

March 2011



# The Lightning News

News from the front for Soldiers, families and friends of HHC, 359th Signal Brigade



# AFGHAN WILDLIFE FRIENDS



Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Top, there are a number of stray dogs around Bagram Airfield. This one, nick named "Sissy," stopped by to visit with the 359th Soldiers from time to time. Left, this colorful unique bird allowed Soldiers to photograph it. Above, real estate is hard to come by in Bagram, so this mouse found it in a can.



Above and left, a couple of stray dogs find comfort and interest in watching the Air Force Engineering and Installation Airmen while they were working on a manhole and communication cables at one of the entry points to Bagram Airfield on March 3. Stray dogs have a very difficult life in Afghanistan.

Right, for a couple of months this young cat would stop by and peek into our offices. Perhaps he was looking for the soda can mouse?



# 359th Soldiers Hand Over Signal Mission in Afghanistan

By Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

*Bagram, Afghanistan* – A transfer of authority ceremony between the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade and the 228th TTSB was held in a clamshell tent at Bagram Airfield on March 27, 2011.

The ceremony officially marked the end of Task Force Thunder (the 359th TTSB's tour) and recognized the beginning of Task Force Spartan (the 228th's TTSB tour). Although the name of the task force changed, the overall mission for the new TTSB remains to maintain and commercialize the communications assets throughout the Combined Joint Operations Area – Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Army Col. Chris Kemp and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Wilkerson, the outgoing 359th TTSB's commander and command sergeant major, cased the 359th colors after which, Army Brig. Gen. Gregory W. Batts and Command Sgt. Maj. Charles R. Campbell, the commander and command sergeant major of the 228th TTSB, unfurled the guidon of the incoming command.

Guest speaker, Army Maj. Gen. Timothy P. McHale, deputy commanding general-support, U.S. Forces Afghanistan, bid farewell to the Reserve Soldiers of the 359th TTSB and welcomed the South Carolina National Guard Soldiers of the 228th TTSB. "Your contributions towards supporting our troopers and building communication infrastructure have been a vital component to the success of the coalition and the morale of our fighting men and women." This commitment to the mission enabled those troops to perform their mission at a higher standard, but our job here is not complete," said McHale. The battlefield is constantly changing and that will require you, Task Force Spartan, to adapt. To the incoming Soldiers, McHale said, "What works today, may be obsolete a few months from now."

The Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 359th TTSB, located at Fort Gordon, Ga., deployed to Afghanistan in April 2010 with over 100 Soldiers and one Department of the Army of Civilian, relieved the active-duty 7th TTSB, and stood up forward operations at Bagram Airfield, which is northeast of Kabul.

The HHC of the 359th formed the core of the Joint Network Operations Control Center-Afghanistan and assumed responsibility for management of



Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

**Army Spc. Tyler Dietz, intel analyst, serves as the guidon bearer during the transfer of authority ceremony on March 27 at Bagram Airfield.**



**Army Capt. Gervis Carlise, commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, stands before some of his Soldiers during the transfer of authority ceremony between the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade and the 228th TTSB.**



Army Command Sgt. Maj. Charles R. Campbell and Brig. Gen. Gregory W. Batts, the command sergeant major commander of the 228th TTSB unfurl their brigade guidon.



Army Lt. Col. Teri Hassell, task force deputy commander, leads the color guard during the transfer of authority ceremony at the Bagram Airfield clamshell on March 27.

three networks, consisting of over 1,700 servers and 200 satellite links, two subordinate expeditionary signal battalions and a U.S. Air Force Engineering and Installation Squadron. To enhance the commercial expertise of the JNCC-A, over 90 information technology contractors augmented the mission as well.

One of the JNCC-A's critical accomplishments during Task Force Thunder, was distributing over 500 Iridium telephones to key units throughout Afghanistan. The Command, Control, Communications and Computer Infrastructure Support Element section of the JNCC-A, in coordination with Central Command and the Defense Information Service Agency, distributed and provided service for more than 5,115 Netted Iridium Radios to combat and combat-support units in forward deployed locations in every region across the country. These tactical communication tools, along with essential training, provided the warfighters in Taliban-active areas the ability to call for fire or medical aid, in addition to having direct communications with their unit, said Army Capt. Hampton Culp, officer in charge of the C4I Support section, 359th TTSB. "This program has given remote isolated units access to emergency communication wherever they are." Another vital feature of the Iridium devices is their ability to act as a beacon by providing position location information. "This allows commanders to have an unprecedented look at dismounted movement as well," said Culp. This kind of technology combined with Blue Force Tracker dramatically reduces the potential for "friendly fire" incidents, said Army Lt. Col. John H. Phillips, Task Force Thunder plans and operations officer in charge/JNCC-A director, 359th TTSB.

In addition to the Iridium telephones and radios, the JNCC-A team also provided warfighters with 1500 "Go Book" laptops, created by the L3 Company. These hand-held computers coupled with a multi-ban satellite capable radio allows the combat fighters e-mail, web browser and chat functions like a regular laptop. This capability gives the service-members on patrol visibility on threats and intel on the battlefield, said Air Force Col. Jeff Maxwell, senior joint communicator for USFOR-A. "It greatly increases the reach-back capacity for Soldiers on patrol."

Another effort to support the warfighters in rugged remote bases was to provide them with the ability to communicate home. The Joint Communications leaders at USFOR-A purchased more than

# Promotion to Captain



Left, 1st Lt. Vincent Cooper, resource manager, is promoted to the rank of captain after a few words from Task Force Thunder Commander Col. Chris Kemp in the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade command office at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan on March 13.

Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Below, 1st Lt. Damon Pipkin, supply and logistics officer, is promoted to the rank of captain by Col. (Promotable) "Bell" Jones, 335th Signal Command (Theater) on March 12.



Above, 1st Lt. Thomas Grasso, engineering officer in charge, is promoted to the rank of captain by Task Force Thunder commander, Col. Chris Kemp on March 14.



Above, 1st Lt. Cedric Lloyd, deputy officer in charge of the Command, Control, Communications and Computer (C4) Shop, is promoted to the rank of captain by Task Force Thunder commander, Col. Chris Kemp on March 14.

# **Brigade Commander:** *Be Proud of your Service, Take Time Reintegrating*

Dear 359<sup>th</sup> Soldiers, families and friends,

**A**s we end our successful deployment, I want to thank you all deeply. This has been a long and hard but successful year. We have accomplished a great amount of things, in Afghanistan and here at home.

The combined efforts of you all have made those accomplishments happen. I can't thank you enough for the hard work. And nothing I say can make up for the sacrifices you have made for you nation and the future of the Afghan people.

You may not realize it now, but the Soldiers have contributed to the history of Operation Enduring Freedom and the hope of a nation that has been suppressed for generations. For those of you who have continuously supported us, please know, we could not have succeeded without you. Your support allowed us to bear the weight of our critical mission.

Though our duty is complete, the mission in Afghanistan will continue and you all will take on a new task – the task of reintegration. I



ask you all to take it slowly. It has been a long and difficult year for us all and most likely, a lot of things have changed.

Take time getting to know each other again and re-learning the roles you play in each other's lives. Try to understand that it will take time to adjust to each person's experiences over the year and the new roles that have now become normal.

Soldiers and families have both had to adapt during the deployment, so I ask you all to take a moment to understand the others point of view. Be aware of what your loved one/Soldier has experienced, and keep that in mind before you react to situations that will come up. Things will return to a new normal. It will just take time.

I also urge you all to take advantage of the number of resources available to you. Ranging from medical care to counseling to your new veteran's status. You have earned these benefits so please don't hesitate to utilize them.

*There is no shame in asking for help and using the assistance that our grateful nation wants to give you.*

Again, I want you to know that I deeply appreciate all that you have done. I can't thank you enough, and I was proud to serve as your commander.

*COL Chris Kemp*

359<sup>th</sup> TTSB Commander

# Celebrating April Birthdays



**MAJ Robert NeSmith**  
April 14

Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



**SGT Tristan Hughel**  
April 8



**SPC Christine Awkward**  
April 25



**CW2 Jovar McKellar**  
April 6

Happy  
Birthday





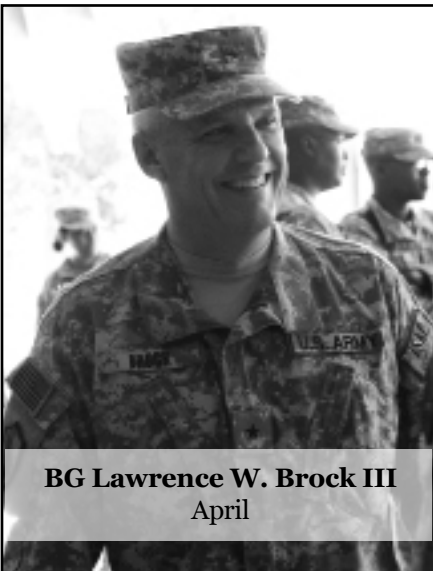
**SFC Timothy Hart**  
April 6



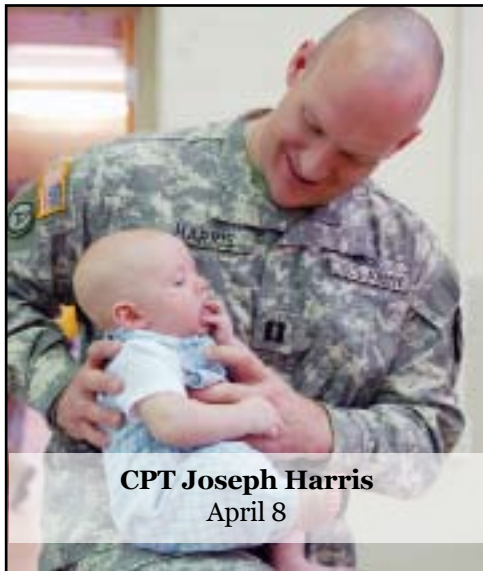
**SGT Natanisha Hershberger**  
April 29



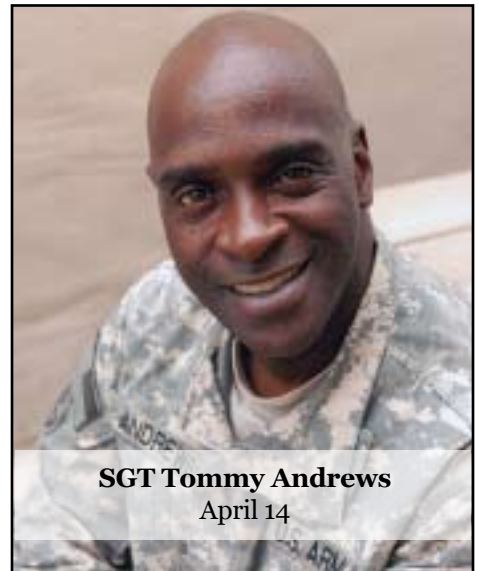
**SFC Kenneth Doyle**  
April 9



**BG Lawrence W. Brock III**  
April



**CPT Joseph Harris**  
April 8



**SGT Tommy Andrews**  
April 14

# Here at Bagram...



Left, Capt. Hampton Culp, officer in charge of the Command, Control, Communications and Computer (C4) Shop, reacts to Col. Jones mentioning a humorous incident that occurred on a previous deployment in Kuwait. Below, Spc. Charles A. Smith, technician for the Enterprise section for the Enterprise section, reads over a pre-test for a class on the laws of war that was held at the chapel on March 14.

Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato



Above, Spcs. Kimika Blakley, Joint NetOps Control Center-Afghanistan supply specialist; Darcelyn Kimbro, human resources specialist; and Candid Surry, information assurance specialist; all of the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade, take a moment to strike a pose and relax as they wait for the bus to tent-city, Warrior, at Bagram Airfield.





Above, Sgt. Natanisha Hershberger, Joint NetOps Control Center supply sergeant, shows off her pre-test during mandatory training while Maj. Benjamin Stevens, intelligence officer in charge, and Sgt. 1st Class John Hembree, projects officer, smile.

Soldiers practice for end of tour ceremonies at the clamshell tent at Bagram Airfield on March 22.



Middle left, Lt. Col. Gary Williams, chaplain, and John H. Phillips, plans and operations officer in charge/Joint NetOps Control Center director, are all smiles during their last week of briefs. Middle right, Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Doyle, telephone noncommissioned officer in charge at the Command, Control, Communications and Computer (C4) Shop, Left, Capt. Gervis Carlisle, Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander, does a little celebratory move upon entering the JNCC.

## TOA Continued from page 5

110 “Cheetah Systems,” which consisted of a small satellite dish, laptops and phones; thus allowing servicemembers to send and receive e-mails, Skype or make calls for morale purposes.

The JNCC-A supply team pushed these systems out to small operating bases with less than 100 warfighters in the middle of literally nowhere, said Army Sgt. Maj. John Schiffli, plans and operations sergeant major for the 359th TTSB. “The Cheetah Systems’ provided the much needed morale by allowing Soldiers on the farthest edge of the battlefield to make contact with loved ones during the holiday season and from that point forward.”

The 86th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, an active-duty Army unit from Arizona, controlled forward operations for Regional Command-South and West with their main hub positioned in Kandahar. This team of over 800 Soldiers and 20 plus IT contractors established the first regionally focused Combined Network Operation and Cyber Security Center, which managed the digital battlefield space for two separate coalition divisions within Afghanistan. The 86th ESB, Task Force Tiger, also assumed the mission of providing regional communication security for two regional commands and increased the total capacity of secure lines by 324 percent.

To ensure the sustainment of signal capabilities within an ever-changing technical field, the 86th established a regional signal training center, Tiger University. Classes ranged from information management to an assortment of combat net radio courses. The classes also included technically advanced communications that provided college credits and professional certifications. Overall, the 86th trained more than 3,400 personnel, some of which were Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Coalition partners.

The 307th ESB, an active-duty Army unit from Hawaii, controlled the forward operations for Regional Command-North with their hub located at Camp Marmal, which is near Maza Serif. The 307th, Task Force Dragon, truly executed the expeditionary part of the signal mission by establishing a Regional Network Control Center from the ground up in an austere environment.

Their robust communications efforts provided tactical and strategic capabilities to combat, aviation, medical, reconstruction, and a myriad of International Security Assistance Forces teams. As



Photos by Army Capt. Michelle Lunato

**Guest speaker, Army Maj. Gen. Timothy P. McHale, deputy commanding general-support, U.S. Forces Afghanistan, bid farewell to the Reserve Soldiers of the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade before their transfer of authority ceremony at Bagram Airfield on March 27, 2011.**



**Above, Army Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Wilkerson and Col. Chris Kemp, task force command sergeant major and commander, case the brigade colors signifying the end of the deployment for the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade. Below, Army Lt. Col. Orville Jennings, Maj. Benjamin Stevens, Lt. Col. John H. Phillips, and Lt. Col. George Brady, task force staff officers, walk away from the center of the transfer of authority formation to make room for the staff officers of the 228th TTSB. This action symbolizes that they are no longer the staff in command.**



RC-N transformed from a one-star headquarters to a two-star joint coalition headquarters, the Task Force Dragon team's customer base grew in excess of 10,000 personnel who were spread over 61,000 miles, and included more than 50 different tactical communication nodes. Meanwhile, they were able to procure and distribute over 10 million dollars of networking, end user, cable and transmission equipment, and increase network service to their combat customers by 50 percent.

Over 140 Airmen augmented Task Force Thunder as well, filling a number of vital roles throughout the country. These active-duty and National Guard Air Force signaleers represented a number of states and positions. The largest Air Force presence served on the Engineering and Installation teams, which were responsible for installing over 500,000 feet of copper and fiber optic cabling; creating eight critical communication locations that served over 40,000 users; and researching, procuring and storing over 10 million dollars in communications infrastructure materiel. This included the shipping and handling of over 500 short tons of critical equipment.

Collectively, all the elements of Task Force Thunder provided an efficient and secure communications network for the entire CJOA-A, which supported over 90,000 U.S. Forces, with a reliability rate of 99.9 percent. And with numerous development projects throughout the country, the signaleers increased the network capacity by over 400 percent and pushed out an excess of one billion dollars worth of equipment and contract support in an 11-month period, said Army Lt. Col. George Brady, 359th TTSB supply and logistics officer in charge for Task Force Thunder.

Kemp thanked the members of Task Force Thunder and his Soldiers of the 359th TTSB for their tireless efforts in supporting the warfighters. "The success we have had here has been a team effort... and you can tell your family that you had the opportunity to serve with the best signal brigade in the Army's inventory."

The accomplishments of the 359th have definitely set a high bar, said Batts. "As we, the members of the 228th take on this mission, we can't help but stand in awe and admiration of the work you've done and the example you have set." The mission here is not done though, and my team is prepared, thanks to the efforts and training by the 359th. "Our time has come, and we are ready."

