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4 January 2005

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Program brings parents home to kids on tape

By Lt. Col. Susan H Meisner



Marine Capt. Carlos Algarin, Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan, reads to his sons as part of the “Read to your Kids” program at the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan.

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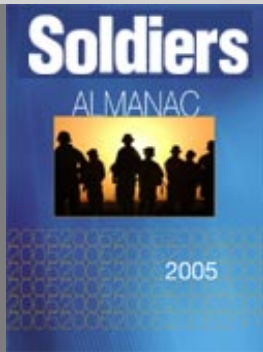
KABUL, Afghanistan (Army News Service, Jan. 4, 2004) — A program in Afghanistan enables deployed service members to videotape themselves reading a story to their children, and then mail both the video and book back home.

The “Read to your Kids” program at the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan was made possible through donations of both videos and books by stateside readers of the anysoldier.com Web site.

The program is Master Sgt. D. Keith Johnson’s pet project, and he devotes his one “off” day in Afghanistan each week to its completion.

“While I was in Bosnia, I read an article in `Stars and





Stripes' about a similar program on a Navy ship," said Johnson. "I started the program in Bosnia and completed over 100 tapings there. It was very popular."

Johnson, OMC-A Public Affairs Office noncommissioned officer in charge, arrived in Kabul in October. He immediately established the program there, and has coordinated the recording of more than 60 tapes between OMC-A and its subordinate unit, Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix.

Military members and their families have expressed their gratitude for, and enjoyment of, the program. Testimonials roll in.

Navy Cmdr. Kathy Schulz, a planner with Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan, received a message from her husband, Rob, about their 8-month-old daughter Jenna's reaction to the tape.

"... she had been very fussy all day until I showed her your tape ... (and) you completely changed her mood!"

Lt. Cmdr. Theresa Thurlow, an engineering officer with OMC-A's Defense Resource Sector, also received a good report from the home front.

"She loved watching the tape," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Douglas Thurlow about their daughter. "She even tried talking back to the TV once or twice . . . I think it's a great program."

(Editor's note: Lt. Col. Susan Meisner serves as a public affairs officer for the Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan.)

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