

Remembering Masoud; a national icon

Story by Pfc. Kelly Hunt
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – His only goal was to bring peace to the people of Afghanistan, but it was that ambition that resulted in his death, leaving a country to mourn and a world scarred. On Sept. 9, 2001, Afghanistan experienced the most intense loss in recent history, but no one would have thought that this one man’s demise would lead to the immense devastation felt on Sept. 11th in the United States.

Ahmad Shah Masoud, commander of the Northern Alliance, dedicated freedom fighter, leader of the Taliban resistance and a crucial ally to the United States was murdered at the age of 45 by members of the Taliban regime in preparation for the attacks on American soil; destroying the one man who alone had the resources and the intelligence to aid the coalition in their fight to end terrorism and the Taliban reign in the Middle East.

“Masoud was a very charismatic figure,

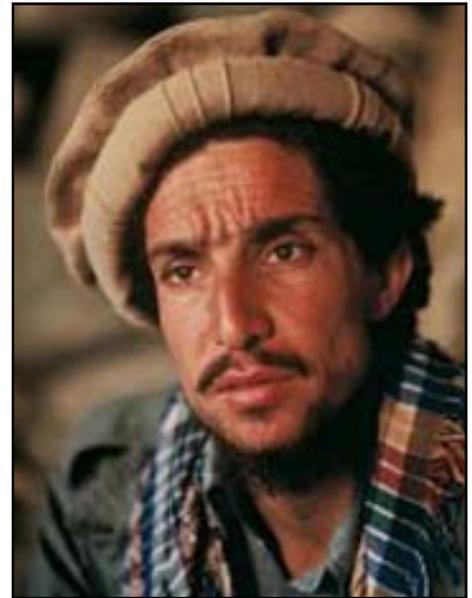
well educated and a hands-on commander of his forces, but he had a flare for the media and the Taliban, al Qaeda link took advantage of that,” said Lt. Col. Monti Zimmerman, a civil affairs officer with Combined Joint Civilian Military Operations Task Force.

Two Taliban members posed as journalists with the intent to attack the leader through a camera bomb; to “kill him in a very dramatic and public way” in hopes “to desecrate and destroy his body as well,” he said. “His murder was very clearly engineered.”

The event shook the country and “basically changed the whole configuration of who the Northern Alliance was,” he said.

The international community was taken back by Masoud’s death and it was clear to many that his death was not the end of the terrorists’ acts, but only a hint of what the future held.

“With his death, I was sure there were bigger things to come,” said Zimmerman. “Shortly after seeing the Buddha destroyed in Bamian, I really had a strong feeling that the United States was going to have to become very quickly involved in Afghanistan, (but) I had



Courtesy photo

Ahmad Shah Masoud

no idea that Masoud was specifically targeted for death in order to prevent him from being the contact point for the United States military when we decided to take action against al

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Soldiers Run 10k in remembrance of 9-11

Story by Spc. Wes Landrum
Coalition Joint Task Force 180

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – More than 1,000 people participated in the September 11th 10K remembrance run held today at Bagram Air Base. Troops from various services and nations waited for more than an hour to register for the 6.5 mile run. Sergeant Maj. Mike Wevodau, Base Operations command sergeant major said the run would be a successful start to the day.

“I have a line that is stretched all the way back to the Base Ops. building,” he said. “Just seeing that has made it successful.”

The route took the runners around the perimeter of the base. Wevodau said the run was Bagram’s way to remember 9-11 and the events surrounding it.

“The run was a way for people to commemorate the second anniversary of 9-11,” he said.

The runners were divided into two groups, open and master. The open division was open to people up to and including age 40. The master division was for those age 41 or older.

In the male open division, Air Force Capt. Gordon Birdsall came in first with a time of 36 minutes, 37 seconds. In the master’s division, Lt. Col. Mike Franzack, Military Attack

Wing 513, took the honors with a time of 39:50.

1st Lt. Laura McManus, CJ-7, won the female’s open division with a time of 45 minutes and 27 seconds. Lt. Col. Linda Sheimo, Combined Joint Task Force 180, won the master’s division. Her time was 53:41.

The participants in the run were given t-shirts for their efforts and first place prizes were awarded to the four division winners. According to Wevodau, the spirit of 9-11 could be felt as the run started.

“This run is more in the spirit of the day

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



Al-Jazeera aired a video in which it said Osama bin Laden appeared with his top deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Al-Jazeera airs purported bin Laden, Zawahiri video

CNN – On the eve of the second anniversary of the September 11 attacks, Arabic-language news network Al-Jazeera broadcast Wednesday what it said was a new recorded statement of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and his top deputy urging Muslims in Iraq to “devour the Americans.”

In the preproduced tape with separate video and audio portions, a voice purported to be that of bin Laden’s chief deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, warned that the battle with the United States was far from over and exhorted fighters in Iraq to “bury them [the Americans] in the graveyard of Iraq.”

The purported voice of al-Zawahiri also said the United States has so far experienced “just the first skirmishes” and not yet begun to realize the true volume of its casualties.

“Those fighters in Iraq, we greet them and salute them and support them and ask God to bless their efforts and their bravery in fighting the crusaders, and we tell them God is with you and the nation is supporting you, depend and rely on God and attack and devour the Americans and bury them in the graveyard of Iraq,” the voice said.

The taped voice warned that “the real battle has not started yet. Prepare yourself for the punishment for your crimes.”

That theme of the fighting just beginning also was used last month in an audiotape the CIA said was likely the voice of al-Zawahiri.

“We recommend to the mothers of the soldiers, if you like to see your sons, then

hasten to ask your government to return them rather than coming back to you in coffins,” the voice said on the latest tape.

Al-Zawahiri is bin Laden’s closest adviser as well as his doctor.

The video portion of the tape on Al-Jazeera showed bin Laden and al-Zawahiri walking down a rocky hillside path. It’s not known when or where the videotape was shot, but Al-Jazeera speculated it could have been in April or May. It’s also unclear when the audio was recorded.

“The videotape could have been made quite some time ago,” said a U.S. official.

“It’s a P.R. ploy,” said one intelligence official, “taking advantage of the 9/11 anniversary to get some attention for their standard rhetoric.”



Bush called a tax increase to pay for his budget request “an absurd notion.”

Bush: \$87 billion ‘worth it’

WASHINGTON — President Bush said Wednesday spending \$87 billion to fund operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in the next fiscal year is “worth it” for national security and he rejected any call to raise taxes to pay for it.

“The \$87 billion, it’s important to spend that money. It’s in our national interest that we spend it,” Bush said following a White House meeting with Kuwait’s prime minister.

“A free and peaceful Iraq will save this country money in the long term. It’s important to get it done now.”

Many members of Congress, mostly Demo-

crats, have voiced concern in recent days the larger than anticipated price tag for Iraqi operations will hurt key domestic programs.

Some have suggested repealing at least some of the nearly \$2 trillion in tax cuts enacted since Bush took office.

“I heard somebody say, well, what we need to do is have a tax increase to pay for this. That’s an absurd notion,” Bush told reporters.

“You don’t raise taxes when an economy is recovering. Matter of fact, lower taxes will help enhance economic recovery.

“We want our people going back to work. We’ve got good momentum now in our economy; we don’t want to destroy that momentum. But the \$87 billion is worth it and I look forward to working with Congress to get that number completed and get the job done.”

Microsoft warns of new flaw

SAN FRANCISCO - Microsoft Corp. warned computer users Wednesday about a new critical security hole in its Windows operating system that could allow an attacker to gain control over a computer, delete data and install unwanted programs.

The vulnerability is similar to one that Microsoft warned about in July, which experts called one of the worst to hit a software program in years because of the broad number of Windows systems affected.

Within a month, the Blaster Internet worm surfaced, taking advantage of that security hole in Windows. The worm eventually infected an estimated hundreds of thousands of machines.

Hackers apparently have not yet targeted the newly announced vulnerability, said Jeff Jones, senior director of Trustworthy Computing security at Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft.

But with any critical flaw, “we have a worry that history has shown us there are malicious individuals out there that could create an attack of some sort against it,” he said.

The operating systems affected by the latest security vulnerabilities are Windows NT 4.0, Windows 2000, Windows XP and Windows Server 2003.

ANA holds symposium in Ghowr Province

GHOWR, Afghanistan – Recently, senior representatives of the Interim Transitional Government of Afghanistan, Kabul-based diplomats, and military leaders from the Coalition traveled to Chaghcharan, the capital city of Ghowr Province, to discuss the Afghan National Army (ANA) with local officials and elders.

The Honorable Mohammed Ibrahim, governor of Ghowr, welcomed the delegation upon its arrival and expressed his strong support for the ANA by saying, “The people of our province are willing and ready to send our sons to join the ANA to help the peace process proceed in Afghanistan.”

Hundreds of townspeople actively listened as the Ministers of Justice, Tribal and Border Affairs, and Transportation, Deputy Minister of Planning and Reconstruction, and the National Security Advisor to the President delivered speeches about the benefits of the ANA and the benefits of Afghanistan having a united Army.

A senior Minister of Defense official explained the concept of the newly established ANA and praised the bravery of the Ghowr people in Afghanistan’s past history and welcomed volunteers who are ready to join the ANA. He also announced that two National Army Volunteer Centers were recently opened in Jalalabad and Gardez, and one would be shortly opened as well in Ghowr.

During his talk, pamphlets describing the benefits of joining the ANA in Dari and Pashto were handed out to the crowd by ANA soldiers who readily answered any questions young men had about the ANA.

The representatives from Germany, Japan and the United States all expressed their commitment to the people of Afghanistan during the reconstruction of their country.

Ten nations are currently helping to train the ANA and more than 30 nations have provided equipment to the new Army.

Maj. Gen. Moeen, ANA Central Corps Commander, acknowledged the international assistance, and added, “This new Army, the ANA, is the backbone of Afghanistan, and without it, the nation cannot stand.”

(Information from CJTF-180 Press Release)

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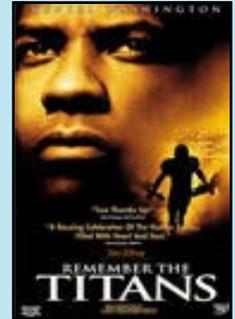
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Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR building: “Remember the Titans.” The true story of an newly appointed African-American coach and his high school football team on their first season as a racially integrated unit.



Tomorrow’s movie will be “City By the Sea..”

Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Bagram:	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 90F L: 61F	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 90F L: 63F
Kandahar:	<i>Haze</i> H: 99F L: 66F	<i>Haze</i> H: 99F L: 66F
Kabul:	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 84F L: 55F	<i>Scattered TSTMS</i> H: 86F L: 54F
Uzbekistan:	<i>Clear</i> H: 100F L: 59F	<i>Clear</i> H: 97F L: 58F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

Visit the CENTCOM web site at www.centcom.mil and click on the *Freedom Watch* or Forces in Afghanistan link at the bottom of the page to get to the *Freedom Watch*. To be added to the daily distribution list e-mail ThompsonJ@baf.cjtf180.army.mil

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Qaeda and the Taliban.”

Masoud had warned the U.S. Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State before his assassination that the Taliban regime was planning an attack, but he was unsure of when and how that threat would be carried out, said Zimmerman.

“We believed him, but the warnings were so unspecified that the (Department of) State and (Department of) Defense couldn’t act on them,” he said. “Because he couldn’t tell us what it was and because we couldn’t (discover) it through any other source, we couldn’t localize it to the point that we could act on it.”

The goal of the assassination was to destroy the link between Masoud and the United States government after the attack on America to prevent a joint effort that would eliminate the power of the Taliban regime, said Zimmerman.

“They were getting the strongest and most capable ally out of the way,” he said. “The guy who had the resolve and was able to hold a couple of the provinces in Afghanistan from the Taliban control.”

Of course Masoud’s death was a plan, said Shahid Azizi, an interpreter from Parwan Province, Bagram District. Killing Masoud was part of the plot to attack Americans and was eliminated because he was openly discussing the possibility of terrorism expanding outside of the country.

“In all his interviews, what I heard and what people heard was that all the terrorists that fought (Masoud) in Afghanistan would someday create a problem for all the other countries too,” he said. “When they killed great Masoud and attacked the twin towers, then the Americans and all the other coalition forces understood that (Masoud) was right.”

Even after death, Masoud is highly respected within his own country and within the international community as one of Afghanistan’s most remarkable leaders. During his life, Masoud provided for his people; building schools, finding food for the hungry and maintaining a level of professionalism unsurpassed by any other leader Afghanistan has seen without sacrificing his main mission of rebuilding his country.

Education was one of his priorities, believing that an educated

country would rise above the terror and end hostilities within the country. Masoud built universities and encouraged educators from outside the country to speak to Afghan students about politics and history.

“He tried to bring peace to Afghanistan and wanted to have freedom in this country,” said Azizi.

He was a very capable and remarkable man, said Zimmerman, and “I think that clearly if you’ve traveled around Afghanistan within the last few days, the black flags that you see everywhere demonstrate that his loss is deeply felt.”

Black flags and dark clothing are international symbols for a period of mourning and for the followers of Masoud’s teachings, the day of remembrance is dedicated entirely to the nations’ loss and the proceeds that Masoud’s dedication brought to his people.

“It is all because of his struggle,” said Azizi. “He tried and sacrificed himself on the way to bringing peace and now we have the positive result of his struggle in Afghanistan.”

The “great Masoud” promoted healing within his country, rose against the Russians and then the Taliban, all with intentions of creating a democratic government that would end the fighting in Afghanistan, he said.

“He was a great leader for Afghanistan,” said Azizi. “In the history of Afghanistan, we’ve had many leaders who tried to save Afghanistan, tried to beat the enemies, but he was a different kind of man.

“He was an exceptional kind of person,” he said. “We didn’t have any like him in the past and I’m sure we won’t have such a person in the future.”

The Taliban and al Qaeda may have tried to destroy Masoud’s dream for a peaceful Afghanistan, “but we were together, the Afghan government and the American government, and we beat them all,” said Azizi. “That was his hope; that with the help of the international community, we could someday bring peace and reconstruction to Afghanistan.”

Following Masoud’s death, many cities commemorated the centers of their towns in his name including traffic circles in Charikar, Gohar, Jabalussaraj, Kabul and many others.

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than the spirit of competition,” he said.

According to soldiers, the atmosphere the remembrance run produced couldn’t have been better.

“Thank you for putting this on,” Franzack told Wevodau as he was awarded first place in the master’s division. “You guys really worked hard to get this together and myself and the soldiers really appreciate it.”

Troops stationed at Bagram recognize the sacrifices made by coalition forces from Sept. 11th to the present day. It is real – they live the consequences of that tragedy daily.

“That’s the reason I’m here fighting,” Wevodau said. “To make sure another Sept. 11th doesn’t happen.”



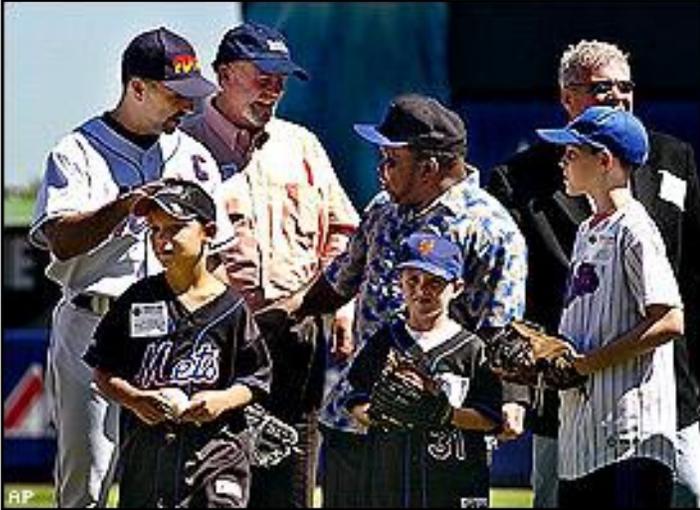
Photo by Sgt. Greg Heath

More than 1,000 coalition service members participated in Bagram's Sept. 11th 10 K remembrance run.



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *ESPN.com*)



John Franco joins Tuesday's Children founding members Brian Kelly, background center, and Chris Burke, far right, in greeting children who lost a parent in the 9-11 attacks.

Mets pay tribute to 9-11 victims Wednesday

ESPN – The New York Mets found a fitting way to pay tribute to Yolanda Dowling and the other victims of Sept. 11 — they played the tape of her singing the national anthem at Shea Stadium seven years ago.

The Mets are off Thursday, the two-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks. So before Wednesday afternoon's game against Florida, they used her rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" that she performed on Banner Day at Shea on Aug. 4, 1996.

Eight Mets players, including starting pitcher Jae Weong Seo, wore hats from the different service organizations who lost members that day. After the attacks at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Mets players wore "NYPD" and "FDNY" and Port Authority caps for the rest of the season.

Five people whose families were affected by the tragedies threw out ceremonial first pitches. In addition, Mets pitcher Al Leiter was selected by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Gov. George Pataki as spokesman for Let Freedom Run, a 4-mile commemorative run along the Hudson River to be held Saturday.

Leiter and teammates John Franco, Mike Piazza and Tom Glavine all contributed \$5,000, which was matched by Mets Foundation for total of \$40,000, to start a Mets Scholarship Fund through the Tuesday's Children organization to benefit kids who lost a parent.

Eagles' Dawkins out 2-6 weeks with injury

PHILADELPHIA — Eagles' safety Brian Dawkins will miss two to six weeks with a sprained right foot.

Dawkins was one of three defensive starters injured in Monday night's 17-0 season-opening loss to Super Bowl champion Tampa

Bay. Cornerback Bobby Taylor also had a sprained foot and defensive end Brandon Whiting strained a hamstring.

Taylor and Whiting also could miss Sunday's game against the New England Patriots.



Brian Dawkins

Dawkins' injury doesn't require surgery, the team announced Wednesday. He has a sprain in a joint in the middle of the foot.

In 2000, Eagles running back Duce Staley missed the final 13 games, including playoffs, with the same injury.

The Eagles already have been hurt by injuries on defense, losing defensive ends Derrick Burgess (Achilles' tendon) and Jamaal Green (leg) for the season. Also, rookie defensive end Jerome McDougle will miss at least one more game with ankle, knee and hip injuries.

Clarett suspended for the entire season

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Maurice Clarett was suspended for the season Wednesday for violating NCAA rules, tarnishing Ohio State's national title and clouding the future of one of the nation's most talented running backs.

Clarett was punished because the school determined he accepted thousands of dollars in improper benefits and then lied to NCAA and school investigators.

"This is a sad day," Ohio State athletic director Andy Geiger said as he announced the penalty.



OSU AD Andy Geiger said Maurice Clarett was guilty of 14 violations of the ethical-conduct bylaw.

Clarett will remain on scholarship this school year. His attorney, Scott Schiff, wouldn't speculate if Clarett's Ohio State career was over.

"He's considering his options right now," Schiff said.

Clarett had been suspended from the team while the NCAA and Ohio State investigated his finances.

Geiger said Clarett was guilty of 14 violations of the ethical-conduct bylaw and two violations of receiving preferential treatment or benefits because he is an athlete.

Geiger said before each season Ohio State players are presented a copy of NCAA Bylaw 10 which deals with ethical conduct and not lying to investigators.

"You play by the rules, you live by the rules," Geiger said.

Geiger said Clarett would be required to make a donation to a charity of his choice equal to the amount he received in benefits, which Geiger termed as "thousands of dollars," if he wants to be reinstated.

Afghanistan Hot Topics

(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)



Senior Afghan official shot

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP)—The brother of a slain police official allegedly led a gang of 15 men who stormed a government office in Afghanistan's southern Uruzgan province, shooting dead a senior government official, the provincial governor said Wednesday.

Mohammed Qudus, the head of administration in the Uruzgan district of the province, was killed in his office on Monday, said Gov. Jan Mohammed Khan.

Khan blamed the attack on a brother of the district's police chief, who was killed last month in a suspected Taliban ambush.

The suspected assailant, Mohammed Yunus, suspected Qudus "had a hand in the killing of his brother," Khan said. He said the dead official had played no role in the police chief's death.

No arrests have been made for the latest killing and Jan Mohammed Khan said police were searching for the suspects, including Yunus.

Revenge killings are common in Afghanistan's conservative areas. Some feuds last for generations, claiming scores of lives.

A rugged region, Uruzgan is believed to be infested with remnants of the Taliban militia, which was ousted by a U.S.-led coalition in late 2001 for harboring terrorists. The militia fighters are suspected of attacks against the post-Taliban government.

Questions grow on Pakistan's commitment to fight Taliban

SLAMABAD, Pakistan (*New York Times*)—Two years after the Sept. 11 attacks, questions are growing about whether Pakistan, a crucial American ally in the campaign against terrorism, is mounting a sincere effort to crack down on a resurgent Taliban and other Islamic militants.

The Pakistani military, which dominates the country, is credited by American officials with excellent cooperation in hunting down

members of Al Qaeda. But members of the Afghan government and some Pakistani political and intelligence officials suggest that Pakistan is not doing all it could to stop Taliban forces from using its territory to attack Afghan territory, and that some elements of Pakistan's army are harboring Taliban and Qaeda members.

At least three low-level Pakistani army officers have been arrested on charges that they helped Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Al Qaeda's chief of operations, hide in the country before his arrest in March, Pakistani intelligence officials said. These officials believe that the most likely hiding place of Osama bin Laden is in the tribal areas along the Pakistani-Afghan border.

Overwhelming public support for Mr. bin Laden among the area's religiously conservative Pashtun tribes continues to thwart efforts to arrest him, they said.

Such support is also evident elsewhere. Islamic militants are again operating openly in Pakistan. Last Friday afternoon at the Red Mosque in the center of Islamabad, the nation's capital, Fazlur Rehman Khalil, the former head of Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen, delivered a sermon to hundreds of worshippers as police officers lounged outside.

The State Department has declared the group a terrorist organization. In 1998, Mr. Khalil supported Mr. bin Laden's call for attacks on the United States and Western interests. After the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, Pakistan's president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, banned the group. Mr. Khalil dissolved his former group and created a new one, Jamiat-ul-Ansar.

On Friday, he exhorted listeners to participate in "jihad," or holy war.

"Our salvation lies in obeying the orders of Allah, not America," Mr. Khalil said. "If we don't do jihad, our prayers and fasting will not be accepted. This is a sacred duty."

After he spoke, members of a new group collected money from worshippers. Asked what the money was for, two members of the

group said jihad in Kashmir, where Islamic guerrillas are fighting to overthrow Indian rule. Asked if it was also for jihad in Afghanistan, one answered "Praise be to God." The other quickly cut him off and said "no."

Members of the group sold a copy of the September 2003 issue of their magazine. Its cover featured an interview with Mr. Khalil in which he stated that "America should announce its defeat" in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The back page contained a report saying that in Afghanistan, "a raging battle between Islam and the infidels is continuing."

In an interview, Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said Pakistan was fighting terrorism and Islamic extremism by all possible means. He cited the influx of 3.5 million Afghan refugees into Pakistan over the last 25 tumultuous years and scoffed at the idea that Pakistan would try to destabilize its neighbor.

"We have perhaps more to lose than any other country," he said, referring to a rise in poverty and Islamic radicalism that he attributed, in part, to Afghanistan's wars. "We have paid in ways no other country has paid."

The United States has shown no sign of questioning Pakistan's commitment to fighting terror. President Bush called Mr. Musharraf on Monday to thank him for Pakistan's contribution, the Foreign Ministry said. American officials believe that the Pakistani intelligence services, once seen as a key agent in the creation of the Taliban, have been thoroughly reformed since Sept. 11, 2001, and are now committed to fighting both Islamic extremism and terrorism.

Western diplomats say the Taliban is building up its forces along the border and running a recruiting network inside Pakistan. But they see the problem as one of Pakistani capacity and politics, not will, and say they have seen no evidence of direct aid from Pakistan's government to the Taliban. "They may not know what to do," said one Western diplomat.

REMEMBERING 9/11

September 11, 2003 □ Published in the interest of those serving in Operation Enduring Freedom □ Bagram, Afghanistan

Bagram remembers September 11th

Story by Spc. Wes Landrum
Coalition Joint Task Force 180

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — It was meant to tear a nation apart; instead, it united it. On September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked two planes and crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York City. Forty minutes later, another plane was hijacked and struck the Pentagon in Washington. As the second anniversary of the tragedy approaches, the soldiers at Bagram Air Base have taken the time to reflect on that fateful day in 2001.

Sgt. 1st Class Mary O'Keefe, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Aviation Brigade was at work when she found out about the attacks. She said she was shocked when she heard it about it.

"I just couldn't believe it had happened," she said. "I was in total disbelief."

Col. Patrick Skelly, Coalition Land Force

Component Command, said surprise was definitely on the side of the terrorist that day.

"I was surprised that the terrorists were able to pull off such an enormous event like that," he said. "We hadn't anticipated their capabilities were that high."

The evening was just beginning for Melvin Ransom, Air Force Contract Augmentation Program, but even he was not immune to the disaster that took place in New York.

"I was in Germany with V Corp," he said. "I was on a date and heard it over radio while sitting in a café. I couldn't believe it."

Ransom said the reason for the attack was the complacent attitude that America had taken.

"We believed our own hype," he continued. "We got too comfortable where we were at in society and in the world compared to other places."

Skelly suspects America knew about an

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COURTESY PHOTO

Afghan survives Taliban imprisonment

Story by Sgt. Stephanie Hall
4th Affairs Detachment

BAMIAN, Afghanistan — In the summer of 1998, Sayed Mohammad Ali's world in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan, seemed so very far from the war and tyranny being inflamed by the Taliban in other parts of his country. This 21-year-old's biggest worry was that of college exams on his road to becoming a doctor. He never imagined that in a short few months, the Taliban would completely engulf his life.

On August 8, 1998, the city's defenses crumbled and the Taliban seized Mazar-e-Sharif. Ali, who was 21 at the time, said from the moment they infiltrated the city, they went against everything the city stood for. "The Taliban went inside the 'Blue Mosque,' (which) is so honorable for our people of Mazaar-e-Sharif and all of Afghanistan, with their weapon and with their shoes," which showed the Taliban's complete disregard for the Islamic religion the people of Mazar-e-Sharif shared, said Ali.

The Taliban, or "God's students," is an Islamic fundamentalist faction, and they "say that they are Muslim," said Ali. "I don't think they are

even human." He said that their fanatic twist to the Islamic faith is not the one he learned. "The Islam religion has honor for every religion," he said. "They (have) respect for every human of this world."

The people were caught off guard when the Taliban entered the city and had no chance to defend themselves when the Taliban began indiscriminately butchering people. "To them it didn't matter who it was," said Ali.

Many people fled into the mountains, leaving behind their homes and their lives, but there were some who refused to leave their homes including Ali. Three days later, Ali was discovered by the Taliban and was taken and asked about a weapon, he said. "I told them I was a student of college and I don't have any weapon."

They didn't believe him, so they locked him up in a room, and told him "if you don't give (up) the weapon, we will never let you to go," said Ali. After three hours, they released him and told him to go back to his house and not come out.

A week passed and his family needed supplies, so he risked ventur

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impending attack but didn't think it would actually happen.

"The threat was definitely known out there," he said.

But he added having a lot of threats coming in made it difficult for the intelligence community to decide which were genuine and which were hoaxes.

"I think the intelligence community was much more attuned to it than they were given credit for," he said. "To actually piece together where the threat is going to happen is the key."

But O'Keefe said that through the tragedy of Sept. 11, a nation found its identity.

"Sept. 11 unified us as a nation," she said. "We have shown our strength and we have shown that we will not be intimidated by anyone, even the Taliban."

Ransom said the disaster made think Americans think about what it means to be called Americans.

"It made us understand who we are and that it is a privilege to be an American," he said. "It was a bad thing but it was necessary to understand where we are at as a society and where we are in this world."

"It brought us back down to earth a little bit," he added.

Skelly said the impact of Sept 11th would be felt Thursday but not on the scale it did right after the disaster happened. He said the nation

has moved forward and that life has gone on for Americans.

"Even though the rallying cry is there, I'm not sure the purpose is there anymore," he said. "It's grown to be more of a symbolic value but I don't know if it changes people's lives the way it did for the first month after the attacks."

The days impact on America has not been minimized, just internalized, Skelly said.

For these three soldiers and for American's across the world, the events on Sept. 11th will never be forgotten. Each of us holds the memory of that devastating day inside our hearts as the day America rose from disaster to combat and eliminate hatred from countries around the globe.

Prisoner, from page 7

ing out to the local bazaar to buy necessities, he said. When he returned, the Taliban were waiting for him. "They took me and my brother and around 10 and 15 other people from that village I was living at that time," he said. They were taken to the Mazaar-e-Sharif prison, he said.

The first year ...

Ali and his brother, and a handful of other people from his village, were taken to the Mazar-e-Sharif Prison, and he was there for a week, but it was a hellish week, said Ali. That first night, the Taliban "started to beat us by slapping us on the faces, or by (whipping) a cable on (our) backs," he said. "Then they put us in a small jail," which was a room about 20 by 20 meters in size along with 400 to 500 other souls unfortunate enough to be caught in the Taliban's whirlwind of destruction, said Ali. The space was so cramped that people could barley find enough room to sit and sleep, he said.

The next day, the Taliban began beating the prisoners again, said Ali. After the beatings, those who still showed some strength were taken to the back of the jail and shot.

After that mind-numbing week, Ali and several others were transported to a prison in Shiberghan where he was kept for 15 days.

During his imprisonment in Shiberghan, Ali witnessed "seven guys die in front of my eyes by (hunger) because they didn't have enough food to feed themselves," he said.

After those tortuous 15 days, the Taliban transported Ali and around 50 other people from Shiberghan jail to a prison in Kandahar, and his world grew a lot smaller when he was confined to a 5 by 7 meter cell along with 50 other prisoners, he said.

For a week, the prisoners were allowed reprieve from their cells to

walk around or go to the restroom only twice a day for twenty minutes each time, said Ali. They spent the rest of the day jammed packed into a room with no space to sleep at night and no room to breathe during the sweltering heat of the day.

After a week of intense interrogating where the Taliban identified every prisoner as a "soldier against the Taliban" despite whether it was true or not, the prisoners were finally given a little freedom, said Ali. They were allowed out into a small courtyard with about 2000 other prisoners from other cells, and were also allowed to practice their religion in the prison's mosque, he said.

Despite their new freedom, each prisoner was barely kept alive with two pieces of bread and a cup of tea each day, and a cup of soup with two pieces of potatoes in it each week, said Ali.

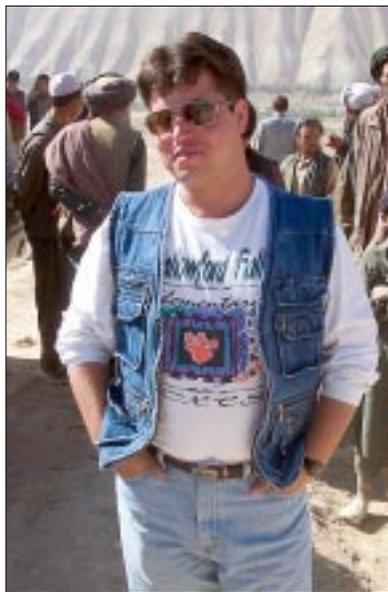
After about four months in Kandahar, the American Red Cross came and handed each prisoner an identification card. "The ID card was a kind of insurance for life," said Ali. They made the Taliban guards think twice about killing a prisoner, he said.

The amount of beatings the prisoners endured depended on each battle between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. The more defeats the Taliban received, the harsher and more frequent the beatings were, said Ali.

One of those beating occurred when the Taliban came into a room, chose the strongest looking prisoner, and "had a kind of fun for themselves," said Ali. They hit him with rocks and cables, and then

demeaned him by "riding him like a donkey or a horse," said Ali. When they finished riding him, they beat him some more until "everybody could hear his voice, his yelling," said Ali. The prisoners couldn't sleep until midnight when the beating stopped and the man fell silent, he said.

(Ali's story will continue in next issue with the last two years of his imprisonment and his impression of Operation Enduring Freedom.)



COURTESY PHOTO

Sayed Mohammad Ali

September 11, 2001 until...

A Freedom Watch look back on some of the events that have shaped our mission



Sept. 11, 2001: At 8:45 a.m. (EDT) a hijacked passenger jet crashes into the north tower of the World Trade Center. Eighteen minutes later a second jet crashes into the south tower.



Sept. 11, 2001: At 9:43 a.m. (EDT) hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon, sending up a huge plume of smoke. Evacuation begins immediately. At 10:10 a.m. United Airlines Flight 93, also hijacked, crashes in Somerset County, Penn.



Sept. 18, 2001: Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld says administration preparing sustained offensive against terrorists and countries that support them. Pentagon orders combat aircraft to bases in Persian Gulf the next day.

Sept. 14, 2001: President George W. Bush declares national emergency and gives military authority to call 50,000 reservists to active duty. Bush vows that America will “lead the world to victory” over terrorism.



Sept. 20, 2001: In a national address, Bush announces creation of Office of Homeland Security. Bush directs U.S. military forces to “be ready” for the gathering battle. “The hour is coming when America will act and you will make us proud.”



Oct. 7, 2001: American and British forces unleash missile attacks against Taliban military targets and Osama bin Laden’s training camps. Bush says, “We will not waver, we will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.” Bin Laden, in a taped message, says America will not “dream of security” until “the infidel’s armies leave the land of Muhammad.”



Oct. 19, 2001: U.S. ground forces battle in Afghanistan, opening a new phase in the war on terrorism after nearly two weeks of air strikes, a defense official said. The next day U.S. Army Rangers launch raids into Afghanistan in the dark of night. Two soldiers are killed when their helicopter crashes in Pakistan.



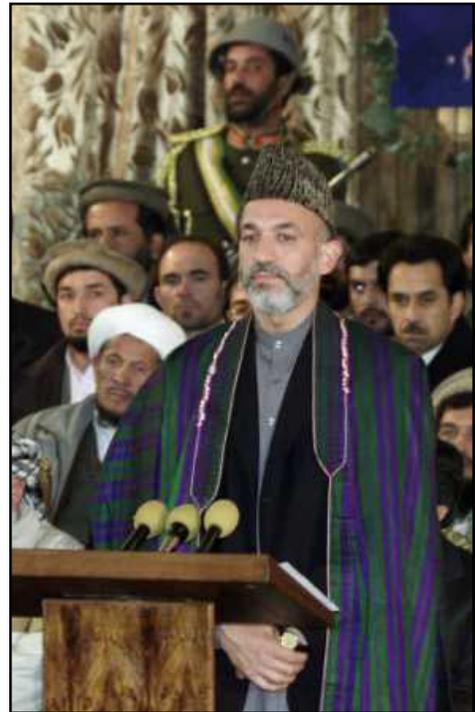
Nov. 12, 2001: Northern Alliance troops march into Kabul. Taliban forces unexpectedly desert the capital at Kabul at dawn, after a series of stunning military victories by opposition forces in the north over the past several days. Residents of Kabul are seen shouting and cheering as the Taliban departed in columns and vehicle convoys heading south. The Alliance now controls 50 percent of the country.



Dec. 16, 2001: Rumsfeld visits troops at Bagram Air Base. Rumsfeld becomes the first senior Bush administration official to step foot in Afghanistan. Afghan forces declare they have wiped out the last pockets of al-Qaeda resistance in the Tora Bora mountains.



Feb. 8, 2002: The World Trade Center flag is carried by Olympic athletes at the winter games' opening ceremony in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Dec. 22, 2001: Hamid Karzai takes the oath of office as Afghanistan's interim prime minister in a ceremony in Kabul. Karzai pledges to "fulfill my mission to bring peace to Afghanistan."



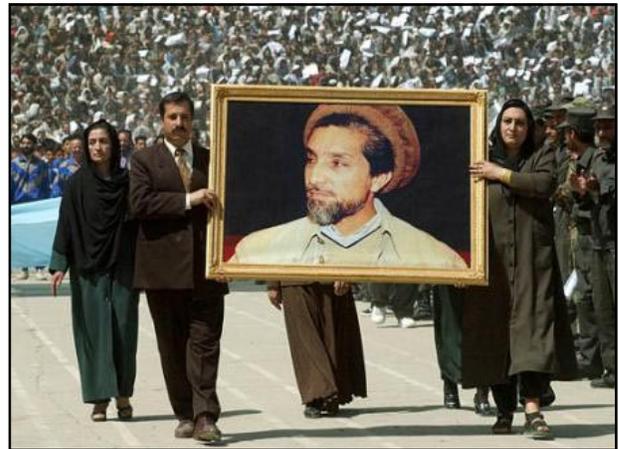
March 5, 2002: American soldiers scan a ridgeline during Operation Anaconda. The operation was designed to squeeze the life out of Taliban and al-Qaeda strongholds dug deep into the Shah-i-Kot mountains of eastern Afghanistan.



May 30, 2002: The last steel beam is removed from the World Trade Center site. After more than eight months a ceremony at Ground Zero marks the end of clean-up efforts.



July 6, 2002: *Afghan Vice President Haji Abdul Qadir and his driver are assassinated while driving in Kabul.*



Aug. 19, 2002: *Afghans carry a picture of Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Masoud during a parade in Kabul celebrating Afghan Independence Day.*



Aug. 30, 2003/Ongoing: *Afghan National Army soldiers dance after being officially activated as the official defense force at Pol-E-Charki near Kabul. The ANA is continuing to expand and is being trained and assisted by coalition forces.*



Sept. 11, 2002: *A mourner cries at Ground Zero during a remembrance ceremony marking one year since the attack on America.*



Ongoing: *Provincial Reconstruction Teams work together with the Afghan government to reconstruct and rebuild a war-torn country. Coalition forces assist in everything from education to physical reconstruction.*



Ongoing: *American military forces continue to kill and deny sanctuary to anticoalition forces in Afghanistan. Operations Warrior Sweep and Mountain Viper are currently underway in southeast Afghanistan.*

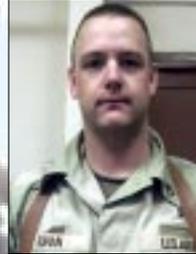
Freedom's Voices

What does September 11th mean to you?



Spc. Jerome Mercer Jr., SJA, HHC, 10th Mountain Div., CJTF 180 - *"When I think of the events that occurred on 9-11, I feel remorse for the innocent people that were wounded and killed. I feel remorse for the families and friends of those victims. I also feel grateful for the lives that were saved. 9-11 opened my eyes to a lot of things. First and foremost, terrorism is definitely a*

threat to society and has to be stopped. It also made me really appreciate the military and my role as a soldier. It helped me to realize that the military's mission accomplishment has a great impact on whether or not our families in America sleep well at night. I've grown new confidence that terrorism of that sort will never strike home again."



Staff Sgt. Shawn Rohan, HHC, CJTF 180 - *"On September 11th, 2001, I watched the attack on New York with the rest of America. I felt the same horror, grief and rage that all of our country did, and I knew that our way of life had changed forever. Since then, the anniversary of this cowardly murder of our fellow Americans has evolved to be a sad day*

of horror for our fallen brothers and sisters, both civilian and military. The efforts and sacrifices that every soldier who has been, and is in Afghanistan (has made), represents the most poignant memorial I can think of. I believe that every one of the victims of September 11th would be proud that America has stood both strong and resolute in the face of terror."



Sgt. David Merchant, HHC, CJTF 180 - *"I guess what that day has meant to me is how unaware and naïve we really were. This day has been embedded into my mind every time I hear about New York or anything now that has to do with terrorism. That day we lost more than the twin towers. That day we lost our innocence. The way we thought nothing could ever happen to us or no one is*

stupid enough to attack the U.S. is gone now. I still feel grief for the people that lost their lives that terrible day and can't feel anything but sorrow for their beloved ones. I guess what 9/11 means to me is we will not be unaware anymore. We will not look away when things happen to other countries. We must make sure a day like this will never happen again."



Sgt. Jose Martinez, 10th Soldier Support Battalion, CJTF 180 - *"It's a day that we'll never forget; the terrorist attack to the twin towers in New York, a landmark that distinguish this city. A day when many innocent victims died."*

THIS IS NOT A DRILL!!

NEVER FORGET

OPSEC WILL HELP SAVE LIVES

PRACTICE IT!