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Missions create a brotherhood among infantrymen
By Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons, 17th Public Affairs Det.



Photo(s) by Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons

From left: Pfc. James Sloan, Pfc. Ray Richard, Spcs. Nathan Hucker and Stephan Rzucidlo take advantage of some down-time to bond outside their tent.

ZABUL PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- As the sun rises over the desolate mountains in Arghndob district in southern Afghanistan, a small group of Soldiers scan the horizon for enemy movement.

The Soldiers, a squad of infantrymen from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, are tasked to provide perimeter security for a small firebase in the remote region.

""They sit on the towers, they guard the local workers. At night, they have a rotating guard shift on each tower," said Master Sgt. Bob Labella, 3rd Special Forces Group. Before rotating in to provide security for the firebase, the Soldiers usually conducted presence patrols throughout the province.

This squad has only been together for a very short time, but has used the small amount of time wisely

to build a team with a good working relationship.

"We've been together for about two months," said Sgt. Louis Chapman, Co. B, 2nd Bn., 35th Inf. Rgt., squad leader.

"We all knew each other from different squads. We've always gotten along really well. Out here it's just us, so there's been a lot of team building," he said.

When the Soldiers were assigned to the squad, they knew all the tasks and battle drills, but they hadn't worked closely together, said Chapman.

"I took them out to train a lot when we first got together just to let them get a feel for each other," he said. "Watching them grow as a team is one of my favorite things about being a leader in the infantry.

"We all have grown together as a family -- like brothers -- and none of us wants to see anything happen to any one of us. It raises the performance level, because you want to ensure you're not the one that's going to get the other person hurt."

The Soldiers find themselves growing as a team as they spend more time completing tasks assigned to them.

"Each time we go on a mission we get better," said Spc. Mark Sollars. "We can look at each other and without communicating we know what each person is going to do."

Motivation is also key to keeping Soldiers mission ready, said Medinger.

"The whole preparation for a mission, watching them get ready and everything squared away for the mission, that excites me, motivates me, and makes me want to ensure I'm doing my job to the best of my abilities so I don't let them down."

Although living and operating in such close quarters can sometimes create tension, the Soldiers chalk it up to being part of "family" life.

"This is all we've got right now," said Sollars. "All I've got is my squad and my platoon. These guys are my friends right now. You become close to these guys, because you see them every day. They become your brothers. Sometimes brothers fight and sometimes they get along, but hey -- they're still brothers."