

FREEDOM WATCH AFGHANISTAN



Anytime, anywhere:
TF Poseidon medics
train for hoist missions

FEBRUARY 2012

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FREEDOM WATCH

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U.S. Army Sgt. Patrick Lynch, of Canton, Mich., a Black Hawk crew chief with Task Force Poseidon, pulls flight medic Spc. Aaron King, of Orlando, Fla., into an HH-60M Black Hawk medical helicopter with a hoist cable during hoist training on Bagram Airfield Dec. 15. Flight medics routinely practice hoist operations to prepare for medevac missions in eastern Afghanistan's rough terrain. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Donna Davis, TF Poseidon PAO)



'Ammo Dawgs' from the 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron reassemble two bombs inspected during an assembled munitions serviceability inspection at Bagram Airfield Dec. 28. Ammo Airmen receive, inspect, issue, assemble and test, maintain, inventory and transport guided and unguided munitions. An assembled munitions serviceability inspection was done twice a year to ensure all munitions in stock were ready to be deployed when needed to be dropped on target. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Vernon Cunningham, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing PAO)

'Ammo Dawgs' rearm the fight

By U.S. Airforce Tech. Sgt. Vernon Cunningham
455th Air Expeditionary Wing PAO

A select group of men and women of the 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron gathered together around a munitions assembly conveyor to execute a semi-annual assembled munitions serviceability inspection at Bagram Airfield Dec. 28.

Munition systems specialists, known as 'Ammo Dawgs', receive, inspect, issue, assemble and test, maintain, inventory and transport guided and unguided munitions.

They use and maintain munitions test sets and munitions-specific trailers, loaders and tractors. Ammo Dawgs ensure the war fighting readiness of explosives from small arms or egress components to ejections seats and 4,500 pound bunker penetrating bombs.

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Alex Brzoska, 455th EMXS conventional maintenance supervisor, said the mission is to be a war fighter. One aspect of this is to arm the fight by ensuring munitions will function as designed when the trigger is pulled.

"We build bombs from scratch," he said. "We receive the bomb body and the components for assembly. Then every six months we have to verify that what we built is still accurate. We

undo all the components to make sure it is still serviceable."

During the AMSI, Airmen disassembled armament and verified that all the components were still functioning. The inspections are performed twice as often here as in the United States due to the dirt, sand and weather conditions that exist.

The team members visually inspected each component of the MK 82 bomb bodies and KMUI-572 tail kits which lay in front of them. Also, electronic fuses and laser detector kits were inspected. In addition, they ran an integrated built-in test using the AN/GYQ-79A test set to test electronic features.

All bombs passed the AMSI. Throughout December, the Ammo team inspected 22 bombs and performed 355 post load visual/IBIT inspections on bombs that were unloaded from aircraft due to aircraft maintenance.

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Zachary Coleman, 455th EMXS munitions systems specialist, said he enjoys his job at Bagram Airfield.

He said, "It is a good feeling to know that whenever troops on the ground call in an air strike, the bombs that we build work dead on and save lives."

That feeling is shared by many of his fellow ammo Airmen.

"It's very satisfying," said Brzoska. "You're keeping people alive. It's very gratifying." 

'82nd Challenge' motivates Soldiers to run more

By U.S. Army Capt. Christine Krueger
TF Poisedon PAO

Servicemembers may wear the same thing while they run, but they don't run for the same reasons. Shortly after deploying, U.S. Army Chaplain (Maj.) Stanton Trotter, of La Palma, Calif., created what is now known as the "82nd Challenge."

The goal of the challenge is to run the perimeter of Bagram Airfield 82 times during the deployment. Measuring roughly 7.5 miles, it doesn't seem too extreme. However, with a total of 600 miles, the t-shirt payoff may seem insignificant.

To complete the challenge, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade troopers have to battle altitude, wind and dust. Then there are the rocket and mortar attacks; random road closures; extreme temperatures; and a 12-hour, seven-day work week to contend with. All totalled, there's a lot standing in the way.

Those who run are as diverse as their inspirations. Some chose to run because that's what they do. They are the tri-athletes and marathon runners. To these Soldiers, the challenge makes Afghanistan feel like home. The grind of squeezing runs into a hectic schedule is a nostalgic reminder of the rigorous training they did at home.

Then there are people like U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Andrew Chui, who runs because it provides a challenge and a goal to work towards for the next year. Chui, a sheet metal repairer who works on aircraft repairing blades and bullet holes, competes in races at home, but runs mostly for the pride and to stay in shape.

"I run mostly for the fulfillment and the challenge," said Chiu, a native of San Mateo, Calif. "Plus, with so much going on each day it's nice to start with a moment to myself."

Now two or three days a week, up to seven others join him on his morning lap around the airfield.

"I run just so that in the future I can see my grandkids grow up," said U.S. Army Spc. Trevor Harrison.

Some are using this challenge as a stepping stone towards a larger goal. Others have plans to run half marathons or full marathons when they get home and having running buddies helps get them out on the road.

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason Dickerson runs for fulfillment.

As a senior enlisted leader, he works all day mentoring Soldiers and setting the example for the younger, less-experienced mechanics, but desires a sense of accomplishment that is not tied to work.

On a previous deployment, Dickerson trained for and completed a marathon. Runners who have completed one know even with a 9:00 to 5:00 job and weekends off it's no easy task.

"Running here is a nice escape from reality and the stress of a combat zone," said Dickerson, of Sanford, N.C. "After last deployment, I swore to myself I would never run another marathon; I just could not walk away from the challenge."

A few runners are using the challenge as a connection to family. It's a way to bridge a gap of thousands of miles. Many married couples have a tough time with conversation during deployment, because all of the familiar things have disappeared.


U.S. Army Capt. David Krueger and his spouse are separated only by a few Afghan mountain ranges. Back home they train together, so while they can't actually meet up for daily runs, it keeps a little piece of home alive in their relationship.

"At home we run together on the weekends, but during the week we can't often line up our schedules," said Krueger, a native of Delavan, Wis. "On those days if one fits in a workout before the other it's pretty good motivation to get out the door to keep up. Here it's the same thing- if one of us runs that day the other feels guilty!"

U.S. Army Spc. Andrew Brown, a native of Palestine, Texas, just needed a little extra motivation to get out and run.

"That hour in the morning is the best part of my day," said Brown. "No one is awake and the road is empty; I look forward to that time."

It's a varied group you wouldn't likely find running together in the states. A few days a week however, they have a common bond-eating up the pavement around Bagram Airfield.

Each is looking forward to running their favorite route back home or at least getting the freedom to choose running something new. Each may be running for their own goal, but they are all here in Afghanistan for the same reason. They believe in what they do and who they are fighting for. But at the end of the day, some are still just running for the t-shirt. 



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jason Dickerson, Staff Sgt. Andrew Chiu and Capt. Christine Krueger of Task Force Talon, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, run together to complete the "82nd Challenge"; a personal challenge to complete 82 laps around the 7.5-mile airfield loop on Bagram Airfield Dec. 13. (Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Joshua McDonald, TF Poisedon PAO)

Anytime, anywhere: TF Poseidon

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Donna Davis
TF Poseidon PAO

U.S. Army Spc. Aaron King, a flight medic, dangled more than 200 hundred feet in the air from an HH-60M Medevac Black Hawk – secured by only a thin metal wire and two carabineers Dec. 18.

The rotor blades stirred up dirt in the air as U.S. Army Sgt. Patrick Lynch pulled him in.

Lynch, a native of Canton, Mich., has been a crew chief for more than four years and was recently assigned to C Company, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Poseidon.

Lynch is training to become certified to operate the hoist during medical evacuation missions.

This is the third hoist training exercise for Lynch and the first time he's trained with a live patient instead of a manikin. With his buddy's life in his hands, he's careful to make sure everything is perfect.

Once Lynch pulls King in, they position themselves to do the whole thing over again in reverse. Lynch concentrates on lowering King to the ground.

Hoisting King up to the aircraft and down to the ground is the

closest training Lynch will get next to an actual hoist mission. It's a dangerous procedure for both Soldiers and equipment, but necessary for medevac crews to be ready when it really counts. The training also gives Lynch the confidence he will need when it comes time to conduct an actual hoist medevac.

When a medevac crew spins up for a hoist mission and they arrive on the scene, crew chiefs like Lynch are the ones responsible for the safety and well-being of every inch of the aircraft the pilots can't see, more than 38 feet of it, plus the patients and passengers on board.

"Hoist training is extremely important because this is one of the most difficult and dangerous things we do in the airframe," said King, a native of Orlando, Fla.

A hoist mission is usually a last resort; conducted only when there is nowhere for the aircraft to land. Due to the extreme terrain in eastern Afghanistan, hoist missions are more likely here than most places.

If a ground unit calls for a medevac in a wooded area, near lots of buildings or on a mountainside, C Company, often referred to as "Dustoff," has the ability to hoist an injured person out of the danger area, provide immediate care, and quickly evacuate that patient to better-equipped medical facilities.



U.S. Army Sgt. Kevin Bursleson, a native of Cameron, N.C., and Task Force Poseidon standardization instructor checks the hoist cable in an HH-60M Black Hawk before flight medic Spc. Aaron King, a native of Orlando, Fla., is lowered to the ground during hoist training on Bagram Airfield Dec. 15. Flight medics routinely practice hoist operations to prepare for medevac missions in eastern Afghanistan's rough terrain. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Donna Davis, TF Poseidon PAO)

medics train for hoist missions



U.S. Army Spc. Aaron King, a native of Orlando, FL., a flight medic assigned to Charlie Medical Company, 3-82 General Support Aviation Battalion, is hoisted back into a HH-60M Black Hawk during hoist training Dec. 15. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Donna Davis, TF Poisedon PAO)

When the aircraft arrives to pick up patients, a crew chief slides the large cargo door open and draws the hoist hook inside as he's pounded with winds from the whirling blades. He hooks a flight medic in to the hoist cable with a special harness and carefully lowers him or her to the ground.

It's a difficult process that has to be done quickly- strong winds and enemy fire are a few hazards that can cause the helicopter to swing and slam a Soldier into rocks, buildings, or trees.

On the ground, the medic stabilizes the patient and secures him or her to a special portable stretcher called a "Sked."

Once the patient is tightly fastened, the flight medic alerts the crew, who then pull the patient to safety while the medic controls a tag line, another rope hanging from the stretcher, to keep the stretcher steady. If the medic loses control of the tag line the Sked can spiral out of control and cause further injuries or kill the patient.

"You can't over-fixate on any one thing," said Lynch. "I don't want to hurt anybody; the whole point is to help people."

In order for a crew chief to qualify to conduct hoist missions Soldiers have to complete an extra 14-16 hours of instruction, including night training, all done under the supervision of an experienced instructor. Standardization instructors like U.S.

Army Sgt. Kevin Burleson, a native of Cameron, N.C., are crew chiefs who became experts in the aircraft, and now train others.

They are not only responsible for teaching the new guys, but in the bigger picture, they're responsible for how that Soldier performs when it really counts.

"Hoist missions are one of the most difficult tasks that we do in medical evacuation," said Burleson. "It is the most critical and the most dangerous mission."

Dustoff crew members have performed 10 hoist missions in a variety of situations since arriving in August. Staying proficient between missions is key and something Burleson does not take lightly.

"I've dedicated a lot of time to training myself, so I can teach these guys to perform flawlessly," said Burleson.

Medevac Soldiers share the same philosophy when it comes to their missions.

"We will go anywhere, anyplace, anytime to get anyone regardless of the situation," said Burleson. "So if it requires us to do hoist then that's what we are prepared to do."

Medevac crews from the 82nd CAB have completed more than 600 missions throughout Regional Command-East since August. 🇺🇸

W^{PHOTO} WATCH





U.S. Army Spc. Devon Boxa, a native of San Angelo, Texas, with the 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, admires the Afghan landscape out the back door of a CH-47D Chinook helicopter in route from Kabul to Jalalabad Dec. 17. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Ken Scar, RC-East PAO)



The Rabat village Afghan Local Police leader discusses security with an Afghan National Police member, Bermel district, Dec. 15. ALP provide a village-level security force to maintain peace and be a first-response force for disturbances. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Lizette Hart, CJSOTF-A PAO)

Connecting Islands: ALP brings villages together

Story by Sgt. Lizette Hart
CJSOTF-A PAO

In a country with a history of sustaining itself at a tribal level, a program was developed to cater to the traditions of Afghanistan by building a security force at the local level. Through word of mouth and evidence of success, support for the Afghan Local Police program spread throughout the country.

Over the past year, Paktika province in eastern Afghanistan has developed a widespread and effective ALP presence which continues to grow.

It isn't an easy process to begin an ALP program in an area where the villages have been policing themselves for generations. Some villages were more than willing to accept an ALP presence, while others knew they were too small to handle it on their own and asked for more than one village to participate. To maintain their influence, a coalition Special Operations Forces team engaged multiple villages at once.

"Villages are afraid if they do it as an island, they will be overrun, but if their neighbors do it also, they will be strong enough to stand up against the insurgents," said a coalition SOF non-commissioned officer assigned to the team. "It's still local, still their hometown, but it's multiple sub-villages and small tribes. They look after each other and are very happy about it."

Through need and suggestion, villages in the province's four districts requested ALP to help maintain security from -insurgents and rival tribes. The ALP often mediate village shuras to settle differences between tribes.

"They'll provide the security so the two tribes can come together and work out the disputes," said the Rabat village ALP leader. "Because the ALP is so supported here, all the villagers will give us information. They like the ALP, not the insurgents. When any village has ALP, there is good security there."

When insurgents controlled an area, roads were restricted

and movement was limited. Villagers were often forced to turn to the insurgents to solve problems and disputes. Elders who traditionally solved these issues were marginalized, effectively stripping them of their responsibilities.

"As they get more security, more resolution in place, some of the feuds go away and the tribes' systems start to work again, they step up and can be elders again," said the coalition SOF NCO. "The ALP has a very good smoothing effect because they'll talk back and forth and have shuras to solve problems."

With security measures in place, the villagers were free to go wherever and do whatever they wanted. Commerce grew due to an increase in the ability to trade and villagers were free to frequent the local bazaars and even travel to neighboring villages to shop.

"Before there were ALP on this road, there were thieves," said a Rabat village elder. "Now we have ALP, the bad guys are gone and there is security on the roads. They've stopped illegal checkpoints the insurgents were setting up where they were robbing people. They're solving a bigger problem, not just a small problem."

While the ALP is a security force designed to protect their own village, it doesn't prevent the forces from coming to help other villages, or even volunteering to do combined patrols throughout multiple villages.

With more than 500 members, ALP within the province work to secure their villages. Bringing local security to the village allows for freedom of movement, linking itself to other villages and building relationships which were severed by the insurgency long ago. By connecting the islands, ALP brings together the villages which are the foundation of Afghanistan.

"I'm working in my village, so I can see my compound, my home," said the Rabat village ALP leader. "We work not just for the village, but the country, too. Afghanistan, our country, needs us."

Afghan Peace, Reintegration Program begins in Nangahar

By U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Jeff M. Nagan
TF Bronco PAO

After nearly a year of discussion between leaders within Kabul and Nangahar province, the official start of the Nangarhar reintegration program began with an inaugural ceremony Dec. 17 in Jalalabad.

Members from the High Peace Council and Joint Secretariat, who maintain and oversee the implementation of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program, traveled from Kabul to Jalalabad to formally recognize the beginning of the program and show their support for the peace process.

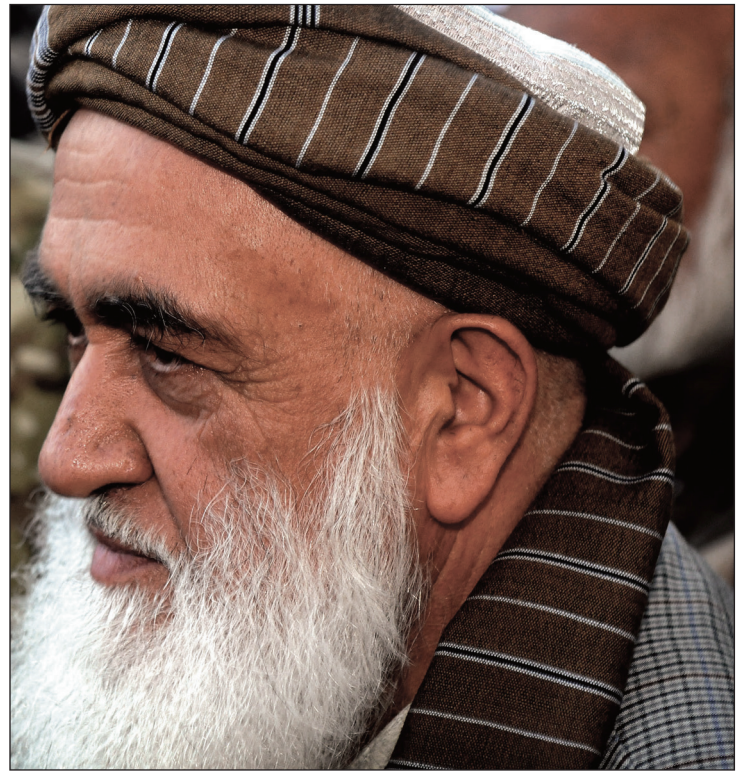
"Now it is our responsibility to take the lead and maintain peace in the region," said Qazi Muhammad Amin Waqad, a member of the High Peace Council, during a speech to an audience of more than 100 elders and civic leaders. "This is our country. This is our home. We must make it a better place."

The audience included members of the Provincial Peace Committee, Provincial Joint Secretariat Team, community leaders and the provincial governor, Gul Agha Sherzai.

Similar to the relationship between the High Peace Council and Joint Secretariat in Kabul, APRP at the provincial level is comprised of the PPC and PJST.

"The [PJST] acts as the administrative body for the [PPC]," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. John Walsh, the deputy commander for the Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team. "The PPC members canvas their local districts to bring fighters back into their communities by making them aware of the peace and reintegration program."

Once viable individuals are found and identified for the reintegration program, the PJST works to find opportunities for them to become productive members of society, said Bill Girard, Afghan Hands, who monitors, reports and enables the



Qazi Muhammad Amin Waqad, a member of the High Peace Council, attends a ceremony inaugurating the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program in Nangarhar Dec. 17. (Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Jeff M. Nagan, TF Bronco PAO)

APRP process in Nangarhar, Kunar and Nuristan.

"This is a heavy burden on your shoulders," said Waqad, talking to the PPC, "but bringing peace will be the most worthwhile effort."


In addition to working through a relatively new bureaucratic process, APRP in Nangarhar was delayed following the murder of Burhanuddin Rabbani, the leader of Afghanistan's High Peace Council and a former president Sept. 20.

"Afghans have faced so many problems over the last 30 years," said Farhadullah Farhad, deputy chief executive of the Joint Secretariat, during the inaugural ceremony. "Now is the time to stop violence and work toward peace and prosperity. The Afghan people are thirsty for peace."

According to the ISAF website The APRP is an Afghan government program, which aims to bring former fighters who renounce violence, break ties with terrorists, and agree to abide by the Afghan constitution, back into their communities.

"Transition is a step toward peace," said Waqad. "It requires a comprehensive approach; we cannot stay in the back relying on Coalition Forces to handle security and bring peace. We cannot always rely on foreign forces. We must do for ourselves."

Since APRP began in August 2010, nearly 3,000 former fighters have joined the peace process, said Farhad. The program has provided many of them training and jobs to help transition them back into their communities.

"We have proved to the international community that Afghanistan is part of the solution, and we will work hard to make this program successful," said Farhad. "It is truly an Afghan led program." 



Following a ceremony inaugurating the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program in Nangarhar, Qazi Muhammad Amin Waqad, a member of the High Peace Council, Gul Agha Sherzai, Nangarhar governor, and other leaders cut the ribbon on the new Nangarhar Reintegration Center Dec. 17. (Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Jeff M. Nagan, PAO)



Provincial line director illuminates city bazaar

By Air Force 1st Lt. Cammie Quinn
RC-East PAO

Hundreds of bazaar shops will soon have electricity in Pak-taya province.

Laolo Edin, the Paktya rovince director of power and Wali an Engineer, met with Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team engineers Jan. 9 to discuss providing electricity to shops in the Gardez City bazaar.

The project will affect about a mile stretch of the road and will provide electricity for 300 to 400 shops, Wali said.

"Previously, the shops either ran without electricity, or relied on a weak, area-wide generator," Wali added.

The project is a part of a larger plan intended to bring electricity to most of the city, Edin said.

"Such projects provide benefits for all people in the city, and I'm happy to have a part in it," the director of power added.

Electricity is a sign of progress and allows the Afghan government to reach into homes and expand influence, said 1st Lt. Cale Reeves, a Paktya PRT engineer from Angleton, Texas.

Construction projects must be vetted through the Paktya Provincial Development Plan before they are approved for funding; allowing the Afghan Government to prioritize community needs and meet higher-level development goals.

Not only is the Gardez bazaar project Afghan-proposed, approved and executed, it is also largely Afghan-funded, Reeves said.

"The director of power is predominately using his budget to fund the project, the PRT's contribution assists only about a third of the overall cost," he said.


This approach is consistent with a larger strategic view in which Afghan projects are migrating from purely direct-assistance funding, through PRTs, government organizations and donors, toward on-budget funding through Afghan national processes.

The director of power is one of the pioneers, in helping the new process evolve as national budget mechanisms mature, said U.S. Air Force Col. James Forand, PRT Paktya commander from Auburn, Mass.

"The director of power is one of the most proactive directors in Paktya," Reeves said. "It is inspiring to see his motivation and dedication as a government director while GIRoA works to provide a secure, sustainable nation."

The PRT regularly partners with Afghan contractors to conduct quality assurance inspections for ongoing projects. During inspections, project managers assess progress, determine current status, verify adherence to predetermined timelines, and identifying things that need to be corrected.

As with the budget process, this approach is evolving to a more Afghan-initiated and led cycle to ensure it becomes an institutional part of Afghan daily activities.

The civil engineers at Paktya Provincial Reconstruction Team facilitate the reconstruction effort and reinforce national and local development priorities. 



Laolo Edin, Paktya province director of power, points to future sites for poles to support an electricity project in Paktya province Jan 9. Electricity is a sign of progress and allows the Afghan government to reach into homes and expand positive service delivery for their people. (Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Cammie Quinn, Paktya PRT PAO)





An Afghan leader in a farming association poses a question during a group discussion at the Logar Agribusiness Leadership and Business Training, Dec. 18. (Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Zackary Root, RC-East PAO)

Afghan farmers look to brighter future

By U.S. Army Pfc. Zackary Root
RC-East PAO

Officials from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, the Afghan Agribusiness Associations and Cooperatives, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Georgia Agribusiness Development Team came together for a two-day Logar Agribusiness Leadership and Business training conference in Logar Province Dec. 18.

"Their government is no different from our government," said U.S. Army Col. Bill Williams, Georgia Agribusiness Development Team Commander. "The more voices that are speaking the more likely someone will listen."

There were five associations present at the Logar Agribusiness Leadership and Business training conference. While the Georgia ADT helped set up several associations, the Afghan farmers have taken the initiative forming new associations themselves.

"The purpose of associations is to come together as a group of farmers," said Steve Berk, a representative from the United States Department of Agriculture working as senior agricultural advisor for Task Force Bulldog. "As individual farmers, they do not have much power. They don't have negotiation power or a voice to the government and are kind of on their own."

Berk said when he asked the Afghan farmers about forming an Afghan farming business association, the farmers said that they already had and they are having their first meeting.

"That is one of the biggest success stories here and we had nothing to do with it," said Berk.

The focus of the training was leadership and business skills. The Georgia ADT taught the experienced Afghan farmers the business side of selling their goods and also how to lead an

association successfully. The training helped the Associations develop five to 10-year goals with a plan to reach their long-term goals.

"It is crucial because a lot of time these associations and cooperatives rely on the government or Coalition Forces," said U.S. Army Sgt. Carmen Benson, an agricultural specialist with Georgia ADT. "What we are trying to teach them is to plan for their future so they can become self sufficient."

Only about 15 percent of the land in Afghanistan is suitable for agriculture.


With a lack of resources such as irrigation systems and farming equipment, skilled Afghan farmers are as resilient as the land they grow crops on. The recent forming of farming associations across the province has put the power of progress back in the hands of the farmers, making them a voice that can't be ignored.

Farming in Afghanistan comes with its own set of problems ranging from lack of water and irrigation systems, to no infrastructure to obtain credit and small business loans to purchase farming equipment.

"There is just not a financial institution system that will allow for small loans to small farmers like there is in the Western world," said Berk.

The forming of associations has helped the Afghan people become more self-sufficient and reliant on themselves to improve their quality of life.

"This is just the start," said Williams. "Obviously, you don't get everything accomplished in two days. But, we want to get people thinking and working together. If they do that they will be able to stand on their own."

"They will not have to depend on the government, they will not have to depend on Coalition Forces and they won't have to depend on international donors." 



Maternal, child health conference held

By U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Steele
RC-East PAO

In an effort to reduce poverty in one of the most impoverished provinces in Afghanistan, a group of about 40 medical experts and government officials gathered at Kiwi Base in Bamiyan Dec. 17 for a conference on maternal and child health, a key indicator of development.

The conference was organized by the Malaysian Contingent 3, International Security Assistance Force, part of the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team and covered a range of issues from anemia in pregnant mothers to water-borne illnesses in small children.

"The purpose of the meeting was to share information and build connections among the partners trying to solve these problems," said Dr. (Maj.) Zaki Mokhtar, head of MALCON 3's medical teams. "Maternal child health is a big problem in Bamiyan."

In Bamiyan, the MALCON 3 medical teams perform medical and dental health outreach in district villages and provide nurse and midwife training at health centers, among other services.

In addition to MALCON 3 and the New Zealand PRT, conference attendees included representatives from United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, physicians from Bamiyan-area hospitals, and advisors to the Afghan Ministry of Public Health. Guests also included donors from Japan and South Korea.

Dr. Zaki said that the Malaysian Contingent organized the conference because poor communication between the agencies was hampering progress toward improving maternal and child health care in Bamiyan.

"We didn't know what data they were collecting or what findings they were getting," Zaki said. "The coordination has not been so good."

Better coordination in places like Bamiyan will be critical if Afghanistan hopes to reach its goal of reducing mother and child mortality rates, which are among the highest in the world. The numbers are sobering.

According to the 2010 Afghan Mortality Survey, released in November, 1 in 13 children in Afghanistan die before their first birthday, 1 in 10 children die before age five, and an Afghan woman dies from pregnancy-related causes every two hours.

Though no Bamiyan-specific mortality data exists, experts at the conference agreed that the problem is probably worse here than in other areas of Afghanistan. Bamiyan is largely rural and remote, and most pregnant women and small children have limited access to skilled health care, if at all.

"Transportation is a big problem," said Dr. Burhan Rahmani, a Bamiyan Province health advisor to the Ministry of Public Health. "Even women who live a half mile from a health facility don't go because they can't get transportation."

On the flip side, many doctors don't want to work in, or travel to, the peripheral villages of Bamiyan, Rahmani said. The result is that most rural health care facilities have staff with limited capabilities and inadequate training.

But even with the best facilities and doctors available, Rahmani acknowledged that most women in isolated parts of Afghanistan prefer home delivery, a fact borne out by the statistics: only 9 percent of births are attended by a skilled laborer.

This is significant because the leading cause of maternal deaths among Afghan women is excessive bleeding following delivery.



Dr. (Maj.) Zaki Mokhtar, Public Health Physician and Head of Medical Teams for the Malaysian Contingent 3, works for MSH/TECH-SERVE, an implementing partner for USAID, as an advisor.

The root cause is anemia, caused by a lack of proper nutrition.

To address this issue clinically, the Ministry of Public Health, supported by U.S. Agency for International Development, has been distributing a safe, inexpensive drug called Misoprostol to prevent post-partum hemorrhaging, which has been used effectively in many developing countries.

So far, the scope of coverage has been limited to central Bamiyan and Yakawlang district, said Dr. Mohamad Reza, a PPH Program Advisor with USAID.

In his lecture entitled, "Community-Based Prevention of Post-Partum Hemorrhaging," he said more money would help pay community health workers to Misoprostol to other distant areas, and also to educate pregnant women and the community elder that PPH is a serious problem that needs addressing.

"Right now everything is volunteer [level]," said Reza. "The budget needs to be expanded to all Bamiyan districts."



held by New Zealand PRT in Bamyan



Malaysian Contingent 3 International Security Assistance Force, gives a tour of MALCON 3's medical storeroom to Dr. Burhan Rahmani, Provincial Health Advisor for Bamyan Province and advisor to the Afghan Ministry of Public Health. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Steele, RC-East PAO)

Zaki pledged his support and said that the Malaysian Contingent would assist with health promotion in the areas it covers, and called on the donor partners to also support the initiative.

"If we can pass this message, how to reduce PPH, they might not even have to use the drugs—they know how to control [the problem] already," Zaki said.

While many at the conference warmed to the PPH initiative and other proposals to improve maternal and child health, such as training midwives to perform cesarean sections and installing water filtration systems in villages, their long-term sustainability was questioned.


"It all comes down to resources," said Atiqullah Amiri, a UNICEF program officer in Bamyan. "Without proper resources we [Afghans] can't maintain the health care facilities the same as now. That is for sure."

How the Ministry of Public Health and local Bamyan officials

will manage health care in the near term is a pressing issue since Bamyan is currently one of two provinces undergoing transition whereby the Afghan government will soon take the lead on all issues across security, governance and development.

Zaki reminded the group that Afghanistan has set target reductions of 15 percent for maternal mortality and 20 percent for child mortality by 2020 as part of its Millennium Development Goals to eliminate poverty.

All the more reason, he said, for the parties concerned to swiftly improve their coordination of the Maternal and Child Health program, a U.N. World Health Organization-sponsored initiative.

"It's vital that we start somewhere, especially in the context of Bamyan Province, and that we work towards achieving this goal," Zaki said. "This conference is just a small step in that direction." 

ANA Soldiers continue with operation

By French Army 1st Lt. Aurelie Lattès
RC-East PAO


Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, Afghan National Army, commanded by General Nazar, conducted a second major operation in Tagab Valley, Dec. 28-31.

Operation Hunting Spear 2 comes just two days after the first part of the operation which took place from Dec. 16-20. The objective of this operation was to search north Tagab Valley, along the Vermont line to preserve the freedom of movement on it.

Operation Hunting Spear 2 mobilized 10 Afghan companies from Kandaks 31, 32, 33, 34 and 36 along with 300 French soldiers from Battle Group Tiger. The unit also included liaison detachments which provided tailored support in the form of direct or indirect fire support in addition to coordinating air support from Forward Operating Base Tagab.

After entering several key points in the vicinity of Tagab, Afghan troops were deployed by foot along the Vermont axis.

The Afghan soldiers neutralized four insurgents and wounded nine others in fighting that took place at the entrance of Bedraou valley. A weapons cache was discovered that included large caliber ammunition such as 122-mm rockets, 105-mm rounds, 82-mm shells and a rocket-propelled grenade.

Operation Hunting Spear 2 illustrated the progress made by the Afghan National Army, in both the planning and the execution of operations but also in army's determination and fighting spirit. 



French soldiers from Battle Group Tiger, Task force la Fayette, train with an individual grenade launcher while monitoring and supporting Afghan National Army soldiers from the Kandak 31 during Operation Hunting Spear 2. (Photo by French Army Master Corporal Jérémie, TF Lafayette PAO)

Operation Hunting Spear in Tagab valley



An Afghan National Army combat Group crosses a waddi in Kapisa province while participating in Operation Hunting Spear 2 Dec. 30. (Photo by French Army Master Corporal Jérémie, TF Lafayette PAO)



French soldiers from Task force Lafayette, train with an AT4 anti-tank weapon while monitoring and supporting Afghan National Army soldiers from Kandak 31. The soldiers have been controlling the ground of Tagab Valley since the ANA conducted Operation Hunting Spear 2 Dec. 16 to 30. The patrols provide a way to consolidate government presence in this sensitive province while the Afghan military continues to work on their credibility with the people of the valley. (Photo by French Army Master Corporal Jérémie, TF Lafayette PAO)



U.S. Army Chaplain (Col.) Rick Spencer, an auxiliary Roman Catholic bishop with the Archdiocese for the Military Services, prepares to celebrate an Advent Mass with military members and civilians serving with Regional Command-East. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Eric Albertson, CJTF-1 Chaplain Office)

*By U.S. Army Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Eric Albertson
RC-East PAO*

He is a Priest, Soldier, Army chaplain, and yet also a Bishop, serving as an auxiliary for the Archdiocese for the Military Services.

U.S. Army Chaplain (Col.) Rick Spencer wears many hats besides his zucchetto, the small head covering marking his clerical position; including the Army's patrol cap, field "boonie" cap, and combat helmet.

A former military police officer commissioned in 1973, he answered the call to the priesthood in 1980 and was ordained for the Diocese of Baltimore in 1988. Having served initially in the U.S. Army Reserves, Spencer later joined the active force and served with distinction in varied assignments, including Bosnia, Egypt, Korea, Germany, and multiple combat deployments to Iraq.

Answering the call from Rome, he was ordained a bishop in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., Sept. 8, 2010. Unique in the history of the Military Archdiocese, as the only actively serving auxiliary bishop, he retained his status as an Army chaplain in the Reserves, allowing him to deploy in support of combat operations and provide needed sacramental and spiritual support to the troops in the forward operating areas.

His most recent deployment landed him at Bagram Airfield, the largest military base in Afghanistan, in support of one of his former combat units, the 1st Cavalry Division based out of Fort Hood, Texas. In his well-known and energetic style, Bishop Spencer hit the ground running, generously providing pastoral care, visiting the wounded, celebrating Mass, and administering the Sacrament of Confirmation to Catholic servicemembers stationed at Bagram. He also traveled north to administer Confirmation to American Catholics located at Camp Marmal in Regional Command-North.

Bishop Spencer commented that he always finds it humbling and rewarding to work and serve in a joint environment—one that includes the Air Force, Navy, Marines, in addition to the Army. Although his roots are with the Army, as a military bishop, his concern is for all branches of service.

"The privilege to support the different branches with pastoral care, and seeing them work together to bring peace, stability and hope to the people and nation of Afghanistan is very rewarding," the Bishop said.

Yet the reward goes both ways. The Bagram congregations, made up of the different branches, all commented on how special it was to have the Bishop celebrate Mass for Advent and the holiday season.

Although tremendous military success has occurred in the past year, the fighting in eastern Afghanistan remains intense. Helicopters routinely brought in the wounded, and multiple ramp ceremonies and memorial ceremonies were conducted to honor the fallen. The long hours and continuous combat operations, the cumulative effects of grief and the emotional strain associated with caring for the wounded takes its toll.

Most of these troops have deployed multiple times. Sometimes it takes a little more grace when the spiritual need is so great, perhaps only the grace and presence a bishop can bring, one who possesses the fullness of the Priesthood, one who is Soldier, Chaplain and Shepherd. 🇺🇸

Father Eric Albertson is a priest from the Arlington Diocese serving in the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA. Currently he is the Command Chaplain for Regional Command-East, 1st Cavalry Division, CJTF-1, Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.



U.S. Army Chaplain (Col.) Rick Spencer an auxiliary Roman Catholic bishop with the Archdiocese for the Military Services and U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jeremy Todd, his chaplain assistant, stand in front of the Enduring Faith Chapel on Bagram. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Eric Albertson, CJTF-1 Chaplain Office)



U.S. Army Chaplain (Col.) Rick Spencer, an auxiliary Roman Catholic bishop with the Archdiocese for the Military Services, stands with his shepherd's crook prior to celebrating Mass. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Eric Albertson, CJTF-1 Chaplain Office)



Smoke fills the air after an Afghan National Army Soldier fired an SPG-9 73 mm recoilless rifle at Forward Operating Base Gamberi Dec. 21, during a three-week heavy weapons course. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Thompson, RC-East PAO)

Heavy weapons course ends with a bang

By Sgt. Matthew Thompson
RC-East PAO

The booming rapport of the SPG-9 73-mm recoilless rifle reverberated off the walls of the valley while the M2 .50-caliber machine gun tore through reinforced targets.

Twenty-three Afghan National Army Soldiers completed a three-week training course on three heavy weapons systems at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, Dec. 22.

"You have done an excellent job," said Afghan National Army Lt. Col. Rayees Khan, the officer in charge of training. "Continue to train like this to defend Afghanistan."

"You should share your training with your units," added French Army Capt. Jean Michael Filipi, Infantry Mobile Training Team Leader. "You should do everything in your power to defend your country."

The Soldiers were trained to effectively use, maintain and employ the SPG-9 recoilless rifle, M2 .50-caliber machine gun and 82 mm mortars.

"I like the SPG-9," said an ANA Soldier. "It makes a big sound, and if you want to destroy something, it does it almost immediately."

One by one the Soldiers were issued their certificates of achievement for completing the course.

"To better serve Afghanistan!" each Afghan Soldier cried out as he received his certificate. 🇦🇫



An Afghan National Army Soldier lines up his target through the sights of an SPG-9 73 mm recoilless rifle at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, Dec. 21, during a three-week heavy weapons course. Afghan National Army Soldiers trained on the SPG-9 73 mm recoilless rifle, M2 .50-caliber machine gun and 82 mm mortars. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Thompson, RC-East PAO)

ANA new elite snipers complete course

By U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Thompson
RC-East PAO

Twelve Afghan National Army Soldiers from the 201st Afghan National Army Corps endured harsh wintery conditions for the chance to earn the elite title of sniper after a three-week training course at Forward Operating Base Gamberi.

The French Infantry Mobile Training Team, led by French Army Capt. Jean Michel Filipi, trained the Afghan Soldiers on the U.S. Army M24 sniper weapon system and the Russian SVD-137 Dragunov sniper rifle Dec. 17 – Jan. 5.

“These Soldiers embodied the sniper motto of ‘one shot, one

kill,’” said Filipi.

The Afghan snipers learned advanced shooting techniques such as how to approximate distances, how to adjust their windage and how to report basic intelligence.

ANA Sgt. Ajab-ullah, Intelligence Company, 4th Kandak, 3rd Brigade, earned top shot of the class.

“I am very happy that I got the first position,” Ajab-ullah said humbly. “When I get back to my Kandak, I will train my fellow Soldiers in the sniper skills and make them as good a shooter as myself.”

This is the first sniper course that the French MTT has facilitated and the first that the 201st ANA Corps has received



An Afghan National Army sniper peers through the scope of his M24 sniper weapon system during the sniper training course at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, Dec. 21. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Thompson, RC-East PAO)



An Afghan National Army sniper adjusts the sights on his M24 sniper weapon system during a sniper training course at Forward Operating Base Gamberi Dec. 21. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Thompson, RC-East PAO)

and conducted. The course curriculum was developed from feedback of the trainees, commanders in the field, and the unit requirements for target interdiction and intelligence gathering.

“[Since] this is the first sniper course, like most firsts, there are always bugs in the system” said French Army Master Sgt. Yomar Barthelemy, senior French sniper trainer. “The coordination, weapons, logistic requirements to support the range and the class are evolving and will be less stressful the next class.”

Trained snipers play an important role in fighting insurgents due to Afghanistan’s mountainous terrain, and being able to engage the enemy at a distance adds a combat multiplier for any Afghan Army unit, according to Rodney Kennedy, civilian mentor with the FOB Gamberi Tactical Action Center.

“If you can hit a target at 600 meters, it’s no problem to hit a target at 1,000 meters,” said Kennedy.

The sniper course is one of a series of training courses offered by the 201st ANA Corps at FOB Gamberi. The training at the FOB is intended to teach Afghan Soldiers new skills, tactics, techniques and procedures, develop leadership characteristics and create a sustainable cycle that the ANA will maintain after transition.



First ANA-built combat outpost rises at Dawlat Shah

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Luke Graziani
RC-East PAO

The presence of Coalition Forces is beginning to withdraw more and more into the background behind an Afghan face. The transition to a safe Afghanistan, patrolled and protected by the Afghan National Army has begun.

The ANA has made considerable steps in their journey to self-sufficiency, to include taking a stronger lead on missions, planning and executing their own missions and showing a positive presence in their communities.

The ANA Soldiers of 1st Kandak, 201st Corps have another reason to hold their heads up high. As of Dec. 21 they have designed and built their own combat outpost just outside of Dawlat Shah.

The 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team provided their Brigade Engineer noncommissioned officer in charge, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Cody Wilson, to assist in getting the ANA started in the right direction.

"It went slow at first, because of the learning curve," said Wilson, a native of Liberty-Mounds, Okla. "I went through meticulously explained to them why things are this long how the supports need to be put in."

Construction of the COP and the buildings inside soon began to accelerate.

The ANA and local carpenters caught on quickly. They readily accepted the challenge of finishing the task.

"We got one floor done that first day," said Wilson. "The next day I had to leave to go to Najil. By the time I got back, they had already gotten the rest of the three floors done. I showed them how to do one and they built three on their own."


Not only was this the first time the ANA has ever built their own COP, this was also the first time some of the carpenters had ever used power tools. They had previously only used hand tools. The speed and efficiency that the power tools provided gave the men more confidence in their skills.

"Staff Sgt. Wilson came in here and he teaches us how to build all the barracks," said Jan Aqa, the ANA 201st Corps engineer. "I thank Staff Sgt. Wilson for all his efforts and training."

Never before has the ANA done this type of construction on this large a scale. The future of the ANA depends on their ability to grow and expand their physical property to keep up with the growth and expansion of their tasks and responsibilities to the community. They have taken this small step in stride and are already building a new COP completely on their own not far from Dawlat Shah.

"It teaches them pride in their work," said Wilson. "The fact that they can do it on their own, and they don't have us doing it for them, is a huge boost to their morale."

They appreciate the valuable skills they've recently learned and are looking into the future positively.

"I'm so happy and content with our achievement here," said Aqa. "We never did such a thing before - it was a good experience for us." 



Afghan carpenters carry a cut piece of plywood to be used as the floor of a building at an Afghan National Army combat outpost just outside of Dawlat Shah District, Laghman Province. This is the first COP designed and built by the ANA with only minimal assistance from Coalition Forces. (Photo courtesy of TF Thunderbird, PAO)



A Soldier with the Afghan National Army demonstrates to his instructor and senior officers how to prepare an improvised explosive device that his team located for demolition Dec. 31 in Kandahar. (Photo by U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Ronald Carpinella, TF Paladin PAO)

Afghan forces add to counter-IED capabilities

*By U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Ronald Carpinella
TF Paladin PAO*

Members of the Afghan National Army, police and other uniformed services graduated from the challenging explosive hazard reduction course in Kandahar Dec. 31.

The month-long course, designed to enable the safe detection and demolition of improvised explosive devices and other explosives, is part of coalition efforts to train Afghan National Security Forces for independent operations that protect civilians and security forces throughout their country. On successful completion of the course, the students are qualified as explosive hazard reduction technicians.

With the prevalence of IEDs in Afghanistan and their undeniable status as the weapon of choice for insurgents, the ability to detect and safely destroy them in the field is a key skill for the ANSF. As EHRTs, the 27 students who graduated will provide independent operational capabilities for their units throughout Afghanistan.

“By using realistic scenarios and current tactics, techniques and procedures, we are arming the students with the ability to find and remove IEDs from the battle space in a safe and controlled way”, said Warrant Officer Ian West of the Royal Australian Engineers.

The commander of Afghan National Civil Order Police training in Kandahar, Brig. Gen. Ghulam Mohaiddin, was the guest of honor and used the opportunity to challenge the graduates, reinforcing their responsibility to protect both civilians and service-members.

In his address, he stated: “You are the future of Afghanistan and you are an important element in bringing stability and peace to our nation... the effort to protect lives in Afghanistan starts with you.”

A challenge that the students embraced when they yelled, “Zwand,” which is Pashto for life, as they presented their certificates to their classmates.

The explosive hazards reduction course taught in Kandahar is one of many counter-IED and explosive ordnance device courses provided by Combined-Joint Task Force Paladin, whose mission is focused on defeating the IED threat in Afghanistan.

The training efforts are focused on enabling Afghan security forces to independently operate and counter the insurgent IED threat and protecting Afghan citizens.

“The skills that these Soldiers now possess will greatly enhance the counter IED capability of the ANSF. By delivering high quality and detailed instruction we have enabled the students to have the best chance of success on the battlefield and in the streets of Afghanistan”, said Sgt. Joseph Macklin, an instructor from the Royal Australian Engineers.

The explosive hazards reduction course is taught by coalition servicemembers from Australia and the ANA.



Ghazni district transfers security to Afghans

By U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. J. Lavoie
TF White Eagle PAO

Afghan National Police, Afghan National Army and National Defense Service were handed security of Ghazni District during a historic ceremony here, Jan. 12.

The event marked the transfer of security of Ghazni District from Polish to Afghan responsibility, as well as displayed coalition and Afghan confidence in the Afghan National Security Forces capabilities.

"We are proud of the ANA, ANP and NDS and that they are able to provide good security for Ghazni," said Musa Khan, Ghazni Provincial governor, in his statements during the ceremony. "Every people and every nation must have their own security."

Musa Khan, along with Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, head of transition for Afghanistan, also assured the people in attendance that the decision to transfer security was not taken lightly, and they are confident it is the right decision.

"The decision to transition has been carefully considered," said Ahmadzai. "We have planned for a long time and are ready to provide security."

"Foreign troops have provided security for a long time, but now is our time," he added. "We will continue to have positive relations with them, but now we will provide our own security."

The only American speaker during the Afghan event echoed Ahmadzai's desire to continue a positive relationship between Coalition Forces and the Government of Afghanistan.

"Transition does not mean the end of our partnership, quite to the contrary; we will continue to tackle Ghazni's challenges together," said Gregory Huger, Regional Command-East acting senior civilian.

In addition to celebrating the success of the ANSF and transition, the provincial governor also had a message for the people of Ghazni City, as well as Ghazni Province.

"The Quran says if you kill each other, you will be destroyed. I ask that each of you follow the Quran. If we follow the Quran, we will succeed. We have to be united," Khan said during the ceremony, adding that with this success, he hopes to soon see such ceremonies in other districts.

Ahmadzai also hoped for such a future, "President Karzai's main goal, when he became president, was to hand over security to Afghans. We have been witness in a lot of districts, this is happening. We would like to have such ceremonies in all districts."

In Ghazni City, ANA members in attendance thought the ceremony went well, and that they are ready to support the Afghan people's safety.

"One hundred percent, we are ready to provide security," said Col. Mohammad Alim, ANA commander. "It was a good event."

Some in attendance felt this was a first step to an autonomous Afghanistan.

"I am very happy, everyone is happy," said an ANA sergeant. "This is the beginning of the future."

"We are in charge of our country, our people and our future," the sergeant added. 🇦🇫



An Afghan National Army Soldier presents the Afghan flag during a transition ceremony Jan 12 in Ghazni City. During the ceremony, Afghan National Police, Afghan National Army, and National Defense Service were often lauded for their abilities and professionalism. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Darnell T. Cannady, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team PAO)



U.S. Army Sgt. Joshua Stevens, a parachute rigger, 725th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Spartan, prepares to hook up a sling load to a Russian Mi-8 helicopter at Forward Operating Base Salerno Jan 3. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jason E. Epperson, TF Spartan PAO)

Centurions deliver for Alaska-based Airborne Brigade

By U.S. Army Capt. Charles M. Spears
TF Spartan PAO

A group of Alaska-based parachute riggers are now rigging everything from fuel to food for delivery to Soldiers on the front lines in Afghanistan.

The riggers are part of the 725th Brigade Support Battalion, Task Force Centurion, which recently deployed to eastern Afghanistan. Task Force Centurion assumed responsibility of the support and sustainment mission for the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Spartan.

"This section has already coordinated the transportation of over 3,000 Soldiers and just under one million pounds of cargo by contracted aviation in less than one month," said U.S. Army Capt. Adam Jones, TF Centurion transportation officer. "Without this air coordination, the maneuver forces would not be able to sustain operations at certain bases."

In Alaska, the riggers support the brigade's airborne mission by re-rigging thousands of parachutes the brigade uses every week for airborne proficiency training. They also keep their skills fresh by rigging entire humvees and howitzer artillery platforms for what's known as aerial delivery.

The 725th BSB's support operations air transportation section is at the head of the battalion's logistical support mission. This section plans and coordinates with military and civilian contract agencies to bundle, sling load and fly needed supplies anywhere in the brigade's battle space. Despite the rough terrain of eastern Afghanistan, air delivery isn't the only option.

"Last week the 725th pushed out our first convoy over the

[Khowst-Gardez] pass from Salerno to Gardez," said U.S. Army Capt. Eddie Gorbett, battalion operations officer. "The roads of Afghanistan are rough and lack the conveniences of the U.S. interstate system. There were problems to overcome like vehicle breakdowns and flat tires.


"During their convoy they moved over hard ball, dirt, and even river beds to get from one destination to the other. These Soldiers quickly responded to all challenges and ensured everyone made it back safely and tactically."

While transitioning with the outgoing 201st Brigade Support Battalion from Fort Knox, Ky., the 725th BSB diligently worked to learn the battle rhythm the 201st used to ensure smooth flow of operations over the last year.

The focus of the 725th BSB's mission is the full transition of security and governance responsibilities to the Afghan government.

For its part of that mission, The 725th BSB is observing Afghan National Army operations in order to build trust, learn the ANA logistics system, and identify areas to focus on while mentoring and training the ANA, according to U.S. Army 1st Lt. Courtney Fuller, battalion personnel officer.

Nearly 3,500 paratroopers conducting combat and support missions everyday requires significant resource support. The BSB provides flexible and responsive logistical support to TF Spartan's maneuver units arrayed across the area of operations, according to Jones.

The 725th BSB, TF Centurion commander, Lt. Col. Brad Hinson, summarized the principle that guides all members of his team, "No mission will fail due to logistics." 

TF Spartan paratroopers rescue Afghan child



Farook, an Afghan child with his uncle, Shah Saied, receives medical care after suffering an asthma attack. He was medically evacuated to the Forward Operating Base Salerno hospital for further treatment Jan 8. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Eric-James Estrada, TF Spartan PAO)

*By U.S. Army Spc. Eric-James Estrada
TF Spartan PAO*

Paratroopers from the 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Spartan, assisted in the rescue of an Afghan child, Jan. 8.

Early Sunday morning, a combat arms unit from TF Gold Geronimo was approached by the father of three-year-old Farook while on patrol in Paktya Province of Afghanistan.

Farook was suffering from an asthma attack and was taken to the Forward Operating Base Gardez medical facility. There, the medics determined that Farook would need to be evacuated by helicopter to Forward Operating Base Salerno.

“Our physicians took over care and we were able to treat him appropriately with steroids and airway treatments,” said U.S. Army Col. Peter Gould, 352nd Combat Support Hospital commander at FOB Salerno. “Now he’s calm and able to breath on his own and with that care he’s ready to go home.”

Childcare constitutes about 10 percent of patient care at the Salerno hospital. That 10 percent has to meet a certain criteria in order for the doctors here to help them.

“Unless kids are injured by us, they are not what is called [Medical Rule of Eligibility] positive,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Matthew Dupree, 352nd CSH officer in charge of emergency medical treatment. “Most of the time when we admit children it’s a life, limb, or eyesight issue. This was obviously a life issue.”

The doctors at Salerno do their best to service all of those who come seeking medical attention, according to Dupree.

“A lot of times the parents just want to bring their kids here because they want them to get better care. We can’t take all of them, but we certainly take the ones who fall into the three categories,” said Dupree.

Another challenge the Salerno hospital faces is that it is one of very few hospitals in Afghanistan with a pediatrics facility.

“... there’s not very many places in the area that can take care of sick kids,” said Dupree. “So a lot of times we have to take them and then treat them until they are stable for discharge.”

Although the Salerno hospital is capable of taking care of children, the facilities are equipped more toward adult patient care, Dupree said. “We have to make due and get a little creative using what we have to work with kids.”

Farook’s uncle, Shah Saied, from Paktya province, who accompanied his nephew to the Salerno hospital, expressed his gratitude for the care the hospital was able to provide for his nephew.

“Absolutely this is a good hospital, when I took my nephew to a local clinic in our district they were unable to care for him,” Saied said. “Then I brought him to the base here in Jaji [and] they called an ambulance and were very helpful. If I did not bring him here, he would have died.”



Literacy over the airwaves

Story by Sgt. Lizette Hart
CJSOTF-A PAO

With a bright yellow notebook in hand, a young boy sits on the floor of a bazaar shop staring at the words on the page. Looking for help, he turns to the man next to him, as they both are learning how to read by listening to an educational radio program while following along in the notebook.

In a country where the literacy rate is below 30 percent, a coalition special operations forces team assists Afghan citizens by facilitating a regular radio literacy program in Jaji district.

"Giving out print products around here doesn't work because nobody can read," said the coalition SOF team noncommissioned officer responsible for the literacy program. "Everything comes from the radio: news, information, government programs and education programs. The intent of the radio program is to have one teacher, teaching 5,000 people at the same time."

While looking for ways to improve the lives of Afghans, the coalition SOF team discovered a literacy program that could reach thousands of people simultaneously. In late November 2011, the coalition SOF team met with district shura leaders to propose the idea of the literacy program.

"We went to the district shura to tell them we have this literacy program and explained to them what the program was and how it was supposed to work," said the coalition SOF NCO. "We took a poll to see who would be interested in the program, and everyone said they were."

Upon approval from the shura, the SOF team ordered 5,000 books. In addition, they handed out notebooks, pens and radios to prospective listeners.


The literacy program consists of 60 prerecorded lessons. Each lesson lasts approximately 15-30 minutes and is broadcast three times a day. Airing four days a week, the whole program takes three months to complete.

"By the time the program finishes, the people should be able to read and write at a good level to communicate in their own language," said the coalition SOF NCO. "When we get to the end of the program, the idea is to give the books to people who didn't get them this time and start the program all over again."

Most listeners tend to gather at central locations with the purpose of assisting each other with difficult lessons. Some adults already have a basic understanding of the written language and are able to coach fellow villagers during the radio lessons.

"We can make a group when the radio program is going, and one person can take responsibility, and everybody can come in, and I can interpret it for them," said an Ali Kheyl village elder. "Everyone is really thankful for all the books, and people like to study on their own for self-improvement. We like to have a direct link toward improvement."

The literacy program is also a way to educate adults in an area that lacks qualified teachers, and with an anticipated increase in literacy among adults, there will be better dissemination of information across the villages in the district.

"There will be more information about current events and projects in the area," said the coalition SOF NCO. "I just want this program to be the best thing for them right now, and I want them to get the most out of it, and we're going to keep running it the way it is until we have suggestions or people have better ideas. It's helping each other out; that's what this thing is all about." 



Elders from Ali Kheyl village assist each other during a weekly literacy program aired over the radio in the Jaji district, Dec. 26. The 60-lesson program is designed to teach adults how to read and write in Pashtu. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Lizette Hart, CJSOTF-A PAO)



CJTH's longest resident inspires staff

By U.S. Army Spc. Ken Scar
RC-East PAO

On July 21, a boy playing soccer with his friends was hit by a piece of shrapnel, possibly from a round that had been shot into the ground hundreds of meters away.

His father at first did not think the wound was life-threatening, but rushed his son to Forward Operating Base Warrior in Ghazni province as it became clear something was very wrong.

Although U.S. forces were not involved in the accident, the boy, Najibullah, was immediately put on a medical evacuation flight to Craig Joint-Theater Hospital on Bagram Airfield in a desperate attempt to save his life.

"His injuries were severely life-threatening on arrival and his very survival was in doubt," said Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Joe DuBose, CJTH Trauma Chief. "The burn injury occurring to his abdomen caused the destruction of the entire thickness of his abdominal wall and a significant portion of his intestines.

"After multiple bowel resections, the preservation of the viable length of intestine required to support basic oral nutrition was in serious doubt."

Najibullah was eight years old when he came to Craig Hospital where he was unable to eat, drink, use his bowels, and was in ceaseless pain. "Naji", as he's affectionately called, spoke no English.

Over the next six months and through dozens of operations and very close calls, CJTH staff became his friends and big brothers and sisters.

He in turn became the star of the medical ward, a bright light for two deployment cycles of elite medical professionals who see the very worst consequences of war day after day.

By the time Naji finally returns to his home, he will have spent more than 25 weeks under the hospital's care – longer than any patient in its history.

"He's had two dozen operations at least – a dozen in the last month," said Maj. (Dr.) Chris Wilhelm, the CJTH pediatrician. "And there's nothing cosmetic about any of them – it's all just been to keep him alive and get him able to eat well."

Naji spent so much time at the hospital that he learned how to speak, read and write English within its walls. So well, in fact, that he often acts as interpreter for the doctors and nurses with



Air Force Maj. Sherrol James, Craig Joint-Theater Hospital chaplain, cries as she hugs Afghan national Najibullah goodbye, Jan. 9. Najibullah was severely injured in the stomach July 20, in Ghazni province and had been under the care of Craig Hospital ever since. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ken Scar, RC-East PAO)

other children in the ward.

Depending on the day, he'll give different answers to what he wants to be when he grows up, said DuBose.

"I want to be a teacher," Naji said. "A good teacher."

"Well, you've taught me a lot, little brother," said DuBose, while giving Naji a fist-bump with exploding fingers.

The effect Naji's had on the hospital staff is obvious during a stroll through the long-term care wing of the hospital.

He walks carefully, delicately hunched over as if he has a constant stomachache. He is greeted at every turn either by someone mussing his dark brown hair, high-fives from doctors, or hugs and kisses from the nurses. A wide, boyish grin never leaves his face.

"He has a lot of friends here," said DuBose. "We see a lot of children here – any time you're in this environment it's a significant component to what we provide, and it's frequently the most rewarding component of what we do, but Naji's a rare exception in that we've been able to see him all the way through."

"Most of the time we treat combat casualties and they move very rapidly to the next stage of their care so we lose the opportunity to see the fruits of our labor."

After all the months of constant attention, Naji's feelings toward his imminent discharge are mixed.



A U.S. Air Force nurse holds the hand of Najibullah at Craig Joint-Theater Hospital Jan. 1. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ken Scar, RC-East PAO)





Najibullah, 10, and Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Joe DuBose, Craig Joint-Theater Hospital trauma chief, joke around Jan. 1, Najib's 164th day under the hospital's care. (U.S. Army photo illustration by Spc. Ken Scar, RC-East PAO)

"I feel like I'm home here," Najib said. "I don't want to leave, because it's cold in my province and we're poor. I'm going to miss everyone here. I've been here six months! [But] when I leave here I'll be very happy, because I can see my brothers and sisters again."

It is imperative for Najib to be fully healed before sending him on his way.


"We have to get [Afghan patients] into a good state of health before they leave ... because we have to presume they won't get any outside care," Wilhelm said. "A lot of these kids go back to places where there's no electricity or running water."

Judging by the way the staff members' eyes water when they talk about him, it's not going to be easy letting little Najib go – but they are immensely proud that he will be walking out full of life and not being carried, lifeless.

"I was very worried for a while, because if Najib died, it was going to be a serious blow to morale for the entire staff," said Sperl.

Khaled Hosseini, author of 'The Kite Runner' wrote, "There are a lot of children in Afghanistan, but little childhood."

Najib is exactly as old as the war and his injuries builds on to the memories of the war around him. Those who cared for Najib hope that time spent with them will give him the strength to forget the bad memories and move on to his future.

"We've been able to see him all the way through some very tough times," said DuBose. "Hopefully he'll be able to forget them and move on. He is the future of Afghanistan – and that means it's a very bright future indeed." 



Najibullah performs his duties as the grand marshal of the Craig Joint-Theater Hospital New Year's Day parade Jan. 1. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ken Scar, RC-East PAO)

Aeromedical Evacuation crew pr



The American flag hangs while a Critical Care Air Transport Team works to keep a patient alive during flight on the C-130 Hercules Jan. 10. The CCATT is needed for treating the most critically injured patients during an aeromedical evacuation. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Cody Barber, RC-East PAO)

By U.S. Army Spc. Cody Barber
RC-East PAO

“Prepare to lift! Lift!”

U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Timothy Talbert shouted these commands to fellow medics who then lifted the Critical Care Air Transport Team patient from an ambulance to a C-130 Hercules because they understood that time was a factor in saving the patient’s life.

Talbert, a flight nurse, is part of the 455th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Flight team on Bagram Airfield, whose mission is to care for and transport patients from one location to another to get them further medical care.

“Our primary mission is to transport patients anywhere in theater,” said Talbert, a native of Richmond, Va. “We move injured and wounded patients whether they are Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines or contractors. There isn’t a patient we can’t transport.”

The 455th EAEF picks up and treats servicemembers and civilians with injuries varying from anything as minor as a cough

to as severe as multiple amputation or gunshot wounds.

They also take patients from Craig Joint Theater Hospital to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany, for a higher level of medical care.

Talbert said they are the medics in-between when referring to the transportation of patients from one location to the next.

“We are a part of a system,” said Talbert. “We are the intermediate area between point A to point B. The transport is vital for the continuity of care and getting the patient to the next step, which might be the life saving step, the diagnosis that they need, or the treatment that they need.”

The mission planning starts upon receiving an aerovac request from the Combined Air Operations Center. The crews of the 455th EAEF have to be airborne within three hours to include multiple briefings, loading and checking approximately 1,800 pounds of equipment and converting the cargo area of a C-130, C-17 Globemaster III or a KC-135 Stratotanker into a flying ambulance or hospital.

“Whenever we are alerted, we have an hour to show,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Martha Maddox, native of Chapel Hill, N.C.,



ovides lifesaving transportation

and the Medical Crew Director with the 455th EAEF. “During the next two hours we have to brief, load our equipment and get everything checked so when we get to the aircraft, we are ready to go.”

Maddox said that the crew wants everything ready 30 minutes before takeoff and it wouldn’t be possible if it wasn’t for a team effort.

“My crew is amazing,” said Maddox. “They know their procedures backwards and forwards and I would fly with anyone of them anywhere, anytime.”

There are four crews in the squadron and each crew is made up of five personnel. The crews are made up of two nurses and three air medical evacuation technicians.

One technician, U.S. Air Force Senior Airmen Melissa Deardorff, a native to Dumfries, Va., works as the charge on the crew, which details making sure equipment is up-to-date as well as doing pre-flight checks.

“As a flight medic, there is a job you do before you do your medic part,” said Deardorff. “I also have to delegate jobs such as who does the oxygen, electrical, straps and who loads the patients.”

Even though the each person on the crew has a specific job, it’s important for each crew member to know each other’s job, Deardorff added.

“We have to know each other’s jobs,” Deardorff continued. “We have to work like a well-oiled machine.”

The crew has experienced a great sense of satisfaction transporting and caring for about 160 patients during their time in theater.

“It’s something that is hard to describe,” said Deardorff. “... but there is no greater feeling than to take care of one of your own and get them the help they need.”



A patient is loaded onto a C-130 Hercules so he can be flown to another medical facility to receive additional care Jan. 10. The 455th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Flight crew customizes a C-130 into a flying ambulance that can hold upwards of 50 litter patients. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Cody Barber, RC-East PAO)



U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Timothy Talbert, native of Richmond, Va., and a flight nurse with the 455th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Flight, and U.S. Air Force Senior Airmen Jonathan Ward, a native from Greenville, S.C., an air medic with 455th EAEF, wait from the back of a C-130 Hercules for a Critical Care Air Transport Patient to arrive Jan. 10. The crew waited hours for the patient to be stabilized before flight. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Cody Barber, RC-East PAO)

Air Force Art Program

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terrance D. Rhodes
RC-East PAO

Ask any deployed Airmen about a famous artist and they may mention Vincent van Gogh or even Pablo Picasso. Although this may be true, the Air Force has many artists through a program of their own, which many don't know about.

The Air Force Art Program started in 1950 with the mission to capture the story of the Air Force through the universal language of art.

These paintings and drawings are created by American artists like Michael Kane, founder of Custom Interior Murals based in Denver. He was introduced to the program back in 1997.

"I started out in the Society of Illustrators as an independent artist," said Kane. "My first painting was for the 50th anniversary calendar for the Air Force association, they donated my paintings and that's how I got into the program."

Kane's first trip overseas was to Osan, Korea back in 1999. Since then his love for the Air Force and his determination to tell the Air Force story through art has grown.

"Instead of having a snapshot to build a picture, I take numerous pictures to build a painting that will showcase the total range of what these airmen do every day," he added.

U.S. Air Force Senior Airmen Jonathan Ward, an air medical evacuation technician with the 455th Expeditionary Aero-medical Evacuation Flight, who recently flew on a mission with Kane, likes the idea of having artists there to capture the essence of a mission.

"It feels great to know that what we are doing gets out to the public. Not a lot of people get a chance to go on missions with us," said Ward, a native of Greenville, S.C. "I'm looking forward to seeing how [Kane] draws us."


Kane's drawing motivates Airmen of all ranks.

"It's an honor that the AFAP has taken this opportunity to come on our mission and capture an artistic impression of what I do," said U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Timothy Talbert, a native of Richmond, Va., and a flight nurse with the 455th EAEF. "Sometimes, just telling someone about what I do on a daily basis is not enough so having the moment captured in art goes a long way."

Kane knows that his paintings give the American people a chance to see what goes on during deployments.

"Once I return home after a trip like this and see how the everyday lifestyles of civilian people are conducted, I think to myself that we really don't have a clue of what goes on over there," said Kane.

Kane never served in the Air Force, which he says he regrets, but being able to draw and paint what the Airmen do daily makes him feel as if he is part of the team.

"I always say the Air Force is my team. It's a special honor to see what the military does in person," said Kane. "To be able to give something back to my team is the most important thing to show my appreciation." 

The background photo is a picture of an oil painting titled "Baghdad CAP Refuel." The painting depicts a refueling over Baghdad in Oct 2003. The painting was created by Michael B Kane owner and founder of Custom Interior Murals. (Courtesy Photo by Michael B. Kane.)



m showcases Airmen



Picture of an oil painting titled "Peacekeepers" depicts Security Force operations at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base. The painting was created by Michael B Kane owner and founder of Custom Interior Murals. (Courtesy photo by Michael B. Kane.)

To the left: Michael Kane, founder of Custom Interior Murals based in Denver, takes pictures for the Air Force Art Program Jan. 11. The AFAP, started in 1950, sends freelance artist to capture the mission of the Air Force to be painted as murals. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Terrance D. Rhodes, 11th Public Affairs Detachment)



Picture of an oil painting titled "DG Ops" depicts port operations at Navy Support Facility Diego Garcia in Oct 2001. The painting was created by Michael B Kane owner and founder of Custom Interior Murals. (Courtesy photo by Michael B. Kane.)

W^{LEADER} WATCH

Exercise your brain, read

*Commentary by U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Jim Fisher, Ph.D.
TF Longhorn*

Leadership expert John Maxwell states, “Leaders are readers and readers are leaders.” If we are not regularly taking in, we will have nothing to put out. Sure, we can coast for a while on the fumes of yesterday’s success, but sooner or later the tank will run dry. Leaders must be sponges, soaking up intentional information and sharing it with others.

We are being exposed to things and learning every day, whether planned or not. Much of this unintentional learning is useless. Wouldn’t it be better to have an intentional plan for daily learning through reading? Such learning should be joyful

as we stretch our horizons.

Are you a reader? Many will claim they do not have time to read. Really? How much web-surfing are you doing? If your hand has to be full when you relax, replace the game-controller or remote control with a book.

The issue is not to build a personal library or to fill up book-cases in the living room. Our goal is not to impress others with a collection; rather we are seeking to inspire ourselves towards greater learning.

The problem usually is planning. For many, good reading requires silence and solitude, two aspects that can be terribly frightening to many. To experience these twin pillars of education, a plan must be developed. Silence and solitude can be


difficult to find, but we will create it, if it’s important to us. The time and place must be prioritized. Maybe getting up earlier in the morning before the family will provide the time. Perhaps it is carving out some time at lunch and sitting in your car.

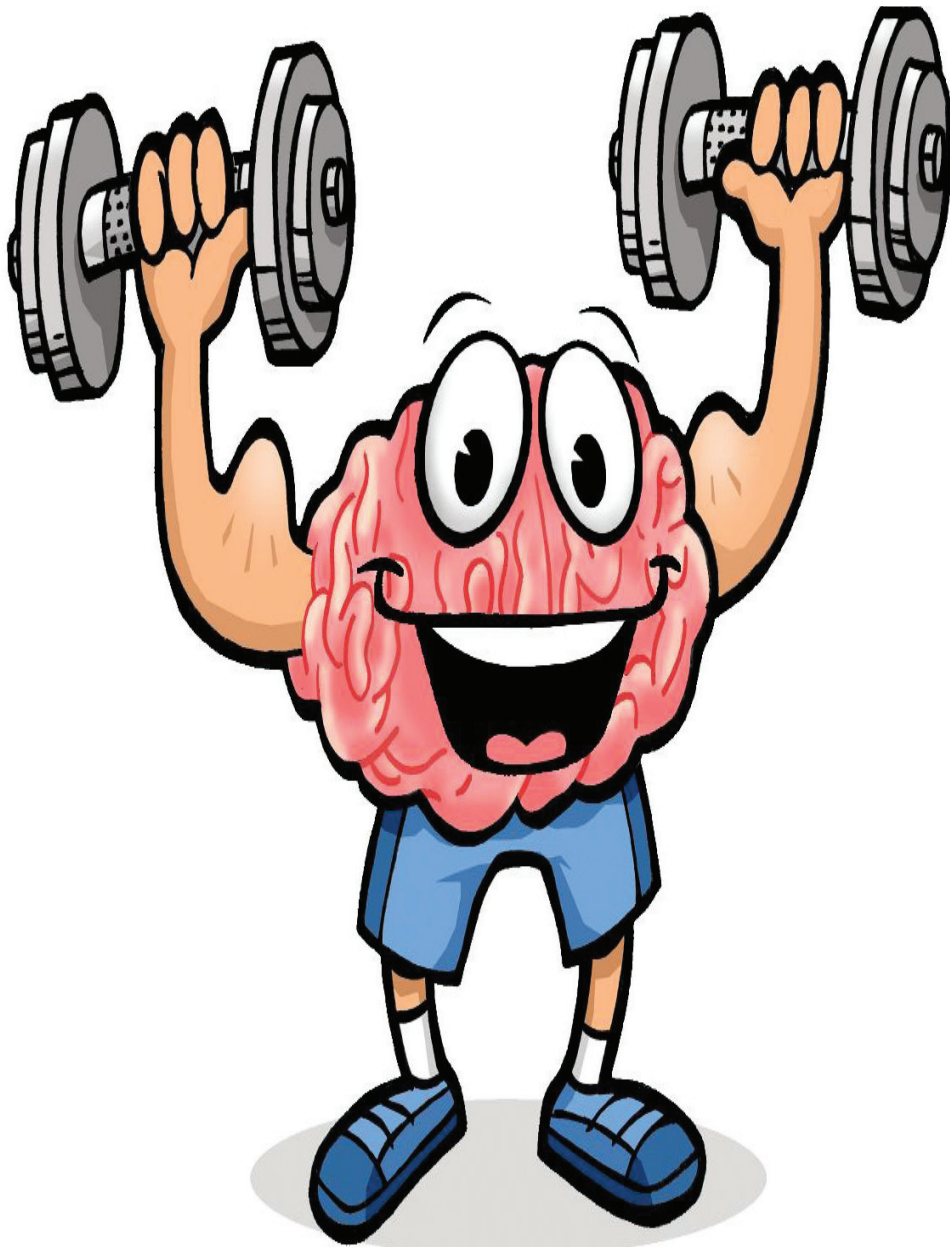
How long has it been since you held a newspaper and washed the black ink from your hands? The library is still available, even if you are not attending college. Now-a-days books, newspapers and magazines aren’t just print and paper. They can also be downloaded on a computer, smart phone or electronic reader.

Think with me. What if you commit to reading for 15 minutes a day? If you do this for 365 days, you will read for 5,475 minutes. Wow! This culminates in 91 hours of reading, almost four full days. Let’s get really brave. How about reading for 30 minutes per day? That would be 10,950 minutes or 182 hours; this is almost eight full days per year.

The Nielsen Company revealed that the average American watches 153 hours of television per month. This equates to 1,836 hours per year or 76.5 full days. Still think you can’t find time to read?

Learning should not end when we walk across the stage and receive our diploma. Yet, without purposeful reading through planning, we will not continue to grow. It’s a good thing our medical physicians continue to read after they graduate.

Reading has the innate ability to reprogram our minds and refresh our actions. The eye is the only organ with brain cells. The visual remains an integral part of all learning. Grow the critical thinking skills and fire the brain synapses. Be purposeful and plan some reading-leaders read and readers lead! 



W MEDICAL WATCH

Never go full red, go green instead

Commentary by U.S. Army Maj. Renee E. Cole, PhD, RD

By now many of you have seen the revised 'Go for Green' nutrition awareness program at Department of Defense dining facilities run by Fluor and DynCorp's food services throughout Afghanistan.

The Army and Joint Culinary Center of Excellence at Fort Lee, Va. designed the program to help war fighters improve their performance.

The G4G program can help patrons make healthier choices by following a color coded labeling system, similar to a traffic light.

The nutrient cards are displayed on the serving lines, various food bars and at the beverage coolers.

Foods labeled:

GREEN: are considered high nutrition performance foods because they are lower in calories but provided the necessary vitamins, minerals and nutrients to function at our best.

YELLOW: are considered moderate nutrition performance foods since they are a little higher in calories, fat and/or sugar, but still provide important nutrients to support health and wellness.

RED: are considered low nutrition performance foods because they are high in fat and/or sugar, have minimal, if any, essential vitamins and minerals, and are considered empty calories our bodies have trouble managing, which often contributes to weight gain.

Green-labeled foods should be the basis of our diet with a moderate amount of yellow-labeled foods, and limited amounts of red-labeled food choices. A good rule of thumb is two red foods per day.

The nutrient cards display serving size, percent calories, fat from calories, and have grams of sugar or fiber depending on the food item.

The program is meant to be simple and quick to use when passing through the serving line. Excess calories, fat and sugar contribute to low performance and weight gain and are the focus of the program.

Thus, you won't find protein and specific vitamins and minerals listed. Based on our food options it would be difficult for a person to obtain less than the daily protein required unless they're on a strict vegan.

Fat is displayed as a percent and not as grams of fat since most people don't know how much fat they require in a day; it varies based on age, height, weight and gender. It can be tedious counting fat grams but if you can choose foods that have 30 percent calories or less from fat you'll be doing well.

It's okay to have some red labeled foods when in moderation, and when you G4G more often you'll naturally get the nutrients needed without the stress of constant monitoring.

Over 1,800 customers and staff were surveyed in Dec 2011 to identify the usefulness and satisfaction with the program. The survey found that customers who use the G4G nutrient cards believe the program can help them make better choices.

Fifty-four percent of participants choose less red-labeled foods.


About 64 percent of the participants find the color coded system easy to use and another 59 percent plan to continue using the program.

Sixty percent of the staff found the program easy to implement, believe it's beneficial to everyone, and plan to use the program themselves.

The program isn't for everyone, but if you would like to make a change in your health, stop and take a look. Not every location has educational posters and may have adapted by posting slides on a corkboard somewhere within the DFAC.

Keep in mind that it is often difficult to get color printers and the paper needed to support the program, but the staff is doing the best they can, given the limited resources in country.

Listen for the American Forces Network radio commercials advertising the program. They feature DFAC Jack who is waiting to catch you with a full 'red' plate and plans to take you down and educate you on the ways of healthy eating.

I want to thank Fluor and DynCorp's for investing the time and energy in making this a successful program and we hope to continue making improvements in the New Year! 



WATCH your marriage

W^{CHAPLAIN}

Commentary by Chaplain (Maj.) Eddie Kinley, CJTF-1 Family Life Chaplain

Resiliency is the process of facing adversity, trauma, tragedy or extreme stress and recovering successfully.

Marriage is a fulfilling and rewarding relationship, however, it can also be filled with stress, adversity and strain. Resilient marriages possess the ability to bounce back in the face of difficulty.

One of the greatest challenges in marriage is overcoming infidelity. Infidelity is a common problem in relationships and the second leading cause of divorce.

Currently about 20 percent of men and 10 percent of women engage in sexual infidelity at some point in their lives and nearly 45 percent of men and 25 percent of women engage in emotional (nonsexual) affairs.

An affair involves violating the expectations or standards of a relationship by becoming emotionally or physically involved with someone else, no matter what word you use to define it.

Why do men and women engage in affairs? Countless articles and books are filled with carefully reasoned arguments. Nonetheless, the answer is very simple. Infidelity is inevitable when couples fail to establish healthy boundaries in their relationship. It is very important for couples to discuss boundaries regarding the opposite sex. Marriage changes how we interact with the opposite sex. We must get into the habit of protecting our marriage.

This is especially critical during deployment cycles. The deployed spouse and the non-deployed spouse are both vulnerable when boundaries are not established.

It is very difficult living away from your spouse for an entire year. When boundaries are not clearly defined, the marital

relationship suffers. During deployments, male and female relationships are inevitably established. Some are healthy and productive, others can be lethal and career ending.

When infidelity strikes, feelings of betrayal, deceit, mistrust and hurt are commonly experienced. Both the offender and the victim wrestle with thoughts of disappointment and failure in the relationship.


Men feel embarrassment when their wives are unfaithful. Women feel hurt and betrayed. The easy solution is to legally end the marriage in an amicable manner. The best solution however is to bounce back and restore the relationship.

Can you and your partner truly recover from an affair? Can you restore a trusting, loving relationship and move on together restoring joy and happiness? The answer is maybe, but it takes commitment and hard work.

Among married couples in which one member has recently learned of a partner's affair, approximately 60-75 percent remain married. However some couples struggling to recover from an affair remain married yet continue feeling hurt, distrustful and very unhappy.

If you are the victim of an affair, you must ask yourself several pertinent questions. Can I truly learn to trust this person again and work through the pain? Am I willing to exercise patience and understanding toward my spouse in the recovery process? Not every person possesses the capacity to move beyond the hurt and pain.

Affairs are never worth the few moments of pleasure. In the end, we hurt those whom we love. We jeopardize our careers and harbor secrets from our spouse.

Next month, we will look at a few steps which might help in the recovery of a broken marriage. 



W^{UNIT} ATCH

Kiwi element serves as logistical gateway



Eight of the nine members of the New Zealand National Support Element pose for a photo Jan. 12. With only nine members, each person must possess many different specialties in order to provide logistical support to the rest of the New Zealand contingent in Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. William Begley, RC-East PAO)

By U.S. Army Sgt. William Begley
RC-East PAO

At the Soldier Support Center on Bagram Airfield is a unique door called a Pare, which is symbolic of a Maori, or a mythological gateway between two worlds.

One world is the realm of Tumatauenga, the Maori god of war, and the other is the realm of Rango, the Maori god of agriculture and other peaceful pursuits. Thus, the Pare serves as a gateway between hostility and conflict outside, and calm and peace inside.

The door is the entrance to the New Zealand National Support Element, which serves as the gateway for logistical support in Afghanistan through which equipment and supplies must pass to their fellow Kiwi brethren in theatre.

"In effect what we do is provide logistical support for our element here," said New Zealand Navy Lt. Cmdr. Wayne Burton, officer-in charge of New Zealand NSE. "We are just a very small cog in a very large machine."

The small cog Burton refers to is his nine-member team in the New Zealand NSE on BAF. The "Kiwis," as they are affectionately nicknamed after their national bird, consists of about 160 personnel spread around various forward operating bases in Regional Command-East. They've had boots on the ground since 2001 and plan to remain until 2014.

New Zealand Army Sgt. Maj. Leslie Baker, noncommissioned officer in charge of NSE, serves as an aerial delivery rigger as well as a movement control planner. He said that with a total army size of only 5,200 people, the Kiwis have to be multi-talented.

"Because we have a small army, you can't really specialize in just one area. You usually fill the roles of many specialties," said Baker. "We have to be able to do all these things because we have to be able to do all the things the American army does, but with far less people."

Another multi-tasker for the Kiwis is New Zealand Army Staff Sgt. Oonagh Taru, senior supply technician for the New Zealand NSE. Her job is to purchase supplies that are required for Kiwi troops and also to manage accounts. Since Taru is working in a small element, she is learning to take on new roles.

"I'm used to managing troops and equipment," said Taru. "But here I'm learning to do a lot of new things. I'm managing accounts and purchasing equipment and supplies."

New Zealand Army Capt. Michael Mist, NSE executive officer, said that because they only have nine people in their unit, everyone here has their own functional role and each person here is pretty much their own manager and worker.

"We are a small team so everyone here has to crank out a lot of work to accomplish the mission," said Mist. "They pretty much look after the whole show all by themselves."

Mist added that it's a challenging mission with a small team and they rely heavily on the Coalition Forces, especially the Americans. All of the Kiwis acknowledged their gratitude to be working with the American forces.

"The support we have here is fantastic, we couldn't ask for much more," said Burton.

Just as the Pare serves as a unique gateway between two worlds, the New Zealand NSE's unique team serves in the Coalition effort to bring peace to a nation that has so long been at war.

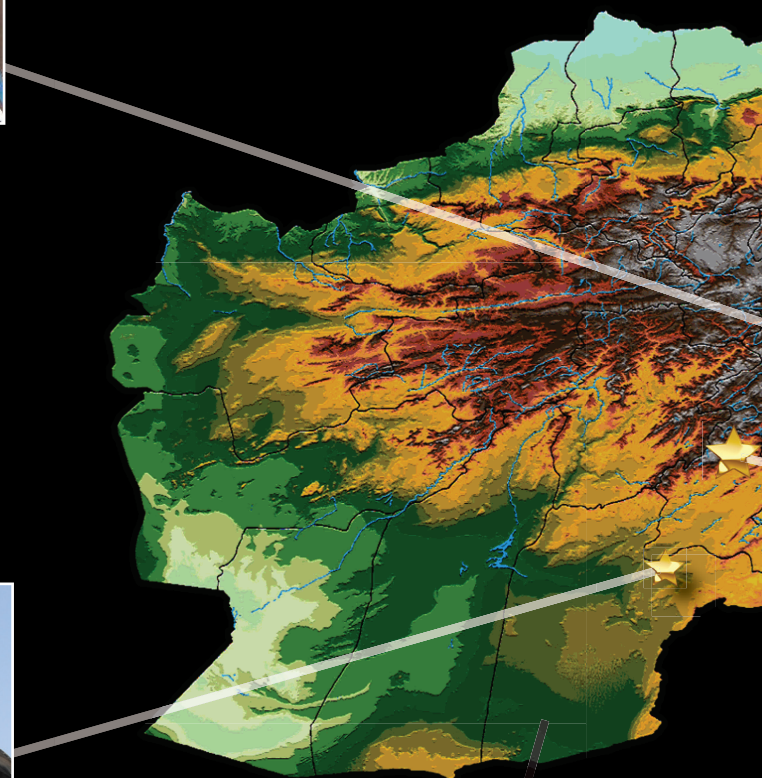
Goodwill across Afghanistan:



Kotgay village elders show off a new solar panel after setting it up in their local bazaar, Jaji district, Dec. 16. The solar panels provide the necessary light for the shoppers and bazaar workers to keep the bazaar open later. (Courtesy photo by Combined Joint Special Operations TF-Afghanistan PAO)

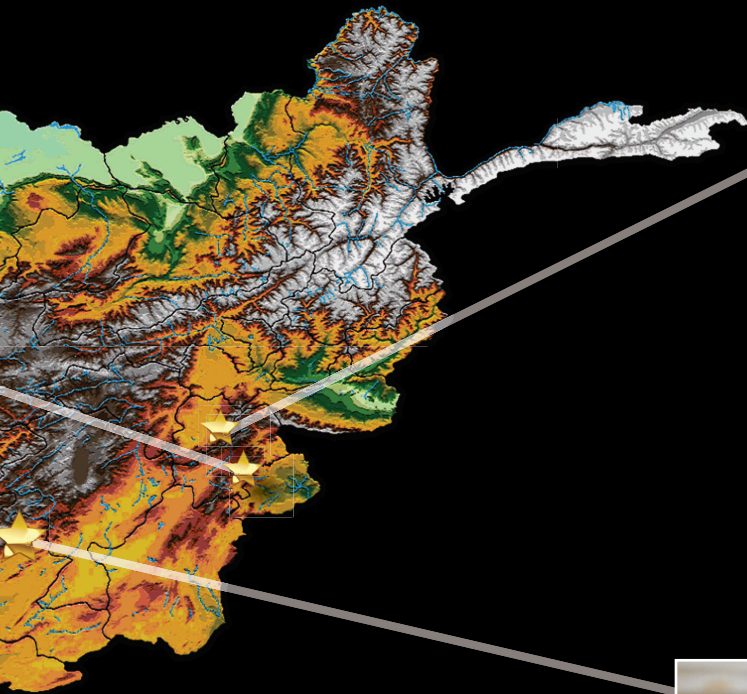


Afghan students try on aviation equipment and explore aircraft during an open house Jan. 1 that was hosted by the Afghan air force's Kandahar Air Wing. This is the third year the unit has opened its doors to the local children and elders. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Stephanie Carl, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade PAO)



ISAF and ANSF Reach Out

A young boy reaches for some warm clothes at Aq Robat, a remote village more than 20 miles northwest of Bamyān Dec. 24. The clothes were donated by Operation Care: Afghanistan, a non-profit, private charitable organization based at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Steele, RC-East PAO)



A Tandan Village student holds a Guardians of Peace handbill distributed during a village outreach mission in Paktya Province, Dec. 28. The handbills provide illustrations demonstrating procedures for reporting dangerous activity to local Afghan Uniformed Police. (Photo by U.S. Air Force 1 Lt. Cammie Quinn, Provincial Reconstruction Team Paktya PAO)



STORY SNAPSHOTS



Securing

U.S. Army Spc. Cody Brice, a native of Laughlin, La., from 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, 4th Airborne Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Task Force Spartan provides security outside of Combat Outpost Bak in Khowst province Jan. 1. Afghan and Coalition Forces conduct joint operations and patrols daily for regional safety. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Phillip McTaggart, TF Spartan PAO)

Inspecting

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Cody Passaro and Airman 1st Class Jordan Deangelis inspect the wing of an F-16C Fighting Falcon at Bagram Air Field Dec 25. Passaro and Deangelis are assigned to the 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and are from the 177th Fighter Wing, New Jersey Air National Guard. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, 177th Fighter Wing PAO)



Listening

An Afghan Local Police recruit receives instruction from an Afghan commando after firing his AK-47 rifle during weapons training in Uruzgan province Dec 14. The ALP is a defensive, community-oriented force that brings security and stability to rural areas of Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class David Brandenburg, Combined Joint Special Operations TF-Afghanistan PAO)



Giving

Sisters from the village of Aq Robat, more than 20 miles northwest of Bamyan, head home with a bundle of winter clothes, Dec. 24. Operation Care: Afghanistan, a non-profit, private charitable organization based at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, donated the items and the Afghan National Police distributed the items with the help of U.S. Soldiers. Operation Care is comprised of military and civilian volunteers dedicated to the welfare of the people of Afghanistan and, especially, to the children. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Bill Steele, RC-East PAO)



Treating

A veterinarian with coalition special operations forces teaches a local villager how to administer medication to a chicken during a veterinary seminar in Chora district, Uruzgan province, Jan. 1-5. During the five-day seminar, more than 1,100 animals were treated, and villagers were taught ways to decrease illnesses caused by diseases transmitted through livestock. (Courtesy photo from Combined Joint Special Operations TF-Afghanistan PAO)



Supporting

French Soldiers from Task Force La Fayette climb to over watch positions during Operation Hunting Spear I in Kapisa province Dec. 16-20 . Soldiers with 3rd Brigade, 201st Afghan National Army Corps, commanded by Afghan National Army General Naza led the four day operation. (Courtesy photo from TF La Fayette PAO)



Learning

Students watch a “Roll the Tape II” video in Tandan Village during a village outreach mission in Paktya Province, Dec. 28. The video is a compilation of Afghan recordings and interviews highlighting representatives, capabilities and functions of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. (Photo by U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Cammie Quinn, Provincial Reconstruction Team-Paktya PAO)



Judging

A public trial was held at the Laghman Provincial Governor's compound Jan. 9, for two Afghan citizens arrested in November for possessing more than 2,000 lbs. of ammonium nitrate. Defendant Shah Qand was sentenced to six years in prison for violating Article 23 of the law on crimes against internal and external security, otherwise known as aiding enemy forces, while his alleged co-conspirator, Daw Lat was acquitted. (Photo by U.S. Army Maj. Lindy White, TF Thunderbird PAO)

Competing

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Conrad Lauer, of Buffalo, N.Y., marches under the full moon during Task Force Attack's winter 'Spur Ride', Dec. 7 on Forward Operating Base Sharana. Soldiers marched more than six miles per day between challenges of tactical, technical and leadership skills. More than 40 Soldiers tested their abilities to overcome terrain, cold weather and fatigue to earn the right to wear coveted silver cavalry spurs. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Eric Pahon, TF Poseidon PAO)





Flying

A UH-60L Black Hawk helicopter from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry division, takes flight, stirring up the snow as it passes over another UH-60A Black Hawk helicopter at Camp Marmal in Mazar-e Shariff Dec. 21. The helicopters went out on mission the morning after an over-night snow storm. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Richard Wrigley, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade PAO)



Firing

Flames blast from a D-30, 122 mm howitzer barrel after firing a round, as is typical with the Soviet-made weapon system. Afghan Soldiers with the 4th Combat Support Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, coordinated and executed their second live-fire artillery training exercise. (Photo by Marine Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes, 2nd Marine Division PAO)



**CJTF-1CD
Command
Retention Officer**
MG Daniel Allyn

**CJTF-1CD
Command
Retention NCO**
CSM Isaia Vimoto

**CJTF-1CD
Command Career
Counselor**
SFC Richard Erickson

**Oath of
Reenlistment**
I do solemnly
swear to support
and defend the
Constitution of the
United States against
all enemies, foreign
and domestic; that I will
bear true faith and
allegiance to the same;
and that I will obey the
orders of the President
of the United States
and the orders of the
officers appointed over
me, according to
regulations and the
Uniform Code of
Military Justice.
So help me God.



CJTF-1 CD RETENTION

See What's Happening in the Retention Corner!

Retention Contacts

- SFC Eric Crist - DSN: 318-481-6541,
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- SFC Nathaniel Fears - DSN: 318-431-
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- MSG James Meyers - DSN: 303-794-
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For additional information see your servicing
career counselor or visit www.armyreenlistment.com

“Care enough to confront”

“I AM STRONG”

CJTF-1 Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention Campaign

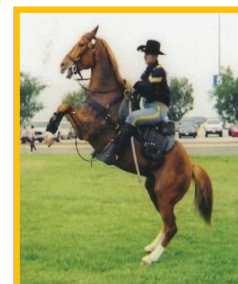
- **B**- Be Army Strong and Live Army Values
- **E**- Educate yourself and your troops on risk reduction and prevention
- **H**- Have the courage and concern to intervene
- **A**- Act ---The I AM Strong Campaign and Theme is about taking action!!!
- **V**- Visualize Victory - Be committed to culture change & Victory against sexual assault
- **E**- Energize others in this endeavor --Everyone must “Care Enough to Confront”

Leader Commitment – Command Emphasis- Soldier Awareness = Culture Change



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THE W FINAL WATCH

U.S. Army Spc. Josiah Johns, a Dallas native, reaches out to a child in Jaghatu District Dec. 17. This was the first time in almost two years Coalition Forces were able to visit the area. (Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Rebekah Frost, Texas Agribusiness Development Team PAO)

