

New Poetry by Jennifer Smith: “So This is My Career?”



BLANK AND CONFUSED / *image by Amalie Flynn*

So, This is My Career?

Ecstatic to deploy, I qualify on 9MM handguns—

Battle ready Air Force lawyer to defend both Iraqi and
Enduring Freedom

Engineers advance to the front lines:

spend billions, move like lightning, build tents, site
trailers,

provide food, water, and air conditioning. Our soldiers'
beddown

enables our fight for Oil

Sign off on this funds request, the Engineers demand

What is our mission? I ask

Make the Afghans modern, the Department of Defense

replies. *We will build 200 police stations, use a US blueprint*

to cut costs. The villagers can reign in their warlords

What do the Afghans want? I ask

The US Generals look blank and confused

the second-floor bathrooms flood—the

Afghan soldiers' Islamic practice of making wudu requires them to wash their feet in waist-high sinks before praying salah

I fly in a contractor's Russian MI-12V-5 helicopter to inspect one remote station

for future construction claims. *Are there any?* I ask

We bribe the local warlord—to keep the peace, the Lieutenant says in a whisper