



KEEPING UP WITH CONTAINERS

Story by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario, Task Force Lifeline
([Play Video](#) ► by Staff Sgt. Peter Sinclair)

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — The ability to communicate efficiently with hand signals is vital for two Soldiers who execute missions with the Kalmar RT-240 Rough Terrain Container Handler (RTCH) in a boisterous environment, full of revving engines and screeching metal.

Spc. Kevin E. Berry, a materials handling equipment (MHE) operator and Spc. Casey E. Sleeman, a cargo specialist, both Soldiers with the 203rd Inland Cargo Transfer Company, 77th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in support of Task Force Lifeline, use au-

thoritative hand signs and gestures to pass messages between each other while they move, stack and un-stack containers with the RTCH.

Both Soldiers have gone on multiple missions together and have learned to understand each other, which has strengthened their communication and trust. The team makes light of their communication skill set and explain that it is to the point where they can almost read each other's thoughts just by facial expressions. Sleeman, a native of Sioux Falls, S.D., exclaimed, "He's (Berry) perfectly fine with picking up a connex until he can't quite see at the right angle, then he'll just look

RTCH—Page 2



Photo by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario

Spc. Casey E. Sleeman, a native of Sioux, S.D., and a cargo specialist, ground guides and conducts arm and hand signals for Spc. Kevin E. Berry, a native of Grantsburg, Wis., and a materials handler equipment operator, as Berry carries a container with a Kalmar RT-240 Rough Terrain Container Handler. Both Soldiers are with the 203rd Inland Cargo Transfer Company, 77th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in support of Task Force Lifeline.

Page 1—RTCH

down at me and I instantly know, “hey what do I need to do?”, then I give him the hand signals and get-er-done.”

He also added that one of the biggest challenges is the manipulation of Kalmar arm. It has to be at the optimal angle to enable it to lift its maximum weight. In these cases they must realign the RTCH in order to safely move these massive containers.

Berry, a native of Grantsburg, Wis., expresses how he feels when he’s behind the wheel of a RTCH.

Berry exclaimed, “It is a little different, it’s usually the biggest thing on the road. It tops out at 23 miles per hour, which is strange in itself. Usually you don’t even get to 3rd gear on the road because of the top handler swing.”

He continued to explain that his primary focus is safety, which entails moving slowly and paying attention to his surroundings including power lines, people and other vehicles. With special care when he has to turn the RTCH.

As he sits in his RTCH smiling, he speaks very highly of the monstrous vehicle that he drives on a daily basis.

“It (RTCH) won’t let you hurt it and it will not hurt itself,” excitedly exclaimed Berry. “It’s got like six computers; it locks you out before you can even break it. If anything is wrong in here it’ll sense it and it’ll tell you on this computer screen, it’s nice!”

He describes his first days on the RTCH as though he felt every little bump and rock and the nerves one gets as the RTCH has a swaying motion.

Berry continued to explain how experience plays a role in the confidence the Soldier’s have in their equipment, which allows them to make sound decisions.

Sleeman makes sure he is focused and alert as Berry drives his RTCH around the yards during their daily operations.

“My job as the ground guide is to make sure that the

operator does not come in contact with anything other than the ground and the conexes, whether it’s people, vehicles, stacks of conexes, buildings, anything like that,” said Sleeman.

He then recalled a picture he had once seen where a RTCH had driven over a civilian vehicle and completely crushed it, like it was a monster truck that ran over it.

“Obviously if it would do that to a car, lord knows what it would do to a person,” added Sleeman.

Almost two months into their deployment in Afghanistan, the two Soldiers have built a great bond knowing that it takes two to get to the job done.

They both realize safety is the priority, and continue to enhance their communication focus to complete their daily mission, creating a unique and solid team.

As he finished up his container movement, Sleeman reiterated his mission, “My job is to make sure that everything gets where it needs to go and in that process it’s all done safely.” •



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LIFELINER 6 SENDS



Col. Charles R. Hamilton
Commander,

First I'd like to say, Task Force Lifeline is effectively executing sustainment operations throughout the three busiest regions in Afghanistan. We would like to welcome the 77th CSSB - Task Force Garita (Watchtower) – the newest member of the Lifeline Family here in Afghanistan. With that being said your troops are performing beyond reproach. I have challenged them on many fronts; emergency re-supply missions, harsh road conditions in order to support the forces and they have been successful with every challenge. We have now been in theater a little over 90 days with this “Rendezvous with Destiny” and I am proud of my Lifeliners for their continued high spirits and commitment to excellence in all they do. To the Lifeline Families and friends; every ounce of your support contributes to the success of the men and women of our great unit. Our mission is difficult, the enemy is unwavering, yet with your continued support failure is out of the question. I have never been as proud as I am now to lead and stand shoulder to shoulder with these true patriots. One thing I tell the Soldiers on a daily basis is “Stay Alert, Stay Alive” because that’s exactly what I need them to do each and every day until we are all back home.

LIFELINER 7 SENDS

It's amazing to think our Lifeliners have been in Afghanistan for three months. The sheer strength of our Lifeliners is solid and I want to thank our foundation; Lifeline's Families and friends. Continue to stay strong and positive for your troops downrange as they rely on you for their strength. The Lifeliners are the best in the business and without a doubt will continue to be the best. I ensure you they are trained and capable of executing our mission with the best equipment available. To be the Command Sergeant Major of this organization is an honor, due solely to the fact of the amazing men and women I have the pleasure to stand with everyday here in Afghanistan. Yes it's tough on our troops; the conditions, the long hours, the relentless enemy, but your Lifeliners continue to overcome and adapt to these situations, and I am thoroughly impressed. Be proud of your Soldiers, they are truly a group of great Americans. I will continue to push the standards and discipline throughout the brigade. Know your Soldiers are in good hands. Continue to remain positive, your hard work and dedication is reflected everyday through your Lifeliners here in Afghanistan.



Command Sgt. Maj.
Eugene J. Thomas Jr.
Command Sergeant Major,

Coalition forces remember 9/11 at Bagram Air Field

Photo and Story by Spc. Ryan Scott,
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment,
Combined Joint Task Force 101

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan - Hundreds of people crowded into the main courtyard of the Joint Operations Center at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Sept. 11, 2013, to attend a ceremony remembering the tragic events of this day 12 years ago.

U.S. sailors, soldiers, airmen and Marines were joined by their Afghan and coalition counterparts in remembering the events of this day, 12 years ago, that led to invasion of this country, the crippling of the al-Qaida network that perpetrated the attack and the removal of the Taliban regime who supported them.

"Over the last 12 years the United States and members of the International Community have invested much blood and treasure to hold accountable those who planned, supported and attacked us and to bring stability to Afghanistan so that it is no longer a safe haven for transnational terrorists," said Maj. Gen. James C. McConville, commanding general, Combined Joint Task Force 101.

Acting as the focal point of the courtyard on Bagram, amidst flags representing each coalition nation, stands a beam from the World Trade Center inscribed simply with, "WTC 91101."

Donated by residents of the Breezy Point neighborhood in New York, the memorial was unveiled on Bagram, Memorial Day, May 31, 2010, and stands as a reminder of the more than 3,000 Americans who lost their lives that day and to honor the legacy, sacrifice and memory of the 5,311 heroes who have fallen during the global war on terror.

"Our sacrifices are not in vain; Americans sleep soundly knowing we are here, knowing Al Qaida is no longer operationally effective in Afghanistan, and knowing the Afghans are taking the lead for the security of their country to gain peace and a better future for all," said McConville.

While the International Security Assistance Force makes preparations to end combat operations in 2014, coalition service members continue to perform daily acts of heroism throughout the country.

"During the last twelve years, the horrific acts of a few have been surpassed by the countless selfless acts of many," said Master Sgt. Stephanie Carl, an operations noncommissioned officer with CJTF-101. "The legacy of [Sept. 11, 2001] lies in the worldwide embrace of the light for freedom that followed."

Here in Afghanistan, that light for freedom has brought education, economic growth, improved health care and access to media, information and technology.

"These opportunities and freedoms have been made available for both girls and boys," said McConville. "They have improved medical care, living conditions, and schools; they can read books; they can celebrate holidays; they can simply be kids and play and have fun in ways that they were not able to before."

As the Afghan National Security Forces take the lead in maintaining and building on those freedoms, and ISAF forces withdraw from the fight, those in attendance today remembered why they were here.

"Together, as a combined team, away from our homes and families, we understand all too well that freedom is not free," said Carl. ●



CARIBOU DROPPINGS: **LOW COST, LOW ALTITUDE**

Story by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario,
Task Force Lifeline

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — Transporting cargo rapidly, safely and precisely is the main goal for the Riggers and their partners that take part in the daily aerial supply delivery operations.

The importance of this sort of operation is in its name, low cost low altitudes (LCLA). The reason it's called this is because the parachutes are one time disposable parachutes.

"Whenever you drop them to the troops in the field they don't have to recover anything, they don't have to back load anything, they can just pick up their equipment and move

on," said John Early, a pilot at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan.

The airdrops occur at approximately 150 feet above ground for it to be considered low altitude. Normally the Air Force drops anywhere between 500 feet and 15,000 feet depending on the cargo and where it is being dropped.

"One of the reasons that this is a good system is because it's not all that expensive, but more importantly you have a very quick reaction time," said Early.

He continued to explain that whenever the Soldiers on the ground need something they are ready. If the riggers have it already rigged up they can be in the air and on their way to drop the supplies to the Sol-

diers, usually within three hours.

"The LCLA mission helps sustain troops in two ways," stated Chief Warrant Officer 2 Gregory Benson, an airdrop systems technician with the 647th Quartermaster Detachment in support of Task Force Lifeline. "First, it puts much needed supplies on target. It allows units to receive these supplies without setting up a large drop zone.

"These loads can be delivered inside the FOB (Forward Operating Base) from 150' moving at 100mph. Secondly, it keeps supply convoys off the road; the less trucks on the road, the less IED (improvised explosive device) attacks, and the more Soldiers go home intact."

Caribou — Page 5



Photos by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario

Task Force Lifeline medics prepare to lift a litter during aeromedical evacuation training with the U.S. Air Force, Aug. 22, 2013 at Bagram Airfield, Parwan province, Afghanistan. During this training the Soldiers learn how to safely load and unload patients on and off of a C-130 Hercules aircraft. This gives the Soldiers the opportunity to learn new techniques, how to communicate with the Airmen crew during an aeromedical evacuation incident.

MEDICS BROADEN THEIR SKILLS

Story by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario,
Task Force Lifeline
([Play Video](#) ►) by Staff Sgt. Peter Sin-

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — Task Force Lifeline medics broaden their medical skill set as they receive aeromedical evacuation training by the U.S. Air Force, building new relationships and communication that will assist them in the event of a catastrophic incident where Soldiers and Airmen work alongside each other.

Learning to understand each other and to adapt to changes and new procedures are essential to ensure patients get proper care and treatment.

The medics train on new techniques. A primary task they needed to learn was how to load and unload patients safely into the C-130 Hercules fixed wing aircraft, which is something U.S. Army

medics rarely have the opportunity to train on.

“It’s very important, because if we don’t train in advance, when you got to go out there and do it for real there’s going to be issues,” stated Staff Sgt. Craig A. Greene, a native of Little River, S.C., and senior medic with Task Force Lifeline.

“Having a working relationship where we can work with them (U.S. Air Force) on a regular basis does help with the care of patients.”

The main goal of the U.S. Air Force crew was to ensure that Task Force Lifeline medics understand the importance of the mission.

“You might want to think of you being that person, how important it is and what it means to that person for us to do our job correctly and

Medics — Page 6

Page 4 — Caribou

The Caribou aircraft, which is a contracted aerial asset that provides the LCLA drops, have the capabilities to drop supplies in extremely small areas. It can deliver a fairly high capacity of supplies compared to other aerial assets used in Afghanistan.

The aircraft can also travel into isolated areas where larger aircraft cannot maneuver. This form of aerial supply drop reduces the threat toward the customer. It can be dropped into and recovered from a secure compound. Another advantage to this aircraft is you can distribute supplies to multiple locations.

“We can drop to more than one location on the same flight, so we can go to one place and drop two or three bundles, go to another place drop two or three more bundles and then come home,” stated Early. “In that respect, it’s very, very good for the local commander because he can get what he needs quickly and efficiently, with a minimum risk to his people.”

Although the Caribou team provides services all year round, the summer months with high temperatures can cause challenges. The Caribou pilot maintains constant awareness of the flight altitude, high temperatures and fuel consumption. Both the riggers and the pilots ensure all precautions are taken when loading the supply bundles on the aircraft.

“We supply the warfighter with their supplies, we keep convoys from rolling into hostile areas, we save the army money on replacing vehicles, and mothers and fathers get to complete their tours and return to their families,” readily explained Benson. “I’d do it all day, every day.” ●

Page 5 — Medics

safely,” said U.S. Air Force Tech Sgt. Tyrone Evans, a native of Bowie, M.D., and a charge medical technician with the 455th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.

He continued to explain, that the U.S. Air Force focuses on safety. Every task they need to accomplish has safety requirements.

“We switched from a four man to a three man (litter carry), its just body mechanics,” said Evans.

“Again, it’s about safety. You can hurt yourself with improper lifting or you can get caught up on something and actually turn the litter over and cause more bodily harm to the patients themselves.”

The medics learned how to carry a patient to an aircraft, including the speed and the communication that every member of a team has to understand for the successful transfer of a patient. Greene reiterated the importance of working with the Airmen and building new relationships.

“Being able to talk and work with them side by side...it’s a good feeling knowing they’re there and that we can count on them,” said Greene. ●



(Above) Task Force Lifeline medics receive training from U.S. Air Force Aeromedical Evacuation Crew on how to safely load and unload patients on and off of a C-130 Hercules aircraft during a joint training exercise Aug. 22, 2013 at Bagram Airfield, Parwan province, Afghanistan.

(Below) Spc. Mark E. Faucette (left), a native of Sellersville, Pa., and Spc. David C. Choeun (right), a native of San Bernardino, Calif., straps up Spc. Daniel O. Paul (middle), a native of Americus, Ga., onto a litter to load him properly onto a fixed wing aircraft during the aeromedical evacuation training.

Photos by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario



157TH CSSB CASES ITS COLORS:

77TH CSSB TAKES THE WHEEL TO CONTINUE THE SUSTAINMENT AND RETROGRADE MUSCLE MOVEMENT IN REGIONAL COMMAND - EAST

Story by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario, Task Force Lifeline
([Play Video](#) ► by Staff Sgt. Peter Sinclair)

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — Task Force Lifeline's 157th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion cased its colors as the 77th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, unfurled its colors during the Transfer of Authority ceremony held Sept. 1, 2013 at Bagram Airfield, Parwan province, Afghanistan. This ceremony signifies mission success for one and the start of a new mission for another.

As the 157th CSSB relinquished their duties, Lt. Col. David D. Dean, commander of the 157th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion gave thanks for all the support their unit received during their deployment. Dean also thanked his Soldiers for all the hard work, successes and sacrifices they faced as a unit.

"Remember the injured and the fallen that have gone through our ranks here and keep them in your thoughts and prayers," stated Brig. Gen. Duane A. Gamble, deputy commanding general of 1st Theater Sustainment Command.

He ensured that he recognized the 157th CSSB role in Afghanistan and their mission success.

"Combat resupplies and all the CET (convoy escort team) missions that they've done in this area of responsibility is frankly incredible," stated Gamble. "I am more proud of the great troops that Lieutenant Colonel Dean and Master Sergeant Harris have led. The company's out there have completed this mission in a very, very tough, hostile environment."

As Dean gave his final words to the formations he offered words to the incoming commander of the 77th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, Lt. Col. Hector L. Agosto, wishing their unit best success on their new mission and offered one request from his successor.

"That you always include the Soldiers best interest in the equation when making decisions," stressed Dean. "These Soldiers understand that mission comes first and understand the risk of being on the road. They will work hard for you, treat them well."

Col. Charles R. Hamilton, Task Force Lifeline commander spoke highly of the accomplishments of the 157th CSSB during the ceremony.

Hamilton exclaimed, "What you've (unit) done and what he's (Dean) done is really you've made history, over nine thousand miles, numerous CET missions and all that while in contact. What you've done on the retrograde side is truly remarkable."

As the 77th CSSB stands together listening to Hamilton's words explaining the challenge they would face, the Soldiers hold their heads high, ready to begin their new mission in Afghanistan.

"You're going into the phase on the operation where you're going to be asked to do more than Chain (157th CSSB) did, so it's going to take a lot of dedication," said Hamilton as he challenges these Soldiers with those words.

The mission of these two commands is vital to the success of the mission in Afghanistan. They provide the sustainment to service members and civilians and at the same time they provide the muscle movement for the retrograde of equipment from Afghanistan. ●



Photo by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario

U.S. Army Lt. Col. David D. Dean (left), commander of the 157th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion and Master Sgt. Robert F. Harris (right), acting command sergeant major for the 157th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, case their colors during their transfer of authority to the 77th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, Sept. 1, 2013, at Bagram Airfield, Parwan province, Afghanistan. The 157th CSSB is based out of Willow Grove, Pa.

BREAKING THROUGH CULTURAL BARRIERS

A SOLDIERS PERSPECTIVE ON BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL AFGHAN COUNTERPARTS

Commentary by 1st Lt. Warren Quenton, 1245th Trans. Company

MAZAR-E-SHARIF, Afghanistan — The 1245th Transportation Company, 524th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 101st Sustainment Brigade out of Oklahoma works closely with local Dari and Pashtu truck drivers.

Some of the companies young men and women exhibited feelings of culture shock in the very beginning months of arrival, but leadership since then have seen those feelings of uncertainty evolve into creative interaction with “Host National” drivers. 1245th Transportation Company’s unique role paints a picture of their interaction with the Afghan people for family and friends back home, displaying an impressive ability to utilize creative methods of communication while sharing the utmost respect and concern for each other’s safety.

Imagine a location set in the picturesque valleys of the Hindu Kush Mountains. Members of the 1245th Transportation Company briskly walk to an assortment of tactical military vehicles as the sun sets quietly in the west, and the twilight displays colorful blue, purple and red hues. Soldiers work methodically to prepare their vehicles; checking the oil, cleaning their windows, and gearing up for the long trip that lays ahead of them. Directly behind the 1245th sits a parking lot full of colorfully ornate Host National Afghan vehicles.

While the Afghan culture is very different from

their Oklahoma culture, the small contingent of 1245th Soldiers respect the Afghan people. There are times when things go awry but for the most part every challenge is worked in cooperation with Afghan drivers. After the initial information is distributed, local nationals promptly begin to ask numerous questions, usually about fuel. After their meeting, Afghan drivers continue to prep their vehicles, ensuring that their loads are secure, and just like U.S. forces checking their vehicle’s maintenance. Many drivers exhibit a sense of great pride in their vehicles ensuring they are washed, fueled, and very clean.

After vehicle checks are complete, Soldiers stand around and visit with other crews and friends. Often there is a lot of laughter and joking and routine to throw around a football after all checks are complete. Afghans have taken an interest in 1245th’s pre-mission football game and are intrigued by how the ball spirals through the air. As relationships are built, they show a desire to interact and throw the ball around with the 1245th Soldiers. Most Soldiers encourage them to participate while friends stand guard and keep their distance.

1245th Soldiers are periodically invited for an Afghan meal, an interesting experience. Drivers invite Soldiers for a cup of chai tea; all sit around the trucks and sip tea while sharing through broken English or interpreters. While awaiting directions from 1245th’s Soldiers, the Afghans will usually sit on the ground, spread a blanket out, and wait. Their



1st Lt. Warren Quenton and his translator takes a break with his local Afghan counterparts in Northern Afghanistan.

lives appear to be very nomadic; they do not live in one area but move around all over the country. Afghan’s travel with all their bread, fruits and vegetables and are always looking for a dinner partner. Their diet primarily consisted of lamb, beef, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, and bread. The food is typically prepared in pressure cookers, and served as a stew or soup.

While Afghan culture is very different from that of America, the people are extremely kind and helpful; they are continually helping one another out on the road. They seem to live very simple lives not bound by a culture demanding materialistic belongings, a possible side effect of a tribal lifestyle. Over the last eight months, the 1245th Transportation brothers and sisters have performed exceptionally alongside their Afghans drivers with whom they have built great relationships. They continue to impress all with the respect they show to the Afghans. The 1245th Transportation Company Soldiers are setting the standard here in Afghanistan. ●

CARTOONING THE TROOPS

Photos and Story by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario, Task Force Lifeline (Play Video ► by Staff Sgt. Peter Sinclair)

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — Beats of excitement and laughter rippled its way into the heart of the Task Force Lifeline Soldiers as they sit with cartoonists who draw the Soldiers caricature.

The Soldiers expressed their sincere appreciation for these talented artists especially after they looked at the comical reflections of themselves created by these professional cartoonists.

Pvt. Alice M. Harris, a native of Pinellas Park, Fla., and a human resource specialist with the Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), heard the cartoonist were coming to the Task Force Lifeline building and as a fan of *MAD Magazine* she dropped everything to meet some of her favorite cartoonist.

Harris exclaimed excitedly, “I went in there and I said hey, can you draw Spiderman because that’s my favorite superhero. He (Tom Richmond) said ‘yeah, I can draw Spiderman, that’s fine, I got something perfect for you...and man when he showed me...I was done; it was the best picture I’ve ever got!’”

One by one the Soldiers came up to the cartoonists to receive a personalized drawing as a special memento in remembrance of the occasion.

“I love it when people ask to do things like that it gives me the chance to think up some gags or something funny to do with it,” stated Tom Richmond, with *MAD Magazine* cartoonist and national cartoonist president. “The Spiderman one, I wanted to do the upside down one Spiderman kissing from the first movie, it’s pretty popular so I thought it would be a good gag.”

The cartoonist visited on a United Service Organizations (USO) tour with the National Cartoonists Society (NCS), they (artist) visit troops that are downrange or military installations and then draw the troops comically just to bring a little bit of laughter during their deployment time. The NCS is an organization of professional cartoonist within the United States. It was formed in 1946 when cartoonist got together to entertain military troops. From then on they continued to visit on a regular basis.

Richmond proudly stated, “We are continuing that tradition. “Personally I just love the fact that I can come out here and meet the people that are defending our freedom overseas and try to bring some smiles to their

faces, it’s the best part.”

Capt. Peter O. Mousseau, a native of Clarksville, Tenn., and brigade human resource officer in charge for Task Force Lifeline, spoke very highly about the cartoonists visit and how it brought cheer and home to the Soldiers. Mousseau exclaimed, “Every single one of these cartoonists are true patriots! They came out here to Afghanistan for us Lifeliners and other deployed civilians and military and really raised our moral.”

Cartoon—Page 10

Master Sgt. Charles R. Montoya, a native of Albuquerque, N.M., and a petroleum non-commissioned officer with the 809th Quartermaster Detachment in support of Task Force Lifeline, sits on a chair as Tom Richmond, cartoonist with the *MAD Magazine*, comically draws him on a portable drawing board during the United Services Organizations (USO) tour with the National Cartoonists Society visiting troops downrange, Sept. 4, 2013 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. The NCS come together often to entertain service members downrange or at military installations.

Photos by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario



Page 9 — Cartoon

These events are important to the troops mostly because being away from the comforts of home while downrange; it gives them something to look forward to.

“I think it’s paramount, because everybody works so hard and in a stressful environment. It’s nice to take a break from the monotony of each day and have someone take time to come here and share their talents with us, talk to us and kinda get our minds out of work for that moment, expressed Capt. Janay M. Wilson, a native of Moreno Valley, Calif., and Morale Welfare and Recreation officer in charge with the Combined Joint Task Force 101.

As the cartoonist finished up the last drawing, there was a sense of accomplishment, knowing that each of the Soldier’s day was brightened by just a simple silly picture.

“You know you make people laugh, make them smile; make them have a good time, exclaimed Richmond.

“That’s why we do what we do; especially here where people can often times use a good smile and laugh. It’s very gratifying.”●



(Above) Tom Richmond, cartoonist with the MAD Magazine, prepares to place a paper on a portable drawing board to begin drawing a Task Force Lifeline Soldier during the United Services Organizations (USO) tour with the National Cartoonists Society visiting troops downrange, Sept. 4, 2013 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. The NCS come together on a regular basis to entertain through their drawings service members downrange or at military installations. (Below-Right) Pvt. Alice M. Harris, a native of Pinellas Park, Fla. and a human resource specialist with the Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), looks at her caricature character drawn by Tom Richmond, a cartoonist with MAD Magazine. (Below-Left) Capt. Peter O. Mousseau, a native of Clarksville, Tenn., and brigade human resource officer in charge for Task Force Lifeline, sits on a chair as Ray Alma, cartoonist with the MAD Magazine, comically draws him on a portable drawing board.





Photo by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario

Pfc. Jacob R. Morse, a native of Port Orchard, Wash., and a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Task Force Lifeline, fills out the quality assurance quality control inspection form during preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) on the mine resistant ambush protected vehicle, Aug. 23, 2013 at Bagram Airfield, Parwan province, Afghanistan. Morse conducts PMCS to ensure the care, servicing, early detection and correction of minor faults before these faults cause serious damage or failures to the vehicle.

Solidifying Confidence Through Maintenance

Photos and Story by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario, Task Force Lifeline
([Play Video](#) ► by Staff Sgt. Peter Sin-

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — Soldiers with very different missions come together every week to troubleshoot and maintain their equipment. The trust they put in their mechanics to know that their vehicles will get them to their next destination and back with no complication is critical to the team known as the Shield of the Lifeline, the Command Security Team (CST).

“Lifelines run on vehicles,” stated Pfc. Jacob R. Morse, a native of Port Orchard, Wash., and a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Task Force Lifeline. Maintenance is the mantra of the day-to-day life of a mechanic. It is their responsibility to ensure that the vehicles are maintained in a timely manner and are ready to roll through the rugged terrain of Afghanistan.

The CST and the mechanics have a special relationship that ensures success of their mission.

“Our cohesion with our mechanics is essential,” stated Spc. Kyle Stetson, a native of Liberty, Mo., and a member of the command security team with the Task Force Lifeline. “Making sure that our vehicles are correctly maintained and that we (as CST members) under-

stand how to properly operate the vehicle.”

The CST brings their vehicles to the mechanics for weekly inspection. This ensures that the CST has the knowledge and know how to self identify problems.

“We do a QAQC, which is a quality assurance, quality control inspection to make sure everything is good on that vehicle so it’s dependable outside the wire,” said Morse. “The way I look at it, if I wouldn’t trust myself driving it outside the wire, I’m not gonna have them driving it out.”

He continued to explain some of the things they know to look for during these inspections such as brake wear, oil levels and other fluid leaks. The mechanics ensure all the rotors and brakes are serviceable and even something as simple as checking the seat belts. The mechanics pay close attention to the work they do on these vehicles to ensure even the smallest detail isn’t overlooked.

The Soldiers know that if they don’t conduct proper checks or fix what needs to be fixed it can lead to future complication that the CST does not need while traveling

on these dangerous roads.

Morse described an example of what can happen if a vehicle is low on oil and it’s not properly filled before a mission.

“You can blow a head gasket, blow a main seal, now say you blow a rear main seal what’s going to happen is that the engine is going to completely dump all the oil that’s in it and you’re going to be stuck out there with an engine that will not run at all,” exclaimed Morse. “You’re going to have a vehicle down, you’re going to have to get wrecker support out and it’s a headache that the Command Security Team does not need.”

Knowing what the CST faces routinely on missions outside the wire drives the mechanics to work harder to guarantee the safe return of their comrades.

“Our equipment is everything. Without our equipment we couldn’t do our job, without the proper training on the equipment we couldn’t do our job,” Stetson explained in a serious tone of voice. “The mechanics skill set and hard work make sure that our equipment works properly and instills confidence in our team that everything’s working properly.”●

CET ACADEMY: PASSING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Story by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario,
Task Force Lifeline

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan — The mission is to execute the movement of sustainment and retrograde materiel up and down the most dangerous roads in the world; to support 1st Sustainment Command (Theater) mission in Afghanistan.

After lessons learned due to continued contact with the enemy on the Afghanistan roads, the 157th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in support of Task Force Lifeline, established a training course to share invaluable knowledge with incoming convoy escort team (CET) units.

“The CET Academy is a program that was derived from experience from other convoy escort teams that

have been running the roads of Afghanistan,” said Sgt. 1st Class Juan J. Villalobos, a convoy commander with the 359th Inland Cargo Transfer Company, 157th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. “It’s a program to give them (new Soldiers) an overview of what to expect when they’re out on the roads.”

He continued to explain the training was envisioned and established by Lt. Col. Dean, the commander of the 157th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion and his CET units. Dean and the CET commanders came together to discuss a new plan of action. This plan of action was to ensure every Soldier upon their arrival to Afghanistan receive proper training before they negotiate the roads.

“During this training the Soldiers

will conduct evaluations to make sure that the platoon leaders, platoon sergeants and the convoy commanders are qualified to take junior Soldiers out on the road and keep them safe on the most dangerous roads in Afghanistan,” said Dean. He continued to explain that the training was broken down into different phases; a classroom part, then a hands-on, then a culminating training event where Soldiers practiced under stressful conditions.

From there the Soldiers went out on the road with their counterparts to see first-hand what it takes to conduct these missions, where they are sustaining troops through delivery of supplies and then retrograding those supplies that are no longer needed at remote locations.



Photos by Sgt. Sinthia Rosario

(Left Photo) Spc. Jerry N. Wallace, a native of Orlando, Fla., and a gunner with the 850th Transportation Company, 77th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in support of Task Force Lifeline inspects vehicle during preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS), Sept. 11, 2013 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (Right Photo) Spc. Releshea L. Sanders, a native of Senatobia, Miss., and a motor transport operator with the 850th Transportation Company, checks the fluids on the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle during PMCS. The 850th Trans. Co. participated in the Convoy Escort Team (CET) Academy as part of a requirement for incoming CET units.

Page 12—Knowledge

During the joint mission the incoming unit gets a chance to actually execute the role of a mission commander, convoy commander or an assistant convoy commander while they have a trained and seasoned counterpart in the trucks with them. This will allow them to prove they understand the role and gain that confidence that they are completing the task correctly and safely.

Finally, the Battalion conducts a check-on-learning. This last portion is where the Soldiers go through a board process.

The CET members being trained are asked questions by the battalion staff to ensure the mission handover was a success and they fully understand their roles.

Once the Soldiers complete this phase the Soldiers are validated and certified by the battalion commander, Dean.

“The main goal is to provide situation awareness in any new SI-GACTS (significant activities) or any new TTPs (tactics, techniques and procedures) that we have instilled that have been productive and effective against the enemy,” said Villalobos, a native of Eagle Pass, Texas.

The CET Academy fosters a training environment in which incoming Soldiers can absorb the knowledge and experience of the unit they’re replacing. Villalobos stated, “What we do is we take specifics that have worked in the country of Afghanistan and that gives them a better understanding of what is going on here.” He added that they don’t really get this updated training when they’re back in the states because everything changes daily.

“The enemy is forever changing,” said Sgt. David A. Armstrong, a native of Memphis, Tenn., and a truck

driver with the 850th Transportation Company, 157th CSSB. Armstrong, as a new Soldier in Afghanistan and taking the training he understands how vital this program can be to understanding their daily mission and the safety precautions that go with their task.

He continued to explain that the enemy has the ability to learn their techniques and their positions during convoys. The way to success is this type of training where one can learn from Soldiers who have actually experienced missions on the road and have dealt with the insurgents.

“Personally I have run over 33 missions and I’ll tell you that we did not have this training when we got here back in December,” Villalobos stated. “This program, it’s important, it’s vital and it’ll probably make their life and their job a little bit easier.”●