



# THE TIEN BIEN TIMES

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM X



## First-ever Program Changes Mindsets



U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Sean P. Casey

Participants return to FOB Shank from the Voices Of Modern Islam Program trek and join TF Bayonet leaders and flight crew. The initiative is recognized by Gen. David Petraeus as being “the right program at the right time.”

Bayonet 6 Remarks on Importance of Afghan Elections On Page 2

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For Story Suggestions, contact [SSG Cobbeldick](#)



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



## **Sky Soldiers, Friends and Families,**

The 173rd Airborne Brigade suffered a tragic loss on August 31st when SSG Vinson Adkinson, SGT Raymond Alcaraz, SPC Matthew George and SPC James Page of the 173rd Brigade Support Battalion were killed in action in Logar Province. Their service was in keeping with the highest standards of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, and they will never be forgotten.

As we enter the month of September, we are involved in an extremely important part of our mission while deployed in support of OEF-X. Not only are we at the point where we must fight complacency. We are a few weeks away from the Afghan elections. In these elections the Afghan citizens have the ability to shape their future. The Afghan voters will select their Lower Parliament, and success hinges on the election process being a safe and secure experience for the citizens here.

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are in the lead for providing secure and safe voting to the Afghan people. The 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team's mission will be to facilitate their success - not perform the missions for the Afghan Police and Soldiers, but support their forces, as they set out to protect their citizens from those who would disrupt this democratic exercise with violence, demonstrations, fraud or intimidation. Our CIVMIL Team will also play an important role in the election process to ensure a transparent election free of fraud.

Oppression and tyranny are best fought by citizens at the voter level. Tolerating frauds, bullies or lethargic leaders will only guarantee the Afghan people more of the problems they are fighting against. The citizenry deserves quality leaders and their future hinges on their propensity to participate in the government process.

This cannot happen if voters are held up in their homes afraid to go to the voting centers because the enemies of the Afghan government have intimidated them with threats of violence or reprisal for exercising their rights as citizens.

While the Independent Election Commission (IEC) is responsible for the conduct of the elections, we must remember that election of leaders is not a totally new process for the Afghans. Traditionally, Afghan elders voted in local *Shuras*. Many Americans do not view a vote in a shura as a "democratic" vote since they are not voting directly for a single candidate. It is good to remind ourselves that in our Presidential elections, our vote goes to a representative in the Electoral College, and that Electoral College votes actually determines the winner. Additionally, understanding the root definition of *shura* helps us understand the Afghan perspective of government rule. The shura derives its enforcement power from the policing force (*shorta* in Arabic) and the policing force is empowered by the law of Allah (*Shiria* law) so that in the Afghan mind there is no separation of State and Church. This understanding is important in motivating Afghans to vote.

Change can and will come to Afghanistan when its voters are free to travel about, show up at the polling stations, make their choice and not live in fear for having done so.

I will leave you with a parting thought; I caution everyone to avoid complacency. Assume nothing. Our work here is not done. Stay vigilant and situationally aware, because mistakes happen when units let their guard down and lose focus. Stay sharp, accomplish the mission, and take care of the Paratrooper to your left and right. Sky Soldiers!

**Colonel Jim Johnson**  
**Bayonet 6**



## Afghans Lead Security ROC Drill for Election Day (see page 9)



**Afghan Government and Security Forces gathered at Forward Operating Base ( FOB ) Airborne to formalize their security plans with coalition partners for the Afghan parliamentary election. ( Photos by Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick )**



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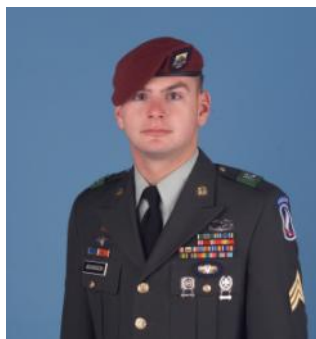
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# 173rd ABCT Suffers Loss of Four Sky Soldiers

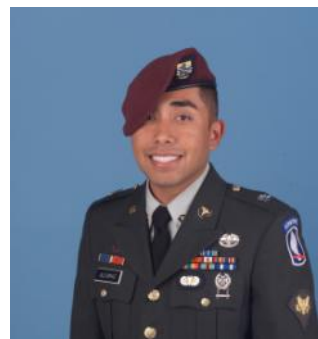
LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan (02 SEP 2010) – Four Soldiers from the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team died in an attack in Logar province, Afghanistan, August 31.

Killed in the attack were Army Sgt. Vinson Adkinson, Pfc. Matthew George, Pfc. James Page of A Company, 173<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Support Battalion, 173<sup>rd</sup> ABCT, and Spec. Raymond Alcaraz assigned to C Co., 173<sup>rd</sup> BSB.

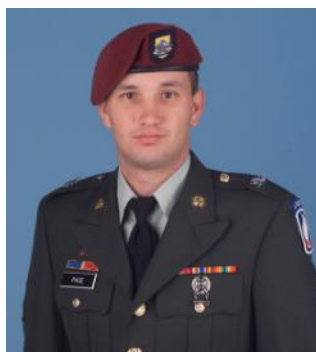
“These four selfless Soldiers volunteered to serve in an Army at war. They deployed to combat, some for their second or third tour, and they performed their dangerous and important duties with honor each day,” said Lt. Col. Curtis Johnson, the commander of the 173<sup>rd</sup> BSB, Task Force Repel. “These Sky Soldiers will be remembered for how they lived their lives, which were too short, but still characterized by commitment and dedication - their sacrifice will never be forgotten.”



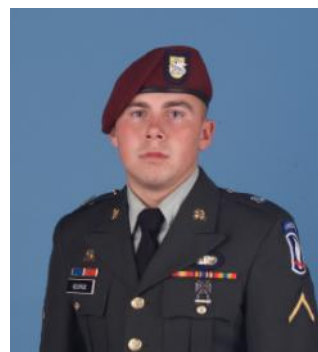
Staff Sgt. Vinson Adkinson



Sgt. Raymond Alcaraz



Spc. Matthew George



Spc. James Page



**Editor's Note:**  
The Fallen Soldiers' photos do not depict their posthumous promotions.



**Memorial Services for the four Soldiers were held Monday, Sept. 13, at 3 p.m. at the U.S. Army Garrison, Bamberg, Germany and Friday, Sept. 17, at 3 p.m. at Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy.**



## "Adkinson Far More Than a Sergeant - He Was a Leader"



**Leadership of the 173d ABCT render honors.**

Adkinson was assigned as a heavy vehicle operator who enlisted in the Army in 2003 and had twice previously deployed to Iraq with the 782nd Brigade Support Battalion of Fort Bragg, N.C. and the 32nd Transportation Company of Fort Carson, Colo.

"He was my leader, my mentor and the one who taught me everything I know. He was my sergeant and my friend," said Spec. David RiveraBadillo, a member of Adkinson's squad.

Adkinson was from Harper, Kan. and is survived by his wife, Veronica, of Colorado Springs, Colo., and his father Vinson and brother, Jacob of Comanche, Okla.

Adkinson's military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart Medal, Army Commendation Medal (2<sup>nd</sup> award), Army Achievement Medal (3<sup>rd</sup> award), Army Good Conduct Medal (2<sup>nd</sup> award), National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal (1 campaign star),



**Staff Sgt. Adkinson, Sky Soldier and Fallen Hero**



**Paratroopers of the 173d ABCT lined up to sign the Fallen Soldiers' memorial books, writing messages to the friends and family members of our heroes, who made the ultimate sacrifice in support of the Global War on Terror.**

Iraq Campaign Medal (2 campaign stars), Global War on Terror Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, the Combat Action Badge and the Parachutists Badge. He has been posthumously promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant.

**“Alcaraz Was One Of The Best Combat Medics I Ever Encountered”  
According to Platoon Sergeant, SFC Abouh Neufville**



Sgt. Alcaraz was remembered as being a talented role model—one of the best combat medics ever.



The firing party stand at attention, prepared to fire a rifle volley at the memorial service.

*“Alcaraz was the kind of Soldier that every new lieutenant dreams of having in their platoon.” - 2LT Emille Prosko*

Alcaraz was a medic who enlisted in the Army in 2007 and had previously deployed to Afghanistan while assigned to the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team.

“He was a great Soldier, a better friend, and what we all aspire to be,” said his three platoon-mates, Cpl. Maxwell Kahle, Spc. Ashley Bordges and Spc. Jeremy Rohrer.

Alcaraz was from Redlands, Calif., and is survived by his mother Alma Murphy, his brother Lucas Gonzales, both of Redlands and his father Raymond Alcaraz of Fontana, Calif.

Alcaraz’s military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart Medal, Army Achievement Medal (2 awards), Meritorious Unit Commendation Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal (1 campaign star), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, the Combat Medic Badge and the Parachutists Badge. He has been posthumously promoted to the rank of Sergeant.



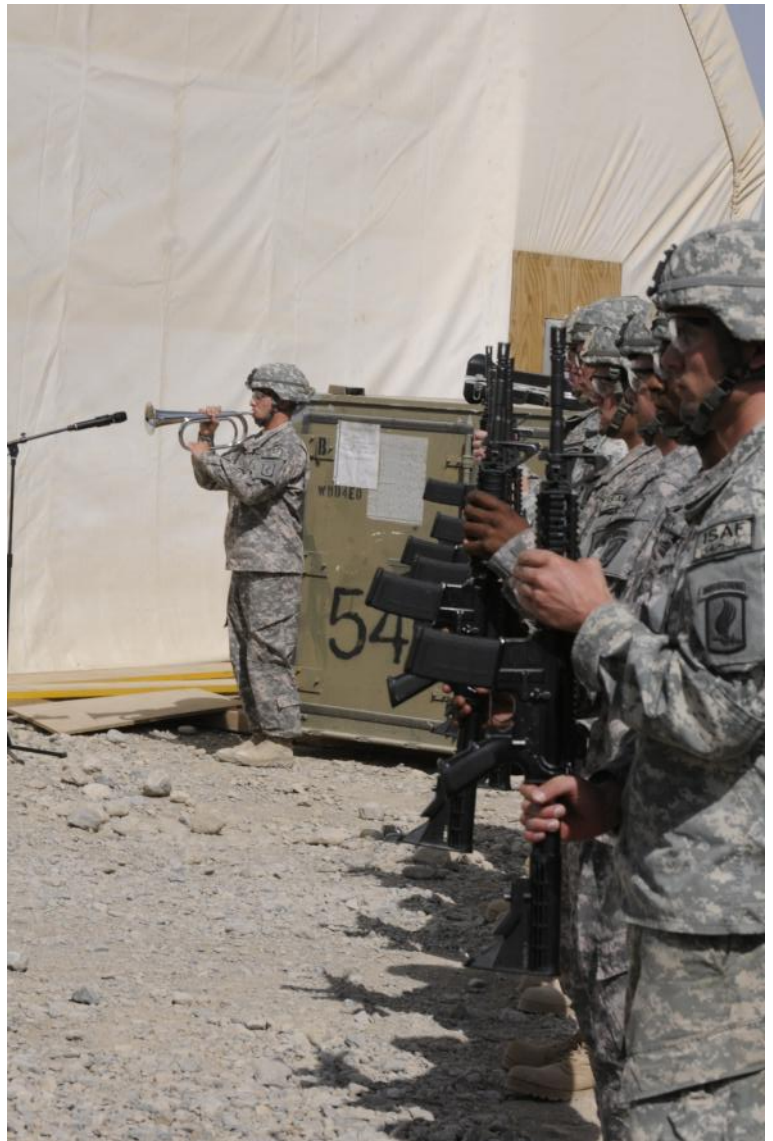
## George Seen As a Light By The Soldiers of the 173d ABCT

George, of Grantsboro, N.C. was assigned as a heavy vehicle driver, who served in the Army since 2009.

“Spc. George was a light for us that will now always show us the way,” said Sgt. Richard Alvarez, a noncommissioned officer in his company.

George is survived by his parents Donnie and Bridget George of Virginia Beach, Va.

His military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal (1 campaign star), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, the Combat Action Badge and the Parachutists Badge. He has been posthumously promoted to the rank of Specialist.



The Brigade’s bugler sounds Taps at the memorial service.



Senior Leaders from the 173d ABCT including the Brigade Chaplain, Maj. Sean Wead (center) honor the heroes lost on Aug 31.



Spc. George, (center) Sky Soldier and Fallen Hero.

## Page Seen As a Hero To Be Remembered

Page enlisted in the Army in 2008 and was assigned as a vehicle driver.

“Spc. Page worked hard every day. He always wanted to go on missions. I’m going to miss him,” said Pfc. Devon Groom, a fellow Soldier in his squad.

Page of Titusville, Fla, is survived by his son, Jarod Weathersby of Butler, Pa, his mother Deanna Strickland of Titusville, Fla, and his father James Page of Bellview, Fla, and his sister Cristi of Gainesville, Fla.

Page’s military awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal (1 campaign star), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, and the Combat Action Badge. He has been posthumously promoted to the rank of Specialist.



Spc. Page, Sky Soldier and Fallen Hero.



Lt. Col. Curtis Johnson and Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Sellers salute the heroes at the memorial service.



## Afghans Lead Security ROC Drill (continued)

**By Army Pfc. Michael Sword**

### Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs

WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan (02 SEP 2010) – Senior leaders from the Afghan National Security Forces across Wardak and Logar provinces, and commanders from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, gathered at Forward Operating Base Shank, Thursday, Sept. 1, in preparation for the upcoming Afghan elections.

The meeting was the first to bring together the Afghan National Army, police, provincial National Defense Service chiefs, OCCP commanders as well as representatives from Afghanistan’s Independent Election Commission and the 173rd’s leadership to discuss the upcoming elections and the combined effort of securing both polling sites and voters.

“The purpose of today was to get the senior leadership together, getting them talking about the detailed events of the elections,” said Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Storms, of Virginia Beach, Va., the officer in charge of the 173rd’s role in the elections. “There is clear cooperation between the ANP, the NDS the ANA the IEC and coalition forces, so we brought all five of those people into the same room and we have a pretty decent plan that really just needs to be polished up a little bit.”

That plan will cover two provinces and more than 200 polling sites and the ANSF will provide the majority of the security in the area. With the elections in less than two weeks, meeting also provided clarity to potential problems that may arise.

“This is not a simple operation,” said Storms. “It’s a complex operation and complex operations require you to have detailed plans and analysis done so you can properly execute that mission.”

“We’ve come a long way since we started this thing about 2 months ago with planning but we still have some very important details to flush out,” he added.

As the planning came to an end, Army Col. Jim Johnson, commander of the 173rd ABCT, reminded everyone in attendance that this was another step toward a successful election and the people of Logar and Wardak need to know the work that their security have put into ensuring their ability to vote safely Sept. 18.

“This was a good event because it’s moving us forward,” he said. “You need to let the population know the detail you’ve put into this plan.”



The Wardak election preparation saw company-level Afghan leaders in attendance—a sign that junior leaders were engaged in the event, as well.



Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Storms, Deputy Governance Officer, 173d ABCT, listens as an Afghan leader talks about plans for the election.



Major Bart Hensler, TF Rock S-3 and Major Jason Leible, TF King XO, prepare for the symposium.

*Photos by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick*

## Afghan Cadets Complete TF Bayonet Mentorship Program



Afghan cadets thank members of TF Bayonet for their time with the 173rd ABCT.

**By Army Pfc. Michael Sword Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs**

**LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan (03 SEP 2010)** – – Four cadets from the National Military Academy of Afghanistan were recognized for completing a new program being piloted by the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team at Forward Operating Base Shank, Friday, August 27.

The third-year cadets were the first to take part the program, where as part of their classes at the academy, they spend two weeks with an American unit area learning more about their chosen military career field.

“The idea was to mentor future Afghan National Army officers, by improving their oral and written English skills, their understanding of company-level counterinsurgency operations and to create positive, lasting relationships between Afghan cadets and select 173rd officers,” said Army Sgt. 1st Class Melvyn Lopez, a noncommissioned officer who worked closely with the program.

Muhammad Jawad, an aviation cadet, got more out of his two weeks than he expected.

“When we came here, we weren’t familiar with the American culture. We came here to learn about the American culture, military culture and we got a lot of experience about our aviation major,” he said. “It was a good experience for us.”

“It was always very good,” said Hasibullah Shapor, a logistics cadet. “I learned the culture, I learned about logistics like supply, repairs, mechanics, medicine and other things.”

Though they are the first class to participate in the program, they all realized the benefits of such an opportunity and would like to see every cadet at the academy get the same chance as they did.

“We got familiar with new things and new supplies,” said Jawad. “I think the other cadets won’t have the experience we got in two weeks here.”

The program proved to be a success, showing signs of the potential benefits to be offered to the academy’s future cadets. There are also plans to continue offering the two-week mentorship program and explore the possibility of expanding it to other units throughout Regional Command-East.

“It will be a good opportunity for cadets in the academy to be with Americans to learn more, new things from the Americans,” said Mozamel Abass Khan, an infantry cadet.

“I think it is the best opportunity in my life to be here,” said Jawad.



## 4-319th AFAR Helps Afghan Police On Road to Success

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick,

Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs Office

### **WARDAK PROVINCE, Afghanistan** - -

Task Force King have been leading the way in helping Afghanistan form a strong and effective police force to control the interior of the nation by training and mentoring the Afghan forces to help make the entire country toxic to insurgents.

The artillerymen of Task Force King have been bolstering the strength of Afghan police officers within Logar and Wardak Provinces for the last nine months.

The 4-319<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team continued their support by giving the Afghan Uniformed Police three, Up-Armored HMMWVs to help Afghan forces engage with the local population more often.

In the past, the ANA have been the only Afghan National Security Force that was offered the additional protection of the Up Armored HMMWV. (UAH) According to the 4-319th's Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Woods, "the fact that these AUP officers are the first to operate up-armoured vehicles has greatly increased their position in the Afghan community, as well."

Today, the AUP and the Afghan media witnessed the tangible proof of our training program where Afghan Officers enabled other Afghan officers to perform.



Afghan Uniformed Police BG Haqyar and Army Lt. Col. David Sink ( center ) the commander of the 4-319<sup>th</sup> Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, have been working closely together to improve security in Wardak Province Afghanistan for the past ten months.

The ANA have done extremely well in building their capacity and operational capability. As Police trainers and mentors, the 173d ABCT wanted to give the AUP the same protection offered the ANA.

According to Lt. Col David Sink, commander of the 4-319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd ABCT, this is just the beginning. Sink continued by saying, "In the future, as more vehicles are distributed, this will give them a greater level of protection and tactical mobility. "BG Haqyar was assigned the position as the Provincial Police Chief about 5 months ago. Since then, he has taken an active role in redefining his AUP."

Haqyar has led the AUP, making battlefield circulation in order to understand the problems, strengths and weaknesses of the district level police.

## TF Bayonet, Nashmi Reach Afghans With New Cultural Program

Story and photos by TF Bayonet PAO Staff

**Logar Province, Afghanistan** —Thirty-four local Afghan leaders from the civic, social and security fields from Logar and Wardak Provinces kicked off the initial phase of the "Voices of Moderate Islam" (VOMI) program, the first-ever initiative of its kind in Afghanistan.

VOMI participants began their journey by boarding a USAF aircraft at Forward Operating Base Shank which transported them to Amman, Jordan for the second phase of the program - a comprehensive seminar experience with a focus on exposing the attendees to Islam in the context of a modern Jordanian society.

The idea for the program was developed by TF Bayonet and TF Nashmi, the Jordanian Ranger Battalion attached to TF Bayonet.

The initiative is sponsored by US Embassy Kabul, US Embassy Amman, and in partnership with the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization. As part of the capstone experience, and following the seminar phase in Amman, the Jordanian government is facilitating the attendees' participation in the Umra, or lesser Hajj, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

The Amman portion, which is ongoing, consists of lectures from prominent Islamic culture and religious scholars from the Hashemite Charity Organization, the Islamic University of Jordan, US Embassy Amman and the Jordanian Armed Forces Director of iftar.

The experience includes visits to significant culture sites common to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

"Just after they arrived in Amman, His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan paid the attendees a significant honor by hosting them for an evening Ramadan meal," said Maj Matthew Yandura, Brigade Information Operations Officer, for the 173<sup>rd</sup> ABCT, who co-planned the event. "The attendees will never forget the respect that was shown to them by King Abdullah."



Participants of VOMI prepare to board a C-130.

After conducting the Umra, the participants will return to Logar and Wardak provinces for phase III, during which they will share the experience with their families, friends and colleagues in Afghanistan.

The purpose of "Voices of Moderate Islam" is to demonstrate a message of respect to key Afghan communicators and demonstrate the joint resolve of the US, Jordanian, and Afghan governments. Army Col. Jim Johnson, commander of the 173<sup>rd</sup> ABCT, encouraged the participants to get the most out of the experience.

"This is an historic event on so many levels," said Yandura, of Troy, Mich. "While the insurgents have claimed that Coalition Forces are here to interfere with Islam, we demonstrate to the Afghan people that we respect their faith, and we respect them. This initiative has the potential to change the dialogue here for years to come - perhaps generations to come."

Shaikh Mohammed Najm, TF Nashmi's senior cleric said "There are people who are using Islam and the political and social challenges that we are facing here to bring violence to Afghanistan." This program will counter that effort.

"We believe that this initiative will help Afghans gain a new perspective on their faith and culture and our respect for both," said John Lister, The TF Bayonet Senior State Department Civilian.



## TF Bayonet, Nashmi Reach Afghans With New Cultural Program

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

**Logar Province, Afghanistan** — Task Force Bayonet partnered with Task Force Nashmi as 34 local Afghan leaders returned to Afghanistan Sept. 13. The returnees earned the title hajji from their journey to Amman, Jordan, and Mecca, Saudi Arabia, as participants in the Voices of Moderate Islam initiative.

The VoMI initiative, the first of its kind, gave participants the opportunity to see first-hand how Islam is practiced in Jordan, affording them a chance to change dialogue among Afghans and share their insights with friends and family.

The VoMI attendees began their trek three weeks prior at Forward Operating Base Shank. They were transported to Amman, Jordan, for the second phase of the program, a comprehensive seminar experience with a focus on exposing attendees to Islam in a modern Jordanian society.

Orchestrated by the leaders at TF Bayonet and TF Nashmi, the Jordanian Ranger Battalion attached to TF Bayonet, the initiative seeks to expand the understanding of the participants and give them an opportunity to experience how Islam is practiced outside of Afghanistan.

When the participants arrived back at FOB Shank, they shared their experiences with international and local media. Three pilgrims spoke at length about their journey.

“Religion is good, but we do not want the insurgents to misuse Islam to commit crimes and acts of violence,” said Sher Abass, a VoMI participant. “We have seen first-hand from our second home in Jordan and have come to appreciate this life we have, and we see the need to end the violence and fighting among ourselves.”

Another participant, Abdul Hakeem, said, “We have brought a message back from our Jordanian brothers ... to enjoy this life and to stop killing each other here in Afghanistan.”

Jordanian Col. Aref S. Alzaben, who commands TF Nashmi, said, “In my country, we have both Christians and Muslims living together, as brothers, a secure country working for civilization.

“When I came here two months ago ... I saw the children of Afghanistan. They are looking for education and to improve their lives. We need to work together with other Islamic countries, and stop the madness. We cannot promote the violence.



**Army Maj. Jason Curl, executive officer, 173rd ABCT, shakes hands with a pilgrim, who returned with 33 others who all earned the title of hajji.**

“Terrorists all over the world justify violence in the name of Islam. That is something which Islam prohibits. Killing innocent people is wrong,” said Alzaben. “We know from the Quran that we all, as Muslims, our big challenge is to follow our religion in the proper way... it is important to have respect for other religions. We do not want the insurgents to get away with violence in the name of Muslim religion.”

The initiative is sponsored by U.S. Embassy Kabul, U.S. Embassy Amman, and in partnership with the Jordanian Hashemite Charity Organization. As part of the experience, following the seminar phase in Amman, the Jordanian government facilitated the attendees’ participation in a lesser hajj, called an urma, to Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

The experience included visits to significant culture sites common to Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

“I want to challenge you all here today who made this journey to bring five of your close friends back here so we can share with them your experiences and move into the future and continue to learn together,” said U.S. Army Col. Jim Johnson, Task Force Bayonet commander.

“As you left on this journey, most of you left as strangers to each other. And now, you returned as brothers,” added U.S. Army Maj. Matthew Yandura, coordinator of the event and a native of Troy, Mich. “People from all walks of life can come together.”

# Gen. Petraeus on VOMI: "It's The Right Program At The Right Time!"



Col. Aref Alzeben and members of Task Force 222 were instrumental in Voices Of Moderate Islam, lending their full support to the program. Gen. David Petraeus thanked TF Bayonet thanked TF Bayonet, citing VOMI as a victory.



Lt. Col. William Brown welcomes back Jordanian Col. Aref Alzeben. Brown and Aref work closely together as coalition partners.



Maj. Matthew Yandura and 1st Lt. Devon Collins direct the welcoming party as Soldiers of Task Force 222 and the 173d ABCT line up to welcome participants of VOMI at FOB Shank, in Logar Province.





## Battle Co. Supports Elections Operations With Tactical Prowess

**Story and photos by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, TF Bayonet PAO**

**LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan (19 SEP 2010)** – Battle Company conducted Counterinsurgency (COIN) and Counter-IDF operations in Western Pul-E-Alam in order to provide a secure environment for the facilitation of Afghan parliamentary elections much like they approach all their missions – as a team.

Well in advance of the 18 September Afghan Parliamentary Elections Army, Battle Company Executive Officer 1LT Cris Gasperini of Richmond, VA and other Battle Company leaders began the mission by sitting down and creating a patrol schedule that would provide maximum coverage of the area, while not completely burning out the men. They formulated plans based on gathering intelligence and photographs of strategic locations that would prove to be key offensive and defensive positions. It would prove to be proper prior planning that resulted in success for Battle Company.

On Sept 6, Battle Company began rotating platoons on 12-hour cycles, maintaining at least two elements in sector at all times. This required out-of-the-box thinking. Gasperini made the decision to split his two largest platoons in half to create four elements; he then used his Headquarters Platoon & Heavy Weapons Platoon, along with an attached platoon from Alpha Company BSB to create seven elements to man a rotation that was intended to provide maximum coverage and a viable presence in the area of operations starting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September and continuing through the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Army Spc. Vincent George Stransky III, a gunner for 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Battle Company, who trained at Ft. Benning, GA. said, "the toughest aspect of the election mission was the operational tempo. The patrols have been pretty intense. The men of Battle Company go with the flow though. It is part of the job. We brought the ability to watch the polling stations and support the polling stations as necessary. Our placement and our technology let us see three polling stations and we could engage those three polling stations if necessary. The ANA did most of the direct engaging with the polling stations."



**LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Under the gunner's canopy, Army Spc. Vincent George Stransky III controls his weapons system, atop an MRAP turret. (Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs)**

In fact, their plan worked flawlessly. Members of Battle Company pulled duties in the TOC for 72 hours at a time during the election period, getting little sleep but making the tactical decisions necessary to flex units to the needed area and project force where necessary.

The men of Battle Company have the reputation of being reliable. Perhaps they get that reputation by setting out to succeed – their eyes always focused on success. Platoon leadership sets the work climate and has created esprit de corps that is conducive to success. The men of 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon explained, "SFC Wayne William Wahlenmeier [Platoon Sergeant from Charleston, SC] is always there for us, they said. He gets us the information and help we need in order to be solid."

## Battle Co. Supports Elections Operations With Tactical Prowess



The election translated into a 72-hour mission for some Soldiers.

First Platoon (Weapons Platoon) drew the first short straw. They were tasked with occupying Observation Post (OP) Sar-E-Sang at 2200 hours to establish the TOW missile firing position. OP Sar-E-Sang is on the side of a mountain where only the MATV can go as Humvees even have a hard time getting to it.

From this vantage point, 1st Platoon could observe the entire valley and engage anything within 4km of their position. First Platoon was identified to occupy this position until the evening of Sept. 19.

Spartan, the Route Clearance Package (RCP) in support of B Co. did a fantastic job, including the dangerous job of clearing routes in AO Battle when they were engaged by RPG fire after a controlled detonation of an IED. 1st Platoon made a positive identification of the back blast of the RPG and checked the range to the target. Once they determined that there were no civilians or local dwellings, they engaged with a TOW.

***Editor's Note: A special thanks to Chief Christopher Storms, Lt. Col. David Sink and Battle Company, 173rd BSB, for their help with Election Day story coverage.***

Stransky said, "TOW missiles serve to show the enemies of Afghanistan that up to a certain distance we can shoot back at them with something as powerful if not more powerful. It lifted the morale. We had to get positive id (PID) of enemy and weapons and get approval from higher command. It went smooth and quick getting the PID. I was on the TOW missile system most of the time. We observed insurgency movement which allowed 3rd platoon that they shot or fired weapons in a short amount of time. We did a good job letting the people know that we are here to help them."

On Sept. 18, at six in the morning, the insurgents engaged the Oni-Sayed polling center, at the most Northeast position and 1st Platoon could see the explosions and hear the gunfire, but was unable to positively identify any enemy forces.

At about nine in the morning, insurgents engaged Sar-E-Sang (most NW) with small arms fire and RPG's. First Platoon once again PID'd the enemy with an RPG and immediately engaged with a TOW, which scored a direct hit. Once the TOW detonated, insurgents broke contact and never engaged the Sar-E-Sang polling site again.

As the insurgents broke contact south, they ran into a patrol being conducted by Wiseguy, a TF Repel element. After a short but intense skirmish the insurgents broke contact again and headed East. 1st Platoon was able to watch most of this but were unable to engage because they did not know how close the Wiseguy element was to the insurgents and they wanted to avoid damaging Afghan dwellings.

Army Sgt. Victor Parker, a squad leader, who has been with the 173<sup>rd</sup> ABCT for two years now, said that the Taliban had been intimidating the citizens in the Baraki Barak area prior to the elections by threatening them with cutting off their fingers or even killing them for voting.

The Taliban put up a fight with Battle Company for nine long hours the day of the elections. Fire fights involving small arms and RPG fire seemed to erupt intermittently throughout the entire center of AO Battle all day.



## Battle Co. Supports Elections Operations With Tactical Prowess



**LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Sgt. Victor Parker sits in the navigator's seat of an MRAP, prior to moving out. (Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs )**

"But we answered their attacks when we dropped TOW missiles after we tracked down the sites got positive identification of their weapons and intentions and we were able to arrest about 20 Taliban, who were found to have explosive residue on their hands," Parker said.

The 72 hours at their Observation Post paid off for Battle Company.

The insurgents moved back to Oni-Sayedan and attacked the polling station there once more, but briefly. Battle Company's HQ Platoon happened to be passing through this area in time to cause the insurgents to cease firing on the polling site. The insurgents then moved southwest to where Battle Company 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was located on a ridgeline over-watching the center of the AO.

About 30 minutes after the attack on the Oni-Sayedan polling site, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon began receiving small arms fire and RPG fire to their northwest by 10 insurgents. The firefight lasted probably 15-20 minutes and was pretty intense. The ANA and Battle Company paratroopers on the ridgeline fired heavily on the INS even with the RPGs impacting close-by. Eventually the insurgents fled into qalats nearby with 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon in pursuit.

Once on the ground 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was guided by Battle 1st Platoon to the location of multiple qalats holding insurgents. They rounded up 10 individuals with the help of the ANA, after X-spraying them and the results coming up positive for handling firearms. The ANA detained them and took them back to FOB Shank. After this engagement all enemy activity in AO Battle ceased.

The Battle Company HQ platoon acted as an augmenting force before, during, and after the elections. On election day the HQ platoon provided flexibility to the area of operations by maneuvering in support of the other Battle Company elements and even resupplying 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon by carrying TOW missiles on foot up the mountain where 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was located. HQ's movement enroute to resupply 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon deterred the insurgents from continuing their attack on the Oni-Sayedan Polling Site. Later in the day HQ provided over-watch of 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon detaining the 10 insurgents that were shooting at ANSF and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon.

One of 2nd Platoon elements assumed the duties of Aerial Reaction Force led by Sgt. First Class Patrick Flanagan, of Fayetteville, NC. It required them to be able to flex anywhere in AO Bayonet that help was needed. The other five elements maintained the 12-hour patrol schedule.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of September Battle Co. was tasked to send an element to Chak District and collect the ballots. Upon landing in Chak, they immediately established security and began loading the ballot boxes. Immediately they began receiving RPG and small arms fire. The fire was so heavy that ANSF forces started boarding the helicopters in order to find some cover.



The elections called for some long hours but Afghan voters had about two million show up for the election.

## Battle Co. Supports Elections Operations With Tactical Prowess



Elements returned fire and loaded wounded INSF forces on the helicopter.

As they were leaving, the helicopters were taking direct fire and bullets were piercing the skin of the aircraft. They immediately took off and returned to base with some minor casualties to ANSF forces.

Members of Battle Co. continue to provide a presence in Pul-E-Alam district, Logar Province and solid security that helped make this operation a true, combined action success.

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Sgt. Victor Parker sits in the navigator's seat of an MRAP, prior to moving out. (Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs)

## Arroyo Earns Coveted Engineers' de Fleury Medal



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, TF Bayonet PAO

Sgt. First Class Michael Arroyo, from Bronx, NY, a member of the 173rd ABCT for six years, proudly stands among his fellow Sappers and Engineers from TF Bayonet, having just been presented the Bronze de Fleury Medal at FOB Shank, Sept. 23. On the obverse of the medal is the Latin inscription meaning: "A MEMORIAL AND REWARD FOR COURAGE AND BOLDNESS". In the center appears the image of a helmeted soldier standing amidst the ruins of a fort, holding in his right hand an unsheathed sword, and in his left the staff of the enemy's flag, which he tramples underfoot. The de Fleury medal is how the Corps of Engineers honors those individuals who have provided significant contributions to Army Engineering.



## Resiliency Program Helps 'The Herd' Heal, Strengthen

Story by Staff Sgt. Bruce Cobbeldick, TF Bayonet PAO

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- According to Chaplain Sean Wead, Brigade Chaplain, for the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team, "the reality of war is that many Soldiers die spiritually in combat. One only needs to look through the ranks of veterans to find the highest suicide rates, drug abuse, and alcoholism among Americans. The soul can die before the body; it only takes longer for physical collapse, said Wead. Such veterans become like the living dead, the joy of life vanishing on the day of battle. They return home as shadows of their former selves, casualties of conscience.

The ruin of the soul caused by the unraveling of moral character in the face of continued combat and traumatic experiences is termed acute stress disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, or stress illness, when symptoms persist. During the American Civil War it was called 'Soldier's Heart.' In World War I, it was called 'Shell Shock.' In World War II, it was termed 'Combat fatigue.' Later, in Vietnam it would be called Combat Stress Reaction. "The question before us is what can we do to help our Sky Soldiers who may be facing such stressors?" said Wead.

The 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team has a solution. They are implementing a comprehensive resiliency program designed to promote the overall health and wellness of Soldiers. It emphasizes a synchronized effort to deliver organizational, psychological, physical fitness and spiritual training to help Sky Soldiers retain the honor they earned in their year of deployment and strengthen body, mind and soul.

Several aspects of the program are being implemented currently by both the chaplains and mental health of the Brigade to help Soldiers be spiritually and emotionally resilient on the battlefield. For the Soldiers who encountered some of the horrors of war, Baker said there is a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) involving a group meeting or discussion about a particularly distressing critical incident. Based on core principles of crisis intervention, the CISD is designed to mitigate the impact of a critical incident and to assist people in recovery from the stress associated with the trauma of combat.



**Health, wellness and team-building are pillars of the new Resiliency Program, featuring mental and spiritual training.**

In addition, the Brigade has educated Soldiers about Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) – teaching "Suicide First Aid" skills to key leaders in contact with a person at risk. Soldiers are given a tools to help pull their brothers and sisters back from the darkness of suicidal depression. The Suicide Intervention Model risk review improves the quality of information and communication between agencies and individuals, especially for necessary referrals to secondary health services. ASIST may be conducted during any phase of deployment or at home station. It is a 16 hour program of instruction.

Baker and Wead said that part of the Resiliency program includes "One Shot One Kill," a module designed at the battalion level that emphasizes physical training and Battle Mind lessons to improve warrior skills holistically.

The Brigade will offer an array of programs that deliver care, counseling, and growth for our Sky Soldiers and their families in their transition from combat operations to a non-deployed environment. The reintegration process is designed to assist Soldiers, civilian employees, and family members who have endured hardships and sacrifices associated with deployment.

There is a Reintegration portion that is seven half-days immediately after redeployment, designed to assist Soldiers' assimilation back into their communities and families and to assist in the transition from combat to a more normal military lifestyle.

## New Army Resiliency Program *(Continued From Page 19)*



The Resiliency Program is dedicated to wholistic wellness for Soldiers returning from Operation Enduring Freedom.

Army Community Services will be on hand to help manage family readiness groups, outreach programs, Army family team building programs, and various support initiatives such as family violence prevention programs, exceptional family member programs, financial readiness programs, and important other resources, according to Baker, who manages health care issues for the Brigade.

According to Brigade Surgeon, Maj. Jay Baker, Soldiers are potentially vulnerable to harm due to physical separation from their unit and decreased sense of purpose after redeployment.

So, the 173<sup>rd</sup> ABCT will offer Accountability Week to give unit leaders objectives to achieve specific recovery tasks for completion. Just as in a war zone, tasks are completed to standard with leader supervision and develop junior leaders. The goal is being "task-focused", not "time-focused", so it adds purpose to the duty day. According to Baker, "the program is designed to help a Soldier spiritually, culturally, physically, and socially. For example, the Chapel may sponsor a trip to the Vatican in Rome to engage Soldiers spiritually and culturally. This becomes the Soldiers' place of duty. Activities inspire purpose outside of the war zone and engage the Soldier positively until the full leadership of the Brigade has returned from deployment."

*"We want to equip our Soldiers not only to survive war in a physical sense, but to survive war and its aftermath in a spiritual sense with soul, body, and mind intact."*

**-Maj. Sean Wead, Brigade Chaplain, 173rd ABCT**

According to Baker, "the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Combat Team will incorporate the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program into the brigade's Resiliency program. CSF is designed to train noncommissioned officers adapted from the Positive Psychology Program at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. CSF's Master Resiliency Trainer (MRT) course operates as a "train-the-trainer" program, and aims to turn participants into fitness experts able to train others and strengthen the force as a whole. MRT will eventually be taught during basic combat training, at officer schools, and throughout all levels of the Army."

Resiliency Week will follow Accountability Weeks and be a time for units to process and understand their time and service during deployment. Activities will be based around the CSF principles of social, emotional, physical, family, and spiritual. Modules will be taught by MRTs and units will have activities to strengthen their sense of camaraderie.

Redeploying can be tough for Soldiers and their families. There are lots of adjustments that come with returning home after a year-long deployment. Organizational Behavior specialists and medical experts have gone to exhaustive lengths to create this Pilot Program, which mitigates risk and maximizes wellness for the men and women of "The Herd."

"The brigade is determined to help our Soldiers preserve the honor they gained in service of our country as they return to Italy and Germany," Baker said.

Chaplain Wead added, we want to equip our Soldiers not only to survive war in a physical sense, but to survive war and its aftermath in a spiritual sense with soul, body, and mind intact. We have taken a great deal of time to formulate a well thought out plan that makes that possible.



## First C-17 Arrives at FOB Shank



**LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III plane approaches the first-ever landing of a C-17 at the Recently-completed airfield at Forward Operating Base Shank, Thursday, Sept. 9. The ability to land a C-17 at FOB Shank, provides the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team with the ability to expedite the movement of personnel and equipment throughout their area of operation. (Photos by Army Spc. Stephen Meese, 173rd Brigade Support Battalion)**

### **By Task Force Bayonet Public Affairs**

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan (11 SEP 2010) – A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III made its inaugural landing at the recently-constructed airfield at Forward Operating Base Shank, here, Thursday, Sept. 9.

The C-17 is the largest cargo plane in use in Regional Command-East, the U.S. Army command that covers eastern Afghanistan, and its Thursday landing provides new opportunities for the soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team and RC-east.

"The significance of the C-17 landing today is monumental to the logistics here in Afghanistan," said U.S. Army Maj. Pete Gilbert, a native of Laurel, Md.

"It's a great capability, not only for the brigade but I think for all of RC-East," said Lt. Col. Curtis Johnson, commander of the 173rd Brigade Support Battalion, 173rd ABCT, and native of New Haven, Ind. "As FOB Shank becomes a strategic hub, it's basically going to act as a pressure relief valve of all of RC-East and allow us to get men, weapons and equip in here much quicker."

Until now, the 173rd has depended on rotary-wing assets in UH-60 Blackhawk and Ch-47 Chinook helicopters, and ground transportation to move personnel and equipment throughout Logar and Wardak provinces, their area of operation.

"This allows us to bring in personnel as well as equip by fixed wing, and free up those rotary-wing assets for key missions throughout AO Bayonet as well as RC-East," said Johnson.

The new airfield has been two years in the making and thanks to the 173rd and the Army Corps of Engineers, the first C-17 landing was a success.

"I think it went excellent," said Gilbert. "I talked to the pilot and he said there were no issues on the approach or on the landing itself so that's great news."

"I think overall it went well," added Johnson. "This airfield was built to standard by the Corps of Engineers and again, I think it will be a great capability not only for the brigade but all of RC-East."

# HHC Conducts Labor Day Festivities



Soldiers of HHC, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, showed up in force for some fun at the Company's Labor Day event.



Members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team's S-6 (above) participate in the Tug-Of-War Contest. "The five, separate tug-of-war matches were exhausting and the entire team felt it big time the next day, but we had fun. It gave us a break from our daily routine. We were hoping for first place but the Czechs were pretty big," said Pfc. Patrick Shelby, Information Assurance Specialist, for the 173 ABCT.

Sgt. First Class Michael Holguin, FECC Plt. Sgt., "fires" a beanbag at target.



Sgt. Maj. Richard Howell presents runners award to Sgt. Jamie Rayburn, 173rd ABCT S-2.

Somehow, Maj. Matthew Yandura and his NCOIC, Sgt. First Class Melvyn Lopez and fellow PsyOp Team members got roped into the Tug-Of-War contest.



The Czechs faired well throughout the day!





173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team