



The Pacemaker



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MESSAGE FROM TASK FORCE COMMANDER

Dear Pacemaker Families & Friends,

We finally have Fort Lewis -based Soldiers on leave, enjoying time with loved ones as they relax from the combat theater for some well-deserved rest. It's great to be able to relax and maybe even attend an important family event. All Soldiers in the Task Force will take Rest & Relaxation (R&R) leave during the deployment. The last leave groups will leave 60 days before our redeployment. I encourage each family to have a plan for when your Soldier comes home so you can enjoy the time wisely. I'm sure everyone will try to pack as many events into a two-week period as possible.

Along with R&R comes family vacations during the summer. Remember to let the FRG know where to contact you during the time you'll be gone so they can reach you in case of an emergency. All families want to have some time to relax during the summer, but it's critical that we know how to contact you.

Since we've been in Afghanistan you've heard stories and seen pictures of the 117km Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road and how we will finish it by 15 SEP 05. You also know that we'll have almost every Soldier and equipment asset on the road by late June. We are dedicated to one mission. After we complete this road, we'll most likely have Task Force assets shifted to the east to join the Bulldogs in road construction. We might even get a chance to spend some time working with them during the second half of the deployment.

Our mighty Signal office has made every effort to ensure we can start having video teleconferences (VTC) with family members at Fort Lewis. During June we'll have HSC and A company conferences. 1LT Sun Koh is working with additional assets to ensure B Company, C/864, C/926, A/391, and the 298th will have this capability too!

Don't be surprised if your Soldier is a bit thinner on the VTC. With the 100+ degree temperatures comes a great weight loss program that some of us could use. A few Soldiers have lost as much as 30+ pounds so far.

I was thinking back to the Yakima training exercise we had in February a few days ago as our Soldiers encountered another IED. It's obvious that the training the 555th set up for us made a great impact on how our Soldiers are prepared for the day to day events in Afghanistan. Nothing can completely replicate the environment here, but the realistic training CSM Glenn set up for us really paid off.

As each week passes there isn't a moment when we don't think of you. Keep us in your prayers and know that we're working hard to make you proud.

Set the Pace!

LTC Paul Paolozzi

MESSAGE FROM THE TASK FORCE CSM

Pacemaker Families,

Hey, Pacemakers how are things back there on the home front? In a couple of days it will be the summer for real, but for us the summer started over a month ago. Yes, we have seen the temperature rise to over a 100 degrees, but I can tell you it's nothing like what we faced in Iraq two years ago.

So how are your Soldiers doing? I would say nothing less than spectacular. I just came back from spending a week with the soldiers at FOB Tiger where team Kodiak, Rocksteady, and Roughneck are chopping off big chunks of the road. You know how you get mad at road crews when they are fixing the highway because they are taking too long, well, after seeing your Soldiers work, I can say your anger is justified. Your Soldiers really put most road crews to shame.

So what about the guys on the airfield? Some one said to me today, "These guys are a month and half ahead of schedule." So

I asked, "Whose schedule is it?" The person answered, "It's the schedule from the unit before you." Need I say more? First Sergeant Russell is telling me that the "Bulldog" is barking so loud that everyone can hear them all over Eastern Afghanistan. That one company is doing the work of a battalion and making the Pacemaker family proud. Task Force Sword's Sergeant Major called me the other day just to rave about his visit to see the Bulldogs. He was surprised to see how much these Soldiers had accomplished and how disciplined they were. It's great to be a "Bulldog for life."

Somebody put a burr in the Wildcats' paws and the last couple of weeks they have hit high speed and are rolling down the hills of the north. I don't know if it is the fact that they now have to travel a mile around the new barriers to get a shower even though they only live fifty meters from it as the crow flies and they are taking out all that frustration on the road, but whatever it is, I like it. It's getting the road built fast. Yes, some smart guys made a dumb decision to block off the showers which causes these soldiers to travel that far to get to it. We are working on getting that fixed.

So what is the plan for leave? The entire Pacemaker Task Force is now eligible for leave. I must apologize that we all will not be able to get leave when it best fits our plans, but the command is trying it's best to accommodate you and your Soldier. And please remember that the honey do list cannot be too long because you won't have much time left over to enjoy being back together.

Well, I've got to go see your Soldier work, so I'm off for now. Enjoy the summer and, as my Hawaii brother and sister would say, "Hang loose, tide high."

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CSM Neville Lewis and LTC Paul Paolozzi.
Picture by SPC Robert Davis

A/864 DIVIDED TO CONQUER

1LT Sara Cullen

Alpha Company "Animals" have recently narrowed their focus to two main efforts. The Earth Moving Platoon continues working on the T-K Road Project with elements of maintenance along to assist in the never ending battle to keep the equipment moving forward. They continue to live under austere conditions with infrequent showers most often out of a camping shower bag. They continue to work long hours, averaging approximately 800 feet of road being completed per day.



1st Platoon places concrete at the Mobility Ramp at KAF
Picture by 1LT Jennifer Austin

The remainder of A Company is staying focused on the mobility ramp concrete placement project where 200 to 400 cubic yards of concrete are placed each day. First and Second Platoons have been working from opposite ends and will soon meet in the center, giving Air Force aircraft a new parking area which will allow for a larger number of aircraft to use the existing runway.

With the mobility ramp approaching completion, Alpha Company is preparing to roll out to its new mission in support of the T-K Road. All Alpha Company Soldiers who are not currently working on the road will move to the future location of FOB Pacemaker and begin building a Forward Operating Base for over 700 Soldiers. This large project will house all of the assets needed to complete the road and will provide housing for all of our soldiers until road construction is complete.

Alpha Company continues to move at a high rate of speed from one high profile mission to the next. Those of us here at KAF are enjoying the nice accommodations while they last, preparing ourselves for a few months of hard work, MREs, and tent living.



Alpha Company Headquarters Platoon at KAF
Picture by SPC James Freeman

BUILDING THE TK ROAD

-1LT Brian Meister, Earthmoving Platoon Leader, Team Kodiak

FORWARD OPERATING BASE TIGER, AFGHANISTAN

– Arctic warriors are generally known for their unique ability to survive and fight in the ice and snow, but Kodiak Soldiers are now facing a desert environment and temperatures nearing 100 degrees. As summer approaches and the sun continues to scorch the Afghani landscape, work on the Kandahar to Tarin Kowt Road is approaching a feverish pace. With Parliamentary Elections looming on the horizon in September, the push to complete the road is taking on significant political and strategic importance. Not only will it allow information and commerce to reach an almost completely isolated part of the country, but it will provide coalition forces with an avenue to gain rapid access to Taliban fighters seeking refuge in the mountains.

This isn't an ordinary road. Each day presents EM Soldiers with a variety of unique challenges and problems associated with building a road in adverse conditions with limited resources. Sergeant Joel Drummond explains, "Operating in Afghanistan doesn't do your equipment any favors. When you spend most of the day driving over rocks and through riverbeds, vehicles break more frequently and they're harder to fix. You have to improvise to keep stuff on the road." Even with operational equipment, a lack of water often impedes construction progress. Proper compaction of the soil on the road requires moisture, and finding water in a desert is no easy task. Sergeant Jediah Eustaquio says, "It's funny how we take water for granted back home, but there's just no water here. It takes me four hours to drive the water tanker to the well and back out to the job site."



SGT David Austin (C/864) conducts night maintenance operations on a scraper.
Picture by 2LT Gillis.

While much of the road travels through barren, uncultivated land with no sign of civilization, it also finds its way through numerous villages on the way to Tarin Kowt. Despite all of the benefits derived from having an improved road, many local Afghans struggle to see the benefits the road provides and show reluctance to allow construction to pass through their land. Compromise and careful negotiations prove critical in satisfying concerns over the placement of the road. Specialist Bobby Speer says, "We had to cut out a bunch of one guy's field to build the road, so I helped put in irrigation pipes to allow him to continue to water his crops. I try to make friends in the village so that they'll tell us if they know we're in danger." Earning the support of local nationals goes hand in hand with making linear progress on the road. Our security and the overall success of the mission directly relates to our ability to win the trust of the Afghani people and unite in opposition to the Taliban.

Though difficulties seem to be around every corner, Earthmovers have constructed over six miles of road to date, with hundreds more feet added every day.

Specialist Chad Gibbs explains, "It's all about making the best out of what you've got, and EM always gets the job done."



SPC William Stoltenberg stockpiles fill material at the borrow pit.
Picture by 1LT Brian Meister.

ONE METER AT A TIME

2LT William Mohr

It's not a thick piece of bullet proof glass, but the steady beeps and tones of their mine detectors that keeps the members of First Platoon, Alpha Company, 391 Engineer Battalion safe. "Its kind of nerve racking to know that at any moment you could step on a mine," states SGT Christopher Ernst in a wavering voice. This US Army Reserve platoon has been tasked with the detailed mission of detecting and destroying mines within the perimeter of Bagram Airfield. SPC Michael Tripp adamantly explains, "Manual mine clearance is an extremely stressful and tedious job that takes a ton of concentration because one wrong move and you could be blown sky high." The mental preparation for the "Roughneck" Soldiers of Alpha Company is intense. "Every time I enter the minefield I put on my game face and become as serious as I can be," exclaims SPC Jason Black.

Clearing a minefield manually requires a lot of teamwork and trust. One Soldier will walk slowly into a suspected minefield, carefully sweeping the ground in front of him with a mine detector before taking another step. If his detector changes tone, the Soldier will carefully mark the area before pulling back and allowing the next Soldier, a "prober," to go forward. The prober will lay on his stomach behind the marked area and gently insert a long wooden probe into the ground. He will then identify, expose, and mark anything out of the ordinary before pulling back and allowing the first Soldier to continue his sweep. At the end of the day the demolitions team will go through and destroy any Unexploded Ordinance (UXO) or mines found.

Prior to entering the minefield for the first time, everyone seemed to have grave thoughts weighing on their minds. The greatest concern for the platoon sergeant, SFC Jamie Burkholder, was that he had not prepared the Soldiers to handle the mental aspect of manual mine clearance. PFC Raul Leon, responsible for finding and marking possible mines using a metal detector, commented shortly after his first day detecting in an actual minefield, "I felt fine but I was extremely worried about my prober hitting a mine that I might have failed to mark." Platoon leader, 2LT Bill Mohr, stated with pride, "Even with the short time that the platoon has been together, it seems that most of the platoon is more concerned with their partner's well being rather than with their own."

So far the platoon has worked a week in the mine fields and they have not unearthed any mines. However, some soldiers have found old Soviet pins and awards. SGT Daniel Funer explained, "Sometimes it feels like I am an archaeologist who is carefully excavating the past." No one in first platoon could ever imagine that they would be walking and working in a mine field. SPC Matthew Hodge was excited when he said, "Conducting

manual mine clearance operations is an experience of a lifetime because you are truly searching through the unknown."



Left: A cache of detected UXOs and rounds waiting for demolition. Picture by 2LT William Mohr

"The best thing about conducting manual mine clearance operations is that you can quantitatively calculate the work that you have completed," LT Mohr explained. Everyday the Soldiers can look behind them and be rewarded to see all the ground that they have cleared. The "Roughnecks" truly are making Afghanistan safer, one meter at a time.

DIRT TRAIL TO PAVED ROAD

2LT Shaunte Chandler

Five units from across the nation have joined together within a few months here at FOB Ripley, Afghanistan to work construction on the Tarin Kowt Road. The days are long and the nights are short, but the Soldiers are motivated and producing an average of 800ft of road daily. The Soldiers bump up and down the road in heavy equipment in order to improve the rocky, uneven, trail that the people of Afghanistan use to travel back and forth from Tarin Kowt to Kandahar. After the completion of the road the locals will be able to travel on a smooth surface road constructed by the Soldiers of Task Force Pace-maker. The Sappers from A/391 clear the road of IEDs and mines. The "Rock" element of HSC/864 provide guidance on quality assurance and road direction through their surveying team, while also ensuring that there is enough material to construct the road by providing earth material from their burrow sites. 191 5th Company Direct Support Maintenance, assist in keeping the equipment mission capable.

Daily operations are extensive and dangerous, but the Soldiers do not miss a beat. They are on the road every day, taking only one day to relax and recover from the week's wear and tear. After a hard days work or on their down time, you can find them either at the gym working out, at the MWR tent calling their loved ones, or just simply sending out email messages. A majority of them just want to rest on their bunks or in front of a good American movie.

The work is difficult but rewarding. The Soldiers all know that in the end they will leave something that will be for the benefit of all of Afghanistan. This road will hopefully be around for the great-grandchildren of the locals that are watching in wonder as we push deeper into the interior region between Tarin Kowt and Kandahar. This mix of Soldiers from all over the country that only a few months ago did not even know one another will have moved mountains and brought hope and prosperity to this war torn nation. These kinds of impacts are what make being an engineer worth while.



2.5 yd bucket loader filling a 5 ton dump at the burrow site. Picture by 2LT Shaunte Chandler

Did you know...?

Kandahar, Afghanistan is the capital of Kandahar Province with a population of 250,000. The country's second largest city and chief trade center, Kandahar is a market for sheep, wool, cotton, food grains, fresh and dried fruit, and tobacco. The surrounding irrigated region produces fine fruits, especially grapes, and the city has plants for canning, drying, and packing fruit. Kandahar was founded by Alexander the Great (4th century B.C.).

Fact from: <http://www.afghan-network.net/Culture/qandahar.html>

ROCK STEADY SUPPORTS A TASK FORCE

1LT James Sakai

Greetings from Kandahar! Things continue to be very busy for the Rock Steady family. Equipment Platoon continues to support the road effort at both FOB Tiger and FOB Ripley. They work from sun-up to sun-down, but the results of their efforts are easy to see—the road continues to progress steadily as they support A CO and C



HSC Soldiers prepare for a Ground Assault Convoy.

Picture by SSG Kyle Thompson

CO EM platoons. The maintainers remain busy as well as both Maintenance and DS platoons try to keep up the equipment essential to the road. From engine rebuilds to blown out tires, there is never a lack of work to be done and they continue to do an excellent job on all of it. The DFAC is also busy supporting the Task Force with cooks at both Tiger and Ripley. Cooking two hot meals a day for over five hundred Soldiers is a daunting task, but they keep everyone well fed. The medics continue to support both locations as well, and SSG Pharis has impressed everyone at Charlie Med, the KAF hospital, as he treats our Soldiers as well as any other Soldier that needs his attention. Overall, Rock Steady continues to stay busy and provide first class support to the Task Force.

Even with all the normal support rolls keeping HSC busy, Rock steady has also taken on rolls it does not traditionally fill. CPT Gregory Parranto, the HSC commander, is now in charge of security at FOB Tiger. Along with his contingent of HSC Soldiers there, he oversees the activities of an infantry platoon and the local security forces. He is out on the road day in and day out ensuring that security is tight and that the earth movers can get their job done safely.

In other news, many Soldiers are taking advantage of the reenlistment opportunities that are available. One of the latest, SGT Christopher Olson from supply, reenlisted on his first trip to FOB Tiger. Many others are working out their contracts and keeping SSG James Hatfield and SGT Eric Bolich, the TF reenlistment NCOs, busy as they make sure the Soldiers get what they want. With all the opportunities and all the money available, they expect many more to reenlist over the course of the deployment.



Left: MAJ Jerry Farnsworth reenlists SGT Christopher Olsen in the FOB Tiger guard tower. Picture by SGT Eric Bolich

CARE PACKAGES ARRIVE

2LT Darcy Jones

All of you back home have been working very hard to support us here in Afghanistan and your hard work is beginning to show. I am very happy to announce the arrival of **61 care packages** over the span of two days. Day 1: 43 boxes arrived. All hygiene items were immediately put to the side and split evenly between Forward Operating Bases Tiger and Ripley. The boxes containing candy, batteries, and snacks were split in three directions between FOB Tiger, FOB Ripley, and KAF. There were many smiles as the Soldiers unloaded the care packages from the back of the mail truck and saw the names of their friends and loved ones on the return address block of the customs form. And don't worry, Bravo Company, we haven't forgotten about you! Day 2: 18 more boxes arrived to provide B/864 with their share. There is a flight to the East scheduled later in the month and all of the hygiene items from that second shipment and the same share of snacks as the other FOBs will be on board. It will take a few days for the packages designated for the FOBs to make it out to there, so in the meantime, I would like to share these pictures of the care package arrival:



Above and right: SSG Jeffrey Richter demonstrates that care packages have more than one use. Above left: SGT Karen Neidener gives a thumbs up to the families back home for the support. Below Left to Right: Boxes for B/864; SGT Stanley Snowden and SGT Wesley Roach inspect the separate piles of boxes for KAF, Tiger, and Ripley for fair distribution.

Pictures by 2LT Darcy Jones

Thank you!



Happy Father's Day

In My Eyes

*He's rough and lacks in etiquette,
Society would say.
He has no classy attributes,
To help him on his way.
He's not a fancy dresser,
And he's not so trimmed and neat.
With simple clothes and simples shoes,
He wears upon his feet.*

*He doesn't belong to a club,
Or drive a shiny car.
And when he takes vacations,
He does not go very far.*

*He doesn't dine on fine cuisine,
To him fast food's a treat.
And he may use a plastic fork,
When it is time to eat.*

*He has a modest little house,
But has all that he needs.
He keeps his lawn cut nice and short,
He even trims his weeds.*

*He works long hours at his job,
To make an average pay.
And even if he's sick or tired,
He goes to work each day*

His job is just a Soldier's job,
His pay just makes ends meet.
But, a few good friends and family,
Make his life complete.*

*He's not well versed in poetry,
Theater or the arts.
And wisdom is not something,
That he constantly imparts.*

*He loves the simple things in life,
For riches doesn't thirst.
He knows what is important,
And his family is put first.*

*The wealth that God has given him,
To treasure in his life.
A loving son and daughter,
And a very special wife.*

*He never has much money,
And his life is not a show.
But he is still the richest man,
That I will ever know.*

*To others he's a simple man,
And fame he's never had.
But he's the greatest man I know,
He also is my Dad.*

~Author Unknown~

** Changed from "factory" for this publication*



From TF Pacemaker