



LOGFIRE LEDGER

298th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion

Volume 1, Issue 10

December 31, 2011



Christmas in Shindand



Lines from LOGFIRE 06



A Year in the Life of the LOGFIRE Team---

As I script my final article for the ledger, I think it fitting to reflect on our achievements throughout the journey here in Afghanistan. On one hand, it seems like just yesterday that we were all saying goodbye; yet it sometimes feels as if that were "forever ago". I'd like to remind our readers that when I refer to the "LOGFIRE Team", it absolutely includes the family, friends, and loved ones of our Soldiers. Throughout this long journey, our team has shared joy, tears, sweat, and challenge after challenge. We have remained true to our battalion motto to "Approach through Adversity". Regardless the challenge at hand, the team has not backed down; but rather nobly exceeded all expectations.

We have achieved so many things together that it's very difficult to describe it all. We've accomplished goals that cannot be measured through statistics or any form of quantitative analysis. Though I could never accurately account all achievements, I will list a few accomplishments that we could measure through our statistical records. Below is a statistical and operational account of only highlights of our journey.

Our focus all along has been to serve as a "customer focused" Battalion; centered on providing "world class" logistics. Throughout the year, we sustained 2 U.S. Maneuver Battalions, 1 U.S. Aviation Battalion, 4 Italian Task Forces, and provided direct logistics support to 1 Slovenian Operational Mentorship Liaison Team (OMLT) and 4 Special Operations Teams in Regional Command-West (RC-W). We also coordinated with contractors and joint forces to sustain Shindand Air Base.

The 298th CSSB completed 221 combat support missions totaling 1,341 Load Movement Requests and 433,303 miles. We propelled the pilot Afghan Transportation Network (ATN) through proof of principle into theater wide use. The Battalion completed 998 ATN missions for a total of 98,237 miles. We assisted our higher headquarters, the 7 Sustainment Brigade, in their efforts to coordinate elder vetting through RC-West opening up routes from Herat to Qal-e-Naw.

Our Support Operations Container Managers decreased detention carrier containers at Shindand from over 300, when we started, to a low of 132 bringing detention fees to \$0 per day. This achievement resulted in saving the government an estimated \$250,000.00 per year.

Our maintenance managers reduced "dead lined" items by more than 50% and shortened the average days of those items by 33%. Additionally, the number of items requiring repair for more than 30 days was reduced by 64%. We also planned the receipt, and issue of over \$24,000,000.00 of equipment loaned to the Italian Army for route clearance missions. We ensured that the equipment loaned to the Italians was maintained and inventoried as needed despite it being located at four different remote locations in Regional Command West.

Our team coordinated with Shindand Base Command, Base engineers, and US Forces-Afghanistan, Detachment West for Expansion of Shindand Air Base. We assisted in the review and justification of Shindand expansion projects. We also actively participated in master planning meetings for Shindand Expansion.

Regarding plans, our team planned and tracked all Soldiers and unit equipment in the 298th deploying and redeploying. These force flow plans involved over 7 units, almost 900 personnel, and 150 equipment moves throughout the deployment.

We took an active role in partnering with the Afghan National Army (ANA). We developed course curriculum, and offered drivers training to the ANA. Our efforts resulted in qualified operators for multiple vehicle types. During the middle of our tour, we transitioned the program from our Soldiers teaching to ANA Soldiers training their own drivers. We have completed an SOP / POI for them to utilize with each class. Since inception, we have graduated over 366 drivers.

Our team supervised the successful distribution of over 120,520 cases of bottled water, and production and distribution of over 27 million gallons of bulk water for Shindand Air Base for use in latrines, showers and dining facility operations. Our commodities management section authorized and accounted for the receipt and issue of over 5 million gallons of fuel valued at over \$41,840,000.00 dollars.

We oversaw operations of the first Ammunition Holding Area at Shindand Air Base (AB) from initial operations to its' Fully Operational Capable status. 89 different ammunition lines, over 136.2 short tons valued at over \$5,500,000.00, supporting over 14 units/customers to include special operations and Italian forces. The unit has processed over 400 issues and 180 turn-ins of munitions that were critical to tactical operations, and training needs.

We also managed a Supply Support Activity (SSA) alongside contractors employed by Dyncorp. Our SSA employed workers from 8 different countries. We established a working environment focused on a "One Team" concept, regardless if military or civilian employee. Our efforts reduced the Authorized Stockage List (ASL) for the SSA from 9,600 stocked item lines to 5,125 lines (\$85,894,680 to \$53,973,067). We also oversaw the reduction of retrograde, reverse supply at the SSA from 104 pallets to an average manageable 9 pallets in support of Surge Recovery Efforts in RC-W. Our team's efforts increased the SSA Inventory Adjustment Rate from 75% to 100% (over the 95% Army standard).

We had a very unique mission set which involved a great deal of support to Coalition Forces. Through our liaison officer, we requisitioned 4,176 repair parts, 900 sheets of plywood, 14 automotive batteries, 37 batteries non-chargeable, 30 batteries multiband, 124 yards of Type XXI nylon webbing, 100 yards ½ inch tubular olive drab, 23 boxes of honey comb, 48 shipping and storage drum for Italian and Spanish forces. We coordinated with various Movement Control Teams to aid in the completion of 64 Logistics Movement Requests for the movement of 1080 short tons of cargo for Italian, Slovenian, and American Forces throughout Regional Command West. Coordinated 11 Aerial Movement Requests for Italian Task Force North at Bala Murghab for 277,370 liters of JP8 and 1680 cases of Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) valued in excess of \$677,890.

Aside from our mission, the generous nature of our team found many opportunities to contribute to worthy causes even during their free time. Many of our team members sought to promote physical fitness; and took initiatives to plan, organize, and execute a number of races on Shindand Air Base. Through collaboration with the USO, our team sponsored 1 half-marathon and five 5K races. The proceeds for each event were donated to various charities. These efforts improved morale, and fitness, for Service members of all branches; along with DA civilians and contractors.

Our Unit Ministry Team (UMT) didn't limit religious support to the 298th CSSB. The ministry was free to all personnel serving on Shindand Air Base. Our UMT managed a "Base Wide" chapel, and offered spiritual nourishment to thousands of individuals throughout the tour.

Continuing the spirit of good will, our team participated in multiple humanitarian assistance missions. Our efforts involved a variety of projects, including a sewing machine project, Karez restoration, school renovation, well installations, and school supply deliveries. All of these projects clearly demonstrated the kind hearted, generous character of our team.

Overall, I could go on and on about the accomplishments of our great team. My hope is that the reader will glean some understanding of the complexities endured, noted with the overall greatness of this team. As I conclude, all of the achievements listed above are impressive, yet these are not what I'm most proud of. The consistent attribute that I'm proudest of is the character of our team. We are a team who is recognized as compassionate, caring, yet eager to accept mission responsibilities. I'm so very proud of the team's integrity and overall "Class". The "LOGFIRE Team" is the classiest organization to which I've ever served and it has been my honor to serve with you all throughout this journey. I'm so very proud of everyone's contributions and sacrifices. May God continue to bless our team as we conclude this magnificent journey together!

Words from Command Sergeant Major



It's time for the Logfire Team to move on with safety in mind. Remember safety first!

Leaders make sure you monitor your soldiers and check your section for sensitive items. Please, no negligent discharges. Make sure to use the Battle Buddy system. Remember when in a vehicle each soldier will wear seat belts at all times. Wear reflective belts and carry flash lights during the hours of darkness and while wearing the PT uniform. Leaders make sure soldiers uniforms have the proper insignia.

One of the bittersweet realities of this deployment is saying goodbye and the Logfire Team to bid farewell. At the beginning of the month CSM Russell W. Stone will assume responsibilities as Command Sergeant Major for the 365th CSSB. I would like to wish them the best as they begin the next year of Army life.

I would like to thank you, Logfire Team for everything you've done and your sacrifice and the sacrifices of your families. I would like to personally thank the Family Readiness Group for all you do.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. See you soon.

Logfire 09 OUT.

Congratulations to:



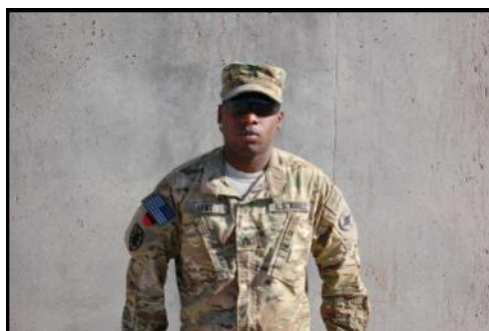
NCO of the Month

SGT Charles Lewis (602nd MC)



Soldier of the Month

SPC Amanda Ryder (602nd MC)



Promotion: SGT Marcus Kent (298th)



298th CSSB Humanitarian Assistance

20 DEC 11



SGT Moody prepares clothing that will be given to local villages around Shindand Airbase.

Who: HHD 298th CSSB
What: Humanitarian Assistance Projects
When: April 2011- December 2011
Where: Shindand, Afghanistan
Why: Improve quality of life in Shindand by providing essential items to local villages and schools.

Narrative:

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas and the spirit of giving, soldiers from HHD 298th have been in the giving mood all year. Since April 2011, soldiers from HHD 298th CSSB have contributed time and effort into providing humanitarian assistance to local villages and schools. From providing medical care for local Afghans to providing schools supplies to students and teachers in need, HHD 298th CSSB has answered the call. We are proud to be a part of helping the citizens of Shindand. These humanitarian projects improved quality of life by providing essential items to local villages and schools. With the support from family, friends, and businesses back home, HHD 298th CSSB has formed relationships with the local populace that will be paramount as we continue to make a positive impact in Afghanistan.



Soldiers from the 298th CSSB donate needed items to local workers.



CPT Brownlee loading boxes of toys and supplies for a local daycare.



LTC Pippen writes and draws on one of the many marker boards delivered to teachers and students at Kandak Middle School.



Students at Mandel School in Shindand receive new backpacks and supplies.



377th QM DET/ 298th CSSB
377th Quartermaster Detachment
"Movement Brings Victory"



The 377th QM Platoon celebrates with the 298th CSSB during their Christmas and Bon Voyage Party on 17 December 2011.

It is such a great pleasure to have served under the 298th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. The Command, Staff, and all the Soldiers of the 298th CSSB were very professional and great people to know. We were proud to have worked with them. You have left your mark in many important areas and have made an outstanding contribution to OEF. We will miss you all. Wishing you all the best in your future endeavors and GOD Speed!



602nd Support Maintenance Company

Last Month of the Year, New Team, New Beginning!

Hello again Friends and Family, and Merry Christmas!

This will be my last submission into the LOGFIRE Ledger as the 298th Departs Shindand, Afghanistan and heads for home. I would like to thank everyone on the 298th Team for their warm hospitality, from reception to their departure, the 602nd Support Maintenance Company truly felt as part of the 298th Team. December in Afghanistan is proving to be the month of change for the 602nd team, as we redeployed about 40% of our team due to curtailment, we lose the 298th CSSB and gain the 365th CSSB; how is that for change? However, we are ever so postured for our mission and we are determined to finish strong. I would like to congratulate my troops on their safe return home into their families welcome, and I ask that they keep us in their thoughts and prayers as we finish our mission. I could not think of a better time to receive this amount of change, as we look forward and lean into the next year, we will start anew. We look forward to working with the 365th CSSB team, as we try to reciprocate the same amount of hospitality that we received, thank you team LOGFIRE, thank you for your service and your commitment to the whole Battalion and really making 602nd a part of the team, for that we are forever grateful. To the friends and family of team LOGFIRE, thank you for your enduring support, congratulations on the safe return of your family members as well God Bless you and may you all have a wonderful New Year!

CPT David Moreno Jr.
Hammer 6



Chaplain's Corner

"Are You a Grinch?"

Introduction: It's the Christmas season! A time of Whobilation! What could be better than a Christmas celebration? Sound the Flu Floopers, Trum Tupers, and Jing Tingers. Open your wallets, your savings, and jinglers. Light the trees, your houses, and stores. What's more inviting than wreathes on your doors? What's that you say? You're not full of cheer? You think Christmas a waste, a sham, you sneer. You can't imagine—can't think of one reason--why anyone would celebrate this ridiculous season. Perhaps you share, just one tiny inch, something that deeply bothered the Grinch. Is happiness here; is this what it's for? Or is Christmas perhaps a little bit more? Perchance this is weird. You might think it strange, but maybe it's time for something to change.

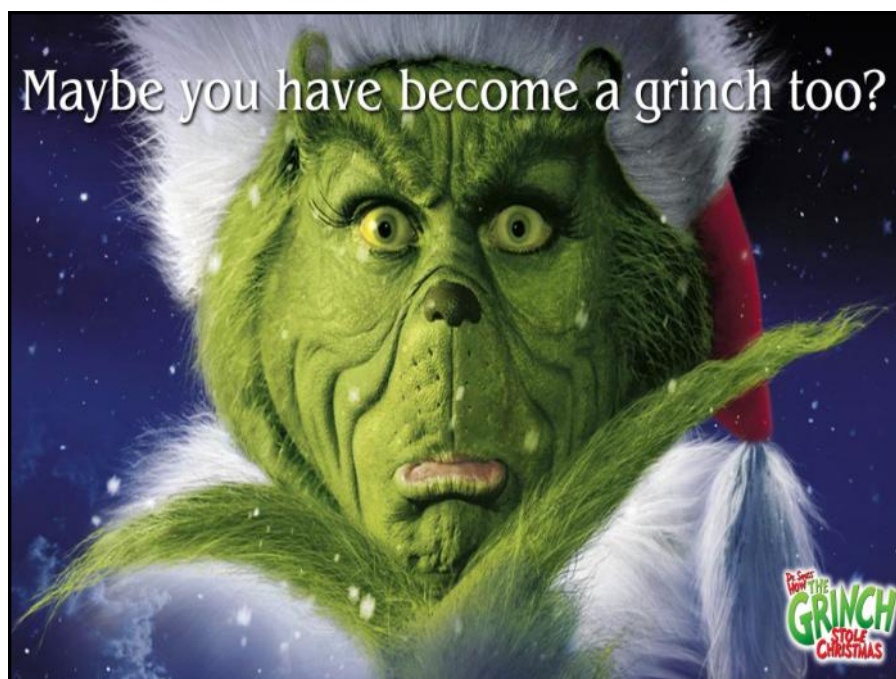
Luke 2:9:11 (New American Standard Version): *And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

Overview: Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas introduces the magical, snowy land of Whoville, and the Whos living there. All the Whos love Christmas, except the Grinch, an outcast Who living high on Mount Crumpet. He hates Christmas. Exhausted with the celebration year after year, the Grinch sneaks down to Whoville to steal the Who's Christmas cheer.

Like the Grinch, we may not like Christmas. But I submit that our feelings about Christmas often reflect something deeper inside. If our attitude about Christmas (or anything else in life) is overtly one way, or another, we need to ask God to reveal the truth about our feelings. There may be something we need to address.

Don't let the Grinch, or anyone/anything else, steal your Christmas. Although "Satan has come to steal, kill and destroy, we must remember that with the birth of Christ, Satan is a defeated foe. In spite of Satan's best efforts, Christmas – the Christ-child – was born!

This Christmas, I challenge you to consider the real meaning of Christmas. As the angels told the Shepherds, don't be afraid. Don't be doubtful. Don't be anxious. Don't let anyone or anything steal this moment; don't be a Grinch! -- For Today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you!



548th Transportation company

It's Christmas time in Shindand and 548TH TC is definitely feeling the freezing weather. All the gunners are all bundled up in their cold weather gear while braving the frigid temperatures on every convoy. Even though it's chilly outside that didn't stop SPC Jeremy Matney, SGT Don Burgett, and SPC Keith Stalnaker from performing in the 2nd Annual Shindand's Got Talent held at the fire department on 18 December 2011. Though they didn't place, each Soldier showed great spirit and competitiveness while facing the other contestants.

Last week 1st Platoon had a little going away pizza party for their medics (Ssgt Meza and Ssgt Hartman). Even with a full schedule of running missions, 1st Platoon (Spartans) was able to show their appreciation to their medics before they officially left Shindand. To show how much they appreciated their help while being the medics, 1st Platoon awarded the medics with plaques and the 548th TC commander (CPT Douglas Adams) presented Ssgt Meza and Ssgt Hartman with certificates and coins. You might remember Ssgt Meza earlier this deployment, he took 1st place in our very first mud run held at FOB Thomas and Ssgt Hartman will be missed with his funny sense of humor. Replacing Ssgt Meza and Ssgt Hartman are Ssgt Tabitha Zelinsky and SrA Lora Splain. Though the other medics will be missed, 548th TC is looking forward to making the new medics feel right at home.

548th TC welcomes back 1st platoon lead by SSG McGuire, SSG Thomas, and SGT McClellan from Camp Stone (STONE CLP) to join us here at Shindand. They in turn have brought a lot of experience from running missions to support coalition forces and numerous other units. By doing this the STONE CLP represented 298th CSSB and 548th TC in the highest possible standards.



Our USO guys Coleman and Frank, being presented with a flag by LTC Pippen. They help make a lot of things possible for the troops here at Shindand AB.



Here are some unique photos from a recent OPD w/the Company Commanders & XOs taken by SGT Pope.

Shindand's Salsa King: SGT Garcia has won many Salsa Night contests since he's been here at Shindand AB.



Stovall's Sacrifice for Soldiers

On August 22, 2004 1LT Matt Stovall was killed while serving in Mosul, Iraq. Stovall's Sacrifice for Soldiers was founded to carry on Matt's legacy. On December 17, 2011 the 298th CSSB held a Steps for Stovall 5K Run/Walk. Steps for Stovall was organized to honor and remember Matt and all American soldiers who have volunteered to defend and protect our freedom. All donations went to Snowball Express, an organization to help children of fallen soldiers.



Winners of the Shindand's Got Talent Too Contest



The Shindand's Got Talent Too contest winners were: 2nd place, Shanelle Kemp with poetry that she wrote; 1st place, Phil Hallibuton singing a Frank Sinatra tune "New York"; 3rd place, Sarah Doran singing "Your Song".



General Carroll and the
Battalion Commanders of
7th Sustainment Brigade

Command Sergeant Majors of the
7th Sustainment Brigade.



Team members of Resolute!!!

WWE Visits Shindand



Photos by SFC Hughes



Christmas Humor

12 Days of Christmas Correspondence

Dearest John:

I went to the door today and the postman delivered a partridge in a pear tree. What a delightful gift. I couldn't have been more surprised.

With dearest love and affection, Agnes

December 15th

Dearest John:

Today the postman brought your very sweet gift. Just imagine, two turtle doves.... I'm just delighted at your very thoughtful gift. They are just adorable.

All my love, Agnes

December 16th

Dear John:

Oh, aren't you the extravagant one! Now I must protest. I don't deserve such generosity. Three french hens. They are just darling but I must insist.... you're just too kind.

Love Agnes

December 17th

Today the postman delivered four calling birds. Now really! They are beautiful, but don't you think enough is enough? You're being too romantic.

Affectionately, Agnes

December 18th

Dearest John:

What a surprise! Today the postman delivered five golden rings. One for each finger. You're just impossible, but I love it. Frankly, John, all those squawking birds were beginning to get on my nerves.

All my love, Agnes

December 19th

Dear John:

When I opened the door there were actually six geese-a-laying on my front steps. So you're back to the birds again, huh? Those geese are huge. Where will I ever keep them? The neighbors are complaining and I can't sleep through the racket. PLEASE STOP!

Cordially, Agnes

December 20th

John:

What's with you and those birds???? Seven swans-a-swimming. What kind of joke is this? There's bird pooh all over the house and they never stop the racket. I'm a nervous wreck and I can't sleep all night. IT'S NOT FUNNY.....So stop with those birds.

Sincerely, Agnes

December 21st

OK Buster:

I think I prefer the birds. What am I going to do with eight maids-a-milking? It's not enough with all those birds and eight maids-a-milking, but they had to bring their own cows. There is poop all over the lawn and I can't move into my own house. Just lay off me. .

Ag

December 22nd

Hey:

What are you? Some kind of sadist? Now there's nine pipers playing. And do they play! They never stopped chasing those maids since they got here yesterday morning. The cows are upset and are stepping all over those screeching birds. No wonder they screech. What am I going to do? The neighbors have started a petition to evict me. You'll get yours.

From Ag

December 23rd

You Creep!

Now there's ten ladies dancing - I don't know why I call them ladies. Now the cows can't sleep and they've got diarrhea. My living room is a river of poop. The commissioner of buildings has subpoenaed me to give cause why the building shouldn't be condemned. I'm sicking the police on you.

One who means it, Ag

December 24th

Listen Idiot:

What's with the eleven lords a-leaping? All 234 of the birds are dead. I hope you're satisfied, you rotten swine.

Your sworn enemy, Miss Agnes McCallister

December 25th (From the law offices Taeker, Spedar, and Baegar)

Dear Sir:

This is to acknowledge your latest gift of twelve fiddlers fiddling, which you have seen fit to inflict on our client, Miss Agnes McCallister. The destruction, of course, was total. All correspondence should come to our attention. If you should attempt to reach Miss McCallister at Happy Dale Sanitarium, the attendants have instructions to shoot you on sight. With this letter, please find attached a warrant for your arrest.

-Merry Christmas

The True Meaning Of Christmas

Just a week before Christmas I had a visitor. This is how it happened...I had just finished the household chores for the night and was preparing to go to bed, when I heard a noise in the front of the house. I opened the door to the front room and to my surprise, Santa himself stepped out from behind the Christmas tree.



He placed his finger over his mouth so I would not cry out. "What are you doing?" I started to ask. The words choked up in my throat, and I saw he had tears in his eyes. His usual jolly manner was gone.

Gone was the eager, boisterous soul we all know. He then answered me with a simple statement. "TEACH THE CHILDREN!" I was puzzled; what did he mean?

He anticipated my question, and with one quick movement brought forth a miniature toy bag from behind the tree. As I stood bewildered, Santa said, "Teach the children! Teach them the old meaning of Christmas. The meaning that now-a-days Christmas has forgotten."



Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a FIR TREE and placed it before the mantle. "Teach the children that the pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year round, depicting the everlasting hope of mankind, all the needles point heavenward, making it a symbol of man's thoughts turning toward heaven."



He again reached into his bag and pulled out a brilliant STAR. "Teach the children that the star was the heavenly sign of promises long ago. God promised a Savior for the world, and the star was the sign of fulfillment of His promise."



He then reached into his bag and pulled out a CANDLE. "Teach the children that the candle symbolizes that Christ is the light of the world, and when we see this great light we are reminded of He who displaces the darkness."



Once again he reached into his bag and removed a WREATH and placed it on the tree. "Teach the children that the wreath symbolizes the real nature of love. Real love never ceases. Love is one continuous round of affection."



He then pulled from his bag and ornament of HIMSELF. "Teach the children that I, Santa Claus symbolize the generosity and good will we feel during the month of December."



He then brought out a HOLLY LEAF. "Teach the children that the holly plant represents immortality. It represents the crown of thorns worn by our Savior. The red holly represents the blood shed by Him."



Next he pulled from his bag a GIFT and said, "Teach the children that God so loved the world that he gave..." "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Teach the children that the wise men bowed before the holy babe and presented him with gold, frankincense and myrrh. We should always give gifts in the same spirit of the wise men."



Santa then reached in his bag and pulled out a CANDY CANE and hung it on the tree. "Teach the children that the candy cane represents the shepherds' crook. The crook on the staff helps to bring back strayed sheep to the flock. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper."



He reached in again and pulled out an ANGEL. "Teach the children that it was the angels that heralded in the glorious news of the Savior's birth. The angels sang Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good will toward men."



Suddenly I heard a soft twinkling sound, and from his bag he pulled out a BELL. "Teach the children that as the lost sheep are found by the sound of the bell, it should ring mankind to the fold. The bell symbolizes guidance and return."



Santa looked back and was pleased. He looked back at me and I saw that the twinkle was back in his eyes. He said, "Remember, teach the children the true meaning of Christmas and do not put me in the center, for I am but a humble servant of the One that is, and I bow down to worship Him, our Lord, our God."



Merry Christmas

Letters to Santa

Dear Santa,

I know that you're extremely busy fulfilling the Christmas lists of all the girls and boys who done nothing but good things all year long, so I'll try to keep it short. I'm writing you as a special request because this Christmas stands out from all the rest. The only wish I have is that you give my two daughters Lanyia and Jordyn everything on their wish lists this year. Not because they've been good all year long but, because they have also had to endure the reality of spending this Christmas without both their mother and father. We are both currently deployed in Afghanistan because we chose to defend our nation when they called at the expense of not spending the holidays with them. They are only 7 and 5 years old but, they have been very understanding during this transition and I think that they deserve a special reward for their sacrifice. They gave their parents this year to give the nation the gift of freedom. Please grant me this one wish...I've been good all this year if that helps.

Thank Santa,
SSG Belinda Tyson

Dear Santa,

All I want for Christmas this year is a sleigh ride to Mississippi! Thank you very much!

SGT Ryan Bostick

Dear Santa,

I would like to meet Trey Ratcliff, actually win an eggnog challenge (if there is such a thing), and grow a beard as epic as yours.

SPC Zachary Morehead

Dear Santa,

I know I haven't always been the best boy in the past, but I think I turned the corner this year? God showed me that I've got some outstanding friends in the 298th, and they were by my side the whole year....comrades. They picked me up when I was down, listened to me when I know I sounded like a broken record, and encouraged me to drive on despite my broken heart. They strengthened me, and for them I am most thankful. If I've been good enough to warrant a gift from you this year, I only wish one thing. I want you to make sure my comrades get home safe and sound to their loved ones as soon as our job here is done. They deserve it.

Thank you Santa, and God bless the 298th CSSB.
MAJ Crowe

P.S. Please save me some cookies and REAL milk...Nom Nom Nom!



Dear Santa,
I have been very good this year. All I want for Christmas is to be blessed and make it home safe and sound after the holidays. I want to wish that my kids and mother have a very special Christmas without me this year. I wish everyone that has to spend time away from home at this time of the year a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Love Always,
Sha (SGT Shaina Wilder)

Dear Santa,
All I want for Christmas is for my family and friends to continue to be covered by God's grace and mercy.

CPT Merle Lee

Hello Santa,
Just a note to say that I've been nice, to the best of my ability. This year has gone by really fast, I don't know if I had time to be naughty. I'm sad that I'll spend the holidays away from my family and friends, but I couldn't have pick a better group of people to spend this Christmas season with.

I am closer to going home to see all of my family and friends and I hope that you make sure they all are happy, healthy and all their Christmas wishes come true.

Thanks Santa,
SSG Belinda Bates

Dear Santa,
I've been good all year! Ok most of the time . . . well once in a while. Oh just forget it, I'll buy my own presents.

But seriously Santa, I only wish for my health and strength and peace of mind for us all. Also for my family and friends to have a Merry Christmas even though I will not be there to enjoy it with them.

SFC Bonnie Hughes

Dear Saint Nick,
Thank you for taking the time to read this. As you know, I'm once again in a foreign land in the service of my country. Most days we have just about all we need to get by. We have plenty of food, we have work to keep us busy, and we have our fellow soldiers to keep us company. So, you can probably guess what I'm going to ask for will not be too heavy for your sleigh and the reindeer to carry.

Since I've been here, all I've been able to think about is how hard it must be for my sweet wife, Cyrena, to keep up with everything and to manage it all by herself. She gets up early each day, feeds our dog and cat, walks the dog and somehow finds time to email me with something positive to brighten my day. She goes to work to teach and care for the kids at the high school where she works and she comes home each day, dead on her feet. She then goes to a gym, teaches a fitness class, and then two nights a week she teaches a night class at our local community college. She somehow finds the time to keep our home in good order and she even mails me letters and packages with lots of love and goodies inside. Most recently, she sent me a photo which I pinned up in my tent so I can see her sweet face before I go to sleep and when I first wake up. On Sundays and on Wednesday nights, she goes to our little country church to worship and to grow in knowledge and in faith, always keeping our church family updated on our situation here. She does all these things because she is the strongest and bravest woman I've ever known. She has kept me from falling apart and she does it all without any thanks or recognition for what a beautiful person she truly is.

Santa, this year, I want you to send her so much love from me that it completely surrounds her and keeps her warm even if snow blankets our home. I want you to send Cyrena so much thankfulness and gratitude from me that she will feel it was all worthwhile. Please give her a big box of patience to allow her to endure just a little longer until I can make it home. And most of all, tell her I am a better man because I married her.

Thank you so much, Santa, and I hope you get plenty of rest before your long ride through the night! God bless you!

Jamie Shows



Safety Message

Safe and Sober Celebrating

The fall and winter seasons are full of opportunities for celebrating. Football games, holidays and extended vacations from work all offer ample time for fun, food and fellowship. And for many people, tailgates and parties wouldn't be the same without a splash or two of their favorite alcoholic beverages. While social gatherings offer a perfect opportunity to let loose, Soldiers, Family members and Civilians must be extra vigilant and have a plan if they choose to drink, regardless of the time of year. But when you factor in other variables unique to winter, including adverse weather conditions like ice and snow, prior planning becomes even more important. Accident reports show drinking and driving are a lethal combination for Soldiers year round. Between the start of fiscal 2010 and through the third quarter of fiscal 2011, at least 59 Soldiers died and 67 were injured in vehicle crashes where alcohol use was confirmed. Statistics also prove the dangers of alcohol impairment do not stop at driving — walking while drunk can be just as deadly. On average, the Army loses approximately two Soldiers every year to alcohol-related pedestrian accidents. Walking versus driving sounds like a good plan, but an intoxicated pedestrian is at tremendous risk. A plan is only as good as the planner. If your thoughts are clouded by the effects of alcohol, you might not have planned for every challenge. Both party hosts and their guests have special responsibilities to ensure everyone makes it home safely.

For hosts

- Collect car keys from guests as they arrive and return them to only those guests who are not impaired.
- Offer alcohol-free beverages and plenty of food so guests have alternatives to alcohol.
- Ensure guests leave sober or with a sober designated driver, and call a cab for guests without a ride.
- Keep alcoholic beverages off limits to all guests under the age of 21.

For guests

- Make a plan. Designate a nondrinking buddy and give him or her the keys, prearrange a taxi service or have the numbers for local cab companies programmed in your cell phone.
- Use the buddy system. Rotate designated driver responsibilities and, if no one else volunteers, speak up and offer to stay sober.
- Be honest with yourself and remember that even a slight "buzz" can significantly weaken your perceptions and abilities. If you are out on your own and know you are impaired, stay with the host until you are sober or call a friend or taxi for a ride.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember when celebrating these next few months is that no matter the situation, drinking and driving is never the right answer. Engagement on all fronts — Leaders, Soldiers, Family members and Civilians — is critical to ensuring everyone in the Army Family understands the dangers of impaired driving. Risk taking often ends in needless fatalities. Our Army needs each and every one of our Soldiers. We must continue teaching our Soldiers to think about their decisions and the consequences of risky behavior.

Happy Holidays

CW2 James Ballard "Families that are Army Safe, are Army Strong!"

