summer in the club

Marines honor fallen brothers in Afghanistan

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Lieutenant Colonel David Bradney, commanding officer of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 6, along with Sgt. Maj. Keith Coombs, battalion sergeant major of 1st Bn., 7th Marines pay their respects to a fallen comrade during a memorial ceremony, July 8, 2012. During the ceremony, Marines paid tribute to Pfc. Steven P. Stevens II, Lance Cpl. Niall W. Coti-Sears, Lance Cpl. Hunter D. Hogan and Lance Cpl. Eugene C. Mills III. Stevens and Mills were killed in action June 22 while participating in Operation Jaws in the Sangin Valley District, Afghanistan. Hogan and Coti-Sears were killed in action the following day during the same operation. Stevens was a combat engineer with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion supporting Weapons Company. Coti-Sears was a rifleman with Weapons Co. Hogan and Mills were riflemen with Bravo Co. attached to Weapons Co. (USMC Photo)

CPL. MARK GARCIA

Regimental Combat Team 6

COMBAT OUTPOST TABAC, Afghanistan – On a somber Sunday afternoon, more than 200 servicemembers gathered to honor four fallen comrades during a memorial ceremony, July 8.

Marines with 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 6, paid tribute to Pfc. Steven P. Stevens II, Lance Cpl. Niall W. Coti-Sears, Lance Cpl. Hunter D. Hogan and Lance Cpl. Eugene C. Mills III.

Stevens and Mills were killed in action June 22 while participating in Operation Jaws in the Sangin Valley District, Afghanistan. Hogan and Coti-Sears were killed in action the following day during the same operation.

Stevens, from South Field, Mich., was a combat engineer with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion supporting Weapons Company, 1st Bn., 7th Marines.

Coti-Sears, from Washington, D.C., was a rifleman with Weapons Co., Hogan, from Brownstown, Ind., and Mills, from Silver Spring, Md., were riflemen with Bravo Co., and attached to Weapons Co., for the operation.

During the ceremony, Marines placed a Kevlar helmet and identification tags on an inverted rifle, signifying a time of prayer and break in action to pay tribute. A pair of boots in front of the rifle represented the Marines' last march.

The chaplain and battalion commander spoke of the men and Marines that Stevens, Coti-Sears, Hogan and Mills were.

"The shadow of grief that has been cast over us is multiplied by such a great loss as to have four of our brothers fall nearly at once," said Navy Lt. Seanan Holland, chaplain, 1st Bn., 7th Marines. "With the weight of grief upon us, we gather to mourn. As Marines, we take up a life of duty, not all of which is easy, and the Marines whom we pay our respects to today made a commitment to be of service to others. They choose no easy commitment. Theirs was a deeper promise, a promise not just of service but also of taking risks with their lives in order to be of service."

Lieutenant Col. David Bradney, commanding officer, 1st Bn., 7th Marines, said the Marines' sacrifice would not be forgotten. The memorial service, he said, was a way for the battalion's members to grieve and heal.

"We gather today to honor our fallen Marines, to pay our respects, to share our grief and sorrow and to strengthen our bonds to one another. Don't remember our fallen by their deaths but by their lives and all that made them special to us."

Holland said the four fallen Marines were men of character, devotion and professionalism.

"We have lost four Marines who loved and were loved deeply. We lost Marines who we worked and played alongside, said Holland. "Even as their gifts of music, ingenuity, perpetual good cheer, athleticism and creative vision are lost to us, we may be inspired by the memory of their courage and their willingness to go first into harms way."

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