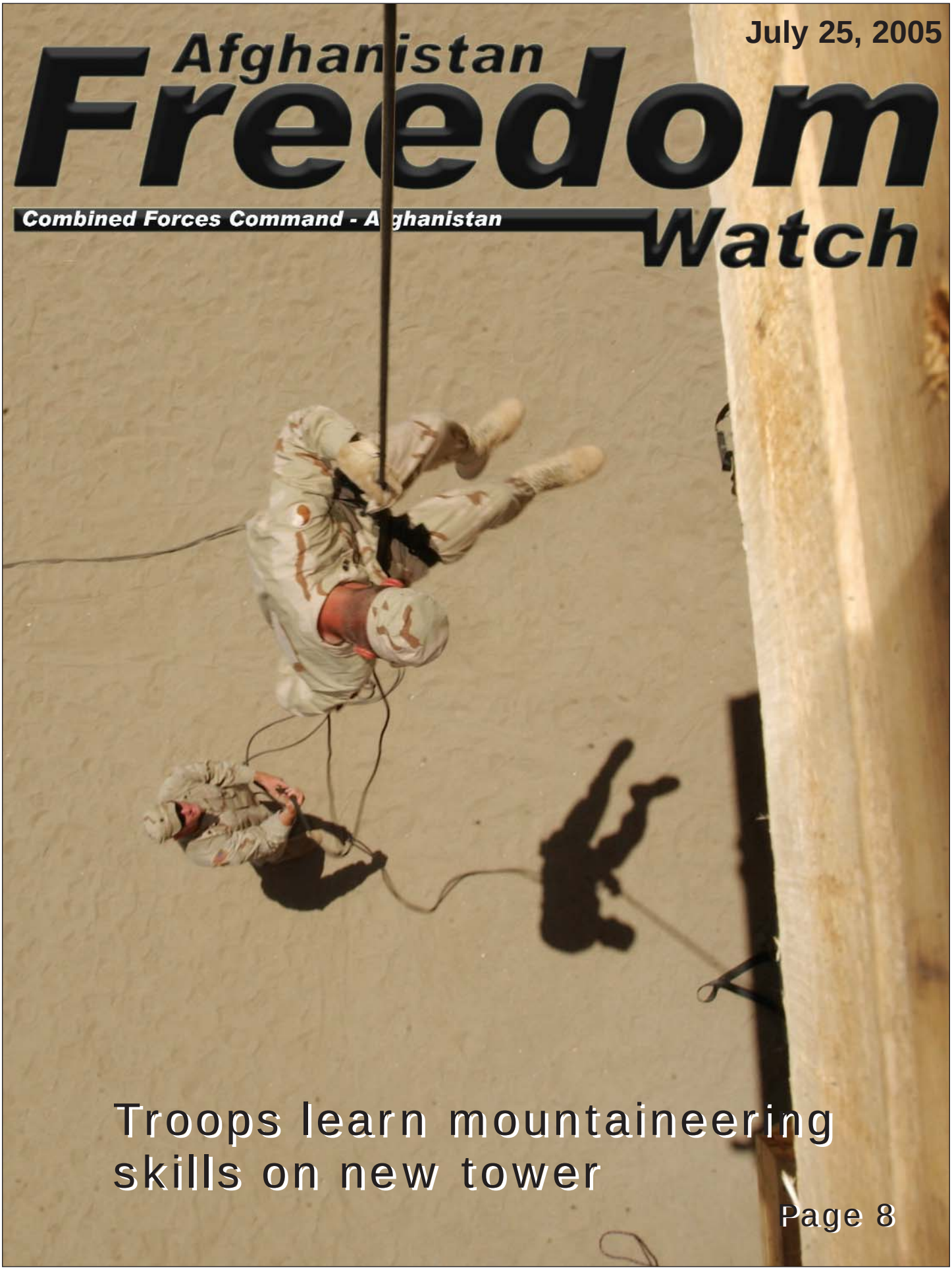
July 25, 2005

Afghanistan Freedom Watch

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan



Troops learn mountaineering skills on new tower

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Photo by Marine Cpl. James Yarboro

Marines of K Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment conduct a security halt while patrolling in the Alishang Valley on May 24. The Marines are conducting security and stabilization operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

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Army Spc. Adam Watson climbs the mountaineering tower at Camp Cherry-Beasley during an opening ceremony for the tower June 15 at Bagram Airfield.

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(Cover) Army Spc. Heath Folmsbee, on the ground, acts as a safety for 1st Sgt. David Bugg as Bugg repels from the mountaineering tower June 15. Photo by Sgt. Douglas DeMaio

Afghanistan Freedom Watch
Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

Freedom Watch is the weekly publication of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan.

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Public Affairs Officer - Col. James R. Yonts

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Photos courtesy New Zealand Army

New Zealand Army Cpl. Nick Cloke conducts weapons training with Afghan National Police on AK-47 rifles at the Bamyan Police Station.

Kiwis pass on skills to Afghan National Police

By New Zealand Army Capt. Kate Neill
Bamyan Provincial Reconstruction Team

BAMYAN, Afghanistan – A patrol from the New Zealand run Bamyan Provincial Reconstruction Team conducted the second phase of training for the Bamyan Afghan National Police June 20.

"The security sector working group, during the provisional planning conference, identified a lack of professional staff as a key weakness in the police force and security sector," said New Zealand Army Lt. Col. Greg Allnutt.

The NZ PRT was able to provide assistance in this area through the training of the Bamyan ANP, which was considered good preparation in the build-up to the September elections, Allnut said.

"The individual skill level of the policemen was initially low," said New Zealand Army Maj. Derek Tunui, whose patrol conducted the initial pilot course, "but they learned quickly despite the language barrier and willingly committed to the training. To date, around 140 policemen have undergone training in the Bamyan District, and the course has now been exported to outlying districts of the province where it is currently conducted by the Kiwi patrols in those areas."

New Zealand Army Pvt. Rob Schiphorst explains the stoppage drill to Afghan National policemen.

Training is conducted in two phases, the first comprising development of individual skills including weapon drills, first aid and basic paramilitary skills.

The second phase includes development of collective skills such as vehicle checkpoints, vehicle searches, clearing of buildings, and searching people. Their learning is consolidated through a battle handling exercise that includes a scenario designed to test all competencies taught throughout both phases.

"The next step would be to revise training already conducted and to continue to develop the individual and collective skills of the Bamyan ANP," said Tunui. "They now have a core number of policemen throughout the provinces who can be employed to do a far broader variety of tasks than they would have otherwise been able to do. This is particularly relevant leading up to the September elections."

'Blue Star' helicopter crew battles terrorists

Crew credited with saving the lives of Special Forces unit

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Rick Scavetta
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

Photo by Army Spc. Jerry T. Combes

A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter transports Combined Joint Task Force 76 Soldiers over Kandahar on June 22.

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – When Army Spc. Ryan Pummill unleashed machine-gun fire on enemies below his UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, the 22-year-old crew chief knew that wounded troops from a Army Special Forces team on the ground were counting on him.

An armor-piercing round shot into the helicopter's side had just sent hot shrapnel into Pummill's face. Another round hit under his seat. Bullets were hitting all over the place and smoke was filling the cabin. Still, the Missouri native kept firing at the enemy.

"I'm seeing our guys on the ground -- the enemy was trying to overrun them," Pummill said. "It was our job to suppress the enemy, keep the enemy down and kill who we could kill."

That Monday, April 11, will be a day that the brave crew from the U.S. Army's A Company, 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment will never forget. On that day, the "Blue Stars" crew risked their lives to protect fellow Soldiers and killed half a dozen enemy fighters.

Just behind Pummill, fellow crew chief Army Spc. John Irick was reloading his M60-D machine gun and waiting for his turn to fire upon the attackers. The pilots up front, Army Chief Warrant Officers Steven Burr and Chris Palumbo, powered the helicopter through evasive maneuvers to avoid enemy rocket-propelled grenades and machine-gun fire.

"We never went without a gun shooting," Pummill said. "While I was firing, Specialist Irick was reloading ammo. We'd spin the aircraft and then he was firing."

Less than an hour before, the crew had been at nearby Forward Operating Base Salerno when they were handed a mission: insert a quick reaction force into an area where enemy fighters had launched an ambush on Coalition forces.

Burr, 30, of Lawton, Okla., climbed aboard aircraft 655 along with Palumbo, 32, of West Warrick, R.I. A blue star is painted on the nose of the helicopter, a symbol that first saw combat during the seven years the unit served in Vietnam .

Irick and Pummill readied their machine guns and the Blackhawk lifted off. They stopped at a nearby base camp to pick up the quick reaction force, a Special Forces A-Team. AH-64 Apaches had launched earlier and were already at the ambush site.

The rugged terrain and numerous trees made landing difficult, Burr said. They finally found a steep slope to drop off the team.

"The concern was that a guy with the RPGs would try to launch them at us," Burr said.

Palumbo could only set his right forward landing gear on the ground. But that was enough. The team had about a four-foot drop to the rocky hillside. They jumped out both sides. The helicopter's rotors barely cleared the slope.

Palumbo lifted the Blackhawk back into the air, taking up an orbit just south of the landing zone. Within seconds, the A-Team radioed that they were under fire and shooting back at the enemy.

The Apaches began firing rockets and chain guns to support the troops on the ground. The Apaches were taking fire and getting low on fuel. They had to return to base, leaving the UH-60s to help out.

Palumbo called over the radio to the troops on the ground that they would take up close air support. An Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt was also overhead to provide cover.

The A-Team called up to the helicopter that they were in direct contact with the enemy, who were hiding in trees down the ridge from their position.

"We saw one [enemy] begin to run down the ridge and the team chased after him," Burr said. "The guy fell off the ridge and into a draw."

Burr's helicopter flew around the steep slope to search for him. Burr spotted the enemy fighter and talked Irick onto the target. The 23-year-old crew chief from Seminole, Okla., let loose with his M-60 machine gun, killing the man.

When Irick needed to reload, the pilots swung the aircraft around to allow Pummill to fire.

"We continued to circle when we started to take small-arms fire and an RPG was launched at us," Burr said.

Then a call came over the radio: two A-Team members were wounded and badly needed a lift out.

"When you hear the desperation in that voice on the radio, someone saying that they need you there, you kind of feel helpless," Palumbo said. "You could see the bad guys. I wasn't going to leave our guys bleeding on the side of the hill."

They were circling, trying to find the wounded Soldiers, when they saw a half-dozen enemy closing in. At one point, the enemy ran underneath the helicopter to attack the wounded soldiers, who had taken cover. The pilots lowered the helicopter to about 20 feet

See **Blue Star** *next page*

From previous page **Blue Star**

off the ground.

"We positioned the aircraft between the enemy and the wounded Soldiers and began to engage," Burr said.

During the next 10 minutes, Pummill and Irick took turns with their machine guns, killing roughly six enemy. The crew was shouting so loud they didn't need their internal communication system.

But the enemy had opened fire on the helicopter. They fired at least two RPGs at the Blackhawk, forcing the pilots to throwing the helicopter into skill-testing positions. Bullets ricocheted around the cabin. The enemy fighters shot several holes in the fuel tank, an engine and the rotors. Smoke was billowing out and sparks flew from the cockpit.

"We knew we had been shot, but we did not know how bad we'd been shot," Palumbo said.

Pummill was leaning out over his M60-D machine gun when an armor-piercing round penetrated a panel just below him, sending shrapnel into his face. Another round shot though the belly of the aircraft, ricocheted off backpacks and grazed his buttocks.

Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Rick Scavetta

The "Blue Star" crew stand next to their UH-60D helicopter. Quick reaction and firepower helped save the lives of a Special Forces unit April 11.

"It felt like someone throwing a rock at you; it stung, but never broke the skin," Pummill said of the round that hit under his seat. "I was in the middle of firing. So, I called to the pilot 'I'm still good to go' and kept on firing."

The helicopter crew's covering fire allowed the Special Forces team medic to get to the wounded Soldiers. They were later extracted.

Meanwhile, Palumbo felt the aircraft was "starting to act funny," he said. They decided to fly back to FOB Salerno to have Pummill checked by the medics.

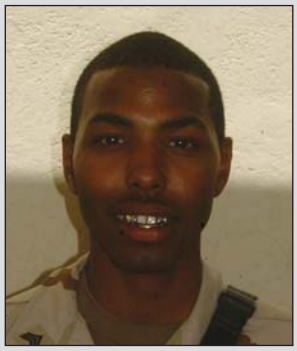
Later, members of the Special Forces team told the crew their actions kept the wounded Soldiers from being killed. Now, the crew has been put in for medals for their heroic actions.

But decorations did not motivate the Blue Star's crew. Medals are an afterthought for the Soldiers, who still continue their dangerous mission of carrying troops and supplies around the battlefield.

"Medals may look good on a uniform, but when you're out there, that's the last thing on your mind," Palumbo said. "We're just one of the many aircrews out there doing our job."

Enduring Voices

Do you think the media is accurately covering Operation Enduring Freedom?



Army Sgt. Lance Percell
226th Quartermaster Co.
"The media's been getting to the point and accurately covering what we are doing."

Army Lt. Col. Meg Vanasse
NATO Rapid Deployment Corps, Italy
"Sometimes it's difficult for the media to balance coverage between OEF and OIF, but the media when they are here do a good job at getting the story out."

Marine Staff Sgt. John Kraft
CJTF-76
"The main focus is on Iraq and they tend to forget that we still have a war going on here. When they do report on OEF I think it tends to be more negative than the situation actually is."

Canadian Warrant Officer Seven Cobden
Task Force Kabul/National Command Element
"I don't think that the coalition forces here in Afghanistan are getting the coverage they deserve from media."

A Helping Hand: ANA, Coalition help farmer get restitution after destruction of crops

Photo by Army Sgt. James-Denton Wyllie

British Lt. Cmdr. David Lindsay of the IV (Army Corporation) Squadron out of Royal Air Base Cottesmore (left) hands farmer Abdul Ghafaar payment for his destroyed wheat field as ANA Maj. Mohammed Daoud looks on. Daoud petitioned Coalition forces on Ghafaar's behalf after his crops were destroyed by flares during a Coalition aerial operation.

By Army Sgt. James-Denton Wyllie
20th Public Affairs Detachment

KHANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Afghan wheat farmer Abdul Ghafaar,was devastated when he found his recently harvested crops destroyed by fire in Munday Village June 17.

"I thought that it was the start of very bad times for me and my family," said Ghafaar.

It turned out that a flare from a Coalition aircraft had accidentally destroyed Ghafaar's crops during an operation. Under the old system of the Taliban, Ghafaar would have had to suffer his loss with no hope of restitution.

However, Afghan National Army Maj. Mohammed Daoud saw the opportunity to send a message to Ghafaar and the people of Afghanistan that things are different. He petitioned the Coalition for payment on Ghafaar's behalf, and served as a liaison between the Coalition and the Munday villagers.

After an investigation confirmed his claim, Ghafaar learned the difference between the Taliban and the Coalition first-hand when British Lt. Cmdr. David Lindsay, a pilot with the IV (Army Corporation) Squadron out of Royal Air Base Cottesmore and the pilot of the plane that released the flare, presented him with a $2,128 payment for his crops July 8.

"I am sorry about the fate of your crops and hope that this payment will help," said Lindsay. "Our goal is to do some good in the short time we are here, and the next time you see us flying overhead, I hope that you think of us as friends."

After receiving the payment, Ghafaar thanked Lindsay for the funds. He also thanked Daoud for making the compensation possible.

"One of our own, an ANA soldier, helping is very pleasing," said Ghafaar. "If this was the Taliban era, this help would never have happened."

Lindsay also thanked Daoud for his dedication in getting Ghafaar paid, and invited him to take a tour of his aircraft. Daoud accepted the offer, but was quick to point out that he did not have any expectations of a personal reward.

"I did this because I wanted the people to know that we are here to help and that we will do whatever we can," said Daoud. ""It is important for them to understand that in their souls."

Daoud's message of change is spreading throughout Afghanistan, said Ghafaar.

"I would like to give my appreciation for what you are doing here," he said. "We know why you are here and what your objectives are. We all hope you succeed."

Daoud said that in the end, he was just doing his job as a soldier.

"I am a soldier," he said. "It is my sole responsibility to take care of my people. If I can't live in peace, then I want my children to live in peace."

Air Force pilot logs 3,000 hours in A-10 Thunderbolt over Afghanistan

By Air Force Capt. Mark Gibson
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The commander respectfully called "Duck" scored 3,000 flying hours in an A-10 Thunderbolt over the Afghan skies July 3.

Air Force Lt. Col. Jeffrey Cowan, 74th Fighter Squadron commander, entered hog history upon returning to base after flying a mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Since his first flight, Cowan, from Pope Air Force Base, N.C., has clocked more than 3,000 hours in a Thunderbolt cockpit.

"It is extremely rare for a pilot to get 3,000 hours in a single-seat fighter aircraft. I am honored to have 'Duck' as a boss and mentor," said Air Force Capt. Cameron Curry, A-10 pilot with the 74th.

"Lieutenant Colonel Cowan entered into a select group of combat aviators/attack pilots passing a milestone that demonstrates his professionalism, determination and resilience," said Air Force Col. John Dobbins, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group commander.

During Cowan's deployment here, he has taken to the Afghan sky an average of nine hours each week, providing close-air support for Coalition ground troops.

Photos by Air Force Capt. Mark Gibson

(Above) Air Force Lt. Col. Jeffrey Cowan, 74th Fighter Squadron commander, returns to base after completing 3,000 flying hours in the A-10 Thunderbolt. (Left) Cowen is greeted by Air Force Col. John Dobbins, commander of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, and squadron members with a traditional dousing.

Photos by Army Sgt. Douglas DeMAio

New tower teaches needed mountaineering skills to troops

By Army Sgt. Douglas DeMaio
20th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – A mountaineering tower built by Korean engineers is now complete at Camp Cherry-Beasley and ready for use by Coalition forces.

The tower is intended to provide troops in Afghanistan a place to train before future missions.

"It is for training purposes," said Korean Capt. Yong-Ho Jung, 2nd Construction Company commander. "This is for the Soldiers right before they go to the real missions outside of Bagram. They can practice before they go on the missions, so they will be better prepared for the mission."

Built with wood imported from America, the tower will prepare troops to mountaineer through the Afghan terrain, said Sgt. 1st Class Richard Schauland, construction project manager for Bagram.

The training aspect is applicable to the operational environment, Schauland said. Soldiers stationed at Bagram can reacquaint themselves with techniques and safety measures before training on the equipment and putting it to use on an operation.

"This project has been beneficial for everyone," Jung said.

It has improved the Koreans' construction skills and provided Coalition forces with valuable training equipment, he said.

"I'm very proud of my soldiers and very proud of what we have done here," Jung said.

Schauland said, "I think the Koreans did an outstanding job with building the tower."

Individual Soldiers can request training from the unit providing training on the tower, he said. Units wanting to train on the tower should contact their operations cell to coordinate the training.

(Above left) Army 1st Sgt. David Bugg repels from a mountaineering tower June 15 during the opening ceremony.

(Left) Army Spc. Heath Folmsbee, on the ground, acts as a safety for Bugg as he repels from the mountaineering tower June 15.

Korean Capt. Yong-Ho Jung, 2nd Construction Company commander, stands in front of his troops at the opening ceremony June 15 for the mountaineering tower built by Jung's company.

Unit takes on new mission, name

By Army Lt. Col. Frederick Rice
Office of Security Cooperation - Afghanistan Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan – The Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan has been focused on the task of rebuilding the Afghan National Army for three years. In a ceremony at Camp Eggers on July 12, that focus was expanded as OMC-A officially assumed responsibility for the United States' role in reforming Afghanistan's National Police force and changed its name to the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan.

In its expanded role, the newly designated OSC-A will have responsibilities that encompass the entire Afghan security sector, providing U.S. support to the German-led Afghan National Police Reform program in addition to its ongoing mission of reforming the ANA.

Army Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, commander of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, OSC-A's parent unit, and Air Force Maj. Gen. John T. Brennan, chief of OSC-A, presided over the ceremony which included the presentation of a new OSC-A guidon.

"Today's ceremony and the creation of the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan mark the commitment of the United States to this program, and to the continued development of a safe, secure and prosperous Afghanistan," said Eikenberry, who served as chief of OMC-A from 2002 to 2003.

Also in attendance were guests from the governments of the United States, Afghanistan and numerous Coalition nations, including the U.S. Charge' d' Affairs Maureen Quinn, Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak and Afghan Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali. Ambassador Rudolf Schmidt, the German special representative for Afghan Security Sector Reform, represented the Police Reform program's lead nation at the ceremony.

Under the guidance of OMC-A, the ANA has steadily increased in capability, professionalism, and size, reaching a current strength of more than 24,300 trained and equipped soldiers, with another 6,000 in training.

OMC-A's accomplishments with ANA reform made the unit a perfect choice to take on the U.S. role for ANP reform.

"The level of effort exerted on the ANA and the success of the program have earned us the honor of working with the Germans, the international community and the Afghan Ministry of the Interior in trying to produce those same results with the Afghan National Police program," said Brennan, OMC-A's chief since February.

British Army Col. Mark van der Lande, Brennan's chief of staff, added that OSC-A brings "the experience of institutional reform from its work in rebuilding the Afghan defense sector. Lessons learned from that experience will be applied to support the police program."

Addressing the ceremony attendees, Quinn stressed the importance of OSC-A's expanded role.

"This command is crucial to the future success of Afghanistan," she said. "The Afghanistan reconstruction effort and transfer to democracy is inextricably linked to security. Our ability to further develop the ANA's capabilities, combined with an accelerated program to train an effective, reliable police force, will have a direct impact on democracy and reconstruction in Afghanistan."

Jalali noted that the ceremony marked a renewed emphasis and greater commitment by the international community to the reform of the Afghan Police.

"With Germany as the lead nation

See **New name** *next page*

Additional U.S. forces headed to Afghanistan

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – A U.S. Army airborne infantry battalion is preparing to deploy to Afghanistan to provide additional flexibility in the fight against terrorism and to support the National Assembly and Provincial Council elections.

The 1st Battalion of the 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, part of the 82nd Airborne Division, is expected to ship out near the end of July. About 700 people will deploy.

"The Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and Coalition forces, along with this additional airborne battalion, will provide greater flexibility to continue offensive operations and enhance security during the election period," said Army Brig. Gen. Jack Sterling, deputy commanding general of Combined Joint Task Force-76. "We want to provide Afghanistan with an environment for democracy to flourish. It is our goal to allow security that promotes participation in the election process."

The Afghanistan National Assembly and Provincial Council elections are scheduled for September 18.

From previous page **New name**

and the substantial commitment of the United States in both personnel and resources, we will be able to accelerate our efforts to provide the people of Afghanistan a stable rule of law," he said.

Before the redesignation ceremony, Wardak's Defense Ministry received OMC-A's full attention as it focused on rebuilding the Afghan National Army. Wardak, however, is confident that OSC-A's expanded role with the Afghan National Police will complement the ANA's development and lead to a better future for the people of Afghanistan.

"OSC-A is committing itself to a new responsibility, a new job, but with the same final objectives and a much better prospect of achieving them," said Wardak. "Today we are marking a new phase – a stepping stone toward expediting the process of peace, security, stability and the rule of law for Afghanistan."

More detainees released under Takhim-e-Solh program

By Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – A second group of detainees was released from Coalition detention facilities July 9 as part of the Government of Afghanistan's Takhim-e-Solh or "Strengthening Peace" program.

After being given a medical examination, and their personal effects, 76 participants were released and then transferred from Coalition custody to the Government of Afghanistan. They were transported to the Takhim-e-Solh commission office in Kabul to be registered in the program and allowed to return home under the supervision of tribal elders.

A total of 199 detainees accepted participation in the program. The initial release of the detainees occurred July 2 when 57 participants were transferred into the program. The rest of the participants will be released in the near future.

Medical team attacked near Asadabad

By Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – While conducting a medical assistance visit near Asadabad in Kunar province July 6, a group of Afghan and U.S. forces came under fire from a group of four to eight enemies.

The Soldiers reported being attacked with a "crew-served weapon," possibly a machine gun, and returned fire with mortars. Afghan and U.S. forces conducted a search of the area.

The attackers fled shortly after the incident. There were no reports of injury or damage.

U.S. forces and their Afghan counterparts often visit remote areas of Afghanistan with doctors and other health-care professionals to help families with their medical needs. These visits are often supplemented with veterinarians who vaccinate livestock against disease.

"It's incredible to us that the enemy would attack our forces while we are providing innocent Afghans with health care," said Army Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara, a spokesperson for Combined Joint Task Force-76. "These attacks will not deter us; we will continue to provide this type of civic assistance to the people of Afghanistan."

"The enemy has proved through their actions, again, that they are only interested in oppression and terror for the people of this nation," O'Hara said.

"Every step we take forward with the Afghanistan government further and further marginalizes their cause."

Six arrested, weapons recovered near Kunar Province

By Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Six people were detained after U.S. forces discovered a weapons cache northwest of Asadabad in Kunar province July 4.

The cache consisted of five grenades, one rocket-propelled grenade, wires and timing devices, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and Taliban propaganda materials.

"This cache's discovery is significant in that we were able to remove potential improvised explosive device-making materials from Afghanistan," said Army Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara, a spokesperson for Combined Joint Task Force-76. "When removing the materials used in IED construction and arresting the criminals responsible for their use, we make Afghanistan a safer, more prosperous place to live."

The individuals detained were transported to a nearby Coalition base and were questioned by U.S. forces. The cache will be destroyed.

Afghan Army Logistics Command leaders to visit U.S.

By Army Sgt. Lynnette M. Jefferson
Office of Security Cooperation - Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan – Senior members of the Afghan National Army's Logistics Command will travel to the United States this week to visit the Army Materiel Command headquarters at Fort Belvoir, Va., and other military logistics depots and supply centers.

ANA Gen. Shah Aqa Haidari, the ANA General Staff's director of Logistics Materiel Readiness; ANA Col. Mohammad Ewaz Esar, commander of the ANA's Central Supply Depot; and ANA Lt. Col. Mohammad Ibrahim, secretary to the General Staff, will first visit a logistics depot in Philadelphia on the way to their scheduled Fort Belvoir visit July 15. They will also travel to Washington July 16-17 to visit the Embassy of Afghanistan and the Pentagon.

"I hope to learn from the U.S. Army leaders," Ibrahim said. "The experience will help me to learn more for my country and will help the people of Afghanistan too. It will be a good trip."

He said this is his first trip to the United States.

"I am very happy to go to the United States and my family is excited for me as well," he said.

Escorting the Afghan delegation will be U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer Theodore Walker, a logistics plans maintenance officer from the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan's Defense Resource Sector directorate. He said the trip will strengthen the logistics capabilities of the Afghan military.

"It is a great experience for them to see how the U.S. Army manages resources," Walker said.

The ANA Logistics Command provides national-level logistics support to the Ministry of Defense and other ministries. It serves as the national provider of supplies, maintenance and strategic transportation for the ANA.

When the ANA officers return to Afghanistan, they will be prepared to apply their experiences to improve the management of the ANA's Logistics Command.

Afghans lead U.S. forces to weapons in Eastern Afghanistan

By Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Afghan citizens discovered and turned in three weapons caches to U.S. forces July 3 in eastern Afghanistan.

The first cache was reported to U.S. forces by Afghan children playing in a field near Jalalabad in Nangarhar Province. It consisted of seven rockets that were transported by U.S. forces to a nearby base for destruction.

Another cache was discovered near Salerno in Khost Province when an Afghan man led U.S. forces to its location. The cache consisted of 95 anti-aircraft rounds, 2 mortar rounds, a night-vision device and a rifle scope, 500 feet of detonation cord and a Soviet-era missile of unknown origin. Numerous other small-arms rounds were also discovered at the scene. The cache was transported to Forward Operating Base Salerno for destruction.

Also near Salerno, another Afghan man led a patrol to a cache of eight 107 mm rockets. The rockets were transported to Salerno for destruction.

"The fact that Afghan citizens voluntarily turned these munitions in is a sign the Afghan people are tired of war and violence." said Army Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara, a spokesperson for Combined Joint Task Force-76. "Besides their obvious uses against the people of Afghanistan and U.S. forces, they are inherently dangerous on their own accord. When left unattended and not properly maintained, they become unstable and can detonate, killing anyone who happens to be in the area. We encourage all Afghans to report the locations of these dangerous munitions to Afghan or Coalition forces."

Tons of munitions collected; possible trigger man captured

By Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Afghan National Police officers turned in more than 1,000 rockets and other munitions to U.S. forces near Ghazni July 7 after having collected them from around the region.

In addition to the rockets, police collected more than 400 mortar rounds and 200 recoilless rifle rounds, 150 machine gun rounds, 75 rocket-propelled grenades and four anti-tank mines. Ninety-five percent of the munitions were reported as serviceable and some were still in their original packing materials.

Coalition forces transported the weapons to a nearby base for destruction.

"We are seeing district and provincial governments across the country prepare for the National Assembly elections in September. Part of that process is vetting candidates who want to run for seats in the parliament," said Army Lt. Col. Mike Fenzel, deputy commander of the Coalition's Regional Command East. "But in order to be favorably considered as a candidate, former warlords, fighters, and citizens with caches of weapons have to demobilize and demilitarize to even be considered. We've watched a steady flow of weapons and ammunition being turned in and collected by the Afghan National Police around our area of operation, all as part of the democratic process. These are very clear signals that democracy and security are taking hold in Afghanistan."

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, U.S. Soldiers patrolling near Qalat captured a man believed to be responsible for the detonation of an improvised explosive device that was triggered as their convoy passed July 7. The detonation caused no injuries or damage.

The man believed to be responsible for the attack was being questioned.

U.S. forces pursued a second individual believed to be involved in the attack but were unable to apprehend him.

Renovated bank opens in Kabul

By Army Spc. Benjamin Donde
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KABUL, Afghanistan -- Afghanistan continues to march along the path to reconstruction as a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held July 7 for a newly renovated bank branch.

"This shines as yet another example of the many positive steps forward occurring in this great country," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Christopher M. Nolta, a Coalition engineer and a liaison officer with the Afghan government.

It is the first opening of a renovated bank in Kabul province. Two more are scheduled for renovation.

The bank is to be a government bank supporting the payrolls of government officials and employees such as the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army, Nolta said.

"There have been a lot of issues in getting government workers paid due to the financial infrastructure in this country," Nolta said. "This bank's opening will make getting officials paid a lot easier, and that will increase the stability and security of this country in a big way."

More than 12,000 government workers will be able to cash their paychecks at this one branch alone, said Nolta.

The building has undergone several renovations, including the installation of a bathroom, teller windows and a reinforced vault, which is believed to be the first of its kind in Afghanistan.

The project cost $55,000 from the U.S. military's Commander's Emergency Response Program, which provides funds for projects that can help Afghans quickly.

This bank celebrated its grand opening today with a ribbon cutting ceremony after being newly renovated in Kabul, Afghanistan. It marks the first bank to be renovated here, and two more are scheduled for the future.

Army doctor delivers baby girl

By Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - A doctor working with the Lashkar Gah Provincial Reconstruction Team happened to be in the right place at the right time July 7 for an expecting Afghan mother about to give birth.

U.S. Army Dr. (Capt.) Jacqueline Naylor was part of a medical assistance visit at an Afghan hospital in the small city of Lashkar Gah in Helmand province when she was asked to help with the delivery of an Afghan baby girl.

Medical assistance visits are conducted throughout much of Afghanistan. They allow U.S. military medical personnel to help Afghan medical facilities and personnel with treatment of Afghan citizens.

Naylor is from Ocala, Fla., and is deployed from Vicenza, Italy, with the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Photo by Army Sgt. Erin Maynard

PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Marine rifleman Lance Cpl. Andrew Medina, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment keeps an eye out for enemy activity while traveling to the mountains of Alisheng District to conduct search patrols June 22.

Photo by Army Sgt. James-Denton Wyllie
20th Public Affairs Detachment

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

Afghan army unit dedicates memorial to fallen comrades

By Army Capt. Cenethea Harraway and Sgt. 1st Class Mack Davis
Office of Security Cooperation - Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan — The newly unveiled Afghan National Army Memorial at the headquarters of the 201st Corps' 3rd Brigade at Pol-e-Charki was dedicated June 30.

It honors 19 soldiers from the brigade who died while serving their country since the unit's formation in May 2002.

Present at the memorial dedication were several key leaders of the Afghan government, including Ahmad Zia Massoud, first deputy vice president of Afghanistan, Abdul Rahim Wardak, defense minister of Afghanistan, Gen. Bismullah Khan, chief of the ANA's General Staff, Maj. Gen. Moeen, commander of the 201st Corps, and Brig. Gen. Zamarai, the 3rd Brigade commander.

Also attending the ceremony were relatives of the honored soldiers, members of the 3rd Brigade and numerous Coalition mentors, including U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Richard Moorhead, commander of Coalition Joint Task Force Phoenix.

The memorial dedication offered a time for reflection, not only for the soldiers of the 3rd Brigade and their families, but also for the rest of the country.

"We have to ensure that the job the ANA is doing and the blood they shed for their country is not forgotten," Wardak said. "The Afghan people feel responsible to maintain the pride and heritage of our ancestors. We still have a lot of enemies that do not want us to succeed, but we must keep the inspiration we have received from the victims of war during the mujahedeen and the time since the ANA was formed."

Photo by Army Capt. Cenethea Harraway

Soldiers of the ANA's 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps stand guard at the memorial dedication honoring their fallen comrades. The background mural represents the Afghan National Army in battle.

The ceremony began with a prayer led by the 3rd Brigade mullah, followed by the playing of the Afghan national anthem and remarks by visiting dignitaries, who commemorated the memorial to the fallen soldiers.

In their remarks, Moeen and Zamarai vowed that they and their Soldiers would keep the people of Afghanistan secure and serve their country with honor and dignity for as long as they live.

When called upon, the 3rd Brigade's Soldiers have provided security for the people of Afghanistan, conducted combat operations against the enemies of their country and helped those in need during times of disaster. The memorial dedication served as a testament to the strength and fortitude of the ANA.

"I feel great respect for the dedication and sacrifices of our victims," Massoud said. "The building of this memorial is very important and honorable. I am sure the Afghan National Army will continue to serve our country as they have done previously."

The event concluded with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the official dedication of the monument. Afterward, as the attendees toured the memorial site, they bid their final, silent farewells to the brave warriors of the past.

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week:

Is it safe here?

Dari

Ainja masoon ast?

(in-**ja** maf-**sooz** ast?)

Pashtu

Dalta aman dae?

(Del-ta a-man da?)

Afghans are small farmers, growing wheat, barley, corn, and rice as major crops for internal consumption. Orchards are also highly prized and produce fruits and nuts for export.

(Source: http://www.culturalorientation.net/afghan/aeco.html)

Service members remembered

Missing Special Forces team members recovered after extensive searches

By Pfc. Vincent Fusco
20th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – After conducting numerous search and rescue operations in Kunar Province, Coalition forces were able to locate the bodies of three Navy SEALs who were killed in action while fighting enemy terrorists in late June.

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Danny P. Dietz, 25, of Littleton, Colo., and Navy Lt. Michael P. Murphy, 29, of Patchogue, N.Y., died in action before being located July 4.

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew G. Axelson, 29, of Cupertino, Calif, died in action before being located July 10.

Murphy and Axelson were assigned to SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Dietz was assigned to SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team Two, Virginia Beach, Va.

They were part of a four-man counter-terrorism team conducting combat operations in Kunar. A fourth member of the team was rescued and airlifted to the U.S. military hospital at Bagram Airfield with non-life-threatening injuries July 3.

While trying to reinforce the SEALs on the ground, sixteen U.S. service members traveling in an MH-47 Chinook were killed when their helicopter was hit by enemy fire June 28.

The following personnel on board the MH-47 when it was shot down were honored during separate memorial ceremonies between July 1 and 12:

Army Staff Sgt. Shamus O. Goare, 29, of Danville, Ohio; Army Chief Warrant Officer Corey J. Goodnature, 35, of Clarks Grove, Minn.; Army Sgt. Kip A. Jacoby, 21, of Pompano Beach, Fla.; Army Sgt. 1st Class Marcus V. Muralles, 33, of Shelbyville, Ind.; Army Maj. Stephen C. Reich, 34, of Washington Depot, Conn.; Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael L. Russell, 31, of Stafford, Va.; and Army Chief Warrant Officer Chris J. Scherkenbach, 40, of Jacksonville, Fla., assigned to 3rd Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), Hunter Army Air Field, Ga.

Army Master Sgt. James W. Ponder III, 36, of Franklin, Tenn., assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), Fort Campbell, Ky.

Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Daniel R. Healy, 36, of Exeter, N.H.; Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class James Suh, 28, of Deerfield Beach, Fla.; Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Eric S. Patton, 22, of Boulder City, Nev., assigned to SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Navy Chief Petty Officer Jacques J. Fontan, 36, of New Orleans, La.; Navy Lt. Cmdr. Erik S. Kristensen, 33, of San Diego, Calif.; Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Jeffery A. Lucas, 33, of Corbett, Ore.; Navy Lt. Michael M. McGreevy, Jr., 30, of Portville, N.Y.; Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Jeffrey S. Taylor, 30, of Midway, W.Va., assigned to SEAL Team Ten, Virginia Beach, Va.

In a separate incident, Marine Lance Cpl. Kevin B. Joyce, 19, of Ganado, Ariz., died June 25 after falling into the Pech River while conducting combat operations in Afghanistan. He was traveling along the river with his squad in a cargo Humvee when the vehicle slid down an embankment.

It is believed that when the occupants escaped the vehicle, Joyce fell into the river. He was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

AAFES Services Hours of Operation

Bagram Air Base

PX
0230-1630
Shoppette
0230-1630
Burger King
0430-1730
Food Court
0600-1630
Coffee Shop
24 hours
Barber Shop
0430-1530
Day Spa
0400-1600
Massage
0400-1800
Alterations
0430-1430
Embroidery Shop
0430-1430
Gift Shops
0430-1430
Sports Apparel
0430-1430
Black Ops Store
0430-1530

Kandahar Airfield

PX
0500-1700
Burger King
0430-1730
Pizza Hut
0600-1800
Subway
0600-1430
Coffee Shop
24hrs
Main Barber Shop
0500-1700
Lagoon Barber Shop
0300-1700
Day Spa
0500-1700
Alterations
0500-1700
Embroidery Shop
0500-1700
Gift Shops
0500-1700
Sports Apparel
0500-1700
Black Ops Store
0500-1700
Leather Shop
0500-1700

TF Phoenix

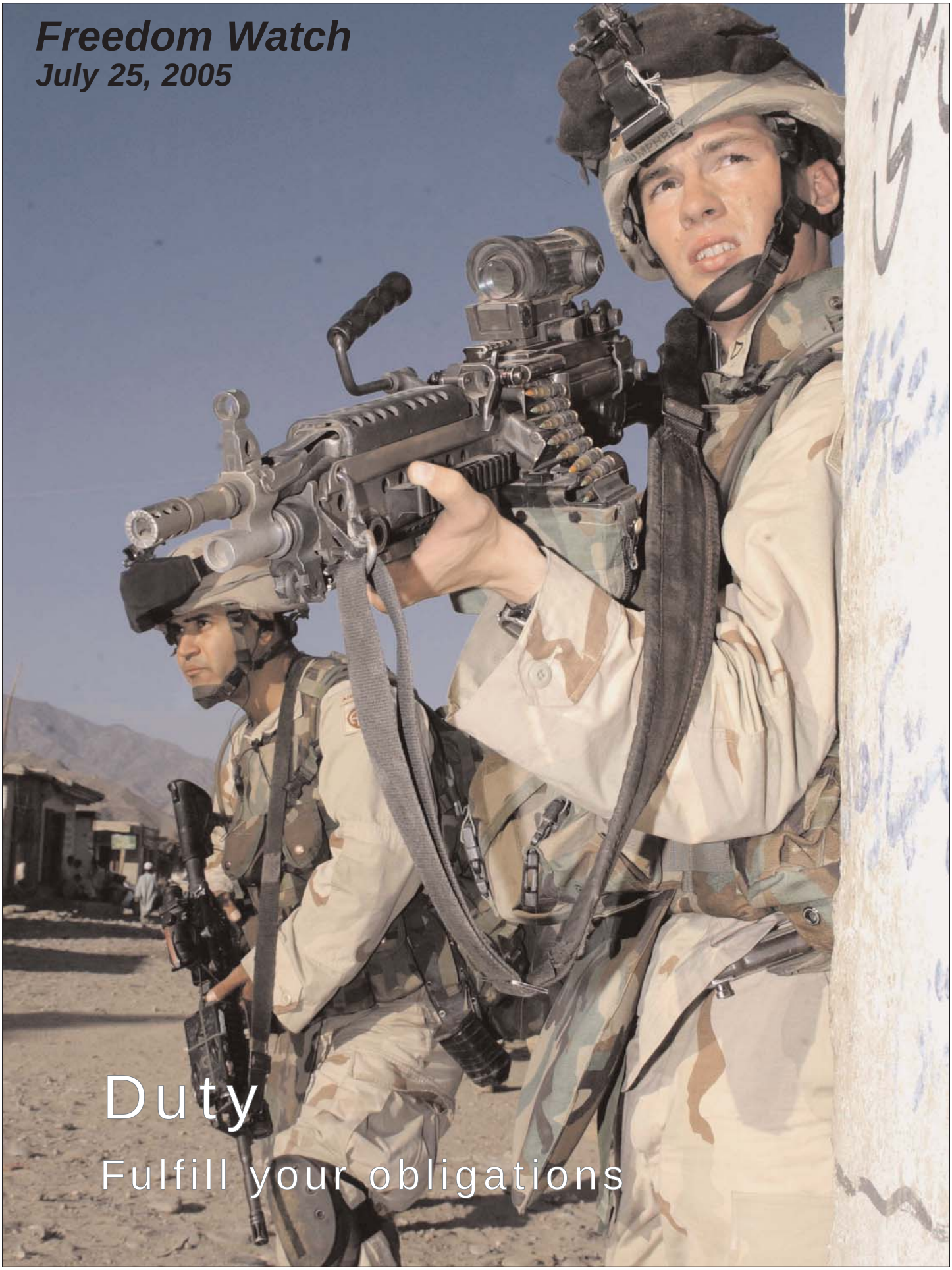
PX
0430-1630
Barber Shop
0330-1530
Alterations
0330-1630
Coffee Shop
24 hours

Camp Eggers

PX
0430-1630
Barber Shop
0330-1530
Coffee Shop
24 hours

**** All times in Zulu/GMT***

Freedom Watch
July 25, 2005



Duty

Fulfill your obligations

Soldiers from B Co., 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment look around a corner while on a dismounted presence patrol through Asadabad. (Photo by Spc. Harold Fields, 55th Signal Co.)