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NEWS

Afghans take lead in anti-drug operations

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Tyler Reiriz



CAMP HANSON, Afghanistan- The members of the National Interdiction Unit, a group of Afghan special forces, stand side-by-side with Marines of 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment as they prepare for their next mission during rehearsals, March 13. Their target is a building they suspect is being used to traffic opium. The NIU are a part of Central Narcotics Police Afghanistan, and their goal is to stop the illegal drug trade in their country. The raid they are preparing for is one of many the NIU team has conducted during their time in Marjah. "I wanted to do something to help my people and my country," said Capt. Farouk, the NIU team commanding officer. "Narcotics are a big problem for

Afghanistan. Our main goal is to get rid of any narcotics in our country and punish the smugglers." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Afghan soldiers take lead in Marjah security operation

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Tyler Reiriz

MARJAH, Afghanistan - Soldiers of Weapons Tolai, 3rd Kandak, 215th Corps worked with the Marines of the Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, to set up a vehicle check point in Marjah, March 22. The Afghan National Army soldiers took charge, searching vehicles and pedestrians while Marines provided support and security. In the past, the Marines were leading operations, teaching the ANA soldiers by example. Today, the soldiers conduct their own operations. Cpl. Glenn D. Stadig, a squad leader with Weapons Company, said working with the ANA has changed since his previous deployment to Afghanistan in 2010. "Last year the Marines taught them,"



Stadig said. "This year the ANA are doing their own thing. They're making their own briefs, leading their own squads and setting up their own operations. On patrols they're more vigilant. I'm impressed with the ANA this year." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

British soldiers deliver transition to Nad 'Ali

U.K. Defence News



British troops in Nad 'Ali have helped Afghan forces take on more of the burden for security in the region, facilitating the process of transition. Soldiers from A Company, 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (1 PWRR), known as Salerno Company, have seen significant improvements in their area of operations during their tour, allowing the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to take on more responsibility for security throughout the district. Salerno Company arrived in Helmand in September of last year, taking over from J Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines, and the soldiers found themselves under daily attack from insurgents in both the checkpoints they occupied and while they were out on patrol ([Read the](#)

[STORY](#))

Afghan medics answer call after bus accident

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Timothy Lenzo

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan - Afghan National Army medics are tending to patients brought in from a bus accident, March 26. Sunday, the ANA medics learned about an incoming mass casualty situation. A passenger bus collided head on with a car close to base, and with the closest hospital more than four hours away, the seriously injured patients were brought straight to the ANA medic's tent. There were 28 casualties. "The patients came from different provinces," said ANA Staff Sgt. Asmutullah, senior medic, 4th Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps. "They went to run errands. They were on their way to Kabul." The ANA medics see local Afghans on a daily basis, but don't see mass casualty situations often. The medics immediately mobilized ambulances to the scene after receiving a call from an ANA unit about the accident.



([Read the STORY](#))

Afghan engineers build check points, step toward independence

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Timothy Lenzo



PATROL BASE WASHIR, Afghanistan - The road to Washir is dusty and dirty, with potholes and hills making it an obstacle course. The ride almost feels like off-roading, with vehicles hitting bumps and twisting around turns. With no sign of houses, the approaching check points stick out of the barren landscape, with Afghan National Army soldiers keeping watch over the area. Last Wednesday, ANA Col. Abdul Hai Neshat, executive officer, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, stopped at several check points with Capt. Charles Arvisais, executive officer, 2nd Brigade Advisor Team, Regimental Combat Team 6, to inspect the

construction of check points and address the ANA soldiers. ([Read the STORY](#))

British and Afghan forces bring security to Nahr-e Saraj

U.K. Defence News

Progress towards greater security has moved apace in the Nahr-e Saraj area of Helmand province thanks to the combined efforts of British and Afghan forces. B Company, 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (1 PWRR), serving as part of Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj (South), have been working closely with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) during their tour, to bring about a significant improvement in the security of their area of operations. When B Company arrived in Nahr-e Saraj in October 2011, they came under regular attack from the insurgents while out on patrol. But by working with Afghan forces on relentless patrolling, and the establishment of two new checkpoints, they have been able to significantly reduce the insurgency in the area. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Reserve Marines come together, accomplish mission in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. John Jackson



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

Afghan police show respect to villagers, receive cooperation in return

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Michael Cifuentes

KHAN NESHIN DISTRICT, Afghanistan – A patrol leader with the Afghan Uniformed Police said he’s made substantial progress building rapport with the locals during his three months of service in Khan Neshin district. This is no small feat for a person from the opposite side of the country and one who speaks a different language than the population he protects. He said there is one key element that takes him far when interacting with the people of Khan Neshin – respect. “When we show them respect, they return to us with respect. After that, we have their attention, we have their cooperation and more importantly, we have their respect,” said Bismullah Khaliq, a patrol leader with the Khan Neshin AUP precinct. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Marines choose brotherhood over personal safety, Afghan police show trustworthiness

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Michael Cifuentes



COMBAT OUTPOST CASTLE, Afghanistan - What turned out to be a rough patrol for Marines became a story of heroism, complete with a sign of trust from Afghan allies. Marines serving with 1st Platoon, Delta Company, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, set off on a patrol during the nighttime hours of Feb. 23. Their mission was to drop off food, water, batteries, and other supplies to another squad of Marines who were set in a cordon for the night near Qual-e Now, a neighboring village in Khan Neshin district. The chosen path required them to cross several canals. One waterway was bridged by tree branches that were almost

submerged in the canal's high, swiftly moving waters. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Make it happen: Weapons Platoon adapts, overcomes in southern Helmand

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

KHAN NESHIN, Afghanistan – U.S. Marines are well versed in adapting to the ever changing environment inherent to counterinsurgency operations in southern Helmand province. The warfighters of Weapons Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, have been utilizing this skill since they began operating here last October. Weapons Plt. is composed of Marines holding the 0300, or infantryman, military occupational specialty code. Light armored reconnaissance vehicle drivers, crewmen, mortarmen, anti-tank missilemen and scouts form the platoon, which usually specializes in providing a fire to support those Marines most forward in the fight. “Traditionally, my [mortar] section sits in a defensive area to provide indirect fire and battlefield illumination,” explained Staff Sgt. Joshua Chitwood, the Weapons Plt. commander and native of Tampa, Fla. “The anti-tank section sits in an over watch position to provide support by fire and missiles for maneuver elements.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Preventing the boom: coalition forces IED train

Story and photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Monique LaRouche



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — The counter improvised explosive device course, which is part of Reception, Staging, Onward movement and Integration, is more than just a refresher, it is a safety net for all who deploy to Regional Command Southwest. The eight-hour CIED course is given daily on Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, and it prepares service members who recently arrived in country, a last chance to get real experience. The training is unique in its own way because it allows the students to be creative with combat scenarios and allows new members to

ask questions from Marines who just got back from the fight. The course is available to all coalition forces including Americans, Georgians, Jordanians, Dutch and Department of Defense civilians. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Afghan contractors build toward the future of Marjah

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Tyler Reiriz

MARJAH, Afghanistan - Team 2, Civil Affairs Detachment 11.2, 11th Marine Regiment, is responsible for many projects throughout the city of Marjah. The team contracts construction projects to local Afghan companies to help improve the economy and quality of life in Marjah. Capt. Ian J. Duncan, the team leader, and his Marines took a tour of projects currently underway in the city March 17. The team oversees a variety of projects in Marjah including patrol bases, roads, and the most recent project nearing completion, a school. The school is a particularly important part of the civil affairs mission in Marjah. Duncan said attendance in schools has skyrocketed since Afghan students began moving from temporary tent facilities to permanent structures. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Afghan forces, 'America's Battalion' Marines keep Garmsir safe during Afghan New Year

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Reece Lodder



GARMSIR DISTRICT, Afghanistan — The celebration of the Afghan New Year was outlawed while Helmand province's Garmsir district was under insurgent rule prior to the arrival of coalition forces in 2005. The three-day celebration, known in Dari as 'Nowruz', highlights the transition from winter into spring — the "new day" said Dauod Parwani, the Regimental Combat Team 5 cultural adviser. Since Nowruz's cultural and religious significance was derived from the non-Islamic Zoroastrian religion and had no basis in the Islam or Pashtun culture, Parwani said insurgents banned the holiday in Garmsir. Today, after seven years of struggles and progress

made by Afghan National Security Forces and coalition troops, Garmsir is largely free of the insurgency. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Afghan soldiers improve communications infrastructure in Helmand

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo

COMBAT OUTPOST PANTHER, Afghanistan — Members of the 1st Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, Afghan National Army raised a communications antenna March 27 at a forward location in Delaram district. The VHF antenna will allow for better communication with ANA soldiers at Forward Operating Base Delaram II and posts in more remote areas around it. While the ANA raised the antenna, Marines and sailors with the Brigade Mentor Team, Regimental Combat Team 6, supervised and advised them throughout the process. "My soldiers and I hooked up a field antenna to have communication between Delaram and further outposts," said Capt. Mohammad Zarif Akef, the deputy communications officer for the 1st Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, Afghan National Army, aboard FOB Delaram II. Before today, they had little practice setting up VHF antennas. Akef said he was grateful for the assistance he received. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



HEROES

Fallen Corpsman honored for service, sacrifice

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Timothy Lenzo



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan - "Every corpsman wants to be out there to help protect and save the Marines that we serve with," said Petty Officer 1st Class George Fricke, leading petty officer, Regimental Aid Station, Regimental Combat Team 6. On Sept. 9, 2011, Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian Lundy Jr., a Navy corpsman with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, gave his life while protecting the Marines he served with. Standing in front of a formation of Marines and sailors with RCT-6, Col. John Shafer and Sgt. Maj. Jamie Deets, commanding officer and regimental sergeant major, RCT-6 honored Lundy during a ceremony March 23. Together, Shafer and Deets helped Fricke to

memorialize his fellow corpsman by officially naming the Regimental Aid Station the Lundy Clinic. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

VIGNETTES

Women in the United States Navy: 3 CEC officers share their perspectives through thoughts, recollections, philosophies and advice

Story and photos by Petty Officer 1st Class Jonathan Carmichael

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan - "Don't put false barriers in your way." Consider those words of wisdom from U.S. Navy Cmdr. Lore Aguayo, a 1993 graduate of Civil Engineer Corps Officers' School and one of many service members consistently proving that women do belong in the U.S. military. Civil Engineer Corps officers are the engineers and architects of the Navy. They work in construction management, public works and with the Seabees. The term Seabee spawned from CB, the abbreviation for construction battalion. Seabees make up the Naval Construction Force which consists of Construction Battalion Maintenance Units, Underwater Construction Teams, Amphibious Construction Battalions, and Naval Mobile Construction Battalions. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Chaplain finds solace in helping others

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Mark Garcia



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan — Growing up as a military brat, Lt. Cmdr. Mark Tews, the regimental chaplain, for Regimental Combat Team 6, knew he wanted to serve his country; however, he also felt a calling to be a minister. Before his commissioning in the Navy during June 1996, Tews had been a minister at a parish for four years and knew he wanted to continue that career while in the military. "I always wanted to kind of follow in my dad's footsteps by being patriotic and serving my country, but I also had a calling to ministry," said Tews, 53, from Alvin, Texas. "I knew the only job I could do that in would be as a chaplain and the Navy happened to be the only branch looking for chaplains at the time." During his time in the Navy, Tews has had the opportunity to be a chaplain for Marines, Coast Guardsmen, surface and aviation side of the Navy. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

No short days, just short nights

Story and photos by Spc. Chelsea Russell

ZARANJ, Afghanistan - Despite all the bad things that can happen during a deployment, Marine Corps Col. Michael Gann, the II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) operations officer for Afghan National Security Forces Development stationed at Camp Lejeune, N.C., said his experiences in Afghanistan have taught him to never forget the simple things in life. Gann and his men were awaiting a return flight to Camp Leatherneck after completing a mission in Zaranj when he noticed a couple of Afghan civilians had arrived at the airfield. It was a Friday morning, so it was a holiday. There was a little girl with them. Gann said he was standing there in all of his battle gear when the little girl just started walking toward him. She wasn't the least bit deterred by his intimidating appearance. Gann slowly squatted down and held out his hand to her. She fearlessly grabbed ahold of it and smiled up at him. **(Read the STORY)**



Leveraging technology adds force multiplier, saves lives in combat

Story and photos by Chief Petty Officer Leslie Shively



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Although Marines are not the transformers seen in films on the silver screen, they are equipped with some of the latest technologies available today. Director of Science and Technology for II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), Col. David Thompson, ensured Marines had the right equipment when they went into the field to battle insurgents, and do their jobs as safely as possible. "He leveraged the latest technology and ensured its rapid deployment to save lives," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Randy Tootle, Logistics chief, II MEF (Fwd). "A good example would be the ballistic boxers," said Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics, Col. Jeffery Hooks, I MEF (Fwd). Thompson and his team researched the type of material that would withstand a blast and not cause infection. Lightweight silk, coated in an anti-microbial agent with an extra layer of ballistic protection on the inside was the final solution. A manufacturer was found and a rush order arranged. The

boxers are currently standard issue to military members working outside forward operating bases in Afghanistan. **(Read the STORY)**

Baltimore native, mother thanks Corps

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Kenneth Jasik

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – The hardships Marines face together build a bond between them, and that brotherhood is so strong it brings families into the fold as well. Not many know this better than Sgt. Latoya A. Gaines, a warehouse chief with I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group (Forward). When she had her daughter during March 2008, it was about three months too early, and her newborn, Kahmille, was in dire health. "When she was born she was 1 pound, 3 ounces, and she had a long road to recovery," said Gaines, 25, from Baltimore. "She had 13 surgeries before she was 1." The level of care required for Kahmille demanded a lot of personal time from Gaines. The Marines she worked with understood and gave her the appropriate time off to care for her newborn. "When she first was born, the whole first year of her life she was in the



hospital,” said Gaines. “It was just a continuous battle trying to juggle the Marine Corps and juggle her and be a good mom. It was really hard.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

From one desert to another: Doc continues to help others

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Mark Garcia



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan — Growing up, Petty Officer 2nd Class Antonio Saenz, a hospital corpsman with the Regimental Aid Station, Regimental Combat Team 6, knew he wanted to leave the desert where his hometown is located and serve his country. Saenz is currently serving on his fourth deployment. He was deployed to Iraq during his previous three deployments. While on those deployments, he served in the renowned Triangle of Death and was a part of both invasions into Fallujah. During his previous deployments, Saenz has been married and has missed out on the birth of one of his sons. “It’s always difficult being away from your family,” said Saenz, 27, from Chaparral, N.M. “Through all my deployments, I’ve missed out on a lot of things like the birth of my son. The easiest way to cope with it though is to be in constant communication with my family whether it be

through a phone call, email or Skype.” Before enlisting in the Navy during June 2002, Saenz saw most of his family join the Army and wanted to follow in their footsteps while paving his own path. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

One man’s journey to better himself leads to Marine Corps

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Mark Garcia

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan - Forward Operating Base Delaram II, Afghanistan -- Growing up, Lance Cpl. Larry Mcaffé, postal clerk, 1st Marine Logistics Group Forward, envisioned himself making a difference in people’s lives. However, he didn’t know that dream would lead him to the Marine Corps. After Mcaffé finished high school, he accepted a full scholarship to a junior college to play basketball. However, he tore his knee and subsequently lost his scholarship. He was faced with having to pay for college out of his own pocket. Mcaffé didn’t have the money to continue his education so he chose to join the Marine Corps to help pay for college and make himself a better person. Mcaffé’s decision to join the Marine Corps was also his way of not giving up on himself. Rather than letting his injury get him down, he still strived for a better future, he said. “How I grew up, a lot of people didn’t help me, so now I try to turn any negativity that is around me into something positive,” Mcaffé said. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Willow Springs native keeps Marines safe in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Tyler Reiriz



CAMP HANSON, Afghanistan- Sgt. Gregory Phipps, sergeant of the guard for Headquarters and Service Company Guard Forces, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, speaks a few words into his radio. Less than two minutes later, a group of Marines in full combat gear are standing outside his office prepared to respond to any threat to their camp. The impromptu muster is a reactionary drill, and maintaining their readiness is one of Phipps duties as SOG for the Guard Forces here. The Marines responding to the drill are part of the quick reaction force. On a moment’s notice, they need to put on all of their personal protective equipment, gather their weapons and ammunition, prepare

all of the supporting gear for the squad, and report to the SOG as quickly as possible. “It’s an opportunity to see how the Marines are able to go from whatever they’re doing, to getting here quickly in case of a threat,” said Phipps, 26, a native of Willow Springs, Mo. “We drill to prepare for the real thing.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

VIDEOS

Operation Now Roz Multimedia

Video by Marine Cpl. Kenneth Jasik

Soldiers stationed at Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan paid honor to their fallen brothers. Soldiers of the 375th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion joined together to pay honor to five soldiers with a permanent unique memorial on Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan. The memorial stands almost seven feet tall, made of black granite with a replica of the Freedom Tower along with a reflecting pool. The memorial will stay in its current location, until all U.S. forces come home from Afghanistan. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



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MEDIA COVERAGE/Interviews

Marine salutes Laguna Niguel teacher with U.S. flag Story on Staff Sgt. Jeremy Martinez based on story by Cpl. Alfred Lopez

Maj O'Connor, VMU-1, talks about the use of a new helicopter in southwest Asia Stars and Stripes Interview

Marines look to extend unmanned helo program in Afghanistan Stars and Stripes story

Cpl. Natasha Almeida interview with Kingsport Times-News

Petty Officer 2nd Class James Vanzella, talks to a WTKF-FM

Lt. Cmdr. Chaplain Mark Tews talks to a WTKF-FM

Lance Cpl. Cody Goebel talks to a Stars and Stripes

Navy Lt. Leroy Young talks with Fox Sports National

Petty Officer 2nd Class (RP2) Armando D. Arias interview

Marine Staff Sgt. Joshua Chitwood interview
