

Sappers expand role of Army engineers



Combat engineers work in teams of two while clearing the minefields. One soldier initially probes the area and then the other soldier comes in and sweeps it with a mine detector.

Story and photos by Sgt. Greg Heath
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – Every day the soldiers of Company B, 41st Engineer Battalion, 10th Mountain Division, perform a job where death is potentially only one step away.

These Army combat engineers aren't fighting the Taliban or al Qaeda on the frontlines, but they're skating the razor's edge performing their mission of manually clearing landmines and unexploded ordnance in Bagram's own backyard.

Here at Bagram, the majority of landmine area clearance is performed within the safe cocoon of a demining vehicle, like the Hydrema or Aardvark de-mining vehicles, where soldiers are protected behind tons of steel and destroy mines in place with the vehicle's heavy flailing chains. But due to Afghanistan's uneven terrain, there are some places where the massive vehicles can't go. At these times it's the job of the Sapper foot soldiers, protected only by body armor plates, a Kevlar helmet with clear plastic blast shield, blast protective boots, and armed with a diligent mind and mine detector to complete the job.

Currently the two platoons of sappers are clearing sites near the base runway for the future expansion of Bagram Air Base.

The soldiers work in teams of two, where one soldier goes in with a mine probe and checks a small area, and then the other soldier equipped with the AMPSS-14 mine detector goes over the area to

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Local governors visit Bagram Air Base, PRT

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Keith Thompson
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – The governors of Kapisa and Parwan provinces made a special trip here on the eve of Ramadan to learn what the soon to be formed Provincial Reconstruction Team could do for their constituents.

The governors came for a dinner and presentation Saturday held at the Viper Dining Facility's Checo room.

According to Maj. Michael Mantey,

Coalition Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force Information Operations officer, the event was "to foster understanding of the capabilities of the Parwan PRT for the Parwan and Kapisa provinces."

"This is the opportunity for us to make this a formal event," said Lt. Col. Elizabeth Damonte, Parwan PRT commander, of the chance to meet with Governor's Zazar Ahmad



(From left) Gov. Zazar Ahmad Moqbil, Gov. Sayed Ahmad Haq Been from Kapisa, Col. Craig Morton, CJCMOTF deputy commander, and Maj. Carman Oldre, CATA team leader talk before the presentation at Viper Dining Facility Saturday.

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



Firefighters stand in front of a backfire they set outside Julian, Calif.

California wildfires consume 600,000 acres, 1,500 home

SAN DIEGO – With wildfires raging in California from Simi Valley to San Diego, the number of homes destroyed neared 1,500, the charred land totaled more than 600,000 acres and the death toll was 16, fire officials said Tuesday.

Forced from their homes during the past three days, tens of thousands of people watched and waited as firefighters battled the blazes.

Twelve people were killed in San Diego County, most while trying to escape in their cars, and four people died during the weekend in San Bernardino. Two of those were elderly men who died from stress caused by the fires.

At least two of the 13 fires have been blamed on arson.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department released a sketch Tuesday of one of two people sought on suspicion of sparking the so-called Old Fire, which has burned nearly 30,000 acres.

The department is looking for two men in their 20s who authorities said were seen driving a gray van Saturday morning north of the San Bernardino city limits. Witnesses saw something being thrown into the brush from the van.

The so-called Cedar Fire, which has torched more than 200,000 acres in San Diego County, was started by a lost hunter who lit a signal fire, San Diego Fire Chief Jeff Bowman said Tuesday. He said the hunter did not intend the fire to spread, and that he has been detained.

Thanks to a lull in the winds, the California Department of Forestry said late Tuesday morning, the Cedar is expected to be contained by November 5.



Kharazi said Iranians have been opposed to al Qaeda.

Iran 'won't extradite terrorists'

PARIS – Iran will refuse requests to extradite captured al Qaeda members to the United States, instead trying them under Iranian law, a top official has said.

Seyed Mohammad Sadegh Kharazi, Iran's ambassador to France, also said Tuesday there were "links between al Qaeda and the military elements of the Baath party," the party once run by deposed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

He described al Qaeda and the Taliban as "essentially the illegitimate children" of the United States.

U.S. officials blame recent attacks in Iraq on Baath party remnants, members of terrorist groups, and other insurgents.

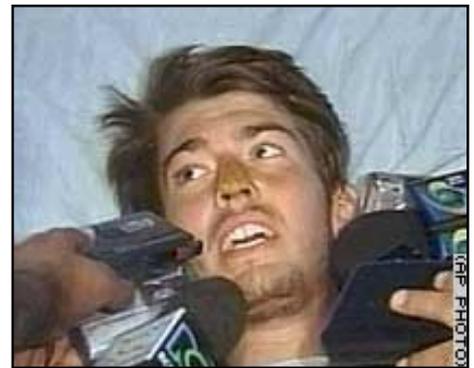
The United States has called on Iran to send al Qaeda members within its borders to the United States, because of the terrorist attacks the group has launched against the U.S. and its interests overseas.

Kharazi said his country will instead try al Qaeda members "under Iranian law because they have committed crimes on our territory."

"We have from the very beginning been totally opposed to al Qaeda and, besides, al Qaeda has been completely opposed to us," Kharazi told reporters at the Center for Foreign Press.

"It has to be said that the Taliban and al Qaeda are essentially the illegitimate children of the U.S.A. It is the Americans who are responsible for bringing these movements into being."

The Deputy Secretary of State Tuesday said the U.S. was prepared to resume limited contact with Iran "about areas of mutual interest," but has not entered into a broad dialogue with Tehran in an effort to normalize relations.



Matthew Scott was able to escape and was found wandering in the jungle.

Hopes rise for 7 tourists kidnapped in Colombia

BOGOTA, Colombia – Roman Catholic Church leaders said Tuesday the Colombian government was prepared to consider a guerrilla group's offer to release four Israeli and three European hostages, but first needed to iron out certain details.

The National Liberation Army, or ELN, announced Monday it was ready to hand over the backpackers next week to a delegation of United Nations and church representatives, provided certain conditions were met.

"In general, the president demonstrated good will toward a majority of ELN demands," the Rev. Dario Echeverri told reporters Tuesday after talks with President Alvaro Uribe. The president, a hardliner, had formally asked Echeverri to act as a mediator in the kidnapping.

The key sticking point to a deal appeared to involve the fate of a jailed ELN leader, Francisco Galan. The rebels would like to see him released in exchange for the hostages but apparently have not made it a requirement. However, they have demanded that he be freed at least temporarily to witness the handover.

Uribe is staunchly opposed to making concessions under pressure but had previously offered Galan an early release if the rebel leader renounced violence and promised to work toward peace. Galan refused, however, saying he could not give up his life-long revolutionary struggle.

Echeverri said that Uribe did not oppose in principle either the presence of U.N. and church officials at a handover or Galan's temporary release. He refused, however, to say on what points the president disagreed with the rebels.

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ensure it is mine free.

For the engineers, this type of mine clearance can be a very slow process, with the soldiers clearing only a fraction of what a mine clearing vehicle could accomplish in a day.

For this type of job, being deliberate, safe and thorough are necessities.

“This is very methodical, tedious, meticulous area clearance,” said Co. B Commander Capt. James Handura, adding that normally combat engineers are trained for combat operation mine clearance, where they quickly breach a minefield so that other units can pass through.

In order to prepare for this new type of mission in Afghanistan, where they are helping to rewrite the Army manuals on minefield area clearance, the soldiers had to go through extensive training prior to starting the job, according to Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Hecker, platoon sergeant, 3rd Platoon.

Initially the soldiers went to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., for weeks of training on the new mine detectors, and then once arriving in Afghanistan they were given training by the preceding engineer unit, and certified on the mine clearing equipment.

And to ensure the soldiers stay sharp, the unit also holds weekly recertification in which the Sappers have to identify various mines and unexploded ordnance, Hecker added.

“Our biggest enemy is complacency,” said Pvt. 2 Jeremy Gray, mine detector operator, 3rd Plt. “I’ve just got to keep a clear head and keep focus on my job.”

Many of the soldiers, like Gray, admit to never having expected to do this type of job in their military careers, and although the job can be stressful, the soldiers find it rewarding.

“I enjoy seeing progress in our work everyday,” said Gray, about getting to see more and more area clear of landmines.

Their impact of their work will be felt beyond Afghanistan as well, according to 2nd Lt. Matthew Marino, 1st Plt. leader.

“This is a great opportunity for the Sappers because they’re expanding the role of the combat engineer,” Marino said. “This info can be passed to the (combat engineer) schoolhouse.”



10th Mtn. Division combat engineers are clearing landmines out of areas of Bagram Air Base that can't be reached by mine-clearing vehicles, by hand.



A 10th Mtn. Division combat engineer searches for landmines using a mine probe at Bagram Air Base. The soldier is protected only by body armor plates, a Kevlar helmet with a clear plastic blast shield and blast protective boots.

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Moqbil and Sayed Ahmad Haq Been and their provincial ministers.

Maj. Carman Oldre, Parwan Civil Affairs Team leader, gave the presentation on the PRT. Some of the topics she covered included: the PRT’s area of responsibility, the PRT’s mission, the PRT’s organization, along with their capabilities and future operations.

“Our mission is to assist the central government in extending its authority throughout the Capitol Region provinces and fa-

cilitate the continued stability and security of the region,” Oldre said. The PRT will also, “demonstrate the international commitment to the rebuilding of Afghanistan, and continue to establish and foster favorable relationships with local authorities and populations.”

Oldre also went through the process for CA projects from initial consideration through completion and discussed some of the 43 immediate impact and long-term projects already completed by the Parwan and Kapisa CAT A team.

“Everyone in this room has made great

sacrifices in rebuilding Afghanistan,” Oldre said.

Damonte and Oldre then answered numerous questions from various ministers from both provinces.

Questions ranged from education to the project nomination process.

The event provided the governors and their ministers with information about who and what the PRT are and what they can do before the official grand opening in November.

“The PRT is here to assist you in hoping for a better tomorrow,” Oldre said.

Kandahar gets a new face lift

Story by Spc.C. Elijah Spencer

211th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – After three years, four rotations, and who knows how many thousands of troops later, Kandahar Air Field in Afghanistan is getting a well-deserved facelift along with needed modifications. This has come as a result of the U.S. military recognizing that it will take longer than expected to accomplish everything necessary to rebuild this nation.

“We’re going to be here for a while”, said Lt. Col. Steven Mahoney, Airfield Support Task Force commander. “The main thing is that the soldiers here get the things that are important and essential for a good quality of life away from home.”

One noticeable change at KAF is the new location for the Morale Welfare and Recreation tent. It has moved to a larger and more convenient location past the hangar on Warrior Way.

Another change that’s in progress is the relocation of the gym from behind the PX to the same area as the MWR tent.

The biggest improvement underway is the construction of a new PX Mini Mall. KAF soldiers can finally get their uniforms altered or patches sewn on at the new Alterations and Embroidery Shop there.

Troops will also be able to pick up something for the folks back home at the improved gift shop or the new jewelry shop. For the sports enthusiast, the latest in workout apparel and accessories will be available at the new sporting goods store.

Soldiers can also relax by sipping on a hot cappuccino at the new coffee shop or grab a bite to eat at Nathan’s Hot Dog Shop.

Further improvements, such as modular housing complete with central air-conditioning and heat is planned for KAF. These aluminum buildings will feature four-man rooms. Other comforts in the buildings will include showers, toilets, and refrigerators.

Even though morale at KAF is good and the service members are content with their surroundings; the ASTF knows that life will be better here with the improvements.

“They deserve everything that we’re doing for them”, said Mahoney “Soldiers know how to soldier. They are not complaining, but we’re still going to make things better.”

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

“Gorillas in the Mist”

1530Z at the MWR building:

The story of Dian Fossey, a scientist who came to Africa to study the vanishing mountain gorillas, and later fought to protect them.

Tomorrow’s movie: “Bandits”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Thursday
Bagram:	Clear H: 79F L: 41F	Partly cloudy H: 79F L: 43F
Kandahar:	Dusty H: 86F L: 52F	Partly cloudy H: 84F L: 52F
Kabul:	Clear H: 79F L: 41F	Partly cloudy H: 79F L: 43F
Uzbekistan:	Partly cloudy H: 89F L: 60F	Mostly Clear H: 86F L: 55F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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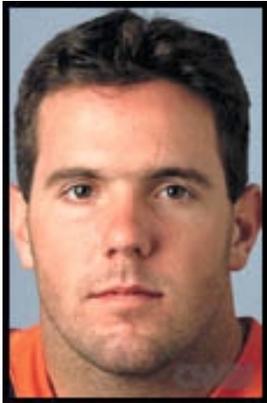
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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)

Griese has inside track on starting job



Brian Griese

DAVIE, Fla. — Brian Griese's first pass went for a touchdown. His first six passes were complete. His only incomplete pass in the first half was dropped.

With a fast start in his first start for the Miami Dolphins, Griese made it clear he wants to stay in the lineup.

And he may.

Coach Dave Wannstedt said Tuesday he was pleased with the way Griese sparked the Dolphins' sputtering offense in Monday night's 26-10 victory over San Diego.

Replacing an injured Jay Fiedler, Griese threw for 192 yards and three touchdowns with no turnovers. Wannstedt said he would decide Wednesday whether to stay with Griese in Sunday's AFC showdown against the Indianapolis Colts.

"Brian played really well," Wannstedt said. "He made good decisions, got rid of the ball and was really into the game. He was in tune to what they were doing and what we were trying to do."

The health of the two quarterbacks may help determine which starts Sunday.

Fiedler, who sprained his left knee in a loss to New England on Oct. 19, dressed Monday night but was designated the No. 3 quarterback because he's still hobbled. Griese had a little swelling in his right thumb after the victory, although Wannstedt said he didn't believe the injury was serious.

Several comments by the coach suggested he's leaning toward making Griese's promotion permanent. Wannstedt said a starter knocked out of the lineup by an injury — Fiedler, for instance — isn't assured of keeping his job.

Wannstedt said Griese releases the ball more quickly than Fiedler, an advantage once Miami's receivers adjust their timing.

"You saw two or three routes where the receiver wasn't quite ready," Wannstedt said. "You put that on the receiver. He's got to anticipate it's going to be out quicker with Brian than it is with Jay."

Wannstedt also said he expects Griese to be even better with a start under his belt. The game was his first since being sidelined during the exhibition season by a toe injury.

"If he plays this week, you would like to believe he would be more comfortable than he was," Wannstedt said. "And it being a home game should help."

The Dolphins (5-2) play three of their next four games in Miami, beginning with Indianapolis (6-1).

Griese helped forge a 24-3 halftime lead with touchdown passes of 5 yards to Chris Chambers, 2 yards to James McKnight and 7 yards to Randy McMichael. He finished 20-for-29 despite having at least three passes dropped.

Dotson brought to Waco to face murder charge



Carlton Dotson was indicted in August in the slaying of Patrick Dennehy.

WACO, Texas — Former Baylor University basketball player Carlton Dotson was being transported back to Waco on Tuesday, three months after he was arrested in Maryland in the shooting death of a former teammate, an official said.

Dotson, 21, will face another arraignment and bail review hearing in Waco. He was flown to Austin on Tuesday afternoon from Maryland and was being driven to Waco.

Dotson was indicted in August in the slaying of Patrick Dennehy, 21, who had been missing six weeks when his body was found July 25 in a field near a rock quarry south

of Waco. The 6-foot-10 player, who shared his apartment with Dotson since April, had been shot twice in the head.

Dotson had been fighting extradition since his July 21 arrest in his home state, where he returned in June after leaving Baylor.

Early Tuesday, Dotson left the jail in Chestertown, Md., 55 miles from his hometown of Hurlock on Maryland's Eastern Shore, said Joseph Flanagan, assistant state's attorney in Kent County. Texas authorities arrived in Maryland earlier this week to prepare for the transfer of Dotson, Flanagan said. Dotson has appeared in court three times as officials shuffled extradition paperwork between Texas and Maryland. Last month, Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich signed a warrant agreeing to turn Dotson over to prosecutors in Texas.

FDA formally declares new steroid illegal

WASHINGTON — The newly unmasked steroid causing a furor in athletics is an illegal drug, not a dietary supplement, and poses some serious health risks to people who use it, the Food and Drug Administration warned Tuesday.

U.S. doping authorities first learned about the steroid, called THG, this summer after an anonymous tip. It apparently was designed specifically to be undetectable by the standard test given to athletes.

Europe's fastest man — 100-meter champion Dwain Chambers of Britain — has admitted taking it, and dozens of top Olympic and professional athletes have been subpoenaed to testify before a federal grand jury probing a California lab that sold alleged nutritional supplements. Now armed with a THG test, sports organizations are scrambling to retest athletes and decide what penalties to impose for its use.

Anabolic steroids are synthetic versions of the male hormone testosterone. Some are approved by the FDA to sell, by prescription only, to treat certain muscle-wasting diseases. But athletes use them illegally to bulk up.

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

Afghan militias cling to power in north

By Pamela Constable

MAZAR-E SHARIF, Afghanistan (*Washington Post*)—The Balkh Gate looks like any other traffic post along a busy rural highway. Bored police run an eye over crammed minibuses, poke their rifles among wheat sacks piled atop farm trucks, and then wave the vehicles on into this provincial capital.

But the gate is a valuable, hotly contested piece of political and military turf that has just been liberated, under considerable national and foreign pressure, from the clutches of local militia forces who squeezed hefty fees from drivers and protected the movement of their allies' men and weapons through the area.

"It's much better now," said Nasrullah, 25, a driver whose wheezing truck full of wheat, beans and farmhands was being inspected at the gate Sunday. "The old police forced me to pay about 50 Afghanis [\$1] every time I came into the city. The new ones treat us much better, and they say I don't have to pay anything at all."

As part of an Oct. 9 cease-fire agreement between northern Afghanistan's two long-feuding militia bosses, Gen. Abdurrashid Dostum and Gen. Attah Mohammad, a force of 300 newly trained national police officers were brought from Kabul two weeks ago to take over security in Mazar-e Sharif — especially the checkpoints that served as militia chokeholds.

On Sunday, the government of President Hamid Karzai followed with a second, more dramatic move to curb the power of the two regional bosses. Officials announced they would replace the governors and police chiefs of four northern provinces and remove Dostum and Mohammad, giving both men jobs in Kabul, the capital, and joining their armed forces under a new, neutral commander.

"It is time for the north to be governed by the pen, not the gun," Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali told BBC Afghan-language radio Sunday night from this historic city of 1.5 million. Early this month, escalating tensions and scattered clashes between thousands of rival militia troops left at least 50 fighters dead or wounded and sent panic through the city, the capital of Balkh province.

Although both militia chiefs have reportedly agreed to the deal, many Afghans and foreign observers expressed doubt that even a high-level shuffle would bring enduring change to a region that has long been hostage to the brutal whims of ethnic commanders and the turf battles that frequently erupt among them.

For one thing, Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek who heads the left-leaning Jumbish-i-Milli party, and Mohammad, an ethnic Tajik from the Islamic Jamiat-i-Islami party, have been adversaries for well over a decade. Mohammad essentially controls Mazar-e Sharif, while Dostum has more forces in the countryside. Truces have been negotiated a dozen times, and the two men once signed a pact in Mecca, to no avail.

9-11 attacks planned in Afghanistan, German says

HAMBURG, Germany (*Reuters*)—The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks were planned by al Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan rather than by a suspected extremist cell in Hamburg, a German intelligence official said yesterday.

Heinz Fromm, head of Germany's domestic intelligence service, told a court he believed the plan to hijack planes and crash them into U.S. landmarks was first hatched by al Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan.

Defense lawyers for a Moroccan accused of supporting the suicide hijackers said Fromm's testimony undermines prosecutors' assertions that an al Qaeda cell in Germany planned the 2001 attacks.

Abdelghani Mzoudi, a 30-year-old electrical engineering student from Morocco, is charged with 3,066 counts of aiding and abetting murder and membership in a terrorist organization, a Hamburg-based al Qaeda cell.

Prosecutors say the independent Hamburg cell was involved in planning, preparing and carrying out the attacks from the early summer of 1999. But Fromm said his agency believed that the three Hamburg-based suicide pilots were recruited by al Qaeda during their stay in Afghanistan at the end of 1999.

Fromm said Mohamed Atta, who flew the first plane into the World Trade Center, and two other pilots, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah, had wanted to join a holy war against non-Muslims. He said they had thought of going to Chechnya to fight Russians, but subsequently settled on Afghanistan.

He said they were recruited there for the Sept. 11 attacks "because they could speak English and knew the ways of the Western world."

"Do you think he'll trade that for an E-tool?"



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By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support