

Freedom

October 3, 2004

Watch



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***Farah PRT opens to bring stability to western province
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Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl

Talking with the troops

Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, Combined Joint Task Force-76 commander, talks to Soldiers from Combined Task Force Saber in Herat Sept. 16. The Soldiers responded to rioting on the streets of Herat Sept. 12, supporting the safe and hasty evacuation of more than 50 non-combatants.

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During a Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise, the Soldiers of CTF Thunder had the opportunity to test the capabilities of their communication and weapon systems. One of the weapons used during the CALFEX was the M-198 howitzer, which is seen here being fired by Soldiers from Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt.

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Freedom Watch

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New PRT broadens Coalition's efforts

Story and photos by
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FARAH PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Leadership from the Coalition, the U.S. Embassy, the Afghan national government and Farah Province gathered at the site of the Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team for its official opening Sept. 15.

For approximately three weeks, members of the PRT have been working to not only establish their home in Farah Province, but also establish a solid, working relationship with the members of the province.

"Just a few days ago, there was a ditch under where your feet now are," said Lt. Col. Andy Santer-Pinter, Farah PRT commander. "Looking around, you can see the buildings that have been erected, built by the skill of many laborers of Farah."

This statement is symbolic of just one of the roles the PRT will play in Farah Province.

"With funding and the help of military engineers, security forces and others, we will help address the concerns of the people," he said.

Knowing the PRT will be able to assist Farah Province in reconstruction efforts that mirror the efforts of the 13 other Coalition-run PRTs throughout Afghanistan, members of the national government were anxious to lend their support.

"This is an important step," said Dr. Fahid, Ministry of Health representative who goes by only one name, to the attendees at the opening ceremony. "I hope this PRT will give the support to Farah Province like other PRTs do."

In establishing their relationship with the government and the residents of Farah Province, the members of the PRT have been focusing on



Lt. Col. Andy Santer-Pinter (left), Farah PRT commander, Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson (center), CJTF-76 commander, and Asadullah Fallah, Farah provincial governor, use ceremonial scissors to cut the ribbon signifying the opening of the Farah PRT in western Afghanistan.

the kind of support that is most needed in the area of western Afghanistan. The biggest response has been security.

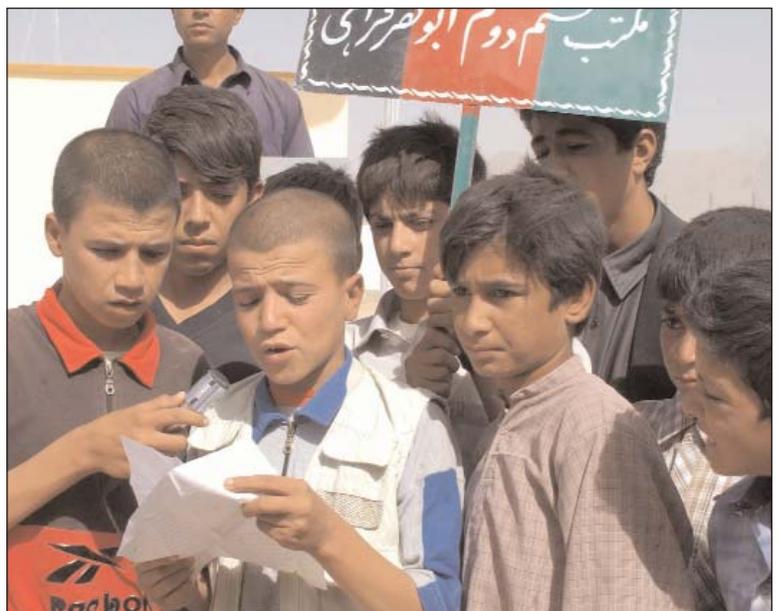
With an increased Coalition presence and the help of their security forces, the PRT hopes to develop a secure environment to actively pursue reconstruction projects. But the two go hand-in-hand, as Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, Combined Joint Task Force-76 commander, pointed out.

"There's an important link between security and reconstruction," he said. "The more security there is, the more reconstruction efforts can develop. And the more reconstruction we have in progress, the more security there will be."

These efforts, combined with a strong rela-

tionship with the people of Farah, will be the keys to helping the province progress. This is a goal that the PRT is determined to accomplish.

"I truly believe Farah is on the right path to success," said Santer-Pinter. "We can do it together. We will do it together!"



A group of schoolboys from Farah Province sing a song to welcome the members of the Farah PRT during the official opening Sept. 15.

ANA soldiers graduate from language course

Story and photos by Col. Randy Pullen
Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — Twenty-seven Afghan National Army officers and non-commissioned officers graduated from the Intensive English Language Course at the Kabul Military Training Center Sept. 2.

The six-month course was taught by Roberto Farias and Urinda Hernandez, two civilian instructors from the Defense Language Institute at Lackland Air Force Base based in San Antonio; and Air Force Capt. Jeffrey Heyse and Air Force Master Sgt. James Hill, two Air Force military training instructors. Students were initially grouped by their pre-existing English abilities.

Addressing the graduating students, Brig. Gen. Ghulam Sakhi Asifi, the KMTC commander, said that learning English is a critical skill for ANA soldiers because of the need to understand their Coalition embedded trainers who accompany them on combat missions. By being able to communicate with and understand each other, the mission can be accomplished more easily.

Maj. Gen. Hamayoon Fauzi, the deputy minister of defense for Education Affairs, agreed with Asifi about the military neces-

sity of their training, and said that they needed to learn not only English, but other languages in order to work with the different countries of the Coalition.

“We have an expression here in Afghanistan,” said Fauzi. “It is that anyone who knows a language is one person, the one who knows two languages is two persons, and the one who knows multiple languages is multiple persons.”

Brig. Gen. Richard Moorhead, Task Force Phoenix commander, expressed his appreciation to the KMTC and the English language instructors for their work, which will ultimately benefit not only the Afghan National Army, but also the embedded trainers of Task Force Phoenix. Task Force Phoenix is the Coalition organization that is helping to train the ANA.

“I’m proud of the graduates today who have gone through a different course of training in order to better serve the ANA and their nation,” said Moorhead. “All the students were very dedicated and motivated to learn. Thank you for that dedication to serve your country.”

Several of the students demonstrated their language abilities by speaking in English at the ceremony.

“Six months ago, I was not able to speak or understand (more than) a few words of English,” said ANA Maj. Abdul Wahid.



Air Force Capt. Jeffrey Heyse receives the Joint Service Achievement Medal from Maj. Gen. Hamayoon Fauzi, Afghan deputy minister of defense for education.

“Now, I can speak and understand English very well.”

ANA Command Sgt. Maj. Roshan Safi, the ANA’s Central Corps command sergeant major, said that since he is away from his family he misses them a lot, but he knows that his country is depending upon him as much as his family does. He also explained that his duty as a non-commissioned officer is to train soldiers.

“I know how to pass the skills I have learned on to my subordinates, and they will pass them on to other soldiers,” said Safi.

The graduates will now be assigned positions within the ANA to take advantage of their English ability. Some will also be considered for attendance at military schools in the United States.

No matter where they go next, they will be carrying out the promise one of the top graduates, ANA Lt. Naserullah, made when he spoke during the ceremony.



Sgt. 1st Class Mack Davis

Brig. Gen. Richard Moorhead, TF Phoenix commander, presents Urinda Hernandez (right), an instructor from the Defense Language Institute, the Commander’s Award for Civilian Service medal.



ANA Central Corps Command Sgt. Maj. Roshan Safi (left) addresses his classmates during the graduation of the Intensive English Language Course at the Kabul Military Training Center Sept. 12.

PRT, USAID work to rebuild Afghanistan

Story by Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons
17th Public Affairs Detachment

NIJRAB DISTRICT, Afghanistan — Villagers gathered to watch as the first stones were laid for the new road in Nijrab District during a groundbreaking ceremony Sept. 16.

The road construction project is being facilitated by the U.S. Agency for International Development, in partnership with the Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team.

“This project is very significant because it’s not only the first project for the Parwan PRT in the Nijrab District,” said Maj. Charles Westover, Parwan PRT commander. “But it’s also the first project initiated and funded by the United States Agency for International Development.”

The road construction project is important because it runs through the business district in the heart of the city, said Michelle Girard, USAID representative.

“We’re hoping with a better road, the traffic will increase and there will be a good flow into the market area, and this will increase economic activity,” she said.

The USAID representative lives and works with the Soldiers of the PRT. Without the assistance of the military forces, the federal agency wouldn’t be able to complete its mission.

“The only way I can actually work and go out into these districts as frequently as I do is if I have some sort of force protection with me,” said Girard. “The PRT allows me to go out, and it allows me to have high mobility. It allows me to do my job.”

Throughout Afghanistan, USAID has a very large impact. It’s not only developing infrastructure, but contributing to capaci-

ty building, training, technical assistance, and the lawmaking process, at both the national and local provincial levels, said Girard.

“My projects on the PRT-level are focused largely on (infrastructure reconstruction) projects such as bridges, roads (and) drinking water projects,” she said. On a higher level, USAID brings a lot of expertise to the development portion of the PRT.

“They bring a whole new dynamic to the PRT,” said Westover. “The thing that is going to be successful for this country is to start developing some long-term infrastructure and economic rebirth of the entire country. They bring long-term developmental expertise at a much greater capacity than we have available to us.”

Working together, the PRT and USAID are able to meet the goals agreed upon by the Coalition and the Afghan national government.

“This is my first experience with working with the military and working with a PRT,” said Girard. “It’s been an eye-opening experience. I’ve learned a lot from how they work.” This road construction project fits in with the priorities of Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s administration, said Westover.

“Over the past three years, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in partnership with the United States of America, the Coalition and agencies like USAID, have helped improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of Afghans with projects just like this,” said Westover. “At the end of the day, the people (of Afghanistan) are going to benefit. They recognize the United States, the Coalition (and) organizations like USAID are the ones who are the lead on these projects. That’s who’s going to be remembered. It’s going to be the people working on those projects. We’ve started a legacy, created a legacy for the future of the country.”

“The PRT allows me to go out and it allows me to have high mobility. It allows me to do my job.”

Michelle Girard
USAID representative

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Enduring Voices

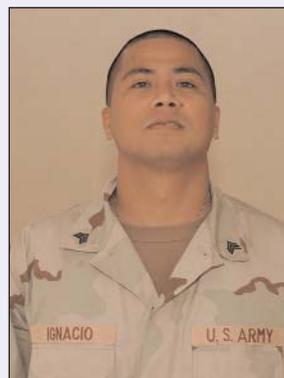
What team do you think will go to the Super Bowl this year?



Spc. Andrew Decker
1st Bn., 211th Avn. Rgt.
“New England Patriots – they have good momentum from being in the Super Bowl last year.”



Sgt. Brian Gunzenhauser
TF 168
“Green Bay Packers – they have a good group of players and were really close last year.”



Sgt. Jason Ignacio
125th Sig. Bn.
“Patriots – They’re a good team and they did well last year.”



Marine Sgt. Luke Seno
HMH 769
“Pittsburgh Steelers – it’s my hometown team, and they’re going to make it back one of these years.”

Airfield upgrades improve quality of life

Story and photo by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — While some firebases throughout Afghanistan are intended to be temporary staging areas for Coalition forces, others are becoming more permanent areas to stabilize a presence throughout Afghanistan.

Kandahar Airfield, one of the original bases to support Coalition forces in Operation Enduring Freedom, is embarking on multiple projects to not only support expanding operations, but also provide better comfort and support for deployed troops.

One project that will impact the standard of living on Kandahar is the construction of new barracks for the base's permanent population. The new prefabricated buildings meant to replace the tents currently housing troops are being built for two reasons, said Maj. James Brock, Kandahar Airfield base operations plans and operations officer.

"The new barracks will be much more energy-efficient and lower maintenance than the tents," said Brock. "The new barracks will also provide more comfort for Kandahar personnel."

The buildings are all separated into rooms, with each room capable of housing up to four people. The rooms will be furnished with desks, refrigerators, nightstands, beds and wall lockers. The buildings will also be equipped with internal shower and restroom facilities, as well as heating and air conditioning.

"There's not as much room now, but we have two-drawer chests," said Staff Sgt. Mark Carter, a Combined Joint Task Force-76 career counselor, who is already residing in the new barracks. "They will also be bringing us some lockers."

Carter's coworker, Staff Sgt. Ryan Ragano, is happy with the new barracks for a different reason.

"It feels good to be inside a hard structure," he said. "There's less room, but now I don't have as much dust to deal with. Another plus is that I live closer to work."

While some Coalition members are already occupying the new housing, the rest of the buildings aren't expected to be complete until January.

A new water purification plant, currently under construction, will provide



An Afghan worker positions a wall in the new barracks being built on Kandahar Airfield. The barracks are expected to be complete by January.

water to the new barracks.

The plant will also provide ice to troops and dining facilities, as well as bottled water throughout Afghanistan. The plant, which will be run by Kellogg, Brown and Root, is expected to be operational by the end of the year.

"People won't have to use (commercial) bottled water to brush their teeth anymore," said Brock. "The bottled water provided by the plant will also make our forces more self-sufficient."

The construction of the new barracks and water purification plant are just the first step for the base.

Improvements to the flightline itself are scheduled to be begin in November. The Army Corps of Engineers will conduct the renovations that will total-

ly resurface the runway and taxiways. In addition, the runway will be widened by 90 feet.

"After the runway renovations take place, basically any aircraft will be able to land in Kandahar," said Brock.

Along with improvements in living areas and its flightline, Kandahar is also improving its total security posture with the construction of a chain-link fence, force protection barriers and new guard towers around the perimeter of the airfield. The fence, topped with barbed and razor wire, will be an improvement over the concertina wire that is currently protecting the perimeter.

With most of the improvements

See *Upgrades*, Page 14

Soldiers display Army values during riots

Story by Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

SHINDAND AIRPORT, Afghanistan — During peacetime, Soldiers train to protect each other and non-combatants while carrying out their mission. But it often takes a combat engagement to truly illustrate the importance of this training.

When the ground forces of Combined Joint Task Force Saber found themselves being assaulted with bricks, rocks and Molotov cocktails during riots in Herat Sept. 12, they fell back on their training, maintaining their composure and accomplishing their mission of evacuating noncombatants to a safe area.

“The first thing we did is set up a perimeter of concertina wire,” said Spc. Matthew Moritz, a member of CTF Saber’s quick reaction force. “Unfortunately, that didn’t last very long.”

It was only a matter of time before the crowd of hostile residents had pulled back the wire, moving closer to continue barraging the troops with anything they could find.

Many of the Soldiers on the ground that day still bear the bruises they received during the event. Pelted with whole bricks, many of the Soldiers bear the black marks of ruptured blood vessels stretching up their arms, along their backs and torsos, and some on their faces. Others received stitches to mend the injuries they suffered during the onslaught.

But through it all, not a single shot was fired — a testament to the mission focus and discipline of the Soldiers on the ground.

“Our focus was getting those people out,” said Moritz. The members of his group had been tasked with evacuating personnel from various compounds throughout Herat. The Soldiers were in close quarters with the people they were trying to help, and also knew they wouldn’t be able to help them if they started firing.

Non-lethal weapons, which are usually used for riot control, would have been useful, said Moritz. But with none on hand, CTF Saber had to accomplish its mission with what was available.

One of the most valuable assets they had were the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior and UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters in the air above them.

Like their fellow Soldiers on the ground, the crews of these aircraft maintained their discipline.

Flying over the Soldiers, anger was the first emotion felt by 1st Lt. Angela Zugay, one of the Kiowa pilots who hovered over the riots, providing an overall picture for the ground forces.

“I could see our ground troops getting engaged, and (it seemed) there was nothing we could do,” she said.

Through strict adherence to standards and discipline instilled during training, the pilots restrained from unleashing the awesome fire

power of their aircraft. Instead of using them to engage the rioters, they used their vantage point to pass information to the Soldiers on the ground.

“It would have been impossible for us to engage any targets without severe collateral damage,” said Chief Warrant Officer Ryan Hitchings, another of the Kiowa pilots. He explained that they received fire from within crowds, where returning fire could have resulted in injury or even death to innocent civilians

“It would have been impossible for us to engage any targets without severe collateral damage.”

**Chief Warrant Officer Ryan Hitchings
CTF Saber OH-58D Kiowa pilot**

and Coalition forces.

“I had to ask myself, ‘What if I missed?’” said Chief Warrant Officer Craig Maurer, a third Kiowa pilot involved in the event. “I could have engaged them, but at what cost?”

No one will ever know that cost because all of the Soldiers involved maintained their discipline.

“You showed the restraint you are capable of,” said Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, Combined Joint Task Force-76 commander, when he met with the pilots and the ground troops of CTF Saber. “That restraint was remarkable and essential. It sent a message that was greater than any message we could have sent with firepower.

“If it had gone different, who is to say what could have happened. What we know now is that you all have set the conditions for a huge success, and you did that with your discipline and courage.”

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Noncommissioned officers from Task Force Guardian coach other military police officers during marksmanship training on a range outside Bagram Air Base. Task Force Guardian is comprised of different military police units from throughout the Army.

Photo by 1st Sgt. Max Brown, 551st Military Police Company

If you have high quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please email them to carls@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



CTF Thunder fires M-198 howitzer in CALFEX

Story and photo by
Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO — Coalition forces maneuvering throughout Afghanistan can employ a variety of weapons at a moment's notice to support ground efforts.

From rotary and fixed wing aircraft, to artillery and mortars, there is more than meets the eye available to each maneuvering force in Operation Enduring Freedom.

In an effort to test the full gamut of combined arms in Regional Command East, Combined Task Force Thunder conducted a Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise.

The exercise marked the debut of the M-198 howitzer in Afghanistan, and showcased its enhanced range and capabilities.

The CALFEX also incorporated aviation elements from throughout the Coalition.

But during an exercise that centers on the employment of weapon systems, it is the communications that are really tested, said Maj. J.R. Mendoza, CTF Thunder fire support officer.

"This CALFEX tested communications over large distances," said Mendoza. "Ground forces had to communicate accurate and up-to-the-minute data that has to get to many different people."

Replicating real-world situations, the command element was located in a different area than the artillery, ground forces and aircraft. This distance elevated the communication and communication equipment as one of the most important pieces of equipment employed, said Mendoza.

Combining fluid communication with all the working elements of the combined-arms arena achieves a "synergistic effect," said Mendoza.

Mendoza said this synergistic effect uses all the strengths of each element involved, while minimizing the disadvantages inherent to each combat system.

The ultimate benefit to using the entire combined-arms arsenal is that maneuvering ground forces will gain more fire power and command of the battlefield.

In addition to the coordination and communications experience the unit gained by conducting the CALFEX, another benefit was the utilization of the M-198 howitzer.

The introduction of the weapon system to the CALFEX not only benefited the howitzer sections that operate the

weapon, but also the forward observer who calls for fire.

"One advantage to this CALFEX is the ground forces that are calling for fire are the same individuals that would be doing it real-world situations," said Chief Warrant Officer Jim Gomez, TF Thunder targeting officer. "This exercise validated the weapon's capability and accuracy.

"It also demonstrated some of the advantages the howitzer has over other weapon systems," he said.

As the largest caliber surface-to-surface weapon system being employed in theater, the howitzer has a very long range. Its range can be increased when it fires a rocket-assisted projectile. During the CALFEX, the RAP was the primary round used in the M-198.

"The M-198 has the ability to reach out and engage targets from incredible distances," said Capt. Brendan Raymond, Battery F, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, commander.

In addition to its range, the howitzer can also respond to ground forces in a fraction of the time it would take to get rotary or fixed winged aircraft to targets.

"We have howitzer sections on stand-by around the clock," said Raymond. "As

See CALFEX, Page 12



An M-198 howitzer fires a high explosive, rocket assisted projectile from FOB Salerno during a CALFEX exercise.

Kabul heavy weapons under national control

Story and photos by

Col. Randy Pullen

Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — There are countless moving parts that are contributing to the security and stability of Afghanistan.

Another important element to accomplishing this objective fell into place with the completion of the cantonment of all heavy weapons in Kabul. They are now under the control of the Afghan Ministry of Defense.

A ceremony to mark the transfer of ownership of the Afghan Militia Force's 8th Division's heavy weapons to the Ministry of Defense took place at the Hussein Khot Cantonment Site northwest of Kabul Sept. 1.

As Afghan, International Security Assistance Force and Coalition dignitaries arrived at the site, they saw dozens of tanks, artillery pieces, armored personnel carriers and other heavy weapons neatly parked at the site. A formation of AMF 8th Division soldiers stood to the side and came to attention when First Deputy Minister of Defense Rahim Wardak arrived.

In his remarks, Wardak praised the AMF soldiers for their courage in battling the Soviets and the Taliban. He also complimented them on their vision for Afghanistan's future by undertaking the cantonment process.

"Our jihad was for the sake of God and the defense of our country," said Wardak. "We did it for the good of our people. We want our people to live in peace and harmony."

Wardak said the disarmament process



With cantoned T-62 tanks in the background, Air Force Maj. Gen. Craig P. Weston, chief of the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan, speaks at the ceremony marking the completion of heavy weapons cantonment in Kabul Sept. 1.

was intended to strengthen the ability of the people to live in peace and harmony by placing control of weapons in the hands of the Ministry of Defense and the Afghan National Army, an army of the whole nation, to protect the people.

The deputy minister said that there is a need for people to respect the Coalition and the Afghan government.

"Everyone everywhere in the world who defends their country is respected," said Wardak. "The mujahedeen have their special place in our history and in our community."

Following Wardak, Lt. Gen. Jean-Louis Py, ISAF commander, thanked the 8th Division for turning in its heavy

weapons in record time, having cantoned some 235 heavy weapons in five days. He promised that ISAF would continue with the cantonment process until all heavy weapons are submitted to government control.

"This is an important process for strengthening peace in Afghanistan and encouraging prosperity for the peo-

ple," said Py. "Heavy weapons cantonment is a tangible example of the Afghan people turning their backs on violence."

Air Force Maj. Gen. Craig P. Weston, chief of the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan, represented the Coalition at the ceremony.

"By submitting your weapons to the government, you join in the reconstruction of your country," said Weston to the officers and soldiers of the 8th Division. "This is a very important event for the people of Kabul and for all the Afghan people."

The redeployment and cantonment of heavy weapons is a Ministry of Defense initiative. This heavy weapons cantonment program is in compliance with the Bonn Agreement and the Petersburg Declaration, thereby assisting in the establishment of further stable security structures within Afghanistan. Although heavy weapons cantonment is not a part of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, it is a program that complements DDR and leads to the common goals of increasing security and enhancing the rule of law in Afghanistan.

According to UNAMA, The Ministry of Defense and the Afghan New Beginnings Program have cantoned 1,388 heavy weapons as of Sept. 2, 2004.



ANA Sgt. Gul Mohammed of the ANA's Central Corps stands in front of a line of T-62 tanks, formerly belonging to the 8th Division, at the Hussein Khot Cantonment Site.

CTF Saber Soldiers recognized for heroic efforts

Story and photos by Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

HERAT PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Though their uniforms covered most of their bruises, nothing could conceal the fact that the Soldiers of Combined Task Force Saber had put their own lives on the line to help others Sept. 12.

When Afghan President Hamid Karzai announced the removal of Ishmal Khan from the post of provincial governor of Herat, some residents of Herat were rallied into a frenzied riot. Arming themselves with stones, bricks and Molotov cocktails, they took to the streets, endangering nongovernmental aid workers and U.N. employees, as well as fellow citizens in the area. The members of CTF Saber responded quickly, conducting a noncombatant evacuation operation to rescue between 50 to 70 personnel from grave danger.

To recognize their valiant efforts, Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, Combined Joint Task Force-76 commander, presented three Soldiers from CTF Saber's quick reaction force with Bronze Stars, each with Valor Device, and eight members of CTF



The aircrew of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter 701 forms up on the flightline at Herat Airport. Each member of the crew received the Air Medal with Valor Device for their actions during the Herat riots Sept. 12.

Saber's aircrew with Air Medals, each with Valor Device.

"You all reacted with tremendous discipline and courage," said Olson to the formation of CTF Saber Soldiers who gathered for the awards ceremony.

But to the Soldiers, what they did was nothing special, the same thing any Soldier in their shoes would do.

"I just did my job," said Spc. Matthew Moritz, a member of CTF Saber's quick reaction force who was awarded the Bronze Star with "V" Device. One of several Soldiers who received stitches as a result of the violence, Moritz was one of the first Soldiers to respond to the riots. He and the rest of his team were responsible for evacuating personnel from the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan building in Herat to a safe haven secured by Soldiers from the Herat Provincial Reconstruction Team, where the aircrews of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters 701 and 704 stepped in.

The aircrews took turns maneuvering their aircraft in and out of the confined space of the PRT's courtyard, landing on the basketball court to pick up personnel and evacuating them to a safe location. The crews also evacuated personnel from the U.N. building in Herat, as well as transported three casualties for medical treatment.

"This was the most rewarding day I've had in Afghanistan," said Chief Warrant Officer Jefferson S. Newman, a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot who received the Air Medal with "V" Device. "I was able to put all my training to use and help save lives."

All the Soldiers believed it was their training that allowed them to react so efficiently, despite the knowledge that their own lives were in danger.

"I never expected to end up in the middle of a riot," said Moritz, "but I was prepared for it. To a certain point, I almost felt like I had already been through all this before. But the last time I was in training at Fort Hood, this time it was real. That just tells me my training was effective."

It was this training, as well as the selfless service of the Soldiers of CTF Saber, that resulted in the safety of other personnel that are essential to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

"We still have a few more steps to take," said Olson to the Soldiers, "but I guarantee we'll be successful. You Soldiers have changed history and have helped to prevent what could have resulted in a civil war."



Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson (left), CJTF-76 commander, awards the Bronze Star with Valor Device to Spc. Matthew Moritz, a member of CTF Saber's quick reaction force. Moritz and other members of the quick reaction force were the first to respond to the riots in Herat Sept. 12.

Air Force engineers build up, improve Bagram

Story and photos by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jennifer Lindsey
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Air Force Airman 1st Class Aaron McDonald calls to the air control tower from his truck radio for clearance to enter the runway. His mission: break up five different 24-inch squares of damaged sections of the runway and put them back together again before the next A-10 jet or any of the cargo aircraft take off. He has less than an hour to clear each one. Each damaged section repaired is one less safety hazard the pilots have to keep in mind during their take-offs and landings.

Jack-hammers, generators and screwdrivers may seem out of place when talking about a flightline, but keeping the aircraft flying is the number one priority for the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group Civil Engineer Flight at Bagram Air Base.

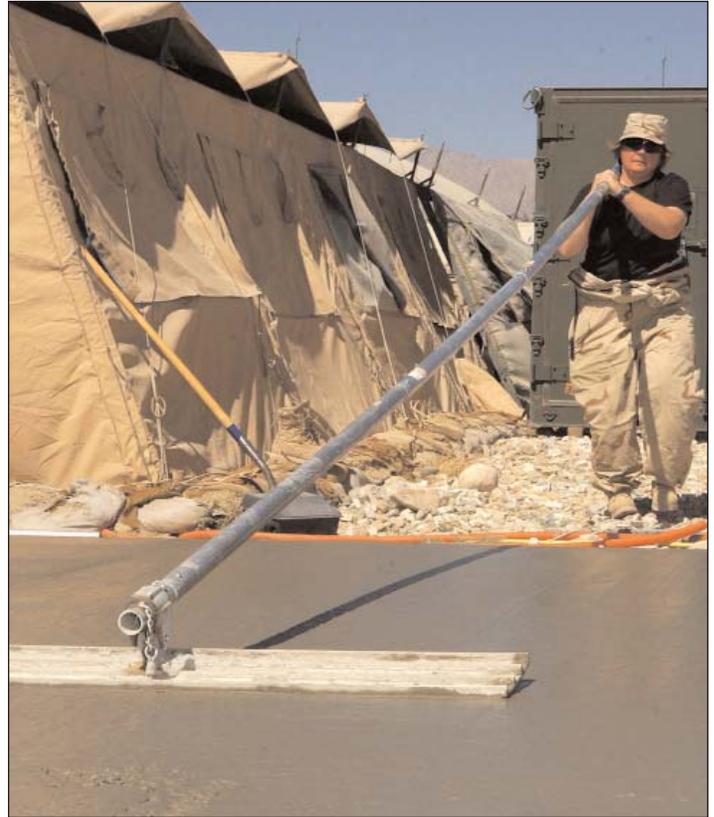
Each heavy equipment operator, structures craftsman, power production and electrical technician deployed to Bagram Air Base is called upon to fill a role for Operation Enduring Freedom that differs from the mission they conduct back at home station. Here, it's all about keeping the aircraft flying — whether it's through runway repairs or rehangng a B-hut door.

"It's a running joke for us — every time we fix a door hinge, we say we're keeping the A-10s flying. But, the truth is, we are in a roundabout way, because if a broken door is keeping a pilot from sleeping, it could become a flight safety issue," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Ricky Johnson, heavy equipment journeyman.

Serving at Bagram differs from working back at home base in many ways for the CE folks here. McDonald who, back at his home station of Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, would call a contractor to repair the runway — a dirty and tedious job, as Johnson described it — has found his niche in doing runway repairs himself.

"I love being out there on the runway," said the Airman from Kilgore, Texas. "From the minute I begin jack-hammering, to the next minute when I get a call from air control telling me I have to rush off of the runway to allow aircraft to come in or fly out."

Some jobs are contracted out, such as plumbing, heating, ventilation and air conditioning functions. But even without these responsibilities, civil engineers maintain a full daily schedule doing jobs unique to contingencies. Within the team's first couple of weeks here it has already repaired 41 spalls, or damaged sections of runway; crack-sealed approximately 10,000 linear feet of runway; built dirt-filled barriers, commonly called HESCOS; fixed



Air Force Master Sgt. Charmaine Regelman uses a bullfloat to smooth out a newly poured concrete pad at Bagram Air Base Sept. 7.

bomb shelters; assisted with self-help living quarters improvements, such as building shelves to store uniforms and toiletries; and repaired B-huts, from doors to floors.

"Hooch-help is something extra we do here to help out the people assigned here and augment the contractors who can't get to all the jobs," said Air Force 2nd Lt. Lloyd Mangaroo, 455th CEF commander.

While making camp improvements, safety is a concern the 455th CEF has to take seriously. Something as typical as digging can be a harrowing experience, the result of decades of fighting throughout Afghanistan.

"There (are) lots of (unexploded ordnance) out there; the teams have to keep their eyes open for all kinds of hazards," explained Air Force Master Sgt. Charmaine Regelman, squadron superintendent.

Improving the base to reduce and even eliminate safety hazards when possible is another 455th CEF goal. The team has already poured concrete foundations for a supply storage facility, a vehicle maintenance ramp and an electronics storage shed. During the next few months, the squadron plans to improve the walkway from the entry control point to the base's main road, pour more concrete pads and foundations and pave several high-traffic areas, which will prevent vehicle damage and save maintenance money and time.

With all the improvements they are making to Bagram Air Base, especially the repairs on the flightline, the Airmen of the 455th CEF know that they have played important part in the safe takeoff and landing of every aircraft that touches down here.



Members of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group Civil Engineer Flight work together Sept. 7 to prepare concrete that will be used as pad for a supply hut.

Soldiers work to improve communities

Story by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, currently deployed to Kandahar Airfield, are going into the surrounding communities to find more ways to help local residents.

To facilitate this effort, Soldiers from 3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt., and Col. Dick Pedersen, Combined Task Force Bronco commander, were on hand to speak with local mullahs, or religious leaders, during a meeting held at the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team. The mullahs from Kandahar meet monthly with Coalition forces to discuss issues and concerns within their community. The main focal points of September's meeting were ongoing reconstruction efforts in the Kandahar region, education and security, particularly for the mullahs themselves. The mullahs and their families have been targeted by anti-Coalition militants for their continued cooperation with Coalition forces.

"I am very aware that you as mullahs, true scholars of Islam, are assuming risk because you pursue what is right and

what is true," said Pedersen. "By standing up for what is true and what is right, (you are) soldiers in your own right. You are Afghan heroes — patriots."

Pedersen also urged the mullahs to share information from the meeting with their people to help dispel misconceptions surrounding the Coalition's presence in Afghanistan, and to reiterate the fact that everyone, including the international community, must work together to accomplish the tasks at hand.

"The Afghan people, Coalition forces and the international community must come together for this rebuilding," said Pedersen. "This way, the Afghan people can harness the resources of the world in order to rebuild their country."

After the meeting, 3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt., Soldiers visited the Kandahar Shaeed Abdul Ahad Karzi Orphanage to meet with administrators and residents there. The orphanage also serves as a school for boys and girls from kindergarten to middle school. It's currently undergoing major reconstruction so it can house nearly 250 children. The battalion is considering adopting the orphanage and helping to supply it with

necessities like furniture, bedding and school supplies.

While no official decision has been made yet, 3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt., Executive Officer Maj. William Oxtoby, toured the area and assessed the conditions there.

"It's one of the many things that we can do besides our regular missions to give something back to the people," said Oxtoby. "I think it means a lot to the people here, and I think it's doing something for this country and strengthening ties between Afghanistan and the United States."

Maj. James Schaefer, CTF Bronco chaplain, is working with several units throughout the brigade, including 3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt., to encourage them to "adopt" different local schools and organizations like the orphanage. The partnership gives units another outlet to directly impact the rebuilding and stabilization of Afghanistan.

"This is important for the Coalition because part of our purpose is to stop the growth or movement of evil forces," said Schaefer. "At the same time, it helps these young men and women get an opportunity to grow, to learn a trade and also be productive for this country."

CALFEX: CTF Thunder brings in the big guns



Sgt. Frank Magni

Pvt. Colt Harris, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt., announces "bore clear," while Sgt. Richard Tucker, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt., prepares to position the weapon on a priority target during M-198 howitzer crew drills at FOB Salerno.

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soon as we get our (target location), we can have a round down range within minutes."

Even though the CALFEX was conducted during the day, in favorable conditions, the advantages to using artillery over other weapon systems is its versatility in unfavorable weather conditions.

"Day, night, fog, rain (or) snow, artillery can be fired at anytime," said Gomez. "The howitzers will always be there to support the ground forces."

Although not all the M-198 capabilities were demonstrated during the CALFEX, Mendoza said everybody was very impressed with the howitzers.

"Until you see the rounds falling in the impact area, you don't realize how accurate they are," said Mendoza.

He also said the exercise met all the training objectives put forth by CTF Thunder.

"It went extremely well, and achieved everything we wanted," he said. "Everybody was in the right place at the right time."

Fire prevention essential to safety

Safeguarding the Coalition

Story by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

AFGHANISTAN — It is a week inspired by one of the greatest tragedies in U.S. history — the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. But Fire Prevention Week has evolved from a time of remembrance, to an annual event to raise awareness for fire prevention.

As temperatures fall and more Coalition members start heating work and sleep areas, Mark Larocco, Bagram Fire Department fire inspector, said Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 3 through Oct. 9, comes at a pivotal time.

“In this high stress, high tempo environment, we sometimes overlook fire prevention,” said Larocco. “That’s why Fire Prevention Week is a good opportunity for leaders to make sure their units are taking the proper steps to save lives.”

With a combination of high winds, dry weather and living quarters in close proximity to each other, Larocco said the formula for devastating fires is already in place.

“All it takes is the negligence of one person,” he said. “That is why awareness is one of the key factors to fire prevention.”

During fire prevention week, Larocco recommends Coalition members take time to check that smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are operational and easily accessible in both work and sleep areas.

He also recommends that all electrical systems be checked. Outlets should not be overloaded and surge protectors should be used. Coalition members should also pay attention to the wiring within buildings.

“Especially if the buildings are older,” he said. “If the wiring doesn’t look right, get some qualified people to look at it.”

Coalition members should also pay close attention to fire exits and fire lanes.

“With the limited amount of space many people have in their tents and sleep areas, some people will block one of the doors in their tent or B-hut,” he said. “But all sleep areas are required to have two exits.”

One unit fire safety noncommissioned officer in charge also said people should be cautious of using certain materials as dividers to section off rooms.

“Many Soldiers are hanging ponchos for

members will find different heating sources for work and sleep areas. Some of these heating sources will be safe, while others will require the watchful eye of users.

“The rule of thumb with heating devices is they should always be monitored,” said Larocco. “This includes irons and coffee pots.”

Even though space heaters are authorized, they should be used with great caution, he said.

“People have the tendency to move closer to a heat source,” he said. “But always be careful not to have flammable objects like blankets or drapes close to the heater.”

In addition to using space heaters, Coalition members will also try to avoid going to approved smoking areas and will try to smoke indoors.

“I’m always encountering Soldiers trying to smoke inside tents,” said Jester. “It is the job of every leader to make sure their Soldiers are only smoking in approved areas.”

“Everyone must remember smoking is prohibited in any building on any military installation within this country,” she said.

In addition to the cooler weather in the coming months, the holiday season is also a critical time to observe fire safety.

“Many units will hang decorations and electric lights,” said

Larocco. “But these units need to take the same safety steps they would take with any electrical cord.”

Larocco said he and his team of safety professionals are available throughout Afghanistan for consultation and training. But ultimately, the responsibility of fire safety falls on the units.

“Leaders should take the time to go into work and sleep areas to make sure their people are living safely,” he said. “Everyone in Afghanistan should take fire safety as serious as any other danger they encounter here.”



Courtesy photo

A fire in a tent city at Camp Champion, Kuwait, July 31, 2003, destroyed 20 tents and resulted in 12 Soldiers being treated for smoke inhalation. Preliminary investigations cited an overloaded electrical system as the cause of the fire.

privacy, but this is a potential fire hazard,” said Sgt. 1st Class Viva Jester, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Logistics Task Force 524, platoon sergeant.

“If they want to hang dividers, (they) should be made from cotton or other non-flammable materials,” she said.

While Fire Prevention Week is a time for units to evaluate current systems to keep Coalition members safe, the upcoming months are a very important time for leaders to stay vigilant, said Larocco.

When the cold weather arrives, Coalition

Stress control unit helps deployed troops

Story by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Mental health is a significant issue that can affect a unit's ability to accomplish its mission during major deployments.

To ensure mental health issues don't hinder mission accomplishment, the military relies on combat stress control units like the one located at the 325th Combat Support Hospital on Bagram Air Base, which operates the Combat Stress Control Clinic.

"We're (going to) have normal human responses to difficult situations," said Maj. Ronald Alexander, Combat Stress Control Unit commander. "The bottom line is to keep the mission rolling. The key component of our mission is the people, and we've got to take care of the people just as we take care of equipment."

The unit's primary mission is preventing and treating combat stress. Combat stress can be described as the body's mental and physical reaction to the stressors of battle. Symptoms can include anxiety, sleeplessness, loss of appetite and erratic or harmful behavior. It can also cause delayed reaction time and loss of focus and attention-to-detail, which can have deadly consequences for troops serving on the battlefield.

"It felt like I had the weight of the world on my shoulders," said Spc. Christopher Pekarek, 367th Engineer Battalion combat engineer. "I didn't have an appetite and I couldn't sleep."

Clinic personnel evaluated Pekarek's symptoms in order to prevent combat stress. He said that being able to speak to someone openly about what he was feel-

ing helped him deal with what was going on. He also said a major benefit of receiving treatment here is that it allowed him to confront the problem before he redeployed. The overall mental effects of a long-term deployment and combat stress can play a large role in a service member's ability to adjust once they redeploy.

"With everything going on, we need somewhere to go and work it out before (we) go home," said Pekarek. It's important for Soldiers to be able to separate combat from their personal lives.

To help do this, the combat stress control unit employs a rapid-response team of psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and mental health specialists that can identify the symptoms of and treat combat stress through rest and relaxation, preventive education, therapy and, in extreme cases, medication.

In addition to combat stress counseling, the team also provides other mental health services such as individual counseling, anger management and tobacco cessation classes, medication management, assessment and treatment of sleep disorders, critical-incident stress management, command leadership consultation and injury-prevention training.

The majority of problems the clinic staff sees relate to long-term deployment issues like homesickness, depression, anxiety, conflict within units and family problems.

"If you don't have the support back home, it makes it twice as hard to do your job here," said Air Force Senior Airman Gustavo Trujillo, mental health specialist. "We have a large population of National Guard and reservists here. Being away from their everyday lives and jobs for

long periods of time can be an unusual disruption. Whereas active duty (personnel) may not have as hard of a time because this is part of their full-time job."

The combat stress control clinic also provides its services to Coalition forces serving throughout the Combined Joint Operations Area. With outreach programs, they are able to help troops serving everywhere, from remote sites like Salerno and Orgun-E, to places like Kabul and Karshi-Kahanabad (K-2), Uzbekistan. Members visit areas as they are needed or at a unit's request.

"We're not just sitting here on Bagram in our stress clinic waiting for people to come to us, we're going out to them," said Alexander.

Mental health professionals at the clinic say any stress, whether it's combat-related or not, should be reduced as much as possible.

"Stress is the doorway to other problems, that's where it starts," said Trujillo. He recommends troops try to find an outlet to focus on, whether it's reading, participating in morale, welfare and recreation activities; or just taking a few moments out of their day to do something they enjoy or that will relax them. Good overall self-care is another way troops can prevent combat stress and reduce their likelihood of mental health problems. Getting enough sleep, exercising, eating properly, hydrating and finding ways to reduce stress are key.

"We're a resource that's here to help," said Alexander. "We're here for the troops (and) the leadership. We're here to support the mission. Asking for help when you know you need it is a sign of strength, not weakness."

Upgrades: Kandahar Airfield receives facelift

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being made to support operational aspects of Kandahar, units on post are also lending a hand at improving cultural structures that existed before Coalition forces were stationed on the airfield. A prominent mosque located within the base's perimeter is being renovated using Commander's Emergency Response Funds from Combined Task Force Bronco. The renovations are being contracted through a local company, and will provide a facelift to the building's internal and external areas.

Expected to cost more than \$50,000, the purpose of the project is to provide a place of worship for the Afghan workers that come onto Kandahar, said Capt. Nick Bobrowski, CTF Bronco CERP coordinator.

"We also wanted to show that we really value the buildings that were here," said Bobrowski.

Projects like the mosque and upgrades to the passenger terminal building currently located within Kandahar limits are also preparations for a possible handover of certain areas of Kandahar back to the Afghan government.

"We are also relocating some of our aviation assets to different sections of the airfield in preparation for a possible handover," said Brock.

Although no plans are finalized concerning the handover, Brock said all the new construction is posturing Kandahar Airfield to return the sections back to local control. Whether or not a transfer takes place, Kandahar's improvement in operational and support capabilities allow forces on the base to not only provide better services to the Coalition in Regional Command South, but throughout Afghanistan.

New fitness center promotes well-being

Story and photo by
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — With limited downtime available to service members participating in Operation Enduring Freedom, the leaders of Joint Task Force Wings want to ensure personnel are making the most of the time they do have.

To facilitate this, they opened the Fuller Fitness Center and Camp Albert Sports Bar Sept. 18.

“We wanted a place for the Soldiers to come and relax after missions,” said Capt.

Robert Baldwin, Camp Albert Mayor and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, JTF Wings, commander.

Baldwin was one of the driving forces behind the facility, much of what was constructed by the Soldiers of JTF Wings.

The fitness center features a weight room, cardio room and coed sauna. One of the features that sets it apart from other gyms on Bagram Air Base is its setup. The fitness center is in an old hangar, which has a lofty ceiling. Rather than waste that space, the staff of JTF Wings, with the help of the Facility Engineer Team, opted to add a second floor.

“We were able to maximize the use of a big space,” said Capt. Paul Salinas, a FET project manager.

By maximizing this space, they were able to expand the weight room on the bottom floor and add in the sauna. Upstairs, they’ve developed a cardio room and the “sports bar.” Combined, these facilities open the door to promoting both physical and mental health within the service members of OEF.

“This gym is in a more central location to where I work,” said Spc. Phillip Norris, Company B, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment. “It’s a place I can come to work out my frustrations – a place to take my mind off what’s going on.”

But the gym doesn’t just give the service members a place to “work out their frustrations,” it also keeps them in shape and able to accomplish their mission.

“The job our Soldiers do is extremely physical,” said JTF Wings Commander Col. B. Shannon Davis. “All aviators have a strenuous job. Our crew chiefs and mechanics have to be extremely agile, for as much movement as they do on and around the aircraft. And every one needs to keep their endurance up.”

While the gym gives service members a place to develop and maintain their physical well-being, the new facility also offers a place for interaction with others, where service members can balance out their emotional and mental health.

“The sports bar gives (service members) somewhere to congregate,” said Davis. “It adds cohesion and gives them a productive place to pass the time. This will become more and more important the longer we stay here. After the mental and physical stress they deal with in accomplishing their mission, it’s important that we also give them a place to relax.”

A lounge area with three televisions gives service members a place where they can watch a variety of sporting events, while the bar area, constructed by the Soldiers of JTF Wings, gives them a place to get refreshments while they socialize with comrades.

“The bottom line is we want to make sure our troops are doing wholesome things with their idle time,” said Lt. Col. Scott Robinson, Task Force Pirate commander. “Many Soldiers spend a lot of time alone or in very small groups doing things like playing video games. Here, we’re giving them the opportunity to meet with more people, to do something ... constructive with their time.”



Spc. Phillip Norris, Co. B, 3rd Bn., 116th Inf. Rgt., performs repetitions of curls during his workout at the Fuller Fitness Center. The gym is centrally located between Norris’ living quarters and his work area, giving him more convenient opportunities to exercise.

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