

Afghanistan
Freedom

February 19, 2007

Combined Joint Task Force - 76

Watch



**Bagram PRT opens new
bridge, road in Kohe Safi**

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A local Afghan takes in the view from the newly-constructed Gogamanda Bridge in Kohe Safi.

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Doscher
Combined Joint Task Force-76 Public Affairs Office

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Cover: Parwan Governor Jabar Taqwa prepares to cut the ribbon on the newly constructed Gogamanda Bridge. The new bridge and road will provide a new link to Kabul for more than 6,000 Afghan families. The Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team provided funding and some oversight for the construction, which cost \$450,000.

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Doscher
Combined Joint Task Force-76 Public Affairs Office

Afghanistan Freedom Watch

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Why did we re-enlist?

From the perspective of an old Soldier

**Compiled by Army Sgt. Maj.
Curtis Regan
Combined Joint Task Force-76
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Why should we reenlist? Because an innate sense of responsibility to our nation's defense compels us to, or because we're pursuing an active role in the national defense strategy or how about because, first and foremost, the Army is Soldiers.

Each of us are an integral part of this values based organization and time honored profession, commanding respect and admiration for our service to the country, constitution and American way of life.

Soldiers are the centerpiece of all Army organizations. Only with Soldiers can the Army ensure the victories required on battlefields of today and the future.

Doctrinally, Soldiers support and defend America's constitution and way of life against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Soldiers protect national security interests, including forces, possessions, citizens and allies. We prepare for and deliver decisive action in all operations and provide a versatile land force ready to fight and win the nation's wars.

Soldiers have the ability, by threat, force or occupation, to promptly gain, sustain and exploit control over land, resources and people. This includes our ability to impose the nation's will on adversaries in diverse and complex terrain. Soldiers can also establish and maintain a stable environment which sets the conditions for a lasting peace, restores infrastructures, and reestablishes basic civil rights.

Soldiers are ready for deployment on short notice and able to conduct sustained operations indefinitely. But, Soldiers do more than fight wars. Soldiers provide America the means to deter potential adversaries and shape global politics. Fundamental to deterrence is their credible, demonstrated capability in every conflict to fight and win in all environments.

Several factors underlie the credibility

and capability making Soldiers relevant in any environment. Tough and imaginative adaptive Soldiers are essential components. These same characteristics are important in establishing relationships with multinational partners. When deterrence fails or disaster strikes, they can lead or support the unified action required to resolve a situation.

Soldiers are versatile. They supply many services associated with establishing order, rebuilding infrastructure, and delivering humanitarian support. When necessary, they can direct assistance in reestablishing entire governmental institutions.

So what is a Soldier? That is hard to capture in words. No two Soldiers are alike, though they live by a common ethical standard and are subject to military law and order.

The Soldier is not the great wise man, the inhuman Spartan or necessarily the inflated body builder. Soldiers are sensible, practical and without a great imagination for grandeur. Their manners are simple and their uniform decent. They can clearly see people are people and windmills are windmills; they never confuse clouds for stones or desires from reality. They are heroes and saints, but in simple human measures. They may enlist for military service and not become true Soldiers. The first one is a random decision, an impulse without foundation; the second one is a personal achievement and an individual accomplishment.

While on duty, Soldiers display order, discipline, solid intellectual and physical power, flexibility and grace. The Soldier should feel the responsibility and moral weight of the whole empire on their shoulders. A Soldier controls their passions, never speaks of themselves or says bad words about others, is master of their temper and captain of their soul.

They preserve all the virtues of past heroes, but with more flexibility and differentiation; promise less than what is determined to do; perfectly control their passions, good or bad; and are obedient to the spirit and letter of the law.

Off duty, a Soldier is flexible and charming, without the strict ethics of oversight or command, and is a graceful citizen. Their life is a compromise and a co-existence where the social conscience must adjust the individual

conscience, the virtues and the malices must be moderate, not to bother anyone; and if it's possible, to be pleasurable to the interaction of all humans.

In close-combat, they feel the honor of all that is right and virtuous in the world is depending on their sword's edge. God, country, honor, the three great values; but above all, honor.

Why reenlist? Because no one but a Soldier understands all of this for what it truly represents. In no other walk of life can a person be so much to so many in such a way that leaves no doubt as to their resolve. The Army offers the greatest circumstance life can afford a person, the occasion to be a hero.

“Why reenlist? Because no one but a Soldier understands all of this for what it truly represents. In no other walk of life can a person be so much to so many in such a way that leaves no doubt as to their resolve.”

Army Sgt. Maj. Curtis Regan
Combined Joint Task Force-76
operations sergeant major

U.S. transfers humvees, light weapons to ANA

American Forces Press Services News Release

KABUL, Afghanistan – The United States transferred 213 Humvees and more than 12,000 light weapons to the Afghan National Army during a ceremony Feb. 2 at a depot in Pol-e-charkhi, Afghanistan.

The transfer marks the beginning of delivery of more than 800 various up-armored vehicles for the ANA, according to Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

“This is only the tip of the mountain of deliveries ... you will see many things the U.S. is committed to give Afghanistan in order to support the defense force,” Karzai said. “We appreciate both current and future donations.”

Afghan Defense Minister Maj. Gen. Abdul Rahim Wardak said the vehicles and weapons will help the ANA gain the capability to conduct independent operations.

“This dramatically increases
See TRANSFER, page 6

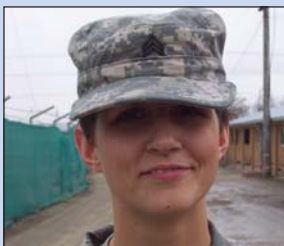


Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Asselin

The United States transfers 213 Humvees to the Afghan National Army during a ceremony Feb. 2 in Pol-e-charkhi, Afghanistan. The event marked the initial transfer of more than 800 up-armored vehicles and more than 12,000 light weapons to the ANA.

Enduring Voices

What is your greatest hope for the people of Afghanistan?



**Army Sgt.
Brandy Ulrich**

"To find a way to strike a balance with modern economics and still hold true to their culture and values."



Army Chief Warrant Officer Brett Brown

"For them to be independent and democratic."



**Army Pvt.
Staton Casey**

"That they get the same freedoms we do."



**Army Staff Sgt.
Gregory Twait**

"I want them to have basic human rights, and to be free from fear and oppression."

Airmen to work alongside Soldiers in Afghanistan

By Air Force Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel
376th Air Expeditionary Wing
Public Affairs Office

MANAS AIR BASE, Kyrgyzstan – Troops arriving here are typically greeted by a welcoming committee, so

when the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing commander and his staff went to meet the servicemembers bound for Afghanistan disembarking off an aircraft Feb. 4, they fully expected to see Army Soldiers file off.

But when more than 170 Airmen came down the staircase, they knew something was different.

“I was expecting Soldiers to emerge from the jet,” said Air Force Col. Scott Reese. “Instead I saw Airman after

Airman, battlefield Airmen. I could not help but admire them for their dedication to their nation’s needs and for their flexibility. We are proud to support them as they head off to assist in bringing peace

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Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel

Air Force Staff Sgt. Jason Lapeyrouse (left) and Air Force Staff Sgt. James Johnson (right) help Air Force Senior Airman Emily Jones secure her Interceptor Body Armor Feb. 5 in preparation for departure from Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, to Afghanistan. Lapeyrouse and Jones are deployed from the 6th Medical Operations Squadron at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Johnson is deployed from the 116th Air Control Wing at Robins AFB, Ga. The three are part of 170 Airmen who trained with the Army at Fort Riley, Kan., and will be deployed side-by-side with Soldiers in Afghanistan.

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ANA mobility, assault and survivability,” Wardak said. “By Allah’s aid, and the backing of the Afghan people, these vehicles and weapons will help us defend the country and challenge all threats in the most hazardous area of the Asian continent.”

Karzai praised his nation’s army and expressed gratitude to the United States.

“Today we are very happy and proud of our national army,”

he said. “We appreciate its minister, chief of general staff, officers and, mostly, its noncommissioned officers and soldiers. This country will be forever in their debt.

“Let’s take care of these vehicles and weapons bought with millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars,” Karzai continued. “We should be grateful for the delivery of this equipment and use them in the correct way.”



Photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Scott Cohen

Gen. Bismullah Kahn, Afghan National Army Chief of Staff (left), and Afghan President Hamid Karzai (right) look over light weapons after a vehicle and weapons transfer ceremony in Pol-e-charki, Afghanistan. The United States transferred 213 Humvees and more than 12,000 light weapons to the Afghan National Army.

From AIRMEN, page 5

and stability to Afghanistan, this time side-by-side with Soldiers. I wish them the best on their journeys.”

The men and women had just completed an almost 10-week long Army training course at Fort Riley, Kan. They are here waiting for their next flight, which will take them to missions across Afghanistan.

“We are basically going in to augment the Army,” said Air Force Maj. Dain Kleiv, an operations officer from the 100th Maintenance Squadron at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom. “They are a little short-manned.”

For the Airmen, Army training was something of a culture shock.

“Initially, it was like speaking another language,” said Air Force Capt. David Marce of the 23rd Maintenance Squadron from Pope Air Force Base, N.C. “I think that we are all pretty fluent in Army now.”

Another Airman had a similar reaction.

“Toward the end, they got used to us being around,” said Senior Airman Emily Woolfolk, a medic from the 6th Medical Operations Squadron at MacDill AFB, Fla. “In the beginning, it felt like being an alien from another planet.”

She and the other members of the

“I was expecting Soldiers to emerge from the jet. Instead I saw Airman after Airman. I could not help but admire them for their dedication to their nation’s needs and for their flexibility.”

Air Force Col. Scott Reese
376th Expeditionary Air Wing commander

group managed to adapt and overcome the unique circumstances.

“Waking up at 3:30 in the morning and training till 7 o’clock at night, (is) just a change in lifestyle, I guess,” Woolfolk said.

The Airmen, with career fields ranging from vehicle and aircraft maintainers to communications and medical technicians, qualified in improvised explosives device detection, weapons training, combat life-

saver and other invaluable skills.

For many of the Airmen, firing the Army’s high-caliber weapons was the highlight of their training.

“Shooting a .50 cal off a turret, that was pretty cool,” Marce said.

Others appreciated the convoy training, which will be required in order to get from location to location while in country. “In supply, that’s our bread and butter,” said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Michael Ickes of the 56th Logistics Readiness Squadron from Luke AFB, Ariz.

Since they would often be dealing with the Afghanistan National Army, the Airmen were trained in the various cultural awareness skills including language training.

For Senior Airman Erin Jones, a 6th MDOS medic, her biggest challenge was learning Dari, a language native to Afghanistan.

“I can count to 10, say the days of the week, (and) say ‘Hi, how are you?’” said Jones.

As valuable as the training was for the Airmen, there was one common sentiment in the group.

“Get the job done, get home safe,” Jones said.

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



Photo by Army Spc. Michael J. Nyeste

Are you hungry?

Dari

**Aya shume gursna hasted?
(Eye-yah sho-mah goor-ees-nah hah-stayed)**

Pashtu

**Taso wazha ye?
(Tah-soh wah-ja yaya)**

Afghan men typically wear a long tunic over baggy trousers and often wear a vest over the tunic. Turbans are wound around a type of turban cap. Pashtuns and others who imitate them leave a couple of feet of turban cloth hanging down, while most of those in the rest of the country tuck the end in. Pashtun men customarily have their hair cut square at ear-lobe length. Other groups have their heads shaved about twice a month.

New 'Freedom Radio' goes

New station manager changes name, doubles local broadcast time

**By Air Force Staff
Sgt. Matt Lichtenberg**
*American Forces Network - Afghanistan
print section*

Being on a deployment, you usually see a lot of new faces. There are some new faces here at Bagram Airfield that you may not see, but you'll definitely hear them.

They're the new radio disc jockeys of

the local radio station at 94.1 FM here or 91.5 FM in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, formerly known as "Thunder Radio," which changed its name to "Freedom Radio" Monday.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Dominique Dickens, Senior Airman Sarah Mihlfeld, and Airman 1st Class Jared Sauvageau arrived at Bagram Airfield earlier this month, and they make up the new Freedom Radio staff.

Dickens comes from Yokota Air Base, Japan, with five years of radio experience. He's the noncommissioned officer in charge of the radio station and also the host of the afternoon show.

The Washington, D.C., native says his job is very unique and important, especially during deployments.

"We're in a different environment and sometimes it may get a little depressing being away from our family and friends," he said. "So for me, it feels good to give folks a piece of home."

Mihlfeld is stationed at Vicenza, Italy, where she has added to her three years of radio experience. She has big plans during her first deployment to Bagram.

"I'm really looking forward to learning about the culture and people of Afghanistan and fulfilling my responsibility in the war," said the mid-day radio show host.

Sauvageau claims Worcester, Mass., as



Airman 1st Class Jared Sauvageau, morning show host, working at 6:30 a.m. Sauvageau is trying to push the envelope and get more informed about base activities.



Senior Airman Sarah Mihlfeld, American Forces Network - Afghanistan mid-day radio show host, prepares material for her show.

Photo by Air Force Senior Airman Brian Stives

es Air Force, gets new staff



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Matt Lichtenberg

ed Sauvageau, American Forces Network - wakes up the nation with new rock begin- vageau doesn't let his rank stop him from velope to keep listeners tuned and activities and news.

home and has been stationed at March Air Reserve Base, Calif., for almost six months before deploying here. The morning show host has only about a year of radio experience, but he doesn't let that get in the way of having fun on the job.

"I push the limits all the time," he said. "Sometimes I push too hard ... but, that's when you have a really good show."

Even though all these DJs come from different bases and backgrounds, they share one commonality: they're all excited to provide servicemembers with important information and state-side-like entertainment.

You can catch Sauvageau's morning show from 6:30 a.m. local to 10:30 a.m. local, Mihlfeld's midday show goes from 10:30 a.m. local to 2:30 p.m. local, and Dickens' afternoon show is from 2:30 p.m. local to 6:30 p.m. local Monday through Friday.



**Freedom Radio 94.1 FM (91.5 FM in Manas)
Urban (The Touch) 105.7 FM (Except Kabul)
Country 107.3 FM**



Photo by Air Force Senior Airman Brian Stives

Air Force Staff Sgt. Dominique Dickens, American Forces Network - Afghanistan noncommissioned officer in charge of the radio station and afternoon show host, is in full character during his show.

Bagram PRT opens bridge, road in Kohe Safi

By Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Doscher
Combined Joint Task Force-76 Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – When local contractor Asil Khan first thought of building a bridge over the Gogamanda River, he was knee-deep in it, evading the Soviet Army on a trip to Pakistan to procure weapons for the Mujahadeen.

More than 15 years later, that idea became a reality as Governor Jabar Taqwa officially opened the Gogomanda Bridge and the road that links Kabul with thousands of villagers who have been cut off from the capital by the river.

“Behind the mountains there are 6,000 villagers,” Khan said. “They had no way to get to Kabul. Now they have the bridge.”

Construction of the bridge took six months and more than 40 local Afghan workers. The road and bridge cost \$225,000 apiece.

Army Maj. Don Johnson, Bagram Provincial Reconstruction Team commander, said the price was a bargain.

“Normally a road like this costs \$25,000 per kilometer,” he said. “It should have cost us \$400,000. It was a steal.”

Khan said he wanted to do his part for the people.

“I felt these people needed help, and this is the help we can do for them,” he said.

The Bagram PRT provided funds for the project and some oversight.

“We would go and periodically check the work,” Johnson said. “It’s a strong bridge. We were here when it was just the foundations.”

As Johnson’s final mission before his redeployment, he took the opportunity to speak to some of the assembled local Afghans.

“In the 10 months I’ve been here, I’ve learned a lot about the Afghan people,” he said. “They’re generous, hospitable. They value education and they want the best for their people.”

Johnson said a project like this would not be possible under the Taliban. He asked the Afghans, “How many bridges have the Taliban built?”

One Afghan stepped forward and answered him. “Don’t ask that question,” he said. “Ask how many they have destroyed.”



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Doscher

A group of Afghans assemble on the newly-constructed Gogamanda Bridge Feb. 7. The new bridge and road will provide a new link to Kabul for more than 6,000 Afghan villagers.

Taking aim with other nations

U.S. servicemembers participate in the German Schutzenschnur

By Army Spc.
Michael J. Nyeste
19th Public Affairs
Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Service members here have an opportunity to take aim with foreign weapons, and become a part of a tradition nearly three centuries old.

The German Schutzenschnur is a marksmanship qualification course where shooters fire different types of weapons at targets from the standing, kneeling and prone firing posi-

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Photo by Army Spc. Michael J. Nyeste

German Army Lt. Col. Rainer Otter, German liaison officer to CJTF-76, awards Army Pfc. Jeffory Lewis, motor transportation operator with Echo Co. 2-10 Aviation, the German shooters chord and gold marksmanship badge.



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

Senior Airman Sarah Mihlfeld, American Forces Network - Afghanistan disc jockey, passes out candy to one of six children in the Egyptian Field Hospital Saturday on Bagram Airfield. Senior Airman Andrea Wright and Mihlfeld talked to all 25 patients in the hospital and passed out school supplies as well as the candy.

Photo by Air Force Senior Airman Andrea Wright
American Forces Network - Afghanistan print section

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.

Father, son Paratroopers deploy to Afghanistan

By Staff Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
Task Force Fury Public Affairs Office

As a boy, Jose Gomez would watch his father come home from work or being in the field and dream that one day that would be him.

“I saw my father and fellow Soldiers while growing up coming home from the field and knew I wanted to do that,” said Gomez, a native of Puerto Rico. “I wanted to jump, deploy; be a hero.”

Now a 21-year-old sergeant, Gomez is an artillery gunner with Battery A, 2nd

Battalion, 321st Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, beginning his first deployment. If Jose needs to seek any fatherly advice while in Afghanistan, he won't have to look far. His father serves as a section chief with Battery B, 2nd Bn., 321st AFAR. The father deployed along side with the son Jan. 22.

“I'm proud of what he's doing following my footprints in the service and serving our country,” said Staff Sgt. Miguel Gomez, who is making his third opera-

tional deployment.

Miguel and Jose have been together in the 2nd Bn., 321st AFAR for five months and have jumped together four times.

While Miguel and Jose will not serve in the same location in Afghanistan they hope to get together at least once or twice during their year-long deployment.

“We hope to get together for Father's Day or Christmas,” said Miguel. “We would like to do something, we just don't know yet.”

While their proximity to each other will ease their burden during the deployment a little, it will be more difficult for Miguel's and Jose's wives, especially with Jose's wife giving birth to their first child in January.

“My wife is really proud, but has it hard because both of us will be deployed,” Miguel said.

“My wife is in the Army too and she was supposed to deploy as well, but she won't now because she gave birth to our first son Jan. 4,” Jose said.

Jose became the third generation of Gomez's, to serve in the Army as an artilleryman. Indeed, he passed on a full baseball scholarship at the University of Miami to follow his father and grandfather into the service two years ago.

“I had a full scholarship to play baseball, but felt strongly about joining the military and that I wasn't doing a bad thing,” said Jose. “I wanted to experience my dad's experiences and I wanted to be an airborne paratrooper.”

While Miguel was hoping Jose would take advantage of his scholarship, he is not disappointed by his son's decision to serve in the Army.

“I wanted to see him go to college, but he told me he wanted to be like me,” Miguel said. “He's a grown man and he makes his own decisions, so I've tried to help him along the way.”

Miguel said that when Jose entered the Army he hoped he and his son could be stationed together one day.

“Branch just happened to send me to Bragg,” Miguel said. “I was happy when I received the orders. It was a dream of ours to serve in the same brigade but we got one better with the same battalion.”



Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey

Army Sgt. Jose Gomez (left) and his father Army Staff Sgt. Miguel Gomez (right) are serving in the same battalion deployed to Afghanistan.

From AIM, page 11

tions, said German Army Lt. Col. Rainer Otter, the German liaison officer to Combined Joint Task Force-76.

The tradition began in 1720 when Prussian emperor Friedrich Wilhelm I decided to decorate his best rifle shooters. The tradition of awarding superior marksmanship carries on today in Germany and in the desert sands of Afghanistan.

Today, marksmen who qualify receive a silver shooters chord with a bronze, silver or gold badge attached to it depending on how well one scores, Otter said.

“Being awarded with the German shooting badge demonstrates your skill in that important area,” Otter said. “It proves universal skill in handling all kinds of weapons.”

The two German weapons available to be qualified on in Afghanistan are the Rifle G38 and the Pistol P8.

Someone who shot both those weapons with skill, Army Pfc. Jeffery Lewis, motor transportation operator with Echo Co. 2-10 Aviation who earned a gold shooting badge, said the experience was worthwhile.

“It was a lot of fun,” Lewis said. “I enjoyed every minute of it. People should definitely do it if they get the chance.”

It’s more than having a great time that makes earning the German shooters chord worth it.

“It’s an exchange of spirit, motivation, brotherhood, friendship and comradeship,” Otter said.



Photo by Army Spc. Michael J. Nyeste

German Army Lt. Col. Rainer Otter, German liaison officer to CJTF-76, gives a speech to U.S. servicemembers who successfully completed the Schutzenschnur.

Critical links mean critical seconds

Many players in MEDEVAC mission are key to saving lives

By Air Force Staff Sgt.

Thomas J. Doscher

Combined Joint Task Force-76 Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan

— During a medical crisis in the U.S., time is critical. In Afghanistan, it's unforgiving. While a child falling out of a tree in Wauwatosa, Wis., can be treated at an emergency room within a few minutes, injured children in Afghanistan could be days from a facility that can adequately treat them.

This is where the Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 82nd General Support Aviation Battalion and the Airmen of Task Force Med here step in. While their primary mission is to care for injured servicemembers wounded in combat, they also care for injured Afghan nationals for whom time is critical.

When the call comes in, Sgt. Royce Smith, 82nd Airborne Division, medical operations NCO, must first use a variety of factors to determine whether an aeromedical evacuation mission can be justified. He said there are several things that must be considered.

"If a local national is injured, and we caused it, we assume responsibility and provide him with the same treatment we would a U.S. member," he said. "Or seeing as some of our facilities are better suited to treat them and if we have bed-space, we'll take them."

Smith said the criteria include enemy action, even if that action is unintentional.

"If a kid finds a mine and treats it like a Frisbee, we still consider that an injury we would treat."

In the five months the Henager, Ala., native has worked as a medical operations NCO, he has coordinated more than 100 MEDEVACS for local Afghan nationals.

"I'm not the one flying the chopper or giving the care, but it's my job to get that chopper to the patient to guarantee they receive immediate care at a hospital that can meet their needs," he said.

That chopper is manned by members of the 3-82nd GSAB out of Fort Bragg,



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Doscher

Army Private 1st Class Aaron Fuge, C Company, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Ground Support Aviation Battalion Blackhawk crew chief, inspects the hoist system on a UH-60A Blackhawk helicopter.

N.C. Flying the UH-60A Blackhawk helicopter, the 3-82nd functions as an air ambulance for injured Soldiers and Afghans alike.

Sgt. 1st Class Randy Scott, C Company, 3-82nd GSAB flight medic, said their birds are fully equipped for any medical emergency.

"We carry anything you'd find on an ambulance," he said. "Ventilators, drugs, narcotics, a high performance hoist for mountain side and water rescue, oxygen and defibrillators."

Although here barely a month, Scott has already used that equipment to save Afghan children.

"We went into a forward operating base to retrieve a two-month old baby girl in respiratory distress and evacuate her back here to Bagram for higher care," he said. "The child was already in the care of a Forward Surgical Team. The child was pale, not breathing. I facilitated the breathing of the child to keep her stable enough to come here."

Because the baby was so small, the medics could not use the ventilator.

"We had to ventilate her by hand,"

Scott said.

In another case, the crew picked up a six-year-old boy who was hit by a tractor and developed an infection that interfered with his breathing. During the flight, Scott had to be sensitive not only to his patient's needs but the needs of the boy's father.

"The father wanted to have a visual of his son's face," he said. "He would make me move out of the way if I blocked it."

Both patients were taken to the Task Force Medical hospital where they were stabilized. In both instances, time was a key factor. Without the Blackhawks of the 3-82nd GSAB, things might have been much different.

Air Force Maj. Kerry Hesselrode, deployed from Travis AFB, Calif., serves as Task Force Med's Emergency Department officer in charge. Originally from Sikeston, Mo., Hesselrode said he's seen at least 15 local national air evacuations into Bagram since his arrival Jan. 7. He said without the speed the Blackhawks provide, most wouldn't have made it.

"At least 10 would not have made it," he said. "A couple of them got here, and I

See MEDEVAC, page 15

From MEDEVAC, page 14 don't know how they made it at all."

The task of keeping those Blackhawks flying falls to some of the 3-82nd's most junior members. Pfc. Aaron Fuge of Phoenix and Pfc. Kelton Glorfield of Boise, Idaho, have been in the Army for 18 months and are 3-82nd Blackhawk crew chiefs. They said they are all too aware that lives depend on those choppers flying.

"Any problem we fix," Fuge said.

Glorfield said they want every helicopter to go when needed.

"Everyone here cares, and it tears you up when you can't go out," he said. "Going through mountain passes and ridges, it would take days to get there in other vehicles, so the choppers are essential."

Along with the other systems on the Blackhawk, the crew chiefs maintain the helicopter's 250 ft. hoist, used for pulling people from mountainsides and bodies of water.

Fuge said each system is essential.

"We make sure they work right," he said. "It's someone's life dangling on the end of that."

Once safely on the ground, it's up to TF Med to care for the wounded Afghans, no matter what injury they may have.

Hesselrode said he sees injuries from gunshot wounds and mine blast injuries to car accidents and kids falling out of trees.

"Some are minor," he said. "Some are extremely critical. The FOBs do their care there then they bring them here for our care. They don't have the facilities we do."

Once stabilized, TF Med must work through even more

obstacles to the healing process. Air Force Maj. Christine Hale-Pierce, TF Med's chief nurse from Travis AFB, said they often have to overcome nutrition and hygiene issues that can stretch out the time patients stay.

"We had a young man here for four months," she said. "We coordinate with ISAF facilities to take over when they reach a certain level of wellness."

Another issue the men and women of TF Med must deal with is the differences in culture, something Hale-Pierce said can pull hard on their hearts.

"We had a 57-year-old heart attack patient come in," she said. "We recognized the indicators that it was beyond the country's ability to handle."

The prognosis was grim.

"In the U.S. in these cases, we would give the patient pain medication and make them

comfortable until the end," she said. "Here, we obeyed the family's wishes. We put her in a taxi and watched them drive away. These things are difficult for us, but it follows their beliefs."

Success stories, however, are more numerous. When an 11-year-old boy came in with an abscess on his foot, TF Med cared for him for 50 days while he recovered.

"The foot is a very dangerous place for an infection because of the large number of bones," Hale-Pierce said.

The boy had multiple surgeries before he was finally released.

"He was here so long he thought he was part of the family," Hale-Pierce said.

While each link in the chain plays only a small role, they say the impact their roles have on the Afghan people are far-reaching.

"It's good for the morale of

the village if they see the U.S. come in and help one of their own," Smith said. "It's good for the Coalition effort to show Afghans that we support them."

"Anybody who needs our help, we're here," Scott said. "It's what we're here for. We did it in Iraq, and we'll do it here."

"What better way to win the hearts and minds of the people here than to pick them up and show them that we care?" Glorfield asked.

"It's a tough mission," Hale-Pierce said. "It impacts you emotionally. At the same time you know you're doing something valuable for these people, and we know the people here are grateful."

With each link working together, the Soldiers and Airmen conducting the aeromedical evacuation mission at Bagram can give wounded Afghans one of the most critical components in life-saving; time.



Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Doscher

Air Force Maj. Maria Spry, an Air Force Reservist from Hercules, Calif., deployed to Task Force Med from 349th Aero-Medical Staging Squadron offers medication to Muji Brahman at the TF Med hospital Feb. 5.

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A Medevac Helicopter from 3/82nd Aviation Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Infantry Division picks up a crewman at Forward Operating Base Salerno, in the Khowst Province, Afghanistan Feb. 2. Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Isaac A. Graham.