

THE WOLVES' DEN

JANUARY 2012

HOME OF THE 1ST STRYKER BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION
TASK FORCE ARCTIC WOLVES

VOLUME 1

ISSUE 5



COMMANDER'S CORNER

1/25 SBCT Commander
Colonel Todd R. Wood

Arctic Wolves,

As we celebrate the New Year we should not just declare our resolutions to improve next year but also take the time to reflect on the brigade's achievements in 2011.

A year ago, this month, many Soldiers and family members prepared for their first extended separation as the brigade prepared to go to the National Training Center in California. After more than 30 days in California for the Mission Readiness Exercise and with most of the equipment shipped to Afghanistan, the brigade continued to train in Alaska and prepare for the upcoming deployment to Afghanistan.

April 06, the brigade gathered on Ladd Army Airfield to officially case the colors during the deployment ceremony and shortly after, Soldiers said goodbye to loved ones. The more than 4,000 Soldiers of the brigade hit the ground in Afghanistan running and assumed responsibility as Combined Team Zabul, a multi-national force, which was responsible for much of the Kandahar Province and Regional Command –South.

In July, the Arctic Wolves were sent to the heart of the Taliban, the Panjwa'i District, to relieve the Canadians of Task Force Kandahar. Partnered with the 1st Brigade, 205th Afghan National Army Corps, Afghan National Police, and Afghan National Civil Order Police, the Wolves pushed deep into the Horn of Panjwa'i where the insurgents had established a strong hold. Within four short months the brigade and ANSF had established Combat Outpost Lion which continues to provide enduring security in Do'ab village and the surrounding area.

As the world closed out 2011 and after six months of partnering and mentoring, the Afghan Army Brigade conducted their first independent operation with overwhelming success. The Afghan brigade found and destroyed more than 112 IEDs making the area safer for U.S. forces and local civilians. At almost the same time, 53 insurgent fighters decided to join the peace process in Panjwa'i and laid down their weapons in an official ceremony. These were impossible feats a year ago and the Arctic Wolves made it happen.

The Arctic Wolves spent 2011 doing the hard tasks to standard -enabling Afghan National Security Forces to improve and conduct security operations - which has set the stage for strategic mission success in this area for 2012 and years to come.

Every Soldier of the brigade should be proud of the accomplishments of the brigade in 2011 and we should all resolve to continue to lead the way in standards and mission accomplishment.

Strike First!

Strike Hard!

And Happy New Year!



WOLF 7

1/25 SBCT Command Sergeant Major CSM Bernie Knight

Arctic Wolves,

It's a new year and a new mission. Our NCOs and Soldiers must maintain the same high standard of discipline and performance that they have shown throughout the deployment.

Redeployment is on the horizon but more importantly mission success, as the Afghan security forces continue to show growth and increased ability to conduct security operations with U.S. forces in a mentoring role. If we stay on this path and keep developing our security partners we will have an opportunity to see our hard work and sacrifices result in Afghan National Security Forces throughout Southern Kandahar operating independently with U.S. forces in an advisory role.

In the spring we will likely see the effects of the Afghan winter operations and hopefully see a Taliban force that has been beaten and dissipated beyond rebound.

To the Families and community back home, I can't say it enough; Thank you for the hard work in keeping the critical operations at home running while the unit is out here continuing to fight the good fight. It is your strong spirit and support that has gotten the Soldiers through tough times.

I want to wish you all a Happy New Year!

Strike First!
Strike Hard!

The Wolves' den

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 5

IED's and bullets are no match for Gimlet Soldier

Story By: Sgt. Michael Blalack

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MA-SUM GHAR, Afghanistan-- Tall and muscular, Cpl. Matt Martin looks a little out of place hunched over a laptop in his role as the training room NCO for C Company, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

Martin, a native of St. Louis, started the deployment as a grenadier in 3rd platoon, walking patrols in the Horn of Panjwa'i, one of the most volatile and dangerous areas in Southern Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

Shortly after arriving in Afghanistan, Martin was out on patrol near the village of Lakani in the Horn of Panjwa'i when he stepped on a pressure plate, setting off an antipersonnel mine.

"I had picked up a large signature with the [mine detector] so I was turning around when the IED went off," said Martin. "I got lucky, it could have been a lot worse."

The blast sent shrapnel into the right side of his face and right arm.

Martin was bleeding from shrapnel wounds and temporarily blinded in his right eye.

"I didn't want a MEDEVAC, because we knew they were watching and I didn't want to give them the satisfaction of

knowing they'd wounded one of us," said Martin.

After being treated by the medics at Forward Operating Base Zangabad, it was only 2 weeks and Martin was out on patrol again, close to the same area.

After clearing a village, 3rd platoon was on its way back to FOB Zangabad when they were hit by an ambush, taking fire from 3 sides.

While returning fire, Martin was shot in the left leg.

Martin spent a month at the ROLE 3 medical facility at Kandahar Airfield recovering.

"They had the resources at [Kandahar Airfield] for me to do physical therapy and recover.

For me, going home wasn't really an option, I didn't deploy just to go home 3 months later," said Martin. "Once I got back to Sperwan Ghar, the option was presented to me to go home, but I said no. I just wanted to stay because I knew I could still work and help out."

"They told me I couldn't go back out, but if I can't be out in the fight I can still contribute to the mission and help the guys that are out there," said Martin who now tracks company operations at FOB Zangabad in Panjwa'i District, Afghanistan.



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Holidays with Task Force Arctic Wolves

By Sgt. Michael Blalack

Americans traditionally spend the holidays with family, exchanging gifts, playing games, eating, and enjoying the company of close friends and catching up with relatives only seen on special occasions.

For U.S. service members deployed overseas the holidays can be a difficult time due to the absence of family and the traditional surroundings and pastimes that usually take place this time of year.

Following in the footsteps of generations of Soldiers deployed during Christmas the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division stepped up to the challenge of making the best of things and working with what's available to bring some holiday cheer to Forward Operating Bases and Combat Outposts across southern Afghanistan.

At Kandahar Airfield Soldiers from the Brigade Troops Battalion and Brigade Support Battalion decorated their areas with Christmas trees, snowmen and lights for a Christmas party on Dec. 18th. It was held early so that a few Soldiers who were taking leave on Christmas could enjoy a relaxed evening with their friends and coworkers.

In addition to dinner, prepared by the S4 shop, gifts and stockings full of presents, both

humorous and heartfelt, were exchanged.

At FOB Masum Ghar, the Brigade headquarters held a parade Dec. 24th, consisting of tactical vehicles that had been decorated with various themes making a few passes around the landing zone.

Then, throughout the day there were various competitions from basketball, to dominoes, to games on the Xboxes in the newly opened MWR tent.

At FOB Lindsay the senior members of 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment took over all guard duty assignments, giving the lower enlisted Soldiers the day off to relax and enjoy the activities and new equipment in the new MWR facility there.

Over the last few years several organizations have been started by groups and individuals concerned about the moral and

welfare of troops deployed in combat. These groups send care packages or letters and provide a variety of support services.

A few of these, such as Operation Christmas Tree and Operation Holiday Stockings, focus specifically on increasing the moral of deployed Soldiers during the holiday season, when the absence of family is felt more acutely.

With gifts and care packages coming in the mail from family, friends and groups of caring supporters, newly equipped MWR facilities supplied by the command, and the heartfelt companionship of their fellow Soldiers, the 1/25 SBCT made the best of Christmas in Afghanistan.



CHRISTMAS





Cavalry Soldiers receive unexpected gift for holidays

Story By: Sgt. Thomas Duval

Christmas came early for the Soldiers from the 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

During a recent mission to southern, Kandahar, Afghanistan the Joint Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Martin Dempsey, delivered a bundle of street hockey equipment to members of the 'Blackhawk' Squadron.

The donation came from the professional hockey team-the Washington Capitals.

The equipment included hockey sticks, goalie protective gear and a more invisible item; Morale.

"We get to forget everything for one to two hours," said Capt. Michael Newman, signal officer with the 5/1 CAV. "It has been a tremendous boost in morale."

Since receiving the gear, Soldiers from the 5/1 CAV have turned to pick-up games of hockey during their free time.

Newman said a team of Soldiers gets together one-to-three times a month, 'when mission allows'.

"As a bonus, it is an excellent cardio workout." Newman added.

Newman and the Soldiers said they were very thankful for the gifts from the Capitals and for the time Gen. Dempsey's took to deliver the gifts.



Bobcats on the move

Story By: 1st Lt. Anthony Formica

The 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment “Bobcats” recently completed the daunting task of moving the Battalion Headquarters from Forward Operations Base (FOB) Tarnak to their new home at FOB Shoja. Moving assets into any location can be a challenging experience under the best of circumstances; moving a Battalion Headquarters while maintaining command and control of operations in the battalion’s Area of Operations (AO), covering 320 square miles, was a truly Herculean task demanding expert planning, precise coordination, and lots of hard work.

The expansion of FOB Shoja had been one of the major hurdles in the relocation process. Shoja once held a single platoon plus the headquarters element for the Bobcat’s Charger Company.

The FOB had to nearly double in size to accommodate the combined numbers of the Battalion Headquarters, mechanics, repair crews, construction crews, and a full complement of Afghan National Army (ANA) Soldiers.

Brigade engineer teams are working in conjunction with 1-5 Infantry Battalion Soldiers around the clock not only to expand the base in size, but also to build new tents to house the

growing number of Soldiers.

The focus of the Engineers has been on increasing the area for a more well rounded Morale, welfare and Recreation Center, a newer and larger dining facility, and additional living quarters.

Additionally, the engineers have constructed an entirely new Battalion Headquarters building, complete with staff offices, conference rooms, and a Tactical Operations Center (TOC) which enable the Bobcats to control and direct their efforts throughout southern Kandahar Province.

If time stops for no man, then war accelerates its normal passage to a full-out sprint. As a result, the Bobcat’s operations continued despite relocating.

The radio and telephone operators in the Battalion TOC continued to keep track of every mission, report every significant action, and help control every engagement that occurs within the vast Bobcat AO even as



they packed up and relocated their work stations from FOB Tarnak to FOB Shoja.

The closure of FOB Tarnak was as demanding a task as expanding FOB Shoja has been.

Bobcat Soldiers had to tear down and pack up their living tents, clean up the garbage and waste that accumulated on Tarnak after seven months of use, coordinate and transport several cargo storage containers of equipment, ensure that no classified or mission-essential equipment was forgotten or left behind, and conduct a final inspection in order to ensure that all of these tasks were completed to standard.

FOB Tarnak was formerly known as the heart of the Bobcat’s efforts because the location allowed them to focus on con-

ducting operations in Dand District.

Since then they have been able to transfer increasing amounts of responsibility for Dand to their Afghan counterparts as Afghan National Security Forces continue to improve their capabilities over the past few months.

The 1-5Inf. has in turn been able to increase their focus to the far more lawless and problematic Panjwa'i District to the west.

The Battalion's move from Tar-

nak to Shoja represented a tremendous advance in the broader strategic picture in Afghanistan- essentially demonstrating an unprecedented Afghan ability to provide local security.

The Bobcat's move will complete yet another chapter in the Battalion's complex, dynamic, and largely successful Afghan story—but not the last chapter.

They are hopeful that by the time they are ready to close down the Battalion Headquarters for

good and retire the Battalion standard in Afghanistan, they will be able to oversee numerous other transfers of authority from International Security Assistance Forces to the Afghan Forces .

According to the 'bobcats' the transfer of authority from coalition to their Afghan partners would be the greatest tribute they could make to the collective sacrifices they have made and travails they have experienced during this deployment.

Story By: Sgt. Thomas Duval

When you compare Capt. Angela Chipman to Santa Claus or Mrs. Claus, there isn't many similarities. She doesn't have a big white beard, a red suit and doesn't rely on reindeer to get from one place to the other.

Despite these key differences, she does share one important trait with the fictional Claus family- Chipman loves to give.

"In many ways, giving is what makes me tick," said the Williamsburg, Iowa native. "I've always been drawn to the military because its' very foundation is based on the concept of sacrifice and putting the lives of others above your own."

During a recent mission to a village in the Daman district, southern Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Chipman arrived, like she had so many times before, bearing gifts- making her a welcomed site to the villagers in Daman.

"The people of Daman seem very positive toward coalition forces," said Chipman. "Even in some of the villages where we know there is a Taliban influence, the villagers are very happy



to have us come in with the Afghan National Police during partnering operations."

With the temperatures in Afghanistan drastically dropping to below freezing temperatures Chipman, brought the children knitted caps to help protect them from the harsh weather.

Chipman, the Female Engagement Team leader with the 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, distributed more than twenty-five knit caps, to the local Afghan children.

The knit caps were donated to Chipman, to

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distribute during her deployment, by another charitable ‘giver’, Mrs. Vicki Carter, who also resided in Chipman’s hometown.

“She’d made each of those little hats by hand and wanted to put them into the hands of people who needed them the most,” Chipman added. “She wanted no recognition or payment in return, only asking that I give her a picture of those receiving her gifts. Her willingness to sacrifice personal time and resources to give something of comfort to people she doesn’t know in a country thousands of miles away brought me closer to home this Christmas season than I was expecting possible.”

Although the holiday season is a great time to highlight the spirit of giving, Chipman has made it a year-round mission.

During the summer months, she joined her team for routine missions into the local villages. As a FET leader, her team is responsible for visiting villages and talking with the local female population.

“I love working with the Female Engagement Team because there is no other job out there that allows me to get as close to the female population in Afghanistan as this,” said the FET leader.

In addition to bringing vital supplies to the Afghan people, Chipman and her team focus on giv-

ing the local people the skills necessary to improve their way of life. One of those skills is how to purify water.

“Teaching someone how to make their drinking water clean may not sound like the sexiest thing happening but it will directly impact their immediate health and welfare which, in the long run, will have an indirect influence on other things,” she added. “As they’ve put it, ‘You’re doing your job to better our lives’.

Although she is very humble about the things she does, she has become somewhat of a figure to emulate not only to people she provides for but also Soldiers and leaders she serves with.

“Capt. Chipman is a phenomenal asset to the Battalion; her positive, team-centric attitude impacts all facets of the organization,” said Maj. Jason Nierman, the executive officer for 2-8FA. “She has assumed numerous roles within the unit and has maintained excellence in her core duties as the senior human resources officer.”

“At the end of my life, will my successes be measured by the amount of money I have in the bank or the size of my house? Or will it be measured by the positive influence I had on the people around me,” Chipman said.



Change of Command

Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Brigade Troops Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, welcomed Capt. Joshua Withington as their new commander during a change of command ceremony held at Forward Operating Base Masum Ghar, Dec. 8. During the ceremony the ‘Kodiaks’ of HHC, BTB, said farewell to their former commander, Maj. Kenneth Bath. Col. Todd R. Wood, commander of 1/25 SBCT and Brig. Gen. Ahmed Habibi, commander of the 1st Brigade, 205th Afghan National Army Corps were in attendance. (U.S. Army Photo By: Sgt. Thomas Duval)

Wounded NCO weds at Walter Reed

Story By: Staff Sgt. Patricia McMurphy

FAIRBANKS, Alaska - Dana Wille and Sgt. Davin Dumar had known each other since high school and ran on the track team together. They admittedly had crushes on each other, but each was too shy to profess his or her love for the other.

"Davin was a senior while Dana was just a freshman", Laura Wille, Dana's mother, said, "and they kept in touch via the internet".

She said she didn't think the two talked to each other that much; just "kept track" of each other.

Dumar joined the Army in 2005 a year after high school and - except for a one-year tour at Fort Bragg, N.C. - was stationed in Alaska.

This April, during Dumar's second Alaska tour as an infantryman with the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, he unexpectedly got back in touch with Dana when he commented on the Facebook site of a mutual friend who, unbeknownst to him, had passed away.

Dana saw Davin's comment and she thought it best to let him know what had happened to their friend, according to Laura Wille.

Soon they started calling and texting each other. "I couldn't tell you how many pages of text I saw on her phone bill," Laura Wille said.

When Dumar deployed to Afghanistan with the 1-25th SBCT in May, the two kept in touch as much as possible.

Dumar said he wrote more than 30 letters in that time and had decided he wanted to spend the rest of his life with Dana Wille.

He said he was going to surprise her with a marriage proposal on his mid-tour leave in August, but an unforeseen event on July 7 changed those plans.

Dumar was injured in an attack and had to be transported to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., for treatment. Dumar's father notified Dana and she got to the hospital as soon as she could.

"She never wavered, never looked back," Dana's mother said. "She just couldn't wait to get down to see him in person and reassure him that she was still there for him."

"I think he proposed to her the day after she got there and she thought he was out of it on his medication or just joking with her," Laura Wille said. "She said 'yes,' but then she just pushed it aside thinking this was not for real, but a day or two later he reassured her that he was dead serious."

"She was kind enough to stay with me when I lost my leg," Dumar said, "I figured if she could



stick with me through that she could stick with me through anything."

"My dad had my credit card and I had him run it for her to buy her own ring because I was in the hospital and couldn't do it," he said.

Dana Wille started planning the wedding. She made all the arrangements and the date was set: Oct. 8.

A few friends, doctors and nurses and the parents of Dana Wille and Davin Dumar were in attendance, along with a surprise visit from U.S. Army Alaska's Commanding General, Raymond Palumbo and Command Sgt. Maj. David Turnbull.

Dana Wille and Dumar were wed at the Walter Reed Chapel and plan to have another ceremony next November in Michigan so the rest of their friends and family can attend.

Dumar said he plans to stay in the Army, but will have to talk it over with his new bride ... after the honeymoon.

Combat Steakhouse: Not your typical mom and pop restaurant

Story By: Sgt. Thomas Duval

COP EDGERTON, Afghanistan -- When most people think of a steakhouse, images of an old western themed dining room filled with steaks and garnished bake potatoes are sure to follow.

Tucked in a small corner of southern Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Cookie's Steakhouse is changing the way deployed Soldiers view fine dining.

Its wood sides, aged and weathered, are complimented by matching picnic tables. The Soldiers fine china is often cardboard disposable trays and plastic utensils.

Unlike most food joints, the kitchen is located under a green tent separated from the actual dining hall and lacks much of the necessities like stoves and deep fryers. The lack of equipment, often times, leaves the cooking and prepar-

ing of food up to the imagination of the chef, owner and server: Spc. William Kennedy.

"The biggest challenge is keeping everyone happy with limited resources," said Kennedy, a cook assigned to the 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division.

For Kennedy, a Cleveland Ohio native, keeping everyone happy means working long hours.

On average, the Ohioan spends more than twelve hours preparing and cooking food three times a day.

In addition to working long hours he said the key to being a successful cook is to add variety and of course, 'cook as much steak as possible'.

Because steak is a rare treat, much of the daily menu is left up to supply and the creativity of Kennedy and its not rare to see something as simple as a

tuna fish sandwich as the daily special.

"It's one of those things you learn as you go," he said.

"You just have to learn how to use your spices even if it's something simple."

For example, on one particular day, Kennedy used parmesan cheese packets to spice up a box of tasteless potatoes. Although simple, it made a world of difference to the Soldiers who have become accustomed to flavorless meals-ready-to-eat.

Kennedy said cooking back home for his wife and son inspires his creativeness in the kitchen in Afghanistan and added that although there may not be the most high tech appliances, there is enough between his skills and imagination to feed any force.

"He works really hard and is always trying something new," said Staff Sgt. Harry Space, an Infantryman assigned to the Security Assistance Forces Team with the 1-5 Inf. "He's always in the kitchen."

On average, Cookie's feeds 75 – 100 hungry Soldiers and offers three meals a day.

Sarcastically named after a former cook, Cookie's doesn't offer many of the same amenities as traditional establishments but Kennedy said it offers one thing many Soldiers don't have the privilege of getting and that's a warm meal.

"When you come back from mission and you haven't eaten anything, it's nice to have a cooked meal waiting on you," Space said.



Operation Hope Hero 58

Story By: Sgt. Thomas Duval

FOB MASUM GHAR, Afghanistan - The history books in Panjwa'i district, Kandahar province, Afghanistan, have historically been written by the Taliban. Known more commonly as the birthplace of the Taliban and a strategic stronghold for the insurgents, each chapter in Panjwa'i holds stories of insurgents' dominance with little to no resistance from either Afghan or coalition forces.

In July, the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, operating as Task Force Arctic Wolves, moved into the area and began a partnership with Afghan forces in an effort to begin

writing a new chapter, one that the people of Afghanistan controlled instead of the insurgents.

On Dec. 17, the 1st Brigade, 205th Afghan National Army Corps, began rewriting the history books as they began Operation Hope Hero 58.

During Operation Hope Hero 58, more than 400 ANSF planned, coordinated and executed a multi-agency operation, a challenging feat for even developed security forces.

ANSF worked closely with Afghan National Civil Order Police, Afghan Uniformed Police and Afghan National Defense Services to conduct a number of advanced clearing operations.

During the clearing process, the independent Afghan force discovered multiple caches containing a large amount of bomb-making material, including ammunition, more than ten pressure plates, ignition systems, over 1,000 lbs of homemade explosives and enough material to make more than 112 IEDs.

In addition to uncovering



and destroying a significant amount of insurgents' weapon supply, the ANSF destroyed multiple insurgent fighting positions.

The operation, which came to an end Friday, was an important step for both ANSF and coalition forces as talks of troop withdrawals demand much of the public's attention.

For the 1st Brigade, 205th ANA, the success of the mission was the culmination of a five-year partnership in the Panjwa'i district.

For more than three years, Canadian forces worked shoulder to shoulder, or in Pashto, "shona ba shona," so much so that ISAF adopted the phrase as their campaign slogan.

Through continuous partnered operations, coalition forces and Afghan National Security Forces progressively moved deeper and deeper into one of the most hostile environments



in Afghanistan.

In July, Task Force Arctic Wolves, led by Col. Todd R. Wood, took over for the Canadian forces, and within just three-short months, an Afghan-U.S. combat outpost, COP Lion, located deep in the Horn of Panjwa'i, typically a unexplored region, was opened.

The new outpost allowed Afghan forces to oversee and monitor routes often used by insurgents and gave them the upper hand in limiting the movement of weapons, explosives and illicit drug operations.

The term "shona ba shona" was dropped, therefore initiating the start of Afghan-led and independent missions in Panjwa'i, helping further progress toward transition and enabling ANSF to assume full responsi-

bility for security in the area.

Recognizing the significant improvements in local security, 50 militants laid down their weapons and joined the peace process last Tuesday at the Panjwa'i District Center.

The reintegration of the former insurgent fighters was part of the Afghan reconciliation program and was recognized as one of the largest and most visible signs of improvement in recent history.

Panjwa'i District Governor Hajji Fazzludin Agha works closely with local ANSF to enable the formal and informal reintegration process.

The two sides agree that there is still work to be done but acknowledged the importance of Operation Hope Hero 58 as a major step toward transitioning security operations from ISAF to ANSF.



OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- 1st Afghan National Army dependant operation in the history of Panjwa'i
- Only 2 ANA Soldiers suffered minor wounds
- More than 1,000 lbs of HME found
- Enough Material for 112 IED's
- 400 ANA Soldiers participated

REINTEGRATION

- 53 Militants laid down their weapons to join the piece



RUNNING WITH THE PACK



ARCTIC WOLVES RETENTION

Recently we have heard a lot of Soldiers say “the Army is being unfair” or “the Army is not taking in to account individual desires”. There is a reason for this, and that reason is the third goal of the Army retention program listed in AR 601-280, “achieve and maintain Army force alignment through the retention, transfer, or enlistment of highly qualified Soldiers in critical skills and locations”. As the Army is no longer growing you may hear the term “right sizing” or “force shaping” which are just other terms for force alignment. Through force alignment initiatives the Army must ensure that they fill the right jobs at the right locations to meet current operations. During the years of growing the Army, force alignment was not as big of an issue as Soldiers were needed in most every MOS and in most locations. With The Army no longer growing it is a difficult task for the Army to balance out current strengths of both MOS’s and locations.

What can you as a Soldier do to make the process as painless as possible you ask? The biggest thing you can do is stay flexible during this period of time. Engage your Career Counselor and branch managers with an open mind and be flexible based on what is available. Talk with senior NCO’s and Officers that have been in for awhile and seek their mentorship. Many of these senior Soldiers were in prior to 9/11 and experienced the draw down the Army saw during the 90’s. These Soldiers can provide personal experiences on how they were able to advance in their careers during a reduction in force.

Make yourself competitive. Just as the civilian work force must find ways to beef up their resumes and be competitive in a tough job market so must our Soldiers. As a Soldier you should always be finding ways to make yourself more competitive and marketable to the Army. What have you done to raise your ASVAB line scores? Are you enrolled in correspondence courses and college courses? What are you doing to improve your APFT score or meet the Army’s height and weight standards? These are just some basic questions to ask yourself, when you are not getting promoted or not being given the opportunity for continued service.

Leadership is also a piece in this puzzle. The last ten years of war have gotten our leaders in the mind set of focusing in on tactical skills and preparing Soldiers for combat. As the Army continues to draw down combat operations, leaders need to get back to mentoring Soldiers on self improvement and professional development. Our mid grade NCO’s who came up in the ranks during the last decade may lack some of these skills and that is where our senior level NCO’s come in. As a mid grade NCO seek out experienced senior NCO’s that you trust and ask them for their mentorship and guidance. Every Soldier from lower enlisted on up should have a mentor that they trust and seek guidance from. One of the biggest tools an NCO has to help Soldiers is not just providing monthly performance counseling’s but to also provide professional development counseling’s to your Soldiers and then follow up.

In the years to come the key word in the promotion and reenlistment world is going to be QUALITY. Look to your left and right and then look in the mirror and ask yourself if you are doing everything you can to be considered the best qualified candidate before you blame others for your shortcomings. The Army is not for everyone but one thing is for sure your service to our country is appreciated by all; we only make up about one percent of the country and for that you are already a step above the rest.

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