



CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

From 1 to 4 December 2009 I had the great honor and privilege of visiting 1-17 on their forward operating base (FOB) in the Kandahar province of Afghanistan. LTC Jon Neumann and CSM Peter Smith had been extending an invitation to me for months and the timing was right for me to get to them. I took a 20 minute helicopter ride over some of the most desolate and barren landscape in the country, but the rugged beauty of this country still captivates me. I was met on the landing zone by one of our young Buffaloes who told me LTC Neumann had been there a while earlier anticipating me, but had gone back to the headquarters to await me. The majority of the battalion was off the FOB conducting operations in their assigned battlespace so I got to meet the staff and Buffaloes preparing for or supporting operations from the FOB.

CSM Smith is the driving force behind developing the FOB, which 1-17 had assumed from a French-Canadian battalion that previously occupied and named

the FOB, Frontenac. CSM Smith told me the FOB was pretty austere when they took possession of it, but by the time I saw it it was a paradise

in the middle of nowhere. It is neat, organized, clean, and really lacking nothing for the comfort, security, and safety of the Soldiers. After weeks of patrolling and fighting, the FOB is a beautiful place to seek respite. My accommodations were wonderful, and the accommodations for the troops are even better since they can decorate their rooms to suit themselves. I could go on and on about the FOB itself but the real attraction is the Buffaloes themselves.

The morale and spirit of the men are incredibly awe inspiring. I observed an exciting camaraderie amongst the men that made me reminiscent of my own Buffalo days. I still feel



emotionally unrestrained even as I write this about six weeks later. Call it a legal contact high that keeps on giving. LTC Neumann and CSM Smith were most gracious hosts. We toured the FOB, had our meals together in a beautiful and abundantly supplied mess hall, and I had the opportunity to sit in on a nightly commander's battle update briefing. I played a fine line between being engaged enough but out of the way enough as to avoid being even a temporary distraction. I hope I played it right. Often I would stand in a staff section and just absorb the spirit of these fine Buffaloes at work. Being amongst our Buffaloes in combat as they went about their day



to day business was a profound thing for me. It's a feeling only a Soldier can understand and appreciate.

My last day there we presented the Ek Mark 4 fighting knives to the 2008 NCO and

Soldier of the Year, SGT Mark Goodwin and SGT, then SPC, Anthony Roney, respectively. LTC Neumann and CSM Smith mustered the available men into a formation and we had the US and 1-17 flags providing a patriotic and heraldic backdrop. I spoke a little bit before we presented the knives to the men but there was really nothing I could say that could add to what they already know about themselves: we love them; we pray for them; and they are adding another new chapter to 17th Regiment and US Army history with battlefield victories as well as being the first Strykers in Afghanistan since the U.S. entered 8 years ago. I was clearly outclassed by these men and I knew it, and loved them for it.

The 1-17 is the standard bearer for their brigade and when this war is over, will be the most heralded battalion to serve in Afghanistan. They are extremely well led, enthusiastic, tough, disciplined, and strong of heart and character. I am humbled, blessed, and honored to have spent a few days with these mighty Buffaloes on their own turf, the battlefield. Thank you so very much, Buffaloes. God bless and be with each one of you.

Thundering Herd!

*CSM Tim Green*

