

Golden Knight Battalion,

Thank you for the generous care package. I was able to share all of its contents with my Troop, and they say thank you also. I did however keep the Frank's Red Hot all for myself. Not many Soldiers understand and appreciate how good Frank's Red Hot really is therefore I did not feel obligated to share. In all seriousness we really do appreciate you thinking of us. I have helped Shirley prepare many care packages for Golden Knight Alumni, and I never really understood until recently how important they are to Soldiers. I gave the Clarkson ROTC t-shirt to our senior interpreter Aryan, who is from Kabul. He is truly dedicated to the improvement of Afghanistan and its people. Plus, it would be really cool if one the future Lieutenants ran into a guy wearing a Clarkson ROTC shirt.

My time at the Golden Knight Battalion seems like ages ago, but I still find myself using lessons I learned as a Cadet. Training for LDAC is of the utmost importance to becoming a Soldier, especially if you ever want to leave Potsdam, but your senior year as an MSIV will be the most important and influential to your career as an officer. Take it seriously and begin to prepare yourself for duties and tasks that 2LT's often acquire. Prepare yourself for anything. Upon arrival at my first unit on Fort Drum, 4-25 Field Artillery, I was the assistant S4 for two months. I knew nothing about the supply system, but was forced to learn quickly. If any of you plan on going Field Artillery, do not get your hopes up for a job of firing howitzers. Many FA units today are given a maneuver mission and are expected to perform the same jobs as Infantry Companies and Cavalry Troops. Arriving at your first unit as a FA 2LT, you will most likely be given 1 of 2 jobs; Fire Support Officer or Fire Direction Officer. I believe I was lucky in securing an FSO position with a Cavalry Troop. As an FSO you are the Troop Commander's advisor to Fires. With an FSNCO, you are in charge of the Platoon Forward Observers. However, as a FA officer, you get to perform many additional duties such as HQ Platoon Leader, Contracting Officer Representative, Field Ordering Officer, and the list goes on and on. In concluding, if you plan on going Field Artillery, buckle up for a fun and busy ride.

Many of you are either excited or dreading a deployment. Everyone's experience is different so learn what you can from their lessons learned, but understand that you will most likely be experiencing many new things. Take time to learn the language. Those officers who are well versed in the language of the local population become liked and respected by locals. AKO offers the most popular of languages in Afghanistan such as Pashto and Dari. Learn the basics of their culture and then build off of that once you arrive in country.

Most importantly, take time to help out Shirley and Dilys because without them your career as an Army Officer will crash and burn.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Ives
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