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### **‘CHOSEN COMPANY’ PATROLS RUGGED HILLS AND VALLEYS OF AFGHANISTAN’S NURISTAN PROVINCE**

**By Sgt. Henry Selzer**

173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office

**NURISTAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan** -- Just after sunrise on the first day of March, Soldiers from the 2nd platoon of Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, set out for a long day patrolling the mountains around their base in search of signs of enemy activity in the area.



SGT HENRY SELZER

Nearly camouflaged against the rocky terrain, Soldiers of Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, conduct a patrol in the Jamachgal-Khwar Valley in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan March 1.

The company's 3rd squad set out from Forward Operating Base Bella and moved through the valley of Jamachgal-Khwar to begin traversing the steep mountains of the region. They completed their patrol late in the afternoon after what looks like a 3-kilometer trek on a map, but in reality was much longer.

By conducting the patrols in the valleys surrounding their FOB, the Soldiers are providing the base with more

separation from the enemy and strengthening relationships with Afghans in the area.

“We like to make our presence known and let the locals know that we are not going anywhere and we are here to help,” said Spc. James Schmidt, a gunner and radio-telephone operator for 3rd squad.

The patrols allow the Soldiers to get a close look at hard-to-reach areas of the rugged valleys.

“The purpose of these patrols is to keep the enemy off balance and provide FOB Bella with more security,” said Staff Sgt John Oftinoski, a 2nd platoon squad leader.

Although the Soldiers of 3rd Squad did not see much activity during the day’s patrol, they become more familiar with the area they will be protecting throughout the summer.

“As the summer gets closer and enemy activity becomes more frequent, the length and amount of patrols we will be conducting will increase,” said Oftinoski.

The 2-503rd is part of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, a U.S. Army Europe organization headquartered in Vicenza, Italy.



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