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## NPS Yeoman, Father Deploy Together to Afghanistan

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## NPS Yeoman, Father Deploy Together to Afghanistan

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Article By: MC3 John R. Fischer

Most of us here at the Naval Postgraduate School are familiar with deployments, whether it's you, a spouse, a child or a parent. The first time was kind of exciting, probably pretty scary, and at times a bit lonely. Maybe deploying wouldn't be so difficult if you could just take someone with you.

Yeoman 3rd Class Caleb Little, one of the Flag Admin assistants at NPS, volunteered to serve an Individual Augmentee mission to Afghanistan last year. Going home for one last visit before heading overseas brought a surprise Little never expected. At a gathering in his son's honor, Joe Little presented the young Sailor with a card that read, "See you in Kabul."

Mr. Little, a Navy air crew veteran and now contracting officer with the 38th Cyberspace Engineering Group (CEG) out of Tinker, also received orders to Afghanistan during the same period as his son. "It's ironic because we'd planned to visit him this summer in California," the elder Little had said of the coincidence.

Joe Little had his fair share of combat and deployment experiences while in the Navy, with this his first since joining the 38th CEG. He knew how his son would be feeling at first, "But when you come out on the other side, that feeling is unbelievable," he recalled.

Being assigned to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Headquarters in Kabul, and his father at the camp "across the street," the younger Little was inclined to agree. He said adjusting to the experience was very similar to his first few weeks of boot camp.

"At first I had no idea what to think," said Petty Officer Little. "I felt like some kind of yak: just big, goofy and sweaty. The whole base is about 400 sq. meters. You're all caged in with nowhere to go; you don't know what to do."

Now past the halfway point of his tour, Little has gained a greater appreciation for his situation. He said the bewilderment and feelings of doubt washed away quickly, and have been replaced with an attitude of discovery.

"One of the best things is meeting all of the people," Little said. "Working with NATO has really been exciting – definitely an invaluable experience. We all get along really well, and we do little things like trade souvenirs with each other whenever people leave."

Little said one of the things that most helped him adjust to his new setting was the crowd in his office. He is the only American in his office; all of the other personnel are German. He said they were especially welcoming of him, which helped him to bring his outgoing personality back to the forefront and push through his challenging period of adjustment.

"They're like a bunch of big brothers to me," he said. "I mean, they speak a lot of German all the time, but still... Plus, we have the only fax machine, so we're pretty popular."

Hitting the home stretch, Little was even ready to give advice to other service members getting ready to deploy. "Every step of the way you're told not to get complacent – complacency kills," he explained. "But you sort of have to a little bit. You have to be comfortable with what you do and where you are – otherwise you'd be too stressed to do your job, and that brings everyone down."

The winter holiday season granted a change of pace, allowing more time for the troops to de-stress Little said. Father and son were able to spend at least part of their holiday together along with their American and international brothers and sisters.

Naturally, the past holiday season brought thoughts of home to the young Sailor. He said he's left service to his cell phone turned on the entire time he's been away so that friends and family back home could still call him if they felt like it.

"It's probably going to take weeks to go through that stuff, but I think people enjoy doing it," Little said. "Friends have emailed me just to tell me they've left me a voice mail."

Scheduled to arrive stateside in late spring, Little is looking forward to nothing more than getting back to one of his deepest passions: music. Whether it's jamming on a drum set, rocking his guitar or just singing karaoke with a crowd at the local joint, he's ready.

"When I get home I just want to change into a comfortable set of jeans and let my music go," he said. "I wanna jam for hours and I don't care who's listening."

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