

CJSOTF takes the plunge at Bagram

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Keith Thompson
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – The soft yellow glow spilling from the cracks in the corrugated tin building only added to the clandestine atmosphere as the Special Forces soldiers inside strapped on parachutes.

As dawn broke on Tuesday, more than 40 Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force soldiers made the short jaunt from the parachute rigger's shack across the airfield to an awaiting Chinook helicopter that would take them on a rare airborne operation.

“The purpose of this jump is a demonstration of force,” said Maj. Rene Jewett, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force. “If there are any enemies out there – any anti-coalition forces – this parachute jump is a very visible thing.

“It shows our power and our capabilities and hopefully will strike some fear in our enemies,” he said. “A demonstration of Force is definitely a psychological operation.”

The paratroopers jumped in three separate groups, the last group being a combination of U.S. and Italian military free fall jumpers, from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter onto a drop zone close to Bagram Air Base.



A CJSOTF paratrooper takes the plunge from a CH-47 Chinook during an airborne operation near Bagram Air Base.

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Bagram celebrates Women's Equality Day

Story and photo by Sgt. Stephanie Hall
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – U.S. soldiers file into a tent to commemorate a milestone for U.S. women's rights, while simultaneously an Afghan woman with virtually no rights is lead into the U.S. Army hospital on Bagram Air Base.

That was the scene yesterday when service members observed Women's Equality Day, a day dedicated to when American women achieved the right to

vote.

And, the troops of CJTF-180 and the Equal Opportunity staff held a cake-cutting ceremony and commemoration.

At the U.S. Army Hospital, Col. Judy Tracey, head nurse of the 452nd Combat Support Hospital, spoke as the keynote speaker on why recognizing this day is essential to the continuing advancement of women's rights, both in the civilian and military worlds.

“I personally felt that the military has done the best to advance equality for the sexes throughout the years,”

said Tracey. “It is the military that pins on the rank according to the fulfillment of certain criteria and not on the sex of the individual.”

It is also the coalition troops in Afghanistan trying to help this country to travel a similar path to reach that same equality, said Tracey.

“While we are here in Afghanistan we are witness to a culture where equality of women is non-existent,” she said. “We need to continue to do our jobs

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



Kelly (L) and Japanese official Mitoji Yabunaka, leave trilateral talks with S. Korea on Tuesday.

High-stakes N. Korea talks begin

BEIJING – Six-party talks aimed at ending the standoff over North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons program have begun in China.

The three days of talks are seen as an opportunity for Washington and its allies South Korea and Japan, as well as China and Russia, to present their views to North Korea and hear from Pyongyang about its concerns.

North Korea says it wants security guarantees from the U.S. before it will begin to dismantle its touted nuclear weapons program. Washington, meanwhile, wants the program scrapped unconditionally.

"If the North Koreans don't walk out, we will consider it a success," said one U.S. official in Washington Tuesday.

The Beijing meet is the culmination of months of frantic diplomatic scrambling, particularly by Beijing, seeking to cultivate some common ground for Pyongyang and Washington.

The talks, to be held at Beijing's exclusive Diaoyutai state guest house, will run from Wednesday to Friday.

A senior State Department official in Washington said the talks are only the beginning of a process, and no concrete accomplishments are expected to come from the session.

This senior official said the United States would not be offering inducements at the

talks to encourage North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program or to finally comply with previously violated agreements.

The U.S. delegation is "not going with some package of rewards in anticipation of progress," the official said.



Palestinian youths surround a car destroyed in Tuesday's attack in Gaza.

Israeli missile strike kills bystander

GAZACITY, Gaza—Israeli helicopters fired at least three missiles Tuesday at a car near a refugee camp north of Gaza City, killing an elderly man and wounding 23 bystanders, Palestinian hospital sources said.

The apparent target of the attack, Hamas militant Khalid Massoud, ran from the car before it was hit near the entrance of the Jabaliya refugee camp, sources said. Another Hamas militant, Wael Ikilan, escaped with him, sources said.

Both men are members of the military wing of Hamas, Izzedine al Qassam. Israel had attempted to kill Massoud before.

Israeli security sources accused Massoud of playing a primary role in the manufacture of Qassam rockets. They said 10 Qassam rockets have been fired at Israel in the past five days.

It was Israel's third attack targeting individual militants since the August 19 terror bombing of a bus in Jerusalem that killed at least 21 people and for which Izzedine al Qassam and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility.

Two days later, Israeli forces killed senior Hamas leader Ismail Abu Shanab, and Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades called off their self-declared cease-fire with Israel.

The violence has posed a threat to the U.S.-backed road map aimed at ending the

conflict and establishing an independent Palestinian state by 2005.



Steven Hatfill denies any connection to the fatal anthrax mailings.

Anthrax 'person of interest' sues Ashcroft, FBI

WASHINGTON – Steven Hatfill, the former U.S. Army bioweapons scientist named a "person of interest" in the 2001 anthrax attacks, filed suit Tuesday against Attorney General John Ashcroft, the Justice Department and FBI, saying his constitutional rights were violated.

"Dr. Hatfill had nothing to do with the horrific anthrax attacks," Hatfill attorney Thomas Connolly said.

"No evidence links Dr. Hatfill to the crime, yet the attorney general and his subordinates have attempted to make him a scapegoat. In the process, they have trampled his constitutional rights and destroyed his life."

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, also names various lower-level Justice Department and FBI officials.

It asks for a declaration that government officials violated Hatfill's constitutional rights and seeks an injunction against future violations. It also seeks an undetermined amount of monetary damages.

Hatfill's attorneys said the FBI tipped the news media to searches of Hatfill's home to deflect attention from what the attorneys characterize as a floundering anthrax investigation. They said 24-hour surveillance and wiretaps violated Hatfill's privacy.

Justice Department officials had no immediate response to Hatfill's lawsuit against the federal government, but they promptly released an internal document showing that the department's ethics watchdogs fully cleared Ashcroft for calling Hatfill a "person of interest."

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“There have been airborne operations during Operation Enduring Freedom, but this is the first time one has been conducted this close to Bagram Air Field,” Jewett said.

For many of the parachutists, the location of the jump added an extra sense of sobriety to the mission.

“This is my 60th jump and it’s obviously a little different because it’s in a country where there are bad guys out there,” said Capt. John Rhodes, CJSOTF service detachment commander.

Rhodes said that he never expected to be conducting a parachute jump on his tour to Afghanistan since “you don’t think of jumping when you deploy except as a method of getting there.”

While many of the jumpers were seasoned paratroopers, for

some this was their first jump since airborne school.

“I’m scared to death,” said Pfc. Chad Rogers, CJSOTF. Although he said he was anxious about his first jump being in Afghanistan, the jump would be “something to brag about when I get back to Fort Bragg.”

CJSOTF achieved another first on this operation – Spc. Gertie Sliker became the first female soldier to parachute in Afghanistan, ironically on Women’s Equality Day.

“I wouldn’t say that I’m a pioneer, but (the experience is) definitely something I can take home and be proud of,” Sliker said. “It’s something I can pass on to my 7-month old son at home.”

By the time the Afghanistan sun could begin to bake the tin roof of the rigger’s shack, CJSOTF had accomplished a successful jump and sent a message to anti-coalition forces around Bagram.

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and hope that by our example with the interpreters and local people we come into contact with that a change will occur.”

It is that change coalition troops are trying to achieve, said Maj. Thomas McGeachy, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Mountain Division, Equal Opportunity program manager. “Their contributions help the women of Afghanistan to regain their rights that were stripped from them by the Taliban.”

Spc. Sunny N. Stevens, 348th Engineer Detachment, said that seeing the restrictions put on women makes “you want to hopefully make a difference here in Afghanistan – to lift the veil, so to speak – so women and children can have a future, and maybe open the door for the men to realize that the value (of the women) are far more important than what (the men) put on it, which is almost nothing.”

While one of the missions for coalition troops in Afghanistan is to help the society advance equally, Sgt. 1st Class Rosalie R. Jimenez, HHC, CJTF-180, said the movement for women’s equality in the United States should not be forgotten.

“There’s always a voice needed because we want to continue going forward, and not regress, and there’s always an opposition to that progression,” said Jimenez.

“If we don’t maintain our status quo and try to improve on it, we might wind up like here where we start regressing, and we don’t want to go three steps backwards for every step forward,” Jimenez added.

These are the reasons why a day is needed: a day that “recognizes the accomplishments of our fellow Americans, and our fellow human beings,” said Staff Sgt. Robert C. Nunez, an EO coordinator for Task Force-44.

The accomplishments of the American woman is unparalleled to the women in the rest of the world, but only a continued drive and dedication will ensure that status never becomes tilted.

“We should recognize the accomplishments of the past, the present, and soon to be future,” said Nunez.



Col. Judy Tracey, head nurse for 452nd Combat Support Hospital and Brig. Gen. Byron S. Bagby, director of the Combined Joint Staff, CJTF-180, cut a cake in commemoration of Women’s Equality Day Tuesday.

Meeting promotes livelihood in Gardez

Story by Pfc. Kelly Hunt
4th Public Affairs Detachment

GARDEZ, Afghanistan – The Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team commander met with the governor of Paktya province and members of the community Aug. 17, to discuss an upcoming medical relief effort designed to reach out and offer treatment to the underserved population within the province.

Lt. Col. Anthony Hunter, Gardez PRT commander, 321st Civil Affairs Battalion, was welcomed by the Shura, a group of elders responsible for the community’s well being, to go over details of the mission and review any concerns either group had about the operation.

“This meeting today was to finalize the schedule for the medical program we’re going to be doing next week,” said Hunter.

The five-day operation will be spread throughout the province to four different locations accessible to the nomadic group they intend to help.

“We’re going to focus humanitarian (aid), medical assistance and veterinarian assistance to the Kuchis,” said Maj. Dean Fremling, leader of Civil Affairs Team 13, 407th CABn.

The Kuchis, nomadic people who travel from Pakistan to Afghanistan, are hard to medically treat due to their constant movement throughout the country.

“It’s hard to inoculate the people because they are always moving around,” said Fremling.

It is important to treat this group of people in particular because due to their movement, they may carry disease from one area of the country to another.

The operation will offer the Kuchi people a convenient opportunity to receive medical treatment for both themselves and their livestock.

A similar operation was completed in Zormant and proved to be a success, and Fremling expects the same type of productivity in this mission.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR building: “Darkness Falls.” A vengeful spirit has taken the form of the Tooth Fairy to exact vengeance on the town that lynched her 150 years earlier. Her only opposition is the only child, now grown up, who has survived her before.

Tomorrow’s movie will be “High Crimes.”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Thursday
Bagram:	Scattered TSTMS H: 93F L: 72F	Rain Showers H: 95F L: 68F
Kandahar:	Dusty H: 102F L: 72F	Dusty H: 100F L: 73F
Kabul:	Scattered TSTMS H: 91F L: 63F	Scattered TSTMS H: 93F L: 64F
Uzbekistan:	Clear H: 99F L: 60F	Clear H: 99F L: 57F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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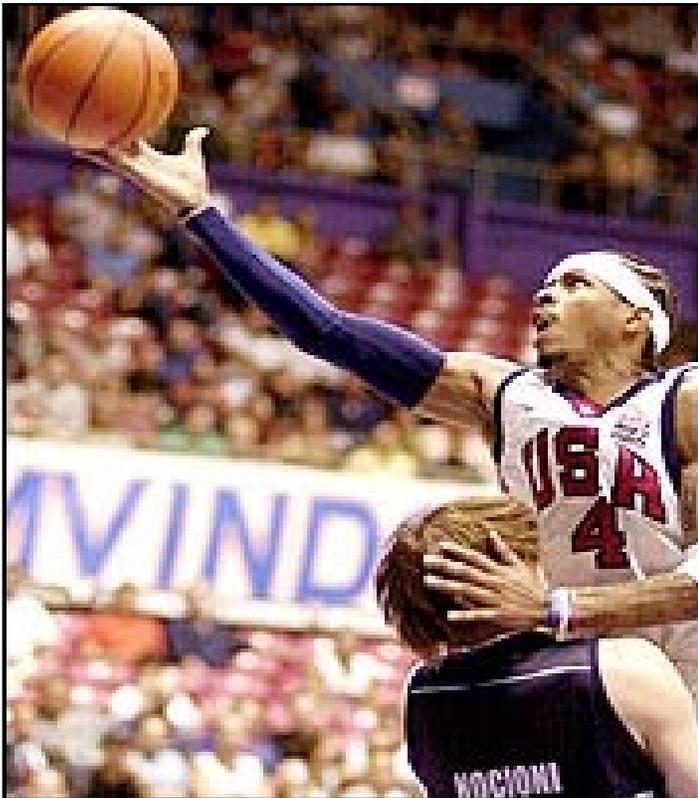
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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *ESPN.com*)



Allen Iverson and the U.S. survived a tough test in San Juan.

Team USA avenges loss in San Juan

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Argentina couldn't pull off the same type of shocker it did a year ago.

With an improved United States team showing greater degrees of poise and talent down the stretch, the Americans avenged a groundbreaking defeat of a year ago by defeating Argentina 94-86 Tuesday in the second round of the Tournament of the Americas.

Fittingly for the U.S. team, the star of the game was Jermaine O'Neal — one of only two U.S. players held over from last summer's team that finished a disappointing sixth at the World Championships.

O'Neal scored 22 points and made one of the biggest plays of the game at the defensive end, blocking a shot by Fabricio Oberto with 1:13 left — a play that led to a fast-break dunk by Vince Carter off a pass from Allen Iverson for an 89-83 lead. It was the only missed shot for Oberto, who finished 8-for-9.

Andres Nocioni then missed a 3-pointer, and Iverson went to the line with 1:07 left and made one of two. Another missed 3 by Nocioni from the same spot was followed by two made free throws by Tim Duncan to make it 92-83, and Argentina got no closer than six the rest of the way.

The United States remained undefeated in this Olympic qualifying tournament and improved to 22-0 in qualifiers. The Americans are 64-3 when using professional players in international tournaments, all three of the losses coming last summer.

Pace ends holdout; signs one-year deal

ESPN — Orlando Pace ended his lengthy holdout from the Rams on Tuesday, reporting to camp and signing a one-year deal as the team's designated franchise player.

The deal is worth \$5.724 million.



The six-year veteran offensive tackle and four-time Pro Bowl performer has been telling friends for the last few weeks that he would likely report after the third preseason game. Pace said last week on national radio that his contract situation would be resolved "real soon."

Orlando Pace — Pace, 27, is generally acknowledged as one of the top three left tackles in the league, in a class with Jonathan Ogden of Baltimore and Seattle's Walter Jones. He was the first choice overall in the 1997 draft.

The one-year deal represents the average of the five highest-paid linemen in the league. Pace and the Rams may now negotiate a longer-term contract, although that will be difficult, unless the star lineman substantially reduces his demands.

Early in the offseason, Pace's agent Carl Poston proposed a seven-year, \$80 million contract with a signing bonus of \$23.75 million. The Rams offered a deal similar to those awarded their other high-profile players, about \$42 million over seven years, with a signing bonus of between \$11 million and \$12 million.

Time for a Chang-e, Tennis great retires

NEW YORK — It's getting a bit lonely out there for Andre Agassi.

One by one, the generation of American stars who grew up playing junior tennis against one another in the 1980s and collected Grand Slam singles titles together for more than a decade is calling it quits.

Michael Chang lost his final match as a pro Tuesday at the U.S. Open in a far more muted farewell than Pete Sampras' retirement announcement the night before. Jim Courier, the first of the ol' gang to stop, called Chang's match from the TV booth.

And Agassi? He isn't done yet, not by a long shot.

Still calibrating points perfectly, lacing lines with hit-it-as-soon-as-possible groundstrokes, the 33-year-old Agassi began his run as the oldest top-seeded player in the Open era by beating Alex Corretja 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 in the first round.

And unlike the half-hour tribute to Sampras replete with a choir and speeches, there was no big celebration of Chang's career Tuesday, although the U.S. Tennis Association has talked with him about doing something next week.

Only a few thousand fans were on hand for the start of his match against No. 15-seeded Fernando Gonzalez, but, as always, Chang gave it his all.

"On court, it would be nice to be able to be remembered as a person that gave his best — win, lose or draw," said Chang, whose career highlight was winning the 1989 French Open at age 17. "It's going to be tough leaving tennis."

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

U.S., Afghan forces begin cleanup

Story by AMIR SHAH

KABUL, Afghanistan (*Washington Post*) – Afghan militia and U.S. forces began a cleanup operation Tuesday after the bombing of a suspected Taliban mountain hideout that killed at least 14 insurgents, an Afghan official said.

Between 100-150 Afghan forces backed by U.S. troops were sweeping through southeastern Afghanistan's rugged terrain, where a bombardment by U.S. jets destroyed a suspected Taliban hideout Monday, said Khalil Hotak, chief of the Zabul province intelligence service.

It was the deadliest air assault since rebels launched a series of strikes against Afghan government targets in recent weeks.

The attacks against police and government officials have cast a shadow over American-led efforts to rebuild the war-battered country. They are also indications of an increasingly well organized Taliban.

Hotak said that the Taliban were operating with al-Qaida and loyalists of renegade rebel commander Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

He didn't offer evidence of his claim, but said there were "intelligence" reports of Pakistanis and Middle Eastern fighters among the Taliban who escaped.

Monday's attack was carried out jointly by Afghan provincial militia forces and U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers, as well as A-10 ground attack jets, F-16 fighter bombers and AV-8B Harrier attack jets, said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jim Cassella, a Pentagon spokesman.

Col. Rodney Davis, spokesman for the U.S. military at coalition headquarters at Bagram Air Base, north of Kabul, said late Monday that 14 "enemy" fighters were killed.

"The number may be higher, and we are still waiting for additional battle damage assessment," he told a news briefing Tuesday.

There were no reported casualties among U.S.-led coalition troops, Davis said.

He said coalition forces were continuing to operate in the southeastern provinces of Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan.

A spokesman for the Taliban, Mohammed Hanif, said in a satellite telephone interview with The Associated Press that the dead in Monday's operation were civilians. He said the Taliban were attacked on two fronts by government troops but escaped. His version could not be verified.

Operations carried out in Afghanistan's rugged mountain regions are difficult to independently verify and differing accounts of casualties among suspected insurgents are difficult to reconcile.

In Monday's operation, some government officials, including a spokesman for the governor of Zabul province, put the

death toll among suspected Taliban at 50.

However, the U.S. military scaled back that estimate to 14.

Yet it still isn't clear whether bodies of the dead were recovered.

The United States continues to conduct periodic airstrikes in Afghanistan. About a week ago, Harriers and A-10s were sent on a bombing run along the border with Pakistan.

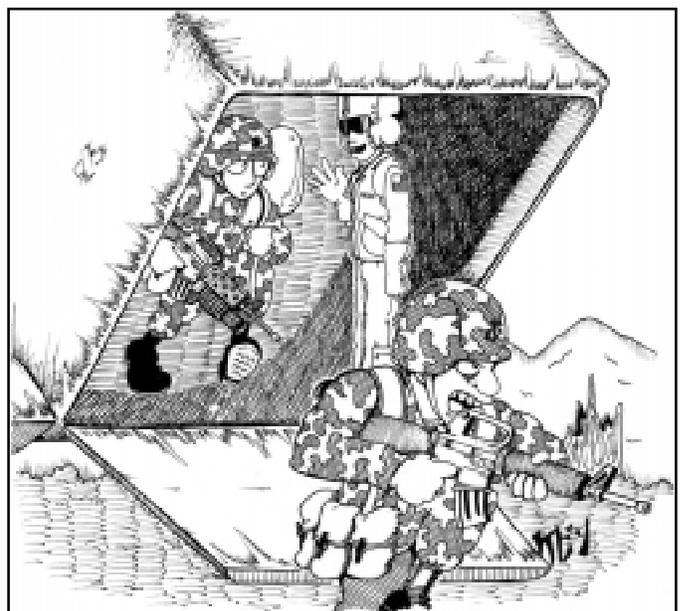
The recent anti-government assaults suggest that the Taliban are regrouping after the harsh Islamic regime was toppled by U.S.-led forces in late 2001.

There have been reports that the Taliban's leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, has appointed military commanders to areas of control.

Afghan presidential spokesman Jawad Luddin said Monday the guerrilla attacks were an attempt to undermine the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai in "soft areas" vulnerable to infiltration.

The Afghan administration has complained to Pakistan - a U.S. ally in the war on terror - that Taliban leaders appear to have found refuge in its lawless tribal regions. Pakistan has deployed its troops there but the border regions are long and porous and lined with rugged mountains in which to hide.

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By Kevin Kilgore

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