

# FREEDOM

The background of the cover is a photograph of several soldiers in a desert environment. They are wearing tan camouflage uniforms and helmets. The soldier in the foreground is wearing a tan balaclava and glasses. A name tag on his chest reads "BUGKLEY". The soldiers are holding rifles and looking towards the left. The background shows a sandy, arid landscape with some sparse vegetation under a clear sky.

March 29, 2004

*Watch*

**Air Force civil engineers  
build up Bagram**

*Page 3*

*Jordanian Hospital reaches out to Afghans*

*Page 6-7*

# In the field

**KABUL PROVINCE**, Afghanistan – Marines assigned to 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment disembark from a CH-47 helicopter in order to conduct security operations in Tagab Valley. The Marines and sailors of the battalion have been conducting operations to destroy terrorist organizations and infrastructures since arriving in Afghanistan late last year.

**Photo by Lance Cpl. Eric R. Martin  
8th Marine Regiment Public Affairs**



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Cover photo by Sgt. Greg Heath, 4th Public Affairs Detachment Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment patrol the roads of Ghazni Province. The 2-87 Inf. Regt. Soldiers are currently conducting operations to deny Anti-Coalition Militants sanctuary in the central Afghan province.

UNREAL! SO YOU'RE ME FROM THE FUTURE!?

THAT'S RIGHT.

THE TECHNOLOGY THE ARMY HAS IN MY TIME ALLOWS US TO TRAVERSE THE SPACE/TIME CONTINUUM!

I'M THE SOLDIER YOU'LL BE IN. 20 YEARS!! I'M SURE YOU'RE JUST LOADED WITH QUESTIONS!

FORMOST: WHY AM I STILL A PRIVATE?!

Oh yeah, I KNEW THERE WAS A REASON I CAME BACK HERE..

By Mark Baker

## Pvt. Murphy's Law

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# *AF engineers make things better at Bagram*

Story and photos by  
Master Sgt. Jeff P. Szczechowski  
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

**BAGRAM**, Afghanistan – There’s been some talk lately about “rockin’ and rollin’ ” and “getting in a rhythm” here. The words aren’t used to describe a morale-boosting concert for the men and women at Camp Cunningham; they’re referring to how the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group civil engineer flight has been going about its business.

Civil Engineering teams seem to be everywhere at once. In the past two weeks,

the CE professionals have been building re-ventments on the flightline to protect the A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft parked there; they’ve painted taxiway and parking ramp lines to ensure safe aircraft movement; they’ve laid the foundations for new aircraft hangars and maintenance workshops, consolidating A-10 support operations into a closer circle; they’re breaking up and laying concrete to improve and expand the Bagram flightline; and they’ve been overseeing the construction of numerous B-huts to centralize the quarters of all Air Force personnel within the walls of Camp Cunningham.

Lt. Col. Bob LaBrutta, 455th Expedition-

ary Support Squadron commander, said that all the work being done by the CE flight is crucial from both an operational standpoint and from a quality-of-life perspective.

“CE plays a vital role in both the combat and support missions of the 455th EOG,” he said. “Without them, there would be no infrastructure to billet the personnel here. At the same time, CE ensures the airfield is prepared and fully ready for our A-10 pilots to execute their missions and to employ weapons on the bad guys, when needed.”

Temperature controlled wooden B-huts instead of tents for living quarters, hot showers with water pressure just like back home and flushing toilets are conveniences that were foreign to Camp Cunningham airmen not so long ago. Because of CE, these creature comforts are now part of every-day life here.

While the quality-of-life of personnel deployed to Bagram is something that leadership is always looking to improve, the airfield remains CE’s number one priority, said LaBrutta.

That’s where 1st Lt. Jason Riebel, the CE flight chief, comes in. He cited one major CE effort after another, praised his troops and reiterated the importance of maintaining



*Staff Sgt. Gregory Lund, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group civil engineer, edges the newly-poured concrete on the Delta south A-10 Thunderbolt II parking ramp.*

— See **ENGINEERS**, Page 10

# School re-opening helps keep spirits strong

Story and photo by Spc. Kelly Hunt  
4th Public Affairs Detachment

**BAGRAM**, Afghanistan – On the outskirts of the hectic city of Kabul, people from the small village of Chenari recently had something to celebrate – the grand re-opening of Chenari School Mar. 2, in Kabul Province.

The newly renovated school included nine classrooms, new windows, doors, blackboards, replacing the roof in the main and adjacent building and the restoration of the nearby well.

The school will provide education to nearly 400 students of all ages throughout the area.

“It is a great honor and pleasure for me to be here today with you on behalf of the United States of America and the Coalition Joint Military Operations Task Force, your partner in the rebuilding

and refurbishing of this facility, and to witness the re-opening of this much needed school,” said Maj. Charles Westover, 364th Civil Affairs Brigade, during the ceremony. “The completion of this facility improves the educational capabilities, not only of this community, but the region and improves the overall education system of the nation.”

Like many areas in Afghanistan, the education and development of Chenari village has suffered due to destruction of its public infrastructure from nearly 25 years of war.

Troops hope that the re-opening of this school will rebuild villagers’ faith in the future of their country.

“We all have the wind that blows troubles into our personal lives, into our villages, into our government and into our countries, but what’s important is that the spirit stays strong,” said Maj. Carman

— See **SCHOOL**, Page 10

# Natl. Women's Month helping to open doors

## Service members gather at Bagram Air Base to reflect on women's accomplishments

Story by Sgt. Stephanie Hall  
4th Public Affairs Detachment

**BAGRAM**, Afghanistan – Two influential women dedicated to the advancement of Afghanistan spoke at Bagram's "Celebrate Women's History Month" observance sponsored by Combined Joint Task Force-180 March 13.

Lt. Col. Judith Tracy, chief nurse for Medical Task Force-44, and Najiba

Sharif, deputy minister of Afghanistan Women's Affairs, voiced their appreciation to the dedicated women who've brought

rights and equality to women around the world.

Both expressed their hopes that, with the support of the coalition and local efforts, similar results can occur in Afghanistan.

"With the cooperation of the United States of America, the opportunities

have been given to Afghan women to take part in our political, social and cultural activities," said Sharif, through an interpreter. "For example, (women) have been given the right to take part in the elections of the Loya Jirga, which is considered a very positive step."

Sharif said that America's National Women's History Month is an inspiration that Afghanistan can learn from and build upon.

Since the Taliban was driven out of

power, Afghanistan has taken significant steps toward ensuring equality for Afghan women, said Sharif.

"Afghanistan (had) essentially disavowed 50 percent of its population. In order for the country to succeed, (it) must make a place in society for women," Tracy said.

"The doors have been a little bit opened to the Afghan women in that now they can take part in deciding the

future."

The current plight of Afghan women is improving everyday, but it's still something that will take a lot of hard word and dedication, said Tracy.

"We cannot become complacent with the accomplishments women have made so far, but we need to focus on the new challenges and prepare them for the work ahead. Remember that there were women who fought and died for us to get where we are now in the United States."

Seeing first hand the lives of Afghan women here has made Tracy appreciate those "women of courage" in the United States who fought and won equality and independence for American women, said Tracy.

"We made great progress in the United States, and I'm sure that the Afghan women will be able to do that as well with the great leadership that they have."

With this united front created by Afghan and coalition strength, Afghan women can look forward to the day they can enjoy equal rights and live their lives with confidence.

*"Afghanistan has essentially disavowed 50 percent of its population. In order for the country to succeed, (it) must make a place in society for women,"*

**Lt. Col. Judith Tracy,  
Medical Task Force-44**

### Mountain Voices

*What is one significant female-influenced lesson you've learned in life?*



**Spc. Donald J. Garcia**  
473rd MCT

"My mom and sisters taught me to respect females to the fullest. I'm the only boy in the family."



**Capt. Murray E. Phillips**  
HHD, 109th Avn. Regt.

"My mother taught me to always strive for excellence in everything that you do."



**Sgt. Allison L. Purdy**  
HHD, 109th Avn. Regt.

"From my mother I learned that just because someone is mad at you, you don't have to be mad at them."



**Sgt. Kevin L. Shelton**  
473rd MCT

"My mother always taught me that if you want to achieve your goals, you have to get out and do it yourself."

# CJTF-180 commander earns ‘major’ promotion

Story by Staff Sgt. Twana Atkinson  
Combined Joint Task Force-180

**BAGRAM**, Afghanistan – Maj. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, the commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), and Combined Joint Task Force-180, added a second star to his collar during a promotion ceremony here, Mar. 14.

Austin has commanded the 10th Mtn. Div. and Fort Drum, N.Y., since August and has commanded the more than 12,000 coalition forces in CJTF-180 since October.

“I feel that our mission is being fully accomplished here, and I’m proud of all the forces involved,” said Austin.

Under Austin’s command, Operation Enduring Freedom forces in Afghanistan have continued to destroy terrorist organizations and their infrastructure while rebuilding the country and helping the Afghan citizens help themselves.

“Our Soldiers, Airmen, Marines, and Sailors risk their lives on a daily basis to take care of the Afghan people. I think that is a lot to be said about the United States military,” said Austin.

Austin spent most of 2003 deployed to



Photo by Maj. Matt Garner

*Maj. Gen. Lloyd Austin, CJTF-180 and 10th Mountain Division commander receives his second star during a promotion ceremony here, Mar. 14.*

the Middle East as the Assistant Division Commander for Maneuvers for the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized). With 3rd Inf. Div., he led troops from Kuwait all the way to victory in Baghdad.

Weeks after returning from Iraq, he assumed command of the 10th Mtn. Div. at Fort Drum, N.Y., and weeks after assuming command, he deployed to Afghanistan.

After 35 years of service, Austin has vowed to continue to share his wisdom and expertise. “I feel fortunate to still be able to serve in the military. I serve at the pleasure of the secretary of defense and the chief of staff of the Army, and I’ll do whatever they think is best.”

As 10th Mtn. Div. heads back to New York, Austin already has committed to preparing the Soldiers for their next rotation.

# 455th AEW commander receives first star

Story by Master Sgt. Jeff P. Szczechowski  
455th Expeditionary Operations Group

**BAGRAM**, Afghanistan – The commander of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, James A. Whitmore, was promoted to brigadier general Saturday during a promotion ceremony at Bagram Air Base’s Joint Operations Center.

Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, 18th Airborne Corps commander and previous commander of Combined Joint Task Force-180, officially presented Whitmore with his first star, after praising him for the “positive energy” that he brings to the JOC. Vines said that Whitmore is “a great warrior and an extraordinary asset to this task force (CJTF -180).”

Whitmore, a command pilot who has flown more than 3,000 hours in F-4 and F-16 fighter aircraft, has commanded the 455th AEW, headquartered here, since April 2003.

The son of an Air Force pilot, Whitmore entered the Air Force in 1976.

His last assignment before assuming command here was as

executive secretary to the secretary of defense, in Washington, D.C.

Looking back on his career, the general said that when he first came into the Air Force, there was probably only one person who ever guessed that this day would come – his mother. He acknowledged her faith in him by reflecting on the star and telling the audience in the JOC compound, “Here it is, Mom, I made it.”

Whitmore said that it’s been the people under him, like the airmen, Soldiers and other service members who were standing before him during Saturday’s ceremony, who had helped pave the way to his current rank.

Speaking directly to everyone in the audience, he said, “You are an outstanding team. You make my job easy – I give you the tools you need, some guidance, then stay out of the way while you accomplish the mission.”

The general also thanked his wife of 27 years, Julia, for all she has done to support his career, calling her his “best wingman.”



*Dozens of Afghan men wait in line to be seen by the outpatient personnel. This is where they are either given a prescription to be filled, or directed to visit one of the Jordanian hospital's many medical specialists.*

# *A glimpse at hope*

Photo page by Sgt. Stephanie Hall  
4th Public Affairs Detachment

**MAZAR-E-SHARIF**, Afghanistan – Each day Afghan's filled with new hope travel to the gates of the Jordanian hospital from all over the city and surrounding areas to wait their turn to receive medical care from a Jordanian task force.

Because this northern province is considered to be less volatile than other parts of Afghanistan, and because of the excellent reputation the Jordanian medical team has developed, hundreds of patients travel far to take advantage of the free medical care.

Every morning when the Jordanian Special Mission Field Hospital-Afghanistan opens its doors, it's ready to treat anywhere from 500 to more than 900 patients. With a medical team of 14 doctors, 33 nurses and 37 medics, the Jordanians struggle daily to keep up with the surge of patients with ailments the doctors are prepared to ward off and fix.

The Jordanians steel themselves against the pain and suffering with the knowledge they are making a significant difference in this country recovering from decades of war, and move forward daily to fulfill their duty.

"The Jordanian task force is here to maintain the humanitarian aspects and to stand with the sad and poor nations to help reduce the tragedy of war," said Jordanian Col. Hani Al-Ma'ayta, Special Force duty commander of the Jordan Eagle 8 rotation.

The Jordan's medical mission in Mazar-e-Sharif began Jan. 8, 2002, and this is the eighth 90-day rotation. There is no set time for how long the Jordanians will continue this mission, but Al-Ma'ayta realizes the depth of need in this area.

"We know from our medical work here just how much this nation needs medical support," said Al-Ma'ayta. "We're here to provide that medical support."



*An Afghan woman waits along with countless others for her prescription to be filled at the hospital pharmacy's window.*



*A young Afghan girl stands near the front of the line for female patients waiting to be seen by the outpatient medical staff.*



*Top - A pair of Jordanian surgeons work on a patient inside a medical field tent.*

*Left - Dr. Mohod Al-Shboul (left), a dental specialist for the Jordanian field hospital, works on an Afghan man's teeth. Like so many other local Afghans, this man has badly damaged teeth from years of neglect. The dental clinic sees on average of 50 patients a day.*

# Korean hospital marks 'Peace'-ful milestone

*Republic of Korea Army Medical Soldiers commemorate treating 90,000 Afghan patients*

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

**BAGRAM**, Afghanistan – Coalition Forces here are adamant in their efforts to help Afghanistan become a healthy and vigorous nation, and that resolve helped the Republic of Korea Army's 924th Medical Support Group reach a milestone Mar. 12, when they treated their 90,000th Afghan patient at the ROK Hospital.

Part of the Coalition Forces in Afghanistan since February 2002, ROK Soldiers have been a routine medical care provider for Afghan citizens in villages surrounding Bagram Air Base.

That care has been a vital component in the successful relationship the coalition has established with local citizens.

"We are very pleased to be a part of (the organization) that is helping to bring change in Afghanistan," said Capt. Do-Hyung Kim, Korean hospital's chief physician. "It gives us joy to know that the past (Korean) Soldiers have done a great job providing treatment for the citizens and helping to improve their health."

Kim said the milestone was an extremely important accomplishment for the medical group, which is the fifth Korean medical rotation and arrived in Bagram at the beginning of March, because it illustrates that the Korean Army is playing a major role in rejuvenating Afghanistan.

To commemorate the healthcare highlight, the Koreans held a ceremony in which they gave several Afghan interpreters certificates of appreciation for their language assistance and unveiled a new garden – the Garden of Peace.

"We know that our jobs would be a lot harder without the interpreters be-



*Soldiers of the Republic of Korea Army joined by U.S. Army representatives and Afghan Interpreters spread seeds in the "Garden of Peace" as part of the ceremony commemorating 90,000 patients treated at the Korean Hospital.*

cause they are our communication link," said Kim. "Without their assistance we couldn't make the correct diagnosis, so it was important for us to recognize them today."

"For us the Garden of Peace illustrates the symbolism of the coalition and the people of Afghanistan," said Maj. Chung Woon Oh, Korean hospital executive commander. "In the garden we are growing different types of plants and fruit and they represent all of mankind. It will show patients that race, creed and religion don't matter. We all can grow from the experiences of each other."

Oh added that as the plants and fruit grow they will be a mark of their commitment to the Afghan patients. "Just as the plants and fruit in the garden grow so will our cause to help. We will sacrifice our life, time, services and hospital to help the people," he said.

The garden is located along the hospital's patient entrance.

The ceremony was attended by representatives from the U.S. Army's Chaplain's office and U.S. Army hospi-

tal in Bagram.

Though the ceremony applauded the efforts of the Afghan interpreters and highlighted unveiling the Garden of Peace, the hospital staff that attended the event did not lose the true purpose of the commemoration.

"The purpose of celebrating the treatment of our 90,000th patient is not to celebrate the number, because healthcare is not about numbers it's about people," said Capt. Ju-Hyoung Lee, operations officer. "(Koreans) know the hardship that this nation is facing because we faced the same conditions after the Korean War, so we pledge to help Afghanistan through our hospital. Koreans had to rebuild our hopes and dreams after the war, so we want to be a part of their rebuilding process and show them that it can be done – they can have a prosperous nation."

"We hope our contributions and support brighten the lives of the Afghan citizens," said Joon-Hyang Park, head nurse at the Korean hospital. "Our goal is just to make a difference and build a friendship."

# ANA makes impressive showing at open house



*An Afghan National Army Soldier prepares to display the capabilities of his T-62 Tank during an Open House at the Afghan Pol-e-Charki base near Kabul.*

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Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Robert R. Ramon  
Task Force Phoenix Public Affairs

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**KABUL**, Afghanistan – The Afghan National Army showcased its skills, facilities and equipment during a recent open house at the Kabul Military Training Center and the Afghan Pol-e-Charki base in Kabul.

Attended by members of the media and Ministry of Defense attaches, the one-day open house allowed a first-hand look at a well-trained ANA that will provide a safe, secure and stable environment in which government, economic and civil institutions may develop and become self-sufficient and help to prevent the re-emergence of terrorism.

“The security and defense of this country will be the responsibility of Afghanistan in the long term,” said Afghan Gen. Abdul Rahim Wardak, Afghanistan’s First Deputy Minister of Defense. “Without security, Afghanistan cannot be rebuilt, peace and stability cannot be restored, and economic policies cannot be administered,” he said. “The ANA will provide that security to Afghanistan.”

Attendees were able to see the great strides made by the ANA since its inception in May 2002.

“The ANA is the most successful reform of an institution in Afghanistan,” said Wardak. “The ANA has already proven itself both independently and with the coalition in fighting against terrorists.”

The open house began with a tour of the military training center, where the courses including basic training, commissioned and non-commissioned officer training and other advanced classes. It’s here that men from all ethnic groups in Afghanistan are molded into well-trained soldiers in pursuit of a common goal—securing and stabilizing Afghanistan and fighting terrorists throughout the country.

The professionalism instilled in the Soldiers at the military training center and their ethnic diversity play a big part in the warm reception they receive throughout the country.

“The ANA includes Soldiers from many ethnic backgrounds, and Af-

ghan people from all groups and religions mutually respect the ANA,” said Wardak.

Reporters jockeyed for the best position to capture an impressive display of ANA Soldiers marching, accompanied by the Army’s brass band, at the training center’s parade field.

Visitors were then invited to catch a glimpse of a typical ANA Soldier’s living conditions by touring one of the newly constructed barracks buildings. From there, the group traveled minutes away to Pol-e-Charki base, home to the ANA Central Corps.

During the short drive from the training center to Pol-e-Charki, ANA Soldiers were positioned every few meters along the road to provide security. Their professionalism was quite apparent, as Afghan civilians in the area seemed to look upon the Soldiers with high regard.

“This professionalism has been demonstrated wherever the ANA has been deployed in Afghanistan, including the Loya Jirga security,” Wardak said.

The Constitutional Loya Jirga not only resulted in a ratification of the Afghan Constitution, but it also verified the soaring abilities of the ANA that was tasked to provide security for the large council meeting.

“They provided the security so professionally and earned the respect and admiration of everyone who witnessed it,” said Wardak.

ANA Soldiers displayed some of their equipment and capabilities, including rifles, machine guns, tanks, and trucks.

ANA tankers displayed the awesome firepower of their T-62 tanks as they methodically destroyed targets on the training range. Following each thundering boom, direct hits caused targets to smolder as onlookers conveyed their approval with applause.

Among the audience was Brig. Gen. Thomas P. Mancino, commander of Coalition Joint Task Force Phoenix, which is comprised mainly of National Guard units from more than 20 states and contingents from seven countries.

“The ANA will be a strategic partner in the war against terrorism as well as that of national security,” said Wardak. “The ANA will help the coalition in the fight against terrorism and gain confidence of Afghans on the bright future of their country,” he said. “This investment in the ANA will give us real returns in terms of saving lives and money for the coalition.”

During recent missions throughout the country in which they were tasked with security operations, denying sanctuary to anti-coalition fighters and disrupting anti-coalition activity in the region, ANA Soldiers have more than proven their worth to the citizens of Afghanistan. They’ll have more opportunities for success in the near future.

“The ANA will provide security for the elections so people can exercise their rights without fear of the Taliban, al Qaeda, or others against Afghanistan,” said Wardak. “They will also continue to support the coalition in defeating terrorists and insurgent groups.”

Any doubts in the minds of the open house attendants were probably put to rest at the end of the day.

“I hope they have learned from their experiences with the ANA,” said Wardak. “The ANA enjoys the full respect, trust and confidence of the people.”

**ENGINEERS**, from Page 3

taining Bagram's flightline.

"All of the guys have stepped up and answered the call," he said. "They understand the importance of their work and the implications it has on the mission. Everything we do out there on the aircraft ramp directly impacts the A-10 operators and maintainers and their ability to churn aircraft safely and efficiently."

Despite working long hours and doing physically demanding jobs that leave them drained by the end of the day, morale has been high throughout the flight.

Take it from Staff Sgt. Kendall Long, deployed here from the 28th Civil Engineer Squadron, Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., and Airman 1st Class Richard Nash, deployed from the 50th CES, Schriever AFB, Colo.

"I'm glad we're here. We've got work to do. It's all about getting dirty, going home tired, but feeling good about it," said Long. "You don't get this kind of work back home."

Nash added that the mission at Schriever AFB is more about base maintenance and upkeep, and not so much about the hands-on construction that he's been able to do here. He said he enjoys doing the type of work that's been put in front of him at Bagram. Plus, "We're making an impact on the war on terrorism," he said.

The CE flight goes at it day in and day out, full speed



*(Left to right) Staff Sergeants Darrell Haas, Bruce King, Jason Putt and Brady Dryden, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group civil engineers, work on a concrete pad that expands the Bagram flightline. The project is just one of many that the CE flight has undertaken to ensure combat readiness here.*

ahead, like a well-oiled machine. Progress isn't measured in days and weeks, but in minutes and hours. How do they do it?

"The mentality with 'dirt boys' is once they get in a rhythm, and everyone finds their spot, what they do best, everyone just seems to work well together," said Tech. Sergeant Jason Kreutzer, Non-commissioned Officer in Charge of airfield projects here.

Like seemingly everyone else at Bagram Air Base, Kreutzer said that being at the tip of the spear motivates him.

"We're going after bin Laden, and being here, we're at the (front) of the assault," he said.

**SCHOOL**, from Page 3

Oldre, Task Force Victory, to the audience. "I've seen that the Afghan people are very hospitable and that their spirit is very

strong."

Education is the foundation of restoring Afghanistan, according to the civil affairs officers.

"The education of this nation's youth is



*Afghan kids are all smiles as they cheer on Soldiers before the school's grand re-opening.*

among the highest priorities of President Hamid Karzai's administration," said Westover. "Over the past two years, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in partnership with the United States of America and other coalition forces, (has) helped to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of Afghans with projects just like this. This facility now joins hundreds of other clinics, wells, schools and bridges repaired in every part of Afghanistan," he said.

The school opening is the result of dedication from the contractors, as well as involvement of school officials and faculty with the project, said Westover.

"Thanks to their hard work, this reconstruction will benefit all of the citizens who earnestly want their family members to be healthy, educated and live long lives," he said.

After the ceremony, the flag of Afghanistan was raised high on a flagpole that stands in the center of the schoolyard by representatives from all services and groups that contributed to the school's rebirth.

# Local female police get boost from citizen Soldiers

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Kelly McCargo  
Office of Military Cooperation - Afghanistan  
and Spc. Kelly Hunt  
4th Public Affairs Detachment

**KABUL, Afghanistan** – Female Afghan police officers in Kabul recently prepared for their role in Afghanistan’s upcoming elections with extra training from female U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers.

Twenty-nine Ministry of Interior female officers graduated from the two-and-a-half day course in election site protection Feb. 22. All of the Soldiers teaching the course were able to draw from their civilian police backgrounds.

The training supplemented their prior police training with new techniques in areas that women don’t normally participate in.

Female police officers in Afghanistan are only accustomed to working with females, said Maj. Christine Nichols, 364th Civil Affairs Brigade, leader of the training and seven-year Seattle Police Department veteran.

“They will cuff women suspects, search women suspects, take their statements and do their investigations, but they will not be out on the streets doing patrol like the men do. That’s not their role,” she said.

But the role of Afghan women police officers is changing, and the training that Nichols and her six other U.S. trainers provided helped prepare them for the road ahead.

“We helped them become more thorough with their search techniques, (learn) force techniques, basic self defense techniques (and) vehicle search techniques,” said Nichols. “We also introduced them to police presence and we taught them how to be assertive at a site when someone wasn’t listening to them.

“It’s stuff that they don’t face because they’re not on the street,” she said.

The transformation the women underwent from day one to graduation was incredible, said Nichols.

“The first day, we didn’t know how we felt or how we were going to be received,” she said. “Here we are teaching women something totally new, but by the time the training was over,



*One of the Soldier trainers shows one of the Afghan Ministry of Interior policewomen a lesson on baton use.*

the women were so happy that we were there.”

The shy women of the first day turned into enthusiastic, forceful women in no time, taking the training to heart and enjoying every minute of it, said Nichols.

They became “extremely confident” during the training, she noted. “They wanted us to teach them more advanced things; we couldn’t believe it.”

Even men that witnessed some of the training showed appreciation for what the U.S. women were doing for the Afghan police officers.

“We (knew) that was really a step in the right direction for the women’s movement in Afghanistan,” said Nichols, referring to the men’s seeming acceptance of the training.

One of the women’s favorite parts of the course, according to Nichols, was learning vehicle search techniques.

“They loved getting in the car. They thought it was the greatest thing (and) they wanted training on driving the car.”

The Army trainers said they were amazed how quickly the women caught on to techniques and how enthusiastic they were to learn new things.

“We learned a lot from these instructors,” said Mazgan Osmany, one participant of the course and an Afghan police officer of one year. “The Kabul Police Academy has very good

teachers, but we didn’t get as much (variety of training) there as we did here.”

Nichols said she accomplished so much with the women because of their high level of motivation.

Even after everything the U.S. Soldiers taught them, the Afghan women police officers expressed their interest in learning more.

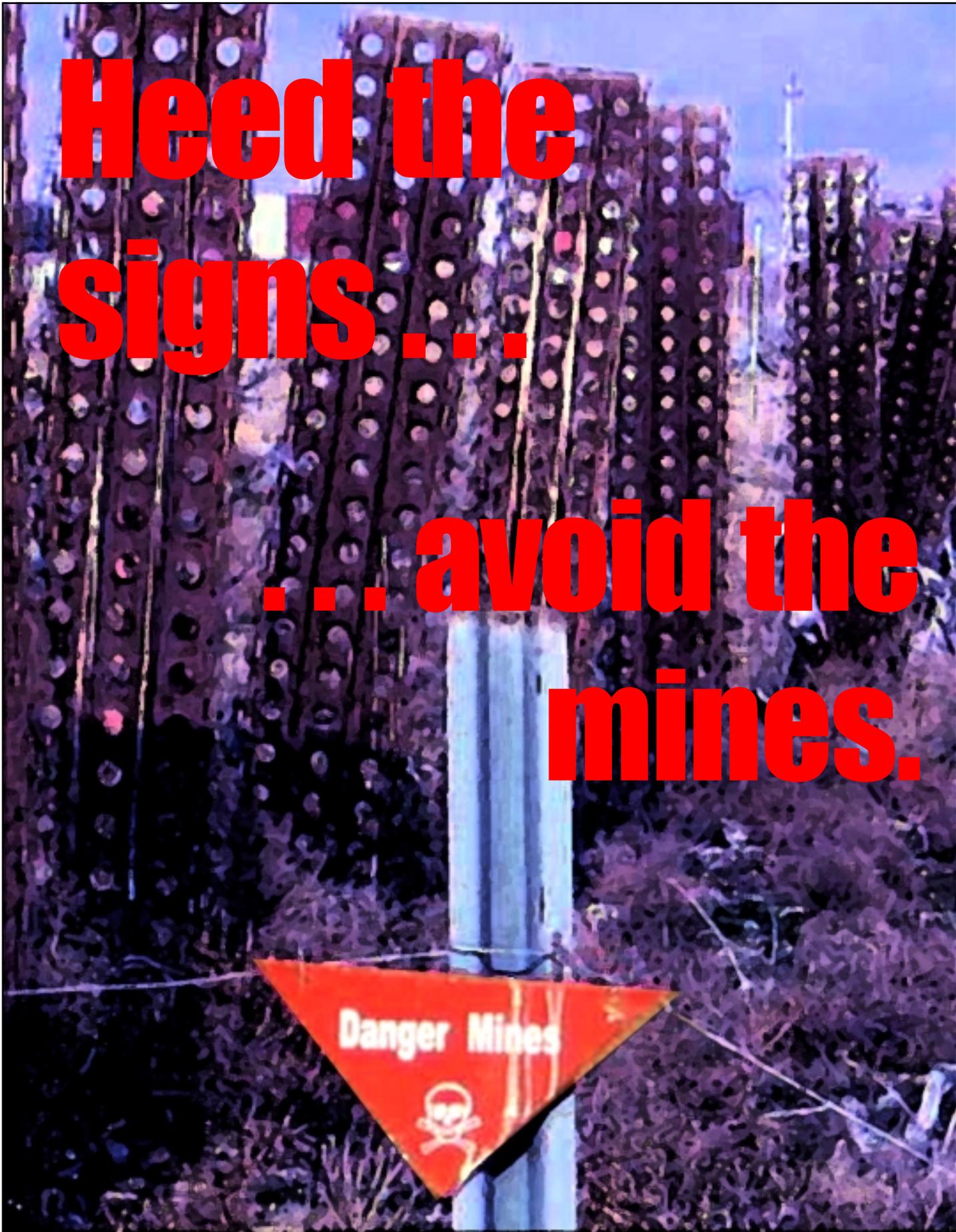
“They wanted to have more freedom to do things as a police officer; carry a gun, know how to use a gun, work more with male counterparts (and) drive vehicles,” said Nichols. “They wanted to be out there, not just focusing on women suspects, but males as well and be part of everything as a team.”

The newly-trained officers said they wanted to pass on their new knowledge to other Afghan women police officers as well.

“If they can get another training course like this for the women in the future, it will be good, because we can become police academy instructors and teach (this) to other girls,” said Osmany.

The results were more than trainees could have hoped for, and among the Soldier trainers, the consensus was overwhelming – they would do the training again in a heartbeat.

“By the time they were leaving, they were hugging us, kissing us, wanting pictures with us and it was a pretty good feeling,” said Nichols. “It was interesting and fun; I’m hoping it’s not a one-time deal.”



**Heed the  
signs . . .**

**. . . avoid the  
mines.**