

Ghazni PRT continues efforts in Petaw

Story and photos by Spc. Kelly Hunt
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – Troops from the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team continued to make their good intentions known as they ventured to Petaw Village Dec. 15 to discuss security issues in the area and to be updated on the villagers' concerns.

"Today's mission was to go back to Petaw Village, talk to the villagers and to follow up on the well project," said Lt. Col. Mark Schnur, Ghazni PRT commander.

The well project that had been approved for the area was one of the major reasons for the visit, he said. The area had been greatly affected by the lack of water, which is evident in the lack of agriculture and overwhelming amount of stomach problems experienced by villagers throughout the area.

"The people here need a well, deserve a well," said Schnur. "We hope to get them that well as soon as possible."

Construction for the well had been ap-



Capt. Dan Verich, Ghazni PRT operations officer helps distribute games and other humanitarian aid to villagers from Petaw Village during a humanitarian aid effort Dec 15.

proved and a contractor has been chosen. The only problem holding up the immediate drilling for the well was the template they had to work with.

"Two days ago, we started drilling," said Capt. Dan Verich, Ghazni PRT operations of-

ficer during a meeting with the elders from Petaw Village. "He tells me that the ground was much harder than we thought and he has to go to Kabul to get bigger equipment be-

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Soldier gets surprise Christmas call from U.S. President

Story and photo by Spc. Kelly Hunt
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – One coalition troop stationed at Bagram Air Field had an extra-special Christmas as a call came in for him from President George W. Bush to wish him and his fellow service members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sgt. Adam Jones, Marine forces element, Combined Joint Military Task Force- 180, was one of the 10 troops, two from each service, who received the surprising phone call Christmas morning from America's leader.

"It was a once in a lifetime deal," said Jones. "He said he'd like to



Sgt. Adam Jones

thank (me) and everybody that I work with for (our) hard work and dedication."

Jones was one of the many troops stationed overseas who volunteered to serve in the Global War On Terrorism and Bush thanked him for his sacrifice and patriotism to his country.

Bush then told Jones to tell his wife and his daughter that he and Laura wish them both a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

To add to the already exciting experience, the operator at the White House then connected Jones to his wife, allowing him to wish his family a happy holiday. The

White House also called his hometown newspaper to share the memory of President Bush's phone call with those who care about him.

It was a good experience, Jones said.

World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



U.S. Army soldiers with the 4th Infantry Division monitor a mosque in Tikrit on Monday.

Papers: Saddam revealing information on guns, money

AMMAN, Jordan – A member of the Iraqi Governing Council told two Arabic newspapers that Saddam Hussein has given interrogators information about where he has hidden money and how to find weapons arsenals used by those attacking coalition forces.

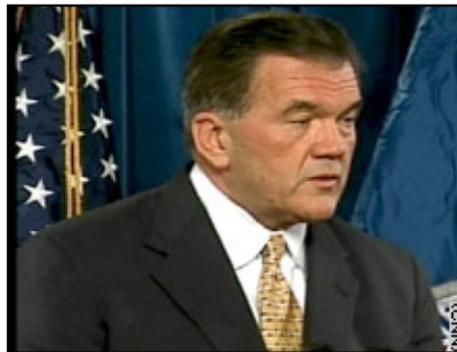
The Arab dailies *Asharq Al-Awsat* and *Al-Hayat* reported Monday that Dr. Iyad Allawi told them in interviews the former Iraqi leader admitted he invested stolen Iraqi money – which the Iraqi Governing Council estimates at \$40 billion – in Switzerland, Japan and Germany, among others, under fictitious company names.

Allawi also told the papers that Saddam is giving the “names of people who know the location of hidden arsenals used in terrorist attacks against coalition forces and the Governing Council.”

Allawi is quoted saying, “Saddam Hussein’s trial would not be public since he could name countries and persons whom he gave money.”

Allawi, who is heading security issues at the Iraqi Council, estimated the number of “terrorists coming from abroad who are carrying out attacks in Iraq” at more than 5,000.

Saddam surrendered to U.S. troops on Dec. 13 from the bottom of a narrow, dark hole beneath a two-room mud shack on a sheep farm in Adwar, about 15 kilometers (nine miles) from Tikrit, Saddam’s ancestral home.



Ridge: “We are at war – war against an enemy driven by hate.”

U.S. steps up air security because of possible threats

WASHINGTON – Although there were no terror attacks during the Christmas holiday, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said Monday his agency is just as concerned about the possibility of an attack “this week as we were last week.”

He said the nation would remain on high alert (orange) through at least the New Year’s holiday, and possibly for several weeks thereafter.

Ridge made his comments as he announced that the Department of Homeland Security has ordered international air carriers to place armed government officers on some flights to the United States.

Under the measure, the cargo and passenger carriers are required to place air marshals on flights when requested by the U.S. government, or possibly face the denial of landing rights.

Ridge said such measures would be taken when intelligence indicates a possible threat.

“We will ask whenever we think it’s appropriate,” he said, adding that the new air security policy is “effective immediately.”

With the nation on heightened terror alert, Ridge urged Americans to go about their lives this week – attend the traditional college bowl games, revel in New Year’s festivities and fly on airlines without fear.

U.S. airlifts disaster aid into Iran

WASHINGTON – Two U.S. military cargo planes have landed in Iran, carrying the first of more than 200 personnel and over 150,000 pounds of medical supplies to provide emergency assistance for the victims of Friday’s earthquake that killed thousands in Bam, Iran.

Two U.S. military C-130 planes landed at Kerman airfield Sunday morning, about 120 miles from Bam, airport officials said. A third plane was expected to follow shortly, with at least two other flights arriving later.

The earthquake – with a magnitude of 6.6 – hit the ancient city before dawn, killing between 5,000 and 20,000 people. As many as 30,000 people are believed to have been injured, the Interior Ministry said.



Mohamed ElBaradei, left, and Libyan Foreign Minister Abdel-Rahman Shalqam meet in Tripoli, Libya, this weekend.

ElBaradei: Libya nuclear program dismantled

TRIPOLI, Libya – Libya’s nuclear program was years away from producing a nuclear weapon and has been dismantled, International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei said Monday.

ElBaradei, who completed a tour of four previously undisclosed sites in Tripoli, said it was a revelation to learn how Libya bought nuclear materials for its program through the black market.

“The program is very much at an early stage of development, where it is right now ... quite dismantled in fact. It’s all in boxes,” ElBaradei said. “They were far away from having an industrial-scale enrichment capability.”

An aide to Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi said ElBaradei also met with Gadhafi for about 30 minutes Monday. He did not characterize the discussion or give any details.

An aide to ElBaradei said inspectors spent about three hours doing initial inspections of four sites around Tripoli.

More detailed inspections are scheduled to follow in coming days and weeks, the aide said.

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fore he can come back down and start drilling.”

Verich assured the village elders that the well would not be the end of their efforts to better the lives of those in the area.

“We would like to start by helping Petaw as much as we can and then hopefully we can help more villages later,” said Verich. “We can only help one village at a time and we will try to help more as we build the PRT and become more operational.”

In addition to the well, troops discussed the role they hope to play in Ghazni District.



Spc. Edward Maxa from the Civil Military Operations Center sector of the Ghazni PRT, unloads boxes from a van in Petaw Village Dec. 15 with the help of villagers during a humanitarian aid distribution effort.

“One of the main objectives of the Ghazni PRT is to help with stability and security,”

said Verich to the elders.

He told the villagers that though troops are not there in full force now, they soon will be once construction for the PRT is completed. Verich assured the elders that PRT troops will do their best to offer the area a secure, friendly, terrorist free environment so they can take their minds off defending themselves and onto building up a peaceful area.

“The visit went really well,” said Verich. “The province of Ghazni is a big one and just to be able to make an impact on any part of the province is a good thing. We were able to do that in the village of Petaw.”

Kabul IT team keeps communications flowing

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy M. Williams
211th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KABUL, Afghanistan – “My computer’s not working, I’m not getting any e-mails and my cell phone keeps losing connection,” are just a few complaints the communications department hears at the Kabul Compound.

Capt. Marshall I. Geyer, director of information technology (IT), or CJ6, is responsible for communications security, including management and support of all cryptographic networks. He also provides help desk support, advice and assistance for all communication matters in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

“Essentially I manage and lead a team of IT professionals to provide communications throughout the area. By communications I mean Internet, classified and unclassified, cell phone communications and DSN communications,” Geyer said. “Basically, if it has anything to do with talking from one person to another it comes through us.”



Sgt. Joel A. Candelario, 213th Area Support Group, out of Allentown, Pa., is an automation NCO for CJ6. He provides help desk support and networking assistance for communication matters in Kabul.

Geyer, from Georgetown, Texas, is a member of the Texas Army National Guard where works as a liaison officer for 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. In his civilian job, he manages a server design and development team in the Research and Development department at Dell Computers in Round Rock, Texas.

“I really enjoy working here and helping this organization. When I first got here, the server side and automation was barely operational. We’ve put a lot of effort into building up the automation piece of it,” Geyer said.

Geyer and his team mostly focus is on automation. Automation includes networking and server management, which is how the computers talk to each other, similar to e-mail.

“What’s unique is that I’ve never worked in a production environment before,” Geyer said. “At Dell, I’m in research and development and no one is actually using the stuff. It’s all stuff that will be used in the future, so I normally don’t get to interface with users.”

One soldier that works with Geyer in the CJ6 office is Sgt. Kenneth R. McGrew, from Lexington, Ky. McGrew is a full time student majoring in Sociology at the University of Kentucky and a member of the Kentucky Army National Guard with the 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery Regiment (Mobile Launching Rocket System).

McGrew, whose regular job for the Army is as a cannon crewmember, was assigned as an information systems operator for CJ6 while here in Kabul. His main duty is to help handle computer work orders and solve computer problems. His biggest obstacle is learning to pick up the duties as a computer specialist.

“When I first arrived here, I reported to the personnel desk and was told I was going to work with CJ6. My initial reaction was, ‘What’s CJ6?’” McGrew said. “They mentioned it was working with computers and that they would teach me everything.”

McGrew has had to learn a new Military Occupational Specialty while on the job. He’s learned by reading, following Geyer, asking

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questions and on the job training.

Geyer and his team have also helped develop and manage three websites. One is for the Kabul Compound, another for the Office of Military Cooperation for Afghanistan and the third, of particular note, is for the Afghan National Army (ANA).

“The ANA website is now in the approval phase with the Ministry of Defense (MOD). The MOD is the higher headquarters for ANA and they had certain requirements they wanted. There was a lot of information they didn’t want to have on the site, some for security reasons,” Geyer said.

“The website will be in three languages. English, Dari and Pashtun and will help to lend credibility to ANA. It’ll show that ANA is here to stay and they are the Army of Afghanistan.”

Knowing the functions of a computer is essential in the Army today. E-mail capability is a growing trend and rapidly becoming the most common means of communications over local and wide area networks. Wireless communication systems such as radios and satellite communications terminals are also critical.

“When I first joined the Army, each battalion had only one computer that everyone would have to share. Pretty much we did everything on paper with a pen or typewriter. We’ve slowly jumped on the computer bandwagon where we do everything with computers now,” Geyer said.

“For the future, I think you’re going to see the continuance of automation growing and an emphasis in battle combat systems. We are seeing the beginning of a lot more wireless communications, and miniaturizations like computers built into weapons and equipment,” he added.

The experience has given the CJ6 shop something they can be proud of and a sense that they helped make a difference in the war on terrorism.

“One thing I’ve enjoyed is how we worked with coalition forces and other branches and how well we all worked here together,” McGrew said.

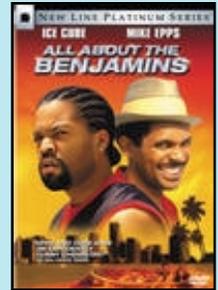
Geyer added, “I think we’ll continue to see the United States and the coalition forces really hosting the Afghan government more so they can take over and take control of their own destiny.”

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

“All About the Benjamins”

1530Z at the MWR building:

A bounty hunter is on the trail of a conman who skipped bail. The two wind up in a deserted warehouse where they witness a diamond scam in action...



Tomorrow’s movie: “Legally Blonde”

Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>
Uzbekistan:	<i>Rain</i> H: 40F L: 29F	<i>Light Snow</i> H: 39F L: 18F
Bagram:	<i>Mostly Cloudy</i> H: 48F L: 27F	<i>Mostly Cloudy</i> H: 45F L: 19F
Kabul:	<i>Mostly Cloudy</i> H: 48F L: 25F	<i>Mostly Cloudy</i> H: 45F L: 19F
Kandahar:	<i>Cloudy</i> H: 64F L: 37F	<i>Mostly Cloudy</i> H: 59F L: 34F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from SI.com)

Virginia wins 2nd straight Tire Bowl

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Matt Schaub capped his career as Virginia’s most prolific quarterback by taking a knee on his second consecutive Continental Tire Bowl victory.

Larry Fitzgerald could only watch from the Pittsburgh sidelines, hands on his hips in yet another disappointing loss in what might have been the final game for one of the greatest players in Panthers history.

Virginia made it 2-for-2 in the 2-year-old Tire Bowl by using solid defense to snap Fitzgerald’s record touchdown streak at 18 games in a 23-16 victory on Saturday.

“We have worked very hard to become a significant defensive team and we knew stopping Larry Fitzgerald was going to be important,” Cavaliers coach Al Groh said. “He can do in one or two plays what a 12-play drive usually does, so we put an emphasis on him.”



Charlotte native Alvin Pearman had 104 yards rushing and 32 receiving for the Cavaliers.

Mayor to give Poole key to the city

GREEN BAY, Wis. – Green Bay Packers fans want to thank the person who made the team’s playoff run possible – Arizona wide receiver Nathan Poole – and even the mayor is joining in with an invitation to Sunday’s playoff game.

Poole caught the game-winning touchdown pass as time ran out in Arizona on Sunday to defeat the Minnesota Vikings 18-17. The Vikings’ loss gave the Packers the NFC North title and eliminated Minnesota from the playoffs.

Poole will be celebrated this weekend, when he and his wife travel to Green Bay to attend the Packers’ game Sunday against the Seattle Seahawks with Mayor Jim Schmitt.

“Of course, he’s my favorite non-Packers player,” Schmitt said. “The Packers deserve to be in the playoffs, and the way the system works they wouldn’t have been allowed in without a [Cardinals] victory over the Vikings, and Nathan played a big part of that.”

Schmitt’s invitation took Poole by surprise.

“I heard that the fans in Green Bay were quite some fans, but I didn’t expect this,” he said in a telephone interview Monday with the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*.

He wasn’t even thinking about the Packers when he made his catch at the end of the game.

“I was just trying to get a victory for the team because we’ve

been down,” Poole said.

Schmitt also will give Poole a key to the city.

“Anyone who assists in getting us in the playoffs like Nathan did is a friend of the city,” Schmitt said.

Bryant’s case chosen story of 2003

NEW YORK – The young hotel worker’s accusation was shocking enough: Thrilled by a chance encounter with a celebrity, she went to his room only to be forced over a chair and sexually assaulted.

More startling was the name of the accused: Kobe Bryant.

Exactly what happened behind a locked door at a Colorado resort June 30 probably will be up to a jury to decide next year. But it didn’t take long for the accusations to hurt the reputations of Bryant and his accuser.

Reporters and Bryant’s supporters and bashers flocked to the small mountain town of Eagle, Colo., over the next few months for a series of court appearances that brought out graphic details of the 19-year-old woman’s charges along with revelations about her past.

Even with a trial months away, it became the most-watched case against a celebrity sports figure since O.J. Simpson was charged with murder. It was chosen the story of the year by the newspaper and broadcast members of *The Associated Press*.



Kobe Bryant

Francis ties Dionne on points list

RALEIGH, N.C. – After reaching several milestones the past few seasons in losses, Ron Francis was able to enjoy his latest accomplishment during a win.

The Carolina captain tied for fourth on the NHL’s all-time points list with a goal and the Hurricanes finally solved Buffalo’s Mika Noronen, beating the Sabres 2-1 Monday night.

“The guys are working hard and it’s nice to get it in a game that helps us win,” Francis said when asked about tying Marcel Dionne with 1,771 points. “That’s the most special part about it.”

Carolina won its second straight at the start of a seven-game homestand and improved to 4-2 under new coach Peter Laviolette. All of the wins have been by 2-1 scores.

“It’s a great number, isn’t it?” Francis said of the 2-1 scores. “I was actually getting excited when we had two goals halfway through the second, thinking we might get three or four tonight. In the end, 2-1 was good enough again.”

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

Taliban says it's behind Kabul bombing

By Mike Collett-White

KABUL, Afghanistan (*Reuters*) – Remnants of Afghanistan's ousted Taliban claimed responsibility on Monday for a suicide bombing in Kabul that killed five security officials and two bombers, and vowed more attacks.

Sunday's attack was the worst in Kabul since June, when four German peacekeepers were killed and 31 wounded by a suicide car bomb, and coincided with the final stages of an increasingly acrimonious debate to finalize a post-Taliban constitution.

Now in its third week, the constitutional Loya Jirga, or Grand Assembly, is being watched closely by President Hamid Karzai's backers in the West, but progress has been slow because of noisy complaints that the process is being rushed.

Taliban guerrillas and Islamic militant allies believed to include members of al Qaeda have declared a holy war on foreign forces in Afghanistan and their local partners, and earlier threatened delegates at the Loya Jirga with death.

"A group of 200 mujahideen (holy warriors) has penetrated various Afghan cities," said Mullah Sabir Momin, Taliban deputy operational commander in southern Afghanistan.

"In Kabul alone, 130 trained Taliban are present on suicide missions," he added, speaking by satellite telephone. "They can manufacture powerful bombs with limited resources."

If confirmed, the switch in tactics will be a worry for 5,700 international peacekeepers in Kabul and the 12,000-strong U.S.-led force hunting Taliban and al Qaeda rebels.

The deadliest guerrilla attacks have been in remote areas of the south and east in recent months. Over 400 people have died in the violence since early August, including many rebels.

Defense ministry spokesman Dr Gulbuddin said there appeared to be two attackers involved in Sunday night's blast near the airport, one more than first thought.

Five security officials detained two men after a tip-off, he said. One was carrying explosives in a metal cooking pot and one had explosives wrapped around his body which he set off, killing all seven people in the vehicle.

"We couldn't identify the bodies (of the attackers) because they were blown to pieces, but we know that an Afghan could not have carried out such a suicide attack," said Abdul Jameel of the Kabul police, adding that he suspected Arabs or Pakistanis.

Ten men seized in drug-running ops are being held in Afghan prison

By Robert Burns

WASHINGTON (*AP*) – Ten men captured recently aboard boats carrying drugs in the Persian Gulf area have been taken for questioning to a U.S. prison in Afghanistan, a U.S. defense official said Monday.

They are held on Bagram Air Base north of the Afghan capital of Kabul

and are being questioned about suspected connections to Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda terrorist network, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The U.S. military has more than 100 people in custody at the Bagram facility, U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilfert said recently. Most were captured in Afghanistan as part of the U.S.-led operation to hunt down remnants of the Taliban regime and its al Qaeda supporters.

Three of the 10 men transported to Bagram were captured Dec. 15 by the U.S. Navy aboard a small wooden vessel called a dhow, which the Navy said was carrying nearly two tons of hashish in the Persian Gulf. The Navy said some of the crew were suspected of having al Qaeda connections.

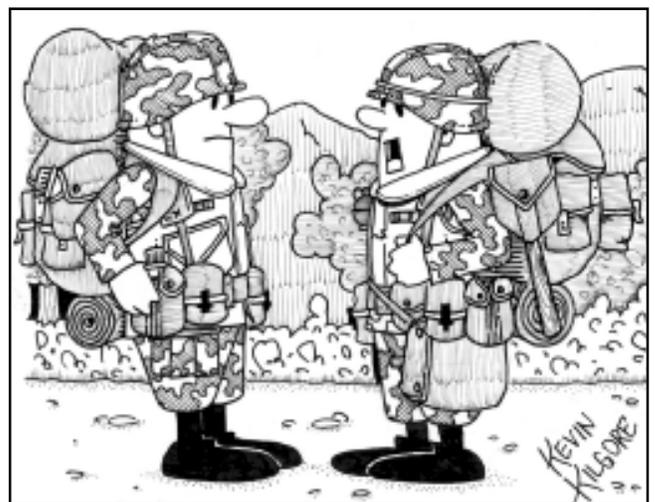
The seven others were captured in a raid Dec. 20 on two other dhows that were sailing in the northern Arabian Sea. U.S. officials said one of the dhows was transporting heroin and the other had methamphetamines. The Navy said at the time that it was investigating potential al Qaeda connections to the drug-running operations.

Australian, British, New Zealand and U.S. air forces tracked the two dhows for two days after receiving intelligence information gleaned from the Dec. 15 seizure.

Terrorism experts and government officials long have said they believe that al Qaeda makes money through criminal enterprises including the drug trade. A United Nations panel reported last month, for example, that al Qaeda had financed some of its operations through drug trafficking.

Before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, bin Laden had been sheltered in Afghanistan by the Taliban, which had clear links to the heroin trade through

"If this is the light infantry, I'd hate to see what the heavy infantry is like."



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By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support