



THE VOICE REPORT



The Latest News from "The Voice of Lightning" 125th Signal Battalion, Bagram Air Field
Friday, July 30, 2004

Task Force Charlie

Welcomes a New Commander



They're all yours! Charlie Commander CPT Poirier (left) and outgoing commander CPT Phillips (right) just after the Change of Command Ceremony.

On July 15th, Task Force Charlie said goodbye to CPT Jesse Phillips after 18 months of command and welcomed CPT Leonard Poirier and his family as the new commander of the largest element in the 125th Signal Battalion.

CPT Phillips kept his words short and heartfelt at the Change of Command ceremony held at Bagram. He thanked his "strong 1SGs," MSG Berry and current 1SG Beam. CPT Phillips also recognized the Platoon Leaders and XO that worked with him while in command, CPT Tavares, 1LT Collymore, 1LT Moyer, 1LT Pflaum, and 1LT Pierce-Lunderman. He also thanked his wife, Iralia, and daughter April for their support throughout the command. Lastly, CPT Phillips thanked, "the amazing soldiers of Charlie Company that always executed the mission they were called to complete." With a few quick pictures and some BBQ after the ceremony, CPT Phillips was off on R& R leave with time to figure out what he will do with the rest of his military career now that Charlie Company has left a huge void in his life.

CPT Poirier wasted no time in picking up right where CPT Phillips left off. He's been in the Army for 11 years so he's had plenty of time to take notes. Over the years CPT Poirier has learned that, "Leadership is what the Army is all about. Someone once said that the purpose of a leader is to create more leaders, not followers," and for his time in command he plans to create as many leaders as he can. The new commander's first priority is to "continue to accomplish the mission here in Afghanistan. Charlie Company has been doing a fantastic job since we got here, providing communications support to teams in this country."

CPT Poirier's second priority is just as important as the first, with taking care of soldiers. "That means providing them with the proper training while deployed to ensure they stay safe, in proper physical shape, and stay proficient at their jobs. It also means taking care of the families back in Hawaii," says CPT Poirier. The third priority is maintaining equipment so that we are able to achieve our mission while deployed and once we return to Hawaii.



CPT Phillips speaks to Task Force Charlie for the last time as the Commander just before the Change of Command ceremony.

CPT Poirier brings much more than his priorities to Task Force Charlie, he's also bringing a unique family and deployment experience that many of us don't have. CPT Poirier's wife, Tracey is currently in Pennsylvania with their family of four children, ranging in age from 4 years old to two weeks, and their two 5 year old dogs. The Poirier children are Emma (4 yrs. old), Beth (2 yrs. old), Will (11 mos.), and John (two wks). Patton and Knightly are the two dogs that round off the Poirier clan. Believe it or not, Tracey Poirier was deployed for a few months last year and CPT Poirier got to play Mr. Mom while she was away. He says, "I know first hand that being the spouse left back home with the children is no easier than being the Soldier deployed. I would be hard pressed to disagree that you have at least as hard a job as we do and I recognize that."

Lastly, CPT Poirier, "would like to thank all the spouses and families of our great Soldiers for your support. Know that your Soldier is doing what they took an oath to do, and what the country needs them to do. Finally, please keep in touch with the Family Readiness Group, which is in a reorganization and rebuilding phase, trying to provide the best support we can to all of you." Meanwhile, the soldiers at Bagram are more than happy to support their new Commander in all the changes to come.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEWLY PROMOTED SOLDIERS!!

On July 1st, the Battalion recognized soldiers for their hard work and potential by promoting them to their next respective rank. This promotion was long awaited for some and an expected reward for others. For example, 1LT Tavares was promoted to Captain this month after serving 14 years enlisted in the Army Reserves and spending the past three years as a Lieutenant. Some other soldiers had overcome some obstacles in their career but still continued to strive for a promotion. On being promoted to Specialist, SPC Schuler said, "I was truly ecstatic when I was promoted. Initially, I had some issues to overcome. Now they're behind me I'm making a comeback and it feels really good."



SPC Schuler and SGT Garner at the NC61/FES65 site at Bagram Airfield.

SPC Garner was promoted to the rank of SGT and is "really thankful. I've worked hard to prepare myself for the role of a Non-Commissioned Officer, and I know I will perform well. I welcome the challenge of training and leading soldiers," he says. SGT Garner quickly saw the difference in becoming a NCO. "People of all ranks treat you with a little more respect than they did before. I feel like I've accomplished one of the goals I set for myself, and I am proud to be a NCO," said SGT Garner. 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!



CPT Tavares (right) and CJTF-76 Chief of Staff Colonel Cardinal (left) just after the promotion ceremony.



From left to right: PFC Williams, Smith, Strider, Stampley, Watkins, Hanson and Sablan are waiting to get promoted to Specialist. SPC Stampley (middle) decides to strike a pose to pass the time.



SGT Wilcox (left) and SGT Henry (right) get promoted to SSG at FOB Salerno.



SSG Scott (middle) is pinned by SSG Phillips (left) and CPT Phillips (right) in front of the Company on July 1st.

FES 65 Sweeps the Soldier/NCO of the Quarter Boards



The Unstoppable FES 65: From Left to Right Back Row: SPC Hammond (Soldier of the Quarter), SPC Eden, SGT Burdette, SPC Reyes. Middle Row: SFC Dawson (Platoon Sergeant), SGT Davis (NCO of the Quarter), SPC Wegner, SSG Davolt. Front Row: SPC Thompson

Many rose to the occasion of the Soldier/NCO of the Quarter Boards, but in the end they were once again defeated by the impressive soldiers and NCOs of FES 65. The Soldier and NCO of the Month Board was held on July 14th at Bagram, soldiers and NCOs from other sites flew in to take part in the competition. The board was composed of soldiers and NCOs that were previous Soldier/NCO of the Month winners for the past three months. They all came together to compete for the best soldier/NCO of the past boards. In the end, SPC Hammond was selected as Soldier of the Quarter and NCO of the Quarter was SGT Davis. Both are members of FES 65, the platoon that has held a soldier or NCO of the month since the boards began in May. When asked why FES 65 has been so successful at the boards, SGT Davis replied, "It is the platoon secret weapon and I am not at liberty to speak on it unless my lawyer is present." So, whatever they've got is pretty powerful and quite effective.

FES 65 Platoon Sergeant SFC Dawson gives the soldiers as much exposure to the board procedure so they can get used to the somewhat stressful atmosphere. "The soldiers competed against each other at the platoon level, through the use of platoon internal mock boards. We then collectively decided which soldier/NCO would represent the platoon at the NCO/Soldier of the month board," said SFC Dawson. Obviously the practice has been extremely helpful. SFC Dawson continues, "Each soldier that has gone before the board and won has told me that our platoon boards were more difficult than the actual board itself. I put them through at least two mock boards prior to them going to the real thing."

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The next board will be on Aug. 4th where FES 65 will send another one of their soldiers, SPC Eden, to have a shot at the title. SFC Dawson says he's "not going to make any promises, but [has] a good feeling that SPC Eden is going to do well."

The best advice SGT Davis can give to others studying for the board is to "get a study buddy, someone who can keep you focused and give you different techniques to remember the answers." We'll have to wait until the next board to see how well soldiers and NCOs heed SGT Davis' advice. Until then, FES 65 is sitting on top with the best soldiers and NCOs in the Battalion.

Tarin Kowt Update

Soldiers of G72 headed out to a little out site called Tarin Kowt just over one month ago. Now that they are into the swing of things in the desert, they are able to send us pictures and notes all about their new home away from home.

Team Supervisor, SSG Fontanez:

"We are supporting an Infantry Battalion with phones, and Internet. That's enough for business talk. For fun we watch movies and wait for mail to come. Much of our spare time is used hand-washing clothes (when there is water, that is). Things are actually looking up some. Things are getting built. The showers even run from time to time!"

Okay, so Tarin Kowt isn't quite the Hilton Hawaiian Resort, but the team still continues to achieve amazing results everyday for the Infantry soldiers out there that depend on them. The satellite team of SGT Budhi, SPC Young, SPC Wilcox, and PFC Fiedler are not pictured here but they play an extremely important part in making sure that communications remain constant at Tarin Kowt.



The soldiers of G72 roughing it in Tarin Kowt: (From left to right) SPC Stoneking, SGT Ryland, SPC Fludd, SSG Fontanez (Team Supervisor)

Work Hard, Play Hard, Rest at Qatar

The bustling city by the sea in Qatar. Home to great restaurants (Chili's to name one) and even better shopping.

It's not quite home, but the beers are cold and the ocean is warm so the soldiers say they'll make due with Qatar for now. Over the last few months, 125th Signal Battalion soldiers have been given the opportunity to go on 4-day passes to the country of Qatar (pronounced anyway from cutter to cut-tar) to take in a little rest and relaxation time. Everyone who's gone so far has come back with rave reviews. SPC Hammond went to Qatar for winning Soldier of the Quarter and his favorite part of the trip was, "swimming in the ocean." SGT Davis, NCO of the Quarter, went to Qatar and not only had fun, but made many new friends. "They had water sports there, a safari, dinner cruise, shopping and much more. And even if you didn't know anyone there, by the end of the trip you'd have met everyone and made a lot of new friends," said SGT Davis. CPT Pittman just enjoyed the low priced shopping, "I just went and bought about 12 pairs of shoes!"

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SGT Davis takes a moment to unwind poolside during her trip to Qatar.

The amenities at the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation facility are a welcomed change from any airfield or forward operating base in Afghanistan. Soldiers can have a massage, manicure, pedicure, or go for a swim in the olympic sized pool. But, the main attraction is the beer since soldiers are not allowed to consume alcohol in a combat zone. At the MWR facility, soldiers are allowed to have up to 3 beers a day just to make sure no one gets unruly during their stay. After three full days of no early wake ups and sunny beach scenery, the soldiers attempt to head back to their base camps. For the past few months, it's taken the soldiers a few extra days to return due to a shortage in flights, but there are few complaints about a little extra R&R time. All soldiers deployed to Afghanistan get the opportunity to take a 4-day pass to Qatar in addition to their 2-week leave to the location of their choice. Soldiers are allowed to take 4-day passes until 2 months before our redeployment to Hawaii and they all plan to take advantage of the opportunity until then.

The Shkin Beat

The teams at Shkin are due to change locations in the near future, so they have been busy with preparations. No, they won't be headed home, just to another location to provide outstanding communication to more soldiers. But, the teams are still hard at work doing everything that needs to make the mission successful. They're still guarding the post and running phones and internet where ever it needs to go. They've also made a reputation for themselves in sling loading, attaching equipment to a helicopter for air transport from one site to another. So helping out the other units located at Shkin keeps them busy also. Team Supervisor, SSG Roscoe says, "The morale is good and everyone's spirits are up. If we are not on shift you can either find us at the gym lifting weights, running around the compound, or just relaxing in the sleep area." The site has also become a secret hide away for other members of Alpha Company, "for some reason our chain of command has been coming out more frequently to visit us. I guess they need a break from Kandahar!" says SSG Roscoe.



A classic sling load, above is a Chinook helicopter with a Humvee sling loaded for transportation to another site.

The Warrior Civilians of Salerno

Written by Tim Cathers

You may see us casually walking the dusty streets of Salerno wearing khaki shorts, flip flops, the odd T-shirt, and even the occasional aloha attire. But, you will also see us in DCUs stacking sandbags, digging trenches, and hitting the bunkers in helmet and flack vest. Most importantly, you will observe us doing what we do best, keeping the communications up.

The employees of Engineering Solutions and Products (ESP) are a vital part of the 125th Signal Battalion C4ISR package here in Afghanistan. We are testing and proving equipment, soon to be added to the Army's communications arsenal.

With over 100 years military experience between the team of eight, we know how to fit in and are proud to serve with the soldiers. "These are the most talented individuals I have ever worked with. Our team is made up of retired and former military members from the Army, Navy, and Air Force," brags the C4ISR manager, Barbara Carter. Each of us was put through a tough and thorough screening before being hired and sent here.

The little off time afforded us is spent sleeping, reading, working out, and watching cheap DVDs. Some of our members join in with soldiers during sporting events and other leisure activities.

Being civilians, it has been a while, for most of us, since we have lived in field conditions. Most are adjusting very well. However, we do have some complaints. The dust, lack of pavement, eating an MRE once a day, and no family close by is tough to cope with. Ms. Carter also complains that things are not all rosy at times, "I hate rats and snakes. And what did we have in our tent last week? A poisonous viper eating a rat."

Any of us could up and quit and go home right now. Why do we stay? We know the mission is important, the soldiers we work with are awesome, and we take care of one another. In this war on terrorism, none of us can think of a better way to do our part.



The Hard Core Warrior Civilians of FOB Salerno

Deciding to Stay Army

Despite the war on terrorism and the hardships of combat, soldiers in the 125th Signal Battalion are deciding that they'll continue to stay in the Army and give their best effort to protect American freedom. Until the end of the fiscal year, October 1st, soldiers are being greatly rewarded with a reenlistment bonus of \$10,000 for staying with the Army for an additional six years of service. Others soldiers are choosing to reenlist for the opportunity to serve in the Army's new Stryker Brigade. The advantage of soldiers reenlisting while these options are open is that they get to choose where they would like to go in the near future instead of waiting for the Army to decide their next position. In that situation both parties win, the Army keeps an outstanding soldier/NCO and the service member gets to make an important decision for their career future. However, the reenlistment options won't last forever, once September ends, there are no guarantees. The soldiers you see below didn't want to take any chances on missing out on this great opportunity. Many others are following suit.



SSG Fontanez (far right) reenlists for six more years with the Army just outside of 125th Signal Battalion Headquarters.



SGT Maciejewski (right) also decided to Stay Army

Postcard from Bagram

From: SGT Sean Coyle



Network Technician, CJ6, C Company

To the Voice Family,

First, I would like to say to my wife, Tammy and my children Tricia, Adonis, and Teirnan, I love and miss you guys. Babe, you are doing a great job with the kids, "please send more OREO DOUBLE STUFF." To the families of the C Company 125th Signal BN, Be proud of your loved ones. The missions that they are carrying out are very important and sometimes not easy tasks. Moms and dads, I am sure that your job at home is a far tougher mission at times. Thank you for taking care of us when we are home and missing us when we are away. But most of all thank you for all of your love and support. Finally, everyone at home be safe and see you soon.

Love and Life!!!

125th Signal Picture Gallery



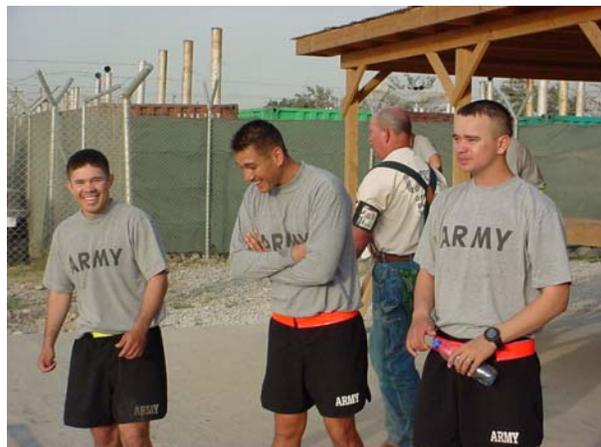
Hard Work! SSG Whitted (far right) takes a moment to pause and take in the scenery of Bamyan, Afghanistan with his New Zealand counterparts.



Meanwhile, back at the site: SSG Whitted's soldiers (Left to Right: SGT Dixon, SPC Ward, and SGT Lowe) huddle together behind their dish for a piece of shade from the merciless sun.



We made our own NBA (sort of!) SFC Garrett (front left) gives SSG Perez (middle) and SGT Parks (rear) a run for their money on the Bagram Basketball court.



You've GOT to be kidding me! (From left to right) PFC Zuniga, SPC Ferrell, and SGT Parks take some time out to watch the fast paced, no holds barred, basketball game in full swing.

Task Force Charlie Company Run



Follow Me! CPT Poirier leads the Company on a run at Bagram.



He's running me crazy! ISG Beam feeling good and having fun.



Are we there yet? SFC Kent keeps on pushing during the Company Run



Energy to spare: SPC Carrion (Charlie Co. Soldier of the Month) brushes up on his rope climbing skills after the run.

Bagram Airfield 4th of July 10K Fun Run



Soldiers from TF Charlie, completed a 10K (6.2 mile) Run in honor of Independence Day. The proceeds from the run went to the families of wounded and deceased soldiers from Afghanistan and Iraq deployments.



SGTs Stephanie and Jeff Hughes are overjoyed to be finished with the Fun Run.



Soldiers of Task Force Charlie had dinner with Brigadier General Foley (middle) at Bagram Airfield. Gen. Foley is the communications advisor to the commander of Iraq and Afghanistan troops.



The hard working soldiers of Shkin with CPT Ali on a recent visit.

Funny Pics



Come on, SSG Roscoe, just a quick kiss: SSG Roscoe fends off the advances of a friendly camel at Shkin.



Sometimes your favorite hat will make it all better: SSG Henderson (middle) models his favorite hat at Salerno.