



Tien Bien Times

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TF Rock air-assaults into Taliban's backyard



Scouts from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), react as villagers below run after spotting the Soldiers moving on the hillside during Operation Destined Strike in Chowkay Valley, Afghanistan Aug. 22.

By Sgt. Brandon Aird,
173rd ABCT Public Affairs

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- The tense paratroopers and Afghan National Army Soldiers sat in silence surrounded by darkness.

The previous hours had been spent huddled together rehearsing the mission, "Destined Strike", which was to be an air-assault into the Taliban's backyard.

The whoop, whoop, whoop sound of the CH-47 "Chinook" helicopter's rotary wings reverberated in the Soldiers' ears drowning out all chance of another sound. Some of the Soldiers said last minute prayers while others day dreamed of loved ones back home. Squad leaders made last minute checks in the dark.

When the Chinook landed all thoughts came to the task at hand. The Soldiers jumped off

the noisy helicopter onto a quiet moon-lit mountain above the Chowkay Valley in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. The mountain is over 7,000 feet above sea level.

The Taliban's biggest advantage in past fire fights has been their ability to dominate the high ground, but not this time.

Soldiers from the 2nd Platoons of Able, Chosen and Destined Companies, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), all members of Task Force Rock and the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, and elements from the 2nd Kandak, 201st Corps, launched Operation Destined Strike August 21-25, 2007, according to Capt. Michael T. Jackson, Destined Company Commander.

"We came here to show the local populace that coalition forces aren't afraid to come into the Chowkay Valley," said 1st Lt. Kareem F. Hernandez a New York and New Jersey resident and



Cont. on page 2

Operation Destined Strike - continued from page 1

also 2nd Platoon Leader in Able Company.

After the initial insertion, the Soldiers pulled security and waited for daybreak. During the night, they searched with night vision devices for 15 individuals spotted earlier near their position by an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV).

Once dawn broke, the Soldiers and ANA put their gear-laden rucksacks on, and broke trail down the mountain to the first farming village. The village and fields were hand cut out of the mountain side. The terrain was extremely difficult to traverse. The locals can be difficult too, but not this time.

"I was kind of surprised," said Hernandez when asked about the first villager he talked to. "It was the first time in this country I had someone admit he knew who the Taliban were. He showed me where they had been coming through to attack us. I've never had that happen before. They always act like they have no clue what I'm talking about."

Hernandez learned the Taliban in the area were from the Korengal Valley. The trip from the Korengal Valley to the Chowkay Valley takes the insurgents two to three hours according to the local villager.

The next village Hernandez's platoon came upon wasn't very friendly toward the Americans.

The villager's view of the Americans could be seen by the questions they asked Hernandez's interpreter.

"One of the village elders asked me why I was working with these infidels," said "Dave" Mohammad, who is from Jalalabad.

Hernandez talked with the villagers for over an hour trying to

come to a peaceful resolution.

"After sitting down and talking with the elders they finally agreed to let the ANA search the village," Hernandez explained.

After searching the village, 2nd Platoon, Able Company continued down the hill to the next village. At this point rain started falling down from the sky along with bolts of lightning.

Not all of the thunder claps were lightning strikes. During the storm Taliban extremists had attacked the landing zone 2nd Platoon, Able Company landed on, which was now occupied by Jackson and an over watch element.

"They took small arms fire and two RPG's from the Northwest," said Hernandez.

In response, small arms, 120mm Mortars and 155 Howitzers were fired at the Taliban positions.

"We got reports that they were trying to fix in on our positions in the North to push us out of there," said

Hernandez.

Four 500lb bombs were dropped from fighter jets ending any plans the Taliban had to move Jackson from his over watch position.

After the short fire fight, Hernandez's platoon and 2nd Platoon, Chosen Company, spent the next two days moving to their extraction point to be picked up by a helicopter.

"On the map its four clicks to the extraction point," said Hernandez. "Our GPS said we moved 15 to 20 clicks."

On the way to the extraction point Hernandez platoon suffered three heat casualties. One Soldier had been battling a fever for several days.

The difficult terrain, extreme weather conditions, and carrying extra ammunition, food and water was having its toll on the Soldiers.

When one Soldier fell out another picked up his gear while the Soldier recovered and was examined by a medic.

Scouts from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), pull overwatch during Operation Destined Strike while 2nd Platoon, Able Company searches a village below the Chowkay Valley in Kunar Province, Afghanistan Aug. 22.





Commander's Corner

To the paratroopers and families of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team,

As we observe Labor Day, the symbolic end of summer, we can take a moment to reflect on our accomplishments to date. Nobody works harder than a Soldier, particularly a Sky Soldier.

September not only gives us time to reflect on the fruits of our labor, but the reasons why we work as hard and diligently as we do.

Sept. 11 marks the sixth anniversary of the tragic events that occurred at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Many of us have suffered because of those events. Take the time to remember those Americans we've lost and let it strengthen our resolve.

Sadly, we've lost another Sky Soldier this past month in our fight against Islamic extremism. This month is a time to remember him and all the others who have made the ultimate sacrifice to protect Afghan civilians and Americans back home.

Our Afghan allies in this War on Terror are observing an important holiday as well. The beginning of

the 30-day observance of Ramadan begins on the evening of Sept. 13 and continues through Oct. 12. Eid al-Fitr, an official government holiday, is the three-day celebration that will take place following Ramadan.

To our families back in Italy, Germany and the United States, thank you for your continued support and prayers. The amounts and quality of mail and care packages are what gets our Soldiers through the long months of deployment. We continue to try to improve living conditions and connectivity with our families. It still remains a challenge in some of the remote Forward Operating Bases.

As we observe Labor Day, Sept. 11 and our kids going back to school, I encourage all to keep your loved one informed of your families activities so we can stay connected. It is important that our kids know we are still watching with great pride their accomplishments in school. I hope they will send us reminders of their work so we can hang them on our walls with all do pride. As well we hope we can in some small way help them if they have problems in school. At least we might be able to encourage them from afar.



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

R&R Leave has kicked in and we will sustain a program of scheduled leave for the next 10 months. I know all are looking forward to their turn to see our loved ones and get some much deserved rest. The good news is we are now less than 12 months from being finished with this deployment and counting. My gratitude goes out to all the Sky Soldiers past and present and our families for their hard work, their support and their sacrifice for our noble goal of peace and freedom.

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.



Soldiers search for their favorite items from the 'love packages' from home Aug. 30 inside the dining facility at FOB Fenty.

“She just loves the troops,” Davis said. “She doesn’t call them care packages, she calls them love boxes.”

Sky Soldiers receive ‘love packages’

By Pfc. Daniel M. Rangel,

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FENTY, Afghanistan – Few things raise the spirits of a Soldier on deployment more than a care package from back home. The little things from back in the states are always greatly appreciated and are as good as gold.

Army Sgt. 1st Class John Davis from Victoria, Texas assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team received 40 care packages to share with his fellow Soldiers at FOB Fenty Aug. 30.

Gracie ‘Nanny’ Brown, 72, of Rising Sun, Md. received funding from her local Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter to purchase and send approximately 300 pounds of items inside what she calls ‘love packages’, according to Davis.

The items inside the packages included snacks, personal hygiene products, books and magazines which were distributed by Davis in the FOB Fenty dining facility during dinner time.

“She just loves the troops,” Davis said. “She doesn’t call them care packages, she calls them love boxes. She says these boxes are full of love.”

Brown first got in contact with Davis through her daughter and the website www.ansoldier.com.

“Her daughter started sending me boxes,” Davis said. “We exchange emails probably two or three times a week.”

Davis is appreciative of the support and likes to express his gratitude.

“Any time somebody sends a package, I send an email [that says] ‘thank you’,” Davis said. “She emailed me back asking how many soldiers [I’ve] got. And I said I’m at the brigade level, so I said there’s a couple of thousand just joking with her. Before I knew it, I got all this.”

Brown and her husband, who they call ‘Pops’, had previously sent Davis a few individual boxes and does this for a number of

Soldiers overseas.

“She’s an awesome woman,” Davis said. “She’s got about nine different soldiers throughout Iraq and Afghanistan that she does this for.”

“It’s amazing,” said Army Pfc. Jessica Campos of the 173rd ABCT as she looked through the packages.

Brown represents only one of many people back home who has been supporting the troops out here overseas.

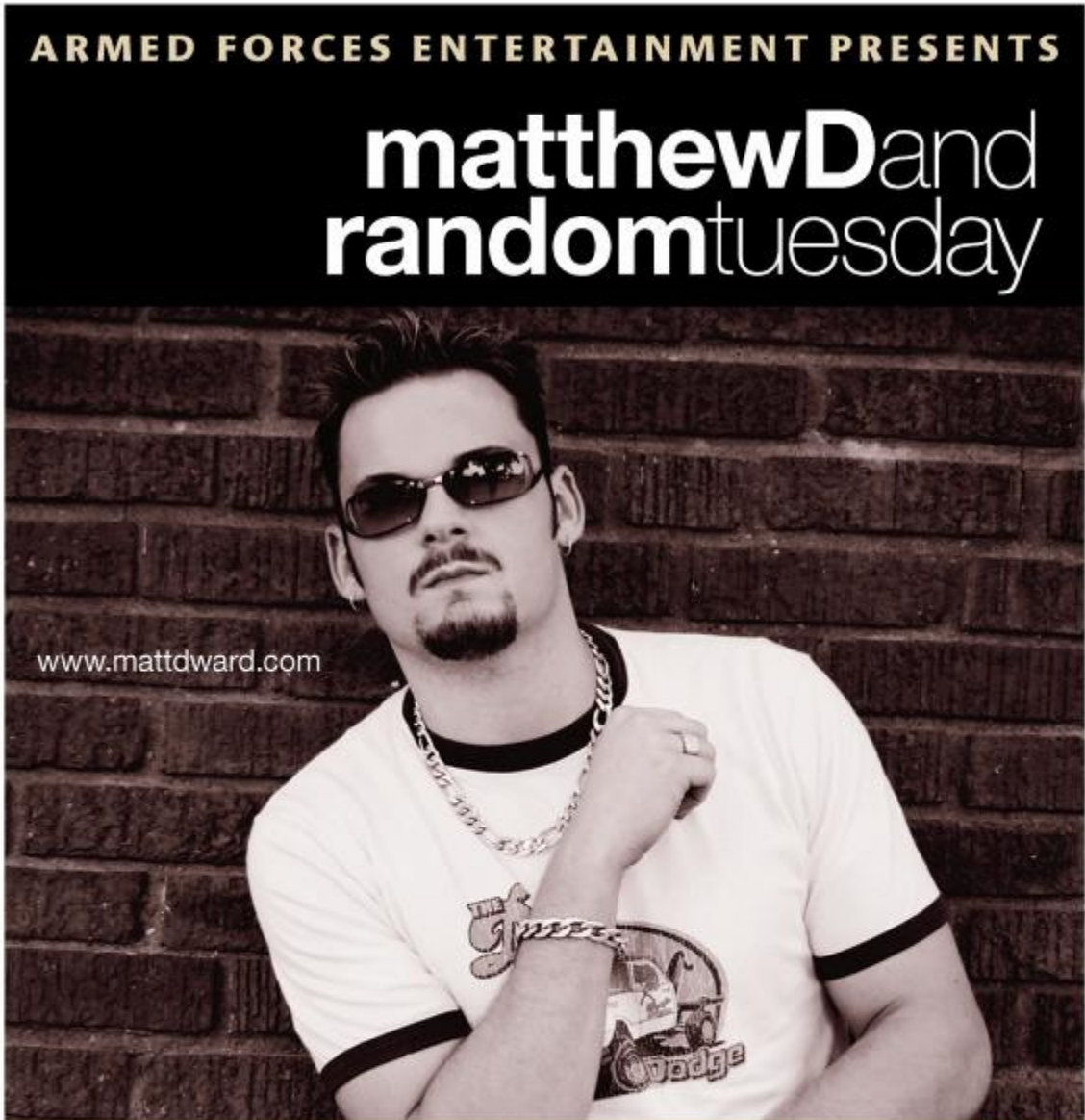


Sgt. 1st Class John Davis of Task Force Bayonet, distributes items from packages during dinner at the FOB Fenty dining facility Aug. 30.

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YOU ARE NOW FREE TO DANCE AROUND THE BASE

From Elvis to Maroon 5 to KC & the Sunshine Band, Matthew D and Random Tuesday have been wowing audiences from Kansas City to Kuwait. These supremely-talented musicians put the "show" in show band. So, put on your boogie shoes for a night of funk-soul electricity you won't soon forget.



**Scheduled for the evening of Sep. 7
in the FOB Fenty dining facility**

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Education Center Information



Dear Service Member,

This is a reminder that your Vicenza Education Center is here for your education needs whether you are here locally or deployed.

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Kabul: 318 237-2504, thomas.slaughter@us.army.mil

Bagram: 318-231-3106, lovellop@kaf.afgn.army.mil

Kandahar: 318-841-1014, robert.hauer@kaf.afgn.army.mil

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*Don't forget tuition assistance is requested through <http://www.GoArmyEd.com>.

66th MPs celebrate independence with Afghans



Sgt. Michael Espejo of the 66th Military Police Company stationed out of Fort Lewis, Wash., pulls security at the Pakistani border at Torkham Gate during the Afghan Independence Day ceremonies held Aug. 19.

By Pfc. Daniel M. Rangel,

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP TORKHAM, Afghanistan – Soldiers from the 66th Military Police Company, stationed out of Fort Lewis, Wash., accepted an invitation from the Afghan Border Police to take part in the Afghan Independence Day festivities held Aug. 19 on the Pakistan border at Torkham Gate.

As part of the celebration, Soldiers from the 66th MPs listened to speeches and watched Afghan children sing songs that celebrated the occasion. After the performance, Soldiers were invited to dine with their Afghan hosts at a lavish meal prepared for the event.

The Afghans hospitality comes after months of successful partnership between the 66th MPs and local law enforcement along the Pakistan border.

“We’re a part of their community,” said Army Capt. Christopher Hormel of Spokane, Wash., commander of the 66th MPs. “Were trying to build their capabilities and their capacities to do policing,”

Hormel said.

“Our biggest thing is partnering with and training up the national police,” Hormel said. “Our partnership is very good. We have a couple of problem areas, of course, down here at the Tora Bora Mountains. But overall [the partnership is] extremely good.”

The problems Hormel spoke of derive from having some local police chiefs and sub-governors being more cooperative than others because of fear that insurgents will retaliate.

In order to counter the threat of insurgents, the 66th MPs routinely do a force protection assessment.

“We make sure that they have what they need to defend themselves,” Hormel said. “We make requests for extra Hescos to build up their force protection and the Ministry of the Interior [gives] weapons to the provincial chief of police.” Hesco barriers are stackable dirt-filled barriers that provide cover from fire during attacks.

During their assessments, they also take a census of law enforcement personnel and the weapons at their disposal. The rest of the month is spent conducting training and joint patrols.

“A good way to think of it is on-the-job training,” Hormel said. “We go out there and do hands-on [training] with them. The idea is [that] they go to the regional training center and get their basic training. Then they go out to the districts [and] we take over from there.”

The regional training center for Afghan law enforcement is located just outside of Jalalabad. The 66th MPs build upon the training the recruits received there.

Capt. Christopher Hormel and his team, 1st Lt. Leah Wicks, and 2nd Lt. James Hardy, all officers of the 66th Military Police Company stationed out of Fort Lewis, Wash., listen to speeches at the Afghan Independence Day ceremony at Torkham Gate held Aug. 19.



“We do a little class then we take them out,” Hormel said. “We take them from their rough training that they get and try to hone their skills a little bit more so that they’re a lot more effective.”

Training consists of basic police skills such as securing an area, vehicle searches, personnel searches and handcuffing techniques.

Strong Afghan law enforcement along the border is a source of pride and part of the meaning of Afghan independence for an Afghan Border Police officer known in the area as “Maj. Sultan.”

“In Afghanistan we have a lot of pride,” Sultan said. “We have Hazara; we have Pashtun. We have a lot of tribes. [To be] Afghan means to bring together all of them.”

And now, with the partnership between Afghan law enforcement and Coalition Forces, it means unity, Sultan said.

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>
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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

As we approach another anniversary of September the 11th, we cannot help but think about some of our friends and family back in the states that have asked if what we are doing over here is really worth the effort we are putting into it. Is it really worth the separation from family, the heartache, the toll on human lives? Well, I think that is a good question. When I think about many of our families coming from a conservative point-of-view and how many of them have served in the military I know that when many ask the question, they are not coming from an anti-military or anti-war perspective, some are coming from quite the opposite viewpoint actually. So, for the questions that came from that perspective, it seems that we ought to give them a well thought out answer.

I couldn't help but think about the time when John the Baptist, in prison, searching for hope, sent his followers to ask Jesus if he was the one. Jesus responded by answering them with a list of results of his actions rather than a philosophical debate or discourse. He said, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."

It seems that our answer to our family's question should be the same. We should tell them what we see and hear. Afghan girls and boys are going to school. Schools, hospitals, and roads are being built. People are being educated and em-

ployed. They are learning to protect others in their police force and military instead of oppressing others. Their own elected officials are running their own country. They are learning what true freedom and democracy really are. Fewer people are being terrorized. Instead of a culture of fear and oppression that the Taliban was enforcing, they are seeing a culture of freedom, and human dignity. Elsewhere, a ruthless dictator has been taken out of power and is no more, his sons (which some feared would be more ruthless than their father) are no more. The Kurds are no longer being gassed. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban have been uprooted from their bases of operation and dispersed.

The war against tyranny and terrorism is being won, but it has not been won yet. So here we stand, as our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers have stood before us, fighting for freedom, standing for justice, and setting the example for democracy. Edmund Burk said that all it takes for evil to rule the world is for good men and women to do nothing. Well, I tell my family that I see a whole lot a good men and women that are doing something. I see young soldiers patrolling the streets of the cities and the country side. I see them actively pursuing the enemies of this country and ours that seek to destroy freedom and democracy in the world, but our young soldiers have a sense of justice about them and they will not

"Is it really worth the separation from family, the heartache, the toll on human lives?"

back down. They are taking the fight to the enemy and driving them back. The town's people are being encouraged to believe that peace and freedom from tyranny may one day be theirs.

Two hundred and thirty-one years ago our ancestors from every continent around the world established a country based on freedom. We had to fight for it then and this is not the first time that we have had to fight for it again. But it is a cause worth fighting for. I say this as a man of peace. I stand for peace and goodwill for all mankind and that is what we are bringing to this part of the world: Freedom from tyranny, fear, and oppression. The enemy's quest to enslave whole nations and intimidate the world has been blocked. I tell my family that I see a group of soldiers who will never give up, never give in, and never accept anything less than complete victory. And as long as we are doing this, then yes, it is worth the effort, for this is a cause that is greater than ourselves.

Chaplain Lee Nelson
TF Bayonet Chaplain



A Soldier with the Afghan National Army struggles up steep terrain to reach Observation Post Chuck Norris July 25 in Dangam, Afghanistan. The ANA are working with Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), to help bring security to their area of operation in Afghanistan.

Chuck Norris and Mr. T keep Dangam safe

By Sgt. Brandon Aird,
173rd ABCT Public Affairs

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team spent July 22-28 near the district center of Dangam, Afghanistan near the Pakistan border. The area is surrounded by lush farms that thrive from a stream that flows through the valley.

The Soldiers are from Red Platoon, Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne) and they were in the area to help fortify the position of an Afghan National Police station and also to establish and reinforce observations posts with the Afghan National Army on nearby hilltops.

The OPs help monitor and stop Taliban extremist movement in the area. Red Platoon named the OPs after one Soldier's mom, another's daughter, and famous movie stars: Sandra, Haden, Chuck Norris, and Mr. T.

"We thought of the baddest dudes we knew," said Staff Sgt. David Benoit, a squad leader in Red Platoon. "Naming OPs like we do helps keep morale up."

Even though the atmosphere in Red Platoon is a little laid back, the Soldiers take their jobs seriously. From OPs Norris and Mr. T, the platoon observed cross-border activity, called for and adjusted indirect fires, and engaged the enemy with direct fire.

"Our mission was to establish a joint security station in the Dangam area with the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army," said 1st Lt. Jesus Rubio, Red Platoon Leader, "We're also out

here to get situational awareness of the area and build friendships with the local leaders."

The district center of Dangam is a sign of progress for the local ANP. The center has a store, mosque, police station and a school for girls and boys. It even has computers and internet capabilities.

So far, Red Platoon has built up the area around the ANP Station to better safe guard against attacks from Taliban extremists.

"We've built up a perimeter around it with Hesco baskets and surrounded it with concertina wire," said Rubio.

The district center fortifications are just a small piece of the mission.

The observation posts that Red Platoon maintains also help build cohesion between the Soldiers and the local populace.

"We met the new Afghan Border Patrol commander while we were out at Mr. T," said Benoit. "The local village walked all the way up the mountain to tell us the

whole valley was talking about us. Everyone was very excited we were up here, he told us."

Another benefit of establishing OPs throughout the valley is the intelligence that was gathered.

"We observed the bad guys moving on the mountain," said Benoit. "We also got names of smugglers. We definitely laid the grounds for long-term relationships with the locals."

Red Platoon is in the initial phase of helping build up the district center. Future joint operations will continue for the next 14 months that Red Platoon will be in Afghanistan.

The local populace was very warm and generous toward Red Platoon and the ANA. Numerous times at OPs and at the district center, the local village elders would invite the Soldiers over to their houses for food and tea.

"The Afghans treated us like Kings at Mr. T's," said Benoit. "It was awesome."



Paratroopers from Red Platoon, Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), navigate to Observation Post Chuck Norris July 25 In Dangam, Afghanistan.



A quick reference for Ramadan 2007

SOME QUICK FACTS THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Ramadan (pronounced Ramazan) will begin on the evening of 13 Sep and cease on the evening of 12 Oct (celebrations continue for 3 more days (13-15 Oct 2007). – Eid al-Fitr / Eid e Ramadan).
- Ramadan is a month long period of fasting during the ninth month of the Islamic Year. Fasting, Roza in Dari, Rojha in Pashto, is one of the five pillars of Islam.
- During Ramadan, Muslims must abstain from food, drink and intimate relations during the period from dawn to sunset.
- Muslims gather for prayer 5 times during the day: at dawn, at noon, afternoon, at sunset, and finally the evening prayer or Isha' (Namaz-E-Khoftan in Dari, De Maskhutan Lmonz in Pashto), which is the main gathering of the day during Ramadan. Isha' prayer is followed by Taraweh, a longer, supplementary prayer specific to the month of Ramadan.
- Generally, Afghans work from 0800-1300 during the Ramadan period and eating and drinking in public places is prohibited.
- During Ramadan there is a significant increase in activities and attendance at mosques (Masjid in Dari and Pashto), particularly large, central ones.
- On the evening of the 27th of Ramadan (approx. 09 Oct) Muslims celebrate Laylat-ul-Qadr ("The Night of Power"). It is believed that on this night the Prophet Muhammad received the first revelation of the Holy Quran.
- The month of Ramadan ends with a three-day, Islamic celebration called Eid al-Fitr / Eid e Ramadan in Dari Language, and Kochnai Akhtar in Pashto Language (the celebration of Breaking the Fast). On the first morning there is a special Eid prayer in the mosques followed by three days of festivities and visiting friends and relatives.
- The 3 days of Eid al-Fitr / Eid e Ramadan are official government holidays and most Afghans do not work..
- Celebratory gunfire is likely to occur during Ramadan, especially on the first and last days.
- Dates may vary according to moon sighting.

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

- Do remain especially sensitive of Islamic cultural practices during the month of Ramadan.
- Do remember those participating in Ramadan will probably become more tired, irritable and dehydrated as the month progresses.
- Don't serve food, drink, or offer tobacco to any Afghan (including candies to children) between dawn and sunset.
- Don't eat, drink, chew gum or tobacco in the presence of Afghans (or other Muslims) during the day.
- Don't perceive an Afghan citizens' unwillingness to converse or participate as a sign of a negative attitude towards the International Military Forces. The practice of "restraint" during Ramadan requires those participating to cease all non-essential movement, conversations, eating and drinking in order to fully reflect on their own faith.
- Don't enter sacred sites (mosques, shrines etc.) or prevent Afghan citizens from participating in Ramadan prayer sessions unless it is an absolute operational requirement.
- Avoid planning meetings with Afghans after 3pm unless there is an absolute necessity.
- Do wish Afghan citizens "Happy Eid" "Eid-e-Taan Mobarak" in Dari Language, "Akhtar de Mobarak" in Pashto Language at the last three days of Eid al-Fitr / Eid e Ramadan

Afghans take ownership of Jalalabad District Communications Center



Afghan Minister of Communications Amirzi Sengi (left) and Air Force Lt. Col. Gordon Phillips (right), 49, of Albuquerque, N.M., commander of the Nangarhar PRT, sign the paperwork handing over the new District Communications Center in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, Aug. 1.

By Spc. Henry Selzer
173rd ABCT Public Affairs

JALALABAD AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The first of August marked another step forward for the citizens of Afghanistan as the grand opening of the new District Communications Center got underway in Jalalabad Aug 1.

The construction of the DCC was started more than nine months ago by Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, but was recently handed over to the Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team to oversee completion.

“The building was inspected six times before it passed and the PRT could continue the construction,” said Air Force Lt.

Col. Gordon Phillips, Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team Commander.

“The people don’t yet understand that they have a voice in their government, said Phillips. “This facility will hopefully further the ability to get that word out.”

“It’s nice to have this tool and to be able to use it, but what is really important is the people who will be working here,” Phillips said. “The [Islamic Republic of Afghanistan] needs to make sure that the right people with the right talents are placed to work here so they can get the most use out of this facility.”

“This facility is going to become a very important asset to the people of Jalalabad because it is going to help push important information and news to the population

as well as be the people’s voice,” Phillips continued.

The crowd was enthusiastic as the new building was signed over from the Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team to Amirzi Sengi, Minister of Communications.

“I think the Afghan people are very happy that the PRT is here, and the locals are very cooperative,” said Army Capt. Maurice Middleton, team leader of the Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team Civil Affairs Team.

“The biggest things we try to do are build capacity and get the government the tools they need so one day, they will have a government and economy that is self-sustained,” Middleton said.

Voter registration for dummies

By Sgt. Brandon Aird,

173rd ABCT Public Affairs

JALALABAD AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions of U.S. citizens, don't vote simply because they don't know how. I admit until I was asked to write this story I was one of those dummies. I had no clue on how to vote, but thanks to the Federal Voting Assistance Program I now know how to vote in my home state of Washington (The best state).

The first step to voting is getting yourself registered as a voter in your home state.

To get registered you need to fill out and mail Federal Post Card Form (SF-76) to your local state official. For many states, it can be done electronically over the internet. The rest use traditional mail.

Once your local election official receives the letter they will register your request to be a registered voter or request fur-

ther information from you.

When you are registered by your local election official, they will mail you an absentee ballot.

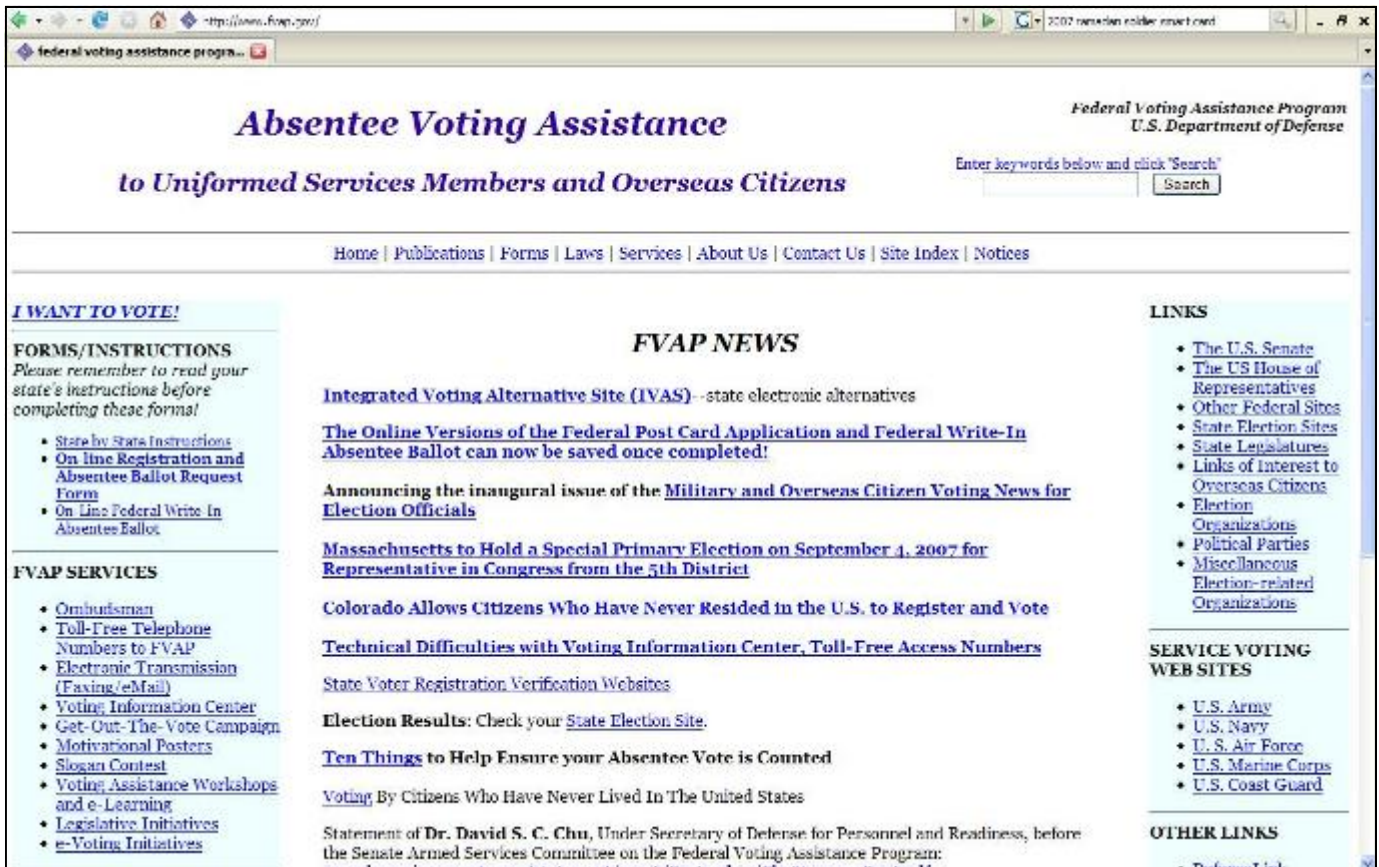
The absentee ballot is the form you vote on.

At that point you pick who you think should be the next president, senator, etc., and mail the absentee ballot back to your local election official to meet state deadlines.

In some states, registration is not necessary to vote. The best way to find out your state's requirements is to visit the FVAP website (www.fvap.gov).

The FVAP website is an asset to uniformed service members, and also all voting age family members, and overseas citizens. It is a treasure trove of information to be found at the stroke of a few keys.

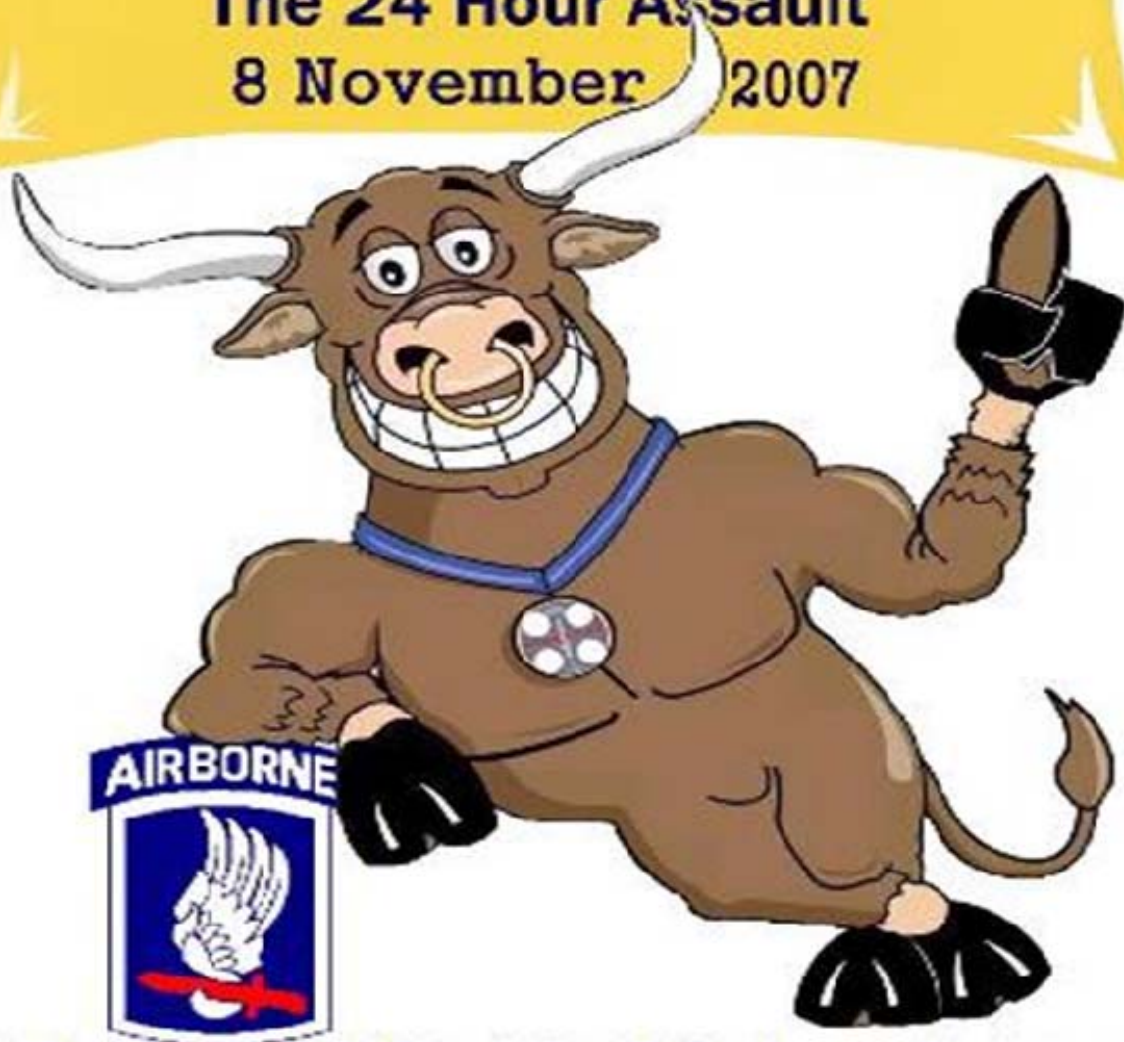
Ask your unit's Voting Assistance Officer for more details.



The Federal Voting Assistance Program website (above) is a treasure-trove of information for servicemembers wanting to register to vote.

Ask your unit's Voting Assistance Officer for more details or further assistance.

**1st Annual Running of the Herd
The 24 Hour Assault
8 November 2007**



Fenty Airfield, Afghanistan

- o Seven Soldiers Per Team, only one may be running at a time
- o continuous laps around the airfield, team with the most laps wins
- o limited slots, the first 21 teams receive T-Shirts upon completion
- o Someone from each team must be running at ALL times
- o Sign up at the C MED TOC

T-Shirts and Prizes provided by the Florida Chapter '73D Association

Sky Soldiers air assault onto clouds of Nuristan

By Sgt. Brandon Aird,
173rd ABCT Public Affairs

NURISTAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Soldiers from the Afghan National Army and the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team air assaulted onto Landing Zone Shetland which is nestled among the clouds during Operation Saray Has July 19. The LZ was located on a large meadow near the top of a mountain in Nuristan Province. Local Afghans use the area as a grazing pasture for livestock while Taliban extremists use it to stage attacks against Task Force Saber.

The spot the Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne) and the 3rd Kandak, 201st Corps landed on was roughly 10,000 feet above sea level. The air assault was part of a reconnaissance mission to determine the origin of rockets that were fired earlier at Forward Operating Base Naray which injured several Soldiers a few weeks prior.

“We came up here to confirm or deny enemy use of the hilltop,” said 1st Lt. Chris Richelderfer, HHT Executive Officer.



A Soldier from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), watches cattle run for their lives while a CH-47 helicopter prepares to land on Landing Zone Shetland during Operation Saray Has July 19 near Forward Operating Base Naray, Afghanistan.

“Seven Soldiers were injured from that attack,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Pedraza, Command Sgt. Maj. of 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne).

After air-assaulting onto the mountain, a patrol was dispatched to an adjacent mountain to scout out the terrain and possible enemy positions.

The rest of the Soldiers pulled security while Capt. Nathan Springer, HHT Commander, along with the Naray District Sub-Governor SamShu Rochman, talked with the local populace.

“I wanted the local government to have the lead when talking with the locals,” said Springer.

Rochman talked with civilians from the villages of Badermashal and Cherigal about security in the area.

While Rochman and Springer were talking with local citizens, wood smugglers accidentally walked their donkeys carrying stolen wood right into the meadow.

“The wood on the donkeys had been stolen from the Naray lumber yard two days before our mission,” said Springer.

Rochman was adamant about bringing the wood smugglers to justice. The wood smugglers were brought off the mountain back to Naray to face prosecution.

Operation Saray Has went better than both Springer and Rochman had planned.

“It validated the need to conduct future operations in the area to deny (Taliban extremist) that terrain,” said Springer.

Operation Saray Has II is already in the works, Springer added.

From the Brigade
Judge Advocate's
Office

"In almost every single case, the negligent discharge of personal weapons occurred when the user was attempting to perform cleaning and maintenance tasks on a weapon that had not been properly cleared."

Negligent Discharges are number one legal and safety concern

By Capt. Eric Hanson, TF Bayonet Trial Counsel, and Maj. Will M. Helixon, Brigade Judge Advocate

Negligent discharges (NDs) are the most common criminal offenses in TF Bayonet. This is unfortunate for three reasons. First, each time a round is negligently discharged, there is a risk that it will injure or kill a fellow Soldier. Second, they easily can and should be prevented by training and attention to detail when handling weapons. Third, it is the fastest way to lose hard-earned rank and financial benefits from being deployed to a combat zone. The good news is that we can examine the details of each ND and notice patterns – patterns that Soldiers and leaders can use to identify and mitigate the circumstances that lead to negligent discharges.

Over forty percent (40%) of NDs since TOA involve crew-served weapons mounted on a vehicle. This demonstrates that leaders can and must do more to ensure that vehicle gunners are trained, qualified, and comfortable using and clearing their weapons. Most of these NDs happen as the weapon is being loaded or unloaded at the beginning or end of a mission. This tells us that vehicle TCs need to take care to ensure that gunners know the procedures for loading and unloading their weapon systems. The M-240B is the most common crew-served weapon used in a negligent discharge.

Nearly half (50%) of the NDs during this period involved a Soldier accidentally firing his or her personally assigned weapon. In almost every single case, the negligent discharge of personal weapons occurred when the user was attempting to perform cleaning and maintenance tasks on a weapon that had not been properly cleared. From our very first days of military service, we train to always remove the magazine first and clear the weapon before working on it. Yet a Soldier in TF Bayonet forgets this simple concept an average of once every four to five days.

Negligent discharges are criminal offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Article 134 mentions two types of unlawful discharges. Most serious is the willful unauthorized weapons discharge. An intentional wrongful discharge can be punished by a dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and

confinement for up to one year. Negligent discharges are the second type, and legally, the less serious type of unlawful discharge. However, NDs can still result in confinement for up to three months and forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for three months.

What this means for the average Soldier is a possible Field Grade Article 15. For an E4 with over three years of service, punishment from a Field Grade Article 15 is a possible quick return to the rank of Private, and a loss of over \$7,000. And that is not to mention the lost sleep and body aches from up to 45 days of extra duty when you personally get to spend "quality time" with your First Sergeant or Command Sergeant Major.

But that is a walk-in-the-park compared to the consequences if a fellow Soldier is killed as a result of a ND. In that unfortunate event, the crime becomes manslaughter or negligent homicide, depending on the circumstances. As a result, the Soldier faces up to 10 years in prison and a dishonorable discharge. How the Soldier sleeps at night knowing his or her carelessness killed a fellow Soldier – a parent, a spouse, a friend – will become a personal demon that haunts one's conscience far greater than prison walls limit liberty or loss of pay limits purchases.

The bottom line is that NDs have serious consequences, including serious legal consequences for the offending Soldier. Soldiers must never, ever forget they have personal responsibility to maintain muzzle awareness and follow the orders of their superiors regarding when and where to have a round chambered. Soldiers and leaders must constantly train and re-train on knowing how to load, operate, clear, and unload their assigned weapons system.

Fortunately, only two TF Bayonet Soldiers have been injured by NDs so far, and both of those Soldiers have only themselves to blame. However, there have been four close calls. If we do not get better as individuals and as leaders at practicing, remembering, and following our weapons training, it is only a matter of time before a negligent discharge results in tragedy for an innocent bystander and a General court martial for the offender.

Bayonet Safety Office Sends

RECENTLY, IN ONE WEEK ALONE, THERE WERE THREE NEGLIGENT DISCHARGES (ND) IN THE BAYONET AOR RESULTING IN ONE INJURY. SKY SOLDIERS HAVE HAD A TOTAL OF NINE NDS SINCE ARRIVAL IN THEATER WITH TWO INJURIES. SINCE 1 JANUARY 2007 TROOPERS PARTICIPATING IN OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) HAVE HAD 95 ND'S RESULTING IN TWO FATALITIES WITH EIGHT INJURIES. THE ARMY HAD FIVE FATALITIES IN FY 05, SIX IN FY 06, AND FOUR SO FAR IN THIS FY DUE TO NEGLIGENT DISCHARGES. THERE ARE VARIOUS REASONS FOR THESE NEGLIGENT DISCHARGES. MOST PROMINENT WAS IMPROPER CLEARING PROCEDURES AND LACK OF SUPERVISION BY FIRST LINE LEADERS. THERE MUST BE NO DEVIATION FROM THE CLEARING PROCEDURES PUBLISHED IN THE CJTF-82 SAFETY SOP AND THE SAFE WEAPONS PULLOUT. BOTH DOCUMENTS CAN BE FOUND ON THE CJTF-82 SAFETY WEB SITE. LEADERS MUST DRILL HOME THE IMPORTANCE TO THEIR TROOPERS TO **THINK** WEAPONS SAFETY!

TREAT EVERY WEAPON AS IF IT IS LOADED.

HANDLE EVERY WEAPON WITH CARE.

IDENTIFY THE TARGET BEFORE YOU FIRE.

NEVER POINT THE MUZZLE AT ANYTHING YOU DON'T INTEND TO SHOOT.

KEEP THE WEAPON ON SAFE AND YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER UNTIL YOU INTEND TO FIRE.

SUPERVISE TROOPERS DURING WEAPONS CLEARING AND ENSURE THEY UNDERSTAND AND MAINTAIN WEAPONS IN THE APPROPRIATE STATUS.

YOU CAN "BE **SAFE**" IF, "**STANDARDS ARE FULLY ENFORCED**"

The Herd: Then and now



Eagle Cash saves time and money

By Pfc. Daniel M. Rangel,

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FENTY, Afghanistan – Eagle Cash is an innovative alternative to casual payments. Accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Eagle Cash is linked to servicemembers’ checking or savings accounts and it works just like a debit card.

Soon casual payments will be scaled down, said the Las Vegas, Nev. native, Army 1st Lt. Todd R. Anderson of 82nd Airborne Finance and a University of Nevada, Las Vegas, College of Business graduate.

Eagle Cash also solves a serious problem — getting funds to Coalition Forces in the field.

“It’s a very difficult process to get cash here into theater,” Anderson said.

Currency must be shipped from the U.S. Treasury Department under guard then be accounted for. The finance offices have Deputy Disbursement Officers in charge of the funds that are distributed.

“The best part of my job is making sure every one gets paid,” said Army Staff Sgt.

Daniel W. Ward III, Deputy Disbursement Officer of the FOB Fenty finance office.

Eagle Cash makes it easier for the DDOs to get the job done.

“It is the solution to the cash problem,” Anderson said. “It relieves the amount of actual cash that we have to have on hand here in theater.”

Eagle Cash funds are withdrawn from servicemembers’ checking or savings accounts. They can use the funds to make purchases at any of the Army Air Force Exchange Service stores that accept Eagle Cash.

“Pretty much any AAFES vendor is going to be set up with the ability to accept the Eagle Cash Card,” Anderson said.

There are plans for turning the local shops and bazaars into AAFES vendors. Plus, as long as there are enough funds on their Eagle Card, servicemembers can still receive cash back as if it were a debit card, Anderson said.

If servicemembers require more actual currency, they can still take the Eagle Cash Cards to their finance office and receive cash.

“I’d like to encourage every Soldier who is on a base large enough that supports Eagle Cash to go ahead and get the Eagle Cash Card because it’s going to be so much easier for them,” Anderson said.

To get an Eagle Cash Card, servicemembers fill out a form at the closest finance office where they’ll write down their bank account and routing number. Cashiers register the information with the U.S. Treasury Department to activate the Eagle Cash Card.

“You’re not charged fees with the Eagle Cash Card,” Anderson said. “Unlike your ATM card where you get charged ATM fees every time.”

Plus, Eagle Cash can be more convenient than casual payments.

“It’s easier and more convenient to be able to go up to a machine and load the funds onto the card rather than waiting in line with 50 to 100 people to get casual pay,” Anderson said.

Even servicemembers in the forward areas of Afghanistan will soon see the benefits of Eagle Cash.

“Places like Mehtar Lam and Kala Gush continue to develop and as they build their infrastructure, they’ll have the Eagle Cash Card out there,” Anderson said.

S3 Victorious in HHC BDE Squad Competition Aug. 18



We will not forget those who have fallen



Pfc. Thomas Wilson
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,
1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne)
KIA 27 August, 2007

Medal of Honor Recipient Spc. 4 Michael R. Blanchfield

Spc. 4 Michael R. Blanchfield, Company , 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic actions taken in Binh Dinh Province, the Republic of Vietnam on July 3, 1969.

Blanchfield was born Jan. 4, 1950 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He entered the service from Chicago, Illinois.

His citation reads as follows:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Blanchfield distinguished himself while serving as a rifleman in Company A on a combat patrol. The patrol surrounded a group of houses to search for suspects. During the search of one of the huts, a man suddenly ran out toward a nearby tree line. Spc. 4 Blanchfield, who was on guard outside the hut, saw the man, shouted for him to halt, and began firing at him as the man ignored the warning and continued to run. The suspect suddenly threw a grenade toward the hut and its occupants. Although the exploding grenade severely wounded Spc. 4 Blanchfield and several others, he regained his feet to continue the pursuit of the enemy. The fleeing enemy threw a second grenade which landed near Spc. 4 Blanchfield and several members of his patrol. Instantly realizing the danger, he shouted a warning to his comrades. Spc. 4



Spc. 4 Michael R. Blanchfield, Company A, 4th Battlalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic actions taken July 3, 1969 in Binh Dinh Province of the Republic of Vietnam.

Blanchfield unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for his safety, threw himself on the grenade, absorbing the full and fatal impact of the explosion. By his gallant action and self-

sacrifice, he was able to save the lives and prevent injury to four members of the patrol and several Vietnamese civilians in the immediate area. Spc. 4 Blanchfield's extraordinary courage and gallantry at the cost of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.

Blanchfield was 19 when he died.

His sacrifice is another reminder if the proud tradition of the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

