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1st Lt. Julie Sheets

Peer Mullah Khan, the father, watches as Dr. (Lt. Col.) Dave Barber (left) and Capt. John Hernandez keep his new-born baby warm following arrival at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, March 12.

Army doctor delivers Afghan baby during MEDEVAC flight

CTF Thunder Public Affairs Office
News Release

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - A U.S. Army doctor and medic helped deliver a baby girl March 12 while flying in the back of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

"It was pretty intense," said Spc. Kyle Storbakken, a medic with the 159th Air Ambulance Company, based at Wiesbaden Army Airfield, Wiesbaden, Germany. "It's hard to believe we helped a woman give birth to a baby up there."

Storbakken assisted while Lt. Col. David Barber, commander of the 249th General Hospital's medical detachment at Forward Operating Base Salerno, delivered the baby while in flight.

The mother, the 40-year-old wife of a village

elder near Shkin in Paktika province, had been in labor for 18 hours when the village midwife notified a nearby U.S. military medical sergeant of her serious complications.

Upon the sergeant's assessment that the woman's condition could threaten both her and her baby's life, Combined Joint Task Force 76 launched a medical helicopter from FOB Salerno to evacuate the pregnant woman and bring her back to the hospital here.

But the little girl could not wait to arrive and was born during the flight from Shkin to FOB Salerno.

Barber said the hospital team at FOB Salerno was prepared for any situation.

"The (operating room) was prepared if we had to do an emergency C-section," he said. "When they didn't have to, they immediately

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Opinion & Commentary

Command Sergeant Major's Corner

Standards still important in combat zone



Command Sgt. Maj. Edmund Murrell
CTF Thunder
Command Sergeant Major

Many of you serving in Regional Command East are in the homestretch of your deployment, while others have just begun your tour here.

Whether you're new in the area of operations or you are pushing a year in-country, you need to stay focused on the task at hand.

Part of that involves meeting or exceeding the standards in everything you do. It is very important for everyone at every level to understand the importance of keeping and enforcing standards.

As you no doubt knew when you volunteered to join the military, there are rules and regulations that govern nearly

everything you do. From weapons safety to the way you wear your uniform and hair, military regs just about cover it all.

During deployments, many of you will find yourselves working alone or in small groups. When that happens, it is sometimes easy to become complacent and not do what we know we are supposed to do. I employ all of you to live up to the standards that have been set, especially when no one is looking.

Some of the most important standards you can follow are safety regulations. Because of high operations tempo and heavy workloads, some of you might want to cut a corner here and there to get the job done faster.

This is a dangerous thing to do. These standards are in place because they are important. They might mean the difference between life and death.

It might be something as small as wearing safety goggles, clearing your weapon or ground-guiding a vehicle, or something more important like following the proper procedures for refueling a helicopter.

Safety standards are in place to ensure everything is done in a safe manner so that no one gets hurt unnecessarily.

Another thing everyone needs to ensure they are following the standards for is the proper wear of the military uniform. From time to time, I see service members not wearing their uniforms properly.

I remind Soldiers that Army Regulation 670-1, Wear and Appearance of the Military Uniform, is still in effect.

Members of the other services should also abide by any uniform standards set forth

by their service.

"We're in combat, what does it matter if I don't tuck my shirt in or I don't wear my headgear?" is a typical response to strict uniform regulations.

I'll tell you why it matters. When we start letting ourselves become lazy and don't pay attention to detail, our guard starts to go down and we put ourselves at risk.

We are still in a combat zone and must understand the dangers. We must continue to wear seat belts, also ensure the vehicle is prepared for the mission by doing good maintenance. This is the time for some leaders and subordinates to become complacent.

Leaders must understand that conditions change but standards never do. As our replacements filter in we owe it to them to set conditions for their successful integration, and to successfully assume the mission. All this starts with basic soldiering.

Ensure we are in the proper uniform all the time. Soldiers properly groomed, and with a good positive attitude.

As our soldiers redeploy to home stations, we must ensure they are properly integrated back into their families and communities.

The same things that made us successful in combat can support our integration. We must talk to our soldiers about drinking and driving, speeding, and just making bad decisions period.

These soldiers are combat veterans, and survived a year of harsh conditions.

Whether you're new to RC East or are on your way out the door, you need to follow the standards in all that you do.

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Commander

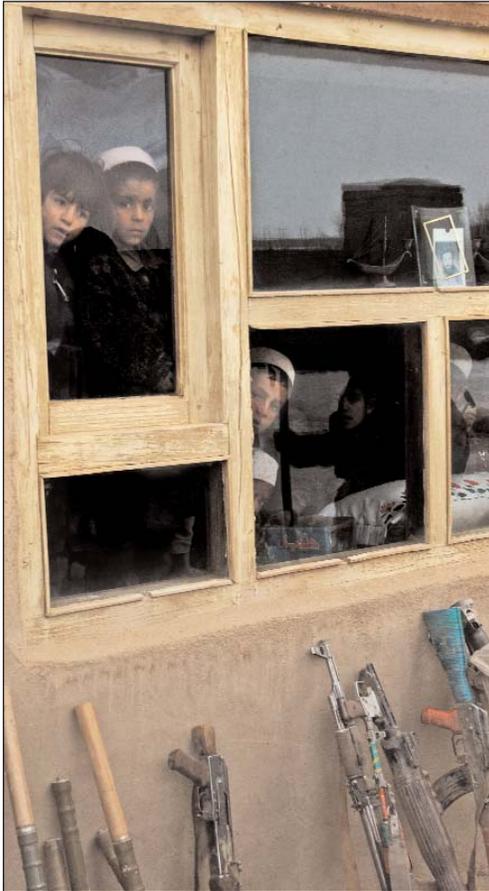
Col. Gary H. Cheek

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Photos by Staff Sgt. Mark Turney

Thousands of rounds of ammunition, heavy machine guns, and RPGs were found during a search conducted by 3rd Bn., 116th Infantry Rgt. and members of the Afghan National Army in the Qarabagh District.

Left - Children of the compound look out at window during an early morning search conducted by 3rd Bn., 116th Infantry Rgt. and members of the Afghan National Army.

3-116th Inf. uncovers weapons in Qarabaugh

By Staff Sgt. Mark Turney
3rd Bn., 116th Inf. Rgt.

QARABAUGH, Afghanistan - Following an early morning search conducted jointly by 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment and the Afghan National Army, thousands of rounds of ammunition, anti-tank mines and many weapons systems were uncovered.

This was also the first time the unit had conducted a joint operation with the newly replaced ANA troops.

"We had some problems early on in the operation," said Capt. Patrick Combs, Task Force Normandy's battle captain. "Because of the urgency of this operation, we didn't get to train or rehearse with this group but all in all the operation was a great success and their participation was invaluable."

The combined units rolled down Route 1, Ring Road, heading towards their turn-off just past Saydabad, the road-

sides piled high with snow. Eleven vehicles, every seat loaded, every turret manned, approached the compound of the suspected arms dealer. Sunrise was still hours away.

As the vehicles began turning onto the dirt road which would bring them to the suspects' compound, three vehicles got stuck in the axle deep mud. It took the units nearly an hour to extricate the vehicles and once again begin down the road.

Fearing that the element of surprise may have been lost, the units were on a heightened state of alert.

"After the vehicles got stuck we were concerned that the element of surprise had been lost," said 1st Lt. Heath Phillips, on-site commander of the operation and senior officer of the Anti-Tank Platoon. "When we rolled up on the compound and no one met us, we all breathed a sigh of relief."

Immediately the units began dispersing. The

Soldiers of 3-116th knew their roles after having affected many other such operations. The ANA also began to disperse and took direction from the Soldiers interspersed between them.

Fanning out to cover all the exits from the compound, the members of the 3-116th quickly surrounded the compound.

Surprisingly, the owner of the house exited the compound while the compound was being surrounded. He waited patiently at the gate to his home and was quickly searched and told to open up the compound.

"How many people are in there?" asked Phillips through an interpreter. "Wake them up and get them into the courtyard, now!"

Immediately the Soldiers were brought to one of the main doors and with the owner leading the way they began the process of clearing each room in the large compound.

As the owner implored the inhabitants of the building to exit their rooms, the doors began to open and half-asleep people began filling the compound's courtyard. At first the men were coming out but no one saw any women or children. They were located in one of the out buildings and they were removed, under female guard, to the courtyard.

As is the custom of the Afghan Muslims, the women and children were separated from the men and female Military Police women from the 25th Military Police Company maintained a guard on the women while the Soldiers kept watch over the men in another wing of the compound.

Infantry Soldiers began to knock and open doors while members of the 229th Engineers, a Virginia Army National Guard unit assigned to Task Force Normandy, efficiently checked each entrance

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TF Wolfhound transfers authority in Paktika province to TF Fury

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ORGUN-E, Afghanistan - After a year in Afghanistan, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment officially transferred authority of one of the country's roughest provinces to 1st Bn. (Airborne), 508th Inf. Rgt. March 12.

As a warm spring sun shone down, the two units conducted a transfer of authority ceremony, with 2-27 casing its colors, and 1-508 subsequently uncasing its.

Speaking at the ceremony, Col. Gary H. Cheek, commander of Combined Task Force Thunder, said the Wolfhounds of 2-27 did a magnificent job during their year in Afghanistan.

Cheek said he didn't want to recite data about weapons caches collected, enemy killed, attacks repelled or enemy leaders captured, because to do so would characterize the fight here as a one-dimensional effort.

"To have that kind of thinking is a dangerous way to approach the mission here," he said. "That one dimension will never be enough to beat this enemy here and give this country a chance to move forward."

Cheek said a lot of what the Wolfhounds did and the Red Devils will do sounds contrary to what one might expect from an infantry battalion.

"But we expect a lot from our infantry battalions, and



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery Hof (left) and Lt. Col. Timothy McGuire uncased the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry Regiment colors during a transfer of authority ceremony March 12 at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E, Afghanistan.

all of our units here, to do things out of the ordinary to make a big difference in the country," he said. "Because in the end, it's not about statistics, it's about the effects you generate."

In welcoming the Red Devils to the team, Cheek asked them to remember that the key to this fight here is not the enemy.

"The key to this fight really lies within the Afghan population," he said. "When you go out and do an operation, your conduct and your actions are going to influence the population, and they're either going to like you, or they're going to not like you, or maybe even hate you. If you win their support, you win this war."

Lt. Col. Walter Piatt, commander of 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., wondered what history will one day say about the Wolfhounds year here. After all, he said, no enemy formations have surrendered, no peace treaties have been signed and there have been no celebrations for the end of hostilities.

"Perhaps the lack of chaos is our only true measure of success," he said. "But maybe we have lit a spark and given hope to those who previously had none."

Piatt told the Red Devils that the people are the true victims in this war and therefore must remain their objective. Their ability to extend compassion will have great

effects, he said.

"This war must be fought with your minds, not your triggers," Piatt said.

Lt. Col. Timothy McGuire, commander of 1st Bn., 508th Inf. Rgt., said the battalion has prepared for this mission for the last year, and will build on the Wolfhounds' legacy.

"We are truly humbled and honored to be replacing the Wolfhounds here in Paktika province," McGuire said. "Paktika province is the most strategic province in Afghanistan. If the central government succeeds in Paktika, it will succeed throughout the country."

McGuire said the Wolfhounds have set the standard for fighting counter-insurgency by winning the populace, and pledged that as the Wolfhounds have set the standard for OEF-V, the Red Devils will set the standard for OEF-VI.

Located along the border with Pakistan, Paktika province is about the size of Vermont and much of the province is rough, mountainous terrain. FOB Orgun-E, located near the town of Orgune, is about 7,500 feet above sea level.

Following the ceremony, the few remaining Soldiers from 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt. boarded helicopters to begin their journey back to Hawaii, while the Soldiers from 1st Bn., 508th Inf. Rgt. continued to get settled in to their new digs.

Raid

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and room for signs of booby traps. None were found and the Soldiers began to quickly enter the rooms of the main building of the compound.

"We've got weapons and stuff here," shouted a voice from within the first room of the building. This shout was to

be repeated many times throughout the morning as more and more caches were found.

The complete search of the compound took nearly four hours and thousands of rounds of ammunition, antitank mines, rockets, mortars and many loaded weapons including several heavy machine guns were found and confiscated in the morning raid.

"This operation showed how we are continuing to work with the ANA and the Afghan National Police in maintaining security throughout the region," said Maj. Andrew Pavord, acting battalion commander for 3rd -116th. "We helped remove some very dangerous weapons from the area making it more difficult for the (insurgents) to acquire and use against us."

1-508th Inf. arrives in Paktika province

By Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Det.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ORGUN-E, Afghanistan - After months of preparation in Italy, and days of travel, the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry Regiment, hit the ground running at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E in early March. They quickly assumed their mission of conducting security operations in eastern Afghanistan's Paktika Province.

For the unit, their participation in Operation Enduring Freedom comes little more than a year after the unit completed a year-long rotation in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Drawing from their recent experience, members of the unit wasted no time settling into their mission at FOB Orgun-E.

After getting essential information from their predecessors, the "Wolfhounds" of 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, from the 25th Infantry Division (Light), the unit visited the range and embarked on a joint patrol - some within 48 hours of arrival.

"It was our focus to hit the ground running when we arrived here," said Capt. Josh Segraves, commander of Company B, 1st Bn., 508th Para. Inf. Rgt. "It is important, because the sooner we get involved in the mission, the sooner we can get proficient at it."

There are many important aspects to beginning as soon as possible.

"Our time with the Wolfhounds is very limited," said Segraves. "We are trying hard to focus on the success of (2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt.) and their accomplishments."

Segraves said he encouraged his Soldiers to interact with their predecessors on every level.

"I want them to spend as much time as possible with them to pick up on all the aspects of our mission here," he said.



Sgt. Frank Magni

Pfc. Andrew Wilund, an M240B gunner with Co. B, 1st Bn., 508th Infantry Rgt., participates in his first dismounted patrol in Paktika province.

Aside from the emphasis on learning from the outgoing unit, the focus for the 1st Bn., 508th Inf. Rgt. revolves around personnel and equipment readiness.

"We want to get into the routine of pre-combat inspections and other aspects of the battle rhythm as soon as possible," said Sgt. Christopher Johnson, a team leader with Co. B, 1st Bn., 508th Para. Inf. Rgt.

Johnson, a veteran of OIF, said that during the first couple of weeks he is focusing on the members of his unit who weren't in Iraq.

"I just want them to get the jitters out as soon as possible, so it will be easier for them to focus on the mission," he said.

Even though a majority of the unit does have past experience operating in a combat zone, Johnson said he is approaching this mission with a fresh approach.

"I know this is a different mission here,"

he said.

After interacting with the outgoing unit and embarking on one patrol, he has already seen differences in the landscape and mission.

"The terrain is much more sparse and spread out than Iraq," he said. "I can also see much more of a focus on (civil affairs) with this mission."

One of Johnson's Soldiers is embracing the "hitting the ground running" mentality with open arms.

"The more I see, the better I know how things are going to be here," said Pfc. Nathan Fuller. "I want to be out as much as possible right now."

In the next few weeks, a majority of the unit will push further into the province on extended patrols, and some will make outlying FOBs their homes.

"It's nice to finally be here," said Fuller. "I hope we stay this busy the entire year."

Baby

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responded to the mother providing her resuscitation and giving me assistance resuscitating the baby."

The baby and mother were eventually transported to Bagram Airfield, where doctors reported both are doing well.

After arriving at Shkin, Storbakken, 25, of Mukiteo, Wash., helped the woman and her husband onto the helicop-

ter. Shortly after taking off, the woman's situation appeared to worsen, Storbakken said.

The helicopter's pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Erick Swanberg, powered the rotors at full speed toward Salerno. A few minutes later Storbakken came over the aircraft's intercom with good news.

"We've got a baby girl," Storbakken announced, after he cut the umbilical cord.

Swanberg radioed to escort aircraft, "Hey, we've got another

passenger on board."

Barber credited the flight crew for their skills.

"They did an exceptional job of flying there to the nap of the earth, at high speed and at great potential risk," he said.

"When they were made aware that there was a medical emergency first with the mother and then the baby, they did everything in their power to get us back to the hospital as quickly as possible, and that meant pedal to the metal."

The little girl's birth may be

the first time a baby was born aboard a helicopter in a combat zone, Swanberg said.

"It's great to have helped bring a life into the world, rather than having one taken," Swanberg said.

Two days later, the event was still sinking into the minds of the crew, which also included 1st Lt. Joshua Ingram and Spc. Daniel Pappizzo.

"I'm just glad we were there to help," Storbakken said. "It was pretty amazing."

Wolfhounds recognized for achievements

By Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Det.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHARANA, Afghanistan - With their tour in Operation Enduring Freedom drawing to a close, the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, took the time to recognize individual achievement with awards ceremonies Feb. 25.

The ceremonies at Forward Operating Base Sharana, Waza Khwa and Orgun-E, were representative of the constant operations conducted by the Wolfhounds throughout Paktika Province, said Combined Joint Task Force-76 commander Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson.

Olson was on hand for each of the ceremonies to present awards to the Soldiers - an opportunity he called an honor.

"The Wolfhounds were the first on the ground for the 25th Infantry Division," said Olson. "It was the Wolfhounds who set the tone for the rest of the division."

He said award ceremonies like these recognize the individuals who made the entire operation successful.

"You were the guys making it happen," said Olson. "The (privates) and the sergeants made the elections a reality. You are the ones that I'm extremely proud of."

At Sharana, Olson awarded Bronze Star and Army Commendation medals to members of Headquarters and

Headquarters Company and Company B. Achievements revolved around the work put into establishing a new FOB, assisting the developing government and providing security for the presidential election.

With the Wolfhounds on hand during a pivotal time in Afghanistan's history, their awards represent the success of not only the unit, but also the local government, said 1st Lt. Stephen Holmberg, a Bronze Star Medal recipient from Company B.

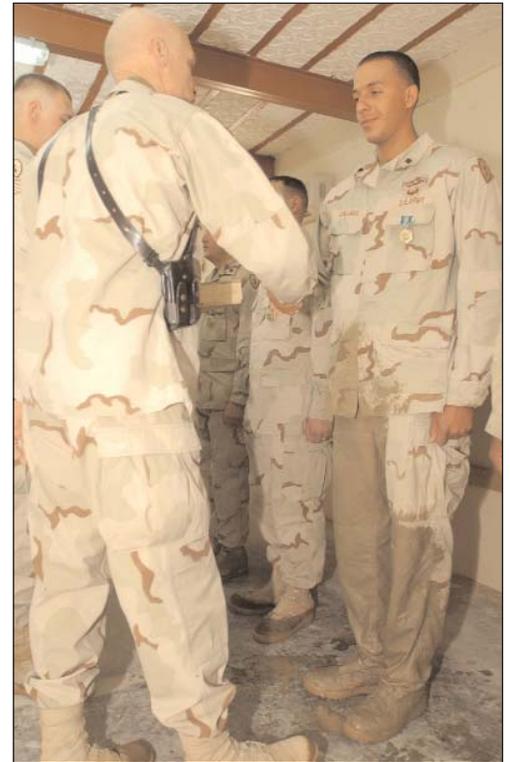
"The security we provided during the elections created a safe environment for the elections to take place," he said.

Although there were many achievements across the Wolfhound's organization, Company B Infantryman Spc. Nathan Adams said his award was especially meaningful because it represented team achievement more than individual effort.

"This award makes me feel good because me and my whole squad got through the rotation," said Adams. "We couldn't have done it without each other."

What was just as special as getting the award, was the rotation ending on such a positive note, he said.

In all, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., awarded 96 Bronze Star Medals, 448 Army Commendation Medals and one Legion of Merit.



Sgt. Frank Magni

Spc. Cesar Collado, HHC, 2nd Bn., 27th Infantry Rgt., shakes hands with Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, CJTF 76 commander. Collado had to participate in the ceremony with muddy pants and boots because he helped pull out vehicles that were stuck in mud on the road.

Wolfhounds, local government bid farewell



Sgt. Frank Magni

Haji Mohammed Glilab Mengal, Paktika province governor, pins a Bronze Star Medal on Capt. John Sego, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 27th Infantry Rgt., commander during a farewell ceremony.

By Sgt. Frank Magni
17th Public Affairs Det.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ORGUN-E, Afghanistan - Over the past year, the "Wolfhounds" of 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, formed tight bonds with their brothers in arms.

An expected side effect of operating in a combat zone for 12 months.

Somewhat unexpected, however, is the close friendship gained from working closely with the local government of Paktika Province and the Afghans in the area.

To honor this special relationship, the Wolfhounds and the provincial leaders held a ceremony before the Soldiers made their journey back to Hawaii.

During the ceremony, both 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., and Afghan officials spoke and were recognized for their achievements.

On hand from the provincial government were Governor Haji Mohammed Glilab Mengal and Afghan National Police Gen. Rahime, head of the province's police force.

With Coalition assistance, security dramatically changed within the province, said Rahime, who took the job as police chief early in the Wolfhound's rotation.

"When I first took over in my job, there were only a few police," he said. "Now there are more than 400."

The partnership between the Coalition and Afghans provides the motivation for many

who work for him to continue to risk their lives to maintain stability, he said.

Although Paktika Province's successes were mentioned throughout the ceremony, it was the strong relationship between the Wolfhounds and their Afghan friends that stood out.

One of the event's highlights was the presentation of the Bronze Star Medal to Company B Commander Capt. John R. Sego by Mengal.

Although unusual to receive an award from non-military personnel, Sego said it was a great honor to have the governor pin the award on his chest.

"It was fitting," said Sego. "What I liked about getting the

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Coalition provides training, equipment to Afghan police

By Master Sgt. Geoffrey Carter
CTF Thunder Public Affairs Office

KHOST, Afghanistan - Early morning sees a small convoy getting prepared to leave the Coalition base near Khost, Afghanistan. It is a combination of forces with one mission in mind: train and equip the local Afghan National Police force's

Special Weapons and Tactics (S.W.A.T.) team.

The drive from Forward Operating Base Salerno to a police barracks in Khost takes about 30 minutes. The drive crosses flooded gullies (wadi) and continues down a main road that has more natural craters than the Earth's moon.

Military vehicles traverse these roads

with relative ease, but local trucks and cars must rely on miracles or expert driving skills to complete even the shortest of drives.

Arriving at the police barracks in downtown Khost, Coalition forces off-load boxes of equipment and hand them off to local policemen.

This delivery is one of many made to enhance the capabilities of Afghanistan's Police with a final goal of Coalition forces working themselves out of a job.

"The training we have received from Coalition forces has made a big difference in the way we take care of our business," said Najib Ullah, a local police garrison commander. "My policemen are now able to search houses with more safety and confidence."

The equipment consisted of elbow and knee pads, tactical gloves and web belts. Previous deliveries included uniforms and field jackets plus first aid kits with tourniquets.

The U.S. Army discovered that during the Viet Nam War having a tourniquet included in field first aid kits were responsible for reducing casualties by about 60 percent.

Training given to Afghan Police Forces focus on how to stop and search a vehicle, how to render first aid, basic small-arms fire and how to secure, enter and search a building for terrorists and illegal arms caches.

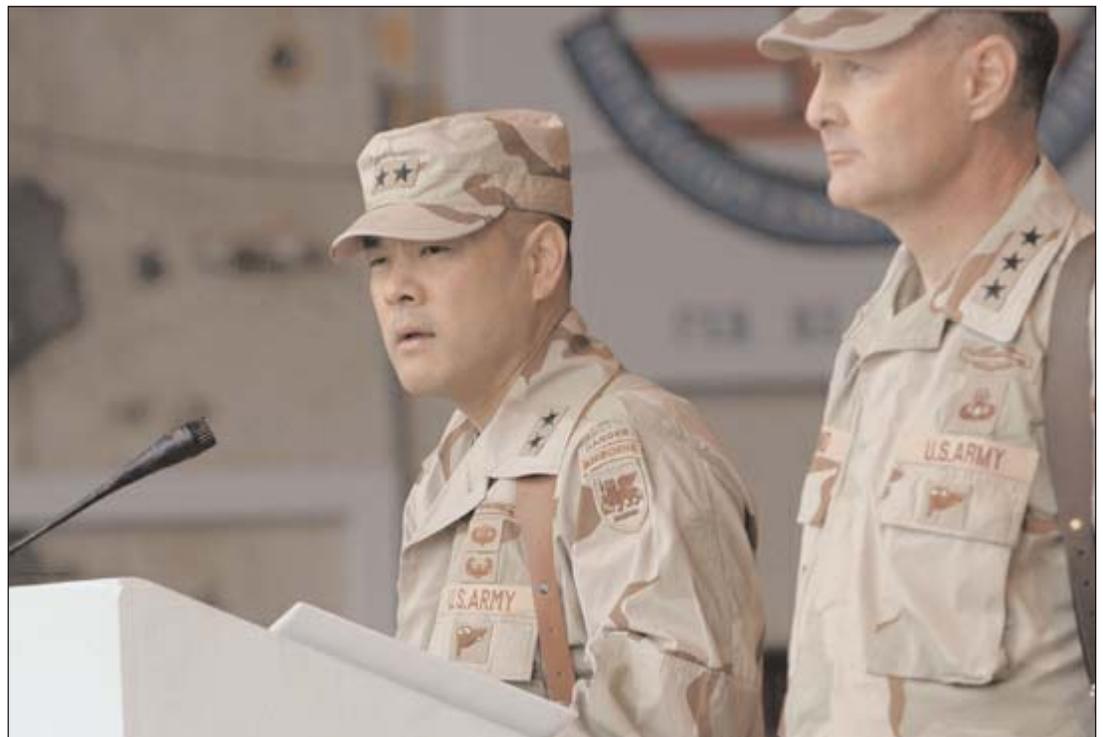


Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

Afghan police practice reflexive firing techniques March 8 at Forward Operating Base Salerno, while wearing knee pads that were donated by the Coalition.

Kamiya assumes command of CJTF 76

Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya, incoming Combined Joint Task Force 76 commander, addresses the crowd during a transfer of authority ceremony March 15 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. Kamiya, the commander of the Southern European Task Force out of Vicenza, Italy, takes over for Maj. Gen. Eric T. Olson, commander of the 25th Infantry Division (Light), who was the commander for the past year. At right is Lt. Gen. David Barno, commander of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan.



Sgt. Adrian Schulte

Salerno Day brings service members together

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Service members here got a break from the daily grind March 5 to participate in a day of sporting events.

Dubbed "Salerno Day," the event included competitions in basketball, volleyball, weight lifting, soccer, horseshoes, dominoes, tug-of-war, as well as a stress shoot competition and an iron man and iron woman competition.

The event was designed to allow all the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen here to get together for one day and enjoy friendly competitions and build esprit de corps, said Sgt. Maj. Eugene Brewer, operations sergeant major for Combined Task Force Thunder.

"It was a good relaxing day," Brewer said at the conclusion of the day. "Everybody got to wear PTs and do some hooah events."

Marine Staff Sgt. Ignacio Ramirezlazos, a member of Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment thought it was a great event.

"It was good to get a break from work and be able to enjoy ourselves," he said.

"I work the night shift, so it's great to



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

Army 1st Lt. Gianni Giannandrea, a member of Btry. F, 7th Field Artillery Rgt., competes in the stress shoot competition at Salerno Day.



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

Army Spc. Miranda Thibodaux, 546th Maintenance Co., competes in the power lifting competition during Salerno Day March 5 at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

be out here and be out of the office."

In addition to being able to relax a bit and escape the monotony of everyday life on the FOB, was also a chance for people who normally don't associate with one another to hang out a little.

"How often does the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines all compete on the same pitch downrange?" said Air Force Master Sgt. John Knipe, a tactical air controller with the 25th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron.

"A lot of people in the Navy don't talk to a lot of people in the Air Force, and a lot of people in the Air Force don't talk to a lot of Marines a lot of time," Knipe added. "So this is a real unique day for people to speak to other branches of service and find out some things about another branch that you might have never known."

Knipe competed in the iron man competition, and although he finished 14th out of 45, he thinks age played a factor.

"I'm 39, so if there was a 39 and

over category, I'd be a winner," he said.

Brewer lauded everyone who competed, especially those who took part in the iron man and iron woman competitions.

"The iron man and iron woman competition was a true testament to intestinal fortitude," he said. "They dug it out five miles, with four events in between - rigorous, testing events."

Following the competitions, there was an awards ceremony and all winners received certificates and commanders coins.



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

Marine Staff Sgts. Ignacio Ramirezlazos (left) and Freddie Scott, both of Headquarters and Service Co., 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt., carry 80-pound ruck sacks up Radar Hill during the iron man competition at Salerno Day.

CTF Thunder conducts SAMC board

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - The Combined Task Force Thunder chapter of the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club held a board here March 8 to test potential club members and determine if they are worthy of being inducted into the prestigious club.

Instead of having each candidate appear inside before all board members, the board was held outside at the base basketball court with candidates rotating around to different senior noncommissioned officers who grilled them on specific subjects.

While answering the NCOs' questions, candidates had to block out such distractions as helicopters passing overhead and other people walking by as daily life on the base went on around them.

Sergeant 1st Class Joseph Dorey, president of the CTF Thunder chapter of the SAMC, said it was decided to hold the board outside to add another element to the already stressful nature of the board.

"What better way to represent Audie Murphy's actions than to have the board outside in the elements with the sounds of the Army and Marine weaponry to replicate battlefield distractions," he said. "I think this factor added to the rigorous evaluations that the NCOs had to perform."

In a combat environment like Afghanistan, Soldiers don't always get a lot of down time. And when they do, it doesn't usually involve studying.

Staff Sgt. Torry Rice, a platoon sergeant with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, said it was more of a challenge preparing for the board here as opposed to the



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

First Sgt. Charles Miller, Logistics Task Force 524, quizzes Sgt. 1st Class Audie D. Matheus, Btry. F, 7th Field Artillery Rgt., during the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club board March 8 at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

rear because of the operations tempo.

"Back home you get to go home, relax and study on your own," he said. "Here, you're a 24-hour Soldier. Anything could happen at any time and you got to be ready for all contingencies."

Rice said his down time

got cut to a bare minimum. A normal duty day for him at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E in Paktika province was anywhere from 10 to 14 hours.

"After that I'd start studying and then get about five hours of sleep if I was lucky,"

Rice said

The following Soldiers appeared before the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club board March 8, received GO's from all board members and will be inducted into the SAMC:

Sgt. 1st Class Audie D. Matheus, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt.
Sgt. 1st Class Troy C. Baylis, HHB, CTF Thunder
Sgt. 1st Class Fredrick D. Warren, HHB, CTF Thunder
Sgt. 1st Class Gary E. Wright, HHB, CTF Thunder
Staff Sgt. Shane K. Ahnee, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt.
Staff Sgt. David E. Alexander, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt.
Staff Sgt. Anthony C. Bowdrie, HHB, CTF Thunder
Staff Sgt. Maurice K. Brittain, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt.
Staff Sgt. David Garcia, HHD, LTF 524
Staff Sgt. Omri Ibi, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt.
Staff Sgt. Bethany R. Matthews, HHB, CTF Thunder
Staff Sgt. Samuela Pulu, Btry. F, 7th FA Rgt.
Staff Sgt. Torry M. Rice, HHC, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt.
Sgt. Aaron F. Krieg, 546th Maint. Co.

But all the hard work paid off and down the road, Rice said it will be more special knowing that he became a member of the club while deployed to a combat zone.

Dorey agreed, saying Murphy, who was America's most decorated Soldier of World War II, overcame many obstacles, against overwhelming odds exemplifying the determination and commitment of the U.S. combat Soldier.

"What a better way to earn the prestige of becoming a member of the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club than doing it while performing a combat mission," Dorey said.

This was the second time CTF Thunder held a Sgt. Audie Murphy Club board here. On Dec. 11, 16 non-commissioned officers from across Regional Command East faced the board, and all passed.

MARFORCENT deputy CG visits 3-3 Marines

By Cpl. Rich Mattingly
3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Third Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment marked what was most likely their halfway mark in Afghanistan with a visit from Brig. Gen. Jerry C. McAbee, deputy commanding general of Marine Forces Central Command March 7.

In front of the Battalion's Combat Operations Center, as helicopters flew in and out of FOB Salerno's busy airfield, McAbee talked to the gathered Marines and Sailors from Headquarters and Service Company and Weapons Company about what was happening throughout the U.S. Central Command and the Marine Corps.

"Every Marine has performed with distinction in the Central Command Area of Responsibility," said McAbee, speaking proudly of what Marines have accomplished in both Iraq and Afghanistan. "You are truly the nation's second greatest generation."

The brigadier general, who formerly commanded Marine Corps Base Hawaii, stressed the importance of the United States' ongoing commitment to fighting the Global War on Terrorism.

"If we are to maintain our way of life as Americans, then this is a fight we must win," he said, continuing his pep talk. "In America we have the smallest military we have had in decades, while our population continues to grow. You should be proud of what you're doing. You will always be able to call yourselves patriots."

As for the state of the Marine Corps, McAbee assured the Marines and Corpsmen that life, as they knew it,



Cpl. Rich Mattingly

Marine Brig. Gen. Jerry C. McAbee, deputy commanding general of Marine Forces Central Command, talks to Marines from 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt. March 7 at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

would continue on once they returned to Hawaii. No changes to special duty assignments such as Marine Security Guard, Drill Instructor or Recruiting are currently anticipated, he said.

The operational tempo of the Marine Corps remains high, he continued, saying that Marines in deployable units could expect to remain on a regular "seven months out, seven months back" schedule for the foreseeable future.

Units around the Marine Corps can expect to be refreshed with 3,000 new Marines who are currently being trained, said McAbee. Despite reported recruiting shortfalls Department of Defense wide, the Marine Corps will be able to augment the existing force structure and expand its size by two battalions.

Because of this, the Marine Corps should be able to avoid any need to implement stop loss policies or involuntarily extend Marines and Sailors who have reached their end of active service, he said.

McAbee concluded by speaking to the future of the Middle East, which will remain the focus of overseas troops for many years to come.

"The futures of Iraq and Afghanistan have never looked brighter," said McAbee. "There are a lot of positive things going on because of our involvement in the Middle East. Iraq and Afghanistan are free, Lebanon will soon be free from Syrian control and never have Israeli-Palestinian relations looked closer to resolution. You are a part of that change."

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award from the governor was that it is representative of the bond and friendship that developed from the year.

"Our personalities just clicked," said Segó. "Our relationship definitely helped us get more accomplished."

Daily interaction with his Afghan partners added greatly to the mission, said Segó.

"I will definitely miss them," said Segó. "Working with (the Afghans) was a major part of our operation here."

Both parties also offered gestures of goodwill through various gift exchanges throughout the ceremony.

Soldiers and Afghans who died over the past year were remembered and the ceremony concluded with a 21-gun salute and the playing of Taps.

Right - Haji Mohammed Glilab Mengal, Paktika province governor, waves to Soldiers as he arrives to a farewell ceremony for 2nd Bn., 27th Infantry Rgt. at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E.



Sgt. Frank Magni

LTF 191 assumes authority of logistics mission

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Logistics Task Force 191 assumed authority of the logistics mission from LTF 524 during a transfer of authority ceremony here March 16.

As LTF concluded its mission, it marked the first casing of colors from a unit from the 45th Corps Support Group (Forward) out of Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, for service in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Col. Dave McKenna, commander of Joint Logistics Command, said the Soldiers of LTF 524 displayed the greatest commitment, courage, confidence and selflessness everyday.

McKenna said all the Soldiers of LTF 524 had one thing in common: "While they were here, they served and they soldiered for each other. As combat service support Soldiers and health care providers in support of service of others, it became their personal affair of the heart."

McKenna said it was an honor and a privilege to serve with the Soldiers of LTF 524, saying, "You are the absolute best of the best."

"As you prepare to leave Afghanistan, know that what you did was good, what you did was right, and what you did really made a difference," he said.

McKenna told LTF 191 that he had no doubt they were the best prepared unit in

the U.S. Army to assume this mission.

"You have trained long and hard to get here, you arrive here with fresh legs, new thoughts and enthusiasm beyond compare," he said. "The challenge is now yours."

Lt. Col. Brian Haebig, commander of LTF 524, said the unit had a "wild ride" over the last 12 months.

"The officers and the Soldiers that you see here before you put together plans and executed missions that weren't in any field manual, and just went about making it happen," he said.

He said when the Soldiers arrived at FOB Salerno in May 2004, they found a base with no post office, finance office, personnel detachment or PX and had to eat MREs for lunch since the dining facility only served two hot meals a day.

"These Soldiers adopted our battalion motto 'Make a Way,' and started to take the time to truly make this place a better place," Haebig said.

Lt. Col. Thomas Langowski, commander of LTF 191, said the service of LTF 524 is nothing short of magnificent and commendable.

"The combat service support and combat health support provided by your logistics task force ... were unmatched and unparalleled," he said. "Due to your efforts, the warfighter was provided unprecedented access to all services and classes of supply that greatly enhanced their ability to execute their combat mission."



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Command Sgt. Maj. Angel Clark-Davis and Lt. Col. Thomas Langowski uncase the Logistics Task Force 191 colors during a transfer of authority ceremony with LTF 524 March 16 at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

Renovated school reopens in Gardez

An Afghan boy holds a picture of Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the grand opening ceremony of the newly-renovated Ibrahim Khail School March 5 in Gardez District, Paktya province. Members of the Gardez PRT participated in the event, which included speeches by Governor Hakim Taniwal, the Afghan Director of Education Abdul Samad Muslih, and Lt. Col. Brendan O'Shea, commander of the Gardez PRT. The school had been severely damaged during Operation Anaconda, with most of the windows broken out and considerable damage to the roof and walls.



Courtesy photo

Afghan Dep. Minister of Women's Affairs addresses women's rights

By 2nd Lt. Christy Kercheval
CJTF 76 Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - On the heels of International Women's Day, Nageeba Shareef, deputy minister of women's affairs for Afghanistan, visited villages in Nangarhar and Paktya provinces to take part in women's shuras.

Women's shuras have been conducted in many villages across Afghanistan in the last year. The shura serves as a forum for women in the community to gather and discuss their concerns and their needs, just as a jirga serves as an assembly of elder men to solve problems within the community.

"The country is very traditional and they've always worked their problems through jirgas and they have elders come and discuss their problems," Shareef said. "Basically this was the same thing, they were the ones who wanted to put this together, it came from them."

Shareef, and several women from Combined Joint Task Force 76, met with the women of Torkham, in Nangarhar province March 10. This was the areas' first women's shura, and more than 50 women from the village gathered under the shade of trees in a courtyard to be a part of the event.

"One of the rumors is that people say the central government is only cares about the Kabul area and not the villages. This shows that someone from the government does care and that the central government is not

only for one area, but they are for everybody," Shareef said.

Shareef began the shura by explaining to the women the importance of gathering together in this type of forum. The women of the village selected one of their own villagers, Baskhala, to serve as a leader for potential future shuras in the village.

Baskhala then stood and shared some of the needs of the women in the area. She said there was a need for a school and a clinic near the village.

Other basic concerns were addressed, including a need for drinking water, soap, latex gloves to assist in unsanitary jobs and latrines for the women. Also, the village needed the holes from old, dry wells filled in for the safety of the children of the village.

"If we have clean water and we have schools, clinics and roads people won't need to go to Pakistan for help," Shareef said, referencing the close proximity of border to the east.

The next morning, the group visited Chamkani, in the Paktya province, which has a well-established shura in place, and a school that girls of the village are attending.

Visiting Torkham and Chamkani, and trying to tally the needs of the people of just two villages can be a daunting task in this country, but Shareef walked away encouraged about the future of her country.

"It's going to take a lot of work and a lot of time for people to live a comfortable life ... but I've always been hopeful because Afghanistan has a lot of friends," she said.



2nd Lt. Christy Kercheval

Afghan Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs, Nageeba Shareef, sits at a table before a crowd of more than 50 women gathered for a women's shura.

First woman provincial governor named in Afghanistan

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai appointed the country's first woman governor March 3, coincidentally, during the opening days of Women's History Month.

Karzai named Habiba Sarobi, former minister of women's affairs in the transitional government, as governor of the central province of Bamiyan, according to news reports.

The historic appointment is considered a major step forward for the Afghan government, which is promoting more women in positions of power and encouraging wider political participation among women.

That represents a sea change for a nation ruled for six years by the Taliban regime, which severely limited women's rights until being overthrown by Afghan and coalition forces. Under the Taliban, women were banned from participating in politics, business and all advanced education.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, in an interview earlier this year, cited the widespread participation of women in Afghanistan's national elections last October as a positive sign of things to come in that country.

Of an estimated 8.5 million Afghan voters, about 40 percent were women "who came out and voted even though the Taliban was trying to scare them away," he said.

During a town hall meeting in Kuwait last December, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld counted the Afghan elections, and the "determination of the women who braved violence and cast their ballots" among the "pivotal moments in history" he said were made possible through the help of America's men and women in uniform.