

# ONPOINT!



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## COVER

Soldiers with Charlie Company 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, Task Force 1-23 Infantry patrol near the Khenjakak area of Panjwai, Afghanistan, Oct. 17, 2012. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nevada Jack Smith)

## BACK COVER

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## FLE Soldier gets adrenaline rush from resupplying fellow Soldiers

Story and photos by  
 Spc. Nevada Jack Smith  
 117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Sgt. Brandon Cleary, 28, of the Forward Logistics Element based out of Forward Operating Base Zangabad is a critical asset to the brigade's resupply efforts.

Cleary, a squad leader in the 296th Brigade Support Battalion's FLE, which supports 1-23 Infantry, is the only non-commissioned officer in his platoon other than his platoon sergeant.

"Our mission is to support the battalion and the units attached to the battalion," Cleary said. "If we weren't here those guys wouldn't be getting food, water, ammunition, or any other supplies."

As the only junior NCO in his platoon Cleary shoulders multiple duties and is responsible for the physical security, supply loading, maintenance, planning, and navigation



Sgt. Brandon Cleary, 28, of the Forward Logistics Element based out of Forward Operating Base Zangabad, inspects a chain while preparing to move containers during a combat logistics patrol, Nov. 4, 2012.

of combat logistic patrols. Cleary has enjoyed serving in the Army for the past five years.

"I love the variety in my job. No day is the same," Cleary said. "One day I can be out clearing fields with engineers, and the next day I can be delivering water to a FOB."

"My most memorable experience was doing a clearance mission just south of Sperwan Ghar, where we did what we call tailgate resupply," Cleary said.

Cleary and his Soldiers followed behind the Soldiers

"I love the variety in my job. No day is the same"

running the clearing operation, resupplying them from off the back of their own trucks.

"Being out there in the wide-open and being able to resupply the guys so they could keep fighting was a real adrenaline rush for me," Cleary said.

The young leader from Tuscaloosa, Ala., takes pleasure in his role as an NCO and his responsibility to mold young Soldiers.

"Being an NCO is hard, but enjoyable," Cleary said. "It's probably the most rewarding thing about being in the Army.



Sgt. Brandon Cleary, 28, of the Forward Logistics Element based out of Forward Operating Base Zangabad, tightens a chain while preparing to move containers during a combat logistics patrol, Nov. 4, 2012.

I get to lead these Soldiers and bring them up so that hopefully they can one day be great NCOs."

He spoke briefly on the impact his task force has had on the area and the role he and his men play in it.

"We have pushed a lot of Taliban out of the area considering how the area was when we first got here, and you can definitely tell the difference in the people and how they act," Cleary said. "Just knowing that what I'm doing is helping other Soldiers, who in turn are helping the local Afghans stay safe, is a great feeling. I really feel like we are making a difference."

# Thanksgiving in Regional Command-South features special guests, holiday standards

Story and photos by  
Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka  
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Special holiday guests— including the under secretary of the Army, the vice chief of staff of the Army, and the International Security Forces commander – and a busy day of events and activities combined to create a memorable Thanksgiving for thousands of Regional Command-South troops in southern Afghanistan on Nov. 22.

Visiting with Wounded Warriors and troops within the region were Joseph Westphal, the under secretary of the Army, and Gen. Lloyd Austin, the vice chief of staff of the Army. Westphal and Austin had a full day that included meetings with

Wounded Warriors at the KAF Warrior Recovery Center and a trip throughout the province with stops at smaller bases and posts at Zangabad, Degobad, Siah Choy, Sanjeray and Pasab.

Austin bestowed awards and administered the oath of reenlistment to soldiers at several of the locations. Austin said soldiers in Afghanistan for Thanksgiving would remember the holiday well, not because senior leaders were there, but because they were in a combat zone making a difference.

ISAF commander Gen. John Allen flew from Kabul and was at KAF for about two hours and also visited Wounded Warriors at the

airfield's Role 3 hospital and ate a Thanksgiving lunch with troops at the Independence Dining Facility.

One KAF airman, Staff Sgt. Jose

*"Each of you is in our hearts and our prayers as we give thanks for the many blessings in our lives."*

Pantoja, a flight medic with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, of Bridgeport Texas, received a very special call on Thanksgiving. While at work, the President of the United States,

Barack Obama, called Pantoja to thank him for his service and express how difficult it must be for him to be separated from his family during the holidays.

Pantoja was selected to receive the call as a result of his actions during a medical evacuation mission where he saved nine service members who received severe injuries from an improvised explosive device blast.

Distinguished visitors began arriving earlier in the week on KAF to mark the holiday with both their military and civilian employees. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, the transatlantic division commanding general, arrived on the airbase with transatlantic division Command Sgt. Maj. Roy Ward on Tuesday to spend Thanksgiving with the USACE personnel assigned to Afghanistan Engineer District-South.

"You will not be spending Thanksgiving with family and loved ones; you are far from home, standing watch for freedom. I want you to know that the nation is grateful for your service and for your sacrifice," Eyre said. "Each of you is in our hearts and our prayers as we give thanks for the many blessings in our lives."

In Zabul province, hundreds of residents on Forward Operating Base Lagman, including coalition forces and civilians from around the world, enjoyed a Thanksgiving meal served by FOB Lagman officials. The Thanksgiving meal brought joy and warmth to the

FOB's residents despite a cold rain that persisted throughout the day.

First in line to volunteer for the serving duty was Col. David Sheridan, the deputy commanding officer of Zabul province and a commander with the New York National Guard.

"I always enjoy serving holiday meals, whether here or back home," Sheridan said. "My cousin emailed me to wish me a Happy Thanksgiving and he asked what I was going to eat. I told my cousin no matter what I eat, I know that I will have wonderful company."

Forward Operating Base Spin Boldak hosted a fun run in the morning and a special mid-day luncheon.

Prior to entering to the dining facility for lunch, soldiers were greeted by the K9 and combat stress control team. The teams handed out thank-you letters from communities within the broadcast region for the radio station talk show, "The Bert Show," that is heard in the Atlanta, Nashville, and Indianapolis markets.

The goal of the letter writing campaign was for every U.S. service person deployed outside the U.S. to receive a letter by Thanksgiving.

The Spin Boldak dining facility was decorated lavishly for the occasion. Banners lined every wall and fall leaves covered every empty spot. Also, fruit- and ice-carved sculptures were on a display table for everyone to see. The menu included both



First Sgt. Faataui Iuli, 1st Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, serves a Thanksgiving dinner at Forward Operating Base Lagman on Nov. 22.

traditional Thanksgiving items including roast turkey, baked ham, and glazed sweet potatoes and non-traditional items such as prime rib and shrimp cocktail.

At Multi National Base Tarin Kot, food was abundant as Thanksgiving was celebrated with an assortment of traditional dishes including deep fried and traditional oven baked turkey with gravy, cranberry, ham, mashed potatoes, candied yams, corn and bread roll. Of course, there was pumpkin and sweet potato pie for desert. After the feast, everyone gathered around the fire to keep warm in the inclement weather.

Thanksgiving events began long before dawn on KAF with the airfield's annual Turkey Trot hosted by the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade's Task Force Lobos. Despite crisp temperatures, the race drew more than 700 competitors, according to event director 1st Lt. Tamatane Letuli.



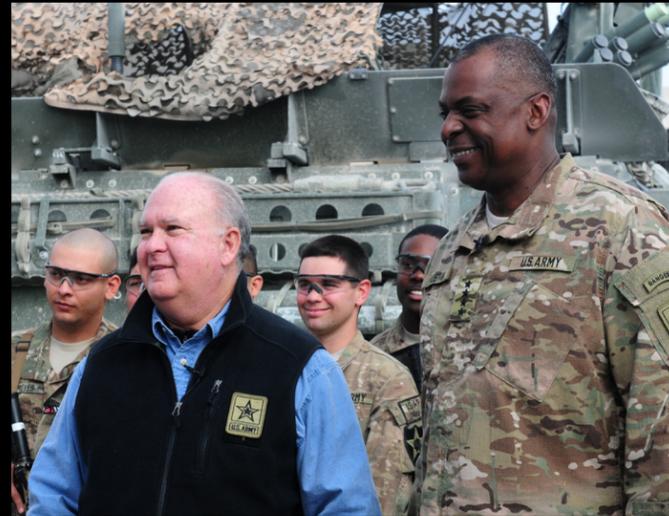
Undersecretary Army Dr. Joseph W. Westphal and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III spend time with troops at Combat Outpost Base Zangabad, Afghanistan, during a Thanksgiving visit, Nov. 22, 2012. The Army officials visited the base and several others to show Soldiers their appreciation.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nevada Jack Smith



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Sheldon



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Veronica Aguila



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Veronica Aguila



Courtesy Photo



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Sheldon



U.S. Army photo by Senior Airman Patrice Clarke



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nevada Jack Smith

# Arrowhead kids create bonds, leave anxiety

Story and photos by Sgt. Austan Owen  
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment  
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD,  
Wash. -- "How many of you  
wanted to come today?" asked  
the organizer for the camp. About  
30 percent of the children raised  
their hands. "How many of you are  
glad you came?" she asked next. A  
resounding majority lifted their  
hands, as smiles crossed their faces  
and it was evident they had fun.

Military family life consultants,  
family readiness group members  
and volunteers held Camp  
Arrowhead, a resiliency camp  
for the children of soldiers  
assigned to 3rd Stryker Brigade,  
2nd Infantry Division's, at  
Lewis North Chapel on Joint  
Base Lewis-McChord, Nov. 3.

The idea behind the camp came  
along when FRG leaders realized

that Soldiers go through a barrage  
of reintegration programs  
before they come home from  
a deployment. Spouses of the  
Soldiers more recently have  
been offered programs that  
explain what a Soldier may go  
through during redeployment  
and have been given information  
on additional resources that  
might help. The leaders asked  
themselves, "What about the kids?"

With this in mind, Camp  
Arrowhead was born. Norma Melo,  
camp organizer, linked up with  
the embedded MFLCs at the local  
schools to find volunteers to help  
put on the camp. Children, ages 6  
to 17-years-old, were invited out  
to participate in arts and crafts,  
eat lunch and make bonds with  
other children facing similar  
situations. The counselors were  
on hand to guide discussions and

help resolve anxieties that exist  
as children look forward to seeing  
their parent after such a long time  
apart. About 60 children showed  
up to take place in the day's events.

"Sometimes kids will listen  
to other people before they  
will listen to their mom," said  
Caroline Webster, the brigade  
commander's wife. "These are all  
licensed clinical social workers  
that are in the school, familiar  
with the kids and the struggles  
that they are going through."

"At the end of the day we wanted  
our kids to have the opportunity  
to get ready for their mom or  
dad to come home," she added.

The FRG leaders encouraged  
parents to participate in  
many ways. The unit held a



Children of soldiers from 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, discuss collages they have made and what they mean during Camp Arrowhead at Lewis North Chapel, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Nov. 3. The children gathered for a resiliency camp, giving them the opportunity to discuss issues they might have and bond with other children prior to their soldiers redeployment.

similar camp last year and  
improved upon it this year.

The camp benefited not only  
the kids but the parents as well.

"If nothing else this is four hours  
off from the kids," Webster said.  
"You can go shopping, you can go  
home and back to bed and take  
a break, or whatever you want."

The Dennis Family, as well as  
many others, are counting the  
days until they see their Soldier.  
Along with that reunion will  
come many changes, like the  
way the household is run and  
also having someone around  
who has been gone for so long.

This isn't the first time the  
Dennis Family has been through  
a deployment, however this  
is the first time they have

participated in anything like  
this, said Gennie Dennis, mother  
of Matti and Colton Dennis

"It's nice to have a program that  
gives them a chance to express their  
feelings before the integration  
actually happens," Gennie said.

Colton appreciated the  
opportunity to attend Camp  
Arrowhead while he made a collage  
of his father and his deployment.

"I thought that he has been through  
some really hard times and I did  
mine to help relate to what he  
has been through," Colton said.

"This was a place where we go to  
express our feelings on how we  
would react when our military  
member gets home," Colton said.  
"It's kind of like therapy for kids  
and it really helps to get motivated

for when he does get home."

Matti's favorite part was toward  
the end of day. During the camp  
the children were encouraged to  
write down on a piece of paper all  
the bad thoughts and feelings they  
might have about the past year  
and the upcoming reintegration  
period. All the papers were  
gathered together and set ablaze  
as the camp came to a conclusion  
allowing the bad thoughts to  
disappear into nothing but smoke.

For the wrap-up to the camp all  
the children received certificates  
of appreciation from the brigade  
and an arrowhead water bottle.  
For Melo and the counselors  
they hope that the children  
take away redeployment coping  
mechanisms and leave behind  
their bad thoughts and anxieties.



The organizer for Camp Arrowhead, Norma Melo, sets fire to all the bad thoughts that have been collected throughout the day during the camp at Lewis North Chapel, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Nov. 3. Children of Soldiers from 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division attended a resiliency camp where they interacted with other children and counselors giving them an opportunity to discuss emotions that they might have before their parent's homecoming.

# 1-64 Soldiers disrupt insurgent activity in Combined Task Force Arrowhead

Story and photos by  
Spc. Nevada Jack Smith  
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

“Our aggressiveness has completely changed the fight and what the enemy is capable of doing out here,” said Capt. Jared Graham, the company commander of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, Task Force 1-23 Infantry.

The Soldiers of Charlie Company are successfully destabilizing enemy operations in the Panjwai district of Kandahar, Afghanistan, by taking the fight to the enemy and limiting their ability to move and operate in the district.

“Panjwai being the traditional homeland of the Taliban, [the enemy] has a vested interest in maintaining strength in the area,” Graham said. “And our role is to disrupt the enemy and prevent them from being able to project their force.”

The Charlie Company Soldiers, who are operating out of Combat Outpost Kenjakak, have been relentless in their effort to thwart enemy insurgents.

“We are always pushing hard against the enemy,” Graham said. “I think that across the board

you will find that a lot of the guys think that this deployment matches the tempo they have seen on some of their previous and longer deployments.”

The concentrated efforts of the company have shown an increase of local support and cooperation.

“We have had plenty of tactical success taking down caches and killing the enemy, but those are a means to an end. The real victory is the people wanting a change,” said Graham. “That is our biggest victory, them coming forward and saying they want government, they want a local police program,



A Soldier with Charlie Company 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, Task Force 1-23 Infantry patrols near the Khenjakak area of Panjwai, Afghanistan, Oct. 17, 2012



Soldiers with Charlie Company 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, Task Force 1-23 Infantry clear a path to their vehicles during a foot patrol near the Khenjakak area of Panjwai, Afghanistan, Oct. 17, 2012.

where they want to be part of the process from here on out.”

By bringing the fight to the enemy so fiercely, the Charlie Company Soldiers are taking the fight out of the enemy and greatly lowering their morale.

“A lot of what we see here is [the enemy] trying to maintain what they have and they are struggling to do it,” said Graham. “There have been instances where the Taliban leaders have used force to keep their fighters from quitting. That definitely gives the impression that they are fighting for survival and are just trying to maintain whatever degree of relevance they have at this point. It’s a sign of desperation.”

The successes of the Soldiers won’t leave when they do. Through

effective training and mentoring programs with Afghan National Security Forces members, the area will be well taken care of even after the unit returns home.

“The real victory is the people wanting a change”

“We have been able to help the ANSF by giving them the room to grow and operate by keeping the enemy at bay,” said Graham. “We have been able to train and mentor the 6th Kandak [1st Brigade, 205th Afghan National Army Corps] to be able to

conduct patrols independently.”

“That is probably going to be one of the more lasting accomplishments,” Graham said.

Charlie Company is nearing the end of their tour and will eventually return to their home station at Fort Stewart, Ga.

Graham spoke on the effectiveness of his Soldiers and how they have been so successful.

“A lot of our success comes from the discipline of the Soldiers and the example of the leaders in the company,” said Graham. “They are the ones that are out getting the job done on a day-to-day basis, and the discipline they have and the cohesion we have built as a company is what makes us so successful.”



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nevada Jack Smith



Courtesy Photo



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nevada Jack Smith



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nevada Jack Smith



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Veronica Aguila



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Veronica Aguila



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nevada Jack Smith



U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Veronica Aguila



Courtesy Photo

# ABP welcome training, share best practices

Story and photos by  
1st Lt. Veronica Aguila  
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Afghan Border Police members with the 4th Kandak, 3rd Zone ABP received instruction on police evidence collection and handling during a training session held at the 4th Kandak Headquarters in Kandahar province, Nov. 1.

Instructors with Security Forces Assistance Team 11 re-introduced basic police practices, evidence handling and assessed the participants' current level of policing knowledge to develop future training scenarios specific to the Kandak's area of operation.

"The goal for the training is to see what the ABP know and see what they need to improve on," said 1st Lt. Ralph Miller, a course instructor with SFAT 11. "[The] 4th KDK Soldiers seem very confident and knowledgeable in tactical site exploitation."

The session included instruction on crime scene processing ranging from evidence handling, marking and documentation, to the prevention of cross-contamination. The ABP members dialogued with instructors, often interjecting their best practices and current crime scene procedures. The understanding of the class material by the ABP students surprised instructors, including Miller, who has facilitated similar training events with other ABP Kandaks in the past. "I was surprised a bit at how knowledgeable they were

on training," said Miller. "My impression of the training was that maybe it was too simple for them. I think that we could have gone with a more extravagant mock crime scene and let them walk us through it."

Although policemen with the 4th KDK ABP conduct their own internal training on patrolling techniques and enemy apprehension tactics, many have not received specialized evidence-based instruction outside of the police academy. Students in the class are expected to assist at various checkpoints to incorporate the evidence-based policing into operations.

Instructors discussed with the ABP students the next steps in evidence-based teachings such as, how evidence-based practices can support or rebut courtroom testimony, how prosecutors view evidence collection and the effect of improper collection practices on cases.

For future training events, students suggested more in-depth evidence collection, map reading and navigation techniques, but emphasized the need for improvised explosive device mitigation and explosive ordinance disposal. According to the policemen, they have seen an increase in the use of IEDs to disrupt police operations in the area.

"Enemies cannot fight with us because we are too active," said ABP 2nd Lt. Sayed Wali through an interpreter. "They are just putting

bombs for us and IEDs in the roads."

Wali, along with two other policemen in the class, recently graduated the Explosive Hazard Reduction course Oct. 22, to become trained explosive hazard technicians. The technicians highlighted the value of the course to instructors.

All of this training is important, said Wali. We want to progress in the things that you help teach us. This is so we can do our job very well and so we can protect our country, our people, and our public.



Sgt. 1st Class Robert Lock, with Security Force Assistance Team 9, greets a member of the 4th Kandak, 3rd Zone Afghan Border Police, participating in an evidence-based policing training session at the 4th Kandak Headquarters in Kandahar province, Afghanistan, Nov. 1, 2012. SFAT 9 is comprised of Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.

# Charlie 'Rock' Company cornerstone to thwarting Taliban effort in Panjwai

Story and photos by  
Spc. Nevada Jack Smith  
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

"Never have I seen a group of men continue to go back into the fight day after day, fully knowing that they or their brothers could be hurt. Never have I seen a group of men that have been able to continue to push and engage and defeat the enemy on a daily basis like Rock Company has," said U.S. Army Capt. John Meyer, the company commander for Charlie "Rock" Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, Task Force 1-23 Infantry

The Soldiers of Rock Company have been battling in some of the toughest areas of Afghanistan for the past 11 months.

"Our first eight months we were in Zharay district, it's a very historic location for Taliban fighting, in fact, Mullah Omar had a home in our area of operations," said Meyer. "When we showed up there wasn't a lot of white space, which is what we call maneuverable area. So my Soldiers had to fight for it."

During their time in Zharay the Rock Company Soldiers pushed hard to clear the Taliban out of an area that had been historically controlled by them. During this time they would encounter at least one firefight a day.

The Rock Company Soldiers battled their way through the district creating a large area free from any Taliban presence.

"To give you an example, in spring 2007 our old company

combat outpost in Pashmal was taking rocket-propelled grenade rounds all the time, in 2011 it wasn't attacked once, because we were pushing the enemy back on their heels," Meyer said.

The Soldiers' victories were compounded by the successes they made with their Afghan counterparts.

"We started three new Afghan Local Police checkpoints in our area and continued to project that whitespace," said Meyer. "Every single platoon lived with their

*"We have been that dependable company that has been sent into the hardest of the fights over and over again"*

ALP counterparts at some point, teaching and training with them. It was very helpful for the Afghans."

This spring, Zharay district was the most kinetic area in all of Afghanistan, said Meyer.

The fact that civilians have begun to move back into the area that at one point saw the worst fighting is the greatest success for Rock Company in Zharay.

"It was a tough fight, but we literally dislocated the enemy from the area," said Meyer.

After fighting for Zharay



Pfc. Bryan Schneider with Charlie "Rock" Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, Task Force 1-23 Infantry gathers biometric data from an Afghan local during a traffic control point mission near Forward Operating Base Shoja, Afghanistan, Oct. 21, 2012.

district the Rock Company was tasked to fight in the often-brutal Panjwai district.

"The essence of being 'The Rock Company' has grown into something here. We have been that dependable company that has been sent into the hardest of the fights over and over again," Meyer said.

Through the course of their tour the Rock Company Soldiers have not been without their losses. With more than 35 instances of Purple Heart Medals being awarded to Rock Company Soldiers, it is clear that they have seen more than their fair share of fighting.

"These guys are incredibly honorable, brave men. These men will look the enemy in the eye, and then go after them," said Meyer. "To do it day after day, and to do it after their buddies have been blown up or shot, is truly remarkable."

# Healing hands, fighting spirit

Story and photos by

Spc. Nevada Jack Smith  
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment  
“Medic!” - a shout often depicted in war movies, and often heard on the battlefield. To those at home watching, it is a sign that something bad has happened, but for Spc. Enrique Avila, it is a call to action.

Avila has been serving as the combat medic for 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, Task Force 1-23 Infantry and is now nearing the end of his year-long deployment. In that time he has treated nearly 30 casualties on the battlefield.

“Though the platoon itself hasn’t taken a lot of casualties, we have had to deal with a lot of them,” Avila said.

The 25-year-old Army specialist and Stockton, Calif., native has seen some of the worst things war can throw at a person.

“The first time I treated a casualty was crazy, he was a triple amputee and I was nowhere near prepared for that,” said Avila, when speaking about treating a member of the Afghan Local Police.

“The first few months were crazy because I had never seen anything like that before, except in training videos, but after my first incident I knew what to expect,” said Avila.

The young medic has been the first responder on almost every quick reaction force call the company responded to and also

treated several civilians during the course of his deployment.

“There have been times when we have gotten into gunfights and the enemy will shoot rocket-propelled grenades at us, and often we end up treating local nationals who have been hurt in the crossfire,” said Avila. “They will take shrapnel from the RPGs and after the fight we see the locals coming to us for help.”

Though faced with some of the worst of war, Avila demonstrates a strong sense of resiliency.

“They did a pretty good job in my Advanced Individual Training of preparing us for combat,” said Avila. “Deploying is pretty much what I expected it would be. I may miss my family, but this is the job I chose to do and I can’t complain about it.”



U.S. Army Spc. Enrique Avila, the combat medic for 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, Task Force 1-23 Infantry, performs a preventative maintenance check on his aid bag during a traffic control point mission near Forward Operating Base Shoja, Afghanistan, Oct. 21, 2012.

When asked how he handles stress Avila spoke on the strength and bonds between him and his fellow soldiers.

“I think the whole platoon keeps each other strong. We have a lot of support for one another and I feel we have grown pretty close,” said Avila. “Any time I need to talk about something and am feeling down, I know I can talk to them.”

Avila will soon be returning home to his wife and two children, where he hopes to continue both his career and education.

“Joining the Army was something I wanted to do for a long time,” said Avila. “I plan on being a medic for a long time and hopefully one day going into med school.”

# Chaplain's Corner

Welcome home Arrowhead and happy holidays! Christmas is just around the corner and that means plenty of time spent with family and friends filled with laughter, love and cheer. Christmas can also be a time for the added stresses of travel, cooking and finding that perfect gift for everyone on your list. However, a family get-together can also bring more heartache than laughter. On top of these potential stresses, you are trying to reintegrate and readjust to life back home. If you add these up, this Christmas season can be far from merry.

To help us navigate through the holiday season and the reintegration process we will glean some insights from the wise men from the Christmas story.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, during the time of King Herod, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” When Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the child was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people

Israel.’” Then Herod called the wise men secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over Bethlehem. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they presented him with gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Helpful Insight #1: Be Active!

The wise men “came from the east.” They got off their couches, packed their things and headed west. They got active. As you spend time with family and friends, get involved and be active. Make the most of every opportunity and in the process create new memories and traditions.

Helpful Insight #2: Be Open!

The wise men went to Jerusalem, to the king’s palace looking for the newly born king of the Jews. They expected him to be there, but he was not. The wise men had to make some changes and be open to the fact that things were not as they had expected. Life will often throw us curveballs when we

least expect it. Be open to change and the unexpected. Grow from the experience and have fun in the process.

Helpful Insight #3: Be Aware!

The wise men looked up and became aware of the star. During this holiday season, become aware and be mindful of some of the potential signs and stressors of the reunion process. Be aware of your thoughts and feelings and if you need to talk to someone and get the right assistance.

Helpful Insight #4: Be Giving!

The wise men gave gifts. Be giving not only in giving tangible gifts but in giving more of yourself. The wise men left their homes and traveled for months to follow the star and find the newborn king. Be giving in being slow to anger and quick to forgive. Be giving in biting your lip and swallowing your pride. Be generous in giving words of encouragement and love.

I hope that these insights will prove helpful and your block leave will be filled with love and joy. Welcome home, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

*Chaplain (Cpt) Rick Pac, 1st Squadron 14th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division*



# ARROWHEAD

*On Point!*