

Afghan village gets Army assistance

By Staff Sgt. Christina Bhatti
11th Public Affairs Detachment

KAPISA, Afghanistan – In a country that has been ravaged by more than 20 years of war, there is a small province that is struggling to get back on its feet and have a productive future through agriculture.

The Kapisa province in a fertile part of northern Afghanistan has in the past, prospered from growing crops. But the years of turmoil changed that prosperity. What was once a thriving province is now barren.

With the help of the U.S., the people of Kapisa are hoping they will thrive again. Col. Kevin McNeely, base commander made his second visit to Kapisa Saturday to pledge U.S. support for the province rebuilding. He and province leaders discussed future plans that they hope will one day bring wealth back to the people.

“There is a system that we are looking at putting in place here because they are successful in the U.S. But for us to do that successfully, we have to tailor the program to fit the needs and traditions of the people here,” McNeely said.

The plan is to institute a co-operative system to grow crops and a Chamber of Commerce, so the people would have a way of selling their crops. The plan will “hopefully unite the people in the province and give back to them what was taken more than 25 years ago” said McNeely.

The province planted a tree in McNeely’s name as a symbol of trust and the good relations between the U.S. and Afghanistan.

Once instituted, this plan will be a “lifeline for the people,” he said.

Since the outbreak of war more than 20 years ago, farming in this region all but stopped. And then when the Taliban came to power, they en-

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Photo by Pvt. 2 Terri Rorke

A somber moment...

The remains of six airmen killed Sunday when their HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter crashed were flown home today. The helicopter crashed while on a medical evacuation mission 18 miles north of Ghazni. The weather was poor across Afghanistan when the aircrew was on their way to MEDEVAC two Afghan children. The airmens’ names are being withheld pending notification of next of kin.

Italian force protection progress

By Maj. William Mott
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — The U.S. shock and awe campaign has increased security operations throughout the world. Our coalition partners here are just as concerned about their soldiers’ security as the U.S.

Working as a liaison officer between the Combined Joint Task Force-180 Joint Operations Center and the Nibbio Task Force, 1st Lt. Emiliano Mosca attends all Dragon Base briefings and relays the latest information on intelligence and threat conditions to his task force.

“I am confident in the security of the compound. The exchange of information

between the American and coalition forces strengthens Bagram Air Base,” said Mosca.

“The directives I get from the JOC are immediately implemented on our new compound.”

Mosca is part of the Taureinense Brigade deployed from L’aquila, Abruzzo, Italy with the Nibbio Task Force for the War on Terror.

As a platoon leader for the Taureinense Brigade and force protection LNO, Mosca plans the emplacement of bunkers and shelters in coordination with the force protection plan for Bagram Air Base.

The Italian compound is still under construction and his plan has to be flexible

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



Iraqi children look Monday through a window in a suburb of Baghdad, as smoke rises from oil fires that ring the city as a defense.

U.S.-led coalition pushes toward Baghdad

CNN — With soldiers from the U.S. Army's V Corps poised to take on an elite Iraqi Republican Guard division less than 60 miles from Baghdad, coalition planes and helicopters pounded Iraqi positions to clear a path toward the Iraqi capital.

Large explosions and anti-aircraft tracer fire lit the night skies over Baghdad early Tuesday morning, with at least five bombing waves hitting the Iraqi capital since darkness fell.

Among the buildings destroyed Monday was an Iraqi air force complex. Saddam International Airport was also being targeted.

Pentagon officials said about half of the airstrikes made in the last 36 hours were directed toward Republican Guard units.

Pentagon: Iraqi forces engaged in 'deadly deception'

WASHINGTON — Pentagon officials lashed out Monday at the "deadly deception" of the Iraqi regime on the battlefield, saying that Iraqi troops are engaged in "serious violations of the laws of war" by falsely indicating their willingness to surrender or by fighting U.S. and allied troops in civilian clothes.

"Known as perfidy or treachery, such acts are strictly prohibited because they make it extraordinarily difficult for coalition forces to accept surrendering forces or protect civilians," said Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clarke.

Not yet a week into the war in Iraq, Pen-

tagon officials expressed optimism about the progress of the military campaign, despite a weekend of significant coalition casualties and a U.S. bomb strike this morning that killed some Syrian civilians. The Pentagon expressed its regret for those deaths.

"The despicable behavior of the Iraqi regime has in no way stopped the progress of the coalition," Clarke said. "Control of the country continues to slip away from the Iraqi regime, and coalition forces are closing in on Baghdad."

U.S. Apache pilots taken prisoner

WASHINGTON — Pentagon officials have confirmed that two Apache helicopter pilots whose craft went down in Iraq have been taken prisoner.

U.S. Apache attack helicopters had been involved in a fierce battle with units of Iraq's Republican Guard units early Monday about 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of Baghdad.

The Pentagon identified the two, who were shown on video on Abu Dhabi TV, as David S. Williams of Florida and Ronald D. Young, Jr., of Georgia, both chief warrant officers.

The U.S. military destroyed the helicopter later in an airstrike so the Iraqis could not gain from it, the Pentagon said.

Families pray for POWs' safety

FORT BLISS, Texas — The war against Iraq hit home when images of captured Army Spc. Joseph Hudson, Pfc. Patrick Miller, Spc. Shoshana Johnson, Sgt. James Riley and Spc. Edgar Hernandez in Iraq flickered onto TV screens and Internet sites.

The five — members of the 507th Maintenance Company at Fort Bliss, Texas — are prisoners of war in Iraq, and were interviewed in an Iraqi state-run video broadcast on Al-Jazeera, shocking their relatives, friends and neighbors at the post and their homes.

Miller, 23, Hudson, 24, Johnson, 30, Riley, 31, and Hernandez, 21, were seen on Al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based, Arabic language TV news network.

In all, 11 soldiers from their maintenance group still are unaccounted for — either cap-

tured, dead or missing — following fierce fighting Sunday at Nasiriya in south-central Iraq.

U.S. pressures Russia over arms sales to Iraq

WASHINGTON — The United States on Monday continued to pressure Moscow to rein in two Russian companies it accuses of supplying military equipment to Saddam Hussein.

President Bush expressed concern to Russian President Vladimir Putin about reports that Russian companies had sold military equipment and electronics to Iraq recently, in violation of U.N. sanctions.

White House press secretary Ari Fleischer told reporters earlier Monday that a Russian company was providing "ongoing cooperation and support to Iraqi forces," including selling night goggles and other equipment to Baghdad that can jam satellite navigational systems used by U.S. precision-guided weapons.

The Washington Post identified two of the companies as Aviaconversiya, which allegedly supplied jamming equipment, and KBP Tula, an optics company.

Allied buildup in northern Iraq

SALAHUDDIN, Iraq — Coalition forces are increasing in the north of Iraq, indicating a northern front in the war on Iraq could be opened soon.

Until recently, between 20 and 30 special operations forces were in Iraq's northern region, but the number appears to be growing rapidly as two major airstrips in the north report U.S. planes coming in fairly steadily.

More than 200 troops were said to be in the area early Monday.

U.S. Special Forces were bringing troops and equipment into the Harir airstrip near Erbil, Iraq, and another airstrip in northeast Iraq near Sulaymaniyah.

The equipment included chemical detectors, as well as communications systems for forward aircraft controllers.

The Harir airstrip is under the control of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and the airstrip near Sulaymaniyah is controlled by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Soldiers with ‘foresight’ get glasses here

Story and photo by
Pfc. Debralee P. Crankshaw
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – If a soldier is having problems with their sight, they don’t have to wait until they return home to receive glasses.

Spc. Larry Reese, optician, 427th Medical Logistics, Fort Gillem, Ga. puts together single-vision glasses with basic combat frames here.

Bifocal prescriptions are sent to a fixed facility and sent back when finished, which usually takes about a month.

Reese has had a few cases where he has fixed glasses, but if the frames are broken the screws Reese has are not small enough to fit all glasses.

To receive glasses, a soldier must visit optometry first, unless they have a prescription that is less than a year old.

Some people may not have frames or didn’t receive their glasses before deploying so the services are offered here.

According to Reese, most glasses usu-



Spc. Larry Reese, optician, 427th Medical Logistics, Fort Gillem, Ga., examines a lens in the lensometer to ensure it is the correct prescription.

ally take about five minutes to put together.

The first step is to select the proper lenses and frame, then Reese takes the lenses to the lensometer to ensure the prescription is correct.

Next, the lenses are taken to the blocker. To use this machine, the optician must have the pupil distance of the patient and the pupil distance of the frames. Using these distances, the optician uses the blocker to find the difference so the lens will be in front of the pupil.

The pupil distance of a patient is determined by measuring the distance, in millime-

ters, between the outer edge of the right pupil and the inner edge of the left.

After using the blocker, the optician takes the lens to the edger, which shapes the circular lens so it will fit the frame.

The edger causes the edges of the lens to be sharp so the optician uses a grinding well to smooth the edges.

Finally, the optician uses a sand box, which heats the frames, melting them and allowing them to be shaped and the lenses to be placed inside. This must be finished before the frames cool. After the frames cool, they retain the shape.

Reese has made about 60 pairs of glasses since January and makes approximately 30 a month.

Reese also performs tints on prescription and nonprescription glasses.

“Tint is the most aggravating part of my job,” said Reese.

Some lenses tint faster than others and to be used, lenses must be the same shade. If the lenses are not the same shade they must be neutralized to remove the tint and redone.

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Photo by Staff Sgt. Christina Bhatti

Col. Kevin McNeely, base commander, and Sayed Habib Abedi, McNeely’s advisor and interpreter, watch as a tree is being planted in Kapisa.

couraged the growth of poppy. Now, the community is happy to give up poppy growth, for a crop that is more useful and profitable.

“The province is now 95 percent drug

free,” said Sayed Habib Abedi, McNeely’s advisor and interpreter. “It is against the Islamic law and U.S. law so the people were more than happy to stop.”

When McNeely made his latest visit to the province, they renounced poppy growth and announced that the U.S. and McNeely could be trusted and were there to help them get back what they had lost.

It was during this second visit that McNeely, “secured his place and gained popularity in the province,” said Abedi.

“These people are normally reserved,” said Abedi. “So for them to embrace a foreigner and open up this quickly, it says something about the colonel’s leadership.”

He is the symbol of America and he speaks for America, Abedi said. They look at him and see a great soldier. They know he is someone they can trust.

The U.S. role in Kapisa is to help them get back on their feet with technology and limited funds. It will be up to the Afghans, with the help of non-governmental organizations, to

do more in the future.

“Some of these people have never known peace or prosperity. We need to help them as part of the next phase of this war,” McNeely said.

This project is part of the Base Operations “two-fold mission,” said McNeely. The first part of their mission is to help the Afghans with the necessities of life – food, water and shelter. The second part of the mission is to build strong relations with the Afghans who reside near the base.

To build relations, McNeely and his team will rely on word of mouth.

“There is no mass communication, out here, so we have to rely on the people to spread the word of our plans,” McNeely said. “That is the only way we can get the American story out.”

Once the “American story” is out, it is easier to make plans to improve the future.

“We can only do so much to help,” McNeely said. “In the end it will be up to the people of Afghanistan.”

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enough to coincide with moving offices and new access gates. Everyday, Hesco walls go up and come down wreaking havoc on security plans, but construction is always geared towards increased security not convenience.

“Our concerns include the threat level, Afghan workers and the Bagram area,” said Mosca. “We have alert exercises in coordination with the base exercises and perform after action reports to ensure the security of the compound.”

“My job has offered me a great opportunity for cultural exchange with the other coalition members and U.S. soldiers while I play a critical role in the safety and security of my fellow soldiers and the success of Nibbio Task Force mission.”

Nibbio forces also operate from the Salerno Forward Operating Base executing missions in the War on Terror to capture residual al-Qaida terrorists and stop followers of Osama bin Laden from returning to Afghanistan.



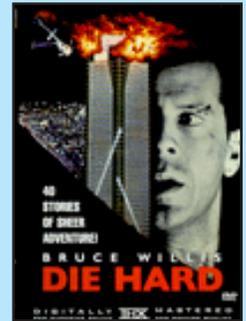
Photo by Maj. William Mott

A Nibbio Task Force Alpini Brigade soldier pulls force protection duty at the Italian compound gate.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR building: “Die Hard.”
New York cop John McClane gives terrorists a dose of their own medicine as they hold hostages in an LA office building.

Tomorrow’s movie will be “Die Hard 2.”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Wednesday
Bagram:	Cloudy H: 59F L: 43F	Mostly cloudy H: 70F L: 41F
Kandahar:	Cloudy H: 72F L: 52F	Dusty H: 73F L: 55F
Kabul:	Fog H: 64F L: 39F	Haze H: 68F L: 41F
Uzbekistan:	Mostly cloudy H: 71F L: 44F	Mostly cloudy H: 74F L: 48F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)

Weekend prompts many stories



Feeling good about the NCAA Tournament? So was Butler.

ESPN — The call count was up to 20 for Gonzaga coach Mark Few. They were coming in from all parties in the sport — coaches, ex-players, media, administrators — everyone telling him that the Zags’ double-overtime loss to Arizona on Saturday was one of the best games they’d ever seen.

“Everyone keeps calling it epic,” Few said Monday. “It was like Rocky vs. Apollo. We started out as rivals and ended as best friends. Luke Walton said we were the best team in five years that he has played at Arizona.”

And that is saying something.

“It was two teams that played their best and left everything out on the court,” Few said. “It was something special to be a part of.”

This whole tournament has been special. For players, coaches,

media members and fans.

This is the tournament that almost wasn’t, with a potential plan to postpone put in place by the NCAA early last week. The NCAA checked with CBS, Homeland Security, the White House and the facilities to see if it was feasible, worth it and even possible to postpone the tournament because of the then-pending and now very real war in Iraq.

No one involved with the tournament is taking himself too seriously. Everyone knows this event is a diversion for real-world issues. But the tournament has been anything but an afterthought.

This tournament has been just as special, maybe more so, as any other in recent memory.

There were fewer first- and second-round upsets than in past years, but the games have been close. And the exciting, down-to-the-final-shot games have been better than we could have hoped for.

“Every game seems to have gone down to the last minute,” Butler’s Darnell Archey said. “This tournament showed how much parity there is in college basketball. I know if I were just a fan of college basketball I would want to watch this just to have something else to turn to. I’m the little guy (6-1) who makes 3s and hopefully I could give inspiration to someone else.

NCAA Division 1:

ESPN/USA Today Coaches Poll



Team	Record
1. Kentucky	29-3
2. Arizona	25-3
3. Oklahoma	24-6
4. Pittsburgh	26-4
5. Texas	22-6
6. Kansas	25-7
7. Duke	24-6
8. Florida	24-7
9. Wake Forest	24-5
10. Illinois	24-6
11. Marquette	23-5
12. Syracuse	24-5

Team	Record
13. Louisville	24-6
14. Xavier	25-5
15. Creighton	29-4
16. Stanford	23-8
17. Maryland	19-9
18. Dayton	25-5
19. Wisconsin	22-7
20. Notre Dame	22-9
21. Mississippi St.	21-9
22. Memphis	23-6
23. Oklahoma State	21-9
24. Connecticut	21-9
25. Missouri	21-10



8-0 isn’t enough for Pitt and company

BOSTON — Pittsburgh coach Ben Howland is thrilled that the Big East has four teams in the Sweet 16. Partly, because it’s nice to see his conference earning some national credibility. But, more selfishly, because it multiplies the degree of difficulty of what his Panthers achieved before the NCAA Tournament tipped off.

“It reflects very well on this team,” Howland said after his Panthers dismantled Indiana, 74-52, on Sunday in a Midwest second-round game. “Because we won the Big East regular season and the Big East tournament.”

It’s a pretty simple equation. If the Big East is the big dog in the Big Dance (and it appears to be, with its four tourney entries now 8-0), then being the best team in the Big East means big things. And after the way Pittsburgh played Sunday — harassing, swarming and generally exhausting Indiana with a performance so blue-collar the Panthers should carry union cards — there’s plenty of reason to be high on Pitt.

“We played Kentucky this year, we played Illinois, we played some really good basketball teams,” said Indiana coach Mike Davis, after Howland’s boys put him through 40 agonizing minutes of what can only be dubbed Big East-brand basketball. “But we hadn’t played a team like that all year.”

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Meanwhile, Big East squads play teams “like that” for three straight months, and it’s paying off right now.

A few hours after Pitt’s victory here in Big East country, fellow conference member Syracuse overcame a 17-point, first-half deficit against Oklahoma State to become the final member of the flawless foursome. Notre Dame and Connecticut advanced on Saturday.

Price to rest groin this week

NORMAN, Okla. — Oklahoma guard Hollis Price will get plenty of rest and treatment this week as he recovers from a left groin injury.

Trainer Alex Brown said he expects Price to undergo three, one-hour sessions in the training room each day this week and won’t do much on the practice court.

“Rest is the best thing for these, and he’s going to get a lot of that,” Brown said Monday.

Price, the Big 12 player of the year, got hurt March 16 in the championship game of the conference tournament.

He played a combined 41 minutes and scored eight points in Oklahoma’s first two East Regional games, victories over South Carolina State and California.

“It’s better than what it was Saturday and Thursday,” Price said Monday as he arrived at the practice gym.

Price, who averages 19 points per game, said he hopes to be close to 100 percent by Friday, when the top-seeded Sooners play No. 12 seed Butler in the regional semifinals at Albany, N.Y.

“The other day (Saturday) I was about 85 percent, which was better,” he said. “I moved a whole lot better than what I did Thursday.”

Naismith awards winners announced

ATLANTA — Texas sophomore T.J. Ford and Connecticut junior Diana Taurasi won the Naismith Awards on Monday as the top college basketball players in the country.

Ford, a 5-foot-10 guard, leads the Longhorns in scoring (15), assists (7.4), and steals (1.96) per game. Last year, he was the first freshman in NCAA history to lead the nation in assists with 8.27 per game. He ranks second on Texas’ all-time career assist list with 495.

“My teammates should share in this honor, as none of our program’s success would be possible without them,” Ford said. “This honor means a lot to me. When I took a look at the list of names who have won the award in the past, I was humbled. It does show that hard work pays off.”

Taurasi, a 6-foot guard, leads the Huskies with 16.5 points,

4.7 assists and 1.2 blocks per game this season. She is 12th on UConn’s all-time scoring list with 1,452 points.



Indiana wasn’t able to hold up under physical play of Jaron Brown and Pittsburgh.

The Naismith Awards, in their 35th year, honor basketball’s inventor — Dr. James Naismith. The awards program was founded by the Atlanta Tipoff Club.

Past winners include Michael Jordan (1984), Larry Johnson (1991) and Tim Duncan (1997).

Bell says he wants more active role on a team

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — New Mexico sophomore center Chad Bell quit the team Monday, saying he wants to transfer to a school where he will get more playing time.

The 6-foot-11 Bell played about 11 minutes a game this season and averaged 1.5 points and 1.6 rebounds. His best statistic was 24 blocked shots.

“Any player, his last two years, wants a role with the team. I want a huge role where I’ll be one of the main focuses,” Bell said

Monday.

“The best thing for me is to go to another situation,” he added. Bell, from Inglewood, Calif., started six games this season.

“I enjoyed every minute of being a Lobo,” Bell said, “but it was just a decision I had to make.”

New Mexico coach Ritchie McKay said he understood Bell’s decision.

“We want Chad in the program, but we certainly respect his wishes to pursue elsewhere,” McKay said.

Bell said he did not know yet where he will transfer.



Laugh Support