

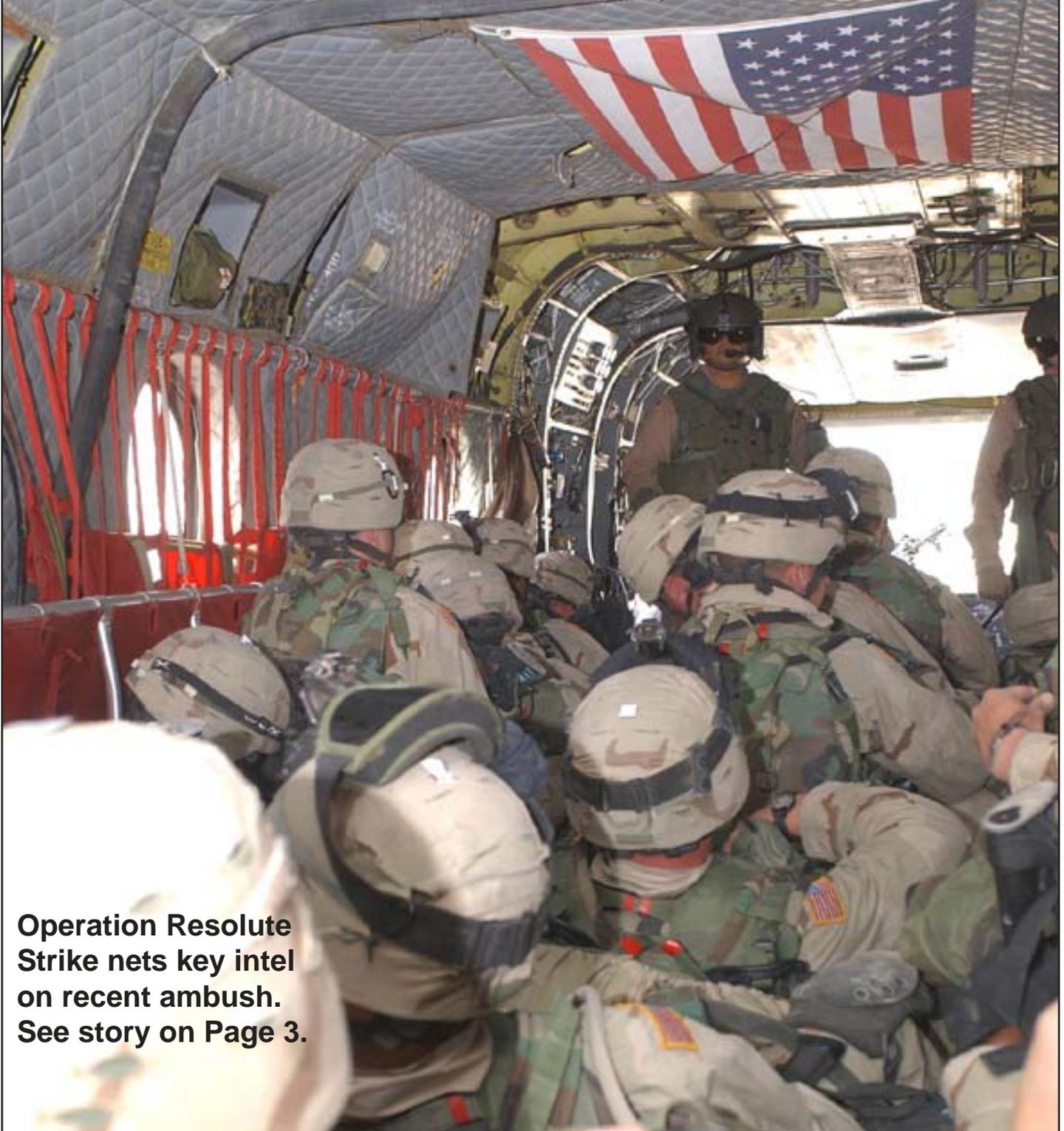


DESERT DEVIL DISPATCH

Volume I Issue 13

Published for the servicemembers of Kandahar Air Field

April 11, 2003



**Operation Resolute
Strike nets key intel
on recent ambush.
See story on Page 3.**

Tom's Journey to Germany Affects All Involved

Story and photo by Cpl. Keith Kluwe
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Two service members were killed and one seriously wounded in an ambush March 29 in southern Afghanistan.

They were the first combat casualties since Sgt. Steven Checo of the 82nd Airborne Division was killed by hostile fire in December of last year.

In addition to the army Special Forces soldier and air force tactical air controller killed, there was a Special Forces soldier named Tom that was critically wounded. Tom worked with a small team and when he was hurt he was treated by a few different small teams. Tom had to work on healing while the teams treating him had to help him and at the same time deal with the emotional involvement caused by caring for one of your own.

Tom was shot in the right side, destroying one of his kidneys, perforating his diaphragm and puncturing his lung. Another round went through his right hand. Another round grazed his head. He also was cut over his left eye.

The Forward Surgical Team here saved his life in the operating room at Kandahar Air Field. They removed his damaged organ, closed the hole in his diaphragm and lung. They operated on his hand and closed the wounds he had above his eye and on the side of his head.

Once his surgery was done, it was the job of the Critical Care Aeromedical Transport Team to move Tom to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

Different members of the team were



Capt. Kristen McCabe, a critical care nurse with the 438th EAES, holds Tom's hand while she reassures him on his flight to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany

doing different tasks to get Tom moved. Everyone had to do their part so he could be moved to a better medical facility. Everyone going in their own direction, doing their own thing, making their own decisions in Tom's best interests.

The AELT

Capt. Russel Frantz, the officer in charge of aeromedical operations at Kandahar Air Field, and his crew were responsible for putting Tom in the air evac system, coordinating his movement.

"Some people on the medical side tend to distance themselves from their patient because it helps them focus on their injuries," Frantz said, "but if it is somebody you know, somebody who is a

friend of yours, it's always a little harder. I didn't know (Tom) but it still hit home because he is one of our own."

Frantz also was thinking about Tom on a different level. They are both husbands and fathers.

"To me, my family is everything. I imagine his family is everything to him too. He is very fortunate to have a second chance."

Frantz only saw Tom for a few minutes when he was being moved from the back of an ambulance to the back of a plane, but he still is proud of the job he does.

"We're not here to get a medal. We're not here to get glory. We're here to do

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



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Resolute Strike Brings In Ambush Intel, Equipment

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

SANGIN, Afghanistan – A task force led by 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, garnered invaluable information and equipment related to an ambush that left two U.S. service members dead and one seriously injured recently.

The mission of Operation Resolute Strike — conducted April 8-9 in the affluent southern Afghanistan city of Sangin by 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers, special forces operators and criminal investigation task force members — was two-fold: to gain intelligence and the perpetrators of the March 29 ambush, and to deny sanctuary and remove weapons and ammunition used by anti-coalition forces.

According to Lt. Col. Richard Clarke, task force 3-504th PIR commander, the operation was a success on both counts.

“We’re gathering a significant amount of information about this ambush that may help lead others to find the perpetrators/attackers during this ambush,” Clarke said after the first day of the operation. “What we’ve done so far is recover a significant amount of small arms, mortar rounds, mortar tubes and anti-tank mines. Most importantly, we recovered bomb-making materials, to include some old C-4, and explosive devices that could have been used against coalition forces later.”

At the end of the operation, a large cache of AK-47s, RPG launchers and other small arms weapons were taken by U.S. forces. Also, more than 240 pounds of ammunition used with mortars, RPGs and small arms were seized and destroyed by 731st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company members.

When the convoy moving outside of Sangin was ambushed March 29, the equipment used by the three U.S. casualties was left behind in the rush to Medivac them to safety. One of the key goals of Operation Resolute Strike was to get that equipment back.

“It looks like we’ve recovered one

weapon and we’re in the process of recovering additional materials from the ambush against coalition forces,” Clarke said.

Capt. Del Monroy, battalion intelligence officer, said the overwhelming show of force used in the operation was critical to the mission’s success.

While 82nd paratroopers established a containment area around the city and special forces operators swept the city for suspects and intelligence, close air support aircraft buzzed overhead as another reminder of American power. Air Force A-10s and F-16s, Marine Corps Harriers and Army Apache helicopters were ever-present throughout the course of the operation. During the night, a steady barrage of illumination mortars were fired to remind local residents the U.S. was still in town.

“The influence that we were able to bring here had a lot to do with the success here,” Monroy said. “I didn’t think we would get any of the U.S. equipment back.”

The show of force was enough to convince a government official from

see **STRIKE**, page 4



Two paratroopers from C Company, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, coordinate the emplacement of a defensive perimeter in the town of Sangin, Afghanistan, Tuesday.



A team of paratroopers from C Company, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, take a knee before setting up a defensive perimeter. Temperatures during the operation reached as high as 116 degrees.



Criminal investigation task force members escort four residents of the town of Sangin, Afghanistan, Wednesday, to a C-47 "Chinook." They will be questioned further for information on an ambush that killed two U.S. servicemembers and severely injured another March 29.

STRIKE, from page 3

the Helmand province – of which Sangin is a member of – to bring forth several witnesses and people who had picked up the U.S. equipment after the ambush.

Qualified personnel and members of the criminal investigation task force questioned more than 50 local residents who might have had knowledge of the ambush. Out of that crop, four were flown to a Kandahar Air Field field collection point for further questioning.



Paratroopers from 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, wait to board helicopters at the conclusion of Operation Resolute Strike.



Sgt. Nicholas Plitz, 731st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, inspects 23mm rounds confiscated during searches in the town of Sangin, Afghanistan. In all, more than 240 pounds of explosives were destroyed by EOD specialists.

Kandahar Air Field Gets Ready for 10K Run

by Spc. Jim Wagner
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Registration begins Monday for this year's first 6.2 mile run May 1, in conjunction with St. Michael's Airborne Association.

"We wanted to have a run at the same time as the National Day of Prayer," said Chap. (Maj.) Jeffrey D. Watters, task force Devil chaplain, the "Devil Tamer."

When the run begins in the morning at Fort Bragg, Kandahar's run will coincide: a devotional and prayer will be conducted at 1400 Zulu, with the run beginning at 1430.

Plaques will be presented to the top runners in nine divisions: best individual male and female times in three age

brackets, and best team times. T-shirts will be given away to the first 125 people who cross the finish line.

Registration forms can be found in the "Devil Diner" dining facility and the Power House Ministry building, located

near the hangar, beginning Monday.

Event coordinators are looking for 45 volunteers to help with the event. Sign up forms can be found next to the run registration forms. All volunteers will receive a T-shirt on the day of the race.

Chapel Services Kandahar Air Field

Sunday

0100 - Devil Dining Facility
(south side)

0430 - (Catholic) Hangar

0630 - (Protestant) Hangar

All times Zulu.



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

*you have ever yelled
"Faster!" while on an
elevator. - John "Doc" Horton*

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)

Last Bridgehead: 82nd in European Campaign

by Robert Anzuoni

82nd Airborne Division Museum Director

(Editor's Note: This is the second in a two-part series.)

Many of the battle-hardened troops knew the war had to be fought, but for many, it really sank in when the Wöbbelin concentration camp was liberated by the 82nd on May 2. Seeing the atrocities that were committed, there was no doubt in the minds of the troopers that their sacrifices had been necessary.

On May 7, 200 bodies of the victims were buried in individual graves in the town center where the division chaplains conducted funeral services. The local civilians performed the labor and were made to attend the services. Chaplain George Wood, division chaplain, concluded his statement:

"We lay them to rest and commit them into the hands of our Heavenly Father in the hope that the world will not again be faced with such barbarity."



Courtesy photo

Sappers from the 307th Airborne Engineer Brigade defuse a German mine on the road to Rudligslust, May 1945.

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one job, take care of patients the best we can and get them from point A to point B hopefully in the same or better condition than we got them.”

The Air Evac Crew

Lt. Col. Wendy Tomczak, the senior clinical advisor in the Operation Enduring Freedom theater, was an army nurse in Vietnam and an Air Force nurse in Desert Storm.

“Tom was the first American casualty I’ve moved since Vietnam,” Tomczak said. “It was a mixture of feelings for me. There is the officer and the nurse in me, who treated a young man that was badly hurt and that was very touch and go.

“The other part is the mom, thinking Tom is two years older than my son,” she continued. “It’s made for complicated feelings looking at it from two different angles at the same time. I think if he would have been my son, I would have been so grateful that he survived the ambush and that there were skilled enough people there to help him survive. I would have been proud at the same time, proud that he elected to serve his country.”

A Special Forces team from Tom’s unit wanted to ride on the aircraft with him and their friends that were killed.

“We usually don’t take passengers with human remains on board, but the guys came on board and asked us to reconsider,” Tomczak said with tears in her eyes. “They said they would be honored to go back with him and I couldn’t tell them no.”

Chief Master Sgt. Harry Martz, the charge medical technician on the air evac crew, has more than 29 years in the military. Most of his experience is in the back of an ambulance treating strangers, not the back on an aircraft treating a comrade-in-arms.

“It’s a little closer to home, a little more personal when you are treating people you work with, even if you may not know them,” Martz said. “It was a little tough when they brought on the caskets, especially since the helicopter crash and the memorial service for that.”

Technical Sgt. Dean Altman, an air

evac crewmember, has tried to distance himself from his patients in the past but sometimes that is hard when you both wear a uniform and both have families.

“I think it’s awesome that he is going to make it home to see his wife and kids,” Altman said. “I have a family too. I can relate.”

Altman was the most experience crewmember on the C-17 we flew on. He oversaw the loading of the two caskets twenty feet from Tom.

“My main thing was to not let (Tom) see what was happening, if he was awake enough to see it,” Altman said. “He didn’t know (two of his friends had been killed), but even if he did know, you don’t want him to see the caskets. It’s better that way. I didn’t want (Tom) to start thinking ‘why wasn’t I killed? Why couldn’t it have been me instead of one of my buddies?’ He needed to be thinking about himself and getting better.”

The CCAT Team

Maj. Daniel Smith was Tom’s CCATT doctor. He said Tom was very critical. Tom had a chest tube in, was on a ventilator to help him breath, had three IVs for fluids, an arterial line to monitor blood pressure, an OG tube into his stomach. Smith said he had just about every line and every tube a patient could have.

“I have a great sense of honor taking care of one of our Special Forces guys that was injured in battle. Here was a soldier wounded in battle, protecting our liberty and freedom and it gave me a great sense of pride to help him,” Smith said. “When we were carrying him from the plane in Germany I was thinking that freedom is never free. There will always be a sacrifice the sons and daughters of America will have to make to maintain their freedom. It sometimes requires the lives and the spilled blood of those sons and daughters to keep our land free. I have a lot of patriotism and pride in our country and what these guys (special forces) do to defend out country. It really drove home to me that this is a real ball game and that lives are at stake here to keep us free.

Staff Sgt. Larry Minor is the youngest

member of the team and was Tom’s cardiopulmonary technician on his flight from Afghanistan to Germany. He monitored Tom’s breathing and the drainage from the chest tube in the left side of Tom’s chest.

“It feels good to actually do the job we have been training for,” treating U.S. combat casualties. Minor’s team has moved injured Afghans in the past, but this was his first combat casualty mission. “That’s why I’m here, to help that one guy survive. I’m glad he is alive, that his family didn’t get that phone call or that visit.

Capt. Kristen McCabe was Tom’s nurse. She was strapped to the floor standing next to Tom on the take off. She is the person Tom saw the most on his flight to Germany.

“This is what I’m here for. This is why I joined the military, to take care of patients. Those guys are out there taking care of America and I’m here to give them the best medical care I can if they are hurt. Tom was the first patient I’ve had that was true-blue, fighting for America, going out into harms way. I will always remember him, forever.

“Tom asked me where his weapon was, and told me he was ok if I asked him. He could answer yes or no,” McCabe said. “I almost got possessive of him. I didn’t want to give him over to the team in Germany.

“I know he was in capable hands, he just wasn’t in my hand at that time. He kept telling me thank you,” she said crying. “All I did most of the time when he said thank you was give him a sip of water. He was out there taking bullets for me, and my family, and he was thanking me.”

She stood or sat at his side the entire eight-hour flight, giving him his medicine, holding his hand, talking to him. She didn’t start crying until she left his side in Germany.

“I told him I would check up on him. It might be me, but he looked kind of scared. It might have been my feelings I was seeing. I have never felt like I needed to stay with a patient like that before. It just amazes me still that he was saying thank you to me.”