



THE TIEN BIEN TIMES

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM X



MAY 2010

KEEPING WATCH



Soldiers from 3rd Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, provide security for a convoy headed to Combat Outpost Jaghato. Page 6

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contact [SSG Cobbeldick](#)



173rd AIRBORNE
Brigade Combat Team • Sky Soldiers



Equal Opportunity; NATIONAL ASIAN-PACIFIC ISLANDER MONTH, Leadership to Meet the Challenge of a Changing World



Asian-Pacific Americans have been in the United States for over 150 years; however, little is known about their history. To better understand the variety of backgrounds, traditions, and paradigms of these vital members of our society is to better understand what makes America itself great as a nation of immigrants. "Asian-Pacific-American" affixes a common label to a vast array of ethnic groups. The common American perception tends to lump all Asians together into one racial group, without distinct ethnic and cultural differences. The term actually identifies individuals from at least 29 different countries, each with a unique historical and cultural heritage of its own. There are many differences in language, food, and religions among Asian-Pacific-Americans as among the Greeks, Irish, Italians, or Germans.

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM) is celebrated in May to commemorate the contributions of people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent in the United States. Congress passed a joint Congressional Resolution in 1978 to commemorate Asian American Heritage Week during the first week of May. This date was chosen because two important anniversaries occurred during this time: the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants in America on May 7, 1843 and the completion of the transcontinental railroad (by many Chinese laborers) on May 10, 1869. In 1990 Congress voted to expand it from a week to a month long celebration and in May 1992, the month of May was permanently designated as "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month."^[1]

A rather broad term, Asian-Pacific encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).

Like most commemorative months, Asian-Pacific Heritage Month originated in a congressional bill. In June 1977, Reps. Frank Horton of New York and Norman Y. Mineta of California introduced a House resolution that called upon the president to proclaim the first ten days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week. The following month, senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga introduced a similar bill in the Senate. Both were passed. On October 5, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a Joint Resolution designating the annual celebration. Twelve years later, President George H.W. Bush signed an extension making the week-long celebration into a month-long celebration. In 1992, the official designation of May as Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month was signed into law. The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad mentioned above.



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T I E N B I E N F L A S H B A C K



A paratrooper from Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), pulls security during a patrol near Forward Operating Base Keating in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan, March 1, 2008.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team's Soldiers have seen many wars and conflicts.

Soldiers from Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), patrol outside of Forward Operating Base Keating in Nuristan province, Afghanistan, March 1, 2008. FOB Keating is the most North-Eastern forward operating base actively used by coalition forces.



An Army medic from Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), crosses a bridge outside of Forward Operating Base Keating in Nuristan province, Afghanistan, March 1, 2008



173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team



Operation Ebook Drop

Operation Ebook Drop is an effort to provide soldiers deployed overseas free eBooks courtesy of authors participating in the program. Operation EBook Drop (OED), a program through which authors can offer their books to deployed soldiers for free. In early December 2009, Operation EBook Drop started its own Web site and forum at Operation EBook Drop. It started simply enough when an author and a deployed soldier met online. The soldier mentioned that he had a Kindle but couldn't download books from Amazon because the Whispernet didn't work in Iraq. The author, Ed Patterson, offered to send the soldier a copy of each of his books. Then Ed invited other authors on the Kindleboards forum to join him. Other soldiers asked for books, and the program grew quickly. In jumped Mark Coker, founder of Smashwords, an ebook publisher and distributor website. He notified the 1,300+ authors and publishers on Smashwords, and suggested a way in which they could, if they wished, donate their books free to the troops. The idea was simple: they created 100%-off coupons for their books, Ed emailed the names and email addresses of troops who wanted to participate; the authors emailed the troops with the coupon code, and the troops could download free books from Smashwords in a variety of electronic formats. Yes, free books for deployed troops, no strings attached. Over 4,000 books have been donated. E-books from Smashwords can be read on a computer, Kindle, Sony reader, ipad, iphone via the stanza app, and other e-book readers. Anyone can get the books from Smashwords (or the stores in its distribution network), the main reason the books are on Smashwords is to facilitate interaction between publishers, authors and troops.

173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

Cpt. David Kopecky assumes command of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Headquarters and Headquarters Company.



Lieutenant General David M. Rodriguez, commander for the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command honored a select group of Task Force Bayonet personnel. "I'm glad I get to come out here and recognize some incredible Sky Soldiers, and what you're doing here, thank you for what you're doing," said Rodriguez.

Major General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, commander Combined Joint Task Force 82, honored and coined a select group of Sky Soldiers, May 26.



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Sky Soldiers Monument Commemorated

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

There are not too many occasions that can draw a Command Sgt. Maj. away from his paratroopers, but Command Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Rolling, the Command Sgt. Maj. of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, trekked from the remote regions of Wardak and Logar in Afghanistan to the National Infantry Museum outside of Ft. Benning, Ga in order to help officially commemorate the Sky Soldiers monument.

Rolling began the ceremony by extending his gratitude to Col James H. Johnson the 173rd ABCT Commander for allowing him to travel all the way to Ft. Benning in order to help officially commemorate the Sky Soldiers monument.

"The ceremony symbolized a lasting tribute to the selfless acts of dedicated Paratroopers past and present, who have proudly worn the white wings and red sword know as the 'The Herd'," said Rolling.

The walk of honor at the National Infantry Museum provided spectacular surroundings for memorializing the countless contributions and sacrifice that the 173rd's Paratroopers selflessly have performed for a half-century.

"I could not imagine a more suitable location that will share with the public this magnificent unit's history, traditions and reputation. Sky Soldiers are unmatched in the soldierly virtues that they have exemplified over the years," said Rolling.

Rolling recalled what it was like to prepare to depart for Afghanistan, paying his respect in a room "The Herd" has set up, built for the brigade's Heroes and Fallen Soldiers. "The space we've set aside there at our headquarters in Vicenza is called our "Room of Honor," he said.

"I was approached by a few, key people inquiring what we are going to do if we have a lot more people who make the ultimate sacrifice during our deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom X. This was a somber question about how we were going to continue to display and honor these warriors' selfless actions. A question like that just cannot be answered on the spot. I wanted to ponder this and give the process the proper dignity to contemplate things fully."

As Rolling strolled around the Headquarters area, something caught his attention on a giant board.

"I stopped to ponder the past - our men and women's significant contributions and I realized the impact of their blood, sweat and tears. It was at that moment that I took in this gigantic board with its jaw-dropping list of names from actions and iconic battles from Vietnam."



"It was then and there that it struck me. It put me in awe of an event - one, lone battle that claimed so many."

Rolling shared with the crowd, how the sunshine in Italy began to help him focus his eyes and realize the sheer amount of names that were posted on that wall. "When I stopped training my eyes on that wall, I looked straight ahead and saw one date that towered over all else: November 8th 1965."

Rolling elaborated on how he saw scores of names below that lone date..

"It was daunting. All these names under that one fateful day in 1965, when the 173rd took part in Operation Hump, just north of Bien Hoa, on the outskirts of Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. They were ambushed by approximately 1,200 Viet Cong fighters, suffering 48 deaths. This was difficult to fathom. I was totally astonished how that one day cost so many lives," said Rolling.

Rolling expressed that for any unit to suffer those kinds of losses, it had to have been a dark day for those leaders to have to deal with.

"My jaw was on the ground as I tried to contemplate that fateful day."

Putting things into perspective, Rolling said, "The 173rd's monument establishes a permanent testimonial that allows America to honor all 'Sky Soldiers' in both past and future conflicts, who give their life and limbs in support of our Constitution, warriors who go off to war and fight battle after battle with pride and distinction. This spot here truly symbolizes holy ground we stand on. I am humbled and I am honored to be part of the great history of 173rd.

Rolling reminded the audience how America is known for coming to the aid of foreign people, and our military is forever ready and able to protect freedom and liberty both near and afar.

Rolling said, "Our nation's values and strong stances do not come without a heavy price. This lasting symbol reveres those who paid with their blood, sweat, and tears in order to preserve and support our country's values. Our country has taken on oppression and tyranny whenever they have raised their ugly heads."

Rolling asked the crowd to all take a moment of silence and remembrance, as we proud members of "The Herd" prepare to officiate this fine tribute.

Rolling, a two time combat jump veteran, called his brothers and sisters in arms "Members of the elite, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team" - fine Soldiers - both past and present. He concluded by thanking those who helped make The Herd's monument a reality. "Know that your efforts are met with tremendous gratitude." He ended his remarks with a loud shout to the crowd, proclaiming the 173rd's motto, "Sky Soldiers!" And with that the monument's dedication ceremony was complete. The monument is a lasting tribute to the men and women whose uniforms adorned the white wings and red sword patch, for generations to come.

TF Talon Builds New COP in Wardak

Story and photos by Army Pfc. Michael Sword
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan – In a fairly remote area of the Sayad Abad district in Afghanistan's Wardak province, the buildings that currently make up Combat Outpost Jaghato are riddled with bullet holes and burn marks around impact sites of rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. Windows have been replaced by plastic in some places, by nothing in others. The abandoned appearance of the buildings providing evidence that the long-running fight between the ANA and ANP that inhabit the compound and the insurgents in the nearby village is far from over. The continuing violence, insurgent population in the area and their intimidation of the local populace led the leaders of 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team and the rest of Task Force Bayonet to decide to move in. After months of planning and preparation by leaders across the 173rd, the plan for turning the compound into a combined American and Afghan COP became a reality and the first step was taken toward building COP Jaghato, April 28.

The first step included a convoy of over 70 U.S. vehicles that included Counter Improvised Explosive teams and Route Clearance Packages to clear the road, trucks carrying supplies, equipment for the build-up and fuel.

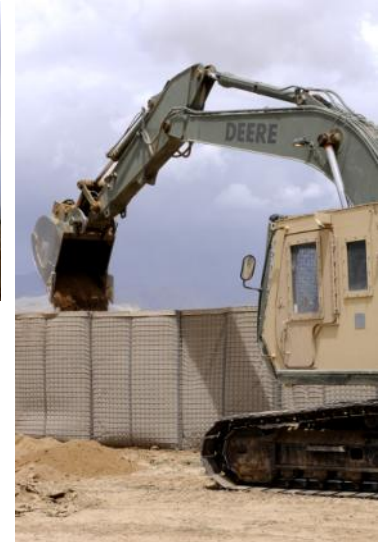
"We spent hours and days planning and fine-tuning it," said Sgt. 1st Class, Kenya Spratt, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt, 173rd ABCT, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Task Force Black, the team building COP Jaghato, and a native of Merced, Calif.

"It's almost two missions in one," he said. "Doing the movement out here was a whole task unto itself and then you've got security and the build-up of COP Jaghato."

Before anyone could leave for COP



"It's almost two missions in one. Doing the movement out here was a whole task unto itself and then you've got security and the build-up of COP Jaghato."



Jaghato, security had to be in place. A task left to 1st Lt. Brad Benjamin, 3rd Platoon, D Company, 1st Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt, 173rd ABCT, and his platoon. Leaving long before the sun came up, his platoon was in place on a hilltop overlooking the route to be followed by the convoy, watching and ensuring a safe arrival to the COP.

"Overall, security has been our number one concern," said Spratt. "The build-up will come second."

"It's a matter of coordinating with different units to ensure you have a safe movement," he continued. "With over 70 U.S. vehicles, you want to ensure you line up all your assets and you have OPs out there that can watch the main avenues of approach where big bends in the road are."

Once the convoy reached COP Jaghato, offloading equipment and personnel began and construction soon followed. However, security quickly took a front seat as the Soldiers began taking indirect and small-arms fire almost daily.

"The biggest challenge so far is every time we react to contact we shut down work," said 1st Lt. Zachary Thelen, TF Black executive officer, HHC, 1st Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt, 173rd ABCT, a native of Ennis, Mont. "That's two or three hours a day losing manpower."

In the meantime, the Soldiers continue to press on. They sleep on cots in bullet hole-ridden buildings, eat MREs and with no real amenities to speak of, they use every second of daylight to build a COP that will ensure their replacements have it better than they do.

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Air Force, Army Provide Security, Air support for New COP

Story and photos by Army Pfc. Michael Sword
 TF Bayonet Public Affairs

WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Over the sound of armored construction equipment, suddenly, gunfire can be heard in the distance, while explosions from the impact of mortars and rocket-propelled grenades can be felt all around. In the chaos, most head for the cover of a building or a bunker. However, at newly-established Combat Outpost Jaghato in Afghanistan’s Wardak province, there’s a team that doesn’t have that choice. Regardless of the situation, their job is looking for people that don’t want to be found.

Army Sgt. Joshua Smith, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, a Knoxville, Tenn. native, is the fires support non-commissioned officer for COP Jaghato. Along with Sgt. Jordan Kriner, a forward observer from Company A, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd ABCT, Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Havens, Joint Terminal Attack Control, of Hitchfield, Mich., and Tech. Sgt. Luke Smith, Tactical Air Command and Control Specialist, of Jacksonville, Fla., they coordinate close air support, target the origin of incoming fire to the COP and improve overall security for the Soldiers on the ground.

“Our main job right now is to establish COP security here at Jaghato,” said Smith. “They are our number one asset, because they have so many capabilities.”

That job leads to long days and even longer nights. COP Jaghato, a former Afghan National Army and police compound, will soon house Soldiers from the 173rd and as the reinforcement of the COP is just beginning, security becomes increasingly important. Though the COP is surrounded by Soldiers manning .50 caliber weapons, Smith and his team can be found a roof top, day or night, scanning the outlying villages for any signs



“It’s up to us to assist the ground commander in getting positive identification. Once we do, it’s up to him to if he wants to engage them or not, using our assets.”

of trouble.

“This area hasn’t really been ventured into, so there’s a lot of insurgent presence here,” said Smith. “They like to use schools or clinics to shoot from and we have to be real careful with what we do on returning fire due to these structures.”

The educated approach being used by insurgents in the area puts a bigger emphasis on close air support and precision firing for the Soldiers at COP Jaghato. Though Smith has a team of mortar men available to return fire, the surrounding buildings provide another challenge to security. With blast radii and collateral damage to worry about if mortars are fired into a village, the importance of the Airmen becomes evident.

“It’s up to us to assist the ground commander in getting positive identification,” said Havens. “Once we do, it’s up to him to if he wants to engage them or not, using our assets.”

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A Co. STB Thwarts Attempted IED, Kills Triggerman

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) had an answer for insurgents who attempted an IED attack in the Kherwar and Al-timur Area of Operation.

The message to insurgents was loud and clear. Task Force Bayonet can quickly identify and swiftly move on IED attackers with lethal efficiency; not only saving an innocent child, who suffered shrapnel injuries, but also killing one IED trigger man, and capturing enemy forces possibly involved in the attack, all within minutes.

As Route Clearance Package (RCP) personnel for Special Troops Battalion, (STB) 173rd ABCT cleared the way for the 173rd's Dark Horse's Convoy, the troopers and Combat Engineers of this heavily relied upon RCP team encountered an IED.

Army Sgt. Theodore J. Vanover, team leader with the RCP, and one of his Soldiers, Army Spc. Markhale Young, another team leader in that same truck, spotted the triggerman of the IED moments after the explosion.

"Young surprised me and the other NCOs, because for being a relatively new trooper, perhaps not that used to situations like these, he jumped in there and took charge of the situation, helping our RCP team out considerably," said Vanover.

When the RCP team was driving along the route and encountered the first of three Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Young, age 25, said he spotted an Afghan insurgent wearing white clothes, drop the detonating device.

"Upon dismounting immediately after the explosion, I notified my vehicle commander and my gunner, of the enemy forces I spotted, and let my team know that I was taking two Sky Soldiers with me and I told my team, I am going to capture this guy," said Young.



"Not only did he identify the triggerman and lead a team that pursued the insurgent, but also he played a big part in rendering medical aid to the little girl we transported to FOB Shank."



"We went after him, and we received permission to do a soft knock search, clearing houses in the area, and that's when we found an injured little girl there, who had shrapnel wounds," said Young. "We took immediate steps to provide her first aid and got her to FOB Shank, where she was treated and I understand from my chain of command that she is doing fine now," he said.

Young, an athletic and enthusiastic member of the 173rd ABCT, was decisive and impressive with his quick reactions and tenacity, Vanover said.

"I was very proud of Specialist Young. Not only did he identify the triggerman and lead a team that pursued the insurgent, but also he played a big part in rendering medical aid to the little girl we transported to FOB Shank," said Vanover.

While Young and Vanover helped transport and accompany the little girl to FOB Shank for medical treatment, the troopers used their electronic tracking and radar devices within the RCP team vehicles to locate the insurgent, spotted by Young.

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Route Clearance Package Team's Leaders Show Heart

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- There are some occupations that are just tougher than others. Being on a Route Clearance Package (RCP) team is no walk in the park. Soldiers have to get up and get going earlier and they are out front, taking the preponderance of the dangers and dealing with the stress that goes hand in hand with being a combat engineer or sapper in a forward operating area in Afghanistan, where Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are lurking, causing havoc and killing innocent people - both combatants and civilians.

For Army Staff Sgt. Jeremy A. Cole, a combat engineer and squad leader, for RCP-30, part of A Company, Special Troops Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, danger is a daily duty - and it is a job he takes very seriously.

"I see our role as keeping our Soldiers safe. We help free up units and we keep supplies flowing. We help with the distribution of supplies and our team earns our pay by clearing roads that are essential to what is going on outside the wire," said Cole.

"We try to remember our training the best we can. Sergeant Walsh and I are both explosive agents. We trained really extensively before we came out here when we were preparing for this deployment back in Germany," said Cole.

"We mentally prepare and do our drills without fail," said Cole, a seasoned combat veteran.

"We get them up to speed in all that we do. We let the Soldiers know that if they take care of their equipment their equipment will take care of them.

We are sure to tell them if we encounter a situation what they need to do to be safe and prevail. Basically, we let them know we are



"We help with the distribution of supplies and our team earns our pay by clearing roads that are essential to what is going on outside the wire."

are prepared for all that what we do and what we are likely to face out here. That is how we get our junior troopers ready for this kind of an assignment. It is demanding," said Cole.

All the hard work that Cole and his fellow Sky Soldiers perform routinely does not go unnoticed.

Cole is quick to point out that his team has had a lot of senior Noncommissioned Officers come to him and thank him for what they do.

"They realize we are keeping them safe and they know we are risking ourselves by doing the kind of missions we go out on," said Cole. "In fact, a lot of senior personnel will say that they are not comfortable going outside of the wire unless his team, RCP-30 goes out in front of them and leads the way. That really makes me feel good," he said.

Army Staff Sgt. Adam A. Walsh agrees. As a fellow combat engineer and squad leader for RCP-30, Walsh mused about what constitutes a good or bad day in his line of work.

Offering a cautious laugh, Walsh pointed out that it depends on what happens. "When you find something, you have that sense of accomplishment and when you find nothing that can still be a very hard day if you are out there for 16 or 18 hours despite not locating any IEDs or booby-traps," said Walsh.

Walsh continued.

"While it is true that there is always something new to help us defeat what they do, conversely, they may have used remote control IEDs, for example, the last time we were deployed here in

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MRAP RG-32 Mark V Echo Saves Lives

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- In the flash of one moment, steel parts, tires and bolts were hurled hundreds of yards from the site of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) as the last vehicle in a Route Clearing Package made it over a culvert, on a route destined for New York South. Luckily, the triggerman's efforts were thwarted, as no Saber or ANA Soldier was seriously injured or killed by the blast.

Recently, Combat Engineer Soldiers of Route Clearing Package-39, augmented by two Air Force EOD personnel, supporting Task Force Saber, acted without delay when a 150-pound IED exploded, tearing into an MRAP vehicle destined Command Post Charkh.

The hull of the sturdy workhorse for the Army, the MRAP RG-32 Mark V Echo, saved lives and the extent of injuries amounted to some simple bumps and bruises. True to form, the vehicle broke where it was designed to come apart, alleviating the force of the blast from harming the ISAF and ANA Soldiers.

Things went right for this team today. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Steve Hager, and Sr. Airman Clackman, out of Luke AFB, were on the scene with RCP-39, able to jump into the fight. As a liaison asset, the EOD team, were right there, able to promptly run diagnostics, test the area and look for signatures. "As airmen here with this team we simply magnify the Soldiers' capabilities out here, augmenting their team," Hager said.

The vehicle took the pressure. Their breakdown points worked. So, score another victory for the mighty RG-32. It is a given that in times of war, here in Afghanistan, ISAF warriors are going to encounter IEDs. What is remarkable is when Soldiers can walk away from such catastrophes unscathed.

The day trek to Charkh may have been interrupted, but there were a number of success stories that unfurled, demonstrating that our Route Clearing Package teams are resilient and well equipped. The team found food items, where the triggerman was located and was able to compile some evidence, deemed helpful, according to RCP-39 team members. "We found motorcycle tracks right away. They knew not to stick around!" the combat engineers proclaimed with confidence.

Not every RCP team can get an EOD package, but when they do it helps a team to conduct diagnostics and detect any signatures that would help ISAF warriors to learn critical information and share important evidence with other teams, throughout Afghanistan. The After Action Reports filed can be used for meaningful training.

"We got all our 360-degree security out there, out front, we managed to get our EOD pulling up the command wire. Our Medic and CLS Soldier were in place, treating and testing our Soldiers."



"As with any IED, the building and design of it, and the amount of IEDs that the insurgents place is limited only to the imagination of the bomb-makers. So, for every incident, we always take the possibility of a secondary IED into consideration. Evidence initially led us to believe that there was a secondary device here at this site, but further diagnostics proved otherwise,"

"Based on the IEDs that we have dealt with in Logar Province, this was an average-sized explosive device - somewhere just over 100 pounds but probably under 150, said Hager.

Far more went right than went wrong. The unit performed as great teams always do. They did their jobs and managed to come together seamlessly in the midst of being in harm's way.

"We got all our 360-degree security out there, out front, we managed to get our EOD pulling up the command wire. Our Medic and CLS Soldier were in place, treating and testing our Soldiers and civilian in the vehicle that was hit. Thankfully, they were just shaken up and will walk away with some minor bumps and bruises. We had our other vehicles sending up our reports. And we have a wrecker out here and a crane, along with a flatbed dispatched to come out here to recover the vehicle.

The Soldiers pulled any sensitive items or personal gear from the damaged vehicle, so that nothing is left behind or able to be re-purposed by the enemy, according to SSG Talar, RCP-39.

The MRAP RG-32 Mark V Echo is one of our sturdiest vehicles out here. Our Soldiers know what to do in these situations. Once we get an IED strike, we all stop, and check that there are no other secondary IEDs, pulling site security, and do our site assessment. In this case, the command wire was laid out 1,000 feet away, with rocks atop the wire to secure the wire from the explosion area to the triggerman's location.

All of our vehicle strikes that we have had, five in all, have had no serious injuries or fatalities. The RG-31 has once again done its job. We have had no inner breaches of the interior hull, where our troops are located inside.

The explosion threw the fuel tank hundreds of yards from the explosion. Steel containers that contained water bottles and Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) were strewn about a football field away from the blast site. That was the force of this explosion, yet no one was substantially hurt, indicating what can occur when technology and training snatches victory from the hands of these enemies of Afghanistan. Murder may have been on their minds, but their aspirations were denied, largely credited to the vehicles created to snatch fate from our foes.

"We were coming down Boston, passing over the culvert when the last vehicle in our package, vehicle number seven encountered the explosive device. In short order, our NCOs and Soldiers performed like clockwork, securing the area and they handled it like the professionals they are," said Talar. "I was very proud of how my team came together and took care of business."

TF King Soldiers Survive Bullet Wounds, Fight Corruption

"We're here to help the Afghan people. We need to set the standard and show them what things could be like and should be like."



Story and photos by Army Spc. Daniel Haun
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

Spc. Sean Beaver, Pfc. Robert Harrison, and Spc. Christopher Kane, all serve TF King in the Wardak province

WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Task Force King Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment represent the best part of their generation, said Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Woods, the Task Force King Command Sgt. Maj..

"These soldiers represent the best part of their generation. I make a comparison to what was once said about the World War II generation, where they called them America's greatest generation, well these soldiers represent the best part of their generation," said Woods.

Woods honored a select group of Soldiers for their values and perseverance. Spc. Sean Beaver, one such Soldier honored, a Richmond, Va. native and Task Force King Military Policemen of the Third Squad, Third Platoon, 118th Airborne Military Police Company, was conducting a patrol with the Afghan National Police in Andar, Afghanistan, when he and his squad were attacked.

He sustained six bullet wounds, to his face, chest, thigh, shin, and foot. Beaver spent two months recovering from his injuries at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He fought to return to his unit and to Afghanistan as quickly as possible. Woods said Beaver's values were what helped him.

"I describe my soldiers with Army values such as loyalty, duty, honor, and selfless service. Take Spc. Beaver, who was shot six times. Rounds pierced his face, through his lungs, through his arms, and through his legs, yet Beaver returned to duty with his unit," said Woods.

"We now call him the wolverine, and that's a pretty good title. Not many men would have done that. His friend, with whom he went to basic training and AIT with, died in the room with him. Other men who were in that room were wounded have yet to return to duty. Spc. Beaver had the courage to return to duty," said Woods.

The fact that he returned is inspirational to other Soldiers, said Woods.

"One of the rounds went through his face. You can see that it's quite an image, a man who was shot in the face and has returned to do his job," said Woods.

Beaver said he doesn't worry about what others think about him, he just goes about his business.

"You need good morals to be able to do your job, and not think about how other people are going to feel, because you're doing your job. Don't really worry about how people will think of you, or feel about your job," said Beaver.

He said his reception upon return to the unit was warm.

"People were really grateful, they were glad I came back. It gave people a kind of view that, not that anybody wants to get injured, but if they do, they can still be alright and still be able to come back and do their job," said Beaver.

"It's not necessarily something that anybody could do, you really have to want to come back. I kind of felt bad because all of my unit, all my brothers are over here fighting, and I'm healthy enough to come back. I'm just

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Mother, Daughter Reflect on Becoming Army Nurses



"You have to be selfless, you have to be a good leader, because as a nurse, you are constantly teaching your patients, your medics and your co-workers. You have to be trustworthy."

Story and photos by Army Spc. Daniel Haun
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Cpt. Teresa Timms, a Charlie Medical Company 173rd Brigade Support Battalion nurse, and her mother, also a nurse, Maj. Ruth Timms, say they joined the Army and the field of nursing for familial reasons.

"My dad and my brothers and I came from a long line of family members who had been in the Army. I wanted to be in the Army, and when I was in nursing school there were recruiters who frequently came around. When I got out of nursing school they asked me to join and I said 'awesome'," said Ruth.

Ruth's daughter, Teresa, said she wanted to follow in her mother's footsteps.

"I saw my mom in the Army and I thought, I'll try that. I joined the Army, and then later on I decided that I still wanted to be more like her and became a nurse, so I went to nursing school and then I changed my MOS," said Teresa.

"Every time I have a question about any kind of patient, about anything I'm unsure of, I can always go to her. She's been the voice of clinical wisdom for my whole nursing career," said Teresa.

Ruth said her daughter has always had the values needed to become a nurse.

"I think for any parent, what you want your kids to have are values. I hope the fact that she has very strong values is partially my doing," said Ruth.

"The motherly skills of caring, compassion, and nurturing are important. Anybody can know medicine, but you have to honestly care about your patient and the outcome of your patient to be a good nurse," said Teresa.

Caring for patients is not always easy, said Ruth.

"Sometimes it can be hard to care for someone who's dying, or hard to take care of someone who's lost someone close, but I think just being there for the patient and sometimes working twelve, sixteen and eighteen hour days matters. You have to want to do it," said Ruth.

"You have to be selfless, you have to be a good leader, because as a nurse, you are constantly teaching your patients, your medics and your co-workers. You have to be trustworthy," said Ruth.

Teresa said she had plans for a long career in the Army, just like her mother.

"After I leave here I plan on going to Texas to complete the ICU course, and hopefully finish my masters to be a CCRN which is a nurse anaesthetist ... I'll be in the army for a while as a nurse," said Teresa.

"I have one more assignment before I retire, and then I'm not really sure where I'll be," said Ruth.

Both Teresa and Ruth agreed that becoming an Army nurse is a great opportunity.

"Being a nurse in the Army is a an excellent opportunity, because you have so many avenues. You can work in different areas of the hospital, you can be a brigade nurse; there are so many different opportunities, and you can change fields every three years. It's not a limited as some other fields, where you get stuck in a job and have to stay there," said Teresa.

"I don't think nursing is for everyone, but for people who want to be nurses, I think the Army offers excellent opportunities," said Ruth.

TF Talon Builds New COP in Wardak

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CH-47 Chinooks fly in daily, landing on the make-shift helicopter landing zone, stirring up brown clouds of dust. In the clouds, Soldiers pick up supplies and equipment to keep the progress moving. Improvements are being made, and even with constant attacks, the COP quickly continues to grow according to their ambitious plans.

"We're going to dig in a gun line, we're going to set up housing, we have a DFAC coming and we have gates coming," said Thelen. "It's all been funded, it's all been approved and it's just waiting on delivery."

It's been a long process to get to this point in the construction, but this is just the beginning for COP Jaghato.

"Right now it's really not an actual cop, it's like the Alamo," said Spratt. "We've got security but it's just not an established COP yet."

"It's going to be cool to see the hesco walls go up, the helicopter landing zone go out, the living areas go out, to get a gym and get good food, the stuff they have at other COPs."

"Everybody here is tired but we're motivated and we're anxious to get the job done," he continued. "Nobody has inhabited this place before and we're anxious to see our work that we're doing progress. "We'll have an impact here that other units haven't had. It's just a matter of how we set the conditions here for ourselves."

Ultimately, once the COP is closer to completion, it will be handed over to another company and the mission will switch from construction to training the ANA and ANP that live with them, improving security in the area and the lives of the local residents. In the mean time, Thelen and the rest of TF Black will continue work on the COP and when the time comes, they'll have something to hand over that they can all be proud of.

"I feel proud that the unit entrusted me with the responsibility of leading this mission as an acting first sergeant," said Spratt. "I couldn't ask for a better job right now, this is where I want to be."

"It's a lot of responsibility but I think we're doing well so far," said Thelen. "In the next month hopefully we have something we can actually hand off to an entire company, that they can live in and defend."

Air Support for New COP

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Recently, when the COP came under indirect fire from a nearby village, the technical sergeants quickly got to work and in the face of incoming mortar rounds, showed one of the big challenges to their job.

"You have to keep that mentality that it's either them or you," said Havens. "You want to find them so they don't continue to shoot at you. "The quicker you can find the enemy, the quicker you can make them stop shooting at you."

"It's part of the job," said Tech. Sgt. Smith. "You have to learn to compartmentalize and you have to have priorities. "Getting air support is the number one priority, not getting shot is number two and shooting back is number three."

They are a small, tight-knit team and though they are from different military services, watching them work, if not for the different uniforms, you would never know it. While construction continues at COP Jaghato, security will continue to be a top priority and as personnel move in, Smith knows that there are bigger challenges ahead.

"It's going to be tough to do while we're establishing COP security at the same time but, our biggest challenge is going to be getting out into these villages, working with the people and letting them know why we are here," said Smith.



"The quicker you can find the enemy, the quicker you can make them stop shooting at you."

STB Thwarts Attempted IED

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"I saw him drop the device and run the moment we dismounted," Young said.

Army Spc. Eric Helton, a Husky driver and GPR operator for the RCP team, part of A Company, Special Troops Battalion, 173 ABCT, said that being at the front of the convoy, his first reaction was to help verify and ensure everyone was all right.

"At first, I was down on myself for having missed the IED, but I was glad with the overall outcome yesterday," said Helton.

For members of A Co., STB, 173rd ABCT, it was another busy day at the office. Not only did the RCP team encounter that IED, but also they located two additional IEDs that were pressure-plate-operated. The Sky Soldiers encountered three IEDs in the span of mere hours, during this one mission, leading Dark Horse's convoy from FOB Kherwar to FOB Altimur.

In addition to a confirmed kill of one enemy, the team was also able to capture a prisoner for interrogation, who was suspected of direct involvement in the attack.

Both Young and Vanover were among troopers who saw incoming rounds that were being aimed at them and their vehicle, so the fact that their RCP team members made it through the IED attack without sustaining injuries was remarkable. On a regular basis, Army Soldiers and Sappers of A Co., STB, 173rd ABCT's route clearance package team face these kinds of IEDs, but it was especially rewarding knowing that this enemy's days of planting murderous explosives were brought to a just end.

"He will not be laying down any more tank mines, or being behind any more senseless killings," said one Soldier, who was present for the attack.

While the Taliban profess that they are stepping up efforts to bring more attacks into this region, ISAF warriors like members of this RCP team are proving they can respond with immediacy.

"The fact that this Army unit was able to come to the aid of an innocent child, who was an innocent bystander, made our day that more rewarding," said Young.

RCP Team's Leaders Show Heart

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Afghanistan, but this time, they are improvising and making new methods to disrupt our convoys and kill or injure us," he said.

"We take the time to learn from the violence and gore. Even when it is bad, you study what other RCP's have done or been through, we look over what has happened bad to us, so we can be prepared as much as possible," said Walsh.

"As a Combat Engineer and as a Sapper, you have to be the jack of all trades. When I first joined the Army there was nothing like route clearance packages. In many ways we are the catchall nowadays," said Walsh.

Walsh said his feelings towards his men, who are out there day in and day out with him, facing danger after danger, are strong.

"I am 100 percent responsible; what they do or what they fail to do is my responsibility and if they get hurt, I would certainly without a doubt take direct responsibility for that," said Walsh.

Walsh said the support they have gotten from everyone, especially Charlie Troop, has been awesome, and they feel great about being an important part of what this Brigade needs for them to do.

Cole said that he has been in the Army for 13 years and the training here is the best. In addition, Cole said that the value that is placed on the Soldiers here is by far the best he has ever seen or experienced in his Army career.

"It makes me very proud to know that we get up early, get out there in front and we make things safe for units by clearing the way," said Cole.

"We expose ourselves to training constantly. We have a class here in Afghanistan that helps clarify things for combat engineers and sappers, as to what we are to be doing out here versus what IED teams are supposed to be doing. If you see something new, you have to make your troopers all aware of it. I really hope my team all goes home safe, but I find peace knowing that the privates here watch out for the other privates as much as I watch out for them," said Walsh.

"That tells me that we are a close-knit team," said Walsh. And Cole agreed. "It is the best unit in terms of readiness and training that I have ever been apart of in my 13 or 14 years in the military. We are surrounded by people who appreciate us and take what we do seriously, which is awesome," said Cole.

TF King Soldiers continued

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sitting there, you know. That was the main thing that made me want to come back. I felt like I should be here with them, I felt like I had a lot to offer," said Beaver.

Beaver said he's moved on from the incident.

"You can't really take it personally. You have to think that you were doing your job, and you really have to just kind of let it go. What happened in the past is in the past. All you can do is hope the future gets better," said Beaver.

"The main thing is to talk about it. Don't try to keep anything in. There are a lot of people there who have been injured, and been through the same things, and they're willing to come talk to you about it. They understand where you're coming from, and can help you out a lot because they've been there," said Beaver.

"The transition is pretty easy, you just have to want to do it," said Beaver.

Another Soldier Woods honored, Pfc. Robert Harrison, an El Dorado, Ark. native and Petroleum Supply Specialist with Task Force King's Golf Battery, identified over 5,000 gallons of missing fuel. Harrison provided information to authorities on companies offering bribes to accept fuel trucks short on fuel. The total payout of bribes over the length of the deployment would have exceeded six figures.

"The fuel point that he works at has just him at the end of the line. No one is around. All he would need to have done to take these bribes, bribes of six figures, would have been to just forge a signature, a very low risk crime with a high payout," said Woods.

"We now call him honest John. He's a married Pfc. with a child in high school; obviously he needs the money. He turned down bribes that would have equalled six figures easily, with honesty and integrity," said Woods.

"There would have been almost no way for anyone to catch him. He did the right thing, because it was the right thing to do, and no one was looking," said Woods.

Harrison said he feels the weight of responsibility accompanying the 200,000 gallons of fuel he is charged with.

"Everybody looks at the petroleum supply specialist just as the gas guy, but it's more in depth than that. You've got to be able to verify the types of fuel you're responsible for. This particular FOB has a capacity of well over 200,000 gallons that I'm responsible for at any given time so," said Harrison.

His first response when approached with the bribes was to get their contact information, so that he could report them to his chain of command.

"One of the contracting carriers that brings fuel in, basically offered to pay me for fuel that we would not receive. Whenever I was confronted with that situation, my first response was to get their phone number, and then I reported it up through the chain of command. They've investigated that issue and are dealing with that," said Harrison.

"They offered me \$5,000 just to sign paperwork for trucks that weren't here. If they were to send trucks in light, say short 2,000 gallons, they offered \$1,000 just to sign off and say it was all there. It could have been an extremely large amount of money over the course of a year," said Harrison.

Harrison said his primary motivation was to abate the corruption he hears about.

"One of our main goals here is to fight the corruption in this country. If as a Soldier, I'm going to be as corrupt as the corruption we're fighting, then how is this country going to see the help that we're giving them as anything better than what was already here?" said Harrison.

"We're here to help the Afghan people. We need to set the standard and show them what things could be like and should be like. We can't lower our standard and set a bad example, so just do the right thing," said Harrison.

Also honored were Spc. Christopher Kane and Pfc. Brooks Milioni, Task Force King Golf Battery Soldiers working at the entry control point, who have intercepted multiple attempts to transport contraband onto the FOB.

"They work at the entry control point, they've intercepted drugs, load of cash in the amount of ten thousand dollars, loose money and contraband, they've turned it all in and they've kept nothing," said Woods.

"We now call them the dynamic duo. They're always together; they work together, they eat together, they're on the same shift day in day out, and it's a pretty good name for them. They're jazzed about it," said Woods.

Woods said the duo persevere in a thankless job.

"Working the entry control point is a thankless, monotonous, day in day out task. No one really wants to go there and do that. These Soldiers, with their selfless service, are able to keep the standard, and they're searching everyone coming and going. They're finding all the contraband and turning it in, in a society where, if they had palmed a few thousand out of that wad of cash, the individual caught would have said nothing," said Woods.

Kane, a Detroit native, said he understands his responsibility well.

"It's a very large responsibility. We're in charge of all the entry control points, where all the people come in through the FOB. If we don't search them properly, they can bring in any type of weapon they want to," said Kane.

"You have to really be exposed to it to know how important it is, and how essential it is to the mission accomplishment of FOB security," said Kane.

"If you're very thorough with your job, then there's really not anything illegal that's getting on this FOB," said Kane.

Kane said that he wants to feel fulfilled from his time in the military.

"I joined the military right after high school ... its just something that somebody needs to do in their life so they can say they've fulfilled something. After its all said and done and they've retired, they can say they've done something with their life, something positive, something for their country, something for their nation, something for their families," said Kane.

Kane said he is up for any challenge.

"The motivation has to stay high everyday. Everybody's lives are pretty much in my hands. If I mess up down there, it could cost somebody their life. It's a large responsibility and I'm up to challenge of that responsibility. It comes down to a lot of things, such as loyalty to my fellow Soldiers. They need to know that they can rely on me to do the job right. We've got to do this job well, if we don't then who else will?" said Kane.

Symposium Seeks to Serve Citizenry

Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- The Logar province Deputy Governor and Afghan leaders throughout Task Force Bayonet's area of operation labored together on capacity building and funding issues with the Czech Republic Provincial Reconstruction Team and American soldiers and civilians, discussing priorities and approaches for projects that will best serve the people of Afghanistan.

Members of the symposium held a provincial budgeting handbook, and were divided into smaller groups to discuss best practices and checklists that would ensure transparency and results-oriented methods to best serve their stakeholders, here. Project bidding, proposal procedures and mandatory monitoring that would mitigate fraud, waste, or abuse were all key topics that the capacity building fund participants covered, during the two-day seminar.

"When enough of the right Afghans support their government, the insurgency is over," said Les Garrison, the Department of State political advisor for Logar province. "This is a definition. Our purpose is to help the Afghans improve their government's ability to do what it should do, thereby earning an increasing level of support from the Afghan public. District level government is the closest level of government to the people, for the most part here in Afghanistan," he said.

"Within the people's budget is 25 percent to be earmarked for projects from Kabul, but since there presently is no money coming from Kabul, the coalition forces will provide that money in the interim, as a means of jump-starting capacity-building funding and building momentum, essential for progress to continue here," said Maj. Jay Baker, the governance officer for Task Force Bayonet.

"Eventually, we will migrate the programs to the provinces and help to install a manage-

"The people are looking for changes in their lives and hope for their future, where they can be assured that the funds benefit them, touching their lives and the days of corruption and secrecy are replaced by bidding procedures and publicly disclosed information."



ment system to oversee this," said Baker.

He continued.

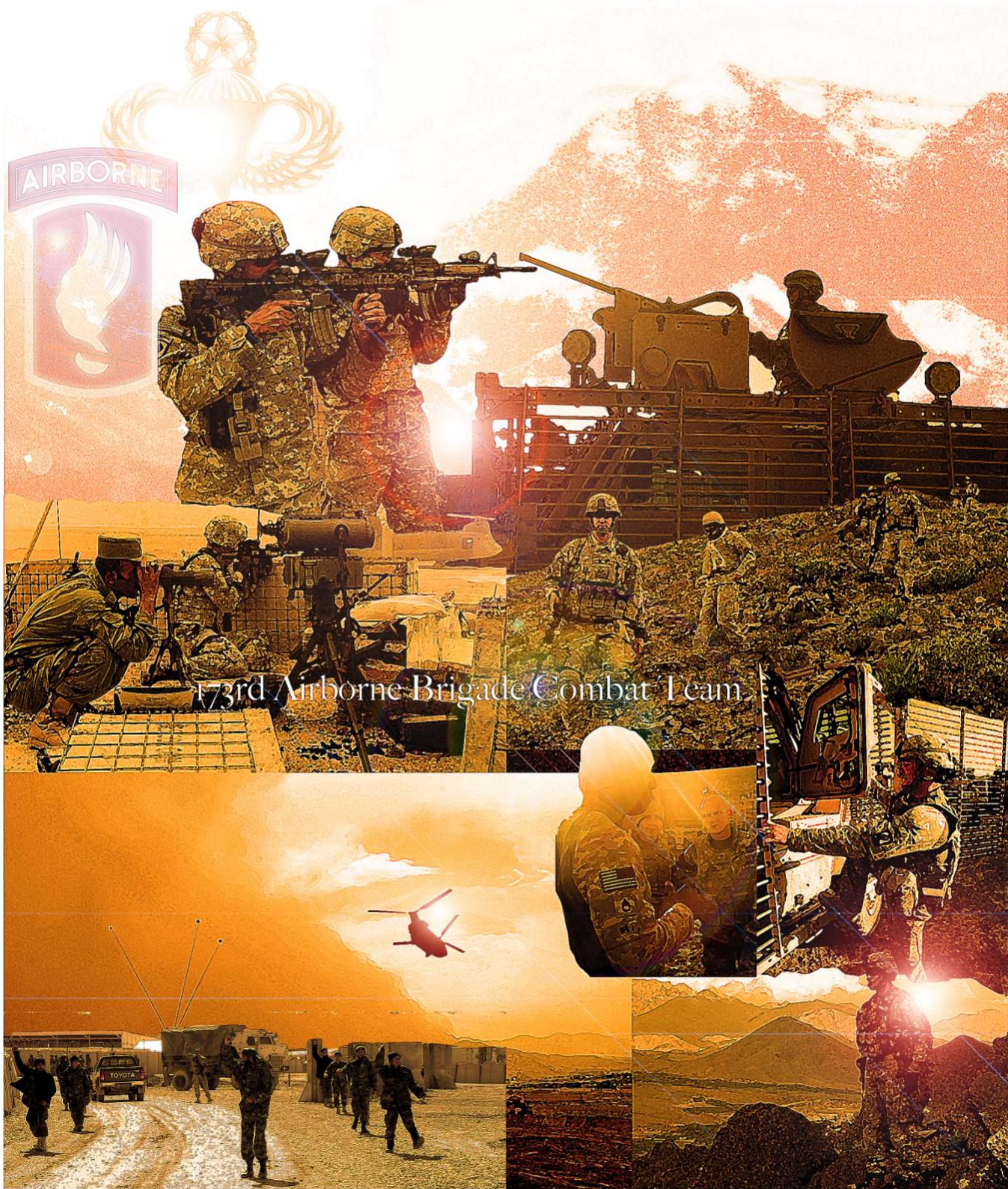
"We are addressing this now because the calendar days are moving quickly and we wanted to begin this program without delay. There are two phases and an end state. The end state is for the money to come down from Kabul, down to the province, and from the province to pass down funding to the districts," said Baker.

"There are districts here that suffer from not having a strong government. We hope to pave the way, so that by the time we are relieved by the unit coming here in a matter of months, that unit will have the things in place they need to help the people, to get access to the people's money for programs that the people want," said Baker.

"The condition is that there must be an administrator, or leader of the area, and a council of people in place to assist the leader in making decisions and inviting the public to shuras and open forums to allow transparency," said Baker.

"The people are looking for changes in their lives and hope for their future, where they can be assured that the funds benefit them, touching their lives and the days of corruption and secrecy are replaced by bidding procedures and publicly disclosed information that increases buy-in and trust in the citizenry's new leadership, as confidence in ones government will propel reform and drive out any reliance of the Taliban or other insurgents, once the people realize they can look to their leaders to meet their needs," said Baker.

Villagers can readily get updates on projects by listening to their radios. The Symposium promises to lay the groundwork for districts and provinces to enjoy a consistent methodology, where meaningful and sustainable change can be realized, thereby becoming the people's budget," said Baker. "A program where the intent and culmination of these varied efforts conveys credibility and results for the populace, so corruption is eliminated and the people of Afghanistan can move forward with a sense of sustained hope and optimism that their government is unquestionably acting in their best interests," he said.



173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team

Photo Illustration by Army Spc. Daniel Haun