



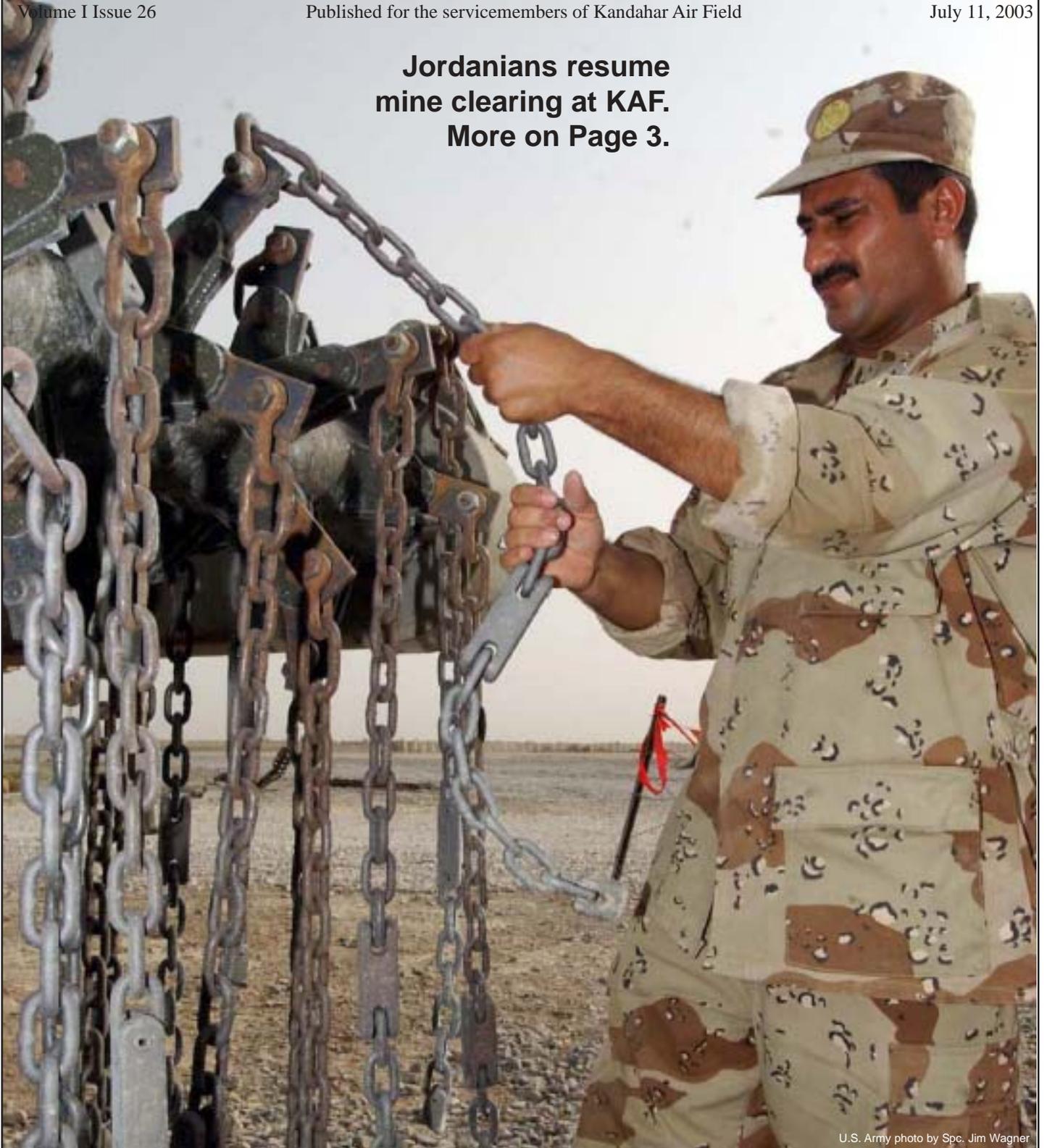
DESERT DEVIL DISPATCH

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July 11, 2003

**Jordanians resume
mine clearing at KAF.
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U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jim Wagner

Deployed Mother Responds to Criticism

by Pfc. Christina Carde
11th Public Affairs Det.

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — While sitting at my desk writing my daily article for the Freedom Watch, the Army newspaper for soldiers in Afghanistan, my co-worker casually turned to me and suggested that I type my name in the Yahoo! search engine to see all of the articles I've written that have been posted on the Internet.

Not thinking anything of it, I typed my name in and began to scroll down headlines of stories I've written since my deployment to Afghanistan. I was not prepared for what I found.

"Agape News Press - The case of Private Christina," read one of the sites on the page. Curious, I clicked on it to see what had been printed about me. I received the shock of a lifetime.

Cort Kirkwood, a journalist and editor of The Daily News Record in Harrisonburg, Va., had read an article about me run by the Department of Defense Web news site, Defend America, titled "A Mom's Mission" and had decided to rip it to shreds.

He called me everything from basically an unfit mother for leaving my son to go off to war to a sellout for enlisting in the Army for "30 pieces of silver," a.k.a., the Montgomery G.I. Bill.

As I read the article, I realized this was not only an attack on my 3-year-old son and myself, but on all mothers deployed in the service of their country.

However, since Mr. Kirkwood believes he is the subject-matter expert on the lives of women in the military he has never met or spoken to, I thought I would take the time to broaden his horizons using a few points he made in his article.

"Patriotism ain't the real reason Pfc. Christina signed up (for the Army). She enlisted for college benefits and to improve her family's lot in life, she enlisted for 30 pieces of silver."

Before I joined the Army, my son and I were living in one of the worst sections in the New York City area, where

getting your next drug fix took nothing more than walking across the street or knocking on the neighbor's door. Working up to 60 hours a week was just barely paying the bills, and my 2-year-old son could have walked out the door at any time and been shot during a drive-by.

I suppose I could have taken the alternate route and applied for public assistance, so upstanding citizens like Mr. Kirkwood could pay my bills for me, but I decided to get out of the rut I was in on my own and joined the service. Now my son lives in a neighborhood where you can hear a pin drop and lights are out by 9 p.m.

"Who are the military morons who think this is a good idea (to allow mothers to deploy overseas)?"

When I came to this portion of the article, I could do nothing but sit back and laugh at the irony of his statement. The same "military morons" who give American women a chance to serve their country and provide for their families, are the same who fight and die alongside many of these women in today's combat operations. They are the ones who give journalists like Kirkwood the freedom of press and speech to write tasteless, unprofessional and uneducated "news articles" such as "The Case of Private Christina."

At least these mothers can return home with a sense of pride and accomplishment and be able to tell their children that they had a part in defending their country. What will Mr. Kirkwood be able to say other than he bashed the integrity and courage of these female troops during a time of war?

"Perhaps the would-be MacArthurs see nothing wrong with a mother dumping on her young son," was the final statement that stood out for me in the article.

Like many other deployed parents out here, I haven't seen my son in six months. However, I know my son is in a safe place with everything he needs. He will never be a child who has to wear second-hand clothing or the one stuck at home because I can't afford to send him on a class trip. That is the way things should be, and if I have to deploy in search of every Bin Laden and Hussein on the planet to keep it that way, then so be it.

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



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Jordanians use a British-manufactured "Aardvark" Mark III de-mining machine to clear a section of ground from landmines Tuesday. On a good day, the team can clear 919 square feet of land.

Jordanian Unit Resumes De-mining Ops at KAF

Story & photos by Spc. Jim Wagner
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

After four idle months the Jordanian de-mining team resumed operations Saturday, clearing mines from the desert floor surrounding Kandahar Air Field (KAF).

Clearing Afghanistan of the deadly ground weapons is a high priority for coalition forces and the soldiers from Jordan have been waiting two months for the chance to do their jobs.

The United Nations Mine Action Programme figures there are roughly 10 million mines strewn throughout Afghanistan – placed mainly during the Russian occupation in the 1980s – that hinder reconstruction efforts in the country. According to the agency, approximately 150 people are maimed or killed every month in the country because of mines.

Arriving at KAF in May for the start of their three-month tour of duty, the team found out their "Aardvark" Mark III mine clearing machine – essentially a bulldozer with flails attached to a ro-

tating drum – was out of commission with a broken rotor. The rotor is used to spin the flails and weighs five tons.

It's because of that weight it took four months for a new part to arrive in Afghanistan from Britain, where the Aardvark is manufactured. DHL, the contractor responsible for delivering packages to the country, balked at handling that much weight on one of its flights. It finally arrived last week and was promptly installed.

There are 72 flails found on the rotor, with a small "hammer" located on the end of each chain. Each hammer delivers one ton of pressure and digs 12-20 inches into the ground, for a total of 72 tons of pressure on a space three inches long and 10 feet long.

On a good day, the Aardvark can clear 919 square feet of ground in one day; unfortunately, a good day is rare for de-mining operations conducted on the grounds surrounding KAF. Debris, either from expended munitions or destroyed equipment caused by the

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Coalition Ends Haven Denial

by Spc. David Landrum
CJTF-180 PAO

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – U.S. and coalition forces completed an operation in southeastern Afghanistan Sunday. Operation Haven Denial began Wednesday and took place in Pakitka and Khost provinces.

"Operation Haven Denial is a deliberately planned operation focused on anti-coalition forces along the border region," said Col. Rodney Davis, Combined Joint Task Force-180 public affairs officer. "It is just one of many operations we're conducting in support of the Afghan people's desire to spread prosperity and rid the country of anti-coalition Taliban and al-Qaida."

According to officials, Taliban and anti-coalition members (ACM) have been attacking a variety of targets.

"The purpose of this operation is to prevent the re-emergence of terrorism, deny anti-coalition fighters sanctuary and prevent further attacks," said Davis.

He said the main objective of the operation was to defeat or capture ACM's operating in the area. If capture could not be performed immediately, the coalition was to prevent them from escaping into neighboring Pakistan by establishing blocking positions along the border.

"The coalition has had a significant impact on the enemy," said Davis. "We're hunting down their leadership and ultimately we will win the war on terrorism."

The operation included forces from Task Force Devil and the Italian army Task Force Nibbio.

"We will, when necessary, undertake combat operations to meet our objectives in the war on terror," said Davis. "We will use balanced, appropriate forces to achieve clearly defined operational objectives."

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firefights when coalition forces attacked the Taliban stronghold nearly two years, frequently destroys the hammers striking the ground.

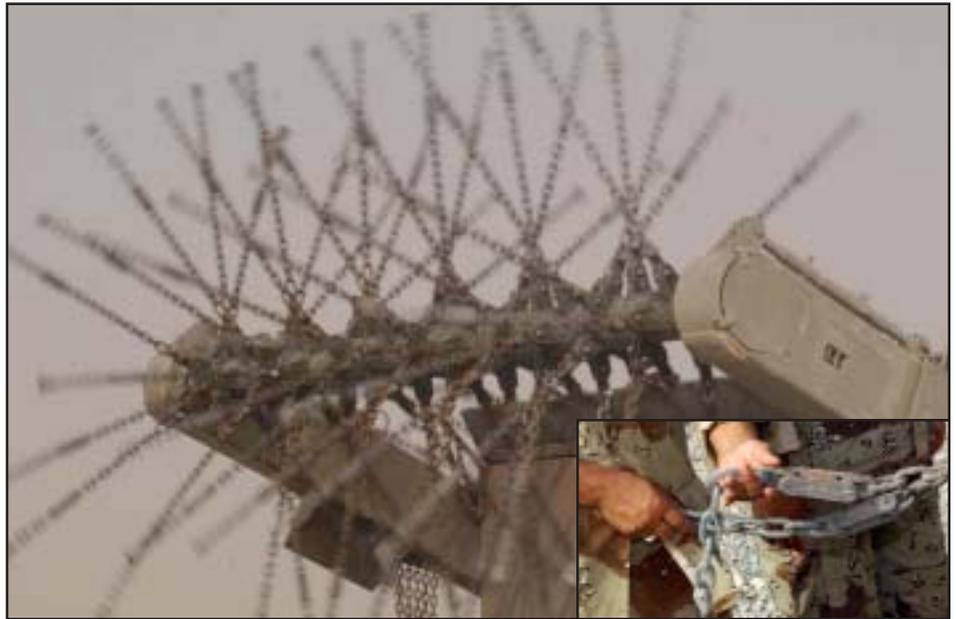
"In this nature of region, we find airplane parts and lots of heavy metals," said 1st Lt. Ashraf Odat, one of the two Jordanian officers in the 14-man de-mining team. "So we stop every 15 minutes and check the rotor. We replace about 10 hammers a day."

Odat said Jordanian de-mining teams spend only three months in country due to the stress and dangers involved in clearing the region of explosives. Since coalition forces started operating in Afghanistan, six teams have cycled through Kandahar.

The nature of their jobs has spawned a proverb in the Jordanian army – "Mines do not respect the ranks," said Odat with a grin. Mines littering the country range from small anti-personnel to the large anti-tank mines that can tear a gaping hole in a HMMWV or track vehicle.



Jordanian army Sgt. 1st Class Awad Hamaidah, driver, steers the "Aardvark" Mark III de-mining machine over dangerous ground. RIGHT: Jordanian army Sgt. 1st Class Mahmood Hamid, assistant driver, replaces a damaged flail.



The 72 flails on the "Aardvark" Mark III de-mining machine whirl through the air prior to clearing the ground of any landmines. INSET: The hammer on each flail delivers one ton of pressure to detonate explosives.

Despite the danger posed by the mines, the three-man Aardvark crew feels completely safe inside their shielded cabs.

"It's normal," said Jordanian army Sgt. 1st Class Awad Hamaidah, "because the driver shield can protect us from an anti-tank mine, so we don't feel a thing."

The Jordanian de-mining team is one of two units at KAF responsible for clearing the airport region around Kandahar.

They are tasked by the Task Force Devil mine action center, which gets requests from the facility engineers who are looking for more space to construct new buildings and

access roads at Kandahar Air Field.

According to Staff Sgt. Oscar Rodriguez, mine action center non-commissioned officer in charge, the Jordanian and C Company, 27th Engineer Battalion out of Fort Bragg, N.C., de-mining teams have cleared almost 100 mines since April.

As coalition forces get ready for the eventual turnover of the Kandahar airport to the Afghanistan government, more safe ground is needed. Until the de-mining teams clear the area, though, it's unusable.

"Its ground that we can't use," Rodriguez said. "Every inch they clear is one more inch we can use. And when we leave, its ground the Afghan people can use."



Stateside News

Smith Takes 505 PIR, Huggins Continues as 3rd BDE

Story & photo by Pfc. J.H. French
82nd Airborne Division PAO

FORT BRAGG, N.C. – The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment changed command June 23 at Pike Field.

Col. James L. Huggins passed the torch of command to Col. Jeff A. Smith. Three battalions, the brigade combat team and the 82d Airborne Division band took part in the ceremony.

Huggins assumed command of 3rd Brigade on June 27, 2001 and led the brigade while it was deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from June 2002 until January 2003.

It is a great day here in “the center of the universe,” said Maj. Gen. Charles Swannack Jr., during his speech.

“This uniform we wear and these wings we wear are a badge of honor and I’m so grateful to share it with each of you,” he told paratroopers of the 505th PIR.

Speaking to Col. Huggins he said, “you are now relegated down from the A-team as a brigade commander to the B-team as Chief of Staff and this is what I mean by that. You be here when the CG is here and you be here when the CG is gone.”

Swannack also challenged Col. Smith to maintain the combat readiness of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment and to take care of the paratroopers and their families.

Huggins spoke of the officers, NCOs, and paratroopers as the “finest collective assembly of professionals with whom I’ve had the privilege to serve.”

“It has been my honor and I can not describe how much of an honor it has been to stand in your ranks. And as great as you look today, this is not how I will remember you. Instead, it will be with heavy loads, training, fighting and standing hooked up under a chilling red glow waiting to do our nation’s bidding,” he said to his former paratroopers.

He ended by saying, “Be ready, you



Maj. Gen. Charles H. Swannack Jr., 82d Airborne Division Commander, passes the colors and command of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment to Col. Jeff A. Smith.

are truly America’s guard of honor. Airborne all the way H minus.”

Prior to taking command of the 505th PIR, Smith served as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, G3, with the 101st Airborne Division.

“Together we have a responsibility to ensure continuity to build and develop the capabilities of 3rd Brigade and the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment,” the new commander said.

Smith ended by saying “we are humbled and honored to rejoin the team.”



**You
might be
Airborne
if ...**

**you mark SAAR on
your calendar, but
forget your
anniversary.**

- Ray Lewis



Going Home...

Sgt. Osvaldo Ortiz sleeps next to the transfer case and gear of his fallen friend, Spc. Kelvin E. Feliciano Gutierrez, aboard a C-17 Globemaster III bound for Dover AFB, Del., on June 29. Ortiz is accompanying the remains to the base and eventually back to the fallen soldier’s home in Puerto Rico. Gutierrez was assigned to Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Kandahar Celebrates Fourth of July with Live Band



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



While watching explosions in the air is the last thing coalition forces want to see in a combat zone, another Independence Day tradition was available - a live band.

"Weekend Excursion," an indie rock band out of Raleigh, N.C., performed in front of more than 500 Kandahar residents for more than three hours July 4. The band is touring the Middle East and Asia throughout the summer.

According to the group's website, the four musicians "feel honored to bring a bit of America to the troops in the field."

The band is currently at Camp Andy, Al Udied, Qatar. For more information about the band, you can visit their website at www.weekendexcursion.com

