

The

BLACK JACK ROUNDUP



DEPLOYMENT EDITION, VOL 2

SEPTEMBER 2013

Black Jack 6 sends

Greetings from Afghanistan!

Dear Black Jack Family,

Greetings to all of the Families and Troopers of the Black Jack Brigade,

We have taken the reigns of our unique and important mission throughout Afghanistan as the theater assistance force. Your Soldiers are fulfilling an important mission here in country for the forces commander.

The Black Knights of 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment are providing protection for combat logistics patrols. This is an important part of the redeployment operations here in theater.

The Mustangs of 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment settled in a separate regional command. They are providing fighting power to the advising and assisting forces and conducting partnered operations with the ANSF.

The 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, Dark Horse, is providing protection to a major operational base in theater. They are conducting security operations and patrols.

Red Dragons of 3rd Battalion,

82nd Field Artillery are assisting the Air Force with security operations and patrols around a massive airbase. A few Red Dragons are also on artillery taking the fight to the enemy with towed 155mm Howitzers known as the M777.

The Spartans of 2BSTB are providing the support operations to the brigade. They are keeping the roads cleared with route clearance in two regional commands. They are also providing intelligence support to the command teams.

15th BSB, the Gamblers, have taken over a large mission of ensuring all the Black Jack units throughout theater are properly supplied and maintained. They also have assisted in medical operations throughout theater.

The brigade's many and varied missions only become more important as more emphasis is given on the redeployment of forces and equipment from Afghanistan. Black Jack Soldiers will play an instrumental part ensuring that the mission happens, whether its convoy escort or protecting the bases each mission is essential. As of this writing we are still on a nine month operation here in Afghani-



stan. The command, Task Force Pershing and the FRG network will inform you of any change to that plan as soon as we know and are able to release that information.

FIRST TEAM!

BLACKJACK!

Col. Bob Whittle

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'Black Jack' uncases colors in Afghanistan, marks unit history



Army Col. Robert Whittle Jr., commander, 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, and Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph McFarlane Jr., Black Jack command sergeant major, cut a cake after the brigade's colors uncasing ceremony at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Aug. 8, 2013. This is the first time the brigade has deployed to Afghanistan.

*Story and photos by Sgt. Quentin Johnson
2/1 CAV Public Affairs Office*

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – More than a decade has passed and U.S. forces continue to leave their mark in Afghanistan, but for one unit, their mark is making history of their own.

The 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas uncased its colors for the first time in Afghanistan, marking the start of a historical moment for the unit, during Black Jack's uncasing ceremony on Bagram Air Field, Aug. 8, 2013.

More than 80 U.S. Soldiers from various units were in attendance to observe the start of a brigade historic occasion, what Black Jack commander, Col. Robert Whittle, Jr., describes as "a rendezvous with des-

tiny."

Whittle explained throughout the brigade's history, Black Jack has always been the first unit to enter battle. From WWII where Black Jack led the way into Manila during the liberation of the Philippines to the first of the 1st Cav. Div.'s brigades to arrive in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

Maj. Gen. James Richardson, Deputy Commanding General-Joint Operational Corps Headquarters-Afghanistan and Commander of the U.S. National Support Element Command-Afghanistan, spoke briefly on the brigade's historic operational success and encouraged Black Jack Soldiers to use past lessons to build new qualities during this deployment.

"Remember what (Black Jack) has already accomplished in Iraq. Carry those lessons of team work and combat with you," said Richardson. "(Black Jack) team has a noble history and legend that you build on as you prepare to serve our nation in battle yet again."

Whittle said although the brigade's current mission, cover and enable the International Security Assistance Force – Afghanistan retrograde, differs from those of past deployments, Black Jack's conducting an equally important task his team will complete.

"(Black Jack's) task is to assist in finishing the fight, ensure our Afghan allies who are out front, have partnership and support to win," said Whittle. "We will simultaneously pave the way to bring our Soldiers and our Nation's treasure home."

Whittle explained brigade operations have already begun, with Black Jack battalions providing artillery support, reserve missions, convoy and route security, all while logistically supporting brigade elements throughout two regional commands and

twelve forward operating bases.

He states such success comes from the support Black Jack receives from other U.S. Forces such as the ISAF Joint Commands, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Ky., 1st Cav. Div. and the U.S. Air Force 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, BAF, but most importantly, highly trained Soldiers, added Whittle.

"Black Jack Soldiers are trained, disciplined and agile, who can exercise sound judgement and understand the strategic affect of their tactical actions," said Whittle.

Richardson said "I am completely confident that (Black Jack) will succeed in your mission. I can't think of a better unit to send forward during these times than the Black Jack Brigade."



Army Col. Robert Whittle Jr., commander, 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, delivers his speech during the brigade's colors uncasing ceremony at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, Aug. 8, 2013. This is the first time the brigade has deployed to Afghanistan.

UNCASING THE COLORS...



FROM THE LAST WEEK IN JULY TO MID-AUGUST 2013, THE BRIGADE AND ITS SIX BATTALIONS THROUGHOUT DIFFERENT PROVINCES, UNCASING THEIR COLORS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AFGHANISTAN. THIS IS A HISTORICAL MOMENT FOR THE BRIGADE AND FOR FAMILIES THAT SUPPORT BLACK JACK!

*Photos by Sgt. Quentin Johnson
and other courtesy submissions
2/1 CAV Public Affairs Office*





'Black Jack' soldier betters life for family, chooses military career

Story and photo by Sgt. Quentin Johnson
2/1 CAV Public Affairs Office

Working a nine to five job with no future wasn't how U.S. Army Pfc. Alejandro Plata saw his life continuing, instead he pursued his desires – taking care of his family, building a career, gaining an education, all while helping others.

Plata, a human resource specialist currently serving in Afghanistan, knew it was time to join the Army, a desire he had for some time but with some hesitation.

"I was in a job that was going nowhere, but hesitated to join the Army even though I really wanted to," Plata said.

After speaking with his wife, Miriam, of three years and who was pregnant at the time, he said she would support his decision especially if it meant to better their family.

Plata knew little about the Army but with much research began to see planning, physical exercise and a strong mental aptitude would help ease him and his family into military life.

"I did research on basic training, what to expect in the military and what job I had experience in while getting to help Soldiers," Plata, who hails from Albuquerque, N.M., said.

In October 2012 Plata concluded basic and advanced individual training, marking the start of his new life in the military. He was assigned to his first and current unit – 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Plata said as a human resource specialist in the battalion he would have the opportunity to help soldiers consistently and at a greater level, something he had experience in.

"I love working with people, in a team. I always want to help people when I can and I knew having prior experience with administrative work, this job would suit me," Plata explained.

What Plata did not expect was the amount of information and work he would have to endure to help soldiers on a daily basis.

"When I first arrived to my unit and

began work it was quite overwhelming," Plata said. "I knew from my instructors in school that I would not know all there is in the administrative field, but not to what extent."

He quickly learned to lean on his team and supervisors for support, learn all he could and become the most versatile clerk he could be, Plata added.



Pfc. Alejandro Plata, a human resource specialist with 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, in Afghanistan, Aug. 15, 2013. Plata is responsible for multiple administrative actions, most prominently tracking more than 800 Black Jack soldiers daily movements throughout Southern and Eastern Afghanistan.

For seven months before deployment Plata had to learn dozens of administrative actions including: updating soldiers' records, tracking personnel, automated filing of adverse actions, promotion board

procedures, and handling soldiers' finance or pay inquiries.

"It was a rough learning curve, but I thank the people who helped me grow in my field, especially Spc. Alicia Anderson and Sgt. Poea Sweat, both of whom have to moved on to different units," Plata said.

Deployed to Kandahar Air Field, less than 8 month since his arrival to Fort Hood, Plata said he has found his niche, continuing to grow in his field while taking in all the deployment experience he can.

"I was excited about deploying, didn't have to many expectations, but wanted to learn all I can," Plata added.

Despite the added stress of deployment and longer hours, Plata continues to track more than 800 Black Jack soldiers' movements and actions throughout Southern Afghanistan, he said.

His abilities and growth have not gone unnoticed making him a valuable member to his team, Staff Sgt. Donelle Hopkins, personnel noncommissioned officer-in-charge and Plata's supervisor, said.

When a soldier is new to the Army you expect them to understand the basic soldiering skills and the basics of their job, Hopkins said. After six months and with good leadership, a soldier should be advanced in his job skills.

"Plata has exceed my expectations," Hopkins added. "He is calm in chaos, always asks important questions and a strong desire to learn."

His integrity, competence and constant communication makes Plata an excellent future leader, Hopkins said.

Plata stated those qualities were instilled into him by good leadership and his team members. He adds the cohesion within his section is close, and the relationships are almost like a family.

It is relationships, support from Plata's family and military family that makes him desire to make a lasting career in the Army.

"The Army has made me a better person...I enjoy the military structure and what it's done to help my family," Plata said.

'Spartan' battalion opens line of communication in south



Lt. Col. Archie Herndon, commander of 2nd "Spartans" Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, and Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Chepenik, Spartan command sergeant major, uncase the battalions' colors at Bagram Air Field, Aug. 3. The Spartan leadership is currently stationed in Southern Afghanistan as a tactical assistance command providing Black Jack with critical information and intelligence about the brigades operations throughout Southern Afghanistan.

*Story and photo by Sgt. Quentin Johnson
2/1 CAV Public Affairs Office*

With elements of the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, spread across multiple regions within Afghanistan, the brigade commander, Col. Robert Whittle Jr., relies on multiple command assets to provide him with an overall view of the battlefield.

The 2nd "Spartans" Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Black Jack, located in Kandahar province and is one of those valuable assets maintaining brigade intelligence and support

throughout the southern region of Afghanistan as a tactical assistance command, Lt. Col. Archie Herndon, 2nd BSTB commander, said.

Parts of three Black Jacks battalions currently operate in the south conducting security, intelligence, and logistical support, he added.

"We serve as a command and control for the brigade in the southern part of Afghanistan, tracking and facilitating Black Jack operations here so we can provide Col. Whittle with critical information," Herndon added.

Information that streams from a positive collaboration between Black Jack units in the southern region, especially 1st "Mustangs" Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, he said.

"We have great communication with all the Black Jack elements in our area," Herndon said. "The Mustangs are great enablers and helped cover all our required training upon arrival in country."

Logistical support is key too, as the TAC receives necessary supplies from other surrounding units, while coordinating with other Black Jack assets to provide them with any supplies they may need, added Staff Sgt. Toya West, 2BSTB logistical noncommissioned officer-in-charge.

"As we receive property and turn-ins we ensure any equipment that can be utilized by the brigade we get it to them or our outlining units," West said.

With no real constraints on logistical matters, as the draw-down continues and support for the brigade goes up, they are prepared to handle any situation West said.

Herndon agreed saying he has full confidence in his young team, "They have a lot of potential, can absorb knowledge and handle any added responsibilities the brigade deems necessary."



Kentucky Soldiers become honorary



Soldiers of the 149th Vertical Construction Company present a large wooden table in the shape of the 1st Cavalry Division patch to Col. Robert Whittle Jr., commander of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Div., at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, July 22, 2013. Whittle said the table will go wherever the unit goes, and will return with them to the U.S. at Fort Hood, Texas.

*Story and photos by Spc. John Rader
149th VCC Unit Public Affairs Office*

In June, the Soldiers of the 149th Vertical Construction Company were tasked with a very high priority construction mission at Bagram Air Field in Afghanistan. The engineers were tasked with constructing a two story tactical operation command center for the 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, known as the “Black Jack” Brigade that was due to arrive in Afghanistan during the summer. The Guardsmen were very familiar with the build as it mirrors the office space they constructed for their own operations area that they share with the 122nd Engineer Battalion from the South Carolina National Guard.

The task was assigned to 1st Platoon with Warrant Officer Jacob Lewis at the helm as the officer in charge of construction. The build took two months to complete and houses 45 offices, two large conference rooms, and two large command centers.

Daily updates to the project were passed up the chain of command so the 149th leadership, the 122nd Engineers, the 555 Engineer Brigade, the 101st Airborne Division, and the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command (IJC)

can track the progress of the construction. All eyes in the Regional Command East Territory were on the 149th as each phase of the project came closer to completion.

With the experience of one similar build completed by 3rd Platoon with Warrant Officer Robert Wiota as the officer in charge of construction, the unit already has a notch in their belt for this particular build. Construction began and continued without any glitches or issues arising. Each phase of the project rolled along flawlessly as the 149th ran 24-hour operations made up of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd shifts that maneuvered seven days a week. With the first 30 days complete, the Soldiers were already days ahead of schedule and their progress was noted by everyone in their chain of command.

“I’ve said it once, and I’ll say it again, the 149th VCC is the flagship company of this battalion,” said Lt. Col. Victor Brown, commander of the 122nd. “This company continues to amaze me.”

With more and more of the smaller operating bases in Afghanistan closing or decreasing in size, Bagram is growing as more troops arrive there to begin or continue operations from the still thriving air field. With the 1st Cavalry Division arriving, Bagram is the right choice for such

a large outfit that will operate in every Regional Command Territory in theater, making it imperative to have command centers to occupy upon the arrival of their main body.

“The work and sweat that these troops put into this project is noted by not only me, but everyone up the chain,” explained Lewis. “I couldn’t ask for a better group of soldiers. They pay attention to every detail, catch things that I haven’t seen yet, and fix it right away without being told.”

Since the build is designed to not be a permanent fixture, the two story structure is constructed under a large area maintenance shelter and uses only two key elements of the vertical construction trade—carpentry and electrical work.

“I give all the troops in my squad the ability to learn as we go along,” said 149th’s Staff Sgt. Steven Willoughby, 2nd Squad Leader. “We try not to rush things for two reasons. One reason we don’t, is so that the soldiers that are not too familiar with this type of work can get a hands-on approach to learning the skill. The second reason is to ensure quality of the craftsmanship. We want to present an excellent product to the 2/1 Cavalry when they arrive.”

“Our name will be attached to the quality of this structure long after we leave and have done our part,” he said.

On July 22nd 2013, the construction project assigned to the 149th Vertical Construction Company was marked complete, ready to be presented to Col. Robert Whittle Jr. and his staff of the 2/1 Cavalry that will operate out of the structure. Preparing for the walk-through, Lewis instructed 1st Platoon to put the finishing touches on a side project to add a unique and personal touch for both the engineers of the 149th and the Troopers of the 2/1 Cavalry.

“I sent back plans to Kentucky and had them drawn up and send back to me for this surprise side project,” said Lewis. “All the Soldiers involved were on board with this addition to our construction task and pitched in when and where they could. Most of my guys stayed long after their shift had ended to work on this and it really is the icing on the cake.”

As the walk through comes to an end,

Cavalry members in Afghanistan



Chief Lewis directed his leadership to the last conference room in the building that had not been seen yet. The door opens to find all the 149th, 1st Platoon engineers standing behind a conference table that was built with that personal touch. The table is in the shape of the cavalry patch and adorns all the likeness of the very recognizable yellow shield that is established as the symbol of the United States Cavalry.

"I don't know what to say here... what you all did here is amazing. I'm literally at a loss for words," said Whittle. "I will make sure we take this table wherever we go, and when we get back home, I will make sure we hang this up at our headquarters in Fort Hood."

To show the gratitude of the "Black Jack" Brigade to the 149th Soldiers that worked day in and day out on the construction, a surprise ceremony was held to induct those Soldiers into the "Order of the Combat Spurs." From that day forth, the 2/1 Cavalry Division recognizes the Soldiers of the 149th by issuing this award that authorizes the troops that are given the prestigious honor to wear the Cavalry Stetson and Combat Spurs in noted situations as honorary members of the Cavalry.

The tradition of the Order dates back to medieval times and roots itself in knighthood, where the awarding of spurs symbolized entry and ranks into the fraternity of mounted warriors. Usually the squire aspiring to knighthood would complete some tasks or deeds to prove his worth on the battlefield. Under these criteria, the 149th Soldiers performed such tasks and were awarded the esteemed honor.

"This is really an amazing award to take home," said Sgt. Gary Forsyth, of the 149th. "It's an award that not every Soldier has the opportunity to obtain, especially since we're engineers, and now, an honorary part of the Cavalry community."

"Everyone worked really hard on this project and we have been awarded to a great extent for our hard work," continued Forsyth. "I couldn't be happier with the construction process and how the build turned out."

The Kentucky Guardsmen added this



Staff Sgt. Andy Wiglesworth with the 149th Vertical Construction Company is presented the Order of the Combat Spur by Col. Robert Whittle Jr., commander of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan, Aug. 4, 2013.

to their long list of accomplishments while in theater. With just a few more months left in Afghanistan; the engineering projects in Bagram and all across Regional Command East and North Territories will continue.

"We have some great projects in front of us in the coming months and I couldn't be more proud of these Soldiers," said 149th Commander, Capt. Adam Evans. "They have worked on so many projects, completed some very difficult task, and always seem to rise to the occasion to get the job done with a touch of excellence."

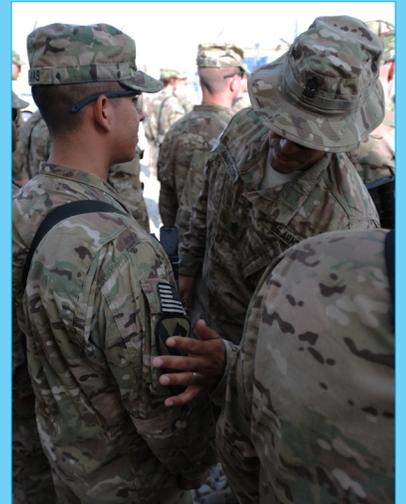
"It's the little recognitions like this that keeps these troops going day in and day out. We will be back in Kentucky in just a few short months and we will have plenty of stories for our families."



Soldiers of the 149th Vertical Construction Company put the final touches on a table in the shape of the 1st Cavalry Division patch at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, July, 2013. 149th Soldiers wanted to add a personal touch to the construction and came up with the idea for the table to honor the cavalry.



CAV



PATCH



PHOTO of the MONTH



U.S. Army Pfc. Derek Southerland, radio transmitter operator assigned to Bravo Troop, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, pushes through overgrown terrain during a presence patrol around Forward Operating Base Fenty in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, Aug. 22, 2013. The purpose of the early morning patrol was to check the security of Fenty's perimeter as well as engage the local population. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Margaret Taylor/Released)

SAFETY

*By Thomas Cline
Bridage Safety Officer*

Many personal injuries in a field environment occur in the base AO. They involve vehicle accidents, POL operations, PT, negligent weapons discharge, and slips, trips and falls. Controls include ground guides for all vehicles, designation of personnel authorized

to operate and refuel the producing equipment, elimination of hazards in common walkways, control of contact sports, fire fighting plans and equipment, and strict adherence to established procedures. Unit SOPs / plans should include provisions for ground

guides, weapons / ammo control, grounding and bonding of refueling operations, rest policy to combat fatigue, and established safety standards for leader enforcement.

The best safety device is located above your shoulders.

We will never forget ...



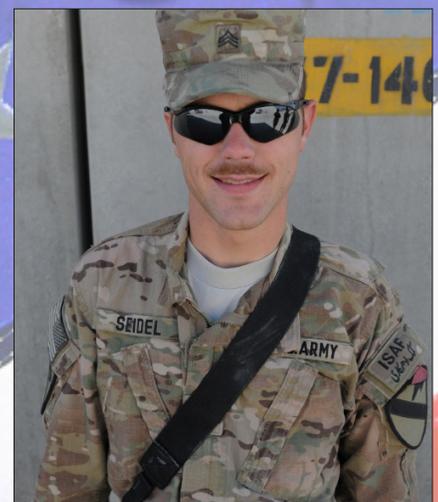
"To me, 9/11 was a very tragic event - an unnecessary loss of life. I am very proud to serve along side family members, defend our country and the people around us," Sgt. Uriel Saldivar - combat engineer.



"To me, 9/11 didn't seem real, like. I was in disbelief at first thinking it was a movie. What we are doing now is standing up for our country. I am proud to serve and support our cause to the upmost," Maj. James Adams - civil affairs officer.



"The events of 9/11 hit me personally. That is why I serve today, to defend our country and support the ongoing mission in Afghanistan. I train and prepare my troops to achieve the same results," Sgt. Wade Lewis - petroleum specialist.



"I was young, but very shocked when the events of 9/11 took place. It was tragic and scared for the people involved. A lot of good, innocent people were killed or injured and I take that personally. I am proud that I can serve and to be part of this mission in Afghanistan," Sgt. Patrick Seidel - multichannel systems maintainer.



"To me, seeing the events of 9/11 was very devastating...just knowing how many people lost their lives. I serve them and their memories now. I am thankful for the ones that came before us to help accomplish our mission here," Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher Nichols - mission systems operator.

... Remembering 9/11



“To me, 9/11 is day of remembrance, a day to be thankful for our lives and the lives of others. We should remember those who fought for our country,” *Sgt. 1st Class James Stoy - platoon sergeant.*



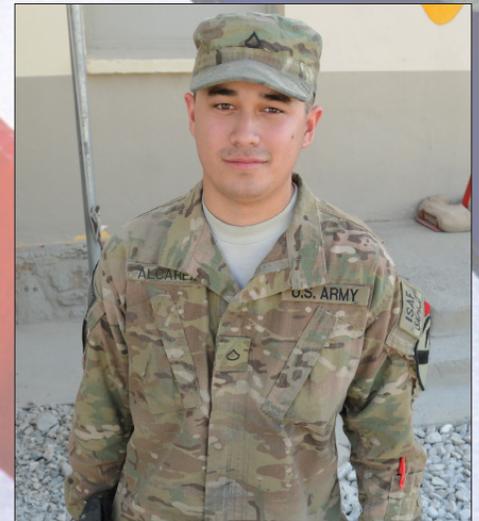
“To me, seeing the events of 9/11 was shocking. I feel for those who lost friends and loved ones. Our country was brought together and we are a better America. That is why I serve in the greatest fighting force such as ours,” *Sgt. 1st Class Forrest Greene - operations sergeant.*



“To me, 9/11 was heart wrenching and depressing. It definitely increased camaraderie between us. I am here now, serving my country and love it! I wouldn't change it for the world,” *Capt. Scott Roessig - company commander.*

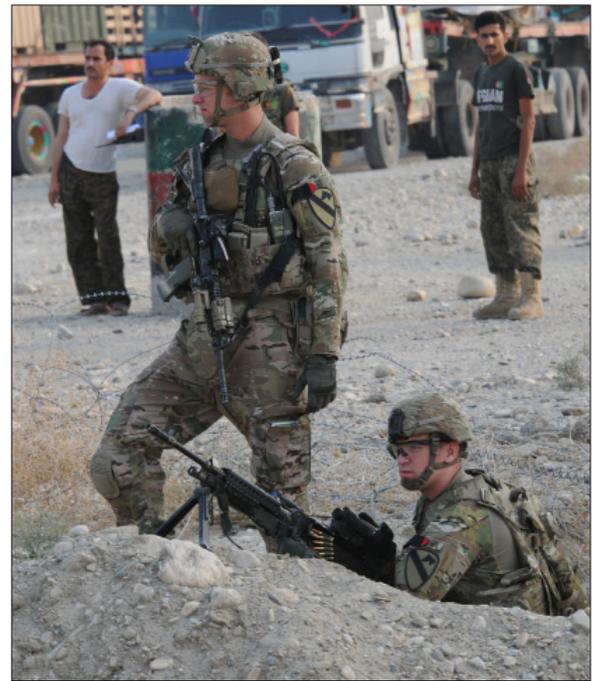


“To me, 9/11 was shocking more than anything. Being able to serve now, in Afghanistan, with our task and purpose makes me proud to be an American Soldier. Three words describe America after 9/11: loyalty, honor and selfless service,” *Sgt. 1st Class Joe Davis - operations sergeant.*



“The event of 9/11 gave me purpose and reason to join the service. I am proud to serve in the Army,” *Pfc. Kyle Alcaarez*

Dark Horse on Patrol



Charlie Troop, 4th Squadron "Dark Horse," 9th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, conducts presence patrols in the Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. Patrols are part of force protection and security operations in and around Jalalabad.

Photos by Sgt. Quentin Johnson

Warrior Tribute

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division
remembers our fallen Brother



1st Lt. Jason Togi
Charlie Co., 2nd BSTB
June 1989 - August 2013

With memories of you in our hearts and your families in our prayers, your sacrifice will never be forgotten.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

HISPANICS:

SERVING

AND LEADING

OUR NATION

WITH PRIDE

AND HONOR