



The Main Effort

Monthly Newsletter of the 205th RSAC

Issue No. 11 — March 2007



ANA, US personnel bring smiles to Qalat children

By MAJ Brent Baxter
2nd Brigade, 205th RSAC

On the morning of Jan. 28, a joint force of U.S. personnel from Forward Operations Base (FOB) Apache and Afghan National Army (ANA) Soldiers from 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps distributed clothing, toys and food to residents of the nearby villages of Jarullah and Kala near Qalat, in Zabul province.

Throughout 2006, many friends and families of the U.S. personnel collected items and shipped them to FOB Apache in an effort to give to those who lives are filled with poverty and need. Donated items came from all across the United States. Offices and living areas within FOB Apache were filled with boxes full of those donated items.

Lt. Col. John Fortune (commander of 2nd Brigade, 205th Regional Security Assistance Command), Col. Muhammad Afzal

(executive officer of 2nd Brigade, ANA 205th Corps), and Lt. Col. Sardar Mohammad (3-2-205th Kandak commander of 3rd Kandak, 2nd Brigade, ANA 205th Corps) headed up the team that distributed the donated items to the children in the villages.

The key objective of the mission was to expose the positive attributes of the

ANA to the local nationals within the Qalat area.

As children worked their way through the line they saw ANA Soldiers along side U.S. Airmen and Soldiers handing out the donated items.

As ANA and US Soldiers secured the villages, Col. Afzal coordinated

distribution efforts.

Smiles were plentiful among children, adults, ANA Soldiers, and US service members. Airman 1st Class Leah Steele handed out clothing and scarves; ANA Command Sgt. Major Muhammad Roshan handed out candy; 1st Lt. Jake Sullivan taught young

Afghan boys how to throw a football; Staff Sgt. Vesta Anderson and SSgt Tiffany Root snapped photos of young children after they received their toys, candy and clothes; and Petty Officer 1st Class Bird handed out stuffed animals and blankets. Many ANA Soldiers played with children and assured that each child received clothing that would be of benefit. The ANA Soldiers also assured order among the children during the distribution.

All personnel who participated agreed it was good to see something positive take place in an area filled with negative

effects of the insurgency and war.

Many of these servicemen and women returned home to the United States in February.

One of the fondest memories of their tour of duty in Afghanistan will be of the smiles on the faces of the children after they received special gifts from people back home.



An Afghan National Army Soldier fits a bright red cap on the head of an Afghan child, during a late January humanitarian assistance visit to two villages near Qalat.

with village elders on the organization of the children and the distribution arrangements. Afzal spoke to the children and expressed his thanks to the US personnel and to all those who donated the items for the children. He also expressed his thanks to the many ANA and US Soldiers who performed the security and helped with the



Focusing Down Range



**By SGM Martin Deck
205th RSAC CSM**

Here is an excerpt from an article regarding deployments and the stresses our loved ones go through while we are gone. We need to realize that they are also under a great deal of emotional stress, and this article should shed some light on the matter.

You can get the rest of the information on Google by entering "The Emotional Cycle of Deployment." I excerpted the third stage for all to review, because the majority of us are in this stage:

Sustainment

The sustainment stage lasts from the sixth month through the 11th (second-to-last) month of deployment.

Sustainment is a time of establishing new sources of support and new routines. Many rely on the Family Readiness Group (FRG), which serves as a close network that meets on a regular basis to handle problems and disseminate the latest information. Others are more comfortable with family, friends, church or other religious institution as their main means of emotional support. As challenges come up, most spouses learn that they are able to cope with crises and make important decisions on their own. They report feeling more confident and in control. During the sustainment stage, it is common to hear military spouses say: "I can do this!"

One challenge, during this stage, is the rapid speed of information provided by widespread phone and e-mail access. In the near future, one can even expect that individual soldiers will have the ability to call home with personal cellular phones. Over long distances and without face-to-face contact, communications between husband and wife are much more vulnerable to distortion or misperception. Given this limitation, discussing "hot topics" in a marriage

can be problematic and are probably best left on hold until after the deployment when they can be resolved more fully. Obvious exceptions, to this rule, include a family emergency (the critical illness of a loved one) or a joyful event (the birth of a child). In these situations, the ideal route of communication is through the Red Cross so that the soldier's command is able to coordinate emergency leave if required.

On a related note, many spouses report significant frustration because phone contact is unidirectional and must be initiated by the soldier. Some even report feeling "trapped" at home for fear that they will miss a call. Likewise, soldiers may feel forgotten if they call -- especially after waiting a long time on line to get to a phone -- and no one is home. This can lead to anger and resentment, especially if an expectation regarding the frequency of calls is unmet. Now that Internet and e-mail are widely available, spouses report have to stay waiting by the phone. Another advantage of e-mail, for both soldier and spouse, is the ability to be more thoughtful about what is said and to "filter out" intense emotions that may be unnecessarily disturbing. This is not to say that military couples should "lie" to protect each other, but rather it helps to recognize that the direct support available from one's mate is limited during the deployment.

Furthermore, rapid communication can lead to unanticipated rumors, which then circulate unchecked within the Family Readiness Group (FRG). The most damning rumor involves an allegation of infidelity that is difficult to prove true or false. Other troubling rumors may include: handling the deployment poorly, accidents or injuries, changes in the date of return, disciplinary actions, or even who calls home the

most. Needless to say, such rumors can be very hurtful to soldier, spouse, the FRG. At its worst, unit cohesion and even mission success can suffer. Limiting the negative impact of such rumors is a constant challenge for unit leaders and chaplains. It is extremely important to keep soldiers and family members fully informed and to dispel rumors quickly. In fact, rumors lose their destructive power once the "secret" is exposed:

There was a rumor that a commander's wife reported that a deployed soldier was having an affair. Members of the FRG, who were very upset, related the details to their deployed spouses. Senior unit leaders decided not to tell the commander because the allegations were deemed too inflammatory. Unfortunately, unit morale and cohesion began to suffer greatly as the rumor spread throughout the ranks. A month later, the commander finally learned of this destructive rumor, which had been undermining his authority to lead. He immediately confronted his wife, senior leaders and the soldier about whom the allegation had been made. Evidence about the validity of these allegations, or how the rumor started in the first place, could not be found. In response, the commander issued a very firm policy regarding exposing all rumors -- whether they be true or false. Unit morale and cohesion, although badly bruised, then began to recover.

The response of children to extended deployment of parent is very individualized and also depends on their developmental age: infants, toddlers, preschool, school age, and teenagers. It is reasonable to assume that a sudden negative change in a child's behavior or mood is a predictable response to the stress of having a deployed parent.

Despite all these obstacles, the vast majority of spouses and family members successfully negotiate the sustainment stage and begin to look forward to their loved ones coming home.

Smith awarded Bronze Star; Arntt pins on Major

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

Capt. Danny K. Smith was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with “V” device during an awards ceremony Jan. 30. The medal was presented for valorous service during an enemy engagement in summer 2006.

Capt. Steve Arntt, administrator of the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) for the 205th Regional Security Assistance Com-

mitment under the most extreme of circumstances while manning a strong defense position against anti-coalition militia.”

“He distinguished himself by engaging enemy forces, evacuating a casualty and accounting for all personnel while under heavy fire.”

In the ceremony conducted under a blue sky, 205th RSAC commander Col. Michael Petrucci exchanged the double-bar Captain insignia affixed to Arntt’s uniform for the gold oak leaf of a Major.

Petrucci also placed atop Arntt’s head a new officer’s cap bearing the correct rank. Several other 205th RSAC Soldiers also received awards Jan. 30 for the exemplary performance of their duties during combat operations.

Maj. Mark C. Lear and Sgt. 1st Class Sean P. Mishra were awarded the Army Commendation Medal with “V” device for gallantry during separate enemy engagements in summer 2006.

Lear “heroically distinguished himself July 2, 2006, while directly engaging over 100 enemy forces during a four hour long battle.”

While under enemy fire June 22-24, 2006, Mishra “set up a support by fire position, engaged and destroyed an advancing enemy, assisted with the evacuation of U.S. casual-

ties, and rallied indigenous troops to the successful defense of his position.”

“It is a good day when we can recognize our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines for their efforts,” he stated. “These awards represent not only the individuals, but also all of us who serve in uniform on behalf of Operation Enduring Freedom.”

Following presentation of the awards, Col. Petrucci reminded those in attendance of the importance of acknowledging superior performance.

thereby effectively guaranteeing a successful end state.”

The Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) was awarded to Maj. Jens Danielson for the performance of his duties while engaged in active ground combat Nov. 13, 2006.

Capt. Jason T. Wilde received the Combat Action Badge (CAB) for duty performed while actively engaging or being engaged by the enemy Sept. 18, 2006.



Capt. Danny K. Smith, right, is congratulated by Col. Michael Petrucci after receiving the Bronze Star Medal Jan. 30 for valorous conduct during an enemy engagement in summer 2006.



Capt. Steve Arntt, right, was promoted to the rank of Major Jan. 30. Arntt oversees the Commander’s Emergency Response Program for the 205th Regional Security Assistance Command.

mand (RSAC), was promoted to the rank of Major during the same awards ceremony.

According to Smith’s award citation, Smith was honored for “gallantry in action while serving in support of Operation Enduring Freedom as a member of the Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha 336.”

Specifically, Capt. Smith “demonstrated great courage and com-

ties, and rallied indigenous troops to the successful defense of his position.”

Cpl. Gabriel D. Sudyka received the Army Commendation Medal for “outstanding displays of soldier skills and duty in Kandahar, Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom.

Sudyka “displayed at all times the traits and skills of the modern soldier, never questioning, always executing to the highest degree on all missions, and

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Karez projects bring living water to parched lands

By CDR Chad Snee
205th RSAC PAO

Vast swaths of land in southern Afghanistan hold significant agricultural potential for the local populace.

Realizing that potential — primarily through the growing of various crops — requires life-giving water.

Looking over the dry, dusty landscape, one might easily conclude that there is little or no water to be had.

Not so.

The water is there, often just a few feet below the surface. The trick is getting the water to the fields to sustain the crops that can be grown on them.

For centuries, Afghan farmers relied on karezes to water their lands. A karez is an innovative system of wells and underground tunnels that can supply water to large amounts of land.

However, three decades of war and destruction have decimated Afghanistan's water infrastructure.

The 1999-2001 drought precipitated the failure of many karez systems due to neglect or the drilling of deep wells close to the karezes.

For Cdr. John Pietkiewicz, repair of karez water systems in the Kandahar area presented, in his view, "an immediate and sustainable means to improve upon the current situation."

"Historically, the obstacle towards the agricultural development of southern Afghanistan has not been a shortage of water, but a lack of adequate control of the water provided."

The beauty of a karez lies in its communal nature. Local communities control the maintenance of the karez and the sharing of the water. This means that government oversight and infrastructure are not immediate requirements.

"Since the proper function of a karez is dependent upon communal participation, rehabilitation of the karez and its attending aquifer will strengthen the local governance," Pietkiewicz said.

An integral part of karez management is the shura, a council of elders



Villagers from Khvosh Ab in Kandahar province work on a karez irrigation system in early January. Much of the repair work was done using methods Afghan farmers have used for hundreds of years.

that represents the interests of the local tribes.

"Traditionally, the shura has controlled the use of water through management of half-hour shares allocated to farmers and providing a forum to resolve disputes," explained Pietkiewicz. "Thus the karez system is an example of a culturally assimilated system that has a built-in social foundation to ensure its survival."

Furthermore, costs can be kept down because much of the repair work can be accomplished using manual labor and techniques that Afghan farmers have employed for generations.

According to Pietkiewicz, one of the benefits of a karez system is that it "exploits ground water without any need of mechanical devices."

"The karez system is also intrinsically sustainable, adjusting itself to the level of available ground water. Unlike wells, the self-regulating karez system does not exhaust the aquifer that it taps."

When properly maintained, a given karez can effectively supply water to as

much as 2,500 acres to 3,000 acres of land, Pietkiewicz said.

In early February, construction and repair of karez systems near the villages of Khvosh Ab and Fatullah Kalay in Kandahar province were completed.

Pietkiewicz said that six more karez projects are scheduled to begin in Kandahar province, contingent upon receipt of funding: two in Daman district, and four in Panjwayj district.

Improving irrigation through the use of Karez systems is essential to improving agricultural output in Afghanistan.

"The agricultural sector is the mainstay of Afghanistan's economy," Pietkiewicz asserts, "and its regeneration is fundamental to the nation's recovery."

The karez can play a vital role, Pietkiewicz maintains, because it "provides water in a sustainable manner and has a legacy of community participation"

Ultimately, though, the people must be empowered to take ownership of these reconstruction efforts, and Pietkiewicz is doing his part to make that happen.