

FREEDOM

May 14, 2004

Watch

***‘Catamounts’ provide security, presence
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***CJTF-180 forces help with Herat explosion victims
Page 3***



Pfc. Chris Stump

Airborne!

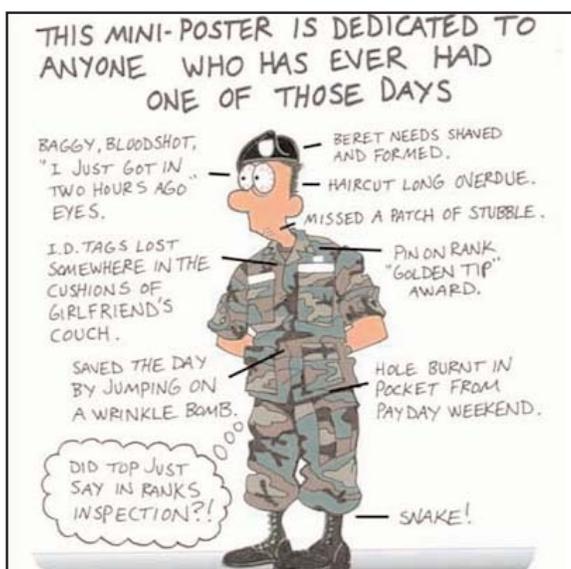
A Republic of Korea soldier flies through the air during a Taekwondo demonstration for Afghan children at a Children's Day event held in the 924th Medical Support Group hospital compound on Bagram Air Base May 5. Children's Day is a traditional Korean holiday where children are celebrated as the future of their country and culture, a tradition the Koreans are sharing with the young Afghans.

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Cover photo by Sgt. Frank Magni, 17th Public Affairs Detachment

Sgt. Christopher Sellars, HHC, 2nd Bn., 87th Inf. Rgt., scout, patrols the streets of Ghazni city. Sellars' unit, the "Catamounts," has been in the Ghazni province for three months, providing security for reconstruction.



By Mark Baker

Pvt. Murphy's Law

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PRT aids explosion victims

Story and photo by Pfc. Cheryl Ransford
17th Public Affairs Detachment

HERAT, Afghanistan — Upon entering the hospital, one could generalize that it is just like any other hospital around the world — worried families and patients gathered outside and in the hallways. But pass through the doors to the patients' rooms and the cries of pain that can be heard down the corridors tell a different story.

Herat Regional Hospital has several rooms filled with patients who were burned when a fuel tanker exploded near a bazaar at a gas station in Aziz Abad Village May 2, said Dr. Omar Sameem, director of Herat Public Health. The explosion caused a second blast when the fuel storage tank it was parked near also erupted into flames.

More than 30 people were killed in the vicinity of the explosions before medical care could be administered.

"We received 31 patients with severe burns, most of them with 50 to 100 percent of their bodies burned. They had been in close vicinity of the fuel tanker that had exploded and killed several people on site and burning many others," he said.

"The exact cause of the explosion is unknown, but it is known that there was an 18-wheeler with a conex of gas on its way to Kandahar from Herat. After pulling over to fill up the gas tank, the tanker exploded," he said.

Along with the 31 patients who had been brought into the hospital alive and fighting the pain of their burns, 13 more were brought in who died on their way to the hospital, said Sameem.

"When the injured people started arriving, we assessed the hospital and what we could handle. We soon realized we did not have the facilities or supplies to handle the number of burn patients we were receiving," he said. "At that point we called on outside organizations to help in our time of need."

And the Soldiers at the Herat Provincial Reconstruction Team were ready to lend a helping hand. Local doctors were on hand to treat the patients, but what the hospital lacked was enough supplies to properly bandage the wounds and help the patients begin the healing process.

"We had a delivery of medical supplies, such as suture material, IV fluids and Flamazine cream (a type of burn cream) for preventing secondary infections, planned for the following day because we were waiting to have all the supplies ready and together before we took them to the hospital," said Capt. John Barnett, Herat PRT physicians assistant.

But the patients' conditions didn't allow for that extra time to pass. The PRT staff knew they



Capt. John Barnett, 3rd Bn, 321st FA, talks with some nurses and family members about the medical supplies that were delivered to Herat Regional Hospital May 3.

See *Explosion*, Page 8

Education centers opening in Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — In the coming weeks, military personnel in Afghanistan can look forward to the opportunity to continue their education.

Education centers should be opening later this month at Bagram Air Base, Karshi-Kahanabad, Uzbekistan, also known as K-2, and Kabul, according to Byron Johnston, senior education services specialist for the K-2 education center. A fourth center will open at Kandahar Airfield around mid-June, he said.

"These centers will provide distance learning, testing and a computer lab," said Johnston.

He explained that the number of computers at each education center will vary based on the number of personnel assigned to each location. There will be 27

computers at the Bagram Education Center.

"There will also be representatives from two colleges — University of Maryland and Central Texas College — on site," said Johnston.

University of Maryland will offer instructor-led classes, while CTC will provide distance learning.

Personnel will also have the opportunity to take College Level Examination Program and Defense Subject Standardized Tests for college credits, according to Johnston. Some other services that will be available are tuition assistance and counseling, as well as some certification tests.

"Basically, our education centers will have many of the same services education cen-

ters in the United States do," said Johnston. "The biggest difference will be in the number of schools offering classes."

The education centers will be open primarily to U.S. service members. Other coalition members, including contractors, can attend classes and tests on a space available basis. Additionally, U.S. service members are eligible for tuition assistance for most classes and tests. Other attendees may be required to pay for these same services.

Anyone with questions about the education centers can call 231-3102 or 231-3100. There has been no definite date set for the openings, as the centers are still waiting to receive shipment of some furnishings. An announcement will be made once opening dates have been established.

ANA soldiers recognized for battle

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Kelly McCargo
 Office Military Coordination - Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — More than 300 Afghan National Army soldiers were recognized by the ANA Central Corps Commander during a 1st “Commando” Battalion, 3rd Brigade (Quick Reaction Force) Recognition Ceremony, April 26 at the Pol-e-charki soccer field.

On three separate occasions, the Commandos successfully repelled ambushes by al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgent forces and coordinated retaliatory assaults, during a three-month force presence mission in southern Afghanistan, February through April.

A total of 11 insurgents were killed and 80 were captured, and several tons of weapons and narcotics were seized and subsequently destroyed.

ANA Maj. Gen. Moen Fagir, Central Corps Commander, joined several ANA senior officers to congratulate and recognize the troops involved.

“You soldiers, officers and NCOs in the ANA Central Corps are the representatives of 20 million people of Afghanistan,” he said. “The Afghan people have faith and rely on you, as you serve them.

“And you met their expectations, and I wish you the best of success in the future,” said Fagir.

Praised by Coalition trainers, the Commandos, the first of 16 ANA battal-

ions to be operationally fielded, far exceeded their leadership’s expectations.

“The 1st Commando Battalion was deployed to several places in the Afghan provinces with the mission to capture, defeat and eliminate the action of the Taliban,” said ANA Capt. Zamry Khan, 2nd Company, 1st Bn., company commander. “You did such marvelous jobs – it was unimaginable.

“Not just on a scale of Afghanistan, but also of the Coalition – you proved your bravery to them in several cases,” he said.

During his speech, the embedded U.S. Marine training chief agreed with the Afghan senior leadership’s assessment of the ANA’s mission.

“When the Taliban heard you (ANA) were coming, they ran,” exclaimed Marine Maj. Brett Bourne. “Those (Taliban) that stayed, died. To the ANA, I salute you for the excellent execution of your job.”

Trained by U.S. Marines as a specialized light infantry unit, the Commando battalion is currently the only light infantry unit in the Afghan National Army.

“During this deployment, many (ANA) soldiers displayed great amounts of heroism and bravery, bringing this country closer to freedom from terror-

ism,” said Marine Capt. Brian Greene, embedded Marine Corps trainer.

Three ANA officers received ANA Defense Ribbons.

About 40 more ANA officers, NCOs and soldiers, to include about 12 coalition trainers, received ANA Defense Appreciation certificates.

In step with a 1,000-year Afghan tradition, more than 60 ANA soldiers performed the National Atan, or victory dance. Throughout Afghan history, Pashto warriors conducted the dance to celebrate victories against their enemies. A fitting end to a well-deserved celebration.



Lt. Col. Mohammad Isaq, 1st Bn. commander, was presented an ANA Defense ribbon during a ceremony April 26 at the Pol-e-charki soccer field.

Enduring Voices

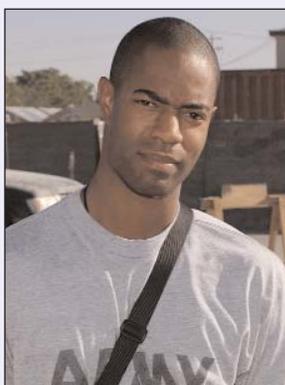
What is your favorite MWR activity?



Capt. Jason F. Wild
 68th Med. Co. Air Ambulance
“Phones. To be able to reach out and touch loved ones is a huge bonus.”



Pfc. Johnny Rosales
 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt.
“Phones to keep in touch with home.”



Spc. Eric Clark
 Co. B, 214th Avn. Bn.
“I like the dominos and chess.”



Pvt. Seth Robinson
 27th Eng. Bn.
“Watching movies.”

DOIM provides Internet, phones to AO

Story and photo by Pfc. Chris Stump
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Technology — especially Internet and telephone communication — is a necessity for the military, a tool that assists leaders in maintaining contact with their troops and keeping things running smoothly.

That technology wouldn't be available without the Directorate of Information Management. DOIM is the agency responsible for keeping the military up on communications within the organization and to the outside world.

Keeping secure Internet, non-secure Internet and telecommunications running is the major task of DOIM at Bagram, the main station for DOIM in Afghanistan, said Spc. Christopher Arevalo, 580th Signal Company. Kabul, Kandahar Airfield and Karshi-Kahanabad, Uzbekistan, also known as K2, are also part of the area of responsibility, and each has a DOIM station.

Some of the Soldiers who work to keep communications going in Afghanistan are from the 580th Signal Company, a unit permanently assigned here, said Arevalo, 580th Sig. Co. They fall under the 25th Signal Battalion in Qatar, and the 160th Sig. Brigade in Kuwait, both units that are permanently assigned to U.S. Central Command's area of operations.

These Soldiers are just one part of a huge network that provides signal support to an entire area of operations, including the roughly 1,300 outlets on Bagram, said Arevalo.

When a phone call is generated here, it is the start of a long relay process through satellites, passing through numerous countries on its way to its destination, as there are no land lines running in or out of Afghanistan, he said.

The same is true for Internet. Signals are sent from here to a

series of six satellites throughout the Middle East, said Sgt. 1st Class Jerri Balbin, DOIM NCO in charge.

But, all these satellites wouldn't be of any use if there wasn't a way to hook them up to individuals' computers and phones. That's where the other half of DOIM comes in — the part that is responsible for installing outlets for Internet and phone use in buildings and offices.

"We have oversight on all communications in Afghanistan," said Balbin. That includes everything from transmitting signal to running cable, so places such as the Joint Operations Center and Morale, Welfare and Recreation sites have the communications capabilities that Coalition forces need.

To keep service flowing to all the people who need it, DOIM has 60 staff members, both military and civilian, who do everything from running cable to ensuring the signal keeps going, said Arevalo. The only problem that DOIM has run into with breaks in service is people accidentally digging up or cutting cables.

"The service here is very reliable," said Arevalo, "but if there's a problem, we try to get to it as fast as possible."

Many problems are on the users' end, usually with a computer, not necessarily a connection. To help with user problems, DOIM has a Help Desk open 24-hours-a-day for phone calls or walk-ins to help with problems people may have with their systems or connections, said Arevalo.

The Help Desk is run by the 125th Sig. Bn., 25th Infantry Division (Light) and can help solve problems with a user's computer system or get a contractor out to check their connection, he said.

The Help Desk is also in charge of sending workers out to install new phone and Internet drops, he said.

Although reliable, the service is a little slower than it is stateside, said Balbin. Much of the problem with the slow speed can be attributed to people hooking up too many computers to one outlet and lowering the bandwidth.

DOIM has adequate resources at their disposal to hook up anyone who needs a connection, so it's not necessary to slow the system even further by plugging too many units into one Internet drop, she said.

But having slow Internet is only a slight disadvantage, considering where the coalition is operating from, said Arevalo, noting that users still have the basics they need to fulfill their mission here.

Covering every aspect of the military's need to communicate, from the JOC sending and receiving information from the United States or anywhere in the world, to one Soldier calling home from the MWR center, DOIM ensures coalition forces throughout Afghanistan will always have reliable communications within their units and to people back home.



Pfc. Pedro Alvarez, a Co. C, 125th Sig. Bn., information systems operator, troubleshoots a computer that was turned in to the Bagram Help Desk. The help desk is a part of DOIM and the services they provide to keep coalition equipment and connections in good repair.

Catamounts bring security to Ghazni

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

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — Like the Afghan tribes currently migrating north through Ghazni province, the Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, have lived a nomadic life. The Catamount's rotation to Afghanistan has been themed with change, not only in location, but also in strategy and mission.

Starting with quick reaction force and perimeter security missions on Bagram Air Base, the Catamounts have moved four times in nine months, finally ending at the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team site providing security and stability.

When the battalion first arrived in country in August, they were split between Bagram and Asadabad for mission support until they were moved in November to Nagalam. In Nagalam, the Catamounts conducted cordon and search and vehicle checkpoint missions until a month later when they moved once again.

Tasked with the mission of providing security during the Perimeter Road opening ceremony, the battalion also worked in the Sarobi Dam region until they finally reached the Ghazni PRT site in January.

The city of Ghazni, located in the northeastern area of the province, is a sprawling Afghan metropolis with a population of 300,000 people. From the PRT site, located just outside the city, the 2nd Bn., 87th Inf. Rgt. has an area of operations that extends more than 100 kilometers long and 60 kilometers wide, with Perimeter Road running right down the middle.

Lt. Col. Dave Paschal, 2nd Bn., 87th Inf. Rgt., commander, said Perimeter Road is one of his unit's main challenges because anti-coalition forces can use it to maneuver faster.

Traditionally, it would take a driver an average time of 11 hours to go from Kandahar to Kabul. Now, thanks to the Perimeter Road improvements, it only takes four.

"Ring Road has enhanced the enemy's maneuver time throughout the country," said Paschal, referring to Perimeter Road.

Using vehicle checkpoints and gaining increased intelligence from community sources were two of the main plusses in hindering the insurgents' ability to use Perimeter Road, said Paschal.

"The enemy no longer has the freedom of maneuver," said Paschal.

After the coalition defeated many of the large factions throughout the country, Paschal said the enemy changed its tactics.

"Initially, the enemy was massing together in large factions and resisting the coalition," said Paschal. "Our strategy was — find these factions and destroy them."

Paschal said during the battalion's time in Afghanistan he has seen the enemy switch from large groups in limited areas fighting the coalition, to small insurgencies spread throughout the country. When the enemy changed, the battalion modified its methods.

Some of these new methods were put to the test when the Catamounts hit the ground in Ghazni.

Paschal said the new methods stressed for his unit to provide more security for reconstruction. He also said securing a safe environment and ensuring the safety of the teams is one the necessities for reconstruction to take place.

"I mean, what is the point of building a school if the bad guys just come and burn it down," said Paschal.

To provide security for the reconstruction, the Catamounts used vehicle checkpoints, as well as mounted and dismounted patrols. These patrols are commonly called village assessments, and are used to show citizens that U.S. forces are regularly in the area.

These village assessments are not only to show a presence and gather intelligence, but are also the first steps for most villages in receiving aid from coalition forces and other non-governmental organizations.

Assisting with reconstructions is a nice change to the mission, but not a replacement for what the unit is here for, said 1st Lt. Tristan DeBord, Company C, 2nd Bn., 87th Inf. Rgt., platoon leader, typically a senior military member on village assessments.

"We are there to maintain security and



1st Lt. Joe Himpelmann, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 87th Inf. Rgt., platoon leader, communicates with a school headmaster during a village assessment in the village of Quqaine, Ghazni. The village assessment provides coalition troops with an opportunity to interact with Afghan citizens.

take out the enemy," said DeBord.

With more and more of the enemy mixed in with the population, the key is gaining the trust of the citizens, he said.

Debord said communication has always improved between the unit and the citizens after they realize U.S. forces are there to aid in reconstruction, not to occupy.

He also said villages begin to have more of an interest in securing their community after a well, school or mosque has been built.

"The average Afghan wants to live and raise a family in peace," said Paschal. "They don't want weapons or bad guys hidden in their villages, just as much as we don't want them there. Trust is the key."

"Helping these people appeals to the human in everybody," said Paschal.

Sgt. 1st Class Shane Henderson, Co. C, 2nd Bn., 87th Inf. Rgt., platoon sergeant said his Soldiers have had no problem adjusting to the missions in Ghazni. Some even enjoy it.

"We have to take everything mission-by-mission. Even though we might be on a patrol to help put a well into a village, we always have to keep our eyes peeled (in case there is) something along the way," said Henderson.

As the Catamounts transition with the 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., "Bobcats" from the 25th Infantry Division (Light), one fact remains clear, said Paschal. "Our rotation illustrated the flexibility and resourcefulness of today's Soldiers."

MWR helps Coalition troops relax

Story by Pfc. Cheryl Ransford
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE — Most people in the military are used to living on their own and doing as they please when they get off work. However, when deployed, it not only means long days, but working and living with the same people in a strange environment.

While being deployed can be very dramatic and life-changing, Morale, Welfare and Recreation tries to make service members' down time as relaxing and enjoyable as possible, said Daniel Alsup, Afghanistan MWR director.

"Having facilities here for the service members to utilize helps keep them busy. If we didn't have somewhere for the service members to go and relax after work, they would just go back to their hooches and be bored," he said.

MWR has tried to make sure there are a variety of activities for all service members and civilians deployed to Afghanistan to enjoy, said Alsup. MWR has events scheduled daily for the troops to take part in to break the monotony of doing the same thing day in and day out.

"In Bagram, each night there is something different going on. For instance, every Monday night is Latino dance night, and Wednesday there is bingo. We also have the morale phones, Internet café, game room, gym and movie theater, which are available 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week," he said.

Most forward operating bases have MWR facilities equipped with morale phones and Internet connections as well.

"In Kandahar and Camp Phoenix the set up is pretty close to that of Bagram," said Alsup. "We are working on the facilities in Kabul, (as well as) forward operating bases."

Everyday, service members take advantage of the facilities available to them, and get a little time to refresh themselves after work.

"I'm glad there is a gym here. It is good for relieving stress," said Chief Warrant Officer Ahmad Upshaw, 214th Aviation Regiment. "Even those without high-stress jobs have the every-day stresses that come with being deployed."

Across the gym, several others were also working out, and felt the gym was a good way to blow off steam.

"If there wasn't a gym here in Afghanistan, I think I would go insane. Working out helps me take my mind off work and helps me sleep better at night by



Pfc. Chris Stump

Marine Lance Cpl. Andre Ortiz, Co. F, 2nd Bn., 8th Marines, works out at the gym on Bagram. The gym is just one of many facilities MWR provides for deployed forces.

tiring out my body," said Marine 1st Lt. Mark Thompson, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment.

In another part of the base, at the phone center, Marine Lance Cpl. Nick Schauer, 2nd Bn., 8th Marine Rgt., said, "It's good to be able to have some kind of contact with friends and family at home. You have to stay focused on your job, but you can't be completely cut off from the world."

In addition to the events that take place on a regular basis, there are also several different kinds of tournaments that take place once a week, said Alsup.

"When I first arrived here in Bagram about four months ago, there weren't as many tournaments and things for our patrons to do on a daily basis," he said. "So I started adding more tournaments and events to the schedule to keep the service members happy and take their minds off work and being deployed. One week it may be a chess tournament, and the next it could be a weight-lifting competition. It varies so that everyone has a chance to participate in something they are interested in."

While there are plenty of activities to keep people busy, not everyone is interested in the same things, he added.

"We are adding another recreation center next to Camp Viper that is planned to open in the beginning of May. This facility will have pool tables, pingpong tables and foosball tables, along with additional morale phones and computers," said Alsup.

Throughout each month there are other

types of entertainment from outside of Bagram for the service members to enjoy, he said.

"In May, there will be a rock band from the States called Brickfoot performing for the service members in Bagram. In June, we are planning on having some comedians and Ranger Gary out. In July, we are looking at having a 'Tough Man' competition. The people from the show, 'Tough Man,' will come out and run it, but the service members will actually be (on) the show," said Alsup.

After the "Tough Man" competitions are over and everyone leaves, the boxing ring will be left behind for the service members to use for "boxing smokers," an additional means of helping the service members and civilians deployed to Afghanistan stay in shape and get out built-up frustrations, he said.

Other events are in the works, but finding enough space to build anything new is a challenge.

"We want to put in a Putt-Putt course with a driving range. We have the supplies needed, just nowhere to put them. We are also trying to find a place for a softball field and a pool, but there just isn't enough real estate here," said Alsup.

Keeping service members' spirits high during a deployment is sometimes hard to do, but the men and women working with Morale, Welfare and Recreation are doing their best to make life a little easier.

For a complete listing of what is scheduled each month, a calendar is posted at the gym, MWR center and all dining facilities.

Broadcast reaches out to Ghazni locals

Story by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — For many residents in Afghanistan, interaction with U.S. forces is limited only to face-to-face communication. But in the Ghazni province, the commanders of an infantry battalion and provincial reconstruction team are using another tool to break down the communication barrier.

Using the unique approach of television and radio broadcast, Lt. Col. Dave Paschal, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment commander, and Lt. Col. Steve Ford, Ghazni PRT commander, are reaching out to the populous over the airwaves, with positive results.

Prompted by a suggestion from interim governor Assadullah Khan, Paschal and Ford appear regularly on local radio and television to answer questions from viewers who write in.

With a straight-forward format, the program has risen in popularity to the point that Paschal is identified as “Commander

Dave,” when he is in the community.

Truly a trilingual show, each commander responds to questions that are sent in Dari and Pashto. The responses are then translated back to the viewer in both languages.

Paschal said the questions range from simple concerns about when reconstruction teams will be coming to villages, to more complex questions about the U.S.’s role in the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

“Of course I couldn’t answer questions about the Israelis and Palestinians, but it does show how much the citizens are interested in what we say,” said Paschal.

“Basically we answer the questions the same way one of my Soldiers would on patrol,” he said. “Initially, we found that many of the older viewers writing in had a lot of fear of U.S. forces because of their experience with the Russians. But we just reiterate the point that we are here to assist the government in rebuilding Afghanistan.”

He also said one of the largest advantages to responding to mail is that they get

to find out about and dispel rumors circulating around the community.

“Our message has always been ‘We are assisting your government toward its ultimate goal,’ ” said Ford. “And the people get to see this on television when we appear with their government.”

Another important aspect to the program, according to Ford is that the Ghazni citizens are able to put faces with the names they are often hearing.

Ford said the show also stays away from the moniker “propaganda” by answering questions and not reciting statements.

The broadcast has had such positive results that Paschal said people have turned in intelligence on the location of weapon’s caches based on the suggestions “Commander Dave” gave on television.

Paschal said he views information operations as being just as important as combat operations.

“Answering questions is what we are here for,” said Paschal. “I see the broadcast as a very important part of being here.”

Explosion: PRT provides medical supplies for victims

continued from Page 3

needed to get those supplies there as quickly as possible.

“When we received the call from the hospital Sunday night, we decided that we would take what we had in the morning and take the rest when it arrived,” he said.

By the time the PRT Soldiers dropped off more supplies the next morning, eight more patients had passed away from the magnitude of the burns they had received. The PRT continued to deliver supplies over the next few days and will continue to do so as long as the supplies are needed, said Barnett.

“I knew when I was here last night that we would most likely lose more lives, but we are trying to keep from losing any more,” he said during a May 3 interview. “The patients that are here now, have a better chance of surviving their burns. However, it is now the secondary infections that we must worry about.”

During the first 24 hours the burns themselves are of the utmost concern, after that it is the new skin and the chance of infection that must be carefully watched, said Barnett.

“During the first 24 hours is when the most deaths happen due to the trauma of the burns. After the initial burns have been cared for it is then the secondary infections that must be addressed to save the lives of the burn victims,” said Barnett.

When people receive high level burns it affects a lot of functions in the body, he said.

“The patients’ skin is new and really thin which causes them be unable to retain fluids or warmth after the severe burn. The patients have been given intravenous fluids to help bring up their hydration level and give them one more hope of recovery,” said Barnett.

As of May 3, about 50 people have died, either at the explosion site or at the hospital. And those who did survive here have a long road ahead of them. But Barnett noted that as long as proper care and treatment are made available they should recover, though their lives will be forever changed.



Pfc. Cheryl Ransford
Maj. David Henderson, 401st CA Bn., U.S. Army Reserve, carries a box of medical supplies into Herat Regional Hospital May 3. The supplies were used to treat burn victims from a fuel truck explosion that killed approximately 50 people.

Engineers build showers for Ghazni Soldiers

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

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Sixty-six days is the longest a Soldier from 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment is rumored to have gone without a shower.

This is according to Soldiers from the 926th Engineer Battalion, Birmingham, Ala. A team of eight engineers from the unit recently returned from Ghazni Province, having built and installed showers at the 2nd Bn., 87th Inf. Rgt. tactical assembly areas to ensure nothing like that happens again. They also repaired the showers at the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team.

“The Soldiers were basically dumping water over their heads for showers,” said Staff Sgt. Phillip Baker, NCO in charge of the project. “The guys from 2-87 won’t benefit much from this, but the 25th [Infantry Division (Light)] Soldiers just coming in will.”

Baker and his team of carpenters, electricians and plumbers spent 26 days building two sets of shower facilities from the ground up. This isn’t an easily accomplished task considering the area.

“We had a lot of problems with the bill of materials,” said Baker. He explained that the BOM is part of the pre-planning process. It is basically a list of the needed materials to complete a specific project.

In the end, the team wasn’t able to get all the materials they asked for. Instead, they had to improvise with what was available.

“If you don’t have something, you adapt and overcome,” said Baker. “We found it

easier to use double two-by-six pieces of wood instead of trying to get two-by-12 pieces.”

These double two-by-six blocks of wood were used to build stairs on two 16-by-45 foot buildings. Each building contains 12 showerheads, something the Soldiers in Ghazni have only seen during field recovery from missions. Recovery is used as an opportunity for Soldiers to regroup after combat missions, and often takes place at PRTs or locations like Bagram Air Base.

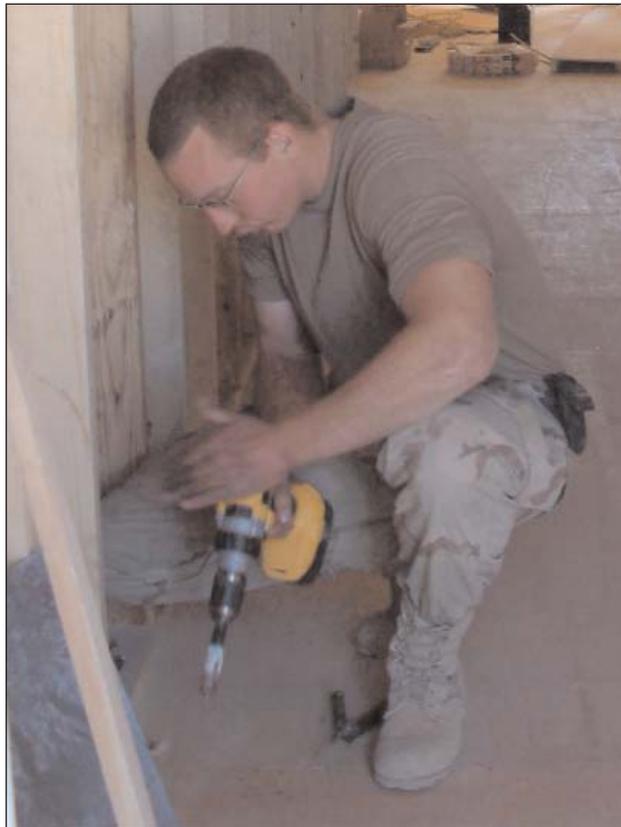
The engineers also added electrical outlets in the buildings. According to Staff Sgt. Lucas Harrison, lead electrician for the project, these outlets will serve a few different purposes.

“We installed six fluorescent light fixtures in each building, as well as a total of six outlets for things like electric shavers,” said Harrison. He added that his team also installed outlets for washers and dryers, helping prepare the facility for future improvements.

Harrison, an augmentee with the 926th Eng. Bn., is actually assigned to the 844th Eng. Bn., Johnson City, Tenn. He said he faced one major challenge in completing his portion of the project.

“We had trouble finding enough power to support the facilities,” he said. “The fire bases weren’t even operating off of 10 (kilowatt) generators. Luckily, we were able to pull enough power in.” Harrison explained that they ran the wiring using existing electricity to power the shower facilities.

Electricity was just one part of the project, however. A shower isn’t a shower without plumbing. Spc. Ron Baldwin, the lead plumber on the project, and his team,



Photos by 2nd Lt. James Irvin
Staff Sgt. Lucas Harrison, 926th Eng. Bn. lead electrician for the Ghazni shower project, drills holes to run wiring through new shower facilities.

stepped in for this portion of the installation.

“My part actually wasn’t that hard,” said Baldwin. “There aren’t any hot water heaters, so I could just use a valve on the shower head.”

Baldwin explained that he first developed a drain system, which would allow the used water to be pulled away from the building. He placed the water tank on top of the shower facility, which served two purposes. First, it provides water pressure to the showerheads. Secondly, having the tank on top of the building exposes it to direct sunlight.

“It won’t be heated water,” said Baldwin, “but the sun will at least warm it up a little bit.”

Even if the Soldiers aren’t getting hot showers, they’re still a step ahead of where they were – using five-gallon water jugs off the back of an LMTV.

“They’re infantrymen,” said Sgt. Jasper Russell, Ghazni shower project lead carpenter. “They’re out there sucking dust, day in and day out. We’re just happy to be able to help them out any way we can.”



Spc. Kevin Vaden (left), and Sgt. Jasper Russell, 926th Eng. Bn., piece together boards for the new showers at fire bases in Ghazni Province. The two were part of an eight-Soldier team that built two shower facilities.

Training pays off during OEF deployment

Training wing command chief addresses Bagram Airmen

Story by Air Force Master Sgt. Jeff Szczechowski
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — During a recent visit to Bagram Air Base for a 455th Air Expeditionary Wing commander's conference, Chief Master Sgt. Lupe Ruiz, the 82nd Training Wing command chief, talked a little bit about his current forward deployment to the 416th Air Expeditionary Group, Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, or K2, Uzbekistan. He talked even more about the mission at his home base, Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, and how the many Airmen who are trained there contribute to the Global War on Terrorism.

Ruiz has been deployed since early March, and he expects to return home to the Wichita Falls area sometime in June. His job at K2, like it is back at Sheppard, is to advise the commander on matters impacting the enlisted force such as morale, quality of life, operational tempo and quality of the enlisted leadership.

But unlike at Sheppard, the chief isn't the senior-ranking enlisted person at K2. Since the Army commands the base, the top enlisted position belongs to an Army command sergeant major. But he's still the Air Force's top noncommissioned officer there, and the first person that Col. Timothy W. Vining, the 416th AEG commander, turns to on issues concerning enlisted matters.

Besides that subtle difference, the mission at K2 certainly differs from that at Sheppard.

"Sheppard provides global training to replenish the war-fighting community and at K2 our goal is to support Air Force organic and tenant units fighting the war on terrorism," said Ruiz. "At the 82nd Training Wing we're concerned about producing well-trained and dedicated Airmen, whereas at K2, I get to see the fruits of our labor."

Ruiz said that the Airmen he's met coming out of Sheppard's classrooms are making quite an impression.

"To name just a few specialties, we've got crew chiefs, fuels, avionics, aircraft electronics and transient alert at K2 — all are dedicated and professional Airmen, and it all started at Sheppard school houses," he said. Then, with a twinkle in his eyes and a touch of pride added, "Some graduated within the last year and a few remembered me."

He talked a lot about the Sheppard "alumni," and probably would have continued longer if not for a dinner appointment

looming later that evening with other members of the conference.

"I tell ya', these young Airmen have the right attitude. They're truly dedicated professionals and are committed to fighting the war on terrorism. They put in long hours without a word of complaint," said Ruiz. "It's great to see the work from the Sheppard end translate into the outstanding performances I'm seeing every day from Airmen at Karshi-Khanabad and from those I talked to during my visit to Bagram Air Base."

The chief then applauded the efforts of the instructors, military training leaders, first sergeants and commanders at Sheppard who have prepared those Airmen to do the job they're doing now.

"The instructors and MTLs play a pivotal role in producing an Airman — an Airman who is ready to fight and engage the enemy, to turn sorties, to fuel aircraft or to provide top-notch

vehicle maintenance," he said. "And the men and women of Team Sheppard should be very proud of their collective efforts."

Sheppard's top enlisted Airman noted that aside from his own deployment, the 82nd TRW is filling the ground safety and public affairs positions at Bagram; Sheppard has 13 Security Forces Squadron members here and another 5-man team in Iraq; and that Sheppard Airmen in career fields like information management, medical and others continue to play an important role in both Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. He said there's a message to be found in the fact that Sheppard, a training base, has deployed many of its personnel worldwide.

"It says that everybody will contribute to the Global War on Terrorism, and it speaks volumes at a training base that we can play such an important role, too," said Ruiz.

The chief said that his deployment has been a rewarding and fulfilling experience, and that he

appreciated the fact that his boss, Brig. Gen. Arthur Rooney Jr., the 82nd TRW commander, allowed him the opportunity to be deployed. He also thanked his wife, Chief Master Sergeant Judy Ruiz, for her unwavering support, adding that all spouses, whether military or not, play a very important support role in the deployment of their Air Force husbands and wives.

Ruiz added that he's looking forward to getting back home, so that he can work once again alongside Team Sheppard members and see the "other" Chief Ruiz.

"Our folks do an awesome job training and mentoring our troops," he said. "It'll be great to get back into that environment. And, more importantly, I'm looking forward to reuniting with my lovely wife, Chief Judy."



Courtesy Photo

Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Lupe Ruiz (Right), 416th Air Expeditionary Group command chief, presents a memento to Camp Stronghold Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Mainiero at K2.

IG classes modernize Afghan army

ANA focus to revolve around the soldier

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Kelly McCargo
Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Afghan government reformation process includes officials restructuring many of their organizational leadership styles.

As requested by the Afghanistan Ministry of Defense, five civilian and military coalition members from the Office of Military Cooperation — Afghanistan are teaching an Inspector General Training Course which began January 26 and will last until September 29.

The intent is to teach the MoD and General Staff Inspector Generals a modern military IG system to inquire, and periodically report on — in an objective manner — the discipline, efficiency, economy, morale, training and combat readiness throughout an army to the Minister of Defense and Chief of the General Staff.

Retired Army Col. Dale “Doc” Litney, OMC-A, MPRI Afghan National Army IG partner; French Army Col. Guy Carlier, OMC-A, Ministry of Defense and General Staff, ANA IG partner; Maj. Shad Satterthwaite, OMC-A, Inspector General; Omid Baha and Jamil Rueen, OMC-A, Afghan interpretation and translation team, write and teach the nine month course every Monday and Wednesday morning.

The Afghan National Army previously used a military IG system in which the senior level leadership was solely responsible for the property and equipment of the entire military.

“The previous inspector general system was based very much on compliance. That is, a lot of inspections were conducted with the goal to make sure the commander’s directive and the army regulations were being followed,” said Satterthwaite.

The new system will have two sections — an AMoD IG with about 88 IG officers and civilians, and a general staff with nearly 60 officers. Minister Said Mohammad Abulfazil will be the head of the AMoD IG and ANA Maj. Gen. Abdullah will be the head of the General Staff IG.

“Now the individual commanders of each corps, division and sections are held

accountable for their equipment,” said Najibullah.

However, this time the focus will primarily revolve around safeguarding military personnel and, secondarily, the equipment.

The AMoD is intent on ensuring that their military is different from the previous Afghan military, because the focus is on the ANA soldiers’ well-being. This will include providing an IG program for every service member, civilian and family member as a forum to talk about problems without the fear of reprisal.

“Both the Minister Abulfazil and General Abdullah are keen to teach and train IGs who will maintain a crucial balance between being an extension of the commander and being sufficiently independent so that those who need to, will come to an IG with confidence,” said Litney.

Litney, who holds a doctorate in higher education, recently spent 18 months developing such an IG system with the Nigerian Army, as they restructured their military after overcoming 35 years of dictatorship, he said.

Aside from routine IG experience as a unit commander, Carlier had three years of additional experience implementing an IG system in Latvia and two years in Ukraine.

Satterthwaite, like Litney, is also a graduate of the three-week “Von Steuben Model” IG Course at Fort Belvoir, Va.

The course is named after Baron Von Steuben who was considered the founding father of the American Army IG system.

“Inspections are still a big part of the job of an Inspector General, but we are teaching them to focus more on rendering assistance to soldiers. In the U.S. Army, the assistance function accounts for over 90 percent of an IG’s workload,” said Satterthwaite.

The IG assistance capability becomes a “significant, positive motivator to the soldier,” said Litney.

Baha and Rueen have the arduous task of translating the designated course material from English to Dari. Each class requires about 18 to 40 pages of course hand-out material that needs to be translated, which can take up to two-and-a-half days per packet, twice a week.

With no previous IG experience, Baha and Rueen have become quite familiar with the material as the better part of their week is spent translating the material.

And their role doesn’t stop there.

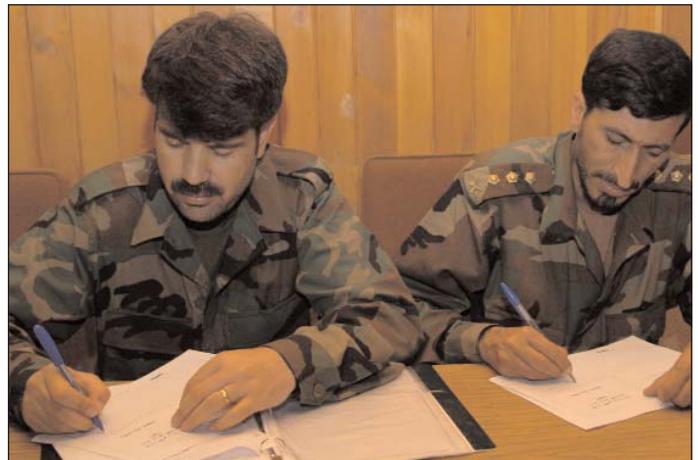
They also help teach the class — all in Dari and Pashto.

The team’s IG training plan contains 10 major blocks of instruction with approximately 204 hours of seminars, workshops and practical exercises for about 35 senior leaders.

The IG course covers the four primary IG functions — rendering assistance, performing inspections, conducting investigations, and teaching and training.

The new IG system will keep senior leaders fully informed about the condition of the military, said Litney. He added that it also provides important information to the government.

“By displaying the moral courage and integrity required of all IGs,” said Litney. “It sets the example for the Afghan government officials.”



ANA Col. Najibullah (left) and ANA Lt. Col. Halim Abdullah, taking notes during the lecture, said they are “very intrigued” with the assistance aspect of the reformed IG system.



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