

The People Fighting the War

Saturday, October 14, 2006



In my book, there's no other unit serving in Afghanistan — or anywhere else in combat for that matter - that provides a better example of what America's military stands for than the 1/32 Infantry, 10th Mountain Division.

U.S. soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 71st Cavalry Regiment of the New York-based and 10th Mountain Division control the villages of Korengal Valley by a binocular in the eastern Kunar province, as fighting continues between American troops and militants linked to al-Qaida, in Afghanistan on Sunday, Sept. 10, 2006. U.S. soldiers killed two suspected militants Sunday in a mortar barrage in the eastern Kunar province's village of Darbart after they had fired on an American-Afghan army patrol, said Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Carabello. (AP Photo/Fisnik Abrashi)

There are approximately 900-1000 people in the unit working in geography similar to that of the Rocky Mountains in an area about the size of the state of Vermont.

They've had it tough, been hit hard during the 7 months they've been deployed here - 101 casualties to date. You do the math.

You can't write about this war without writing about the people who are fighting the war. What better way to do it than through the eyes of someone who knows "his" troops intimately, who eats, sleeps, fights, laughs and cries with them, and who takes each casualty to heart and carries the burden of responsibility for their health, welfare and safety with him 24/7.

And if you want to know the overall story of the soldiers of the 1/32, Command Sergeant Major Jimmy Carabello says it best:

"My soldiers are heroes. They are the bravest men I've ever met. No one will ever believe their story — all of their accomplishments and sacrifices. The only way to believe it would be to see it, to witness it. Each day they sacrifice so much for so many and I just don't think people will ever realize it.

"These are soldiers who aren't able to watch TV for a year. They go 2-3 weeks without a hot shower while working among the people in Afghan villages that are nothing short of filthy. They come in for 24-48 hours, get refit and then they're back at it again.

"They work extremely hard and are committed to doing tough, tough work. They selflessly patrol villages, mountains, valleys, and they do it willingly, without complaint. No other unit in combat is doing what this unit is doing and they're doing it at tremendous cost.

"They are simply the best... the absolute best Americans you'll ever meet in your lifetime."

Amen, Command Sergeant Major. Amen.

— Jerry