

Task Force Legion ready to launch operations in Afghanistan

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ZABUL, Afghanistan – Soldiers from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, opened a new chapter in the battalion’s history during a transfer-of-authority ceremony held May 8 at Forward Operating Base Apache.

After a brief invocation, Lt. Col. Jeff Stewart, commander of Task Force Legion, participated in the time honored tradition of unfurling the unit’s colors, signaling the formal transfer of authority for this sector of the 1-25<sup>th</sup> area of operations, to 1-24<sup>th</sup> Infantry and bringing to an end the deployment of the Germany-based 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Cavalry Regiment.

During the ceremony, Col. James Blackburn, the 75<sup>th</sup> commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regiment, praised the success of 2/2 SCR and expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the Cougar Soldiers and their tireless efforts during the regiment’s 12-month deployment.

“The full-spectrum force of the Cougars did it all ... whether it was killing and capturing the enemy or putting a pencil in a school child’s hand,” said Blackburn. “Thank you.”

“What you see in front of you is the epitome of full-spectrum warriors we expect on the counterinsurgency battlefield,” said Blackburn, referring to the formation of Soldiers who stood with pride and with smiles emblazoned on their faces as testimonies to their accomplishments as they were recognized.

Although much of Blackburn’s speech focused on the accomplishments of 2/2 SCR he admitted that a heavy presence of International Security Assistance Forces is still needed throughout Zabul province, but said he is confident the 1-24<sup>th</sup> Soldiers are up to the challenge.

Zabul Provincial Governor Mohammad Ashraf Naseri, and many other key leaders have worked side-by-side with 2/2 SCR, including Maj. Gen. Jamaludin, commander of the Afghan National Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 205<sup>th</sup> Corps, who was in attendance for the ceremony to honor and say farewell to Lt. Col. Omar Jones, 2/2 SCR commander and his Soldiers and welcome their new partners of TF Legion.

Stewart, who addressed the crowd entirely in Pashtu, the primary language of southern Afghanistan and spoke of the possible challenges ahead for him and his “Deuce-Four” Soldiers. Stewart’s speech was met with warm applause from the large crowd as he spoke of the future partnership between the 1-24<sup>th</sup>, the Afghan National Police, and the ANA.

Stewart said he is happy for the opportunity to work beside the ANA and ANP and he is looking forward to the continued relationship between ISAF and the Afghan forces.



Lt. Col. Omar J. Jones, commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 2<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Cavalry Regiment, and Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher M. Martinez cases the squadron colors during a transfer-of-authority ceremony held at Forward Operating Base Apache, Zabul province, Afghanistan May 8. (U.S. Army Photo By: Spc. Thomas Duval 1/25 SBCT PAO)



Lt. Col. Jeff Stewart, commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and the senior noncommissioned officer in charge Command Sgt. Maj. James Coroy salute the battalion's colors during a transfer of authority ceremony held at FOB Apache, Zabul province, Afghanistan May 8. (U.S. Army Photo By: Spc. Thomas Duval 1/25 SBCT PAO)