

DRAGOON Magazine

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CTF 4-2

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On the cover:



Road construction

PANJWA'I DISTRICT, Afghanistan

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth

First Lt. Tomm Hickey, a platoon leader with 229th Engineer Company, attached to Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) explains an aspect of laying down gravel for a road being constructed in the Panjwa'i District of Afghanistan March 28.

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DRAGOON 6

Col. Michael Getchell



It's springtime in Southern Kandahar, Afghanistan, and by the sounds of the weather reports back home, it's springtime there too! We are excited to hear of the unseasonably warm temperatures that are being enjoyed across the Pacific Northwest. Hopefully, it made for a joyous, enjoyable Easter holiday.

Yet another busy month is in the books, and with the advent of spring, the pace only quickens here. While the warmer seasons here perennially mean more enemy activity, the Afghan Security Forces have demonstrated that they are fully ready to take an independent stance toward securing their country. All around us our partners are increasing their operational tempo, the effectiveness of their patrols, and most importantly, their own confidence and competence. It's encouraging to be a part of this. The degree of pride that our Soldiers take in watching their Afghan counterparts rise to the occasion is indicative of our successful execution of the "follow and support" role that we are assigned.

The Afghan new year, known as Nowruz, and celebrated during the spring equinox, recently occurred. This holiday, forbidden under Taliban rule, was in full effect this year in Kandahar City itself, and also across many of the smaller farming communities that dot our area of operations. The tangible sign of progress and the diminishing influence

of the enemy in this region, stands in stark contrast to past years' marking of the new year. The legacy of those units –United States, Canadian, Romanian, British, and Albanian – whose commitment to getting the mission to this point, will never be forgotten by our team of teams. Likewise, the sacrifices of these nations most certainly will not be forgotten by the Afghans that can now relish and enjoy the start of a new year that promises to be better than their last.

The seasonal change also means that we'll be doing some "spring cleaning" ourselves. We continue to turn in vast amounts of property and material from across the formation. We are reducing, and in some cases closing, several of our tactical bases. Our first 40 Raiders returned home at the start of March. Our next group of Soliders, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, will join them at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. in just a few short weeks. While this redeployment of our first unit-sized element does not signal the Raider Brigade's wholesale return, it does indicate that we are taking proactive steps to align our posture to meet the requirement of a lessening ISAF and U.S. forces presence in this country. Again, we'll utilize our command structure in the Raider Ready Reserve at JBLM to keep everyone apprised of redeployment windows in the



months to come.

We look forward to a fruitful month of April and the many changes that it brings. Units are repositioning, Soldiers are acclimating to the rising temperatures, and morale seems to be higher than usual with the realization that we are starting our sixth month of this deployment. Our men and women serving this team are resilient and they are bolstered more and more by the strength provided to them from our network of family, friends and community partners that provide us with unparalleled support. Happy Easter, once again, and Happy New Year too.

**To the Objective-
Draagoon 6**



DRAGOON 7

Command Sgt. Maj. Oscar Vinson



Family and friends of the Raider Brigade,

Spring is now in full swing here in Afghanistan. Your Soldiers continue to push through the heat and work toward a more thoroughly trained Afghan National Security Force. Time is moving quickly for the Raider Brigade as we are also beginning the planning process for our redeployment home.

We have crested the hill of this deployment and have officially reached the halfway point. Soldiers of the Raider Brigade are demonstrating a drive and initiative that continues to impress myself and Raider 6 as we visit throughout our formations.

The transfer of several combat outposts and forward operating bases has been challenging, working out the logistical aspects and ensuring Soldiers needs are taken care of is of the highest priority. They are working hard and the achievements reached are a testament to their determination and drive to not only accomplish their missions and tasks

but also surpass what is expected of them.

As our retrograde processes continue we ask for your patience, understanding, and as always your continued support. There may be longer lapses in between phone calls home as your Soldiers move across our area of operations, there are many moving pieces to this process and it must be accomplished with purpose, focus and dedication.

Throughout this process the Soldiers of the Raider Brigade have continued on with their mission of assisting the Afghan National Security Forces in becoming self sufficient. Security in the area is progressing and we are continually impressed with the changes being made on a daily basis. It is clear that the ANSF are progressing every day. Each achievement made is a testament to not only the ANSF but to the Soldiers of the Raider Brigade.

The next few months will bring



new challenges to Task Force 4-2, there is still much work to be done and time is moving fast but I am confident in their abilities, they are the best and brightest the Army has to offer.

Thank you for your continued support, keep up the hard work on the home front.

**To the Objective-
Draagoon 7**



1/205 Security Force Assistance Team



“What’s the sound of the artillery....” are lyrics from a popular U.S. Army cadence. In this case, it was the Afghan National Army artillery creating the boom. The artillerymen from 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 205th ANA Corps and their Security Force Assistance Team were conducting their first live fire exercise. The live fire exercise showcased their new capabilities and progress toward independence.

Until now, the ANA had been dependent upon Coalition Forces for all fire support. Artillerymen were untrained and equipment was not operational. With the coming withdrawal of Coalition Forces, the ANA will have to provide its own fire support while it continues to fight against the Taliban. To this end, 1/205th Brigade, with support from artillerymen from 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, conducted an artillery training event culminating in a live fire exercise.

The train up consisted of several weeks of classroom and practical instruction on their D-30 howitzers. The ANA artillerymen had to learn how to manually calculate their ballistic data, fire control procedures, maintenance, and crew drills. In addition to this, equipment had to be assembled and tested. In the end, despite complications (Afghan artillerymen being trained on Russian howitzers by American Soldiers), the artillerymen were certified.

The final test for the ANA artillerymen was a live fire exercise,

scheduled to take part during a major clearance operation in the Horn of Panjwa’i. The artillerymen showcased their ability to provide firepower in support of Afghan maneuver forces. A total of 33 high explosive (HE) rounds were fired with twelve of the HE rounds fired in rapid succession during a fire for effect mission. In addition to the training value, the live fire was used as a show of force in support of ANA infantrymen clearing villages of Taliban.

At the conclusion of the training, the artillerymen had demonstrated their abilities to provide vitally needed support. For their achievement, they were given an Afghan flag by the brigade leadership. The artillerymen proudly and confidently flew the Afghan flag over their howitzers at the conclusion of the live fire. The success of the mission is a testament to their skill and national pride and is another successful step towards their independence. They have earned their right to be called the “King of Battle”.

SFAT 1/1/205 spent the last month conducting an intense training program for Soldiers of 1st Kandak covering counter-improvised explosive device techniques, reconnaissance, mortar operations, running a Tactical Operations Center, and the use of Intelligence in guiding mission planning. These training courses will aid 1st Kandak in sustaining operations after they lose International Security Assistance Force

support. As we enter the 2013 fighting season, the men of 1st Kandak are well trained, professional, and confident in their abilities.

The 2/1/205th ANA SFAT coordinated a counter-IED train the trainer course in preparation for upcoming operations during the fighting season. This course gave the ANA the ability to conduct its own training in the future, without relying on U.S. forces. The culmination was successfully graduating all 15 2/1/205th ANA soldiers with a ceremony attended by all senior leaders of the Manchu family, 2/1/205th ANA SFAT, and 2/1/205th ANA.

This month 3/1/205th SFAT promoted its team medic, Pfc. Jessie Mitchell, to specialist. Our focus has been on developing our Afghan partners in preparation for providing security for the Afghan New Year, celebrated on March 21. We are seeing great accomplishments from our partners and feel confident that following our departure from Afghanistan, they will continue to provide security in the Arghandab River Valley.

Advisors to 5/1/205th recently concluded two training events: map reading and basic ambulance operations. Both training programs were intended as supplemental training for Operation Strong Borders II. Twenty-four ANA officers attended the map reading classes. Of note, senior ANA officers stepped up to lead the class, demonstrating that the ANA is capable of conducting



its own training. Ambulance training focused on basic preventive maintenance checks and services of the vehicle medical equipment, and pre-mission checklists. Thirty-one students attended from 5 different Kandaks. The five-day training included two days of classroom, two days of hands on instruction, and one day of practical exercise.

The 6/1/205th SFAT continued to conduct its ANA Light Fighters Course modeled after the U.S. Army's Light Fighters Course. The 3rd Tolay completed two weeks of infantry soldier, team, squad and platoon training tasks. The 3rd Tolay, with 6/1/205th SFAT's mentor-

ing, planned and conducted combat operations as culminating events. The 3rd Tolay was successful in planning and executing company level operations and successfully cleared several villages and destroyed 29 IEDs. Throughout the training, instructors were impressed with the knowledge and professionalism of the noncommissioned officers, who stepped in as assistant instructors throughout the course.

The 6/1/205th SFAT with HHC, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment established the ANA Mortar Leaders Course. At the end of the course, the 6th Kandak will have certified forward observers and

Mortar Platoon.

The 205th Corps Military Police Company advisors continued training their Afghan counterparts. Training consisted of convoy operations training, M16 rifle training, and vehicle searches. Sgt. 1st Class Mendez, the team NCOIC, initially led the training until the company's NCOs took over. The Soldiers were deeply involved in the M16 weapons training, which will continue for the next couple of weeks. In the next few months, the MP Company will be trained in checkpoint and traffic control point operations, further moving the ANA toward independence.



Sapper father promotes sapper son

Story and photo by
Sgt. Kim Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – When Spc. Daniel Kelch, Jr. walked across the stage to receive his branch insignia as a combat engineer during his Advanced Individual Training graduation, his father, a sergeant major who was serving at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., at the time, surprised him by stepping out at the last minute to pin the insignia onto the lapel of his son's dress uniform.

Nearly a year and a half later, it was no surprise to Sgt. Maj. Daniel Kelch Sr.'s son that he was traveling from northeastern Afghanistan to promote Kelch Jr. to specialist, Feb. 27 at FOB Masum Ghar in the Panjwa'i district of Afghanistan.

The father and son are both deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Kelch Jr. is a combat engineer with 38th Engineer Company, Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division). Kelch Sr. is the operations sergeant major for 555th Engineer Brigade. Both units are based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

"Being I was in theatre and an en-

gineer like he is, I wanted to be able to give him his first promotion," said Kelch Sr.

The two men agreed that the experience of Kelch Sr. being able to promote Kelch Jr. in a deployed environment would bring them closer, not only because of the father and son bond, but also the military tie.

"He's one of the inspirations I had to join the Army, so ... him being here is very important to me," said Kelch Jr.

When he decided to join the military, Kelch Jr. followed his father's footsteps after seeing how much his father enjoyed being a combat engineer.

"I have the same mindset as my dad," he explained.

Even with their similar mindsets, their reasons why they enjoy being

combat engineers are different.

Kelch Jr. said he likes the excitement of looking for improvised explosive devices, while his father said he loves building things and blowing things up.

Even though the two simply spent the day walking around the FOB and hanging out, Kelch Jr. said he was glad to have some time with his father.

"I miss him as my dad," he said. "So, it was good to see family."

Should his son choose to stay in the military, Kelch Sr. had some poignant words of advice for him.

"Remember where he came from; we were all privates once," he said.

Kelch Jr. said he does not know if he will make a career out of the Army like his father did, but he is going to take it one day at a time.



Sgt. Maj. Daniel Kelch Sr. (left), promotes his son, Daniel Kelch Jr., to specialist, Feb. 27 on FOB Masum Ghar in the Panjwa'i District of Afghanistan. Kelch Sr., the incoming operations sergeant major for 555th Engineer Brigade and Kelch Jr., a combat engineer with 38th Engineer Company, Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division), are both deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

CTF 4-2 NCO receives fourth deployed promotion

Story by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – When Staff Sgt. Luis Santos found out he made the sergeant first class list in March of 2012, he jokingly bet his wife that he would get promoted during his unit's deployment to Afghanistan and that she would miss his fourth promotion in a row.

The half-hearted joke became reality when Santos was promoted to sergeant first class March 1, on Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar, Afghanistan.

With the strong support of his wife and two kids and a true love for his job, Santos earned the promotion.

"Sergeant first class is a very important rank," said Santos, a Ponce, Puerto Rico, native. "It means a lot ... not only me, but for all of us that are sergeants first class because it takes a lot of sacrifices ... to be here."

One of those sacrifices is being constantly separated from his family and never having them attend any of his promotion ceremonies because every promotion Santos has had has been while deployed.

For Santos, that specific sacrifice started after he graduated Advanced Individual Training to be an automated logistics specialist.

After graduating AIT, Santos went to Korea for a year.

When he returned to the states, he said he thought he finally would get to be with his family.

However, he received some surprising news when he reported to his next duty station, Fort Hood, Texas.

The sponsor from his unit who picked him up from reception told him that their unit was scheduled to deploy in two months.

"I reported in September 2004 and two months later I was on an airplane getting ready to go to Kuwait on my first deployment," said Santos.

On his first deployment, Santos was promoted to specialist.

During his second six-month deployment to Kuwait, he was promoted to sergeant and on his year-long tour to Iraq in 2009, he was

Being a platoon sergeant and leading soldiers has been his favorite part of being a noncommissioned officer, he said.

His enthusiasm and dedication to soldiers is something that Santos' wife, Yanira, said she could see.

"I know how hard he's been working to reach all his goals," said Yanira via telephone. "The kids probably don't understand, but for me, I know how hard it's been for him and everything that he has done."

Not being able to have his family attend any of his promotions has been hard for Santos, he said.

"It's very sad because usually when you get promoted, you get the opportunity to be with your family and unfortunately I wasn't able to have that opportunity," said Santos.

Though the newly promoted senior NCO has been in the Army less than 10 years and has been on five deployments, he doesn't regret the career path he chose.

Santos said he considers his promotion to sergeant

first class to be his biggest accomplishment in his career.

"The most important thing to me is to educate soldiers, and to lead them to be good leaders because the reality is ... we need to make sure we create good leaders so when we leave, our Army is going to be in good hands," he said.

Santos said he credits previous military leaders who helped him and taught him how to be a leader and his supportive family for making it as far as he has in his career.



Photo by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth, CTF 4-2 PAO

Staff Sgt. Luis Santos, the Afghan National Security Force Development Cell operations noncommissioned officer, is promoted to sergeant first class by Lt. Col. Bruce Moses, the ANSF Development Cell team chief, during a promotion ceremony Mar. 1 on Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar, Afghanistan.

promoted to staff sergeant.

Earning the rank of staff sergeant wasn't easy, said Santos.

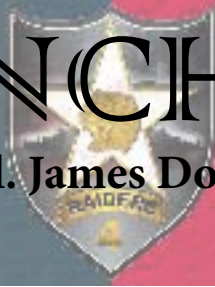
At the time, in order to get promoted to staff sergeant, Santos had to achieve the highest score possible on his Army Physical Fitness Test and qualify as expert on his assigned weapon along with other arduous tasks.

When he became a platoon sergeant, the successes of his soldiers reflected his motivation and love for his job and training soldiers.



MANCHU 6

Lt. Col. James Dooghan



Our Manchu Family,

We have continued to witness incredible progress in the Horn of Panjwa'i since our February update, and the men and women of Combined Task Force 4-9 have demonstrated why our task force has remained the designated main effort for this brigade.

With the onset of spring (in actuality summer in most countries!), the desert landscape has rapidly transformed with the growth of various vegetation that accompanies the season.

Mid-March marks the halfway point for the majority of our deployed Manchus and we acknowledge this time as a significant transition period for many of the families and friends who anxiously track every day until our return. We are already developing the framework for our redeployment to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. and the companies are diligently working on the retrograde of excess equipment to facilitate our return. We ask for your continued patience and commitment and please maintain contact with your Family Readiness Groups for the latest in specific dates for noteworthy events and

milestones.

In March, CTF 4-9 focused the majority of efforts in assisting the Afghan National Security Forces improve their abilities to protect the Horn of Panjwa'i as the conditions change with force realignment across Afghanistan. "Able" and "Torch" Companies devoted a significant amount of their daily activities this month towards the reconstruction of their Combat Outposts (COP) in preparation for its eventual transfer to the Afghan National Army (ANA) later this year. "Comanche" Company continued to closely partner with the ANA Company at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Zangabad.

C Co. also hosted an exceptional professional change of command for Capt. Logan Cole and Capt. Daniel Mitchell. We bid farewell to Logan, Kelly, and Grant, but only with the reminder that "once a Manchu, always a Manchu".

"Havoc" Company continued to maintain a high operation tempo by executing several Scout reconnaissance missions, mortar registrations, and oversight of current and future operations.

The Soldiers of 472nd Signal Company "Dawg" continued to

set the example by supporting the Raider Brigade with uninterrupted signal support.

"Peacemakers" significantly increased the capabilities of the ANA kandak staff to a level never before seen, and it has directly contributed to an increase in security and readiness of forces in the Horn of Panjwa'i.

Our "Ligers" continued to be the vital link between FOB Zangabad and all thing sustainment outside of AO Manchu.

Soldiers report spikes in morale with every care package, with every communication with loved ones, and positive news from JBLM continues to keep our spirits high.

We continue to encourage everyone to stay in close contact with your Soldiers, monitor our Manchu Facebook page for the latest in "releasable" photos, and support the exceptional FRG teams back at JBLM.

Command Sgt. Maj. Young and I are extremely proud of every Manchu Soldier who is serving this great nation and for those Soldiers who have recently committed to continue their service when our nation continues to call us to serve abroad.

KEEP UP THE FIRE!

Keep Up The Support, Keep Up The Prayers,
Lt. Col. James K. Dooghan
Manchu 6
Combined Task Force 4-9





CTF 4-2 S6 soldiers communicate through art on Masum Ghar

Story and photos by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office



Spc. Sarah Stimpson (left), an information technology specialist, and Spc. Michelle Delgadillo (right), a signal support systems specialist, both with Combined Task 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division), paint a rock inside the dining facility Feb. 22 on Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in the Panjwa'i District of Afghanistan. Delgadillo, a Miami native, and Stimpson, a Stafford, N.H., native, continue their interest in art while deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – Spc. Sarah Stimpson, an information technology specialist with Combined Task 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division), paints a “thank you” collage for the workers of the dining facility Mar.19 on Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in the Panjwa’i District of Afghanistan.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – When Spc. Michelle Delgadillo was younger, she went through a phase where she drew horses everywhere, she said. Now, the signal support systems specialist with Combined Task 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) draws infantrymen and Strykers.

“It gives me something to do when the day’s really slow ... [or] when I need something to keep my mind busy from what’s going on around us,” said the Miami native.

She and another Soldier painted the brigade’s deployed crest on two of the T-walls of her base, Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar in the Panjwa’i district of Afghanistan, and she frequently collaborates with her coworker and fellow artist, Spc. Sarah Stimpson.

Stimpson’s mother was a painter,

so she grew up with art, she said.

“There was really not a time I can’t remember not having art supplies around,” Stimpson said.

While she said she enjoys writing and reading cookbooks, art consumes the majority of her personal time here.

“I like making things pretty wherever I go,” said Stimpson, who grew up in Strafford, N.H.

“I used to farm, so it’s kind of along the same lines as seeing a barren field and then putting pretty plants and vegetables and things and making it better,” Stimpson explained.

The most requested artwork she and Delgadillo receive are commemorative deployment plaques made from recycled resources.

The two artists get a general theme or idea from whomever is requesting the work. Then they create a concept and choose any photographs, quotes

or colors that corresponds with the theme, Stimpson said.

Once the idea is set, they use acrylic paints and other art supplies, both brought from home and sent to them, and create art on old, wooden boards or particle boards, or in some cases, rocks.

Each project is tailored to the recipient and requires approximately five to eight hours, said Stimpson.

Stimpson said she did not mind using her own personal time to work on the art.

“I’d be painting regardless,” said Stimpson. “I like the fact that I’m able to give them something to bring home that they’ll really enjoy.”

Stimpson said creating artwork for others brings her joy; however, trying to choose which project is her favorite is impossible.

“They’re all my favorite,” Stimpson insists. “It’s kind of like having little children, little babies, each time.”

When creating art for herself, Stimpson said the inspiration comes from her own background.

“I like drawing from my life experience or wherever I am at a particular time and creating pieces around that,” Stimpson said.

Her main motivating factor for her art out here is so she has physical things to show her kids when she returns, she said.

“I have pieces at home from when I was little all the way up ‘til now,” said Stimpson. “It’s nice for me to be able to show my kids and I think they get a better understanding of where I’ve been and what I’ve done.”

Delgadillo and Stimpson’s unit is slated to redeploy to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., later this summer.

ROSSIER 6

Lt. Col. Chad Sundem



To all the Rock Family and Friends,

There is not a moment wasted by your Soldiers, as they continue to show courage, compassion, bravery, and brotherhood. The season here in Afghanistan may be changing, with the increased temperatures and colors of spring, but the dogged determination of Task Force Rosser continues on their remarkable journey to make Panjwa'i a better place

for all.

This month we say goodbye to our executive officer, Maj. Mike Condon, as he moves to brigade to become the new operations officer. While change is always difficult, it is a deserving moment for him in recognition of his selfless service to the Rock. With that, we welcome Maj. Stephen Dobbins as the new executive officer. Already on the ground and running, we are excited to bring him onto the team.

Know that the men and women

of this formation remained humbled with the honor of serving our nation during this difficult and complex chapter in her history, and are grateful for the bedrock of support the families and friends back home graciously offer us.

Today, we stand humble and proud as the Rock of the Marne.

Tomorrow, Let 'Em Come!

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bartlett and Lt. Col. Chad Sundem

Happy St. Patrick's Day Fierce Company Family and Friends.

March has arrived and is nearly gone, this deployment is moving along faster than we had expected. The thermostat is turning up in Kandahar, each day either brings winds, rain, heat, or a combination of all three. While the weather is a welcome change from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., rest assured we think about our families throughout our day to day operations.

Headquarters has been working diligently to provide quality intelligence to the platoons throughout their operational life cycle. Second Lt. Robinson and Staff Sgt. Mitchell provide an intel update before every patrol that is informed and applicable to their mission. They have been working tirelessly with

the Battalion S2 to prepare for operations over the next few months. In early March, both Capt. Ben Porath and 1st Sgt. Richard Deguzman were out for three days conducting an over watch with 1st and 2nd Platoon. They didn't get a lot of sleep, but their watchful eye kept the two platoons safe for the three days they were out.

First Platoon has exciting news: Spc. Justin Williams is the proud father of his first child, a healthy baby girl, Makenzie Rose Williams, weighing 7 lbs. 11 oz. and 18 ¾" long. In regards to missions, 1st Platoon has busied themselves partnering mostly with the police. They have established Traffic Control Points, helping the police control their area of operations and to become a more professional force. Your Fierce Company Soldier is an excellent example of leadership and professionalism for the Afghan Se-

curity forces here in Afghanistan. His tenacity, discipline, and quiet patience are qualities we try and instill in the police here every single day.

Second Platoon has spent a lot of time with the Afghan National Army in the last few months. They assisted them in clearance operations, training, and providing security while they clear their areas of operation. In doing so, 2nd Platoon has proved invaluable to the Afghan Army. While they are different than the police, they present their own set of challenges. 2nd Platoon has bit off as much as they can chew, have spit out results and are asking for more.

FORTIS ET CERTIS

**Capt. Ben Porath and
1st Sgt. Richard Deguzman**





Soldiers take fitness to limit in Dragoon Games

Story by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes
102nd MPAD

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Ten contestants from throughout Regional Command – South (RC-S) tested their physical limits through a fitness challenge in the Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division)’s Dragoon Games here March 24.

Contestants for the fitness challenge were given an exercise plan six weeks prior to the competition to become familiar with the exercises and prepare for the games. Several events were held at locations throughout RC-S to narrow down the field to ten contestants, the top five males and females in the brigade.

“Getting here was an achievement in itself because they defeated or beat out 13 other females and 70-something males to get here,” said brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Oscar Vinson.

Task Force Angry Vikings (2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment) ruled the day with both the male and female winners coming from their ranks.

Capt. Erich Roberts of Pine Mountain, Ga., posted a perfect score of 60 points to be named the “Fittest Male Dragoon” while 1st Lt. Christina Rath of Easton, Pa., led the women with 54 points for the “Fittest Female Dragoon” title.

“I placed first in the preliminaries, but we had some very strong athletes who brought their A game,” Roberts said. “It was a matter of

inches.”

The contestants struggled through six grueling events in 12 hours under the broiling Afghanistan sun. Contestants had one hour to rest between events. Events were timed and points were scaled based on placement. The first place finisher for each event received 10 points with last place receiving four.

The day began at 6 a.m. with a 4.1-mile run. Contestants were told the length of the run and did not know the course until lining up for the race.

“That’s part of the gamesmanship – pacing yourself for the competition,” said Capt. Tristan Manning, commander of Company C, 702nd Brigade Support Battalion, CTF 4-2, which hosted the competition. “They don’t know what’s next or what’s going to be required of them.”

The next event featured five rounds of several repetitions of the Turkish get-up, kettlebell swings and toes-to-bar.

The third event was a round-robin of push-press lifts of 75 lbs. for males and 55 lbs. for females, the rower, wall ball, high-pull lifts at the same weight and box jumps.

Other events featured a dead lift; round-robin of burpees to pull-ups, kettlebell snatches and several farmer’s carries down a 70-meter lane and ended with an event that included tire pulls, tire flips and burpees.

“It was pretty tough,” Rath said. “We didn’t really know what to expect next.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes, 102nd MPAD

Capt. Erich Roberts, with the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, strains to pull a truck tire across the finish line during the Dragoon Games hosted by Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) at Kandahar Airfield in Ka

Sgt. Nicholas Wohlers, of C Co., 702nd BSB, agreed that it was an extremely demanding day, but he was proud to have been a part of it.

“The competitors today were so fun to work with,” the Sheridan, Wyo., native said. “It made this an incredible day and I’m really glad I had the opportunity to meet and compete with every one of these gentlemen.”

Lt. Col. Scot Doboszenski, commander of 702nd BSB, said he was proud of all the competitors across the brigade who competed to be a part of the Dragoon Games.

“I think it’s been a phenomenal success,” he said. “I’m really glad we were able to pull this off because this does so much for soldiers. It keeps them physically fit because they are working up to the program; and it’s affected so many folks across the formation.”





Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes, 102nd MPAD

Soldiers assigned to Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) compete in a round-robin event during the Dragoon Games at Kandahar Airfield in Kandahar province, Afghanistan, March 24. The daylong, six-event fitness challenge was designed as a test of physical endurance.

Sgt. Nia Demarco, a Soldier with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division), flips a truck tire during an event at the Dragoon Games hosted by CTF 4-2 at Kandahar Airfield in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, March 24.



Photo by Spc. Nathan Fanton, C Co., 702nd BSB



Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Tynes, 102nd MPAD

Sgt. Nicholas Wohlers strains to set a new weight goal in the sumo deadlift event during the Dragoon Games hosted by Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division), at Kandahar Airfield in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, March 24. Wohlers, with Company C, 702nd Brigade Support Battalion, CTF 4-2, lifted 435 pounds to place second in the event.

TOMAHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Thomas Feltey



Greetings Tomahawk families and friends!

It has been about a month since my last update to you, so I wanted to fill you in on what we've been up to. It has been a very busy month, and there has been a lot going on in our Task Force. First, we successfully transferred Crazyhorse Company's home away from home, Combat Outpost Lakaray, to our Afghan National Security Force partners and brought Crazyhorse back to For-

execute the operation with support from us fully showed the positive effect our partnership has had on ANSF leadership. Now is the time for them to go on the offensive, and I am confident as we draw down our numbers, they will continue to take the lead. The Tomahawks have also been able to get some excellent coverage in the media, with several photos of Tomahawk personnel

ever for a family with a deployed Soldier; I emphasize now more than ever the importance of the buddy system, as we strive to maintain morale until our soldiers return home. The mission on the homefront is critical to accomplishment of our mission in Afghanistan. And while that time is approaching, we must be reminded that our mission is not yet complete, and we must carry on until the day we come home with our heads held high, and our mis-

"I am fully confident that when that time comes, we will return home ... knowing that through all our efforts we have made a major contribution to the safety and security of the people of Afghanistan."

**-Lt. Col. Thomas Feltey
2nd Bn., 23rd Inf. Regt. commander**

ward Operating Base Spin Boldak. The transfer has been a massive effort for both Crazyhorse and the Task Force as a whole, but we are glad to see our ANSF partners take the lead in that area. The first phase of Operation Southern Fist III was also executed early this month, and overall has been a huge success; in this operation and others like it, we are making major gains. In particular, seeing our ANSF counterparts take the initiative and independently

from the operation being picked up in major media sources, including TIME Magazine. Nevertheless our hard work continues, and we are as firmly committed as ever to our mission here.

On the homefront, the Tomahawk Ready Reserve and the Family Readiness Group remain steadfast supporters of the Battalion's deployed personnel. As we are now past the halfway point in our deployment, it is as difficult a time as

sion accomplished.

I am fully confident that when that time comes, we will return home to Joint Base Lewis-McChord knowing that through all our efforts we have made a major contribution to the safety and security of the people of Afghanistan.

Tomahawks Win!!

Tomahawk 6 and 7



Operation Southern Fist III

Story by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann
102nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan – Afghan National Security Forces assisted by International Security Assistance Forces began Operation Southern Fist III March 3, in the district of Spin Boldak, Kandahar province, Afghanistan.

The operation was designed to eliminate an insurgent infiltration route, known locally as the “Jungle”, that is suspected of being used as a stop over and materials collection point to gain access to Kandahar province.

Southern Fist III was the idea of the Spin Boldak district Afghan Border Police Quick Reaction Force commander, Lt. Col. Haji Janan, said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Kenneth W. Scheidt, a mentor and adviser known as an Afghan Hand who partners with Janan.

“He’s quite convinced that that area had been used as sort of a lay-over for Taliban affiliated elements to move further into the Kandahar province,” said Scheidt. “He is looking at this as being a way of mitigating the overall fighting season of the Taliban.”

The operation consisted of several events that lasted for 10 days and began when ANSF and ISAF forces linked-up on the first day to search pre-designated areas for potential weapons and home made explosives caches.

The second day started with ANA engineers using bulldozers to remove the trees and brush in the jungle while shuras, or meetings, were held at a nearby villages to allow

ANSF and ISAF leaders speak to and answer questions from the villagers.

The shura was important because it sent a message to the local Afghans that they can talk to the ANSF to help them get rid of the Taliban in their area, said U.S. Army Cpt. Derek C. Knapp, the executive officer of Security Force Assistance Team 10 comprised of members of the Texas Army National Guard.

To further connect with the local villages, the ANSF allowed the villagers to enter the area of operations to collect wood and brush as it was uprooted to use as fuel for cooking and heating.

“Almost immediately when the bulldozers started to clear the jungle they were already starting to pile the brush over to one side,” said Knapp. “The locals could take that brush, use it for firewood or sell to other Afghans.”

The remaining days of the operation were centered on the work of the bulldozers of the Afghan National Army, 205th Corps Engineering Kandak, who were formed and began training for this mission only six months ago.

“This is their first major operation,” said U.S. Army Cpt. Fabian J. Barrera, an engineer adviser with SFAT 4A, of the Texas Army National Guard. “This is a fast move for them with the little training they received to actually being out here doing a combat operation.”

The engineers were not able see the area before the mission but they were able to adapt to the environment and changes on the ground in order to make the mission a success, said Afghan National Army Maj.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann, 102nd MPAD

Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment provide over watch security for Afghan National Army engineers as they reduce brush in the area known as the “Jungle” during Operation Southern Fist III March 4, in the district of Spin Boldak, Kandahar province, Afghanistan. Insurgents use the jungle during the summer fighting season as an infiltration route and cache site.

Karim Daad, the 205th CEK executive officer.

“Changes were made,” said Scheidt. “They did adapt to them. They had coordination meetings.”

“Major operations, especially with complex equipment over long distances, do require a level of coordination and understanding of the overall environment,” said Scheidt.

Coordinating with each other and understanding the unique capabilities that each had to offer, the ANSF in Kandahar province accomplished much more than destroying an insurgent safe haven. They have demonstrated their ability to execute a major operation.

Operation Southern Fist III showed that with Afghan forces working together they can make an impact in their area of operations that mitigate the dangers of the fighting season.



Afghan National Security Force and International Security Assistance Force members meet to discuss the day's events in the area known as the "jungle" during Operation Southern Fist III March 5, in the district of Spin Boldak, Kandahar province, Afghanistan. Insurgents use the jungle during the summer fighting season as an infiltration route and cache site and the operation eliminated concealment.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann, 102nd MPAD



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann, 102nd MPAD

Australian army Cpl. Andrew Guyer, with 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and an Afghan National Army soldier provide security in the area known as the "jungle" as key leaders inspect the area during Operation Southern Fist III March 5, in the district of Spin Boldak, Kandahar province, Afghanistan. Insurgents use the jungle during the summer fighting season as an infiltration route and cache site and the operation eliminated concealment.

Afghan National Army engineers begin clearing the area known as the "Jungle" to eliminate an insurgent infiltration and cache site March 4, in the district of Spin Boldak, Kandahar province, Afghanistan. In the summer fighting season the area has thick vegetation used for concealment.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Hamann, 102nd MPAD



VIKING (6)

Lt. Col. William Downing



To the Soldiers, families, and friends of Task Force Viking,

We are almost at the half way point in our deployment and the weather is starting to heat up. The recent rains provided the moisture needed and farmers across the country are in full swing. The brown, winter landscape has given way to green agricultural fields and sprouting grape rows; a good sign that the clock is steadily ticking on our deployment.

Examples of the resiliency of our Task Force (here and at home) continue to amaze me on a daily basis. Babies born over Skype, a faded family picture in the windshield on patrol, handwritten letters from our young ones, and care packages filled with items only an Army family would know to send, constantly remind me of the uniqueness of our profession and the accompanying hardship that only those who are part of it can truly understand. We ask for no sympathy and we take care of our own – every player, every play.

The Task Force remains active with the successful transfer of two bases back to Afghan control, a change of command in Charlie Battery, hundreds of miles traveled on count-

less patrols, and too many hours to count spent conducting combined operations with our Afghan Police counterparts. Coordination with the unit replacing us has started and we are now planning for their pre-deployment site survey later this spring in preparation for our relief in place (RIP) in the summer. It is exciting (and easy) to think about redeployment but we must remain focused on the “inches” that will make us successful during the upcoming fighting season.

As senior leaders develop and refine United States strategy on how the military will continue drawn down in Afghanistan, you can expect to see Soldiers from the Raider Brigade return home earlier than expected.

While this is exciting for the families affected, it can be hard for the families of those Soldiers who remain in theater through their full deployment. For Task Force Viking, expect us to remain for the entire deployment unless you are told otherwise by your Soldiers’ company, battery, or troop chain of command. There will always be ru-

mors, and some information that is disseminated will likely confuse the situation, but if you check with your Soldiers’ chain of command before getting concerned (or excited), we will be able to confirm the information for you.

One date I can confirm for you is Sept. 26, 2013...the Task Force Viking Redeployment and Saint Barbara’s Day Ball at the Red Lion Hotel in Olympia. This ball will be open to all ranks, so start planning for it now. More details will follow as we get closer, but you can rest assured the Anger level at this event will be borderline dangerous...

I leave you with a quote that makes me proud to be a Soldier every time I read it: “We sleep safely at night because rough men stand ready to visit violence on those who would harm us.” You can sleep safely to-night knowing that your rough men, your Angry Vikings, stand ready to accomplish the mission at hand, remain focused on the inches needed, and will, without hesitation, visit violence on anyone who would attempt to harm our great country.

May God bless Task Force Viking, its families, and the United States of America.

Stay Angry,

Lt. Col. Will Downing

Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Kerns (the original Angry Viking)





Field artillerymen learn infantry skills in squad live-fire exercise



Story and photos by Spc. Loren Cook
20th PAD

JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash. - At Range 50, deep in the impact area and miles from the cantonment area or even a paved road, squads from the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's rear detachment trained for war in a three-night field exercise last week. Going on field exercises is hardly business as usual for most rear-detachments, but then again, this rear-d is far from usual.

The brigade has a fairly new approach to handling its rear detachment. Rather than each battalion maintaining its own rear-detachment stateside, the brigade has a Raider Ready Reserve (R3) acting as a collective rear-d.

R3 handles normal rear-d activities, such as handling Soldier, family, training, and equipment readiness. In addition, the R3 also counts the soldiers of G Company, 52nd Infantry Regiment in its membership.

Co. G, 52nd Inf. Regt. is the "reserve" in Raider Ready Reserve. On order, the company can send an element as small as a single fire team or as large as the entire company to

reinforce its parent brigade in Afghanistan.

The Soldiers of Co. G, 52nd Inf. Regt., most of them straight out of advanced individual training, must build and maintain proficiency in infantry tasks and drills in preparation for a deployment that could come at any time. It's an imperative task, especially since a great deal of the infantry company's new soldiers are not infantrymen.

"I was originally a cannon crew member with 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment," said Pfc.



Cory Carter, now a fire team leader with Co. G, 52nd Inf. Regt. "Seven of us (junior enlisted) and three non-commissioned officers were pulled from 2-12 to come down here and

train with infantry."

The Soldiers began their training early March 5 with a nine-mile foot march to Range 50. Soldiers brought only what they could hump on their backs or stuff into their cargo pockets. Once there, they engaged in three days and three nights of training.

They conducted day and night squad live-fire exercises focusing on the react-to-contact battle drill, practiced using a mine detector to locate improvised explosive devices, and learned some of the tactics, techniques, and procedures in use by the enemy in Afghanistan.

"This training is one of the culminating training events for us," said Co. G, 52nd Inf. Regt. 1st Sgt. Shayne Charlesworth. "It will test all of the skill level 1 tasks our soldiers should know, from loading, firing, and handling stoppages of their weapons, all the way up to moving as a member of a team and maneuvering as a squad."

"I learned some of this stuff at basic training, but some of it is brand new, especially with me being a new team leader," Carter said. "How to maneuver a fire team, how to make sure everyone is set up in a position to optimize their firepower – these aren't the sorts of thing I would have learned in the artillery world. It's a lot of new stuff on my plate at the same time, but it's a really good learning experience."

Some soldiers from R3 have already deployed to reinforce their parent brigade in Afghanistan. As the soldiers of Co. G, 52nd Inf. Regt. train and maintain readiness to deploy at a moment's notice, they learn a valuable lesson: Some may be infantrymen and some may be artillerymen, but all of them are Soldiers.



Fort Lewis Stryker brigade Soldiers return to basics, reset small arms weapons in theater

Story by Sharonda Pearson

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- For nearly a decade the Army Materiel Command's (AMC) Small Arms Readiness Evaluation Teams, or SARET, have traveled to units to inspect and repair weapons, optics, lasers, and mortars for the Warfighter.

Due to sequestration--which will last 10 years and cut approximately \$500 billion from the defense budget--things have changed.

"Traditionally when the unit deploys and then redeploys back to CONUS, they use a SARET to reset small arms equipment," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Miguel Gomez, AMC's Brigade Logistics Support Team Chief supporting 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. "However, because of budget cuts, SARET funding has been cut off as of March 2013."

Foreseeing the future, the unit decided to be proactive should funding for a SARET be unavailable during their redeployment.

"We had a good feeling that that SARET wasn't going to be an option because of funding, so we started planning a month and a half ago," Gomez said. "It made sense that we do the reset here in theater and get the Soldiers trained and have the Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) Armament Logistics Assistance Representatives provide any necessary assistance."

The solution was to tap the Soldier skills already resident in the unit by having the small arms/artillery repairer Soldiers in the 91F military occupation specialty complete their

own SARET-type reset of the unit's small arms.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brandon Parrett, 702nd Brigade Support Battalion acting armament technician, believes the small arms and artillery repair Soldiers are prepared for the task.

"The brigade commander, Col. Michael A. Getchell, has decided that the 91-Foxes, which are the experts, should do the reset here in theater," Parrett said. "Throughout the deployment they are the ones supporting the weapons system--repairing them, gauging them--doing all the same things required as part of a reset."

"The brigade decided to take care of the reset here in theater due to fiscal constraints and the large quantities of weapons that need to be reset," Parrett added. "Here we have the equipment needed to do the reset; that might not be the case when we return home."

While Soldiers downrange will be fully supported, and most base support functions will continue in the near term, military readiness, base facility maintenance, and modernization will likely erode as a result of sequestration.

Gomez believes that the financial uncertainties will force the Army to return to the basics.



Courtesy photo

"Having the Soldiers do the reset accomplishes two things," he said. "First, it saves the Army, Army Materiel Command and the unit money. AMC will save on equipment transportation and labor costs, plus the intangible benefit of going back to basics and allowing Soldiers to hone their skills by performing the work themselves," he said.

The Soldiers welcome the additional training.

"I think its good practice for our craft." It will make me and my team more proficient. It's important that we all hone our skills," said Sgt. Kasim Kennerly, the non commissioned officer in charge. "I've only served in the Army two years, so I always welcome any opportunity to improve my craft."

Gomez agrees.

"This is what they do. They get to work on what they love and they know they are saving the Army money," he said. "After 11 years of war, we definitely need to get back to the basics. That's what's going to move us forward."



BLACKHAWK 6

Lt. Col. Charles Lombardo



Greetings Blackhawk nation,

The winter weather is fading away and spring is upon us here in Zabul Province. Since we last spoke, your troopers have continued to make us all proud. I am inspired daily by their diligence, attention to detail, and sense of duty. A few weeks ago, our first wave of Soldiers, the Chemical, Biological Radiological and Nuclear Platoon, departed Forward Operating Base Apache and returned home to Joint Base Lewis-

McChord, Wash. I cannot express how proud I am of the Soldiers and noncommissioned officers in our CBRN Platoon. They were given a challenging mission in one of the least comfortable places in the province and they performed magnificently.

ment of our Afghan Army partners. I am pleased to say that our Afghan partners are continuing to grow in their capabilities and reach. We have conducted several partnered missions over the last few weeks with very promising success. It is great to see a young force have such a positive impact on its community while providing for its security and prosperity. I have met numerous solid Afghan leaders and Soldiers

that the squadron is still set to return as scheduled. Any date prior to our scheduled return is a welcome surprise. Please be rest assured that I will formally notify the squadron, family, and friends when any official information is published. Any other redeployment information is a rumor and should not be counted on.

I would like to personally thank those who support us back at home. Your efforts and thoughts play a critical role in the success of this squadron and its troopers and is al-

“I am pleased to say that our Afghan partners are continuing to grow in their capabilities and reach.”

**-Lt. Col. Charles Lombardo
2nd Sqdn., 1st Cav. Regt. commander**

During the past month, we have been incredibly busy preparing equipment and personnel for movement back to FOB Apache as well as combined training and develop-

and I am confident they will continue to succeed. I credit a lot of their success to the thorough and patient mentorship provided by your troopers. Almost everyday the Soldiers of the Blackhawk Squadron roll up their sleeves with Afghan Soldiers and train on a variety of tasks and tactics.

It is no surprise that the squadron's return is not far away. However, I ask that the families and friends of the Blackhawk nation remember

ways greatly appreciated. One of the key strengths of this squadron is the strength and fortitude of the Blackhawk nation. Please continue your hard work and dedication in support of the squadron and its mission. Happy St. Patrick's Day!!

Blackhawks! Animo Et Fide.

**Lt. Col. Charles T. Lombardo
“Blackhawk 6”**





NFL players visit Soldiers of Masum Ghar



Story and photos by
2nd Lt. Jennifer Frazer
102nd MPAD

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan – Players from the National Football League visited the soldiers of Masum Ghar for a motivational United Service Organization (USO) tour on March 18 in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

The NFL players included Denver Broncos Cornerback, Champ Bailey, Cleveland Browns Linebacker, D'Qwell Jackson, Tampa Bay Buccaneers Guard, Davin Joseph, Denver Broncos Linebacker, Von Miller, Carolina Panthers Wide Receiver, Steve Smith, and Houston

Texans Defensive End, J.J. Watt.

“Visiting Soldiers, seeing what they do on a daily basis,” said Miller, “it really puts it into perspective, it makes you appreciate what you have stateside. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I am truly blessed and grateful to be here.”

The players arrived in the early morning and ventured up to Engineer Hill where they were able to meet a Tactical Explosive Detection Dog (TEDD) and given a demonstration of the dogs’ capabilities. Afterward, they met with the 38th Engineers of Combined Task Force (CTF) 4-2.

“This is a chance of a life time,” said Jackson, “to show our appreciation for the uniform, the men and

women who risk their lives and the bravery they show each and every day.”

Following Engineer Hill, the NFL players made it to the highest point surrounding Masum Ghar and were given an opportunity to view the surrounding area.

Lastly, the players spent quality time with the Soldiers in the dining facility (DFAC). J.J. Watt played catch with some of the dining facility workers while the others signed autographs and posed for photos.

“I felt like a 40 year old woman waiting for “Twilight” to come out,” said Broncos fan Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Hochstedler, a Spectrum Manager with, Headquarters, Headquarters Co., CTF 4-2, “It was amazing.”





FORGE 6

Lt. Col. Scot Doboszenski



To the Forge Families, Friends, and Soldiers,

We have finally reached our halfway point! It seems as though time is flying by when there is just so much to do. Our mission has change a few times but overall we are still focusing on developing our partnership with the ANA and the people of this country. Our Soldiers are constantly hard at work and this month was no exception. We have begun

Bravo Company made some well crafted trophies to present to the winners of each event. Also, this month the battalion will be holding the NCO and Soldier of the Quarter where Soldiers from different companies can compete for bragging rights in the 3rd Quarter, FY 13. It'll be a tough decision because every Soldier we have out here is the best

countless mission changes and operations. This battalion has the best group of leaders the command sergeant major and I could not have picked any better.

A lot of what we do here is influenced by the families and friends' support back at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. As we begin to see Soldiers go home, we must continue to stay Forge Strong and focused to accomplish our mission and bring

“We have come a long way since the first group of Forge Soldiers left back in October.”

**-Lt. Col. Scot Doboszenski
702nd BSB commander**

closing down some of the outlying forward operating bases throughout the region we have been working on. We have also been moving a lot of equipment back and personnel have been reorganized so they can start going home.

The month of March signified our halfway point for this deployment and to celebrate, our chaplain, Chaplain Chang, scheduled an Organization Celebration Day for the Soldiers to have a friendly competition of various events ranging from pull-ups, horseshoe, basketball, and volleyball. It was a great morale booster for the well deserved Soldiers as they begin to see the end of this deployment. Our very own

the command sergeant major and I have seen.

We have come a long way since the first group of Forge Soldiers left back in October. But the command sergeant major and I cannot be more proud of where we came from and what we have accomplished since then. It is an honor for the both of use to have this opportunity to lead the best Soldiers not only in the brigade but the whole Army. We have not seen a finer group of men and women who are willing to put so much hard work and efforts into supporting this country and their people. The leadership has also been doing great things with planning, coordinating, and executing

everyone home. The command sergeant major and I wish for you all to continue the support you give us back at home. Again thank you all for everything you do and I can promise you that every single letter, package, or phone call that is sent or made has a huge positive impact on the Soldiers.

Forge 6 and Forge 7

**“Mend the Broken
Sword”**







Keeping left of the **BANG**

Story and photo by
Pfc. Reese Von Rogatz
4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Office

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. – Soldiers from 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's Raider Ready Reserve (R3) recently completed five days of training, enhancing their ability to identify indicators of insurgent activity in Afghanistan, where the brigade is currently deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Advanced Situational Awareness Training, conducted Feb. 25 through March 1, took place in both the classroom and the field. Geared toward improving the ability to detect, observe and engage adversaries and their networks, it taught soldiers tactical skills to improve their

survivability during military operations on urban terrain.

"The [soldiers] are being trained to utilize a proactive mindset," said Sgt. 1st Class Elias Munoz, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div., R3 operations noncommissioned officer in charge.

According to Munoz, the nature of the things soldiers do when something happens is reactive. Spotting indicators as they occur – and avoiding, preventing or stopping an adverse event – is a proactive approach.

This concept is known as "staying left of the bang."

Instruction in human behavior pattern recognition and analysis prepared soldiers to apply critical

thinking and problem-solving skills in order to anticipate an event before it happens.

"In the classroom, we learned to predict a catastrophic event. Out here on the range, we're running through what we learned in the classroom and applying it to practical field exercises," said Spc. Nathan Taylor, an infantryman with 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

In the field training simulation, a local village requested help from coalition partners as a result of mounting tensions with a neighboring settlement. The Afghan residents and police were role-played

See BANG pg. 33...



by brigade soldiers, who underwent an additional two days of training in order to stage realistic scenarios.

The soldiers set up observation posts, known as OPs, and a tactical operation center, also called a TOC. They observed the communities to establish a baseline, a rhythm and pattern to life there. Information from the OPs was relayed to the TOC, recorded and tracked. Departure from normal routine was analyzed.

"Three anomalies and you make a decision," said Taylor. It is a guide-

line for the number of pre-event cues which lead from observation to action.

Simulated sniper fire rang out during a soccer game. An improvised explosive device detonated as a shipment of relief supplies was hijacked. A vehicle borne improvised explosive device exploded at a checkpoint. There were complex interactions between the social groups.

After-action reviews were held at the conclusion of each scenario, where questions such as "what happened and how did it happen?" and "did the soldiers successfully iden-

tify the indicators leading up to an event?" were posed.

"I myself have not been deployed, but going through the class I don't see how one could be deployed without the training. I think it's very valuable," said Pfc. Adam Warren, an infantryman with 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div.

The Raider Ready Reserve is organized, equipped and trained to execute Rear Detachment Operations focused on maintaining soldier, family, training and equipment readiness that instill confidence in forward deployed commanders.

Mobile RPAT eases redeployment stresses for CTF 4-2

Story by Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth
CTF 4-2 Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ZANGABAD, Afghanistan – As soldiers of 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, Combined Task Force 4-2 (4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division) reached the halfway point in their deployment, they realized they had equipment on their base that they were not using and could turn in.

The normal process of returning retrograde or unused items is to take them back to the Redistribution Property Assistance Team yard on Kandahar Airfield.

However, thanks to Mobile RPATs and Package Acceptance Assistance Teams, the process of turning equipment in is easier for units on remote bases, such as 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment's Capt. Reed Timme, the logistics officer for 4th Bn., 9th Inf. Regt., is in charge of monitoring everything turned in by the unit.

"By them coming out here to the

customer, if you will, we have more people out here that we can dedicate to laying property out, to turning in," said Timme, an Avon, Conn., native. "Basically, we are their only customer out here, so we get their sole attention and their focus."

The battalion is turning in approximately 438 items, to include 10 pieces of rolling stock such as mine resistant ambush protected vehicles, according to Timme.

"It runs a gamut from smaller items up to the size of an MRAP, but just excess equipment that we don't use on a regular basis but it's all on our [property] books," said Timme.

Curtis McIver, the master supply technician for the mobile RPAT, from Rockingham, N.C., said the mobile RPATs are just a mirror image of what is done at the RPAT yard on Kandahar Airfield.

"We just go out to remote FOBs to relieve units of accountability," he said.

Planning starts 120 days out from when the unit wants to turn in its excess items, said McIvers. The

Mobile RPATs brief units on what is required in order for the team to go to the base.

The Mobile RPAT checks back with the unit 90 days out to make sure everything is on track to be turned in.

The PAAT arrives approximately a week before the Mobile RPAT to ensure that soldiers have all of their equipment turn-in paperwork filled out correctly. According to McIvers, PAATs developed last year in Regional Command-South, Afghanistan. The Mobile RPATs follow behind the PAATs and conduct layouts of all equipment being turned in by the unit and then sign for the equipment. The unit then moves the items to Kandahar Airfield and is fully relieved of responsibility for the equipment.

After weeks of preparation, the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment soldiers turned in their extra equipment and signed it over to the Mobile RPAT. They can now focus more on their mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



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Chaplain's Corner

Chap. (Maj.) Jim Combs

“A Bad Conversation”

Whether on Facebook, during a phone call, or even in a letter or e-mail – it is very common that we will eventually have a bad conversation with loved ones during the deployment. When we receive these negative communications, either in Afghanistan or at home, it is important to keep everything in context and not allow ourselves to tailspin into hopelessness. Rainer M. Rilke wrote, “A person isn’t who they were during the last conversation you had with them, they’re who they’ve been throughout your whole relationship.” For example, if I have a bad conversation with my wife last night, we should not assume the worse of one another and write off over twenty years of marriage. Rather, we can choose to examine the conversation in the light of the many challenges of separation and the positive context of our overall time together throughout the years.

For we all know that there are days when we aren’t in the best mood to communicate with our loved ones. Ironically, out of love, we go ahead and make the call or Facebook them anyway and may ultimately do more harm than good! And these bad moments, if held in isolation, can be devastating. But when held in the light of the many great memories we have of spending time with our loved one, we can truly understand and benefit from Rilke’s encouragement: “A person isn’t who they were during the last conversation you had with them, they’re who they’ve been throughout your whole relationship.” So, if you’re tired, hungry, just came in from a mission, or recently disciplined the kids...maybe it would be better to get some rest and make that contact later. Or, at least, just send a reminder that you love them and you will make contact soon. We are all in this together and our desire for one another is like our motto during the deployment, to see every relationship grow “Stronger Together!” God Bless...

Chap. (Maj.) Jim Combs
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“A person isn’t who they were during the last conversation you had with them, they’re who they’ve been throughout your whole relationship.”

-Rainer M. Rilke
Poet and novelist



OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM 2012-2013

IN LOVING MEMORY



*Staff Sgt. Rayvon Battle, Jr.
Nov. 13, 2012
38th Eng. Co.*



*Staff Sgt. Wesley Williams
Dec. 10, 2012
B Co., 1-38 IN*



*Pfc. Markie Sims
Dec. 29, 2012
38th Eng. Co.*



*Sgt. David Chambers
Jan. 16, 2013
B Co., 1-38 IN*