

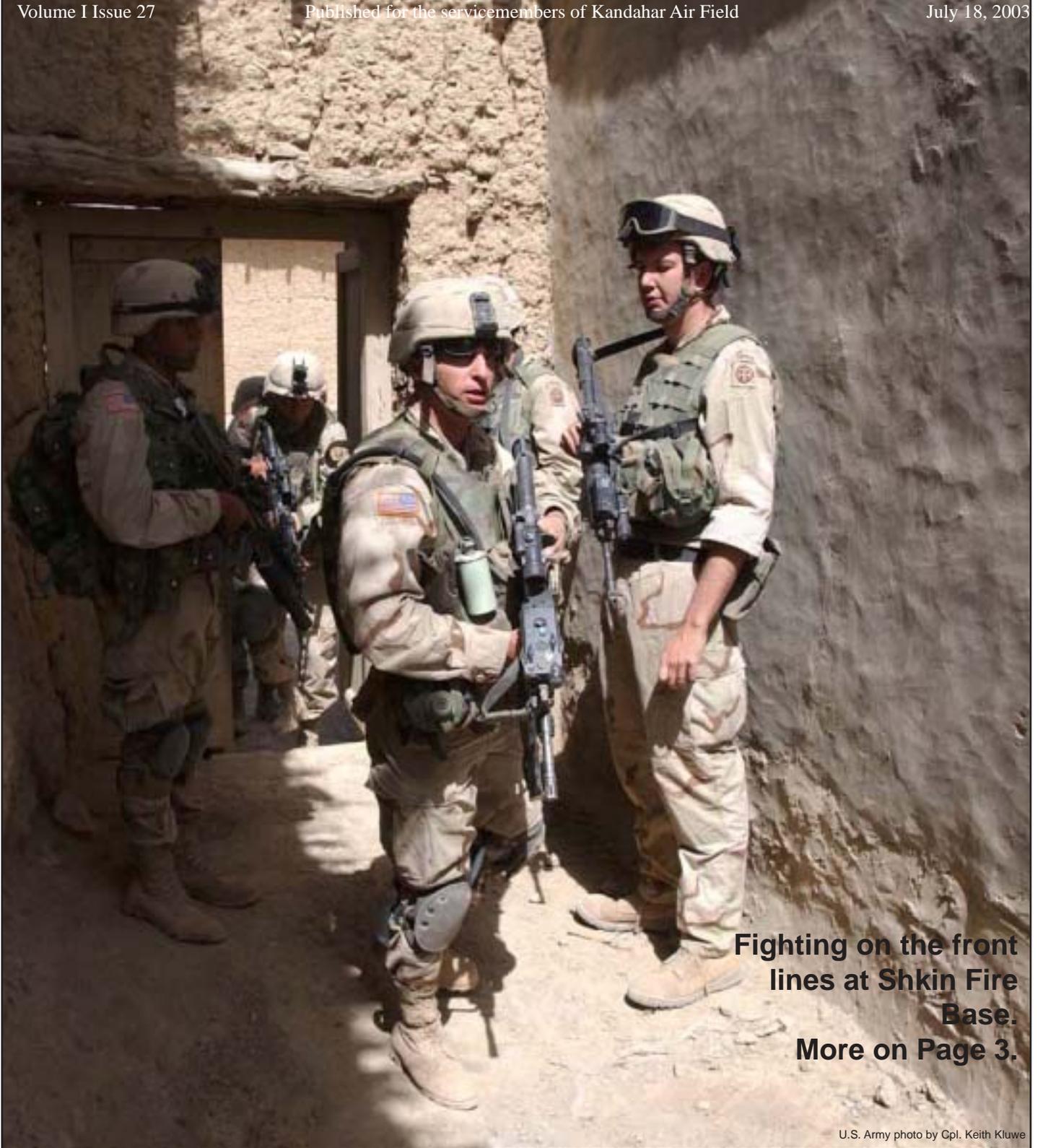


# DESERT DEVIL DISPATCH

Volume I Issue 27

Published for the servicemembers of Kandahar Air Field

July 18, 2003



**Fighting on the front  
lines at Shkin Fire  
Base.  
More on Page 3.**

U.S. Army photo by Cpl. Keith Kluwe

# Agencies Available Outside Chain-of-Command

by Pfc. Christina Carde  
11th Public Affairs Det.

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — Whether in a garrison or deployed environment, soldiers and civilians alike may find themselves in a situation that needs assistance outside of their immediate supervisors or chain of command.

For these issues the Equal Opportunity (EO) and Inspector General (IG) offices have some tips and guidelines for troops and Department of Defense (DoD) employees who may be having problems and don't know where to turn.

"As an equal opportunity officer, my job is to assist troops and DoD civilians with any issues they have regarding harassment due to their race, religion, gender, ethnicity or nationality," said Maj. Thomas McGeachy, EO officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Mountain Infantry Division (Light), Fort Drum, N.Y. "I am also responsible for mediating disputes between two or more parties and conducting command climate assessments."

Due to the fact the military is made up of people of many different backgrounds, EO is also in charge of functions that help troops and DoD civilians better relate to others and understand their coworkers' cultures.

"Every month we try to organize a function based on a heritage or holiday such as Hispanic Heritage Month to keep soldiers educated about the cultures and traditions of those around them," said McGeachy. "By doing this, we ensure that soldiers are given a broader scope than what they are used to which may help avoid discrimination issues due to race or ethnicity in the future."

Even though the EO office deals with many issues regarding discrimination and harassment, there are certain cases that they don't handle. For these, there is the Inspector General's office.

"Any discrimination or harassment issue that doesn't have to do with race, religion or ethnicity is dealt with by our personnel," said Lt. Col. John Elwood, IG officer, HHC, 10th Mountain. "We always try to solve problems by first assisting troops with their issues, conducting inspections and investigations of the matter if required and teaching and training commanders and soldiers on how best to deal with problems."

Whether the complaint is an EO or IG matter, both offices said there are things they can't do no matter what the case.

"The IG office doesn't investigate criminal allegations or any issues that have a means of redress," said Elwood. "All legal matters that are subject to (Uniformed Code of Military Justice) action we can't touch."

"Our office can advise a command investigation but we can't recommend any punitive action," said McGeachy. "Once we have investigated a matter it is up to the individual commander how the situation will be handled."

In both cases, McGeachy and Elwood shared the same sentiments about confidentiality.

"We do our best to keep everything that is said to us confidential," said Elwood. "Of course there are some exceptions to every rule, but we do everything in our power to keep matters within the confines of the office."

Unlike many EO and IG offices in the states there is an added convenience to the EO and IG offices here.

"Soldiers can find both IG and EO personnel in the same office," said Sgt. 1st Class Tyrun Johnson, IG noncommissioned officer, HHC, 10th Mountain. "It makes things a whole lot easier for both us and the individual with the problem because whether it's an IG or EO issue, it can be handled right here in the same room."

Even though the IG and EO personnel said troops should feel free to come to them with any problem, they did ask that they explore other options first.

"Before a soldier comes into our office, they need to first go through their chain of command at the lowest level to try to resolve the problem," said Johnson. "If troops feel that there is no one in their chain of command they can talk to, they can contact their EO representative and then our office if they have no other recourse."

Whether the job is one for EO or IG, both offices said their mission is to assist soldiers in solving their problems as smoothly as possible.

"My goal is to make sure soldiers and DoD civilians can work in an environment that is as hassle free and comfortable as possible," said McGeachy. "No one should have to work

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

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# Shkin: The Front Line on Terror

by 1st Lt. Cory Angell  
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

**FIRE BASE SHKIN, Afghanistan** – Fire base Shkin (unofficially called Fire Base Checo in honor of the paratrooper killed in action last year) is a mud fortress that resembles the Alamo and houses the soldiers of B Company 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and is located in one of the most dangerous places in Afghanistan.

“It’s a different place,” said Lt. Col. Richard Clark, the commander of the 3-504<sup>th</sup> PIR. “It’s our Fort Apache the Bronx.”



U.S. Army photos by Cpl. Keith Kluwe

**Shkin, dubbed Fire Base Checo by troops in honor of the paratrooper killed there last year.**

The fire base has seen a great deal of enemy contact and the units that have served there have taken more casualties from enemy fire than any other location.

“I definitely got word under the (505<sup>th</sup> PIR) Panther brigade that Shkin was definitely the hot spot,” said Capt. David Buffaloe, B Company commander. “The Panthers suffered their first causality of war, and that was Sgt. (Steven) Checo. It happened down here at Shkin fire base. Shortly after he was killed 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Rich was wounded, shot in the back of the head.”

“Like Clark said it’s definitely the hot spot here in Afghanistan,” Buffaloe continued. “We like to say it’s the front line on the war on terrorism right now because we believe that the bad guys are very near by. We probably go past them and see them every day, (we) definitely get a lot of action down here.”

“My company has

been here since early January but we have been at this firebase since the early part of April,” said 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Brian Severino. “Since then we have had at least six direct fire contacts. We have lost a couple casualties ourselves but we have made the enemy pay in full for their mistakes.”

“Looking at all the reports coming from throughout Afghanistan; I would probably agree that this is probably the most active part of Afghanistan,” said Severino.

“I think, given our close proximity to the Pakistani border, we seem to have the most contact with enemy forces and not just in the form of (improvised explosive devices) or rocket attacks it’s actual direct fire contact with the enemy.”

Many of the soldiers feel the importance of their mission and are glad to be at fire base Checo.

“The soldiers had a reason to come here,” Severino said. “I have a lot of soldiers in my company that joined up right after September 11<sup>th</sup>. That was their main goal for joining the army because they were upset and angry and they wanted to get back at them for what hap-

**SHKIN**, continued on Page 4



**TOP LEFT:** Paratroopers enter a village to search for anti-coalition forces and weapons caches. **LEFT:** During cache searches, intelligence is gathered in the form of pictures, correspondence and interviews with villagers. **ABOVE:** Paratroopers search a truck during a vehicle control point patrol.

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pened and they are over here now fighting. A lot of the soldiers had family or friends that they knew in the World Trade Center or the Pentagon and it means a lot to them that they are here now going after the terrorists.”

Despite the fact that soldiers at Shkin face an elevated threat level and have had to deal with the loss of fellow soldiers their morale remains high.

“The soldiers came here knowing that this was the hottest spot in the country and morale was high,” said Severino. “We came to Afghanistan to kill our enemies, bottom line. They knew that this was the place where it was going to be done.”

There is no doubt that all soldiers serving in Afghanistan face the dangers of combat on a daily basis but there seems to be a distinction for those who serve at Shkin.

“The morale and motivation is still very high,” said Severino. “The conditions here at this fire base, they are not bad but their not the best. Life is kind of rough here but the soldiers don’t mind because they joined the Army to do what they are doing out here. They’re going after the enemies of our country.”



**ABOVE:** A soldier grills steaks at Shkin Fire Base. **RIGHT:** 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers unwind with a game of softball.



**ABOVE:** A .50-caliber gunner keeps an eye on the Afghanistan horizon for anti-coalition forces. **BELOW:** Paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division search an Afghan village near Shkin.



# 'Ring Road' Improvements Connect Kabul, Kandahar

by Sgt. Valerie Dey-Bolejck  
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

KABUL, Afghanistan — U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Robert Finn recently inaugurated the first section of reconstruction of the "Ring Road" from Kabul to Kandahar. This project is designed to bring Afghanistan together through road improvement.

"I am very happy to see the road is on schedule. It will be done by the end of the year," said Finn. "There have been complaints about it being too slow, but people who build things know you have to do a lot of preliminary work before you can start doing the visible things. Today we are seeing the visible part of the road."

The first segment of the Ring Road will span 298 miles from Kabul to Kandahar. The construction of this span is being done in five segments, all being worked simultaneously. The Ring Road is known locally as Afghanistan Highway 1. It is scheduled for completion by Dec. 31.

The construction of the road is being facilitated by a number of contracting companies. The first segment of the road



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Valerie Dey-Bolejck

**Afghan work crew and spectators watch the first segment of the 'Ring Road' get blacktopped recently. The 298-mile stretch between Kabul and Kandahar is expected to be completed by the end of the year.**

is being built by the Turkish company ARC, and they have hired more than 400 local workers. The contractors are training workers for all aspects of road construction, such as bulldozer operation and the rockwork for the culverts. They have rented local equipment including dump trucks, excavators, graders and loaders. The workers start at 7 a.m. and work until 6 p.m.

The Ring Road will go from Kabul to Kandahar, Kandahar to Herat, Herat to Mazar-e-Sharif and then Mazar-e Sharif

back to Kabul. There will also be connecting roads from Kabul through Bamian to Herat as well as other offshoots, including into Iran and Pakistan.

"(This project) will tie in the infrastructure of Afghanistan, it will tie the central government to the outlying provinces," said Lt Col. Steven Sanchez, Civil-Military Coordination Center, Coalition Joint Civil-Military Task Force. "Afghanistan has historically been a merchant society," said Sanchez. "It linked the Far East to the Middle East and it was the crossroads. This is putting Afghanistan back in its culture ... acting as a conduit between the Middle East and the Far East."

The Ring Road will help the central government project itself into the provinces. Not only will the road act as a link for commercial trade and travel, but it will also facilitate the improvement of telecommunications across the country.

The contractors plan to complete three-quarters of a mile per day. Once the road is complete, travelers will be able to travel as fast as 80-85 kilometers per hour, cutting the trip from two days to 7 hours.

## Stateside News

# Privatized Housing at Fort Bragg Nears Completion

by Kelly M. Douglas  
Picerne Military Housing

FORT BRAGG, N.C. -- Fort Bragg officials signed their Residential Occupancy Agreements Wednesday at XVIII Airborne Corps Headquarters.

There are still more than 1,300 Residential Occupancy Agreements that need to be signed. It is very important that these agreements are signed before Aug. 1, when Picerne Military Housing assumes responsibility of all houses on Fort Bragg.

The ROAs need to be signed in order for current residents to maintain on-post housing. The agreement sets up the sponsor's Basic Allowance for Housing allotment as rent and utilities payment. This will not change the amount of the service member's take-home pay.

The question that may come to mind while signing the ROA is "what's initially in it for me?"

As of Aug. 1, there will be a few immediate changes. First, lawn care will no longer be the responsibility of the residents.

If residents choose to maintain their own lawns then they have the right to do so and should contact their neighborhood managers to notify them of that decision.

Otherwise, Picerne subcontractors will perform all grass cutting and landscaping. Second, only a surface clean condition is required upon move out. This eliminates the need to hire a cleaning team.

If the resident is planning on moving out after July 23 then the Housing Office will be accepting Picerne Military

Housing standards for surface clean conditions.

Third, each neighborhood will receive personalized property management, maintenance and family services through the Neighborhood Office located in each neighborhood.

Picerne Military Housing understands that many Fort Bragg soldiers are currently deployed and will work closely with those families to achieve the best outcome for the family.

Picerne takes its mission, Families First, very seriously.

If you have not turned in your Residential Occupancy Agreement, please stop by the Picerne Military Housing office located on Longstreet, across from Sports USA. ROAs are also available on the Picerne website at [www.braggpicerne.com](http://www.braggpicerne.com).



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jim Wagner

## Four-Star Visit

Gen. Larry Ellis, commanding general of U.S. Army Forces Command, chats with Spc. Victoria Virgess of the 21st Cargo Transfer Company, Fort Lewis, Wash., before taking her re-enlistment oath July 11. Ellis visited Task Force Devil to review the troops and get briefed on current operations at Kandahar Air Field. The four-star general also handed out challenge coins to outstanding performers during his visit to the Afghanistan area of responsibility.



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

**your joints sound like  
rice-krispies when  
you get out of bed.**

**- AbnDaddy**

## Pvt. Murphy's Law



[www.paratrooper.net/](http://www.paratrooper.net/)

**Leaving soon? Make sure to contact the Deployment Support Team at DSN 580-3090 to schedule the flight of cargo and personnel out of Kandahar Air Field.**

## **AGENCIES**, from Page 2

in a hostile situation where they are being harassed.”

“IG is an impartial fact finder that works to clear someone’s good name and to seek out the truth,” said Elwood. “Troops should know they should never feel intimidated by their chain of command for coming to see us. Any reprisal on the command’s part is illegal and punishable by UCMJ.”