

Sappers continue clearing Highway 1
for coalition convoys ... **PAGE 4**

Leadership gained through
Maintenance platoon ... **PAGE 11**



SAPPER SENTINEL

"SAPPERS IN!"

JOINT TASK FORCE SAPPER

NEWSLETTER OF THE THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE IN AFGHANISTAN



Issue 4 — January 2014

Message from the Commander

Greetings from Kabul! The end of January marked the completion of our transition from Bagram to the New Kabul Compound and integration with our higher headquarters, USFOR-A. We have experienced a lot of changes including new office space and billeting, as well as our entire scope of responsibility. It is not easy to make such drastic adjustments in a short time, but our team embraced the challenge and made it appear seamless.

We have experienced many internal changes as well. We conducted a change of command ceremony for our headquarters company. Thanks to Vic and Erika Gronenthal who provided exceptional leadership to our Soldiers and Families over the past year. It has been a privilege to know and serve with them. Meanwhile, we are very excited to welcome Matt and Michelle Jordan to the Sapper command team.

We also said good-bye to the 14th Construction Management Team and several members of HHC when they redeployed to Schofield Barracks. It is great to know they are home safe and sound. Job well done!

Time is certainly flying by. It is hard to believe that we are quickly approaching the mid-way point of this deployment. As always, we appreciate the support of our Families and the 130th Engineer Battalion (Provisional) who make it possible for us to focus on the mission and ensure the success of our Soldiers on the ground. SAPPERS IN!!

— COL Diana Holland



Photo courtesy of Afghan 205th Corps Public Affairs

Facebook.com/TheaterEngineerBrigade



At A Glance...

- ◆ JTF SAPPER SERVING AS THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE, COMMANDING ABOUT 2,000 MILITARY ENGINEERS
- ◆ ENGINEER FORCES SPREAD ACROSS AFGHANISTAN IN SUPPORT OF NATO-LED INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE (ISAF)
- ◆ JOINT TEAM LED BY 130TH ENG. BRIGADE HQS FROM SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, HAWAII... INCLUDES ACTIVE, RESERVE, AND GUARD UNITS FROM ARMY, NAVY AND AIR FORCE

ANA National Engineer Brigade Starts Strong

By 1st Lt. Laura B. Beebe
JTF Sapper Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan — The Afghan National Army National Engineer Brigade (NEB) is now in full training mode as they arrived to Camp Ghazi, from where they will operate.

The brigade is now training at the Combined Fielding Center (CFC) where they undergo instruction and hands on training in many different fields of expertise.

The NEB consists of the NEB Headquarters, a Specialty Engineer Kandak (battalion) that has bridging and well drilling capabilities, and a Construction Engineer Kandak.

In addition to the ANA, the CFC also includes Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) students in the bridge training, which allows for sharing of knowledge between different branches of the Afghan government.

The training looks similar to what the U.S. is familiar with: a "crawl, walk, run" approach. The NEB is currently in the walk phase as they are gaining the knowledge from hands on training, but in a semi-controlled environment.

According to the Engineer Brigade Advise and Assist Team (EBAAT) operations officer, Lt. Cmdr. Deniz Piskin, the NEB head-

(Continued on page 8)

*Allow[ing] for cross
knowledge, similar to
what the U.S. knows
and understands*

January — Month of Health and Wellness



It's the start of a new year and time to make good on those New Year's resolutions! Whether you'd like to start exercising more, stop smoking or learn how to manage your stress, make the decision to become a better, healthier you this year!

Inside this issue...

COMMAND SGT. MAJ.'S CORNER. MRBC REMOVES BRIDGE	2
AIR FORCE ENGINEERS COMPLETE CONCRETE PROJECT	3
216TH MAC CONTINUES HIGHWAY 1 CLEARING MISSION	4
ANA THANKS EBAAT	5
STRESS DOG VISITS TF RUGGED	8
SEABEES REPAIR WELL ON BAGRAM	9
WORKING WITH POLISH SAPPERS	10
HEADQUARTERS & HEADQUARTERS COMPANY (HHC) UPDATE	12
JTF SAPPER CROSSWORD!	13
GALLERY: AROUND THE BRIGADE. CHAPLAIN'S CLOSING	14
REMEMBERING FALLEN HEROS	15



Command Sergeant Major's Corner Command Sgt. Maj. John Etter, "Sapper 7"

Aloha to our Ohana from
NKC in Kabul, Afghanistan!

I truly hope the New Year
has been positive for you and
your Family, so
far.



And for those
of you that
made resolu-
tions that they
are still in high
gear, keep up
the excellent

work!

Valentine's Day is almost
here; remember to share that
special place in your heart with
your loved ones and remember
the sacrifices we all share each
day to keep our Families Strong!

Thank you to the FRG, Fam-
ily, and friends for welcoming
home some of our early arrivals
from the deployment. Please
take advantage of the reintegration
opportunity and make up for
time spent away from your Sol-
dier.

It is vital that our returning
Soldiers continue to build on
their Family relationships as well

*Take advantage of the
reintegration opportunity
and make up for time spent
away from your Soldier*

as adjusting back into the com-
munities in which we live.

I'd say we're about half way
thru the deployment and even
though we've had a few sur-
prises, everyone remains positive
and upbeat; we've had a few
minor sniffy noses due to the
cold and flu season but all in all
I'm very proud of our team.

Keep us in your thoughts
and prayers and we'll keep you
posted.

Your Soldier's "New" address:

USFOR-A / NKC

"Name"

130th EN BDE / TF Sapper

APO AE 09354-9998

Thank you for supporting
your Soldier and Mahalo!
("Thank you!")

Sappers In,
CSM John Etter



Photo by U.S. Army Cpl. George Huley

Soldiers of the 1438th MRBC, disassemble an over bridge in Gereschk, Helmand province, Afghanistan. The over bridge was a replacement for a bridge that had been damaged during an insurgent attack.

Removing Tom Bridge

By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura B. Beebe
Joint Task Force Sapper Public Affairs

HELMAND PROVINCE, Af-
ghanistan—Soldiers from the
1438th Multi-Role Bridge Com-
pany, Missouri National Guard,
removed a seven-bay Mabey
Johnson Bridge along Highway 1
in the southern portion of Ga-

reshk on Jan. 15-17.

The unit worked alongside
British Security Forces, Afghan
National Security Forces, and
other U.S. Forces, to include the
82nd Eng. Support Company,
Task Force Bayonet.

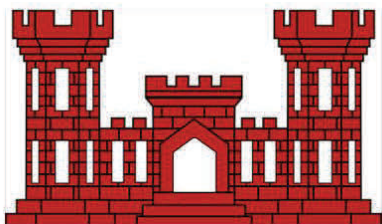
The mission was set for
three days, but the company was
on the ground for just under 24
hours, so as to disrupt traffic
along the route for as short of
time as possible.

The bridge being removed
was a replacement for a bridge
that had been damaged by an
insurgent attack in March 2012.

The company's mission was
to remove the
footing from
the last re-
maining dam-
aged section
in order to
allow for a
local contrac-
tor to finish
his repair
work on the
damage.

The unit performed seam-
lessly and the River Otters con-
tinue to be at the front of the
assured mobility fight.

(Photos continued on page 6)



The *Sapper Sentinel* is an authorized
newsletter for members of the 130th
Engineer Brigade and Joint Task Force
Sapper. Contents are not necessarily
endorsed by the Dept. of the Army, Dept.
of Defense, or United States Government.
Content is reviewed, edited, and approved
by the Brigade Public Affairs Officer.
For questions, comments, or submissions,
please contact the Brigade PAO.

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**This newsletter belongs to the
members of Joint Task Force Sapper...**

**Send us photos, stories, and ideas for
future coverage, and see your unit's
accomplishments highlighted on our
Facebook page and in future editions
of the Sapper Sentinel!**

**Facebook.com/TheaterEngineerBrigade
Email: laura.b.beebe@swa.army.mil**



Prime BEEF Provides Skills in Concrete Pour

By Senior Airman Kayla Newman
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — As concrete splatter finds its way onto the uniforms and faces of U.S. Air Force airmen assigned to the 577th Expeditionary Prime BEEF Squadron, smiles and laughter can be seen and heard coming from the workers as they pour a concrete foundation at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, Jan. 4, 2014.

"I've been here since September and this is the most interesting job I've done"

"I have been here since September and this is the most interesting job I've done," said Senior Airman Mervin Santa Maria, 577th EPBS electrician. "This is the first time I have ever poured concrete."

Most of the members of the 577th EPBS had never poured concrete before, yet they were all able to go out and construct concrete pads for a large-area maintenance facility, which is approximately 8,000



Photo by Senior Airman Kayla Newman

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Austen Windle, 577th Expeditionary Prime BEEF Squadron pavements and equipment operator, pours concrete foundation at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, Jan. 4, 2014.

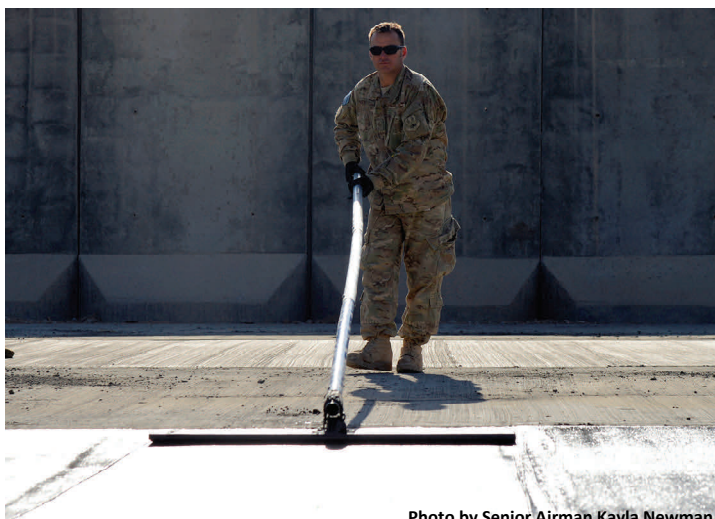


Photo by Senior Airman Kayla Newman

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. John Scherstuhl, 577th Expeditionary Prime BEEF Squadron pavements and equipment operator, smooths concrete foundation at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, Jan. 4, 2014.

square feet.

"The purpose of this construction is so that vehicle maintenance has a facility for all of the 451st Air Expeditionary Wing vehicles, a fleet of about 550 vehicles," explained Capt. Larry Cornelio, 577th EPBS Officer in Charge of Bravo Element.

The 577th EPBS is the only engineer capability that the 451st AEW has, so they were called on to get the new vehicle maintenance facility up so that it can

tionary facilities or shelters, repairs, demolitions or salvaging shelters."

With the move of the vehicle maintenance facility, the land that they once occupied will go back to the Afghan National Army.

As the last Air Force engineer unit in Afghanistan, Santa

Maria wants to leave a lasting impression during his deployment. "If you are going to be gone and away from your family for six months at a



Photo by Senior Airman Kayla Newman

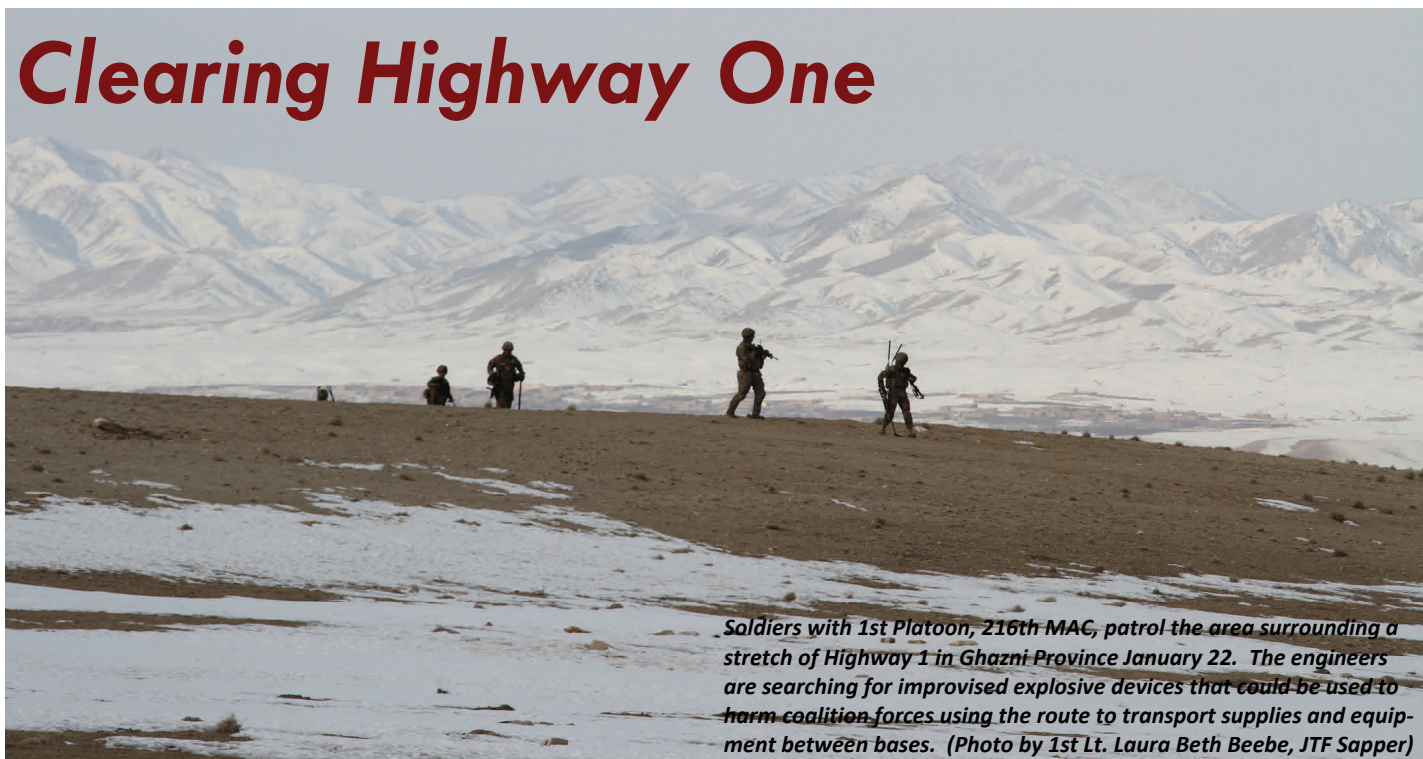
continue its service to the 451st.

"We are a forward deployed unit from the 1st Expeditionary Civil Engineer Group at Al Udeid Air Base," said Cornelio. "AEW's can give us requirements and then we send teams out to meet those requirements, it doesn't matter if it's constructing expedi-

time, you want to make that time worthwhile," said Santa Maria, deployed from the 99th Civil Engineer Squadron, Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. "Even if it's a job as simple as pouring concrete or tearing down tents, you still have a huge impact on the mission as a whole."



Clearing Highway One



Soldiers with 1st Platoon, 216th MAC, patrol the area surrounding a stretch of Highway 1 in Ghazni Province January 22. The engineers are searching for improvised explosive devices that could be used to harm coalition forces using the route to transport supplies and equipment between bases. (Photo by 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe, JTF Sapper)

By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Lisa Miller
Joint Task Force Sapper

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — Snow and ice covered the ground as heavy armored vehicles, filled with highly trained combat engineers, rolled from the gates of forward operating base Ghazni for another mission. Engineers from the 216th Mobile Augmentation Company, U.S. Army National Guard from Long Beach, California, set out to clear a stretch of Highway 1, or “Ring Road,” that connects all major cities in Afghanistan.

Capt. Robert Bejarano, the 216th company commander, described the importance of his unit’s mission the night before the patrol. He explained that “everything here in Afghanistan is route centric, and as engineers, we are the ones keeping the roads open and useable for our fellow brothers and sisters in

arms.”

Bejarano expressed confidence in his team and said, “We can impose our will on Highway 1 whenever and wherever we want; my guys have not failed to complete a single mission – we win tactical victories every day.”

And the 216th MAC has been able to do exactly that. Over halfway into their nine-month deployment, the company has completed over 50 missions along this route with a 100 percent find rate for impro-

vised explosive devices, or IEDs, in their area.

The engineer motto of “Essayons” is translated to “Let us try.” Bejarano’s team embraces

that motto as they tackle the dangerous task of clearing a strategic highway still active with Taliban insurgents. While on patrol members from 1st Platoon pointed out the location of their last engagement with the enemy, a fire fight that

resulted in their medic earning a valorous award and others earning Combat Action Badges.

Although not assigned to this unit, the company welcomed me as part of their team. Bejarano expressed that “everyone who leaves the wire with us on a mission is part of the Family.” For the 216th MAC, that Family bond extends be-

yond their Engineer brothers and sisters. Every time one of Bejarano’s platoons clears a route,

they are accompanied by Polish Sappers in addition to U.S. Army infantrymen.

This unique multinational approach to missions developed through the transformation of route clearance patrols (RCP)

(Continued on page 7)

The symbolism behind shaving the heads is to show... They are not alone in their fight

“Everything here in Afghanistan is route centric, and as engineers, we are the ones keeping the roads open and useable”



Photo by 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe, JTF Sapper

1st Lt. Minkyu Park and Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Williams, the platoon leader and platoon sergeant go over the mission one last time with the platoon prior to leaving the forward operating base, or FOB.



“Showing Appreciation”

ANA Honor Soldiers and Seabees in Task Force EBAAT

By U.S. Navy Steelworker 2nd Class Amanda Lewis
Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 28, TF EBAAT

CAMP PHOENIX, Afghanistan – Soldiers from 14th Construction Management Team (CMT), from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 28, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, were recognized for their contributions as members of the Task Force EBAAT (Engineering Brigade Advise and Assist Team).

Thirteen Soldiers and Seabees were awarded Letters of Achievement from Afghan National Army (ANA) Combined Fielding Center (CFC) Commanding Officer, Col. Ahmadullah Dawar. These Letters of Achievement applauded them for their efforts to improve training of ANA soldiers at the CFC.

Mission planning for the training of the National Engineering Brigade (NEB) began in September 2013, with initial training launching a few months

later in December. Over the course of four weeks, Seabees from NMCB28 have trained 85 ANA soldiers from the NEB Specialty Engineering Kandak on basic

construction skills to include carpentry, electrical, utilities, and vehicle maintenance.

This training consisted of rough framing, building guard houses to help protect ANA soldiers from the elements while providing security, and electrical platforms designed by Seabees to instruct proper wiring techniques using materials and voltage common to Afghanistan. The Seabees

What he never expected was the number of Soldiers that turned out to shave their heads



Photo by U.S. Navy Senior Chief Jeffrey Wolstein, NMCB 28

U.S. Navy Chief Builder Glenn Kohless is awarded a Letter of Achievement from the ANA Combined Fielding Center Chief of Staff for his leadership of training teams working with Afghan Engineers.

also constructed plumbing stations, where utilities-men (UT) taught installation of sinks, showers and toilets as well as the mounting of heating and cooling units.

Construction Electrician Third Class Arey Surratt, a vertical construction advisor, stated, “I love the training and working with the Afghans. They are

eager to learn and pick up the material so fast. Then once you teach one, they teach the rest. Just as they learn from us, I learn something new from them every day.”

“The creation of a National Engineering Brigade truly is history in the making for both Afghanistan and the Seabees,”

Steelworker Chief Barry Wood, TF EBAAT Training Chief, explained. “The skills gained here will bring new capabilities to the Afghan government and improve

security as well as improve the lives of the citizens here as these soldiers deploy throughout the country.”

Wood continued, “Our Seabees are being recognized by the Afghans for their part in training the ANA shows their recognition of the partnership that exists between our forces.”

This mission is proving to be a valuable and unforgettable experience for both coalition and Afghan forces. Seabees plan to continue partnering with ANA engineers throughout 2014.



Photo by U.S. Navy Senior Chief Jeffrey Wolstein, NMCB 28

Builder 3rd Class Jonathan Murray is awarded a Letter of Achievement from the ANA Combined Fielding Center Command Sergeant Major for his efforts in training Afghan Engineers carpentry skills

The symbolism behind shaving the heads is to show... They are not alone in their fight



1438 MRBC Tom Bridge Removal Mission Photos

Photos by U.S. Army Cpl. George Huley





Highway One Patrol

(Continued from page 4)

into combined arms route clearance operations (CARCO.)

Standing in the packed company tactical operations center the night before the patrol, 1st Lt. Minkyu Park and Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Williams, the platoon leader and platoon sergeant in charge of the upcoming mission explained their task and purpose for the next day.

Every individual who would leave the forward operating base attended the brief, and took

notes as Park and Williams' spoke. Each member of the team, to include the drivers, heavy machine gunners, and dismounted and mounted medics understood he needed to understand how to execute the mission from beginning to end.

Soldiers asked questions which allowed the platoon to discuss contingency operations if something did not go as planned. The platoon leader and platoon sergeant valued each individual's input, and acknowledged that everyone brought a unique perspective and skill to the patrol.

At the conclusion of the brief, I received a pair of "yak-trax," the Army's version of an ice-traction device for your combat boots. In the middle of winter the platoon was prepared to walk through knee deep snow and over uneven terrain to complete their mission, so I needed to be too.

Although the next morning required a pre-dawn wake up into very cold night air, nothing fazed the Soldiers of 1st Platoon.



Photo by US Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe, JTF Sapper

Spc. Nickolas Evangelista-Reitner provides over watch for another team clearing the area next to Highway 1, looking for IEDs



Photo by US Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe

Staff Sgt. Martin Krebs, squad leader, shakes hands with a boy in the village 1st platoon passed

Williams went around the group and asked random individual to brief back parts of the mission. Everyone synched.

Each member hustled around and ensured their personal equipment, vehicles, and weapons were ready to go. The platoon executed their pre-mission checks with efficiency and accuracy.

Like clockwork, the individual vehicles manned by Americans and Polish, Soldiers and NCOs, enlisted and officers, fell in line bringing the single pieces of the puzzle together to create a coherent team for the day's mission.

Everyone huddled together

one last time before departure. Park hit the highlights of his previous night's brief and provided an up-to-date intelligence report. Williams went around the group and asked random individuals to brief back parts of the mission. Everyone synched.

The circle tightened right before people dispersed to their vehicles. The men wrapped their arms around one another, and with heads bowed, prayed for protection, wisdom, and clarity.

Instead of shying away from their dangerous mission, 1st Platoon of the 216th MAC courageously went out looking for hazards along the road in order to allow freedom of maneuver for personnel and equipment in their area of operation.

Many leaders say there can never be too many Engineers on the battle field. Bejarano agreed and boldly stated, "We will look back on this time and realize we participated in the heyday of the engineers' mission since World War III!"

"We will look back on this time and realize we participated in the heyday of the engineers' mission since World War III!"



Photo by US Army 1st Lt. Laura B. Beebe, JTF Sapper

1st Platoon drives along Highway searching for improvised explosive devices that could be used to harm coalition forces using the route to transport supplies and equipment between bases



National Engineer Brigade exceeding expectations

(Continued from page 1)

quarters is already highly regarded by other Afghan soldiers and especially among other engineer commands in country.

Piskin credits this to the Afghan officers within the headquarters being highly regarded because they are seen as more capable than others and have more engineering background and training.

These officers are lead by Brig. Gen. Khalilullah, the former Afghan Engineer School-house Commander.

"Khalilullah is very personable and engaging," said Cmdr.

Curtis Smith, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 28 and EBAAT Commander, as he described the new NEB commander's ability to influence those in his command.

The advisory role the EBAAT leads involves many different coalition players, including teams from Bulgaria and Turkey.

Although still a newly fielded unit, the NEB is making great strides in training and plans on graduating some from the CFC earlier than expected.

It is critical that the engineers continue with their strong start and initial success as coalition forces continue to reduce troop strength in Afghanistan.

"Khalilullah is very personable and engaging"



Photo courtesy of Afghan 205th Corps Public Affairs

An ANA soldier carefully probes an area for mines along a road during Operation Chamtoo where ANSF conducted the operation across four provinces in southern Afghanistan simultaneously, synchronizing ANA commands in the large-scale operation, defeating Taliban insurgents and finding caches.

Rugged Soldiers have a dog gone good time

By U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Antonia Pearse
Task Force Rugged Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Stress affects many Soldiers, especially when deployed to a war zone like Afghanistan, where getting blown up by an improvised explosive device or indirect fire is a real possibility. A Soldier does not necessarily have

to participate in fire fights or Route Clearance Patrols to feel the effects of stress. The 98th Medical Detachment, from Joint Base Lewis-McCord, are based in Bagram Air Field, travel to the different Forward Operating Bases to help Soldiers relieve some of the stress. Pfc. Alex Fleming, from Hueytown, Alabama, from the 98th MED DET is Maj. Eden's Handler. He remarked about his assignment, "I couldn't think of a better job. It has been a great deployment. People are always happy to see the dog." Recently, Maj. Eden, the Combat Stress Dog came to visit the soldiers of the 365th Engineer Battalion at the Tactical Operating Center.

Staff Sgt. Jason Trahan, from Stroudsburg, Pa., Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 365th Engineer Battalion, Combat Medic, initiated the idea that the 98th Medical Detachment visits the soldiers of the 365th Eng. Bn. When asked why he called combat stress, he said, "I believe that morale is very important to keep positive and

to deal with stress is key for mission success. I think that seeing the combat stress dog reminds soldiers of home and why we are fighting". Keeping a Soldier's morale up is imperative to mission success. Spc. Maria Tubil, 365th Eng. Bn. Supply Specialist from Patterson, N.J., said, "It was awesome to take the time out to see Maj. Eden while she was around. Dogs don't usually like me, but this one was very friendly."

Maj. Eden and her handlers, Capt. Matthew Neat, Staff Sgt. Thomas Hewett and Pfc. Alex Fleming toured the 365th Engineering Battalion TOC, where the dog brought joy to all who saw her. Many photos were taken to commemorate the event. Spc. Stephen Simko, a HHC Communications Specialist from Lake Lehman, Pa., said, "I thought it was great! It provided both a mental and emotional escape. For anyone with a dog, it was a great reminder what is waiting back home. When I was playing with the dog, it felt as if I wasn't even in Afghanistan; it

was like I was home again. It was a great deployment experience that everyone should experience."

Hopefully, Maj. Eden and her handlers will make more appearance at the 365th Eng. Bn. TOC. It is essential for both leaders and the Soldiers themselves to keep up the morale.



Photo by 2nd Lt. Antonia Pearse, TF Rugged

Sgt. John Ramaika, Battalion Electronic Warfare Officer, stops by the Aid Station to see Maj. Eden, 98th Medical Det. combat stress dog



Photo by 2nd Lt. Antonia Pearse, TF Rugged

Staff Sgt. Joseph Prevatte, Intelligence NCOIC, plays ball with Maj. Eden, 98th Medical Detachment for Combat Stress Prevention.



Plunging the Well: Seabees work creates morale booster among deployed troops

Story from video package by U.S. Marine Cpl. Joshua DeFour /
Recorded by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe, JTF Sapper

Running Water is a luxury in the rugged conditions of Afghanistan. After a hard day's work at Bagram Air Field, a warm shower or washing one's hands are comforts that a flowing water supply can offer.

Though a working faucet could be taken for granted, at an old

well on the outskirts of Bagram Air Field Afghanistan a group of U.S. Navy Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 28 are making it their mission to guarantee these services continue without interruption.

The Seabees are cleaning filters deep under the earth to get the well back on line.

"The capacity of the well had started to diminish," explained Utilities Chief Petty Officer

David Asbury, the well team OIC. "So they've asked us to come in and see if we could re-develop it, in order to get the output capacity to increase."

Using connected metal pipes to act as a giant plunger the Seabees force the steel into the well to produce the massive water

pressure needed to remove the dirt from the filters.

Utilities technician 2nd Class Karl Philip described what happens to the water when they push it out,

"What we need is a diverter, because the water will spew up and kind of get everything. So in order to not have that happen, we use a diverter to let the water go in a certain direction, so it doesn't cause too much of a mess."

"We open the air hose to let the air go out, and then the water will shoot out to clear the formation. And we will continue to do that until the water starts to come out clear," said Philip. "This

usually takes a couple of days. The whole process just takes time."

And after more than a week of work, the well has sprung a clear success.

"We look at the samples we collect, from when we first start

But the Seabees push forward.

"Part of our training is the 'Can Do' mentality. That gets embedded into our brain on a daily basis," accounted Petty Officer 2nd Class Christopher Blacksmith. "There is no job we can't do, and there is no task that

"There is no job we can't do, and there is no task that we can't accomplish."



UT2 Karl Philip on the controls of the well drilling machine

working on the well, each day we can't accomplish." and throughout the day to mark the progress,"

Builder 2nd Class Richard Henderson described as he pointed out water bottles filled with different colors and amounts of sediment. "We are

always trying to clear it up even more, to try and get that good quality of water. Our number one goal is a good clear quality of water."

Days at the well can be tedious, often involving wet clothes in frigid winter temperatures.

Days at the well can be tedious, often involving wet clothes in frigid temperatures

"I've seen some places where people have had to limit their use of water because the source wasn't so readily available like it is here. So when we get this back on line, it should be another morale booster for our troops," said Blacksmith.

See the original story, *Plunging the Well*, online at the Department of Defense YouTube page.



A diverter is used to force the water from the well into a specific direction the Seabees want it to go after being forced through the filters



Camaraderie on Patrol with the 216th MAC



Photo by 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe, JTF Sapper

Staff Sgt. Martin Krebs (left), squad leader, 216th MAC, assists a Polish engineer as they prepare to detonate a possible improvised explosive device near Highway 1 in Ghazni Province Jan. 22.

By 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe
Joint Task Force Sapper Public Affairs

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — “Everyone who leaves the wire with us on a mission is part of this family,” said Capt. Robert Bejarano, 216th Mobile Augmentation Company Commander.

The 216th MAC has conducted route clearance patrols in Ghazni province since they arrived in September 2013 and they still have many more patrols in front of them before the U.S. Army National Guard unit from Long Beach, Calif. will return home.

The engineer Soldiers with the 216th MAC understand Bejarano’s statement very well. They often leave the wire with individuals who are not organic to their company. This is due to the transition of clearance patrols into a combined arms route clearance operation, or CARCO.

“It’s like having a combined arms breach every time we leave the FOB,” Bejarano explained.

The idea of family, a people united by a significant shared

characteristic and treated with a special loyalty, is very important to the 216th. Some of the individuals involved in the operation stay the same while others change out quite frequently.

The company often partners with U.S. Army infantry units from the 10th Mountain Division and Polish Engineer and Infantry units.

While working with the Polish, communication can be a challenge with the language difference. Many of the Polish Sappers took it upon themselves to learn a little English and a number of the 216th engineers have started learning some Polish. Bejarano encourages it and said, “I don’t want my platoon leaders to rely on the Polish’s ability to speak English, I have told them they need to learn some Polish.”

The relationship with the Polish continues to grow and reinforce the longer they work together. With coalition forces continuing to close and transfer bases across the country, the 216th MAC knows they may not be replaced by more engineers.

“The 216th will not leave before the Polish, and this creates an impressive camaraderie between us and them,” said Bejarano. “We are both probably the last show in town.”

Working with other countries also provides other issues, such as trying incorporating and following different doctrines. It forced the 216th to return to the basics and teach the Polish the American way to execute combined arms and conduct troop leading procedures.

The U.S. Infantry and the Polish are not the only outsiders that the 216th brought into their family while deployed. The bonds they created with some intelligence assets such as Copperhead have proven useful for both parties.

The former relationship that was previously one-way, with the intelligence unit providing the information to the ground units, has been strengthened and turned into a two-way rela-

tionship with the 216th. The engineers provided feedback of what they were experiencing and seeing while on patrol. Cmdr. Alexander Peabody, TF Copperhead, explained how useful this feedback has been and has allowed them to re-structure how they provide intelligence to units.

The unit is also very closely attached with the Combat Stress unit on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Ghazni.

“I believe it is vital to integrate talking and addressing combat stress into our everyday life,” said Bejarano. “It is important to treat continuously instead of after it becomes an issue, especially as we prepare for the upcoming spring and fighting season.”

All of these relationships are imperative and contributed to the 216th MAC’s success to this point. As they look to the second half of their deployment, they continue to find ways to strengthen these connections. To strengthen their family.

“I don’t want my platoon leaders to rely on the Polish’s ability to speak English”

“Everyone who leaves the wire with us on a mission is part of this family”



Photo by 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe, JTF Sapper

1st Lt. Mikyu Park (left), 1st Platoon Leader, 216th MAC, works with the Polish patrol leader to mission plan and go over the route they would take the following day.



Maintenance: Tool of Leadership

By 1st Lt. Cathleen A. Rush
82nd Engineer Support Company

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – If done properly and at correct times, maintenance in the army allows units to stay combat ready. But maintenance is many times the component of operations that gets overlooked and sent to the bottom of the priority list.

Serving as an engineer support company's (ESC) maintenance platoon leader offers a unique opportunity to lead Soldiers, provides a distinct advantage for the company command team and ensures valuable personal and professional development.

During the road to war we completed a battalion level National Training Center (NTC) rotation. Our company received some of the best training to date and our mechanics were able to work side by side with ManTech to repair route clearance vehicles that the company would be using down range. This was a critical task as the company would be serving in a role different than that of its garrison mission. Therefore, the equipment the company would use, would also be different.

While some of our Soldiers had previously received training from courses, such as the R2C2 Maintainer, for most the training was new. During the rotation, we used the Mine-Resisted Ambush Protected Recovery Vehicle (MRV) on route clearance patrols and tracked patterns of both parts that broke most often and persistent mechanical issues. The Soldiers learned valuable lessons from NTC and were able

to plan better for the upcoming deployment.

One of the biggest obstacles we identified early on was the lack of MRV operators within the platoon. Between sending some Soldiers to the schoolhouse in Texarkana, Texas and the MRV training conducted immediately upon arrival at Camp Leather-

Soldiers learned valuable lessons from NTC and were able to plan better for the deployment

neck, we established four rotating MRV teams to support two route clearance patrols (RCPs). These rotating teams allowed each Soldier to gain recovery and mission experience while still ensuring these mechanics were able to keep the other equipment within the company mission capable.

Deployed, I now serve as the company's point of contact for all field service representatives (FSRs) in theater. Due to the vast diversity of enablers within an individual RCP, I work with 36 different contractors and organizations across three regional commands and with reach back to the U.S. Organizations such as ManTech, Joint Robotics, and the Pentagon G8. As a maintenance platoon leader, it is my responsibility to coordinate all support from these organizations in order to ensure the platoons receive the support they need.

Active reporting and briefing senior leaders on the company's capability when it comes to our equipment is a major role of the maintenance platoon leader. I conduct daily briefs on the status of our RCPs and stay on top of various trackers that depict our company mission readiness and combat power. I also manage all services for equipment to ensure minimal operational impact.



Photo by 1st Lt. Cathleen Rush, 82nd ESC

Maintenance Soldiers conduct a semi-annual service on an M-870 trailer

As an engineer officer, I understand the line platoon leader's mission set and priorities and can help form proper prioritization of maintenance concerns for both administrative and mission generated deadlines. This method has allowed the commander's intent to be fully supported and creates a shared understanding among all leadership. With my background as an engineer officer and the skills found within the platoon, we have the ability to understand an RCP's needs, and after three months, there have been no company missions canceled due to maintenance readiness.

The maintenance platoon leader position is not found in an engineer company's modification table of organization and equipment (MTOE). However, there are numerous reasons filling the position can benefit the company.

One way is professional development. Young officers are future company executive officers and commanders. The time spent with a maintenance platoon will prove invaluable later in that leader's career.

Another can be seen through a key skill that I have acquired as a maintenance platoon leader, and that is how to identify maintenance errors quickly. Finding

discrepancies or inaccuracies has proven, on many occasions, to be the difference between mission failure and mission success within the company.

I have also had the opportunity in this position to work hand and hand with the 91 and 92 MOS and created a bond between them and the engineers of our company. Something not visible prior to my arrival.

Another notable advantage of the position while in a deployed environment is that it allows freedom of maneuver for our company executive officer to focus on retrograde and other operations, since I am handling the maintenance issues. Retrograde operations have proved to be as time-consuming as our

There have been no company missions cancelled due to maintenance readiness

route clearance mission. Removing maintenance operations and issues from the executive officer's responsibility has been vital in conducting successful operations.

Officers are an integral part of the team and increasing their maintenance knowledge further strengthens their skill sets and their ability to lead. As an officer, it is important to know enough about everything, so that no matter the situation or circumstance, you have the confidence and competence to lead the team.



Brigade Headquarters & Headquarters Company (HHC)

Aloha to Our HHC Family, Friends, and Loved Ones:

The team here on the New Kabul Compound (NKC) and Bagram Airfield is doing great and remaining flexible as ever. I cannot express how proud I am to be receiving such an outstanding company.

This group has shown that there is nothing that can slow us down or throw us off course.

As many of you may already know, Capt. Vic Gronenthal and I conducted a change of command on January 15, 2014. Capt. Gronenthal and his wife, Erika, have done an outstanding job as a command team for HHC.

I, along with the rest of the Sapper Family, would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication as they prepare for their new assignment at Fort Irwin, California.

Many of you will be receiving your loved ones as they return from Afghanistan. At this point in time, those Soldiers have been

notified. I wish you all a happy and healthy homecoming as I know how special the moment truly is.

On the home front, the 130th Eng. Bn. is doing great things. Not only do you support mission requirements in the Pacific, you are doing an outstanding job receiving Soldiers and providing the necessary continuity to keep us up and running.

I would also like to take this chance to introduce my wife, Michelle, as the new FRG Leader. She is very excited to serve such a great group of Family and friends.

Michelle and I are both thrilled to have this amazing opportunity.

We are quickly approaching the half-way mark of the deployment! Thank you all for your support and I look forward to serving you. **Combat Ready!**

**-Capt. Matt Jordan
Commander,
HHC, 130th Eng. Bde.**

(right) Soldiers enjoy a local spread for lunch after the change of command ceremony Jan. 15, between Capt. Victor Gronenthal and Capt. Matt Jordan



Sapper Throw commemorates Theater Engineer Brigade OEF XIV Deployment

Joint Task Force Sapper is selling 50" x 68" blankets to commemorate the Theater Engineer Brigade and all units past and present during Operation Enduring Freedom XIV.

The order will close on Feb. 28, 2014.

The cost is \$40 per blanket.

If you would like more information on how to purchase one, send a Facebook message to the Theater Engineer Brigade Facebook page.



JTF Sapper Crossword Challenge!

ACROSS

3. Location of recent water well project
4. 4-legged Maj that visited TF Rugged
8. Coalition troops 216th commonly works with
9. Facility Prime Beef poured concrete for

DOWN

1. 1438 MRBC "River _"
2. 216 MAC belongs to _ National Guard
5. Mine- _ Protected Recovery Vehicle (MRV)
6. _ Fielding Center is ANA training area
7. Giant metal pipes act as a _ to force water through the well and clean the filters

HINT: EACH ANSWER
CAN BE FOUND INSIDE
THIS NEWSLETTER

About this Photo:

A 201st ANA CEK soldier uses a bulldozer to level an area of FOB Gamberi for an expanded ammo control point. The ANA is developing its posts and their abilities, readying themselves for the upcoming election season. (Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Eric Provost)

There's help when you need it...

Crisis Intervention Hotline

Warriors: Need someone to talk to, or have a buddy here who needs help?

The Crisis Intervention Hotline is staffed 24/7. If you need to talk to a counselor, you can reach them from any NIPR phone by dialing 1-1-1. You can also reach Crisis Counselors by Afghan Local National Phone by dialing 070-113-2000, (wait for tone) then 1-1-1.

Also reach Crisis Counselors by NIPR email at OEFKRISHOTLINE@afghan.swa.army.mil.

Remember, you aren't alone!

Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT., 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs



Northern Afghanistan – Soldiers from the 55th MAC receive coins from ISAF Joint Commander, Lt. Gen. Mark Milley.



Southern Afghanistan – Spc. Garcia-Acevedo disassembles a M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon during Task Force Bayonet's NCO & Soldier of the Quarter Competition on Kandahar Airfield



Eastern Afghanistan – U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Stephen Szalsky (far right), 333rd Eng. Co., and 1st Lt. Benedict Zilka (middle right), 284th Eng. Co., meet with their 201st ANA counterparts at FOB Gamberi, Jan. 5, to discuss parameters for the day's heavy equipment drivers training.



By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe

Eastern Afghanistan – Soldiers in HHC, 130th Eng. Bde., salute in formation during the company's change of command ceremony Jan. 15 at New Kabul Compound



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe

Eastern Afghanistan – Capt. James Bouchard, 14th Construction Management Team, earns the Bronze Star Medal for service in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Chaplain's Closing, Maj. John Sedwick "Be the Best You Can Be"

This month's reflection concerns settling for second best.



Amidst the plethora of motivational videos that went viral on Facebook around the first of the year (most of them addressing the fallacy of making New Year's resolutions), one particular speaker mentioned that all grave yards contain the hidden treasure of secret dreams and ambitions that never materialized.

They never materialized because the overwhelming majority of the dead lying in the ground made no effort during their respective lifetimes to pursue their dreams and reach their full po-

tential to accomplish great things.

I remember the old (and still best) Army slogan: Be all that you can be. As our Army prepares to get much smaller in the very near future, it's important for all of us to ask ourselves some difficult questions:

- Do I wake up every morning striving to be the best that I can be for my country, my fellow Soldiers and my Family, or am I just content to cash a paycheck on the first and the 15th of each month?

- Do I embrace a leadership role in my household (striving to be the best servant leader I can be) or do I come home and start playing video games, totally ig-

noring my spouse and kids?

- Am I serving in the best MOS for me?

- Have I done everything I can do, taken every possible course of action available to advance to the next pay grade?

- Have I prepared myself emotionally for the day when I will take off this uniform for the last time and re-enter the world in which 99.9 percent of the U.S. population lives in?

- Have I sat down with my spouse and set goals for where we want to be as a Family in 5 or 10 years?

As a 52-year-old Army Chaplain with more than 20 years of service (both as a husband and as a military member), I still set

big audacious goals. I want to make a positive difference, touch just one life in a positive way, every single day.

I strive to be the most physically fit and spiritually engaged Chaplain in the Army. When I can't run or ruck anymore with my Soldiers, I will hang up my spikes and retire.

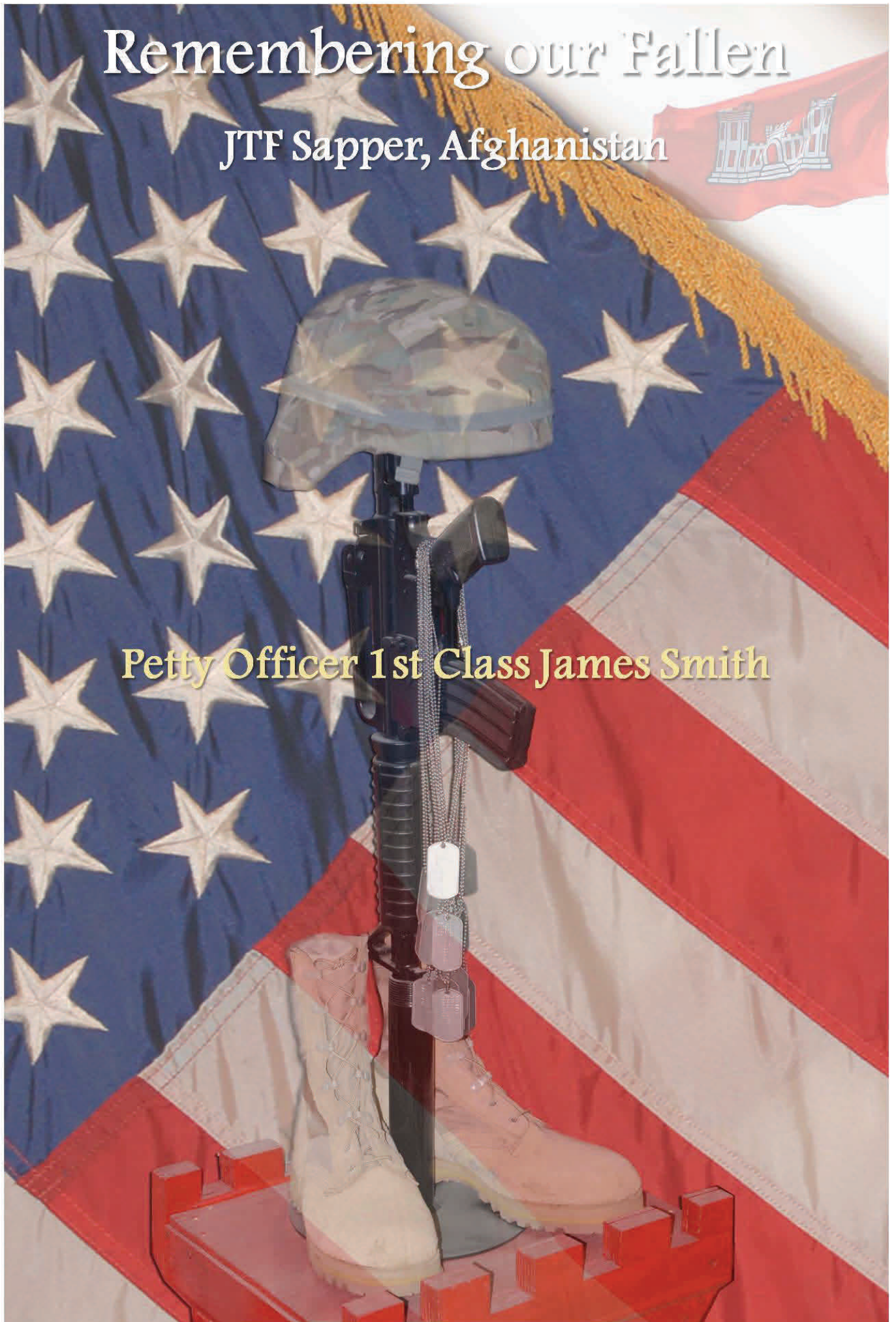
I urge you to examine your life from top to bottom. Set goals. Pursue dreams. Be the best that you can be.

Remembering our Fallen

JTF Sapper, Afghanistan

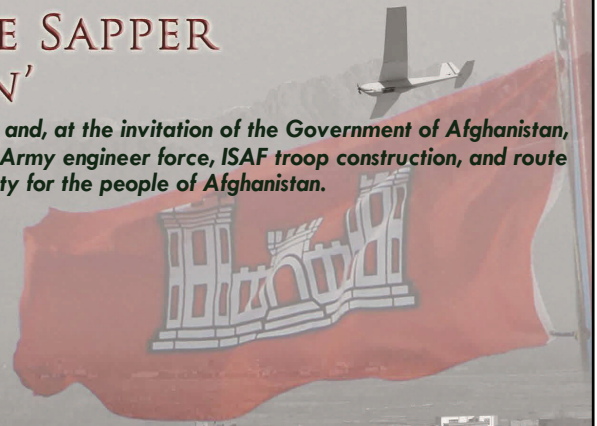


Petty Officer 1st Class James Smith



JOINT TASK FORCE SAPPER 'SAPPERS IN'

Our Mission: Deploy in support of the International Security Assistance Force and, at the invitation of the Government of Afghanistan, provide theater engineer support to include development of the Afghan National Army engineer force, ISAF troop construction, and route clearance, to help build a pathway to peace and prosperity for the people of Afghanistan.



U.S. THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE
AFGHANISTAN 2013-14



Questions or comments? Email
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