



THE GRIDLEY GLOBE



April 2011 Edition

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Above: Governor Mohibullah Samim of Paktika Province, Afghanistan, together with a Task Force Gridley interpreter, takes the podium to speak to a crowded tent of Paktika government officials and a mixture of coalition forces for the opening ceremony of the Sharana City Orphanage. The orphanage was a project began by Task Force Builder in 2010 and was finished in the spring of 2011 to house and educate orphans of Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND *Story by Staff Sgt. Anna Rutherford*

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Submit your story to the Gridley Globe: anna.rutherford@afghan.swa.army.mil !
- The Gridley Globe is now available online at: www.oregon.gov/OMD Look on the right side of the page under "Newsletters"

Part of The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word "orphan" as "one deprived of some protection or advantage." However, the Soldiers of Task Forces Builder, Red Dragon, Gridley and Hammer were bound and determined not to let Merriam-Webster's description define the orphans of Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

The Sharana City Orphanage began two deployments ago by Task Force Builder. The project is what is known as a "legacy project," or project that spans more than one military unit's deployment. Thus construction on the orphanage continued during Task Force Red Dragon, 1092 Engineer Battalion, West Virginia National Guard's deployment and was finished during the spring of 2011 by Task Forces Gridley and Hammer alongside a strong partnership with the Provincial Social Labor Director, Shadhi Khan.

"This orphanage fills a critical need in the Afghan community," said Capt. Ryan Babcock.

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LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND *{Story continued from front page}*

Several provincial directors from Paktika Province, Soldiers from Task Forces Gridley and Hammer and Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Paktika were in attendance for the grand opening on 25 April.

“This effort, by the provincial government, in which we were allowed to assist in a small way, is a landmark commitment by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GiRoA) and the people of Paktika,” said Lt. Col. James Cline of Task Force Hammer, during a speech at the grand opening ceremony.

The orphanage, with several rooms for housing and classes, is located in the capital city of Paktika and will be open to male orphans coming from all around the province. Male orphans will be housed, fed and educated in the new structure.



Left: Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GiRoA) officials and Lt. Col. Kevin Dial, commander of Task Force Gridley, 1249 Engineer Battalion, Oregon National Guard distribute backpacks to orphans in Paktika Province, Afghanistan on 25 April. The backpacks contained school supplies courtesy of West Salem High School in Oregon, wooden toys from the Woodworker’s Club in Lakeland, Fla. and candy from Operation Shoebox in Belleview, Fla.

Below right: Staff Sgt. Chris Herndon of Task Force Gridley, 623 Engineer Company, Nebraska Army National Guard poses with school supply recipients at the opening of the Sharana City Orphanage in Paktika Province, Afghanistan on 25 April. The backpacks contained school supplies courtesy of West Salem High School in Oregon, wooden toys from the Woodworker’s Club in Lakeland, Fla. and candy from Operation Shoebox in Belleview, Fla.

Below: Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Polley of Task Force Gridley, 1249 Engineer Battalion, Oregon Army National Guard and Task Force Hammer Chief of Staff, 176 Engineer Brigade, Texas Army National Guard, sit down for the luncheon after the opening of the Sharana City Orphanage in Paktika Province, Afghanistan on 25 April. The orphanage was a project began by Task Force Builder in 2010 and finished by members of Task Forces Red Dragon, Gridley and Hammer in the spring of 2011. It will house and educate orphans in Paktika Province.





THE BIG RED - 623 ENGINEER COMPANY

As the 623rd Engineer Co. reaches the halfway mark in our deployment we look back at a multitude of completed projects and ahead towards new endeavors. With each project we complete, we take pride in the fact we are making a better environment for other Soldiers to work and live in.

Due to the growth of our hard-working reputation, the last month has been very busy. The Soldiers in our unit have stepped up to the challenge of a more demanding work schedule.

First Platoon has been working on several projects at multiple locations. Some of their completed projects include erecting a Large Area Maintenance Shelter-Aviation (LAMS-A), improvements to the chapel, an enclosed bus stop building, a range facility, and buildings for force protection equipment.

They continue to improve Soldiers living standards by building several B-Huts on FOB Sharana and various other locations. They are currently working on a large-scale project constructing a 40' by 80' building that will be a Joint Service Support Center.

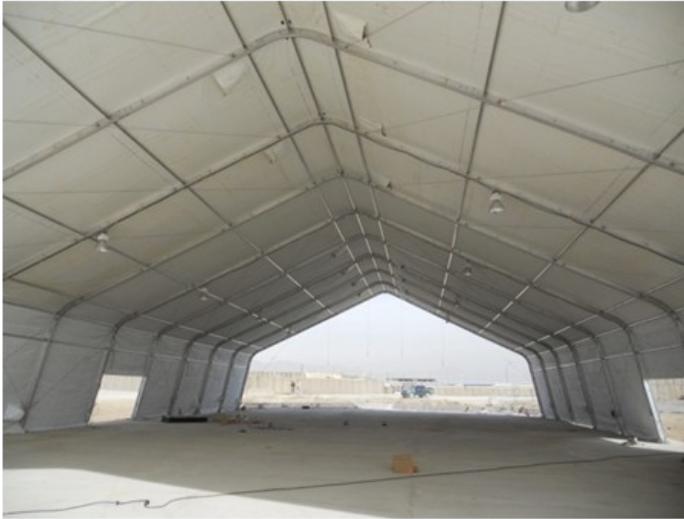
Second Platoon has been working on a large-scale project with organizing the Bill of Materials (BOM) Yard. They begin each day with 8 -12 Soldiers work on sorting, organizing, and taking inventory of large amounts of construction materials.

Every specialty military occupational specialty (MOS) in 2nd Platoon has been used in the field. The electricians have been on-the-go for the last month moving from FOB to FOB troubleshooting and repairing the electrical of existing structures. The carpenters in the platoon have stayed very busy running a pre-fabrication shop for the unit making a variety of different materials to help ease the workload of the unit. The plumbers have been fixing existing latrine and shower facilities, and constructing new ones. Second Platoon is also building a pre-fabrication barn for future use, built two communication towers, and constructed two B-huts. They will soon start construction on a Battalion Aid Station at another location.

Third Platoon has been on the move with the completion of a Tactical Operations Center, Fusion Cell, Living Quarters, and the Field Detention Site. Some of their current projects include a communications tower, Joint Service Support Center, latrine and shower facility, and four B-Huts. Their electricians have been moving from one location to another re-wiring existing facilities and connecting buildings to prime power. Spec. Erb received an Army Achievement Medal (AAM) for his electrical work at FOB Orgun-E in a job well done.

(Story and photos continued on page 4)

THE BIG RED - 623 ENGINEER COMPANY (Cont.'d)



Above left: A Large Area Maintenance Shelter-Aviation (LAMS-A) stands ready for foreign military forces to use. The shelter was constructed by Soldiers from First Platoon, 623rd Engineer Company.

Above: The Bill of Materials (BOM) Yard has seen much progress in the way of organization and inventory thanks to the Soldiers of Second Platoon, 623rd Engineer Company. The BOM Yard acts as a central supply yard for units on the FOB, providing valuable construction and engineering equipment and supplies.

Left: A communications tower stands high in the air, constructed by Soldiers of the 623rd Engineer Company.

THE GOLD MINE—649 ENGINEER COMPANY

Our first mission in coordination with the Afghan National Army (ANA) engineers was a big success. The mission was to support the ANA engineers in completing road improvements to one of the key routes in our area of operations (AO). Despite the numerous parties involved, language barriers and lack of equipment, the project was completed ahead of schedule with improvements to the route that benefit both coalition force and local national mobility. Overcoming these challenges required much coordination, proactive interaction with the ANA, and US support at all levels. The primary factors for success were the ANA engineers' worth ethic and capability.

The scope of work consisted of eight work sites along the route that were impairing coalition and local national traffic due to IED damages, washouts and seasonal wadi flows. The first step was an assessment of each site with US and ANA leadership to determine the scope of work and material/equipment needs at each site. The ANA engineer commander determined the best course of action at each site with input from the US engineers and planned the same methods and materials that would have used in an US-led project. The assessment was promising in that it showed a glimpse of the ANA engineers' capability to plan work, but there was still significant doubt about the quality of their operators and equipment.

Following the assessment, there were several weeks of planning to make sure that all resources were in place including security, equipment, materials and US engineer support. Sgt. 1st Class Scott Nyquist of FSC 1249th Engineer Battalion was embedded with the ANA at their base to make sure that the required materials and equipment were prepared to mobilize each day. The first day of work was on two of the easiest work sites, but the ANA operators seemed to be competent and capable on all equipment except the motor grader, which is one of the

most difficult pieces of equipment to operate. Successive sites proved their capability as grades were raised with fill and compacted, gravel was placed and spread and drainage efforts were improved. In total, more than 8 miles of route were improved and several stretches of vicious craters filled and smoothed. Throughout the process, Soldiers of the 649th Engineer Company trained the ANA operators and provided input on means and methods. Overall, the work was completed to a high level of quality and in a timely manner, resulting in increased mobility along a critical route.

Another benefit of this project was that locals were able to see the ANA taking the lead with the US in a supporting role. This image gives credit to the capability of the Afghan people. This image also humanizes the US Soldiers who are usually only seen through concertina wire, barriers or the windows of mine-resistant armor protected vehicles. Seeing US engineers breaking for lunch and eating alongside their ANA counterparts seemed to please the locals driving by and produced an unusual amount of grins and waving.

Leading up to the project, I was doubtful of the ANA's ability, but after seeing them in action, I am confident that they can effectively execute engineering mission. I believe that, moving forward, the ANA engineers will be a productive engineering unit that can be assigned independent missions. Having the ANA engineers as an actionable element will reduce the load on US elements and help develop the ANA toward being a reliable security force capable of providing security for the Afghan people.

(photos on page 8)

THE DAWG'S GROWL—877 ENGINEER CO.

Story by Spec. Juan J. Gonzalez

Every day that passes gets us one step closer to home, and it's amazing how fast the time is flying by. Surprisingly enough it feels like we just got here yesterday, and yet we have already accomplished several projects, and 21 soldiers have started their R&R leave with some already returning. There is so much going on that it is hard to keep track of the days. Needless to say, the 877th Engineers have been busy.

First Platoon has been stretched thin, but has risen to the challenge. Under the tremendous leadership of 2nd Lt. Cooper and Sgt. 1st Class George Parker, along with 10 of the First Platoon Soldiers and two personnel from maintenance, they recently completed an expansion for Combat Outpost (COP) Charkh, which took two months and quite a bit of ingenuity. Back on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Shank and under the tutelage of Staff Sgt. Tracy Rapp, Sgt. Beaver & Sgt. Patterson, another group of First Platoon Soldiers have also completed a perimeter of Hesco barriers for military working dogs to train and live. This group of soldiers also fixed and filled Hescos for the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) site to ensure that they can continue their daily operations without the worry of unauthorized traffic through their facility. Another group of determined Soldiers led by Sgt. Fowler also created a holding site within a detention center. It was extremely slow and tedious due to the space available to work, but these dedicated soldiers pulled it off.

After much anticipation the mine season has begun. Second Platoon is now putting their extensive training to the test and passing with flying colors. Under the leadership and watchful eye of 1st Lt. Stokes and Sgt. 1st Class Lowery, Second Platoon is representing the 877th at Bagram Airfield proudly. In one of their first missions, their skills were tested and their training was deemed successful. These well trained and dedicated Soldiers were able to provide the necessary armored mechanical support with various mechanical assets including a bulldozer and excavator. Base lanes were cut through the area using the bulldozer, with the excavator being used to remove the large concrete blocks and other building debris. In another mission, Second Platoon Soldiers assisted in the discovery of a warhead in the debris pile which

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Above: Soldiers from 877 Engineer Company discover evidence of children at play in mine-ridden areas during a patrol in Logar Province, Afghanistan.

THE DAWG'S GROWL—877 ENGINEER CO.

had been mechanically pushed into the area. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) was notified, confirmed the item and disposed of it appropriately. Needless to say our Soldiers are making quite a name for themselves.

Third Platoon as usual, feels that they are leading from the front. Under the great leadership of 2nd Lt. Hillier and Sgt. 1st Class Ivey, 3rd Platoon completed four major projects on FOB Shank in March. The projects included a new taxiway, Bravo Company 5/19 Motor pool, the new Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration (RSOI) billeting area and Pul-e Alam. Staff Sgt. York and Staff Sgt. Miller led the team that completed the motor pool improvements with such success that 1st Sgt. Holland recommended every Soldier involved for a battalion-level Certificate of Achievement. This team also completed a successful upgrade to the FOB Shank Ammunition Supply Point (ASP). Working closely with the Air Force's 577 Engineering Co. and the Army Corp of Engineers, 3rd Platoon led by Staff Sgt. Travis Rapp, completed a taxiway, which will allow the movement of fixed wing aircraft. This task has been the most technically challenging project in the company to date requiring precision earth work and was critical to opening the new helicopter landing zone (HLZ). Kudos to Staff Sgt. Rapp and his group for superior work that was accomplished ahead of schedule.

Staff Sgt. Fullmore and Sgt. McNulty also worked with the 577 Engineering Co. to complete two of the three major components of the RSOI tenting area on FOB Shank. The RSOI road was no small project but the Soldiers ripped through the project with ease. Third Platoon has proven itself to be both self supporting and creatively resourceful - its Soldiers continually find ways to do more with less resources and finish tasks above standard.

Last but certainly not least, throughout these projects, the Headquarters & Maintenance platoons continue to provide tremendous support for the line platoons in an efficient and courteous manner. They set the standard for non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and Soldiers across the board. They are text book examples of "NCOs make it happen" and we most certainly would not have been able to accomplish the projects we have without their leadership, attention to detail and can-do attitude.

Right: A Soldier from 877 Engineer Company patrols in Logar Province, Afghanistan in April 2011. The patrol was an assessment of the area outside a forward operating base.



THE GOLD MINE—649 ENGINEER CO. (Cont.'d)



Above: Soldiers from the 649th Engineer Co., California National Guard, pose for a quick photo during an assessment of a route in Paktika Province, Afghanistan. The route was a 2-week project in which Afghan National Army engineers, along with US forces, made drastic improvements to.



Right: Afghan National Army Soldiers discuss route improvement plans with Soldiers from the 649th Engineer Co., California National Guard.

JOKERS WILD—231 SURVEY & DESIGN



Left: Spec. Grider of the 231st Survey and Design unit surveys an area near a small village in Paktika Province for a span bridge.

Below: Soldiers from Task Force Gridley pull security while Spec. Grider of 231st Survey and Design surveys an area in Paktika Province for a span bridge project.



THE SALMON RUN—HHC 1249 ENGINEERS

S-4 LOGISTICS



Another month has gone by and spring time has arrived. The section members are doing well.

Sgt. 1st Class Webb is the first of the S-4 section to go on R&R leave and was looking forward to being amongst his family and fulfilling his role as husband, dad and most of all, Grandpa! Others will start going on leave as their time comes around. With the spring weather also came motivation to see some vegetables, flowers, and who knows what else has been planted, growing. Chief Bonney, Spec. Richards and Spec. Foster are busy with planting flower beds and seedlings for vegetables. Some excitement was provided earlier in the month when “Boris” the Russian tortoise was briefly adopted to save his life. Determined to be a male of the species “*Testudo horsfieldii*” (A. Richards, GOOGLE), it is found throughout Central Asia. Someone had painted Boris’s shell red and he was found wandering the FOB. After a short time he was released back into the wild to enjoy his freedom. We have since then also experienced some awesome thunderstorms! Accompanied with hail and of course lightning, Mother Nature knows how to put on a show.

Work-wise everyone is busy. It seems every time the section is ready to settle into a routine, somewhere up above, plans begin to change. Sgt. Phelps has been busy remodeling the S-4 office, this being a result of trying to find a more efficient use of our small office. Sgt. 1st Class Camper has assumed the Non-Commissioned Office in Charge (NCOIC) mantle during Sgt. 1st Class Webb’s absence, and Spec. Foster is acting on behalf of the Property Book Office while Chief Bonney and Spec. Richards are visiting our units. Chief Bonney certainly has a very competent crew, and they provide 24/7 entertainment at no extra charge. Chief Ryan recently attended a driver’s training course and continues to promise everyone that repair parts are coming...hopefully soon. We miss our two members in Bagram: Staff Sgt. Nason and Sgt. Helligso.

Depending on who is counting we are about 25 percent towards our goals of coming back to “The World”, a phrase once used in many days gone by to describe the USA. May everyone stay safe and we look forward to seeing all soon!



Left: Chief Bonney, Spec. Foster and Chief Landwehr are preparing the soil to plant seed for flowers and vegetables.

Right: An unexpected visitor in the S-4 office—a Central Asian tortoise.



Civil Military Operations



Above: Afghan children unwrap and look at their new National Guard notebooks April 22 in Paktika province, Afghanistan. The notebooks were distributed by Task Force Gridley, 1249th Engineer Battalion soldiers.

Below: Lt. Col. James Cline of Task Force Hammer, 176 Engineer Brigade, Texas Army National Guard, and Commander of Task Force Gridley, 1249 Engineer Battalion, Oregon Army National Guard, Lt. Col. Kevin Dial sit down with Afghans during a luncheon to celebrate the opening of the Sharana City Orphanage in Paktika Province, Afghanistan on 25 April. The new orphanage will house and educate orphans in Paktika.





THE AGAPE SHOP



The end of March and the beginning of April was a great time of R&R for me. Spending time with my family was great! During the two weeks off we actually stayed home within the Salem / Portland area and enjoyed our time together. We had debated of going to California for some fun in the sun, but the weather was just about as bad as Oregon during spring break, so we decided to not waste two days driving each way for the same rain and clouds? It was very relaxing and refreshing to enjoy each other without planning too many activities and running ourselves ragged. This was the first vacation that I have ever taken where the destination was home! It was great and I would highly recommend it!

In all seriousness, R&R is a great time to spend with our loved ones during this deployment. For most of us, we will travel back and forth passing through the airport in Dallas, Tex. The people there are great! For the past 10 years they have welcomed home Soldiers in an incredible way! See the following link for more information. <http://www.welcomehomeahero.com/Welcome/index.html> For me it was a very emotional reception that really set the stage for my time at home.

Back at FOB Sharana, Spec. Chitwood kept the Agape Store running in addition to competing in the Soldier of the Quarter competition for both the battalion and brigade. Spec. Chitwood did a great job and captured the Soldier of the Quarter for the battalion. Great job Spec. Chitwood!

Spec. Chitwood also has a passion for physical fitness! He is leading many of the HHC 1249th Engineer Battalion Soldiers in early morning physical training, and doing individual and small-group athletic training and workouts during an afternoon physical training session time, as well. Though many of us complain during the workouts, we all thank him afterwards for his dedication to our development.

Thank you again to everyone who has been sending us care packages. Soldiers come from all over the FOB and many stop by when they are traveling through the area as well. It seems that word is spreading of the little Agape Store. Please keep the support 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 and I can send you what we need.

May God bless you and keep you safe during this deployment!

~Chaplain Rick Barnes & Spec. Edward Chitwood