



The Main Effort

Monthly Newsletter of the 205th RCAC

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ANA 205th battalion conducts first indirect live fire

By CDR Chad Snee
205th RCAC PAO

A motivated group of Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers achieved a significant milestone Nov. 15: the first live, indirect fire of the D-30 howitzer gun.

The soldiers, assigned to the 4th Kandak (battalion), 1st Brigade, ANA 205th Corps, conducted the successful fire exercise at Tarnak Farms range, located several kilometers southwest of Kandahar Airfield.

Indirect fire involves firing at a target that often is not visible and requires more sophisticated calculations to hit the target.

In contrast, direct artillery fire, which this group of soldiers has done, requires aiming the gun directly at a target that can be seen. Direct fire is not as complicated as indirect fire.

Guiding the ANA soldiers during the Nov. 15 exercise was an experienced group of U.S. Army trainers, including Master Sgt. Andrew Stodgel of Boonville, Mo.

Stodgel explained that the ANA troops are still learning all the myriad details necessary to fire a large artillery piece. From fire direction control to the responsibilities of the gun chief (who directs all aspects of gun operation), there is much to learn, he explained.

“They know the basics, but we are formulating a detailed training plan to teach them what they need to know,” stated Stodgel.

Among the biggest challenges facing the U.S. Army mentors is mastering a foreign weapons system, which adds a significant dimension to teaching the ANA how to use it.

“All the ANA equipment is different



Afghan National Army soldiers assigned to 4th Kandak (battalion), 1st Brigade, 205th Corps prepare a D-30 howitzer gun for firing Nov. 15. The dedicated soldiers are learning to effectively conduct indirect fire using the Soviet-era artillery piece.

from ours. These big guns have been sitting here since the 1980s, but we have no technical records on them,” Stodgel said.

In addition, the ANA uses slightly different measurements when adjusting the D-30 for a given fire mission.

Stodgel estimates that it will take at least two months to three months of additional training before the ANA soldiers of the 4/1/205 will be able to conduct indirect-fire artillery exercises on their own.

During each fire mission, the U.S. instructors assisted only when it was apparent that the ANA team was uncertain of the next step. For the most part, the ANA soldiers conducted the exercise from start to finish.

The U.S. trainers intend to turnover execution of indirect fire to the ANA in stages, as the soldiers demonstrate proficiency in various aspects of their training. Nonetheless, the ANA troops who manned the D-30 were clearly pleased at their progress.

Following the last fire mission, which comprised firing three rounds in rapid succession, there were smiles all around.

As a light rain began to fall from the steel-gray sky, all in attendance applauded the successful conclusion of the exercise.

This and other training exercises are moving the ANA toward the day when it will be ready to assume full responsibility for the defense of Afghanistan.

Indeed, the strength and capability of the ANA is growing steadily each day. Further challenges are to be met, but the progress of Afghanistan’s fighters is undeniable.

Capt. Jason Wilde of Brigham City, Utah, who is leading the artillery training of the ANA, was impressed with what he saw.

“I feel pretty lucky to come over here to work with these guys. They want to learn, and they work very hard,” stated Wilde.

ANA 205th Corps selects NCO, soldier of the year

**By CDR Chad Snee
205th RCAC PAO**

The 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army (ANA) chose two outstanding soldiers for special recognition during a brief ceremony held Nov. 16 at Camp Shir Zai.

Sgt. 1st Class Babrak Jan of Jalalabad was selected as the noncommissioned officer (NCO) of the year, and Soldier Mahfooz Khpalwak of Parwan was chosen as the soldier of the year. Both men are pictured nearby.

Command Sgt. Maj. Kaifayatullah, command sergeant major of the ANA 205th Corps, read the award citations as Maj. Gen. Rahmatullah Raufi, ANA 205th Corps Commander, handed the awards to the two motivated men.

“I am very proud that we have such good soldiers as these two in our ranks,” Raufi stated. “I hope we can recruit more good soldiers.”

Raufi offered some sage advice to the many soldiers in the audience who were not selected: “Keep working on your education and continue to train hard. Keep fighting to keep our borders and country secure.”

Jan, 30, joined the ANA three years ago and was extremely pleased with his selection as NCO of the year.

“I am very happy. It is our duty that we do our best for our country and our people,” Jan proclaimed.

Khpalwak, 21, whose youthful features mask the dedicated, determined warrior within, also is a three-year veteran of the ANA.

“It is powerful for me and my friends that I was selected for this honor in this corps,” Khpalwak asserted. “I will continue to do my best, and I know my fellow soldiers will try their best to be nominated next year.”

Jan and Khpalwak received \$25 cash each, in addition to their award certificates.

Other cash awards, ranging from \$20 to \$30, were given by drawing a

soldier’s name at random from a large wooden box. Jan and Khpalwak were not eligible for these extra monetary awards.

Command Sgt. Maj. Al Jellum of 1st Brigade, 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command explained that the two men and their fellow nominated soldiers were required to stand before evaluation boards conducted at the company, battalion, brigade and corps levels.

Each board comprised six members, and each member asked three questions, Jellum said. The president of each board also quizzed the candidates about current affairs in Afghanistan.

“The soldiers were evaluated on their military skills and on leadership skills within their company,” Jellum explained.

Other areas of scrutiny included uniform appearance and military bearing, general military knowledge, and cultural and religious awareness.

“The boards also asked questions in training and operations, land navigation and map reading, marksmanship, communications and first aid,” Jellum continued.

Jellum remarked that both Jan and Khpalwak are excellent soldiers who immediately stood out among the other nominees.



Sgt. 1st Class Babrak Jan, left, and Soldier Mahfooz Khpalwak were selected as the Afghan National Army 205th Corps’ noncommissioned officer of the year and soldier of the year, respectively, Nov. 16. The two men passed through rigorous evaluation boards to earn these important recognitions.

“Given the significant conflict in this part of the country, it is impressive that they continued to study diligently and prepare for their boards,” Jellum said.

U.S. and Coalition forces are continuing to assist the ANA in its mission to win the support and trust of the Afghan people and to defend the nation’s borders on its own.

More important, the future development of the ANA is on a firm upward trajectory because of the dedication, honor and patriotism of Jan and Khpalwak and their fellow brothers in arms.

205th RCAC medical officer promoted to Major

By CDR Chad Snee
205th RCAC PAO

Capt. Ron C. Smith, medical officer to the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command in Kandahar, Afghanistan, was promoted to the rank of Major Nov. 14.

In a brief ceremony conducted under a tattered blanket of clouds, 205th RCAC Commander Col. Michael Petrucci exchanged the double-bar Captain insignia affixed to Smith's uniform for the gold oak leaf of a Major.

Petrucci also placed atop Smith's head a new officer's cap bearing the correct rank.

Following an exchange of salutes, Petrucci asked that Maj. Smith face the formation of his fellow 205th RCAC personnel who turned out to witness Smith's promotion.

"My only unhappiness at this event is that Doc Smith and I have not had the opportunity to serve together for a longer period of time," Petrucci told those assembled.



Newly promoted Maj. Ron Smith, right, stands at attention during his promotion ceremony, held Nov. 14 at the headquarters of the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command in Kandahar, Afghanistan. At left is Col. Michael Petrucci, commander of the 205th RCAC.

"His promotion is not a reflection of what he has done, but of what he will accomplish in the future."

After the ceremony concluded,

Smith received hearty congratulations from his fellow 205th RCAC Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen.

Smith, 44, hales from Portland, Ore. He completed his undergraduate studies at Oregon State University, before earning a master's degree in medical science from Emory University in Atlanta.

He joined the Oregon Army National Guard in 1998 and has spent his entire military career with the 41st Brigade Combat Team (BCT).

[Editor's note: The 41st BCT, under the command of Brig. Gen. Douglas Pritt, is deployed to Afghanistan as Task Force Phoenix V.]

"I joined the Guard for a combination of reasons," Smith remarked. "First, I wanted to serve my country and do my part.

"I also liked the opportunities I would have to practice my trade, which is emergency medicine."

Of course, it didn't hurt that the Army paid most of Smith's tuition bills, he stated.

Smith noted a number of sources of satisfaction that come with his deployment to Afghanistan.

"Working with the crew here has been great," he observed. "From Col. Petrucci on down, I see excellent examples of leadership.

"It's what I thought the military would be like."

Smith also commented favorably on his interactions with coalition forces, the Canadians in particular.

"I admire how dedicated the Canadians are to their service. They've paid a pretty heavy price for being here."

Following the promotion ceremony, Maj. Smith began casting some thoughts toward his home in Oregon, where he was to spend 15 days' leave at the end of November.

"I look forward to going home and recharging my batteries," he said, a broad smile running across his face.



Focusing Down Range



By CSM Martin Deck
205th RCAC CSM

Winter is upon us and weather conditions are changing rapidly. The nature of our jobs requires us to be on the road often, and we must be aware of the road conditions. Although there may be no visible snow in the area, the temperatures are ideal for creating black ice. This requires us to take a look at the conditions as part of the risk assessment prior to going on a mission. We must determine whether or not the mission is worth the risk in driving during the time of day when the temperature is at its coldest (0500-0700) and walk through what to do if the vehicle hits a patch of black ice, or an oncoming vehicle loses control.

This subject has special meaning to

me: my wife and daughter had an accident recently due to black ice and rolled my truck four times. Luckily they had their seatbelts on and no one was seriously hurt; just some minor injuries and contusions. She was coming back to Klamath Falls, Ore., from Medford, Ore., and coming over the pass hit a patch of black ice and lost control of the vehicle. She said the roads were clear of snow and conditions looked fine, however the temperature was about 20° F outside. Had she made a mental risk assessment prior to her emotional decision to drive over the pass to pick up my daughter, rather than waiting for the next day, she could have avoided risking both their lives. They were lucky. Don't put yourselves in the same situation.

38 205th Regional Corps Soldiers receive CIBs, CABs

By CDR Chad Snee
205th RCAC PAO

A total of 38 Soldiers assigned to the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command received the Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) or the Combat Action Badge (CAB) Nov. 10.

In addition, another Soldier, also a member of the 205th RCAC, was awarded the Combat Medical Badge (CMB) for performing medical duties while under fire.

The awards acknowledged participation in various combat engagements that took place in July and August.

Col. Michael Petrucci, Commander of the 205th RCAC, presented the awards during a brief ceremony conducted at the command headquarters, located on Kandahar Air Facility in southern Afghanistan.

The following Soldiers were awarded the CIB for the performance of their duties while engaged in active ground combat: Staff Sgt. Christian Baughman; Spc. Thomas Bervin; Staff Sgt. Jason Blain; Spc. Scott Delapp; Private 1st Class Mitchell Espinosa; Spc. Scott Fox; Maj. Gregory Glenn; Private 1st Class Jason Haataja; 1st Lt. Vincent Habek; Spc. Ricardo Inciarte; Sgt. Derryl James; Spc. Paul Knickerbocker; Spc. Gregory Mannen; Spc. Jesse Mitchell; Private 1st Class Joseph Munch; Spc. Michael Oakes; Private 2nd Class Justin Peek; Spc. Lance Renfro; Sgt 1st Class Steven Richmond; Sgt. Dale Scott; Cpl. Patrick Strand; Private 2nd Class Bradley Tripp; and Sgt. Bruce Williams.

The following Soldiers received the CAB for the performance of their duties while actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy: 1st Lt. Clayton Engel; Spc. Alonzo Escorza; Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Gallardo; Maj. Craig Gilcrease; Spc. Robert Gillem; Spc. Shi Herrin; Sgt. 1st Class Gary Holland; Spc. Peter Lee; Master Sgt. Richard Martinez;



Soldiers assigned to the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command receive the Combat Infantryman Badge, during an awards ceremony conducted Nov. 10. Presenting the CIBs is Col. Michael Petrucci, Commander of the 205th RCAC.

Sgt. Janile McQueen; Cpl. Raymond Santiago; Sgt. Bruce Townley; Spc. Brian Wayment; Spc. David Weissman; and Sgt. 1st Class Pablo Zamora.

Sgt. Stewart Jones, a hard-charging Army combat medic, was awarded the CMB.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Col. Petrucci praised the awardees and cautioned them not to become complacent.

“Wear these badges with pride, but remember that they don’t protect you from anything,” he stated. “Remember to always be alert on the battlefield.”

The Spartan surroundings did not diminish the significance of the recognition bestowed upon all of these fine Soldiers.

They continue to serve with courage and honor, sometimes under harsh conditions. Their noble efforts on behalf of the Afghan people are cause

for justifiable pride among their families and friends back home.

News of awards presented to personnel stationed in the 205th area of operations is welcome in *The Main Effort*. Please send a brief write-up and a picture of those being recognized to 205th RCAC PAO Cdr. Chad Snee at charles.snee@swa.army.mil.

‘Main Effort’ hit at home

Many thanks to the numerous personnel assigned to the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command who have been diligently forwarding issues of *The Main Effort* home to their families and friends. In response, the 205th RCAC has received numerous favorable comments. Many folks back home are thrilled to learn about the noble efforts of our men and women on behalf of the Afghan people.

Keep the news coming, they say.