

“Clearin’ the way-ROUGHNECK!”



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SW Expansion project, big step in U.S. drawdown from Afghanistan

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan- The initial push for the eventual U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan was done with a dozer blade by U.S. engineers of Task Force Roughneck at Camp Marmal in northern Afghanistan. The engineers are expanding the camp to become the staging point for the vehicles and equipment left behind when U.S. forces leave the country.

“We are directly affecting the exit timeline by building this project,” said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Jason Brown with TF Roughneck, the construction officer in charge from La Porte, Texas. “This is a big responsibility for me and my team. This place will become a major shipping hub where everything gets dropped off and then shipped out.”



(L to R) SSG Pruitt, SSG Boswell & LT Brown discuss expansion plan

When the directive was given to TF Roughneck to start the project, it was made clear that the expansion must be completed on schedule without interruptions. They were even assigned a dedicated platoon of heavy equipment operators from the 230th Engineer Company from the Tennessee National Guard.

“This is a very noticeable project,” explained U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Raymond Boswell with TF Roughneck, the construction manager from Midland, Texas.

“A lot of people are counting on us to complete this project. It’s my job to make sure things go smoothly and take care of any issues. The bad weather has been our main obstacle, slowing down the delivery of equipment and materials, but we’re still pushing forward.”



Boswell & Brown inspect gravel

At the initial phase of the project, the TF Roughneck engineers were busy preparing the site for all the heavy construction equipment that would be used. A motor pool and maintenance area was being built for the 230th to park vehicles and secure equipment.

“Right now, it’s too wet to put the gravel down inside the motor pool,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Kevin Pruitt with TF Roughneck, the construction foreman from Abilene, Texas. “I had to adjust fire. The trucks would’ve tore up the leveled ground so I had them dump the gravel outside the motor pool. A slight delay, but easily overcome.”

Once the engineers of the 230th arrive at Camp Marmal; everything will be in place for them to start work. The TF Roughneck engineers will resource them, address personnel issues and keep them on track with the project schedule.

“This expansion project is integral for our forces leaving theatre,” Pruitt concluded. “It’s very rewarding when we started with nothing and molded it into a usable product. The hours are long and challenging but in the long run it will be worth our time and efforts.”



Pruitt backs up Afghan gravel truck

FSC cooks to the rescue at COP Aryan

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

GHAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan- A small team of U.S. Army cooks from the Forward Support Company, Task Force Roughneck, defeated a “threat to the force” at Combat Outpost Aryan in Eastern Afghanistan. By establishing sanitation standards and stabilizing dining facility operations these Soldiers prevented further sickness, improved quality of meals and raised morale for the combat Soldiers station there.



SFC Ronald Reczek shows Soldiers how to properly slice onions

“This is the most important mission we’ve ever done,” said U.S. Army Sergeant 1st Class Ronald Reczek with the FSC, TF Roughneck, food service supervisor from Dallas, Texas. “Before we got here, the facility was run by non-English speaking coalition soldiers. There was a lack of understanding how to deal with the U.S. Army chain of command, logistics, sanitation standards and food storage. We worked our way in as subject matter experts and were able to upgrade the dining facility to sustain the troops.”



SPC Christopher Dougherty receives a shipment of food & supplies

The team of food service specialists started their deployment as drivers and gunners on combat logistics patrols hauling cargo and supplies throughout the northern provinces of Afghanistan. They said it was a shock when they got their tasking and were immediately sent to COP Aryan.

“From gunner to cook. I had no idea I’d be cooking,” said U.S. Army Spc. Jose Martinez with FSC, TF Roughneck, a food service specialist from Terrell, Texas. “If it needed to be done, it needed to be done. The Soldiers we’re serving and feeding are happy. I feel like I’m needed here. I get good comments, so I’ll keep doing what I’m doing.”



SPC Jose Martinez grills steaks inside a field kitchen

Delays in food and supply deliveries were common occurrences because of the COP’s remote location, the enemy threat and dangerous winter conditions. Planning and managing food stock was a daily challenge.

“My job is to manage and distribute food for the dining facility and for Soldiers going out on patrol,” said U.S. Army Spc. Chance Tall with FSC, TF Roughneck, a food service specialist from Euless, Texas. “Before us, when food was low, there was a tendency to hoard and steal food. But, We’ve fixed all that. There’s been a huge change in morale. Here, everything we do is critical for the welfare and health of Soldiers.”



SPC Dougherty (left) & SPC Chance Tall (center) stock snacks

The U.S. Army food service training and Reczek’s years of food service experience prepared his Soldiers for success in the challenging environment. Reczek said like any training, a cook’s skill is perishable and must be maintained to be effective.

“My men and I are satisfied we made a difference,” said Reczek. “The threats of sanitation issues are gone. Soldiers’ productivity is up and people have energy. It goes to show what good food can do to a situation.”

TF Roughneck ETTs push toward ANA handover

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan- Embedded Training Teams mentoring Afghanistan National Army engineers in northern Afghanistan showed signs of progress, according to U.S. Army Capt. Neal Litton with TF Roughneck, the partnership officer of Regional Command-North from Frisco, Texas. Litton manages the ETTs scattered across RC-North from his headquarters located at Camp Spann.



CPT Neal Litton manages TF Roughneck Embedded Training Teams

“The ETT members are very motivated,” Litton said. “They understand the principles behind the training the ANA engineers. They’re building relationships, trust and respect. I oversee six ETTs working with ANA route clearing and construction companies throughout the north and the feedback I’m getting is, steady progress.”

Litton said the ETTs’ goals are in sync with the big picture of turning the security of Afghanistan over to the ANA. He said a lot of people want to know the progress of the mentoring.



ANA LT Jamakhan greets TF Roughneck ETT member at Camp Spann



MSG Edward Garza processes data on ETTs & ANA training progress

“I gather all the progress reports from the ETTs and pass them up to higher,” said U.S. Army Master Sgt. Edward Garza with TF Roughneck, the partnership team coordinator from San Antonio, Texas. “The ETTs have high visibility. From what I see and process, the ETTs have integrated well and established good working relationships. The ANA feedback is positive about the training. I like to see success. This path is the way to success in Afghanistan.”

Litton pointed out that there were no major obstacles interfering with the ETTs momentum other than the ANA 209th Corps was a brand new unit and some their companies were more advanced than others. He said training the new ANA soldiers on new equipment would take time in order for them to become proficient.

“We are happy they are training us, they are not wasting time,” said ANA 1st Lt. Jamakhan with 1st/209th Route Clearance Company. “I will give an example of why we are grateful for their efforts. We have a weapon called the “M-2” that my soldiers do not know how to use. We want this training. The Americans will train my soldiers on this weapon soon. This is the kind of things we need for our soldiers to become more professional and our Army strong.”

Litton concluded that the working relationship that the TF Roughneck ETTs have built would help the next rotation of ETTs.

“It should be a smooth transition,” said Litton. “The ANA engineers have the same training tasks and mission sets as U.S. engineers so we all will help the ANA succeed in their ultimate goal for independence.”

190th's engineer ETT accelerates ANA training

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan—Afghan National Army combat engineers learned the latest counter-improvise explosive device (IED) techniques and procedures from their counterparts with the U.S. Army Embedded Training Team-3 (ETT) at Camp Shaheen in northern Afghanistan. The ETT from 190th Engineer Company, Task Force Roughneck shared more specialized explosive clearing skills to supplement the ANA 3rd/209th Route Clearance Company basic knowledge.



SPC Mark Ledford conducts a counter IED class for ANA engineers

"They have their own military standards and training," said U.S. Army Spc. Mark Ledford with ETT-3 from the 190th Eng. Co., TF Roughneck, a combat engineer from Jonesboro, Tenn. "They usually question our new techniques. We explain, demonstrate and have them try it. After awhile, we see them incorporate what we taught in their missions saying it was better and safer. It works."

One of the challenges the ETT members faced was the scheduling conflict between the ANA unit conducting combat missions and training. Ledford said it is hard for them to think as a team when they are trying to survive as individuals.



SGT Habibullah helps in training

"Some of them have a lot of experience and knowledge," explained U.S. Army Sgt. Larry McClanahan with ETT-3 from the 190th Eng. Co., TF Roughneck, a combat engineer from Morsetown, Tenn. "We look for those individuals and get them to help their buddies. We'll teach them something new and make them be the instructors. When they learn to think as a team, they'll be very successful."



SSG Larry McClanahan supervises ANA mine detector training

McClanahan said its ETT-3's goal is to have ANA soldiers teach ANA soldiers with his team only as observers. But at this point, he said, the ANA needs the ETT's support to learn how to use their new equipment.

"I am able to teach others what I have learned," said ANA Sgt. Habibullah, a combat engineer with the 3rd/209th Route Clearance Company. "We are happy they are training us. There are many things we must learn. There are weapons, robots and devices we need more training on."

Habibullah said his fellow soldiers come from different parts of Afghanistan. He said they all have different opinions about the Americans but they all agree the knowledge and skills are valuable.



SPC Nathaniel Mitchell earns respect & trust from ANA engineers

"It's been rewarding to see them learn new skills," said U.S. Army Spc. Nathaniel Mitchell with ETT-3 from the 190th Eng. Co., TF Roughneck, a combat engineer from Seiverville, Tenn. "Any worthy Soldier wants to pass along some bit of knowledge and skills picked up over the years. The ANA are the good guys. When we're home, I want to know the good guys have a little bit more to stay alive and win."

FSC's ETT increases qualified ANA truck operators

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan-A U.S. Army Embedded Training Team (ETT) assisted the Afghan National Army fill in a shortage of qualified tractor-trailer drivers at Camp Shaheen in northern Afghanistan. The ETT from the Forward Support Company, Task Force Roughneck, worked closely with the ANA 1st/209th Engineer Corps, which was recently fielded with new soldiers and equipment but lacked trained operators.



ANA SGT Gul Ahmad backs up his truck during ETT training. "We've always had a problem transporting our equipment," explained ANA Sgt. Gul Ahmad with the 1st/209th Route Clearance Company. "Now, we'll have enough qualified drivers to move our equipment from place to place. We're very grateful for the Americans' time and efforts to help us. We were in need of this technical training."



An ANA engineer uses hand signals taught during ETT training

The primary mission of this ETT was to advise and train selected ANA engineers to operate and maintain military transport vehicles very similar to the U.S. Army's version. The military tractor-trailer combination was very technical and required detailed instruction.

"We have to be careful how and what we teach them," said U.S. Army Spc. Nicholas Herman with FSC, TF Roughneck, a heavy equipment operator from Belle Fourche, S.D. "We narrowed the soldiers down to the ones we thought would succeed. There's a lot of technical and nontechnical stuff you got to do with the vehicle and trailer. There are different brakes, buttons to push, techniques and procedures to overcome and learn."



Nicholas explains techniques & procedures

The ETTs goal of having the ANA soldiers train themselves to self-sufficiency required quality instruction to those soldiers with leadership potential. Although the instruction was technical, the members found ways to keep the training fun.



Kienzle demonstrates hook up procedures

"One was, if you hit a cone while driving, you had to do push ups," said U.S. Army Sgt. Kyle Kienzle with FSC, TF Roughneck, a heavy equipment operator from Sturgis, S.D. "They enjoyed obstacle courses, competitions and compliments. By reducing the number of soldiers on ground, we were able to keep them focused and gave them more hands on training. They were professional and fun to work with."

Both ANA and U.S. Soldiers said it was a positive experience and their biggest obstacle was the language barrier. They said it was hard translating experiences and knowledge.

"This was an experience we won't forget," said U.S. Army Spc. Joshua Whitford with FSC, TF Roughneck, a heavy equipment operator from Rapid City, S.D. "We learned a little about their culture and they learned a little about ours. We really respected their eagerness to learn and to take control of their own destiny."

1014th Sapper Company, two places at once

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan- In an effort to better affect the future of the Afghan National Army and the U.S. pull out from theater, Task Force Roughneck reconsolidated in northern Afghanistan. The 1014th Sapper Company will move one platoon east, to Kunduz Province, in support of the Northern Distribution Network while the other platoon continues supporting of coalition forces in western Faryab Province.



LT Hernandez coordinates w/ANA & PRT officers

“The 1014th is a very spirited outfit,” said U.S. Army Maj. Matthew Calton with TF Roughneck, the TF operations officer from Brownwood, Texas. “Moving them to the east, they will be setting conditions for the coalition in the North to maintain freedom of movement on key routes that will affect the future of the Northern Distribution Routes.”



Route clearance vehicles on western roads

Calton said when the time comes the network of routes across Central Asia will enable the military to withdraw without having to rely on land routes



RCP vehicle pauses during mission

through Pakistan. In regards to the 1014th's mission in the west, he said the 1014th Embedded Training Team was having effective results with the ANA 1st/209th Route Clearance Company.

“We’re doing a great things with the ANA,” said U.S. Army 1st Lt. Luis Camacho with the 1014th Sapper Co. TF Roughneck, the executive officer from Yauco, Puerto Rico. “By rotating ANA platoons through our ETT program, we’re getting 100 percent attendance and participation. Soon, we’ll be conducting combined route clearing missions with them until they’re fully self-sufficient.”

Camacho pointed out supporting the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Meymaneh with route clearance patrols was still a high priority for the 1014th in the west. He said the coordination



ANA 1st/209th RCC combat engineers and preparation for all the 1014th moving pieces was a challenge, but his company’s morale was high.

“Morale was low at one point,” he recalled. “We had to send some Soldiers home and the company felt they were being dismantled. But we got Soldiers from the 190th Engineer Company to support us and troop morale has been high ever since.”

Calton said the 1014th dealt with extreme weather and terrain conditions while conducting route-clearing missions in the west. He said they had to do “work-arounds” with their equipment to protect themselves in the enemy infested harsh environment.

“Hours of operation have been extreme for them,” Calton concluded. “Snow, rain and mud made the routes and terrain difficult for them. But, they never lost focus of their missions. They have, a different energy. The 1014th has a awesome capability to self motivate.”



Members of 1014th Sapper Co. pose next their route clearing Buffalo

CJ Engineer liaison officer, TF Roughneck's middle man

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan- Freedom of maneuver for Afghans and coalition forces, is one of the essential components for Afghanistan's independence, and is the U.S. Army Combined Joint Engineer liaison officer's main focus at the CJ Engineer Regional Command-North Headquarters at Camp Marmal.

In RC-North, the international coalition forces consist mostly of combat or support troops with the U.S. Army the only force with engineer know how, personnel and equipment to construct, repair and clear roads of threats, such as improvised explosive devices (IED).



LT Brock discusses operations with his German counterpart

"A German division commander controls all of RC-North," explained U.S. Army 1st Lt. Adam Brock with Task Force Roughneck, TF Sword, the CJ Engineer liaison officer from Fort Worth, Texas. "He says route clearance patrols are mission critical in the north. My job is to coordinate route clearing and construction missions with the Germans, Swedes, Hungarians, Turkish, Albanians, Armenians and even South Koreans."

Brock walks with a sense of purpose to the various offices at the CJ Engineer HQs. He says his thoughts of the safety of coalition forces traveling throughout the area and the Afghan people's need for roads are always on his mind.



TF Roughneck route clearance patrol interrogating possible IED



TF Roughneck horizontal engineers level ground on a road project "We will clear a path for them to move," Brock said. "I'll make sure all the assets are available for who ever requested the mission. There's a lot of moving pieces that need to be synchronized. I also know the Afghan villagers are waiting for promised road projects. They see our heavy coalition vehicles on their roads. We win points with the locals when we go back and repair their roads better than what they were originally."

As with any organization there are differences and challenges, but the interactions between the CJ engineers were professional and focused on the mission.

"If a mission is cancelled, we discuss it and come up with an alternate plan," said German Army Major Joachin P., the RC-North CJ Engineer operations officer. "I can talk directly to Lt. Brock; no emails, no telephone calls. We've solved many issues quickly and successfully. With his efforts, the 111th Engineer Battalion has helped us with many construction projects and has cleared many routes of IEDs for our forces."

Brock said he has a busy daily schedule. One of his daily tasks is his briefing to the CJ engineer staff on TF Roughneck project status, mission updates and future plans.



LT Brock coordinating available assets and times for RC-N missions

"I've briefed generals and colonels and made new friends. This has been a unique opportunity for me," Brock concluded. "To be able to work with so many coalition forces in a combat environment and see how we do business together to get Afghanistan stabilized."

Afghan press interviews TF Roughneck commander

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan- U.S. Army Lt. Col. Tim Senecaut, commander of 111th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Roughneck from Austin, TX, met to discuss U.S. and Afghan partnership training with Afghan television reporters at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Dehdadi 2. Mohammad Javid with Ayna Redio Television and Aref Musaui with Tolo Television broadcasted a two-part feature on the upcoming handoff between U.S. and Afghan forces.



Lt. Col. Senecaut listens to a question from an Afghan TV reporter

“I’ve had exposure to mainly print media back in Texas. This was different.” Lt. Col. Senecaut said. “I had to be more thoughtful before I spoke. TV captures the moment. I wanted the viewing audience to understand all the positive work that’s happening between our forces.”

The interview was a rare opportunity for a Task Force commander to communicate directly with the Afghan people. Senecaut pointed out that there was a process in place allowing the Afghan National Army engineers to develop into an effective force.



Afghan TV reporter recording interview footage in Senecaut’s office

“In the first place, the ANA engineers already have their experience, skills, and training.” He continued. “Most importantly, they understand the land, the language, and the culture. We come in with our expertise and experience to help develop and hone their skills even further.”



A language assistor translates Senecaut’s responses

During the interview, he mentioned how two of his companies, the 190th Eng. Co. and the 1014th Sapper Co. were conducting joint Afghan-U.S. route clearing missions. He said his combat engineers were highly motivated, who want to go out and help their ANA counterparts.

“The Afghan people want to know what is going on between our Armies.” Mohammad Javid said. “I am thankful for this opportunity to bring this story to our audience. It is a good thing what is happening.”



Interview focused on partnership

He commented on how Afghans understand world events are unfolding around them and the need for a strong ANA. He said the story would show the how the ANA route clearance and construction engineers play a big part in keeping the freedom to travel in Afghanistan safe.

“This was an opportunity for me.” Senecaut concluded, “My goal was to make sure the people understand. They need to see the partnership, the joint training, and the ANA develop into a professional force.”

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