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Staff Sgt. Mark Turney

Members of 3rd Bn., 116th Infantry Rgt. present two sheep to Haji Faizal during a visit to Faizal's family compound to celebrate the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

RC East celebrates Eid Al-Adha throughout Eastern Afghanistan

From Staff and Unit Reports

Coalition service members in Regional Command East shared the holiday of Eid Al-Adha with their Afghan hosts in many ways.

The Muslim holiday of Eid Al-Adha - or "feast of sacrifice" - was celebrated Jan. 20-24 this year.

During this holiest of holidays for the Muslim people, it is customary to sacrifice a goat, sheep or cow depending on the size and wealth of the family. Of this sacrifice, one third is for consumption, one third is to be given as gifts and one third is to be given to charity for those less fortunate.

In recognition of this holiday, Coalition troops joined their Afghan hosts in many memorable and culturally enlightening events throughout the region.

Members of the Jalalabad Provincial Reconstruction Team joined the local leader-

ship, including the Governor of Nangarhar, the local Afghan Militia Forces commander, the Border Patrol Commander, and the Chief of Police for both Nangarhar and Laghman Provinces for cultural exchange visits.

The Jalalabad PRT also donated much-needed humanitarian assistance to the local orphanage on Jan. 24.

The Parwan PRT distributed 30 goats and more than 400 blankets, 400 sweaters, 300 pair of shoes, 820 toothbrush and toothpaste kits, 60 hygiene kits, and clothing for children in the Bagram district. Twelve goats were given to women and 18 goats were provided for disabled men.

In Paktika Province the members of the Sharana PRT and 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment hosted "Sharana Day" at the Governor's compound. One hundred local

Opinion & Commentary

Actions break down barriers

Commentary By
Sgt. Maj. Anthony Marrero
 2nd Bn., 27th Infantry Rgt.

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan - As the Muslim world conducts their annual Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and celebrates Eid Al-Adha (Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son for God) this year, Soldiers from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, along with Soldiers from the Sharana Provincial Reconstruction Team contributed to their festivities.

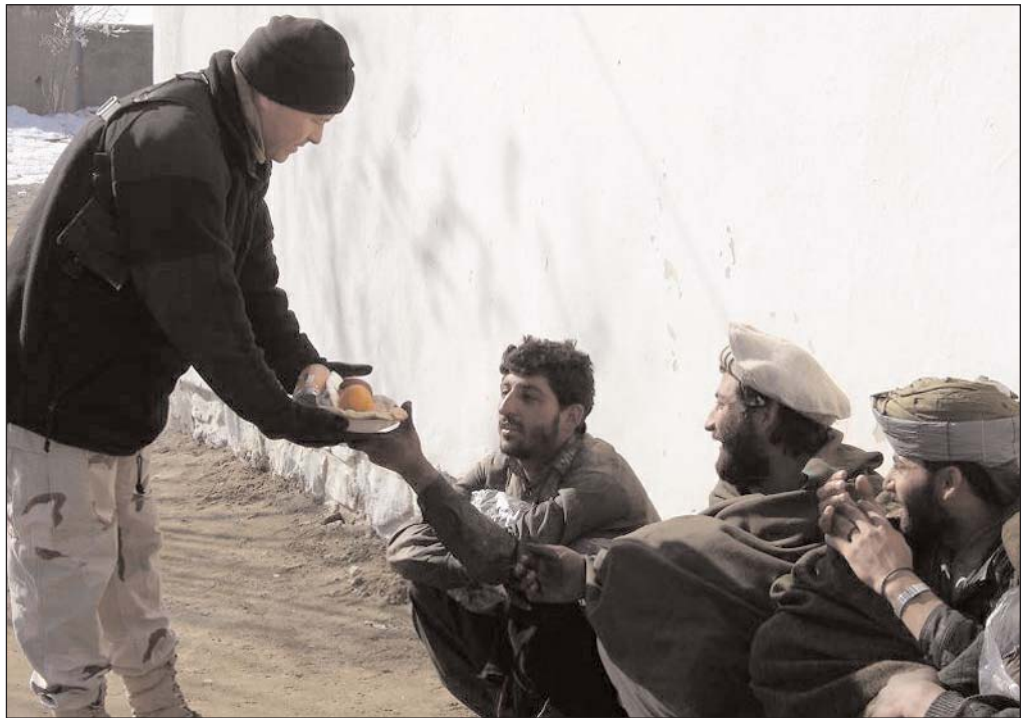
On Jan. 19, the Soldiers handed out 160 winter jackets, 170 blankets, 30 sheep, and a hot meal in the Sharana government compound.

As I sat and enjoyed this meal with the local nationals, I reflected on how the Soldiers have grown and matured along with the Paktika Province. Our task force has done so much since arriving in March 2004.

Many Soldiers have realized that to win the hearts and minds of the population, you must first understand their religion and be compassionate to their needs.

It is not the normal duty of an infantryman, artilleryman or air defender to hand out humanitarian assistance, but the Soldiers of this task force have adapted well to the many facets of these duties outside their Military Occupational Speciality.

The festivities did not end in Sharana that day. Feeling like old Saint Nicholas during Christmas, we used our up-armored vehicles as sleighs to continue handing out jackets, school supplies, candy and blankets in the vil-



Sgt. Maj. Anthony Marrero, operations sergeant major for 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, hands a plate of food to an Afghan man during "Sharan Day" Jan. 19 at the Pakitka Province governor's compound. The event was held in recognition of the Eid al-Adha holiday.

lages of Satore and Orgune.

You know people are needy when they stand in the snow up to their ankles with no shoes or jackets waiting for a hand out, especially the little girls I encountered in Satore. They cried while holding their feet since they were not protected from the ice and snow.

This country needs our help and I am proud to know that the Soldiers in the Wolfhounds' area of operations have made a difference. We can win

this war by providing assistance through projects, schools or even playing a friendly game of soccer or volleyball.

Our actions in the past year have broken down some of the misconceptions that Americans are anti-Muslim.

I encourage everyone to reflect on our contributions this past year. I am not a Muslim, but I enjoyed this Eid celebration with my friends in Afghanistan.

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Commander

Col. Gary H. Cheek

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Editor

Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

Villagers help build area's first school

By Capt. Juanita Chang

CTF Thunder Public Affairs Officer

QAMCHAI, Afghanistan - Insurmountable terrain and high river waters did not thwart the determined residents here from building a first-rate school for area children.

Thanks to the funding of Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team and the determination of the local residents, Qamchai village celebrated the grand opening of the first school in the region Jan. 17.

"We had to use donkeys to carry each of the bricks up the mountain," said Engineer Hafizullah, responsible for the construction of the project. "When the river rose we even had to construct boats to carry the bricks and cement across."

Both school buildings have eight classrooms capable of holding 20 children each, allowing a total of 320 children to attend school at one time. The plan is to allow boys and girls to attend the school at different times or on different days.

"Take care of this school and don't let anyone destroy it," Hafizullah pleaded to the village residents in attendance.

The local police chief also made a speech beseeching the residents of the valley to protect the school and others who bring education to the region.



Capt. Juanita Chang

Lt. Col. Mark McLaughlin of the Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team and a local elder cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Qamchai school in Kunar Province Jan. 17.

The new principal for the school said local villagers were so determined to bring education to the area that everyone pitched in according to their ability.

This school is not only for religious studies but also for education for this world, the principal said. Religious studies are for the next world, but education is for our life in this world, he said.

This school is the first public facility to

be built in this region and the residents expressed their gratitude to the Coalition forces by presenting all the attending members with gifts of traditional Afghan rugs or clothing.

"The future leaders of Kunar and Afghanistan will come from these classrooms," said Capt. John Wilt, the team leader for Civil Affairs Team-A from the Asadabad PRT.

America's Battalion steps up raids in Kunar Province

By Cpl. Rich Mattingly

3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt.

ACHIN, Afghanistan - In what proved to be the most successful seizure of munitions and drugs to date, Company L, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment discovered a large cache of rocket-propelled grenades and 7.62mm ammunition, five kilos of opium and nearly 2,000 pounds of hashish in this village in Kunar Province last week.

Operating with information from a local source concerning a possible weapons cache, 1st platoon, Lima Co. swept into Achin in coordination with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. After establishing a cordon with the Afghan forces, Lima Co. sent in its Marines to do a detailed search of the houses where they suspected the weapons were hidden.

"We entered the compound



Cpl. Rich Mattingly

Lance Cpl. Justin Raack, a mortarman from Co. L, 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt., shimmying down a tunnel to look for a weapons cache recently in Kunar Province.

of the third building and saw several Afghan women gathered in the corner, standing next to a large pile of burlap sacks," said 1st Lt. Michael Berentson,

Lima executive officer. "When we checked one bag, we discovered it was full of hashish," he continued. "It didn't take long to realize that all of the bags

were full of hashish. We searched the house from there and found more, smaller bags of hash hidden all over the place. All together, we estimate that the bags equaled a little over 1,800 pounds in weight."

The Marines' find was further increased after Lance Cpl. Justin Raack, one of Lima Company's attached 81mm mortar men, shimmied down a 25-foot tunnel to find the target they were originally looking for, a large cache of RPGs and 7.62mm rounds.

Nearly every week, Lima Company's work has taken significant amounts of arms and ammunition out of the hands of the enemy. Insurgents are well known to hide weapons and explosives in cache sights to be used against Coalition and Afghan government forces at a later date.

After the successful seizure,

See "Raids" page 7

Asadabad PRT donates goats to refugee camp



Courtesy photo

Staff Sgt. Erich F. Muehleisen, Civil Affairs Team B NCOIC for the Asadabad PRT, helps a villager from Chawkay, Afghanistan, offload one of 50 goats the PRT donated to village Jan. 19 for its Eid Al-Adha celebration.

Staff Sgt. Erich F. Muehleisen
Asadabad PRT

CHAWKAY, Afghanistan - Members of the Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team donated 50 goats to Chawkay Repatriated Afghan Camp in Kunar Province Jan. 19.

The goats were presented to the camp residents for the camp's celebration of the Islamic religious holiday, Eid Al Adha.

The goat distribution will provide much-needed food for the residents during the holiday since many of the residents do not have jobs and can't afford to buy meat.

During discussions with village elders, an elder named Turjan declared, "The true enemies of Afghanistan are the people who interfere with progress. Everyone knows the Coalition is here to bring security and progress to Afghanistan."

An additional 20 goats were purchased for distribution to mosques in Asadabad.

The goats were purchased from the Gudjer Tribes living in the mountains surrounding the Asadabad area.

During the years of conflict in

Afghanistan before the Coalition arrived in 2001, many Afghans migrated to other countries to avoid war and bloodshed. A majority of the refugees moved just across the border into Pakistan.

With the restructuring and stabilization of the New Afghan Government, many of these refugees have begun to return to their homeland in search of their cultural roots. Kunar Province is just a few miles from the Pakistan border and an important center of returnee activity.

Chawkay, located about 30 kilometers south of the Provincial Center of Asadabad in Kunar Province, is home to one of these camps.

The population of the camp consists of 211 families, totaling more than 1,500 residents.

The camp is managed by Mohammed Hanif who estimates the camp size will increase 10-15 families each month.

"The numbers of people (families) will grow very quickly when the spring comes," Mohammed said.

With the expected growth, the PRT plans to provide a number services to the camp in the future.

Eid from page 1

residents and 30 shura representatives attended the event.

Working through the deputy governor, General Rahim, each participant received a blanket and winter jacket. Additionally, 18 sheep were provided to the shura representatives for distribution to the needier residents of the Sharan area.

In Paktia Province, members of the Gardez PRT distributed humanitarian assistance items to several villages as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development clinic in Sayed Karam and the Gardez orphanage. Items included blankets, shoes, winter clothing and cooking oil.

In Ghazni Province members of the Ghazni PRT and 3rd Bn., 116th Infantry Rgt. attended an Eid celebration Jan. 21 at the home of Haji Fazell, the district governor of Dih Yak district.

Lt. Col. Blake Ortner, commander of 3-116 Inf., brought two sheep to the event.

Other members of the Ghazni PRT celebrated Eid with Aziza Malikzada, the director of the Ghazni orphanage. The PRT mem-

bers brought boxes of winter clothing sent from the United States as a gift to the children.

In Khost Province Jan. 22, the commander of Regional Command East, Col. Gary Cheek, and several members of his staff attended a lunch

hosted by Governor Merajudin Patan and Gen. Nawab, the deputy commander of the 25th Division of Afghan Militia Forces.

The commander of the Khost PRT and a coalition Special Forces commander also attended the lunch.

Lt. Col. Christopher Carney, CTF Thunder director of civil-military operations, said the holiday was an opportunity for Coalition members to show that we understand and appreciate their beliefs.

"It shows support and respect for Islam and their culture," he said.

Carney said this holiday reminded him of his first rotation in Afghanistan, which included Christmas. He said several locals who he worked with made the effort to find Christmas cards to give to him.

"They took the time and made the effort to show support for our holidays, and this was a way for us to do the same," Carney said.



courtesy photo

An Afghan woman leads a goat that she received from the Parwan PRT for the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

Attack proves beneficial for Marines

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Editor

ZAMBAR, Afghanistan - A single gunshot shattered the early morning quiet Jan. 12.

A few moments of silence followed, as heads spun to find out where the shot came from.

Then, a flurry of machine gun fire erupted from a nearby hill.

Within a matter of seconds, Marines from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment were returning fire on their attackers.

For about 20 minutes, the Marines and their unknown attackers exchanged fire just outside a village in northern Khost Province. In the pitch black of the early morning, the Marines had only the muzzle flashes of the attackers to fire at.

During the exchange, the attackers fired several rocket-propelled grenades, including one that hit about 10 feet from a Humvee that just moments before had three Marines sleeping on the ground around it.

The attackers fled before Cobra helicopters arrived on scene, leaving one Marine with a gunshot wound to his arm. He was evacuated back to Forward Operating Base Salerno, where he was treated and released to his unit later in the day.

Lance Cpl. Ryan Lane believed there were between 15 and 20 attackers. An infantryman in Weapons Company, 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt., Ryan was manning a watch point on the hilltop closest to where the attack came from.

"I tried to count how many flashes there were, but there was so many I couldn't keep track of them," Lane said. "One would pop up, then another one, then a whole line



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

A Marine from HQ and Service Co., 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt. inspects weapons found during a cordon and search of a house Jan. 12 near Zambar, Afghanistan.

would just light up. After that, my whole squad just started unloading on them."

The Marines had arrived at the location just before sunset the evening before. It was the first night of a scheduled four-day, three-night mission.

Lane, who turned 21 years old on Jan. 12, said he was asleep when at about 3 a.m. his squad leader jumped on top of him. He awoke and heard rounds impacting around where he was sleeping.

At one point during the firefight, two of the attackers moved closer to the Marines' position and each fired an RPG, Lane said. One hit the hill below the Marines' position, sending debris flying, and the other RPG whizzed over their heads.

"That's when we popped [a flare], and we could see everyone up there," Lane said. "You could see every person that was up on top of that hill. At one point they were so close that we could see their faces."

Almost as soon as the sun started to come up, locals from the village started approaching the Marines with information. The Marines spent the majority of the next three days acting on

this information in an effort to find the attackers.

While conducting searches throughout the village, they found several weapons.

Additionally, the Marines were able to accomplish all of the mission's original goals, said Capt. K.C. Barr, commander of Weapons Co. That included setting up a mullah conference, evaluating a well construction project in the village, conducting patrols with the Afghan National Police, and following up on some old intelligence leads.

Barr said because of the attack, he could have searched any home he wanted to in the village. Instead, he chose to talk it out with village elders and allow them time to solve the problem.

During his dealings with locals following the attack, Barr, a native of Upper Darby, Pa., said he was able to talk from a more emotional level.

"I think we shifted [the villagers'] trust in our direction," Barr said.

On the last day of the mission, villagers handed the Marines several weapons, including RPG launchers Barr believes were used in the attack.

In addition, Barr said the experience was beneficial because it served as a wake-up call for the Marines, who arrived in Afghanistan three months ago.

"Undoubtedly, this flipped on a whole bunch of light bulbs, and reminded Marines they can never let their guard down in this environment," he said.

The Marines returned to Forward Operating Base Salerno the night of Jan. 14 without further incident.



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

Navy HM2 Neville Parris, a hospital corpsman from Weapons Co., 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt., searches an Afghan man at a vehicle check point Jan. 13 near Zambar, Afghanistan.

CTF Thunder draws from many places to form command

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - As the Army continues to transform to deal with emerging threats, Soldiers are finding themselves working alongside people they normally don't work with and doing jobs they normally don't do.

This is especially true for the 25th Infantry Division (Light) Division Artillery.

Originally left out of the division's deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan in late 2003, the members of DIVARTY headquarters eventually deployed to Afghanistan in June 2004 to fulfill a unique mission. The headquarters would serve as the headquarters of Regional Command East, which covers 16 provinces in the east of the country.

Col. Gary H. Cheek, the DIVARTY commander and a career field artillery officer, found himself in a new role. As the commander of RC East - dubbed Combined Task Force Thunder - Cheek is the commander of three infantry battalions, eight Provincial Reconstruction Teams and a variety of other units.

There is but one field artillery unit - Battery F, 7th Field Artillery Regiment, but it falls under the control of one of the infantry battalions.

The infantry battalions also add to the diversity of the command. One is an active Army battalion, one is a Marine battalion and the other is an Army National Guard battalion.

"Three distinct organizations that are quite different in their lineage, their upbringing, their training levels, their experiences, as well as their equipment and interoperability," Cheek said.

Despite his artillery background, Cheek said working with the infantry and the PRTs



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen

Col. Gary H. Cheek, commander of CTF Thunder (center), and Command Sgt. Maj. Edmund Murrell, CTF Thunder command sergeant major (right), walk with Capt. John Sego, commander of Co. B, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt., during a foot patrol Nov. 5, 2004, in Sehla, Afghanistan.

hasn't been as difficult as it might seem to be.

"We're all products of our experiences, and I've grown up in the Army working with infantry and armor units my whole career," he said.

Cheek has not had to go it alone, though. To help integrate infantry into the command, two infantry officers were assigned to the headquarters. One serves as the deputy commander and the other serves as the operations officer.

Lt. Col. Bobby Mundell, CTF Thunder's deputy commander, said although CTF Thunder looks a lot different from the outside, the inside similar to any other brigade headquarters.

"It's typical of the type organization we probably need to prepare ourselves to be a part of in the future, just because of the spectrum of operations we're executing right now in Iraq and here in Afghanistan," he said.

Mundell, who came to CTF Thunder from the joint U.S. Southern Command, said he has learned a lot during his

time here. Just serving with the artillerymen in the headquarters, he said, has particularly helped him learn more about the integration of artillery.

"I think the biggest thing I've had to adjust to is the ambiguity of the environment," Mundell said. "It's a non-traditional mission that we're in, although it's becoming more traditional with the level of warfare our Army is faced with today."

Both Cheek and Mundell said working with the PRTs has been challenging, since neither has worked with a similar organization before. However, with 11 major subordinate units and a plethora of smaller units, Cheek said he doesn't get involved in the nuts and bolts of the units' operations.

"We don't really get into supervising day-to-day operations on a low level," he said. "We do a lot of our operations by providing guidance and providing resources."

With so many units, Cheek said CTF Thunder functions more like a division headquarter-

ters than a brigade headquarters.

For Mundell, the fun of transformation will not end when this deployment is over. When he returns to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, he will assume command of 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment. That battalion is part of the division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, which will convert into a Stryker Brigade when it returns to Hawaii from its current assignment in Iraq.

"The transformation our Army is going through, I'm experiencing first hand, with the conversion of the DIVARTY headquarters into a maneuver brigade, and then subsequently, transitioning over from a light infantry battalion into a Stryker battalion," Mundell said.

Over the next few years, as the 2nd BCT transforms into a Stryker Brigade and the division's 3rd BCT transforms into a Unit of Action, the Soldiers of DIVARTY will have a leg up, since they will already know what it's like to work in a new type of organization.

3-116 Inf. troops make contact in Wardak

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GHAZNI, Afghanistan - "Contact, Contact, Contact," came the words through the radio.

They were words Soldiers in the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment Tactical Operations Center didn't want to hear.

It was the words of fellow Soldiers in unknown trouble and under fire.

Much like boxing matches of old, Soldiers in the TOC huddled around the radio listening intently for each word, trying to establish exactly what was happening. Even with the ringside seats, the men in the TOC were nearly helpless to assist directly but a well-choreographed ballet of action began to play out.

"You can't see what's going on so you have to listen really hard to hear the full story," said Capt. Patrick Combs, who was working in the TOC as the officer responsible for supervising and coordinating the operations being conducted that day. "Your whole attention is centered on that radio. You know their lives are in the balance and all you want to do is help them out as much as you can."

The mission started as all missions do with briefings and last minute checks. That morning's mission was a routine cache pickup, according to Spc. James Utz, a nine-year National Guard Soldier and member of Company B, 3-116 Inf.

"Initially, it was not even going to be a twenty-four hour mission," said Utz. "We were going to go out and take care of this weapons cache, take care of a village assessment and then whatever other kind of mission we had and then come right on back."

The scene was the same one the battalion has experienced hundreds of times since their deployment. The village elders gathered around and talked with the Soldiers about the villagers' needs and concerns. It was a typical day in another

"There are a lot of little things you don't think about at home that you don't have here. Then when they shoot at you, you realize they are trying to take that away from you."

- Spc. Bobby Pendleton,
3rd Bn., 116th Inf. Rgt.

Afghan village.

Following lunch and tea, the Soldiers departed, ready to conclude the cache mission and come home to the FOB.

As the old saying around the military goes, 'no plan survives first contact.'

"We had left the first village and were just through another about one mile away when [the turret gunner] said 'I think I heard a gunshot.' I thought I heard one too, but I wasn't sure because it sounded like a single shot and it could have been anything," said Spc. Bobby Pendleton, a seven-year veteran from Shenandoah, Va. "Then all of a sudden we heard 'bap bap bap' in a burst and I knew we were getting shot at."

Initially the shooting was coming from the convoy's three o'clock position and consisted of AK-47 small arms firing. As the convoy screeched to a halt, the men began returning fire, concentrating on two positions on the overlooking mountain range.

One attacker was at the peak of the mountain and another at the midway point. The rock walls all around the unit were steep and nearly impassable. It was a good ambush position and the men were forced to return fire in the middle of it.

The convoy stopped and everyone off loaded and took up defensive firing positions near their vehicles. Each team communicated and set up fields of fire as they were trained. Soon the firing died down as the enemy ceased firing.

"All that shooting was all from the three o'clock, and next thing you know we got hit from the nine o'clock," said Spc. Charles McClellan, a 20-year-old assistant restaurant manager from New Market, Va. "The three o'clock had pretty much died down and then the nine o'clock started up."

For nearly 25 minutes, the firefight raged on with shots coming from both directions.

"We were sitting between two very high pieces of ground and it was the perfect spot to ambush us from," said Pendleton. "We had two feet of snow just off the main road and we had nowhere else to go."

Then as suddenly as it started, it stopped and the Americans heard the words they had been waiting for. Help was on the way.

"It really makes you feel good because as a National Guard Soldier, when we train it's just us and what we got on our backs," said Isabelle. "We don't have helicopters to support us and stuff like that."

With the firing having come to a halt and the excitement beginning to subside, the men began the task of coming to grips with what had just happened.

"You don't have time to think about the stuff that can go wrong. You only got time to think about what the hell I can do right to keep alive," said Pendleton.

No one was injured in the ambush, so for the men of the company it was a good day and a day that changed many of their lives.

"It was one of my biggest fears about coming over here," said Utz. "I sell toilets at home so how dangerous is that? The worst I have to worry about is someone's house flooding. So to me, getting shot at was not my idea of fun."

"I took so much for granted back home," said Pendleton. "There are a lot of little things you don't think about at home and that you don't have here. Then when they shoot at you, you realize they are trying to take that away from you because that's what they are really trying to do."

Raids

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everyone involved was thrilled with the success of the raid, which again hi-lighted America's Battalion's efforts to work closely with Afghan forces when conducting operations.

"The teamwork between U.S. Marines, Afghan Soldiers and the Afghan National Police is

what made this operation such a success," said Staff Sgt. Vinny Russo, a Lima Co. platoon sergeant. "Having the ANA and ANP at the forefront of these operations lets the Afghan citizens know that their government is serious about drug eradication and eliminating support for terrorists."

Drug eradication has, in fact, become a significant goal

for the Afghan government. President Hamid Karzai pledged to eliminate what has been a large source of income for terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan in his inaugural speech last month in Kabul. The current Coalition policy is that narcotics discovered in the course of conducting security and stability operations are seized and destroyed by Afghan

forces.

"The Afghan people are beginning to realize that poppy cultivation and opium production is destroying innocent lives in Afghanistan and around the world," said 2nd Lt. Erik Muniz, 1st platoon commander.

Afghan forces and 3/3 will continue to conduct joint security and support operations throughout Afghanistan.

Coalition donates truck to Mondo Zai police

By Capt. Juanita Chang

CTF Thunder Public Affairs Officer

MONDO ZAI, Afghanistan - Coalition forces donated a new truck to the police chief here Jan. 19 to replace the one that was destroyed by an improvised explosive device a month earlier.

On Dec. 16, terrorists fired two rocket propelled grenades at the Mondo Zai Police Station and the Mondo Zai School.

The RPGs were fired at the police station through the school while children were present. The school was badly damaged, but nobody was injured from the RPG attack.

Immediately after the RPGs were fired, six Afghan policemen departed the compound to search for the terrorists.

Shortly after leaving the compound, their vehicle was hit by an IED killing four of the policemen and injuring the remaining two, including the Mondo Zai Police Chief, Nasarullah.

Coalition forces recently replaced the destroyed vehicle and will continue to support the local police and provide them the equipment and training they need to combat terrorism.

"I am not scared," said recovering police chief Nasarullah, whose leg was still in a cast, but was present at the police station when coalition forces presented the vehicle.

"Because I saw the explosion it has



Capt. K.C. Barr

An IED destroyed this truck belonging to the Mondo Zai district police Dec. 16. Coalition forces donated a new truck to the police chief Jan. 19 to replace this one.

been a hard time for me. I am not acting police chief any longer. I want to find these bad guys," Nasarullah said.

"Although we do not have armored trucks like (Coalition forces), we still want to patrol like we have armored

trucks and tanks so we can find bad guys," said Gulab Shah, the acting Police Chief of Mondo Zai.

"I swear that as long as I am alive I will continue to soldier and to serve my country," Nasarullah said.



Pfc. Kevin Nummerdoor

Ghazni PRT donates uniforms to local police officers

Afghan National Police stand in formation after receiving new uniforms from the Ghazni PRT Jan. 19. The PRT presented 533 sets of winter coats, hats, gloves and scarves to the police at the main police station in Ghazni. "I see these guys standing out there doing their jobs in weather like this every day," said Sgt. James Adkins, an MP from the 101st Airborne Division who is assigned to the PRT's police training team. "This should make their lives a little better."



Photos by Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Above - Spc. Luke Bauer, a medic from HHB, CTF Thunder, listens to an Afghan child's heartbeat during a Cooperative Medical Assistance mission Jan. 18 in Sadak, Afghanistan.



Right - Spc. Scott Brennan, a medic with the 725th Main Support Battalion, examines an Afghan boy's throat.

Medics provide aid to Afghan village

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
 Editor

SADAK, Afghanistan - Medics from the Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team and Forward Operating Base Salerno traveled to this village in eastern Khost Province Jan. 18 to provide much-needed medical aid.

After convoying to the village, the medics set up two tents, one for men and one for women, and went to work.

A total of 412 patients were treated throughout the day - 152 men, 118 women, and 142 children.

Most of the complaints were headaches, sore throats and symptoms of the common cold. Some villagers also complained of back and joint aches.

Many of these patients were diagnosed, given medicine and directions for use by an interpreter and then sent on their way in a matter of minutes.

Sgt. Shasta Benavente, a medic from the 725th Main Support Battalion who is deployed to Forward Operating Base Salerno, said she wanted to participate in the mission because males aren't traditionally permitted to treat female patients, so females were not getting sufficient medical attention.

"We had a good turnout," Benavente said. "They weren't frightened to talk to us, we treated them the best that we could, and I thought they were grateful."

Benavente, a native of Vallejo, Calif., said missions

like this should definitely continue, because at the very least, they allow the medics to practice their skills.

"If we don't receive patients here in the hospital, it's a good thing because none of our Soldiers are injured, so we go out and help the locals as much as we can," she said.

Spc. Scott Brennan, also a medic with the 725th MSB at FOB Salerno, said he was grateful to be able to get some hands-on experience. It was his first time taking part in a mission outside the wire since arriving in Afghanistan four months ago.

"I have been looking forward to something like this for a while now," he said. "Just seeing all the different things the people had and how the people

live gives me a better understanding of how to treat them."

The Concord, N.H., native said missions like this let the local populace to see that the Coalition is here to help.

"It says, 'Hey, we're good people. We're not here to harm you,'" Brennan said.

The Khost PRT conducts at least one CMA each month.

There are three criteria used to determine what villages the PRT chooses for these Cooperative Medical Assistance missions, said Maj. Carl Hollister, commander of the Khost PRT. The villages have to be far away from a hospital, there has to be a need for medical care and there has to be some sort of tactical benefit to holding a mission there.

Great Aloha Run comes to Afghanistan

By Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen
Editor

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan - Service members deployed to Afghanistan from Hawaii will have an opportunity to take part in one of the Aloha State's most popular traditions Jan. 30.

The Great Aloha Run will be held at four bases throughout Afghanistan. Service members at Bagram Airfield, Kandahar Airfield, Forward Operating Base Salerno and Forward Operating Base Salerno Orgune-E will have the opportunity to participate in the event.

Held annually on Presidents Day, the Great Aloha Run is an 8.15-mile "fun run" from Aloha Tower Marketplace in downtown Honolulu to Aloha Stadium near Pearl Harbor.

Sgt. Maj. Eugene Brewer, operations sergeant major for Combined Task Force Thunder and event organizer at FOB Salerno, said 10 units will participate here for a total of about 300 runners.

The run in Afghanistan will be 10 k instead of the traditional 8.15 miles, and all units will run in formation.

There is no entrance fee, but CTF Thunder is collecting donations for an orphanage in nearby Khost. After the first day of donations Jan. 26, which included a two-hour drive outside the dining facility, \$634 was collected, Brewer said.

Even though it wasn't originally included in the GAR plans, FOB Orgun-E in Paktika Province will conduct a run as well. About 150 runners from 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment will be running there.

"Because the Wolfhounds are at Orgun-E and they have several companies that are in refitting right now, I felt it was an opportune time for them to take

told the Honolulu Advertiser. "They (the military) wanted to do it in Afghanistan to keep the feeling of being close to Hawaii."

More than 2,000 race T-shirts were donated to the military and shipped to Afghanistan for troops who participate.

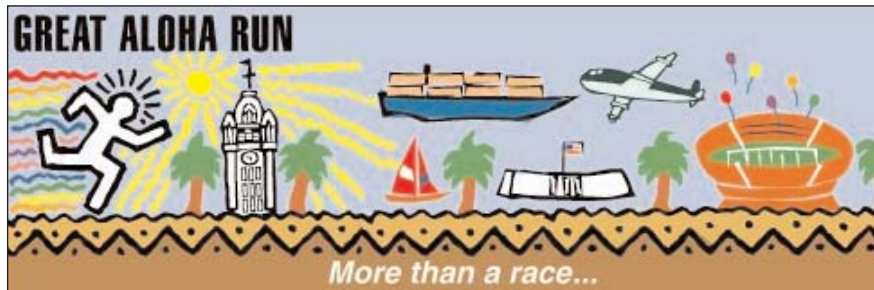
Since 1985, the Great Aloha Run has raised more than \$6.2 million for more than 100 charitable organizations, community groups and elderly care in

Hawaii. The race annually attracts more than 20,000 participants, including island residents and visitors.

Last year, about 6,000 Hawaii-based Soldiers participated in the event and raised more than \$72,000 for charities.

Brewer said having this run in Afghanistan is designed to strengthen the military's ties with its neighbors in Hawaii and spread the Aloha spirit to its neighbors in Afghanistan.

"We want to show the people of Hawaii that we don't forget where we come from, and we want to show the Afghan people our Aloha spirit," he said.



advantage of this inspirational and morale-building run we Hawaii-based Soldiers so look forward to when we're on Oahu," Brewer said.

There are currently about 5,500 Soldiers and Marines from Oahu in Afghanistan - about 4,500 Soldiers from Schofield Barracks and about 1,000 Marines from Kaneohe Bay.

According to Carole Kai, organizer of the Great Aloha Run, the military traditionally enters more than 5,000 people in the event, with many of the units running the race in formation. The military portion of the run is called the "Sounds of Freedom," alluding to the cadences the units sing along the way.

"For the troops, it means a lot," Kai

Donations Being Accepted

Anyone interested in making a charitable donation should bring money to the race at their location, where there will be a collection taking place at the start point.



Haka challenges visitors at Bamian

Members of the Bamian Provincial Reconstruction Team from the New Zealand Defence Force perform a Haka for visitors to the PRT compound. The Haka is a traditional Maori challenge, and is now used as part of a Wero (welcome ceremony) for important visitors and newcomers to determine if they are "friend or foe."

courtesy photo

America's Battalion welcomes 23rd Kandak

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

JALALABAD, Afghanistan - Marines of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment gained a new partner in Afghanistan as the 23rd Kandak, or battalion, of the Afghan National Army assumed authority in Jalalabad.

The Kandak, whose Soldiers recently graduated from the Kabul Military Training Academy, were welcomed to the fight by America's Battalion at a transfer of authority ceremony held recently.

"The Afghan National Army plays a critical role in protecting and promoting the Afghan democracy," said Lt. Col. Norm Cooling, commander of 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines. "The Marines of America's Battalion will continue to work closely with Afghan forces to improve their training as well as work side by side with the ANA to provide security for the Afghan people."

The Kandaks have been supporting the Marine mission in Afghanistan with the help of the Army's Embedded Training Teams who liaison between the Marines and Afghan forces.

"We're a 14-man team who coach, mentor and train the leadership of a Kandak," said Army Maj. Dave Vesper, deputy team chief, 23rd Kandak ETT. "In a garrison environment we direct formal classes, and during missions we act more as combat advisors as well as go-betweens for the ANA and Coalition forces."

Marines have had many positive experiences working with dedicated Afghan forces. The 3/3 Kandak, which the 23rd replaced, was looked upon highly by the Marines who operated side-by-side with its Soldiers.

"The Kandak is an outstanding unit and it has been an honor to work with them,"



Lt. Col. Norm Cooling, commander of 3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Rgt., congratulates and welcomes Col. Nasim, commander of the 23rd Kandak, at the recent Transfer of Authority ceremony between the two units.

explained 1st Lt. John-Paul Sienicki, Lima platoon commander. "They have been vital in helping us develop a positive relationship with the Afghan people."

The 3/3 Kandak is a designated armor unit, but were deployed to Jalalabad as an infantry unit for the Presidential election. As they return to Pol-E-Charki, near Kabul, they will undergo armor refresher training then return to being part of the quick reaction force for the nation, ready to be deployed

as an armor unit as needed.

Made up of a diverse mix of ethnicities and tribes from around the country, the Kandaks are widely viewed by Afghans as a source of national pride. In this diverse environment where ethnic tensions still divide parts of the country, the Kandaks are a unifying and stabilizing force for the Afghan people, said Vesper.

"The Kandaks are the future of Afghanistan," he said. "For many people they are the most visible manifes-

tation of the central government. Because of their multi-ethnic composition, they're seen as fair brokers of the peace."

Vesper related that when the ANA first began to operate around Afghanistan, they were not trusted by the Afghan Militia Forces who were the remnants of the warlords' militias who had fought the Taliban regime.

"To the militia guys, the ANA were just another group of guys with AKs," explained Vesper. "Within two months, the ANA had the AMF turning in their weapons and explosives voluntarily. The ANA has built that trust."

The ANA also provides an Afghan face to the government and to the new peace that is being built here. For the Marines, working with the Kandak further demonstrates to the people of Afghanistan that their mission is for the greater good of the country.

"People see their own government helping them, not just other nations, and that's very important to the development of Afghan self-government," said Vesper.

"The Kandak Soldiers clearly want to serve their nation," added Cooling. "That spirit of service and sacrifice is an indispensable and fundamental basis for any democracy."

"The ANA Soldiers are patriotic," added Sgt. 1st Class Steve Toth, ETT company trainer. "They appreciate the sacrifice of the Marines and Soldiers because it's something they understand. They desire a peaceful and secure Afghanistan just as we do."

The transfer of authority ceremony was marked with speeches by Coalition and Afghan leaders and a traditional Afghan dinner. The outgoing Kandak was praised for its hard work and support of the Marines and Soldiers in Jalalabad.

Afghan citizens, Army help security

By **Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample**
American Forces Press Service

KABUL, Afghanistan - Better cooperation by Afghan citizens and a more developed Afghan National Army are reasons cited for improved security in Afghanistan, a military spokesman said Jan. 24.

"Coalition forces continue to be encouraged by continuous signs that security conditions continue to improve throughout Afghanistan," noted Army Maj. Mark McCann during a press conference.

He said in the past two weeks local Afghan citizens turned in a significant number of weapons caches to coalition forces. Of 32 weapons caches discovered during that time period, local Afghan citizens and Afghan security forces turned in 11.

"We commend those Afghan citizens who continue to help themselves by assisting Coalition forces make Afghanistan a more secure place," McCann said, "and we hope others will follow their example of courage."

Two caches of note were found in Khost and Ghazni provinces. The find in Khost contained 135 107 mm rockets, 150-200 mortar rounds, fuses and several recoilless rifle rounds. The Ghazni cache contained 614 cases of 14.5 mm

"We commend those Afghan citizens who continue to help themselves by assisting Coalition forces make Afghanistan a more secure place."

- Maj. Mark McCann,
*Combined Forces Command -
Afghanistan*

rounds, 54 recoilless rifle rounds, 99 82 mm mortar rounds, and 28 107 mm rockets.

"Many of the munitions discovered were serviceable and some will be turned over to the Afghan National Army, while others were destroyed or will be destroyed at a later date," McCann said.

He also noted steps in the continued development of the Afghan National Army that have contributed to the country's improved security situation.

Some 60 ANA officers will graduate from the Command and General Staff College Jan. 25, he McCann pointed out.

"The CGSC is a critical part of the military education of the ANA's officer

corps," he explained, "ensuring that they are well-trained, professional and capable of leading the soldiers who are the backbone of Afghanistan's national army."

In addition, McCann reported that the Afghan government will open another National Army Volunteer Center Jan. 26 in the Farah province. He also said that the Afghan government is on schedule to open at least one army volunteer center in each of the country's 34 provinces, including two in Kabul.

The volunteer centers will help establish a "government presence" throughout Afghanistan's provinces and provide a "good first impression" for citizens of remote regions, he noted.

"These volunteer centers reassure local citizens that the government is committed to security and peace for all of Afghanistan," McCann said.

In other news, a 10-member team from the Afghan Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization airlifted thousands of doses of vaccine Jan. 23 to help combat an outbreak of whooping cough in the Day Kundi province village of Saretageb.

McCann said the outbreak claimed the lives of 20-25 children in that village. The team carried enough antibiotics for 2,000 people and vaccinations for 2,500 people.

Reenlistment on 'Radar Hill'

Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly, commander of Army Reserve Command (right), reenlists Staff Sgt. Darryn Dunn, 556th Personnel Support Battalion, and Sgt. Joshua Nelson, 367th Engineer Battalion, atop "Radar Hill" at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, Jan. 23.



Staff Sgt. Bradley Rhen