

Freedom Watch

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Bagram, Afghanistan

Engineers 'reconstruct' Afghanistan



1st Lt. Meghann Sullivan, CJ-7, inspects the clinic at the Altamour site.

Story and photo by
Spc. Steven Marroni
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

KABUL, Afghanistan — “Rebuilding Afghanistan” has become a common phrase, almost a cliché, meaning the efforts to establish a stable government and rid the country of terrorism. But the engineers of the Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operation Task Force in Kabul are physically rebuilding Afghanistan — in the construction sense of the word.

The engineers, or CJ-7, take bids from local contractors for rebuilding or constructing schools and clinics in outlying villages. They inspect the entire process, making periodic visits to each of their 30 sites.

“I enjoy this job for three main reasons,” said project engineer Capt. Greg Quimby. “One, it is oriented a lot more towards the techni-

cal side of the engineering field than a typical job that I would have on active duty; secondly, the people of Afghanistan are very appreciative of the work we are doing so that makes the job rewarding; and lastly by interacting so frequently with the local people, it provides us with a great way to learn about the culture and way of life here.”

Project engineers visit sites nominated by civil affairs teams and develop the scope of work that needs to be done for that particular village. They then prepare the paperwork that will go into the bid proposal for local contractors. After the contract is awarded, CJ7 is responsible for inspecting the quality of the contractors’ work and that it fits within the scope of the project.

The CJ-7 shop consists of a variety of people, ranging from active

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126th always ready to answer call for help

Story and photos by
Pvt. 2 Terri Rorke
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – A cry for help is all that is needed for a medical evacuation helicopter crew to dispatch to a victim. But to be ready for spontaneous calls, maintaining proficiency of skills and equipment is crucial.

Having performed MEDEVACs in a state with the highest point in the continental United States, the California National Guard, 126th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) is a team used to rescuing victims at high elevations.

Because of the location of the company,

recently built HH60L Black Hawk helicopters were given to them. The choppers are specifically designed for medical evacuation – the first in the Army.

When orders were put on paper for the company to deploy to Afghanistan, they would bring their experience, skills and their choppers specifically designed for MEDEVAC.

The company is capable and ready to rescue a victim at any altitude due to its specially designed hoist. Of the two helicopters the company has here, one has an internal hoist and the other has an external hoist.



A crew chief of the 126th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), practices using the external hoist of an HH-60L Black Hawk.

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



The Pentagon said Pfc. Jessica Lynch has been rescued after being listed as missing in action near Nasiriya on March 23.

Official: U.S. launches 'major' offensive in Iraq

CNN — As the Pentagon defended questions about its troop strength in Iraq Tuesday, a military official said U.S. forces have launched a major ground offensive against at least two Iraqi Republican Guard divisions.

The new offensive targeted against at least two Republican Guard divisions — the Medina and Baghdad — south of the Iraqi capital, in what could be the beginning of the battle for Baghdad.

One Pentagon official said U.S. forces are engaging Iraqi Republican Guard troops in a major fight in Karbala.

The new offensive came after U.S.-led coalition forces in the Persian Gulf region began receiving a battle plan suggesting the focus of the ground war would soon shift to Baghdad, according to U.S. military officials.

Gen. Tommy Franks, chief of U.S. Central Command, will not have to consult with President Bush or Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld before moving on the Iraqi capital, officials told CNN.

Meanwhile, U.S. Central Command announced a U.S. Army POW held captive in Iraq had been rescued from an Iraqi hospital and returned to a "coalition controlled area."

Pentagon officials confirmed the rescue of Pfc. Jessica Lynch, 19, who had been listed as missing in action after intense fighting near Nasiriya on March 23.

Myers delivers spirited defense of Pentagon war plan

WASHINGTON — In an unusually strong and passionate defense of the Pentagon's war plan, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff criticized those who are questioning the military campaign in Iraq as "absolutely wrong" and said their comments are "not good for our troops."

"It is not helpful to have those kind of comments come out when we've got troops in combat, because, first of all, they're false, they're absolutely wrong, they bear no resemblance to the truth, and it's just harmful to our troops that are out there fighting very bravely, very courageously," Gen. Richard Myers said at Tuesday's Pentagon briefing.

His spirited answer came in response to a question about reports of insufficient forces on the ground and delays in deployment orders. Both reports, Myers said, are wrong.

Saddam a no-show for address

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The Bush administration Tuesday continued to press for proof that Saddam Hussein is alive after the Iraqi president was a no-show for a televised address to his nation.

An announcement by Iraqi TV that Saddam would speak raised the possibility that he would make an appearance and prove he survived early coalition airstrikes.

Instead, another Iraqi official read a statement said to be from Saddam.

Minutes after Iraqi television announced the address, Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf appeared and delivered the statement, which defined the battle in Iraq in religious and pan-Arabic terms.

"Long live Palestine," al-Sahaf read. "Long live Iraq."

There was "a lot of interest here in the White House" when people saw the words "Saddam to appear at noon" at the bottom of their television screens, said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer at his afternoon briefing.

Missing journalists safe in Jordan

NEW YORK — Molly Bingham, a member of one of America's most famous newspaper families, two journalists from the Long Island newspaper Newsday, a Danish photographer and a peace activist have been released from Iraqi custody after a week's confinement, and are safe in Jordan.

They all disappeared March 25 — last Tuesday — from the Palestine Hotel, which is housing many of the visiting journalists covering the war from Baghdad.

"We thought it was an April Fool's joke," Barry Bingham Jr., father of the award-winning photojournalist, told reporters in Louisville, Ky., about the call he received from his daughter. With his wife, Mary, and Molly's sister Emily at his side, Bingham said, "Molly said she was OK and said she'd had a rough week. My family and I are overjoyed."

The Newsday journalists, reporter Matthew McAllester, 33, and photographer Moises Saman, 29, said they were seized by Iraqi authorities at the hotel last Tuesday morning and taken to a prison where they were interrogated and held until Monday.

U.S. attacked human shields

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Iraq's information minister accused U.S. forces Tuesday of "indiscriminately" killing their own citizens in a bus attack and killing nine Iraqi children in a central neighborhood of Babylon.

"Yesterday, an American warplane attacked two buses on the highway between Baghdad and Ahman," Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf told reporters.

"Those people on those two buses are human shields coming to participate in defending civilian installations like water sanitation stations, electricity generation stations, and so on."

He said Iraqis are awaiting more details on the incident, and the U.S. Central Command said it is investigating the claim.

Describing what Sahaf said was the attack in southern Babylon, 60 miles south of Baghdad, he said, "This morning, the villains bombarded a civilian quarter." He said the children who died lived in adjacent houses.

Italian medics equipped for self-support

By Maj. William Mott
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — The Italian Nibbio Task Force has deployed into the Afghan mountains surrounding Forward Operating Base Salerno in support of Operation Enduring Freedom to execute the dangerous mission of search and seizure for the War on Terror.

Supporting the Italian Nibbio Task Force is a formidable medical team of eight doctors, six nurses and 12 medics.

Nibbio is equipped to support itself medically and augment the Task Force-44 Com-

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The internal hoist has a 290-foot cable capable of lifting a person at 125 feet a minute, the external has a 290-foot cable capable of lifting a person at 350 feet a minute. Both can lift up to 600 pounds.

CH-47 Chinooks have an internal hoist but it is inconvenient compared to the HH60L's, said, Sgt. 1st Class Gary Volkman, crew chief, 126th. They have a center hole aboard and it's awkward compared to a specifically designed chopper easily capable of getting victims aboard.

"We have more experience with the hoist than the other teams here. People assume we have the same training as everyone else," said Staff Sgt. Kelly Hughes, crew chief, 126th. Most of the team has been through additional training and is highly qualified for this type of job.

"It's part of our mission back home," said Hughes.

All the other units here pretty much have the same capabilities, but the 24-hour standby all-paramedic team of 20 is used to performing high-altitude rescues. Their equipment, including the hoist, is made to carry out missions in mountainous terrain, added Hughes.

Even though the company has been deployed to Bagram for about eight weeks, they have not needed to use their hoist in the 35 MEDEVACs they have completed. But to maintain their skills, the team is required to conduct quarterly hoist training,

bat Support Hospital if the coalition was to sustain mass casualties.

Managing the medical team is Dr. Lt. Col. Luigi De Meo, chief of medicine, from Turin, Italy and Dr. Maj. Alfonso Zizza, director of Sanitary Service, from Messina, Sicily. Their specialties are respectively, urology and neurology. FOB Salerno has three doctors who specialize in cardiology, preventative medicine, internal medicine and one general practitioner.

"Our medical team is well supplied with a mobile pharmacy, ambulatory dental lab, and five ambulances," said De Meo. Two ambulances are in Salerno.

The first aid station in Bagram can hold 12 patients and operates as a Level 1 plus stabilization clinic until the patient can be moved to the TF-44 CSH for more critical care. The aid station is divided into triage, recovery and quarantine areas to manage injuries, ailments and infectious diseases.

"Having our own resources allows us to operate independently and offer assistance to TF-44 if needed rather than request it. This makes the Nibbio Task a true ally in the War on Terror," said Zizza.

Physical injuries are not the only battle

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Above: Staff Sgt. Kelly Hughes, crew chief, 126th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), California National Guard, pulls security looking out of an HH-60L Black Hawk helicopter. The helicopter is one of two here designed specifically for medical evacuations.

Right: The hoist can lower a paramedic down into a minefield or raise them in mountainous terrain to quickly rescue an injured person.

said Volkman. The company trains more than that — they train whenever they have free time.

"Good training" is the reason everyone is highly experienced at using the hoist, said Hughes about the exercises, said Hughes.

And the good training is what keeps the team ready to implement what they learned in garrison for Afghanistan.



MEDICS, from Page 3

losses that armies face in battle. Fatigue, stress, shock and malaise, or the loss of will, account for a high loss of troop strength. Because of this the medical team has a resident psychiatrist in Salerno to provide care for troops who may show symptoms of depression or stress.

This is the first combat deployment for the Italian army since WWII and has a contingent of more than 950 soldiers comprised of troops from six Italian brigades that have successfully participated in more than 15 international operations other than war over two decades.

“By supporting ourselves, we support the success of OEF,” said Zizza.



Photo by Pvt. 2 Terri Rorke

Maj. Fausto Benegiamo, registered nurse, Nibbio Medical Team, treats ailments and prescribes medication from the Nibbio mobile pharmacy.

Dragon Palace Talent Show

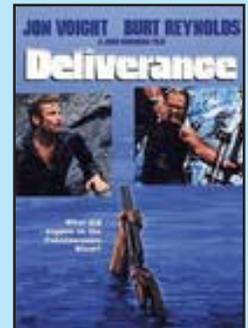
Sign up now for Dragon Palace’s talent show.

Bagram’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation are seeking singers, musicians and other performers to help make the show a success.

The event will be held Saturday at 1430Z.

*Bagram Air Base
MWR presents*

1530Z at the MWR building: “Deliverance.” Canoeing down a river, four city men run into some unfriendly locals. Unable to escape from the gorge in which the river runs, the locals become more and more of a threat.



Tomorrow’s movie will be “Panic Room.”

Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Thursday</i>
Bagram:	<i>Scattered showers</i> H: 63F L: 43F	<i>Mostly cloudy</i> H: 61F L: 39F
Kandahar:	<i>Mostly clear</i> H: 81F L: 56F	<i>Dusty</i> H: 84F L: 50F
Kabul:	<i>Scattered showers</i> H: 66F L: 41F	<i>Fog</i> H: 54F L: 38F
Uzbekistan:	<i>Mostly cloudy</i> H: 62F L: 35F	<i>Sunny</i> H: 64F L: 34F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)

Can Peja cut it as Kings' go-to guy?

ESPN — There's a lot more to taking and making big shots in big games than simple, in-the-moment desire. But it starts there and Kings assistant coach Terry Porter doesn't know yet if Peja Stojakovic has it.

"I haven't been around him enough to know if he has the mindset," Porter said. "All I know is he doesn't dislike being in that situation."

Which is kind of like saying your old Uncle Fester doesn't dislike going to the store wearing pants. It leaves open the possibility of the preferred circumstance without exactly guaranteeing it.

If nothing else, Porter's presence on the Kings' staff as an assistant coach is the latest provision to help Peja realize whatever potential he has as a go-to guy. Stojakovic's arrival in '98, two years after being drafted, dovetailed with the hiring of Rick Adelman, who coached both Porter and the late Drazen Petrovic, the first Yugoslav of any NBA repute and an equally talented dead-eye shooter.

Vlade Divac, a fellow Serb, first saw Peja on a Yugoslavian under-16 team and his locker is to the right of Peja's. To the left is where Lawrence Funderburke, who played with Peja on Greece's PAOK



Peja Stojakovic, right, is remembered most for his miss against L.A. last year.

team, stows his gear.

"I can't say there was a grand vision," says Petrie, "but it's obviously helped."

Brand has missed past 18 games

LOS ANGELES — Clippers star Elton Brand was activated Tuesday after missing 18 games because of a stress fracture above his left ankle.

To make room, Los Angeles placed Cherokee Parks on the injured list with back spasms. He started all 18 games at power forward in Brand's absence.

Brand, the Clippers' leading scorer and rebounder, entered Tuesday night's game against Utah averaging 18.4 points, 11.2 rebounds and 2.6 blocks in 53 games.

Parks is averaging 6.3 points and 4.3 rebounds in 30 games.

Collins says Oakley's knee injury might sideline him

WASHINGTON — Michael Jordan has nothing on Charles Oakley when it comes to bitterness over the Washington Wizards' season.

Jordan ripped his teammates several times in recent weeks, but Oakley has been simmering all season, complaining about the work ethic of younger players and his lack of playing time.

"I think the fans have been cheated out of a lot," Oakley said. "We should be in the playoffs, a fourth or fifth seed. We shouldn't be struggling to get in the playoffs."

Whether Oakley will be a part of that struggle is in question. He has been hobbled for two weeks with a knee injury that he says is "just a bruise," even though coach Doug Collins said it might be bad enough to keep the 39-year-old forward sidelined the rest of the season.

Oakley was listed as questionable for Wednesday's game against Sacramento.

"I've been available for 73 games. I think I've probably played in 30, so what's my percentage?" Oakley said. "I'm just going to get myself healthy for myself and go from there."

Actually, Oakley has played in 42 games, but he is averaging just 12 minutes. He often has been used in the second half to provide a defensive spark.

Iverson wins high-scoring duel

ORLANDO, Fla. — The Philadelphia 76ers enjoyed a great March, and it got them in the playoffs.

Allen Iverson scored 14 of his 42 points in the fourth quarter and overtime as the 76ers clinched their fifth straight playoff berth by beating the Orlando Magic 118-113 Monday night.

2002 NBA standings



Eastern Conference

Atlantic

- (2) New Jersey 46-28
- (3) Philadelphia 44-29
- (6) Boston 40-34
- (7) Orlando 39-35
- Washington 34-39

Central

- (1) Detroit 47-26
- (4) Indiana 43-31
- (5) New Orleans 41-33
- (8) Milwaukee 36-39
- Atlanta 29-45

Western Conference

Midwest

- (1x) Dallas 55-18
- (3) San Antonio 53-20
- (5) Minnesota 46-29
- (6) Utah 43-30
- Houston 38-36

Pacific

- (2x) Sacramento 53-22
- (4) Portland 45-27
- (7) L.A. Lakers 43-31
- (8) Phoenix 38-35
- Golden State 35-37

x = clinched playoff berth.



SPORTS, from Page 5

"It's such a huge win for us," Philadelphia coach Larry Brown said. "It caps off a big month for us where we had 12 road games and four home games and ended up going 11-5, which is pretty special."

Added Iverson: "It's good to know we're in (the playoffs) because the East is so crazy. You lose a couple of games here or there, and you go from in to out."

The 76ers won for the fourth time in five games, and for the fourth straight time on the road, to move a game ahead of idle Indiana for third place in the East. Philadelphia also kept pace 1½ games behind New Jersey for the Atlantic Division lead. The Nets beat Houston 110-86 Monday.

Kenny Thomas had 24 points and 20 rebounds for his fifth double-double in the last six games, while Derrick Coleman added 18 points and 13 rebounds. Philadelphia had a 61-38 advantage on the boards, including a 24-12 margin in the final quarter and overtime.

Jefferson stays hot

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Dikembe Mutombo's elbow crashed into Yao Ming's throat, and Yao went down in a heap.

The rest of the Houston Rockets stumbled badly, too.

Richard Jefferson had 30 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds for his first career triple-double as the New Jersey Nets won their fourth in a row Monday night, 110-86 over the Houston Rockets.

Houston dropped a half-game behind Phoenix in the race for the Western Conference's eighth and final playoff spot despite Yao breaking out of a four-game offensive slump.

Mutombo had four points and eight rebounds in his second game back from the injured list.

It was his first career meeting with Yao, and Mutombo nailed him in the throat with an elbow late in the second quarter when Mutombo got into position to box out.

Yao collapsed to his knees, holding his throat, and Mutombo was whistled for a foul despite his protests.

"I can't believe my elbow can reach his neck," Mutombo said. "I thought I was going to get it between his chest and stomach and box him out. Next thing I knew he was on the floor. I didn't realize that so I told him to 'get up.'"

Lakers return to smoother ways

LOS ANGELES — March has turned into April, and that means the NBA playoffs are less than three weeks away.

Despite all their ups and downs this season, the three-time defending champion Los Angeles Lakers believe they'll be ready.

"Hopefully, I'm praying. I think we'll be all right," Robert Horry said with a smile after the Lakers beat the Memphis Grizzlies 110-94 on Monday night.

"It's really been tough to stay focused on each moment, knowing that the goal is close but it's not here yet," Derek Fisher said.

Shaquille O'Neal had 34 points, 11 rebounds and four blocked shots, and Kobe Bryant added 29 points as the Lakers rebounded from an ugly 119-98 loss at Seattle the night before to win for the eighth time in 11 games.

CJ-7, from Page 1

duty and reserve engineers to civil affairs personnel and even a veterinarian. Teams visit various sites daily. When a project is completed, they hold an opening ceremony.

"Turning over responsibility of a completed project to its owner is always rewarding because they will finally be able to put your work into use for the good of the people," Quimby said.

Several CJ-7 members visited the Altamour Elementary School, Altamour Clinic and Patkhaub Roghani High School March 26—about a two-hour, rough ride southeast of Kabul. When they arrived, local contractors were hard at work sawing boards, spackling mortar, hauling bricks and adjusting roof supports.

The two Altamour projects neighbor each other. Both are about a month and a half away from completion. The foundations and walls have been constructed, consisting mostly of brick, mortar and plaster walls. The engineers often use a template model for their schools, which, depending on the square footage, can contain anywhere between 300 and 2,000 students.

Patkhaub Roghani is expected to be ready for students in the next few weeks. Contractors slapped on the last coat of paint as CJ7 arrived. The remaining work entails site clean up and repairing some odds and ends such as window fixtures, which did not quite fit.

One of the challenges CJ7 has come across is that there are no set construction standards or building codes in Afghanistan.

"Without strict guidelines, coupled with the fact that many of the contractors use different construction techniques, it is a challenge to try and standardize plans for various projects," Quimby said.

"Do you think we'll get frequent flier miles for this?"



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By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support