



AFGHANISTAN:

LESSONS IN SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

*From a S.A.P. Deployed in the
Civilian Surge*

L.J. Palmer-Moloney, PhD

Afghanistan: Lessons in Situational Awareness

**from a S.A.P. deployed
in the Civilian Surge**

by L. J. Palmer-Moloney

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FYSA – “For Your Situational Awareness”--


**WHAT IS A
S.A.P.?**

For the 30-plus years of married life, my husband Jim has lovingly referred to me as his Southern American Princess, a.k.a his S.A.P. Grounded by my south Louisiana roots, I embrace this title. As the you read my story, you may detect some “princess” tendencies in the expectations that I have for the way things should be, as well as a little sense of “entitlement,” which I openly admit to having. These cannot be helped; they are part of my geographic predisposition. (Wink to Ellen Churchill Semple here.)

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Disclaimer

There's a big difference between publishing and not publishing.

Publishing takes determination and ACTION.

This eBook series is not a first-cut draft v.0.5, but you, reader, may notice that the copy is not scrubbed to a perfectly polished finish. You may also notice that though many pictures are fantastic, some would benefit from a bit of Photoshop magic.

Thanks to lessons from my internet marketing guru Angus Moloney, I learned to be bold and to embrace the concept of MVP--*minimum viable product*. AND I learned that the Internet offers incredible opportunities for "split testing" and revision. I know that the self-publishing--DIY publishing-- offers a dynamic, energized environment for learning and growing together. Let's do it!

This collection is a *memoir*--as defined by Merriam Webster, "a record of events written by a person having intimate knowledge of them and based on personal observation." Personal observations, being personal, are filtered by an individual's cultural screens and life experiences. As you read, please keep this in mind.

Full names were used only with permission. (In the case of MSgt Pruitt, permission was given by his mother Lydia Hobson.)

This eBook series is dedicated to

My supportive, tolerant, and unconditionally loving family

Jim,

Emmett Seamus,

angus Britton Emmett Moloney
13 Aug 1993- 26 Sept 2015

and

Camille

Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)

Why do I need to tell this story?

“...the memories remain seared in all who go, and that is a good thing, because they are charged to return and tell the story, visit the graves, and never forget the price that can be paid when politicians opt to commit our Nation’s resources.”

BG (USMC, retired) Dave



Foreword

Dr. Laura Jean Palmer-Moloney's tale of her adventures in Afghanistan is the uniquely personal account of how an extraordinary woman balanced career, motherhood, and her insatiable curiosity to make real contributions to our nation's understanding of this amazing and tragic region.

It is the story of her transition from mid-career academic, wife, and mother to a dust-encrusted, helmeted, geographer and water resources expert accompanying our military to Afghanistan's remote villages and distant valleys. While helping our military understand the water and power dynamics of local communities caught in the midst of war, Laura Jean also comes to understand her own inner resources, weaknesses, and ultimately her own surprising resiliency.

Laura Jean's book is not only a great resource for leaders needing to rapidly adapt to chaotic environments and work far beyond their comfort zones. It is also a very personal exploration of how different cultures can work together for common goals – not just Americans and Afghans, but NGOs, Military personnel, civilians, business people, and experts from different academic disciplines. As Laura Jean navigates both Afghanistan's physical and cultural terrains, she also experiences her own personal transformation as she learns to work effectively in an environment far more challenging than most of us will ever see.

In the end, her story is an inspiration for any of us contemplating bold career moves, life changes, or just seeking a new perspective on the day-to-day lives of the Americans working in today's Afghanistan.

Kevin Lange
CEO

[Trusted Knowledge Options](#), Inc.

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Preface

“As is a tale, so is life: not how long it is, but how good it is, is what matters.”

— Seneca

Synchronicity? Synchrodestiny? Call it what you will.
When “coincidence” happens, you can pay attention to it or dismiss it.

I’ve watched [What the Bleep Do We Know](#) and [Mind Walk](#). I’ve read mind-body books by [Deepak Chopra](#) and [Wayne Dyer](#) and [Joe Dispenza](#). Though not a physicist, I get excited by [quantum mechanics](#) —particularly quantum entanglement and [particle physics](#). I know that what I focus on expands, that thought are energy-- “[thoughts are things](#).” Each moment, my brain receives a gazillion bits of data, and I consciously catch only a fraction of the input.

In mid-March 2016, I was just emerging from a “fog of grief”¹ and was thinking about—but NOT-- writing again. At this same time, I was becoming friends with my new neighbor, Peg Spencer. One morning as we walked along the beach, I told Peg that “one of these days” I wanted to finish writing my memoirs about deploying to Afghanistan. I imagined my book as a dark comedy travel guide of sorts (like [Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy](#)), taking a civilian like myself into the world of the military and into the world of undeclared war. (To be honest, I saw my book turning into a film starring Tina Fey. But timing is everything, and Tina’s already done her Afghanistan movie. I’m on the lookout for a strong, funny, small-framed, energetic female for the role. Please send me your recommendations! ;)

Peg, a retired Navy nurse who spent her career as a woman in the military, got excited about my book idea and insisted that I meet her next door neighbor Ann. Coincidentally, Elizabeth Ann Tyndall, PhD was a writer who self-published [eBooks on Amazon](#). Ann might have some ideas for me!

Our initial get-together at Ann’s house on 11 March was an incredible convergence of strong-woman² energy. We spent two hours visiting (which is a very southern way to spend time), and talking about writing, publishing, and my book ideas. Peg and Ann listened to me read from my manuscript and then divided tasks—Peg would read and provide comment on the manuscript copy, and Ann would help me figure out how to get my story told.

¹ Please refer to The Stardust-Startup Factory’s “About Us – Origin” at www.starduststartupfactory.org to learn more about Angus Britton Emmett Moloney and the beginning of The Stardust-Startup Factory. A detailed account of Angus’s passing and my voyage through the process of living and dying is beyond the scope of this work.

² If you’ve not heard the story of “Where are your men?” check out the Stardust-Startup Factory’s Facebook posting, ~12 June 2016.

Peg took the manuscript and, guarding it as CONFIDENTIAL, dutifully spent the next three weeks reading through it. Ann and I met again on 22 March, and she encouraged me to be brave and venture into the world of eBook self-publishing. Both of these wise-women were helping me break the inertia of NOT writing.

Ann passed away on 25 April 2016. I'm so grateful for the gift of her insight, her passion, and her "get it done" approach to self-publishing on the Internet.

Peg and I continue our walks, and her support, friendship, and constructive critique continue to be a blessing.

This eBook series is part of my therapy, part of The Stardust-Startup Factory and my "spiritual alchemy."

“When there is no turning back, then we should concern ourselves only with the best way of
going forward.

— Paulo Coelho

Wishing you Peace,

Jean (a.k.a., Laura, Laura Jean, Lj, Jeannie)
05 Sept 2016
Morehead City, North Carolina

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to all who were part of the my before, during, and after deployment *experience* and to those who helped me create the *eBook series*. Particularly, I would like to thank:

- Mike Price of the National Ground Water Association for interviewing with me in May and subsequently publishing the interview in December 2012 and to my AFPAK Hand colleague Bill for suggesting the story on Helmand water to Mike.
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 - Web Apps: Explain Everything, Canva, Awesome Screenshot, Color Snapper and other incredible, and often FREE, resources on the Internet for DIY graphics
 - Entrepreneurs On Fire (EOFire) and John Lee Dumas for "get going!" and "how to do it" podcasts and blogs
 - AWeber: email subscription database for the Stardust-Startup Factory.
- Elise Rich for hours of video work supporting both this eBook Series and the Stardust-Startup Factory.
- Lydia Hobson, mother of Master Sergeant Scott Pruitt, for her permission to use Scott's name and to publish the essay I wrote about my time with Scott on 28 April 2012. Special thanks to Lydia and her family as well as to Trish Lane and hers for welcoming into their circles of love. Scott brought us all together.
- Academic colleagues and mentors, particularly Paul Starrs, who was the first to encourage me to write about my deployment; Mary Braun, who helped me explore ways to craft my story; Bill Davidson, who, as my cultural/historical geography mentor for over 40 years, taught me to develop a morphological eye when studying the landscape; and Derek Alderman and Scott Lecce, who helped me navigate completion of my second PhD.

- D.C. area U.S. Government colleagues and friends Ted Cope, who saw the relevance of water in the context of national security; Kea Duckenfield, who worked with me before, during, and after deployment on Helmand River water; Monica Smith, who helped me frame water work in the water-food-energy nexus; Brian Graff, Swathi Veeravalli, and Demetra Voyagis, who offered their insight as well as professional expertise as we worked together to connect human-environment interaction with civil-military operations; Alex Dehgan, who opened doors and helped me network between US Government agencies in my attempt to connect the Helmand River water dots; Pete Chirico, who linked me to the Fairchild photos and the history of human-environment interaction and change in the Helmand watershed; and Craig Pullen, my very first US Government geography colleague, who was the one I asked to keep the “bullet with my name on it” during my time in Afghanistan.
- My NASA family Jennifer Dungan, Cindy Schmidt, Liane Guild, Jim Brass, Don Sullivan, Ken, and Jen for helping me realize the transferability of my story on water, war, and stability operations.
- My tight nest of women friends for being there--before, during, and after deployment—to help me put all things into perspective and to remember to laugh. Betsy Bloom, Doreen McGraff, Wendy Willis, Heather Ward, Sheila Henriksen, Sharon Aguiar, Claudia Kreamelmeyer, Pat Foote, Marcee Hobbs, Jodi Brexa, Demi Garner, Karen Reneau, Fabiana Lacerca, Mandy Beer, Peg Spencer, Kris Youngblood, Wanda Bennett, and Jill Clark.
- Everyone listed in the Cast of Characters section!
- Emmett’s second family—Ian and Colleen Tracy, Bev Baird, and Nancy Fitz.
- Angus’s second family—John, Mouse, Carson, and Haley Barry.
- Angus’s extended family—Isabelle, Jonathan, and Camille Babington (his partner in life and love, as well as co-creator of the Stardust-Startup Factory).
- My mom Alta Allen, my sister Joanie Randle, my brother Britt Palmer, my sister-in-law Elise Moloney, and cousin-in-law Carolyn Lochhead.
- And--I’ll never be able to thank them enough for their love and for the safety net they provide--my sons Emmett and Angus, and my husband Jim, for whom I’ll always be a S.A.P.

List of (at least most) Acronyms*

(See chart for military rank designations)

AFPAK	Afghanistan / Pakistan
AO	Area of Operation
ASCOPE	Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, and Events
C-9	Command level, Stability Operations
CALL	Center for Army Lessons Learned
CAN	Can = 8'x10' aluminum container, similar to a "Pod" used for temporary storage
CENTCOM	Central Command (Department of Defense Combatant Command region)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CMO-HEI	Civilian-Military Operations – Human-Environment Interaction
CO	Commanding Officer
COA	Course of Action
COB	Close of Business
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COP	Command Observation Post
CRM	Coastal Resources Management
CUA	Commander's Update Assessment
DFAC	Dining Facility
DFID	Department for International Development
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
ERDC	Engineer Research and Development Center (Army Corps of Engineers)
ETA	Estimated Time of Arrival
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FYSA	For Your Situational Awareness
FRAGO	Fragmentary Order
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IPB	Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KAIA	Kabul International Airport (not to be confused with KIA - Killed in Action)
LNO	Liaison Officer
LOO	Line of Operation
MCB	Marine Corps Base
MCCLL	Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MET-TC	Mission, Enemy Terrain, Troops, Time, Civil Considerations
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (Afghan Govt)
MEW	Ministry of Energy and Water (Afghan Govt)
MOD	Ministry of Defence (Afghan Govt)
MoM	Ministry of Mines (Afghan Govt)

MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (Afghan Govt)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLT	No Later Than
PAX	Passenger area for flight arrival/departure
PMESII	Political(governance), Military(security), Economic, Social, Infrastructure, Information
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PT	Physical Training
RC(SW)	Regional Command Southwest
RIP-TOA	Replacement in Place—Transfer of Authority
RO	Reverse Osmosis
SNFU	Situation Normal, All F'd Up
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

*Understanding acronyms can be tricky at many levels. In an international engagement, acronyms vary if for no other reason than different languages bring different words for similar items or events. Acronym vary in meaning between US services (Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force). Even within the same service, the same acronyms can have a number of meanings depending on the circumstances of its use.

Template:United States uniformed services comparative ranks

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

United States comparative military ranks 				
Flag Rank Officers				
Pay Grade	Army	Marine Corps	NavyCoast Guard	Air Force
Special	General of the Armies	none	Admiral of the Navy	none
Special	General of the Army	none	Fleet Admiral	General of the Air Force
O-10	General	General	Admiral	General
O-9	Lt. General	Lt. General	Vice Admiral	Lt. General
O-8	Major General	Major General	Rear Admiral (upper half)	Major General
O-7	Brigadier General	Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (lower half)	Brigadier General
Commissioned Officers				
Pay Grade	Army	Marine Corps	NavyCoast Guard	Air Force
O-6	Colonel	Colonel	Captain	Colonel
O-5	Lt. Colonel	Lt. Colonel	Commander	Lt. Colonel
O-4	Major	Major	Lt. Commander	Major
O-3	Captain	Captain	Lieutenant	Captain
O-2	1st Lieutenant	1st Lieutenant	Lieutenant, JG	1st Lieutenant
O-1	2nd Lieutenant	2nd Lieutenant	Ensign	2nd Lieutenant
Warrant Officers				
Pay Grade	Army	Marine Corps	NavyCoast Guard	Air Force
W-5	Chief Warrant Officer, Five	Chief Warrant Officer, Five	Chief Warrant Officer, Five (not used by Coast Guard)	Chief Warrant Officer, Five (discontinued)
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer, Four	Chief Warrant Officer, Four	Chief Warrant Officer, Four	Chief Warrant Officer, Four (discontinued)
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer, Three	Chief Warrant Officer, Three	Chief Warrant Officer, Three	Chief Warrant Officer, Three (discontinued)
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer, Two	Chief Warrant Officer, Two	Chief Warrant Officer, Two	Chief Warrant Officer, Two (discontinued)
W-1	Warrant Officer, One	Warrant Officer, One	Warrant Officer, One (discontinued)	Warrant Officer, One (discontinued)
Enlisted Servicemen				
Pay Grade	Army	Marine Corps	NavyCoast Guard	Air Force
E-9 (special)	Sergeant Major of the Army	Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps	Master Chief Petty Officer of the NavyCoast Guard	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force
E-9	Command Sergeant Major	Sergeant Major	Command Master Chief Petty Officer	Command Chief Master Sergeant
	Sergeant Major	Master Gunnery Sergeant	Master Chief Petty Officer	Chief Master Sergeant
E-8	First Sergeant	First Sergeant	Senior Chief Petty Officer	Senior Master Sergeant
	Master Sergeant	Master Sergeant	Chief Petty Officer	Master Sergeant
E-7	Sergeant First Class	Gunnery Sergeant	Petty Officer First Class	Technical Sergeant
E-6	Staff Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Petty Officer Second Class	Staff Sergeant
E-5	Sergeant	Sergeant	Petty Officer Third Class	Senior Airman
E-4	SpecialistCorporal	Corporal	Seaman	Airman First Class
E-3	Private First Class	Lance Corporal	Seaman Apprentice	Airman
E-2	Private	Private First Class	Seaman Recruit	Airman Basic
E-1	Private	Private		

Cast of Characters

Dear Reader,

This Cast of Characters is provided as a quick reference guide to those with whom I was in close contact while deployed.

Friends, family, and stateside coworkers were my lifeline to home; they gave perspective to my work and life in Afghanistan. Many of those listed sent me emails, texts, and letters from which I extracted passages that help bring this tale to life.

My AFPAK Hand colleagues deployed to Afghanistan with me but were based in Kabul and elsewhere. Without their support, insight, and advice, I would have never gotten outside the wire. My battle buddies (U.S. Marines, British military, and DOS-USAID civilians) share a bond with me that will never be broken. We depended on each other as we sorted through the mess that was Afghanistan on our watch. (This is NOT an inclusive list of everyone with whom I served. The military and civilians in Cast of Characters is related to those who play a prominent role in my story.

Self

Laura Jean (a.k.a. *Laura, Jean, Jeannie, Lj, Dr. Lj*)—Protagonist. Like Sputnik, 1957 vintage. Wife and mother of 2 sons, 7 years apart. Holder of 2 Ph.D.s, 14 years apart (one in Education/curriculum and instruction, focus in geographic education; the other in coastal resources management). Family background: South Louisiana Cajun and Southern Redneck. Educator (Latin, science, and social studies public high school teacher 12 years; geography professor 11 years), fiber artist (spinning, knitting), dancer (ballet, Irish step), gardener, yoga practitioner, swimmer, writer, avid reader. “Compulsive” order and symmetry inclinations. Comfortable working on complex nonlinear problems. Eclectic, focused, impulsive, intuitive, lively. (Pitta/Vata³)

³ Each bio includes my unscientific determination of the character’s “dosha” to help you understand her/his responses and suggestions to my situation in Afghanistan. According to Ayurveda Indian medicine, three mind/body doshas—Vata, Pitta, Kapha-- make up an individual and perform different physiological functions in the body. Key characteristics of doshas are: **Vata**—Light, thin build. Performs activity quickly. Enthusiastic, vivacious, excitable. Hungry any time of day or night. Quick to grasp new information. Tendency to worry. Mental and physical energy comes in bursts. Tendency to overexert. May find it difficult to gain weight. Quick paced stride. The “sprinter” dosha. **Pitta**—Medium build, medium strength and endurance. Enterprising. Tendency toward anger and irritability under stress. Sharp intellect. Resents having time wasted. May be perceived to be demanding, sarcastic, or critical at times. Determined stride. The “marathon runner” dosha. **Kapha**—Solid, powerful build. Great physical strength and endurance. Tranquil, relaxed personality. Slow to anger. Seeks emotional comfort from eating. Tendency to be heavy or overweight. Affectionate, tolerant, forgiving. Slow to grasp new information, but good retentive memory. Brings stability and steadiness. Mulls things over before making decisions. Graceful, gliding stride. The “power-walker” dosha.

Nuclear Family

- **Jim**—Husband. Seven years my senior. Married me 03 May 1984. Substance abuse therapist, motorcycle rider, carpenter, guitar player, former EMT on Breckenridge Ski Area ski patrol (for ~20 years). St. Louis born and bred—a demanding son of Missouri, the “Show Me” state. Sometimes crass and politically incorrect. Supportive, cautiously optimistic, wily—like the coyote. My soul mate. (Pitta/Kapha)
- **Emmett**—Oldest Son. Born on Labor Day (ha ha). U. S. Army veteran (Sgt Moloney, Hotel Company, Infantry Honor Guard), EMT, nurse, motorcycle rider, craftsman, swimmer/diver, rock climber. Skilled at synthesizing information. Prefers backstage work pulling strings, unseen. Tall, dark, strong, enigmatic, intense. (Pitta/Kapha)
- **Angus**—Youngest Son. Born on Friday the 13th, a very lucky day. Physics major, inventor, massage therapist, springboard diver, slackline walker, rock climber, raw vegan. Sharp minded, emanates self-confidence, enjoys challenges. Great with people; knows how to work a room. Prefers center stage. Tall, strong, blonde, blue-eyed, creative, balanced, hopeful. (Pitta/Vata)

[N.B.: Angus passed away on 26 Sept 2016 while on a day hike up Gregory Canyon, Boulder County, CO. I miss his hugs and his infectious smile!]

Extended Family

- **Alta**—Mom. Mother of four (2 daughters, 2 sons—I’m the oldest). Ed.D. in Education (earned in 1975—the same year I graduated from high school). First generation college graduate, teacher/professor for 60 year. Musician, community leader. Can be a bit of a pickle, but well intentioned. Focused, competitive, authoritarian. (Vata)
- **Joanie** (a.k.a. *Pamela, Pamela Joan*)—Younger Sister. Mother (2 daughters (Abby and Lilyanne), 2 sons (Mason and Henry)). Registered Nurse (Neonatal Intensive Care specialist), yoga teacher, cello player. Always the pretty one. Possessive, dedicated, goal-oriented, romantic. (Pitta/Vata)
- **Bill**—Younger Brother. Died of a heart attack in 2002. Father (1 daughter, 2 sons). Navy vet (served on USS Enterprise), intuitive electrician/engineer. Super loving, tall, handsome, intense.
- **Britt**—(a.k.a. *James, James Britton*) Youngest Brother. Husband, father (2 sons, 20 years apart). Self-employed (landscaping), gardener, Jack-of-all-trades. Boyish disposition. Always there to ground me. Loveable, pleasant, forgiving. (Kapha/Pitta)
- **Elise** (a.k.a. *Little*)—Niece. Air Force (enlisted). Spent 6 months in Afghanistan (Kandahar), 2010. Bubbly, energetic, optimistic. (Pitta/Kapha)
- **Elise** (a.k.a. *Lesie*)—Sister-in-Law. Undergrad degree in Ecology. Living life in subtropical Florida with Marge, her yellow lab. Palm tree lover, gardener, photographer, EBay whiz. Thoughtful, sensitive. (Vata/Pitta)

Friends

- **Karen Jean**—My most enduring friendship (since our days at LSU in the '70s). Wife, mom (1 daughter). Accountant, realtor/broker, outdoors enthusiast. Louisiana salt-of-the-earth gal turned Washington State mountain mama. Crafty businesswoman with a naughty side. Laughs, enjoys life at all levels. Knows me inside and out and still loves me! Strong, compassionate, vibrant. (Pitta/Vata)
- **Betsy**— Wife, mom (1 son, 1 daughter). Professor, writer, fighter for social justice, gardener, great cook. Ed.D. in curriculum and instruction. Emmett's 8th grade social studies teacher. Co-author with me on several scholarly articles. NY "Jewish American Princess" tendencies. Empathetic, embracing, risk-taking. (Pitta)
- **Heather**— Wife, mom (1 son, 1 daughter). Environmentalist, writer, perennial gardener, independent consultant. Ph.D. Coastal Resources Management. Former CIA intelligence officer; U. S. Army vet (Military Police). Exudes "Don't mess around with me, I could be packin' " aura when crossed. Calls bullshit when sees it. Determined, analytical, perfectionist. (Pitta/Kapha)
- **Doreen**— Wife, mom (2 sons, 1 daughter). Artist, high school social studies teacher, fighter for social justice and for making education relevant to her students. Was one of my geography students at State University of NY-Oneonta. NY City born; can conjure Bronx "Don't even think of fuckin' with me" persona as needed. Tender, loyal, resolute. (Kapha)
- **Ursula**-- Wife, mom (4 sons). Research scientist, avid reader, problem-solver. Ph.D. Geochemistry, undergrad in Latin (common link between us). Worked with me since 2009 on Afghanistan's water issues. Colorado native transplanted to DC beltway. Self-reliant, strong, eloquent. (Kapha/Pitta)
- **Sheila**—Wife, mom (2 sons, 2 daughters), grandma (6 grandkids). Anthropologist, gardener, avid reader. New Orleans born, transplant to Colorado. Taught with me at Summit High School. Known for her high-country Mardi Gras parties and crawfish boils. Gentle and nurturing approach to life. Soft spoken, reflective, frank. (Pitta/Kapha)
- **Sharon**—Wife, mom (1 daughter), college professor, fighter for social justice. Was my social studies student teacher at Summit High School in early '90s. Works with immigrant and disadvantaged populations. Provided home base 'staging area' for Emmett when he moved to Colorado in August 2011. Southern California "Valley Girl" qualities. High energy, daring, super sweet. (Pitta/Vata)
- **Gordon**—Husband (and "fictive kin" to my family). Emmett's former Platoon Sgt. from the Old Guard days at Arlington. Surrogate big brother to Emmett, there to help him in times of bureaucratic intolerance. Multi-tasking logistics master. Formerly in L.A. film industry. Epitomizes military saying "Your best friend; your worst enemy." High energy, loud, loveable. (Pitta/Kapha)
- **Ann**—Gordon's wife (and "fictive kin" to my family). Rockin' and rollin' former Rockette. Dancer, Pilates instructor, great cook. Introduced me to Spa World and Korean scrubs.

Got me back on my feet during reintegration. Happy hippy that loves NY City.
Purposeful, gregarious, hilarious. (Pitta)

- **Ian**—Emmett's best buddy. Active duty Army, Infantry Honor Guard. Married to Colleen. Like a son to me. Marksman, gunsmith, soccer player, a natural at unraveling complex problems. Always has a Spontaneous, adventurous, easygoing. (Kapha/Pitta)
- **Colleen**—Married to Ian. Like a daughter to me. Soccer player, dancer. Strong, not easily upset. (Kapha/Pitta)

AF/PAK Hands Unit

- **CAPT Jeff** (Navy O-6) Unit lead when based at Camp Julien; the only other student with me in our pre-deployment Dari training class. Husband, father (3 daughters). Runner, leader. Cautious but willing to take a reasoned risk. Calculating, well organized, focused. (Vata/Pitta)
- **LtCol Jody** (Air Force) Mother (1 son). Hiker, runner. PhD with focus on terrorist activities, finance/corruption. Head on a swivel; always looking for unexpected connections. Well-spoken, determined, watchful. (Pitta/Kapha)
- **Capt. Tangala** (Army, "promotable") Mother (1 daughter). Forceful, goal-oriented, bullshit intolerant. (Pitta/Kapha)

Battle Buddies

This is NOT a comprehensive list of all with whom I served. (Unless otherwise noted, all Battle Buddies at Pitta.)

UK--

- **Lawrence (Maj, Army)** C-9 Development with I MEF (FWD). British military "comedian" (after John Cleese, Dylan Moran, Eddie Izzard, and Lewis Black) with a pinch of Yossarian *Catch 22* optimism about probable success of the war. Quick to call bullshit when he sees it. A lighthouse in the counterinsurgency fog of war. Sullen, sarcastic, sincere.
- **Pete (Wing Commander, Air Force)** C-9 Ops wizard with II MEF (FWD). First person at Leatherneck to ask if I'd like to join him for lunch, and that endeared me to him forever. Watched "Modern Family" with me on regular basis. Quick-thinking, intense, short fuse. (Vata/Pitta)
- **Mandy (Lt. Commander, Navy)** C-9 Ops with II MEF (FWD). Navy engineer; spent other deployments out on nuclear submarines. The only feminine female officer in my circles. Uplifting laugh that rang through the plywood office. Cheerful, compassionate, methodical.
- **Charlie (Wing Commander, Air Force)** C-9 Development staff with II MEF (FWD). Proper British officer. Consummate Scotsman. Big picture and continuity bridge for the three Development Colonels. Frequently the winner at Thursday Quiz Night games. Insightful, fiercely competitive, to-the-point.

- **Mark (Wing Commander, Air Force)** C-9 Development staff with I MEF (FWD). Food Service officer tasked to work on Afghan agriculture and infrastructure projects. Quick learner; keen at finding the right questions to ask. Assertive, not aggressive. Clever, centered, kind.
- **Niall (Maj, Army)** C-9 Development staff with II MEF (FWD). Taught me everything I never knew I needed to know about FRAGOs and military report production. Key link to Royal Engineers in Helmand. Enjoyed many debates and discussions about proper spelling and commas. “A panda walks into a bar. Eats shoots and leaves” **or** “...eats, shoots, and leaves.” Competitive, cautious, tad bit haughty.
- **Grey (Lt.Col., Army)** C-9 Reintegration staff with II MEF (FWD). Didn’t offer much about the work he did; I didn’t ask. Joined us frequently at Thursday Quiz Night. Quiet, quick tempered, deep.
- **Rhett (Maj, Army)** C-9 Rule of Law staff with II MEF (FWD). Royal Engineer. Key for connecting to those working irrigation projects in Helmand. Background in Iraq made him key source for research on defining success of water projects in counterinsurgency operations. Reminded me of George (played by Hugh Laurie) in the series Blackadder Goes Forth. Expressive, curious, there to serve.

U.S Marines--

- **John Wayne (MSgt.)** II MEF (FWD), C-9 Ops II. (What a cool name.) Worked closely with Pete and Mandy. Sat at desk surrounded by pictures of tropical islands. Coordinated countless travel requests. Helped me navigate through dust storm shut downs and River City black-outs. Reserved, detached, counting the days.
- **Brian (Second Lt.)** I MEF (FWD), C-9 Finance. Determined to “seal the deal” and be done. Worked with Scott to support Development in Stability Ops. Colorful, focused, energetic. (Vata/Pitta)
- **Scott (MSgt.)** I MEF (FWD), C-9 Finance. Died in IED 28 April 2012, Zaranj, Nimruz Province, Afghanistan. Father (2 daughters). Always with a joke to tell. Worked closely with Brian, Lawrence, Chad, Mark, and me. Demonstrated use of common sense and good judgment in the midst foolishness and folly. Efficient, charming, jokester.
- **Ethan (Maj.)** I MEF (FWD), C-9 Nimruz Coordination Team. Worked closely with me on Nimruz’s water situation. Understood the upstream/downstream tensions. Supportive, direct, involved.
- **Bryan (Gunny Sgt.)** II MEF (FWD), C-9 Development. Met me at the plane upon my arrival in Helmand. Supportive and tolerant.
- **Jason (Capt.)** I MEF (FWD) C-9 Nimruz Coordination Team. Worked in tandem with Ethan. To the point, no frills. Sincere, dedicated, determined. (Pitta/Kapha)
- **Chad (Gunny Sgt.)** I MEF (FWD), C-9 Development. (OMG- He actually watched the “Helmand Water Security 101” Professional Military Education video recorded by Combat Camera!) Chad’s second deployment to Camp Leatherneck. (He was part of the initial surge into Helmand, 2009). Has family in Louisiana. Reserve, professional, powerful.

- **Col H II MEF (FWD), C-9 Development.** Coordinated with Brig. Gen. Dave to get me to RCSW. Instrumental in getting me a 'take-away' lunch pass for the DFAC. Willing to add my ideas and suggestions to development discussion. Allowed me to go on my first recce to the Helmand PRT and to Kajaki Dam and reservoir.
- **Col W II MEF (FWD), C-9 Development.** Incorporated water discussion into development work during his tour. Supported work between Stability Ops Development group and Nimruz Coordination team.
- **Col B I MEF (FWD), C-9 Development.** Trained in geology. Understood the groundwater conundrum. Encouraged active engagement with USAID water specialists; supported and provided Marine top cover for the first-ever water summit between Nimruz and Helmand government officials.

Others

- **Shanna**—Met during Civilian Expeditionary Workforce pre-deployment training, December 2010. Works for Department of Defense. East Carolina University grad, like me. North Carolina southern charm, quick wit. As comfortable smoking cigars in the 'pit' with the guys as sipping mint juleps on the porch with the gals. Fun loving, animated, influential. (Pitta/Vata)
- **Craig**—Geographer with Department of Defense. One of my first US Government buddies. Commutes daily from eastern West Virginia to Capital Beltway for work. Sensitive, dedicated, resolute. (Pitta)
- **Alex**—Ph.D. in conservation biology and dedicated to applying science to serve society. Working with several US Government agencies on aspects of US-Southwest Asia relations, he provided critical support to my Helmand River watershed research. Systems thinker, thoughtful, sincere. (Vata/Pitta)
- **Dave (USMC Brigadier General, Retired)**—Combat veteran. Leader of numerous Marine campaigns in Iraq (Anbar Province, Falluja). He's the person who picked up the phone and worked the problem to get me a billet at Camp Leatherneck. Without Dave's intervention, I would not have gone to Afghanistan. Levelheaded, visionary, strategic planner. (Pitta)
- **Paul (Professor, UN-Reno; Association of American Geographers)**. Professional colleague and close friend. Encouraged me to write down and to share my deployment experiences. Encouraged me to find a publisher. Spirited speaker, captivating writer. Vivacious, insightful, warm. (Kapha/Pitta)
- **Mike (Research Scientist, US Army Corps of Engineers)** Disenchanted government employee. Championed me and my work in Afghanistan. Faithful, caring, diligent. (Kapha)

INTRODUCTION

A Reader's Guide

When I enter a museum exhibit, I scan the room and then head to the display that for some reasons attracts me the most. I don't follow directional arrows placed on the walls or guidelines published in a printed handout or the numbered stops in order as determined by an audio guide.

This eBook series is yours to explore in the order you wish.

If you want to get into the thick of the war and begin with the serious challenges and consequences of stability op missions in a counterinsurgency battle space, begin by reading the **Prelude**, dedicated to MSgt Scott Pruitt.

If, however, you want the story to unfold in a somewhat "cause- effect" chronology, then begin with **Book One: The Back Story**--"How I Got to Now."

Book Two: Getting There is a two part volume that begins with the *S.A.P. Training Essays*. These will be of interest if you want to know more of what it took to get deployed--such as the fun times with medical exams and training at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. (While I was in Afghanistan, I sent several of these essays to the New Yorker. Still waiting for a reply...) *Part Two -Into Theater* starts after Deployment countdown begins in earnest as I prepare for and then board my flight into theater. But it is only after three weeks in Kabul area that I finally arrive in the Dasht-e Margo (Desert of Death), Helmand Province, RCSW Camp Leatherneck. Join me in this story as I tiptoe into the world of CENTCOM

Book Three: Being There is also a two part volume. *Part One - Being There* delves into life in Afghanistan, in the desert, at the Camp Leatherneck--a Super FOB, and in my CAN--my home away from home. *Part Two - Working There* brings you into the situation of working in Afghanistan, in Operation Enduring Freedom, at RCSW in Stability Ops. It also takes you into the field exploring water issues from Kajaki Reservoir to Lashkar Gah to the hamouns on the Afghanistan border with Iran. (Examination of the water-food-energy nexus or the mission critical nature of water in the context of national security are beyond the scope of this work. However, as part of the eBook, you'll be given hyperlinks to my dissertation on COIN and Water Resource Management and to a number of published articles on the water situation in southwestern Afghanistan.)

Book Four: Reintegration presents the disorienting experience of returning home, whether for leave or home for good. What happens when you're *home on leave* from a combat zone? It was clear that just about no one in the States remembered that US forces were still fighting in Afghanistan, a.k.a. "the long war." The minimal news coverage and lack of public interest or outcry made things awkward. What happens when you *redeploy (return home for good)*? What do you say when people want to know about your work or what it's like over there? What do

you say when people ask, “How are you?” covers six months, from my return to northern Virginia--in time for MSgt Pruitt’s funeral at Arlington Cemetery--to finding a place for myself as a senior research geographer with an unquenchable thirst to continue work on water’s relationship to security and stability.

Book Five: Separation. How is life after my stint with DOD? Are Lessons Learned in Afghanistan transferable? This eBook provides an executive summary of seven years of water research, and lays out the importance of a water-food-energy systems approach to understanding stability-- in Afghanistan or elsewhere. It also presents my insight into the good, bad, and ugly aspects of serving in a “one off” civilian surge assignments. Finally, I give you my personal and professional BLUF.

Take-Aways

- Bypassing the clearly defined, channeled career streams of fluvial geomorphology and hydrogeology, I followed a meandering course through anthropology, cultural geography, wetlands ecology, hydrology, geomorphology, and water resource management and emerged as a something new—a *hydrogeographer*.⁴ As such, I went forth to the desert of southwestern Afghanistan to be in the field, to learn all I could first-hand, and to share in discussion and dialogue about the Helmand River watershed. The Helmand’s water sustains life. It is tied to Afghanistan’s food and energy production. To achieve stability in the region, it is imperative to factor water into the equation, to put it in the context of national security.
- I have always been a woman of many “covers” (military speak for “hats”); this quite possibly was particularly useful during my deployment in Afghanistan, when being flexible and recognizing the role(s) to play and the hat (or scarf) to grab were critical to my success.
- I am an educator and owe my ability to “brief”—I can captivate an audience, that typically has no prior knowledge of the complex issue being addressed, in 10 minutes or less using the expected PowerPoint quad chart with no more than three bullets of non-technical language—to the hundreds of students who have helped me perfect my lecture style.
- I bring a first-hand account of Afghanistan 2011-2012. From the perspective of a civilian who has NEVER served in the uniformed services, I share my shock and awe as I find and fumble my way through the military world of acronyms, numbers, and rank. From a geographer’s perspective, I highlight the landscape’s human dimensions, physical features, and human-environment interaction. From the perspective of a western woman, wife, and mother, I provide observations of and interactions with Afghans and my military and civilian associates.

⁴ My thanks to Mary Elizabeth Braun at Oregon State University for coining this term!

- I was proud to serve in Regional Command Southwest, and many times my life depended on those who put themselves at risk watching my back. For the most part, the US Marines and British troops I got to know and work with were professionals focused on mission success in an ill-defined counterinsurgency environment.
- I give my personal and professional Lessons Learned while working in and returning from a combat zone. These lessons are not intended to represent the position of the Regional Command Southwest in Afghanistan, the International Security Assistance Force, or the U.S. Department of Defense Central Command. This is my personal story to share.