



It's not that we don't like the holidays. We just don't like hats.

25 DEC 12

We have hit the 1/3 mark in our deployment! What better way to do so, then to celebrate the holidays! A Co. is playing a major role in the 101st ESB's mission here in Afghanistan, and the 25th of December was a welcomed milestone. After over 3 months here in country, this holiday season has covered our Soldiers with a sense of appreciation. It is a time to reflect on not only the things we have here, but the things we are missing back home.

Many of our out sites celebrated the holidays in their own ways...

SGT Pena and his team of NCOs covered down for the lower enlisted this holiday. Pulling guard shifts and regular duties to lighten the load for his Soldiers. To stay in contact with his family, SGT Pena's wife sent videos of Christmas morning while he communicated with them via morale phone lines.

SGT Tesoriero and her Soldiers exchanged Secret Santa gifts on the 25th. Although they worked their typical schedules, they celebrated by taking pictures and Skyping home with their families. SPC Altieri's mom

even posted pictures on Facebook of their holiday meal back home... YUM!

SGT Walton's team had a fun filled holiday. After exchanging morning gifts of matching pajamas and multicam Santa hats, SGT Walton and her Soldiers had a Christmas waffle ball game out on the LZ! Instead of yelling "car!" like you would hear in a typical game, they found themselves yelling "bird!" when the helicopters came in. They wrapped up their day with movies and Skype calls home to their families.

1SG Frye spent Christmas out with SGT Marshall's team. After decorating their tent and sharing their gifts with the other Soldiers on the FOB, 1SG Frye took part in serving dinner chow to all of the Soldiers in the DFAC that night. After dinner, SGT Marshall's team got to enjoy a cigar with Top, and morale calls home to their families.

SGT Swartz and his Soldiers had a calm holiday. Between calling home using the morale lines and exchanging gifts with one another, the team got to spend the night by a campfire. Although it's no fireplace in a living room back home, the Afghanistan campfire was a nice way to wrap up the day.

A CO 101 ESB



Chargers

SGT Arias's team had a relaxing Christmas day. Like our other out sites, they also participated in Secret Santa gift giving. SPC Smith received goodies for his Playstation from SGT Teran! They took the day to Skype home with family members and call using Morale lines.

SFC Anderson has the largest team of Soldiers at an out site. The Soldiers were all given a half day for the holiday. They spent their time together, taking pictures and playing football. They were even lucky enough to see Santa on a decorated firetruck, woo hoo! In between the festivities, like our other out sites, the Soldiers Skyped family back home to be part of their holiday too.

Last, but not least, are our Soldiers here on KAF. It was a light day. The senior leadership covered down to give their Soldiers here the day off and time needed to celebrate. A Co. did their best to make the most of this holiday here, and we hope our families back home had a very Happy Holidays, too!

-Article and photo by SGT Alexandra Lippi



Happy Holidays from Alpha!

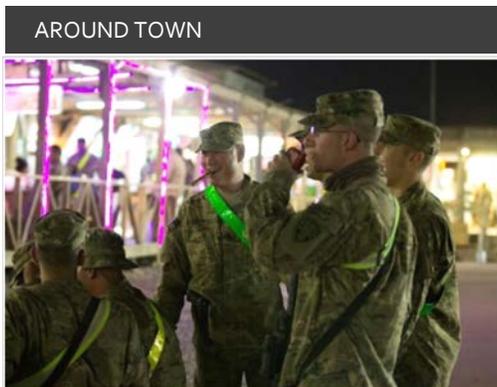


Down Time

by SGT Lippi

In between work at the TOC, RNCC, validation site, classes at SIG U, and battle field rotations, A Co. Soldiers find ways to come together and share a few laughs.

The boardwalk is a great place to socialize. Dozens of shops and places to eat surround an area filled with a soccer field, hockey rink, volley ball court, 1/8 mile track, and park benches. Seen here, 1SG Frye enjoys a night out with his Soldiers. Food and cigars are a nice way to end a work day.



Boardwalk

The 101 also seeks ways to bring all companies together. As seen here, HHC hosted a Battalion BBQ which A Co. was more than happy to attend! The smell of steaks and sound of music are welcomed senses here in Afghanistan. Helping to break up the monotony of the work week, these Battalion BBQs are something each company looks forward to.



BBQ

SPORTS, SPORTS, SPORTS!

A Co. Soldiers have been spending lots of down time playing sports. Seen here, SFC Stephan dominates in a friendly game of volleyball. Our very own Commander and high speed A Co. Soldiers also play in a weekly basketball league. They have ripped through the ranks to become one of the two teams competing in the 101 Championship Finals! With the occasional dodgeball and football games, A Co. sure is keeping busy!



Volleyball

Out-Site Visits and Battlefield Circulation

The A CO Commander and First Sergeant frequently visit all the Points of Presence (PoPs) A CO occupies in Afghanistan. Team chiefs in charge of their respective sites receive the visitors and give them a tour of the Forward Operating Base (FOB) where they work, which includes equipment, storage, work space and living quarters.

During their stay, the command team evaluates the troops' morale as well as the mission and operational tempo in order to ensure the soldiers are performing their duties and are taken care of.

An important part of life at the "out-sites" is the integration of the A CO teams into the other units that operate within their respective FOBs. Often known as "the CPN team," A CO soldiers support various military units such as Special Forces teams, Infantry Companies, and Field Artillery Batteries. Many of these outside entities come from other NATO forces such as the Romanian and German Armies.

"Wherever I visit our FOBs, I hear nothing but great things about Alpha Company soldiers," said 1LT Jon Santana, A CO Commander. "The Special Forces guys, the Infantry guys, even the Romanians. They all praise our teams out there for their work ethic and the support they provide."

The company First Sergeant, SFC Frye, agrees. "The customers at the out-sites are doing handsprings. They're always telling me how they appreciate the support our guys are giving them, and I couldn't be more proud of our teams."

SPC Diallo, 1LT Santana, and SPC Clarke enjoy some cigar time at the "Fire Pit."



The Soldiers at the out-sites often become a tight-knit group. They eat meals together, work out together, share care packages and spend down-time together watching movies and playing video games.

Check out the photos on the next two pages for Alpha Company teams at out-sites.

A Co Commander 1LT Santana visits SGT Teseirero's team. From left to right: PFC Alberto, SPC Clarke, 1LT Santana, PFC Santiago, SPC Kelly, D., SGT Tesoriero, SPC Altieri, and PFC Cereo.



A Co Commander 1LT Santana visits SGT Walton's team. Top row left to right: 1LT Santana, SPC Diallo, SPC Clarke.
Bottom row left to right: SGT Walton, SGT Rosendo, SPC Martinez.



A Co Commander, 1LT Santana visits SGT Pena's team. From left to right:
SPC Mackinnon, SGT Maseo, 1LT Santana, SGT Pena.



SGT Marshall's Team. From left to right:
SGT Marshall, SPC Vanburen, SPC Deacy, PFC Reyes.



A CO 101 ESB Chargers

101 ESB, A Co
APO AE 09355

It has been a busy 3 months for A Co. Between settling in, learning new jobs, celebrating the holidays away from home, and finding time to unwind, our Soldiers have had their hands full. The experience is constantly changing for most of us, but we are on a steady pace on the road home!

