



TRIPLE NICKEL TRIBUNE

"WILLING AND ABLE!"



JOINT TASK FORCE TRIPLE NICKEL
NEWSLETTER OF THE THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE IN AFGHANISTAN



Issue 4 — May 2013

Message from the Commander

Colonel Nicholas Katers, "Able 6"

Triple Nickel Team,

May brings JTF Triple Nickel to the halfway point in this deployment. We are now meeting



our replacement, the 130th Engineer Brigade from Hawaii, whose leaders have arrived to conduct their survey

of our operations. It is truly an exciting time here for all.

There are many units changing out in the May-June period. Task Force Prowler, the 178th Engineer Battalion, was recently replaced by its sister battalion from South Carolina, the 122nd Engineer Battalion. We have also sent our very own 40th Survey and Design Detachment home to Ft. Carson, and soon the 1st Engineer Battalion, Task Force Diehard, will return to Ft. Riley.

I am extremely pleased with the progress we are making in our main effort of training Afghans. We recently fielded the third and fourth Afghan Engineer Battalions and our Soldiers are with them every day helping to train on engineer skills. By the time we leave there will be six Afghan Engineer Battalions.

As the weather starts to heat up even the simple things become more difficult. Please know that your Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen are succeeding at every step and they are always "Willing and Able."

- Col. Nick Katers, 'Able 6'



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Bignardi, Task Force Dynamite Public Affairs

ANA's Explosive Progress: Halfway through deployment, JTF Triple Nickel remains focused on training and developing Afghan National Army engineers. The Brigade views ANA engineers' progress as central to its lasting legacy. Here, U.S. forces observe ANA-led disposal of IEDs. **Related Story: Page 8**

Mid-deployment, Triple Nickel already building lasting legacy

By U.S. Army Capt. Spencer Garrison
Joint Task Force Triple Nickel Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Soldiers of the Joint Task Force Triple Nickel Headquarters marked an encouraging milestone as the brigade recently crossed the half-way point of their deployment to Afghanistan.

It was a milestone met with spirited excitement, to be sure, but also with quiet reflection, because at the same time, these Soldiers were marking Memorial Day.

It seemed fitting. Before the Soldiers enjoyed the half-way-home

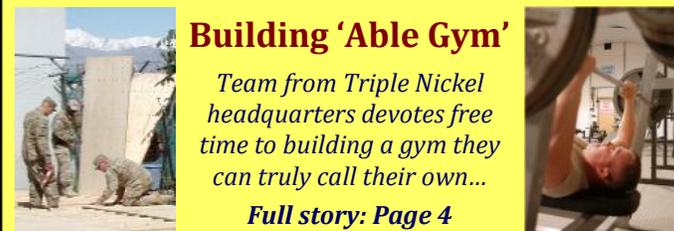
celebration, complete with a barbecue and bonfire, they first stood in formation and rendered honors to fallen comrades, remembering the sacrifices of those who have gone before.

Following the tribute to the fallen, brigade commander Col. Nicholas Katers spoke to the unit about the impact being made by the Triple Nickel, and the enduring legacy they're building as the Theater Engineer Brigade.

"Every day, I hear from units throughout Afghanistan about the amazing work being done by our

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"Every day, I hear from units throughout Afghanistan about the amazing work being done by our brigade."
-Col. Nicholas Katers



Building 'Able Gym'

Team from Triple Nickel headquarters devotes free time to building a gym they can truly call their own...

Full story: Page 4

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At A Glance...

- ◆ TRIPLE NICKEL SERVING AS THEATER ENGINEER BRIGADE, COMMANDING ABOUT 5,000 ENGINEER TROOPS
- ◆ ENGINEER FORCES SPREAD ACROSS AFGHANISTAN IN VARIOUS ROLES
- ◆ FOURTH LARGEST UNIT UNDER ISAF JOINT COMMAND, BEHIND ONLY EAST, SOUTH, AND SOUTHWEST REGIONAL COMMANDS
- ◆ JOINT TEAM LED BY 555TH ENG. BRIGADE HQS... INCLUDES ARMY, NAVY, AND AIR FORCE, AS WELL AS ACTIVE, RESERVE, AND GUARD
- ◆ TRIPLE NICKEL FOCUSED ON AFGHAN ARMY ENGINEER PARTNERSHIP, ISAF TROOP CONSTRUCTION, AND ROUTE CLEARANCE (KEEPING ROADS SAFE)

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Command Sergeant Major's Corner Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin Bryan, "Able 7"

Triple Nickel Family,

All is well here in Afghanistan as we roll into the halfway mark. Your loved ones are focused on the mission and are doing an outstanding job. It is absolutely amazing the quality of work and the amount of work our Soldiers are doing on a day to day basis. Nothing here is a cookie cutter answer, and your Soldiers are demonstrating how bright and tuned-in they are, improving the brigade and helping accomplish the mission every day.

Our team is making history, fighting for what is morally right by ridding this country of violence and tyranny, so be proud knowing that only your loved one is part of a small, select few -- less than 1% of the United States -- serving in the military for the cause of freedom.



"Be proud knowing that only your loved one is part of a small, select few -- less than 1% of the United States -- serving in the military for the cause of freedom."

As we just observed Memorial Day, we are reminded of the sacrifices that have been made over the years for the cause of freedom. We remember and honor all our fallen heroes, and we work even harder to stay focused on the mission, take care of one another, and support each Family back home.

Stay strong and resilient... our return is drawing closer every day.

Willing and Able,
CSM Kevin Bryan



The 122nd Engineer Battalion command team uncases their colors, marking the unit's arrival and commencement of their mission.

War Horse engineers arrive, replace sister unit from South Carolina Guard

By U.S. Army Spc. April Lloyd
Task Force War Horse Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — "Pin the castle on my collar...Essayons!" The Army Engineer song echoed. So began the Transfer of Authority Ceremony, May 6, at Bagram Airfield for the 178th and 122nd Engineer Battalions, both from South Carolina.

"We have very big shoes to fill," said Lt. Col. Victor Brown, commander of the incoming 122nd Engineer Battalion, Task Force Warhorse. During their deployment, TF Warhorse will continue the engineer mission of Afghan National Army Engineer (ANA) development, route clearance and construction in support of the International Security Assistance Force. During his address to both companies, Brown stressed vigilance during this time of retrograde.

Col. Nicholas Katers, commander of the Theater Engineer Brigade, Joint Task Force Triple Nickel, echoed the same sentiment. "We move into a very critical summer, some may see it as our last fighting season, but this is the wrong way to look at it. This is [the ANA's] first fighting season. Task Force Warhorse is tasked to deliver the breathing space this country needs the most."

In his remarks, Lt. Col. Dobson, battalion commander of outgoing Task Force Prowler, spoke of fallen comrades, telling his Soldiers, "Let us not forget their sacrifices to help keep our families safe from terrorism. Let us not forget their courage, let us not forget their families."



The Triple Nickel Tribune is an authorized newsletter for members of the 555th Engineer Brigade and Joint Task Force Triple Nickel. Contents are not necessarily endorsed by the Dept. of the Army, Dept. of Defense, or United States Government. Content is reviewed, edited, and approved by the Brigade Public Affairs Officer. For questions, comments, or submissions, please contact the Brigade PAO.

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YOU ARE THE NEWS!

This newsletter belongs to the **WILLING AND ABLE** members of **Joint Task Force Triple Nickel...**

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 Triple Nickel Tribune!

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Mid-deployment, Triple Nickel already building lasting legacy

(Continued from page 1)

Brigade,” Katers said to the unit.

Since February, the brigade has led many operations throughout Afghanistan. As the Theater Engineer Brigade, with roughly 5,000 engineer Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen, Triple Nickel’s mission is three-fold: Afghan National Army (ANA) engineer development, plus construction and route clearance.

Development of the ANA engineers is a top priority for the Triple Nickel, because as coalition forces step back and draw down, the Afghan National Security Forces are taking the lead in all operations, including engineering.

ANA engineers have made substantial progress since Triple Nickel arrived, with 25 more Afghan engineer units now certified

as independent, 17 of which were directly trained by and partnered with the brigade. In total, of the 44 deployed, 31 engineer companies are now certified as independent, with another 9 just below that, rated as “effective with advisors.”

The brigade is also overseeing the roll-out of larger, battalion-sized Afghan engineer units – Corps Engineer Kandaks. While most are still being established, the first of these units, the 205th CEK near Kandahar, has already taken the lead on engineer projects such as construction of a road in the Horn of Panjwa’i. The 205th is now building a literacy center to support their army’s education initiatives.

Triple Nickel has also overseen massive construction and deconstruction efforts across the



Triple Nickel Brigade commander, Col. Nicholas Katers, speaks to the brigade headquarters company about their unit’s progress thus far.

theater since February, already completing over 130 projects, valued at almost \$30 million, in support of the drawdown and consolidation of coalition forces. The brigade also dispatches small, joint engineer teams to provide maintenance and repairs critical to troop health and safety on coalition bases. These new Configurable Small Maintenance and Repair Teams (C-SMART) have already

completed over ten projects, with several more in progress.

The third major ongoing brigade effort is route clearance – patrolling essential roadways to find and eliminate insurgent-placed improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. Thanks to its roughly 50 route clearance units, Triple Nickel has already eliminated over 140 IEDs, protecting coalition forces and the Afghan population.

Afghan soldiers train on demolition, continue route clearance mission

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

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – “Infaja! Infaja! [Blast! Blast!]” Afghan Nation Army soldiers called out as they hurried quickly towards the concrete bunkers to seek cover. A demolition charge of several blocks of C-4 plastic explosive was about to detonate. The soldiers crowded into the bunkers in anticipation, with huge grins on their faces. They had placed it themselves.

The Afghan soldiers of the 4th Brigade, 203rd Corps, were completing a week of training at their base in late April, learning combat engineering and basic demolition, taught by the 57th Sapper Company, out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

The 57th soldiers instructed the Afghan students on constructing obstacles using concertina and barbed wire, as well as basic demolitions – which they had all been eagerly awaiting.

Originally, the plan for the demolition training was for a small group of soldiers from the Engineer Coy of the brigade’s 4th Kandak, as the culmination of their engineer training validation, a certification process planned by the ANA brigade engineer, with help from U.S. advisers. The brigade engineer, however, did not want the skills confined to just the engineers.

“I always enjoy training the Afghan National Army. They are very attentive and quick to learn,” said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Eric Prescott, a native of Addison, N.Y. “This class now has soldiers from all of 4th Brigade and grew from 15 soldiers at first, to 33 soldiers. We normally work with the RCC [route clearance company]. However, this was a good opportunity to train ANA infantry as well as engineer soldiers.”

*“I always enjoy training the Afghan National Army. They are very attentive and quick to learn.”
-Sgt. 1st Class Prescott*

The Afghan Army, being infantry-heavy, will often incorporate other skill sets into their patrols. The high number of soldiers trained on demolitions allows the Afghan patrols to greatly extend the reach of engineer skills across Logar and Wardak provinces.

The 4th Brigade Explosive Ordnance Disposal instructor, Afghan Sgt. 1st Class Nazif, was there to assist the training. After the 57th finished teaching the basic demolition, the same group of students would enter his class the following week for more training in finding and destroying roadside bombs.

“Here is good,” Nazif said with a smile as he showed Prescott the training area he selected. “My EOD soldiers train here.”

He was proud of the training site, which had a large pit sur-

rounded by barriers to conduct demolitions safely.

Nazif helped not only with direct instruction, but also bridging the cultural and language barrier between the U.S. and Afghan engineers. He was able to tailor the training to the Afghan equipment, which greatly appreciated.

Nazif and Prescott supervised the Afghan students as they attached their C-4 blocks to the detonation cord, and followed them to the detonation site. The charges were placed, and two soldiers started the time fuse.

With three minutes to take cover, they rushed across the rocky ground to the bunkers. Three minutes and ten seconds later there was a roar and the ground beneath them vibrated. The Afghan soldiers cheered and raced back to the detonation site to see the results.

“Yeah, I like blowing stuff up,” said Afghan Sgt. Ahzrat, one of the students, summing the week up perfectly.



Story by
U.S. Army Capt. Spencer Garrison,
JTF Triple Nickel Public Affairs

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD,
Afghanistan—**

In the first

four months of
deployment, the
Soldiers of Joint
Task Force Triple

Nickel headquarters, 555th Engineer Brigade, have supported
engineer projects for other units across Afghanistan. Base
expansion, road construction, building repairs, and more.

This month, on top of their regular duties and in their little
spare time, these engineers finally got to complete a project for
their very own unit...

Building 'Able Gym'

Drawing its name from the brigade motto, "Willing and Able," the brand new gym is already fully furnished and, since its May 5 completion, has received a warm welcome from Soldiers.

"It's one of the best morale boosts a unit can get," said Spc. Andrew Cuadrado, from Boston, Mass., an HHC Soldier assigned to the engineer brigade command group, and a regular at the new gym.

Cuadrado is among the more than 120 Soldiers of Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 555th Engineer Brigade, from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., who deployed this January to Bagram Airfield in eastern Afghanistan. With other gyms on base a far distance away and

occasionally overcrowded, Soldiers like him are happy to have a gym they can call their own.

"When a Soldier walks in there and knows it's their very own gym, that makes a big difference," Cuadrado said.

The unassuming tan exterior of the fitness tent, hardly noticeable in its humble space behind the larger brigade joint operations center, stands in stark contrast to what's inside. Complete with that "new gym" smell, the air-conditioned Able Gym features a full complement of treadmills, stationary bikes, free weights, resistance machines, and extras like a stereo and TV.

"It is with a sense of pride and accomplishment with which this task was completed," said Master Sgt. Kerry Wiles, combat

engineer and non-commissioned officer-in-charge for JTF Triple Nickel current operations.

A native of Paterson, N.J., Wiles oversaw the two-month effort, which included five weeks of acquiring equipment and three weeks more of actual construction, all during limited free time, on top of a full slate of workday responsibilities.

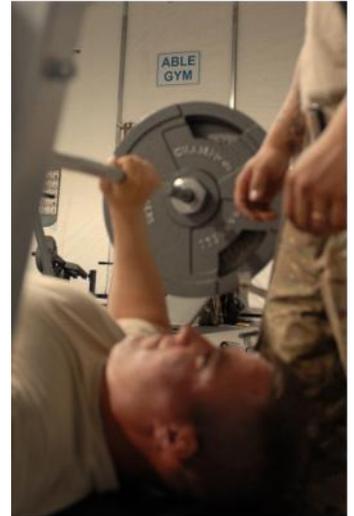
It was a team effort, made possible by several dedicated Soldiers, NCOs, officers, and warrant officers from the company, as well as a "kick-ass Air Force electrical team working through five hours of continuous rain," Wiles noted.

Rain or shine, many simply appreciated the chance to get out of the office and help out.

"It was great getting out of the [operations center] and getting my hands dirty," said Sgt. Clinton Martin, a combat engineer from Missoula, Mont., serving as an RTO (radio telephone operator) for the brigade.

As RTO, Martin's typical day includes thirteen hours on tactical computers and telephones monitoring engineer operations across Afghanistan.

Even though this project was in addition to the demands of his regular duties, Martin was glad to help out as Wiles' handy-



man on the construction site. The work ranged from constructing the wooden foundation, assembling the tent's metal framing, and wiring for lights and electronics, among other tasks.

It was worth the time, Martin felt, "to be able to contribute something to the team that's worthwhile."

It was time well spent, if Soldiers' reactions are any indication.

"How did it turn out?" More than expected," said Cuadrado. "It looks more like a professional gym, like something back in the States. When you walk in there, you don't feel like you're deployed."

*Rain or shine,
many simply
appreciated the
chance to get out
of the office and
help out.*



Master Sgt. Kerry Wiles helps construct the wood foundation of the new 'Able Gym', April 22.



Spc. Andrew Cuadrado and Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Chadwick, assigned to the 555th Eng. Bde., use the brigade's newly constructed gym.



Leading Ladies: Female lieutenants embrace route clearance mission

Story and Photo by 1st Lt. Allie Braun
Task Force S.A.W. Public Affairs

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – The 307th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Sapper Athlete Warrior (S.A.W.) has for two months now helped safeguard Afghan civilians and coalition forces safe through route clearance patrols, led in large part by two female platoon leaders.

First Lieutenants Erin Anthony and Vanessa Pizarro from the 738th Engineer Support Company found themselves embracing their roles as patrol leaders when their horizontal construction platoons transitioned to Route Clearance Packages (RCPs) in May 2012 to meet the needs of their upcoming mission in Afghanistan.

RCPs arguably have one of the toughest and most dangerous jobs in the Army. These Soldiers search for improvised explosives devices (IEDs) along the roadways. It takes a tremendous amount of diligence, focus, patience and expertise, as patrols can last several hours.

Anthony graduated from the U.S. Army Sapper School at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., in July 2011 while working as a Graduate Assistant at the United States Military Academy. She arrived to Ft. Bragg shortly before the 307th Engineer Battalion left for their rotation at the National Training Center (NTC) at Ft. Irwin, Calif.

“NTC was pretty overwhelming at first,” Anthony recalls, “but the training lanes threw a lot of challenges my way and gave me a chance to observe my platoon.”

Training opportunities like NTC prepare Soldiers for the days ahead of them. During training, Soldiers learn their roles, teamwork, refine their standard operating procedures, and practice different scenarios they will likely face out on the road.

Pizarro had a similar experience in training. She too graduated from Sapper School at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., in March 2012, and had the opportunity to refine her platoon and leadership style at NTC prior to the deployment here.

For Pizarro, Sapper School was all about teamwork.

“You get thrown into a squad of people from different ranks and backgrounds,” Pizarro explained, “and it’s about using the strength of the individuals to mask the weakness of the team.”

Both ladies expressed excitement about having a female counterpart. They decided up front that they would get more accomplished if they worked together instead of competing against one another. They have stuck by that mentality, and it has carried them through the first months of deployment.

Anthony and Pizarro have brought a lot to the table in a male-dominated engineer company.

They are well organized, level headed, deliberate and team oriented, according to their company commander.

“I never would have guessed that for most of my time as a company commander, both of my platoon leaders would be females,” said Capt. Ryan Neely. “However, my respect for them as profes-

“My respect for them as professional officers rivals that of any male and they continue to impress me.”

-Capt. Ryan Neely



1st Lieutenants Pizarro and Anthony pose in front of a route clearance vehicle March 30, 2013, following a 12-day route clearance mission.

sional officers rivals that of any male and they continue to impress me. They routinely accomplish challenging missions in a combat environment and are forging the way for the future of full integration for women in the Army.”

Anthony and Pizarro spent an extensive amount of time learning about their area of operations prior to leaving Ft. Bragg and more so since they have been in country. The better they know their battlespace, the more effective they will be outside the gate, on mission.

After over a month as an RCP platoon leader, Anthony has reflected on her role: “It’s a huge responsibility! We are clearing routes in several different areas of the country and TF S.A.W. holds us to a high standard for training, planning and execution.”

Pizarro echoed her sentiments and discussed the importance of maintaining a high standard for all operations and emphasized teamwork. She also com-

mented on her experience working with the Afghan National Army.

“It has been an adventure learning the Afghan culture and adapting to it especially as a female,” Pizarro said. “Many of the ANA have...worked with female Soldiers before and understand our leadership roles within ISAF.”

Both young women are a living testament to the power of the human spirit. They have both fulfilled their roles as platoon leaders and did not hesitate to answer their calling as route clearance patrol leaders, a position traditionally not held by women.

They have set the standard for other aspiring young women and have helped clear the way for the future of women in combat.

Partnership operations with the ANA as well as route clearance will continue to be a vital part of the engineer mission in Afghanistan. Task Force S.A.W. falls under Joint Task Force Triple Nickel, the Theater Engineer Brigade.



Building Skills: Afghan Army engineers quickly learn carpentry, finish major project unassisted

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

NANGARHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan - In early April, the 859th Vertical Construction Company sent a training team to Finley Shields, near Jalalabad, to assist Afghan National Army (ANA) engineers from 4th Brigade, 201st Corps in expanding their tactical operations center .

When the 859th team met their Afghan partners, they knew they were in for a challenge.

The Afghan soldiers who joined them on the job site were all horizontal engineers, trained in building roads and earthmoving operations,

and were unfamiliar with constructing buildings. The 859th team set out first to teach vertical construction techniques to the Afghans, who quickly learned the new skill set.

"It was a cakewalk really," said Sergeant Keiane Magee, a native of Hattiesburg Miss., commenting on how fast the Afghan engineers learned the trade.

"They would direct me to where the right cuts were."

As the non-commissioned officer in charge at the job site, Magee frequently met with the 4th Brigade leadership to ensure the construction was being built to their specifications.

Originally they were to construct a brand-new TOC, but the plan shifted to building expansions and remodeling the existing one. One large room, previously used as a gym, was divided into individual offices for the brigade operations personnel.

Both the American and Afghan teams were a half-dozen strong and worked throughout the first half of April.

Equipment was initially a concern, as the Afghan engineers did not own carpentry-specific tools for the task.

The 859th Eng. Company team showed them how to put together saw horses and miter boxes, and after seeing what was needed for the project, the Afghans traveled to the local market and purchased

*"I don't care what you do, it's looking good. Great job."
-ANA General Lawang, Brigade Commander*



U.S. Army Sgt. Keiane Magee and members of the 859th Eng. Co.'s Mobile Training Team instruct Afghan soldiers on using a table saw.

tool sets for themselves, including an expensive table saw.

"I don't care what you do, it's looking good. Great job," commented Afghan General Dadan Lawang, the brigade commander, with a smile. He, along with Major General Waziri, the ANA's 201st Corps commander, made several trips to the construction site and expressed their excitement about the progress. The U.S. engineers mostly advised, while the Afghan engineers took the lead in planning

and building the TOC expansions.

When the project was at 90% completion, the Afghan engineers told their U.S. partners to go ahead and take some time off. They were ready to prove themselves to General Lawang that they could put the finishing touches on the TOC themselves.

The ANA's 4th Brigade leadership and its engineers presented the soldiers from the 859th with certificates of appreciation to thank them for all their help and training.

Afghan Army leaders come together for national engineer conference



By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jon Flowers
Joint Task Force Triple Nickel

KABUL, Afghanistan – Leaders of the Afghan army's fledgling engineer corps gathered in Kabul, at the headquarters of the Afghan Ground Forces Command, April 14 to 16, for the first national-level engineer conference. While their coalition partners watched with interest, these Afghan officers conducted completely independent briefings and discussions, focused on engineer operations, problems,

and solutions across Afghanistan.

Chaired by Brigadier General Mer Ahmad Raufi, the Combat Support Deputy Chief of Staff, and visited by a long list of other interested Afghan generals, the conference had extensive visibility and impact across the Ground Forces Command. Each Corps engineer, as well as specialty directorates like Counter-IED or the Engineer School in Mazar-e-Sharif, briefed their operations for the last year and plans for the next one.



Trained, tested, ready to serve:

Afghan 203rd Corps Engineer Kandak graduates, deploys to eastern Afghanistan

By U.S. Army 1st Lt. Tyler Dovel, Task Force Diehard Public Affairs
LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan—

At Camp Blackhorse, a Canadian training team busily worked with over three hundred Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers. Carrying hammers, saws, and driving bulldozers, these soldiers were working to pass their final test...



It was the final phase of their training at the Consolidated Fielding Center (CFC), where they were preparing to become the new Corps Engineer Kandak that would provide construction for the entire 203rd Corps.

The 203rd Corps Engineer Kandak (CEK) is primarily a construction unit, to support the 203rd Corps in all manner of horizontal and vertical projects. As military engineers however, they still know how to fight. With their rifles loaded with blank rounds, their validation exercise at the CFC was two days of construction projects, all performed under war-time conditions. A group of Canadian trainers made up the opposition force, trying to stop the CEK soldiers.

"Their [non-commissioned officers] were taking charge of the

training," said 1st Lt. Shawn Dorman, from Weehawken N.J., assigned to Task Force Diehard. "The skills they are being taught here will carry over with them to FOB (Afghan Forward Operating Base) Lightning. The ANA non-commissioned officers will be able to train the new soldiers assigned to the CEK down the road."

After a long nine weeks of preparing these new soldiers, the CFC held a graduation ceremony at Camp Blackhorse for the CEK on May 2nd. Originally they were going to move to FOB Lightning the next day, but under the guidance of Maj. Gen. Yaftali, 203rd Corps Commander, they delayed their movement five days to secure the movement of the Corps Signal Kandak. Both kandaks moving together allowed greater safety on their trek

to their new home.

The CEK travelled to FOB Lightning early in the morning, taking advantage of the darkness. Once arrived, the ANA soldiers unpacked their belongings and equipment, and quickly prepared for their first inspection. Lt. Col. Wardak, the CEK commander, along with Brig. Gen. Raouf and Lt.

Col. Rosool, the chief of staff and public affairs officer respectively, walked through the barracks and motor pool, ensuring they clean and adequate for the troops.

As the last of the ANA soldiers were leaving Camp Blackhorse, one turned and called back to their former instructors, "Visit us after we've built something!"

As the last of the ANA soldiers were leaving Camp Blackhorse, one turned and called back to their former instructors, "Visit us after we've built something!"



Soldiers from the 203rd CEK attach a door to a guard shack during a final training exercise. They were tested with two days on construction projects in battlefield conditions as the final phase of their training.



‘Train-the-trainer’: Afghan combat engineers teach their own

By Sgt. 1st Class Michael Bignardi
Task Force Dynamite Public Affairs

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – As the Afghan National Army (ANA) takes the lead for military operations throughout the country, the U.S. Army’s 84th Engineer Company has done its part in advising and assisting ANA engineer forces in the Zharay District of southern Afghanistan.

The 84th Engineers, assigned to the 878th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Dynamite, have partnered with the Afghan Route Clearance Company of 3rd Brigade, 205th Corps and are employing a broad “train-the-trainer” approach to developing the Afghan unit. Instead of teaching one person from each platoon on a specific skill, they



train all the Afghan non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and, in turn, enable those NCOs to train their own soldiers.

The Soldiers of the 84th observing demolition training they provided for the ANA soldiers. Staff Sgt. Jones brought in 1st Lt. Tracy Porter from the 766th Explosive Ordnance Detachment (EOD) Platoon to conduct explosives training. The training consisted of safe handling of explosives, techniques to disable improvised explosive devices (IEDs) via impulse charges, and real-world training destroying IEDs and damaged munitions.

“The ANA we’ve trained to date has successfully located over 100 IEDs since January of 2013,” said Jones. He also remarked that the “train the



Afghan combat engineers prepare explosive charges during training with U.S. partners, as they learn to effectively dispose of IEDs.

trainer” program the 84th was utilizing to educate the ANA is in full swing, and that this method of training has proven to be the most effective style of training, with the 84th already seeing big dividends.

Further, the ANA soldiers’ demolition skills have already improved, according to Jones.

“The training was good, and I liked learning better techniques,” said Afghan Army Sgt. Abdul-Qayyuw, a member of the route clearance company.

The Afghan soldiers have already requested additional training in explosives disposal operations; they are the primary EOD team in the Zharay District.

Reinvigorating Soldier Counseling

By Staff Sgt. Maria Morales
JTF Triple Nickel Medical Section NCOIC

For over a decade we have been fighting a war against terrorism; preparing troops for deployment, deployment, then redeployment. Prior to deployment, the focus is gearing up for deployment and the mission that the unit will have throughout the time they are deployed. During the deployments we deal with combat stress, loss of battle buddies, concerns at home, dear John/Jane letters, combat logistic patrols and when our mail will come, until it is finally time to come home. Upon redeployment, we deal with anxiety issues, substance abuse issues, cheating, pregnancies, divorces,

and PCS moves. For the last decade we have been so focused on fighting a war on terrorism that we have forgotten to truly emphasize and reemphasize to the upcoming squad leader and in some instances platoon sergeant how to properly counsel Soldiers. It is not just about forming a bond or sharing life experiences, but truly being engaged and coaching, counseling and mentoring. The new “Triple Nickel Counseling Guide” is a resource that serves new squad leaders and even seasoned leaders as a resource to better engage, better connect, and touch areas of our soldier’s lives that maybe where never thought of before. Keep an eye out for it!



TRIPLE NICKEL COUNSELING GUIDE
Message from the 555th Engineer Brigade Commander to Leaders of the Brigade

Throughout the last two years, the Triple Nickel Brigade has deployed 23 companies into the fight in Iraq and Afghanistan from eight different battalions on three different installations. In the conduct of the innumerable, dangerous missions our Brigade Soldiers have carried out while deployed, we sadly lost **one** of our own to enemy action. Tragically, during that same period we lost **seven more** that many Soldiers within the Brigade to off-duty accidental deaths and suicide, mostly at home and in our communities. At the same time, our trends with non-fatal serious incidents and discipline suggest that relationship issues, financial strain, and complex health challenges limit the comprehensive fitness of our Soldiers and their Families.

As leaders in the Triple Nickel Brigade, we have a sacred responsibility to change the conditions that have led to these results. In order to improve, we have to know our Soldiers better and our Soldiers have to trust us more. Accordingly, I believe this counseling initiative can be decisive in both regards. From Brigade Commander to Team Leader we have to improve in our counseling skills. We have to execute counseling more consistently. We have to shorten the time it takes us to get to know new Soldiers in our formations. We have to better facilitate knowledge transfer between leaders as Soldiers transition between units. All of this has to be done while respecting the privacy concerns of our Soldiers concerning the information we gather as engaged leaders.

Many leaders will receive this guide and ask why it is necessary. They will say, “I don’t need a guide to know my Soldiers. I do that already.” However, the results of our engaged leadership, as a whole, indicate we don’t do that well enough. Through counseling I believe we can clearly communicate to our Soldiers that we care about them; earn their trust, encourage them to seek help, and demonstrate that seeking help is a strength which is essential for us to be our best and Willing and Able.

Using this guide, I expect 555th Engineer Brigade leaders to achieve the following guidance:

- Leaders will **prioritize engaged leadership** through daily interactions and formal counseling, and do so at the expense of METL training, when necessary.
- Leaders will actively gather critical information from personnel documents and associated agencies to “connect the dots” of their Soldiers’ lives. **This effort is decisive in identifying risk and setting conditions for that Soldier’s success.**
- Leaders will go beyond the superficial discussion that too often characterizes “counseling.” They will **ask hard, often uncomfortable questions** seeking information and answers that will improve—and possibly save—the lives of their subordinates.
- Leaders will use the Army’s Composite Risk Management Worksheet (DA Form 7566) as the primary tool to document identified risk, develop risk mitigation measures, and develop an implementation plan. Every Soldier will have an individual CRM Worksheet.
- First Sergeants will be personally responsible for Soldier transitions within the formation, for both Company-to-Company and intra-Brigade/intra-post moves. Managing these transitions, especially with medium and high risk Soldiers is critical to mitigating risk.
- Finally, leaders will compliment the effort to reduce risk with a corresponding campaign to **inspire Soldiers to live the Army Values**. Leaders will seek, identify, and emphasize strengths, help Soldiers achieve personal and professional goals, and continue to display an example worthy of emulation.



It's a crossword puzzle!
HINT: EACH ANSWER
CAN BE FOUND INSIDE
THE NEWSLETTER!

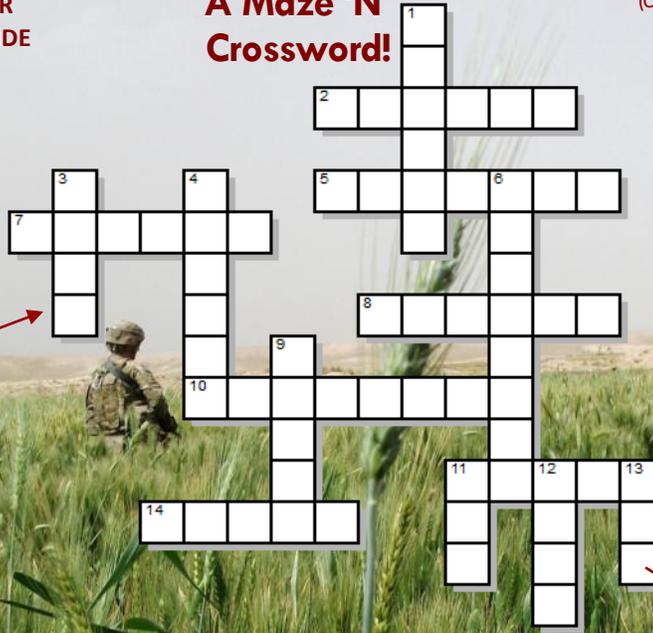
Triple Nickel Presents...
**A Maze 'N'
Crossword!**

(Maze: Ages 1-8)
(Crossword: Ages 8 and up)

It's also a maze!
(Yes, a ridiculously easy one.)

**Help the Triple
Nickel engineers
get to their base,
the red castle!**

Follow the white boxes.
Start here



About this Photo: Pvt. Joshua Thompson, 541st Sapper Co., Task Force SAW, conducts dismantled operations as part of a deliberate clearance operation, April 26. TF SAW route clearance patrols work to protect coalition forces and Afghan civilians from IEDs. (By 1st Lt. Christopher Wagner, TF SAW Public Affairs)

Finish. You've returned
to the base. Great job!

ACROSS

- 2. 203rd Corps Engineer ____
- 4. Makes gadgets for James Bond
- 5. Extending an Airfield
- 7. ____ Airfield
- 8. Survey & ____ Detachment
- 10. 122nd Engineer Battalion
- 11. Camp John ____
- 14. Wrote most articles in here

DOWN

- 1. Memorial Day
- 3. Triple Nickel is ____ way there
- 4. Afghan Sgt. Abdul ____
- 6. Afghan ____ conference
- 9. HHC commander
- 11. Send stories and photos to ____
- 12. ____ Gym
- 13. Afghans finished building a ____

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 OEFKRISISHOTLINE@afghan.swa.army.mil.

Remember, you aren't alone!

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



Brigade Headquarters & Headquarters Company (HHC)



*Triple Nickel Family,
Greetings from Bagram Airfield.*

As I pen this note, it is the 131st day of an estimated 270 day deployment. We quickly approach the halfway point. This moment marks a great accomplishment for the Brigade staff and Company. We have journeyed quite a ways from the staff training in Grafenwoer, Germany, the proving grounds of Afghanistan for OEF '13; from the quiet hours of staff exercises to the grinding hours of targeting cycles; from the comfort of loved ones' company to the frustration of distant communication.

The unit has much of which to be proud. Maj. Megan Meinholz and the J1 section has processed over 2000 awards since our Transfer of Authority (TOA) ceremony in February. The J3 section has provided coverage and oversight for 160,000 miles of cleared theater routes in the same time period. Maj. Rian Carter and the J4 sections has purchased, identified, turned-in, or reconstituted millions of dollars in Government property. This is just a sample of the amazing work being done.

At this mid-tour point, a time which also happens to be when the nation celebrates Memorial Day, I ask that we keep not only the fallen in mind, but their loved ones as well. According to Army Field manuals, the smallest unit in the U.S. Army is an infantry fire team, the building block of higher echelons of command and control. However, this fact fails to account for an important reality; the quintessential unit in the Army, the building block of a healthy life, is the military family. The NCO Corps may well be the backbone of our Army, but the military family is certainly the heart, which pumps vitality into the veins of our professional careers and our personal life. I ask that we all join arms, in BAF and in JBLM, and, like the front lines of a Phalanx, encourage one another to stand strong. We must all "take a much deserved knee" to rededicate ourselves fully to closing out what has been so far an extraordinarily successful deployment.

*"Strength in Numbers!"
-Capt. Matthew D. Pride
HHC Cdr., Phalanx 6*



HHC held a mid-deployment celebration May 26, but began with a tribute to the fallen, as part of Memorial Day observances. Soldiers later enjoyed dinner and a bonfire at their 'Engineer Castle' pavilion.



CLEAR - HOLD - BUILD

ARMY ENGINEERS CONSTRUCT A COMBAT OUTPOST IN AFGHANISTAN IN SUPPORT OF COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

FROM THE PAINTING BY PATRICK J. HASKETT

UNITED STATES ARMY ENGINEER REGIMENT

Sales of artwork benefit the 555 Able Soldier and Family

The 555 Able Soldier & Family Fund helps support our Triple Nickel Soldiers and their Families during their times of greatest need, assisting those deployed and Families of our Fallen troops.

The Able Fund recently commissioned world-renowned combat artist Patrick Haskett to create a **print titled "Clear-Hold-Build."** This print, shown above, depicts the 864th Engineer Battalion constructing a combat outpost in Afghanistan.

This print is being offered at \$80, with proceeds going directly to the Able Fund.

More information, including how to order, is available at 555soldierfund.com.



Family Shout Outs

*Thank you Families for your
love and continued support*



Photo by 1st Lt. Jon Flowers

To PFC Dexter Marable, 585th EN CO, 864th EN BN...
I'm counting down the days until you come home! I love you
and I'm so proud of you! Love, Hannah

To SSG Timothy Bennett, 557th EN CO, 864th EN BN:
We love you, miss you, and are SO incredibly proud of you!
Love, Your Girls JBLM, WA

To my son SW3 Carlos Aldana, NMCB 15:
We love and miss you and are praying for you. I'm counting
the days till we see you again. Stay safe!
— From Estela Aldana

To ENS Matthew Wanamaker, JTF Triple Nickel,
We love you and are so proud of you!
— From Kevin, Sharon, Judi, and Ryan.

To CSM Kevin Bryan, JTF Triple Nickel,
Sending a shout out to my Dad, Kevin Bryan. We all love and
miss you so much Dad but continue to be proud of who you
are and what you represent each and every day. Can't wait to
see you soon, keep our love close to your heart and stay safe.
Love you to heaven and back,
Chelsy and Family

To SSG Matthew Hernandez, 618th ESC,
We miss you and love you! Be safe!
— From Cherie

To Lt. Tod Neidt, NMCB 15, Alfa Co., Awesome father,
husband, and Seabee. We're proud of you!
— From Lisa

To EO1 Marty Gill, NMCB 15 ALFA Co. Moline, Illinois
Sending big love and prayers to my new husband of just nine
months, Marty Gill!! I am anxiously waiting your return so we
can start our new life together!! XOXO
— From Susie

To Capt. SG, who is always "Fired Up!" Love you!!!

To SGT Peter St. Laurence, 557 EN CO:
We're so proud of you Peter, and we miss you and can't wait
for these months to go by so we can have you home with
LeeAnn. Hope everything is going well for you over there!!!
Love, Carol and Frank Hajbucki

To PFC John Shannon, 585 EN CO:
We are so proud of you, Jack. Although we miss you, we
understand your commitment to our county. Please stay safe
and come home whole and healthy. Love, Mom, Dad & Adam



Photo by Master Sgt. Bryan Hinzman, Task Force Comet

FOB Kunduz – Soldiers from 321st Eng. Co. stand atop their vehicles during preparations for a morning route clearance mission in late April.



Photo by Master Sgt. Bryan Hinzman, Task Force Comet

Camp John Pratt – Soldiers with 377th Engineer Company construct culverts to complete the drainage plan on base.

Around the Triple Nickel

This past month



Photo courtesy of Task Force White Eagle

Ghazni Province — Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 15 pour concrete as they work to extend an airfield for coalition forces.



Photo by Capt. Spencer Garrison

Bagram Airfield — Soldiers from HHC, 555th Eng. Bde., form an assembly line as they relocate pallets of water, May 24. The unit is halfway done the deployment.



Photo by Capt. Spencer Garrison

Bagram Airfield – Soldiers with Task Force Prowler stand in formation after receiving their end-of-tour awards earlier this month.



Triple Nickel Survey & Design Detachment Transfer-of-Authority

Bagram Airfield



The 40th S&D Detachment officially completed their deployment May 17, transferring to the 10th Detachment all responsibilities as JTF Triple Nickel's survey and design experts. The 40th were presented their End-of-Tour Awards by deputy brigade commander Lt. Col. Torrey DiCiro, followed by remarks from the brigade construction officer, as well as the outgoing and incoming detachment commanders. Welcome to the team, 10th. And job well done, 40th!

Photos by Capt. Spencer Garrison, JTF Triple Nickel PAO

Chaplain's Closing, Maj. Dawud Agbere

Triple Nickel Family,

Memorial Day is a day when our nation comes together to remember, reflect, and honor the life of those who have given their all in service to our country. As is customary with this day, wreaths will be laid and there will be lofty speeches. There will also be parades in our cities and towns and graves of Soldiers will be decorated with flags and flowers, among other activities, to honor those who gave their lives responding to the call of duty.

These communal observances of Memorial Day are important because they remind us of the price we paid for our liberties, even as they help keep the memory and sacrifices of our fallen giants alive in our nation's collective memory.

Yet I think those of us in uniform can do more to honor the memory of our comrades, and I believe there is no nobler way to doing so than by upholding the dignity of the military institution they bequeathed to us. And I think that, given the ongoing moral challenges facing our military as an institution, there is no better place to begin at this critical time than by rededicating ourselves to honorable service, which was what those great men and women exemplified with their sacrifices.

I strongly believe we will truly be honoring their memory when we recommit ourselves, individually and collectively, to the noble values that define our profession and to rid our ranks of purveyors of sexual violence and undesirable behaviors. Their presence in our formations does tremendous injury to the legacy of our fallen.



Remembering our Fallen

2013

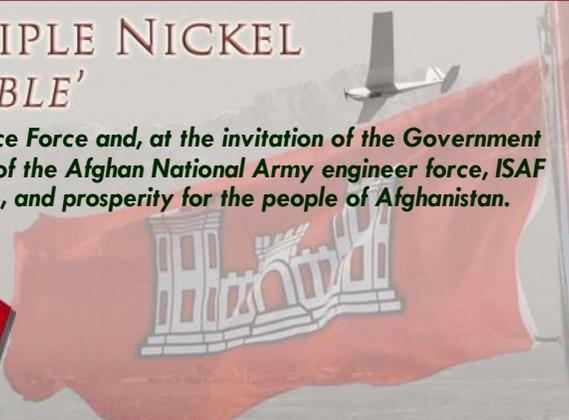
JTF Triple Nickel, Afghanistan

Sgt. Tristan Wade



JOINT TASK FORCE TRIPLE NICKEL 'WILLING & ABLE'

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

 [Facebook.com/JointTaskForceTripleNickel](https://www.facebook.com/JointTaskForceTripleNickel)

We are the Triple Nickel...

The 555th Engineer Brigade, currently serving as the Theater Engineer Brigade in Afghanistan, with about 5,000 Engineer Service Members operating across the country. Our pride is each unit comprising our Joint Task Force—each with their own storied histories, some dating to the Civil War. This team of teams serves as a diverse, capable force that lives out our motto, "Willing and Able!"

555



Questions or comments? Email
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