



Sword's Edge



THE OFFICIAL DEPLOYMENT MAGAZINE OF TASK FORCE SWORD

November 2011

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Edge



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The Future of ASNF Engineer Partnership

Story by U.S. Army Cpt. Joseph Caperna, U.S. Army Cpt. Thomas Ryder, and Afghan National Army Lt. Jamal Nasir

Ten years ago, no one believed that the Afghan National Army (ANA) would possess the capability to conduct route clearance patrols, build roads, or construct buildings. Today, Soldiers of Task Force (TF) Sword have the opportunity to work with Afghan engineers, who are not only determined to establish security for the Afghan people, but are also prepared to meet the challenge of rebuilding their country.

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As the time that the U.S. and Coalition Forces have remaining in Afghanistan dwindles, an increasing amount of resources is being spent on partnership with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). With the drawdown of forces already being felt throughout the Combined/Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan (CJOA-A) and more cutbacks planned, one thing is clear: The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will have to do more with less. With the future of Afghanistan hanging in the balance, a dire need exists for tactically and technically competent Afghan engineers to build infrastructure, ensure freedom of movement along vital roads for transportation and commerce, and secure the developing government. According to the ISAF Partnering Directive, the guidance for partnership is:

“The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) faces two daunting tasks: protecting the Afghan population and defeating the insurgency that challenges its sovereignty. ISAF’s mission is to assist GIROA in accomplishing these tasks. ISAF will use embedded partnering—a trust-based, habitual and enduring relationship with the ANSF - as the method to assist GIROA in overcoming these challenges.”

Significance of Partnership

Prior to the deployment, TF Sword recognized the importance of partnering with the ANA engineers and placed partnership as a main line of effort, alongside construction and combat effects. The desired outcome for the engineer partnership line of effort, when U.S. forces depart Afghanistan in 2014, is for ANA engineer units to be able to provide combat and construction effects, independent of ISAF assistance. The end-state for partnership, in general, is for the ANSF to be capable of shouldering additional security tasks and can increasingly conduct and sustain coordinated operations, with emerging organic combat support and combat service support capability, with less assistance from the coalition.

Once deployed, TF Sword quickly established its Partnership cell, part of the S3 section. Consisting of a captain and a staff sergeant on the brigade staff, the Partnership cell aims to:

- Increase ANSF capability and capacity
- Develop the ANSF and their leadership to a level where they are capable of shouldering additional security tasks, and conduct coordinated operations as the supported element with less assistance from ISAF
- Increase the Professionalism of the ANSF

Every other week, the Partnership cell hosts a Partnership Working Group in order to synchronize TF



1st Lt. McNeese, platoon leader in the 572nd Engineer Company, Task Force Gridley, briefs an ANA platoon leader and another ANA soldier from 3/203rd Route Clearance Company with the help of the interpreter, Habib, prior to a partnership mission to clear the Gates of Ghazni on August 13, 2011. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Anna Rutherford, Task Force Gridley Public Affairs)

Sword partnership efforts with the ANA engineers in RC-North, RC-Capital, and RC-East, in order to allow the ANA engineers to conduct full spectrum engineer operations independent of ISAF assistance. The composition of the Partnership Working Group consists of the Brigade S3 as the chair, the Partnership Officer in Charge, as the lead, each battalion partnership officer, the Brigade Public Affairs Officer, and an S2 representative. The Partnership Working Group utilizes inputs from the intelligence assessment provided by the S2 representative, the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A) fielding plan of future ANA engineer units, any requests from ANSF or GIROA, and current partnerships. The working group also examines units that are without an existing partnership in order to close the gap. Often, the reason that units are lacking a partnership is because the ANA engineer units are still in the process of being created. One critical element of ensuring a positive partnership is sending a few U.S. Soldiers to the ANA engineer school, located in Mazar-E-Sharif, in RC-North, while their future Afghan partnership unit is still being formed. This way, relationships and bonds can be formed even before the ANA unit graduates and is released to a base to join the fight.

The crux of the Partnership Working Group is reviewing key leader engagements (KLEs) with ANA units, analyzing the map overlay that depicts the current laydown of U.S. units that have partner-

ships, and the Commander’s Update and Assessment Tool (CUAT). The CUAT measures ANA units based on their leadership, training, overall material, and shoot-move-communicate skills, and classifies the unit into one of the following categories:

CUAT Assessment Categories	
Independent	The unit is able to plan and execute missions, maintain command and control of subordinate elements, call on and control QRF as well as MEDEVAC assets. The unit is able to call for and integrate joint effects from Coalition Forces and is capable of exploiting intelligence. Unit personnel and equipment are greater than 75% and able to meet its basic logistics needs without assistance from Coalition Forces.
Effective with Advisors	Effective planning, synchronizing, directing, and reporting of operations and status and able to coordinate and communicate with higher, lower, adjacent, and combined/joint units. Leaders, staff, and unit adhere to ANSF Code of Conduct and are loyal to GIRoA. Equipment and personnel levels are ≥75%.
Effective with Assistance	Required routine mentoring for planning, synchronizing, directing, and reporting of operations and status; coordinating and communicating with higher, lower, adjacent and combined/joint units; and maintaining effective readiness reports. Leaders, staff, and most of the unit usually adhere to the ANSF Code of Conduct and are loyal to GIRoA. Equipment and personnel levels are ≥65%.
Developing	Requires partner unit presence and assistance for planning, synchronizing, directing, and reporting of operations and status; coordinating and communicating with higher, lower, adjacent, and combined/joint units; and maintaining effective readiness reports. Leaders and most of the staff usually adhere to the ANSF Code of Conduct and are Loyal to GIRoA. Equipment and personnel levels are ≤65%.
Establishing	This unit is at the beginning of organization. It is barely capable of planning, synchronizing, directing, and reporting of operations and status, even with the presence and assistance of a partner unit. It is barely able to communicate with higher, lower, adjacent, and combined/joint units. Leadership and staff may not adhere to the ANSF Code of Conduct or may not be loyal to GIRoA. Equipment and personnel levels less than 50%.
Not Assessed	Insufficient data available for complete assessment.

The Partnership Working Group also analyzes the security objectives for each RC while determining if partnership efforts are having the desired impact on the security objective areas.

From the Partnership Working Group, the updated partnership priorities and planned KLEs with ANA units and installations are produced as outputs. After each Partnership Working Group, the slides and outputs are disseminated to the leads of the Strategic Communications and Targeting Working Groups, so the knowledge can be shared throughout the brigade staff and incorporated into different working groups.

The different types of ANA engineer units are a Kandak, Coy, Route Clearance Company (RCC), and a Garrison Support Unit (GSU). A Kandak is an ANA battalion, while a Coy is an ANA engineer company, consisting of approximately 130 soldiers. A Coy possesses both Sapper and construction assets to provide combat and force protection measures. Comparatively, a RCC has less manpower; only 75 to 100 soldiers, but it does have organic route clearance and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) platoons. Part of brigade headquarters, a GSU provides facilities with engineering support, and processes reoccurring work requests with its 50 soldiers. A GSU is similar to a Department of Public Works (DPW) on U.S. Forward Operating Bases (FOBs).

Partnership Success

"Our military is working hand in hand with our civilian partners to secure the gains we have made by strengthening the Afghan government and by ad-

vancing economic opportunity. We're committed to working with and strengthening our Afghan partners because we know that only they can ensure the security of their country." – GEN John Allen, COMISAF

Task Force Sword is involved in mentoring several ANA Engineer units including route clearance engineers, combat engineers, and facility engineers. These partnerships range from basic classes in drivers’ training to combined action route clearance operations. Regardless of the intended mission, the key to making these partnerships yield successful results is utilizing realistic expectations and developing goals that will enable the ANA to conduct independent operations.

Great achievements have already been made through partnership. ANA combat engineers are actively securing main roads that are necessary to the movement of commerce in Afghanistan. ANA construction engineers are busy repairing highways, building infrastructure, and making improvements to the quality of life.

An example of a successful partnership is with the 2/203rd ANA Route Clearance Company (RCC). The 2/203rd ANA RCC is currently partnered with the 370th Engineer Company, attached to 1249th Engineer Battalion – TF Gridley. Based in the vicinity of FOB Sharana, the 2/203rd RCC is led by Cpt. Shah. With 82 soldiers divided into three platoons, Cpt. Ahmad Shah is in charge of what is lauded to be one of the most successful, if not the most successful RCC in all of his country. According to Cpt. Dave Jennings, the 370th company commander, "the ANA partnership

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Soldiers from the 370th Eng. Co. and the ANA's 2/203 Route Clearance Company, work together to clear a route. (Photo by U.S. Army)

is going extremely well. Their leadership is exceptional and apparent in the manner in which they conduct themselves. The 2/203rd RCC is fully capable of conducting route clearance operations. They have discovered IEDs (improvised explosive devices) while conducting joint missions with my company, validating their route clearance skills."

The ingredients for the achievements of the 2/203rd RCC are its co-location with their partnered unit, strong ANA leadership, and trust between both Afghan and American Soldiers. The 2/203rd RCC is fearless and remains steadfast in their commitment to serving their nation. Always willing to go out on mission, even with a moment's notice, the 2/203rd RCC volunteered to escort and transport critical supplies to the 370th Engineer Company, who suffered multiple IED strikes during a named operation and were stuck at another FOB awaiting repair parts. "The [2/203rd] RCC didn't hesitate once they heard about our situation. They wanted to help us out because they knew we would do the same for them. That is the type of brotherhood and relationship that is melded only through shared combat experience," explained Sgt. 1st Class James Goleman, the TF Gridley partnership officer.

Partnership Methods	
Embedded Partner	Combined team units where a trust-based, assigned relationship exists. Both share the same
Partnered	Combined team units where a trust-based, assigned relationship exists. Both share the same
Limited Partnership	Combined team units where an assigned relationship exists. The units do not share a battle
Mentoring Only	Combined team units where an assigned relationship exists. Both share the same goal of build-
Uncovered	Coalition unit is not present/assigned. The ANSFC unit is uncovered.

Partnership Challenges

"The Afghans have been surviving. They haven't been living. They've been surviving." - Sgt. 1st Class James Goleman, TF Gridley Partnership Officer

Unfortunately, not all partnerships are flourishing as well as the 2/203rd RCC. As with any unit in the U.S. Army, leadership, or lack thereof, play a pivotal role in the overall success. However, the paramount chal-

allenges facing partnership have less to do with the training, leadership, and competency of the ANA and more with logistics, equipping, and fielding.

Currently, not all U.S. Army engineer units are partnered with the ANA, because the Afghan units have yet to be stood up, properly trained, and fielded. Additionally, not all of the newly formed ANA engineer units are co-located with their American or Coalition counterparts. This significantly detracts from the partnership experience and hinders the growth of relationships. Likewise, the ANA logistics and supply systems have yet to catch up with the influx of new units that are being created on a rolling basis.

Frustrating for their American counterparts, it is tempting to simply give the ANA a handout. "That is a quick fix and is comparable to putting a Band-Aid on a wound instead of a tourniquet. It all goes back to the proverb of if you give a man a fish, it will feed him for a day. But if you teach that man to fish, he will never go hungry again. That's exactly what we're trying to do with the ANA – getting them to help themselves," explains Sgt. 1st Class Goleman. The Afghans realize this as well. Lieutenant Jamal Nasir, the EOD platoon leader in the 2/203rd RCC commented through a translator "Our hope is that the U.S. forces develop and build the ANA and Afghan National Police (ANP) so that we can defend our own country." He went on to say "I don't want the U.S. and Coalition Forces to solve our problems for us. I want the U.S. to solve the bureaucracy and logistics issues so Afghan can help ourselves." In Afghanistan, corruption is common and is no stranger to the ANA. Another huge challenge for the country is education. According to Lieutenant Nasir, "80-percent of Afghans are illiterate. Without an education they are easily susceptible to influence from the insurgents. The first step in ANA training should be education and literacy."

The Way Ahead

"This kind of enhanced cultural awareness and partnership on the front line will increase operational effectiveness and reduce casualties associated with security operations. Gaining the support of the population and denying the ability of the enemy to exploit cultural grievances is a critical element of the combined team approach. Holding each other accountable and ensuring the operations are culturally acceptable will improve overall operating conditions in Afghanistan." – CSM Marvin Hill, ISAF CSM

TF Sword's three lines of effort, Engineer Partnership, Construction Effects, and Combat Effects continue to develop ANA engineers towards independent operations. At the beginning of the deployment, TF Sword spent the first 60 days focusing on key leader engagements with all currently fielded ANA engineer units, training facilities, and units currently in training. This was conducted at all levels, from platoon to brigade. By building relationships, TF Sword was able to develop or grow estab-

lished partnerships.

After 90 days in theater, TF Sword assessed all training facilities programs of instruction in addition to assessing the engineer units currently in training. The purpose of this step was to validate the timeline for partnered operations to ensure our goals and milestones were feasible. The next gate was to conduct CUATs of all partnered ANA engineer units in order to determine each unit's readiness posture and capability to conduct missions as well as their leadership. After this was completed, the subsequent phase is to ensure that all ANA engineer units are fielded and partnered with a NATO unit. This is an ongoing process. If possible, the NATO units will embed with their partnered ANA unit. Whenever feasible, partnered NATO and ANA units are co-located.

After training and mentorship with partnered units, TF Sword began to conduct combined action with the ANA engineers. This occurs on a sliding timeline, with certain ANA units requiring more time and effort with training before they are ready for combined action. Additionally, as new ANA units are formed, engagements and training must occur prior to combined action. Currently, TF Sword is in the process of improving the operational readiness of all partnered ANA units so they are capable of combined action. Ultimately, the goal is to build the ANA through combined action until they can conduct independent operations. Prior to independent operations, units will assess their partnered ANA engineers to validate them.

It is impossible to plan partnership with the ANA in a sterilized environment. Afghans depend on personal contact, which helps develop relationships and in turn yields great rewards. Every Liaison or Partnership Officer who takes the time to know his or her Afghan counterpart will be setting themselves up for success. U.S. Soldiers must look for the commonalities with the Afghan people and respect the differences between the two cultures. In order to build rapport, U.S. Soldiers must trust their Afghan counterparts. Soldiers are Soldiers, whether American or Afghan. Soldiers stand up for what is right. The future of engineering partnership is for both the U.S. Army and ANA to work "shohna ba shohna" or shoulder to shoulder in pursuit of common mission success.







Ghormach Ford Site



Task Force Roughneck



Engineers Improve Base, Construct Road

Story by Spc. David Huddleston
Task Force Sword Public Affairs

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Afghan local national contractors hired by U.S. Army and supervised by U.S. civilian inspectors constructed a road at Forward Operating Base Sharana July 19. By paving a primary route, they are helping to improve the FOB, as well as, the Afghan economy.

According to U.S. Army Capt. Justin McMillan, 243rd Construction Management Team, Task Force Sword, the Afghan economy does not receive much revenue from exports or trade, and is forced to rely on internal money distribution, which is not abundant.

To help the economy grow, McMillan employs up to 300 local nationals a day to provide services to sustain and improve FOB Sharana.

"Hiring local national contractors improves their economic situation by creating jobs and feeding external money into their economy which helps stimulate commerce in their hometown," said McMillan, a base master planner from Colorado Springs, Colo. "Boosting the local commerce helps achieve our strategic goal of creating a self-sufficient Afghanistan."

McMillan said coalition forces have an Afghan-first policy which requires the hiring of Afghans for labor to develop the workforce. In addition, forces seek local materials and services to expand the industrial, commercial and agriculture bases of Afghanistan.

"Our projects employ a lot of Afghan workers. The Afghan-first policy puts money directly into those workers' hands," said U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Elyse Vail, 243rd CMT public works officer from San Diego. "For an economy that does not have an external market, this program is one of few that directly puts external funds into their economy."

Afghan contractor Haji lives on FOB Sharana and has been doing construction for years. The contract defined his responsibility for managing, manning and equipping the project.

Haji said the hardest part of fulfilling the contract was "the time it takes to get through the gate. Sometimes (workers) get in too slow, but we know its all because of security."

U.S. civilian inspectors Dave Hartley from Niceville,



Fla., employed with CH2M Hill/KBR Global Service, inspected the work throughout the process and assured the contractor abided by conditions set forth in the contract.

"We had no problems at all with work," said Hartley. "They are excellent, hard workers."

McMillan said it is a win-win situation.

"By building this partnership with the local nationals, we are providing them work opportunities, while teaching them the best practices when it comes to construction and construction management," said McMillan. "In turn, the Army is receiving a low cost method of constructing, and achieving the enduring goal of stimulating the Afghan populace."

Haji said these partnerships help support the counterinsurgency by helping the Afghans help themselves.

"The last few years I have been doing this. I have learned a lot-especially about construction," said Haji. "We are happy with what we are doing. This is our country. We do it to support our family and people. Our children, our family, and the Afghan people can use it in the future."



Afghan workers spread asphalt on a new road being built on Forward Operating Base Sharana, July 19. To help stimulate the economy and grow a skilled workforce in Afghanistan, the 243rd Construction Management Team, Task Force Sword, maintains an Afghan-first policy when selecting contractors for jobs. (Photo by Spc. David Huddleston, Task Force Sword Public Affairs)



A truck dumps asphalt into a bitumen spreader as Afghan workers spread asphalt across a new road at Forward Operating Base Sharana, July 19. To help stimulate the economy and grow a skilled workforce in Afghanistan, the 243rd Construction Management Team, Task Force Sword, maintains an Afghan-first policy when selecting contractors for jobs. (Photo by Spc. David Huddleston, Task Force Sword Public Affairs)



Zaire-Native Soldier Gives Back To US Through Military Service in Afghanistan

Story by 1st LT. Jared Hirsch Korn and Spc. Rosalind Arroyo, TF Dolch Public Affairs

The thirst for freedom and hunger for an improved way of life is why one U.S. Army soldier sought asylum in the U.S. to escape his former homeland of Zaire, Africa under the tyrannical reign of former President Mobutu Sese Seko.

U.S. Army Spc. Ali Baharanyi is a 54th Engineer Battalion combat engineer and native of the Democratic Republic of Congo who now resides in Auburn, Ala.

Baharanyi originally hails from Lubumbashi, DRC, where he was born in 1974 when it was called Zaire. The DRC has been enmeshed in civil war for much of the last 15 years. Political, ethnic and state-based actors have vied with each other for control of its valuable natural resources. The war and genocide fought between a Hutu majority and Tutsi minority in Rwanda in 1994 spilled over into the DRC. The Hutu's campaign of genocide against the Tutsi was a pre-text for armies in neighboring Rwanda and Uganda to invade Zaire.

Growing up in Lubumbashi, the second largest city in the DRC, Baharanyi grew up having his basic needs met.

"I can't say we lacked anything; but my dad was a visiting professor at Princeton University," said Baharanyi. "He was spending most of his time outside the country."

The war in the Congo became a part of Baharanyi's life one night when soldiers visited his house. They were looking for Baharanyi due to his father's political position against the authoritarian regime. The regime soldiers went to the back of the house and beat up two students who were renting the guest house; the regime was sending a message to Baharanyi's father who supported a different political party.

After beating up the students, the soldiers tried to enter the house. Baharanyi's mother and brother distracted the soldiers by making noise in one of the rooms while Baharanyi escaped to get help. He went to a wealthy neighbor with a private security force; the guards fired their weapons toward the soldiers until they left.

After the attack and home-invasion, Baharanyi's family left Lubumbashi feeling it was no longer safe for them. Baharanyi soon finished high school and was reunited with his family in Bukavu. In a move to evade possible harm and escape the growing genocide of his family, Baharanyi moved with his father to America in 2006.

Life in the U.S. posed new problems for Baharanyi; not knowing English and extreme culture shock were some of the obstacles he encountered assimilating to American society.

"I didn't speak English, and in my country the young have respect for older people," said Baharanyi. "I found 18-year-old kids didn't care about your age."



Late 2006, U.S. officials granted Baharanyi asylum, and he decided to join the U.S. Army. After the Army denied his initial entry for several years because he did not have a green card, a National Guard recruiter assisted Baharanyi in 2009 after he earned his green card.

"I felt compelled to give back [by joining the Army] to the country that provided my family and me a safe haven when our own country took everything from us," Baharanyi said.

Having a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural engineering and a Master of Science degree in bio-systems engineering/agronomy and soil, Baharanyi is fluent in French, Swahili, Kinyarwanda and Lingala. He chose to pursue a career as a combat engineer in the Army.

August 2010 marked Baharanyi's graduation from basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., where he then graduated advanced training and earned the title of combat engineer.

Baharanyi held several positions in two different companies of the 54th Engineer Battalion. He works in the construction management squad, assisting in the construction of various projects and duties. Baharanyi aspires to become an officer so he can optimize his contributions to his new country.

"I want to serve my new country in the fullest capacity possible by using all my assets and experiences as an officer in the U.S. Army," said Baharanyi.

There have been some setbacks for Baharanyi's goal of becoming an officer. At his age of 36, he is unable to apply without a waiver.

"An officer in the battalion is helping me by finding out if we can possibly process an application for direct commission," said Baharanyi.

Baharanyi is well liked among his peers and leadership. They said his positive work ethic, in addition to being able to manage whatever duties delegated to him, helps him stand out.

"Baha' is a hard worker and really nice guy," said Los Angeles resident U.S. Army Spc. Shiyan Liu, a CMS carpenter assigned to 54th Engineer Battalion who is originally from Beijing. "I feel very comfortable with him, because he offers me sound advice. Baha is a bit older than me and more mature than most people around here."

U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Steven Barker of the 370th Sapper Engineer Company from Glendale, Ariz. is Baharanyi's former first sergeant and thinks highly of his potential to become an officer.

"Since last September, I've known Spc. Baharanyi to be an extremely well educated Soldier and a decent family man," said

Barker. "He serves as an exemplary role model to all his peers while always seeking to improve himself and those around him.

"Baharanyi uses his intelligence to aid our battalion in company intelligence support teams, and he is able to brief higher forms of leadership with amazing ease," continued Barker. "As an officer, Baharanyi will be a great leader both tactically and interpersonally. He has fair and impartial qualities and has been through more conflict than any one Soldier will ever know in their entire life. These experiences taught him strength and perseverance."





ROUTE CLEARANCE PACKAGE

39

370TH SAPPER COMPANY

TASK FORCE GRIDLEY

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Scott A. Smith, the platoon sergeant for Route Clearance Package 39, 370th Sapper Company, Task Force Gridley, Task Force Sword, pulls security during dismounted route clearance operations, Oct. 22. Smith, a combat engineer from Providence, R.I. helped clear Route Jeep of explosive hazards. (Photos by Cpt. Thomas Ryder, Task Force Sword Public Affairs)



U.S. Army Pfc. Kirk Allen, a dismount Sapper with Route Clearance Package 39, 370th Sapper Company, Task Force Gridley, Task Force Sword, pulls security during dismounted route clearance operations, Oct. 22. Allen, a combat engineer from San Diego, helped clear Route Jeep of explosive hazards.



U.S. Army Spc. Paul McPhetres, a team leader with Route Clearance Package 39, 370th Sapper Company, Task Force Gridley, Task Force Sword, pulls security during dismounted route clearance operations, Oct. 22. McPhetres, a combat engineer from Randolph Center, Vt., helped clear Route Jeep of explosive hazards.

“Partnership is an essential aspect of our counterinsurgency strategy. It is also an indispensable element of the transition of responsibility to Afghans.”

– GEN (ret.) David Petraeus



**U.S. and Afghan Army Engineers gather together on Forward Operating Base Sharana, upon completion of partnered training.
(Photo by Spc. David Huddleston, Task Force Sword Public Affairs)**



TF Sword Holds Quarterly 1SG Forum

Story by Sgt. Wesley Petrus
Task Force Sword Public Affairs

U.S. Army and Air Force enlisted leaders of over 20 engineer companies in the Northern Engineer Region of Afghanistan attended the initial quarterly First Sergeant Forum, held by Task Force Sword at Forward Operation Base Sharana, Oct. 1.

U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. David Clark, command sergeant major of TF Sword, from Knoxville, Tenn., hosted the forum along with several senior leaders from the TF and Regional Command East, giving the first sergeants the opportunity to receive mentorship and address concerns about their daily mission.

"I don't want you to have any questions in your mind about your role as company first sergeants," said Clark in his introduction. "The decisions you make everyday has a major impact on future missions of the U.S. military and coalition forces,"

Clark also highlighted the importance of the engineer mission and discussed the challenges first sergeants face while trying to accomplish it in Afghanistan.

"Your job is even more complicated while in theatre because of the extra stress, operational tempo, and loss of Soldiers' lives that some of you have already faced while here," he said.

U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Isia Vimoto, command sergeant major of Combined Joint Task Force-1, of American Samoa, was the feature guest speaker for the forum. During his address, he paralleled the perplexities of the mission in Afghanistan to the Walt Disney's movie *The Sword in the Stone*.

"If you recall in the movie, young King Arthur who was mentored by Merlin faced many chal-



lenges while growing up and becoming the great king of England," said Vimoto. "King Arthur wanted to unite England, but he had many issues to overcome in order to do so: the difficult geography of the area, the solitude of castles, their lack of trust of outsiders, and a difficult history...Now compare the same issues he had there to us here in Afghanistan." Most first sergeants, if not all, easily understood and agreed with the points to his reference.

The remainder of the schedule featured presentations on a variety of topics from changes to the retention program to continuing the partnership with the Afghan National Army.

Clark ended the forum by saying, "I know there's a lot of new information for us to take in, and it can change at any given moment, and we all are in a leadership position. With that position comes responsibility, and right now we are responsible for using this new information to mentor not only our soldiers but also the engineer military leaders of Afghanistan."





Female Platoon Leaders Gain Afghans' Respect

Story by 2nd Lt. Michael Chigbrow
Task Force Dolch

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Accomplishing the traditionally male role of route clearance missions, brings a unique blend of challenges and advantages to female platoon leaders of the 535th Engineer Support Company, Task Force Dolch, TF Sword, charged with clearing the roads of improvised explosive devices in eastern Afghanistan.

Since the early days of the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns, U.S. Army engineers have cleared routes of IEDs and other dangers to ensure safe passage of Soldiers and supplies. However, most of these Soldiers belong to engineer sapper companies, mobility augmentation companies or clearance companies which are made up of all male Soldiers.

The 535th ESC, originally a construction company, is a mixed gender unit that is now being used for route clearance in Logar Province.

According to U.S. Army 1st Lt. Brittany Clark, a route clearance patrol platoon leader with the 535th ESC, from Kapolei, Hawaii, the gender diversity adds challenges when communicating with the local population, where women are not commonly allowed to speak to men who are not in their family.

She said female members of the unit usually get strange looks from Afghans who are not used to seeing female Soldiers clearing routes.

"I get a lot of stares, but I think that the locals on the routes have gotten used to seeing me now," said Clark.

Former 535th ESC, RCP platoon leader, U.S. Army 1st Lt. Kimberly Jung, of Los Angeles, said Afghan men have a hard time believing the females are in charge.

"One time, I was approached by an Afghan man during a traffic control point operation, and he asked who I was. I said, I was the platoon leader. He said, 'So you are in charge of the women?' I said, 'No, I'm in charge of everyone here, not just the women.' He shook his head in disbelief and said, 'No, you must be in charge of the women,' and offered to have me talk to the women of their village," said Jung.

Another RCP platoon leader from Ouray, Colo., U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Casey Hinkson said the local men will sometimes try to talk to one of the males in the patrol first instead of the female platoon leader.

"If I am dismounted with my interpreter, sometimes they will try to talk to a male team member instead, but we really haven't had that many issues with locals not being willing to talk to me," she said.

The women said their gender can come in handy, too. The ability to be able to talk to the women of a village has been useful in certain situations.

"When we have to blow in place [improvised explosive devices or unexploded ordinances] on the route, and there are houses nearby, I would take the interpreter and let the people know there is going to be an explosion. A lot of times there are just women at home, so they are a little nervous when we come to the door. But the interpreter tells them that I am a female, and it is okay for them to come and talk to me," said Clark.

Despite initial concerns, female Soldiers are able

1st Lt. Brittany Clark, a route clearance patrol platoon leader with the 535th Engineer Support Company, Task Force Dolch, from Kapolei, Hawaii, leads her patrol in a route clearance mission April 17. The 535th ESC, originally a construction company, is a mixed gender unit that is now being used for route clearance, a mission traditionally tasked to all-male units. (Photo by Capt. Wade Smith, Task Force Dolch)



1st Lt. Clark finishes her patrol brief with her platoon May 12.

to work with our Afghan allies. Being female allows the platoon leaders to hear Afghan women's concerns.

"I think that a lot of the local females assume that we are all male, so I make an extra effort to speak to the local women," said Clark.

There have also been some awkward situations dealing with the Afghan National Security Forces.

"When I was down at a combat outpost in our area of operations, I was invited to a luncheon and the local National Directorate of Security wanted to give me a burka as a present," said Clark. "I didn't know if this was a good thing or a bad thing."

Within the platoon, Jung said females are considered both equal and vital parts of the units.

"Being a female in a combat zone is no different. The male Soldiers treat us the same as everyone else. We are not special, and we are included as indispensable parts of the team."

Hinkson agreed stating, "The fact that we are doing the job that we are doing now proves that there is no reason to keep females separate from combat units. Even if it doesn't say that we are a sapper platoon, by doing route clearance we are still doing the same job, whether or not we have the title."

U.S. Army Capt. Wade Smith, 535th ESC commander from Brewster, N.Y., said he is proud of the work his platoon leaders have done.

"Their performance speaks for itself. Their subordinates look to them for guidance and leadership regardless of their gender and they have always accomplished their missions as professionals," said Smith. "I am very proud of the way they have handled this mission, but in no way surprised at their results."

Combat has long been an arena for earning equality. The female platoon leaders of the 535th ESC's route clearance patrols are leading Soldiers, interacting with Afghans, and accomplishing the mission of keeping the roads safe for Soldiers and civilians.



U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Casey Hinkson a route clearance patrol platoon leader with the 535th Engineer Support Company, Task Force Dolch, Task Force Sword, from Ouray, Colo., briefs her platoon prior to conducting a mission April 2. The 535th ESC, originally a construction company, is a mixed gender unit that is now being used for route clearance, a mission traditionally tasked to all-male units. (Photo by 2nd Lt. Michael Chigbrow, Task Force Dolch, Task Force Sword)







ANA Hone Route Clearance Tactics With Task Force Dolch

Story by Spc. Rosalind Arroyo
Task Force Dolch Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, much of the recent focus has shifted toward rehabilitating Afghanistan into a viable and independent state. One crucial aspect of this mission is building an Afghan National Army that is able to assume responsibility for the country's security.

With this goal in mind, Sappers from Task Force Dolch, Task Force Sword, have committed many hours of their time partnering with multiple ANA engineer units. From the beginning of the partnership, TF Dolch primarily advised and trained Afghan security forces in the areas of logistics, first aid, weapons maintenance, training and operations, and route clearance procedures. Over time, as their partnered units gained proficiency, they executed numerous missions with their U.S. counterparts and independently.

Task Force Dolch began training their first ANA route clearance company in February at the consolidated fielding center outside of Kabul, under the guidance of U.S. Army Capt. Jacob Hohman, a Pittsburgh native and officer in charge, and U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Cesar Olaso, the non-commissioned officer in charge from Bozeman, Mont., both members of TF Dolch, TF Sword.



"Task Force Dolch has a unique role in RC East in that we cover a large area resulting in experienced route clearance operations; we're able to train RCCs with an up to date practical approach. We developed a training plan that gives them a basic concept of route clearance like leaders training to the more technical aspects of route clearance using equipment and driving route clearance vehicles," said Hohman.

Hohman's team has since helped train multiple ANA unit across RC East in explosive hazardous reduction measures, heavy construction equipment operation, route clearance patrol procedures, and the development of leadership skills. In

a little over five months, Hohman and his team prepared instruction guidelines and located appropriate training areas and interpreters. Hohman's team also instructed the 2nd Brigade, 201st Corps, Afghan National Army on how to find and neutralize improvised explosive devices, provide security, manage logistics supply chains, and render first aid.

Before this training, the soldiers of 4th Brigade, 203rd Corps ANA Route Clearance Company found only a handful of IEDs, whereas they've now found more than 30.

ANA officer 1st Lt. Noor, a platoon leader with 4th Brigade, 203rd Corps in Parwan Province, Afghanistan, said that before the training his soldiers were not properly prepared to conduct route clearance missions. However, the training conducted by Hohman's team has provided them with important tactics techniques and procedures which facilitated their effectiveness.

"We have found more than 30 IEDs on our own, some of which I discovered myself thanks to the training," said one ANA soldier. It was a big help to have Task Force Dolch work with us, and we extend our gratitude to them."

ANA officer Capt. Mohamed of Kabul, Afghanistan, is proud to sustain their route clearance operations while training other Afghan soldiers in route clearance basics. Mohamed said that in time he foresees himself developing his own route clearance training curriculum for Afghan infantry units; however, for now he will remain focused on his soldiers.

Mentoring the Afghan National Army is becoming a step-by-step process that surpasses merely showing Afghans the correct processes, it encompasses mutual learning, developing mentors, and knowledge of tactical procedures. Task Force Dolch's mentorship contribution to the route clearance companies of RC East will help the ANA operate independently and take over the reins against the insurgency for years to come.



In Memoriam

CPL Raphael R. Arruda



Corporal Raphael Rodrigues Arruda was born in Brazil on July 23, 1989, and enlisted in the U.S. Army on July 17, 2007 as a 21B, combat engineer. After basic training and advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood, MO, he was assigned to the 744th Engineer Company (MAC) based in Ogden, UT. He deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom to FOB Fenty to provide assured mobility to Task Force Bastogne and Task Force Bronco in November 2010. This was his first deployment.

CPL Arruda served as Husky driver, RC-31 driver and gunner, team leader and truck commander. He enjoyed the company of good friends, casual hikes and a competitive game of soccer.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (posthumous), Purple Heart (posthumous) with one oak leaf cluster, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two bronze stars, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, NATO ISAF Medal, Combat Action Badge, Rifle Marksman Proficiency Badge, Grenade Expert Proficiency Badge, and the Army Lapel Button.

CPL Arruda is survived by his father and his brother. He will be greatly missed, but never forgotten by the men and women of the 744th Engineer Company, 54th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade.

Killed In Action on 16 JUL 2011

SGT Omar Jones



Died 18 JUL 2011

Omar Alejandro Jones was born in Jackson, Miss., on September 16, 1982. In October 2001, he enlisted in the U.S. Army as a 11B, infantryman. During his active duty time, he mobilized to Iraq from May 2003 to July 2004. He then moved to the Nebraska National Guard. His first assignment was with the 134th LRS in Crete, Neb., as a 11B, scout. Later, SGT Jones reclassified to 88M, vehicle driver, and was assigned to 1074th Transportation Company (MED TRK)(-) in North Platte, Neb. He transferred to DET 2, 1074th in Ogallala for deployment to Iraq from July 2006 to Nov 2007. Upon his return, he transferred to DET 2, 1195th Trans. Co. (MED TRK) in McCook, Neb., as an 88M, vehicle driver. He was reassigned in Feb 2009 to 1195th Trans Co. (MED TRK) (-) in Kearney, Neb., and reassigned shortly after to the Rear DET 1195th Trans. Co. in Kearney, Neb. In July 2010, SGT Jones transferred to DET 1, 623rd Engineer Co. in Hastings Neb., as a 12R, electrician. He transferred to 623rd Eng. Co. in Wahoo, Neb., in July 2010 as a 12R, electrician, and in October 2010, he deployed to Afghanistan.

He has received the following awards and decorations: Army Commendation Medal w/ three bronze oak leaf clusters, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal w/ one bronze star, Iraqi Campaign Medal w/ two bronze stars, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal w/ "M" Device, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Nebraska National Guard Homeland Defense Service Ribbon w/ "M" Device, and the Nebraska National Guard Service Medal 5 year, Combat Infantryman Badge, Combat Action Badge, Driver and Mechanic Badge w/ Driver Tracked Vehicle Clasp.

SGT Omar Jones was a very caring person. He would go out of his way to help anyone. His presence always brought a smile to all around him and his sense of humor kept the Soldiers in high spirits. He truly was a great person to have in the 623rd Eng. Co. He always went above and beyond any task that was given to him.

SGT Jones is survived by his wife, his daughter and his son. He will be greatly missed, but never forgotten by the men and women of the 623rd Engineer Company, 1249th Engineer Battalion and 18th Engineer Brigade.

SGT Barun Rai



Died on 03 AUG 11

Sergeant Barun Rai was born in Nepal on June 5th, 1987 and enlisted in the United States Army Quartermaster Corps on October 5, 2006. He attended basic combat training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and subsequently, Advanced Individual Training at Fort Lee, Virginia. In May of 2007, immediately after graduating from AIT, he was assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Brigade in Fort Drum, New York. During his time with 10th CAB, he deployed ISO Operation Iraqi Freedom where he served with distinction and honor. In 2010 he was reassigned to his current unit, the 54th Engineer Battalion out of Bamberg, Germany, currently deployed to Afghanistan ISO Operation Enduring Freedom. He served as a unit Supply Specialist, Company Supply NCOIC, and Company Armorer for the Forward Support Company, 54th EN BN.

His awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal (2OLC), the Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal second award, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Ribbons with numeral 3, the NATO Medal, and the Combat Action Badge.

SGT Rai and his family immigrated to the United States when he was 16 years old, where they lived in New York briefly before moving to their current residence in Maryland. Being a non US citizen, he was able to obtain his US citizenship while serving his country during a time of war. His main goals were to complete his service obligation and depart from the military, save money, further his civilian education, build a big house and take care of his family.

SGT Rai is survived by his mother and father, sister and brother. To those who served with him, he was a Soldier, a brother, and a friend. The loss of such a fine Soldier has created a void in the FSC that cannot be filled. He will be greatly missed but never forgotten by the men and women of the Forward Support Company, 54th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade, and 10th Combat Aviation Brigade.

1LT Ivan Lechowich



First Lieutenant Ivan Derek Lechowich was born on 26 October 1983, in Fort Sill, Okla. Prior to joining the Army, he resided in Tampa, Fla., and graduated from the University of Florida in 2007, with a Bachelor's of Art in History.

1LT Lechowich entered the United States Army at Fort Benning, Ga., where he completed both Basic Training and Officer Candidate School. 1LT Lechowich then completed Engineer Officer Basic Course at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Upon completion of his training, 1LT Lechowich was assigned to the 515th Engineer Company (Sapper), 5th Engineer Battalion, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

In April 2011, 1LT Lechowich deployed to Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, to meet the 515th Engineer Company (Sapper), who was already deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom XI-XII. For the first two months of the deployment he served as a mentor to an Afghan National Army Route Clearance Company and became the Platoon Leader for Route Clearance Patrol 72 in July 2011.

1LT Lechowich's hobbies included hiking and running. He also volunteered with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and was a member of Theta Chi while at the University of Florida. 1LT Lechowich was known for his intelligence, his uncanny ability to quote movies, and his unprecedented sense of humor.

1LT Lechowich's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (Posthumous), Purple Heart (Posthumous), Army Commendation Medal (Posthumous), National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO ISAF Medal, Polish Forces Medal – Gold, Combat Action Badge, Sapper Tab, and German Armed Force Proficiency Badge – Gold.

1LT Lechowich is survived by his wife Jennifer, daughter Natalie, parents Richard and Gina Lechowich, and sister Erika. He will be greatly missed but never forgotten by the men and women of the 515th Engineer Company, 54th Engineer Battalion, and 18th Engineer Brigade.

Killed in Action 28 SEP 2011

SPC Steven Gutowski



Specialist Steven Edward Gutowski was born on 27 May 1987, in Weymouth, Mass. Prior to joining the United States Army, he resided in Plymouth, Mass., where he graduated from Plymouth North High School and attended Cape Cod Community College.

On 31 December 2008, SPC Gutowski entered the United States Army at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. He was assigned to Charlie Company, 35th Engineer Battalion, where he completed Combat Engineer One Station Unit Training. Upon completion of his training, SPC Gutowski was assigned to the 515th Engineer Company (Sapper), 5th Engineer Battalion, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. From May to October 2009, SPC Gutowski served as the Company's Armorer, and from October 2009 to the September 2011, he was assigned to 3rd Platoon.

In February 2011, SPC Gutowski deployed to Ghazni Province, Afghanistan with the 515th Engineer Company (Sapper), in support of Operation Enduring Freedom XI-XII. He continued to serve as a Husky Operator and Gunner for Route Clearance Patrol 72.

SPC Gutowski's hobbies included fishing, hockey and bowling. He was also an avid Boston sports fan, particularly the Boston Bruins. SPC Gutowski was known for his big smile, easy-going demeanor, and positive attitude.

SPC Gutowski's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (Posthumous), Purple Heart (Posthumous), Army Commendation Medal (Posthumous), National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO ISAF Medal, Polish Forces Medal – Gold, Combat Action Badge, Wheeled Driver Badge, and Expert Weapons Qualification Badge – Rifle.

SPC Gutowski is survived by his parents Edward and Joan Gutowski and sisters Cheryl and Karen. He will be greatly missed but never forgotten by the men and women of the 515th Engineer Company, 54th Engineer Battalion, and 18th Engineer Brigade.

Killed in Action 28 SEP 2011

PFC David Drake



Private First Class David Andrew Drake was born on 07 October 1989, in Houston, Texas. Prior to joining the Army, he resided in Lumberton, Texas, where he studied Fire Protection at the Lamar Institute of Technology.

On 31 January 2011 PFC Drake entered the United States Army at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. He was assigned to Charlie Company, 31st Engineer Battalion, where he completed Combat Engineer One Station Unit Training. Upon completion of this training, PFC Drake was assigned to the 515th Engineer Company (Sapper), 5th Engineer Battalion, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

In June 2011, PFC Drake deployed to Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, where he joined the 515th Engineer Company (Sapper) already deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom XI-XII. After arriving he served as the Platoon Leader's driver for Route Clearance Patrol 72.

PFC Drake's hobbies included football and video games. Prior to enlisting in the United States Army he served as a Volunteer Fireman in his hometown. PFC Drake's brother, William, is also in the United States Army and just returned to Fort Hood, Texas after a tour in Iraq.

PFC Drake's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (Posthumous), Purple Heart (Posthumous), National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO ISAF Medal, Polish Forces Medal – Gold, Combat Action Badge, Wheeled Driver Badge, and Expert Weapons Qualification Badge – Rifle.

PFC Drake is survived by his mother Tommye Clark, brother William Drake, and sister Tori Drake. He will be greatly missed but never forgotten by the men and women of the 515th Engineer Company, 54th Engineer Battalion, and 18th Engineer Brigade.

Killed in Action 28 SEP 2011

SGT John A. Lyons



U.S. Army Sergeant John Alden Lyons was born in Peterborough, New Hampshire on Dec. 4, 1984 to Susan Smiley and Ronald Alden Lyons. He was raised in Seaside Park, New Jersey.

Upon graduating Central Regional high school, SGT Lyons went to work as a carpenter for several years. SGT Lyons then then applied to Rutgers University, where he studied Political Science for three years, earning 76 credits toward a Bachelor of Arts degree.

In December 2008, SGT Lyons enlisted at Fort Dix to be a combat engineer. He arrived at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. for One Station Unit Training (OSUT) in February, 2009. Upon completion of OSUT, SGT Lyons was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas where was assigned to the 572nd Mobility Augmentation Company.

SGT Lyons deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in December 2010. He served at Forward Operating Base Frontenac for the first six months of his deployment where he was among the first to receive a lateral promotion from Specialist to Corporal. In June 2011, the 572nd Mobility Augmentation Company moved to Regional Command East, where SGT Lyons continued his duties as a truck commander and dismount team leader.

SGT Lyons' awards and decorations include the Purple Heart (Posthumous), Army Achievement Medal with two oak leaf clusters, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, and the Combat Action Badge. Sgt. Lyons was promoted to sergeant posthumously.

SGT Lyons is survived by his parents, brother, and sister. He will be greatly missed but never forgotten by the men and women of the 572nd Mobility Augmentation Company, 124th Engineer Battalion, and 18th Engineer Brigade.

Killed in Action 26 OCT 2011

