

Deployment to Afghanistan

Justin Schultz, a 1st Lt. in the Iowa National Guard, spoke to the Treynor Optimist Club on December 17 about his time in Afghanistan. Justin was in Delta Company of the Iowa Guard's 1-168th Infantry Battalion. He went to school at Lewis Central and joined the Guard on September 10, 2000, when he was 17.

In his first tour in Afghanistan in 2004, Justin helped build schools and other infrastructure after the fighting in an area was over. Most of the United States money at that time was going to Iraq, so progress at that time was difficult.

On his second deployment in 2006, his focus was on logistics. There were about 150 foreign troops and 400 Afghan soldiers working in Zormat where he was stationed. Zormat is in a mountainous area and everything had to be flown in by helicopter. There are about 3,000 people in the city and 400,000 people in the district.

In March 2011 Justin spearheaded a cash-for-trash cleanup of the garbage in the city. There was garbage everywhere, so they decided to pay the local people \$8-12 per day to clean it up. They didn't expect more than 75 people to come, but the first day they had 300 and the second day 500 people. Justin had to get additional money from another base, but the effort help revive people's confidence in their government.

Justin walked away from a rocket blast about forty feet from him which blew him to the ground. Another time he broke his ankle when a close IED explosion knocked him down.

Justin is now a safety manager at the Southwest Iowa Renewable Energy ethanol plant. He completed his college degree at University of Iowa in Foreign Relations and Politics. He says his key to returning to a normal life has been his wife and his desire to keep doing the things he enjoyed before deploying, such as hunting.

Justin mentioned that the Nebraska National Guard bought some tractors and combines and rents them to farmers in Afghanistan. This has helped them as they learn to farm wheat instead of poppies. The United States is making a big difference in the lives of people in Afghanistan, but you don't hear about that often.