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Issue 57

Reflections of Major General
Michael J. Diamond

Intercultural Talks
A new initiative not only
USCENTCOM members



Helping Hands,
Reach for Each Other








BULLETIN



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 **Editor's Note**

By the generous permission of our NATO partners, the *Coalition Bulletin* is pleased to bring you stories covering the activities of the International Security Assistance Force. As ISAF and the Coalition are separate entities, ISAF stories will be denoted by the NATO logo at the top of each page when they appear.

Cover photo: - Helping Hands Reach for Each Other- Canadian Cpl. C. M. Smithers, Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) shakes hands with an Afghan child at a local school.

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Canadian Cpl. C. M. Smithers, Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) shakes hands with an Afghan child at a local school.

ISAF - photo by Staff Sergeant Jeffrey Duran



Almost sixty countries are represented in Tampa working together to defeat terrorism. In particular, the role of detachments is to ensure a responsive liaison between their respective HQs and the Commander of USCENTCOM, and in turn to provide the best possible support to troops on the ground.

The presence of so many different nationalities is unique and valuable for a strategic command. Many meetings and exchanges of views that punctuate the daily life of the coalition, lead to a better understanding of the problems of each country, and particularly those in the AOR.

To capitalize on the exchange, a discussion group (Intercultural Talks) involving military representatives of Muslim and non-Muslim countries has been established (see pages 8 and 9). This group will discuss topics as varied as the Taliban - who are they and how to control them; support in Pakistan, or the approach and knowledge of the Muslim world by Western bloc countries. This friendly-work does not exclusively reflect members' points of view. Any coalition member is invited to send comments and proposals, all of which will to be carefully taken into account.

The results of our German Senior National Representative (SNR) initiative, Admiral Mannhardt, will undoubtedly ensure better understanding of issues in the Muslim world, and therefore enable the Coalition to provide better support.

In addition, the Coalition Bulletin extends sincere appreciation to Major General Michael Diamond, Director of Coalition Coordination Center (CCC), who granted us the honor of an interview highlighted in this issue.


As we begin this new year, which should be a time of peace (will it ever?), we cannot start our reading without a thought for all our comrades who are in combat, far from home.

Happy New Year to you all.


A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gilles Lemoine".

Brigadier General Gilles Lemoine
Chairman of the Public Affair Working Group
Coalition Coordination Center (CCC)


Czech Republic Donates Three Helicopters to ANA AirCorps

KABUL, Afghanistan - The ANA offload a donated MI-17 attack helicopter at Kabul International Airport. The Directorate for ANA Training and Equipment Support (DATES) at ISAF and CSTC-A worked with the Czech Republic to donate 3 MI-17 attack helicopters to the Afghan National Army's Air Corps, on 1 December. This was the first of three helos donations from the Czech Republic. 

Armenians Complete Successful Mission in Iraq


BAGHDAD - The 8th Armenian Contingent conducted an end of mission ceremony at the Joint Visitor Bureau, Camp Victory, Iraq. The 46 member contingent worked in support of the Polish brigade, Multi-National Division – Central South, as medical staff, transportation and explosive ordnance disposal personnel. 

NATO Secretary General, in Afghanistan

NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, paid a brief visit to Afghanistan on 26 and 27 November 2008. During his visit, the Secretary General met with President Karzai and Lieutenant General Jim Dutton, Deputy Commander ISAF, in order to receive an update on the current political and military situation in Afghanistan. 

ISAF Commander Earns Romanian Medal of Honor at National Day of Romania Ceremony



KABUL, Afghanistan - Romanian troops deployed to International Security Assistance Force Headquarters gathered in front of the ISAF's main building to celebrate the 90th National Day of Romania on 1 December. At the ceremony, Commander of ISAF, General David McKiernan, was presented with the Romanian Medal of Honour on behalf of the nation's Ministry of Defense. 

Reflections of Major General Michael J. Diamond

Major General Michael J. Diamond assumed the duties as Director, Coalition Coordination Centre in January of 2008. Commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Army Reserve in May 1974, General Diamond has served in a variety of assignments over his 34-year career, to which he admitted that being able to interact and work with over 60 nations represented at the USCENTCOM headquarters has been his most enjoyable and rewarding experience.

As Director of the Coalition Coordination Centre, General Diamond has played a significant role in the close coordination between the Senior National Representatives of the Coalition, key leaders from the US Government Inter-agency, and the leadership at USCENTCOM and other military commands. Under his leadership, the Coalition Coordination Centre (CCC) played in establishing the groundwork and requirements pre-deployment training for nations participating in non-traditional, non-kinetic operations in Afghanistan with Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams, Police Mentoring Teams, and Provincial Reconstruction Teams. He conducted as well as the coordination between the USCENTCOM, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Multi-National Forces Iraq in the complex coordination of the redeployment of 15 Coalition nations from Iraq upon mission completion as well.

Captain Ethan Tan, Singapore's Media Officer to Coalition Public Affairs Team, had the opportunity to sit down with General Diamond to obtain some of his perspectives at the end of his tenure in the CCC. Below is an extract of the interview.

* *

Q: Sir, you have worked tirelessly with the partner countries in the Coalition for the war on Terror for the past year. What is your attitude towards this war?

A: We really need to get at the violent extremists because of the effect they have on so many things in the world – developing countries, the global economy, peace in all parts of the world. And it is heartwarming to see so many international partners that have embraced this global war on terrorism, against these violent extremists.

This war on terrorism has some similarities to the Cold War in terms of the length of time it will take to claim victory. One of the biggest things we need to be able to do is to get the true message- the truth -out to what eventually is going to be for the next generation. We have to stigmatize this violent extremism as it is spreading around the world. That is the first and foremost.

In the short term, we got to get at those that affect terror



*Major General Michael J. Diamond
Director of Coalition Coordination Center (CCC)*

the most and cut them off. Obviously that would be Al Qaeda, their associated movement and some of the others that wreck terrorism throughout the world today. We also have to get to that next generation- the ten to 20 year olds – that could be a member of the violent extremist organizations. So it is imperative that the international community embraces this from the long term and short term aspects and get at it.

I don't feel the political elements within the US and the international community have been able to get the message to their people on what is really going on.

Not enough are said of the real situation with Iraq. It has not been explained well enough to the international community on why Iraq is so important. People think that it is all about oil. It is really much deeper than that. It is about stability in a region that is really important to the global economy. And to follow on, why is Afghanistan so important? Afghanistan is the nexus where terrorism has emanated from for over the past 15 years.

We all know it is isolated in the Pashtun region in Central Asia. By ridding the violent extremist groups that are operating out of there, we will be like cutting off the head of the snake. We got to do that for the long term gain that we had talked about earlier.

Q: What do you consider is the biggest achievement of the CCC, particularly this year of your tenure?

A: I think the biggest achievement is the involvement in the non-kinetic items that can play such a pivotal role in the solution for Afghanistan. And with that I am talking primarily about the Operational Mentor Liaison Teams, Police Liaison Teams and Provincial Reconstruction Teams. I think the role that the CCC and the Coalition have played in that aspect is the biggest success over this past year.

Q: To achieve this success is definitely no easy task. What do you see was your biggest challenge for your assignment?

A: The biggest challenge was establishing the relationships that we needed to have to do this job much better. And those are primarily with the US European Command (EUCOM), with NATO and the elements of NATO. Having a good relationship enables us to do a better job at our support role here, such as the deployment-redeployment, training and equipping of Coalition forces into and out of the AOR. I think we succeeded in that regard.

Q: On a related note, what do you consider is your biggest personal achievement while in office vis-à-vis any personal goals?

A: I didn't really have any personal goals for myself. It is primarily for the organization. I never really look in terms of what I can get out of anything. But I think I can take solace that we really did establish some important and lasting relationships here which have enabled the Coalition to thrive and really get at the missions that each of the Coalition countries have needed to do.

Q: More than 60 nations are part of the Coalition. No doubt it is a challenge to fit them together while making difficult decisions. What guides you in all that you do, if any?

A: I see each of the partnering countries that we have in here as a customer of the CCC. It is our job to try to satisfy these customers we have here. "Customer First" – I have always been drilled in that in much of my corporate and military background. And then also, in every opportunity, we need to do the right thing. And we need to do that right thing right the first time, so that we can be more efficient. And we strove to do that and I think we have succeeded very well in that regard.

I've always been driven by that need to do the right thing and that is more or less through conscience and judgment. And I always let that override those things that cropped up in situations of conflict when making a decision.

And I am open-minded with differing views. If someone has a better idea or what they feel like is the right way, then

I am certainly going to sit down and discuss it with them, so that we can collectively come at what the right thing is for the team. I don't always know what the right thing to do is but I certainly do want to hear other people's opinions or thoughts on it could be. We collectively had come together and I felt that we had done right in most cases.

Q: Complete this sentence: It is amazing that

A: It is amazing that we have been able to put together very professional and championship team of winners in the CCC. It has taken quite a while to put this team together. The team has been very professional, creative, has exercised tremendous initiative in getting at what I feel are the real critical elements of the solution in Afghanistan. Their service extends not only for the Coalition but for NATO assets as a whole too. So I feel very honored and privileged to have been able to be a member of this team that I would consider winners. And I think that is important because we need that team of winners to support our Coalition partners, to help them become more effective in whatever they do.

Q: Any parting words to the Coalition members and their representatives in the CCC?

A: I am very appreciative of the selfless service by each of the countries that have raised their hands, have contributed troops, equipment and basing rights, and whatever it may be to get at the violent extremists we have in the world today that wreck havoc and terror on freedom-loving people. I am very thankful we have Coalition partners that walk side by side with us to go out and accomplish this much needed deed. Without them, this fight would be extremely tough. So we have been very fortunate to have our Coalition partners step up, stand side by side and go after these violent extremist networks that are so derogatory to the peace we needed in the world today.

To the representatives here in CCC, I have to say that this has been without question, the most enjoyable year of my service in 34 and a half years to my country. It has been so rewarding because of the relationships my wife and I have been able to build, not only with the Coalition partners, but a lot of the entities related to these Coalition partners. The various cultures that we have been permitted to be part of have just been outstanding. The relationships that have been built in this one year are relationships that will carry us for the rest of our lives. I don't think we can say that with the previous 33 and a half years that I have been in service. So it is really a privilege and an honor to serve with each and every one of these countries that are represented here. The SNRs themselves are really at the heart and soul of that opportunity that we have had that we are so thankful of. We look forward to continuing the relationships and visiting each and everyone of these SNRs and delegation members in the remaining years we have in our lives. ■

Q & A: Pulling Out of Iraq, with Albanian Chief of General Staff



*Brigadier General
Maksim Malaj*

Albanian Chief of General Staff

*Interview of:
Senior Editor of
Coalition Bulletin
Captain
Kastriot Rexhaj*

Q. Sir, how do you see the engagement of the Albanian Armed Forces (AAF) in both OEF/OIF and so far what has been the contribution of the AAF to these operations ?

A. After the deadly terrorists attack of 9/11 the Albanian Government made the decision to join and fully support the Coalition of Global War on Terror. In addition to this, recently the government has declared that AAF units in Afghanistan will stay as long as Coalition and NATO units will stay there. Currently, our troops are engaged in three different missions in NATO/ISAF in Afghanistan.

- The first unit, a platoon of 22 personnel of AAF is currently our 13th contingent since 2002. This platoon is attached to a Turkish unit accomplishing sustainment and support tasks.

- The second unit a medical element attached to a Joint Medical Team in the framework of the US – A3 Adriatic Charter, has been operational since August 2005. Albanian AF contribute with 4 medics to the team deployed at the Kabul International Airport, in a military hospital run by a Czech contingent,

- The third unit, an infantry company consisting of 113 personnel is currently contributing as the third rotation from June 2007 together with an Italian unit.

All units have a rotation based on a six month period. The AAF is also in the last phase of preparation for the deployment of two personnel in one of the Operation Mentoring Liaison Teams (OMLT) in the Regional Command – North.

We are considering for the near future to deploy an additional company to ISAF following the gradual withdrawal of our troops from Iraq. In addition to that, the AAF has planned to contribute with 2-3 officers in another OMLT and 2-3 personnel in the ISAF HQ by the second half of the 2009. Part of the contribution to Afghanistan is considered as a possibility of Albanian Government to participate in the Trust Fund for reconstruction of this country.

Since it began and until now, the total number of Albanian troops personnel to ISAF mission is about 800 personnel.

Since April 2003 the AAF has joined the Operation "Iraqi Freedom", and currently the 12th contingent, a Commando Company composed of 120 personnel, is deployed in Mosul, together with a US contingent. Since September of this year an additional commando company of 90 personnel is deployed there.


Alongside the company with each mission deploys a number of staff officers at the Joint Coalition Forces HQ and to the USCENTCOM HQ in Tampa, FL USA.

The AAF are waiting on a political decision for the future deployments in this operation. So far, a total of 1350 personnel has already participated. We are exploring ways to contribute to the NATO Training Mission with 3-4 people as trainers in the areas which will be jointly agreed upon in negotiations with NATO.

Q. What lessons have you learned from your experience in OEF/OIF and has it been applied to the AAF?

A. The AAF has had a fair number of deployed troops in international operations and has contributed to the application of the lessons learned throughout the units of the Armed Forces. There is assigned personnel at General Staff who deal with lessons learned at the strategic level. Joint Force Command also, has established an ad hoc structure of the lessons learned at the operation level. To institutionalize this concept, a lessons learned center has been established in the Training and Doctrine Command as part of the Defense Analysis Center which deals and makes sure these lessons are followed properly.

Q. Do you believe the invitation to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit is actually an appreciation of the contribution made by the AAF and its achieved standards in past operations?

A. I am fully convinced that the invitation to join NATO is based on the progress and contributions of Albania in general and the AAF in particular. Since 1994 when Albania became Member of the PfP our plans have been focused on increasing the interoperability and reaching the NATO standards. Besides the professional engagement in the international missions I think that through different regional initiatives the AAF has shown that in many aspects they fulfill the required standards. I would also mention that Albania has given a great contribution to the stabilization and progress of the whole region and where our forces have been involved. For these reasons I believe that the invitation to join NATO in Bucharest was well deserved and showed the appreciation of our efforts and contributions to NATO led operations and our moderate role as a contributor to the stability in the region and wider. 

Belgian Information Operations Team in Kunduz: A Matter of Trust

Story and pictures Courtesy of
Belgian Office in CCC

The map on the wall of the team's is punctured with a bunch of colored pins. The yellow ones show the villages already visited by the team. While Sergeant Major Bruno Diricks drives a red pin near the border of Tajikistan, his colleague, Command Sergeant Major Roland Mylle explains to us: "The red pins indicate the village where we have still to go. The PRT Commander sends us either to places where only a little information is available or locations where our troops experienced some problems in the past days. In a few hours we shall accompany a patrol heading to the village of Nawabad".

The patrol is leaving the compound of the PRT. The Belgian Light Multipurpose Vehicle (LMV) is moving just behind a German Störser, an armored vehicle fitted with electronic countermeasures systems able to deactivate the remote controlled explosive devices. The Belgian vehicle is immediately followed by an armored ambulance. The security of the convoy is provided by German Dingo vehicles. While the village of Nawabad is only 80 kilometers far in the North-East of Kunduz, it will take more than three hours to cover the distance on bad sand trails.

To distribute gifts and more.

Exchange of gifts is part of Afghan culture. The boots of the all-road vehicles are loaded with teddy bears and FM radio-receivers. "It is useful to break the ice and win the trust of the people", Roland explains.

The team consists of five members: Roland and Bruno, the drivers Marc and Jean-Luc and the indispensable interpreter, Fatah. "Thanks to him we are not only the eyes and the ears of ISAF but also its voice", Roland adds.


Belgian soldier introduces himself: "Salaam, my name is Bruno". Fatah translates in Pashtun, the local spoken language. The elder replies his salute. Very soon he draws up the list of problems that the villagers have to cope with. The well which collects the rainwater is dry. The villagers have to take water directly from the river where the cattle are also gathering. This causes diseases among the population. Bruno and Roland promise to inform the qualified Non Governmental Organizations of this situation.



The interpreter translates the messages of the ISAF troops.

"Are there problems when ISAF is patrolling throughout the village". The elder denies with a sign. "Are insurgents sometimes coming here", Roland asks further on. "Never. But in the next village, Police had recently arrested nine of them", the elder answers. The Belgians try to assess the security level of the area. "When it is told that a local official is corrupted, this is a useful information for ISAF", Bruno comments.

After stones were thrown on a patrol entering a village, the team, accompanied with an interpreter, is returning to this location. They understand then what it was regarded as unacceptable by the local villagers: the fact that the soldier from the hull of the Dingo could see inside of the wall of their properties. "Since then the Dingo provide support from the outside of the village and did not enter anymore. There is now no problem at all. And the image of ISAF is improving".

Additionally to its participation into the PRT of Kunduz, Belgian troops are also present in Kabul, providing security of the Kabul International Airport, and in Kandahar, with a F-16 detachment in support of the ISAF troops. Other Belgians are also embedded within the HQ ISAF and the HQ RC-Capital. In total, almost of 500 Belgian troops are deployed in Afghanistan. 

* * * * *

Intercultural Talks

A new initiative not only for the members of the coalition at USCENTCOM

Idea & Objectives

In November 2008 the Intercultural Talks (InTa) were initiated within the coalition at USCENTCOM to exchange thoughts on relevant items concerning our mission in the CENTCOM AOR.

The general idea is to learn from each other in form of a relaxed conversation. A group with cultural and religious balance of 10–12 senior national representatives (SNR) of the coalition in Tampa will come together once a month to discuss relevant issues and to establish a common understanding of a multinational and multicultural way ahead in the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

German SNR (moderation) and Morocco SNR have developed the concept, to mutually exchange ideas and thoughts mainly between representatives of Islamic and non-Islamic countries.

Because Pakistan is a key player in the GWOT, as the closest coalition members to the AFG border, the Pakistan SNR belongs to the permanent members as well as the French SNR who is at this time the chair of the Public Awareness Working Group (PAWG) and may publish in the coalition bulletin specific results of each InTa if all participants agree.

In addition to the four permanent members mentioned above, another 6 to 8 SNRs of the coalition will be invited to participate in the monthly sessions.

These SNRs will rotate from time to time in order to provide the opportunity for participation in InTa to a broad number of SNR.

Relevant Topics

During the first meeting the following relevant topics have been agreed upon for discussing within

future “Intercultural Talks”. All about the Taliban – who are they and how to handle them in the future?

How to support Pakistan – ideas for an approach on how to stabilize the region?

Al Qaida (AQ) – where do they come from, who are they, what are the different perceptions on them?

What is the Islamic position on GWOT – are there any changes necessary on the general or individual approach?

Photo by: Maj. Cristian Popovici, CPAT



Juergen Mannhardt
Rear Admiral German Navy & GER
SNR

The GWOT and AQ in the media – why AQ is given the initiative to present itself? What can be done better by the coalition?

Special Islamic words and definitions/meanings as of Jihad and others e.g.

How to improve coalition strategic communication – some proposals (additional to our InTa, which should provide ideas to improve strategic communication)?

Meanwhile the first topic about the Taliban has been discussed successfully. The participants from GER, MAR, PAK, FRA, ITA, BGR, ROU, KAZ, KWT agreed upon an extremely worthwhile and appreciated

conversation between Islamic and non-Islamic countries. The result will be provided by the PAK SNR as a short summary for the coalition bulletin as well. Now the group is looking forward to the next InTa in January 2009 with a slightly different composition concerning the non-permanent members.

Talibans - Who are they and how to handle them in the future?

During the course of discussion on “Talibans - who are they and how to handle them in future” BG Maqsood Ahmed Abbasi, SNR of Pakistan, highlighted following basic features of Pashtun tribal society.

a. Characteristics of Afghan Society.

Geography of Afghanistan has a great impact on the cultural development of the society. Under-development has impeded internal communication and, because of it, economic, social, and political integration has been very slow. Afghan population comprises of 8 Major ethnic groups (Pushoons, Tajiks, Hazara, Aimaqs, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Baluch and Kirghiz). Historical resistance to foreign aggression during 18th, 19th and 20th century had a great impact on the society.

b. Culture and Traditions.

Cultural code of Afghanistan is a unique mix of Islam and nationalism. Afghans take immense pride in their independence. They strongly held their cultural values and stood united against the external pressures. It is a common saying in Pashtoon society, “I fight against my brother. My brother and me fight against our cousins. We and our cousins fight against the enemy.”

c. Political and Social.

Jirga (assembly of tribal elders) defines laws, regulations and policies. It enjoys autonomous status and people like to be dealt in accordance with age, old traditions and local customs. Traditional and local practices take precedence over what is perceived to be imposed through central authority.

d. Taliban. The word Taliban is from Pashto language loaned from the Arabic word Talib meaning “student” or “the seeker of the knowledge”. Taliban are the students of Madrassas established during anti-Soviet resistance. Taliban emerged in 1990 as a reaction to the wide spread anarchy and lawlessness, which resulted from premature and hasty abandonment of Afghanistan after Soviet demise.

e. Political Ideology of Taliban.

Taliban believed in Khalafat, wherein Khalifa (Supreme leader was selected by small council of able leaders). Goal of Taliban movement as stated by Mullah Omer was “To end mischief, establish peace and security, to protect life, wealth and honor, to enforce Shariah, do Jihad against the leaders who were devoted to power and endeavor to make the land of Afghanistan an exemplary state”. In the areas under Taliban Government, every kind of wickedness and immorality, cruelty, murder, robbery, songs and music, TV, VCR, satellite dish, immodesty (be pardegi), travelling of woman without a mehram (immediate blood related personal), shaving of or trimming the beard amongst male adult, pictures and photographs, interest, have all been totally banned.

f. Taliban Political Administration.

In the Political Administration of Taliban, Amir-ul- Moameneen was the supreme leader. It had Inner Shura comprising of 5 members and Central Shura comprising of 11 members. Central Shura members were incharge of important ministries and Inner Shura approved all important national issues.

g. How to Deal with Taliban.

Regional tensions and growing Indian influence in Afghanistan has further complicated the issue. Lumping everything, which happens on Pak-Afghan border, with Talibanization and Islamic extremism, is over simplification of the issue. Hostile intelligence agencies are sponsoring insurgency

agency in FATA and adjoining areas under the garb of GWOT. Therefore, in order to bring peace and stability in the area, a Comprehensive Approach addressing the genuine security concerns of Pakistan is a logical start point. Toward this end:

(1) Coalition should make concerted effort to cramp the space for elements

Photo by: Cpt Ethan Tan, CPAT



*Brigadier General
Maqsood Ahmed Abbasi
Pakistan SNR*

which are waging proxy war against Pakistan on Western borders.

(2) USA to immediately stop cross border kinetic strikes which are against the sovereignty of Pakistan and allow Pakistan to handle the issue.

(3) Coalition partners to ensure substantial economic support of Pakistan to minimize the fallout of GWOT on her economy.

(4) Pakistan should be given financial and technical assistance for capacity building of her Armed Forces for obtaining real time actionable intelligence with compatible response capability to take on hard core targets.

(5) Isolate hardcore Taliban by engaging with general masses and pro-peace tribes.

(6) Use of military instrument alone, which has not accrued the desired results so far as it relates to strategic objectives of elimination of terrorism, be discouraged. It should be resorted to as to as a last option after due deliberations.

The forthcoming topic will deal with “how to support Pakistan – a topic which is again of utmost importance. There will be a couple of relevant questions which are going to be discussed as e.g.:

- Who should talk with whom to improve the situation?
- How could PAK support the peace building process?
- How may PAK cooperate more effective in the AFG war?
- Could there be a policy of equity (technology, trade and military issues) between PAK and IND promoted by regional security cooperation (initiated by conference with the neighboring countries)?
- How could the coalition strategy be revised?
- Is western democracy a proper model for PAK and AFG or could it be more suitable to look for common values?
- Is there a common understanding for terms which are used by the different countries in the area of responsibility (AOR) and ISAF countries?

Indeed – these are a lot of rather important questions keeping the coalition busy since many years. For the SNR at CENTCOM however it might be worthwhile to become more acquainted with the whole problems in the AOR and the different perspectives of different cultures. For USCENTCOM it is worthwhile to realize that the coalition at HQ USCENTCOM is willing to think about solutions and to support the US not only by showing the flag.

All members of the coalition are encouraged to send further ideas about these talks and future publications to: coalitionpublicaffairs@centcom.mil.



Kazakhstan Looks Back During End of Mission Ceremony

Story Courtesy of
Specialist Allison Churchill
41st Fire Bde.

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELTA — Soldiers from the Kazakhstan contingency to Iraq reflected on their accomplishments and lessons learned during an end-of-mission ceremony at Forward Operating Base Delta, in October, 2008, marking the end of their support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since deploying to Wasit province in March of 2003.

“Since the first day, [our] Soldiers have been meritoriously carrying out their mission,” said Lieutenant General Bulat Sembinov, Kazakhstan deputy minister of defense.



Photo by Spc. Tiffany Dusetshof.

Kazakhstani Soldiers march in a pass and review during their end of mission ceremony, October, 2008 on Forward Operating Base Delta.

Sembinov thanked Coalition partners and Iraqi Security Forces for their “comradeship and partnership” during the Kazakhstani Soldiers deployment, noting that his Soldiers had not worked alone

Iraqi leaders thanked the Kazakhs for their efforts and pledged to continue building upon the Kazakhs successes, in the continued efforts to strengthen and rebuild Iraq.

“You have fought side-by-side with Iraqi Security Forces,” said Vice Chairman of Iraqi Armed Forces Gen. Nasier Abadi. “That’s a testimony of the progress of our Soldiers.”

“We are looking forward to building good relationships between Iraq and other countries, based on love and peace and cooperation far away from wars,” said Wasit Deputy Governor for Administration Yousif Reja.

The Kazakhstanis received several tokens of appreciation during the ceremony.


Romanian Army Brigadier General Mihai Chirita, Multi-National Force – Iraq deputy chief of staff, presented a

certificate of appreciation. Marine Major General Paul E. Lefebvre, Multi-National Corps – Iraq deputy commanding general, presented a token on behalf of the Corps leadership. Colonel Richard Francey, 41st Fires Brigade commander, also gave the Kazakhstan forces a certificate of appreciation.

Four Kazakhstani Soldiers were singled out for their service. Captain Azat Mukhamadiev received the U.S. Army Commendation Medal, and Sergeant. Erlan Dusetov, Warrant Officer Amantay Ismuhambetov and 1st Lieutenant. Akylbek Mazhimbekov received the Army Achievement Medal.

During their five years in Iraq, Kazakhstani Soldiers a variety of different missions.

A reverse osmosis water purification Unit provided more than 6,000 cubic meters of clean water for Iraqi citizens and Coalition forces at and in the areas surrounding Patrol Base Murray.


An explosive ordnance disposal platoon destroyed more than 4 million pieces of ordnance, including 12,821 pieces of unexploded ordnance. A medical section of the EOD platoon provided care to more than 5,000 Iraqi civilians. 

Commander US CENTCOM visits Pakistan

General David H. Petraeus, Commander USCENTCOM called on Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS), General Tariq Majid and the Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani during his visit to Pakistan.

Wide ranging discussions focused on matters of mutual interest between the two countries and other avenues of military cooperation and professional interest. The military commanders also discussed current security environment in the region.

General Tariq said that we are looking forward to working with him under the renewed environment of bilateral cooperation to deal with the challenges stemming out of militancy. He emphasised that there is a need for developing long term relationship based on mutual trust, transparency and understanding of the complexity of the region, keeping in view the local perspective.

He further stressed that the two countries should evolve consensus strategy to deal with violent extremism. 

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General David H. Petraeus, Commander US CENTCOM, called on Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Tariq Majid.



General David H. Petraeus, Commander US CENTCOM, called on the Chief of Army Staff, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani.



USFOR - AFGHANISTAN

ANSF, Coalition Forces Treat More Than 100 People in Helmand Province

KABUL, Afghanistan. Afghan National Security Forces and Coalition forces medical personnel provided treatment for 114 Afghan villagers in Nar Surkh district, Helmand province, on 18 November.

The medical professionals provided treatment for men, women and children for multiple ailments, including aches and pains, lacerations, dehydration and varying illnesses. The personnel also distributed much needed cold weather clothing to the people as they left the clinic.

"This is another example of how ANSF are working to provide security and meet the needs of the Afghan people," said General Mohammed Azimi, Chief spokesperson for the Afghan Ministry of Defense. ■

Coalition Forces Provide Medical Care to Severely Injured 14-Year Old Boy

KABUL, Afghanistan Coalition forces Friday provided medical care to a 14-year old boy who had been severely injured by an improvised explosive device in Shaheed Hasas District, Oruzgan province. The boy is currently in stable condition.

The boy was riding a donkey on a dirt road near his village when the donkey stepped on an IED. The boy's father rushed the boy to a nearby Coalition forces medical facility.

The boy suffered shrapnel wounds to his face, neck and left thigh. He also suffered a jaw injury. His wounds were too severe to be fully treated at the initial Coalition forces medical facility he was taken to, so he was later transported to a Coalition forces hospital in Tarin Kowt District, Oruzgan province, where he underwent surgery for his wounds. ■

ANA Senior Enlisted Host 4th Sergeants Major of the Army Seminar

KABUL, Afghanistan. Countless years of military experience were represented at the Kabul Military Training Center's auditorium as members of coalition forces and the Afghan National Army kicked off the ANA Sergeants Major of the Army seminar 17-19 November. The event showcased the current development of the ANA bridmal (non-commissioned officers).

"Pieces of equipment, assets and training are important, but what really is important is the ANA's ability to take on the fight," said Major General Robert W. Cone, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan commanding general, "With the ANA taking on two-thirds of the fight, the growth of the ANA is important."

The development of the ANA bridmal and "Shaping the future of the ANA" were principal themes of the seminar. More than 100 ANA and coalition sergeants major attended.

"This conference is important because it gives us the opportunity to discuss what works best," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston. "Building a strong NCO corps, like in any other army, is the backbone of its army. Sergeants major's job is to provide the best training possible for their soldiers."

During the seminar, ANA command sergeants major showcased examples of the precision training being conducted for their fighting forces.

"Afghanistan is our country," said ANA Command Sergeant Major Ziaual Haq. "It is our duty to defend our country, to protect our people. Our army is able to conduct missions within our country. We have ordnance corps operating in the Takal Valley that are operating alone without the aid of coalition forces."

According to Cone, the size of the Afghan forces is growing dramatically. He said few armies have ever grown at such a phenomenal rate while at the same time taking on the challenges of fighting a hostile enemy on their own ground.

The ANA force currently stands at approximate 68,000 troops. Cone said he and ANA officials have fashioned a plan that would get to the 134,000 goal two years early by the summer of 2012 if he can get additional U.S. funding.

"We have improved greatly in the past year," said ANA Sergeant Major of the Army Roshan Safi. "We have a ways to go, but our combat abilities have improved dramatically. We have a great responsibility to our people."

Cone said the ANA is leading 62 percent of the operations they participate in.

"We owe to the Afghan Army to provide them the best training we possibly can," said Command Sergeant Major.

Arthur Coleman Jr., CSTC-A Command Sergeant Major. "Progress is being made everyday in preparing the ANA to take the lead."

During the three days of discussions, meetings and demonstrations, members of the ANA showed their ability to field new equipment such as the up-armored Humvee, the M-2 .50 caliber machine gun and the Mi-17 helicopter. Six demonstration sites were set up to allow the ANA soldiers to show their mastery of the new equipment.

"Our leadership and training will make the difference," said Roshan. "We are fighting for our people. We fight for every province, all 34 of them." ■




NATO AND PARTNER CHIEFS OF DEFENSE MET AT NATO HEADQUARTERS

Top military officers of the Alliance's member and Partner nations met at NATO HQ, Brussels, on 19-20 November 2008, for their autumn meeting. This is the second of three meetings per year for the NATO Chiefs of Defense, NATO's highest military authority.

More than 60 Chiefs of Defense from NATO members, Partnership-for-Peace nations, the Mediterranean Dialogue countries and Ukraine attended the meeting. Chiefs of Defense from Albania and Croatia participated for the first time with their status as NATO Invitee Countries. The Pakistan Chief of Army Staff attended as well for discussions on the situation in Afghanistan.

There were conducted several different sessions, including with just the NATO Chiefs of Defense, dealing mainly with operations (taking stock of all NATO-led operations and missions, ISAF and KFOR and maritime operations in particular), and discussed military-related issues in preparations for the next NATO Summit in April 2009.

Additional meetings will be held in Euro Atlantic Partnership Council format (sharing lessons learned from participating in NATO-led operations); with countries of the Mediterranean Dialogue (discussions on a common vision on military cooperation); and with Ukraine (update on current progress of NATO-Ukraine 2008 Work Plan and approval of a 2009-2010). 



Left to right: Lieutenant General I. Jurgen Bornemann (Military Representative to NATO, Germany) with General W. Schneiderhan (Chief of Defence, Germany)



Left to right: General J. Lucic (Croatian Chief of Defense) shaking hands with Brigadier General Maksim Malaj (Chief of Defense, Albania).

NATO SHIP PREVENTS LIKELY PIRATE ATTACK

Gulf of Aden – the Italian Navy destroyer Luigi Durand de la Penne, flagship of NATO's Standing Maritime Group 2 and of the anti-piracy Operation Allied Provider, prevented a likely attack against the Panama flagged merchant vessel Kirti by two skiffs that were maneuvering on a piracy attack pattern.

The Italian destroyer, while patrolling the Gulf of Aden, received a distress call from the merchant vessel, which was steaming towards Suez. The master reported seeing skiffs attempting to approach its vessel at high speed.

At that time the Durand de la Penne was at a distance of 20 nautical miles from the Kirti: the ship's helicopter was immediately scrambled and sent over the merchant vessel. As soon as the suspected pirates noticed the Italian helicopter the skiffs changed their course and the Kirti was able to continue her trip.



Italian Navy Destroyer "Luigi Durand de la Penne".

Armenians, Complete Successful Mission

Story and pictures Courtesy of
Pfc. Eric Glassey, 13th Public Affairs Detachment

The 8th Armenian Contingent conducted an end of mission ceremony at the Joint Visitor Bureau, Camp Victory, Iraq.

The 46 member contingent worked in support of the Polish brigade, Multi-National Division – Central South, as medical staff, transportation and explosive ordnance disposal personnel.

“The Armenian peacekeeping and humanitarian mission in Iraq began in January 2005,” said U.S. Marine Corps Major General Paul Lefebvre, deputy commanding general, Multi-National Corps – Iraq. “Since that time, the Armenian armed forces have rotated 380 personnel through Iraq and have provided first-class support to Operation Iraqi Freedom in the areas of transportation, engineering and medicine.”

The Armenian transport component has successfully executed more than 60 convoys, while the engineering component has removed more than 9,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance and cleared more than 130,000 square miles of terrain. In addition, the Armenian medical component has performed more than 300 surgeries and provided ambulatory healthcare to over 450 military personnel and 700 civilians, thus bolstering ties between the nation of Iraq and coalition forces.

“It has been our honor to serve under your command and to know and to work with you in the filtering of peace and democracy in Iraq,” said Captain Ruben Papyan, commander, 8th Armenian Contingent Commander and Armenian senior national representative. “On behalf of the Armenian contingent, I would like to take the opportunity to offer you all our gratitude”.

Brig. Gen. Mihai Chirita, Romanian army, deputy director, MNF-I CJ5 coalition, presented each soldier with a certificate of appreciation for their outstanding service and support to the coalition and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“Never forget what you have accomplished here,” Lefebvre said. “You will be able to look back and know that

you were part of something great; something that shaped the world for future generations. You have represented your country to the highest degree.”



Coalition forces commemorate the end of mission for the Armenian component in Iraq at the Joint Visitor Bureau, Camp Victory. Armenia has supported Operation Iraqi Freedom since 2005.

PRT Well Project, Brings Water to Afghan Villages

Story and pictures
Courtesy of US Army

KABUL, Afghanistan (December 16, 2008) – The Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team recently completed an eight-well project that will bring much-needed water sources to six districts throughout the eastern Afghanistan province.

The PRT-funded project, which combined several individual well projects into one, cost \$30,000 and was constructed by a local Afghan construction company.

“As we travel throughout the province, the Afghans tell us water availability is one of their biggest concerns” said Air Force Lieutenant. Colonel Steve Cabosky, Nangarhar PRT commander. “This project allowed us to directly address some of those needs and demonstrates team’s ability to work closely with local government to improve the living conditions of the Afghan people.”

The wells, which were constructed in Goshta, Kama, Kuz Kunar, Shinwar, Nazyan and Dara-I-Nur districts, took the contractor eight months to complete.

The new wells will bring a reliable water source to thousands of people across these districts, said Air Force Captain Elisabeth Leon, chief engineer for the Nangarhar PRT.

“These wells bring water to areas that have had their clean water reserves depleted,” Captain Leon said. “They will help reduce water-borne illnesses, improve sanitation and provide a higher quality of life for the people.”

Overall, the PRT is currently funding approximately 60 projects worth more than \$73.5 million throughout Nangarhar Province. The team’s mission is to work directly with the provincial and district governments to assist in the province’s security, governance and reconstruction efforts.



Afghan girls draw water from a recently completed village well in Kuz Konar District. The Nangarhar PRT recently sponsored the completion of eight wells in six districts that will bring a vital water source to thousands of people in the districts.



Children draw water from a well in Dara-I-Nur District. The well was recently completed by a Nangarhar PRT contractor. The \$30,000 project included the construction of eight wells in six districts and was finished in December.

A Safer Iraq

A member of Iraq's Emergency Response Battalion 2, secures a large poster promoting unity on the side of a fortified checkpoint in eastern Mosul. The ERB 2 was accompanied by U.S. Army's 552nd Military Police Company, which provided security and the poster materials.

