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## NEWS

### Elite Afghan police uncover Taliban weapons and drugs

*U.K. Defence News*



Elite Afghan policemen from Helmand's Provincial Response Company (PRC), trained by British troops, have uncovered a huge stash of weapons and drugs in two separate operations in a 48-hour period. The first operation was carried out without any support from the International Security Assistance Force. It involved the search of a compound in Sangin which uncovered 13 rifles, four rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), an 82mm mortar and a large quantity of ammunition including RPG, mortar and artillery rounds, anti-personnel mines and small arms ammunition. The second operation, just 48 hours later in the Pupalzay

region of Lashkar Gah district, uncovered over 90kg of opium. This operation was supported by the PRC Embedded Mentoring Team and soldiers from the Queen's Royal Hussars, who provided security in the area to allow the operation to proceed. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

### PRP paves way for fallen heroes' return home

*Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Michele Watson*

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.

[\(Read the STORY\)](#)



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

## Task Force Leatherneck transfers to 1st Marine Division

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Jacob Harrer



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The 2nd Marine Division (Forward) transferred authority of Task Force Leatherneck to 1st Marine Division (Forward) during a brief ceremony, here, Feb. 25. Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, commanding general of 2nd Marine Division (Fwd), relinquished command to Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, commanding general of 1st MarDiv (Fwd). Task Force Leatherneck is the Ground Combat Element of Regional Command (Southwest), covering Helmand and Nimroz provinces. In the past year, Craparotta, a native of South Windsor, Conn., said his division's focus was conducting

population-centric counterinsurgency, which meant living among the people and spreading out the forces. In addition, he stressed the importance of partnered operations. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## San Diego-based Marines assume aviation command in Afghanistan

Story by Marine Cpl. Lisa Tourtelot, photo by Marine Cpl. Isaac Lamberth

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - More than 3,000 Marines with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) officially assumed aviation responsibilities in the Regional Command Southwest area of operations Feb. 29 aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan. The 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) Marines relieved 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), based out of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C. The East Coast wing has been the primary Marine Corps aviation asset in support of NATO International Security Assistance Force operations since early 2011. Brig. Gen. Gregg A. Sturdevant took command of 3rd MAW (Fwd) when the unit mobilized for deployment earlier this year. "It's going to be a big year of change," said Sturdevant in an interview with Gretel Kovach of U-T San Diego prior to deployment. "Our total end strength is going to change, our mission is going to change somewhat. ... But I think the demand for aviation will at a minimum stay the same, if not increase." Sturdevant further elaborated, "When the Afghans are asked to stand more on their own two feet or take more of a lead, with them not having an air wing to depend on, we are going to be their go-to guys." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Afghan and British forces seize Taliban anti-tank weapon

U.K. Defence News



A joint Afghan and British team recently launched a pre-dawn raid on a Taliban compound, seizing an anti-tank weapon which had been used to target a British base. Soldiers from the Queen's Dragoon Guards, known as the Welsh Cavalry, joined forces with their Afghan counterparts to mount the operation to strike at insurgents who had been firing at the headquarters of 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (2 MERCIAN) in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province. The operation resulted in the seizure of a stash of munitions and the 82mm recoilless rifle, designed to smash through tank armour. Intelligence reports received since the raid suggest that Taliban chiefs are furious at the loss of the

weapon. Surveillance assets run by 2 MERCIAN tracked the insurgents using the gun to an abandoned compound, where they hid the weapon before fleeing. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Soldiers gain fly time with Raven

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Laura Bonano

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The students ran through a list of function checks on a small remote controlled plane while another soldier held it to his chest, making sure the different elements responded to commands given through a computer ten feet away. The tiny propeller whirled faster and faster while the operator held it high above his head. "Launch, launch, launch," he yelled before sending the plane flying. It sailed a few feet into the air and then instantaneously, the nose dipped down towards the ground instead of gaining altitude. The plane plowed headfirst into the ground with a crash. Wings and other odd pieces flew off in different directions as people could be heard gasping and chuckling. Fortunately, the Raven was designed to crash land. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Afghan Local Police Academy graduates in Nawa

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Johnny Merkley



FORWARD OPERATING BASE GERONIMO, Afghanistan - Marines with the 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment Police Advisory Team held a ceremony for the most recently graduated students of the Afghan Local Police Academy here, Feb. 23. After three weeks of training and over 120 hours of instruction, the 59 newly graduated members of the ALP will begin conducting security operations throughout Helmand province's Nawa district, protecting their local communities "This was a lot of hours of training... six days a week we trained together," said Cpl. Brett S. Clark, an ALP instructor with 2/6 and native of East Liverpool, Ohio. "After this course, I believe each one of the ALP have a better understanding of their duty and more discipline." As the police graduates received their certificates, each one

thanked their Marine instructors for the hard work they put in during the three week course. "Every single student came up and thanked us for putting in the hours and time to train them," said Clark. "They really appreciated that we took time away from our home and families to help them improve their community."

[\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Marine MPs provide security, keep engineering operations safe

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. John Jackson

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. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## 9th ESB Marines defy challenges, complete construction mission

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Michele Watson



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The Fleet Marine Force qualification, a military badge earned by sailors assigned to U.S. Marine Corps commands, is a source of pride for many in the Navy, a testament to experience, to time spent on the Navy's "green side" – serving alongside U.S. Marines. More than 50 sailors attached to 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) in Afghanistan now proudly wear the silver device on their chest, a distinction earned during their deployment. "It means a great deal, it's an honor to be able to wear this every day," said Seaman Chase Lapradd, a corpsman attached to 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward),

and a native of Drakes Branch, Va., who was presented his qualification badge during a ceremony at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Feb. 16. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Afghans refurbish mosque with help from Marine Civil Affairs Detachment

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Michael Cifuentes

KHAN NESHIN, Afghanistan - Afghans in Khan Neshin district are kneeling in front of the work of their fellow countrymen. Afghan construction workers, contracted in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and coalition forces, refurbished a grand mosque, which was once a crumbling ruin in the secluded village of Khan Neshin. It has now been returned to the village as the centerpiece of the local government. A combination of deterioration to the mud walls and plaster inside, the Helmand desert weather elements, and lack of maintenance picked at the 300-year-old mosque.

Furthermore, insurgent forces controlled the area, and caring for the mosque wasn't important, according to the locals. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Combat Engineers tear down walls, reduce ANSF base

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Timothy Lenzo



AFGHANISTAN - The bulldozer, unceremoniously, rams into the wall of mud bricks and straw, causing the top half to collapse. With dust and debris forming a cloud around the machine, local Afghans children gather to see what the commotion is about. The bulldozer backs up and plows into the wall again, leaving a pile of rubble where the outer wall once stood. Marines with 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion spent three days leveling part of the patrol base, here, Feb. 23. "We are tearing this base in half for the (Afghan National Civil Order Police) and Marines who are here," said Cpl. Austin Brown, a heavy equipment operator with 3rd CEB.

The base needed to be reduced because the area had become more secure, and the need for more troops had decreased. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Heavy equipment operators pave way for safer Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. John Jackson

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." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Bulk fuel Marines keep Afghanistan operations moving

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. John Jackson

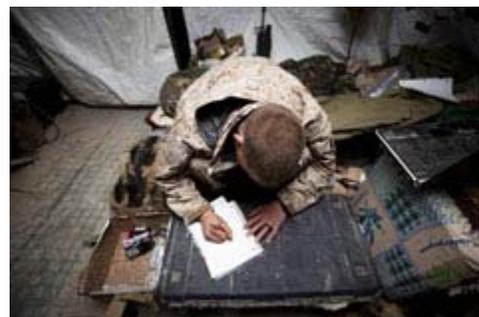


FORWARD OPERATING BASE EDINBURGH, Afghanistan - Fuel is critical for almost all missions Marines conduct. Whether in garrison or forward deployed, fuel keeps operations moving. Without fuel, combat logistics patrols cannot get supplies to units in need, aircraft cannot patrol the skies and generators 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. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## There's No Place Like A Patrol Base

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Reece Lodder

PATROL BASE BURY, Afghanistan - Their humble home is exceptionally primitive, but it's all the deployed infantrymen need. Patrol Base Bury, a tiny base contained by concertina wire and giant Hesco barriers, is the humble home of Marines with 3rd Platoon, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment during their seven-month deployment to Helmand province's Garmsir district. This deployment has brought them far from home in both distance and circumstance. At Bury, the 3rd Platoon Marines live and work with the Afghan National Police. They mentor the ANP in a partnered combat operations center, and patrol with them in and around the nearby Safar Bazaar, Garmsir's busiest commercial center. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## HEROES

### Shock trauma platoon awarded for success in Helmand

Story and photos by Marine Staff Sgt. Robert Storm



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan - The Marines and sailors of the Shock Trauma platoon, 2nd Medical Battalion, received a certificate of commendation aboard Forward Operating Base Delaram II for their work during August 2011 to March 2012. During their time in Helmand Province, the STP provided essential medical care throughout their area of coverage. They treated more than 500 patients consisting of local civilians, ANA forces, and International Security Assistance Forces to include American, Georgian, Jordanian and Italian armed forces. "It's been an interesting deployment. We've seen a lot of severe trauma,

mostly with the ANA (Afghan National Army)," Navy Capt. David Keblish said, 46, officer in charge STP, from Annapolis, Md. "We definitely saw the ghastly, gory side of war, but we were well supported, had good quality gear and an absolute crackerjack team. They performed top notch, I couldn't be more proud." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

### Corpsman up! 'Doc' commended for life-saving actions

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Lisa Tourtelot

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - "I heard the loud pop and thought, 'there's no way someone just got shot in Yuma,'" said Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric Dodson, a hospital corpsman attached to the Arizona-based Marine Wing Support Squadron 371 (Forward). The Monroe, N.Y., native earned the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal in a ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Feb. 17 for his life-saving actions following a shooting aboard Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., last September before the squadron deployed. "I was in the right place at the right time," said Dodson. Dodson was walking toward the base enlisted club with a fellow corpsman when the shot rang out. "I came around the building and saw two guys pulling [the victim] out of the car," explained Dodson. According to Dodson's award citation, the young corpsman immediately took control of the situation and began performing life-saving first aid. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## VIGNETTES

### Tennessee Marine continues family legacy in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez



CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan - The Marine Corps is rich with tradition. Whenever and wherever Marines are called to arms, they stand fast with their brothers and sisters to continue the tradition of serving their country for the sake of their family and friends. Corporal Natasha Almeida, an intelligence analyst with 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment currently serving with the Regimental Combat Team 5 civil affairs detachment, honors her own family's tradition of serving in the U.S. military. Her grandmother, Mildred Morgan, inspired Almeida, a 22-year-old native of Piney Flats, Tenn., to join the Marine Corps. Growing up, Morgan

told the young Almeida many stories about women Marines in the 1960's and the "old Corps". "When I was little, all my friends wanted to play dress up as princesses or ballerinas," recalls Almeida, based out of Camp Pendleton, Calif. "I wanted to play dress up in my grandmother's old uniform." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Pennsylvania Marine leads construction team in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Michele Watson

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." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## San Diego native uses humor to connect with people of Afghanistan

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Timothy Lenzo



AFGHANISTAN - First one Afghan appears, then another and another. Within minutes, Afghan children surround the patrolling Marine, Feb. 22. The sight is familiar to Lance Cpl. Edgar Lima, an assaultman, for 2nd Squad, 1st Platoon, Lima Company. "Today a bunch of children gathered around me," said Lima, currently deployed with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. "They came around and I just started making funny faces at them; they just burst out laughing." Lima, a native of San Diego, uses humor to interact with local Afghan children. He said he knows what a blessing it is to have the children there. "Our last deployment, we didn't see that many locals, and that many children coming up to us," said Lima, a graduate of Mission Bay High School in San

Diego. "Now they can go and move around, and have a better sense of security. They can just live their lives now." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Wartrace Marine supports safety, mobility in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Michele Watson

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - 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," [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Marine with 3/7 mentor, train the Afghan National Army

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Timothy Lenzo



PATROL BASE HANGAR, Afghanistan - The patrol had just stepped off the road when gunfire opened up. The Marines and sailors with India Company immediately crouched and raised their weapons. Second Lt. Theodore Hardy, a platoon commander with the company, called for his Marines to take cover by nearby ruins. While the Marines were seeking cover, return fire opened up, and as quickly as the firefight began it ended. During this exchange, it was the Afghan National Army soldiers with 3rd Tolai, 2nd Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps who fired back, with the Marines in a supporting role. "Individuals started firing, then the ANA fired back and pretty much handled it on their own," said 2nd Lt. James Cartin, the ANA company-level advisor with India Co., 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. The ANA responded

quickly and appropriately during the engagement. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Body armour saves British soldier from Taliban bullet

U.K. Defence News

A British soldier's body armour saved him from a Taliban gunshot during a fierce fire fight in Helmand province recently, enabling him to shrug off the impact and carry on with the mission. Brave Trooper Daniel Griffiths, from 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards (QDG), was shot by insurgents while on Operation EAGLE'S SHADOW, a two-day operation targeting known insurgent 'safe havens' on the edge of the Nad 'Ali district. The operation's mission was to disrupt insurgents' ability to attack or lay improvised explosive devices against Afghan security forces and soldiers from the International Security Assistance Force. 23-year-old Trooper Griffiths, from Wrexham, had been working to identify an insurgent firing point after another part of his patrol came under fire from AK-47 assault rifles. But, as he moved to try to see where the insurgents were, another group opened fire from another location, pinning Trooper Griffiths and two more soldiers under fire. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## MEDIA COVERAGE/Interviews

**“Marines sweep uncharted areas of Khan-Neshin during Operation Highland Thunder” republished in: Menifee 24/7**

**Plainfield Marine Seen in War Coverage Photo by Cpl Lopez**

**Sgt. Maj. Jaime Deets talks to a WTKF- FM, Atlantic, N.C.**

**Sgt. Eric Goulet talks to a WTKF- FM, Atlantic, N.C.**

**Pfc. Keven Barrera talks with Fox Sports Radio - National**

**Sgt. Travis Tito-Pace - Radio Lia**

**Marine Cpl. Natasha Almeida by Cpl Lopez**

## **SHOUTOUTS**

**Pfc. Keven Barerra, Marine Week Cleveland**  
**Staff Sgt. Ray Garcia, Alex Garcia, Marine Week Ohio**  
**1st Lt. Michael T. Robinson, Marine Week Ohio**  
**Lt. Col. Edward Jeep, Marine Week Ohio**

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