

## MISSION ESSENTIAL MOVEMENTS

Her mission was up in the air from the get go. She changed military occupation specialties, changed platoons, and changed roles multiple times, and that was all before leaving Nashville, Tenn., for the upcoming mission in Afghanistan.

When Spc. Kimberley Espey raised her hand and volunteered to deploy with the 230th Signal Company, she had no idea how important she and her military logistics background would become to the overall mission in Afghanistan.

After cross training with various platoons and changing roles as the mission needs of her changed, Espey still had a smile on her face and a work ethic most would look upon with awe. First in the office and last to leave on most days, it wasn't long before she found her niche assisting the officer in charge of the five direct signal support teams, 1st Lt. Jason Capps. A job that we would all come to realize, fit her as perfectly as she fit the needs of the job.

"That's when I realized all the skills I've ever acquired, on both the military and the civilian sides, came into play," Espey said, as she described her new role.

Despite being built years ago, most of the DSST locations where 230th soldiers relocated were still very primitive from being mishandled by inhabitants before them. The teams of seven found themselves thinking about essentials like housing and equipment, in addition to their primary duties of taking over for the previous unit.

"One unit is supposed to set up another, to help another, and so on," said Espey. "It wasn't like that when we arrived here."

Faults cannot always be placed on the unit leaving; handing over operations to a new unit is a complicated process. As one packs up to leave theater, another arrives to pick operations up where the other left off. Equipment and supplies are transferred to the new unit via paperwork, but the unit being replaced by the 230th didn't have much to pass along except a handful of troubles that were handed to them.

"Back door deals happen sometimes, and things don't always go the way they are supposed to," Capps said. "We fell in on the result of that."

Instead of trying to trace back and redo the deals that had been done, the tandem got right to work in getting their teams set up for success. The first two items on the agenda were acquiring vehicles for troop and equipment transport, and giving personal attention to the five FOB's that were in desperate need.

With a forward thinking mentality, Espey went to the USO and started networking, a skill that has proven to be quite valuable to the 230th. Her first order of business: two LMTV's. Large vehicles that could be used to haul lumber and equipment for the DSST's, and with Afghanistan's rainy season just around the corner, may become a necessity for troop transportation and mission movements.

The timing couldn't have been better.

"As soon as we got the LMTV's we started getting requests from the DSST teams," she said. "It started small with nails, then wood for housing."

The need for the materials was present but processes were in place that needed to be followed. It required assembly of large paperwork packets, meetings with military boards, and a justification of needs. It's an extensive process that ends with legal ownership of the equipment acquired by the unit.

"The order process takes months," Espey said. "Everywhere I turned, people said it couldn't be done. The stuff we needed wasn't available." This wasn't the answer the team of two would accept as their final, and the long timeline was something the 230th Signal Company just didn't have.

"If we don't send [our teams] the materials they need," said Capps, "they aren't going to have a place to live; [or a proper place to work] they are going to be out there roughing it."

So off they went, to leverage those business relationships they both made just a few weeks before. "We got creative and we made it happen," said Espey. "We went out knocking on doors again."

Together they were able to barter with other units here, acquire things those units would be leaving behind, and send the materials out to their DSST teams. "Imagine going back to the Old West, everyone lives and works in close proximity, and everyone has to work together to get things done," Capps said. "It's a barter and trade system, but the one with the most 'stuff' has the most control."

Some of it they needed, some of it they didn't, but all of it can be used to barter - to help create a win/win situation for everyone. It's already begun to build strong friendships between those living together at the FOBs.

"Acquire as much stuff as possible and get it out to those guys," Capps said. "You want to

set your people up for that kind of success."

Thanks to this dynamic duo, the 230th Signal Company's five DSST locations are now getting a much needed facelift.

"We've got all this wood out there that we've traded for other stuff we need," said Spc. David Moffet, DSST soldier.

"We've got a subdivision, friendly neighborhood, type thing going on at Camp Stone."

Espey beams with pride and relates the whole experience back to family, a mentality that runs deep in all National Guard soldiers, when she spoke about the DSST's with endearment.

"I'm a mother, so the DSST's are like my kids. They need food, they need shelter, and they need their play - Spc. Nicole Newton toys," she said with a smile.

- Spc. Nicole Newton

Public Affairs Officer

230th Signal Company



*Spc. Kimberley Espey and 1st Lt. Jason Capps, 230th Signal Company's dynamic duo, meet with various units here at Kandahar to acquire needed equipment for their five direct signal support teams spread across Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nicole Newton)*