



LOGFIRE LEDGER

Volume 1, Issue 5

July 31, 2011

298TH COMBAT SUSTAINMENT SUPPORT BATTALION

Shindand's Got Talent



And the winner is . . .

Michael Jackson???

Actually, it was CPT Reginald Brownlee, the 298th Battalion S-4 OIC. He won the Shindand's Got Talent competition that was held on the 4th of July at Shindand Airbase. He won by doing a Michael Jackson impersonation and performing "Billie Jean". The idea to host a Shindand's Got Talent competition was inspired by CPT Brownlee's sister, Samantha Clark Neal. SFC Bonnie Hughes, the Public Affairs NCOIC, received a

request from Mrs. Neal to be on the LogFire newsletter distro list and went on to tell SFC Hughes how proud she was of her brother and the whole 298th CSSB. Mrs. Neal also told SFC Hughes, "Reggie has always been a social butterfly! Ask him about the time he performed as Michael Jackson in a talent show". When he was approached by SFC Hughes about it, he informed her that he had won two years in a row but that was when he was eight years old. However, that was enough to put the wheels in motion, and the "Shindand's Got Talent" Contest was underway.

SFC Hughes was the sponsor of the Shindand's Got Talent competition and was assisted by Mr. Frank Stinson who runs the USO on Shindand Airbase. The 1st prize was an (iPod Touch), 2nd prize was a (Flip HD video camera), 3rd prize was an (MP3 player) and all participants received t-shirts.



From left to right; SPC Scarisbrick & SPC Richardson (2nd place), CPT Brownlee (1st place) and SGT Smith (3rd place)

The following are the contestants that participated in the competition:

MAJ Tony Crowe – Singer/Guitar (298th) sang a 2 song combo...."Write You A Song" and "Behind Blue Eyes"

CPL Reggie Gebo – Singer (673rd) "I'm gonna miss her"

SGT Megan Smith – Singer (298th) sang "When you say nothing at all" 3rd place

SGT Donald Burgett – Singer (548th) sang "Thank God I'm a Country Boy"

SGT Aaron Vandergriff – Singer/Guitar (548th)

SPC Paul Richardson/SPC Adam Scarisbrick – Drums/Rap (183rd) 2nd place

SPC Brenda McCrae – Singer (377th) sang "Killing me softly"

SGT Derrick Moore – Rap (183rd)

CPT Reginald Brownlee – Michael Jackson Impersonator (298th) 1st place

The competition was held on the 4th of July for a specific reason. Since the soldiers could not be with family and friends back home, SFC Hughes felt that it was the perfect time for soldiers to get together in a relaxed atmosphere

with their "military" family and have a little fun.

SFC Hughes stated that the show was a great success, but a lot of work. Thanks to the judges: Mr. Zach Sanchez, CPT Hannah Moussa, and Sgt Mgt O'Neal Johnson. SFC Isaiah Johnson and SGT Shania Wilder, of the Shindand Mayor's Cell, were extremely helpful with the set-up. All in all, putting on the first talent show was stressful, but SFC Hughes definitely rose to the occasion as did all the contestants. Congratulations to SFC Hughes and all who had a part in the competition. Who knows, Shindand's Got Talent "2" might be in the works. Stay tuned!

(More photos on page 8)



Tuition Cost for an Afghan School Child

Greetings to all of the readers of our newsletter; and to all of the family, friends, and warriors of the “LOGFIRE team”! Let me begin this month’s column by telling you that all of the team is doing great as we continue to meet milestones in our journey here in Afghanistan. I could not be prouder of the team of professionals that I serve with. Our mission, goals, and vision for this journey are very diverse in nature; hence the title of my column this month.

Perhaps the title may be misleading, but I’ll try to explain throughout the article’s content. We, as Americans, somehow ensure that education provisions are made for the children of our great nation. We do so through tuition fees, taxes, grants, etc. As a point of curiosity, what then is the tuition cost for an Afghan child?

Before I answer this curious question, let me preface my response by stating that I am not authority on the subject in any way. My recent experience with Afghan schools is strictly limited to my eye witness accounts of 3 separate schools that we have visited while serving here in Afghanistan. Again, though not an authority on the subject, I would like to share some of our recent observations with you.

Through the generosity of some great Americans, we received an abundance of donated school supplies designated for Afghan schools within our area of operations. We coordinated very closely with some Afghanistan officials, and developed a distribution plan to some local schools. Through our coordinated efforts with Coalition forces, and Afghanistan officials, we embarked on a mission to distribute these donated supplies.

As I attempt to describe our experience, I ask that you use your “mind’s eye” to picture the scene that I and other great warriors were blessed to witness. We move our vehicles down a long and dusty road landscaped with little foliage, and lined with huts constructed of mud and straw. We see a larger mud structure in the distance. Behind the structure is a mud walled courtyard containing something that remotely resembles a soccer field (although without grass or nets for the goals).

As we near this large mud structure, we quickly realize this scene to be the school where our mission would take place. As we draw closer, we observe multiple guards atop the roof of the school. One guard appears to be holding a rocket propelled grenade launcher. The scene is intimidating to say the least, however, we know these are friendly Afghan officials; therefore, we are not alarmed by their presence.

Our team enters the threshold of the mud walls where we’re anxiously greeted by several school officials, and Afghan government representatives. We are greeted with kindness, gratitude, and many smiling faces.

Closer observation of the compound reveals a series of large open windows, doors, and breezeways along the face of the mud building. An even closer look offers a view through the mud windows of beautiful children attending classes. We met briefly with the school officials and discussed specific plans for how we should distribute the goods we brought.

Much to my surprise, it was suggested that we visit each classroom and distribute the supplies there. I was surprised because we all expected a large room of some sort where supplies would be issued. However, the preference for distribution to each class was because no shelter was available to accommodate all students at once. The steaming heat persuaded the headmaster keep the little ones out of the hot sun. You see, there is no air conditioning, or auditorium...only quaint little classrooms and open ground.

We then proceeded to each classroom. As we entered the classes, we discovered dirt floors, collapsing plywood ceilings, homemade blackboards, and metal benches serving as desks and seats. We observed only a handful of students in each of these classrooms. The opportunity to visit each class offered the chance for us to personally interact with teachers and students alike.

During this interaction, I had the opportunity to converse (through an interpreter) with the students and teachers. Presented with this scene, I became very interested in what the students thought of their school, so I asked. In fact, I asked every class that I met how they liked school. Without hesitation, every class collectively responded in jubilation that they “loved school”. The faces of these beautiful children lit up with glee as we spoke of their opportunity to be educated.

I shall never forget the response that I received in the very first class I met. After the collective response of jubilation, one student approached me with these words in well spoken English, “Hello, how are you today?” I was frankly shocked to hear these words from a boy who appeared to be no older than 10. He further explained how much he enjoyed learning English. As my encounter with this class concluded, the same young man said, “Thank you for bringing the gifts.” Common school supplies were considered as “gifts”. Both he and his teacher were so proud of his achievement to speak perfect English to an English speaking visitor in their land.

Each class that we visited had a similar story. As we departed one of the final classrooms, I was privileged to exchange “hand shakes” with many of the boys; and concluded by teaching them a “high five”. An act, so simple in gesture, inspired the united language of smiles all around.

Throughout this entire experience, my thoughts reflected on days gone by when I was a young student. I recalled times in my youth when I desperately wanted to be anywhere besides school. I suppose that is a shared feeling for many of us during our childhood years. I’m met with the irony of how precious something as simple as attending school is to these young ones; compared with our American education opportunities so often taken for granted.

In summary, let’s re-visit my curious question. What is the tuition cost for an Afghan child? I can’t answer this question in an intellectual manner with any degree of certainty. However, my vivid memory of this day in a mud hut school in Western Afghanistan reveals a very high price. This high price is comprised of sacrificial commitment from parents, teachers, administrators, and most importantly; Afghan children. My eyes have given me a new appreciation, and wholesome respect for the character of these who are committed to increasing knowledge; broadening perspective, and seeking a better way of life. Most significant to me is that this new found revelation is presented to us through the “innocence of children”.

We, as the “LOGFIRE Team”, earn a new and deeper appreciation for the blessings we have as Americans with each sunrise. I am so very proud to be a part of this mighty team of compassionate warriors we have. To all family and friends of these great soldiers, you can be very proud of the achievements we have made; and anticipate those yet to come. I’d like to offer special thanks to Heritage United Methodist Church’s “Love” Sunday school class, Petal-Harvey Baptist Church, my “Aunt Peg”, my Mom, and my beautiful wife for willingly coordinating donations for these young ones. I also thank the “unknown” donors of this project. Your compassion has been put into action by the soldiers of the “LOGFIRE Team”. May God truly bless the friends, family, and warriors of the “LOGFIRE Team” and God Bless the USA!

Words from Command Sergeant Major



Stay Strong in the Heat

For many soldiers, the extended daylight of summer means additional opportunities to meet physical training requirements. The heat and humidity that accompanies these long days, however, increases the number of heat injuries and other physical problems.

Minor illnesses such as heat cramps are typically the first sign of heat injury. Leaders and soldiers should understand that sun safety and heat injuries are vital to sustaining combat power. Leaders must continue to be aware of the conditions of their soldiers and seek immediate treatment when needed. Make sure to use the Buddy System.

I would like to thank the Family Readiness Group. Thank you, Logfire Team.

Logfire 09

Congratulations to:



NCO of the Month
SGT Patrick W. Marsh
183rd Maintenance CO



Soldier of the Month
SPC Ashley Matter
183rd Maintenance CO



Previous 838th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group Commander COL Larry D. Bowers (Pictured with COL Shores of the Afghan Air Force)



Current 838th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group Commander COL John J. Hokaj

183rd Workhorse...Signing Out of the Net

On the windy evening of July 26, 2011, the 183rd Maintenance Company (MC) held its ceremony to transfer authority to the 602nd Maintenance Company. The 183rd MC set up the first area support maintenance company in all of Regional Command West (RC-W) and was responsible for both Organizational and Direct Support Level Maintenance in RC-W and RC-S. In addition to maintenance support, the 183rd supported over 170 Combat Logistics Patrols between Camp Stone, Farah, Leatherneck, Camp Arena and Masum Ghar over a period of 11 months and conducted convoy security missions, spanning over 12,000 miles resulting in 100 percent mission complete. The 183rd's list of accomplishments could go on forever. They truly set the standard as their unit was the first to lay the groundwork for numerous monumental tasks that were successfully executed in RC-W and RC-SW Afghanistan.

The incoming unit that will be providing relief in place for the 183rd is the 602nd MC which is an Active Duty component of the army that hails from Fort Hood, Texas. The 602nd has hit the ground running assuming the many tasks and missions previously conducted by the 183rd MC. The 298th CSSB proudly welcomes the 602nd into the Log fire team.

The "Workhorse" has made a lasting impression on Forward Operating Base Shindand, RC-W, but most importantly, with the 298th LogFire Team. Safe travels to them as they return to their friends and family. The professionalism, vast knowledge, and camaraderie of the 183rd will be sorely missed.



548th Transportation Company

The 548th Transportation Company enters into our 2nd month on the ground in Shindand with this comes our “Patching” Ceremony. LTC Pippen and CSM Ward presented the 548th Transportation Company with the Shoulder Sleeve Insignia or “Combat Patch” for their overseas service in Afghanistan on July 19th. This was a great honor for the 548th Transportation Company; as LTC Pippen said, “Every combat patch tells its own story, you may have more than one (combat patch) but each one is significant for what you did and who you served with.” This patch is the first and only patch for several of our soldiers and they will wear it proudly. For other soldiers who have more than one patch; they are beginning to gather the stories they will associate with this patch.

The 548th Transportation Company had a busy 4th of July Holiday. They had several talented soldiers perform in the Talent Show. They may not have won anything but they did a really good job of performing for everyone. We found that SGT Vandergriff played guitar really well and sings to boot, SGT Burgett puts together a really good tune, and PFC Adkins also plays a mean guitar. We also have several members who love to play volleyball and enjoyed the tournament during the 4th of July games. The 5K Logfire Run also drew several participants; we had several participate to assist in the cause.

As time goes on we continue to run missions learning more about our surrounding area, more about the roads and communities around us and more about the Afghan culture. We have also started our leave and have begun sending soldiers back home to see their families; some are returning with pictures of new babies that are being born or pictures of vacations taken.



183rd Maintenance Company



The end of our journey has quickly arrived as the end of July approaches. Over the last year we have done many things to support Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) here in Afghanistan. We built up Shindand Air base and made it our home. We supported units throughout all of Regional Command – West (RC -W) and Southwest (RC-SW) protecting logistics convoys and repairing equipment for other units of all services. No matter where we worked, no matter what the mission, we always left our mark. 183rd Maintenance Company set high standards for all maintenance companies to follow.

July being our last month in Afghanistan has been nothing less than busy. We started off the month by celebrating our independence day with a BBQ that was planned by the corporals in the company. We ate hamburgers, hotdogs, chicken wings and so much more, cooked by our very own. We enjoyed each other's company while playing board games, sports and just relaxing conversation. We even had fireworks with a sprinkling of mortars brought to us by our local US Army Special Forces.

Most of July was spent finishing packing up our equipment and gear for shipment back to Fort Carson. That was no easy task! Customs inspections were required causing long hours to be spent in the sun watching inspectors going through our things. Then there was the blocking and bracing that didn't always go quite as we planned, but Army ingenuity prevailed in the end.

After the milvans were packed and sealed, and vehicles were cleaned and readied it was time to get ready for the arrival of our replacements, the 602nd Maintenance Company. Soldiers moved to transient tents making room, office space was cleaned and organized, and signs, pictures, and all other traces of 183rd Maintenance Company were removed to make way.



July was not all work though. Each Saturday was filled with competitiveness between the platoons as we enjoyed Saturday Sports Day. GSE platoon was the first to win in Ultimate Football and they made sure everyone knew they won with they're not so subtle bragging. Maintenance Support platoon was the next to win in volleyball. They won each match despite the prevailing winds that would curve a spiked ball or blow a serve out of bounds. On the third Saturday, Headquarters platoon was triumphant in basketball. The mighty HQ pulled it off leading the pack on our field expedient basketball court. Electronics Maintenance platoon was the only platoon not to win, but we are sure they would have won had kickball not been cancelled.

Kickball was cancelled for a good reason though. This Saturday marked the arrival of 602nd Maintenance and the cue for us to get ready to go home. They hit the ground running, shadowing our key leaders, learning all there is to know about our mission here. They will train beside our Soldiers and slowly take over responsibility as we transition toward redeployment and the end of our journey.

The end will be marked on 26 July 2011 as we participate in a Transfer of Authority ceremony, which symbolizes our transfer of mission responsibility to the 602nd and the closing of our chapter in the history books.



377th Quartermaster Detachment



377th QM DET/ 298th CSSB
377th Quartermaster Detachment
"Movement Brings Victory"



The 377th QM Platoon has got talent. SPC McCrae sings during the 4th of July Talent Show.



SPC McCrae



Great Job!

SHINDAND'S GOT TALENT



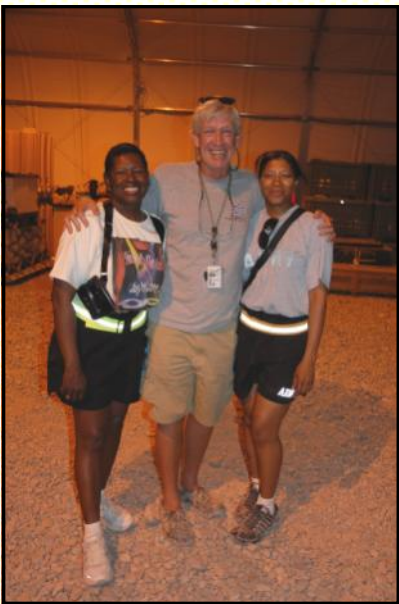
1st place—CPT Brownlee



2nd place—SPC Richardson & SPC Scarisbrick



3rd place—SGT Smith



Sponsors/ SFC Hughes & Frank Stinson (USO) and their helper SGT Wilder



Judges/Zach Sanchez, CPT Hannah Moussa & Sgt Maj O'Neal Johnson



SGT Burgett



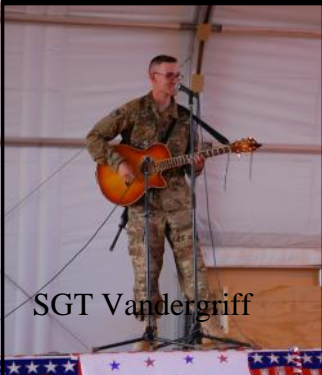
SGT Moore



Our MC SFC Johnson



SPC McCrae



SGT Vandergriff



CPL Gebo



MAJ Crowe



298th CSSB Italian MRAP Issue

The 298th Supply, S4 and Maintenance Section and the 183rd Maint Co. conducted the first inspections/inventory of fifteen MAXXPRO vehicles to be issued to Task Force Engineers of the Italian Army. They also repaired all maintenance deficiencies and notated any BII shortages.



Chaplain's Corner by CH Heather Duff

Running With Endurance

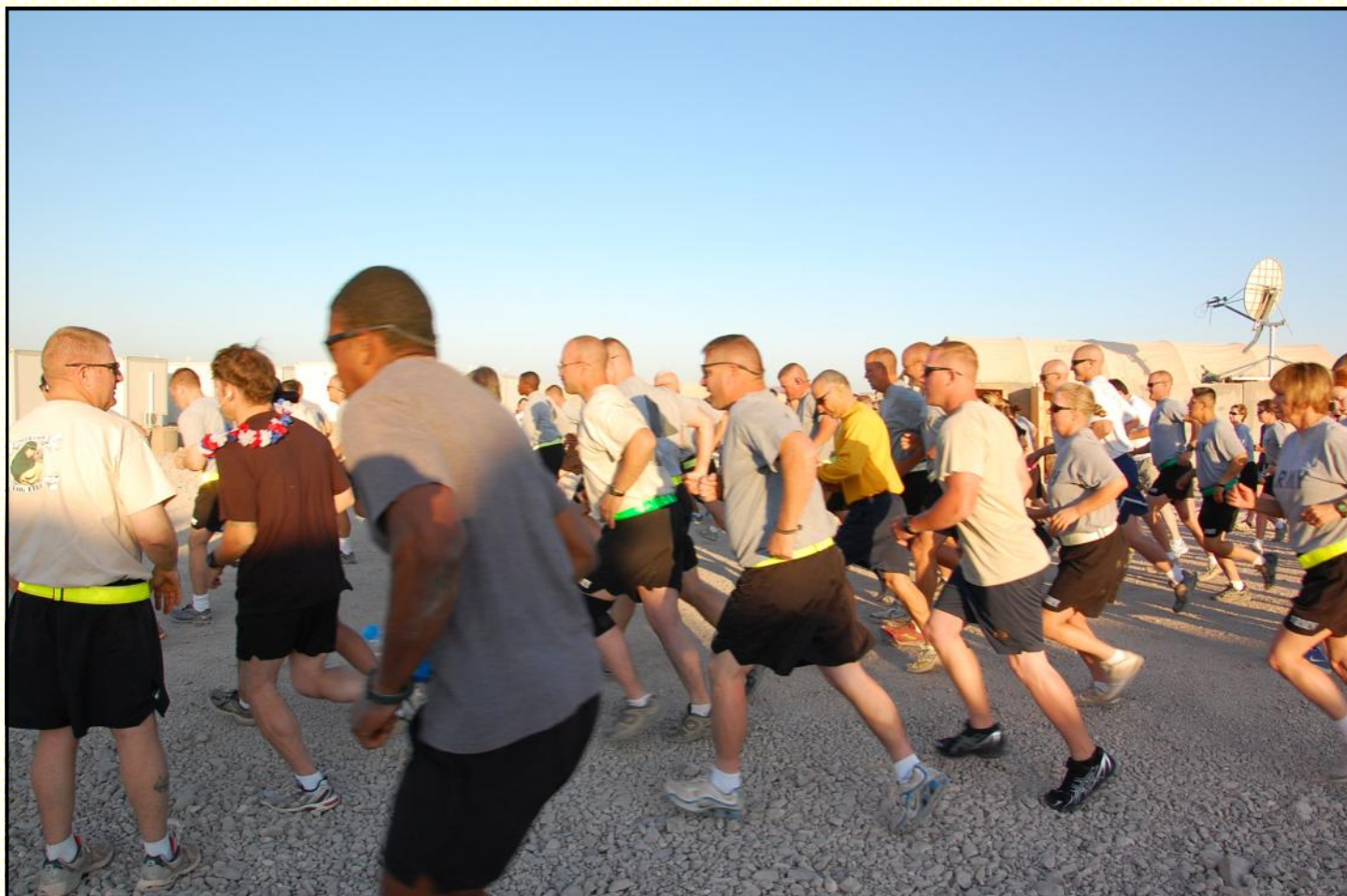
Endurance is defined as the act, quality or power of withstanding hardship or stress. For example, a marathon tests the runner's endurance – it is the state or act of persevering. To endure is to have the ability and strength to last and continue to last for a long period of time, especially despite fatigue, stress, or other adverse conditions. In contrast, a sprint is defined as the act or an instance of sprinting, especially a short race at top speed – a burst of speed or activity for a short distance. It is important to distinguish between the two. Here in Shindand, our unofficial LOGFIRE motto is: we are here to run a marathon, not a sprint.

I am sure that you have heard that life is like a marathon. The author of Hebrews uses this comparison when he writes, “let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith” (12:2).

Both the life of a soldier and the life of a person of faith require endurance. For example, the soldier constantly battles heat. Every soldier knows it is going to be hot. Every soldier endures the heat of the day while working, playing, eating etcetera. The heat is simply a fact – every day, all day. Eventually the soldier becomes accustomed to the heat and learns to endure it.

As people of faith, we learn to battle another kind of heat: the world. As people of faith, we live in a world that is not our home, and like the heat, it is constant. All day, every day, while working, playing, eating, talking, writing, driving, we battle the world and it's song. But we learn to endure it!

I want to encourage you today to continue to run with endurance – both as a soldier and as a human being. The heat will not last forever. But our victory and our faith will!



A 5K Run/Walk was held on July 4th with benefits going to the Mississippi Army National Guard Wounded Minute Men.



A Little Means A Lot

Kids are kids no matter what part of the world you are in. They all want to be loved and appreciated and should be afforded every opportunity to succeed in life. On 13 July, the 298th CSSB reached out to a local school to offer a helping hand to its students and teachers, as they overcome dire conditions in the pursuit of education. Most people would agree that teachers have a difficult job even in the best of circumstances. However, when students and teachers are faced with dilapidated buildings, no tables or desks, little to no school supplies, and ongoing Taliban insurgency; it's nothing short of a miracle that any learning can be achieved. That's why the efforts that were put forth in making the trip to deliver the much needed, greatly appreciated school supplies were so important to LTC Clifton "Lynn" Pippen and his LogFire team.

LTC Pippen and the Italian Task Force Centre commanded by COL Patane', gathered a large shipment of donated school supplies and coordinated a joint humanitarian mission to provide assistance to a much deserving local middle school. The 298th CSSB would like to express its many thanks and deepest gratitude for the kindness and generosity of several donors which include: Adopt a Platoon, Operation Crayon, Heritage United Methodist Church of Hattiesburg "Love" Sunday School Class, Petal Harvey Baptist Church, and countless other generous donors. It was because of the good will acts of these special donors that this mission was possible. The looks of genuine excitement on the faces of the children as they received book bags, pencils, pens, crayons, notebooks, rulers, and a host of other school supplies was priceless.

The education system in this school's local school district doesn't furnish school supplies for the students or teachers so donations of this magnitude are crucial on so many levels. Just last year the middle school had approximately 750 students and today there are less than 200. Due to the poor conditions of the school, the lack of school supplies and insurgency, parents are not interested in sending their children to school. "The reality of these students is so far removed from what our children expect as the norm or take for granted," stated LTC Pippen. For LTC Pippen, the delivery of these supplies by the Italian Task Force and his Log Fire team meant helping to provide a better way of life for these students. It was also way for him to assess first hand, the needs of the school and find out how Task Force LogFire could provide any additional assistance.

This was also a very effective measure in the execution of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations by reaching out to foster relationships with the local school district and its populace. In addition to getting the Italian Task Force involved, Colonel Hoseiny, the Afghan Traffic Police Commander was brought in on this mission. The children in each class were able to see an authority figure from their country and of their culture, working with authority figures from other countries and cultures, in an effort to make a difference through positive partnership. It is often said that a little goes a long way, and hopefully through this small step, huge strides forward will be made in developing long lasting relationships.



Safety Message



Child Safety

Summer is here and parents are looking for ways to keep their kids safe when they go online. Kids online usage increases over the summer and so do the risks. Please make sure you are talking to your kids about summer safety and be sure to include online safety and tips to stay safe. If you've got school-age children, that means your house is about to become busier for the next few months, and the challenge is to find ways to keep kids occupied during the summer. There's always the temptation of letting technology fill the void, but as we've learned, technology isn't the best babysitter.

A good resource for online safety is the [Verizon Parental Controls Center](http://www.verizon.com/parentalcontrols), with information for parents, educators and kids. And to help you prepare for summer, here are the top 10 ways to turn the situation into a win-win for everyone.

Having a clearly defined set of rules.

Talk to your children about technology.

Install Internet filters.

Make sure your online security tools are up to date.

Keeping your files safe with online backup.

Suggest worthwhile programming.

Take advantage of parental controls on your TV.

"Rugged-ize" your gadgets with skins and protective covers.

Give kids alternatives.

Don't forget to have fun!

As our soldiers prepare to fight the enemy, each and every day, we must equip our kids with aids that will prevent them from being statistics in our world of technology. These guidelines will help protect our children from predators and inappropriate materials that may pop up at any moment while searching for something of interest.

"Families that are Army Safe, are Army Strong!"

CW2 James Ballard

We're on Facebook
[http://
www.facebook.com/
pages/298th-
CSSB/126140340773566](http://www.facebook.com/pages/298th-CSSB/126140340773566)

Thought For The Day

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.



Promotions: (298th)

MAJ Crowe

CPT Duff

SPC Mosley

SGT Bender

SGT Vigil

On The Funny Side

A woman gets onto a bus with her baby. The bus driver says, "That's the ugliest baby that I've ever seen. Ugh!" The woman goes to the rear of the bus and sits down, fuming. She says to a man next to her, "The driver just insulted me!" The man says, "There's no call for that. You go right up there and tell him off. Go ahead, I'll hold your monkey for you."