



The Convoy

Delivering quality information on the 1st Marine Logistics Group

Volume 4 Issue 5



Capt. Tracy Rients, (right), operations officer, Regional Logistics Support Command-Southwest Advisor Team greets Maj. Mohammad Aslam, commanding officer of Maintenance Company, RLSC-SW, during a tour of Camp Shorabak by the commanding general and staff of 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward).

Logistics Marines discuss challenges with Afghan counterparts

Story and photos by
2nd Lt. Tyler Morrison
Public Affairs Officer

CAMP SHORABAK, Afghanistan - The staff of 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) toured the Regional Logistics Support Command-Southwest and met with their Afghan National Army counterparts to discuss current and future challenges together, March 12.

The commanding general of 1st MLG (Fwd), Brig. Gen. John J. Broadmeadow, and his staff met with Col. Karimi Mumtaz, commanding officer of RLSC-SW and the members of his command in a tour hosted by the RLSC-SW Advisor Team.

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CLB-5 advanced party heads to Afghanistan

Story and photos by
Cpl. Khoa Pelczar
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - Marines are constantly deploying to remote locations around the world to conduct various operations, and just because they have done it before doesn't make it any easier the second time around.

Fifty Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, said goodbye to their friends and families here and

deployed to Helmand province, Afghanistan, March 24, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The rest of the battalion is preparing to deploy to Afghanistan in the near future. This group of Marines was scheduled to deploy there in advance to prepare for any operation prior to the arrival of the rest of the battalion.

Amongst these Marines, Cpl. Daniel Caddy, wrecker mechanic, CLB-5, who deployed to Afghanistan in March 2009, said goodbye to his family once again to fulfill his duty as a Marine.

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A Marine with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, says goodbye to his loved one before parting Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 24, to deploy to Helmand province, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

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HAPPENINGS

Tuition Assistance Class

Every Wednesday at 11:30 a.m., the Joint Education Center offers a College 101 class to inform service members about different college offers both 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 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 7:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. A basic rider's course will be held weekly on 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.



Cpl. Daniel Caddy, 23, from Queen Creek, Ariz., wrecker mechanic, Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, kisses his daughter before departing Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 24, to deploy to Helmand province, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

ADVON

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"It's tough, but you've got to do what you've got to do," said Caddy, 23, from Queen Creek, Ariz.

Caddy's parents and his brother came here to see him off. His mother, Connie, said it was even harder than the first time.

"It's sad," said Connie. "It's definitely worse the second time. It was better not knowing what's going to happen. He was quieter after his first deployment, trying to keep things to himself. I just hope it's not like that this time."

Caddy wasn't too worried. He said this time he knows what to expect, so it'll be easier for him to adapt once he comes back from this deployment.

Once the Marines said their final farewell to their loved ones, they loaded two buses and began their journey to Afghanistan, where they will be for the next seven months.



Volunteers from Saddleback Church serve food to Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, while Marines prepare to leave here to deploy to Helmand province, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



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CLB-5 prepares for deployment to Afghanistan

Story by
Lance Cpl. Jerrick Griffin
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, conducted a ‘What is Their Job’ brief here, March 21.

The purpose of the brief was to prepare the Marines and sailors for an upcoming deployment to Afghanistan, as well as understanding their role there as the Afghans start to take charge of operations.

The main topics of discussion were what their job will be while deployed, who is and who is not the enemy and how to conduct themselves on the roads.

While discussing the enemy, Capt. Robert Hillery, operations officer, CLB-5, CLR-1, 1st MLG stated that “the Afghan people are not the enemy, the enemy are amongst the people. You will have to make good judgments on who is an enemy and who isn’t.”

Additionally, leaders went over details on how the enemy

conducts themselves so that service members would know what to look for. Some of the details were tactics used by the enemy to the type of weapons mostly used by them.

“The more we know about the enemy, the more we can prevent hurting innocent civilians” said Hillery.

He also added that there was not a distinction between the civilians and enemy fighters.

Shortly after the brief, Sgt. Maj. Troy Black, battalion sergeant ma-

yor, CLB-5, CLR-1, 1st MLG, gave the Marines and sailors a few more pointers, with the most important focus being three keys to good leadership in combat.

The first one was to maintain control of the situation. The second was to be prepared for increased casualties, and the last one was to know the environment they are operating in and to know the enemy, he said.

“With those three things in mind, you should be able to make the right judgment,” said Black.

VISIT

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Regional Logistics Support Command-Southwest is the primary Afghan National Army logistics organization for the entire Southwestern region of Afghanistan. Much like 1st MLG (Fwd), RLSC-SW’s mission is to plan, prepare and execute uninterrupted flow of logistics support to units assigned to Regional Command Southwest. RLSC-SW is composed of four companies: Distribution Co., Maintenance Co., Headquarters Co. and a Supply Co. or Forward Supply Depot Element.

Brig. Gen. Broadmeadow and his staff toured each of the four company areas. Afterward, they sat down for a meeting and a few cups of tea with Col. Mumtaz to discuss current and future obstacles.

As a relatively new command, RLSC-SW faces the same growing pains as any large organization. Mumtaz said that many members of the Afghan National Army are not familiar with this new logistics system, and that he needs more officers to hold key billets and lead his troops to success.

Brig. Gen. Broadmeadow concurred, explaining that many of these challenges are shared by all military logistics organizations. “My understanding of the challenges you face, allows me to help you in any way I can,” he explained.

The primary form of help comes from the members of the RLSC-SW Advisor Team. Team members are attached to each of four companies in order to provide guidance and to share logistics lessons from



Sgt. Maj. Antonio Vizcarrondo, (right), sergeant major of 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), visits with an Afghan National Army sergeant during a tour of Camp Shorabak by the commanding general and staff of 1st MLG (Fwd).

their own careers in the US military. Working together, the Advisor Team and the soldiers from RLSC-SW have made great strides.

Staff Sgt. Michael Meeks, distribution advisor, RLSC-SW Advisor Team, explained some of the obstacles that the soldiers from Distribution Co. initially faced before the advisor team rendered assistance. “When we arrived, [Distribution Co.] only had 11 certified drivers, which makes it very difficult to conduct a convoy safely,” said Meeks.

In response to the need for more drivers, the advisors first taught an operator’s certification course to increase the number of approved

drivers. Then, they gave the responsibility of teaching the course to the Afghan non-commissioned officers.

“We showed them that now [Distribution Co.] can do it on their own, and that’s when they really took off,” said Meeks.

With the help of the Advisor Team, Distribution Co. is now conducting one to three convoys a week, providing logistical support to their brothers in arms.

The progress is even more readily apparent in Maintenance Co., where at one time the Afghan mechanics were limited to repairing one vehicle at a time, explained 1st Lt. Wolf Powell, Maintenance Co. advisor,

RLSC-SW Advisor Team. Now they have taken over a facility with three maintenance bays and have serviced over 30 vehicles for organizational and general level repairs.

Most importantly, the tour cemented a working relationship between the staff of 1st MLG (Fwd) and RLSC-SW.

Brig. Gen. Broadmeadow discussed the importance of this relationship with Col. Mumtaz. “I believe you have the most important billet in the ANA right now, and I hope we can develop a very close relationship in the future,” said Broadmeadow. “I will do whatever I can to help.”



Lance Cpl. Allie Fazendin, 23, a Bakersfield, Calif., native and welder with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, reads a story on camera during Operation Bedtime Stories aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 20.

Programs help deploying parents stay connected with their children's lives

Story and photos by
Cpl. Khoa Pelczar
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – “Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? I see a red bird looking at me...”

Like many other parents in the battalion, Lance Cpl. Allie Fazendin, welder, Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, recorded herself reading a bedtime story to her son during an Operation Bedtime Stories event here, March 20.

Prior to a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Marines and sailors with CLB-5 got the opportunity to make a recording of themselves reading a bedtime story to their children, as well as recording a message onto a voice chip, which gets put into a teddy bear.

Organized by the battalion's family readiness officer, Christine Winicki, two different non-profit organizations hosted their programs, Operation Bedtime Stories and A Message from the Heart pro-

gram, to provide service members the opportunity to give their loved ones a personal gift.

A Message from the Heart program, sponsored by the Lance Cpl. Jonathan W. Collins Foundation, provided voice chips, which allowed deploying service members to pre-record messages for their children. Additionally, the program offered the children an opportunity to create their own comfort bears to put the voice chips in at nearby Build-a-Bear workshop.

Operation Bedtime Stories is one of many programs sponsored by Operation Help a Hero. This program provided service members with books they could read to their children. Furthermore, the founder of the organization, Cindy Farnum, said they would then mail the books to the families after the departure of the deploying parents, along with the recorded videos of them reading the books.

“This is meant to be a surprise to our Marines and sailors’ family members,” said Winicki. “We’ll send these packages to the families once the Marines and sailors are forward deployed.”

“I love it. I think it’s really great. It really helps us reach out to our family,” said Fazendin, 23, from Bakersfield, Calif. “This will definitely help my 1-year-old son to remember my face and know what I sound like while I’m gone.”

Lance Cpl. Alejandro Torres, motor transport mechanic for CLB-5 and a soon-to-be father, had the same appreciation of these programs as Fazendin.

“It’s such an awesome pro-

gram, the greatest thing they have for us right now,” said Torres, 23, from Bronx, N.Y. “My son will be born while I’m deployed in Afghanistan, but the program makes me feel like I’m closer to my family even when I’m not there. I won’t be a stranger to my son when I return because he’ll see me reading a bedtime story to him every night. I feel like a piece of me will be with them no matter what.”



Marines and sailors with CLB-5, CLR-1, 1st MLG, get an opportunity to send comfort teddy bears and messages to their children and family members prior to their deployment, during A Message from the Heart program here.



GIVE HIM ONE!

HM3 JOSHUA STALLINGS



Photo by Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

Petty Officer 3rd Class Joshua Stallings, a corpsman with 3rd Platoon, Motor Transport Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), is responsible for providing medical care and advice to the Marines of his platoon currently deployed to Helmand province, Afghanistan.

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

After spending his entire life growing up in Los Angeles, Petty Officer 3rd Class Joshua Stallings decided he needed to make a life altering change if he was going to become the man he wanted to be.

The youngest of six, Stallings looked to the military as a possible career path.

“My family was very supportive of the medical field, so I decided to join the Navy and became a corpsman,” said Stallings, 23.

As a first duty station, Stallings worked with Marines at Parris Island taking care of countless recruits in training. After two and a half years, he was sent to Combat Logistics Battalion 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

“I love California,” said Stallings, who was more than happy to be stationed much closer to his family. “It’s my home, and family is the most important thing to me.”

A few months after joining CLB-1, Stallings deployed to Helmand province, Afghanistan where he now serves as the corpsman for 3rd Platoon, Motor Transport Company, CLB-1, 1st MLG (Forward).

“It’s an important job,” he said. “I need to be here for [my Marines] no matter what. It’s my job to take care of them and keep them safe.”

Stallings goes out on every combat logistics patrol on which the platoon is sent. The platoon is responsible for providing supplies to smaller patrol bases on a regular basis.

“I understand that the logistics we do is a big part of the fight out here,” said Stallings. “I am proud to be an American because of the freedoms and luxuries that

we have, but being here makes me feel that we take for granted what we have.”

Stallings said that being in the military during a time of war has a dual meaning for him.

“I’m fighting for my country because that’s where my family is, but I’m also fighting for the Marines next to me,” said Stallings. “They are protecting me, so it’s my job to take care of them.”

Working out of Camp Dwyer, Stallings said the area has remained calm for most of the deployment.

“I’m glad we’re in a quiet area because I don’t want any of my guys to get hurt,” he said.

Though combat has been minimal, Stallings still has his work cut out for him. During a combat logistics patrol, a Marine was injured by a 300-pound tow bar while he was trying to fix it.

“I was sitting in the truck, and I heard someone yelling, ‘Doc, Doc we need you!’” said Stallings. “I’ve never moved so fast in my life.”

The young corpsman gave the Marine immediate medical care and got him loaded into the truck that brought him to the base hospital.

Stallings is unsure if he will remain in the military or get out and seek further medical education. For now, he says he is proud of what he is doing.

“I’m proud of the changes I have made in my life,” said Stallings. “I’m becoming a better person, and hearing my family say they’re proud of me and what I’m doing with my life makes me happy.”

Stallings has a family history of military service, but he says he doesn’t feel like he is following in those footsteps.

“I feel like I’m making my own path to becoming the man I want to be,” he said.

CLB-5 conducts last battalion run before deployment

Story and photo by
Cpl. Jennifer Pirante
I MEF Public Affairs

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, conducted a battalion run here, March 22, to build unit cohesion in preparation for the battalion's upcoming 7-month deployment to Afghanistan.

The mission of CLB-5 will be to provide direct logistical support to Regimental Combat Team 5 by providing transportation, supply, maintenance and engineering services.

The battalion spent the last several months preparing for their deployment and participated in various exercises including Steel Knight, a Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force level exercise, and Enhanced Mojave Viper at Twenty-nine Palms, Calif., in October 2011.

"The Marines have worked really hard," said Lt. Col. Robert T. Meade, commanding officer, CLB-5. "They have done a tremendous job during the predeployment training process. They've spent a lot of long hours working up to be mentally, morally and physically



Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 5, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, conduct a battalion run aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 22, to build unit cohesion in preparation for the battalion's upcoming 7-month deployment to Afghanistan.

prepared for this deployment."

As a final battle cry and farewell to the fellow Marine Corps units aboard Camp Pendleton, Meade and Sgt. Maj. Troy E. Black, battalion sergeant major, charged the formation across an approximate 5.5-mile distance around the 21 Area in Del Mar, making sure everyone heard them along the way.

"Discipline and good order are paramount for mission success,"

Black said. "Additionally, applying the results of the five indicators of effective leadership – Espirit de corps, motivation, proficiency, discipline and moral. I think we have hit all five of those things as far as our leadership from what we have seen from the Marines as they prepare to deploy."

Many of the battalion's Marines will be departing for their first deployment.

Sgt. Cory Brown, automotive organizational mechanic with Support Company, CLB-5, is slated to complete his second deployment to Afghanistan. His job will be to service, inspect and maintain necessary vehicle equipment.

"We have a great group of Marines and their experience level has grown throughout our predeployment buildup," Brown said. "I feel like everyone's ready."

Chaplain's Corner

"Two are better than one..." This proverbial saying was written by the wisest man to ever live, King Solomon (Ecclesiastes 4:9a). While it makes sense, it is great advice that we often do not follow. Many simply wish to tough it out by being the rugged individual alone with their pain, suffering and hurt. This does not have to be. If you are hurting, you have people around you to help. You have a chaplain you can see and talk to about the pain. You also have your fellow Marines and sailors to talk with and who can support you through your time of suffering.

King Solomon further advises in Ecclesiastes 4:10 that one who falls also has someone to help him or her to get back up. While on deploy-

ment and in garrison you have cultivated many friendships; you have established routines that included time with other people. These fellow Marines and sailors are those you can rely upon to lift you up, not just when times are tough, but in times of celebration as well. When we are promoted, receive an award, and when we observe life's milestones, we celebrate with others. We collectively lift each other up in celebration.

These supporting relationships are not only those with whom we work, but also our loved ones. Our families are often the best resource we can rely on for friendship and support in all of life's seasons. However, our connections to our fellow man or woman are not limited to work and home. Churches

and houses of worship also provide support to us. The support we receive from a spiritual community aids us in staying connected to those around us, as well as keeping us in relationship with God. These communities can help us through the most difficult and dark periods of our lives.

All of these connections with other people are called support systems. A support system is a network of relationships that a person has to other people. They can be friends, family or part of a larger community such as a church or fraternal organization. To visualize your support system, think of yourself in the center of a web. Each strand is a connection you have to another person or community. When we look at our support system in this manner, we will see how many people we have around us that we can call upon in good and bad times. When we allow our



Lt. Christopher Sutton
Chaplain
1st Supply Battalion
1st Marine Logistics Group

friends and family to support us, we are closer to understanding the wisdom of King Solomon, "Two are better than one... If either of them falls down, one can help the other up."

Toward the future

Afghan soldiers conduct independent convoys with help from advisor team

Story and photo by
Cpl. Michele Watson
Staff Writer

CAMP SHORABAK, Afghanistan - Coalition forces with the Regional Logistics Support Command-Southwest Advisor Team have made significant progress training members of the Afghan National Army in the past few months.

More than a hundred ANA soldiers piled into 31 vehicles and set out for their first independent cross-boundary combat logistics patrol, March 15, at Camp Shorabak, Afghanistan.

The RLSC-SW Advisor Team is a joint team sourced through NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. Working side by side with Afghan counterparts, members of the RLSC-SW Advisor Team have paved the way for handing over logistical responsibilities to the ANA.

"When I first came here I knew it would be the most fun, rewarding, challenging and frustrating job I have ever had," said Lt. Col. Luke Kratky, partnering officer-in-charge, RLSC-SW Advisor Team. "And it has been exactly that."

The unit is responsible for providing logistical support to all ANA brigades in Helmand province. When the unit first stood up, Jan. 16, brigade commanders outside of Camp Shorabak were not informed of the changeover of support from coalition forces to the ANA. To spread the word, Col. Mumtaz Karimi, RLSC-SW commander, has traveled to different locations to share the new plan with other commanders.

At a visit to Delaram, March 14, Col. Mumtaz and Lt. Col. Kratky met with key ANA leaders to provide personal service to their customers. During the meeting, leaders were able to discuss discrepancies and come up with solutions for concerns such as fixing broken trucks.

"Before, we were helpless," said Col. Abdul Hai Nashat, 2nd Brigade executive officer. "Luckily we have [RLSC-SW] here now. This is good news for us."

Both coalition forces and Afghan counterparts have contributed to the success of the unit. The willingness of the advisory teams to teach and the eagerness of the ANA to learn have resulted in progress that has exceeded expectations.

Personnel accountability used to be a major problem. Now a formation is held each morning and roll call is taken to ensure each soldier is present. The ANA has started enacting consequences for unauthorized absences. The ability to maintain accountability represents a more stable and organized group.

Advisor teams give classes to senior non-commissioned officers within the ANA. Those senior NCOs are now able to take the knowl-



Lt. Col. Luke Kratky, partnering officer-in-charge of Regional Logistics Support Company-Southwest Advisor Team, shakes the hand of an Afghan soldier before RLSC-SW goes off on their first independent, cross-boundary combat logistics patrol at Camp Shorabak, March 15.

edge they learned and independently train their junior soldiers. Through the classes, soldiers learned how to conduct weapons maintenance and communications checks.

Only two months ago, Afghan counterparts were only able to perform oil changes and minor preventative maintenance. After moving into a true maintenance facility, they have repaired more than 50 vehicles and can replace transmissions, pistons and exhaust systems.

The team has also addressed smaller factors that contribute to a successful mission as well. Before setting out for their independent convoy, cooks prepared a meal for the trip. As the RLSC-SW gains experience, their attention to detail improves and the preparations for convoys becomes smoother.

Col. Mumtaz spoke to the soldiers before they left for Kandahar Air Field to pick up 147 pallets of gear.

"Col. Mumtaz has been the consummate professional," said Capt. Tracy Rientz, operations officer, RLSC-SW Advisor Team. "He consistently

expresses to his entire battalion the importance of professionalism and tells them that time is like gold and to spend every minute wisely."

For the Afghans to lead logistical support operations on their own speaks volumes for the efforts made on both sides. In a short time, the RLSC-SW Advisor Team has set the foundation for a dependable and capable force that will pave the way for the ANA across Afghanistan.

"Today, we are making history," said Lt. Col. Kratky. "I believe in Afghanistan with all of my heart. They are an incredibly proud people with an incredible history and if they can do this here in Helmand, they can do it anywhere."

The advisory teams met with their counterparts to say goodbye as the soldiers packed their bags and prepared to go.

"Watching a unit go from where it was to being a representation of what Afghanistan can do has been an incredibly humbling experience," said Lt. Col. Kratky. "This mission is letting the world know that great things are happening out here."

1st MLG corpsmen prepare sailors to save lives

Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Jerrick Griffin
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Sailors with Alpha Surgical Company, 1st Medical Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group, trained members of the Naval Education Medical Training Institute here, March 13.

The goal was to teach the individual sailors who are going to be assigned to medical support roles in Afghanistan at a role two level facility.

Forty-four members of NEMTI were taught the basic skills for setting up and taking down GP300 tents, which are operating rooms on the battlefield.

“We’re teaching these sailors this so if the mission dictates and they have to go forward to the edge of the battle space they have that familiarization with taking down and the setting up of the tents in case they have to move their position,” said Lt. Cmdr. Brian Beale, company commander, Alpha Surgical Co., 1st Med. Bn., 1st MLG.

Five members of the company were tasked to train all of the sailors. First, they assembled a tent and explained what should and shouldn’t be done while putting it

together. Then, they disassembled it step by step. Afterward, the participants split up into teams to practice setting up and breaking down a tent on their own.

After becoming proficient in setting up the GP300 tent, they received a class on the Mobile Trauma Bay. The Mobile Trauma Bay is a clinic on a Logistics Vehicle System Replacement, which includes medical equipment, a doctor, a nurse and three corpsmen. Its purpose is to be closer to the battlefield to provide immediate medical treatment to injured service members on the front-line.

“We are also familiarizing them with the theory and doctrine behind the Mobile Trauma Bay, which is also utilized in-country,” said Beale, from Mobile, Ala. “Although they may not be assigned to a Mobile Trauma Bay unit, they’ll at least understand the theory behind how it works – the design, the construct of the equipment and what’s available to them to provide the medical support to save the lives of Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen.”

Alpha Surgical Co. currently consists of 30 sailors who are tasked on a weekly basis to conduct training for other units. Also



Sailors with Naval Education Medical Training Institute watch as members of Alpha Surgical Co., 1st Med. Bn., 1st MLG, show them the proper way to assemble a GP300 tent, at Camp Pendleton, Calif. March 13.

known as the Advisory Training Group, they are ‘the only show in town’.

“We are like an outreach program,” said Beale. “We provide medical training to division units throughout Camp Pendleton. We also do training for staff members

at Naval Medical Center San Diego, Field Medical Training Battalion West; basically anybody who wants to reach out to us for combat life saving techniques and measures, we provide them with the medical training that is necessary to do so.”



CLB-13 wins Wharton Trophy

Photo by Lance Cpl. Jerrick Griffin

Lance Cpl. Steven Brown, a Marine attached to Combat Logistics Battalion 13, Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, holds up the Wharton Trophy during an awards ceremony held at the base theater on Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 16. The trophy was awarded to the best Western Division Rifle Team representing a Marine Corps unit west of the Mississippi River whose unit strength is 600 personnel or less. Brown, Cpl. Ryan Richards, Staff Sgt. David Carlson, Sgt. Dustin Yurcisin, Cpl. Ryan Strahs and Cpl. James Ahearn won the trophy with a score of 1,096 with 52 center shots.

Reserve Marines come together, accomplish mission in Afghanistan

Story and photos by
Sgt. John Jackson
Public Affairs Chief

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Of the more than 200 Marines that make up General Support Motor Transport Company, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), all but six are Reserve Component Marines.

The Marines in the company have various military occupational specialties and come from multiple Marine Corps reserve sites throughout the U.S.

“The company started out with about 220 Marines from 34 different reserve stations,” said Lt. Col. David Gibbs, the MSB 11.2 commanding officer. “They came together prior to deploying at Quantico Viper and [Enhanced Mohave Viper] and have been performing brilliantly ever since.”

Typically, most active duty companies are able to work together as a unit for up to a year prior to deploying. GSMT Co. had just a few months.

Having the opportunity to train together as a company at EMV allowed the Marines to build confidence in one another and confidence in the company as a whole.

“EMV definitely helped us to build unit cohesion,” said Capt. Robert Moore, GSMT Co. commander. “The Marines were able to work together, [physically train] together, eat together, live together and just get to know one another.”



Sgt. Jacob Neuberger, motor transport operator, General Support Motor Transport Company, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) speaks to Afghan children in Musa Qal'ah, Afghanistan, March 16.

Throughout the company's pre-deployment training, leaders emerged to ensure the Marines were prepared to deploy.

“The command team was just phenomenal at making sure the company was well trained,” Gibbs said. “They have outstanding leadership from the company commander to the first sergeant to the [staff non-commissioned officers] and [non-commissioned officers]. Everyone's personalities meshed together well, making a very balanced group.”

At the conclusion of EMV, GSMT Co. deployed to Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, to begin an approximate seven-month deployment. While deployed, the company strives to always say ‘yes’ to other units in Helmand province.

“Simply put, our mission is to

not say ‘no’ to any unit who needs support,” said Moore, a native of Atlanta, Ga. “We have done base support, supported coalition forces and done heavy equipment support as well. Our mission is to help everyone succeed out here.”

The company's mission includes conducting vehicle maintenance for their battalion and other units in the area. The Marines also provide heavy equipment support to the Sort Lot on Camp Leatherneck. Additionally, the company is responsible for escorting Afghan truck drivers carrying fuel to forward operating bases in Helmand province. This mission is unique and gives the Marines an opportunity to interact with Afghan civilians.

According to Gibbs, the company delivered approximately 2 million gallons of fuel throughout Helmand

province during their deployment.

For one of the company's platoon commanders, the past several months have been a time to remember.

“It's just been an incredible experience,” said 1st Lt. Mariela Pena, 2nd Platoon commander, GSMT Co. “Not too many female Marines have the opportunity to do a job like this. I did have a few concerns [about working with the Afghans] because of my gender, but I have had no issues at all. It has been great.”

When not deployed, Pena, a Walnut Creek, Calif., native, is a city planner for Oakland, Calif. Since becoming mobilized in the summer of 2011, she said her Marines have done outstanding work.

“I think from day one the Marines have exceeded all expectation,” Pena said. “The Marines really worked well together, knew their responsibilities and got the job done.”

Since the Marines came from various reserve stations throughout the U.S., many of them met for the first time during pre-deployment training; however, the company performed like they had been together for years.

“These Marines are motivated and very well disciplined,” Moore said. “What they have done on this deployment is nothing short of a miracle. They accomplished their mission and did so exceptionally well.”

“The Marines did not miss a beat,” said Gibbs. “They worked as effectively as any active duty company. I am exceptionally pleased and very proud.”



First Lt. Mariela Pena, center, 2nd Platoon Commander, General Support Motor Transport Company, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) explains the rules and regulations through an interpreter to 35 local Afghan truck drivers outside of Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, March 11. During their deployment, GSMT Company has successfully delivered approximately 2 million gallons of fuel throughout Helmand province.

CLR-17 celebrates St. Patrick's Day with regimental run



Marines with Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, conduct a regimental run in celebration of St. Patrick's Day aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 16.

Story and photos by
Cpl. Khoa Pelczar
Staff Writer

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Marines are no strangers to waking up before sunrise to train and stay fit.

In the spirit of St. Patrick's Day, Marines and sailors with Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, conducted a regimental run here, March 16.

To get them into the holiday spirit, service members were allowed to wear any type of green hat along with the Marine Corps traditional green-on-green physical training uniform. Leaders encouraged their Marines and sailors to go wild with their hat ideas.

After warming up, service members went on a short run, led by the regimental commander and the sergeant major.

"The run was very motivated," said Sgt. Maj. Robert Ledferd, regimental sergeant major, CLR-17. "It was short but motivating; that was the purpose of it. Marines were sounding off and enjoying the run. That's how it should be every time."

Cadences could be heard from the top to the bottom of the hill as they made their route around the 14 Area. Marines and sailors of CLR-17 screamed as loud as they could during the run to make sure that their presence was known.

Ledferd said he was proud of his Marines and sailors in the regiment for finishing strong.

"Sometimes, because of our missions, we don't get to do this as often as we should," said Ledferd. "But whenever we get our regiment together, they're giving 100 percent every time. There's no better regiment than CLR-17."



Marines with G-1, Headquarters Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, take a group photo while wearing green hats in celebration of St. Patrick's Day aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 16.

Cash is out, the eagle is in

Story and photo by
Cpl. Michele Watson
Staff Writer

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Anyone who has ever used cash to buy something at the exchange in Afghanistan is familiar with the pogs that serve as change for a purchase.

They can be found at the bottom of desk drawers, deep inside pockets at the laundry facility, or under the bed hidden behind a pair of combat boots.

Most Marines have heard about the Eagle Cash Card, but for those who do not know, the benefits go beyond preventing a useless stash of pogs.

"The Eagle Cash Card is an alternative way to spend money in Afghanistan," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Timothy Nixon, fiscal officer, disbursing, Headquarters Company, 1st Marine

Logistics Group (Forward).

To apply for an Eagle Cash Card at the disbursing office at Camp Leatherneck, a short form is filled out with a name, social security number and address. A service member or DoD contractor chooses a pin and the card is activated immediately for use.

There are four kiosks located on Camp Leatherneck that serve as Eagle Cash Card automated teller machines. Up to \$350 can be transferred per day from a user's bank account to their card.

The card is accepted at all Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities on Camp Leatherneck, Camp Dwyer and most places at Camp Bastion including Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken and the steak house.

"Additionally, we are expanding the use of Eagle Cash on Bastion," said Nixon.

Though the card is optional



To apply for an Eagle Cash Card at the disbursing office at Camp Leatherneck, a short form is filled out with a name, social security number and address. A service member or DoD contractor chooses a pin and the card is activated immediately for use.

for Marines, Nixon said there has been talk of getting rid of casual pay and reducing all U.S. currency on Leatherneck. In case cash is no longer available at the disbursing office, the Eagle Cash Card ensures service members and contractors have access to their funds.

"The card eliminates the need to carry cash or stand in a long line at our office," said Nixon. "It can be replaced within 24 hours if it is lost and the full balance of funds can be restored. We have had a few issues with

identity theft for Marines using credit and debit cards but with Eagle Cash, you can't get fraudulent charges."

The Eagle Cash Card provides a convenient, risk-free way to spend money in Afghanistan. For anyone interested in getting a card, visit the disbursing office located at 4th Street and Echo Avenue, Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan.

"Of course the best thing about the Eagle Cash Card is that you don't get stuck with all those pogs from the exchange," Nixon joked.

Logistics Marines complete largest patrol so far

Story and photo by
Cpl. Mark Stroud
CLB-4 Public Affairs

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Alpha Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 4, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), completed their largest combat logistics patrol to date in Helmand province, March 11-14.

Even with more tactical vehicles and more supplies than any of their previous patrols, CLB-4 completed their mission ahead of schedule.

"The Marines are getting the hang of operations out here and are becoming [more proficient]," said Staff Sgt. Luis Martinezbido, platoon sergeant, 2nd Platoon, Alpha Co., CLB-4. "We set ourselves a goal to complete the convoy ahead of schedule and the Marines worked together and went the extra mile to get that done."

The convoy delivered supplies to forward operating bases and combat outposts manned by Regimental Combat Team 6 in support of counter-insurgency operations. After completing the delivery, the Marines backhauled surplus equipment for repair and retrograde, said 2nd Lt. Charlie



A M1A1 Abrams main battle tank attached to 1st Tank Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 6, passes a Combat Logistics Battalion 4, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), AMK31 Refueler during a combat logistics patrol in Helmand province, Afghanistan, March 13.

Brooks, platoon commander, 2nd Plt., Alpha Co., CLB-4.

The number of moving parts in the convoy increased the chances of something going wrong and created new challenges for the Marines.

"This mission was the largest that [CLB-4] has done so far ... so that alone was a challenge," said Brooks. "The patrol required a lot of detailed planning from [non-commissioned officers] on up to establish a good security posture and deliver supplies needed to support RCT-6

safely and successfully."

Once they had arrived at a delivery site, the Marines rose to the increased logistical challenge of unloading a large quantity of supplies.

"We are becoming more efficient with the actions on objective," said Brooks. "We [offloaded and on-loaded supplies] in less time than any previous convoy despite having more vehicles."

Marines with 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st MLG (Fwd) and Army soldiers with 96th Transportation Company, 375th Combat Service Support

Battalion, Task Force Resolute also joined the convoy.

"The Army and [9th ESB] embedded trucks in our convoy to complete their own mission," said Martinezbido. "We basically provided them with [extra firepower] and security along the route."

According to Martinezbido, the arrangement turned out to be mutually beneficial when the Army soldiers assisted in the recovery of a pair of broken M870A2 semi-trailers [870s] stacked on top of each other.

"Working [with the Army] helped us because we were able to take advantage of their [trailers] for a vehicle recovery operation," added Martinezbido. "You do not often recover an 870 on top of an 870 ... and their [trailers] were better suited for the job than our own."

The success of the operation reflected the hard work and mission-readiness of those involved said the platoon leader.

"[The convoy] proved that we are fully capable of being flexible and adapting on the move," said Brooks. "The Marines are accomplishing the mission and are ready to move on to bigger challenges down the road."

1st Supply Battalion welcomes new commanding officer

Story and photos by
Cpl. Jennifer Pirante
I MEF Public Affairs

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – Lt. Col. Michael J. Murchison, outgoing commanding officer for 1st Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, relinquished command to Maj. Michael Fitzgerald during a change of command ceremony at the 22 Area parade deck here, March 16.

Fitzgerald received his commission through the Platoon Leaders Course and spent two summers at Officer Candidate School in 1994 and 1995. He was assigned as an operations officer to the Fleet Support Division publications branch at Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, Ga., upon completion of The Basic School and Supply Officer's Course.

In March 2009, Fitzgerald deployed as the operations officer for 2nd Supply Battalion to Iraq. In 2010, Fitzgerald transferred to Combat Logistics Regiment 17,

1st MLG.

To the Marines of 1st Supply Bn., Fitzgerald quoted Lt. Cmdr. Ernest E. Evans, commanding officer of the USS Johnston (DD-557) during World War II.

“All orders and instructions remain enforced,” Fitzgerald said. “I will make changes when and where I deem necessary. Until then, carry on.”

Murchison is slated to become executive officer for the Retrograded, Redeployment, Reset and Reconstitute mission in Afghanistan. During the ceremony, Murchison took the time to thank friends, family and the Marines he worked closely with to accomplish the battalion's missions during his time in command.

“To the Marines and sailors of 1st Supply Bn., you are awesome,” Murchison said. “Thank you for doing what you do. Thank you for putting your name on the bottom line and answering your nation's call when she needed you the most during a time of war.”



Lt. Col. Michael Murchison, (right), outgoing commanding officer for 1st Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group, passes the battalion's organizational colors to Maj. Michael Fitzgerald during a change of command ceremony at the 22 Area parade deck aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 16.



The colorguard presents the colors during a change of command ceremony at the 22 Area parade deck aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 16.



Marines with 2nd Platoon, General Support Motor Transport Company, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) escort fuel trucks to the next forward operating base in northern Helmand province, March 16. The 2nd Plt. Marines provided an escort for Afghan drivers who hauled approximately 340,000 gallons of fuel to forward operating bases in northern Helmand province.

Marines escort Afghan drivers, get fuel to the fight

Story and photo by
Sgt. John Jackson
Public Affairs Chief

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Thirty five civilian trucks carrying approximately 340,000 gallons of fuel left the outskirts of Camp Leatherneck to deliver fuel to forward operating bases in northern Helmand province, Afghanistan, March 13.

In addition to the fuel trucks, Marines and sailors with General Support Motor Transport Company, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) accompanied the Afghan drivers to ensure the fuel was delivered without incident.

“Our mission is to provide an armed escort for the local nationals,” said Staff Sgt. Justin Baldwin,

platoon sergeant, 2nd Platoon, GSMT Co. “We provide fire support to ensure the trucks make it to the FOBs unharmed.”

The Marines of 2nd Platoon have been conducting fuel escort missions since September and have successfully delivered more than one million gallons of fuel throughout Helmand province.

Escorting fuel tankers on routes monitored by the enemy is not an easy feat, but that’s not the only hurdle the Marines have to overcome.

“One of the main challenges we face during these missions is the mechanical readiness of the local nationals’ trucks,” said 1st Lt. Mariela Pena, 2nd Plt. Commander, GSMT Co. “The Marines conduct maintenance inspections on the trucks prior to the mission, but there are still

issues that come up.”

Whether the trucks get a flat tire or have engine problems, Marines ensure the vehicles are able to get to their final destination.

“The trucks always seem to break down at the worst possible moment, but the Marines are there to keep the convoy moving,” said Pena, a 34 year-old Walnut Creek, Calif., native. “We will be taking fire, but the Marines will dismount to get the trucks moving again and to keep the local nationals safe. Their courage is amazing.”

Working with local civilians has been an experience the 2nd Plt. Marines have enjoyed.

“It’s been incredible,” said Pena. “We get to know the drivers, and they get to know the Marines. It makes for a really good experience for us all.”

The Marines and 35 local Afghans returned to Camp Leatherneck on March 18 after successfully delivering more than a quarter of a million gallons of fuel to five forward operating bases. This escort marks one of the final missions for the GSMT Marines. They will return home soon after an approximate seven-month deployment.

“This run, like all of them, was outstanding,” said Baldwin, the 29 year-old Meriden, Conn., native. “This is the best platoon I have ever worked with. Everyone works together.”

“The mission is to deliver fuel and keep the local Afghans safe.” Pena said. “The Marines understand this and get the mission accomplished every time.”



Sgt. Matthew Branch, the assistant security team leader for 2nd Platoon, General Support Motor Transport Company, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) speaks through an interpreter to Afghan truck drivers before leaving Forward Operating Base Edinburgh, March 17. Branch says working with Afghans has been a unique experience and a great way to learn the locals' culture.

Nebraska Reserve Marine keeps Afghans safe

Story and photos by
Sgt. John Jackson
Public Affairs Chief

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – For the past six months, Sgt. Matthew Branch has been responsible for providing security for Afghan truck drivers while they deliver fuel to forward operating bases in northern Helmand province, Afghanistan.

While he and his Marines have successfully accomplished this mission, the job is a change of pace for the Kearney, Neb., native.

Branch is the assistant security team leader for 2nd Platoon, General Support Motor Transport Company, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward); however, while not forward deployed, he is a Marine Corps reservist attached to 4th Engineer Maintenance Company in Omaha, Neb.

When in Nebraska, Branch is accustomed to arriving at work at 6 a.m. and leaving around 3 p.m. Additionally, ensuring the enemy does not affect his mission or harm Afghan drivers is not in his everyday job description.

Branch is a maintenance technician at a clothing distribution center in Nebraska. Fixing broken down equipment is his specialty,



Sgt. Matthew Branch, the assistant security team leader, 2nd Plt., GSMT Co., MAGTF Support Bn. 11.2, 1st MLG (Fwd) communicates with other 2nd Plt. Marines prior to the start of a joint convoy with Afghan truck drivers, March 13.

but deploying in support of Marine Corps operations is something Branch has become proficient at as well.

“This is my third deployment,” said Branch, 29. “I love to deploy. I like to be engaged with what the

Marine Corps is doing.”

During his current deployment, Branch has been responsible for getting fuel and other supplies to Marines stationed throughout Helmand province.

“Our mission is to safely and

expediently transport combat essential gear and fuel to the Marines and service members throughout the [area of operations],” Branch said. “Our platoon has completed more than a dozen missions, and we have been very successful at getting our job accomplished.”

In addition to making sure fuel and equipment is delivered safely, Branch and his Marines also interact and work with local civilians.

“There is a language barrier, but it was definitely a unique experience,” said Branch. “It gave us all a great insight and a great way to experience the locals’ culture.”

GSMT Co. is wrapping up their seven-month deployment, and the Marines will soon be headed back to the U.S. Branch is looking forward to getting back to Nebraska to be with his family but believes his time in Afghanistan was a worthy accomplishment.

“I am ready to get in some good quality time with my wife and daughter,” said Branch. “My wife is a very proud Marine Corps wife, and she is very supportive.”

“This deployment has been a success. Any mission that was asked of the Marines, they got done and excelled at. We kept our convoys safe, the local nationals safe and got our missions completed.”