



Tien Bien Times

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 1, 2008

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

USO Tour Visits	2
TF Bayonet	
Commander's Corner	3
Destined Visits	5
Girls School	
OEF Dream Team	6
Doc Becker	8
DIMHRS-What Is It?	10
ANA and STB Engineers	11
Custom Quesadillas	12
Christmas Mail by the Ton	13
ANA Embrace Leadership	16
Chaplain's Corner	19
Fallen Heroes	19

A Soldier waits to 'hook up' underneath a Chinook helicopter while helping airlift two M777 lightweight 155mm Howitzers on Forward Operating Base Fenty Dec. 20 in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.



M777s arrive in N2KL

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

JALALABAD AIRFIELD – Afghanistan – Commanders in Task Force Bayonet are starting off the New Year with a new and very valuable asset: M777 lightweight 155mm Howitzers.

Chinook helicopters flew in the new M777s to various forward operating bases the last two weeks of December.

The M777 will replace some of the currently fielded M198 155mm towed Howitzers that will be moved to other locations.

"The new Howitzers are a vast improvement over the old

ones," explained 1st. Lt. Anthony Demarco, Fusion Company's Executive Officer, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne). Demarco was assisting in the fielding of the new guns.

The new Howitzer is lighter, can shoot farther and is more accurate than the older Howitzer

"The triple seven can put steel on steel," said Staff. Sgt. Franklin Zenon, a Howitzer mechanic in Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 321st Field Artillery Regiment (Airborne). Zenon and his team of Soldiers will be working with the 173rd ABCT manning the new Howitzer.



Continued on page 2

The M777 is made out of titanium, and is roughly 5,000 lbs lighter than the M198 making it more mobile and user friendly.

"It also minimizes collateral damage by being extremely accurate," said Zenon who is originally from New York.

The M777 can fire a Raytheon / Bofors XM982 Excalibur GPS / Inertial Navigation-guided extended-range 155mm projectile. In short, the round is GPS guided for more accuracy and rocket assisted for longer range. The Excalibur round is rated as being accurate within 10 meters. This is the biggest advantage of the M777.

"We can fire a round four miles off course and it will still come back and hit its target," said Zenon.

Being able to safely and accurately hit a target with indirect fire support is crucial to combat operations.

"The triple seven and Excalibur (rounds) are going to save Soldier's lives and minimize civilian casualties in the process," explained Zenon.

USO Tour Visits Bayonet

*Story and photos by Sgt. Henry Selzer,
173rd ABCT Public Affairs*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FENTY, Afghanistan – On the morning of Dec. 22, a plane full of holiday cheer landed on the air strip at Forward Operating Base Fenty, bringing country music artists, cheerleaders, and the Sergeant Major of the Army, to help ring in the holiday season.

The guests included country music artists Darryl Worley, Keni Thomas, a group of Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders, and super model Leanne Tweeden.

The show began with an introduction from Leanne Tweeden, followed by Daryl Worley who performed his hit song 'Have You Forgotten' that he wrote specifically for the troops.

After Worley, country music artist and former Army Ranger Keni Thomas came on and showed his appreciation by going on stage and sharing a couple emotional moments with the troops, and singing his song he made for the soldiers called 'The Last Band of Brothers.'

After Thomas the Dallas Cowboy's cheerleaders brought a few willing volunteers on stage and performed a dance routine to the song 'All I Want for Christmas Is You.'

The performers enjoyed the chance to spend time with the deployed troops, and show them that they care.

"You go through a huge range of emotion, and what we do comes from the heart, it's our way of saying thank you to the men and women that are deployed," said Darryl Worley.

After the show, Soldiers were able to interact with the guests by having their pictures taken and get their autographs.

Soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team pose for a photo on top of a Humvee with Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders, and super model Leanne Tweeden Dec. 22 during the USO Christmas Tour at FOB Fenty.



"I think it's good that people from back home come out to show their support and love to the Soldiers and to take time away from being with their families on the holidays to spend with us," said Staff Sgt. Jesse T. Beopple, 173rd ABCT.

"It's an indescribable high. It makes you feel great and that what you are doing is making a difference," said Worley.

"We love coming over here and spending time with the troops, and letting everyone know just how much we appreciate everything they're doing for us," said Laura Beke, of the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders, "and on behalf of everyone back home just to say thank you and we love you."



Commander's Corner

To the paratroopers, family and friends of Task Force Bayonet.

The beginning of 2008 not only marks the beginning of a new year, but also a turning point in the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team's deployment. We have reached the halfway point and I'm extremely proud of the progress we've made throughout our Area of Operations.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say Happy New Year and best wishes to all of the incredible men and women of Task Force Bayonet, your dedication to the 173rd and our mission inspires me on a daily basis.

And to all the friends and loved ones standing by us back home, I'd like to thank you again for your enduring support, which gives us our foundation and strength to stay strong through such a trying time. The holidays are a tough time to be without family and friends, but the Sky Soldier family takes care of its own, and will continue to sustain us throughout the New Year.

The New Year is also a time to make a fresh start or

a resolution. Maybe it's to quit smoking, work out more, or just lose those holiday pounds. Whatever they may be, I wish you all success in accomplishing your goals and setting yourself up for success in 2008.

During the coming year in AO Bayonet, we will be seeing an increase in Afghan's taking the initiative. It's been a challenging road to get here, but our efforts to work with and train our Afghan counterparts are positively affecting every aspect of their lives, from governance and security to education and agricultural development. As they take on more and more responsibility for their communities, we are able to see right before our eyes what our mission can accomplish when we all work toward a common goal. For this all of you should hold your heads high, and know that I am extremely proud of you.

Unfortunately, we cannot look ahead without also remembering those who are not here to do so with us.



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

This past month we mourn the loss of three Sky Soldiers, all brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and who will be remembered forever as heroes. My thoughts and prayers go out to their families and loved ones. I can only say that these men will not have died in vain, and their efforts have made a difference in this world that will last.

Sky Soldiers,
COL Preysler
Bayonet 6

Tien Bien Times
Commander COL Charles Preysler
Command Sgt Maj. CSM Isaia Vimoto
Public Affairs Officer MAJ Nicholas Sternberg
Editor SFC Jacob Caldwell
Writers SFC Jacob Caldwell, SGT Brandon Aird, SPC Henry Selzer, SPC Gregory Argentieri, PFC Daniel Rangel
The Tien Bien Times monthly newsletter is an unofficial publication of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team and the U.S. Army

authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. The newsletter is published and distributed monthly in an electronic format. The newsletter can be viewed on the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team website at <http://www.173abnbde.setaf.army.mil>. 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.



DoD113 Conceptual Design by: Tiara Smith, Department of Defense Education Activity, Aviano, Italy District • Slogan by: YNC Karen Bassingthwaite, USN, Tampa, Florida
Federal Voting Assistance Program, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1155 • www.fvap.gov • www.fvap.gov • vote@fvap.ncr.gov • (800) 438-VOTE

The upcoming election year is upon us. During the year of 2008 we will decide who will be given the honor of heading our nation for the next four years and the command wants to ensure you have the opportunity to let your voice be heard in the upcoming federal, state, and local elections. Although U.S. citizens are not required to vote, citizens will be afforded the opportunity to participate in all federal, state, and local elections with the help of unit voting assistance officers (VAO). These VAOs are specifically designated by the command to assist you in requesting your absentee ballot by helping you fill out the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), sending in your FPCA to your local election official in order to receive your Absentee Ballot and cast your vote per guidelines set forth by your state or territory. For more information please contact your unit Voting Assistance Officer.

TF Bayonet VA Project Mgr
SSG Marcus Dandridge

TF Headhunter
SFC Alfredo Woods

TF Rock
CPT Carlos Ramos

TF Diamondback
1LT Michael Keebaugh

TF Saber
1LT Tom Pae

TF King
2LT Hugo Estrada

TF Raptor
CPT Diane Collver

TF Repel
CPT Jennifer Carr

Nangarhar PRT
2LT Trevor Rafferty

Nuristan PRT
CPO Kyra Maillard

Kunar PRT
CPT David Feldner

Mehtar Lam PRT
MSgt Bernadette Gregory

Destined Company visits school in Bar Narang



1st Sgt. Mitchell Rucker, Destined Company First Sergeant, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne), opens a bag filled with school supplies Dec. 4 at a school in Bar Narang, Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

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

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Paratroopers from Destined Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), also known as "The Rock", visited a school nestled along the banks of the Pech River Dec. 4 in Bar Narang, Afghanistan.

During the visit Capt. Michael T. Jackson and 1st Sgt. Mitchell Rucker, Destined Company's Commander and First Sergeant, talked with school teachers and village elders about the possibility of future projects to improve the school.

"Education is very important," Jackson explained.

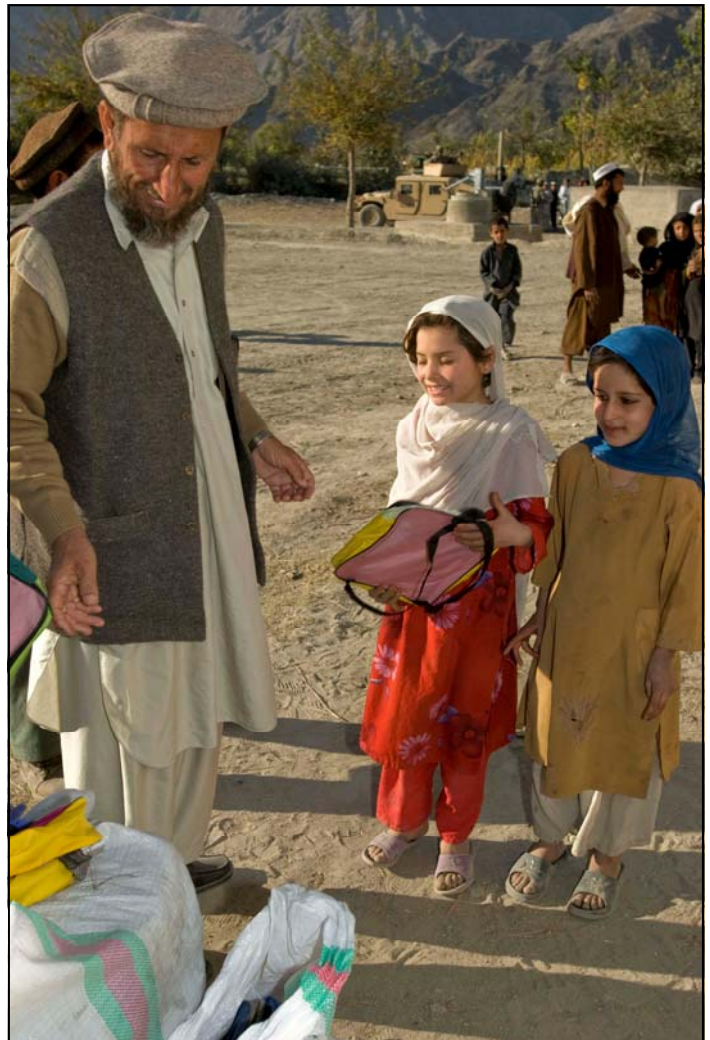
Afghan National Police helped Destined Company provide security while Jackson, Rucker and Narang Sub-Governor Haii Tahulam took a short tour of the school.

Jackson talked with school teachers about the possibilities of renovating some of the pre-existing buildings and also the potential to build some new class rooms.

"I need your input so I can sell the project and try to get funding," Jackson explained.

After the tour Tahulam handed out bags donated by Destined Company to local school girls. The bags contained pens, pencils, notepads and other school supplies.

Before Destined Company left they also gave the school humanitarian aid and promised to visit again soon.



Narang Sub-Governor Haii Tahulam hands out school supplies Dec. 4 donated by Destined Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne), at a school in Bar Narang, Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

In the field: OEF Dream Team provides a helping hand

By Lt Col Gordon Phillips, USAF

Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team Commander

Thirteen days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on our nation, the Commander in Chief announced a course of action for the mounting U.S. response:

"Make no mistake about it, I've asked our military to be ready for a reason. But the American people must understand this war on terrorism will be fought on a variety of fronts, in different ways. The front lines will look different from the wars of the past.

"So I told the American people we will direct every resource at our command to win the war against terrorists: every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence. We will starve the terrorists of funding, turn them against each other, rout them out of their safe hiding places and bring them to justice."

President George W. Bush, Sept 24, 2001, The White House

For Soldiers, Airmen and civilians of the Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team in Eastern Afghanistan, the President's declaration of the view at the front lines rings true every day.

With boots on the ground since April, our days vary significantly – mentoring Afghan government representatives at a humanitarian assistance delivery one day, conducting quality-control inspections on road construction another day, meeting with politicians and tribal elders representing their people in the provincial capital the next – the list goes on as ordinary Americans of the PRT complete extraordinary missions in this complex counterinsurgency fight.

Our mission is ambitious; we're responsible for improving stability, governance and reconstruction in Nangarhar province following nearly 30 years of war. To achieve this, Airmen and Soldiers are teamed with professionals from the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Our mission takes us on many hours-long convoys where we interact directly with Afghans in remote areas, with the unique responsibility of helping them rebuild their country. To provide perspective, this effort is equal in scale to the rebuilding of Japan and Germany after WWII.

The PRT mentors Afghan government officials and security forces to provide Afghans with the state representation and security they need. The goal: a stronger Afghan government that will provide essential services for its people and maintain security and stability. The mentorship and training piece is absolutely critical to the future of this nation.

In June, the first-ever Conference to establish a Provincial Development Plan brought district-level tribal



and elected civilian representatives together to prioritize the needs of Nangarhar for the Afghan National Development Strategy. While the end product was predicted – the right mix of infrastructure and programs to best meet the needs of the people – the event itself was unprecedented. Afghan citizens had never before had a voice in the budget process affecting their province. Local Afghan men, women, nomads and the disabled were heard in a powerful and public way. The event was democracy in action.

With input from the provincial governor, our PRT assesses community needs and develops life-changing contracts to build schools, mosques, markets, government centers, roads, medical capability, communications and improved infrastructure. To date, we've obligated nearly \$12M on 35 projects to improve life for more than two million people. One contract valued at \$10.5M will provide more than 25 kilometers of strategic roadway construction. In Jalalabad City, businessmen are making money and serious development of sustainable fruit and vegetable export capacity is being studied. The vision: world-class Nangarhar produce reaching markets in neighboring countries.

Success in governance and development is tied directly to security in Nangarhar. Today, Afghan National Security Forces are first responders to security events in the province. This is a credit to provincial leadership and ANSF mentorship led by our battlespace partners - Soldiers from Task Force Raptor, 173rd Special Troops Battalion (Airborne).

As significant as being part of a historical mission is the opportunity to witness first-hand development of the contagious and inspiring leadership and

Continued from previous page

character within PRT members serving their nation in one of the most dangerous, non-doctrinal missions in this long war on terror. By example, after mentorship from leaders of his civil affairs team, a Private First Class planned and led a mission assisting the education minister to deliver school supplies and tents to a village where the existing school was an unshaded dirt field in the heat of the Afghan summer.

With bench stock steel, a vehicle maintenance Senior Airman fashioned secondary crew-served weapon mounts for HMMWV turrets improving force protection for our missions. Army National Guard Infantrymen from our security force -- electrical engineers and stock brokers, as well as other occupations in their civilian lives -- join Nangarhar government officials in power and finance technical working groups hosted by the United Nations.

In the seconds after my Executive Officer's HMMWV was struck by a suicide bomber, the XO assessed the status of his team and led them all to an effective fighting position. Defining their character, on that day, and each day since, PRT Airmen and Soldiers continue to enter the battle space and make the mission happen, without hesitation.

My most junior Airmen and Soldiers plan missions and lead highly successful meetings with tribal elders and political leaders. Junior officers and NCOs make tough calls, ensuring team safety and completion of the mission. Senior NCOs and Officers lead pre-combat inspections and mentor troops through the personal challenges of a 15-month mission. Everyone is vital; the infantry security force, communications, medical, civil affairs, vehicle maintenance, police trainers -- everyone.

Key to our success is family, friends and community members back home. Their support allows us to do our job to the best of our ability. It allows us focus on what is truly important -the need to complete the mission correctly, safely and with honor everyday -- because we all have so much to return home to. Each letter, e-mail, phone call and care package underscores the greatest implied task: to meet the great expectations of the American people and do great things. We represent them, and we do this proudly, every day.

The future will determine this team's true impact, but it is personally rewarding to help the Afghan people in a direct way; it is an honor to do so leading PRT Nangarhar.



'Doc' Becker defines combat medic



Pfc. Sarah Becker, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, Special Troops Battalion, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Military Police platoon, greets local children before teaching a first aid class conducted Dec. 1 in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

*Story and photos by Pfc. Daniel M. Rangel
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

NANGARHAR, Afghanistan — "It's a very prestigious thing to be called 'Doc' when you're around people that you work with," said Army Pfc. Sarah Becker, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, Special Troops Battalion, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Military Police platoon. "It means that they respect you. It's not about the rank, it's about

what you can do for them."

The Greenwich, Ohio native has spent most of the year deployed as an Army medic gaining the respect of Sky Soldiers across the Nangarhar Province. Becker, a young and petite Soldier, now spends much of her time teaching Afghan National Police personnel her specialty and held her last class Dec. 1 in Jalalabad.

This isn't the first class

she's taught either. Becker estimates she has conducted between 20 to 30 classes since she's been in Afghanistan. Her supervisor, Army Staff Sgt. Victor M. Diaz, explained why there is such a high demand for these classes.

"We always get new [ANP] coming in," Diaz said. "So we're constantly training the new personnel for each situation such as how to give first aid, how to react to contact and so on."

The classes focus on first-responder care. Afghan National Security Forces are frequently faced with life or death situations on the battlefield and their knowledge of first aid can save many of their own lives. And although the classes are focused on battlefield situations, ANSF forces are encouraged to take their new knowledge of first aid to help their local communities with more common health issues. In an evaluation of Becker's performance in the field and in the classroom, Diaz explained that Becker is a competent and thorough professional.

"She does an outstanding job. She knows what she's doing," Diaz said. "When she gives a class, she goes step-by-step. She doesn't miss any steps. Soldiers ask her questions and she answers in detail. That's the way that we want her to do it."

Becker's last class focused on having an ANP platoon learn the meaning of the acronym MARCH.

"MARCH is an acronym that one of my senior ranking [Noncommissioned Officers] taught me," Becker said. "It stands for Massive hemorrhage, Airway, Respiration, Circulation and Head trauma. It's all things that you can look at in your initial assessment as you're packaging

Continued from previous page

up your casualty to get them on to higher facility care.”

Becker's instruction sticks with her students who practice the techniques she teaches, said ANP 2nd Lt. Abdul Waqaf, operation team leader.

“We review it with our Soldiers,” Waqaf said. “We get a lot of good training from [Coalition Forces]. If we don't review than we will not be able to remember.”

ANSF listen to Becker because she brings with her ample combat experience. Over the past summer she was attached to the 66th Military Police Company in Camp Torkham by the Pakistani border here in Nangarhar Province. She has been on convoys that have been attacked while with the 66th MPs

and has treated numerous combat injuries.

“I actually had four traumas that I took care of,” Becker said. “They were on different days [only] about a week apart.”

When she's not conducting a class or treating injuries, Becker is pulling security like every other Soldier in her platoon.

“The number one priority every time we get out of the vehicle is to pull security,” Becker said.

The life of a combat medic is stressful, the missions are plenty and the hours are long, but Becker handles the challenge well and manages to keep the spirits up of the Sky Soldiers she works with.

“She's very friendly,

she's kind. She likes to work.

She's a hard worker,” Diaz said.

“She's constantly going on missions because she's the only medic we have in the platoon. If we have two missions in one day, she has to go on both missions. We'll come back from one and she'll jump from one vehicle and go into the other. She never complains.”

Becker is a well of inspiration to those around her. She loves the people in her unit and the local Afghans, especially the children. Her inspiration comes from helping people.

“Being a medic I get to help people,” Becker said. “I get to not only help U.S. Soldiers but I help the kids too. And as you can see it puts a smile on my face.”



Pfc. Sarah Becker, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, Special Troops Battalion, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Military Police platoon, pulls security at a bridge with Afghan National Police after her first aid class concluded Dec. 1 in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

DIMHRS Brings Self-service Capabilities to Soldiers 24/7

Everyone needs to get ready for the coming of the apocalypse -- not really. But on 1 October 2008, the Army will transform its Human Resources System and unveil the Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System (DIMHRS). This system is part of a congressionally mandated program spearheaded by the Department of Defense. It will significantly transform the way the Army provides personnel and pay support.

The cost savings to the Army will be significant. Overall, 74 different systems, subsystems and databases will go away when DIMHRS goes live. No more long lines at the Battalion S1 to update your records. This self-service web based system will bring 24/7 capability to the individual Soldier. The Soldier will be able to access their records, make a limited number of updates on themselves and their family members. Of course, the Brigade and Battalion S1 will still be there for your support. Not all data elements will be given up to the individual. An actual list of who does what will be forthcoming in the June/July 2008 training



that will be made available to our Task Force while we remain deployed in Afghanistan.

Under DIMHRS the vision of paperless comes to mind. Soldiers will be required to initiate requests for: assignments, training, retirement, record updates, awards, family-member travel, transition from the Reserve to Regular Commission, enlistment extensions, various waivers and enlisted commissioning programs. This list is not all encompassing but is bound to grow as the Department of Defense moves to this idea of an individual Soldier maintained and paperless system. DIMHRS' self-service capabilities will also allow Soldiers to more efficiently start, stop or modify discretionary allotments and savings bonds; complete an Employee Withholding Request (Form W-4); complete an Employee Reissue W-2 Request; change personal direct-deposit information; and change their state of legal-residence declaration.

"This real-time functionality will significantly decrease the amount of time needed to process a Soldier's personnel ac-

tion requests while improving accuracy and virtually turning the personnel-action process into an almost paperless environment", said WO1 Coleman, TF Bayonet HR Technician. "Soldiers will be able to track the progress of their requests from initial submission to final approval. Electronic signatures, e-mail notifications and automatic routing are also available."

Another key function in DIMHRS is the view-only screen, which lets Soldiers view such personnel and pay items as family member information; Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD 214) and any corrections to their DD Form 214; Service Members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) election; Leave & Earnings Statements and Wage and Tax Statement (Form W-2); Record Brief; currently assigned checklists; a record of civilian and military education, awards, contracts, and evaluations; and a Department of the Army photo.

For more information, visit the Army DIMHRS Program Office's Web site at www.armydimhrs.army.mil.

ANA and STB combat engineers continue joint training in Nangarhar

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

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan— American and Afghan combat engineers exploded two weapons caches during joint demolitions training Dec. 3 outside Forward Operating Base Koghyani, in Nangarhar Province in Eastern Afghanistan.

As often as twice a month Soldiers from Alpha Company, 173rd Special Troops Battalion (Airborne), 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team and 4th Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, Afghan National Army Soldiers hold joint demolition training operations of unexploded ordnance.

“We like to do joint demolition training with the ANA. We partner with them,” said Alpha Company Commander Cpt. Jonathan Zimmer, “They are combat engineers, this is their skill, and we are combat engineers too.”

Besides demolition training, the soldiers of Alpha Company teach basic rifle marksmanship, and drill and ceremony to the ANA. This is the second company of ANA soldiers to come through FOB Koghyani since the 173rd arrived in May.

“At one point we want to turn this country over to them,” said Sgt. Stephen M. Dodge, a combat engineer from Alpha Company who was lead trainer for the demolition mission.

“We have to ‘backbone’ the ANA and get them up to speed, so they’re able to accomplish those daily tasks and missions, from demolitions, to patrolling, to holding down security on a FOB.”

Zimmer also sees the necessity of the training and says it’s good for both armies.

“We train them, and we get the training benefit,

but also they get the training. We have a good working relationship with the ANA,” said Zimmer.

The International Security Assistance Force has a Small Rewards Program that pays money to Afghan citizens for the recovery and turn-in of weapons caches. The intent of the program is to encourage local Afghans

to help make their country safe. The caches destroyed this day were turned in as a part of that program.

“Usually what gets turned in are RPG heads, rocket propelled grenade boosters, mortar rounds, old ammunition, grenades, mines,” said Zimmer. “We’ll get some anti-tank mines, anti-personnel mines, and sometimes we get IED making material.”

“This country is filled with ordnance left here by the Russian’s since the ‘80s,” said Dodge.

Dodge has completed two advanced schools for combat engineers. He graduated from Sapper School, and is a demolitions expert. Also, just before this deployment, he sacrificed

his personnel time on block leave, and chose instead to go to school for six weeks and become an Explosive Ordnance Clearance Agent. This EOCA qualification enables Dodge to take care of any unexploded ordnance.

“EOCA is a valuable class to have, it relates pretty well to the mission, said Dodge. “It’s pretty much what I’ve been doing the whole time I’ve been deployed in theatre three times.”

When Soldiers are not fighting, they are training, preparing for the next battle, always remaining Army Strong.

Zimmer says this ANA Company is very well trained, strong, and fully capable of doing independent operations.



Sgt. Stephen M. Dodge, a combat engineer from Alpha Company, 173rd STB explains safety procedures before exploding a weapons cache during a joint demolition training mission with the Afghan National Army's 4th Kandak, Engineer Company, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, Dec. 3 outside FOB Koghyani in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan.

Extra effort in the kitchen keeps

Destined's morale high

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

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan—"The Rock believes highly that food service support improves morale," explained Sgt. Joseph Smith, from Jackson, Michigan.

Smith is the dining facility manager at Forward Operating Base Fortress and member of 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), which is known as "The Rock."

Paratroopers in Destined Company and a platoon from Chosen Company, 2-503rd, live at Forward Operating Base Fortress, which is near the Chowkay Valley in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

The FOB is named Fortress due to the 30-foot walls and four guard towers that surround the base. Luckily for Destined and Chosen Company, Fortress is home to three cooks from "The Rock's" support company, Fusion Company.

The cooks prepare food for the 150-200 Soldiers who call Fortress home. Food and other logistical supplies are driven up to FOB Fortress from FOB Fenty by Paratroopers in Fusion Company. The food comes in prepared packages, which are downloaded, prepared and cooked by Smith's team.

Smith explained they could simply cook the same meals over and over again, but they choose not to. The leadership in "The Rock" gives the cooks freedom to use their imagination when preparing meals.

"We get to put our personality into our cooking," explained Spc. Jesse Ramirez, from Twin Cities, Minnesota. "Being able to add your own touch makes things more exciting."

Smith explained that their dining facility was able to receive extra cooking utensils, which enabled them to cook a bigger variety of food.

"We can do omelets, crab cakes, quesadillas- pretty much anything you want," said Smith. "We even have taco night."

The three cooks work 12 to 16 hours a day, said Spc. Nicholas Krueger.

"Not all our time is spent in the kitchen," Krueger explained. "We also help pull FOB security, download convoys, and organize supplies."

Recently Smith and his team stayed up over 32 hours in the kitchen to make sure Destined and Chosen Companies' Thanksgiving meal was one



Sgt. Joseph Smith, dining facility manager at Forward Operating Base Fortress, cooks quesadillas for Soldiers Dec. 6. Smith took orders and custom cooked quesadillas to how the Soldier wanted it.

to remember.

"We take pride in our cooking," said Ramirez. "Thanksgiving is our time to show off."

"We work long hours," said Smith, "but we enjoy seeing happy Soldiers."

Christmas brings tons of mail to TF Bayonet

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

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FENTY, Afghanistan— Soldiers from 458th Adjutant General Postal Company stationed here at Forward Operating Base Fenty run a central mail hub for the entire Task Force Bayonet area of operation that is responsible for handling, sorting, and processing all in-coming and out-going letters and packages through Jalalabad, Afghanistan, for thousands of Soldiers.

The holiday season began early for the military postal service on FOB Fenty. At the beginning of November, the packages and letters being handled tripled and are expected to climax over the days surrounding Christmas, but will continue until the end of January. Mail before the holidays was averaging three to four thousand pounds a day. Since November, the mail has increased to between eight and thirteen thousand pounds a day.

"Santa Claus is the little white planes, and we are the elves," said Spc. Tanya M. Runnels, 34, from Jasper, Texas, with Headquarter and Headquarters Company, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion (Airborne), part of the FOB Fenty postal team. "We're working our butts off to make sure the mail gets out to the soldiers, it's important, it's Christmas time, that is our job, we're the mail people."



Staff Sgt. Brian R. Boss, 458th Adjutant General Postal Company tightens a tie-down and prepares a bulk pallet of out going mail Dec. 20 that will be placed in a C-130 Hercules at FOB Fenty, Afghanistan.

"We get to supply the mail for all the Joes out there, the guys who are really fighting the war, so it's good stuff, and it makes us feel good," said Sgt. Brian R. Boss, 42, from Valliant, Okla., 458th AG Postal Company. "Since arriving at FOB Fenty in February, the 458th has personally handled, carried, either loading and unloading planes, or loading and unloading helicopters, 900-950 thousand pounds of mail, and before our deployment is over in February, we will have moved more than one million pounds of mail."

Three times a week, Soldiers from FOB Torkham convoy two hours to FOB Fenty to pick-up mail, supplies, and pick-up or drop off Soldiers.

"The mail means a lot since we're away from our families," said Spc. Jonathan S. Morgan, 21, from Sissonville, W.Va., 66th MP Company, based at FOB Torkham. "The first things the Joes do when they see our trucks come back, is they come running."

Spc. Isaac Lopez, 20, from Bloomington, Minn., 147th Personnel Support Battalion, part of the FOB Fenty postal team said the big challenge of his job mostly involves working long hours from airplanes arriving late with mail due to bad weather. Sometimes the challenge is trying to read the handwriting on the letters and packages, but stresses the most important thing is making sure everybody gets their mail.

"I have sent out packages and cards on four different occasions with outstanding service," said Pfc. Robert J. Logan III, 45, from Baltimore, Md., a parachute rigger, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. "They go above and beyond their call of duty; it's always an A-plus positive experience. My hat is off to them."

Recently the mail has suffered delays at Bagram Airfield due to bad weather, with mail falling three to four days behind schedule. Sgt. Boss refers to Bagram Air Base as the fish-bowl because it sits surrounded by mountains. All mail arriving in Afghanistan presently arrives in Bagram.

"Bad weather comes to the fish-bowl and sits there, so every two to three days there's weather problems causing delays, with late or canceled flights," said Boss.

But mail during the holidays is more important than normal and extra efforts were made to get the Christmas mail to the Task Force Bayonet Soldiers.

Alpha Company, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion took a holiday break from their normal mission of running ammo, and delivered instead 22,500 pounds of Christmas morale for the Soldiers. Dec. 23, Alpha Company arrived at FOB Fenty with two 20-foot containers, several 5-tons, and a few jingle trucks full of Christmas mail.

"We ran a convoy down to Bagram to bring back the mail, I guess we were actually the reindeer bringing the Christmas presents over the mountains," said Staff Sgt. Fred Fortune, 44, from Philadelphia, Pa., Alpha Company, 173rd BSB. "We called this mission Operation Santa Claus."

Once the mail arrived at Fenty, helicopters and another combat logistics patrol immediately took up the mail for outlying FOBs in the Bayonet area of operation to make sure that all Bayonet Soldiers got their mail by Christmas.

December snap shots



Soldiers of Task Force Rock take time between eating holiday chow, drinking eggnog, and story telling for a few photos with Sgt. Maj. Santa Claus Dec. 24 at Fire Base Vegas in Afghanistan. Photo by Spc. Gregory Argentieri

Sgt. Maj. Santa Claus of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team with his M240 machine gun and Staff Sgt. Shelton, take a break from the holiday festivities to do some shooting Dec. 24 at Fire Base Vegas in Afghanistan. Photo by Spc. Gregory Argentieri



Soldiers from Company B, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion pose for a group shot after completing a "Jingle Run" Dec. 20 at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Afghanistan. Photo by 2nd Lt. Monica Comeaux.



(Left) 1st Lt. Kristin Preczewski, Executive Officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion receives a phone call from United States Senator Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., who wished her and everyone at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Jalalabad, Afghanistan a Merry Christmas on Dec. 19, 2007.



(Above) Capt. David Rowland and Sgt Major Jeremiah Inman congratulate Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd ABCT during an awards and promotion ceremony Dec. 1 at Jalalabad Airfield, Afghanistan.

(Left) Master Sgt. Eric C. Post, a Grand Rapids, Mich. native living in Detroit and advisor to the Afghan National Army 3rd Brigade surgeon, conducts the final combat medic class of a five-day series held Dec. 8 at the Jalalabad Garrison Troop Medical Clinic.

ANA embrace leadership role in Nangarhar

Capt. Jonathan Zimmer (right), Alpha Company Commander, 173rd STB, Lt. Col. Ziarat Gul Ahmad Zai (center), Chief of Training, Unit 03, Afghan National Police, and Afghan National Army Cpt. Hanifullah (left), Commander for the Engineering Company, 4th Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps talk with the Koghyani District sub-governor, and village elders at a shura Dec. 3 at the Memlah Gardens in Nangarhar Province in Eastern Afghanistan.



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

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Soldiers from FOB Koghyani conducted a combined mission led by the Afghan National Army to pass out humanitarian aid on their way to a shura at Memlah Gardens Dec. 3 in Nangarhar Province to address some concerns the village elders had expressed about the Afghan National Police.

Cpt. Hanifullah, Commander for the Engineering Company, 4th Kandak, 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps and his soldiers chose the mission's route, stopping along the way to handout wool blankets, shoes, rice, and other items to help lessen the impact and hardship of the upcoming winter on local families. Convoy leader 1st Lt. Michael P. Carvelli, and his soldiers from Alpha Company, 173rd Special Troops Battalion (Airborne), remained on the sidelines pulling security and supporting the ANA.

"I was the leader of this mission," said Hanifullah. "I was very happy because my personnel did a good job, and the people were very happy."

Hanifullah was happy to do the job and the U.S. Forces were happy to let him take the lead.

"Like today, Cpt. Hanifullah made the call on the spot; 'hey we need to stop here. These are the people who don't get anything because we usually go to the main meeting areas.' His men passed out the [humanitarian aid], he knows what he's doing," said Capt. Jonathan Zimmer, Alpha Company Commander, 173rd STB. "He knows how to persuade the folks, and the folks are going to remember it. Where he passed out HA was key areas, like choke points where you would put IEDs and things like that. He made a good call on the areas where we stopped."

At Memlah Gardens the shura was headed by Hanifullah, and Lt. Col. Ziarat Gul Ahmad Zai, Chief

of Training, Unit 03, Afghan National Police. U.S. Army Paratroopers were also there but in a strictly supporting role.

The Koghyani District sub-governor and the local maliks (elders) voiced their concerns about some past coalition activities in the area.

"They aired out all the stuff and came to an agreement. The Lt. Col. for the ANP says he's got it, and will take care of his men, and this won't happen again," said Zimmer. "The malik's were satisfied. We were basically the conduit making sure the shura went well and the topics discussed were actually resolved."

"Cpt. Hanifullah understands COIN (counter insurgency operations), he understands he has to persuade the people to support the government of Afghanistan, support the Army, support the Police, and basically turn away the Taliban or ACM (anti-coalition militia)," said Zimmer.

This is Zimmer's second tour with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team in Afghanistan. He was here during OEF VI and he can see the improvement from then to now.

"My last ANA unit was pretty squared away and this one is even better, so it's like every time I see a new ANA unit, these guys are getting good, their getting really good," said Zimmer. "This unit right here is fully capable of doing independent operations, they have already proved it."

"We are making sure everybody understands that the ANP and the ANA are there to support them and we support the ANP and ANA," said Carvelli.

"We're not leading anymore. The ANP and ANA tell us where they want to go and what they want to do, and we're there to support them the best we can."

Chaplain's Corner

It is hard to think of a new year when everything around you is the same. When it seems like nothing changes and life is like the movie Ground Hog Day. The New Year is about starting over, resolutions, and turning over a new leaf. But how are we to do that out here?

Will this year be just another year for you? Just another year that you wake up going from one activity to another until the day ends and you go to sleep and start over the next day doing the same thing? We often times talk about the days going by aimlessly but when you string enough days together with no plan or purpose they become a year and the years become decades and then life is over and what was it all about? What was the purpose of it anyway?

New Year's resolutions are common this time of year. They usually fall in the category of starting to do something, or to stop doing something on the first of January and making a commitment that you will do or avoid that action every day for a year. Some will decide to exercise everyday or maybe stop smoking. But what often happens is we start off with great enthusiasm for the first week or two and then we mess up. We miss an exercise day or on a particularly stressful day, we take a smoke. Then we say that we failed at having 365 days of doing or avoiding whatever, so we give up.

Why I am writing this after the first of January? Because, now it's too late to start a 365 day plan for 2008. This is good because most of us fail at those goals at one point in the year anyway. But there is something you can decide on for the New Year and the rest of your life. You can decide on your purpose in life.

Deciding on your purpose in life falls in a completely different category. There is no test or any-

thing like missing a day and failing at your goal. It is deciding on why your are here and what you want to do with your life. What you want to accomplish. It is not important if you have a failure on one day or another in your life, we all have those days. You just don't want to have a failed life. People have a failed life by giving up or by simply not planning. When you have a purpose you do not have an unplanned life. Now while we may not plan on failing, when we acknowledge that failure is just a part of life and not life itself, it doesn't define us or cause us to give up. Writing out your purpose in life is stating something that defines "success" for you. What you believe is important, not what others say is important. It is deciding on what the center of your life will be. The poet Robert Frost said:

*Two roads diverged in a wood and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

What are you going to live for? What are you going to build you life around? With so many different ways to go and things to do how do you decide?

You can decide by looking at the purpose you were created for. You were created for a purpose. And the talents and desires that are deep in your soul are there to help you achieve that purpose. Look at the things you are good at, the things that you like to do, to accomplish. What do you want to be remembered for? What do you want people to say about you when someone asks what kind of person you are? Being famous or popular or rich are all the results of what people have done, not the purpose itself.

Look to your heart, your deepest desires and find yourself.

Get alone somewhere and sit down with pen and paper and think of one question: "If I could do with my life what I most want to do. What would I do?"

Deep down inside you will find the reason God created you and made you the way you are. Let your purpose flow out of those talents and desires that God has put in you. Clarify it and write it down. This will define your character, what you achieve in life what you will be remembered for.

Get alone somewhere and sit down with pen and paper and think of one question: "If I could do with my life what I most want to do. What would I do?" Look deep in your heart and ask God what he put there so you can find it and live. Someone put it this way:

Don't ask yourself what the world needs.

Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, Because what the world needs are people who have come alive.

What makes you come alive? Find it, and you will find you purpose.

Happy New Year
Chaplain Nelson

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

We will not forget those who have fallen



Cpl. Joshua Blaney
Delta Company,
1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne)
KIA December 12, 2007



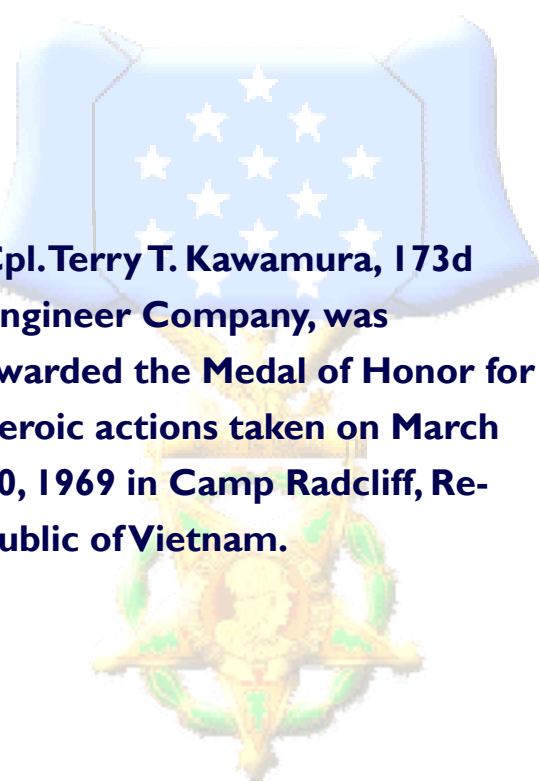
Staff Sgt. Michael Gabel
Delta Company,
1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne)
KIA December 12, 2007



Pfc. Brian Gorham
Delta Company,
1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne)
Died of wounds sustained in combat
December 12, 2007

As of Jan. 1, 29 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.

Medal of Honor Recipient CPL Terry T. Kawamura



Cpl. Terry T. Kawamura, 173d Engineer Company, was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic actions taken on March 20, 1969 in Camp Radcliff, Republic of Vietnam.



Cpl. Terry T. Kawamura, 173d Engineer Company, was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic actions taken on March 20, 1969 in Camp Radcliff, Republic of Vietnam.

Kawamura was born Dec. 10, 1949 in Wahiawa, Hawaii. He entered the service from Oahu, Hawaii.

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. Cpl. Kawamura distinguished himself by heroic action while serving as a member of the 173d Engineer Company.

An enemy demolition team infiltrated the unit quarters area and opened fire with automatic weapons. Disregarding the intense fire, Kawamura ran for his weapon. At that moment, a violent explosion tore a hole in the roof and

stunned the occupants of the room. Kawamura jumped to his feet, secured his weapon and, as he ran toward the door to return the enemy fire, he observed that another explosive charge had been thrown through the hole in the roof to the floor.

He immediately realized that two stunned fellow Soldiers were in great peril and shouted a warning. Although in a position to escape, Kawamura unhesitatingly wheeled around and threw himself on the charge. In completely disregarding his safety, Kawamura prevented serious injury or death to several members of his unit.

The extraordinary courage and selflessness displayed by Kawamura are in the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.