

Operation Dreamseed recently conducted a mission into Ghowr Province during the exfiltration of World Health Organization doctors that had been inserted to treat an outbreak of Whooping Cough at the Nele Zaragak village.

### **Operation Dreamseed reaches out, warms hearts in high mountain village**

Story by Capt. Todd Schmidt

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Kandahar Air Field, AFGHANISTAN— We sat down at a dinner table by coincidence, but after breaking bread together, we had a plan to reach out to local school children in Afghanistan.

Chief Warrant Officers Charlie Woodward and Mark Johansen of the Georgia Army National Guard were looking for a way to have a positive impact on their mission in Afghanistan. Following a dinner meeting in the Army dining facility at Kandahar Airfield, we came up with a plan.

With the help of the Jacob G. Smith (Principal Dr. Cindy LoManaco) and Calvary Baptist Day Elementary (Principal Louise Moore) Schools, we began to craft a mission for Operation Dreamseed. Between both schools, nearly 900 students participated in the gathering of school supplies and warm winter clothes for the Afghan children. The result was nearly four tons of supplies. It was a Herculean effort that could only be accomplished by the faith and will of children wanting to help their peers in a far away land.

The wives and family members really pulled together, led by spouses Samantha and Mary Ellen, and children Catherine, Mary Margaret, and Keeley. To assist the children, the community pulled together. Postage for shipping many of the supplies was provided by local churches, civic organization, and the Family Readiness Group of Fox Company, 131 Aviation. Employees of Goodwill Industries of Georgia pitched in to take care of all bundling, packing and preparation for shipping. Final handling and shipping were taken care of by the Army Aviation Support Facility III out of Savannah, Georgia.

The mission seemed simple, but had sprung from unfortunate circumstances. Deliver nearly a ton of supplies to the small, remote, mountain village of Nele Zaragak in the Ghowr Province. An outbreak of Whooping Cough had plagued the village that rests next to a river in a high mountain valley at over 10000ft. altitude. Six children had passed away, but over 40 lives would be saved in a population of 3000-3500 school age children.

Without incident, the entire mission unfolded. Eight World Health Organization (WHO) doctors were flown in for nearly one week to treat the villagers. They were brought in via a large cargo helicopter with a small security element, and overhead security provided by close air support assets. Exfiltration mirrored the infiltration with one big difference – we delivered nearly ONE TON of school supplies and warm winter clothes and shoes for the children. OPERATION DREAMSEED MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!