



The Convoy

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Delivering quality information on the 1st Marine Logistics Group

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Never a Bridge Too Far

Afghan children give their approval of the new bridge constructed near Combat Outpost Rankel in the district of Garmsir, Helmand province, Jan. 29.

Combat engineers increase mobility in Garmsir

Story and photos by
Cpl. Bryan Nygaard
RC(SW) Public Affairs

GARMSIR, Afghanistan - During the last week of January, 55 Marines of Bridge Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward) traveled nearly 80 miles through the central portion of Helmand province in order to reach Combat Outpost Rankel, a small base located in the district of

Garmsir, Helmand province. Their mission consisted of removing a medium girder bridge and replacing it with a more permanent and cost-efficient structure designed to increase the mobility of the Marines and Afghans in the area.

However, getting to the bridge site was half of the battle. The Marines convoyed from Leatherneck to Rankel in armored vehicles carrying more than 100,000 pounds of construction equipment and building

materials on roads that were often unpaved. The convoy was held up several times by stuck vehicles and threats from possible improvised explosive devices. As a result, the convoy took nearly five days to reach a destination that would normally take 30 minutes by helicopter.

The Marines, many of whom were packed tightly together while wearing their body armor, slept sitting up inside of the armored vehicles while others stood watch in the gun turret.

After finally arriving at Rankel, the Marines bedded down for the night and headed out to the bridge site early next morning.

The site is only a few minutes' drive from Rankel and is near an observation post occupied by Afghan National Police. The bridge was built over a large creek, enhancing the mobility of the Marines of India Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, who operate out of Rankel.

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CLR-1 receives new sergeant major

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Jerrick Griffin
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Sgt. Maj. Kenneth A. Conover relinquished his position as the top senior enlisted advisor for Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group to Sgt. Maj. Juan J. Diaz during a Relief and Appointment ceremony here, Feb. 21.

Conover served as the regimental sergeant major of CLR-1 for the past year and will take over as the sergeant major for Marine Corps University.

The heart of the ceremony was the passing of the organization's noncommissioned officers sword by the regimental commander, from the outgoing sergeant major to the incoming sergeant major. This signified the transfer of all duties and responsibilities from Conover to Diaz.

Col. James Caley, commanding officer for CLR-1, had a few words to say about Conover before his departure.

"I've known Sgt. Maj. Conover



Sgt. Maj. Kenneth A. Conover (left) and Sgt. Maj. Juan J. Diaz, the outgoing and incoming sergeant major for Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, stand at the position of attention during their Relief and Appointment ceremony on Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 21.

for some time and I was very glad to know he was going to be the sergeant major when I was taking over CLR-1. I knew that I was in good hands at that point," said Caley. "I couldn't have had a better man standing at my side for the last six

months than Sgt. Maj. Conover."

During the ceremony, Diaz expressed his plans for the regiment as the new sergeant major.

"Hopefully I can do the same job and continue what Sgt. Maj. Conover has started and keep this regiment just as good, if not better," said Diaz.

Diaz turned to the formation and addressed the Marines and sailors of CLR-1.

"I'm looking forward to leading you all," said Diaz. "It is an honor and a pleasure to be here, and it will definitely be an honor to serve you."

Before the end of the ceremony, Conover left the Marines, sailors and Diaz a few kind words.

"It's been a pleasure to serve with these fine Marines and sailors," said Conover. "I can stand up here all day and run my mouth about the time I've had serving with CLR-1. To Sgt. Maj. Diaz, brother I am out and you are in. I feel you will do great things with the regiment."



Sgt. Maj. Juan J. Diaz, incoming sergeant major for Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, addresses the Marines and sailors in the regiment during the Relief and Appointment ceremony on Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 21.

HAPPENINGS

Tuition Assistance Class

Every Wednesday at 11:30 a.m., Joint Education Center offers College 101 class to inform service members about different college offers, on and off base, as well as provide information about tuition assistance and how to use it. For more information, call the JEC at (760) 725-6660.

Motorcycle Safety Courses

An advanced riders course will be held weekly, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 7:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. A basic rider's course will be held weekly Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 7:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Both courses will take place at Bldg. 200071. For more information, call Kevin Frantum at (760) 725-2897.

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BRIDGE

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Before breaking ground on the site, the Marines used mine-sweepers to clear the area of any possible IEDs in order to make it safe to work and maneuver heavy equipment. Once the area had been deemed safe, the Marines unloaded their tools and began working.

First, sections of earth were removed on both sides of the ditch with an excavator. Marines followed up by using shovels and pickaxes to break up some of the harder ground and then used a tractor to finish it off. Using a dirt tamper, they leveled off the ground in order to begin laying the concrete footers that served as the bridge's foundation. Once that was finished, the Marines hooked cables up to the footers, which weighed several hundred pounds, and used an excavator to move them into place.

While the majority of Bridge Platoon was working, several of the Marines provided security. They provided overwatch while standing in the gun turrets of the armored vehicles that were surrounding the bridge site. Their day was spent waving off farmers who were herding their sheep and camels through the area.

Lance Cpl. Jesus Penagraves had spent the entire ride down to Rankel in the turret of an armored vehicle. Whenever he felt tired or sleepy, Penagraves would look toward the bridge site where his fellows Marines were working non-stop.

Stiff winds cooled the Marines

off as they worked through the night. By utilizing the headlights on the heavy equipment, the Marines were able to move the rest of the bridge into place. By dawn the next morning, the bridge was almost complete.

Even though the Marines were rotated on and off of the bridge site, no one got more than five hours of sleep. Sgt. Joseph Redman, a squad leader in Bridge Platoon, put in 29 straight hours of work that had him directing heavy equipment, guiding the Marines and doing quality control until 1st Lt. Matt Paluta, the commander of Bridge Platoon, told him to get some sleep in one of the vehicles.

Once the Marines were finished constructing the bridge, they quickly went to work disassembling the medium girder bridge that was already in place nearby. The parts of the MGB will be sent back to Marine Corps Logistics Base, Albany, Ga., where they will be distributed to different engineering units to be used for training purposes.

"You're looking at a major difference," said Paluta, a native of Cincinnati. "We put in a permanent structure for \$60,000 and took out a temporary bridge that costs a couple million dollars. To pull that off with the quality of workmanship that we did...our attention to detail was never lacking. We made it a quality product for both the Marines of (3rd Bn., 3rd Marines) and for the Afghan people."

Many Afghans from surrounding villages had expressed to the Marines that they did not like the old bridge because its high pitch in the middle prevented them from



Lance Cpl. Dan Schergen, a metal worker with Support Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion and a native of Valparaiso, Ind., welds a bolt into place during the construction of a bridge near Combat Outpost Rankel in the district of Garmsir, Helmand province, Jan. 29.

seeing the ground on the other side. One Afghan, an elder from one of the villages, expressed his gratitude for the new bridge.

"He said he really appreciates the bridge," said Paluta. "He said they need a really good quality bridge. He was grateful for the Marines' hard work."

Staff Sgt. Brian Glory, the platoon sergeant for Bridge Platoon, has deployed to Iraq twice and remembers how much easier it was to move from place to place to complete a mission.

"The movement piece was a lot easier in Iraq," said Glory, a native of Tulsa, Okla. "It was a lot simpler to me. It was a simpler way of life.

There was an infrastructure. There were roads. Here there is nothing. There's absolutely nothing. We saw that on the way here. We moved through open desert with 100,000 pounds plus of equipment. It's just ridiculous."

"In my eyes, this is an engineer's war," said Glory. "The mobility issues in this country are horrible. Combat Engineers are a force multiplier. We enhance the mobility for these units to be able to go in and establish a foothold [in] whatever area they are trying to go to. That's really Bridge Platoon's mission at this point: enhancing the mobility of whatever unit we need to."



Lance Cpl. Jervis Hetterick, a combat engineer with Bridge Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, and a native of Union Beach, N.J., helps remove a wooden beam that Marines used to cross a ditch during the construction of a bridge near Combat Outpost Rankel in the district of Garmsir, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Jan. 29.

Leading by example: 1st MLG raises safety awareness

Story and photo by
Cpl. Khoa Pelczar
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Throughout history, the Marine Corps has established itself in the public eye as the most dependable military branch with the highest standards of discipline.

However, the actions of a few individuals within the Corps driving on the road contradict those standards. For that reason, the 1st Marine Logistics Group is encouraging its Marines and sailors to raise vehicle and motorcycle safety awareness, on and off the road.

“The Marines and sailors have brought great honor back from our time deployed to Afghanistan,” said Lt. Cmdr. Paul Schiermeier, safety and environmental officer, 1st MLG. “But just because we have gone into combat, wearing the Marine Corps uniform, should not allow us to assume unnecessary risks like driving under the influence of alcohol and increasing the conditions for harm on roadway. We want to improve our Marines’ driving behavior to change the American population perceptions, especially those residents living in Oceanside and other areas around Camp Pendleton. Don’t be that guy.”

In order to do so, Schiermeier, from Florissant, Mo., encourages Marines and sailors to utilize all resources that are available to them.

“Marines and sailors under the age of 26 must complete the Drive-for-Life training, which is taught by base safety,” he said. “For motorcycle riders, they must complete the basic motorcycle course and the advanced rider course. If they’ve been drinking and don’t have a designated driver, make use of the Arrive Alive program.”

The Arrive Alive program offers service members who carry the card a safe ride home from a few of the local taxi companies, (taxi point of contacts are printed on the card) Schiermeier explained. Marines and sailors can pick up an Arrive Alive card from their unit’s Substance Abuse Control Officer.

“Not only do we need to be responsible for ourselves, we need to consider those we allow to drive

us, be aware of what conditions might be effecting the other person to safely drive you,” he said.

Schiermeier asked Marines and sailors to practice personal and peer leadership to make better plans for their activities while off duty. First MLG had 50 vehicle mishaps reported last year with three fatalities, reported by the 1st MLG Safety and Environmental Office.

“One fatality is way too many. We need to plan our activities off duty as well, just as much as we’re planning our combat operations and training exercises,” he said. “We need to recognize that we have a public image to uphold. As often as the American people are proud of our accomplishments, they’re disgruntled and dismayed when they hear that we have personnel who are killing themselves or others on the roadway.”

So far this year, there have been four vehicle mishaps reported to the Safety and Environmental Office, 1st MLG, thankfully all of which resulted in no loss of life, a big improvement from last year’s report.

“Overall, the 1st MLG has shown remarkable support of force preservation with data that supports stats to include zero mishap fatalities this calendar year,” he said. “In order for us to keep leaning forward and creating a safe and healthy environment both on and off duty, it will require the personal leadership of our Marines and sailors, and a better understanding of the options to make them safe and apply them.”

Schiermeier added, “As junior Marines and sailors, they need to develop their personal leadership, which will enhance their abilities to become leaders of people. We should demonstrate leadership abilities in our personal lives by following the rules and the laws around us. Marines and sailors need to understand that they don’t have the right to: 1) drink and drive; 2) text while driving; 3) drive aggressively; and 4) drive at high excessive speeds; nor should they have those rights. These behaviors do not reflect in our core values, and they’re not key traits of good ambassadors, which we should be.”

Schiermeier went on to address service members about pedestrian safety.



“One fatality is way too many,” 1st Marine Logistics Group is encouraging its Marines and sailors to raise safety awareness, on and off the road.



Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Andrew Smith

A sailor adjusts his helmet during the Navy and Marine Corps traffic skills training rodeo at North Dock Yokohama, Japan, April 10, 2010. The event, open to service members from all branches, is intended to promote motorcycle road safety.

“We need to be courteous and respectful of the driving laws, on and off base, particularly pertaining to the pedestrian safety,” he said. “We need to apply risk management and be sure that we constringed those around us and not treat our vehicles as weapons.”

The most important task of the

safety officer of 1st MLG is getting every service member to practice personal and peer leadership and to raise their safety awareness – it is an ongoing battle. Schiermeier hopes that his word reaches everyone and helps them be more aware of their surroundings, on and off duty, in and out of their vehicles.



GIVE HIM ONE!

LANCE CPL. MARTIN POWELL JR.

**Story and photos by
Cpl. Michele Watson
Staff Writer**

Less than two years ago, Lance Cpl. Martin Powell Jr. was standing in a cap and gown alongside a graduating class of 90 students at Cascade High School. Today, he proudly wears a uniform shared by 200,000.

Raised in the small southern town of Wartrace, Tenn., Powell has seen more of the world than most 19-year-olds.

“All my friends were joining the Marine Corps, and I decided that I wanted to do that too,” said Powell.

Stationed in Okinawa, Japan, Powell has participated in operations in Korea and is now deployed to Afghanistan.

“Experiencing the culture out here and seeing how the people live makes me more appreciative of the country I come from,” he said.

Powell arrived in Afghanistan in November with his unit, 9th Engineer Support Battalion. While deployed as a combat engineer, he has supported the construction of multiple structures that provide additional safety in the combat zone. Additionally, he has helped construct bridges and roads, making travel throughout the region easier for coalition convoys and Afghan civilians alike.

“We built a land bridge to help the community but also to help with military bypass,” he said. “We’ve done a lot to help people out here.”

Prior to deploying, units spend months training and preparing for the deployed environment. Powell said though problems tend to arise after being around each other constantly, his platoon pulls together when the time comes.

“Especially when we go out on missions, problems are left in the rear, and we put everything else aside,” he said.

The rainy season in Afghanistan has brought additional challenges to the combat engineers. Powell

talked about a 3-day downpour his platoon worked through during a recent construction job.

“In Okinawa it’s always raining, so the training helped us for times like this last mission,” he said. “We’re kind of used to it.”

The work of combat engineers is hard labor, but the back-to-back missions help the deployment pass quickly.

“It makes the time go by a lot faster when you’re working,” said Powell. “It might [be difficult] sometimes, but the days go by quickly.”

In garrison, Powell said he enjoys going swimming and visiting the numerous beaches near his base.

“I love going out in town and experiencing Japan,” he said. “There is always something to do, unless it’s monsoon season.”

Despite enjoying the Japanese culture, Powell looks forward to returning to the states to be with his wife. For his first duty station, Powell was sent to Japan unaccompanied but said his wife remains

supportive of what he does.

“My wife has one of those ‘half my heart is in Afghanistan’ bumper stickers on her car,” he joked.

Powell plans to go back to school after his enlistment is completed. Like

his wife, he wants to become a dental assistant, but he said leaving the Marine Corps will be “bittersweet.”

“All my brothers that I have been working with and living with — I’m going to miss them a lot,” he said.



Lance Cpl. Martin A. Powell Jr., a combat engineer with 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), hammers a nail into a 2-by-4 during a mission at a patrol base in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 19.



Lance Cpl. Martin A. Powell Jr., a combat engineer with 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), mans a .50 caliber automatic weapon during a convoy through Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 14.

“Don’t bother, the Marine has sorted it out!”

75-year-old man thanks 1st MLG Marine for kindness

Story and photos by
Cpl. Khoa Pelczar
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – An ammunition technician Marine with Ammunition Company, 1st Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, was awarded for his heroic actions while off duty.

Cpl. Nicholas Mejia, 22, from Harrison, N.J., received the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal here, Feb. 23, after his command learned about his heroic act last October.

Mejia aided a 75-year-old father to find his diabetic son when they were separated while hiking on the Timber Tops trail in the rugged back country of Big Sur, Calif., Oct. 16. Grateful for Mejia’s kindness, the father, John Q. Bellingham, wrote a letter to Mejia’s command, fully explaining Mejia’s action.

“Sir, I wish to bring to your attention my appreciation for actions of assistance to me and my son, rendered by an individual serving under your command, Cpl. Nicholas Mejia,” Bellingham wrote.

According to Bellingham’s letter, the pair was hiking and became separated. He waited for his son at the trailhead, hoping for the arrival of his son. After an hour, Bellingham feared for the worse and contacted 911 for assistance. Another hour had gone by and help was nowhere to be found. From a distance, Bellingham mistaken Mejia’s vehicle for

an emergency vehicle dispatched in response to his call, he waved for help but was disappointed as the vehicle drove past. Moments later, Mejia’s vehicle reappeared from the opposite direction and offered assistance.

“I explained my problem, thanked him for his kindness but said I was expecting help to arrive soon,” Bellingham wrote. “Nicholas told me he was a Marine, had training in search and rescue, could probably carry my son out if he indeed was injured and proposed going up the trail to look for him while I stayed below to await assistance. I reluctantly agreed, since he could do what I clearly could not.”

As Bellingham waited, the night grew closer and he was concerned for his son’s safety, so he left a note on his car and headed up the trail, Bellingham explained. Within 30 minutes, he saw Mejia and his son, Jonathan, coming down. Jonathan was in rough condition as he had used all his water and sugar supply.

Once they returned to their home, Bellingham re-called 911 to give them the news, only to find out that they had a record of his original call, but had yet to dispatch help. In a moment of anger, he responded to the operator, “Don’t bother, the Marine has sorted it out!”

Bellingham described Mejia as not only generously helpful, he was extraordinarily humble and sought no recognition. Bellingham said he knew he had to let people know of Mejia’s ac-



Cpl. Nicholas Mejia, ammunition technician, Ammunition Company, 1st Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, receives the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 23, for his heroic actions while off duty.

tion. Through the help of 1st MLG’s Public Affairs Office, he identified Mejia’s unit and the name and address of Mejia’s commanding officer.

Mejia said the news came as a surprise to him. He didn’t learn about the award until the night before.

“My friends told me I was getting a NAM the next day,” he said. “Before I know it, I was standing in a formation and was called forth to face our company commander. That’s when it really hit me.”

So honored to receive such an award, Mejia was at a loss for words.

“It’s crazy. This is the first time I got recognized and congratulated for being myself,” he said.

“It’s good to finally get notice for something and I firmly believe in helping people. This will be one of the few things I can take away from the Marine Corps in an official document, rather than just stories and memories.”

Mejia couldn’t wait to tell his family of his big Marine Corps achievement.

“I haven’t told my family yet, but I’m sure they’ll be happy and proud of me when they hear the news,” he said.

Bellingham ended his letter with his sincere appreciation to Mejia’s action that day, he wrote, “... Cpl Nicholas Mejia’s actions reflect well on the spirit of service and sacrifice the Corps instills in its members. Please let Nick know of my deep appreciation.”



Pennsylvania Marine leads construction team in Afghanistan

Story and photo by
Cpl. Michele Watson
Staff Writer

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – In the past decade, the war on terror has changed dramatically. American troops are now out of Iraq, and their presence in Afghanistan is downsizing.

In late 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom had reached dangerous heights for service members, but that didn't stop Sgt. Michael J. Favata Jr., from enlisting in the Marine Corps.

"Like any other family, mine was concerned about [ongoing conflicts at] the time I was joining," said Favata, 28, a native of Albrightsville, Pa. "The war had just started but they supported me fully."

With a background in construction, he was happy to become a combat engineer. As part of 7th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group, he deployed to Iraq in 2004.

"It was my first deployment, and it was exciting," said Favata. "There was something different every day, and you never knew what to expect."

Since his first tour, Favata has been to Iraq two more times and is currently deployed to Afghanistan. Stationed out of Okinawa, Japan, he has also been a part of operations in the Western Pacific.

"One of the most beneficial missions I have been on as a combat engineer was in the Philippines," said Favata. "We built a school in a village of orphans. It felt pretty good to make that kind of a difference."

In addition to building schools, Favata has helped with the construction of structures that offer increased protection and mobility for deployed Marines such as indirect fire bunkers, blast mitigation pits, land bridges, and entry control points.

Now as platoon guide for 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), Favata runs the majority of missions his team goes on in Helmand province.

"We get to go to these outposts and help the guys who are stuck out here for months on end," said Favata.

In a recent mission to one of those outposts, Favata was in charge of erecting two indirect fire bunkers. The structures provide a sanctuary in case of enemy attack. Despite heavy rains and freezing temperatures, his diligence and strong work ethic pressed the team to complete the job early.

"Anything we can do to help them is totally worth it," he said.

The combat engineers of 9th ESB have been deployed since October. Favata speaks highly of the



Sgt. Michael J. Favata Jr., platoon guide, 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), sits by a dog after building a blast mitigation pit at a patrol base in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 15.

team he is privileged to lead.

"This is the most disciplined platoon I have ever worked with," he said. "They are all hard workers, and they take pride in what they do."

As a leader, Favata strives to be open-minded, willing to hear others' suggestions and ideas for how to complete a job.

"One thing I have learned in the Marine Corps is that, regardless of rank, there is always something new someone can teach me," said Favata. "It's never my way or the highway."

With only a few months left in this deployment, Favata said he looks forward to getting home to his

wife and 1-year-old son. Though the distance from home can be stressful, he is grateful for the opportunities the Corps has offered him.

"When I hear about the people I grew up with and what they're doing, I feel like I have done 10 times as much," said Favata. "I've had a lot of experiences that I never would have had if I hadn't joined."

Favata said he loves the camaraderie and the traveling within the Corps and he intends to stick with his original plan.

"When I joined the Corps, I decided to stay in until it stopped being fun," he said. "I'm still having fun."

Chaplain's Corner

You may have found yourself in a quandary from time to time where you had to think things out, whether of a divine nature or of a human kind. It is not easy to struggle with life's problems and situations. In either case, you thought and thought hard, contemplating your predicament. Such contemplation is an adventure in thinking deeply; thinking out loud; thinking to yourself. Now, some may believe contemplation is only reserved for mystics, sages, or holy ones such as priests, pastors, rabbis, imams, monks, or nuns. Far from it! Contemplation involves ordinary people like you and me. Spiritually, contemplation is thinking with God.

In some cases, contemplation is like wrestling with a bear, or in my

case wrestling with God.

OK, maybe I have not wrestled with God in the manner depicted by Jacob at Peniel (Genesis 32), or conversed with God like Moses did with the burning bush (Exodus 3-4). I have struggled with God in my contemplation like Huckleberry Finn, in Mark Twain's famous novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: "I went and told the Widow Douglas about it, and she said the thing a body could get by praying for it was 'spiritual gifts.' This was too many for me, but she told me what she meant—I must help other people, and do everything I could for other people, and look out for them all the time, and never think about myself" (pp. 10-11).

I have sat my rump onto many stumps like Huck in the backwoods

not to just think about God; but think with God about others around me. So, I want to invite you to place your rump on a stump. That's right! Your heard me correctly. Put that rump of yours on a stump and think. Think! Stumping and thumping, sitting and thinking are what contemplation is all about. By this simple act, you have now entered the world of contemplation.

I can still see to this day Huck sitting on that stump in the woods conversing with himself (and I would insert, unknowingly with God), and receiving a few splinters not only from the stump he sat on, but from those many trials and tribulations he experienced adventuring down the Mississippi River on a raft with Jim, the slave. There are many "ah ha" moments with splinters pricking our rumps whether it be getting up from our own individual stumps or from the many stumps tied together to make



Lt. Cmdr. Scott Kroener
Regimental Chaplain
Combat Logistics Regiment 17
1st Marine Logistics Group

a raft, floating down the river of life. Contemplation is like a raft adventure. It allows the hand of God to touch our hearts and make us aware of the divine presence in the hearts of others.

Marines compete to raise morale

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Jerrick Griffin
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – As the Marines pushed towards the finish line, a crowd of spectators stood on the sideline and cheered them on. The competition was stiff, but there could only be one winner.

First Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, conducted a field meet at 22 Area, Feb. 24.

The field meet consisted of several different events including the Humvee-pull, the casualty evacuation run, and the tug-of-war. Each event challenged the participants to work as a team.

The first event was the Humvee pull. A team of four Marines from each company, starting in the push-up position, had to sprint, while carrying ammunition cans, to a Humvee waiting at the end of the path. As soon as every member of the team made it to the Humvee, they placed the ammo cans in the back and began to pull the truck back to the starting line to complete the challenge. The competition became fierce as each team tried their

best to outperform the rest.

“Every team showed great teamwork out there,” said 1st Sgt. Tina Dexter, company 1st sergeant for Ammunition Company, 1st Supply Bn., who won the first event.

After the Humvee-pull, the devildogs made their way to the next event, which was the Cas-Evac run. A team of six Marines had to transport a log, simulating a casualty, on a stretcher to a designated evacuation zone utilizing a trail in the hills of 22 Area while carrying four ammo cans. During the third event, each team had to disassemble and reassemble a M16A4 service rifle, a M9 service pistol and a M240B machine gun for time.

The final challenge was the tug-of-war. During this challenge, two teams of 10 Marines took the rope. The team that pulled the other to a predetermined point moved on to the next round. This event received the loudest cheers from the sideline. Everyone screamed “PULL, PULL, PULL!” to motivate their team.

“I love when the Marines are competitive,” said Sgt. Carrie Belle, battalion sergeant major, 1st Supply Bn. “We hold these events to give the Marines a break and to let them have fun.”



A Marines with 1st Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, carries an ammunition can during the casualty evacuation run portion of the 1st Supply Bn. Field Meet at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 24.

At the end of the field meet, the winner was announced. Combat Logistics Company 11, 1st Supply Battalion, CLR-1, 1st MLG, stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar took home the first place trophy. The Marines then enjoyed

grilled hamburgers and hotdogs after a long day of competition.

“It was a great turn out,” said Belle. “Everyone had fun and our Marines from Miramar came out and were very competitive. We’ll see who will take the trophy home next time.”



Marines with 1st Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, make their way to the finish line as spectators cheer them on during the Humvee-pull portion of the 1st Supply Bn. Field Meet at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 24.

Bulk fuel Marines keep operations moving

Story and photos by
Sgt. John Jackson
Public Affairs Chief

FORWARD OPERATING BASE EDINBURGH, Afghanistan – Fuel is critical for almost all missions Marines conduct. Whether in garrison or forward deployed, fuel keeps operations moving. Without fuel, combat logistics patrols cannot get supplies to units in need, aircraft cannot patrol the skies and generators cannot provide power to electronic equipment.

Luckily for the Marines at Forward Operating Base Edinburgh, Afghanistan, three Marines ensure those operations continue. One corporal and two lance corporals are responsible for the fuel needed for vehicles, aircraft and equipment at the FOB.

“We receive, store and dispense all of the ground fuel for FOB Edinburgh,” said Cpl. Clayton Leatherwood, FOB Edinburgh fuel farm non-commissioned officer-in-charge, Headquarters and Service Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward). “We also issue all the fuel to the air wing here at the FOB.”

According to Leatherwood, the fuel farm at FOB Edinburgh dispenses approximately 10,000 gallons of fuel per day – the highest amount of fuel distributed in the region.

“It’s a privilege to show off what we can do,” said Leatherwood, 22, a native of Stockbridge, Ga. “We dispense a lot of fuel, and it’s great to show how much we can do with so few Marines.”

The Marines’ job is important to keep the Marine Air-Ground team mission-ready.

“The Marines at FOB Edinburgh support both the air and the ground missions in [the region],” said Sgt. Shawn Tredinnick, the operations non-commissioned officer-in-charge for Bulk Fuel Platoon, H&S Co., 9th ESB, 1st MLG(Fwd). “They support the ground missions by issuing fuel to all convoys and supporting equipment on that FOB. They support the air mission by ensuring the [Marine Wing Support Squadron] aboard FOB Edinburgh has a steady amount of fuel to issue to aircraft.”

Along with Leatherwood, Lance Cpl. William Zerr and Lance Cpl. Shelby Williams are the three Marines who run the fuel farm at FOB Edinburgh.

Zerr, a bulk fuel specialist with H&S Co., 9th ESB, 1st MLG (Fwd), says he has learned a great deal on this deployment and is excited to have the opportunity to be deployed.

“Some aspects are challenging, but we just work around them,” said Zerr, 20, a native of St. Charles, Mo. “We just look out for one another to make sure the mission is accomplished.”

Williams says she has new experiences daily. The 20 year-old Tallahassee, Fla., native is a combat engineer by trade, but is



Lance Cpl. William Zerr, a bulk fuel specialist with Headquarters and Service Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), checks the fuel gauges at Forward Operating Base Edinburgh Feb. 20.



Inflatable storage containers at Forward Operating Base Edinburgh store fuel in order to support ground operations, air operations and equipment on the FOB.

working alongside the bulk fuel specialists to keep operations moving.

“It’s very rewarding,” said Williams. “Being up here learning the trade is good. I am glad I am doing it.”

The three Marines running the FOB Edinburgh Fuel Farm are not only dispensing the

most fuel in the region, they are also building a solid reputation for their work.

“I have heard nothing but good things from the FOB commander about the performance of the Marines at the fuel farm,” Tredinnick said. “[They] are performing with the high standards expected of our platoon.”



Engineer Marines with Bridge Company, 7th Engineer Support Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, conduct a bridge construction training exercise aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 15.

Bridge Company Marines conduct training exercise

Story and photos by
Cpl. Khoa Pelczar
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Marines with Bridge Company, 7th Engineer Support Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, conducted a bridge construction training exercise here, Feb. 15, to test the new Improved Ribbon Bridge.

Being one of Marine Corps only two bridge companies and most junior, the first being 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, this was the first time these engineers got hands-on experience with the IRB.

“This is great training, not only for my Marines but for me also,” said Sgt. Christopher Ivester, engineer, Bridge Co. 7th ESB. “I’ve been doing this for a while now but no matter how experienced you are, there’s always something new for you to learn. I’m glad we finally get some training with the new IRB.”

The IRB provides the Marine Expeditionary Forces with the capability to overcome wet gap obstacles, which are too wide to be breached, or too deep to be forded by combat vehicles, according to the program mission statement.

Developed by prime contractor Eisenweke Kaiserslautern for the U.S. Army, the IRB, an improved version of the Standard Ribbon Bridge, is a modular floating

bridge with integral superstructure and floating supports, which said to have higher military load classifications and would be able to cross faster water with banks up to two meters high, explained Michael Travis, training instructor and contractor for AM General Contracting Company.

During the exercise, Marines practiced building and tearing down a 7-piece floating-bridge and how to do it efficiently.

“Most of the Marines in our company had never constructed a bridge or a project similar to this before, so this is a great chance for them to get familiar with the job,” said Ivester, 26, from Gastonia, N.C. “They seemed to be doing really well and I’m excited to be working with them.”

Marines transported each of the seven pieces of the IRB on a Logistics Vehicle System Replacement to the construction zone. Once on site, they loaded each piece one by one into the water, starting with the first ramp, then the inner pieces and finally finishing the bridge with another ramp piece.

Due to an interface issue with free launching of the IRB from the LVSR into the water and caused damage to the equipment, the IRB was placed on administrative deadline in July 2008, as stated in the mission report of the training. Only after a safety assessment and review of the proper controlled launch procedures of the IRB from



Engineer Marines with Bridge Company, 7th Engineer Support Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, release a piece of a 7-piece Improved Ribbon Bridge into the water during a bridge construction training exercise aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 15.

the LVSR did the Marine Corps resume with testing the bridge in a field environment in September 2011 with 8th ESB and Marine Corps Engineer School. So it was important for the instructors to show the Marines of 7th ESB this proper procedure to launch the IRB into the water.

“The instructors were great, they taught us everything we needed to know about the new bridge,” said Ivester. “They explained everything thoroughly so my Marines could understand.”

Once the 7-piece floating-bridge was completely built, Marines utilized the conventional rafting method, which aligned the rafts perpendicular to the bridge, to maneuver the bridge freely in the water. Then they brought the bridge

ashore to load a few tactical vehicles onto the bridge and returned into the water to simulate crossing over a wet gap obstacle and tested to see if the bridge can support these vehicles’ weight. Afterward, the engineers dismounted the vehicles from the bridge and began the tear-down process.

Once the training completed, Marines repeated the exercise from step one to get more efficient with their workflow.

“I’m proud of the effort that the Marines are putting out,” said Ivester. “It’s freezing cold and the rain isn’t really helping us out but everyone put forth everything they have to accomplish the mission, even if it was just training. I have no doubt they’re ready for the real thing when it comes.”

9th ESB Marines defy challenges, complete construction mission

Story and photos by
Cpl. Michele Watson
Staff Writer

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – It's 7 o'clock on a Sunday night. The sky is pitch black, and it is starting to rain again. The gunner strains his eyes to look for any moving figures illuminated by the frequent flashes of lightning across the sky.

Only a few days ago, it was a sunny morning when the combat engineers of 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), loaded up their trucks. Their mission was to support a few isolated patrol bases manned by soldiers from the Republic of Georgia.

After a few hours of driving, the platoon arrived at their first destination, Patrol Base Enguri, Feb. 14. The Marines immediately conducted a site survey to determine how much structural reinforcement the base required. Site surveys are done prior to the actual construction to determine what kind and how much material will be needed. When the survey is completed, a support unit will go in later with the necessary equipment and complete the construction project.

Once the survey was complete,

the convoy pressed on to PB Shukvani, where the Marines refueled the vehicles and prepared their supplies for the next task.

The following day, the group set out for PB Ertoba. Just outside the perimeter of the small, Georgian base, the Marines began to build a blast mitigation pit.

The pit is designed to allow explosive ordnance technicians the ability to safely investigate any ordnance they find. Once an explosive is rendered safe, EOD personnel place it in the pit and send in a robot to analyze the bomb's characteristics and gain intelligence. In case of an explosion, the pit retains the blast ensuring the safety of the EOD technicians.

Using Hesco barriers, the combat engineers set up a 20-foot-by-20-foot perimeter. Hesco barriers are made with a collapsible wire mesh. Each individual cell has four sides lined with a heavy-duty felt and is filled with sand. The cells are connected to create different sized perimeters that create a bullet-resistant structure. The Marines were allotted 48 hours to complete the pit, but after only five hours, the job was done.

"We have years of experience between all of us," said Sgt. Joseph Ramey, a combat



Cpl. Michael Wagner, combat engineer, 2nd Plt., A Co., 9th ESB, 1st MLG (FWD), attaches two Hesco barriers together at Patrol Base Ertoba, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 15.

engineer with 2nd Plt., Alpha Co., 9th ESB, 1st MLG (Fwd). "We know what we're doing and we're ready to get the task at hand completed and move on to the next mission."

The next mission was to head a few miles north and build two indirect fire bunkers at PB Didgori. Much like a blast mitigation pit, IDF bunkers are built the same way; however, a roof is added to provide overhead protection from incoming rounds.

Cold air and cloudy skies moved in as the convoy maneuvered through steep, rocky hills to get to the site. Exiting their vehicles, the Marines jumped into knee-deep mud and got to work. Ignoring the freezing rain, the team continued their work into dark hours of the night.

"I used to work with my dad in these conditions, so it kind of brought me back home," said Lance Cpl. Michael Duran, a combat engineer with 2nd Plt., Alpha Co., 9th ESB, 1st MLG (Fwd). "My job is to build anything that these guys outside the wire need. This particular mission increases the safety of the people living on these patrol bases."

Once the Hesco perimeter was set up, the roof construction began. Using 2-by-4 planks, the engineers set up a wooden foundation on top of the 7-foot Hesco barriers. On top of the foundation, 2-foot Hesco barriers were filled with more sand to create the protective roof.

"Construction is my favorite part of this job," said Duran, 20, from Baldwin Park, Calif. "I don't just enjoy it; I really have

fun with it. When they are telling us how something is going to be set up, I can already picture it in my mind."

Despite the harsh weather, the team was still able to complete their mission early. At the end of the third day at PB Didgori, the Marines began their return trip.

When the convoy left for PB Didgori, the skies were clear and the dry desert brought few difficulties driving across the terrain. After a few days of rain, though, the dry desert turned into an impassible mud bath for the vehicles as they headed back home.

The lightning storm frequently lit up a purple sky as the Marines struggled to pull out stuck vehicles. It soon became clear that travel couldn't continue until morning. The gunners took turns throughout the night posting security for the stranded group.

With the sunrise, the convoy continued. Each vehicle pressed through the mud successfully. At the bottom of the hill leading up to PB Ertoba, what once had been a dry bed was now a rushing river. Using heavy machinery that had been used earlier to fill Hesco barriers, the combat engineers built a land bridge that finally got them across the river and past their final challenge.

The platoon was given 10 days to complete all their tasks. Despite multiple obstacles and bad weather, the platoon was able to use their engineering skills to adapt and overcome. The group arrived back at Camp Leatherneck on the seventh day of their mission.

"We work well together," said Ramey. "It's just that simple."



Lance Cpl. Andrew Nelson, combat engineer, 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), nails down a sheet of wood at Patrol Base Didgori, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 19.



Lt. Cmdr. Bridget Wise-San Antonio, president, Camp Pendleton Chapter, National Naval Officer's Association, greets the guests at the start of the 2012 Black History Month Luncheon at the South Mesa Club, Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 29.

NNOA Camp Pendleton Chapter host luncheon

Story and photos by
Cpl. Khoa Pelczar
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Marines and sailors aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., and guests made their way to the South Mesa Club, Feb. 29, where the Camp Pendleton Chapter of the National Naval Officer's Association hosted a luncheon to celebrate Black History Month.

During the event, the guest speaker, Maj. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, commanding gen-

eral, 1st Marine Division, said to the guests that the important thing is continuing to move forward and build on the legacy to create a stronger America while they reflect on their culture, their legacy and their history.

"There are many barriers in this nation. But a barrier is only a barrier when you allow it," he said. "That's why we're not here to celebrate Black history, we're here to celebrate American history. So teach the young and focus on the future. Because when it comes down to it, America will always do the right thing."



Marines and sailors enjoy a buffet at the 2012 Black History Month Luncheon, hosted by Camp Pendleton Chapter of the National Naval Officer's Association, at the South Mesa Club, Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 29.

Congratulations Combat Logistics Battalion 7

CLB-7 brings home the 2012 Marine Logistics Unit of the Year

The announcement was made via MARADMIN 106/12 on behalf of Lt. Gen. Frank Panter, deputy commandant for installations and logistics.

The awards ceremony is scheduled to take place in Crystal City, Arlington, Va., 7 p.m., March 29.

Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 7 present their company colors aboard Camp Dwyer, Afghanistan, during a formation at which the 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward) commanding general, Brig. Gen. Michael G. Dana, addressed the Marines and highlighted their accomplishments, Oct. 14. Combat Logistics Battalion 7 completed their seven-month deployment and transferred authority to CLB-1.

Photo by Cpl. Katherine M. Solano





Cpl. Nickolas Gervasoni, a military policeman and a security team leader, Engineer Support Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) debriefs his security team following a mission in Helmand province Feb. 22.

Military policemen provide security, keep engineering operations safe

Story and photos by
Sgt. John Jackson
Public Affairs Chief

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Whether the Marines of 9th Engineer Support Battalion are building bridges or roads or constructing new structures on patrol bases throughout Helmand province, the Marines provide tactical logistics support so that other units have what they need to accomplish their mission. However, completing these tasks takes not only the hard work of combat engineers, motor transport operators and heavy equipment operators, but military police Marines to provide security to ensure the mission is accomplished in the safest environment possible.

According to their website, 9th ESB provides general engineering support of an expeditionary nature to Regional Command (Southwest) including mobility, counter-mobility, survivability, engineer reconnaissance, tactical utilities, bulk water production and storage, and bulk fuel storage.

For the Marines of Engineer Support Company, 9th ESB, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), knowing teams of military policemen are providing security both while they travel and while they are working allows the 9th ESB Marines to focus on their assigned tasks.

“Our job is to provide all security for [our] convoys maneuvering



Sgt. Carlos Garza, assistant convoy commander and squad leader, Engineer Support Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) provides security while a heavy equipment operator works on a road improvement project in Helmand province Feb. 16.

from point A to point B and while we are at fixed positions,” said Cpl. Nickolas Gervasoni, a military policeman and a security team leader, Engineer Support Company, 9th ESB, 1st MLG (Fwd).

In addition to providing an extra measure of protection, the Marines have other tasks they are responsible for while on missions.

“Our guys do everything,” said Sgt. Carlos Garza, assistant con-

voys commander and squad leader, Engineer Support Company, 9th ESB, 1st MLG (Fwd). “We drive the security trucks, are responsible for communications and of course man the crew-served weapons.”

The security teams with 9th ESB spent countless hours preparing prior to arriving in Afghanistan to ensure they were ready for any mission thrown their way.

“We trained a lot; about seven

solid months of training,” Gervasoni said. “Prior to deploying, we trained to do everything from dismounted patrols, night patrols and even house clearings.”

According to Gervasoni, training prior to deployment and their time in country has really been beneficial for the Marines.

“The team has really grown together,” said Gervasoni, 27, from Trenton, N.J. “Every single Marine has a vast amount of knowledge about our specific mission and how to get the job done.”

Security for any convoy or engineering operation is crucial, and the junior Marines and non-commissioned officers are the ones who provide the essential piece.

“We have a handful of NCO’s, but the majority of the security team are junior Marines,” said Garza, 27, from Houston. “Everyone has really stepped up to the plate and is doing a great job.”

The greater part of the Marines on the security team are on their first deployment; however, according to Garza, they are all handling it like seasoned veterans.

“Our job here is to get the mission accomplished, get everyone home safe and get our gear home,” said Lance Cpl. Cornelius Greer, a security vehicle commander, Engineer Support Company, 9th ESB, 1st MLG (Fwd). “I think we all understand our role here. It can sometimes be difficult, but I am confident our team will get the job done.”

PRP paves way for fallen heroes' return home

Story and photo by
Cpl. Michele Watson
Staff Writer

CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan – In times of war, sacrifices must be made. For fallen Marines, the process of returning home is paved with honor, respect and dignity.

Marines with Personnel Retrieval and Processing have one of the hardest jobs in the Corps — preparing remains for their final trip home.

“It’s something [that] needs to be done,” said Lance Cpl. Hunter Foster, a PRP team member, PRP Detachment, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward). “It’s a very respectable and very honorable job.”

PRP Marines handle and care for all fallen service members, civilian Department of Defense personnel, U.S. coalition forces, contractors, and local nationals within Regional Command Southwest area of operations.

The process begins when the remains arrive at the Mortuary Affairs Collection Point at Camp Bastion. A medical doctor is called in to officially announce the time of death, and a death certificate is written. PRP logs all injuries on an anatomical chart and documents all items that are brought in with

the body. Each item is tagged and forwarded to Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan.

“The meticulous manner in which PRP Marines document the personal effects that accompany the remains of our fallen heroes might seem to be inconsequential in the big picture, but those items are sometimes the last pieces of tangible evidence that a family member can cling in remembrance,” said Capt. Clark Phillips, officer-in-charge, PRP Det., 1st MLG (Fwd). “Whether it is a watch that was passed down from father to son, or a wife’s wedding ring, that item is something a family member can embrace during the grieving process and remember their loved one.”

Sgt. William Donaldson, non-commissioned officer-in-charge, PRP Det., 1st MLG (Fwd), said the team has four hours to complete the process once the remains reach their work space. Though it may seem like a long time, each step requires a detailed review.

The team works through a checks and balance system to ensure each case is accurate. A two-person integrity validation is conducted for each individual job to ensure all documentation is correct.

“Everyone has the experience to

know, not only their job, but everyone else’s job,” said Donaldson. “This shop is totally interchangeable. We are very efficient.”

All Marines at PRP are on call 24/7. Although the majority of the time remains are brought in by respective units, there are occasions when the team is sent out to retrieve fallen service members.

Staff Sgt. Armando Silva, staff non-commissioned officer-in-charge, PRP Det., 1st MLG (Fwd), has been on three deployments as part of a PRP detachment. He said the most important part of the job is getting all fallen heroes home.

“When a service member is killed, we strive to get them back to the states within 72 hours,” said Silva.

Occasionally, PRP Marines have time to help out in the Bastion hospital, giving them the opportunity to contribute in another arena.

“There are many people who work here that are very talented,” said Foster, 21, from Alpharetta, Ga. “You see some patients come in, and they’re in a bad situation, but the hospital personnel push them through to a full recovery.”

Foster said a big difference for PRP from other jobs is their

reactive role in the Corps. Most military occupations are able to control the situations they encounter by acting ahead of time to avoid difficulties.

“At PRP, we’re reactive,” said Foster. “Once our job comes into play, there is nothing we can do to change the outcome except provide the fallen with the dignity and honor they deserve.”

The challenges associated with being a part of a PRP detachment instill a tremendous sense of pride in its members.

“I chose this job because I felt it would be a great honor and respect to take care of our fallen heroes,” said Donaldson.

At the end of the process, PRP escorts the flag-draped casket from the emergency vehicle to the aircraft waiting on the flight line. In the aircraft, Marines render a final hand salute and march away as the hero takes off for their final trip home.

“The dignity, reverence and respect with which PRP Marines care for our fallen heroes is the greatest positive affect PRP has on the Marine Corps mission in Afghanistan,” said Phillips. “In doing so, we express to the family and the nation that we mourn the loss and honor the sacrifice made by our fallen heroes.”



At Mortuary Affairs Collection Point at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, empty flag-draped transfer cases are prepared for fallen heroes. Marines with Personnel Retrieval and Processing Detachment, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), have one of the hardest jobs in the Corps — preparing remains for their final trip home.

1st MLG sailors sweep Sailor of the Quarter boards for I MEF

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Jerrick Griffin
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – It's early in the morning and Marines and sailors are already standing in formation waiting to conduct an awards ceremony.

The Senior Sailor, Junior Sailor and Blue Jacket of the Quarter were awarded during a morning colors ceremony held at the 1st Marine Logistics Group Headquarters building, Feb. 29.

Petty Officer First Class Frediller Donguines, hospital corpsman, G-1 Navy manpower, was awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for his superior ability and relentless determination. Donguines was recognized as the I Marine Expeditionary Force Senior Sailor of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2011.

Donguines ensures all navy personnel are in the correct billet and assigns personnel to make sure each unit has a full staff. Upon being selected to represent 1st MLG as the Senior Sailor of the Quarter Donguines stated he was happy and excited. He also thanked the command.

"I want to thank the command for allowing me the opportunity to represent them as the Sailor of the Quarter," said Donguines.

Petty Officer Second Class Robert Steeley, hospital corpsman, G-3, Tactical, Readiness and Training, was also awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for superior duty as the senior line corpsman with Combat Logistics Battalion 7 (Forward) from Oct. 1 through December 29, 2011. During this period he was selected as I MEF Junior Sailor of the Quarter.

"It means a lot to win Junior Sailor of the Quarter," said Steeley, from Pinole Valley, Calif.

Seaman Erik Bryar, prosthetics technician, 1st Dental Battalion, 1st MLG, from Seattle, was named I MEF Blue Jacket of the quarter.

Representatives from the Montford Point Marine association and Pacific Marine Credit Union presented each awardee with various gifts, including certificates, T-shirts and personally engraved mugs.

The 1st MLG sailors swept each

category available at I MEF.

"It's good that every Sailor of the Quarter were from 1st MLG," say Donguines. "It shows that 1st MLG produces great sailor and Marines."

Aside from the I MEF Sailors of the Quarter, the I MEF Marine of the Year, 1st MLG Sailor of the Year, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter, and Marine of the Quarter were awarded.

Cpl. Andy Nguyen was chosen out of several other Marines to represent I MEF as one of the best for 2011. Petty Officer Aimee Granger was named the 1st MLG Sailor of the Year. Sgt. Robert Nadeau, who earlier in 2011 was named NCO of the Quarter and meritoriously promoted to his current rank, subsequently was named the 1st MLG NCO of the Year. The 1st MLG NCO of the Quarter was Sgt. Kenyatta Ealey and the 1st MLG Marine of the Quarter was Lance Cpl. Stephanie Goslin.

Before the end of the ceremony Col. Randy Lawson, commanding officer, 1st MLG left



Petty Officer First Class Frediller Donguines, hospital corpsman, G-1 Navy manpower, accepts a gift from (Ret) Sgt, Maj. Melvin Chestnut, representative for Montford Point Marine Association, during a morning colors ceremony held at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 29.

the Marines and sailors with a few words of encouragement.

"It's great to recognize our Ma-

rines and sailors for the hard work they do," said Lawson. "I really appreciate everything."



Marines and sailors with 1st Marine Logistics Group stand at parade rest during a morning colors ceremony held at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 29.

Heavy equipment operators pave way for safer Afghanistan

Story and photos by
Sgt. John Jackson
Public Affairs Chief

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Heavy equipment operators with Engineer Support Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) began road improvements on a frequently traveled route outside Musa Qal’ah, Feb. 15.

By improving the road, the Marines are making it easier and safer for military convoys and local civilians alike to travel through the area.

In addition to the added safety the road improvements bring to the area, the mission also helps to build better relationships with the local Afghan population.

“It’s important for us to be out here doing [the road improvement] not only to make it safer for us and the Afghans, but it also helps us to improve our relations with the population,” said Staff Sgt. Aron Szekely, the mission commander for the road improvement project, Engineer Support Co., 9th ESB, 1st MLG (Fwd). “It’s beneficial for us and the locals to have better roads in the area.”

Though the road improvements will be advantageous for coalition forces and the local populace, there are still challenges the Marines face before the project is complete.

“The terrain in the area makes it difficult,” said Szekely, 33, from Tampa, Fla. “Ensuring that we keep our equipment operational so we can make the improvements is a challenge.”

According to Szekely, the Marines will improve the route by grading the existing path and leveling the terrain. Once the route is level, the potholes are filled and the hills are at a passable grade, gravel will be spread, wet down and compacted. Additionally, the Marines will add culverts under the road and ditches to the side of it to help water drainage, making the end result a much easier traveled route for tactical and civilian-owned vehicles alike.

Despite the challenges the terrain brings, the heavy equipment operators are determined to accomplish the mission.

“The terrain is rough here, but we have al-

ready improved roads in the area, and the Marines are well prepared to get this mission complete as well,” said Sgt. Guadalupe Cortez, a heavy equipment operator with Engineer Support Company, 9th ESB, 1st MLG (Fwd). “The Marines have taken what they learned from pre-deployment training and from the missions we have already done, and now they are really coming together. They are doing a great job.”

According to Szekely, the 10 heavy equipment operators will improve the road to make it approximately 25-30 feet wide, making it suitable for two lanes of traffic. Additionally,

the Marines will make the hills much easier to climb by leveling them to a manageable angle for all vehicles.

“My team is the ‘A’ team for sure,” Szekely said. “Every single Marine has improved their ability; everyone has a drive to accomplish the mission. It makes my job a lot easier.”

When the mission is completed the Marines will have an improved route that will last long after coalition forces have left the area.

“It’s just a rewarding job,” Cortez said. “To be able to see the end result; to see the civilians using the roads we improve is all worth it.”



Cpl. Robert Beich, heavy equipment operator, Engineer Support Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) works on leveling a hill during a road improvement mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 15.



Staff Sgt. Aron Szekely, mission commander, Engineer Support Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) speaks with local Afghans about the road improvement project in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Feb. 16. In addition to the added safety the route improvement is bringing to the area, the mission also helps to build better relationships with the local Afghan population.



(From left to right) Corporal Miguel Aliaga and Lance Cpls. Biancesca Rivera, Maribel Mendoza, Erick Mayora Garcia, and Luis Luna, members of 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), received their American citizenship during a naturalization ceremony at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan, Feb. 10.

Deployed Marines become U.S. citizen

Story and photo by
Cpl. Michele Watson
Staff Writer

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Five members of 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward) recited the Pledge of Allegiance during a naturalization ceremony that granted the service members their citizenship to the United States of America at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan, Feb. 10.

Corporal Miguel Aliaga and Lance Cpls. Luis Luna, Erick Mayora Garcia, Maribel Mendoza, and Biancesca Rivera each raised their right hand to declare an oath to support and defend the Constitution and to denounce any allegiance to their

previous citizenship.

Being a citizen of the United States is the first step toward the American dream. However, for those service members who have already sacrificed years of their lives fighting for the red, white, and blue, obtaining citizenship while deployed to a combat zone holds a deeper meaning.

“I’m wearing the uniform already,” said Luna, a heavy equipment operator with 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd MLG (Fwd). “I might as well be fighting for a country that I am actually a part of.”

Each of the 36 service members, from 17 different countries, had their own reasons for enlisting.

Rivera, a 19-year-old warehouse clerk with General Support Motor Transportation Company, 2nd Supply Battalion, 2nd MLG (FWD), said the challenge of the Marine Corps is what motivated her to join.

“The Corps is mostly males,

and as a female, you have to prove yourself every day,” said Rivera, originally from Peru. “Being away from my family is also a great challenge.”

For others, the decision to enlist was a path to success. Aliaga, 24, moved from Peru to Pennsylvania with his family as a teenager. He said he needed a lifestyle change and felt the military could fulfill it.

“I wanted to join the greatest fighting force in America, and I wanted to make a difference,” said Aliaga, a motor transport mechanic with 2nd Supply Bn., GSMT, 2nd MLG (FWD). “My family is very happy and very proud.”

Mendoza’s family moved from Mexico to Georgia when she was three. Through the applications, testing, and citizenship interviews, Mendoza didn’t tell her family that she was approved. She said she wanted to surprise them and called home

to share the news shortly after receiving her certificate.

“I am the first one in my family to join the military and the first to become a U.S. citizen,” said Mendoza, 20, a warehouse clerk with GSMT Co., 2nd Supply Bn., 2nd MLG (Fwd).

The final words of the ceremony were given during a pre-recorded speech by President Barack Obama.

“It is an honor and a privilege to call you a fellow citizen of the United States of America,” said Obama.

During the speech, the president went on to thank the service members for their continued service to the country and encouraged them to take advantage of all rights earned as citizens, however, no words could match the pride that each member felt after taking their oath.

“I am proud to be an American,” said Luna. “I am proud to be from a country that is free.”