



The Shield

November 2021
Newsletter Vol. 4
29th Inf. Div.
TF Spartan

Historic Mission

Tasked with a mission to support people in dire need, the Soldiers of Task Force Spartan and 29th ID stood up Task Force Freedom and moved 5,000 people through Kuwait

*Story by Sgt. Marc Loi,
Task Force Spartan Public Affairs*

On a particularly hazy mid-September day in Kuwait, Maj. Gen. John Rhodes, commanding general of Task Force Spartan (TFS) and the National Guard's Virginia-based 29th Infantry Division, stood near a camp on a military base in Kuwait. Empty tents lined the desert in front of him.

This was his Soldiers' doing. Days earlier, this patch of land was bustling with travel-weary Afghans who arrived from Kabul. Curious children – not fully aware of their own circumstances – darted to and fro, and played soccer with American Soldiers. Buses rumbled, hissed, and kicked up dust as they traveled the unpaved roads, carrying with them approximately 5,000 evacuees. Yet, because of his Soldiers who collectively poured in thousands of work hours, the base was quiet again. In just two weeks, TFS Soldiers turned the world's most vulnerable people into those who could see a glimmer of hope.

FIRST NOTICE

By late July, as the world awaited word on the fate of Afghan interpreters and their families, TFS Soldiers quietly planned. Although they did not know how many, if any at all, would end up coming through their area of operation, eight TFS Soldiers based in Jordan flew to Kuwait to conduct a site survey for what would be called "Freedom Village," the sprawling compound designed to welcome and house evacuees as they awaited processing.

Officers and senior non-commissioned officers comprised the delegation, and although most of them had spent their entire careers planning for war, they took their new task of building a miniature city with gusto.

"We hit the ground within 24 hours of getting the warning order," said Sgt. 1st Class Gavin McClung, the Protection Cell non-commissioned officer and one of the original eight who arrived from Jordan. "From that time on, we sprinted."

The team also benefited from the National Guard's West Virginia-based 111th Engineer Brigade, which had been working on



Afghan evacuees board a U.S.-chartered flight for their destination after a two-week stay in Kuwait, where they received medical screenings and were processed by Task Force Spartan personnel. In all, approximately 5,000 evacuees processed through Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Bob Yarbrough)

moving the dirt and flattening the ground for Freedom Village. The miniature city included bedspaces, showers, bathrooms, a cultural center, and medical screening and supply tents.

Still facing uncertainties and without knowing how many evacuees would need temporary housing, the team went on with their plans. Then, there came a change. Rather than housing evacuees, the area would instead be used for American service-members redeploying from Afghanistan. Just as quickly as they had planned to house Afghans, the team scrapped that plan and

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What's Inside



From the Top

Brig. Gen. Joseph Reale
Task Force Spartan|29 ID
Assistant Division Commander
for Sustainment



The Shield

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Got a Tip?

At The Shield, we are always looking for more content that highlights Task Force Spartan and 29th ID Soldiers. Do you have photos you think we should feature here or in our yearbook (more on that later)? Send them to us with a few sentences of basic information. We'll give you credit. Additionally, please also let us know if you have story ideas.

Note from the Shield's staff:

In early October, Task Force Freedom, originally staged in Kuwait in support of the Afghan evacuation mission, moved to Qatar as Task Force Liberty. Their mission remains overseeing the day-to-day activities in support of the Department of Defense's mission to provide safe haven for at-risk Afghans. Keep reading The Shield and follow Task Force Spartan on social media for updates.

During Operation Allies Refuge I had the opportunity to tour the Evacuation Control Center, Freedom Village and other facilities that Task Force Spartan was planning, staffing, and operating.

These facilities, created to assist the movement of 5,000 people out of Afghanistan, through Kuwait, and eventually on to the U.S. or other designated safe nations, were bustling with Soldiers busying themselves with necessary tasks and missions. I was then and still am now in awe at the dedication and commitment of our Soldiers to get this historic mission done, and to get it done right.

Once planes coming out of Hamid Karzai International Airport started landing in Kuwait, a steady stream of children, women and men flowed through these facilities, staffed and led by Task Force Freedom, consisting of more than 800 servicemembers from 13 different units representing active duty, National Guard, and Army Reserve components. These Soldiers, alongside personnel from the U.S. Air Force, our partners in the Kuwaiti Land Forces, Department of State, and many other agencies, worked tirelessly and around the clock to help Afghans through the necessary processes and into temporary safe shelter with kindness, dignity and efficiency.

Mere days later I watched as those same Afghans went through the reverse of that process and boarded buses and then planes out of Kuwait, having been cared for in every way during their brief stay. I've said it before and I'll say it again here: this was an historic mission and I, like many of you, feel honored to have played a small part in it. What we accomplished in such a short amount of time with limited resources was no small feat, and I am proud of all of you for what you accomplished.

Having completed that historic mission and experienced the elation and satisfaction of having been involved in such a landmark event, where do we go from here? Honestly, even given the magnitude of Operation Allies Refuge, the answer is simple: we each continue doing all the small, daily tasks that lead to success in the short term and that build the foundations for mission accomplishment in the long term.

In other words, we simply keep doing all we can to remain ready for every mission, planned and unplanned, anticipated or not. We continue to plan for and execute training missions alongside our regional partners. We ensure our sections, teams and units are ready physically, mentally and emotionally to once again do the impossible. Readiness is such a focal point of all we do in the Army and the 29th Infantry Division because, as was seen over the last month, we never know what we might be asked to do next. Whatever it is, I will be honored to tackle it with you. 29, Let's go! 🇺🇸

Amidst Afghan evacuation, an American Soldier shares her immigration story

Story by Sgt. Marc Loi
Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

Of the thousands of servicemembers who have welcomed and helped Afghan evacuees, Staff Sgt. Laura Mardukhayeva can probably relate to them more than most.

A supply sergeant currently deployed to Kuwait with the Vermont-based 424th Engineer Company in support of Operation Spartan Shield, Mardukhayeva emigrated from Russia to America as a child and vividly recalls the challenges of being a stranger in a new land.

To help make the transition easier for Afghan evacuees during their brief stay in Kuwait, Mardukhayeva volunteered her own time after the duty day to comfort the children and to help other Soldiers assigned to Task Force Freedom tasked with welcoming, processing, and housing approximately 5,000 at-risk Afghans.

On a particularly busy night during the operation, Mardukhayeva was running from Soldier to Soldier, offering them snacks.

“Lifesaver for a life saver?” she asked, as she reached out toward a Soldier, a palm full of the round pieces of candy in her hand. As the Soldier took one and thanked her, Mardukhayeva darted to toward another Soldier before turning her attention to the children. “I only have so many hours off, but I am still going to be out here,” Mardukhayeva said.

“Whatever we’re going through – it may be hot, we may be away from our families or maybe we’re not having a good day – there are thousands of people who are losing their homes and their cultures so they can have freedom.

“As a Soldier, I can’t understand why someone wouldn’t want to be a part of something as important as this.”

While her volunteerism is deeply rooted in the mindset of a Soldier, her understanding of the evacuees’ experience of having to leave behind all they know came from her own experience as a child when, at 6 years old, she left Russia to come to America.

“My family came to America with nothing,”



Staff Sgt. Laura Mardukhayeva, a supply sergeant deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield, was born in Russia and came to the United States when she was a child. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Marc Loi)

Mardukhayeva said. “They found help, not just in terms of opportunities and material things, but also guidance. They were shown how to do new things – how to create a new world for our family. I am so grateful for that and want for the evacuees exactly what my family got.”

Despite her enthusiasm and excitement for the evacuees’ new opportunities, Mardukhayeva said she understands that safe passage doesn’t mean a storybook ending. Just like her parents, who financially struggled at first, so will the evacuees when they first arrive in America. Much like she did, the children she comforted will struggle as they settle into their new environment.

“I remember being that kid and coming to America – the language barrier brings back a ton of memories,” she said. “I was six. No one understood what I was saying. I might have needed water or food or to use the bathroom. Particularly with kids, that frustration can turn into anger really quickly.”

Even with the language barrier, Mardukhayeva could sense kindness when she experienced it, and she tried to provide the same for the evacuees she met.

“You don’t need to share the same culture or language to communicate kindness,” she said, adding that for some parents, even

receiving something as simple as a diaper for their child brings about sentiments that span cultural and language boundaries.

Although an overwhelming majority of evacuees have been treated with kindness, Mardukhayeva said she knows from experience that such treatment won’t always be the case when they finally settle at their destination.

“There’s going to be people who are not going to be kind, and there’s going to be people who are not going to take you seriously,” she said. “Just keep going, because at the end of the day, it’s about the life that you fought to get.”

For Mardukhayeva, getting the opportunity at a life full of possibilities is the definition of the American Dream – something she hopes is as accessible for the soon-to-be Americans as it has been for her.

“To me, the American Dream means that I can dream,” she said. “It doesn’t mean a white picket fence. It means that we get to choose what our fence looks like.”

Note: According to the Migration Policy Institute, there are 530,000 foreign-born U.S. veterans and nearly 1.9 million veterans whose parents are immigrants.

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instead began building for thousands of battle-wearied servicemembers.

"We went from building 10-person rooms to building open bays, because the needs of civilians and Soldiers are different," McClung said. "We had to pull back on a lot of what we would have considered amenities that families needed, to building something for Soldiers instead."

ON-THE-FLY ADJUSTMENTS

As the landscape of Freedom Village began to change, so did the situation in Afghanistan. As the Taliban closed on Kabul, tens of thousands of at-risk Afghans flooded the airport, looking for a way out of the country and to a safer, more secure future. When the Department of State announced the official evacuations of Special Immigrant Visa Afghans, the team had to change their plans again. This time, they knew who they were planning for and the approximate number of civilians Freedom Village needed to accommodate.

"We had operated under a particular course of action for about ten days, and in 24 hours, we shifted course again because we were told the Kuwaiti government had agreed to help us – that this was a humanitarian mission," McClung said.

With concrete numbers to work from, the team – now officially known as Task Force Freedom – worked with subunits under TFS to anticipate every logistical need in the movement of some 5,000 people.

"It took a lot of planning, because displaced civilians have different access and needs than Department of Defense personnel," McClung said. "They couldn't go everywhere on base, so there were logistics of transportation and meal services to consider."

While the Army's systems of checks-and-balances are best for producing optimal results, those same systems may not necessarily be the best when speed is key. Displaced evacuees on Air Force-operated flights were coming by the hundreds, and the team needed to act right away.

"Logistically, we faced a lot of hurdles because people were coming and they needed to be housed and fed," McClung said. "To our leadership's credit, they understood that. They didn't quibble on whether we were authorized to do something by finding where it was written. They just told us to do it."

As evacuees poured in, the team realized it quickly needed more space. Although it had planned to house about 5,000 people, many of the spaces still needed to be cleared by engineer Soldiers and tents needed to be set up.

The team shifted again to meet mission requirements by using an already-built facility on another part of the base originally

used to quarantine Soldiers during the COVID-19 epidemic.

"Again, we had to do it in 24 hours because the evacuees were either coming or already on the ground," said 1st Lt. John Rivera, Task Force Freedom tactical operations center (TOC) officer-in-charge. "Even though we were adjusting as the situation changed, we knew it was going to work because we started with a solid plan."

By the end of the operation, more than 800 Soldiers had worked under Task Force Freedom to assist about 5,000 at-risk evacuees.

REFLECTIONS

When situations are constantly changing, when they don't have the time to even sleep or stop the mission to eat, when the lives of thousands of innocent people depend on them, Soldiers don't have the luxury to stop to think about the impact of their work.

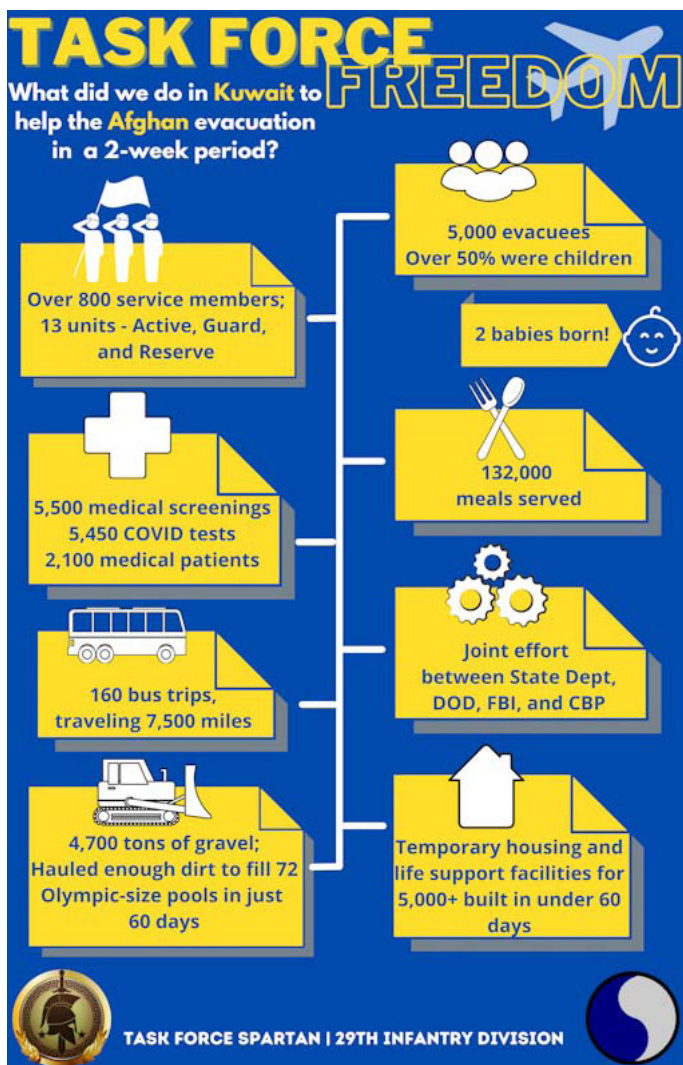
As their mission wound down, McClung and Rivera sat together in a dusty room at the unit's tactical operations center to reflect on what the mission meant to them.

"You see these children – these innocent, displaced children. They are hungry, they had been sitting out on the tarmac in Kabul for a week. To see them come in, you just want to help them as much as you can," McClung said, adding that the Soldiers immediately went to the base's Post Exchange and spent several thousands of dollars to buy necessity items for the evacuees.

Rivera, on his first deployment, also recalled that he just wanted to help. He said he will most remember this mission because of the people he met.

On the last day Freedom Village was opened, as the last displaced Afghans boarded the bus to the airport for flights to America, Soldiers lined up on both sides to say goodbye with a round of applause. Although it was the end of a short, intense two weeks, it was also a beginning for many.

For two mothers, it was the beginning because they gave birth during their stay at Freedom Village. For about 5,000 evacuees, it was a new beginning because during a sweltering summer in 2021 – with the entire world watching and as they were called to lend a hand – Soldiers from the 29th Infantry Division said, "Let's Go!"



Around Operation Allies Refuge



An Afghan child leans against an American Soldier while he works during Operation Allies Refuge in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Marc Loi)



American Soldiers flank Afghan evacuees to applaud as they prepare to board buses headed for the airport to fly to their destination during the last day of Operation Allies Refuge in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Connor Davis)



Staff Sgt. Marc Heaton, a public affairs noncommissioned officer assigned to the 29th Infantry Division, hands out candy to Afghan children during Operation Allies Refuge in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. James Mason)



Above: American Soldiers wave at Afghan children during Operation Allies Refuge as they prepare to board a bus shortly after their arrival in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. James Mason)



Left: An American Soldier helps an Afghan child pin his drawing to a wall dedicated to children's drawings during Operation Allies Refuge (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. James Mason)



Left: An American Soldier entertains Afghan children with examination-glove balloons as they await processing during Operation Allies Refuge in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. James Mason)

Below: An American Soldier shares a moment with an Afghan child while supporting Operation Allies Refuge in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Marc Loi)

Below left: An American Soldier plays with an Afghan child while supporting Operation Allies Refuge in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Marc Loi)



An Afghan child whispers in an American Soldier's ear while awaiting processing during Operation Allies Refuge in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Marc Loi)

29th ID Promotions

Please congratulate the following Soldiers on their promotion:

- Col. James Culver
- Lt. Col. Ryan Loeffelholz
- Maj. Michael Bristow
- Maj. Thaibao Ngo
- Maj. Martin Sexton
- Sgt. Conner Alexander
- Spc. Darien London

Despite mission change, 29th ID Soldiers' resilience proves useful in escort mission

Story by Sgt. Marc Loi
Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

With just a bit more information than the fictitious Rangers who boarded a plane with “mission undetermined, destination unknown,” a handful of Soldiers from Task Force Freedom and 29th Infantry Division showed the same grit and determination when they accepted their mission during Operation Allies Refuge.

As the United States military began its Afghanistan retrograde operations, the Soldiers first received warning orders to support American servicemembers on their way back to the United States. That mission quickly changed when the Department of State announced it would transport hundreds of thousands of Afghans out of the country. Of those, about 5,000 came through Kuwait.

“The initial mission was supposed to be supporting and transporting American servicemembers, feeding and housing them, and then getting them back to America,” said Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Laurion, Task Force Spartan chemical non-commissioned officer. “That all changed as we met up with our counterparts.”

While they had mentally prepared for one mission and received their new mission in the middle of the night, Capt. Nicholas Rivera, a Task Force Spartan intelligence officer, said the team did not find their new mission daunting.

“It wasn’t really all that hard,” Rivera said. “We had eight people and split them up on night and day shift. Because of the change in mission, it helped us stay awake and motivated.”

Although one enduring characteristic of the Army is its ability to adapt to different situations, Rivera said being National Guard Soldiers was an added benefit to the team’s ability to remain flexible.

“Flexibility was key being National Guards-



29th Infantry Division Soldiers who escorted vulnerable Afghans during Operation Allies Refuge pose for a photo shortly after the mission ended. In all, the team drove more than 7,500 miles in 160 trips in support of the mission. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Marc Loi)

men,” Rivera said. “We’re used to being told to do different jobs.”

In just this year, for example, in addition to being deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield, 29th Infantry Division Soldiers also mobilized during the COVID-19 pandemic and provided security in the days leading up to and after the presidential inauguration.

In their role as security escorts, the team accompanied buses transporting Afghan evacuees from the airbase to the housing area before driving

back to the airbase to repeat the process. Although they were running around-the-clock operations, sometimes planes arrived in such high numbers that the runway was filled with aircraft.

Despite the long hours and multiple trips to and from the airbase, Rivera said the team accomplished its missions. What it found hard, however, were the sights of displaced Afghans as they got off the plane and got loaded onto buses.

“The evacuees would come in mass amounts. There were children with no shoes. They barely had any clothes,” Rivera said. “They all just looked so tired. I wasn’t

expecting the children to be that small, walking around with no shoes on the gravel and the hard rocks. It was a blow to the gut.”

Laurion, who spent time in Afghanistan in a combat role more than a decade ago, said seeing Afghans this time around, especially in such a vulnerable position, was a different experience.

“Seeing them 15 years later, leaving their country after they were all about fighting for it back then was more than what I had imagined. It was surreal,” he said. “Most families had one bag. That was hard to watch.”

For Spc. Elliot Matteson, a human resource specialist on his first deployment, being a part of Operation Allies Refuge brought special meaning because he got to be a part of something he can look back and remember years from now.

“It was great to help out, even for just a little bit,” Matteson said. “It’s hard to say what was most memorable about this mission, but it’s something that will stay with me years from now.”



Leaders from Task Force Spartan (TFS) were invited to participate in an armored vehicle live fire at the Udairi Range Complex, Oct. 13, 2021.

Clockwise, from top left: Maj. Jason Rothwell, Task Force Spartan secretary of the general staff, gives a thumbs up from the back of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle; Maj. Gen. John Rhodes, commanding general of TFS and 29th Inf. Div., jumps off an Abrams Tank; Command Sgt. Maj. Daryl Plude, TFS senior enlisted leader, talks with Command Sgt. Maj. Travis Manzke, senior enlisted leader of 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 194th Armor Brigade; Maj. Tom Bortner, chief of the Training and Exercises section for TFS, talks with an unidentified Soldier; and Col. Jared Lake, chief of staff for TFS and 29th Inf. Div., talks with an unidentified 1-194th Soldier. (U.S. Army photos courtesy of Sgt. Marc Loi)



Not your average sessions: *How a Soldier, social worker assisted Afghans*

Story by Sgt. Marc Loi
Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

Capt. Tiffany Hendershot knew she had to help. As a licensed clinical social worker, she understood how trauma can affect a person's well-being, and at that exact moment, no one needed her help more than the thousands of Afghans on dozens of flights set to land in Kuwait.

Although she did not have an official role at the beginning of Operation Allies Refuge – the Department of Defense's mission to evacuate, process, and house at-risk Afghans – Hendershot clawed her way into the biggest evacuation operation since the end of the Vietnam War, at first by organizing supply donation drop-offs for the 5,000 evacuees who would be coming through. A quick inventory told Hendershot the operation needed more supplies: baby bottles and formula, diapers, toothbrushes and washcloths and other items of comfort that evacuees who left Afghanistan with no more than a bag – and had spent days in Kabul waiting on flights – would need.

"When the first group started coming through, it was obvious that the children were hungry, dirty and uncomfortable. They had spent days in the same clothes," Hendershot said. "They would spend hours in line [to get processed]. Some ended up just sitting on the ground."

Hendershot organized and made calls to people she knew. Soon, truckloads of supplies arrived. Soldiers set up a supply area within the welcome tent where evacuees awaiting processing could get much-needed items of comfort, including blankets for children to sit and sleep on. As a mother, Hendershot also knew from experience that parents will put their children's needs before their own. Instead of just having evacuees come to the supply station for what they needed, she brought the items to them.

"I can relate to them as a parent," Hendershot said. "So, I started giving them wipes, and they asked me to help clean the kids' faces as well because there were so many kids."

Despite not sharing the same language, Hendershot identified with what evacuees

were going through because some things – like parenting and how to care for those in need – can cross language and cultural barriers.

"For me, it's social work and not social words," she said. "I don't need to speak their language to do social work, so I would just offer bottles and diapers and whatever else I thought they needed."

Science also crosses cultural boundaries. For Hendershot, this is a salient point because regardless of culture, all children go through the same stages of development, and trauma can have the same long-term effects on them. For example, the limbic system is the first to develop in the human brain, and that system helps a person survive and is a reason babies cry when they have a physical need. When caretakers make babies feel safe and satisfy those needs, the frontal cortex, which is responsible for emotional and impulse control, begins to develop. Conversely, when those needs aren't met, the brain instead spends energy on ensuring survival.

For Hendershot, this was especially a concern for evacuated Afghan children, because some of them had seen some of the worst examples of humanity in the days preceding their arrival in Kuwait.

"When, as an Afghan or American child, you

spend energy worrying that your parent might get killed or you might get killed, that's trauma. The cortisol getting released is going to change your brain chemistry," she said.

Fortunately, just as the science of trauma crosses boundaries, the science of softening those harsh experiences also has the same boundary-crossing abilities.

"The parents were so tired, and they just wanted to rest, but the kids had all this energy and were running around," Hendershot said. "So, I got the kids together and treated it like summer camp."

Part of the "summer camp" activities included Hendershot leading the youngsters in "Ring Around the Rosie," "London Bridge," and other children's songs they will soon be introduced to in their new homes.

The goal, Hendershot said, was to give the children something positive to remember amidst all the chaos and change. For now, it appears she has done just that, as evidenced by one of her visits to the evacuees a few days later.

"It was so touching because as I walked in the door of the Gateway, the families saw me, their eyes just locked on me, and they smiled. I thought, 'I made an impression. I made a difference.'" 🌟



An Afghan child blows bubbles with Capt. Tiffany Hendershot's help during Operation Allies Refuge in Kuwait. As an Army behavioral therapist, Hendershot said she wanted to help the children because she knows how childhood trauma, such as what they experienced, can lead to behavioral issues later on. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. James Mason)

Feeding a village: Spartan Soldiers provide 132,000 meals to at-risk Afghans



In addition to an aggregated 132,000 meals served, Task Force Spartan Soldiers working in support of Operation Allies Refuge also handed out countless snacks and hugs to the thousands of children who came through Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Marc Heaton)

Story by Sgt. Marc Loi Task Force Spartan Public Affairs

Although they did not have to worry about keeping an ample supply of bullets and beds, the logistics Soldiers from Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, had plenty to worry about when it came to beans in their mission to feed about 5,000 Afghan evacuees.

The Fort Polk-based unit's mission essential task list (METL) – to conduct distribution operations and expeditionary deployment operations – shifted upon arrival in Kuwait, where the Soldiers were told they would instead support the feeding of thousands of Afghans coming through Kuwait under Operation Allies Refuge.

“This is not what we normally do,” said 1st Lt. Hank Abell, the commander of Golf Forward Support Company, which arrived in Kuwait in early August with 32 personnel. “We are trained to support tactical missions. We had just gone through Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) where we moved a lot of ammunition, so this humanitarian mission was definitely new.”

Supplying Soldiers with warfighting tools is one thing, but ensuring evacuees receive nutritious and culturally-sensitive meals is a vastly different task. Still, 1st Lt. Julian Doumet, the executive officer, said it was a mission the Soldiers readily took on.

“One of the biggest challenges for us was manning,” Doumet said. “We have a 32-person team, and it was a huge shift from what we normally do.”

One of the biggest changes is that unlike feeding Soldiers, who can sustain via Meals, Ready-to-Eat and virtually have no dietary restrictions, feeding evacuees took more coordination because of cultural considerations. Afghan Muslims, for example, do not eat pork, which meant Soldiers had to ensure the meals contracted for delivery were pork-free. Additionally, because having conversations over cups of tea is an Afghan tradition, Soldiers also had to ensure there was plenty of tea and sugar available, Abell said.

The team cites flexibility as key to mission success. Yet in a humanitarian mission,

listening to the population proved equally important. An example of this, said Doumet, is that at the beginning of the operation, they were feeding evacuees three times a day. Through feedback, they got indication that Afghan evacuees only wanted to eat twice a day – once in mid-morning and again closer to evening. The team obliged by shifting the first meal of the day to a later time and eliminating lunch.

At each meal, the team stacked boxes of catered meals in the feeding tent where tent leaders would come in to sign for the meals and, with the help of men in their respective tents, distribute them among their tent group.

“This solved a lot of cultural issues in which women and children don't want to leave the tents,” Abell said.

In all, Golf Company Soldiers served 132,000 meals in two weeks. Despite this figure, the impact of their work was not something the Soldiers realized during the operation.

“I don't think we understood the scope of what we were doing because we were just making sure everybody was taken care of,” Doumet said. “I am sure it will sink in a few weeks when I talk to my family.”

“This could be the most important thing we'll do our entire lives, and we don't know it just yet,” Abell said. 🌐

We're on Social Media!

Want to read more about what the 29th is doing? Check us out on Facebook and Twitter @TFSpartan and @29thD.