



The Main Effort

Monthly Newsletter of the 205th RCAG
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205th RCAG soldier from Oregon lands TV interview

By CDR Chad Snee
205th RCAG PAO

CPT Manuel Robledo, a soldier from the 41st Brigade Combat Team assigned to the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Group at Kandahar, was interviewed Sept. 23 for a short television news report.

The report was to be prepared for possible broadcast on stations in the Eugene, Ore., area.

Robledo, who hails from Sweet Home, Ore., caught the attention of a pair of journalists who came into the 205th RCAG's area of operations in search of news about soldiers from Oregon.

Freelance journalists Doug Grindle and Ken Paprocki, representing television station KEZI of Eugene, Ore., spent approximately 45 minutes with Robledo, who effortlessly fielded questions on a wide range of topics.

As shown in the photo nearby, the on-camera portion of the interview, which lasted approximately 10 minutes, was conducted outside the 205th RCAG's headquarters building



CPT Manuel Robledo, from Sweet Home, Ore., was interviewed for a brief television news spot Sept. 23. The interview was under consideration for possible later broadcast on stations serving the Eugene, Ore., area, near Robledo's home.

'The Main Effort' here to tell your stories

By COL Michael Petrucci
Commander, 205th RCAG

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Main Effort*, the monthly newsletter of the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Group.

This publication is your forum for telling about the accomplishments of the 205th RCAG in support of the Afghan people and their country.

The name of the newsletter is a reflection of the reality on the ground: a great deal of the hard fighting in Afghanistan is being waged in the 205th

RCAG's area of operations.

In the midst of the combat, however, the 205th RCAG is accomplishing incredible things. *The Main Effort* exists to get these stories out to a wider audience, including to our loved ones back home.

As with any publication, *The Main Effort* is only as good as its content. I have every confidence that your stories will make it even better.

Stories and pictures may be submitted to CDR Chad Snee, 205th RCAG PAO, at charles.snee@swa.army.mil.

at Kandahar Air Facility.

Robledo explained the basic structure of the Afghan National Army and reviewed the missions of embedded training teams and the 205th RCAG, as they relate to the development of the ANA.

When Grindle specifically asked about the presence of Oregon personnel in the 205th area of responsibility, Robledo responded, "They are everywhere and are involved with the ANA at all levels."

Overall, there are approximately 200 soldiers from Oregon serving in the 205th RCAG.

Among these Oregonians are about 30 to 40 security-forces personnel. "They provide security for convoys and other operations. Real gut-and-nail kind of guys," observed Robledo.

Robledo also discussed the transition to the NATO operational military liaison teams. OMLTs will eventually take control of the ETT missions currently performed by U.S. personnel, Robledo said.

The OMLT transition has taken much longer in southern Afghanistan because of the high operational tempo and the increased level of combat during the past several months.

Robledo was quick to stress the importance of the work that the 205th RCAG is doing in Afghanistan.

"I'm here to support the men and women in the field," stated Robledo. "We're here to help the Afghans secure their country."

And what about the sacrifice of a year away from home and family?

"A year is a long time, but the mission is worth it," Robledo replied. "There are a lot of brave people here doing extraordinary things."

ANA 205th legal staff grounded in law fundamentals

Ten members of the legal staff of the 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army were grounded in basic law concepts Sept. 24 at Camp Shir Zai.

MAJ Paul Waldron, command judge advocate for the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Group, led a focused discussion that covered topics such as: the rule of law; separation of powers among the legislative, executive and judicial branches; independence of the judiciary; fundamental fairness; due process; impartiality; and double jeopardy (can't be tried for the same offense twice).

To facilitate the transfer of knowledge, Waldron, with the able assistance of his interpreter Abdul Azim Satarzada, prepared slides of the presentation in Dari, the native language of the ANA lawyers in attendance.

During the presentation, Waldron referred to similar slides (displayed on another computer) in English.

The meeting began on an appropriate note, with the playing of the national anthem of Afghanistan.

Satarzada suggested to Waldron that he include the patriotic song, because it would inspire the ANA members and would impress upon them the fact that this training was specifically for their professional development and for the better good of Afghanistan.

COL Shir Ahmad Zarak, staff judge advocate for the 205th Corps of the ANA, then provided a brief introduction, stating that he and his team were pleased about the training they were to receive.

Waldron emphasized that he wanted a dialogue between himself and his students.

"I want this to be a discussion among ourselves," Waldron stated. "I want us to talk about issues when they come up."

Waldron began his lesson with one of the most important legal concepts:



MAJ Paul Waldron, standing, left, command judge advocate for the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Group stationed at Kandahar Air Facility, teaches basic concepts of law to members of the legal staff of the 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army Sept. 24 at Camp Shir Zai.

the rule of law.

The ANA lawyers and judges were asked what they believed "rule of law" meant.

One ANA judge responded immediately and with conviction in his voice: "Rule of law means that all citizens of Afghanistan are subject to the same law."

Waldron affirmed the judge's answer and replied that "we need to have faith, confidence and belief in the rule of law."

Regarding the concept of separation of powers, Waldron advised his students that it is "important to understand that the legislative, executive and judicial branches have separate powers that prevent one branch from encroaching on another."

At times, the discussion became quite animated, as the ANA lawyers wrestled with these important concepts.

It was very clear from their comments and questions that they are committed to expanding their understanding of the law and to putting that knowledge to use in the service of the Afghan people.

Several participants commented that the training was very valuable and useful. So useful, they said, that they didn't realize that more than two hours had passed when the instruction ended.

Waldron stated that this initial block of instruction began with the basics, a foundation upon which more difficult legal concepts may be built.

"We have to show the ANA leadership that the law works and how to use it effectively," Waldron asserted. "We need to be confident experts in our jobs."

"It is my firm belief that the 205th RCAG is leading the way in ANA training on legal issues."

Medical outreach benefits residents of Biaban Darreh

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

The village of Biaban Darreh, approximately five kilometers south of Kandahar Air Facility in southern Afghanistan, was the focus of a village medical outreach visit Sept. 26.

Participating in the VMO were soldiers and doctors from the 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army, soldiers and medical personnel from the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Group, and coalition members of the International Security Assistance Force.

The VMO provided residents with basic medical care, along with medical supplies and preventive medications such as antibiotics.

Also distributed were clothes, small toys and basic food items, including bags of rice and beans and large jugs of cooking oil.

Children in the village also received kites and small back packs filled with notebooks, pencils and other goodies.

The kites, in particular, were especially well received. At one point, almost 10 were fluttering in the gentle breeze that coursed over a large field, just to the east of the village.

Most of the children were quite adept at assembling the kites and at getting them airborne without difficulty. This comes as no surprise, because kite flying has a proud tradition in the history of Afghanistan.

ANA soldiers helped pass out items to the children, and they assisted U.S. and coalition forces with perimeter security.

In keeping with local customs and traditions, the women, many with small children, received their care in an area separated from the men.

Most of the women would not use the main entry control point, set up near the front of village, because there were too many male soldiers and other men present in the area leading to the examination room.

Instead, the women used a small alley next to the room, which allowed them access without being seen by as many people. This alternate route initially posed a security problem, but it was rectified by using female soldiers to keep an eye on entry and exits points near the alley.

Akhtar Mohammad, the malak (senior village elder) of Biaban Darreh, expressed concern that his honor and reputation among the 50 to 60 families in his village would be negatively affected if the VMO did not go well.

His comment carried much weight in a land where honor is paramount and essential for acquiring more power among one's peers.

The security issues for the village's women were rectified, and Mohammad asserted that he felt much better.

He spoke favorably about the VMO, saying that it was most helpful during Ramadan, the month-long period of daily fasting and prayer that began Sept. 23.

In the midst of his positive comments, Mohammad again highlighted security and its affects on



An Afghan National Army soldier distributes backpacks and other supplies to children in the village of Biaban Darreh Sept 26.

his people and his country. "We have a lot to learn about safety and security, after 30 years of war," he stated.

VMOs, such as the one to Biaban Darreh, and other reconstruction and development projects have one central focus: winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people.

In the midst of strife and conflict, such missions build the goodwill, respect and trust that are necessary prerequisites to helping the Afghan people take the destiny of their country into their own hands.

These outreaches also help U.S. and coalition forces obtain valuable intelligence that can be used to thwart the ambitions of the Taliban and other forces that are working to defeat the solid progress being made.

[Editor's note: a special thanks to the following four soldiers who transported the author to the VMO: SSG Jason C. Blain, SPC Rowdy Isbill, CPL Mark Fuwell and PV2 Justin Peek. All four are assigned to the 205th RCAG security forces.]



Two Biaban Darreh children are all smiles, after receiving their backpacks filled with toys and other treats, courtesy of a village medical outreach conducted Sept. 26.

Sloss leaves legacy of service to people of Afghanistan

By CDR Chad Snee
205th RCAG PAO

LTC Joel Sloss, civil affairs officer for the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Group, returned to his hometown of Cumming, Ga., Sept. 30, following two years of dedicated service on behalf of the Afghan people.

While assigned to the 205th RCAG, Sloss wore many hats, and although his efforts often received high visibility, he preferred to remain in the shadows and not be the center of attention.

He likened his work to that of an orchestra conductor. “The players and the music they make are what matter. I’m just there to provide direction,” stated Sloss.

During his tenure, Sloss worked tirelessly to promote and see through to completion projects funded under the aegis of the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP).

Using CERP funds, a total of three schools and one village medical clinic were constructed under his discerning and watchful eye.

Sloss, 59, also planned and executed 10 village medical outreach visits to villages in the 205th RCAG’s area of operations.

The last such VMO for Sloss, conducted Sept. 26, brought food, medicine, toys and school supplies to the families of Biaban Darreh, a village just south of Kandahar Air Facility, home to the 205th RCAG.

Just days before his departure, Sloss was busy planning how to spend a requested \$5 million in CERP funds for fiscal year 2007, to support the building of six schools, five school security walls, an electrical substation, a water project in Karez, a road project and two medical clinics.

Sloss also participated in two of the most important developments in the recent history of this war-torn land. Specifically, he was the senior American responsible for Afghan National Army security for the 2004

presidential and 2005 national assembly elections.

In addition, he served in various mentoring roles, to include coaching the minister of defense at the National Military Command Center and the disaster preparedness chief of the Ministry of Defense.

Sloss helped improve the quality of life for more than 170 interpreters living on Camp Shir Zai, to include assisting in the construction of a new dining facility and living quarters.

When asked how he was able to accomplish so much during his tour, Sloss emphasized two things: his extensive background in civil affairs and his familiarity with the Middle East.

He served as chief of civil affairs for the 3rd Army and spent six years in the Middle East, including a tour spanning Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm during 1990-91.

“I’m very comfortable in the Middle East,” Sloss asserted. “The area doesn’t intimidate me.”

Sloss’ comfort with his surroundings catalyzed productive working relationships with local village elders, and those connections, built on trust, often yielded valuable intelligence that aided the efforts of U.S. and coalition forces.

He also said that much of what he achieved was due to the avid support of COL Michael Petrucci, commander of the 205th RCAG, which is based at Kandahar Air Facility, in southern Afghanistan.

“The civil affairs piece didn’t really get going until COL Petrucci came along. He believes in reaching out to the Afghan people as much as I do,” said Sloss.

Sloss retired from the Army in 2000, but when the call came to serve in Afghanistan, he saw an opportunity to make a difference and to put his experience to good use. “As I see it, if you win the hearts and minds of the



LTC Joel Sloss, third from left, stands with doctors from the 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army Sept. 26, during his final village medical outreach, to Biaban Darreh, a community near Kandahar.

Afghan people, you’ll succeed against the terrorists,” stated Sloss.

A big key to accomplishing this objective, he said, was incorporating the people into the mission of taking control of their lives. “The people have to have a sense of ownership. They have to buy into what is happening here.”

According to Sloss, you have to do more than just give something to the people you are helping, without expecting something in return.

If the objective is to build a school in a village, then the contract should go to a local business. Members of the village should help construct the school, and they should be paid for their services, he said.

Taking such an approach is a sure-fire way to instill pride of ownership and community cohesiveness – two necessary ingredients in the recipe for a better future in Afghanistan.

As for LTC Sloss’ future, he plans to return to his career in education, as a principal of an elementary school.

His students no doubt will benefit from his dedication and enthusiasm, just as the Afghan people did.

“I’m a 100-percent kind of guy,” Sloss said. “I give any job the best that I can.”

ANA 205th soldiers graduate from computer course

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

Twenty-one soldiers from the 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army completed a course in basic computer skills and usage Oct. 4 at Camp Shir Zai.

Normally five days to six days in duration, the course spanned 10 days, because of Ramadan.

CPT J.W. Beatty, signal officer for the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Group, stated that classes lasted a half day, out of respect for the students, who abstain, from sunrise to sunset, from all food and drink during the



A soldier from the 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army proudly displays the certificate he received Oct. 4, following the completion of a course in basic computer skills taught at Camp Shir Zai.

month-long observance.

The graduation ceremony was the third such for ANA soldiers completing the basic computer skills course. Approximately 60 students, including those who graduated Oct. 4, have completed the course, Beatty stated.

Members of the Canadian Army spearheaded the development of the

course syllabus and fielded a dedicated cadre of instructors to teach it.

CPT Sham Sudeem, automation officer for the ANA 205th Corps, worked closely with the Canadians and was instrumental in making the course a reality.

Initially, there were some reservations on the part of the ANA officers attending the course, because they felt that they shouldn't receive instruction from noncommissioned officers.

"Part of the mentoring process involved getting the officers to understand that NCOs are the primary trainers," explained Beatty.

The NCOs provide the hands-on experience, which allows the officers to plan for mission requirements and keep the big picture in mind.

When the graduation ceremony began, all of the students were seated in front of the Dell computers that were used to train them.

Each soldier sounded off smartly when he was called forward to receive his course completion certificate. He then thanked the presenting instructor for the certificate and turned around to show the audience the evidence of his hard work.

Several students, motivated by their experience in the course, proudly and robustly proclaimed, "I will spend my life in the service of Afghanistan!" The conviction and pride in their voices inspired all in attendance.

The executive officer of the ANA 205th Corps, BG Khwaja Murad, attended the graduation ceremony and echoed the feelings of his soldiers.

"We will never forget the help we received from our Canadian teachers and American friends," Murad exclaimed.

Murad explained that it was a big step for the ANA to move from recordkeeping using pens and paper, which he described as "very inefficient," to using computers.

"Computers will make our jobs easier," he continued. "We can then teach others the skills we have learned."

Canadian MAJ John Blythe, commanding officer of the Multinational Brigade (headquarters and signals), also attended the graduation.

"The certificate you received is a



Twenty-one ANA soldiers, shown with their Canadian instructors, completed a course in basic computer skills at Camp Shir Zai Oct. 4.

great milestone in your officer corps," Blythe told the students.

"It is not just a piece of paper – it acknowledges your desire to use technology to do your jobs better, which will help you become better leaders. Take those certificates back to your homes and display them with pride."

Blythe said that he and his team would soon depart for their home in Canada and that he was pleased to have forged close friendships with his ANA counterparts.

"If you should get an e-mail address," he stated, "send me a note, and I will respond in your native language."

Following the ceremony, the students gathered with their teachers for a group photo.

Their smiling faces were a fitting testimony to their desire to better themselves as their nation, after decades of war and upheaval, steadily marches toward a better future.