



# THE TIEN BIEN TIMES

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM X



## 173rd Spans Across Logar, Wardak



Photo by Army Sgt. Russell A. Gilchrest, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team

One Shot, One Kill Program Comes to TF Bayonet Pg. 8

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For Story Suggestions, contact [SSG Cobbe@afck](#)



**173rd AIRBORNE**  
Brigade Combat Team • Sky Soldiers



## Home of "The Herd"



**Commander** Col. James Johnson III  
**Deputy Commander** Lt. Col. Kyle Lear  
**Command Sgt. Maj.** Command Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Rolling

**Public Affairs Officer** Cpt. David J. Williams  
**Public Affairs NCOIC** Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick  
**Editorial Staff** Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, Staff Sgt. Ryan Harris, Pfc. Michael Sword, Spc. Daniel Haun

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# TIEN BIEN FLASHBACK



**Sky Soldiers remaining vigilant while pulling security**



***Editor's Note: Special thanks goes to Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Woods, from Task Force King, who has provided stories about his artillerymen over the past two months, which have gone on to be published in a host of publications and e-Magazines, both in and outside of the artillery community. If you have stories that you would like to contribute about your unit or your people, please e-mail [Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick](mailto:Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick). We will help you tell your story!***

## **Counterinsurgency Flourishes When Brothers-in-Arms Live, Work, Fight Together**

Editorial by 1st Sgt. Donald Harding  
A Battery, 4-319th AFAR

As the 1st sergeant for Alpha Battery, 4th Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, a 105mm split-plato on firing battery, our role in previous iterations of Operation Enduring Freedom was that: an Artillery role.

Our unit knew well in advance what our role was going to be once we went downrange for OEF X. The word Counterinsurgency was something unheard of for some of our Soldiers. While briefings and reading countless articles on the topic are informative, in order to understand COIN, you have to live through it.

My experiences are based on my opinion of successes and lessons learned through combat operations in a COIN environment. Once the unit hit ground in November 2009, we were very anxious to get to our locations throughout Afghanistan's Wardak province.

As I stated earlier I was a 1st sergeant in charge of a split-platoon, hundred-man battery. After we all got to our locations, we were two platoons of maneuvering elements, and one platoon manning Howitzers in two different locations. The battery headquarters was located at Combat Outpost Garda, in Wardak, along with maneuver elements, which were my artillery Soldiers.

## **Sky Soldiers,**

This month, the Commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team has asked me to write the column for the Tien Bien Times newsletter, and I decided that the most important topic that I could expound on is “restraint.”

Restraint within a Counterinsurgency War is essential. Every Paratrooper has a blur of thoughts that go through their mind when confronting the “flight or fight” brand of emotions that trigger our words and achievement in the midst of challenging times. This is something difficult to change due to our culture, warrior ethos training which has become part of our everyday culture and military mindset.

While everyone naturally responds differently when confronted with stressors, our mission success hinges on, training over and over again to eclipse whatever our natural tendencies might be. It is only through rehearsing repeatedly that Paratroopers can resist their habits, personal opinions, or inclinations. Out on the battlefield, Soldiers cannot afford to think subjectively. They must be objective thinkers.

A Counterinsurgency (COIN) environment has no place for knee-jerk reactions; moreover, the mission has to come first, so when the human brain is inclined to react a certain way, it is only through ones training that Troopers can overcome the temptations of acting swiftly and decisively to win the confrontation. Despite ones instincts, COIN is about restraining ones words and deeds.

No one said it is easy. The challenges that face today’s Soldiers are many. The Global War on Terror (GWOT) environment is comprised of complicated, confusing, and difficult expectations that are placed on our Sky Soldiers.

It is the chain of command’s job to make things clear and well understood. Too often, easy paths lead to ruin. That is why restraint is so important.

When making split-second decisions, it might be unnatural to demonstrate restraint, but that is what eliminates, or at least minimizes collateral damage and senseless mistakes. Restraint is the mark of a professional Soldier, who realizes what is at stake here. Our reputation is hard earned and easily lost. When the citizens see that you are using restraint, lives is saved on both sides. Again, it is an honor to serve as Brigade Command Sergeant Major and to have the opportunity to highlight the great accomplishments of our Sky Soldiers.

**Sky Soldiers!**

**Nicholas A. Rolling**





# Fastuca Remembered As Caring Leader



Army Sgt. Louis R. Fastuca will be remembered by his peers and subordinates as their platoon's go-to guy for always helping new Paratroopers. (Story by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs Office)

"Our lives are forever changed because of the impact that SGT Fastuca had on us. We came together to honor the life of Sgt. Fastuca. We share a grief that has given us all heaviness of heart and soul. We gather here together to remind each other that we are a family of troopers. We are a community of family and friends and we stand together.

Cpt. Dave Panian, who served as Fastuca's commanding officer, thanked the distinguished guests and the men and women of the 173rd ABCT. He said every Soldier mentioned Fastuca's care and concern. He was identified by new Soldiers in Dog Company's 2nd Platoon as the go-to guy who would help them—quick with a smile and fatherly to new Soldiers. Fastuca was the epitome of Soldiers. He was a member of the Old Guard and had plans to compete for Special Forces after getting this deployment under his belt.

"Spc. Fastuca was one of the first guys here to befriend me. He taught me as much as possible to help me get by, whether it was as complicated as weapons or shooting, or as easy as driving. He was easy to approach if you had any questions or concerns. Whenever I wanted to learn something new he would take time out of his day to teach me a little bit of what he knew. He was a great leader and made everything fair when it came to tasks," said Army Pvt. Blake S. Marinuzzi, Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) Gunner, 2nd Platoon, Delta Company, 1-503rd Battalion, 173 ABCT, from Dewitt, MI.

"The Soldiers in his platoon had fond memories of SPC Fastuca. He would take time to help the Privates with the many tasks they had to learn to be proficient Infantrymen. He was respected for his caring leadership style and known for his kindness and his smile. SGT Fastuca was an Airborne Infantryman. Part of the very fabric of the 173rd ABCT, and his loss will be felt by every Sky Soldier and our extended family," said Col. James Johnson, Fastuca's brigade commander, who leads the Sky Soldiers of the 173rd ABCT.

# 173rd ABCT Paratroopers Remember Fastuca

**LOGAR PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN** — Army Spc. Louis R. Fastuca was killed in Wardak Province, Afghanistan on July 5, 2010.

Fastuca died at a U.S. medical treatment facility of wounds he received when his platoon was attacked while conducting a patrol.

He was assigned to HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Airborne), 503<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, (Task Force Talon), 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team, Vicenza, Italy, having just recently been reassigned from D Company.

"Without exception, the men of DOG Company loved SPC Fastuca for his genuine care and concern for his brother soldiers. Just as he cared for all around him in life, he is without a doubt, now in God's caring arms," said Cpt. Dave Panian, commander of D Co. "EVERY single Soldier remarked about his mercy, care and concern."

Fastuca served in the Army for four years and four months as an Infantryman. He was previously assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Infantry Regiment "The Old Guard" at Ft Myer, VA. He was assigned to the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team in 2009. He is survived by his parents, Robert and Monette Fastuca and his brothers Anthony and Joseph, of West Chester, PA.

Fastuca's military awards and decorations include the Purple Heart Medal, Army Achievement Medal (2), Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, the Combat Infantryman's Badge and the Parachutists Badge. He has been recommend for the Bronze Star Medal and has been posthumously promoted to the rank of Sergeant.



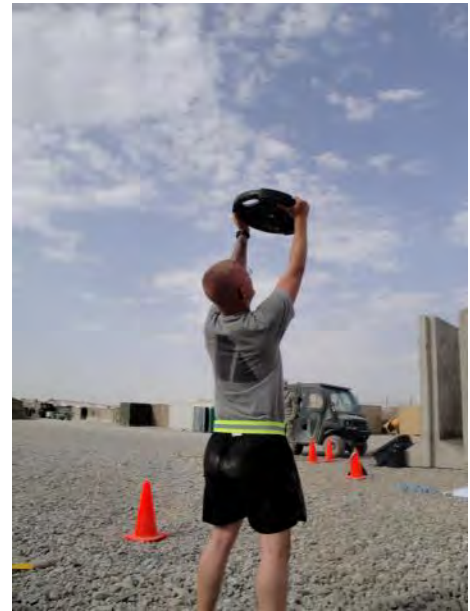
**Army Spc. Louis R. Fastuca, Sky Soldier**



**LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan** – Specialist Louis Fastuca of West Chester, PA, assigned to HHC, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Airborne), 503<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team was killed in Wardak Province, Afghanistan on 5 July 2010. "Without exception, the men of DOG Company loved SPC Fastuca for his genuine care and concern for his brother soldiers." said Cpt. Dave Panian, Commander of D Co.



# TF Bayonet Tests One-Shot, One Kill Fitness Program



*Photos by  
Army Staff Sgt.  
Bruce Cobbeldick,  
Task Force Bayonet PAO*

## Czech, American Leadership Join Governor to Honor ANP Grads



Governor Atiqullah Lodin congratulates an ANA graduate at FOB Shank. The Soldiers were presented certificates by Afghans, Czechs and Americans.



(Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs Office)

**FOB Shank, Afghanistan** — With the recent graduation of another Afghan National Police (ANP) class under their belts, coalition leaders are encouraged by what they are seeing here in Logar Province. According to CSM Jimmy J. Sellers, the acting command sergeant major for 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team, he has seen the level of involvement in daily operations from the ANP change tremendously. “As a force they are better trained, disciplined and organized,” Sellers said.

Sellers said, “It was pleasing to see how very motivated and proud each of the graduates were to receive their graduation certificates. From watching the graduation ceremony, one could sense that these graduates were ready to leave the training environment in order to start assisting the villages in maintaining good order and discipline.”

The American Soldiers’ Command Group representatives of “The Herd” believes that the Czechs are doing a remarkable job at taking new recruits from the villages of Afghanistan and transforming them into National Police, which will work throughout several provinces in Afghanistan, according to Sellers, who filled in for Command Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Rolling for the graduation, which took place at FOB Shank.

According to Sellers, “From what I’ve seen they have taken this responsibility seriously and the results of their hard work and dedication was witnessed during this ceremony today.”

*“The Czechs have been tasked to accomplish a significantly daunting task - a task that is a very important piece of the puzzle in the security of Afghanistan.”*

-CSM Sellers, who served as Acting Command Sgt. Maj., 173rd ABCT, for the graduation



An Afghan National Police graduate salutes The Herd’s Deputy Commanding Officer, LTC Kyle Lear, as Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy J. Sellers, 173rd ABCT looks on.



## Army sergeants Benoit, Potts Help Keep Saber's TOC up, running

Story and Photo By Staff Sgt.  
Bruce Cobbeldick  
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Challenging, stressful, memory-intensive. Those are words that offer a glimpse of what it's like to be a Battle Captain for an Airborne Brigade Combat Team, deployed in a forward area of operation. What's unique about this particular Tactical Operations Center is that its Battle Captains are Noncommissioned Officers - completely NCO-run.

For Army Staff Sgt. David Benoit, the role of Battle Captain is something that fits him like a glove. As anyone can imagine, field grade officers are pretty selective about who is chosen to be a battle captain, as lives depend on the judgment, presence of mind and multi-tasking abilities that this role demands.

Patrick Potts, who is Benoit's Battle Noncommissioned Officer In Charge, during the day shift, his right hand. According to Potts, who is on his fourth combat tour, they know how each other likes to work and are cross-trained very well. Together, they comprise a well-oiled machine at FOB Altimur, a base whereby the TOC manages operational concerns for Chark, Baraki Barak, Kherwar areas of operation, the hot spots of Task Force Bayonet.



Staff Sgt. David Benoit

The first time Benoit ran a TOC, he was a buck sergeant and it was a trial by fire kind of situation. Benoit was a tank gunner, the Headquarters platoon sergeant and was in the middle of an exercise in Germany when he got the word.

"I quickly gathered up some maps and some report templates and starting putting together a small TOC in a dome-style crew tent, where it would be Benoit and a handful of other Soldiers manning the operations center. Now, Benoit is surrounded by a full compliment of high-speed troops and high-tech equipment, in a 21<sup>st</sup> century control center at FOB Altimur.

It was during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) II that Benoit first had a chance to run a TOC when there was enemy in a city that saw a lot of fighting, called Samarra Iraq. "That was a rough tour," said Benoit. We conducted Cajun Mouse Trap 1 through 4, then Operation Baton Rouge, where our unit re-took the city and there was lots of force on force stuff going on there for months on end.



Staff Sgt. Patrick Potts

"To a certain extent, being a battle captain, you do have to be very visual. It helps to be a combat veteran, so you can empathize and appreciate what the Soldiers are going through out there."

"It helps to have leaders around me like Army Sergeant First Class Christopher Condra around. He is awesome to work with," said Benoit. "Condra is a guy who has been out on Recon Teams 50 kilometers out in front at the tip of the spear and has like 50 months combat tour time in the Army.

For Soldiers like Benoit, Condra and Potts, they have made every effort to pass on the batons of knowledge and experience to their troopers, the Soldiers who perform as RTO's - very key players for the Tactical Operations Center teams - both dayshift and nightshift.

The Battle Captain, Benoit, begins his day by taking a moment to prepare him each morning. According to Benoit, "it's important to just sit and ponder what might possibly happen and then take some time to formulate some ideas in my head as to

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# Army Staff Sgt. Transitions to Warrant Officer

Story and Photo By Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick  
TF Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- The transition from Army Staff Sgt. to warrant officer involves going from hands-on leadership skills to that of a planner and strategist.

For one warrant officer, who is under the mentorship of a seasoned, Chief Warrant Officer-5 selectee (CW4) here within the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, as a new maintenance chief who is working with a lot of electronic and mechanical gear that is not even in the Army's system, this brand new warrant officer has his work cut out for him.

Mr. Joshua E. Bruce joined the 173rd ABCT with a tall order to fill – keep equipment he largely has never worked with before or even seen running like a top. One might just say he is always “trying to maintain.”

According to Bruce, “It is a real challenge to work with non-standard equipment and devise the means to track and manage all the different gear that is introduced by contractors and may be proprietary items that nonetheless require repairs or maintenance.”

**“I try and teach everyone what I know and assist them in doing their jobs; I now step back and let my sergeants run their shops.”**  
- WO1 Joshua Bruce

Bruce, a former 63-B mechanic, was a staff sergeant assigned to Special Forces Goup. Bruce presently serves as the maintenance chief for light-medium maintenance team, so he can manage the repairs on equipment and gear just under the size of tanks or aviation assets. “If the need arose, I could even work on tanks,” Bruce said.

“I think what got me through Warrant

Officer Candidate School was that despite having a background in Special Forces, I never lost focus of the conventional Army and how it operates.”

“Some people in Special Forces form such close bonds with their team members and are accustomed to having their equipment and weapons customized to their personal needs that they forget about the uniformity and the generic side found with conventional army units and they cannot make that transition smoothly.”

“One of the things that gets a lot of Non-commissioned officers into trouble at WOCS is the balancing between the soldierly tasks like keeping your closets and foot lockers “dress right dress” with clothing items getting folded properly and every item being squared away as well as balancing the need to study for those 50 question tests that we had 50 minutes to complete.”

“A lot of NCO's get caught up in devoting too much time to being aesthetically squared away, but the warrant officer candidates receive just two chances on tests if they are lucky, so failing ones test scores were a sure-fire way to get dropped from the program if candidates worried about their wall locker display more than their grade point average.”

“The need for superb time management skills was ever-pressing,” Bruce said. “The TAC Officers at WOCS did not want Soldiers to think in terms of either – or. The TAC Officers wanted us to think in terms of ‘and.’”

“Nowadays, WOCS is an accredited college – a college that bombards you with schoolhouse tasks during the day and TAC Officer tasks during the evenings. They are pretty harsh about the need for studying. One has to be able to devote ample time to studying. By the time that first test arrives on your first Friday there, it hits you - what you have gotten yourself into,” Bruce joked.

But with those arduous days behind him now, Mr. Bruce now concerns himself with how to best balance and manage the maintenance needs of the various Forward Operational Bases and Command Posts throughout Task Force Bayonet's Area of Operation (AO).

“I now help manage and optimize the efficiency and synergy between the various units who all tend to see their needs as being the center of everything.



**WO1 Joshua Bruce (left) helps a Sky Soldier with a generator at**

I have tried to help BAF's maintenance team, who have had to face juggling all the various installations across Afghanistan with their customers' expectations get more streamlined, orchestrated efforts from us that are conducive to all stakeholders.”

“There is a lot of planning that goes into keeping everybody up and running here,” said Bruce. “I receive a great deal of help and assistance from Chief Lopez and Chief T. Their knowledge and operational grasp of things as maintenance and SPO professionals make my duties so much easier and I always feel they are just a phone call away.”

For Bruce, the hardest thing may not be working with gear and equipment that he has never set eyes on before or doing a balancing act, keeping the various units satisfied that their needs are being met and fully supported by the professionals at BAF. The real challenge is stepping back and letting his Noncommissioned officers interface with the troops, while he takes a step back and plays a more distant role with the Soldiers.

“It's hard to get away from being hands on and close with my Soldiers allowing the NCOs to do their job without interfering with them, so I try to teach everyone what I know and assist them in doing their jobs, but I see to it that I step back now and let my sergeants run their shops and their teams. I am proud to see that it is getting handled. Missions are getting taken care of and so are the people. That is what its all about,” Bruce said, confident that his NCOs are handling things in his presence or in his absence.



## *One Shot, One Kill Program Comes to Task Force Bayonet*



The One Shot, One Kill program gave Paratroopers and Czech Soldiers with Task Force Bayonet an opportunity to push themselves in an effort to perform combat survival feats and increase their resiliency.

*Photos by SSG Bruce Cobbeldick, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs*



## *Lending a Helping Hand: The Sky Soldier Way*



*Photos by Army Sgt. Russell A. Gilchrest, Combat Camera, Task Force Bayonet*



***Sky Soldiers Span Distance of Logar, Wardak Provinces for OEF***



***Photos by Army Sgt. Russell A. Gilchrest, Combat Camera, Task Force Bayonet***



## Saber NCO's Tap Experience, Help Manage Battalion TOC

how I ought to best deal with those possible situations.”

As a Scout, Benoit is proud of being a 19-Delta. “There is a lot of responsibility that comes with being a Scout,” he said. “I think that has helped prepare me for this role here,” he said.

“Our chemistry here together - these noncommissioned officers that I work with here - are all aware how to cover down for each other and make it happen. Our young Soldiers are getting it when it comes to grasping how to judge the atmospheric and we are seeing the benefits from how we have worked on cross-training everyone and providing knowledge transfer,” said Potts.

“The field-grade officers at Hoenfeld Germany conducted test runs and they put me and this team through a lot of varied situations, hammering us to see if we could take it and show presence of mind. A lot depends on how you conduct yourself under pressure and even the tone of your voice is key because others sense confidence in you when you can remain calm and have a clear head,” Benoit said.

***“Our confidence and experience gets us through the toughest of times,” said Condra.***

“Not every one of these Soldiers came to us because they were the best individuals for the job. Some came to us broke and it was good to see some of them rise to the occasion,” Condra said. “The work is not something that everyone is cut out for. To a certain extent, you either have it or you don’t. It is a lot like running; some people are gifted runners. They are just suited for running.

But Condra also is quick to point out that this generation has both their strengths and their weaknesses. The team has lost some troopers along the way who were not cut out for this kind of work, but I am continually amazed as to how technically literate these young Soldiers are, and I am very aware that they have a great amount of skills with all this modern computer and internet stuff that they can do nowadays. I may have the judgment and the experience, but some of these kids are smarter than me when it comes to all this technology,” said Condra.

Perhaps it’s the combination of technological savvy and battle-seasoned leadership that makes this team operate successfully. In any case, the amounts of TOCs that are completely NCO-run are few and far between and Altimur is one of them.



Army Sgt. Robert M. Brandt, a master driver with 4th Squadron, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd ABCT, gives Zabiullah Mehrab, with ANP, some driving tips.

## *TF King Driver's Training*

Continued from Page 19

“The steering is harder than in a regular car,” said Mazlomyar. “We have to be careful steering or we’ll have an accident.”

A week into the class, Brandt says that that things are going well and the ANA and ANP are getting better by the day.

“It’s going well,” he said. “They’re working well with each other and helping each other with the course.”

“The teacher explained everything to us,” said Mehrab. “I’m glad I’m getting to learn to drive a Humvee.”

“I like that it will make me a better driver,” added Mazlomyar.

Though the class is a basic one, it’s also a very important one. Brandt has been an Army driver for 14 years and is qualified as an instructor and knows that the skill of driving has to be built on a foundation of the basics.

“This course is mainly focused on safety,” he said. “Safety while driving and safety checks before you drive. You have to have the basics down first.”



# TF King conducts driver's training for ANA, ANP

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

WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Safe transportation of U.S. Troops, equipment and supplies on the ground in Afghanistan depends on having a well-trained Soldiers behind the wheel. Having a good driver is just as vital to the Afghan National Army and Police, who depend on vehicles for everything from patrolling a district to moving throughout the country. However, many of the ANA and ANP have never driven a vehicle or been taught the basics of vehicle maintenance and safety.

With no formal driving school in place the Soldiers from 4th Squadron, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, established their basic driver's course that began July 3, at Forward Operating Base Airborne in Afghanistan's Wardak Province.

The two-week course is designed to make ANA and ANA troops familiar with their Humvee vehicles and teach them maintenance and basic driving skills.

"The ANP and ANA have been sending people with no experience or that needed the most driving experience," said Sgt. Robert M. Brandt, the class instructor and a company-level master driver with Battery G,



Army Sgt. Robert M. Brandt, a master driver with 4th Squadron, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd ABCT, mentors ANP and ANA students on topics like maintaining the vehicle, road conditions, safety awareness issues and noticing any discrepancies about the vehicle, prior to taking the students on the road.

4th Squadron, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173 ABCT, a native of Grand Rapids, Mich.

The first two days were dedicated to introducing the Afghan students to the Humvee vehicle and teaching them preventative maintenance, checks and services.

"They would start by walking around the vehicles and looking for any physical damage and then they would look underneath the vehicle for any leaks of oil, fuel or transmission fluid," said Brandt.

"You go by the technical manual and look over your vehicle for any faults that would make the vehicle not mission capable or unsafe."

After a class on hand signals to move large vehicles, Brandt started the driving portion of the class. Zabiullah Mehrab, an Afghan National Policeman attending the class, was happy with his first experience driving a humvee.

*"The engine is stronger than in regular cars. It has an automatic transmission so it's easier to drive than regular cars. This training helped us a lot."*

*— Zabiullah Mehrab, ANP Student Driver*

Zainallah Mazlo myar, another Afghan policeman, agreed with Mehrab, but noticed one, big difference in driving the Humvee.

*TF King Drivers Training*

*Continued on Page 20*



## *Sky Soldier Continues Family Tradition*

Story and photo by Army Staff Sgt.  
Bruce Cobbeldick, TF Bayonet

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Every Soldier's first deployment translates into being away from ones family, friends and loved ones, but for a "Sky Soldier" at Forward Operating Base Altimur, despite his youth and inexperience, he is taking his combat tour here all in stride.

New Soldiers like Army Pfc. Ronny L. Jordan are proving everyday that they can be very aware of why they are here and focused about accomplishing the missions expected of them.

As a driver, Jordan has a lot more on his plate than merely driving vehicles. As a new Soldier to the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, fresh out of basic training and his first military occupational school, Jordan has a number of collateral duties that keep him hopping in this theater, supporting America's efforts in the Global War On Terror.

"There is no doubt in my mind why I am here," he said with confidence. "I am here to serve my country, get the job done here and then head on back to my wife and three-year-old daughter once we have taken care of business," said Jordan, a clean-cut, professional and respectful trooper, who makes his intentions of becoming a career soldier very clear.

"My Noncommissioned officers and I are here to do our respective jobs plus help offer medical evacuation training to the Afghan National Army soldiers and security guards here, who look to us for help in giving them the skills they will be depending on to survive in this war."

"I am also involved in spending hours with new Afghan National Army and security guard personnel, who need help with their marksmanship on the rifle range, so they can shoot with proficiency out there. That is on top of my duties that I have as a driver and member of this unit here in Afghanistan," he said, beaming with the characteristic pride that new warriors just out of basic training are known for.

Jordan, a fireplug of a man, who has chiseled himself with resolve and military bearing, has been trained on the HIIDE system, which helps record local Afghan's retina signature and fingerprints, cataloging locals' biometric data into a database to help identify criminals, insurgents or law-abiding citizens, based on their past records that have been tracked since the inception of this war.

"I help screen interpreters, laborers or contractors, who are seeking access to our military installations for employment, as well as provide Identification processing assistance for other reasons, as well," said Jordan.

His motivation is his daughter, who gets on the phone and asks, "daddy what kind of work did you do today to save the world?" His daughter, Tatiyana, age 3, has a lot of interest in what

he is doing here in Afghanistan, and Jordan tells his wife of 5 years to just keep focusing on that little girl, during his long absence.

"My wife is very strong, but I know this deployment is hard on her," he said.

Jordan has always wanted to be a Soldier. In fact, according to him, ever since he saw a photo of his great-grandfather, who served from World War II through the Vietnam War, wearing a chest full of ribbons, he knew that soldiering was what he wanted to do with his life.

"I wanted to provide a great life for my wife and daughter, and I thought that the Army was the best way for me to give them the kind of life that they deserved," said Jordan.

When he found out that he was going to be a "Sky Soldier" with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, he was not sure what a Sky Soldier was, but he figured it was something really high-speed.

"The tempo around here is fast - real fast," Jordan said. "I enjoy staying busy; it makes the time go by quickly here."

"I do not feel sorry for myself or have any regrets about being out here," he said. "I know why I enlisted, and why I am out here and I feel great about serving here," said Jordan.

There are Soldiers who are older than Jordan out here, serving the Army, but Jordan displays the kind of bearing and soldierly virtues that sustain the notion that today's young soldiers are quite able to personify selfless service – his calling card being his infectious, can-do spirit. One cannot observe him hard at work and not be reminded that there still are Soldiers being turned out from Army Basic Training Battalions, who do the right things for the right reasons.



## Counterinsurgency Continued from pg 3

The sub-governor, Afghan National Army and police chiefs of the district were the first priority because they know their areas better than we do and the elders can better relate to the people on a cultural level.

To get a good feel for your area it takes at least thirty days and it's a continuous learning process. Once you feel that COIN is mastered, there is another building block that needs to be learned. After the first thirty days, we began to lay the foundation of a true partnership with our ANA brothers, and the ANP district chief, but there was something missing... we were not getting the full effect.

The partnership was there but living within the same COP, was not. That is one of the most important things you need to have in order to win the COIN fight, trusting the Soldier to your left and right. Not just the U.S. Soldier, but your ANA Soldiers as well and being totally embedded for the long haul, not just three times a week.

The experiences and friendships we forged are something I will never forget. They are Soldiers just like us, with feeling, compassion, loyalty and spirit to win.

It's just like the Soldiers in your squad. You know everything about them, so why would you not want to know everything about your Afghan brother. Alpha battery began a decisive plan to move our ANA from their compound down the hill, to the confines of COP Garda. This project would ultimately take one and a half months to complete. We literally carved a third tier out of the mountain we were living on and set up a full size camp with 16 tents, electricity, a chow hall and mosque.

This was the cleanest and most-detailed ANA compound I have ever witnessed and the results would be the beginning of an everlasting friendship, and this is when COIN really began to work for the Jalrayz valley. Now that we had all forces living on COP Garda, I wanted to spend as much time as was available to eat, of course drink chai,

and find out everything there was to know about their work habits and life style.

As a whole, I actually felt even safer that our ANA brothers were living with us. What this meant to me, was stability for the province. The plan worked out and was a win-win situation for both sides. I knew the ANA would spread the word to the surrounding areas, about how well they were being treated. We would have it no other way, but for the ANA this was like living in Hollywood. What to the U.S. seems like a small gesture, to them was royalty, and I was very pleased.

During this time frame, we were in the full swing of patrols, projects and constant visits from the elders of the villages. The multitude of weapons cache turn-ins was amazing, the elders and the ANP were amazing. It seemed like every day there was another turn-in, which meant COIN was working and we could see the evidence of the Soldiers' hard work. It seemed like all was working out, when we received a mission to move one Platoon from COP Garda to COP Conlon, and start the process all over.

The decision was made and Alpha Company's 2nd Platoon moved and went in with the same mind set as we had in Garda: Start with the inner circle, and work your way out. Once you set the foundation for your ANA and ANP counterparts and set the conditions, you will win the COIN fight. As with all projects, we never just focused on one element. We made it a point to treat all Afghans with the utmost respect. For example, our local workers were treated just the same and they too spread the word of what we were all about and we built a circle of trust with all people we encountered.

I can remember a project in which the platoon supplied a generator for one of the villages. To see those expressions of joy was the most satisfying accomplishment that we as Afghan and U.S. Soldiers made a difference that will not be soon forgotten. After three months of being on ground, it was amazing to see all the accomplishments that the Soldiers had made within their area of operation. For these accomplishments

to be successful, a unit has to be willing to accept a little risk. When you open your front door and have elders, ANA and ANP coming into the compound, you still have to have situational awareness, but this again is building the trust with the people you live and work with. Every encounter I experienced in the Jalrayz valley was one of kindness and always being welcome.

The Afghan people are very friendly and open to discussion. It can be challenging at times and a conversation can go on for hours until all points are addressed, but the end state is making sure all needs are met. This process can also be mentally tiring at times. Patience is the key to victory when conducting key leader engagements. The goal of the unit would be to say at the end of our rotation that we could hand over the COP completely and the ANA would have control. We would always express that the U.S. Soldiers are guests in their country, and we are privileged to serve alongside of them. This is another success for COIN operations. Don't come into the operation close-minded, think outside the box and victory is sure to follow.

As stated in the beginning, I can be a testament to the success of COIN operations. Being a part of Operation Enduring Freedom at the beginning of the war, I've seen a change over the past eight and half years and it's amazing how much the country has improved.

This short preview of COIN success is owed to all the Soldiers from Alpha Battery, 4th Battalion, 319th AFAR, who have endured, succeeded and made a difference in the Jalrayz valley. The partnership that was made with our ANA brothers will never be forgotten. Once we leave and go home, there will always be a part of us that will miss all the friendships, the lives affected through our good deeds and gestures. While COIN can be read, it's an experience that must be lived through the eyes of Soldiers.

A special thanks to: Capt. John Karcher  
1st Lt. Jeffrey Wade  
Sgt. 1st Class Willis Blackshire  
Sgt. 1st Class Trenton Farris  
All the Alpha Battery Soldiers





Sub-governors across Logar Province meet for the seventh time since January, at FOB Altimur to discuss

## TF Saber Holds District Sub-Governors Meeting at FOB Altimur

Story and Photos by Pfc. Michael Sword  
**Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs**

LOGAR Province, Afghanistan — A district sub-governors conference was hosted by 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, at Forward Operating Base Altimur in Afghanistan's Logar Province, July 15. This is the seventh conference held at FOB Altimur since January and in that time, the conference has evolved from a general meeting to an event that is driven by the concerns of the sub-governors. The agenda for the meeting concentrated on development projects in the sub-governors' respective districts, the importance of security in the province and the need for transparency in the Afghan government.

The conference opened with a graduation of U.S. and Afghan Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment's new combined action warrior leaders course, highlighting the tie between the province's needs for security and development.

In his opening remarks, Atiqullah Lodin, the governor of Logar Province, spoke about his optimism for his district's improvements.

"I'm so happy that our development is progressing," said Lodin. "If there is security there will be construction, but we need to think about how to improve the security and reconstruction here."

Government corruption is a concern for the sub-governors of Logar, who are working to improve the lives of the people of the province. Transparency is the first step to combating the perception of corruption and gaining support for the Afghan government from the local populace.





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