



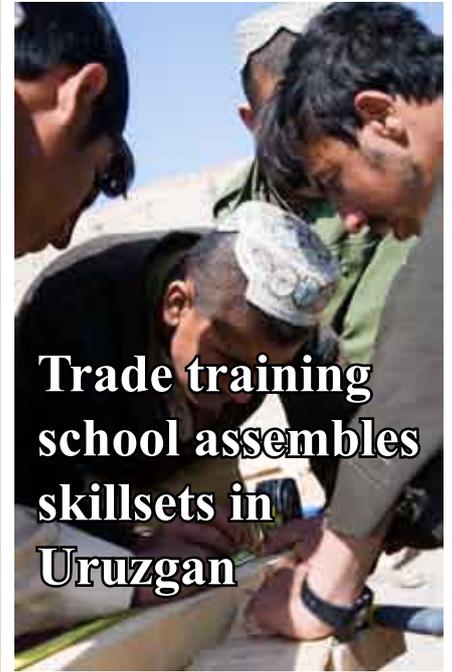
ISAF MIRROR

Issue 39 May 2007

Romanian Forces roll

on Highway 1

Building the future



Trade training school assembles skillsets in Uruzgan

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■ **International Women's Day**

■ **How surgery changes local boy's life**

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Cover



Romanian armored personnel carriers enter Highway 1 in Zabul.

Photo by Catalin Ovreiu

Carpathian

Hawks secure

Zabul

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Celebrating Women's Day in Qalat (RC-S)



Women in Qalat, Zabul province, celebrate International Women's Day with song March

8. *Photo by Captain Kevin G. Tuttle*

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Villagers in Pol e Khomri.
Photo by Sgt. Ruud Mol

OP Achilles update: 82nd Captures Taliban commander

*By Sgt. Tony J. Spain
U.S. NCE Public Affairs*

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- At the request of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's government, soldiers from NATO's International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan National Security Forces launched a major operation targeting Taliban and drug traffickers in southern Afghanistan March 6. Along with the RC-South commander's promise, "Operation Achilles" has been focused on bringing stability to the region.

"Operations will focus on improving security in areas where Taliban extremist, foreign terrorists and narco-traffickers are trying to destabilize the government of Afghanistan," said Major General Ton Van Loon.

"We also intend to empower village elders to take charge of their communities as they have been doing so in other parts of southern Afghanistan, without the influence of Taliban extremists," he said.

The multi-national force operating in the northern region of the Helmand province involves 5,500 soldiers, including 1,000 soldiers from the Afghan National Security Force and up to 1000 Paratroopers from the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division.

While many objectives have already been met, including driving the Taliban out of many areas where they were had previously attempted to terrorize local residents and stage attacks on ANSF and ISAF Forces.

"Operations will focus on improving security in areas where Taliban extremists, foreign terrorists and narco-traffickers are trying to destabilize the government of Afghanistan."

--Major General Ton VanLoon

es. The 82nd has played a key role in the ongoing operation.

"Our Paratroopers coordinated a convoy and night air assault in the Ghorak Valley of the Helmand Province," said 1st Lieutenant Mathew Catalono.

"The main effort is actually the British; we are a supporting effort to help isolate and prevent Taliban from escaping," added Captain Tom Reinner.

"This is the largest multi-national combined ANSF and ISAF operation launched to date and it signifies the beginning of a planned offensive to bring security to northern Helmand and set the conditions for meaningful development that will fundamentally improve the quality of life for Afghans in the area," said Van Loon.

Although Achilles' focus is on improving security conditions, its overreaching purpose is to assist the government of Afghanistan to begin reconstruction and economic development in the area.

"Strategically, our goal is to enable the Afghan government to begin the Kajaki Project," said Van Loon.

Van Loon noted the Kajaki multi-purpose dam and power house will improve the water supply for local communities, rehabilitate irrigation systems for farmlands, as well as provide sufficient electrical power for residents, industries and commerce.

On Wednesday, soldiers from the Afghan National Security Force captured a high-ranking Taliban commander and suicide bomb attack facilitator during the second day of "Operation Achilles."

Mullah Mahmood, was arrested at an ANSF check point as he tried to escape dressed in a burka, a veil worn by Islamic women here.

"The capture of this senior Taliban extremist is another indicator that a more normal life is returning to the Zahre and Panjwai districts, and is a testament to the great work the ANA is achieving," said Van Loon.

"Yesterday's security crackdown in Panjwai is an example of the ultimate goals of "Operation Achilles." With stability provided by the ANA, much needed reconstruction will commence for the people of southern Afghanistan," he added.

COMISAF holds press roundtable

*By Technical Sgt. Michael Voss
ISAF Public Information Office*

International Security and Assistance Force Commander General Dan McNeill held his first Afghan media engagement April 10.

ISAF X Commander's first media roundtable discussion gave the Afghan people a face to go with the NATO vision for Afghanistan.

He shared experiences of his visits to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in the North. He described in detail the beauty of the land and cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and ISAF.

McNeill detailed ISAF's use of PRT's to assist the people rebuild the country after decades of war have left much of the infrastructure in shambles.

"There are currently 25 PRT's in the country," said the 30 year veteran. "It is my suggestion to NATO that we have one PRT in every province in Afghanistan."

"We work hard so that our reconstruction and security efforts go hand and hand," said the ISAF commander.

A prime example of this is the success of the Kajaki Dam, added the General.

Using ISAF forces to secure the area around the Dam provides engineers the opportunity to examine mechanical problems, install a new hydro-electric generator and up the plant's electric production from five to 51 kilowatts.

COMISAF then turned the forum over to the more than 20 members of the local press. With confidence in the success of the ISAF mission he took in each question, and fired back answers and examples of how the ISAF and Afghanistan relationship are turning the corner against the insurgents.

"Just like I and the others who work at ISAF do our jobs for this country everyday, so must the people of Afghanistan," he said.

He left the journalists with a metaphor of an ISAF soldier with a shovel in one hand and an assault weapon in the other: "Either will defeat the enemy," he said. "Which would you prefer he uses? Sometimes, it may require both."

NAC visits Afghanistan



NAC officials arrive at Kabul International Airport April 16.

-- Photo by James C. Fidel

From staff reports

(April 19) -- The North Atlantic Council, NATO's top decision-making body, visited Afghanistan April 16-19. The Alliance's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General John Craddock, and the Chairman of the Military Committee, General Ray Henault, were part of the contingent accompanying the Council.

During the visit, the Council -- led by the Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Alessandro Minuto Rizzo -- held meetings with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and other key members of the Afghan government.

The NAC also conferred with international community representatives from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the European Union, G-8 nations and non-governmental organizations.

The Council also met with the Commander of NATO's ISAF mission, General Dan McNeill, and with NATO's Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan, Ambassador Daan Everts. It also traveled to various NATO-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Before concluding the tour, the Council held discussions with several Afghan parliamentary committees on matters such as security sector reform, border security, refugees, the rule of law, counter narcotics, the media and education, and human and women's rights.

ISAF troops foil ambush

From staff reports

KANDAHAR -- ISAF forces in Helmand Province attacked and destroyed a group of Taliban extremists April 18. The band were attempting to setup an ambush in the area to the North East of Sangin.

The attempted ambush involved more than 20 insurgents supported by 4 vehicles. ISAF forces engaged the insurgents using a combination of troops, helicopters and close air support.

"Since the start of Operation Achilles, ISAF and ANSF troops have engaged Taliban extremist forces on more than 250 occasions and these operations have been successful in eroding the enemy's ability to destabilize the region," said Major General Tan van Loon, the commander of Regional Command South, "This swift ISAF maneuver is tangible evidence of our commitment to ensure the region's continued development and to stabilize Northern Helmand," he added.

Australia increases commitment

From NATO staff reports

In early April, Australia pledged to significantly increase its military contribution to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. The decision was well received by the allies. The increase clearly illustrates the enduring Australian commitment to the security, prosperity and democratic development of Afghanistan, officials said.

Approximately 400 Australian Defence Force personnel are already contributing to a Reconstruction Task Force in Oruzgan province, working closely with Dutch forces to deliver reconstruction and community-based projects. The total Australian contribution should peak at nearly 1000 in mid-2008.

A Special Operations Task Group of about 300 personnel will deploy to Oruz-

gan province for at least two years. It will operate in direct support of ISAF elements. Its role will be to enhance provincial security by disrupting Taliban extremists' command and control and supply routes. These forces will operate under an Australian commander working within the ISAF framework.

NATO officials welcomed the new contribution, which underlines Australia's continuing commitment to supporting the Afghan government's efforts to deliver a stable future for its people.

US, NATO sign sign KAF memo

From staff reports

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan -- The NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency general manager and the commander of U.S. National Command Element (South) signed a joint memorandum of understanding here in mid-April.

Signing the memorandum were Maj. Gen. Karl-Heinz Muenzner and U.S. Army Col. Richard Stephen Williams. It is one of many steps in the official transition of NATO's Kandahar Airfield, the largest operating base in the south, from U.S. management to NATO.

"In multi-national logistics, cooperation is paramount," General Muenzner said. "It is a significant event when individual nations step back and allow an agency to take care of them."

Transfer of KAF is scheduled to be completed this summer.

SHAPE marks 40th at Mons

From NATO staff reports

Mons, Belgium -- The occasion of the 40th Anniversary of SHAPE in Belgium was commemorated at a ceremony in SHAPE cinema March 30. It gave officials the opportunity to recognize and honour 15 long-serving employees who have served at SHAPE continuously for those 40 years. NATO and SHAPE moved to Belgium in 1967 when France withdrew from the integrated military command structure.



Regional Command Capital

Erdem takes RC-C guidon

Commanders laud contingent's performance in capital region, impact on Afghanistan



Brigadier General Pierre De Villiers returns a final salute to his troops as he prepares to relinquish command of RC-Capital to Brigadier General Kasim Erdem (at right in the second command row), as ISAF Commander General Dan McNeill (center) presides. *Photo by 1st Lieutenant Serdar Eyiler*

By 1st Lieutenant Serdar Eyiler
RCC Media Ops officer

Kabul -- The Command of RC Capital, which was led for the last four months by French Army Brigadier General Pierre de Villiers, was transferred to Turkish Army Brigadier General Kasim Erdem. During the ceremony, which was attended by ISAF Commander Gen. Dan McNeill, De Villiers thanked the troops for their efforts for the fulfilment of the mission which was to provide security and stability in the capital and wished success to Erdem in conducting his mission.

Erdem thanked De Villiers for his great leadership and full commitment to the ISAF mission.

"I would like to start with expressing my deepest respect to those who lost their lives in ISAF operations. And I also wish peace and prosperity to Afghan nation," the new commander said, further emphasizing RC-C's commitment to advancing the gains already made in the region.

With Turkey deploying 400 more peo-

ple, the number of Turkish troops reached 1,150. The overall number of troops in RC-C, primary comprised of forces from Turkey, Italy and France, rose to 2,821. There are 13 countries participating in the region.

The change in leadership drew a lot of media attention, especially from members of the Turkish press.

A group of military authorities and Turkish journalists landed at Kabul International Airport the day before the ceremony to cover the event and see conditions at nearby installation Camp Dogan.

Just after the short reception at Dogan, Lieutenant General Akin Zorlu, accompanied by journalists, paid brief visits to Afghan authorities in Kabul, receiving a warm welcome.

Many guests and authorities from ANA, KCP, NDS, Ambassadors, Military attaches, representatives from ISAF HQ and Coalition Forces also were in attendance at the ceremony.

RC-Capital

- Headquartered at Camp Warehouse in Kabul
- 2,821 troops, from 13 different nations

"I would like to start with expressing my deepest respect to those who lost their lives in ISAF operations. And I also wish peace and prosperity to the Afghan nation,"

-- RC-C Commander
Brigadier General
Kasim Erdem



Operation Achilles spurs another season of development and reconstruction

U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopters conduct airlift operations in RC-South recently. *Photo by Catalin Orveiu*

*By Technical Sgt. Jim Fisher
ISAF Public Information Office*

The Afghan people have endured tough times for decades, and the development and reconstruction needed to “get them on their feet again” is a long-term undertaking, according to ISAF’s Regional Command South Commander, Royal Army of the Netherlands Maj. Gen. Ton Van Loon.

“Afghanistan has had a very harsh past, and many very troubled years, and it will take some time to get this country on its feet again. So for that reason, we have to look at long term development and how the soldiers can support the government of Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan,” the general said.

The commander of ISAF’s most volatile region launched a major operation aimed at facilitating this kind of support March 6. Operation Achilles, which includes all forces and countries in ISAF’s RC-South and is concentrated in Northern Helmand, is a comprehensive undertaking aimed at ending the Taliban’s efforts to stifle reconstruction and development, according to Van Loon.

“Operation Achilles will eventually involve over 4,500 NATO troops and close to 1,000 [Afghan National Security Forces] personnel,” the commander said, at a news conference after the onset of operations.

The operation is the beginning of a major offensive, and the largest in NATO history.

“This is the largest combined ANSF and ISAF operation launched to date,”

Van Loon said. “It signifies the beginning of a planned offensive to bring security to Northern Helmand and set the conditions for meaningful development that will fundamentally improve the quality of life for Afghans in the area.”

The operation is being conducted at the request of the Afghan government, and is focused on improving security in areas where the Taliban extremists, narco-traffickers and other groups trying to de-stabilize the government, ISAF said in a statement.

These forces have been hard at work in Helmand province, which is also host to some exemplary cooperative development activities, where ISAF troops are supporting Provincial Reconstruction Teams and non-governmental organizations to fundamentally improve the quality of life for people in the region.

A record of Taliban activity in the province in recent months shows numerous attempts to disrupt projects like the revitalization of the poorly-functioning Kajaki Dam. The project, which will give power and irrigation resources to more than 1.8 million people in region, has been under attack almost from its inception.

The Kajaki Dam symbolizes that ISAF is striving to assist the government of Afghanistan in delivering to its citizens’ prosperity and freedom from being terrorized by the Taliban, Van Loon explained.

“For the people of Northern Helmand who are fed up with being trapped between the Taliban, foreign terrorists and drug lords, this operation is for you.”

Final charge for homeward-bound Royal Marines

Compiled from staff reports

British Royal Marine Commandos took part in their final ISAF mission recently before returning home.

Because of their experience and local knowledge, the homecoming of 42 Commando, 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery and 59 Independent Commando Squadron Royal Engineers was put on hold so they could take part in Operation Silver.

The Brits battled alongside their Afghan, American, Canadian, Danish, Dutch and Estonian allies for nearly two days to drive the Taliban from the Sangin area of Northern Helmand.

The outgoing UK Task Force commander, Brigadier Jerry Thomas, described the operation as a great success.

“The aim of the operation was to clear the Sangin area and re-establish the authority of the government of Afghanistan to allow them the opportunity to create an environment in which reconstruction and development can begin. ISAF has now created that environment,” Thomas said.

After their six-month operational tour in Afghanistan, the troops of 3 Commando Brigade were in the process of handing over to their replacements in 12 Mechanised Brigade when the green light for Op Silver was given.

As part of the operations, the Commandos, together with the Estonians and the Danes, pushed southwards towards the Sangin district centre.

After conducting an air assault to the south of the town, U.S. and Dutch forces, supported by Afghan, British and Canadian troops, advanced north to link up with the Commandos who had experienced sporadic fighting in the town.

Caught between these two pincers, many of the Taliban fighters were forced to flee or face annihilation.

An ISAF information campaign warned the population of the imminent offensive and that they should stay at home. However, many decided to evacuate the town. By the operation’s end, Afghan Security Forces were securing the town.

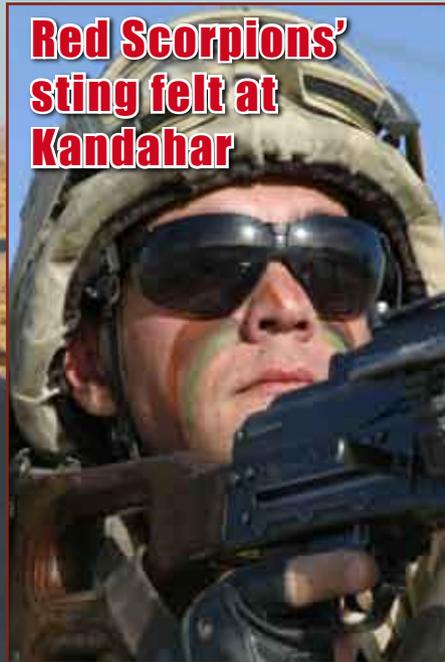


Soimii Carpatilor!

Romanian Forces roll on Highway 1, Carpathian Hawks ready to strike in Zabol province



Above: A Romanian Forces convoy patrols Highway 1 in Zabol March 9. Inset, a member of the Red Scorpions takes his post on the perimeter at Kandahar Airfield.



Red Scorpions' sting felt at Kandahar

Story by Technical Sgt. James Fisher
Photos by Catalin Ovrein

Staff Sgt. Daniel Fratostitanu, a perimeter sentry with Romania's 1st Company, 92nd Infantry Battalion, has to take on all the characteristics of his unit's mascot, the red scorpion. As part of the team securing the ISAF base at Kandahar, he must be alert, agile, and able to rapidly deliver a debilitating strike.

Like his countryman, Sgt. Maj. Sorin Cotoi must maintain a sharp edge to meet the responsibilities of his mission. As a squad leader at Forward Operating Base Varner in Zabol Province, Cotoi and his team of Carpathian Hawks are charged with convoy support at a remote outpost in what could be a dangerous and unpredictable location.

These Romanian NCOs are among the more than 600 Romanian forces serving in Afghanistan, most in Regional Command South, where they are charged with a series of vital missions. Whether from the Scorpions at Kandahar, or the Hawks in Zabol Province, they are making an equally

vital contribution, according to RC-South Commander, Royal Army of the Netherlands Maj. Gen. Ton Van Loon.

"What the Romanian forces are doing in Zabol is very, very important for the entire region," Van Loon said. Zabol contains a crucial segment of Highway 1 and the Romanian battalion is focused on keeping traffic moving. The unit, places hundreds of soldiers on patrols and in FOBs throughout the province. Keeping the highway open and the province secure is key to commerce in the south and Afghanistan as a whole, the general explained.

"Zabol Province is one of the areas where we are having success, and the Qalat area is flourishing," Van Loon said. "This is due to the enormous amount of work the Romanians are doing."

Keeping the highway open has people on the streets, going to market and participating in economic recovery and development, which is key to long-term recovery and stability for the Afghan people, the general said.

"[Qalat] is one of the Afghan Development Zones that has done very well, and the government of Zabol, together with the Romanian task force and the American Provincial Reconstruction Team and also the Afghan National Security Forces, is making a big difference for the Afghan people," the general said.

General Van Loon said that realistic goals for long-term development must be based on ISAF soldiers providing support to the government of Afghanistan and ultimately, the Afghan people. The work being done by PRTs, non-governmental organizations and the Afghan government will ultimately spell mission accomplishment for ISAF, he said.

Major Ovidiu Uifaleanu, commander of Task Force Zabol and the 812th Battalion, views his unit's task from a cultural and historical perspective. Full of seasoned officers and soldiers, his unit arrived in Afghanistan in January, and has previously accomplished tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is the major's first tour as commander. **(next page)**



Major Ovidiu Uifaleanu, commander of Task Force Zabul and the 812th Battalion, surveys the landscape from the high ground at Forward Operating Base Lagman in Zabul province.

“For me as a person and as a soldier, I think we are discovering a very different civilization, people and surroundings,” Uifaleanu said. “I hope our efforts to sustain this young democracy will be successful.”

Making life better for the area’s inhabitants is the goal, the task force commander said.

“We want to continue the good work started by the [preceding] battalion, and to improve the quality of life for the people in this province,” Uifaleanu said.

The battalion is working with ISAF troops from the U.S. to support the PRT in Qalat.

According to U.S. Army Spec. Gilbert Lamont of the 1-4 Infantry’s Bravo Company has experienced some of the accomplishments first hand.

“I went to the opening of the new hospital in Qalat. It gave me a feeling of really helping the people and making a difference,” Gilbert said. “That kind of thing can break up the daily drudgery of life at a FOB, to see how we are really making a difference for the people here.”

Spec. Gilbert works alongside several Romanian soldiers and said it’s been a pleasure.

“They’re nice guys, speak English fairly well and are really fun to talk to,” he said. Gilbert and fellow U.S. Army comrade Sgt. Gary Smith said they are impressed with the Romanians’ work ethic and experience.

“They are very hard workers,” Smith said, noting that several Romanian colleagues had spent nearly two years performing the same functions together in Iraq.

U.S. Army Maj. Christopher Clay, Major Uifaleanu’s deputy commander, said the unit, led by the Romanian soldiers is leaning forward.

“It’s been rewarding to see how they’ve

come in and been very proactive,” Clay said. “You hear about the quality of their officers being very good, but their NCOs are also really take charge. It’s been very interesting to watch.”

Also interesting is the cultural imprint of the Romanian forces on parts of Southern Afghanistan. At Kandahar, a landmark on the installation is the Orthodox Chapel constructed for troops there, replete with a spire modeled after centuries-old churches in Transylvania. In Zabul, Romanian troops from the Carpathian town of Bistrita, have renamed FOB Varner as FOB Dracula, after the region’s notorious Vlad the Impaler, the inspiration for Bram Stoker’s Dracula.

More important, however, is their impact on security. With traffic flowing on Highway 1, and a safe environment for the PRT and residents of Zabul, the Romanians are getting it done.

Fratostitanu described the responsibilities in the watch towers surrounding Kandahar. Together with the 82nd Mortar Battalion, his comrades are on point for the installation, thwarting mortar attacks to keep operations going, supporting the entire ISAF mission.

“We have to be vigilant,” the sergeant said, talking about mortar and rocket attacks emerging in his line of site just below the horizon. “They come from three- to six kilometers away. It could be very bad for this base if we didn’t see them and alert the base. We have to provide clear information to prevent an attack or intervene to make sure people take cover.”

Thanks to the Romanians’ agility and ability to deliver a quick and deadly strike, ISAF is able to deliver security and recovery for the people in Zabul province, and Southern Afghanistan.

“I think we are discovering a very different civilization, people and surroundings. I hope our efforts to sustain this young democracy will be successful.”

-- Major Ovidiu Uifaleanu



Staff Sgt. Daniel Fratostitanu scans the perimeter at Kandahar Airfield, March 7.



Passing on skills to build ...

TF Uruzgan Trade Training School teaches Afghans to put down the sword, pick up the saw



A Tarin Kowt resident learns basic carpentry and other requested skills at the Task Force Uruzgan Trade Training School.

Story by USAF Tech. Sgt. Michael Voss

Photos by Sgt. Rud Mol

ISAF Public Information Office

On the outskirts of Tarin Kowt, a small Provincial Reconstruction Team comprised of Dutch, Americans and Australians, known as Task Force Uruzgan, is making great strides toward achieving peace, stability and a better way of life for the people of Afghanistan.

One such example is the Australian 1st Reconstruction Task Force-run Trade Training School operated on Camp Holiday.

The school opened its doors in November 2006, giving local residents a way to learn in-demand skills such as masonry, generator maintenance and carpentry.

It gives students, some with education ranging from 6th to 9th grade levels, skills in areas that can be put to use in their own communities and daily life. To make sure the right people are allowed into the school, potential students are screened for

security, age and some degree of literacy.

“Most Afghans who do not learn a skill to become a tailor or carpenter would most likely be sitting in the bazaar selling things like cigarettes,” said Trade Training School Lead Instructor, Warrant Officer T.J. Watson.

Each student who takes part in the month-long class, earning \$3.50 per each day of instruction, begins with a Safety and Use of Common Hands Tools Introduction.

“When most of the students get here, it is totally alien to them, and the use of safety equipment is nearly unheard of,” said Watson.

The Generator Maintenance Course is in such demand that the school has purchased both small generators used to power small shops, and large generators, used to power schools or hospitals, as instruction aids.

The school announces class openings to the Tarin Kowt community via radio

broadcasts, but recently, instructors have noticed the success of students like Najin Blah has increased interest through word of mouth.

Each student, upon graduation of the 29-day course, receives their own toolkit to take with them. This includes a tape measure, hammer and other tools, so that along with the skills they have learned at the school, they can improve not just only their own, but the community’s way of life.

Because the Australians that teach at the school are aware that they will return home soon, the challenge is not to teach one Afghan, but to spark the teaching spirit in all their students. The real success is the passing on of these skills between the current students in their own community and future students of the school.

Eventually Afghans who have completed the course will become instructors for future courses, providing both continuity and a connection of the school and the people of the Tarin (next page)



Kowt community.

“We have five students who have successfully completed the course and shown ability to pass on information to their own people,” said Watson. “They have been taken on as local national instructors.”

An example of just this type of success is Najih Blah, an Afghan from Tarin Kowt, who started working at Camp Holiday filling barrier walls for eight dollars a day. He was later recognized for his potential and became qualified as an interpreter. Blah completed the Basic Carpentry course at the Trade Training School, and will soon become the first Afghan to teach other Afghans at the school with minimal assistance.

Over the course of the seven months Najih has worked at Camp Holland, he has managed to afford to take his father to Kandahar for surgery on his legs, and because of his success he has basically become the head of the family.

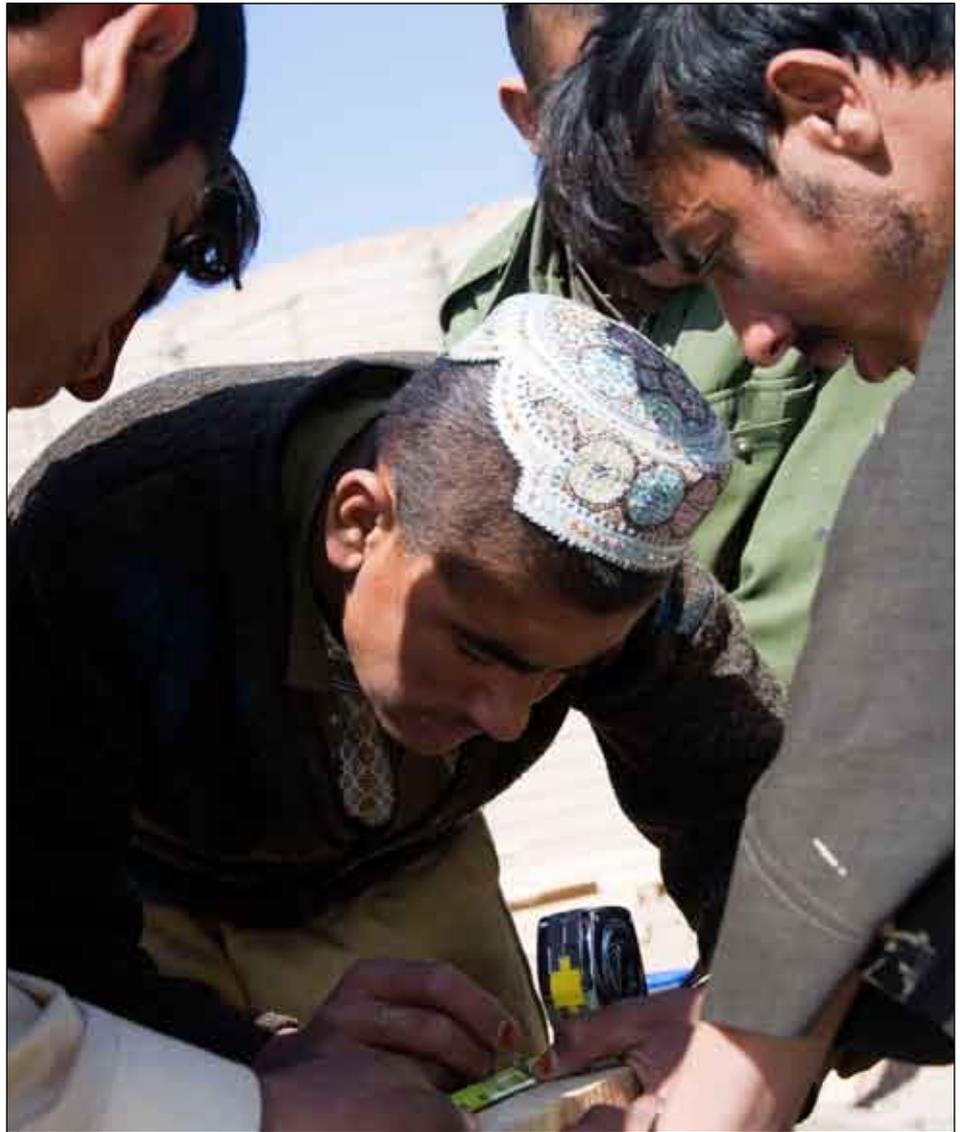
“We know that we can go in a secure area, and build or repair a site for the Afghan people, but when we leave, what was accomplished was minimal,” said Capt. Lachlan Simond, Public Information Officer at Camp Holland. “But when you teach them how to do it and become partners with the students, they teach others so they have a stake in it, then you have really accomplished something.”

One of the big PRT projects in Tarin Kowt is to reopen the public school. Much of the looted furniture is being replaced with new chairs, benches and desks built by the students at the school.

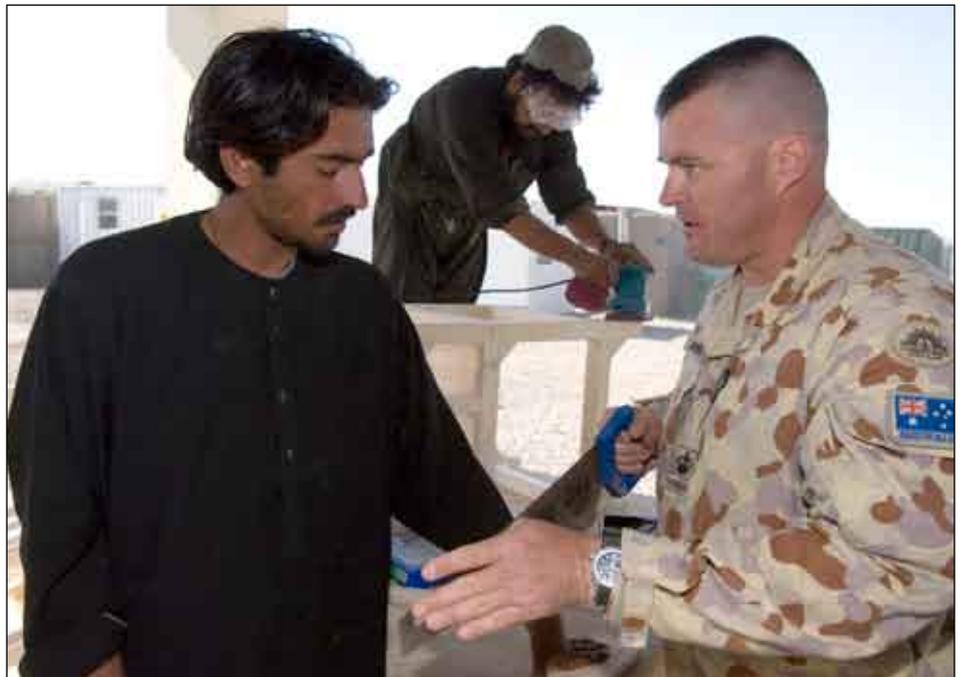
“Students who would normally attend school in Tarin Kowt but cannot because the school is damaged, come here to learn skills,” said Najiblah.

“This cooperation means the people of Tarin Kowt don’t view us as giving them handouts, but they have a real vested interest,” said Simond.

The continued success of projects like the Trade Training School are signs that the troops of Task Force Uruzgan reconstruction are fighting the same war, but understand that keeping the Afghans involved in their own future provides an opportunity to make great strides toward achieving peace, stability and a better way of life for Afghanistan.



Above, students work on preparing wood for the saw. Below: an instructor displays proper sawing technique.



ISAF troops at KAF give local children more than candy

Story and Photos by Army Sgt. Tony J. Spain, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Coalition forces held a free dental hygiene class and handed out humanitarian packs to more than 30 local children in conjunction with the weekly bazaar March 10.

Soldiers from the International Security Assistance Force passed out tooth brushes, tooth paste and water to the Afghan children. They then gave a class on how to properly brush their teeth.

“I noticed that a lot of the kids here all had brown teeth and that we give them a lot of candy,” said Chief Master Sgt. Mark E. Repp, Joint Defense Operation Center. “So I thought, ‘What can we do to mitigate this brown teeth problem?’ The obvious answer was to teach them how to brush their teeth and give them some tooth paste and tooth brushes,” he said.



Children at the Kandahar Airfield Bazaar use their newly-acquired toothbrushes and dental goodies March 10.

ISAF soldiers then passed out humanitarian packs consisting of sugar-free candy, soccer balls and school packs.

The event was coordinated by Soldiers from the Joint Defense Operation Center and the dental supplies were donated from Wing Commander Marguerite Reith, Dental Defense Service, British Royal Air Force and Dr. Tom Kelly, a dentist from Chapin, S.C. The humanitarian packs were provided

by Soldiers from Task Force Grizzly, said Repp.

“I am real proud of the coalition forces that are working here. They all come here with smiles on their faces, and they want to do the right thing,” said Repp.

“It just makes you feel good inside any-time you can help out these kids and put a smile on their face,” said Sgt. Sally Cook of the British Force Protection Wing.

The bazaar, a market where local Afghan vendors sell merchandise, is held once a week here.

“The whole idea behind the bazaar is a win-win situation for everybody,” said Repp. “It is a win for the local nationals who come in and sell their things and it is a win for all the coalition soldiers to come in and be able to interact with the local nationals.”

Repp noted that the bazaar has created around 300 jobs and provides a secure environment for both customers and vendors.

“A lot of these vendors will sell a couple of things and make about thirty to forty bucks, which is like a weeks worth of work for them,” said Repp. “It’s a good thing, this is where the hearts and minds are being won.”

Qalat celebrates International Women’s Day

*By Air Force Capt. Kevin G. Tuttle
Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team*

QALAT, Afghanistan – The women of Qalat felt secure enough to celebrate International Women’s Day here March 8 at the girl’s school, but stressed the importance of increasing security in the province, especially for women.

In an event attended by Zabul Province’s governor Del Bar Jan Arman, local Afghan leaders, the United States Agency for International Development and State Department, the Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team, the United Nations and others, several women reiterated that safety and security issues need to be tackled, in addition to women’s rights being increased.

“The women are now attempting to get rights, but the security is not good,” said Maryam, a 36-year-old resident of Qalat and teacher of third and fourth grades at the girl’s school. “I’m requesting ISAF and Coalition Forces to make security better so women can get their rights. Women’s rights are getting worse when we should be equal

and have more of a partnership.”

The Zabul Provincial Council’s secretary, Fauzia, who helped arrange the event for the women of Qalat, said her goal was to give women a voice for equality and a venue to express the sentiment.

“I helped arrange this celebration today because this is the holiday for women across the world. I wanted to do this so women could ask for their rights. We are trying to show the government that women are equal and can perform governmental positions,” she said. “All over the world women are celebrating this day. I’m really proud that our women are showing up and demanding better treatment in spite of the security concerns.”

The governor was pleased to see more than 70 women and girls in attendance and praised them for having the courage to come out in celebration of the special day. He said setting aside one day a year is not enough to show the vital role women play to society.

“Unfortunately, we haven’t paid enough attention to women and the enemy has

played a great role in keeping women down,” Arman said in a speech to the congregation.

“Saying that God is against education is nothing but lies. How can they [the enemy] argue that the rights of women are against Islam? These evil people just want to destroy our country by burning our schools and keeping oppression of the people high,” the Governor said.

Another issue women are looking to rectify is the right to choose a husband.

“A woman should have the right to choose who she wants to marry, not have it forced on her. We should be able to choose our husbands and be treated with respect,” Fauzia added.

Although this is the third year Zabul has celebrated International Women’s Day, it is the first time the event was so large and attended by so many key players of the province.

For the women of Zabul and across Afghanistan, that could be a good sign for things to come.



Zabul's first nursing students graduate



Abdul Khaliq Wardak removes stitches from a boy during nursing clinical training at the Zabul Provincial Hospital.

*Story and photo by Captain Kevin G. Tuttle
Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team*

QALAT, Afghanistan – Zabul Province, an area of Afghanistan in dire need of medical help, now can benefit from the Qalat Provincial Reconstruction Team's Nursing Assistance Program to alleviate some of the strain.

The 12 students who graduated in March needed to pass an exam given by the Ministry of Public Health, can now work in the Zabul Provincial Hospital as nursing assistants.

"The students are aggressive, energetic and eager to learn. They want jobs afterwards and want to work in the hospital," said Air Force Capt. Jaqueline King, the head instructor for the class at the PRT. "They've learned about pharmacology, minor surgical procedures, routine patient care, basic nursing skills and CPR," she said.

Besides two hours per day of lecture and classroom learning in the year-long course, the students also go to ZPH three times per week for nursing clinicals and hands-on experience.

"I think the program is a good one for Zabul," said King, deployed from Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. "It's a way to give them the education and have them put that

education back into the community. It gives them a sense of ownership."

When students attend ZPH, they must pay close attention to their patients' ailments because the next day during classroom time they have to present their cases to the class, King said.

"We do presentations in class, going over the cases we saw the previous day. The students present the cases and we look at what the labs are and if they fit the diagnosis. Then we go over treatment plans," King said.

"The class has broadened my knowledge," said 19-year-old Hedayatullah, a native of Qalat. "Not only theoretically, but also practical work here at the hospital. I enjoy the operations when I come to the clinicals. The first time I saw an operation, it made me want to be involved and learn more about it."

One of the youngest students in the program at 17 years old, Abdul Khaliq Wardak said he wants to be a nurse to provide a much-needed service to his people.

"The school has helped bring me to a level where I can provide services to the locals and this hospital," Wardak said. "The instructors are very knowledgeable and the local doctors have told me I've learned a lot by going to the PRT."

While it remains to be seen how many will begin work at the hospital, the foundation laid in their medical education affords the students a springboard for a future in the medical field.

"I would like to stay here and help my own people, but if I'm needed in other districts of the province, I am certainly willing to go. I'm in this program so I can help reshape our future and help my province," Hedayatullah said.

"I'm in this program so I can help reshape our future and help my province,"

--Hedayatullah



Dogs inspect goods at the KAF bazaar

Canines remain man's best friend in force protection

*Story and photos by Sgt. LeeAnn Lloyd, 22nd
Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan--Braum. Gromett. Sheika. Benny...

These are the names of some fighters against the enemies of Afghanistan.

Braum, Gromett, Sheika and Benny are canines with the American K-9 Detection Services, Inc., a civilian company based in Miami, Fla., sent to detect narcotics and explosives, the four-legged fighters are assets soldiers say are indispensable.

When Staff Sgt. James Crews, a wheel mechanic with Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 82nd Aviation Brigade, came to Afghanistan in January, he said he didn't imagine he would be pulling security at entry control points at Kandahar Airfield. The dogs have provided him an immense source of relief, he said. And Crews speaks from personal experience. Since his mission began in January, two attempts to get explosives onto KAF have been thwarted.

"There was a bottle on the side of the road where the trucks wait to enter. It was wrapped in [duct] tape. One of my wandering guys was doing a police call and all local nationals were in the holding area. He came across the bottle and thought it looked suspicious, so they sent a canine over to check it out. The dog immediately went up to it and sat still right by it," Crews said.

According to Crystal Greer, a dog handler, that is called a "passive response"—one that indicates the presence of a potentially explosive odor. In this case, the dog was detecting nitrates, and the object was successfully safed.

Dogs with these capabilities are definitely the best friends for the sentries posted at Kandahar and the people they protect.



Photo by Sgt. Rood Mol

ISAF troops in Uruzgan train ANA and ANP

By Technical Sgt. Michael Voss
ISAF Public Information Office

On a small portion of Camp Holiday, Uruzgan, the sounds of men's boots coming together, snapping to the position of attention can be heard, as a group of 52 Afghan men in their mid-20's are learning security tactics from Dutch and American troops at Task Force Uruzgan.

The group of Afghans, with a little

more training will become Afghan National Auxilliary Police in the Tarin Kowt area. Many of these men have little or no education and normally live peacefully on the outskirts of Tarin Kowt as farmers. They have attended training and taken arms because of the struggle they have found their country is facing.

By the end of the 14-day course, through the language barriers, the group will have learned the proper way to conduct vehicle searches, anti-riot tactics and detainment procedures.

Once they graduate the course they are not expected to actively seek out and engage the Taliban fighters; however they will be able to keep a secured area from falling into enemy hands, officials say.

Each of them learn weapons safety, marksmanship, and entry control procedures among other necessary skills. They also have familiarization classes on the Afghan constitution, patrolling techniques and ethics.

"Over 100 Afghan soldiers graduated

the class a couple months ago," said Jennings. "Those troops are out there working, taking part against the Taliban and their spring offensive."

Currently there are more than 700 ANAP deployed in the Tarin Kowt area. Many join for different reasons, perhaps ordered by town elders because the forces need more troops. Some join looking for work.

"The end goal is for these ANAP soldiers to be basic law enforcers in districts where there is not currently a lot of government control," said U.S. Department of Defence contractor and 25 year security veteran, John Newcomer.

This group of 50 cadets graduates at the end of March. The common denominator with all of them is they are willing to do their best for Afghanistan's freedom from Taliban extremists.

"The ANAP are not mean to attack, just to keep the Taliban out of already secured areas and they do a good job of that," said Jennings.

Australian Reconstruction TF completes tour

Story by Captain Haydn Barlow

A little more than a year ago, the Australian Government announced it would deploy members from the Australian Defence Force to Afghanistan to assist in the ISAF mission.

In September 2006, the 1st Reconstruction Task Force arrived in southern Afghanistan's Uruzgan Province. During their six-month deployment, the 1st RTF established a trade training school which developed a local skilled work force; undertook a series of quick impact projects which instantly helped local communities and delivered a range of complex engineering works to assist with the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

On April 8 of this year, the RTF's first commander, Australian Lieutenant Colonel Mick Ryan passed command of the RTF to fellow engineer, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Jarvie.

The ADF's commander in the Middle East, Brigadier Mick Crane, praised the work and accomplishments of the 1st RTF.

"As their tour in Uruzgan province, Afghanistan, draws to a close, I congratulate the commanding officer and all ranks of the 1st Reconstruction Task Force on a job

very well done.

"When they entered the Middle East Area of Operations in September 2006, they confronted a daunting range of tasks. Before they could commence operations, they had to establish themselves in an austere forward operating base. They also had to develop a working relationship with a new partner, The Netherlands, and form an understanding of the International Security Assistance Force environment in which they would be working. Only then would they be free to focus on the complex engineering reconstruction missions assigned to them," Crane added.

Rapid adaptation paved the way for success, Crane explained.

"The men and women of the 1st RTF succeeded magnificently in these endeavours, they quickly came to grips with their surroundings and learned to work with their Dutch counterparts. Before they were fully settled, they quickly established a trade training school for Afghans, which continues to generate a skilled workforce for the local economy and is now housed in a purpose-designed facility. They built trust in the villages of Uruzgan with their quick impact projects. And they delivered a range of more complex engineering works

while initiating others for their successors to complete," Crane said.

The success cemented their role as ambassadors in the region, and in the lore of the ADF, he said.

"They have been outstanding ambassadors for Australia and have made a key contribution to restoring security and stability in Afghanistan. Their achievements have been of the highest order and are in accordance with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force," Crane said.

Lieutenant Colonel Jarvie and his team will continue to build on the progress made by the 1st Reconstruction Task Force. Later this year, the RTF will be joined in Uruzgan province by an Australian Special Operations Task Group, consisting of around 300 special forces personnel. They will enhance provincial security by working to disrupt Taliban extremists' command and control and routes of supply in remote areas, officials said.

These disruption activities will directly support the RTF's reconstruction efforts, support the development of the Afghan National Security Forces and reinforce the legitimacy of the Afghan Government, they said.



PRT Farah gets new CG

Story by Gina Gillespie
PRT Farah

PRT Farah is under new leadership following the transfer of authority ceremony April 7. The Farah guidon passed from outgoing PRT Commander Michael Horan to incoming Commander Frank Hughlett.

ISAF Commander General Dan McNeill and RC-West Commander Brigadier-General Antonio Satta flew in for the occasion. Local dignitaries present for the event included Governor Mullah Mohideen Baluch, Afghan National Army Chief of Staff General Bismullah Khan, and Afghan National Police General Saqib Aga, Chief of Police for Farah Province.

Hughlett is a native of Sterling, Va. and a graduate of Virginia Tech where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. Previous assignments include duty aboard the USS CHOSIN (CG 65) home-ported in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; weapons officer and combat systems officer aboard the USS RAMAGE (DDG 61); and director of training at the Center for Surface Combat Systems in Dahlgren, Virginia.

While in command of Beachmaster Unit TWO in September 2004, he led the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander's Naval Support Element in Biloxi, Miss. in support of CJTF Katrina.

"I am honored and humbled to be here today in the presence of so many who have dedicated their lives -- and in certain cases risked their lives -- to advance the quality of life for the Afghan people here in Farah," said Hughlett during the ceremony.

"This tour provides me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work hand-in-hand with a diverse, and some might say eclectic group," he said. "I am confident that working together, we will most successfully accomplish our mission, by providing a bright and optimistic future for the children of Afghanistan and in particular Farah."

Outgoing commander Horan challenged the Afghan people to quickly bond with the new PRT and to continue supporting their work.



PRT Farah's Captain Jay Berendzen gives keys to Farah City's new education center to Mr. Atiqullah, director of education. *Photo by Shirinzoy Rabim*

Farah gets education center

Story by Gina Gillespie
PRT Farah

The rain failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd gathered to celebrate the opening of the new provincial education center in Farah City recently.

The new building, funded by the PRT at a cost of \$255,000, will be home to the regional education administration offices, and will have eight classrooms for training teachers. The new building came fully furnished, including computers and Internet access.

Previously, the teachers were trained in a school next door that they shared with students. This meant less space for the students, which is already a scarce commodity. "Several sections of the education department had to work in one room, including management, finance and service departments," said Mr. Atiqullah, director of education. "It was very difficult to track files and we were missing a lot of important files and records."

Azada, a student in the eighth grade, agreed that the new building was desperately needed. "In the past we had to go to a school to meet with the education director, check on our records or get textbooks. The boys would tease us, therefore none of the girls wanted to go there even if they had something very important they

needed to check on," she explained.

The new education center is unique in that lush landscaping and trees will invite people inside, rather than hiding the building behind security walls. On-site irrigation will allow for green space, trees and flowering bushes. Another unique feature is the Internet-enabled computer lab, which will connect teachers to information, opportunities and new ideas.

At the opening ceremony, PRT Farah Commander Michael Horan called on the citizens of Farah City to help keep their children safe by supporting the Afghan National Security Forces.

"While the insurgents conduct desperate and cowardly acts without regard to the safety of innocent civilians and children, your Afghan Army Forces, Police and NDS along with ISAF forces are committed to end the terrorist threat while ensuring that your children are guaranteed all the opportunities that this building symbolizes," he said.

The land for the new building was donated by the Afghan government, and the PRT engineers worked hand-in-hand with engineer Ahmad Shah Barak to build the centre.

The contractor, Nawid Bakhshie Construction Company, also built the PRT-funded school in Pirkandar.



Med center going up at PRT Farah

Story by Gina Gillespie
PRT Farah

Farah, Afghanistan -- A new medical facility is under construction at PRT Farah. Funded by CJTF76 at a cost of \$43,000, the completed building will upgrade Farah from a Role 1 to a Role 2 facility, once properly staffed. This means casualties could be brought straight from the field to the PRT for treatment, without requiring a further medevac to Herat.

"We decided if we built a clinic capable of surgery, they could fly in a forward surgical team for specific military operations, trying to reduce the amount of time that elapses between the time a soldier gets injured and the time he reaches surgery," said Lieutenant Commander (Dr.) Paul Johnstone, of PRT Farah.

The new facility will have an operating room with two surgical beds, an in-patient facility, two large triage bays, a lab and full pharmacy. Patients can access a basic health clinic through a separate door for routine ailments. Other features include floor drains for easy clean up, windowless construction for the safety of patients, multiple sinks throughout the facility, and an on-site shower. An interior window in the doctor's office will allow monitoring of the patients.

Since the arrival of the current PRT medical staff in April, 50 casualties have passed through the doors of the PRT aid station, with 43 of these casualties subsequently evacuated to Herat via helicopter.

From Role 1 to Role 2

Casualties will be able to be brought straight from the field to the PRT for treatment, without requiring a further medevac to Herat.

A boy's life-changing surgery



Captain (Dr.) Afshin Arafin (left) with Waheed, and his father. *Courtesy photo*

By Gina Gillespie
PRT Farah

Waheed's life changed forever the day he tried to reach a pot of boiling water from a high shelf. The scalding water burned his chest, face and left armpit, leaving him with limited mobility, and scars that would tear and bleed.

He cried all the time. But Waheed's life changed again the day his father brought him to the PRT Farah Free Medical Clinic.

When Dr. Afshin Arafin saw Waheed, he knew he could help. Following months of bureaucratic roadblocks and frustration, Dr. Arafin had recently sent another Afghan boy to America for surgery. That experience taught him that persistence and patience could overcome red tape.

The Doctor pursued treatment for Waheed in the same way, but things had become more difficult. Captain Ann Simpson, a nurse stationed at Bagram Air Base, helped Dr. Arafin connect with the medical staff there. But then frustration set in as Capt. Simpson redeployed to the U.S., leaving Dr. Arafin with no liaison in Bagram.

"Things became very stagnant. Every time we got travel coordinated, something fell through, something would happen. It just went back and forth for months on end," he says. "I would tell Waheed's father to be ready to go next week, and then I would have to cancel it. This happened four or five times. It was frustrating for me."

"Waheed would never smile for me. When he got off the plane, he was happy. He was smiling, he gave me a high five,"

-Captain (Dr.) Afshin Arafin

But finally, he connected with Lieutenant Colonel Claude Hawkins, a plastic surgeon who agreed to perform surgery on Waheed. As a bonus, an Afghan doctor in Bagram for training was able to assist with the surgery.

"He got to see first hand the tools that Dr. Hawkins used, the skin grafting, the suturing. He had never done that before and he learned a lot of things, and was so impressed by how everybody worked together," Dr. Arafin said.

The surgery was a success. Waheed's range of motion improved significantly, a large part of the scar on his cheek was removed, and his skin grafts healed. Corporal Yeager from PRT Farah flew to Bagram to escort Waheed back to Farah.

"Waheed would never smile for me. When he got off the plane he was happy. He was smiling, he gave me a high five," Dr. Arafin said. "It took a lot of people to get this done. I appreciate all who were involved."



Children at Third District School in Farah. *Courtesy photo*

PRT soldiers support education with donations

Story by Gina Gillespie
PRT Farah

Paree is an Afghan girl who loves to study. Along with her five sisters, Paree attends a girls' school in the Third District of Farah City. They sit on carpets in overflow tents, since the school building has only six classrooms for 21 classes. But buying school supplies are out of the question. Her father's income is only 2000 Afghanis per month.

"That isn't enough to cover our living expenses, like food, let alone paying for school supplies," said Paree.

In an effort to help children like Paree, the soldiers at PRT Farah place a high priority on supporting education. The Civil Affairs team is supported in their efforts by private donations from the families of PRT soldiers.

Sgt. Joseph Paoli recently donated a trailer full of school supplies to the students at Third District School, and met them one-on-one as he handed out notebooks, pens, pencils, folders, paper, staples, staplers and stuffed animals. After seeing the poverty in Afghanistan first hand, Paoli began an informal organization entitled "Donations for Afghan Children."

Donations poured in from friends, and from schoolchildren back home, touched by Paoli's presentation to their class while he was home on leave.

"I went to the school and did a slide show for them and showed them what it was like in Afghanistan, and how the kids their age went to school, and told them what they needed. I showed them the school that the funds from ISAF built in Pirkandar," he said. He told them about the child he saw writing on a piece of trash because there was no paper. His network responded to his call for assistance, and boxes of school supplies soon arrived in the mail.

Other members of the PRT followed suit, and received more of what the children needed.

Heat stress and your body

Dr. Paul Rockswold, MD
ISAF HQ Deputy Medical Director

Body Temperature Control

Our body temperatures remain steady in a fluctuating world. The outside temperatures can typically range 100-140° F throughout a year. It can easily change 30-60° F in a single day. In rapidly changing conditions, the body may struggle to adapt. This is medically called "hypothermia." Insufficient heat loss results in a high core body temperature called "hyperthermia." Despite outside temperature changes, the core temperature of our body usually changes no more than 5°C or 9°F during an entire lifetime. This tight control is needed so that the chemical processes of life occur properly and so that our proteins and other chemicals are not damaged.

Heat Transfer

It is useful to know how our body stays cool in the summer. Heat transfer and production are important factors. Simply speaking heat is due to energy in the motion of particles. Particles with higher amounts of motion are hotter and have more heat. Transfer of heat is important in controlling body temperature. This transfer is by a combination of three different methods: conduction, radiation, and convection.

Conduction is the transfer of heat when high energy particles contact lower energy particles and that energy gets transferred. Heat is conducted from the coffee cup to your hand. Heat is conducted from your feet to a cold floor. Heat may be transferred from your skin to the air of an air conditioned room.

Radiation is the transfer of energy from high energy particles to low energy particles by electronic waves. In this case no direct contact occurs between particles. The sun transmits heat to you through radiation. One's body transmits heat to the walls of a cold concrete bunker.

Convection is the movement of high energy particles from one location to another. Steam from a warm shower convects heat to the room. An air conditioner convects warm air from a room and replaces it with cold.

Heat adaptation

The body makes efforts to control its temperature. An individual can help or hinder these efforts. When veins under the skin relax, warm blood can be cooled off by radiation or conduction of heat from the skin into the surroundings. For this to work well, one needs enough blood volume. The blood volume can be increased gradually through the day by

drinking extra fluid and taking salt with food.

The body sweats when the surrounding environment is too warm for excess heat to leave the skin. The hottest water molecules evaporate from the sweat and leave the cooler molecules on the skin. The heat in the evaporated sweat is convected away. The remaining cool sweat conducts heat from the skin. The skin cools the blood, which then cools the body. Sweating uses water and salt, which must be replaced. The water and salt are also needed for enough blood volume to achieve good cooling from relaxed veins.

Obstacles

Surroundings: High temperature and radiant heat from the sun or hot objects cause the body to absorb more heat. This heat must be eliminated. Poor air flow and high humidity make the cooling mechanism from sweating less effective. This results in greater fluid loss. Restrictive clothing and armor can decrease the ability to eliminate heat.

Activity level: Higher work level requires more rapid elimination of heat. Carrying additional weight increases heat generation. This weight can be armor, additional equipment, or body fat. Periods of rest allow this heat to be eliminated with less sweat.

Body factors: Excess body weight increases the work associated with activity and results in more heat generation. Low blood volume may occur due to insufficient intake of water and salt. Alcohol consumption and caffeine can cause loss of body water. Insufficient food intake can affect the production of effective energy and result in less effective cooling by the blood.

Actions

Observe the following for heat stress environments:

- Acclimatize gradually by increasing activity and exposure to the heat stress environment by 10 or 15 minutes each day.

- Use the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) Index to guide maximum level of activity and work/rest cycles.

- Consider the effects of clothing and armor on heat retention (body armor adds 5.5 to the WBGT Index)

- Frequently sip fluids throughout the day, up to 1 liter per hour. The goal for fluid intake is to maintain light colored urine.

- Add salt freely to food when frequently in heat stress environments.

- Avoid direct sun when possible.

- Get sufficient rest when possible.

- Limit alcohol use.

- Maintain food intake.



Being there in a time of need



A young girl living in Surkhakkan Refugee Camp in the Qarghayi district of Laghman province lifts a bag of humanitarian assistance supplies with the help of an Afghan National Police officer April 4. The Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team and ANP delivered food, hygiene items and other supplies to 200 families displaced by recent flooding in the district. *Photo by Master Sgt. Robyn Fees*

ISAF, Mehtar Lam PRT provide help to flood victims

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Afghan National Security Forces and members of the Mehtar Lam Provincial Reconstruction Team delivered humanitarian assistance to people displaced by flood damage April 4 in the Surkhakkan Refugee Camp in the Quarghayi District of Laghman province.

The Laghman director of refugee affairs and the Red Crescent director identified 160 families in the camp in need of humanitarian assistance. An additional 40 families were identified by name in the area outside the camp.

Laghman officials coordinated with

village elders for the assistance drop. Officials and elders arranged for one representative from each recognized family to be present to receive their aid.

Supplies distributed during the event included food items such as rice, beans, oil and flour, as well as personal hygiene items and blankets.

According to PRT leaders, the drop was Afghan-led with Afghan National Policemen playing a leading role in coordination, distribution and security efforts.

“The Provincial Reconstruction Team stepped back for ANP to take the lead on this humanitarian assistance visit,” said Army Maj. Patrick Brennan, officer in charge of the Mehtar Lam civil affairs team. “They were also solely responsible for coordinating, managing and providing security.”

ISAF flood assistance

According to ISAF Civilian-Military Cooperation, hundreds of families were affected by flooding in four regional commands in April, including more than 900 in RC-West. ISAF troops were there to help:

- More than 1,250 families affected across Afghanistan, more than 200 families evacuated in RC-East alone
- 1,660-plus food kits delivered
- ISAF Engineers conducted damage assessments



Afghans, PRT celebrate Now Ruz with volleyball

*Story by Army Staff Sgt. Giovanni Caligiuri
PRT Nuristan*

KALA GUSH, Afghanistan – The early morning sun slowly rose over the rocky mountains, bringing with it not only a new day but a new year for the people in Nuristan province. In the village of Lowkar, excitement and anticipation filled the air March 21 for the first-ever sponsored volleyball tournament.

In a show of unity, 30 villages from the Nurgram district and the border village of Lowkar, located in Laghman province, entered a team in the three-day event in celebration of the new year. For the nearly 800 spectators and players, the tournament offered a brief escape from daily struggles to rebuild this war-torn region. Smiles, food, laughter and a sense of coming together were shared by all.

“What better way to celebrate the new year than to bring people together in peace and friendship,” said Lowkar Boys School headmaster and tournament organizer Fazal Raheem. “This would not have been possible a few years ago under Taliban rule, but with the support of the PRT in Nuristan, happiness can be seen on the face of the people here.”

Every successful endeavor springs from imagination, encouragement, and hard work. In early January, members of the



Players participate in the first-ever Lowkar volleyball tournament to celebrate Now Ruz. *Photo by Staff Sgt. Giovanni Caligiuri*

Nuristan PRT met with Raheem and Mohamed Agha during an assessment of the school in Lowkark. The idea of a volleyball tournament to celebrate the new year in March arose during the meeting.

In trying to come up with a way to mark the special day, a member of the PRT’s civil affairs team thought a volleyball tournament might be a good way to usher in a new volleyball court for the boys and girls school. Upon hearing this, Lieutenant Colonel Todd Brown, the Nuristan PRT commander, began laying

the groundwork for a tournament with Raheem and Agha.

Raheem and Agha agreed to organize the tournament while Nuristan PRT members support their efforts in any way possible. That support eventually came in the form of donations of food, blankets, tarps and 90 new International Security Assistance Force - Afghanistan volleyballs for the schools and each team participating in the tournament. In total, the PRT donated a lot of humanitarian aid to those in attendance of the big event.

“The tournament is the culmination of the hard work of Mr. Raheem and Mr. Agha and their staff. It is great to see the positive effect such an event has on people who live such difficult lives in very harsh conditions,” said Staff Sgt. Justin Cardoza of the Nuristan PRT civil affairs team.

Developing and rebuilding this war-weary country depends not only on building a viable economic, education, health and security system throughout Afghanistan but on establishing lasting friendships, officials said. Working together with the people of Nuristan, ISAF forces believe the Nuristan PRT is building friendships that will serve as the foundation for a successful partnership in a stronger, brighter future.

Laghman gathering focuses on provincial projects

From RC-East staff reports

JALALABAD AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The governor of Laghman Province and other key local officials, U.N. officials and leaders from the Mehtar Lam provincial Reconstruction Team plotted provincial progress during a development meeting March 23 in Mehtar Lam.

Gov. Gulab Mangal welcomed non-governmental organizations to start projects in northern Alishang and Dawlat Shah during the meeting, which focused mainly on projects currently underway in Laghman province.

Mangal spoke favorably about the state of security in the northeastern province and urged that NGO-sponsored activities begin promptly.

Jose Belleza, eastern regional director of the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, and several members of the U.N. Afghanistan Development Program

also participated in the proceedings. The U.N. leaders discussed issues within their departmental purviews and briefed the assembled officials on matters of local concern.

An assistance team from Kabul was scheduled to arrive in early April to help generate a provincial development plan.

Leaders from Task Force Spartan, the ISAF organization administering the northeast, expressed optimism about the level of Afghan National Security Forces, governmental and non-governmental cooperation coalescing in support of the people of their four-province region.

“The Laghman government has made significant strides during the last year,” said Major Eric P. Zenk, Task Force Spartan spokesman. “Governor Mangal has brought together a large and effective team of governmental, ANSF, ISAF, NGOs and international aid organizations to help

develop his province and deliver assistance to its people. The progress we’re seeing in large swaths of the northeast reflects the level of coordination, planning and participation of all the agencies working on behalf of the people of the northeast.”

“The progress we’re seeing in ... the northeast reflects the level of coordination, planning and participation of all the agencies working on behalf of the people of the northeast,”

--Major Eric P. Zenk



Regional Command North

Tornadoes roar into RC-N, Mazar-e Sharif

Story and photo by Herbert Albring, Chief Master Sgt. Herbert Albring

Mazar-e Sharif -- The German Tornado aircraft of Reconnaissance Squadron 51 "Immelmann" arrived in Mazar-e-Sharif safely April 5. The first of three waves of the jets, with Commander Thorsten Poschwatta on board, landed in Afghanistan as scheduled. According to an announcement made by the control tower, the first Tornado jet touched down at 14:20, the last Tornado aircraft landed at 14:45 local time.

The aircraft had been bidden farewell at the Schleswig/Jagel Air Base in Northern Germany by the Minister of Defence, Franz-Josef Jung, April 2. The Tornados of the Air Force covered the distance between Jagel and Mazar-e-Sharif as scheduled after having made two stopovers in the Mediterranean and in the United Arab Emirates. The aircrew mem-

bers spent about 20 hours in their cockpits to cover a distance of 9000 kilometres. RC-North Commander Brigadier General Joseph Blotz received Poschwatta at the aircraft immediately after touch down and welcomed him and his troops.

"I am happy and glad to have brought the six German Air Force Tornado aircraft to Mazar-e Sharif safely", Pschwatta said. "General, I report six Tornado aircraft of Reconnaissance Squadron 51 'Immelmann' to be in your area of responsibility!"

The Bundeswehr Operations Command placed the Tornado aircraft under NATO April 9. The Tornado aircraft were ready to fly reconnaissance and air surveillance missions subsequent to local orientation flights by mid-April. Then the German Tornado jets conducted reconnaissance missions with special high-tech cameras in support of ISAF.



The Tornado crews from the German Air Force's Reconnaissance Squadron 51 touched down to a welcoming reception at Mazar-e Sharif April 5.



Story and photo by Hans Didi RC-North Public Information Office

Mazar-e-Sharif -- Regional Command North's Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team recently received a new commander, with German and Afghan officials gathering here to participate in the transitional ceremony.

Afghan National Army General Naye-bi, Deputy Commander of 209th ANA Corps, who works closely with the OMLT, was among those receiving praise from outgoing commander Colonel Mathias Kohnen

In his speech Kohnen first thanked the soldiers of the Croatian OMLT, who had accompanied Afghan soldiers of the 209th to the southern region last year.

Kohnen expressed his special thanks to General Naye-bi. "General, there was not a single day on which you would turn down my official requests. Thank you very much for your hospitality and your willingness to accept my proposals," the outgoing colonel said. He specifically thanked the U.S. hosts in Camp "Mike Spann." After Kohnen said goodbye to his German soldiers, he reported to Brigadier General Joseph Blotz, who oversees OMLT's in the region:

"General, I report mission accomplished."

Blotz thanked Colonel Kohnen for his work. "You were faced with an enormous challenges which you excellently met," Blotz said.

The General released the outgoing Colonel from his duties and transferred them to his successor, Colonel Dietmar Werstler, whom he wished the best of luck with the new challenge.



New territory for ANA in North

MEDCAP puts soldiers, medics in remote regions

Story by U.S. Army Sergeant Margaret Nelson
RC-North Public Information Office

MAZAR-E SHARIF, Afghanistan—

Soldiers, medics, and medical officers of the Afghan National Army's 209th Corps recently engaged new enemies with a different form of battle plan.

The ANA medics have been combating the medical complications that arise from poverty and poor sanitation through Medical Civil Affairs Programs, and familiarizing people in previously unreachable regions with the ANA and their capabilities.

The ANA's 4th and 5th Kandaks have declared war against conditions responsible for claiming the lives of 600 children under 5 every day – poverty and poor sanitation. These adversaries leave 54 percent of their children stunted and 40 percent underweight, according to the latest statistics compiled by UNICEF.

Leveraging MEDCAPS and mentoring teams

Their fifth and most recent mission took the ANA medical staff and their U.S. Embedded Team Trainers, and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Operation Mentor Liaison Team members around 300 miles southwest of their camps in Mezar-e Sharif. The journey took them into non-paved, rugged, muscle-wrenching mountainous terrain. In some areas, Afghans riding donkeys passed them.

Their destination was a village (nameless for its protection) located in the Qaisar District. This is an area believed to be a recruiting stronghold for the Taliban, and a place where the ANA has never been seen.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to show our fellow Afghans that the ANA ... our government cares for them," said Captain Quamaradin, the head medicine officer for the 209th Corps, 1st Brigade.

Their intent was to provide medical assistance to the villagers of this district while their fellow soldiers in the 4th



Kandak and local police officers of the Afghan National Police provided security.

"What makes this MEDCAP special is that it was ANA-driven from beginning to end," said German Army 1st Lt. Andreas Draht, OMLT head medical officer and mentor for the 209th Corps. "The process of its planning, coordination, to its execution is the basis for all military operations," he said.

Draht explained the ANA soldiers in the 209th initiated those steps. They also wrote and published the operation order following their military decision-making process.

The ANA organized and coordinated security with the ANP and their 4th Kandak in Meymaneh, kept communications flowing with the Norwegian-run Provisional Reconstruction Team made up of ISAF troops also in Meymaneh.

"This MEDCAP showed us that when given the responsibility to perform on their own, they succeed," Draht said. "We are not just putting an ANA face on our operations here in the 209th. We have ANA-run operations."

The members of the "CMT" have become spectators. Their students have graduated from the classroom, to serving their fellow soldiers, to treating non-combatants off the battlefield, and within their own communities.

Afghans for Afghans

"It's very important that the ANA continue reaching Afghans in these remote locations. MEDCAPs are an important tool for the ANA and ANP to reach out and win the hearts and the minds of the Afghan populace," said Norwegian Forces Colonel Knut Drivenes Senior, OMLT mentor for the 1st Brigade. "Without the support of your people, it doesn't matter how strong your security forces are."

Relationships were being built on several levels, according to Norwegian Forces Captain Einar Berntsen, 209th, 1st Brigade S2 mentor, "What I saw was Afghans for Afghans. Trust was being developed between the army and police with the villagers; and between the security forces themselves," he said. "I saw the 4th Kandak Religious Affairs Officer communicating with the villagers. He was telling them that the ANA is a Muslim army which is contrary to what the Taliban is telling them."

Prior notification about scheduled MEDCAPS cannot be made due to security and safety reasons. However word of mouth is very effective. The news about this MEDCAP traveled like a wildfire throughout the area. Within an hour, hundreds showed up. Due to the overwhelming numbers and the time constraints, not all were able to be treated. (page 22)

(from page 21)

“Our villagers need our assistance. They don’t have access to medical care in these locations. I want to continue helping them. The ANA does care. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan cares. This is the best way that we can show them, when we are not fighting our enemies,” said ANA 1st Lieutenant Muhammad Zarif, 1st Brigade medical officer.

During this MEDCAP, close to 200 men and more than 100 women and children were treated. The common theme was diarrhea, gastroenteritis (stomach ailments) and vitamin deficiencies caused by poor nutrition. The ANA medics assessed the male patients outdoors, taking their blood pressure, asking about their medical histories and their chief complaints before being seen by the ANA medical officers. The ANA medical officers then further investigated their complaints, prescribing various medications and passing along advice on nutrition and preventative medicine.

The women and children were assessed and treated separately, behind closed doors, by a German medical officer and German medic from ISAF’s Regional Command – North, Mazar-e Sharif. Both are OMLTs. All the women remained veiled until being treated as their customs dictate.

“I am very proud to serve our villagers in this way and I am very proud of my medics,” Quamaradin said. “They did an outstanding job. I also want to thank the OMLTs, ETTs, PRT and ANP. This MEDCAP would not have been possible without their training and guidance,” he said.

Training value

MEDCAPs are ideal for other training purposes too.

“The 4th Kandak is actually a Headquarters and Headquarters Company made up of artillery, infantry and other types of

soldiers. It’s a unique mixture of personnel,” said ETT Staff Sgt. Bob Warren, senior 4th Kandak non-commissioned officer mentor. “This is the first time that they have pulled security like this and conducted crowd control operations, to include searches.” “This MEDCAP is a great training tool for them, and I’m impressed with how they handled it,” he said.

Additionally, the ANA and ANP were seen working as a cohesive team, showing evidence of the strengthening of the relationship between the two main branches of Afghan security forces.

“This was a great field training exercise for my men to practice what they’ve been taught. I am happy with them. They also worked well with the ANP,” 4th Kandak 1st Sergeant Samullah said. “We are here together with the ANP to protect our people in these areas. When we conduct MEDCAPs, we are known as heroes.”

The ANA are not the only students here

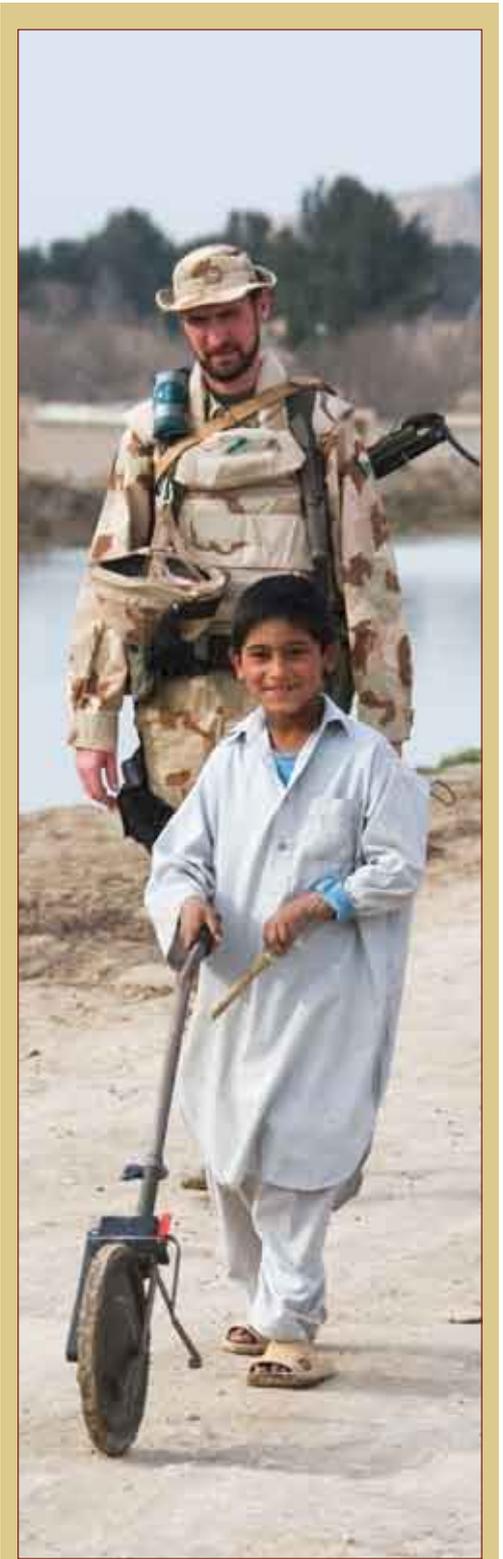
“This was the PRT’s first MEDCAP. Their eyes were open to the many benefits of the operations, and how they are run. It is important for all PRTs to establish relationships with the ANA and ANP in their area if they are going to succeed in assisting this country’s reconstruction efforts,” Drivenes said, adding, “The commander for the PRT in Meymaneh wants to know when the next one will be held.”

Partnership is the key

Draht said that viewing the ANA relationship as a partnership elevates the 209th over other Regional Security Assistance Commands. “We view and treat our ANA counterparts as a coalition partner. If all coalition forces did the same, our mission here would end more expediently.”

This was the fifth MEDCAP for the 209th. All their medics and all but one of their Kandaks have participated in MEDCAPs here. ANA doctors hope the concept spreads.

“The 209th is the only corps that conducts MEDCAPs with ANA doctors and medics. I hope this begins a trend with the other Corps,” said Colonel Mohammad Hasan Kohbandi, 209th Corps Surgeon. “Our medics have been trained by the best military medics that Germany, the U. S., and other coalition forces have to offer. Now they are equal in knowledge and will utilize that knowledge to help all Afghans and anyone who needs medical assistance.



Paving the way

A local child helps to measure a road prior to paving in Pol e Khomri April 17. Members of the Hungarian PRT there are focused on improving the quality of life for people residing in the region. Photo by Sgt. Ruud Mol

“We are here together with the ANP to protect our people in these areas. When we conduct MEDCAPs, we are known as heroes ,”
--1st Sergeant Samullah

Compass points

Women in the Romanian Forces:

A new portrait



For Romanian Civil Dentistry Doctor Nicoleta Ghimus, shown working on a patient at Forward Operating Base Lagher in Zabul province, serving in Afghanistan is “very rewarding.”

*Story and photo by Captain Marius Mihai
812 Infantry Battalion
Public Information Officer*

In recent years, women have been taking on an increasing number of roles in the Romanian Armed Forces.

Nicoleta Ghimus (pronounced Ghee-moosh) is a good example. She’s a civil dentistry doctor with a practice near Bucharest and also is a military reservist who belongs to a military unit based in Targoviste. As a result of the selection process for international missions, she was activated, and since January, she’s been a member of the 812th Infantry Battalion’s Carpathian Hawks. The 812th is now deployed to Zabul province in Regional Command South.

Her desire to deploy was piqued about three months ago, when Ghimus saw a documentary about Afghanistan that aired on the Discovery Channel. She received a phone call several days after.

“It was two simple lucky days and two happy sets of circumstances,” Ghimus explained. “One day, I was watching TV and I saw a documentary about Afghanistan. There was an Afghan woman trying to obtain a driver’s license. I was very touched by her efforts. Three days later, I was called by the chief of personnel who asked me if I wanted to participate in the mission in Afghanistan. In that moment I felt excited, and I knew that the mission

was meant for me.

The commander needed an answer right away, and she didn’t have time to consult with her husband before making a decision.

“I accepted the offer without my husband’s input because I hadn’t time enough to tell him. I had 15 minutes to make a decision,” Ghimus explained. “Later, I spoke with my husband about my mission and he was encouraging and supportive.”

She believes the mission has broadened her perspective and professional experience.

“Here, I have an extraordinary chance to do much good for all coalition forces. I feel better and I enjoy working with the multinational soldiers. These six months in Afghanistan helped me to gain a new respect for the Hypocratic Oath.

A passion for helping people is behind her deepening commitment.

“I love my job very much and I wish to be exact in my work, especially here in the international military environment,” she said.

After spending more than three months at Forward Operating Base Lager, Ghimus already feels a sense of reward and accomplishment.

“Maybe it’s strange, but I feel like a fulfilled woman for the simple fact that I perform medical services in special military conditions in a forward area. It’s an

extraordinary opportunity and I feel very excited,” she said.

Before leaving in June, Ghimus strives to endure and provide the best care to her patients.

“The challenges don’t scare me. For me my secondary purpose in the mission is to succeed in what was previously an area of operations reserved for men.”

“I saw a documentary about Afghanistan. More precisely, there was an Afghan woman trying to obtain a driver’s license. I was very touched by her efforts. Three days later, I was called by the chief of personnel who asked me if I wanted to participate in the mission in Afghanistan. In that moment I felt excited, and I knew that the mission was meant for me.”

-- Nicoleta Ghimus

