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Robots to take over city

A creative invasion of BigBots will tweak the usual concepts of art and technology.

BY MARK HOUSER TRIBUNE-REVIEW

When planners of a citywide exhibition of large, robotic art that starts this week asked Ian Ingram to submit a piece, he had one goal in mind. "I wanted to make a robot that's as big as Pittsburgh," said Ingram.

So with a \$10,000 grant, the 30-year-old Friendship resident built a sculpture that not only accomplishes his aim, but should strike a deep chord with sports-mad locals.

His contribution to Robot 250, an event starting Friday with the public debut of Ingram's and 10 other so-called "BigBots," is a giant foam hand in black and gold, one finger raised, with the lettering "You're #1."

Mounted on the roof of the Andy Warhol Museum, the 12-foot finger will point to other big foam body parts — an ear, a nose, a leg — that Ingram will install miles away around the city.

As big as Pittsburgh, see? If it stretches the definition of robot — or art, for that matter — that's the whole idea, said Ilah Nourbakhsh. A professor at the Carnegie Mellon University Robotics Institute, Nourbakhsh is the motivating force behind the effort to highlight Pittsburgh's connection to robotics during the city's 250th birthday celebration.

SEE ROBOTS • A6



An Afghan man is taken into custody by a U.S. soldier during a raid by the Afghanistan National Police and the Army's 101st Airborne Division's Delta Company 2/506th Infantry Regiment in Dakhi Village in the Nadar Shah Kot District of the Khost Province. The coalition forces arrested three men after finding bomb-making supplies.

A FIGHT FOR THEIR HEARTS Afghan war is about winning 'human terrain'

BY STEVE HILL • TRIBUNE-REVIEW

SENEMY, Afghanistan — Capt. Nick Howard picks his way over rocks and boulders along a dirt road that skirts mountains and the Pakistani border.

His blue eyes scan the landscape, assessing the risks of a combat outpost where 150 "bad guys" operate. Taliban border infiltration is growing, and the Delta Company commander wants to reposition a platoon to block the "rat line," or insurgent trail.

"Here, you're too close to the mountains — they could shower mortars down on you," Howard, 27, of Reston, Va., says. Wild marijuana covers the ground at his feet.

Later, he walks a wadi, a dry riverbed, nearer the mountain passes, searching for two militants reportedly hiding there. To his left are stone-tiered wheat fields. Green mulberry trees plump with ripe dark berries shade two fields of purple, white and red poppies.

SEE HEARTS • A8

Iraqi uranium safely Canada

U.S. secretly re nuclear seed stock

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The last major remnant of Saddam's nuclear program — a huge stockpiled natural uranium — is set to depart Saturday to complete a secret deal that included a two-week airlift and a ship voyage crossing two oceans. The removal of 550 metric tons of "cake" — the seed material for nuclear enrichment — was a step toward closing the books on Saddam's nuclear legacy. It brought relief to U.S. and Iraqi authorities who had worried the cache would reach insurgents or smugglers crossing to Iran to aid its nuclear ambitions.

What's left is the final and complicated push to clean up the remaining radioactive debris at the former Tuwaitha nuclear complex about 12 miles south of Baghdad — using teams that include Iraqi experts recently trained in the Chernobyl fallout zone in Ukraine.

"Everyone is very happy to have of Iraq," said a U.S. official who said the three-month operation to "The AS" The official spoke on condition because of the sensitivity of the situation. While yellowcake alone is not potent enough for a so-called "dirty conventional explosive that disintegrative material — it could stir wide incorporated in a blast. Yellowcake enriched for use in reactors and, at higher levels, nuclear weapons using sophisticated equipment.

SEE IRAQ • A11

REPORT FROM AFGHANISTAN War is about winning 'human terrain' Includes a photo of a person in a field and a small text block.



Julie Trahan, 28, of Rodman, N.Y., who arrived in Pittsburgh on April 30 to await stomach, small bowel and pancreas transplants, enjoys the serenity at Family House Shadyside.

Family House comforts, strengthens patients

It will grow to provide a homelike setting for more people seeking treatment in Pittsburgh.

BY CHRIS TOGNERI TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Julie Trahan was scared and homesick. She had not eaten solid food in 18 months. Her weight plummeted

to just under 70 pounds. Several organs were failing, and she was too weak to get out of the car.

But as her mother went inside Family House Shadyside and signed papers clearing the way for an indefinite stay in Pittsburgh, Trahan, 28, of Rodman, N.Y., got a good feeling.

"From where I sat in the vehicle, I could see little lamps and paintings through the windows," she said. "I thought, 'What have I stepped into? This is going to be good.'"

"I kept thinking about Christmas for some reason," she said. "I thought, 'Well, if I'm still here, I'll dream about walking down the stairs to a Christmas tree.' We would have a huge tree. I imagined everyone around it, decorating it, putting presents under it. "And then I wouldn't have to miss home.

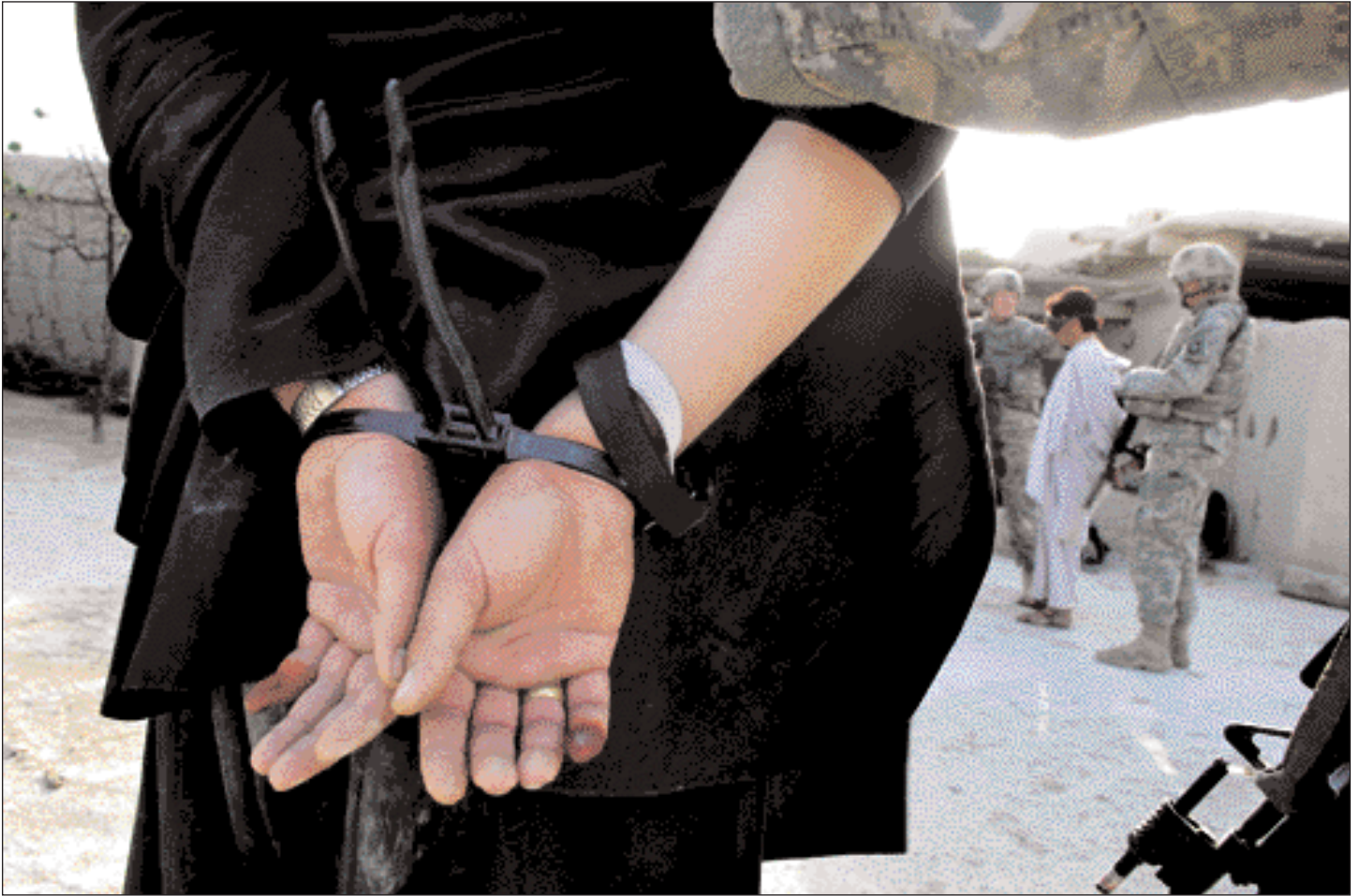
That's the goal at Family House. Now in its 28th year of providing shelter and moral support to critically ill patients and caregivers

who travel to seek treatment in Pittsburgh. Family House is expanding. Officials recently began building a fourth facility, in Oakland.

Family House officials said they aim to create a homelike environment so patients can focus on fighting their illnesses, and to charge as little as possible. Rooms start at \$30 for a single and run to \$50 for a suite for four people.

SEE COMFORT • A11

MORNING BRIEFING section with sub-sections: Weather (84-64), Nation/World (Chicago faces challenges to its gun laws), Region (Virtual gym class), Food (Piccolina's in Upper St. Clair), Living (An HBO film explores what dented Pittsburgh painter Chuck Connelly on his way to the top), Sister act (Reprising their Sister Slam Show), Index (VOL. 120 • NO. 155), Living F1, Lotteries A12, Movies F7, Obituaries C4, Opinion D1, Real Estate H1, Sports B1, Travel G5, Whispers D6.



JUSTIN MERRIMAN/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

An Afghan man is taken into custody by a U.S. soldier during a raid by the Afghanistan National Police and the Army's 101st Airborne Division's Delta Company 2/506th Infantry Regiment in Dakhi Village in the Nadar Shah Kot District of the Khost Province. The coalition forces arrested three men after finding bomb-making supplies.

A FIGHT FOR THEIR HEARTS

Afghan war is about winning 'human terrain'

BY BETSY HIEL • TRIBUNE-REVIEW

SENEKY, Afghanistan

Capt. Nick Howard picks his way over rocks and boulders along a dirt road that skirts mountains and the Pakistani border.

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combat outpost where 150 "bad guys" operate. Taliban border infiltration is growing, and the Delta Company commander wants to reposition a platoon to block the "rat line," or insurgent trail.

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Afghanistan National Police Officer Akhtar searches a house during a raid by the ANP and the Army in Dakhi Village in the Nadar Shah Kot District of the Khost Province.

“Small amounts” of poppies, refined into heroin, are grown locally, Howard says. A provincial counter-narcotics task force is supposed to “destroy it, and we go back and verify. So far we haven’t had any problems. None has been harvested, to our knowledge.”

For American soldiers, the war in Afghanistan isn’t just firefights and roadside bombs.

On any given day, they face myriad problems — poppy fields and drug trafficking, feuding tribes, villages without water, power or schools, a weak central government requiring constant support, a populace unsure which side it wants to be on.

U.S. Army brass and soldiers on the ground here are hopeful — but candidly admit the situation could turn bad overnight.

‘No one will live this long’

Back at the combat outpost of 1st Platoon, Golf Company, 4/320th Field Artillery of the 101st Airborne Division, Howard meets with a Tani District sub-governor, Badi Saman. He learns more about the dizzying array of local tribal names and relations, sub-tribes, and clans too tiny to be included in either group.

Saman says his father, a tribal elder, lived to be 120 years old. Asked if he will live so long, Saman — with one attempt on his life already — laughs. “Hopefully, I want

to. But with all these suicide attackers, no one will live this long.”

Howard mentions that Taliban fighters are “moving through Narizah and Seneky,” two local villages, from havens in Pakistan. “If we move down there, do you think we will be effective in stopping them?”

“I think it will be very helpful,” Saman replies. “... The terrorists are either going to attack Tani or the checkpoint on the road to Khost,” the provincial capital.

Howard thanks the Afghan for his information, then invites him to dinner: “It has been too long since I have seen you — we must break bread together.”

At age 27, Howard commands four platoons of the 2/506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, along with seven of Khost Province’s 13 districts.

A decade ago, Khost hosted al-Qaida training camps; until recently, it was considered one of the least governable, most dangerous provinces.

The Army says a successful counterinsurgency plan has turned all that around. Yet, now, that progress seems threatened.

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, who heads NATO’s Regional Command East, one of five in Afghanistan, says Taliban attacks rose 40 percent in the past six months. He cites two factors for the increasing violence.

Afghan, U.S. and NATO forces are deploying “into areas that previously, if not

sanctuaries, they were ... support areas for the Taliban,” he explains. Meanwhile, more insurgents than ever are crossing into Afghanistan.

“It is quite clear to me that the border that we have” — 450 mountainous miles in the Regional East Command alone — “is ... potentially more porous than it has been in some time,” says Schloesser, who also commands the 101st Airborne Division and the U.S.-led coalition known as Enduring Freedom.

“We are seeing, on a daily basis, more activity crossing that border ... and then attacking the Afghan people,” as well as U.S. and coalition forces.

‘Big guys’ vs. ‘school bullies’

Delta’s Capt. Howard, one of the 40,000 U.S. soldiers and Marines deployed here, is a well-read West Point graduate. Books on warfare, strategy and Afghanistan, such as Steve Coll’s Pulitzer Prize-winning “Ghost Wars,” fill his outpost office.

“I’m not that old, but on a daily basis I deal with 50- or 60-year-old sub-governors (who) have seen 30 years of war. ... And dealing with them is humbling at times. But at the same time, you know, they answer to me.”

He admits U.S.-led forces cannot “achieve a physical separation between” villagers and the Taliban, so they strive for “a psychological separation.”



An Afghanistan officer stands guard on a patrol with the Army's 101st Airborne Divisions, Golf Company 4/320th Field Artillery Regiment's in Legharah, a village in the Khost Province.

"The insurgents are like a big school-yard bully ... trying to beat up on the little kid ... we're the big guy who is going to stand behind that small guy, so he feels strong enough to stand up to that bully.

"The key is a balance of going after the enemy on the one hand" — what he terms "kinetic operations" — and "the non-kinetic part (of) talking to elders, understanding the tribal dynamics and working the reconstruction piece, which is extremely critical."

All of those, he says, must "go hand-in-hand" in order to win this war.

"Our ability to shoot and kill the enemy is only a very small part of our ability to succeed in this fight," he explains. "Our ability to understand the culture and the human terrain is far more important.

"... If we can't understand them, we are never going to win them over."

Linking government to people

Howard's words closely echo Schloesser's description of U.S. strategy here.

U.S. combat outposts work closely with Afghan officials, police, soldiers and villagers in order to forge a link between them, the general explains.

"I believe, at the end of the day, the enemy understands that if you connect government at the lowest level to the vil-

lager ... and (Afghans) have a quality of life that's improving, the whole reason for their insurgency is evaporating."

Saman, the sub-governor, agrees. He wants to erase the line between people and the government.

"We have a lot of problems — we don't have potable water, we need schools and an irrigation system, roads," he says. But rebuilding those will bring jobs to an area of rampant unemployment.

"When people are jobless," he adds, "they start smoking hash, and a mullah can take advantage of them."

The sub-governor, comparable to an American county executive, hopes to launch a television and radio campaign to spread his message, to explain why foreign forces are here, and to "talk about the Taliban and al-Qaida and what the bad guys are doing."

A promise to bring shoes

In the stone-and-mudbrick village of Turqel, cows and donkeys graze, a camel lopes by, and Afghans gather around as U.S. soldiers pull up in four Humvees.

Sgt. 1st Class Dustin Horn, 35, and his men from 1st Platoon, Golf Company, 4/320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne, greet the villagers and ask for the local elders.

Horn wants to talk about construction

projects. The villagers say they were promised a school, months ago.

Sakhi Gul, 30, is a blue-eyed, dark-bearded day laborer in white loose trousers and tunic and a tan pakol, the traditional Afghan wool hat with a rolled brim. He is frustrated with the local government.

"Generally, I trust the government, but I don't know why they forget our area," he says. "Our government is always promising things but they never do anything. We need water and electricity."

Horn, pleased by Gul's frankness, asks permission to quiz him about Afghan officials, soldiers and police, as well as U.S. forces. He asks about the villagers' tribal affiliation and what they need most.

Gul is unhappy with the Afghan police; the army is another matter. "The ANA (Afghan National Army) are great, they are loyal ...we never hear anything bad about the ANA."

He gives some of the soldiers a tour of the village, pointing to an area he says was destroyed by Soviet troops in the 1980s.

Before leaving, Horn gives Gul and another villager two hand-crank radios. He promises to return with children's shoes.

Tribe trumps police work

Americans and Afghans alike feel the Afghan army is improving but the police remain plagued by corruption.

A FIGHT FOR THEIR HEARTS

PUBLICATION DATE: 07/06/08

Howard says the police have invaluable expertise in villages, but “they can’t arrest people because of ... tribal rivalries and Pashtunwali,” the Pashtun code of honor.

“That’s a huge problem for us right now.”

He hopes to mix police throughout the province, so they are not too far from home yet distanced from tribal complications that can allow a captured insurgent to go free.

On most days, U.S. soldiers travel with Afghan policemen on missions, in order to train by example. The police presence can build rapport with villagers, too.

“Putting an Afghan face on it makes it easier when you roll into the village,” says Horn, so that “we are not just there ... looking like an occupation force.”

A new U.S. National Guard police-training team — all law enforcers in civilian life — is rotating through Khost Province’s seven districts.

Explaining the strategy, Howard quotes T.E. Lawrence, the British army officer known as “Lawrence of Arabia,” who helped lead the 1916-18 Arab Revolt: “It goes back a little bit to what Lawrence said — ‘Better they do tolerably than we do it perfect.’”

‘Some real bad people here’

The biggest threat in this area is a network run by ailing warlord Jalauddin

Haqqani and his son, Siraj, who is said to be training suicide bombers across the border.

While providing security may be only part of the task here, “it is the foundation ... and cannot be underplayed,” says Schloesser.

Lately, Delta Company’s 3rd Platoon is running a lot of counterinsurgency operations.

First Lt. Shane Oravsky leads one such mission to the village of Dakhi in a district known to be a haven for Taliban and criminals. The Taliban reportedly are massing there to attack an Afghan police checkpoint.

Two trusted Afghan police commanders, named Arafat and Akhtar, knock on the wooden door of a mud-brick house suspected as a Taliban hideout. With the soldiers, they begin to search the house as chickens cluck, birds chirp, roosters crow, and several cows, donkeys and goats shift nervously at the back.

In minutes, the men find suspicious items, including large hunks of hashish, old rifles, a shotgun, ammunition, binoculars, an old Pakistani passport.

“Hey, we just found a box of blasting caps!” shouts Staff Sgt. Dave McNeil, 26 of Milwaukee. “We have some real bad people here.”

More searching uncovers batteries and

wiring — materials fit for roadside bombs, the No. 1 killer of U.S. soldiers here.

Staff Sgt. Mac Blocker, 39, of Abilene, Texas, orders the three men in the house to be detained. Oravsky, 25, of Catskill, N.Y., orders the men to be photographed with the evidence, as McNeil begins testing their skin for explosive residue.

“It’s pink,” says McNeil, meaning one of the men tests positive for such military-grade explosives as C4 and Semtex. Another man tests positive for black power, used in fuses.

The three suspects are handcuffed, blinded and escorted to the waiting Humvees.

The soldiers are pleased with the mission.

“We found a lot of stuff,” says McNeil. “It looks like, with all we have here, we are going to put these guys away for a while so they won’t be able to hurt any coalition forces ... and hopefully bring some stability to the area.”

He predicts the number of attacks locally will go down — in a year. Until then, he plans to give the enemy no rest.

“It’s a never-ending process, but we’re all excited about it,” he says.

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