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PX Re-Opens Days After Blaze

By Spc. Jim Wagner

109th Mobile Public Affairs

The temporary Post Exchange re-opened for business today with its regular hours of operations just three days after a fire razed the original.

Located in the Kandahar Kafe near the terminal building, the hours of operation for the PX are from 0800 to 1700 Zulu.

The PX opened Sunday at noon for soldiers, according to Army and Air Force Exchange Service officials, so they could purchase essential items. Also open for business was the barber-shop and gift shop, which was also destroyed in the blaze.

Plans are already in the works on a new PX, located just yards from the site of the previous one, behind the base gym. Officials expect the project to be completed in the next seven to eight weeks.

The blaze — which Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Bill Mattravers, Kandahar fire chief, called the largest he's seen since arriving in country— completely destroyed the PX, barbershop, gift and coffee shop and the personal living quarters of 25 Army AAFES employees. Also damaged was the Morale, Welfare and Recreation computer, movie and telephone tents, located next to the previous PX.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation at press time. The PX was a complete loss because Air Force firefighters were more concerned about containing the fire, which was heading towards a diesel fuel bladder and other critical buildings.

Fierce winds, measured at 33 mph at



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Cory Angell

Firefighters water down the smouldering remains of the Kandahar PX. The damage is expected to exceed well over \$1 million.

the time of the fire, and the confined space around the PX compound made saving any part of the building difficult. The fire, though it was contained soon after the fire department arrived, continued to smolder throughout Friday night.

“We went to the back and the wind was blowing towards us,” said Airman 1st Class Charvis Kali Gordan, an Air Force firefighter. “We got there and there was debris, ash, pitch black smoke and my eyes were burning even with my mask on. My helmet started burning up a little bit so I knew it was hot.

“We heard aerosol cans explode, we heard a fire extinguisher explode,” he continued. “I thought it was a bomb going off.”

A quick turnaround time in opening the temporary PX, said Paula Gunderson, AAFES director in

Kandahar, was necessary.

“When the soldiers see the PX destroyed, it really hurts their morale,” she said. “It was especially important that we open it up again quickly.”

The fire, which took five water trucks, bulldozers and 20 firefighters to contain, destroyed 90 percent of AAFES food at the base as well as all its stock on the shelves. The damage, according to Scott Curran, AAFES field accountant, is well over \$1 million by conservative estimates. He expects a final assessment within the week.

Curran, like the other 24 AAFES employees, lost everything in the blaze — everything from clothing and his bed to irreplaceable items like photographs, he said. The PX employees are staying in

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From the Chaplain



**Chap. (Maj.) Jeffrey
B. Watters**

One of the benefits of being a chaplain is getting mail from great Americans from all over the United States and literally from different parts of the world.

Several schools have written participating in "Operation Support Our Troops" where school children write letters to soldiers like you and me. We put them in the writing station at the Power House Ministry Center where soldiers can come, read and write back to them.

I have undertaken to read and write each class. I encourage you to do the same. Some letters are serious:

From Emily a second grader, "I think you are a really brave person. You're really helping America

when you are doing this. Thank you for all that you have done for America" From Mindy a fifth grader, "Everyone in my class is thankful that you went to defend our country. You put yourself in danger for your country and that's brave." From Benjamin a sixth grader, "I would like to thank you for serving and protecting our country. I hope you catch Ben Lauden (sic)."

Some are inquisitive like from Krystal: "I was wondering, what is your job in the Army? How is the food? Do you get much rest? When did you return to the Army? Have you been fighting very much? Are you homesick from being away? How long were you in boot camp?"

Some are humorous, like from Carisa: "I have 10 people in my family, there are three boys and five girls, and my parents. I have three pets, 2 rats and 1 dog. Their names are Shampoo and Conditioner, and my dogs name is Sterling." From Jeffrey, "What is your favorite holiday? My favorite holidays are Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. I like Thanksgiving because I get to see family from away. I like Easter because I get to also see family from farther away. I like Christmas because we get presents. Bye"

All are good. Stop by the Power House Ministry Center, pick up a letter and write these great kids.

Desert Devil Dispatch falls under the supervision of Task Force Devil.

Task Force Devil Commander:

Col. John F. Campbell

Task Force Devil Command Sgt. Maj.:

Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Kalinofski

82nd Airborne Public Affairs:

Maj. Robert Gilpin

Romanian Public Affairs:

Capt. Constantin Hertanu

Desert Devil Dispatch, a U.S. Army newsletter, is produced by the 109th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Pennsylvania Army National Guard at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan.

Commander:

1st Lt. Cory Angell

NCOIC:

Staff Sgt. Kevin Askew

Editor/Layout/Graphics:

Spc. Jim Wagner

Photojournalist:

Cpl. Keith A. Kluwe

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Combat Heavy-Drop Mission is Historical Event

By 1st Lt. Cory Angell
109th Mobile Public Affairs

The Parachute Riggers of Company E, 782nd Main Support Battalion attached to HQ Company A, 307th Logistical Task Force made history this week when they dropped a total of 38,088 gallons of fuel to the Forward Area Refueling Point in support of Operation Eagle Fury in the Baghran Valley, Afghanistan.

"The significance to the drop is that until this point there has not been a heavy drop in Afghanistan or in support of Operation Enduring Freedom," said

WO1 Peter Lautzenheiser, the Air Drop Systems Technician and Platoon leader of the riggers.

"To the best of my knowledge, the last time any fuel was air dropped, certainly by the 82nd Airborne, if not by the entire Army, was in Vietnam."

The 82nd routinely practices heavy drop mission, but this is the first combat drop in years, said Lautzenheiser.

Among the challenges the soldiers faced were the weather and loading the massive bundle for the drop.

"Back at Bragg, they have the heavy drop rigging facility, where they have all the equipment needed to rig," said

Lautzenheiser.

Lautzenheiser explained how the soldiers were affected by the rain without the benefit of a large facility.

Parachutes cannot be allowed to get wet so the soldiers were forced to pack when the rain would subside.

This caused their work to start and stop. They also had to arrange for special transportation of the bundles to the aircraft.

The Air Force was not able to drive right up to the rigging area causing them to switch the load over from one

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U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jim Wagner

An AAFES employee stocks blank video tapes at the temporary PX Sunday. Officials expect the new PX to be completed in the next couple months.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jim Wagner

Staff Sgt. Patrick Platt, left, and Sgt. Shawn Mills of the 527th Engineer Company, construct shelves Sunday for DVDs and books at the temporary PX.

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temporary lodging until new tents can be built. Officials at AAFES headquarters in Dallas are currently looking at recouping employees' personal losses.

But despite personal losses, Curran and other employees concentrated first on getting the temporary PX open for business. "Our primary mission is to take care of the soldiers," he said.

The opening wouldn't have been possible, he said, without the unasked-for aid of the 527th Engineer Company, an Army National Guard unit out of Louisiana.

The engineers worked around the clock clearing out the Kandahar Kafe, which is normally a recreation station, constructing shelving for PX items.

"I don't think there's ever been a question of not helping (rebuild the PX)," said SFC Ben Pipes, 527th Engineer Co. platoon sergeant.

"Everyone wants to see the PX reopen."



You might be Airborne if ...

when nature calls, you refer to it as having a "jumper in the door"

— Ranger Moore (from partrooper.net)



Wolfowitz: Disarm or be Disarmed

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21, 2003 — It was Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz's turn this week to relay a simple message to Iraq's Saddam Hussein: Disarm or be disarmed; time is running out.

His words joined the recent chorus of other administration officials, including Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, and even President Bush himself.

In separate interviews with the British Broadcasting Corp., Independent TV London and PBS National Public Radio, Wolfowitz delivered the message and then addressed anti-war protesters, saying they're free to demonstrate but they've been doing it with the wrong purpose in mind.

"If the people of Baghdad were free to demonstrate, you'd see millions in the streets saying 'Please come; why haven't you come sooner?'" Wolfowitz told NPR's Melissa Block.

"If the demonstrators want to prevent war, the best thing they could have done would be to demonstrate in front of the Iraqi embassy and sent a message to Saddam saying time is running out for a peaceful solution here," he said.

Wolfowitz later said the "real tragedy" is that protesters should be marching to change Iraqi policy, not U.S. policy.

"If (Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein) saw

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piece of equipment to another, even over a short distance, Lautzenheiser explained.

"The 82nd knows how to fight by jumping in and airdropping any equipment they need to sustain their mission," said Lautzenheiser.

"We're hoping get more combat missions like this. It's what we came here to do."

a few million people on the streets saying, 'Your time is up, you'd better change,' that would be the one hope of getting him disarmed or getting him to leave peacefully."

He told BBC that war with Iraq will become necessary if Hussein does not change his ways, meaning that Iraq must comply with the demands set forth in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441.

"Clearly the purpose of the U.N. resolution is to disarm him," Wolfowitz said. "If he disarms peacefully, the purpose of the resolution would be achieved.

"If Iraq has to be disarmed by military force, the only way to do it is to remove Hussein and his regime," he added.

Wolfowitz told Sir Trevor McDonald of ITV London that he respects the right of people to protest but most, he said, do not understand why war with Iraq may be likely.

"Those who think that if it comes to war, it's going to be a war for oil or a war for Israel don't understand the issue," he said. "The issue is about a real and present threat and a threat that only gets worse the longer we wait."

The goal of any war, if it comes to that, would be to remove a real threat to the United States, Europe and the Persian Gulf states, as well as the Iraqi people, Wolfowitz told NPR.

"President Bush and (British) Prime Minister Tony Blair and other world leaders understand that it is their job to secure the future of their people, and that's what they're doing," he concluded.



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Patrick Roddey

Aircrew load a C-130.

U.S., Philippines Join Forces Against Terrorist Group

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21, 2003 — U.S. and Philippine forces will conduct combined operations against the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group in the Southern Philippines, DoD officials said today.

Philippine and U.S. officials have been discussing the situation for several months, DoD officials said. A high level U.S. team worked out the final details earlier this month.

About 350 U.S. special operations personnel from the Army, Navy and Air Force will work with Philippine soldiers in the Sulu Archipelago. Another 750 Americans will provide logistics support from the headquarters in Zamboanga on Mindanao Island.

In addition, elements of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, based in Okinawa, Japan, and the USS Essex Amphibious Ready Group will provide additional support if needed. The forces afloat bring quick reaction teams, command and control assets, aviation support and medical support to the effort.

Officials said U.S. assessment teams are ready to deploy to Jolo Island in the center of the archipelago. The area is the new center of Abu Sayyaf activity. DoD officials said "hundreds" of Abu Sayyaf terrorists are in the area. Abu Sayyaf is linked with Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda terrorist network.

While the group styles itself as working toward a Muslim country in the southern Philippines, it operates like an outlaw gang. It kidnaps for ransom and extracts tribute from civilians in the area.

DEVIL SPORTS

Tiger Defanged (Again) at Riviera

LOS ANGELES - Something about Riviera Country Club brings success to Charles Howell III, and frustration to Tiger Woods.

Woods has never won at Riviera, and he will not win this year, either, not after Saturday's two-over-par 73, which began with a double bogey on the first hole.

Howell, meanwhile, was in position to win for the second time in his young Professional Golfers Association (PGA) Tour career, playing a course that has quickly become one of his favorites.

By shooting a third-round 68, he will take a three-stroke lead into Sunday's final round of the Nissan Open, with Woods (even par) falling hopelessly out of contention, 11 strokes back.

failed to reach the green on his next shot, pitched to 15 feet, then two-putted for a double-bogey seven.

As if that were not enough, Woods had three three-putt bogeys on the front nine, and with each hole that slipped away it became clear that the momentum he built from last weekend's victory at the Buick Open was gone. Woods has hit only 22 of 42 fairways this week.

Howell started the third round with a one-stroke lead. He extended it right away, with birdies at Nos. 1 and 2.

At No. 1, he reached the green in two strokes, then two-putted from 67 feet for birdie.

At No. 2, he made a nice 12-foot putt for birdie. Suddenly, he had a four-stroke lead.

After eight consecutive pars, Howell displayed his power with an eagle at the par-five, 564-yard No. 11. *(Story courtesy of INY Times)*

Canucks Extend Winning Streak

EDMONTON (CP) - Brendan Morrison scored in overtime to give the Canucks a 3-2 win over the Oilers on Saturday night, extending Vancouver's club-record unbeaten streak to 12 games and sending Edmonton to its fifth straight loss.

Morrison knocked in Ed Jovanovski's rebound 1:22 into the extra frame, his 16th of the season, for the victory. Trevor Linden had tied the score at 19:38 of the second period, redirecting Daniel Sedin's pass into an open net for his 12th of the season.

The goal extended Linden's scoring streak to five games, during which he has two goals and six assists.

Mattias Ohlund also scored for the Canucks (36-16-9-0), who are 8-0-4-0 in their last 12 games and in second place in the Western Conference behind the Dallas Stars.

Shawn Horcoff and Ales Pisa scored for the Oilers (26-21-6-8), now 1-5-0-2 in their last eight.

Edmonton, holding on to the final play-



(CP/John Ulan)

Vancouver Canucks forward Trevor Linden celebrates after scoring his team's second goal in a 3-2 overtime win over the Edmonton Oilers on Saturday.

off spot in the West, went 1-3-0-1 on a five-game roadtrip before returning home for a pair of games this weekend. The Oilers host the Atlanta Thrashers on Sunday night.

(Story courtesy of Canadian Press)

Spurs Top Pacers, 105-96

SAN ANTONIO - While the Indiana Pacers couldn't score, Tony Parker couldn't miss.

Parker scored 14 of his 18 points in the third quarter on 5-for-5 shooting to key a 24-4 run as the San Antonio Spurs beat Indiana, 105-96, Saturday night in the National Basketball Association (NBA).

The win was San Antonio's 10th in 11 games.

The Spurs' defense clamped down on Indiana, which missed 11 consecutive shots over a seven-minute span in the third and made only five of its 20 attempts during the period.

"This was by far our worst performance on the road all season," Indiana coach Isiah Thomas said. "It was such an ugly game."

The Pacers, who have lost four straight, cut San Antonio's lead in the final minutes, as Erick Strickland made four three-pointers in the fourth quarter.

Tim Duncan was the high scorer for the Spurs with 21, while Malik Rose had 15 off the bench.

Strickland led all scorers with 22, while fellow reserves Al Harrington and Austin Croshere added 19 and 13, respectively. Jermaine O'Neal led Indiana's starters with 12, well below his 19.8 average, on 4-for-15 shooting. Reggie Miller finished with four points.

"Shots kind of come and go," O'Neal said. "We need to put a few good [games] together to get our confidence back."

(Story courtesy of Associated Press)