



Volume 1, Issue 8

Legacy Edition

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JTF Empire reflects on history



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith
Joint Task Force Empire Public Affairs

The sun sets behind the mountains in eastern Afghanistan. During its nine-month deployment, Joint Task Force Empire continually consolidated military engineer assets in line with force drawdown, ultimately transitioning engineer effects to a single brigade engineer command for the entire Combined Joint Operations Area – Afghanistan, becoming the fourth largest NATO command element in theater.

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General Knowledge

From the desk of the Commanding General, JTF Empire

As Joint Task Force EMPIRE transfers authority to the 555th Engineer Brigade, I want to thank all the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen who have contributed to our success.

I say OUR success, because every RCP you conducted, every road built, every construction project every FOB/COB you built or helped transfer proved that your unit and the brigade was able to accomplish any task at hand.

Not once have we said: "We can't do it." We all lived the Engineer motto: "Let us try!" I am very proud of your efforts and I know that you will continue to work with the JTF Triple Nickel just has hard.

Take advantage of the battle rhythm and make sure that you are conducting

maintenance on your equipment as well as maintenance on yourself and the Soldiers in your care.

Make sure everyone is ready for what comes next: increased operational tempo, change of mission, return home, etc.

To JTF Triple Nickel, your mission will be difficult, but based on what I have seen during our RIP, I know you are up to the challenge... you are Willing and Able! Congratulations and best of luck in the months ahead.



Essays!

DAVID L. WEEKS

Brigadier General, USA

Commander

Joint Task Force EMPIRE and

411TH Engineer Brigade

Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan

THE EMPIRE REPORT

JOINT TASK FORCE EMPIRE - 411TH ENGINEER BRIGADE

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



COMMANDING GENERAL
BRIG. GEN. DAVID L. WEEKS



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"Brigade of Choice"

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818th RCC conducts operations in southern Afghanistan

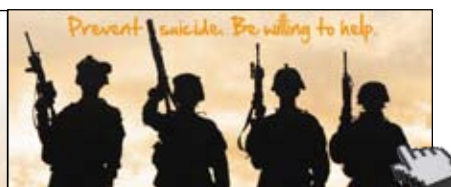


(Left) Sgt. Stuart Hammer, 1st Platoon medic, 818th Route Clearance Company, 507th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Warhammer, gives medical attention to a local Afghan boy while conducting a patrol in southern Afghanistan. (Below) First Plt., 818th RCC, establishes a cordon after detecting an improvised explosive device buried in the sands of a remote southern route. (Bottom left) Staff Sgt. Allen, Maintenance Platoon, 818th RCC, assists a local Afghan by righting his rolled trailer. Route clearance patrols often encounter civilian vehicle accidents and invariably assist Afghan citizens with vehicle recovery.

Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Rodney Johnson 818th Route Clearance Company



Photos courtesy of 818th Route Clearance Company



GRUFFLY SPEAKING

Straight Talk from the Command Sergeant Major, JTF Empire

As we come to the end of our tour, I feel we can reflect with pride all that we have accomplished as part of Joint Task Force Empire. We really have made history here in Afghanistan and could not be more proud of all the hard work our Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen have put in, day in and day out. You should all hold your heads high with all that you have done.

We can only spend so much time looking back, though. For many of you, the mission carries on as you become part of Task Force Triple Nickel. I trust that you will all put forth the same effort and professionalism you have displayed as part of the Empire team.

Take time to pay homage to those who have come before us, and to remember the fine service members who paid the ultimate price in the line of duty. We honor them by fulfilling the mission and living your life true to yourself and your comrades. They shall always remind us that the price of freedom is never

without sacrifice.

We have seen many of our service members take the next step in their military career through promotion and duties. I

know a great many of you have stepped outside your regular roles and accepted the challenge of assignments you may never have expected. Not only have you fulfilled these roles; you have excelled.

On behalf of the 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, I say "Thank You." Though we are departing, you are always with us. Take care of yourselves and each other.



Thank you all for what you do.

CSM Andrew Krom



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411th En. Bde. leaves legacy in Afghanistan

By U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith
Joint Task Force Empire Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – History is written, not in ink, but in accomplishment. It is the legacy left to those who come after. Generations to come will judge the accomplishments of today in context to its effect on tomorrow. With the completion of its mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 411th Engineer Brigade, home stationed in New Windsor, N.Y., stamps its legacy into the annals of not only Afghanistan's history, but in the military tomes of engineering doctrine.

As Joint Task Force (JTF) Empire, the members of the 411th En. Bde., headquartered at Bagram Air Field, with technical representative staffs throughout Afghanistan, executed sustained, multifunctional engineer operations as the lead engineer force assigned to U.S. Forces-Afghanistan. JTF Empire planned and executed multiple lines of operations, including combat and construction engineering in addition to extensive partnership with Afghan National Army (ANA) engineers. During its nine-month deployment, JTF Empire continually consolidated military engineer assets in line with force drawdown, ultimately transitioning engineer effects to a single brigade engineer command for the

entire Combined Joint Operations Area – Afghanistan (CJOA-A), becoming the fourth largest NATO command element in theater.

Each step is part of the journey

JTF Empire began its mission May 17, 2012, arriving in Afghanistan and establishing its operations as part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). It assumed responsibility of engineer operations in Regional Commands (RC) – East, Capital and North, relieving the 18th En. Bde. June 4. The brigade managed engineering oversight, planning, and conducted combat, construction and partnership operations throughout the northern and eastern engineer regions of Afghanistan. The mem-



Photo by courtesy of Joint Task Force Empire Regional Command-Southwest/West Coordination Cell

Army Staff Sgt. Michael Cush, technical engineer noncommissioned officer, 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire, conducts a site survey in southern Afghanistan. JTF Empire's mission was to provide synchronized combat and construction engineer effects through combined actions in support of IJC operations to improve security, development, and governance of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

bers of the brigade focused operations with a single-minded purpose: The key to their success was the partnership with Afghans to enable

them to operate independently.

The 411th Engineer Brigade assumed mission command of all units previously assigned to 22nd Naval Construction Regiment (NCR), July 31. This transition required 411th to absorb two additional engineer battalions. These battalions, NMCB 11 and the U.S. Army 980th En. Bn., were located in RC-Southwest and South, respectively. JTF Empire effectively expanded from four construction companies to eight, included the addition of a multi-role bridge company, and increased the size of the JTF by 1,098 Soldiers and Sailors. This set the conditions for JTF Empire to be the single, theater engineer brigade for all of Afghanistan.

“The biggest part of putting this together was realizing the magnitude of the mission and putting Soldiers in the mindset of the complexity of it,” explained Brig. Gen. David L. Weeks, commanding general of the 411th Engineer Brigade. “The mission is huge, but it’s something we have trained for.”

JTF Empire assumed control of all engineer task forces in the entire CJOA-A by the end of October. The JTF consisted of 46 distinct units and more than 5,300 Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen. The brigade consisted of the 841st, 507th, 20th, 120th and 178th Engineer Battalions; NMCBs 11 and 133; and the 577th and 777th Expeditionary Prime BEEF Squadron (EPBS) Air Force Engineers. The JTF also provide tactical command of over 200 supplemental engineers conducting construction projects in various areas of the country. JTF Empire’s mission was to provide synchronized combat and construction engineer effects through combined actions in support of ISAF Joint

Command (IJC) operations to improve security, development, and governance of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. With 55 route clearance packages (RCPs) under its command and control, JTF Empire’s combat engineer assets cleared roads of explosive hazards daily.

“The 411th has always been delegated as a theater engineer brigade, and that’s the exact role we are serving in right now,” said Weeks. “Essentially, we are the only engineer brigade - one of 17 in the Army Engineer Regiment - in combat. We became the only engineer command element within the whole theater.”

Working toward Afghan Success

During the course of the deployment, JTF Empire concentrated partnership efforts with 38 ANA units. The brigade units partnered with approximately 3,600 ANA Soldiers in route clearance compa-

nies, engineer companies, the ANA Engineer Schoolhouse, the Combined Fielding Center and other organizations to effectively train Afghan Soldiers in independent engineer operations. Members of JTF Empire developed its Professionalism Campaign to standardize training tasks, specific required tasks, as well as forming the first quantitative method of evaluating ANA engineer units.

“We crafted a professionalism campaign that is geared toward individual level proficiency. We’re talking sustainment, administrative, (tactical operation center) operations, leadership, and also (military occupational specialty)-specific technical proficiency,” explained Lt. Col. Jon Brierton, JTF Empire chief of operations and ANA development officer.

A mere three months after initiating the Professionalism Campaign, task and process effectiveness were markedly increased and 67% of the



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith

Afghan National Army (ANA) engineers attend class at the ANA Engineer Schoolhouse in Regional Command-North, Afghanistan. During the course of the deployment, Joint Task Force Empire concentrated partnership efforts with 38 ANA units. The brigade units partnered with approximately 3,600 ANA Soldiers.



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Derek M. Smith

A convoy stages outside the Salang Tunnel during Operation Mountain Blade, an emergency road repair effort to the Salang Pass section of Highway One in the Parwan Province, Afghanistan, recently. The operation, conducted by engineering elements of Joint Task Force Empire, improved the road surface of the pass in preparation for winter.

ANA units were postured for independent operations, nearly four months ahead of the IJC deadline. JTF Empire conducted 1,064 training events and 1,120 combined operations across all six RCs. JTF Empire fielded, deployed, and trained the first-ever 403-man ANA engineer battalion, providing the only organic vertical construction capability in Afghanistan. The JTF set the groundwork for future ANA engineer success by setting conditions for five more ANA engineer battalions, seven mobile strike forces, and the Afghan National Engineer Brigade, as well as assisting with field testing of alternate counter-IED equipment that will equip approximately 200 ANA units across the country.

“We have had an aggressive training program that, to date, has resulted in seven out of the 24 units being validated. They have achieved an independent operation status,” Brierton continued. “More than 90 percent of the remaining

RCCs (route clearance companies) and engineer coys are at an ‘effective with advisor’ status. They can conduct operations with limited advisement and are on the glide path to achieve independence by the end of March.”

Brierton pointed out that this success was not without its challenges. The ANA’s supply system is a hurdle being addressed, but remains a concern to its engineers’ effectiveness. Additionally, the rise of green on blue incidents spiked during the height of partnership missions and training. This concern required careful planning in operations under stricter security measures.

“We’ve changed the scope of the landscape in terms of building ANA engineer capability,” echoed Lt. Col. Matthew S. Warne, JTF Empire operations officer. “When you look at how the elements come together, that allows the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) to be successful. That’s why we were here. During this time of transition,

the ANSF was being placed in the lead through ISAF and IJC. We provided a huge role in that from an engineer standpoint; that being our primary line of effort. The 411th changed that landscape and changed history by allowing them to advance within their system. That will be long lasting and I think overall, that gives the sense of pride for all of our Soldiers that we took on that difficult mission.”

“Ultimately, we provided a lasting foundation for the ANA engineers to continue to support their army and the people of Afghanistan,” Warne added. “That will help provide the construction effects and develop and support their infrastructure, and enable them to continue to grow not only as an army, but as a society.”

“They’re definitely prepared,” Brierton asserted. “Conditions have been set to accelerate the ANSF into the lead in terms of their ability to operate independently.”

Challenge was the Norm

The 411th En. Bde., unlike its predecessor, reported directly to IJC as a theater asset. This change allowed the JTF greater authority in prioritizing efforts and capabilities throughout Afghanistan. During the month of July, JTF Empire brigade staff established their systems and produced a common operating picture.

“I don’t think we ever looked at this as overwhelming,” Weeks reflected. “We had a very concise site picture of what the mission looked like. We looked at our predecessor’s mission and asked ‘will we ever be at the level?’ Ultimately, we surpassed that level.”

Similar engineer command force structures had been attempted in the past with arguably limited success;

most recently with the formation of the Joint Force Engineer Command - Afghanistan (JFEC-A) from 2009 through 2010. Ultimately, all U.S. engineer assets transitioned to ISAF in March, 2010 and the JFEC-A was absorbed and relegated to the USFOR-A Joint Engineer section, supporting only those engineer operations that supported U.S. forces.

“This type of arrangement was attempted a couple years ago by deploying elements of the theater engineer commands called deployable command posts (DCPs), “elaborated Weeks. “ However, the DCP arrangement as intended, I do not believe worked. The DCPs from that point forward never served in a capacity of a theater element. What’s happened is the DCPs have been fragmented out to different staff elements on an individual Soldier basis rather than a key mission command element.”

It may be said that necessity is the muse to success. As the troop drawdown continued, it became necessary to effectively consolidate engineer efforts throughout the CJOA-A. The specter of unsuccessful singular engineer commands of the past did not sway the command of the 411th En. Bde. as it meticulously structured operations. This involved standard operations, as well as many staff members stepping outside their typical realms.

Upon assuming command and control in June, JTF Empire published the Engineer Campaign Support Plan (ECSP). This plan serves as a baseline for conducting engineer operations in support of IJC. As JTF Empire’s responsibility increased, the ECSP was continually expanded to meet mission requirements and improve cooperation between the engineers and the battle



Photo by U.S. Army Col. John Elam, Joint Task Force Empire

A route clearance patrol of Joint Task Force Empire conducts operations in southern Afghanistan. Route clearance vigilantly worked to keep routes clear for coalition and Afghan traffic. During Operation Shrimp Net In July, JTF Empire staff identified the operational need of RCPs being moved from one regional area of operation to another.

space owners.

“I would not say the staff or the down trace was overwhelmed or hesitant about the scope,” recalled Brierton. “We all went into this deployment with eyes wide open, knowing what we were about to encounter and potentially achieve. As our efforts increased, so did our situational awareness and understanding. We became more experienced, more efficient with the processes that we developed and improved upon.”

“We had developed our systems coming out of our validation exercises and synchronized and integrated as a staff,” added Warne. “The exercises only get you to a certain level, but that foundation is there; we could build on it and expand our ability to control engineer forces.”

“You have to have that ability to project that mission command,” Warne continued in regard to a sin-

gular engineer theater command.

“We did that through setting up three cells and that enable us to develop the future operations picture plus have a connection to the current operations that provided that vision. What made it more difficult was that we had some very strategic and large missions on top of just running normal operations. Managing that work load is a difficult task that we do every day.”

“Transitioning that southern part of the theater was difficult in that we replaced the whole brigade with a smaller cell,” Warne recalled. “Then we built a cell in the southwest so we had the right command and control ability for the task forces. Though the task forces were running current operations we had to develop systems that were much more streamlined in order to conduct those brigade operations while still conducting the ones to the north and east. It took quite a bit of effort



Photo by U.S. Army Staff 1st Lt. David Watts, Joint Task Force Empire
A route clearance patrol of Joint Task Force Empire conducts operations in southern Afghanistan. JTF Empire's vision of the whole theater allowed for better assessment and allocation of engineer resources throughout Afghanistan.

to integrate and synchronize the battle rhythm (of various organizations) and maintain our continuity across the theater.”

“We had to prioritize and synchronize the construction effects which were not a part of our predecessor's skill set,” explained Warne. “We basically (exceeded) their operational requirements. We picked up more Army construction and a whole Naval construction battalion and then we had to look across the whole Afghan theater of operations to ensure we were working on the right priorities for IJC and the regional commanders based on what resources we had.”

Throughout the 411th En.Bde.'s deployment, there was constant change in its force flow. JTF Empire saw six battalions, 22 companies and four detachments redeploy. The following month of each transitioned unit was predominantly spent training, mentoring, and validating the new battalions while setting them up for success.

Contributing to that success, JTF

Empire Intelligence set historical precedent as the first non-battle space owner in the OEF's 11 years to have a seat representing its TFs at the IJC level for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance collection requirements previously afforded only to regional commands and higher entities.

As part of JTF Empire, the 558th Explosive Hazards Coordination Cell (EHCC) oversaw multiple facets of route clearance support to include a mobile observation team (MOT), intelligence reports and explosive hazards tracking, and oversight of the Blow-in-Place Theater-Specific Training (BIP-TST) Course. The MOTs studied route clearance patrol data and distributed more than 75 weekly and monthly analysis products showing the IED trends and emerging tactics, techniques, and procedures. The BIP-TST course certified over 404 engineers, better enabling them to clear routes of IEDs.

In response to the drawdown, JTF Empire Logistics, beginning in Au-

gust, saw the need to organize and reconsolidate the multiple Bill of Material (BOM) yards throughout the CJOA-A. The brigade sent teams to operational BOM yards throughout the country and organized over \$87 million of BOM, increasing material availability and preventing loss.

Diverse Operations on a Kinetic Battlefield

The operations under JTF Empire were as diverse as the engineers conducting them. Ongoing base expansions and retrograde kept task force elements busy throughout the country. Route clearance vigilantly worked to keep routes clear for coalition and Afghan traffic. In addition to ANA development, JTF Empire engineers exhibited their own skill sets daily.

During Operation Shrimp Net In July, JTF Empire staff identified the operational need of RCPs being moved from one regional area of operation to another. This coordination better addressed regional requirements as well as overall theater operations through the realignment of eight RCPs. JTF Empire's vision of the whole theater allowed for better assessment and allocation of engineer resources throughout Afghanistan.

Engineers of the 841st En. Bn. worked continuously on Camp John Pratt, a primary piece of ISAF's retrograde plan. The camp will serve as an alternative egress staging area as the stream of troops and equipment being removed from the country increases. This project consists of over 23 separate construction efforts and is the largest troop-based construction initiative underway in the region. Approximately 300 JTF Empire engineers from numer-

ous units conducted more than 200 acres of cutting and levelling operations moving more than 687,000 cubic meters of material, and constructed more than 500 structures.

Bridging operations were a major concern in the CJOA-A. JTF partnered with IJC assets throughout the country to maintain bridge crossings open for coalition and Afghan traffic. A signature example of these was Operation Golden Gate (OGG). OGG was a RC-Southwest combined-joint engineering mission to construct a bridge complex spanning the Helmand River in southwest Afghanistan. The operation design was to improve mobility at the Sabit Qadam Flood Plain, a strategic crossing linking the Sangin, Musa Qa'lah and Now Zad Districts. It was the largest bridging operation of the JTF's command.

In September, JTF Empire partnered with the Afghan Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) to conduct Operation Mountain Blade. Engineers and partners completed emergency repairs for the Salang Tunnel and provided technical training to ensure traffic ability between Kabul and northern Afghanistan through the winter. This operation was one of the most prominent and impacting construction projects undertaken by the brigade during the deployment. JTF Empire worked closely with the MoPW to coordinate road closures, improving force protection measures and provided technical assistance and training to MoPW. JTF Empire assisted the MoPW emplacing a stronger road surface along the route and ensured the Afghans are postured to maintain the Salang Tunnel after the departure of coalition forces. This 2.4 km tunnel enables approximately 9,000 trucks per day that travel

unhindered with cargo valued at \$104million per month.

JTF Empire engineers designed and built a ford site at Ghormach during October to provide freedom of movement in the western portion of RC-North. The old ford site used by both civilian and military traffic was susceptible to impassability during the March to May snowmelt and rainy seasons. In the course of construction, the ford was elevated and armored to provide continuous mobility. The Ghormach ford site, ensured effectiveness of military operations and Afghan economic conditions in the area would not be hindered through improving strategic mobility and commerce traffic.

Members of Joint Task Force Empire officially dedicated the Staff Sgt. Dain Venne Engineer Center at Bagram Air Field, Nov. 19. The Venne Center centrally directs engineer combat and construction operations throughout Afghanistan maintaining the primary focus on

management of the training and development of ANA Engineers.

Overlooking the bottom line

During its deployment, the 411th En. Bde. tracked and synchronized more than 4,081 combat route clearance patrols, resulting in approximately 700 IEDs found and cleared, making the roads safer for coalition forces and the Afghan populace. The brigade maintained and tracked the status of culvert denial and crater repair operations in addition to route sanitation and the status of critical bridges. Additionally, the brigade planned, coordinated, and tracked force protection construction, base expansion and closure, and quality of life improvements, all while maintaining meticulous attention to minimum military requirements to ensure proper utilization of Soldiers and materials. The brigade supported 107 named operations and conducted training for more than 900 Soldiers in theater for



Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. James Evans, Joint Task Force Empire

Joint Task Force Empire engineers survey their designed and built ford site at Ghormach in Regional Command-North, Afghanistan. The crossing provides freedom of movement in the western portion of RC-North and, ensures effectiveness of military operations and Afghan economic conditions in the area would not be hindered through improving strategic mobility and commerce traffic.



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jason Armano, Joint Task Force Empire Engineers of Joint Task Force Empire construct a bridge in southern Afghanistan. Bridging operations were a major concern for the JTF partnered with IJC assets throughout the country to maintain bridge crossings open for coalition and Afghan traffic.

critical requirements on new equipment used for route clearance. The brigade also completed more than 120 construction missions, building 350 kilometers of road, and constructing more than 840 structures. JTF Empire sustained 14 KIA and 209 WIA during this deployment.

“The 411th Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Empire has done during this deployment what has never been done before; that is a single engineer brigade conducting mission command for the entire theater,” said Weeks. “We have replaced multiple brigades and regiments. It’s proven that fact that we

can do it with a capable staff and I couldn’t be more proud of the team. We are the only engineer brigade in combat in all the Armed Forces. They should be very proud of what they’ve done and their accomplishments. We actually made history.”

The 411th En. Bde. cases its colors at Bagram Airfield and formally transfers authority to the 555th En. Bde. from Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington, February 3, 2013. During nine months of sustained, multifunctional engineering operations, the engineers and leaders of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 411th Engineer

Brigade served in an ever-increasing mission scope that will leave an enduring impact on the history of Afghanistan. Serving as an IJC asset and the theater engineer brigade, the brigade established a solid tradition of aggressively exceeding mission requirements, developing capable Afghan Engineer Forces, protecting the population, and constructing critical infrastructure.

“The 411th is the premier Reserve engineer brigade and we demonstrated that while in Afghanistan,” Warne concluded. “Our ability to command the full spectrum of engineers in a very difficult and challenging theater is showcased through the professionalism of our Soldiers every day. That’s an overall accomplishment we take a lot of pride in.”

“We did make history here,” Brierton avowed. “What sets us apart from anybody else is that we had mission command over combat effects, construction effects and ANA engineer development. We are in the process right now of establishing a mobility cell that will prioritize and ensure the success of the retrograde. There will be a single source for route clearance and that’s going to be the theater engineer brigade. In the 11-plus years of operations in Afghanistan, not one other command has been able to do this...and that’s history making.”



FOB Tillman deconstruction ends historic chapter in War on Terror



By U.S. Army Sgt. Dawn Bartlett
258th Engineer Company

Photo by U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Brock A. Eastman, Task Force Prowler Public Affairs
Army National Guard, 258th Engineer Company from Florence, Arizona, tears down buildings on Forward Operating Base Tillman during FOB deconstruction, Nov.18.

SHARANA, Afghanistan - When the Arizona National Guard 258th Engineer Company deployed last year to assist with Forward Operating Base (FOB) deconstruction in Afghanistan, its Soldiers didn't know what type of projects would come their way. Soon, their skills as engineers and Soldiers were tested when they were assigned to FOB Tillman deconstruction.

Previously occupied by Russian Forces in the 1980s, the area was known as FOB Lwara. The FOB was later renamed FOB Tillman for fallen Army Spc. Patrick Daniel "Pat" Tillman who was killed in action in 2004 near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Tillman gave up a professional football career with

the Arizona Cardinals to enlist in the military after the 9/11 terrorists attacks.

FOB Tillman is located close to the Pakistan border, near the village of Lwara in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. The terrain to and around Tillman is mountainous and rugged. Most of the daily supplies needed at the FOB were air lifted in because the roads to FOB Tillman are dangerous and hadn't been traversed in years.

"Originally, during the beginning phases of deconstruction planning, I was concerned about how we would get our equipment to Tillman," said 1st Lt. Robert Ogden, platoon leader for 258th En. Co. "Everyone said the roads had been black (untrav-

eled) for five years and that there was no way we could get 916A3 tractor trailers, loaded down with equipment, to Tillman."

FOB Tillman was estimated to be about 40,500 square meters, or roughly 10 acres. The FOB housed U.S. Infantry Forces, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Afghan Security Guard (ASG) personnel. With an original closure date of Nov. 1, 2012, a total job completion time of 2-3 months, and winter approaching, the 258th command team wanted to get their engineers and equipment on the ground as soon as possible.

"The road conditions, isolated location, terrain, enemy situation and security were all major factors in



Photo by U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Brock A. Eastman, Task Force Prowler Public Affairs
Army National Guard, 258th Engineer Company from Florence, Arizona, tears down
buildings on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Tillman Oct. 21.

the complexity of this mission,” said Capt. Roberto Gomez, company commander of 258th En. Co. “We just wanted to get there, get the mission done and get everyone back safely.”

A two man crew was sent to Tillman to do an initial assessment Oct. 4. Sgt. Dennis J. Lisack III and Staff Sgt. Damian Wadekamper utilized equipment already on ground to widen the entry control point to make room for the equipment coming in the main body movement and to prepare a staging area for the equipment.

“When we first arrived, I couldn’t help thinking that we have a lot of work in front of us, but I knew if we pushed hard we could get it done on time,” said Lisack.

An advanced party element consisting of eight personnel, two dump trucks and a five yard loader was sent to Tillman to begin deconstruction Oct 12.

“We sent the (advanced) party because we wanted to pick up the pace and ensure we could stay on schedule while the security details for the main party’s movement were worked out,” said Ogden.

While waiting for the main party to arrive, the Soldiers on ground worked 12-14 hour days, received indirect fire (IDF) from rocket mortar attacks and small arms fire almost daily. One Soldier was wounded in action from IDF shrapnel.

“We received over 40 rounds of IDF while we were working on the FOB,” said 1st Lt. Calvin McAdams, executive officer for 258th En Co.

“It was frustrating because all the IDF slowed down our progress, but we were still able to continue with the mission everyday and stay on task,” said Lisack.

The advance party Soldiers were able to complete 25 percent of the project, with six pieces of equipment, before the main body arrived. The main body arrived with 36 pieces of equipment and 40 personnel, including maintenance, medical and communication support Nov. 5. Five separate convoy movements totalling 240 convoy hours were required to get the necessary equipment and personnel to the deconstruction site. For most of the convoys, the engineers had to drive bulldozers ahead of the con-

voy to do road improvements so the equipment could make it through the mountain passes.

“I believe this mission helped our company become a more cohesive unit and I am proud of the obstacles and challenges that our Soldiers overcame while dealing with the added factors of working around enemy activity,” said 1st Sgt. Michael B. Kirby, first sergeant for 258th En Co.

Once there, the company set up day and night shift crews to begin work. Two 12-hour crews were responsible for the deconstruction of 45 buildings, removal of all HESCOs and force protection facilities, and returning the 10-acre area to its original, natural state.

“After our first week there, we were told we needed to slow down because we were ahead of project schedule and air movement to get all of the FOB assets off the FOB was behind schedule,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jaydee Finney, platoon sergeant, 258th En Co.

One of the largest projects during deconstruction was the Lwara Border Control Center (LBCC). This single brick and mortar building was a 5,000 sq. foot building that served as a communications center that liaised with the Pakistan military. FOB Tillman was located along one of the main routes insurgents use to cross the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The LBCC would report insurgent movement across the border to the Pakistan military which helped the military with their detainee operations.

During deconstruction, the engineering team removed 29,778 linear feet of HESCOs, hauled away 4,601 cubic yards of demolition debris and deconstructed 45 buildings. They also helped with envi-

ronmental remediation of the fuel point and the firing range. The company accrued 3,086 equipment hours and 16,154 man hours.

“To date, this was the largest mission the 258th has accomplished in Afghanistan,” said McAdams. “I think it was good for the morale of the company being this was FOB Tillman and a unit from Arizona was able to help end this chapter of the war.”

The project was completed Nov. 21, in less than half the time of original estimations. The company saved an estimated \$16,000-\$40,000, in fuel costs alone, by finishing the project ahead of schedule. The 258th En. Co. was awarded 13 Combat Action Badges, one Purple Heart, five Army Commendation Medals and seven Army Achievement Medals for the deconstruction of FOB Tillman.


“Tillman was a test of endurance, self-confidence and adaptability for our company,” said Gomez. “Soldiers’ courage, ingenuity and dedication at each level were instrumental in overcoming challenges and fears, and more importantly, to bring closure to one of our hero’s tale.” 



Photo by U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Brock A. Eastman
Task Force Prowler Public Affairs

Army National Guard, 258th Engineer Company from Florence, Arizona, tears down buildings on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Tillman during FOB deconstruction, Nov. 18.



Task Force Anchor Alfa Company increases equipment readiness

By Construction Mechanic 3rd Class Tara Strieby
Task Force Anchor Public Affairs

CAMP KRUTKE, Afghanistan - Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 133, Task Force Anchor, Alfa Company improved construction engineering support equipment (CESE) readiness through the reorganization of the Alfa yard, heavy shop, light shop and utilization of Defense Reutilization Marketing Office (DRMO) during December and the trend continues to improve.

With maintenance, both preventative and corrective, playing a huge role in the company's organizational structure, the construction mechanics in the heavy and light equipment shops, completed 1,951 preventative maintenance checks on 151 pieces of CESE and repaired nine more, returning them to the opera-

tional equipment pool.

The importance of preventative maintenance is to catch issues before they become larger problems, reducing both the time and money spent on corrective maintenance. With the shops surpassing weekly expectations while completing checks quickly and correctly, time becomes available to focus on corrective repairs.

Construction Mechanic 2nd Class Paul Case, the light shop floor supervisor, said he is very impressed with the work his shop puts out and the experience has taught him a lot about being a leader.

The shops were able to save money by utilizing resources around Camp Leatherneck to acquire parts and motors for corrective maintenance

that cut down the wait time when ordering and receiving parts while changing multiple hydraulic lines, rebuilding a D7 bulldozer track adjuster, diagnosing various electrical problems, and changing out or repairing six engines.

Construction Mechanic Constructionman Brandon Donnelly said, "We're trying to keep part budget down, but keep equipment up."

With the constant balancing act with money, the ability to fabricate parts or repair existing parts becomes a critical component.

Steelworker 2nd Class Gavin Hall, the company's welding expert, said, "Alfa Company is a really good experience for junior steelworkers who want to get knowledge and do a lot of welding."

In December alone, Hall fabricated three D8 master links used to keep the tracks on equipment, king pin doughnuts for cheater trailers, tools for shop use and repaired the teeth on multiple buckets.

When a piece of equipment is heavily damaged and not repairable, Construction Mechanic 3rd Class Bryan Castellon, the head of the company's DRMO department, gets involved processing the paperwork and supervising the preparation of the equipment for transport to the DRMO site. Castellon's crew has moved more than 36 tons of equipment.


As Alfa Company's readiness improves, it contributes to the overall success of battalion operations, enabling the completion of projects and further support for engineering operations throughout Afghanistan, where the battalion is deployed in support of coalition forces, the Afghan National Army and the local population. 



Photo by Construction Mechanic 3rd Class Tara Strieby
Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133

Equipment Operator Third Class Ray Lawton, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, Task Force Anchor, washes a D7 bulldozer following the completion of a project.

SAFETY STOP

JOINT TASK FORCE
EMPIRE SAFETY OFFICE



This Month: “Fire Safety”

By Mr. Marcus M. Heard
Joint Task Force Empire Safety Officer



Electrical safety and fire prevention are synonymous in our A/O. Without one, you won't have the other. Fires not only destroy Soldiers' personal property and equipment, but hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage and loss to/of government, contractor, and Coalition property and facilities. Loss of equipment and facilities of this magnitude greatly limits that unit's ability to conduct full spectrum operations. These fires could have been prevented if standards were followed and enforced. It only takes one Soldier or leader to evaluate a situation and see that it is not safe or within standards, and then correct the situation. We must do what is right to ensure the safety of our Soldiers and to avoid damage or loss of equipment.

Hazards and Controls

Overloaded Electrical Wiring

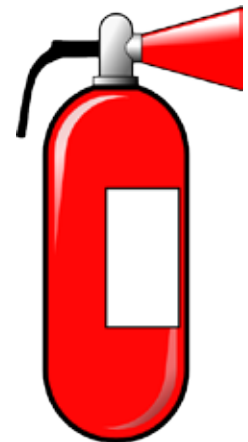
- Inspect all electrical wiring for frayed or broken wires
- Unplug all non-mission essential items
- Do not plug in high draw appliances to same circuit
- Do not use daisy-chained surge protectors
- Use only approved extension cords and power strips
- A maximum of 4 items plugged into any one power strip

Missing or Empty Extinguishers

- Exchange unserviceable extinguishers at HHC
- Ensure extinguishers are properly distributed and placed in convenient locations
- Do not use fire extinguishers as door stops
- Ensure all who live/work in that area know where extinguishers are and how to use them
- Mayor's Cell and Unit Fire Wardens inspect extinguishers monthly and annotate inspection

Lack of Fire Warning System

- Order, place, and maintain smoke detectors
- Use a common fire alert system IAW unit accident prevention plan
- Ensure that each living/work area has an emergency evacuation plan posted in a visible location
- Mayor's Cell and Unit Fire Wardens inspect Smoke Alarms monthly and document inspection



INSPECT ALL FIRE EXTINGUISHERS AND SMOKE DETECTORS MONTHLY



*'So long, from
JTF Empire
Safety!'*





Warhammer provides Symphony training to ANA engineers

(Left) An Afghan National Army (ANA) engineer of the 1/207th Route Clearance Company (RCC) prepares to use a fill box as part of SYMPHONY ECM training conducted by the 507th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Warhammer at Camp Zafar in Herat Province, Afghanistan. ANA soldiers learned how to perform maintenance, operate and test their SYMPHONY ECM systems through extensive practice and a hands-on examination. (Below) A 3/207th RCC ANA Soldier observes the progress of loading a threat load with his Fill Box during an evaluation as part of the SYMPHONY ECM training at the ANA base in Qal-Eh-Ye-Naw, Afghanistan. (Bottom Left) Sgt 1st Class Eric Zanke of the 507th En. Bn. instructs Soldiers from the 3/207th RCC ANA on the use of the Fill Box as part of SYMPHONY ECM training at the ANA base in Qal-Eh-Ye-Naw, Afghanistan.



Photos courtesy of Task Force Warhammer.



ANA engineers partner with 857th Construction Co. for tent pad build

By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Tyler Dovel
Task Force Diehard Public Affairs

PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan – The air was chilly as engineers from the 857th Construction Company drove up to the old motor pool at Camp Maiwand, right next to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Shank in eastern Afghanistan. As they parked their trucks and began setting up the job site for the day, they were joined by a squad of Afghan National Army engineers from the 4th Kandak, who eagerly helped them unload the trucks.

The 4th Kandak, located at FOB Sanchez, has had their engineers working with the 857th since September. The Kandak was preparing to relocate to Maiwand, but in their planning, they identified there was still the issue of adequate housing, something they called upon their American partners in the 857th to help remedy.

Work started around 9:30 am, with both 857th Soldiers and their Afghan counterparts setting up saws and marking the layout for the new tent pads. Two linguists stood by to bridge the inevitable language gap, but most of the communication throughout the day was non-verbal. Both teams of engineers

knew construction, and the work flowed seamlessly as lumber and tools passed between American and Afghan hands.

These tent pads were important to the Afghan Soldiers, as they would be living there in the coming months, but this project held a special importance to the 857th Sol-

diers as well. The distance between the two units had been an obstacle in the past, but now they are eager with the prospect of their Afghan partners moving closer.

“They’re hard workers,” said the Staff Sgt. Bounds, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge at the job site. “They like getting out here and using tools, no one has to tell them to get to work.”


The Soldiers worked in groups, each one assigned to a different task, and by the end of the day, they had jointly constructed two tent pads, with five more partially complete. The Afghan platoon sergeant was on site, supervising his Soldiers. He spoke well of the partnered effort, stating “We’re happy to work with you guys...the experience is good for us and we can use it in the future.” 



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Tyler Dovel

The Afghan National Army 4th Kandak Engineer Company and the 857th Construction Company working together to built tent pads.