

DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS



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New Jersey Guardsman chronicles images of Afghanistan

Story by Donna Clementoni, JerseyMan Magazine

A 177th Fighter Wing's war correspondent and U.S. Air Force technical sergeant reflects on his recent tour of duty in Parwan Province, Afghanistan as a country that is equally "harsh and beautiful."

Tech Sgt. Matt Hetch's six month assignment found him stationed at Bagram Airfield, 30 miles from the capital city of Kabul.

As a public affairs non-commissioned officer, Hecht was deployed from the 177th FW, New Jersey National Guard, as part of a two man team - he partnered with a guardsman from the Ohio National Guard - who operated from the northern Afghanistan air base. Their mission was a continuous 7 day a week, 12-14 hour a day effort. The guardsmen acted as the base's official photographers,



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht

in addition to writing news stories, filming video documentaries, arranging tours, providing on air broadcasts and completing community relations assignments.

While the American military are 'in residence' on this foreign soil, they individually and collectively do what they can to make a difference. Though Hecht's main assignment was with an intelligence squadron, he had the freedom to cover human interest

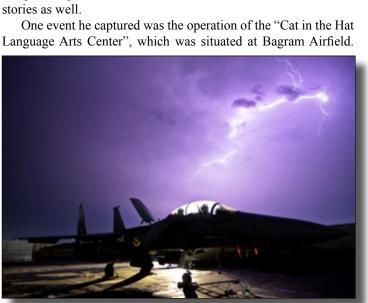


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht takes photos from a security tower on Nov 12, 2011 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Joe Harwood)

Run by the U.S. Army, it brings together members of the military, who are teachers in their civilian life, to volunteer to teach young students English.

Interestingly, the idea was brought forward at the request of the Afghan elders who had hopes that their children could have the ability to become doctors or lawyers, opportunities that their generation wasn't exposed to. The first classes were attended by segregated students of 21 boys and 19 girls.

"It makes you realize what we have, here," said Hecht. "What we (Americans) see is the Taliban. (But) the people of Afghanistan, in the local towns, want security and education."

After a much deserved break, which Hecht is using to 'debrief' and catch up on lost time with his wife, Robynn, this JerseyMan will return to the 177th Fighter Wing to resume his duties as a full time public affairs representative and will continue to document the next deployment from his unique perspective behind the lens.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht



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Sea Cadet Lt. Debbie Treacy (third from left) and 10 cadets, assigned to John T. Dempster, Jr. Division, based at 50th Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey National Guard, volunteer in area beautification at the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Lawrenceville, N.J. June 28. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley, 444th MPAD)

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