

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

As the closing months of the deployment are approaching, please ensure that you are checking eMarine for updated information. Official family readiness information will come from Echo Company's Family Readiness Officer (FRO), 1stSgt Fowler, or 1stCEB's FRO, Sgt Clements, or from the eMarine website. While I completely understand family members being anxious for any and all news or information about when we'll be coming home, we cannot pass any sensitive information. For those who plan on linking up with the company when we return to California, please remain flexible. Please be aware that the company will not be billeted in San Mateo upon our return. The closest hotels to where the company will be located are in Oceanside, near the Camp Pendleton main gate.

Camp Dwyer's mail services have been reduced. While I always advocate as much mail or packages for your Marine, Sailor, or Airman as possible, it may be best to stop mailing those items in the beginning of September; more information can be found on eMarine.

Please remember about the Return and Reunion Brief for all family members of Echo Company scheduled for 19 October at the Patton Museum auditorium. I highly encourage you to attend and bring any family you believe could benefit. If you haven't done so already, please send an email to 1stSgt Fowler (Brant.Fowler@usmc.mil).

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

2d Platoon Plt Commander

2ndLt Alexander Wu

2d Platoon Plt Sgt

GySgt Wilson Hinson

3d Platoon Plt Commander

1stLt Thomas Hodge

3d 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!

It is hard to believe yet another month has passed. The deployment is progressing very rapidly, well for us here it is, and before you know it, your loved ones will be back in your arms. Please remain patient and diligent as the work they are doing is extremely important here. Their collective efforts keep the roads and thoroughfares free of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) so that coalition forces and the local populace can navigate them without the pervasive cloud of fear and uncertainty that accompanies the employment of these nefarious devices.

I wanted to remind all about a couple of important pieces of information. First, by now you should have all received an email from 1stSgt Fowler, about the family post deployment briefs to be held Friday, 19 October in the Patton museum. 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. If you have not received this information, please contact 1stSgt Fowler at brant.fowler@usmc.mil or via 502-624-6224.

On the issue of mailed items: I would caution against sending any pressurized, canned drinks such as Monsters, or other like energy drinks, cola and/or soft drinks of any kind etc. The pressure and heat placed upon these items during transit have resulted in many of them exploding in the care packages and infiltrating the remaining contents. This includes those wrapped in plastic and sealable plastic bags, i.e. Ziploc's. Last comment about mail; please **do not mail anything postmarked after 1 September**. This is advanced from the previous newsletter but, we have had packages taking in excess of two months to arrive. Sending it out later than this date will increase the likelihood of your loved one not receiving the intended care package! Check eMarine for further details.

Sgt Clements, the CEB BN family readiness officer, will post all relevant information appertaining to the deployment on eMarine that he can. If there is ANY information that needs to be passed, it will come from official sources ONLY, be it Sgt Clements, 1stSgt Fowler or CEB proper and no others. These sources of official information will ensure, as much as practicable, that all are apprised with as much information and lead time as they can. All of our family and friends must resist falling prey to speculation or innuendo; this serves no purpose other than to heighten anxiety and spread misinformation. Please forward any queries you may have to them about anything concerning family readiness related topics; they are the resident experts in this area. Be patient; information will be pushed as it becomes available.

Your Marines, Sailors and Airmen continue to accord themselves in the highest sense of professionalism and conduct. They have built and continue to build upon relationships they have established with Coalition forces, the Afghan National Army and the local populace throughout the entire area of operations. What they have done and are doing will resonate long after we have left Afghanistan. You can be, as we are all, extremely proud of their continued efforts towards helping Afghanistan and all Afghans maintain national self-determination by defeating terror wherever it may fester.

A special thanks to all the organizations who continue to support our Marines, Sailors and Airmen by send the multitudes of Care packages. You are too numerous to list but, please know we ALL appreciate your sustained efforts!!

Until next time, 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,

First of all, thank you to the friends and families who continue to send care packages. Packages have been flooding in consistently throughout the deployment keeping morale high and the Marines, Sailors, and Airmen stocked on the necessities to be successful. A little “piece of home” is always appreciated. “Tank” you.

Corporal Kyle Reid, one of our two company armorers, has returned to Echo Company after supporting the Battalion’s armorer at Camp Leatherneck. In the short time he has been back, he has supported 3d Platoon on a mission as gunner on a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle. Although he enjoyed the challenges and opportunities working at the battalion, we are equally pleased to have him returned to Echo Company here at Camp Dwyer.

In addition to their normal duties, headquarters Marines and Sailor continue to support the Platoons by augmenting their patrols. Most recently, on two such occasions, Corporal Aaron Prater and Corporal Byron Mynes supported 1st Platoon on their missions.

HM2 Emmanuel Marquez received an influx of medical supplies and equipment and along with the help of the platoon corpsman, HM3 Mario Ybay, HM2 Gonzalo Chavez, and HM2 David Galindo, HM2 Marquez created a company aid station on order to quickly support the company’s medical needs at Camp Dwyer and ensure the platoon corpsmen have what they need while on multi-day missions.

Under the guidance of Staff Sergeant Andrew Hedrick, Maintenance Section assisted a US Army Route Clearance Company (RCC) with much needed parts and tools. Through the Maintenance Section’s efforts and assistance, they were able to repair some of their vehicles, further establishing Echo Company’s relationship with our Army brothers.

Although the Maintenance Section has work diligently to keep the motor vehicles running and regularly maintained, they found some time to build a gazebo for smoke breaks and evening cigar gatherings. As important as it is to get out of this 105 plus degree weather under the shade of the gazebo, it has been proved to be a social convenience for the Marines, Sailors, and Airmen to unwind and visit with members from other platoons they do not have the opportunity to see very often due to the different platoon schedules.

Second Platoon conducted casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) with DUSTOFF and four members of Headquarters Platoon participated. They are Lance Corporal Jamael Brown, Lance Corporal Thomas Jackson, Corporal Kyle Reid, and Corporal Daniel Iracheta. DUSTOFF, which is an acronym for Dedicated Unhesitating Service to our Fighting Forces, is the US Army aero-medical who supports all air CASEVACs within the area Echo Company operates. The training conducted consisted of learning about the interior and exterior of the Army’s Blackhawk helicopter, how to properly load a litter, and how to conduct a hoist extraction. During the hoist extraction, Marines were loaded into a hoist from a hovering Blackhawk approximately 40 feet from the ground. All participants appreciated the training provided by DUSTOFF and the realistic training will surely stay fresh in their minds for months to come.

On a lighter side, some of our Marines and Corpsman participated in the two Camp Dwyer “Morale, Welfare, and Recreation” (MWR) 3 on 3 basketball tournaments and won the 1st place trophy each time. The participants in the first game were Lance Corporals Kody McGregor, Jamael Brown, and Thomas Jackson along with 2nd Platoon’s Sergeant Matthew Kruspe (the team included one alternate). The second win came from Lance Corporals Kody McGregor, Thomas Jackson, and HM2 Emmanuel Marquez. Corporal Daniel Iracheta, Cpl Aaron Prater, HM2 Manny Marquez, Lance Corporal Thomas Jackson, and Lance Corporal Jamael Brown, along with support from Marines from 2d and 3d Platoon, set up a large “Alaska” tent and created a flat floor thus establishing the Echo Company Gym. Nicknamed “Pressure Plates”, the gym contains all the weights and equipment necessary to get a full body work out as well as having the capability to do the more challenging P90X, P90X2 and Insanity Asylum workouts. Most of the Marines and Sailors in the company now use this gym on a daily basis from the early morning to late at night, thanks to the efforts of these few Marines and Corpsman.

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.

Thank you,
Captain Erik Brandriff
Company Executive Officer

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

1ST PLATOON

Greetings family, friends, and loved ones.

As I write this I am happy to report we have a bit of reprieve in the weather the past few weeks. Instead of the normal Afghan summer weather of 120 degrees as the high and lows being in the 80's we have experienced cooler temperatures with highs as 102 to 104 degrees to the lows in the mid 70's. What a difference 20 degrees can make! Maybe it's just me but I find myself sweating a lot less and requiring a rather less than usual need for water intake.

I know the news back home is always focused on the negative aspects of rogue Afghan elements befriendng coalition forces than turning against us. Please rest assured that at all levels we are taking the necessary measures to eliminate the chance of anyone bringing harm to the Marines, Sailors, and Airmen of 1st Platoon.

In the months prior to our deployment we had the opportunity to learn to use many pieces of equipment and utilize a vast amount of tools to safely accomplish our mission. I can now say that every tool and piece of equipment issued to us has been effectively utilized in some form or another.

I can also report that our IED Detection Dogs (IDD) have been effectively deployed with positive results. Cpl Johnson and his IDD "Ace" and LCpl Allen with his IDD "Moola" have all successfully identified explosive hazards safely and effectively. This allows Marines in 1st Plt to safely remove any roadside bombs and allows us the safe distance that is needed to complete the task.

I hope this letter finds each and every one of you in good spirits. We are pushing along and will continue to stay focused in these last few weeks so we can all return home safely.

1st Lt Overly, M. D.



Cpl Ivy, GySgt Dordal and the "motivator" looking motivated!



Cpl Guadamuz and Belgodere conduct weapons maintenance after a patrol.

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

2D PLATOON

Family and Friends,

“Ramadan Mubarak.” Have a happy and blessed Ramadan. 20 July to 20 August was the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan. During this time, Muslims all around the world do not eat or drink from sun up to sundown to observe the *Sawm* (Fast), one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Ramadan is a sacred time for Muslims to reflect upon their spirituality and to rededicate themselves to worship. The reason Muslims fast during this time is to help them direct their focus away from worldly concerns, challenge their self-discipline, and build empathy for those less fortunate than them.

During Ramadan, your Marines and their partnered Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers continued operations and conducted many hours of both partnered and independent training. Early every morning for the first three weeks of Ramadan, your Marines trained with their Afghan partners on Combat Life Saving, Crew Served Weapons Employment, and personal weapon employment. The Marines and soldiers also discussed tactics, techniques, and procedures for detainee handling and communications gear employment.

After conducting weapons classes with the ANA soldiers, your Marines and the soldiers conducted a joint Crew Served Weapon Range and Rifle Range. When conducting live fire training, Marines have an Officer-in-Charge, Range Safety Officer, and Position Safety Officers to ensure safe, efficient training is conducted. During our joint ranges, the Afghan soldiers filled the same roles for their own soldiers, and we were able to share weapons knowledge and methods of running a range. Your Marines were able to help guide and develop the Afghan soldiers on their weapons skills, and see how the Afghans employed their weapons from their HMMWVs and on the ground.

Furthermore, your Marines were able to witness firsthand the religious devotion of their Afghan partners during the conduct of these ranges. From 0700 each morning until around 1100 each afternoon, our Marines and the ANA soldiers were out on the range in temperatures that easily surpassed 100 degrees. We always tried to start early to avoid the greatest heat of the day, but inevitably the day would get hot before the ranges were complete. The soldiers did not eat or drink at all when out there, and were still in good spirits and enthusiastic about the training.

One of the more memorable training events the Marines conducted without their ANA counterparts was with US Army pilots and their Blackhawk helicopters. The Army gave the Marines an orientation to their Blackhawks, had the Marines familiarize themselves with the internal layout of the aircraft, and taught the Marines how to rig themselves for hoist in case they ever need to be lifted out of a precarious situation onto a hovering helicopter.

The hoist the Marines learned about is called a “Jungle Penetrator” and looks like a yellow anchor that folds out into three small “seats.” It connects to a powerful winch mounted inside the helicopter and is capable of lifting several hundred pounds. It is called a Jungle Penetrator because it was designed to penetrate treeline canopies in Vietnam when it was necessary to hastily extract Marines and soldiers from the jungle floor. The small seats were designed to be able to hold up to three people, however, once your Marines actually started attempting to strap onto the device, it became obvious that even fitting two Marines with full combat loads onto the hoist was quite an accomplishment.

Congratulations must be extended to Sergeant Aaron Oakes, who signed his reenlistment this past month. His continued commitment to the Corps will inevitably benefit many Marines in the coming years.

Another critical member of 2d Platoon, our linguist, Hemy, was recently given a new assignment. Hemy’s versatility, cultural knowledge, and courage have exemplified what it means to be a linguist in a combat zone. It has been a privilege to work with him and he will be missed. We know he will do great things moving forward.

A sincere “Job well done” must be extended to Corporal Asher Bock and Sergeant Johnathan Brown, who will be returning early to the States as part of the Marine Corps’ overall “Surge Recovery” manpower reduction. They have worked tirelessly for this deployment since our drillout back at Fort Knox. Now, they will be able to reunite with their families and begin helping Company E begin its transition back to Tanks.

Finally, there has been a lot of news recently about several “Green on Blue” incidents throughout Afghanistan. We will not let the current situation jeopardize all the hard work your Marines have done with their Afghan partners. At the same time, please rest assured that we have taken the proper force protection measures to account for the increased “insider threat” and ensure your Marines’ safety.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Respectfully,
2ndLt Alex Wu

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

3D PLATOON

Families and Friends of 3d Platoon,

Another month has passed here in Afghanistan and your Marines, Sailors and Airmen continue to keep their edge. Even with the deployment coming to a close they are just as focused now as they were in April. Our operational tempo has been very high throughout our time here and a lesser group of men would have begun showing signs of fatigue, but not 3d.

Over the past month the platoon has supported a couple different units across Southern Helmand helping to eliminate the IED threat to American and Afghan forces. Most recently, the platoon had the opportunity to support a battalion in the southern most portion of the country. While there, we had the chance to stay at one of Alexander the Great's castles that has been turned into a Marine combat outpost. Although some of the accommodations were a little rough, the Marines made the best of it. For over two thousand years that castle has been protecting warriors, and it continues to do so today.

I am sure that most of you have been hearing about the increase in the so called "Green on Blue" attacks that have been going on in Afghanistan as of late. Rest assured that Echo Company has a great relationship with our Afghan counterparts most noticeably the ANA (Afghan National Army) soldiers. We continue to develop and strengthen that relationship every day. As you can see from some of the pictures, there is no better way to build on relationships then through games and friendly competition. Third platoon recently took part in another game of volleyball with the ANA at one of the combat outposts that we frequent when out on missions and we all had a great time. Every Marine and ANA soldier that either participated in the game or watched the game had a great time!

As we push on through the deployment, your thoughts and prayers are still greatly appreciated. The mail system has slowed down a bit now that the camp post office is closed, but your letters and packages are still a great help to all of us. Also, due to the time it takes these items to reach us, the cutoff date for mail will be September 1st. If you have things you want to get to your Marines be sure to get them in the mail prior to this date so that they can be sure to get them.

Semper Fidelis
3d Platoon Staff



Cpl Sanders, the Chameleon, watches the game with his ANA counterparts



LCpl Bunch going up against the ANA "ringer."

ANA ROUTE CLEARANCE ADVISOR TEAM

Hi all!

Since our last installment, we have continued to forge ahead with assisting the RCC Tolai in more training of various subjects. Combat Life Savers' class, HMMWV drivers' course and weapons shooting range week keeps the handful of us busy as all get out. We also have welcomed a new Brigade Advisor Team to the tiny camp and had a nice send off for their predecessors that we have worked with since our arrival in April. Now we are the 'salty dogs' on deck of Camp Alamo! So, some of our energies have gone to assisting them in getting settled and understanding of who's who in the ANA Brigade that we all work with.

The second day of the month saw Sgt Cole off with the partnered platoon and a section of the tolai rollout in support of one of the Kandaks (Dari word for battalion). We also sent off Lt. Oliver to the EOD school in Mazar-e-Sharrif in one of the northeast provinces. We currently have students from the tolai attending too. It is a wonderful opportunity to visit them, to encourage them to success at school, and to see them in class during a typical day there.

Training is constantly on going. Sgt LaClair developed and taught a GPS class to 26 ANA soldiers and officers. This gave them the knowledge to enable better battlefield control and tracking. Further in depth training was given to a senior EOD SSgt Anwar, allowing him the ability to teach and train his junior ANA soldiers. This is one of the culminating steps in the education of the ANA in land navigation and reporting.

In between class sessions, Sgt LaClair had asked to not to be put on watch on a particular day, late in the month. To our slight surprise, he just wanted to celebrate his birthday with out watch! Well, Sgt LaClair, **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!**

P. S. You have no watch!

The rest of the month was fairly slow (considering), with the closing of Ramadan and the Eid Al Fitr celebrations for the ANA soldiers. The team took some time to catch up on some administrative duties and squeezed in some recommendations for a couple of teammates. We are putting Sgt Thompson up for a Combat Meritorious Promotion board and Sgt Cole for NCO of the Quarter. Good luck gentlemen, as they are very deserving.

The ANA RCC Advisor Team



Sgt. LaClair providing additional training to SSgt. Anwar of the ANA on waypoints with assistance of Said's linguistic skills



The Advisor Team strike's a pose in front of a RCC vehicle gear set.

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

MARINES, SAILORS AND AIRMEN IN ACTION!



Chef Doc Chavez cooking up his famous grilled Spam in the back of the MRAP with his trusted Sous Chef LCpl Watson



3d Plt vs ANA, we won but all had fun



Cpl Brown and LCpl Holt from 3d Platoon up high at the Castle



This is the "Red Air" your Marines and Sailors have been telling you about!



Exciting, slightly uneasy River Crossing



Camp Dwyer's version of Top Gun.

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

MARINES, SAILORS AND AIRMEN IN ACTION!



If only they exerted the same amount of energy actually working!



Cpl Reid living the life; a job working outdoors and with guns too!



A bittersweet departure for Hemy, one of the Company Linguists, who receives much deserved and earned thank you from the Company.



2d Platoon honing their pistol marksmanship skills



HM3 Ybay "getting some" on the pistol range.



Sgt Oakes renewing his commitment to the Corps, Country and his fellow Marines as he reenlists for four more years.

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

MARINES, SAILORS AND AIRMEN IN ACTION!



Put a Marine in a Helo and he is a little boy all over again.



Marines of 2d Platoon graduating from the local Marine Corps Martial Arts course.



Marines participating in joint training with the ANA



LCpl Bradford cracks a smile after a long day of patrols in the lower Helmand Valley.



Cpl's McKinley and Prater and LCpl Bodenbender getting ready to step off on another long day of IED patrols.



HM2 Galindo and LCpl "motivator" Hite fuel up in preparation for their next patrol.

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

MARINES, SAILORS AND AIRMEN IN ACTION!



A look says it all and LCpl Jankowski's states, "Yes, I love Afghanistan!"



The inside of "Pressure Plates"; the Company's "Spartan" gym. The locale is a bit out of the way but memberships are affordable!



Cpl Whyte and LCpl's Pater and Klimek ready for another day of patrols.



A few of the Company members availing themselves of all Pressure Plates has to offer.



SSgt Herrington and Sgt Tate relax after a day of patrols.



Oral hygiene is important no matter the clime or place!

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

MESSAGES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Headquarters Platoon:

Doc Marquez:

My deepest condolences to the Labiste family. Tatang is in a better place. To my family (Mom, Dad, Ate, Kuya Jon & Misty) & friends- I miss you all very much, thank you for the love & support, especially the prayers. To my wife, I LOVE YOU. And of course, to my daughter, Mikayla- Daddy loves you & misses you the most. I'll be home before you know it.

HM2(FMF) Marquez, E.S.

Cpl Reid:

To all the folks at home, I thank you for your continued support. I'd like to thank my family for all of the care packages. Cheta thanks you as well. It's getting close to crunch time, and I'll be home sooner than you know it.

Semper, Kyle

Cpl Iracheta:

To my family and friends, I miss you all and I cant wait to see you guys. ill be home in no time. Jr I hope gabe likes the book I got to read to him. Love you all

Daniel

Cpl Wilson:

Thank you friends and family for everything I love you all

LCpl Brown:

To my family and friends, I wish you all the best for the fall semester. I will be home soon and I would like to say that I love you all and to take care.

Love, Jamael Brown

LCpl Jackson:

I appreciate the love and support and prayers since I've been out here. Soon we will all will be back to getting on your nerves. I love and miss you all

Jackson III T.L.

Second Platoon:

Cpl Ellis:

Happy birthday dad hope all is well.

Love you all,

Joseph

MESSAGES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Third Platoon:

1stLt Hodge:

To Mom and Dad,

Happy anniversary! Hope there are many more!

Love, Tommy

GySgt Marshall:

Happy Birthday to my newly 94 year old Me-Maw, Lord I hope I have just a little bit of your genes.

HM2 Chavez:

Happy birthday to Sgt Klump and Cpl Wagner

From Sgt Rutledge:

To my loving family,

Thank-you for your support on this deployment. Through the thick and the thin, you guys have stood by me and comforted me. I thank you and commend everyone for the help. We're nearing the end of the deployment and I will soon be back in the US hanging with my fam. I miss everyone and love you all very much. Take care and I will see you soon.

Love Matt

Cpl Wagner:

To my family, I love and miss you all. We're getting closer everyday.

Cpl Couch:

Happy Birthday Pop! Wish I could be there.

Cpl Evans:

Happy Birthday to Sgt Klump and Cpl Wagner