



THE VOICE REPORT

The Latest News from "The Voice of Lightning" 125th Signal Battalion, Bagram Air Field
Friday, June 25, 2004

Life in Orgun-E By SPC Valdez

The first day I arrived on the Forward Operating Base, Orgun-E, I immediately noticed that it is very rocky here as the wind from the Chinooks rotors blew me off balance with my bags. For the most part, the base sits quietly surrounded by mountains near the Pakistan border. Day to day life here is good, contrary to what a lot of us might have thought before we got here. We are not infantry and so with the exception of when they go out on missions and we have to pick up the slack with guard duty, we have it easy. We have a nice routine going. We wake up and do our PT, take a shower and get some chow and head off to start our workday.

Our shifts, when everything is working well, usually consist of maintaining our link and our equipment. After that any free time we have is spent watching movies and playing Xbox or spending most of our time talking to our families and friends online. We also pass time utilizing the facilities here, which are beyond what we could have expected. The gym, open 24 hours, has every machine to work out every muscle group. And the chow hall, also open 24 hours, almost always has hot chow. After having a good workout session and a nice hot meal, we usually relax in a nice hot shower. After that, we retire to our rooms for a good nights sleep.



On the mud huts at Orgun-E: (Left to Right) SGT Hufstetler, SPC Cajandab, SPC Saelens, PFC Stutler, and PFC Bang
Our PX is the size of a small shack or shed and the local market is only open on Fridays. So we are left with all the money we are making and nowhere to spend it. But other than that I really have no complaints except for the sand storms or the 5 on 1 DVD bought from the locals. We buy them for the small price of 5 discs for \$10, only to find out that they won't play or they were obviously recorded by someone in a theater. All kidding aside, life is as good as can be expected. Leaving behind our loved ones is always one of the hardest things to do. But we are soldiers and realizing we had a job to do, it didn't take long for us to get adjusted. We are all working hard to get the job done so that we can come home.



PRC Team Leaders (Back row, left to right) SSG Whitted, SGT Murphy, SSG Delacruz, SGT McCarthy, SSG Adams, SGT Dudley, SSG Small, SSG Jean Pierre, SGT Factor, SGT Matthews (front row) SGT Crowder, SGT Ingram, SSG Blair, SSG Huerta, SGT Johnson

Never Fear, the PRC Teams are Here!

The month of June brought weeks of hard work and training for 32 members of the 125th Signal Battalion that make up the CJTF-76 Provincial Reconstruction Communication Teams (PRC teams). The soldiers arrived at Bagram at the end of May and immediately began learning the specifics on brand new equipment that will be used at the most remote locations in Afghanistan for the next year. Each of the teams are composed of at least one NCO and one soldier with two National Guard soldiers that will join the team at the remote site. All of the soldiers are excited about their missions and the opportunity to make a difference in Afghanistan.

When asked about what exactly the teams will be doing, SSG Ramos said, "We'll be using high tech equipment that can do everything, voice over IP, NIPR/SIPR, and provides access for STE phone calls." In general, each individual team will be able to provide Internet access, secure phone lines (for all classified information), and a new technology that allows people to use IP addresses to talk on the phone, similar to using the computer network make phone calls. This is all done with extremely compact satellite equipment, compared to what the Army has used in the past. It allows the teams to move quickly to remote sites and achieve amazing reliable communication.

The missions of the PRC teams are so important because they are the "missions that are going to get us out of Afghanistan," said SPC Barth. These teams will allow Afghan villages to have communication as they build up their infrastructure, schools, banks, water systems, roadways, etc. The teams will help get the country back on its feet so U.S. forces can head back home.

(Continued on Next Page)

Written by 1LT Cursha Pierce-Lunderman

Photography by Soldiers of 125th Sig BN

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY PROMOTED SOLDIERS!!

On 1 June, the Battalion recognized soldiers for their hard work and potential by promoting them to their next respective rank. Some of the soldiers had shown so much drive and dedication to duty that they were promoted with waivers ahead of their peers that were senior to them. For example the May Soldier of the Month, now SPC Ferony was promoted because of his dedication and hard work, not simply because the Army said it was time for him to get promoted. The command will continue to recognize over achieving soldiers in this way as long as the soldiers continue to strive for excellence. Congratulations to all of the newly promoted soldiers and NCOs, you have worked hard. Continue to set examples for your peers and do great things for the Army!



Newly promoted SPC Stevens (Second from left) salutes CPT Phillips after being pinned. He is joined by SPC Ladd (far left), SPC Thompson, and SPC Wegner (far right) also promoted that day.

PROMOTIONS EFFECTIVE 1 JUN 2004

SGT to SSG Stewart
PFC to SPC Thompson
PFC to SPC Ferony
PFC to SPC Stevens
PFC to SPC Ladd
PFC to SPC Gant
PFC to SPC Sobering
PFC to SPC Wegner
PV2 to PFC Guttierrez



SPC Gant couldn't be happier as she is pinned by LTC Daley in the Joint Operations Center.

(PRC Teams Continued)

125th Signal Battalion soldiers will be working with Marines, Engineers, Civil Affairs, Logisticians, and all other types of military personnel to achieve this mission at each of their sites. Although the mission sends them far from the comforts of home, the soldiers find satisfaction in the importance of their work. "I'm homesick already," said SPC Barth, "It will be a lot tougher than here at Bagram, rocks and dirt will be all we have. But, when we get back, we'll be able to say we actually did something good in Afghanistan." Most of the PRC teams are already off at their sites doing great things, there are a few teams remaining at Bagram awaiting their equipment and transportation. By the middle of July, all teams should be on their way to making a significant difference in the lives of the Afghan people throughout the country.



Newly promoted SSG Stewart is pinned by LTC Daley in the Joint Operations Center.

Bagram Prayer Breakfast

On June 9th, the 125th Signal Battalion soldiers in Bagram had the honor of spending the morning with the Division Chaplain, LTC Adams-Thompson at the Spiritual Fitness Breakfast. LTC Adams-Thompson has served in the Army for over 20 years and was with the 25th Infantry Division on their last deployment to Vietnam, an honor that very few can claim. The Division Chaplain spoke on the importance of holding on to faith in God and as a result, God will fight your battles for you and keep you safe. LTC Adams-Thompson also used the story of the Exodus as a comparison to the PRC soldiers' current situation. Behind the Jews was a life that they hated, but one of familiarity. In front of them was the Red Sea, full of uncertainty and possible death. At the thought of death, many of the Jews wanted to turn back to the familiar, though painful life with Pharaoh rather than deal with the uncertainty. Many of the soldiers headed out to PRT sites are in a similar situation. Behind them is a life in Helemano Military Reservation, Hawaii, that some complained about and wished for more, but in front of them are remote sites in a foreign country and the threat of combat. Many wish they could just get on the plane and head back to Hawaii than to move forward! But, LTC Adams-Thompson reassured the soldiers that with faith in God, they will be delivered from their enemies, just as Moses and the Jews were delivered from Pharaoh. (Continued on next page)

NCO of the Month and Soldier of the Month



Soldier of the Month, SPC Hammond (Left) and NCO of the Month, SGT Davis (Middle) are recognized by SGM Benyard (Right) with a Battalion coin for their excellence.

On June 2nd, the Battalion held its second Soldier of the Month/NCO of the Month board. Though many soldiers and NCOs made worthy attempts, SPC Hammond and SGT Davis were the ones selected by the judges as the best in the Battalion. SPC Hammond floored the judges by standing up at the end of his session and proudly reciting the Soldiers' Creed. We'll have to wait until July 7th, the next Soldier of the Month board to see if any other soldiers follow SPC Hammond's lead. On July 14th all of the Soldiers and NCOs of the Month board winners from the past months of May, June, and July will compete with each other for the Soldier and NCO of the Quarter. The reward for that distinction is a 4-day pass to Qatar. If the other platoons don't study up, it looks like all of the soldiers competing for the Quarter distinction will be from the FES 65 platoon. They are ready and willing to take it all the way, but the rest of the company is still going to try their best to stop them.



NCO of the Month, SGT Davis, hard at work leading a Company PT session at Bagram Airfield.

(Prayer Breakfast Continued)

The soldiers truly enjoyed their time with the Division Chaplain. "His message really hit home for me," said SPC Barth a member of the Sharanan PRC team, "I used to hate Hawaii before I came here!" LTC Adams-Thompson closed with a prayer for the safety of all soldiers and with words of encouragement that they would all return home safely.

Afghanistan Tour

By 2LT Tedrick

Towards the end of May and into early June, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity of visiting soldiers operating out of Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). To me, this was an exciting change from the everyday routine I had established at Kandahar. I was also very excited that I would get to see more of Afghanistan than just the dusty hot desert of Kandahar. I eagerly packed my duffel and jumped on a Chinook heading towards Orgun-E.

Orgun-E is not very big and is situated about 7,000ft above sea level in the mountains. The plus side is that I did not get lost wandering around the base, even in the dark, because of its size. My accommodations were excellent and I also had the dubious honor of becoming the fourth female on the base (for a week anyway). Some of the things that stand out about Orgun-E are the mud constructed buildings. Even the PX and the billets I stayed in were mud huts! I didn't mind at all because it was a change from the tent that I sleep in back in Kandahar. Also the soldiers maintain a great relationship with the Afghans and the surrounding community. Many of the Afghans smile and greet the soldiers at the base. And watching the camel herds in the morning going by the base is also something you don't see everyday in Hawaii.

After spending a week at Orgun-E, my next stop was FOB Salerno. The base itself is bigger than Orgun-E, but smaller than Kandahar. I got to witness the guys in action; it was interesting to watch the equipment we use for our mission being set up and the installation of new fiber cables to set up an internet network. I had a great time visiting everyone at the FOBs and consider myself lucky that I had the opportunity to do so. I can't wait to visit these bases again, and look forward to doing so in the future.

A Vignette on FOB Shkin

By SPC Vinson

Shkin fire base is located about 4 miles from the Pakistan boarder at an elevation of 7800ft. Being soldiers here at shkin we have very important responsibilities as well as learning other MOS's.

Living conditions here at shkin are not the greatest, but we make due with what we got. The buildings that we all live in are made out of mud and they keep the heat in very well and the lack of air conditioners make it even better.

After hours," when we find the time" are filled with various activities such as basketball, spades, volleyball, dominos, and the occasional rocket attack.



SPC Vinson finishing up a run at FOB Shkin.



SGT Knowles, SGT Devine and SPC Hausmann sit outside their satellite shelter at FOB Shkin.

Picture Break!!

Just a few pics from the Soldiers of 125th Signal Battalion



Yumm!! SGT James proudly displays a jar of pickled pig's feet sent to Kandahar in a care package from home



Let the Good Times Roll!!: PFC Springfield (left) and ISG Beam take a minute out of the BBQ to send some aloha back home

The Salerno Update

By 1LT Howell

Forward Operating Base Salerno received the 125th Signal Battalion on 11 May 2004. Originally the Task Force Salerno personnel and equipment started off in Kandahar as the reserve switch. However, because of the expansion of Salerno, LTC Daley moved personnel and equipment from all over Afghanistan, forming the Task Force Salerno Signal Team (otherwise known as the "A" team). Soldiers and civilians serving at Salerno have combined to make an outstanding Signal Detachment Task Force.

Life at Salerno is rather simple. Soldiers begin the day with morning physical training, followed by breakfast at the Salerno Dining Facility (DFAC). The Salerno DFAC recently acquired two grills used for cooking fresh eggs and making omelets, which has turned into a huge attraction. The Salerno chow hall also serves a dinner meal with steak and lobster tail or crab legs every Friday. Following breakfast the Signal Soldiers and Civilians usually begin work at or around 04:00z (08:30 local time). SFC Dorey, the Detachment First Sergeant describes the day to day at Salerno as "Proud young Americans coming together as a team, striving towards a common goal." Did you guys expect something different from SFC Dorey? Following a shift in the Automations Section, a Switching Shelter or Satellite System soldiers usually retire to the gym or to the MWR facility. On Sunday's at Salerno the Signaleers have started the First Regional Salerno Horse Shoe Tournament. The winners last week were the Head Honchos represented by LT Howell and SFC Dorey. However, SGT New and PV2 Howell (seen below) gave the Head Honchos a run for their money.



In addition to horseshoes, the Task Force Salerno Signaleers participated in the Salerno Football Tournament. The Signaleers did not fare as well without the likes of SSG Page, SGT Bennett and other almost professional players but, the plan is to return to the next Football Tournament remembering that the rules are "no biting or eye gouging."



LT Howell (one of the shortest guys on Salerno) was nominated to play quarterback. Most of the linemen for the Signal Team were over 6 foot tall and completely blocked the path to the wide receivers. Furthermore, the center usually snapped the ball straight to LT Howell's right foot; most think this was a subliminal message trying to get the quarterback to punt. He usually decided to throw interceptions.

Through it all, the Signal soldiers and civilians at Salerno have grown very close to one another and would not trade our meager accommodations for any other base camp. With the leadership of SFC Dorey and some of the finest Noncommissioned Officers in the Army, the Task Force Salerno Signal soldiers and civilians are accomplishing the mission beyond all expectations. We have been on Salerno for almost two months and Task Force's dedication to country and unit have been of the highest caliber. It takes a special kind of person to do the job they are doing and they are very valuable individuals. Furthermore, their personalities and their character are just right for this team and they join the thousands of others who serve our country and are called "America's Finest." Although the temperatures pass one hundred degrees and we are without air conditioning, and the dust and dirt fill our tents and cots, our morale remains high. We all understand that we are making a difference and know that we are changing the world and bettering a nation. Even though we still have a considerable amount of time to serve here, I am thankful that I have individuals like these to help carry the burden of combat.



The soldiers and civilians of Task Force Salerno.

Postcard from Orgun-E

From: SPC Ferdinand Cajandab



Small Extension Node Op., A Company, G71

To all loved ones,
 First of all I would like to say, aloha!
 Secondly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the spouses back in the states for their thoughts, patience and infinite understanding. I also want to thank you for giving us the freedom to concentrate on the mission that my fellow soldiers and I will accomplish. I also know that it is a challenge to be apart but there is a reason for everything. We will be home soon, miss you all. To my wife Melba, I want to thank you for your great understanding, patience, love and care. I'll be back soon. Lastly, take care of yourself and stay healthy. Love you!!

125th Signal Picture Gallery



Here Comes Charlie, Over the Hill: CPT Phillips leads Task Force Charlie on a run at Bagram Air Field



Bagram Jam Session: (Left to right) SPC Aasgard, SPC Magtoto, PFC Springfield, and SPC Rung played a few tunes a recent BBQ



SGT Recinos on the prowl: SGT Recinos finally tracked down Geraldo Rivera in the gym during his recent visit to Kandahar



Umm, maybe I'll just have some chips instead: SPC Garner (left) and CW3 Butler (right) carefully examine the food at the Bagram BBQ



(Back Row, Left to Right) 2LT Tedrick, PFC Lewis, SPC Saelens, SPC Hetzel, SSG Childs, SPC Cajandab, and (Front Row) PFC Bang, PFC Stutler, SPC Valdez stand in front of their TACSAT equipment at FOB Orgun-E

Funny Pics



SGM Benyard Hard at Work: “Yea, is this Domino’s? I need two large pepperonis and a cheese delivered to Bagram, Afghanistan. Can you get it here in 30 minutes or less?”



Always Ready: While the rest of Bagram works busily at the Bagram Joint Operations Center, (Left to Right) 1LT Pierce-Lunderman, 1LT Tavares, and CPT Pittman are on guard protecting the safety of the headquarters. The Military Police wish they were this ready! Get some!