



# ISAF MIRROR

Issue 36 January 2007



**Kabul MEDCAP treats more than 600**

**DOCEX team returns antique weapons  
to Afghan National Museum**

**Air Task Force Pantera**

**43 motorcycles donated to local workers**



Front and back covers  
by  
SM Rene Ketting



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**Commander's Foreword**  
General Richards



This edition of the Mirror is the last to be produced during the tenure of ISAF IX as we hand over to our successors in ISAF X on 4 February. Many of the newcomers are already here, some having been so for several months, and I wish you all a productive and enjoyable tour.

As 2007 begins and as personnel rotate, it is appropriate to reflect on what was achieved in 2006 and how this might set the scene for the year ahead. 2006 was a difficult, challenging but thoroughly successful year for ISAF. We took over responsibility for Regional Commands South and East from the Coalition in August and October respectively. We achieved a major tactical defeat of the Taliban in the Panjwayi/Zhari region of Kandahar in September and October. This action very much demonstrated the resolve and ability of ISAF and indeed NATO, and proved once and for all to the doubters, of whom there were a number, that NATO could and would defeat the insurgency militarily. More recently we have seen some significant actions in the border region of Regional Command East, with some well-coordinated, successful operations, enhanced by good cooperation with the Pakistan Army. It is not all about the south and east though. We have maintained focus and progress in Regional Commands North, West and Capital, and many areas in these regions are models for the type of development we hope will eventually spread across all of Afghanistan. In sum the security situation is now stable in 3 out of 5 regions, the overall incident trend is down and, where there are increases, these are the result of increased ISAF presence and offensive action.

There has been similar but varied progress in the fields of governance and 'reconstruction and develop-

ment' (R&D). The President's Policy Action Group (PAG) (on which there is a short article in this Mirror) was created during ISAF IX and now fulfills a key co-ordination role across government, and the international community is being encouraged to play an ever-greater part in R&D. The military to military links between the Afghan National Army, the Pakistan Army and ISAF, through the regular meetings of the Tripartite Commission, have never been stronger.

These achievements lay a firm foundation for success in 2007 and beyond, although there is of course much still to do in the short and longer term. The important thing to remember is that the Afghan people want peace and overwhelmingly support our presence here, as evidenced through a number of recent polls. We must do all we can to maintain that support and deliver and encourage the necessary improvements that they need and deserve.

I am delighted to see within the pages of this Mirror several articles on capacity building and operations, and - once again - I am enthused by the number and variety of reconstruction and assistance projects with which ISAF soldiers, across all Regions, are involved. Indeed some of this assistance has been undertaken on a very personal basis, as in the story of 6-year-old Mahsoom, which is very much to the credit of the soldiers concerned. It is through such contact and support that many Afghans judge us.

Finally, I thank all of you - whether in the Headquarters in Kabul or in the Regional Commands, Units and PRTs - for your hard work and commitment to the mission and to the Afghan people during your time here. Afghanistan is worth it, and NATO will succeed.

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# Policy Action Group

Story by Col. John Bevan (UK-A), Policy Action Group LNO to President Karzai

In an effort to improve the coordination within and between the ministries of the Government of Afghanistan and the main international actors, including ISAF, UNAMA and embassies, President Karzai created the Policy Action Group (PAG). The PAG's initial agenda consisted of ten presidential objectives covering governance, political engagement, diplomatic engagement, security, development and economic issues, cultural and social issues and public communication.

The PAG consists of the main Government ministers and invited principals from the international community; chaired by the President roughly once a month and meeting at ministerial level every week. It is supported by a full time Implementation and Coordination Team (IACT) and by four Working Group pillars, each led by a nominated minister, covering intelligence fusion, security operations, strategic communications and reconstruction and development.

The PAG has initially focussed on the problems in the South of Afghanistan and has endeavoured to get out from Kabul and visit the relevant provinces. A week long trip in the Autumn by the members of the IACT working group to Kandahar,

President			
Policy Action Group			
Implementation and Coordination Team			
Intelligence Fusion Group	Security Operations Group	Strategic Communications	Reconstruction and Development
Chief NDS ISAF	MoD & MoI ISAF	MoCITY UNAMA	MoE UNAMA
		MoCITY Pres Office	MoE MoRRD
		MoD, MoI MoHIA	MoF
NDS	MoD	MoBTA	MoE&W
MoD	MoI	MoRRD	MoA
MoI	NDS	MoCN	MoPW
ISAF	ISAF	MoE, PTS	MoPH ISAF
CSTC-A	CSTC-A	ISAF	UNAMA
UNAMA	UNAMA	CSTC-A	ACBAR
	CA, NL, UK	UNAMA	CA, NL, UK
	AUS, USA	CA, NL, UK	AUS, USA
		AUS, USA	

Ministries, Provinces, Forces and Organizations represented in PAG

Tarin Kowt, Lashkar Gar and Qalat, the capitals of the four development zone provinces, in order to discuss with the governors and key officials their most critical needs, is hoping to be repeated before the Spring. A recent PAG was also held in Kandahar, chaired by the President. The meeting was deemed a huge success, particularly in terms of high-level governmental outreach to the local administrations and people of the South, and showing a united and coordinated approach by the government and international community to the national and local issues.

PAG and its subordinate working groups has done much to improve coordination within and between the government and international community over many issues, including development zones,

security planning, auxiliary police, cross-border issues, priorities for reconstruction and development, release of funds and increasing provincial capabilities. However, while the record of achievements grows steadily, the list of priority tasks does not seem to shrink and PAG aspirations include improved provincial coordination, auditing the ANA and ANP strengths and resources, addressing governance and reconciliation issues and further improvements in governmental outreach, reconstruction and development and strategic communications.

The current initiative to establish joint security committees at Regional level and Provincial Coordination Centres will ensure the work of the PAG is felt at District level.

## Progress and aid come to Panjawayi District



Story and photos by:  
**Capt. Andre Salloum(CA-A)**  
**PIO RC-South**

After combining their strength and efforts, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and ISAF, who are working together as part of Operation Baaz Tsuka, have been able to secure the regions of Howz-e Madad and Zangabad.

"Since the start of Operation Baaz Tsuka, the ANSF with ISAF have worked together to ensure these two regions are secure. The next step is to bring in humanitarian aid and to set up a security zone with the aid of the tribal elders," stated Squadron Leader Dave Marsh, RC-S Spokesman.

In another operation that occurred earlier, ISAF sol-

diers were able to provide food, clothes, medical aid, and tools to approximately 400 villagers and displaced personnel in the southern region of Panjawayi.

The displaced Afghans, who originated from Sperwan Ghar, Zangabad and Talukan

told ISAF soldiers during a Shura that they were forced to flee their homes months ago due to fighting. Along with the aid, a medical clinic was set up with an ISAF doctor and around 50 patients were treated for minor wounds.



## Bagram units provide medical treatment and give out donations at Egyptian Field Hospital

Story and photos by:  
Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste (US-A)

Service members from numerous units based at Bagram handed out aid and toys to Afghans on 5 December at Bagram's Egyptian Field Hospital.

"It's an amazing feeling," said Maj. Grady Gentry, battalion chaplain for the 330th Movement Control Battalion. "You can give back what you feel in your heart."

The day began with Afghans entering the Egyptian hospital to receive medical treatment. While they were being treated, they were informed that they would be receiving aid and toys.

The volunteers quickly set up a distribution point for giving out the gifts and aid that were

donated by people on two different continents. After that was completed, one Afghan family at a time went through and received stuffed animals, toys and much needed winter clothes, Gentry said. "Giving out the stuff in the snow is important," he said. "It adds another sense of urgency."

"You can tell it might be a bad winter for them, because it has snowed so much already," said Sgt. Sherica Sanders, a chaplain's assistant with the 330th Movement Control Battalion. In addition to battling a possible harsh winter, the Afghans have to combat poverty as well. "That's why it means so much to an Afghan child when they receive something like a toy," Sgt. Sanders said. "It makes you realise what you take for granted in the States," Sanders said. "You can tell they're appreciative."



## PRT Nuristan looks to build positive relationship



### Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Giovanni Caligiuri (US-A) PRT Nuristan

In a rugged valley in western Nuristan, Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Nuristan (Kala Gush) is the latest step the International Security Assistance Force has taken in delivering assistance and security to the people of Afghanistan.

Hitting the ground running, the PRT has accomplished much over the past month by having face-to-face meetings with numerous village elders, distributing humanitarian aid, conducting village assessments, overseeing reconstruction projects, performing medical support missions, and security force training. "Winning the trust and confidence among the local district populations is an important factor in establishing and maintaining peace, security, stability and prosperity in this region," remarked the PRT commander, Army Lt. Col. Todd Brown.

The PRT recently held a three-day leadership engagement with Shuras, which discussed the role of the PRT and assessed the needs and concerns of the local people. The Afghan people know that ISAF is here to help and not to dominate or take away the Afghan's freedom, many elders said.

The village representatives placed a high importance on electrical and school projects. Lacking schools and with limited education, illiteracy is high among the populace. "The most important thing is education," said Adam Gul of Nangarach.

Humanitarian missions, led by the PRT Civil Affairs (CA) team have already distributed nearly 12 tons of humanitarian resources. Navy Engineers Lt. j.g. James Reynolds and Lt. j.g. Robert Warren, along with Army Capt. Kerr Chase, the CA team-Alpha team leader, are constantly on the go. "One of the most vital functions of our mission is to help the Afghan people build the infrastructure that will allow them to achieve true self-government and self-reliance," Capt. Chase said.

The use of local contractors and workers from the region are focused on two current projects, a micro-hydro electric generator and a bridge in Titan Valley. "After so many years of war and difficult struggles, Nangarach, Nuristan, and all of Afghanistan are very thankful for the United States and the PRT with providing assistance to our people," said Dr. Mir Zaman, a Nangarach doctor.

## Kabul MEDCAP treats more than 600

Story by: Capt. Stacie N. Shafran (US-F)  
HQ ISAF PIO

Photos by: SM Rene Ketting (NL-A)

An ISAF and Coalition sponsored Medical Civic Action Program, or MEDCAP, treated more than 600 patients from Kabul Police District 9, the first event of its kind in this area.

Medical and security forces personnel from Task Force Phoenix, along with military personnel from Regional Command-Capital, conducted the MEDCAP, which cost approximately \$600, at the Qabel Bay School. Doctors treated men, women and children suffering from malnutrition, gastric problems, joint pain and cold symptoms.

"This type of activity provides the local people with a service that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to get," said U.S. Army Maj. Mark Roper, a civil affairs officer who coordinated the event. "Medical care in Afghanistan is often poor at best. If we can help people, while showing them that we really do care, it becomes a win-win situation. This is a 'hearts and minds' type of scenario."

As part of a joint security operation, the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) and Kabul City Police (KCP) assisted with security for the MEDCAP, allowing ISAF and Coalition personnel to focus on providing medical care. After patients were treated and provided with medicine, they were offered clothing, shoes and toys donated from various charity organizations in the United States.

"I am very proud to have helped the locals and to be able to represent the Air Force as a medic in this MEDCAP," said Staff Sgt. Marcus Laurico, a medical technician and NCOIC of the Camp Phoenix clinic. "MEDCAPs help the locals in every way. They see how helpful we are and how we are able to lend a hand even though we are at war, whether it's giving clothes and shoes to the kids or providing medical help."





## Op OQAB ALPINI In The Musayi Valley

**Story and photos by:**  
**Capt. Luigi Usai (IT-A)**  
**PIO ITALFOR XIV**

After five days of continuous operations in mid-December, following cooperation with the Shura, the first phase of Operation OQAB ALPINI has been completed in the Musayi valley, which lies to the south of Kabul.



The operation was carried out primarily by the Italian Battle Group, under the command of Lt. Col. Stefano Fregona, and with the cooperation of the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army. During the operation, soldiers monitored the Musayi valley and carried out a CIMIC activity for the population of the valley.

The CIMIC Team distributed over 27,000 kilograms of food that included rice, beans, tea, flour, sugar, salt and oil. In total, 341 of the poorest families in the valley received a food



package of about 81 kilograms.

Besides the distribution of food, a medical team examined a number of the local population. The team, which had two doctors and two nurses, treated 213 men, women and children.

The CIMIC team also distributed materials to the local police. This included full uniforms, boots, electric torches, beds, mattresses, pillows, sleeping bags and blankets. In the previous week, the police also received three pick-up vehicles with radios.

During the final Shura the Malek, the Mullah and the Elders thanked the Italians for their assistance.

The commander of the Italian Battle Group ended the Shura thanking everyone for their collaboration during the operation, as well as informing the Shura about initiatives for reconstruction in the valley that will include the construction of a clinic, a bridge and 20 artesian wells.



## Air task force Pantera

**Story and photo by:**  
**Capt. Luigi Usai (IT-A) PIO ITALFOR XIV**

On 1 December, Task Force (TF) Pantera of the Italian Navy, commanded by Capt. Nicola Milillo, took over from Task Force Seagull.

TF Pantera will continue the Italian mission in the skies of Kabul where the AB 212 helicopters of the Air Force and Navy have contributed to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for more than one year.

TF Seagull has carried out 258 missions, comprising 577 flights and almost 500 hours of flying. The task force was involved in numerous missions, including training activities with multi-national personnel of different nations to reinforce the synergy between the military contingents, as well as assist the Government of Afghanistan through carrying out routine taskings to improve security.

TF Pantera will be in Afghanistan

until June. It will assure continuity to the contribution that Italy is providing to the ISAF mission with the presence of a component of helicopters that has an operating capability to complete tasks such as reconnaissance, transport of personnel, medical evacuation and controlling territory.

Previously TF Pantera operated in Afghanistan from July 2005 until May 2006, under the Italian-led ISAF VIII. In their last tour the task force flew 698 missions and carried out 715 hours of flying, of which 25 percent were night flights.

TF Pantera will guarantee air support to Regional Command - Capital and all the contingents made up of different nations. Also, its presence is important in maintaining a safe environment to assist the Government of Afghanistan in the stabilisation and reconstruction of the country.



# Members of ISAF's DOCEX team return antique weapons to Afghan National Museum

On 12 January, the International Security Assistance Force became the first organisation to return antique weapons to the Government of Afghanistan in accordance with Afghan Presidential Decree 19.

The law was established in 2004 to encourage citizens to return items stolen from the national museum during years of war - first with Russia, then the Taliban.

The Document Exploitation, DOCEX, team returned to the Afghan National Museum a nearly six-foot long "pond gun" that was made in Kabul in 1929 and a Gardner Battery gun that was produced in the United States sometime between 1878 and 1881.

Afghanistan enjoys a rich history and the national museum had always been a place where any of its citizens or visitors, regardless of their status, could visit some of the ancient remains of its culture.

That was until many years of war with Russia nearly destroyed the original museum and most of its contents; what wasn't destroyed was stolen. The few items that remained were destroyed by the Taliban, in their effort to avoid pagan worship.

Immediately after the fall of the Taliban in Kabul, the museum's curator, Omara Khan Massoudi, began re-establishing the museum. His hope was to bring it back better than ever.

Through coordinated efforts with many nations, the museum is well on its way back. "The return of these weapons is proof that

coalition forces share my desire to return the museum to its original state and will work hand in hand with us toward achieving this common goal," said Mr. Massoudi.

"We are thrilled to be able to give these weapons back to the museum," said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Tracy Johnson, a member of the DOCEX team that found the weapons. "This is where they belong and I am thankful we were given to opportunity to return them. When we first discovered the weapons we didn't know what to do with them, then it became apparent that they were not ordinary weapons. We began to realize that they were antiques and probably

belonged in a museum."

The Gardner Battery Gun was on display in the original museum. In fact, its tag has the curator's signature on it. He was the one that originally logged the item in many years ago and seeing this particular piece again brought him great joy. "I am extremely happy to receive these weapons on behalf of the National Museum of Afghanistan," he said. I am very thankful to ISAF for its support and cooperation. We are hopeful that we will see more of the original items returned."

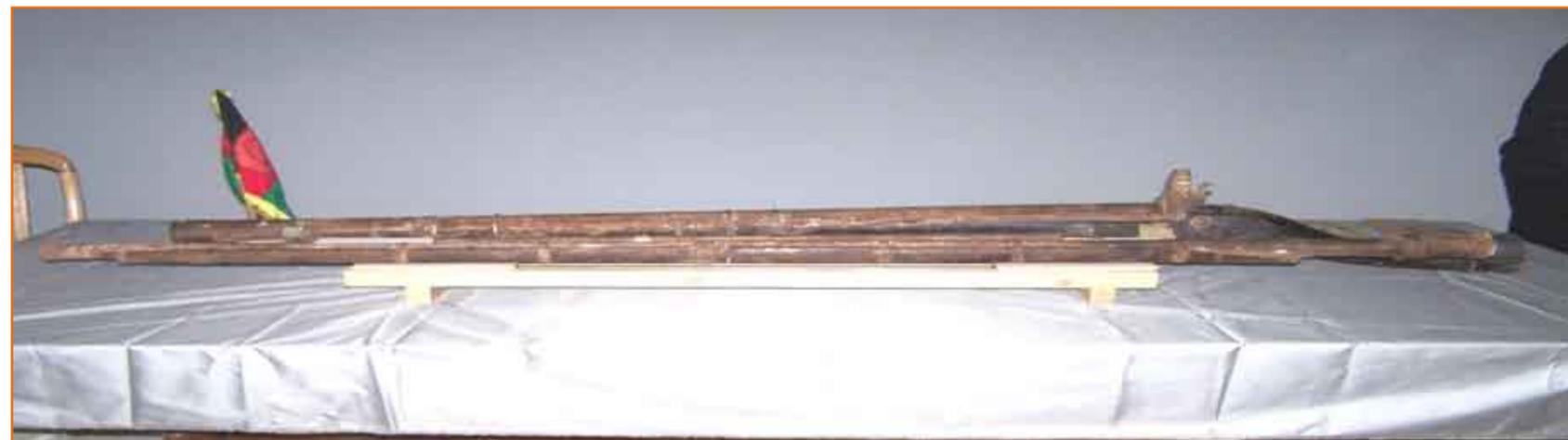
To date, the museum has received more than 4,000 items for entry. It is currently open for business, although portions of it are still being reconstructed. There are many items already on display and the museum should be completely rebuilt and fully operational later this year.



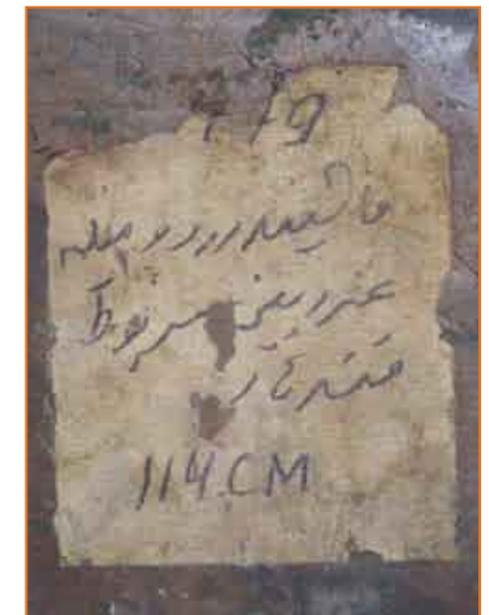
Original stamp on Battery gun



Gardner Battery Gun



Pond gun built made in Kabul in 1929



Original label on Battery gun with curator's name penned on it.

Story and photos by  
Master Sgt. Paula Allen-Gibbs  
HQ ISAF PIO



## Marmal Challenge in support of 'lost' children

Story and photo by:  
OR-8 Rolf Walters (GE-A)  
RC-North

For those of us on international operations it can sometimes be hard to see or feel the direct impact our presence makes. It is easy to forget that whilst you cannot change the world you can change the world of one individual. That's precisely what we decided to do.

The Mazar-e-Sharif orphanage is home to 130 'lost' children, 57 of which live there permanently, sharing 23 beds. The remaining 83 who do not live in, have no option but to live rough and fend for themselves. With no access to fresh water, heating, hygienic latrines or kitchens, their everyday life is a harsh heartbreaking reality to all of us who have witnessed it.

RC(N) decided to host a half marathon to raise money for the children. The race was dedicated to the strength and courage shown by the children and our way of bringing a little bit of sunshine into their lives.

On 28 November, at 9 a.m., 85 adrenaline filled young servicemembers gathered at the start line. International teams from RC(N) and RC(W) rose to the challenge. Competition was fierce between the teams and the different nations and eventually our reigning athletes were



crowned. Lt. Bjornar from Latvia won the male event in a time of 1:20:24, 2nd Lt. Hughes from the UK won the female event in a time of 1:38:31. Team G clocked in with a time of 1:26:55. In the afternoon a well-deserved ceremony was held in honour of the event at Planet Mazar where the winners were presented with their prizes.

The race was a great success and a massive thank you must be said to all of those that gave their time and hard work to help raise this event. The money raised by the British Detachment (2,000 euros and 153 dollars) was used to buy much needed equipment and toys for the children. The UK detachment traveled down to the orphanage with this and delivered it before Christmas. RC(N) Gen. Barth and Lt. Col. Stefner accompanied.

For some of you reading this at home a half marathon might seem like a huge and

difficult challenge. Seeing the smile upon the children's faces as they realised that our donations were for them to keep, made us realise that what we did was easy in the face of the hardship that they had to face every day in order to survive.

The International Community may quickly forget our visit, in the grand scheme of things we haven't even scratched the surface of the 'children in need' in Afghanistan. However, the children will not forget our intent, and we have achieved at least one great thing. We managed to make a difference for the 130 of Afghanistan's many children. It is not always about how many you help, it is about sowing the seeds of change and giving them enough light to help them grow as they pave their way to adulthood. We hope that in our own way we have offered these seeds a flicker of light and hope.



## A crisis management tool

### Bundeswehr deploys armoured reserve to Afghanistan



Story and photo by: OR-8 Rolf Walter (GE-A) RC-N

To enhance its reconnaissance capability and responsiveness, as well as its self-protection, the Bundeswehr has begun to deploy an armoured reserve – comprised of four MARDER 1 A5 infantry combat vehicles and one armoured recovery vehicle – to Mazar-e-Sharif. This is to counter the increased threat in the north of the country.

The vehicles mentioned deployed from the United States Airbase Ramstein in Germany using the American large-capacity transport aircraft C-17 Globemaster. Built in the early

80s for the sole purpose of transporting large cargo and troops, the C-17 is a multi-purpose transport aircraft with a wingspan of more than 51 meters and a height of nearly 17 meters. Maximum payload capacity of the C-17 is 77.5 tons.

The crew of the vehicle's forward combat compartments – commander, gunner, driver, and team leader – are assigned to ISAF's DEU CON headquarters company in terms of administrative control. The recovery teams and maintenance personnel will

be serving with the Mazar-e-Sharif Logistic Support Battalion during their deployment. The rifle squad personnel have not arrived in theatre, as they will only be moved to Afghanistan on order and be deployed temporarily.

For the men of Mechanized Infantry Battalion 212 (garrisoned in Augustdorf, Germany), employment options might possibly include security and reconnaissance tasks, as well as patrolling, to be carried out not only in Mazar-e-Sharif, but also in Kunduz or Kabul.

# ODIN on patrol in

# Northern Afghanistan

**Story and photos by: OR-8 Rolf Walter (GE-A) PIO RC North**

The time is 11:45 a.m. at Camp Marmal in North Afghanistan. There is a flurry of activity on the ring road opposite the OC, GAF Ground Combat Support Squadron. Several Wolf off-road vehicles drive up and their drivers start to remove the tarp tops. Other soldiers are putting on their warm winter caps and gloves, getting ready for their patrol to the village of Ala Schapan.

2nd. Lt. Jann B, the patrol leader, unfolds a map on the bonnet of his Wolf and takes some notes while having a last smoke. Gradually, the men cluster around the vehicle, taking their writing things out of their pockets and waiting for their orders. "We're complete," reports the deputy patrol leader.

"Everybody listen. My orders are to do a humint patrol to Ala Schapan and liaise with the local mullah," the 2nd. Lt. announces. Vehicle spacing, nicknames, fire control order according to the Rules of Engagement, he forgets nothing. After all, his men must know precisely what is at stake and what they have to do.

The patrol members are a closely-knit team. They know they can depend on each other. In the course of their stay in Afghanistan they have done this patrol together more than 20 times – but still they leave nothing to chance, nothing must ever become a matter of routine.

"Mount, we move off in two minutes," orders the patrol leader. The vehicles are started up and the first vehicle starts moving at noon on the dot. The vehicle commanders report, one after the other, via radio: "Two following, three following, four following."

Just under 20 minutes later they reach their first intermediate destination. The drivers stop their vehicles, the men dismount and immediately take up all-round security with obvious professional skill. They know their job, each of them. It does not take long and the first curious children start gathering around the vehicles. Still a bit shy initially, they slowly come closer. Have the German ISAF soldiers brought anything for us? 2nd. Lt. B. takes a green plastic bag from his vehicle. The children are watching him closely. When he begins to hand out crayons and drawing books, the children's eyes light up. In the background, there are the two seesaws and the climbing frame erected by the previous contingent. After a brief talk – translated by the interpreter – with the men who have meanwhile also come along, the soldiers continue their trip to Ala Schapan.

On their way they have to cross a minefield. Stones with red and white markings identify the safe lane. Stones bearing blue-white markings



indicate places where fighting had occurred.

After another 20 minutes' drive along bumpy dirt roads and past the odd isolated house with firewood stacked up in front, the patrol reaches Ala Schapan, a suburban estate east of Mazar-e Sharif.

The village consists of the flat-roofed, sun-dried brick constructions typical of the area, and a crisscross of narrow streets or rather small lanes. There are women dressed in their customary burqas, having a chat or buying food in one of the small shops. In front of what is supposedly a butcher's shop, there is a sheep hanging head-first, suspended from a rafter. The blood leaking from the body forms a pool in the dust underneath. Children interrupt their play and wave to the soldiers. Some follow the convoy, running alongside the vehicles for a while with their thumbs pointing upward. They are obviously glad to see the patrol arrive – the soldiers have become a familiar sight and the children have learned to trust them. A young girl with a cartload of scrap metal is standing at the roadside, waiting for her father.

The patrol comes to a halt in a narrow lane opposite the mosque. Immediately the soldiers are surrounded by a horde of children. Some are wearing warm winterjackets, others only thin, light clothes. Despite the biting cold, many of them only wear rubber slippers on their bare feet. Only very few are wearing socks.

Accompanied by three security soldiers and the interpreter, the patrol leader liaises with the mullah. The mullah has slipped on a brown wrap.



He is wearing a black turban and sporting a greyish-black full beard. The two men exchange amiable greetings. 2nd. Lt. B explains the reasons for his visit. Even though he is talking to the mullah in German, he keeps looking into his eyes. He had taken off his sunglasses beforehand. He deliberately speaks in brief sentences, which the interpreter then translates into Dari. The German officer explains to the mullah that he would like him to name four men who would then be employed by ISAF as range guards at the firing range. The mullah promises to provide the names in their next meeting. For a few more minutes they keep up a polite conversation before the patrol leader takes his leave with civility.

On their way back to Camp Marmal the soldiers take a few more breaks to talk with the population. The conversations yield vital information, information about the country, about structures and also about the difficulties the population is facing. Such individual pieces of information fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and eventually form an overall picture of the situation.

After covering a distance of 50 kilometres in almost four hours, ODIN reaches the Camp without incident.

## Multinationality is the solution

**Story and photo by:**  
**OR8 Walter (GE-A)**  
**PIO RC North**

On the 27 and 28 of November the Allied Command Operation (ACO) Medical Advisor to SHAPE, Brig. Gen. Dr. Hans-Jürgen Dick, visited RC-North to gather a general idea of the on-site health service support and the multinational cooperation.

hospital during a guided tour, which include a multinational medical team. As well he visited the German Medical Task Force and heard about the progress of the construction of a new German field hospital.

On the second day he visited the military hospital of the Afghan National Army (ANA) where he was welcomed by the director, Col. Asif Bromand. A brief orientation talk over



“My mission as medical advisor consists in coordinating the health service support of all the operations controlled by NATO. Meanwhile we have multinational operated and controlled medical facilities in the countries of deployment, most of all, however, here in Afghanistan,” explained Gen. Dick.

“The problem is that many NATO nations are no longer in a position to deploy a complete medical service all by themselves. We can only manage that on a multinational basis. It is simply indispensable to gain a first hand impression here on site to be able to better assess the situation in the mission country,” he added.

Following a brief at the Norwegian Deployable Hospital at Camp Marmal, Gen. Dick saw for himself the capabilities of the

a cup of tea was followed by a guided tour through the hospital. At the end of his visit, Gen. Dick noted that the ANA medical services still require plenty of support. They are still lacking transport for casualty movement and well-trained, skilled personnel. “Also in this respect, NATO can help in the future by rendering training support,” he concluded.

At the end of his visit to Afghanistan, Gen. Dick summed up as follows, “I have gained a huge amount of detailed information. For the time being, my intention was to make a joint situation assessment together with the ISAF Medical Advisor and the command surgeons of the different regional commands.

There is still very much left to do, but we are on the right track.” he said.

## Medicine and vaccines for Qaleh-ye Now hospital

**Story and photo by: Capt. Lopez (SP-A)**  
**PRT Qaleh-ye Now**

The Spanish PRT recently delivered some sanitary devices and medicine to the local hospital. This material was donated by a Spanish firm, ULIS.

Col. Roel, commander of PRT Qaleh-ye Now, a representative from the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) and the hospital administrator, held a symbolic delivery ceremony. The Spanish military contingent also donated some flu vaccines to the same hospital.

Qaleh-ye Now hospital is one of the main projects that the PRT is participating in and it is monitored by AECI. The current efforts are directed toward creating new facilities, improving existing ones, supplying medicines, supplying sanitary and medical material, managing the humanitarian aid that comes to the hospital and giving vocational training to the local doctors and paramedics.

This is the only hospital in the entire province and it has to provide health care throughout its 21,858 km<sup>2</sup> and to its 400,000 residents.

In every district there are only small clinics to pay primary attention to the local people. Non-Government Organization's such as BRAC are making a great effort to alleviate this problem by supplying medicine and medical material, delivering ambulances and providing medical training.

In addition, the Spanish contingent has convinced the local jail director to donate some of the jail's land to the hospital in order to extend the medical facilities.

AECI is working on this project with local Afghan laborers. The CIMIC team is working closely with the jail on a project to remodel its dining room, which also employs local workers. This is a simple example of CIMIC collaboration between the two parts of the PRT, military and civil.

The PRT is not only carrying out a humanitarian effort, but is also generating employment, vocational training and therefore, is accomplishing its mission for the reconstruction and development in Badghis.

In addition, one of the permanent PRT tasks is to support the provincial government in improving the health system.



# Surgery for six-year-old burn victim

Photos and story by: Gina Gillespie FMT PRT Farah

Mahsoom is a six-year-old Afghan boy. Sometimes he cries in the night because the burns he received in a house fire two years ago itch so badly. He burned the left side of his neck and jawline, leaving him unable to chew or speak well, and he has trouble swallowing his food. He is taunted by the other children. But Mahsoom's life is about to improve thanks to the help of two American soldiers stationed at PRT Farah.

In July, Mahsoom's father brought him to the PRT seeking medical help. There he met Capt. Jay Berendzen from the Civil Affairs team and Navy Lt. Afshin Afarin, a doctor at the PRT. But there was little they could do to help Mahsoom. Dr. Afarin took notes and pictures and contacted a number of charitable organisations, but to no avail. Shortly thereafter, Capt. Berendzen read a story in Reader's Digest magazine about a young Afghan girl from Farah named Zubaida, who had also been severely burned.

The story told of an American soldier who helped Zubaida by sending her to a surgeon in California for reconstructive surgery. Amazed at the coincidence, Capt. Berendzen sent an e-mail about Mahsoom to the doctor in the story, Peter Grossman from the Grossman Burn Center at Sherman Oaks Hospital near Los Angeles. Dr. Grossman answered back. He wanted to help.

Thus began a journey through reams of paperwork and bureaucratic red tape. Lt. Afarin and Capt. Berendzen were determined to fly Mahsoom to California for surgery. They sent e-mail after e-mail to a multitude of organisations seeking guidance. They needed money, a host family in the United States, a visa, a passport, a Power of Attorney and medical forms.

"All these hurdles were almost unbearable at times, but we just kept plugging away," said Lt. Afarin. "Jay would take a week and e-mail people, then

I would take a week and do it. Every time we saw Mahsoom, he gave us hope." During one visit Mahsoom shyly presented Capt. Berendzen with a small reddish-orange gourd. "He wasn't prompted by his Dad, he just gave it to me. It's been sitting on my desk this whole time, and now it's shrivelled to the size of a cranberry," says Capt. Berendzen.

The pair finally connected with Laura Mendelson, an agent for Childspring, a charitable organisation that seeks medical help for children in third world countries. Childspring had been through the process before, and knew what was required. Capt. Berendzen and Lt. Afarin estimate that Ms Mendelson's advice and experience compressed a six-month process into a matter of weeks. "The other day we filled out forms for three hours," said Capt. Berendzen.

After that, things began falling into place. Lt. Afarin visited the State Department in Kabul to

learn about visa and passport requirements, and a Power of Attorney was prepared.

In addition to following the bureaucratic paper trail, they also respected the traditional Afghan system of getting things done, obtaining a letter of permission from Mahsoom's father, and from the village Shura authorizing the child's trip to America. Unable to read or write, Mahsoom's father signed his name using his thumbprint. Meanwhile, the family, who live in a remote district of Farah Province, was struggling to get Mahsoom to the many required appointments. The family had no phone, so making contact was difficult, and each trip between their village and the PRT took 12 hours. Capt. Berendzen and Lt. Afarin paid the father's lost wages and travel expenses themselves.

Getting a visa for Mahsoom's father was one of the biggest hurdles they faced. As the months flew past, the poor labourer grew to trust Capt. Berendzen and Lt. Afarin. Eventually he agreed to step aside and allow Laura Mendelson to accompany his son to the United States.

"It is in God's hands," he said. "Right now people are calling Mahsoom names, so he is getting disappointed about the way people talk to him. When he eats, food comes back out of his mouth. This operation will be good for his life. Everybody is going to fall in love with him."

Three days before Christmas, Mahsoom and Capt. Berendzen boarded a



plane for Kabul, where Mahsoom met with Laura Mendelson for the trip to California. Mahsoom's father stood on the runway, a headscarf pressed to his face to catch the river of tears. "His father is putting ultimate trust in all of us, in America, in everything, to make his son better," says Lt. Afarin. Mahsoom will undergo six to nine months of reconstructive surgery at the Grossman Burn Center in California.

Capt. Berendzen is thankful that everything came together in the end. The Rotary Club of Herat

found an Afghan host family in California where Mahsoom can stay while undergoing surgery. Zubaida, the little girl from the Reader's Digest story will be accompanying Mahsoom as well, since Dr. Grossman wishes to follow-up on her case.

"A week ago everything seemed to be falling apart on us," said Capt. Berendzen. "Flights were cancelled, Zubaida's tickets weren't yet purchased, we didn't think it would all come together, but it did. Call it the Christmas spirit, I guess."

Dr. Afarin says that despite all the hurdles they encountered, he never doubted that things would work out in the end. "There is so much that doesn't go right in this country. This gives us the opportunity to say "some things do go well, and there are caring people out there. I'm hoping this gives Mahsoom not only his health back, but his Spirit. The child has a great Spirit," Dr. Afarin said.



# 43 motorcycles donated to local government workers

Story and photo by: Gina Gillespie FMT PRT Farah



**P**RT Farah recently donated 43 motorcycles to a variety of government departments. The Caspian 125 cc motorcycles, valued at \$410 apiece were distributed to the Governor's office, the Departments for Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Education, Economics, Agriculture, Sports, Mullahs, Refugees, the TV station, the Mayor's office, the Provincial Council, the Telecom Department,

and the Post Office. Representing the Department of Agriculture, Engineer Mohammad Aslam Dana said the motorcycles will allow agricultural extension agents to visit outlying villages and maintain closer ties with the farmers. "Before, when we wanted to see somebody it took two hours because we were on foot," said Abdul Rahim Rahimi, computer manager for the Provincial Council. "Now it will take

10 minutes because we are going to have motorbikes." In addition to the motorcycles, five truckloads of blankets, coats, sweaters and foods were donated to the Department of Mullahs and the governor's office. These supplies are part of the government's disaster management plan. The items will be stored in preparation for future disasters in an effort to decrease their response times.

# Kharmalaq MEDCAP

Story and photos by:  
Gina Gillespie  
FMT PRT Farah

The medical staff from PRT Farah recently took their show on the road, holding a Medical Civil Affairs Programme (MEDCAP) in the village of Kharmalaq. There are 1,700 families in this village.

The medical interpreter recalls a MEDCAP held in Kharmalaq two years ago. On that day they treated 400 people, but none of the women turned up. Although this time only six of the 212 patients seen were women, 37 girls were treated. "At least they were bringing their daughters in," said Lt. j.g. Warren Kennedy, a physician assistant. Eighty-seven boys were seen by the doctors.

During the MEDCAP, the Corpsmen set up a triage area in front of the schoolhouse. The children were sent home from school early to accommodate the medical clinic.

They de-wormed the children, assessed the patients prior to seeing the doctors, and handed out vitamins and Aspirin. "We're trying to do preventative medicine so the kids won't get sick in the future from bad food or bad water," says Corpsman E5 Ricky Elliott. "We're treating basic body aches and kids with coughs. It's starting to get cold out here. We're handing out medicine because the people can't get to the doctor."

Inside the school there was no electricity or heat, and no glass in the windows. A bitter wind blew through the classrooms, now turned into

makeshift treatment rooms. Navy Lt. Afshin Afarin looked after the women and Lt. j.g. Kennedy treated the men.

"Kharmalaq is my favorite town," says Lt. j.g. Kennedy. "It's green. In a place that looks like a Martian landscape, it just stands out."

In addition to the common complaints of headaches and stomach ailments, he saw two cases of children with Muscular Dystrophy, and a lot of children with eye problems. But what he noticed most was the children shivering in the winter cold, standing shoeless and coatless in the school turned clinic. "The most disturbing thing was watching the kids shiver," he said. "So one of the more important things I was able to do there was hand out coats and blankets to the children. I'd give them a new jacket right there or a blanket to wrap babies in, so I think there was a lot of goodwill and winning hearts and minds that took place."

In the women's room, Lt Afarin dealt with hungry children and concerned mothers. "This mother said there was no food for her little boy. I need to remember to bring some next time, some formula for the child. We don't normally bring any, but that was a concern," he said.

Outside the school Lt. Cmdr. David Hopper chatted with the village elders, asking about their needs and concerns. "They're really dependent on agriculture here. They have 40 canals, and all but two have dried up. That's what they need help with here, agriculture and water," he says.

Prior to departure, the Civil Affairs team handed out coats and blankets from the back of a five-ton truck.



