

# SAPPER SENTINEL

"SAPPERS IN!"



**JOINT TASK FORCE SAPPER**  
NEWSLETTER OF THE THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE IN AFGHANISTAN



Issue 5 — February 2014

## Message from the Commander

The month of February was largely spent settling in to our new environment at NKC. We then closed the month with visits to our units. We saw great work completed by the 284th Vertical Construction and 333rd Horizontal Construction companies at Shindand Air Base in western Afghanistan. Then we participated in the 333rd's end-of-tour awards ceremony and farewell at FOB Shank.

Meanwhile, our training mission with the Afghan engineers continues. The Seabees have truly embraced their role in advising the Afghan National Engineer Brigade—it was very satisfying to see two of the three Afghan units graduate from initial training and move to their final station in Kabul. We also had the opportunity to visit a team from the 365th Engineer Battalion located in northern Afghanistan where they are training the Construction Engineer Battalion of the Afghan 209th Corps.

Finally, we hosted the 2nd Eng. Brigade from Alaska when they conducted their Pre-Deployment Site Survey. It was a reminder of how much our team has accomplished in five months and how quickly time is passing.

The next several weeks will be busy for all of us. We look forward to continuing to make a difference in support of the mission in Afghanistan. As always, we are thankful for our Families and friends for their unceasing support. SAPPERS IN!!

— COL Diana Holland



Photo by US Army Pfc. Dixie Rae Liwanag, Combat Camera

## 203rd Engineer Kandak Celebrates One Year

By U.S. Army Sgt. Javier Amador  
3rd BCT, 10th Mtn., Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE THUNDER, Afghanistan — The 203rd Corps Engineering Kandak celebrated their first full year of operations in the early afternoon of Feb. 17, with a ceremony held on Forward Operating Base Thunder and celebrating with them was the Spartan brigade's Engineering Security Force Advise and Assist Team who helped make the unit the success story it is today.

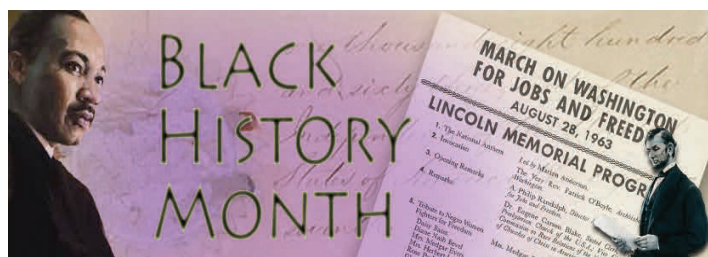
The ceremony, which consisted of a formation and inspection tour by the Commander of the Afghan National Army's 203rd Corps, Afghan Army Maj. Gen.

Mohammad Yaftali, the Engineering Kandak's Commander, Afghan Army Lt. Col. Sado Gul, as well as U.S. Army Brig. Gen. David Haight, and U.S. Army Maj. Andrew Olson, the former officer-in-charge of the Spartan brigade's engineering Security Force Advise Assist Team, both with the 10th Mountain Division. Haight and Olson presented a brand new flag to be used as the unit's official colors, after which Haight reminded everyone present about the great importance engineering units hold in any army.

"In the U.S. Army, historically, some of our smartest and most skillful soldiers are our engi-

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*"Some of our smartest  
and most skillful soldiers  
are our engineers"*



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## At A Glance...

- ♦ JTF SAPPER SERVING AS THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE, THE ENGINEER HQ AND EXPERTISE IN AFGHANISTAN
- ♦ ENGINEER FORCES SPREAD ACROSS AFGHANISTAN IN SUPPORT OF NATO-LED INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE (ISAF)
- ♦ JOINT TEAM LED BY 130TH ENG. BRIGADE HQS FROM SCHOFIELD BARRACKS, HAWAII... INCLUDES ACTIVE, RESERVE, AND GUARD UNITS FROM ARMY, NAVY AND AIR FORCE

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## Command Sergeant Major's Corner Command Sgt. Maj. John Etter, "Sapper 7"

Aloha to our Ohana from  
Kabul, Afghanistan!

As each month passes, the time in between writing my message to our Families and friends back in Hawaii seems to go by faster. I hope that the beautiful island weather is helping the time go by just as fast for you as we complete the sixth month of the deployment.

I am continually impressed with the resiliency of the Soldiers, NCOs, Officers and Families of our unit each day as mission requirements change in preparation for the reduction of forces in Afghanistan by the end of this year.

JTF Sapper and the 130th Eng. Bde. have excelled in the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program, a key component of the Army's Ready and Resilient Campaign.

My interaction with the personnel in our formations across the country makes me

proud of how our recent experiences have helped improve the "Five Dimensions of Strength" that make up the program and keep us focused both at work and at home.

Throughout the deployment I have witnessed our Soldiers balancing all the demands required of them and I challenge each of you to identify and discuss with your loved ones ways you can continue to get stronger together.

For example, take the time to share your accomplishments in the gym and encourage each other during a long distance phone call or video chat to achieve the goals you set. Or, highlight the positive skills you have practiced while being apart: learning to be more independent or having increased confidence when you are alone.

Thank you for supporting your Soldier! Happy New Year and Mahalo! ("Thank you!")

Sappers In,  
CSM John Etter



Photo by Chief Utilitiesman David Asbury

Seabees with NMCB 28 Water Well Team set up the mudpuppy at their project site to aid in recycling the drill rig mud being used.

## Seabees Provide Water Through Drilling Team

By U.S. Navy Lt. j.g. Michael Dwyer  
Joint Task Force Sapper

Central Afghanistan – Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalions (NMCB) 28 form the Task Force Coda water well team. This is a highly specialized team of Seabees that provide well repair, remediation, and development service within Combined Joint Operations Area-

Afghanistan (CJOA-A).

Lead by Chief Utilitiesman David Asbury, this team mobilizes across to various locations throughout the country in support of bases' needs. The Seabees rotate shifts to be able to work 24 hour days through the duration of their projects.

Recently, the team conducted on-site training at New Kabul Compound for senior leaders of the 130th Engineer Brigade Headquarters. Training consisted of several stations that articulated the full capability of a water well team and their current

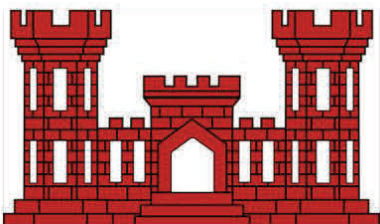
**[The team] provides well repair, remediation, and development service**

mission objectives. "This area would create

a unique mission since our team has never dug a well on this base before," said Asbury. "Other nations and contractors have dug wells on NKC, but not American forces."

Due to this element, they were able to explain to the senior leaders at the training all that is required. The significant data collection that ensures the safety of the Soldiers involved in the

(Continued on page 6)



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**Send us photos, stories, and ideas for future coverage, and see your unit's accomplishments highlighted on our Facebook page and in future editions of the Sapper Sentinel!**

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# **“Bridging the Gap”**

## **Seabees Work with Afghan Army Specialty Engineers**

By Steelworker 2nd Class Amanda Lewis  
Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 28

CAMP PHOENIX, Afghanistan — As members of the Task Force Engineering Brigade Advise and Assist Team (EBAAT), Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 28, based out of Barksdale Air Force Base, Shreveport, La., mentor and advise soldiers of the Afghan National Army (ANA) National Engineer Brigade (NEB) Specialty Engineering Kandak (SEK) on complex engineering tasks, including vertical construction, bridging, and water well drilling.

Beginning in January 2014, nine Seabees with the support of six linguists were provided the opportunity to instruct 60 Afghan National Army (ANA) sol-

diers on the construction of a Mabey Johnson bridge, a pre-engineered, steel panel bridge.

Within the past couple of weeks, these Seabees have familiarized their Afghan counterparts with parts recognition, roller layout, and have constructed the launching nose section.

Although it has been challenging overcoming the language

***“When [the ANA] push us out of the way and take charge, they are grasping the concept of pin and panel bridging and are eager to participate”***

barrier, bridge master Utilitiesman 1st Class David Knapp describes the training as a “rewarding experience.”

Knapp says he takes pride

“when they [the ANA] push us out of the way and take charge of the bridge operations. They are grasping the concept of pin and panel bridging, and are eager to participate.”

“The level of engagement



U.S. Navy photo by Chief Steelworker Barry Wood

**Equipment Operator 2nd Class Cody Doyle instructs Afghan Army Engineers on the construction of a Mabey-Johnson Bridge during a training exercise at the Consolidated Fielding Center (CFC).**



U.S. Navy photo by Chief Steelworker Barry Wood

**Utilitiesman 2nd Class Alexander Dunbar supervises the placement of a bridge section by Afghan Army Engineers Feb. 23 at the CFC.**

from the Specialty Kandak up and down the chain; from the Commanding and Executive Officers to the Bridge Students is very exciting,” explained Lt. Cdr. Deniz Piskin, EBAAT Officer-in-Charge. “They understand the importance of learning critical engineering skills like bridging and the positive impact that these skills can create for their community and country. So they are eager to participate.”

Bridge master and safety representative

Builder Second Class Matt Triolo talked about the rough start, “The majority of these soldiers are kids, aging 19 to 21, just like us when we came out of boot camp. They

don’t necessarily want to be doing it, but they are doing it.”

“We are working with extremely heavy parts, and many of them are not used to manual labor, nor mechanically in-

clined,” Triolo continued. “They currently need 100% guidance to ensure nobody gets hurt.”

Triolo has proactively established an Afghan safety counterpart to help emphasize proper hand placement, lifting technique and teamwork, effectively minimizing the risk of any safety mishaps occurring on the job site.

So far the idea has been positively reinforced, Triolo explained, “if he sees something, he takes the initiative to fix it so no one gets hurt”.

Triolo hopes to promote a safety plan that remains effective long after the Seabees finish their training with the ANA.

Future training of the Specialty Kandak Bridge Company will include finishing the build-out, launching and landing the bridge, as well as continued practical exercises to ensure the ANA bridge unit is fully mission capable.

***“They understand the importance of learning critical engineering skills like bridging and the positive impact that these skills create for their community and country.”***



## ANA Soldiers Hone IED Neutralizing Expertise



*Afghan National Army soldiers examine parts of an improvised explosive device during an explosive hazardous reduction and containment course being taught at Camp Eagle, Afghanistan, Feb. 10. The class was one of two counter-improvised explosive device courses being taught to soldiers of the ANA's 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps.*

Photo by U.S. Army Cpl. Clay Beyersdorfer, RC-S Public Affairs

By U.S. Army Cpl. Clay Beyersdorfer  
RC-South Public Affairs

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — With International Security Assistance Force assistance, soldiers from the Afghan National Army's 205th Corps, continue to train and defeat improvised explosive devices.

ANA instructors recently held two classes that covered counter-IED training at Camp Eagle, Afghanistan.

The training featured a section on hand-held mine detectors, as well as an explosive hazard reduction and containment course.

18 hand-selected engineer soldiers from six kandaks, or battalions, of the 205th Corps, started the nearly three-week training course with 10 days of MD training, where soldiers received classroom instruction on properly maintaining and using the device.

Capt. Robert Soriano, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, who has overseen engineering training with the ANA as part of a security force assistance team at near-

by Forward Operating Base Apache, talked about the training, and the ANA's responsiveness to it.

"The training going on right now is the hand held mine detector training, which is a 'train-the-trainer' course," Soriano said. "The ANA really gravitate to the training because of the technology brought to the table."

He also spoke about the goal of teaching the ANA so that they can return to their perspec-

*"We know this material...but we are learning new ways to defeat the IED"*

tive units and teach their own soldiers without ISAF assistance.

"They know that they are going to be the future trainers," he said. "So they are taking a personal interest on learning this equipment and doing the teach-backs. They will be able to return to their Kandaks and train their own soldiers by themselves."

Along with proper maintenance and how to use the device effectively, soldiers were given an overview of IEDs — where they are typically located, why they are located where they are, and how to properly handle them in any given situation.

Soriano talked about how

the IED has changed the face of combat, and how the ANA can become effective in defeating those devices by using the hand held mine detector.

"They biggest threat (ANA) have is the IED," Soriano said. "This training gives them the capability to go out there, find those IEDs and neutralize them."

In the next classroom over, nearly 20 soldiers from the six Kandaks of 2nd Bde., received training from ISAF personnel on proper explosive ordnance disposal and destruction.

Lessons ranged from identifying components of an IED, ground and warning signs of explosives, as well as proper distance and measures needed to effectively defeat explosives.

ANA Sgt. Abdullah Sharem, an engineer with 4th Kandak (Battalion), 2nd Bde., 205th Corps, spoke about the benefits of the classes being taught.

"We know this material a lot of it, but we are learning new ways to defeat the IED," Sharem said. "Our forces are greater because of these teachings."

In a landscape where IED's

are prevalent and used by the enemy, destroying them not only saves a local Afghan population of harmful devices, but it also sends a message.

A message ANA Sgt. Abdul Wahid, a platoon sergeant with 4th Kandak, is ready to deliver.

"We are ready to show them we are not afraid of you (Taliban) and we will defeat you and you cannot hide from us," he said.

That message will be on display even more towards the end of both the hand held mine detector training and EHRC courses — where a final exercise will be held with the students.

A mock scenario will be presented to both groups, who will have to effectively clear, identify and destroy dummy IEDs located at a nearby training site.

The exercise is just another positive step forward, as the ANA will be able to defeat the Taliban's most notorious weapon, and help provide security for the Afghan population.

"We will protect our country and do anything for the people to show we are ready and can do this," Wahid said.

*"We will protect our country and do anything for the people to show we are ready"*





# JTF Sapper Reaches Halfway Point Strong

By 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe  
Joint Task Force Sapper

KABUL, Afghanistan – The 130th Engineer Brigade Headquarters, from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, had a boosting milestone as they recently crossed the half-way point of their deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan where they have been serving as Joint Task Force Sapper, the Theater Engineer Brigade Headquarters.

This milestone also coincides with the headquarters move to the New Kabul Compound (NKC), from Bagram Airfield. As the brigade settles down, they will spend the second half of their deployment in the country's capital, co-located with U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) headquarters.

Since September, the brigade has been responsible for a multitude of engineer operations throughout Afghanistan in support of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.

As the Theater Engineer Brigade, JTF Sapper's overall mission has continued to change as the overall ISAF mission continues to evolve, setting the stage for a post-2014 Afghanistan.

Starting out, the brigade, which had approximately 4,000 engineer Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen, was responsible for Afghan National Army (ANA) engineer development, coalition base construction and route clearance

*As coalition forces step back and draw down, the Afghan National Security Forces are taking the lead in all operations*

assets across the country. The brigade is now responsible for the ANA National Engineer Brigade (NEB) development, coalition base construction and deconstruction, and base de-scoping, while still being referred to as the subject matter experts in mobility assets.

De-scoping of coalition bases across the country is a top priority for the Sapper team as the amount of equipment and bases after a decade of war have become substantial. The ability to assign the proper assets to certain projects in order to ensure both the timeline and intent are met is critical and JTF Sapper has

taken this requirement and exceeded expectations to this point.

Development of the ANA engineers continues to be a high priority for the brigade headquarters, because as coalition forces step back and draw down, the Afghan National Security Forces are taking the lead in all operations.

The Corps Engineer Kandaks (battalion size element of engineers consisting of construction and mobility engineers) have been performing above expectations and continue to produce great products.

"Both ANA and Coalition Force engineers have become 'Solutioneers' on all fronts in solving problems in each of the regional commands," explained Capt. Michael Williams, JTF Sapper ANA Development Officer. "They have adapted and overcome to continue progress in training despite whatever issues may arise."

The 203rd CEK has exceeded training timelines and is conducting operations on their own now. This past month the 203rd CEK conducted mission analysis on future training events and projects for their Spring Campaign which involved thinking through different courses of action and ensuring their troops were assigned to the proper tasks for maximum results.

The ability for them to conduct this process without assistance or advice from coalition forces is another indication that shows that they are now fully capable to conduct operations even after coalition forces pull out of the country.

The 207th CEK is one of the newest and youngest kandaks to be fielded. They are not letting

that stop them from grabbing a hold of their own training and running with it.

"After receiving the training themselves, the 207th CEK NCOs are increasing the effectiveness of the training by breaking down the language barrier and directly training their Soldiers," said Capt. Jason Oliver, 207th CEK Security Force Advise and Assist Team officer in charge.

"This allows for lessons to be more effective for both the CEK NCOs who are continually thinking about the instruction by verbally explaining it to their soldiers and for the ANA soldiers who are receiving direct instruction from their own leaders."

The brigade is also working with the NEB headquarters, currently at the Combined Fielding Center (CFC), to ensure the headquarters is properly trained to handle the mission command and capabilities that the ANA engineers bring to the table.

Although the brigade has transferred responsibility of route clearance to the Regional Commands, the brigade still advises ISAF Joint Command (IJC) on mobility assets within the country.

As JTF Sapper looks forward to the second half of the deployment, it will continue to stay flexible in its multidimensional mission, as well as planning ahead in order to set up JTF Sapper's eventual replacement, the 2nd Engineer Brigade from Ft. Richardson, Ala., for success.

This long-term planning process is important as the uncertainty of coalition presence in Afghanistan lingers. Therefore, the work put in by the Theater Engineer Brigade now will set both the U.S. and ANA engineers up for success in the post-2014 Afghanistan.

*"They have adapted and overcome to continue progress in training despite whatever issues may arise."*



Photo courtesy of 203rd CEK SFAAT

**203rd CEK leaders plot out future training for the upcoming spring. The ANA engineers completed this planning without coalition assistance.**



## Drilling to assist in Afghanistan's water need



Photo by Lt. Col. David Hurley, JTF Sapper

**Seabees with the water well team demonstrate their equipment for HHC, 130th Eng. Bde. leaders.**

*(Continued from page 2)*

project and ensures no existing utilities would be damaged in the process.

Asbury continued, "This is proving to be a great opportunity to teach everyone on the water well team a little something new."

Task Force Coda is planned to partner with the Afghan National Army (ANA) National

Engineer Brigade's (NEB) water well team. The NEB will eventually be the only ANA unit trained and able to provide this vital skill to bases throughout the Govern-

ment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA).

Afghan specialty engineers will work side by side with their Seabee partners to develop the necessary skills and experience needed to take over the mission without advisory help later this year.

The Seabees, in keeping with their "Can Do" spirit, are eager and ready to show the NEB how to provide their brothers and sisters in arms with clean and safe water from the rugged mountains of Badakhshan to the deserts of Nimroz.

***"This is proving to be a great opportunity to teach everyone on the team a little something new."***



Photo by Chief Utilitiesman David Asbury

**The NMCB 28 Water Well Team digs a trench to aid in recycling the drill rig mud. This is a necessary step in ensuring the fluid used by the drilling rig is clean.**

## National Eng. Brigade Continues to Form Under TEB

By U.S. Army 1st Lt. James Beebe  
Joint Task Force Sapper

KABUL, Afghanistan – The Afghan National Army (ANA) is closer than ever to fully fielding Afghanistan's first and only National Engineer Brigade (NEB) thanks to the hard work of the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines of Joint Task Force Sapper.

Through continued mentorship and synchronization between Task Force Coda, Joint Task Force Sapper Headquarters, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), and NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), the NEB is closer than ever to moving into their new home station at Camp Ghazi in Central Afghanistan.

Progress has been made and is continuing to be made in several areas of the NEB development as it graduates from the Combined Fielding Center (CFC).

Unparalleled training, re-

sourcing, and partnership operations are proving to be an essential part in establishing this national asset that will be able to project specialty skills across the Combined Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan (CJOA-A).

"The unique capability the NEB has the potential to provide is critical for the future of the ANA to conduct bridging and well-drilling operations across Afghanistan," Capt Michael Williams, ANA Development Officer for the Theater Engineer Brigade (TEB) explains. "The level of effort applied to this mission stretches from the tactical level

***The NEB is closer than ever to moving into their new home station at Camp Ghazi***

to the strategic level." Some of these specialty skills include vertical and horizontal construction, water well drilling, and bridging.

Soldiers of the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 28 have been working relentlessly to ensure the best quality training is provided to the ANA to ensure high quality output once their mission set is

transitioned to their replacements, NMCB 25, in the coming months.

The flexibility, versatility, and independence these specialty skills provide will far outlast any United States Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) presence.

At present, the forefront of this effort is providing logistics support to the NEB

as they continue to establish themselves at their new location.

The logistics effort is two-fold: ensuring the proper entities such as NTM-A and CSTC-A are integrated into all the TEB's planning efforts and that the TEB's planning efforts involve strengthening and utilizing the Afghan logistics systems.

***"The level of effort applied to this mission stretches from the tactical level to the strategic level"***



Photo by U.S. Navy Construction Mechanic 2nd Class John Zaragoza

**ANA solders with the SEK are mentored by NMCB 28's Bridge Team.**





# Engineers assist with Re-locatable “Hotel”

By U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp  
82nd Sustainment Brigade

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Engineers with the Fort Bragg, N.C.-based 82nd Sustainment Brigade — U.S. Central Command Materiel Recovery Element have teamed with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s Civil Aviation Authority for the Ministry of Transportation and the Regional Command-South Department of Public Works to assist with a project to build a hotel for the Kandahar International Airport.

For the 82nd SB-CMRE portion of the project, engineers from the attached, Little Rock, Ark.-based 489th Engineer Battalion are providing re-locatable buildings that can be refurbished for use in the hotel’s construction and will be given to Afghans through the Foreign Excess Personal Property program. In addition to this, the 82nd SB-CMRE played a major role in the plans and design of the structure.

*“The project shows that we are continuing to grow relationships with all entities involved in our operations and the combined effort is a sign of growing stability [in Afghanistan]”*

“When the idea first came about, we went to the Afghan Ministry of Transportation with it and they weren’t sure if they had anyone who could provide designs for the project or come up with a concept,” said Lyman, S.C. native, Air Force Staff Sgt. William King, an engineering craftsman for the 82nd SB-CMRE. “So, I volunteered to do the design.”

“I love the idea, it’s what I was trained to do and it was really great to get more experience doing this,” added King. “It’s good for our engineers, because with this project they really do see the tangible results of their work. Eventually the Afghans will get the funding to build it, and all we really did was assist them in getting started.”

With the eventual transition of security to Afghan Security Forces in the near future, 82nd SB-CMRE engineers said the project was an opportunity to assist the Afghans with sustaining their stability.

“The project shows that we are continuing to grow relation-

ships with all entities involved in our operations and the combined effort is a sign of growing stability [in Afghanistan],” said Highland Heights, Ky. native, Sgt. Maj. Charles Kottmyer, engineering operations sergeant major for the 82nd SB-CMRE.

King’s design for the hotel includes regular hotel rooms with individual bathrooms, suites for special visitors, areas for VIP vis-

and are proud to be part of it,” said Brick, N.J. native, Pfc. Joseph Bove, a combat engineer for the Marion, Va.-based 760th Eng. Co., attached to 489th Eng. Bn. “We’re taking down these structures in a responsible way which you know will benefit someone in the long run.”

“You can see the importance of this and the fact that there’s a purpose to what we’re



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp, 82nd SB-CMRE Public Affairs

**Pfc. Joseph Bove, a combat engineer for the Marion, Va.-based 760th Engineer Company, prepares a power cable for use with electrical tools that will assist with the partial disassembly of re-locatable buildings.**

its, a pool and laundry facilities along with other amenities.

Besides the re-locatable structures themselves, 82nd SB-CMRE engineers are also providing other recovered materials for the building project consisting mainly of electrical components, wood, metal trusses and sheet metal.

Engineers working on the project said it has been a worthwhile experience and they were glad to know that the recovered materials from their work sites will go to good use.

“We’re enjoying the mission

doing,” added Bove. “It’s not like we’re just demolishing something, but we’re doing something that will have a nice result for the Afghans to help them out. We’re giving them something that will improve their quality of life and

give them some creature comforts.”

To date, 82nd SB-CMRE engineers have assisted with moving more than 120 re-locatable buildings to the hotel project site and once the engineers are done with their portion of the project, they expect to have handed over nearly 600 structures to the Afghans.

*“You can see the importance of this and the fact that there’s a purpose to what we’re doing”*



Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Jon Cupp, 82nd SB-CMRE Public Affairs

**Spc. Corey Celik (left), and Staff Sgt. John Scheetz, both engineers with the 760th Engineer Company, prepare re-locatable buildings**



## Sappers Continue to Enhance Lifesaving and Warrior Skills

By 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe  
JTF Sapper Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan – Soldiers with Joint Task Force Sapper Headquarters recently completed a refresher course on combat lifesaving skills.

The course was one of the ways that the soldiers with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 130th Engineer Brigade, have continued to improve their proficiency in basic tasks.

The JTF Sapper headquarters recently established a personnel security detail (PSD), after moving their headquarters to Kabul, the country's capital. This is critical

*[It] will give the Theater Engineer Brigade Commander the ability to now move around the Kabul limits to conduct critical interactions*

because as the Afghan National Army's National Engineer Brigade gains momentum, the face-to-face interaction with key personnel is needed to further advise the ANA Engineer leaders, and the NEB headquarters will call Ghazi, also located within the

Kabul limits, home.

The PSD will give the Theater Engineer Brigade Commander the ability to now move around the Kabul limits to conduct these critical interactions.

"When we arrived to NKC and were told that vehicles were going to become part of the PSD, the guardian angel duties that used to only involve myself and Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Galyon, was expanded to add drive capabilities to the command team,"

Master Sgt. Agustin Cruz, one of the PSD NCOICs explained.

Cruz has been working with the command team since arrival into country, as he and Galyon accompanied the commander and command sergeant major on certain battle field circulation or key leader engagements.

With the implementation of this movement and security detail, JTF Sapper leadership ensured that even while de-



**Sgt. 1st Class Eric Perry (left), JTF Sapper Operations NCO, places a pressure dressing on Spc. Justin Clayton, a Signal Support Specialist, during a medical training refresher course**

ployed, these soldiers were given the training to refresh the basic skills of "shoot, move, and communicate."

"Basic skills are always important to train on regardless of where you are or what unit you are in," said Cruz. "Never let the basic tasks go because they make the big tasks happen."

This training also included lifesaving training given by the JTF Sapper Medical NCOIC, Master Sgt. Ana Alvarenga. Training on how to react quickly in an emergency situation

and respond with not only "buddy aid," where a soldier performs first aid on another soldier, but also on self-aid, where a Soldier can perform basic first aid on themselves if they are able to.

Through training while deployed, soldiers can also learn about new devices or techniques that have been fielded. The medical training JTF Sapper recently

conducted went over one of these new devices, a cloth called water gel. The convection properties it contains draws the heat out of a burn to evaporate it into the surrounding atmosphere.

Col. Diana Holland, Theater Engineer Brigade Commander, described the importance of staying on top of their toes, and

keeping their skills fresh and muscle memory on point, by simply saying, "Complacency is not an option."

"All soldiers should be proficient and continue to ensure proficiency, especially in hemorrhage control," said Alvarenga. "You never know when you will need to use these skills."

The 130th headquarters has been deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan since September 2013 and is currently halfway through their nine month deployment, scheduled to end in June 2014.



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. Bryan Pruitt, JTF Sapper

**Master Sgt. Agustin Cruz (left), Intelligence and JTF Sapper PSD NCOIC, places a tourniquet on Sgt. 1st Class Jeremiah Galyon, JTF Sapper Future Plans NCO, during a medical training refresher course.**





## ANA Engineers After a Year

(Continued from page 1)

neers,” said Haight, “You have special skills which many of your other soldiers don’t have and we need you to maintain those skills to help your army.”

The kandak, which in the Pashtu language means battalion, has accomplished much during their brief existence. They have constructed over 62 kilometers of road, built observation and combat outposts, completed numerous shelter and force protection projects on Forward Operating Base Lightning as well as assisted a local community when

The Spartan engineering SFAAT brings with them a combination of both engineering and organizational knowhow. This enables them to do more than just mentor their Afghan counterparts in technical areas. This enables them to develop the kandak into an empowered, learning organization capable of ensuring their own growth.

“A big part of our job in our Army, as officers, is planning and while an officer is planning, his Non-Commissioned Officers and his platoons are executing the mission,” said Olson, “You don’t

*“Whatever we can teach them, they absorb like a sponge. Anything you give them, they want more.”*

see much of that with the Afghans.”

An example of how empowered soldiers are in the U.S. Army is clearly demonstrated by how quickly an event can go from the planning stage to its actual execution.

“Executing a training event for us is really simple,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Cody, “You have your company commander who can approve a risk assessment and from there you can go out execute the training. For them, it takes the Corps Commander to approve a training event such as certifying their soldiers to drive down the road.”

The Spartan engineering SFAAT team members under-

stand the changes their Afghan counterparts must make as they develop their capabilities. They also understand there are some, just as there would be in any other population, who are resistant to change.

“Anyone they have sent to work with us has been eager to learn,” said Marcus Cargill, engineering SFAAT construction technician. “Whatever we can teach them, they absorb like a sponge. Anything you give them, they want more. They want to understand why we do things.”



Photo by US Army Pfc. Dixie Rae Liwanag, Combat Camera

**ANA Maj. Gen. Mohammad Yaftali, commanding general of 203rd Thunder Corps briefs ANA engineers during their first year anniversary**



Photo by US Army Pfc. Dixie Rae Liwanag, Combat Camera

**Lt. Col. Sado Gul, 203rd ANA Corp Eng. Kandak Commander (second from left) and US Army Capt. Joshua Snyder, Security Force Advise and Assist Team OIC, discuss vehicle maintenance issues.**

stand the changes their Afghan counterparts must make as they develop their capabilities. They also understand there are some, just as there would be in any other population, who are resistant to change.

“We’ve actually empowered a lot of the junior NCO’s, and they are starting to step up and fill those roles like we would,” said Cargill, “They’re seeing how we run things, and they’re picking up on it.”

Empowering the younger Afghan enlisted leaders has encouraged them to take on roles that allow them to exercise their growing leadership abilities.

“The Mobile Training Team is teaching them vertical construction skills such as masonry, carpentry and electrical wiring and each of the sections trains on

*“We’ve actually empowered a lot of the junior NCO’s, and they are starting to step up”*

their own. These guys got the junior NCOs and sometimes, even senior NCOs to take charge of the smaller classes,” said U.S. Army Capt. Joshua Snyder, the officer-in-charge of the engineering SFAAT. “They make corrections and make sure people are there when they’re supposed to be there.”

The Spartan engineering SFAAT has been working with their Afghan counterparts since Oct. 2013, and know the time they have to make a difference is short. Knowing this, they have

set attainable short term goals with substantial, long term returns. They are working on a variety of programs from a trainer certification process and developing their vehicle and heavy equipment maintenance program. There is another program which could potentially have the greatest reach.

Olson explained the program, “There’s a hospital being built by Afghan civilian contractors right outside their base. So we facilitated a meeting between the kandak commander and the contractors building the hospital. They worked out an informal agreement to allow

certain engineering soldiers to work side by side with the contractors,” said Olson. There were fears the relationship would be difficult to maintain, especially with the differences between the military culture and the civilian culture. The fears eventually proved to be unfounded.

“We initially saw it as being a fragile relationship, but it has really blossomed. It’s Afghans helping Afghans, forming relationships outside of the army. They are making engineer connections, and it’s a win-win situation. The contractors get more work done for free, the ANA get training which would be very difficult for us to provide,” said Olson.



## Brothers in Arms: Serving the U.S. a Family Matter



Photo courtesy of 1st Lt. William Thomson

**2nd Lt. Joseph Thomson (left) and 1st Lt. William Thomson (right), stand together outside the dining facility at Shindand Air Base.**

**By U.S. Army 1st Lt. William Thomson**  
Joint Task Force Sapper

Southwest Asia – When oldest brother, Capt. Charles “Charlie” Thomson, went to the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY. in the summer of 2003, no one would have imagined that the closest distance between all three Thomson brothers, to also include 1st Lt. William “Billy” Thomson and 2nd Lt. Joseph “Joe” Thomson, for an extended period in the next ten years would be from Kuwait to Afghanistan.

The brothers, all graduates of Waukesha West High School, are the three children of Jeff and Judy Thomson from Waukesha, Wis. Although the family is geographically separated, both parents are honored by their sons’ selfless service.

Judy, a middle school teacher, and her husband, Jeff, participate in numerous military events throughout the year to express their appreciation for the men and women in uniform.

Fast-forward to early 2014 and the active duty junior officers are all currently deployed in Southwest Asia supporting the War on Terror.

Charlie is the Intelligence Officer for 1-44 Air Defense Artil-

lery Battalion at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Billy works in the Command Group for the 130th Engineer Brigade which is currently serving as the Theater Engineer Brigade at New Kabul Compound, Afghanistan. And Joe is a Route Clearance Platoon Leader in the 576th Eng. Clearance Company at Shindand Air Base, Afghanistan.

For the initial months of the 130th Eng. Bde.’s deployment, the 576th Eng. Co. fell under their task force, until task organization realignment transferred operational control to Regional Command-West on Jan. 1, 2014.

However, for the weeks between Veteran’s Day and Christmas of 2013, both as members of the Theater Engineer Brigade, Billy and Joe were deployed within the same force structure in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Coincidentally, while Billy traveled with the Bde. Commander and Command Sergeant Major on battle field circulation during that time, the two brothers were able to meet for breakfast and discuss lessons learned from Billy’s platoon time.

“I have been mentoring Joe my whole life, the only difference now is my advice will help keep him and his team safe against a

‘real’ opponent,” Billy said.

Joe was humbled to be involved in the conflict together and said, “It has increased the camaraderie we created first as brothers, as best friends and now as two engineer officers connected by an event few Americans can relate to.”

Many Soldiers will say that it is not uncommon for a deployment environment to allow for family, friends and classmates serving in the military together to reunite.

However, as the United States prepares to withdrawal from Afghanistan, it has been a unique experience that the Thomson brothers, their parents, spouses and hometown community have shared and a story that will be passed on through generations of the family.

Mother, Judy, remembers thinking of her sons at war when the youngest was commissioned in Dec. 2012, “but I never dreamed having them all in harm’s way at once would be reality.”

“Despite the synonymous remorseful reaction from the public, my response is always the same: ‘Don’t apologize, and

please pray for their safe return,” Judy said. “We raised our sons to be independent and spread their wings; the Army has given them the opportunity, so for that I am grateful and proud.”

The two youngest Thomson brothers will be mission complete later this spring, when Billy returns to his wife, Jessica, daughter, Halle (3 years), and son, Tate (1 year), at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and Joe to his wife, Hanna, at Ft. Carson, Colo.

Charlie will finish his one year deployment this fall, before being reunited with his wife, Denise, at Ft. Hood, Texas. As the first of the Thomson brothers to make the decision to defend the nation during a time of war, Charlie calmly reminds his younger siblings, “The sacrifices we are making now, will lead to a lifetime of satisfaction in the end.”

Ultimately, their father looks forward to the next time the men are in the same room talking about the Wisconsin sports teams they love.

“But until then,” Jeff said, “it is in the back of my mind all the time. I pray a lot and have faith.”

*“I have been mentoring Joe my whole life, the only difference now is my advice will help keep him and his team safe”*



Photo courtesy of 1st Lt. William Thomson

**Thomson officers, William (left), Joseph (center), and Charles (right), stand together in uniform after Joseph commissioned in Dec. 2012.**





## Brigade Headquarters & Headquarters Company (HHC)

Greetings To Our Sapper Family and Friends,

Things are moving right along for the company here at the New Kabul Compound.



Time is flying by quickly as it has already been one month since CPT Gronenthal and I changed command.

The company has been extremely supportive of 1SG Brummel and I.

Our mission continues to take slightly different molds as we remain flexible and ready.

I would like to highlight some recent accomplishments by the company.

MSG Augustin Cruz and SFC Jeremiah Galyon spearheaded the recent stand up of our new Personal Security Detachment (PSD) for the Brigade Command Team. The PSD will serve as a task force multiplier allowing COL Holland and CSM Etter to make important meetings

in our surrounding areas.

SPC Rivera recently re-enlisted for a tour to Europe and I know the J7 cell is very proud of his decision to continue service to our country. 1LT J.C. Wright conducted the re-enlistment ceremony for SPC Rivera.

CPT Matt Burgoon was recently recognized for his hard work in supporting the theater deconstruction efforts.

MAJ Garrett Kaye was awarded the Knowlton Award for his contributions to the military intelligence community.

MAJ Glen MacDonald was recognized for his planning efforts that have shaped the Theater Engineer Brigade's future. 1LT Lisa Miller was recognized by Lieutenant General Bos-tick for her hard work in personnel management.

SSG Guiao was promoted last month from SGT and he has done an outstanding job as a promising

non-commissioned officer in J6.

MAJ Palicia recently won the NKC pull-up competition with 32 pull-ups and CW3 Gadsden came in a close 2nd with 28.

To say I am extremely proud of our team is an understatement.

In the last month, several Sappers have returned home and I want to thank the FRG, volunteers, and 130th EN BN (Prov.) for all of their hard work in welcoming our

Soldiers home.

At this time, we are still planning to return to Hawaii as scheduled. Until we know for sure, we will continue to work hard and execute our mission here.

Thank all of you for your continued support. **Combat Ready!**

**-Capt. Matt Jordan  
Commander  
HHC, 130th Eng. Bde.**



**A group of HHC, 130th Eng. Bde. Soldiers prepare to travel from Bagram Airfield to the New Kabul Compound Feb. 4th.**

## Sexual Harassment and Assault Response Program (SHARP)

### What is Personal Courage?

Facing your fear, danger or adversity (physical or moral). Personal courage has long been associated with our Army. With physical courage, it is a matter of enduring physical duress and at times risking personal safety. Facing moral fear or adversity may be a long, slow process of continuing forward on the right path, especially if taking those actions that is not popular with others. You can build your personal courage by daily standing up against sexual harassment and sexual assault in your formation.

Why is it important for us to stop sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Answer: We all have a responsibility to take action to change our culture to eliminate an "enemy that lies within our ranks." (CSA General Casey, SHARP Summit 2010)

**There is No "innocent bystander"**



When you see the warning signs of sexual violence, you either:

Support	-or-	Deter
Encourage	-or-	Discourage
Enable	-or-	Condemn
Speak Up	-or-	Stay Silent
Intervene	-or-	Ignore

You are either:

<b>a Leader</b>	-or-	<b>a Follower</b>
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Which one are you? Whether you're a Soldier or a civilian, it takes COURAGE

Stand Up, Be A Leader who

**Intervenes, Acts, and Motivates!**

***We are all leaders, and as leaders there is no such thing as a passive bystander. Each of us is either enabling sexual harassment and sexual assault or standing up to stop it.***



**ACROSS**

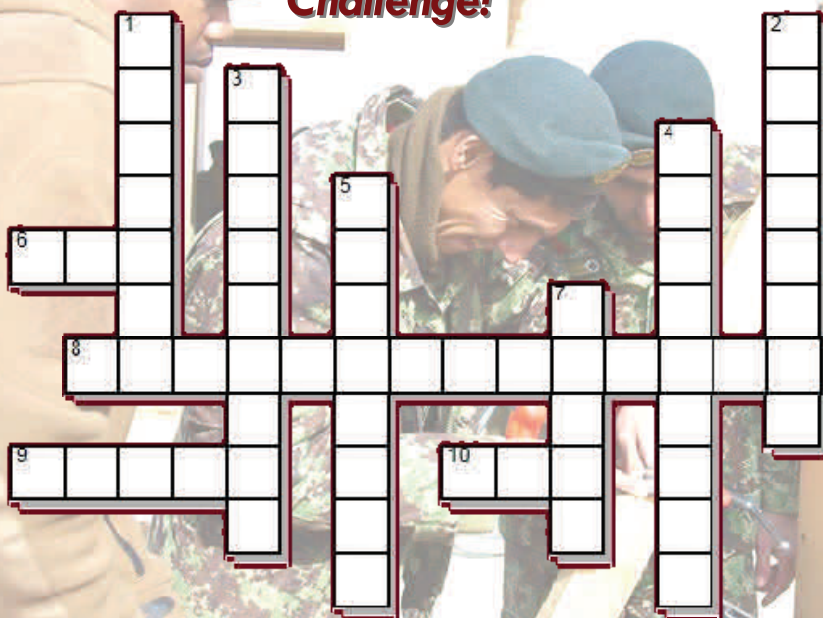
6. Brigade scheduled to replace 130th as TEB HQ
8. Afghan Ministry the 489th went to for hotel project
9. Future home of the NEB
10. 203rd CEK Commander

**JTF Sapper  
Crossword  
Challenge!**

**DOWN**

1. FOB the 203rd CEK operates out of
2. CFC stands for Combined \_\_\_ Center
3. U.S. State three brothers in arms are from
4. \_\_\_ Eng. Kandak has Afghan Bridge unit
5. Machine used to recycle well drill rig mud
7. Camp where ANA IED courses were held

**HINT: EACH ANSWER  
CAN BE FOUND INSIDE  
THIS NEWSLETTER**



**About this Photo:**

CE3 Surratt (Surrante) teaches ANA soldiers from the CNEK on how to cut and file down conduit before running electrical wire through it. (U.S. Navy photo by Construction Mechanic 2nd Class John Zaragoza).

**There's help when you need it...**

**Crisis Intervention Hotline**

**Warriors: Need someone to talk to, or have a buddy here who needs help?**

The Crisis Intervention Hotline is staffed 24/7. If you need to talk to a counselor, you can reach them from any NIPR phone by dialing 1-1-1. You can also reach Crisis Counselors by Afghan Local National Phone by dialing 070-113-2000, (wait for tone) then 1-1-1.

Also reach Crisis Counselors by NIPR email at [OEFCRISISHOTLINE@afghan.swa.army.mil](mailto:OEFCRISISHOTLINE@afghan.swa.army.mil).

**Remember, you aren't alone!**

Photo by U.S. Army Sgt. Kimberly Hackbarth, 4th SBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs





Photo courtesy of TF Bayonet

*Southwestern Afghanistan — 82nd Engineer Support Company conducts breach training at Camp Leatherneck Feb. 15.*

## Around the Sapper AO This past month



By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Laura Beth Beebe

*Bagram Airfield — Soldiers with HHC, 130th Eng. Bde. take a break and play a small game of basketball one afternoon.*



Photo by U.S. Army Spc. Eric Provost, TF Patriot Public Affairs

*Eastern Afghanistan — 201st Afghan National Army Corps engineers, working with the 663rd Engineer Company, begin work on a maintenance pad Feb. 16, at Forward Operating Base Gamberi.*



Photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Dixie Rae Livanag, Combat Camera

*Eastern Afghanistan — U.S. Army Capt. Joshua Snyder, Engineer Security Force Advise and Assist Team officer in charge and ANA Lt. Col. Sadu Gul, commander of the 203rd Corps Engineer Kandak, observe vehicles during their weekly maintenance at FOB Tunder, Paktya province.*



Photo by U.S. Army 1st Lt. William Thomson

*Eastern Afghanistan — Spc. David Flowers, 333rd Eng. Co., is presented the Army Commendation Medal for his service in Operation Enduring Freedom.*

## Chaplain's Closing, Maj. John Sedwick "Olympic Dreams and Relationship Realities"

This month's "amen corner" involves Olympic dreams and relationship realities.



During these past two weeks the members of Task Force Sapper have joined millions around the world who have been watching the Winter Olympics from Russia.

Many of us have pondered in our hearts and have searched our memory bank of life experiences in an effort to answer difficult philosophical questions: What exactly is curling, and how can it possibly be an Olympic sport? Are the American speed skaters really losing in spectacular fashion because of their high tech uniforms? Why was Russia, with its incredi-

bly melting snow and lack of quality hotel rooms, awarded the Winter Olympics in the first place?

I think military members are naturally drawn to the Olympic Games because we can relate to young people (like most of our Soldiers) who have trained their whole lives for a single moment in time to excel, to attain perfection—just as Nadia Comaneci, the Romanian gymnast, did a long time ago in the Summer Olympics.

The challenging weather conditions at Sochi have prevented most athletes from attaining anything close to perfection, as we have become accustomed to watching world class athletes routinely picking themselves up

after falling.

Our personal relationships—especially during deployments—involve brief moments of perfection (saying just the right thing or picking the perfect gift to send home) along with lots of occasions where we pick ourselves up after crashing and burning—when we've expressed our frustration about our mission change, our cramped living conditions, or our lack of office/personal space.

As we approach the sixth month of our deployment I would compare it to a 10K cross country ski race in the Olympics. We have struggled up many hills; we have coasted down several slopes.

Our personal relationships are not about perfection; they are all about endurance; they are all about resilience, about pick-

ing ourselves up after crashing and burning.

There's nothing wrong with striving for perfection in our relationships; however, a gold medal performance for Task Force Sapper Soldiers entails returning home with honor. And here's the gold medal standard for honor: I have remained faithful to my spouse, I have continued to give Task Force Sapper and the units entrusted to our care my very best, and I will return home with the goal of being the best servant leader that I can be to my Family.

I encourage all of you to complete the race that has been set before you. As we enter the final stage of this deployment, continue to focus on the gold medal that awaits you: a loving Family that stands at the finish line.

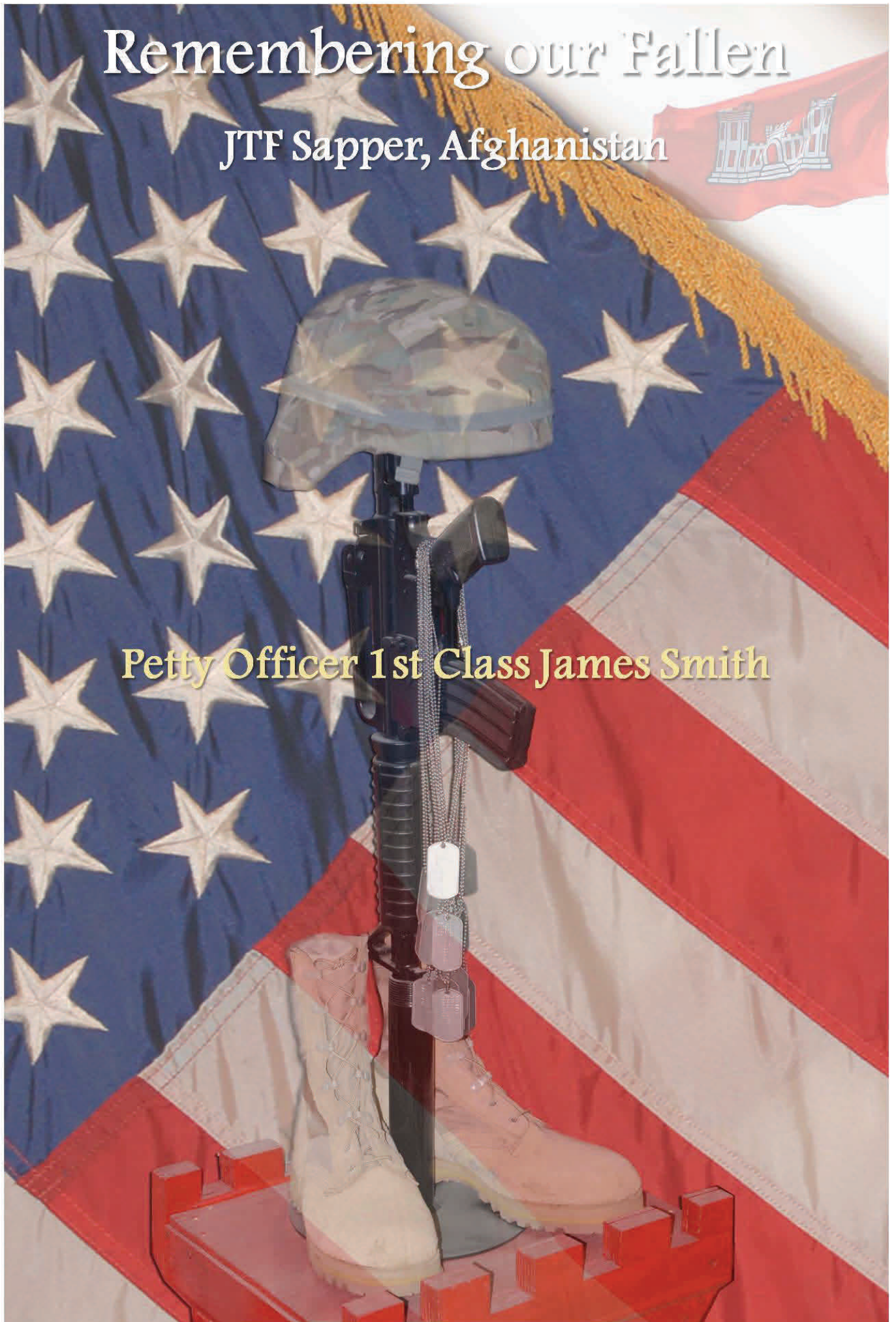


# Remembering our Fallen

JTF Sapper, Afghanistan



Petty Officer 1st Class James Smith





# JOINT TASK FORCE SAPPER 'SAPPERS IN'

**Our Mission:** Deploy in support of the International Security Assistance Force and, at the invitation of the Government of Afghanistan, provide theater engineer support to include development of the Afghan National Army engineer force, ISAF troop construction, and route clearance, to help build a pathway to peace and prosperity for the people of Afghanistan.



U.S. THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE  
AFGHANISTAN 2013-14



Questions or comments? Email  
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