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4th Brigade Paratroopers Learn Dari

4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs Office

FORT BRAGG, N.C. — Paratroopers of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC are conducting a 16-week Afghan language course, which began here Jan. 22, to better prepare them for their deployment to Afghanistan.

Approximately 62 Soldiers with the 4th BCT are attending this training to learn more about the Dari language and culture.

This is the first time that this course has been offered here, but it has been taught at locations such as Fort Drum, Fort Polk and Fort Campbell.

During the first week, paratroopers in this course receive an English Grammar refresher before learning to speak the Dari language, which helps them when they are deployed without an interpreter or translator.

“It’s definitely a good course to have,” said Traci Dunn, Language Instructor for Defense Language Institute of Monterey, Calif., who teaches the English refresher

course. “Going to another country and not knowing their language, you are at a disadvantage.”

The course is provided through DLI, who sub-contracts instructors to teach Soldiers Dari and Pashto. There are currently 15 instructors here teaching who are all natives of Afghanistan.

“Students learn to read and write Dari, but the main focus is how to speak and communicate with the locals,” said Ahmad Seyar Atmar, Team Leader and Senior Instructor, of Kabul, Afghanistan. “It’s always good for the Soldiers to know the language before they go to Afghanistan because of minor cultural differences. That way they know what to expect. These soldiers represent the United States.”

Once the troopers have completed the English refresher portion it is time to jump into the main course, which is learning to speak Dari.

Students are broken down into smaller classes with 6 to 7 students per instructor who begin to teach them the basics, such as alphabets, numbers and pronunciation refinement before going further in-depth into the language.

“It’s better to learn in the smaller groups if they have the numbers to support it,” said Spc. Douglas Boso, a Soldier with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th BCT and a student in the course. “It definitely helps putting one teacher with a smaller group so you get more hands on time with the instructor. It makes it easy to identify individual problems students are having with the language.”

“It would be a great opportunity for every Soldier to get an abbreviated portion of this course,” said Boso. “Dealing with the locals in Afghanistan, the language barrier has a real detrimental effect on the operations that we have over there.”

“This is a great course with skills that Soldiers can use down range, this is a rapport building tool,” said Staff Sgt. David Aschwanden, Temporary Language Training Site Manager.

“It is a difficult language to learn and understand, but it all depends on the person and how open they are to learning,” said Boso.

“We believe that language training will open the door to learning about the Afghan culture,” said Col. Brian Mennes, commander of the 4th BCT. “So in addition to gaining more Fury interpreters we will benefit from the cultural enrichment our team will derive from working directly with the Afghan teachers for an extended period.”

Editor’s Note:

1. For more information or to attend upcoming training events, contact the 82nd Airborne Division Public Affairs Office at (910) 432-0661/0662 or (910) 813-3891.