



THE TIEN BIEN TIMES



Operation Enduring Freedom X



January 2010

Sky Soldiers Take Off



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Army Sgt. Daniel Davis, a Blackhawk crew chief, with 4-3 Aviation performs a flight inspection supporting TF Bayonet missions.

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For Story Suggestions,
contact SSG Cobbeldick



173rd AIRBORNE

Brigade Combat Team • Sky Soldiers



This month's military question ...

... Any ideas who Major Yandura is speaking with in this photo?



Each issue, we're going to attempt to test your military knowledge by showing a photo that depicts an Afghan or regional leader and if you are the first contestant to offer the correct name and title, you win!

This issue's question:

Who is the gentlemen in the photo on the left?

The first person to e-mail us with the correct answer wins! So, waste no time, warriors. Get your response in as soon as possible. We will be doing a personality feature article on the winning Soldier in *The Tien Bien Times* each month, based on whoever provides the first correct answer via e-mail. No phone calls accepted for this contest. So, if you want spontaneous publicity this is your ticket!

Send your responses to: bruce.cobbeldick@us.army.mil

Family Members Share the Hardships of Deployments

Editorial by Army SSG Bruce Cobbeldick, 173rd PAO

It begins when we, as young recruits or candidates, head off for initial training. Our families' care, concern, worries, prayers and support start day one. Within our very first year, missed holidays present themselves, foreshadowing things to come. Our spouses, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children and grandparents provide that rock and continuity that gives us peace of mind, grounding us in what is truly important, as we experience amazing things, travel to destinations around the world (or at least far from home), and dedicate ourselves to the mission. When the time comes for another goodbye or farewell hug, a new deployment or exercise can weigh us down — service members and loved ones alike. In today's Global War On Terror landscape, hazardous duty can be especially harrowing.

The military life is not for the faint of heart. There is an uncompromising demand on military families that carries with it a degree of uncertainty, and those close to us feel the recoil of our absence morning, noon and night. Whether it is the tedious errands or household headaches that an absent warrior soon leaves behind, the reality is our lives in the military do not move forward without the selfless support of our families. Missed get-togethers and huge chunks of children's memories that escape us are tempered by our families' loyalty, pride and commitment to the Armed Forces. It is only when that [blue star](#) in the window comes down that our loved ones breathe a sigh of relief and enjoy the "completeness" felt when their loved ones' dirty duffle bags are plopped down on the porch steps and the door swings open. Our tours of duty are their tours of duty, too.



Commander: Col. James Johnson III
Deputy Commanding Officer
Lt. Col. Kyle Lear
Command Sgt. Maj. Command
Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Rolling

Public Affairs Officer: Maj. Thomas Gilleran
PA NCOIC/Editor: Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick
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Photojournalist: Spc. Daniel D. Haun

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Commander's Corner



To the Families and friends of our fallen heroes, I wish to extend my deepest sympathies and offer a heartfelt and humble assurance that their sacrifices will be remembered and honored, as they were great Americans.

The Soldiers lost were irreplaceable and their selfless courage and commitment to the Global War On Terror are testimonials to the Warrior Ethos and sense of Patriotism that maps these fine men and women who proudly wear the uniform.

Soldiers who are Killed In Action (KIA), Wounded in Action (WIA), Missing In Action (MIA) or Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN) are vital concerns to the Command Group of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. Command Sergeant Major Nicholas Rolling and I take the Warrior Ethos very seriously. As leaders, we are committed to doing everything humanly possible to come to the aid of the Families of our fallen Sky Soldiers. They are part of our extended Army Family.

The Army has a covenant with the fallen Soldiers and their Family members. I am utterly convinced that we must keep the faith with that covenant. The profound responsibilities that go with notifying the Next of Kin shall never be taken lightly. Whether there are special needs that cannot be met or unique circumstances that must be dealt with, the Army is well prepared to assist any Army Family.

Families of our fallen, wounded or missing will have the full array of services and be shown every courtesy and consideration possible

To ensure the proper support of every Sky Soldier and their Family, the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team established the Home Station Support Network. This Network provides support for every deployed Sky Soldier and their immediate Family by linking the efforts of the Deployed Unit, the Family Readiness Group (FRG), and the Rear Detachment. The Unit Commander is overall responsible for this network.

The Rear Detachment Commander serves as the unit commander for non-deployed unit members during deployment. He helps resolve Family readiness problems or refers them to the appropriate agency; maintains regular contact with the deployed unit and is the link between the FRG and military resources.

The FRG Leader is a volunteer position. It may be filled by the unit commander's spouse or any Family member in the unit whom the Commander has appointed and endorsed. Primary tasks include: being knowledgeable of FRG operating procedures, structure, and community resources; organize unit-level support groups; notifies contact persons to activate information channels (verbal, telephonic, or digital); attend and participate in all FRG meetings; communicate with the Rear Detachment Commander during deployments; recruit and train volunteers; and insure communication is maintained among the members.

Key personnel from this triad of the Home Station Support Network have received training to prepare themselves for their positions. We also completed a Home Station Support Network Conference that allowed all key elements of the Network to discuss issues and establish procedures while we are deployed.

This conference was followed up by rehearsals of critical events – the same events we have unfortunately had to address recently when we lost our fellow comrades to the enemy. (continued on Page 4)



Commander's Corner

(Continued from Page 3)

FRGs are a critical part of our Home Station Support Network. The mission of 173rd ABCT FRGs is to support the readiness of 173rd ABCT paratroopers and their Family members. Everyone involved in FRGS should make decision and act to achieve this mission. The unit FRGs are vital elements of this command.

Membership in the FRG is voluntary. Membership is open to unit Family members (immediate and extended to include mothers, fathers, aunts, etc.), as well as others interested in the welfare of the paratroopers (community members, retirees). I ask for all Sky Soldier Family members to remain supportive of the efforts of the Home Station Support Network.

Across "The Herd" various units have established outstanding tools that facilitate this mission. Unit Newsletters, the vFRG webpage, and frequent events are all vital to ensure the success of the FRGs. Family members should support these efforts throughout the deployment, not just at the point of crisis. Just like a web of safety, these efforts are networked to other organizations and groups that support "The Herd." Of note are the efforts made by the 173d Airborne Association and all the veterans of the "The Herd" who have continued to support the Families of our fallen Sky Soldiers or to assist wounded Sky Soldiers as they recover.

As we continue to serve here in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-X, I would have wanted nothing more than for no Family members or friends within this Brigade to have needed these services, but as the Commanding Officer of "The Herd," I hope you find comfort in the fact that the United States Army practices what it preaches when it comes to you being Family in every sense of the word.

Sky Soldiers!

Col. Jim Johnson

Bayonet-6

Congratulations to the following Sky Soldiers, who were recognized
by the 503rd Infantry Regiment:

**Distinguished
Members:**

CSM Nicholas Rolling,
CSM Bradley Myers,
SFC Erich Phillips,
SPC Dillon Bergstad

Honorary Members:
SSG Lincoln Dockery



Losses Felt Across 173rd Brigade

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Soldiers from Task Force Bayonet gather at a memorial ceremony at Forward Operating Base Airborne, Afghanistan, Jan. 16, to pay their final respects to two fallen Soldiers from 118th Military Police Company, 503rd Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Brigade out of Fort Bragg, N.C., commander, 118th Military Police Company. "Staff Sgt. Merriweather and Spc. Whitsitt died as heroes." (photos by Pfc. Michael Sword, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs)

Story by Army Pfc. Michael Sword, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs Office

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- A memorial ceremony was held Jan. 16, at Forward Operating Base Airborne, Afghanistan for two fallen Soldiers from the 118th Military Police Company, 503rd Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Brigade, out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

Staff Sgt. Daniel D. Merriweather and Spc. Geoffrey A. Whitsitt were killed in action Jan 13, when their MRAP vehicle was struck by an Improvised Explosive Device while on patrol in Logar province.

"There is no more honorable profession than to be a Soldier," said Capt. Kendall Robinson, commander, 118th Military Police Company. "Staff Sgt. Merriweather and Spc. Whitsitt died as heroes."

"They fought to protect our nation and our way of life," he continued. "They gave their lives in service to that cause."

Staff Sgt. John Freeland, Merriweather's squad leader, spoke at the ceremony.

"Staff Sgt. Merriweather was a genuine leader and honestly cared about his Soldiers," he said. "He was a warrior to the core."

Though Freeland wasn't in the convoy, he has faith that Merriweather was being the person he knew him to be to the end.

"I have no doubt that Sgt. Merriweather went out leading from the front," he said. "I know this because he wouldn't want to be anywhere else but the most dangerous place, so someone else wouldn't have to."

Merriweather served in the Army for over seven years. He had previously deployed to Iraq and was on his second deployment to Afghanistan.

His awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal (two oak leaf clusters, one with "V" device), the Army Achievement Medal (one oak leaf cluster), the Meritorious Unit Citation, the Army Good Conduct Medal (two awards), the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghan Campaign Medal (with two bronze service stars), the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Medal, the Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon (four awards), the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal (two awards), the Combat Action Badge, the Basic Parachutist Badge, the Air Assault Badge and the Driver/Mechanic Badge.

He has been recommended for posthumous awards of the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart Medal.

(Continued on Page 5b)



"There is no more honorable profession than to be a Soldier," said Capt. Kendall Robinson. Staff Sgt. Daniel D. Merriweather and Spc. Geoffrey A. Whitsitt were killed in action Jan. 13.

Losses Felt Across 173rd Brigade

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(Continued from Page 5a)

He is survived by his wife, Rachelle of Raeford, N.C., his mother Pamela Finnie of Collierville, Tenn. and two sons, Daniel Jr., also of Raeford, N.C. and Kale Rausche of Gurnee, Ill.

Sgt. Shaun Amend, a military policeman with the 118th, also spoke, remembering Spc. Geoffrey Whitsitt as a great soldier and friend to everyone.

"Whitsitt exemplified every day what a Soldier should be," he said. "Every person Whitsitt ever met was an instant friend."

"He had a way of putting a smile on everybody's face no matter how good or bad the situation was."

Whitsitt served in the Army for almost two years and was on his first deployment to Afghanistan.

His awards and decorations include the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, the Combat Action Badge and the Parachutist Badge. He has also been recommended for posthumous awards of the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart Medal.

He is survived by his parents, Steve and Deborah Whitsitt of Travelers Rest, S.C.

"These heroes, who gave their lives, were serving far from their homes to help the people of Afghanistan live in secure villages and districts," said Col. Jim Johnson, Task Force Bayonet Commander. "They were dedicated to improving the situation here, so others could know the freedoms, which these Soldiers selflessly gave up in order to serve a greater cause."



Army Chaplain (Capt.) James Hall, 4th Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, Capt. Kendall Robinson, commander, and 1st Sgt. Peterson of the 118th Military Police Company, 503rd Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Brigade, pay their final respects to Staff Sgt. Daniel D. Merriweather and Spc. Geoffrey A. Whitsitt, who were killed in action Jan. 13. "There is no more honorable profession than to be a Soldier," said Robinson. "Staff Sgt. Merriweather and Spc. Whitsitt died as heroes." (photo by Pfc. Michael Sword, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs)



"These heroes, who gave their lives, were serving far from their homes to help the people of Afghanistan live in secure villages and districts,"

—Col. Jim Johnson, Task Force Bayonet Commander.

Beachnaw Seen As Peer, Mentor, Friend

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- A memorial ceremony was held Jan. 16, at Combat Outpost Joyce, for a soldier from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, who was killed in action Jan 13.

Sgt. Lucas Beachnaw, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt. was killed by enemy small-arms fire, as he led his squad to prevent an enemy element from engaging the company decisive position in Kunar province. Currently, 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt. is attached to 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

"Sgt. Beachnaw suffered a gunshot wound to the shoulder but refused medical treatment in order to keep fighting," said Lt. Col. William Butler, commander, 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt. "It wasn't until the third gunshot he was mortally wounded."

"He never quit and always fought valiantly for the men on his left and right," Butler added. "Sgt. Beachnaw was every bit as courageous, valorous and selfless as any other Sky Soldier to don the maroon beret."

As a member of Beachnaw's squad, Spc. Ryan Hale, 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt., knows firsthand that Beachnaw held a special place in the unit.

"To some of us, Sgt. Beachnaw was a mentor, to some of us he was a peer," he said. "But to all of us, he was a friend."

Beachnaw served in the Army for almost four years. He was on his second deployment to Afghanistan with the 173rd.

It is customary to display a fallen Soldier's helmet, rifle, dog tags and boots; because Beachnaw had earned the coveted "Top Gun" award at Sniper School, his unit took meticulous care in also displaying his ghillie suit, M14, Barret .50 cal sniper rifle and scope of the Army Sniper to highlight his current duty position and the rare achievement that was his to claim.

Beachnaw's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Army Achievement Medal with one oak leaf cluster, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, The Afghanistan Campaign Medal with one Campaign Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the NCO Professional Development Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, The Parachutists Badge and the Pathfinder Badge.

Beachnaw has also been recommended for posthumous award of the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart Medal.

He is survived by his wife, Kimberly, his mother Jeanne Beachnaw of Lowell, Mich. and his father Kevin Beachnaw of Charlotte, Mich.



Spc. Ryan Hale (middle), and two Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, pay their final respects to Sgt. Lucas Beachnaw, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt., who was killed in action Jan. 13.

(Photo by Army Spc. Michael Sword, TF Bayonet Public Affairs Office.)

"Sergeant Beachnaw enlisted in an Army at war. He volunteered for service in the Airborne Infantry. He completed a 15-month tour with the 173rd ABCT in Afghanistan in 2008 and returned in 2009, because he knew that the mission was not yet completed.

He risked his life, side by side with the Sky Soldiers he led, so that the people of Kunar Province, Afghanistan could live free of tyranny" said Colonel Jim Johnson, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Commander. "His service was exemplary and will be remembered."

Beachnaw Memorial (continued)



Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, and Task Forces Bayonet and Mountain Warrior, gather to pay their final respects to Sgt. Lucas Beachnaw, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. Regt., who was killed in action Jan. 13.



173rd AIRBORNE

Brigade Combat Team • Sky Soldiers



Losses Felt Across 173rd Brigade

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A Soldier's Goodbye

We came with many
Wanting only for all to return
We arrived as one, united in purpose
We came to free others
Today, we only know sadness
And feel deep concern
Our Army Family has suffered
We've lost three, fine brothers
No understanding
No preparation can there ever be
When news like this hits home
So tragic, so painfully true
The irony of being filled with grief
Yet so very empty
Dark clouds felt by all
Despite these Afghan skies so blue

Our hearts are heavy
As we remember you, just as you were
And not as you are, dear brothers in arms
What was fate and what sadly did occur
Will never erase your good traits
Or your many splendid charms
Yours were lives of selfless service
And so it shall forever be
Soldiers know the price of freedom
And how it comes so terribly high
We warriors, we stand here assembled
Tight-lipped and tight-fisted
Honoring your memory
Our rank and file barely composed
Saying a Soldier's goodbye

—SSG Bruce Cobbeldick, TF Bayonet PA NCOIC

Dedicated to:



Army Spc. Geoffrey Whitsitt of the 118th Military Police Company (Airborne), 503rd Military Police Battalion (Airborne)



Army Sgt. Lucas Beachnaw of HHC, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne)



Army Staff Sgt. Daniel Merriweather, of the 118th Military Police Company (Airborne), 503rd Military Police Battalion

For Story Suggestions,
contact SSG_Cobbeldick



173rd AIRBORNE

Brigade Combat Team • Sky Soldiers



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

Careful What You Post

By Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick
TF Bayonet Public Affairs Office



Maj. Ray Ceralde, the Army OPSEC program manager said OPSEC is a "total Army concept" and "The Internet, personal Web sites, blogs (Web logs) - are examples of where our adversaries are looking for open-source information about us."

"Open-source information isn't classified and may look like nothing more than innocuous bits of information, a piece here, a piece there, like pieces of a puzzle. But when you put enough of the pieces together you begin to realize the bigger picture and that something could be going on."

While Army personnel may maintain their own Web sites or post information on blogs, Maj. Ceralde said "photos of deployed Soldiers to share with Family and friends are acceptable."

"However, when the photo includes a background of the inside of their camp with force protection measures in plain view, an adversary will know how to counter their force-protection measures," Maj. Ceralde said.



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

In 2005, the 173rd went to Afghanistan for the first time. That February, the Sky Soldiers deployed along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border to Regional Command East, as well as Regional Command South. Among the 173rd's accomplishments was helping facilitate a peaceful parliamentary election in the fall.

During this tour, the Sky Soldiers provided humanitarian assistance in eastern Afghanistan. The 3rd Bn., 319th Artillery, 82nd Airborne. Division was attached to the 173rd, organized as a maneuver task force. It conducted combat operations in Kandahar province. The 173rd Support Battalion and 173rd Combat Support Company provided logistical support from Kandahar, and sent soldiers to assist at forward operating bases.



Afghanistan

Weather



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NCO Builds Cohesive Team



Army Staff Sgt. Martin Diaz De Leon, Jr., (seated) Noncommissioned Officer In Charge (NCOIC) of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team's paralegal specialists, assists Chaplain's Assistant, Army Sgt. Christopher Tennant, 173rd ABCT.

**Story by U.S. Army Pfc. Michael Sword
Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs**

FOB Shank, Afghanistan -- It has been said that the more things change, the more things stay the same. Though the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team is in Afghanistan, far from their home station of Vicenza, Italy, the brigade's day-to-day business must continue uninterrupted. In the 173rd's legal office, Staff Sgt. Martin Diaz De Leon Jr., a native of Rockport, Texas, is the Noncommissioned Officer In Charge and he ensures his team doesn't miss a beat.

His presence is much bigger than he is. In the small office that houses the 173rd's legal team at Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan, it is Diaz De Leon's persona that fills the room. From the Texas sports team flags that adorn the office, to his commanding voice that echoes through the wooden walls. Though it may be a team of paralegals who keep the office running smoothly, you can feel the influence of Diaz De Leon from the second you walk in.

Although he has spent more than eight years as a paralegal in the Army, Diaz De Leon didn't always have a legal career in mind. His initial thoughts were to enlist as an infantryman.

"Honestly, because my recruiter told me not to go infantry, I defaulted to what I knew. My dad was a judge for 12 or 13 years. But I also knew I wanted to jump out of airplanes. So, I said I wanted something in law and to jump out of airplanes."

However, he soon found out that being a paralegal specialist in the Army wasn't as easy as signing on the dotted line.

"When I was starting out, everyone thought I was with CID (Criminal Investigation Division), so I didn't have friends for a long time," Diaz De Leon joked.

Eight years have passed and now, as the senior-ranking, enlisted Soldier in the legal office, he lends his knowledge to the brigade's Command Judge Advocate and tries to make sure his troopers are getting the leadership they deserve.

"My goal for every one of them is to be better than I am," he said. "I push them in ways I wasn't pushed."

This fireplug of an NCO has his own unique leadership style and when you see his Soldiers interact in the office, you can tell that it works. "We have a pretty cohesive unit, we work well together," he said.

In addition to building office cohesion, Diaz De Leon also ensures the educational development of his Soldiers.

"It's highly encouraged for them to be enrolled in college," he said. "It keeps their minds working."

"We have a very routine job, a lot of the same things over and over," he continued. "The college and correspondence courses keep their minds thinking and learning new things, so they do not become stagnant in our MOS."

Eight years after signing that dotted line, Diaz De Leon has become a leader, a motivator and a good example for Soldiers.



Crew Chiefs Help Keep Blackhawks Up, Running

Story by Army Spc. Daniel D. Haun, TF Bayonet Public Affairs

Though helicopter pilots often reap the glories associated with flight, the laurels of praise should fall not only round the heads of these great stalwarts, but also with the crew chiefs who stand *and* sit behind them, on a daily basis.

If you ask any member of Bravo Company, 4-3 Aviation here at FOB Shank about the kind of hours they log in keeping their Blackhawks mechanically sound, and the ratio of flight time to maintenance time, these the Aircrew Chiefs just might perk up.

"The average flight is about five hours; for every five hours of flight, there's about six to seven hours of maintenance you have to do.," said Army Sgt. Daniel P. Davis, a Los Angeles, CA native and Blackhawk mechanic deployed with Bravo Company.

"You work everyday. There are days that are slow, but it's a good job to actually have. It's one of the under appreciated jobs, but it has great benefits, because one of the things you get to do is you get to fly. If you're a crew chief on an Apache, more or less you're just a mechanic."

"But our pilots can't see anywhere behind them, so that's why we have to go with them; to make sure they don't crash into anything. We sit there and keep security for the aircraft, so that's one of the benefits you get ... you actually get to see the world," said Davis.

Blackhawk mechanics, also referred to as 15 Tangos, live in two worlds; the world up above and the world down below, where they often get their hands dirty.

"Aircrew Chiefs are more hands on; that's why I chose it. I love getting hands on, getting dirty, wrenching, that kind of stuff. It's why I chose to transition to it," said Specialist Brian J. Wattenschaidt, a Delaware, Ohio native who, after living in the world of flight operations communicating with Aircrew Chiefs, decided to become one after this deployment, and is already receiving on-the-job training.

"You get to be that much closer to the experience of actually flying. That's what I live for; I like action, I want to see it with my eyes. I don't want to just hear about it," said Wattenschaidt.



Delaware, Ohio native Specialist Brian J. Wattenschaidt, a Blackhawk mechanic deployed with Bravo Company 4-3 Aviation in support of Operation Enduring Freedom begins preventative maintenance checks and services for a 40-hour Blackhawk flight inspection at Forward Operating Base Shank January 15. (Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Daniel D. Haun, TF Bayonet Public Affairs)

The action, he is referring to, entails a great deal more than getting one's hands dirty.

"Getting from base to base on a convoy would take you hours; this takes you ten minutes, twenty minutes at the most ... we get cargo faster, we get mail faster. On Christmas day, I did a mission where we brought food to the other troops, and if it was on a convoy it might not have made it to them in time. This way we had hot chow to them in thirty minutes," said Davis.

"A lot of people just see us hanging out the window and letting the wind hit your face. They don't see all the maintenance we do; it takes a lot of work keeping these things in the air. It's just a lot of long hours," said Smiley.

"I love what I do. I love working on helicopters. I love flying. I love being able to leave the FOB. When you are up in the air, you see things from a different perspective ... aviation is an unexplored area. Everything we do is on the ground; as technology comes along we're going to be up in the air even more often," said Davis.



173rd's Stability Operations Team Paves the Way For Bringing Afghans to Their Government

Story by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick,
TF Bayonet Public Affairs Office

FOB Shank— The 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team's Stability Operations section hosted a conference at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Shank, on Jan. 22, to establish unity of effort within AO Bayonet to promote stability and increase understanding between military, civilian personnel and Afghan counterparts.

The Stability Operations team was encouraged, because in the past, a lot of coaching was required.

According to Army Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Storms, a senior leader within the section, "we are now seeing some shuras, councils and committees taking the lead without coaxing.

Helping former fighters reintegrate and get short-term employment leveraging the Cash For Work Programs, and later on, offering Trade School training for more long-term solutions is being discussed presently, according to Storms.

"This is all about bringing the people to their government and projects are just a means to that end," he said.

"The conference gave the TF Bayonet Commander, Col. Jim Johnson, an opportunity to present his vision and campaign plans to our growing civilian staff," according to Storms.

For the personnel who attended the Civilian/Military Conference, the event gave participants a better understanding of the Area of Operation (AO) and what is required for unity of effort, better information sharing and an end state that sees better understanding and cooperation between all parties, so the people can lobby their government for the support they need.



The TF Bayonet Stability Operations team, comprised of military and civilian personnel, met to help improve cooperation and understanding. (Photo by Army Pfc. Michael Sword, TF Bayonet Public Affairs Office)

The Army recently selected the following Sky Soldiers for Master Sgt. Please congratulate them!

Melvyn Lopez
Michael Saxton
Jeremy Olesen
Johnathan Mathes
Abuoh Neufville
Adam Eckstein
Johnny McNeil III
Jason Graves
Robert Monroe
Carlos Encina
Christopher Hall
Charles Gerand

THE TIEN BIEN TIMES STAFF ASKS...

What is your favorite part of the deployment so far?

Pfc. George Davis, Human Resources and Information Systems Management Specialist, HHC, 173rd ABCT



“Being able to take college classes, while doing my job here.”

Sgt. First Class John Mathes, PMO Cell NCOIC, 173rd ABCT



Overall, working with good people and discovering I made the master sergeant list.

Spc. Franklin Miller, Paralegal Specialist, HHC, 173rd ABCT



“Working with Staff Sgt. Diaz De Leon.”

Army Chaplain Capt. Dustin Rodriguez, Chaplain, STB, 173rd ABCT



“The way the Soldiers of the 173rd work together. They’re focused. They take hardships in stride.”

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Riggers 'Will Be Sure Always'

FOB Shank Afghanistan —

Parachute riggers deployed with the 173rd HHC Brigade Support Battalion Rigger Platoon have found a new calling here at FOB Shank. Taking the responsibility of manning the Entry Control Point (ECP), the riggers are using the tools accumulated from prepping countless parachutists in an entirely new fashion.

"The riggers are support out here for the brigade, so the missions can go smoothly and they can perform additional missions. For us to be out here and pull this guard duty at the ECP helps our brigade complete more missions and make better progress," said Specialist Ryan N. McDonald, a parachute rigger from Fort Myers, FL.

Riggers like McDonald are already accustomed to the stress associated with working at an entry control point.

"I wanted to be airborne, and the quickest way to go is to be a rigger. I like being out on the airfields, I like jumping, and it's a job that you only get one chance at. Something can't go wrong in our job, and I like that. It's a pretty detailed job. When you do it and everything goes well it feels good. All the rest of the time it's very stressful," said McDonald.

Private First Class Michael A. Alarcon, a rigger from Los Angeles, shares the same sentiment.

"Act as a professional, just like when you're packing a parachute.



A Soldier with the 173rd Airborne Brigade searches a local Afghan citizen, who works on FOB Shank. The Riggers' motto, "I will be sure always," has taken on new meaning at Entry Control Points.

"You have to be a professional at it; there are no mistakes. It's the same thing out here, be a professional and know that anything bad can happen if you make a mistake, so you need to be on point, make no mistakes and be perfect at all times," said Alarcon.

This professionalism stems from the daily inspections Alarcon and others execute in garrison.

"Out here, if something doesn't look how it should look, don't just let it go. Make sure you investigate it, make sure everyone has their badges and you look at every compartment of a vehicle."

"Anything could be hidden anywhere, so attention to detail is also very important in both rigging parachutes and out here at the ECP."

"I take a lot of pride in what I do out here...we are the first line of defense; if we do get attacked, we are the first people that are defending the FOB. I do feel very fulfilled and very proud that I do that," said Alarcon.

Others agreed.

"It's pretty fulfilling knowing that we're keeping the FOB safe, keeping all the soldiers safe, searching the trucks and making sure no contraband or weapons are getting onto the fob," said Private Josh C. Lindsey, a rigger from Lake City, FL.

"We're out here doing it for not only ourselves, but for everyone else in the country," said Alarcon.

Story and photos by Army Spec. Daniel D. Haun, 300th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

'Knowledge Battlefield' Serious Business for NCOs

Editorial by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, TF Bayonet Public Affairs Office

We routinely hear about how our society has become a nation that hinges on a “knowledge economy,” where education and training has replaced the dated “manufacturing economy.” However, if we compare DoD’s build-up of Cold War era hardware to today’s need to bolster our human assets, we gain an appreciation of people versus things.

The 1980s saw a huge build-up in ships, weapons systems and gear — all required to win the Cold War. But in this new technical world, there is now an operational necessity to recognize and train for the “knowledge battlefield.” And, this new battlefield calls for a more educated, technologically-savvy NCO corps. No other time in history has made what you know more important than who you know.

Solutions and successful outcomes are more readily apparent to those with the right training and knowledge. The fact is missions can fail or suffer setbacks more easily when NCOs lack military occupational skills. More than ever, being technically competent contributes to survivability.

Clearly, the Armed Forces has seen a pronounced rise in the educational achievements of its NCO ranks; the array of MOS online courses is impressive. Today's Noncommissioned Officers are expected to attend ongoing military training and encouraged to attend college.

Even 30 years ago, the military was making the connection between education and military proficiency, as well as their relationship to career progression. Frankly, MOS training is equally if not more important than civilian education.

We’re at war and everything has become highly technical. That’s why the “knowledge battlefield” is serious business. You might say, “what you don’t know will hurt you.” The Cold War was about increasing capital assets. Unlike the past build-up of hardware, today’s military landscape hinges on human capital being paramount in the Global War On Terror environment.



Mechanics Motor Along at FOB Shank

Sky Soldiers Not Afraid to Get Hands Dirty

Story and photos by Specialist Daniel D. Haun, 300th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



A Soldier with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team checks under the hood, ensuring that when it is time to move out, the vehicle will be ready to roll.

FOB Shank, Afghanistan— Soldiers from the Maintenance Platoon 173rd Special Troops Battalion, adapt to the new maintenance challenges the Army's relatively new Mine Resistant Ambush Protectant (MRAP) vehicles present. Deployed to Forward Operating Base Shank in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, these troops work to maintain the mission-essential vehicles highly resistant to improvised explosive devices.

"Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QA-QC) is what we conduct on a day to day basis on each vehicle," said Sergeant First Class Sara J. George, Maintenance Platoon supervisor from New Brighton, PA. "This is to protect the Soldier who is actually going to be on the road on a daily basis."

"If the truck is not mission capable, it's not safe to go outside the wire. What we strive to do is make sure everything is correct," said Private First Class Shannon L. Reid, an all wheel vehicle mechanic from Augusta, GA.

Part of the challenge includes working on vehicles in deployed environment, a far cry from working in a garrison environment. "It's a much bigger responsibility, you take a lot more to heart," said George. He says it's a good feeling to carry this responsibility.

"It is good to know that what we do as the maintenance platoon and maintenance section keeps our soldiers safe and keeps our brothers and sisters going," said George.



The life of a deployed mechanic makes for long hours, but these Soldiers were quick to say, "A lot of pride comes with this uniform." Airborne!

"If you don't have a challenge you're really not doing anything,"

— Army Pfc. Shannon L. Reid



Army Pfc. Shannon L. Reid, an all wheel vehicle mechanic, helps the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team's squeaky wheels get the grease.

The advent of new vehicle systems presents new challenges to George and her platoon. The size alone of many parts of the MRAP can create difficulties.

"All the parts are bigger and heavier with more armor," said Reid.

"It's obviously a much bigger piece of equipment to deal with, but my guys are all over it," said George. It's a challenge for them, but they're excited about it because they're into maintenance; they like the field and they don't mind the job. "We learn something new every time we get an MRAP in," said Reid.

TF Bayonet's EOD Team Shows Courage Every Day



EOD Personnel prepare to command detonate a gas can IED found in a culvert.



EOD Personnel take a sample of the contents of a gas can, which later was identified as mud and silver nitrate.



EOD Personnel discuss an Improvised Explosive Device that was identified in the area.

SC Guardsmen Augment 173rd, Help Plant New Ideas

By Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, TF Bayonet
Public Affairs Office

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan (Jan.14) — Before Afghanistan found itself at war with the former Soviet Union, the people of Afghanistan were the largest exporter of food in the region. Today, Afghanistan is the region's largest importer of food in the region. Soldiers from the South Carolina National Guard's Agri-business Development Team are here to assist the Afghan government to change those statistics.

The Guardsmen joined "The Herd" comprised of Soldiers who have civilian backgrounds in farming, veterinary, corn, grain, citrus or other specialties. The team's Civil Affairs mission is to aid the Afghan farmers in diversifying their crops, improving technology and coordinating the information flow between co-op farming representatives and the families who farm their land as their primary means of income.

One such Agribusiness team member is Army Staff Sgt. Robert Phillips, second squad leader, and National Guard Soldier with South Carolina's 133rd Military Police Company, specializing in tree orchards, for the Agriculture Team.

Phillips said, "ironically, most things that are successfully grown in California, such as grapes, apricots and pistachios originated in Afghanistan. Back in the 1970s, Afghanistan controlled 90% of the pistachio market. However, since the war with the former Soviet Union and the subsequent Civil War here, many farmers, who were the subject matter experts, were casualties of those wars, their methods did not pass from father to son.

"The wisdom and techniques have been forgotten as elders have largely died off, so today's Afghan farmers are trying to survive based on what they remember as children," said Phillips.

Due to the pronounced need for these Afghan farmers to break their cycles of frustration, low market prices for their wheat and a lack of diversification, the Agriculture Team has been making contributions that will benefit the Afghan people for generations to come.

Phillips said, "the farmers need to expand their farming efforts. For example, next to wheat, we are encouraging local farmers to plant alfalfa, next to alfalfa, plant watermelons."

"Through diversifying their crops and giving them a means to store their harvests, these farming families will be able to eat what they grow for an extended period of time and stabilize the pricing of their harvested crops. In the past, they had been dumping all their product onto the market all at once, and then watching the Pakistanis buy it up, then sell it back to them at five times the price, because they lack silos or storage methods to control supply and demand issues," said Phillips.

Another Guardsman from the Agriculture Team, Army Staff Sgt. Timothy Vise, 1st Squad Leader, who specializes in hydrology and general farming and road cropping, said, "we work through proper Afghan channels, so initiatives like these - ranging from increasing light and ventilation at chicken coops, or looking into solar power and windmills due to scarce electricity—are approved and coordinated by their government."

With some 200 projects on their plate, their objectives include monthly and annual goals, working side by side with the Afghan government, so the Afghan co-op managers work their programs through their established government channels.

According to the Agriculture Team, it is absolutely essential that the farmers here learn how to take advantage of their own government's array of programs that will bolster livestock and farm production, as part of our focused efforts to promote development and partnership that will aid the general population of Afghanistan.

Foreign Claims Act Offers Restitution to Local Nationals

Story by SPC Morgan Ellis, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Paralegal Specialist

While some may wonder why an Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Team has a legal team and why they would need to deploy, but according to Spc. Morgan Ellis, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Legal Clerk, “on top of the routine issues that include criminal justice, investigations and legal assistance for Soldiers, the Judge Advocate General Corps fills an important role in counter insurgency operations, through managing important programs like The Foreign Claims Act (FCA).”

According to Ellis, “it’s designed to compensate inhabitants of a foreign country for injury due to property loss or damaged incurred due to non-combat activities, including negligence of U.S. Forces, the JAG is prepared to step in if accidents occur.”

“Despite members of the 173rd ABCT taking maximum safety precautions, there are times when the on-scene commander must help gather relevant evidence and provide Afghan citizens with a Unit Claim Card,” said Ellis.

According to her, “the Unit Claims Card instructs the claimant where to go and what is needed to file a proper claim with the U.S. Government. The card includes the date and location of the incident and a brief explanation of events. All information pertaining to the claim is then forwarded to our legal office,” she said.

“Most claims filed with the 173rd Legal Office are received in

person, through interaction and interviews with local nationals. Because the overall purpose of the foreign claims mission is to promote friendly relations in foreign countries, it is an important part of counterinsurgency operations,” said Ellis.

“By promptly taking responsibility for our actions it helps

to counter any Information Operations efforts of the enemy that wrongly tries to claim we are here to harm the Afghans. Actually a primary focus of ISAF is to protect the people of Afghanistan and empower their government. This program bolsters foreign relations and the local economy.”



Spc. Morgan Ellis, a paralegal specialist, for the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, who handles filings, greets an Afghan citizen.



Spc. Franklin Miller, a paralegal specialist for the 173rd ABCT, welcomes an Afghan citizen, as other Afghans wait their turn to file Foreign Claims Act paperwork with the legal team.

January Celebrates MLK



Task Force Bayonet Equal Opportunity Advisor:

SFC Joseph Osinski, joseph.osinski@us.army.mil

HHC 173D ABCT

FOB SHANK (WEST)

APO AE 09364

Good Safety Practices Hinge On Avoiding Carelessness

By Frank Marcantonio, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Safety Manager

“Safety” while being forward deployed may seem like a contradiction of terms, however, statistics show that the majority of injuries that occur while deployed are the result of accidents and not from hostile fire. The third month of a deployment is one of the most critical time periods of any deployment due to substantially higher accident rates. There are a number of reasons why accident numbers increase and they are clearly identified in TF Bayonet Policy Letter #11 (Safety)

Carelessness and overconfidence are far more dangerous than deliberately accepted risks. Adhering to Army standards is the cornerstone to the ABCT safety program. Preventable incidents are usually caused by unsafe acts and conditions which are created by one or more of the following:

- Failure to perform tasks to standard
- Failure to enforce the standard
- Failure to communicate the standard
- Failure to ensure personnel are trained to standard.

Do not allow any Paratrooper to become a statistic.
PCCs and PCIs save lives!

Secret to Sky Soldiers' Success: Resiliency

Thriving In Face of Adversity Speaks Volumes of Unit Members



Prepared by Army Maj. Jay Baker, 173rd ABCT Surgeon



Since our inception, Sky Soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade have made extraordinary sacrifices towards upholding the values and principles of the United States of America. We have shed blood, sweat, and tears in defense of our country and in liberating oppressed nations. While paratroopers of the 173rd have continuously accepted this call to duty with confidence and fervor, not much is known about the qualities of these exceptional professional Soldiers.

Below is a brief list of the qualities, characteristics, and traits espoused by Paratroopers of the 173rd ABCT. These attributes of “Resiliency” – the ability to thrive and excel in the face of adversity – represent the foundation of Sky Soldiers’ enduring success!

- Sense of Purpose and Meaning: a higher calling, a clear mission, a sense of patriotism
- Strong Leadership: provided by a strong role model with a clear mission and expectations
- Extensive Preparation: resulting in knowledge, skills, competence and confidence
- Tactical and Technical Proficiency: the comprehensive knowledge and application of skill sets
- Stress Inoculation: psychological preparation through progressively challenging training
- Optimism and Determination: accepting nothing less than success and victory
- Active Coping: developing an offensive posture as opposed to being passive and defensive
- Cognitive Flexibility: the ability to see alternatives and adjust to challenges
- Spirituality: transforming negative experiences into opportunities for positive change
- Altruism: understanding the value in helping others
- Social Support: the most powerful and important protector, provided by immediate and extended family, the unit, and other social structures and organizations
- Learning to Recover Rapidly: speedy physical and psychological recovery
- Sense of Humor: seeing the glass as half-full, finding the silver lining
- Aerobic Exercise and Physical Fitness: maintains peak performance and resilience to physical and emotional stress
- Predictable and Consistent Information Flow: maintaining communication “up, down, left and right”

Learn your ranks in Pashto/Dari. Here are a few:

OFFICERS:

General of Army: Starr Genrahl

Lt. General: Dagar Genrahl

Major General: Toran Genrahl

Brigadier General: Breed Genrahl

Colonel: Dagarwal

Lt. Colonel: Dagarman

Major: Jugrun

Captain: Toran

First Lieutenant: Lumray Breetman

Second Lieutenant: Dwayam Breetman



NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS

Sergeant Major: Zabitee Kandat or E-No (no is 9)

Master Sergeant: Zabitah Pazhon or E-Asht (asht means 8)

Sergeant First Class: Zabitah Opracion or E-Aft (aft means 7)

Staff Sergeant: Zabitah Baluq or E-shash (shash is 6)

Sergeant: Zabit or E-Panj (Pang is 5)

Congratulations to the following Sky Soldiers:

MacArthur Leadership Award Nominees

CPT Robinson, TF Arch Angel, for FORSCOM

WO1 Ryan Wilcox, TF Talon, for USAREUR

1LT Rachael Schenk, TF Bayonet, for USAREUR



The program recognizes company grade officers who demonstrate the ideals for which General MacArthur personified—duty, honor, country. The award promotes and sustains effective junior officer leadership in the United States Army. Nominees will compete on the DA Board. Results will be released on March 1, 2010.

TF Bayonet Warriors Locate Weapons Caches

Story by Maj. Thomas Gilleran, TF Bayonet PAO

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS), Czech and U.S. Coalition Forces from Task Force Bayonet conducted an operation Jan. 26, in Pol-e Alam District, Logar Province, which resulted in the seizure of several caches, containing illegal weapons and ammunition including RPGs, rockets, grenades, IED-making materials and small arms ammunition.

The combined force responded to a tip, moved into the area, met with local leaders and explained the purpose of the operation. They unearthed bags, containing the contraband weapons and ammunition.

The force recovered the arms and ammunition for the safety of the local population. The illegal caches were then brought to a safe location and destroyed.

“Every, illegal weapon cache we remove brings increased security to the people of these villages and districts” said Army Capt. Daniel Williams, who led the U.S. element on the operation. “The mission would not have been successful without the NDS. They were instrumental in talking with the local elders and locating the caches.”

“Every illegal weapon cache we remove brings increased security to the people of these villages and districts”

—Army Capt. Daniel Williams



The weapons cache was discovered by Sky Soldiers on Jan. 26.



Dangerous caches like these can be used by anti-Coalition forces to attack friendly Soldiers and Afghan citizens. People in Afghanistan are encouraged to provide information on the location of cache sites and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The DoD Rewards Program offers money to Afghan citizens, who give information that substantially helps identify significant risks to operations and leads to apprehension of insurgents to safeguard the people of Afghanistan. (Official Army photos courtesy of Task Force Bayonet)

173RD LEADERS PRESENT COMBAT PATCH TO SKY SOLDIERS

Story by Army Spc. Michael Sword, TF Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – In a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Shank, Jan. 22, The Sky Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team were presented their combat patches for their current deployment to Afghanistan.

The combat patch is authorized for Soldiers who have earned the right to represent their service for having served in a deployed theater.

“It’s a proud day for all of us,” said Col. Jim Johnson, commander of the 173rd. “Today we don the Sky Soldier patch on our right sleeve as a sign of our combat service in this great brigade, the 173rd, ‘The Herd.’”

“That patch will represent the combat legacy of this brigade to include its 14 Medal of Honor winners and multiple Distinguished Service Cross awardees,” he continued. “A legacy which you are now a permanent part of.”

Pfc. Mindy High, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion, who is attached to HHC on this deployment, shares the commander’s sentiment.

“When I see the 173rd patch I see the symbol of a distinguished, honored, respected and proud unit,” she said. “I feel like I am part of a legacy now.”

In addition to being a symbol of the 173rd’s storied past, the patch represents the sacrifices being made by Sky Soldiers currently in Afghanistan.

“The patch will represent your own personal sacrifice of time away from family, friends and all that you value,” said Johnson. “That patch will represent the camaraderie that has, and will continue to form with your fellow Sky Soldiers as we continue to sacrifice together.”

“Most importantly, that patch will represent our comrades who will sacrifice life and limb for a cause greater than any one of us,” he added.

“I feel like I’ve finally done something important, worthwhile and admirable,” said High. “It’s something that I can be proud of and proud to be a part of.”

Once all the Sky Soldiers had their combat patches on their right arms, Johnson’s words called them to continue building the legacy of the 173rd.

“Sky Soldiers, you’re now part of the combat legacy of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team,” he said. “I challenge you to wear this combat patch with pride.”



Members of HHC, 173rd ABCT stand by for their patches.



The Army Combat Patch is part of a tradition that dates back to World War II. The 173rd ABCT has a rich history.

Kherwar District Governor Lays Foundation

Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Michael Sword
Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan –

The governor of the Kherwar district and village elders, representing almost 100 villages across the district, gathered Jan. 24 for the district's first-ever shura.

This is the first meeting between all the village elders and the recently-arrived Governor, Samar Gul. The shura is Kherwar's starting point to address issues of security, development and governance across the district.

"Everything is in its infancy up here as far as governance goes," said Army Capt. John Williams, commander, C Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, a native of Chickasha, Okla.

"We realized that nothing was going on in Kherwar and we were basically losing the governance battle up here," he said. "Logar governor Atiqullah Lodin made Kherwar a focus and sent more National Defense Service and more Afghan National Police to the area."

With a renewed focus on the district, the Governor returned to Kherwar three weeks ago to aid the development of his district.

"He really wants to put it together," Williams added.

The shura is the result of more than six weeks of daily patrols and interaction with local villagers by Williams, his soldiers and their Afghan National Security Forces partners.

"Everyone is tired of fighting and they want to start development," he said.

"This is the first time that all the village elders from Kherwar have come to-



Kherwar district governor Samar Gul speaks to the village elders of the district at a shura, Jan. 24.

important day, especially for the people of Kherwar."

Elders came from villages across the Kherwar district, some making the trek by walking up to five miles.

After a reading from the Koran, the shura started, with Gul taking charge from the start.

Lt. Timothy Miller, C Troop, 1st Sqdn., 91st Cav. Regt. said, "It's important for him to set the tone today, so the elders know they can come to him to get projects done and build a better infrastructure for Afghanistan."

Everyone involved seems hopeful about the future of the Kherwar district.



Sky Soldiers!



SUPPORTING OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM X



173rd AIRBORNE
Brigade Combat Team * Sky Soldiers

