

FEBRUARY

THE ATLAS

704TH EN CO NEWSLETTER



PFC ANDREW BLAIN READY TO ROLL

The mountains of Afghanistan paint a magnificent picture on every horizon



Moving Forward becoming the servant warrior leader

By CPT Joshua Yarbrough

13FEB2013 - The greatest strength of a Soldier down range lies within the values he embodies and lives every day. He establishes the standards and boundaries that will define him and his performance. This framework is already there and the Army provides a set of values for him to live by, to mold his character and to guide his actions. With a solid character rooted in these values, the struggles and hardships of deployment are surmountable.

By volunteering to serve, a Soldier has already shown he is capable and willing to give more than the ordinary citizen. He is entrusting his life to the Army and to his leadership. He is accepting hardship and is willing to endure that hardship so that others may have the chance to live in peace. Ultimately, it is his selfless service and sacrifice that provides our Nation the forward momentum to be successful.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow

confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity." This is something I truly believe applies to all of the Soldiers of the 704th Engineer Company. They are putting their lives and futures on the line to provide for those who cannot. They are not afraid to seek out challenges, to overcome those struggles they encounter. By being here, they are truly beginning to live.

Whatever the end result in Afghanistan, the Soldiers will leave here knowing they gave it everything they have. The legacy they leave behind will be one of commitment to the enduring principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Their ideals will have been shared with their Afghan and Coalition counterparts. Their actions will speak volumes to the ambassadorship of America. The Soldiers will also learn through their selfless sacrifice. They will learn the meaning of trust, of brotherhood, and what it means to live by strong values. They will learn from those they train with and those they

support. They will learn from each other and the places they see together. Their mettle will be tested and the final result will define who they are for the rest of their lives.

I'll end this with a one last bit of wisdom from John Quincy Adams, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." I encourage all of my Soldiers to be leaders; to be strong when necessary, but to be humble yet resolute in their actions. I encourage their families to learn from their Soldier's strength and selfless service to our Nation.

"Clear the way!"

Assassin 6



Commander

CPT Joshua Yarbrough
joshua.w.yarbrough@afghan.swa.army.mil

Operations Officer

1LT Chris Scott
chris.scott8@us.army.mil

First Sergeant

1SG Clayton Elmore
clayton.h.elmore@us.army.mil

Rear Detachment

SFC Sean Davis
sean.d.davis@us.army.mil



XO's DESK
remember when

By 1LT Chris Scott

15FEB2013 - For me February has rarely been about Valentine's Day. I have yet to get married, and for some reason any girl I dated... well we don't end up dating over Valentine's Day. Conspiracy? Convenient? Congratulations? Whatever the case over the past few years February 14th has really just been another day. Of course the real reason for this, is that the main event of February is the 7th. That's my Mom's birthday.

This is a a birthday that far outshines the largest of chocolate hearts, or sweetest of sonnets. Its my Mom. And while I find it hard to imagine the world even revolved on its axis prior to my birth, its harder still to imagine my Mom as someone other than, my Mom. However impossible Jan Scott was born on February 7th (year redacted for national and personal security reasons) and went on to live an

"I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

-President Abraham Lincoln

exciting and full life all around the South. Going from state to state with her parents and sister, and eventually ending up attending Memphis State University where she met some dude. I like to call this dude, Dad. They met in the midst of the Vietnam Era, were married, and kids just started happening, or so I'm told. These kids, my brothers, or the "Other Dudes."

One of the dudes enlisted and served proudly in the Navy for 20 years. One dude stayed a little closer to home, went to college and started working in communications. And me, well more than a few years passed that I think caused my Mom a little worry, but eventually I found a home in the Army, and with the 704th. And now I am in Afghanistan, and I know this worries my Mom more than a little.

However, Mom, there is no need to worry. You raised me in a world where good beats evil, doing the right thing is always the best thing, hope is more powerful than bullets, a place where in the end Love Wins. I take that place everywhere I go. I take you everywhere I go.

Thanks to all the courageous Moms out there who raised brave and good sons. Sons who would volunteer to fight and stand up against the bad, evil and terrible of this world.

Happy Birthday Mom, I love you, I miss you, I'll be home soon.

FIRST PLATOON
everyone else is two or lower

By SGT John Oxford

18FEB2013 - First platoon's first couple of months are in the books. We have had our ups and downs. We have spent many of our days out on the roads, kind of like nomads. Living out of our backpacks, and staying in small FOBs (Forward Operating Base) enjoying the camaraderie. We even get a decent meal every once in a while. Well it's a love, hate thing. At

some of the FOBs run by Italians the food divides the platoon. I happen to think its excellent.

While we are out the time seems to fly by. We get a chance to do our jobs, see the countryside, go to sleep and do it again the next day. This is an experience that some have had and others are doing for the first time. Either way all the Soldiers are getting a life experience that not many get to have.

Love it or hate it we are here, serving our country, making lifelong friends. After mission, coming back

to Shindand to find all of the care packages that have been sent by family and friends piled up to the ceiling helps the guys remember why we are here, and who we are fighting for. There are a lot of smiles during mail call. Myself and all of the soldiers of First Platoon appreciate the support of our families and friends, and we will be back before you know it. Take care everybody!

“We have spent many of our days out on the roads, kind of like nomads.”

L-R: SPC Antonion Waters, SPC Kentrell Ousley, CPL Rodney Gaynor





L: SPC Kyle Striplin and SPC Brian Roush, battle buddies for life.
 B: SPC Christopher Brown getting confused with some other brown.



SECOND PLATOON

who does number two work for?

By 1LT Adam Mueller

19FEB2013 - Greetings friends and family. It's been a great, but very busy, month since we last updated you. As you probably already know, the platoons are on demanding schedules that often keep them away for days at a time. It has been a mix of frustration, hard work, and finally satisfaction as we went from a training environment to becoming proficient at our job in a combat environment. The long missions we have been doing are definitely testing our patience and fortitude, but we have found many ways to relax even during our short breaks. Our long days generally end at a small Forward Operating Base (FOB) that consists of nothing more than a warm shower and a small sleeping area. However, there is always fun to be had no matter where we are; the trucks are packed to the brim with footballs, frisbees, cards, and anything else a bunch of goofy guys can find entertaining. Even the trucks we drive become useful for our fun and games; SPC Stover often loans out his enormous flat-bed trailer to the group for the world's biggest card-table. The RG-31 gun-trucks also make great shelves for our own personal coffee shop, consisting of two hot-water makers and an extra large bag of every kind of instant coffee and cocoa you can think of. Second Platoon is also getting plenty of exercise, thanks to the local children that run circles

around us on the soccer field at one of our frequent stops.

When we get back from a mission set, we generally have a couple days at Shindand to work on equipment and relax in our own rooms. It's always a good feeling to get back "home" as we prepare to go out again. There has been a constant flow of entertainment material coming in the mail. SPC Stivers and SPC Roush are just two of the many that you'll always hear laughing or yelling (depending on how the game is going) at their Xbox. There is never a dull moment in Second Platoon's living area. By the time our break comes to an end though, everyone is well rested and pumped-up to get back out on the road. I am more impressed than I ever imagined at how all of the Soldiers have taken the bull by the horns and performed our challenging job with the utmost skill and safety. I also can't believe it's already been 2 months. We will be back to our loving family and friends before you know it! In the meantime, Second is constantly creating priceless memories and stories that we can't wait to share with you.

THIRD PLATOON

1,2,3 strikes... its 3rd!!!

By SGT Phillip Ragus

13FEB2013 - We've been putting in some long days here in Afghanistan. Everyday we work hard getting our vehicles ready and up to par for our long slow drives down Afghanistan's finest roads. Each Soldier has been putting forth every ounce of effort into our trucks.

We have also been interacting with the local populace every time we are on mission. We help them out any way we can. The Afghan people are very talented; no one is able to stack stuff on their busses, cars, trucks and even motorcycles the way they do. On the other hand rocks have been an imminent threat. By rocks, I mean the thrown kind. These 3 year olds here could probably out pitch Nolan Ryan at the peak of his career. Lately on the last couple of missions we have had a massive reduction of rocks being thrown at our platoon. I think it may have something to do with the help, random acts of kindness, we provide. I believe that our actions speak louder than words.

We have been training the Afghan Army on how to conduct route clearance so they will be able to fight the IED threat after we all return home. They are very receptive to us being at their base, and to the training we coordinate. The Afghan Soldiers are genuinely excited to learn how we do route clearance and are willing to adopt our tactics and techniques. They are no different than us other than the

"I believe that our actions speak louder than words."

SPC Pearson and CPL Andrew Newlon take a minute to spend time with some Afghan children

language they speak. We have enjoyed teaching them and getting to know them.

I love my job as a combat engineer and I know that I am not the only one who does. A lot of the Coalition Forces think that we are nuts for doing the job that we do. The way I look at it, driving as slow as we do gives us time to take in the countries beauty. Of course it also gives us more time to look at the details of the ground so we can detect threats. If we do find a threat we get to make it go BOOM, which is always fun.





M2T2: Training Team

couple of dudes, training other dudes, to be better dudes

By SSG Todd Young

15FEB2013 - Myself and SPC Jarvis Johnson have been assigned to come advise the ANA (Afghanistan National Army) on route clearance tactics and techniques. We stay on a small base, with Marines, down in Deleram. The rooms and showers are close by and always warm. We have a USO and MWR room as well. The USO room has a big screen TV, with cable, fosse-ball table, and plenty of movies and books. The MWR room has some computers and phones so that we can keep in touch with our loved ones back home. But enough about creature comforts, let me tell you about our mission.

Route clearance is fairly new to the ANA. The group that we replaced set the foundation for route clearance basics, showing the ANA how to use route clearance equipment. Since, we have stepped in, we have taken the training back to basics. Since our training started the ANA have gone a couple of successful patrols. This mission

SPC Jarvis Johnson and SSG Todd Young in action.

success has reinforced the training that SPC Johnson and I have been providing. As a result they come to our training ready to learn and ask questions, confident in our knowledge and expertise.

The training we provide to the ANA is vital not only to them, but to us as well. These are the Soldiers who will be here long after we are gone. The ANA will have to rely on their skills and training to defeat, survive, and make this land a safer place for their people. They know the land and the people. They can discover important information, because the people are more willing to talk to them than us. So in return for our training and resources we are giving the ANA, they are taking our training and making the roads even safer for us to travel and complete our vital missions.

It is an honor for SPC Johnson and I to be advising the ANA in route clearance for the 704th EN CO. We take pride in our work and this training, and we hope to advance the skill of the ANA route clearance patrols.

The M2T2 Team is comprised of SSG Todd Young and SPC Jarvis Johnson. They work directly with the ANA and are located in a FOB away from the main body of the Company.

“Driving a Jumbo Elephant sized vehicle on the busted up dirt roads of the air base is an adventure.” -SPC Stephen Drennon

HQ stand up, hook up, send another email

By SPC Stephen Drennon

15FEB2013 - Bent nails, stripped screws, and worn splintered hands, are what HQ's has to show for all the work put into the mailroom, the TOC, and the MWR (morale welfare recreation.) A lot of thanks must go to SGT Witt for fixing up the TOC. SSG Tackett added his elbow grease to the effort. He fixed his work area, adding shelves and desk space, so much so that he had to assign it a zip code. SSG Tackett and I had a long conversation about carpentry and "swooping corners" (curved/rounded corners.) We kept going on and on discussing the pros and cons of the "swooping." The whole afternoon was "swoop this" and "swoop that." Finally Lt Schoen declared SSG Tackett and I were both nuttier than a payday. We don't talk about "swooping" anymore.

As far as the mail goes, 1SG Elmore and I have been going everyday collecting the mail from the Post Office. Driving a Jumbo Elephant sized vehicle on the busted up dirt roads of the air base is an adventure. For awhile SPC Heiner was the only one guaranteed to received mail every day. I was starting to think SPC Heiner and had a girlfriend named Amazon. He got so much mail that we just gave him his own special corner in the mail room. When he finally came and got his mail room stopped leaning to the right.

At the beginning of the month the sky opened up and the rain didn't stop. Anyone sleeping at Shindand woke up in the middle of the night multiple times to the sound of hail hitting the tents. I am surprised the tents down in the motor pool did not float away. The company area was so flooded they had to tear a giant hole in the earth to let out the water drain out. Believe me, everyone has been busy with one job or multiple jobs (like me.) Headquarters is always on its game trying our best to set the line platoons up for success outside the wire. So keep us in your prayers, and keep sending us mail, and if you need to know the latest on swooping give me a call.

FMT running on diesel and WD40

By SGT Brian Hutson

16FEB2012 - The FMT has been as busy as possible, with work coming from every direction! Almost half of the mechanics, who were recovery qualified, were sent to an MRV course at Leatherneck. The MRV is a new recovery vehicle, and the soldiers learned the proper operation of this new equipment and its boundaries. The truck is an amazing piece of military equipment and the mechanics are very happy to use it. We've recently rotated more Soldiers from the FMT to attend the class while the rest of maintenance is still busy getting everything organized. Soldiers have built as much as possible to make everything around us easier to track and organize. Motivation is very high, especially when mail is received, which keeps everything operating as smooth as possible.

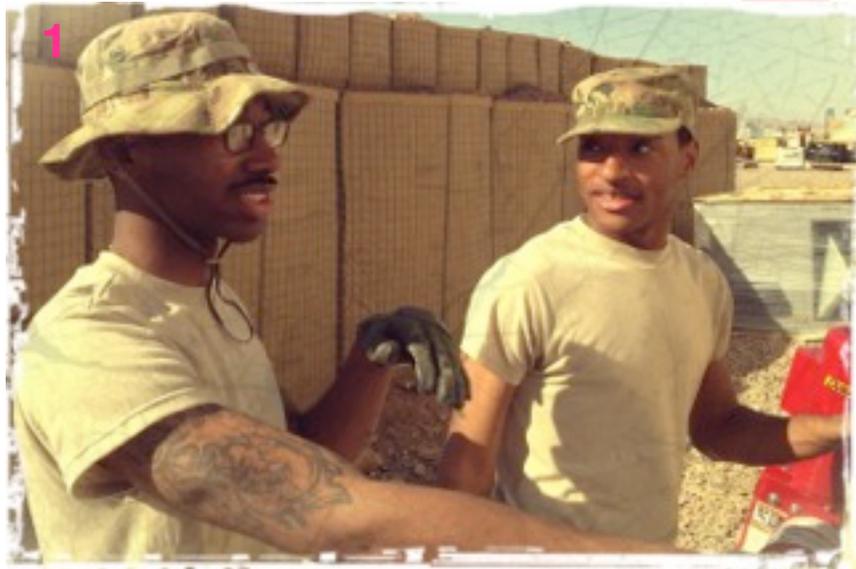
Return of the RCP's is also another mission for maintenance. The platoons arrive and mechanics assist the operators in a "Regen" process. Regen (short for Regeneration) is where we take a truck just off mission and begin the process of getting it ready for the next mission. It is another task, but it's rewarding for soldiers to see their friends again as well as to help them to the best of their abilities. We will continue to get everything situated to help operations go smoothly as possible for our mission.

The MRV in action (training action that is)



Soldiers being Soldiers

TRAINING PICS



- (1) SPC Cortez Lawson and SPC Chase Johnson discuss the finer points of life.
- (2) SPC Garrett Hendrix gives Afghanistan two thumbs up.
- (3) SFC Billy Harner and 1LT Jared Schoen buddy up for a helicopter ride.

Soldiers being Soldiers TRAINING PICS



1



2



3

- (1) SPC Kyle Striplin, SPC Kyle Cox, and SPC Louis BOLLASINA taking it easy.
- (2) SGT Ricky Jones making friends with the Afghan people.
- (3) SPC Benjamin Heiner, Lord of the Mail Room.

SWEET HEARTED MESSAGES

marry me, real love, all mine, watch your six?

TO: SPC Robert Fryar

Wishing my son and best bud a Happy Valentine's Day. Sure do miss our back roading.

FROM: Dad

TO: SSG Jarrod Stroud

To my handsome and devoted Soldier, you keep me safe and have made me strong. I can't think of any other way to spend Valentine's day this year other than knowing that, even though we are apart for this one, we have many more Valentine's Days to spend together. I love you forever and always.

FROM: Olivia

TO: SSG Luke Boeckman

Go and serve your country now my son, as a Soldier's job is never done. I pray each and every day until I can see your handsome face. Go and do what needs to be done then come back home safely to all that hold you dear. You will always be within my heart even though we will now be apart. I am so very proud of you my son, because of what you have gone and done. You're a Soldier now my son! Happy valentine's Day to my Soldier

FROM: Mom

TO: SPC Jason Harper

Happy Valentine's Day to the love of my life, best friend, and soldier! I'm beyond thankful and proud that God blessed me with such a wonderful man to call my husband! Thank you for the sacrifices you are making for me and our country so that we are able to enjoy life once you are home. I love you with all my heart! Take care of yourself & Godspeed!

FROM: Bevin

TO: Kyle Striplin

Happy Valentine's Day to one of the loves in our life. We are proud of you and love you very much.

FROM: Mom and Dad

TO: PFC Terry Roark

I am so proud to let people know who is my son and what he does for a career. Dave, Daniel, snow and myself miss you very much and miss when you would be in the apt playing beer pong and such. Happy Valentines Day Moisieri!!!!

FROM: Dave, Daniel, Snow and Mom

To SSG George Tackett

On our very first date, you knew that we would no longer be two.

It took a week for me to see we were meant to be. Then the two of us became one. Our life together begun. We each carry the others' hearts so we are never truly apart. Even half the world away, you are with me every day. My heart is crossed and a promise made.

A love this true shall never fade. I would wait forever for you.

FROM: Amber

TO: SFC Billy Harner

Sadly there will be, "No soup for you!" this Valentine's day Oh, and "your back's gonna hurt cause you just pulled landscaping duty" for missing THIS Valentine's day, Just kidding. . . You are the "Festivus for the rest of us" everyday at home. We miss you, and LOVE you! Happy Valentine's day honey! (P.S. Movies and sitcoms are not the same without you!)

FROM: Your loving wife and kids.

TO: SPC Adam Chatman

I tried to have Cupid send you some hugs and love from home, but his bow broke and he didn't have an arrow that would travel that far..... So I decided to just do it myself. We love you, we miss you, but most of all, we are so very proud of you. Happy Valentine's Day Son.

FROM: Mom

TO: 2LT Bennett Adams

Happy Valentine's Day from your nieces, Brighton and Kinyon. They love you can't wait to give you hugs and kisses. Much love also from Kirsten and Brent, we are proud of you!

FROM: Brent, Kirsten, Kinyon, and Brighton

TO: SSG Luke Boeckman

We know you aren't here to give us a teddy bear

But we are sending our love to let you know we care.

You're our hero, we are so proud of you.

From this side of the world we're blowing you a kiss or two!

Stay safe and Happy Valentine's Day, my love!

From: Joanie, Ethan, Audrey, and Oliver

TO: SPC Ben Ibarra

I just wanted to let you know I am thinking of you on our first Valentines day as a married couple :) I miss you so much and wish we could be spending this day together, but we have so many more to celebrate and I

can't wait ! You are such an amazing husband and best friend! I am the luckiest :) Happy Valentines Day Babe! I love you!

FROM: Brittany

TO: SPC Jason Harper

Happy Valentine's Day! We love you.

FROM: Mom and Dad

TO: SPC Steven Cox

Words cannot express how proud I am of you! You mean more than the world to me, you are my other half and without whom I would be lost. You will be home in no time my Valentine. Each day without you feels like a lifetime. Counting down the days until you are safely back in my arms. You are my hero! I love and miss you dearly!!!

FROM: Andrea

TO: 1LT Delfin Fuentes

Hi hunny, Happy Valentines Day! I miss you so very much and I wish you were here. I love you more than all the heart candies in the world. Hurry home :)

FROM: Heather

TO: SGT Jonathan Witt

We had a big year with the wedding, finding out we were pregnant, you deploying and our little one coming so early! I am so thankful to have had you by my side for every moment of it. You truly are a blessing to me! I am so proud of everything you do for your family as well as your country. You make me the happiest person in the world! I think about you every moment of every day and cannot wait for the day you return home. I miss you so much and I love you with all of my heart! Happy Valentines Day!

FROM: Alicia

TO: SPC Kevin Tischer

We are so very glad that you are our son. Thank you for all that you do for us and have done for us. Keep your head down and your spirits up!

FROM: Mom and Dad

TO: SPC Wesley Casey

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
We miss you like crazy
We're so proud of you!
We love you! Stay alert, stay safe!

FROM: Mom

TO: SSG Luke Boeckman

Hey Luke thinking about you all the way from South Padre! How you are well and know you are LOVED

FROM: Aunt Liz

SWEET HEARTED MESSAGES

marry me, real love, all mine, watch your six?

TO: SPC Christopher Brown

To us, every day you are our Valentine! We are so proud of you and can't wait to have you home! I love you! XOXO

FROM: Kass, Taytum, and Brittany

TO: SPC Terry Roark

Happy Valentines Day Stud Muffin/ Daddy! We are so proud & thankful for you! Mwah!

FROM: Janie & Julianna

TO: SPC Philip Reeves

I love you with all my heart, and I believe in you with all my soul. You are and always have been a bright star in my sky! Please remember wherever in this world you go, my love goes with you.

FROM: Mom

TO: SSG Brian Weathers

We love and miss you so very much! Happy Valentine's Day, hurry home to us!!

FROM: Courtney and the girls

TO: 2LT Bennett Adams

Ode to Ben's Beard-
You cling to my face with such little grace,
I can't tell if you're charming or rather alarming.

One thing I do know,
Some day soon you will meet a new foe,

MR. NORELCO!

FROM: Army Grooming Standards

TO: SPC Joshua Crane

I love and miss you so much. We all are thinking about you and will be waiting for you when you come home. On this day (Valentine's Day) I want you to know that even if we are not together face-to-face we are in each other's heart, and our love is something strong that cannot be broken. You are my one and only; you are my best friend and I am proud to

say that I am married to you. You are the best husband and father anyone could ask for. Thank you so much for being who you are! We are so proud of you! Happy Valentine's Day!

FROM: Tabitha and Jason

TO: SPC Joshua Crane

I want you to know how proud of you we all are. I can't remember a day when I felt otherwise. Even though you are so far away from us now, you're always here with me in my heart and mind. Never forget that we will always love you and be here for you.

FROM: Mom

TO: SPC Christopher Donaldson

Valentine's day is a special day for us, we had our first date on this day 11 years ago. We went to dinner and the movie was "How to lose a guy in 10 days." Loved the movie but apparently I did not learn anything from it because you are still here. LOL. I guess that means you have kinda grown on me. Happy Valentine's Day baby, love you bunches!!!

FROM: Kathy

TO: SPC Benjamin Ibarra

Ben, we are so thankful to the Lord for bringing you into our lives. You have been such a joy since the day we learned you were on the way! It amazes us how since your early age you used to play "army guys" with your brother and friends, and taking it so seriously; but we never really thought that would be something you would pursue for real. You always wanted to be a hero, and now you have become one. We are so proud of you. Have a Happy Valentine's Day.

FROM: Mom and Dad

TO: SSG Brian Finney

Happy Valentine's Day! We love you and miss you so much! We can't wait for you to come home!

FROM: Kimberly and Baby Tayln

TO: SGT Dominic Knott

Happy 8th Anniversary! We love you and miss you bunches!

FROM: Ava and the monkeys

TO: SGT Zachary Williams

Romance, who loves to nod and sing
With drowsy head and folded wing
Among the green leaves as they shake

Far down within some shadowy lake,
To me a painted parrot
Hath been - a most familiar bird-
Taught me my earliest word.
To lisp my very earliest word.

Succeeding years, too wild for sing,
Then roll'd like tropic storms along

FROM: Danielle

TO: CPL Richard Scroggins

I love you and miss you lots! We are so proud of you! 9 years ago I could have never imagined that we'd be where we are today! You are an amazing husband and father. Without you, I wouldn't have a leg to stand on or a shoulder to lean on. I'd never make it. But together we can do anything.

FROM: Brittany

TO: CPT Josh Yarbrough

You are wonderful! You make us happy and we are proud of you! You are our everything and we are blessed to have you as a daddy and husband! We love you!

FROM: Teagan and Cathy

TO: SPC Joshua Crane

Can't wait for you to get back so we can see you and we can play Xbox. Happy Valentine's Day. Love You!

FROM: Dilauda

Old Glory set against the backdrop of the Hindu Kush.



AWARDS AND PROMOTIONS

AWARDS:

HERO of the BATTLE:

(recognized each week by the Battalion)

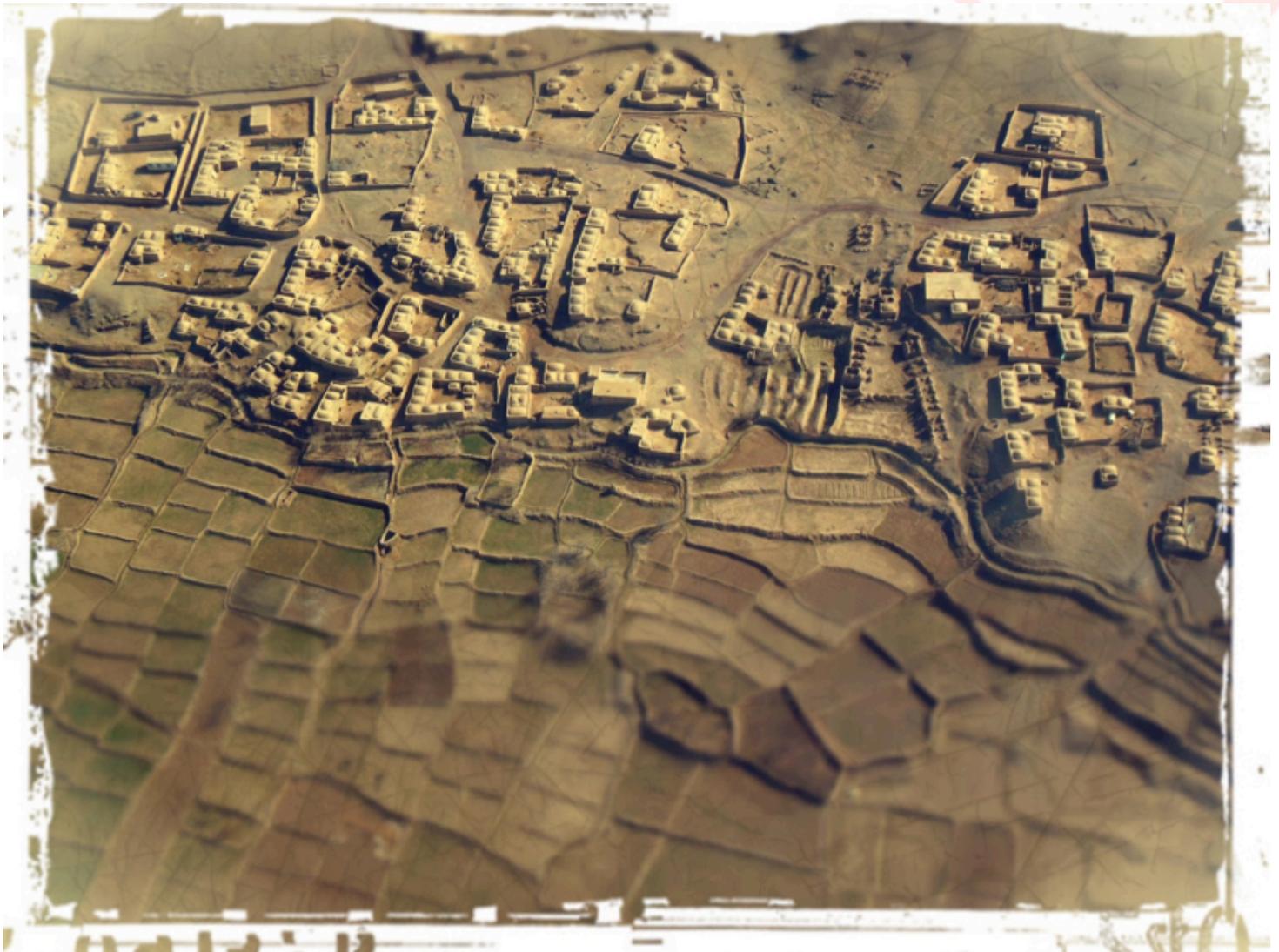
SPC Philip Reeves

SPC Laramey Tillman

SPC Cortez Lawson

SPC Carlos Ortizmejia

Afghanistan from the air.
PHOTO BY 1LT Jared Schoen



**TOP's Corner
specializing in wall to wall counseling**

By 1SG Clayton Elmore

17FEB2013 - This is the fourth news letter and just seven more to go and we will be home. The Soldiers are all working hard at their jobs and making a big difference here in Afghanistan. Just about every day we pick up a big truck load of mail. The leader is SPC Benjamin Heiner, 1LT Scott, SPC Kyle Cox, SPC Joshua Crane, and SSG Tackett coming up fast. The mail is very important to the Soldiers. When they come back from mission, the first thing they want is mail. It's like watching your kids open up gifts at Christmas. I enjoy seeing the guys when they come in from mission. These jokers are always good for a laugh. SGT Jones that always have a smile not when I see him. Even early in the morning, he's just grinning to grin. Then you have Dickman, Collins, Sanchez, Chavez and Cox always waiting to chime in on something. SSG Lewis and SSG Olson are just good to talk. I just don't have all the time to talk about all of them. But these guys love their families. You can always hear them talking about everybody back home, and what they are going to do when they get home. Until next month be safe and keep the mail coming.



1SG Clayton Elmore in his very own Afghan Man Cave.

704 EN CO NEWSLETTER

