

Italian 9th Regt. says goodbye to Bagram

Story and photos by
Pfc. Christina Carde
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BAGRAM, Afghanistan — After more than four months in Afghanistan, Brig. Gen. Giorgio Battisti, Task Force Nibbio commander, Italian Army, passed his command of the task force to Brigadier Gen. Marco Bertolini, 187th Airborne Regiment commander, in a transfer of authority ceremony Monday.

Hundreds of soldiers from the 9th Mountain Regiment, Nibbio Task Force stood in formation to say goodbye to their commander and welcome Bertolini and his regiment who will assume command of the Italian coalition's mission in Afghanistan.

"The 9th Mountain Regiment was chosen specifically to be the first Regiment of



Brig. Gen. Giorgio Battisti, outgoing Task Force Nibbio commander, Brig. Gen. Marco Bertolini, incoming commander and the Hon. Domenico Giorgi, Italian ambassador to Afghanistan, are saluted by their soldiers as they pass to begin the task force transfer of authority ceremony.

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U.S. meets with new Paktia governor

Compiled by the
11th Public Affairs Detachment

GARDEZ, Afghanistan — Former acting Combined Joint Task Force-180 deputy commander, Col. Robert Caslen, and other members of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan met with new Paktia Province governor Asadullah Wafa June 6.

The meeting was held at the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team headquarters where the governor addressed his support for the Afghan central government and opinions on what civil and humanitarian projects are most important to his province.

He said he agrees with the U.S. policy on the Global War on Terrorism. "We stand shoulder to shoulder," said Wafa. "I appreciate what you are doing in Afghanistan."

The governor placed a lot of importance on the central government's need to make education and road repair a priority. He also pledged his support to the central government and said he was committed to providing collected revenues to that government.

Wafa told Caslen that he plans to distribute land to returning

refugees to provide a place to build homes for settlement and to help generate jobs and income for the families. He also intends to establish a tribal office in the city of Saiyid Karam, in central Paktia.

When asked what projects he feels are the most important, the governor replied that he was pleased with the U.S. Agency for International Development's 20 school projects.

Wafa said the roads between Gardez and Saiyid Karam and from Gardez to Pakistan need improvement, and that the road in downtown Gardez needs paving to help reduce dust from traffic.

Lastly, Wafa asked that the U.S. assist him in building a sports stadium for the local youth. He said the children do not have a central location to come together in sports and a stadium could help steer children away from poppy addictions.

By visit's end, both sides agreed the meeting was productive and Wafa even talked to the U.S. delegation about his days as a Mujahadeen fighter in the 1980s.

Caslen is scheduled to leave Bagram Air Base today and he is going to become the 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga., deputy commanding general.

World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



A woman leaves her house in Khaldiyah, Iraq, as U.S. troops prepare to conduct a raid Monday.

Bush denounces critics

CNN — As U.S. troops searched for Saddam Hussein loyalists in central Iraq, President Bush on Monday strongly defended the U.S.-led war to topple Saddam's regime against "revisionist historians" he suggested were trying to diminish the threat once posed by the deposed Iraqi leader.

"This nation acted to a threat from the dictator of Iraq," Bush said during a speech to business leaders in New Jersey. "Now there are some who would like to rewrite history — revisionist historians is what I like to call them.

"Saddam Hussein was a threat to America and the free world in '91, in '98, in 2003. He continually ignored the demands of the free world, so the United States and friends and allies acted."

Israeli official dismisses Hamas cease-fire report

GAZA — An Israeli official Monday dismissed as meaningless reports that the Palestinian militant group Hamas was considering a cease-fire with Israel.

"Hamas is not a partner. Hamas is the enemy," the official said. "There is no cease-fire."

Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas traveled Monday to Gaza to urge Palestinian militant groups to end their attacks against Israel, a key step in the U.S.-backed road map for Mideast peace.

Abbas' arrival came hours after an Egyptian delegation ended two days of talks with the militants, with no apparent agreement on the proposed cease-fire.

Tests don't indicate human-to-human monkeypox spread

MADISON, Wis. — Preliminary tests on two suspected cases of human-to-human transmission of monkeypox have proved negative, a Wisconsin public health official said Monday.

"The preponderance of the evidence is we don't have human-to-human transmission," said Herb Bostrom, director of the Bureau of Communicable Diseases in the Division of Public Health.

Although final test results could take weeks, "it's looking less and less" like human-to-human transmission occurred, he said.

The two suspected cases were a medical assistant and a nurse who became ill after coming into contact with patients with monkeypox.

Lawyers face off over gag order

MODESTO, Calif. — Celebrity lawyers Mark Geragos and Gloria Allred faced off Monday in court papers in Scott Peterson's trial on murder charges, with Geragos accusing Allred of violating a gag order in the case.

Geragos asked that Allred be cited for contempt after she appeared in a television interview last week. He said the interview violated a gag order issued Thursday that restricts public comment by parties in the case.

Her actions, Geragos wrote in court papers filed Monday, "should be considered by this court as nothing short of brazen contempt."

Allred represents Amber Frey, a massage therapist who admitted to having an affair with Peterson before his pregnant wife, Laci, disappeared Dec. 24.

Judge: Millions of CD buyers owed money

PORTLAND, Maine — A judge has approved a settlement agreement in a music antitrust lawsuit that will result in more than 3.5 million consumers receiving nearly \$13 each.

Judge D. Brock Hornby issued a 51-page ruling Friday in the case that began in 1996

when attorneys general across the country began investigating whether distributors and retailers had conspired to inflate CD prices.

"This settlement will put cash in the hands of millions of consumers and music CDs in libraries and schools throughout the country, and will ensure that the challenged distributor/retailer practices will not resume," Hornby wrote.

Texas drug defendants allowed to go free on bond

TULIA, Texas — A Texas judge on Monday ordered the release of 12 African-Americans jailed four years ago after a series of small-town drug arrests nationally criticized by civil-rights advocates.

Retired state District Judge Ron Chapman of Dallas ordered the 12 — convicted on the testimony of an undercover officer later indicted on perjury charges — free on bond while their appeals are being heard.

"I'm just glad to be out," said Joe Moore, 60, a hog farmer from Tulia who was among those arrested and convicted of selling cocaine to an undercover officer he said he never met. Moore refused to plea bargain and was sentenced to 90 years.

Bishop arrested in fatal hit-and-run

PHOENIX — The Roman Catholic bishop of Phoenix was arrested Monday in the investigation of a deadly hit-and-run accident after police traced a license plate number to his car and found the windshield caved in.

Bishop Thomas O'Brien, 67, was driven away in an unmarked detective's car. Police said he would be booked on a charge of leaving the scene of a fatal accident.

Earlier this month, it was announced that O'Brien had relinquished some of his authority in an unprecedented agreement with prosecutors that spared him from indictment on obstruction charges for protecting child-molesting priests.

O'Brien's attorney did not immediately return a call for comment. In a statement, the diocese said it would cooperate with the investigation.

Watchful eye proves force protection success

By Pfc. Terri Rorke
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — Force protection is carried out on post daily. Servicemembers conduct force protection exercises and keep a watchful eye out for anything suspicious.

This was proven here Saturday when Sgt. Michelle Jones and Sgt. Kevin Janey, both from 126th Finance Battalion, Fort Bragg, N.C. noticed something awry, while standing on the Motel 6 balcony.

The two saw a maroon Mercedes Benz parked by soldiers' tents. They instantly questioned the validation of the vehicle being there.

Jones' commander, Capt. Monica Snead had informed her soldiers about a suspicious red or maroon vehicle on Bagram earlier. "(Snead) informs us on what to be on the look out for," said Jones. Snead collects information from the daily battle update briefs, said Jones.

The soldiers informed their commander and instantly the Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander, Capt. Dean Cuzick detained the vehicle's owner and passengers.

"Force protection is everyone's business," said Capt. Dean Cuzick, Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander, Combined Joint Task Force-180. "It's everyone's business to question what's

going on," he said.

The military police here rushed to the scene as soon as they were contacted.

The MPs questioned everyone in the vehicle and later searched it.

The driver of the Mercedes signed on two Afghans for scheduled contracting classes to be future contractors, but they were canceled, said Staff Sgt. Joseph Reed, National Guard 747th military police company, South Bridge, Mass.

"The question is, 'Are they allowed to be escorted on post as friends?'" asked Reed.

"The vehicle had not officially been reported stolen. Anytime we have a report of possible stolen government property, we're going to act on it. But many times people don't go through the proper channels. So if there is a legitimately stolen vehicle rolling around on post, we should know about it. Report it to us," said Reed.

The driver was a U.S. citizen, whose government service grade is lieutenant colonel. He was showing his friends around on base.

U.S. personnel can escort up to 10 Afghans for contracting purposes, said Reed. They are required to be released as soon as they are finished working.

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soldiers to conduct special mountain operations in Afghanistan," said Maj. Simone Schiawni, Italian public information officer, Task Force Nibbio in a press statement. "Led by Gen. Battisti, they have accomplished many things during their time here."

Some of the missions accomplished by the mountain regiment include involvement in two of the largest anti-terrorism operations ever carried out by coalition forces in Afghanistan.

"The soldiers of Task Force Nibbio played a big part in the success of Operations Dragon Fury and Unified Venture," said Schiawni. "On these missions and in others, the Italian forces discovered and destroyed more than 1,200 rockets, 828 shells, 261 anti-personnel mines and 112 anti-tank mines."

Other duties carried out by the Nibbio Task Force soldiers included patrols and ensuring force protection.

"The 9th Mountain Regiment conducted more than 250 patrols and interdiction missions in the mountainous zones of Khowst and also led 51 Civil-Military Affairs missions," said Schiawni.

"In addition, our Carabinieri, or military police, played a big part in the force protection of Bagram and other forward operating bases where our troops were located."

Taking over for the mountain regiment is Bertolini and more than 700 soldiers from the 187th Airborne Regiment, Folgore Brigade, Task Force Nibbio.

"The soldiers of the airborne regiment come highly skilled and equipped with an Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit, Nuclear, Biological and Chemical teams, and logistical support capabilities to effectively continue Task Force Nibbio's mission in Afghanistan," said Schiawni. "The airborne regiment is scheduled to take over immediately and conduct operations until their mission is complete in September."

To commemorate the transfer of authority, the traditions of passing the unit guidon to the new commander, and the changing of banners were honored. Several dignitaries also attended the ceremony including, Asef Delawar, Chief of Staff and Afghan Minister of Defense, The Hon. Domenico Giorgi, Italian ambassador to Afghanistan and Brigadier Gen. Byron Bagby, director, Combined



Brig. Gen. Giorgio Battisti, commander, Task Force Nibbio, passes the guidon to Brig. Gen. Marco Bertolini, commander, 187th Airborne Regiment, Folgore Brigade, Task Force Nibbio in the task force transfer of authority ceremony, Monday.

Joint Task Force-180.

"Even though Gen. Battisti and I come from two different countries we have a lot in common," said Bagby in his speech at the ceremony. "We both have served as field artillery officers in our own respective armies and now hold the ranks of brigadier generals. I respect him and appreciate all of the work he has done."

As a way of showing appreciation for Battisti's hard work, Maj. Gen. John Vines, commander, Combined Joint Task Force-180, awarded Battisti with the Bronze Star.

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“Their purpose was for the class and the class was canceled,” said Reed. “The policy on U.S. personnel escorting Afghans needs to be clarified.”

“With (his) badge, he can sign on 10 locals for detail ... we called in for clarification, but they couldn’t provide it though.

“There is no policy letter written, however, when there is no policy letter, the soldiers, not just (military police), anyone on the ground makes the policy,” said Sgt. Jeremy Bailey, 747th MP Company, South Bridge, Mass.

“If they come back, they need to get signed on by the contracting officer ... the class (today) was canceled and they aren’t special. They were escorted off post. We can’t have them running around,” said Reed.

“Everyone gets screened to come on post. We can’t have them walking around and hanging around ... that’s number one. We don’t know what their intentions are, what their purposes are. These guys had a camera. We don’t really know what their doing here,” said Bailey.

“We trust (the U.S. citizen), but as far as (the others), we don’t know about them.”

It’s all for the soldier’s safety, said Bailey.

“If you see something suspicious, give us a call. We’ll investigate,” said Reed.

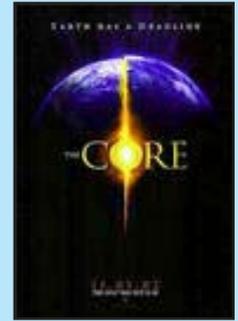


Military police search a reported suspicious vehicle here Saturday. “If you see something suspicious, give us a call. We’ll investigate,” said Joseph Reed, National Guard 747th military police company, South Bridge, Mass.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR building: “The Core.” Scientists discover that the Earth’s core is about to stop spinning. This will cause tremendous natural disasters, wiping out life as we know it. A team of scientists is recruited in a crash project to go into the center of the Earth to prevent the catastrophe.

Tomorrow’s movie will be “Star Trek: Nemesis.”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>
Bagram:	<i>Scattered t-storms</i> H: 95F L: 57F	<i>Mostly clear</i> H: 93F L: 59F
Kandahar:	<i>Clear</i> H: 106F L: 68F	<i>Clear</i> H: 106F L: 72F
Kabul:	<i>Haze</i> H: 91F L: 54F	<i>Haze</i> H: 90F L: 57F
Uzbekistan:	<i>Sunny</i> H: 97F L: 62F	<i>Sunny</i> H: 99F L: 64F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)



Lleyton Hewitt on seeding: "I couldn't care less, mate."

Despite top ranking, Agassi draws No. 2

WIMBLEDON, England — Defending champions Lleyton Hewitt and Serena Williams are seeded No. 1 for Wimbledon.

Hewitt got the top seeding Monday ahead of Andre Agassi, who replaced the Australian as No. 1 in this week's ATP Tour rankings.

Agassi was seeded No. 2, followed by French Open champion Juan Carlos Ferrero, Roger Federer and Andy Roddick.

By tradition, Hewitt will play the first match on Centre Court when the two-week championships open June 23.

On the women's side, Williams was seeded ahead of Belgian star Kim Clijsters and French Open winner Justine Henin-Hardenne. Serena's older sister, Venus, was seeded No. 4.

The seeding means the Williams sisters could be in the same half of the draw and meet before the final. They met in four of the last five Grand Slam finals.

The draw will be held Tuesday.

Unlike every other tournament in the world, Wimbledon refuses to stick to the ATP's world rankings, instead using a combination of rankings and grasscourt form over recent years when determining seeds.

Kournikova, Moya pull out with injuries

WIMBLEDON, England — Anna Kournikova has pulled out of Wimbledon because of a back injury.

The Wimbledon referee's office said Monday the Russian had notified the All England Club of her withdrawal on Friday. The tournament begins June 23.

On Monday, No. 4 Carlos Moya of Spain and Tommy Haas of Germany withdrew with unspecified injuries.

A tearful Kournikova withdrew from the DFS Classic grass-court tournament in Birmingham last week after aggravating her injury in practice.

Kournikova, a Wimbledon semifinalist in 1997, has won only

one of 10 matches this year on the WTA Tour and withdrawn from a series of tournaments with leg and back problems. She has slipped to No. 77 in the rankings.

Kournikova hasn't played in a tour-level tournament since retiring from her opening match at the Family Circle Cup in Charleston, S.C., on April 9.

Moya lost in the French Open quarterfinals in five sets to eventual champion Juan Carlos Ferrero.

Haas, who had surgery on his right shoulder in December, missed the French Open and last week's Wimbledon tuneup in Halle, Germany.

Other players who have withdrawn from Wimbledon include former champion Goran Ivanisevic, Monica Seles and former Australian Open champion Thomas Johansson.

Roddick makes quick work of Grosjean

LONDON — Andy Roddick enjoyed a commanding victory leading to Wimbledon, beating Sebastien Grosjean 6-3, 6-3 Sunday to win the Queen's Club title.

This was the second title of the year for the hard-serving American following last month's win at St. Poelten, Austria. He will be a strong contender when Wimbledon starts June 23.

"I feel I'll be better prepared than I ever have been for Wimbledon," he said. "I'm probably more confident than I ever have been, but you have to guard against that, against overconfidence. I felt pretty good going into Paris as well, and I don't want to talk about that."

Roddick lost in the first round at the French Open three weeks ago.

On Sunday, the third-seeded Roddick had 10 aces but won with a little help from a net cord. He was on his second match point when his backhand clipped the net and dropped on the other side with Grosjean unable to make a return.

Furyk wrote the book on tough

OLYMPIA FIELDS, Ill. — After Curtis Strange won consecutive U.S. Opens in 1988 and 1989, he co-authored an instructional book entitled "Win and Win Again!" After Tiger Woods won the U.S. Open and two other majors in 2000, he wrote a book called "How I Play Golf." When the publishers come after Jim Furyk in the wake of his three-stroke victory in the 103rd national championship Sunday, we've got some titles to consider:

- "Loop Dreams"
- "My Swing and How to Survive It"
- "Spinal Fusion and Me"



The cold steel of the Open trophy matched Furyk's nerves.

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As Furyk proved for four rounds at Olympia Fields Country Club, all his loop-at-the-top swing is good for is fairways and greens. Mix that with a steady, cross-handed putting stroke and an XXL-sized heart, and you have an Open winner whose fourth-round lead never dipped below the three-stroke lead with which he began. Furyk's final round of 72 gave him a 72-hole score of 272 and a three-stroke victory — and his first in a major — over Stephen Leaney of Australia.

"I'm elated and overjoyed," said the 33-year-old Furyk, whose victory was worth \$1.08 million. "My name is always going to be on the trophy. You can't take it off once they engrave it."

A three-putt bogey on No. 18 meant that Furyk tied the Open 72-hole scoring record of 272 instead of breaking it. You better believe that, if Furyk had needed a par, he would have made it. Giving Furyk a three-shot lead is like giving John Smoltz the ball with a three-run lead. Furyk is 4-0-1 in singles matches in the Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup. He fought Tiger Woods for seven holes before losing a playoff to him at Firestone in 2001.

Overnight ratings down 40 percent

NEW YORK — With Tiger Woods out of contention and a relatively suspense-free final round, the overnight ratings for Sunday's telecast of the U.S. Open dropped 40 percent from last year.

The 5.6 overnight rating with a 13 share for the final round was down from the 9.3/21 for last year's final round at Bethpage Black, where Woods held off Phil Mickelson to win the second of golf's four majors by three shots.

Last year's ratings were the highest for the U.S. Open since Nielsen Media Research began tracking overnights in 1975.

NBC's telecast of Sunday's final round ran from 1:30-8 p.m. Jim Furyk won his first major by three shots over Stephen Leaney.

Saturday's third-round coverage generated a 5.3 overnight rating and a 13 share — 17 percent lower than last year's 6.4/16.

The final round in 2001, in which Retief Goosen won in a playoff, drew a 7.0/17, while Woods' win at Pebble Beach in 2000 received a then-record 8.8/21.

Overnight ratings measure the 55 largest TV markets in the United States, covering nearly 70 percent of the country. Each overnight rating point represents about 735,000 TV homes. The share is the percentage of televisions in use tuned to a program.

Exhausted Sorenstam falls short

VIENNA, Ohio — An exhausted Annika Sorenstam turned to a course marshal late in Sunday's final round of the Giant Eagle LPGA Classic and said, "I'm done."

An hour or so later, Rachel Teske made sure she was.

Teske made a 35-foot birdie on the last hole to join a four-player playoff, then ended it by rolling in an 18-foot putt for birdie on the third hole of sudden death Sunday to win the Giant Eagle LPGA Classic.

Sorenstam, Lorie Kane and Jennifer Rosales each missed birdie putts on their third playoff holes as Teske captured her seventh career victory and collected \$150,000.

"I just felt like I walked straight into a wall," said Sorenstam, who had won her last two LPGA Tour events. "I kept eating carrots, energy bars, bananas and I tried to drink everything I could."

"My husband said, 'What do you need?' I said, 'I need a week off. Do you have one of those in your pocket?'" Teske, who shared the lead with Jean Bartholomew at the start of the day, closed with a 69 to finish at 12-under 204. She made the playoff when her lengthy birdie putt at No. 18 slammed into the back of the cup, popped into the air and then settled into the cup.

"My thought was to get some pace on the ball, but I hit it way too hard," the Aussie said. "My caddie said coming up the 18th fairway, 'Hit it in the middle of the hole.' Fortunately, it jumped up and went."

"I suppose Higgins has gone and gotten himself lost again."



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By Kevin Kilgore

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