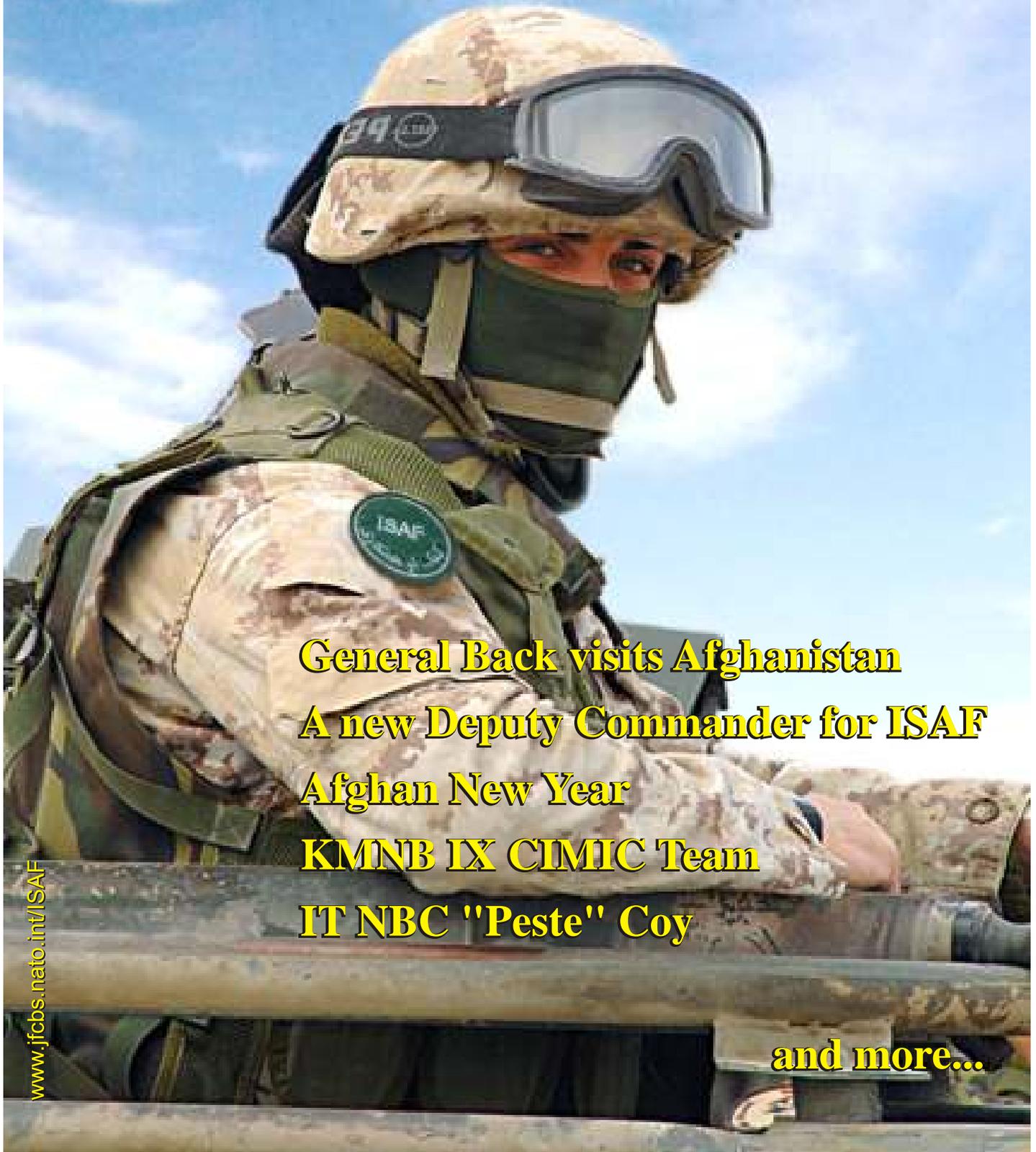




ISAF MIRROR

issue 26 March 2006



General Back visits Afghanistan

A new Deputy Commander for ISAF

Afghan New Year

KMNB IX CIMIC Team

IT NBC "Peste" Coy

and more...



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INSHALLAH

Lt. Riccardo Costa
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The black, red and green flag of Afghanistan, hoisted for the first time in February 2002, flies proudly over the Presidential Palace and many prominent buildings throughout the country now, as Afghanistan looks forward with optimism to a new and stronger future.

In March the country celebrated the New Year and tens of thousands of people worshipped at the major shrines and celebrated with families and friends. The country proudly upholds its traditions, its faith and the dignity of its people despite the efforts of those determined to undermine them.

NATO and the International community continues to support the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to extend law and order out into the provinces and respects the sovereignty of Afghanistan in its decisions regarding good governance and the justice. In the case of Abdul Rahman, the Afghan who converted to Christianity, the International community firmly believes in the right of individuals to choose their religion freely and without threat of punishment or recrimination and trusts that the principles of democracy and human rights will guide the judicial authorities of Afghanistan in all such cases in the future.

As ISAF prepares to extend its operation into the south of the country, the efforts of those who continue to inflict injury and terror on innocent men, women and children, will find their cowardly tactics will not win. ISAF and the international community will not be intimidated or deterred by terrorists. Their cut and run tactics do not constitute a deteriorating security situation, but demonstrate a fragmented, desperate last gasp of an ousted regime. The perceived rise in attacks is due as much to desperate drug runners avoiding the authorities, feuding groups and factional rivalry as it is to Taliban insurgents, but the message is the same, ISAF and the International community will support Afghanistan for as long as it takes – every step of the way.

In the middle of the red stripe is a white insignia of the *mehrab*, the arch in the mosque where the prayer leader stands, and the *mender*, a tiered pulpit surrounded by two splendid sheaves of wheat - a proud flag representing a proud nation and one we are all pleased to support.



ISAF Deputy Commander Change of Command

Lt. Riccardo Costa (ITA Army)
Chief Internal Info
ISAF HQ

A Change of Command ceremony took place at ISAF HQ on last February 14th, as Major General Hans-Werner Ahrens (German Air Force) took over from Major General Jaap Willemse (Royal Netherlands Air Force), becoming the new Deputy Commander of ISAF, in a very simple but significant ceremony.

After six intense months, the figure of DCOM here at ISAF HQ has changed: *“Like my predecessors I will try to play my part as an active member of our international team, driven by a good spirit, with a good sense of humour and trust in each other. May I thank especially General Willemse for his fair and open handover, which will hopefully give me a good start in my new assignment”*, said Major General Ahrens.

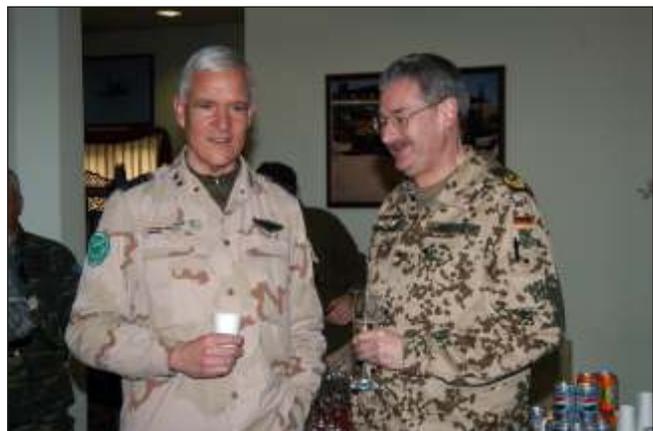
The outgoing DCOM, during his farewell speech, said: *“It has been a great honour for me to act as DCOM ISAF for six months here in Kabul. May I thank you, Commander, and all of you for your cooperation offered to me over this intense period full of important events. I wish General Ahrens every success in his new and exciting assignment”*.

ISAF Commander Lieutenant General Mauro Del Vecchio attended the ceremony: *“I am very pleased to be present today for the Change of Command ceremony between Major General Jaap Willemse and Major General Hans-Werner Ahrens, respectively outgoing and incoming Deputy Commander of ISAF”*, said COMISAF during his speech. *“I wish General Ahrens a very fruitful tour in Afghanistan, and General Willemse a pleasant trip back to his family”*.

The incoming DCOM will be in charge for six months, during which he will perform an active part in many events, like the next expansion of ISAF to the South and the handover between NRDC-IT and ARRC as lead nation in ISAF IX.



A moment of the ceremony



Major General Willemse and Major General Ahrens

AFGHAN NEW YEAR

**Lt Col Isik Saygat (TUR Army)
KMNB Chief PIO**

The Afghan New Year, or *Naw Roz*, on 21st March was an occasion of great celebration, festivities and family gatherings across the country. Tens of thousands of men, women and children flocked to the major shrines in the cities of Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif from before dawn to celebrate the ancient Persian festival.

Messages of congratulations were made to the Afghan people as their country embarked on the beginning of the new year of 1385. NATO Senior Civilian Representative Mr. Hikmet Cetin said: *“The past few years have seen very significant successes, and today Afghanistan is more democratic than it has been for a considerably long time. Forget the past and look to the future - you have a very optimistic future! My hope for the Naw Roz is that Afghans will continue to work for a prosperous Afghanistan with full Afghan ownership, and that Naw Roz will bring more security, more jobs and bread to houses, better health for all Afghans, and schools and teachers for Afghan students.”*

Naw Roz, meaning literally new day, has been celebrated in Afghanistan and Iran for centuries. It is one of nine holy days throughout the year. In Iran it is believed that God created Adam on the day of Naw Roz and that the stars were divided into the signs of the Zodiac on that day. The festival also appears in the ancient Turkish calendar and has been celebrated in Turkey and the many Turkish communities throughout central Asia for centuries too, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The origins of Naw Roz are unknown but it clearly began as an ancient pastoral fertility

festival to mark the end of winter and the beginning of new life and spring. It is also a day of great religious significance particularly for Shiites but is celebrated with equal respect and enjoyment by other religious groups. Naw Roz is rather like the Christian Easter with many symbols indicating spring and renewal. Families give each other gifts of fruit, cakes, coloured eggs and other treats. In Afghanistan families prepare a special dish called Heft-Seen or Heft Miwa. Translated this means seven fruits. The fruits are soaked and the dish is served at midnight on Naw Roz eve. Seven sacred objects beginning in Persian with the letter ‘S’ are also decoratively arranged with great care on the table. Naw Roz celebrations were banned during the Taliban regime.

This year Afghanistan celebrated their New Year in style. Buzkashi games were held around the country, thousands of people gathered at the country’s shrines and families travelled to be with relatives and friends. Afghanistan is truly emerging from the dark era of the past and looking to the future.





General Back Joint Force Commander Brunssum visits Afghanistan

*Cdr. Sue Eagles (UK Royal Navy)
ISAF HQ Chief Media Ops*

As ISAF prepares for Stage III expansion into the South, the Joint Force Commander of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, General Gerhard Back, visited Afghanistan in March for detailed discussions with COM ISAF, General Mauro DEL VECCHIO, the Deputy Minister of Defence, the United Nations Afghanistan Assistance Mission (UNAMA), the Commander of Combined Forces Command Afghanistan, and Brigadier General Fraser, Commanding Officer of the Canadian led PRT in Kandahar.

“Stage III expansion is well on track” said General Back. *‘The discussions were all very positive. We are now concentrating on the fine details, the final force generation mix and numbers, time-lines and the wider issues of counter-narcotics and security in the south.’*

General Back flew from Kabul to Kandahar to visit the Regional Area Coordinator (RAC) South, for discussions on the transfer of authority arrangements and the composition of the Combined Multi National Brigade South which will have its Headquarters in Kandahar. From Kandahar he flew to Herat where he met the PRT Commander

and RAC West staff, and then he flew on by Spanish helicopter to visit the Spanish led PRT at Qale-e-Naw. Qale-e-Naw is one of the smaller PRTs, situated north of a particularly inaccessible range of the Hindu Kush, in the province of Badghis, known in Afghanistan as the home of the winds. General Back was received by the Spanish Ambassador, Jose Luis Solano, the PRT Commander, Col. Jose Antonio Alonso and the ANP Commander in Badghis Province, Gholam Rhasoul, and given a warm and hospitable welcome including a generous lunch of Spanish wine and *paella*. He also applauded the PRT on their efforts to conduct patrols in some of the far-reaching areas in the east of the province where ISAF’s presence had hitherto not been felt. The Spanish PRT CIMIC Project Officer, Major Juan Manso, said *“We are few in number at Qale-e-Naw, but we have seven CIMIC different projects underway in the local community. Over the winter months, the weather and the atrocious conditions of the roads in the province made it very difficult to get about, but now that the snow has melted and the water*

levels have subsided, our patrols are getting further out again.'

General Back, and the German television crew accompanying him on the visit, saw one of the development projects, a major bridge construction over a muddy river valley, linking a very poor part of the town, with the main town centre. *'It took six months to build but men, women and children can now go to the market and the school without having to wade through running water and thick mud. The bridge has made a significant difference to their lives,'* said Major Manso.

"I have been very impressed by all I have seen during this visit," said General Back. *"RC South is extremely active monitoring the Afghan led drug eradication operations in Helmand province. The UK Forces are also getting established in Lashkar Gah and the PRT will change from US to UK control very shortly. The other three PRTs, Kandahar, Tarin Kot and Qualat are well prepared for the change over. It is a high tempo environment, but ISAF is ready to meet the challenge."*



General Back, accompanied by Brig. Gen. Errico, receives honours at his arrival at Herat airport.



General Back, ISAF Commander and Deputy Commander during the visit to Qale-e-Naw PRT.

Teacher hands over large weapons cache

Lt. Richard Nye (US Navy)
PRT Farah IO Officer

A ceremony of appreciation for a former Commander who voluntarily handed over his cache of weapons was recently held in Farah. Ustad Mohammad Alam, who now works as a teacher, gathered his weapons during the soviet occupation of Afghanistan and at the height of his efforts he had enough to arm 300 men. The ceremony was opened with a reading from the Koran followed by a speech from the Farah Province Chief of Police, Said Aqa Saqeb, who also hosted the ceremony. The Chief of Police stated that, *"We will not let our enemies destroy our country anymore. . . now we have a Constitution and with the cooperation of the people the world will help us"*. Next the Deputy Governor Mohammad Juma Ghamko, spoke about the programs of support available for those who voluntarily handover weapons. He also praised Ustad Mohammad Alam for becoming actively involved in the Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) initiative and for setting an example for other former Commanders to follow. A further speech followed from the Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Wylie, who began by reciting an Afghan proverb, *"Drop by drop it becomes a river"* and related this to the future of Afghanistan. He applauded the honoured guest as a patriot who had helped defend his

homeland when it was occupied by their enemies and now as a patriot who has the courage to come forward and make a stand.

Nearly 40% of the cache is estimated to be serviceable based on its intended purpose, however, all of the cache could have been used to create Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), if it had fallen into the wrong hands. The ceremony concluded with a reading of the weapons list, followed by a prayer.



List of Weapons in Cache:

103	107mm HE	7	107mm WP
67	RPG7	54	RPG5
345	82mm Mortars	10	Recoilless Rifle Rounds
10	Anti-Tank Mines	15	Egyptian Claymores
3	Anti-Personnel Mines	200	Fuses
50lbs	Comp B Explosive	5	Anti-Aircraft Weapons
1	M-1 Garand Rifle	1	303 Enfield Rifle
1	RPD	1	75mm Recoilless Rifle
2	Mortar tubes with base plates	3	RPG7 Rocket Launchers
487	Cases of small arms ammunition		



Some of the weapons of cache





TWO MAJOR EVENTS FOR THE ITALIAN NAVY TASK FORCE "PANTERA"

Cdr. Alessandro M. Dionigi, IT TF "Pantera" Commanding Officer (ITA Navy)

Lt. Angelo Pazzaglia, IT TF "Pantera" Command Liaison Officer and PIO (ITA Navy)

The Italian Navy Task Force "Pantera" – Italian word for "Panther", referring to the capacity of quick, invisible reaction and continuous readiness – is a 50 men helicopter unit stationed at KAIA since July 2005 and programmed to stay until May 2006 in coherence with the scheduled mandate of ISAF VIII.

The Task Force operates the 3 light grey Agusta-Bell AB212 helicopters parked close to Apron 2 on the "Helipad" area.

Assigned mission in Theatre goes from "command flight" (primary mission) to "RECCE" (reconnaissance), CASEVAC (casualty evacuation), transport and any other that might be necessary, within technical feasibility and superior authority authorization.

Flexibility, reliability, short reaction time, NVG (Night Vision Goggles) expertise of crews, contained costs, excellent lookout capability on RECCE missions are most important concerns for the frequent employment of these assets by superior Command of ISAF and KMNb.

Helicopter and men of the TF

"Pantera" are always ready for CASEVAC on 30 minutes NTM (Notice To Move) during daytime and 60 minutes NTM during night. In order to meet the best standards of efficacy and care of patients, training with medical teams from different cooperating Nations has become a standard routine. In fact 30 minutes notice does not allow time for the development of synergy between aircrews and medical teams on the ground and in the air. This cooperation capacity is reached before the real-life event with scheduled theoretical and practical training periods.

Recently two very important events for the life of the Task Force have taken place: on the 20th of January the second Change of Command and, on the 17th of February, the reaching of 500 hours flown in Afghanistan.

Two significant steps that need to be appropriately underlined, not only for their intrinsic importance but, above all, to tribute the due merit to the people that have made – both here and in Italy – these achievements possible.

500 hours flown in Afghanistan

On the 17th of February, at the end of a Recce mission performed in the North Area in support of FR Battle Group, Task Force Pantera logged 500 flight hours flown in Afghanistan. These hours were flown in support to ISAF since the 28 of July 2005, date of the first flight of the ITN AB 212s in the Kabul AOO.

Even more taking into account that it goes together with an overall average serviceability close to 96 percent (meaning that, almost every day since last July, all three helicopters have been serviceable) and that all missions have been flown as a minimum with a section of two helos and several have been flown with all three. This considerable amount of flight time was required mainly to support the operations carried out by KMNB and its manoeuvre and support subunits.

In consideration of the extensive employment of the helicopters for pre planned operations and the need to carry out a great deal of immediate

non-scheduled missions for purposes such as CASEVAC, air surveillance and show of force, extra flight hours have been regularly granted by the Italian Joint HQ in addition to the standard monthly allocation.

The effort required to reach this important goal was significant considering the small size of the Unit, and it has to be ascribed to the flight crews and to the maintenance section, also considering that more than half of the helicopter technicians perform flight duty as gunners. This without forgetting the Ops section, which constantly carried out the planning process, often in close conjunction with the requesting and cooperating units.

The unique professional experience, the enriching cooperation with highly trained NATO units, the rewarding feeling of flying over the spectacular landscapes of Afghanistan represent for every single man a essential step of his military career.



AB 212



RECCE over Kabul



Casualty Evacuation Exercise



The Task Force Change of Command

The Ceremony of Change of Command between CDR Riccardo Buralli and CDR Alessandro M. Dionigi took place on January the 20th.

The ceremony was held at the presence of Lt. Gen. Mauro Del Vecchio, Commander ISAF and Brig. Gen. Claudio Graziano, Commander

KMNB and National Contingent Commander.

Both General Graziano and the outgoing Commander, during their speeches, remarked the high proficiency of the people leading to the impressive results achieved so far by the Task Force.



The crew of IT TF "PANTERA"

Repair of laundry in Maiwand Hospital

Lt. Rob Hunt (UK Army)
BRITFOR HQ Media Ops

Throughout January and February 2006, *Ecolog AG* (a German company based in Düsseldorf) placed three of its electricians at the disposal of the HQ British Forces Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Cell, to repair the laundry facilities of Maiwand Hospital in Kabul. The electricians worked alongside two specialists from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) to complete the task. During two separate working periods, several dryers and washing machines were repaired and the main laundry electrical switch board was rewired.

The leader of the British CIMIC Cell in Kabul, WO2 Mark Iles, Regular Reservist of the 1 RGBW LI (1st Battalion the Royal Gloucestershire Berkshire Wiltshire, Light Infantry) said, *"The Hospital's laundry facilities were very, very run down with a lot of the old machines not working. It seemed obvious to ask for help as I knew the company already, they provide laundry services in Camp Souter, where our CIMIC Cell is based. They give such a quick turnaround time that they had to have their own engineers in Kabul and I was sure they could help."*

Maiwand Hospital is a very large general hospital near the centre of Kabul. People from all over Kabul, as well as from other districts, use the hospital so it is important for both the treatment of patients and public health initiatives for the whole population of Kabul.

The British CIMIC Cell in Kabul has not only helped improve the laundry facilities, but has also acted to improve the kitchens and organised fundraising for the Children's ward and the child care facilities. In different campaigns blankets, clothes and toys were collected and distributed to the children. Frequently, relief measures for the hospital have been performed alongside other ISAF countries' CIMIC cells. A recent example is the repair of 2 defective oxygen flow units, successfully completed with the support of technicians from the German Field Hospital located in Kabul. Although a small task in itself, this UK/German co-operation has probably saved the lives of many babies that might otherwise not have survived. WO2 Iles added *"we get a lot of support from ISAF forces, particularly the US-Army and the Royal Danish Air Force, but there is always more that could be done."*



A new primary school inaugurated in Herat province

*Cap. Livio Cavallaro (ITA Army)
RAC WEST Herat PIO*

A few days ago, a primary school was inaugurated in the village of Nang Abad, some 20 kilometers away from Herat. The building will allow about 1400 students to attend shift lessons in suitable rooms instead of the tents which were used in advance.

It took less than six months to the Italian led PRT, under Col. Dario Ranieri, to complete the school in accordance with the reconstruction project which has been coordinated with the Educational Department of the Herat Province.

The Italian PRT - part of Regional Area Coordinator West led by the Italian Brigadier General Danilo Errico - carried out the technical evaluation of the project and supervised the whole working progress. The completed structure comprises 12 classrooms beside a teacher's room, a kitchen and a first aid post. The inauguration ceremony was attended by the vice-governor of the Herat Province, the head of the Educational Department, the governor of Injil District, the head of the village and Italian Col. Ranieri.

In his speech, vice-governor thanked the Italian military personnel for the realization of the new school, which represent the only primary school in the area.

The local inhabitants were happy in participating to the ceremony and the students received from the Italian military 1400 backpacks with pens and copybooks.



Italian soldiers handing out school bags in Nang Abad School



SADA-E-AZADI ISSUE 100

**Capt. Dirk Christiansen (GER Army)
Chief CJPOTF Print Section**

The most trusted information source of information among the Afghan population is also the country's biggest newspaper: *Sada-e Azadi*, the ISAF News.

The newspaper is published every two weeks in three languages – Dari, Pashto, and English, a policy that means the paper is used as a foreign-language primer in Afghan schools – and distributed without charge to more than 300,000 Afghans throughout ISAF's entire AOO.

In the four years since it began publication, the newspaper has undergone many changes and improvements. And in February, it celebrated a milestone: It's 100th edition, a reason for the whole staff to celebrate 48 months of hard work.

The milestone edition ushered in some more changes, including a new, eight-page supplement bringing local news and the best of the pieces from the West and North AOOs to readers in Kabul. This joins the four-page supplements bringing regional flavour and news to the West and North AOOs, and as ISAF expands its role in the south later this year, that area too will get its own supplement.

To celebrate its centennial, the *Sada-e-Azadi* staff invited friends and professional colleagues to a champagne-and-cake reception – not

only Afghan officials with whom the paper has closely cooperated, but media colleagues from the *Sada-e Azadi* radio, television and print sections with whom information and planning is shared to assure ISAF's message remains consistent. Their joins efforts ensure that *Sada-e Azadi* not only is, but will remain, the most reliable source of information for the Afghan population.

Sada-e-Azadi is prepared by the Combined Joint Psychological Operations Task Force's Print Section at Camp Warehouse, and the printing is shared by three local printing houses to spread the economic benefit throughout Kabul. The paper is staffed by a military chief editor – at the moment, German Captain Dirk Christiansen – three native English-speaking International Civilian Contractors, and six Afghan reporters and editors.



Capt. Christiansen proudly shows the 100th issue

KMNB IX CIMIC TEAM ASSIST PRISON CHILDREN

Capt. Orlin Garkov (BUL Army)

KMNB Media Plans

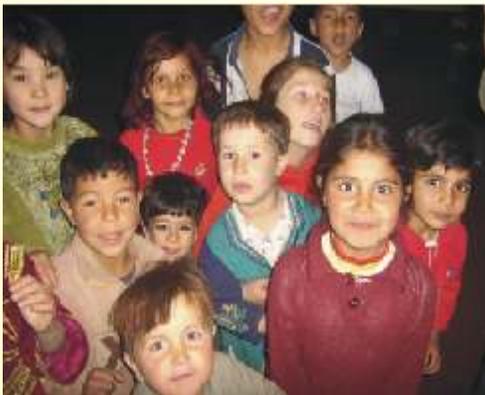
Personnel from KMNB IX were so struck by the plight of children living with their mothers in Pol-e-Charki prison that they decided to collect food and clothing, boots and shoes, snacks, biscuits, chocolates, soft drinks and fruit, in an attempt to make their living conditions more tolerable.

Over eighty women prisoners are detained in Pol-e-Charki and many of them have children in prison with them. The children are effectively serving a prison sentence too. All personnel, from every KMNB IX nation, wanted to provide some comfort for these children who are living in appalling and inappropriate conditions. The mothers are serving sentences for murder, robbery, kidnapping and adultery. In many cases there is nobody in the family who can take care of their children and the judicial authorities have allowed them to care for their children in the prison.

At present there are seventy children living behind the bars of Pol-E-Charki. The prison administration does not have the resources to support these children, but they do have a teacher who is funded by the AWEC (Afghan Women Educational Service), a Non-Governmental Organization. The prison doctor provides the children's health care. The Ministry of Justice had promised to find a way to resolve the issue of caring for children whilst their mothers are in prison and the Chief of the Women's Section, Col. Abdul Sadiq, is hoping a solution will be found soon.

German Forces provided approximately seventy sets of clothing for the children. The children were thrilled with the gifts and said that they liked them a lot. The mothers and children were ordered to wait in their rooms while the distribution of gifts, led by Major Purice from KMNB IX CIMIC section, began. The boys preferred to have new shoes, whilst the girls on the other hand, were more eager for clothes and in addition to this everyone received cookies and biscuits. One of the most rewarding aspects of the trip was to see the smiles in the children's faces. After the donation had finished the whole group visited the children's room and gave them toys as a gifts.

Members of KMNB IX also spoke to the children's teacher who spoke of the importance of education for these children and, of course, the need for them to have a secure and safe environment to grow up in, outside of the prison. The children need education and good understanding of the things; they have to be in good environment. Overall, this was a great activity to get involved with and was of great help to these deserving children. Capt Garkov would personally like to thank to all of the people who gave goods, toys, food and their time, it was a good day and a good deed!



Children art sale

Lt. Rob Hunt (UK Army)
BRITFOR HQ Media Ops

On Friday 24 February 2006, the UK Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) Cell in Camp Souter, held an auction in support of the Aschiana Street Children's School, Kabul. A large amount of artwork, produced by children from the school, both past and present, was put on sale throughout the afternoon, with particular highlights being auctioned at the end of the afternoon. The sale was a huge success, and raised well over US\$3,000 for the school.

On 3 March 2006, Engineer Mohammad Yousef, Director of the school, paid a visit to Camp Souter to receive a 'cheque' of the proceeds from COMBRITFOR, Col J S Douglas OBE, the CIMIC team, and COMBRITFOR Deputy Chief of Staff, Major Alan Rorison.

Major Rorison said 'I am delighted to be able to present you with this cheque for the proceeds of the art sale, and hope that this will be the first of many events to help you in such a worthwhile cause.'

The Aschiana School provides education to the street children of Kabul, offering a wide range of subjects and a mix of academic and vocational training. Further information and guidance on how you can help the school, can be obtained from their website www.aschiana.com.



The CIMIC Team at the Cheque presentation



THE ITALIAN NBC "PESTE" COY

Lt. Riccardo Costa (ITA Army)
Chief Internal Information
ISAF HQ

Integrated as an independent Coy in the Kabul Multinational Brigade, the IT NBC Coy is the one and only coy deployed on the Afghan theatre, employed by KMNB in ISAF VIII, appointed to conduct activities such as chemical/radiological monitoring and environmental sampling.

Coming from 7° Reggimento Difesa NBC "Cremona", lead by Lt. Andrea Dainese, the IT NBC Coy is composed of one CBRN Platoon (Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear) and one Command Team and it carries out daily environmental background-checking activities from a radioactivity point of view (alpha, beta, beta low, gamma, x-ray and neutron) in order to guarantee a safe environment for all the ISAF troops that work in the AoR of Kabul and its surrounding area.

On the cutting edge with its technological equipment, IT NBC Coy perfectly combines radiological monitoring and environmental sampling requirements with the capability to conduct chemical and biological analysis in its field laboratories. As explicitly requested in NATO ambit by the procedures of SIBCA Manual (Sampling and Identification of Biological and Chemical Agents) AEP-10.

The particular nature of this unit in working in the field first, and afterwards conducting a precise analysis in its technological field laboratories, requires a high specialization of all its personnel in NBC subjects and, of course, a

constant updating in research, sampling and analysis techniques.

The men of the "Peste" (this is the name of the IT NBC Coy) leave Camp Invicta on their light armoured tactical vehicles for patrolling (lately with their colleagues of BG 3 and MNEG – Multinational Engineer Group) and sampling in the vast AoR of KMNB, on the streets of TV Hill or Bibi Mahro even as far out as Musayi and Lalandar valleys, alternating tactical wheeled movement with proper foot patrols during which they use their sophisticated equipment.



An operator of the Coy use a "Beta low" probe to check radioactivity



Sampling of water

Operators take environmental samples of any kind (solid, liquid and air) to analyse them in the laboratory, by which means it would be possible to discover bio-warfare agents as *Yersinia pestis* (plague), *Francisella tularensis* (tularemia), *Bacillus anthracis* (anthrax) and *Brucella* (brucellosis) or pathogen agents as *Campilobacter*, *Salmonella*, *E. coli* O157 and *Listeria monocytogenes*.

Similarly, the same samples are analysed with a high-technological chemical detection instrument, based on MS/GC (Mass Spectrometer/Gas Chromatography), that is able to analyse more than 150.000 VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds). In particular, the Gas Chromatography identifies the separation of the mix of substances in any sample in its different components, while the Mass Spectrometer allows its identification; the instrument elaborates a mass spectrum for any component of the mix contained in the sample, the following identification happens making a comparison between this spectrum and all those already included in the database.

Biological analysis is carried out in about two hours, while the chemical one takes only half an hour; for a sudden response to any kind of “threat”, these are extremely quick times.

Depending on the task, the more technological Light Armored VBR NBC are often used: proper overpressured tactical vehicles equipped with a kind of internal laboratory able to detect high levels of gamma radiation and, with specific probes, classical chemical warfare agents like blood agents, nerve agents (“G” and “V”), choking agents and blister agents and

sampling capabilities; it is also able to conduct sampling activity from inside the vehicle by a MS/GC for the detection of chemical agents.

This vehicle, thanks to a pressurization filter, can operate in a NBC environment guaranteeing the maximum safety to the personnel inside; at the same time, is it also possible to carry out samplings from inside, avoiding the need for personnel to leave the vehicle.





Due to its uniqueness in ISAF, IT NBC Coy carries out its activities in the AoR of ISAF troops but also, as routine, it is the only Coy that conducts radiological monitoring and environmental sampling inside all ISAF compounds in order to check and guarantee the background from any substantial radiological variation, presence of bacteria or chemical substances that could represent a CBR attack or a contamination of the environment in which all of us work daily.

Actually the results of the analysis have never exceeded the so-called “critical levels”, but the equipment used is able to provide an immediate “early warning check” for the Commander of any compound and Task Force.

Although its task is already demanding, the men of “Peste” – together with their colleagues of MNEG and its EOD teams- are going to provide their effort in the next construction of the “Kabul entry points”, passing through a careful monitoring of these important NAIs (Named Area of Interest), not only from a radiological point of view, but also bio and chem.

Also, in order to guarantee a widespread control, as it has been carrying out in the AoR of IT BG 3 and all KMNB AoO, it might expand in the next future, to be employed in others AoR through joint patrols with French and Germans Battle Groups.



Personnel of the Coy use a “Cyclone” pump to sample air



Using an “Alpha” Probe to check alpha radioactivity



Change of command at (NLD) PRT PeK

Sub-lieutenant Hein van Gerner (NLD Army) Pul-e-Khumri

On Sunday morning the 26th of February, Colonel (RNLMC) Jan van Putten handed over command of the Netherlands PRT at Pul-e Khumri to Captain (RNLN) Peter de Harder. The ceremony concluded Van Putten's six-month term as commander of the PRT in Baghlan province. The northern province of Baghlan is of strategic value, because of the Main Supply Route (MSR). It connects Kabul to Mazar-e Sharif and Kunduz via the Salang pass and the province's capital Pul-e Khumri.

Colonel van Putten stated in his speech he was impressed by the level of commitment of the Dutch marines, navy personnel and other members of the Netherlands armed forces part of the PRT. Although the Dutch ISAF troops have been involved in two IED incidents in the last six months and found another one just one month ago, it has not affected their efforts in any way. Nor has it influenced the population's attitude toward ISAF. On the contrary, the "Dutch Way" of handling the civil population, local powerbrokers and dignitaries is renowned because of its cultural awareness, respect and patience. This had led to the civil population of Baghlan predominantly condemning the targeting of ISAF troops. Van Putten predicts the "Dutch Way" will be the key to success in Uruzgan when the Dutch will setup a PRT there as part of the ISAF Stage III expansion.

Also present at the ceremony were the Commander RAC NORTH, General Kiesheyer and the Netherlands Contingency Commander, General Tieskens. Both generals addressed the honoured guests and the members of the PRT. They stressed the importance of the PRT's role in the reconstruction efforts throughout the province. Without security provided by ISAF, reconstruction efforts are likely to fail. Colonel van Putten's efforts in this case

have not gone unnoticed. General Kiesheyer as a token of appreciation awarded Van Putten the Commander's Coin.

Colonel van Putten stepped down by handing over the Commander's cane to Captain de Harder. Possession of this wooden cane symbolises command over the PRT. For Colonel Van Putten's handing over the cane meant showing confidence in his successor. Captain de Harder stated he is looking forward to continue Van Putten's work, to the best of his abilities with equal valour and spirit. Like Van Putten he will work together with the Afghan authorities, combining his efforts with the provincial governor for a maximal result.

Both Van Putten and De Harder paid their respects to the provincial governor, Mr. Rasikh. The governor, present at the ceremony, expressed his gratitude for the PRT's assistance but indicated he still has to deal with difficult problems. However, his efforts to improve health services, education and infrastructure are starting to pay off. De governor is making progress, but there is still a lot of work to be done. Captain de Harder assured Mr. Rasikh the PRT will be there, for him and for the people of Baghlan.



General Kiesheyer presenting the Commander's Coin

