



SAPPER SENTINEL

"SAPPERS IN!"

JOINT TASK FORCE SAPPER
NEWSLETTER OF THE THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE IN AFGHANISTAN



Issue 7 — April 2014

Message from the Commander

Another busy month behind us! We completed our move from Kabul and assumed the mission of preparing Bagram for effective retrograde of personnel and equipment.



We welcomed NMCB 25 (TF ULTIMUS) this month.

In their short time in Afghanistan, the new Seabee Battalion has already completed several key leader engagements with the Afghan National Engineer Bde., assisted with the transition of the NEB's Construction Bn. to their permanent station at Camp Ghazi, and drilled a well in Kabul. We also welcomed the 814th Bridge Company from Ft. Polk, LA. The team will assume responsibility for all Coalition bridge missions in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, we said good-bye to many members of the team including NMCB 28, 1438th MRBC, and 6 Navy individual augmentees. These Soldiers and Sailors served exceptionally well and contributed greatly to the Brigade's mission.

CSM Etter and I had the opportunity to visit Soldiers from the 663rd Horizontal and 284th Vertical Construction companies at various locations in RC-East and West. The Soldiers of these two units are exceptionally proficient at both construction and training Afghan engineers.

The next 30 days will be very busy, but we look forward to finishing strong with a thorough transition of duties and responsibilities to the 2nd Eng. Bde followed by travel back to Hawaii. As always, thank you for your unrelenting support. SAPPERS IN!!

— COL Diana Holland



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At A Glance...

- ♦ JTF SAPPER SERVING AS THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE, THE ENGINEER HQ AND EXPERTISE IN AFGHANISTAN
- ♦ 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

Engineering the Final Chapter in Afghanistan

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

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan— Once again, the mission set for the 130th Engineer Brigade has changed to incorporate the ever evolving, complex set of requirements that the Combined Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan (CJOA-A) has for its engineers.

As the brigade headquarters moves to Bagram from New Kabul Compound (NKC), so too does its focus shift from base de-scope planning. JTF Sapper is now spearheading the effort to

'right size' Bagram.

Although the brigade's primary lines of effort still include the Train, Advise, Assist (TAA) mission and the general engineering mission, the brigade has been called upon to help planners at every level understand how American units, contractors, DOD civilians, Coalition Forces, etc., will use, occupy, manage, and eventually shrink our footprint in theater.

In order to ensure all the key players are involved in this highly meticulous planning effort, the brigade is currently undergoing

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The brigade is currently undergoing one of its most intense periods of data collection, coordination and, synchronization to date.

April — Month of the Military Child



JTF Sapper wants to thank all our military Children and Families for their continued sacrifices, strength, love and support.



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

*Aloha to our Ohana from
Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan!*

With only 30 days left in Afghanistan we eagerly anticipate saying "Aloha" to our Ohana in person! Your Soldiers performed exceptionally well over the last month by maintaining professionalism and resiliency during our relocation from New Kabul Compound back to Bagram.

We especially embraced the change in a positive light when we realized we are one helicopter ride closer to the flight that will take us out of Afghanistan and home to you.

Our team here will remain focused on the mission at Bagram and the support given to our companies until our official transfer of authority to 2nd Engineer Brigade.

However, as a team, we all must also start to prepare for reintegration. Deployments can be difficult, stressful, and straining on Families and Soldiers and

reuniting is not always as easy as we think. It will take patience, understanding, and time to get back into a rhythm and create cohesion in the home. Remember there are resources available, all you need to do is ask.

As we move forward and start thinking about the much deserved block leave, remember to have a plan and a battle buddy.

Do things in moderation and remember to keep up with your physical fitness. You can do the traditional weights at the gym and run, but you can also workout while enjoying the island — rent a kayak, surf board, or paddle board from MWR, go for a hike up KoKo head or a swim at Waimea Bay.

Just remember to stay vigilant and watch one another's back. We are extremely excited to reunite with all of our loved ones and Friends in Hawaii — thank you for your support, we will see you soon.

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

Sappers In,
CSM John Etter



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

Command Master Chief Corey Cain, NMCB 28 (left) and Command Master Chief Michael Helgeson, NMCB 25, transition the BEEP Plaque from "28" to "25" during the Transfer of Authority Ceremony

Last Seabee Battalion Takes Over OEF Mission

By U.S. Navy MC1 Patrick Gordon
NMCB 25 Public Affairs

CAMP PHOENIX, Afghanistan—Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Eight (NMCB 28) officially welcomed NMCB 25 as the new Seabee battalion during a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Phoenix, Afghanistan,

April 15.

NMCB 25's arrival in country begins what is expected to be the final Seabee mission in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom.

The ceremony marked the official departure of NMCB 28, Task Force Coda, and its nearly eight-month mission in Afghanistan. During the ceremony, U.S. Army Col. Diana Holland, commander of the 130th Engineer

Brigade, Task Force Sapper, commented on the wide array of missions and responsibilities NMCB 28 undertook during its deployment.

"It has been such a gratifying experience to watch Task Force Coda excel in this environment," said Holland. "You have done it all. Construction, deconstruction, train, advise and assist, well-drilling, personnel protection, convoy movements, and some or all of those tasks across

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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.

Public Affairs Officer: 1LT Laura Beth Beebe



**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!**

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“Working Together”

International Partners Join to Train National Eng. Brigade

By U.S. Navy MC1 Patrick Gordon
NMCB 25 Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan—“One team, one fight” is a common saying in the United States military. It highlights the cooperative spirit between services of the U.S. Armed Forces that work toward a common goal.

In Afghanistan, that saying exemplifies the efforts of all nations in the International Security Assistance Force’s (ISAF) Security Force Assistance Advisory Team (SFAAT), where the combined forces of the U.S. Navy Seabees, the Turkish Army, and the Bulgarian Army are working together to train Afghan engineers with the aim of providing for them a sustainable future.

ISAF has many nations participating in its mission to support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). The SFAAT, specifically, works to advise the Afghan National Engineer Brigade (NEB) leadership on the development of trained Afghan engineers. The SFAAT coordinates all aspects of training for the NEB, including general and specialty engineering skills. It also helps the NEB and Afghan National Army (ANA) leadership develop Camp Ghazi into a permanent and sustainable home.

“This is a mentoring mission,” said Lt. Cmdr. Jeromy Pittmann, SFAAT Officer in Charge (OIC) and member of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB 25). “The Turkish SFAAT team is in charge of mentoring the NEB headquarters, and the Bulgarian SFAAT team is in charge of mentoring the Specialty Engineer Kandak (CEK), or battalion. The U.S. Navy is in charge of mentoring the Construction Engineer



U.S. Navy Photo by MC1 Patrick Gordon, NMCB25 Public Affairs

Lt. Ruben Chavira, NMCB 25 Supply Officer, reviews the supply needs of Afghan National Eng. Brigade personnel during a meeting with U.S., Turkish, and Bulgarian Security Force Assistance Advisory Team.

Kandak (CnEK).”

Everyone involved in this mission understands its importance. The best training and the utmost attention will make the NEB a self-sustaining force capable of rebuilding Afghanistan. Incorporating a multinational team ensures that the problem set receives various perspectives and insights from all the key players.

“It’s so important because sometimes we might miss something about NEB headquarters, so what we see, you might not see. We come together to discuss all situations and issues in order to help the NEB headquarters, facilities and personnel,” said Turkish Capt. Alparslan Yalcin, Turkish Army SFAAT member. “Working together also helps us to understand each other – Americans, Turkish, Bulgarians – we are like friends. It has been a positive experience for us. I have been in Iraq, working with Americans there, but this experience is something

more, something better, working together to help and improve the NEB.”

The three countries involved in the NEB SFAAT mission bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience shared between all groups involved.

Pittmann said that the U.S. has had years of experience working with Afghan forces during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). He explained

“I have been in Iraq, working with Americans there, but this experience is something more, something better”

*- Capt. Alparslan Yalcin
Turkish Army SFAAT*

that the Bulgarians bring with them the technical expertise needed for the specialty kandak, and the Turkish forces have experiences mentoring in various countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan, as well as Afghanistan. He added that the SFAAT is adept at engaging with the Afghans on a personal level as well, aiding in the mission as a whole.

“In particular, the Turkish SFAAT team gets along very well with the Afghan teams, as many of them share the Muslim faith, they are very respected by them,” said Pittmann. “And the Afghan officers in particular see that we get along very well with our inter-

national partners, which has helped us in NMCB 25 because the NEB has responded very well to us as result, despite the short time we’ve been here.”

Those involved in the SFAAT say that there was no real difficulty among the forces working together. Rather, they went through the growing pains of any new team, but quickly moved on in their mission.

“When we first arrived it was a little bit of a challenge because our predecessors interacted with

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Seabees Get Dirty and Dig Deep in Kabul



U.S. Navy photo by Steelworker 2nd Class Holly Robinson, NIMCB 25

Construction Mechanic Jedidiah Fox replaces a pin on the top head of the water well drill rig on New Kabul Compound (NKC). Members of NIMCB 25 water well detachment have been tasked with the well as part of contingency construction support mission in CJOA-A.

By Steelworker 2nd Class Holly Robinson
Naval Mobile Construction Bn 25

KABUL, Afghanistan — As contingency construction support missions are reduced, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NIMCB 25) Water Well Team is continuing to stay busy ensuring the water stays pure and doesn't run dry for those forces still deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Task Force Ultimatus detachment began drilling operations on New Kabul Compound (NKC) in April, launching their first drilling mission within Combined Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan (CJOA-A).

The current Laibe Corp. drilling rig, tender, and mud puppy system have been in rigorous use in Afghanistan's area of operations since November of 2011.

"There were three Laibe Corp. drilling rigs that arrived in

2011," said Russ Theurer, NKC field support representative, "and two of these rigs have been sent back to the states." Members of the NKC Water Well team, headed by Chief Equipment Operator (SCW) Chad Strauser, have "spudded in" by placing steel surface casing to prevent well collapse and established the "mud program" to support drilling operations.

As the mainstay of the drilling process, the mud program includes the preparation of drilling fluid — a combination of mud, water, and chemicals — for use in strengthening the bore hole, cooling the drill bit, and removing cuttings.

Although much of water well drilling is unpredictable, the team anticipates water production at a depth of 600 feet.

"Formations throughout Afghanistan are very similar and we have consistently hit water at depths of 300, 500 and 900 feet,"

said Theurer.

It is estimated the well will be able to produce 100 gallons of water per minute to support such necessities as food preparation, shower and restroom stations, laundry facilities, and more within NKC. The team is currently conducting 24-hour drilling operations with the hope of successful well completion within 4-6 weeks.

In addition to drilling missions, the team will also be tasked with a steady list of well repair missions.

"Many older wells need renovated," said Theurer. "Pumps often need to be replaced, elec-

trical or plumbing to those pumps may need renewed, and some wells even re-sanitized."

Smaller, more mobile teams of these Seabees will break off in support of these missions throughout Afghanistan.

The team will partner with the Afghan National Army on future projects to mentor and strengthen highly demanded skills in water well drilling.

NIMCB 25 is one of five active reserve battalions. It is a routinely deployable unit, standing ready to provide construction support for Navy, Marine Corps and other organizations.

It is estimated the well will be able to support such necessities as food preparation, shower and restroom stations, laundry facilities and more.



U.S. Navy photo by Steelworker 2nd Class Holly Robinson, NIMCB 25

Equipment Operator 1st Class Daniel Segretto operates the Laibe Corp. drilling rig in support of water well drilling operations on NKC, Kabul.



Engineers to Close out Operation Enduring Freedom

(Continued from page 1)

one of its most intense periods of data collection, coordination and, synchronization to date.

This effort requires participation from every stakeholder not only currently on Bagram, but planning must anticipate the projected moves of units to Bagram.

Bagram isn't the only base to receive this level of detailed analysis. For every existing base in theater, planners first determine which

bases will endure during established time frames, and then the decision is made on how and when non-enduring bases will close.

The brigade has been called upon to help planners at every level understand how to... shrink our footprint in theater

After over a decade of war in Afghanistan, there is now a lot of stuff that needs to be accounted for, disposed of, shipped out, or transferred somewhere else.

One of the most difficult questions to answer as it pertains to 'right sizing' Bagram for future operations is: "What's out there?" With so

many different entities laying claim in Afghanistan, what will Bagram be required to sustain?

And as JTF Sapper pre-

pares for its redeployment, this mission and these questions will be assumed and tackled by the 2nd En Bde.



Brigade Staff members discuss the future of Bagram Airfield on the roof of the Coalition Operations Center overlooking the base



APRIL: Sexual Assault Awareness Month

The month of April was recognized as Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) with the theme "Live Our Values. Step up to Stop Sexual Assault."

Well that is exactly what our Sappers did, along with USFOR-A, the 130th Brigade SARC facilitated various events to include Take The

Pledge; Zumba-thon Experience; Sexual Assault Awareness Displays; Movie Night (Accused) and Take Back the Night in support of SAAM at New Kabul Compound (NKC).

Indeed the 130th Engineer Brigade "Sappers" shined their light to bring awareness to sexual violence and have recommitted them-

selves to changing the culture by stopping sexual assault before it starts and ensuring victims get the support they need.

In the months ahead our Sappers will continue to shine their lights, as the example. We will do this by working together against sexual Assaults.

We will stand together as aggressive and proactive leaders who will not stand for sexual misconduct. We will stand together being proactive in confronting the problem by enforcing the "Buddy System," reducing dimly lit areas, and having frequent leadership checks in our life support areas.

As your Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) I will continue to properly train our formation in order to raise awareness and educate all Soldiers on the ramifications of this threat.

As we live by our Army

Values, we can proudly intervene when we observe situations that can lead to sexual assault and harassment.

With this intervention we can ensure that TF Sapper and Bagram Airfield Base, Afghanistan, is safe place to live and work. Let's live our values every day!





133rd Takes Care of Deconstruction



Ennis, Texas native, Pfc. Wesley Martin, an equipment operator for the 858th Engineer Company, 133rd Engineer Battalion Operates a 5-year loader to emplace a barrier at Forward Operating Base Shank.

Photo by U.S. Army 2nd Lt. John Story, 858th Eng. Co.

By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp
82nd Sustainment Brigade

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan—Soldiers working for and attached to the Portland, Maine-based 133rd Engineer Battalion, Maine Army National Guard, fill their days with deconstruction projects aimed at transforming and eventually transferring bases back to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

According to Pembroke, Maine native, Lt. Col. Dean Preston, commander, 133rd Eng. Bn., his battalion's mission is a unique one comprised of troops from both the Army National Guard and Reserves from eight different states and regions throughout the U.S.

"Our mission is significant in that we are a key element in re-sizing and re-shaping in the necessary footprint so we can eventually return bases to the Afghan National Army," said Preston, while explaining that his mission has been made possible by the successful transition of security to the Afghan Security Forces. "It's

a very interesting time in the history of Afghanistan and for our Army."

Preston said that, unlike other troops over the past 13 years in the combat zone who were sometimes working jobs that may not have been their specialty, his troops have been able to do jobs specific to their primary military occupational specialty and an engineer battalion.

"We've been fortunate here in that we've been building and deconstructing using engineer equipment which is a win for our troops as they're going to work and doing what they were trained to do," he said.

"Our battalion consists of two Reserve companies and four National Guard companies from Maine, New Jersey, Delaware, Mississippi, Alabama, Oklahoma, West Virginia and Florida, so at first we thought it would be challenging having people from such diverse regions work together as sometimes we use different words for the same thing," added Preston. "In reality, we have had no real

friction or issues due to where we come from. I describe it as being like building an airplane in flight as we met many of the units for the first time at a mobilization site in the U.S. and then built a great team with all the great people in it from the far north east to the south."

As part of the active-duty Army's 82nd Sustainment Brigade-U.S.

Central Command Materiel Recovery Element, which is based out of Fort Bragg, N.C., the 133rd Eng. Bn. works to ensure buildings are prepped prior to deconstruction with all interior fixtures such as plumbing and electrical components removed. Once the preparation is done, the battalion can bring in heavy machinery to tear down the structures.

Eventually, the battalion cleans up the site and clears off any debris, while also saving any reusable materials.

"We do projects to build berms, we deconstruct on several different forward operating bases throughout our area of

operations, tear down b-huts, relocatable buildings, gyms and tents," said Preston. "Anything man-made that you can walk into we've torn down."

"We save reusable structures such as tents and can save some materials from building sites that can be given to locals," added Preston. "We've also had a few missions where we've been able to interact with the

locals building relationships with them. But we always try to make sure that anything reusable can be returned to the military system or given to Afghans so that we're not wasting anything when possible which saves money in the long run."

Over the course of their nine-month deployment, the battalion has contended with several challenges.

One of the major challenges includes working long hours in the combat zone while being away from family, according to Preston.

"Overcoming that challenge
(Continued on page 8)

"Our mission is significant in that we are a key element in re-sizing and re-shaping in the necessary footprint"

"It's a very interesting time in the history of Afghanistan and for our Army."



Seabees Transfer Authority and Training Mission

(Continued from page 2)

just about every Regional Command. Everything you touched turned into success. Every commander with whom you came into contact, wanted you back. I know...because I heard from many of them as you departed their respective battle space. They loved 'their' Seabees. Quite a tribute to your professionalism and dedication."

Holland also mentioned the challenges faced by NMCB 28, which it overcame with great success. Challenges such as the retrograde from Camp Leatherneck and Kandahar Airfield, moving to Camp Phoenix mid-deployment, having

"No unit has undergone such drastic alterations in their vision of a deployment."

"No unit has undergone such drastic alterations in their vision of a deployment," said Holland. "Yet, though facing the most challenging experiences of all of our battalions, I would suggest that NMCB 28 leaves the most enduring legacy of them all. You led the brigade's decisive

operation. You took something, from almost nothing. You built relationships with Afghan Soldiers that will never be forgotten, by either party. No matter what happens here after Coalition Forces depart, the NEB will have had a fighting chance because of the Seabees."

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Curtis Smith, commanding officer of NMCB 28, Task Force Coda, expanded on the spirit of cooperation that surrounded the Seabees' mission in Afghanistan, and its effect on those still working there.

"Early in the deployment I could think of no finer finish than for the men and women of Task Force Coda to

successfully accomplish our mission, to celebrate our achievements, and to make our families proud of the way we conduct ourselves over the course of our deployment," said Smith. "Little did I know that there would be multiple missions that we could celebrate not only amongst ourselves, but with our Afghan counterparts as well as our Turkish and Bulgarian partners. A defining moment for me was when I visited Camp Ghazi and saw a Seabee patch on an [Afghan National Army] soldier's uniform. He had the grin of a young petty



Cmdr. Jennifer Donahue, commanding officer of NMCB 25, addresses the Seabees after Task Force Ultimatus assumed authority from TF Coda

officer who had just earned a warfare device or had just been promoted; he was proud – he was proud to have been a part of the Seabees."

After Smith officially transferred authority to U.S. Navy Cmdr. Jennifer Donahue, commanding officer of NMCB 25, Task Force Ultimatus; Donahue recognized the unique nature of the battalion's mission and the opportunities it presents.

"The challenge that lies in front of us will not be an easy one," said Donahue. "We will not be executing the traditional Sea-

bee mission like the ones we have deployed before to fulfill. But I truly believe that the mission we have been handed is more profound and far reaching than any we have undertaken before. Today, we undertake a new mission. We are here to advise Afghanistan's National Engineer Brigade to develop their own end state."

Donahue continued, "Each one of you is now an Ambassador. Our jobs are to teach, to advise, to train. We will not be judged on how many miles we convoy or how many man days of construction we execute. Our mission is to help prepare the NEB and [Afghan National Army] develop and become sustainable so that we can leave Afghanistan a better place than where we started. The U.S. is leaving at the end of the year. Our legacy will not be a 1200-man forward operating base, but rather we will be a part of preparing a fully capable brigade of engineers, able to take on the feats Afghanistan asks of it for many years to come. I'm proud to serve with each and every one of you."



Seabees with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB 25) stand in formation during the Transfer of Authority Ceremony between NMCB 28 and NMCB 28 at Camp Phoenix, April 15.



Continuing the Deconstruction Effort



Photo by Spc. Abimbola Makanjuola, 150th Eng. Co. UPAR

Spc. Devan Glaviano, a heavy equipment operator with the 150th Eng. Co. receives instructions from his team leader, Sgt. Jeffrey Maestas, during a deconstruction project at Bagram Airfield, April 10.

(Continued from page 6)

all comes down to creative leadership and we have worked hard to ensure that we're actively engaged in everything from doing PT together to resiliency classes on finance, relationships, spirituality and finding ways that can get our troops away from a mundane routine or their work desk" Preston said.

When inclement weather such as rain storms during the rainy season in Afghanistan keep engineers away from their job sites, 133rd troops have found various ways to stay busy from doing wood work indoors to assisting with maintenance teams.

"No one goes and hides, they all go looking for things to do so we will engage our labor force in other manners if the weather isn't being cooperative," said Preston.

With heavy equipment such as hydraulic excavators and loaders being used every day for long hours, machinery has to be constantly maintained.

"We inherited a fleet of

machinery that didn't just come off the assembly line and we're working it hard," said Preston. "Fortunately, we have a great maintenance crew who are a bunch of heroes in my eyes as they are always out chasing down parts and servicing the equipment, keeping their nose to grind stone without a complaint and ensuring the mission continues."

As with any job on involving engineers and heavy equipment, safety is something the battalion focuses on each day, said Preston.

"They've taken this opportunity to serve their country and take pride in what they've accomplished."

"From the brigade to company levels, we have a great safety program which includes

training, situational awareness, safety noncommissioned officers at every job site and Soldiers who provide security at various sites when necessary," said Preston. "We continually do inspections, give classes and talk to Soldiers about safety and ensure our troops are doing the right thing."

With all the safety procedures they have emplaced, over

the course of the deployment, the battalion has greatly decreased their number of accidents.

"The metrics support that we are doing the right thing," he added. "Our strength is our Soldiers looking after other Soldiers."

With his troops being part of the Army National Guard and Reserve components, Preston works with the 82nd SB-CMRE brigade and his companies to ensure his troops are in a good position when they go back to their civilian jobs and the battalion also assists the troops who may not have jobs in the civilian sector.

"Going back without a job can be a challenge so we partner with the brigade and ensure that our troops have a completed resume if they are seeking employment," said Preston. "For those that have jobs already, we ensure they get a letter from the brigade, the battalion and their companies which are sent to their employer so they can hear about all the great things their employee has accomplished while deployed."

"We have set in place a Soldier strengthening program and we expect every member of the battalion who is a staff sergeant or below to have no less

than three licenses on things such as bulldozers, hydraulic excavators and other equipment," added Preston. "So we really want to help them return home a lot stronger."

As he looks back on the few months left for this deployment, Preston said his troops have not lost the motivation to accomplish the mission and take pride in what they do.

"You can see a pickup in energy as the weather has gotten warmer and as our guys have started to see the light at the end of tunnel and know where the finish line is, morale is as high as it's ever been and we're in a good place," said Preston. "Everyone is pulling their own weight and you don't see too many people who don't have a smile on their face."

"I think the best thing about the mission is that these troops get to show up as an engineer battalion no matter what their specialty and they're the only ones who can do the engineer job and no one else can do what they do," said Preston. "They've taken the opportunity to serve their country and take pride in what they've accomplished. They can look back at what they've done here and know that they've made a significant contribution that will have a historical impact on the future of Afghanistan."



Photo by Spc. Abimbola Makanjuola, 150th Eng. Co. UPAR

Spc. Ryan Ratledge, a heavy equipment operator for 150th Eng. Co., refuels a bull dozer during the deconstruction of a motor pool.



Helping Afghans Counter the IED Threat

By U.S. Army Sgt. Javier Amador
3rd BCT, 10th Mtn. Public Affairs Office

KHOST PROVINCE, Afghanistan—Spartan brigade soldiers helped graduate 59 Afghan soldiers of Route Clearance Company, 1st Brigade, 203rd Corps of the Afghan National Army, from an anti-Improvised Explosive Device system training class, April 2, 2014, at Camp Parsa, Khost Province, Afghanistan.

The soldiers were trained and qualified to operate a system called Symphony, a mobile system used to counter the newer types of IEDs which are becoming more common on today's battlefield.

"The intent is for the Afghan forces to be able to teach themselves how to use the system. All of the training we have been doing with them in the past few months has been geared to do that," said U.S. Army Capt. Luke Plante, a native of Windsor Locks, Conn.

Plant is the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division's electronic warfare officer. Plante, along with U.S. Army 1st Lt. Taylor Kilmer, the executive officer of the 4th Battalion, 25th Artillery Regi-

ment, 3BCT, are responsible for providing tactical expertise as well as coordinating the training.

IEDs have been deployed by insurgents against both the Coalition and Afghan security forces for years, but their technology has advanced. Although the devices are still made of whatever materials insurgents can re-

purpose, the methods of triggering them have changed in an effort to increase their effectiveness. One of the more insidious methods is initiating the IEDs

using wireless control devices, such as cell phones. The Symphony system is designed to defeat those devices from a safe distance, while on the move.

"RCIEDs are radio controlled improvised explosive devices, which basically use the electromagnetic spectrum, particularly radio waves to initiate them. The Symphony system overpowers those systems so they can't be initiated," said Plante.

The soldiers received approximately an hour and a half of classroom instruction and six hours of hands-on training on the system. To successfully graduate from the course, the students had to physically demonstrate

how to power-up the system, set it up and then correctly shut it down, which they were all able to do.

"The field service representative commented that not a single mistake was made. There were a couple of minor hesitations, but no one made a mistake," said Plante.

The Symphony counter-RCIED system is among the latest

Ryan Mayfield, the 3BCT's fire support officer.

Mayfield, a native of Culver, Ind., is confident the Symphony system gives the Afghans a technology they can use to take their growing tactical abilities into the future.

"I think the system will make a difference. Their route clearance efforts, by their own understanding of the terrain and

"It is a capability we can leave with the Afghans that can give them sustainability once we leave."



Soldiers of the ANA Route Clearance Company go through the operating procedures of their vehicle-mounted Symphony counter-Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Device system during a class.

additions to the growing list of critical yet supportable capabilities which are giving the Afghan forces the confidence they need to meet their mission requirements, especially when the last of the U.S. forces leave Afghanistan.

"It's a capability we can leave with the Afghans that can give them sustainability once we leave as well

as gives them increased force protection capabilities for operations. Everything we leave behind, we want it to be sustainable for them," said U.S. Army Maj.

environment, are very successful by their definition but it is a system which gives them the ability to defeat radio controlled IEDs which brings them confidence," said Mayfield.

"The intent is for the Afghan forces to be able to teach themselves."

Plante said the ability to sustain the program begins with focusing on transitioning the training responsibility from the U.S. to the Afghans from the start.

Approximately 10 classes have been taught at forward operating bases throughout the Spartan brigade's area of responsibility with more to come.



Soldiers of the Route Clearance, 1st Brigade, 203rd ANA Corps, receive classroom training on their vehicle-mounted Symphony counter-Radio Controlled IED System during a class at Camp Parsa.



International Training Partners

(Continued from page 3)

“The Afghans are learning a lot from us,” said Pittmann. “So, of course, we come in and we have our own way of doing things. There was no real culture shock, just a matter of learning how to deal with our international counterparts on a personal level. Little things, like maintaining communication, training schedules, and things like that. But we’ve been working quite well after just a short period of time.”

“The Afghans are learning a lot from us. And we are learning how to speak and bridge the international barrier with the other nations.”

“The Afghans are learning a lot from us,” added Yalcin. “We are learning how to speak, behave accordingly with the other forces, and the NEB is learning to help themselves.” As this international team moves forward in its mission, despite their different nationalities, they have become one team with one fight. As a result, the NEB is closer than ever to becoming the force that GIRoA needs to help build a sustainable future.



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

Seabees with NMCB 25 joke around with some of the Turkish Soldiers they work with on the SFAAT to train the National Engineer Brigade during the NMCB Transfer of Authority Ceremony April 15.

Engineers Build One-Stop Sustainment Center



Story from video package by U.S. Army Sgt. Rodney Roldan / Recorded by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe, JTF Sapper

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — There’s a new shop in town with the goal of making things easier for Coalition forces.

Members of the 10th Sustainment Brigade opened up the new Sgt. Darrough Soldier Sustainment Center on Kanahar Airfield.

The center was built with the help of the 284th Engineer Company (Vertical), 130th Engineer Brigade.

“Benefits of having this center include the location is central to Kandahar Airfield, and these functions all fall under the 10th Sustainment Brigade,” said

Lt.jg. Edward Dale, Task Force Sapper RC-South Construction Coordination Officer. “Whereas previously they were over a mile apart, now they are probably 20 feet apart.”

The center, honoring fallen Soldier, Sgt. James M. Darrough, offers coalition forces a one stop shop solution by combining administrative services into one building.

“Our initial goal was to consolidate the finance, regional mail distribution center, post

office, and I.D. card section to a single location for convenience,” explained Dale.

Having the support offices in one location allows the staff to spend less time traveling between offices and more time supporting customer needs.

“It’s beneficial because, especially from a postal point of view, the APO and RMDC being co-located, we are actually able to cut out some of the processes and steps,” explained Capt. Ka-

“It’s beneficial because, especially from a postal point of view...you’re looking at a decrease in about one or two days in moving mail”

milias Blake, postal officer for the center. “So you’re looking at a decrease in about one or two days as far as moving mail.”

As the mission continues in Afghanistan, the staff of the Soldier Sustainment Center will continue to service the Kandahar region, ensuring Coalition forces always have a place to turn for excellent customer care.

“Kandahar Airfield, being a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) base, you have several other nationalities,” said Dale. “This is the only post office on base, the only finance on base, so they will also be using these facilities.”



Photo Courtesy of Armed Forces Network



Brigade Headquarters & Headquarters Company (HHC)

Sapper Family,

Hello again and hope all is well on the home front. All is well here as we are settled back in on BAF and getting into the rhythm of our new mission.

We are shy of five weeks in getting home and I know everyone is excited to rejoin family and friends.

Last month I had mentioned us looking at about 2 weeks for block leave. The amount of leave has been extended to approximately 3 weeks. That is great news!

A couple highlights from the company include SGT Clayton and SSG Moore's battlefield promotions. These two guys have done an outstanding job. They are the guys that allow the unit to communicate- whether it is internet communication, phones, radios- you name it and they do it. The

entire J6 shop has not had much down time this deployment as we have moved multiple times. The team is headed by MAJ Douglas and MSG Sanchez. The two of them, with their section, know how to make things happen.

Our J7 shop has had their hands full as well. There isn't a member of the group that has not earned their paycheck. Whether it is survey and design missions across the theater or spearheading the deconstruction of BAF, they are true engineers, they identify the problem and figure out how to fix it. That's what we do best.

I would like to congratulate LTC Pastor as he heads to 82nd Airborne to be their new division Chief of Plans. LTC Pastor will be right back at home on Ft. Bragg, NC.

With his departure, LTC Rector moved from the J7 OIC position to the Brigade Chief of Staff. It is a perfect fit for LTC Rector. He understands the engineer mission

and knows how to effectively mass our efforts.

I would also like to thank HHC, 130th EN BN (Prov) and the FRG. Your hard work shows in the almost \$2,000 raised through fundraising. Outstanding!

Until next time, stay safe and we look forward to seeing you soon. **Combat Ready!**

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



Sgt. Justin Clayton (left) and Staff Sgt. Steven Moore, work hard to run new wires for conductivity as the Brigade settled in at BAF this month

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 OEFCRISISHOTLINE@afghan.swa.army.mil.

Remember, you aren't alone!

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



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe
Western Afghanistan — Spc. Steven Adams (center), a vertical engineer with the 284th Eng. Co., oversees some ANA Soldiers with the 207th CEK at Camp Zafar, April 29.

Around the Sapper AO This past month



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe
Kabul, Afghanistan — Soldiers with the 242nd Construction Management Team receive their deployment patches. The CMT recently took over the construction mission as the BDE HQs relocated to BAF



Photo courtesy of TF Bayonet
Southern Afghanistan — Soldiers with the Forward Support Company, 65th Engineer Battalion, conduct a patrol of FOB Lindsey's perimeter



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe
Eastern Afghanistan — An ANA Soldier with the 201st CEK works with Soldiers of the 284th Engineer Company to place concrete at FOB Gamberi



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe
Eastern, Afghanistan — Brigade Staff members talk through base de-scoping plans with the Brigade Commander overlooking Bagram Airfield

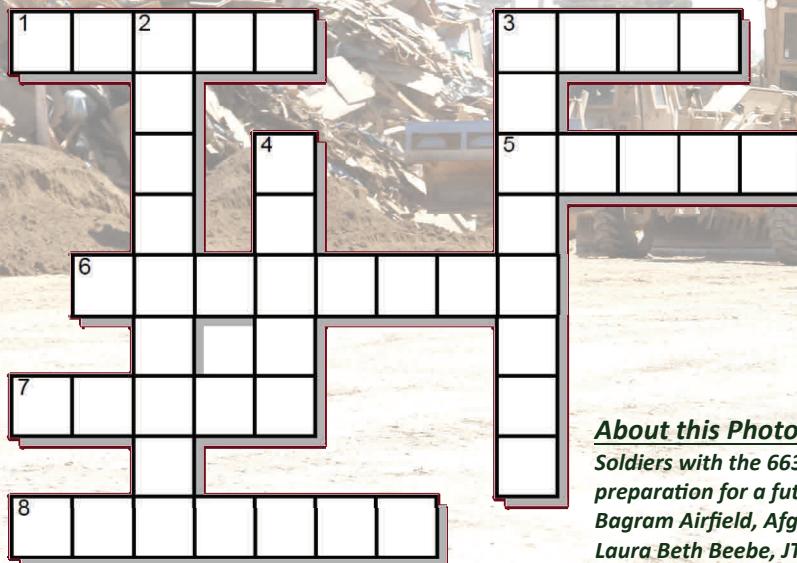
ACROSS

1. New __ Compound: location of new water well
3. April is awareness month for __ (acronym)
5. State 133rd Eng. Bn. Is from
6. New Solider Sustainment Center on KAF
7. Drilling Rig the water well team uses
8. Commander of the final Seabee Bn in TEB

JTF Sapper Crossword Challenge!

DOWN

2. 1 of 3 militaries the NEB SFAAT are from
3. Mobile system used to counter newer IEDs
4. Weeks of block leave HHC Soldiers will receive



**HINT: EACH ANSWER
CAN BE FOUND INSIDE
THIS NEWSLETTER**

About this Photo:

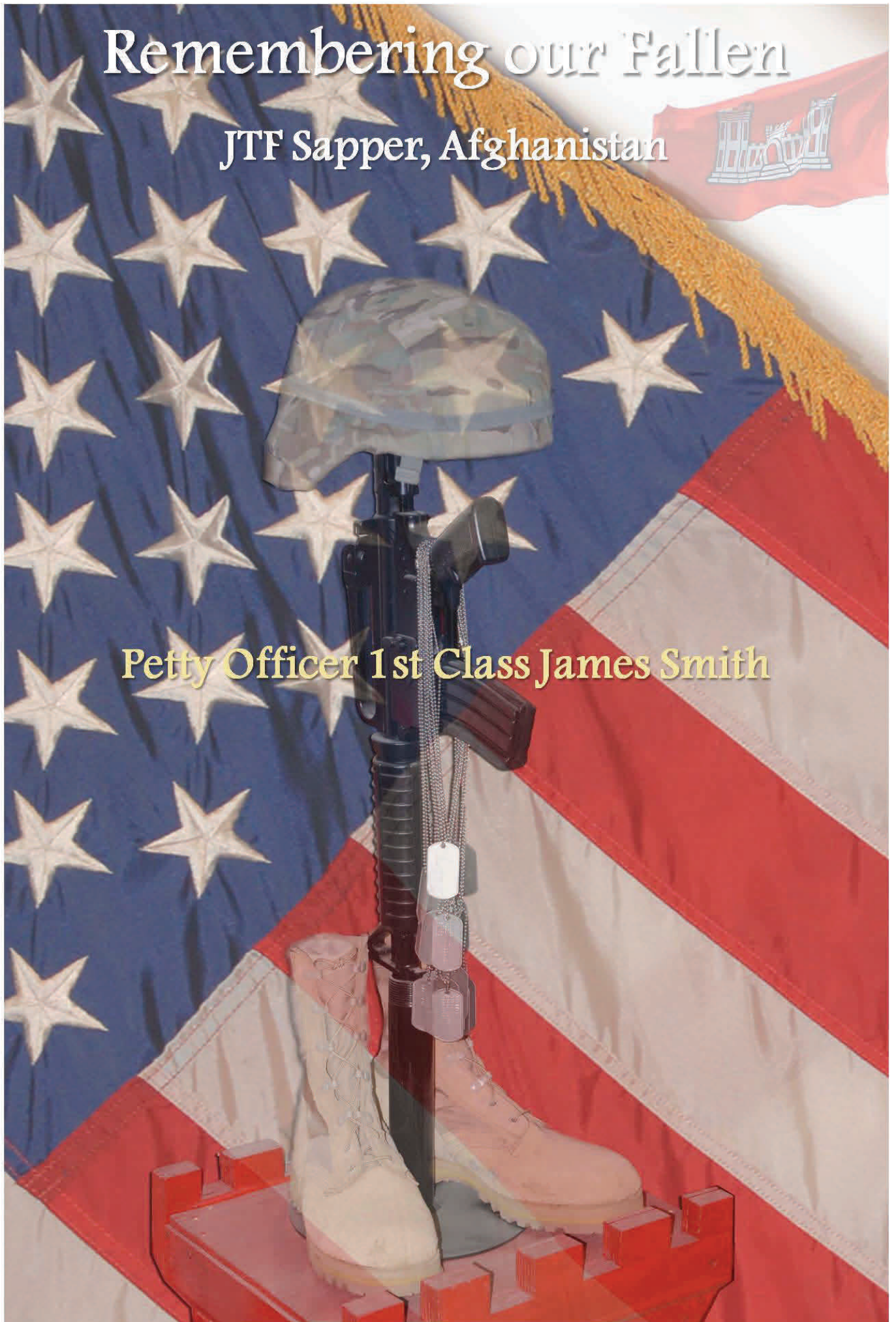
Soldiers with the 663rd Eng. Co. (Horizontal) clear debris in preparation for a future force protection platform at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, April 26. (Photo by 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe, JTF Sapper Public Affairs).

Remembering our Fallen

JTF Sapper, Afghanistan

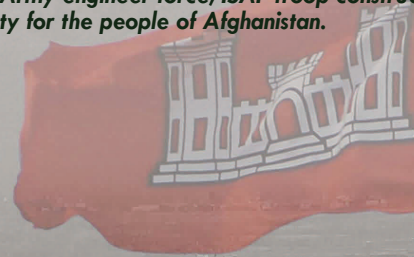


Petty Officer 1st Class James Smith



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



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