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Wolf Pack takes the fight to the Taliban

ZABUL, Afghanistan- While folks back home were still dreaming in their beds about Super Bowl Sunday, troopers from Hawk Company, 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment and their Afghan National Army counterparts were preparing for an air assault mission into three remote mountain villages.

The mission targeted the villages of Tulak, Nowbad and Bulaig, all suspected of being areas heavily trafficked by insurgent forces.

It is 4 a.m., Sunday, Feb 6, as the helicopters touchdown in the desolate mountains. Icy winds kick up, increased by the rotor wash from the Chinooks, as the partnered Soldiers swiftly exit the helicopters and wait. As the sun begins to rise, Hawk's partnered patrols set out to cover the more than five kilometers of unknown terrain. Afghans led the way as each unit began clearing the compounds. The teams slowly made their way across vast fields that at one time had been cultivated, but are now desolate and barren. The purpose of this mission was not only reconnaissance, but also to instruct the Afghan soldiers.

First platoon leader from Hawk company, 1st Lt. Karl Stadler, said, “This was a joint operation with ANA as a part of increasing their training, their skills, abilities and confidence in areas that have never seen a GIRoA or Coalition presence.”

“The ANA is at the point now where we are no longer training them on basic Soldier skills,” Stadler said. “We are training their leadership on planning and coordinating, the whole process of what leaders need to know to start conducting their own missions.”

ANA forces were involved in all aspects of the operation from the planning to the execution. ANA intelligence teams were involved by interviewing villagers in an effort to obtain information for future operations.

As teams proceeded through each village, it became clear that most of the dwellings had long been abandoned. From the few remaining villagers that were found, Soldiers were able to ascertain that families began leaving the area due to the lack of water.

Although only a handful of citizens were found, and Soldiers did not uncover any signs of weapons or insurgent occupation, the mission was deemed a success. It provided the ANA an opportunity to establish connections and communications in an area where citizens had not seen government or Coalition security forces in more than 10 years. Many villagers were happy to see the Soldiers and stopped to shake their hands and talk about problems in the area. Preparing the ANA to perform missions completely free from Coalition participation is a stepping stone that brings Afghanistan closer to becoming a stronger more independent country.

Caption (photo): Over watch: Hawk Company Soldiers begin their search of the rugged terrain near the mountain village of Tulak.

(Photo by: Sgt. Jerry Wilson)



Caption (photo): Meet and Greet: Lt. Col. Bryan Denny, Commander, 3rd Squadron 2 SCR, shakes hands with one of the few remaining villagers met during the recent joint operation.

(Photo by: Sgt. Jerry Wilson)



Caption (photo): Welcome: A village elder warmly welcomes the ANA Soldiers to the village of Tulak. The people of Tulak have not seen government security forces in their area for more than 10 years.

(Photo by: Sgt. Jerry Wilson)



Caption (photo): On Guard: An ANA Soldier pulls security for a partnered team as they enter the village of Tulak during an air Assault mission on Sunday Feb 6.

(Photo by: Sgt. Jerry Wilson)

