

Coalition Bulletin

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A photograph of two military officers shaking hands. The officer on the left is wearing a tan desert camouflage uniform with a name tag that reads 'FALLON' and 'U.S. NAVY' on his chest. He is wearing a tan cap with four stars. The officer on the right is wearing a grey digital camouflage uniform and a black beret. They are standing in front of several flags, including the United States flag and the flag of the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM).

Change Of Command At U.S. CENTCOM



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Editor's Note

By the generous permission of our NATO partners, the *Coalition Bulletin* is pleased to bring you stories covering the activities of the International Security Assistance Force. As ISAF and the Coalition are separate entities, ISAF stories will be denoted by the NATO logo at the top of each page when they appear.

Cover photo: Gen John P. Abizaid shakes the hand of the new U.S. Central Command commander Adm. William J. Fallon. Fallon took charge of CENTCOM at a Change of Command ceremony held at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa Fl. Photo by Spc. Patrick A. Ziegler

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

We have to get things that are going to give the Iraqi people confidence in their government and in their future so that they're going to be able to carry on and we have a lot of things that we can do to help them. We have to make them feel that they've got the courage and capabilities themselves.

**Adm. William Fallon
Commander U.S.CENTCOM**

Editorial

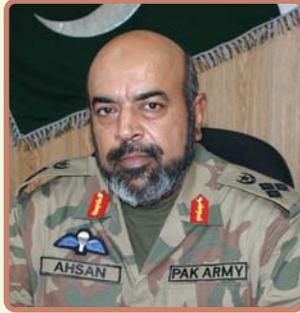
With the change of command at Headquarters CENTCOM, a new US Military hierarchy is now in place to implement the adjusted strategy in Iraq. While we profoundly acknowledge the professionalism and dedication of General Abizaid wishing him very best in his pursuits henceforth, we also take this opportunity to welcome Admiral Fallon and wish him well in this challenging assignment. As the new commander assumes effective control of the Campaign, the members of Coalition assure him of unflinching support to fight and succeed in this ongoing conflict. Needless to mention that the representatives of sixty-four countries here at CENTCOM, actually bring with them an enormous amount of military experience coupled with intimate knowledge of the respective peculiarities/sensitivities, which remains available to the planning staff and Commander.

Notwithstanding the political debate on the subject of war in Iraq, the operations under the new theatre commander have reached a very important phase. While there appears to be an apparent improvement in the situation, it is too early to jump to any conclusions. Therefore, a sustained long-term approach is fundamental to achieve lasting improvement, as any indication of becoming weary of the ongoing conflict will bring disastrous results to Iraq. It will also encourage the insurgents to adopt a strategy to outlast the Coalition forces, thereby retaining the potential to destabilize virtually the complete region. It is therefore important that as 'Operation Fard-Al-Qanoon' progresses with increased participation of Iraqi security forces, simultaneously commensurate efforts are also undertaken to achieve political harmony and resolution of contentious issues between the major ethnic groups, for lasting peace.

Events in Afghanistan also present an encouraging picture with NATO/ISAF offensive having achieved an appreciable success in troubled areas. It is however fundamental that a major development effort should be undertaken in the cleared areas with participation of the locals to erode the support base of insurgents. Increase in number of suitably financed PRTs, with emphasis towards south and SE remains the essential approach for improved results. Additionally, the latest measures instituted for better monitoring of Durand Line will also bear results, as the movement across the border can be better controlled if done effectively from both sides. There is also a need to work now on the issue of management of expected drug crop, to choke the financial support base of the miscreants in Afghanistan.

Like the previous Bulletins, present issue is reflective of numerous security operations, reconstruction effort and capacity building initiatives being done in the AOR. However, the main feature remains the change of command ceremony at HQ CENTCOM and the opening ceremony of the new Coalition building by General Abizaid, which is reflective of the long term nature of the Coalition arrangement.

Ahsan Mahmood
Brigadier-General, Pakistan
Chairman, Public Awareness Working Group



Afghan Leadership Meets Coalition Partners at CENTCOM



Story by 1st Sgt. Marvin Baker

A visiting Afghan General and two of his staff members had a productive luncheon meeting March 12 with several Coalition partners despite having to speak through an interpreter.

Maj. Gen. Mehrab Ali, the chief of communications for the general staff at the Ministry of Defense, Brig. Gen. Baba Mirza, the deputy G6 for strategic communications and Col. Said Farooq Yosuf Zai, the director of maintenance and support activities for the chief of communications, all dined with Coalition partners from the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark.

Maj. Wayne Price, the signal corps chief at the Coalition Coordination Center who set up the meeting, said he has spoken several times with Ali on the telephone prior to meeting him for a Monday morning breakfast.

"They're doing a tour throughout the United States," Price said. "They've been in New York and Washington, D.C., and then Tampa, Keesler Air Force Base (Biloxi, Miss.) and southern California to talk to equipment manufacturers."

Price called the Afghan trio "a great bunch of guys," and said the purpose of the luncheon was to get Ali and his colleagues together with Coalition partners who are big players in stabilizing Afghanistan.

In fact, the Dutch senior national representative, Maj. Gen. Leonardus van den Born, sat next to Ali at the dinner table. The two men talked frequently and made a couple of jokes to break the ice.

Van den Born, who has spent time in Afghanistan, talked about the mountains in the Netherlands being 300 feet in height. Ali quickly replied through the interpreter there is a 500-meter pass in Kandahar province where only one vehicle can pass at a time. Brig. Gen. Susan Lawrence, the director of J6 at CENTCOM, asked Ali if he plays golf.

"It's been 30 years we've been at war," he said. "Those games are gone."

Van den Born added he has played golf in Kabul and suggested that the general start practicing so the next time he comes to Tampa, they can hit the links together.

There was also talk of technology, transportation and personnel during the luncheon. Lawrence said Afghanistan has made great strides in all those areas in recent years.

According to Price, it has been a colossal task for the Afghans to make the kind of progress that Lawrence mentioned.

"The problem you have to understand is he (Ali) is trying to stand up an army that is 90 percent illiterate," Price said.

And for those who can read, Price added, training manuals often found are written in French, German, Russian or English.

"It was a productive meeting," Price said. "If you think about it, the only people in the Coalition he gets to see are the folks fighting. It's good for him to see the support staff."



U.S. Central Command Welcomes

Story by 1st Sgt. Marvin Baker

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. - Adm. William J. Fallon took charge of United States Central Command here March 16 replacing Gen. John P. Abizaid.

Steady rain outside Hangar 3 didn't stop the one-hour ceremony that was attended by hundreds from all branches of military service, Coalition members and civilians. Numerous TV, newspaper and wire service reporters also attended.

commander to lead the organization. Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates, presided during the ceremony that included a simple, traditional passing of the colors. Fallon and Abizaid's review of troops included members of the five CENTCOM component commands, the headquarters and troops representing those in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa and a contingent of Coalition representatives in formation just inside the hangar. Gates then paid tribute to both Abizaid and Fallon during his keynote remarks.



Gen. John P. Abizaid inspects the troop for a final time during the Change of Command ceremony at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa Fla. Abizaid relinquished command to Adm. William J. Fallon. Photo by Spc. Patrick A Ziegler

Fallon, the former chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, now leads more than 200,000 service members deployed in CENTCOM's area of responsibility, which includes 27 nations throughout Southwest Asia, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

Fallon is the first naval officer to assume command of CENTCOM, which began as the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force in 1980 changed to its present title in 1983. He is the 10th

He thanked Abizaid and his wife Kathy for the wonderful job they've both done for the United States and wished them well in their retirement.

In a parting comment, Abizaid asked Coalition members in the audience to stand and be recognized. "Look around, we are not fighting alone," he said.

Abizaid also praised the troops who have worked under him,

New Commander With Fanfare

saying that never has a theater commander been so blessed with such a heroic staff.



Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates delivers his speech at the U.S. Central Command, Change of Command ceremony. Photo by Spc. Patrick A. Ziegler



Gen. John P. Abizaid addresses the troops, dignitaries, family and friends at the Change of Command ceremony. Photo by Spc. Patrick A. Ziegler

“War is never easy,” Abizaid said. “Sometimes we Americans tend to look at all the problems in the world and take too many of our fears to heart. When you look at the people who wear the uniform of this great nation, we have nothing to fear.”

Gates also praised the incoming commander’s experience and expertise. He said this is Fallon’s fourth, four-star assignment after being nominated for the CENTCOM post by President George W. Bush in January and being confirmed by the Senate in February.

“Nobody would begrudge you if you asked for a well-deserved rest but me,” Gates said to Fallon. “We need you again.”

Fallon spoke about the way ahead and offered some encouraging words. He said he puts a premium on good, strong relationships. The admiral added he will work hard to make that happen, especially in the AOR.

“We have been entrusted with a great responsibility in this part of the world,” Fallon said. “And despite the challenges, we have a lot going for us. The five branches serve so well around the world, around the clock. We have the support of the American people who want us to succeed.”

Fallon began his naval career in 1967 and has an impressive list of accomplishments since then. He flew the RA-5C Vigilante with a combat deployment to Vietnam, transitioning to the A-6 Intruder in 1974. He served in flying assignments with attack squadrons and carrier air wings for 24 years, deploying to the Mediterranean Sea, Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans embarked in USS Saratoga, USS Ranger, USS Nimitz, USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and USS Theodore Roosevelt. He has logged more than 1,300 carrier arrested landings and 4,800 flight hours in tactical jet aircraft.

Fallon’s awards include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior

Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal and the Navy Commendation Medal.

The change of command marked the end of Abizaid’s 34-year career. Abizaid wrapped up 54 months at CENTCOM as both deputy commander and commander. He left as one of the longest-serving senior leaders in the command’s history.

The command’s staff provided personal farewells on Thursday at a dinner hosted by City Tavern in Ybor City that included humorous skits and poignant tributes to his career and family. His official retirement ceremony was held Friday morning. He was awarded the Defense Distinguished Service Medal by Gates at the event.



Adm. William J. Fallon receives the colors during the Change of Command ceremony. Photo by Spc. Patrick A. Ziegler



Abizaid Dedicates Coalition Village 3



Story by 1st Sgt. Marvin Baker

Senior National Representatives and their staffs gathered together in front of Coalition Village 3 March 5 in anticipation of the arrival of a very special guest.

“How’s your new house,” Gen. John Abizaid said, as he walked up to greet everyone.

Abizaid, the U.S. Central Command commander, was on hand to officially open the new CENTCOM building that has become known as Coalition Village 3.

As Abizaid marched up the steps and into the main entrance of the spotless, two-story structure, he was met by Army Maj. Gen. Gerald Minetti, the director of the Coalition Coordination Center. In addition, Abizaid immediately saw a dark blue curtain in the doorway that temporarily concealed a plaque that he would soon dedicate to the SNRs .

“There’s a little unveiling we’d like you to participate in,” Minetti said to Abizaid. “This is very meaningful, and memorable for the SNRs to take time out of their schedules to be here. And to make this permanent, we want to unveil this plaque to commemorate today.”

Minetti’s words drew applause from the crowd of about 40. Abizaid addressed the group saying he enjoyed seeing so many Coalition officers and was honored with the logo “United We Stand.”

“Thanks,” Abizaid told the Coalition partners. He then took a tour of the new building, stopping first in the main conference room while Minetti explained the building itself and how it was designed.



New Coalition Village. Photo by Capt. Manuel Matos (Dominican Rep.)

“Life has improved greatly,” Abizaid said as he walked down a hall, referring to Coalition Villages 1 and 2, which were essentially clusters of mobile homes that housed Coalition Soldiers from 64 nations since shortly after 9/11.

The CENTCOM commander later met Marine Corps Col. David Greco, the deputy director of the Coalition Coordination Center. “You’re not living badly,” he said as he checked out Greco’s new office on the main floor.

Next, it was up to the second floor, Abizaid shaking hands with service members as he passed through offices and hallways with his entourage in tow.

One of the unique features of Coalition Village 3 is that the entrance to each Coalition office has that nation’s flag hanging above the doorway providing for colorful hallways.



From left: Maj.Gen. Gerald P. Minetti, Gen. John P. Abizaid and Brig. Gen. Mark Wheeler after official opening of the new Coalition Village. Photo by SGT Chris Keller

“The staff came up with the idea of the flags,” Minetti said.

The CCC director also explained a Coalition Christmas party that was held in the building before it actually opened. Minetti told Abizaid about the numerous types of food and drink Coalition members and their families prepared for everyone.

Abizaid was later flanked by Brig. Gen. Mark Wheeler of New Zealand, the chairman of the SNR group. Together, Wheeler and Abizaid toured the Pakistani office and spoke with Coalition members from that nation for some time.

Wheeler said Coalition Village 3 is an important development as it takes the Coalition from an ad hoc basis to a permanent institution.



From left: SNRs Col. Sorrawat Pattamakom (Thailand), Lt.Col. Juan Minjarrez (Nicaragua) and Rear Adm. Jesus Alvargonzalez (Spain) during the official opening of the new Coalition Village. Photo by SGT Chris Keller

“CV3 will prove to be an excellent facility to enhance interaction between nations,” Wheeler told the Coalition Bulletin last month.

As Abizaid completed his tour, he suggested adding Coalition flags outside the building as well to let passersby know that Coalition service members are serving their nations proudly at CENTCOM.

“Life has gotten better for the Coalition,” Abizaid said. “I’m glad I got over here.”

Minetti concluded the ceremony by presenting a plaque to Abizaid for dedicating the new building.

“This is great progress,” Abizaid said.



Zaytun Vocational Training Center-



Where the Foundation for Reconstruction of Irbil is Being Laid

Story and photos by MND-NE

Founded in January 2005 by MND-NE with a goal of growing the will of self-recovery among the locals and providing them with the basis for economic independence in Irbil, Iraq, Vocational Training Center has been playing a role as a growing ground for a bright future of the region.

When the VTC was established, the war-torn Irbil region was seeing record number of unemployment and a shortage of skilled workers, and possible remedies such as schools and technological



institutes were in a dismal shape. VTC was built to give the locals a chance to acquire practical skills using Korean equipments and techniques, thus learning how to stand on their own feet.

In seven courses that include computer, car maintenance, farming machine repair, special vehicle driving and bakery, 1,192 trainees from eight groups were certified throughout the eight-week program.

These trainees have mastered skills in various ways by learning how to use high-tech equipment during the course and in the field when MND-NE holds its Green Angel Operations outside the base. Furthermore, the certificates the graduates receive upon their course completion almost automatically guarantee them jobs in the region; 836 graduates so far have signed up for a job upon graduation, and they were all hired by various Kurdish Regional Government agencies or by private enterprises.

Among the recent graduates, some are taking advantage of the boom in the electronic sector in the region using the skill they acquired in the VTC. Others are working as public servants, electric mechanics, bakers and many other jobs.

Such an accomplishment is not only helping the Irbil region's reconstruction and economic recovery, but also removing the seeds for social unrests by reducing the number of unemployed in the region, who would have otherwise joined terrorist organization for lack of means to support themselves.

VTC is extending its reach to the disabled as well. Seven disabled people have successfully completed the computer course, and are now living their second lives working at Helen Welfare Center, Irbil Telephone Exchange, Shourish Orphanage and other places.

VTC is also open to women. On the fifth graduation, four female trainees acquired the driving license for heavy vehicles (classified as vehicles up to 69 metric-ton trailer) to become the first Kurdish women to acquire the license, and all of them are now working for KRG; two in the Ministry of Education, one in the Ministry of Industry, and one in the Ministry of Finance. On the sixth graduation, three more female trainees acquired the license as well.

VTC attaches importance to teaching "how to catch fish" rather than "giving them fish," and to giving the locals new lives rather than simply teaching them new skills. It has been a hope of Irbil, by giving the locals a chance to make their dreams come true. Even at this moment, every soldier of Zaytun Vocational Training Center is making every effort in growing a pool of future players for the reconstruction in the region.

The fifth VTC completion graduate Sadar Abdulqadir Mazid (33 years old, a heavy engine and power generator maintenance) graduated high school with an ambition to work at a Special Enterprise related to power generation after meeting many people having difficulties of an electric power shortage.

After graduation, he realized that he had a large family to support including his younger brother riding a wheel chair because of physical disability but he had no chance of getting employment. Just in time, he saw an enrollment advertisement of VTC from KRG. After taking nine weeks of professional training, he graduated



with high grades and now he is working with monthly pay of \$300, which is enough to feed his family, at Repair Enterprise of Heavy Power Generator of KRG. He strongly advocates the Korean Army and VTC to his family and neighborhood.

The fifth VTC completion graduate of the Computer program Bardirkan Adulaziz Ahmed, 31 years old, had difficulty finding a job because of his physical disability, but after completing VTC he entered KRG and was also given a commendation from the Minister of Social Welfare of Irbil Regional Government as the most excellent student from the fifth VTC graduates. He previously had no confidence because of his physical disability but now he says that he is very proud to be instrumental in the development of his country.



Azerbaijan Company Protects Haditha Dam in Iraq



Story by Maj. Elman Shiraliyev (Azerbaijan)

“Thank you for a great visit to your contingent on Feb.1, 2007. I admire the outstanding relationship that you have developed with the U.S. Marines. Your soldiers have a remarkable passion for their important mission – they are true professionals! The importance of the dam in regulating water supply/irrigation and providing electricity is striking, and your team manages security and support in a skilful and expert manner. It is a multinational effort and the strength and interoperability of the U.S. and Coalition units at the Haditha Dam is extraordinary. You all work well together and complement each other very well”.

Maj. Gen. Peter Devlin (Canadian Army)

This letter of appreciation has been sent to a company commander of Azerbaijan peacekeeping company after the visit of Major general Peter Devlin (Canadian Army) currently deputy commanding officer MNC-I.

In order to achieve our main goal of Stability in the Middle East, the importance of successes on a smaller scale is vital.

Azerbaijan peacekeeping company comprise 150 well-trained and equipped soldiers successfully providing security of the crucially important object. Coalition as well as for Iraqi citizens’ water and energy supply at Haditha Dam. It has been almost four years since the first Azerbaijani company arrived in Iraq.

Azerbaijan is a country, which has experienced brutal terrorism, it’s estimated that about 2,500 people have died because of foreign and domestic terrorism in Azerbaijan. The world’s worst metro terrorist attack was conducted in Baku in 1995, when 289 people died and more than 300 were wounded.

Azerbaijan was one of the first nations to offer any help it could provide to the U.S. after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist



Company commander Capt. Nasimi Javadov and Maj.Gen. Peter Devlin. Photo by Capt. Javid Abbasov (Azerbaijan)

attacks in New York, and joining the U.S. led coalition. The country grants over flight rights for U.S. military aircraft, and has sent contingents of troops to the coalition in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Kosovo before that. The defense officials called Azerbaijan’s forces “highly competent” in their performance while serving with Turkish forces in Afghanistan and American forces in Iraq.

In the beginning of 2006, the Azerbaijan security and intelligence agency managed to arrest dozens of Al-Qaeda members who were using Azerbaijan as a transit country. One of the arrested member included Abu-Ayat, who is an alleged explosive specialist and claimed to be close to Osama bin Laden. Some of their plans included attacking the capital of Azerbaijan. All of the Al-Qaeda members were handed over to the U.S.

Currently 207 personnel of the Azerbaijan peacekeeping forces are participating in peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo. Also with the help of the U.S., 545 professionally trained and equipped Azerbaijan peacekeeping personnel are ready to deploy.

Azerbaijan has three-men liaison team in U.S.CENTCOM. Maj. Elman Shiraliyev, Capt. Rashad Ahmadov and Naval Lt. Rashad Mammadov represent their country in both OIF and OEF and play an active coordinating role in assisting Azerbaijani forces in the area of responsibility of CENTCOM to accomplish successfully their mission.

Their another countryman, Lt.Col. Raj Babayev is embedded in Combined Planning Group of the command.



Azerbaijan Army soldiers - reliable protection for Haditha Dam. Photo by Capt. Javid Abbasov (Azerbaijan)



Azerbaijani Army soldiers ready to act
 Photo by Capt. Javid Abbasov (Azerbaijan)



Maj. Elman Shiraliyev(right) briefing his Liaison Team.
 Photo by Capt. Manuel Matos (Dominican Rep.)



Bosnia and Herzegovina EOD Unit in Action



Story by Lt.Col. Marek Zielinski (Poland)

Thirty kilometers east of camp Echo in the Ad Diwanayah area of Asal Belly during operation Desert Storm was an Iraqi artillery position. Sixteen square kilometers of the terrain was almost entirely covered in artillery ammunition, mortar grenades, anti-tank mines and aircraft bombs. Feb. 28 Bosnia and Herzegovina explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) unit set off to this dangerous place in order to seek and destroy unexploded ordnance. It was a very crucial mission because each piece of this ammunition could become a potential improvised device (IED) and be used against Iraqis or Coalition forces.

Right after the unit reached the destination point, the maneuver group secured the area of operation. Next they began identifying ammunition.

“The main priorities are ammunition with caliber over 120 mm because it poses the biggest threat.” said liaison officer 1st Lt. Samir Husanovic. “We are going to collect all this explosive in one place and destroy it.”



B&H technician installs priming points with detonation cord.
 Photo by Capt. Szczepan Gluszczyk (Poland)



The final result of the B&H EOD unit magnificent job.
 Photo by Capt. Szczepan Gluszczyk (Poland)

This task is difficult because some of this ammunition is rusted or damaged and can't be moved. It is necessary to destroy it on the spot.

After they planted plastic explosive charges and withdrew into a safe place, they observed the efficiency of their work. Two huge blasts shook the ground and there appeared big plumes of smoke. After, the team double checked whether all ammunition had been destroyed. A patrol went to the spot and did thorough examination. Then they went back to the Multinational Division Central South camp Echo.

“Today we have destroyed 359 pieces of unexploded ordnance including 126 projectiles and mortar grenades of 120 mm caliber.” Reported EOD unit commander Capt. Herman Jerman. “We have also destroyed more than 6,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance overall weight over 14 tons during last week.”



Political Parties Gather for the First Time in PRT Meymaneh



Story and photos by Lt.Col. Jari Vaara (Finland)

The recent history of political parties in Afghanistan's province Faryab is one of continuous public tensions, old personal hatreds and reoccurring clashes that often date back to the civil war and Taliban raids of the 1990s. In an effort to break the animosity of the past and initiate political dialogue, the PRT Meymaneh arranged the possibility for the political parties to meet officially.

Mohammad Husain, the Azadi Party leader in Faryab said, "It was not a lie that in the past there had been weapons used and not politics. Now we are trying to resolve the issues with politics, not with war." "The goal is not to unify parties, but to have a unity of ideas to move development and it is beneficial to discuss", Said Ahmad Sadat, the Jamiat Party leader in Faryab added.

The initiative for a joint meeting came from the Norwegian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team, the only actor in Faryab to provide neutral ground for discussions like these and to free parties from the local power games. The PRT also houses soldiers from Finland and Latvia.

The media of Faryab was also invited to the scene after the closed door discussions headed by the Commander of PRT Meymaneh, Lt. Col. Arne Opperud. "The meeting was a success. The party representatives were organized and calm in their speeches and behaviour. It was true political dialogue with peaceful means," Opperud said.

Local journalists were very happy, too. "As a resident of Faryab it is great to see the parties together, and that everybody could express their views on the needs of the province. Expressing different thoughts and views brings freedom of speech and democracy," the journalist said at the press conference.

The atmosphere was loose and a lot of smiling and hugs were seen after the meeting.

The presence of the local press also let the parties chat informally and find some touches between the key persons.

"The presence of the media clearly worked as a carrot for the parties. The PRT will organise same type of meetings during this year," Mr. Oskari Eronen, the political representative of PRT stated.



Sometimes the winters are very harsh in Meymaneh

Thursday, Jan. 25 was a historic day in Faryab as the three most important political parties, Jumbesh, Azadi and Jamiat, gathered around the same table to discuss the current state as well as the future of the province. This was the first tripartite talks seen in Faryab.

All representatives of the local political parties expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to gather and meet together. According to Abdul Jalil Awer, the deputy Jumbesh party leader in Faryab, "The time now is suitable for discussing the problems. Political parties will have different ideas, but one should sit together and try to find common solutions. Discussion and exchange of ideas in itself is positive."

All the parties assured each other they do not currently have military units any more and that they do not support the use of weapons. They also said that violence and violent demonstrations must be avoided.



The seller of the bread is ready to serve



Corps Commanders Convene at Herat Conference



Story by ISAF Public Information Office

KABUL, Afghanistan - Corps commanders of the Afghan National Army convened March 7 in Herat for a three-day conference to discuss mission objectives, new goals and current obstacles.

Gen. Dan McNeill, ISAF commander, attended the conference and listened to proposals to restructure the corps, added words of praise for their progress and offered insight on how to achieve success in the ANA organization.

“A hallmark of a good army is its flexibility and ability to adapt to its surrounding environment,” McNeill said. “Make decisions that will help you fight terrorists successfully and you will always be in the right. If it means moving an entire brigade, then do it.”

The ANA is creating a new schedule for active duty, training and liberal leave. This plan is designed to help reduce



Gen. Dan McNeill discusses the importance of the progress the Afghan National Army has made
Photo by Senior Airman Stacia Zachary

McNeill agrees that steps like the new structure plan have enabled the ANA to grow into a strong and reliable security force.

“In 2002, your military was only a band of militias,” he said. “Now five years later, you are emerging as a real army prepared to take on increasing responsibility. Although the generosity of the international alliance has helped, the Afghans’ sacrifices are responsible for most of the progress you have made.”

In a parting speech, Khan praised the corps commanders for their hard work in helping the ANA emerge as a reliable security force.

“The ANA has been extremely successful,” he said. “We continue to be successful because of the commitment of everyone to strengthen our country. The soldiers and officers are the reason why we’re so strong today.”



Lt. Gen. Sher Mohammad Karimi, Afghan Ministry of Defense chief of operations (right), speaks with Gen. Dan McNeill. Photo by Senior Airman Stacia Zachary

desertion rates and motivate soldiers to stay with their companies by allowing them time to visit their families and serve in areas closer to their homes. In an address to the corps commanders and mentors, Afghan Gen. Bismullah Khan, ANA general staff chief of staff, explained the need for the new schedule.

“In the ANA, we have a commitment to each other,” Khan said. “If the soldiers can learn to follow orders and do what we ask, then we must do what we can to care for our subordinates, which means finding a better way for our men to serve their country.”

“Too often, the men who go (absent without leave) come back to us on their own. They know this is a good choice of lifestyle and they just miss their old way of life,” Khan said. “It is our job to make their choice as a soldier easier.”



Gen. Bismullah Khan (left) shows Gen. Dan McNeill the new headquarters at the ANA base in Herat, Afghanistan
Photo by Senior Airman Stacia Zachary



Titan Training Program Targets ANSF



Story by ISAF Public Information Office

CAMP KEATING, Afghanistan – International Security Assistance Force Soldiers have made special efforts to help the Afghan government and Afghan National Security Forces build a stable base at Camp Keating, located in Nuristan Province in northeast Afghanistan.

A short, comprehensive course on dismounted tactics targeting all Afghan security forces is currently helping to improve ANSF performance and enhance regional security.

The 24-hour class, taught by Task Force Titan instructors from 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment of Task Force Spartan, serves as a refresher course for Afghan National Policemen, Afghan Security Guards, Afghan National Border Police and personal security detachment guards.

The course was started by a military police unit formerly stationed on the camp and consists of a variety of classes, including first aid, weapons training and unarmed combat training. These classes represent merely the tip of the iceberg of knowledge that Afghan forces are exposed to throughout the course, given that this is a refresher course, developing on skills the Afghans already possess. The amount of time spent on each subject in the course varies, with key subjects receiving more time.

“We spend a lot of time on the weapons,” said Sgt. Juan Barajas, course instructor. “A lot of these Afghan soldiers have not had very much formal military training up until now. A lot of old habits have to be broken and that takes a little extra time.”

The Afghan soldiers are trained on the AK-47 automatic rifle, 9-millimeter pistol and the shotgun. Weapons safety is a main concern on the small training range as well as real-life scenarios. The weapons are of little use if they don’t function properly. “We also teach them preventative maintenance on their weapons,” Barajas said.

At the completion of the course all students are awarded a graduation certificate.

Trainers face and surmount a number of challenges as they work alongside Afghan colleagues; the most significant of which is the language barrier between the instructors and the soldiers.

“Sometimes meaning gets lost in translation,” Barajas continued. “It takes a lot of patience to make sure these guys are truly understanding what we want from them. We have an interpreter that works with us. We exercise a lot of patience when trying to convey what we expect of the Afghan soldiers during training.”

Another aspect of the course is the time taken with the individuals training to be bodyguards for VIPs. “We train them on special actions, like office evacuation procedures or how to set up security for special meetings, or just having VIP on a location,” Barajas said.



Army Sgt. Juan Barajas, cavalry scout, 3rd Squadron, 71st Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Spartan, and an Afghan security forces trainer, works with Afghan Military Police at Camp Keating in Nuristan Province. Photo by Sgt. Amber Robinson

Barajas and his fellow trainer, Sgt. Andrew Gibbs, put their hearts into their work. “When we start to see true initiative with the Afghans, it spurs the same in us,” said Gibbs. “Their desire to learn inspires the desire to teach in us.”

“We try and teach them to take pride in what they do,” Gibbs said. “We want them to understand that this is not just a job. They are working toward a stronger Afghanistan.”

Barajas and Gibbs make sure they take whatever time is needed to ensure the Afghans are learning their job correctly, so each course is not always the same. The course path depends on the needs of the current pupils.

“We make an assessment of the soldiers prior to them beginning the course,” Barajas said. “If they are already well schooled and comfortable with all the basics, we may take the training to a more advanced level to make sure everyone is getting what they need.” More advanced classes include counter-sniper operations and drug interdiction.

Trainers plan to expand the course length to 32 hours in the near future. They also plan to introduce a new curriculum, including driver training. Other projections for the future include a more intensive un-armed combative portion and a “train the trainer” program.

Looking at the bigger picture, the trainers involved in delivering this course hope that their instruction will help improve the region by bolstering the security forces. “When we leave, we want to see a much stronger and more self-reliant Afghan police and security force,” Gibbs said. “They do not have the best resources, but things are slowly changing and security has to come first.”



First Playground for the Children of Helmand



Story and photos by ISAF Public Information Office

HELMAND, Afghanistan - The first ever children's playground in Helmand province has been built in Lashkar Gah.

The play area, which is approximately 50 x 100 meters, has swings, climbing frames, a football pitch and a covered picnic area with benches.

It was built by local Afghan contractors at a cost of \$52,000 and has been funded and coordinated by the United Kingdom's Civil Military Cooperation team.

"They haven't got anything like that in Helmand. This is the first of what we hope is going to be a lot more" said SSgt. Hutton from the UK CIMIC team. "It has a football pitch, benches, play apparatus and we've planted some hedgerows. The children love it and since it was installed they haven't stopped using it which makes it all worthwhile."

The initial idea for the playground was suggested by an ISAF soldier, who whilst patrolling the town, had seen children playing on a makeshift see-saw made from a plank of wood. The proposal was put to the CIMIC team who agreed to fund the project through the UK's Quick Impact Project fund.

The construction of the playground was done in full cooperation



with the Mayor of Lashkar Gah. It has been such a success that work has now started on a second playground in Lashkar Gah and there are plans for a third in the nearby town of Gereschk.



Polish Children to Iraqi Children



Story by Lt.Col. Marek Zielinski (Poland)

Polish soldiers from camp Echo in Ad Diwaniyah and soldiers from camp Delta in Al Kut have received humanitarian aid for Iraqi children Feb.25.

Action coordinator was Mr. Krzysztof Kolcz from crisis management branch from Wielkopolska province governorate from Poland, had collected cleaning stuff, sweets, school equipment and toys.

Ad Diwaniyah, Camp Echo, Feb. 25, Mrs. Edyta Gorlicka, coordinator of humanitarian assistance from Polish CIMIC receives toys for Iraqi children. Photo by Capt. Szczepan Gluszcak (Poland)



"At first toys and school equipment were delivered" – informed Mrs. Edyta Gorlicka, coordinator of humanitarian aid from Civilian Military Cooperation (CIMIC) group – "Earlier, the same humanitarian stuff was delivered to camp Delta in Al Kut in Wasit province.

The Polish Brigade Combat Team and Salvadorian CIMIC group will soon carry out distribution of humanitarian aid in Wasit province. The next part of assistance from Wielkopolska province is due in March."

Soldiers from CIMIC group from camp Echo are going to hand over this assistance to the capital of Al Quadisiyah province, to the city of Ad Diwaniyah. "These gifts will be distributed to orphanage, local schools and hospital." – stated Lt. Col. Andrzej Dylong, Commander of Polish CIMIC group. Earlier, the governor of Wielkopolska province Mr. Tadeusz Dziuba requested schools in Wielkopolska province to organize collection of humanitarian aid for Iraqi children. Over 150 schools replied his request.



The logo of the action "Polish (Wielkopolska province) children for Iraqi children". Photo by Capt. Szczepan Gluszcak (Poland)



Brig. Gen. Ahsan Speaks to Military Affairs Council On Regional Perspective on War on Terrorism



Story by Lt.Col. Ehtisham Tirmizi (Pakistan)



Brig.Gen. Ahsan during his briefing. Photos by Capt. Manuel Matos (Dominican Rep.)

Brig. Gen. Ahsan, the Pakistani SNR spoke to the Military Affairs Council of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce on the regional perspective on war on terrorism. After introducing himself, Ahsan thanked the community for providing the opportunity for interaction and emphasized the importance of community support to win

this war. He spoke broadly on the core issues of problems faced by coalition forces. He briefed the audience regarding the role of Pakistan and its efforts as a Coalition partner. Importance and hard realities of the region were discussed followed by a question- answer session.

The Military Affairs Council is a team of more than 50 members of the Greater

Chamber of Commerce who respect the sacrifices of those serving in military. This organization serves as a conduit between the citizens of Tampa and American Coalition military members. It organizes a number of events like Veterans Day, reception for Senior Non Commissioned Officers and annual military appreciation dinners.



USS John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group Arrives in 5th Fleet



Story by Lt. Nathan Christensen

USS JOHN C. STENNIS, At Sea – The USS John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group entered the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations Feb.19 to conduct Maritime Security Operations in regional waters, as well as to provide support for ground forces operating in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Led by Rear Adm. Kevin Quinn, commander, Carrier Strike Group 3, the strike group includes the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), Carrier Air Wing 9, Destroyer Squadron 21, the guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam (CG 54), guided-missile destroyers USS O’Kane (DDG 77) and USS

Preble (DDG 88), and the fast combat-support ship USNS Bridge (T-AOE 10).

More than 6,500 Sailors and Marines are assigned to JCSSG.

“The USS John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group is here to help foster stability and security in the region,” said Quinn. “We look forward to working with our coalition partners to provide support for ground forces operating in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as conducting maritime security operations that help provide a safe environment for shipping within the region. We are ready, we are sustainable, we are flexible and we provide significant

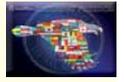
capabilities that contribute to regional peace and security.”

MSO help set the conditions for security and stability in the maritime environment, as well as complement the counter-terrorism and security efforts of regional nations. These operations deny international terrorists use of the maritime environment as a venue for attack or to transport personnel, weapons or other material.

U.S. 5th Fleet’s AOO encompasses 2.5 million square miles of water and includes the Arabian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman and parts of the Indian Ocean.



The Spanish PRT Donates Scholastic Material in a School of Afghanistan



Story and photos courtesy of Spanish Ministry of Defense

The Spanish PRT in Qala and Naw (Afghanistan) has made delivery, through the local authorities, of a series of scholastic material and text books to the school in Chakarán, as well as of a water well just constructed.

In particular, the Spanish military of Airborne Light Brigade gave 1,000 individual text books, as well as 175 slates and diverse lots of scholastic material (notebooks, cases, pens, fluorescent pencils of colors, pencil sharpeners, calendars and markers). Part of this material was donated by the newspaper of Pontevedra and Pontevedra Club of Soccer.

Also, taking advantage of the presence of a great number of children, refreshments, candies and caramels were given. The symbolic act was developed by the governor of Badghis, Col. Roel, head of the PRT, the director of the center and the authorities of the locality.

Chakarán is a small locality to the north of Qala and Naw, of about 2,000 inhabitants.

According to the school's director, the number of children attending the school is 600. However, the number of students has increased about 100 from the previous year, due to the improvement in the conditions of security and the greater awareness in the matter of education.



The Spanish Light Airborne Brigade during the act of delivery of 1,000 text books

Until now, there has been no government support as far education material and text books. Donations from international organizations funded the effort. The subjects distributed are Language (Pastún, English, Dari), sciences (physical, chemical, mathematical and biological), history and geography.

Unlike most of the centers in Afghanistan, this school is mixed, but still the social conditioners reign and the girls never agree at the same time with the boys. Thus, for a class schedule the girls are in the morning and the boys in the evening. This simple project has been possible thanks to the Spanish collaboration with the Headquarters of Education of Badghis.

The PRT has a special preoccupation to support this conscious sector that the education from childhood is the base for the future of the country and of which is key within the process of reconstruction and development.

This way, the Spanish contingent supports the formation distributed in the schools with slight knowledge on corporal and sanitary hygiene, measures of protection against the mines, as well as messages that look for the integration and the improvement of the social conditions of the Afghan woman.



The Spanish Light Airborne Brigade during the act of delivery of 175 individual slates and diverse lots of scholastic material



Coalition Forces Sharpen ANA Weapon Skills



Story by Senior Airman Stacia Zachary

KABUL, Afghanistan – Coalition forces work hand-in-hand with the Afghan National Army to train soldiers at the Kabul Military Training Center to enter the fight against terrorism and provide security for the Afghan people.

At any given time, more than 10,000 Afghan trainees go through courses ranging from basic training to advanced individual skills. “We are very pleased with our progress,” said Afghan National Army Brig. Gen. Amin Wardak, KMTC commander of training. “In five years we have re-established our army and begun standing on our own. We are proud to say that we now run most of our courses but we still rely on the expertise of Coalition forces, such as the American [forces].”

One of the sections of training is weapons. Soldiers are trained on mortars and small-arms weapons. Although the main rifle issued is the AK-47, the preferred weapon is the M-16. The U.S. has already transferred more than 1,000 M-16s with the promise of more to come.

Recently, the addition of paper targets at the ranges has helped instructors teach the students about zeroing their weapons, accuracy and breathing techniques.

“The ANA is learning how to be proficient with their weapons, but it takes a lot of practice and proper training equipment,” said Senior Master Sgt. Robert Spaulding, Training Assistance Group, garrison sergeant major. “With the targets we are able to show them grouping and help them with iron sights. They are dedicated to learning and many are good marksmen.”

Spaulding works in logistics and supply by trade, he has had to learn different aspects of the military to better aid the training of the ANA.



Afghan National Army Capt. Abdul Rahman, 1st Military Police Company, commander, reviews his marksmanship with an M-16 and optical scope at a shooting range at the Kabul Military Training Center. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Airman Stacia Zachary)



Senior Master Sgt. Robert Spaulding, sergeant major mentor, Training Assistance Group Garrison, shows Afghan National Army Capt. Abdul Rahman, commander, 1st Military Police Company, the mechanics of an M-16 and how to view the target through the optical scope. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Airman Stacia Zachary)

An Afghan National Army lieutenant prepares to fire on the 150-meter target with his AK-47 March 14 at the Kabul National Military Center ranges. (U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Airman Stacia Zachary)



“Working with the ANA has given me a greater appreciation for serving in the military,” he said. “There is a greater sense of purpose when you are able to actually work side-by-side with the people who are your ‘customers’. These men are not just serving in the army but putting their lives on the line every day for their country. We are giving them the skills they need to be successful.”

Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines like Spaulding are helping shape the progress and success of the ANA and the security of their nation.

“We remain eternally grateful for the help the Coalition forces have given our army,” Wardak said. “Without them, we would not be this far along or strong.”



“Operation Achilles” in Southern Afghanistan Taliban Commander Captured by Afghan National Army



Story by Army Sgt. Tony J. Spain



Paratroopers from B Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division moves out on patrol into the Ghorak Valley of the Helmand Province in Southern Afghanistan during “Operation Achilles March 6. (U.S. Army Photo by Spc. Matthew T. Little)

KHANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — At the request of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s government, soldiers from NATO’s International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan National Security Force launched a major operation targeting Taliban and drug traffickers in southern Afghanistan March 6.

“Operation will focus on improving security in areas where Taliban extremist, foreign terrorists and [narcotics] traffickers are trying to destabilize the government of Afghanistan,” said Dutch Maj. Gen. Ton Van Loon, commander, Regional Command-South.

“We also intend to empower village elders to take charge of their communities as they have been doing so in other parts of southern Afghanistan, without the influence of Taliban extremists,” he said.

Code named “Operation Achilles,” the multi-national force operating in the northern region of the Helmand province involves 5,500 soldiers including, 1,000 soldiers from the Afghan National Security Force and up to 1000 Paratroopers from Fort Bragg’s 82nd Airborne Division.

The first elements of the operation reached their positions early March 6, said Van Loon.

Paratroopers from the 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, are also playing a key roll in “Operation Achilles.”

“Our Paratroopers coordinated a convoy and night air assault in the Ghorak Valley of the Helmand Province,” said 1st Lt. Mathew Catalano, 1-508th PIR.

“The main effort is actually the British; we are a supporting effort to help isolate and prevent Taliban from escaping,” said Capt. Tom Reinner, 1-508th PIR.

“This is the largest multi-national combined ANSF and ISAF operation launched to date and it signifies the beginning of a planned offensive to bring security to northern Helmand and set the conditions for meaningful development that will fundamentally improve the quality of life for Afghans in the area,” Van Loon said.

Although “Operation Achilles” focus is on improving security conditions, its overreaching purpose is to assist the government of Afghanistan in improving its ability to begin reconstruction and economic development in the area.

“Strategically, our goal is to enable the Afghan government to begin the Kajaki Project,” Van Loon said.

Van Loon noted the Kajaki multi-purpose dam and power house will improve the water supply for local communities, rehabilitate irrigation systems for farmlands, as well as provide sufficient electrical power for residents, industries and commerce.

Soldiers from the ANSF captured a high-ranking Taliban commander and suicide bomb attack facilitator during the second day of operation.

Mullah Mahmood was arrested at an ANSF check point as he tried to escape dressed in a burka, a veil worn by Islamic woman here.

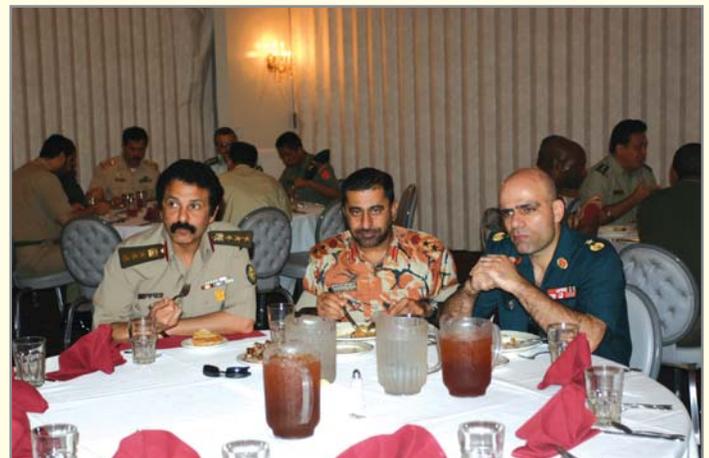
“The capture of this senior Taliban extremist is another indicator that a more normal life is returning to the Zahre and Panjwai districts, and is a testament to the great work the ANA is achieving,” Van Loon said.

“Yesterday’s security crackdown in Panjwai is an example of the ultimate goals of “Operation Achilles.” With stability provided by the ANA, much needed reconstruction will commence for the people of southern Afghanistan,” he added.

Gen. Abizaid's Farewell Party



U.S. Army War College Students' Visit To CENTCOM



Bulgarian National Day Celebration



Qatar Liaison Team Visits Eckerd College



U.S. Navy Command College Students' Visit To CENTCOM





Afghanistan National Army soldiers dismount to pull security for U.S. Army Soldiers at the abandoned Forward Operating Base Vega in the Khowst Province of Afghanistan (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Isaac A. Graham)