

PHOENIX RISING

TASK FORCE PHOENIX NEWSLETTER



Photo by Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown

Task Force Phoenix Embry-Riddle Alumni pose for a photo in front of a UH-60 Blackhawk in the beginning of May.

“No matter how long the winter, spring is sure to follow.”



Task Force Phoenix Commander's Corner

Dear Phoenix Family, friends and fans,

I think summer came early to Afghanistan this year. The temperatures are close to 100 degrees and the sun shines brightly just about every day. All the aircrews who used to love the day trips to Jalalabad in the winter now dread flying to that smoking hot, humid "little piece of heaven." By all standards, Bagram is much cooler and Jalalabad is more like North Carolina in July. The famed 120 days of winds are definitely here in force and make for some bouncy, fun and sometimes sickening flights for the passengers. We're all doing our best to keep the air circulating in the back of the aircraft and we are quick to offer small trash bags for the ill. With the good weather comes more flying and our Soldiers are breaking records daily. To witness their efforts on a daily basis is humbling. We've got quite an amazing team here. The fact that R and R is in full stride makes their efforts all the more impressive. Our mechanics are faster and more efficient than ever. Our fuel Soldiers are the best and fastest in Regional Command East. Our MEDEVAC continues to set record times and support to the ground warriors. Our gun pilots are taking it to the enemy and having a lasting effect. Our cargo and utility pilots are the best in the business and our staff is keeping it all together. I'm very proud of this team.

This month, we will witness the change of command for C/2-10 Assault "Warlords." Cpt. James Polk will relinquish command to Cpt. Kristen Beyer. James has twice commanded in this battalion in Iraq and Afghanistan. He expertly led the Warlords to new heights and we are glad to keep him and his wife Shannon in our ranks. Cpt. Beyer is a former Phoenix Soldier and we look forward to her continuing the outstanding leadership traditions of the Warlords.

We also bid farewell to the Soldiers of B/1-168 - CH-47 - from the Oregon/Washington National Guard who briefly joined our ranks for the past two months. They performed superbly and we wish them all safe travels. We welcome back to our Phoenix ranks, Soldiers of B/7-158th USAR out of Kansas. We are excited to have them back on the team. It has been five years since we've worked with this unit in Afghanistan.

I'd like to wish the Phoenix families a safe, healthy and happy summer.

"FEEL THE BURN"
LTC Dennis J. McKernan

"To read a poem in January is as lovely as to go for a walk in June."



CSM CORNER

Dear Phoenix Family and Friends,

I am on leave. What more can I say?

Have a wonderful month and remember to be safe!!

*“It is the month of June,
The month of leaves and roses,
When pleasant sights salute the eyes,
And pleasant scents the noses.”*







*Helicopter maintainer
continues family
aviation tradition*

By Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown

The 23-year-old OH-58 Kiowa helicopter maintainer from Sahuarita, Ariz., grew up with aviation heritage coursing through his veins. His grandfather retired from the Air Force, his father served with the Air Force for five years, and his grandmother worked on Rolls-Royce helicopter engines.

U.S. Army Spc. Wayne Montgomery, Company C “Blue Max”, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, TF Falcon, said he followed his family tradition with enthusiasm.

Montgomery said he cannot imagine doing anything but aviation; it was only natural when he began his Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Aeronautical Management Technology at Arizona State University in August 2005.

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Joseph King from York, Pa., and Montgomery’s platoon sergeant in Company C, reflected on his Soldier’s interest in aviation.

“He wanted to be both (a pilot and mechanic),” said King, “He went to school to become a pilot before joining the military and then took up the wrench (in the Army) to understand certain fundamentals of the field.”

Montgomery said his deep-rooted passion for the aviation field keeps him motivated.

“Just about everyone loves flying,” said Montgomery, “It’s a very rewarding job. Plus, not everyone can say they work on helicopters.”

As he’s turning wrenches on his assigned aircraft, Montgomery said he feels satisfied knowing he is doing everything to standard - providing each pilot with a dependable aircraft.

*“Oh, my love's like a red, red rose, That's newly sprung in June;
Oh, my love's like the melodie That's sweetly played in tune.”*

Montgomery said he enjoys the friendly competition among his fellow mechanics on whose aircraft is the best.

“You wouldn’t send your child to tee-ball and dislike them when they don’t do well,” said Montgomery with a laugh. “You would take pride in them and support them. It’s the same for our aircraft.”

Montgomery’s unit is the only one in the task force that fully supports two airframes. This has provided him an opportunity to learn how to maintain the AH-64 Apache helicopter as well.

“Learning how to work on a different airframe

breaks up the monotony,” said Montgomery. “It is also good cross-training.”

King said he knows Montgomery will make a great Army leader in the field of aviation.

“I think that he put it best when he went in front of the promotion board,” said King. “Montgomery was asked by 1st Sgt. Howard, why is it that with his high test scores did he want to come in as a mechanic? Montgomery simply stated that he did it because the best male role models of his life – his father and grandfather - were aircraft mechanics. That told me right there, he (is in the Army) to learn what he can from any and everybody and then to be able to pass it along to those who will be working under him soon - exactly what an NCO should do.”



*“It is better to be a young June-bug,
than an old bird of paradise.”*

10th CAB soldiers commemorate fallen aviators

Chaplain (Capt.) Robert Hearon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, TF Falcon, conducted a moment of silence in front of the CH-47 Chinook helicopter whose crew dedicated their flight May 5 to Colossal 31, the call sign of the crew of six who were killed May 5, 2006.



By Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown

May 5 marked five years since the crew aboard a CH-47 Chinook helicopter, call sign Colossal 31, were killed when their aircraft went down in Kunar province while conducting combat operations in 2006.

The six aviators were all members of Company B, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, 10th Mountain Division (LI), of Fort Drum, N.Y.

Since the original Company B, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, was transferred and attached to another task force in March, Company B, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, a National Guard unit from Washington state, attached to 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Phoenix, 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, TF Falcon, was asked if they would dedicate a flight May 5 from Bagram Air field, Afghanistan, to honor those who gave their lives five years ago.

The six aviators who were lost that day were U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Eric W. Totten, U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher B. Donaldson, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Christopher T. Howick, U.S. Army Sgt. Bryan A. Brewster, U.S. Army Sgt. John C. Griffith, and U.S. Army Sgt. Jeffery S. Wiekamp.

“If a June night could talk, it would probably boast it invented romance.”

U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Robert Hearon, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, TF Phoenix, 10th CAB, 10th Mountain Division, TF Falcon, conducted a moment of silence in front of the CH-47 conducting the Colossal 31 dedication flight.

“I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the men of Colossal 31,” said U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Robert Hearon, TF Phoenix chaplain from Greenville, S.C., “Their unfortunate passing is a reminder to us all of the price that’s paid for freedom. May their memories live on forever, and may their families be blessed!”

Those who were in 10th CAB during the event expressed varying emotions. Many who were close to those on Colossal 31 found it difficult to find the words to express themselves.

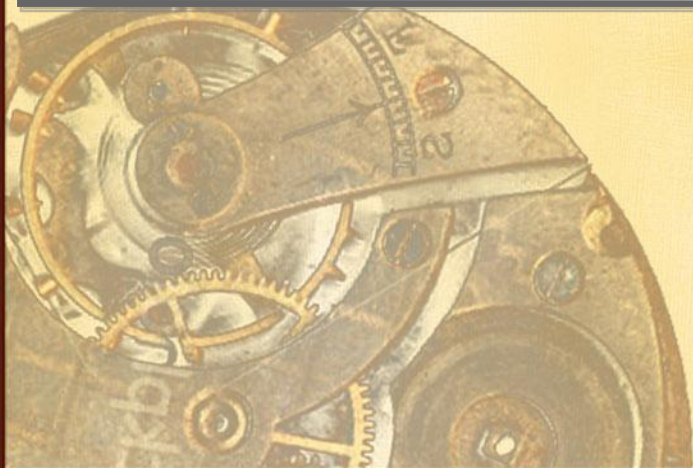
“I find myself trying not to think of the loss that was sustained five years ago,” said U.S. Army First Sgt. William Howard, the current first sergeant of Co. B “Colossal”, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, which is currently attached to TF Shooter, 10th CAB, 10th Mountain Division, TF Falcon, “For those of us who knew them we’ll remember them in our own way.”

Company B, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment does something each year to honor those who have fallen, said Howard. This year, the unit is providing a tribute to each fallen aviator by painting each name on a Chinook.

“If you were to walk the “Colossal” flight line here at [Forward Operating Base] Fenty, you [would] find that every aircraft is emblazoned with the red and white of the U.S. cavalry flag,” said Howard, “By [May 5], each flag will have [the name of] one of the six soldiers from Colossal 31 painted in the white portion of the flag on every aircraft.”

Memorial ceremonies are meant to honor the sacrifices of the fallen and their Families, said U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Dvorsky, command sergeant major of TF Phoenix, 10th CAB, 10th Mountain Division, TF Falcon.

“This year, not unlike each year since the event, we honor those Soldiers and Families who provided the ultimate sacrifice to their country,” said Dvorsky, of Trumbull, Conn., “The least we can do to recognize our fallen aviators is take a few moments out of our day to remember those who have given their lives to the unit and country.”



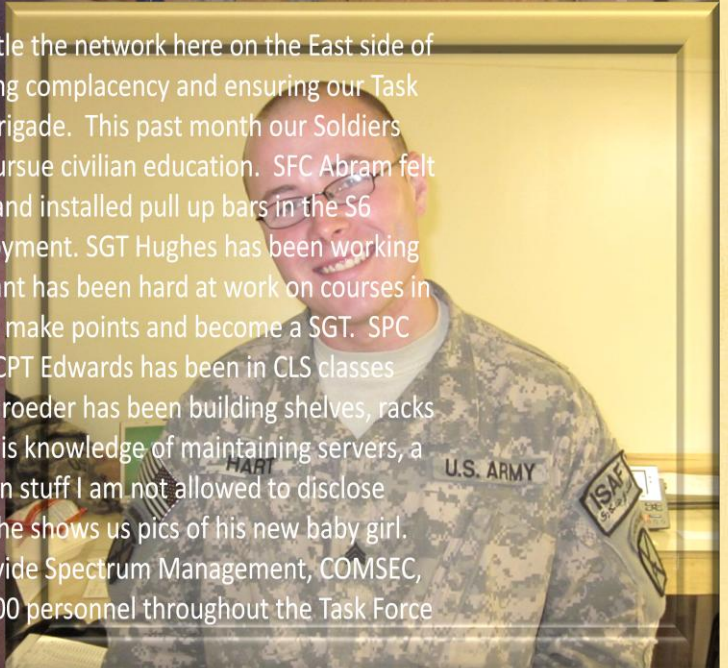
“The summer night is like a perfection of thought.”

HHHC

PHOENIX S6



Welcome to the S6 Page! This May has been busy as we settle the network here on the East side of Bagram. As steady state kicks in, we remain vigilant in battling complacency and ensuring our Task Force members get the best commo support in the Falcon Brigade. This past month our Soldiers continued to cross train, refine our basic Soldier skills, and pursue civilian education. SFC Abram felt it was important to get some additional PT as he purchased and installed pull up bars in the S6 office. He has lost close to 40 lbs since the start of the deployment. SGT Hughes has been working online college courses working to obtain a degree. SPC Vanzant has been hard at work on courses in networking and software engineering on Skill Port looking to make points and become a SGT. SPC Stewart has been following the market and making money. CPT Edwards has been in CLS classes learning how to provide field care in a combat zone. SPC Schroeder has been building shelves, racks and entire commo rooms! SGT Holley continues to expand his knowledge of maintaining servers, a job reserved for a warrant officer! SGT Hart... he's working on stuff I am not allowed to disclose over this medium, but he continues to work with a smile, as he shows us pics of his new baby girl. All-in-all, this S6 shop continues to do what it does best, provide Spectrum Management, COMSEC, Information Assurance, Voice and Data services for almost 700 personnel throughout the Task Force 24/7. It's a big job for a hand full of people.



“Among the delights of summer were picnics to the woods.”

ARCH



ANGELS

Greetings ArchAngel Family and Friends!

Another month is behind us and we are all looking forward to putting this deployment in our rear-view mirrors...that being said, the company continues to please and impress the chain of command with their diligence and professionalism. On any given day the company flies more than 50 hours per day, in temperatures in excess of 100 degrees, with only the solace that they get to rinse and repeat tomorrow. Our company average is more than 840 hours in one month. These are all gee whiz facts until you sit back and realize that your Soldiers are quiet heroes, in that every day they get up before breakfast is served, move out to their helicopters and complete every elaborate plan to support the ground force commanders with aplomb and expertise. I am truly humbled everyday to serve with this company of heroes.

The company had to say farewell to our beloved Platoon Leaders, CPT Christopher Saager and CPT Michael Pinter. The guys are on to bigger and better jobs, spreading the occupational knowledge that they have gleaned from their time with the ArchAngels. We will miss them dearly, and they will always be ArchAngels, we wish them luck as CPT Pinter goes to take charge of the D/3-10 Maintenance Platoon, and CPT Saager goes to lead the Air Mission Planning cell within the Battalion Operations Center. To take up the tremendous position of platoon leader, we welcome 1LT Kyle Eberly (1st Platoon) and 1LT Kyle Wilhelm (2nd Platoon). 1LT Eberly comes to us from the Battalion Operations Center, Air Mission Planning cell and 1LT Wilhelm comes to us from D/3-10 Maintenance Platoon.

May brought us a DES (Directorate of Evaluation and Standardization) visit. DES is a group of aviation subject matter experts who assist Aviation Commanders get an outside assessment. The high flying hour OP-TEMPO in theater can sometimes be a recipe for complacency as aviators conduct the same missions day in and day out. DES visits to theater help units combat this hidden enemy. The ArchAngels did very well during the DES visit, continuing to prove that we are consummate professionals that learn and grow each day with safety in the forefront of our mission. May also brought us CW3 Michael Fusilier, the 1st CAV Commanding General designated pilot and WO1 Clint Young. While CW3 Fusilier graciously stepped into CW3 Henry Bayer's shoes after he redeployed with 101st Airborne Division, WO1 Young ingratiated the company to his positive can-do attitude, he brings out the best in all of us. We are very excited to welcome both aviators and as with CW3 Bayer, they fit right in.

Take care and enjoy the summer, we are all wishing we were there to enjoy it with you.

"No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn."

C Company Blue Max



Recently promoted Sgt. Drosten.

By First Sgt. Tim Clay

I hope that early summer finds you well. We are doing well here, and our weather is warming nicely.

May was a good month for Blue Max, as we have continued to improve the facilities here. We are able to do more now that it is warmer, with little or no rain. The winds here, however, are incredible. We have daily winds of 40 miles per hour, all day. We are dealing with this the best we can.

I am proud to announce again that we were able to promote a deserving Soldier to SGT. SGT Drosten has worked hard to earn this rank and I think he will fill the role well. I look forward to see how he performs as an NCO. Also, SPC Langbehn won Soldier of the Quarter and will compete at the next level, this month. SGT Stewart and SPC Langbehn

both won the NCO and the Soldier of the Month, and are representing the Company very well with their performance. I applaud them for the hard work in preparing for this competition.

All is not lost with our gym. The NCOs, Officers and Soldiers having been working very hard to build a new gym compound and it is working nicely. It will be air conditioned, as the old one was not, and have designated cardio and boxing areas. I think it will work out well, and the Soldiers are already using one of the facilities. Pictures to follow in next month's letter.

A special thanks to the groups and individuals who sent so many packages to us here. We are still enjoying the things you have sent. Thank you.

For the Spouses, kids and other loved ones, thank you for continued support.

"In summer, the song sings itself."

C Company Warlords

Out with the Old In with the New

By Capt. James Polk

Warlord Families and friends,

Summer is fast approaching and I'm sure it is a welcomed sight at Fort Drum and the other parts of the country we have Families, as it sure is here. The temperature is rising and the winds are gusting, which makes for interesting flying here in Afghanistan. With the beginning of a new season soon, brings another change for the company. On the 10th of June, I will be changing command and passing the Guidon to CPT Kristen Beyer. To say it has been a pleasure and honor serving your Soldiers - is truly an understatement. Over the course of the last year, I have been blessed to have served with some of the greatest Soldiers in the Army, as well as get to know some of the greatest spouses, children, mothers and fathers; to whom much credit is deserved. As a company we have endured a short chaotic 12 month dwell, flying all across the United States several times for high altitude training, moving aircraft to Fort Stewart, and attending the ATX at Fort Rucker. We have endured the hardships of deployment, multiple moves, and a never ending mission set. We have shared the joys of births, the sadness of deaths, and the loneliness of separation. I have always asked for more and you all have always given, without hesitation, with-out reservation, and without complaint. To have known each and every one of you has made me a better Soldier, leader, and person. Shannon and I will truly miss each and every one of you, and will always hold this company, Soldiers, and Families close to our hearts.

Thanks for your friendship and service!

Air Assault!



*“All June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves.”*

C Company Dustoff

Staying Positive - Preparing to go Home



By Spc. Christian Hinrichsen

Well, the month of May is coming to a close. Our calendars are almost full of X's, our last R&R leave has packed and repacked his bags, and the heat is bordering unbearable.

However, very little has changed. We still find bird nests in our aircraft - masterfully constructed over night. Our training has remained at a steady state. Our biggest focus is keeping a rhythm and remembering the basics. Oh, and finding little fun everyday; as you may see in our pictures.

As our time here slowly ticks by it amazes me how tight knit we are here. Even as a 4th platoon member coming back from Bagram Airfield, I can see the tangible cords of individuals bound together by extraordinary events. We are all set on our two tasks - complete the mission and come home to our Families.



Dustoff Soldiers break in their Stetsons with an old tradition of drinking from their hat before putting it on their head.



CW2 Sabiston, SSG Pelkey, CPT Lall, SGT Reyes, and CW3 Langa receiving their Stetsons.

*“So here’s to all those summer nights when my feet hit the sand,
and the waves break my fall, and all my friends around me out-number the stars.”*

D Company

By Cpt. Michael Flint

May was a busy month! We started off with the promotion of a great Soldier. Spc. Godbout is now Sgt. Godbout. He will undoubtedly continue working hard and leading Soldiers just as he has been doing since I took command over a year ago. Congratulations!

We also said goodbye to our Washington/Oregon National Guard friends and welcomed the team from Kansas/Nebraska. The unit continues to redefine “steady state” especially in terms of personnel moves. I am certain this is not the last of it.

I would like to welcome Cpt. Pinter to the formation as our new maintenance platoon leader. Mike Pinter is a former A Company flight platoon leader that has continually expressed an interest in being in the maintenance world. We look forward to having him lead the platoon. Our most recent officer loss was First Lt. Wilhelm. Kyle is taking over Mike’s old platoon in A Company and is very deserving of the opportunity to continue to lead Soldiers. The Dukes will certainly miss having him around. Best of luck, Lieutenant!



“Summer is where the girls go barefoot and their hearts are just as free as their toes.”

E C o m p a n y

By Pfc. Matt Sauve

It's been seven months since Task Force Phoenix and the Executioners took that fateful step off the C-130 and set foot on the dusty Afghan trail. At the time, feelings were mixed. First-time deployers, such as me, were unsure what to expect. Some of the more seasoned veterans, on the other hand, gave more of a "here we go again" type of vibe. There was one piece of advice though, that I for one took solace in. LTC Dennis McKernan, our battalion commander, told us to think of our year-long excursion as "a time of cleansing." It was to be a time to take care of our bodies and minds; a time during which we wouldn't have the luxuries and distractions of America to stray us from our goals.

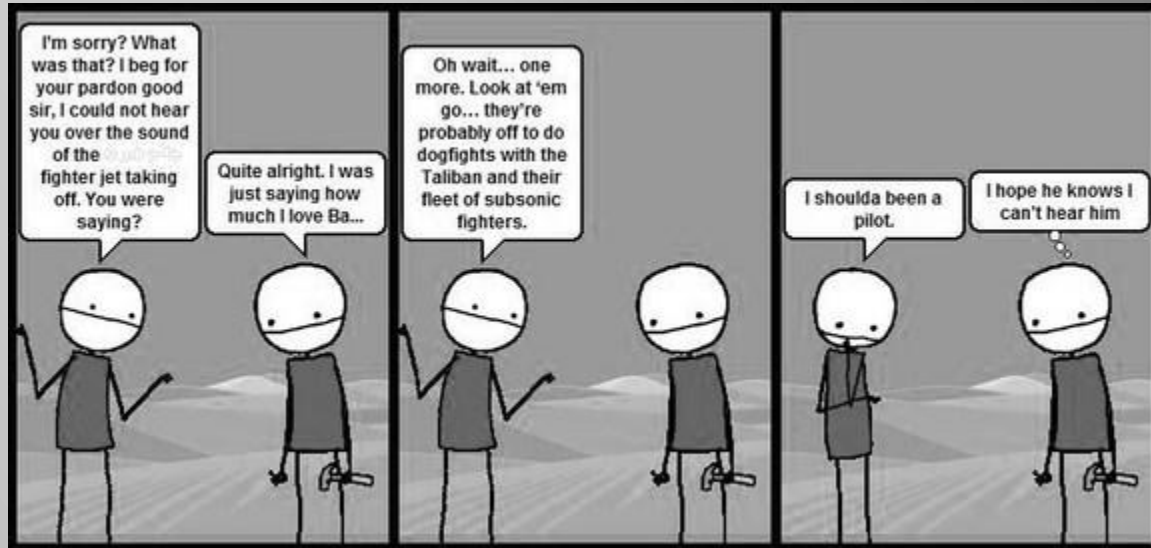
We've all found different ways to better ourselves during our tour. First, and arguably most important, is a higher level physical fitness. We all want that perfect beach body, if not to be more attractive for our prospective mates, then at least to feel better about ourselves. It's not a completely unreasonable goal, seeing as how there are an extremely limited variety of activities one can take part in here. There's, generally speaking, only three things that most soldiers do over here: first of which is watching movies or playing video games. There are only so many movies one can watch or video games one can play, however, before it gets old and boring. Secondly, there's talking to friends and family on the phone and Internet. As much as we all enjoy hearing the voices and seeing the faces of our loved ones (whom we all miss very much, by the way), there's really only so much one can say before eventually hanging up or logging off. So this brings us to our third activity: going to the gym or going for a jog. Not only is this the perfect way to blow off steam, it's also the perfect way to improve yourself, both mentally and physically. It's the ultimate confidence booster: looking at yourself in the mirror and seeing the person you do not want to be dissipating, and looking at your PT test score and seeing that you did twenty more pushups, twenty more sit-ups, and shed two minutes off your two-mile run time. I'm extremely proud of my fellow Echo Company Soldiers who've lost up to forty pounds and gained rank by increasing their PT scores.

Soldiers here have also found ways to improve themselves financially. You'd be surprised to find out just how many ways there are to blow all of your hard-earned deployment pay here. Things like Subway and Pizza Hut, video games, movies, jewelry, and energy drinks are common deterrents to financial success in Afghanistan. For the most part though, Echo Company Soldiers are more disciplined than to waste their money on such things. Common themes that I keep hearing about are buying cars and houses. Those are probably the two most important assets that you can acquire, and it's good to see that most of our heads are in the right place. For those who have had trouble, however, financial classes have been available to help them get back on track, and our soldiers have been taking full advantage of them.

Your Echo Company Soldiers, I'm pleased to report, are on a very promising road to personal and professional success. Our return to the States at the end of the year will mark the culmination of an entire year of positive changes, and you should all be very pleased with the amazing progress of your soldiers.

"There shall be eternal summer in the grateful heart."

Bagram Airfield Humor



Reasons Why I Love Bagram

Reason #:

9. Dudes who grunt loudly when bench pressing at the MWR.
14. Loud F15's - both of them.
32. Gravel
41. The bird tree
49. The regions unique and convenient -30 minute time zone
93. Driving down the road dodging the Soldiers who are trying to play "Frogger" to cross the street.
96. Because everybody complains about it but have probably never been out at a REAL FOB.
99. The blue splash.
120. "Linens only, sorry."
174. Awkwardly standing there while you wait for those two jets to finish interrupting your conversation with the person standing two feet away from you.
209. Saying goodbye to people who got here after you.
214. Being attacked by moths that the millions of birds in the bird tree don't seem to like eating.
280. How the Bagram "Boston" Marathon takes precedence over any and all OTW (outside the wire) missions.
314. People taking the name of this website seriously.
360. Getting your vehicle impounded for not wearing a seat belt in a war zone driving at 15 MPH.
374. The salad bar with no lettuce.
392. Because the Taliban termites are slowly eating the building around me.
398. Because I had a dream about gravel last night.
440. My sandwich with one piece of ham and a slice of cheese. Oh sandwich bar how grateful we are for your services.
447. Living next to "Klub Koele" listening to the bass at night when I have a 0500 take off time.
463. Wishing the big voice would just one time, announce, "Attention Wal-Mart shoppers..."
553. "I'M SORRY I CAN'T HEAR YOU OVER HOW AWESOME THE FLIGHT LINE IS!!!"
555. The high quality freshly unfrozen food FLUOR manages to almost cook.

TF Phoenix Almost Home Cookout



Sunday 19 June 2011

Food begins at 1700

Events begin at 1800

Sumo Wrestling

Karaoke

Dunk Tank

Horseshoes

Volleyball

All events take place in

D Co. clamshell



“Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. Love still stands when all else has fallen.”

JUNE, 2011

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“When the sun is shining I can do anything; no mountain is too high, no trouble too difficult to overcome.”

~ Wilma Rudolph

www.tfphoenixrising.yolasite.com
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BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – This is a very rare photograph of the ever-elusive Staff Sgt. Matthew Simms during the C Company “Warlords” Change of Command Ceremony. There is an old myth that claims there is only one documented photograph of him smiling.