



Yankee Dispatch

26th

Task Force Yankee Newsletter

Holiday Edition



I'll be deployed for
Christmas

Afghan school
dedicated to fallen
guardsman

A Very Yankee
Thanksgiving

Yankee Dispatch

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26th "Yankee" Brigade

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Questions, comments or submissions for the Yankee Dispatch should be directed to the Task Force Yankee Public Affairs Office ATTN: 1st Lt. Kelly Sullivan, kelly.s.souza@us.army.mil

On the Cover



Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Lawrence Bazer, Kabul Base Cluster Command Chaplain, poses for a photo with "Tactical" Santa on Christmas Day 2011, in Patriot Square, on Camp Phoenix. (U.S. Army Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Steven P. Francis)

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Happy New Year to our "Yankee" Brigade Family!!!

I hope each of you had a great holiday season or as good as one could expect under our current conditions. As we enter the new year, I know you are all looking forward to the reunions of 2012! December marked the beginning of the final leg of our collective journey. It is much like the Boston Marathon and December was Heartbreak Hill! Well we have reached the top and will now begin our sprint down Beacon Street to Boston. On January 1st the first 25 members of Task Force Hydra, 648th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, our replacements, arrived here in Kabul to begin the hand off of this mission. At the same time we had a team at Fort Hood assisting Col. Andy Hall and the remainder of the "Hydra" Headquarters with their final preparations. We have already begun packing up our offices and completing our end of tour paperwork. So there is light at the end of the tunnel!

This has been quite a year for all of us. We had a few marriages and the "Yankee" Brigade Family grew with the birth of eight babies. We have lost loved ones and faced medical emergencies, while we have been deployed. I want to thank you for the incredible sacrifices that you made and the hardships you have endured. I hope each of you can take some solace in knowing that these sacrifices have significantly contributed to the security here in Kabul, which will in turn help bring this war to a successful conclusion and thus ensure the security of our Families back in the United States. Command Sgt. Maj. Bill Davidson will highlight the great work performed by your Soldiers during their tour of duty in his comments this month. You will also find a wonderful letter from Gen. John Allen, U.S. Marine Corps, congratulating the Task Force Yankee Team for successfully accomplishing its mission. Gen. Allen is the commanding general of both U.S. and NATO Troops in Afghanistan.

On the Sept. 13, 2011, his Headquarters, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the U.S. Embassy both came under attack by machine gun fire and rocket propelled grenades. The Soldiers of Task Force Yankee responded to these attacks defending ISAF Headquarters. On Oct. 29, 2011, a Rhino Bus convoy was attacked by a suicide bomber, claiming the lives of 17 Soldiers and civilians. Your Soldiers responded valiantly by securing the explosion site, recovering the remains of our Fallen and removing the 13 ton bus that had been carrying our comrades. Most recently, your Soldiers provided critical security assistance to the Afghan National Loya Jirga, by working with their counterparts in the Afghan National Police to ensure the insurgents were not able to follow through on the threats to kill the Tribal Elders who attended



this peace meeting. The ISAF Joint Command (IJC) credited your Soldiers with the success of this mission. To quote General Allen, "Task Force Yankee should take pride in leaving Afghanistan better than you found it!"

During this Holy season, we celebrated Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza and we even had a Festivus Pole. We had midnight vigils, Gospel Choirs and we even had our version of Dick Clark (Chief Girard) count down the New Year by lowering a Disco ball in Patriot Square. Throughout these holidays our thoughts and prayers were with each of you! Very soon now our dreams will become reality and we will rejoin you back in Massachusetts. I am honored to serve with your Soldiers and have each you as members of our "Yankee" Brigade Family!

"First to Fight - Yankee Pride"

Brigadier General Jack Hammond

"Yankee-6"

A very Yankee Thanksgiving



Left: Brig. Gen. John A. Hammond, commander, Task Force Yankee, 26th "Yankee" Brigade, Massachusetts Army National Guard, asks a young Afghan boy his name during an orphanage visit. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)

Below: Members of the Task Force Yankee G6 sit down as a section for a Thanksgiving meal on Thursday Nov. 24, 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



By Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan – As Families across America prepared dinners, got together with friends and relatives, ate pie, went shopping and slipped into a turkey coma, the service members of Task Force Yankee, 26th "Yankee" Brigade, and the Kabul Base Cluster Command (KBCC), had a bit of an untraditional holiday.

The festivities kicked off when service members stationed in the KBCC got a special visit, thanks to Armed Forces Entertainment, the USO and Task Force Yankee MWR. Famous comedians, Tommy Davidson and Dante Carter, traveled around Kabul to spread holiday laughs.

The comedic duo performed at Camp Phoenix, the New Kabul Compound, Camp Eggers, Black Horse, Alamo and Julian Dubbs Nov. 21-23, 2011. Service members and civilians were in tears from laughter and Davidson, no relation to Task Force Yankee's senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. William Davidson, also cracked a few jokes at Task Force Yankee's Commander Brig. Gen. John A.

Hammond.

On Thursday, Nov. 24, 2011, service members were treated to a Thanksgiving meal. For lunch, senior officers and senior enlisted Soldiers from Camp Phoenix arrived at the dining facility (DFAC) a few minutes early. They donned paper hats and plastic gloves as they prepared to serve the service members lining up at the door. "That was a nice touch, it's a good tradition that should be maintained," said Staff Sgt. Nathan McNulty, the information management officer (IMO) noncommissioned officer for the Task Force Yankee G6.

The DFAC was decorated with ice sculptures, pumpkins, pilgrims and even a home setting complete with turkeys. "The meal was pretty good," said Spc. Brandi Walsh, a supply specialist with Task Force Yankee. "[And] the display was awesome."

Service members were served a fantastic meal in the company of their deployed family. Roast beef, turkey, ham and all the fixings were on the menu as well as an impressive dessert spread. Bottles of sparkling grape juice were on every table and smiles could be

Right Top: Spc. Melissa Vizena, an admin specialist with Task Force Yankee G1, makes snowflakes with young Afghan girls during an orphanage visit. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)

Right Bottom: Comedian Tommy Davidson performs for Coalition service members and civilians stationed on Black Horse. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James C. Lally, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)

Below: Comedian Dante Carter performs for Coalition service members and civilians at Camp Alamo during an Armed Forces Entertainment show. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James C. Lally, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



seen throughout the DFAC.

Although there were no lines at the Post Exchange or local national shops Thursday night, Soldiers were treated to a little Black Friday. Camp Phoenix had two local national bazaars on Friday, Nov. 25, 2011. One was held in Patriot Square and the other was held in the French quarter of Camp Phoenix, where traditional Afghan clothes, rugs and trinkets were sold at great prices.

In the spirit of Thanksgiving several members of Task Force Yankee were able to give back on Sunday, Nov. 27, 2011 by taking a trip to a local orphanage in Kabul. Over the last few months Task Force Yankee has been able to establish a great relationship with local orphanages. Service members spent the day playing volleyball, basketball, badminton, making arts and crafts, eating snacks and even putting on a little make up and doing hair. "I got to put make up on the girls and play jump rope," said Chief Warrant Officer 3

Janice Martin, the deputy G1 for Task Force Yankee. "It felt great being able to put a smile on their faces."

"Probably the most rewarding day I've had in Afghanistan," said Spc. Melissa Vizena, an admin specialist with Task Force Yankee's G1. Vizena, on her first trip to the orphanage, spent time with young girls making arts and crafts.

Although the Soldiers of Task Force Yankee and the KBCC were not able to be home for the holidays this year, they were able to have a special week and hopefully it made their time here a little better. "I enjoyed my Thanksgiving in Kabul, the chow hall staff and leadership did a great job setting up a perfect environment to have a good meal and forget, if only for a half of an hour, that we were thousands of miles from our families," said Spc. Adam Lever, a supply specialist with Task Force Yankee.

COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR'S CORNER

Greetings and Happy New Year from the "Yankee" Brigade

This being the last Yankee Dispatch article, I wanted to recap the past ten months in theater and show everyone what we have accomplished as a task force. You have all worked very hard, have been professional and have become synonymous with high standards and a "can-do" attitude. You have all sacrificed a great deal in order to serve your country and this unit and my personal thanks and gratitude go out to you all. The following is what Lt. Col. George Harrington, our chief of staff, wrote for the submission of our Meritorious Unit Commendation Medal, and highlights some of the task force's significant accomplishments.

Task Force Yankee was responsible for the security of all U.S. Forces and installations in Kabul to include the movement corridors that connect U.S. and NATO installations and critical security sites within the city. The task force also provided operational command and support for the 11 U.S. Bases in Kabul, Quick Reaction Forces (QRFs) for Regional Command-Capital and Police Advisor Teams (PATs) to support the 12,000 Afghan National Police (ANP) assigned to the Kabul City Police Command (KCPC). Task Force Yankee played an integral role in the counter insurgency mission, providing oversight and support to Humanitarian Assistance (HA) operations in the Kabul District. To accomplish these operations, Task Force Yankee provided mission command for 2,000 Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, Coalition Forces and civilians.

During its tenure, Task Force Yankee implemented a transformational change of security within Kabul City. Recognizing a void in the Kabul area, the task force aggressively pursued security operations in and around the Kabul Province which improved base security and synchronized security efforts with all Afghan National Security Forces and Coalition partners. The task force implemented the first ever comprehensive KBC defense plan. Building upon individual base defense plans, the command implemented inter-base movement corridor security measures. Base defenses and movement corridor



security were synchronized throughout the KBC by establishing Emergency Action Plans (EAPs). The EAPs established standard operating procedures (SOPs) to react to enemy contact, QRF deployment, and reporting and response procedures within all KBC bases. To synchronize efforts across the 11 KBC, the brigade established the first operational KBC Operations Center (OC). The KBC OC synchronized the Base Defense Operations Centers, managed Quick Reaction forces, maintained communications with Regional Command – Capital (RC-C), KCPC and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command (IJC) ensuring situational awareness of movements throughout KBC. To facilitate security planning, the brigade established an Intelligence Fusion Center to provide commanders and leaders with a focused picture of enemy activities and intents within Kabul. The fusion center produced a Kabul-centric Daily Intelligence Update (DIU) which was distributed to thousands of users, including subscribers from ISAF, IJC, USFOR-A and Coalition Forces. The DIU was cited by multiple leaders within KBC as one of the best daily intelligence products seen in Afghanistan. Task Force Yankee successfully transitioned its mission from an inward looking area support group to a fully functioning mission command

element overseeing the security of all U.S. Forces and 11 installations in the capital city of Kabul to include the movement corridors that connect the U.S. and NATO installations and critical security sites within the city. Task Force Yankee successfully partnered with the KCPC and its 12,000 ANP officers by providing PATs to fill the security gaps identified by IJC. Task Force Yankee trained and provided PATs to assist with improving search techniques, mobile Traffic Control Points (TCP) and check point operations throughout the Rings of Steel and at the Kabul City gates. Task Force Yankee provided liaison officers to advise the KCPC commander and Criminal Investigation Command commander. The PATs worked closely with the ANP to effectively tighten security within Kabul. Task Force Yankee provided Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) mentorship to the ANP and Afghan National Army (ANA) which enabled them to find and diffuse magnetic Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and several caches in Kabul. These teams worked with the ANP in Kabul to assist in the interdiction of weapons and explosives flow into Kabul. Task Force Yankee QRFs responded to a variety of requests from U.S. and Coalition partners in response to enemy actions to include: the British Council Attack, the Afghan Military Hospital Attack, the attack on the U.S. Embassy and ISAF in September, threats against the UN Mission in Afghanistan, as well as the mass casualty vehicle born IED (VBIED) attack on Oct. 29, 2011. The task force provided security for major Coalition sponsored events such as the changes of command for Gen. David H. Petraeus, Lt. Gen. David M. Rodriguez and Lt. Gen. William B. Caldwell. The task force assisted with security for significant Kabul area for conferences such as the IJC Ramazan Feast, the IJC Afghan Transportation Shura, and the Afghan National Loya Jirga. Task Force Yankee also played an important role in the USFOR-A commander's HA mission. The task force facilitated building water wells, schools and clinics to assist women, children and underprivileged citizens within Kabul. Task Force Yankee built seven schools, four district literary centers, two water well projects and one road/canal project. These efforts significantly enhanced the security of Kabul City and the quality of life for more than 10,000 Kabul area children and countless underprivileged citizens. Task Force Yankee's efforts to increase security in the Kabul Province were recognized by senior USFOR-A and IJC leadership as superb; interdicting and disrupting enemy activity and significantly reducing enemy capabilities in the KBCC. To date, members of Task Force Yankee have conducted more than 200 Key Leader Engagements (KLEs) with various military,

police and civil district level leaders within the Kabul Province to facilitate these missions.

In addition to providing vital security oversight and supporting essential HA missions, Task Force Yankee directly managed five Base Support Groups (BSGs), (New Kabul Compound, Camps Eggers, Julien-Dubbs, Blackhorse and Bella Hissar) and indirectly managed two more, (Camps Phoenix and Alamo). The BSGs provided life support to 11,000 joint, Coalition and contractor tenants and multiple units in the KBC, including two and three star flag officers. The task force improved the operational efficiency of the BSGs; provided for increased quality of life and prepared the tenants and units for the impacts of the Afghanistan reposturing operations.

The G1 section established a Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program in the KBCC, was tasked as the Program Manager for RC-C, trained 40 Sexual Assault Response Coordinators/ Unit Victim Advocates and introduced a Women's Self-Defense Training Program. The section facilitated two USO shows, hosted a Naturalization Ceremony on July 4, 2011 for 50 service members and conducted a Memorial Ceremony honoring 13 Fallen Heroes in the wake of the Oct. 29, 2011 VBIED attack. The G1 processed 1,500 awards, 3,400 DEERS/ Rapids transactions, 9,200 parcels of mail, 80 Passports, 60 Special Immigrant Visa packets and authorized \$10,000 in official mail.

The G2 section produced and distributed more than 250 Daily Intel Updates (DIU) to 1,800 U.S. and Coalition subscribers each day. The G2 staff processed more than 2,100 U.S. and Coalition clearance verifications, prepared and presented more than 50 Foreign Travel Briefs, provided support to 50 U.S. Visa applicants and processed more than \$15,000 in rewards for information on insurgent caches or high value target personnel.

The G3 section oversaw the execution of the task force's security operations throughout the KBCC. Military Police Operations conducted Vulnerability Assessments of all KBC bases, generating 200 force protection projects and contracts. They screened over 1,400 Personal Security Contractors (PSC) to begin the transition from military forces to Afghan Public Protection Force. They developed comprehensive new policies for force protection, safety, fire and medical services. The Joint Reception, Staging and Onward Integration section trained 14,850 U.S. and Coalition partners in weapons training, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected

vehicle rollover training and Counter-Improvised Explosive Device training.

The G4 section managed \$128.7 million in U.S. Government (USG) property, facilitated the delivery of 11.5 million gallons of fuel and coordinated hundreds of personnel and cargo movements. They managed \$7.6 million in purchase requisitions, supported logistical requirements for 24 Coalition nations, processed \$24.2 million in acquisition cross service agreement bills, recovered and reintegrated \$8.2 million in USG property and saved \$1.8 million through intensive container management.

The G6 section provided communications support for the task force and the BSGs. They implemented the first KBCC wide FM Communications network linking the KBC OC with the Base Defense Operations Centers, managed and distributed \$4.0 million of computer and radio equipment and managed three Sharepoint portals and 12 Web pages for Joint and Coalition Forces. They contributed to quality of life by building a wireless internet grid, managing American Forces Network broadcasting and providing free Wi-Fi internet to Camp Phoenix.

The G8 section provided oversight for all contracts in KBCC by managing funding and contractor compliance. They validated and funded more than \$200 million in service and construction contracts. With the section's expert contract knowledge, they provided routine and emergency funding for all KBCC bases. The fiscal discipline and conservative operations in the section ensured all funds were spent responsibly and fully accounted for in the contracting process.

The General Engineering (G-ENG) section created a \$22 million Camp Phoenix construction plan to provide future billeting, office space, and infrastructure support; increasing its capacity from 3,000 to 6,000 tenants. They supervised the design and construction of 800 projects totaling \$400 million and assumed construction oversight and planning duties for three additional special forces camps. They managed the \$600 million Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) contract, tracked the billeting of more than 11,000 tenants on a daily basis and created more than 3,500 maps for U.S. and Coalition Forces.

The Brigade Surgeon section established a Local National (LN) medical screening clinic providing oversight and quality control for over 3,500 LN workers. This clinic identified 200 potential LN workers with communicable diseases that posed a force protection threat to U.S. and Coalition Forces.

The section also provided oversight to all KBCC medical assets.

The Chaplaincy supervised and supported eight Joint and Coalition religious support teams, delivering 950 denominational and distinct faith group services to more than 28,300 attendees. They supported the Memorial Ceremony for the Oct. 29 Fallen Heroes and introduced the first Camp Phoenix Alcoholics Anonymous group. The Chaplaincy also adopted an Orphanage and Scouting Center in Kabul, directing more than 100 volunteers that facilitated interaction between service members and Afghan children, thus creating bonds and mentoring the development of stronger future leaders for Afghanistan.

This capped the numerous highlights of our mission but not the individual accomplishments that so many of you have achieved, to include the Kabul "K", and your personal accomplishments of your Mind, Body and Spirit goals. I can tell you that I am extremely proud of this unit and honored to have served as your command sergeant major. Be proud of serving in the "Yankee" Brigade and remember the sacrifices of those that served in the Yankee Division prior to us. Keep up the great work and we'll be home before you know it, enjoying some much deserved time off with Family and friends.

"First to Fight"

Command Sgt. Maj. William Davidson

"Yankee-7"

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What's on your mind?



26th Yankee Brigade added 3 new photos to the album SRA Rollins: End of Tour Award.



Like · Comment · Share · 22 hours ago

Don Mason and 8 others like this.

Write a comment...



26th Yankee Brigade added 3 new photos to the album SHARP/EO Certificates of Appreciation from Maj. Gen. Rapp.



Like · Comment · Share · 22 hours ago

211th Military Police Battalion and 4 others like this.

Write a comment...

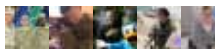


26th Yankee Brigade added 8 new photos to the album 26th "Yankee" Brigade End of Tour Awards.



Admins (5) [?]

See All



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Jeff Dunham

87 of your fans like this.

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Coca-Cola

97 of your fans like this.

Like



Boston, Massachusetts

104 of your fans like this.

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26th Infantry "Yankee" Division

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Afghan school dedicated to fallen guardsman

By Staff Sgt. James C. Lally, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs

PAGHMAN, Afghanistan — A school was dedicated to the memory of an American Soldier here on the outskirts of Kabul Dec. 27, 2011.

The school was named in honor of Sgt. Michael J. Kelley, 101st Field Artillery Battalion, Massachusetts Army National Guard, who was killed June 8, 2005 when his helicopter landing zone came under enemy fire in Shkin, Afghanistan.

The school was built approximately six miles from where 30 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) service members, one civilian interpreter, and seven Afghan commandos were killed when a Coalition CH-47 Chinook was brought down by insurgents Aug. 6, 2011.

After an exhaustive manhunt which yielded multiple intelligence leads and tips from local citizens, special operations forces located Mullah Mohibullah, the Taliban leader believed to be responsible for the attack, and the insurgent who fired the shot associated with the downing of the Chinook. ISAF forces then conducted an airstrike that killed the two insurgents.

In the spirit of peace and reconciliation, Task Force Yankee, Massachusetts Army National Guard used the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) to build the school which was opened in

cooperation with Afghan Government officials just three months after both attacks.

The village did not have a dedicated schoolhouse but now the eight-classroom school will benefit more than 700 children between the ages of five to 13 from 200 families.

Before the opening ceremony, Brig. Gen. John A. Hammond, commander of Task Force Yankee, 26th "Yankee" Brigade, Massachusetts Army National Guard and Command Sgt. Maj. William M. Davidson handed out donated gift packages filled with candy and school supplies to the students.

Hammond addressed the students, village leaders and Afghan officials that gathered for the event saying, "The school supplies we handed out today came from children in America as a gift of friendship and peace to the children here in Afghanistan."

Hammond also said, "Without teachers and students this school is just a building. I am happy to see all of you here today because I know that this school is supported by its village."

Aman Gul, a teacher at the school told Hammond, "You have brought light here and you have given us hope."

In response Hammond said, "We have lit the match but you must keep the candle lit."

Guardisman, Boston policeman keeps Kabul safe



By Staff Sgt. James C. Lally, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan — West Roxbury resident and Boston police sergeant, Maj. James Blake has been serving as the Military Police operations officer for Task Force Yankee, 26th “Yankee” Brigade, Massachusetts Army National Guard, on Camp Phoenix here since April 15, 2011.

Blake, who has been serving as a guardsman for 24 years, is responsible for Military Police, Fire Services, Emergency Medical Services, Force Protection, Access Control, and Safety for the Kabul Base Cluster Command (KBCC). As the Kabul Base Cluster Command, Task Force Yankee provides security, service, support and policy guidance for more than 11,000 Coalition Forces service members and contractors.

Blake is also the officer in charge of the Task Force Spartan Police Advisor Teams (PATs).

The PATs coordinate with and advise Afghan National Police (ANP) to improve security in Kabul and to interdict the flow of insurgent weapons and supplies. “Our Military Policemen have been out in the city working with Afghan police. They have observed Kabul police conducting searches at checkpoints and they are doing a great job. We have been working with them on some other things like surprise checkpoints throughout the city to catch smugglers off guard,” said Blake. “What the Afghan police are doing here every day is very important because if left unchecked the insurgents would kill untold numbers of innocent men, women and children.”

During his time in Kabul, Blake and his team of Military

Policemen have actively delivered police services to the military community. Blake is responsible for overseeing law and order operations on all of the bases that fall under the jurisdiction of the KBCC. Blake has been involved in everything from the investigation of simple assaults to working with Army Criminal Investigation Division, Naval Criminal Investigative Services and even the Federal Bureau of Investigation on several major crimes. “Being a Military Policeman in a combat zone can be challenging since you are trying to fight the enemy as well as protect the people living and working on our bases,” said Blake.

Blake also reviewed the access control policies for all bases in the KBC to close any loopholes in security and defense policies before they could be exploited. This was in an effort to combat the biggest threat, the “insider threat” – insurgents trying to gain access onto military bases using fake documents.

Discussing his approach to security and safety Blake said, “We reviewed all of the policies with the intent to take a holistic approach to safety and fix any and all vulnerabilities. By having police, fire and safety professionals on the job every day we have been able to create an environment to help Coalition service members and contractors focus on the jobs they came here to do.”

When he is not serving in this role, Blake works as a sergeant with the Boston Police Department, which he has been doing for the past for 11 years. He is currently assigned to District B2 and credits his training and experiences there with his success here.

Throughout his years of service Blake has had a lot of specialized training as an officer and Military Policeman in courses like Officer Candidate School, Military Police Officer Basic Course, Military Police Officer Advance Course, Pre-Command Course, Antiterrorism Officer Course, Command and General Staff College: Combined Arms Exercise Course, Intermediate Level Education, and the Advanced Operations Course.

As a civilian, Blake continued his education at Western New England College, graduating in 1999 with a bachelors of science in Criminal Justice. He also attended Boston University, graduating in 2007 with a master’s in criminal justice.

Blake said he has enjoyed facing and overcoming the complex challenges of his position in Afghanistan but he is looking forward to reuniting with his wife Lisa and 10-year-old son Kyle, and also returning to work as a Boston Police Officer.



I'll be deployed for Christmas



Top Left: Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Lawrence Bazer speaks during the lighting of the Camp Phoenix Menorah during Hanukkah. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Kelly Sullivan) **Top Right:** Brig. Gen. John Hammond serves food to Soldiers during the Christmas meal on Camp Phoenix on Christmas Day. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James C. Lally) **Bottom Left:** Coalition service members on Camp Phoenix sing in the choir during the Christmas mass. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James C. Lally) **Bottom Right:** Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Gary Anderson hands a blanket to a boy scout at a local orphanage during an Operation Outreach mission. (Photo by Spc. Steven C. Eaton)

By Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan – Christmas comes but once a year, but for the service members and civilians with Task Force Yankee, this Christmas came a little differently than years past. There was a Christmas tree, holiday music, a big meal and gifts were exchanged. However, rather than waking up on the morning of Dec. 25, 2011 and running to the Christmas tree with their Families, the deployed service members woke up in their bunks and went to work.

The holiday festivities started off by giving the gift of warmth.

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Members of Task Force Yankee and service members and civilians working with Operation Outreach at Camp Phoenix collected 500 blankets, socks and warm clothing in the weeks leading up to Christmas, in order to help keep some children in Afghanistan warm during the cold winter nights.

On a chilly Monday afternoon, service members and civilians gathered up the collected blankets and delivered them to a local orphanage in Kabul.

The children of the orphanage were happy to see a little warmth coming their way, as the thermostat drops and smiles could be seen all around as the children hugged their new blankets and felt the soft

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warmth they knew they would have overnight.

"We've been giving out school supplies and candy to the kids, but we felt that as the weather is getting colder we needed to do something a little different to help keep them warm," said 1st Lt. Kelly Sullivan, the Task Force Yankee public affairs officer, and also the Operation Outreach Afghanistan public affairs officer.

While some service members were able to give during the holidays, others were able to connect with family back home.

"I got on Skype with my wife once my son had woken up back home and we talked for a few over the video-link in front of the tree back home," said Staff Sgt. Nathan McNulty, the Task Force Yankee Information Management Officer (IMO), noncommissioned officer. Although Soldiers like McNulty, with children at home wished they could be there to watch them open presents, being able to Skype home and see the smiles on their children's little faces brought some comfort. "Christmas in Kabul was decent, as good as could be expected while deployed," he added.

Keeping with military holiday traditions, senior leaders stationed on Camp Phoenix convened at the Camp Phoenix dining facility to serve the troops.

"The holiday meal was good, but it did make me miss being home," said 1st Lt. Greg Walsh, the 26th "Yankee" Brigade unit movement officer and the Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), executive officer.

Although the Soldiers of Task Force Yankee couldn't make it home for the holidays, many spent the day with their deployed family.

"We had our holiday meal in the conference room we decorated and Lt. Col. [William] O'Brien passed out gifts and I played dodge ball with some of my friends from another unit," said Spc. Bulger Limchao, the Task Force Yankee mapping technician.

Being thousands of miles away from home during the holidays can be rough, but the Soldiers of Task Force Yankee, who are coming close to the end of their deployment, were able to relax a bit and have a little fun during the holidays.



Above: 1st Sgt. David Correia, 26th "Yankee" Brigade, Headquarters and Headquarters Company first sergeant and his son Sgt. Joshua Correia, pose for a photo with "Tactical" Santa in Patriot Square on Christmas Day 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Steven P. Francis)

Below: Maj. Gen. William E. Rapp, deputy commander, support, U.S. Forces Afghanistan, meets with Soldiers of Task Force Yankee on Dec. 24, 2011. Rapp visited Soldiers around Kabul to wish them a happy holiday. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



“Yankee” Brigade Personal Achievements



2nd. Lt. Ross Kazer has the first documented Bar Mitzvah in Afghanistan.

“Although it was ten years past due, I believe it meant much more to have my Bar Mitzvah done here. So much history has taken place in Afghanistan and it was such an exciting and terrific opportunity to add to it. It was very humbling to see all the support from Task Force Yankee and the Jewish Soliders and contractors here in Kabul,” said Kazer.



Spc. Derek King was promoted to sergeant in Kabul.

“I’ve learned on this deployment what a good leader is and I know I can take these lessons and others with me for the rest of my career,” said King.



Pvt. Shawn Merrill passed a physical fitness test and was promoted to private first class and is expecting to be promoted to specialist.

“I’ve been in the Army for two years and I’ve been able to get up to specialist. I’m in the tail end of my deployment and I’m thankful for just being in the Army and meeting some great people along this journey,” said Merrill.

“Yankee” Brigade Personal Achievements

By the Numbers

Completed the Kabul K (1000 Miles): 20

Completed the Kabul K (621 Miles): 20

Achievement Awards: 163

Personnel over weight at Ft. Hood: 20

Total Body Fat %: 46%

Personnel over weight as of Jan. 1, 2012: 0

Total Body Fat %: >26%

Total Promotions: 35

Task Force Yankee



Bronze Star
Medal



Defense Meritorious Service
Medal



Joint Service Commendation
Medal



Army Commendation
Medal



Joint Service Achievement
Medal



Army Achievement
Medal

Awards and Medals



Army Good Conduct Medal



Afghanistan Campaign Ribbon



Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal



NATO Medal
ISAF



Combat Action Badge



German Marksmanship
Award
(Schützenschnur)

Keep Us Safe

Soldier Spotlight

Keep in Mind OPSEC when posting online

As we near the end of the deployment it is important that both our Soldiers and Families remember Operational Security (OPSEC) when posting online.

Ensure that you do not post exact dates, travel times, schedules or anything that may compromise the security of our Soldiers as they travel home.

We are all excited to see each other and we all need to do our part to make sure our trip is safe and quick.

Thank you.



David Medford and Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Medford, the Task Force Yankee battle noncommissioned officer, pose for a photo during the 26th Signal going away party at the Hudson Elks Club in February 2011. David was the 1000th "like" on the "Yankee" Brigade Facebook page. Thanks to all the fans of the 26th "Yankee" Brigade for helping us reach 1000 likes! (Courtesy Photo)

Yankee Dispatch Submission Guidelines

Articles:

250-300 words for a half-page story;

600-800 words for a full-page article.

Include first and last names and verify spelling. Spell out acronyms, abbreviations and full unit designations on first reference.

If there is a Unit Public Affairs Representative, ensure he or she reviews it.

Photographs:

Highest resolution possible

No retouched photos

Caption (what is happening, who is pictured and the date of the photo)

Credit (who took the photo)

Do not embed the photo in a Word.doc.

Email submissions to: james.lally@us.army.mil

Chaplain's Corner



The December holidays are always a special time of year. Excitement is in the air. From decorating the home, putting up Christmas trees, dusting off the Hanukkah Menorah, figuring out who's cooking what and where to celebrate, shopping for gifts, there is always so

much to plan and do. The holidays are special, but what makes them most special are the people involved. It is the Family feeling that is most important.

One thing that both Christmas and Hanukkah do share is the "giving of gifts." Now, I wouldn't mind a few electronic items and we all want the gift of being together. I do believe this year we will give and receive special, intangible gifts. We give the gifts of

making the Afghan people's lives better and safer. This gift helps rebuild the world, an important aspect of the December holidays. We receive the gifts of love and care from our families and loved ones. That is priceless. And we will give the gift of our presence back home in just a short time. That's a great present to unwrap!

On behalf of Task Force Yankee's Religious Support Team, I want to wish everyone a joyous Christmas and Hanukkah, and a happy and peaceful New Year 2012.

Blessings,

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Larry Bazer

Task Force Yankee Command Chaplain

Family Readiness

CONTACT INFORMATION

FRG email: MebFrg@aol.com

Chair: Jamie Lee Moushigian
Reading Family Assistance Center:

Jill Price
25 Haverhill St, Reading, MA 01867
jill.price@us.army.mil
Office: 888-301-3103 x 7444
Cell: 781-771-5632

Find us on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/26th-Yankee-Brigade-Family-Support-Group/146042042126165>

Around The Brigade



Soldiers from the G4 section, Task Force Yankee, 26th "Yankee" Brigade Massachusetts National Guard, congratulate Maj. Timothy Van Deventer on his promotion here, Dec. 22, 2011. Van Deventer, who is also a Connecticut State trooper, works here in Kabul as the executive officer in charge for the Camp Julien/Dubbs Base Support Group. (U.S. Army Photo by 1st Lt. Kelly Sullivan, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



Members of the Task Force Yankee Camp Black Horse Base Support Group, pose in front of a Mine Resistant Armored Personnel vehicle with Christmas cards they recieved from a Massachusetts school. (Courtesy Photo)

[See More photos on our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/26thyankeebrigade>](http://www.flickr.com/photos/26thyankeebrigade)



Capt. Keith Donahue, the contract manager for construction for Task Force Yankee, reads to children at a local orphanage on Dec. 19, 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



Capt. Allison Bailey, 26th "Yankee" Brigade Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander, presents Spc. Nick Latino, a Task Force Yankee military police officer, with the German Marskmanship Award, the Schützenschnur, during a ceremony on Camp Phoenix Dec. 30, 2011. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James C. Lally, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



From left to right: Lt. Col. William O'Brien, Col. Andrew Lawlor, Sgt. 1st Class Richard Begin, Spc. Adam Lever, Spc. Steven Eaton, Maj. Daniel McNeill, Sgt. 1st Class Gregg Yanchuk and Pfc. Shawn Merrill (center), pose for a photo after winning the championship of the Phoenix Hockey League playoffs.



Brig. Gen. John Hammond (right), commander of Task Force Yankee and Command Sgt. Major William Davidson (Left), command sergeant major of Task Force Yankee, speak with members of the 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Army National Guard, who are stationed in the Kunar Province in Regional Command - East as part of the Provincial Reconstruction Team. The command team spoke to the Soldiers about the importance of education and employment when they redeploy home. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



Coalition service members and civilians who grew mustaches during the month of November in order to raise awareness for prostate cancer pose for a photo in Patriot Square Nov. 30, 2011. Known as Movember men around the world grow mustaches in order to raise awareness and money for prostate cancer research and treatment. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. James C. Lally, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



Soldiers from the Mongolian Expeditionary Task Force, part of Task Force Yankee, give a cultural demonstration to residents on Camp Phoenix. The demonstration included drill and ceremony, martial arts, feats of strength, live music, dancing and wrestling. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Steven C. Eaton, Task Force Yankee Public Affairs)



HEADQUARTERS
International Security Assistance Force/
United States Forces-Afghanistan
Kabul, Afghanistan
APO AE 09356

December 31, 2011

Brigadier General John A. Hammond
Commander
26th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade
Camp Phoenix
APO, AE 09320

Dear General Hammond,

Job Well Done!

Congratulations on completing a successful deployment to Afghanistan. You and the men and women of Task Force Yankee, 26th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, should take pride in leaving Afghanistan better than you found it. You expertly provided security over three main corridors connecting US/NATO installations and critical sites within Kabul city. Working closely with your RC-Capital and Afghan counterparts you ushered into existence a new and thriving partnership. This partnership has resulted in improved coordination and a more secure city.

Beyond the execution of your military duties you have also made an impact with the local community through countless community projects, to include schools, clinics, water wells, and so much more.

I wish you and all your troops a safe return home and continued success in the future.

All the best,

*I am personally very
proud to have served
with TF Yankee!*

John R. Allen
General, United States Marine Corps
Commander