



# DESERT DEVIL DISPATCH

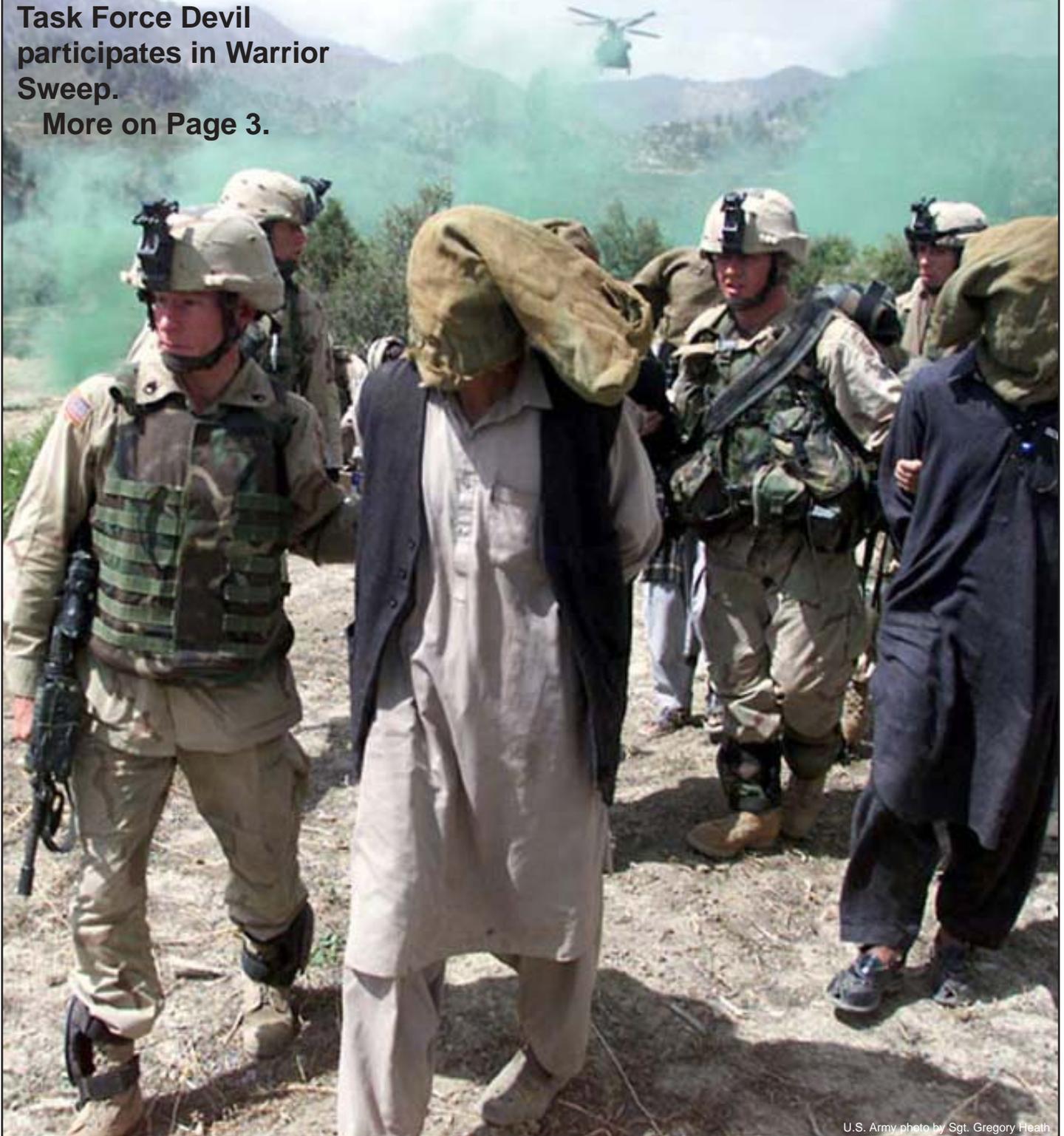
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**Task Force Devil  
participates in Warrior  
Sweep.**

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U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Gregory Heath

# Afghanistan: Easy to Get in, Hard to Stay

WASHINGTON — Every army that marched into Afghanistan has learned one simple fact: it's easy to get in, but it's hard to stay because the natives eventually become restless.

With attacks on U.S. and coalition presence on the rise almost two years after entering the crossroads of the Silk Road that ran between China and Europe and through Afghanistan during the Middle Ages, it's important to see the bigger picture of Afghan history, said Stephen Tanner.

Tanner, a military historian and freelance writer, wrote a book last year titled "Afghanistan, A Military History From Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban".

Even though the U.S. presence in Afghanistan is vastly different to the British and Soviet's, things that occurred then are similar to what's happening now, said Tanner.

Some ethnic groups, notably the Pashtun in the southern areas near Pakistan, are increasing attacks against coalition forces after a small grace period; warlords throughout the country are tightening their grip on power through their own militias; and the central government's control of the country is slipping.

That will continue to occur no matter what foreign military is in the country, said Tanner.

But if those patterns are happening now, the causes and

consequences of the U.S. occupation is different, said Dale Andrade, a historian at the U.S. Army Center for Military History.

The British weren't interested in building the country or truly even colonizing it. The Soviets were there merely to uphold a failing communist government's fight against local Islamic fundamentalists, Andrade said.

The first British invasion in 1839 was to install a friendly king during the "Great Game" with the Russians for control of south Asia.

The parallels between then and now are strikingly similar, Tanner said. The British, like the U.S. Army today, had a two-year grace period after that.

Anarchy had been the rule of law there for almost a century before the British arrived, like it was for almost 22 years before the U.S. arrived in late 2001, he said.

Like Hamid Karzai, the current president of Afghanistan, the shah in 1840 was ethnically fine for the majority of the Pashtun population, Tanner said.

The Afghans only revolted against the shah after British soldiers escorted his tax collectors.

"Ideologically he was fine, ethnically he was fine," Tanner said of the shah. "It was the constant presence of the 'feringee,' as they called the British and their Indian servants, that eventually grated against them."

Eventually, the British and Russian empires settled to make Afghanistan a buffer between them. Afghanistan reverted back to a state of anarchy until a monarchy, based in Kabul, could restore order through ethnic warlords. That monarchy would be overthrown in a bloodless coup during 1973.

A few years after that coup, the Soviets invaded the country to support the then communist government of Hafizullah Amin.

The Soviet invasion is where the parallels end for Andrade. Like the British, the Soviets took control of the cities easily, he said.

But their method of subverting the countryside was through aerial bombing. Reconstruction and raising Afghan society



U.S. Army photo

U.S. Army soldiers search the mountains of Afghanistan during Operation Anaconda in March, 2002.

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



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# Largest Op in Recent History Sweeps Through Afghan Valley

Story & photos by Sgt. Gregory Heath  
4th Public Affairs Det.

AYUBKHEL VALLEY, Afghanistan — More than 600 soldiers of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division began their part in Operation Warrior Sweep — one of the largest combat operations in Afghanistan since Operation Anaconda — early morning July 23.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, A Company and B Company from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), and C Company from 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn., 504<sup>th</sup> PIR, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, air-assaulted into the mountains at elevations topping 10,500 feet in the Ayubkhel Valley in the southeast part of the country.

The 82<sup>nd</sup> soldiers joined a coalition force of more than 3,000 soldiers that included Italian army Task Force Nibio, out of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Salerno in Khowst, and six Afghan National Army (ANA) companies in Zormat, who were participating in their first major combat operation.

The coalition forces' mission was to set up blocking positions to intercept any anti-coalition or anti-government forces that may have been traveling in the valley. The valley was the primary travel route used by the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces during Operation Anaconda last year.

For two days soldiers held their blocking positions but didn't encounter any enemy forces. On the third day of operation they were given a follow-on mission.

They received intelligence reports of al-Qaeda personnel within the valley at a nearby village so they were sent to move in and intercept them or any mili-



82<sup>nd</sup> Abn. Div. soldiers clear one of many caves they find in the Ayubkhel Valley in southeast Afghanistan during Operation Warrior Sweep. No sign of al-Qaeda or Taliban weapons were found in the cave.

tary weapons and intelligence, according to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Che Atkinson, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon leader, 2-505<sup>th</sup> PIR.

"The Taliban and al-Qaeda, they're cowards, and they're going to hit and run, and as long as they're running we're going to follow them," Atkinson said.

**...They're cowards, and they're going to hit and run, and as long as they're running we're going to follow them."**

-- 2nd Lt. Che Atkinson,  
a 2-505th PIR Platoon Leader

The soldiers picked up everything and moved for a whole day, traveling six miles from original landing zone through rugged terrain to a nearby village.

"The terrain was treacherous," according to B Company 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. LaMarquis Knowles, 2-505 PIR. "Soldiers were under pretty heavy loads, in addition to having to walk on 'goat trails.' I know they weren't designed for these 12 wides [boot size]," Knowles said referring to difficulty of soldiers walking on the narrow dirt trails that wind around the mountains. Some soldiers carried loads in excess of 100 pounds, Knowles added.

The soldiers would also search any Afghan homes and caves they would encounter during their movement, but

nothing was found at the time.

On the fourth day the soldiers began the "cordon and search" phase of their mission in the village where they had received reports of Taliban and al-Qaeda activity.

In previous operations over the past six months in Afghanistan, the 82<sup>nd</sup> has conducted many village searches, but the one conducted July 26 proved to be their most successful one yet.

The soldiers worked in squads and methodically searched the houses of the first major village they encountered during the operation.

Third squad, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon, B Company, 2-505<sup>th</sup> PIR quickly uncovered grenades, blocks of C-4 plastic explosives and various types of ammunition in a locked storage room of one house.

"This wasn't too different from our other missions," said Staff Sgt. Brandon Gass, 2<sup>nd</sup> squad leader, B Company, 2-505<sup>th</sup> PIR. "We've cleared villages four times since we've been in country. We've been out a couple times and haven't found anything, but finding stuff gets everyone's adrenaline going and it

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makes the operation a whole lot more exciting.”

In another house, soldiers uncovered an old Russian military two-way radio, a 50-pound crate of dynamite, a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) round, a box of anti-aircraft rounds, and hundreds of 7.62 mm and handgun rounds.

Other soldiers added to the growing list of confiscated ammunitions and explosives, finding more than 20 RPG's, dozens of grenades and scores of small arms ammunition. An engineer team from the 307<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion later destroyed the ammunition and explosives found by the infantry soldiers.

Despite finding a stockpile of ammunition and explosives in the village, no military rifles or weapon firing systems were found.

Atkinson believes the enemy forces may have known ahead of time about the soldiers' coming.

“The (Taliban and al-Qaeda) personnel knew we were coming so they packed up what (weapons) they could, but they left a lot of stuff behind,” said Atkinson. “And the more stuff we find, the less stuff they have to come back to.”

Along with finding the ammunition caches, the soldiers also took six local



**Sgt. Brandon Gass, Co. B, 2-505 Inf. Reg., 82nd Abn. Div. and soldiers from 2nd Sqd. uncover a large cache of ammunition and explosives while searching a house in the Ayubkhel Valley during Operation Warrior Sweep.**

nationals into custody for further questioning. The six Persons Under Control (PUCs) were taken into custody because ammunition or explosives were found in their homes, or based on assessments made by soldiers from the military intelligence unit.

Dealing with the local population proves to be a difficult task for soldiers, who can't easily differentiate regular

citizens from enemy forces, according to Spc. Edward Michel, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, B Company, 2-505<sup>th</sup> PIR.

“They blend in with the local population and there's not really much we can do,” said Michel. “You can't go in there and just rustle up a bunch of villagers because that's not the way we do business.”

For Sgt. Nick Cameron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squad, B Company, 2-505 PIR, local national children actually helped his squad find a large ammunition cache.

“When we went to the house that we actually found the bad stuff in, the kids knew nothing about it but they were more than willing to help us with everything,” Cameron said.

Although there has been no contact with anti-coalition or anti-government forces, the 82<sup>nd</sup> AD's role in Operation Warrior Sweep has been a great success, according to 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. LaMarquis Knowles, B Company, 2-505<sup>th</sup> PIR.

“This has been the most successful mission we've been on, based on the fact that we've recovered so much ammunition and explosives,” Knowles said. “This culminates everything we've done in six months.”

To date, there have been no U.S. casualties attributed to Operation Warrior Sweep.



**An 82nd Airborne Division soldier aided by a local Afghan national search through hay for Taliban and al-Qaeda weapons and ammunition in a village in the Ayubkhel Valley in southeast Afghanistan. The 82nd Abn. Div. is currently involved in Operation Warrior Sweep there.**

# C-MAG Results: 'I'll Stick With 30 Rounds'

## Convenience of 100-round magazine can't overcome malfunctions

by Staff Sgt. Kevin Askew  
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Soldiers at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, found a much different result than what they expected when testing the C-MAG, a 100-round magazine undergoing tests conducted by the Army Rapid Equipping Force (REF).

The C-MAG is designed for 100 rounds of unlinked ammo. It's designed as a back-up for loose ammo when linked ammunition is unavailable, or as an alternative to link ammunition, and is manufactured by the Beta Group.

"The bottom line is, 'would you want to take this on a life-threatening situation,' " said Army Col. (Ret.) Ray Fitzgerald, one of two independent consultants from The Wexford Group International hired by the Army to assess the magazine's performance in the field. "This is what we expected; but (in a way) it's actually worse than expected. We're getting the data we need and I do want to capture it on the survey."

It was every soldier's ultimate dream for a day on the rifle range: A 100-round magazine (C-MAG is an acronym for century magazine) and an endless sup-



U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Leopold Medina, Jr.

A soldier loads ammunition into the C-MAG, a 100-round magazine designed as a backup to linked ammunition for the M-249 and M-4.

ply of ammo. All they had to do was pull the trigger and send rounds down range.

After emptying the 100 rounds, soldiers had to answer a few questions, fill

out a survey and shoot some more. But it did not quite work out the way the magazine's manufacturers intended.

Soldiers experienced problems from the time they were handed the empty C-MAG and ammo can full of 5.56 rounds and told to load the magazine. While loading the magazine there were numerous jams, speed loaders broke, magazines would not accept the full capacity of ammunition.

This was only the beginning.

The order came from range safety to lock and load, soldiers placed the C-MAG in their M-249 (SAWs) and M-4s and began firing. There were repeated malfunctions — rounds would not chamber and double feeds were the most common problem.

The weapons were fired in numerous scenarios; prone position, standing, supported and unsupported, all with similar results.

"I hate it, it keeps jamming," said Spc. Daniel Dicker, A Battery, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment (AFAR) when asked about the C-MAG "It's kind of frustrating."

"The convenience of 100 rounds over

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ABOVE: Army Col. (Ret.) Ray Fitzgerald, an independent consultant from The Wexford Group International hired by the Army to assess the magazine's performance in the field, in civilian clothes, takes feedback on the C-MAG from 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers July 23.

LEFT: Pfc. Patrick Harris, C Battery, 3rd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, right, loads a C-MAG while another soldier fills out a survey form.

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30 is a lot better," he continued, "(but) walking would be heavy with 100 rounds. But it would be convenient in a truck for mounted patrols."

According to the Ultimate Weapons Systems web site the "*C-MAG is built to the highest international military production standards and meets or exceeds all NATO MILSPEC tests,*" and was "*successfully tested in combat during (Operation) Desert Storm where it performed flawlessly under the most rigorous conditions. The 100-round capacity of the C-MAG drastically reduces vulnerability during magazine changes, while dramatically increasing survivability.*"

According to Army Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Gerry Klein, the results



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Leopold Medina, Jr.

**Soldiers testing the effectiveness of the experimental C-MAG cited many problems, including frequent jams.**

touted by the web site and the performance in the Afghanistan desert are completely different.

"You expect equipment to function as designed," he said as he removed the

screws from yet another malfunctioning C-MAG handed to him. "For a new piece to be accepted it needs to perform as good as or better than what we got."

Or, in the words of Spc. Rodolfo Gigantana, a soldier with Headquarters Support Battalion, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, "this would hurt if kept jamming in combat," a comment echoed by many of the soldiers participating in the field tests.

Fitzgerald and Klein will continue testing and gathering data on the C-MAG with coalition forces throughout Afghanistan.

They will return to the U.S. with the data and determine whether they would recommend the C-MAG to soldiers Army-wide.

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wasn't in the cards for the Soviets, said Tanner.

"They ran into particular trouble because communism was recognized by the Afghans to be anti-Islamic," Tanner said. "They just knew instinctively or through experience that they were contrary."

A rag-tag force of guerillas, or Mujahideen, from various ethnic groups and political movements in Afghanistan fought the occupation.

The Soviets sowed the seeds of their defeat by ignoring the tribal system in the mountains, said Andrade.

Parallels through history are a moot point because they're difficult to pin down, Andrade said.

When the U.S. went into Afghanistan in late 2001, Andrade said he had debates with people about what would happen there.

Some compared it to the Soviet occupation during the 1980s when Communist nation had 120,000 soldiers there, Andrade said.

"So I don't think we can use those examples of what's going to happen to us," Andrade said of the British and Soviet occupations.

Trying to impose a government — something the British and Soviets tried

— is impossible in Afghanistan, Andrade said.

The Soviets tried it for 10 years and it didn't work, said Andrade. Based on that experience, the U.S. didn't even attempt it, he added.

The term "the emperor's authority ends at the village gate" is an apt one for Afghanistan, said Tanner.

What's important to note here is that the Soviets created an impossible nut to crack, Andrade said.

"Their ideology wasn't going to work. They were doomed," said Andrade. "In Afghanistan (the Soviets) were tailor-made for failure."

However, the parallels that really count are in war and that's water under the bridge, said Andrade.

It's also important to note, Tanner said, that most of the resentment in Afghanistan now is based in the areas of the ethnic Pashtuns, and the insurgency the Army is fighting now, in all likelihood, will get stronger, he said.

The religious leaders up in the mountains, what Tanner called the "raw material" for the Taliban will be there for the next group of fundamentalists that run through the area.

"Religious fundamentalism is the norm there," said Tanner. "Let's face it, they don't like infidels and they don't

like infidels controlling their country."

Tanner disagrees with Andrade's opinion that the U.S. presence there isn't an occupation.

The parallel between the U.S. presence there and the British occupation of the 1840s is something that should be kept in mind, Tanner said.

Back then, the British brought in a ruler who they tried to make amenable to the people, he said.

The shah, though, only controlled a small area that ran from north of Kabul to Kandahar and warlords controlled the rest. Karzai is in the same situation, he said.

It didn't matter to the Afghans that the British didn't try to ban Islam, Tanner said.

"It was just the fact they were infidels and the Afghans, even though the British didn't call it a conquest, they were there in support of the shah -- just as we're in support of Karzai -- the Afghans realized this was a conquest, this was an occupation for all practical purposes," he said.

"The thing we have over the British is airpower," Tanner said. "We won't have an army wiped out in the passes."

*(Story courtesy of Spc. Bill Putname of the Army News Service, July 9, 2003)*

# KAF, Kandahar Memo Defines Medical Roles

Story & photos by Cpl. Keith Kluwe  
109th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — The Kandahar Air Field Medical Support, Forward Surgical Team (FST) entered into an agreement with the director of public health for the Kandahar Province Thursday regarding the roles and responsibilities each must follow while treating Afghan citizens.

The commanding officer of the FST here, Col. Jose Thomas-Richards, hopes the Memorandum of Understanding will help establish open and effective communications between U.S. Army medical personnel and the medical personnel at Mir Wais Hospital in Kandahar city.

The agreement states that the clinic at Kandahar Air Field (KAF) will treat only local-national patients on an emergency basis, when the patients have the possibility of losing their life, a limb or their eyesight. Local nationals that don't meet these requirements will be referred to Mir Wais Hospital for treatment.

Patients that go to Mir Wais Hospital for treatment, but are in danger of loss of "life, limb or eyesight" will be referred to the medical clinic here by the appropriate medical authority.

The only Afghans exempt from the "life, limb, eyesight" requirement are those Afghan Militia Force (AMF) soldiers and local-national interpreters in-



Col. Jose Thomas-Richards, KAF Forward Surgical Team commanding officer, examines the X-ray taken on an Afghan patient at the Mir Wais Hospital recently.

jured or wounded while participating in combat operations alongside U.S. and coalition forces, and U.S. or coalition medical personnel may be the first medical provider on scene.

In the past, Afghans would come directly to KAF seeking treatment because of the outstanding medical facilities and standard of medical care here. This created a heavy burden on the facility which is sized for the treatment of U.S. and coalition personnel.

Mir Wais Hospital is in need of medical equipment and supplies, according

to Dr. A. Sami Roufi, the Kandahar Province director of public health. Doctors there can not do many of the medical procedures considered routine at the KAF clinic because of the lack of equipment and supplies.

Instead of treating a patient with a broken femur with an exterior fixation, where screws are driven into the bone above and below the fracture and the bone is held in the proper position to heal with external braces, doctors at Mir Wais Hospital have to treat the same patient with traction to keep the bone in alignment to heal.

Roufi and one of his surgeons also said the hospital is in need of medicines, antibiotic and clean bandages. Surgery without antibiotics in the after care could leave a patient in worse medical condition than when they arrived at the hospital.

"The agreement is a step in the right direction for all parties involved," Roufi said. "The medical facilities at Kandahar Air Field will not have to bear as much of a patient load because of the facilities in Kandahar City, while at the same time Mir Wais Hospital will improve their reputation and standing in the community for their excellent medical treatment."



Doctors from the Forward Surgical Team at KAF tour the patient ward of the Mir Wais Hospital in Kandahar city.