

# DESERT BUZZ NEWS



# Commodore's Corner

Men, Women, Families, and Friends of 30NCR,



From all of us at 30NCR and Task Force Forager, we hope you had a very Merry Christmas! We enjoyed some rare down time on Christmas Day so the troops could recharge the batteries and spend time connecting with loved ones back home. We also enjoyed a spectacular lunch in our spaces on Christmas eve. Just prior to lunch, we recognized CM1 Clarence Boulais and ET2 Derrick Maldonado as our Sailor of the Quarter and Junior Sailor of the Quarter, respectively.

Folks, we've been WELL taken care of this holiday season with cards, letters, care packages, and an incredible amount of food...aka "geedunk". In fact, we do a monthly "weigh-in" on deployment to keep an eye on the physical readiness of each Seabee in our unit, and it came as no surprise that our weigh-in on 7 December, shortly after the Thanksgiving surge of goodies, was the first where we collectively gained weight. I'm quite certain our upcoming weigh-in on 7 January will yield similar results. The good news is that we had our semi-annual physical readiness assessment on 7 November and everyone passed, which is a significant achievement that not many units can claim. Well

Done!!

I'm sure you have heard by now of the pending uplift of 30,000 more U.S. troops into Afghanistan. It was no surprise to me that, when deciding upon construction units to bring in to support this uplift, the senior leaders in Afghanistan chose Seabees, based on the reputation, productivity and work ethic we bring to the fight. Thus it is that NMCB 4 from Port Hueneme and NMCB 133 from Gulfport will be joining us in the first months of 2010. We are working hard at the Regiment to set conditions for their arrival, to include laydown areas, operational facilities, and adequate amounts of tools, equipment, and materials. As I said last month, it's hard work, but it sure makes the time fly!

In closing, please know that your Seabees are working extremely hard, paying attention to detail and keeping their eye on the ball as we draw within 7 weeks of returning home. Our Task Force, and 30NCR in particular, is considered among the "MVPs" of all units supporting coalition efforts in Afghanistan, and I could not be more proud to serve with these remarkable men and women. Remember that the days and weeks following the holidays are typically ones that can be filled with melancholy, so please stay in touch with your Seabee and keep the cards, letters, and emails coming! Until next time, take care and God Bless!

-CAPT Schmader

## Words From The CSO

30NCR Families and Friends,



MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR! Once again a month has passed...can you believe it's 2010? That means you should be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Aside from starting a new year, which for some means resolutions and new starts, we're closer to heading west. I have to tell you, I thought I would be able to catch up on reading and online education to "pass the time" here on deployment. Just like broken resolutions however, my pre-deployment plans have been overcome by events; actually one event...work!

Like Thanksgiving, we enjoyed a Christmas meal together and as always, the Logistics Department did a fantastic job in coordinating all of the particulars. Speaking of food, let's talk a minute. Have you ever watched "The Biggest Loser" and there's a challenge where mounds of junk food are placed on tables to tempt contestants to negatively impact their weight loss goals? That was, and still is, tables around our office spaces. Thank you for thinking of us and taking the time to go to the post office for the sole purpose of negatively impacting our body composition assessments. I'm

kidding...only about the negative part though. Thank you seems inadequate for the volume of cards, cookies and cakes.

Seriously though, your Seabees are still making things happen, planning and executing plans and contributing to our already storied history. Need a parking lot improved? Call 30NCR. Need a base expanded? Call 30NCR. Need to add more military engineer capability in country, call the Army? No. What about the Air Force? No. Call the Navy and bring in the Seabees. As the Commodore notes, this decision by our leaders was made deliberately and with intention and wasn't based on rumor and innuendo, but proven productivity and results. I'll leave this with you. I was recently in a meeting with engineer and logistics planners and an Army engineer from our higher headquarters, in responding to a question about an NMCB's capability, said "We wanted Seabees because we knew they'd get the job done." Enough said...Until next time, be well!

- CDR Simms

# Command Master Chief's Corner



Team,

December, what a blur! The support from home has been truly amazing. What you all have provided us in the way of care-packages and a wide variety of holiday mementos; snack food, baked goods, cards and letters of encouragement have made the difference for all of us here. Christmas was not just another day for us, but something special as it should be. Of course not the same as with all our loved ones but, the Navy family has been a good stand in. While we did get to celebrate, it wasn't long before all hands were back at it working hard with drive and purpose to further the mission. You should all be proud of our progress to accomplish our mission.

You may also be interested in knowing the level of support we continually get from around our great nation. There always seems to be a steady flow of generic care packages and cards from patriotic Americans wanting to let us know how proud they are of what we are all doing. Reminding us of how patriotic many Americans are, letters have been pouring in from young school children, retirees and others just wanting to say how much they appreciate our sacrifice. They understand that we are separated from family and friends. It definitely doesn't go unnoticed. That kind of support from total strangers is encouraging for us and hopefully for you as well.

The push forward continues. As we get closer to our redeployment to homeport let us think of the Seabees and families that are ramping up for their turn in the fight. Thank you for your continued support. Stay strong, stay loyal.

-CMDCM Cyr

## Chaplain's Chat



The older I get the more I realize the relativity of the passage of time. When I was a child, the week before Christmas seemed like an eternity. But now that I'm in mid-life (hopefully not a "mid-life crisis") I'm amazed how fast each new Christmas seems to roll around. Even now, sometimes a particular week or month may still seem to creep along far too slow, but at the same time my youngest child will soon turn 27 and I can't believe that many years have gone by so fast.

Albert Einstein was once asked to explain the theory of relativity. Loosely paraphrased, he said that when you put your hand down on a hot stove a split second seems like an eternity, but when you sit in the park with your sweetheart hours seem like only a few moments. How true. Time is like that, and it seems to me these wild swings in our perception of time have more to do with our attitude than the speed with which the hands move around the dial of the clock.

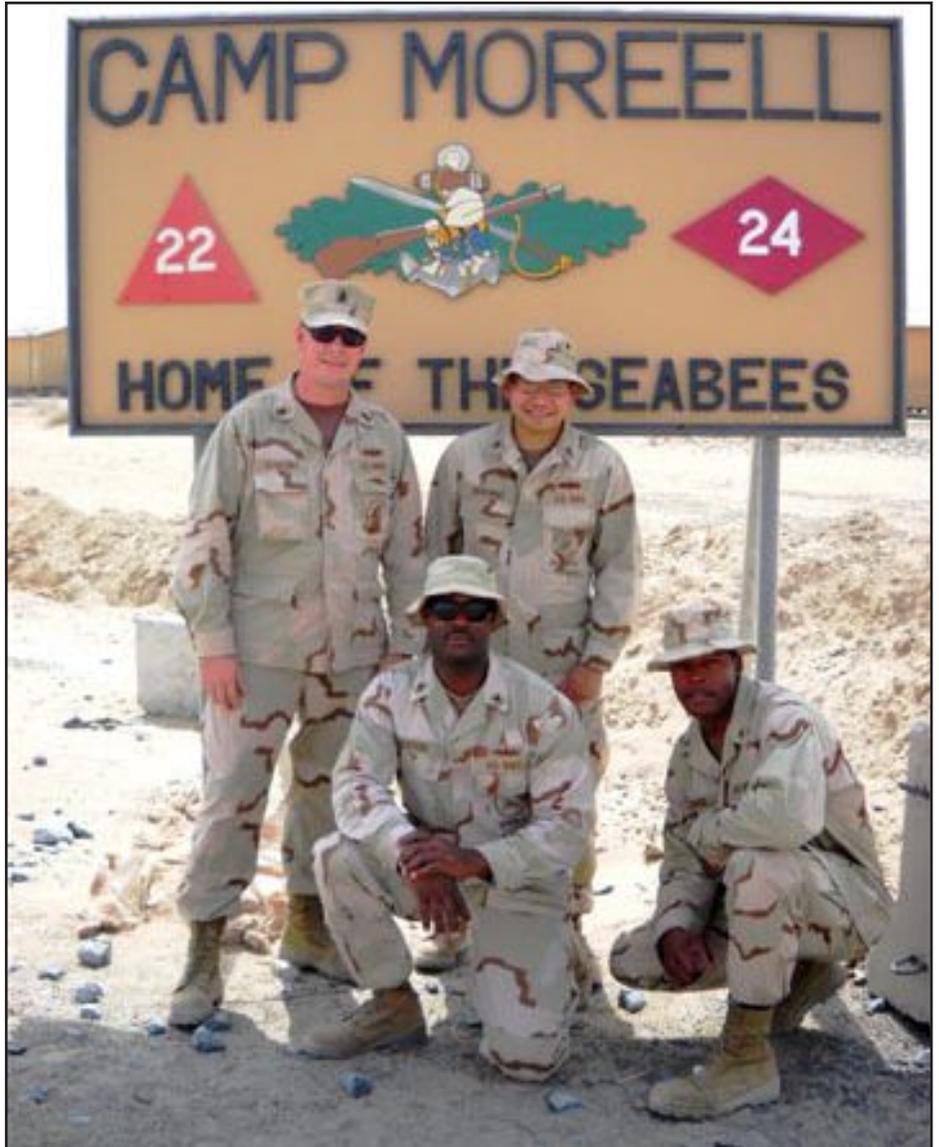
There is a story in the Old Testament that I think of whenever I need an attitude adjustment about the time of this deployment. It's about Jacob and Rachel and is found in Genesis 29.

"Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, 'I will serve you (her father, Laban) seven years for your younger daughter Rachel' ... So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but only a few days because of his love for her."

Did you catch the significance of Jacob's attitude? His love for Rachel, his desire to spend the rest of his life with her, made seven years of working for her seem to him "but only a few days." Jacob thought seven years was a small price to pay next to a lifetime with his sweetheart. Perhaps we should change that popular old saying about time to, "My how time flies when you love."

Aren't you glad we don't have to endure seven year deployments? I've decided that rather than focus even on how many months I'll be away from home and how many Christmases I've missed (which will already be long over by the time you read this), I'm going to focus on how much I love my country, my wife and children, my God, and the privilege of serving Him as a Navy Chaplain. A few months are really a small price to pay for those I love so much. Focusing on love has changed my perception of time and it can do the same for you. Time really does fly by quicker when you love.

-LCDR Slater





The 30NCR Log Cell located at Camp Moreell in Ali al Salem Air Base, Kuwait is the secondary office for the Naval Construction Regiment (30NCR) within Central Command. The Log Cell supports Seabee construction in operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. Processing an average of 1060

requisitions on a monthly basis, the 30NCR Log Cell is responsible for procuring, receiving, and shipping automotive repair parts for equipment, construction project materials, and office supplies for three units and 28 work centers. Financial records for the regiment are also managed at the Log Cell. Normally working 14-16 hours a day, Log Cell personnel can be found in the office working at all hours of the day and night.

Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Aaron Newton and Construction Electrician 2nd Class Carlton Ward are government credit purchase card holders. They are responsible for procuring supplies that are not readily available in the Navy Supply System. Through their diligence and perseverance in establishing a close working relationship with vendors in Kuwait and the U.S., they have been a crucial part in ensuring urgent requirements are purchased and shipped expeditiously. Devoting countless hours to load materials onto pallets and secure them for air shipment, Newton and Ward have prepared and shipped approximately 300,660 LBS of various materials. They also closely coordinate with Embark to ensure all requirements are met to ensure timely departure.

Logistics Specialist 1st Class Bernard Geronimo is the lead logistics specialist. He manages and maintains 30NCR's budget, ensuring funds are readily available to support the rigorous demands of two battalions deployed to southwest Asia.

Equipment Operator 1st Class Michael Ormond is the Log Cell embarkation leading petty officer. In the embark office he assists with shipping vehicles and materials. His expertise, coordination and follow through plays an instrumental role in getting NCF equipment, materials and supplies wherever it needs to go.

Chief Construction Mechanic Terry Bowling is the officer in charge for this dynamic team of professionals. Filling in the gaps and taking care of administrative issues, he is also the 3M-Coordinator for the regiment and provides oversight of the 3M office in Kuwait.

The 30NCR Log Cell has some of the hardest working Seabees in the NCF. Their tenacity and "Can Do" attitude are contagious and necessary to fulfill demanding mission requirements. They are, without question, a key component in providing logistics support to the regiment and all of the units they serve.



CMC  
Terry Bowling



LS1  
Bernard Geronimo



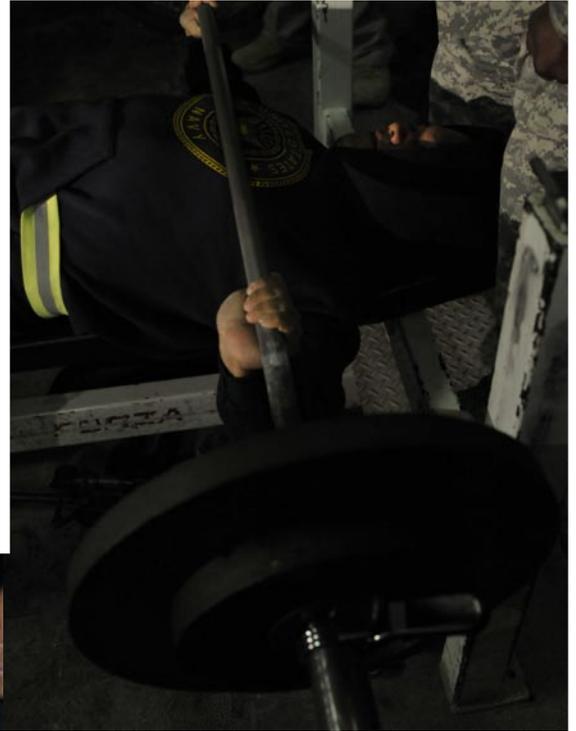
EO1  
Michael Ormond



CE2  
Carlton Ward



LS2  
Aaron Newton



In December, Logistics Specialist 1st Class Mark Co coordinated and organized Kandahar Airfield's Bench Press Challenge 2009 while Major Michael Blackford judged the event. The event attracted participants from all branches and even a Slovakian Soldier.



# Banking Executive Promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan- Ensign Michael Andrews from Orange County, Calif. was promoted to the rank of lieutenant junior grade during Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 26, 2009.

Andrews spent 12 years as a Soldier in the Army before joining the Navy.

“I’ve always wanted to be an officer since I joined the military, but it took me a while,” said Andrews. “I plan on staying in until they kick me out. This promotion is one step closer to being where I want to be in the military.”

Andrews is a reserve component Sailor mobilized to the 30th Naval Construction Regiment (30NCR) in Afghanistan.

“It was great to have the entire regiment there during my promotion,” said Andrews. “There’s a feeling of pride to stand up in front of everyone and take the oath again. This has been an amazing experience because of the people I’ve worked with and how they have helped me to succeed.”

As a supply corps officer assigned to 30NCR, Andrews provides construction material and financial support to enable general engineering projects in southern Afghanistan.

“Basically I deal with anything that’s being built in the southern part of Afghanistan that needs materials,” said Andrews. “We work to procure those materials and start the process to get them to forward operating bases or wherever they need to go. We process the paperwork to fund supplies used to build roads, bridges, buildings... all the material for southern Afghanistan.”



According to Andrews, his job in the civilian sector is almost as confusing as his job in the military. He is a commercial banking market executive for a major U.S. bank. There he manages 16 commercial client manager teams who provide banking solutions to middle market client companies. Currently, Andrews is completing a masters degree in financing from Harvard University.



# Current Operations Visits western Afghanistan





In December staff from the current operations department, Chief Steelworker Michael Bonifer, Lt. Cmdr. Michael Bates, Lt. Everton Houston, and Senior Chief Builder Charlie Luna and the military advisor, Major Michael Blackford departed Kandahar Airfield to visit Forward Operating Base (FOB) Shindand. There they assessed the status of projects and Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 22's local detachment.



# Keeping a Promise to a Friend and Supporting Breast Cancer Research



Lt. Cmdr.  
Michael Bates

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Supporting a good cause and keeping a promise to a friend is all the motivation San Diego native Lt. Cmdr. Michael Bates needed to walk and run 60 miles in Afghanistan.

Shadowing the San Diego 2009 Breast Cancer 3-Day 60 Mile walk, Bates completed the distance in Afghanistan to support his friend Jennifer Schultz and breast cancer research. The walk was an opportunity for men and women to make a personal difference by fundraising, training and wholly dedicating an entire weekend to the fight against breast cancer.

“[Schultz] signed up for this but she was nervous about walking 60 miles and was wondering if she did the right thing,” said Bates. “I told her if she kept it up and did her training I would do it with her but here in Afghanistan. When she left at 6:30 a.m., I left at 7:00 p.m., so we both started at the same time.”

Bates, who is the current operations officer for the 30th Naval Construction Regiment, manages all ongoing military engineer construction in southern Afghanistan. After each workday, he needed to complete the distance over the same three days as his friend, running or walking 26 miles the first day, 20 miles the second and 14 miles the third.

“I didn’t want to walk until four or five in the morning so I decided I’ve got to run some of this,” said Bates. “I ended up running 13 miles and walking the rest the first night. It was pretty hard. I was worn out.”

For the following two days Bates ran and walked the distances.

“The second day I [already] had blisters on my feet but I did it anyway. My heels were bleeding afterwards and I had bigger blisters,” said Bates before starting to laugh. “It was hard to walk so I went to see Doc.”

He was told by the regimental doctor not to run.

“I needed to finish it. So he taped up my feet and got me ready to go,” said Bates. “The last night I went out and did the last 14 miles. I felt horrible, but [I also felt] fantastic that I completed something I started.”

On the second day, Bates called his wife and explained to her his struggles.

“My mother passed away from breast cancer when I was 14 years old,” said Bates. “[My wife] asked me if I was thinking about my mom. I hadn’t until that point but after that, I did. But my main motivation was my very dear friend. I made a promise to her and I intended to keep it. Those were definitely my two motivations.”



**Featured: Builder 1st Class Peter Edwardson and Gunner's Mate 1st Class Jeffrey Wright work to build a roof for the 30th Naval Construction Regiment's weapons maintenance area.**



# A Well Deserved Promotion

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Engineering Aide 2nd Class Mario Tejero, from San Diego, Calif., was promoted to the rank of first class petty officer Dec. 8, 2009 in Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan.

The engineering aide field is one of the hardest Navy ratings to advance in. This year 31 petty officers took the first class engineering aide advancement exam and only ten advanced. For them, benefits include higher pay and more authority.

“I’ve taken this test five times, five times for second class [petty officer] too,” said Tejero. “It’s not frustrating. It’s common for [engineering aides] to reach high year tenure. Five times is not bad.”

Tejero meticulously studied for his exam as he has always done for the past two years. In addition, he received high evaluation marks and points from various awards.

“Sometimes even if you study you might get questions you did not expect,” said Tejero. “This time everything matched what I studied for and I found the exam easier.”

Promotion to first class petty officer increases the benefits of being in the military for Tejero and his family, including the possibility of retiring after 20 years of service.

“My wife was very happy when I [told] her that I made it,” said Tejero. “Of course when you get advanced, not only does your responsibility increase, but so does your pay.”

Tejero is assigned to the 30th Naval Construction Regiment where he tracks official documents as the operations clerk and conducts topographical surveys as the regiment’s head surveyor. In his spare time Tejero is one of the regiment’s barbers, he gives more than 35 haircuts every week and has raised more than \$1,500 for the morale, welfare and recreation fund through donations.



# Christmas Lunch

The regiment's Logistics Department has played a key role in providing materials and food necessary to successfully pull off every event from the Navy birthday to this month's Christmas lunch. They have provided and set up food, tables, plates and any supporting elements.



December 24, the regiment as well as several Soldiers and Airman from subordinate and supporting units gathered together to kickback and enjoy a Christmas meal. Along with various cold cuts and cheeses from care packages, we enjoyed fruits, chicken, steak and even ice cream while Christmas tunes played in the background.





Featured: On Christmas Eve, Capt. Kelly Schmader announced that Construction Mechanic 1st Class Clarence Boulais was the Sailor of the Quarter and Electronics Technician 2nd Class Derrick Maldonado the Junior Sailor of the Quarter for the 4th quarter of calendar year 2009.

