capability.

Eagle 7 Visits STRIKE Soldiers

The Command Sergeant Major for the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), visited the Strike Brigade in Kandahar province and conducted a battlefield circulation mission to some of Strike's Combat Outposts, Nov. 9.

"There are a lot of units down here, but I don't think anybody is putting lumber to Taliban like the Screaming Eagles are," said Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder to group of Strike Soldiers. "We would love to have you up in RC East, but what you are doing here is important."

Eagle 7 shook hands with Soldiers on dismounted patrols and visited COP JFM, COP Kandalay and to the Maquan Strong Point, where Strike Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment were operating.

It was good to see Sgt. Maj. Schroeder, and it's good for him to see the good things we are doing here in Zharay, said Sgt. Curtis Boldman, a team leader in First Strike's HHC. "For me and my guys to see him down here really means a lot to us."

After visiting the Soldiers around the Strike Area of Operation, Schroeder returned to Forward Operating Base Wilson, said farewell to his former brigade and began his trip back to the division headquarters at Baghram Airfield. Schroeder's visit to southern Afghanistan positively impacted the Strike Soldiers he met with.

"Seeing senior leadership come by and show an interest in our actions is incredible," said Cpl. Jeremy Harrington, a team leader with Strike's Troop B, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment. "Knowing that he cares and has true concern for what we are doing here makes me want to keep working hard. He motivates me."



Command Sgt. Major Scott Schroeder, the csm for the 101st Airborne Division, talks with a Combined Task Force Strike Soldier during a patrol in Kandahar.

STRIKE FORCE BUILDS COP



Combined Action Strike Force Soldiers build frames for structures inside of Combat Outpost Ahmed Khan, a new Strike Force base in the Zharay district.

Since its arrival to the Zharay district, Combined Action Strike Force has brought security and has expanded its outreach to the local populace. They do this with the building of Combat Outposts and Strong Points throughout the district and has recently furthered its outreach with the building of COP Ahmed Kan.

Soldiers with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), continue to build up and improve living conditions while stationed at COP Ahmed Khan.

The newly established COP Ahmed Khan is located south of Highway One and many parts of it have been built by the Strike Force Soldiers themselves.

"We built the fortifications in the towers," said Spc. Jared Anderson, a native of Indianapolis, In. and a team leader with the company. "We also made picnic tables to eat on and other things we wanted around here. I'm sure we'll build more too."

To go along with the COP's force protection, the Soldiers also build items to keep morale high.

"We started the [morale, welfare and recreation] center about two days ago," said Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Fleck, a native of Carlisle, Pa. and a platoon sergeant with the company. "There will be TV's in here, maybe computers too."

The Soldiers construct and install most of their amenities themselves, like fuel tanks for generators, sometimes from recycled parts leftover from their other COP building projects.

From security to entertainment and logistical aspects, Strike Force Soldiers work to improve wherever they are. Their dedication helps their bases develop and provide more for themselves and their fellow comrades while deployed to Afghanistan.

COMBAT WELDERS IN KANDAHAR

Along the perimeter of Forward Operating Base Wilson is an open-ended tent filled with the sounds of chop saws cutting pipe, grinders smoothing steel and metals being forged together. The Combined Task Force Soldiers there are one of the many unsung heroes of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, the combat welders of Troop D, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment.

“A lot of people don’t know what we do for the fight, but we’re fairly mission essential,” said Pfc. Nathan Bates, a CTFS combat welder from northern California. “If something metal is broken in sector or a mechanical part is needed on the spot, ordering, receiving and installing the part could take months where as I can build it right there that day.”

A welder joins and shapes metal pieces by heating their surfaces to the point of melting and the list of products the Strike combat



Pfc. Nathan Bates, a combat welder with Troop D, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, joins two pieces of metal, turning an empty drum into a portable shower for one of the Squadron’s Combat Outposts.

welders create in southern Afghanistan is significant.

We’ve replaced parts on bulldozers, fixed rolled over vehicles, built mobile offices inside tactical vehicles, made modifications and upgrades for equipment and of course repaired the mine rollers, said Staff Sgt. Steven Spark, a welder and machinist for the troop. “There is only one or two of us in a squadron or battalion and we’re always welding something.”

CTFS counters the IED threat in Kandahar by attaching mine rollers to the front of their vehicles and detonating the roadside bombs away from the Soldiers. The mine rollers have been successful which keeps the welders working hard.

“The main things we have done for the fight is mine rollers,” said Bates. “Mine Rollers get blown up all the time and that’s what keeps our Soldiers safe, so after they get blown up, bolts are mangled and everything else is just in pieces. We cut them off, repair them and put the brand new ones on. That’s one of

the main things that keeps our guys safe and on the road.”

Security in Zharay, Maiwand and Panjwa’i has increased since the arrival of the Strike Brigade and military compounds in the area continue to grow. Welders are heavily involved with the building of new FOBs and Combat Outposts throughout Strike’s area of operation.

“Force protection of the FOBs and COPs is big and to increase the range of the weapon systems used in the guard towers we’ve created a mounting system so the guns can be moved wherever needed while staying in the mounted position,” said Bates. “We’ve also installed armored windows allowing a clear and safe view while Soldiers are in the towers.”

The welders also produce non-kinetic pieces for the Soldiers. Barbecue grills, refrigerators, gym equipment and bathroom facilities are some of the products made by Strike Welders for Strike Soldiers.

“One of the main things the troops really enjoy are the barbecue



A Combined Task Force Strike Soldier makes weights for a troop-built gym at a base. Strike’s Combat Welders not only create tactical equipment for the fight, but also recreational pieces for the Strike Soldiers’ down time.



The welders are critical to the repair of the mine-rollers used to clear roadside bombs. Keeping the mine-rollers on the Afghan roads saves lives.

grills we make for them,” said Bates. “Most of the COPs don’t have dining facilities and the Soldiers there eat a lot of MRE’s, so what we’ll do is build the grills so they can have a

hot meal instead of just a heated meal and it makes it a little bit easier to be out there,” said Bates.

Welding, while a daily necessity in Afghanistan, was a rarity while at Fort Campbell, Ky. and the Strike Welders welcome the transition.

“In garrison our job doesn’t exist and the welding trailer is usually opened just for inventory purposes,” said Stark. “You don’t weld in garrison; out here, that’s all you do and this is the best welding shop I’ve seen in theater.”

With the birth of new bases like COP Kandalay and Colk, using the combat welders will be critical for CTFS’s development.

“The welder is pretty important because we’re going to turn a lot of product out quickly,” said Bates. “I can make a lot of mission essential products and it’s going to cost the army less money for me



Pfc. Nathan Bates cuts metal with a plasma cutter at the squadron’s welding shop. The welders cut and shape metals to make custom parts needed.

to do it than for them to order it. I’m going to be able to do it faster and I’m mobile. Our actions impact the Soldiers and allows them to do their job better,” said Bates.



The welders and machinist of the Strike Brigade make parts for vehicles, create upgrades and modifications to weapon systems, build showers and bathrooms, join metals that are used for weights at the gym, grills for outposts and other products to help with the growth of Combined Task Force Strike.

U.S. persuades Afghans to put down weapons, pick up shovels



Afghans tear apart ruins as a part of the Cash For Work program Nov. 22, in the Maiwand district. Afghans are paid 300 Afghanis a day for their efforts and are provided protection by Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers.

A new U.S. Army program called Cash For Work gives Afghans a reason to refuse Taliban employment and promotes relations between the U.S. and locals.

The program is run by Company H (Hawk Co.), 3rd Squadron, 2nd Striker Cavalry Regiment and provides steady work for Afghans in the Maiwand district.

"It's almost like an after school program," said Spc. Matthew Molloy, Hawk Co. infantryman and a Marietta, Georgia native. "It keeps people from getting involved with the

wrong crowd."

Cash For Work has become extremely popular, said Molloy. Despite threats from Taliban, people travel from distant villages to come and participate.

"I want to build my country and my government," said an Afghan Cash For Work foreman. "I want to provide for my family and bring food home to them."

Workers are given 300 Afghanis (about seven U.S. dollars) a day to pick up trash, tear down ruins and build Afghan National Police check points, among other things.

Normally, contractors are put in charge of projects and give jobs to local Afghans of their choosing, said 1st Lt. Alexander Frank, Hawk Co. 3rd platoon leader. Cash for Work takes the power away from the contractors and allows Hawk Co. to deal with the Afghans directly, so they don't get taken

advantage of.

"Now anyone who wants to work can come work," said Frank, a Washington D.C. native. "They start trusting us and see that we were here to help them."

Frank said that trust is a big thing when it comes to keeping both the Afghan people and the Soldiers safe. The U.S. forces provide security for the workers and the surrounding community and in return the locals point out improvised explosive devices and suspicious activities.

Another benefit of the Cash For Work program is that anyone who wants to participate must have his or her biometrics taken. Their fingerprints and retina scan are put into a database to help identify them later.

Having them on file serves as a deterrent for anyone possibly thinking of aiding Taliban, said Frank.

In the future, Hawk Co. plans to set up more projects to further aid the community such as cleaning water supply systems and flood prevention measures.

FIRST STRIKE SHONNAS GRADUATE FROM COBRA ACADEMY

Soldiers from 3rd Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps, Afghan National Army partnered with Combined Task Force Strike's Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, graduated from a Strike-born training school called Cobra Academy at Combat Outpost Durkan in the Zharay district, Nov. 29.

The academy is a six week course where First Strike's Cobra Company train their ANA partners on weapons, tactics and escalation of force. Running the Cobra Academy consumes hours of dedication, but worth the company's time.

"The six weeks we took out of our operations to train the ANA has brought us closer in our partnership," said 1st Sgt. Paul Bailey, the company's first sergeant. "We can definitely see out in the field, they have confidence and know how to handle a weapon, what our battle drills are and when they come into contact, they know what to do." The Afghan Cobra graduates have already shown the effects from their training while on mission.

"Just a day before yesterday, they went through the escalation of force and got an IED emplacer where as before, they would just start shooting rounds so we can definitely see the progression of training in what we gave them through Cobra Academy to what they're doing today.



Lt. Col. Johnny Davis, battalion commander, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, shakes hands with an Afghan National Army soldier during a graduation ceremony at Combat Outpost, Nov. 29. The graduation was for the ANA Cobra Academy graduates, who completed a six week course highlighting the basics in weapons, tactics and Soldiering skills.

U.S. Soldiers, ANP night raid homemade bomb facilities in Maiwand

Combined Task Force STRIKE Soldiers and the Afghan National Police worked together to perform a night raid on a series of three compounds suspected of Taliban activity, Nov. 22 in the Maiwand district.

Members from Company H (Hawk Co.), 3rd Squadron, 2nd Striker Cavalry Regiment and the ANP found weapons, bomb making materials and brass casings from spent ammunition.

One of the compounds also appeared to be a staging point for enemy attacks.

The operation began when several insurgents were spotted, by surveillance, attempting to place an improvised explosive device and a Joint Direct Attack Munition, a 500 pound laser guided missile, was placed on their location, said 1st Lt. John Sowder, Hawk Co. 1st platoon leader.

Wounded insurgents were seen fleeing the blast site to a nearby compound and Hawk Company's quick reaction force was called in to investigate.

"At first we didn't think we found anything," said Sowder, a Front Royal, Va. native.

Sowder said that as they were leaving,



Combined Task Force Strike Soldier, Cpl. Raymond Lamb, a team leader for Company H, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Striker Cavalry Regiment, provides security after breaching a compound during a night raid Nov. 22.



Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers from Company H, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Striker Cavalry Regiment, dismount from their vehicle and prepare to raid a series of compounds, Nov. 22, in Kanadahar's Maiwand district.

Pfc. Casey Roberts, a M240B heavy machine gunner, peeked in the door of a supply shack and found an RPK machine gun wrapped up in sheets and placed in a corner.

"As soon as I saw it, the first



Combined Task Force Strike Soldier, Cpl. Christopher Noc, a team leader for Company H, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Striker Cavalry Regiment, secures a detainee during a night raid Nov. 22, in the Maiwand district.

thing I thought was 'security, security, security,'" said Roberts, a Picayune, Miss. native. "We were letting those guys go. I didn't want them to rush us out of their house, grab something we didn't see and give us hell."

Soldiers and ANP searched the compound from top to bottom and found recently bloodied rags and explosive making materials, said Sowder.

Security was left at the first site to wait for explosive ordinance disposal while another squad and ANP were sent to search the remaining compounds for the other wounded insurgents.

More homemade explosive

making materials were found in one of the other compounds and brass ammunition casings were found at another, suspected of being a staging point for small arms attacks and other insurgent activity, said Cpl. Raymond L. Lamb, Team A leader for 1st Squad, 1st Plt., Hawk Co.

After securing the compounds, Hawk Co. went to investigate the blast site where they found digging tools and a blood trail leading

back to the compounds, said Sowder.

The wounded insurgents are suspected to have escaped by vehicle, but the mission was still considered a success.

"They're going to think twice before laying an IED in that area again," said Sowder. "They're going to have to modify how they operate. Anytime we can set them off their game it make it safer for us and the community."

The results of the operation are still under investigation.



A Combined Task Force Strike Soldier from Company H, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Striker Cavalry Regiment, pulls security, while another radios for support during a night raid of several compounds Nov. 22, in the Maiwand district.

Thanksgiving comes to Afghanistan



Combined Task Force Soldiers with Company G, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, place a festive ice sculpture in a dining facility at Combat Outpost Jelawur in the Kandahar's Arghandab district, Nov. 25.



Nagarajan "Cupcake" Ganash, a cook and dessert maker with DynaCorp, puts the finishing touches on a swan, one of many freshly made decorations in the dining facility. Each one designed to bring a touch of home to FOB Wilson.

Being away from home and family during the holidays is difficult even on seasoned veterans, but Soldiers coming together in a combat zone is what makes a holiday special.

The food specialists of Combined Task Force Strike prepared a traditional Thanksgiving feast for the Strike Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 25. Items on the menu included many time honored dishes, along with some extra treats to be enjoyed.

"We had to give them the full meal they had at home, so we got them the ham, turkey, prime rib, the seafood, lobster and crab legs," said Staff Sgt. Fernando Silva, the squadron food operations non-commissioned officer in charge with Troop D, 1st squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). "Just to be treated with the command serving them and being catered to. The reward is to see them all happy, coming in from patrols."

A lot of time was spent laying the groundwork for the holiday festivities, to ensure there would be more than enough food and decorations to make the day stand out with that touch of special cheer.

"It has been kind of hectic and it took a lot of planning," said Sgt. 1st Class John Youngblood, the food service manager at the FOB's Performance Dining Facility and with Strike's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 526th Brigade Support Battalion. "We started our planning phase in mid-October, basically looking at supplies that were going to be offered to each dining facility. We are really doing it big and trying to provide as much as the Soldiers can eat. I see it a lot during the holidays, everyone misses being home and here in a combat zone we have become our extended family."

Conversation buzzed in the dining tents while Soldiers ate and watched a football game or a movie.

The Strike cooks were able to capture the feeling of the holiday within the walls of the dining facility, creating a relaxed atmosphere. Soldiers took their time eating, appreciating the food and the company.

"On a scale of one to ten in the desert, I give it a ten," said Sgt. 1st Class Ta Mouton, the Strike Brigade's equal opportunity advisor.

"They provided all the traditional food and the decorations were festive. It brought something of

home to me."

For all the hard work and thought the Strike cooks put into FOB Wilson's Thanksgiving celebration, the reward was simple and honest.

"It really makes me feel good about myself when they come in and see everything and say 'hey the food was great, thanks for everything you do'," said Spc. Benjamin Swanson, a food preparation specialist with HHC, 526th BSB. For the cooks it's rewarding to see a Soldier's face light up when they get a little taste of home as they come in, Swanson said.

The numerous days of long hours the Strike chefs spent preparing the Thanksgiving meal was well worth it to ease the difficulty of missing home during the holiday season. What normally is an active combat zone dissolved into a celebration spent with co-workers and friends thanks to the efforts of the Strike Soldier cooks.



Spc. Danielle Jimmo, a cook with Troop D, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, cuts fruit to be served during the Thanksgiving meal.

ISAF CSM spends Thanksgiving with troops in the field



Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, International Security Assistance Force command sergeant major, shared Thanksgiving with Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers on a small patrol base in western Panjawa'i, Afghanistan.

The International Security Assistance Force command sergeant major, shared Thanksgiving with Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers on a small patrol base in western Panjawa'i, Afghanistan.

Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill's visit was a surprise for Soldiers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), now known as the "Strikeasans."

"It's pretty cool," said Spc. Jeremy B. Crawford, a senior line medic for Company A and a Johnson City, Texas native. "We were just going to eat a couple of turkey's we bought in the bazaar."

Soldier's enjoyed stuffing, mashed potatoes, turkey and gravy – a change of pace from a month's worth of Meals-Ready-To-Eat, prepackaged combat meals.

The company's patrol base is a small house-like compound that was taken over from Taliban when they entered the area. There are no showers, electricity or toilets.

Hill Air Assaulted into the compound via Black Hawk helicopter and presented several outstanding members of Company A with coins of excellence before sitting down to eat some Thanksgiving dinner with his ISAF Soldiers.

"It shows he cares," said Crawford. "He could be having Thanksgiving anywhere, but he decided to come down and eat what we eat."

The Strikeasans and the ISAF command sergeant major sat in a circle,



Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), wait in line for Thanksgiving dinner in Panjawa'i.

propped up on cardboard food boxes, and said what they were thankful for.

For Hill, he said that at home the most important things in his life are his mother and wife, but while deployed the things he is most thankful for are his Soldiers.

"Out here you all are the most important thing in my life right now," Hill said to the troops sitting in the circle with him. "The people to my left and right are the people I depend on for my life and the same goes for all of you."

Hill said that, during holidays, Soldiers' fondest memories revolve around family. As time goes by, Soldiers find out their closest family are the ones that they share their hardships, joys and pain with.

"This is my first Thanksgiving away from home," said Pfc. Joseph T. Bardales, a medic for Company A and a Palm City, Florida native. "It's a little different being away from my family, but this is pretty much the only other family I've got. You loose one family and you gain another."



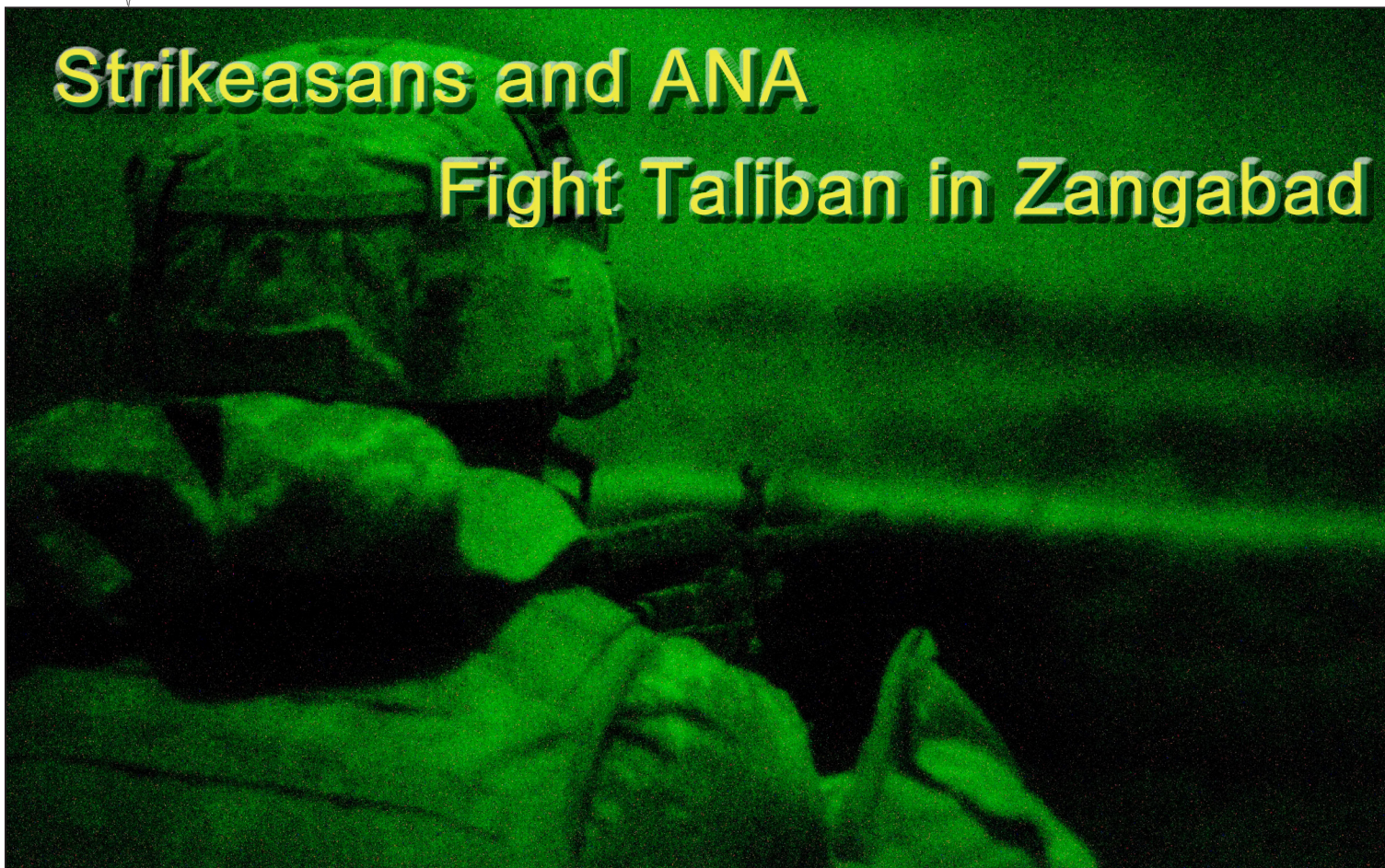
Top Gun Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, serve Col. Arthur Kandarian, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and their fellow Soldiers during a Thanksgiving meal at Combat Outpost Nolan, Nov. 25. Kandarian visited the Top Gun COPs on the holiday and gave his gratitude to the Strike Soldiers operating in the Arghandab district.



Soldiers rolling through line are treated to hot food and a taste of the holidays thanks to the hard work of STRIKE cooks.

Strikeasans and ANA

Fight Taliban in Zangabad



A Combined Task Force Strike Soldier with Company B, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, secures a Talukan field in the horn of Panjwa'i. The Strikeasans and their Afghan National Army partners have pushed into the Talukan area which was once a Taliban stronghold.

After nine years of fighting in Afghanistan, U.S. forces partnered with Afghan National Army have taken a strong foothold in several areas of what is being called the Taliban's last stronghold, the horn of Panjwa'i.

Zangabad, an area on the eastern side of the horn, is one of the areas being cleared of insurgents and Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), nicknamed Leader Rakkasans, have made their presence felt there over the past month.

"It seems like most of the Taliban have left the area," said Cpt. Andrew J. Stevens, executive officer for Leader Rakkasan's Company B and a Carlyle, Ill. native. "We've had a lot less IEDs and small arms fire."

Stevens said this is an area the Taliban operated in without interference for the past three years. They've used the area to traffic drugs, train insurgents and intimidate locals.

There wasn't a strong resistance when the Strikeasans and ANA forces came into the area, said Sgt. 1st Class Eugene P. Stabenow II, acting first sergeant for the company. The focus now is to build

trust with the locals and bring in a strong Government Islamic Republic of Afghanistan presence, he said.

"At first they [the Afghan locals] didn't want anything to do with us," said Spc. Raymond Camden, Company B medic and an Ironton, Mo. native. "We slowly started talking to them and showing them that we weren't here to hurt them. Eventually they started coming up to us and talking to us."

Stevens said winning the trust of the locals is important because they are the ones who point out a lot of the IEDs. Afghans want to feel safe and secure as well, so if they trust the U.S. and more importantly the ANA, they'll report any suspicious activity in the area.

The ANA have partnered extremely well with U.S. forces and every task is a joint effort, said Stabenow. They help with logistics, pull security and go on patrols. "There have been no major issues," he added.

The goal is for Afghans to feel comfortable with GIRoA and the Afghan military, said Stevens.

"When Afghans see other Afghans protecting them, it allows them to feel comfortable and just live their lives," said Stevens. "They want the Taliban out and that's what we're here to do."

Combined Task Force STRIKE conducts Battlefield Service in Panjwa'i

Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those with them," said Chaplain (Capt.) Bryan Wright, a chaplain with Combined Task Force Strike while conducting a battlefield service during a mission in the horn of Panjwa'i, Oct. 19.

"Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots and fire all around Elijah," said Wright as he finished the 2nd Kings verse.

A battlefield service is a military tradition in which the Army ministry teams go into the fight to conduct services for the troops on the front lines. Wright's service took place next to a dug in Mortar Tube and with only a few rocks for the 20 Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers to sit on.

"It delivers confidence to Soldiers while they're

out there and it lets them know that the lord is with them and that is key," said Wright after the service. "It is so important to have a battlefield service outside of the wire where the fight is."

Wright used Elijah's story because he feels it fits the current mission of CTFS's advancement into the known Taliban stronghold of Panjwa'i.

"There is God's care for his children that we don't always see and when you look at what happened to Elijah and the chariots of fire around the Army that was surrounding him," said Wright. "Once you become of God's children he's got you in his hand and he's going to take care of you and we don't always see that."

Wright mentions how the verse's message can relate to some of the specific threats facing



Strikeas chaplain, Capt. Bryan Wright, says a prayer with the Combined Task Force Soldiers operating in the horn of Panjwa'i during a battlefield service.

today's Soldiers fighting in southern Afghanistan, the birthplace of Taliban.

"Even the buried IEDs out here, the lord knows where they're at," said Wright. "So what I'm asking you to do is put your trust in him." You need to put your trust in the lord for he knows everything that's going on out here."

During the service, the chaplain mentions how faith must be strong during war, especially in times of uncertainty. He told the Soldiers to remember the larger objective during operations in the harsh conditions.

"But if something does happen to you and I pray it doesn't, the victory is making it

home to him, said Wright. "When its all said and done, our objective is this word of God, a road map to get us up to him."

As the hot Afghan sun set behind the mountains, the battlefield service offered communion and a final prayer for the mission, the safety of CTFS Soldiers and for the families back home. Wright's services are held to help Soldiers endure the hardships of war.

"The battlefield service is crucial for the Soldiers because they hold a couple of things dear to their heart, faith and family," said Sgt. Charles Brewer, chaplain assistant with 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team. "The service gives them that encouragement and that spark to help them finish that fight."



Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers receive communion during a battlefield service in a Panjwa'i village. CTFS Unit Ministry Teams conduct religious services to the Soldiers on the front lines.

Shura in Zharay connects local populace with GIRoA

A village in southern Zharay hosted a large Shura involving the local leaders of the area and the Zharay government, Oct. 31.

Karim Jan, the former Zharay district governor, spoke to the crowd of fifty plus village locals about how self responsibility is the deciding factor in their security. "People have been promising you things for nine years, but you are responsible for your own security; you're responsible for yourselves," said Jan in his native tongue of Pashto. "(GIRoA) will help, but you have to help yourselves first."

The main focus of the Afghan town hall meeting was how self-reliance can bring true security and development to the villages. The governor also spoke on the importance of education and the role it plays in the future of region.



Karim Jan, the former Zharay district governor, talks to villagers during an Afghan town hall in Siah Choy, Oct. 31.

"Take responsibility for your children and educate them," said Jan. "Don't let your children be uneducated like you. Send your children to school and let them make something better of themselves and your village."

The shura was the first of its kind held near Siah Choy, a village that had not seen GIRoA representation in years.

"The district governor came to a place that has not seen any GIRoA or

government official in years and nobody can even tell us how long it has been since they have been out here," said Lt. Col. Joe Krebs, the 2nd Brigade Combat Team's deputy commanding officer. "I thought it was a great shura and now the proof will be in actions; what are the people going to do?"

Villages like Senjary and Howz-E-Madad have taken responsibility for its own security within the past few weeks. Many

Taliban placed IEDs have been reported and turned over to the Afghan government by the local villagers there. The district governor is looking for similar progress in Siah Choy.

"Now is the time and this is your opportunity to make this happen, but you have to be responsible for yourselves," the governor restated. "You and your local shuras will create the security and your local shuras will rebuild your villages."



The shura for some of the villagers was their first time working with Afghan government as topics of security, self reliance and education were the focal points of the meeting.

STRIKE Leaders Visit Soldiers in Maiwand on Thanksgiving

Making sure Soldiers have what they need on the battlefield is a large part of leading a military force. The leaders of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), have the welfare of their Soldiers in mind as they work every day across southern Afghanistan.

Leaders of Strike Brigade conducted a battlefield circulation to visit with Soldiers and leaders at bases across the Maiwand District during Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25.

Lt. Col. Joseph Krebs, a native of St. Louis, Missouri and Strike's deputy commanding officer and Sgt. Maj. John White, a native of Warren, Texas and the brigade's plans sergeant major, visited some of Combined Task Force Strike's Forward Operating Bases, Combat Outposts and Strong Points to make sure personnel stationed there had what they needed and to wish them a happy Thanksgiving.

"I just want to go out to the bases and express our thanks and wish the Soldiers a happy Thanksgiving," said Krebs. "They have very few amenities at their bases, but they're still doing awesome. It's incredible what they do every day."

Soldiers and command staff were greeted at FOB Azizullah, COP Rath, COP Terminator and SP Prentler with reminders to stay vigilant and continue to do an excellent job. Soldiers were warned on the dangers of becoming complacent as the fighting subsides during winter.

The insurgents observe and plan attacks when things get too cold to move freely, said White. "They train new recruits during the winter and come back again the next season." White said to a Soldier guarding a tower at SP Prentler.



Spc. Nathan Henson, with Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment shakes hands with Sgt. Maj. John White, the brigade's plans sergeant major, at Strong Point Prentler, Nov. 25. White visited with some of the Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers, encouraging them to continue doing their best.



Sgt. Tyler Wilkerson, an agricultural team member with Strike's 526th Brigade Support Battalion and Lt. Col. Joseph Krebs, Strike's deputy commanding officer, tour the Maiwand district's agriculture center outside of Combat Outpost Rath, Nov. 25. Krebs was on a battlefield circulation tour to visit the Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers at several locations across Strike's area of operation.

The Soldiers were upbeat about their mission despite working through the Thanksgiving holiday. They talked about their families and friends with White while continuing to watch over their locations.

"We're doing good out here," said Spc. Nathan Henson, a native of Lusby, Md. and a rifleman stationed at SP Prentler with Company G, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment. "I miss my friends and family, but I like it here better than Germany. Winters there are much worse."

Watching the desert for insurgents was something he hadn't expected to be doing during the holiday season, said Henson.

"These guys do a great job out here," said White. "I want them to know that I'm very proud of everything they do."

The leaders also conducted business as usual while in Maiwand. Like at COP Rath, where Krebs met with Haji Obaidullah, the Maiwand district governor and Abdul Gafar, the National Directorate of Security chief. Afterwards, Krebs and White toured the district's agriculture center to review its progress.

"It's a secure location with lots of room and plants are growing," said Krebs. "We could add a vocational school here, too and I should show this to the [United States Department of Agriculture] guys back at [FOB] Wilson."

The bases visited by Krebs and White are just a few of the places held by Combined Task Force Strike which are important to the Afghan fight and acknowledging the contributions made by the Soldiers there helps keep them focused on their mission; securing southern Afghanistan.

“Top Guns” are Thankful



Staff Sgt. David Chavez, a squad leader with Strike's Battery A, 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment and his Soldier, Spec. Ramon Ramos, grip hands after an award ceremony at Combat Outpost Nolan, Nov. 25. The Strike Batteries have been put through harsh conditions while serving in the Arghandab River Valley and are thankful for what they have.

The “Top Guns” fought in many tough battles so far during its deployment in southern Afghanistan and the artillery battalion now moving as an infantry unit has exchanged blows with Taliban time after time. Fights at Bakersfield, Tynes and Babur, engagements on routes Mad Dog and Red Stripe have all tested the strength of the Top Gun Soldiers and each time they have come out stronger.

The Strike Soldiers of Arghandab have lost brave warriors and taken some life altering injuries during their missions, yet the men and women of 1st Battalion, 320th Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), are grateful for what they have and during a Thanksgiving visit made by their brigade commander, Col. Arthur Kandarian, the Top Gun Soldiers expressed their gratitude.

“I’m thankful for our guys and how they are being taken care of,” said Staff Sgt. Anthony Alberico,

with the battalion’s Headquarters and Headquarters Battery. “I’m thankful for where we are because what we’ve gone through; this deployment has been rough, but we continue to push forward and we have accomplished great things.”

Other Top Gun Soldiers are grateful for their distant loved ones and for their support during this time of separation.

“Some of the things I am thankful for: is my family back home who loves and supports not just me, but all of the Soldiers out here,” said Capt. Andrew Mark, an administrator with HHB. “These guys work harder than anybody I have ever met in my life. They never quit and they’re always willing to do the next task you ask to do, even though the next task gets harder and harder each time.”

The majority of the IEDs in Afghanistan are found in southern Afghanistan and the homemade explosives have seriously injured some of the Soldiers operating in Kanda-

har.

“I’m thankful for my legs and I am thankful to be walking here today in the Arghandab River Valley,” said Sgt. Christopher Hatton, a forward observer with HHB. A lot of guys weren’t so lucky and couldn’t be here with us today, so for them we got to keep moving.

Since their arrival to Arghandab, the Top Guns have added infantry fighters to its units and some are appreciative for their new comrades.

“I’m glad and thankful to be out here with the Top Gun Battalion,” said Sgt. Brock Huber, an infantryman now with HHB. “I can’t tell the difference between the infantry and the artillery anymore and these guys fight as good as anybody I was with in Iraq and I’m glad to be out here in a place making history with these Soldiers and Leaders.”

On 2010’s Thanksgiving Day, Kandarian met with many of the Top Gun Soldiers fighting hard in the Arghandab district. He went to their Combat Outposts and Strong Points to greet the Soldiers there and to express his gratitude.

“You’ll think about this day and who you were with every other Thanksgiving for the rest of your life,” said Kandarian. “I am tremendously proud of what you are all doing everyday and I am thankful for each and every one of you.”



Lt. Col. David Flynn, Top Gun commander, gives his gratitude to Capt. Melvin Cabebe of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, during an award ceremony at COP Stout, Nov. 25.

“STRIKE CAV” says goodbye to CSM Hambrick

The 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), held a Change of Responsibility ceremony at Forward Operating Base Wilson, November 26.

Command Sgt. Maj. William R. Hambrick Jr., the outgoing squadron sergeant major, handed over the mantle of leadership to Command Sgt. Maj. Andre M. Johnson, who has very large boots to fill.

With numerous deployments including places like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Macedonia, Bosnia and Liberia, Hambrick's experience and wisdom was a great fit for the “Strike Cav”.

“The way you build cohesiveness in a unit is through shared hardships,” said Hambrick. “It prepared us for war and this unit was more prepared for war than any unit I’ve been in. They were ready and it showed in their performance.”

Hambrick's aspirations for the Strike Squadron was high, looking to develop his leaders to become the best Soldiers possible.

“I think what has made me successful was empowering my first sergeants and platoon sergeants,” said Hambrick. “You give people the latitude to do a good job, you’d be surprised at what they can do.”

To see Hambrick's success, all one has to do is look at the Soldiers who serve under him. The “Strike Cav” Soldiers who have yet to reach the role of a leader are absorbing the foundation of leadership from those they serve under.

“The thing I liked about Command Sgt. Maj. Hambrick was his presence around us, even out in the field,” said Spc. Josh Mubarak, a forward observer with the Squadron's Troop A. “He brought a lot of confidence



Command Sgt. Major William R. Hambrick, the outgoing csm of 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, passes the “Strike Cav” saber to Lt. Col. Thomas McFadyen, the squadron commander, during a change of responsibility ceremony held at Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 26. Hambrick will be the new brigade sergeant major for the 101st Airborne Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team.

just him being around and he brought the moral up. He was always providing some sort of comfort to us out there.”

Hambrick will be staying with the 101st Airborne Division and will serve as the command sergeant major of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, where he will continue to influence and teach. Johnson is excited to be welcomed into the Strike family and is ready to continue to build on the solid foundation Hambrick established.

“As a non-commissioned officer, the pinnacle of leadership is being a command sergeant major and leading Soldiers,” said Johnson. “I look to continue the same traditions Command Sgt. Maj. Hambrick and Lt. Col. McFadyen have established; focus on discipline, focus on taking care of the Soldiers and family and training hard.”

The “Strike Cav” Soldiers are saying goodbye to a great leader and are welcoming an experienced and enthusiastic command sergeant major. With a solid foundation already in place, the transition should be a smooth one for the squadron.



Command Sgt. Major Andre Johnson, the new csm for 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, takes the “Strike Cav” saber from Lt. Col. Thomas McFadyen, the squadron commander, during a change of responsibility ceremony held at Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 26. Johnson plans to continue the squadron's already enforced discipline, care for Soldier and family and joint operations.



Command Sgt. Maj. Andre Johnson, the new 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment Command Sergeant Major, calls the squadron to attention for the first time.

SeaBees and STRIKE build Check Points



Two SeaBees with 21st Naval Mobile Construction Battalion out of Lakehurst, New Jersey, set up a Hesco Wall along Kandahar's Highway One as Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, provide security.

The 21st Naval Mobile Construction Battalion recently erected the first of three new checkpoints along Highway One.

The project took a day's work to complete and resides within a mile and a half east of Forward Operating Base Wilson's main entrance. The structure is designed to give personnel a secure location from which to operate.

When completed, these CP's will be manned by personnel from American forces, Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army. These structures are new designs for the SeaBees. Previously they have erected other structures before, but these present new challenges.

"It's a learning process," said Equipment Operator 2nd Class Joseph Marziotto, native of Elmont, NY and safety petty officer for the SeaBees. "This is the first one we're building. We haven't constructed this design before."

After the barriers were filled, the SeaBees installed the guard tower. The wooden structure sits atop a metal cargo container, which doubles as shelter to personnel stationed at the CP.

"We built the stairs, but the tower was prefabricated," said Builder 3rd Class Ben Collea, a native of Canadaiqua, NY. "It was easy. We have blue prints and our supervisor helps make things go smoothly."

Strike Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, provided security at the site. The First Strike Soldiers patrolled the perimeter and watched the nearby tree line through their armored vehicles.

"This is actually our first time doing this," said Staff Sgt. Patrick Dela Cruz, a native of Saipan and a squad leader with the company. "There are a lot of people nearby watching and beyond that tree line there's a homemade bomb factory. We're here to provide security to the SeaBees."

The First Strike Soldiers provided a secure working environment for their SeaBee partners to complete the Check Point along the highway and their combined efforts bring more stability to the Kandahar province.

Wolfpack works with local leaders; builds trust

Winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people is considered essential to victory in Afghanistan and earning the trust of key local leaders is one of the best ways to do that.

Key leaders are usually the most respected people in the community, said Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Picache, 2nd squad leader for 3rd platoon, Company H, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Striker Cavalry Regiment.

"We build relations with them [key leaders], so that the community feels safe with us around and doesn't view us as an occupying force," he said. "They view us more in a humanitarian way. It's the quickest way to get results."

Usually, within an Afghan community there are two leaders, a mullah and a malik. The mullah is the religious leader and the malik is the political leader. They are usually elders in the community.

Picache said that a lot of times villages won't have any designated leaders and these villages are easy targets for Taliban. They don't have anyone to represent or stand up for them.

The U.S. and ANA always urge villages to designate leaders, he said.

One of the main ways U.S. forces help build communities in Afghanistan is by facilitating town hall meetings, called shuras.

Shuras give locals an opportunity to see a strong presence of the Government Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and to sit and voice their concerns to leadership, so they can promote change, said Picache. "We want to see this country progress," said Cpl. Freddy H. Claros, a team leader in the company. "I like knowing that were trying to make it a little bit better. We may act all hard because we're U.S. Soldiers, but it feels good to know that all of the stuff we go through makes a difference."

Claros said that once leadership is in place, U.S. and Afghan forces can start addressing the concerns of the people. Little changes in the local Afghan community can lead to big changes for southern Afghanistan.



Combined Task Force Strike Soldier, 1st Lt. Alexander Frank, 3rd platoon leader for Company H, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Striker Cavalry Regiment, speaks to a local leader in Maiwand to discuss security for the Soldiers and the Afghan population Nov. 24. By protecting the people who are doing the right thing, CTFS can start driving Taliban out.

US SENATORS AWARD STRIKE SOLDIERS ON VETERAN'S DAY

US Senators awarded medals to Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team at Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 11.

Arizona Senator John McCain, Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham and New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand pinned seven Purple Hearts on Combined Task Force Strike Soldiers who sustained injuries while operating in the Kandahar Province. The Soldiers were delighted to receive their awards from the visiting senators.

Being pinned the Purple Heart by a senator is something different and really special, said Sgt. Zane Cordingly, a native of Lexington, Kentucky with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, who was awarded the Purple Heart by Senator Graham for wounds he received when a Remote Controlled Improvised Explosive Device was detonated in the Zharay district, Sept. 19. It was good to have our senators come all the way from the states to see us here in Afghanistan, said Cordingly.

The senators spoke about the efforts and accomplishments the Strike Soldiers have made during their deployment to southern Afghanistan.

"Thank you for your service, you are doing great things," said Senator Gillibrand following the award ceremony.

"We're doing a great job over here and we're proud of every single one of you," said Senator McCain.



Arizona Senator John McCain awards Sgt. Jonathan Jackson, a Jacksonville, North Carolina native with Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), with a Purple Heart while visiting Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 11. Jackson earned the Purple Heart for injuries sustained on June 9 when his Combat Outpost came under attack with Rocket Propelled Grenades.



South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham awards Sgt. Zane Cordingly, a Lexington, Kentucky native with Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), with a Purple Heart while visiting Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 11. Cordingly earned the Purple Heart for injuries sustained on Sept. 19 when a Remote Controlled Improvised Explosive Device detonated during a clearance mission in the Zharay district.



Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman awards Spc. Kelly Doyle, an Oceanside, California native with Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), with a Purple Heart while visiting Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 11. Doyle earned the Purple Heart for injuries sustained on Sept. 19 when a remote controlled Improvised Explosive Device detonated while on a clearance mission in the Zharay district.



New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand awards Sgt. Bethany Bayer, a Pittsford, New York native with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), with a Purple Heart while visiting Forward Operating Base Wilson, Nov. 11. Bayer earned the Purple Heart for injuries sustained on Sept. 17 when a Rocket Propelled Grenade hit her convoy while traveling in the Zharay district.

The Faces of STRIKE!



WE WILL NEVER FORGET



Honoring Our Fallen



Spc. Jonathan Curtis, 24, of Belmont, Mass., died of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his dismounted patrol with a vehicle borne improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.



Pfc. Andrew Meari, 21, of Plainfield, Illinois, died of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his dismounted patrol with a vehicle borne improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.



Spc. Jacob Carroll, 20, of Clemmons, North Carolina, died of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his dismounted patrol with a suicide improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.



Cpl. Jacob Carver, 20, of Freeman, Missouri, died of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his dismounted patrol with a suicide improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.



Staff Sgt. Juan Rivadeneira, 27, of Davie, Florida, died of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his dismounted patrol with a suicide improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Company B, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.



Spc. Justin Culbreth, 26, of Georgia, died of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit with an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Company D, 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team.



Staff Sgt. Sean Flannery, 29, of Wyomissing, Penn., died of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his dismounted patrol with an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.



Cpl. William Middleton, 26, of Norfolk, Virginia, died of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his dismounted patrol with an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Company A, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment.





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: