

FREEDOM

May 28, 2004

Watch

58th MP Co. provides security along supply routes
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Coalition ordnance disposal teams destroy cache
Page 3



Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Troth

Badge of honor

Spc. Daniel McKinlay, 1st Bn., 501st Inf. Rgt. (Abn.) watches as Staff Sgt. David Ralston pins on his Combat Infantryman's Badge during a ceremony May 1. The CIB was awarded to 506 infantrymen.

The CIB is awarded to Soldiers in the infantry who satisfactorily perform their duty while assigned or attached to an infantry, Ranger or Special Forces unit of brigade, regiment, or smaller size during any time that the unit is engaged in active ground combat. The CIB was approved in August 1943 to recognize highly proficient, tough, hard and aggressive infantrymen.

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Cover photo by Sgt. Frank Magni, 17th Public Affairs Detachment
Spc. Micheal Harmon, 58th MP Co., pulls security from the turret of an up-armored Humvee while on a presence patrol on New Kabul Road. The 58th MP Co. conducts daily patrols in an effort to keep routes between Bagram Air Base and Kabul safe for Coalition troops to travel.



By Mark Baker

Pvt. Murphy's Law

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AMF weapons cache moved, destroyed

Story and photos by
Pfc. Chris Stump
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAMIAN, Afghanistan – As the sun set across Dragon Valley, an enormous fireball lit up the shadows in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains as Coalition forces destroyed thousands of mortar rounds.

The mortar rounds were removed from a large cave near Bamian and taken to the deserted valley to be destroyed by a Coalition group made up of troops from the New Zealand-led Bamian PRT, the U.S. Army and members of the Afghan Militia Force.

Inside the AMF cache, secured by nothing more than an AMF guard post down the road, mortar rounds and rockets lay strewn across the ground and piled next to the walls of the cave, stacked six feet high in some places.

Located less than 100 meters from inhabited houses, the cache – which con-



1st Sgt. John Szillinsky, 53rd Ord. Co., assists the Bamian PRT in checking munitions found in a cave in Bamian Province.

tained thousands of rounds of munitions – posed a very real threat to the area.

Even though the AMF controlled the cache, much of the ordnance was unstable and not completely secure, said 1st Sgt. John Szillinsky, 53rd Ordnance Company.

From the initial assessment, the ordnance team decided that the munitions would have to be relocated before they were blown. The cache's close proximity to locals' housing, and its sheer size, made destroying it where it lay unsafe.

Blowing caches in place is the preferred method of destruction, but depending on the location and types of munitions, caches sometimes have to be moved, he said.

A crew of about 40 people formed a human chain from the rear of the cache to the truck that transported the ordnance for disposal. Passing one or two mortars at a time, about 2,200 rounds were loaded on the truck by early afternoon, not even a quarter of the total

cache, he said.

"This is a very large cache, I don't know how many exactly I've seen, but this is one of the biggest," he said. Szillinsky said he has destroyed between 30 and 40 caches since arriving in Afghanistan, and this was by far one of the largest.

It's important that caches such as this are destroyed, since many of the munitions inside the cave could potentially be used to make IEDs or in other ways to harm Coalition forces or the local population, said New Zealand Air Force Group Capt. Gavin Howse, Bamian PRT commander.

"The cache is of no use to anyone legit," he said.

"Things change often here," said Szillinsky, "all it takes is for a couple of the wrong people to seize control of these weapons and it could be very bad – not to mention the unstable state they're in."

The AMF soldiers who were assisting at the cache echoed that sentiment.

"I am extremely happy the international community is helping us," said Col. Zuhier Zahair, 34th AMF Division deputy commander. "These munitions are old — it's not good to have them here next to where the people live."

After one day of clearing the cache, about one quarter of the ordnance was taken down in the valley and destroyed, said Szillinsky.

A few more days of removing ordnance from the cache left the cave as it was before Afghan fighters stockpiled their weapons there. Now the village children can continue to play in and around their homes without the threat of tons of ordnance mere feet away.



Spc. Guy Clawson (left), 53rd Ord. Co., and New Zealand Lance Cpl. Kelly Roberts carefully load mortar rounds into the back of a truck.

Engineers improve quality of life in Salerno

Story by Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — While reconstruction efforts are being made throughout communities in Afghanistan, improvements are also being made on Coalition installations throughout the country to make the quality of life for Soldiers fighting the Global War on Terrorism a little better.

Soldiers of the 926th Engineer Battalion, U.S. Army Reserve, are helping to make these improvements. A team of engineers from the unit recently returned from Salerno Provincial Reconstruction Team and Fire Base, where they were tasked to modify a drainage system. The system is used to pull used water away from facilities and return it to a water purification site.

Though Salerno already had a drainage system, the existing system wasn't connected to newer facilities, which meant wastewater was left standing or drained into the ground.

"They only had one drainage system," said Sgt. Jacob Sterling, a carpenter and mason on the project. "They needed us to tie in the Stratex (showers and latrines) and the (dining facility)."

What may have seemed like a fairly simple task to start out with wasn't as easy to accomplish. As many engineers in Afghanistan are finding out, the supply system here is a lot different from the United States.

"Materials move slow here," said Sgt. 1st Class Johnny Bonds, platoon leader for the Salerno project. "A lot of the supplies have to be flown in now because the supply routes have a history of being attacked."

To help compensate for the delay in getting supplies, the engi-

neers tried to use local purchases as much as possible, helping to promote the economy in Salerno. This took some adjusting for the Soldiers working on the project.

According to Bonds, local materials were different from what the engineers are used to working with in the United States. He explained that they are often made out of different materials, and therefore have different capabilities and limitations.

After working through the glitches with the supply system, the engineers were still able to accomplish their mission. They not only succeeded in completing the drainage project they were initially tasked with, but they also tackled several other projects as well.

Though they were requested specifically for the installation of the drainage system, it didn't take them long to learn of other projects they could help with.

In fact, the unit found so many other tasks to do that they actually needed more Soldiers. Initially, there were 10 Soldiers in Salerno. That number jumped to 19 once they realized how much they could do for the firebase.

"We ended up installing the drainage system, building a latrine and MWR facility, and repairing the (tactical operations center) roof," said Spc. Eric Cadman, another carpenter and mason with the team.

According to Briscoe, they also built an enclosed trash collection point, making it easier for the Coalition forces in Salerno to maintain a more sanitary environment.

For the engineers, these projects weren't just about meeting mission requirements or "checking blocks," as many would say. They were about improving the lives of their comrades.

"We want to go where the guys up front need us," said Cadman.



Courtesy Photo

A Soldier with 926th Eng. Bn. cuts a piece of wood for the MWR facility the unit built at Salerno Fire Base.

Enduring Voices

What personal goals have you set for yourself during this deployment?



Marine Lance Cpl. Jonathon Healzer
2nd Bn., 8th Marine Rgt.
"I plan on losing weight and improving my run."



Capt. Harm Cazemier
Dutch Liaison Officer
"I plan on doing more studying and physical exercise."



Staff Sgt. Wayne Gutman
LTF-725
"I plan on putting away money for retirement."



Sgt. Aimee Lawson
45th Inf. Bde., PSB
"I want to make the area I am in better than it was when I arrived."

Ninth NAVC opens in Ghazni Province

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Kelly McCargo
Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — U.S. and Afghan National Army officials formally opened the ninth Afghan National Army Volunteer Center in Ghazni during an NAVC ribbon-cutting ceremony May 6.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Craig Weston, Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan chief, and Ghazni Lt. Governor Ramazon Haidary each cut a portion of the ribbon leading to the NAVC entrance.

The new center gives the citizens of Ghazni the opportunity to volunteer to serve in the ANA.

Before the ceremony, Weston and Haidary drank Chai – an Afghan tea often reserved for informal gatherings – at the provincial governor’s office. They were joined by Baz Mohammed Jawhari, Ministry of Defense assistant minister of acquisition, technology and logistics, and Afghan Militia Force Lt. Gen. Ali Akbar Qusimi, 14th Division commander.

While they were enjoying the tea, the group discussed current Ghazni social subjects such as equipment and health care problems that have been identified at the regional hospital and educational and material shortcomings at the Ghazni boys’ and girls’ schools, which opened earlier this year.

After Chai, the group formally addressed about 200 Ghazni

elders about the benefits of opening an NAVC in their community.

“An important part of rebuilding Afghanistan is the security and stability that gives the Afghan people and the international community the freedom to rebuild,” said Weston. “Essential to creating this security is your Afghan National Army – an army made up of the peoples of Afghanistan, to serve all of Afghanistan.”

“This National Army Volunteer Center will reach out to the young men of Ghazni to help them join a new army made up of all the major ethnic groups of Afghanistan – Pashto, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Turkmen and more,” he said.

One of NAVCs regional directors said his job is important to the formation of the ANA and that he will be successful.

“We have an important job at the NAVC – to recruit volunteers,” said ANA Col. Atique Ullah, Ghazni NAVC regional director. “We must do our best duty to send recruits to fill every Kandak (Afghan Battalion). I think we will be very successful because the status and reputation of the ANA is very good.”

In just two years, eight NAVCs scattered throughout Afghanistan, were able to recruit an ANA army of 10,000 Afghans. By 2010, Afghan officials plan to field a 70,000-man army throughout Afghanistan, protecting its borders from terrorist insurgents and drug traffickers. The success of the Ghazni NAVC will be crucial in achieving this goal. The Ghazni NAVC will do its part to help the Afghan government.



AMF, ANA and Ghazni citizens intermingle at the Ghazni NAVC official opening May 6.

Afghan National Army increases training numbers

Story by Cpl. Douglas DeMaio
Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — There was an increase in the number of cohort battalions being trained at the Kabul Military Training Center this month. This will have a significant impact on the expansion of the fledgling Afghan National Army.

Each battalion graduates with approximately 750 soldiers. During the time in which four cohort battalions are training simultaneously, 3,000 soldiers will be learning basic soldier skills like marksmanship, first aid, drill and ceremony and communications. The increase in cohort battalions being trained will have no effect on the period of instruction the soldiers receive. With more soldiers entering the ANA there will likewise be an increase in the number of leaders being trained by the U.S., French, British and embedded training teams from Coalition forces.

Increasing training is going to have an immediate impact on ANA capabilities, said ANA Central Corps Command Sgt. Maj. Roshan Safi, the ANA’s most senior non-commissioned officer. More troops provide more personnel to fill combat support and combat service support units, which has a direct effect on force capabilities and deployments.

Currently, more than a third of all ANA soldiers are deployed forward to such places as Herat, Kandahar, Gardez and Mazar-i-Sharif. These deployments focus on security and stability for the respective region.

As the force strength of the national army continues to increase, ANA soldiers are becoming more actively involved to the internal defense of Afghanistan.

“The bottom line is that this acceleration process is fulfilling national interests,” said Maj. Scott Tirocchi, 45th Infantry Division, ANA deputy commander of training and doctrine.

By having a sustainable, combat effective national army, Afghanistan can prosper democratically and financially, he said. Increasing the amount of cohort battalions being trained will provide a consistent supply of soldiers for the ANA, which will help obtain the ANA’s goal of reaching maximum force strength by 2007.

“To my understanding, we are ahead of schedule,” said Maj. Paul A. Smith, 45th ID, ANA Soldier Training Brigade officer in charge. “We have all the resources to house and feed the trainees. Personally, I feel this plan is going to make a difference.”

By increasing the force and sending these young men to different regions in Afghanistan, this defense force will no doubt bring stability to this country and provide a better way of life for all Afghans, said Smith.

Smith said a rough estimate, which includes some variables, could provide as many as 13,000 more soldiers in a six-month period for the ANA.

On patrol in Afghanistan

MPs secure Coalition supply routes

Story and photos by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Traveling back and forth on New and Old Kabul roads, military traffic is a constant sight. With these roads established as supply routes linking key Coalition headquarters, security becomes a very hefty task.

Providing the security for these vital routes is the responsibility of the 58th Military Police Company home-based at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. Each of their internal squads patrol independently, serving in two ways to keep New and Old Kabul roads secure.

The squads' primary mission is to provide presence patrols. With constant movement, the MPs focus on potential IED threats, road obstructions and anything that endangers both coalition and Afghan motorists. These presence patrols also put the MPs in contact with Afghan Ministry of Interior forces working checkpoints along the roads.

"We have a partnership with the guards at the checkpoints," said Staff Sgt. Pete Perez, 58th MP Co. squad leader. "This partnership enhances security on the road."

Perez said by working with the AMOI guards, the MPs gain



Spc. Ralph Futrell, 58th MP Co., stabilizes a shotgun while pulling security on the turret of an up-armored Humvee on New Kabul road.

situational awareness. "They are there 24 hours a day. They do foot patrols within their (area of responsibility). They are aware of things we could never see on our patrols."

The result of the MP's partnership translates into weapon's recovery and intelligence gathering for Coalition forces. "They are very excited to be working with us," said Perez. "Many times they will flag us down to give us information."

In return, the MPs support the checkpoint's 24-hour mission. "We give them flashlights, batteries, red chemical lights for emergency situations and just basic comfort items," he said. "We are looking out for them."

Aside from the MPs' daily presence patrols they also provide another step in security by escorting selected convoys.

The combination of the presence patrols and escorts have 58th MP Co. vehicles clocking a lot of miles. The repetition and wear and tear on vehicles makes preparations for their missions one of the most critical tasks.

Preparations for patrols begin with thorough preventive maintenance, checks and services to all weapon systems and vehicles.

Each mission starts with a convoy brief and rehearsal. During the convoy brief, every Soldier in the squad is given key information about the daily mission. During the rehearsal the MPs go a step beyond to ensure the safety of Soldiers.

The focus of the rehearsal is react to contact drills. Standing in the same positions they would be riding in the vehicles, the squad leader calls out the situation they need to react to while the Soldiers physically act on what they would do.

They react to contact drills covering a variety of situations. From blocked and unblocked ambushes, to vehicles rolling



Spc. Alan Garrett, 58th MP Co., pulls security from the turret of an up-armored Humvee while on a presence patrol along New Kabul road.



Sgt. Jacob Hill, 58th MP Co., takes notes at a morning briefing.

Border clinic opens its doors to locals

Story and photo by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KONAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — For many in Afghanistan, access to proper medical care is very limited. A lack of medical training and equipment within community clinics has prompted Coalition forces to send their own medical personnel into communities to assist.

But in Konar Province, medical civilian aid projects are also being supplemented with a different approach. The same clinic that treats Coalition forces at this Special Forces A-Camp leaves its doors open for Afghan citizens, as well.

The clinic — made up of a doctor, Special Forces medics, Navy and Marine corpsmen and interpreters — treats more than 100 patients a day. Open five days a week for sick call, the medics also stay on call around the clock for emergency care, for both military members and Afghans.

The rise in the clinic's popularity is simple, said the Special Forces Medical Sergeant in charge of the clinic. "We are the most definitive care facility in the area.

We are much better supplied and much better trained than any clinic within hundreds of miles," he said.

Konar Province, like many areas in Afghanistan, lacks the level of medical care many are accustomed to throughout the world. With the nearest equivalent medical care facilities in the neighboring country of Pakistan, a combination of crumbling roads, unpredictable weather and a high crime rate make a journey to see a doc-

tor a large undertaking.

"If a family had the means, it would take them one day of travel to see a doctor," said the Special Forces medic.

With poverty still rampant in the area, injuries often go untreated, contributing to a high mortality rate prior to the clinic operation.

Able to handle everything from gunshot wounds and burns to motor vehicle and mine accidents, the Special Forces medic said he and his team have seen a wide variety of injuries and diseases in their nine months in Afghanistan. "Everything in the book," he said.

"Whether it is an arm or leg that's blown off, or passing out soap and tooth brushes, we don't have the luxury of practicing just one kind of medicine," said the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force — Afghanistan surgeon here.

Averaging two trauma cases a week, the clinic's team even has the ability to call in medical evacuation helicopters for more serious cases involving life, limb and loss of eyesight.

Malaria, upper respiratory infections, rare genetic disorders, liver disease and burns round out the laundry list of conditions the

medical personnel in the clinic have encountered — burns being one of the more common injuries the Special Forces team has seen in the prominently agricultural area.

"I've had at least 40-50 burn patients in my nine months (here)," said the Special Forces medic. "Many of these cases would require



Seaman Micheal Devito, 2nd Bn., 8th Marine Rgt., corpsmen, injects anesthetic into a young Afghan girls arm before performing minor surgery.

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ER doc trades country club for Afghanistan

Story by Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Detachment

KONAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Back in the United States, this doctor can normally be seen in a Harley Davidson T-shirt. His appearance normally doesn't convey the fact that he is a doctor, let alone one who graduated from Harvard Medical School. Then again, a lot about him defies the norm, including his reasons for coming to Afghanistan.

The surgeon, an emergency room doctor from the Midwest of the United States, served in Afghanistan for eight months as battalion surgeon for Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force — Afghanistan practicing medicine in the hinterlands, near the border.

Temporarily leaving his family and a \$400,000-a-year job, the surgeon, a member of the Army National Guard, volunteered for his assignment in Afghanistan. "I make in a month here what I normally make in a weekend back in the States," he said. But to

him there is more to life than money, and serving as a U.S. Army doctor where he's needed most, is just what he considers pay back.

Son of a Korean War veteran, the surgeon said his father would not have survived a war injury if it weren't for a U.S. Army doctor.

He used duty as his motivation, not only to become a doctor, but also to serve in the Army. The surgeon said he likes the adventure and excitement, but most of all covets his opportunity to practice medicine in Afghanistan.

"I just feel it is my duty," said the surgeon.

Since working in the Special Forces clinic in Konar Province, he said practicing medicine has become very rewarding.

Citing bureaucratic challenges with health maintenance organizations and a hospital overcrowded with doctors as some of drawbacks to being a doctor in the United States, he said Afghanistan offers him rare medical opportunities.

"Sometimes back home you can't help but be jaded, sitting behind a desk dealing with

health maintenance organizations," he said.

"I love the autonomy (here)," he said. "Everyday I have new challenges.

"In this clinic, if you are the most highly-trained person to do something, you have to do it," he said. "Many times I am that person."

The surgeon said he is learning new things everyday and exploring new medical procedures. "Over here you do what you can with what you've got."

But even the most highly-trained doctor in the region needs a little help. Occasionally using what he's got has meant calling colleagues back home for advice on certain patients.

"There are many different cases," he said. "I've learned so much."

Although the facilities are not what he is used to, the conditions don't deter him from the high standards he sets for himself.

"You must always practice medicine at a high level," he said. "I give the best possible

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Parwan PRT begins new projects

Story and photo by Lance Cpl. John E. Lawson
Combat Correspondent

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — The Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team, based here, broke ground on three new projects in the Kohi Sofi region of Afghanistan May 11.

The PRT, commanded by Maj. Charles Westover, 364th Civil Affairs Brigade, U.S. Army Reserve, selected the projects based on the needs of the Afghans in local villages.

“About three months ago we went through with local delegates to select projects. This is what the people asked for,” said Westover.

The projects include reconstruction of Chakara and Black Rock Pass roads, and the renovation and expansion of the Dandar District Administration Offices.

The PRT chose Chakara Road because the route is critical to the villagers, but is impassable during inclement weather, said Westover. “The road becomes a soup of mud and clay. The vehicles can’t get through it.”

The Chakara Road project includes spreading gravel over the 400-meter stretch of road and should be completed in about four weeks.

Black Rock Pass Road was selected by the PRT because it is too narrow for large trucks to navigate. The PRT has hired local contractors to widen the road and expects the project to be complete in about six weeks.

The renovation and expansion of the Dandar District Administration Offices is the PRT’s first project to directly help extend the reach of the national government, said Westover.

“We are helping to solidify the transitional government of Afghanistan. The different ministries and departments working together helps solidify the government in the people’s eyes,” he added.

The renovations include finishing the interior walls with cement and paint, building concrete floors, replacing the roof and adding four or five rooms to the existing building. The PRT expects to complete this project in eight to 12 months.

“The community here has spent a lot of time and effort on their own improvement. They have a master plan for themselves, and we are helping them fulfill their plan and meet their goals,” said Westover.

Another benefit of the projects, said Westover, is the creation



Col. John Khan, Afghanistan Ministry of the Interior, and Army Maj. Charles Westover, commander, Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team, cut the ribbon signifying the beginning of the PRT’s Black Rock Pass Road reconstruction project May 11.

of jobs for the Afghans in the community. “Because we use local contractors, they hire the locals to do the work.”

The Parwan PRT is comprised of five U.S. Army civil affairs Soldiers, seven Republic of Korea civil affairs soldiers and a security element. They are responsible for the reconstruction projects in five provinces, or an area roughly the size of West Virginia, said Westover. It falls under the command of Task Force Stonewall, headquartered by Marines from Headquarters Company, 6th Marine Regiment. Through their contributions to projects like these renovations, the PRT is constantly improving the lives of many Afghans.

“The great Soldiers in this unit are a big part of the team’s success,” said Westover. “Task Force Stonewall is a great resource. Working together I think we are really helping the Coalition’s efforts in Afghanistan.”

MPs: 58th MP Co. protects supply routes for Coalition



Sgt. Frank Magni

Spc. Ralph Futrell, 58th MP Co., performs PMCS on his MK19 grenade launcher.

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over, the rehearsal prepares each MP for nearly any emergency that may arise.

“We physically walk through the rehearsal so the Soldiers gain muscle memory,” said Perez. “This puts them in a better position to react in a split-second situation.”

He said the unit’s current mission is very rewarding. “They are very happy and excited to go out everyday.”

Spc. Ralph Futrell, 58th MP Co., said the scenery is what still excites him.

Being from Chicago, the mountains and plains along New and Old Kabul roads are a pleasant change for him.

“Even though we are going up and down the same roads, I see new things everyday,” said Futrell.

Both Futrell and Perez said the interaction with the Afghan locals also increases job satisfaction.

“Talking to the locals lets us know how much we are wanted here,” said Perez.

“They appreciate our presence,” said Futrell. “It is that kind of feedback that makes being a MP rewarding.”

The safe way is always the best way

Safeguarding the Coalition

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

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Located in the middle of the Global War on Terrorism, Airmen here are enforcing the Air Force’s stringent safety rules just as much as they are outside the “war zone.”

“Safety is enforced more because we are in a war zone,” said Air Force Master Sgt. Steve Sinatra, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing ground safety manager. “People need to be more aware of the hazards here and not let the psychological ‘war zone’ factor lessen the need for conducting operations safely.”

Challenges to maintaining a safe environment are all around Bagram – literally. There are land mines placed by the former Soviet military and the Taliban. Most are outside the main working and living areas,

but are never very far away.

Considering the number of people here and their mission, there’s not a whole lot of room to operate. Land mines impose some tough “neighborhood zoning restrictions.” Having so many people and so much firepower packed into a relatively small area can make for a dangerous workplace.

Also, everyone here is armed and potentially dangerous to themselves and those around them, if they’re not thinking weapons safety at all times.

“My biggest concern is living and working close to the proximity of explosives. We have limited space here because of all the mined areas,” said Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas Grandstaff.

Because of the conditions, it’s extra-important that everyone keeps a safety-first mindset to reduce the chance of a potentially major accident, said Sinatra. “We constantly publicize relevant safety issues, conduct aggressive spot inspec-

tions and mingle with the 455th AEW personnel. We sell safety as being a necessity, and not a mission inhibitor. We remind people that the safe way is the best way.”

Air Force Staff Sgt. Aaron Spanier, flight safety NCO, said that because Airmen here are enthusiastic about completing the mission, they may be tempted to take shortcuts that would lead to unsafe operations. He said that the safety office

“People need to be more aware of the hazards here...”

Master Sgt. Steve Sinatra
455th Air Exp. Wing ground safety manager

gets out and about to make sure that doesn’t happen.

“We are the checks and balance in the

system,” he said. “We ensure that people can accomplish the mission, while doing it as safely as possible.”

Air Force Lt. Col. Dave Kensinger, 455th AEW chief of safety, said that Bagram’s joint war-fighting environment presents a scenario unlike anything he or his Airmen have seen at their permanent duty stations.

“The Air Force shares the airfield with the Army, Navy and Marines, which requires cooperation among the services. We have a level of complexity here we don’t see at home station,” he said.

One way that the safety office helps to keep Bagram personnel safe is by making sure personnel exercise sound risk management.

“We ensure that all risks taken here are identified and accepted at the appropriate level,” said Grandstaff. “It’s tough to ensure this. We’re at war, and sometimes individuals forget certain things. We’re here to ensure that ‘things’ don’t get forgotten.”

Added Spanier, “We’ve assessed different risks that people were taking and outlined those risks. Some risk, especially in a forward environment, has to be accepted — that’s part of risk management. But any risk that is unacceptable, we have worked hard to remove or mitigate it.”

A large part of managing risk comes from staying focused at the workplace and doing the job the way it’s supposed to be done — the safe way is the best way.

“Concentrate on the task at hand and utilize the appropriate instructions and technical orders that apply to the job,” said Sinatra. “Don’t take shortcuts! It’s easy to get complacent because we don’t think we’ll get hurt, but that’s exactly when a mishap occurs.”



Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas Grandstaff, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, weapons safety manager, performs a spot inspection of an A-10 Thunderbolt II on the Bagram flightline. Grandstaff is making sure that the AGM-65 Maverick missile is securely loaded.

Clinic: Local nationals receive treatment at border clinic

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in-patient care in the United States.”

Without skin grafts, burn patients return to the clinic every few days to have infected areas treated and bandages changed, and even with the less advanced treatment, the Special Forces medic proudly said he has only lost one patient.

He said he still knows there are people in the community who ignore their services because of the lack of trust in Coalition forces – something he tries to change with every new face in the clinic.

“They are very stern in presentation and are not vocally gracious and thankful,” said the Special Forces medic. “It’s also very difficult to gain their trust. This is because we are different, but not in a bad way.”

His secret in building relationships doesn’t come from his experience as a Special Forces medic or Soldier, but as a father.

“I use family pictures and stories,” he said. “I portray myself as a family man. If we don’t have anything else in common, we both love and take care of our families. I think everyone can understand this.”

Breaking the cultural gap at the personal level, the Special Forces medic said he has built long-lasting relationships with repeat Afghan patients. To the point where many patients use his first name and even bring him gifts.

Aside from the success of the clinic, the medics also take part in medical civil action projects throughout the Konar Province.



Petty Officer 3rd Class Chris Dare, 2nd Bn., 8th Marine Rgt., corpsmen, starts an IV for a young Afghan man. The man came to the Konar Province clinic with kidney stone. He was treated at the forward operating base clinic – the same clinic used to treat Coalition forces.

These MEDCAPs, keeping a focus on treatment, also allow the medics and corpsmen to do other things.

“When we go out on MEDCAPs, we also try to focus on distributing medical supplies to the local care providers along with training,” said the Special Forces medic. Some of the local care providers have even come to the clinic to obtain training to take back into their communities.

During his time here, he said, CJSOTF-A has provided medical equipment, generators, medical supplies and improved medical buildings throughout the province.

The Special Forces medic estimates he and his team have treated several thousand patients in nine months. He admits that progress has sometimes been slow, but he points to a few indicators that show more people trust the Coalition.

First, he has seen the number of women coming to the clinic rise exponentially.

“Women would rarely come to the clinic when I first got here,” said the Special Forces medic. “Now, they make up close to ten percent of the people we treat.”

Haje Sharin, father of Wahida Maslim, said after his daughter was treated at the clinic, “Right now I feel like I’m in America, I’m so happy.”

The Special Forces medic said its feedback like this that keeps him going.

“I feel like without my intervention on a few occasions, people would have died,” he said. “That and the thank you at the end make it all worth it.”

ER: Doctor enjoys challenges of U.S. Army medicine

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treatment to every patient I see, whether it is here (Afghanistan) or at my home hospital.”

The surgeon’s different approach to medicine is representative of his different approach to life.

Half Creek Indian and half German, he grew up in a working class family in the Midwest.

He enlisted in the Army after graduating high school and was honorably discharged after a few years. After getting married and starting a family, he found it was challenging trying to support a family with the seven dollars an hour he made as an electronics engineer.

After reading a weekend journal in a local

newspaper detailing the intensity and challenges of being an ER doctor, he said he was inspired to return to school to pursue medicine.

“Everything about being an ER doctor appealed to me,” he said.

Graduating from the University of Kansas, he was accepted to Harvard Medical School. The move to Massachusetts strained his family both emotionally and financially, but the choice to go to Harvard was simple for him.

“I wanted to go to Harvard because it was the best,” he said. “It is the same reason I came back into the Army, I wanted to work with the best.”

Finally he fulfilled his dream of becoming a doctor when he graduated from Harvard

at the age of 38.

With all the sacrifices he and his family have made, the surgeon said coming to Afghanistan was one way for him to give back after all his good fortune.

“I have a beautiful wife and four great kids that I am very thankful for,” he said. “Not many people are as lucky as me.”

As the surgeon finishes his tour in Afghanistan, he said he is looking forward to seeing his family and taking back the lessons he has learned practicing medicine in Afghanistan.

Asked if he would do the whole thing over again, the surgeon responded with a resounding “yes.” In fact when he returns to the United States he wants to volunteer for another assignment – Iraq.

Volunteer helps to improve medical care

Classes teach local doctors different medical techniques

Story and photos by Pfc. Cheryl Ransford
17th Public Affairs Detachment

HERAT PROVINCE, Afghanistan — While deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, one of the doctors assigned to Bagram Air Base has volunteered her time to teach the doctors of local hospitals here and pass along any professional knowledge she can.

Dr. (Capt.) Jennifer Marrast-Host, Task Force Victory, National Army Medical Augmentation Detachment, U.S. Army Reserve, has volunteered to spend a few days away from treating the patients at the U.S. Army hospital in Bagram and visit the hospital in Herat to give lectures and talk to the patients in the hope of bettering the care patients here receive.

The training given at the hospital is offered to all members of the staff — nurses and doctors, as well as the medical students, said Host.

“While in Herat I will be giving four lectures and visiting with the patients in the different medical wards in the hospi-



Capt. Jennifer Marrast-Host, TF-Victory, goes over a patient's chart with the attending doctors at Herat Regional Hospital.

tal. The lectures will be covering CPR, cardiac resuscitation, shock and burns. The doctors here have the knowledge of what to do when the situation arises for these procedures to be performed, however, most of what they know has come from reading books and not hands-on training,” she said. “I am here to try and give them some clinical experience on how to use the knowledge they have.”

Host said she has had a great response to her lectures.

“It is good that Doctor Host has come here to work and train with us. We have learned things that we did not know before,” said Sagid Shoaib Tahibi, Herat Regional Hospital internal medicine doctor.

“We are using this training as a starting point, in hopes that in the future other doctors will come out and do the same,” said Capt. John Barnett, Herat PRT medical officer. “We are also hoping that by having an American doctor working side-by-side with the Afghan doctors that we will have a better understanding of what their current capabilities are and what they are still in need of.”

While going through the hospital, Host said she has seen many areas that could use some improvement.

One area she is focusing on is getting medical supplies and medications donated to the hospital. Right now, the patients' families must buy the medical supplies needed for care during their stay at the hospital. The Soldiers of Task Force Victory are working to improve this, so those less fortunate can still get the care they deserve, said Host.

“The doctors here have the motivation and drive to learn and be able to properly care for their patients,” she said. “But due to the lack of supplies and training they are unable to do what they know they need to do — heal their patients.”

This is something Host is working hard to change. By lending her time and expertise, Host said she knows she can at least help them get some of the training they need and move in a direction that should improve the medical situation here.

Host is also hoping to be able to come back to Herat every six months, for about a week, to continue training the doctors on how to provide the best care possible to their patients, even after her deployment to Afghanistan is over.



Marrast-Host checks a patient who has come in with chest pain at Herat Regional Hospital May 11.



Integrity first

