



Sgt. Patrick Lewis, left, levels a piece of rebar that will reinforce a culvert denial system, with the help of Spc. Jonathan Carpenter on June 11, 2013. They are both in B Company, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, at Forward Operating Base Shank, Afghanistan. (Photo by Sgt. Julieanne Morse)

NCO Welder Works to Prevent Casualties along Afghanistan's Most Important Highway

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In a hot tent on Forward Operating Base Shank in Logar province, Afghanistan, with an American flag hanging from the ceiling works a U.S. Army welder whose recent project can help save many lives in eastern Afghanistan.

Reggae, soul music and rhythm and blues pours out of Sgt. Patrick Lewis's stereo as he goes to work welding together rebar to create culvert denial systems.

The systems will help prevent insurgents from placing improvised explosive devices, known as IEDs, in culverts along Afghanistan's Highway 1.

Lewis, who hails from Queens, N.Y., is originally from Jamaica, and moved to the United States in 2001.

He learned to weld at the Apex Technical School in Manhattan, N.Y., and joined the U.S. Army in 2007, as an allied trade specialist. He currently serves in Com-

pany B, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

Lewis, the primary welder in Company B, has completed many projects since arriving at FOB Shank, such as repairing radio towers and building steel gates, but this project is expanding his reach into Wardak and Logar provinces.

Preventing the emplacement of IEDs is essential to help prevent military and civilian casualties.

“Highway 1 is a main supply route going from [Bagram Airfield] to Ghazni, and a critical point of our mission here is to keep that safe,” said 1st Lt. Shane Hook, Company B executive officer.

The brigade counter-IED office passed a sketch of the system’s design down the chain of command to Lewis. Then, rebar was shipped from Bagram Airfield.

“We do just about anything,” Lewis said. “You name it, if you can come up with a picture and show us that, we can make it. It’s as simple as that.”

The static crackling sound can be heard as Lewis welds the rebar together into a cone-like shape.

Spc. Jonathan Carpenter, a native of Pendleton, S.C., and a wheeled vehicle mechanic in Company B, who helps Lewis when he’s not servicing vehicles, said the culvert denial system will allow water to flow through the culvert, but deny insurgents the ability to plant IEDs inside of them.

Lewis said the system would benefit all U.S. forces as well as Afghans who travel on Highway 1.

Lewis has a good reputation as a hard worker within the brigade.

“He’s a measure-twice, cut-once type of guy, which is good,” said Hook. “That is exactly the type you want.”

First Sgt. Robert Walker, a native of Bryant, Ala., and the Company B first sergeant, said Lewis is one of his better noncommissioned officers.

“He takes every opportunity he can to teach soldiers,” Walker explained.

Lewis’ good reputation stems from his enjoyment of his job.

“I love what I do,” Lewis said. “This is me playing my part. If this is what I can do to prevent the loss of another U.S. service member, then I’m more than willing to contribute in whatever way I can.”

of their career life-cycle,” Thomson said. “Systematic changes to the way the Army trains and develops NCOs are also necessary to achieve strategic goals and objectives the Army has in mind for its operating concept in the future.

“NCOs must become more knowledgeable regarding their role within unified land operations, joint force planning, and the tenets of operational art,” he said.

Additional reading

To read the full text of Army Directive 2015-31, [click here](#).



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