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The Warrior's Log

'Excellence, Innovation & Quality' for the Marines and Sailors of the 2nd Marine Logistics Group

April 6, 2012

Support Marines, Sailors help EOD Company accomplish the mission through

'Blood, Sweat and Tears'

See full story on Page 4

Inside

CLB-8 troops take a shot at making par ... Page 5

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Col. Yori R. Escalante (middle), the assistant chief of staff C-9 for Regional Command Southwest, sits down for a meeting with Deputy Minister Suraya Paikan (front left), Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, April 26, 2011.

Photo courtesy of Col. Yori R. Escalante

Mentor & Develop

Success keeps Houston native rolling through deployment

Sgt. Rachael K. Moore
2nd MLG Public Affairs

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. – Like most East Coast-based Marines in 2011, Col. Yori R. Escalante was preparing to deploy to Afghanistan.

However, Escalante, the commanding officer of Combat Logistics Regiment 2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, was pulled from his command to fill a different billet – a billet that required him to travel long distances by convoy and air, spend countless hours organizing and planning events, but most of all, forced him to think outside of the box.

He was selected to lead the C-9 as the assistant chief of staff for Regional Command Southwest. The C-9 is a non-traditional staff section that helps mentor the Afghan government and develop socioeconomics by working hand-in-hand with the provincial governments to ensure they're established properly and have the ability to survive.

Escalante had one year to leave his fingerprint on the people of Afghanistan. This is his story.

Reporter: The II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) commanding general, Maj. Gen. John A. Toolan, selected you for this position. How did that make you feel?

Escalante: I was extremely honored to be selected by Gen. Toolan and for him to say 'I need you on the team.' I served on a joint tour for three years with the state department, and because of the amount of work that had to be done with civilian diplomats, Gen. Toolan felt it was best to have someone who had that experience. It was conflicting because I didn't want to leave CLR-2, but then again, I was honored by Gen. Toolan thinking I could do the job. It was a challenge.

Reporter: What was your mission in Afghanistan?

Escalante: Support the expansion of governance and socioeconomic development. That was my mission.

Reporter: How did you prepare yourself for this deployment?

Escalante: A lot of reading. I read *The Helmand Plan, United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan,* the myriad of higher headquarters operation orders, *The Afghan National Development Strategy*, and even with that, you've just scratched the surface. I found myself, while I was in Afghanistan, read-

ing six to seven hours every day when you include everything I needed to keep up on.

Reporter: What was the biggest challenge you faced?
Escalante: The different types of people we had to work with. We had the military … we had the infantry battalions on the ground. You had the headquarters you had to work with. You had the different ways different battalion commanders worked within their battle space and the sort of things they felt they needed in order to succeed. You had civilians. We did a lot of work with U.S. diplomats, U.S. government civilians, and foreign diplomats, primarily the British – because the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team was run by the United Kingdom. Civilians have different and specific ways of doing things than the Marines do, and just from the standpoint of 'who's in charge of what line of operation?' – that became a challenge. We saw ourselves supporting and being supported. We felt like we were in charge, but we also felt like we needed their support and vice versa.

"I didn't want to leave CLR-2, but then again, I was honored by Gen. Toolan thinking I could do the job. It was a challenge."

- Col. Yori R. Escalante

Reporter: You had to work a lot with the Afghans. What challenges did that present?
Escalante: It was more than language and culture; it was a way of doing business. It was a way how they conduct business and the things they expect. To some extent, we created a sense of expectation in how we went about initially doing counterinsurgency with a tremendous influx of money and resources. Now we have to say 'Whoa. We have to start weaning you off, and you have to start doing it yourself.' That became a challenge.

Reporter: Through all of the challenges, there had to be something that fueled your fire to keep pushing. What was it?
Escalante: Seeing the success that was taking place and being able to build on that success. As soon as one thing worked, it'd build on the next. As soon as we could ensure that we could distribute wheat seed properly, then we went to ensuring the farmers had the resources and equipment they needed to grow the wheat. Once we knew that succeeded, then we took it to the next step to ensure the road networks were established properly to ensure they could bring their produce to market. Then obviously the next step is to ensure the processes are in place that you could process that produce and actually sell it like a business. And that's just one example.

Reporter: Do you feel like there were any breakthroughs with the local population during your time?
Escalante: At one point during the summer, we saw that the people of Helmand and Nimroz provinces did not want to be under the control of the Taliban anymore, and they actually started pushing back. They started resisting the Taliban's intimidation and murder, resisting their efforts to be that intimidator and it made you more motivated to do your work, because if the people are resisting the insurgency, that meant that they were supporting the government more. If they supported the government more, then the government could do more. If the government could do more, then they could provide more for the people. It was a continuous cycle, but as you saw that start it just grew and grew and grew. You couldn't help but think that 'Wow, something is really working here and I want to be part of it.'

Reporter: What is one thing your 50-man team excelled at?
Escalante: The way we were able to

See ESCALANTE, Page 6

Warrior of the Week

Colonel Yori R. Escalante

Job: CLR-2 Commander
Hometown: Houston

Alma Mater:
Texas A&M - Class of 1986

Favorite Hobby:
"Golf (when I can find time to play) and watching my kids play sports."

Dream Vacation:
"Australia - spent Christmas there in 2005 and it was the best vacation ever!"

Recent Movie Seen:
"Forrest Gump on the way home from Afghanistan."

Photos by Sgt. John E. Jackson

(Above) Support personnel and explosive ordnance disposal technicians with 2nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) work together to construct a realistic Afghan compound that will be used for training on the EOD compound on Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan. (Below) Lance Cpl. John Clark, a welder and support Marine with 2nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) puts concrete into a mold while constructing a mock Afghan compound that will serve as a training aide on the EOD compound at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, March 31.

'Through the blood, sweat and tears'

Support Marines, Sailors help EOD Company accomplish the mission

Sgt. John E. Jackson
1st MLG (FWD) Public Affairs

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – Operational tempo in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, continues at a high pace. Service members continue to conduct foot patrols, mounted patrols, resupply convoys and construction projects on a daily basis. Throughout these missions, the number one hostile threat to coalition forces continues to be improvised explosive devices.

Because of the insurgents' use of these homemade explosives throughout the battle space, explosive ordnance disposal technicians with 2nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) are actively engaged each day working to neutralize and eliminate these threats.

The EOD Co. is made up of more than 100 Marines and Sailors. While the majority of these service members are EOD technicians spread throughout Helmand Province, 16 service members are attached to the company to perform a supporting role. These 16 Marines and Sailors ensure the company continues to accomplish their mission.

"We have communication Marines, supply Marines, a motor transport Marine, a welder, corpsmen, P3 (preservation, packaging and packing) Marines and bulk fuel Marines," said Master Sgt. Shane Langerud, EOD staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge, 2nd EOD Co. "These Marines are doing a little bit of everything. They are filling that 'any Marine role' and doing a phenomenal job. The EOD company commander and I couldn't be more proud of them and what they've accomplished throughout this deployment."

While the support Marines and Sailors do spend some time working in their primary military occupational specialty while deployed with EOD Co., the service members are often completing tasks outside of their areas of expertise.

"Most of these Marines are working outside their MOS," said Gunnery Sgt. George Carter, the company gunnery sergeant for 2nd EOD Co. "We have a bulk fuel Marine who also serves as the administration chief; another bulk fuel Marine is our intelligence

See EOD, Page 6

Photo by Pfc. Franklin E. Mercado

A Marine with Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd Marine Logistics Group hits a golf ball during a golf outing at the Paradise Point Golf Course aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., March 27. The purpose of the day was to give the battalion's Marines and Sailors a day of rest and relaxation.

FORE!

Combat Logistics Battalion 8 takes shot at making par

Pfc. Franklin E. Mercado
2nd MLG Public Affairs

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. – Marines and Sailors with Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd Marine Logistics Group invaded Paradise Point Golf Course aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., March 27 - 28, for a day of rest and relaxation.

Considering the long hours of work the troops put in on a daily basis, Henry Drake, the battalion's family readiness officer, took it upon himself to get them out of their tan uniforms and onto the green fairways.

Each company provided rosters with the service members who would attend and they were separated into 28 teams of four. The golf course was reserved for approximately 220 of the unit's troops.

The event occurred over the span of two days because of the large turnout of golfers.

"Because of the large amount of [corporals] and below, we had to put the sergeants with the [staff noncommissioned officers] on the second day," Drake said.

Battalion camaraderie was at the forefront of the function. Having free time and enjoying themselves was on everyone's mind.

"The [Marines and Sailors] will be busy with all the upcoming training," Drake said. "They need to take time off to relax and have to themselves."

Lance Cpl. Samuel Cote, a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialist with CLB-8, was one of the many who experience golfing for the first time.

"I had a great time," Cote said. "It's a calm sport. I would absolutely love to do this again."

Cote went on to say he's looking forward to the next event the battalion will hold.

The unit has hosted several functions before this one and would like to have one every quarter, mentioned Drake.

"We did Operation Adrenaline Rush when we got back from our last deployment," Cote said. "We went deep sea fishing, which was great. Our unit is good at keeping morale high."

EOD,
continued from Page 4

chief. We have a P3 Marine who manages the upkeep, accountability and maintenance on all of the EOD robotics."

In addition to filling these new roles, the support Marines and Sailors have also completed several improvements to the EOD compound that will allow service members to be better trained. The support personnel have built a 63,000 square foot IED training lane, realistic Afghan compounds for mission training, a classroom to facilitate counter IED classes, and even an outdoor museum, which shows the different types of unexploded ordnance and IEDs that have been found throughout Afghanistan.

"Through the blood, sweat and tears of the support Marines we have been able to build a comprehensive training lane for not only EOD personnel, but also the infantry battalions and our [International Security Assistance Force] and NATO partners," Langerud said. "In conjunction with the regular daily duties of supporting our [EOD] teams spread throughout Helmand Province, the combined staff at the company has moved more than 20,000 cubic yards of dirt, filled more than 300 HESCO, and has hand mixed and filled more than 220 molds containing more than 880 cubic feet of cement and dirt for our training lane. We wouldn't have been able to accomplish 80 percent of what we have done without the support personnel."

Besides constructing areas for education and training, the company's support personnel have also successfully retrograded approximately $10 million worth of gear and equipment since arriving in Afghanistan in October, said Langerud.

"We came here and took a very broad skill set of young personnel in the military and [they] were able to successfully become an excellent support element for the EOD Company," Carter said. "Every one of these Marines and Sailors has grown professionally."

Sgt. Cerina Mingle, the supply chief for EOD Co., says she is happy she volunteered to deploy with the company.

"It's been an eye-opening experience," said Mingle, who is completing her first deployment. "It's been great, and I am truly glad I have gotten this experience."

Cpl. Joshua Smith, radio chief for 2nd EOD Co., is responsible for all of the company's radios and communications gear – a job typically held by a staff noncommissioned officer.

"I think it has been a very successful deployment," Smith said. "It's been a great opportunity for me. The command has really taken care of [the support personnel]. I think the command has a lot of trust in us."

Second EOD Co. is wrapping up their 7-month deployment and will soon return back to Camp Lejeune, but they will leave Afghanistan knowing they have completed their mission and set up future EOD companies long-term for success.

"This compound is our home, and we all have a lot of pride in what we've accomplished throughout the deployment," Langerud said. "The support personnel have developed their own legacy here in Afghanistan, and their efforts have and will continue to benefit the entire [Regional Command] Southwest area of responsibility."

Hard Corps Fact

History of EOD

Bomb disposal in the United States dates back to April 1941. The U.S. was not yet at war, but was preparing the eventuality. In 1947, the Navy was assigned responsibility for basic EOD training and in 1971, was designated as the single service manager for all common EOD training. The training continues to be provided by the Naval Explosive Ordnance and Disposal School at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

* MarineEOD.com

Marine excels in collateral billet

ESCALANTE,
continued from Page 3

work as a team, and that's not just one moment – that's a moment that took place across an entire year. I came in with the specific intention of forming a team around everybody who was involved in the expansion of government and socioeconomics. It didn't matter if you were a Marine on my staff, a Marine on any other subordinate unit's staff, a member of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand Province, a member of the regional platform of U.S. government that were there at Camp Leatherneck, or if you were a member of the Afghan government – we had to form a team and work as a team and cooperate and understand that our collective talents were going to be the only thing that makes us succeed before we could ever go forward and try to make something succeed. Every time we worked as a team it worked.

Reporter: What is one of the times you can reflect on that this team work paid off?

Escalante: The myriad of working groups and planning teams we had that ensured we were able to prioritize different governance issues and different development projects. We had a list of roads that went from one to 130. We prioritized 130 roads. Now, are you going to be able to do 130 roads in a year? No, but we got about 35 of them done. What we passed on to I Marine Expeditionary Force is a plan that they can just pick up and keep working on.

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