

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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### U.S. ARMY EUROPE PARATROOPERS WATCH FOR TALIBAN, SMUGGLERS ON AFGHAN ROAD

By Sgt. Brandon Aird

173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office

**KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan** -- Paratroopers from U.S. Army Europe's 2nd platoon, Able Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry operate tactical checkpoints on a almost daily on the only road leading into the Korengal Valley.

The Pech River Road is one of two paved roads in all of Kunar Province. The road allows easy travel in an area dominated by mountains from the Hindu Kush Mountain Range.

The Soldiers of 2nd platoon works side by side with Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army to keep the road safe for local residents, stop smuggling, and prevent movement of Taliban extremists.



SGT BRANDON AIRD

Staff Sgt. Dawayne Krepel, a squad leader with U.S. Army Europe's 2nd platoon, Able Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, searches an Afghan man during a tactical checkpoint mission on the Pech River Road in Kunar Province, Afghanistan Jan. 11.

The platoon is strategically located at Forward Operating Base Michigan, at the mouth of the Korengal Valley.

Paratroopers from the platoon conducted a two-hour “snap” checkpoint Jan. 11 to look for weapons and ammunition intelligence reports indicated would be coming into the valley on the Pech River Road. The spot chosen this day served two purposes: to intercept contraband and to make a statement.

“We set up the TCP in an ambush spot to show the Taliban we can’t be bullied,” said 2nd platoon squad leader Staff Sgt. Dawayne Krepel.

At the TCPs the Soldiers search trucks, cars and motorcycle for ammunition, weapons and materials that can be used to make weapons. The results of the tactical checkpoints vary from day to day.

“Sometimes we find stuff and sometimes we don’t,” explained Spc. Trevor Petsch. “One time we got a call about some guys about to place an (improvised explosive device) on the road. So we set up a TCP and pulled over a car with four guys in it -- all four were from different areas. They had a video camera and \$80,000 cash on them.”

While the Jan. 11 checkpoint didn’t produce any weapons or ammunition, the Soldiers said they gathered intelligence they can use on future missions.



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