

**2ND BATTALION, 377TH PARACHUTE FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT
FOB SALERNO, AFGHANISTAN**

STEEL TIMES

ISSUE 4 VOLUME 1
APRIL 2012

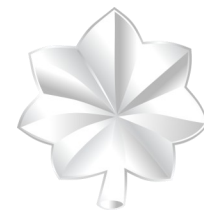


TF STEEL

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM 12-13



COMMANDER'S CUT



Dear Families and Friends of Task Force STEEL,

It is hard to believe we only have five months left until we reunite with our family and friends. The levels of achievement to which these young men and women have facilitated the increased level of security and capability of the Afghan Nation Security Forces has been incredible. Their performance is nothing new, but has always been the case in over 232 years as our Army has responded to our Nation's call. Remembering, it has not come without sacrifice and at a cost — we continue to pray for all those who are serving.

Even during deployments, there is a changing of the guard, as Task Force STEEL conducts three battery changes of command with four young Army leaders — Captain Dan Frechette, Captain Dana Lafarier, Captain Ryan Howell, and Captain Jean Aldoph. Change of command is a special event. It is a time honored ritual that signifies the transfer of responsibility for mission and Soldiers, from one commander to another. A ceremony such as this one, gives us pause to contemplate the possibilities of a future of growth, achievement, and fulfillment. But, at the same time, our traditions and customs allow us to connect to those who have preceded us and endows the present with meaning and richness. Commanding any military unit in these times of conflict requires exceptional leaders. Leaders who aspire to make an immense difference, not only in the organization, but in the community as well, and these four officers exemplify that character. For them, command is a high water mark and a special time in their military career. There is no greater honor and there is no greater privilege then to lead American Soldiers.

As the Soldiers stand on parade in formation, their outstanding actions and impressive appearance, gives appropriate honor to their units and the Task Force; but, most importantly, to those within their ranks. These Soldiers are disciplined, hardened, seasoned, and resolute. We are blessed as a nation to have these Soldiers, who endure hardship, separation from families, and loss of comrades in order to preserve our liberties and our freedoms.

Leading these splendid Soldiers are the outgoing commanders, CPT Frechette, CPT Howell, and CPT Aldoph, who possess training acumen, determination, and courage. Leaders with a straight forward philosophy — a philosophy that features a central truth — that is the battery's primary mission was, is, and will be, to deploy, fight, and win. Under their exemplary leadership the unit's reputations have been further enhanced. They have built high performing teams and strengthened the bond between the leader and led — bonds built upon mutual trust and respect. They harness the strength of others, capitalizing on each Soldier's unique capabilities and talents, and empowering them so that the "whole is greater than the sum of the parts." It is these leaders that will be the first to tell you, with great humility, that it was nothing they did or anything they possessed, but it is due to the superb Soldiers in their charge. They relinquish command of units poised at the tip of tactical and leader development as we are in a transitional period in our Army and a very seminal point in our Nation's history. To the outgoing commanders — THANK YOU FOR THE MARVELOUS LEADERSHIP YOU HAVE PROVIDED. I know that you take great pride in what those who you have led have accomplished.

As we bid farewell to the outgoing commanders, although they will not be traveling far — Ryan assumes command of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Dan assumes command of Bravo Battery, while Jean transitions to the brigade staff where I am confident he will continue to contribute greatly. The Army has another tremendous leader prepared to take command and we welcome our newest commander, Captain Lafarier. Dana has a reputation as a superb Soldier, a tough trainer, and a proven combat leader — I am confident he will excel in command.

Finally, to the Soldiers serving in our ranks. You are the patriots who volunteer to do the difficult and dangerous work of a free society — to dominate the harsh environment and relentless enemies of our liberty. You are the primary reason for our continued success as the world's greatest army — you are the unmistakable expression of American resolve and the centerpiece of American commitment — brave and courageous.

On behalf of CSM Moore, Task Force STEEL, and myself, thank you for your tremendous support. You all are missed and remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,
LTC Frank J. Stanco
Commander, Task Force STEEL
Spartan Steel 6

On the Cover...



(L to R) CPT Daniel Frechette, 1LT Gregory Lins, and 1LT Matthew Hickey discuss maneuver plans while on patrol in Khost Province.



MESSAGE FROM STEEL 7



PFAR Family,

What can I say about Golf Company? I guess the correct terminology would be, how do I start? I've had so many cool experiences with Golf Company, but how do I write about them all?

Let me start with discussing some of the spouses of



CSM Moore shakes hands with a Paratrooper from Golf Company.

Golf Company. I will not list them by name, but they know who they are. On one occasion, a spouse from Golf Company posted a picture of my wife and I sleeping together on Skype, a picture that our 16 year old daughter took; Jessica, you're in trouble when I get home. I am just kidding, you know that I love you and miss you. I was embarrassed and encouraged at the same time due to the generous and kind comments from the spouses of Golf Company. It doesn't stop there. I started to correct someone jokingly, thinking that it was my wife, on a comment she made about a picture on Facebook. The wife responded with dignity and class. It's an honor to serve with her husband and to be a part of his re-enlistment in anyway. This spouse left a long lasting good impression on me. I could go on and on about how you support one another, the activities that you do with your kids, and the support that you give to all of us over here. So, I would just like to say, thank you, you are all awesome. Thanks again for the generosity towards me and my

family. I will never forget the image of Mrs. Rudd's excitement and enthusiasm at the Battalion FRG VTC. There are many warm moments like these that attest to your love and commitment to your spouse and the unit.

On the other hand, I won't be so generous and kind to your Paratroopers. I was thinking to myself as I was standing on top of the guard tower at the Entry Control Point (ECP), "Self, you know what? I am not really afraid of heights; I am afraid of falling and being maimed or paralyzed when I hit the ground." Yes, a Paratrooper, rather several Paratroopers, from Golf Company had the Sergeant Major standing on top of the ECP to conduct a re-enlistment ceremony. It was a privilege and an honor to be a part of those great American's ceremony. I've had the honor of promoting a few to the next grade. Golf Company had one of the four Sergeants First Class out of the entire Brigade to make the Master Sergeant Promotion list. The Battalion had three Staff Sergeants that made the cut to be placed on the Sergeant First Class Promotion list. One of those Soldiers came from Golf Company. This is a testament to the caliber of Soldiers that are in Golf Company.

As you already know, your spouses are jacks-of-all trades. I have challenged all Soldiers not to get complacent and to continue to look for ways to improve. It's absolutely amazing what your spouses have done



CSM Moore shakes hands with a Golf Company NCO while visiting the company this past month.



CSM Moore speaking to Paratroopers from Golf Company while visiting the company command post this past month.

in such a short period of time. I will not go into details about some of the changes they have made because some of the information may be in violation of OPSEC. What I can tell you is that American Soldiers' lives have been saved and are constantly being protected by their efforts. Thousands of tenants on FOB Salerno can work during the day and go to bed at night because of the efforts and diligence of your loved ones.

Whether acting in the capacity of the Quick Reactionary Force or conducting its inherent mission of maintenance and support, Golf Company is a step above the rest. I've had the privilege of going out on a few missions with Golf. Every mission that I've been with them, the leaders and Soldiers are doing the right thing. They are Johnny-on-the-Spot, conducting the mission with dignity, honor, and always with a good sense of humor. On a plane, the pilot sets the attitude of

the plane to determine its altitude. Golf Company is no different, the Command Team has set the bar pretty high and Golf Company continues to soar higher and higher.

Golf Company acted as trailblazers for the Brigade with the implementation of the Female Engagement Team (FET). These dedicated and committed young ladies are instrumental in engaging the female population around the FOB, a first for an American unit. They are able to establish relationships and provide additional insight into their culture. The women enjoyed the blankets that were handed out and of course the kids loved the candy and pens. Another trailblazing endeavor Golf Company is taking on is the standardization of the identification badges throughout our area of responsibility. Last, but definitely not least, is the partnership they have established with our Afghan National Army (ANA) counterparts. I was talking to the ANA mechanics a few days ago, and they were praising the efforts of their American mentors. They were excited, encouraged, and felt that after we left they would be able to effectively do their jobs; the single reason was a result of their Golf Company mentors.

I was accused by a few 1SGs of favoring Golf Company because the first two Warrior/Hero of the Battle nominations went to Golf Company. What the 1SGs probably don't know is, in both cases, I got second and third opinions, and everyone was on the same sheet of music. The Soldiers from Golf were the best. During our monthly promotion and Soldier and NCO of the Month Boards, I must say that the Soldiers from Golf have been the most entertaining; I will leave it at that. I don't want to ruffle any feathers with the 1SG.

It has been said, if you want anything done, find the busiest man in town and ask him. There is a reason why he's the busiest man in town and it is because he's that good. Whether it's harassing SSG Espinoza on the maintenance floor, being "nubbed" by SPC Martinez, PFC Ward drawing a mural of our Battalion Coat of Arms, or SSG Bryant's vision of the ECP, Golf Company is that good. I started this article off talking about the ladies back in the rear, and you have built an exceptional team. I am honored to have served with all in any capacity. We've started strong, now let's finish stronger! Steel 7, Out!

HQ & HQ BATTERY HAWKS



Steel Hawk Families,

HHB Paratroopers send yet another cluster of greetings from the front line to express their gratitude for your continued support, patience, and commitment in standing by their side during a time of war. Through your support, you have greatly contributed to their dedication and service to our great Nation. If we were to express a measurement of progress since our team arrived on the battlefields of Afghanistan, we would obviously undermine what other teams before us have accomplished.

Nonetheless, observing Afghan National Army (ANA) Soldiers of the 4-1 Kandak effectively communicating on the battlefield, evacuating and treating the wounded, ordering parts and equipment through their own supply channels, managing their personnel affairs, observing indirect fires, accurately detecting enemy locations as well as tracking their movement on the battlefield, and effectively destroying enemy positions with devastating cannon fires give our team a great sense of accomplishment. We are very confident that soon this Afghan army will be ready to secure Afghanistan. Your paratroopers have nurtured the tree of liberty in these regions, and it will continue to be more difficult for tyranny and oppression to find comfortable dwellings around here. It is our hope that one day very soon, our children and/or their children will be able to journey peacefully through the beautiful Afghan country-side, cities, villages, mountains, and valleys not as warriors, but as peaceful citizens of the world.

Being a part of the team whose hard work, determination, and unwavering strength ensure the germination and blossoming of such a reality make the long days of work in Afghanistan shorter, the unforgiving heat tolerable, and the harsh conditions acceptable. Our strong American families top it all with genuine concerns and support expressed daily through those care packages, emails full of encouraging words, Easter eggs that force smiles upon our tiring faces, and patience overflowing fountains of hope anticipating our safe return.

This month in HHB, we have witnessed our eligible Paratroopers saying "yes" one more time. They have said "yes" in support of this team and the Country they truly love. On their own free will, they have renewed their contract to stay in the United States Army a little bit longer. They have said "yes" to ensure the enemy is totally crippled and never again able to endanger the security, stability, and peace that our American families so cherish every day. With great appreciation, we remark that these Paratroopers were not drafted, nor were they under any legal obligation to stay in the Army. These true American heroes stay because of their patriotism and love for their families.

The HHB Paratroopers that have reenlisted so far are SSG Alvarado, SSG Bloomer, SGT Raburn, SPC Wynn, SPC Warren, SPC Collins, and SPC Kuhlman. SSG Alvarado is with the Medical team at FOB Salerno while SSG Bloomer is working with the Base Defense Operation Center team providing security on FOB Salerno. SGT Raburn is a Communication Sergeant who has been teaching Afghans about Communications techniques. SPC Kuhlman and SPC Wynn are with the Field Detention Site team while SPC Collins assists the BN Chaplain in his daily Unit Ministry. SPC Warren is a Supply Specialist who has been performing outstandingly as the HHB Supply Clerk. Recently, SPC Warren performed the duties of the Battery Supply Sergeant allowing SGT Tate, the actual Battery Supply Sergeant, to go on leave and enjoy time with his family. Welcome back Sergeant Tate!



CSM Moore awarding a certificate to an NCO of the Afghan 4/1 Kandak.



SSG Schneiderman evaluating ANA Soldiers' fire support skills.



1LT Husain presents SPC Kuhlman with his certificate of reenlistment outside of the FDS.



CPT Gorman reenlists SSG Alvarado outside of the Combat Support Hospital (CSH).



CPT Darensburg reenlists SGT Raburn in front of the BN Headquarters on FOB SALERNO.



CH (CPT) McCurdy reenlists SPC Collins in front of the BN Headquarters.



1LT Sloan presents SSG Bloomer with his certificate of reenlistment outside of the Base Defense Operations Center.



CPT Darensburg reenlists SPC Wynn at the Hawk's Nest.

Some of the personnel who re-enlisted this month have made multiple trips to combat since 9/11, and they have endured the hardships of combat. For others, this is their first time in combat and/or their first time renewing their contract with the Army.

Families, with no flattery in omission, we are proud to tell you that you — spouses, mothers, brothers, sons, daughters, parents, friends and supporters— are at the center of our Paratroopers' hearts every day. And for you they fight, and they fight with all of their might.

SPC Warren, our Logistician Warrior, said it best in a speech that he gave during his reenlistment ceremony. The following is SPC Warren's story:

“The Uniforms of My Family History and Following in Their Boot Steps”

On the third dusty and humid day of Afghanistan's April, I re-enlisted for the first time. I awoke knowing that I was defiantly prepared, but the anxiety still weighed heavily in many thoughts. Commitment is more than a promise – commitment is a passionate dedication, no matter the cost, time, or sacrifice. That morning, our supply mission passed the time, and it was already forty-five minutes before the scheduled time for my ceremony. As we waited the minutes I was asked “So, are you going to give a speech?” That is when I came to the realization that I had no speech prepared for the occasion. I did not panic; I just made the decision to speak directly from the heart. I questioned myself to gather a specific theme to give the speech on. “Who is it that I do this for?” I asked myself. I first joined to provide a secure and comfortable life for me and my high school sweetheart, who now holds my last name and my future child in her grace. I do this for my mother and little brother, so they will never have to worry about a need or a want. I have my beautiful wife, an unborn son, my mother, and my little brother all counting on me. I will continue to climb the ladder of success with my family clinching on to my back. A real soldier knows to be selfless, and to always put family first. I also do this in memory of the siblings of my mother who are all resting in peace in Beaufort National Cemetery for Veterans in Beaufort, South Carolina: Corporal Frederick Green (Vietnam Vet), Sergeant Tyrone Green (Vietnam Vet), and Sergeant First Class Carolyn G. Curry (Vietnam/Persian Gulf Vet). I do it for my great uncles: Joseph Young who retired after 33 years from the Navy, William Young who retired with 26 years from the Air Force, and Nathaniel Young who was a 1st Lieutenant in the U.S. Army and deployed to Korea during the Cold War with the 38th Air Defense Brigade from 1963 to 1965. I also do it for my Senior Non-Commissioned Officer relatives who are always keeping a close eye on my progress and performance as a Soldier in the United States Army. My cousin, First Sergeant Karliss L. Rutledge retired out of Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii after doing 23 years in the Army. My cousin was rewarded a Bronze Star for successfully completing the mission as the First Sergeant for 68th Medical Company, an Ariel Air Evacuation Combat Medical Unit. First Sergeant Rutledge is not only my older cousin, but she is also my inspiration. She holds six deployments total under her belt. She was deployed to Guantanamo Bay (1994-1995), Hungary (1997-1998), Bosnia (1998), Pakistan – Camp Shamshi (2002-2003), Afghanistan – Bagram, Salerno, Kandahar (2004-2005) and Iraq (2005-2007). First Sergeant Rutledge encourages me to do twenty years in the Army because she firmly believes that this is one commitment that brings no regrets. She ensures that I am not becoming complacent, and that I maintain the mindset of a Soldier, so I can be a great leader when my time arrives to be a non commissioned officer. When I think of my family and their military accomplishments, I feel an absolute sense of pride, and I hope that I can one day say “I have grown to fit the size of my family boots.” So, my reenlistment speech reflected my love ones to send the message that I will continue to progress for my immediate family; that I will keep those who are watching over me proud—both those who are smiling down from Heavens' attendance, and those who are still breathing. Reenlisting for four more years in the United States army was an honor that I cherish because being a Soldier runs through my veins. I will proudly share the remembrance of the military experience in our family history with my son, so he too will respect the uniforms of our family, and the flag I raise my right hand to salute.



1LT Shawon reenlists SPC Warren at the Hawk's Nest.

— written by SPC Richard P. Warren

Meanwhile, thanks to the dedication of the Battery FRG, Easter in Afghanistan was a wonderful experience for all HHB Paratroopers. Spending any holiday away from loved ones is devastating. For the Paratroopers experiencing this for the first time, the pain is exponential. The FRG did a wonderful job soothing the sorrows of being away from home. The idea of sending special notes in camouflaged Easter eggs filled with luscious treats was brilliant. MAJ Randall is still smiling about his wife's hand written note. The camouflage pattern adds a tone to the gesture that all Paratroopers could relate to. The total experience mentally transported all Paratroopers on a brief journey back home where the scent, the colors, the joy, and the emotions associated with Easter could be felt. Thank you HHB FRG! The following pictures "What's in Your Egg" express the impact the event had on HHB paratroopers.



Out at Camp Clark, the finest leaders from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery patiently continue to coach, teach, and mentor ANA partners in ensuring steady improvement in planning, mission analysis, logistics, artillery fires, medical treatment, and personnel management. It is imperative that our team assists our ANA counterparts in becoming self-reliant and self-sufficient in order for them to continue the work we have done in securing Afghanistan from its foes. Training the 4/1 Kandak is HHB's responsibility through outstanding partnership and mutual understanding. In the following article, SPC Cooper, one of HHB's Paratroopers whose specialty is in personnel management, expresses how HHB's Security Forces Assistant Team (SFAT) is getting the job done.

Family and Friends,

As time passes by, the Security Forces Assistant Team (SFAT) out of Camp Clark is steadily building a friendship and alliance to work together as a team with the Afghanistan National Army (ANA). Task Force Steel has sent out some of the best mentors throughout the Battalion Staff to encourage and mentor each section throughout the ANA in order to increase their capability of defending the Afghan people. Over the last three months, the SFAT trainers have seen incredible improvements in the 4/1 Kandak (Battalion).

In the Military, communication is essential for all operations. Whether on a cell phone, on the internet, or talking in person, it is very important that we communicate our plans and actions. SGT Raburn, of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery (HHB), a Communications Sergeant, has been mentoring the S6 Communications Officer and the S6 Non-



(L to R) SPC Cooper, CPT Willis, SSG Schneiderman, MSG Fletcher, SGT Raburn, SFC Coates, and Jamshed (linguist) show off their Easter Eggs.

Commissioned Officer (NCO) on the importance of implementing proper radio communication skills. He has been giving classes weekly on developing trouble shooting skills and implementing the use of more radio channels in their communications plan. Last week, SGT Raburn gave additional training on properly putting up Radio antennas that will give them longer range and better communication.

Logistics is also essential to any Army. Logisticians track equipment, receive equipment, and issue equipment to the Units and Soldiers to ensure full work capacity. This is where SFC Coates is an expert and comes into the role of mentoring. SFC Coates of HHB is the Senior Supply Sergeant of the Battalion and has been mentoring the S4 Logistics Officer and S4 Logistics NCO on the importance of supply and logistics. SFC Coates has been working with them on tracking and implementing logistical procedures. He has been showing them how to fill out supply requests, ammunition requests, and how to track the Kandak's equipment.

As it is important to conduct training and missions, we need to ensure that we have the personnel to do so. SPC Cooper of HHB, a Human Resource Specialist, has been mentoring the ANA Human Resource team on how they have been tracking the Soldiers in the Kandak, and helping with computer and software skills such as Microsoft Office. Computers are relatively new to the ANA, and we are working on mentoring them on using the computers to help track the Soldiers of the Kandak instead of constantly updating hand written reports. He is also helping them with record keeping, and ensuring they properly maintain paperwork and archives.

Not only has the Steel SFAT been mentoring, they have also been rewarding the Soldiers of the ANA that are showing great leadership skills. The ANA Command Sergeant Major and Command Sergeant Major Moore chose twelve NCOs last month to reward for their hard work and dedication to the ANA throughout the year. They issued each of the twelve outstanding individuals a Certificate of Appreciation to reward them for their hard work. Not only did they explain how impressive the chosen few were, but they also showed appreciation for the hard work and dedication that all the Kandak NCO's were doing on a daily basis.

In spite of the hard work involved with developing the Afghan National Army Battalion, the members of SFAT enjoy their jobs and are grateful for the good quality of life. Camp Clark, where the SFAT is located, is known for some of the best food in Afghanistan. This is due to the 'Five Star' Bellagio chief that operates the dining facility. He cooks a variety of foods such as hand formed burgers on the grill, steaks on Saturdays for lunch, and other great meals. Friday is movie night at the Camp. For movie night, the dining facility serves ice cream and desserts, and shows a newer movie to the Soldiers, so the Soldiers can just relax and take their mind off work and combat and simply enjoy their time in Afghanistan.

— written by SPC Philip Cooper

This month, HHB has promoted SSG Steffen to Sergeant First Class. SFC Steffen joined HHB on FOB Salerno about three months ago. SFC Steffen is a former member of our Brigade Combat Team. He brings with him a set of skills that are very valuable to the Battalion. He has been making quite a difference since joining our team. Because of his special skill sets, we are a much stronger team. His leadership is very welcome in HHB. Families, friends, and supporters of Steel Hawk Battery, thank you for keeping HHB Paratroopers in your thoughts and prayers.

Steel Hawks,

— written by CPT Jean D. Aldoph
HAWK 6



Afghan Soldiers assigned to the 4/1 Kandak at Camp Parsa with their certificates of appreciation.



LTC Stanco presenting SFC Steffen with his certificate of promotion.

A BATTERY FALCONS

To all our families back home,

Hello again from FOB Salerno and Happy Breakup! We are all looking forward to pictures showing the fun things you will be doing this spring and summer. Luckily, it won't be too cold when we get back, so we'll be able to do a little hiking and fishing before winter sets in.

There's still a lot of work ahead of us to get to that point. Even though we will leave Khost Province this fall, I can promise you that the hard work and dedication of your Troopers will be felt long after we've redeployed. But it won't only be our hard work that will have a lasting effect on this area.

Every day, the Khost Provincial Police patrol alongside us, doing everything asked of them and more. Since day one, this partnership has been one of our top priorities as a battery, and the results speak for themselves. When we first arrived, there were five policemen embedded with us. Now we have 15 policemen, including one lieutenant, who live, eat, and patrol with us every day. Not only do they patrol with us, but they act as our cultural advisors and our bridge to the people of the region. Their dedication to duty would be a credit to any organization, and does the Khost Provincial Police proud. I look forward to keeping in touch with them after deployment and seeing the success they will continue to have.

On a different note, one constant of life in the Army, is change, to include change of leadership. With that in mind, I will be changing out command of Alpha Battery on April 29th with Captain Dana Lafarier. CPT Lafarier (a fellow New Englander) is an outstanding officer, and will lead Alpha Battery to continued success throughout the deployment and into the future. He has done great work as the 3-509th Infantry's Fire Support Officer, and is very excited to take command. I have told him that he is taking command of a great battery, with some of the finest Officers, NCOs, and Paratroopers in the entire Army.

I want you all to know that serving with your husbands and sons, and having the privilege of being their commander, has been an honor. I'd like to thank all of your Troopers for their incredible effort over these last 11 months. All the success that we have had is entirely because of their efforts and sacrifice. Lastly, thank you all for the support you have shown us since we have deployed. Best of luck to all of you, and FALCON STRIKE!

SAMUEL H. ZOKER
FIRST SERGEANT

DANIEL D. FRECHETTE
CPT, FA
Commanding



(above) Alpha Battery Command Team Conducting KLE with COL Hussain, the AUP Ground Commander, for Khowst Province

(left) Alpha Battery Paratroopers load a Blackhawk Helicopter after a long mission in the mountains of AO STEEL.

YEAR OF THE NCO AT ALPHA BATTERY 2-377 PFAF

In the world of Field Artillery, the Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) is the backbone of every good firing platoon. The NCO mentors, motivates, and encourages the Soldiers beneath him. He inspires the youth of the Army and reinforces perfection. The NCO not only demands excellence amongst the young Soldiers but also teaches these young warriors how to become competent and versatile leaders. The NCO guides the youth of the Army to success and ensures that young Officers are trained and reliable leaders, ready to lead their Troopers in combat. These things are true in any unit, and most especially in Alpha Battery.

The difference between Alpha Battery and other batteries fighting the war on terrorism is that we are conducting a maneuver mission— not our traditional firing mission. This makes our NCO's role even more critical. Non-Commissioned Officers like SGT King and SGT Rothenberger of 3rd Platoon or SGT Cortez and SSG Aleman of 1st Platoon are prime examples of why Alpha Battery is exceeding expectations. These leaders continuously set the example and give countless hours of their very limited personal time to ensure their platoons are ready for combat at any time of the day.

Staff Sergeant Robert Novak, 3rd Platoon's Platoon Sergeant, was recently asked what he thought of this non-traditional mission that Alpha Battery is currently conducting. Said SSG Novak, "A wall is only as strong as the men who defend it." This quotation is a direct example of the determination and resilience of the men in Alpha Battery. Furthermore, this quote exemplifies the efforts that the NCOs in Alpha Battery are making everyday to ensure the men underneath them are trained and prepared to take on any mission put in front of them.

Alpha Battery is conducting combat patrols on a daily basis. The patrol cycle is strenuous and demanding, but with the tremendous leadership from the team leader level all the way to the platoon sergeant makes this transition easy. Each member of Alpha Battery knows that the leadership qualities these NCOs possess are not unique to our battery, but are common across the battalion's NCO Corps. These qualities have been absolutely critical to our success as a battalion and as a battery. It is these NCO's who keep our Troopers mission-ready, and continue to accomplish whatever tasks we are given.

— written by 1LT Gregory Lins
3rd Platoon Leader



1st Platoon Paratroopers 1LT Hickey, SGT Cortez, and SPC Barnes observe fires from an observation post.



SPC "Doc" Kunsch surveys the AO from a Blackhawk Helicopter at the onset of an Air Assault Operation.



B BATTERY BLACKSHEEP

LIFE AT COP HERRERA: 4TH PLATOON, BRAVO BATTERY

Four months of deployment have flown by. When we first arrived at COP Herrera, winter was just beginning. Since we arrived, 4th Platoon has been strenuously working to improve the gun positions, Tactical Operations Center (TOC), living conditions, and COP Herrera as a whole.

We have made it through the winter now, along with the vast amounts of snowfall, and are well into the spring time rain. The sun is out shining and the weather is beginning to warm up. Temperatures are reaching the low 80's during the day!

4th Platoon is supporting a company from 3-509th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) in all combat operations. We integrated with them very well, and we have made friends within the company that we are sure will last a lifetime. We have been wonderfully supported here at COP Herrera by our loved ones and Adopt-a-Platoon. We could not ask for better support from our family and friends back home.

We have spent numerous hours in the Fire Direction Center (FDC), cross training at the gun line, and training our Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for defensive maneuvers. As a result, all of 4th Platoon has cross trained up at least two skill levels. This was done to fill the roles of other Paratroopers within the platoon while



Pictured Below – PFC Arentz chasing SPC Rozenboom with a very large snowball.



2-377th PFAR CSM, 4th Platoon, and Chosen Company pushing a broken down helicopter off the Helicopter Landing Zone (HLZ) in order to allow other helicopters to land.



SPC Baughman is preparing 105mm High Explosive (HE) and Hexachlorophene Smoke (HC Smoke) to fire for a calibration mission.



The men of 4th Platoon showing their excitement for packages received by loved ones and Adopt a Platoon.

they are on leave and to help further the career and knowledge of Field Artillery to the individual Soldier. To add to that, we began introducing “Gun Bunnies” or “Bravo(s)” (13B MOS qualified Paratroopers) to the world of the Fire Direction Center, a “Delta” (13D MOS qualified Paratroopers) area of expertise. We also took Paratroopers to watch the maneuver unit’s observers (13F MOS) when they have the opportunity to observe a round for our COP. All this to give 4th Platoon a vast and rounded amount of knowledge in Field Artillery.

4th Platoon is looking forward to getting back home to see family and friends. We have been extremely busy fighting and working hard to protect the freedoms of the country we all love. To the family and friends we all had to leave behind, we love you, we miss you, and we will be home soon.

— written by 1LT Frank Worsham



The men of 4th Platoon posing with one of the M119 Howitzers

COMMANDER'S GOODBYE TO BRAVO “BLACKSHEEP” BATTERY

This past year as the Battery Commander of Bravo “BLACKSHEEP” Battery, 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment has been the most fulfilling of my 10-year Army career. It has not only been the mission of providing close supporting fires to our maneuver brethren, but it has been the Paratroopers that have made the difference. The month after I took command, we left for a month to the Donnelly and Yukon Training Areas. It was not our preferred way of spending the Alaskan summer; however, it paid off with the over 9,000 rounds, two Rocket Assisted Projectile (RAP) raids, and three Air Assault raids we successfully completed. Our rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) was difficult and challenged our ability to operate while decentralized. After a month at JRTC, we were recognized as one of the finest firing batteries to rotate through JRTC in several years. When firing ceased, we then picked up the pace and turned-in 54 pieces of rolling stock to (Left Behind Equipment (LBE); the second highest number of pieces out of the 30-company sized units in the brigade. We successfully deployed to Afghanistan, manning four firing locations. During the first 100 days we successfully fired over 1500 rounds in support of combat operations.

The past year has also seen personal accomplishments from our Paratroopers. SGT Brodigan was awarded the Distinguished Leadership Award from the Warrior Leaders’ Course (WLC). SSG Belcher and SSG Coughlan were both separately awarded Distinguished Honor Graduate from the 13D Advanced Leaders’ Course (ALC) in back to back classes. SFC Billig and SSG Kennedy both graduated from the 82nd Airborne Division Advanced Airborne School-Jumpmaster course; where SSG Kennedy earned the title of Distinguished Honor Graduate. These outstanding leaders have made command easier than I would have imagined. I have had the distinct pleasure of serving with some of the most technically and tactically proficient “Smokes” in the U. S. Army: SFC Sazama, SFC Taganas, SFC Billig, SFC Williams, SFC Joy, and SSG Glass. The officers I was honored to serve with have truly stood out among their peers: CPT Cunningham, 1LT Worsham, 1LT Quinn, 1LT Horswill, 1LT Day, 1LT Spenard, 1LT Nance, 1LT Lain, 2LT Valtinson, and 2LT Adriano. I would also like to thank all the ladies of the Bravo Battery FRG who have contributed more than I could have asked, specifically the co-leaders Ashley, Brittany, and Morgan. Last but not least, I would not be as successful without an outstanding 1SG to bring me along. 1SG Matt Dudley and his wife Molly have been two of the most supporting efforts to the battery. I would be honored to serve with 1SG Dudley in the future, and wish him the best as his career winds down. I wish the best of luck to the incoming Commander, CPT Daniel Frechette, and urge everyone to support him as you did me. Thank you.

CPT Ryan D. Howell

Thanks for the memories...



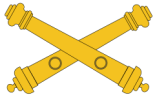
C BATTERY/1-377 FAR CRUSADERS

OPERATIONS AT FIRE BASE CHAMKANI

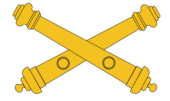
The month of March was a month of progress for 2nd Platoon stationed at Fire Base Chamkani. The month was filled with training and position improvement to better the quality of life for the unit and improve their firing capability. During the month, the platoon of 18 Soldiers increased in size and firing power. This vastly increased the amount of fire power that the fire base would be able to project in support of both infantry and special operations task forces in Northern Pakiya Province, as enemy insurgents begin to move back into the area from neighboring Pakistan. The platoon shot multiple illumination missions in support of counter IED operations and successfully test fired an Excalibur round to validate precision firing capability. As spring arrives, the platoon is anticipating being called on for lethal fires to beat back the enemy and deny them safe haven in the area. Finally, 2nd Platoon conducted their biannual section certifications in which the gun section of SGT Martinez was rated as the best that 2-377 PFAR Master Gunner, SFC Nichols, had seen.



2nd Platoon Charlie Battery with additional howitzer section poses for photo at Firebase Chamkani. The additional howitzer section from FOB Salerno was moved to increase firepower in the area in anticipation for combat operations in the upcoming months.



CRUSADER BATTERY SOLDIER OF THE MONTH



2ND PLATOON, 1-377 FAR SPOTLIGHT: SPC JESSE PARINAS



SPC Jesse Parinas was born February 23rd 1981 in Kahalui, Hawaii. SPC Parinas grew up in Hawaii and lived there until he was 28. On November 17th 2009, SPC Parinas joined the Army because of the lack of employment opportunities in Hawaii and a desire to travel. SPC Parinas enlisted in the Army as a 13B and went to Basic Training at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. Upon graduating, he was assigned to 1st Battalion, 377th Field Artillery Regiment at Ft. Lewis, Washington. He deployed to Afghanistan with 2nd Platoon to Camp Clark and was later assigned to Fire Base Chamkani. As a personal goal he has set for himself, SPC Parinas has vowed to run without stopping to the top of the highest hilltop inside Fire Base Chamkani by the end of his stay. SPC Parinas' near term career goal is to be promoted to the rank of Sergeant by the end of the year. SPC Parinas is eagerly looking forward to spending time with his family upon redeployment and fulfilling his promise to his daughter of taking her to Disneyland.

G COMPANY WOLFPACK

LADIES TAKE THE LEAD!

This month's article is dedicated to what we are doing here in Afghanistan: ensuring stability, empowering the populace and partnering with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

PFAR's Female Engagement Team (FET) wins the war! Well, maybe not single-handedly, but they are making their mark and continuing to improve our relations with the local populace—one woman at a time! After dozens of missions, the FET has fought for women's projects in Khost City, reached out to girls' schools, and interacted with nearly 100 different local women and hundreds of children. Over chai (tea), they often discuss important topics ranging from medical care and child birth to agriculture and markets, as well as less important information— who's getting married and which nail polish is a better color. Each day presents a different challenge for these young female Soldiers. "Sometimes they don't believe that we are women," said SPC Byers, or "the men are afraid that we are a danger to their family so they don't trust us to sit alone with the women," says 1LT August. Other times it's about sneaking around



Golf Company FET Team (Left 1LT August, right SGT Porter) just finished discussing woman's issues with local leaders at a local village outside FOB Salerno.

the aggressive dogs that guard each of the kalats, but with determination and creativity they often find themselves being led into new homes, surrounded by new people.

In the beginning of January, there was not a woman to be found on the streets of AO STEEL and pictures were strictly forbidden of any woman or girl! But now half way through 4/25's deployment, you will find mothers and daughters coming out to greet and welcome their new found friends; you will often find the young girls now crowding around the FET Soldiers, eager to be documented in the memories of the women they look up to. The men were also skeptical at first, but as we build trust and confidence, they are more willing to expose their families to us and continue to open up their homes to more coalition Soldiers.

These engagements have not only benefited Afghan women. It has been a great experience that empowers young female Soldiers to feel that they can make a difference. It builds more confi-



Children from a village recently visited by 2-377th PFAR Female Engagement Team (FET) are all smiles as they pose for the camera.

dence in individuals and their ability to interact with the population while trying to institute a positive change and build relationships. It has also enabled our patrols to connect with a whole new part of the population that was unavailable before the existence of these female engagement teams. It has allowed us to send a message to the Pashtun people that we understand and respect their culture, while still giving men and women opportunities to voice their concerns and opinions equally.

With five months down and five to go, we have increasingly large expectations for these small ladies! They will continue to chip away at the strict limitations of women and set the tone for future female-focused missions.

CPT Douglas Rudd

GOLF 6



(left) SFC Smith gets into the Easter spirit. The fingers off to his left are from 1SG Betanzos who was practicing rabbit hunting.



(right) Golf Co. Maintenance personnel get into the Easter spirit by hunting for Easter eggs that our gracious FRG made for all Soldiers in the company. Pictured from left to right are SPC Sizemore, 1SG Betanzos, CPT Rudd, and SGT Guillion.



(left) Soldiers from the ECP pose for their Easter picture after hunting for Easter eggs that Golf Co. FRG made for each Soldier, pictured from left to right are SPC Dennison, SGT Veney, PFC Raggs, SSG Bryant and CPT Rudd.



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Take a moment to think of someone you despise. Someone that is bothersome to you; you would not like it if they tried to help you.

Now picture this, you're a wealthy farmer. You traveled all the way to the big city from your small farm community in the country. You left behind your wife, kids, and friends to do some business in the city. You navigated the heat, the busy crowded streets, and you just finished your meeting in the city. You are set to return home, but you cannot quite remember the name of the parking garage where you parked your truck. You walk down the street in the direction you believe your vehicle is parked. Then, you turn down a side road; what city folk would call an ally. You take a few steps into the ally and decide to turn around. Something just doesn't feel right.

You are in a dangerous and unfamiliar area, and as you turn around a small group of kids encircles you and begins to harass you. They taunt you and poke at you. You beg them to let you on your way. Finally, they lay an all out attack on you, nearly knocking you



CH (CPT) McCurdy reenlists SPC Collins in front of the BN headquarters. (4APR12)

unconscious. Then, to make things worse, they take all of your possessions including your new shoes and jacket. You are left helpless and can hardly move, but then you look up and see a familiar face from afar.



(L to R) SPC Cain, CH McCurdy, SPC Collins, and MSG Nava stop for a quick photo after SPC Collins' reenlistment ceremony. (4APR12)

You attempt to call out to this person you recognize, an elder from your community church. Unfortunately, you cannot call out to him because of your injuries, but joy almost overcomes you as you feel you are saved. This elder, not recognizing you, sees you and crosses over to the other side of the street to avoid contact with you. You get discouraged and can't imagine God would send someone else, you begin to lose hope. Remembering the verse from Matthew, which reads, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt 21:22 KJV). So, you pray for help.

Then, again, you see another familiar face, a deacon from a neighboring church in your small community. He too sees you and joy overwhelms you. Nevertheless, he too, crosses to the other side of the

street to avoid contact. You feel helpless and beg for mercy from a loving God. Helpless and alone you fall unconscious.

When you wake up, it is several days later, you are in a hospital and do not understand how you got there. You are even more surprised to find out that the person who rescued you paid for your treatment and all the bills at the hospital. Then you learn that your rescuer was this person you thought of at the beginning of this story, the person you so despise. What do you think your feelings would be? How would you respond? You realize hope comes in many forms.

Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27). As you do as the Savior commands, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," consider who your neighbor truly is. I also want you to think about the power of hope, the hope we can bring and receive from one another. That hope comes as each of us embarks in the service of our fellow man.

The story of the Good Samaritan is a well-known parable. The parable is a little different from the story told here. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, there is no indication that the man who was attacked knew anyone that passed by that day. In all probability, he did not associate with Samaritans, maybe even despised them a little. Yet, this lowly Samaritan was the one person willing to stop and help. The Priest and the Levite were representatives of God to the people and representatives of the people to God. Those men passed by the injured man more concerned with themselves than with someone they supposedly represented. Yet a lowly Samaritan, despised by all, stopped to help and went above and beyond.

In conclusion to the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus asked the lawyer "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:36-37).

We are all filled with desires of our own, things we want to accomplish in our lives. We do not want to suffer from pain or sorrow. We could probably compare ourselves to the first two characters in the parable of the Good Samaritan; the Priest and the Levite. How often are we guilty of selfishness in our relationships with our wives, our children, our parents, and even our friends? If we cannot forsake our natural tendencies, our lives will be filled with pain, suffering, and despair. What we have on our side is the power of hope; hope in each other and in a loving Heavenly Father. There is always hope that abounds in our lives. Our God, our Father in Heaven, will not forsake us. He will not leave us alone just as He did not forsake the man that was beaten and left for dead; God will send a Good Samaritan. It may not be the person we want, but whoever they are they will come into our lives. Just as a messenger from a loving Father in Heaven, a blessing will come into our lives. There are two lessons we can take from this story; learn to serve others and allow others to serve us. God brings hope into our lives through others and He brings hope into the lives of others through us. We must be willing to listen and serve. As we do so, hope will abound in our lives, hope will sustain us.

CH (CPT) Logan McCurdy



Last Month's BLAST....

**If you guessed CPT
Ryan Howell, the
Blacksheep Battery
Commander, then you
were right. Look fa-
miliar now?**

BLAST FROM THE PAST

The first junior enlisted Soldier (E-4 or below) who can identify the TF STEEL leader shown in the picture below will get a day off, courtesy of STEEL 7.

