

# COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION



## 1st Combat Engineer Battalion; *"The Super Breed"*

Our mission: provide mobility, counter mobility, survivability, and limited general engineering support to the 1st Marine Division

### COMPANY COMMANDER

#### Family and friends of Echo Company

The new I&I 1stSgt, 1stSgt Brant Fowler, recently sent an email announcing the Return and Reunion Brief for all family members of Echo Company. It is scheduled for 19 October at the Patton Museum auditorium, where we held the pre-deployment briefs. The time is still to be determined, but 1stSgt Fowler will send an update once he can establish the time. I highly encourage you to attend, and bring any family you believe could benefit. Please send an email to 1stSgt Fowler (Brant.Fowler@usmc.mil) no later than 14 July in order to allow him the opportunity to coordinate catering enough for everyone.

The Fourth of July is quickly approaching. While I'm sure we can all agree that the nation can be proud of your Marines, Sailors, and Airmen, it can also be proud of the families and friends that support them. The fact that wives are raising children, paying bills, and running a household essentially by themselves, parents and significant others are taking the time and effort to write and send packages, and friends are raising toasts and remain full of obvious pride in the accomplishments and dedication of their Echo Marine, Sailor, or Airmen makes you all as much a part of our success as anyone here in Afghanistan. Your sacrifices and dedication are just as important and necessary as ours to maintain the freedom and liberty that we enjoy as Americans. Thank you.

Have a safe and fun Fourth of July.

Semper Fidelis,  
Maj Mike O'Quin

#### Company Commander:

Major Michael O'Quin

#### Executive Officer/HQ Plt Commander

Captain Erik Brandriff

#### Company First Sergeant

1stSgt Deryl Jarnagin

#### Tank Leader/Ops Chief

MSgt Michael Kadlub

#### HQ Plt Sgt/Comm Chief:

GySgt Mark Ellison

#### 1st Platoon Plt Commander

1stLt Matthew Overly

#### 1st Platoon Plt Sgt

GySgt Matthew Dordal

#### 2nd Platoon Plt Commander

2ndLt Alexander Wu

#### 2nd Platoon Plt Sgt

GySgt Wilson Hinson

#### 3rd Platoon Plt Commander

1stLt Thomas Hodge

#### 3rd Platoon Plt Sgt

GySgt Shane Marshall

#### Advisor Team OIC

1stLt William Oliver

#### Advisor Team SNCOIC

GySgt Aaron McNeal

#### Maintenance Chief

SSgt Andrew Hedrick

#### Senior Line Corpsman

HM2 Emmanuel Marquez

#### EOD Team Leaders

TSgt Adam Putnam

TSgt Damian Taylor

TSgt Mark Walker

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COMPANY FIRST SERGEANT

Family and Friends,

Greetings from Southern Afghanistan! Your Marines, Sailors and Airmen have and continue to do an excellent job no matter the charge or endeavor. It truly is an inspirational and amazing feat all things considered. The patchwork construct of this Company is truly a unique situation especially considering the mission they have been assigned.

A couple tidbits of information to pass; first, 1stSgt Fowler, the I&I 1stSgt and Deputy Family Readiness Officer, has begun sending out information appertaining to return and reunion briefs. He has scheduled the briefs for Friday, 19 October. These briefs will cover such topics as VA Benefits, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Combat Operation Stress, employment resources, what to expect upon the arrival of your loved one, and other beneficial resources available to military members and their families. These briefs are a perfect opportunity for you to ask questions and find out the newest info concerning the expected arrival time of your Marines.

Please respond to his RSVP no later than 14 July 2012 but, the sooner the better, so as to allow for proper planning of catering and seating. Contact 1stSgt Fowler at Brant.Fowler@usmc.mil or (502)624-6224 to RSVP or to garner any additional information. I highly encourage all of you to participate and attend these briefs. This will be mutually beneficial and you all will leave with a greater understanding of not only your Marine but, the benefits you have both earned through your service.

One note about mail; our mail delivery will slow considerably starting in August. It will go from 10-14 days normal delivery time to upwards of 3 weeks so, please bear that in mind when you are posting anything, especially perishable items. Also, be advised that the mail is handled many times before it arrives at Camp Dwyer. As such, it can at times arrive damaged or crushed. Please ensure you fully pack all boxes so as to minimize the likelihood of damage. We have had quite a few crushed boxes wherein the contents were damages or destroyed. Last comment about mail; please do not mail anything postmarked after 1 October. Check eMarine for further details

Lastly, I wish you all a happy and safe 4th of July. Please take a few moments to reflect on the meaning and purpose of the celebration and how it correlates to what your Marines, Sailors and Airmen are accomplishing here in Afghanistan. Take care of each other!!

Semper Fidelis,

1stSgt Jarnagin



# COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

## HEADQUARTERS PLATOON

To the family and friends of Headquarters Platoon,

Headquarters Platoon continues to stay busy supporting the platoons here at Camp Dwyer as well as participating in route clearance missions. Some of the Marines have even had the opportunity to fly to Camp Leatherneck to work on a completely different base with our Battalion Headquarters counterparts.

As noted before, your Marines and Sailor of Headquarters Platoon have developed a strict routine of daily physical fitness. As busy as the Marine and Sailor are doing their jobs and many collateral duties, I believe you all will be very surprised at how physically fit and mentally healthy the Headquarters Platoon has become. Many of us have embraced the opportunity to become as physically fit while deployed and have developed the necessary skills to maintain what they have accomplished in the time we have been deployed.

We support both Route Clearance platoons and the partnering platoon, which works hand in hand with the Afghan National Army (ANA) daily. Headquarters Platoon understand the importance of doing their jobs thorough and right the first time to ensure there are no issues while out on platoon, regardless of the job being communications, administrative, or maintenance related. The maintenance section has even helped our ANA partners by assisting them with washing their HMMWVs on our wash rack. The ability for the Marines and ANA to work side by side with vehicle maintenance and cleaning is just as important as being able to operate on a combat patrol together. This may seem like small steps, but in reality, they are leaps and bounds in developing a positive working relationship with the Afghan soldiers and your Marines and Sailor are the one's who are making this important progress happen on a daily basis.

I would like to take a moment to recognize some birthdays and anniversaries. Happy birthday to Lance Corporal McGregor's daughter, Mycah - 25 June, Major O'Quin's wife, Allison- 17 June, Master Sergeant Kadlub's wife, Andrea - 6 June and daughter, Reagan - 8 June. Happy anniversary to Corporal Prater and his wife, Abbie on 25 June.

Here is the information on the "Cup of Joe for a Joe" program once again. Camp Dwyer's coffee shop, Green Beans Coffee, has a promotion called "Cup of Joe for a Joe" where friends or family can go online and sign their Marine, Sailor or Airmen up to receive "codes" valued at \$2 each which enables them to purchase any number of drinks at the Green Beans Coffee shop here on Dwyer. The email address is [www.getcoj.com](http://www.getcoj.com).

Thank you,  
Captain Erik Brandriff  
Company Executive Officer



Cpl Prater, the Company Guide, standing stoically in preparation of a Company formation



Newly promoted Major O'Quin being congratulated by the Battalion Commander, LiCol Niebel.

# COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

## 1ST PLATOON

Greetings Family, Friends, and Loved Ones,

Since I last wrote this newsletter many actions have occurred. Needless to say the month of June has been a very eventful month. We have had much success with our mission sets. With the successful finds of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) and combined operations with adjacent units.

We are now completely in general support of Third Battalion, Eight Marines. This makes our job easier in that we only have unit to report to while conducting operations. It is evident that the footprint of coalition forces is getting smaller but our forces still present and the Afghan Security Forces still conduct many combined operations.

Our success in locating and destroying IED's is the result of all the months of training conducted on both coasts of the United States, as well as the on the job training conducted in the area of operation. At first we had to learn the hard way of IED detection. Many thanks to your prayers, and the now countless hours of training, we have all come back unscathed from our first IED encounters. Everyone in First Platoon has a real knowledge of the enemy we are fighting here and what they are capable of doing.

The professionalism and dedication to duty exhibited by the members of First Platoon continues to humble me. When we have found ourselves in situations of elevated risk their commitment to each other and to accomplishing the mission is executed in a manner consistent of all Marines, Sailors, and Airmen.

As we approach the half way point of this deployment we are prepping for reset training. This training is to reinforce all skills acquired to ensure we continue operating in a safe and effective manner. Although this will cut into the little free time the Marines have it is consistent with our belief that the best form of troop welfare is to ensure sure all Marines are best trained in their fields of expertise and have knowledge of the basics.

We continue to be amazed at all the care packages that continue to make their way to Camp Dwyer. Letters and packages from home are a constant reminder of your love and support and they always bring a smile to each ones face when they are handed out. Until next time, thanks for the love, prayers, and your constant support.

First Lieutenant Overly, Matthew D.  
First Platoon Commander, E Co, 1st CEB.



Cpl McKinley, LCpl's Bradford and Bodenbender are all smiles as they look forward to another day of patrols



SSgt Herrington, Cpl Whyte and LCpl Pater "racked out" in the early Afghan morning

## COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

### 2ND PLATOON

Family and Friends,

Over the past month, your Marines and their ANA counterparts have conducted partnered mounted counter-IED patrols, guaranteeing freedom of mobility for friendly forces and local villagers on over 1200 kilometers of road. The platoon has grown accustomed to the relative fluidity associated with working with the Afghan National Army and is constantly ready to execute missions at a moment's notice. Since beginning partnered operations, our joint patrols have exploited six IEDs, found one IED cache, and have sustained zero IED strikes. Your Marines have demonstrated great flexibility and discipline in uncertain environments and have performed their duties well on mission and in garrison. Despite the dangerous nature of their job, they continue to carry themselves with the bearing and professionalism we have all come to expect of them.

This past month, all 1st Combat Engineer Battalion units were instructed on short notice to conduct a scored Physical Fitness Test (PFT) - consisting of pull-ups, timed crunches, and a 3-mile timed run - before the end of June; the short notice and lack of time to train specifically for the PFT did not phase any of your Marines, and they performed very well. Out of the platoon of (23) Marines, only four Marines failed to achieve a First Class PFT score - and those four Marines are right on the cusp. A First Class PFT is by no means the end state in terms of necessary physical fitness, but it is a good start towards the level of all-around combat fitness that Marines need to maintain. There is still much room for growth, but overall, the physical conditioning of 2nd Platoon is solid and continually improving.

Good physical fitness is a foundation of an effective combat unit; if Marines cannot depend on their brothers-in-arms to be able to carry their own weight or - God forbid - the weight of a fellow Marine, then there can be no true trust within a unit. Accomplishing that is no small feat either; while wearing all personal protective equipment (PPE), carrying all ammunition, water, and a personal weapon, each Marine is carrying between (30) and (50) pounds of extra weight. Your Marines, with their full combat loads, weigh well in excess of (200) pounds. The PFT is not designed specifically to measure physical effectiveness while wearing a combat load (that is more accurately measured by the Combat Fitness Test, or CFT), however, it is a time-tested measure of a Marine's physical ability. Your Marines once again demonstrated their overall discipline and constant state of readiness by performing to standard at a moment's notice.

Our relationship with the ANA continues to grow and improve as the Marines and soldiers get used to operating and relaxing together. We have held several very successful joint debriefs - semi-structured discussions after missions to talk about things to sustain and improve - that have gotten the Marines and soldiers talking directly to one another (via our team of dedicated linguists) about different tactics and standard operating procedures (SOP). These debriefs are never personal, but because they are meant to be critical for the sake of future improvement, a certain amount of trust must be shared by all those involved. Your Marines have continually demonstrated their cultural knowledge and personal maturity by being able to see past the surface differences between the Marine Corps and ANA military cultures and conduct real, meaningful conversations. They have carried themselves professionally, brought up many good tactical points to get the

ANA soldiers thinking, and have had the humility to take the opinions and suggestions of the ANA to heart as well. After long days of patrolling, our Marines and ANA soldiers often share a meal together (more often than not of Afghan creation, as all the ANA soldiers and some of our Marines prefer the meats, rice, and vegetables that the ANA use to make their nightly meals to the Meals Ready to Eat [MRE] that we have available to us). Because of the unfamiliar origin of the Afghan produce however, your Marines partake in the much tastier Afghan food with an understanding that trips to the bathroom may become more frequent immediately following a meal with the ANA . . . There are those Marines that stubbornly subsist on what seems like nothing but cigarettes, dip, beef jerky and energy drinks, but for those brave souls who have been willing to try the homemade (or, I should say Patrol Base-made) food of the Afghan soldiers, much more nourishing and tasty sustenance await. Once the Marines take this culinary leap of faith, they are faced with one final challenge: eating without utensils. Most of the Marines have gotten the hang of it, but some Marines, primarily one Marine who will remain unnamed (a Marine who may or may not be the most "seasoned" Staff Sergeant in the company) have thrown in the towel and will only eat with the ANA when they have their combat spoon on hand.

# COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

## 2ND PLATOON

In closing, I'd like to recognize our Marines who were awarded this past month for their continued performance above and beyond the call of duty:

Congratulations to Sergeant Aaron Oakes, who was selected as the Company E Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) of the Quarter. From the moment Sergeant Oakes stepped on deck with Company E, his professionalism, combat experience, and absolute dedication to training Marines invigorated the company as a whole and truly changed the mindset and confidence of its Marines. His personal example, hard-earned experience, and ability to lead, mentor and teach gave the normally mounted M1A1 Crewmen, M1A1 Mechanics, and Motor Transport Operators of Company E the proficiency and confidence they needed to successfully conduct Route Reconnaissance and Clearance - a mission that relies heavily upon dismounted patrolling for Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detection, interrogation, and exploitation. For his efforts, Sergeant Oakes was awarded a Meritorious Mast, and his NCO of the Quarter Package is currently at the Battalion level for review. If he is selected there, he will continue competing at the Division level, and ultimately, the Marine Expeditionary Force level. Regardless of how far he goes, his performance has been recognized across Company E and serves as an excellent example for junior Marines to emulate.

Finally, a special and well-deserved congratulation must go out to Corporal Joseph Ellis II, who was meritoriously promoted to the rank of Corporal. As a Lance Corporal, Corporal Ellis - through his hard work, dedication to bettering himself, and technical proficiency - distinguished himself as the platoon's go-to vehicle maintenance expert. By being selected to join the non-commissioned officer ranks of the Marine Corps ahead of his peers, he has been officially recognized as a Leader of Marines - proficient, mature, and capable beyond the already high standards expected of every Marine.

Thank you for all your continued support.

Respectfully,

2ndLt Alex Wu



SSgt "the seasoned one" Collins enjoying his dinner Afghan style.



Sgt Wilson enjoying some ANA hospitality while sharing dinner.

# COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

## 3RD PLATOON

Families of 3rd Platoon,

Another month has passed here in Afghanistan. It seems like just yesterday we were completing EMV and getting our first experiences with the route clearance vehicles and gear. Today these vehicles and tools seem second nature to us.

As of last month, we had taught the Afghan National Army how to throw a Frisbee properly and this month they taught us a thing or two about Afghan volleyball. After a long day we pulled into one of the combat outposts we stay at on mission, and the ANA at this COP invited some of the Marines to play them in volleyball. Our Marines gladly accepted and the game was on. The Afghans proved to be a formidable opponent; however our Marines beat them two out of three games. The rules, while being similar to those in the US, were slightly different. For instance, the Afghans did not rotate positions between possessions and there was some discussion over points scoring. At the end of the day everyone had a great time and friendships were built.

As always, your letters and care packages are greatly appreciated by all of us and we cannot thank everyone enough. We have been fortunate enough to receive care packages and letters from local communities, friends, and family. The amount of time, effort and thought that goes into these items absolutely astounds me.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate our two newest NCOs, Corporal Craig Evans and Corporal Jason Brown.

Semper Fidelis  
Third Platoon



IDD Docker sporting his "doggles"



Cpl Sanders AKA "Chameleon", he can blend into any environment



Cpl Sanders or Afghan National Army recruiting poster?

ANA ADVISOR TEAM

Hello all.

First and foremost, the team is alive and well. We have made some significant progress in assisting the ANA Route Clearance Tolai (Tolai=company in Dari), in bettering themselves as professionals. First is the five graduates from the off road driver improvement course that should be congratulated as SGT. Thompson worked them hard. He was tireless in his reinforcement of proper technique to surmount certain obstacles and to ‘read’ the terrain better. Through the assistance of SGT. LaClair, the track was completed and a small ‘field’ class room was erected at the site to help ward off the blistering sun. They both deserve a huge hand as this was quite challenge; lack of resources on hand, language, no national driver’s training and a certain attitude to driving that most Afghans seem to adhere to, so kudos to them.

Lt. Oliver and SGT. Cole have been instrumental in the development of the engineer advanced skill sets that the tolai will undoubtedly rely heavily on once they are trained up. These two Marines have gotten one team leader validated and are a couple of weeks away from a second validated team leader, since our arrival.

Late in the last month, we tackled one of the bigger collective projects. That was assisting the creation and building of the ANA RCC Tolai ASP, (ammunition supply point). We had some mechanical help getting the storage lockers in place and some of the RCC Tolai came out to help throw sandbags on top as part of the structural requirements. The following day the inspector saw what we had accomplished and decided that the containers had to move as they were too close to one wall. Well, we do as asked and took down all of the sand bags with the assistance of a few soldiers from the Tolai. At least we were thinking and stacked nearly 2,000 sandbags onto a flat bed 7 ton to make it easier to stack back onto the storage lockers later. So, after the reshuffling of sheds, we went out and tried to get some help to rebuild the top of the storage lockers to no avail. The soldiers were busy with their training schedule; some of the Marine units we asked were also tasked out to the winds. “Well,” Gunny says, “nothing to it but to do It.” while shaking his head. So we went and four of the team over a two day period replaced all the support structure and ALL of the sandbags on to the ASP storage containers. Needless to say, naps count as part of workouts!



A new fitness routine is sweeping Camp Dwyer; you too can achieve muscularity like this in a mere 8 weeks with the revolutionary “sandbaggin” workout!



1stLt Oliver, GySgt McNeal and Sgt Thompson show off there motivation in redefining “sandbaggin”!

COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

MARINES, SAILORS AND AIRMEN IN ACTION!



Sgt's LaClair and Wilson, Cpl Ellis and LCpl Rothwell with the ANA



Sgt's LaClair and Wilson, Cpl Ellis and LCpl Rothwell with the ANA



Typical landscape of the lower Helmand Valley canal zone.



2nd Platoon Linguist Hemy being recognized for his outstanding service



2ndLt Wu and GySgt Hinson congratulate Hemy on his recognition.



2nd Platoon with Hemy. Linguists are vital and incumbent upon mission success. Hemy is one of the best and his Platoon collectively recognize and appreciate his contributions.

# COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

## MARINES, SAILORS AND AIRMEN IN ACTION!



ANA soldiers speaking with a group of young Afghan children.



Sgt's Cole and Thompson (background) and LCpl's Rothwell and Wettstein installing Hesco barriers; a laborious and time intensive project



All Cpl Ivy is missing is his "Teddy".



Ever see the movie the "Mist", well in Afghanistan, it is the "dust" that envelopes all.



Sgt Oakes receiving a meritorious mast for representing the Company as the non-commissioned office of the quarter.



HM2 Marquez enjoying a favorite snack, beef jerky.

# COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

## MESSAGES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

### **Headquarters Platoon:**

#### **HQ Platoon:**

#### **HM2(FMF) Marquez, E.S:**

To my family & friends,

Thank you so much for the care packages I've received thus far. It definitely keeps me from getting homesick. A special shout out to the Reyes family, the Wojcik family, Aries(Happy 21st brah!) and of course my wife Stephanie. Mom, Dad, Misty and the Delacruz family- I miss you all. See you soon. Happy Father's Day to all the dads out there- Especially mine.

All my love,

#### **Cpl Garcia:**

Dear Family and Friends,

Miss you all, be home soon, I know you guys are waiting upon my return. It's both ways because I look forward to it too. Love you all and I will see you soon.

#### **Cpl Iracheta:**

To my beloved family and friends,

I miss you guys and ill be home soon...junior tell dad I and the family I said hi and I love them. Give Gabe a kiss for me.

#### **LCpl Serra:**

Dear Family and Friends,

I just want to thank you all so very much for all of the birthday packages and letters that you all have sent to me it means so much. It helped make this birthday feel like I'm still at home. I also want to thank you again for all of the support that I have been getting every single one of you. Also I would like to wish a Happy Birthday to my cousins Cody June 9, Jessica June 13. Also a happy father's day to my Dad and all of my friends. I love you all and thank you again for everything.

#### **LCpl Thurby:**

Dear beloved family, It's going great love you always catch you on the flipside

#### **LCpl McGregor:**

First I want to start by saying sorry Myc Myc that I missed your birthday and also sorry that I didn't get you a pony but that is not my fault momma said no way. Next I want to tell all of the father's happy father's day. I know it sucks not being able to be home with your kids on that day. And to my son Cam, I'm sorry I missed our first fathers day but I can promise I will do my best to never miss another one. And last but not least I want to give my thanks to all the guys that left the wire this month.

#### **LCpl Jackson T.L:**

Hey Family,

Good Day kind people were doing good out here constantly learning new things. I love your care packages ebony. Make sure you tell everybody I said hi hello...and I love them. I appreciate your prays and love. Its almost over at this point so we need to start planning the home coming, I think for this month I miss autumn the most, she's so red lol  
With loves and laughs

#### **LCpl Brown:**

To all of my family and friends,

I want to thank you all for the support and encourage, so far this deployment is going by pretty fast and I feel as though I will be home in no time. I love you all and appreciate the letters and care packages. I want you all to know that I am doing well and I am safe, so keep my in your hearts and minds as well as your prayers and I will do the same. I will see you all soon, take care and I will see you soon.

One Love,

# COMPANY E, 1ST COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION, 1ST MARINE DIVISION

## MESSAGES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

### **Second Platoon:**

#### **SSgt Collins:**

Family and Friends,

Thank you for the continued support. I also want to thank the following persons and organizations for the packages they sent to 2nd Platoon and Company E:

City of Cerritos  
Stephen M. Collins, Sr. (USAF, Retired)  
Richard A. Dohar (GE Water & Process Technologies)  
Operation Shoebox  
The United Refining Company's Chemistry Lab

A few days ago, I saw an improved road being built by civilians. In a place where improved roads are nonexistent, this is a big deal. As the infrastructure improves in this area, I can only hope that prosperity will soon follow.

Some of you asked how I do my laundry. The base has a laundry service run by civilians. We drop our laundry off and it's usually done within 72 hours.

Take care...be safe,

Stephen

#### **Cpl Fernandez:**

Hey Baby,

I want to wish you a Happy Birthday. I know it's not until October, but I know an early birthday wish would make you smile. Don't worry, Hun. I will make up for it when I get back.

Love,

Adriel

### **Third Platoon:**

#### **Sgt Rutledge**

To my loving family, thank you for all the care packages. They are most appreciated. Won't be too

long before you will be sending your last one! Happy Birthday to any family members that have birthday's this month. You all take care, love you and miss you guys.

Love, Matt

#### **Cpl Wagner**

To Dad, Mom and Jordan,

I love and miss you all, thank you so much for all the packages. Have a happy 4th of July.

Love you

Danny

MESSAGES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

**Third Platoon:**

**LCpl Prater:**

Happy Birthday Mom!

Love you Matthew

**LCpl Holt:**

Happy Birthday Shell!

Love Trey