

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

STEEL TIMES

ISSUE 5 VOLUME 1
MAY 2012



TF STEEL
OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM 12-13

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Commander’s Cut.....3

Message from Steel 7.....4

HQ & HQ Battery Hawks.....6

A Battery Falcons.....8

B Battery Blacksheep11

C Battery/1-377 FAR Crusaders.....14

G Company Wolfpack.....16

Chaplain’s Corner.....18

Blast from the Past.....20

Special Congratulations.....21

On the Cover...



SPC Samantha Hall and PFC Chris Kunze, assigned to A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force 4-25, relax with a military working dog in Khoni Ghar May 27. Photo by SPC Kimberly Trumbull

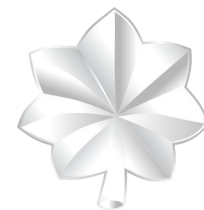
On Page 12..



B Battery Soldiers work with the ANA on an A D-30 as a gunner prepares to fire rounds in support of a training mission.



COMMANDER'S CUT



Dear Families and Friends of Task Force STEEL,

Another month has come and gone. As we celebrate the month of May and with it -- Memorial Day: A ceremonial day in which we honor those who gave the last full measure of devotion in service to their country and their countrymen. Originally, this day was set aside to remember those who died during a war that divided this nation. It was a day to reconcile and remember those noble young buried in every city, village, and hamlet church-yard in our great land. All to ensure the spirit of the fallen contributed to the character of the living.

As time went on, our great nation chose to expand the purpose and further embrace the value a Soldiers' sacrifice -- to designate it as a Federal Holiday to remember the fallen from every conflict. Memorial Day is now a day of remembrance for all who have died in our nation's service. This is a unique holiday with ceremonies punctuated by 21 gun salutes, rather than fireworks; with remembrances in cemeteries, not in parks; with events of active tribute, rather than activities and recreation; furnished with a moment of silence to our fallen. It is a day with a somber tone and sober purpose to remember those who gave the greatest gift so that we at home could enjoy the blessings of peace and prosperity.

We here at FOB SALERNO celebrated the day with the unveiling of the "Fallen Heroes" memorial. Designed and crafted by our own 4-25 ABCT Soldiers, this proud monument is displayed on the airfield for all those arriving and departing to see. This monument bears the names of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice serving in Afghanistan. This monument is the steadfast commitment and resolve of the American Soldier, to provide others with a sense of hope and peace for a better life.

We honor these Soldiers -- and all Soldiers, who have given so much and asked for so little.

On behalf of CSM Moore, Task Force STEEL, and myself, thank you for your tremendous support. We miss you and you remain in our thoughts and prayers. God Bless.



COL Goins and CSM Moore unveiling the "Fallen Heroes" Memorial. Photo by CH Pat Devine

Sincerely,

LTC Frank J. Stanco

Commander, Task Force STEEL

Spartan Steel 6



MESSAGE FROM STEEL 7



Dear PFAR Family,

As you all know, the correct meaning of PFAR is Parachute Field Artillery Regiment. The keywords are Field Artillery. I was reminded by Bravo Battery's 1SG, 1SG Dudley, that his great Paratroopers are really the only true Artillerymen in the Brigade. I understand his position, but I recognize more importantly the intense pride and appreciation that he has for all of the Soldier's that are a part of the Black Sheep Battery. I too share his pride and his enthusiasm for the men of Bravo Battery.

As many of you know, my family and I came to the battalion in July of last year, after the majority of the

heavy lifting, when it came to training, was already complete. So, my first real look at the Battalion and Bravo Battery in general was when we went to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Ft. Polk, LA. At Ft. Polk, the Trainer/Mentors (TMs), told me that this unit (Black Sheep) was the best that they had ever seen. What's so significant about this is that the TMs see every

unit in the Army, and they are not attached to any of them. So, their statements are based upon their observations of the Army standard and not a personal opinion. In other words, they were saying that Bravo Battery was one of the best Artillery units in the entire Army. That was my introduction to Bravo Battery. I observed, and I took notes like any good Sergeant Major would. The more I watched and took notes, the more I was convinced that Bravo Battery, the Black Sheep of the Battalion as they liked to be called, was

truly a unique and special group of men. I didn't know how special or unique that would be until we deployed.

I can honestly say that some of the most memorable (special and unique) experiences that I have had in Afghanistan have been when I've conducted Battle-field Circulation and visited the Paratroopers of Black Sheep. As the wives and loved ones of Black Sheep already know, their loved ones are geographically dispersed over the entire Brigade's Area of Responsibility to provide accurate and timely fires in support of all the Task Forces in the Brigade. Now, let's talk about a few of those special and unique experiences.



PFC Jordan poses with CSM Moore in the "Bat Tower" at COP BAK.

I am a big fan of Batman. I grew up watching Batman and Robin as a kid, and he's always been one of my favorite superheroes. Little did I know, I would get the opportunity to meet one of my childhood heroes in Afghanistan? Yes, if you have not guessed it yet, PFC Jordan is my hero. I even have a picture to show you of myself and PFC Jordan in the Bat Cave, or should I

say, "Bat Tower." This is PFC Jordan's side of the story. He was pulling guard duty, and he calmly called the Sergeant of the Guard to inform him of a bat that had a wingspan of over two feet that was flying in and out of his tower. He calmly calls back and tells them that the bat entered his tower, and he kindly asked the bat to leave. In doing so, the bat scratched him on the hand. At this time, there is an unconfirmed report that the particular bat in question was a Talibat. The other side of the story is that the bat was about six

inches long, and PFC Jordan squealed like a little girl as he grabbed whatever was nearest him, possibly scratching himself in the struggle to the death of good versus evil. I guess there are only three people that can honestly tell what happened that faithful night: God, the Talibat, and PFC Jordan.

I flew out one day to visit the Paratroopers at COP Herrera, and I witnessed two sections certify and conduct training. I even had the opportunity to sit down and talk with them and share with them the things that was on the Sergeant Major's mind, and then the weather starts to go red and then black. That simply means that you might as well get comfortable for a few days because you are not going anywhere, and I was cool with that. Then I had one of those, this can only happen in Afghanistan moments. This is the God's honest truth with no embellishment or exaggeration whatsoever. A Russian helicopter from the Hind family lands. The pilot gets out, and the helicopter is left on the Helicopter Landing Zone (HLZ). So, what do we do? Yes, you guessed it; we turn it around and push it off of the HLZ. I couldn't believe what I was witnessing and didn't want to be left out. I quickly gave someone my camera, and I must admit, I was doing more posing than pushing because fact is definitely stranger than fiction at times. After I got my photo props, I actually did push and help out. I had a pretty good time. Who can say that they actually pushed a Russian Helicopter off of the HLZ? I can — and a select group of proud Paratroopers from Black Sheep.

Flying and visiting various FOBs and COPs in Afghanistan is challenging because of how demanding the terrain is. Couple that with terrible weather conditions in the winter, and the chances of getting stranded grows exponentially. Yes, I had the honor of being stuck more than once with Paratroopers from Bravo Battery. Those were some of the most refreshing and fun times I have had; refreshing, because no emails or meetings or phone calls; fun, because frankly some of your husbands are crazy and probably need to be placed in some type of an asylum. I can say that we had a great time getting to know one another in me telling some of my stories to them and them sharing some of their outlandish tales with me. The good news for them is that I have forgotten most of the stuff they told me, so I will not embarrass them in this newsletter. As long as no one tells my story about the mangos, I will call it even.

While visiting your Paratroopers, I was extremely impressed with how they conducted themselves with every mission that they performed. Much was required of them, sometimes given little to no notice to accomplish the mission, and every time their performance was exemplary. They were asked to move on several occasions, create a firing point where there was none, and their guidance was to make it happen. They were given a new Artillery piece (M777A2, 155mm) and in five days or less they were certified and had already fired this weapon system in support of their maneuver Task Force; once again, the guidance was to make it happen. They created a partnered firing point to help facilitate the transition from American forces on the ground to Afghan lead and controlled forces on the ground, and yes you guessed it, there guidance was to make it happen. There are so many other things that I could write about, but I was told that I have to condense my articles. I didn't even talk about the myriad of duties and responsibilities that they performed on their respective FOBs. I can tell you that the Commander and I are extremely proud and pleased with their efforts. Black Sheep, thank you for making it happen.



Members of Black Sheep Battery, along with CSM Moore, push a Russian helicopter off of the HLZ at COP Herrera.

Steel 7 Out!

HQ & HQ BATTERY HAWKS



Steel Hawk Families,

Greetings from Afghanistan! It has been one hundred and eighty days, since we arrived in Afghanistan. Our Paratroopers continuously face an enemy reluctant to change and zealous to foster a climate of uncertainty for peace, justice, and liberty. Despite the enemy's tactics, our Paratroopers continue to dominate the battlefield, keeping the enemy on the run. To commemorate our accomplishment thus far, our Brigade Rear-Detachment is planning a mid-tour celebration event in JBER, AK. We encourage all to attend. The FRG leaders have the details.



CW2 Colegrove (left) reenlisting SGT Barber.



CW2 Colegrove (left) reenlisting SSG Hayes.

Our Paratroopers continue to take a break from the combat environment by going on Rest and Recuperation leave. HHB personnel have also been taking advantage of the weather and downtime to get more involved in athletic activities around the FOB. For instance, under the leadership of Sergeant First Class (SFC) Charles and Staff Sergeant McKenzie, HHB won the all FOB- Salerno- Small- Field Soccer tournament by defeating eight other skilled teams some of which comprised of international and/or local national soccer players.

HHB Paratroopers eligible for reenlistment continued to renew their promises to the Steel Hawk family, the United States Army, and our Country. The outstanding Paratroopers who reenlisted this past 30 days include Staff Sergeant Christopher Hayes, Sergeant Mark Kondik, and SGT Mark Barber. This month, HHB promoted SSG Sakis to Sergeant First Class, Corporal

Bucko to Sergeant, and PFC Diaz to Specialist.

From the home front, the families joined Mrs. Aldoph, and Mrs. Fletcher to celebrate "Military Spouse Appreciation Day." The United States Armed Services have been celebrating this day since 1984. We have reports that the event was a blast. Families enjoyed an exquisite banquet, and the children enjoyed crafts and other activities. The crafts made during the banquet will be sent forward to dads for Father's Day. Can't wait to receive them!

Steel Hawk Families, twelve months ago Sachiko and I joined the PFAR family, and everyone joined us in creating a



CPT Darendburg (left) reenlisting SGT Kondik (right).

family friendly climate in HHB. On 27 May 2012, Sachiko and I will transition out of HHB, and CPT Ryan Howell will assume command of the battery. We appreciate all the warm farewells we have already received. It was a great privilege to have been at your service. Please do not hesitate to look us up in the future. Wherever your endeavors may take you, we will always be at your service.

Families, friends, and supporters of the Steel Hawk Battery, thank you so much for all your support.

Strong Families Always,

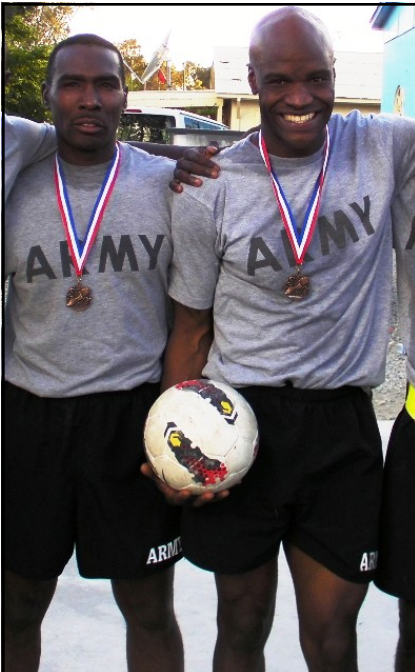
CPT Jean D. Aldoph
HAWK 6



SFC Sakis giving a speech at his promotion ceremony.



SFC Kramer (right) promoting CPL Bucko to SGT.



SFC Charles (right) and SSG McKenzie (left) posing for the championship picture at FOB Salerno



ISG Phillips (center) observes as SSG McKnight (left) promotes PFC Diaz to SPC.

A picture of the Military Spouse Appreciation Day celebration at JBER.



A BATTERY FALCONS

Well, another month has come, and by the time you read this, May will have passed. What does this mean? It means another month closer to our families and friends, another month of daily patrols with our Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) and Paratroopers of Alpha Battery will have been completed, and a change of command between CPT Daniel Frechette and I (CPT Dana Lafarier) went well.

First, an introduction of myself to the wives, girlfriends, families, and friends of all the Paratroopers of Alpha Battery, 2-377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment (PFAR). My name is Dana Lafarier and I, like CPT Frechette mentioned last month, am a New Englander (or “New England-ah,” as some will say). This isn’t my first time in Alaska, my wife, Tiffany, and I were stationed in Fort Wainwright, for four years and deployed with 1-24 IN to Iraq from 2008-2009. I will tell you if you never have been to Fairbanks, AK, it’s a different world, especially at -60 degrees without the wind chill factor. My wife and I look forward to meeting all of you and are looking forward to the relationships that we will build throughout our tenure in command. Now, enough about me, let’s talk about the men who work day-in and day-out for this Battery and the country of Afghanistan.

I will tell you when I arrived at the Alpha Battery Command Post (CP) and saw many of the Paratroopers that I was immediately impressed. As I briefed the men my “Command Philosophies,” I mentioned the three characteristics that will make you successful as an American Soldier and as a Paratrooper in this Battery: motivation, discipline, and physical fitness. Now these may seem like broad Army terms, but they are key to keep our Paratroopers prepared, situational aware, and most importantly, safe. All of these characteristics were already established and shown by the Paratroopers of Alpha Battery. The abilities of the Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) in this Battery are impeccable. We as “Artillerymen,” are faced with the challenge being the only non-Infantry maneuver element in the Brigade. This Battery has been able to evolve and become highly proficient in ground force tactics and planning. The NCO’s ability to lead from the front and ensure that his subordinate Paratroopers are prepared and aware of current surroundings is what will keep us “always ready” and safe.

Don’t be mistaken by other Batteries, Companies, or Battalions. The Paratroopers of Alpha Battery are working, and they are working hard. There isn’t much time for basketball, volleyball, or video games. But they make

time for their families, friends, and even though they may have been on a 10 hour dismounted patrol, they get in the gym and keep their bodies at peak physical fitness. Why? Not because they want to have “sweet beach bodies” for when they get home, but because they know that the Paratrooper to his left and his right need him to be conditioned this way, in order to complete any mission or task given to them.

If you are new to the *Steel Times* or need a refresher on what the Paratroopers of Alpha Battery are doing, here is a quick summary of events for May 2012. The Paratroopers have been assigned the task to disrupt and deny (the Army calls these tactical tasks) insurgent activities targeted at/around FOB SALERNO, located in sunny KHOWST Province, AFG. The Paratroopers make this look easy, but make no mistake; this is a difficult and time consuming task. In the month of May there are 744 total hours. Just to give you an idea of the amount of time the Paratroopers of Alpha Battery invest in the country of Afghanistan, they will have conducted nearly 670 hours of patrols “outside the wire.” These patrols range from mounted patrols in our armored vehicles, dismounted patrols through the mountainous terrain in our northern area of operations, to air assaults with TF WOLFPACK aboard Chinook (CH-47) and Blackhawk (UH-60) helicopters. The goal is to saturate the area in order to prevent malicious acts against FOB SALERNO and the surrounding villages. As I told the Paratroopers of Alpha Battery when I took command, “your service and contributions to the people of FOB SALERNO will be unknown to everyone and your sacrifice will be unrewarded by others.” There are many people who do not have to sacrifice the time and efforts like the Paratroopers of Alpha Battery. And for their sacrifice, the amount of attacks from rockets and mortars has decreased nearly 80 percent, not bad for a FOB known by all in the country of Afghanistan as “Rocket City!” The amount of presence and over-watch provided by the men of Alpha Battery allows the other units here on FOB SALERNO to sleep a little safer and without the fear of rocket bombardment by the insurgents of Afghanistan.

Well, it was a pleasure to have introduced myself to all of you and hopefully I’ve shed a little light on all that your Paratroopers of Alpha Battery are doing, while we are here in Afghanistan. To the wives and girlfriends of Alpha Battery, I truly appreciate all of the efforts and time consuming tasks that you are faced with on a daily basis. I’m sure it isn’t easy to manage school, work, the kids, the house, and a pet or two; that is almost like a deployment in itself. You do it because it’s what you know is right for

you and your family. So take a minute to reflect on all that you are doing for your family, husband, and for yourselves and give yourself a pat-on-the-back. You're doing great! For the families who are reading this, you are also making a sacrifice and deserve to be rewarded for the contributions to the United States and to your Paratroopers. So for that, I thank you. Until next month, from me and the Paratroopers of Alpha Battery 2-377th PFAR, thank you and we look forward to seeing you all in the short months to come.

— CPT Dana Lafarier
FALCON 6

ANOTHER DAY IN AFGHANISTAN

I think it was some sort of beef, but one couldn't be certain. The carcass hung there lifelessly, freshly butchered.

"We should probably cook this thing pretty good, don't you think? I'd hate to give the whole platoon malaria," I said.

First Platoon was on the way to the Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) Check Point 5. We were buying dinner at a local bazaar, and despite all the hazards presented on the battlefield, the only thing on my mind was, "Man, I hope the guys are taking their Malaria pills."

Check Point 5 is a small outpost located along a frequently traveled route in A/2-377 PFAR's battlespace. Each and every day the brave policemen complete the dangerous task of patrolling a portion of that main route in order to ensure it is clear of explosives and other hazards that might impede ANSF, ISAF, or civilian traffic. As it is, members of Alpha Battery also frequently travel this route. The service done by the members of Check Point 5 directly affects the safety of Alpha's men. So when a member of the AUP from



SSG Novak (right) at the butcher shop.

Check Point 5 was wounded by an Improved Explosive Device (IED) it only seemed fitting to show our platoon's gratitude and sympathy toward our partnered brothers-in-arms. The only question was, how?

A crumpled wad of Afghani, American dollars, and Pakistani Rupees made it difficult to count exactly how much currency First Platoon was toting that day at the bazaar, but judging by the thickness of the wad it looked like enough. The butcher and his vendor were trying to run a tough bargain though. That's when the Platoon Sergeant, SFC Jean Andre, stepped in.

"I got it Sir. Let me handle this guy."

"Roger Smoke. He's a stingy fellow and that butcher's blade is starting to scare me a little," I said as I began walking back to the trucks with the butcher in full chop.

Minutes later Smoke returned with a grin on his face and dinner in his hands. Somehow, empowered by secrets and skills only an experienced NCO garners, Smoke Andre returned to the trucks with an extremely generous cut of beef, a live chicken, and the majority of the cash.



PFC Jennings, SPC Ortega, SPC Torres and other members of Alpha Battery and the AUP from CP5 enjoy the feast.



PFC Berry enjoying the Afghan meal.

“What did you say to him,” I asked.

“I think he just liked me better,” he replied.

“Ha, impossible, but what’s with the chicken?”

“I figured if the whole platoon was going to get Malaria from the beef tonight, I’d spare myself.”

And so, it would be for dinner that evening, chicken and some sort of mystery Afghan beef, which was thoroughly cooked and cleaned I might add. The rest of the platoon pitched in buying various vegetables, a case of Mountain Dew, and some cakes for dessert. We delivered it all to the check point’s chef, who also doubles as a machine gunner, who immediately got to work preparing the meal. A few hours later a gluttonous feast was had.

Later that evening it was brought to my attention that the Policemen from Check Point 5 are not often supplied with meat and therefore our bearing of it in abundance was a sign of great respect and support. Even the usually subdued commander cracked a smile while he woofed down scoop after scoop of the beefy stew. One could sense the AUP’s trust in us increasing as they all began to liven up. The strength of the partnership was growing by the second.

For some members of First Platoon, eating the Afghan meal was a first time experience. All the Paratroopers took it in stride just as they have with everything thus far during the deployment. In many ways the meal was analogous of the deployment. Eating the mystery meat was much like stepping out on patrol each day, not knowing what the next bite or step would hold. Sitting across from an AUP counterpart implied the partnership we were attempting to establish. The

silence in the air represented all the things we don’t know about each other, but the common non-spoken language around the food showed the cooperation we still manage to keep.

As the night continued SPC “Doc” Kunsch got to training the Afghans on medical procedures. The usually reluctant and disinterested Afghans were attentive and participative while he went through the steps of applying a tourniquet — the first and most important step when applying aid to a wounded comrade. Surprisingly, a talented young policeman displayed a superb understanding of the medical care, and a new Afghan medic was born.

On that night, not a trigger was pulled, and no bombs went off. No insurgents were detained and no enemy was killed. Yet, in the middle of a war zone, where most progress is measured by the aforementioned events, significant progress was made for Alpha Battery and their AUP counterparts. Because of the skills the Paratroopers from Alpha Battery were teaching them, the policemen from Check Point 5 were growing closer to taking over full responsibility of their district. They were learning, and more importantly, they wanted to learn. And just like every day, the Paratroopers from Alpha Battery were leading the way.

— written by 1LT Matthew Hickey



Doc Kunsch and SFC Andre instruct the new Afghan medics the proper way to apply a tourniquet as other Alpha Battery Paratroopers serve as ‘patients.’

B BATTERY BLACKSHEEP

Bravo Battery Spouses, Family, and Friends,

Hello to everyone back there in Alaska! I want to tell you all how excited I am to be joining the great Bravo Battery team. It's also great to be doing the job we all signed up for; putting steel downrange!

First, I'd like to congratulate CPT Ryan Howell on a successful command. He will be missed in the Battery, but his hard work and dedication continue in the success your Paratroopers have.

Since taking command, I visited all the firing positions where Bravo Battery Paratroopers are located. Some are living more Spartan than others, but every place I went impressed me with their high morale and high standard of discipline. Your Paratroopers are working very hard, and anyone with them can see the obvious high level of pride they take in their job as Artillerymen.

I attribute the success the Battery is having to the excellent training our Paratroopers received before deployment, great leadership on the gunline and in the fire direction centers, and the outstanding attitudes the Paratroopers maintain every day. The success is not just because of our hard work. From visiting the different COPs and FOBs, everyone has told me that your support for them has been outstanding and has been a huge help to morale. I thank you for everything that you do in the rear for us and for our families, and ask that you continue those efforts over the last half of our deployment. You are as much a part of the Blacksheep Team as all of us over here.

First Sergeant Dudley and I are committed to making sure our Paratroopers and their families have everything they need to accomplish the mission and take care of everyone still at home. If there is ever anything we can do to help, please let us know.

I look forward to working with everyone on the Blacksheep Team and seeing our Paratroopers continue to accomplish great things.

BLACKSHEEP!

Sincerely,

DANIEL D. FRECHETTE

CPT, FA

Commanding

MATTHEW J. DUDLEY

FIRST SERGEANT

UPDATE ON THE “WILD MEN” OF 2ND PLATOON AT COP WILDERNESS



ANA's 4/1 Kandak Heavy Weapons Coy Platoon prepares to fire 1st Fire Mission at COP Wilderness out of the D-30 artillery weapon system.

it off. It provides a place for Soldiers to relax and get outside without walking through the oftentimes muddy ground to shoot the breeze or enjoy a fire at night. Now that it is getting warmer, and we are receiving more rain, it is a good morale boost to be out on the porch.

Looking ahead, 2nd Platoon will be partnering and training with ANA artillery counterparts. We have already modified our Fire Direction Center (FDC) into one combined FDC so that we can work side-by-side for fire mission processing. Additionally, our firing point has grown with the ANA's D-30 artillery weapon system; as well as another platoon of ANA Soldiers living and working right beside us. This is a huge step for the ANA as they continue to strengthen protection and peace for their country. We look forward to both the challenges and rewards that lie ahead of us as the ANA and Coalition Forces progress together. Due to our recent partnering and changing priorities, numerous members of our team have left for other positions in different areas. This is just another thing the guys have to adapt to and keep driving on with the mission. Those of us reaming with 2nd Platoon at COP Wilderness wish our fellow Soldiers the best as they adapt to living with Alpha Battery and HHB. The Soldiers have been hard at work, training daily to maintain proficiency for artillery support, when called upon. When the day is done, it is nice for the guys to reconnect back at home and talk with loved ones with the internet connection set up on our site.

Additional highlights — PV2 Adam Kelly was promoted to PFC and 2LT Kenny Spenard was promoted to 1LT; both have willingly earned the increased responsibility that goes along with their promotion.

After crossing the five month mark here at COP Wilderness, 2nd Platoon has adapted well and continues to thrive in an ever changing environment in the Khost-Gardez Pass. Some of our difficulties arise when our fellow Soldiers depart for R&R leave. We all look forward to our time at home and with our families; however, we understand that means more work and responsibility for those that remain at COP Wilderness. From working shifts at the entry control point to Sergeant of the guard, 2nd platoon has stepped up when Chaos Troop of 1-40 CAV has needed them: both for indirect fire support and force protection. The men of 2nd platoon have been continuously improving their positions and living quarters commonly referred to as “hooches.” We are always adding to or modifying our porch in the back of our hooches. We constructed a fire pit and a wood furnished patio with a tool shed to top



A D-30 Gunner prepares to fire rounds in support of a training mission.

— written by 1LT Patrick Hoefler
Platoon Leader



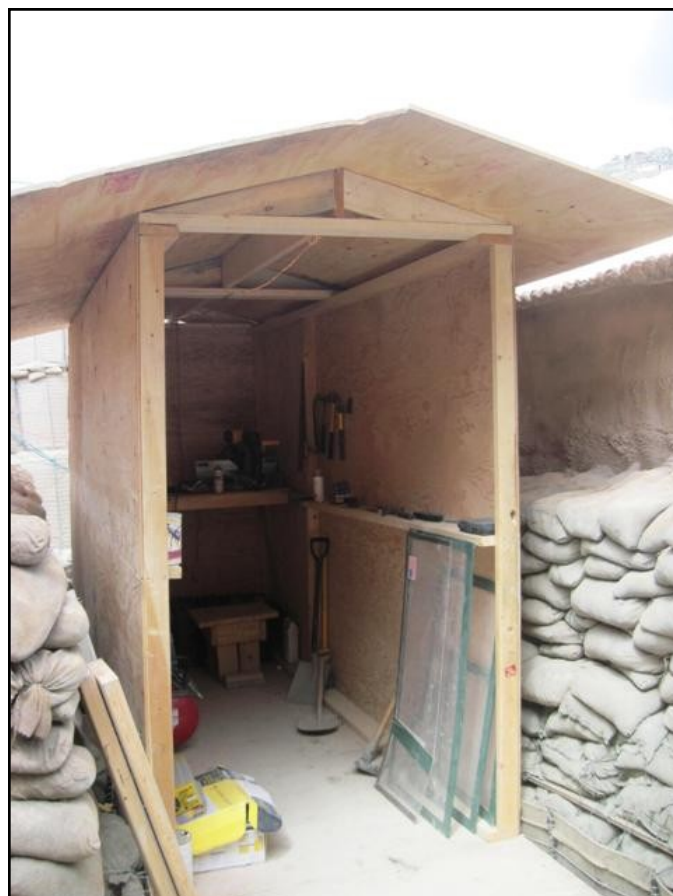
A D-30 Gun Chief gives the command to fire on COP Wil-derness in support of a training mission.



2nd Platoon falls into formation as PV2 Kelly is promoted to PFC.



The wood patio, or "porch" that was constructed behind our living quarters.



Newly constructed tool and gear shed.

C BATTERY/1-377 FAR CRUSADERS

The month of May has been a busy month for the Crusader Battery. During the month, countless hours of training were conducted in order to prepare the M777 howitzer crews at each firing point for the introduction of M119 howitzers. The hard work paid off, and each firing point received an M119 and had all its crews certified to use it. Numerous combat illumination missions were conducted at Camp Clark and Firebase Chamkani to support the safe movement of Coalition Forces at night across their Areas of Operation, while also denying the enemy freedom of maneuver under the cover of darkness.

In addition to its combat mission, Camp Clark received praise from the new RC-East Commander, Major General Mayville, when he paid a visit to see the training of the Afghani Kandak Heavy Coy Artillery. 4th Platoon at Firebase Chamkani spent the month hardening the platoon's living areas and gun positions while striving to improve the camp's once austere living conditions. Soldiers at Chamkani also participated in advanced marksmanship and force protection training led by the Operational Detachment Alpha

(ODA) Team. The Special Forces snipers mentored the Soldiers on their individual weapons, how to employ and maintain them, and demonstrated uniquely tailored approaches for each Soldier on how to improve their form and techniques for the firing of their weapon system. This improved the understanding in each Soldier of how to utilize their weapon system more effectively and as an extension of themselves.

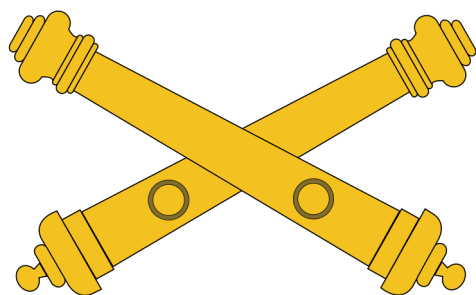
At FOB Andar, a comprehensive physical training program modeled after the Crossfit and Insanity exercise programs was implemented by 1st Platoon to challenge the Soldiers to score the highest on the upcoming battery PT test in June. The high altitude at FOB Andar, approximately 7,000 feet, makes even light exercise extremely demanding, making

the already strenuous physical training regiment all the more difficult. In spite of this difficulty, the program helped raise the overall level of fitness for the platoon and dramatically boosted the platoon's morale. During the month, 1st Platoon received and trained extensively on the M119 howitzer as it provided additional firing capabilities for the platoon.

For 3rd Platoon at FOB Salerno, the month was busy with maintenance and repairs, as all howitzers at the firing point began their quarterly and annual services. The services are an important part of maintaining the firing capability of the M777 howitzer and providing junior Soldiers an opportunity to better understand how the howitzer is maintained and how intricately all its individual parts work together to perform, even under ex-

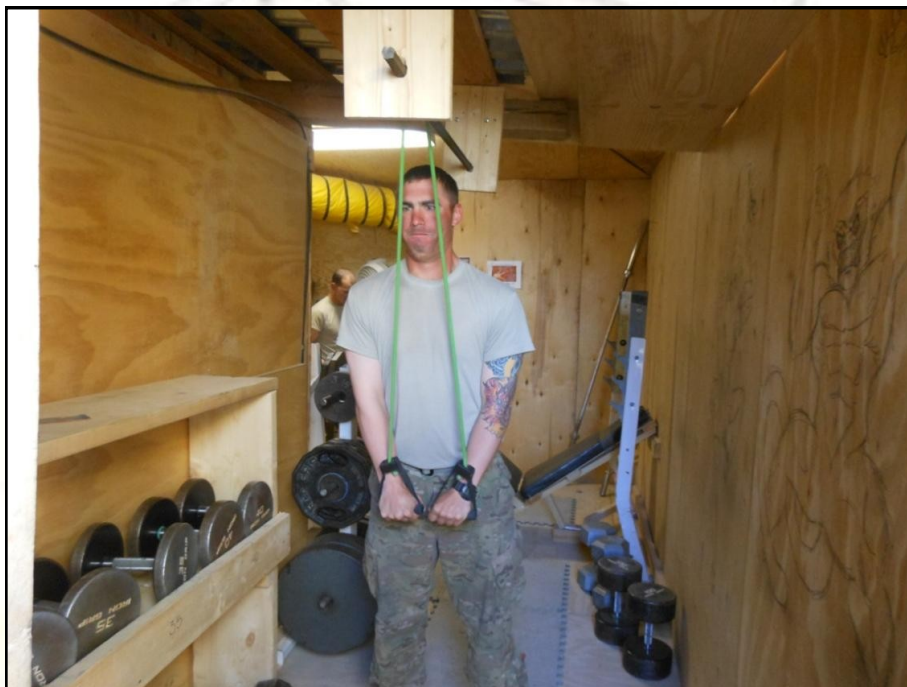


Soldiers from 4th Platoon at Firebase Chamkani conduct rehearsals at dusk for illumination missions in support of Special Operations missions.



treme stress. In addition to manning both M777 and M119 firing positions, 3rd Platoon has Soldiers providing force protection for the Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC) that aid in the processing of detainees at the Field Detention Site (FDS), and also provide Soldiers for patrols to support maneuver operations in AO Steel. 3rd Platoon is representative of the overall adaptability of the Crusader Battery, its flexibility, and continued ability to take on any task that is assigned to it to contribute to the overall success of the U.S mission in Afghanistan.

— written by 1LT Daniel White



PVT Watson from 1st Platoon at FOB Andar pushes himself during regular platoon PT.



Soldiers from 1st Platoon at FOB Andar conducting M119 Training in preparation for howitzer certification.

G COMPANY WOLFPACK

The month of May is a turning point for Golf Company; we have crossed the “hump” or halfway point of our deployment. While it hasn’t been easy, we look back over the past months at our accomplishment, and look forward to the challenges that lie ahead. This month, Golf has seen several promotions and re-enlistments. SPC Bradley Winter proudly raised his arm to swear and re-affirm his dedication to support and defend the constitution of the United States.

The Company promoted this month from the rank of Private First Class to Specialist, were Maria Vandyne, Charles Gliden, and Marek Osowski. SPC Diego Bakhos was laterally promoted from Specialist to the rank of Corporal. Lastly, Corporal Janovia Nelson was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. Sergeant Nelson gladly accepted the added responsibility that comes with being a Noncommissioned Officer in the United States Army.

This article will highlight what goes on at the Salerno Entry Control Point (ECP). The Soldiers at the ECP are extremely hardworking, dedicated Paratroopers. They work 12+ hours a day processing personnel and vehicles on and off the FOB. Day in and day out, they diligently perform their duties in a professional manner, understanding how important it is to ensure contraband does not pass through the gate. The Paratroopers at the ECP feel a sense of purpose and accomplishment in their job. They understand the important security role they have been tasked with. “We have the most important job with the least amount of recognition,” says SPC Cottrell. “But, there is no other place I would want to work, or job I would want to be doing. The ECP is where I want to be.” The ECP is multifunctional. It is equipped to process not only vehicles entering and exiting the FOB, but the local national workers who walk onto the Salerno to work.

The ACP processes all of the Local Nationals walking onto FOB SALERNO. The majority of the locals walking through ACP work one of the many companies located on FOB Salerno. Walking through the ACP, one will often hear our Paratroopers speaking Pashto, the dominate language in Khost Province. Many of these language skills are needed for daily operations, but many of the Paratroopers really enjoy the interaction with the local Afghans and learning about their culture.

The VCP is responsible for the entry of all coalition convoys entering and exiting the FOB, as well as any and all local “jingle” truck exiting after delivering much needed supplies. The VCP Paratroopers keep a watchful eye on what leaves the FOB as well as what enters. It is their responsibility to ensure any jingle truck that exits the FOB is authorized the cargo it is carrying.

The MILVACIS lane processes all jingle trucks delivering supplies to FOB Salerno. The MILVACIS Paratroopers process trucks carrying fuel, food, PX items, gravel, barriers and anything you can think of that is needed for operations on the FOB. The MILVACIS crew works hand



The MILVACIS Crew with our AMK9 dog handlers and their dogs. (L to R) PFC Love, John and his dog Boyke, SGT Veney, Tari and his dog Cifra, SPC Bennett, SPC Wengel, Phaniel and his dog Max, and PFC Yankey

in hand with the movement control team (MCT) who processes all the inbound trucks. In addition to the MCT, the MILVACIS crew works closely with the bomb and drug dogs along with their handlers. These dogs and handlers are vital to searching each truck to deny the enemy any possibility of smuggling drugs or explosives on the FOB. During the times when the dogs aren't searching the trucks, they give a much needed feel of home, a reminder of what we have to look forward to when we get home.

Along with the AMK9 dog handlers, another important enabler to the ECP operations are the Garda World (GW) security forces personnel that work for us. Garda World is a local national security force that augments the FOBs security. The ECP has numerous GW personnel that are integrated into our operations. These men have truly become part of our team. The GW personnel bring much to the table including, at times, much needed comic relief, giving a laugh to help us make it through the day.

While this isn't an overly exciting job, it is critical to FOB Security. The Paratroopers will continue to perform their duties professionally, until they get on the bird that will take them back to Alaska.



SGT Crawford, SPC Prawito, and SGT Venney take a break to pose for a picture.



SGT Venney, SSG Bryant, and SGT Nelson posing in front of the new ECP wall scroll.



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Building a foundation that can withstand financial crisis, physical illness, prolonged separation, etc. Society currently faces these storms and thus it is urgent in these turbulent times to develop a sure foundation in our homes; a refuge from the world. The scriptures say, “He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock” (Luke 6:48 KJV). Building a strong foundation in life is essential to safety, health, and spiritual strength. This foundation is what we turn to when we face personal crises in life; a place to turn for comfort and peace. Everyone builds their foundation in a different way, thus we can strengthen each other, for there is strength in diversity. We do not need to come together to believe the same things, but to foster growth in each other. We can accomplish this sense of community by first developing a strong foundation of living the best possible life, no matter our circumstance.

Family plays a great role in how we live our lives. “And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Mal 4:6 KJV). God has blessed us on this great earth with families that are and will be a literal refuge from the world, if we develop a sure foundation. Three key principles will strengthen the family and by extension, the community. The first and probably most important is building a sturdy foundation of healthy communication in the home. Second, create an atmosphere in the home of study, whether that study is scripture or other good books. The other principle is to strengthen the family bonds by spending quality time together; eating dinner together, reserving an evening for family activities, and/or developing family traditions. Teaching these principles of healthy communication and quality time together will reinforce the family and thus create a refuge from the storms of life.

These principles can develop a sure foundation in the home and consequently the community. Everything else will fall into place when a refuge from the storms of life is developed within the walls of our homes. The first principle to learn and develop is in healthy communication. Each family member has their own personality and communication style. In our home we found a few traditions that helped us communicate more effectively. One of those traditions is praying together as a family. We kneel in a circle and ask each other what we are grateful for. Then one of us thanks our Heavenly Father for those things of which we are grateful. This may seem inconsequential, but when we express gratitude for each other, in front of each other, we develop a greater love and open communication in our home. This tradition allowed us to communicate openly and effectively. Every family has traditions of their own and can develop new traditions. You must decide what works best for you and what will help bring a peace in your homes providing a refuge from everything that happens outside the home. Inevitably, there will be times when the effort seems to far exceed the results. In these times of personal and sometimes



CH (CPT) McCurdy stops to pose for a quick picture with the children of a local village while on patrol with A BTRY.

collective crises, families can find answers to life's problems together. Those efforts can, in many cases, build faith and help to develop solutions families can apply in their homes.

Our homes can also benefit from spending quality time as a family. We need to come together as families, to strengthen each other, and build a strong foundation. A message I once learned came from Stanley and Willits who wrote, "We were never meant to live in a state of functional isolation. We were created to be relational beings." These words are important for us to understand in today's society of technology. We seem to spend more time apart than together. I remember as a child going out into the neighborhood where parents were always outside, kids were playing, and in general families spent more time together. Today, I find families spending more time in isolation, to include family members not spending as much time together. God intended for each of His children to build lasting relationships, to build a strong foundation. When we hold true to family traditions or develop traditions such as a home evening with the family, or a pizza and movie night each week, relationships are further developed. Families grow stronger together and make strong our family bond. We can come together as families to build a strong foundation, to build a refuge from the world, and to strengthen our communities. Let's come together to better serve each other and in turn to better serve God.

CH (CPT) Logan McCurdy



SPC Collins poses with a boy from the local village while on patrol with A BTRY.



Last Month's BLAST....

If you guessed ISG David Phillips, HAWK 7, then you are correct.



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.



SPECIAL CONGRATULATIONS!!!

TO THE PFAR GUN BUNNIES FOR WINNING THEIR FIRST SOFTBALL GAME. CONGRATULATIONS LADIES! CHECK OUT SOME OF THE PICTURES BELOW.

