

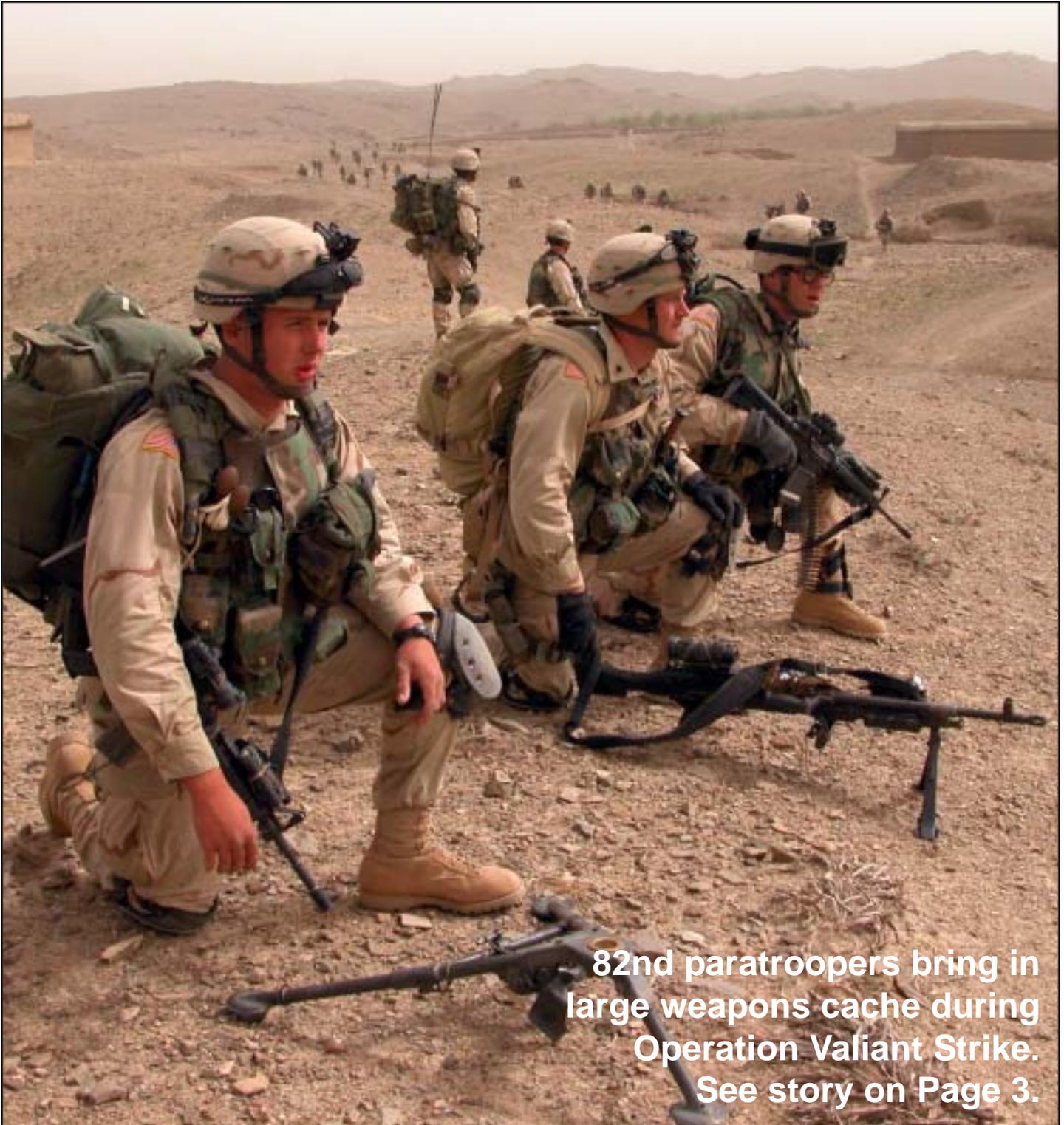


DESERT DEVIL DISPATCH

Volume I Issue 11

Published for the servicemembers of Kandahar Air Field

March 28, 2003



82nd paratroopers bring in large weapons cache during Operation Valiant Strike. See story on Page 3.

Faith, Family Give Comfort in Wake of Tragedy

by Chap. (Maj.) Jeff Watters
1st Brigade Chaplain

For the second time in a week we gathered at the hanger. This time, however, there were no TV cameras or a national audience watching a live-broadcast show. This time there were six memorial displays placed together on stage with an American and 41st Expeditionary Rescue Squadron flag standing as the back drop.

Airmen, soldiers, sailors and Marines who gathered here paid their last respects to six great Americans who died doing what they loved to do — flying a rescue mission.

On Sunday, I shook Lt. Col. John Stein's hand at chapel. On Wednesday, he, along with five others, was eulogized.

How does one grapple with a tragedy like this? How does one work through the grief at such a loss?

Different people grieve differently. However, there seems to be a thread of hope in which all can gain comfort. That thread of hope is woven by the three strands of faith, family and friends.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Faith directed toward a God who suffered with us is a sure faith; it's the confirmation of hope which we seek in these dark hours.

While we cannot be with our families, we can feel their closeness. They can share our grief -- even from far away. Friends are always important and here they



U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Keith Klueve

Capt. Robert Lindblom, director of operations for the 41st Expeditionary Rescue Squadron, Moody AFB, Ga., talks during a memorial service commemorating the six airmen killed during a rescue mission Sunday evening. Honored in the service were: Lt. Col. John Stein, 1st Lt. Tamara Archuleta, Master Sgt. Michael Maltz, Staff Sgt. Jason Hicks, Staff Sgt. John Teal and Senior Airman Jason Plite.

are vital. Our friends fill in for our families. Sometimes friends become closer than families. That's what I saw Wednesday night. Friends offering words of comfort and encouragement.

Victor Hugo once wrote:

"Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones. And when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace — God is awake."

This is what we must do; we must continue to accomplish our tasks even in the face of sorrow. We must honor those who have gone before us by exhibiting the same courage in the face of danger.

And we must remember, even when we sleep, God is awake.

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. Klueve

In accordance with AR 360-1, this newsletter is an authorized unofficial publication for members of the U.S. military. The contents of *Desert Devil Dispatch* are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. government, Department of Defense, or the Department of the Army. All submissions are subject to editing for size and content.

If you would like to receive the Dispatch electronically, please send an email to jim1wag@yahoo.com

Valiant Strike Nets Large Weapons Stash

Story by Spc. Marie Schult
CJTF-180 PAO

Operation Valiant Strike kicked off in the pre-dawn hours Mar. 21 when members of the 82nd Airborne Division's 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg, N.C. air assaulted into the Sami Ghar Mountains.

"Don't let them bring it to you, you bring it to them," said Lt. Col. Charlie Flynn, commander, 2nd Battalion, 504th PIR "White Devils," referring to the enemy in a pep talk to his soldiers. The troopers then boarded a fleet of Chinooks that dropped them off in various locations in eastern Kandahar province.

The purpose of Valiant Strike, which ended yesterday, was to clear and search villages, gather intelligence, search for weapons caches and seek out remaining



Al Qaeda and Taliban forces, according to 1st Sgt. Brian Severino, Company B, 3rd Bn., 504th PIR "Blue Devils."

By the end of the third day the long days, sleepless nights, and sore feet paid off with four people, more than 50 rifles, two heavy machine guns, 170 107mm rockets, and 400 82mm mortar rounds under control, according to Combined Joint Task Force-180 spokesman Col. Roger King.

During the first day of Valiant Strike, B Co. troops spent a greater part of the day searching the village of Laday.

In the village consisting of four small compounds, several goats, donkeys and large dogs, several weapons were found hidden in manure piles and haystacks, including two AK47's with bags of ammunition and a dirty syringe.

Akter Mohammed a 40-year-old shepherd said the reason they did not declare their weapons was because they were scared.

"We don't know because we are mountain people," he said. "We need the guns to protect our sheep from the wolves, or they will eat my sheep."

Severino explained to the villagers that they do not need AK47's to protect their sheep against wolves.

Friday morning B Co. air assaulted into a riverbed near the village of Narai, a large village with about 100 families. It was one of the wealthiest villages

encountered, according to the village elders, with two wells and its own school building.

"For the most part these are the most friendly villagers we've found," said Severino, "they actually came out to offer assistance to us."

Shahghsy, a 50-year-old village elder said his people know the Americans come as friends.

"The Americans come to make peace in Afghanistan," he said. "When the Russians were here the Americans helped push the Russians out."

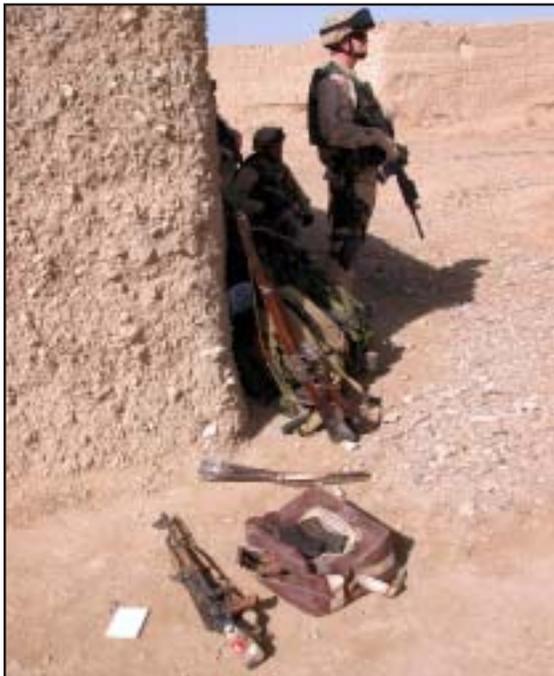
Although the village was friendly and the villagers brought pot after pot of tea out to thirsty soldiers, some houses were found to have more than simple, single shot, home security weapons.

Severino said they found some RPG's and mines. The man of the house said his brother is a militiaman and he left these things here the last time he was in town, but failed to tell the man who owned the house.

"This is one less rocket that might be fired against us and coalition forces," said Flynn.

While the Blue Devils were finding RPG's in the village of Narai, further down the riverbed, the White Devils of 2-505 were finding weapons, in the village of Luikely.

1st Sgt. Craig Pinkley, B Co., 2-504, and his men found ammunition, two antipersonnel mines, training rounds, Taliban recruiting documents, Taliban pamphlets, military uniforms, sleeping bags and bandoliers after the two men



U.S. Army photos by Maj. Robert Hepner

Top: Paratroopers from C Company, 2-504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, provide overwatch during a compound search during Operation Valiant Strike.

Above: Paratroopers guard a cache of weapons.

see **STRIKE**, page 4

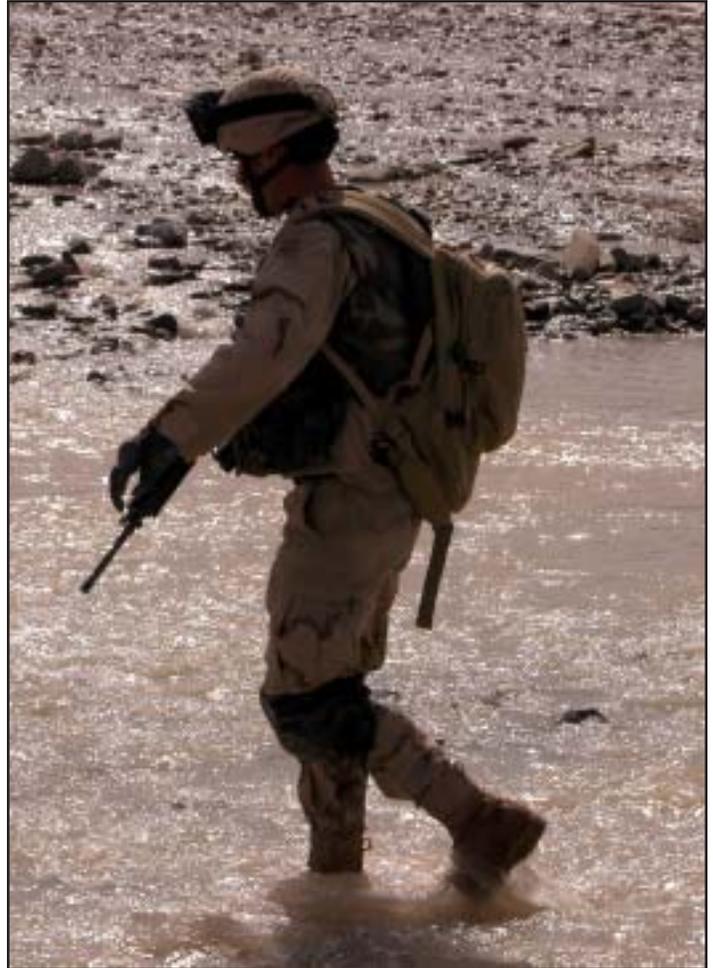


STRIKE, from page 3

in the compound said they had nothing to claim.

“Its not a stack of RPG’s like we usually find but it’s pretty significant,” said Capt. Andrew Zieseniss, company commander, “the stuff is pretty new.”

The two men in the compound were taken under control and sent back to Kandahar Air Field the next day for questioning.



Top Left: Geraldo Rivera, Fox News reporter, left, interviews a paratrooper after a large cache was found at a compound during Operation Valiant Strike.

Top Right: A paratrooper wades across a river during patrol.

Left: Using a camera, an 82nd Airborne Division paratrooper checks for weapons and ammunition in an Afghan well.

Above: A paratrooper begins his search through a chest found at one compound during Operation Valiant Strike.



Airborne History

American parachutists — Devils in Baggy Pants — are less than 100 meters from my outpost line. I can't sleep at night; they pop up from nowhere and we never know when or how they will strike next. Seems like the black-hearted devils are everywhere.....

(Translated from the diary of a dead German officer at Anzio - February 1944)

York Takes 132 Prisoners on Way to WWI Honors

On Oct. 8, 1918, less than year after he joined the Army, Cpl. Alvin C. York, Company G, 328th Infantry, 82d Airborne Division, during operations in the Argonne sector, killed twenty-five Germans, captured 132 prisoners and put out of commission thirty-five machine guns -- did it by his "lonesome," subduing a machine gun battalion with his rifle and automatic pistol.

On patrol, the guns from one hill had the Americans enfiladed, and acting Sgt. Bernard Early was ordered to take two squads, and put the guns out of action. Early had sixteen men under him, one of whom was Corporal York.

The Americans fired and there were a few return shots, but the majority of the surprised Germans threw down their guns and held up their hands in sign of surrender, and the others followed suit promptly, including the major in command of the battalion.

Early had them line up and was just ready to take them out when, in the expressive words of a survivor, "all hell broke loose."

Machine-guns placed in "fox-holes" that had been pointed the other way were swung round, and from the slope above Early's detachment, began a fusillade. The German prisoners at once dropped down and lay on their bellies as did some of the Americans, others seeking the shelter of trees. Six of the little detachment were killed outright.

This fire reduced the party to eight, York and seven privates. Of the latter, one was pinned behind a tree, the others were guarding the prisoners.

York, when he dropped at the first fire of the machine-guns, found himself in a little path by a clump of bushes; the machine-guns were peppering from a

distance of less than thirty yards, cutting off the tops of the bushes about York. On his return to the United States May 22, 1919, York said to a reporter: "I sat right where I was, and it seemed as if every gunner was a-firing straight at me. All this time, though, I was a-using my rifle, and the enemy he was a-feeling the effects of it. One of our boys



Cpl. Alvin C. York

yelled that it was impossible to get the best of the situation, but I yelled back `Shut up!' I knew one American was better than ten Germans if he kept his wits."

Aiming as he used to when shooting off the heads of the turkeys, he potted Germans in the "foxholes," those firing from behind trees or over logs, with deadly precision, himself lying low to have the protection of the German prisoners prostrate between him and the machine guns.

"I turned in time to see a Heinie Lieutenant rise up from near one of them machine guns and with six or seven men come charging toward me with fixed bayonets," York said. "They were only twenty yards away from me when I whipped out my automatic and I potted them off one after another.

"As soon as the Germans saw the Lieutenant drop, most of the machine guns stopped firing and the battle sort of quieted down, but I kept on shooting until the major with the first batch of Germans we had come across, and who was lying on his stomach to avoid being hit by his own gunners, called to me in perfect English that if I would stop shooting he would make them all surrender, so I did. Then I called all our boys, and their affidavits show they came, and we herded the Germans in front of us and started toward our lines. I walked among four German officers and had our wounded bring up the rear. The Major asked me how many men I had, and I just told him, `I have a-plenty.'"

On the way back, the unit stirred up several more machine gun nests, one of which put up a fight and York felt it a regrettable necessity to "shoot a man there."

After that when a nest was flushed the German major touched him on the arm and said, "Don't kill any more, and I'll make them surrender."

This was done and the hill was pretty well cleared up before they got to the other side and York's herd of prisoners numbered 132.

For his actions, York was awarded first the Distinguished Service Cross and French *Croix de Guerre*, and later the Congressional Medal of Honor.

(Story and photo courtesy P. Darlene McClendon.)

Getting 'Blue Packs' Out To Children

Story by Staff Sgt. Kevin Askew
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

As a result of years of conflict and war, the priority on education in Afghanistan was next to nothing.

Girls were not permitted to attend school and boys received limited education

"It's the little things we need to do, it may have been small, but for that girl it was a big thing, she could grow up to be a doctor or diplomat just from this incident" said Staff Sgt Paula Loyd, 450th Civil Affairs Battalion, as she handed Fabzana, the first girl to receive a BluePack in southern Afghanistan. BluePacks were given out for the first time at Dand District High School in Kandahar.

"The lack of basic supplies is really heart wrenching," Loyd added. "These kids are learning in an environment that (Americans) would consider unacceptable."

The Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force (JCMOTF) -- better known as Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) teams -- have received 7,000 BluePacks to be distributed throughout Southern Afghanistan.

BluePacks contain schools supplies such as chalkboard, regular and colored

pencils, sharpener, eraser, notebook, ruler and writing tablets and a few toys for the children. BluePacks are designed for Afghan children in primary school.

The program is a direct result of President George Bush's appeal to American children to donate one dollar to support educational efforts for Afghanistan children.

America's Fund for Afghan Children (AFAC) received \$750,000 in donations as a result of the Presidents request. The Academy for Educational Development

receive their BluePack of supplies.

The civil affairs team plans on distributing all 7,000 BluePacks. Their primary goal is to hit all the primary schools in the civil affairs region, approximately 5,000-6,000 kids.

"We want to get them out to as many schools as we can," said Loyd. "Our plan is to distribute to the schools the were victimized, we want to applaud them for continuing school under the circumstances."

According to Loyd, just recently Taliban vandalized a school in southern Afghanistan, broke chairs and other furniture and wrote graffiti at the school.

The administration and students responded by continuing classes the next day, despite the destruction.

"The best defense against the Taliban is education," Loyd said.

The 450th CA goal is to get 200 BluePacks out per day so that Non-Governmental Agencies can come in and

help the schools further. The CA team is working with several villages to help establish schools and lay the road for education in all of Afghanistan.

For more information on BluePacks or to make a donation visit <http://www.bluepacks.org>.



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Askew

Female students from the Dand District High School stand with their "Blue Packs" donated by U.S. school children. The program is designed to provide basic school supplies to Afghan children.

(AED) produces the BluePacks for distribution.

"We want to send a message that Americans value education and that we are proud of them (boys & girls) going to school", claims Loyd. More than 100 girls stood in line patiently waiting to



You might be Airborne if ...



you do your "back to school" shopping at the U.S. Cavalry store.

- quinman



Pvt. Murpy's Law
by Mark Baker