SERPENT STAR

VOLUME I, ISSUE II | THE OFFICIAL NEWS PUBLICATION OF TASK FORCE 30TH MEDCOM | JULY 2009

SOUTH KOREANS BREAK GROUND ON NEW HOSPITAL

ALSO INSIDE----------

STRONG FOODS, STRONGER NATION

TOBY KEITH...LIVE!

NCO SPOTLIGHT

COMMANDER'S CORNER

We've had another busy month as the entire theater was focused on getting ready for the Marine operations in Regional Command South that just began. Our staff and subordinate units did a superb job in assessing and flexing medical assets where needed. Our Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen worked with the British, Dutch, Jordanians, Egyptians and certainly the Afghanis to ensure the appropriate distribution of critical medical resources across the theater. There's no doubt that we are making a difference in this war on terrorism.

Although it's been a lot of work, we've had some time to play too. On 30 June, we celebrated the 92nd birthday of the Medical Service Corps. We shared war stories (some of them even true) and enjoyed lively music by a duet from the 82d Airborne Division band as Medical Service Corps officers from all services across Bagram Air Field came together to celebrate this occasion. Don't worry, we'll also give the other Medical Department Corps their due with similar plans for their special days. Speaking of special days, for those of you back in Heidelberg, please pat Lisa on the back or give her a hug for all she's put up with in our 29 years (27 June 1980) of marriage. Her most recent feat of spouse sainthood was the solo receipt of our household goods and the establishment of our new home in Germany.

The 4th of July also gave the folks at Bagram the chance to unwind a bit with a number of festivities and a BBQ. July is also a banner month since we start our R&R leave this month. CPT Hardy is the test case and the rest of us will benefit from his experience and lessons learned on what to pack and how the system works. I encourage everyone to fully enjoy their much deserved leave but also to be responsible and be safe. We need everyone in the Task Force for the work before us and our families need us even more.

Finally, our Task Force family has become more diverse as a number of Air Force and Navy personnel have joined our ranks in the headquarters. We're all trying to figure out the different service approaches to our medical business. I'm hopeful that our request for a "Joint Task Force" designation will be approved based on our current staff composition and mission.

Thanks for your support, thoughts and prayers for our team.

Colonel Dennis D. Doyle

CSM'S CORNER

It comes without question that the war fighters who venture outside the wire must stay focused; their life depends on it. Outside the wire, the Soldier's weapon is always at the ready because every rock, every tree, and every pothole must be seen as a danger. They cannot afford to go on patrol and day-dream their day away. For the warfighter to lose focus is to lose their life.

Staying focused inside the wire is much more difficult but just as important. Inside the wire our weapon is not always at the ready and we do not always see every rock, every tree, and every pothole as a danger; however, losing focus is just a serious regardless of location.

In the military we like to say things like "one team" and "one fight"... If this is true we also have one goal and one focus. When those inside the wire lose their focus it must—and it will-- in time affect the focus of those outside the wire. Inside the wire we must fight the thought that our actions are not connected to those on patrol, because our actions support and sustain those outside the wire. If we are truly one team, we know what happens when that one link weakens and breaks.

Inside the wire danger does not lurk behind every rock, every tree, and every pothole, however, danger lurks in the Soldiers losing focus on their daily mission. Every job inside the wire has the potential to affect the Soldier on patrol. If focus is lost inside the wire the mechanic will do a poor job and vehicles will break down on patrol; if focus is lost inside the wire the finance Soldier does a poor job and Soldiers on patrol worry about their money and lose focus on their surroundings; if focus is lost inside the wire medics do a poor job and Soldiers on patrol wonder if they will be healed if brought to the hospital.

We are truly "one team" with "one fight", one goal and one focus. In order to win, every Soldier in every MOS on every day must stay focused.

CSM Christopher A. Walls

Major General Michael Tucker, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations for ISAF, poses alongside Colonel Dennis D. Doyle, TF 30th MEDCOM Commander. Major General Tucker visited the MEDCOM to discuss TF 30th MEDCOM's medical concept of operations and future expansion.

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STRONG FOODS, STRONGER NATION

A sweet, soft dough consisting of five simple ingredients and multivitamins - this is known as "Strong Food", a type of dough that the TF 30th MEDCOM Cooperative Medical Assistance is teaching Afghanistan citizens to make to combat malnourishment in local villages. A successful program in the country so far, the "Strong Foods" program, as it is officially known, has turned out to be beneficial to the battle against malnourishment in Afghanistan.

According to the Millenium Development Goals set for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, over a fifth of all Afghan children die before the age of five. Of these, a third die soon after birth, and more than half within the first year. These rates are due to lack of food.

The Strong Foods program, started only recently, has had much success in reaching provinces as far-outlying as Zabul, Paktika, Parwan, and Bamyan. The CMA teaches Provincial Reconstruction teams, who in turn travel far out to teach the local healthcare providers in their own village.

"More often than not, women are not allowed to leave the village," explains Senior Chief Marsha Burmeister of the CMA. "By going out to the villages, we're able to bring the training to them and effectively reach a bigger audience."

Strong Food is made with affordable ingredients provided by the United States Military and is easily obtained locally, yet contains copious amounts of nutrients essential to fighting malnourishment. Strong Food is high in calories, fat, carbohydrate and protein.

However, when it comes to training programs, certain questions arise. How is it known if the programs are continued? How are the malnourished faring as a result?

"We have follow-up programs to ensure that everything is running smoothly," says Lieutenant Commander Lisa Braun, also of the CMA. "We only give the villages six months of supply to make Strong Food. In exchange for more supply, they must provide data on the progress of the malnourished locals. Our aim is get malnourished children to gain 1 to 1.5 pounds per week. "

While the success of the Strong Foods program is impressive, Senior Chief Burmeister is quick to point out that it's only a smaller aspect of CMA operations in Afghanistan.

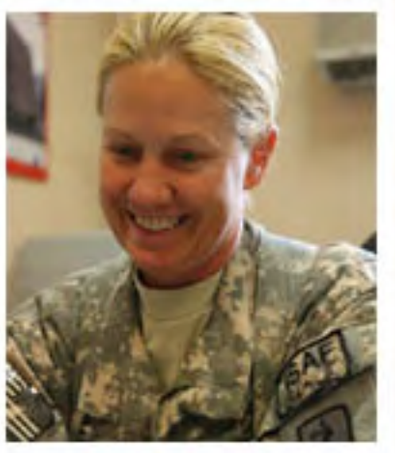
"Our number one goal is training to eradicate disease," she points out. "Training is an intangible thing, and can benefit people longer and can be less tampered with than tangible things. We want to push programs that adjust to the specific needs of certain areas of Afghanistan, without going against the government."

"We are also teaching the locals on very important healthcare issues," adds Lieutenant Commander Braun. "Afghanistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. We teach locals about the importance of birth spacing and hygiene. All of these affect the infancy death rate."

The CMA has also put into effect programs aimed at teaching things such as water sanitation, and has even employed a veterinary team and entomologist to teach about animals and insects.

The development of better health care in Afghanistan is important for the progress and eventual self-sufficiency of the nation. With programs like Strong Foods and its counterparts, the progress is, without a doubt, taking major steps to combat malnutrition.

Article by Second Lieutenant Jules Chan



(From top to bottom): a Soldier makes Strong Food during a training session, Senior Chief Burmiester (L) and Lieutenant Commander Braun (R), some of the Strong Food ingredient supply.

THE 92ND ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE CORPS BIRTHDAY

Celebraters gather around the Medical Service birthday cake. The cake was cut by the most senior and junior MSC Officers, COL Dennis Doyle (front left) and 2LT Jules Chan (front right).

War stories (some of them even true) were shared over lively music by a duet from the 82d Airborne Division band as Medical Service Corps officers from across Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, came together to celebrate the Army Medical Service Corps' 92nd Birthday on 30 June 2009.

The event, held at the Checo VIP Room of Koele Dining Facility, was hosted by Task Force 30th MEDCOM. MSC Officers from all services participated in the festivities. The program included a video hosted by Major General Rubenstein, the Corps Chief, highlighting the different opportunities within the Medical Service Corps.

The video also featured TF 30th MEDCOM's own Major Yun Fan, who described the many career and educational offerings available in our Corps.

Colonel Dennis Doyle, the TF 30th MEDCOM Commander and USFOR-A Surgeon, also presented a brief history of the Medical Service Corps, noting how its humble beginnings of a few soldiers in the Sanitary Corps had grown into a storied Corps, with thousands of MSC officers now serving in critical roles across the Army. An exciting game of MSC trivia, complete with prizes, followed the presentation.

The celebration concluded with a traditional cake cutting by the most senior and junior MSC officers present, COL Doyle and 2LT Jules Chan, respectively.

Article by Second Lieutenant Jules Chan

NCO SPOTLIGHT

To celebrate The Year of the NCO, the TF 30th MEDCOM will feature spotlights on several NCOs. This month, we highlight newly promoted Sergeant Jonathan Hsu of TF MED EAST.

What is your hometown?
Huntington Beach, CA

What is your age?
31

What is your MOS?
92Y

What is your base unit? How long have you been with your unit, and what is your job there?
My base unit's the 185th Medical Company (Dental Services). I've been with my unit for 28 months & my job there's to attend to the non-medical material needs of the Soldiers who're there.

What is one example of esprit-de-corps or camaraderie that you have seen amongst your unit in OEF?
One example of esprit-de-corps or camaraderie that I've seen amongst my unit in OEF's that all the Soldiers at my unit assemble for a monthly meeting, which allows everybody to check on each other's well being.

What is the thing that you love most about your line of work?
The thing I love most about my line of work's that I've the chance to interact with a bunch of different people from different backgrounds.

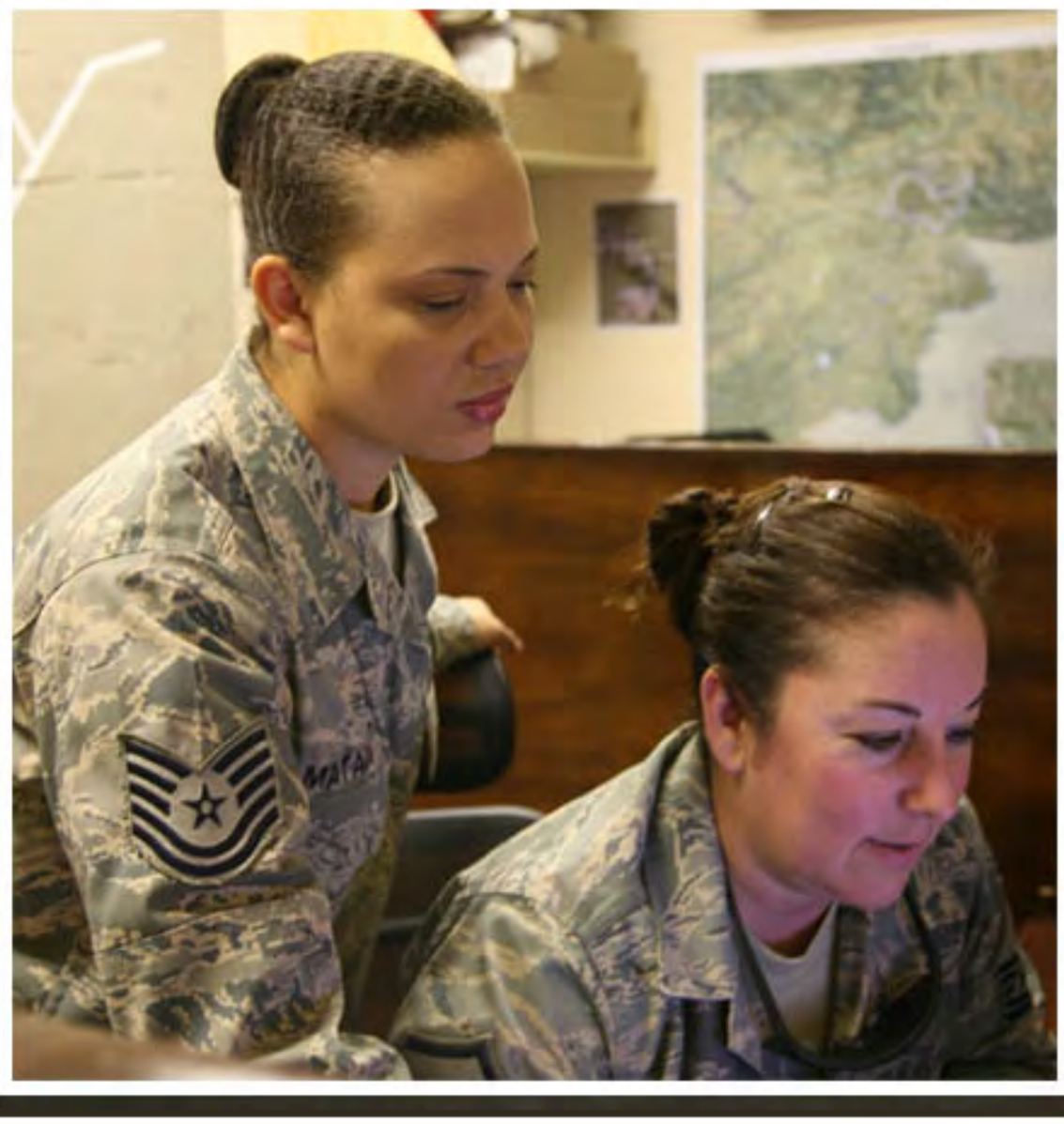
To you, what does it mean to be an NCO?
To me, to be an NCO means being a leader, who doesn't abuse authority, takes the initiative & is a professional.

What are your future plans?
My future plans are to attempt to re-class to 25B & take an EMT-B class, as I await my S1 superiors to enroll me in a 25B class.

AROUND BAGRAM

(Above) Soldiers of the Egyptian Army Hospital smile as they attend the awards ceremony held in early June. The hospital has received a new rotation of workers.

(Left) Captain Christine Collins assists Razia, a local Afghan child, in putting on her shoes. Razia was burned by phosphorus during a battle in her village. She returned to her home after months of care at Craig Joint Theater Hospital.



(Right) Tech Sergeant Nakisha Mataia looks over the shoulder of Master Sergeant Denise Desuacido during a high-tempo workday. Both are new additions to the TF 30th MEDCOM General Staff, which recently received an influx of Air Force personnel.

TF 30TH MEDCOM HHC UPDATE

June was another building month for the Command. We took over the responsibility for the medical care of our troops in Afghanistan at the beginning of the month, and we continue to reallocate our personnel and refine our business processes.

On the other hand, most of the company is getting settled in. Due to the more-frequent rotations of our Air Force roommates, some Soldiers have been able to score better bunks and room furniture. Soldiers are also starting or continuing their education. As much as 80% of the junior enlisted Soldiers were taking some type of courses as evident from the 1SG's review of the counseling program. That is awesome!

In reviewing the events we participated in, we started the month with the Patch Ceremony. The purpose of the ceremony was to recognize the 30th Medical Command's war-time service. As COL Doyle pointed out in his speech, it was a perfect day not only because of the beautiful clear blue skies and mountains in the background, but because it was June 6th – the 65th anniversary of "D-Day", the Invasion of Normandy in 1944. Sixty-five years later, the American Army is working again to defeat the enemies of our nation.

To show war-time service, Soldiers wear their unit's patch on their right shoulder sleeve. During the Patch Ceremony, COL Doyle "patched" members of HHC, making them snake sandwiches. Now we can proudly wear the 30th Medical Command's patch even after we are reassigned.

In the middle of the month, we celebrated the Army's 234th Birthday. The Army was established in 1775 by the Second Continental Congress to fight in the Revolutionary War against the British. Although the company was not planning anything specific to celebrate the day, I heard some of our Soldiers discuss running 234 miles to mark the occasion. I decided to embrace the idea and recruit runners. It was a pleasant surprise that lots of Soldiers were enthusiastic about being a part of the run.

When June 14th came around, we had more than enough people to run the 8.5 miles each that it would take to complete 234 miles collectively. A few runners stood out in particular: The group of Soldiers who carried the guidon the entire way, SGT St. Joy who sacrificed his inner thighs because he could not find his shorts and had to run in PT pants, CPT Dunlap who ran the loop and then went back for more, CW2 Quinones and SPC Englebrecht who braved the heat and completed the distance even though they had running profiles, and SGT Luttrell who apparently woke up late, had a full breakfast, and then did a ruck-run around the airfield.

I would also like to recognize those who braved the 8.5 mile loop for the first time. It takes courage to start out on such a long run without knowing exactly what you will encounter. However, that is part of the joy of running. Jesse Owens, one of the greatest runners of the 20th century, stated this concept succinctly saying, "I always loved running... it was something you could do by yourself, and under your own power. You could go in any direction, fast or slow as you wanted, fighting the wind if you felt like it, seeking out new sights just on the strength of your feet and the courage of your lungs." I hope to see Soldiers continue to brave the loop throughout the year.

After such a great beginning, June also became a month of tragedy. Two Soldiers from other units were killed on Bagram by rocket attacks. This is not a frequent occurrence, so it rattled a lot of us here. In response to this attack, HHC revised and practiced its alert procedures. The main goal with the revision of the procedures was to minimize troop movement outside of areas providing cover (like the barracks most of us live in). I know I feel more comfortable now that our Soldiers are better trained and protected should another attack occur.

Lastly, I would like to mention our Family VTC Session program. As I write this, we have completed three of these sessions. The reviews were great. The VTC interface gives Soldiers and their families another option to connect with each other. The benefits are better video and audio than Skype, a better environment for the Soldier (Skyping in the barracks room is sometimes difficult), and whole families can talk to and see each other all at one time.

However, I would caution everyone that there are limitations: meetings need to be scheduled a few days ahead of time and can be canceled based on the mission. Then there is the limited availability of VTC rooms in locations outside of Bagram. We also have to realize that the commo Soldiers in the rear, SGT Barrios and SGT Stone, are normally working overtime to support this. Thank them for assisting! With all that said, contact your Soldier and the FRG and schedule a meeting time. See if you like it!

In the coming weeks the company has a some exciting events to look forward to: the 92nd Medical Service Corps Birthday (almost all our officers are part of the Medical Service Corps), the 4th of July, a company barbeque, the 234th Army Medical Department Birthday, and (for me at least) the lovely Julia and I are getting married! Again!

I promise I'll take lots of photos!

Viva San Fermin!

Captain Thomas M. Hardy

COL WIESEN

LTC SANDERS

CONGRATULATIONS & FAREWELL

TF 30th MEDCOM congratulated one Officer and said farewell to another as Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Wiesen was promoted to Colonel and Lieutenant Colonel John Sanders moved onto his new unit.

COL Wiesen, a Preventive Medicine Physician, mentioned upon being promoted that his own immediate family had never witnessed one of his many promotions.

"It's definitely been a weird situation," he told the TF 30th MEDCOM crowd. COL Wiesen works for the Clinical Services section of TF 30th MEDCOM.

LTC John Sanders, who had been with TF 30th MEDCOM for two years, reflected fondly on his time with the G-4 Section he commanded.

"It was a rewarding experience to see all the people who worked under me start to become self-sufficient."

LTC Sanders, who is now headed to the VII Army in Heidelberg, Germany, went above and beyond the call of duty and deployed to Afghanistan to help TF 30th MEDCOM with their in-theater settlement. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

Article by Second Lieutenant Jules Chan

NCO SPOTLIGHT

To celebrate The Year of the NCO, the TF 30th MEDCOM will feature spotlights on several NCOs. This month, we highlight Staff Sergeant Kerry Turner of TF MED-EAST.

What is your hometown?
I grew up mostly in Michigan (military child), currently my wonderful wife of 18 years, my two children (16 and 2), and two boxers live in Savannah, Ga.

What is your age? 38

What is your MOS?
68S – Preventive Medicine

What is your base unit? How long have you been with your unit, and what is your job there?
I am with the 172nd Medical Detachment (PM), stationed in Hunter Army Airfield, Savannah, GA. I have been with the unit for 3 years now and I am the Detachment Sergeant.

What is one example of esprit-de-corps or camaraderie that you have seen amongst your unit in OEF?
When it comes to camaraderie we all work together in accomplishing the mission. Each Soldier understands what it takes and can step up and fulfill those requirements. Plus after 14 months as with any family we have seen the good and the bad and grown together to be better people.

What is the thing that you love most about your line of work?
One of the greatest parts of our job is the ability to move around and see the country. We get to assist and help so many of our fellow Soldiers in the battle space keep healthy and continue the fight.

To you, what does it mean to be an NCO?
The NCO corps has gone through many changes during my time in the Army. Today's NCO corps has many more challenges to handle, with deployments, training, promotions, and family. Ensuring Soldier's remain on top of all aspects of their professional and personal goals is a very difficult job. Since taking the Detachment Sergeant position, I have learned many things that have helped me grow in being a better leader. The NCO Corps has a long and proud heritage, and the future NCO's out there will have the battle mind to get the mission done and take care of their soldiers.

What are your future plans?
As far as my future plans, I have wrapped up my BS degree in Environmental Studies and plan to continue working into for a Master's of Environmental Science. I am looking to stay in the Ft. Stewart area to allow my son complete high school.

THE ARMY'S 234TH BIRTHDAY - DEPLOYMENT STYLE

(Left) A group of TF 30th MEDCOM HHC Soldiers carry the guidon on a portion of the run. (Right) Sergeant Alex St. Joy smiles as he treks the eight-mile course.

It was the Army's 234th Birthday, but members of Task Force 30th MEDCOM weren't blowing out candles. Instead, they were celebrating the Army's Birthday by running a combined 234 miles around Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

In a unique way of celebrating the birthday occasion, 28 volunteers from the TF ran 8 miles each around the Bagram Perimeter, making for a combined 234 miles.

The idea for the birthday run was put into effect by Captain Thomas Hardy, TF 30th MEDCOM HHC Commander. "A few NCOs were talking about the thought of having a run for the Army's birthday, and I put a firm grip on the idea and made it a reality. "
The thought of running eight miles, especially on a morning fenced for personal time for most Soldiers, might have been a big hindrance to some people. However, the response from the TF 30th MEDCOM was overwhelming. "As I searched for volunteers, everyone I asked gave a quick 'heck yeah, '" Captain Hardy said.

For many of the participants, it was the first time they had run such an extended distance. "I've never run this long before," said Specialist Brittany MacArthur. "It was hard, but worth it because we had great time."

Other participants went above and beyond. A group of soldiers carried the HHC guidon the entire way, while some others, upon completing the 8 miles, went back for more.

"Truthfully, it was pretty different," said Sergeant Aaron McDannell, who held the HHC, TF 30th MEDCOM guidon for over two miles of the run. "Different, but fun and unique."

Article by Second Lieutenant Jules Chan

A NEW HOSPITAL FOR AFGHANISTAN

SOUTH KOREANS BREAK GROUND ON NEW COMPOUND

Dignitaries break ground in a traditional ceremony held at the South Korean Compound.

By the end of 2009, Bagram Air Field hopes to not only celebrate the beginning of a new year, but also the opening of a new, state-of-the-art, South Korean hospital compound.

With a prestigious groundbreaking ceremony held June 24th, the building of a new, 104,000 square-foot compound commenced. Hospital workers dressed in tradition Korean garb and handed out gifts to all that came in attendance. With the 82nd Airborne Division Band playing in the background, dignitaries cut a ceremonial ribbon and also partook in a ceremonial shovel-breaking of the ground. Balloons flew into the sky as an enthusiastic crowd cheered the new venture.

The commencement served as the marking of a new era in the Korean hospital's history. Originally opened in 2002, the hospital was operated under the South Korean Military's control. It was turned over to civilian control in 2008, when a delegation from the South Korean government came to the hospital to do a feasibility study.

"We wanted to help the local people of Afghanistan, but we did not have a lot of capabilities," says Bae Han Jin, the Counselor and Director of the hospital. "We felt frustration and felt the need to upgrade our facilities and manpower."

Soon after the study, a massive overhaul was approved.

The new hospital will serve as a Role II facility with surgical capacity. It will have room for 30 inpatients, and will serve 200-300 outpatients daily; the old Korean hospital served less than one-fourth of that number. The new hospital will also provide working opportunities for many. While the old hospital only employed around 40 people, the new facility will call for up to 90 personnel, many of whom will be local Afghanistan workers.

Major Kim Beom Su, a South Korean Military Officer who serves as the Deputy Chief of the Korean Medical and Vocational Team, is very proud of the relationship the hospital has built with local healthcare personnel.

"We train the locals so that they can go back and bring the knowledge to their home," Su says. "We train the trainers."

Major Kim, who was only in Afghanistan on a six-month tour, extended his stay an additional six months to see the completion of the project.

"I couldn't leave," he explains. "I had to see it for myself!"

The Korean hospital will offer a variety of student programs, from six-month internship programs to merit programs. The merit program offers a chance for the hospital students to actually go to South Korea to attend classes at medical schools and even do some on-the-job training.

In addition to the hospital, the compound will include high-end technology, with doors that require fingerprint identification to enter and an infrared alarm system. More security guards will be hired, and operations will go 24 hours straight. The compound will also include the Stephousing Facility, a three-story billet for all the workers that includes a Tae Kwan Do gym and Korean Dining Facility.

"Everyone is always asking if the rumors are true about the Korean Dining Facility," Jin says with a laugh. "The rumors are very true."

Jin and Su understand the extreme challenge ahead. The 104,000 square foot compound is slated to be built in only six months.

"We want to show all the naysayers that it can be done," says Jin. "We are using all the safety measures for building the compound. All high-tech materials are being used."

When it comes down to their overall feelings of the project, however, there are no qualms or reservations, but pure joy and passion.

"When it's finished, we can serve the Afghan people more," Su says through a smile, "and it will be good for CJTF-82 operations."

"I am in charge of the whole project, "adds Jin. "Right now, there Is no other mission for me than to finish as planned. I am very happy."

Article by Second Lieutenant Jules Chan

An artist rendering of what the new South Korean Compound will look like upon its opening by the end of 2009. The hospital will have 30 inpatient beds and serve 200-300 outpatients daily. The compound will also have a three-story billeting building for the hospital workers, complete with Tae Kwon Do gym and dining facility.

759TH FORWARD SURGICAL TEAM UPDATE

FOB ABAD----------

FOB BOSTICK----------

The 759th Forward Surgical Team (Airborne) is a 20 Soldier team responsible for performing far forward emergent life-saving and damage control surgeries. The team is currently performing split base operations both at FOB Wright (Asadabad) and FOB Bostick (Naray) with 10 personnel at each location. Each member is critical to the accomplishment of the team's mission. Recently, the team has been involved in the following events:

ABAD

With just two months in Afghanistan, the FST in Asadabad experienced its first MASCAL, receiving three patients at one time, one of which required immediate life-saving intervention and two who required surgery. The event did not come too soon either. Just two days prior to this real-life MASCAL, the team conducted an intricate FOB-wide night exercise involving 10 patients that were initiated from three different locations on the FOB. The team's efforts and performance during the exercise directly contributed to their calm demeanor and professional attitudes in the midst of an actual chaotic event.

BOSTICK

The skills of the FST members were truly tested when the team received notification of two MEDEVAC casualties. Like clockwork, each member quickly prepared their section to receive trauma and immediately began resuscitative efforts. Suffering from a severe head injury, one casualty began to posture and developed agonal breathing. His right pupil was fixed and dilated to 10mm. Seemlessly, the patient was intubated and taken to the OR for immediate decompressive craniectomy; the first to be performed at FOB Bostick. The OR team, with the aid of the cross-trained ATLS and ICU team members, maintained stable vital signs, while craniectomy was performed with rudimentary instruments. With return of the right pupil to 3mm, the patient's condition improved so that MEDEVAC to the next level of care was possible.

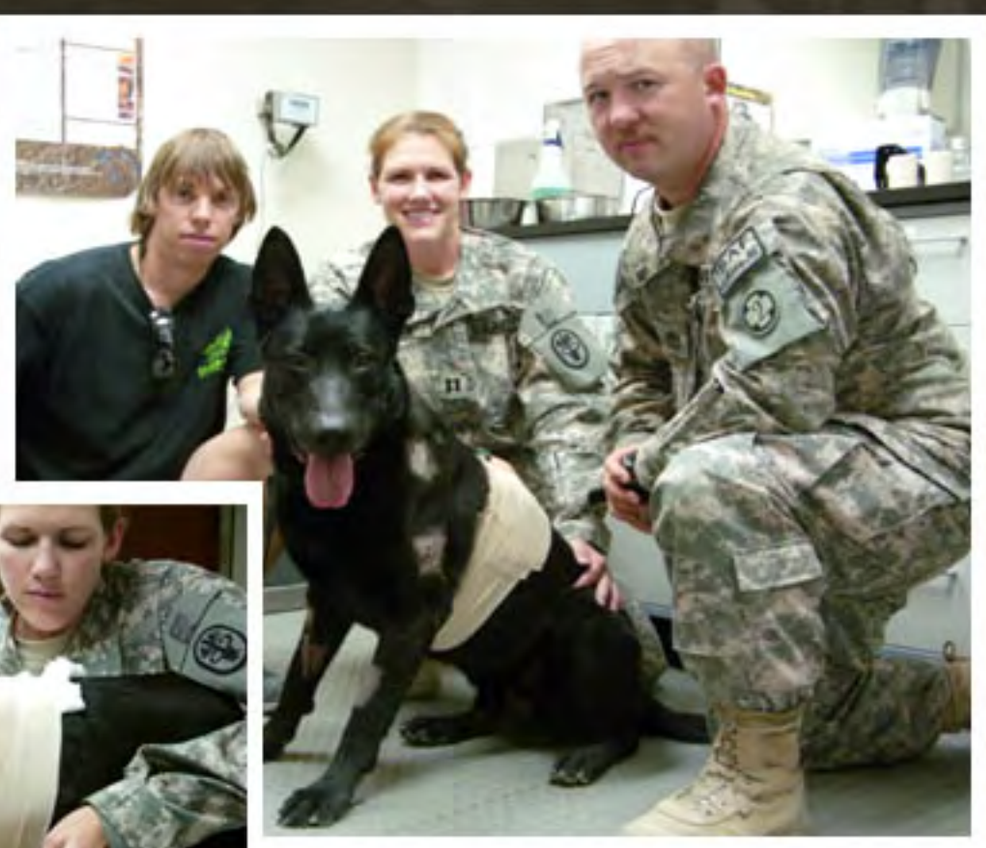
Article by Sergeant First Class Kendra Gasque

NAVY DOG HEALING AFTER IED BLAST

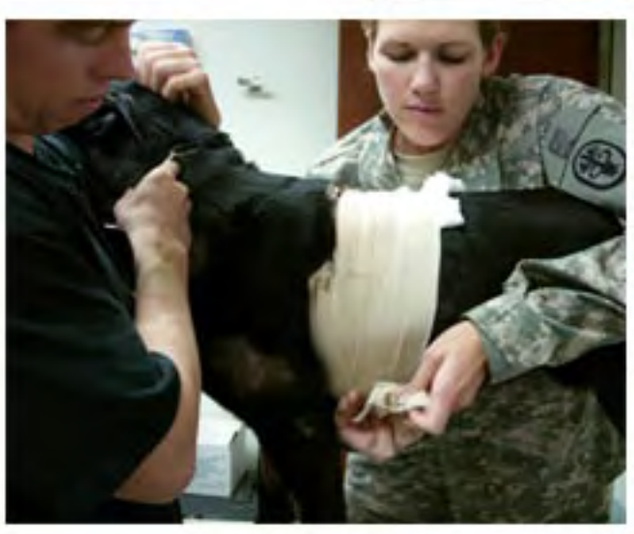
993RD MEDICAL DETACHMENT (VETERINARY SERVICES)

Nero was surgically treated at the Bagram Veterinary Hospital to remove shrapnel from wounds suffered while on duty in June of 2009. Nero is a four year old Malinois Dutch Shepard and is trained for explosive detection and patrolling. Nero had a long surgery to remove the shrapnel followed by several days of medication, wound care, and bandage changes. He is now doing great!

Article by Lieutenant Colonel Georgette Goonan



From left to right: Nero's Navy dog handler, Nero, Veterinarian Captain Chance, & Animal Care Specialist Sergeant First Class Braun.



Nero is comforted by his handler as his wounds are treated.

TOBY KEITH... *Live!* 758TH FORWARD SURGICAL TEAM

A typical day in Afghanistan for deployed Soldiers does not usually include private concerts from country music stars. However, members of the 758th FST paused their normal Friday afternoon duties to enjoy a concert by Toby Keith.

Thanks to the United Service Organization, concerts for Soldiers in East Paktika are possible. Essentially, Toby Keith gives up much of his time, money and effort to brighten the day of deployed troops. With the help of the USO, Toby Keith traveled for about two weeks in Afghanistan playing at various FOBs and COPs and the 758th FST was fortunate to be able to take part. Toby Keith landed by helicopter at FOB Orgun-E to a warm reception from waiting Soldiers eager to shake his hand, get a picture or receive an autograph. Toby Keith gladly obliged as many Soldiers as he could.

While the concert stage was set, Toby Keith visited the troops to better understand the jobs FOB Orgun-E Soldiers undertake daily and what diversions the Soldiers use to keep themselves busy and entertained in their off time.

Once the show was complete, LTC Minalga (3/509th IN-FOB Commander) shared with Toby Keith a small token of the FOB's appreciation for his dedication to deployed troops over the last decade. Toby Keith was presented with a 3-Geronimo coin as well as an ACU top decked out with the Airborne and 25th Infantry Division patches.

Now - the part most have been waiting for - Toby Keith live, in Afghanistan! Toby Keith performed in front of several hundred Soldiers and civilians working on FOB Orgun-E. Although the performance was brief due to Mr. Keith's busy schedule, the break from daily routine was a welcomed distraction. Toby Keith performed hit songs to include "As Good As I Once Was" and "I Love This Bar". He also played an Army crowd favorite, "The Taliban Song", about US Troops coming to Afghanistan earlier in the War on Terror.

At the end of the show, Soldiers received photos and autographs with the country music icon. Toby Keith's songs describe many of the experiences of American life that Soldiers miss most and the tunes were a small reminder of the good life back home they will someday enjoy again.

Article and Photos by
First Lieutenant David Meservey

758th FST CONDUCTS PEDIATRIC ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT TRAINING

The Orgun area has a large population of infants and children and limited resources to care for these pediatric cases. Recently, the medics and surgeons of the 758th FST have seen an increase in pediatric cases since arriving at FOB Orgun-E. So it was decided that some additional training was needed to treat and care for these children. Fortunately, SFC Matthew Gritta and SSG Matt Harmon, Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) Instructors were able to provide a PALS certification course this month. FST members were provided the training needed to recognize infants and children at risk for cardiopulmonary arrest, strategies to prevent arrest and the cognitive and psychomotor skills needed to resuscitate and stabilize those in respiratory failure, shock or cardiopulmonary arrest. Those who care for acutely ill or injured children will have a tremendous opportunity to save lives through implementation of the PALS training.

Article and Photos by First Lieutenant David Meservey

(Clockwise from left) Abdul, a local child, shows burns to his leg and chest, Private Alaniz applies a dressing to Shafiqa's knee, SGT Williams and Abdul pose during recovery from an operation.

772ND FORWARD SURGICAL TEAM UPDATE

Greetings from the 772nd "Air Assault" Forward Surgical Team. The 772nd FST is stationed out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The unit served as the 801st FST when previously assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, "Air Assault." The 801st FST deployed in support of the 101st ABN for Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield. The 801st FST was then re-designated the 772nd FST in 2005 and deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-06. The 772nd FST served 12 months in Baghdad at Ibn Sina Hospital and served under both the 44th MED BDE and then the 30th MED BDE.

The 772nd FST established a rigorous training program after returning from Iraq. The 772nd FST established a monthly FTX that incorporated clinical rotations to Vanderbilt University Medical Center, where the team worked in the Trauma Rooms, Trauma ICU and Burn ICU. FST team members additionally rotated through Blanchfield Army Community Hospital. FST personnel also attended Air Assault School, the Joint En-route Care Course, BLS, PALS, PEARS, ACLS and the Army Trauma Training Course in Miami. The FST developed and validated Sling-load operations and Air Assault Surgical Operations with the 101st ABN prior to deployment to Operation Enduring Freedom 08-09.

The 772nd FST deployed to OEF in July 2008 and is currently serving a 15 month deployment to OEF 08-09. Based at FOB Fenty, the 772nd FST maintains the largest medical facility in AO Duke. The 772nd FST is co-located with the Medical Company of the 201st BSB, 4BCT, 1ID. On arrival in theatre, the 772nd was the only FST not "split" between two locations and located with a Medical Company. The Medical Company provides the FST with ambulance, lab, X-ray, blood, admin, PAD, logistical support and additional patient holding capability.

The 772nd FST was called upon three times to conduct additional mobile Surgical Missions. The first mission occurred three weeks after arrival. The FST sent a nine member team to FOB Ghazni to support the 1/506th PIR (101st ABN). The team was later called to support CJSOTF-A forces in RC-West for a 5 week mission in an austere environment where seven team members were awarded Combat Medical Badges for their actions under fire. The FST was later tasked to "split" and establish a new FST site at FOB Shank in preparation for the arrival of the 8th FST from Hawaii. Following a successfully handoff to the 8th FST the team was reunited FOB Fenty and moved into a new hardened medical facility in April 2009.

The 772nd FST's current deployment is coming to an end, but the experiences and lives impacted will endure a lifetime.

"Blade of the Eagle"
Major Todd Jackson

440TH BLOOD SUPPORT DETACHMENT UPDATE

Yet another month has fallen by the wayside. The month of May went just about as fast as the rest. We've been staying incredibly busy now that it is summer. It's hard to believe we've been here over a year. As of today, we've completed 400 days and have 55 days remaining. All the Soldiers are starting to get excited about going home. It's been a long deployment, but it's gone by relatively quickly.

I started out the month of May with a trip to Qatar for a medical conference. This was my second trip there and was able to eat at Chili's on base. They also have a swimming pool right next to the restaurant. It was a very nice pool and, much to my surprise, the pool was always empty.

The 440th celebrated two birthdays this month. Both Staff Sergeant Hernandez and Specialist Prewitt celebrated their second birthday over here. When you think about leaving home a certain age and returning two years older, it makes the 15-month deployment seem even longer. I believe it was a bit depressing for these Soldiers.

As of June 1st, we fall under a new command. We will be changing from the 101st Airborne Division to the 30th Medical Command from Germany.

The next team from the 440th will be finished with block leave next week and we can finalize much of the planning and coordination. Everyone here is so excited and looking forward to them arriving. The countdown is on and it is winding down quickly.

Until next month...

Major Matthew T. Swingholm

LIVE FROM AFGHANISTAN

LIEUTENANT COLONEL PROMOTES SON TO CAPTAIN VIA VIDEO

Then-1st Lt. Travis Black, 87th Logistics Readiness Squadron Materiel Management Flight commander, prepares to take the oath of office administered by his father, Lt. Col. Steven Black, chief of nutritional medicine at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, via video teleconference May 29. Captain Black and his family had not seen the lieutenant colonel since he deployed four and a half months ago.
(U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Danielle Johnson)

"Can you hear me, Dad? ... Pop, can ya hear?"

"Loud and clear."

And just like that, from halfway across the world, Lt. Col. Steven Black, Chief of Nutritional Medicine at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, was ready to promote his son, then-1st Lt. Travis Black, Materiel Management Flight commander, 87th Logistics Readiness Squadron, to captain at McGuire Air Force Base via video teleconference (VTC).

With a nearly life-size, live video stream of his father behind him, and his mother, Carolyn Black, and wife, Jillian Black, present to pin on his Captain insignia, Capt. Black's promotion ceremony also served as a special, miniature family reunion.

Lt. Col. Black left his home in Colorado Springs, where he is a professor of biology at the U.S. Air Force Academy, in early January on a deployment to Afghanistan. It had been more than four and half months since he had seen his family.

With thousands of miles in between the two, Capt. Black, a 2005 Air Force Academy graduate, had originally "written off the idea" of having his father promote him, said Carolyn Black.

"But he was the best choice," added Jillian Black. "Travis looks up to him so much as an officer and as a dad. It just made it that much more special and personal."

Capt. Black described how his father guided his career. "My father has always been a sounding board for me," he said. "As a young cadet, he encouraged me to keep pushing through the first year of the Academy." Now, both active-duty officers, "his guidance has not stopped — he often shares the highs and lows, good and bad, and his overall 'lieutenant colonel' take on leadership."

Lt. Col. Black's dual role as father and officer is not new to the family. "The title 'Captain Black' still reminds me of my father," Capt. Black said. "He wore that rank when we first moved to Colorado Springs (in 1997). It's humbling to wear the rank he once wore."

As Capt. Black develops as an Air Force officer, he said he looks to his father as a role model. "I know I have big shoes to fill — my father is such a great, level-headed, passionate, and charismatic officer. I can only hope to live up to the officer he is."

Capt. Craig Straight, installation deployment officer and the ceremony's presiding official, offered a few words of advice to Capt. Black: "[He] will face significant challenges, as we all do in the real world. I know he'll do well." He described the promotion ceremony as an "awesome, awesome thing" and being a part of it as "an honor."

Lt. Col. Black described himself as "one proud papa" to be able to promote his son to the rank he once wore.

"It was really special to Travis, especially because his dad administered the oath when he was sworn in as a second lieutenant into the Air Force," said wife Jillian Black. "And as his dad gets closer to retirement, this may be the last promotion he'll be able to administer the oath for."

While Lt. Col. Black was an easy first choice to administer the oath of office, the logistics of the video teleconference were a bit more complicated. Only three places at McGuire AFB have the capability to host a VTC. "Once I knew the medical clinic had the capability needed, it instantly became my first choice," said Capt. Black. "My father, a medical corps officer, is stationed at a medical facility at Bagram AB. I knew it would be unique to have two medical facilities coordinate this promotion."

Working out the technical aspects of VTC was a collaboration between Gerald Calabro, 87th Medical Support Squadron systems analyst, and Tech. Sgt. Terry Rainey, NCOIC of the information systems shop at Bagram AB, Afghanistan.

"We get requests for VTCs all the time," said Calabro, "but this was the first request we've had for this sort of event. Everyone was happy to jump on the bandwagon to get it done."

More than a week of planning and testing culminated in a successful 20-minute promotion ceremony. The two hospitals connected via satellite, "which can be difficult due to the high winds and dusty conditions," said Sgt. Rainey. "Fortunately, we were able to configure our VTC systems directly to McGuire," bypassing the typical connection that must go through Landstuhl, Germany.

Although time was a concern, and just minutes before the ceremony was to begin the connection timed out, but when 10 a.m. came, everything went smoothly.

"There was the typical half-a-world-away communication delay that is expected on overseas calls, and the occasional scrambling of the audio, but otherwise it was the next best thing to being there!" said Lt. Col. Black. "(Calabro and Sergeant Rainey) deserve a bonus!"

Both men were able to see their work pay off. "It was well worth all the coordination and setup. Especially when you see how much it meant to Capt. Black and how proud Lt. Col. Black was to deliver the oath to his son," said Sergeant Rainey.

"I felt really good about doing something outside the typical work spec. It was definitely a feel good thing," added Calabro.

While Lt. Col. Black's virtual presence made the promotion ceremony unique, it was the entire family being together which made the occasion particularly special for Capt. Black. "They have seen me at my best and worst throughout my short Air Force career. All of them are always cheering me on, giving me advice, and just listening when necessary," said the captain. "I was thrilled that my mother was there to share the opportunity to see my father live through the VTC capabilities."

Carolyn Black was equally pleased to take part in the ceremony. "I was impressed Travis put it together — actually made it happen," she said. "And I know it meant a lot to Steve."

The audience that gathered for the ceremony, which included many Airmen from the 87th LRS, could also see Lt. Col. Black's excitement as he took a moment away from his official demeanor to snap a picture of the streaming video on his end.

"It was incredibly gratifying to be a part of such an important milestone —even though I was on the other side of the world," said Lt. Col. Black. "And it was an honor to be among people who respect Travis and provide him such strong support."

Article by Erin Blauvelt, 87th Air Base Wing Public Affairs
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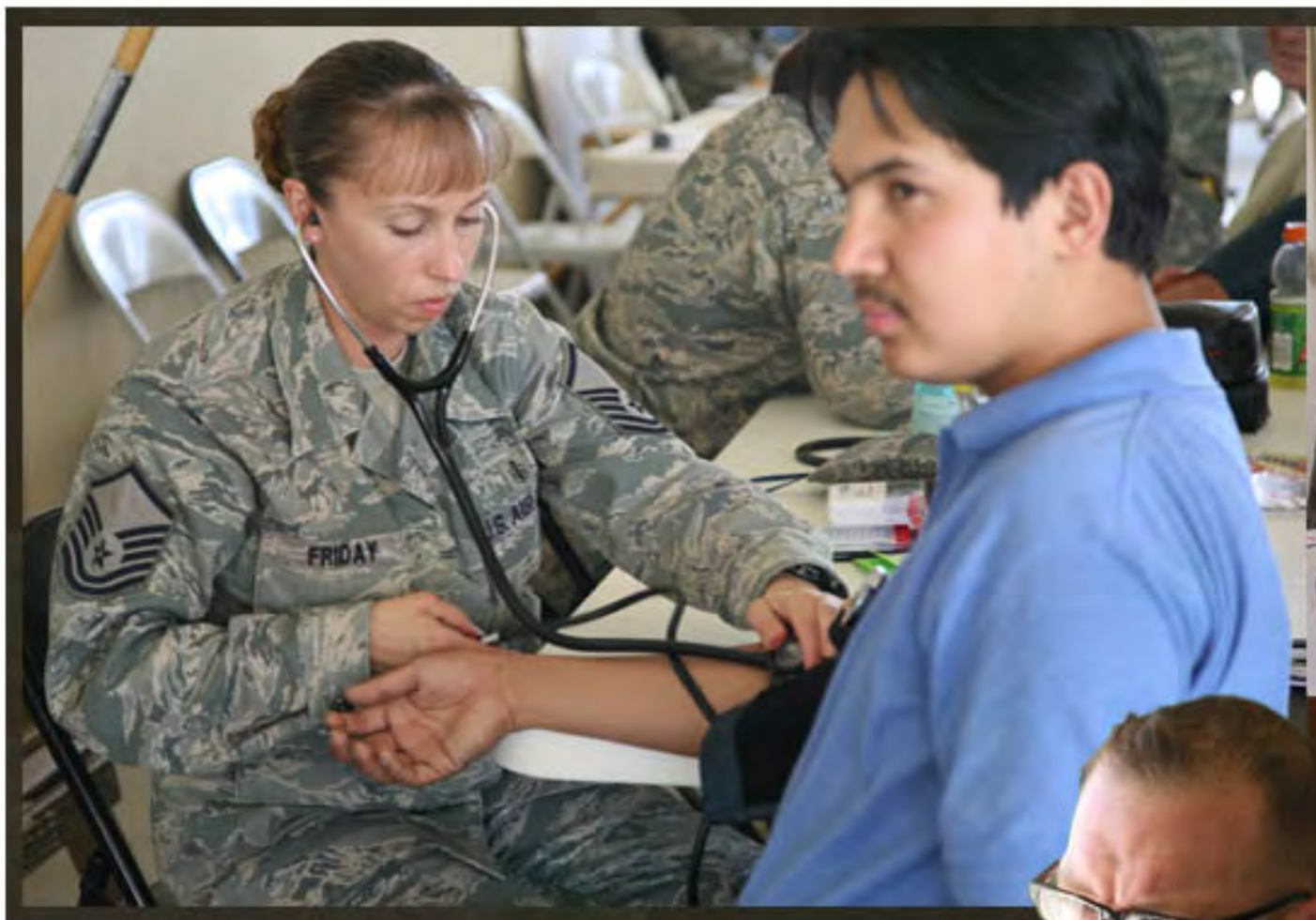
scenes from the TASK FORCE MED-EAST health fair 2009