

Commander

Out with 2010 and in with 2011. We all welcome in the New Year, with 7 months to go we all have great hopes for 2011. February with its cold weather and glumly sky's is not the cheeriest of months but we have a few things to look forward too. First theirs the Super bowl and a close second is Valentine's Day.

Thank to the FRG we all have Super Bowl chips and dip, summer sausage and party favors. The game comes on at 04:00 AM. The hard corps fans will watch the game regardless of the time. I have a feeling the rest will get some sleep and see the highlights and the score in the morning.

I would imagine most of you know that we have moves our aircraft and Command Post to the East side of the runway, although the move was challenging, we are still living on the West side of the runway. This move has made us all reliant on public transportation. Busses run every ½ hour. But all in all, this entire move should be a good one. When we get into our new digs, we will all see that this is much better deal for all of us.

All the Smugglers are doing a great job here. We are doing a lot of flying considering it is winter in Afghanistan. Thanks for all the support.

CPT Hilzendager

P.S. CW4 Pettit is a nifty fifty, years old this month. Congratulations!

First Platoon

Smuggler Family and Friends,

This newsletter marks the passing of another month here in Afghanistan, and it marks the start of a new year. 2011 is off to a great start, and 1st Platoon is leading the way. After nearly three months in theater, we have finally found a solid battle rhythm and are actively participating in daily missions. Although the flow of care-packages has settled since the passing of the holidays, we have managed to stockpile quite a few boxes, which should provide snacks for months to come. Birthdays to be celebrated this month are SPC Floyd, SPC Lopez, and CW4 Pettit. Congrats to all those Soldiers.

This past month we have gained three new 1st Platoon Smugglers: CW4 Loveless, SPC Laird, and PFC Bryant. CW4 Loveless is a Maintenance Test Pilot, which is a much needed asset here and will help take some of the load off CW4 Jones and CW4 Bohannon, our other MTP's. Additionally, SPC Laird and PFC Bryant add combat power by filling the crucial roles of crew chiefs and maintainers. SPC Mills was temporarily reassigned to another company in Task Force Phoenix, to help fill some voids in that company; he should return to us in a couple months. We still see him daily and he is doing well.

Bagram was finally "blessed" with snow the other day for the first time this year. It snowed for only about five minutes, and there was no accumulation; however, the mountains surrounding us are now covered with snow, which makes everything appear quite scenic. The temperature is still very cold, especially at night, but things should start heating up by the time March rolls around.

SGT Fransen and SSG Guzman will be returning from R&R soon; both of these Soldiers lucked out and got a few extra days leave because of the freak snow storm down south. It will be great to get these two NCO's back in the fight. SPC Hubbard and SPC Lopez are both leaving for R&R this month.

All in all, things are going well in 1st Platoon. Everyone is working hard and it is evident. We look forward to reuniting with our families, but are staying focused for the time being.

Best,

1st Platoon

Second Platoon

The year 2011 was greeted in different ways for 2nd Platoon. Some of the platoon was out flying, others attended New Year's festivities and watched the ball drop on Bagram, while others at the stroke of midnight cracked open a can of Becks Non-Alcoholic Beer, smoked a cigar and then went back to work.

The month of January was a good month for 2nd Platoon, with the arrival of the colder months over here; the operation tempo has slowed down some which means less flights. You ask some of the Crew Chiefs and they will say that is the only negative thing about this time of year. Historically this is normal for Afghanistan and things will pick up when it gets warmer; good news for our Crew Chiefs and pilots alike who came over here to fly and love what they do. As SPC Andrew Dillon stated on one flight "any day you can fly is a good day" He said this at 10,000 feet and minus 1 degree! Flying with doors open, manning a gun through the mountains can get a little chilly. Luckily the Crews have what they call Mustang Suits that help keep them warm. I personally believe what our Crew Chiefs do on a daily basis is under appreciated. The credit goes to SFC Lord, SGT Burchette, SGT Smith, SPC Dillon, PFC Pezoa, PFC Gibson, SGT Parsons, SGT Dietz, SGT Wood, PFC Agader, PFC Abrom, and PFC Khera—the maintainers of 2nd Platoon who are the unsung heroes who work hard to keep the Blackhawks flying and in operational order.

The pilots of 2nd Platoon: CW4 Bohanon and CW3 DelValle are our seasoned and experienced combat aviators who continue to mentor and develop the rest of the platoon pilots: CW2 Argus, CW2 Butler, CW2 Long, CW2 Higgins, CW2 Steward and CW2 Wilson. I have seen firsthand the growing of our aviators and the increase in their self confidence.

A Company had the privilege this month to be visited by Chief of the Army Reserve, Lt General Jack Stultz. His visit was quite pleasant and he spoke about the bright future of Army Reserve Aviation. It's not every day you can speak freely to the Chief of the Army Reserve and the members of 2nd platoon enjoyed speaking to him. In an article about General Stultz visit in the Army Reserve Web Portal he is quoted saying:

"This is a totally different Army and a totally different Army Reserve than when I entered back in the 70s. Our Nation, I don't think really understands or appreciates what you do," explained Stultz. "These are soldiers who have jobs, have families, have homes that are willing to leave that to go serve their country and risk their lives." I think that pretty much sums it up.

2nd Platoon has had a good start to 2011 and we hope to continue to do great things here until the time we can come home. We would like to thank once again the support from family and friends back home and the letters and care packages that still trickle in. Until next month keep A Company in your thoughts and prayers as we will all of you back home and that you stay safe.

1LT James Bukovec

This week's featured Soldier is SGT Joseph Smith. SGT Smith is a 28 year old from Chesapeake, VA, where he lives with his wife Jessica and their two daughters, Haley and Hannah. SGT Smith was one of the individuals who volunteered to join the Smugglers for this deployment; his home unit works out of FT Eustis, VA. Back in the rear, SGT Smith is a Close Quarters Battle (CBQ) instructor at a local Joint Task Force Base, where he teaches Soldiers, Marines, and Sailors basic instruction in CBQ. Additionally, he uses his Army Combatives Level 3 training to volunteer at the local YMCA teaching a free women's self-defense course.

Primarily a 15P, an Aviation Operations Specialist, SGT Smith's primary role for the deployment is a door gunner. His goal is to achieve 500 flight hours in combat throughout the deployment. In addition to his flying duties, SGT Smith still assists Task Force Phoenix by managing the Smugglers' Flight Records for 46 Soldiers. Balancing two jobs might be a struggle for some, but SGT Smith handles both of his duties professionally and skillfully. Furthermore, SGT Smith is currently taking courses from Embry Riddle University with a focus on Aviation Safety and Operations. He is an extremely hard worker, a pleasure to be around, and a great asset to the Smugglers.