

FROM GAMMA TO BETA

Volume 1, Issue 5

SFAATs:
SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION AS THE ANA TAKE THE LEAD

FROM GAMBERI

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Picture by Omar Sobhani/Reuters

On the cover

U.S. Army Sgt. First Class Reynaldo Gomez, (foreground), a native of Corpus Christi, Texas, observes as Afghan National Army non-commissioned officers assigned to 2nd Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps mount an M2 .50 caliber machine gun to a Humvee, during a familiarization class on the weapon system at Forward Operating Base Tagab, May 18, 2013. Gomez serves with Security Force Assistance Advisory Team 13, and is assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Regiment, based out of Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

This installment of the FROM GAMBERI magazine features a story and pictures of how Security Force Advisory Assistance Teams are creating close bonds and provide valuable training for Afghan National Army soldiers assigned to the 201st Corps based in Forward Operating Base Naghlu High and Forward Operating Base Tagab in Kapisa Province.

A story with pictures of U.S. Army Master Sgt. deployed to FOB Gamberi who witnessed the officer commission ceremony of his son via video teleconference in Georgia.

A set of pictures from a visit by the Deputy Secretary of Defense speaking to the commander of the 201st Corps and Task Force Longknife senior leadership during his brief stay.

A story and pictures of a five-week driver's training course graduation ceremony held on FOB Gamberi. The 20 ANA soldiers will return to their kandaks and train their fellow soldiers on the importance of safe driving.

The last story is about an explosion that happened in Kabul by Pamela Engel.

If you wish to contribute to this magazine with a picture or have a story idea you can contact Maj. Miller or Staff Sgt. Andrade in the Public Affairs Office on FOB Gamberi.

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FOSTERING RAPPORT IS KEY FOR ANA/ADVISER RELATIONSHIP

By Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade
Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs

The mission of Security Force Assistance Advisory Team 15 is to advise Afghan National Army soldiers on field artillery, reconnaissance, engineering and other operations at Forward Operating Base Naghlu High.

U.S. Army soldiers assigned to SFAAT 15 advise ANA soldiers of the 4th Kandak, (Battalion), 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, during their missions as they conduct independent operations and prepare to assume responsibility for the security of their country.

“Working together every day, it’s really rewarding to see them progress, and conduct independent operations,” said U.S. Army Capt. Zhuoyi Gu, SFAAT 15 reconnaissance company adviser.

He and the rest of his team replaced French army reconnaissance advisers over six months ago. Gu is assigned to 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based out of Fort Hood, Texas.

In his opinion, the ANA’s main challenges are dealing with maintenance and logistics issues. Gu said there is a logistics adviser assigned to SFAAT 15 and works with his ANA counterpart to deal with those issues.

“But as far as going out and being able to conduct independent operations, providing security in an area and being able to engage insurgent elements, they are very successful with that,” said Gu.

The native of Gaithersburg, Md., said his advisory role has been a worthwhile experience.

“We interact with our ANA counterparts frequently,” said Gu. “In Afghanistan, your word means a lot. Being able to build that close personal relationship and establish trust is really important.

When SFAAT 15 arrived at FOB Naghlu High, Gu said the French had a more direct role in training and supporting the ANA.

“Our strategy was more hands-off, and see where they are at,” said Gu. “We advised them when necessary, allowing them to operate.”

Gu said SFAAT 15 interjects to make improvements, if and when the ANA makes mistakes.

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U.S. Army Maj. Demetrius Perry, (center), a native of Houston, Texas, observes Afghan National Army soldiers conduct drill and ceremonies at Forward Operating Base Naghlu Riverside, April 30, 2013. He serves as senior advisor for the Security Force Assistance Advisory Team 15, advising ANA soldiers on field artillery, reconnaissance, engineering and other operations. Perry is assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based out of Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



FOSTERING RAPPORT IS KEY FOR ANA/ADVISER RELATIONSHIP

U.S. Army Sgt. First Class Thomas Tangalin, a native of Kauai, Hawaii, and Maj. Demetrius Perry, a native of Houston, Texas, speak with Afghan National Army Maj. Mohammad Hussin, executive officer, 4th Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, during a meeting at Forward Operating Base Naghlu Riverside, April 30, 2013. Both Soldiers serve as advisors assigned to Security Force Assistance Advisory Team 15, who mentor ANA soldiers on field artillery, reconnaissance, engineering and other operations. Both are assigned to 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based out of Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



U.S. Army Maj. Demetrius Perry, a native of Houston, Texas, removes his glove prior to shaking hands with an Afghan National Army soldier during a visit to Forward Operating Base Naghlu Riverside, April 30, 2013. Perry emphasized to his Soldiers the importance of building a strong rapport with their ANA counterparts. He serves as senior advisor for Security Force Assistance Advisory Team 15, and assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based out of Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

“Our ultimate goal is to ensure that the ANA can do what they need to do independently of advisers, and they do it all the time,” said Gu.

In his opinion, the ANA noncommissioned officers are no different than U.S. NCOs. He has seen them take the initiative to train soldiers on primary weapons instruction and later that week, go to the firing range to familiarize the ANA soldiers on their weapon systems.

SFAAT 15 senior adviser, Maj. Demetrius Perry, is on his first deployment to Afghanistan. He has experience serving as an adviser with the special police transition team during one of his two deployments to Iraq. Perry serves with 1-9th Cav. Regt., 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

Perry said the ANA have their own way of conducting business. If U.S. forces come to Afghanistan and try to teach our way of thinking, the ANA forces will not listen.

He emphasized the importance of building a relationship with his ANA counterpart to the other advisers.

“If you don’t have good rapport with them, they will keep all their knowledge a secret,” said Perry. “They will listen to you offering advice and let you give classes, and when you are done they will tell you, ‘Hey, I ran the Russians out of Afghanistan, you aren’t teaching me anything new.’”

Perry said the best part of his advisory mission is the informal interactions he has with the kandak commander, ANA Col. Gul Aqa Shirzard. He said whenever they meet, they talk business but then they talk about other things. For example, over a cup of tea at the ANA base at FOB Naghlu Riverside, he gets to know the colonel by asking casual questions like what it was like growing up in Afghanistan.

The two leaders have developed such a close bond, Shirzard told the soldiers in his kandak, whenever he is out of town on business, Perry is in charge.

“I’ve learned a lot just from talking to the ANA leadership in a relaxed way,” said Perry. “I’ve found out more by having those informal conversations than you will find in a class or in any book. It is those interactions that I will carry with me forever.”

Perry acknowledged that being an adviser takes a special skill set, and even called the mission fun.

“The ANA is good; they are very capable of securing their country,” said Perry. “They take care of soldiers and their families; they just don’t do it exactly the way we do it. Once you understand that, your advisory mission will be very rewarding.”

The native of Houston, Texas, said once that relationship and rapport is established the advisory mission will be something that will stay with you for the rest of your life. Perry said he is still in contact with soldiers he worked with while working as an adviser in Iraq.

“There are guys that I met and worked with in Iraq that are now Facebook friends of mine,” said Perry.

DEPLOYED FATHER RENDERS FIRST SALUTE TO NEWLY COMMISSIONED SON



U.S. Army Master Sgt. Marshall Rader, (right), a native of Clarington, Ohio, stands next to Col. William Benson, the commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division as he renders the first salute to his son, Gregory Rader, following his officer commissioning ceremony held at North Georgia University, May 10, 2013. A video teleconference was set up inside the conference room at Forward Operating Base Gamberi so that Rader could render the first salute to his son after his promotion. Rader serves as human resources noncommissioned officer-in-charge assigned to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based out of Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

By Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade
Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs

U.S. Army Master Sgt. Marshall Rader opened up a laptop and turned on a projector atop the conference room table at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 10. He then opened a video chat program and saw a familiar face on the screen projected onto the wall.

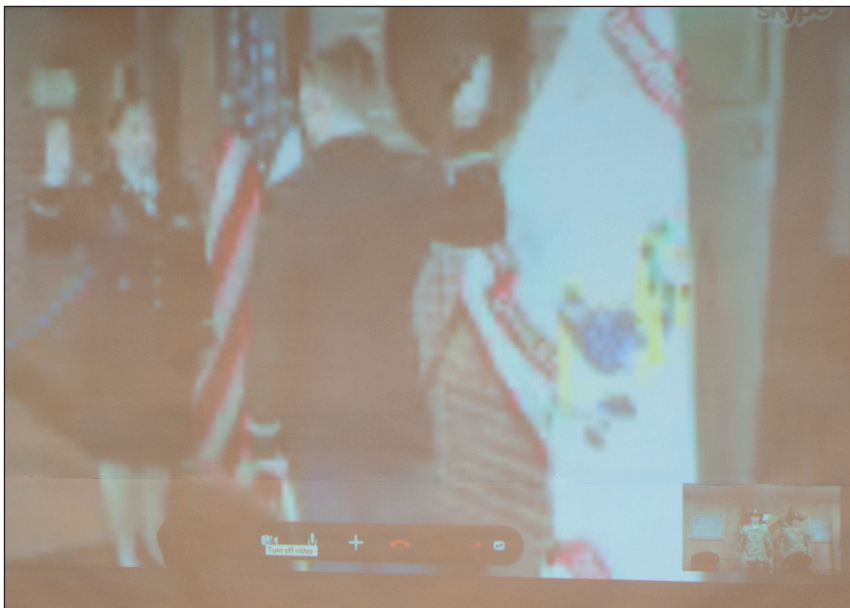
A video teleconference was set up inside the conference room at FOB Gamberi so that Rader could render the first salute to his son Gregory during his officer commissioning ceremony following a ceremony held at North Georgia University campus.

Rader said he has 17 years in active service with the U.S. Army. He served as a military policeman before changing his military occupational specialty to human resources specialist. Rader serves as human resources noncommissioned officer-in-charge with 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based out of Fort Hood, Texas.

The native of Clarington, Ohio, served honorably for ten years in the Army before getting out. Rader said he was out for five years when he decided to re-enlist.

"My wife deployed and 29 days later, I came back into the Army," said Rader. "I just missed it too much, I love the military."

Rader's wife is a major, her father is a retired Lt. Colonel and her grandfather was a major in the U.S. Army. Rader said his son was always interested in the military growing up.



The video image of U.S. Army Maj. Jennifer Rader reciting the oath of enlistment to her son, 2nd Lt. Gregory Rader is projected on a screen during an officer commissioning ceremony held at North Georgia University, May 10, 2013. The video teleconference was set up inside the conference room at Forward Operating Base Gamberi so that Master Sgt. Rader, can render the first salute to his son following his promotion. Rader serves as human resources noncommissioned officer-in-charge with 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based out of Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

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DEPLOYED FATHER RENDERS FIRST SALUTE TO NEWLY COMMISSIONED SON



Task Force Long Knife Soldiers applaud following the officer commissioning ceremony for 2nd Lt. Gregory Rader (on the screen), held at North Georgia University campus, May 10. A video teleconference was set up inside the conference room at Forward Operating Base Gamberi so that Master Sgt. Marshall Rader, can render the first salute to his son following his promotion. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

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The majority of the Rader family has either served or is currently in the military. When his son, Greg, graduated high school he attended college in Florida far from home and any connection to the military. After his son attended his first year of college he was still considering the military.

"He was actually born in Belgium and has been affiliated with the military his entire life," said Rader.

Rader said his son attended North Georgia College majoring in political science and joined the Reserve Officer Training Course, Simultaneous Membership Program. After attending basic training and graduating from advanced individual training as an electrical engineer, he served as an enlisted Soldier in the US. Army Reserve.

As the connection came up everyone on the screen began to smile. Rader's two daughters were in attendance. His father-in-law, wife and son, were all dressed in their Army Service Uniform for the occasion.

"My wife was ecstatic," said Rader. "He is commissioning in the same branch as she is, transportation."

His son stood at attention with his right hand up, as Rader's wife, a U.S. Army major, read the oath of enlistment to her son. More people began to walk into the conference room to witness Rader's son become the newest officer in the Rader family.

Greg is the oldest of three siblings. Rader also has two daughters, ages 20 and 18.

"He has always wanted to join the Army," said Rader. "He excelled while serving in the reserves and earned the rank of sergeant."

Rader said he is glad his son got to see the perspective of the enlisted side of the Army before he became an officer.

During the VTC, the newest lieutenant in the family was pinned by his fiancée and grandfather. Each one placed the shoulder boards with rank on the shoulders of 2nd Lt. Rader.

Everyone in the conference room at FOB Gamberi and at the university clapped their hands for the newest lieutenant.

Second Lt. Rader then looked at the computer screen as his father, Master Sgt. Rader, rendered the new officer his first salute.

After the new lieutenant reciprocated, everyone clapped their hands again. The internet connection was a little slow but both sides could see what was happening.

After the ceremony they moved the laptop to another room so that the family could have time to talk to one another.

In the meantime, Rader received handshakes and congratulations from the Stetson-wearing Soldiers in the conference room. He looked at a silver dollar in his hand and said it was sent from his family in the U.S.

Rader showed the group in attendance a silver dollar which he placed in a clear coin holder. He said it is a tradition for the newly promoted officer to present the first person to render a sa-



Master Sgt. Marshall Rader, a native of Clarington, Ohio, holds a silver dollar in a coin holder after the officer commissioning ceremony of his son Gregory Rader at a ceremony held at North Georgia University campus, May 10. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

lute with a silver dollar.

"It's a great honor," said Rader. "[The coin] has got his birth year on it."

"I wanted to be there for my son, but I know I had to be here," said Rader. "We all tried to figure out a way to do this and it worked out very well."

"How are you doing, sir?" Rader asked his son.

The group in Georgia all chuckled.

Second Lt. Rader said he was honored to have his two role-models take part in the ceremony.

"It means a lot to have my mother swear me in and have my father render the first salute," said Rader. "I think that was awesome."

His mother, Maj. Rader, said she was extremely proud.

"We were initially disappointed that his dad wouldn't attend because of his deployment," said Rader. "Technology is so much better now, I am glad he got the chance to attend the ceremony. I am absolutely thrilled and so proud of my son."

The group in the conference room began to leave in order to give the Rader family time for themselves.

"I am just so excited and happy that I got to partake in tonight's event with my family," said Master Sgt. Rader.

"There are so many officers on that screen," he said pointing the screen shot of his family projected on the white wall. "I will have a very tired arm from saluting all the officers walking to my house."



DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE VISITS FOB GAMBERI

United States Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ashton B. Carter (left), meets with U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Ronald Lewis (right), the 101st Airborne Division's deputy commanding general for support, upon arriving to Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 13, 2013. During his visit, Carter met with 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. senior leadership and the commander of the Afghan National Army 201st Corps. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



United States Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ashton B. Carter, right, shares a light moment with Afghan National Army Maj. Gen. Mohammad Zaman Wazeri, (left), commander of the ANA's 201st Corps, at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 13, 2013. During his visit, the deputy defense chief met with 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division senior leadership and the commander of the ANA 201st Corps commander for a round-table discussion. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



Afghan National Army Maj. Gen. Mohammad Zaman Wazeri, commander of the ANA's 201st Corps, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ashton B. Carter, and U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Ronald Lewis, the 101st Airborne Division's deputy commanding general for support, pose for a picture after a meeting at Forward Operating Base Gamberi. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



United States Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ashton B. Carter, shares a light moment with U.S. Army Col. William Nuckols, Tactical Action Center-1, chief of staff at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 13, 2013. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



Left to right, U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Ronald Lewis, the 101st Airborne Division's deputy commanding general for support, walks with Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ashton B. Carter, as he shakes hands with Col. William E. Benson, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 13, 2013. During his visit, the deputy defense chief met with 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. senior leadership and the commander of the Afghan National Army 201st Corps. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

201st CORPS SOLDIERS GRADUATE FROM DRIVERS TRAINING COURSE



Afghan National Army soldiers from the 201st Corps and instructors from Raytheon, Intelligence Mobile Education and Training Team, pose for a picture following a drivers training course graduation ceremony at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 22. Before the class, the ANA soldiers had never driven a vehicle before. The five week course teaches ANA soldiers lessons such as driver's safety and the preventative maintenance of their vehicles. The students were trained to drive light tactical vehicles and humvees which are commonly used by the ANA. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

By Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade
Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs

Twenty soldiers from the Afghan National Army, 201st Corps received certificates of completion after finishing a five-week driver's training course at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 22.

The graduation ceremony included the driver's training instructors from Raytheon, Intelligence Mobile Education and Training Team, ANA Lt. Col. Abdul Latif, commander of the 3rd Kandak (Battalion), 4th Brigade, 201st Corps and his advisor, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Doug Johnson, plans officer with 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, based out of Fort Hood, Texas.

"The ANA soldiers did well and I want to thank all of the mentors that taught this class," said Latif, following the ceremony.

The commander said there are a lot of vehicles in his kandak. Latif stressed the importance of his soldiers being safe drivers and said the driver's course is important for the development of his kandak and the ANA.

"Now that they are certified drivers, they have the responsibility to teach the rest of the soldiers in the kandak," said Latif.

The five week course teaches ANA soldiers driver's safety and the preventative maintenance of their vehicles. The students are primarily trained to drive light tactical vehicles and humvees which are commonly used by the ANA.

"The coalition forces are going back to their homes. Our military should do all our own missions and be able to drive our own equipment," said Latif.

ANA Sgt. Nazar Gul said the class was very good and said he appreciated the instructors who conducted themselves professionally.



An Afghan National Army soldier displays his certificate of completion during a drivers training course graduation ceremony conducted at Forward Operating Base Gamberi. The five-week course covered the basics of driving and the ANA soldiers were primarily trained on light tactical vehicles and humvees which are commonly used by the ANA. The soldiers will return to their unit and instruct other soldiers what they learned during the course. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

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An Afghan National Army soldier proudly displays his certificate of completion during a drivers training course graduation ceremony conducted at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 22. The five-week course covered the basics of driving and the ANA soldiers were primarily trained on light tactical vehicles and humvees. The soldiers will return to their unit and train other soldiers what they learned during the course. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



Leo Hernandez (center), a native of El Paso, Texas and team leader with Raytheon, Intelligence Mobile Education and Training Team, receives a hug from Afghan National Army soldier following a drivers training course graduation ceremony conducted at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 22. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

201st CORPS SOLDIERS GRADUATE FROM DRIVERS TRAINING COURSE

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"We learned a lot in this class from map reading to the hazards of unsafe driving," said Gul. "What we learned in this course, [if God is willing], I will teach my soldiers as well."

He saw the group of non-drivers develop into confident drivers who constantly stressed safety, especially while driving. During the class, the ANA were taught how to shift gears, the use of hand and arm signals and maintenance on their vehicles.

"After training the soldiers for five weeks, I was glad to see we had all 20 students graduate today. Ten of the graduates are certified to return to their kandak and be instructors," said Rudy Gomez, with Raytheon, Intelligence Mobile Education and Training Team.

Gomez said the students in the class had never driven a vehicle before, but had the desire to learn.

"This class was dedicated to being in the class, when the weather was too hot, they devised ways to come in two hours earlier to avoid the heat and get the full training," said Gomez, a native of Orange County, Calif. "I believe they will go back to their kandak and stress safety, which is what we stressed from day one."

Leo Hernandez, a team leader with Raytheon, said the graduation class was amazing and hopes the next class will be the same.

"The [driver's training course] is changing the ANA soldier's mentality," Hernandez said. "We teach them how to operate vehicles, safely."

The El Paso, Texas, native said the first week of class begins with learning the basics of driving and focuses on safety. After the first week the instructors focus on preventative maintenance checks and services of vehicles. As an advisor, Hernandez said he enjoys watching the driving course graduation ceremonies.

Following the ceremony, the group took pictures and the students thanked and shook hands with their instructors. Some of the ANA soldiers even expressed their gratitude by giving Hernandez a hug.

"I am very happy," Hernandez said. "Everytime we graduate a class it just shows me Afghanistan is moving forward a little more, and soon we will not have to be here anymore."



An Afghan National Army soldier proudly displays his certificate of completion during a drivers training course graduation ceremony conducted at Forward Operating Base Gamberi, May 22, 2013. The five-week course covered the basics of driving and the ANA soldiers were primarily trained on light tactical vehicles and humvees. The soldiers will return to their unit and train other soldiers what they learned during the course. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



SFAAT 13 TRAINS ANA ON M2 .50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN

U.S. Army Sgt. Brandon Terrette, (background), a native of Phoenix, Ariz., and Sgt. First Class Reynaldo Gomez, (foreground), a native of Corpus Christi, Texas, observe as Afghan National Army noncommissioned officers assigned to 2nd Kandak, or battalion, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps mount an M2 .50 caliber machine gun on to a Humvee, during a class on the weapon system at Forward Operating Base Tagab, May 18, 2013. 13. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

By Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade
Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs

Elements from Security Force Advisory and Assistance Team 13 trained Afghan National Army soldiers on the M2 .50 caliber machine gun weapons system at Forward Operating Base Tagab, May 18.

The SFAAT 13 advisors met with their Afghan counterparts at the motor pool on FOB Tagab to perform the hands-on training with ANA soldiers assigned to the 2nd Kandak, or battalion, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps. The outdoor training was to familiarize the ANA noncommissioned officers with the headspace and timing of the .50 caliber machine gun mounted on ANA vehicles.

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Joshua Lakey serves as advisor to ANA Maj. Ullah Aziz, the executive officer and acting kandak commander. The native of Atlanta, Ga., also serves as operations, or S3, advisor for SFAAT 13.

Lakey said they meet with their ANA counterparts individually to discuss any projects they are working on. The advisors visit their counterparts regularly to provide ANA leadership with solutions for any issues they might have.

During a recent joint operation, Lakey said, there was an incident, when under fire, an ANA soldier's .50 caliber machine gun jammed, rendering the weapon inoperable. Unfortunately, the soldier did not know how to make the weapon fully operational again.

"They were familiar with some [.50 caliber machine gun] training, but they weren't trained

well enough to where they could execute it under fire," said Lakey. "So that is what brought up today's training event."

U.S. Army Sgt. Brandon Terrette, a signal support systems specialist, provided the ANA noncommissioned officers with the knowledge so they can return to their platoons and train their soldiers on the weapon system.

Terrette is the SFAAT 13, communications noncommissioned officer-in-charge and serves as the ANA communications, or S6, advisor. He is assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Regiment, based out of Fort Hood, Texas.

The morning began with the U.S. Soldiers walking to the ANA side of the FOB and meeting with their ANA counterparts. The .50 caliber machine gun was removed from the turret of an ANA Humvee and used for the class.

Under the mid-morning sun, the SFAAT advisors showed the soldiers how to safely take the weapon apart and reassemble it. The group of noncommissioned officers encircled Terrette and listened close to what the advisor had to say.

Through the use of an interpreter, the advisors answered questions the ANA soldiers had about the weapon system. With the machine gun on the floor, Terrette showed them how to safely disassemble it.

ANA Sgt. Nemullah, like many Afghans who go by one name, has been in the army for more than three years. He said he is a platoon sergeant

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U.S. Army Sgt. First Class Reynaldo Gomez, a native of Corpus Christi, Texas, speaks through an interpreter, shows Afghan National Army soldiers of the 2nd Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, a headspace and timing gauge during a class on the M2 .50 caliber machine gun at the motor pool on Forward Operating Base Tagab, May 18, 2013. Gomez serves as an advisor with Security Force Assistance Advisory Team 13 and is a cavalry scout assigned to Troop B, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Regiment, based out of Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)



SFAAT 13 TRAINS ANA ON M2 .50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN

U.S. Army Sgt. First Class Reynaldo Gomez, a native of Corpus Christi, Texas, speaks through an interpreter, to noncommissioned officers assigned to the 2nd Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, before conducting an M2 .50 Caliber machine gun familiarization class at the motor pool on Forward Operating Base Tagab, May 18. He serves as an advisor with Security Force Assistance Advisory Teams 13. Gomez is a cavalry scout assigned to Troop B, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Regiment, based out of Fort Hood, Texas. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Richard Andrade, Task Force Long Knife Public Affairs)

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and enjoys being a noncommissioned officer.

"I have to educate and train my soldiers how to use this weapon, that is my job," said Nemullah.

After a familiarization with the components of the M2, the ANA soldiers removed the barrel, picked it up from the motor pool floor and repositioned on its mount atop the Humvee.

Next, the advisors instructed and supervised the ANA soldiers on the headspace and timing of the .50-caliber machine gun. The adjustment procedures must be performed each time the barrel is installed. Firing a weapon that has improperly set headspace and timing could damage the machine gun, or cause injury to the gunner.

With the use of a headspace and timing gauge and a translated version of an M2 machine gun technical manual, the ANA soldiers took turns removing and reinstalling the barrel and properly checked the headspace and timing of their weapon. They followed the steps by-the-book and each of the soldiers practiced performing a functions check on the gun.

"Today's training was very good, we've had this training a long time ago and right now they refreshed our mind. We are very happy with the training from our advisors," said Nemullah.

The ANA platoon sergeant said it is important for his soldiers to know how to use every weapon in his kandak.

"I tell my soldiers this is our country, and we have to defend it from whoever is trying to be against our country," said Nemullah.

Terrette is a native of Phoenix, Ariz., and said the SFAAT team does not visit the ANA side of the camp as often as they have in the past when they first arrived at FOB Tagab.

"We advise every other day so they can grow on their own, and we can check on their progress," said Terrette. "We train the NCOs so they can be

self-reliant, and spend time training their soldiers."

"The XO does a wonderful job listening to our recommendations and understands what we are trying to accomplish," said Terrette, speaking of the new leadership in the kandak.

Aziz said Coalition Forces do not provide the support they used to and that is not a bad thing. He said they helped the ANA in many ways from providing literacy classes to weapons training.

"Right now the SFAAT teams are allowing us to stand up on our own two feet," said Aziz.

As the acting commander, Aziz said he holds officers and senior non-commissioned officers accountable for their soldiers and said he makes sure they do their jobs.

"In the past, the U.S. Soldiers did a lot for the ANA, and that allowed some soldiers to become lazy," said Aziz. "Now the ANA will have to remember all of their previous training so they can do their jobs by themselves."

Terrette said the ANA soldiers maintain constant communication with the check points and combat outposts near the base.

"They have gone from checking on things every once in a while to checking on things every day," said Terrette.

Lakey, a native of Atlanta, Ga., said he has witnessed the vast improvements the ANA have made during his time as an advisor. He said his mission as an advisor has been full of challenges.

"These guys know how to fight, but they don't always have the tools available," said Lakey. "I hope they can get their supply system fixed sooner than later so that it will allow resources get to where they are needed."

As his redeployment back home draws closer, he said he hopes the ANA will continue to grow and make the mission their own, not only for themselves but also for their country.

TALIBAN CLAIM RESPONSIBILITY FOR EXPLOSION IN KABUL



An Afghan boy cries as he rushes from the scene of an explosion, followed closely by a man rushing two other children out of harm's way near the main compound of the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan, in Kabul, May 24, 2013. Meanwhile, Afghan National Police officers can be seen headed to the scene of the blast. (Photograph by Omar Sobhani, Reuters)

By Pamela Engel
Business Insider

An explosion followed by heavy gunfire rocked the Afghan capital of Kabul May 24, and the Taliban is reportedly claiming responsibility for the attack.

The target of the attack is unclear. The New York Times reports that the explosion was near the main compound of the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan. Many guesthouses used by foreign staff are also located near that area. A spokesman for the Taliban told the BBC a guesthouse was targeted.

There have been reports that a CIA facility was being targeted, but this has not been confirmed.

The explosion was so powerful it was heard two miles away, according to The Times. Several other, smaller explosions have also been reported. UN employees have been ordered into blast shelters.

Several people have been wounded in the attack. One attacker was apparently a suicide bomber.

There were 5 attackers initially: 1 blew himself up in the Shahrara Tower, two killed by Afghan Police QRF, two still engaging Police QRF.

— LT Mustafa Kazemi (@combatjourno) May 24, 2013

Kabul police chief Gen Ayub Salangi told the BBC that they are “dealing with a well coordinated attack” and that at least two suicide attackers have been killed.

The attackers were using AK-47s and grenades against Afghan police, according to an Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman.



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