

NOVEMBER

# THE ATLAS

704TH EN CO NEWSLETTER



**The Journey Begins**

SPC Steven Calhoun ready to begin training



# 704TH EN CO

3RD PLATOON  
SOLDIERS STAND  
AT THE READY  
DURING FORC  
(Fundamentals Of  
Route Clearance)  
Training



## 704TH FALLS IN AT FORT BLISS

Training begins for deployment to Afghanistan

By CPT Joshua Yarbrough - Assassin 6

Fort Bliss, TX (26NOV12) – The 704th Engineer Company arrived at Fort Bliss, TX on the 5th to begin training for their upcoming rotation to Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom).

During a brief stay at Fort Bliss proper, the Soldiers underwent Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) to properly access them to active duty as well as to the Central Issue Facility (CIF) and Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) to receive all equipment for training and deployment. While there, they were well-fed at the Bamford Dining Facility (DFAC) and were able to visit Freedom Crossing (Post Exchange/Shopping Mall).

After SRP, the Soldiers moved to Camp McGregor, NM to begin their post-mobilization training. The living quarters and meals here are pretty decent compared to a lot of training sites and the logistical support from the training brigade (5th Armored Brigade) has been excellent.

To date, the Soldiers have completed chemical/gas mask training, land navigation, communication training, combat pistol qualification, grenade launcher qualification, Dari language & cultural awareness, and rifle qualification. Soldiers have attended a Blue Force Tracker course, the Combat Lifesaver and Combat Medic Mentorship course with live role players and casualties. The also completed training lanes for their specialty equipment called enablers. The Field Maintenance team has also started to get involved with the MANTEC team here and is getting much needed wrench time.

The Soldiers will be moving to Forward Operating Base Westbrook to begin their collective training. They will operate for 1-week in field conditions and have limited communications/amenities. The first few days involve situational training exercises (STX) that will enable the troops to refine tactics and set them up

for success during their culminating training exercise (CTE). This training will bring all of the prior training together and have them operating at combat speed to validate their hard learned skills.

The Soldiers look forward to completing their training and breaking for Christmas. They just enjoyed a well-prepared dinner for Thanksgiving and visited Fort Bliss on their day off. All of the families support and well-wishes during this Holiday has been appreciated. Please continue to provide your support and we look forward to being home soon.

As their commander, I could not be prouder of their achievements and my confidence in their continued success is assured. The Assassins stand poised and ready to complete their mission thanks to the hard work and dedication of its training cadre, family members and, most importantly, it's highly dedicated and skilled Soldiers.



### Commander

CPT Joshua Yarbrough  
[joshua.yarbrough1@us.army.mil](mailto:joshua.yarbrough1@us.army.mil)

### Operations Officer

1LT Chris Scott  
[chris.scott8@us.army.mil](mailto:chris.scott8@us.army.mil)

### First Sergeant

1SG Clayton Elmore  
[clayton.h.elmore@us.army.mil](mailto:clayton.h.elmore@us.army.mil)

### Rear Detachment

SFC Sean Davis  
[sean.d.davis@us.army.mil](mailto:sean.d.davis@us.army.mil)

L: Brigadier General Thompson (center) addresses the Soldiers of 704th.

B: Brigadier General Thompson presents SPC Taylor Saiz with a challenge coin.



## BRIGADE COMMANDER VISITS THE 704TH

Brigadier General Thompson stops by Camp McGregor to visit the Soldiers

By 1LT Chris Scott

(20 November 2012) - Brigadier General Tracey Thompson, Commanding General of the 420th Engineer Brigade, along with Command Sergeant Major Dunn flew into Fort Bliss to pay a visit to the 704th Engineer Company.

Gen. Thompson took the time to see where the Soldiers were staying and spent sometime with the company command team discussing general training and readiness. He talked about the current situation in Afghanistan and the importance of the Company's mission. After a brief tour of the barracks Gen. Thompson was eager to get some face time with Soldiers and see their training as it happened.

Captain Yarbrough escorted Gen. Thompson to the FORC (Fundamentals Of Route Clearance) training site. The site itself was broken into multiple training areas or lanes allowing Soldiers to get their hands on a variety of equipment

that will augment their warfighting abilities. Gen. Thompson was impressed with the depth and thoroughness of the training and took time to talk with each of the platoons and sections spread amongst the training lanes.

He emphasized the importance of each Soldier's commitment to training as hard as possible, and he told them that while his schedule will prevent him from seeing them at their departure to Afghanistan, he said "I will be waiting to shake hands with each of you when you get off that plane in eleven months."

One of the highlights for a select few Soldiers was the handing out Challenge Coins. These coins are unique to Gen. Thompson and are meant to reward and encourage excellence in the recipient.



# FIRST PLATOON

## first to none

By SSG Hugh Finney

(15 November 2012) - Soldiers of the 704<sup>th</sup> EN CO 1<sup>st</sup> PLT arrived at Ft. Bliss eager for the challenges that awaited them. For some this will be the first opportunity to truly test the skills they have spent their careers training to perfect. For others the deployment is to be the last hoo-rah and the finishing touch on a career.

First Platoon's roster is largely comprised of volunteers from throughout the 420<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade. Despite the geographic diversity, there have been no issues with individuals coming together to help achieve what is best for the platoon. The Soldier's organic to the 704<sup>th</sup> have been receptive and appreciative of the wealth of knowledge and experience that the incoming Soldiers have brought with them. The Soldiers of First Platoon have bonded quickly. People outside this tight knit group probably would not believe that many of these Soldiers had never even seen each other only a few short weeks ago.

To date the members of First Platoon have braved small pox inoculations, faced off against a never ending stream of paperwork, and survived SRP to be able to head out to Camp McGregor to begin the training for the challenges that lay ahead. SSG Barry Jewell is tackling one such challenge. Displaying true personal courage, SSG Barry Jewell conquered his fear of technology and gained valuable knowledge for the platoon in the Blue Force Tracker Course. First Platoon has already completed training for CBRN, DAGRs, and learned the basics of the Dari language. The Soldiers of First Platoon are eager for more training and eager to head to the

**“The Soldiers of First Platoon are eager for more training and eager to head to the ranges to begin firing their personal and crew served weapons.”**

ranges to begin firing their personal and crew served weapons.

Even though the 704<sup>th</sup> has only taken the first few steps on the long journey ahead of them, already the Soldiers are coming together to work as a cohesive unit and areas of weakness are being exposed and plans are being implemented to correct issues as they arise. Company and platoon level SOP's are being tested, refined, and created when needed.

L: SPC Mark Sanchez and SPC William Johnson performing some maintenance on a Buffalo  
R: SGT Joshua Barnes, SPC Timothy Leavitt, SPC Jake Thomas hurrying up and waiting.



Second Platoon Soldiers at the end of a long day of training on the Fundamentals of Route Clearance.



## SECOND PLATOON draw a line in the sand, we'll cross it

By 2LT Adam Mueller

(26 November 2012) - The past few weeks have proven very beneficial for 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. Despite the sand storms, prowling coyotes, and suicidal antelope, we've been training hard and coming together as a team every day. Whether it's Modern Army Combatives Training (hand-to-hand combat), vehicle operator training, or letting some bullets fly down-range, each Soldier is going above and beyond and exceeding every expectation put before them.

2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon is continually complimented by the 1<sup>st</sup> Army trainers at every event we attend for outstanding teamwork, skill, safety, and discipline. There is no doubt that when the 704<sup>th</sup> arrives

overseas for the real-deal, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon will be setting the standard, saving lives, and turning heads (did I mention we're also the best looking bunch in the whole company?).

As friends, family, and loved ones, you should be proud to know your Soldier is getting outstanding training in order to ensure he performs his job with the utmost skill and competency. We are quickly becoming a tight-knit family and have our battle-buddy's back at all times. However, as close as we're getting to each other, we can't wait to see you back home!



# THIRD PLATOON

## the word from the third herd

By SSG Jarrod Stroud

(22 November 2012) - Hello Wife, Mom, Dad, Sister, Brother, and everyone reading this. The time here is great we have beach as far as the eye can see, and the bushes grow razorblades. Only problem so far is the wind decided to put the beach in the air for a day. But the men survived with minor complaints. Told them it wasn't the Army's fault. The mountains are beautiful, but no resorts have been located yet. The chow has been so great almost most made us feel at home (Insert Laughs now.)

2LT Fuentes (the Platoon Leader) and I (SSG Stroud, the Platoon Sergeant) have been sending Soldiers to classes to augment their warrior skill sets. Classes like Combat Life Saver teach battlefield combat casualty care. (So when we return home, you no longer need to go to the hospital, Wink Wink.) We have also learned how to talk and operate the latest Army communication equipment. But our Twang is keeping us from coming through 100% loud and clear. We also conducted training with our Protective (gas) masks. They'll keep us safe, but we won't be winning any awards in the beauty contest. Through all this training we have definitely bonded. Something about 32 battle buddies stuck in confined spaces seems to make bonding mandatory.

For the mothers, I want to say thank you for your hard work raising your sons. The guys don't

**“We also conducted training with our Protective (gas) masks. They’ll keep us safe, but we won't be winning any awards in the beauty contest.”**

have drawers to put laundry, or hangers for clothes. So it lets them get a sense of being home, when I gripe them out about cleaning their area. I now feel your pain. For the Fathers, I think of you as well. Your sons are very wise and accomplish their tasks each day to the best of their abilities. As you know the Army way of life is very different than the civilian way of life. All the rest should be very proud of these men. They work hard to get to know each other, so many cultures co-existing in one area. I know the PLT Leader and I are proud how much they had developed. (Especially since we are stuck with this barrel of monkeys for a year.)

L: PFC Joshua Williams spontaneously grew a mustache upon arriving at Ft. Bliss. R: 2LT Omar Fuentes, showing off some US Army standard issue guns... and his pistol and rifle.



# MAINTENANCE if it ain't broke, you're not trying hard enough

By SFC Toney Bussey

Since arriving at Fort Bliss the Field Maintenance Team has been running all over post in order to meet all of our Mobilization requirements. Checking all of the boxes to validate our readiness involved living out one of the Army's favorite maxims, "Hurry up and wait." SRP (Soldier Readiness Processing) involved long lines of waiting to check visions, dental, get shots (the dreaded small pox), and check paperwork and finance. Long days of waiting in rooms watching DVDs and trying not to fall asleep (the guy next to you could take your spot.) Once that was complete we made the move out to our current home at Camp McGregor.

The tempo picked up and our Soldiers have been running training lanes for H8 wrecker operation. This training is essential and will increase our expertise when it comes to recovering downed vehicles when we are in Afghanistan. We have also worked alongside MANTECH. MANTECH is a US Government contractor that specializes in the maintenance and repair of Route Clearance Equipment. The soldiers have also qualified with the M4 rifle, fun stuff. More training to come in the next couple of weeks. All of the men's spirits are high and they are looking forward to tackling the next part of their training.

-Thanks.



L: The frame of this vehicle is used to simulate a flipped or damaged vehicle that FMT Contact Teams must recover.

R: FMT Soldiers work hard to attach tow ropes to an over turned vehicle.



SGT Jay Witt, SPC Roy Wade, and 1LT Jared Schoen put on their tough face during Fundamentals of Patrolling.

# HEADQUARTERS powerpoint rangers

By 1LT Chris Scott  
(25November2012) - Headquarters, the hopefully heard and unseen force working to enable and accomplish the Company and Commander's mission. I say heard because without a doubt HQ, puts out all kinds of information, data and plans, but our hope is that we are never caught under foot and rarely found in the way.

The Soldiers in HQ have been hard at work setting training schedules, providing supplies, creating inventories, working communications plans, drawing

equipment, and overall working to set the pace for the rest of the company.

I know we are setting the standard. Recently during our M4 (carbine/assault rifle) qualification, HQ had 5 Soldiers shoot expert, that's hitting 36 or more targets out of 40. No other platoon or section had as many experts. Of course the rest of the company was quick to point out that our marksmanship skills were sharpened from hours and hours of Call of Duty and Halo. Hey if it works...

The Soldiers are doing great work, and their ability to adapt and be flexible is always humbling. Keep us in your hearts and prayers. Cheers.

# AWARDS AND PROMOTIONS

## AWARDS:

### COINS:

BRIGADE COMMANDER:  
 1LT BENNET ADAMS  
 SGT ADAM MEGGS  
 SGT TIMOTHY COX  
 CPL ANDREW NEWLON  
 SPC TAYLOR SAIZ  
 SPC ROY WADE

### ARMY PHYSICAL FITNESS BADGE:

(\*indicates voluntary participation in BLACKHAT PT program)

SGT HORATIO SANDOVAL  
 CPL ANDREW NEWLON\*  
 SPC LOUIS BOLLASINA\*  
 SPC GARRETT HENDRIX\*  
 SPC SHELDON CHILDRESS\*  
 SPC CHASE JOHNSON\*  
 SPC JOSHUA STIVERS\*

## PROMOTIONS:

### STAFF SERGEANT:

TODD YOUNG  
 JACOB STEWART

### SERGEANT:

COUREY JOHNSON  
 ZACHARY WILLIAMS

### SPECIALIST:

STEVEN CALHOUN  
 JARVIS JOHNSON  
 WILLIAM JOHNSON  
 KYLE STRIPLIN  
 JOSHUA WILLIAMS

### PRIVATE FIRST CLASS:

JACOB SPRY



NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

**FROM:**

**TO:**