



COALITION

Issue 63

**SPAIN CONTINUES ITS
CONTRIBUTION TO ISAF**

*Bright Star
Begins in Egypt*

BG Muhammad Zahid
The New Pakistani SNR

ISAF

اسفاندا



Chairman

BG Gilles Lemoine, France



Chief of Coalition Public Affairs Team

LTC José D. Arias, Dominican Republic



Coalition Bulletin Staff

Senior Editor

CPT Dritor Papa, Albania



Editorial Staff

LTC Michel C. Escudie, USA



MAJ Ghazanfar Iqbal, Pakistan



CPT Ehab El-Saheb, Jordan



Editor's Note

By the generous permission of our NATO partners, the Coalition 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.

Front Cover: Spanish Soldier in Afghanistan.
Photo, Courtesy of: mde.es

Back Cover: Students of the Al Amal Deaf Institute,
Al Rumaiytha District, Muthanna province, Iraq,
Photo, Courtesy of: mnf-iraq.com

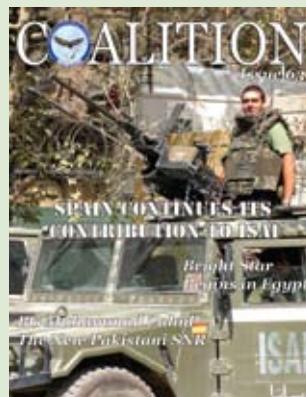
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EDITORIAL



In this issue we highlight the continued support from Spain to Afghanistan. The Spanish Armed Forces believe that the strategic objective of the mission in Afghanistan should continue to be the same: help the people of Afghanistan until they are capable of assuming their own security.

They also know that until that happens; the support of the international community is necessary, not just for the development of a situation of stability and freedom in Afghanistan, but for the security of the world.

Spain became the first European country to send more troops to Afghanistan, well aware of the importance of their mission in that country and always in keeping with the United Nations Letter of Principles.

We also introduce you to the new Pakistani Senior National Representative, a highly regarded and extremely well educated officer, Brigadier General Muhammad Zahid, who kindly agreed to answer a few questions to our Senior Editor, Capt. Dritor Papa.

We bring you information about the beginning of Bright Star, a multinational military exercise held near the Egyptian coastal city of Alexandria.

On August 14, Pakistan celebrated the 62nd anniversary of their independence, with the attendance of a large number of members of CENTCOM and the Tampa community, they held a traditional dinner. The Coalition Public Affairs Team wishes to all Pakistani a very happy National Day.

Lastly, I want to write about how impressed I was with Ocean for Life (OFL), a USCENTCOM and NESA initiative. The primary goal of OFL is to improve and increase long-term relationships and consistent engagement within the different sectors among the civilian populations in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility.

After I read what Omar Mansour, a Jordanian High school participant at OFL said “living alone in one culture is like living in a closed room, but you can always open the windows to see others outside”; there is no doubt in my mind that the activities of this field study are working toward a better tomorrow.

LTC José D. Arias
Dominican Republic
Chief of Coalition Public Affairs Team

NEWS IN BRIEF

Military Committee Visit to ISAF

Kabul, Afghanistan, October 2009. - NATO's Military Committee (MC) visited Afghanistan. In attendance were Military Representatives from all 28 NATO member states as well as Military Representatives from the 14 non-NATO nations who also contribute forces to ISAF.

www.nato.int/isaf

Australian Special Forces Continue to Work with Afghan community

Australian Special Forces soldiers in conjunction with the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) have applied months of intense pressure on insurgents in Oruzgan province, making their presence felt in the province's Mirabad region.

A series of operations in the area since July have seen the Australian Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) and ANSF steadily advance a counterinsurgency strategy.

www.nato.int/isaf

Soldiers Work With Afghan National Security Forces to Secure Zhari District

Forward Operating Base Wilson, Afghanistan – U.S. and Canadian soldiers partnered with Afghan national security forces to conduct an operation in the village of Pasab, located in the Zhari District.

“The main focus of the mission was to talk with local villagers in their compounds so Taliban wouldn't be able to influence what they said by using intimidation,” said Capt. Sam Shepherd, Headquarters Company commander, 1-12th Regiment.

www.nato.int/isaf

Troops Help Open School, More to Come

BAGHDAD — Children laughed and talked excitedly throughout the re-opening ceremony of the Zuhair Bin Abysulma Primary School in western Baghdad, Oct. 15.

The \$67,000 refurbishment project was a joint effort between U.S. troops and the local government that came to fruition after three months of hard work, said Navy Lt. Ross Simpson, a civil affairs officer, from Dalton, GA.

The project included cleaning up debris, painting the building, adding electricity and fixing the plumbing for the 128 local area children that attend the school, explained Simpson, who is assigned to the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion.

www.mnf-iraq.com

Spain Continues Its Contribution to the ISAF Mission

By Coalition Public Affairs Team
Photos, Courtesy of: mde.es

Spain is currently the tenth largest contingent in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force or ISAF, with 778 soldiers, according to their Ministry of Defense.

Last June the Spain Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero announced that, with approval of the Spanish Congress Defense Commission, they would be raising the number of Spanish troops deployed in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from 778 to more than 1000, making Spain the first European country to increase its military mission in Afghanistan.

Following that announcement and in line with its international commitment, Spain has had troops in Afghanistan since 2002. They sent extra troops to Afghanistan ahead of the presidential elections held there on August 20.

A 450 members-strong battalion was in place on 21st July as what Defense Minister, Carmen Chacón, described as a 'third line of security', with the objective of support the Af-

ghan police and Army during the electoral process. They are expected to be there between three and four months.

The Congress Defense Commission also authorized an additional deployment of 70 troops who took over from Poland command of Kabul's civil and military airport for a period of six months, until March 30, 2010.

Defense Minister Carmen Chacón, who attended the ceremony, guaranteed that the troop contingent would help ensure that the installation is never again "a door opens to terror."

Spain's troops at the airport, which is comprised of 66 soldiers and four Civil Guards under the command of Col. Ruben Garcia Servet, will be responsible for the operations of the civil airport and the Kabul military base, this include the security, protection, logistics

**Never Again
"A Door Opens to Terror."**

Carmen Chacón



Spanish troops during patrol at the market area, Kabul, Afghanistan

and administrative tasks at the installation, where a total of 350 people, both soldiers and civilians, work.

The Spanish troops commenced their new duties at a time when air traffic in Afghanistan has increased due to the election process and the resurgence in attacks by insurgents.

A team of 12 Spanish instructors for the Afghan Army was also approved.

Then again on September 24 and with the objective of further contribute to the NATO-led mission to bring peace to Afghanistan, the Spain's government agreed to send 220 more troops to Afghanistan, raising the permanent number to 1000. There are now about 1,200 Spanish soldiers in the west of the country, but 450 of them are due to come home when the results of the election are known.

According to Deputy Prime Minister Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega "Spain is contributing to the reinforcement of the peacekeeping mission, which as you NATO is carrying out with a mandate from the United Nations,".

She also said that the new troops are assigned in part with increasing the security for the ones already there, many of whom are involved in reconstruction efforts, and that they are being sent at a particularly important time because the presidential elections will be followed next year by legislative and local ones.



The government had been giving indications during the last months it might send more troops for the long-term. But the idea took on more urgency last month with a series of attacks on Spanish troops, including an ambush that provoked a five-hour firefight in which Spanish forces killed 13 insurgents while they had no casualties of their own.

Also and according to "El Pais", the Spanish Government is in conversation with the Colombian Government to incorporate Colombian troops into a Spanish battalion in Afghanistan.

The Colombian unit will comprise of about 100 soldiers, a company and will be integrated into a Spanish force based in Qal-i-Naw in northwestern Afghanistan.

Quoted by local daily 'El Colombiano', Gen. Freddy Padilla of the Colombian Armed Forces said that he was waiting for the government to make a decision and that Spain will provide the Colombian troops with training, support and even equipment.

The Colombian participation is expected to facilitate Spain's task in maintaining order in restless Baghdis province.



NEW PAKISTANI SENIOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE (SNR)

By Captain Dritor Papa
Albanian Armed Forces
Senior Editor of Coalition

All the Coalition Members and especially the Coalition Public Affairs Team (CPAT), bid farewell to the departing Pakistani SNR, BG Maqsood Ahmed Abbasi, who after serving at the U.S. Central Command Headquarters for a period of one year, left to assume his new assignment in Pakistan as Director of Operations and Plans of the Pakistan Southern Command, in Quetta, Pakistan.

His successor is BG Muhammad Zahid Latif Mirza, a highly regarded officer, who got commissioned in the Pakistan Army in October 1981; General Zahid holds a Masters of Arts in Political Science and History, Masters of Science in War Studies, Defense and Strategic Studies, and Bachelor of Science in War Studies. He is a graduate of the Army Command College course in China and the Governance and Management Defense Course in Nepal. He is fluent in English, Urdu and Japanese.

He was an instructor at the Army Air Defense School. He is a graduate of the Pakistan Command and Staff College in Quetta and held the appointment of Brigade Major of an Infantry Brigade. He commanded an Air Defense Regiment and was also staff director at the Pakistan Command and Staff College. Attended Japanese Language Certificate Course followed by Diploma Course from National University of Modern Languages. He attended the Armed Forces War Course and National Defense Course at the National Defense University in Islamabad Pakistan, where he also was part of the faculty. He commanded an Air Defense Brigade and an Infantry Brigade in Balochistan. In 2008, he directed the team of students that formulated the national strategy paper titled, "Governance of Federally Administered Areas and their Impact on National Security" at the National Defense University. Before coming to CENTCOM, he served as Chief of Staff of the Army Air Defense Command at Rawalpindi.

At his arrival to this headquarters, I had the opportunity to ask General Zahid some questions to in reference to his future contributions to the Coalition.

Q: General, you have a vast experience of serving on a number of professional assignments during your illustrious career in Pakistan Army. With your experience how do you intend benefiting the Coalition members in CENTCOM?

A: I intend to follow a four-prong approach to project and interact on issues related to Pakistan's security concerns in the regional context, our contributions in the fight against terrorism, the sharing with coalition members the salient features of Pakistan's internal dynamics to enhance their understanding on various issues, and the interaction on different forums in

wide ranging issues which impact on our national security.

Q: How does Pakistan supports Coalition efforts in OEF?

A: It is through the articulation of a holistic strategy encompassing the political and military dimensions.

Q: Briefly tell us about your country's contributions and sacrifices made in the ongoing fight against terrorism?

A: No country has suffered more in terms of human and material losses than Pakistan. Our society as a whole, and our military in particular, has made innumerable sacrifices. In terms of our military effort, forces committed by us against fighting terrorism surpass any other country in the world. This is a manifestation of our sincere effort in conjunction with the international community to root out terrorism which impacts all of us.

Q: In your opinion, what should be the main ingredients of an action plan to fight against terrorism?

A: Our response against terrorism should stem through synergetic application of various instruments of a counter terrorism policy harnessing its political, military, social, economical and ideological facets. A multi-dimensional approach is pivotal for taking our efforts to a logical conclusion.

Q: How much has the Pakistan Armed Forces contributed towards United Nations in maintaining peace all over the world?

A: We have the largest contribution in the world by our valiant armed forces all around the globe. It is a noble cause and contributions to maintaining peace in conflict torn countries will always be our prime focus.

Q: On behalf of the people of Pakistan, as a senior National Representative, what message do you bring to the community?

A: Understanding Pakistan's security concerns in the right perspective and recognition of our enormous sacrifices in fight against terrorism.



Brigadier General Muhammad
Zahid Latif Mirza

New NATO Headquarters

NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan

Story and Photo, Courtesy of :
www.nato.int/isaf

KABUL, Afghanistan - The Commander of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), General Stanley A. McChrystal, announced the establishment of a new NATO headquarters to oversee higher level training and mentoring for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

“Through better coordination and collaboration between the various organizations currently supporting Afghan National Security Force development, we will be able to develop a more streamlined, efficient and effective training program that allows for increased partnership with the Afghan security forces and accelerated progress in this vital security dimension of our mission here,” said Gen. McChrystal.

Known as NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), the new headquarters demonstrates NATO-ISAF’s commitment to Afghanistan. Under the new organisational structure, the U.S.-led training and mentoring efforts of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) will integrate with NATO-ISAF efforts into a common headquarters.

The two organisations will synchronise missions under a single, dual-hatted commander to facilitate integration of operations. U.S. Army Lt. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV has been nominated as commander, a position which requires confirmation by the United States Senate.

NTM-A’s key elements will include the provision of training and mentoring teams to the ANA and the ANP, ANA’s institutional training, and ANP reform

at the district level and below.

CSTC-A will continue to mentor the Afghan Ministries of Defence and Interior, and will be responsible for developing the Afghan National Air Corps, the logistics command, and the Afghan national military hospital.

By accelerating progress toward a self-sustaining and capable ANSF, NTM-A demonstrates NATO’s enhanced commitment to transitioning towards Afghanistan’s ownership of its own security and affairs

a more streamlined, efficient and effective training program that allows for increased partnership with the Afghan security



Afghan National Army (ANA) leaders, assisted by ISAF forces, plan a massive operation to clear insurgents out of the village of Shewan, in September 2009. The operation will provide a permanent security presence in the area, considered a safe haven for insurgents and crossroads for distribution of drugs and weapons.

CENTCOM Senior National Representatives Attend Seminar at National Defense University

By Captain Dritor Papa
Albanian Armed Forces
Senior Editor of Coalition

Senior National Representatives (SNRs) from CENTCOM's Coalition Coordination Center attended a one-week seminar facilitated by the Near East South Asia Center (NESA) for Strategic Studies in Washington from 21-25 September 2009. This is the second time that some of the SNRs had the opportunity to listen to the distinguished speakers and share with them their ideas and thoughts while discussing a wide range of subjects during the interactive course of discussion.

The theme for this seminar was "SNR Combating Transitional Threats - Responding To Violent Extremism".

The seminar opened with the welcoming speech of the Director of the NESA Center for Strategic Studies, Lieutenant General (Ret.) David W. Barno and the Dean of this center, Dr. John Ballard.

During the seminar, among other distinguished lecturers, the attendees had the opportunity of listening and discus-



sing with Lieutenant General John R. Allen, Deputy Commander, United States Central Command, and the General Sir David Richards, KCB, CBE, DSO, the Perspectives on Modern War Fighting.

Some of the topics discussed during the seminar included: Stability and Reconstruction in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Illicit Support Networks (Funding Crime and Terrorism), War by other means, and International Context for Combating Transnational Threats (Human Trafficking).

The seminar was conducted in an interactive way by dividing the participants in breakout groups where they had the opportunity to discuss with their group members on the most important issues that are taking place nowadays. Each group chose one person to share ideas on these subjects with the other participants and concluded with a question and answer session.

Lieutenant General (Ret.) David W. Barno offered the participants a dinner, where they had the opportunity to socialize and share their ideas with the academic staff of the center and some of the distinguished guests.

On the last day, the participants visited the Gettysburg Battlefield, the place where more than 150 years ago, during the first days of July 1863, one of the most important battles of the American Civil War occurred. This three-day battle between the Union Army led by General George G. Meade and the Confederate Army led by General Robert E. Lee resulted in more than 50000 dead, wounded and missing casualties. This battle, won by the Union Army played a significant role in ending the American Civil War.

At the end of the last day of the seminar, the participants were presented certificates by the Director of the NESACenter.

This seminar was found to be very important by the participants since through lectures and opened discussions with senior U.S. Government Officials, scholars and advisors outside CENTCOM, it broadened their knowledge on the impact of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of the United States Administration in the formation of foreign and counterterrorism policy.



At Gettysburg Battlefield



Group Photo of the participants (Photos by Capt. Dritor Papa)

Joint Afghan-Australian Operation Supports Security in Oruzgan

Story and Picture, Courtesy of:
defence.gov.au

A joint Afghan National Army, Australian Defence Force, Dutch and US operation has responded to a call from Afghan locals to remove the threat posed by Taliban insurgents from the Mirabad area, located east of Tarin Kowt.

A combined force was successfully air-lifted by helicopter into the region in a major air mobile operation on the 25th of September with ground operations commencing immediately. The operation is progressing well with the discovery of several improvised explosive devices and weapons caches.

Called Operation 'Baz Panje', meaning 'Falcon's Talon', the operation is seen as a critical step in spreading the coalition's influence into the area by building a new patrol base.

The Commanding Officer of the Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force-2, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Connolly, said the Mirabad area has had a limited security presence over the last few years.

"This is a method of expanding the Afghan Development Zone from Tarin Kowt out to the east. This is how ISAF works its counter insurgency operation by expanding this bubble of security to the east so that we can expand development and reconstruction efforts also in the east," said Lieutenant Colonel Connolly.

The launch of Operation Baz Panje has been greatly assisted through the work of the Australian Special Operations Task Group and its partner forces, including the Afghan National Security Forces, through the conduct of a series of coordinated operations in the area.

"The Mirabad Valley is a place that has been dominated by the Taliban insurgency for the past seven years and in fact the young people in the valley have become used to having no legitimate governance structure over them instead being dominated by the insurgency," he said.

Alongside their Afghan Army colleagues, the Australian soldiers and other coalition forces have spent weeks planning the operation before carrying out detailed air insertion rehearsals in the days leading up to the operation.

Lieutenant Colonel Connolly said the ongoing operation also marked the growing capability of the Afghan National Army's 4th Brigade.

"It's extremely important because it allows us to expand the area of operations of the 4th Brigade of the Afghan National

Army and in doing so, it will allow the new infantry battalion, the 3rd Kandak, to establish itself in a new area, spreading security out to the east of Tarin Kowt through the Mirabad Valley," said Lieutenant Colonel Connolly.

"They've seen a lot of fleeting visits by the coalition forces and what they need to see now is a persistent presence, particularly from the Afghan National Security Forces."

After the forces were air-lifted in, a series of meetings with key local leaders were held to understand local issues and help build stronger relationships. At the same time, soldiers began securing the area from insurgent influence.

"What we'll see during the operation is clearance of the Mirabad Valley, the establishment of a secure position by Australian and Afghan forces and then the building of a significant



Operational Mentor and Liaison Team, Team 2 Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer 2, (WO2) Andrew Egan on patrol with members of the 4th Kandak Brigade of the Afghanistan National Army in Sorkh Lez, Mirabad Valley, Southern Afghanistan

patrol base which will allow the 3rd Kandak to establish itself in that area," said Lieutenant Colonel Connolly.

"In the future, the Afghan Kandak that is established in the Mirabad Valley will be mentored by Australian Forces, so from our perspective we have a lot of interest in making sure the valley is properly cleared, that it's properly secured and that the best standard of facility is established there for Australians and Afghans to work together side by side in the future," he said.

Bright Star Begins in Egypt

Story and Pictures, Courtesy of:
U.S. Army Central Public Affairs

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt (Oct. 12, 2009) — Military units from around the world formed a common front in a multi-national military exercise held near the Egyptian coastal city of Alexandria.

Exercise Bright Star first took place nearly 30 years ago as a friendly training exercise to better relations between Egypt, and the United States, and has matured into an 11 nation combined exercise, a major joining together of traditional military tactics with modern military technology.

“Bright Star has always been about partnership, it started back in 1981. As a matter of fact, I was a part of Bright Star back in ’81, the very first one, which really started out as a biennial exercise between the U.S. and Egypt,” said Maj. Gen. Peter M. Vangjel, Deputy Commanding General of Third Army/US Army Central. “But it has grown



Pakistani Marines and U.S. Marines from Battalion Landing Team 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit take up firing positions after exiting a landing craft utility. (Official Army photo by Spc. Lindsey M. Frazier)

“Bright Star has always been about partnership”

Maj. Gen. Peter M. Vangjel

substantially since then, and we have almost a dozen coalition partners that are here participating in one way, shape, form

or fashion. Whether or not they come from the sea, jumping from airplanes, or soldiers on the ground- it’s all about partnership.”



A U.S. Marine takes up a firing position in front of an amphibious assault vehicle to provide security during a training exercise in support of Exercise Bright Star

The Bright Star exercise included a strategic airborne jump of more than 300 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division partnering with Egyptian, German, Kuwaiti, and Pakistani paratroopers, while more than 1,000 Marines from the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit hit Al Amein Beach by amphibious landing with their Bright Star counterparts.

More non-traditional training is scheduled in the coming days and will include a combined computer aided command post exercise introducing partnering soldiers to each others’ equipment and updated tactics thereby developing a better coalition contingency environment.

Exercises like Bright Star are essential to international team building and will positively affect world and regional military response, leaders said.

Celebration of Pakistan's Independence Day

Story by:
Maj Ghazanfar Iqbal
Pakistani Armed Forces
Media Engagement Officer

Pakistan, a key Coalition partner, emerged on the world map in August 1947. Pakistan is a land enriched by majestic mountains, gushing rivers, fertile plains, sprawling deserts captivating beauty and rich heritage. The journey for independence started during the British Rule from 1938 to 1947, with the realization by the Muslims that they were being deprived of all their due rights in all walks of life. The vision of a separate homeland for Muslims of subcontinent by Dr Muhammad Iqbal, philosopher poet, infused new life to struggle for independence. Under the charismatic leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Father of the nation), Muslims waged a civil struggle premised on a two-nation theory, which finally resulted into creation of Pakistan on 14 August 1947.

Pakistan is divided into four provinces and two territories, shares its borders with Afghanistan, China, India and Iran. Due to its location on the crossroads of Middle East, South Asia and Central Asia, Pakistan has always been a geo – strategically important country. It has a 523 km long border with China in the north, 2,430 km with Afghanistan in the north west, 909 km with Iran in the west, 2,912 km with India in the east and more than 1000 km long coast line stretching along the Arabian Sea in the south.

Pakistan has a rich and unique culture that has preserved traditions throughout the history. Many cultural practices, foods, monuments and shrines were inherited from the rule of Mughals. Pakistan is a climber's paradise. It is home to five out of 14 mountain peaks more than 8,000 meters, which attracts adventurers and mountaineers from around the world.

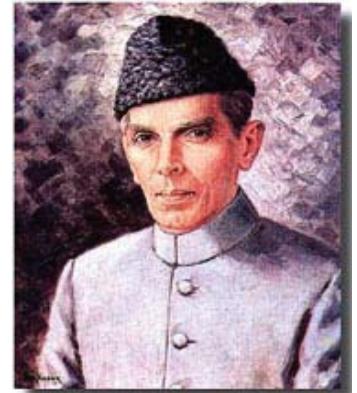
The armed forces of Pakistan are a completely volunteer force and the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping efforts,



Distinguished Guests at the Pakistan Independence Day reception
(Photo by Capt. Ehab El-Saheb, Community Relations Officer)

which is a testimony of their professionalism. Pakistan is an active member of the United Nations, member of Non Aligned Movement, a major non-NATO ally of the US and a proud nuclear state.

Pakistan celebrates its independence on the 14th of August every year. Like other Pakistani communities, Pakistan Liaison Team at CENTCOM, also celebrated 62nd Independence Day with traditional fervor at MacDill AFB. A large number of dignitaries from USCENTCOM, USSOCOM, Coalition Coordination Center, SNR's of about 60 Coalition Nations, US Citizens and members and leaders of the Pakistan Community at Tampa graced the occasion.



Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Brigadier General Maqsood Ahmed Abbasi, the SNR Pakistan, welcomed the guests



BG Maqsood Ahmed Abbasi, the SNR, delivering the Independence Day speech
(Photo by Capt. Ehab El-Saheb, Community Relations Officer)

and briefly explained the history and ideology of Pakistan. He elaborated on the history of Pakistani -U.S. relations. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to bring peace and stability in the region and also highlighted the sacrifices by the nation towards this end. Pakistan's Armed Forces continuous and unflinching resolve to fight against the miscreants was also amply highlighted by the SNR.

Lieutenant General John R. Allen, Deputy Commander, United States Central Command, the chief guest, gave remarks congratulating all Pakistanis on Independence Day. He thanked Pakistan for being a major and frontline U.S. ally in fighting against miscreants. He also paid tribute to the Pakistani Armed Forces for their sacrifices and significant contributions they have made in ongoing operations against miscreants.

Iraqi Air Force Assumes Independent Control of C-130 Fleet

Story and Photo
Courtesy of: centcom.mil

NEW AL-MUTHANA AIR BASE, Iraq – The Iraqi air force officially began fully independent C-130 air operations on 30 September 2009, marking the end of the U.S. C-130 air advisory mission here.

A ceremony deactivating the U.S. Air Force's 321st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron and marking assumption of C-130 operations, maintenance and training by the Iraqi air force's Squadron 23 formalized the milestone.

Presiding over the event were U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert C. Kane, commander of the 321st Air Expeditionary Wing and director of the Air Force's Iraq training and advisory mission; Staff Lt. Gen. Anwar Hamad Amen Ahmed, Iraqi air force commander; Brig. Gen. Kareem Ali Abud, commander of the Iraqi air force's New Al-Muthana Air Base; and Col. Christopher Pehrson, commander of the U.S. Air Force's 321st Air Expeditionary Advisory Group.

"Today, I say we are proud to have had the honor to work with you side by side as brothers, not less," Kareem said. "I have worked with about eight advisors, and we have here more than 60 groups at Al-Mathana, great in all fields: discipline, versatility, specialties and, more than that, humanity.

"We can't forget the support you gave in the training of pilots, craft engineers, logistics, security forces and English classes," he continued. "We respect your sacrifices -- leaving your families behind just to support Iraqi air forces. We are grateful for you and your families. We don't like to say goodbye. See you again with better situations in Iraq."

The deactivation of the U.S. squadron marked another claim to the Iraqi air force's independence.

Squadron 23 is the largest C-130 squadron in the Iraqi air force, and its mission includes delivering troops and cargo, supporting distinguished visitors, and flying medical evacuation missions. The squadron began after the United States gave three C-130E aircraft to the Iraqis through the Excess Defense Articles program.

The Iraqi Air Force C-130 airlift mission was born with the arrival in January 2005 of those same three aircraft at Ali Air Base. This paved the way for the first aircrew members to receive flight training at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark. After being assigned to Ali Air Base since 2005, the squadron moved here March 7, 2006.

In his remarks, Kane declared the C-130 flight training effort "mission complete."

"The Iraqi pilots, navigators, flight engineers, loadmasters, and maintainers have clearly demonstrated that they are ready to perform their missions and, most importantly, to do it well," he said. "American advisors have also done what we've asked them to do: to stand side by side with their Iraqi partners and provide them the training required to operate the C-130 safely. This is a big deal -- something the people of Iraq, and even the world, will take note of. The Iraqi air force is on its way to independent operations."

In his comments, Pehrson noted the milestone's importance. "Today's ceremony is possible because the United States Air Force and the Iraqi air force were successful in their partnership to develop credible, professional and enduring airlift capability in the Iraqi C-130 fleet," he said. "It's an important step in the realization of a fully independent Iraqi air force that will one day defend and protect the people of Iraq."



An Iraqi Air Force C-130 prepares for landing. Iraq now controls its C-130 fleet independently, marking an end to the U.S. C-130 advisory mission in Iraq.

"From today forward, Squadron 23 will fly independently over the skies of Iraq without direct support from a U.S. air advisory squadron," he added. "One day soon, other squadrons throughout the Iraqi air force will also operate independent of American advisor support. This change, and the evolution of the air advisory mission, is good because it means that we are moving together beyond foundational training and towards air power capabilities that are credible and enduring."

Air advisory training included a focus on foundational training for pilots, navigators, flight engineers, loadmasters, crew chiefs and maintenance specialists in engines, sheet metal, avionics and hydraulics.

USCENTCOM Supports Ocean for Life

Story and Pictures by:
Maj Ghazanfar Iqbal
Pakistani Armed Forces
Media Engagement Officer

A group of 57 students from US and Greater Middle Eastern countries along with mentors and chaperones from U.S. participated in two separate Ocean for Life (OFL) field study programs in Florida and California between July 12, 2009 to August 9, 2009.

Lieutenant Colonel Qaiser Mahay, Pakistan Army, Major Ghazanfar Iqbal, Pakistan Army, Nicolas Lemoine, son of French SNR, Amalie Grimsmo Skjaerpe, daughter of Norwegian SNR, Ammar Maqsood Abbasi, son of Pakistani SNR, participated in the program and represented USCENTCOM Coalition partners.

Ocean for Life is a US Central Command (USCENTCOM) and Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA) Strategic Communication 'whole of Government' initiative nested with USCENTCOM Operation Earnest Voice (OEV). The primary goal of OFL is to improve and increase long-term relationships and consistent engagement with the broad sectors among the civilian populations in the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR), impacting millions of youth while strengthening and broadening our credibility and trust in the region and throughout the world. Ocean for Life is an initiative to increase cultural understanding through ocean science study.



Group picture of Ocean for Life students for Florida Keys and Californian field study trip

USCENTCOM, as facilitator, has taken lead for integrating the USCENTCOM Coalition, NESA, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (coordinating agency), U.S State Department, selected embassies, The Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) Program, SCUBAnauts International, Meridian International Center, National Geographic Society, American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF), all of whom have tremendous influence in advancing universally held values throughout the USCENTCOM AOR.

The themes of Ocean for Life included: a sense of place, interconnectedness and ocean conservation and stewardship. Participants explored the ocean and coastal areas in NOAA's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and in California at the Cordell Bank, Gulf of Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries.



OFL foreign participants showing keen interest in learning marine life while sailing in Gulf of Farallones

Besides exploring ocean and doing various field study activities, participants also had a unique opportunity of sharing their thoughts about their diverse cultures and ideologies and discussing different stereotypes, which prevail among the common people. The OFL program left deep impacts on all the participants based on their comments during the program.

Omar Mansour, a Jordanian high school participating student, while sharing his views about OFL said, "meeting people from other cultures has taught me that we all speak the same language but in different tones. Living alone in one culture is like living in a closed room, but you can always open the windows to see others outside".

"Through OFL I have learned that although we come in a variety of shapes, sizes and social norms; on the inside, we are all the same. There are no two identical fish in the sea; likewise we are all different. But the differences are to be accepted, not overlooked. There are so many dreams and aspirations we share. When I look into ocean I feel peace the rest of our world is lacking", said Samaah Jaffer, Matthew McNair Secondary School student from Canada.

Overall, OFL field study program provided a very unique, rewarding and mutually beneficial forum for all the Western and Middle Eastern students along with all the mentors to bridge a lasting relationship between the youth and create better understanding of different cultures without any prejudices.

Afghan Mi-35 Pilots Once Again Patrol the Skies

Story Courtesy of:
nato.int/isaf

AFGHANISTAN - The Afghan National Army Air Corps recently reached a milestone with the completion of the Initial Operations Capability Mi-35 attack helicopter program.

American and Czech Republic mentors recommended the Mi-35 program to the Ministry of Defense to provide security, show force and patrol the skies of Afghanistan.

The accomplishment required many hours of practice and training, but careful preparation was important when utilizing such a powerful aircraft.

conjunction. They performed multiple weapon loads and live fire exercises to hone their skills for their current capabilities.

“We were improving with the coordination of the Czechs and also with the American mentors,” said Col. Frogg Ulluh, Mi-35 pilot and forward air controller. “Day by day it is going to get better for us.”

Forward air controllers, or “nochecks,” were also trained as part of the Mi-35 program. Their mission was to communicate friendly locations, enemy locations and give the clearance to fire.

“This training is important to us. It is integral to verify enemy targets,” said Maj. Farmanullah, Mi-35 pilot and forward air controller. “We want to get prepared for future missions.”

The mentors focused on two primary missions for the Afghan pilots. The first was a security escort mission, defending Afghan helicopters, transporting VIP’s, troops or supplies as they move across the nation. The second mission type was to provide protection for Afghan ground forces, through pre-planned fires.

After the six months of exercises and practice, six Afghan pilots were evaluated and recommended by the advisors to perform the two core operations. Four days later the Ministry of Defense asked the pilots to fly “show of force” missions.

These tried and true pilots will continue to grow their experience and pass their skills on to the Nation’s future.



Two MI-35 attack helicopters from the Afghan Army Air Corps landing at Kabul International Airport. U.S Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Parker Gyokeres (Courtesy of: defenselink.mil)

The Mi-35 is a heavily armored aircraft, yet streamlined. It sports a 12.7 mm Yak-B Gatling gun. It also has the potential to carry up to four 57 mm rocket pods for a total payload of 256 anti-tank rockets. Often called a “flying tank,” the helicopter is durable, powerful and well suited to the unforgiving temperature and terrain of Afghanistan.

Training for the Mi-35 crews began six months ago. The Combined Air Power Transition Force (CAPTF) and the Czech Republic took on the role of Air Corps mentors. They provide guidance for maintenance, weapons load, operations and every detail in between.

While CAPTF has plans to train brand new pilots in the future, the crews that went through this initial phase required little more than refresher training.

“The good thing we have right now is all the Mi-35 pilots are all previously qualified,” said Lt. Col. James Duban, 438th Air Expeditionary Advisor Group lead rotary-wing advisor. “Right now we don’t have any new pilots coming through the pipeline, so we are using old, experienced pilots to fulfill this role. They’re knocking off the rust and getting back into it.”

For months the Afghan pilots and load crews worked in





Students of the Al Amal Deaf Institute, Al Rumaytha District, Muthanna province, Iraq, received equipment needed for education and information access, Sept. 14, from the U.S. Army and the Provincial Reconstruction Team, Muthanna, based at Camp Adder.

Photo by Spc. Anita VanderMolen.