

The BOMBARDIER

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Service before Self

Local couple donates fuel for Afghan women

By **STEPHANIE BEMROSE**
THE BOMBARDIER

Chief Master Sgt. Jeffrey Melahn, 2d Security Forces Squadron command chief, and Senior Master Sgt. Elizabeth Melahn, Afghan National Army Embedded Training Team S4 mentor deployed from the 2d Logistics Readiness Squadron, donated 1,500 liters of heating fuel for Afghan women Jan. 10.

"A lot of the women are widowed and poor, and a lot of them have young children," Sergeant Melahn said. "It broke my heart because I'm a grandmother with two grandchildren. I told Gen. (Myhammadzai) Khatul, (the only female general in the Afghani military), that I would try to find the money to help, somehow."

At first, Sergeant Melahn tried to go through Commanders Emergency Response Program and the Funds Obligation Officer with no success.

"That's when I decided to call my husband and ask him if we could make a donation of \$1,200 to purchase 1,500 liters of fuel," the sergeant said.

According to her Afghani interpreter, Massa Mayanzai, 1,500 liters of fuel would provide 10 liters for 150 homes for a month.

"Sergeant Melahn is the great-

est person I have met ever," Mr. Mayanzai said. "I have been working with the United States Army and Air Force for about five years. Sergeant Melahn is the only one spending money from her own pocket to help Afghan people."

General Khatul was near tears and gave Sergeant Melahn a big hug.

"My interpreters said General Khatul was so grateful and she blessed me," Sergeant Melahn said. "She kept saying 'thank you, thank you,' and 'God bless you.'"

"All the women and (Mr. Mayanzai) were very appreciative – a lot of people are praying for me now," the sergeant said. "One of the women, Malshalara Hakimi, is a widow with one son. She said she appreciated what I did for them and told me that since I helped them, God will be here with me and that her family prays for me. Another woman, Marena Wahab, is married and has five children and is still using the fuel after nearly a month. She still prays for me every time she uses the fuel to heat her home."

After Sergeant Melahn returned to Afghanistan after her rest and relaxation leave, she said all the women asked her if she and her husband were going

to buy fuel again.

"I don't think that's possible, but we're looking at other ways to get more fuel if the weather takes a turn for the worse," Sergeant Melahn said.

Here at home, leadership is very proud that the donation came from a local couple.

The deeper and longer-lasting impact of the donation may be that the Afghan people understand that the U.S. cares about their well-being and that there is hope for a better life, said Col. Michael Myers, 2d Mission Support Group commander.

Colonel Myers said the Melahns are special people who represent the best of the Air Force and Americans.

"Their selfless act of kindness no doubt won hearts and minds in Afghanistan and furthered U.S. efforts to promote democracy in this part of the world," the group commander said.

Colonel Myers added that Sergeant Melahn is living in primitive conditions and helps wherever she can, including arming up and running supply convoys.

"She has experienced extreme poverty, improvised explosive devices and ambushes – and through it all, she continues to smile and proudly serve her country," he concluded.



Courtesy photo
General Khatul hugs Sergeant Melahn in Afghanistan after learning about the sergeant's donation of heating fuel for Afghani civilian workers.



Reminder: Many base agencies are closed today and Monday in observance of President's Day.



Weekend Weather



Today
Mostly sunny
Hi: 57
Low: 30



Saturday
Mostly sunny
Hi: 63
Low: 39



Sunday
Mostly sunny
Hi: 54
Low: 34

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11 local members receive annual awards

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20th BS ARMS: Two do the work of five

Sortie Scoreboard

2d Bomb Wing monthly flying goals

As of Feb. 12	11th Bomb Squadron	20th Bomb Squadron	21st Bomb Squadron
Goal:	83	58	15
Flown:	28	27	6
Remaining:	55	31	9
Above/Below	- 5	+ 4	+ 2