

Space Soldier and His Wife Bring Warmth to Afghanistan

By MAJ Robert Zaza

B AGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — Army Space Support Teams normally provide Space products and expertise to Corps commanders and staffs. That's the extremely important job that Army Space Support Team 4 is deployed here currently to do, as participants in the global war on terrorism.

Recently, though, a member of that team, mobilized reservist 1LT Shawn Price, gave a bit more than even the 100-percent all soldiers are expected to give, when he spearheaded a humanitarian relief effort with the assistance of his wife Marie.

A project to provide blankets and winter clothing to destitute Afghans began in November 2002 with Marie Price's idea to do something for the American soldiers in Afghanistan. Marie said, "I wanted to send supplies to the soldiers, just extra stuff. I contacted my husband and we discussed the idea." Price felt that the need for adequate clothing among the Afghans was so great that they should gather clothing and blankets for them instead. He told Marie, "We have it made, compared to the local people." Now they knew exactly what they had to do.

Marie's church, the 1st Baptist Church of Kettering, Ohio, rallied together to collect 22 large boxes of winter clothing. A childcare center, La Petite Academy, and Marie's apartment complex also donated clothing. The Family Support Office at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, near Dayton, Ohio helped immensely by shipping the boxes, which otherwise would have been cost prohibitive.

On Jan. 12, 2003, Price joined a group of soldiers from the 450th Civil Affairs Battalion, a unit from Riverdale, Md., on a mission to distribute the boxes to people in

the Bagram Valley, in the shadow of the Hindu Kush Mountains. The 450th conducted the mission on a Sunday, a day normally reserved for "down time."

Price reported that the distribution got out of control after a while, because the Afghans were so desperate. The 450th made arrangements with the local "Mullah" to leave

the remaining items with the village elders, who distributed the items by need to villagers following evening prayer. The boxes consisted of a variety of winter apparel, adult pants and shirts, infant- and toddler-wear, and blankets.

After the mission, Price wrote in an email to Marie, "I can't describe the desperation of these people — how badly they need help. We ran into some problems giving out the clothes because the crowd got slightly out of control, so we

had to end it early. They weren't being malicious, just overcome with the need to get what they could — sisters fighting brothers, parents pushing their children aside. I don't think I've ever seen the look on a child's face that I saw when they were clawing at us for clothes. It wasn't panic; it was survival. It was the look that you would see on the face of a grown adult fighting for his or her life. Everything here is about 'survival of the fittest'."

He added, "On the good side, they were grateful to see us. The people at your church need to know that The Lord allowed them to do a great thing — possibly the greatest thing that any civilian can do as part of the effort in Afghanistan."

In a spirit of faith and goodwill, American soldiers and civilians gave potentially life-saving clothing to the people who needed it the most.



1LT Shawn Price, a mobilized reservist with Army Space Support Team 4, distributes desperately needed clothing to children and adults in Afghanistan, where he is presently deployed. His wife Marie, with the aid of her church and other local citizens, collected the clothing and blankets once her husband told her of the need. Army Space photo.