

# FREEDOM

June 4, 2004

*Watch*



**Korean Hospital celebrates treating 100,000th patient  
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***Bamian Province holds first governor's conference  
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Air Force Master Sgt. Jeff Szczechowski

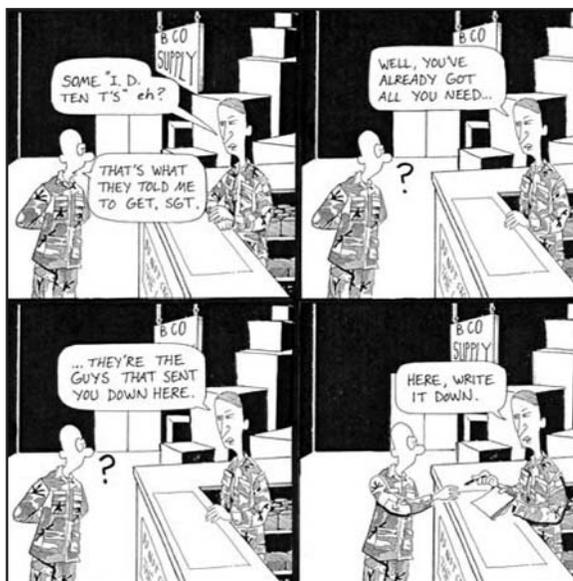
## Fill 'er up

Air Force Airman 1st Class David Breedlove, 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief, attaches a jet fuel single point nozzle to his A-10 Thunderbolt II, as he gets set to fill up its tanks with JP-8 jet fuel. Breedlove is deployed to Bagram Air Base from Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. His hometown is Charleston, W. Va.

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Cover photo by Pfc. Cheryl Ransford, 17th Public Affairs Detachment Col. Walter Branch, Task Force 325 commander, greets Wahidulahgul, the 100,000th patient at the Korean Hospital. Wahidulahgul was treated for a foot abscess May 20. The Republic of Korea 924th Medical Support Group has been providing medical care to the Afghan nationals and Coalition forces at Bagram Air Base since November 2002.



By Mark Baker

## Pvt. Murphy's Law

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# Governor holds first conference of key leaders

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

BAMIAN, Afghanistan — Spreading democracy where only war and oppressive leaders have reigned for nearly 30 years is a difficult task. But it was a task willingly undertaken at the first Bamian Province governor's conference.

Key leaders from throughout the province gathered here May 15-16 to discuss important issues facing the future of not only their province, but the whole of Afghanistan, as well as taking advantage of their rights in the new Afghan democracy.

Standing behind a podium decorated with flowers and a picture of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Bamian Governor Mohammed Rahim Ali Yar, opened the conference by welcoming all the leaders and outlining the key points of the next two days of talks.

"We called this meeting to find all the problems that the people of Bamian have and try to find solutions," said Yar.

The four main issues discussed in the conference were security, reconstruction,

elections and implementing the new constitution of Afghanistan.

Yar spoke of all four major issues, stressing that none were more or less important than the others.

"All these issues are important to the future of Afghanistan," said Yar.

The rest of the speakers at the conference echoed the governor's sentiments, including New Zealand Air Force Group Capt. Gavin Howse, Bamian Provincial Reconstruction Team commander.

Howse spoke mostly of the work his New Zealand-led PRT has done for the residents of Bamian. He added that they will continue to do all they can in the future to help with elections, security and other needs of the people.

Howse's main focus was the security and stabilization of the region and keeping it guarded from illegal influence.

"We have been here since September 2003, and we will be here longer to ensure Taliban and al-Qaeda will not have an influence in Bamian Province," he said. "We believe we can make a difference. The task of rebuilding is a large one and will take time. We will be here to help with it."

On the side of positive influence and taking care of the needs of Bamian, there were many aid agencies present to show their support for Yar and his provincial government, and pledge their assistance with future projects — especially in the upcoming elections.

"We're all working to change Afghanistan — elections, health, agriculture and transit are important issues that must be fixed in the future," said Peter Maxwell, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan regional head.

Maxwell spoke of the importance of a free Afghanistan and all that can, and will, be done to encourage business and trade to make Bamian a prosperous place for residents.

He closed out the day talking about human rights and the importance of educating the people of the province.

After a day of putting forth the prob-



**Key leaders of Bamian Province hold a discussion about the most important issues facing the area. Attendees of the governor's conference split into small groups to discuss possible solutions to problems facing the province and Afghanistan.**

lems facing the region, the conference was adjourned until the following day when group discussions took place and solutions to the problems were discussed.

On the second day, the governor made opening remarks and dismissed the conference to move into their small-groups. The groups incorporated everyone from the leaders to the aid workers — all presenting their ideas on what would make the region the most stable and successful.

Conference attendees participated in four main group discussions — security, education, agriculture and reconstruction.

Almost everyone in the groups was afforded the opportunity to offer their opinion on how to make improvement within the province.

At the end of the group discussions, all participants reconvened to share their ideas with the conference as a whole and hear feedback on their ideas.

What was said at the conference will make a difference, said Yar.

The people of the country are its most important asset and how they feel makes a very real impact on everything that will happen in the coming days, months and years, he added.

"This has been an important two days for Bamian," he said. "The people had a chance to voice their feelings and have an input into what we will do as a province."



**New Zealand Air Force Group Capt. Gavin Howse, Bamian PRT commander, speaks to key leaders of the province at the governor's conference. Howse's New Zealand-led PRT is a major contributor to the people and government of Bamian.**

# Absentee voter's registration underway

*Mail SF-76 by Aug. 15 to register for general election*

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

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — In just five months, voters across America will be taking advantage of their Constitutional rights as they do their part in deciding who will win the 2004 General Election. With so many eligible service members and civilian employees deployed overseas, voting by absentee ballot is just as important to the election as the votes of those still in the United States.

“Voting is just one of the rights we’re here for,” said Maj. Bryan Carter, Coalition Joint Task Force-76 senior voting assistance officer. “Voting is how our democracy works - really, it’s how we speak to our government.”

By registering to vote on a Standard Form 76, or Federal Post Card Application, U.S. citizens overseas can vote in all elections held at their home of record for a period of one year. The only requirements to be eligible to vote are that you are a U.S. citizen who will be 18 years old on the date of the election.

“Once you fill out a SF-76, you send it

back to the States, where it gets approved by your local voting official,” said Carter. He added that it is important to make sure all your data on the card is correct, otherwise, it may affect the district you are able to vote in.

District registration gives voters a voice regarding different laws being considered in their home of record voting district, and it allows them to vote in elections at every level.

An alternative to the FPCA is the Online Version of the FPCA. The OVFPFA can be filled out on the Federal Voting Assistance Program official Web site, [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), printed out and mailed to your local voting official in a regular envelope.

After a local voting official approves your registration form, you will receive ballots in the mail for every election held in the next year, according to Carter.

“The important thing is that people ensure they are mailing the ballots in time to meet the deadline for voting,” said Carter.

This is also important for registration for anyone who plans on voting in the presidential election in November.

According to the Federal Voting Assistance Office, anyone residing overseas and wishing to vote in the election must mail their SF-76 no later than August 15.

Carter said he anticipates ballots for the presidential election to arrive sometime in

September.

“Our deadline to mail ballots back to the (United States) for the election is October 11,” he said. This leaves approximately a 20-day window for the ballots to make it to the United States.

However, those who want their vote counted shouldn’t wait until the last minute to mail in their ballots. The longer you wait to mail your ballot, the greater the risk that it won’t get there on time, said Carter.

This election year a lot of attention is focused on absentee voters getting their paperwork in on time and participating in the elections.

“A big concern right now is that there are so many service members (and civilians) deployed right now. That’s why there’s so much of an emphasis on voting,” he said.

“We want to make sure everyone knows that individuals do count,” said Carter.

“And their votes will be counted for their future. Our elections aren’t just about people. They’re about taxes, bonds, referendums, schools, cities and counties.

We’re allowing the people we elect to work and perform different functions, and by voting, we get to approve or disapprove many of these functions.”



## Enduring Voices

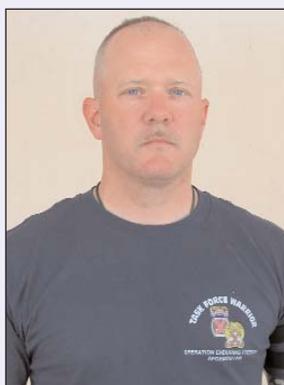
*What did you bring with you to remind you of home?*



**Marine Cpl. Ronald Kern**  
Task Force L, Kabul Embassy  
*“I brought pictures of my friends and family.”*



**Spc. Joseph McKeague**  
CFC-A operations  
*“I brought macadamia nuts and surf shorts to remind me of Hawaii.”*



**Chief Warrant Officer Tom LeBrun**  
PSD, CJTF-76  
*“I have a prayer that my wife wrote.”*



**Sgt. 1st Class Sven Spietz**  
German Army Detachment  
*“I have a metal heart chime from my girlfriend.”*

# Bamian PRT reconstructs, secures province

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

BAMIAN, Afghanistan — Throughout Afghanistan, provincial reconstruction teams are working to make life better for the people in the area and give them the tools and knowledge to help themselves.

One such example is the Bamian PRT. Made up mostly of New Zealanders, personnel from Afghanistan, the United States and the United Kingdom assist with the mission.

The Bamian PRT, under Task Force Stonewall, is responsible for the entire province and the mission of reconstruction and security, said New Zealand Lt. Col. Dave Pirie, Bamian PRT deputy commander. The 150 people in the PRT help the Afghans rebuild everything from roads to their damaged infrastructure, as well as conducting presence patrols to provide security for the people and the new voter registration sites.

“Securing and reconstructing are the two pillars of the PRT,” he said. The New Zealand-led PRT took over from U.S. forces in September 2003 and has been rebuilding the area ever since.

Faced with many challenges in rebuilding this war-torn area, the New Zealanders are scheduled to remain a part of reconstructing the Bamian area until 2005, he said. The force here is the main deployed effort of the New Zealand government.

The PRT is not only the largest deployed effort by the New Zealand government, it is the largest PRT of five under TF



**New Zealand Lance Cpl. Kelly Roberts (left), a Bamian PRT medic, provides medical assistance to a local Afghan woman during a recent patrol.**

Stonewall, said Marine Col. David C. Garza, TF Stonewall commander.

And one of the most successful in Afghanistan, he added.

“This is the furthest advanced of our PRTs,” he said. “The PRT has a great partnership with Task Force Stonewall and the local people in the province.

“The Bamian PRT has a tremendous positive atmosphere,” said Garza. “They are very important to the success and future of this country.”

One of the biggest projects the PRT has undertaken to help in the future of the country is the reconstruction of Bamian University. With help from other Coalition assets, the New Zealanders rebuilt the university, just one of the many things members of the Taliban took over or destroyed while in power. They also damaged most of the town of Bamian and many historical religious markers in the surrounding area, said Pirie.

But the New Zealanders don't just rebuild for the Afghans, they are also teaching them many things about rebuilding — something that that will benefit the people long after the physical support of organizations like the PRT is gone.

“We're giving skills to the community,” said Pirie.

To give those skills to the community, the PRT has soldiers of every trade from infantry and engineers to educators and chaplains, he said. The New Zealand military doesn't have civil affairs specialists, so every troop in the PRT plays a role in what

happens in the rebuilding process.

The civil affairs-type missions are done while on short patrols in the area close to the PRT and patrols to two forward operating bases that last as long as four weeks, he said.

Many of the patrols are to provide security on the new voting centers, he added. But they also look after the other needs of the people of the province, such as medical care, wells and roads.

Without civil affairs specialists, the Bamian PRT relies on the trades and special skills of its members to reach out and help the community. The same soldiers who talk to the locals about reconstruction are the same ones who physically work on the projects, said Pirie.

The projects undertaken by the PRT range from education to security, so every troop's specialty is called upon in the reconstruction of Bamian Province, he added. Infantry soldiers provide security, medical personnel treat locals and educators teach in the local area.

Providing all the help the PRT has to the local population has not been easy and is sometimes a very difficult and daunting task, said Pirie. The winter often leaves mountain passes blocked, and the mountainous terrain often makes communication with Bagram difficult.

But the region and its terrain aren't the only issues that make helping the people difficult. The PRT also deals with a developing government, a very low literacy rate



**Members of the New Zealand-led Bamian PRT speak with locals about aid to fix their dam.**

See *PRT*, Page 11

# Republic of Korea Hospital treats 100,000th patient

Story by Pfc. Cheryl Ransford  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Having to be seen for a foot abscess isn't normally cause for celebration, but when 13-year-old Wahidulahgul, a local Afghan child came to the Korean Hospital here for just that reason, the Korean's celebrated.

To commemorate Wahidulahgul being the 100,000th patient, the Republic of Korea Army's 924th Medical Support Group invited service members from the units that helped them accomplish their mission to their compound May 20.

The Republic of Korea Army has been providing medical support as an integral member of Operation Enduring Freedom since February 2002.

The soldiers from the 924th MSG deployed to Bagram in November 2002, and have since treated more than 100,000 patients, said Col. Tae Whan Kwon, Korean contingency commander.

When the Korean Hospital had treated 90,000 patients in March, a Peace Garden was planted. Now, just two months later, reaching the milestone of 100,000 patients treated, the soldiers at the Korean Hospital have planted two commemorative trees and established a Peace Park inside the ROK hospital compound, said Lt. Col. Young Deck Kim, 924th Medical Support Group commander

"This milestone is a testament of our

dedication and purpose in providing the highest level of medical treatment to the Coalition forces and local nationals as a member of Operation Enduring Freedom," said Kim.

The ceremony was held in honor of everyone at Bagram Air Base who has supported the ROK soldiers, said Kim. Included in the ceremony were members of Combined Joint Task Force-76 medical staff, Task Force 325th Combat Support Hospital, the Egyptian Hospital staff and the local militia, who have helped in the security and movement of the patients, along with all others who have supported the ROK.

"The work that the (Republic of Korea) soldiers are doing has made a direct and significant effect on the Coalition contingent," said Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, CJTF-76 commander. "They add a quality to the Coalition that is irreplaceable. The work they have done is evident all over Bagram."

On average, 5,000 patients are treated at the hospital each month. The patients come from Bagram Air Base and the surrounding villages, the majority of which are Afghan nationals, said Capt. Joon Hyang Park, ROK head nurse. Due to local culture, men and women can't be seen at the same time.

"We treat both men and women three days a week. Women are treated Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the men are treated Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday," said Kwan. "However, we are open 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week



Pfc. Chris Stump

**ROK Capt. Doh-Hyung Kim, a 924th Med. Grp. staff doctor, uses his stethoscope to check Marsol's heart rate. Marsol is just one of the many local children who has been treated at the Korean Hospital.**

for emergency care."

The Coalition forces have done a lot to help the Republic of Korea Army complete their mission in Afghanistan, said Maj. Young Man Seo, CJTF-76 liaison officer

"Without the support of the Coalition forces, we wouldn't have been able to reach this milestone," said Seo. "When we are low on supplies, it is CJTF-76 who helps us out and gets us the supplies and medicines that we need to treat the patients, until our next supply from Korea comes in."

With the Coalition forces there to celebrate along side the Korean soldiers, the Peace Park Milestone was unveiled by the commanders of various units around Bagram.

It will stand outside the Korean hospital as a reminder of the hard work the Republic of Korea soldiers have done helping the local nationals and Coalition forces.

Olson ended the ceremony by saying, "In the midst of a country that has been torn and ravaged by war, it is absolutely wonderful that a Peace Park has been established to show that peace is possible."



Pfc. Cheryl Ransford

**The Peace Park Milestone is unveiled at the Republic of Korea Hospital on Bagram Air Base May 20 by invited guests and unit commanders. The Peace Park was dedicated to the treatment of 100,000 patients during their deployment to Afghanistan.**

# Herat PRT helps improve women's prison

Story by Pfc. Cheryl Ransford  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

HERAT, Afghanistan — Flowers bloom where solitary confinement cells once stood during the reign of the Taliban. Inmates bustle around workshops, making everything from fresh cakes and candies to rugs and shoes that are sold in the city each week.

This is the inside view of the Herat Men's Prison — a stark contrast to the Herat Women's Prison, directly across the street.

A rundown building stands alone in the middle of an empty court yard, with children playing barefoot in the standing water of the well or on the hot cement. In the far corner is another rundown building that is used as the restroom for both the women and their children.

The Herat Provincial Reconstruction Team is working to better the living con-

ditions for the women and their children who are imprisoned here, said Sgt. 1st Class Shannon Para, 401st Civil Affairs Battalion, U.S. Army Reserve.

"Herat is one of the few cities in Afghanistan that were barely touched by the war," she said. "With most of the structural reconstruction complete, we are focusing on the social infrastructure, and social growth."

The Soldiers at the Herat PRT are working together to improve women's rights and gender equality, said Para, the NCO in charge of the PRT, which is run by the 364th Civil Affairs Battalion.

"Most PRTs work more closely with the reconstruction aspect of humanitarian aid. We have decided to work on the women's issues here in Herat," she said.

Although most of Afghanistan has started living by the new constitution, the people of Herat are a little behind the times, said Para.

"The women here are still unable to leave the house alone, or ask for a divorce, as the women in the rest of Afghanistan are now allowed to do," she said. "The new constitution is known but not lived by in this province."

When the women of Afghanistan go to prison, there is usually no one left at home to care for their children. Since the husbands are usually the ones who go out and work to bring money into the home, the children must often go to prison with their mothers, said Sadiq Majid, prison director.

"The children are not prisoners so they are allowed to come and go as they please. They are allowed to go to school and visit other relatives," he said.

There are currently 44 women in the prison, most with two or more children ranging in age from one month to about

See *Prison*, Page 10

## Marines, Afghan police work side-by-side

Story and photo by  
Lance Cpl. John E. Lawson Jr.  
Combat Correspondent

SAROBI, Afghanistan — The troops of 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, have found a new partner in the Global War on Terrorism. The battalion has joined forces with the Sarobi police in both security and civil affairs operations throughout the Sarobi District.

"America's Battalion" deployed to Afghanistan late last year, and has spent the past two months operating in the Tagab Valley. The area was once home to numerous anti-Coalition militia members.

The Afghan Ministry of the Interior sent Dauod to assume command of the police in the Sarobi District. The 250-member-strong police force is responsible for 129 villages throughout the valley.

"Three months ago, nobody followed the police. Warlords moved freely through Sarobi," said Dauod. "Before, everyone walked the streets of Sarobi with guns. Now only the police are armed."

Since establishing a close working relationship, the battalion has asked for police support during various security and humanitarian assistance missions.

"I try to always have a police officer with my Marines during operations. It's good to show an Afghan face right alongside us," said Marine Lt. Col.

Robert Petit, battalion commander.

"The Marines and police work together to make the Sarobi District a safe place," said Dauod.

As a gesture of good faith and to better the abilities of the policemen, the battalion coordinated for the donation of two Toyota Hilux vehicles for use by the police department.

"We noticed transportation was a problem for them, so we tried to help," said Petit. This helps extend the reach of the law here.

The Marines had "Sarobi Police" painted on the vehicles in both English and Pashto — the main language in the area.

"This is a very happy day for us," said Talib, Sarobi Proper Police commander. "We had no vehicles that could make it up and down the hills here. Now we have two."

Prior to receiving the vehicles, the department only had one marked police vehicle.

"On behalf of the Ministry of the Interior and the police, thank you to the Marines for the help and support of the police station," added General Muhammad Dauod-Nadim, commander of police.



**Marine Lt. Col. Robert Petit, 2nd Bn., 8th Marine Rgt., commander, shakes the hands of numerous Afghanistan Ministry of the Interior officials at the Sarobi police station. The battalion coordinated funding for two refurbished Toyota Hilux police vehicles provided to the commander of police for the province May 8, tripling the number of marked police vehicles the 250-person department has.**

# Afghan women study new constitution

Story by Pfc. Chris Stump  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAMIAN, Afghanistan — Free from the oppressive rule of the Taliban, women throughout Afghanistan are now free to receive an education and learn more about the rights they have under the new constitution.

Two organizations that are playing an integral part in helping the women here gain knowledge of their new constitution are Save the Women and Children of Afghanistan and New Zealand Aid for International Development.

With the help of the two organizations, a class was set up for local women to learn about their numerous rights under Afghanistan's new constitution at the Civil Training Course, said New Zealand Navy Lt. Cmdr. Tania Koberstein, project manager for NZAID at the Bamian Provincial Reconstruction Team and an engineer by trade. NZAID funds the women-only class with monetary donations and managing projects.

Teachers of the three-month-long course instruct students in two basic areas pertaining to the constitution — the constitutional law of Afghanistan and civil rights, said Zeinalo Sajaeli, a course instructor.

Classes of this type would have been unheard of just a few years ago under Taliban rule, he said.

And so would the idea of teaching the women so they can, in turn, teach other women, he added. By the end of the course, the goal is to have the 50 women

who are enrolled take what they learn and teach 4,000 women within Bamian Province.

Many of the women who attend the course are teachers at local schools and will go back to their schools and teach their students what they have learned, said Sajaeli.

The knowledge that these women are gaining will be very useful to them in the future. Most of the women in Afghanistan do not understand or take advantage of their most important rights, he said. The Afghan constitution does not afford women any specific rights, but gives all people a set of rights they didn't have under previous rule.

According to the new constitution, Afghanistan's citizens are afforded many of the same rights people in Western societies have — the right to vote, free speech, liberty, dignity, and the right to be free from crime, violence and discrimination.

"We have never had these rights before," he added. "Especially not those that included women as citizens.

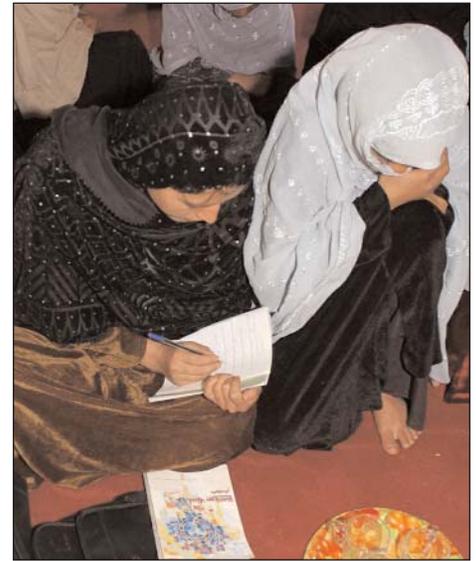
"The goal of this course is to make them aware of the constitution and the rights it provides them so that they may have a part in the future of the nation."

A future that depends on the women and children, he added.

"This course is helping me with my job, and I can teach children as well," said Hawa Jafaery, a student in the course.

"This class is very useful and I'm learning a lot about constitutional rights," she said.

The course is in its first month, and well



Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons

**Women at the Civil Training Course study the new Afghan constitution and the rights it provides them.**

into educating the women about what rights they can exercise in the new Afghan government, said Sajaeli.

If all goes well with this course, another may be possible in the future with a proposal from the group and approval from NZAID and Save the Women and Children of Afghanistan, said Koberstein.

With groups like NZAID and others providing women with the knowledge they need to be active members in Afghanistan's future, said Sajaeli, the women and children will be an effective and vocal part of Afghan life and politics.



Pfc. Chris Stump

## Feast of Lanterns

ROK soldiers celebrate the Feast of Lanterns, the birthday of Buddha, at the 100th Eng. Grp. compound on Bagram Air Base May 25. The soldiers carry lighted lamps symbolizing the illumination of the dark world, the brightening of the inner heart and a pledge for the salvation of all living beings. The celebration is considered to be the most sacred of Buddhist holidays and is celebrated on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month.

# Planning, preparation key to safe convoys

## Safeguarding the Coalition

Story by  
Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Driving in Afghanistan can be one of the most dangerous missions Coalition troops can participate in, whether it is part of a combat operation or a frequent mail run from Bagram Air Base to Kabul. With dangerous, pothole-filled roads, speeding drivers, the threat of enemy ambushes and potential use of improvised explosive devices, the threat to convoys is constant.

“More people have been killed or injured in Afghanistan since the beginning of OEF by accidents than combat action,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy S. Green, the senior enlisted man in charge of Bagram Air Base. “And vehicular accidents lead the way.”

For many Coalition troops, convoys are a daily occurrence, whether they are in tactical or non-tactical vehicles. But when accidents occur it can often be traced back to one thing — planning.

“A convoy is like any other operation,” said Green. “You have to have a plan.”

Although a thorough convoy brief is a necessity for safe and sufficient convoys, just briefing the plan isn’t enough. Leaders must prepare their troops for any contingency and enforce rehearsals of those plans.

“Part of your preparation is supervising and inspecting rehearsals,” he said. “Go out there on a dirt road and practice — practice evasive driving, practice a communication plan.”

Planning and practice go hand in hand, at least where Green is concerned, and all members of the convoy need to know what to do when something unplanned occurs. They need to have answers and be able to react immediately to situations where the question is raised “What am I going to do if I get ambushed? What is my battle drill?”

“It’s easy to say, ‘If we make contact, we’re going to do this,’” said Green. Rather than just discuss it during a convoy brief, every person in the convoy should rehearse what his actions will be. That way when it does come time to react, the actions will come naturally.

Once the convoy is on the road, every-

one should know how to react to different situations they may be confronted with.

“Execute the plan, but remember, plans only last until the first gunshot,” he said.

That is when troops must refer back to their training and allow their instincts to kick in.

“We say the enemy has a vote in this,” said Green. “He may present you with something that you are unprepared for.”

However, the enemy isn’t always a physical person. The enemy is often speed, overdriving the road conditions and not wearing seatbelts.

“... We’ve learned very hard, painful lessons and Army-wide we are seeing a tremendous spike in vehicle accidents,” said Garrett Lozier, Combined Joint Task Force-76 Safety Director. He said that an upcoming report from the U.S. Army Safety Center notes the trends that are promoting unsafe vehicle incidents include lack of awareness, lack of enforcement of policies and speeds too fast for the road or environmental conditions.

“Vehicles are speeding when they shouldn’t be speeding,” said Lozier. “Convoys are speeding when they shouldn’t be speeding. Drivers and leaders basically are ignoring the convoy speed limit and they are going way too fast for the conditions.”

The current CJTF-76 speed limit for con-

voys on paved highways is 55 miles per hour or 72 kilometers per hour. However, this policy is currently being reviewed in light of all the recent accidents, said Lozier.

In addition to the speed limit, it is important for convoy commanders and leaders to be strategic in planning their convoys. They need to realize that the abilities and limitations of the vehicles in the convoy change depending on what they are driving that day and the capabilities of those vehicles fluctuates based on the current load plan and the road conditions.

Convoy commanders must also enforce the use of seatbelts any time a vehicle is in motion, regardless of whether or not it is part of a convoy.

“There seems to be an overwhelming false perception that ‘Using seatbelts in a combat theater will hinder me from getting out of a vehicle when I’m under fire,’” said Lozier.

Based on a report from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Safety Office during recent operations in Iraq, “There were zero Soldiers lost as a result of trying to get a seatbelt off while they were under fire, as opposed to numerous casualties involving both serious injury, as well as fatalities, when the vehicle crashed,” and Soldiers were not buckled up, said Lozier.

Proper planning, safe driving and leader

*See Convoy, Page 10*



Sgt. Frank Magni

**Staff Sgt. Jose Perez, 58th MP Co., leads a convoy rehearsal and react to contact drills with the Soldiers in his squad. Perez and his squad conduct these drills before every daily convoy they embark on. The purpose of these drills is to give Soldiers a faster reaction time when emergencies arise during convoys.**

## Prison: PRT makes improvements to women's prison

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nine or 10 years old, said Majid.

The number of women in the prison varies from 30-50 depending on when they are released and when more women come in, said Majid.

Most of the women are in prison for breaking Islamic law, said Para.

"Some of them are here for leaving their husbands, while others are here for defending themselves or others. Some are here for simply asking for a divorce, and most are under the age of 21," she said.

Although the women are in prison, the PRT is trying to make sure the women and children have the basic necessities of life, such as screens for the windows and somewhere to wash their clothes, said Para.

"Currently, we are working on building a new restroom and

washroom," said Para. "We are also working on getting screens on the windows to help keep the insects out."

When asked what they needed, the women said they could use soap, buckets to wash clothes, shampoo, blankets, fans for when it gets hot and a female doctor, said Para.

"When I went back to the PRT after visiting the women and told the PRT commander that some of the Commander's Emergency Relief funds were needed to get basic necessity items for the women, he said that we could have \$2,000 for whatever is needed," she said.

When the donations of basic necessity items were taken back to the prison, a U.S. Army doctor who was visiting Herat was able to go to the prison with the civil affairs personnel and examine everyone, said Para.

"The women and children

were very happy to see that we not only brought the supplies they had asked for, but a female doctor as well," she said. "All the prisoners, as well as their children, were seen. Two of the female guards were seen too."

The PRT is also working to start a training program for the women, said Para.

"Just as in the men's prison, the women should have a way to learn a trade skill for when they get out. We are working with Suraya Pakzad, Voice of Women, to get a women's vocational training program started," she said. "The program will include breakfast in the morning before starting work and the materials, equipment and teachers will be brought in to the prison to teach the women how to sew and do basic tailoring."

What's being done is appreciated by everyone who is in

prison, as well as those who work there, said Para.

"What the PRT is doing for the prison is wonderful," said Majid. "We have wanted to start something like this for the women, but we didn't have a way of getting it done."

In an attempt to make the lives of these women and their children better, the PRT is doing everything they can give them the basic necessities of life, and possibly a little more, said Para.

By teaching the women a skill or trade "we are trying to help the women understand that just because they are in prison, they can still be a valued member of society when they are released," she said. "We want the women to know that there is still life outside prison – especially for those with young children who have never known life outside the prison's walls."

## Convoy: Enforcing standards keeps troops safe

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supervision are large, but important, tasks for the drivers and convoy commanders. However there are other responsibilities to consider.

All vehicle occupants must maintain 360-degree security, keeping an eye out for anything that may impede the movement of the convoy. This includes animals and people in the road, slow moving vehicles and speed bumps. But most importantly everyone in the vehicle must maintain watch for potential ambushes by anti-Coalition militia and the presence of IEDs.

With IED incidents on the rise it is important for Coalition troops to do their best to identify when an IED is present and protect themselves in case one is detonated, said Eric, a member of the IED Task Force.

"When you see an IED, that doesn't necessarily mean it's the only one in the area," he said.

When dealing with potential IEDs, it is important to report them to the nearest Explosive Ordnance Disposal team rather than try to handle the situation yourself.

Convoy members also need to ensure their vehicle's ballistic glass windows are up and they are wearing body armor and helmets, said Eric. It's also good idea to wear eye protection whenever you are in a situation where IEDs are a threat.

However, the most important piece of advice both Green and Eric can give to protect lives during a convoy operation is to avoid complacency.

"When you see guys who have been here for eight or nine months, they don't care as much," said Eric.

Although it is extremely difficult to predict the detonation or even

the presence of an IED, there are some signs to watch for.

"When you are on routes you take regularly, take notice of what's normal for that route. If you see an empty roadside stand that is normally manned at 10 o'clock in the morning or the absence of children who are normally present, (take notice)," said Eric.

The trend for many troops is to think that nothing will happen to their convoy since it hasn't occurred during the time they have already spent performing the same mission, he said. But if there is a tendency to be complacent, the warning signs cannot be detected.

If you would like to schedule a comprehensive briefing with the IED Task Force, call DSN 318-231-4624 or if you have access to the SIPR domain visit <http://iedtaskforce.army.smil.mil>.



Courtesy photo

**High explosives, such as these 107mm rockets, can be rigged by the enemy as improvised explosive devices.**

# COMM flight brings season of change

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

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — It's appropriate that the Airmen currently deployed to the 455th Expeditionary Group's Communications Flight arrived here around springtime. The communications transformation that has come over Camp Cunningham since their mid-March arrival has been like the new life that sprouts up and covers the landscape after winter turns into spring.

New telephone and computer wiring is crawling all over the camp, like the ivy on the outfield walls of Chicago's Wrigley Field. That's because the COMM flight has been working non-stop, upgrading the communications network here.

"The entire COMM team is working their tails off," said Air Force Lt. Col. Bob LaBrutta, 455th Expeditionary Services Squadron commander. "They are working daily to enhance our communications network capabilities. New lines are being dropped every day, new computer upgrades are occurring and the overall archaic infrastructure here is being replaced or modified at an astounding rate."

The flight has done a little bit of everything, often tackling issues they wouldn't be confronted with in a fully-staffed shop back at their home bases. Air Force 1st Lt. Keith Strandell, 455th Communications Flight commander, said his unit has maintained and upgraded computers, telephones and radios.

They have done troubleshooting on cameras, fixed television sets, run coaxial cable, laid down phone and network lines, and set up PA systems for distinguished visitors. They even ran cable to an outdoor break area, so the Camp Cunningham community can watch television there.

Everyone in the COMM flight has had plenty of opportunities to "get our hands dirty," said Strandell, from the flight commander right down to the information manager, who admitted she wouldn't be doing the kind of work back home that she's doing here.

"I've done line and cable installs, dug trenches, run telephone lines and network cables, lots of things which I would never have done if not deployed — it's been a good experience," said Air Force Senior Airman Daisy Almacen. "I've learned a lot, and I've worked with great people. They've been so willing to help me out and teach me new things."

Senior Master Sgt. Paul Gorom, 455th COMM flight superintendent, said that from "day one, everyone here has hit the road running and hasn't looked back." He added that the brisk pace is a good thing at a deployed location like Bagram.

"My philosophy is to stay busy and time will go by fast. We're

pretty much constantly on the move, whether we're fixing computer problems, laying new cable or installing antennas," he said.

Judging by the workload, time should be flying by. From trying to keep computers fully functional against the damaging effects of the always-present dust and sand in the air, to trying to keep up with the never-ending call for communications upgrades as the 455th EOG expands or upgrades its facilities, there's always plenty to do.

"We've run telephone and network connectivity to the new buildings, removed old wiring, and buried quite a few cables, which extends their life," he said. Members of the flight can often be seen slugging away at the ground with pick axes, digging trenches for those cables and other communications wires.

He said that removing the old wiring has improved the flight's ability to troubleshoot problems, simply because there's less wire to contend with. He also said that it has helped to spruce up the appearance of the camp.

Like Almacen and Strandell, Gorom talked about the hands-on work that is a part of everyday life in the 455th Communications Flight.

"The hands-on experience is unbelievable. You do what it takes to get the job done," he said.

Gorom said the pace here never slows. When one project is completed, it's time to move on to another, as there are many challenges ahead.

"Since Camp Cunningham is in a constant state of (change), we have to make sure communication is in place when the new owners move into a B-hut or clamshell (large, tent-like structure that houses maintenance facilities)," said Gorom. "We just finished up moving telephone and networking capabilities for the security forces squadron supply guys. Next is an MWR move, which will be a large undertaking because of the amount of phone lines and networked computers involved, and our own relocation. We are also planning on adding key strategic communications closets, connected via fiber, throughout the base to prepare for future growth and further moves."

Strandell said that he is thankful for the opportunity to be a part of Operation Enduring Freedom, working not only with the Air Force, but sister services and other Coalition forces, as well. But it's his communications flight that he's most proud of.

"I've been blessed to work with a great team," he said. "They came in with a "can-do" attitude and pressed full speed ahead. They get the job done, and then ask what else can they do. For the most part, every one of my troops spends a good deal of their time working outside of their normal career field boundaries. They are learning other aspects of COMM and using what they learn to make Camp Cunningham a better place."

## PRT: Coalition forces make improvements in Bamian

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and re-emergence of the Taliban and anti-Coalition militia while reaching out to locals, said Pirie.

Not to mention the fact that Afghanistan is still a combat zone and everywhere the patrols travel in the mountains is "Ambush Alley," he said.

To combat many of these issues, the PRT has joint patrols with local police and works

directly with ministries in the new Afghan government to show the people "everyone has the same aim — make Bamian a safe, successful place to live," said Pirie.

To make Bamian a safe place and encourage democracy, the PRT has been patrolling and working with the locals to help with the upcoming election process, letting the locals know that the Coalition is here to help make life better, he said.

"We feel we can make a difference here,"

said Pirie. "One good man or woman can make a difference. This is a rewarding mission in a place that really needs our assistance."

The attitude of "we can make a difference" is the reason the PRT and the locals of Bamian Province have such a good relationship, he added, and it will help the PRT in the future with their plans to do more for the people and allow them the opportunity to have a better quality of life.

# Honor



*A Marine must possess the highest sense of gallantry in serving the United States of America and embody responsibility to duty above self, including, but not limited to integrity, responsibility, honesty, and tradition.*