

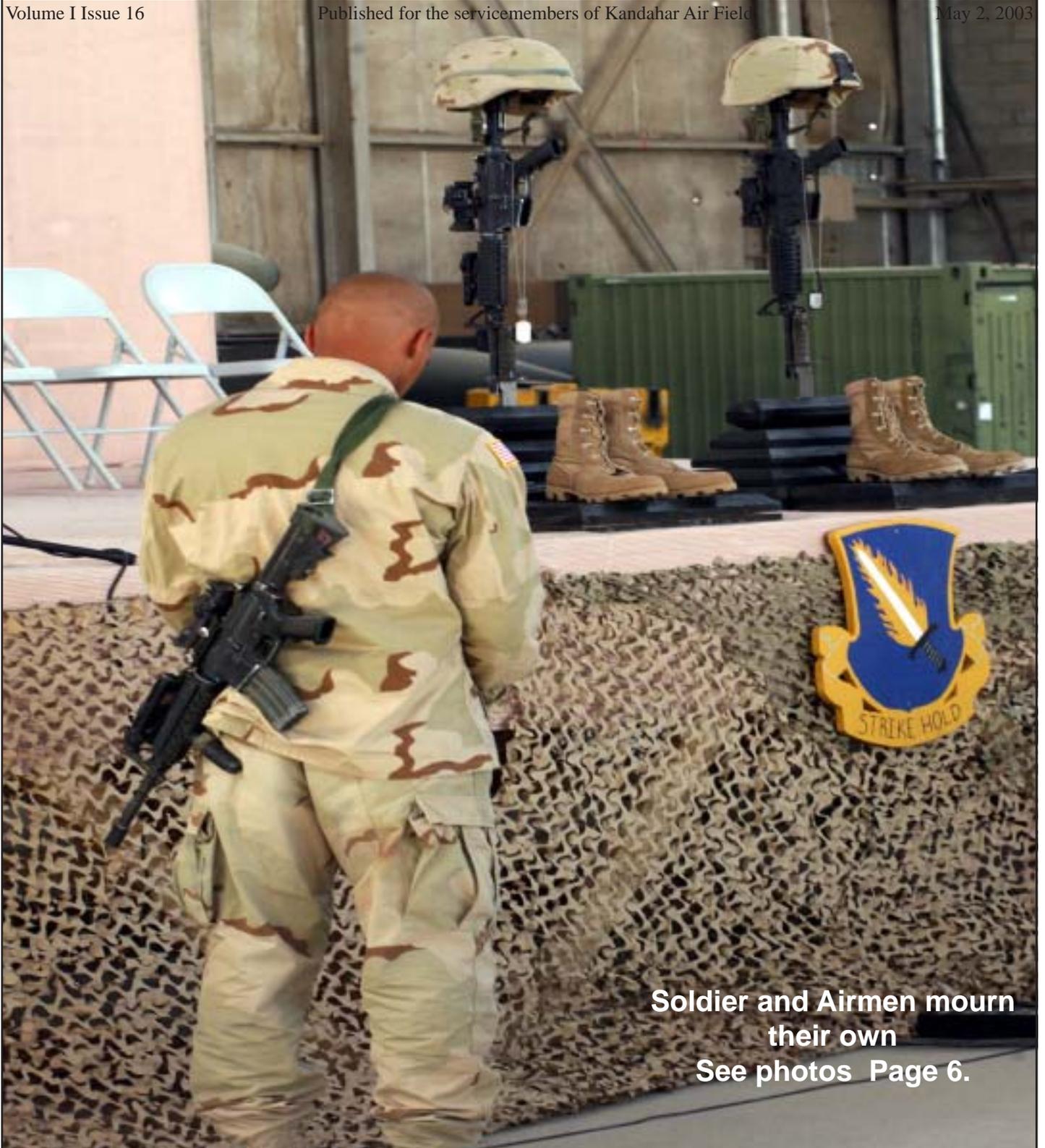


DESERT DEVIL DISPATCH

Volume I Issue 16

Published for the servicemembers of Kandahar Air Field

May 2, 2003



**Soldier and Airmen mourn
their own
See photos Page 6.**

A Few Words from the Postal Officer



*1st Lt. Michael J. Mazza
Postal Officer*

Sending packages back home is a great way to acknowledge the support that our families and friends give to those of us stationed here at KAF. But it is important to be aware of the restrictions on outgoing mail. Here are some important points to remember regarding restricted and prohibited items:

1) Knives, swords, and other sharp items, such as may be bought at the bazaar, are not permitted to be sent through the military mail system. This restriction holds whether or not the item is in a scabbard.

2) Unloaded antique rifles are the only firearms that may be mailed, provided they meet the following conditions: (a) They

must have been manufactured before 1898; (b) They must not be capable of being fired using ammunition manufactured in the United States or easily available through commercial channels; (c) only pieces being sent for display purposes or museum pieces may be sent—in other words, it is unmailable if it can be fired. If you want to mail such a piece home, please ensure that it is accompanied by authoritative documentation stating that conditions (a), (b) and (c) are met; an affidavit of this nature can be filled out at the legal office. If we at the post office have any doubts about such a piece or about its documentation, we will not allow it to be sent.

3) “War Trophies” are prohibited; this includes any TA-50 used by groups that had been fighting in this region.

4) Other prohibited items include, but are not limited to, the following: flammable material, poisonous substances, sand or soil, controlled substances, drug-related paraphernalia, poisonous animals, currency, human remains, and pornographic items. Furthermore, any item which could in any way damage the mail or injure postal personnel is prohibited.

All packages must be

presented opened to the mail clerk on duty so that he or she can inspect it and ensure that no contraband is inside. A customs form must be filled out for every package containing anything other than a simple letter.

Remember, your packages have a long journey before they reach the States. I recommend you use the sturdiest box you can find. Used MRE boxes are particularly strong. If you are sending something breakable, make sure that it is well cushioned by crumpled newspaper, bubble wrap, or some other shock absorbing material. Also, after it is inspected, make sure that the package is securely sealed with strong tape in order to prevent it from popping open.

The Post Office’s customer service window is open Monday through Saturday from 0400Z to 1600Z, and on Sunday from 0400Z to 1200Z. We can only accept cash—no credit cards, checks, or AAFES tokens, please. If you have any doubts as to whether an item is mailable, or have any other questions about the mail service, please contact me at the post office or talk to the mail clerk on duty.

—1LT Michael J. Mazza,
Postal Officer (DSN 582-0758)

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

Vigilant Guardian: mission complete, successful end

*Photos and Stories by PV2 Terri Rorke
11th Public Affairs Detachment*

KANDAHAR PROVINCE – Operation Vigilant Guardian kicked off April 23 with troops of the 2nd battalion of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, “White Devils” entering twelve villages in the Kandahar province.

The “White Devils” found and destroyed two hand grenades, multiple rocket-propelled grenades, six 107 mm rockets, approximately 40 mortars and a few AK-47s, according to 1st Lt. James W. Tomlanson, the heavy weapons platoon leader for D Company, 1/504th PIR.

The operation’s mission was to search for anti-coalition militia and suspected weapons caches in an area American forces haven’t entered before.

When April 24th’s dawn arrived, soldiers waited on the ground for fellow regiment soldiers to arrive in a CH-47 “Chinook.” The aircraft “took a hard landing” into a designated landing zone where the dust disguised how far down the ground was, according to a recent press statement. Two soldiers suffered minor injuries.

Civil affairs soldiers, paratroopers and Afghan Military Forces soldiers filed into Loy Kariz, near Spin Boldak, which is 80 kilometers east from Kandahar Air Field. “It is the first time AMF assets were used during an American (82nd village search) operation,” said Staff Sgt. Mark Charles, platoon sergeant with the 2/504th PIR.

Young boys greeted the soldiers at the edge of the village. Young girls peeped from behind rusted doors while nearby roosters cried of the new day with their cock-a-doodle-dos.

Civil affairs soldiers asked to speak to the village leader, which is a routine for assessing a village. But the leader seemed to hesitate to greet his visitors, which led to the American forces’ suspicion. Usually the village leader will greet the Americans as soon as they arrive, according to Capt. Kevin K. Parker, 450th Civil Affairs Battalion at Kandahar Air Field.

The soldiers decided to search the village without the village leader’s presence because of reports of recent fighting and suspicion of weapons cache in the area.

The troops didn’t find any additional weapons caches or see any hostility of the villagers.



Paratroopers of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg, N.C. conduct searches in homes in the village Loy Kariz during Operation Vigilant Guardian. Poppy plants in just about every villager’s homes revealed wealth of the village, said Capt. Kevin K. Parker, 450th Civil Affairs Battalion, Kandahar Air Field. U.S. soldiers talk with villagers as part of a village assessment routine during Operation Vigilant Guardian.



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Operation

"This is the most bizarre situation I have seen since we started doing this," said Parker. After doing village assessments just about every week for six months now, Parker said there was a lack of culture and customs displayed in this village.

Poppy plants, electricity assets, car ports, over-weight cows and sheep all present in the village served as pieces in figuring out this village's puzzle. These are all signs of wealth and prosperity in a third world country, according to Parker. Yet the villagers claimed they didn't have any supplies to support the Taliban-vandalized school at the edge of the village.

The Taliban came and destroyed part of the school two or three months ago, according to the villagers.

2/ 504th PIR paratroopers and civil affairs soldiers marched approximately two miles in the desert mid-day heat to seek out the village leader in his remote home in yet another poppy field.

"They're AMF soldiers," said one U. S. soldier approaching the residence. He was referring to six males dressed in military battle dress uniforms appearing to guard the village leader's residence.

The supposed soldiers didn't show any resistance, but it was yet another piece of the puzzle when they couldn't present any identification to show legitimacy of their claims, said Parker.

"Documentation is not easy to come by in Afghanistan," said Parker, "They should have it."

The U.S. forces' suspicions led them to discover a small cache of weapons in the village leader's vehicle.

The American soldiers detained seven persons for further questioning, including the village leader.

The village leader claimed he was an Afghan Militia Force commander, but didn't have identification either.

Paratroopers also searched the mountain behind the village for weapons caches, but found nothing.

The paratroopers didn't find any other caches in the other villages.

Tomlanson remains positive even though the soldiers found a smaller number of weapons cache than what they are used to finding.

"The searches were very successful. You're always looking for something. You don't want to get complacent. Every time we go out, we find new information. It is always beneficial. The soldiers give 110 percent every time. Their families should be proud of what they're doing out here...I wouldn't rather be any other place. These guys give it all," Tomlanson added.

The paratroopers safely returned to Kandahar Air Field April 27 after completing another operation.



Opium Poppy plants grow throughout the Kandahar Province in Afghanistan.



U.S. soldiers (ABOVE) take supposed Afghan Military Force soldiers from the village of Loy Kariz during Operation Vigilant Guardian. Seven persons were taken, including the village leader. (BELOW) Paratroopers from the "White Devils" prepare their perimeter before nightfall while on Operation Vigilant Guardian near Spin Boldak in the Kandahar Province.



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)

Campaigns - Sicily

Confident of a successful conclusion to their North African Campaign, the Allied Forces now looked ahead for a foothold in Europe. The planning for this occurred in January, 1943 at a high level conference in attended by Roosevelt and Churchill. The plans aim was to put pressure on “*the soft under belly of Europe*” in an effort to force the German’s to spread their troops more thinly. The plan targeted Sicily as the first step in this operation code-named HUSKY. Operation HUSKY involved four separate airborne operations, two by the British and two by the 82nd Airborne. The first operation HUSKY I spearheaded this airborne invasion of Sicily. Led by Col. James M. “Slim Jim” Gavin, the 505th PIR, and the 3rd Battalion of the 504th PIR were organized into a Regimental Combat Team. Their first objective was to parachute into an area around Gela on the southern shore of Sicily to close off roads leading to the beaches and secure the drop zone for the next operation. paratroopers crossed over the Sicilian Coast on schedule and jumped on their assigned drop zone on 9 July 1943 — an event which British Prime Minister Winston Churchill

termed, “not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning” The second operation called HUSKY II involved the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 504th PIR, led by Colonel Reuben H. Tucker. They loaded the C-47 the dusty airstrip near Kairouan, Tunisia. Near the Sicilian coast, however, a nervous Allied naval vessel suddenly fired upon the formation. Immediately, all other naval vessels and shore troops joined in, downing friendly aircraft and forcing planeloads of paratroopers to exit far from their intended drop zones in one of the greatest tragedies of World War II. Twenty-three of 144 USAAF transports were shot down by friendly fire and a total of 318 American troops were killed or wounded in the operation. Colonel Tucker’s plane, after twice flying the length of the Sicilian coast and with well over 2,000 holes in its fuselage, finally reached the drop zone near Gela. By morning, only 400 of the Regiment’s 1600 soldiers had reached the objective area. The others had been dropped in isolated groups on all parts of the island and carried out demolitions, cut lines of communication, established island roadblocks, ambushed German and Italian motorized columns, and caused so much

confusion over such an extensive area that initial German radio reports estimated the number of American parachutists dropped to be over ten times the actual number. Meanwhile, the troopers of the 504th 3rd Battalion along with the 505th PIR fought an enemy superior in numbers and equipment. Ambushes were conducted and even Objective Y, the deadly pillboxes, were secured. By continuing to fight in small groups the 82nd led the Germans and Italians to continue to overestimate the number of airborne invaders thus impeding any meaningful counterattacks. The German Herman Goering Panzer Division was another matter. Even though outmanned and outgunned, the 82nd used raw courage and fighting spirit to block the steel behemoths of this Division from advancing toward the Allied landings on the beachhead. By D+3, they had accomplished their initial mission and were relieved by the 1st Infantry Division to return to regimental control. On 13 July, the 504th moved out in the attack, spearheading the 82nd Airborne Division’s drive northwest 150 miles along the southern coast of Sicily. With captured Italian light tanks, trucks, motorcycles, horses, mules, bicycles, and even wheelbarrows pressed into service, the 82nd encountered only light resistance and took 22,000 prisoners in their first contact with Nazi and Fascist forces. Overall, the Sicilian operation proved costly both in lives and equipment, but the unit gained valuable fighting experience and managed to hurt the enemy in the process. It was with this experience and pride that the 504th returned to its base in Kairouan, Tunisia, to prepare for the invasion of mainland Italy.



Courtesy photo

(lower left)

US Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division get ready for the drop into Sicily.

(The series continues in the May 9 edition of the Desert Devil Dispatch)



Images from a memorial service for Private Jerod Dennis, 20 from Soper, Okla. assigned to B Co., 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment from Fort Bragg, N.C. and Airman 1st Class Raymond Losano, 23 from Del Rio, Texas, assigned to the 14th Air Support Operations Squadron from Pope Air Force Base, N.C. Both were killed in the Patika Province near the town of Shkin during combat operations. Six other U.S. soldiers and one Afghan Militia Forces soldier were also wounded. This memorial ceremony was held April 24 at Kandahar Air Field. Ceremonies were also held at Bagram Air Base and at coalition forward operations bases near the border with Pakistan



**You might be
Airborne if ...**
*you make your children clear
Housing before they go off to
college.* - quinman

