

Duke



Dispatch

Vol. 14

Three days
on the dividing line

Centaur Soldier serves
to honor family

October 2011

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Photos from operations of Task Force Duke taken between Sept. 11- Oct. 15. Top Left: Photo by Staff Sgt. Ben Navratil, Top Right: Staff Sgt. Ben Navratil, Middle Left: Sgt. Joseph Watson, Middle Right: Sgt. Joseph Watson Bottom Left: Sgt. Joseph Watson



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Cover photo- U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jordan Weiss, platoon leader for 3rd Plt., Company B, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, prepares to patrol through the village of Majiles in Sabari District Sept. 9. The U.S. Army Soldiers, alongside their Afghan National Army partners stayed in sector for three nights, patrolling and securing the area. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Ben K. Navratil, TF Duke public affairs.)

Commander's Corner

By Col. Chris Toner
TF Duke Commander

This October marks our tenth month of being deployed. Incidentally, October also represents the month on the calendar when insurgent activity across eastern Afghanistan has traditionally declined.

Regardless of what the enemy chooses to do as winter approaches, what is certain is that Soldiers of Task Force Duke will never let up until our job is done. During our remaining weeks here we intend to finish strong, and hand the mission over to our replacements without either of us having to break stride.

We certainly have been busy since deploying in January. Alongside our Afghan counterparts we have tallied over 13,000 combined patrols, with our partners conducting nearly 4,300 independently. We have completed more than 530 named operations, killed over 200 enemy fighters, and captured more than 1,300 (250 of these being insurgent leaders).

Task Force Duke has facilitated significant projects in our area of operations,

greatly improving the lives of Afghans through economic development and by helping to increase governmental effectiveness. For example, a simple 50-meter footbridge spanning a dangerous wadi did wonders connecting people to their district government center, health facilities, bazaar, and major highway. A new school gave students the opportunity to learn in a clean and stable environment, while across the region many more thousands of children are now attending classes. Ongoing training provided by Afghan agricultural extension agents, with support from our Agribusiness Development Teams, is closing the 30-year gap in agricultural knowledge that followed the Soviet occupation. And a new state-of-the-art hospital in Khowst City, which rivals many facilities we have in the United States, will provide unprecedented access to care unlike any this area has ever seen.

While there is still much work to be done in our TF Duke AO, there's no doubt that we've seen significant changes during our time here. That's why it's so important that we continue to work hard

Voice of the CSM

By CSM Drew Pumarejo
TF Duke Command Sgt. Maj.

As our mission continues uninterrupted in October, the reality of having only three months left on our scheduled deployment has started to hit home. Hard to believe, isn't it? While it may seem like only yesterday that our Task Force Duke arrived here in eastern Afghanistan, the past nine months have shaped us profoundly as Soldiers. Before we call it a successful deployment, however, it's important to remember why we're here and what remains to be accomplished over the next 90 days.

Our time here has been instrumental in helping our Afghan partners build a more secure country and stable government that has the support of its citizens. Infrastructure has been improved that not only helps people live better lives through improved roads, but also provides greater access to clean water.

I've seen first-hand, as have many others, the positive impact of good deeds performed by our Soldiers. Whether it was treating a sick child, donating school supplies or passing out candy, these actions will be remembered fondly by Afghans long after we leave. Do you think I'm exaggerating? Think about the death and misery brought to this land by the foreign countries and criminal elements before us, then measure that against the humanitarian projects and institutions we have been partnering on with the Afghans. There is no comparison.

Many things still need to be accomplished before we can or should rest on our deployment laurels. Our Duke Brigade prides itself on having confident, competent and disciplined Soldiers. Remaining committed to these values will be crucial in completing our mission successfully. Being disciplined certainly means following orders, but another part of that is always



with our Afghan partners and sustain the momentum before we hand the mission over at the end of our tour. Continued progress and the future of the great people here depend on our ability to finish strong.

We lost three Soldiers from the 1-279 Inf., TF Creek, Oklahoma National Guard. These Soldiers were Sgt. Bret Isenhower, Spc. Chris Horton, and Pfc. Tony Potter, Jr. We lost Spc. Michael Elm from the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment. Our thoughts and prayers are with the loved ones of these brave men through this difficult time. They sacrificed everything to preserve our freedoms and those of the Afghan people. ▀



paying attention to detail and maintaining presence of mind.

We've come too far, and accomplished too many good things, to tarnish our record by not mastering the basic Soldierly tasks and expectations under our control. Stay focused, professional, and vigilant; and that trip back to our "Old Kentucky Home" will be all the more enjoyable.

No Mission Too Difficult...No Sacrifice Too Great...Duty First ▀

Chaplain's Word

By Chaplain (Maj.) Mike Nishimura,
TF Duke Chaplain

Fall has begun according to the calendar, and guess what that means? It means we have an ever-shrinking number of days left to make a difference here than when we began our journey. Yes, we are getting closer to going home!

Instead of becoming complacent or just coasting along for the remaining time, though, we need to keep our focus on the tasks at hand whether we are deployed or on the home front. Just like in running a race, we need to look forward to the goal and increase our effort to finish strong as we hit the finish line. It's also crucial that we start consciously preparing for our time of reunion with Family and friends. Let me suggest to you some of the issues we need to focus and work on.

First, realize that we all have expectations about the many aspects surrounding our return. That's only natural, because everyone has some expectations about what lies ahead. Even when you say that you don't have any, that's an expectation. We must ask ourselves if our expectations are realistic. Do they pass the common sense test? We need to evaluate our expectations

for our reunions with Family and friends, making sure they are not overly optimistic or unrealistic. The gap in our expectations may cause feelings of disappointment, frustration and anger. We need to guard ourselves from those emotions to avoid unpleasant situations which could spoil our hoped-for special times.

Second, realize that change is not only inevitable, but can also lead to stressful situations. Things have changed while we have been deployed. We have grown in our emotional maturity, and become more resilient through our experiences. But we aren't the only ones who have changed. Our children have grown—physically and mentally. They now can do more things or have become more skilled in their activities. Our spouses have been able to manage the household without us being there. Some have become more independent simply because they had to. Be cognizant that changes such as these have taken place. Don't be threatened by them, knowing that changes are inevitable. Take pride in the fact your loved ones have become more confident, competent and capable in managing the home front in your absence. Knowing this, remember the old adage



upon your return to your household, that "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Lastly, be prepared to make adjustments. Because of our expectations and the changes that have occurred in our absence, we need to move slowly in making adjustments. We often tend to act hastily in trying to make up for the lost time. That's our natural tendency, but that will only make matters worse when we return home from a long absence. Just sit back and relax for a while. If there are any obvious changes that need to be made, talk about it. Communicate with each other. Don't make any assumptions because we usually tend to assume that things are worse than they really are.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to make your plans for a great reunion! ▀

Boosting morale, one bite at a time

Story by Capt. James Armstrong
BSTB Asst. S3

What is fruity, sweet, cinammony and wrapped in a crisp, flaky buttery crust? Apple pie, or as some of us like to call them "morale boosters in a wrapper."

When the Battalion Chaplain, Capt. James Leslie, told me that he had pies to hand out I almost didn't believe him. However he is the Chaplain so I kept with Army tradition and went to the back of the line to make sure every enlisted Soldier had a chance to get a pie, as it's a leader's duty to ensure that the sons and daughters of America are taken care of first.

It turned out that I need not have worried, as the Chaplain had 600 apple pies to distribute, and not one Soldier went away with an empty belly. That may have been the end of the pie, but the beginning of my story about finding out how 600 apple

pies ended up in Paktya Province, Afghanistan, and in the hands (and mouths) of the Soldiers of Special Troops Battalion, 3rd BCT, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Valiant.

It turns out that two outstanding American young ladies, Anna (11) and Abigail (8), started a community service organization titled Kids and Teens in Action and made it their first mission to send 600 apple pies to a battalion of soldiers in Afghanistan. The girls secured a donation of 600 Drake's Cakes apple pies and raised funds to pay for their project by selling cookies, lemonade and handmade bracelets; and by gathering donations from the 911dayofservice.org website.

They met their goal, and on Sept. 11, they shipped the pies to the Chaplain for distribution to the Soldiers. Included with the pies were several handwritten letters and notes to Soldiers expressing gratitude

and patriotism.

U.S. Army Spc. Cecilia Fravel opined, "It was good, I shared half with my buddy when we were on tower guard duty" and added, "I really liked the crust."

Chaplain Leslie best summed up the impact of apple pies on morale, "These Apple pies have produced hundreds of smiles all over eastern Afghanistan! It was great to travel and pass out pies to Soldiers. Thank you Anna and Abigail!"

I have never met Anna or Abigail, but I am humbled by their desire to serve others and amazed at how much joy an apple pie can give a GI stuck in an otherwise apple pie free zone. What's more American than apple pie? I would like to express a big "thank you" to Anna and Abigail from the Soldiers of Task Force Valiant.

You can learn more about Anna and Abigail's efforts at <http://kidsandteensin-action.org/> ▀

U.S. Army Soldiers from the Personal Security Detail, 1st battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigaded Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, pull security on a road during Operation Steel Rain in Tirzaye, Afghanistan, Sept. 24. The mission was a joint effort between U.S. and Afghan forces and was focused on clearing villages of insurgents, materials involved in the making of improvised explosive devices and illegal small arms.



Photo by Sgt. Joseph Watson

Afghan and U.S. troops worked together in Operation Steel Rain to disrupt Haqqani network cells operating in the Tirzaye district of Khowst province, which concluded Sept. 29.

The Haqqani network is a criminal organization with links to the Taliban and al-Qaida and believed to be based across the nearby Afghan-Pakistan border.

Units involved in the operation included the Sabari District-based 3rd Kandak, 1st Brigade, 203rd Corps, Afghan National Army; 3rd Koy, 2nd Afghan Border Police Corps out of Tirzaye and companies from 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke.

During the mission, the joint forces had to cover a vast area in a short amount of time, said U.S. Army Capt. Daniel Leard, Able Company, 1st Bn., 26th Inf. Regt. company commander and Pittsburgh native. The cooperation between the three different forces - U.S., ANA and ABP, allowed the joint force to synchronize their efforts to make the most effective use of their time.

“Any given day, between two companies, four to eight objectives had to be cleared,” he explained.

The operation involved several moving parts as coalition forces

moved through the area to eliminate insurgents from villages, materials involved in the making of improvised explosive devices and illegal weapons, said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Oscar Lorenzano, platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon, Able Co.

“We went out and let the bad guys know we were here,” the Los Angeles native said. “A lot of people were very inviting and told us to come back.”

In addition to finding any munitions in the area, another aspect of the mission was to deny insurgents the use of border routes into Afghanistan and to clear cache sites, said Leard.

“There’s a great deal of cross-border activity out in Tirzaye,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jesse Pearson, 1st Bn., 26th Inf. Regt. commander and Chicago native. “A lot of people come across the border, not just insurgents.”

In order to reduce the risk of civilian casualties, Pearson emphasized the importance of working closely with the local population.

“It’s important for us to get out there and spend time with the local village leaders and elders and make sure we understand the dynamics inside the villages and find out where the insurgents are finding refuge in the area,” Pearson added.

Because of the remote and mountainous terrain, several of the

villages visited had not seen a U.S. or Afghan National Security Forces presence in quite some time, Lorenzano said. To ease the introduction of the military to the local population, ANSF forces led several shuras, or community meetings, designed to meet the villagers and let them know their government was there for them and wanted to help.

In addition to the ANSF-led shuras, the Tirzaye district sub-governor Amir Badshah led shuras for the people of Landar and Kadam villages, providing him the opportunity to hear their concerns and issues.

It was a unique opportunity to connect the government to the people to foster a better working relationship, Pearson said.

The relationship between the people and the government wasn’t the only one that saw progress, however.

One benefit of Operation Steel Rain was Afghan forces being incorporated into the fight and being allowed to take the lead, Lorenzano said. ANSF forces were eager to take charge during the clearance and searching of homes, with U.S. forces acting as security and giving guidance when necessary.

“The mission gave them confidence in their abilities and the Afghan people got to see that ANSF was in charge,” Lorenzano said.

“We saw an outstanding performance by the ANA and ABP,” Leard said. “They really did most of the work.”

U.S. Army Pfc. Wade James, a rifleman for 2nd Plt., Able Co., and a native of Hampstead, N.C., said he noticed a marked change in the current abilities of the ANSF forces, compared to when the two units initially partnered up 10 months ago.

When his company first started partnering with the Afghan Soldiers, James said the ANA Soldiers weren’t very thorough when it came to clearing a house. During Steel Rain, however, the ANSF Soldiers demonstrated a capability and thoroughness that showed significant improvement.

“They did very well,” James said. “I was just there to point out things to be cautious of.”

Based upon the cooperation between Afghan and coalition forces that he saw during the operation, Pearson was pleased with the huge strides made in recent months. With the paramount goal of a more stable Afghan government, and one more connected to the needs of its people, the operation provided an important lesson for the future.

“Our close partnership with the ANSF forces reinforced that ideal and ethic among them that we are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with them, fighting the enemy, reinforcing them, and giving them the assets and resources they need to be successful,” Pearson said.

Middle Right: Lt. Col. Jesse Pearson, the battalion commander for 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke and a native of Chicago, speaks with village elders near a village in Tirzaye District, Afghanistan during Operation Steel Rain, Sept. 24.

Bottom Right: Members of Viper Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, set up a tactical satellite antenna used to facilitate long range communications in support of Operation Steel Rain near a village in Tirzaye District, Sept. 24. The mission was a joint effort between U.S. and Afghan forces and was focused on clearing villages of insurgents, materials involved in the making of improvised explosive devices and illegal small arms.



Photo by Sgt. Joseph Watson



Photo by 1st Lt. James Hodges



Photo by 1st Lt. James Hodges

Top: Afghan Border Patrol soldiers search a villager trying to cross a checkpoint during Operation Steel Rain in Tirzaye district, Khowst province, Afghanistan Sept. 24.

Operation Tofan II disrupts enemy in Suri Kheyl

Story by Staff Sgt. John Zumer,
TF Duke, PAO

It’s probably the most dangerous mission all year,” said U.S. Army Capt. Michael Hefti, speaking to his Soldiers before they headed off to the remote Suri Kheyl area of Waze Zadran district, Paktya province, Sept. 15. The impending joint effort between coalition and Afghan National Security Forces to locate and destroy enemy strength, designated as Operation Tofan II would prove to be an illuminating one in many ways.

Hefti, commander of Blackfoot Troop, 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, and a native of Bangor, Wis., knew the mission would be a challenging one, largely because of what the area promised to reveal.

“It’s a popular transit line for the insurgents,” Hefti said.

The operation’s goal was to establish contact with the insurgents, disrupt their

logistics, and reduce any material or moral support from the local population. Movement to the extremely remote area, which featured narrow or non-existent roads set among mountains, included mounted and dismounted Soldiers who also had to be aware of the need to control the key terrain features around Suri Kheyl.

“We know this area is where the enemy enjoys freedom of movement, largely because of the terrain,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Mark Borowski, commander of 6th Sqdn., 4th Cav. Regt., and a native of South Hadley, Mass.

“We wanted to disrupt enemy safe havens and elicit a reaction that we could base future operations on,” he added.

Tofan II is the latest of several major operations since January in which TF Duke has partnered with ANSF in their joint area of responsibility in Khwst and Paktya provinces. These operations have all attempted to influence the battlefield by targeting insurgent weapons caches, securing key routes, eliminating insurgents

from populated areas and removing their local hideouts.

According to Hefti, the operation was a landmark one not just for what it hoped to accomplish, but where. The Suri Kheyl area has long been thought to be fertile ground for the Haqqani network, a criminal organization with links to the Taliban and al-Qaida, and believed to be based across the nearby Afghan border with Pakistan.

“[Tofan II] shows that ANSF forces can go wherever they want,” said Hefti, adding that few Afghan or coalition forces have visited the area over the years.

The operation included several additional objectives, with the most important possibly being to convince villagers to work alongside coalition and ANSF forces in ridding the area of insurgent activity. Blackfoot Troop and their Afghan National Army partners methodically swept the Suri Kheyl area for improvised explosive devices, weapons caches, human and other intelligence targets.

Enemy resistance and activity was less than expected during the majority of the operation.

“It was quieter, and the enemy made it very clear they wouldn’t confront our air assets,” said Hefti.

Regardless, important progress was made on several fronts. Small caches of weapons, ammunition and components for improvised explosive devices were confiscated from several locations, removing all from future use on the battlefield. The most beneficial result of all may have been the levels of support and cooperation shown between coalition and Afghan forces.

“The ANA were amazing,” said Hefti, specifically citing the battlefield leader-

U.S. Army soldiers from Blackfoot Troop, 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, descend a mountain during Operation Tofan II, near the village of Suri Kheyl, Waze Zadran district, Afghanistan Sept. 15. The operation’s main objective was to clear insurgents from the vicinity of Suri Kheyl and to prevent them from returning.



Photos by Sgt. Joseph Watson

U.S. Army Soldiers from Blackfoot Troop, 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, pull security near a house while it is being searched during Operation Tofan II, near the village of Suri Kheyl, Waze Zadran district, Afghanistan, Sept. 15. The operation’s main objective was to clear insurgents from the vicinity of Suri Kheyl and to prevent them from returning.

ship of Maj. Shapoor of the ANA’s 6th Koy, 1st Kandak. Shapoor took the lead among his men, Hefti said, in professionally conducting searches, interviewing villagers and maintaining accountability of Afghan personnel and materiel.

Exiting the Suri Kheyl area when the mission concluded might have been the most dangerous part of the mission. Isolated skirmishes with the enemy were settled quickly through strong air cover supplemented by artillery support provided by TF Duke’s 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Regiment. Having such powerful assets available left Hefti quite pleased.

“Those guys are the greatest. It (artillery support) gives you a sense of peace, and has a very powerful psychological effect on both enemy forces and our own,” said Hefti.

For Borowski, the many successful aspects of the operation helped to confirm a lot of suspicions that coalition and ANA leadership had about the area.

“We think it will be very helpful for the future,” he said.■



U.S. Army Soldiers from the Troop B, 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Duke climb a mountain during Operation Tofan II, which took place in Suri Khel, Afghanistan on Sept. 15.



Three days dividing on the hill

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Ben Navratil, TF Duke, PAO

There was just a glimmer of moonlight to illuminate the landscape as a platoon of Soldiers set off from Combat Outpost Sabari during the early hours of Sept. 9.

The group of about 40 U.S. and Afghan National Army Soldiers marched silently through wadis, farmland and rocky scramble to reach their target, a hill in Sabari district known as “Little G,” which would be their home for the next three days.

The Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, and their partnered ANA unit, the 3rd Coy, 1st Kandak, set up a patrol base on Little G, to interdict any indirect fire coming from the nearby villages of Majiles and Surwapon Toy, and patrol the area, looking for several terrorist cell leaders and establishing a visible presence there.

Day 1- The hill

Little G was chosen as the ideal spot to set up a patrol base because it is easily defensible and provided Sol-

diers a view of the surrounding area, said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jordan Weiss, 3rd Platoon leader and native of Parkston, S.D.

Although one of the shorter hills in the vicinity, Little G still towers over the nearby farms and villages. Ellipse-shaped, it has two peaks on its east and west ends, with a slightly lower saddle in the middle. Its steep slopes are covered in loose rocks, making its ascent a precarious climb for the Soldiers carrying enough supplies to last them for several days in addition to their normal combat load of ammunition and body armor.

Weiss and his platoon headquarters element, including his platoon sergeant, a radioman, a medic and a two-man mortar team set up in the central part of the hill, while he sent squads of Soldiers

to cover each peak, in order to provide security against threats coming from any direction. As with all U.S. operations here, all teams of U.S. personnel were accompanied by their ANA counterparts.

Once the Soldiers finished setting up their defensive positions, a small security element stayed behind as the majority of the Soldiers set out on their first patrol of the day through southern Majiles. As the Soldiers entered the village and made their way to the Kholbesat Bazaar, small groups of villagers of all ages approached. The troops spoke with many of the villagers they came across about the security situation in the area and other issues affecting their lives.

“You’ve got to develop a relationship [with the locals],” said Weiss, “without that, there’s no trust.”

He also sat down for a while with the village elder to discuss the needs of the local populace, and urge him to attend an upcoming Sabari district shura. It will be the first of its kind since U.S. forces have been operating there.

After the engagement, in which the elder not only promised to attend the shura, but also named others that might come along, the Soldiers returned to their hilltop base to rest and watch the area for any suspicious



Above: Soldiers of 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, march through a cornfield while returning to their patrol base after a patrol through Majiles village in Sabari District. The U.S. and Afghan National Army patrolled the area around Majiles for local insurgent leaders and contraband.

Opposite: U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jordan Weiss, platoon leader for 3rd Plt., Company B, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, discusses tactics with his Afghan National Army counterpart, Capt. Khair Ghul, during a foot patrol through Majiles village in Sabari District Sept. 9. The partnered forces set themselves up on a nearby hilltop, where they stayed for three days in order to send out local patrols several times a day.

activity.

Day 2- The North side

The night passed without incident, and the Soldiers were up on their feet again at 3 a.m. the next morning ready to send out another patrol, this time to the more hostile northern section of Majiles and Surwapon Toy.

“[Little G] is the line in the sand for us,” said Weiss, referring to the stark contrast in opinion of U.S. and ANA forces between the people living to the south and north of the hill.

“[North of Little G] is one of the worst parts of our area of operations,” he added. “We take contact virtually every time we go out there.”

This early-morning patrol targeted two homes previously known to be used as safe houses by local leaders within the Haqqani insurgent network. Nothing suspicious was found at either of the initial objectives, so the Soldiers moved on to inspect other sites that had previously been used for weapons caches.

Moving through northern Majiles and Surwapon Toy, the mood of the villagers was noticeably different from the previous day. Here the people seemed more standoffish, and not as willing to approach

the Soldiers.

The first significant activity of the day occurred after the Soldiers finished clearing their final objective, and began the trek to their staging area.

As they paused to rest in a field, there were two explosions near the objective the Soldiers had just finished clearing minutes earlier. The troops took up defensive positions and prepared for an attack, but nothing further occurred. Weiss quickly made the call to get his guys out of the open and head back to the patrol base.

That wasn’t the only excitement during the mission though. Later that night, as the moon was hidden behind clouds and the platoon stood guard over their hilltop base, a pair of indirect rounds were fired at the hill as well as a barrage of small arms fire.

Almost simultaneously, machine gun fire from both peaks zeroed in on the origin of the attack as reports crackled over the radio with descriptions from the fire teams scattered around the hill.

“My Soldiers’ response to the attack was text book,” said U.S. Army Sgt. Jonathan Soto, 3rd Platoon sergeant from Long Island, N.Y., adding that they immediately took cover, scanned their fire sectors and sent up the proper reports as soon as they had all the information they needed.

The barrage was brief though, and after the guns silenced from their initial response, they remained that way through the night.

Day 3- Night and day

The final day began, again well before sunrise, as the Soldiers made their way back down the hill and crossed through the fields from which the previous night’s gunfire had come from.

Their objective was again a residence known to be frequented by a local Haqqani cell leader. After weaving their way through narrow alleys in the village, they finally came to the suspected home. Upon searching the premises, the Soldiers this time found illegal weapons, and identified a man who might be the one they were looking for. He was detained, and two AK-47’s and 10 full magazines were confiscated.

The patrol was cut short after searching one final home, in order to rendezvous with 1st Platoon, Company B, who took the confiscated weapons and the detainee to COP Sabari.

The rest of the day passed without incident, and the Soldiers finally broke camp and trudged back across the countryside late that night, this time under the light of a full moon, in order to get some well-earned rest.

“My Soldiers conducted themselves well under the conditions,” said Soto. “It was really hot, and we had some long movements, covering 30 kilometers over three days.”

As to their partnership, both the U.S. and ANA forces agreed that vast improvements have been made by the 3rd Coy since they began working alongside 3rd Platoon.

“I have been working with 3rd platoon for around nine months,” said ANA Capt. Khair Ghul, the 3rd Coy’s commander. “Our Soldiers were good before, and now they are even better.”

Weiss agreed, describing the improvements he’s seen in the ANA soldiers as “night and day.”

And even though the three-day mission only yielded one detainee and a few weapons, the importance of the Soldiers’ presence in the area was not lost on Weiss.

“We’ve alerted the bad guys that we’re looking for them,” said Weiss. “We’re letting them know that we’ll be at their doorstep every day.”

Warrior's spotlight:

TF Centaur serves to honor son, family

Story and photos by Spc. John Martinez
TF Centaur, PAO

A radar dish malfunctioned Sept. 15 near Combat Outpost Chamkani, a small outpost located in a remote, mountainous region near the Pakistan border. A repair team was summoned to perform the risky task of fixing it.

They would traverse a mountain in a hostile environment to replace the broken radar. Within an hour, the team diagnosed the problem, replaced the radar, and was ready to move on to the next mission.

The team was led by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Christopher B. Sutton, a fire finder radar operator from Kankakee, Ill., with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Centaur. Sutton, a 14-year Army veteran, works with intricate computer systems known as lightweight counter mortar radar. The main function of the system is to detect incoming mortars and identify their firing location.

"I love this job and everything that comes with it," said Sutton, "this job saves lives."

Part of that job is making sure the LCMR system is in good working order, he said.

"The LCMR is a tool well suited for the fight coalition forces are currently engaged in with insurgents," said U.S. Army Spc. Magella Correa of Kahaluu, Hawaii, one of Sutton's team members and a mechanic from Delta Battery, 26th Target Acquisition Battery, 82nd Airborne Division.

"Because of the LCMR's ability to detect and designate where enemy mortars are fired, we are able to find and counter-fire on the insurgent that attacked us," Correa added.

Sutton said he started his career primarily to "see the world through a secured job."

As he matured, so did his desire to care for his growing family, which now consists of his wife Tiffany, son Christopher, and daughter Icic.

Working long hours and being constantly on the move isn't easy. For Sutton, however, his family plays a large part in why he does this job.

"It's hard to be away from them, especially missing out on my son's soccer games and my daughter's gymnastics and piano lessons, but they understand this is my job," he explained. "This is what I do to take care of them as well as the nation as a whole."

Since Sutton's team, based out of Forward Operating Base Salerno, is in constant demand, they are never in one spot for long. He stays in contact with his family as much as possible via Skype.

"I'm based at FOB Salerno, but I don't live there-I visit," Sutton quipped, "wherever they need us, we go."

Most of Sutton's time is spent making the journey to a number of different COPs, said Sutton. They are constantly on the move and as a result are given warm welcomes at several of the more remote COPs, like Chamkani.

"It's a great honor to know you are recognized for doing good work," he said.

Being a fire finder radar operator isn't easy. It requires its technicians to be highly knowledgeable about the equipment to be able to troubleshoot the dish, Sutton said.

"As with most jobs, skills are perishable," he explained.

For Sutton's team, they stay sharp by staying busy.

"Most Soldiers get their training through classes and reading. We get ours through actual hands on experience and in most cases, while under duress," he said.

Many people think of their job as just a "9-to-5," but that's not the case for Sutton.

"Being a Soldier is being dedicated to the military lifestyle and our country. It's more than wearing a uniform, it's about

sacrifice, hard work, and doing everything you can to wear the uniform with pride," Sutton said. "To me, every Soldier's job is an important one."

"Sgt. 1st Class Sutton is a hard charging, mission first leader," said U.S. Army Warrant Officer Bryan Nelson of Longview, Texas also of HHB, 1st Bn., 6th FA.

"It's Sutton's knowledge of the radar systems that is so essential to the mission readiness in our AO," said Nelson. "By keeping the radars up to date and operational, Sutton is providing over watch of insurgents indirect fire in all of Task Force Duke."

Sutton credits his family as the ones providing him inspiration to do the things that need to be done regardless of how tired he may be or how dangerous the task.

"My family looks at me as their hero, so I work hard on being that person for them," Sutton said. "My son told me 'Dad, you're my hero,' and because of his words, I do everything I can to do things better than before because I don't want to ever let my Family down." ■



Reenlistment:

By Master Sgt. David Burgoon
Retention NCOIC

This Army is in a draw-down phase. This is causing the Army to look at personnel manning policies like those that were seen in the early 90’s after Desert Storm. Last year’s policy changes, which blocked many Duke Soldiers’ reenlistment options, were evidence of this.

This year the Army has a few more changes to make and Soldiers need to act fast while options and bonuses are available. Some who wait will completely lose the option to reenlist within the next four months.

This year the Army is reenlisting eligible Soldiers in phases. Soldiers with an ETS date from Oct. 1, 2011 to Sept. 30, 2012 (Fiscal Year 12) are eligible to reenlist in phase I. Soldiers who ETS from Oct. 1, 2012 to Sept. 30, 2013 (FY 13) are eligible to reenlist in phase II.

Soldiers whose ETS date places them in phase I will ONLY be eligible to re-enlist from Oct. 1 until Jan. 31, 2012, if they do not re-enlist in that timeframe, they will have to ETS from active service. The Army may close this phase sooner if they reach 10,000 reenlistments in this category too quickly. These Soldiers are still eligible, if otherwise qualified, to transition to the reserve components.

Soldiers in phase II will be able to re-enlist starting March 1, 2013 until Sept. 30, 2013. This is the only time frame where phase II Soldiers will be eligible to reenlist, with one exception: any deployed Soldier whose ETS puts them in phase II (Oct. 1, 2012 through Sept. 30, 2013) and is eligible to receive a bonus, whether its specific to their MOS or the deployment bonus, will be allowed to reenlist during phase I before they redeploy. This allows the Soldier to take advantage of bonuses and options that they will lose after they redeploy.

Bottom line: if your ETS date is before October 2012, you need to plan to re-enlist before we redeploy while you have your best options available. Your cut off is Jan. 31 2012 but if you wait to the last minute you risk getting blocked. If your ETS is before October 2013, and you’re eligible for a bonus (which many Soldiers are while we are deployed), you should seriously consider re-enlisting before we redeploy while assignments, training and bonuses are available. The further we go into the fiscal year, the scarcer assignments and training will get and bonuses are sure to be reduced.

See your Career Counselor today. They can give you the full details on what you are eligible to receive. Even if you are planning on separating, you owe it to yourself to seriously consider your options for continued service first; even if it’s only for a short re-enlistment to give you the time to set yourself up for success after we redeploy. STAY DUKE STRONG. 🇺🇸

**We made a mistake in attributing last months retention article to Staff Sgt. Ronald Williams, Jr., it was actually written by Staff Sgt. Jim Perry. We apologize for any confusion this caused.*

Purpleheart

Recipients: Sept. 11 - Oct. 15

Sgt. Jonathan Brewer C Trp., 6-4 CAV	1st Lt. Christopher Hehemann BSTB attached to B Co., 1-26 Inf.
Sgt. Michael Brown B Co., 1-26 Inf.	Cpl. Michael Judd C Trp., 6-4 CAV

Reenlistments: Sept. 15 - Oct. 15		
Staff Sgt. Kenneth Alexander	Sgt. 1st Class Scott Guillotte	Spc. Matthew Newcomb
Staff Sgt. Adam Abernathy	Spc. Jeffrey Hall	Spc. Geoffrey Noland
Staff Sgt. Derrick Balderas	Spc. Joshua Hall	Sgt. Martin Parker
Sgt. Luther Barnett	Sgt. Theresa Haisma	Spc. Titeion Paxton
Sgt. Ramon Becerra	Sgt. Nathan Hanks	Spc. Nicholas Price
Sgt. Joseph Broome	Spc. Evan Heilman	Staff Sgt. Jose Pupo
Spc. Derrick Bruechert	Sgt. Joshua Helms	Sgt. William Rassman
Staff Sgt. Hesper Butkovich	Spc. Benjamin Horn	Sgt. Darryll Rideout
Staff Sgt. Nicholas Bunch	Spc. Brandon Hurd	Spc. Joseph Satchwell
Spc. Angel Cabarloc	Sgt. Jeffery Jeffcoat	Spc. Tyler Schilling
Spc. Kenneth Carson	Sgt. Marlon Joe	Spc. Christopher Smith
Sgt. Dale Carter	Staff Sgt. Damian Johns	Staff Sgt. Michael Spears
Spc. Michael Casto	Spc. Brian Johnston	Spc. Bryan Starr
Spc. Betty Cazares	Spc. Brian Jones	Spc. Alex Veras
Spc. Porfirio Colon	Sgt. Johnny Kawakami	Staff Sgt. Patrick Sullivan
Spc. Juduis Colon	Sgt. 1st Class Kimberly Kennedy	Sgt. Mikeal Swenson
Spc. Hank Cooper	Spc. Erik Kohler	Sgt. Timothy Tabor
Spc. Justin Cordaro	Staff Sgt. Carnell Leach	Staff Sgt. Ivan Tanna
Spc. Frank Creamer	Spc. Robert Marsh	Sgt. Joshua Thibodeaux
Spc. Jacob Cruz	Spc. Paul Marchese	Spc. Brandon Thorp
Spc. Ryan Danila	Staff Sgt. Darcella Marshall	Spc. Brian Vandenberg
Staff Sgt. Brandon Dean	Spc. Charles Mays	Spc. Jose Veras
Staff Sgt. Thomas Eden	Spc. Jack McMillan	Staff Sgt. David Vondolski
Spc. Justin Ferguson	Spc. Larry Melton	Sgt. Richard Walton
Staff Sgt. Thomas Fortner	Spc. Christopher Miller	Staff Sgt. Lath Warren
Spc. Kenneth Gaylord	Spc. Tyler Miller	Sgt. Alex Stumm
Spc. Steven Glasford	Spc. Alejandro Miranda	Sgt. Mikeal Swenson
Sgt. Gregory Goodrich		Sgt. Timothy Tabor
Sgt. Dennis Guffey		Staff Sgt. Ivan Tanna

Recognizing hate symbols

Some Americans see the Confederate States of America flag simply as a symbol of lingering Southern pride, but there are some who use it to advocate the domination of whites over African-Americans.

Regardless of whether the symbol in question is the Confederate flag, the German swastika from the World War II-era, or any other symbol linked to extremist groups, the important point is to remember how such symbols or affiliations are perceived or dealt with in the military.

Commanders have the authority to prohibit military personnel from participating in activities the commander determines will adversely affect good order, discipline or morale within the command. This includes, but is not limited to, the authority to order displays removed from barracks, to place areas or activities off-limits (see AR 190-24), or to order Soldiers not to participate in those activities contrary to good order, discipline, unit morale or that pose a threat to health, safety, and security of military personnel and installations.

According to AR 600-20, 4-12 paragraph C, the commander’s UCMJ justification for dealing with a Soldier’s violation of the prohibitions include:

- (a) Article 92 - Violation or failure to obey a lawful general order or regulation
- (b) Article 116 - Riot or breach of peace.
- (c) Article 117 - Provoking speeches or gestures.
- (d) Article 134 - General article, specifically, conduct which is prejudicial to good order and discipline or service discrediting.

If your actions, affiliations or displays cause any doubt in your mind as to whether they would be approved by your chain of command, it’s a good bet that you need to refrain from such conduct. Do the right thing! 🇺🇸



Redeployment Issues

As our tour is on its last legs, there are a number of legal issues which service members typically face. The first of these issues is taxes. All service members who deploy to a combat zone have their time for filing taxes extended for their entire deployments, plus 180 days after the deployment ends. For most of us, this will only apply for the previous tax year. Fort Knox will have a tax center set up and running from the beginning of February through mid-May which should be located in the basement of Pike Hall. This will enable any personnel who have been deployed to file their taxes in a timely manner.

The second major issue is the revocation of powers of attorney. If the power of attorney has not been misused or you do not think it has been misused, you can either let it naturally expire according to the expiration date you had placed on it, or you can take positive steps to revoke it. To revoke a power of attorney, first obtain the original power of attorney and all copies if possible. Secondly, go to your unit legal office with that power of attorney and have a paralegal assist you in drafting the revocation. Listen to any instructions which are specific to that particular revocation. If you are revoking a general power of attorney, be prepared to do quite a bit of work in order to limit the damage that person could have done.

For instance, if Spc. Joe Snuffy gave his brother Jim a general power of attorney and Jim has misused it, then Spc. Snuffy should to see a paralegal from my office. We could help him prepare a revocation with several original copies. The first revocation instrument would need to be provided to his brother along with instructions to cease and desist in the use of that power of attorney, which would be the revocation notification. If Spc. Snuffy has checked his credit report and sees that Jim has opened additional lines of credit, Spc. Snuffy should send a copy of the revocation to each of the major credit bureaus and also needs to freeze that specific line of credit. Such a revocation instrument should be provided to each known creditor in a timely manner to ensure any expense is contested by Spc. Snuffy. Spc. Snuffy should ensure that a copy of the revocation gets filed with the county court of the area where he resides. Spc. Snuffy should also ensure that a copy of the revocation goes to any business where he has reason to believe his brother may have or intended to use the power of attorney. Lastly, in this situation, Spc. Snuffy should to see a legal assistance attorney to discuss his situation. Even if the power of attorney has been revoked, if Jim continues to use it, Spc. Snuffy is still obligated to honor those contracts. However, he would have the grounds to pursue a legal case against his brother.

This article is not to be considered as legal advice, as the author is not an attorney. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your legal assistance office. In Afghanistan, that number is 851-0514 and back at Fort Knox, the number is (502) 624-2771. 🇺🇸

Safety Corner:

Get-home-itis

By Ken Campbell
Brigade Safety Officer

It’s been just over nine months since we made the journey from Fort Knox, Ky., to Afghanistan, and we all look forward to redeploying safely in December or January. In order for us to do that it requires leaders across the Task Force to enforce basic standards, discipline, and communication. We have to place the responsibility for high-risk behavior where it belongs; on Soldiers who willfully disregard the standards and Leaders who turn a blind eye to it.

During the end stage of a deployment, everyone focuses on finishing the deployment so that they can get home to friends and Family. Mistakes tend to occur more frequently during the end stage as people tend to perform tasks haphazardly in the effort to “git-er-done.” Your professionalism, checklist discipline, and attention to detail will prevent mishaps from occurring. We all have the same goal--to get home safely to our loved ones and friends. The best way to do that is to take pride in your work, celebrate your professionalism, and close out your deployment with the same attitude that you started it: at an above-average level of safety awareness.

Remember, we want you to return home to your friends and Family in the same condition you deployed to this location. Think safety first in all tasks in preparation for redeployment. SAFETY FIRST! 🇺🇸

FRG Events

By Ally Reese
FRG Leader

Fall is here, and we are moving closer to the homecoming of our deployed Duke Soldiers. We spent September planning activities, training sessions and briefings for our Families to better prepare them for their Soldiers return.

The brigade has planned a series of reintegration presentations which will give our Families valuable knowledge and skills to help make their Soldiers homecoming transition as smooth as possible. The following briefings will be held in November:

Nov. 2-3 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder understanding the signs and symptoms and where to find help

Nov. 8-9 Preparing to be Together – Communication and finding your “New Normal”

Nov. 16-17 Children & Reintegration – Tips for reconnecting your Soldier and children

Both day and evening briefings will be available and free childcare will be offered through the Child Development Center.

**Due to the recent merger of the E-Army Family Messaging System and the Virtual FRG website, to continue receiving E-Army Messages, you will need to be a subscriber to your unit’s Virtual FRG page.*

Duke Team plans to use the E Army messaging System and the Virtual FRG websites as tools to communicate homecoming flight and ceremony information. 🇺🇸

World News Highlights

New York

Occupy Wall Street

An ongoing series of demonstrations protesting against social and economic inequality, corporate greed, and the influence of corporate money and lobbyists on government in New York City kicked off on Sept. 17. By Oct. 9, similar demonstrations had been held in over 70 cities.

Iran

American hikers freed

Josh Fattal and Shane Bauer were freed Sept. 21 after two years in an Iranian prison for illegally entering the country. A third hiker, Sarah Shourd, had been freed last year on medical grounds. In August, the two had been sentenced to eight years in prison for entering Iran illegally and spying for the U.S.



United States

Apple founder dies

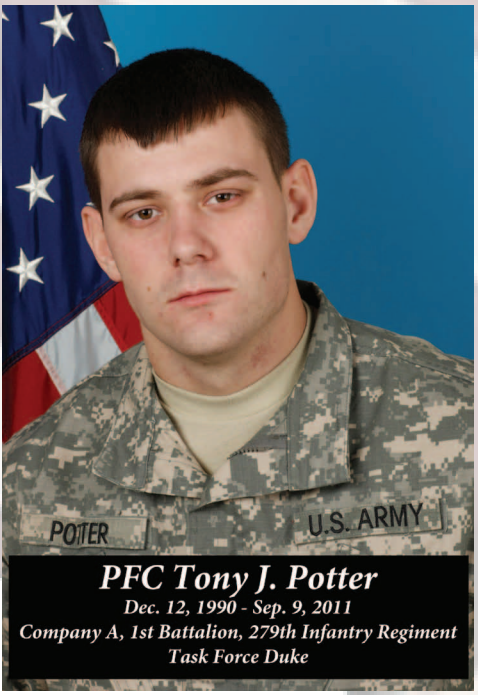
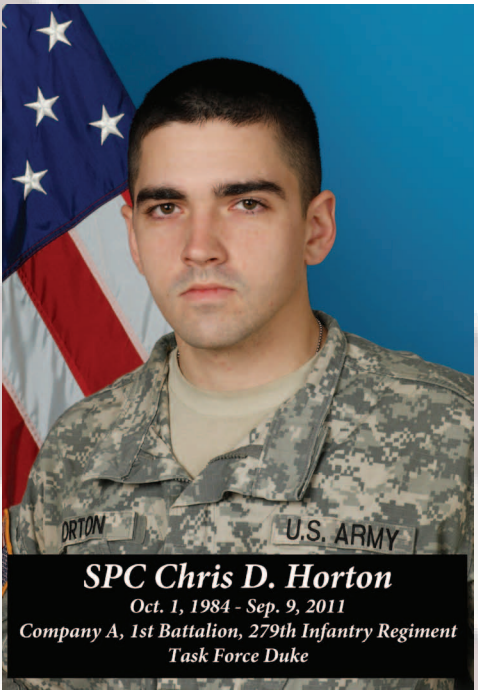
Co-founder of Apple and technology pioneer, Steve Jobs, died Oct. 5 at the age of 56. Jobs had been the driving force in introducing the iPod and the iPhone to the world. The technology visionary had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2003 and in August of 2011 resigned as Apple's CEO.

Saudi Arabia

Getting the vote

Women in Saudi Arabia will be allowed to vote and run for office in future municipal elections, King Abdullah announced Sept. 25. The changes he announced will be put in place for the next elections. Saudi women's rights activists are calling it a great step forward.

IN MEMORIAM



U.S. Army Soldiers from the 1st battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigaded Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, walk through a field during Operation Steel Rain in Tirzaye, Afghanistan, Sept. 24.

