

# THE WOLVES DEN

FEBRUARY 2012



VOLUME 1 ISSUE 6

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



# COMMANDER'S CORNER

**1/25 SBCT Commander  
Col. Todd Wood**

## **Arctic Wolves,**

We were challenged last month, with the assassination of one of our key Afghan partners followed by the insurgent attack on some of our 1-24 IN soldiers. I am proud of the Soldiers in this brigade and how they overcame these challenges and continue to work with their Afghan partners, setting conditions for transition.

One of our Soldiers was killed and two others wounded from 1-24 IN by an insurgent posing as an Afghan Army Soldier. Many expected this to cause a rift in our partnership with the Afghan security forces. Our Afghan partners expressed and demonstrated their regret and resolve to prevent insurgents from infiltrating the Afghan security forces' ranks. We improved our force protection measures and at the same time, units continue to foster a strong partnership during combined patrols and operations.

Many believed that the death of Panjwa'i District Governor Haji Fazzluddin Agha would have caused a decrease in security, negating our success in Panjwa'i. Though the Afghan people lost a great leader and we lost a key partner, it has not slowed the success in Panjwa'i. The local police and Afghan National Army continue to conduct operations throughout the area and continue to defeat IEDs, find caches, and connect the Afghan government to the people. These successes are echoed across every district and unit that Task Force Arctic Wolves is partnered with.

The Arctic Wolves continue to set the example for RC-South and when our tour is complete, conditions will be set for our follow-on units to transition security operations to the Afghans. You should all be proud of your achievements here. Thank you all for your continued hard work.

**Strike First!  
Strike Hard!**



# WOLF 7

## **1/25 SBCT Command Sergeant Major CSM Bernie Knight**

### **Soldiers and Family members,**

Some of you have heard the echoes of redeployment planning. We are putting the finishing touches on our mission here and soon units will begin the arduous task of preparing equipment and soldiers for the move back to Alaska. I want to encourage everyone to finish strong. Leave the lasting reputation of what great soldiers you are. Don't let complacency rear its ugly head. Leaders, look inside your formations and make sure standards are being adhered to and give 100% focus on preventing accidents.

The family readiness groups and garrison are starting to coordinate reunion training. These classes are designed to facilitate the Brigade's return and how to manage expectations. I strongly encourage all spouses to take part in this training. For some of you, this is your first deployment and it has been a long hard year. The reunion classes can provide you with some insight on what to expect when your spouse returns. For those of you who are no stranger to deployments, I am asking you to play an active role in the Family Readiness Group and share your experience with the new spouses. The classes have something for everyone.

You all are doing a great job, fighting the cold weather and dealing with the wide array of challenges that arise during deployments. Keep up the good fight.

**Strike First!  
Strike Hard!**



# Safety Message

By Sgt. Thomas Duval

Webster's Dictionary defines complacency as "self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies."

As harmless as it may seem, complacency can carry extreme consequences when displayed by Soldiers.

As a unit prepares to enter what the military calls the '90-day window,' these dangers are a concern of leaders throughout Afghanistan.

The '90-day window' refers to the first or last ninety days of a unit's deployment and is typically when the unit is most vulnerable to sustain a loss or injury due to a 'preventable accident.'

There are two key contributors to preventable accidents within this window of time, inexperience and complacency.

For in-bound units, a lack of a battle rhythm or refined Standard Operating Procedures can lead to inexperienced Soldiers being injured, or worse.

On the other end of the spectrum are the units who have gained momentum towards redeployment with Soldiers rushing to go home. Without enforcement of standards and safety practices all the way through the finish line, these units are more at risk to have an accident that could have been prevented.

Loss of a Soldier is always tough on units, on families and on friends, however, the senseless loss of a Soldier during redeployment operations can and should be prevented.

Some important things to remember when a unit operates in the 90-day window:



\*On-the-spot corrections: Every Soldier is responsible for on-the-spot corrections, regardless of rank. Making an on-the-spot correction can be the first step in preventing an unforeseen accident. Whether deploying or redeploying, making exceptions to the standards could be the difference in whether or not a Soldier makes it home.

\*Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Despite being one of the simplest safety tasks, PPE is one of the most common infractions made by a Soldier. Ensure Soldiers are wearing their eye protection, hearing protection, gloves, using ground guides and when mission requires, -reflective belts. When worn appropriately, PPE can protect from many unforeseen hazards.

\*In addition to PPE and on-the-spot corrections, ensure that every Soldier is properly trained on the equipment they are using. Completing this task ensures that the trained and best equipped Soldier is performing tasks to standard.

By implementing simple safety standards units can dramatically decrease the number of accidents. Whether they are on their first day with boots on the ground or preparing for re-deployment, it's important not to get complacent and enforce the standards every day. Together, everyone needs to do their part to ensure every Soldier comes home.



# The Wolves' Den

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## 1-24 IN Soldier reunites with family in Afghanistan

By Staff Sgt. Jason Epperson, 4-25 ABCT Public Affairs

KHOWST PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Having three deployed members in one family would seem unlikely; however, for the Hale family, it's a reality. With a little help, they were able to reconnect after a four-year separation, at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Jan. 6.

U.S. Army Capt. Rikki Salyers, of the Indiana National Guard's 4-19th Agri-Business Development Team and her two stepbrothers, U.S. Sgt. Nicholaus A. Hale, a squad leader with C Company, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, and U.S. Sgt. Adam M. Hale, an infantryman with B Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade came to the attention of Regional Command-East, after their father reached out to Maj. Gen. Daniel Allyn, Combined Joint Task Force-1 commanding general.

Though they are step-siblings, Salyers, a native of Oxford, Ind., stationed at FOB Salerno, refers to them as brothers.

"Technically they're my

step-brothers, but I've never considered them [that]." Salyers, who works with the Women's Outreach Program, explains.

"We've been together since I was in fourth grade, so they are my brothers."

The last time the siblings were united was four years ago, according to Salyers.

"Our parents flew us in to Arkansas," she said. "That was our Christmas present. We actually got to come together for a family Christmas and get some pictures, so it was a really good time."

Nicholaus, serving at Combat Outpost Mizan, said his father was instrumental in getting the three of them together.

"I was actually at FOB Lagman in a transient tent, getting ready to head back to COP Mizan from R&R, and I got forwarded an e-mail from my dad that he had sent to General Allyn, and [Brig.] Gen Schwietzer. He said they had



planned on getting us back together."

Adam serves at Combat Outpost Zerok. As the last of the siblings to join the Army, he talked to his brother about going to see him during this deployment. However, no plans were ever actually made.

"It was a pretty new development," Adam said. "I feel pretty excited. I haven't seen my brother or sister for a few years so it's pretty cool to see them over here."

After the three reunited, they spent the evening reminiscing about old times and shared a few laughs.

"Just to be able to be with family here in Afghanistan is kind of surreal," Salyers said. "To me family is everything, so it makes it all worth it with us being here and what we're doing."

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## YOUNG, ENLISTED SOLDIER DISPLAYS NCO QUALITIES



By Sgt. Nazly Confesor, 319th MPAD

COMBAT OUTPOST LION, Afghanistan - Deep in the horn of the Panjwa'i district lies a small combat outpost where a 21-year-old Chicago native oversees and protects his fellow soldiers with a .50-caliber, squad automatic weapon and a set of binoculars from an entry control point.

Pfc. Frank Franco is an Infantryman, assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division from Fort Wainwright, Alaska. He is part of an infantry team that helped build a small combat outpost in the westernmost

point of Southern Kandahar province, Afghanistan two and a half months ago.

With the lack of life's daily amenities such as hot water, showers and computers, Franco said the best part of his job is working with his comrades and knowing that he is making a difference in that area.

Franco joined the military in 2010 after being impressed by the Army's television advertisements.

"It's good knowing that you are serving your country proud," Franco said. "It was something that I always wanted to do ever since I was a child."

With nearly two years of experience as an infantryman, Franco has shown qualities and

standards of a non-commissioned officer and as a team leader.

Franco recalled one of his first leadership experiences; after a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle struck an improvised explosive device, Franco drove his Stryker vehicle toward the burning MRAP and helped those who were still trapped inside. After securing the injured in his Stryker vehicle, Franco quickly restored the flow of traffic by pushing the MRAP with his Stryker to the side.

He said that he could not have done it without the support of his platoon sergeant,

Sgt. 1st Class Johnathan B. McCain. McCain was killed

## NCO Qualities

in action last November in southern Afghanistan.

“No matter the situation, my platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class McCain always instilled confidence within me,” he said.

Similar to his late platoon sergeant, Franco is well respected and depended upon by the non-commissioned officers of his platoon.

“Franco displays qualities of a non-commissioned officer. He shows concern for his comrades when they are in need of

help and completes tasks without being told to,” said Sgt. Rafael Santos, Franco’s squad leader and New York native. “His initiative and motivation is seen among his peers. He is the type of soldier; we need in the military to lead our future soldiers.”

When asked about incoming soldiers joining the military, Franco hopes aspiring soldiers listen to the advice of their NCOs. He also mentioned bonding with fellow soldiers is

very important during a deployment.

“Being out in this outpost, my platoon has learned a lot about each other,” he said. “We created a brotherhood that no one will understand. I watch their backs, and they watch mine.”

For now, Franco continues to pull guard duty and volunteers for any task when not on patrol.

When asked about one thing he misses back in the states, he said he cannot wait for his mother’s cooking.

# 'Opahey' Cook Provides Morale to Fellow Soldiers

By Sgt. Nazly Confesor, 319th MPAD

COMBAT OUTPOST LION, Afghanistan - For any deployed soldier in the outskirts of southern Afghanistan, the basic needs of food, water and proper hygiene are vital ingredients to keeping them motivated and on the move.

Deep in the village of Do’ab near the tip of the horn of the Panjwa’i district lies a small combat outpost where U.S. Army Spc. Curtis Bess prepares hot chow for his fellow comrades in a tiny kitchen compartment, known as an expeditionary TRICON kitchen system.

The food service operations specialist and Daleville, Ala., native assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 25th Brigade Support

Battalion said having a hot meal is a huge morale booster for soldiers.

“It’s nice to see a huge smile on their faces when they are served a hot meal after a rough day,” said the 25-year-old.

After cooking on different forward operating bases and combat outposts around southern Afghanistan for almost eight months, Bess finally settled in COP Lion two months ago.

Waking before the sun and everyone else at COP Lion, Bess ensures his fellow soldiers of A Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, are fed

well before they start their patrols and other missions. Bess ensures everyone is fed and asks soldiers what they would like to have.

“Bess tries his best to accommodate food requests from his fellow soldiers,” said Pfc. Dylan J. Bose, an infantryman assigned to 1-5 Inf.

With five years experience as a field cook and two deploy-





ments, Bess and his battle buddy, Spc. Brandon J. Brown find creative ways to make a frozen meal into a five-star feast.

For New Year's Day, Bess and Brown made a special meal consisting of a baked ham, a turkey, mashed potatoes, collard greens, snow crabs and fried shrimp despite the lack of a big, fancy kitchen.

"For the majority of these

soldiers- this is their first time they are away from their families and we wanted to do something special for them," said Bess.

Indeed, the soldiers were grateful to see the huge meal Bess and Brown made that evening.

Bess hopes he is making at least a small difference at the COP despite providing soldiers with only one of the three essen-

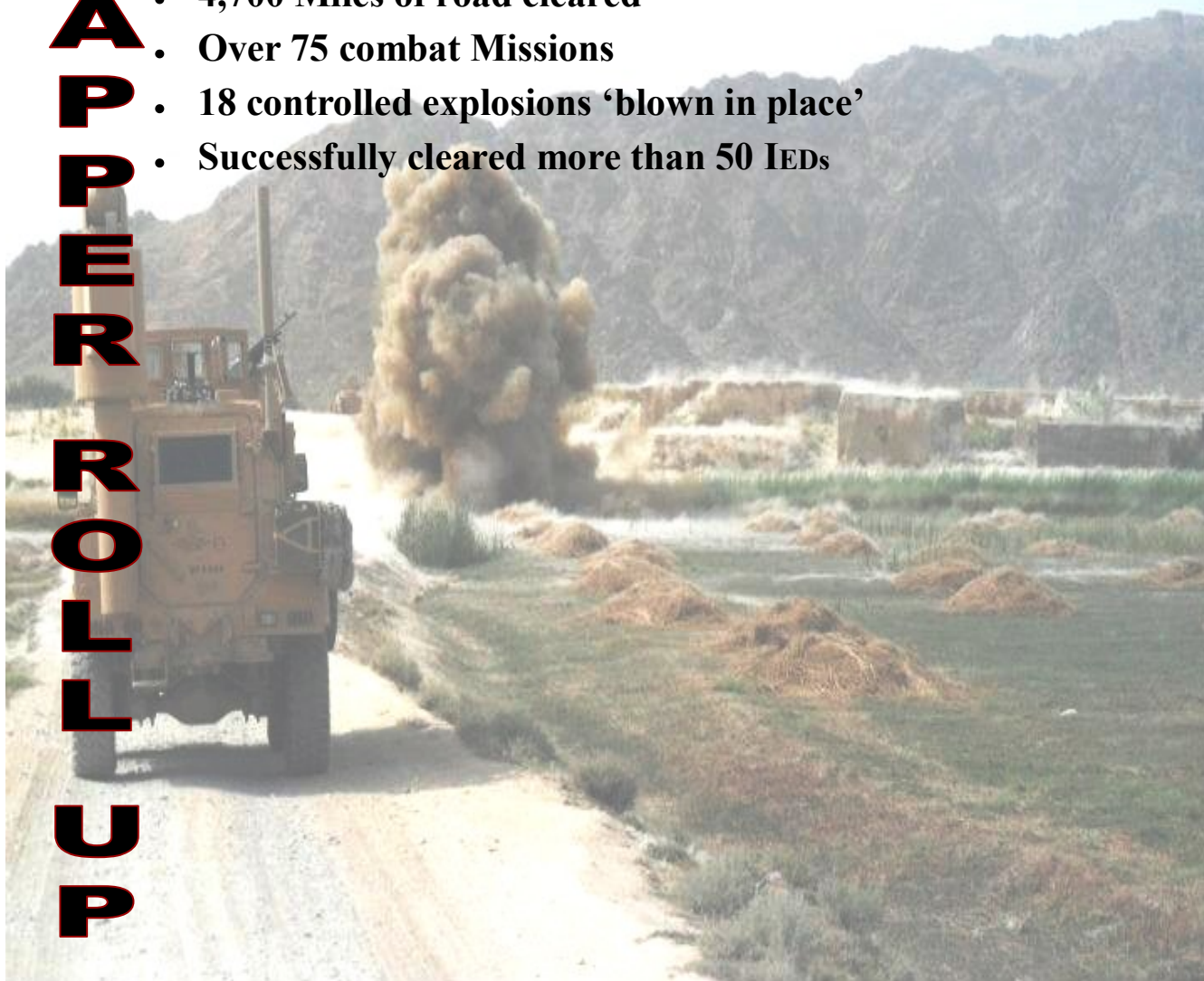
tial needs.

Overall, Bess said he enjoyed working and living in COP Lion but looks forward to returning home in a few months.

## 73rd Engineer's Operational Roll-Up for Dec-Jan

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- 4,700 Miles of road cleared
- Over 75 combat Missions
- 18 controlled explosions 'blown in place'
- Successfully cleared more than 50 IEDs





# ***RUNNING WITH THE PACK***





# Bobcats on the prowl

By Cheryl Hatch, Zuma Press

MOLLA DUST, near Khenjak, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan — 0400: Afghan and American soldiers scramble in the dark as they find their place in line. They can see their breath, though they can barely see each other. The leaders shout to be heard over the thwump-thwump-thwump of the two Chinook helicopters as the rotors chop the night air. Moving through the crowd, Pfc. Mazzole Singeo, 21, cuts a tall, lean silhouette. He counts soldiers, joking as he threads his way among them. He's the team leader for 1st Squad 3rd Platoon Charlie Company of the 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry, and he's tasked with accountability.

"I'm the one that takes all the guys to where we're going. I make sure they have their

NODs (night vision optical devices), sensitive items, weapon."

On his right wrist, Singeo wears a black engraved KIA bracelet with the name of the one soldier who didn't make it back from their first air assault mission in September 2011: Pfc. Brent E. Wood. No one speaks of Wood's death, yet his absence and the fear of meeting his fate weigh on many as heavily as their rucks and body armor.

0557: The helicopters lift off and fly for barely 10 minutes before landing. The ramp drops and soldiers spill onto an open field. They drop and duck and the helicopters lift off. They form a circle, each soldier down on one knee, weapons pointing out. There's a smudge of pink

on the horizon as they move out, heading away from day-break.

The two-day air assault is a joint mission of American and Afghan National

Army soldiers and includes members of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks.

"We're working in partnership with the ANA to clear any buildings, occupied or unoccupied, to look for any insurgent weapons or material. Lots of times we find the IED components," says Sgt. Robert Taylor, 30, from Tampa, Fla.

"In the last couple of months, there's been a push to let the ANA be the spearhead and us support them. We give them the counter-IED equipment and give them point."

There are 45 Afghan and 45 American soldiers, divided into two groups.

Company commander Capt. Christopher Zagursky, 27, leads one group; Sgt. 1st Class Brian O'Neal, 27, from Page, Ariz., leads the other. Zagursky's team moves toward a "kuchi" village, with a transient population, while O'Neal's team heads toward an abandoned mud hut compound.

0700: O'Neal's patrol has cleared its first objective and created a casualty collection point. They set up guards, survey the surroundings, monitor radio transmissions from Zagursky's patrol and keep a watch on their own patrol as it pushes forward to the next building.

"There are Americans over



there. Don't fire out there," Taylor says to his Afghan counterparts.

"We've got a couple of creepers, 800, maybe 600 meters," says Pfc. Troy Vacala, 28, from San Diego, Calif., to his fellow guard, Pfc. Richard Tostado, "Toast," 24, from Tucson, Ariz.

"There's at least two, might be more," Tostado says. "I saw a couple of silhouettes. Here we go. We got the Kiowas (helicopters) on them now."

As Vacala and Tostado keep watch, the Afghan and American soldiers take advantage of the break, though they don't interact. Some smoke. Others snack. The medic, Pfc. Eric Gomez, 26, from Quarry, Pa., breaks out a Meals Ready to Eat, Brisket Entree Menu No. 7, and eats it cold from the brown plastic bag.

They joke about the cold. Taylor sticks his hands under his "battle buddy" Vacala's armpits to warm them.

"You're going to get me promoted for this, right sergeant?" Vacala says.

"If my feet weren't cold, I'd be good," Tostado says. "I didn't plan on stepping in five feet of mud."

The first hour sets the rhythm for the day. March. Clear. Stop. Soldiers grab food, a smoke and rest when they can.

"I'm going to light my cigarette and as soon I do, we'll move," says Pvt. Fred Resende, 20, from Long Island, as he lights up. "Marlboro reds. All the way. All day."

In this joint operation, the ANA soldiers lead the way. They enter the compounds and rooms first, clearing them as they go. The Americans follow in a supporting role and do a second thorough



check.

"We haven't found any caches and that's a good thing," Zagursky says. "Security is good. You weren't hearing that two, three, four months ago."

By noon, the two groups have cleared all their objectives for both days, and Zagursky considers their next move while the soldiers rest.

"Hey, TGIF is calling. They'll make a delivery," Singeo says. "They'll be here in about 10 miles."

"Cheesy bacon cheeseburger," says Sgt. Travis Nowling, 32, from Panama City, Fla.

"Cheesy bacon cheeseburger, 2-liter Pepsi and an order of fries," O'Neal says.

"Side of ribs. Never mind, we got the ribs," another soldier says, referring to the raw meat hanging on one wall of the compound.

Zagursky decides to continue clearing compounds throughout the afternoon.

"We'll move north to the riverbed," he says. "Historically, insur-

gents have used that as a thoroughfare and historically, they've used it to store caches."

1500: The soldiers fall out in two columns, Afghans and Americans separated by a field, mirroring each other's movements. They cross varied terrain: sun-baked soil with deep cracks; loose, tilled soil; slick, gooey mud that gloms to their boots. They leap over irrigation ditches and balance on mud ridges that parcel fields. They move in single file, following as precisely as possible in each other's footsteps. And following the guy in the lead with the metal detector.

Taylor and Singeo take turns leading, using a Valon, a hand-held metal detector, to sweep for mines.

"Every time we go out on a patrol, I always take point," Taylor said. "When I get a hit on the Valon, I brush the dirt away to expose whatever we hit. Sometimes it's an IED, a battery or a piece of a tractor part. You never know. It's defi-



nately the least enjoyable part of the job.

"Everyone in this platoon has done 300 to 500 patrols. In the beginning, at Maktab, it was a hostile area," Taylor says. "We did two to five patrols a day for four months."

Spc. Malecia James, 25, from Jamaica, N.Y., marches near the rear. She's a member of the Female Engagement Team and the Female Search and Seizure Team. She's trained to engage with the Afghan women and children.

At one compound, she removes her rifle to be photographed with a young girl. She offers candy, pens and notebooks to children who gather around her. As she's leaving one compound, she makes a point to offer a pen to a shy young Afghan girl wearing a bright pink head scarf.

Before sunset, the two groups reassemble at an unoccupied compound they cleared earlier in the day. Soldiers grab a spot to sleep. Some eat cold MREs. Some smoke or dip chewing tobacco. Many of them joke about the cold before hunkering down under a night sky full of stars. While most of the soldiers sleep, a few soldiers will stand guard in two-hour shifts.

## DAY TWO

0200 to 0400: Pfc. Trenton Zuber, 20, from Toledo, Ohio, stands guard outside the entrance to the compound. Pfc. Robert Sipes, 22, from St. Petersburg, Fla., keeps watch from the roof.

"When you first get in country, it's a lot more nerve-wracking, outside the wire," says Zuber, of being alone on guard. "You're more wary at night. You look for suspicious stuff. Something that

doesn't look right. If you see people walking by with shovels, that's not common."

And they look for ways to pass the time.

"Don't look at your watch. Conversate.

Talk about home," Zuber says. "We do math. What's the chances of this tower being hit? What's the

chances of you being in it?"

"Most guard shifts, a lot of time, I think about home," Sipes says. "I spoiled my kids so much when I was on leave. My 2-and-a-half-year-old, whatever he pointed at, I got it."

"That's what I think about, I think about my daughter," Zuber says. He missed her birth. He was home on leave July 3 through 19 last year, and Trinity was born July 24.

0600: The local muezzin's voice pierces the morning air with his melodic call to prayer. Soldiers grudgingly leave their sleeping bags and start packing for another day of hiking and clearing compounds.

A group of soldiers pretends to double-dutch jump rope to get warm; others create a mini-mosh pit and slam bodies and laugh.

"I went to drink out of my water bottle last night and it was frozen," a soldier says.

"Hey Rivera, I thought you were going to come cuddle last night with me," a soldier shouts across the courtyard.

0730: The soldiers smoke and talk as they wait to leave. They

burn their trash and move out.

0930: James, the member of the Female Engagement Team, is called into a compound to meet with the women who've been gath-

ered in a room off the inner courtyard. She removes her helmet and her scarf. She kneels down, making certain not to show the soles of her

boots, which is considered offensive in Afghan culture. She sets her rifle down beside her.

The translator tells James the women are from the Achekzai tribe. The matriarch, Fatima, is a widow.

"We're going to bring some tea and we can talk," Fatima says through the translator. "We've been through a lot."

There's no man in the household; her husband drowned 22 years ago. Five women and nine children sit around James on a mat on the dirt floor. Tea and bread are served.

James holds one of the babies, a girl named Najiba. She feeds her bread as she asks Fatima questions.

"Do you have a school? Do you sew? Where's the closest clinic?" She's conducting a survey to learn the women's needs.

"We have a store. That's how we survive," Fatima says. "I am not a weak person. I'm strong. I was scared when I saw the soldiers. We're scared from everybody. This side is the government. The other side is the Taliban. We're in

**"Most guard shifts, a lot of time, I think about home,"**

**- Pfc. Robert Sipes**

between.”

1030: O’Neal’s group clears another compound. The two groups take turns clearing compounds as they move north. At one point, a local Afghan serves tea in clear glasses to the ANA and American soldiers as they rest in the dirt outside a compound.

1245: “We’ve found nothing, which may sound insignificant,” Zagursky says of their mission. “But it’s very significant. Zero caches is far more significant than any caches.

“Before in Molla Dust, no one had been there as frequently as we have been there,” he says. “We’ve made a lot of headway in eroding the insurgents’ logis-

tical capabilities.”

Zagursky decides to have the soldiers march back to Khenjakak instead of waiting for the Chinooks to pick them up later than night.

1255: “Let’s go. Let’s go. Get moving.”

The soldiers are happy to walk the last mile back to Khenjakak. They’ll get back to base in time for hot chow and a shower.

1745: Singeo is too late for a hot shower; he takes a cold one to get cleaned up after the mission. In two days, he and the other soldiers walked nearly eight miles and cleared four clusters of compounds.

Singeo admits he was thinking of Wood when the mission

started.

“Once we were out there, it was like just another day,” he says. “We talk to the locals, show them that we’re here and that we care about them.”

And, like Taylor, he leads the line with the Valon.

“Most of the time, I pick up batteries,” Singeo says. “If a beep goes higher than a seven, I need to investigate. I need to make sure it’s safe for the guys to come through.

“I just hope for the best,” Singeo says. “I tell myself that I will come back. It’s been working so far.”



Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division fire the M777 Howitzer in Zabul, Afghanistan.



NAME: PFC Justin Lashley  
UNIT: HHC, 1-5 IN  
DUTY POSITION: Retrans Operator  
HOMETOWN: Roanoke Rapids,  
North Carolina



## Soldier of the month for January 2012

As a 25U, PFC Lashley has been performing duties above his skill level by becoming the subject matter expert on the Harris 117G radio. His actions have allowed 1-5 IN to be the first BN in the Brigade to have an active CX-I network to be utilized to connect outlying Strong Points to the Battalion. On 15 minutes notice, PFC Lashley was sent to deploy a re-trans station when a unit was hit by an IED, his actions resulted in complete C2 into eastern Panjwa'i. PFC Lashley's dedication to fellow Soldiers has led him to work outside of his MOS to assist with the repair and upkeep on SP Tarnak. His willingness to tackle new challenges to improve the quality of life on the Strong Point in-



NAME: SSG Breedlove, Cathy  
UNIT: BSMC, 25<sup>th</sup> BSB  
DUTY POSITION: Aid Station  
NCOIC, 68 W  
HOMETOWN: Kempner, TX



## NCO of the month for January 2012

SSG Breedlove manages, and maintains the 25<sup>th</sup> BSB Battalion Aid Station which provides first class patient care for Soldiers within the 1/25 Stryker Brigade on Kandahar Air Field, and other supported units. Her BAS averages about 200 patient encounters weekly since the beginning of the deployment. She has been diligently working on Influenza vaccinations for Soldiers within the Brigade. Her hard work and dedication has contributed to over 550 vaccinations. In addition SSG Breedlove scored a 298 on her record APFT, earning the Army Physical Fitness Badge for Excellence setting the standard for all Soldiers to follow. Serving as the BSMC's Combined Federal Campaign representative, her efforts resulted in a 100% contact rate, with donations surpassing \$5,000.



NAME: 1LT Stratton, Nathan  
UNIT: C Troop, 5-1 CAV, 1/25<sup>th</sup> SBCT  
DUTY POSITION: Platoon Leader  
HOMETOWN: Houston, TX



## Officer of the month for January 2012

1LT Stratton led his Platoon through the rugged terrain of the Shege Rig Desert to disrupt the enemy supply lines. The operation required his element air assaulted in and ensured unit support for a minimum of 48 hours. Upon touchdown at the Landing Zone, 1 LT Stratton immediately established his command and control node and emplaced his elements into observation posts. His actions, and those of his Soldiers, allowed for the effective observation of enemy smuggling routes across the southern boundary of the Battalion Area of Operations. The presence of his Platoon forced the enemy to shift movement of personnel and equipment to main routes being actively patrol by ISAF and ANSF personnel.



# Operation Creature Pan Kalay

By Nazly Confesor, 319 MPAD

PAN KALAY, Afghanistan - As improvised explosive devices remain the weapon of choice for insurgents, U.S. forces and the Afghan National Army (ANA) continue to fight against the threat of IEDs, caches and home-made explosive compounds.

In the Panjwa'i district of southern Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Soldiers from C Company, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division from Fort Wainwright, Alaska are doing their part in providing security as the ANA along with the Afghan Explosive Ordinance Disposal team lead the way in planning, organizing and executing IED clearance operations.

Recently, the ANA 1st Brigade, 205th Hero Corps successfully took the lead in searching the village of Pan

Kalay to disrupt future insurgent attacks and activities.

Operation Creature Pan Kalay was one of the many operations marking the beginning of a transition phase, where Afghan National Security Forces are taking the lead in independent operations.

As U.S. forces plan to draw-down in 2014, ANSF have been working together to bring stability and security to the region.

"A few months ago, U.S. forces planned and executed missions, while the ANA supported us," said U.S. Army Capt. Jeremiah Sasala, platoon leader assigned to C Company, 3-21 Inf." Now, the ANA is coordinating its own missions. We provide security and support."

Sasala's platoon along with 1-5 Inf. and Airmen from the U.S. Air Force 466th Air Expeditionary Squadron Explosive

Ordinance Disposal team provided support, resources and guidance during the 3-day operation.

On the second day of the operation, the ANA

EOD technicians along with Air Force EOD technicians started the mission first as their counterparts and U.S. forces provided security.

During the clearing, they found seventy-five pounds of HME before striking an IED at the gate of a home-made explosive facility. The explosion injured three ANA EOD technicians and one U.S. Air Force EOD technician.

The ANA provided security as U.S. forces provided medical treatment to the wounded. Meanwhile, Air Force EOD technicians eliminated the remaining IEDs by controlled detonation.

U.S. Army Spc. Zachary H. Bolin, a combat medic with 3-21 Inf. said he has seen a shift in attitudes with their ANA counterparts in the past few weeks.

"The ANA has become more confident ever since they started operating on their own," he said.

The mission resulted in the confiscation of 400 pounds of HME, IED making material, 1,150 pounds of marijuana seeds, numerous caches and 11,560 lbs of Hashish.

Overall, Operation Creature Pan Kalay was successful in removing dangerous IED's from the battlefield and delivered a blow to the insurgent financing from hashish and marijuana seeds to fund their insurgency.



# Arctic Wolves Adapt to Changing Mission

By Sgt. Michael Blalack

The 2011 fighting season is over in Afghanistan, and U.S. forces are adjusting their mission, all the way down to platoon level operations, to reflect the resulting change in focus. While insurgents are still active, contact is less frequent and International Security Assistance Forces and Afghan National Security Forces are taking advantage of the lull in combat operations to spend more time on building good relations with the people of Afghanistan.

2nd Platoon, B Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, recently participated in just such a patrol, led by their Afghan partners near Combat Outpost Sperwan Ghar, in Southern Kandahar.

"The purpose was basically to get to know the people in the village of Shengazi," said 2nd Lt. Skyler Petitt, platoon

leader for 2nd Platoon, who led the patrol. "We had never been there before. We didn't even know what the village was called."

On the morning of Jan. 3 the platoon, along with their Afghan National Army partners, marched out of Sperwan Ghar equipped with rifles, mine sweepers, and a Military Working Dog.

But they were also carrying radios to be passed out to heads of households that receive the Afghan government's official radio broadcasts, as well as newsletters with the same information to be given to literate members of the family.

"We're also letting them know about things we're doing," said Petitt, "such as starting a school south of Sperwan Ghar that we



While U.S. and Afghan soldiers took up security positions throughout the village, Petitt and his Afghan counterpart spoke with a shopkeeper and two village elders.

Counternarcotics have become a focus for ANSF operations in the area and during the recent patrol the ANA found and destroyed more than 2,000 lbs of marijuana.

Growing and using marijuana is both against Afghan law and Islam. For the 1st time since 2002, the Afghan government is putting emphasis on drug eradication.

"We're looking forward to next year," said Petitt. "The Taliban won't have the income that marijuana brings them to use against us and the ANA."

U.S. and Afghan forces working together to create a secure and stable Afghanistan in 2014.



need the support and desire of the villagers to get started."



## ARCTIC WOLVES RETENTION

Change in reenlistment policy now allows our Soldiers in phase 2 of the reenlistment window to start working their reenlistment at this time. The only catch is that you will not be able to actually conduct the reenlistment until 1 March 2012. Soldiers with an ETS date between 1 October 2012 and 30 September 2013 are considered in the reenlistment window for phase 2. Soldiers are able to utilize current policy to when determining which options they qualify for. Soldiers who have a valid reservation will be grandfathered if policy changes before they are able to conduct the reenlistment.

This change I am sure is welcomed news for our phase 2 Soldiers as it now gives them predictability as to their future; as we begin the downward slope of our deployment. Some key things to remember

1. Soldiers must be within 12 months of DEROS to work a movement option through reenlistment.
2. Currently our over strength Soldiers have an exception to policy to reenlist for the Regular Army Reenlistment option if they do not qualify for any training seats or no training that they desire. Once we return from deployment it will be reclassification or ETS for these Soldiers.
3. Most Soldiers will not qualify for a bonus upon return from deployment. So far this fiscal year 87% of the bonuses paid out by the Army have been to deployed Soldiers who do not qualify for a MOS bonus.

As always remember that the best source of information is to contact one of the Brigades Career Counselors for the most accurate and up to date information.

### ---BRIGADE RETENTION TEAM---

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SFC VINCI-	1-5 IN BN Career Counselor	FOB Soja
SSG Alvarez-	3-21 IN BN Career Counselor	FOB Zangabad
SSG Fatuesi-	1-24 IN BN Career Counselor	FOB Lagman
SSG Cloud-	5-1 CAV SQDN Career Counselor	KAF
SSG Peltier-	2-8 FA BN Career Counselor	FOB Lindsey
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### ----STAY ARCTIC TOUGH----



**Have a Story Idea or photos?**

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