

Service members honored by all-stars

Story and photos by Sgt. Greg Heath
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – Service members were treated to an all star extravaganza when the United Service Organizations brought its 2003 Hope and Freedom Tour here yesterday.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack Tilley, on his farewell tour before retirement, brought along the U.S. Army band, comedian and author Al Franken, country music stars Mark Wills and Darryl Worley, T.V. show J.A.G. star Karri Turner, WWE superstar Bradshaw, members of the Washington Redskins Cheerleading



The USO brought together an all-star group of entertainers to perform a more than two-hour show for troops at Bagram Air Base yesterday.

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LTF-129 class hoists combat readiness

Story by Staff Sgt. Johnny A. Thompson
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – If coalition forces here are going to be successful in their quest to kill, capture and deny sanctuary to al Qaeda and Taliban militants it's not going to be on flat, undisturbed plains or graveled roads, but the untamed, mountainous regions of Afghanistan.

With that knowledge, members of Logistics Task Force-129 held a sling loading class Saturday for service members at Bagram Air Base with the intent to hoist their readiness for Afghanistan's unincorporated landscape.

"The purpose of the class was to give service members a working knowledge of how to sling load equipment," said Master Sgt. Michael Mosier, training and operations noncommissioned officer in charge for LTF-129.

"A lot of service members don't know how to or haven't

had a lot of training in sling loading so we wanted to offer some training," he said

The five and a half hour class, attended by more than 45 service members from the 805th Military Police Company and 2nd Battalion, 8th Regiment Marines, afforded troops the opportunity to learn how to inspect a sling load set and cargo nets, hook up a 10K cargo net and High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle, and use a palletized loading system.

With assistance from Task Force Panther, the service members sling loaded equipment to a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to get real world experience on how meticulous the procedures are, but more importantly how to ensure their own safety when loading equipment.

"Teaching (service members) from a field manual or Army regulation is good, but when they get hands on training and see what to do and what not to do they learn and retain the information a lot better," said Mosier. "But, before anything

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

World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



A Connecticut state trooper returns to New Haven on Monday after riding a commuter train to New York City.

Security raised in United States

WASHINGTON – Surface-to-air missiles were ready to be deployed around Washington, New York state troopers were authorized to ride commuter trains, and air travelers encountered more delays Monday – all results of the heightened terrorism threat alert level.

On Sunday, the Department of Homeland Security raised the level from elevated, or yellow, to high, or orange, the second-highest level on the department's five-color warning system.

The move was based mostly on information gleaned from a high volume of "chatter" among suspected terrorists, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said.

Ridge warned of possible strikes more devastating than the al Qaeda airliner attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, on New York and Washington, and told *CNN* on Monday that airplanes remain terrorists' weapon of choice.

"There is a continuous stream of reporting, literally from the last two years, that indicates [terrorists'] preference or desire to use aircraft as a means of attack," Ridge said on *CNN*'s "American Morning."

Despite that, he said, "From curbside to the cockpit, we are far more secure traveling by air than we have ever been."

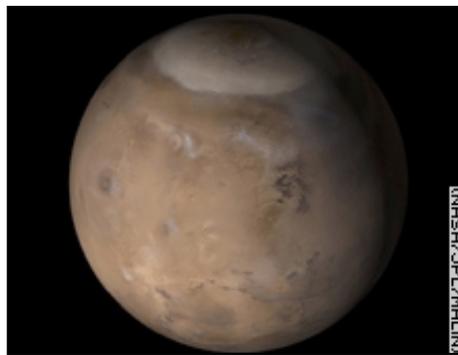
Blast kills two U.S. soldiers

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Two U.S. soldiers and an Iraqi translator were killed Monday when their convoy struck an improvised explosive device along a road in Baghdad, U.S. Central Command said.

Two other soldiers in the 1st Armored Division patrol were wounded and evacuated to a hospital, Central Command said.

At least one convoy vehicle was disabled in the blast near a gas station in the Adhamiya neighborhood of the Iraqi capital, officials said. Quick-reaction forces swept the area looking for suspects, they said.

On Sunday, the U.S. military said a new operation was under way targeting anti-coalition insurgents. More than 100 suspects were captured, and arms caches were confiscated, a military spokeswoman said.



Mars Global Surveyor view of the red planet.

Landers may resolve riddles

PASADENA, Calif. – The prospect of life on Mars has charged the public imagination for more than a century, ever since astronomers first spied what they thought were canals dug to irrigate the planet's ruddy surface.

But after spacecraft and Earth-based telescopes began taking a closer look at the planet, evidence of the canals – and the Martians who presumably created them – quickly vanished.

Instead, the scrutiny showed Mars to be a dusty, frigid world, shrouded by an atmosphere too thin to breathe, bombarded with radiation and largely dry beyond the ice that caps its poles. It seemed altogether hostile to life as we know it.

But ongoing scientific spadework continues to turn up evidence that suggests that long ago Mars was a wetter, if not warmer, world where rivers large enough to carve canyons the size of the United States flowed across its surface. Life, even if just tiny microbes, could have thrived in such a place.

Early Christmas morning, a small armada of exploratory spacecraft will reach the red planet, some attempting to enter orbit, others to land – a

very risky business because of the engineering and physical challenges that await the robotic probes. Together, they represent one of the most ambitious efforts yet to resolve the contradictions that persist in alternately intriguing and beguiling scientists.



Former hostages hug Monday after their release by Colombian rebels.

Marxist Rebels free hostages

SIERRA NEVADA, Colombia – Colombian Marxist rebels on Monday released four Israeli hikers and a British backpacker they kidnapped 100 days ago, handing them over to a church-led humanitarian commission.

Israelis Benny Daniel, Ido Guy, Erez Altawil and Orpaz Ohayon and Briton Mark Henderson appeared in good health as they boarded helicopters in the northern Sierra Nevada mountains, according to a *Reuters* witness.

"It's something that we've all been waiting for, for three months. And now it's finally going to happen," Henderson told *Reuters* at the secret jungle handoff site.

"This is ... a massive Christmas present," Henderson's mother, Sharelle, told reporters outside the family's home in North Yorkshire, England. "I don't know. Just sheer joy. Just magic," she said when asked how she felt at the news of his release.

The released hostages were being taken to Bogota, where relatives were waiting.

They were the last of a group of eight hostages to go free after being kidnapped at gunpoint by the National Liberation Army, or ELN, during an excursion to the jungle ruins of an ancient Indian city in the Colombian mountains on Sept. 12.

Roman Catholic Church officials helped secure the release of the hostages.

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squad, music group No Illusion, and many others.

The more than two hour show had a little bit of everything, from music and dancing, to laughter and tears. Even recently captured Saddam Hussein made a surprise appearance at the show, courtesy of funnyman Franken.

“The show was fantastic ... just the love we get from these guys, they say they’re not worthy, but we’re all people and we appreciate them just as much as they appreciate us,” said Spc. Joshua Wil-

liams, HHC, 10th Aviation Brigade, expressing thanks toward the performers who, throughout the night, repeatedly expressed their appreciation and admiration to the service members.

The show ended with Tilley getting the whole building to lock arms, service members and entertainers, and sing “God Bless America.”

According to many service members in attendance, it was a fitting cap to an emotion-filled night.

“It just makes me feel proud to be here in Afghanistan,” said Lance Cpl. Cody Kissell, Marine -Task Force Red Dog.



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Tilley’s niece, Bonnie Tilley, gets up close and personal with a Marine during a song.



Top - Country singer Mark Wills plays a song for the energized crowd.

Right - Country singer Darryl Worley gets the crowd going with a cover of Jimmy Buffetts’ “Margaritaville.”



Service members erupt in emotion at the end of the night when Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack Tilley got everyone together to sing “God Bless America.”



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else (service members) must realize that safety comes first. Having the Chinook here (as part of the training aid) was a plus because (service members) got the chance to sling load under (real world pressures) and to see how important safety and attention to deal is when sling loading equipment.”

“Our mission was to help (service members) walk away with confidence they can hook up any sling load mission handed to them,” said Sgt. Derek Marble of security and intelligence operations for LTF-129.

Marble noted that a mission can arise at anytime and service members need to know how to sling load equipment because their unit may have to be mobile within hours.

“The more people in a unit who know how to sling load, the more that unit is mission ready,” Marble added.

Mosier noted that in Afghanistan sling loading experience and know-how is a very important skill for service members because, “a lot of missions happen in remote locations or (on uneven ground) and air lifting is only way to get equipment where it needs to be.”

Although sling-loading knowledge isn't a prerequisite for most Army military occupational specialties, Saturday service members discovered the adage “what you don't know won't hurt you” may be far from the truth for troops here supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

“MP's are multipurpose assets of the Army, we go to the field and support a lot of missions, so it's very important that we have some knowledge about sling loading,” said Sgt. 1st Class Steve Real, platoon sergeant of the 805th MP Co.

“It's our equipment, so we have to make sure it's a priority that we know how to sling load it properly because if the equipment isn't transported correctly and it gets broken it's of no use to us and we're no use to the mission. And that's the difference between us winning and losing a battle.”

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

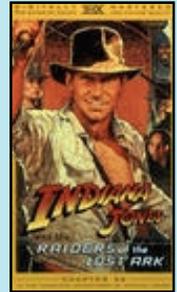
“Indiana Jones Trilogy”

1530Z at the MWR building:

The creators of JAWS and STAR WARS now bring you the ultimate hero in the ultimate adventure.

Tomorrow's movie:

“The Italian Job (1969)”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Wednesday
Uzbekistan:	Mostly Cloudy H: 37F L: 29F	Partly Cloudy H: 40F L: 23F
Bagram:	Partly Cloudy H: 46F L: 21F	Partly Cloudy H: 50F L: 21F
Kabul:	Partly Cloudy H: 45F L: 23F	Partly Cloudy H: 48F L: 19F
Kandahar:	Dusty H: 53F L: 30F	Dusty H: 45F L: 32F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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

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

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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from SI.com)



Javy-lujah: Lopez is coming off a career season in which he batted .328 with 43 homers and 109 RBIs in just 129 games.

Lopez agrees to deal with Orioles

BALTIMORE – The Baltimore Orioles took another step Monday to rebuilding a team that’s finished fourth in the AL East for six consecutive seasons, agreeing on a three-year, \$22.5 million deal with Javy Lopez.

The deal is contingent on the All-Star catcher passing a team physical Tuesday.

“Javy was the targeted guy that we were looking at in the process, and he’s thrilled to be aboard,” Orioles vice president Mike Flanagan said.

Lopez joins Miguel Tejada, the 2002 AL Most Valuable Player, in trying to revive the franchise. The shortstop agreed eight days earlier to a six-year, \$72 million contract.

Flanagan said negotiations will continue through the holidays with the agent of outfielder Vladimir Guerrero. Flanagan called Guerrero “an important piece we want to consider.”

Before reaching the deal with Lopez, Baltimore also spoke with free agent catcher Ivan Rodriguez, but Flanagan said “Javy was the targeted guy for some time.”

Lopez, 33, hit .328 last season for the Atlanta Braves, with 43 homers and 109 RBIs, both career highs. It was his best year since 1998, when he hit .284 with 34 homers and 106 RBIs.

Knicks fire Layden, hire Thomas

NEW YORK – In a change of leadership that almost no one at Madison Square Garden saw coming, Scott Layden was fired Monday as president of the New York Knicks and was replaced by Isiah Thomas.

The move comes after New York missed the playoffs the past two seasons with a roster largely assembled by Layden. The Knicks are 10-18 this season, and recent speculation centered on coach Don Chaney possibly losing his job.

Instead, the man forced out was Layden, who joined the Knicks in the summer of 1999 after they were coming off an appearance in the NBA Finals.

“I don’t think there’s any question that everybody is underperforming. Just look at our record,” said James Dolan, the chairman of the team’s corporate owner, Cablevision. “This is the thing we could do right now to most help the team. That’s the bottom line of it.”

No. 6 Kansas goes belly-up in Reno

RENO, Nev. – Nevada coach Trent Johnson figured his team needed to play a near-perfect game to beat Kansas.

That’s what the Wolf Pack did.

Kirk Snyder had 29 points and nine rebounds and Nevada used sharp foul shooting down the stretch to upset No. 6 Kansas 75-61 Sunday night at the Wolf Pack Holiday Classic.

“It’s pretty hard for me personally to imagine us under the circumstances playing better,” Johnson said. “I thought we put on a pretty good performance in front of some pretty good enthusiastic and deserving fans.”

Cheered on by an enthusiastic crowd of 10,983 fans, Nevada made 19 of 21 free throws over the final 10 minutes to hold off the Jayhawks.

Todd Okeson had 12 points and Kevinn Pinkney added 10 for the Wolf Pack (5-3), who were mobbed by more than 100 students who charged the floor at the buzzer.

“I still have goose bumps. It hasn’t really set in that we just beat Kansas,” said Okeson, who us from Weskan, Kan.



Keith Langford was KU’s co-leading scorer – with just 11 points.

TCU suspends five players, Boise State rules out six for Fort Worth Bowl

FORT WORTH, Texas – Starting center Chase Johnson is among five TCU players who were suspended for the inaugural Fort Worth Bowl against No. 18 Boise State.

Johnson missed curfew at the team hotel Saturday night. Four freshmen players were suspended for violating unspecified team rules that same night, TCU spokesman Steve Fink said Monday.

None of the four freshmen, fullbacks Marcus Draper and Reggie La’Mothe, and cornerbacks Gerrad Wilson and Derek Ferry, had extended playing time this season.

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

Explosions raise tension in Afghan capital during constitutional meeting

KABUL, Afghanistan (*USATODAY.com*) – Two heavy explosions heard in downtown Kabul on Monday were apparently caused by controlled blasts to destroy old weapons.

The blasts jolted a city already on alert during a landmark constitutional convention amid concerns that Taliban insurgents may try and target the meeting.

“We have some controlled explosions today,” Lt. Col. Joerg Langer, a spokesman for the international peacekeeping force in Kabul, said after the explosions, heard at about 1:40 p.m. local time.

Kabul police could not confirm what caused the blasts, but also said they believed it was part of efforts to dispose of old weapons leftover from two decades of war.

The capital is currently on a high security footing as it hosts a constitutional council.

Up to four rockets were fired into Kabul on Sunday night, one damaging a house in the north of the city but hurting no one.

Thousands of Afghan troops and foreign peacekeepers are providing security for the grand council, or loya jirga, which has brought together 500 delegates from around the country to debate a new constitution.

Afghan intelligence units have been patrolling hills surrounding the city to try to prevent rocket attacks, a favorite tactic of Afghan insurgents.

Three rockets slammed into Kabul last Tuesday, but none landed near the jirga site or caused serious damage.

Pakistani security seizes arms cache near northwestern Afghan border

(ABC Radio Australia) – Pakistani authorities have recovered a cache of arms and ammunition from the north-western tribal area bordering Afghanistan.

A local official in Parachinar district, 105-kilometres southwest of Peshawar says the heavy weapons were found during a routine search of goods loaded on camels.

The cache included 139 anti-personnel mines, 10 rocket launcher shells, 38 rocket launcher chargers, 39 anti-personnel mine fuses and other small weapons.

The smugglers fled the scene.

Afghanistan gets new farming techniques

URBANA, Ill. (AP) – Farmers in Afghanistan, left idle after 25 years of war and the repressive rule of the Muslim fundamentalist Taliban regime, are getting lessons from Illinois on

how to use the latest farming techniques and technology.

Among the goals of the training program, developed by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, is to develop native teachers and researchers, restoring Afghanistan’s once-respected agriculture education system.

“If we expect Afghanistan to ultimately walk alone, it has got to have its educational system built back up,” said Oval Myers Jr., a retired professor at SIUC who is leading the program with John Santas of the University of Illinois.

So far, three monthlong courses have been taught to 43 Afghans. But Santas and Myers are confident the program will go on for at least four more years with the potential to reach hundreds, if not thousands, of Afghan farmers.

Myers and Santas, who heads the new program from the University of Illinois’ College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, were among the leaders of a 15-year project that began in 1983 to build Northwest Frontier Province Agricultural University in Peshawar, Pakistan, using the same model as American land-grant universities.

The project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, ended in 1994 because of legislation that stopped aid to Pakistan if it persisted in building nuclear weapons. But over 11 years, more than 100 teachers and researchers were trained in the United States and returned to the Pakistani school, which continued to develop and prosper on its own, Santas said.

“Government Issue toilet paper use #78.”



kevin_kilgore@hotmail.com

By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support