



The Main Effort

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Donations buy school supplies for Shir Zai students

By CDR Chad Snee
205th RCAC PAO

More than 500 students attending school at Shir Zai received backpacks stuffed with supplies Oct. 12.

Shir Zai is a small village next to Kandahar Airfield, in southern Afghanistan.

The generous donation was the brainchild of Navy LCDR Phil Miller, who serves on the Embedded Training Team stationed at Camp Shir Zai, just a few kilometers from Kandahar Airfield.

Seeing the visible needs of the children during his daily commute to Camp Sher Zai, Miller decided to take matters into his own hands.

Not long after Miller arrived for his tour in Afghanistan, he arranged for a meeting with the school principal. Miller asked him what the students could use.

Pencils, pens, paper and other basic school supplies topped the principal's wish list.

Miller then contacted two of his friends back home in Connecticut, Darren Cunningham and Robert Deichert, who work with Miller as assistant attorneys general in Connecticut.

Cunningham and Deichert helped Miller set up a charity called "Project Support Kandahar's Kids," for the purpose of raising the necessary funds to buy the backpacks and supplies for the kids.

Miller made no secret of the valuable help that his colleagues provided: "I had a lot of advice on how to set up a charity properly."

Once the charity was up and running, Miller and his friends began using the power of e-mail to spread the word.



Boys and girls attending school in the village of Sher Zai, near Kandahar, Afghanistan, received colorful backpacks filled with school supplies Oct. 12. Navy LCDR Phil Miller spearheaded the effort to raise the money used to buy the backpacks and supplies for the children.

In addition, two local papers in Connecticut carried news of the charity.

It didn't take long for donations to start rolling in at a steady clip.

"Our original goal was \$3,000," Miller stated. "We ended up raising almost \$8,000."

An embroidery company in Corning, N.Y., run by a close friend of Miller, supplied the backpacks "at a very reduced cost," Miller said.

The resultant savings were funneled into buying more school supplies.

After the supplies arrived, Miller and his Air Force and Navy ETT coworkers loaded the backpacks and prepared them for delivery to the children.

Miller reported that there were broad smiles on the faces of the kids when they received their backpacks, as

shown by the picture accompanying this story.

Project Support Kandahar's Kids first effort on behalf of the Afghan people was a resounding success, and the charity will continue to accept donations.

"I would like to thank everyone who has contributed," Miller said. "It's just been great how everyone has come together and supported this."

To support the charity, send a check made payable to "Project Support Kandahar's Kids" to Darren Cunningham, 199 Farms Village Road, West Simsbury, CT 06092.

[Editor's note: All details in this story were contributed by SPC Robert Honeycutt of the 345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, who covered the Oct. 12 event at the Shir Zai school.]

Purple Heart, Infantry Badges awarded to soldiers

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

Honor and courage were on display Oct. 22, when CPT Michael Waldrop was awarded the Purple Heart medal for wounds sustained during combat operations in early July.

Waldrop is attached to the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command from the 209th RCAC, which operates in northern Afghanistan.

Waldrop and SFC Geoffery Miotke, a fellow 209th soldier working for the 205th, also received the Combat Infantryman Badge, for action in combat in early July.

Waldrop explained that his Purple Heart was awarded for shrapnel injuries he sustained to his right leg July 9, while fighting a well-fortified group of Taliban in Pashmul, which is located in the district of Panjwayi, in southern Afghanistan.

“The enemy had us pinned down, and we were taking a great deal of fire,” recalled Waldrop, who hails from Orlando, Fla.

Waldrop recounted that he and his men were extremely close to the indirect fire being called in to eliminate the enemy threat.

Because the enemy had a superior position, Waldrop and his men had no



COL Michael Petrucci, right, commander of the 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command, congratulates SFC Geoffery Miotke, left, and CPT Michael Waldrop, center, at an awards ceremony held Oct. 22. Waldrop was awarded the Purple Heart, and both men received the Combat Infantryman Badge.

choice but to risk the possibility of being hit by incoming friendly fire.

Several hours of intense fighting resulted in the capture of one enemy

detainee and one enemy killed in action, stated Waldrop.

The CIBs, Waldrop said, were awarded for his and Miotke’s participation in combat operations in the same region July 8.

COL Michael Petrucci, commander of the 205th RCAC, presented the awards to both men during a brief ceremony conducted at command headquarters, located on Kandahar Air Facility.

Upon congratulating both men, Petrucci acknowledged their contributions to those assembled in formation, saying, “These fine men represent who we are and what we do.”

The simple ceremony, which lasted perhaps five minutes, was a fitting way to acknowledge their bravery.

Following the ceremony, Miotke and Waldrop accepted the praise of their fellow brothers and sisters in arms.

Both men were very pleased that COL Petrucci presented their awards.

“I was honored to have the colonel pin on my CIB,” remarked Miotke, a native of Cottage Grove, Ore.

Miotke, 35, and Waldrop, 32, exude motivation and determination, and both men are 100-percent committed to the mission of the embedded training teams working with the Afghan National Army.

“I think the ETT mission here is a great one, one of the best in the Army,” Waldrop asserted.

Both men agreed that substantive progress is being made in Afghanistan, despite the recent resurgence of the Taliban.

“The insurgents are rising up in anger because we are beating them,” stated Miotke.

The commitment to excellence demonstrated by these two soldiers is one reason why Task Force Phoenix continues to help the Afghan people strive toward a brighter, more secure future.



Focusing Down Range



**By CSM Martin Deck
205th RCAC CSM**

We have successfully completed approximately six months in theater. This is a critical time for us, and we must remain focused on what we are doing and not let complacency kick us in the backside.

We need to take a look at how we are doing things now as to compared to how we did things when we first got here. There should still be a bit of apprehension every time we go on a mis-

sion. Remember: every time we leave the wire, it is a combat mission.

Always perform a mission brief prior to movement, even if you have worked with the same team the whole time you have been here.

By doing so, you ensure that you haven’t missed anything, and you allow for questions or concerns to be brought up. Pre-combat checks and inspections need to be looked at again. Remember, complacency kills.

Enough said.



Spotlight on Service: TSGT Brian Lackman



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

In August 2006, the motor pool at Forward Operating Base Apache stood in disarray.

FOB Apache, headquarters of 2nd Brigade, 205th Regional Corps Assistance Command, is a few kilometers north of Qalat, in southern Afghanistan.

Spare parts, equipment and tools languished in jumbled piles inside conex boxes, and numerous vehicles were in need of preventive maintenance.

The situation was serious because ground transport is often the most efficient means of moving around 2nd Brigade's operating area.

Some serious reorganizing was required, and Air Force Technical Sergeant Brian Lackman was just the person to fine-tune the Apache motor pool and make it hum like a well-oiled machine.

Within three days of assuming his duties in August as the NCOIC of the motor pool, Lackman organized work spaces in the conex boxes and constructed benches, shelves and storage bins for spare parts, petroleum, oil and lubricants.

Lackman, a Philadelphia native with a ready smile and robust sense of humor, approached each problem with methodical discipline, often employing limited resources to achieve creative solutions.

Tool shortages often meant fabricating substitutes to get the job done.

For example, Lackman used a small piece of heavy-gauge tie-down strapping to make a makeshift wrench that he uses to remove the oil filter from an up-armored humvee.

"Innovation is a big part of my job," Lackman said. "I often have to figure out ways to make repairs without having the required tools.

"You need to have patience to look

at the problem and find a creative solution. There are procedures to follow, but sometimes you have to modify things on short notice, to get a repair done."

In order to be effective, Lackman emphasized, you must have a thorough knowledge of the equipment you work on: "From replacing a light switch to repairing a transmission, I have to know all levels of repair."

After Lackman, 35, got his workspaces organized, he turned his attention to improving preventive maintenance for the 45 vehicles and other machinery assigned to FOB Apache.

He instituted front-to-back inspections of all vehicles and began issuing monthly bulletins reminding convoy commanders and truck commanders of important safety checks to conduct before taking a vehicle outside the wire.

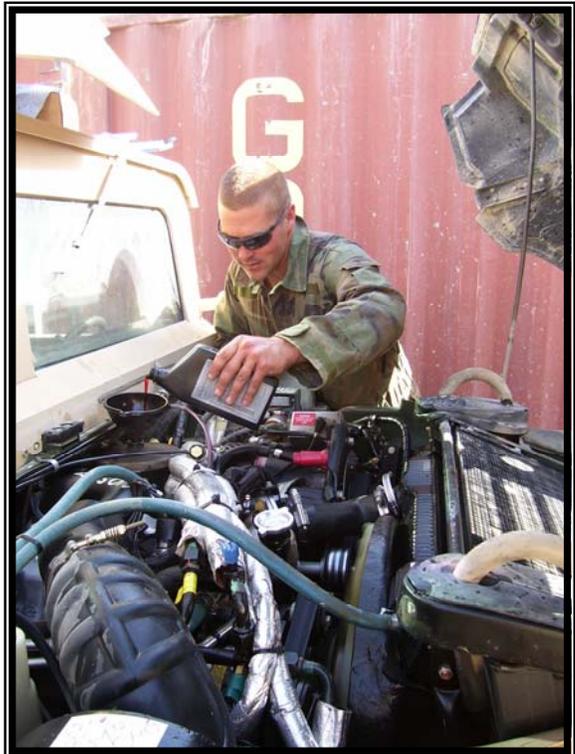
Whenever possible, Lackman strives to repair a vehicle at Apache, instead of sending it to a larger facility.

"I'd rather fix a vehicle at Apache because doing so keeps from putting lives at risk to take the vehicle elsewhere," asserted Lackman. "Also, a local repair saves money and gets the vehicle back to the user more quickly."

The need to effect repairs on site becomes especially critical when a convoy moving through the area has to stop at Apache because a vehicle needs to be fixed.

Such repairs often need to be done on a moment's notice, regardless of the time.

"There aren't any set hours,"



Air Force Technical Sergeant Brian Lackman adds power-steering fluid to an up-armored humvee Oct. 15 at Forward Operating Base Apache. Lackman is the innovative NCOIC of the FOB Apache motor pool.

Lackman stressed. "If a vehicle breaks down at 3 a.m., I've got to get moving and get it fixed."

The fast pace and numerous demands on his time keep Lackman charging at full speed, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

And he's not too proud to acknowledge that he can't do it all by himself.

"We're like a big family here — we all help each other to get the job done," Lackman affirmed.

As for the various cuts and bruises that are acquired through the course of his duties, Lackman joked that they just come with the territory.

"Hey, if I don't bleed at least once a day," he laughed, "I haven't done any work!"

Navy Supply Corps duo succeeds in Afghanistan

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

The motto of the Supply Corps, the logistics arm of the United States Navy, is “Ready for Sea.”

For two Supply Corps officers serving at Forward Operating Base Apache near Qalat, Afghanistan, a more appropriate creed might be “Ready for Anything.”

LCDR Brian Link of St. Louis and LT Pete Codinha of New York City have participated in a broad spectrum of experiences during their time at FOB Apache.

“From standing watches in the towers, to leading convoys, to learning to drive a tractor, we’ve taken on numerous tasks outside our areas of expertise,” Codinha stated.

During his six-month tour, Codinha served on a tiger team responsible for assessing high-value property belonging to the Afghan National Army. He also was the S3 and S4 mentor for the 5th Kandak, 2nd Brigade, ANA 205th Corps.

[Editor’s note: Codinha redeployed to the United States in late October.]

Link, who is about halfway through a 1-year tour, is the S4 garrison mentor for the ANA 2nd Brigade. He also handles all fuel and ammunition distribution for 2nd Brigade, 205th Regional Corps Advisory Command.

In their various roles, the two officers often find themselves supporting one another. If one is tied up with a particular assignment, the other steps in to assist.

“We definitely back each other up, and we do whatever is required to support the mission here,” said Codinha.

Among the biggest challenges both men face is being disconnected from regular sources of supply.

“We are isolated out here,” affirmed Link, and Codinha added that being at a remote base in southern Afghanistan often presents numerous logistical difficulties.

Nonetheless, both were quick to point out that they have a great deal of latitude to find solutions to the inevita-

ANA.

“We are not the doers for the ANA,” Codinha asserted. “We were mobilized to get the ANA to do their jobs for themselves.”

Over time, the objective is for the U.S. and coalition presence to be unnecessary.

“We do what we do because we’re trying to work ourselves out of a job,” Link observed.

Some days with the ANA, Codinha said, are much better than other days are: “At times, it’s one step forward, two steps back. Other days, it’s five steps forward. It’s really fantastic when they figure something out without prompting from us.”

Although some might see Codinha and Link as proverbial “fish out of water,” both men affirmed that their Navy backgrounds are an asset, not a hindrance.

“There are parallels to driving a ship and helping the ANA,” affirmed Codinha. “You simply adapt procedures that you are familiar with to get the job done.”

For example, Codinha took a checklist for getting a ship underway and modified it to produce a simple ANA document for organizing and conducting a convoy.

Despite the threat of rocket attacks and IEDs, both men acknowledged that their experiences in Afghanistan have been overwhelmingly positive.

“We tap into each other’s strengths,” said Link. “We work things as a team.”

Codinha echoed Link’s sentiments, saying, “You see the whole spectrum — you never do the same thing two days in a row. Our Navy culture has allowed us to succeed here.”

Overall, the duo represent a success story for the Navy and its warrior logisticians in the Supply Corps.



U.S. Navy Supply Corps officers LT Pete Codinha, left, and LCDR Brian Link man a tractor at forward operating base Apache near Qalat, Afghanistan.

ble problems that arise.

Both Codinha and Link cited the challenges and rewards that come with working with the ANA.

“A big part of our job is to mentor the ANA to develop a functioning supply system that will meet their needs in a timely fashion,” stated Link.

The trick, both men acknowledged, is to avoid doing too much for the ANA when obstacles present themselves.

To a certain degree, their skill and proficiency make them vulnerable to exploitation by the ANA, who sometimes lean on them too heavily to get what they need.

Nonetheless, both officers agreed that they would rather see ANA soldiers execute a poorly conceived plan and then learn from their mistakes, instead of solving the problem for the