
Bagram News Express

Fighting Terror, Building Peace

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Start Right, Finish Strong

By Chief Master Sgt. John Kimball
755 Air Expeditionary Group
superintendent

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – The 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Commander Brig. Gen. James Holmes, recently started a wing campaign that really makes a lot of sense, with multiple meanings – Start Right, Finish Strong. Within that campaign slogan, one can find the three Air Force core values: Integrity First and Service before Self – Start Right. Service before Self and Excellence in All We Do – Finish Strong.

The Air Force has attempted to get you started right by providing some limited training prior to your arrival here. Perhaps the training was not always focused where you thought it might have been. Perhaps it was not always to the depth and level you thought you needed. Perhaps some of it was of little or no value to your perceived mission in Afghanistan. However, it was an attempt at a right start. The rest is now up to you, as is a strong finish at the end of your assignment.

In an article to Airmen, dated April 7, 2008, Michael W. Wynne, the Secretary of the Air Force, said, “Excellence is about getting the right

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level of training and taking personal accountability for being ready, willing and able to execute the mission, whether administrative or operational, correctly and efficiently.” I want to concentrate on “taking personal accountability for being ready, willing and able to execute the mission. . .” as well as Service before Self.

Many of you volunteered for duty in Afghanistan for a variety of reasons. I have talked to some and they said they were due to deploy anyway and wanted to exercise some control over the location. Others told me they volunteered in order to get a base-of-preference. Some needed to deploy to get an edge on a promotion or an assignment. And some felt the need to serve in the Global War on Terrorism in a meaningful and personal way. All are valid reasons for serving in Afghanistan. Now it is time to take personal accountability for executing the mission. It is now time to place service before self, and put

the mission first, for the right reasons.

Unfortunately in too many cases, I have failed to see Airmen taking on personal accountability for their assigned missions. I have seen too many instances of “it’s all about me” versus it’s about the mission, it’s about Operation Enduring Freedom and the ongoing Global War on Terrorism. I fail to understand the need for many Airmen to question almost everything (especially uniform wear instructions and guidance) and to continually express a desire to disrupt military good order and discipline.

Retired Gen. Ronald Fogleman, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, said “missions will fail with potentially devastating consequences” without a willingness by our Airmen “to subordinate personal interests for the good of one’s unit, one’s service, and one’s nation.” He went on to answer the

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Heavy Load

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan - A-10 Crew chiefs move a fuel POD on the flightline here May 15. The new rotation for A-10 units started arriving May 13. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester)

Airmen, Soldiers improve Afghan lives

By Capt. Elaine Hunnicutt

Nangarhar Provincial
Reconstruction Team

NANGARHAR, Afghanistan – Airmen from around the world and Soldiers from Pennsylvania, Texas, North Carolina and Virginia arrived in Afghanistan in early March to improve the lives of the people of Nangarhar Province.

After two months on the ground, the team has gotten its bearings and is working to build strong relationships with its community.

“Seeing smiles on the faces of the Afghan children is by far the most rewarding experience, and knowing that our team is working to provide a better future for the kids is tremendously important to me,” said Lt. Col. Paul Donovan, Nangarhar Provincial Reconstruction Team commander.

The team of more than 80 includes a handful of civilians from

the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of Agriculture. Together the group focuses on reconstruction, security and governance for the Nangarhar Province, a 7,700 square-kilometer area.

“Each service brings unique skill sets to the fight, and when you combine them into one organization with great people and dedicated leadership, you get a much more effective organization,” said Colonel Donovan.

The PRT operates along three lines of operation: security, governance, and reconstruction.

The nucleus of the group is civil affairs, a small team of Army Reservists. With experience and training, they research and propose projects to enhance the government of Afghanistan as the country re-

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question “what’s the payoff for placing service before self?” The payoff is “the intangibles — the satisfaction gained from doing something significant with their lives; the pride in being part of a unique organization that lives by high standards; and the sense of accomplishment gained from defending our nation and its democratic way of life.”

Retired Brig. Gen. Malham M. Wakin, Permanent Professor Emeritus of the U.S. Air Force Academy, wrote about Service before Self and the military profession. He said, “(W)e see that the function itself requires subordination of the individual to the good of the military unit, its mission, and the ultimate good of our country.”

For those of you who know me well, you know that I am proud to be an American Airman. I am proud to serve and represent the United States of America. And, I am an outspoken proponent of our three core values. You will hear me refer to those values often, as they are the corner stones of all that we do. I strongly encourage you to consider their place in the daily performance of your assigned mission.

I thank you for your service. As others have stated, I feel the war in Afghanistan is probably the most important activity currently ongoing. The Global War on Terrorism started here, and I feel that this phase of the GWOT will definitely end here. Your willingness and ability to execute the mission will help determine the outcome.

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gains its strength and solidarity after more than 30 years of war and struggle.

The main focus for projects is building and rebuilding infrastructure that helps the whole of the population and not just a few. Projects include: dams, bridges, roads, power stations, schools, medical facilities and civic meeting facilities.

“We are mentoring them to manage their own affairs,” said Maj. Bob Minton, civil affairs. “It is rewarding to see capacity building ... to see improvements versus destruction in a country torn by war. The only way we will go home is to help them take the lead.”

The group’s mission goes far beyond just physical projects; however, relationship building is the most critical piece of the puzzle. It is imperative that strong relationships be forged quickly so that mentoring and fostering of good governance and security can be enhanced via the partnership.

“The PRT mission is unique because it spans the tactical, operational, and strategic continuums,” said Colonel Donovan. “The uniqueness of the PRT mission helps folks focus on mission accomplishment.”

The muscle for the team is the security forces element, made up of Pennsylvania National Guardsmen. This group provides the civil affairs element the ability to move from

point-to-point in potentially hazardous areas. These folks train and work day-in and day-out to ensure not only the safety of the team when they are out, but also the security of the team when they are back at base.

However, the security team also finds time to build relationships when opportunities arise, whether it’s a friendly soccer game with the neighborhood children or passing out pencils to school children.

First Lt. Robert Boyd, a former scout, and currently the security forces platoon leader for the PRT, explained this is a different type of mission than the team is use to.

“We can let the people come right up to us,” said Lieutenant Boyd. “We are helping rebuild a country by providing safety and security for our team to operate. We are actually making a difference in their lives; we can see progress.”

The final element of the team is the support section. This group ensures that the strategic focus is maintained at the lowest levels and Soldiers and Airmen are taken care of, to include the families holding down the home front.

“I volunteered because this mission makes an immediate impact, and there’s no greater honor than commanding troops in combat,” said Colonel Donovan.

The daunting mission of rebuilding a nation in a situation where the basic necessities are a struggle to obtain is one that this team takes

seriously, according to the commander.

“Isolation is the greatest challenge for the Afghan people. If we can connect the dots with roads and communication, then we can stand back and watch them progress,” said Capt. Timothy O’Donnell, civil affairs.

“Commerce will happen naturally – they will be able to transport and sell their own goods vs. importing from others,” he continued.

“I am here to help the Afghan people stand on their own after years of suffering so that my son is not here in 15 years doing the same mission,” said Maj. Clifton Cornell, civil affairs.

More than \$15 million and 50 projects were completed last year, including 25 kilometers of paved roads on the major highway between Jalalabad and Kabul.

“This mission is unquestionably the most important one I’ve accomplished in my career,” said Colonel Donovan. “We’re helping people out of some pretty dire straights and helping to rebuild a country. We’re making history.”

“I wasn’t expecting this; I thought the mission would be small-scale,” added Captain O’Donnell. “I thought I would be rebuilding schools, instead I am helping to power a nation, literally. All I can do is give this an honest effort every day.”

News Briefs

MEMORIAL DAY SILENT VIGIL

Monday May 26, 2008 at 0700 local
Two-person teams will stand “silent watch” every 15 minutes at the Camp Cunningham main flag pole from 0730-1830 local.

BILLETING INSPECTION

The Army billeting office was directed to perform an inspection of all billeting areas in each camp. The inspection for Camp Cunningham is scheduled for May 26. The BAF safety office will also be a part of this inspection.

Purpose:

- Ensure our compliance with the sand book and current base operations.
- Ensure compliance with all safety standards.
- Inspect living spaces (Common Areas), force protection and the office spaces of each unit.