

# 'Keeping Tabs'

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**27<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team --- Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix VII**

*Forward Operating Base Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan*

## Chief of the National Guard Bureau visits Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix

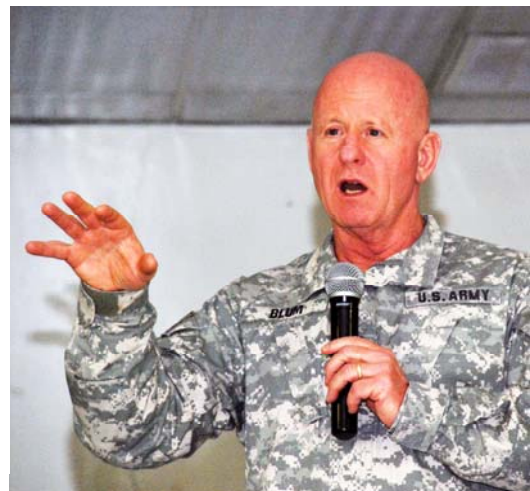
**CAMP PHOENIX, KABUL** – The Chief of the National Guard Bureau came to see his troops in Afghanistan during a very special visit on 26 and 27 August.

Lieutenant General H. Steven Blum was accompanied by National Guard Bureau Command Sergeant Major David Ray Hudson to see members of the New York National Guard's 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team and Soldiers from other Guard states. "The main thing I want to do is thank you," said General Blum while addressing troops at the Camp Phoenix dining facility.

"I want to thank you for your service. I want to thank you for what you do every day back home to add value to America and to your communities. Thanks for being Citizen Soldiers that are willing to do what the nation asks us to do whether it is overseas or right back home in the states," he said. "You are making a significant difference over here," he said in reference to



Members of the task force personal security detachment join in a photo with LTG H. Steven Blum, CNGB in Patriot Square with an MRAP as a back drop. From the left are SGT Edgar Medina, SGT Stephen Marshburn, LTG H. Steven Blum, SPC Ray Ramirez and PFC Sean Flynn.





Above, SFC Thomas Deis from Ithaca, NY assigned to SECFOR D speaks with Lt. Gen. Blum at the conclusion of an open forum meeting. At left, CW3 Russ Hoyer from Voorheesville gets a photo opportunity.



CJTF-Phoenix's mission to train and mentor the Afghan National Security Forces. "You are probably America's best good will ambassadors," said the general.

"It is a great honor for Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix to host the Chief of the National Guard Bureau while we are here in the combat zone," said Colonel Brian K. Balfe, commander of CJTF-Phoenix and the 27<sup>th</sup> IBCT. "National Guard troops from nearly every state are a part of this great team and his visit is deeply appreciated," he said.

The visit by the National Guard's top leader included stops at Camps Blackhorse, Alamo and Phoenix, where Soldiers could listen to General Blum and ask questions. But mostly they heard praise from their distinguished visitor who has led NGB for more than the last five years, through historic changes and deployments and

brought the Guard from its strategic reserve role to a position as an operational force.

"There is tremendous respect and admiration for the National Guard, probably higher now than at any other time in history," said General Blum. "The fact that you are all volunteers is amazing. The sacrifices you make, the commitment you make – you take it for granted, I don't," he told the Soldiers.

"You leave your family, you leave your loved ones, you leave your job, you leave your education and do not know for sure exactly where it is going to come back to you," he said in praise. "It takes a special breed of men and women that I am proud to be a part of that calls themselves National Guard."

#### ***Keeping Tabs –***

***Is a weekly electronic newsletter produced by the HQ 27<sup>th</sup> BCT Public Affairs Section for family members and friends back home and is available on-line through the NYS Division of Military and Naval Affairs website at [www.dmna.state.ny.us](http://www.dmna.state.ny.us) For more information contact the DMNA Public Affairs Office at (518) 786-4581.***