

Special Forces takes care of its own

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Beebe
CJSOTF-A

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – Under a special contract, the U.S. Army Special Forces has made arrangements for Atlas Telecommunications to visit Bagram Air Field and several locations throughout Afghanistan and make life much better for the Special Forces troops living there and in the outlying firebases.

Atlas is a Systems Integrator focusing mainly on military clients, providing wireless communications, microwave radio frequency (RF), ultra-high frequency (UHF), very high frequency (VHF) and satellite communications to troops stationed all around the world.

They have been contracted to make available broadband wireless internet systems with high speed Internet services, Internet Protocol (IP) telephone services to U.S. service members in Afghanistan, starting with the Special Forces main camp at Bagram Air Base and then to eight of the outlying firebases.

Atlas will bring with them to each site, equipment made in Virginia (satellite modems) and South Carolina (satellite dishes) and in a matter of a few hours have set up and made operational the system to provide toll free calling to the United States as well as the ability to call the main camp at Bagram or the other firebases that are connected to the same system. Along with the Internet Protocol telephone services come the high-speed Internet connec-



Atlas is a Systems Integrator focusing mainly on military clients, providing wireless communications, microwave radio frequency (RF), ultra-high frequency (UHF), very high frequency (VHF) and satellite communications to troops stationed all around the world.

See SPECIAL, Page 3

SAM hits cargo jet; ops continue in Iraq

Story by Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Baghdad International Airport was closed to all civilian traffic after a DHL cargo aircraft was hit by surface-to-air missiles Nov. 22, coalition officials said during a press conference today in Baghdad, Iraq.

Three U.S. soldiers also were killed in Iraq, said Army Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, deputy operations director for Combined Joint Task Force 7. Kimmitt said gunfire was involved in the

deaths of the soldiers, but would not comment further.

Coalition officials said the airport will continue to receive military flights, but flights by civilian aircraft carrying military supplies and humanitarian goods cannot use the facility. Kimmitt said the civilian DHL aircraft reported an emergency south of Baghdad and made an emergency landing. The three-member crew is safe, he said.

The plane apparently was hit by a surface-to-air missile launched from an area south of the airport. There was extensive damage to the left wing of the aircraft, Kimmitt said. U.S. Air Force

personnel are investigating the incident.

The general said coalition offensive operations continue the length and breadth of Iraq. He said the attacks anti-coalition forces are launching on coalition troops are “insignificant.” Kimmitt said the coalition is facing an enemy that cannot defeat it militarily. “In engagement after engagement, we see the enemy breaking off and running away,” he said. “Militarily, their attacks are insignificant against coalition forces.”

See IRAQ, Page 4

English/Dari phrase of the day: *Thank you, I'm fine - Tashakor man khub hastam*

World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



The United States is considering handing some duties over to former members of the Iraqi army.

Rumsfeld: Officials mull recalling Iraqi army units

WASHINGTON – Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Tuesday that the Pentagon and the Coalition Provisional Authority are discussing the feasibility of recalling some Iraqi army units as high as the mid-officer rank.

Rumsfeld was responding to a question about a letter from two senators to President Bush about the “need to speed up the process by which Iraqis assume greater responsibility for their own security.”

“It is a question that is moving around in the department and in the Coalition Provisional Authority, and I believe possibly with the [Iraqi] Governing Council, and it’s complicated,” Rumsfeld said.

He said some former Iraqi soldiers have been hired to work in the police, civil defense and border security forces.

He said he did not know if it is “possible to actually reach back in and see if units below some officer level” – but not too close to the Saddam Hussein regime – can be brought back, but the discussion is taking place.

Rumsfeld did not specify what the top officer level might be but said some people have mentioned lieutenant, captain or colonel.

The letter from Sens. Carl Levin, a Michigan Democrat, and Richard Lugar, an Indiana Republican, was written two weeks ago and released Tuesday.

It said the new Iraqi army, “which is being created from scratch, currently has less than 1,000 members. We cannot afford to transfer security functions to Iraqis at that slow a pace. The quicker we get the New Iraqi Army in place, the more security we are likely to have and the better-off Iraq will be.”

The senators also pointed out that Iyad Allawi, who was presiding officer of the Iraqi Governing Council at the time, wrote an opinion article in *The New York Times* last month that called for the recall of Iraqi Army units at the mid-officer level and below.

The senators said those ranks contained soldiers “that Saddam Hussein did not trust” and that “refused to fight for him.

“They would have to be vetted, of course, to remove high-ranking Baathists,” the letter said, referring to the regime’s political movement.

Yemen arrests al Qaeda leader

(CNN) – Yemeni security officials Tuesday arrested a senior al Qaeda leader who played a major role in planning the deadly October 2000 terror attack on the USS Cole, the official Yemeni news agency *Saba* reported.

The news agency said Mohammed Hamdi al-Ahdal surrendered to security forces after they surrounded a home where he was hiding west of Sanaa, the capital of Yemen.

“He had to give himself up to police,” an Interior Ministry source was quoted as saying.

U.S. intelligence officials confirmed al-Ahdal was captured by Yemeni security forces.

According to the *Saba* report, al-Ahdal received about \$500,000 from sources outside Yemen to fund terror attacks inside the Arab nation.

The report said he had a primary planning role in the attack on the USS Cole, in which an explosives-laden dinghy blew up and ripped a hole in the side of the ship, killing 17 U.S. sailors.

Authorities said that attack was spearheaded by al Qaeda leader Ali Qaed Senyan al-Harhi, who was killed last year when an unmanned CIA drone fired a Hellfire missile on his car in eastern Yemen.

The *Saba* report said al-Ahdal was the “main partner” of al-Harhi.

U.S. intelligence officials said al-Ahdal remains in the custody of Yemeni security forces. One official called the capture “important.”

The officials said al-Ahdal is a significant player with the terrorist group in Yemen, where he has been involved in planning past operations. He is “well worth capturing,” one official said. U.S. officials do not expect al-Ahdal to be turned over to the United States because he is

wanted for crimes in Yemen and is a Yemeni citizen.

The U.S. officials said that while al-Ahdal is an important figure in the Yemeni branch of al Qaeda, they do not believe he is the No. 2 person in the terror group there. Yemen is the ancestral home of Osama bin Laden.



Dru Sjodin went missing late Saturday, after leaving work. Police believe she may be abducted.

Hundreds show up to search for missing college student

GRAND FORKS, North Dakota – Hundreds of volunteers lined up Tuesday to join the search for a University of North Dakota student who has been missing since Saturday. Police believe she may have been abducted.

Dru Sjodin, a 22-year-old senior in graphic arts from Pequot Lakes, Minn., was last seen late Saturday afternoon, as she was leaving the Columbia Mall in Grand Forks where she worked.

Her mother, Linda Walker, said her daughter was talking to her boyfriend on her cell phone about 5 p.m. Saturday when her boyfriend heard her say, “Oh, my God.” Walker said the phone then went dead.

On Tuesday morning, the volunteers were given identification badges and assigned to teams, then bused to an area east of the city to search for Sjodin.

“I was up all night, because I’ve just been itching to get out and do this,” said Jerrod Arneson, one of the searchers. “You never think something like this would happen here, and when it does, you want to do something.”

The search was concentrated on an area around Fisher, Minn., east of Grand Forks, where police had traced a call from Sjodin’s cell phone.

SPECIAL, from Page 1

tions that will speed up the access and cut down on the wait time for web usage.

There will be only a slight delay when speaking to the phones in America. In fact, there will be a longer delay when speaking to somebody here in this country because the transmission has to go over to the U.S. off the satellite and then back up to the satellite to get back here. Voice phones take more bandwidth than data exchange, so there will be fewer phones available than there are data ports for computers.

The crew from Atlas comes from a wide and varied background:

Don Baker, company vice president, comes from California but now splits his time between Virginia and Dubai.

Ghassan Housainy is originally from Iraq, at As Nafal near Baghdad.

Tameerlan Agilayev is from Kazakhstan and Mohammed Ismail and Daya Shankar are both from India.

They are all based in Dubai and travel extensively.

This team has made arrangements to travel to selected firebases and set up equipment to provide broadband connectivity to the SOF personnel in the field, where there has been little service available. The teams at the firebases have Internet access that is spotty at best, and they are allowed one 15-minute period per week on the Iridium satellite phones that the teams have with them.

The system at Firebase Chapman at Khowst took only two hours and 15 minutes to set up and make totally operational from start to finish. The men at Firebase Chapman were fully prepared when the Atlas team arrived. They had an area leveled and prepared for the 2.4-meter satellite dish, with 60 or so sandbags already filled ready for stability on the feet of the base. A plan had been laid out for where each of the phones were going and which common area in the camp was to be set up with drop lines for the Internet access computers.

“We set a new record for setup. We usually time each setup and this one went fast because of all the preparation the Special Forces team had already made. We pulled the dish and the hardware out of the box, assembled it in place, hooked up the spectrum analyzer to fine-tune its aiming position at its proper azimuth and correct declination to look for (the satellite),” said Don Baker. “We started with a bit of a set-back when we discovered a bag of mounting and assembly bolts for the dish was missing. But, luckily, I had included an extra set in our kit bag, so we were soon right back on track.”

The Atlas crew, with help from the Special Forces, Civil Affairs and PSYOP soldiers stationed at Chapman Field, ran a twin ‘Comscope’ coaxial cable from the satellite dish into the team’s common area where the modem and switching equipment was placed, along with a Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) which allows for one and one half hours of operation without power as well as acting as a surge protector and power stabilizer for the system.

By the time the dish was assembled, the sandbags had been delivered and unloaded, ready to be placed on the base of the dish system. Mr. Ghassan Housainy then connected his laptop and started running diagnostics of the system before shortly announcing that all was well and they could start using the system.

“I am really looking forward to e-mail with sanity – I have tried for two straight days to log on with no luck. It is very intermittent. Getting the IP



The system at Firebase Chapman at Khowst took only two hours and 15 minutes to set up and make totally operational from start to finish. The men at Firebase Chapman were fully prepared when the Atlas team arrived.

phone is a real bonus, as we are lucky to get five good minutes of talk time after getting set up and connected with the Iridium. Plus the cost for this phone is something ridiculous like \$5 or \$7 per minute,” said Sgt. Jay Christian, Civil Affairs Team at the firebase at Khowst.

Several telephones were unpacked and set out on 3.3 meter connecting cords. It is a simple process to dial your home area code and home phone number. These are high end phones with a full range of services, like voice messaging, call waiting and all the other features modern phones now have available. Soon there will be much longer phone cords run and strung to reach the areas already set up for the communication that will soon be flowing across the skies back and forth between loved ones.

“When you are connected it is like you are just down the block. The first thing my wife said was, ‘When did you get back to the States?’” said Sgt. Maj. Hallam, of Firebase Chapman. “There is no delay and it is very clear.”

This scene repeats itself at each firebase, with the only difference being the stages of preparation on the ground. This situation is totally mission dependant for the teams getting the system. Some of the firebases are more involved with patrols and missions to dedicate much time in preparation and setup.

The Atlas team returns to Bagram for a short layover before heading to the southern end of Afghanistan, installing the system at three more firebases there during the next 15 days.

“The customers are very happy and they are stacked up like cordwood, waiting to get on the phone or get on-line. We had guys coming up to us as we are loading out in Deh Rawod, profusely thanking us and saying that this was the best Christmas present ever!,” said Baker.

Other organizations, realizing the benefits of the system are in contractual negotiations with Atlas to bring the team back into the country to install this modern communication system for more elements of the Task Force in Afghanistan.

IRAQ, from Page 1

Reporters asked how U.S. troops have changed tactics against the enemy that seems to want to get closer to coalition troops. "There are offensive operations that we have conducted recently — Iron Hammer, Ivy Cyclone, Rifle Blitz — that are causing us to get awful close to the enemy as well," Kimmitt said. "Every time we fight them, we win. Our soldiers are not afraid of this enemy. This enemy is not well-trained; he may be clever at times." He said overall the country remains stable, and all forces are on the alert.

Kimmitt provided statistics showing the breadth of coalition efforts in Iraq. Overall, forces made 2,043 patrols, conducted 16 raids and captured 182 men. In the northern part of the country, the 101st Airborne Division also conducted seven "cordon-and-knock" operations and conducted a number of no-notice traffic stops in which 16 individuals were detained. "Two of the individuals were carrying \$81,000 in U.S. cash," Kimmitt said.

Also in the north, another sign of a return to normal was the first passenger train from Syria arriving at the Mosul train station, the general said.

In the Baathist Triangle, soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division continued Operation Ivy Cyclone II. The soldiers captured 12 people. Soldiers also conducted a raid in Baquba and captured a lieutenant general of the former Iraqi army. The soldiers seized rifles, ammunition and documents.

Soldiers also searched an area 15 kilometers east of Balad for two people suspected on launching attacks on coalition personnel. "In all, nine people were captured, along with weapons and ammunition," Kimmitt said.

In Baghdad, the 1st Armored Division has launched the third phase of Operation Iron Hammer. Soldiers conducted 568 patrols and captured more than 40 people.

In the 82nd Airborne Division's sector, raids netted 35 enemy personnel. Kimmitt said those people had 12 Syrian passports and an Egyptian passport.

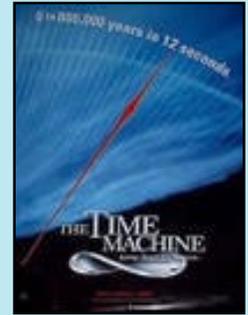
The Multinational Division Central/South based around Hillah conducted a number of patrols and captured 11 Iraqis along with ammunition and weapons. In Basra, the British-led forces also conducted patrols — often with Iraqi police — and detained eight people, Kimmitt said.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

"The Time Machine"

1530Z at the MWR building:
Hoping to alter the events of the past, a 19th century inventor instead travels 800,000 years into the future, where he finds humankind divided into two warring races.

Tomorrow's movie: "Reign of Fire"



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
<u>Bagram:</u>	<i>Clear</i> H: 57F L: 25F	<i>Partly Cloudy</i> H: 55F L: 28F
<u>Kandahar:</u>	<i>Dusty</i> H: 57F L: 36F	<i>Dusty</i> H: 59F L: 36F
<u>Kabul:</u>	<i>Dusty</i> H: 57F L: 30F	<i>Haze</i> H: 57F L: 30F
<u>Uzbekistan:</u>	<i>Partly Cloudy</i> H: 54F L: 28F	<i>Partly Cloudy</i> H: 53F L: 30F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

Freedom Watch falls under the supervision of the Combined Joint Task Force - 180, and is published daily, Monday - Saturday.

- CJTF-180 Commander —
- Brig. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III
- CJTF-180 Command Sergeant Major —
- Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Carey
- Public Affairs Officer —
- Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty
- Public Affairs Sergeant Major —
- Master Sgt. Sharon Opeka

Freedom Watch, an Army newspaper



publication, is produced by the 4th Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

- Commander — Maj. Matthew L. Garner
- NCOIC — Staff Sgt. Keith Thompson
- Editor — Sgt. Stephanie Hall
- Journalists — Sgt. Johnny A. Thompson,
- Sgt. Gregory Heath, Spc. Kelly Hunt

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

Contents of *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.

All submissions are subject to editing for size and content by the 4th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Motel 6, CJTF-180, Bagram Air Base.

Visit the CENTCOM Web site at www.centcom.mil and click on the Freedom Watch or Forces in Afghanistan link at the bottom of the page to get the latest editions of the *Freedom Watch*. To be added to the daily distribution list email HallSTE@baf.cjtf180.army.mil



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *SI.com*)

Skiles expected to be named Bulls coach

CHICAGO – It appears John Paxson is counting on Scott Skiles to toughen up the Chicago Bulls.

The *Chicago Sun-Times* is reporting that the Bulls are expected to name Skiles as their coach at a Friday news conference.

After a disappointing 4-10 start, the Bulls fired Bill Cartwright on Monday and named scout Pete Myers as interim coach.

Myers will run the team for back-to-back games Tuesday and Wednesday at Dallas and San Antonio.

Paxson, the Bulls general manager, vowed that the dismissal of Cartwright “represented the first change, but not necessarily the last.”

Paxson apparently wants a tough-minded disciplinarian after many believed Cartwright was too soft on the players and Skiles appears to fill the bill.

The 39-year-old Skiles compiled a 116-79 record in 2 1/2 seasons as coach of the Phoenix Suns, but probably is best known for his intense demeanor as a player and a coach. He once went after Los Angeles Lakers center Shaquille O’Neal during an altercation and reportedly clashed with Jason Kidd and Rodney Rogers in Phoenix before resigning as coach during the 2000-01 season.



Scott Skiles won 50 games in consecutive seasons with Phoenix.

Beamer to stick with Randall as team’s only quarterback against Virginia

BLACKSBURG, Va. – Virginia Tech’s rotating quarterback experiment is finished and Bryan Randall will be the only quarterback scheduled to play against Virginia, coach Frank Beamer said.

Randall, a junior, has started every game this season for the Hokies (8-3), but yielded the position to Marcus Vick for most of games against Miami and Pittsburgh.

Randall also took a seat for the second quarter of games at Temple and against Boston College, the latter after the Hokies rolled up 238 yards in the first quarter, took a 17-10 lead on the first play of the second quarter and seemed poised to roll.

Instead of keeping the red-hot Randall in the game, Beamer sent Vick out for the first drive in the second quarter. The Hokies lost their offensive rhythm and managed just 47 yards in the next two quarters. The Eagles rallied for a 34-27 victory.

Later, a seething Randall was left watching his words, but wondering if he would be part of a continuing quarterback situation with Vick for all of next season, too.

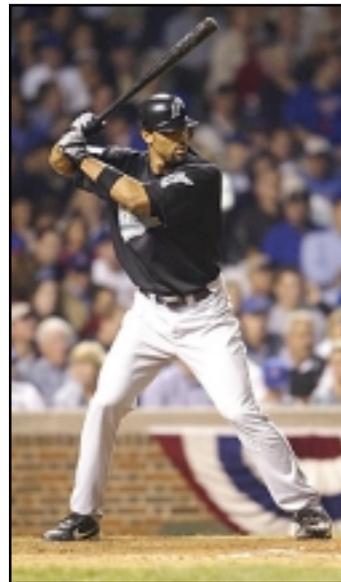
Beamer put that possibility to rest, at least for this week, and said Tuesday that he’s not really interested in rehashing coaching decisions about the quarterbacks.

“Every decision that was made about our quarterback situation was well thought out, much talked about. We as a coaching staff thought we were doing the right thing and that’s the way it is,” he said. “You learn from it and go on to play Virginia.”

Beamer also said the decision is not a reflection on Vick’s future.

“I can tell you that I have great confidence in Marcus Vick. I think he’s had a little bit of bad luck to be honest with you,” Beamer said, listing a touchdown pass that was called back against Temple and what looked like pass interference that was not called against Pittsburgh, depriving the Hokies of a crucial late completion.

Marlins trade Lee to Cubs for Choi



Derrek Lee batted .341 with five home runs and 20 RBIs in September, then had 15 hits and eight RBIs in the postseason.

CHICAGO – The breakup of the Florida Marlins has begun.

The World Series champions traded first baseman Derrek Lee to the Chicago Cubs on Tuesday in a cost-cutting measure, getting Hee Seop Choi and a minor leaguer to be named.

More deals could follow.

“There were two main reasons for the move. One is, obviously, we need to achieve our goal of operating within our payroll,” Marlins general manager Larry Beinfest said. “Two, we want to make sure we have the appropriate allocations to retain our core pitching.”

The Marlins insist their offseason changes won’t be as drastic as the ones after they won their first World Series title in 1997.

That team wasn’t just broken up, it was blown up, with the best pieces stripped and sold to the highest bidder like so many spare parts.

But Florida does have to watch its budget. It won the World Series with a \$54 million payroll, and it would cost more than \$80 million just to keep the current squad intact.

Second baseman Luis Castillo, catcher Ivan Rodriguez and closer Ugueth Urbina are all free agents. Third baseman Mike Lowell, right fielder Juan Encarnacion and starting pitchers Brad Penny and Mark Redman are among a long list of players eligible for salary arbitration.

Lee also is eligible for arbitration, and his salary is expected to go from \$4.25 million to at least \$6 million. By trading him, the Marlins said they were able to offer right-hander A.J. Burnett a contract.

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

Copter crash blamed on engine failure

By Thomas Wagner

BAGRAM, Afghanistan (AP) – Engine failure, not enemy fire, may have downed a U.S. transport helicopter in Afghanistan, Pentagon officials said yesterday, as soldiers at the scene searched the burned wreckage of the crash that killed five U.S. servicemen.

The MH-53 transport helicopter, which can carry up to 55 people, crashed Sunday just after leaving Bagram Air Base to support a special military operation by the U.S.-led coalition in northeastern Afghanistan. Eight soldiers also were wounded.

U.S. military officials at Bagram and Central Command in Tampa, Fla., had been investigating the cause – including whether it was shot down by rocket fire from pro-Taliban militants.

But at the Pentagon, officials said yesterday there was no indication the helicopter was hit by hostile fire. Some sort of engine problem may have caused the crash, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

At the scene, against a backdrop of snow-topped mountains and hills, between 15 and 20 U.S. soldiers guarded and searched the burned-out copter. It crashed in pieces near a river that runs through a small farming village deep in the Bagram region, only seven miles from the U.S. air base.

Afghan Muslim villagers looking on said they saw the chopper crash just before sunset Sunday as they ended their daily fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

“I saw the helicopter crashing, breaking into pieces and catching fire. Part of it fell into the riverbed here,” Maraj Jan said, adding he did not see anything strike the aircraft.

At Bagram Air Base, U.S. military spokesman Maj. Richard Sater said the aircraft had just left the base in support of Operation Mountain Resolve, launched by U.S. and Afghan soldiers Nov. 7 in eastern Nuristan and Kunar provinces. He refused to say how many soldiers the copter was carrying, or whether it was dropping off or picking up coalition forces.

“It certainly is tragic,” Sater said of the crash.

At a news conference in the capital, Kabul, Foreign Ministry spokesman Omar Samad said: “The Afghan people are saddened by this tragic event.”

Bagram Air Base, just north of Kabul, is home to most of the 11,600 coalition forces in Afghanistan. An additional 5,500 international peace-keepers patrol the capital.

Two U.S. men sentenced to 18 years in plot to help Taliban wage war

LOS ANGELES (AFP) – Two admitted conspirators got 18-year prison terms for plotting to help Afghanistan’s Taliban wage war against the United States, justice officials told *AFP*.

Judge Robert Jones, sitting in the northwest U.S. city of Portland, Ore., branded Jeffrey Battle, 33, and Patrice Lumumba Ford, 32, “first class traitors” after they admitted to conspiring to help the Taliban fight

U.S. forces, prosecutors said.

“They are traitors,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles Gorder told *AFP* after the pair admitted to a single charge of seditious conspiracy under a plea bargain deal.

“It was what the judge called them: first class traitors,” Gorder said.

“They have some kind of twisted notion of their religion. They were fascinated by fighting in the jihad.”

Battle and Ford admitted planning to travel to Afghanistan to fight alongside members of al Qaeda’s terror network and the Taliban against U.S. forces, the U.S. Justice Department said.

The pleas by the pair, both Muslims and U.S. citizens, brought to six the number of members of the so-called Portland terror cell who have confessed to charges in connection with helping the fundamentalist Taliban and al Qaeda.

Ford also admitted that after the Sept. 11 attacks on U.S. targets, he purchased a shotgun and then conducted weapons training on two occasions at a gravel pit in Washington state, with other co-defendants.

The pair also admitted flying to China with several other defendants in an unsuccessful attempt to enter Pakistan, en route to Afghanistan.

