



Tien Bien Times

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Commander's Corner 3
- Kunar Trade School 4
- Safety Gram 5
- Keeping the Big Guns Booming 7
- Training with Ravens 8
- PRT School Supplies 9
- Chaplain's Corner 11
- Able Company 12
- Hypothermia 14
- 'Muscle of the Battalion 16
- Boxing Tournament 17
- TF Rock remembers fallen Sky Soldiers 18
- Fallen Heros 19

U.S. and Afghan doctors team up for poor in Jalalabad



U.S. Army Maj. Saira Saini (right), plastic surgeon, and Maj. Lee J. Trombetta (left), general surgeon, both with the 555th Forward Surgical Team located at Forward Operating Base Fenty near the north-eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, consult with each other Oct. 8, regarding the snake bite wound of 80 year-old Said Padska. Afghan doctors Obaid Dost, a plastic surgeon, and Mr. Zaheer Din, an anesthesia provider watch and listen.

Story and photos by Spc. Gregory J. Argentieri, 173rd ABCT Public Affairs

JALALABAD AIRFIELD, AFGHANISTAN-- U.S. Army doctor, Maj. Lee J. Trombetta, from San Antonio, Texas, a general surgeon for the 555th Forward Surgical Team (FST) on Forward Operating Base Fenty reaches out with Afghan doctors to treat the neediest and most impoverished local people in Jalalabad.

Trombetta's first trip to the Jalalabad Public Health Hospital (JPHH), is when he met Dr. Akmal Pardis, director of JPHH, and together they came up with a partnership program where local Afghan doctors would work side-by-side with the 555th FST.

"To me the most important thing, the purpose of the program is to treat

the poorest of the poor," said Trombetta.

Secondly, it is meant to foster a working partnership between the local Afghan doctors and the 555th FST. Lastly, an academic environment to provide training and an education for all Afghan and Army medics.

"In order for us to go home we need competent people who can take over for us," said Maj. J. Stephen Birchfield, surgeon for the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. "So in essence we are providing medical training for our Afghanistan partners. So they know what we know, and hopefully they can take on our mission."

"This partnership makes it easy to communicate with the JPHH," said



Continued on page 2

Trombetta. "There's never a problem, when you are on a first name basis with six or eight Afghan surgeons."

"JPHH had a woman who was bitten by a snake, and they did not have any anti-venom or any way to care for her," said Trombetta. "Now all they have to do is call me on my cell phone, and depending on the circumstances, I say send them right over."

Some of the humanitarian surgeries the 555th FST are offering the local nationals are: hernia care, adult circumcision, removal of soft tissue tumors, amputation revisions, breast biopsy/mastectomy, scar revisions, cleft lip/palate, skin grafting for burns, and fractures.

Every Sunday the 555th FST gets a list of consultations from the Afghan surgeons from JPHH. "Everything funnels through Dr. Shacore and Dr. Shaquile, the directors of the hospital," said Trombetta. "We do not want people who have

any resources into the program. It's truly a mission on behalf of the poor."

Each week a different Afghan surgeon and anesthesia provider from JPHH are assigned to the FST clinic. The local national patients with the Afghan doctors come on the FOB, and the patients are screened Monday mornings. If they are good surgical candidates, on Tuesday and Wednesday the doctors perform surgery.

Dr. Obaid Dost, an Afghan plastic surgeon, says he likes what he sees and has a good feeling about the partnership. Obaid said, "A son of one of the patients who was treated here said, 'They are good kind people, even better than our doctors.'"

U.S. Army doctors operating on poor local Afghan citizens does not change the fact that a war rages on. While a little girl with an infected bone fracture is being operated on,

and a young Afghan man with a hand deformity from a childhood burn waits calmly, an Afghan Border Patrol Guard evacuated to FOB Fenty interrupts the tempo with a seriously wounded tibia from a gunshot. Later the same day, an American Soldier is also brought in with possible shoulder fractures.

"We are attempting to capture the hearts and minds of the local people, to show them that the Americans here want to help them," said Lt. Col. Patricia A. Fortner, Commander, 555th FST, from Fort Hood, Texas, assigned to Task Force Med, Bagram. "Maybe they will think a little bit better of the American and coalition troops."

"The real hero of this story is Maj. Lee Trombetta," said Birchfield. "Maj. Lee Trombetta went out of his way; it was out of his scope, out of his range of practice. He saw a need and he saw a way to fill the need."

Maj. Lee J. Trombetta, (left), general surgeon, removes skin from a young Afghan man's torso, so it can be used to repair his burned hand. Meanwhile, Maj. Saira Saini, and Afghan Dr. Obaid Dost (right), plastic surgeons, correct a 20-year hand scar contracture with the skin taken from his torso. In the foreground, Capt. Sean W. Burke, certified registered nurse anesthetist, administers oxygen to the patient Oct. 9. Trombetta and Saini, and Burke are all assigned to the 555th Forward Surgical Team, located at Forward Operating Base.





Commander's Corner

To Task Force Bayonet and all of the family, friends, and veterans who support us.

In this month of giving thanks, I want to be the first to let you all know how thankful I am for each and every one of you. You all bring something to the team and without you TF Bayonet and the 173rd ABCT wouldn't be what it is today, a proud and extremely successful organization.

I want to thank all the service members in TF Bayonet for all your hard work and dedication. As a result of your efforts I truly see a difference in what we are doing here and so do the people of Afghanistan. You should be proud of all that you have done and what you will accomplish in the months to come. Keep up the great work.

All of the friends and loved ones who are supporting the team from afar, your efforts are truly amazing. You have supported your service member and each other through tough times and have done so with great care and concern. The support you have shared truly makes a difference to your service members and the other families throughout the community. All of the letters, cards, e-mails, and phone calls of support that you have exchanged mean more than you know. Remember that there are many resources available to help should you need it. Your Family Readiness

Groups and the Rear Detachment are great places to start.

To the members of 173rd Rear Detachment, my words can not express the gratitude and praise you deserve for your service. Whether you are taking care of Soldiers who are preparing to deploy, helping a family of a deployed Soldier with an issue, or assisting one of the wounded warriors in their recovery you are making a difference in the fight every day.

To the brave veterans of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Association who still serve the "HERD" with distinction, you are truly the foundation of this great organization and we will continue to build on what you started. The support you show TF Bayonet is sincerely appreciated. Your devotion to helping our families and supporting the service members is unparalleled; I have never seen an organization do so much for a unit in all my years of service. Thanks to all of you.

As the holiday season approaches be sure to make an extra effort to stay in touch. This time of year is normally difficult but with the additional stress that a deployment brings, it is even more important to maintain communications and to support one another.

On a somber note, several Sky Soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice for their friends and



From the desk of
COL Charles A. Preysler
TF Bayonet Commander

for their country last month. This is an all too often recurring part of my letter and is very difficult on all of us to bear. I am thankful that 173d has such men as these heroes who never quit and will fight for all of us even if it means paying the ultimate cost. My thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of these heroic paratroopers.

Sky Soldiers,

COL Preysler
Bayonet 6

Tien Bien Times

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This newsletter is a command information product that places emphasis on missions, events and activities occurring throughout the 173rd ABCT's deployed area of operations.

Information and photos included in this newsletter are acquired from sources that highlight events, programs and activities in Nangarhar,

Nuristan, Kunar, Laghman and Paktika Provinces of Afghanistan. Dates, times, locations, and the events themselves might change or be cancelled without prior notice.

To be added to the Tien Bien Times distribution list, please email: Jacob.caldwell@us.army.mil.

This address can also be used to submit photos or information on upcoming events, or you can reach the 173rd ABCT Public Affairs Office by calling DSN 318-831-6028.

Trade School bringing new jobs to Kunar Province

*Story and photos by Sgt. Brandon Aird,
173rd ABCF Public Affairs*

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- The last thirty years of war in Afghanistan have left the country in dire need of skilled laborers to help rebuild the devastated infrastructure.

Fighting over the years by Russians, Mujahedin, Taliban and other groups have left key structures damaged or destroyed.

The vast majority of the skilled laborers that were once abundant in Afghanistan during the 70s fled to nearby countries to practice their trade in safety.

The International Security Assistance Force is working with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to rebuild the countries skilled-labor force within the country.

The Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team is building the Kunar Trade School in Shigal District, Afghanistan to help speed up the process in Kunar and Nuristan Provinces.

March 1st, 2008 is the scheduled opening date for the Kunar Trade School.

The school will teach general construction trades to local Afghans at no cost to the student. Students can take additional curriculum, which is tied directly to local construction needs.

The trade school site is located at a central location on the Pech Road between Nuristan and Kunar Province.

"We're trying to get the bread winners of the family to come to the school," explained Navy Lt. Cmdr. Larry LeGree, Commander of the Kunar PRT.

The site already has pre-existing buildings that were once used by construction workers during the Pech Road construction. The Kunar PRT is planning to refurbish the buildings.

Two new classrooms are also being built on the site, said Capt. Steve Fritz, a Civil Affairs Team Leader with the PRT. Fritz is overseeing the construction and initial setup of the school.

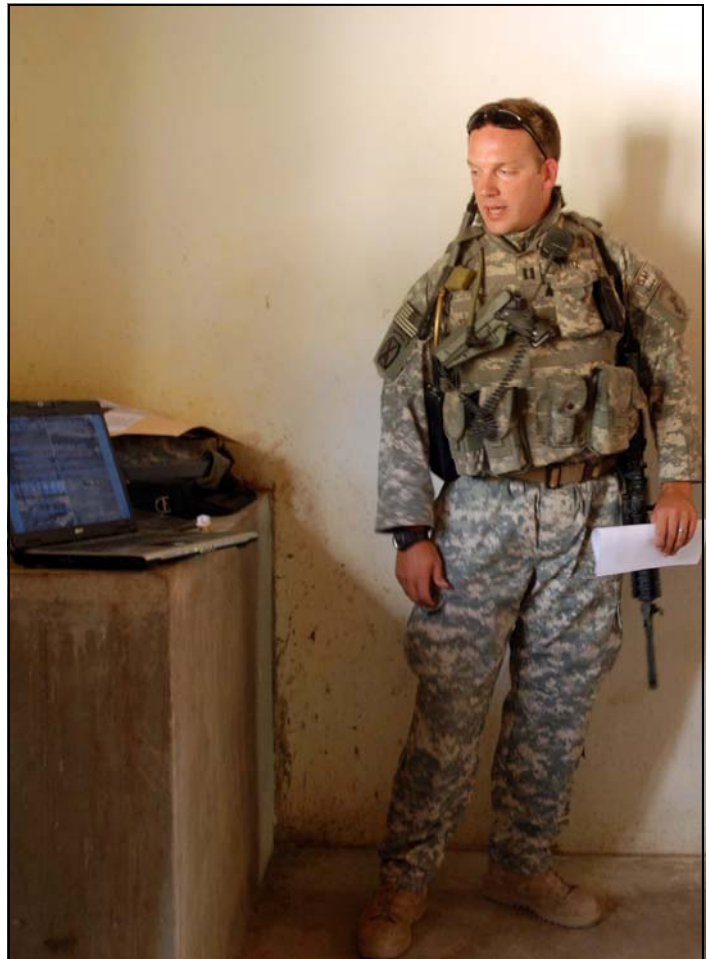
Each trade will have two instructors teaching the class. The Kunar PRT plans on the school having 10 classes a year with 1,250 graduates. The 125 student class will be broken down into small trade groups.

The trades taught will be decided by a locally appointed apprenticeship counsel. The counsel will own the school and also live on the site.

"We wanted the school to be independent from the government," explained Fritz, from Massapequa, New York.

The counsel will guide the trade school growth, curriculum and graduate progression. Graduates will receive a tool kit and assistance with job placement.

Graduates will also be eligible for scholarship



(Capt. Steve Fritz, Civil Affairs Team Leader, Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team, gives a briefing to state department officials at the Kunar Trade School Sept. 29 in Shigal District, Afghanistan.

based advanced follow-on training.

The Kunar PRT plans on the trade school to become an economic development center and regional construction center.

The center will develop a quick-reaction force that will be able to go to construction sites to help when problems arise.

After the school opens, it will become self-sustainable through fee-based advanced classes, QRF fees, material-testing facilities and private business ventures.

"We want to have a cement factory here," said LeGree while giving a tour at the trade school Sept. 29.

Currently cement found in both Kunar and Nuristan Provinces comes from nearby Pakistan.

"Hopefully, soon Pakistan will come here for their cement needs," explained Legree.

From the Task Force Bayonet Safety Office:

Personal Protective Equipment

With the ever increasing use of IED's in theater, it is imperative that paratroopers use of all their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This is especially critical when operating in convoys and patrols.

A CJTF-82 unit recently encountered a VBIED, resulting in burn injuries to three out the four occupants in the up-armored humvee. The most serious injury was third-degree burns to the hands of one of the Troopers who was then medically evacuated out of theater. The remaining paratroopers received minor burns and "flashes" to the face and upper neck. Fortunately these paratroopers all returned back to duty.



This is an example of a third-degree burn to the hand. This is not a photo of the paratroopers referenced above.

Remember to wear the following PPE when operating in convoys and vehicle patrols:

- **NOMAX A2CU (if issued)**
- **IBA with throat protector, ESBI, and DAPS (for gunner in cupola, minimum)**
- **Proper eye protection, must meet ANCI Standard Z87.1, recommend goggles for gunner**
- **Gloves (NOMAX Flyer Gloves if issued)**

From the 173rd Retention Office

★ AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY ★



★ STAY ARMY STAY AIRBORNE ★

Task Force Bayonet Retention Team:

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------|----------|
| Jalalabad Airfield | MSG Lopez | 831-6051 |
| Jalalabad Airfield | SFC Dickerson | 831-6051 |
| Organ-E | SFC Ortiz | 431-8022 |
| Bagram Airfield | SSG Kubash | 431-3035 |
| Camp Blessing | SSG McCullers | 846-4222 |

One man keeps big guns booming



Sgt. Daniel Martwick, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, tightens a bolt on a 155mm Howitzer at Camp Wright in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

Story and photos by Sgt. Brandon Aird,
173rd ABCT Public Affairs

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Sgt. Daniel Martwick, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, helps Task Force Bayonet be more effective as a fighting force with just his hands.

Martwick, from Creston, Iowa, can fix almost every weapon system in the Task Force Bayonet area of operation.

"I can fix an M-9 (pistol) all the way up to 155s (Howitzer)," Martwick boasts. The task force is spread out over numerous forward operating bases- most are located near the Pech Road in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

Pech Road twists around mountains near the border of Pakistan. These mountains can give the enemy an advantage over the para-

troopers by allowing them to set up ambushes.

When this happens paratroopers call for indirect fire support from 155 MM Howitzer gun teams based out of various FOBs in the area.

The heavy demand for artillery support often leads to the wear and breakage of the 155 MM Howitzers.

"That's when they call on me," explained Martwick.

"In over five months of combat we have fired over 4,400 rounds in support of troops in contact," said Maj. Anthony Lugo, Executive Officer for 4th Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment (Airborne).

"Under these conditions, even the best maintained howitzers break. Martwick's ability to troubleshoot maintenance issues before

they occur has enabled us to keep our howitzers firing in support of troops in contact."

Martwick is one of only a handful of Soldiers in Afghanistan who are qualified to fix a 155 MM Howitzer.

"I've got 11 Howitzers that I take care of," said Martwick.

Martwick works side-by-side with the gun crew to keep the 155 MM Howitzers working, said Pfc. George Sutter, Bravo Battery, 4th Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment (Airborne).

Martwick uses the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center at Camp Wright to order parts. Once the parts arrive, Martwick travels to the Howitzer to fix it. Some of the parts weigh hundreds of pounds and are quite difficult to move.

"We have to use a crane to move some of the bigger pieces," explained Martwick.

Martwick was working on a 155 MM Howitzer at Camp Blessing when a part slipped and took off part of his finger.

"I had to wait 12 hours for a MEDAVAC," said Martwick. "But I still came back two days later to finish the job."

By the time Martwick came back, the 155 MM Howitzer Team had already assembled the gun.

"These guys love their gun," explained Martwick. "If their gun isn't working they feel left out of the fight."

Martwick only had to make a few adjustments before the gun team was ready to get back into the fight.

"Its hard work, but we appreciate his help," said Sutter while working on a Howitzer at Camp Wright.

"He has truly done the Lord's work to keep these howitzers firing," said Lugo.

"These guys love their gun," explained Martwick. "If their gun isn't working they feel left out of the fight."

TF Bayonet Soldiers train with Ravens



Spc. Alexander S. Grusak, an infantryman from A Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment from Fort Bragg, N.C., practices how to launch the Raven Unmanned Aerial Vehicle from a moving vehicle. Grusak was assisted by Cpl. Erick J. Rodas, a light-wheel vehicle mechanic, who is also the Raven Master Trainer for the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Story and photos by 2nd Lt. Monika Comeaux, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion FORWARD OPERATING BASE FENTY, AFGHANI-STAN—Task Force Bayonet Soldiers conducted training on the Raven Unmanned Aerial Vehicle at Forward Operating Base Fenty 5-15 Oct.

The troops came from several locations with different backgrounds, but they all had one thing in common; their eagerness to learn about a piece of equipment that can make their jobs much easier by providing real time footage or still images of the battlefield.

"It is a great tool. Before we go out to hit an objective, we can look at it. To have this ability, it saves lives basically. We know what we are going up against," said Spc. Sean M. Noel, a 21-year-old infantryman from C Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, from Fort Bragg, N.C.

The class consisted of both classroom time and time spent out-

doors flying the bird. "In the morning time we try to do classroom, where we do 'death by Power-Point'. I try to liven it up by making after lunch strictly field site," said Cpl. Erick J. Rodas, the Brigade Master Trainer for the Raven UAV for the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

He said he was not overly concerned if his students knew the exact weight or the manufacturer for the Raven, what he was more concerned about is that they can properly launch, operate and land the UAV.

Rodas is a light-wheel vehicle mechanic by trade. He was chosen to become the brigade master trainer because he did so well when he attended a training course on the Raven at Fort Benning, Ga. "When I was in Benning, I was the only student who earned what they call the 'Rock Star Award'. I got 100 percent on all of my exams. I showed proficiency and never failed a launch," explained the 22-year-old proudly.

It is a funny twist of fate that Rodas at one time was actually in a rock band. That is where he gets his confidence for standing up in front of the class and teaching students who are at times twice his age.

Pfc. Andrew W. Powers, a military policeman with Headquarters and Headquarters

Company, Special Troops Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade found the instructor and the class very informative. "He is a great teacher. He gave us a lot of hands-on instruction, which is good for me; I am a hands-on learner." Powers thinks that the Raven is a very helpful tool for his unit, since they go out on a lot of overnight missions, where visibility is very limited.

Both Powers and Noel expressed great enthusiasm for flying as well. "I have always been interested in flying. It is one baby step closer to it," said Powers.

Noel was selected to attend this class based on scores he attained on a computer game he frequently plays on the FOB with his fellow Soldiers. "I am supposedly one of the best guys who can fly this combat flight simulator game, and I think that is why [his command] chose me," he said smiling.

"I would encourage anybody to get out there and learn as much as they can about the UAV, because that is the future of the Army," Noel added. "Technology is growing. I encourage anybody to go out there and learn a little bit, outside of their own [Military Occupational Specialty]. The future is upon us and everything isn't about shooting guns any more."

PRT supports Kunar schools with supplies from home

*Story and photos by Sgt. Brandon Aird,
173rd ABCT Public Affairs*

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- The Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team and Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), donated school supplies to a boys-and-girls school Oct. 2. in Asmar, Afghanistan.

The 2nd Kandak, 201st Corps, Afghan National Army helped hand out the school supplies, and also provided security while the Soldiers talked to the kids.

"We brought the school supplies here to show that the Kunar PRT believes in the importance of your education," said Capt. Steve Fritz, during a small speech at the boy's school.

Fritz and Spc. James Cook, both members of the Kunar PRT, organize school supply donations on a monthly basis.

"We asked our families back in the states to send school supplies to us," explained Cook, "When we get enough boxes we visit a school to hand them out."

Families back in the states send notebooks, pencils, pens, erasers, and even book bags with the Kunar PRT's name etched on the side.

"It's good to be handing out these school supplies," said Cook. "Whole families are getting together and mailing stuff out to us. Its great seeing everything come together."

In the last few months Cook and Fritz are averaging one school supply drop off to five or six different schools per month.

"It all just really depends on the amount of school supplies we get," said Cook. The school supplies are sent to Fritz and Cook through the mail. As the boxes show up, Cook and Fritz talk with the school teachers to organize drop offs.

Fritz and Cook plan on continuing the school supply donation program for as long as they can.

"We got a call from a local Afghan telling us some of the kids wanted to write letters to our families back in the states to say 'thank you'," explained Cook.

"As long as we continue to get the school supplies," said Cook, "we'll keep visiting these schools."



A Soldier from 2nd Kandak, 201st Corps, Afghan National Army, hands out a book bag during a school supply distribution in Asmar, Afghanistan Oct. 2.



Capt. Jason Pieri, Commander of Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), teaches English words to school kids in Asmar, Afghanistan Oct. 2.

It's good to be handing out these school supplies," said Cook. "Whole families are getting together and mailing stuff out to us. Its great seeing everything come together."

FOB Fenty (JAF) Chapel Schedule



Protestant Services

| | | |
|--|--------------|----------------------|
| <i>Prayer-borne Ops</i> | <i>Daily</i> | <i>0330Z / 0800L</i> |
| <i>Traditional Protestant (Beginning July 8)</i> | <i>Sun</i> | <i>0430Z / 0900L</i> |
| <i>Contemporary Protestant</i> | <i>Sun</i> | <i>0630Z / 1100L</i> |
| <i>Gospel</i> | <i>Sun</i> | <i>1400Z / 1830L</i> |
| <i>Bible Study</i> | <i>Wed</i> | <i>1400Z / 1830L</i> |

Point of contact CH (CPT) Hart

Roman Catholic Services

| | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Mass (English)</i> | <i>Sun</i> | <i>1030Z / 1500L</i> |
| <i>Mass (Español)</i> | <i>Sun</i> | <i>1230Z / 1700L</i> |
| <i>Weekday Mass (Beginning July 9)</i> | <i>M-F</i> | <i>0700Z / 1130L</i> |
| <i>Confession / Reconciliation</i> | <i>By Appointment</i> | |

Point of contact CH (MAJ) Herrera

Latter Day Saints

| | | |
|----------------|------------|----------------------|
| <i>Worship</i> | <i>Sun</i> | <i>0800Z / 1230L</i> |
|----------------|------------|----------------------|

The FOB Fenty Chapel remains open for personal prayer, worship, and meditation for all faith traditions.

For more information, contact Chapel Office at DSN 831-2222 or 831-2223.

"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up as with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." - Isaiah 40:31

Chaplain's Corner

What is thanksgiving all about anyway? Being thankful, but what does it mean to be thankful? With Christmas just around the corner I cannot help but think about the getting and giving of presents and how everyone wants to know if the recipient is really happy with what they received? In other words, are they thankful? Well we learned as little children to always say thanks when we got something whether we meant it or not. But the real test to see if someone was truly grateful for what they got is: did they use it?

It may have been 30 years ago that my wife Gail and I got married but I still remember getting the fondue set from our best friends as a wedding present. And I also remember never using it. One year when they were visiting they saw the fondue box in the kitchen cabinet and the brand spanking new, clean, never been used fondue set that they gave us. We really did intend to use it and fondue something but we never got around to it. I think their feelings were hurt.

Thanksgiving has been set aside as a time to thank God for all he has given us. Freedom for one thing. It is hard to take freedom for granted when you are living in a country that has very restricted freedoms and the constant threat of someone trying to take those freedoms away. The first Thanksgiving the Pilgrims celebrated the new hope of true freedom from the oppression of Europe that our ancestors had just left.

When I think about being grateful I think that I need to turn to the person next to me, wearing this uniform and say thanks for being here. Thanks for serving our country and keeping it free. Thanks for the sacrifice of your time away from home, family, and country. Thanks for working seven days a week and getting up the next morning and doing it all over again. Thanks for staying up all night and guarding us here on the FOB and keeping us safe for one more night. Thanks for being there for us.

Last Thanksgiving columnist Craig R. Smith quoted a Newsweek poll that said that 2/3s of the US citizenry just ain't happy and want a change. So he wondered, "What are we so unhappy about?"

(Someone on the internet attributed these statements to Jay Leno but it was actually Mr. Smith.)

He wondered if we are unhappy because, "we have electricity and running water 24/7? Maybe it is the ability to walk into a grocery store at any time and see more food in moments than Darfur has seen in the last year? Maybe it is the ability to drive from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean without having to present identification papers as we move through each state? Perhaps you are one of the 70 percent of Americans who own a home? This all in the backdrop of a neighborhood free of bombs or militias raping and pillaging the residents."

So he concludes with saying, "Fact is, we are the larg-

When I think about being grateful I think that I need to turn to the person next to me, wearing this uniform and say thanks for being here.

est group of ungrateful, spoiled brats the world has ever seen."

Well maybe that's true of some Americans or many, but I don't see it being true for the soldiers I see out here in Afghanistan. What I see is a bunch of soldiers that are using their freedom to defend our nation and our allies. I see a bunch of soldiers that are not taking their freedom and sticking it in a kitchen cabinet or taking it for granted. I see a bunch of soldiers that are thankful for what their country has given them and are willing to do something to defend it.

For me this Thanksgiving is all about being grateful for all you do, for your sacrifice, your hard work and your tireless spirit. Thank you. You are an inspiration to our country and the world. You, the American soldiers, you are America's heroes and I for one, am grateful and will always be proud to be called one of you.

Chaplain (MAJ) Lee Nelson
TF Bayonet Chaplain

Able Company locks-in on Taliban during Operation Rock Avalanche

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jacob Caldwell,
173rd ABCT Public Affairs

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan—Under the cover of darkness, Soldiers from Able Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) air-assaulted onto Phase Line Ridgeway approximately three miles south of their forward operating bases located in the Pech River Valley Oct. 22 as one part of Operation Rock Avalanche.

Operation Rock Avalanche was a multiple-company mission running from Oct. 19-25 in the Chapa Dara, Korengal, Shuryak and Pech Valleys. Participating were Able, Battle and Chosen Companies from the 2-503rd, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry (Airborne) and multiple companies from the Afghan National Army's 201st Corps. The companies were positioned into different areas of Kunar Province at different times hoping to flush insurgents out of one area into another where U.S. and Afghan forces would be waiting for them.

With a vantage point from 7,500 feet up and overlooking the Shuryak and Pech Valleys, Able Company's four-day mission was to locate and destroy insurgent command-and-control and logistical elements operating in that area, according to Capt. Louis Frketic, Able Company Commander.

After having set up a perimeter and establishing a command post on the top of Phase Line Ridgeway, 2nd Platoon was dispatched to the nearby village of Aybot. Previous intelligence had suggested that Taliban leaders might be holed-up in that area.

"We were looking for two named [High-Value Targets]. One of them is the commander of the entire Shuryak forces and the other guy is an IED specialist," said Frketic, "We searched their compounds and they were not in there or in the area."

Frketic and his paratroopers were not dissuaded. A Low-Level Voice Intercept Team from Bravo Company, 173rd Special Troops Battalion (Airborne) was tasked to Able Company for the mission. The team began listening to Taliban radio traffic as soon as they hit the ground and were already getting a bead on the insurgents operating in the surrounding valleys.

The team was an invaluable asset; one that Frketic uses every chance he gets to collect intelligence on the enemy.

"A lot of times we will start getting locations and then we will pick up names," said Frketic, "It is usually specific to that cell what kind of things they are talking about. Sometimes they will start talking about people, fighters, locations, ammo, or weapons systems that they have."

Even the smallest details, including the specific words used, can yield valuable information, said Frketic.

"A couple days ago, right before the mission started, we heard a cell talking about their fighters and their leaders in the terms of soldiers and officers. Other



Capt. Louis Frketic (center), Able Company Commander, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) and Staff Sgt. James Green (right), San Antonio, Texas, a Low-Level Voice Intercept Team Leader assigned to Bravo Company, 173rd Special Troops Battalion (Airborne), discuss intelligence gathered by the LLVI team Oct. 24 in the Pech and Shuryak Valleys in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

times we'll hear them about talk about fighters and commanders. The one talking about officers and soldiers: that is a professional organization. Little details like that are very critical in my mind," explained Frketic.

With so much U.S. military and Afghan National Army activity on the surrounding mountains and in the surrounding valleys, the Taliban were never sure of Able Company's position and never mounted an attack on Able's position. The LLVI team used the time to continue to collect intelligence on enemy in the area. The formerly suspected enemy locations were now known.

Around noon of Oct. 24, Frketic put that information to use and launched Soldiers from 1st Platoon, Destined Company into action. The platoon is a heavy-weapons platoon attached to Able Company for the deployment and commonly referred to as the Dragon Platoon. They had air-assaulted onto the ridgeline with their MK19 and M2 machine guns. A mortar team with an 81MM tube from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-503rd was also put in action.

Their fire destroyed one command-and-control node operating in the Shuryak Valley. But destroying the enemy position was probably the easiest part of the mission for the MK19 gun team, said Spc. David Hooker, from Palestine, Ark., and a Dragon Platoon member.

"I've never air-assaulted in with a MK19 before," said Hooker, "But since we just set in and manned a blocking position it was okay."

"The weight is the biggest challenge, getting it in and out," he said.

Continued from page 12



Capt. Louis Frketic (center), Able Company Commander, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) and Staff Sgt. James Green (right), San Antonio, Texas, a Low-Level Voice Intercept Team Leader assigned to Bravo Company, 173rd Special Troops Battalion (Airborne), discuss intelligence gathered by the LLVI team Oct. 24 in the Pech and Shuryak Valleys in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

The MK19 without the tri-pod weighs 75 pounds and the ammo cans weigh between 40 and 60 pounds each depending on the number of rounds in them. Many cans were brought for this mission.

The mortar team, one of the busiest in the battalion, also spent most of the day putting rounds on target. The team averages firing more than 1,000 rounds per month.

"As far as firing goes, this is hands-down the most intense deployment that I have been on," said Staff Sgt. Brandon Thomas, of Nashville, Tenn.

While there are Howitzers available for fire missions throughout the Kunar Province, the mortar teams are able to react the quickest when indirect fire is needed, said Thomas.

"We have eyes on a lot of the targets and our response is a little bit quicker," said Thomas, "The channels to clear the 155 go all the way through battalion and then back through their fires. Ours are cleared right here. If we are in direct contact, I can engage freely."

The number of rounds fired combined with the danger of their job has earned the team the respect of Thomas and the Rock leadership.

"These guys are awesome," said Thomas, "Everybody has been put in for valor awards."

The mortar team and the pit in which they work are a favorite target of the Taliban, making it a dangerous job.

"There is no overhead cover and they stand out there and fire throughout the entire engagement and also in support after by hitting exfil routes," said Thomas, "It's pretty remarkable what they do."

During the night of the 24th, Dragon Platoon was flown back to Able Main, but early the morning of Oct. 25, the remainder of Able Company began what would end up a 10-hour trek down treacherous, slippery and steep terrain back to their base. No small feat for even the most fit paratrooper, yet a regular occurrence for Soldiers in Kunar Province.

"We go on ruck marches into the mountains every other day or every third day," said Staff Sgt. Brian Mading, from Bonita Springs, Fla. and a member of Headquarters Platoon.

"The first couple are tough. Then, of course, the more you are doing it, the more you get built up," said Mading.

"The guys that come here right out of basic or other units usually get broke down pretty quick or get into it pretty quick depending on what their physical fitness level was before," said Mading.

All of the gear these paratroopers carry is heavy: helmet, protective vests, rucksacks, weapons, ammunition, and water. It makes packing before the mission extremely important, leaving little room for extra cold-weather gear or even extra food.

During the trip down the mountain, the Able Company Soldiers had hoped to 'drop in' on some insurgents the LLVI team had confirmed were hiding out in villages in that area. But none were spotted and no contact was made.

That's okay, according to Frketic.

"Those villages are only a three-to-four hour walk from our base. They'll be getting visits from us again soon."



Sgt. Chad Mohr (left), St. Louis, Mo. watches rounds land on target as Spc. David Hooker (right), Palestine, Ark., fires the MK19 Machine Gun at a known insurgent position Oct. 24 during Operation Rock Avalanche. The "Dragon Platoon" Soldiers of Destined Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) were occupying a ridgeline between the Pech and Shuryak Valleys in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

Cold Weather Injuries: Hypothermia

By Maj J. Steven Birchfield,
MAJ (P)/MC
TF Bayonet Surgeon

A winter chill is in the air and snow fell at Lybert last week. As we go into the winter, we will need to protect ourselves and our buddies from cold injuries.

Our bodies manage our body temperatures carefully through a process of thermo-regulation. When it is cold, our body's main goal is to keep us alive, and our internal organs are considered vital to our survival.

Therefore, the body will preferentially "shunt" blood away from the periphery (arms, legs) in order to preserve the functions of the core (heart, brain, lungs, liver, and kidneys). The body will do this by constricting blood flow to the outer body. This protects life, but puts

your extremities, especially the fingers, toes, ears, and nose at greater risk when you are out in cold weather.

Our typical cold weather injury is a male E-4 and below who is from a cold climate with less than 18 months in service that may not be used to the cold. Smoking or tobacco use also causes constriction of blood vessels, so smokers are at an even greater risk. Soldiers who have had previous cold injuries who are dehydrated or in the cold for a

long periods of time are at even greater risk for injuries such as hypothermia, frostbite, chilblains, or immersion foot/trench foot.

While all of these injuries will take a soldier out of the fight, our biggest concern is life-threatening hypothermia that occurs when your core body temperature falls below 95 degrees. This type of hypothermia can occur quickly when

The best way to defeat hypothermia is to prevent its occurrence. Dress in layers that allow sweat to be wicked away from the body and traps layers of warmth between layers of clothing. Wear dry socks, and keep an extra pair in your pack or in your IBA. Rotate soldiers out of foxholes or off the OP and into the warmth regularly. Ensure your soldiers get plenty of rest and plenty of water to

avoid dehydration (soldiers will sweat even when it is cold). Avoid nicotine, smoking or caffeine that may cause your blood vessels to constrict

If a soldier stops shivering and you think they are becoming hypothermic, get them out of the cold

and into a warm place, make sure that wet clothing is removed. Sleeping bags are insulators and keep people warm if they are warm, but do not immediately warm up someone who is cold. If necessary, body-to-body contact may be required to warm your buddy if isolated. Sipping warm liquids or an IV warmed to body temperature (stick them under your armpits) will help warm the patient until you can get the patient evacuated.



it is windy and your clothing is wet. Hypothermia usually starts with hard shivering, dizziness or drowsiness, irritability and confusion, which eventually leads to slow slurred speech and altered vision. Hypothermia becomes severe when a soldier stops shivering and feels an odd warm sensation that makes them want to lie down and sleep. If allowed to lie down and sleep while still cold, their breathing will become faint or undetectable and if left cold, they will die.

Avoid Cold Casualties!

When using Cold-Weather Clothing,
Remember **C-O-L-D**

C ~ Keep it...**Clean**

O ~ Avoid...**Overheating**

L ~ Wear it...**Loose and in Layers**

D ~ Keep it...**Dry**

**Notify an instructor / leader,
if you or your buddy experience --**

| In cold environments ... | |
|---|--|
| Effects to the skin, such as: | Effects, such as: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swollen red or darkened • Pain, tenderness, hot or itchy • Numbness or tingling • Bleeding or blistered • Gray, waxy feeling or "wooden" to the touch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dizziness, weakness or blurred vision • Vigorous shivering • Lack of coordination and impaired judgment • Painful, red, watery or gritty feeling in the eyes (snow blindness) |

| In enclosed areas where heaters are used ... |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive yawning, cherry red lips or grayish tint to lips and mouth • Confusion, disorientation or mental slowness • Drowsiness, lack of coordination or unconsciousness |



B Company 173rd BSB is 'muscle of the battalion'

Story and photos by 2nd Lt. Monika Comeaux,
173rd Brigade Support Battalion

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FENTY, Afghanistan—Soldiers of B Company, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion trained countless hours in preparation for their current deployment and its maintenance mission before they left Germany. Originally they were getting ready to go to Iraq; it wasn't until March that they found out that they were being redirected to Afghanistan.

Little did they know that besides providing the usual maintenance support, they would also be responsible for managing and running FOB Fenty Base Operations. They were told about this task upon completion of their last training exercise, so there was not time to rehearse for this mission, said Capt. Christopher J. Moberg, a quartermaster officer, who is the B Company Commander.

"Traditionally the B Company mission in a brigade support battalion is to provide field maintenance support to all units within the brigade support battalion and unsupported units in the battalion Area of Responsibility," said Moberg. His company is also responsible for providing supplementary field maintenance and recovery support on vehicles, weapons, electronics, and ground support equipment to the Forward Support Companies of the four maneuver battalions within the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, he added.

The company truly hit the ground running.

"It was a challenge just to get a battle rhythm...We have a battle rhythm but we still have to respond to everyday changes. It is a moving mission, like a moving target. There is always something new that comes up, because of the movements in the FOB, improvements in the FOB," said 1st Sgt. Reyes Rios, B Company First Sergeant.

With just under 60 Soldiers on the ground at Fenty, the company is strung out. There is a team of Soldiers residing at Bagram Air Base, who provide maintenance and recovery support to A Company's Combat Logistics Patrols. Yet when it comes to new tasks, the battalion heavily depends on B Company.

"We are known as the 'muscle of the battalion' because we make any and everything that the mission requires happen," said Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Stewart, a senior maintenance supervisor who is the Platoon Sergeant for the Automotive Platoon. Stewart is also the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge and the Field Ordering Officer for FOB Fenty Base Operations.

Besides being the 'muscle of the battalion', Rios says the company is also known for its tight-knit family environment.

"We don't consider the company a company. It is called a company but it is more like a family...like a really close team of individuals, from the senior leadership all the way down to the lowest ranking private," he explained.

Running the Base Ops mission enables B Company Soldiers to work with local nationals and learn about the culture. "Some of the guys who have been on guard duty sometimes get invited to dinner at another compound. They get to see the culture of the locals here...That is something that Soldiers will talk about when they have grandkids," said Rios.

"I think it is a very educational experience because we get first hand knowledge about the Afghan culture, the reasons that the people are the way they are and how they feel about the [International Security Assistance Force] personnel being here in their country," added Stewart.

Besides meeting the locals, B Company had other interesting adventures through running Base Ops. Since they oversee work orders, they had a good laugh when someone submitted a work order to have a bed made when the rest of the base camp were still sleeping on cots, remembers Rios.

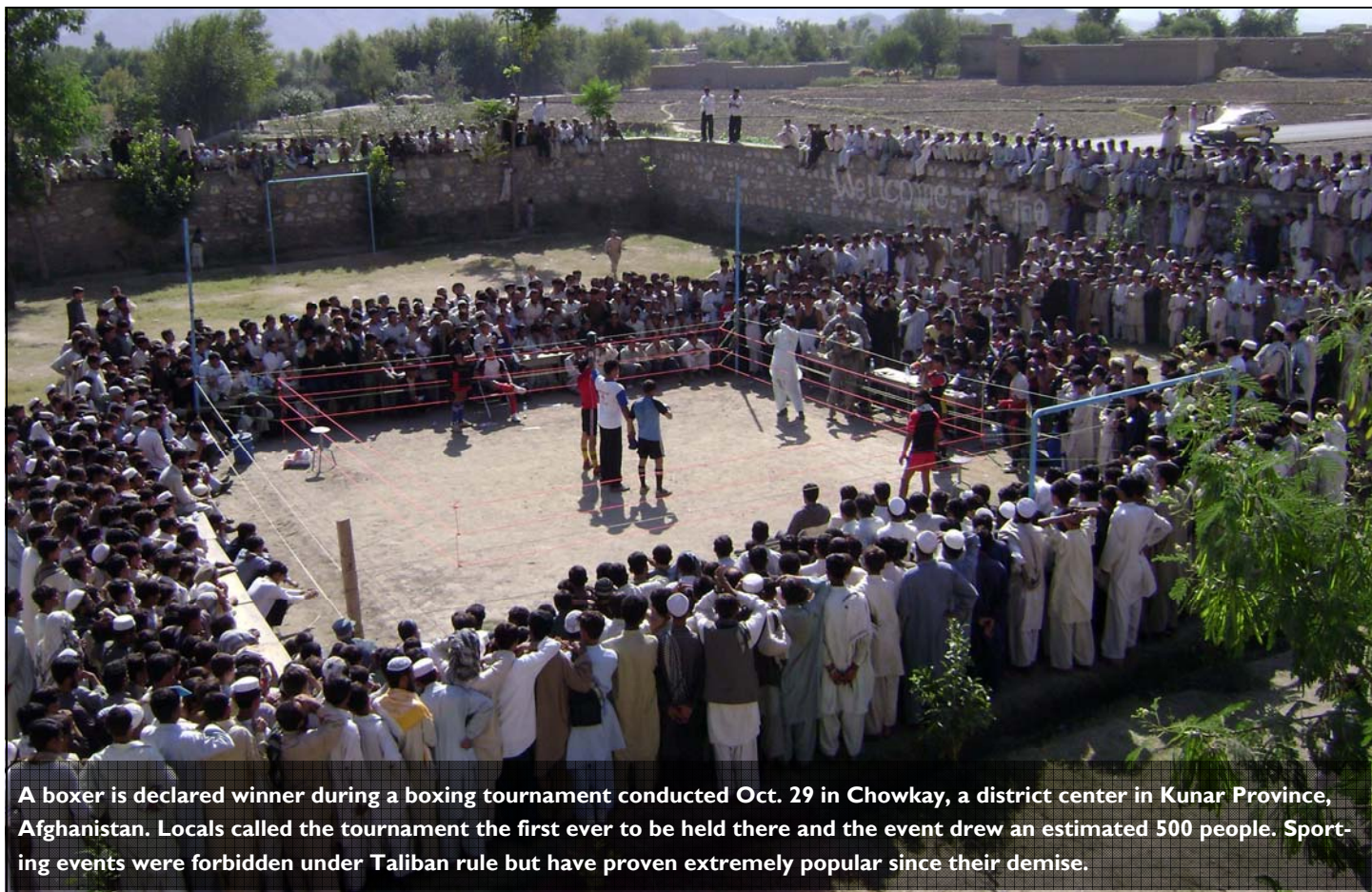
"At this point, nothing surprises me," said Moberg reflecting back on the numerous unusual requests and taskings the company has received in the past five months.

Soldiers in B Company will take away a lot from this deployment. They will keep on pushing and do what they have to do to accomplish the multifaceted mission.



Pfc. Clayton Taylor, a metal worker with B Company, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion from Bamberg, Germany, cuts some angle iron to use it for a construction project in the B Company motor pool on Sept. 27, 2007.

Kunar boxing tournament draws 500 spectators



A boxer is declared winner during a boxing tournament conducted Oct. 29 in Chowkay, a district center in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Locals called the tournament the first ever to be held there and the event drew an estimated 500 people. Sporting events were forbidden under Taliban rule but have proven extremely popular since their demise.

From the 173rd ABCT Public Affairs Office

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan (29 October) – Task Force Bayonet Soldiers and the citizens of Kunar Province gathered for what locals there are calling the first boxing tournament ever conducted in that region Oct. 27 in the District Center of Chowkay.

The Chowkay High School boxing team, under Coach Abdulmalick Safi, hosted the tournament. The visiting coach, Zaid Ullah from Jalalabad, brought fighters from Nangarhar Province and Laghman to compete with the Chowkay Boxing Club, according to Capt. Michael Jackson, Destined Company Commander, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne).

The match, featuring 22 boxers participating in 11 matches, was a hit with the local community drawing an estimated five hundred enthusiastic spectators, according to Jackson.

"It was an exciting day for the young boxers who had the opportunity to display the skills and discipline they have developed through hard work, rigorous practices, and commitment to a sport they love," said Jackson, "It was a proud day for the coaches and Afghan elders who had the opportunity to see the youth and the future of Afghanistan display their courage,

sportsmanship, and dedication."

During the tournament, another Chowkay High School teacher, and the volleyball coach, commented that sporting events were not possible under Taliban rule; he was truly excited to see his students have the opportunity to compete freely without fear and with the support of the Government of Afghanistan as the Chowkay Afghan National Police provided security for the event. He plans to hold a similar volley ball tournament in the near future to continue the success and popularity of high school sporting events.

ISAF service members also supported the event as paratroopers from Destined Company, watched the event and Jackson and 1st Sgt. Mitchell Rucker presented awards to the winner of each match.

Reporters from Kunar Television video-taped the entire competition for future broadcast and reporters from BBC narrated the matches for future radio broadcast.

Interpreter Sardar Mohameed was visibly overwhelmed by the event, stating that the boxing tournament and the local support was "a sign of prosperity for Afghanistan and a sign of strengthen friendship with America."

TF Rock gathers to remember fallen Sky Soldiers



Paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) take time to share their personal memories of Spc. Hugo V. Mendoza, Sgt. Joshua C. Brennan, Staff Sgt. Larry I. Rougle, after a memorial ceremony Nov. 2 at Camp Blessing, Afghanistan.

Story and photos by Spc. Gregory Argentieri,
173rd ABCT Public Affairs

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Soldiers from Task Force Bayonet and distinguished guests gathered to honor the lives of three fallen Sky Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) Nov. 2 at Camp Blessing, Afghanistan. The three Soldiers died during Operation Rock Avalanche, an operation conducted in Kunar Province.

Staff Sgt. Larry I. Rougle, born May 6, 1982 – Oct. 23, 2007, was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-503rd.

Rougle enlisted in the U.S. Army in March 2000. He became a paratrooper with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team in Vicenza, Italy in Aug. 2004 and was assigned to The Rock.

Rougle was on his third deployment in four years. He earned his reputation for being a battle-hardened Soldier during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom VI.

"Staff Sgt. Rougle was my right-hand man on more than one occasion," said Capt. Daniel P.

Kearney, Battle Company Commander. "He understood the fight and lived without fear under the changing tide of war."

"Many of us knew Ranger Rougle, as he was nicknamed," said Staff Sgt. Michael J. Gabel, Delta Company Platoon Sergeant, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry. "He was known as a man who excelled at all tasks, and he knew no physical limits."

Gabel said, "I know what Larry would want from us, he would not want us to be bitter or blame others for his death, but simply be glad for the time we shared."

"A warrior to the bitter end, until we see each other again. Sky Soldiers!" was Gabel's thunderous final words in his eulogy remembering his friend.

Rougle is survived by his daughter Carmin, parents Ismail and Nancy Rougle of West Jordan, Utah and brother, David.

Sgt. Joshua C. Brennan, born May 30, 1985 – Oct. 25, 2007, was assigned to Battle Company, 2-503rd.



Staff Sgt. Larry Rougle
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne)
KIA October 23, 2007



Spc. Hugo Mendoza
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne)
KIA October 25, 2007

We will not forget those who have fallen

19 members of Task Force Bayonet and the 173rd ABCT have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom VIII. We will remember them always.



Sgt. Joshua Brennan
Battle Company,
2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne)
KIA October 25, 2007

Continued from previous page

Brennan enlisted in the U.S. Army in September 2003. He became a paratrooper with the 173rd ABCT in March 2004 and was assigned to The Rock.

"Josh was a quiet professional. He truly, truly showed the younger soldiers what it meant to be a soldier, and what it meant to be a leader," said Staff Sgt. Benito Gallardo, Squad Leader. "He was stop-lossed back in September and just made fun of the situation. It was a privilege to have him under me. I learned a lot from him. He was my Alpha Team Leader."

"Sgt. Brennan proved himself a combat leader last year on deployment here in Afghanistan and again this deployment," said 1st Lt. Bradley J. Winn, 1st Platoon Leader, Battle Company.

"In August during an operation, Brennan, despite having a gunshot wound to the calf, walked

back to Fire Base Vegas, on point, leading the patrol," said Winn.

"Sgt. Brennan was going to go back to school to become a cop like his father. I could not think of anyone better to protect our streets, or protect our country," said Winn.

"Sgt. Brennan's new guitar arrived three days before Rock Avalanche, and for three days we had a musician. For three days all we had was a music playing fool," said Gallardo. "That's all he ever talked about: his love for music."

"Everybody's last memories about Josh are sitting and just watching him play guitar," said Gallardo. "I have already spoken to his father, and the Fender acoustic guitar is going directly to his dad. We have everybody signing

Continued on next page

Medal of Honor Recipient Sgt. Ray E. Eubanks

Sgt. Ray E. Eubanks, Company D, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic actions taken July 23, 1944 on Noemfoor Island, Dutch New Guinea.

Eubanks was born Feb. 6, 1922 in Snow Hill, N.C. He entered the service from LaGrange, N.C.

His citation reads as follows:

While moving to the relief of a platoon isolated by the enemy, Eubank's company encountered a strong enemy position supported by machinegun, rifle, and mortar fire.

Eubanks was ordered to make an attack with one squad to neutralize the enemy by fire in order to assist the advance of his company. He maneuvered his squad to within 30 yards of the enemy where heavy fire checked his advance. Directing his men to maintain their fire, he and two scouts worked their



Sgt. Ray E. Eubanks, Company D, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic actions taken July 23, 1944 on Noemfoor Island, Dutch New Guinea.

way forward up a shallow depression to within 25 yards of the enemy. Directing the scouts to remain in place, Eubanks armed himself with an automatic rifle and worked himself forward over terrain swept by intense fire to within 15 yards of the enemy position when he opened fire with telling effect.

The enemy, having located his position, concentrated their fire with the result that he was wounded and a bullet rendered his rifle useless. In spite of his painful wounds he immediately charged the enemy and using his weapon as a club killed four of the enemy before he was himself again hit and killed.

Eubanks' heroic action, courage, and example of leadership, so inspired his men that their advance was successful. They killed 45 of the enemy and drove the remainder from the position, thus effecting the relief of our beleaguered troops.

Continued from previous page

it."

Brennan is survived by his parents Michael Brennan and Janice Gates and family.

Spc. Hugo V. Mendoza, born March 23, 1978 – Oct. 25, 2007, was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-503rd.

Mendoza enlisted in the U.S. Army in May 2005. He became a paratrooper with the 173rd ABCT in March 2006 and was assigned to The Rock.

"The truth, the honest truth, no matter what happens, Mendoza would be there for you whenever you needed it," said Sgt. Michael Z. Chioke, 1st Platoon, Battle Company, 2-503rd. "As a medic, Mendoza went on every patrol."

"Always smiling, Doc Mendoza had a devotion to making people feel better," said Winn. "Spc. Mendoza knew his passion better than most forty or fifty year olds. Eventually he was going to transfer his love for medical care over to the civilian world."

"Valor is not a word you can just throw around. It's encompassed in Spc. Mendoza, to be hit by a bullet and still bound through and through a near ambush 15 meters away to get to his fallen comrades," said Winn.

Mendoza is survived by his parents, Jesus Carlos Sr. and Sara Mendoza and his two brothers, Jesus Carlos Jr. and Stevie.

"How can the Army find more men like Rougle, Brennan, and Mendoza? They can't and they won't,"

said Winn. "Men like that aren't replaceable. They're one of a kind."

"We shall not forget, we shall not falter," said Kearney near the end of the ceremony. "As it is our duties to honor them through our continued efforts ensuring they share in the ultimate success of our mission."



Sgt. Michael Z. Chioke, 1st Platoon, Battle Company, 2-503rd emphatically shares personal memories of Spc. Hugo V. Mendoza, Sgt. Joshua C. Brennan, Staff Sgt. Larry I. Rougle, fellow paratroopers, during a memorial ceremony Nov. 2 at Camp Blessing, Afghanistan.