

Freedom Watch

April 3, 2003

Published in the interest of those serving in Operation Enduring Freedom

Bagram, Afghanistan



Photo by Pvt. 2 Terri Rorke

Rolling out the runway...

Slovakian soldiers pour and level concrete on the runway here. In a project with the 527th Engineer Battalion, Louisiana National Guard, the Slovaks are laying down a parking pad and taxiways for additional room. The project is scheduled to be finished within two to three weeks, said 1st Lt. Sean Joyner, 527th Eng. Bn.

U.S. discusses education progress in Gardez

By Pfc. Christina Carde

11th Public Affairs Detachment

GARDEZ, Afghanistan – To continue assisting the citizens of Gardez in rebuilding their community, U.S. forces constantly meet with local officials and dignitaries to ensure progress is being maintained.

In one of these meetings, U.S. civil affairs soldiers and a representative from the Department of State met with the Gardez president of education to discuss problems and progress in one of the cities' most important areas – education.

"I would like to thank the U.S. forces and the United Nations for all of their help in improving our education department," said Gardez President of Education, Haji Moslih. "We are doing our best to put the resources they have given us to good use and will continue to improve education for the people of Gardez."

One of the improvements Moslih was most grateful for was the increase of schools and students in Gardez by more than 100 percent due to U.S. intervention.

"During the rule of the Taliban, we had 24 schools and about 2,000 male students since girls were not allowed to attend school. All of the materials taught were dictated by the Taliban," said Moslih. "Now the U.S. and coalition forces have helped us to increase those

See **EDUCATION**, Page 3

Finance team supports soldiers throughout Afghanistan

By Sgt. Valerie Dey-Bolejck

109th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KABUL, Afghanistan — Every Thursday, soldiers from the Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force disbursing office visit servicemembers throughout Kabul, to cash checks and give casual pay.

The soldiers, airman, and Marines that serve at the Kabul Military Training Center, the Embassy and International Security Assistance Force have no other finance support. Without the team coming weekly, many of them would have no chance to buy souvenirs, necessities from the Post Exchange

in Bagram or mail items home.

The three-man Task Force Devils team is here as a disbursing team, funding local contracts and projects. The soldier support they provide is an additional duty. But every Thursday, the team from Ft. Bragg, N.C., Sgt. 1st Class Cosmos Williamson, Staff Sgt. Isaac Moody and Spc. Asher Wright, pack up to bring a finance office to the troops.

Moody is the accounts payable and finance non-commissioned office in charge. Since he arrived with the advance team of the Task Force Devils, he has been working several different issues to help support the military assigned throughout Afghanistan.

The Thursday trips are merely one way of helping the troops.

Spc. Deborah Humphries, 747th Military Police Company, South Bridge, Mass, is assigned to KMTC and appreciates their efforts, "They come over here and support us. This allows us to get money out of our bank accounts."

At the U.S. Embassy, Lance Cpl. Bill Turner, 36 K Company, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines, Camp LeJeune, N.C., was also very happy for the support the team provides. "It works out pretty well, because sometimes

See **FINANCE**, Page 4

World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



U.S. Army tanks move north near Karbala in central Iraq.

U.S. chopper shot down

CNN — Seven U.S. service members were killed when their Black Hawk helicopter was shot down by small arms fire in southern Iraq, Pentagon officials said late Wednesday. Four others — who were wounded — were rescued.

The crash happened near Karbala, about 50 miles from Baghdad. The city has seen heavy fighting in recent days between coalition forces and Iraqi Republican Guard units.

Coalition forces have pummeled Iraq's Republican Guard, leaving two of six divisions ineffective, Pentagon officials said Wednesday, even as they warned that some of the fiercest fighting lies ahead.

U.S. team hunts WMD evidence

WASHINGTON — A team of U.S. military, CIA and private-contractor personnel are operating at a number of sites inside Iraq in hopes of finding evidence of weapons of mass destruction, terrorist activity and possible war crimes, according to Pentagon sources.

The so-called Intelligence Exploitation Unit is modeled on many of the lessons learned during the war in Afghanistan, when the U.S. military and CIA forces examined hundreds of sites for clues to al Qaeda activities.

However, this effort relies on private contractors with scientific and forensic expertise.

The military, including special operations troops, continues to provide security for the team members as they move to various locations in Iraq. The team hopes to eventually travel to hundreds of sites.

Iraq torture chamber found

ABU AL KHASIB, Iraq — A torture chamber equipped with hooks hanging from ceilings and an on-site electrocution room has been found in the basement of an Iraqi police station, an embedded reporter with the BBC reports.

The reporter said the British Royal Marines from A Company 40 Commando entered the facility — home to Saddam Hussein's dreaded internal security police — looking for clues about local militia groups.

Weapons, maps and other documents were found in the raid in the town of Abu Al Khasib, the BBC reporter said Wednesday. But it was downstairs where they found the torture chamber.

Iraqi official: U.S. is lying

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Coalition forces are not making the progress they tout and have lost more troops and equipment than they admit, Iraq's information minister said Wednesday.

Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf said that U.S.-led forces have not crossed the Tigris River and are not approaching Baghdad. But they have lost significant numbers of troops and equipment, he said.

Al-Sahaf also said that U.S. and British forces are bombing historic and religious sites and flying planes close to a mosque in Najaf to "make vibrations and destroy" important Shiite tombs within that structure.

"They are lying every day. They are lying always, and mainly they are lying to their public opinion," al-Sahaf said. "What they say about a breakthrough is completely an illusion. They are sending their warplanes to fly very low in order to have vibrations on these sacred places.

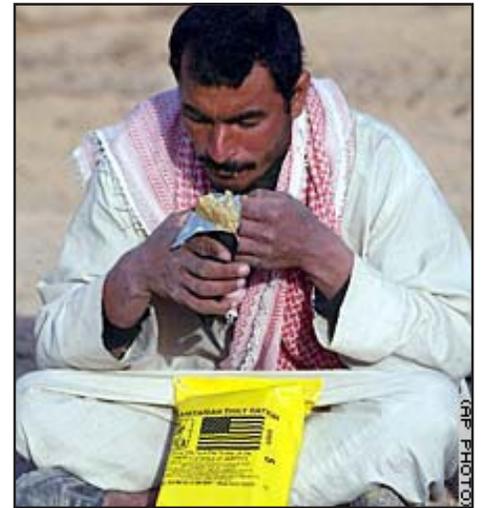
Al-Jazeera suspends correspondents' work in Iraq

DOHA, Qatar — The Arab-language news agency Al-Jazeera reported Wednesday it has suspended the work of all its correspondents in Iraq, after Iraqi officials banned at least one of its employees from

reporting.

It said it will continue to broadcast video from some areas of the country.

A statement read by an Al-Jazeera news anchor said: "The Iraqi Information Ministry told Al-Jazeera office in Baghdad its decision to ban Diar al-Omari, Al-Jazeera's Baghdad correspondent, from practicing his journalistic duties."



An Iraqi civilian detainee eats a humanitarian ration given to him by U.S. Marines Tuesday, southeast of Baghdad.

U.N.: Iraqi children may confuse rations, bomblets

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations warned Wednesday that humanitarian food rations being distributed in Iraq by U.S.-led coalition forces are wrapped in the same yellow packaging as deadly so-called bomblets being airdropped by the coalition.

Bomblets are individual units of cluster bombs and are made of metal. They are shaped like a soft drink can and are packed with high explosives. Cluster bombs contain about 200 small so-called bomblets designed to scatter themselves over a large area, targeting troops and military vehicles.

A written release from the U.N. International Children's Emergency Fund said, "Confusing unexploded ordnance with food places children at huge risk of injury or death. UNICEF urges coalition forces to urgently change the color of these rations."

EDUCATION, from Page 1

numbers to 122 schools and almost 100,000 students, both male and female in attendance.”

In addition to schools, coalition forces also helped Gardez students in other areas to make their learning experience easier.

“The coalition forces supplied us with school supplies for our students such as books, pens and desks,” said Moslih. “They also provided transportation by way of bus for female school children who were afraid to travel on foot.”

However, the coalition forces providing the extra support eventually returned home.

“Now that the forces that helped us are gone, we are experiencing some problems receiving supplies and getting some children to attend school,” said Moslih. “Other problems we are experiencing are lack of fuel for vehicles that is needed to travel long distances to buy supplies and very poor salaries for our teachers.”

Another more recent problem the Gardez education department has had to face, is an investigation by the governor for fraud.

“The construction of many of our new school projects has been halted due to the speculation that we are pocketing funds allotted for contractors who are building the schools,” said Moslih.

“We need the U.S. to make the governor realize that we never see these funds and the contractors are paid directly from the U.S. and non-governmental organizations,” Moslih added.

Capt. Dan Glanz, civil/military affairs officer, 450th CA Battalion (Airborne), Md., empathized with Moslih’s problems and said the U.S. forces would try to do whatever they could to help.

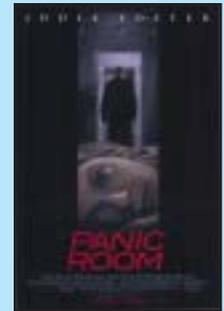
“We understand that transportation, fuel and teachers’ salaries are important to the education progress,” said Glanz. “Unfortunately, we are not authorized to use our funds in these areas at this time.”

“We will however speak to the necessary people and other NGOs to see what we can do about having these amenities re-implemented,” Glanz added.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR building: “Panic Room.” A divorced woman and her daughter, who are trapped inside their New York brownstone when three burglars come looking for a hidden cache of cash. Mother and daughter hide in the “panic room,” a secret room designed for just such a purpose.

Tomorrow’s movie will be “My Big Fat Greek Wedding.”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Bagram:	<i>Dusty</i> H: 61F L: 41F	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 57F L: 37F
Kandahar:	<i>Dusty</i> H: 84F L: 50F	<i>Dusty</i> H: 82F L: 48F
Kabul:	<i>Mostly cloudy</i> H: 55F L: 38F	<i>Fog</i> H: 50F L: 36F
Uzbekistan:	<i>Sunny</i> H: 64F L: 34F	<i>Mostly cloudy</i> H: 69F L: 36F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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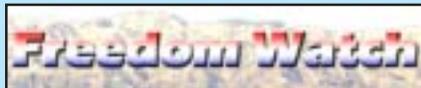
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'Flying Tiger' at the controls again

Pfc. Charles D. Meseke
CTF-82 PAO

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – After a seven-year hiatus, Maj. George vonHilsheimer, a flight surgeon for the 3rd Battalion, 229th Aviation Regiment (Attack), Fort Bragg, N.C., is once again behind the controls of an Apache.

He took his first flight Sunday.

A pilot for seven years in the 90's, vonHilsheimer spent three of those years as a "Flying Tiger" with 3-229.

The flight conjured many emotions for the pilot.

"I was more excited than nervous about flying again — mainly because the person flying with me was my buddy in flight school and is a great pi-



Photo by Pfc. Charles D. Meseke, CTF-82 PAO

Maj. George vonHilsheimer, a flight surgeon, 3rd Battalion, 229th Aviation Regiment (Attack), suits up for a flight in an Apache for the first time in seven years at Bagram Air Base, Sunday.

lot," vonHilsheimer said.

His buddy is Chief Warrant Officer 3 Frank Diaz, chief flight instructor, 3-229.

Though it was his first flight in seven years and he has been through many changes in his

Army career, some traditions never change.

He didn't tell his wife of 11 years, Natalie. He knew that she would be worried, as she was with all of his flights, but he called her as soon as his feet

were firmly on the ground again.

To be able to get back in the seat, vonHilsheimer received special permission. He wanted to gain insight on the challenges the pilots under his care face while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

This is not vonHilsheimer's first time flying in a combat zone. He flew several combat missions during Operation Desert Storm.

The flight was a reminder for vonHilsheimer of many of the great things that the Army has offered him over his career.

"I started off as an 18-year-old paratrooper. I flew Apaches and even went to medical school — all on the Army's dime," vonHilsheimer said. "I even met my wife as a pen-pal during the Gulf War. My blood is probably Army green by now!"

FINANCE, from Page 1

we have the chance to go to the Bazaar around here. It's hard to get money if you leave everything at home, checks and all that. It helps a lot."

Turner doesn't get the opportunity to go to the CJCMOTF compound. Without these trips he has no other way to get money.

There is more to the mission than just cashing check for a soldier. Many of the soldiers are Army Reserve or National Guard members and have had problems with their pay or entitlements.

"I took on an additional role of taking care of all the Reserve pay, National Guard side of the house, that's the main focus right now," Moody said. "Most of the entitlements or the pay issues that the soldiers actually had were stemmed from not being taken care of from their home station." He has been working on pay issues for every one assigned to Afghanistan.

To prevent other pay problems, Moody and the finance team at K2 created a different process. Each soldier's pay had to be



Photo by Sgt. Valerie Dey-Bolejck, 109th MPAD

Staff Sgt. Isaac Moody, Fort Bragg, N.C., (right) processes paperwork for a casual pay.

input each month. Moody says, "Instead of having to regenerate and regenerate, we have a thing now that we are going to pay the soldiers for a period of six months."

Most reservists are on active duty for six months. But if they are on a longer tour, or have been extended, there needs to be paperwork given to finance so their pay continues. Moody says it very important that they go through finance or personnel if their tour is shorter or longer than six months. "Unless they come through finance or to personnel we don't have a hands on, every one is scattered throughout Afghanistan."

Another problem many soldiers faced was getting cash while assigned to a firebase or civil affairs team in the field. Many of the teams only come in once every couple of months. In order to get these soldiers money, Moody started arranging for the pay agents to issue casual pay. This has had a big impact at the outlying areas, "They've been extremely happy," says Moody.

"Being that we are a three-man team, and we support a lot of soldiers, we can't be out to all areas. If we go out to these areas, it means we'll be out of the office, so the mission can't go on like that," said Moody. By giving the pay agents the authorization for casual pay, it supports the soldiers in the field.

Moody says that casual pay is the easiest for most soldiers, since they don't want a lot of money on them or spend a lot of money. "A lot of the young soldiers don't have checking accounts, and prior to their being called up they never thought they'd need checks going to war."

Regardless of whom he serves, his motto is to always be there for any military member. Moody believes in "One team — one fight."



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *ESPN.com*)



Garth Snow made 35 saves for the Islanders but settled for a tie.

No joy in Ranger-ville with this tie

UNIONDALE, N.Y. — The optimist sees the doughnut.

The pessimist sees the hole.

The New York Rangers pulled off a remarkable comeback at Nassau Coliseum on Tuesday night, rallying from two goals back in the third period to tie the Islanders 2-2.

And that would be a purely good thing, if they weren't skating on the brink of missing the playoffs for an unbelievable sixth consecutive season.

The point they picked up, like the season they've played, is just short of good enough.

"We're still in it," said Glen Sather, the Rangers' guru who is in the third year of a rebuilding plan that has yet to reach even the first step toward success. "We showed a lot of character tonight."

Maybe they did, but what does it matter?

The Rangers fell behind in this game, the same way they fell too far behind this year. They have two games left to play and three points to make up on the Islanders, who have three games left.

Alex Kovalev, the kind of flashy player with poor fundamentals that Sather has loved to import, was caught tripping Janne Niinimaa, a foolish move at the worst time, with the Rangers trailing by a goal in a game they were desperate to win.

It was the kind of bad hockey that Sather admitted he would live with when he used the Rangers' rich resources to snag Kovalev from the Pittsburgh Penguins. It's the kind of hockey that costs his team games.

Kovalev's penalty set up Alexei Yashin's power play goal, a blast that pinballed past Rangers goaltender Mike Dunham.

And that left the Rangers ultimately settling for a tie when they needed a win.

For the NHL, no time will be like present

ESPN — No, this won't be the final NHL playoff season before the end of the collective bargaining agreement, which in turn might lead to a work stoppage that lasts about as long as the average obstruction crackdown.

Two, three days. Tops.

It also could last a lot longer. And the safe betting is that it would.

Unless the CBA issue is settled in advance of the expiration of the current agreement — Sept. 14, 2004 — virtually every NHL story line next season will have a labor component, even if that component is an unshakable feeling of dread.

Ever try to go to bed at 9 p.m. because you have to get up at 3:30 a.m. to catch a crack-of-dawn flight or drive to a breakfast meeting? Completely psych yourself out of ever really getting into a deep sleep because of it? Spend all night dozing fitfully and looking at the clock every 11 minutes? Oh, you haven't?

Well, some of us have.

And that's the 2003-04 NHL season and 2004 playoffs are going to feel like — for everyone — if the league and the players association don't knock off this who-blinks-first, gotta-wait-'til-the-pressure's-on attitude about getting a deal done.

See **SPORTS**, Page 6



2002 National Hockey League standings

Eastern Conference

Atlantic

(2x) New Jersey	79 pts
(4x) Philadelphia	80 pts
(8) N.Y. Islanders	79 pts
N.Y. Rangers	80 pts
Pittsburgh	80 pts

Northeast

(1y) Ottawa	80 pts
(5x) Toronto	80 pts
(7x) Boston	80 pts
Montreal	80 pts
Buffalo	79 pts

Southeast

(3x) Tampa Bay	79 pts
(6x) Washington	80 pts
Atlanta	79 pts
Florida	80 pts
Carolina	79 pts

Western Conference

Central

(2x) Detroit	79 pts
(5x) St. Louis	79 pts
Chicago	79 pts
Nashville	80 pts
Columbus	79 pts

Northwest

(3x) Vancouver	80 pts
(4x) Colorado	79 pts
(7x) Minnesota	79 pts
(8x) Edmonton	80 pts
Calgary	79 pts

Pacific

(1y) Dallas	80 pts
(6x) Anaheim	80 pts
Phoenix	79 pts
Los Angeles	79 pts
San Jose	79 pts

x = clinched playoff spot

y = clinched division title

SPORTS, from Page 5

Yes, bringing this up now is playing right into that sky-is-falling mentality, but this also is a sport that has shown a remarkable ability to arrest its own progress.

Thomas scores record 13th overtime goal

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Everyone wants to score the winning goal in overtime. Nobody does it better than Steve Thomas of Anaheim.

Thomas set an NHL record with his 13th overtime goal Tuesday night when he scored his second goal with 52.6 seconds left in the extra period, lifting the Mighty Ducks to a 2-1 victory. The loss extended the Nashville Predators' franchise-worst winless streak to 13 games.

With the goal, Thomas moved ahead of Sergei Fedorov, Mats Sundin and Jaromir Jagr. Thomas, 39, said it's just a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

"I sit on the bench sometimes, and I think I want to be the guy who makes a difference and scores a goal to help your team. That's the mindset I have all the time in overtime. Things happen for me. It's weird," he said.

Thomas, acquired in a trade from Chicago on March 11, has provided a much-needed boost for the Mighty Ducks. He had just four goals in 69 games with Chicago, but he now has scored the winning goal in three games for Anaheim since the trade.

Belfour works overtime for milestone

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Ed Belfour reached another milestone in a career that will go down as one of the greatest for a goaltender.

Belfour became only the seventh NHL goaltender to win 400 regular-season games when the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the New Jersey Devils 3-2 on a goal by Tomas Kaberle in overtime.

"Quiet frankly, 400 is a ton," Maple Leafs coach Pat Quinn said. "Eddie is a top guy in that category.

"He's had a marvelous career. I'm sure it's a wonderful milestone for him. Hopefully there are lots more for him."

Belfour joins Patrick Roy, Terry Sawchuk, Jacques Plante, Tony Esposito, Glenn Hall and Grant Fuhr in the 400-club.

"This is definitely up there," Belfour said. "It's something I feel honored about and I'm thankful that I'm on the Toronto Maple Leafs with a great group of guys who play well in front of me. I owe it all to them."

He had to work to get this one. The 37-year-old goalie made 38 saves, including a great chance in close by Scott Gomez in overtime.

Belfour won for the 36th time this season, pushing his career mark to 400-262-105 in 15 seasons.

Hossa sets Ottawa record with 45 goals

OTTAWA — Marian Hossa values team achievements more than individual records. Playing for the league-leading Ottawa Senators allows him to celebrate both.

Hossa scored twice to set an Ottawa record with 45 goals and

Martin Havlat had a goal and an assist, carrying the Senators to a 3-2 win over the Boston Bruins on Tuesday night.

Hossa scored his 44th goal midway through the first period to tie Alexei Yashin's 1998-99 team record. He broke the mark with his second goal of the game late in the period to draw Ottawa even for the second time.

"It definitely feels good," Hossa said. "The main thing is we won, and that feels even better."

Radek Bonk assisted on all three goals for the Senators, who converted two of 13 power-play opportunities to become the first Canadian team to reach 50 wins since Calgary and Montreal in 1988-89.

Ottawa, which ended its home schedule by tying a team record with its 109th point, leads Dallas by two points for first overall. The Senators can clinch their first Presidents' Trophy — and home-ice advantage throughout the playoffs — with wins in their final two games.

Capitals close to division lead

WASHINGTON — After six games in Canada, Olaf Kolzig has the Washington Capitals right back on the heels of the first-place Tampa Bay Lightning.

Kolzig made 31 saves as the Capitals beat the Florida Panthers 3-0 Tuesday night to move within a point of idle Tampa Bay for the Southeast Division lead.

"We knew that coming back home after a long road trip that we were going to be a little sluggish in the first period," Kolzig said. "We had a lot of chances at the offensive end, but we were a little behind the play in our own end."

Sergei Gonchar, Michael Nylander and Robert Lang each scored for Washington, which now can't finish worse than sixth in the Eastern Conference because Ottawa beat Boston on Tuesday night.

"Gunny, find out who replaced the fast rope with a bungee cord."



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By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support