

Texas Lawyer Blog

September 04, 2008

Lawyer outside the wire



It's Thursday afternoon, and Texas lawyers are hard at work, arguing cases, reviewing documents and counseling clients. But there's one Dallas lawyer who's probably asleep by now. After all, it's the middle of the night where he lives, at Fort Phoenix, a U.S. Army Forward Operating Base in Kabul, Afghanistan. Brian A. Farlow (pictured) is a trial lawyer by training, a member of the Elrod firm in downtown Dallas. But Farlow, a West Point grad and Gulf War veteran, is also a member of another fighting group: the U.S. Army Reserves. Late last fall, his number came up. Since Dec. 24, 2007, he's been part of an ETT – Embedded Transition Team – tasked with training and mentoring the

Afghan National Army. Not surprisingly, Farlow has faced myriad challenges, from religion to culture to basic soldiering skills. "We have had to teach them things most people take for granted that people just know," says Farlow, who talked to me yesterday via Skype. Take maps for instance. Literacy skills aside, he says, "just the concept of having a piece of paper that represents the earth looking down" was hard for some soldiers to understand. Learning to order and stay current on supplies was another tricky concept, he says, since the Afghans had never had supplies before. And with the start of Ramadan this week and its traditional daytime fasting, Elrod's unit has had to change up the routine, planning exercises and excursions in the morning, when energy levels are higher, and instructing Americans to keep their own eating and drinking on the down low, out of courtesy to their Muslim mentees. What the Afghan soldiers do have, however, is tenacity. "I've been in sticky situations here, and they are absolutely fearless," Farlow says. But Farlow's time is winding down, and he expects to be heading home in the next month or so. During his deployment, he's kept family and friends posted on his service via [his monthly "Wolfpack Newsletters,"](#) all of which are posted on his Elrod bio page. Although he's still waiting on the details of his return, Farlow hopes he'll be back at Elrod by mid-October, renewing relationships and making new contacts. He doesn't expect many problems on that front. "I am sure people respect my service, and it won't be too difficult to get back to it," he says. "It's been a nice break, but at the same time, it makes you really look forward to getting back to it and attacking it with new vigor and new excitement." Until then, however, his strategy is to keep thoughts of court, clients and the firm at the back of his mind. "The truth is, when you're over here, you focus on the mission," he says. "We are outside patrolling the city every day, and you can't afford distractions when you're outside the wire."

– *Jenny B. Davis*

Posted at 03:49 PM | [Permalink](#)

Comments