

From Afghanistan: 101st Change of Command

Jerry attends a ceremony marking the change of command.

May 20, 2011

After a long road trip I had the opportunity and privilege to attend a ceremony marking the change of command from the Combined Joint Task Force-101, (CJTF-1), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) to CJTF-1, 1st Cavalry Division.

Since last June, the mission of RC-East in Afghanistan was to conduct combined action counterinsurgency operations to protect the population, increase the competency, capacity and credibility of Afghan institutions, and defeat insurgent forces in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and in close coordination with joint, interagency and multinational partners.

First, about RC-East: The eastern region of the country is where some of the most intense fighting has occurred over the years. This is where insurgent fighters make their way from Pakistan and much of the area is still contested. As a side-note, it's the area where I spent time on previous embeds.

This is also where the surge of U.S. coalition and beefed-up Afghan security forces have made a significant difference. CJTF-101 conducted more than 770 named operations. Because of the effort, more than 4,000 insurgents are no longer around to threaten coalition forces or Afghan citizenry. Tons of enemy weapons and all types of munitions were also removed from the hands of insurgents, limiting their future ability to disrupt stabilization, security, development and governance.

The effort was not without sacrifice; 219 coalition and more than 500 Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) lost their lives in the effort.

“It has been my privilege and honor to serve with these great men and women of CJTF-101; a time that I will forever cherish. Thanks for allowing me to pass on some of the news from

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CJTF-101 the past year ... hopefully it has given you a better appreciation for Afghanistan and the very tough fight that we have faced; the challenges and sacrifices we have shared; and the positive impact that we have had on the Afghan people and their security forces,” said Maj. Gen. Campbell.

The 1st Cavalry will pick up where the 101st left off; continuing intensive counterinsurgency operations, working to increase the competency and credibility of the ANSF and Afghan institutions, and facilitating development so that the end-game of transitioning to the Afghan Government can become a reality. —Jerry Newberry