

MARCH

THE ATLAS

704TH EN CO NEWSLETTER



may the road rise to meet you....

PFC Joshua Crane is guns up in Afghanistan



CPT JOSHUA YARBROUGH ON PATROL WITH RCP 35 (1PLT)

March Showers Bring Flooded Wadis three months in the books

By CPT Joshua Yarbrough (ASSASSIN 6)

21MAR2013 - The excitement here in Afghanistan continues to build. The mission sets are getting longer and more difficult, but our Soldiers are showing their warrior spirit. They relish the challenge and endure hardship with ease. They continue to impress me with their resiliency. As we continue the march, I know we will build upon our success every single day.

The 704th has to date conducted numerous patrols, key leader engagements with Coalition and Afghan leaders, and several partnered operations with the Afghans. The opportunity to work side by side with Italians, Afghans, Slovenians, and other US forces continues to be very rewarding.

Our actions are changing the dynamics of our area of operations for the better and we are truly enabling our Afghan partners to lead the way. Every day we see more Afghan Soldiers and Police taking ownership of their country. It is with no small amount of pride that we are

able to look at their success as a reflection of our own.

It's not all missions either. Some of the best interactions with the Afghans can be witnessed during our downtime. 3rd Platoon for instance recently spent several nights in the field working with the Afghans. During downtime, they were quick to play soccer together and 57 Heavy also taught the Afghans how to play football. CPL Scroggins and SPC Chatman introduced the Afghans to weightlifting "Wreck It Ralph"-style utilizing 91B ingenuity to use a cheater bar and tow hooks as a weight bar while laying on the mine rollers on the front of the 12B's trucks.

Personally, I've spent a lot of time with Afghan officers sharing their culture. Whether it's meeting with my company command counterparts to feasting with the ANA Brigade commander, it's always an adventure. Afghan hospitality is a world of its own. The

people may not be well off in the Western sense, but what they have is ours as their guests.

Meetings are all on what we lovingly call "Afghan Time". It starts with chai tea (sometimes black, green or condensed sweet milk with tea grounds), some treats offered (pistachios, almonds, raisins, and nasgkhar/ghor (sugar cane candy). Once we discuss families and personal lives, we are able to get to business.

I'm honored to be their guest and look forward to returning the favor in the near future. Teaching them our culture while being immersed in theirs is a true lifetime experience.

Our Soldiers will continue the good fight. They do it with pride and great compassion for the people of Afghanistan. It is our privilege to be the ambassadors of America.

"CLEAR THE WAY!"

May the road
rise to meet
you.
May the wind
always be at
your back.
May the sun
shine upon your
face,
and rains fall
soft upon you
fields.
And until we
meet again,
May God hold
you in the palm
of His Hand.
-traditional
blessing

XO's DESK

a challenge...

By 1LT Chris Scott

21MAR2013 - Back in the World, perhaps that's too broad a stroke, back in Arkansas I found a tremendous amount of fulfillment and satisfaction in my civilian line of work. I began working as a personal trainer last summer after years of dreaming and imagining programs and formats and workouts. I was privileged to work with 20 different individuals from a variety of backgrounds. I worked hard to impart them with more than muscles or fitness. I wanted them to buy into a state of mind and being.

My philosophy was built around an idea. The idea was simple: we exist in three aspects, body, mind, spirit (soul/heart.) We have to enrich and "exercise" all three to be truly alive. This was the foundation of everything I did. I wanted people to build not just their bodies, but their minds and spirits as well. It was a challenge. Crushing the life out of someone's body with countless pushups and sprints can at times get in the way of building mental resilience and strengthening someone's spirit. And yet that's what we worked for.

The buy in began, and people started to get it. I challenged them with different exercises both mental and physical. I pushed them to be better fathers, daughters, co-

"There is no limit to what you can imagine. And with commitment, with effort, what you can imagine you can become. Put your mind to work for you. Believe that you can do it. The world will tell you that you can't. yet in your belief you'll find the strength, you'll find the ability, to do it anyway."

- Ralph Marston

workers. And change began. I am not seeking to take credit for this, because I merely provided the catalyst. The ones sweating and working, thinking and hoping did the true "heavy lifting."

We challenged our Soldiers in a similar way, we asked them to develop a goal for the deployment. Something outside the Army. Something to develop the other aspects of their lives. Some wanted to get fit and strong, some chose to take online college classes. Others challenged themselves to read a certain amount of books, or get into college/grad school. Others have been volunteering here on post at the USO.

What does this have to do with you families back home? Here it is. I challenge each of you to do a little introspection and find out if you are working your body, mind and spirit. What needs work? What can you improve?

Can you match your Soldiers's challenge? Can you share this 9 month opportunity with your Soldier by seeking to find a way to improve some part of your life? Can you improve your body, your mind, your spirit? Can you get out and run/walk everyday? Can you take some college classes, or complete a certificate? Can you volunteer somewhere?

Share your challenge with your Soldier, your goal for yourself. Or keep it as a surprise for when you hold them in your arms again. Ask your Soldier what their goal is. I hope you all find something to dig into, good luck, God Bless and YOU CAN DO IT!



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The original Guinness Brewery in Dublin has a 9,000 year lease, at a rate of 45 Irish Punds a year (or about \$70)

James Joyce (celebrated author) once called Guinness "the wine of Ireland."

FIRST PLATOON

Call Sign Eeyore

By SGT Brian Neudecker

20MAR2013 - First has been busy! We have been building up our motor pool/refit area in Shindand. We created a storage area for MREs, shelving for all of our platoon gear, a horse shoe pit, and walls and what not for our hooches. While we have been on route we have needed our mechanics to be on our toes. They have come up with some pretty clever fixes in the field. Those days on route are long, as we travel slowly, checking culverts and blast craters for IEDs and anything out of the ordinary.

When we do roll out we start by loading the trucks with food and water. We finish with a final commo check and out we go. A typical day can take between 8-12 hours. AT A SLOW PACE. We spend days out at a time checking the routes and staying in locations all over Afghanistan. Some of the places are run by Italians. The food is great, but wherever we go is very different. Tobruk, Farah, Deleram, and Stone are some of the usual places we go. Stone has been a favorite with good amenities and great shops for such a small place. We even spent one night in a farmers field!

Once we return to Shindand, we have a few days down and then start all over again.



SGT TIMOTHY COX ON THE LOOK OUT



SSG BRIAN FINNEY, 2LT BENNETT ADAM HUSKY FORDING A WADI AND CPL BRANDON JACKON HAPPY PUTTING BOOTS ON THE GROUND IN AFGHANISTAN

According to some historians, over 40% of all American Presidents have had some Irish ancestry.

The national symbol of Ireland is the Celtic Harp, not the shamrock.



2ND PLATOON SOLDIERS ENJOYING A BBQ WITH SOME ITALIAN SOLDIERS. 1LT ADAM MUELLER "IS NOT IMPRESSED."

SECOND PLATOON

Call Sign Battle Bunny

By SFC Kenneth Buoy

15MAR2013 - As March dwindles down and we head into April, so do we leave Winter behind. The highs are in the 70s and the lows are, thankfully, above freezing. The emphasis on working heaters is now replaced with the importance of working air conditioners. With forty pounds of gear covering every inch of your body and no windows to let the breeze in, it can get mighty warm in a MRAP pretty fast.

In two months Second Platoon has logged over 2000 miles on the roads of Afghanistan. All those miles and we have yet to tow a vehicle in the gates. This is a testament to the hard work and diligence the Soldiers have put into keeping their vehicles in tip-top shape.

Recently we upgraded our fleet with six brand new vehicles. With the new vehicles came a brand new Brigade and Battalion. While the changes in reporting and mission have not been great, the change in command provides a new level of challenge to the Soldiers. With all challenges, we will conquer, we will persevere. Adapt and overcome is what we do best.

As always every Soldier is greatly appreciative of your love and support in the form of care packages, letters, emails, and all the other ways you remind us of home. The Soldiers of second are always proud to serve.⁵



HUSKY FORDING A WADI

In 1800, the population of Ireland was almost twice as large as that of the United States. By 2000, America's population was about 60 times that of Ireland.

The Vikings founded Dublin in 988 AD.

THIRD PLATOON

Call Sign War Turtle

By CPL Jonathan Anderson

15MAR2013 - Sand, sand, sand, it's everywhere and nearly impossible to keep anything clean. I find myself putting a lot of personal items in air tight zip lock baggies, only to discover that the items inside magically become covered in dust. These are the joys that make up Afghanistan, a place of sweat, blood, and tears. My Afghanistan story began when the 704th Engineer Company voyaged to the National Training Center in California. The Company is full of Soldiers from all over the country, from Pennsylvania to Utah. Despite the huge diversity of cultures, all of these Soldiers united with one goal in mind, to deploy to Afghanistan in support of our Country and the other Coalition Forces.

I am a team leader in 3rd squad and I am directly responsible for three awesome Soldiers. My job as a team leader is to take care of my Soldiers, assigning them tasks, providing them with the proper training, and motivating them every day to become a better Soldier. A good leader should have the ability to give direction, purpose, and motivation to every soldier he leads. The job is sometimes very difficult and one of my most rewarding life experiences.

My experience in Afghanistan has been pretty enjoyable despite being so far from home. We live up in the mountains in RC-West, and in all honesty, the view is spectacular. The mountains make up a beautiful scenery, one that you would find on a post card to send back home. Although it is not the luscious forests and rolling hills of Missouri, for home it does just fine. We have internet, a good USO, and a PX, which provide creature comforts the 21st century man cannot go without. They even feed us some awesome food, and then give us a decent gym to work it all off.

For days on end, we are sent out of this home we think of as paradise, in support of our friendly forces. We go FOB to FOB, usually sleeping on the ground beside our trucks, so

that we can keep clearing long distances at a time. Did I mention the lack of showers and running water? Just imagine all these Soldiers, sweating, wearing body armor all day, and not changing clothes for a couple of days. I'm sure you can smell us from there.

We have had the privilege of working closely alongside the Afghanistan National Army in training their Soldiers to perform route clearance operations as well as proper disposal of unexploded ordinance and Improvised Explosive Devices. The ANA Soldiers are actually a pretty fun group of guys to hang out with and despite their size (these guys are tiny) they are pretty strong. They also are highly addicted to Chai tea and these little sugar candies that are literally balls of sugar. So far this year, we have found a couple of IEDs, so our presence being here is well deserved and rewarded.

The platoon has done a lot of work building a relationship with the local populace. We never hesitate to help; stopping anytime there are major accidents, passing out food and water, and even just being plain friendly. I believe we are making a big difference in the eyes of the people here. While I am a team leader in the platoon when we are on patrol, I wear many hats. Primarily, I am a Husky operator, sent out to look for IEDs that are buried in the ground using radar. Sometimes I am a gunner, and a truck commander, depending on the mission set. Our presence and our persistence, is what sets us aside from all the rest. I could never be more proud of this group of guys that I have the honor of serving beside. As Gandhi once said, "Be the change you want to see in the world", and I know friends and family that you miss us all dearly, but we are change here. We are changing Afghanistan into a better place. We miss you all, and will return soon. Keep your heads high, and be proud of your Soldiers for the change they are providing.



SGT JAMES HUNSUCKER PUTTING AN RPG CAGE ON THE MAXXPRO

May God give you...
For every storm, a rainbow,
for every tear, a smile,
For every care, a promise,
And a blessing in each trial.
For every problem life sends,
A faithful friend to share,
For every sigh, a sweet song,
And an answer for each prayer.
-traditional blessing



**SSG BRIAN WEATHERS
GETTING READY TO TEE OFF**

**CPL ROY WADE DEALING
WITH THE CHAOS**

Headquarters

We Gotta FRAGO in here!

By SGT Dominic Knott

20MAR2013 - The end of another month encroaches upon us in HQ and finds its inhabitants gleefully attending to their duties like the good Soldiers we are. Life on Shindand Air Base has finally begun to fall into a battle rhythm of tending to the tedious tasks that ravenously consume the minutes and hours of the day. Weather has been kind and cruel in the span of a few short hours, much like the weather in Arkansas. Freezing at night, sunny and 72 by lunch. HQ has been besieged by decks and porches. They are all the rage, and more and more creative versions sprout up every couple of days. Supply personnel are meticulously reviewing hand receipts and fixing the countless flaws they discover. Supply personnel have traveled all over our AO (area of operations) ensuring new vehicles are acquired, and that any and all new equipment is in the best possible condition for the Soldiers. ColST is passing the time coordinating missions and sending out the latest intelligence on IEDs and enemy activity. They are in good spirits, all them fascinated by the ancient art and science of military intelligence, and of course tormented by the devilish faces of the Rubik's Cube.

Commo is diligently focused on keeping everyone updated with the latest FREQs, ensuring that all information can get out to the patrols as soon as possible. SPC Munyon (the Onion) is mesmerizing Soldiers and Afghans alike with his copper and magnet contraptions. He is currently working to build a Hubble Telescope capable of going Warp 9. SGT Witt keeps all the wires and computers humming when he is not in the gym with the XO pushing it to the limit. We medics are nestled into a new Aid Station, and providing continued care for the daily bumps, scrapes and ~~adflsdjfla~~ (sorry, censored for HIPPA.) The Line Medics (those going out on patrol) are thriving with their platoons. These Soldiers are providing emergency aid to Afghans, and truly winning hearts and minds. While the medics stand ready for the worst, we are gracefully bowing to a blessed time of band aids and Motrin. 1SG Elmore was able to track down a source for REAL Mountain Dew and calm has been restored. CPT Yarbrough is still sharing packages from home and destroying any gains at the gym. 1LT Scott keeps the Platoon Leaders on a straight and narrow path taunting them with the promise of a 12 mile mud run lined with barb wire and filled with alligators for those that stray. Thats all from HQ. We still get breakfast, loved ones are still missed, and care packages are always welcome. Assassins, CLEAR THE WAY!

The Irish tricolor flag, created in 1848, was designed to reflect the country's political realities. Orange stands for Irish Protestants, green for Irish Catholics, and the white stripe for the hope that peace might eventually be reached between them.

FMT

a couple of screws loose

By SPC Brandon Babcock

15MAR2013 - This March saw more Soldiers attend the MRV Course to ensure that we would be able to utilize everyone of our mechanics to their full potential. Being one of those Soldiers, I learned a lot from the course instructors on how to recover broken or damaged vehicles on route. Hopefully nothing goes wrong, I'd like to use my knowledge to help the mission effort, and keep the patrol going, but hopefully its just to help fix a flat tire.

While we were attending class we also had a platoon rolling with us to go and turn in vehicles. It was interesting for me, it was the first time that I got the opportunity to perform a number of different roles while on route. Usually I am a driver or a TC (truck commander). These different roles allowed me to see a whole new side to the country. The terrain here is a little barren, but honestly I think the mountains make up for it. When you see a sunset with the Afghani Mountains in the background it's a site you don't forget.

Upon completion of the class, maintenance personnel that we sent to the class were flown back to Shindand. A few weeks later we

received a shipment of tools and other supplies that will greatly aid us in performing our duties. We are still receiving boxes of equipment and will soon have everything inventoried and organized. Honestly, the longest part of this will probably be the inventory, because we have to go through every single piece and part from transmission jack to loose bolt.

With help from some Navy SeaBees (Naval Construction Types) a new maintenance tent was erected in the motor pool. We worked diligently to make it our own. We are hoping to have it finished within the week so that we can continue providing support to the Route Clearance Patrols.

In our time here I feel that our platoon is more than just a platoon, it's like a family. When we have our meetings every morning we don't just give out assignments to our mechanics. We ask them how they are, what's going on back home, and how they are doing with this deployment. For a lot of Soldiers in our company this is a new experience and can be quite frightening. It pushes us to the edge and asks all of us to step up to the plate. Please remember that biggest thing that keeps these soldiers going is their friends and family back home.



**SGT HORACIO SANDOVAL
MAKING IT HAPPEN**



**SPC TAYLOR SAIZ JUST HAPPY
TO BE SPC TAYLOR SAIZ**

In olden days, a pig was often allowed to live in the house with the family on an Irish farm. The pig was commonly referred to as "the gentlemen that pays the rent."

Ireland was once densely forested, but almost all the tree cover was chopped down in the 17th century.

Soldiers being Soldiers

TRAINING PICS



SPC CORTEZ LAWSON AND SPC JUSTIN COLLINS SIZING IT UP.



SPC ANDREW MUNYON
TAKING A SWING



SGT JAY WITT, HE CAN JUMP THIS!

A shamrock is a three-leafed clover.

Legend has it that one of St. Patrick's miracles was driving all the snakes out of Ireland.

Soldiers being Soldiers

TRAINING PICS



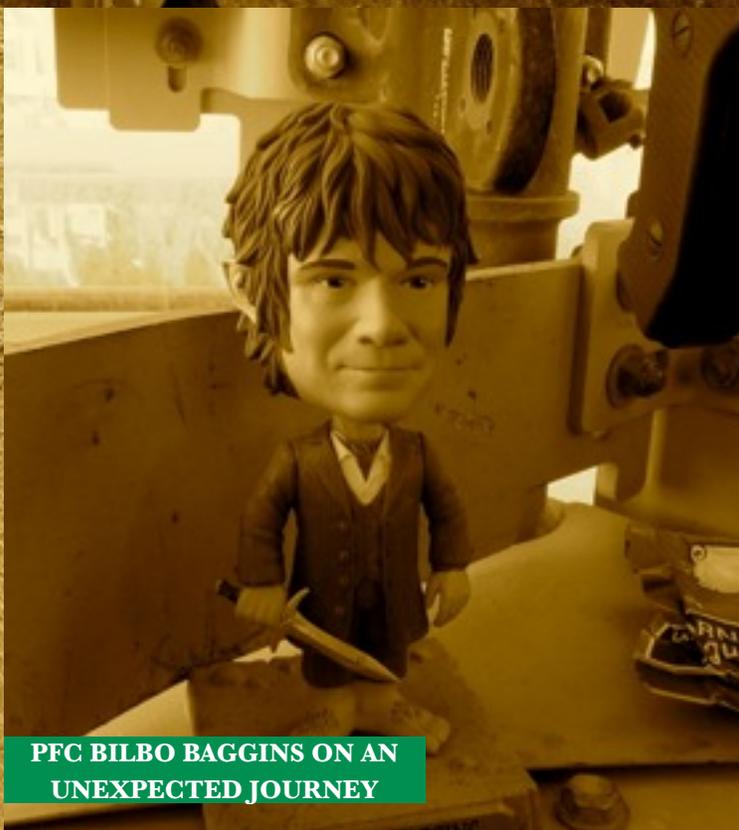
**SGT BRYAN HUTSON
MAKING REPAIRS**



**2LT BENNETT ADAMS AND
HIS 100 MILE STARE**



**“DONNY” ONE OF THE
AFGHAN LOCALS**



**PFC BILBO BAGGINS ON AN
UNEXPECTED JOURNEY**

May love and laughter light your days, and warm your heart and home. May good and faithful friends be yours, wherever you may roam. May peace and plenty bless your world with joy that long endures. May all life's passing seasons bring the best to you and yours!
-traditional blessing

AWARDS AND PROMOTIONS

AWARDS:

HERO of the BATTLE:

(recognized each week by the Battalion)

SSG Brian Weathers

1LT Adam Mueller

SGT Michael Small

PROMOTIONS:

Specialist:

Jacob Spry



SPC DANIEL STOVER GETTING SOME DOWN TIME BETWEEN PATROLS

TOP's Corner top of the morning to you!

By 1SG Clayton Elmore

21MAR2013 - I don't have much to say this month. I am always proud of our Soldiers and the hard work they do. I hope everyone had a Happy St. Patrick's Day and has a great Easter. I just want to single out SGT Timothy Cox, SGT Channing Brumfield, SPC Chase Johnson, SPC Cortez Lawson, SPC Joshua May, and SPC Justin Collins. These Soldiers worked long days building a roofed porch to serve as a waiting area for the medical station. Like I said they did a great job.



A MAN AND HIS SHOTGUN

704 EN CO NEWSLETTER

