

“Clearin’ the way-ROUGHNECK!”

TF ROUGHNECK REVIEW

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FOB Dehdadi 2
Afghanistan



Battle Captains: Gatekeepers of the Task Force

1st LT Derek Dunham Houston, Texas

We track our soldiers out on the battlefield. They might be on a route clearance patrol, a logistics convoy, or a single soldier flying out on R and R. We track 24 hours a day, seven days a week. My staff and I work 12 hour shifts every day. We come in and run all the systems. We’re not on the front lines but we’re the critical link for our guys out there all alone.

I was chosen to be battle captain from my XO position with HHC. I have SSG Anthony Medder, SPC Donald Cisneros, and SPC Brian Nicholson working for me. We started from scratch at Fort McCoy. Sometimes we learned the hard way, but we learned. Now my guys are spot on.

TF Roughneck is in a very unique spot because we’re the only one with route clearance capability in the north. We’re playing a key role up here for the future of the Afghan Army. Our engineers are partnering with their engineers developing techniques, tactics, and procedures that the Afghan Army engineers will use when we hand over responsibility when we leave.

Roughneck Main

1st LT Jason Grizzle Colorado City, Texas

Our primary function is to track every moving piece within our area of operation. We track and follow RCPs as they move down the road. They call in grids to let us know where they’re at and we track them on our map. We need to provide the colonel information on where every soldier is in the task force at any given time.

I have SGT David O’Brien, SPC Jeron Anderson, and SPC Ryan Tomamichel on my team. We handle all the functions of the TOC. It keeps us busy with no slack time. As a Task Force, I would give us an “A” if I had to grade. But things are different in the north than anywhere else in Afghanistan.

We’re never going to get out of this country if we can’t hand it over to the Afghan people and let them take responsibility and be in charge of their own destiny. TF Roughneck is in the process of embedding with the ANA and become mentors. We’ve got to get them more involved and trained up. We’re here to accomplish that mission.

Roughneck Main



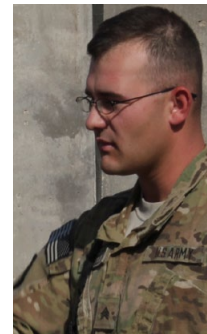
1st LT Dunham

1st LT Grizzle



COL. Paul Paolozzi, CDR of 18th EN BDE authorizes the 18th EN BDE combat patch to TF Roughneck soldiers at DD2.

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HHC, recent promotions at Dehdadi II. From left to right. Capt. Bonnie Wickham, SGT Dustan Purcella, & Capt. Gary Ward.

Bonecrushers: baptism by fire

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan-1st Platoon, 1014th Sapper Company, 111th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade beat back a complex attack with the help of Swedish Quick Reaction Force and U.S. gunships while conducting a route reconnaissance mission northwest of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Dehdadi II.

A squad of Sappers scouting a narrow village road was the first to receive mortar rounds and small arms fire. “We hit the ground as the rounds exploded around us,” said Staff Sgt. Rafael Bruno with 1014th Sapper CO, 111th EN BN, 18th

EN BDE, the platoon sergeant from Bayamon, Puerto Rico. He recalls seeing a ditch on the side of the road and yelling to his men, “One O’clock, twenty meters, find cover in the ditch.” Once in, Bruno positioned his men into a 360-degree

defensive perimeter and had them scan their sectors. They reported enemy moving all around as bullets snapped over or impacted on their position. The sun was scorching hot and they were running low on water.

“I thought to myself, ‘No, this ain’t happening,’ after the first explosion.” Spc. Roberto Ortiz with 1014th Sapper CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE, a combat engineer from the Bronx, N.Y. reflected. “But once in the ditch our training kicked in, our perimeter was set, and we were ready to develop the situation.”



SSG Rafael Bruno

SPC Roberto Ortiz

all radios except for one to conserve on batteries, they controlled their water consumption, and communicated with each other to relieve the stress. Ortiz chuckled as he remembered one of his buddies down in the ditch, “Spc Gary Maldonado rolled over and asked Staff Sgt. Bruno for a cigarette. Sergeant Bruno was shocked. He looked at Maldonado and said, ‘You don’t smoke,’ and Maldonado said, ‘Today, I do.’”

“I couldn’t have asked for anything better than how my men conducted themselves under enemy fire,” stated 1st LT Anthony Santiago with 1014th Sapper CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE, the platoon leader from Orocovis, Puerto Rico. “I sent two gun trucks to suppress the enemy and recover my men. One truck was hit in the fuel line. One of my guys, runs up, rolls under the vehicle, and fixes it with his Gerber.”

Bruno’s squad got ready as the gun trucks approached their position, they could hear bullets ping-pong off the armor. The Sappers would cover fire as their buddies rushed a few meters, turned, and covered them in a bounding movement towards the trucks.

“As we got to the gun trucks, I noticed fuel leaking under one of them,” said Sgt. Hector Mendez with



SGT Hector Mendez

1014th Sapper CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE, a combat engineer from Carolina, Puerto Rico. “Staff Sgt Bruno set up security for me. I got under, using the tire as cover. I grabbed the leaking fuel line, cut off the leaking section with my knife, and reconnected the line. The truck started right up.”

Bruno’s squad squeezed themselves into the gun truck and linked up with the rest of the platoon to continue the fight.

By that time, 1st LT Santiago’s request for support was answered with armored tanks and infantry from the Swedish Army and U.S. Apache gunships. The swiftness and momentum of the Quick Reaction Force scattered the enemy into a retreat.

“Everybody did a great job that day,” reflected Sgt. Mendez. “Everybody was a hero that day.”



1st LT Anthony Santiago

Bloodhounds join forces with German Army

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

KUNDUZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan-Combat engineers with the 190th Engineer Company, 111th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade partnered with German Army Engineer Corps of Task Force Kunduz in a combined route clearing training exercise outside Forward Operating Base Kunduz.

Each side brought unique expertise and specialized equipment with the goal of creating a new effective route-clearing package to counter improvised explosive devices (IED) in northern Afghanistan.



SSG Smitley explains the various cameras used on the Talon robot to German combat engineers during a combined training exercise.

“We are training together because we will soon work together out on patrols. We have to make sure everything works together,” said Maj. Andreas Hoffmann with TF Kunduz Engineer Corps from Marschacht, Germany. “We are lucky to have an American route clearing patrol (RCP) here because it is a great asset to clear the roads. The combination with our dismounts will result in great work.”



Major Hoffman with German Task Force Kunduz observes and listens as 1st LT Carter with 190th EN CO explain capabilities of his equipment.

Soldiers from both sides tested their equipment and techniques to find strengths and weaknesses in order to be effective on future combined operations. “What we’re trying to do is start building cohesion and get a picture of how everything will work together,” explained 1st LT Jason Carter with the 190th EN CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE, a platoon leader from Clarksville, Tenn. “We’re excited with what’s happening here. We excel in certain aspects with our equipment and they excel in certain things with dismount operations. Overall, the guys, Germans and Americans are enjoying this.” The combined strengths were obvious. The minor problems they encountered could be easily fixed Carter said. But language was another matter.



Soldiers working out radio problems



LTC Matthias Rudolph

“There are differences in languages but I think that the soldiers understand each other,” said LTC Matthias Rudolph with TF Kunduz, an operations officer from Messtetten, Germany. “I see them communicate in the simplest ways because they are doing the same things. Soldiers always find ways to figure things out, so it isn’t really a problem.”

At the end of the training both sides agreed combined future operations would work. “Working with them was easy,” concluded 1st LT Eric Madison with 190th EN CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE, a platoon leader from Baton Rouge, La. “The Germans have great resources. Our vehicles will ensure the safety of their soldiers. This was a learning process. It was a great experience



1st LT Madison and German EOD officer

for my company and I’m sure for the Germans. Together we can accomplish any RC mission.”

TF Roughneck working with the Swedish Army

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

JOWZJAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan-Engineers with Task Force Roughneck, 18th EN BDE conducted a preconstruction reconnaissance mission with Swedish Army officers for a future construction project at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Monitor. The recon required precise measurements and data.

The Roughnecks brought along a survey and design team to map out the plan. “The survey guys will produce a map that will show our exact scope of work,” explained Staff Sgt. Kevin Pruitt with HHC, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE, the project manager from Abilene, TX.

“It’s never what you expect once you get boots on the ground so you have to adapt and be flexible and that is a challenge for the coordination and the planning. The Swedes were very accommodating and communicated very well with us. We had a very good discussion on how they wanted things.”



SPC Baylis & SPC Lawson with 231st Survey and Design Team plot points & mark area.

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SSG Pruitt and CPT David Anderson with the Swedish Army secure the area for the surveyors.



SSG Pruitt, SSG Fontejon, and CPT Brandberg discuss courses of action.

During their meeting they all agreed: Few tasks, if any, can ever get accomplished when different points of views are involved. And, teamwork is the only way to successfully complete complicated projects.

“We have big plans for FOB Monitor, as we move out west,” said Capt. Fredrik Brandberg with the Swedish 3rd Cavalry Regiment, military assistance director of operations from Sverige, Sweden.



Brandberg & Pruitt discuss FOB upgrades

“I feel confident that we have the administrative relations sorted out. We need help with this project. I can see these guys are skilled engineers that will get the job done. I’m happy and look forward to working with the Americans.”

The Roughnecks did find obstacles during their recon. “The biggest challenge we have is land ownership. There is no actual line that borders the privately owned land,” said Staff Sgt. Peter Fontejon with 877th EN CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE, a heavy equipment supervisor from Atlanta, Ga. “I’m on this recon to check out the job site and see what equipment I’m going to need. I also wanted to see what needed to be done prior to coming out here. I’m glad we did. We can’t just go out there dozing down mud walls. Walls in Afghanistan usually mean its someone’s property.”



SSG Fontejon explains land borders

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Once all the data was collected from the recon, that completed the first step of the project. “We agreed on the boundary issue, so that’s solved,” concluded Capt. Brandberg. “The next challenge is time. I know that we are in Afghanistan and things do take longer than we tend to project. So, it’s a few steps forward and maybe one step back but we’ll keep moving on. It’s a move to the west.”



CPT Brandberg & SSG Pruitt

Soldier and NCO of the month Competition

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan- SGT Michael Yeats a recovery supervisor with FSC, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE from Blanket, TX won the TF Roughneck NCO of the Month and SPC Jarred Fuller a combat engineer with HHC, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE from Sachse, TX won the Soldier of the Month competition at Dehdadi II. Each month, each company from Task Force Roughneck selects their best soldiers and NCOs to compete for the title.

This was the third competition for the task force, where soldiers scores were based on their performance in the fundamentals of soldiering: which is shooting, moving, and communicating.

According to TF Roughneck CSM Bryan Senkirik from Brownwood, TX, “The competition was very tight. Their performance was outstanding. Their scores were so close, we struggled deciding who would get the titles.”



SPC Ivan Perez, 1014th



SPC Jose Chavez, FSC



TF Roughneck soldiers compete at firing range.



The Board. (L to R) 1SG Davis, 190th EN CO; 1SG Lee, FSC; CSM Senkirik, TF Roughneck; 1SG Garcia, HHC; 1SG Cintron, 1014th Sapper CO. Soldiers present themselves and their Army knowledge.



Start of 9 mile ruck march with full gear.



SSG Michael Yeats, NCO of the Month



SPC Jarred Fuller, Soldier of the Month

The soldiers competing this month were:

SGT Jonathan Seals from New Market, Tenn. and SPC William Broyles from Morristown, Tenn. both combat engineers with 190th EN CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE.

SGT Gary Maldonado, a medic, from Manati, PR and SPC Ivan Perez, a combat engineer from Las Piedras, PR both with the 1014th Sapper CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE.

SGT Dustan Purcella, a combat engineer from Comanche, TX with HHC, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE and Jose Chavez, a wheeled vehicle mechanic from Ennis, TX with FSC, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE.

The King

Story by SFC Glenn Sierra

BALKH PROVINCE, Afghanistan-Detachment 1, 623rd EN CO completed the long overdue helicopter landing zone (HLZ) at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Dehdadi II.

“We had to build a wall around it for protection,” said PFC Robert Green with Det. 1, 623rd EN CO, 111th EN BN, 18th EN BDE, from Lawrence, Ga. “The wall is made of Hescos. They can be a hassle or they can be easy to put up.”

Green described Hescos as inner linings holding earth inside metal frames. It takes several soldiers to assemble a section of Hesco wall. He spoke highly of his leadership who taught his platoon the importance of teamwork.



SSG Fontejon lines up Hesco wall.

“Our sergeants are experienced and know how to run a job site. I can see they actually enjoy asking our opinions before we do something.”



PFC Green with Det. 1

Green said. “They make sure we’re trained and safe. They’re out there with us. Not sitting back. They actually get involved. To me that’s worth more than just giving advice.”

About Afghanistan he said, “Its got its problems. But it also has its beauty. The children. The sun rises and sun sets. Starry nights. And the mountains.”

Green recently graduated from advance individual training (AIT) in his military occupation skill (MOS), which is a heavy equipment operator.

“If you’re afraid of work, this job isn’t for you,” Green smugly grinned as he concluded. “It does have chal-



PFC Green from Lawrence, Ga.

lenges. I would not have chosen another MOS to do in the Army. It makes me happy to be running heavy equipment. I feel like a king out there. Especially on an excavator, a dozer, or a loader.

Heck yeah, good feeling.”



Loader filling in Hesco wall.

... encourage one another daily ... Hebrews 3:13

Today was one of those days. These days came along for me occasionally on the civilian side as well. I imagine it happens to the best of us regardless of how much we love our work. I really enjoy being an Army Chaplain. But this morning, I didn’t want to be an Army chaplain. I didn’t want to be in Afghanistan. I was ready to go HOME! Perhaps it was because I hadn’t taken any time off during the past two weeks. I don’t know. It was just one of those mornings.

I did the things I normally do. I rose early to go exercise. I spent time in prayer, meditative reading and journaling. It’s early in the week, yet I finished my sermon for next Sunday because I knew I would be traveling to visit soldiers the rest of the week. I dropped what I was doing in the midst of that sermon preparation to meet with a civilian contractor that was quite upset and needed resources to cope. Did I mention that all through this full morning I didn’t want to be an Army chaplain in Afghanistan?

Yet, God is good. Two boxes arrived from home today from my wife Rachel. There wasn’t anything earth shattering in those boxes. There was some air freshener for the tent, a couple of my favorite magazines, a throw pillow, some candy, some Vicks and “my” aftershave lotion which keeps me looking young and handsome. ;)

So, after lunch, I decided to get away for a bit. I went to my tent, leafed through my magazines while leaning back on my bed against my new throw pillow and I took a nap. After my nap, I read for a little while, got up and went to supper. Now, I’m back in the office writing this article and feeling good about being an Army chaplain in Afghanistan.

Your soldier has days like today was for me. Send your encouragement often. It doesn’t have to be something critically needed to be helpful. A prayer ... a card ... a postcard ... a hometown newspaper ... maybe even something silly ... be imaginative and creative ... it can make all the difference in the world.



Chaplain Ganther

September 2011



SGT Nicholas McElroy w/ Det.1, 623rd EN CO looks at the completed HLZ wall.



PFC Robert Green and SPC Christopher Mohney assemble last section of HLZ wall.



SPC Lander Hergott with 623rd EN CO cuts lumber for a new building project.



SPC Robin Cauthon with 623rd EN CO from Nebraska measures distance for steps.



SPC Danielle Icke with FSC waits for the all clear siren while inside a bunker.



SPC Colt Nichols with FSC, leads a sweep team during a FOB mass casualty exercise.



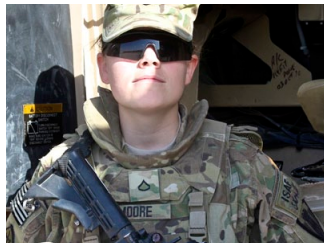
SPC Jose Martinez and PFC Jasson Reed both with FSC and part of the sweep team.



SGT Jefferson Decoo with FSC waits inside a bunker waiting for the all clear signal.



SFC Don Salas at the FSC tactical operations center (TOC) coordinates with his soldiers.



PFC Jherica Moore with HHC, PSD MRAP driver and human resource specialist.



SGT Jon Eck, a civil engineer, has proven invaluable to TFR construction projects.



1st LT Jason Brown, responsible for construction projects in Northern Afghanistan.



1st LT Ehigie Obasohan, the electronic warfare expert, and SPC Jared Fuller from HHC.



SGT Jonathan Seals and SPC William Broyles with 190th at DD2 for competition.



SGT Gary Maldonado after competing. 1SG Cintron still loves him regardless of who won.



MSG Steve Mansfield with 111th EN BN planning ops with Swedes at FOB Monitor.



2nd Platoon, 1014th Sapper Company from Puerto Rico before a RC mission.



1st Platoon, 1014th Sapper Company from Puerto Rico after a RC mission.



Soldiers of PSD with HHC, 111th EN BN before rolling out on a mission.



190th EN CO & German TF Kunduz pose after combined training outside FOB Kunduz.

"Clearin' the way-Roughneck!"



Roughneck Spotlight: People of Northern Afghanistan



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