Dragon Tales from Afghanistan

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Issue 3 April 28, 2012

photo by Sgt. Kimberly Lamb
The memorial for three fallen Heroes assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, April 6, 2012.

Task Force Viking Medic Aids Afghan Child

Story and photo by
Spc. James Simpson
Unit Public Affairs Representative, Alpha Co. 1-125

KUNDUZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Pfc. Kyle Koblinski, a combat medic in 3rd Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, was on patrol with his fellow Soldiers when an Afghan father approached them with his sick daughter.

Koblinski, eager to assist the Afghans, did a basic examination of the child and determined that she was suffering from stomach pains. He believed this was due to a diet relying heavily on grain. Koblinski spoke with the girl's father and advised him to have her take additional fluids and citrus fruits to ease her

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Pfc. Kyle Koblinski, medic assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, examines a 4-year-old girl, March 23, 2012, as others look on. The father brought the girl to the Soldiers because she was not feeling well. The 37th IBCT is deployed to northern Afghanistan in support of the International Security Assistance Force in order to build Afghan National Police capacity.

Soldiers Attend Female Engagement Training, Shura

by Sgt. Kimberly Lamb
37th IBCT Public Affairs

CAMP MARMAL, Afghanistan – Fifteen Soldiers of the 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and several other Coalition Force service members participated in female engagement team training and a female shura here, March 24-28, 2012.

During the training, the Soldiers completed several interactive courses including Afghan history and culture, stability operations, counter-insurgency, conducting key leader engagements, and Dari language.

The Soldiers received instruction from female engagement team advisors as well as representatives from public affairs, the commander's emergency relief program, the COIN Advisory Assistance Team, and gender advisors.

On March 26, 2012, Brigadier General Khatool Mohammadzai, the highest-ranking female and director of women's affairs in the Afghan army, visited the group.

Mohammadzai, through her language assistant, expressed how important female engagement teams are in Afghanistan's evolving culture. Three of the Soldiers attending the FET training were male.

"It is very important for males to train as part of the FET. The Afghan culture is male dominated. The inclusion of males allows the team to engage male Afghans prior to engaging the females. This helps reinforce our understanding and respect for Afghan culture norms in the eyes of our target audience," said Sgt. First Class Gregory C. Sewell, military information support operations planner and information operations noncommissioned officer in charge, assigned to Headquarters Company, 37th IBCT. "Each gender brings unique capabilities and strengths to the team. We are more effective working together than approaching engagements focusing solely on one gender."

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Ohio National Guard Soldiers help train Afghan National Police

Story and photo by
Capt. Charles Buchanan
Charlie Co. 1-148

FARYAB PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Tucked away on a combat outpost, known as a COP in military jargon, Company C of the 1st Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment is training Afghan National Police officers on conducting traffic control points.

The company, based in Tiffin, Ohio, is part of the 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team currently deployed throughout northern Afghanistan. The company's mission in northern Afghanistan is to train and advise the ANP in the Ghormach District within the Faryab Province. Company C Soldiers are partnering with the Afghan National Army to help train the police.

"Partnering and mentoring comes easy to the 1-148th Infantry Soldiers," said Sgt. 1st Class Brad Hallinan of Delaware, Ohio.

The Soldiers of Company C spend their days training the ANP how to conduct the traffic control points and then follow up the training by conducting actual traffic control points in the surrounding area.

Members of the Afghan National Police receive a class on conducting traffic control points. Soldiers from the Ohio Army National Guard's Company C, 1st Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team are partnering with the Afghan National Army.

The training teaches the ANP how to search vehicles, search personnel and how to establish barriers to slow a vehicle's approach. The training lasts a few hours and the police received a certificate of completion following a successful practical exercise.

"Not only did the district police have the opportunity to enhance their law enforcement skills, they had the opportunity to work with their military counterparts," said 2nd Lt. Kevin Obermeyer of West Chester, Ohio. "The true success was training together as one force and sharing knowledge."

The successful training will help provide security to the district of Ghormach, which continues to see Taliban activity. The increased proficiency of the police and additional checkpoint operations help isolate the Taliban from the local population.

"Security is a major concern in Ghormach," Hallinan said. "Partnered operations with the Afghan Army and Police send a clear message, we will not allow the freedom to openly operate that the Taliban are used to."

Security is improving within the district of Ghormach due to the actions taken by Company C. The most significant improvement has been the increased competence and capability of the ANP. Continued training will build upon the recent success and lead to better days ahead. The smiles and confidence that the Afghan Police display at the end of training reinforces with Company C Soldiers that the training they are conducting is worthwhile.

Sgt. 1st Class Bethany Ballangee of Old Washington, Ohio, medical operations noncommissioned officer in charge assigned to Headquarters Company, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, helps female Afghan Border Police soldiers practice applying a splint during medical training at the ABP 5th Zone near Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh Province, Afghanistan, April 24, 2012. The 37th IBCT is deployed to Afghanistan in support of the International Security Assistance Force in order to build Afghan National Police capacity. (37th IBCT photo by Sgt. Kimberly Lamb)

COMMANDER'S CORNER

- Col. James E. Perry
37th IBCT Commander

As I write this message the families of Capt. Nicholas Rozanski, Master Sgt. Shawn Hannon, and Master Sgt. Jeffrey Rieck are holding funerals for their loved ones, and 1st Lt. Christopher Rosebrock, Sgt. 1st Class David Lau, Cpl. Everett Haworth, Spc. Austin Weigle, and Pfc. Jacob Williams are all state-side receiving the best medical care possible. Please take a moment to think about the families (parents, wives, children and siblings) of our fallen Soldiers as they say their final goodbyes, and keep those that were wounded on your mind as they work thru their individual challenges of recovery.

As everyone fully realizes, we are operating in a dangerous and deadly environment, and let the event on April 4, 2012 that took the lives of three and wounded five more of our Soldier's be what continuously reminds us of it every day.

Most of us have been here for 90 days, and we have officially been responsible for the mission in RC-North for just over 75 days. Ever since our mission change and reorganization back in October, we have virtually remained unchanged. We are operating from 12 forward operating bases and camps across northern Afghanistan, and our primary mission is to provide security force assistance to over 20 Afghan Uniform, Border and Civil Order Police units.

In order for our 16 Security Force Assistance Teams to focus on their mission with their partnered unit, it takes all of us to provide the needed support - administrative; command and control; intelligence; mounted security; operational; information; COP/FOB force defense; logistics; communications; and quick reaction force. WHAT YOU DO MATTERS! WHAT YOU DO CONTRIBUTES! GIVE ALL TO WHAT YOU DO!

There is a lot of discussion going on regarding base closures, end of mission dates, change of mission taskings, force flow to the United States, and when we'll get done with out-processing at Camp Shelby and head home. There is an approved plan for the major events, and all levels of the command are working the details. What I am asking is that each of you continues to focus on your mission, and trust that your leadership is working all the details of transitioning us out of mission and flowing home.

Keep your mind in the fight!!!

Everyone associated with this IBCT has my full respect.

One-Team, One-Fight!

D6

Safety is of the utmost importance to the Army and the 37th IBCT. It is primarily an NCO responsibility to ensure our Soldiers adhere to all safety standards. First, it is a matter of protecting our Soldiers' lives and well being. As NCOs, we owe it to our Soldiers and their families to ensure that we conduct all training and missions to the Army standard. Secondly, it is of the greatest importance for mission accomplishment. If we lose a Soldier to an accident, then someone else will have to step up and take this Soldier's place, in addition to doing their own duties. If we lose a driver, who will drive the M-ATV or PLS? If we lose a gunner, who will man the M240B or the MK19? I am certain that no unit has excess Soldiers in waiting to replace Soldiers injured in accidents. We lose not only a Soldier, but all of his or her skills and qualifications. Simply put: Not enforcing safety standards jeopardizes the mission. If you have safety concerns or questions, bring them up to your chain of command. ONE TEAM – ONE FIGHT!

- Command Sgt. Maj. Rodger Jones
37th IBCT Command Sergeant Major

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Medical Health

Brigade Dentist
Maj. Frank Wanat

The American Cancer Society's 2011 estimate for lung cancer deaths related to cigarette smoking is 150,000. Another 7,900 is associated with the use of smokeless tobacco. These are grim facts, but they are FACTS.

If you smoke or dip you will lose about seven years from your life. You may be in top physical shape. You may get a 300+ on your PT test and bench 250 lbs. Using tobacco will still shorten your life.

The United States Army has a program to help you stop. It is command sponsored and strongly encouraged. It works! What you need to supply is will power. Set a date and use the same sense of determination that has made you a successful Soldier to beat this addiction. Stop in to your Troop Medical Clinic or see me at the Dental Clinic on Camp Mike Spann. We will arm you with what you need to stop.

Safety Office

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Understanding Heat Injuries

As you may have noticed the temperature is quickly heating up in Afghanistan and will increase as summer approaches. There are control measures in place to prevent heat related injuries. Using history as a guide, we can see what others in combat have done to preserve the force. During the 1967 War between Israel and Egypt, the Egyptians sustained over 20,000 heat casualties, while heat casualties among Israeli forces were minimal.

Heat injuries can be deadly, and they can leave a military force virtually combat ineffective. The fact that the Israelis had minimal heat casualties in 1967 compared to the numerous heat causalities among the Egyptians isn't because of luck. Leaders of the Israeli Army placed intense emphasis on the prevention of heat injuries. To prevent heat injuries, leaders must enforce heat injury prevention programs, and Soldiers must ensure they practice individual protective measures.

Commanders should also ensure Soldiers consume three meals a day to replace lost electrolytes; and when the tactical situation permits, follow correct work/rest cycles.

As environmental temperature rises, the body's main way of regulating body temperature is by the evaporation of sweat. Obviously as you sweat, your body is losing moisture, which means it must be regularly replaced. You cannot train your body to perform with less water.

We can, however, adjust to changes in our environment through a process called acclimatization. As the body acclimatizes to a hotter climate, a number of physiological modifications occur. Among these is an increase in sweating by approximately 10 percent. Acclimatization, however, does not occur immediately.

The four major ways of prevention are (1) fluid replacement (drinking water), (2) wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT) monitoring, (3) work/rest cycles (based on the WBGT), and (4) acclimatization. DRINKING WATER regularly is critical. In a hot environment and during periods of heavy work, thirst is no indicator. Sport drinks are also helpful in replacing fluids and nutrients lost during times of heavy work activity, but they are no substitute for water.

Do you have comments or questions about Dragon Tales?
Email us at 37thibct@gmail.com

Playing with Fire

Headquarters Company Conducts training

photo by Maj. Anthony Chenault

Spc. Danielle Evilsizor, mechanic assigned to Headquarters Company, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, uses a fire extinguisher to put out a fire on Camp Mike Spann, Balkh Province, Afghanistan, March 8, 2012, while Lloyd Callaway, fire brigade instructor, coaches her in the technique, as William Alexander, assistant fire brigade instructor, looks on. Soldiers of the 37th conducted a three-day training course in order to understand the basics needed to contain a fire on Camp Spann

by Capt. Walter P. Work, Headquarters Co., 37th IBCT

CAMP MIKE SPANN, Afghanistan – Soldiers from Headquarters Company, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, underwent a three-day fire brigade training course that is part of United States Forces – Afghanistan mandated training.

Having the opportunity to partake in this training has enabled the 37th to organize their fire brigade with a task and purpose, and to equip them with the knowledge and skills to react appropriately in the event of a fire emergency.

The training focused on the principles of fire, fire spread and combustible versus flammable materials. This foundation of education assists newly trained personnel in understanding fire behavior, fire conflagration, site assessment and ventilation techniques. Focus was given on life safety before property conservation.

Brigade members received additional training on the proper inspection and use of fire extinguishers on flammable fuel fires, compressed air foam systems and the proper procedures of putting the Camp Mike Spann Fire Engine Number 1 into operation on a fire scene.

The Soldiers were also training in building fire inspection, with a focus on lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The newly trained inspectors then traveled around the camp applying their new knowledge in assessing and inspecting buildings and living quarters, and in suggesting corrective actions to make the tents, shelters and structures safer for all of Camp Spann's inhabitants.

As a culminating training exercise, the Soldiers participated in several scenarios involving a structure fire on the camp. In each scenario, the Soldiers were notified, activated and then responded to the fire scene. The scene was secured to prevent unnecessary hazards to other camp inhabitants and to ensure accountability of all personnel that were in the structure while the fire apparatus responded.

Once the fire engine arrived on scene, the Soldiers began laying out the fire hose in order to put it into operation and begin fire suppression. The Soldiers used the techniques they were taught during their training to safely extinguish the fire. Once the fire was extinguished, the scene was turned over to the appropriate authorities for investigation, overhaul and cleanup.

As every firefighter knows, the job does not end once the fire is out. The Soldiers had to prepare Camp Mike Spann Fire Engine Number 1 to go on its next run, whether that is in an hour, a day or another week. Being prepared for the next run, by having everything clean and ready to use, could save valuable lives and equipment should there ever be a fire.

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stomach and alleviate her pain.

"It shows a remarkable amount of trust from the Afghans," said Pfc. Tyler King, a driver for the patrol. "If the Afghans trust us with their children, all our efforts over the past ten years have not been in vain."

Soldiers from Alpha Company routinely assist Afghans whenever feasible. The first rule of counterinsurgency operations remains protecting the Afghan people. In the past, Alpha Company soldiers have given Meals, Ready-To-Eat to starving children and water to families who lacked a fresh water supply.

SHURA *continued from page 1*

Afghan culture does not allow for females to openly speak with anyone outside of her immediate family.

FET operations allow for better assessment of the needs of the Afghan people by communicating with the other 50 percent of the previously forbidden population, the Afghan females.

The training ended with the team's participation at the female shura held March 28, 2012, where the team was encouraged to interact with key female leaders representing several provinces of Afghanistan.

The shura, the fourth held in Regional Command-North involving female leaders from Afghanistan, allowed province representatives and social affair directors a chance to address Brig. Gen. Eric P. Wendt, deputy commander for the International Security Assistance Force, RC-N, for requests of aid from the commander's emergency relief program and to discuss the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program, a program designed to help former fighters to break ties with terrorists and to agree to abide by the Afghan Constitution thus bringing them peacefully back into society.

The female engagement team members will be used in future operations conducted by the 37th IBCT while they are deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Passing the Torch

Story and photo by Sgt. Andrew Kambic Unit Public Affairs Representative, Charlie Co. 1-148

GHORMACH, Afghanistan - As the mandatory withdrawal of American troops draws near, the Afghan National Army and the Afghan Uniform Police continue to gain responsibility for complete control of security operations in Afghanistan. As this change occurs, American forces will continue to shift from a combat operations force to a training force.

Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's mission in Ghormach is to teach, train and equip the AUP that continually secures strategic check points in the area of operations. Charlie Company has also taken on the additional role of training and partnering with the ANA. This evolving process is designed to ensure that the ANA and AUP gain competency in basic soldiering skills and tasks, and properly prepares them to keep Ghormach secure from the always present Taliban threat.

Sgt. 1st Class Frank Steed demonstrates a technique for developing a smooth trigger squeeze during a Basic Rifle Marksmenship Class given to the Afghan National Army officers, Feb. 14, 2012.

Over the past few months, the Soldiers have been conducting key leader engagements with the check point commanders and local political leaders to observe the efficiency of the security forces in the area. These visits include checking the structural integrity of the check points, ensuring the policemen that man the check points are properly equipped and observing the organizational ability of the higher Afghan command to resupply the men on the ground. As this process nears its conclusion, AUP members from all over Ghormach will begin the training program located at Combat Outpost Ghormach.

The training will not be conducted solely by American forces; it will be a partnered venture between the Americans and the ANA. The ANA has demonstrated quality soldiering skills with a desire to learn all that the Americans are willing to teach. The first such training event was February 14th, when five Soldiers from the company went over to the ANA side of the compound to teach the officers basic rifle marksmanship. This was the first time that the two organizations had worked together below the command level. The five ANA officers were eager to learn from their American counterparts.

The Afghans were taught how to engage targets from the prone, kneeling, sitting and standing positions, just as a new enlistee in the U.S. Army is trained. The day ended on such a positive note, that the Soldiers were invited to take lunch with the Afghan officers.

Several times since this first engagement, Soldiers from Charlie Company have gone to the ANA side of the compound to train their men in a variety of different skills. Some of the training was for basic soldiering, while some were to ensure that both, American and Afghan, understood the proper way to conduct joint operations.

The ANA has shown

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Balkh Juvenile Rehabiliation Center

Story by Capt. Jason Kester, Headquarters Company, 37th IBCT

MAZAR-E-SHARIF, Afghanistan - When the 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team landed in Afghanistan in January, several Soldiers toured a juvenile detention center after receiving information at a rule of law meeting held January 17, 2012. The juvenile facility they visited was in one of the rougher parts of downtown Mazar-e Sharif. The living conditions were less than ideal – boys and girls, many of them accused of serious offenses, were housed together. The living quarters were squalid. Some of the girls had infant children. As for community safety regarding this facility: the lack of bars on the windows made escape all too easy.

Cpt. Tate Atkinson, provost marshall, and 1st Lt. Kimberly Snow, civil affairs officer, both assigned to Headquarters Company, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, speak with Rita Thomas, mentor/trainer of the Corrections System Support Program, about the Balkh Juvenile Rehabilitation Center project in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan, Feb. 2. 2012.

photo by Sgt. Kimberly Lamb

The Soldiers of the 37th knew that they could make this situation better.

Col. Gordon Ellis, deputy commander for the brigade, Capt. Tate Atkinson, provost marshal, both assigned to Headquarters Company, 37th IBCT, and Soldiers assigned to Charlie Company, 451st Civil Affairs Battalion identified problems at the existing facility.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers surveyed the site to see what type of improvements could be done.

Capt. Jason Kester, operational law attorney assigned to Headquarters Company, 37th IBCT, worked with the officials responsible for

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Deployed Soldiers Honored with Combat Patch

Story and photo by Maj. William Humes
Battalion Public Affairs Representative
1-125 Infantry Regiment

BAGHLAN AND KUNDUZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan – The Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, were issued their shoulder sleeve insignia for former wartime service, commonly referred to as a combat patch, in separate ceremonies March 21, 2012.

To receive the SSI-FWTS, the units must have actively participated in, or supported ground combat operations against hostile forces in which they were exposed to the threat of enemy action or fire, either directly or indirectly. This is according to Army Regulation 670-1.

While there is a misconception that Soldiers need to be deployed in excess of 30 days, this is no longer the case. All Army Activities Message 055/2007 rescinded this requirement. Even without the time requirement, the ceremony marked a key point in the unit's deployment to Afghanistan.

Delta Company Soldiers held their ceremony at Combat Outpost Khilaguy, Baghlan Province, where they are assigned. 1st Sgt. Adam D. LaMay, the senior noncommissioned officer of the company, began the ceremony with a short speech, stating the significance of this milestone and the accomplishments it represented.

After the speech was concluded, Capt. Brian C. VanderBie, the company commander, bestowed the honor on each of his Soldiers by placing the 37th IBCT patch onto their right shoulder, coupled with a congratulatory pat to ensure it was seated properly.

In a separate ceremony, Soldiers of HHC were issued their combat patches on Forward Operating Base Kunduz, Kunduz Province, by the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Ryan Connelly.

Connelly gave a speech to the Soldiers gathered, prior to the presentation of the patches. Command Sgt. Maj. Bryan Merkel, the senior noncommissioned officer of the battalion, was also on hand during the ceremony to assist Connelly in the presentations and congratulations of each Soldier within the battalion headquarters.

photo by 1st Lt. Brandon McCollum

1st Sgt. Adam LaMay, senior noncommissioned officer for Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, address his Soldiers during the combat patch ceremony March 21, 2012, at Combat Outpost Khilaguy, Baghlan Province Afghanistan. The 37th IBCT is deployed to northern Afghanistan in support of the International Security Assistance Force in order to build Afghan National Police capacity.

Combat Patching the 1st Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment

Story by Spc. Jeremy England
Unit Public Affairs Representative,
HHC 1-148 Infantry Regiment

MAIMANAH, Afghanistan - On Thursday, April 12, 2012, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 148th Infantry Regiment, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team conducted its combat patch ceremony at Forward Operating Base Griffin, Afghanistan. The combat patch, also formally known as the Shoulder Sleeve Insignia-Former Wartime Service (SSI-FWTS), is a unit patch worn on the right shoulder of the Army Combat Uniform. The combat patch designates individual wartime service and it also represents the higher headquarters that the Soldier is assigned to. The combat patch that HHC 1-148th IN is awarded and designated for wear is the 37th IBCT patch.

HHC's combat patch ceremony was initiated with a reading of the unit's history and its involvement in previous engagements since the Mexican War. The rich history of the 1-148th IN allowed the Soldiers to reflect on the past accomplishments by Soldiers who have worn the same patch on their uniforms. After the reading of the unit's history, the Soldiers of HHC 1-148th IN were awarded the combat patches by their leadership.

Once each Soldier received the honor of having the 37th patch placed on their right shoulder, the 1-148th IN Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Kevin W. Lochtefeld, and Battalion Command Sergeant Major, Command Sergeant Major Jonathan D. Cepek, offered their words of wisdom to the Company as to why this was an important milestone. The two leaders stressed that those who wear the patch now are adding to the history of the unit and that the Soldiers should wear the insignia with pride. The Soldiers are currently part of the living legacy that is not only 1-148th Infantry Regiment, but the living legacy of the 37th IBCT as well. CSM Cepek reminded the HHC Soldiers that approximately one percent of the citizens in the United States of America will ever serve their country as a Soldier, and even fewer will deploy to a foreign nation in conflict.

1st Lt David Lam, executive officer assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-148, slaps the 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team patch on Sgt. Timothy Bowser, administrative personnel assigned to HHC 1-148, April 12, 2012.

Maintenance Soldiers Keep the Mission Moving

Pvt. David Bronze and Pfc. Daniel Palmer, both assigned to Fox Company, 237th Brigade Support Battalion, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, work to repair a ball joint on a Mine Resistant, Ambush Protected All Terrain Vehicle. Fox Company is the forward support company attached to the 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment, 37th IBCT.

Story and photo by 1st Lt. Brooke N. Murphy, Fox Co. 237 BSB

KUNDUZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Soldiers from Fox Company, 237th Brigade Support Battalion, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, conduct scheduled maintenance on vehicles in an effort to mitigate deadline faults and ensure equipment meets current safety standards. Ensuring the right equipment is available for the right person to utilize at the right time is the heart and soul of the sustainment mission. The foundation for that mission, as it pertains to combat readiness within the 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry Regiment, rests upon the shoulders of the Fox Company Maintenance Platoon. The platoon is broken up into several sections, each with its own distinct purpose. The production control section is the center of maintenance operations. Work orders for all jobs within the motor pool are initiated and completed here. The vehicle maintenance section is divided into two squads, each with a squad leader to organize and prioritize the work orders pushed from the production control section. Finally, the communications sections, which is somewhat embedded within the maintenance squads, is responsible for inspecting, testing and repairing communications systems. Each mechanic touts a variety of additional licenses and qualifications to include recovery, welding, forklift operations, and Counter Remote Control Improvised Explosive Device Electronic Warfare. These additional licenses enable them to maintain the equipment organic to the battalion, as well as assist in other areas. Their combined efforts help maintain and improve operational readiness across the battalion. However, even with all their hard work, it is important to remember that vehicle readiness starts at the operator level. "PMCS (preventative maintenance checks and service) is everyone's responsibility. There is no end-of-day when it comes to maintenance, only pauses in-between," says Sgt. 1st Class William Palmer, the battalion maintenance supervisor.

TORCH *cont'd from page 6*

such professionalism in their training, they will be leading the training of the AUP. The U.S. Soldiers will be in a supervisory role, to ensure that the Afghans are conducting the training to standard. This arrangement will aid in the development of a strong relationship between the ANA and AUP. It is vital that these two organizations learn that they can depend on one another under difficult circumstances. Once the American forces pull out of Afghanistan, there will be no one left to liaise between the two groups.

Soldiers Give a Few More Years

photo by Spc. Jeremy England

Sgt. Matthew Skiver, squad leader assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-148, gives his re-enlistment oath to 1st Lt. Brandon Sallee, operations officer, also assigned to HHC 1-148, Feb. 24, 2012.

by Maj. Anthony Chenault 37th IBCT Public Affairs

CAMP MIKE SPANN, Afghanistan - What do Pfc. Gregory Pyles (237), Pfc. Sarah Adams (125), Spc. Andrea Mertes (HQ), and Sgt. Joseph Fought (148) have in common? Each of these Soldiers was the first within their battalion or the brigade headquarters to reenlist since arriving in Afghanistan. You may ask yourself, "Why is this news?"

For starters, it isn't as easy to reenlist as it once was. As the Army faces significant force reductions, it is important that we retain the highest quality Soldiers in order to preserve the quality of our all-volunteer force, meet mandated end strength goals and to support Army force structure requirements.

During the next five years, the Army plans to reduce the active-duty force from 570,000 to 490,000 by taking a look at who should stay and who should go. Soldiers who wish to remain in the Army will need to be committed and flexible. One in 10 Soldiers currently serving will be affected by the drawdown.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III said the drawdown will impact all ranks of Soldiers from throughout the Army.

"We're going to cut as many Soldiers as we need to meet the Army's end strength," Chandler said. "For those people currently serving, there will be a tougher future to try to stay in the service. We're

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JUVENILE *cont'd from page 6*

the facility. Together, they proposed that this location become the brigade's first commander's emergency response program project in Afghanistan. Working as a team, the project was staffed, developed and approved in short order.

Work began quickly to locate a new building and to make the needed improvements. Local contractors were hired to do the installation of bars on the windows and to install other safety measures within the facility. Using local contractors for the job also added income to the community and showed the people that Afghans are working to improve Afghanistan.

The original team of 37th Soldiers returned to the facility March 25, 2012 for the opening of the new Balkh Juvenile Rehabilitation Center, in a residential neighborhood in downtown Mazar-e Sharif.

Some of the improvements made were safer stairwells, bars on the windows and security doors. One of the major improvements was improving the overall living conditions by housing the boys and girls separately. By giving separate living areas, the girls with infant children could now safely care for their babies.

By assisting in building a better facility, the 37th IBCT has helped give young Afghans a better chance at a productive life. With the first project completed successfully, more are undoubtedly to follow.

photo by Sgt. Kimberly Lamb

Staff Sgt. Desiree Barrett, operations noncommissioned officer, and 1st Lt. Nicole Barnhill, brigade personnel strength manager, both are female engagment team members assigned to Headquarters Company, 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, speak with two female Afghan Border Police through their language assistant during a shura in Haritan, Balkh Province, Afghanistan, April 21, 2012.

YEARS *cont'd from page 8*

going to look at our retirement-eligible population, and some of those Soldiers are going to be asked to leave before their mandatory retirement date."

The Army will continue to retain qualified, competent and proficient Soldiers, Chandler said. But it will enforce standards more strictly, and those Soldiers with discipline problems will disappear from the ranks.

"Service is a privilege," Chandler said. "It's a privilege; it's not a right. You've got to continuously work hard to truly posture yourself as someone who is among the best, and those ways that we determine who are among the best are all common knowledge for those who are in the Army."

Beginning March 1, 2012, brigade/O-6 level commanders and above were given specific reenlistment objectives, as determined by the Army Deputy Chief of Staff. These objectives are designed to ensure only the best qualified Soldiers of those eligible are reenlisted. These new guidelines are for the active-duty Army, National Guard and Reserves.

In a letter on retention signed by Chandler, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond T. Odierno and Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh reads, "Army commands, Army service component commands, and direct reporting units will establish brigade-level re-enlistment objectives, and, just like the past, commanders will be directed to retain a percentage of the eligible population. However, unlike the past, commanders will not exceed this objective."

With all the talk of not just a smaller Army, but a smaller U.S. military, Soldiers may become discouraged when thinking about reenlisting. Don't let the changes scare you into ending your service. Talk to your battalion retention noncommissioned officer. If they aren't able to help you, have them contact the brigade retention NCO.

If you are thinking of reenlisting, don't wait around hoping the bonus or incentives will go up. With the new changes taking place, the closer you get to your expiration, term of service date, the less of a bonus you will receive, if any at all. Time is important if you are approaching your ETS date.

Once all of the required paperwork is completed, you have raised your right hand and taken the oath of enlistment again, you might have a few comments as to why you decided to stay in the military.

"The guard has been very rewarding for me. I have great pride in wearing the uniform and helping my neighbors. I have a family in the Ohio National Guard … and have met so many people that I can call my brothers and sisters and a family I have created. I reenlisted because I feel there is more I can do for Ohio, the United States, and other countries. I want to be beside my brothers and sisters wearing this uniform that makes us stand out from the rest of the country. I am very proud of who I have become because of the Army and who I can be. I have a lot of pride for the United States and will gladly protect what is ours. That's why I reenlisted," Mertes said after she reenlisted for an additional six years.

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