



# The Main Effort

Monthly Newsletter of the 205th RSAC

Issue No. 14 — April 2007(2)



## ANA 205 presence patrols build trust in villages

By CDR Chad Snee  
205th RSAC PAO

In recent weeks, Soldiers assigned to the garrison of the Afghan National Army's (ANA) 205th "Hero" Corps have been conducting presence patrols in the vicinity of Camp Shir Zai, the 205th Corps' home.

ANA 2nd Lt. Shir Ali, 27, from Parwan province in northern Afghanistan, and the motivated Soldiers in his platoon are learning the fundamentals of planning and conducting a patrol from U.S. and British personnel.

In late March, Chief Petty Officer Karen Miller, a member of the Navy Embedded Training Team headquartered at Shir Zai, met with Ali to discuss an upcoming patrol.

Miller has been working closely with Ali on all aspects of planning and briefing a patrol mission.

Their first order of business was to review the map overlays that Ali had produced. An overlay, drawn on a clear sheet of plastic, is a color-coded map of the patrol route, showing outbound and inbound routes and the checkpoints along the route.

Miller pointed out that the overlays were quite good and contained all the required information.

During their discussion, Miller stressed to Ali that the proper briefing reports need to be completed prior to the patrol brief. She also reviewed the importance of maintaining proper vehicle distance and speed, and the actions that must be taken upon initial contact with the enemy.

Ali and his men began training for the patrols about two months ago, Miller said. They have conducted three patrols with U.S. personnel assigned to



**Afghan National Army Soldiers of the 205th "Hero" Corps are conducting presence patrols in the vicinity of Camp Shir Zai. The patrols help the ANA establish positive relationships with local villagers.**

1st Brigade, 205th Regional Security Assistance Command (RSAC), and three patrols with British forces.

Miller emphasized that 1st Brigade provides support and security assets (such as crew-served weapons), along with tactical training. "We couldn't do these patrols without their help," asserted Miller.

For his part, Ali sees the value of building positive connections with the local Afghan citizenry.

"Whenever we visit the villages, the people are happy to see us. They offer us tea and talk to us," said Ali.

"We ask about their problems, ask about Taliban activity. The people tell us who is coming into their village and what they are doing there."

Indeed, gathering useful intelligence is one of the main reasons for going on the patrols.

"Our objective is to get the ANA into the villages to make friends and obtain intelligence," Miller explained.

"We want the people to see their

Army in a positive way. Our mission is not search and destroy — it's presence, like a cop walking a beat."

Ali expressed appreciation for the dedicated work that Miller and others are providing to improve the performance of his men.

"We are glad that the U.S. and Coalition people are training us," Ali remarked. "We are learning a great deal.

"My Soldiers are new, but I am pleased that they are doing a great job."

It is clear that Ali and Miller have a strong working relationship, and that Ali respects Miller for her expertise and knowledge.

Over a cup or two of tea, the discussion at turns becomes lighthearted, with the two exchanging jokes.

Miller noted that Ali and his platoon are doing very well in some areas, though there is room for improvement.

"Their small-unit tactics when dismounted from the vehicles are great, but they still need practice planning and organizing their missions," she observed.

"Overall, though, we are very proud of the progress they've made in a short period of time."

Miller's efforts demonstrate how much ANA Soldiers can accomplish when one takes a keen interest in their growth as military professionals.

More important, the patrols foster the formation of closer ties between ordinary Afghan citizens and the army that represents their nation and their democratically elected government.

Such bonds are a critical part of our effort to defeat those who are against democracy and freedom for the Afghan people.



## Spotlight on Service: SrA Sean De La Cruz



By 2LT Jeff Fullmer

1st Brigade, 205th RSAC PAO

Air Force Sr. Airman Sean De La Cruz is a soft-spoken, intelligent young man. But beneath the quiet façade lies a fiery spirit dedicated to our mission in Afghanistan.

It took a great deal of courage for Sr. Airman De La Cruz to volunteer for a deployment with the Army. Let's face it: the Army and the Air Force are different.

Yet so far, De La Cruz has enjoyed this deployment. He likes being in 1st Brigade, 205th Regional Security Assistance Command (of course) and likes working at Camp Shir-Zai, home to 1st Brigade and the 205th "Hero" Corps of the Afghan National Army.

"I like working at Shir-Zai because the unit I work with is both professional and diverse," De La Cruz said.

De La Cruz has performed extremely well in 1st Brigade, as a communications specialist for the 4th Kandak (battalion) and as the night-shift battle captain. His exemplary performance proves that members of the different services can seamlessly work together.

De La Cruz has done a lot of work



Air Force Sr. Airman Sean De La Cruz, right, is all business during a village medical outreach to Koshab April 10. Koshab is near Camp Shir Zai.

on his own initiative to benefit the Afghans, including volunteering for several village medical outreach missions. His heart is with helping the people.

For him, this deployment has had its ups and downs, but overall it has been

a positive experience. He feels fortunate to be able to help.

De La Cruz has high hopes for the future of the Afghan people. Although they have many hurdles to overcome, such as low wages, limited jobs and a lack of resources, he retains optimism.

His deepest wish for the Afghans is that the nobility of Operation Enduring Freedom will be realized and that the Afghans will be able to sustain themselves in the future. He looks forward to the day when the people of Afghanistan will be independent and free.

De La Cruz has plans following his deployment. He wants to cross-train into the medical branch of the Air Force and become a radiologist. If he cannot do this, he will likely go to radiology school. Medicine is a field for which he is well-suited, because he takes satisfaction in helping others.

In Afghanistan, Sr. Airman Sean De La Cruz is making a difference. His courage and service are invaluable, and one can only hope that he will continue to serve his country in the future.



### COMMANDER'S CORNER



By COL Michael Petrucci  
Commander, 205th RSAC

You'll notice that this issue focuses on service and building relationships for both now and the future. These have been continuing themes and probably mark our success here as well as anything else.

There is no doubt that the Afghan National Army has improved greatly since our arrival here a year ago. That progress has come about as the result of hard work by the Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of this command, many of whom were well out forward, away from the basic benefits of a fixed base.

More recently, we've assumed the task of mentoring the emerging Afghan

National Police and are now doing so. The ANP is behind the ANA in readiness but is making strides. It's our job to build trust and understanding with the ANP, so our successors can build for the future as we've done.

We've sent the first of the 205th home as Task Force Phoenix V begins its relief. I've noticed a touch of sadness interspersed with smiles. When I ask why, I often get an answer that mentions an Afghan by name, or an event where we helped, or "I'll miss . . ." Maybe that's what we're both taking and leaving — relationships and understanding that will serve both nations well. We're almost there — take care of one another — stay safe.

# 205th ANA, ANP conduct VMO to support Buragay

**By CPT Joshua Thompson  
2nd Brigade, 205th RSAC**

On March 14, a village medical outreach (VMO) coordinated by Coalition members in Zabul Province provided a great service to villagers living in Surrey district.

Members of the Afghan National Army's (ANA) 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps, U.S. embedded training teams (ETT), the Zabul Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), and the Afghan National Police (ANP) joined forces for the Buragay Village VMO.

The need for the VMO was identified by leaders from the brigade's 4th Kandak (battalion) while working with the local elders to establish a good relationship in their area of operations.

ANA leadership began the planning process and worked through their ETT counterparts to leverage the humanitarian assistance supplies available from the PRT.

The ANA also incorporated the unique skills available from 5th Kandak's medical company and an ANP security section.

All involved organizations agreed on

the concept for the VMO and decided on a date.

Starting early in the morning of March 14, the 4th Kandak and the ANP cordoned the village and secured the site where the VMO would take place.

Shortly thereafter, the medical and humanitarian contingent arrived and organized the treatment areas and food distribution point.

Within an hour of the arrival of all VMO elements, the village elders led their people through the process.

Villagers participating in the VMO went through several stations as part of the event.

The first station was dental readiness, where they received a toothbrush and toothpaste and instructions on dental care. The next was a medical station where they received an exam and were treated for their ailments.



**A ANA 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps Soldier distributes school supplies and toys to youngsters from the village of Buragay March 14. Adults in the village received rice, beans, flour, cooking oil and boxes of tea.**



**Col. Abdul Haq, right, the religious and cultural affairs officer for 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army, meets with elders from Buragay, following a village medical outreach March 14. The VMO was led primarily by ANA Soldiers from 2nd Brigade.**

This went exceptionally well for the 2nd Brigade's first ANA-led VMO.

Rounding out the VMO was a meeting between 2nd Brigade's religious and cultural affairs officer, Col. Abdul Haq, and the local village elders, to bring closure to the event and to address all concerns of the villagers.

Such gatherings are a critical part of our mission, because they foster respect and trust between local Afghans and the ANA.

We want the people to see that their army is a force for positive influence and is looking out for their interests.

The ANA's ability to involve organizations beyond their respective training teams is a testament to how far they have come in the past few years and also an excellent indicator of what they will accomplish in the future.

The operation was very successful, with just shy of 200 village residents participating. All involved thought that it

## School receives supplies via 205th interpreter

**By CDR Chad Snee  
205th RSAC PAO**

In mid-April, a small, private school in Kandahar City received a generous donation of school supplies from a group of teacher-education students in North Carolina.

The last leg of the long-distance delivery, from Kandahar Airfield to the school, was facilitated by Abdul Hadi, a 23-year-old interpreter from Kandahar province who works for the Navy embedded training team at Camp Shir Zai.

Hadi delivered the supplies to the school during the early evening of April 16, when the second shift of students was in attendance.

Approximately 70 boys and girls, ranging in age from 6 to 14, received myriad supplies, including paper, notebooks, pencils and erasers (plus pencil sharpeners), and pens.

Included with the supplies were cheerful “heart-to-heart” handmade greeting cards from the teacher-education students.

Two pictures of the North Carolina students and their dedicated teacher, Natalie Bates, accompanied the supplies.

Before passing them out, Hadi told the eager Afghan students about the cards and pictures.

“I told the kids that adult students in the United States donated these materials to help Afghan children,” stated Hadi.

Although the students could not read the kind sentiments, they were extremely happy to receive the cards and were drawn to their bright colors and designs.

“About 45 students were present when I delivered the supplies,” Hadi

explained. “I told them that one day they could do something like this for children in another part of the world.”

All told, four substantial boxes of supplies were delivered. Hadi enlisted the help of two of his brothers to transport the material to the school.

Though considered a private school, the children who attend do not pay any tuition, Hadi said.

The lack of tuition income makes it quite difficult to acquire and stock supplies, so this donation was most welcome.

For his part, Hadi was extremely

she spurred her students to action.

“Each semester, I send an e-mail to the students with information they need to know about the course that isn’t in the university catalog,” Bates said.

“I told them of the service learning project for the school in Kandahar. I suggested they commit \$1 to school supplies, or if they could afford more, fine.

“I said they could enlist families and friends, too. I let them know that I was so poor while in college that I would have had to scrape for a \$1.

“One of my students responded that she spent four years in the Army, has two children, is going to school on the GI Bill, and her husband just retired from the military, after two stints in Afghanistan.

“She thinks this project is ‘awesome.’ That’s enough confirmation for me.”

The students in Bates’ classes come from all walks of life, and they were very glad to help the children in Kandahar.

“In my classes, I have a Muslim mother from the Middle East; a Hispanic, ex-U.S. Army, truck-driver mother; a 54-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who wants to teach Spanish; and other students outside the norm.

“These are some of the awesome people who will take teaching to new heights.

“Our goal for the Kandahar project is to let the boys and girls know that education provides choices.”

The efforts of Bates’ students and countless others stand as a powerful testimony to the importance of education in the lives of Afghanistan’s most vulnerable citizens.



**In mid-April, Abdul Hadi, an interpreter who works at Camp Shir Zai, delivered a large donation of supplies to a small, private school in Kandahar City. Included with the supplies were two pictures of the teacher-education students from North Carolina who sent the material.**

pleased to assist with such a worthy cause.

“I am very glad that the students from the United States could help these children,” he declared.

“I appreciate the friendships we have with people in the United States. We will never forget the help that we are receiving.”

When Bates learned about the needs of the Kandahar school in late 2006,