

**2ND BATTALION, 377TH PARACHUTE FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT
FOB SALERNO, AFGHANISTAN**



STEEL TIMES

ISSUE 3 VOLUME 1
MARCH 2012



TF STEEL

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM 12-13



COMMANDER'S CUT



Dear Families and Friends of Task Force STEEL,



MG Daniel B. Allyn, Commanding General of the Combined Joint Task Force 1 (CJTF-1), recognizes TF SPARTAN STEEL Paratroopers with coins of excellence for their hard work and contribution to the success of the task force's mission. (21 MAR 12)

You can certainly be proud, yet again, a brave generation continues to answer the call to do our Nation's bidding. They answer that call at a seminal point in our Nation's history when we are in a protracted conflict with a determined and ruthless foe— an enemy that wants no accommodation and desires no compromise. Against such a foe, we cannot back down, give in, or accept anything less than victory.

General (Retired) Charles Campbell, former Commanding General of the United States Army Forces Command, captured it well when he stated, "Clearly, these are not times for the 'feint of heart', 'frail of body' or 'weak of spirit'. These are not the times of the 'summer Soldier or the sunshine patriot'. These are the times for the resolute, the hardened, the perseverant, and the courageous.

These are times that demand that the difficult and dangerous work of a free society be done, and be done by men and women of courage, of integrity, and of character." This is descriptive of the character of the men and women not only in Task Force STEEL but also throughout all of Task Force SPARTAN. These Soldiers in our ranks represent all of America in a mosaic of old and young, male and female, with a diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds; yet, they stand together as one, confronting our Nation's enemies and winning in a singularly superior manner.

But just as important is the inextricable bond that these Soldiers have formed with their fellow Americans. This bond was forged in the darkest hours as our Nation was born and continues to strengthen with each challenge. It is an enduring bond that has been consecrated by blood that has been shed by men and women of every generation throughout history, who have sacrificed and underwent the fatigue of support in a selfless manner. Make no mistake, the United States of America is a remarkable Nation, unlike any that has ever existed, and our Army is a reflection of that Nation.

Together we stand for what is right and what is good, and we are willing to make the enormous sacrifice and ask nothing in return. There is no doubt that this fight will continue to test our resolve; however, we will answer the call for the pursuit of freedom— a time-honored American principle— so that others can be men and women of free choice.

On behalf of CSM Moore, Task Force STEEL, and myself, thank you for your tremendous support. We miss you, and you remain in our thoughts and prayers. God Bless.

Sincerely,
LTC Frank J. Stanco
Commander, Task Force STEEL
Spartan Steel 6

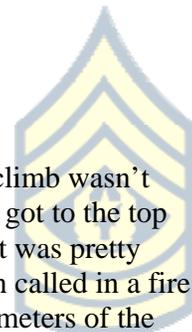
On the Cover...



MG Allyn speaks with TF SPARTAN STEEL Paratroopers during his visit to FOB SALERNO. (21 MAR 12)



MESSAGE FROM STEEL 7



Dear PFAR Family,

It has been said that time flies when you are having fun, and I have found that to be a true statement. I cannot believe how fast this month has gone by. I am a country boy from Alabama, so I guess I am a little slow. It only took me three months to finally write about the outstanding and phenomenal job that your other halves and loved ones have been doing and will continue to do. However, there is a little twist in how I will write about your loved ones. I will choose one battery to write about at a time every month until I have written about all the batteries in the battalion. The lucky winner this month is Alpha Battery.

I have had the privilege and honor to participate in all the events that I will be writing to you all about. The real reason why I am starting with Alpha Battery is that 1SG Zoker accuses me of placing them last all the time. I tried telling him that it really has to do with his last name starting with a "Z".

Many of you don't know that before I was a Sergeant Major, I was a Forward Observer. So, I went out on patrol with Alpha Battery to fire two missions with our howitzer section on the FOB. It was a beautiful day and the view was spectacular. As I stumbled up the hill over jagged rocks, I was reminded that this was con-

sidered a small hill. I pretended like the climb wasn't anything, but I really was smoked when I got to the top of this "small" hill. I thought to myself, it was pretty large when I was climbing it. SGT Felton called in a fire mission and the rounds landed within 50 meters of the target. He made one correction and fired the remaining



CSM Moore observing fires while on patrol with Paratroopers from A BTRY.

rounds on that target.

Just a few days ago, I went out on a dismounted patrol with Alpha Battery and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command (IJC) CSM. The IJC CSM is responsible for over 84,000 Soldiers, and he has been out on many patrols with Soldiers all throughout Afghanistan. He told me that this was one of the best platoons he has gone out on a patrol with. What is significant about that statement is that Alpha is a Field Artillery unit and not an Infantry unit. This testifies of how good your Paratroopers are, and it's an honor to serve alongside of them in any capacity.

Megan is a civilian contractor that works with our unit, and she works mostly with Paratroopers from Alpha Battery. I step out of my living quarters and see four bald heads, including Megan (I was thinking skinhead reunion). To make a long story short, Megan's brother is dying of cancer. Alpha Battery Paratroopers, to honor her brother, shaved their heads. This speaks of compassion and camaraderie—compassion for a sister who will be going home to say bye to her brother for the last time, and



CSM Moore and his ANA partners escort CSM Vimoto (far left), the Regional Command East CSM, around Camp Clark and Camp Parsa.

camaraderie of bonding together for a cause that is bigger than one's self. So, the Sergeant Major deemed that day, "Give Megan a hug day." Through many tears and thank yous, the day culminated with the lowering of the American flag in her brother Nick's honor. I have included that picture in this newsletter.

The last story I will share is about one of the Soldiers that was killed in Iraq that most Paratroopers in the battalion never met. The Soldier is SPC Johnathan Chism from A/2-377th PFAR who was killed at the Provincial Joint Coordination Center (PJCC) in Karbala, Iraq on January 20, 2007. I was speaking to one of the Chief Warrant Officers at his work area two days ago. I told him that I had sent flags to all of the Spartan Heroes family members. We kept talking, and then he mentioned SPC Chism's name. He began to share with me that he was SFC Rico at the time, and he was the one that escorted SPC Chism's remains back to Louisiana. He talked about the honor of carrying out such a solemn duty. He talked about it being the hardest thing he had to do, and he talked about how much it meant to the family. I just thought that was amazing and what are the chances of something like that occurring.

Finally, I would like to say it truly has been an honor and a pleasure to work with the committed and dedicated men of Falcon Battery this month. You all should be extremely proud of their many accomplishments; I know that the Commander and I are. Their efforts have made a significant difference in such a short time, and many can sleep well at night because of their vigilance in accomplishing every mission with dignity and honor. Thank you for your prayers, and thank you for your love and support. Take care and God bless.

Steel 7 Out!

(middle) CSM Moore imparts words of wisdom on the Soldiers and NCOs of C BTRY, 1-377 FAR at the firing point on FOB SALERNO.

(bottom) CSM Moore and PFC Ward stand next to the newly finished mural of the 2-377 PFAR Coat of Arms that PFC Ward diligently painted during the month of March.



CSM Moore gives Megan (center) a hug on "Give Megan a hug day," outside of the A BTRY Command Post. Several Paratroopers from A BTRY shaved their heads in honor of Megan's brother.



HQ & HQ BATTERY HAWKS

From the Battery Commander:

Hawk family,



Greetings from Afghanistan! During the past 30 days, HHB Paratroopers' fearsome presence on the battlefield continued to dismantle the enemy's machinery of hate and will to fight. My interpreter/cultural adviser at the Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC), who has been working for coalition forces for over 10 years, was wowed by the incredible decrease in the number of mortar attacks FOB SALERNO has received since HHB arrived. He strongly believes that our unit is scaring the insurgents away, and he fears that he will have to start looking for another job very soon. I constantly reassure him the war is not over yet and finding another job will be easy for him, even after all combat operations are over.

Nonetheless, the Battalion has begun another phase in the operation. During this phase, some leaders throughout the Battalion are being reassigned to different positions in order to foster growth through different roles in a combat environment.



1LT Pachnieski became the new BN Information Operations Officer (S7).

the Battery Executive Officer (XO) since I took command of HHB, left the Battery to join the Battalion staff. He is now the Tactical Information Operations Officer for the Battalion. HHB is a much better organization today because of 1LT Pachnieski's hard work and leadership abilities.

On the other hand, the Battery promoted Second Lieutenant Shawon to First Lieutenant and welcomed him as the new HHB XO and BDOC Platoon leader. 1LT Shawon is not new to the Battery. In fact, he had temporarily filled the Battery XO position in the past for 1LT Pachnieski. 1LT Shawon also acted as HHB Commander while 1LT Pachnieski and I deployed early with the advance

party team. 1LT Shawon did a wonderful job deploying the main body to Afghanistan. He is quite at home in HHB, and the Battery is proud to have him.

Additionally, the Battery said goodbye to SFC Joy, who went on to become a firing battery Platoon Sergeant for Bravo Battery, and we welcomed



CPT Aldoph with his linguist / cultural advisor outside of the BDOC.

SFC Sazama and SFC Ramos as new Operations Sergeants for the BDOC.

I can't believe it has almost been 12 months since my family and I joined the Steel Hawk family. What a home it has been for us! However, it will soon be our turn to say goodbye to HHB and embrace another chapter in my military career and service to our great nation.

Despite so many key leaders moving around, HHB continued to send its Paratroopers on well-deserved furloughs to enjoy relaxing free time with families and friends. It is very important that our Paratroopers take a break from the combat environment. Personally, I enjoy chatting with Relax and Recuperation (R&R) returners, and with great hunger, I consume every detail of their R&R experience. This past week, when I asked one of our outstanding Paratroopers how his R&R went, he delightfully replied, "Sir, it was great; I had a chance to run in a marathon."

When I insisted on getting the details of his accomplishment, I realized that this Paratrooper did not just run a marathon, he actually participated in one

LTC Stanco promoting 2LT Shawon to 1LT.



of humanity's most important battles. His motives for joining in this fight were nothing shy of being very personal. The following is SPC John William Zamora's story.

"Live strong! When most people hear that statement, they think of the great Tour de France winner and cancer survivor, Lance Armstrong. This past February, I was lucky enough to be a part of his legacy and support the fight against cancer. Every February, in the heart of Austin, Texas, Lance Armstrong hosts a marathon and a half-marathon for the fight against cancer.

I have always wanted to participate in this event since cancer has played a big part in my family. My grandmother is a survivor of breast cancer, and I lost my grandfather to colon cancer before I was born. Growing up, I have always wanted to do my part in raising cancer awareness and support the fight against cancer. I believe that everyone should do their part and raise awareness.

The atmosphere of the race was beyond motivating. Thousands of spectators lined the streets full of posters and banners welcoming and cheering on all the participants. Each and every one of them yelled and cheered nonstop for every runner. Seeing their compassion and commitment to motivate each runner telling us, "You're almost there. Don't give up." made you keep pushing and striving towards your goal. Now you not only had your loved ones you ran the race for, but those who were pushing you to complete all you set out to do that day. Coming in to the final stretch was the loudest out of all the length of the race. It seemed like even more people crammed the finish line waving you on. Crossing the finish line was a great feeling of accomplishment and success. On top of all of this, the weather was more than perfect. A cool sixty degrees with a slight wind welcomed the morning.

Running the half-marathon brought a sense of self accomplishment as well as pride knowing I was doing it not only for myself but for my family members who have had to suffer from the affects of cancer. Running with so many people who have lost loved ones and those who survived was an amazing sight. These people may have never ran these distances in their lives, but they pushed themselves further and further for a cause they strongly believe in, a memory that had changed their lives, and a sense of hope that the human race will be triumphant one day. Being around such individuals really opens your eyes and allows you to cherish the life we live.

I further plan to run this race again in its entirety. Once again not for me but for those who have survived and for those who have lost their lives in the fight against cancer. I would like to see all those willing and able sign up for the Pat Tillman run on 21 April 2012."

—written by SPC John W. Zamora

SPC Zamora's participation in this fight did justice to the entire human race, and we appreciate his accomplishment. Little did Zamora know his participating in this fight was directly linked to rendering justice to one of our very own.

Our Battery First Sergeant, 1SG Phillips, went on R&R earlier than scheduled in order to visit his mother who was ill of lung cancer. Unfortunately, 1SG Phillips lost his mother while he was on R&R. His mother had courageously battled this vicious disease for more than a year. The entire Battalion pulled together behind 1SG Phillips during this time of sorrow. Under the leadership of SFC Clay, who was the acting Battery First Sergeant while 1SG Phillips went on R&R, Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Soldiers and families expressed sincere condolence to their 1SG.

Sometimes military units are troubled because of Soldiers who fail to do the right thing while on R&R or away from their supervisors. In HHB, Paratroopers know nothing less than living an exemplary life in accordance with the Army Values. SPC Zamora's participation in a marathon in support of cancer awareness while on R&R is an accomplishment



SFC Sazama (above) and SFC Ramos (below) are the "new" Non-Commissioned Officers in charge of BDOC.



SPC Zamora (below) returned from R&R.



that honors us all, especially during a time when the Battery's top Non-Commissioned Officer was personally affected by cancer. Cheers to SPC Zamora!

From the home front, the FRG leaders executed the "Let's Pump it Up" event. Families and Rear Detachment leaders joined Mrs. Aldoph and Mrs. Fletcher for their first Battery FRG event since the battery deployed. HHB dads we spoke with claimed that during their Skype-conversations, their little ones could not stop chattering about bouncing and jumping around during this event. Way to go FRG! We also have knowledge from a very good source that HHB families had a huge gathering and have planned a surprise operation for HHB Paratroopers in Afghanistan. Sorry, but that is all we are allowed to say about that for now. Happy Hunting!

This month, in addition to promoting Second Lieutenant Shawon to First Lieutenant, Hawk Battery promoted three outstanding Paratroopers. Privates First Class Zachariah Drajić, Birane Dioum, and Igor Raskin were promoted to Specialist. SPC Drajić is an Intel Analyst, and he works for the S2 shop. SPC Dioum and SPC Raskin are both Medics and are working at Salerno Hospital. Among the junior enlisted, they are very skilled and the best at their jobs.

To all the families back in JBER, Alaska, or where ever you may currently be, thank you so much for keeping our Paratroopers in your thoughts and prayers. Your patience, care, love and support are truly appreciated.

Strong Families Always,

CPT Aldoph, Jean
HAWK 6

From the Battery First Sergeant:

Hawk family,

Greetings from 1SG's foxhole! First, I would like to say I had a safe trip back from South Carolina where I was fortunate to be with my mother before she passed away from a long battle with lung cancer. Thanks to all the Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, junior enlisted Paratroopers, and family members who sent their condolences. My mother really expressed her appreciation to our Paratroopers and families who sent flowers and made phone calls before her passing. I hope all families are doing well; we all know it is very difficult for you to juggle work, school, bills, kids, etc while your husbands and wives are deployed. The Hawk family is a very strong family, and it has been proven that during adversity we can work through it together. We appreciate all the efforts from all our families, and you can look forward to our safe return home to Alaska to be with you. Your husbands and wives, sons and daughters are the best of the best, and they continue to prove it on a daily basis.



HHB FRG Leaders at Easter Event - Code Name "??".



CPT Aldoph presenting SPC Raskin with his promotion certificate. He was promoted to Specialist (E4).



**1SG Phillips, David
HAWK 7**



A BATTERY FALCONS

Hello to everybody back home,

It seems like time has been flying recently. It's great to look up and see that we are almost four months into our deployment! Soon we'll be at the halfway point, and it's all downhill from there.

Our Troopers continue to excel in their performance and their conduct over here. If you could see them on patrol, I doubt you could tell a difference between our artillerymen and an infantry company. I believe that the quality of life in our area of operations is improving, in large part, because of the effort of your husbands and sons.

Just because we are over here does not mean our Army careers are on hold, and I'd like to recognize two outstanding Non-commissioned officers who recently re-enlisted. SFC Wylie Ramos re-enlisted for an indefinite length of time, meaning that he has now committed to staying in the Army until his retirement. In addition, just yesterday, SGT Robert Salazar re-enlisted for six years. I congratulate and applaud these two great leaders for recommitting to serving their country in a time of war.

It always amazes me when I think about the sacrifices our Troopers make every day. Nearly all of the Battery enlisted during wartime and knew they would most likely deploy soon after entering the Army. For the NCO's, this deployment marks their 2nd, 3rd, or even 4th time overseas, which speaks to a commitment that most people cannot fathom. Equally as committed and dedicated are all of our families in Alaska and elsewhere; as I've said, and continue to say, our success is not possible without your support. I know you all miss your husbands and your sons, and our deployment is perhaps even more difficult for you than it is for us over here. Please know that our Troopers are extremely appreciative of everything you do, as are 1st Sergeant Zoker and I.

Finally, it is great to see how active you all are in the Battery FRG. I have seen good and bad FRGs, and the organization you have formed is by far the best FRG I have ever seen. Thank you to all of you for the effort you put in to supporting each other and for allowing us to do what we do.

Sincerely,

SAMUEL H. ZOKER
1SG, USA
First Sergeant

DANIEL D. FRECHETTE
CPT, FA
Commanding



SGT Ramon Cortez, a native of Zacatecas, Mexico, uses a laser range finder to determine an accurate location for the target area he will be observing.



SGT Casey Felton, from Lewiston, Idaho, prepares to call in adjustments to the round he is observing.

A BATTERY GAINS VALUABLE FORWARD OBSERVER EXPERIENCE

The Paratroopers of Alpha Battery completed a transformation from a Firing Battery in order to perform a maneuver mission during our deployment here to Afghanistan. But that does not mean that we have stopped being Artillerymen. As “Redlegs”, we have found a way to still incorporate Field Artillery (FA) into our operations. Our paratroopers are most familiar with the “gunline” part of FA, but on the other side of the Field Artillery world is the observation of the round when it impacts its target. The Soldiers that are trained to do this are called Forward Observers (FOs). Alpha Battery’s qualified observers include 2LT Rob Wright, a native of Woodburn, Kentucky, SGT Ramon Cortez, a native of Zacatecas, Mexico, and SGT Casey Felton, a native of Lewiston, Idaho. FOs are responsible for calling for, observing, and adjusting the rounds that are fired from the howitzers. It is important that these Paratroopers remain sharp on their basic skills. For this reason, Alpha Battery conducts constant training.

The Forward Observer, while patrolling, will conduct a reconnaissance of possible areas to call for fire and subsequently observe “fires.” It is best for the observer to be on higher ground than the impact area, and since 600 meters is considered “danger close”, all fires are observed from a distance greater than this. There are two methods that can be used to put “steel on target.” The first is “low angle”; in plain English this means that the barrel of the howitzer is elevated less than 45 degrees because there are fewer ridges, crests, and peaks between the gun and the target area. However, due to the mountainous terrain in much of eastern Afghanistan, many fire missions must be shot in “high angle.” This means that the howitzer tube must be elevated above 45 degrees in order to clear all terrain features in the path of the trajectory. Think of low angle as throwing a water balloon across your backyard, and high angle as having to throw a water balloon over your neighbor’s fence.

SSG Gallegos, a Cannon Crewmember who has occupied several observation posts (OPs) with 1st platoon, remarked, “This is actually really beneficial to me as a gun guy to be able to see how things operate from the Forward Observer’s perspective.”

SGT Cortez added, “It has helped me to know how to better interact with the gunline [through the radio] while I’m calling for fire. Since the guys that are occupying the OP with me have fired artillery before, they are able to give me pointers of what the gunline is interested in hearing from me while I am up here observing rounds.”

The training continues to be important for the refinement of skills it reinforces in the Forward Observers and the cross training that the Cannon Crewmembers of Alpha Battery are able to be involved in. This is knowledge they will take with them and pass along to their future assignments.



Rounds fired from C BTRY, 1-377 FAR are observed safely by A BTRY at OP 12.



1LT Dave Groseclose, from Clemens, N.C., 3rd Platoon Leader for A BTRY and SGT Casey Felton, a native of Lewiston, Idaho prepare for a call-for-fire exercise with the M777 155mm howitzer crews on FOB SALERNO from the top of a mountain several miles away from the FOB. (3 FEB 12)

—written by 2LT Rob Wright



(Left) Paratroopers with 3rd Platoon, A BTRY prepare to ascend a hillside up to OP 11 outside FOB SALERNO (3 FEB 12). 3rd Platoon partnered with members of the ABP and the Afghan Uniformed Police to execute a call-for-fire exercise from the top of OP 11, an important procedure that calibrates large weapons, in this case the M777 155mm howitzers on FOB SALERNO.

(Right) SSG Wakeley (left) and SGT Rothenberger share a quick laugh while waiting to start moving up a hill to occupy an observation post.



(Left) SGT Cortez was challenged to an arm wrestling match by a villager in Koni Kawar. After a brief struggle, SGT Cortez was able to win the match.

CPT Daniel Frechette, A BTRY Commander, gives SFC Wylie Ramos the Oath of Enlistment during his reenlistment ceremony at FOB SALERNO. SFC Ramos reenlisted indefinitely. (9 MAR 12)





B BATTERY BLACKSHEEP

1st Platoon, Bravo Battery, 2-377th PPAR

Here at JCOP BAK, 1st Platoon of Bravo “BLACKSHEEP” Battery, 2-377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment continues building a firing point from scratch. The establishment and continuous construction of our firing point is tiring but rewarding work. The men of 1st platoon are taking advantage of the opportunity afforded them by not only mastering their respective artillery skills but also refining and mastering skills beyond what is expected of them. Whether it is PFC Pedro gunning his section’s howitzer, or PFC Jordan learning the intricacies of every position on the gun line – the artillerymen of JCOP BAK continuously accumulate their artillery knowledge.



Picture Above: 1st Platoon paratroopers conduct MEDEVAC training at JCOP BAK with members of 1-501st PIR and TF WOLFPACK.

Whenever two new units begin working with each other, there will inevitably be a time where each unit must become familiar with the other’s idiosyncrasies. Training with our supported infantrymen ensures this familiarity and improves our overall effectiveness when the rounds we fire are meant for the enemy. Our training with the men of Team Blackfoot, 1-501st Parachute Infantry Regiment has solidified our confidence in both our abilities and the abilities of the infantrymen we support.

An advantage of building a firing point from scratch is our platoon’s opportunity to enjoy the fruits of our labor. Where there was once nothing, there now stand ready racks, HESCOs, ammo storage areas, shelves, and much improved gun positions. These projects, together with our superbly accurate and effective fire support for our Blackfoot, 1-501st brothers in arms, are what will become our legacy for the Afghan and American people. We of 1st Platoon want everyone to know, through our actions, we take pride in our work ethic and understand there is no such thing as “good enough.”

An advantage of building a firing point from scratch is our platoon’s opportunity to enjoy the fruits of our labor. Where there was once nothing, there now stand ready racks, HESCOs, ammo storage areas, shelves, and much improved gun positions. These projects, together with our superbly accurate and effective fire support for our Blackfoot, 1-501st brothers in arms, are what will become our legacy for the Afghan and American people. We of 1st Platoon want everyone to know through our actions that we take pride in our work ethic and understand there is no such thing as, “good enough.”

—written by ILT Mitchell Day

C BATTERY/1-377 FAR CRUSADERS

C Battery, 1-377 FAR has seen much in the last month. The Battery has supported numerous operations for TF BLUE GERONIMO, TF STEEL, TF DENALI, TF GOLD GERONIMO, and TF BLACK SCARVES from the four firing locations we maintain with six howitzer sections. The Battery has collectively shot over 140 rounds in the past month for missions ranging from Illumination to High Explosives (HE). Every gun section in the Battery continues to work hard at making themselves the best crew they can be, with all soldiers working hard to learn everything they can about the M777A2. Recently, 3rd Platoon, at FOB SALERNO, received two additional howitzers. The first is a 105MM M119, and the second is an additional 155MM M777A2. With the different howitzer type, the already certified crews are having to supplement their considerable howitzer knowledge culled from the M777A2 with that of a different type of howitzer, which is completely manually operated. The gun that they are used to operating has several digital systems designed to make the operation of the gun as easy as possible. The selected crews are training hard toward certification on the new artillery piece and look forward to the day they can finally shoot it.



SGT Little, SPC Lee, and PFC Saxon, three of the Soldiers picked to man the M119 are hard at work on the new piece.



SGT Little checks the site during crew drill rehearsals, while SPC Lee stands by to load.



PFC Saxon levels the bubbles on the M119 during a dry-fire mission.



CRUSADER BATTERY SOLDIER OF THE MONTH



SPC Joshua Medaris is a vital asset not only to the Army but also to 3rd Platoon, C BTRY, 1st Battalion, 377th Field Artillery Regiment (AASLT). As a member of the M777A2 Howitzer section he is also the only Uniform 6 (Howitzer Mechanic) in the platoon. In addition to being fully capable of performing assigned tasks during fire missions, he is also constantly called upon to go far beyond what the normal 13B is asked to do. Most notably, SPC Medaris revitalized both howitzers this unit took possession of, and of even more significance, he repaired a howitzer that had been neglected for many years. As the designated U-6 Howitzer Mechanic for 3rd Platoon, a significant part of his mission is spent ensuring that our howitzers are capable of firing at all times. This platoon also recently received a non-mission capable (NMC) M777, which unfortunately had five dead-lining deficiencies. SPC Medaris has been diligently working on the third howitzer from sun up to sun down. After the final repairs are made on this howitzer, it will be used in support of follow on missions in support of the Task Force's mission and Operation Enduring Freedom.

SPC Medaris' goal is to certify as a Gunner of the section and eventually lead his very own howitzer section. Without a doubt, SPC Medaris holds the

keys to success in his palms. SPC Medaris is not new to deployment; he has deployed two other times before OEF 12-13, but this is his first deployment to Afghanistan. His other deployments were spent in Iraq. SPC Medaris quotes, "My mission here is extremely different from my previous two. Before, when I was deployed in Iraq in support of OIF III and OIF IV, my primary mission was that of an infantryman." Undoubtedly, artillerymen and women are considered a "jack of all trades," and this is no more clearly evident than through his prior service to his country. In the span of his military career, he has conducted hundreds of dismounted combat patrols through the cities of Baghdad and Taji. SPC Medaris completed over 500 "soft knocks" and 800 "hard knocks" while serving as a 13B in-lieu-of an 11B.

SPC Medaris' personal goal is to continue learning about the M777 so he can expand on his current knowledge base. Furthermore, it is important to note that when his career with the military is over, SPC Medaris would greatly like to continue his work in support of the Army and the United States Military by working on its current and future howitzers.

SPC Medaris is seen here taking a break with the newly transferred M777A2 which he has spent the better part of two weeks working on in order to make it fully operational and get it into the fight.



G COMPANY WOLFPACK

The month of March has brought with it several important milestones for a few of our Soldiers. Two re-enlistments were conducted this month; SGT Glen Veney and SPC Cwandi Prawito proudly raised their hands and once more accepted their oaths.

Promoted this month from the rank of Private to Private First Class was Stephen Iwasko. The following Soldiers were promoted from the rank of Private First Class to Specialist: Kaitlin Brown, Robert Cottrell, and Asia Dawson. Three Soldiers received lateral promotions to the rank of Corporal. These junior Non-Commissioned Officers and current team leaders are CPL Janovia Nelson, CPL Angela Porter, and CPL Surya Potu. Additionally, there are three new challengers to the duties and responsibilities entrusted to the United States Army's Non-Commissioned Officer Corps. Bobby Boyd, Eli Martin, and Edward Rowell proudly pinned the rank of SGT. They proudly and knowingly accept what leadership challenges lay ahead, and we wish them the best in their endeavors to guide and mentor our sons, daughters, wives, and husbands. Bringing up the last of this month's promotions was Vincent Montoya who earned the rank of SSG and accepted with it the increased demands and expectations of the United States Army's senior NCOs.

Changing gears, this month's article will shed more light on the actions and events surrounding Golf Company's Quick Reactionary Force (QRF) platoon. More or less, the daily routine of Golf Company follows the same timeline and schedule for many Soldiers. Predetermined at an earlier date, most shifts begin at the same time during the day and end at the same time later that night. However, these luxuries are far from the realities appreciated by SFC Fredrick Williams and his merry band of truck driving 88Ms (Motor Transport Operator) and fuel pumping 92Fs (Fuel Supply Specialist). Accompanying SFC Williams in this highly unpredictable mission are SSG James Gonzalez, SGT Felix Medina, and SGT Bobby Boyd. These are the NCOs of Golf Company's Distribution Platoon fatefully turned QRF.

For some, like SPC Matthew Alonso who is on his third deployment with the company, this mission comes as no surprise. Younger and less experienced Soldiers, PFC Michael Kissal, PFC Heather Hughes, PFC Stephen Iwasko, and SPC Max Watts are still adjusting to expect the unexpected. Despite lacking the knowledge and veteran experience of their NCOs, these young Soldiers more than make up for it in their youthful energy and ambition. There hasn't been a mission or task yet that has escaped their willingness or dedication.



SPC Prawito prepares to recite the Oath of Reenlistment on top of FOB SALERNO's ECP guard tower.



SGT Veney shows off his reenlistment gift from CSM Moore, a Russian PPSH-41.

“Without them we wouldn’t be able to function as a platoon,” says SFC Williams. Closing the Golf QRF roster are two 68W combat medics from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery (HHB): SPC Nathaniel Werner and SPC Birane Dioum. These two provide not only QRF’s medical requirements but also all of Golf Company’s medical needs. Despite their HHB origin, they have earned their place here and we have warmly welcomed them into the Wolfpack family.

Many of QRF’s missions take them to into never before seen villages, along narrow streets, or into the deep valleys of mountainous Afghanistan. Expert drivers SPC Matthew Alonso and PFC Heather Hughes have taken vehicles across seemingly impassable terrain, often skirting mere inches away from washed out roads or ditches. Every completed mission brings with it satisfaction as well as a sigh of relief.

By no means is the mission of QRF planned around a set schedule. In the randomness of full spectrum operations, the radio transmits orders at any given time of day or night. Sometimes the mission is escorting battlefield enablers such as military attorneys, civil affairs, explosive ordnance disposal, recovery vehicles, or even working hand in hand with our Afghan National Army counterparts.

The job is tough, but the Soldiers of QRF continue to drive forward. They remain in the hands of the United States Army’s finest leadership. Together with such fine leadership and support from back home, you can rest assured QRF is prepared for whatever tasks come across the other side of the radio.

—written by 1LT Matthew Vogeles, Golf Company XO



Golf Company QRF’s trucks lined up and ready to roll on a mission.



Golf Company QRF downloads an Afghan Army M1151 HMMWV at Camp Clark.



WOLFPACK SOLDIER OF THE MONTH



"PFC 'Big Guns': Golf's Soldier of the Month"

PFC Marek Osowski is literally a one of a kind Soldier. I don't happen to be referring to his unique background of Polish heritage, having enlisted in the army a few years after immigrating to the United States. Instead, I mean to say he is the only 91F small arms and armament repairman in Golf Company, a position that has made him the lifeline between Golf and our artillery battle brothers.

The nature of PFC Osowski's work has taken him further than any other Soldier in Golf Company. Wherever the M119 or M777 Howitzers are located, Osowski has been there. First, imagine the distance a M119 Howitzer can fire, which is roughly 12 miles depending on the ammunition. Then, imagine about 4 or 5 different firing positions scattered across eastern Afghanistan. If you're thinking to yourself, "that sounds really far," then you are absolutely right. Osowski has either flown by helicopter or traveled on convoys to each of these firing positions. Once on ground he performs invaluable maintenance and services to keep those 'big guns' in the fight. He ensures the howitzers continue to provide accurate and timely fires, keeping our fighting men and women safe whenever they may find themselves in a pinch. By now, it wouldn't come as a surprise to find out he's an expert not only in small arms and artillery repair but also on the geography of Afghanistan.

The occasional 'big gun' that needs more work than a simple tune-up is flown back to Salerno. PFC Osowski can be found busily laboring over its many components, sub-components, and various fire control devices that keep the gun in alignment and fully mission capable. He performs services on every M119 that comes in for maintenance, which is what he considers "the hardest part of the job." Each service requires hours of tedious tinkering, calibrating, and troubleshooting. In some cases, guns with major issues can take up considerably more time and effort, amounting to hours and hours of manpower.

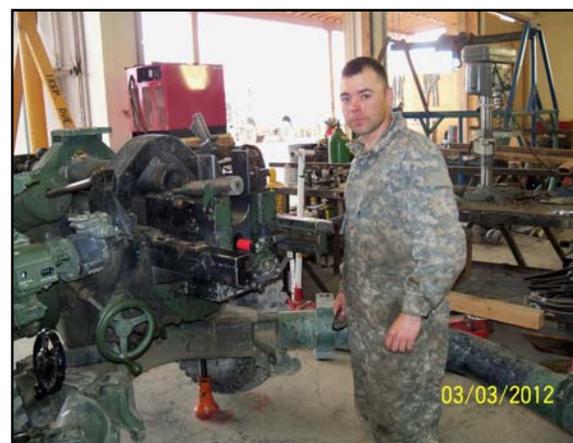
Osowski says he has been, "learning a lot from his leadership, especially SFC Keeling and CW2 Calkins." Two of PFC Osowski's most impressive achievements have been his efforts in decreasing the amount of time a howitzer remains non-mission capable and how he has improved the work space of the maintenance bay, allowing for howitzers to be quickly assembled and disassembled. He has also carefully monitored what repairs are needed more than others and has ensured that plenty of spare parts are readily available.

The success and failure of the entire unit does not rest on one Soldier alone and every Soldier here leans on those standing to his or her left and right. This is PFC Osowski's first deployment, and he has already proven himself an invaluable asset to the unit and its mission here in Afghanistan. He looks forward to R&R in Denmark with his wife Cassandra and can't wait for the two of them to be back together.

—written by 1LT Matthew Vogeles, Golf Company XO



PFC Osowski calibrating a M119 Howitzer with careful guidance from CW2 Calkins and SFC Keeling.



A typical day for PFC Osowski: covered in gun grease and tinkering away at a 105mm M119 Howitzer.



PFC Osowski performing weapons gauging on a M4 Carbine, only 200 more to go.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

"Spiritual Development"

Chosen by the Lord, Abraham, the leader in his community, had a vision, a plan for the future, and he relied heavily on the Lord. Abraham's plan detailed a new way of living that required expulsion of the old ways of life. His plan defined the need for a healthy spiritual foundation to support drastic change. The visualization of the plan grew as Abraham's relationship with our Heavenly Father grew. He also understood that making radical changes could have devastating effects. Yet, he continued in faith and trusted in the Lord. He knew the changes in his life, and in the lives of his people, needed to take place carefully and specifically.

Abraham taught his people to build healthy, protective walls or boundaries that would help prevent and ward off wickedness from outside influences. In the end, he had a plan that he placed into motion; learn and do the will of God. The author of Proverbs wrote, "Where there is no vision, the people perish; those who keep my law, happy are they (Proverbs 29:18 KJV)". Earlier in Proverbs we read, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Abraham's plan was inclusive of the past, adaptive of the present, and pertinent to the future. The past helped him develop a stronger desire to do the will of God. The present, on the other hand, made it difficult to follow the Lord. His family, friends, and others tried to convince him that he was wrong. Understanding the future, Abraham was able to keep the will of God alive through his desire to be obedient. If we are to follow in the footsteps of Abraham we must be willing to change. Issues arise in all facets of our lives; what do we do? We find someone or something to blame for our problems. It is difficult for us to step back, look in the mirror, and say, "what can I change?" or "what can I do better?"

Life is often filled with what seem to be insurmountable challenges. Questions arise regarding the difficulties faced during these challenges. Inevitably, there will be times when we may feel that all of our effort seems to be for nothing. In these times of per-



CH (CPT) McCurdy on the road again, in route to visit our Paratroopers and provide religious support.



CH (CPT) McCurdy helps construct B-Huts for the Paratroopers to live in.

sonal crisis, we have many resources we can use to assist and guide us through hard times. The strongest resource we have will always be the scriptures and staying close, through prayer, to a loving Heavenly Father. It is our individual responsibility to spiritually prepare ourselves while learning from the past, living the present, and understanding the future.

Our battalion places special emphasis on personal and professional development, thus we can make sense of the past, live in the present, and improve the future. Our emphasis on personal and professional development is not merely to change our organization, but to improve as individuals. Our affirmation and understanding of personal change deeply impact our living in the now and our ability to prepare for the future. We can follow in Abraham's footsteps by advocating change within ourselves.

We might get tired of hearing about the need for personal and professional development; however, there is a need. We can find within ourselves the ability to change our attitude, our behavior, and in the end, our character. In anxious times, as leaders, we tend to react to situations that could very well cause reaction from those around us. Thomas A. Kolditz in his book, *In Extremis Leadership*, spoke of the necessity and ability of a good leader to make vital decisions in critical moments. Kolditz illustrated this ability in the following story. Soldiers entered a town with which they were unfamiliar. The population probably believed the Soldiers were there to damage the village. They came out in a crowd with stones and other items to throw at the Soldiers. The commander recognized what was happening and commanded his Soldiers to lower their weapons and smile. That one decision by a leader in an extreme situation made the difference between friend and foe, life and death. LTC Stanco and CSM Moore want nothing more than to return home having made the right choices. It takes a great test of faith, as it did for Abraham, to make the right decisions and the right changes to impact our situation.

In the deployed situation we are in, we find ourselves in the right hands. We can follow Abraham's example and take this opportunity to become better individually and, in turn, as an organization. We must do as it says in Proverbs; trust in the Lord. As we find within ourselves the desire to change, our Heavenly Father will bless us with the ability to accomplish those changes.

CH (CPT) Logan McCurdy



Last Month's BLAST....

If you guessed MAJ Casey Randall, our mighty BN S3, then you were absolutely correct. See the resemblance now?



BLAST FROM THE PAST

The first junior enlisted Soldier (E-4 or below) who can identify the TF STEEL leader shown in the picture below will get a day off, courtesy of STEEL 7.

