

THE ATLAS

25¢

704TH EN CO NEWSLETTER

2013 AUGUST OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM XIII

**SGT ANDREW NEWLON
READIES THE PUMA FOR
FLIGHT**



HEADQUARTERS

BY CPT JOSHUA YARBROUGH

20AUG2013 - Our time here in Afghanistan is quickly drawing to a close. It feels like the days are blurring together and we have so many tasks left to accomplish in such a finite amount of time. It certainly has and continues to be a challenge every day. Not that challenges are a bad thing and the rigors have been a cornerstone for building character. Combat operations are often unforgiving and it takes a special kind of a person, a Soldier, to overcome the hardships.

This month I asked our junior leaders to reflect on the challenges they have faced and the lessons they learned as leaders. These young leaders have done surprisingly well; growing into mature young men – confident in their abilities. The ability to instill loyalty and inspire confidence in Soldiers is earned, not given lightly. It takes tremendous efforts on behalf of the leader including selflessly sacrificing your own time to take care of your Soldiers.

Soldiers often complain (if Soldiers aren't griping, something is up) about their lack of down time, rest, sleep, etc. What really occurs though is that those Soldiers more often than not are getting the most time down. Their leaders work tirelessly through the night to plan, resource, and put everything in motion to ensure the success of upcoming operations. Leaders are usually the first awake and the last to go to sleep. They are often the last to eat – always placing their men before them. This builds the loyalty of their Soldiers.

Beyond these basics, I've learned that leadership is not only about placing the needs of Soldiers above your own. It is about communicating the same continuous message from the Commander to the lowest ranking Soldier. Leaders at all levels (Platoon Leaders, Platoon Sergeants, Squad Leaders, and Team Leaders) have to be synchronized with each other. They set the tone for their piece of the organization and the attitude of the platoon reflects their attitude. Effective communication is often the hardest task. The leader must strive to make Soldiers understand the how and why of the mission. They must never be focused on "because higher said so".

The second tenant of leadership is the enforcement of discipline. Soldiers crave order and discipline. Junior leaders most often struggle with this because they are afraid of not being liked. They must understand the difference between leadership and "liker" ship. They worry about building resentment, but when they focus on enforcing the same standard consistently it erodes this concern. Standards are made to maintain our combat power. In tense combat situations, leaders do not have the luxury of wondering if the Soldiers are going to do as ordered. It must be a given that discipline is enforced. Discipline should not be likened to punishment. Failures of discipline can result in punishment, but it should be understood that discipline as "doing what's right, even when no one else is looking". It begins at the Soldier level and must be groomed by junior leadership. Something as simple as enforcing the uniform wear policy to personal protective equipment can mean the difference between life and death.

The final tenant of leadership I've learned is about

maintaining initiative. It is good that junior leadership looks to guidance from higher, but must remember that guidance is just that. Junior leaders have to take it upon themselves to correct problems, to present solutions, and above all maintain forward momentum. Initiative means taking the commander's intent and utilizing critical thinking. What does the commander want me to do? How do I fit into the bigger picture? Junior leaders have to learn that specified tasks often have implied tasks. Being able to discern these implied tasks without being told is the difference between a follower and a leader. Soldiers should never be hesitant to do what is right. Leaders must encourage their Soldiers to take action. Even if they fail, it is still a valuable lesson learned and they should be encouraged by their leadership. The strongest leader is the one who encourages his subordinates to independent action, provides feedback for both success and failure, and continues to push his Soldiers to excellence in everything.

**"IF YOUR ACTIONS INSPIRE
OTHERS TO DREAM MORE,
LEARN MORE, DO MORE
AND BECOME MORE, YOU
ARE A LEADER."**

– JOHN QUINCY ADAMS



TOP'S CORNER

BY 1SG CLAYTON ELMORE

20AUG2013 - We only have roughly 30 days before we head back to Fort Bliss demobilize and from there back to our families and homes. The Soldiers have done a great job for the 704th Engineer Company and the City of Hot Springs is planning to host a large Welcome Home Ceremony (date TBD). I remember the last time when we returned from Iraq in 2004. There were over 3000 people who showed up to welcome us home. The city has been very supportive of us and provided help when we needed it the most. I find this very noble of them and why we decided as a command team to ensure the most Soldiers possible were available for the event. The Soldiers will never forget that day when they step off the bus to find their loved ones and walk by all the people there to say thank you for their valorous efforts in defense of our nation. There are still a lot of things left to do to get the ceremony ready and we are always looking for help. Please get with SFC Davis and Mrs. Weathers if you would like to volunteer to help with set up or preparations.

Also, this month's issue is focused on our junior leaders and what they've learned during their time away from home; how they grew as leaders. Personally, I've learned that talking to my Soldiers, hearing what they have to say, and then helping them find the right answers without always telling them it. It's good to help them with their own self discovery and growth. One memory that stands out the most to me is when a young specialist came into my office asking what he has to do to become a non-commissioned officer. We talked for at least an hour and a half. I asked him to give me 5 positives and 5 negatives about himself. I've found in my long career that learning to evaluate you is the key to growing as a leader. I was proud when it all came together for him and he understood what he needed to do to get to the next level.

The final note on this is that all of this came about because I took the time to communicate with that junior Soldier. This has been the most important aspect of leadership I learned while in Afghanistan. Communicate habitually and frequently with your subordinates; conduct follow up with them and ensure they are communicating the same message as higher leadership effectively. This avoids break downs in the chain of command and is critical to success of the unit.

Until next month, I wish you all to be safe and wait patiently for us. Remember, a Soldier doesn't fight because he hates the enemy in front of him; he fights because he loves what he left behind him. Live for something rather than die for nothing.

Assassin 7



ABOVE: SPC KYLE COX

BELOW 1: SPC JONATHAN PRUITT

BELOW 2: SPC CHRIS OVERTON CARRYING THE GUIDON





FIRST PLATOON

BY SGT SHELDON CHILDRESS

20AUG2013 - During the deployment I have learned many things and continue to learn as the days continue to go by. One thing I learned about is leadership and how it affects the company, platoon, squad and team. Having good leadership can effect morale in positive ways and makes the deployment less of a hardship.

Another thing I learned is how to operate HRR kit (hasty road repair). This kit was designed to fix blast craters in the road caused by IEDs that are implanted by insurgents. With this kit a team can temporary fix a hole from 90 minutes to 120 minutes based on how long the person is proficient in using the kit. The kit once poured in the blast crater can be drove over after placed.

I have learned how to work with hand held clearance devices such as a, gizmo and valon. These devices are really high speed metal detectors. They are so high speed that I cannot even tell you exactly what they do. Lets just say it gives us the edge we need while clearing routes.

I have worked with other coalition forces such as the Italians and Spanish. I also have learned how to work with locals such as the Afghan Army and Police. All in all I have learned many things throughout this deployment that I can use on many more deployments to come and to teach other troops.

SECOND PLATOON

BY SGT DANIEL ADAMS



ABOVE: SPC RICHARD JONES... HE'S ALWAYS GOT SOMETHING TO SAY.

BELOW: SPC JARVIS JOHNSON, SPC DUSTIN GRAY, AND SPC GARRETT HENDRIX TAKE A MINUTE TO SMILE FOR THE CAMERA.

20AUG2013 - I have learned a lot about being a leader, especially in regards to being a NCO in the Army Reserve as opposed to my current responsibilities while on Active Duty Orders. I had been a Sergeant in this company for a while before the deployment, but I hadn't yet had a real chance to lead Soldiers like I have during this tour in Afghanistan. Being a leader for two days a month during drill weekend and being in charge of Soldiers every day for a year are two completely different worlds. I have learned a lot about leadership, mentorship, and the importance of my position.

I have learned that having a personal relationship and showing your Soldiers that you care about them will go a lot further than blind leadership. During deployment there is no "off" time for leaders, you are a 24/7 leader and need to be ready and available at all times. Working along side the Soldiers that serve under you will show them that you are not forcing them to do the dirty work that you are not willing to do yourself. Sometimes it's best just to go ahead and grab the broom and get the job done. As well as setting an example for them to have a positive outlook on things and not to cut corners when work needs done.

Also, as a leader, it's important to explain "why" things need to be done the way they are, to give purpose and not just because "I told you so". You have to remember your Soldiers are always looking toward you for answers so if you have a poor attitude or are just trying to skim by, it is going to reflect on your Soldiers. Being high & mighty and not willing to sit on the same level as the Soldiers beneath you sets a very poor example for future leaders. The Soldiers you lead today, will become leaders tomorrow.

I know I will value this deployment as a positive experience for me as a leader to grow and expand my knowledge and future potential as a Non-Commissioned Officer in the 704th Engineer Company and I'm sure the bonds that I have built with my fellow Soldiers will last a long time.



THIRD PLATOON

BY SGT RICKY JONES

20AUG2013 - I learned that deployment can be a time for personal growth. I learned so much about myself during this deployment. I grew as a person. I learned more about who I am, what I want, and a little about what makes me tick. If you are currently reading this and going through a deployment, let me encourage you to use this time to learn about yourself and to better yourself. See what things in your life you can improve before you go home. You will be amazed to see the results at the end of the deployment!

I also learned that trusting God is my only option. It's sad that it had to come down to a deployment to make me realize this. So many times I try to do things on my own and I don't think about trusting God or having faith in Him. It's funny because when you actively ask God to help you learn how to trust, then He is definitely going to put things in your life to help you learn how to trust. And those things aren't always going to be what we think they are! It was those times when I was at the end of my rope, when I felt like there just had to be something else I could do—that was when I heard God's

powerful and encouraging voice that said, "Just trust."

And that is what I learned, at the end of it all and even at the beginning, our only option is to trust. Because if we don't trust Him for the little things, then how can we trust Him for the big things in our lives? I learned that I am stronger than I think. That is how it's been with me. I look back and I think, "Wow, how did I do that?" The answer? I did it with God's help, and also by taking it one day at a time. There were a lot of days that I look back on when I felt I couldn't go on, but I didn't have a choice in the matter so I kept on going. Those are the days that I believe made me a person stronger. When I realized I didn't have a choice but to keep on going and so I did. Finally looking back I realize how strong I really was, and how much of a stronger person I am now.

SPC JOSHUA BASINGER, SPC JOSHUA WILLIAMS, SPC BENJAMIN MILLER STAND AT ATTENTION TO RECEIVE THE ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL FOR THEIR ACTIONS DURING COMBAT OPERATIONS.





HEADQUARTERS

BY SSG BRIAN WEATHERS

20AUG2013 - My deployment to Afghanistan has taught me many things as I am sure that it has each and every Soldier in our unit. All of the skills we have acquired are unique to the individual, and vary from skills of becoming better leaders and Soldiers, as well as skills to take home to train the Soldiers that will take our places.

The skill that I have experienced the most personal growth in has been the ability to train and develop Soldiers to become competent leaders. Throughout this deployment, I have seen all of our Soldiers grow in ways that are astonishing as we have tested their abilities to make split second decisions as well as pushed them to the limits that they didn't believe that they could go. For all of us this deployment has been different. For some Soldiers this is the first time that they have been able to specifically work in their MOS (Military Occupational Specialty.) For others this is the first time that

they have been Platoon Leaders, Platoon SGTs, Squad leaders, and Team Leaders. Each and every Soldier has accepted the challenge with results that are beyond belief.

As you can imagine there were tough times at first with Soldiers being from all over the United States, but we quickly overcame those differences, becoming the best unit in the 307th Engineer Battalion. At the end of the day we all wear the same patch on our right and left shoulder and fight the same mission.

The most important thing that I have taken out of this deployment is the fact that you can bring properly trained Soldiers from all over the United States with different races, religions, experiences, personal opinions and create a solid unit structure.

SPC WILLIAM SHNAEKEL



SFC TONEY BUSSEY



SPC KYLE GLOVER



FIELD MAINTENANCE TEAM

BY SGT HORACIO SANDOVAL

20AUG2013 - I've been a NCO for a few years now, and each day I learn something new from the Soldiers around me. The best thing I have learned while on this deployment is patience, with Soldiers and missions.

As for Soldiers, we all come from different backgrounds, unit, and habits of life. In order for us all to get along we must have patience with one another. We spend a lot of AWESOME days together on mission, sharing ideas, thoughts, and plans for our future (with the MILLIONS of dollars we're making over here, LOL). Some of the younger Soldiers are talking about buying fast cars or motorcycles; I just want to pay off my house. This is one of the things I'm talking about patience. As a NCO you must be patient with your Soldiers, because when you give Soldiers an ear, you're helping them in many ways. Letting them know that their NCO cares enough to listen to what they have to say. As a NCO you have to do this, because if the Soldiers trust you as a leader to talk about good thing in

their life, then when they have a problem they do not second guess whether to talk to you or not.

We have become a tight net group, although we have lost a few Soldiers due too different reasons (everybody is safe, don't worry.) We have a couple of PFC's in our platoon, fresh out of AIT (Advanced Individual Training) and eager to learn any and everything. It's a big job to train new Soldiers in this environment, this is the time when a great deal of patience is needed. A good NCO took the time to train me, the least I can do to is try and train the my Soldiers. Having patience and training the Soldiers, betters the ARMY with quality personnel to complete the missions. One job One fight.

"LET'S GET IT!"

SOLDIERS BEING SOLDIERS

FROM THE FRONT LINES TO THE HOME FRONT



ABOVE LEFT: THE 704TH PRIDES ITSELF ON THE USE OF ALL ROBOTIC ENABLERS.

ABOVE RIGHT: SPC JUSTIN COLLINS MEAN MUGGING FOR THE CAMERA, AND AFGHANISTAN.

BELOW RIGHT: MISSIONS GET MORE COMPLICATED WHILE WORKING AT NIGHT.



SOLDIERS BEING SOLDIERS

FROM THE FRONT LINES TO THE HOME FRONT



ABOVE LEFT: SPC CHRIS OVERTON AND SPC ANDREW MUNYON SPENDING SOME QUALITY TIME IN FORMATION.

ABOVE RIGHT: SPC TREVOR SCOTT WALKING A NEVER ENDING LINE OF TRUCKS.

BELOW LEFT: JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE DESERTS OF AFGHANISTAN.

AWARDS AND PROMOTIONS

PROMOTIONS:

**FIRST LIEUTENANT:
DONNELL SMITH**

AWARDS:

ARCOM (ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL)

**SPC JOSHUA BASINGER
SPC BENJAMIN MILLER
SPC JOSHUA WILLIAMS**

AAM (ARMY ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL)

**SGT DANIEL ADAMS
SPC JEREMY BAILEY
SPC STEVEN CALHOUN
SPC WESLEY CASEY
SPC MANUEL HUIZAR
SPC JARVIS JOHNSON
SPC WILLIAM JOHNSON
SSG KEITH OLSON
SGT HORACIO SANDOVAL
SPC KYLE STRIPLIN
SGT JAY WITT**

COA (CERTIFICATE OF ACHEIVEMENT)

**SPC LOUIS BOLLASINA
SGT DOMINIC KNOTT
SPC CORTEZ LAWSON
SGT BRIAN NEUDECKER
SPC MARK SANCHEZ**

COINS (FROM USAR AFFAIRS TEAM)

**1LT BENNETT ADAMS
SPC EVAN BARTON
SGT CHANNING BRUMFIELD
SGT SHELDON CHILDRESS
1SG CLAYTON ELMORE
SSG BRIAN NEUDECKER
SPC JACOB SPRY
SPC WESLEY CASEY
SPC ANTONIO WATERS
CPT JOSHUA YARBOUGH**



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