

Freedom Watch

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Building up Comanche Firebase...



Photo by Sgt. Greg Heath

Soldiers from Co. C, 2-87 Inf., 10th Mountain Division have spent the last week building up their new home, Comanche Firebase in Ghazni Province. (See photopage on page 4.)

Sec. Rumsfeld says increase in end strength not likely for now

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Despite what he called a “spike” in the operational tempo in Iraq, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said here Tuesday he hopes stress from increased operations will not lead to increased troop strength in the country.

“We hope and believe that the current stress that is being put on the force is a spike ... a temporary increase, rather than what would prove to be a plateau,” he told reporters during a Pentagon briefing. “Very simply, we do not expect to have 100,000 (or) 120,000 troops in a single country permanently deployed.”

For troops under the stress of increased military operations, he said, the Defense Department is taking immediate actions to fix the problem – from training more Iraqi security forces which now number close to 200,000 to increasing international military participation.

The secretary said justification for not increasing the military’s end strength is not that the United States can’t afford more troops. “Of course we can,” he said. “The United States is perfectly capable of paying for additional forces if we decide that that’s

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Plans developing for military academies in Iraq, Afghanistan

Story by Spc. Nate Jastzemski
Pointer View staff writer

WEST POINT, N.Y. – Plans for a military academy are developing in Iraq and one is set to open next year in Afghanistan thanks to the hard work and perseverance of two West Point officers.

Col. George B. Forsythe, West Point’s assistant dean for education and Lt. Col. Casey Neff, special assistant to the commandant here for systems and planning, recently spent more than eight weeks in the Middle East to develop the plans to start academies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The project started in October. That’s when the two traveled to Afghanistan to meet with Maj. Gen. Karl Eichenberry, commander of the Office of Military Cooperation there. With numerous Afghan military leaders and Turkish Col. Sener Tekbas, the group embarked on a program to jointly develop a new four-year academic program. This program, Forsythe said, was intended to develop “leaders of character” who could command troops and one day help redevelop the nation.

“We originally wanted to set them up with a two-year program, but they showed no interest,” he explained. “They wanted a modern, Western-style military academy with a four-year education program.

The foreign contingent also wanted a program, he continued, that would allow their officers to earn degrees in applicable civilian fields so they could contribute “more than military knowledge to their nation.”

Neff said the idea was not unlike another one that surfaced decades ago.

“There are parallels with what the Afghan leaders want to do and what the graduates of West Point did for the U.S. in the 19th century,” he said. “They want officers who will take their knowledge and experience not only as military leaders, but also as civilian leaders who will apply hardworking military ethos to the infrastructure of the country.

“The Afghan leaders we dealt with are committed to making their country better and working with them went well beyond our expectations,” Neff added.

English/Dari phrase of the day: *Sixty - Shast; Seventy - Haftad; Eighty - Hashtad; Ninety - Nawad*

World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



Bush: "Much remains for us to explore and to learn."

Bush unveils vision for moon

WASHINGTON – Saying "the desire to explore and understand is part of our character," President Bush Wednesday unveiled an ambitious plan to return Americans to the moon by 2020 and use the mission as a steppingstone for future manned trips to Mars and beyond.

"We do not know where this journey will end, yet we know this – human beings are headed into the cosmos," Bush said. "Mankind is drawn to the heavens for the same reason we were once drawn into unknown lands and across the open sea. We choose to explore space because doing so improves our lives and lifts our national spirit."

The president unveiled what he billed as a "new course" for the nation's space program in a speech at NASA headquarters, shifting the long-term focus from the space shuttle and the international space station to the creation of a new manned space vehicle that will be flying with a crew in 10 years and will return humans to the moon within 16 years.

Bush proposed spending \$12 billion over the next five years on the effort. About \$1 billion of that will come from an increase in NASA's budget, while the other \$11 billion would come from shifting funds from existing programs within NASA's current \$86 billion budget. The overall NASA budget would stay at about 1 percent of the federal budget, according to White House figures.

Fastow and wife plead guilty

HOUSTON – Ex-Enron chief financial officer Andrew Fastow pleaded guilty Wednesday to two counts of wire and securities fraud for his role in the accounting scandal that rocked the corporate world and brought down

the energy company.

Fastow entered his plea in a federal court in Houston and agreed to serve a 10-year prison sentence and to cooperate with authorities.

His wife, Lea Fastow, once an assistant treasurer at Enron, also pleaded guilty to tax fraud in exchange for a five-month sentence. She could have faced up to 37 years in prison if convicted on all counts.

The couple wants to avoid overlapping jail sentences because of their two young sons, their lawyers said.

Andrew Fastow was accused of being the mastermind behind a complex web of fraudulent accounting deals at Enron and is the highest-ranking executive to be convicted in the scandal.



An Israeli border police officer wounded in Wednesday's attack receives medical attention.

Female suicide bomber kills at least four Israelis at border

JERUSALEM – A female suicide bomber killed at least four Israelis Wednesday morning at the Erez border crossing separating Israel and northern Gaza, according to Israeli military sources.

Three soldiers and one Israeli civilian were killed in the attack, as was the bomber, according to the sources. Ten people, including four Palestinians, were wounded.

Israel Radio and the Israeli daily newspaper *Ha'aretz* quoted Israel Defense Forces Brig. Gen. Gad Shamni, commander of the army's Gaza Division, as saying when the bomber reached the area where Palestinian workers are inspected prior to entry into Israel, she told security personnel that she had a metal plate in her leg, which could set off an alarm.

"Because she was a woman, a female Soldier was sent for, to inspect her," Shamni said. "While she was waiting for the arrival of the

woman Soldier, (the bomber) apparently succeeded in penetrating a meter or two into the inspection hall, and blew herself up."

Hamas, a Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist organization, claimed joint responsibility for the attack with the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a military offshoot of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

Both groups have claimed responsibility for previous terrorist attacks against Israeli targets and have been labeled terrorist organizations by the U.S. State Department.



Dick Gephardt visits with 7-month-old Megan Klabunde after calling Dean a "fair-weather friend" in a speech Wednesday in Nevada, Iowa.

Dick Gephardt on Howard Dean: 'Manufactured anger'

NEVADA, Iowa – Rep. Dick Gephardt blasted Democratic presidential front-runner Howard Dean in a sharply worded speech Wednesday, calling Dean a "fair-weather friend" of American workers and railing against "the cynical politics of manufactured anger."

Gephardt, D-Missouri, and Dean are running neck-and-neck in the polls just five days before the Iowa caucuses.

Gephardt condemned Dean's support for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) while Vermont's governor in the 1990s. He questioned the sincerity of Dean's campaign pledge to seek labor and environmental protections in new trade pacts.

"Howard Dean travels the country and yells and pounds the podium against NAFTA, against the secrecy of the Bush-Cheney White House and against insider corporate deals," Gephardt said.

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desirable. The question is whether, in the information age, measuring end strength is the only, or even the best, way to look at the problem, and whether permanently raising end strength would or would not be the best solution.”

He said the 21st century requires a focus on quality, not quantity. “What is critical to success in combat is not necessarily mass, as much as capability,” he said, noting that coalition forces in Iraq defeated a large enemy not with mass, “but with overwhelming speed, power and agility.”

DoD is investing in new information-age technologies – precision weapons, unmanned air and sea vehicles and other less-manpower-intensive platforms and technologies – as a way of improving force capability, Rumsfeld said. In addition, he said, the military is working to increase the “jointness” of its forces.

Other measures the department is taking to reduce stress on U.S. forces include rebalancing the active force with the Guard and Reserve to reduce reliance on involuntary mobilization. And the secretary said DoD is moving forward with its plan to civilianize thousands of military jobs, thus “freeing military personnel for military tasks.”

Rumsfeld said the department already has used its emergency powers to temporarily increase end strength of U.S. troops by some 36,000. “That’s a considerable increase,” he said. He noted that a permanent end-strength increase could prove to be the slowest, most expensive option for reducing stress on the force.

“The costs are sizeable over a lifetime of each added service member,” he said, “and because of the time it takes to recruit, train and integrate new military personnel, the benefits really cannot be felt for some time.”

The secretary also emphasized that a permanent increase in end strength would require cuts elsewhere in the defense budget, “crowding out funding for various types of transformational capabilities.” Those capabilities, he said, would allow the military “to do more with the forces that we currently have.”

Still, Rumsfeld told reporters, he will do whatever “makes the most sense.”

“To the extent it involves an increase in end strength we will propose it to the president,” he said. However, he added that he is comfortable “at the moment” with the actions DoD is taking.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

“Formula 51”

0830Z at the MWR building:

An American master chemist plans to score big on a once in a lifetime drug deal. All does not go as planned and he is soon entangled in a web of deceit.

1530Z: Karaoke Night

Tomorrow’s movie:

“Malibu’s Most Wanted.”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Uzbekistan:	Cloudy/Rain H: 64F L: 39F	Cloudy/Rain H: 52F L: 34F
Bagram:	Cloudy/Rain H: 50F L: 37F	Cloudy/Fog H: 48F L: 34F
Kabul:	Cloudy/Rain H: 48F L: 36F	Cloudy/Fog H: 46F L: 32F
Kandahar:	Thunderstorms H: 68F L: 48F	Cloudy/Rain H: 64F L: 45F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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Building a Firebase

Photo Page by Sgt. Greg Heath
4th Public Affairs Detachment

GHAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Soldiers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Divi-

sion have worked tirelessly since arriving in Ghazni Province on Jan. 6 to create Comanche Firebase. The soldiers at the firebase are supporting operations currently being conducted by the entire battalion throughout the province.



Soldiers stand guard at the front gate of the new Comanche Firebase.



(Above) Company C Soldiers spent days filling sandbags, in between time spent pulling guard shifts and conducting presence patrols, to create bunkers and to fortify their new firebase. (Left) Soldiers worked together to lift heavy sandbags to various guard tower positions located on top of walls up to 15 ft. high at the firebase.



Soldiers form a human chain to move tons of supplies that the infantry company will use while conducting operations at the firebase.



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from SI.com)



Matt Mauck ended his college career with a national title.

Mauck to forego final year, head for draft

BATON ROUGE, La. – Matt Mauck, quarterback of the LSU team that won the Sugar Bowl and a Bowl Championship Series national title, said he will forego his final year of college eligibility and enter the NFL Draft.

Mauck was 18-2 as a starter and set an LSU record with 28 touchdown passes last season.

“I want to give it my best shot and hopefully it will work out,” Mauck said Tuesday during a news conference. He was accompanied by head coach Nick Saban.

“We wanted this guy to come back, but we’re happy he has the opportunity,” Saban said. “He’s been the leader, he’s been the commander in chief out there.”

Mauck, who turns 25 next month, graduated in pre-med in December and he is getting married in February. He said he would continue applying to dental schools to keep his options open.

His decision was one of a series by players who had been considered candidates for the NFL.

Junior defensive end Marcus Spears said at the same news conference on Tuesday that he would stay at LSU for his senior year.

McNabb shows his game still a threat

PHILADELPHIA – Donovan McNabb tried to shed the running quarterback label, insisting he was a pocket passer who only scrambled when plays broke down.

This season, McNabb seemed hesitant to run, often passing up chances when he had open lanes or waiting too long and getting sacked.

But he just couldn’t help himself in last week’s playoff win against Green Bay. With his receivers forced outside, McNabb had all the room he needed to run for 107 yards – an NFL postseason

record for quarterbacks.

Combined with his 248 yards and two touchdowns passing, the Eagles beat the Packers 20-17 in overtime to reach their third straight NFC title game Sunday against Carolina.

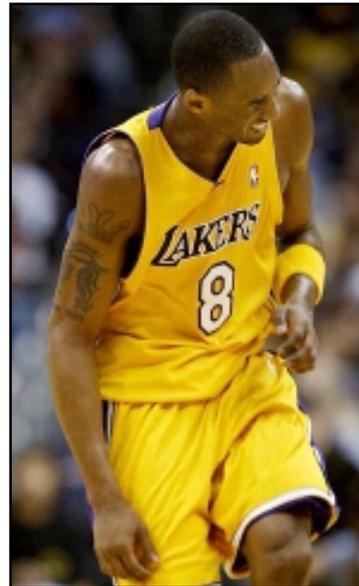
McNabb shrugged off the record, saying he ran out of necessity.

“I just tried to protect the ball,” McNabb said. “I knew they were blitzing, I looked at my first and second read and I knew I was about to get hit, so I just tried to protect the ball.”

Coach Andy Reid had a simpler explanation.

“It looked like he was the one guy that they didn’t account for,” Reid said.

Kobe goes on IL with sprained shoulder



Kobe Bryant played parts of two quarters Monday after he initially injured his shoulder.

EL SEGUNDO, Calif. –

Kobe Bryant was placed on the injured list Wednesday and is expected to miss up to three weeks with a sprained right shoulder.

Lakers coach Phil Jackson said Bryant won’t need surgery.

Bryant was injured in a collision with Cleveland’s Kedrick Brown on Monday night.

The NBA’s seventh-leading scorer with a 22.0-point average, Bryant was injured late in the first quarter of an 89-79 victory over the Cavaliers when he faked Brown into the air outside the 3-point line

and Brown landed on Bryant’s shoulder.

In obvious pain, Bryant made three free throws, but left after the period ended and went to the locker room for X-rays. Bryant played a little more than five minutes in the second quarter, but was clearly not himself, running with his right arm hanging at his side.

Bryant had surgery on his shoulder June 12 – four weeks after the Lakers were eliminated from the second round of the playoffs by San Antonio. He had an inflamed bursa removed and a frayed labrum trimmed.

On Wednesday, the Lakers signed guard Ime Udoka to a 10-day contract. He was with the Lakers through training camp and played in six preseason games, averaging 3.7 points, 1.3 rebounds and 0.7 assists in 8.8 minutes.

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

Troops overcome local security fears

GOMAL, Afghanistan (*The Christian Science Monitor*) – With gold turbans and eyes ringed in black, the Afghan men squat in a circle in the dust, listening intently to the first U.S. Soldiers to appear in this desolate border outpost for at least a year.

“We are not like the Russians. We won’t come here and bomb everything,” a Soldier tells them. “I have many men and many bombs, and I can bring them all,” he says, as an Apache gunship swoops overhead. “But I’m not going to. I want only to use them against the bad people.”

The Afghans respond initially with hard looks and few words. A tribal elder, taken aside and asked whether he knows of any Taliban or al Qaeda fighters in the area, answers simply, “No.”

“It’s too dangerous,” an Afghan interpreter whispers to me, “asking that question is like announcing this man’s death in the newspaper.”

The 10th Mountain Division mission into uncharted territory of Paktika Province illustrates a stark dilemma facing U.S. forces as they push deeper into Afghanistan’s lawless borderlands: How to persuade Afghans to risk their lives and divulge guerrilla whereabouts in return for a promise of security and development.

“The citizens here have had one choice: We’re with the al Qaeda, or we’re dead,” says Lt. Col. Mike Howard, the top U.S. commander in Paktika. Villagers in the border districts of Gomal, Barmal, and Gayan are “completely ungoverned” and easily bribed or forced to supply guerrillas with food, shelter, and proxy fighters, he says. “Our challenge is to give them (another) choice.”

To do this, U.S. ground troops are expanding their presence in Paktika and other troubled regions of eastern and southern Afghanistan, policing more widely and aggressively. The U.S. strategy means shifting away from large-scale sweeps and slow, top-down planning ill-suited to fighting insurgents, some officers say. Instead, smaller, more agile units – including Special Forces teams linked with Afghan militia – are branching out to win over villagers and flush out guerrillas.

“We can’t hunker down in the firebases,” says Howard, whose 1-87 Infantry Battalion now makes frequent, unpredictable forays far beyond its fort-like outposts at Orgun and Shkin. Last month, 1-87 joined Operation Avalanche, a series of overlapping missions along the Pakistani border that involved some 2,000 of the 13,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

U.N. office and aid agency attacked

KABUL, Afghanistan (*IRIN*) – The Afghan NGOs Security Office (ANSO), an organization providing security advice to national and international NGOs in the country, confirmed that a bomb exploded in front of the office of an international aid organization in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif on Sunday.

According to the group, one person was injured as a result of the explosion, which occurred outside premises belonging to French aid group Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED). “It is believed that an explosive device was either thrown or planted against the

guard hut,” Nick Downie, ANSO project coordinator, told *IRIN* on Tuesday in Kabul, adding that the injured person was a passer-by.

An ACTED staff member contacted by *IRIN* confirmed the explosion, but said it was not clear whether it had been a grenade attack or a planted mine. “The explosion did not affect our activities and our operations are ongoing. An investigation is underway by local police,” he said.

Sunday’s explosion, which happened at around 8:10 in the evening, followed the discovery of an improvised explosive device, near the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) regional office in Mazar-e-Sharif city center on Jan. 8, the United Nations confirmed. “At approximately 6:30 in the evening on 8 January, an improvised explosive device was discovered in a ditch near the UNAMA office in Mazar-e-Sharif,” said Manoel de Almeida e Silva, a UNAMA spokesman.

The device was deactivated by a demining team. “The chief of police was informed and police were immediately deployed to cordon off the area and await the arrival of a demining team,” he said. The U.N. official responsible for security in Afghanistan, UNAMA Chief of Staff, Margareta Wahlstrom, condemned the attack. “We do take these attempts to destabilise the work of the U.N. and international organizations seriously and are in close contact with the authorities to pursue the investigation,” she told *IRIN* in Kabul.

ANSO said they did not have any indication of a motive for the attack on ACTED. “We can only relate it to the previous UNAMA incident by the use of an explosive device and the short space of time between those incidents,” Downie said.

