

Freedom

August 15, 2004

Watch



**CTF Bronco, ANA work together in Qalat
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***Second class of ANA officers complete CGSC
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Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl

Charge!!!

Afghan competitors demonstrate Nezhah Bazey, a traditional game that consists of spearing a block of wood, to welcome the members of the Ghazni PRT July 26. Members of the PRT were gathered in preparation for the opening of a new bazaar in Ghazni Province.

Contents



Members of the ANA's 1st Kandak, 2nd Bde., are deployed to Zabul Province for stability operations in support of voter registration. Here, an ANA soldier kicks through a piece of wood during physical training at Forward Operating Base Qalat.

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Cover photo by Sgt. Frank Magni

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Freedom Watch

Freedom Watch falls under the supervision of the Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan, and is published weekly.

CFC-A Commander – Lt. Gen. David Barno
Public Affairs Officer – Lt. Col. Susan H. Meisner

Freedom Watch, an Army publication, is published each Sunday by the 17th Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. Printed circulation is 6,000 copies per week.

In accordance with AR 360-1, this Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas.

Contents of the *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

Deadline for submissions is noon local/0730 Zulu each Friday. All submissions are subject to editing by the 17th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Bldg. 425, Room 107, Bagram Air Base. We can be reached at DSN 318-231-3338.

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ANA marks second CGSC graduation

Story and photos by
Maj. William S. Wynn
Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — Sixty Afghan National Army officers from the ranks of captain to colonel graduated from the second class of the Command and General Staff College July 19 in Macrorriyan, Kabul.

The graduates attended the three-month-long course of advanced military officer training, conducted by an instructional cadre from the French Army, to gain critical field grade officer skills. Topics of instruction ranged from military tactics to the military decision-making process, to current theories of leadership principals.

Afghanistan has been without a professional army for over two decades, said Gen. Bismullah Khan, Ministry of Defense chief of general staff. Now, through the efforts of the Coalition and courses such as CGSC, Afghanistan once again has a national army that is strong and professional. Khan also charged the CGSC graduates with the responsibility to pass on their newly-gained skills to their subordinates who make up the ranks of the ANA.

“The instruction received at CGSC will enable me to be a more effective brigade commander or corps staff officer,” said ANA Col. Abdul Haq, from the Kapisa Province.

The first CGSC class began in January



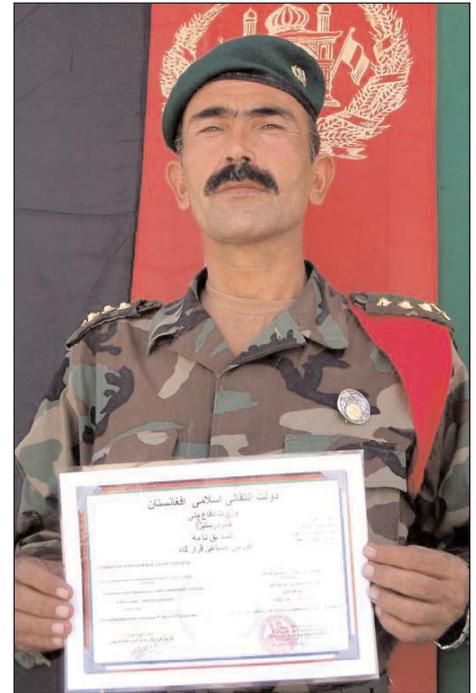
2004. It also consisted of 60 officers.

The next class is scheduled to begin this month. The officers to attend this course have already been selected, following completion of a competitive examination administered by the French elements of Operational Training Detachment 8 of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix.

The French Army trains Afghan officers at all levels, from assisting the Afghan instructors of the Officer Training Brigade to directly training the staff officers at the CGSC.

The third CGSC class will find Afghan officers serving as the instructors, supported by French officers. Future courses will be taught entirely by ANA officers.

CGSC graduates will be assigned to command and staff positions throughout the ANA Regional Commands.



Top: French Army Commandant (Maj.) Jean-Pierre Ancelet, CGSC professor, salutes Afghan National Army Maj. Naser-Allah, a CGSC student from the Logar Province, before presenting Naser-Allah's diploma.

Above: Afghan National Army Col. Gh. Mohieudin Ghor, a CGSC student from the Ghor Province, was selected as the CGSC's Honor Graduate.

Left: French Army Lt. Col. Jerone Cario, CGSC deputy commandant, presents Afghan National Army Col. Abdul Haq his CGSC diploma.



Coalition security aides in voter registration

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

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — As the date for the Afghan presidential election draws closer, voter registration is making its final push in southern Afghanistan. Throughout the country, more than eight of the 10 million eligible citizens have already registered, 40 percent being women. Polling day is currently scheduled for Oct. 9.

What is being hailed as a great success for the entire country, was still in doubt not more than a few months ago in the southern region of the country, said Dan Kelly, United Nations regional security officer for voter registration.

“They were going to close this place down two months ago,” said Kelly. “There was a lot of doubt whether the south of the country was stable enough to safely register the citizens.”

Kelly said security is the primary concern for his organization.

“This process has to be done in a secure environment or it can easily lose its legitimacy,” he said.

When registration began in May, Kelly and the remainder of the Joint Electoral Management Body needed assistance in terms of security. They got it from the Afghan National Police and through coordination with Coalition forces.

“It is a very difficult balance, because we couldn’t use Coalition forces to take our teams out to register the voters, but they

were the key to creating the conditions for successful registration,” said Peter Murphy, JEMB southern region election coordinator.

Capt. Todd Schmidt, special assistant to the Combined Task Force Bronco commander, said when he and his unit began operations in Afghanistan, their focus was assisting with the elections.

“We said from the very beginning that we are here to support the (national) government of Afghanistan in any way we can,” he said.

The key for not only the JEMB, but also Coalition forces was communication and synchronization to focus on the areas that needed the most security.

“We synchronize our efforts with the JEMB,” said Schmidt. “We conduct operations in areas prior to registration teams moving in.”

“Coalition forces would clear the area where registration teams wanted to go,” said Kelly. “After a while, we found just by the military showing up the bad guys would normally take off.”

He said it also provided peace-of-mind for his teams that many times feared for their safety.

Even with the presence of ANP with the registration teams, there was still fear because of anti-Coalition propaganda efforts being conducted, in attempts to disrupt the election process and sow seeds of doubt in the minds of the populace, said Kelly.

“A lot of what my (registration) teams were being told just wasn’t true,” he said. “Many lives were being threatened just for assisting in the election process.”

But even with the best efforts of the anti-Coalition militants, voter registration has proceeded and is gaining popularity, said Kelly.



Afghan women register to vote at the Kandahar city voter registration center. To date, more than eight million people have registered to vote throughout Afghanistan. Forty percent of registered voters are women.

Rona, a voter registration supervisor in Kandahar city, said her location has never been disturbed.

While she and her team register 200-300 women a day, she said the concept of the election is becoming very popular to the Afghan people.

“We are worried about the future of Afghanistan, so voting is very important to many of us,” said Rona. “We are working very hard not only to bring elections, but reconstruct Afghanistan. But we need Coalition forces here to help us.”

Through the work of people like Rona, more than 1.2 million people have registered in the Kandahar area.

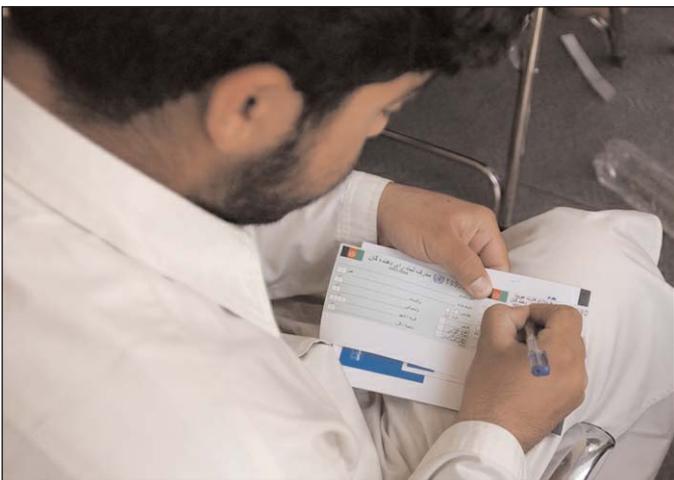
“The number of people that have registered in Kandahar city goes to illustrate how passionate the Afghans are about these elections,” said Murphy. “Some are traveling days into the city to register, because we haven’t made it to their villages yet.”

Murphy said even with the few weeks left to go, the voter registration process in southern Afghanistan has been a huge success.

“We are very happy with our numbers so far,” he said. “But there was no way this would have happened without the Afghan National Police and Coalition forces.”

JEMB’s success in elections is only going to illustrate the success the Coalition forces are having in the south, in terms of providing security, said Schmidt.

“Our original mission was to ‘provide enduring security,’ ” he said. “The success of the elections will be a large part of our report card. If we stay on the road we are on now, the elections will be a resounding success.”



An Afghan man fills out a voter registration card at the UNAMA headquarters in Kandahar city. This Afghan man will soon work in centers in southern Afghanistan registering voters.

Coalition forces defend Paktika Province

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

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Explosions shattered the still of the night as Coalition aircraft massed their considerable firepower on their target — an uninhabited area on a mountainside in southeastern Afghanistan.

Displays of firepower such as this are used to deter anti-Coalition activity in the region.

“We’re here to show the people of Afghanistan that we mean business, that we want a secure and safe Afghanistan just like they do. Not only for elections, but for trade, for prosperity, for growth,” said Capt. Drew White, 27th Engineer Battalion (Combat) (Airborne) battle captain.

Coalition forces in the area are specially equipped to provide security in the region that rests along the Pakistan border.

“...We provide the commander a lot of different options,” said White. “Not only can we secure ourselves, we can secure this area of the border. We can secure our local towns. We can react to help out other friendly forces in the area, if necessary.”

The gunfire from the aircraft destroyed the objective. Displays like this reinforce to both the enemy and the local population the Coalition’s resolve to establish this

secure environment.

“We’re obviously going to do everything we can to make sure we help the Afghan people in creating a safe, secure environment for elections, for their government, for the stability of Afghanistan in general,” said White.

These demonstrations reinforce to the local population the Coalition goal of freeing the population from the oppression they experienced under the Taliban rule.

“We have to help the people,” said Abdul Kadirzada, an American citizen working as an interpreter with Coalition forces in the area. “Save them from those who are trying to impose their dark vision on the people of Afghanistan.”

Understanding the importance of their role in the Global War on Terrorism and seeing the daily progress being made keeps the forces motivated to stay in the fight.

“The number one goal is to stop the spread of terrorism around the world,” said White. “To get the bad guys. In the



Pfc. Chris Stump

Staff Sgt. Erick Alcantara, Co. B, 27th Eng. Bn., fires an AT-4 during a show of force. These displays show Coalition capabilities and resolve to secure the area.

big scheme of things, that’s what we’re here for. I hope in some way to help in that matter.”

The Coalition forces in the area will stay alert and continue to show their capabilities, said White.

“The show of force we had here the other night just shows what we are capable of here in our small area,” he said. “We’re obviously going to do everything we can to make our area safe, defending not only ourselves and our local area, but also to reach out and touch the enemy if the commander requires us to.”

Enduring Voices

If you could go anywhere with the military, where would it be?



Spc. Shaun Miller
58th MP Co.
“Fort Campbell because it’s close to home.”



Marine Lance Cpl. Corlione Almond
3rd Bn., 6th Marines
“Africa - I’ve been there and it’s a pretty nice place to be.”



Navy Lt. Mike Theoret
VAQ-134
“I’d like to go anywhere in Europe to experience European culture.”



Sgt. Maj. Samuel R. Jackson
Base Operations Safety
“Egypt - I only have a year left and it’s something I’ve wanted to do for a while.”

Roads promote stronger infrastructure

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

GHAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Members of the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team and the local government are looking at long-term improvements to be made in their region, adding to the redevelopment taking place throughout Afghanistan.

One of those projects with long-term benefits is improvements to roads in the area. By improving the roads of Ghazni, they have tackled two issues – the landscape and the economy.

“We’ve been able to pave about five kilometers of road,” said Lt. Col. Steven J. Ford, Ghazni PRT commander.

Included in these five kilometers are Kandahar Bus Station Road, which had its official opening July 29, and Hospital Road. Both of these streets run along bustling business districts, and provide convenient passage to market areas.

“We spent around \$300,000 on Hospital Road,” said Allen Nugent, Ghazni PRT’s U.S. Agency for International



Development representative.

The funding for each of the roads came from USAID, which allocates money to certain types of development projects.

“Both Hospital Road and Kandahar Bus Station Road connect to Ring Road,” said Nugent. This makes them an economic asset to Ghazni city, which is one of the largest cities in Afghanistan. Ring Road links major hubs of Afghanistan, like Kabul and Khandahar, providing a developed route for economic growth.

Already, business establishments are starting to sprout up along the new roads, from fabric stands to fresh produce, as entrepreneurs are looking to profit from the influx of passersby.

“We really hope these projects assist with economic development,” said Nugent.

But the improvements don’t stop with downtown Ghazni city. Bazaars and other establishments have begun to open in areas anticipating future projects.

“We’re also looking at ways to link the outlying areas of Ghazni to Ring Road,” said Nugent. Another project in the design phase is a road from Ghazni to Gardez, an important trade route for the merchants of both areas.

“This project is going to be planned and completed by several contractors,” he said. “This will help bring even more money to the Afghan people.”

While the PRT and agencies like USAID are providing the funding for the roads themselves, Ghazni’s provincial government is making other improvements right along with them.



Top: Improvements are still being made along Hospital Road, allowing the commercial area of Ghazni to expand.

Above: This sign marks the entrance to Kandahar Bus Station Road, the newest addition to the Ghazni road system.

“These roads have curbs, sidewalks and covered drains,” said Nugent. These improvements were made by the provincial government itself, hoping to further improve the living conditions and infrastructure in Ghazni.

“They’ve even installed streetlights along the roads,” said Maj. Scott C. Ford, Ghazni Civil Military Operations Center commander. “When you drive through here at night, it looks almost like an American city.”

With the combined efforts of the PRT and the Afghan government, it’s only a matter of time before Ghazni finds itself classified as a center of commerce for Afghanistan, said the PRT commander.

“These roads are presenting an immediate ripple effect,” he said. “As soon as we have the ground-breaking for a road, there is an immediate economic impact.”



Among the road improvements taking place in Ghazni, there are also repairs being made to the bridges in the area.

Afghans recognize Coalition efforts

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

LAGHMAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — For as long as many Afghans can remember, their country has been in a state of war — from the Soviet invasion to civil wars, to the Taliban reign, and most recently, the Coalition's fight against terrorism.

Through the many years of turmoil, the country has gone through various changes, both social and physical, leaving the pre-Soviet Afghanistan something only found in memories.

Now, the country is looking to expand past the violence and become a productive, self-sufficient nation. This is not something that will happen overnight, but over time with the combined hard work of Afghan nationals and the Coalition.

The Coalition has been in Afghanistan for nearly three years and the people are realizing the improvements being made in their war-stricken nation.

"Some people are still scared that the same thing will happen as before," said Fahima, head of the emergency obstetrics

center in Alingar village. "But they still welcome the Coalition in hopes of a better life."

While life in Afghanistan has grown steadily better since the Coalition began helping the Afghan people rebuild, there is still much more that needs to be done, said Shokria Anwari, an Afghan-American registered nurse working as an interpreter with World Wide Language Resource.

"One of the biggest problems the people of Afghanistan face is a lack of proper medical care," she said. "The people of Afghanistan are dying mostly from everyday ailments that we don't have to worry about."

Since pharmacies aren't readily available to the people of every village, the Coalition goes to different villages around the country providing medical care to all men, women and children, as well as their livestock, said Col. Steve Jones, Task Force Victory command surgeon.

When the Coalition goes into the villages to treat the villagers, the reaction of the people varies drastically.

"When the Coalition first came to the village, people were afraid of what they might do because of what has happened in the past," said Said Karim, an Alingar village elder. "But now we have worked with them on many small projects in the village and the people are starting to learn to trust them."

Many villages throughout Afghanistan have small medical clinics, but (generally) the people working at them are not formally trained and there usually isn't enough medication to help everyone in the village.

"It is a big help when the Americans come to the village to help the people," said Fahima. "I am only



Shokria Anwari (right), an Afghan-American interpreter and RN in the United States, assists the medical staff with seeing patients in Alingar village.

able to treat them for minor illnesses and can only give a three- to five-day supply of medication, even though some of them need much more."

In many villages across Afghanistan, the sick must travel to other villages and larger towns to go to a hospital, said Baigam, a Pariana villager.

"The nearest hospital to (Pariana) village is in Laghman or Jalalabad," he said. "It can sometimes take several days to get there."

Because traveling to the hospital can take so long, the families need to make sure they have food and water for the trip, as well as a reliable mode of transportation, which can cost more than most Afghan families have.

"The cost of traveling is much more than the people of the village can afford," said Mohamed Saa Ber, an Alingar village elder. "Most men work in the field and make very little money to care for their families."

The Coalition makes being able to be seen possible and easy for the villagers.

"When the cooperative medical assistance missions are planned, they are set up in a way that makes getting to the clinic easy for both the people and their animals," said Jones.

Each CMA takes weeks of coordination with the local villages, he said.

"Before going to the villages we first have to talk with the village elders to find out what is needed and how we can best help the village," he said.

By working with the people of the villages, more people are able to be treated, said Jones. This means more people will have the chance at happier, healthier lives, and shows them there is hope for a better country.



Maj. Richard Chadek, TF Victory, listens to Qulstan's lungs at a CMA in Pariana village July 23.

ANA kandak maneuvers with CTF Bronco

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

QALAT, Afghanistan — As Combined Task Force Bronco continues its mission to stabilize Regional Command South for the presidential election, it looked to the Afghan National Army to lead the charge into Zabul province.

During the mission, the 1st Kandak (Battalion), 2nd Brigade of the ANA assumed command and control of stabilization and presence efforts — a move that signifies the remarkable growth the organization has undergone in a short amount of time.

As the kandak moved out from their firebase in Qalat into Speenbodak, Badghis and Shabarughan districts, they traded their normal operational support role for running command and control of the entire mission.

The mission combined the 1st Kandak, 2nd Bde., with elements from the U.S. Army's 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, to provide stability for voter registration.

"In past missions the (kandak) would attach companies to Coalition units," said Sgt. Maj. Stephen Guion, embedded



Members of 1st Kandak, 2nd Bde., depart on a dismounted patrol through Qalat city.

training team noncommissioned officer in charge. "This is the first mission (where) our battalion headquarters assumed command and control for the entire mission."

Working with Combined Task Force Bronco, the kandak also participated in its

first air assault operation.

Based out of Pole-e-Charki, 1st Kandak is one of the first infantry units established under the Central Corps of the ANA. Made up of all the ethnic groups from Afghanistan, soldiers in the ANA enlist much like U.S. service members.

In their two-and-a-half-year history, they have deployed eight times in support of a variety of missions, leaving their families and homes.

The most notable of their deployments were to Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif, where they served as peacekeepers to settle tribal disputes.

Guion said the unit grows and learns from each of the missions they participate in, but their mission in Zabul is where he saw a lot of service and support elements become relevant to the unit's mission.

"They have really come a long way in the time we have worked with them," said Guion. The ETT from the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, has been working with 1st Kandak for 10 months and has helped lay the groundwork to get them to where they are today.

See Kandak, Page 14

Training ANA enhances mission for ETT

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

QALAT, Afghanistan — As a member of an embedded training team, you live, eat, sleep and train with the Soldiers of the Afghan National Army, resulting in a special bond and relationship that expands beyond cultural and national boundaries.



1st Lt. Andrew Booth, company-level mentor for the ANA's 1st Kandak ETT, discusses the route of a dismounted patrol with the 3rd Co. commander just outside Qalat city.

One such ETT from the Vermont National Guard is finishing a 10-month deployment with 1st Kandak (Battalion), 2nd Brigade ANA — a rotation that showed them the many different facets of a developing army.

The 15-man team from 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) was assigned to Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix and attached to 1st Kandak, 2nd Bde. Their primary mission was to mentor and advise the ANA unit as they conducted day-to-day operations.

Sgt. Maj. Stephen Guion, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 1st Kandak ETT, said there is a common misconception regarding the exact mission of the ETT.

"We aren't here just

to train, but we mentor and advise the leadership of the battalions and company," he said. "Our task is to show them the military decision-making process."

The team mentors the unit by assigning a U.S. military officer and NCO to each company. They also assign personnel to each of the functional areas on the battalion staff, like administration, training and supply.

"We focus on the areas that will prepare them for future operations and training," said Guion. The challenge for the ETT is the short amount of time the ANA has been in existence, he said. "They have a very steep learning curve."

"Many of the leaders are assessed in basic training and immediately sent to the NCO or officer school," said Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Barr, ETT company-level mentor. "Imagine coming straight into the Army after initial training and being a squad leader. They are very bright individuals, but they need experience to be successful."

See Training, Page 14

MP platoon prepared to respond

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Fearing
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — A fog of dust rolled in off the Helmand Desert as members of the 25th Military Police Company queued up their high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles for an early morning mission. Third Platoon is the only 25th MP Co. platoon in southern Afghanistan. They venture out from Kandahar Airfield and set up vehicle control points north of Kandahar city.

“We practically live in these vehicles,” said Staff Sgt. Robert Blanchard, while checking a digital map to verify his team’s position.

On this day’s mission, 1st Lt. Noel Bergeron, 3rd Platoon leader, coordinated with General Gul Pawani, Kandahar police chief, on the vehicle control point mission.

“We’re working together with the Afghan National Police,” he said. Afghans play key roles in these missions. Joining the MPs for the operation were two interpreters, to assist in communication with the local populace, and two Afghan policemen, to provide local authority.

While VCPs are an important part of creating a secure and stable Afghanistan, these MPs play a much larger role in the operations of Combined Task Force Bronco. The MPs augment security forces in and around Kandahar city for 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division (Light), which heads up Combined Task Force Bronco.

Blanchard described working area security patrols, convoy security, route reconnais-

sance missions, and, as with the present mission, vehicle control points. All tasks they’ve accomplished in the last few months.

“We’re on these missions just about every day,” he said. They also work intelligence operations and VIP security details.

Equipped with an array of weapons and special up-armored HMMWVs, the military police are prepared to respond quickly to attacks and hostile situations.

It is with this equipment that these MPs continue to train. They train so that the use of the equipment and their actions are second nature to them.

“We trained with battle drills, talking and going through each situation. We’ve trained hard,” said Blanchard. “Each one of us,” he said, pausing to look at the two other MPs in the vehicle, “can do any other team member’s job. That’s the way we train.”

Upon arriving at the designated point, the MPs were ready within minutes to run the VCP. Like a well-oiled machine, each Soldier moved into place. Cots were set up vertically to mark off a private area for searching the Afghan women. This was to ensure cultural sensitivities were being met. All around, security was up, scanning the area.

Vehicles were stopped by the Afghan police and MPs, and occupants were checked to ensure contraband wasn’t being brought into Kandahar. The VCP is effective and efficient as an unannounced spot check.

Sgt. Jayde Fry said she looks for anything suspicious when conducting a VCP. It’s all part of the effort to help make Kandahar safe.

Fry led the female search element. She provided training to two female Soldiers from the 325th



1st Lt. Noel Bergeron, 3rd Plt., 25th MP Co., talks with Afghan National Police officers at the ANP compound in Kandahar city.

Forward Support Battalion who had been tasked to assist with this mission.

“Be thorough. Don’t be squeamish about searching,” she told them as she demonstrated search techniques. Fry understands the importance of thorough searches. “We know what we have to do and do it. We’re thorough so we’ll be safe.”

As the VCP wrapped up, the MPs prepared to convoy back to the city and on to the base. Sgt. Donovan McManus commented on the MPs’ mission in Afghanistan, saying, “It’s what we do and what we trained to do.”



An Afghan man is searched by military policemen of the 25th MP Co.



Military police HMMWVs are lined up in preparation for a security patrol outside Kandahar Airfield.

'Total Force' effort keeps Bagram supplied

Story and photo by Air Force
Master Sgt. Andrew Gates
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Every day, between 50 and 100 tons of equipment and supplies come into Bagram Air Base, flown in by a constant stream of cargo aircraft during all hours of the day and night.

Since this is a combat environment, getting the aircraft down, unloaded quickly and off the ground again is extremely important. Keeping that logistical pipeline running smoothly and efficiently is the responsibility of the men and women of the Air Terminal Operations Center here.

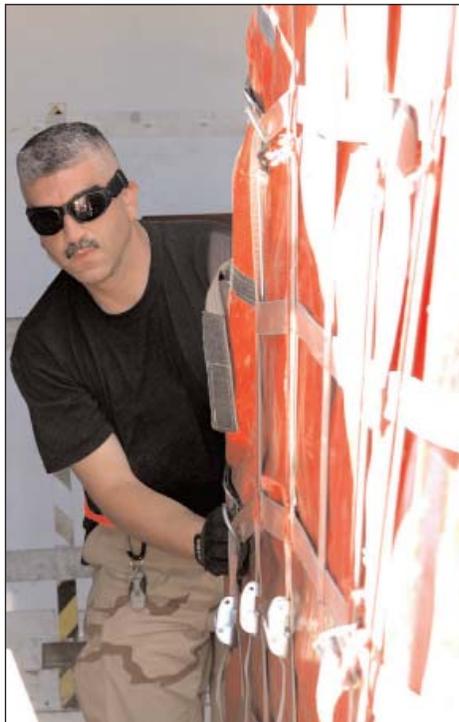
"We do all the aircraft load planning, passenger terminal operations, logistics, loading and unloading that happens at a regular airport — except at a much higher pace," said Air Force Master Sgt. Janet Coomes, 455th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron. Coomes was activated from the 67th Aerial Port Squadron, Air Force Reserve, Hill Air Force Base, Utah.

In fact, the entire ATOC is made up of members of the Guard and Reserve — all 28 team members. Six of them come from Coomes' outfit and two more are reservists from the 69th Aerial Port Squadron, Maryland. The remaining members of the team are from the 109th Aerial Port Flight, a New York Air National Guard unit from Stratton Air National Guard Base.

This total force effort is invaluable to keeping Bagram supplied. The ATOC operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

"I don't think we have had a day when we didn't have aircraft in," said Air Force Master Sgt. Mark Mann, 455th ELRS, who is here from the 109th APF. "We have to keep aircraft moving in and out quickly because we have a limited number of aircraft spaces on the ramp — so we have a pretty high tempo here."

The high operations tempo sometimes requires the team to perform an engine-running offload — a challenging maneuver where the airplane parks, keeps the engines running while the logisticians remove the cargo and upload any new cargo, and the aircraft immediately takes off. This speeds up the process and minimizes the time an aircraft spends on the ground, said Coomes.



Air Force Master Sgt. Mark Mann, 455th ELRS, pushes a pallet of mail from an 727 cargo hold onto a 25,000-pound loader.

Loading and offloading cargo takes up much of the day. The most common aircraft are C-130s and C-17s, with an occasional C-141.

"However, our favorite aircraft is the DHL Worldwide Express (727)," said Coomes. "That one brings in the mail and food, so we know people appreciate the cargo coming in."

To offload the 727, the team uses the Next Generation Small Loader, nicknamed the NGSL. The loader, which carries 25,000 pounds, is the only one that can rise the 18 feet to the L-1011's cargo deck. For the rest of the aircraft, the team can either use the NGSL or any of the other loaders.

"We prefer the NGSL because it has a roller system that automatically moves the pallets to the back of the loader," said Mann. "The rest of the loaders you have to physically push the pallet all the way onto the equipment."

It takes the team from half an hour to an hour to unload an aircraft, depending on exactly what is aboard.

"When you have rolling stock, it takes a little less time, because you can drive the equipment off. We have this process down to an exact science, so when we have more than one aircraft on the ramp,

we can break into three-person teams to get the job done quicker."

One of the oddest pieces of cargo the team recently off-loaded was the Burger King van for AAFES. "That took a lot of time because it was somewhat awkward," said Coomes. "We had to use a lot of material to shore the van up as we stair-stepped it off the aircraft."

Besides cargo, the logisticians also move more than 9,000 passengers in and out of the Bagram area each month. Although the people can "self-load" onto an aircraft, "cargo doesn't talk back," joked Mann.

With the amount of traffic on the flight line, the large numbers of inbound and outgoing aircraft and large numbers of passengers moving into and out of the area, safety is extremely important while on the flight line. For example, personnel can not travel on an aircraft that is transporting ammunition or hazardous material, said Coomes.

Safety is also a major concern during nighttime operations, because much of the activity must be done in the dark. "There have been some nights when you can't see your hand in front of your face," said Mann. "We have a lot of briefings on safety practices, and we make sure that all the teams stay in constant communication. Everyone on the team also stays in contact with each other, and the team chief keeps track of everyone."

Both Coomes and Mann have a lot of pride in what they are doing and how they are impacting the on-going operations against terrorists in Afghanistan.

"This is a big change from the stereotypical one weekend a month and two weeks a year," said Mann. "This isn't the typical 9 to 5 job — we have all kinds of great challenges."

This feeling pervades through the entire deployed team from New York — all of whom volunteered for the year-long activation. The 22-person Guard team spent four months at Dover AFB, Del., deployed to Bagram for four months, and then will return to Dover for the final four months of their activation.

"This is also a great opportunity to get out and see new locations," said Coomes. "I get a great deal of satisfaction knowing that I am helping another country become safer and give the people the opportunity to enjoy a number of those freedoms we have in the United States."

EOD helps clear Afghanistan of ordnance

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

JALALABAD, Afghanistan — Trained to recognize more than 100,000 pieces of ordnance, explosive ordnance disposal specialists are playing a vital role here in the reduction of caches and other types of ordnance, such as improvised explosive devices.

“Our primary mission here is IEDs,” said Sgt. 1st Class Mark D. Simeroth, 754th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), team leader. His team also assesses numerous caches found throughout Afghanistan.

“Our main mission is disrupting many of the IEDs, cleaning up after they go off and collecting intel on the devices. But we also assist in helping the (Jalalabad Provincial Reconstruction Team) assess caches, providing an important asset to their mission,” he said.

While the unit handles many ordnance issues in the area, their primary mission is to gather information on the tactics, techniques and procedures the enemy is using with IEDs, he said.

“We stay busy here,” said Simeroth. “There’s been 14 or 15 (IEDs) in the past two weeks.

“There’s a real heavy IED threat here. With all the land mines and caches, it’s very easy for someone to find the materials to make an IED.”

The information his team collects provides many people who will deploy in the future an understanding of what they’re up against, he said.

The two-man EOD team collects information on everything from the type of explosive used, to how it was, or was going to be set off, said Pfc. Matthew Humphrey, 754th Ord. Co. (EOD).

Collecting information on IEDs is only part of their job, though. Simeroth and Humphrey spend much of their time with the PRT on convoy operations, meeting with local Afghan Militia Force leaders and assessing caches that are being turned over.

Although a secondary mission, assessing caches and deciding how best to dispose of them is a very important part of their role in assisting the PRT, said Simeroth.

Assessing caches involves inventorying all the ordnance, as well as determining what it will take to destroy the cache, he said.

With the limited manpower he has, Simeroth often suggests that Halo Trust take over the cache’s destruction. Halo

Trust is a non-profit, civilian organization that plays a large part in destroying ordnance from caches throughout the country.

No matter who gets rid of the caches, the end result is the same, said Simeroth.

“We’re getting rid of it so it can’t be used against us,” he said.

It also benefits the local community.

“These people want your help because they know the caches can be a threat to them,” said Humphrey.

Eliminating as much ordnance as possible is good for everyone, said Simeroth, who also said EOD is getting used more than ever before due to the type of conflict and the weapons available to the enemy.

“People never used to know who EOD really was until in the past few years,” he said. “People are now interested and now understand how important we are in a place like this.”

The work the EOD team does in conjunction with the PRT makes the whole area much safer for everyone.

“It’s important that we make it safer for the troops and the people by taking away the caches and IEDs,” said Humphrey. “It’s a good feeling knowing the people here want your help.”



Sgt. 1st Class Mark Simeroth, 754th Ord. Co. (EOD), assesses a cache that will be turned over to Halo Trust, a non-profit, civilian organization that plays a large part in clearing land mines and unexploded ordnance in Afghanistan.

Ghazni PRT continues to support local education

Story and photos by
Maj. Scott C. Ford
Ghazni Civil Military Operations Center

GHAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Members of the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team delivered a large quantity of school supplies to village elders of the Nawabad region of Ghazni.

Lt. Col. Steven J. Ford, the PRT commander, accompanied by representatives of the PRT's Civil Military Operations Center and Civil Affairs Team-Alpha, met with the elders of the area to present a truckload of school supplies that would benefit approximately 1,500 students. They also delivered desks to support the Bajaul school.

This delivery continues to show the citizens of Ghazni Province that their government and the Coalition forces represented by the PRT is actively supporting reconstruction efforts and bringing humanitarian assistance to those areas that desperately need assistance.

"If the Ministry of Education has a warehouse full of books or supplies, or we have a lot of school supplies on hand, it does the children no good. We need to get this stuff out to where it is needed," said Sgt. Maurice Allen, a U.S. Army reservist working for the CMOC and an assistant principal with the Baltimore City School System.

This donation demonstrates the PRT's continued support to the ongoing efforts of the Afghan government to emphasize education.

Ford said he felt it was a good experience to meet the local elders because it shows

the people that there is a strong bond between the PRT and the elders. Working closely with their local national colleagues, the PRT personnel have met with local shuras, or organizations, elders and district leaders and continue to seek out opportunities for more visits and other interactions.

Most of the schools in the area have extremely limited resources and are unable to provide the basic supplies necessary to properly study in school. This delivery is one of many made by the PRT to support the national education initiative with the desire to continue with as many more as they can until the school year ends or they run out of supplies.

Spc. Kelly Spann, a civil affairs specialist, saw firsthand the benefits that the delivery of school supplies has on the local population.

"When we first got here, the kids would just stare at us, but now when they see us, they ... wave and smile because we were probably at their school and gave them stuff to help them learn. That impression will stick with them for a long time and for a few minutes worth of work, we will affect someone for their whole life," she said.



Coalition Soldiers work with the Ghazni PRT to distribute school supplies to the Bajaul High School in the Nawabad area of Ghazni city.

Russell, an interpreter who has worked with the U.S. military since the PRT arrived in Ghazni, has also seen the difference.

"I like what they are doing for the people of Afghanistan. When people see the Americans doing this, they know they are here to help," he said.

In addition to the civil affairs Soldiers, members of the Minnesota National Guard assigned to the PRT, Soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division (Light) Division Artillery, and Marines from 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, worked together to deliver the school items.

Later, following this meeting and delivery, Ford met with two members of the Constitutional Loya-Jurga, Fatima Mushtaq and Dr. Jamal. The Loya-Jurga is a prominent group within the province that works with the PRT and the provincial government to make improvements throughout the region. During this meeting, they discussed other ways the PRT can continue to support the reconstruction and humanitarian efforts in the area. Ford also presented Mushtaq with a computer system and digital camera for use by the women's council, which meets with PRT representatives on a regular basis.

The PRT had its grand opening in March, but has been operating in Ghazni Province since January.



Bajaul High School has approximately 1,500 students who benefit from donations made by the Ghazni PRT. The PRT donates school supplies, books and desks to schools throughout the province.

Training, 'SANDI' prevent mine accidents

Safeguarding the Coalition

Story by Pfc. Chris Stump
17th Public Affairs Detachment

AFGHANISTAN — In a country with more than seven million mines unaccounted for, Coalition forces need to be especially cautious in where they travel and know what to do if they find themselves in a hazardous area.

Troops also need to be aware of the unexploded ordnance that litters the countryside of Afghanistan and what the procedures are if they encounter these explosives.

The number one thing personnel can do to avoid injury, or a dangerous situation, is to stay away from areas marked as containing ordnance, said Australian army Maj. Paul Mason, Mine Action Center officer in charge.

But if someone ends up in an area that isn't safe, they will likely make it out safely if they stay calm and remember what they learned about mines and UXOs during their pre-deployment training, he said.

SANDI

Likely the most important term to remember about mine awareness is the acronym SANDI.

Used properly, personnel who find themselves in a likely minefield can use SANDI to help extricate themselves and their group, said Sgt. 1st Class Wesley Martinsen, Company A, 367th Engineer Battalion, operations non commissioned officer in charge.

Stop

Stop is the first part of SANDI and personnel should do exactly that as soon as they suspect they may be in a mined area. Even though they may have made it well into a minefield, one more step may be to a mine, he said.

"Don't move your feet," said Mason. The area the feet are on is the only area a person knows to be safe.

"If there are others in the group, call out for them to stop," he said.

Natural voice communication should be

the only communication used when in a suspected mine field, he said. Many mines in use can be detonated by the signal from radios.

Assess

Once movement has been halted, the second thing to do is assess the situation. When assessing, personnel need to be looking for obvious signs of a mine, such as prongs or other parts of the mine.

Note

After assessing, personnel should note the location of the mine and mark it, said Mason. Use whatever materials are available to mark the area and then begin the fourth stage of SANDI.



Courtesy photo

The PMN-2 is one of the most common mines found in Afghanistan. The PMN-2 is an anti-personnel mine that was produced by the former Soviet Union. Countless mines of this type are still emplaced throughout Afghanistan.

Drawback

When executing an exit from a minefield, personnel should retreat in generally the same direction they went in, said Mason.

"They shouldn't just walk out, though," he said.

"They should bend down and begin probing closest to their feet," said Mason. Starting close to the feet and probing outward will give the person enough room to kneel, then to lie down and probe.

But not everyone who finds themselves in minefields are engineers who carry mine probes with them, he said. Instead they must improvise.

"They should probe with whatever they have on them, possibly a bayonet (or sim-

ilar object)," said Mason.

Probing should be done in one-inch increments, both from side-to-side and forward.

Although tedious, this is the safest method for minefield self-extraction, he said.

If a mine is encountered, it should be marked, but otherwise not touched, said Mason.

"There are qualified mine disposal experts to take care of mines," he said.

Inform

Once the task of avoiding mines and getting out of the minefield is accomplished, the fifth part of SANDI, inform, should be implemented, said Martinsen.

Upon extracting from a minefield, personnel should inform their chain of command of the location of the field so it may be properly marked and possibly demined, he said.

Avoiding Minefields

Although SANDI will help someone get out of a minefield, the best way to stay safe with mines is to not go near them, said Martinsen.

"Soldiers should maintain situational awareness," he said. "Most minefields are marked and people just need to pay attention to where they are."

In fact, to help personnel in distinguishing minefields, the Mine Action Center has maps of most of Afghanistan with all known minefields properly marked, said Mason. The maps can be picked up at the center or on the

Combined Joint Task Force-76 secure Internet site.

Sometimes all the proper planning, maps and awareness still aren't enough and people may find themselves in a mined area, said Martinsen. So, it's very important personnel receive adequate training prior to arriving in an area like Afghanistan.

"Proper training before (and during) deployments is also key," said Martinsen. "If you give the proper training, you save lives."

Leaders should continue to review this training with their Soldiers to ensure it stays fresh in their minds. Especially important is briefing mine awareness before departing on missions or convoys around mined areas.

Kandak: ANA conducts Qalat stability operations

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“They never lacked in soldier skills,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Barr, ETT company-level mentor. “It was the organization we had to work on in our time here.”

“When we first arrived here, they weren’t using their functional areas like administration, training and supply in the right way,” said Guion.

If a truck went down eight months ago, said 1st Lt. Andrew Booth, ETT company-level mentor, the company commander would take the problem to the battalion commander to solve it. Now they will take the problem through the proper channels so their leadership can focus on their roles.

“Their biggest accomplishment is knowing and establishing the lanes each of them work from,” said Booth. “From battalion commander to team leader, each knows the job they have to do.”

This concept was put to the test in Qalat, where much of their organizational skills had to be used in planning and executing the mission. The mission in Qalat was also the first time the kandak established its own dining facility to feed the troops within the firebase.

“This mission tied together so many concepts they have been working on,” said Guion. “The primary challenge with this mission was the level of planning involved.”

By assuming command and control, the kandak also had to plan troop movements, as well as forecast supply needs and arrange for resupply in the field.

“They had to forecast for how much medicine, food, water, ammunition, fuel and repair parts they would need on this mission,” said Guion. “Basically think long range.”

He said the battalion and company staffs already use this long-range thinking by developing training schedules and maintaining supply records in garrison.



Sgt. Frank Magni

An ANA soldier provides overwatch above a vehicle checkpoint outside the city of Qalat.

“From organization maintenance to communication, it has all come together for them during this mission,” he said.

The kandak’s commander, ANA Lt. Col. Nezamuddin Choopan, said he and his staff have been very successful during their recent mission, and failure was not an option for his unit.

“The future of the ANA is tied very closely to successful elections,” he said. “If the elections fail, then the government has a chance to fail and eventually our army (will fail).”

When the unit returns from this mission they will remain in Qalat for a few more months to continue their role in stabilizing the region for the upcoming presidential election. Choopan said his troops are very honored to be a part of the election process.

Last year the ANA expanded from seven to 12,000 troops with the eventual goal of 70,000 in the distant future. Using the lessons learned from the pioneers of the 1st Kandak, the ANA is growing into a self-sufficient organization able to lead Afghanistan in the future.

Training: ETT advises and mentors ANA during missions

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Guion said their development has reached a point where they are self-sufficient.

“They can run qualification ranges, maintain their fleet of trucks and secure a perimeter,” he said. “They have also shown they are very proficient in security, presence and combat patrols.”

As one of the most deployed kandaks in the ANA, 1st Kandak, 2nd Bde., is quickly gaining experience with each deployment and mission, said Barr. They also interact with the locals like no other unit in the Coalition can.

“When these soldiers go into the community, they are showing the people how much things are progressing in Afghanistan,” he said. “When they enter a town, the people respond to them differently.”

Although the unit has been successful in the traditional role of security, Barr

said the ANA interaction in the communities also supports the mission of recruiting.

“They are the best-selling tool to joining the ANA,” he said. “They not only believe in what they do, they also believe in the future of Afghanistan.”

Another company mentor, 1st Lt. Andrew Booth, said he enjoyed the time he got to spend with the unit for many different reasons. “This was a very challenging mission at times,” he said. “There are many barriers in language and culture, but we have learned how to work with them just as much as they have learned how to work with us.”

He said the most redeeming aspect of working as an embedded trainer was being so immersed in the culture.

“We are constantly traveling with them, living off the local economy, eating the local food,” said Booth. “I felt like it was a very rare opportunity many (U.S.) Soldiers will never be able to experience.”

After serving so closely with the ANA soldiers, Booth said they share a lot of traits universal to soldiers around the world, including American Soldiers.

“They have a great sense of humor, love to laugh and participate in competition,” he said. “Most of all, they have great camaraderie with each other.”

Among all his experiences with 1st Kandak, 2nd Bde., Guion said the response he gets from unit leaders is the most rewarding aspect of his job.

“Every unit commander that comes in contact with the ANA has nothing but praise for the job they do,” he said. “We are always hearing that we trained them well and the future of Afghanistan looks promising because of them.”

Of all the positive feedback the team receives, each of them agreed that it is hard for them to take any credit.

“It is their army,” said Guion. “I’m just honored I was here to see the beginning phases of it.”

Volleyball game helps build trust, support

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

GHALAY GULAY, Afghanistan — Earning the trust and support from the people of Afghanistan includes more than just providing stabilization and reconstruction. It also means becoming friends with local people and interacting with them socially.

That's just what happened when service members of six Coalition nations visited Ghalay Gulay village, just outside Bagram Air Base, for a friendly afternoon of volleyball July 25.

The event, designed to build the relationship between the villagers and the Coalition, follows recent projects by the Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team, including the building of three wells in the village. The other goal of the event was to show the many faces of the Coalition, said United Kingdom Royal Air Force Squadron Leader Richard Langley, Bagram Base Operations Force Protection officer.

"It was about demonstrating that there's more than one nation at Bagram," he said.

With more than 15 nations living and working together on Bagram, it's important "that the locals see that there is not one nation here," said German Army Master Sgt. Patrick Bonneik, German army liaison noncommissioned officer. "That there are many nations here to help them."

The Coalition team played half a dozen games against the village team, but didn't fare well against the skilled locals, losing each game in rapid succession. But that doesn't mean that the Coalition troops didn't have fun.

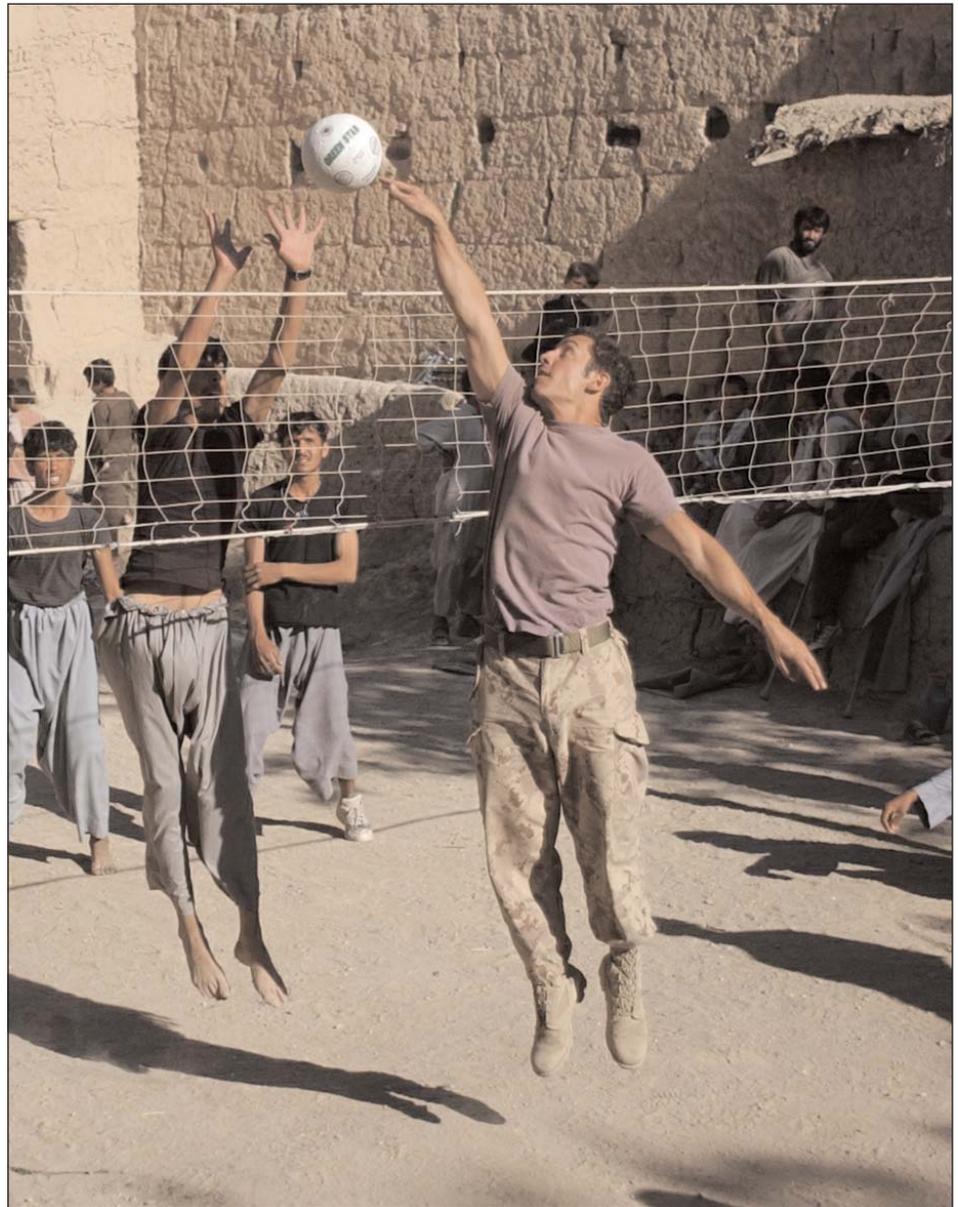
"I think they had more of a blast than we did because they beat us," said Bonneik.

Villagers not participating in the games gathered around the court to witness the event that broke down the language barriers that normally exist. Spectators clapped and cheered after good plays, regardless of who made them.

Win or lose, it appeared that everyone there knew the significance of the day.

"This was just fun," said Arif, a villager. "We want to play with you guys once in a while, that way we can make friends."

Thankful for the Coalition's presence in his country, Arif enjoys the "coopera-



Canadian Army Capt. J.J. Simon spikes the ball over the net, as Jamshid attempts to block the play. Several matches were played July 25 between representatives of six Coalition nations and the villagers of Ghalay Gulay village.

tion" between Afghans and Coalition members.

"We're really happy that the Coalition came to our country," he said.

The villagers realize the impact the Coalition has made on the area, as well as the rest of the country, and enjoyed having the afternoon to build the relationships with the Coalition players.

"Anytime (the Coalition members) are coming the people are getting happy," said Awrang, a prominent member of the village. "It doesn't matter if they are coming here to help or coming here to play."



Coalition volleyball players share a laugh over dinner with Awrang after the volleyball matches.

Safety First: Safe Speeds



Always obey posted speed limits and do not exceed 72kph/55mph off base unless the situation requires faster speeds.