

## Medical unit gives Afghanistan air relief

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Johnny A. Thompson  
4<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment

**BAGRAM, Afghanistan** – “Nothing we trained for prepared me what I’ve seen here,” said Sgt. David Bibb III, Air Ambulance Medic, 717<sup>th</sup> Medical Company as he spoke with a steely look on his face about the conditions of Afghanistan. And from that look one can only realize that the crisis here is all too real.

With that same steely determination the 717<sup>th</sup> Med. Co., a National Guard unit from Santa Fe, N.M., that scours the borders of Afghanistan providing medical aid when called upon.

“Our mission is to provide air medical support in the theater of Afghanistan for the Coalition Joint Task Force 180,” said Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Dewey Loveless, first sergeant of the 717<sup>th</sup> Med. Co.

The 717<sup>th</sup>, equipped with 42 soldiers and six helicopters, is the air ambulance unit for all of Afghanistan. To cover the region, the unit is broken into three elements with sol-



*Elements of the 717th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) along with U.S. Army Hospital emergency room staff rush a young Afghan girl into the emergency room after a landmine explosion accident.*

diers serving in Bagram, Salerno and Kandahar.

Since taking over the air ambulance mission in August, the 717<sup>th</sup> has performed 85 medical evacuation missions and has trans-

ported more than 110 patients to Army hospitals in Bagram and Kandahar.

In those 85 evacuations, one-third have

See **RELIEF**, Page 3

## Airmen finish construction of Bagram runway

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Russell Wicke  
455<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Operations Group Public Affairs

**BAGRAM, Afghanistan** – With help from the Army and other coalition nations, airmen poured the final load of concrete for the new \$2.3 million runway here Oct. 24 after nearly six months of construction.

During this period civil engineer airmen and soldiers worked on one 90-foot-wide strip, while aircraft landed and took off on the other 90-foot half.

The project was completed three weeks ahead of schedule.

After two weeks of curing and painting lines, the entire 180-foot wide runway will be ready for incoming aircraft, said Master Sgt. David Lennemann, 455<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Support Squadron superin-

tendent of operations.

“Once the entire runway is activated, it will be able to support just about any heavy aircraft the Air Force has,” said Lennemann. Unfortunately, smaller fighter aircraft won’t be authorized to land here until there is less of a foreign-object-damage threat, said Capt. Trey Sledge, 455<sup>th</sup> ESS Civil Engineer Flight commander. The strong winds combined with limitless marble-sized, desert gravel here pose a continual FOD hazard for smaller aircraft with low intakes.

“There is a project scheduled for June next summer to lay six inches of asphalt over the runway,” said Sledge. “This should decrease the FOD danger enough to bring in the smaller fighters.”

The completion of the runway will have a significant impact on the rest of the base.

See **RUNWAY**, Page 3

# World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



Firefighters were unable to defend this house in Moorpark, California.

## At least 10 killed in wildfires

LA VERNE, Calif. – Wind-whipped wildfires tormented Southern California from San Diego to Los Angeles on Sunday, causing at least 10 deaths, and destroying nearly 400 homes and threatening thousands more.

Eight people were reported dead in a 100,000-acre fire in eastern San Diego County and more deaths were being investigated, Sheriff Bill Kolender said. Two people died inside their car while apparently trying to escape, *The Associated Press* reported.

The so-called Cedar fire started Saturday when a hunter lost in the mountains near Julian ignited a signal fire, the *AP* reported authorities as saying.

Two elderly men died Saturday in San Bernardino east of Los Angeles, apparently from fire-induced stress.

A 93-year-old man collapsed and died while watching his home burn, according to the San Bernardino coroner. A 70-year-old man died from a heart attack while evacuating his house, the coroner said.

Thousands of acres have burned in the fast-moving fires raging since Tuesday. The blazes have been fanned by gusting, hot Santa Ana winds and low humidity.

Up the coast, fires raged in the mountains and canyons beyond the eastern suburbs of Los Angeles — sometimes hopping fire lines and highways, thwarting firefighters and lighting up homes.

Two fires in San Bernardino County once separated by at least 10 miles merged at the intersection of interstates 215 and 15, the main freeway between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, Nevada.

The combined “Grand Prix” and “Old” fires created a blaze of about 72,000 acres in the San Bernardino and Angeles national forests and have so far destroyed more than 375 homes.

As many as 12,000 homes in the region were under “some form of evacuation,” with residents either having already left or preparing to do so, Forest Service information officer Martin Esparza said.

The Grand Prix fire started Tuesday and the Old fire Saturday. Officials believe both were deliberately set.



Thirty-three wet and miners emerged safely Saturday.

## Time running out for miners

SHAKHTY, Russia – Engineers in southern Russia are racing against time and rising water in a desperate bid to rescue 13 coal miners trapped for three days a half mile underground.

The rescuers resorted to heavy machinery on Sunday after euphoria the day before when workers brought out 33 of the 46 miners who had become stuck. That was seen as a minor miracle for Russia’s rundown and disaster-prone coal industry.

But that turned to gloom when a makeshift dam that had been stemming the flow of water in the flooded Zapadnaya mine, 1000 km (600 miles) south of Moscow, suddenly gave way, and officials said the entire mine could be flooded as early as Monday evening.

*CNN*’s Ryan Chilcote said a church service was held on the surface to pray for the missing 13.

The would-be rescuers were trying to dig

from an adjacent mine to an air pocket where they believe the men may have sought refuge.

But that was only an educated guess, since the miners have not been heard from since a wall collapsed, sending water from an abandoned shaft rushing into the tunnels.

The *Interfax News Agency* reported as many as 800 people were taking part in the rescue effort.

A day later, 33 companions who were also trapped managed to crawl to an elevator that took them on the 30-minute ride to the surface.

A team of scouts is trying to use that same elevator shaft to go down and look for the remaining group, but poor air quality has forced them to turn back several times.

## Muslim world marks Ramadan

CAIRO, Egypt – The holy month of Ramadan has begun throughout the Middle East, with Muslims observing their first day of dawn-to-dusk fasting, followed by sumptuous meals at family homes, five-star restaurants or free-to-eat-at tables lining city streets.

Traditionally a period of spiritual reflection, Ramadan this year coincides with the war in Iraq, the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict and harsh economic times in countries like Egypt, the most populous nation in the Arab world.

Millions of Muslims in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen began fasting Sunday. Muslims elsewhere are expected to begin marking Ramadan on Monday because Islamic officials there decreed that the holiday should begin a day later.

Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim nation, and Iraq will officially begin the fasting month Monday.

Muslims believe it was during Ramadan about 1,400 years ago that the Quran, the Islamic holy book, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Abdel Hakem Abaed, a Yemeni university student, said he will be “praying to God during Ramadan for the sake of Muslims everywhere in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan. This is our task.”

**RELIEF**, from Page 1

been U.S. and coalition forces injured in battles with the Taliban or al Qaeda forces and one-third have been small children injured from landmines and other ordnance. All factors that help this unit, made up of primarily civilian police officers, paramedics and fire fighters, understand the pertinence of their mission here.

“Back home we assist with natural disaster, humanitarian aid missions and train for possible scenarios, but this is an entirely different set of circumstances,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Henry Bryant, 717<sup>th</sup> pilot. “We don’t have rehearsals to play upon, every time we fly out it’s the real thing.”

The “real thing” Bryant describes in not merely job performance, it’s job performance with the possibility of engaging in combat.

“On more than a dozen missions we’ve taken fire when we got to landing zone to

evacuate a casualty,” said Loveless.

An Apache attack helicopter flies as a flight escort on all of 717<sup>th</sup>’s missions to act as a security precaution; however even that doesn’t guarantee a danger-free mission for the unit.

“We were ambushed on one mission,” said Loveless, “but thank God the attackers acted prematurely and didn’t wait for the medic to leave the plane. We were able to leave the [landing zone] unharmed. But it was a real eye opener for the crew.”

Loveless noted that if the medic had left the helicopter it would have left the soldiers and the helicopter vulnerable because the helicopter will not leave an area without the crew fully intact.

“This is different than what we trained for,” said Staff Sgt. Allen McBroom, a crew chief for the 717<sup>th</sup>. “But every time we get called upon I get excited. It’s sad that to do our job people have to be hurt, but happy when we have to go on a mission.”

McBroom is responsible for assisting

the medics and loading patients into the helicopter. He is also in charge of ensuring that the aircraft is ready to land and take off from a landing zone.

“[Deploying to Afghanistan] has give me a deeper appreciation for my job as a medic,” said Bibb. “I feel like part of the mission [in the quest] to help bring stability and give hope to Afghanistan.”

Bibb noted that the experience from his deployment will give him more security in his civilian job as a medic of the SWAT team for the Santa Fe County Sheriff’s Department.

Though Bibb wasn’t prepared for imagery he has seen in Afghanistan it hasn’t stopped him or his comrades from welcoming the challenges they encounter every time their chopper lifts off the ground.

“In achieving [the U.S. mission] in Afghanistan, [the U.S.] is going to lose some soldiers, but every time we get that call to go out we’re dedicated to doing what we were trained for... save the lives of soldiers and coalition forces.”

**RUNWAY**, from Page 1

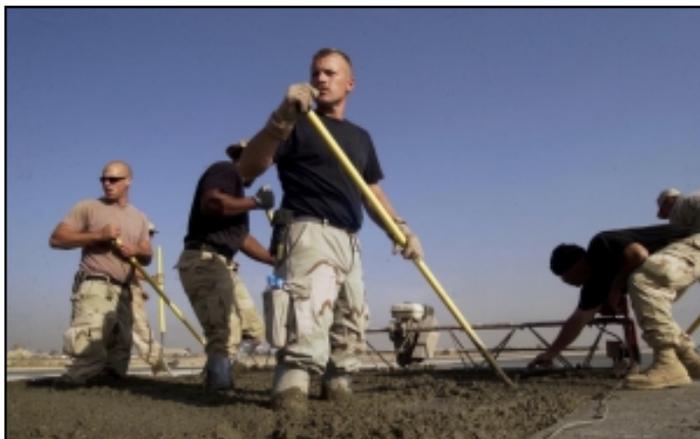
Now that the runway is complete, standard runway lighting will soon be installed, which will enable aircraft to land without night vision, said Sledge. This accomplishment will eventually mark the end of blackout conditions here.

Airmen involved in this construction stood up to meet a formidable challenge when they began work on this runway. According to Lennemann, the civil engineer airmen did an exceptional job on a project that would normally be considered above their skill level.

“Pouring concrete for this runway was hard work,” said Tech. Sgt. Wesley Matthews, 455th ESS structural technician. “Because of the importance of this project, this is the first time I’ve felt like I had a direct impact on the mission. Completing this runway is very rewarding for us.”



**Top -** Airman 1st Class Eric Leehan, 455th Expeditionary Support Squadron, completes construction of the runway here by smoothing out the last section of concrete.



**Left -** Staff Sgt. Joseph Adair, 455th Expeditionary Support Squadron, stands in 12 inches of concrete as he, and the rest of his team, work on the last strip of the runway here before completion.

# Personal Stories...

## Chaplain on the receiving end of CFC charity

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany – Chaplains are used to taking care of others in their communities. It is one of the most important roles of their stewardship. “Come to find out, we sometimes need a little help too,” explained Chaplain Dwayne Jones.

In January, an electrical malfunction in the Jones’ basement resulted in a fire that spread through much of their house. “Luckily, my wife noticed the smoke when she went to check on our daughter, and they were both able to escape without injury,” Jones said.

The fire destroyed a lot of personal items, as well as items of necessity like clothes and food that were stored in the family’s basement. Everything was either ruined or covered with heavy soot. On top of that, the damage to the house required that the family relocate. The idea of starting over was daunting to the Chaplain and his family.

Someone mentioned a CFC-sponsored charity to the chaplain’s wife. Once contacted, the charity responded immediately, first with emotional support and then with financial aid. “It would have been a huge financial burden if we would have not had the help of this CFC-sponsored charity,” explained Chaplain Jones. “If things didn’t need replacing, they needed professional cleaning in order to be salvaged, and we had the costs associated with the move.”

The experience was an eye-opener for the Chaplain and his family. “Although we had always donated to charity, we never realized how much help is provided until we were on the receiving end of their generosity,” added Jones. “Situations like ours can happen to anyone. It is nice to know that people have somewhere to turn for help.”

For more information on how you can contribute, visit the website [www.cfcoverseas.org](http://www.cfcoverseas.org).

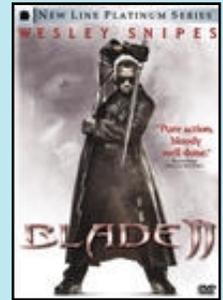
*(Information provided by a CJTF 180 press release.)*

## Bagram Air Base MWR presents

### “Blade II”

1530Z at the MWR building:  
Blade forms an uneasy alliance with the vampire council in order to combat the Reapers vampires who feed on vampires.

Tomorrow’s movie: “Bad Company”



## Local weather

### TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Tuesday
<b>Bagram:</b>	Mostly cloudy H: 77F L: 43F	Mostly cloudy H: 79F L: 45F
<b>Kandahar:</b>	Clear H: 84F L: 50F	Clear H: 84F L: 50F
<b>Kabul:</b>	Haze H: 77F L: 43F	Haze H: 79F L: 45F
<b>Uzbekistan:</b>	Mostly Clear H: 85F L: 56F	Mostly Clear H: 80F L: 50F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

Freedom Watch falls under the supervision of the Combined Joint Task Force - 180, and is published daily, Monday - Saturday.

- CJTF-180 Commander — Maj. Gen. David W. Barno
- CJTF-180 Command Sergeant Major — Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Carey
- Public Affairs Officer — Col. Rodney Davis
- Public Affairs Sergeant Major — Sgt. Maj. Harrison Saries

Freedom Watch, an Army newspaper



publication, is produced by the 4<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

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

In accordance with AR 360-1, this Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas.

Contents of Freedom Watch are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

All submissions are subject to editing for size and content by the 4<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment, located in Motel 6, CJTF-180, Bagram Air Base.

Visit the CENTCOM Web site at [www.centcom.mil](http://www.centcom.mil) and click on the Freedom Watch or Forces in Afghanistan link at the bottom of the page to get the latest editions of the Freedom Watch. To be added to the daily distribution list email [HallSTE@baf.cjtf180us.army.mil](mailto:HallSTE@baf.cjtf180us.army.mil)



# Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)



*Ike Hilliard scored two touchdowns to lead the Giants' upset.*

## Giants knock Vikings from ranks of unbeatens

**MINNEAPOLIS**—The Minnesota Vikings were flat and lacking focus, while the New York Giants were hungry and eager for some success.

Kerry Collins passed for 375 yards and two touchdowns Sunday to lead the Giants to a 29-17 victory over the Vikings — the NFC's last unbeaten team.

"When you play like a team that's starting to believe what everyone is saying about you — that's what you get," said Minnesota coach Mike Tice, whose team lost for the first time in 10 regular-season games dating to last Dec. 8 at Green Bay.

"We never lost that will to win — the guys just kept on fighting," said Giants coach Jim Fassel, whose team ended a three-game losing streak and has never dropped four in a row in his seven seasons.

Randy Moss had two touchdown catches and 125 yards receiving for Minnesota (6-1), but Daunte Culpepper threw his first two interceptions of the year and the Vikings got little offensive production from anyone else.

"We just really didn't have it in us," Moss said. "I really don't know how we're going to react. Some teams go down in the hole, and some teams step up."

That's what the Giants (3-4) did.

They were 3-4 last year, too, before winning seven of their final nine to earn a wild-card spot. And then there was 2000, when New York lost two straight at home to fall to 7-4 and prompt Fassel to guarantee a playoff appearance. The Giants went to the Super Bowl that year.

"It's been tough around here," Collins said, "but we kept our belief."

Tiki Barber had a touchdown and 122 total yards for New York, which led 22-17 on Barber's 2-yard TD run with 5:29 remaining.

Culpepper was picked off by Frank Walker on the next play from scrimmage, and Walker returned it 18 yards to the Minnesota 17. Ike Hilliard got his second touchdown reception three plays later to put the game out of reach.

"We have a lot of character," said Giants safety Shaun Williams, "and it showed."

## Don't expect dismantling of these Marlins

**MIAMI**—They beat Barry Bonds, then confounded the Chicago Cubs, and by the end of the World Series, the New York Yankees couldn't even score against them.

Break up the Marlins? Not this time.

The dismantling ordered by founding Marlins owner Wayne Huizenga after they won the 1997 World Series nearly doomed baseball in South Florida, and current owner Jeffrey Loria knows better than to repeat the mistake.

Keeping intact the team that finished off the Yankees in the World Series on Saturday may be impossible, but many of the Marlins' emerging stars will likely be back in 2004.

"I think Jeffrey has made a sound commitment that he wants to continue with competitive, winning ballclubs here," said manager Jack McKeon, who is almost certain to be back for another season at age 73. "I think we'll have a winning team here next year."



*The 2003 Florida Marlins proved that it's possible to win with a modest payroll.*

## Singh wins Funai Classic at Disney, moves past Woods on money list

**LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla.** — Vijay Singh has never been so close to ending Tiger Woods' four-year reign of the PGA Tour money list.

At this rate, he won't rule out his chances of replacing him as No. 1 in the world.

Singh took a huge step toward the first goal Sunday with an easy victory in the Funai Classic at Disney, finishing with another long birdie putt for a 5-under 67 that vaulted him to the top of the money list.

"I hope I don't wake up from this dream," Singh said after his four-shot victory over Woods, Scott Verplank and Stewart Cink, his fourth of the year.

Singh finished at 23-under 265 and earned \$720,000 to take over the lead on the money list at just over \$6.8 million. He now has a \$250,094 lead over Woods.

Advantage, Vijay.

The big Fijian is playing next week in the \$4.8 million Chrysler Championship in Tampa, and could further pad his lead with a good finish.

Woods, who already has played eight fewer events than Singh, is taking the week off.

Meantime, Singh clearly joined the race for PGA Tour player of the year.

# Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

## 240 al Qaeda men held during operation

**PESHAWAR** (*Pak Tribune*) – During the military operation against al Qaeda and Taliban operatives in the tribal areas, as many as 240 al Qaeda members have been captured and many others killed to date. Pakistan army has set up over 100 check posts in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan in order to prevent the sneaking of foreign terrorists into Pakistan.

Corp Commander Lt. Gen. Ali Jan Orakzai disclosed this in a briefing arranged for foreign envoys here at Corps Headquarters.

The delegation comprised almost 21 diplomatic dignitaries and military attaches from America, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Iran, South Africa and other European countries.

In the briefing, Gen. Orakzai apprised them of the military operation in the Afghan-bordering tribal belt and informed the dignitaries that the operation namely 'Mezaan' was completed in four successive phases.

"It was aimed at catching the terrorists' elements, who took refuge in the tribal areas," he said adding we tried to halt terrorist elements' incursion into Pakistan from Afghanistan through this crackdown.

He also informed them about development work being carried out in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and said the uplift programme in the tribal belt is meant to provide better communication facilities to the common man of the area.

On the occasion the Corp Commander responded to the queries of visiting envoys on various issues. In the next leg of the tour, envoys will visit Southern Waziristan.

Giving further details he said that besides presence of frontier corps personnel, two division headquarters of army, four brigade headquarters, 10 infantry battalions, 3 engineering battalions and one SS battalion have been deployed in FATA.

He informed that centuries old no go areas established in 8250 kilometre long tribal areas have been abolished completely. About 500 posts of Frontier Corps and over 100 army posts have been set up on 600 kilometre porous borders, he added.

NWFP governor Syed Iftikhar Shah told the envoys that rule of law has been put in place in the tribal areas with the help of army. Net work of water, electricity, education, medical facilities and roads has been laid in the remote areas, he stated.

He went on to say that about 300 billion rupees are being spent on development projects in FATA.

He maintained that the military operation would continue in the tribal areas till the elimination of criminals and terrorists from the belt.

## Disarming of Afghans called vital to security

By Carlotta Gall

**KUNDUZ**, Afghanistan (*New York Times*) – A long-overdue program to disarm and demobilize thousands of Afghan guerrilla and militia fighters began this week, with President Hamid Karzai personally locking away a truckload of weapons on Friday in this sleepy northern town

in front of hundreds of schoolchildren and townspeople.

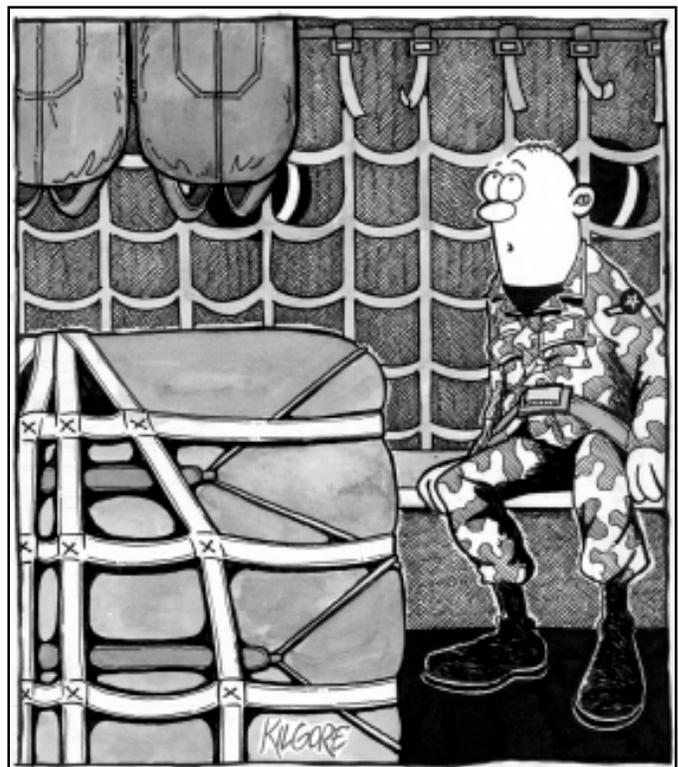
Nearly 1,000 men from Kunduz Province handed over weapons to United Nations inspectors this week and agreed to return to civilian life. For many of them, it was the end of 20 years of fighting.

The \$150 million "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration" program, run by the United Nations, plans to demobilize 100,000 men over the next three years, to try to rid the country of its warring factions and replace them with a new national army and police force. But it has begun tentatively, with a pilot operation in one of the calmest parts of Afghanistan, a region controlled by Gen. Muhammad Daoud, who is close to the minister of defense.

Germany's lower house of Parliament approved legislation this week expanding the scope of the country's peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan by sending troops to Kunduz.

Mr. Karzai said Friday was "one of the best days after 20 years of war and devastation," which civilians hoped would lead to peace, security and prosperity.

"Six parachutes; four officers, two NCOs and one airman ... oh man ... "



kevin\_kilgore@hotmail.com

By Kevin Kilgore

## Laugh Support