

JUNE

THE ATLAS

e-4 Takeover

don't forget the PFCs

READY TO RUN

SPC Chase Johnson getting ready to crush a 10 mile RUCK

learning leadership through a different lens

CPT Joshua Yarbrough

With everything beginning to wind down so quickly here, I find it hard to imagine that I'm completing my ninth year of service in the Army Reserve. I certainly wouldn't have thought 9 years ago when I enlisted as a Private First class that I would find myself a captain in Afghanistan commanding a company of outstanding Soldiers.

In 2004, I was starting my third year of college and looking for direction in my life. I struggled to maintain my focus in class and needed an opportunity to take a break. That break led me to enlist in 2004 and report to Basic Training in early 2005. From the onset, I realized that service in the military was the missing link. It gave me purpose and let me feel like I was contributing to something larger than myself. There were many struggles of course during the challenging initial entry training throughout the summer of 2005 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

After completing basic and my advanced individual training, I reported back to the 302nd Minimal care Detachment in Bossier City, LA. I fell into the Human Resources SGT billet and continued to work my way up and attended Golden Medic 2006. My time in the unit taught me a lot about different styles of leadership and I saw a lot of opportunities to improve the organization. I felt like I could give more back to the institution that gave me my direction and so I applied for a Direct commission in December 2006.

Interestingly enough, I boarded for both E-5 SGT and ZLT in January 2007. In February, I was promoted to Sergeant. I had just enough time to sow my stripes on before I received a letter in April saying that the Secretary of the Defense had approved my commission. I was very excited, but I would also be remiss if I did not think about how different my service would become - how my relationship would change with those who had been my peers. I made the decision to accept and went to find a field grade officer to swear my oath of office.

In 2005, while in basic, my uncle, then a Master Sergeant (E-7) in the Air Force wrote me letter telling me how proud he was that I had decided to serve my country. He is and was one of my primary influences to join the military. That being said, he also quipped towards the end of his letter, "At least I will always out rank you." Of course, I'm very competitive by nature and remembered this immediately the day I received my appointment.

I made a call to my aunt and arranged to visit them at Sheppard Air Force Base near Wichita Falls, TX. We arranged for me to go to work with my uncle the next morning and meet his commander to receive my oath of office. I certainly think it was a surprise to him when I went with him in my uniform and his commander, staff, etc. were all there in the office. I took my oath and then received my first salute from my uncle. I will never forget that.

Years later now, I find that my time as an enlisted Soldier comes back to remind me of how talented our youngest Soldiers are and that their potential is limitless given the right motivation and direction. This month's newsletter is geared towards sharing their perspective and I believe that the insights we learn from our junior most Soldiers can often be the most enlightened. They are the wheels and cogs that make the machinery of war function - without them no mission can be accomplished.

As we progress towards our return home, our schedule here will only become more hectic and our Soldiers will be busier than ever. From maintaining combat operations during the Summer Fighting Season to packing to clear customs, the days will be long yet more exciting as each tick brings us a little closer back to our families.

I continue to be very proud of everything we have accomplished as a company. Our Soldiers continue to be some of the best in our Task Force and the most motivated group of men I've had the privilege of serving. Until next month, I hope all is well on the Home Front and want you to know that you can sleep peacefully knowing your Soldiers continue to "clear the way!" here in western Afghanistan.

assassin 6 leads the way



assassin 6

1LT Chris Scott

The success of our company is directly related to the character, execution, and professionalism of our junior enlisted Soldiers. These Soldiers (Pvt, Pvt2, Pfc, SPC) are the engine that drives everything we do. They execute the missions, man the weapons, operate the vehicles, and find the IEDs. I cannot say enough about each and everyone of them and how I am amazed each day by their performance. With that understanding I wanted to turn this whole issue over to these outstanding young men, and let you hear about this deployment from their perspective. You will not find any platoons or sections, only Soldiers and their unique voices telling their unique story.

XO



SPC RICHARD JONES
SECURES A RESUPPLY
OF WATER

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704th Soldiers who volunteered
and ran in the memorial day
race

family matters

Spc Robert Fryar

The best part of this deployment has been getting to meet new people and becoming an Army family away from home. When we were at home we did not get a lot of time to get to know each other. There were only a few drill weekends and 2 weeks at Ft. Leonard Wood before we mobilized. Being away and spending months on end with each other has given me the opportunity to know these guys more than I would ever have a chance too. The addition of new faces to the core group I have been with over the years has been great. I consider myself the friendly type, and I enjoy making new friends. Meeting new people on this deployment has changed my life for the better. It has changed my culture and made it a new one by adding different parts of other people's culture to mine. I think that is the cool part about people from all over the United States coming together as one group. It makes you learn more about places that you have never been. It also makes you get out of your little shell and meet them. The shy types have gotten drawn into the group quick. It also gave me a chance to get to see people at their strongest and weakest. This helps make the family closer, because we are there to help each other through the hard times.

I have been helped out by new friends that have been there whenever I needed them. I have been able to share my joy of making new friends and my overall enjoyment of life and work. I've matured a lot since we left and can thank my leadership for that. They have mentored me all the way through this deployment to make me not only better at accomplishing my mission but better at being Robert Fryar. For that I wanted to give thanks to our leadership for taking the time out of their day to get to know me and the other guys. To let us find out about them and to share about who we are, how our families are doing, and just spending time to hang out. This has made us not only better friends, but a stronger Army family. I must say I would deploy with this group of people again if I had the chance to in the future. That's how close we are as friends, really a second family. This has to be the best part of this deployment for me and the same for others. I hope I to get see this group of Soldiers after this deployment, and still have that friendship and bond that we made. I will always remember the best parts of this deployment with my Army family.

FRYguy



truth...



Sgt Jay Witt
guns up!



Spc CARLOS ORTIZ-Mejia rucking like a champ!

i'm gonna WRECK it!

PFC MICAH HAZELIP

15JUNE2013 - Being a part of the Field Maintenance Team I have worked on every vehicle in our motor pool. I have driven every vehicle that we have been assigned, as well as operated a few outside the wire. There is one that has taken care of us and served our every need. The HMMT 984A4 wrecker, Hemmit is the slang we call it, is one of our recovery assets during missions, and it is my favorite vehicle in the fleet. It has a winch with a 50 ton capacity and a crane that can lift 12 tons. It has an All wheel 8 wheel Drive and something that we call a "Stinger" on the back. This stinger is a triangle like shape and lifts our broken vehicles up so we can tow them on the back of the HMMT.

I remember being on missions and driving off the road. Without a doubt the coolest experience ever because no matter what the terrain, the Hemmit will always overcome. We run into pot-holes, mud, unexpected ditches, and HUGE rocks, but the suspension is a beast! Sometimes the load on it ranges from zero to around 80,000 pounds!!! I know that if I maintain this vehicle and take care of it, it will always take care of me. The best way I can describe this vehicle is, "When Man and Machine Become One."

You can manually operate all portions of the vehicle's recovery systems: the crane, stinger, and the winch. Speaking of the crane, I have to admit it is the best part about the wrecker. I remember dreaming as a kid about going to space and using the robotic arm on the shuttle. Although I am not in space now... the crane on the wrecker is the closest thing you can get, and I love it! It folds out of the back of the wrecker kind of like a Transformer, and it has a metal cable on it that we use to lift vehicles out of ditches. We can flip trucks back on their tires if they roll over.

The crane is always one of our best friends during recovery operations.

One of our wreckers we nicknamed "Mater" because it is so old and beat up, kind of like the old beat up tow truck from "cars." We have put this vehicle through a lot, yet it never quits. I was in Mater once and the vehicle started going sideways down a 35 degree slope. All the tires kept contact with the ground and the Truck refused to roll over despite the extra 7 thousand pounds on top of it. It freaked me out but it was a great laugh after. This is my first deployment and I have had a blast working on the Hemmit and every vehicle in our fleet. Hats off to the 984A4 wrecker and all of our assets that we use to complete our missions.



THE "HEMMIT" PROVIDING SHADE ON MISSION

"We run into pot-holes, mud, unexpected ditches, and HUGE rocks, but the suspension is a beast!"

SFC Juan Tierradentro, "T", rucking out



HAZELIP

going on patrol with pink bellied marines



SPC Evan Barton soaking up the SUN

SGT ZACH WILLIAMS
hydrating!

SPC Steven Calhoun showing his good side.

PFC RICKY MARKOVICS

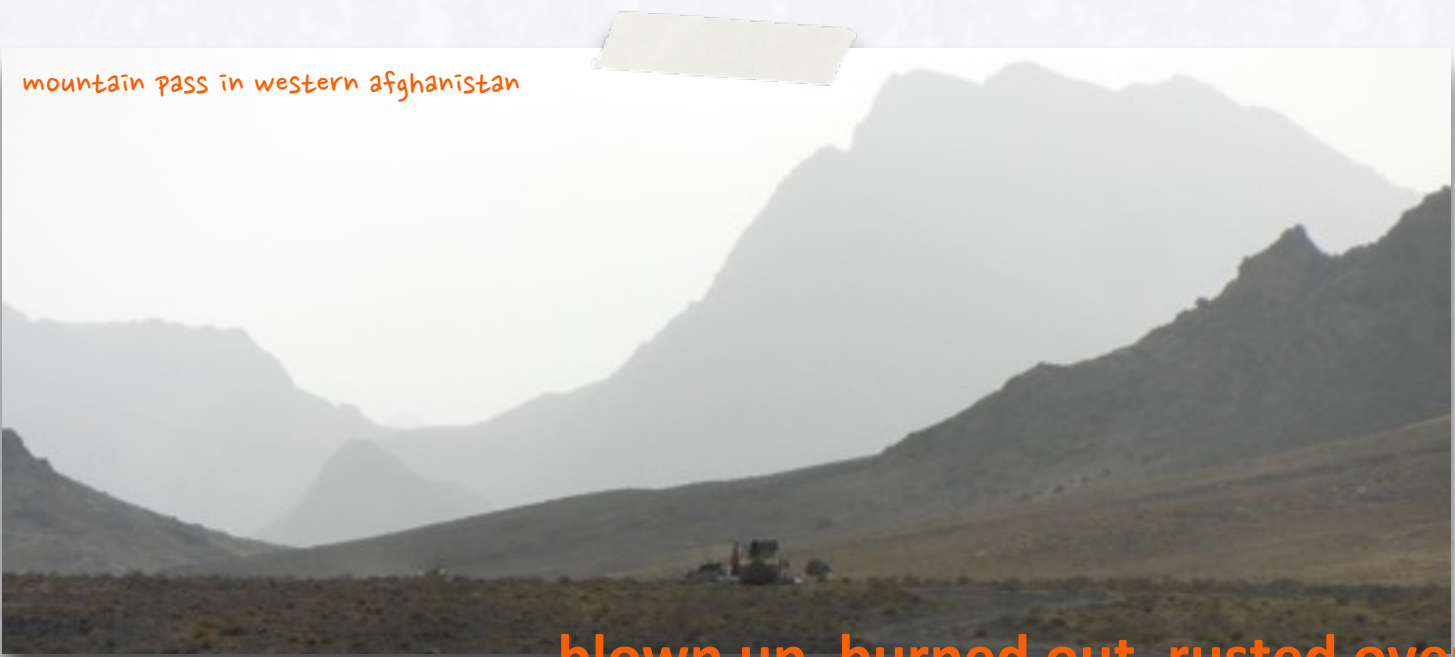
We have been running a lot of missions lately, some of them longer than others. The one we just got off was 15 days long. We've been getting to work with some new guys and seeing some new things. We have been kept pretty busy. The weather is getting hotter, it got up to 120 degrees last week.

There have been quite a few memorable moments during this deployment. First off getting to interact with the locals, learning about their lifestyle, and culture has been great!. Also, getting to talk to and learn about how the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) work, and also learn about them as people has been very rewarding. Personally I love Meeting Soldiers from different countries, trying their food, and getting to know them has been one of the best parts of being in Afghanistan. Working with Marsoc (Marine Special Operations command), its the Marine corps version of Special Forces, is amazing, those guys are high speed! On mission all kinds of things happen. Sometimes when we go through villages the Afghan people stop us. They have people who need medical attention and our doc, SGT Zach Williams, helps them out every time. When the day is over and we arrive at the Forward Operating Base (FOB) we finally get some time to hang out. Sitting around with the rest of the platoon, stress free just joking around, talking about families back home and what we all are going to do when we get back, these are some of my favorite memories. Guys will bust out a laptop and a lot of us will watch movies together.

I almost forgot a tradition that SPC. Timothy Leavitt started! When it is one of our guy's birthday we will tackle them and hold them down and give them a pink belly. Don't try this at home, ha ha! On our last mission our Platoon Leader, ILT Bennett Adams, let it slip that his birthday was the day before. When it was time for our pre mission brief we attacked! It took 10 of us to get him down to the ground, so when we finally did he got pink bellied... really good!!! SPC. Taylor Saiz had a birthday a few days before that so we got him too. He tried to keep it a secret. Once again Happy 31st Birthday to ILT Adams and a Happy 23rd birthday to SPC Saiz. Glad we got to celebrate it with both of you. Our time in Afghanistan is flying by and everyday is a day closer to going home. All the Soldiers in First Platoon appreciate everyone's support back home. We all love and miss ya'll.

MARKO-POLO

mountain pass in western afghanistan



blown up, burned out, rusted over

SPC Wesley Casey

During our last mission, a mission over a week long, we set up our Patrol Base out in the desert. We were tasked with keeping watch over a stretch of highway-1 (the main road through Afghanistan.) We stayed out there all day and all night. One day in particular will likely stay in my memory for a long time.

We had just returned to the desert that afternoon from a resupply trip to an allied Forward Operating Base (FOB.) We had fueled up and eaten a hot meal, and just like that it was back to the desert. We were needed to assist 3rd Platoon pulling old and burned out wrecks away from the road. We are Route clearance, its part of the job description. I was in the HEMTT (in my opinion the best series of wheeled vehicle in the Army) and the job obviously called for our capabilities. So I and my Truck commander (TC), CPL Ammon, set out for a long day of taking out the trash. We followed one of our platoon's gun trucks a handful of kilometers north up highway-1. We arrived on site and linked up with the wrecker team from 3rd Platoon (Shout outs to CPL Scroggins and SPC Chatman!!!) Between the four of us we quickly came up with a plan: wrap a chain through the vehicle frame, attach it to the end of the HEMTT's main winch, drop it in low and PULL!!!

It worked like a charm. I barely even noticed the weight of the rusted and burned out cars and trucks we pulled. CPL Ammon and I moved eight of them all on our own. The desert started to look like a used car lot consisting of two old 5-ton's, a few small civilian cars and trucks, a tanker, and most of a blown-up HMMWV (humvee.) Buyer beware, those vehicles had been run a little rough. Every vehicle had been hit by an IED blast and burned up, meaning they dragged rather than rolled across the dirt. We staged all the wrecks fifty meters away, the highway was clear and we called it a job well done. We were safe the entire time thanks to a roaming group of Soldiers from 3rd Platoon watching our backs, thanks SSgt Rostan, SGT Hunsucker and SPCs Yeager and Graves. Thanks to those guys we didn't need to worry at all. With Second taking care of their vehicles and always spotting the IEDs we are always successful. I have only had to recover a few vehicles on mission, and those that I do are usually just stuck. For me getting to push my truck to the limit and throw around broken burned out vehicles like toys was the best.

the mighty casey



SPC Wesley Casey always ready.

oversized, oversharing, over the top



SPC CHRIS OVERTON HERO POSE DOWN

SPC christopher overton

overdrive here. or overtoc, buttercup, overstuffed, ovaltine, or some other nickname you come up with. There are other names, but they are not family friendly... sorry mom. This is my second deployment in Afghanistan. The first time I was over here, I was a vehicle operator in a route clearance patrol. We would go on 30 day missions that were rough, dirty, and dangerous. I thought that job was tough, and it was. This time around I find myself working in the company headquarters. Its a new kind of tough. Not so much dirty or dangerous, but hectic and nonstop. I am constantly creating reports that require hours upon hours of work. I help to coordinate missions with the Italians, Special Forces, and the CSSB (guys that haul stuff Soldiers need all

over the place.) So not only am I planning for our unit, but units all around Afghanistan. It gets pretty crazy in here from time to time. Phones, computers, radios, CPL Wade, more phones, emails, facebook (just being honest), more radios, conferences calls... you get the picture.

Its not all work, work, work. My time in and out of the office gets a little wild thanks to ILT Scott. He is a good friend of mine from our home unit the 688th MAC. We have done a lot of stuff together. We are work out buddies, which usually ends with him pushing me until I puke (its still fun.) We worked together to plan a 10 mile race here on Shindand at the end of May. We spent a lot of time registering people and coming up with ideas to make the race better. We had a huge turn out and I was really proud of how it all came together.

If the two of us are not in the office working, we are probably at home in good 'ol TENT 26!!! Home of the best guys in the company. We have a movie theater in one of our rooms. Well its half a theater and half CPT Yarbrough's bedroom. Sometimes its all CPT Yarbrough's bedroom, and he just happens to have a movie theater in it. We watch movies, play games, and hang out, its our home. Heck, we even walk around in our ranger panties (google it) just because we can.

After spending so much time with ILT Scott, I have decided I want to become an officer. He has put me under his wing and tries to show me how to be a great officer. I have learned a lot from him, and I hope when I get back I can go to ROTC and pursue commissioning as an officer. Oh, and unofficially he has adopted me as his deployment son. The main benefit of this adoption, free push ups whenever I want.

As this deployment comes to an end, I have to say it has been a pretty good run. OVERTOC-OUT

overdrive

SPC Stephen Drennon headed outside the wire



chicken, pasta, watermelon, an afghan picnic

Spc Trevor Scott

What's the best moment of the deployment so far? Between MWR days with the unit, and days off relaxing with my battle buddies, to put a single item at the top of my list is difficult to say the least. I will, however, say that one of my more enjoyable experiences from this deployment has been having the ability to work and learn about the other nations we are fighting alongside. I've had the pleasure of being able to rest in an Italian base, eat their chow, work out in their gym, and overall learn a little more about their culture and the way their military is run. Every time I eat there, one of the chefs tries to teach me a little Italian, but it may take me a while to be fluent!

Even though we are guests, or because we are guests on their base, they're always polite and friendly, whether it be that extra serving of chicken and pasta at dinner, sharing a bench in the gym, or letting us have frozen water so we don't bake in the sun. Getting used to the metric system however is something entirely different!

In addition, being able to teach the Soldiers in the Afghan National Army (ANA) has been a real treat. They're very stubborn when it comes to learning the things we try to teach them. They are understandably a proud bunch. When the day's done they can relax with the best of them. They are more than willing to share a meal, and will not hesitate to enjoy a game of soccer. Making sure that these soldiers are prepared for the time NATO forces leave has given me a greater understanding of not only our importance as a unit, but our job as an Army. These Afghan soldiers are vital to their own country. So, all in all, I would say I DEFINITELY look forward to another night of Italian food with good people, good friends, and good Soldiers. And for lunch maybe some local watermelon. So, until next time, stay safe, and drink water true believers!!!

scotty knows



SpC trevor Scott finishing strong!

soldiers being soldiers



Spc Adam chatman and Spc Philip clark



Spc Jacob Spry
giving it all he's got.



Spc Benjamin Heiner and some new Afghan Friends

soldiers being soldiers



Spc Phillip Reeves getting Tactical



Sgt Andrew Newlon, call me "Squints"



Spc Terry Roark checking the RPG netting

soldiers being soldiers



CPL Christopher Ammon, truck commander



SPC Timothy Leavitt, realizing 10 miles is a long run

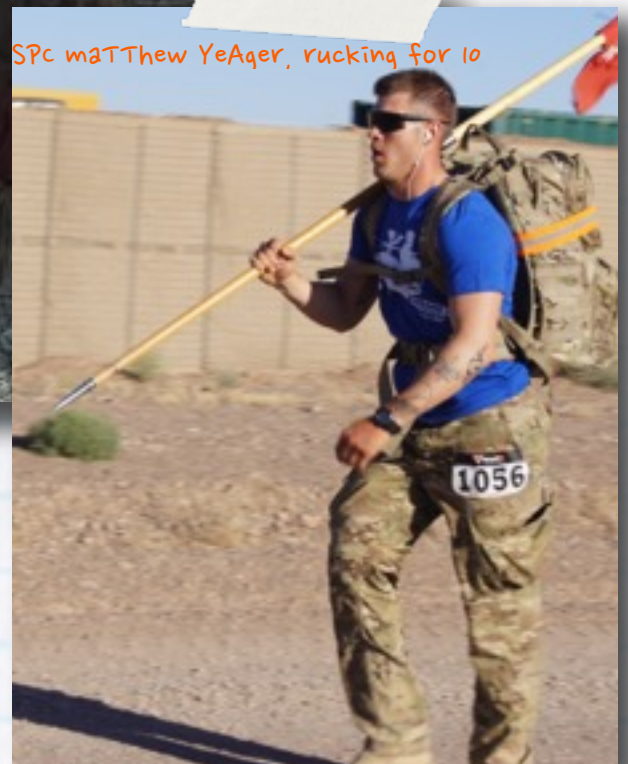


SPC Jason Harper and SPC Chris Brown having a Battle Buddy Moment

soldiers being soldiers



Spc Ben Dickman,
there are many
rifles like this one,
but this one is his.



Spc Matthew Yeager, rucking for 10

awards and promotions

AWARDS:

HERO of THE BATTLE:

SSG Brian Neudecker

Sgt Jay Witt

SPC Benjamin Dickman

CERTIFICATE of ACHIEVEMENT:

Sgt Jay Witt

SPC Adam Chatman

SPC Benjamin Ibarra

SPC Mark Sanchez

SPC Joseph Welch

REENLISTMENTS:

SPC Manuel Huizar



"We search for happiness everywhere, but we are like Tolstoy's fabled beggar who spent his life sitting on a pot of gold, under him the whole time. Your treasure--your perfection--is within you already. But to claim it, you must leave the busy commotion of the mind and abandon the desires of the ego and enter into the silence of the heart." -Elizabeth Gilbert