

Slovaks pave way for a better runway

By Pfc. Christina Carde
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – Since the arrival of American and coalition forces to Bagram Air Base, many engineer units from different countries have played a big part in the base's reconstruction.

As part of the overall reconstruction mission, the Slovakian Engineer Unit has been largely responsible for the success of many projects, repairs and enhancements made to Bagram's airfield and runways.

"When we arrived in Bagram in August of last year, we were told our main mission was to repair the airfield which was in really bad shape," said Capt. Vladimir Kuchar, deputy commander, Slovakian Engineer Unit. "There was scrap metal, and mines all over the place and a lot of craters in the ground from bombs. We knew we had our work cut out for us."

In just a few short weeks after their arrival, the small team of 40 engineers was ready to begin work.

"Our first project that lasted from September to October was to reinforce the airfield and runways with concrete slabs," said Kuchar. "In about a month's time, we had laid 76 complete slabs of concrete."

Upon completion of their first project, the Slovakian engineers learned just how multifaceted their mission was going to be.

"Laying a smooth foundation for the safe arrival of aircraft was not our only job," said Kuchar. "When aircraft would descend from the cold mountain temperatures, they would run into the problem of their wings freezing over, and there was no designated hangar to

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Courtesy photo

Giving a lift...

C Battery, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment conducted the sling load of two M119A2 Howitzers, with two High Mobility Multiwheeled Vehicles on April 18 from Forward Operating Base Salerno to Fire Base Shkin. The guns and equipment will remain indefinitely at Shkin. They were moved to the firebase to provide an asset with more range due to the increased threat in that vicinity. Task Force DEVIL is also in the process of moving a Q36 radar (from 3-319th AFAR) to the firebase, which will provide a target acquisition capability along with the 105mm Howitzers. The battery is commanded by 1st Lt. James Sink, executive officer, and Sgt. 1st Class William Covey, gunnery sergeant.

Islamic revolution day

By Spc. Steven Marroni
109th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghans celebrated Islamic Revolution Day on Monday. Every April 28, Afghans mark the collapse of the communist government to the mujaheddin in their country.

The holiday is usually celebrated by parades and festivities. Most people in Kabul try to watch the parade, or get within site of it. Some watch the live broadcast at home.

"It's a very happy day," said Abdul Samad, a groundskeeper at Civil Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force compound.

"When the Russians took over, we had a bad time. Life was hard, and people had to always move and live in refuge."

Following the pro-Moscow revolution of 1978, Afghanistan slid into a state of chaos. Tribes and regional factions took up arms, and in 1979, a puppet Soviet government was established in Kabul. An Islamic jihad was called, and seven mujaheddin factions sprung up. Mired in a war that drug out through the 1980s, the Soviets eventually withdrew their troops in 1989, which severely weakened the pro-communist government of

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



Emergency personnel evacuate one of the wounded from a Tel Aviv street.

Four dead in Tel Aviv terror bombing

TEL AVIV, Israel — A security guard at a beachfront cafe blocked a suicide bomber from entering the establishment early Wednesday, but the bomber blew himself up at the cafe's door, the city's police chief said.

At least four people were killed, one of them probably the bomber, authorities said.

The terror attack, which occurred beside the U.S. Embassy compound, left as many as 40 wounded — two of them in very critical condition, four in serious condition, four moderately hurt and 21 with light injuries — ambulance service officials said.

The cafe, Mike's Place, is located in an area that includes several bars, cafes, and nightclubs along the Mediterranean coastline.

"Suddenly there was an orange flash and a loud bang, and I ducked and then it was covered in smoke, and everyone was screaming, and then we ran out," said Barry Gilbert, a musician performing at the cafe whose shirt and pants were bloodstained. "It was just very, very, very messy as we were trying to get out."

Gilbert said about 100 people were inside at the time of the explosion.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

In the aftermath of the attack, ambulances crowded the pedestrian mall. Video of the scene showed twisted metal supports and hanging wires, all that was left of the cafe's entrance.

The restaurant owner said one of his waitresses lost her arm in the explosion.

The blast occurred just hours after Abu Mazen was confirmed as the first Palestinian prime minister.



Angry Iraqis confront a U.S. soldier posted on guard Tuesday in Fallujah after a clash Monday night.

U.S. troops leave school after deadly clash with Iraqis

FALLUJAH, Iraq — U.S. troops pulled out of a school in a farming community 40 miles west of Baghdad on Tuesday night, a day after their presence there sparked a deadly clash with hundreds of Iraqi protesters.

Conflicting accounts emerged about Monday night's confrontation in Fallujah that Red Cross officials said killed at least 15 civilians and wounded up to 53 others. Among the dead were three boys under the age of 11, Red Cross officials said.

The violence broke out as the demonstrators approached members of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division — based at the elementary school — and demanded that they leave, according to a telecommunications engineer.

U.S. Central Command said that the protesters fired on the soldiers with AK-47s and that the soldiers fired back in self-defense.

According to CNN's Karl Penhaul the demonstrators say that didn't occur. They say that some of their number did start throwing stones, and that is what prompted the U.S. soldiers to open fire.

The engineer says that at that point "all

hell broke loose."

One U.S. Army sergeant said he shot at what he saw, "and what I saw was targets. Targets with weapons, and they were going to harm me."

"It's either them or me, and I took the shot, sir, and I'm still here talking to you," he said.

A second U.S. soldier said the clash began when some protesters started throwing rocks at the soldiers and others started chanting.

"Then others joined in throwing rocks, and others brought weapons to the party," the soldier said. "Then they started firing them — not just into the air but toward the soldiers on top of the buildings."

The confrontation reportedly went on for hours.

The situation at Fallujah is under investigation, Pentagon officials said.

Iraqi who helped rescue POW granted asylum

WASHINGTON — The Iraqi lawyer who U.S. officials say took great risks to help with the rescue of Pfc. Jessica Lynch has been granted asylum and offered a job in the United States, officials told CNN on Tuesday.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge announced Tuesday that Mohammed Odeh al Rehaief, his wife, and their 5-year-old daughter had been granted humanitarian parole the day before.

"I'm very heartened to tell you that the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services granted asylum yesterday to Mohammed al Rehaief, who provided critical information to our United States Marines, which led to the location and rescue of Private Jessica Lynch," Ridge said.

Ridge said the family was brought to America this month after the Department of Homeland Security allowed them into the country.

"Mr. al Rehaief should know that Americans are grateful for his bravery and for his compassion," Ridge said.

The family is staying in the Washington area, a government official said.

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defrost them. A facility where the aircraft could be thawed with chemical agents was desperately needed. We completed this job in less than a month.”

In addition to building additional facilities for aircraft, the engineers were tasked with another mission they were not expecting.

“We did a lot of work on the guard towers around the perimeter,” said Kuchar. “In addition to making repairs, we also installed heaters inside the towers for the cold winter months.”



As the months progressed the airfield and runways began to take shape and the engineers were given greater responsibilities.

“We recently finished building the foundation for a helicopter maintenance facility, and we’ve done numerous extensions on various taxiways,” said Kuchar. “Our newest and most challenging project involves the complete reconstruction of the Delta area of the airfield. Normally, our projects use about 800 cubic meters of concrete. This one will use about 6,000.”

Even though all these projects may seem like a lot of work for such a small element, the engineers have had no problem handling the workload.

“We may be small but we are quick, skilled and the best at what we do,” said 1st Lt. Anton Kosik, unit physician. “Our leaders have spent their lives in the engineering business and have degrees to back up their experience. Our soldiers have been trained as engineers and have all proven to be naturals. They are all professionals.”



Photos by Pfc. Christina Carde

A Slovakian engineer sprays water over the newly cemented helicopter pad foundation.

Left: Soldiers from the Slovakian Engineer Unit, use shovels and rakes to smooth out the foundation of the new helicopter pad in the Delta area of the airfield.

Below left: Two Slovakian engineers direct the cement flow from a trough into the new helicopter pad site. The Slovakian Engineer Team completed 100 cubic meters of construction on the airfield Tuesday with 5,999 cubic meters left to go.

When the engineers are not hard at work on the runways, they are busy fostering good relations with their American and coalition counterparts.

“Our culture is very hospitable by nature,” said Kosik. “We enjoy getting to know the other countries we work with and invite them over to socialize all the time. Presently, when we are not working, we are busy erecting a new volleyball net for an upcoming tournament with our American and coalition co-workers. It’s a good way to get to know people.”

With the end of their tour approaching in August, Kuchar said they will leave with a sense of accomplishment.

“I believe all my soldiers will look back on their time here as a good experience,” said Kuchar. “I don’t know what else lies ahead in our time here, but we are proud of what we have done so far and are looking forward to completing whatever comes our way.”

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Afghanistan. Though the fighting continued after the Soviets left, the pro-Islamic movement took over.

“When the Islamic Revolution took place, our past problems dissolved,” Samad said. “Ever since then, we could continue to live a normal life.”

Though Afghanistan has a storied and often tumultuous history, the people continue to celebrate various days of independence, mourning, celebration and all of the holidays on the Islamic calendar. As another example, Afghanistan’s Independence Day is recognized in August, noting the date when the British relinquished their control in 1919.



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

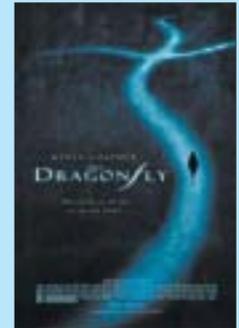
School opening...

Col. Rene Dolder and the contractor cut the ribbon formally opening school. Engineers based at Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force recently attended the opening ceremony of the Bakterian school in Kabul, signifying the completion of reconstruction work, facilitated by the engineering team. The project, totaling \$31,000, included the reconstruction of eight classrooms and a teachers room for the school that will serve over 400 students up through the 9th grade. The contractor’s design will now be used as a model for schools funded by the Army.

**Bagram Air Base
MWR presents**

1530Z at the MWR building: “Dragonfly.” A grieving doctor is being contacted by his late wife through his patients near death experiences.

Tomorrow’s movie will be “Bend It Like Beckham.”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
Bagram:	<i>Scattered showers</i> H: 82F L: 52F	<i>Scattered showers</i> H: 75F L: 50F
Kandahar:	<i>Dusty</i> H: 99F L: 62F	<i>Dusty</i> H: 88F L: 54F
Kabul:	<i>Haze</i> H: 81F L: 50F	<i>Scattered showers</i> H: 72F L: 48F
Uzbekistan:	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 62F L: 45F	<i>Mostly cloudy</i> H: 62F L: 42F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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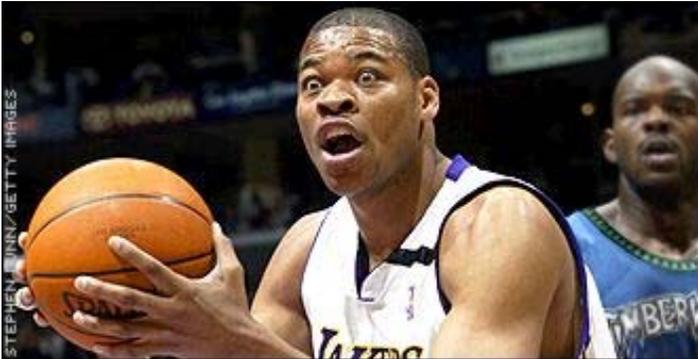
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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *ESPN.com*)



George has averaged 6.7 points in 22.3 minutes in the playoffs.

Filling The Fox Hole

MINNEAPOLIS — In a seven-game series, a lot of things can go wrong. “One injury is all it takes” is something you hear people say quite a bit. In the Los Angeles Lakers’ worst-case scenario/nightmare, that injury would happen to Shaquille O’Neal or Kobe Bryant. Or worse, Rick Fox.

No, the Lakers probably couldn’t win a scrimmage without Shaq or Kobe. But Fox is the one who has set the tone for the Lakers’ defensive intensity and overall aggression.

Fox is the man who isn’t afraid to crash the floor in pursuit of a loose ball, sacrifice his groin to take a charge or an elbow to the nose if he thinks he has a clear shot at the ball. But against the Minnesota Timberwolves in Game 5, Fox will likely get the same amount of minutes as Tex Winter. Zero. His left ankle hasn’t allowed him to

walk without pain since he rolled it in the first quarter of Game 4 at the Staples Center.

“I can’t put any weight on it,” he said. “I’ve never felt that kind of pain before.”

Enter Devean George. The fourth-year small forward will replace Fox in the starting lineup and will be called on for the rest of the playoffs to give the thinning Lakers the boost they desperately need on both ends of the floor. George has spent most of his career teasing Lakers management with his explosive athletic ability and knack for scoring while frustrating them with his inability to maximize his potential.

George will have the opportunity to do one or the other under a glaring spotlight Tuesday night at the Target Center. George came up huge for the Lakers in the second half of Game 4 by scoring seven of his nine points in the fourth quarter and serving up two big blocks on Wally Szczerbiak that forced a 24-second shot-clock violation late in the game. But in the first half, George was the player Laker faithful know all too well. He stood around on the perimeter and proceeded to brick one flat jumpshot after another, missing four straight at one point. He also picked up two quick fouls within five minutes of replacing Fox and was summoned to the bench in favor of Brian Shaw.

But on the plus side, George’s 17-foot jumper stopped a late Wolves run and put the Lakers up for good, 88-87. George has often been considered not suitable for the Lakers’ triple-post offense because his type of game is too similar to Bryant’s and he is often ineffective when he’s on the floor with Kobe. George needs the ball to score, and Kobe dominates the ball.

Ball or no ball, George must somehow provide a sizeable contribution, considering he’ll likely play 30-plus minutes. For Game 5, George will earn his keep trying to frustrate Szczerbiak by face-guarding and denying him the ball all night long, crashing the defensive boards and showing he can consistently knock down open jumpers to relieve pressure from Shaq.

It’s a big task, but only the Lakers’ bid at a fourth straight world championship is at stake.

“I know I’ll be called on to step things up,” George said. “Kobe and Shaq need support, and I’m going to give it to them.”

By George, he’d better.

Rose scores 27 points to lead Spurs to Game 5 win

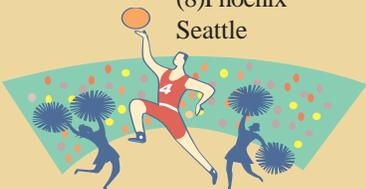
SAN ANTONIO - The Spurs opened a double-digit lead in the first quarter, built it to 24 by halftime and then had to hang on to defeat Phoenix 94-82 Tuesday night to

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2002/2003 NBA standings

Eastern Conference		Western Conference	
Atlantic		Midwest	
(2) New Jersey	49-33	(1) San Antonio	60-22
(4) Philadelphia	48-34	(3) Dallas	60-22
(6) Boston	44-38	(4) Minnesota	51-31
(7) Milwaukee	42-40	(6) Portland	50-32
(8) Orlando	42-20	(7) Utah	47-35
Central		Pacific	
(1) Detroit	50-32	(2) Sacramento	59-23
(3) Indiana	48-34	(5) LA Lakers	50-32
(5) New Orleans	47-35	(6) Portland	50-32
(7) Milwaukee	42-40	(8) Phoenix	44-38
Atlanta	35-47	Seattle	40-42



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take a 3-2 lead in their best-of-seven playoff series.

The Suns, who erased big leads in their victories in Games 1 and 4, made the second half compelling. They opened the third quarter with a 19-5 run that trimmed San Antonio's advantage to 59-49, but the Spurs put together a string of baskets to restore their lead to 19 by the end of the quarter.

Phoenix charged again in the fourth quarter, pulling within six, 85-79, with 1:49 to play on a drive by Stephon Marbury, but the Spurs hit their foul shots down the stretch to secure the win.

"We came out with energy in the second half," said Shawn Marion, who led the Suns with 22 points. "We closed the gap real close. We just couldn't get over the hump."

Tim Duncan made all six of his foul shots in the final minute.

"We knew they were going to make some kind of run," Duncan said. "But we kept our composure and sustained throughout."

Reserve Malik Rose led the Spurs with 27 points and 13 rebounds. Duncan added 23 points and 17 rebounds.

Led by Rose, San Antonio's bench outscored the Phoenix reserves, 42-17.

"When our bench plays that strong, it means we're really passing the ball well," said David Robinson, who scored 10 points and had nine rebounds.

Game 6 will be Thursday night in Phoenix.

San Antonio's energetic defense took away the inside in the first half, limiting the Suns to 10 field goals in the first two periods. Marbury was 0-for-7 from the field.

"I didn't really have my strength, the way I normally have it," said Marbury, who has been bothered by a shoulder injury that makes his right arm numb.

Phoenix missed its first four shots before an alley-oop dunk by Marion three minutes into the game, then missed its next five attempts.

A tip-in by Duncan gave San Antonio a 23-13 lead with a minute left in the first period, and a putback by Robinson with 7:16 remaining in the second quarter pushed the Spurs' lead to 38-18.

"It was really a clinic," Robinson said of his team's execution in the first half. "We moved the ball around, we went high-low. We went baseline. We had the size and we just started taking it."

The Suns never found an offensive rhythm in the half. As a team, they shot 4-for-22 in the first quarter and 6-for-16 in the second. Phoenix was outrebounded in the half, 31-11, but the Suns grabbed more rebounds in the second half.

Marbury, who had his way with San Antonio in the first four games, scored his first basket with 9:16 left in the third quarter.

Jackson NBA's sixth-man award winner

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Sacramento Kings guard Bobby Jackson won the NBA's Sixth Man of the Year award on Tuesday.

Jackson, the runner-up for the award last season behind

Detroit's Corliss Williamson, received 52 of the 118 first-place votes from a panel of broadcasters and journalists.

Jackson got 362 points in the voting. Milwaukee shooting guard Michael Redd finished second with 257, and Utah forward Andrei Kirilenko was third with 127.

Jackson, the Kings' undersized offensive spark plug, is just the second point guard to win the award, along with Orlando's Darrell Armstrong in 1999.

Jackson was the Kings' fourth-leading scorer this season, averaging a career-best 15.2 points. He also recorded career bests in shooting percentage (46.4), free throw percentage (84.6) and 3-point percentage (37.9).

But Jackson's season was hardly a typical one for a sixth man.

He started 26 games for the Kings last fall while Mike Bibby missed the first seven weeks with a foot injury — and after a collision with Shaquille O'Neal on Christmas, Jackson missed the Kings' next 20 games with a broken hand.

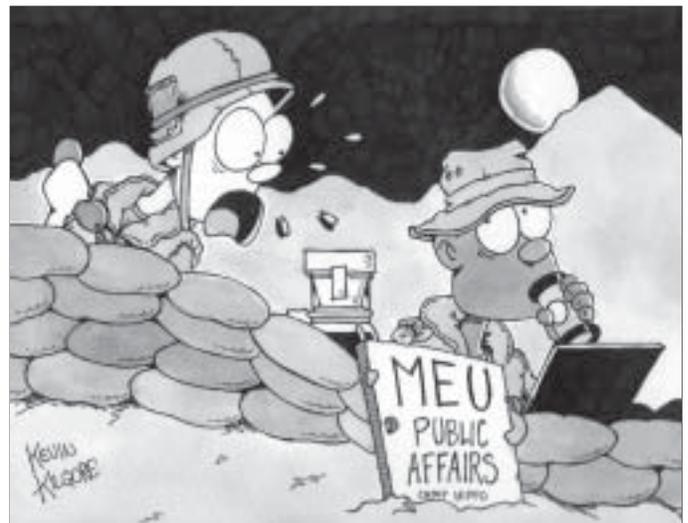
Jackson has been the Kings' best reserve since returning. He spells Bibby and Doug Christie at both guard positions, and he's usually on the court in the closing minutes of tight games.

Not bad for a guard who's probably two inches shorter than his listed 6-foot-1 — and who's been traded twice and allowed to leave Minnesota three seasons ago as an unrestricted free agent.

Jackson is one of the Kings' leaders, with an exuberant locker room presence and a calming veteran influence. He's also known for his remarkable work ethic, both during and after practice.

A six-year veteran, Jackson is one of several Kings still under contract for more than two seasons. With consecutive division championships under their belt after going 59-23 in the regular season, the Kings are one victory away from finishing their first-round playoff series with the Jazz and advancing to the conference semifinals for the third straight year.

"Incoming! MEDIA!"



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By Kevin Kilgore

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