



Volume 1, Issue 6



December 2012

JTF Empire dedicates Venne Engineer Center



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith
Joint Task Force Empire Public Affairs

The official party cuts the ribbon to officially dedicate the Staff Sgt. Dain Venne Engineer Center during a ceremony at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Nov. 19. The center, built by engineers for engineers, will be a central location for synchronizing military engineer operations in Afghanistan.

Full Story on Page 3

Featured this month:

- Honey Badgers go versatile **Page 5**
- Missouri Gov. visits troops **Page 7**
- Empire troops aim for Schützenschnur **Page 8**
- Partners work toward common goal **Page 16**





General Knowledge

From the desk of the Commanding General, JTF Empire

As I circulate the battlefield and visit with our troops, I see the hearts of Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen filled with pride in the work they do. I commend all of you for your hard work and dedication. Because we live this fight every day, it is sometimes difficult to see the impact we have on each other, the people and military of Afghanistan.

With the Winter Holidays approaching, it is good to take time and think of what you have and are thankful for. Not only for what we all left behind at home, but the people, training and interactions that we have all had here in Afghanistan. We have all grown a little during our time here. Every day is a blessing. Every day, I thank God for giving me another day and pray that He will allow me to make the most of it.

Pass on what you have learned in Leader/Continuity Books and AARs so that follow-on Soldiers and formations that rotate in will learn and grow from our experiences. It will make a difference. And who knows, they might be thanking you someday down the road for your assistance and help. During the holidays, take

time to call family and friends at home.

Finally, be thankful for each day. Reflect on your accomplishments and what you have done here. Be proud. Think about how you would have done things differently and learn from your experiences. Then, refocus and get back in the fight. We need you!

Finally, we must make sure that our Afghan partners are set up for success. Train them as best you can. This is their fight - their country. It is their future.



Essays!
DAVID L. WEEKS
Brigadier General, USA
Commander
Joint Task Force EMPIRE and
411TH Engineer Brigade
Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan



THE EMPIRE REPORT			
JOINT TASK FORCE EMPIRE - 411TH ENGINEER BRIGADE			
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE			
COMMANDING GENERAL BRIG. GEN. DAVID L. WEEKS		COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR COMMAND SGT. MAJ. ANDREW C. KROM	
<p>The EMPIRE Report is an authorized publication for members of Joint Task Force Empire in accordance with DoD Instruction 5120.4. Contents of The Empire Report are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, NATO, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, The National Football League, or the 411th Engineer Brigade. All editorial content of this publication is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the JTF Empire Public Affairs Office. All submissions are subject to editing by JTF Empire PAO.</p>	Editorial Staff JTF Empire Chief of Staff: Col. John P. Constable JTF Empire IIA Officer: Maj. John A. Coppola JTF Empire Intelligence Officer: Lt. Col. Richard T. McCauley JTF Empire Public Affairs Officer: Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith	Contributing Units RC-N Engineer Tactical Command Post 1st Engineer Battalion - Task Force Diehard 178th Engineer Battalion - Task Force Prowler 120th Engineer Battalion - Task Force Outlaw 507th Engineer Battalion - Task Force Warhammer 20th Engineer Battalion - Task Force Lumberjack 133rd Naval Mobile Construction Battalion - Task Force Anchor 49th Mine Dog Detachment	
	<p>“Winter is coming.”</p>		<p>Media Queries please contact the JTF Empire PAO at derek.m.smith@afghan.swa.army.mil</p>

JTF Empire dedicates Venne Engineer Center

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith
Joint Task Force Empire Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Members of Joint Task Force Empire and honored guests gathered to officially dedicate the Staff Sgt. Dain Venne Engineer Center at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Nov. 19. The center, built by engineers for engineers, will be a central location for synchronizing military engineer operations throughout the country.

JTF Empire, the single engineer brigade command coordinating Army, Air Force and Navy engineer operations in Afghanistan, dedicated the building to the memory of Staff Sgt. Dain Venne of the 444th Engineer Company, who was killed in the line of duty in Paktya Province, Afghanistan, Nov. 3. Additionally, attendees honored two other Soldiers who paid the ultimate

sacrifice by dedicating the Sgt. Brett Gornewicz Conference Room and the Sgt. 1st Class James E. Thode Joint Operations Center in the new establishment.

Gornewicz was killed in the line of duty while conducting route clearance operations with the 444th En. Co. in Paktya Province, Afghanistan, Nov. 3. Thode was killed while conducting route clearance operations with the 118th Engineer Sapper Company, Dec. 10, 2010.

“These three men are heroes in the truest sense of the word,” said Brig. Gen. David L. Weeks, commanding general of the 411th Engineer Brigade,



Joint Task Force Empire. “It is appropriate that we honor these fallen engineers for their service, for their ultimate sacrifice, for their fight against terrorism. These men gave all they had in the defense of freedom, for mission accomplishments, to ensure freedom of movement, to ensure a better and free Afghanistan.”

Weeks explained the Venne Center will centrally direct engineer combat and construction operations throughout Afghanistan. The major focus of these operations will be to manage and guide the training and development of Afghan National Army Engineers.

“ANA engineers will soon assume the mission of assuring freedom of movement and synchronizing construction operations for the building of infrastructure here,” explained Weeks. “They will be the corner-



Photos by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith

(Top right) Brig. Gen. David L. Weeks, commanding general, 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, addresses service members during the official dedication ceremony of the Staff Sgt. Dain Venne Engineer Center at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Nov. 19. (Above) Capt. Donald J. Oechslin, commander of the 444th Engineer Company, Joint Task Force Empire, shares memories of Staff Sgt. Dain Venne.



GRUFFLY SPEAKING

Straight Talk from the Command Sergeant Major, JTF Empire

We started out December by holding the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club Board and sending two NCOs from the 42nd Clearance Company to CJTF-1 to compete at the division level. After the board, we prepared and dedicated the new engineer center in the name of one of our own from the 411th. The Staff Sgt. Dain Venne Engineer Center here on Bagram will be a place where joint engineers can operate and track operations throughout theater.

Then it was off to Fenty, to see the Soldiers and command teams from the 289th Vertical Construction Company and 264th Clearance Co. Soldiers at Fenty are doing great work, ensuring freedom of movement and the reconstruction of living quarters for Soldiers. While we were on the ground, Chief of Staff Col. Constable, and myself were honored to have the opportunity to enjoy a Thanksgiving Day meal with the Soldiers.

We made it back in time for the start of the JTF Empire Engineer Conference, which was a great success. Maj. Gen. Mayville and Command Sgt. Maj. Sasser stopped by to let the engineer community here in Afghanistan know how much they appreciate all the support and hard work we all do. We had not only U.S. Forces in attendance, but forces from the entire Coalition; it was a great turn out.

After the conference, I headed to Kabul to meet with Command Sgt. Maj. Capel and command sergeants major from all across theater to discuss the Afghan National Security Forces and the direction in which they are heading. One of the best parts of that day was being there to hear the Afghan Sergeant Major of the Army praise all the hard

work and time put into building and developing the ANSF by Coalition Forces.

I would like the entire JTF Empire Team to read the quote on the slide below from Afghan Sgt. Maj. Of the Army Roshan Safi. After sitting in the audience while he was giving his brief, I would have to say, it was given truly from the heart and he is very appreciative of all that has been done to assist the Afghan people. He also included some positive impacts and short comings pertaining to the ANSF.

Then, it was off to Shank for change of command for the 102nd Sapper Company. We said good bye and good luck to Maj. Cook, and hello and welcome to Capt. Pickett. There is no doubt Capt. Pickett and 1st Sgt. Cox will keep this company strong and focused on the task at hand.

The last trip this month was out to Airborne to recognize the Soldiers from the 41st out of Ft. Carson. Capt. Keesling and 1st Sgt. Reed have an outstanding team ensuring freedom of movement for the battlespace objective.

As our time here grows short, I ask each and every one of you to stay alert and stay focused. I know they say there is a "fighting season" and it is winding down. I say don't believe it, it just a lull in the action, so stay on your game, and thank you all for what you do each and every day.

Lastly, I would ask that all of you take a moment to remember our fallen brothers and sisters, and sadly we have to add two more names to that list.



Thank you all for what you do.

CSM Andrew Krom



<p>NATO ASSISTANCE POSSITIVE IMPACTS and SHORT COMINGS</p>
<p><i>"The Blood shed by NATO Forces can never be repaid. There are no words to convey enough THANKS to any of the NATO countries."</i> <i>SMA Roshan Safi – Croatia 2012</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">POSITIVE IMPACTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides confidence to fight • Recognizes shortfalls and assists with training and provides equipment • Sacrifices for the Freedom of Afghanistan's People
<p style="text-align: center;">SHORT COMINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not introduce or recognize the NCOs Corps to the power base • Each Nation partners utilizing their own doctrine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating different concepts within the ANA - Negative impact on developing NCO Corps and NCO and Officer relationships

Honey Badgers conduct versatile route clearance in Afghanistan

By U.S. Army Capt. Paul Wyckoff
Task Force Outlaw Public Affairs

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Soldiers of the 1433rd Engineer Company, Michigan National Guard, not only conduct route clearance to find and remove improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from the roads, but also fix, repair and improve roads in the area.

The 3rd platoon “Honey Badgers” of the 1433rd Engineer Company is a little different than most Combat Engineer Companies here in Afghanistan. They are actually comprised of two different companies from the Michigan National Guard. The 1432nd Engineer Company from Kingsford, Mich. is primarily construction engineers from the upper peninsula. These Soldiers were tasked with getting reclassified as combat engineers and combine with the 1433rd combat engineers from Battle Creek, Mich., to form



Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Paul Wyckoff

one large company of combat engineers to help clear routes and make Afghanistan safer.

With a wide variety of personnel and numerous skills, this company has the ability to accomplish missions that others would find quite difficult. First Lt. Andres Hernandez is the platoon leader for the “Honey Badgers” and said “We may be the only route clearance platoon (RCP) in country that not only clears the route, but makes road improvements as we go.”

Third platoon differs from most

other RCPs because when a route is determined to have areas that need improvement, (grading, gravel, etc.) they will add road graders to the platoon and fix the problem areas as they go.

Staff Sgt. Ross Solberg said “many of us belong to a horizontal construction platoon back home in the 1432nd. It is nice to be able to use our original job skills to make things better here as well.”

As the temperatures cool here in Afghanistan, the rainy season is not far away. Improving the routes is one way to ensure the routes will still be passable by military and civilian vehicles when heavy rains begin to fall. 



(Above) Members of 3rd Platoon, 1433rd Engineer Company, grade roads to improve freedom of movement in southern Afghanistan, recently. (Left) U.S. Army 1st Lt. Andres Hernandez (left), platoon leader for 3rd Platoon, 1433rd Engineer Company, discusses upcoming road improvements with Staff Sgt. Trever Mashak, squad leader, during a mission in southern Afghanistan, recently.

Photo courtesy of Task Force Outlaw

Center
from page 3

stone in the development of a better and a brighter Afghanistan.”

The dedication was bittersweet for many attendees as they reflected on the men whose names will now be permanently associated with the hub of all engineer operations. Capt. Donald J. Oechslin, commander of the 444th En. Co., based out of Oswego, N.Y., said the new center was aptly named.

“Staff Sgt. Venne influenced others with his actions. This man was a decision maker,” Oechslin reflected. “There is no better place to dedicate than this building which will influence (engineer operations) throughout this country.” ❖



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Derek M. Smith

Members of Joint Task Force Empire pause to remember and honor their fallen brethren during the official dedication ceremony of the Staff Sgt. Dain Venne Engineer Center at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Nov. 19.

A **Ask your buddy**

- Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm
- Ask the question directly: Are you thinking of killing yourself?

Care for your buddy

- Calmly control the situation; do not use force; be safe
- Actively listen to show understanding and produce relief
- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury

Escort your buddy

- Never leave your buddy alone
- Escort to chain of command, Chaplain, behavioral health professional, or primary care provider
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) <http://prevention.af.mil>

USAPMC

ARMYSTRONG

ACE

U.S. ARMY Suicide Intervention



Brighten your internet experience ... with no static cling !

The Joint Task Force Empire on facebook

Spring freshness with every click of the mouse !*

***JTF Empire on Facebook will not eliminate computer odors**

Missouri Governor visits troops in Afghanistan

By U.S. Army Captain Paul Wyckoff
Task Force Outlaw Public Affairs

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon, governor of Missouri, visited Soldiers from his state in southern Afghanistan, Dec. 5.

Soldiers of the 1138th Engineer Company from Farmington, Mo., met with Gov. Nixon during the visit that included a briefing on current operations in the area, meeting with Soldiers from the company, and lunch at the small dining facility located on their forward operating base. “It is great to see support and interest in the work we do here from the commander in chief of the Missouri National Guard,” said Spc. Trey Maevers.

Several Soldiers that decided to re-enlist were able to take the oath of enlistment from Gov. Nixon. The governor took time to personally thank each individual in the company formation. As he shook each Soldier’s hand, he gave each a word of encouragement and thanked them for the difficult job they are doing.

“They’re road sweepers; it’s tough work,” said Nixon. “They’re the ones that are out there doing the hard work. Every time I’m here I’m



Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Paul Wyckoff

Governor of Missouri, Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon, shakes hands with Sgt. 1st Class Mark Crites of the 1138th Engineer Company, during his visit with Missouri National Guard Soldiers in southern Afghanistan, Dec. 5.

inspired by the 24-7 get-it-done attitude, and am confident that Missourians, as usual, are not hesitating to assist when called on.”

Gov. Nixon took the opportunity to take a close look at the latest equipment used by the engineers for route clearance and was updated on their capabilities. “The advancements in our equipment over the last ten years have had a tremendous im-

act in our Soldiers abilities to do their jobs,” he said.

This is Governor Nixon’s third trip overseas to visit Missouri troops in war zones. The 1138th En. Co. currently serves under the 120th En. Battalion, Task Force Outlaw, supporting the theater-wide engineer mission of the 411th En. Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, in Afghanistan. ❖



COMPREHENSIVE SOLDIER FITNESS

STRONG MINDS ★ STRONG BODIES



PHYSICAL ★ FAMILY ★ SOCIAL ★ SPIRITUAL ★ EMOTIONAL





Empire Soldiers take aim on German Schützenschnur

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith
Joint Task Force Empire Public Affairs



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Service members of Joint Task Force Empire earned the Schützenschnur, the German Armed Forces Badge of Weapon Proficiency, during joint weapons ranges with German counterparts at Kandahar Air Field (KAF) and Camp Mike Spann, Afghanistan, in November.

The Schützenschnur, is awarded in silver and gold based on weapons proficiency. The JTF Empire Soldiers fired the German-issued G36 service rifle, P8 pistol and MG3 machine gun. It is one of a few foreign military awards authorized for enlisted wear on the U.S. Army uniform and is a rare opportunity for many Soldiers.

The occasion gave Soldiers the chance to experience the differences in Coalition partner weapons systems and strengthen partnerships with NATO allies. German Soldiers of the Partnering & Advisory Task Forces in Mazar-e-Sharif, took the opportunity over the month to qualify on the U.S. Army's M4 service rifle and M9 pistol.

Early in the month, a group of Soldiers travelled to Camp Spann in Regional Command (RC)-North to take part in the event, which many Reservists never experience. Later in the month, JTF Empire Soldiers took part in a similar range at KAF with their German counterparts stationed in RC-South.

“A few of us from the 411th Engineer Brigade got the opportunity to travel north and go to the range to shoot the German



Photo courtesy of 411th Engineer Brigade
Regional Command-South Liaison Cell

Soldiers of the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, fire the MG3 machine gun during a German weapon proficiency range at Camp Mike Spann, Afghanistan, (Above) and G36 service rifle at Kandahar Air Field, recently.

service rifle, pistol, and machine gun, recounted Spc. Meredith Owen, a geospatial engineer with the 411th En. Bde., based out of New Windsor, N.Y. “The majority of us, by the end of the day, qualified for the silver and the gold German marksmanship award. I would say that is was a fun and pretty successful day.”

In addition to typical weapons qualification target shooting, the German range operators incorporated some real-world scenario training.

“We had a sort of obstacle course to complete at one station in four man teams using the German service rifle,” explained Owen. “We slowly made our way to the

target and then had to quickly carry our fallen comrade to cover afterwards using smoke for concealment.”

Sgt. Stephen Poandl, technical engineer for the 411th En. Bde., pointed out there was more to the event than the mere novelty of firing new weapons and possibly adding a little flair to one’s uniform.

“It went real well today,” said Poandl. “I think this is a good sign - Soldiers qualifying on other weapons. This means they could walk up to any weapon and be able to defend themselves should the need arise.” ❖



(Top Left) Spc. Meredith Owen, a geospatial engineer, and (Bottom Left) Sgt. Stephen Poandl, technical engineer, both of the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, fire the P8 pistol under the guidance of a German range instructors during a German weapon proficiency range at Camp Mike Spann, Afghanistan, recently. (Below) Soldiers of Joint Task Force Empire fire the MG3 machine gun under the guidance of their German counterparts.



Photos by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith

EMPIRE

THUNDER BUDDIES

Holiday Blues

Courtesy of HOOAH 4 HEALTH

"Holiday blues" range from mild sadness during the holidays to severe depression. This sadness or depression can be prevented, and if it's already present, it can be eased.

Holiday blues can affect both men and women, young and old. Factors contributing to holiday blues include increased stress and fatigue, unrealistic expectations, too much commercialization, and the inability to be with one's Family. The increased demands of shopping, parties, Family reunions, and house guests may also contribute to tension and sadness during the holidays. Common stress reactions during the holidays include headaches, excessive drinking, over-eating or not eating enough, and difficulty sleeping.

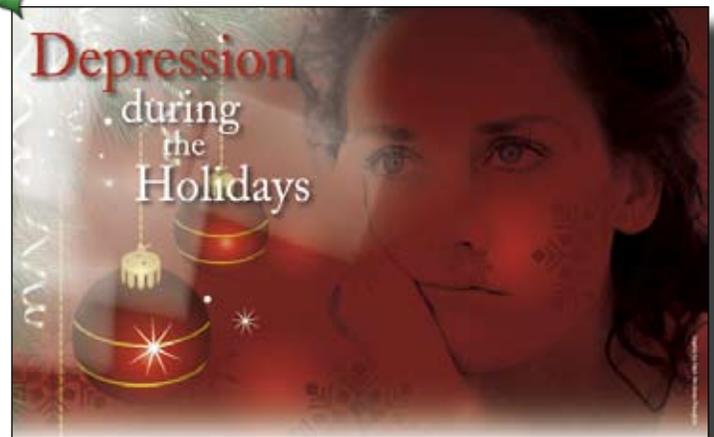
A post-holiday let down, resulting from emotional disappointments during the holidays as well as the physical reactions caused by excess fatigue and stress, may cause holiday blues to continue into the new year.

For some people—particularly those who live in the northern, darker regions—holiday blues may be caused by seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD results from fewer hours of sunlight as the days grow shorter during the winter months.

Preventing Holiday Blues

To help prevent holiday blues, follow these tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Psychological Association, the National Mental Health Association, and the Mental Health Association of Colorado:

- Establish realistic goals and expectations for the holiday season, and do not label the holiday season as a time to cure all past problems. The holidays do not prevent sadness or loneliness.
- Limit your drinking.



Graphic courtesy of Mark Weckman, Paraglide, Fort Bragg

- Do not feel obliged to feel festive. Accept your inner experience and do not force yourself to express specific feelings.
 - If you have experienced a recent tragedy, death, or romantic break-up, tell people about your needs.
 - To relieve holiday stress, know your spending limit and stick to it. Enjoy free holiday activities, such as driving around to look at holiday decorations.
 - Express your feelings in a constructive, honest, and open way. If you need to confront someone with a problem, begin your sentences with "I feel."
- If someone you know is experiencing holiday blues:**
- Try to involve that person in holiday activities, but don't be forceful.
 - Be a good listener. If people express suicidal thoughts or feel depressed, hopeless, or worthless, be supportive. Let them know you are there for them and are willing to help them seek professional help. Never issue challenges or dares.
 - Familiarize yourself with resources such as mental health centers, counseling centers, and hotlines.
 - If the depressed person is chronically ill, express that you understand that the holidays do not cure the illness.
 - Be aware that holidays can be difficult for people, especially when reality doesn't measure up to their expectations. Help them establish what is realistic and what is not.

Suicide Prevention

For more information and help please visit save.org or Call the National Hotline at 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) during emergencies.
VA's Suicide Prevention Hot Line - Toll-free 1-800-273-TALK (8255)



From all corners of
JTF Empire,

we wish you the warmest
of Holiday Seasons.



SAFETY STOP

JOINT TASK FORCE
EMPIRE SAFETY OFFICE



This Month:

“Winter Driving in Afghanistan”

By Mr. Marcus M. Heard
Joint Task Force Empire Safety Officer



Risk Management Driving Decision

- ~Can I make this trip later?
- ~Commander must weigh pros and cons
- ~Leadership at appropriate level accept risk and grant approval
- ~What is the safest route?
- ~Check with G2 for weather forecast
- ~Primary and alternate routes
- ~Route analysis for hazards (i.e. culverts, IED's)
- ~Prepared for emergencies?
- ~See checklist on winter vehicle kit

Winter Vehicle Kit

- ~Snow brush with scraper
- ~Flashlight with batteries
- ~Blanket
- ~Gloves, socks, and hat
- ~Shovel (E-tool)
- ~25lbs. of kitty litter or sand
- ~Jumper cables
- ~Hazard sign, flares, or fluorescent flag
- ~Windshield washer fluid
- ~Spare cell-phone battery (charged)
- ~Tinted lens eyepre – identify changes in terrain/road surfaces & mitigate risk of snow blindness

Defensive Driving Techniques

- ~Fresh snow may conceal icy roads
- ~Avoid quick acceleration on slick roads, will cause you to spin out.
- ~Drive at reduced speeds so you make quick unexpected stops
- ~Initiate turn signals sooner than usual, this gives drivers more time to react
- ~Tap your brakes lightly to warn others of your intention to stop
- ~Maintain at minimum 3x the normal distance from the vehicle ahead (6 seconds)
- ~When approaching a hill or upgrade select the proper gear, usually a lower gear
- ~Use that same gear going down This will allow the engine to act as a brake, you will not have to use your brake excessively



Skid Dangers

- ~Black ice
- ~Bridges/Overpasses/Underpasses
- ~Shaded Areas
- ~Driving too fast for conditions
- ~Sudden steering corrections or braking
- ~Sudden accelerations
- ~Front End Skids-Release the brake and allow the front wheels to roll freely to regain traction and steering control
- ~Rear End Skids-Take foot off accelerator and turn wheels in the direction that the rear of vehicle is skidding; pump brakes lightly

Summary

- ~Perform proper vehicle maintenance
- ~Allow more time to travel and slow down
- ~Remove ALL snow from the vehicle
- ~Maintain more space between vehicles
- ~Drive with your lights on
- ~Wear seat belts
- ~Look well ahead
- ~Anticipate trouble





Legal Matters

JTF EMPIRE COMMAND JUDGE ADVOCATE

Your Redeployment Rights Under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act

For all Soldiers returning to a civilian job upon redeployment, you should be familiar with the various rights afforded to you under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, or USERRA. Under the Act, you have the right to be reemployed by your civilian job upon redeployment, provided your total time mobilized/deployed on active duty while with your employer did not exceed five years; you provided proper notice prior to deployment; you return to work or apply for reemployment in a timely manner after return from active duty; and you were not separated from service with a disqualifying discharge.

With a deployment more than 181 days, you would have up to 90 days following REFRAD before being required to return to work. However, it is a good idea to contact your employer as soon as possible after returning home to coordinate the date of your return to work with your employer. Pursuant to the Act, you

must be restored to the same or comparable job and benefits you would have had if you did not deploy. You also have the right to be promptly reinstated in your employer's health plan when you return to work without any waiting periods or exclusions, except for service-connected illnesses or injuries.

Further, you have the right to be free from discrimination and retaliation because of your military service. For example, your employer cannot deny reemployment, retention in employment, or promotion because of your military status. In addition, an employer may not retaliate against anyone assisting in the enforcement of USERRA rights, including testifying or making a statement in connection with a proceeding under USERRA, even if that person has no service connection.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) is authorized to investigate and resolve complaints alleging USERRA violations. For assistance in filing a complaint, or for any other information on USERRA, contact VETS at 1-866-4-USA-DOL or visit its website at <http://www.dol.gov/vets>. An interactive online USERRA Advisor can also be viewed at <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/userra.htm>. You can also contact your local Legal Assistance Office for advice.



Operations at a glance:

Images from around JTF Empire



Photo taken by U.S. Army Spc. Daniel Vickers, 132nd MRBC (Above) Soldiers from the 132nd Multi-Role Bridge Company, 507th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Warhammer, perform bridge repairs along the Highway One "Ring Road" in southern Afghanistan. Periodic bridge repairs are critical to maintaining freedom of movement for coalition and Afghan National Security Force convoys as well as civilian and commercial traffic. To date, the 132nd MRBC "River Rats" have repaired more than 60 military and civilian bridges throughout Afghanistan.



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Simon Caron, TF Warhammer

(Above) The Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 507th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Warhammer, Personal Security Detachment conduct maintenance and installation of Striker Lights in order to provide greater visibility during night time operations. (Left) A route clearance platoon interrogates an unknown object near Forward Operating Base Qala-I-Naw while the Headquarters and Headquarters Company Personal Security Detachment, 507th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Warhammer, provides additional security.



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. William Carpenter, TF Warhammer



In Remembrance . . .

*“Peace to each manly soul that sleepeth;
Rest to each faithful eye that weepeth . . .”*

~ Thomas Moor



Sgt. 1st Class Darren M. Linde
Devils Lake, North Dakota

Served with the 818th Engineer Company, North Dakota National Guard, out of Williston, North Dakota, deployed to Afghanistan in June of 2012, where he served as a Squad Leader on Route Clearance Patrol in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

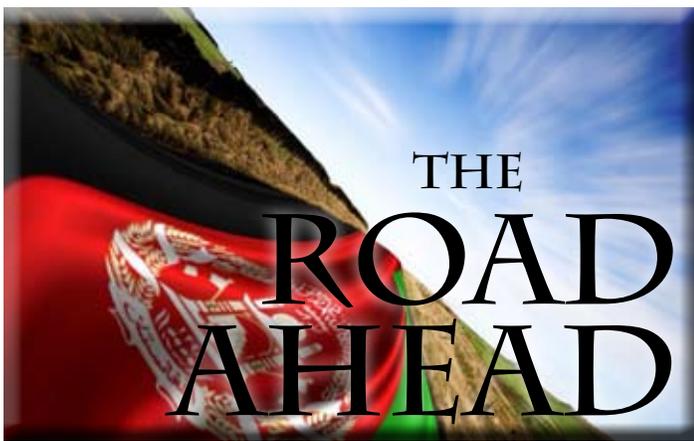
Killed In Action December 3, 2012.



Spc. Tyler J. Orgaard
Bismarck, North Dakota

Served with the 818th Engineer Company, North Dakota National Guard, out of Williston, North Dakota, deployed to Afghanistan, in June of 2012, where he served as a Combat Engineer on Route Clearance Patrol in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Killed In Action December 3, 2012.



A Common Goal: Independent Operations, Future Prosperity

By MC Specialist 1st Class Steven Myers
Task Force Anchor Public Affairs

CAMP KRUTKE, Afghanistan – Under the sun in Afghanistan’s southern provinces, through the desert, flood plains and mountains, into the bustling metropolitan area of the capital, Kabul, coalition forces continue to develop, mentor and train members of the Afghan National Army (ANA), security forces and police.

Beginning in October, 11 members of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, Task Force Anchor, embedded with coalition partners at four forward operating bases across Helmand and Kabul Province to train, coach and advise ANA engineering units in contingency construction operations.

Embedded with U.S. Marines of a Security Force Advisor Assistance Team and the engineers of the ANA 2nd Brigade 215th Corps at FOB Nolay in northern Helmand Province, Builder 1st Class Matthew D. Culberson works closely with the company commander mentoring and giving technical advice.

Culberson said the ANA engineers eagerly moved forward in the construction of a mosque, an administrative building, and construction of a roof structure for the cistern on their camp, the company commander frequently requested his expertise in devising a comprehensive plan.

Coupled with the knowledge and skills attained during a contingency construction course, Culberson said the company proved to be resilient and resourceful.

In southern Helmand Province, two more members of the team, Construction Electrician 1st Class Justin M. Urban and Construction Mechanic 2nd Class Timothy J. Woznick, attached to the 1st Brigade 215th Corps Advisor Team at FOB Dwyer, assisted in the instruc-

tion of 22 ANA students in a 30-day generator operator and maintenance course. The Seabees conducted hands on training with the ANA Soldiers.

“Once we started and met with these guys it became really fun.” said Woznick. “It was amazing to see their progress in just a few weeks. I really can’t wait to teach them more classes.”

“I don’t always know how to respond when I hear ‘hey Seabee, great job today. You really are working hard; we don’t know what we would do without you guys.’” Woznick said.

His normal response: “I’m just doing my job.”

To the north, at Camp Blackhorse in Kabul Province, seven other members of the team are mentoring the ANA’s 215th Engineering Battalion in more than just construction.

Yeoman 2nd Class Narkedrian Hollis, the NMCB 133 Engineering Development Team’s administrative instructor, said there were a few challenges, but were quickly overcome with the assistance of interpreters.

“They all had dealings with prior ANA battalions and U.S military mentors,” said Hollis. “As the initial conversation progressed, each interpreter chimed to share their experiences, expectations, and significant do’s and don’ts.”

The interpreters were subject matter experts in various fields, said Hollis, so they matched their expertise with each team member. The next step was to develop a course of instruction.

“I had no idea whether or not their administrative personnel had any experience,” he said. “I didn’t want my course of instruction to overwhelm them.”

Ultimately, after several meetings with the garrison personnel, Hollis had the information he needed.

“I gave them advice on how to make their personnel status reports better and instructed them on the importance of timeliness,” said Hollis. “I began by going out to watch them muster in the mornings. I also incorporated tools on how to evaluate personnel, document leave, the importance of positive and negative counseling, and accurately maintaining personnel records. I attempted to streamline and reinforce what was already in place.”

Regardless of the location within the country, Task Force Anchor’s mentors continue to renew the enduring partnership between the coalition forces and the ANA toward one common goal: the future prosperity of Afghanistan. 