

January 2005

ISAF MIRROR



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New President Sworn In

By Capt Mike Nicholson

President Hamid Karzai was officially sworn in as Afghanistan's first popularly elected President on December 7th. The inauguration was attended by over 150 dignitaries from numerous countries, as well as Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO Secretary General, and General James Jones, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR).

"We have now left a hard and dark past behind us and today we are opening a new chapter in our history," said Karzai during his speech. He also paid tribute to the Afghan people, saying the October elections were a defeat for extremists. The ceremony was especially moving to those in attendance, and was seen all around the world on television via satellite.

ISAF and Coalition forces worked together with Afghan authorities to provide security for the historic Presidential elections as well as provide security for the inauguration (see p.3).

Cover Photo: President Hamid Karzai and Mohamed Zahir Shah, the Father of the Nation, make their way towards the ceremony hall. Photo by OR-4 Jean Pierre Denil.



Photos by OR-4 Jean Pierre Denil

Newly sworn in President Karzai addresses the nation.



Photos by OR-4 Jean Pierre Denil

Gen James Jones, SACEUR, and Gen Jean-Louis Py, COM ISAF, enter the ceremony hall.



Photos by OR-4 Achim Eisele



COM ISAF's Holiday Message

In this Christmas time, I would like to take a few moments to share, with ISAF personnel and families at home, some thoughts about our mission here. It is fitting at this time, that we reflect on the role we are tasked to play in Afghanistan. We are in a privileged position to be here at this time, with the opportunity to make a difference to the lives of millions of people who have known such hardship for so long.

I have been impressed by the dedication, patience and skill shown by ISAF personnel in what, at times, have been the most challenging circumstances. You only have to look at the last few months - a successful election, a widely celebrated Presidential Inauguration, and a country which now looks forward to the Hajj season and parliamentary elections - and you realise that ISAF's presence here is helping to create a climate of normality where people can start to enjoy the things so many of us take for granted.

To ISAF personnel I would like to say that your

efforts are making a difference. You are setting the conditions for success in a country which is demonstrating its determination to embrace a new future. I know how grateful are the people of Afghanistan and the International community for your commitment.

To your families at home I wish also to say a few words. I want to thank you for the sacrifices you are making each day, and the support you are giving to your serving loved ones. I know how difficult prolonged periods of separation can be for families, but I hope you will take some comfort in knowing that you too are playing an important part in restoring peace to this once troubled land. Your forbearance is recognised and appreciated by everyone here.

Finally, wherever you are on Christmas Day, may I wish you all peace and happiness, a successful conclusion to your tours of duty and finally, joy on being safely reunited with your loved ones.

Presidential Inauguration Security

By Capt Christian Chramer

When the first democratically elected president of Afghanistan was inaugurated, ISAF personnel and Afghan security partners had an important role to play. The forward command element of Kabul Multi National Brigade was only a few hundred meters from the presidential palace, ready and able to take action if something should happen. The Brigade forward command element was deployed to Kabul Garrison where everything had been arranged to ensure close cooperation with Afghan partners. A Joint Security Coordination Center was set up and ready to act on orders from the Deputy Commander of Operations, Colonel Per Opedal. "If something



happens in Kabul I only have to walk into the building next to the command post," said Colonel Per Opedal, "The Afghan partners will all be represented and they will have access to updated information." The inauguration of President Karzai was an event of great importance. Foreign dignitaries and Afghan leaders gathered at the palace to greet the new president and show their support. It was important for the democratic process, ISAF, Coalition Forces and the Afghan people, that the day went as planned and was successful. Thanks to the great cooperation between all parties, the event occurred safely and without incident.

ISAF Fights Toy Guns

By Capt Christian Chramer

At the end of the holy month of Ramadan, many Afghan kids receive gifts from friends and family. The problem for ISAF soldiers is that the most popular gift is a toy gun, and in the hours of darkness it is hard to distinguish a real one from a toy one. To help overcome this problem, soldiers in Battle Group 3 have started a campaign against the toy guns.

The Norwegian Recce Squadron bring an interpreter with them while on patrols to explain to kids why toy guns can be easily mistaken for a real one. "Our procedure is always to stop," said Captain Stian of the Norwegian Recce Squadron, "and ask if it is alright to replace the toy gun with a different toy such as a colouring book and pencils, a football or other toys." The unit has seen scores of kids that hurry home to exchange their toy guns for a different toy when they see the ISAF patrols.

The patrols also hand out brochures that make it easier to understand the exchange program. The handout has both Pashtu and Dari text, and colourful drawings explaining why it is bad to point toy guns at military personnel. The kids are asked to take the handouts back to their parents so that they can see why ISAF wants the toy guns off the streets.

So far, the soldiers of Battle Group 3 have collected large piles of toy weapons. In the days just after the celebration of Eid, while on a 6 hour patrol, they collected over 50 toy guns. The hope is that in the long term, improving the knowledge of children will result in a safer Afghanistan for all.



Private Kjetil shows off some of the toy guns that have been collected and replaced by other toys.



This colourful handout made by ISAF helps illustrate the program to parents and children.



U.S. Lieutenant Mclon of Battle Group 3 is explaining the dangers of toy guns with the help of an interpreter.

Canadians remove 1500 kg of munitions

Canadian soldiers removed approximately 1500 kg of munitions from an ammunition cache near a patrol route in the Kabul area after a local Afghan requested the Canadian soldiers remove his ammunition. "These types of munitions have been used in the past by terrorists to create improvised explosive devices," said Lt. Col. Chuck Lamarre, acting Commander of Task Force Kabul. "Removing them from the streets of Kabul means a safer environment for the local population and our soldiers."

Engineers from the 11th Field Squadron arrived and found approximately 550 rounds of ammunition. The cache included more than 300 rounds of 82mm mortars, approximately 50 rounds of 120mm mortars, and the rest of various sizes. "It took almost two hours to remove all the munitions," said Warrant Officer Troy Chiasson. The ammunition was scheduled to be destroyed by the end of December.



Canadian soldiers line up some of the munitions that are to be removed.

Spanish squad ships stuff safer in streets



Spanish trucks are unloaded and quickly put to use transporting equipment for ISAF.

The Spanish NSE Transport Squad, composed of 1 NCO, 8 troop members, four heavy trucks (VEMPAR) and four light trucks (PEGASO7217), have been in Kabul for three months. They have logged in over 15,000 Km and have carried over 1,100 metric tons of equipment.

The road conditions can be very chaotic with few traffic lights, narrow streets, wide load vehicles and numerous pedestrians. "We absolutely must be conscious in both driving and security," said Capt Fernando Fernández López.

The drivers have a wide range of experiences in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq, and continue to balance safe driving with the security concerns of the area.

Mission HALO TRUST



French EOD teams spend many hours preparing the ammunition site for its ultimate destruction.



After the flick of a switch and 1/10th of a second, the ammunition in the ground is destroyed.

By Lieutenant Jean Bolling

In the French area of responsibility (AOR), there are two ammunition destruction sites that are used by engineers. The first is *Kheyraabad* and it is located very close to the French AOR. The second site is called *Halo Trust* and is located 20 km away from the capital in the northern part of the Shamali region. Because of the remote location of *Halo Trust*, up to 400 kg of explosives can be destroyed at a time.

Ammunition is collected from the entire French AOR as well as the National Guard depot in PD 15. After enough ammunition is collected to create three destruction pits, the EOD team will transport it all to the destruction site. After about 4 hours of preparation the site is ready, but in 1/10th of a second the ammunition is destroyed.

There is a lot of ammunition destroyed on one day, but one day's work is a mere drop in the ocean when looking at all of ammunition in Afghanistan. After another two days the EOD teams will be back to continue this seemingly endless process.

Take the 4-hr Running Challenge



By Lieutenant Jean Bolling

The French Logistic and Support company sponsored the 2nd 4 hour Run and Walking Challenge. The aim of the challenge is to run or walk as many laps as possible around the 1.2 kilometer track. The first run occurred during the ISAF V rotation, and the challenge was readily accepted by the ISAF VI personnel.

Despite the 4 months that the participants have been here, they seemed to have plenty of energy to complete the challenge. The former record set by ISAF V was 1537 laps, or 1614 kilometers. The 189 individuals who participated this time were able to beat the previous record by completing 2442 laps or 2564 kilometers.

The Narcotics Challenge

By Flt. Lt. Howard Leader

At the UNAMA news conference on Sat 12 Dec, it was revealed that a staggering 60% of the Gross Domestic Product of Afghanistan is derived from the export of opium and its derivative products. Clearly we are not just talking about a few rogue farmers growing a field or two of poppies on the side. In the last twelve months there has been an explosion in poppy cultivation from 80,000 to 130,000 hectares of land given over to the crop, which now accounts for 87% of the world's opium. This activity involves no fewer than 356,000 families, and that is the problem. In a society beset with so many economic problems, you can hardly blame poor farmers for growing the crop that will offer them the highest return, regardless of the suffering it causes to so many communities further afield.

The recent Counter Narcotics Conference in Kabul devoted time and effort to finding ways to end poppy production, without insighting civil unrest or causing undue hardship to agricultural areas toiling for an income. There have been plenty of suggestions, ranging from programmes already underway, such as the distribution of alternative seeds, to plans to introduce rose growing for essential oils. Other initiatives underway on the law enforcement side include new powers of prosecution for judges and a direct campaign to destroy drug stockpiles and refining laboratories and arresting traffickers. Coinciding with the Counter Narcotics Conference was a US pledge to put \$780 million into Afghanistan's fight against drug production, and the

country's new President Hamid Karzai, made a promise in an interview with CNN on Dec 12th when he said, "I promise you, and I like that American people and the rest of the world should know this, that we will fight poppy. We know it hurts us. We know it hurts you. It hurts everybody. So we will fight it".

The Government of Afghanistan is clear that eradicating narcotics is in line with the Islamic religion, in line with the National Constitution and the Law of the Land. In addition, senior Government figures have

described the country's reputation on this issue as an embarrassment. As a result the Government is building a coalition of support in the fight against drugs, the partners include the UK as the Counter Narcotics lead nation, the US Department of Defence, the Drug Enforcement Agency and the US Agency for International



Photo by LtC Rantapelkonen

Delegates at the Counter Drug Conference read through the information being presented.

Development.

The months ahead will be important as the campaign begins, but there is no quick fix to this problem and experts predict that only a long term strategy, patiently implemented will solve the problem. ISAF has a role to play here in information sharing with the key bodies, raising public awareness, assisting in training the ANA and Afghan Police for their roles in this struggle, and focusing on promoting alternative livelihoods for former poppy growers. One thing is certain, everyone in this country has a part to play in supporting the country's efforts to be rid of this scourge and take its place in the world community with pride.



Christmas



in Kabul

New School in Feyzabad: From Start to Finish

Many of the schools on the city of Feyzabad are located in simple tents or out in the open air. Sanitary facilities and school furniture are rarely available to students who attend school. One of the highest priorities of the German Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the city of Feyzabad is to improve the situation of the school systems. While many schools within the range of the city of Kunduz have already been built, the PRT is extending its efforts into the city of Feyzabad, which is located in the northeast region of Badakshan. Each new School in Feyzabad will cost approximately 150,000 Euro and is being funded by the Foreign Office. Responsibility for building the schools has been taken by the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC), a Norwegian Non Governmental Organization.



The foundation stone for the two new High Schools were laid recently in a ceremony attended by LtC Horst Blankenburg, Commander of PRT Feyzabad, and

Michael Hasenau, representative of the Foreign Office. The schools new directors, Mrs. Parigul Sawary and Mr. Abdul Wadud, along with authorities from the province government and the city of Feyzabad, thanked the PRT and the NAC for this step towards a new future for the city. They also thanked the work of the soldiers and civilians of the German Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The school is being developed in the proximity of the German PRT. The building will have 25 classrooms, and will instruct over 1000 students from the Feyzabad area. The opening ceremony of the school occurred on December 16th (see below).

COM attends new school opening ceremony



Photos by OR-4 Jean Pierre Denil

On December 16th, Gen Py visited the opening commemoration ceremony of the new Feyzabad school (see above story). The ceremony was attended by representatives of the NAC and Luxembourg, and was covered by international media.

The project showed how ISAF is extending its reach into the northern, more rural regions of Afghanistan, and making its presence felt by all in the country. The school is near the German PRT in Feyzabad and will be a place where thousands of children can be educated.



Local children watch the ceremony, and have their picture taken with OR-7 Jane Pizzi



Spanish Helicopter Unit SUPPORTS ISAF

By Capt. Gala Gallego

On the 18th of August, 3 members of the Spanish helicopter unit arrived at KAIA in order to prepare for the deployment of their unit. One month later, all 68 members and their 4 Cougar AS 532 helicopters were deployed at KAIA. After some initial test flights, the unit started with environment familiarization flights for all crews. Afghanistan has a challenging environment for helicopters including air threats, dusty landing sites, extreme temperatures, and high altitudes, all of which must be prepared for.

After only 2 days in theater, the unit was ordered to deploy to Mazar-e-Sharif to support the Spanish QRF Bn deployed during the Afghan Presidential election. The helicopter unit flew towards Mazar-e-Sharif on the 30th of September, crossing the Hindu Kush mountain range with all 4 helicopters.

A new helipad had to be made at the

Mazar-e-Sharif airfield as well as cleaning the former ramp and demining its surroundings. The Mazar-e-Sharif area provided some additional unexpected challenges. The weather and dust in the area was worse than in Kabul and there was less resources to accomplish daily tasks.

The Spanish helicopter unit carried out different kinds of missions including escorting convoys, troop transport during elections, and day and night time MEDEVAC missions. After spending 34 days in Mazar-e-Sharif, the helicopter detachment received the order to go back to KAIA operating under OPCON of ISAF in the Kabul AOO for other QRF and MEDEVAC missions. The unit has already flown around 300 hours in Afganistan since it has been here, and is ready for any future missions.



2 Spanish Helicopters fly over the Mazar-e-Sharif area in support of the Spanish QRF Battalion. Photo provided by Capt. Del Pozo

Italian Contingent Improves Local School

By Lieutenant Bruno Vio

The Italian Contingent started the renovation of a school at the end of November. The project, developed by the CIMIC (Civil Military Cooperation) Cell, lasted for about a month and was carried out by Italian Army Engineer Corps personnel.

The *Paktiakot School* is located near Camp Invicta where the Italian Contingent in Kabul is located. About 2,500 students attend the school, with ages ranging from 4 to 15. Currently, the school has only two half-destroyed classrooms and some worn-out tents. An old Soviet bunker is also in the area and has become a haven for animals, waste, and is a source of illness for the students attending class nearby. The conditions do not allow students to attend class during bad weather, which is especially hard during the winter season. In order to make room for all students, classes are organized on three shifts and students cannot attend more than two hours of classes a day.

Colonel Francesco Figliuolo, Italian Contingent Commander, spoke at the school inauguration and said the the project was another tangible sign of the improvements being made for the Afghan people.

The project consists of making a masonry structure with classrooms inside, leveling the terrain, and covering the entire area with gravel. In order to improve the sanitary conditions, a water well and sewage system was built, and the Soviet bunker was removed.



Photo by Msgt Mario Bernardi

Above - An Italian soldier talks with some of the local children. Below - Engineers destroy the old Soviet bunker located near the school.



Photo by Msgt Mario Bernardi

The works were carried out by the 8th Engineer Regiment stationed in Legnago, Verona, a battalion headquarters of the Italian Army Engineers, an operational and logistic support company, and a Greek Army Engineer Company. These units are helping create a bright future for the children living in their vicinity and are creating a new and improved *Paktiakot School*.



Buzkashi!



By Capt Mike Nicholson

'Buzkashi' is a game which is played in Afghanistan and has a long history dating back into Afghan antiquity. The name is derived from hunting of mountain goats by Afghan champions while riding on horseback.



The game is played on a large field with anywhere from 10 to 100 players. Players ride horses, use an already deceased goat as the 'ball', and try to get the 'ball' to the goal line at the opposite end of the field.



Buzkashi horses require special training if its rider is to be successful in the game. Well-trained horses will wait until their rider has a grasp of the 'ball', and automatically take off at a high rate of speed towards the goal line. If a rider falls off, a good horse will stop and wait for the rider to get back on.



A Buzkashi game can last hours or days. Members of ISAF were invited to attend to watch the cultural event take place.



Photos by OR-4 Achim Eisele

ISAF helps Kabul Orphanage

By Flt. Lt. Howard Leader

When Sqn Ldr Jim White arrived in Kabul to begin a tour as the Medical Planning officer, he little expected to be running a charity appeal within days of his arrival. It began when he had occasion to visit a small orphanage in district 13. Here a small but dedicated team of volunteer teachers is caring for 11 children who have no family as a result of the war. In addition they open the orphanage during the daytime as a school for around 80 local poor children. Predictably, they are struggling through lack of funds. There is no heating in the building, there is no official body responsible for feeding these children, many of whom are mal-nourished, and they have precious little in the way of books and pencils with which to teach reading and writing.

Having seen the condition of the orphanage, and been impressed by the commitment of the unpaid staff, Jim White organised the ISAF HQ



Sqn Ldr Jim White gives a 'sweetie' to the children of the orphanage in District 13.

Charity Day on December 12th where he was only hoping to raise \$200 needed to heat the building through the winter, and some extra funds for food and materials. During the event he said, "It's a good way to get people away from their desks for an hour!" Much to his amazement, the ISAF Charity Day raised much more than the \$200 he was originally looking for (see p. 16).

OP ATHENA removes munitions



WO Troy Chiasson and Leading Seaman Paul Weber remove a mortar round during OP ATHENA

By Capt Brian Martin

Canadian Engineers involved in Operation ATHENA removed munitions from a large cache that was turned into members of Task Force Kabul. The Engineers are a part of the Canadian 11th Field Squadron, Combat Engineer Regiment, that provides mobility and protection. Some of their tasks include route and area clearance, mine tracking, explosive ordnance disposal, improvised explosive device disposal, and heavy equipment support.

The mission of Operation ATHENA is to help maintain security in Kabul and its surrounding areas so the Afghan Government and UN agencies can keep rebuilding the country.

LANDING IN A MINEFIELD

By Flt. Lt. Howard Leader

When stepping off the C-17 at Kabul International Airport, the first instruction to troops beginning a tour of duty in Afghanistan is not to stray off the tarmac as the area alongside is an active minefield. Sure enough the little piles of stones painted red and the profusion of litter and barbed wire are a good indication of a hazardous area!



The KAIA area being improved by Slovak EOD.

But it won't remain so. For the past three months a Slovak EOD team has been using a nifty bit of kit they call "Bozena" to clear the mines at the airport. On 14th Dec, ISAF took a media party to see the work in action. The visit began with a close look at the problem literally, the first "stand" was adjacent to the perimeter fence which marks a minefield. This six meter wide strip, 18 kilometers long was laid by the Russians when they ran the place. The Slovaks have been working on this project since their tour began and, to date, have cleared about 6 kilometers.

"This," the Slovak Major told journalists "is the most densely mined area I have ever seen in my career!". He wasn't kidding. When

Bozena's flail whirled into action and slowly inched along a twenty meter stretch of the fence, it initiated no fewer than nineteen explosions. There would have been twenty, but the half carcass of a hapless donkey lying alongside the barbed wire had already accounted for the twentieth. The day before the press visit to the Airport, 15,000 anti-personnel mines were destroyed in Harat province. At a clearance rate of 40 meters a day, Kabul International Airport will be an explosive destination for a while yet, but the work progresses steadily in the battle to clean-up one of the most heavily mined countries in the world.

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Would you like to have something printed in the next edition?

Submissions can be e-mailed to pressoffice@isaf-hq.nato.int. Articles should be in Microsoft Word format and, whenever possible, no longer than 600 words. Photographs should be at least 7 X 4.5 centimeters and 300 dpi. The ISAF Mirror is published monthly and aims to be available by the first Friday of the month.

For more information please call the Editor on HQ ISAF (079 51) ext. 1230. The Editor reserves the right to edit submissions.

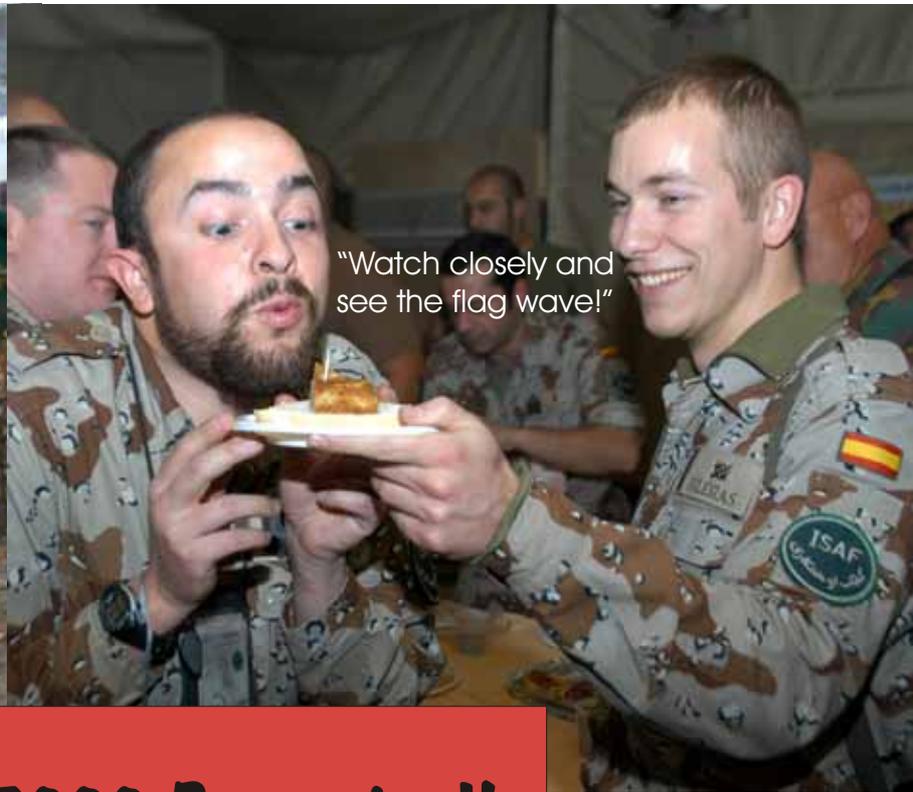
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"They should never have put mirrors in front of these machines"



"Watch closely and see the flag wave!"

Over 7000 Euro raised!

Thank you to all those who participated in Charity Day. Your generosity will be well appreciated by those who need it most



Did anyone not owe June money?! I didn't think so.



The "Terminator" runner



French Kissing!



"I'm drinking all of this, but I'm only going to do it for Charity"