



# THE GRIDLEY GLOBE



March 2011 Edition

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**Above:** Sgt. 1st Class Jose Rodriguez, a medical NCO with HHC 1249th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Gridley, Oregon Army National Guard renders first aid to an Afghan male's leg during a visit to a village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. Rodriguez, along with the Task Force Gridley Physician's Assistant, 1st Lt. Ken Craver, were able to provide first aid for minor injuries and hand out medicine to Afghan villagers in need on 9 March. *Photo by 1st Sgt. Matthew McHugh*

## **IT TAKES A VILLAGE** *Story by Staff Sgt. Anna Rutherford*

St. Francis of Assisi once said "Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance." This is the adage which emanated from the various missions Task Forces Gridley and Red Currahee have been making to one village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

Soldiers from Task Force Gridley, Oregon and Nebraska Army National Guard, and soldiers from Task Force Red Currahee, 101st Airborne Division, have planned and coordinated various projects to help a village, high in the mountains of Paktika. One mission in early March brought this Afghan village humanitarian aid to combat the drastic toll the harsh winter weather had taken on its agriculture. This humanitarian aid came in the form of large sacks of wheat, flour, rice, beans, tea and other items delivered via Chinook helicopters courtesy of the 101st Airborne Division, Task Force Currahee. The Chinooks dropped large nets into the village containing the humanitarian aid, as well as large sacks of concrete in preparation for a dam project, managed by 2nd Lt. Ray Jones, 1249 Engineer Battalion, Task Force Gridley, Oregon Army National Guard.

"It's been a challenge to design this dam," said Jones.

*{Story continued on Page 2}*

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE *{Story continued from front page}*

“It’s going to be very rewarding to see it complete and functional.” Jones works as a member of the Task Force Gridley Civil Military Operations team. Civil Military Operations works with various civilian, government and other entities in order to help the local population through sustainable skills and projects.

The dam will provide long-term sustainability for the village by providing an easier way to irrigate agriculture. Along with the dam, there will also be other projects, which will provide the village with access to long-term and stable resources.

This particular mission brought together members of the 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, Task Force Red Currahee, Task Force Gridley Operations personnel, medics and civil military operations.

On a lighter note, Soldiers were also able to hand out toys to the village children during the visit, which delighted both the village adults and children alike. The village served lunch for all the Soldiers, allowing cultures to come together over a common element: food.



**Left:** Task Force Gridley Civil Military Operations Officer 2Lt. Ray Jones explains a diagram drawing of the proposed dam to Afghan villagers via an interpreter. The dam will enable the village to alleviate irrigation problems and assist in future agricultural projects.

**Below left:** Afghan children enjoy small wooden toys delivered by Soldiers of Task Force Gridley.

**Below right:** Soldiers from 1-506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, Task Force Red Currahee and Soldiers of the 1249th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Gridley sit down to an Afghan meal in a village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. The Soldiers delivered concrete and humanitarian aid with the help of 101st Airborne Division aviation assets.



## THE BIG RED - 623 ENGINEER COMPANY



As the month of March progresses, the warmer temperatures are starting to arrive. Although spring is a sign of relief, not even the cold temps and snow of the previous month could slow down the troops of the 623rd Engineer Company. With weather conditions preventing some missions, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon went back to focusing on FOB Sharana improvements. K-spans were a top priority while the troops were available, and the Battalion put in a request to have some of their offices remodeled in support of operations. The winter weather conditions also prompted 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon to add some amenities to the FOB Sharana weapons range. An awning over the firing positions will prevent the troops from having to lie in the mud, and an ammo shack will also double as a warming shack when temperatures drop below freezing. Second Platoon was also impacted by the winter weather while at Orgun-E (OE). Drainage of melting snow proved to be poorly planned. One of the two B-Huts being constructed required innovative thinking by the leadership to prevent a sinking footer. 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was also tasked with a very important mission here on FOB Sharana. The material staging yard (Bill of Materials yard) supplies material to multiple FOBs in the area. Remodeling, organizing, and accountability have been a main focus for 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. The Soldiers call it the “ACE Hardware” away from home. Third



**Above left:** Soldiers of First Platoon, 623 Engineer Company, Task Force Gridley, work on the rifle range on FOB Sharana.

**Above right:** Snow melts inside a 2nd Platoon B-Hut during construction at Orgun-E.

**Below:** Tactical Operations Center project with tiered desks at OE courtesy of 3rd Platoon, 623rd Engineer Company, Task Force Gridley.

Platoon has had its own tribulations with the weather. The muddy conditions have prevented much progress on the fencing around the detention facility. So the Platoon shifted its focus to the mission at OE and living connexes. At OE they have nearly completed the construction of a Battalion Tactical Operations Center (TOC) which is only one of three buildings. With a short timeline and limited personnel, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon was able to complete 10 connexes in a matter of days.

## A (FSC) 1249 ENGINEER COMPANY

Congratulations go to CPT Holmes on his recent promotion.

The short 28-day month of February flew by for the Personal Security Detail (PSD) “Misfits” as the team welcomed Sgt. 1st Class Fritsch as their new Platoon Sergeant. They went out for 10 missions during the month. PSD is excited that its role has evolved into working primarily with the Civil Military Operations Office, which has offered up some outstanding opportunities to witness first-hand the Afghan people par-

ticipating in infrastructure and community development projects. PSD had the opportunity to take 27 personnel along on missions during February and will be actively seeking volunteers to assist in future missions. Training is the key for the PSD and February was no exception as we were able to execute a crew-serve weapons class and range, gunnery lanes and recovery drills.

Maintenance platoon is putting in long hours of continuous effort to accomplish their primary mission—to ensure equipment throughout the battalion is fully

mission capable. Maintenance has already completed 51 jobs to date, plus 16 welder jobs and 20 communications jobs. The platoon is also providing gunners and drivers to support other companies and contractors when requested.

Distro Platoon—a.k.a. Distro Demons—have been busy since landing at FOB Sharana. Staff Sgt. Darrow has taken the Platoon Sergeant’s role when Sgt. 1st Class Fritsch was transferred to PSD. The Scorpions team, headed up by Sgt. Devereaux, has



**Above left:** The PSD Platoon of A (FSC) 1249 Engineer Battalion shoots various weapons at the crew-serve weapons range in Paktika Province.

**Above right:** A (FSC) 1249 Engineer Commander Cpt. Matthew Holmes is pinned the rank of Cpt. by his brother PFC Romitt.

**Right:** PSD Platoon Leader 1st Lt. Jay O’Connor stands security in a village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan on 17 March.



pumped fuel at more than 4 sites, and their responsibilities increase daily. The Hurricanes team, once headed up by Sgt. Reyna, has been whittled down to just one person. Sgt. Reyna is now shadowing Cpl. Massey in all transportation missions as he learns the ropes. The Titans team is headed up by Cpl. Massey, and not a day goes by that a training opportunity does not arise where she teaches something new—from changing 916 tires, fixing trailers, to backing up trucks with loads. To date, we have done over 25 separate missions, given away over 3500 gallons of POL, pumped over 1500 gallons of fuel and almost all personnel have been outside the wire. No matter the mission, The Demons are always prepared to move.

## THE GOLD MINE—649 ENGINEER COMPANY

Wow, where did February go? Another month down and 1st Platoon, 649 Engineer Company, finds itself deeply involved in a wide variety of projects. Soldiers are working hard to improve the quality of life for other here in our area of operations. FOB and COP security and expansion projects, road improvements and our favorite: drainage projects. All of these add up to good work that we know will make life better for the short term as well as long term.

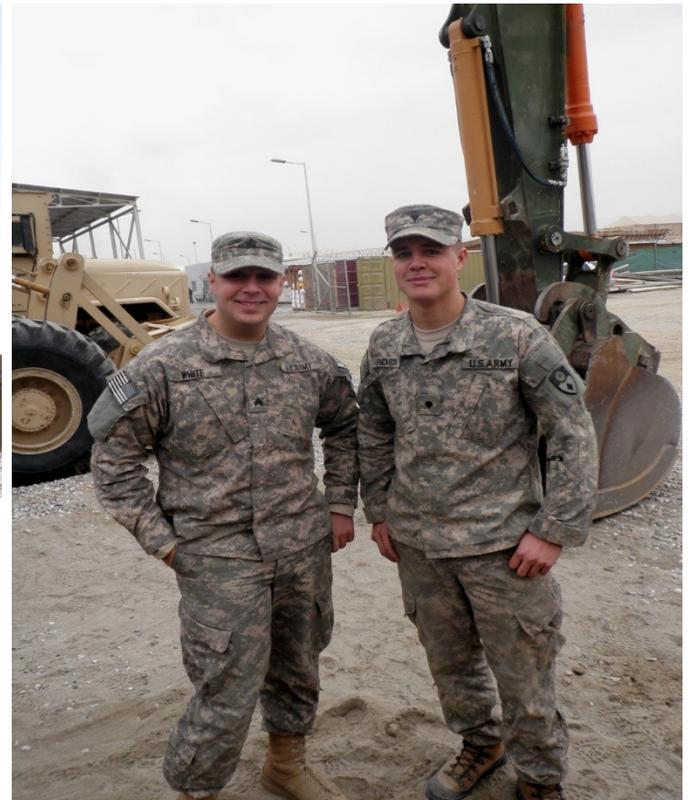
We consider ourselves very fortunate to have joined forces with the 1430th Engineer Company; they are truly a great bunch of folks. From Day One four units meshed and have worked together beyond anyone's expectations, I know that we were all a little worried being away from the rest of the 649th for

this deployment, and it has been a tremendous relief to be able to work alongside a friendly and welcoming group of professionals like the 1430th. The only downside is that quite a few of us have picked up a slight Michigan accent, so we may all come back talking a little funny, dont'cha know? Yeah, you betcha!

In closing, just let me say that we all miss our families and loved ones tremendously and we value all the letters and packages so very, very much. Those little touches from home can really brighten our day and make this all a little more bearable. Shenanigans!



**Above:** Staff Sgt. Prescott of 649 Engineer Company, operates a grader.



**Right:** Sgt. White and Spc. Erickson of 1/649 Engineer Company pose for a quick photo during work.

**THE DAWG’S GROWL—877 ENGINEER COMPANY**



**Left:** Sgt Roberts and PFC Knight plot points in preparation for the land navigation portion of Day 1 of the Task Force Gridley Soldier and NCO of the Quarter Competition.

**Right:** PFC Knight shuffles at a brisk pace on the 5-mile road march portion of the Task Force Gridley Soldier and NCO of the Quarter Competition.



**JOKERS WILD—231 SURVEY & DESIGN**

The 231<sup>st</sup> has surveyed an area adjacent to the Bill of Materials (BOM) yard in order to move certain operations that are currently being carried out in the yard. Currently construction of towers and other pre-fabricated structures are being built in the clam shell tents within the BOM compound. These construction operations need to be moved to free valuable storage space within the yard. For this to happen, we have surveyed an area for facilities to be placed so that construction can continue and space can be gained by the BOM facility.

Other projects are also ongoing at various locations. An area of one FOB was surveyed for a helicopter landing zone (HLZ). Also a fifty foot antenna tower was designed by brigade engineers and drawn by SGT Laroussini, of the 231st for construction by the 623<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Company, Nebraska National Guard, for placement on FOB Sharana.



**Above left:** Spc. Norton of the 231st Survey and Design surveys a project to assist with space issues on FOB Sharana.

**Above right:** Sgt. Arwood of the 231st Survey and Design marks a stake indicating a corner of “Bridge Park” on FOB Sharana. Bridge Park will be a compound on Sharana that will store and stage pre-fabricated bridges

## THE SALMON RUN—HHC 1249 ENGINEERS

### S-4 LOGISTICS



Last month I neglected to mention Sgt. Kevin Phelps, another valuable member of our team. His duties as the S-4 “COR”, or Contracting Officer’s Representative, keep him busy with...you guessed it, contracts! From purchasing flags to renewing the contracts for our civilian vehicles fleet, he is gainfully occupied. Kevin has also earned a reputation for being a good “scrounger,” a vital skill in any military operation.

As for the rest of the section, everyone has settled into a routine of one sort or another. Lack of quality sleep, or ailments of various sorts still plague us all one way or another. The section has been very busy with transferring equipment from one unit to another, this is a very simple way of describing a process with many moving pieces, the paperwork being possibly the easiest of it all. This current project will keep everyone busy for the next couple of months.

The weather has also given us several days of uninterrupted sunshine, and everyone is in a good mood and enjoying the warmth. Coincidentally, this has also triggered many remodeling projects, including two satellite dish installations for the majority of the S-4 section. This will hopefully provide a better link to communicate with everyone at home.

As for our two soldiers at Bagram, Staff Sgt. Nason was able to visit the section in SHARANA to observe our operation and see how he can help facilitate equipment moves back and forth between the various locations.

This raps up our “SITREP” for the second update. Next month we should be able to include some pictures again. Hello to all and time is flying by. Send more mail to everyone.....

### THE AGAPE SHOP



Is it March already? Looking at the weather outside today, Sunny and 60, it definitely does feel like Spring. With the nicer weather we have also started seeing more activity with people around the FOB. Seems like warmer temperatures brings out the physical training shorts and shirts!

As I mentioned last month, we are blessed to have a great chapel within walking distance of all of our activities, and we currently have worship opportunities for soldiers five times on Sundays. I preach at the General Protestant service in the morning, followed by the Catholic Service led by our Catholic Chaplain. In the afternoon we have a Gospel Service, Latter Day Saints Service, and finish off the day with a Contemporary Christian Service in the evening. Cpt. Quijano is leading great worship at both our morning and evening services. In the morning Maj. Shreves joins in on the piano. Sgt. Lambert is on the vocals at both services, with Pvt. 1st Class Martinez additional in the eve-

nings. Spc. Polley lends his technical expertise running the sound board as well. Thank you all!

Spring has also brought on a steady supply of items for the Agape Store. Thank you to everyone who has been sending us care packages. Soldiers come from all over the FOB and it is great to have many items for them to head back with. In addition, we have been sending some care packages of our own to our units at other FOBs so that they too will feel the love from home. Please keep them coming as we have many needs to fill. We try and update our needs list as much as possible, so please feel free to contact me at [richard.barnes@afghan.swa.army.mil](mailto:richard.barnes@afghan.swa.army.mil) and I can send you what we need. May God bless you and keep you safe during this deployment!

— Chaplain Rick Barnes

## Civil Military Operations



The 1249<sup>th</sup> inherited a project called the Center for Engineering Excellence (CEE) right here in Sharana City. It serves as a vocational training hub for Paktika Province, primarily focusing on vertical and horizontal engineering such as carpentry and road building. Currently the facility needs major repairs and upgrades. With all things in life, change eventually occurs. Our contribution will essentially transform the CEE into a vocational/agricultural college. Afghanistan is in desperate need of new technologies and agricultural training. That is why this particular project is so important.

These additions will include courses in construction and maintenance skills; various aspects of engineering; all manner of horticulture/apiculture/viticulture to include trellising, root cellars, underground greenhouses - roughly 9000 apricot, apple, and walnut trees will be planted, 2000 grape cuttings will also be planted; Dari, Pashto, English; veterinary medicine; wood-working/carpentry; information technology systems and various other trades.

The courses will be taught by Afghans with soldiers providing technical assistance using the model of a vocational college in America. Once the facility is up to speed with training materials it is simple to get classes started. This also gives us an unparalleled degree of flexibility to add courses as the need arises.

One of the biggest challenges in a country like Afghanistan is sustainability. The key to a project such as this is to develop a curriculum supported by the local and provincial Afghan government and sought after by the local people. Initially courses will be free to tailor the instruction. As the courses progress, all students will pay a portion of the instructional fee, roughly 25 percent. This covers cost and maintenance of the facility. Eventually that percentage will increase. What is unique about this facility is the valuable horticultural crops. These teaching orchards and crops will produce an ample supply fruit which in turn can be sold fresh or dried. Fresh commodities are in short supply in this province.

Another provision in this project is mentoring the Director of Agriculture. It is important not to build a parallel institution that competes with the fledgling Afghan government, but one that enhances it. Throughout this mentoring process their extension agents will be trained by the Agrimax trainers side by side. The key here is technology transfer. Afghan agriculture is far behind what is used in America, hence the low crop yields and storage losses. This project will accomplish that goal in this district. The vocational training will enhance critically needed specialties. Once local buy-in occurs, the project will flourish.



Left: A CH-47 Chinook helicopter from 101st Airborne Division, Task Force Currahee, hovers above a sling load to allow a rigger to attach it to the helicopter on 21 March in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. The sling load contained concrete and humanitarian aid, courtesy of the 1249th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Gridley, in order to assist villagers in building a dam and providing sustenance after a harsh winter took a toll on the village's agriculture.



**Above:** Task Force Gridley Civil Military Officer Capt. Ryan Babcock smiles and moves out of the way, while children swarm Task Force Gridley Soldiers for soccer balls. The soccer balls were delivered to the children in a village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan on 17 March.

**Below:** Task Force Gridley Physician Assistant 1st Lt. Ken Craver explains the dosage for a medicine via an interpreter in a village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan on 17 March. Villagers spoke to Task Force Gridley soldiers about minor ailments and injuries.

