

# Freedom

September 26, 2004

# Watch



**OEF troops pay tribute to terrorist attack victims**  
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Maj. Steven J. Wollman

## Stars and stripes forever

Spc. Douglas Andrews holds the U.S. flag as 1st Lt. Kellie Knight folds it. Both are members of the CJTF-76 Joint Logistics Command, which flew 78 flags outside its headquarters building on Sept. 11 in commemoration of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.

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Spc. Tyler Burgin, a native of Scotland, plays Amazing Grace on his bagpipes as part of the first of many 9/11 remembrance ceremonies conducted throughout Afghanistan. The special flag raising ceremony at Bagram Air Base was conducted on the morning of Sept. 11, three years to the day that the United States was attacked by terrorists. Later that day, a memorial ceremony was held in remembrance of those who lost their lives and those service members who have served and sacrificed since. See cover story, Page 4

Cover photo by Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl

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Combined Federal Campaign



# 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. Pamela V. Keeton

*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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# Combined Federal Campaign kicks off

## Fundraising goal set at \$200,000

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

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — During his presidency, John F. Kennedy signed into law the Combined Federal Campaign, a program by which service members and federally employed civil-

ians can further their contributions to the strength of the nation by donating to charitable organizations.

Since then, CFC has been an annual event for service members. Through the donations of service members and Department of Defense civilians, many non-profit organizations have the ability to better help those in need.

From Oct. 1 through Nov. 1, members of Combined Forces Command — Afghanistan and its subordinate units will have the opportunity to commit their

contributions to CFC. Kicking off the annual campaign, Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, Combined Joint Task Force-76 commander, filled out the first donation form during a luncheon held at Bagram Air Base Sept. 10.

“I have three things I would like to see accomplished during this year’s campaign,” said Olson to the program managers who gathered for the luncheon. “We need to give everybody in the (Combined Joint Operations Area) the opportunity to contribute. We need to share the wealth in who is contributing. And we need to contribute more than CJTF-180 did last year. We need to seek constant improvement year-by-year.”

During last year’s campaign, CJTF-180 raised \$120,368 for CFC. The goal for this year is to raise \$200,000.

With more than 15,000 service members spread throughout the CJOA, this is a goal Capt. Chad McGillivray, Bagram Air Base CFC coordinator, believes is easily attainable.

“There are more than 1,600 different charities (service members) can donate to,” he said. “The best part is that the (service member) gets to designate where the money gets used.”

Participants in the campaign can contribute to various organizations, from research institutes and adoption agencies, to international disaster and humanitarian aid.

In places like Afghanistan, service members have the opportunity to see how their contributions can help every day.

“We’re able to see how fortunate we are,” said Sgt. 1st Class Fred Warren, Combined Task Force Thunder CFC program manager. “CFC gives us all an opportunity to



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contribute and help those who are less fortunate.”

“The goodness of contributing to CFC is more clear here,” said Olson. “There are organizations that support areas here. They are addressing the critical needs of people like those here.”

Those organizations rely on the donations of service members and civilians to continue providing assistance to others.

Donations can come in the form of one-time contributions or through monthly allotments. Units can also hold fundraisers, bringing awareness to even more people. One such event will take place Oct. 1.

The official kick-off fundraiser for CFC will be a sidewalk sale at the Bagram PX, as well as an opportunity for personnel to dunk CJTF-76 Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin G. Ashe and other CJTF-76 sergeants major.

The funds raised from these events will be donated to CFC as a one-time contribution, a collective contribution to show the support of the entire Coalition.

“I support this program, and I believe it is worthy of the support of any Soldier in the CJOA,” said Olson.

“This is a worthy effort, and good units do worthy things well.”

Olson said he believes it is a worthy effort because of the help it provides to both Americans and to others.

“This is one of the many ways we come together as a nation,” he said. “We come together to help others.”



CJTF-76 Command Sgt. Maj. Franklin G. Ashe completes one of the first Combined Federal Campaign donation forms during the kickoff luncheon Sept. 10. The goal of \$200,000 has been set for the task force.

## 9/11 ceremony reminds troops to 'never forget'

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

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — As U.S. and Coalition forces continue to support the war against terrorism, hundreds of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines deployed to Bagram Air Base took a moment to remember the 3,000 people who lost their lives on Sept. 11, 2001.

"We honor them by protecting freedom for years to come — no matter what the sacrifice," said Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, Combined Joint Task Force-76 commander, at the base-wide 9/11 memorial ceremony.

Commanders of various units from different branches of military service spoke about the importance of maintaining honor, courage, freedom and sacrifice as troops carrying out their mission in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Although terrorism-supporting forces such as al-Qaida are dispersed, and the Soviets and Taliban no longer oppress the people of Afghanistan, U.S. and Coalition forces must remain resolute in the fight for freedom from terror, said Olson.

"As we continue to fight, we must maintain our tradition to values as second to none," said Task Force Prowler Navy Cmdr. Charles Gibson. "We're joined in the war against terrorism with Coalition forces, proving we're dedicated to working together for democracy."

The message proved right on target for troops here, such as Spcs. Tony Walters and Travis Cyphers of Company B, 367th Engineer Battalion, who are helping Afghans establish a democratic government by literally paving the way to the voting stations. The heavy equipment and combat engineer specialists are currently clearing mines for what will become roadways in and out of local villages so Afghan elections can take place safely in October.

The Soldiers, who are waiting for their absentee ballots to arrive so they may vote for the U.S. president in November, said they look forward to Afghans being able to choose their own leader and how they wish to live.



**Spcs. Tony Walters (left) and Travis Cyphers, Co. B, 367th Eng. Bn., sing "America the Beautiful" along with Coalition troops at the 9/11 memorial ceremony on Bagram. Hundreds of Coalition forces filled the Clamshell, an auditorium on Bagram, to honor the men and women who lost their lives on Sept. 11, 2001.**



**U.S. Army Color Guard members (left to right) Staff Sgt. Rafael Torres, Sgt. 1st Class Reginald Hall, Staff Sgt. Brian Mincey and Sgt. Annette Laulusa present the colors at the 9/11 memorial ceremony Sept. 11.**

"For two generations these people haven't been able to vote. It's important we help them gain this right," said Walters.

For many in attendance, the memorial ceremony served as inspiration as they continue to serve far from their loved ones for months, and even years, at a time.

"For your tomorrow, we gave today," quoted Col. Nancy Wetherill, Combined Task Force Coyote commander.

For some, the ceremony brought back memories of a horrifying reality. Maj. Andy Preston, CJTF-76 plans officer, was working on the third floor of the Pentagon when the airliner flew into the two floors below his office. The building quickly filled with smoke and the third floor fire escape was ablaze from a burning fuselage lodged in the stairs, he said. Preston and his co-workers escaped by maneuvering through the smoke and heat to the far side of the building.

"It's important that we remember the people who gave their lives that day," said Preston. "This memorial (service) is a reminder as to why we're here and to prevent more 9/11s from occurring."

For others, the memorial service touched deeply into their hearts and minds as they remember loved ones they lost on that infamous day. Lt. Col. Mike Blackwell, Task Force Guardian commander, lost his brother, Chris, a New York City firefighter, who was rescuing the injured after the World Trade Center attacks. His brother and all the firefighters with him that day on the truck were killed. Their remains were never found. The commander keeps a photo of his brother dressed in his NYC firefighter uniform with him every day while he serves in Afghanistan.

Blackwell and his brother come from a long line of public service — their grandfather and father retired from the police force. Chris, a U.S. military veteran, served as a firefighter for more than 20 years.

"Firemen, policemen and military members all serve in different ways, but what we all have in common is that we work to do good for others," said Blackwell. "What we're doing here is (bringing) an end to the seeds of hatred that devised such an attack. What we're doing here is (taking) away every sanctuary of those few fanatical fundamentalists who inflicted this damage to our nation.

"It's easy for people directly affected by 9/11 to not forget," he said. "We must ensure others don't forget."

# Navy chaplain serving in GWOT recalls 9/11

Story and photo by  
Sgt. 1st Class Darren D. Heusel  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KABUL, Afghanistan — Like most Americans, U.S. Navy Chaplain (Capt.) Steve Evans of New Orleans, La., experienced a range of emotions three years ago in September when terrorists hijacked commercial airliners and used them as weapons



**U.S. Navy Chaplain (Capt.) Steve Evans welcomes Sgt. Jessica Pennington to an event July 9 at Kabul Compound, where he serves as the CFC-A chaplain. Evans ministered to rescue workers immediately following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States.**

of mass destruction.

Evans was stationed at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Md., about 15 miles from the Pentagon. He was in the middle of a counseling session when the attacks occurred.

During the next several days, he spent three 12-hour shifts ministering to rescue workers and witnessing “the dogged determination of those who were committed to recovering from this sucker punch,” he said.

“I was just one of the many chaplains who were enormously committed in the wake of that tragedy. It was amazing to see how the best in each person came out and the true generosity of the American spirit.”

At the Pentagon, Evans said he and other members of the ministry team were notified each time a body was discovered in the rubble.

They would go in and remove it “in a dignified way,” a process that was repeated many times throughout the day.

“In the past three years, I think the American people have not only recovered, but strengthened their resolve and determination to do everything we can to prevent

this from happening again,” he said.

Evans is currently the chaplain for Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan Headquarters, but he didn’t ever imagine himself serving in the country that harbored the terrorist organization behind the attacks.

“When the Navy chief of chaplains asked me if I wanted to come to Afghanistan, I was surprised,” he said. “I talked to my wife and, just as we responded to the call for Desert Storm, the answer was the same 13 years later.”

He has mixed emotions about being in Afghanistan, but mostly feels honored to serve.

“I’m also very humble in that I wonder if I’m able to uphold the high ideals our service members possess,” he said.

“Afghanistan is a place where uncommon valor is a common virtue and a place where extraordinary sacrifices are ordinary occurrences.”

Successes of the 17 Provincial Reconstruction Teams deployed throughout the country clearly indicate the U.S.-led Coalition is working hand-in-hand with the Afghan government to bring continued security and stability to the region.

Remnants of al-Qaida and the Taliban remain in Afghanistan. But according to a recent Asia Foundation survey, 86 percent of Afghans believe life is better now than it was just two years ago, and 90 percent believe it is better now than five years ago under the repressive Taliban regime.

## Enduring Voices

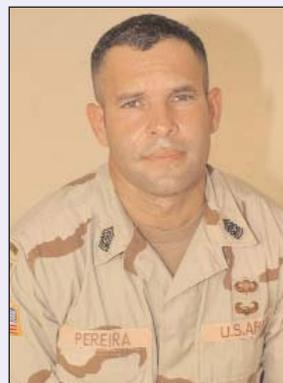
*Who was your role model as you were growing up?*



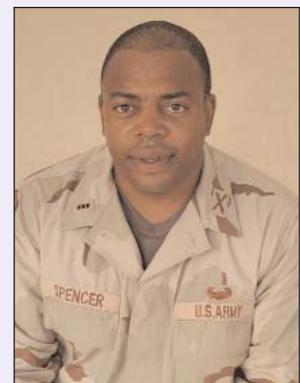
**Staff Sgt. Stanley Demuth**  
HHS, 3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt.  
*“My father – He always set high standards. In turn, I set high standards.”*



**Pfc. Nicole Iarossi**  
551st MP Co.  
*“Humanitarian workers – Ever since I was little, I’ve wanted to help people.”*



**Command Sgt. Maj. Jesus Pereira**  
3rd Bn., 7th FA Rgt.  
*“My parents – The sacrifices they’ve made for me make me who I am today.”*



**Chief Warrant Officer Paul Spencer**  
CJTF-76, CJ3-5 Plans  
*“My parents – They had more influence over me and my actions than anyone else.”*

# ANA recruiting extends to northeast

## *Newest volunteer center opens in Faizabad*

Story and photos by  
Col. Randy Pullen

Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

FAIZABAD, Afghanistan — Recruiting for the Afghan National Army extended to the northeastern province that touches China with the opening of the newest National Army Volunteer Center Sept. 7.

The Badakhshan Province's NAVC in Faizabad opened in a ceremony attended by the province's Deputy Governor Shamsulrahman, who goes by only one name; ANA Maj. Gen. Aziz Rahman, ANA Recruiting Command commander; ANA Maj. Gen. Shahzada, chief of the Ministry of Defense's Disaster Response Department; U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Craig P. Weston, Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan chief; and provincial and local leaders.

During the ceremony, Weston spoke of an Afghan army that is operating throughout the country on a variety of missions.

"Four thousand, three hundred soldiers and officers of your new army are now deployed around Afghanistan, engaged in combat operations in the south and east with the Coalition, fighting the enemies of your new democracy," said Weston. "And these soldiers are also deployed in the north and west for stability operations to prevent factional fighting."

He also noted that during the past six months, the Ministry of Defense has increased the number of soldiers in training simultaneously from two kandaks (battalions) of 1,500 men to four kandaks of 3,000 men. Those in training now

will soon be based in the regional commands being established in Kandahar, Gardez, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat.

These soldiers and those already deployed will also be performing additional tasks for the Afghan people in the near future – deploying to provide security for the presidential election and assuming security responsibilities from militia units that are being disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated.

"The young men of Badakhshan will be proud to join this army, so they, too, can contribute to providing peace, stability and to the rebuilding of Afghanistan," said Weston.

"This volunteer center ... will truly open the door to opportunity for your young men, the opportunity to serve the many peoples of the new Afghanistan."

Following the remarks, everyone moved to the front of the NAVC. There, the Afghan flag was raised as the Afghan national anthem was played. A ribbon-cutting brought the ceremony to a close.

The current strength of the Afghan National Army is about 15,500, with approximately 13,000 of this number being trained soldiers and another 2,500 still in training.

The 23rd kandak of the ANA graduated from the Kabul Military Training Center Sept. 5. The 27th kandak of the ANA reported to KMTC in mid-September.

By the time the 28th kandak reports for training, it could quite easily include young men recruited at the Faizabad NAVC.



**Maj. Gen. Aziz Rahman, commander of the Afghan National Army Recruiting Command, addresses the audience at the grand opening of the National Army Volunteer Center in Faizabad, Badakhshan Province.**



**(Above) The Afghan flag is raised over the Faizabad National Army Volunteer Center.**



**(Left) Badakhshan Province's Deputy Governor Shamsulrahman shakes hands with U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Craig P. Weston, Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan chief, as he receives a framed ANA recruiting poster at the grand opening of the NAVC in Faizabad.**

# Engineer reflects on WTC clean up efforts

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Darren D. Heusel  
105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KABUL, Afghanistan — There are few people who were not affected by the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. While most service members related closely to the damage inflicted upon the Pentagon, Col. John O'Dowd focused his attention on the devastating attacks on the World Trade Center.

O'Dowd had assumed command of the New York District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in July of that year. He was working on the 24th floor of the federal building, just six blocks away from ground zero, when the attacks occurred.

He said once it became obvious he wasn't going to be able to conduct emergency operations from his current location, he moved to one of the Corps' 11 nearby barges and set up a command post on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River.

O'Dowd estimates his crews ferried some 3,000 people back and forth from Manhattan to New Jersey that day alone. Later that evening, he said he received a call to help support the New York Police Department with refueling efforts.

The following day, his crews were tasked with helping to remove the massive pile of rubble he estimates was between seven to eight stories tall. O'Dowd said there was no way the debris could be moved by land, so his crews cleared three locations by dredging the harbor so his boats could help ferry the debris across the river.

"Within a couple of days, we had about 150 Corps of Engineers personnel from all over the country and as far away as Honolulu coming in to help," he said.

O'Dowd said his crews were tasked with moving the 1.3 million tons of debris to nearby Fresh Kills, where it took almost a year to sift through the piles.

"We took over operations at Fresh Kills, which basically amounted to a crime scene because we had to come up with a way to sift through the debris down to three-quarters of an inch to look for personal effects, personal remains and evidence," he said.

O'Dowd said his crews found tens of thousands of personal effects, including wedding bands, wrist watches and credit cards, but "it's a wonder at all how anything could have survived that attack."

He said more than 1.6 million man-hours went into the operation



**Col. John O'Dowd and community leaders discuss a hospital reconstruction project in Kabul. O'Dowd is serving as the staff engineer for Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan and commander of the Afghan Engineering District as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.**

with only one minor injury.

"That's pretty incredible given the fact that we had 30,000 people come through there over the course of a year for a common cause," said O'Dowd.

The total cost of the project came to \$75 million, but O'Dowd said it came in under budget and faster than anyone anticipated.

O'Dowd is currently the staff engineer for Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan and commander for the Afghan Engineering District.

He said he asked to come to Afghanistan, adding, "I don't think you can be in the Army, in particular after 9/11, and not feel a little mad and in some cases guilty. This is where it originated. It's real obvious to me why we're here."

With the success of the U.S.-led Coalition readily apparent, O'Dowd knows his contribution to the Global War on Terrorism is helping to prevent his daughter's fears from coming true.

"I have a 10-year-old daughter at home (who) wonders if people are going to fly planes into buildings any more," he said. "I'd like to think the answer is no, and that kids won't have to worry about that."



## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

**Chief Warrant Officer Shawn Gabhart, a Task Force Pirate C-12 pilot, ties an Afghan baby's shoe during a visit to Jildalek village in central Afghanistan. The shoes were donated to "Operation Shoe Fly," a program that family members of deployed Soldiers began in Hawaii.**

*Photo by Spc. Donald Chandler, 1st Battalion, 211th Attack Aviation Regiment*

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

# Coalition forces give gift of sight to young girl

Story by Sgt. Jennifer Emmons  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Due to a vision impairment, Halema, a young Afghan girl, has never seen clearly. The Soldiers of Task Force Pirate, who met Halema during one of their humanitarian assistance visits to Jildalek village in central Afghanistan, saw her plight and decided they would do what they could to help.

“(The) last time we went out to the village, we were taking photographs,” said Chief Warrant Officer Layne Pace, Task Force Pirate safety officer. “We came back and saw the photograph of Halema — we later found out (that) was her name — and we noticed she had some severe eye problems.”

The Soldiers took the photo to the doctors at the 325th Combat Support Hospital at Bagram Air Base. From the photo, doctors were able to diagnose Halema with congenital esotropia.

“Congenital esotropia is just a bunch of big words that mean the eyes weren’t straight. They’re actually pointing at each other,” said Maj. Gregory Bramblett, 325th CSH ophthalmologist.

“It’s a common condition in children all over the world,” he said.

The surgery to correct this problem is relatively simple. But Afghans from the rural regions of the country do not have access to this type of medical care, said Bramblett.

Working with the ophthalmologist from the Egyptian Hospital here, the Soldiers decided to bring Halema to Bagram for an operation that would correct her eyes.

“The Egyptian hospital (staff) was very gracious and agreed to (house) her and (offer) the services of their surgeon on her behalf and agreed to do the surgery,” said Pace.

The Soldiers scheduled another trip to Jildalek to coordinate with the village elders and Halema’s family to bring her to Bagram for surgery.

“We were pleasantly surprised at how quickly they agreed,” said Pace.

But it was an easy decision for her parents.

“If no one does an operation on her, she will have this problem forever,” said Sher Mohammad, Halema’s father.

That same day, young Halema and her father came to Bagram with the Soldiers. After preliminary exams by U.S. and Egyptian ophthalmologists, the surgery was scheduled.



Video stills by Sgt. Jennifer Emmons  
**Halema smiles for the camera from her hospital bed two days after surgery to correct her impaired vision.**

“What we do is adjust the position of the muscles to either weaken or strengthen them,” said Bramblett. “There are six muscles that move the eye. Her eyes are looking toward the center too much, so we take the ones in the middle, which move the eye, and we weaken those muscles so they won’t pull as hard. The goal is to get her eyes to be straight.”

On the day of surgery, Halema and her father, along with several Soldiers from Task Force Pirate, arrived at the combat support hospital. As the nurse prepared her for surgery, Halema held on to a Soldier’s hand, her face bursting into a smile.

The surgery lasted two hours and was considered a success.

“It is wonderful,” said Egyptian Dr. (Lt. Col.) Emad Gobr, one of the ophthalmol-



**Chief Warrant Officer Layne Pace plays with Halema prior to her surgery at the 325th Combat Support Hospital on Bagram.**

ogists who performed the surgery. “The procedure was done on both eyes at one setting and went very well.”

Eventually, with recovery time, Halema will have perfect vision. As the youngest child of six, this wouldn’t have been possible without the help of the Coalition.

“We are happy that the Coalition forces are helping her,” said Mohammad. “They will help her see. Her vision will get better and better.”

The people in Jildalek also appreciate what the Coalition forces are doing.

“Apparently the news of what we’re doing has spread throughout the village,” said Chaplain (Capt.) Mark Allison, Task Force Pirate chaplain. “They’re very pleased. They are very grateful.”

Halema is one of many Afghans to receive surgery from Coalition medical professionals.

“These people return to their homes after having surgery very happy,” said Gobr.

This helps the relationship between the Afghan population and Coalition forces, he said. As an eye doctor, Gobr performs surgery to restore sight to many locals.

“A lot of them have congenital cataracts and have never seen the world before,” said Gobr. “The first thing they see in the world (is) Coalition forces helping them.”

The waiting list for surgery is more than four months long, said Gobr. But children have priority.

“I think this child who is only 6 or 7 years old will remember all her life and all her family will remember what the Coalition forces have done for her,” he said.

Halema spent several days recovering before the Task Force Pirate Soldiers took her back to her home.

She left behind many Coalition members with an even better understanding of the importance of their role in Operation Enduring Freedom.

“This whole experience started out by just finding a girl who was in need,” said Pace. “The whole thing turned out to be bigger than we thought it would. The U.S. hospital, the Egyptian hospital and the entire Task Force Pirate are extremely excited about helping this little girl.

“But they’re not just excited over Halema, they’re excited about the whole idea of us being here and what we can potentially do for the people of Afghanistan. It’s not just the surgery, but it’s the entire humanitarian package, the entire aid we are providing.”

# TF Victory raises flags in memory of Sept. 11

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

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — U.S. flags flew at half-staff and half-mast around the world Sept. 11. It was a tribute to those who lost their lives in the tragic attacks on the United States Sept. 11, 2001.

In front of the Task Force Victory headquarters on Bagram Air Base, more than 400 flags were flown at half-staff throughout the day.

“These flags are going to legions, (Veterans of Foreign Wars), churches, employers, neighbors and many other people,” said TF Victory Command Sgt. Maj. Jan E. Lewis.

“I’m flying a flag for my wife, because I believe in why we’re here and she’s willing to support it.”

The flags were flown at the request of Soldiers who wanted to pay tribute to someone in their lives and honor the memory of those killed on Sept. 11, 2001.

Each Soldier had his own reason for flying the flags, but none was any more or less significant than anyone else’s.

Knowing the significance of the flag-raising, the members of the task force thought it was important that they not only fly the flags, but ensure each was

hoisted properly.

Two three-person teams stood at the base of four flagpoles, where every nine minutes and 11 seconds a new flag was raised.

Each flag received the same solemn salute — the oldest and most heralded of all military honors — and each will be accompanied by a certificate when it reaches its intended recipient.

While one Soldier issued the commands, other Soldiers posted the flags.

The Soldier issuing commands watched the time intently, ensuring each flag was flown for exactly nine minutes and 11 seconds, before issuing the command to lower each one.

Each team spent two hours in position and even the task force’s deputy commander reorganized his schedule to participate.



**Sgt. 1st Class Samuel McRae attaches the U.S. flag to the lanyard during Task Force Victory’s flag-raising ceremony Sept. 11.**

“Sept. 11 was one of those moments in your life where you will always remember where you were,” said Col. Larry Raaf, TF Victory deputy commander.

“Each time someone raises the flag, they are very solemn, very professional. This shows honor to our flag and to the people who gave their lives.”

But the event wasn’t just about the people who died in the terrorist attacks. To some, it was about all the service members who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

“I’m paying respect to those who have died and the Soldiers who have fallen before us,” said Spc. Chris Couch, a mechanic with Task Force 168, one of the security elements of TF Victory.

“I flew two flags today — one for my dad, who served in the military, and one for my wife’s dad, who fought in Vietnam.”

The certificates that will accompany the flags when Couch presents them to his father and father-in-law will state that they were flown in their honor at Bagram Air Base in tribute of Sept. 11, 2001.

With that tribute comes the memory of Sept. 11, 2001.

“It’s important that we keep the memory refreshed of why we’re serving here,” said Sgt. 1st Class David Hodges, TF 168 maintenance officer. “As time passes, people tend to forget things. This helps to remind us all.”



**Spec. Chris Couch salutes as the U.S. flag is lowered Sept. 11. Task Force Victory flew more than 400 flags for nine minutes and 11 seconds each, in honor of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.**

# Leaders address needs of 'citizen Soldiers'

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

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — National Guardsmen and U.S. Army reservists comprise about 30 percent of the approximately 13,500 Soldiers of Combined Joint Task Force-76.

These citizen Soldiers bring a number of talents to the Coalition. Not only are they well-versed in their military skills, but many of them have training and experience in other arenas from their civilian careers.

From engineers and security forces to civil affairs teams, the National Guardsmen and reservists, collectively known as the reserve component, have proven how important they are to mission accomplishment.

"It's the nature of the Guard to help nations rebuild," said Maj. Mary Lowe Mayhugh, a member of the National Guard Bureau's personnel staff. "Afghanistan is just one of the places we are able to do that."

One of the biggest roles the reserve component has played is in the Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

"Around 97 percent of our task force is National Guard or Reserves," said Task Force Victory Command Sgt. Maj. Jan E. Lewis.

Task Force Victory is a brigade-sized element that is responsible for many of the PRTs throughout Afghanistan. One of the most important assets to the PRTs is the civil affairs personnel, most of whom are reservists.

But that's not the only asset the reserve component brings to OEF. Across the country, there are engineer units, security forces and many other task forces where Soldiers have not only military training, but civilian training, sometimes in multiple skill sets.

Sgt. Daniel Toleno is one such Soldier. A reservist with Company C, 367th Engineer Battalion, U.S. Army Reserve, St. Cloud, Minn., Toleno is currently assigned as the PRT engineer for the Ghazni PRT. In the civilian sector, Toleno is a project manager for a custom homes company. He has taken his training and experience from that job and incorporated them into his current position.

"I oversee all the building projects here," said Toleno. "I have to manage the projects and make sure everything is getting completed on time. I also help select the contractors who will be used for different projects."

But Toleno isn't the only Soldier in this position.

"With the civilian experience we all have, there are so many hidden



Photos by Sgt. Frank Magni

**1st Lt. Andrew Booth, 3rd Bn., 172nd Inf. Rgt. (Mountain), Vermont Army National Guard, pulls security along side an ANA soldier at a vehicle check-point outside Qalat city. Booth, who worked as an embedded trainer with the ANA, brings valuable knowledge to his mission gained from his civilian life, as do most National Guard Soldiers.**

talents," he said.

But with all the hidden talent comes the harsh reality that a lot of these Soldiers have left behind not only families, but also civilian careers, to serve their country. That's where the personnel offices and the Army Reserve Affairs office come in. It's also the reason Mayhugh and other leaders of the National Guard Bureau came to visit their Soldiers in Afghanistan.

During a National Guard Retention Conference at Bagram Air Base Sept. 10-11, the group met with personnel staff from reserve component units to discuss issues affecting activated Soldiers, and more specifically, retention.

"We're here to help fix problems that may have occurred during the activation process," said Sgt. Maj. Launa Klimowicz, NGB retention cell sergeant major. "Many Soldiers were affected by stop-losses, were extended or reenlisted. We want to make sure they are taken care of."

Additionally, National Guard and reserve Soldiers often fall under different policies.

"All the branches have different policies for many different things," said Chief Warrant Officer Carol Hudy, a member of the ARA team in Afghanistan. "This sometimes causes some confusion."

"We're here to find out which of these policies are working, and to change the policies that aren't working where we can," said Mayhugh.

By changing some policies, the National Guard is better able to accommodate its activated Soldiers.

"We recognize the need to retain Soldiers," said Hudy. "We also understand personnel issues. By addressing the personnel issues, we are better able to retain our Soldiers."



**Spc. Jason Anderson, Task Force 168, pulls security outside the perimeter of a CMA mission in Panjshir Province. The task force is an Iowa Army National Guard unit tasked with providing force protection to Provincial Reconstruction Teams throughout Afghanistan.**

# Mission recovery leads to mission success

Story and photos by Sgt. Frank Magni

17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RIPLEY, Afghanistan — When Coalition members embark on combat operations within Afghanistan, they do so behind a variety of preparations. Some preparations begin before the unit got to Afghanistan, but others start the moment they return from a mission.

Recovery for Company B, 2nd Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment “Bobcats” reached a new level of importance when they returned from an 18-day mission in the Oruzgan Province.

“There is so much to concentrate on when conducting operations you don’t have time think about whether you replaced that battery in your scope or cleaned your barrel,” said Spc. Shay Humphrey, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., team leader. “When we return from a mission, we immediately start preparing for the next mission because we don’t know when it will be.”

As the emphasis on recovery is paramount for the Bobcats,

**Staff Sgt. Travis Lloyd, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., unloads rounds from his magazine during unit recovery on FOB Ripley in Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan.**



**Staff Sgt. Mike Larson, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., reassembles his Remington 870 shotgun during unit recovery after a mission in the Oruzgan Province.**



**Sgt. Manuel Isbell cuts the hair of Spc. Edward Cuellar during recovery from a mission in the Oruzgan Province. Both are members of Co. B, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt.**

the battalion has developed timelines and procedures specific to Afghanistan.

“The conditions here are very different than Hawaii,” said 1st Lt. Ryan Beltramini, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., executive officer. “Not only are the conditions different, but performing in combat for extended periods of time is also very different than a training exercise.”

The Bobcat’s mission in Oruzgan varied from mounted and dismounted patrols. The conditions were at high elevation with temperatures reaching more than 100 degrees.

“At times this was the most physically taxing work I’ve ever done in the Army,” said Staff Sgt. Travis Lloyd, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 5th Inf. Rgt., squad leader. “Our recovery not only focuses on equipment, but personnel.”

In terms of equipment, the company focuses on weapons, night vision goggles and radios within the first 24 hours of returning, said Beltramini. They inventory, clean and identify broken equipment, with the eventual goal of having all equipment ready for the next mission within 48 hours.

The unit also maintains and restocks collective unit equipment like medical and engineering supplies.

When maintaining their weapons, the Soldiers focus on rounds and magazines, said Humphrey.

“We unload the magazines and make sure there are no dents in the rounds,” he said. “We also make sure the springs in the mags are relaxed and straight.”

They also try to verify the zero on their weapons if there is extra time during recovery.

In terms of the conditions within Afghanistan, the dust poses the biggest challenge for the operation and recovery of all equipment, he said.

“The dust is so fine in consistency, it gets in all the nooks and crannies of our weapons,” he said. “We clean our weapons at least once a day in the field, but during recovery we concentrate on the hard-to-reach areas.”

Personnel also get much needed recovery time immediately after returning from missions. Individual recovery ranges from sewing on buttons and repairing torn uniforms, to taking showers and getting haircuts.

“What we do here is just as important as what we do on a mission,” said Beltramini. “Leaders just need to make sure it is done with the same intensity and attention to detail as on a mission.”

# Air Force TMO packs it, tracks it

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Andrew Gates  
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — In a combat zone, tracking the exact location of critical outbound equipment is extremely important.

That's why Airmen at the traffic management office on Bagram Air Base are the first in the service to test the Air Force's latest cargo tracking software, the Cargo Movement Operator System Version 6.3.2.b.

The Airmen are responsible for scheduling, packing and tracking all outbound cargo that leaves Bagram, and are also responsible for tracking and distributing inbound cargo for Air Force, Army and Coalition forces here.

"We process outbound cargo for shipment and decide how it leaves the theater," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Kevin Isaac, 455th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron logistician. "We determine if we need to use Air Mobility Command airlift or a commercial carrier."

The latest software version helps them track the equipment better, since it uses a satellite connection rather than using local area network lines, eliminating the problems of slow network speeds and system crashes, said Air Force Senior Airman Timothy Grasso, 455th ELRS, who has been testing the new software. With multiple databases and routes to connect to those databases, the system is somewhat akin to a wireless Internet connection.

"We needed a central server to help maintain 100 percent accountability of every piece of cargo shipped from Bagram," said Grasso.

This is especially important to help the Airmen track critical cargos — such as hazardous material and cryptographic material, said Isaac.

"We're able to pinpoint exactly where any particular

piece of cargo is at any one moment — no one else in the Air Force is using this version."

The Airmen's goal is to move cargo quickly.

"We want to send cargo out the most cost-effective way possible, but get it here quick enough to keep the mission going," said Isaac.

When cargo comes in by C-130, C-17 or commercial carrier, the TMO Airmen receive the cargo, sort it, ensure they account for it, and then distribute it through various channels. One of those channels, for instance, is the supply network.

"We give supply their cargo," said Isaac. "But there's a lot of cargo we receive that's not generated through the supply system. We give a lot of cargo directly to the customers."

The TMO Airmen handle much more inbound cargo than outbound. In July, for instance, the TMO sent out more than 370 shipments valued at about \$20 million. However, they received more than five times as many inbound pieces of cargo — more than 18,800, weighing about 170 tons.

Tracking down the owners of inbound cargo can often provide one of the greatest challenges for the TMO Airmen.

"Sometimes we have cargo coming in and we can't be certain who exactly it goes to," said Air Force Airman 1st Class Leisha Smith, 455th ELRS. "We have high turnover rates of units in theater, which can make it very difficult to determine exactly who needs to get some parts that come in."

The length of time it takes to ship items from home stations also adds to the challenges, she said.

Regardless of the challenges they face in dealing with inbound or outbound cargo, Air Force Senior Airman Michael Spera, 455th ELRS, knows how important his job is to the mission.

"It's good knowing the property we bring in keeps the mission going," he said.



**(Above) Senior Airman Michael Spera, 455th ELRS traffic management office (in forklift), moves a liquid oxygen storage tank from the TMO storage area to a holding area, while Senior Airman Timothy Grasso spots him.**

**(Below) Airman 1st Class Leisha Smith, 455th ELRS traffic management office, packs a compressed air sample for shipping.**



# Safety first during combat zone PT

## Safeguarding the Coalition

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

AFGHANISTAN — The old Army adage of “We train as we fight,” has taken on a new meaning in regards to physical training in a combat zone.

Even with limited resources and time, PT remains fundamental for units throughout Afghanistan because of the unlimited amounts of positive effects provided on the battlefield.

But just like many activities in a combat zone, PT poses challenges to leaders in terms of safety.

One leader who works through the challenge of PT on the front lines is Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Dorey, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 125th Signal Battalion element working on Forward Operating Base Salerno. Even with the rigors of the everyday mission, safe PT hasn't taken a backseat in the unit — it has just evolved, said Dorey, an Army Master Fitness Trainer.

In fact, the PT his unit conducts in Afghanistan has many advantages over what they did at their home station in Hawaii. It has better prepared his Soldiers for the challenges of operating in Afghanistan.

“I have found that PT is much more (mission)-related here,” said Dorey.

That means the Soldiers are conducting PT that more closely reflects what they do during day-to-day operations.

For members of 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, also based at FOB Salerno, PT has become their daily mission in many ways.

“We are conducting dismounted patrols ranging from eight to 10 kilometers a day,” said Marine 1st Sgt. James Brooks, Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Bn., 6th Marines.

With PT more closely related to, and some-

times becoming, the daily mission, its use in the combat zone has many different effects beyond maintaining a healthy body.

“As (leaders) we have to preach to our Soldiers to be combat-ready,” said Dorey. “We just use PT as one way to accomplish it.”

For Dorey's unit, formations to conduct push-ups, sit-ups and two-mile runs have been replaced by individual sections conducting regular ruck-marches, body-armor runs and litter-carry relays.

“We not only try to incorporate battle drills into our PT, but also the equipment we use in these drills,” said Dorey.

It is hard to measure or equate the effects of the training, but Dorey knows Soldiers are better-prepared to carry a litter in the event of a rocket attack. The bi-product for their efforts is the ability of service members to

when conducting traditional PT on an FOB, said Brooks.

“You have to constantly stay aware of your surroundings when running, or even walking, on gravel roads,” he said.

Situational awareness is also key in terms of force protection.

“It is a requirement to run with a buddy in our unit,” said Dorey.

In addition to running with a buddy, they avoid desolate areas around their base, he said.

“We try to stay as close to the base's general population as possible, so that in case something happens either with enemy contact or injury, there is help close by,” he said.

While most FOBs have limited areas for running, sticking to a regularly used run route is one key to avoiding injury on non-paved roads.

“We try to run the same routes,” said Brooks. “Although this might get repetitive, we do this to stay aware of the problem areas.”

Hydration is one of the most important points both Brooks and Dorey stress to their troops, whether they are conducting PT or other activities.

“At this elevation and temperatures, Soldiers have to constantly drink fluids to stay healthy,” said Dorey.

He said drinking water is important because of the uniform that is required in Afghanistan.

“We don't have the luxury to take off our body armor or change uniforms,” he said.

“So we have to compensate by drinking more water.”

While leaders take lessons from daily missions and apply them to PT and vice versa, safe PT is not a tremendous challenge as long as all leaders stay involved, said Dorey.

“You have to stay focused on why physical training is important, and not look at PT as a distraction, but one of the most critical tasks your unit does,” he said.

For Coalition members who get enough PT through their daily mission, the goal remains simple.

“It is part of being a well-rounded (service member),” said Brooks. “If we are not out on a mission, we are in the gym. We always have to be prepared physically for whatever the mission has in store for us.”



**Soldiers on FOB Salerno run with weapons to diversify their physical training in a combat environment. Soldiers regularly conducting PT maintain a high level of physical fitness in order to remain ready for the rigors of combat.**

deal with the rigors of their day. By practicing essential tasks during PT, they are also more conditioned to accomplish those tasks, he said.

While the line between battle drills and physical training blur in a combat area, some basic principles for preventing injury normally associated with physical training have become a part of the daily grind for the Marines conducting dismounted patrols.

“We always stretch before any movement we conduct,” said Brooks. “Our main focus in doing this is to reduce injury, so more Marines are combat-ready.”

But, just as units take from their experiences in PT to enhance their daily mission, their operational experience can also enhance PT. Maintaining situational awareness is key

# EOD: Making Afghanistan safe for future

Story and photos by  
Air Force Master Sgt.  
Andrew Gates

455th Expeditionary Operations Group

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Right now, literally tons of explosive materials are hidden throughout Afghanistan.

Some, like the land mines the former Soviet Union liberally scattered around the countryside, lie deceptively under a thin veneer of dirt. Others lie hidden away in caches — collections of weapons carefully hoarded and preserved.

Whenever even one of these items is uncovered around Bagram, there's no question whom to call — the Air Force explosive ordnance disposal team.

"We have a lot of missions every day," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Perry, 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Flight. "We usually get six or seven calls."

No matter what the call, safety is the primary priority for the explosive demolition experts.

"We wear as much safety gear as we can, based on the situation, and we stay away from the explosive as long as we possibly can," said Perry. "Moreover, if we can send in a remote unit — one of our robots — to respond to the situation, we use it."

Most of these calls are for situations on the airfield — which could be some discovered ordnance, or, more likely, an in-flight emergency with an armed aircraft, said Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas.

"We respond to every in-flight emergency where there is a problem with munitions — a hung flare or rocket, a stuck gun or the like. Usually the maintainers are able to take care of it, so we don't have to do

anything. But, if they can't fix it, we're there."

Joint operations on the airfield are commonplace — as evidenced by Army EOD Pfc. Matthew, who joined Thomas for response training.

"So far, my experiences with joint operations have been good," he said. "I don't often get the opportunity to work on an airfield and see how the Air Force EOD team responds. Once I know their procedures, I can respond to emergencies on the airfield, if needed."

Normally, though, the Air Force takes care of the airfield, said Thomas. "If we can take care of the base, the Army can use their EOD experts to respond to their forward operating bases — it's a smart use of resources."

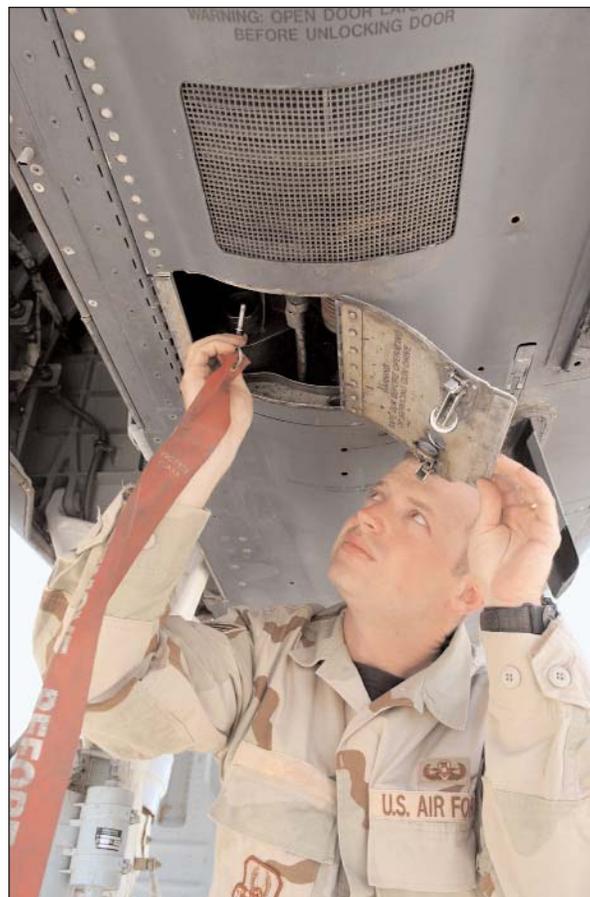
The airfield team's mission in a combat zone is much like their mission at home.

"We respond to unexploded ordnance calls the same way, although there is an increased threat here," said Thomas.

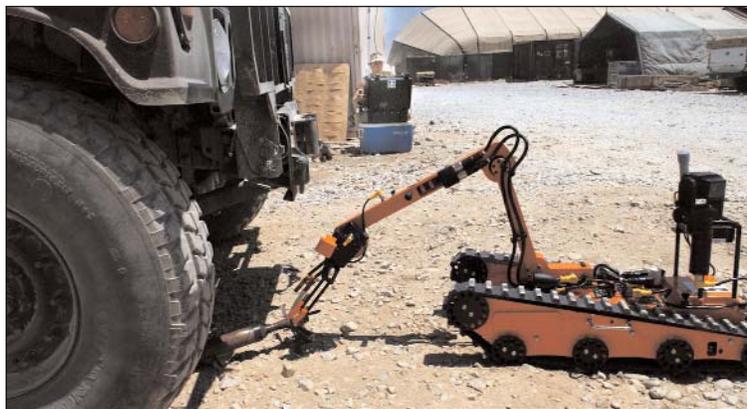
They also get called out when someone finds something they can't identify.

"Today, I got called out for a spent flare (which looks like a miniature rocket)," said Perry.

"I would rather get called out 20 times a day for something like that than to have someone pick up something that will hurt them."



**Staff Sgt. Thomas, 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Flight explosive ordnance disposal technician, attempts to safe an A-10 30 mm gun during an emergency exercise where a gun malfunctioned.**



**"Lucky Day," a Vanguard Mark II robot used by explosive ordnance disposal technicians, picks up a rocket motor from underneath a HMMWV during a training scenario. EOD often uses robots like "Lucky Day" to retrieve ordnance from difficult-to-reach or dangerous locations**

The other calls the team receives are those that help keep U.S. service members and the Afghan people safe — destroying weapons stockpiles and minefields.

"We're responsible for destroying any ordnance found in this section of Afghanistan," said Perry.

Often this turns out to be what are called "spoil piles" — huge piles of explosives unearthed during de-mining operations. The unearthed mines are piled up and detonated by the explosive experts.

The best part of the job is the feeling members of the team get when they destroy these piles and prevent people from getting injured.

"When you leave the base, you get thronged with children," said Perry. "After we finish, if we do our job right, none of them will ever get hurt here again. These kids are out playing and living in a dangerous area."

With the help of the Air Force EOD team, this danger will continue to decrease, and the children will be able to play in a safe environment.

*Editor's note: For operational security, only the rank and first name of those interviewed and photographed are given — explosive ordnance disposal personnel often go off-base to accomplish their mission.*

# Bagram blood bank supplies Coalition

Story by Spc. Dijon Rolle  
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Blood. To many, it's known as the gift of life. One that's often taken for granted until the moment it's needed.

But one place it cannot be forgotten is in combat. Ensuring there is a sufficient supply of the life-saving fluid are the Soldiers from the 312th Medical Logistics Unit (Blood Support) at the 325th Combat Support Hospital at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. They are doing their part to supply Coalition forces with enough blood to support current combat operations throughout the theater.

Every week, the unit receives a shipment of blood from the Armed Services Whole Blood Processing Laboratory in the United States. ASWBPL is responsible for collecting blood from various blood banks in the United States and sending it to blood support units like the 312th. The individually packaged units of blood are stored inside a Collins box, which is made of cardboard and insulated with Styrofoam. The box is filled with ice to keep the blood cool until it can be picked up.

Once the 312th receives the blood, they are responsible for processing the shipments and preparing them for distribution throughout the country. This involves carefully inventorying each unit of blood, organizing it by types and prepping it for storage or shipment to Coalition forces throughout the country.

"We support all our armed forces, and on top of that, we support our Coalition, our allies," said 1st Lt. Osama Ismail, 312th MLU blood support officer in

charge. "We make sure that all of the blood supply in our operations is there (accounted for and ready for distribution)."

The unit also processes blood plasma, a component of human blood used by doctors to help a patient's existing blood supply clot on its own.

After processing, the blood and plasma

"We make sure that the Coalition, our Soldiers, whoever needs blood gets what they need when they need it," said Sgt. Pamela Bearer, 312th MLU blood support noncommissioned officer.

The unit pulls from its existing inventory to fill the requests. The blood is repacked inside an ice-filled shipping container, where it can last two to three days before having to be re-packaged. The Soldiers also arrange to transport the blood to the requesting unit.

There are two additional supporting blood points on Kandahar Airfield and Forward Operating Base Salerno designed to support the blood bank. They are capable of processing blood received from the blood bank here and maintaining the supply for that area. Coalition Forces currently or recently deployed overseas are not eligible to donate blood because of the different medications and vaccinations they receive. This is one of the reasons that it's imperative for others who are eligible to donate whenever possible.

If there is an extreme shortage, the unit can buy blood from civilian organizations like United Blood Services and the Red Cross to re-stock their supply. As a last resort, the unit can also receive blood donations from Coalition members within theater to save the lives of other Coalition members during extreme emergencies.

"Blood is life," said Ismail. "When you put blood back into the person, you're putting life back into them. That's why blood is one of the most crucial missions in any theater, any combat theater in the armed forces. Our supply is your supply."



Video stills by Spc. Dijon Rolle

**(Above) Sgt. Ruben Ramirez scans units of blood as they arrive in Afghanistan. The units will be tracked as they are sent to different medical facilities throughout the country.**

**(Below) Ramirez counts units of blood kept in a temperature-controlled environment. The blood is carefully monitored to maintain quality and freshness.**



are stored in special, temperature-controlled refrigerators and freezers. Each is monitored throughout the day to ensure the quality and freshness of the blood.

The blood stays refrigerated until the unit receives a request from a hospital or medical facility.

# Soldier's Creed

**I am an American Soldier.**

**I am a Warrior and a member of a team.**

**I serve the people of the United States  
and live the Army Values.**

**I will always place the mission first.**

**I will never accept defeat.**

**I will never quit.**

**I will never leave a fallen comrade.**

**I am disciplined, physically and mentally  
tough, trained and proficient in my warrior  
tasks and drills.**

**I always maintain my arms, my equipment  
and myself.**

**I am an expert and I am a professional.**

**I stand ready to deploy, engage and  
destroy the enemies of the United States  
of America in close combat.**

**I am a guardian of freedom and the  
American way of life.**

***I am an American Soldier!***

