



NEWS

Lejeune Marines clear Afghan valley of insurgents

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo



NIMRUZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan — As the early morning sun peeks over the mountains the Nimruz province of Afghanistan, the Marines and sailors with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, began an operation in the Gostan Valley. The Marines staged their vehicles at the top of the hills overlooking Gorozan, the first village they were set to clear. As a show of force and for added protection, tanks with 1st Tank Battalion watched from a distance as Charlie Company cleared the small village. “Charlie Company, 1st Bn., 8th Marines, has been tasked with clearing the Gostan Valley where Washir is located, which is a known insurgent bed-down location,” said 2nd Lt.

Michael Steadman, platoon commander, 3rd platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Bn., 8th Marines. “This is where the insurgents like to come to, so this operation was meant to be offensive in nature. We wanted to take the fight to the enemy in a place where they traditionally feel like it’s safe.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Marines capture 20 during operation in northern Musa Qa’leh

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Kenneth Jasik

MUSA QA’LEH DISTRICT, Afghanistan – Marines with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment disrupted insurgent activity in northern Musa Qa’leh district during Operation Ox Bow, May 8-12. The operation led to the arrest of about 20 suspected enemy combatants. Most of them tested positive for handling bomb-making materials, including one carrying approximately 40 pounds of homemade explosives. “During Operation Ox Bow, we went to the northern Musa Qa’leh wadi (dry stream bed) to disrupt the insurgents involved with drug activity, weapons finance and collecting taxes for the Taliban,” said 1st Lt. John D. Black, platoon commander with Weapons Company, 2nd Bn., 5th Marines. The four-day operation was



in an area of Musa Qa’leh where coalition forces rarely venture, but the impact they made was a necessary step to bringing stability and security to the region. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Final Helmand district in UK operational area enters transition process

U.K. Defence News



Nahr-e Saraj district in Helmand province, where British forces operate, has now entered the transition process whereby responsibility for security will be handed over to Afghan forces. Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai announced yesterday the list of areas in the country that will make up the third of five tranches of transition of security responsibility from ISAF to Afghan forces. President Karzai said that this third tranche will mean Afghanistan's own forces will take lead responsibility for security in a further 122 areas across the country, including Nahr-e Saraj district in Helmand province where British forces operate. Yesterday's announcement means that Afghan forces will soon have lead security

responsibility in areas home to 75 per cent of Afghanistan's population. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Future of Garmsir in Afghan hands, 'America's Battalion' completes final Helmand tour

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Reece Lodder

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Afghanistan — In the fall of 2004, the Marines and sailors of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment began a challenging journey that took them to the Middle East and central Asia. They served on six combat deployments in the years since then — three each to Afghanistan and Iraq. They fought, sacrificed and honored their 16 fallen brothers. Seven months ago, the men of 'America's Battalion' began their final Afghanistan deployment to Helmand province's Garmsir district. Now they're finally coming home. The battalion replaced fellow Hawaii-based 1st Bn., 3rd Marines in Garmsir last November. They inherited an 80-kilometer long battlespace surrounding the Helmand River, previously the scene of intense fighting between insurgents and coalition forces. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Medical clinics assist keeping members in the fight

Story and photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Monique LaRouche



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – The combined aid medical support clinics on Camp Leatherneck offer a variety of services, conduct research, and provide a place for recovery. There are five clinics in the campus-like atmosphere. Although all five have separate areas of care, each are advanced in what they offer complimenting one another with the treatments provided. The Combined Aid Station clinic provides services such as sick call, pharmacy, X-ray, laboratory and minor procedures. They see between 50 to 70 patients a day, said Lt. Cmdr. Jonathan Elliot, officer in charge. This is fantastic care in the middle of the desert and is a one stop-shop, said Elliot, a native of Pensacola,

Fla. Most of what they see are musculoskeletal injuries, which are usually due to strenuous activity. They also diagnose sprained ankles and knee injuries from physical exercising and twisting of ankles on the rocks. They see lacerations on fingers that are caught in vehicle doors, a few heart attacks, cases of appendicitis, resetting fractures and minor stitching of wounds, said Elliot. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Pelosi, Delegation visits troops in Afghanistan on Mother's Day

Story and photos by Petty Officer 1st Class Jonathan Carmichael

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) visited troops on Camp Leatherneck in Helmand province, Afghanistan, along with four other congresswomen on Mother's Day, May 13, 2012. Joining Pelosi were Rep. Jean Schmidt (R-Ohio), Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), Rep. Terri Sewell (D-Ala.), and Rear Adm. Brian P. Monahan, attending physician for Congress and the Supreme Court. In attendance were Marines of Regional Command Southwest and Navy Seabees assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11. Pelosi approached the podium after a brief introduction by Marine Capt. Jacobus Vollebregt, funding U.S. Military Operations attorney, Regional Command Southwest. One by one, Pelosi introduced the members of her delegation, and each was met with applause from the attending service members. **(Read the STORY)**



Marines in Afghanistan thinking about mom at home

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Michael Cifuentes



CAMP HANSON, Afghanistan - U.S. Marines serving in Marjah, Afghanistan, say when they have the time, they often think about the luxuries and comforts they miss at home. Naturally, there's always one lady missed very much by a deployed Marine – his mother. Guard sentries here spend large chunks of their day guarding Camp Hanson at fortified posts around the base. As they keep vigilant, scanning the scenery immediately in front of them all the way back to the horizon, on the lookout for threats and enemy activity, they often think about home and memories thereof. Two Marines

serving at the forward edge of the battlefield if it weren't for the support from their mothers respectively, who they said they miss. **(Read the STORY)**

Helicopter Support Team conducts night operations via sling load

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Michele Watson

PATROL BASE SHEHEBAN, Afghanistan – The calming shade of blue makes the water enticing under the intense Afghan sun, but the currents are relentless. When the Helmand River is too deep to ford while delivering supplies, the helicopter support team is called in. As part of the helicopter support team at Forward Operating Base Whitehouse, Lance Cpls. Thomas Beranek and Jacob Walter, landing support specialists, Combat Logistics Battalion 4, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), had a mission to accomplish. With Walter remaining at the FOB to receive the backload, Beranek set out to Patrol Base Sheheban in support of Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 6. Because of the river, combat logistics patrols are sometimes an ineffective means of transportation. **(Read the STORY)**



NCO Coalition Symposium: Junior leaders hungry for leadership

Story and photos by Spc. Chelsea Russell



HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Coalition force members stationed here gathered, April 24, to begin a two-day Noncommissioned Officer Coalition Symposium held at I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group (Forward). Throughout the next two days, the NCOs from various parts of the world shared their experiences and cultures with each other through guided discussions and team building exercises. Major Gen. Charles Gurganus, the commanding general for Regional Command Southwest, greeted the NCOs and told them they were about to participate in an extremely valuable learning opportunity. The

NCO Coalition Symposium was a general leadership class for members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization who are stationed here. Master Sgt. Eugene Holiday, the assistant operations chief for I MHG (Fwd) from Jasper, Ala., said this course was extremely useful because it taught junior NCOs about the different cultures of their coalition partners. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Combat Logistics Battalion 4 assists realigning Marine Corps forces in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Mark Stroud

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Service members attached to 1st MLG (Fwd) provide tactical logistics support to adjacent units in Regional Command (Southwest) and assist in the Marine Corps' reset and reconstitution effort. Whether it is engineering operations, maintaining vehicles, supplying units or identifying excess gear, 1st MLG (Fwd) Marines and sailors get the mission accomplished. One of 1st MLG (Fwd)'s combat logistics battalions currently deployed to RC(SW) ensures Marines and sailors in the northern portion of Helmand Province are equipped with the gear and equipment they need, while removing the gear and equipment they no longer use. “[Combat Logistics Battalion 4] is serving as the distribution arm of the MLG,” said Lt. Col. Adam L. Chalkley, commanding officer, CLB-4. Inherent in that is the transport of supplies and equipment from outlying [Forward Operating Bases] to [Camp Leatherneck].” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Marines prepare for fuel run, inspect Afghan drivers, trucks

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Michele Watson



HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Fuel is a mission essential commodity that can affect operational tempo, and when fuel levels at forward operating bases run low, Afghans are often contracted to refill their tanks. Marines and sailors with General Support Motor Transport Company, 1st Maintenance Battalion (-) (Reinforced), 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) prepped and screened local nationals who were selected to participate in a fuel delivery mission to northern Helmand Province, May 13. Each local national passed an individual inspection that verified the driver was not a member of the insurgency, and each vehicle had to pass its own series of tests administered by the Marines.

“We go through and make sure there is no critical maintenance needed or damage to the truck,” said Cpl. Thomas Adams, quality control and modification noncommissioned officer, Headquarters Platoon, GSMT Co. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Pick, pack, ship: Marines support units across Helmand Province

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Michele Watson

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – The Supply Management Unit aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, is home to more than 500,000 pieces of gear and supports 56 units throughout Regional Command Southwest. Since arriving in Afghanistan last month, Marines with Storage Platoon, Supply Company, 1st Maintenance Battalion (-) (Reinforced), 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) have helped retrograde more than 130,000 items back to the U.S. While the SMU has played a significant role in the retrograde process, the lot is also responsible for supplying Marines throughout the area of operations. “Our main focus is providing sustainment, and our secondary focus is the retrograde,” said Master Sgt. Cody Douglas, staff non-commissioned officer, Storage Plt., Supply Co. “Our goal is to be at 260,000 pieces for sustainment within the next six weeks.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



‘Sweathogs’ construct new helo pad for isolated outpost

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Lisa Tourtelot



SOUTHERN HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan –The Marines and Sailors of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, live minimally - to say the least - at their tiny outpost in southwestern Afghanistan. With only a dirt square outside their compound for a helicopter pad, swirling dust clouds made by helicopters landing and taking off, known as “brownouts,” make the delivery of necessary supplies, as well as troop movements in and out of the compound, dangerous for both the aircrews and ground personnel. That is where the Marines and Sailors of Marine Wing Support Squadron 273 come in. The MWSS-273 “Sweathogs” traveled to the desolate post on May 4th, to

construct a safer helicopter landing zone (HLZ) with approximately 15,000 cubic meters of gravel and rock, a handful of combat engineers and only about twelve hours to complete the project. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

VIGNETTES

ISAF Deputy Commander reflects on progress in Helmand

U.K. Defence News

Lieutenant General Adrian Bradshaw, Deputy Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, here reflects on recent visits to Helmand and eastern Afghanistan, and gains made by ISAF over the past year. Lieutenant General Bradshaw writes: Last week I was on patrol with British servicemen in Helmand and, as ever, I was deeply impressed by their courage and dedication. With remarkable coolness, they remarked that the area in which we were patrolling is subject to improvised explosive device emplacement by the Taliban. The servicemen showed me where an insurgent had blown himself up trying to lay a bomb in the track just a few days before. My guides were wary of the risk, of course, and proceeded with understandable caution - but they were also confident in their drills, their equipment and their ability to stay ahead of the threat. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Guam corpsman helps save Marines despite injuries

Story and photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Monique LaRouche



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – April 28, 2012, started out like any other day for Petty Officer 1st Class Benny Flores, but by late afternoon it took a turn for the worse. Flores, a corpsman for Regional Command (Southwest), was providing medical coverage for a three-day, Afghan-led mission to Zaranj near the Iranian border. This was a routine mission and many have taken the trip. Corpsmen go as medical support in case of incidences, but an interpreter was not necessary. Zaranj is the capital of Nimruz province and is considered the most progressive city in Afghanistan. There is a major highway that starts in Delaram and ends in India. Women walk the streets, crowded with vendors, unescorted without burkas. At times, the highway is congested with

trucks and other vehicles going to and from the border. The city also has a major hospital and Iranians often cross the border for medical treatment. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Mother, Marine, more; one woman's sacrifice while deployed

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Timothy Lenzo

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – Staff Sgt. Maribel Valdez, the adjutant with 1st Marine Division (Forward), sits quietly at her desk. She sits straight with dark eyes, her M-9 pistol holstered tight to her uniform, and pictures of her family on the board behind her, showcasing the two different lives she lives. She's a mother and a Marine. A balancing act that's more difficult now that she's deployed. She's thousands of miles from her children and trading the sunny Southern California lifestyle for the heat and dust of Afghanistan. "It's very hard, I'm not going to say it's easy," Valdez said. "I think it's harder being a mom, it's hard to know that a big part of your life is not here with you." Valdez,



resides in Temecula, Calif., and is currently deployed to Afghanistan, but a large part of her life is at her home in Temecula. She has five children: Breanna, 12; Jose, 10; Issac, 9; Jason, 5; and Jacob, 4. She said it's hard for her younger children to understand why she can't be home. "No matter how you tell them you are working, they don't understand," Valdez said. "To them it's mommy's gone or mommy left me." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

From firefighter/EMT to Navy corpsman

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Ed Galo



NIMRUZ PROVINCE, Afghanistan —Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Matthew Sears is always walking around with a smile as he interacts with the Marines in his unit. "I joined the Navy because (back home) I was a firefighter and an emergency medical technician, and the area was pretty saturated with people who were trying to do pretty much the same job. I had just had my son, so I needed to get something solid so that I could provide for my family," said Sears, corpsman, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment. Sears says he has enjoyed his time in the Navy so far, but he also enjoyed being a firefighter and EMT. "I loved it," Sears, from Dayton, Ohio added. "It gave me a ton of experience before joining

the Navy. I knew if I was going to join the Navy, I was going to be a corpsman. Just being a firefighter and EMT exposed me to a lot of different scenarios that definitely carried over to being a corpsman in the Navy." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Supplying victory one round at a time

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. James Mercure

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WHITEHOUSE, Afghanistan – A Marine is useless without a rifle. A rifle is useless without ammunition. At 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, ensuring magazines are full is the job of the battalion's sole ammunition technician. Sgt. Waylon Sliker, from Sparta, N.J., has, so far, provided more than 630,000 rounds of ammunition to keep Marines in the fight this deployment.

"Once the ammo is requested, I get what they need from the ammunition supply point," Sliker said. "Through all the chaos of firefights the infantry Marines go through, they need someone to keep track of their ammo, and that's where I come in." As the ammunition chief, Sliker is responsible for more than \$3.2 million dollars worth of bullets, rockets, missiles, demolition explosives, grenades and Claymore mines. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician teaches life lessons during OSCAR training

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Michele Watson



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – They spend time away from their families and friends; they wear the same clothes every day; they work seven days a week with no holiday breaks. Whether it is an infantryman operating in a remote area of Afghanistan who frequently engages the enemy or an administrative clerk who works in an office at Camp Leatherneck keeping track of personnel in their unit, service members who deploy to a combat zone are under a greater amount of stress than the average American. "We are all different, and we all handle stress differently," said Master Sgt. Jackie Canaday, staff non-commissioned officer of 1st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 1st Marine

Logistics Group (Forward). [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

VIDEOS

Afghan Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians Test New Skills

Video by Marine Staff Sgt. Brian Buckwalter

The improvised explosive device is the weapon of choice for insurgents Afghanistan. As Staff Sgt. Brian Buckwalter reports, searching and destroying them is increasingly becoming the responsibility of Afghan national security forces. Soundbites from Staff Sgt. Gulbuddin and Sgt. Din Mohammed. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Keeping Our Honor Clean: PRP Marines

Video by Marine Sgt. Michael Cifuentes



This is part two of a series of videos about 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) non-commissioned officers and their professionalism, hard work and dedication to the mission while deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

Marketed/Republished Combat Correspondent Product

Taking a Knee - Time Magazine Battleand Blog Features photo by Cpl. Reece Lodder

The Marines have the Ace of Spades! Features story by Cpl. Alfred Lopez

Finksburg Mom Gets A Mother's Day Surprise At Sunday's Orioles Game Mother's Day Greeting by Capt. Daniel Love used by Baltimore Orioles, by CBS13 in Baltimore, Md.

Sergeant from Heuvelton advises Afghan troops Article based on phone interview with Sgt. Christopher Scott and story by Cpl. Timothy Lenzo

Nancy Pelosi picture by Spc. Russell posted on Nancy Pelosi website

Clifton woman flourishes in Marine Corps from The Daily Journal based on story from Spc. Chelsea Russell

Staff Sgt. Michael Rowland talks to a WTKF-FM reporter in Jacksonville, N.C.

Sgt. Jesse Trumble talks to a WTKF-FM reporter in Jacksonville, N.C.

Marine Capt. Rafiel Warfield on Radio Lia

Marine Week Shout Out from WBNX in Cleveland

Cpl Guerrero on Fox Sports Radio-National

Mother's Day greeting from 1st Lt. Larry Melton and 2nd Lt. Matt Jarrat aired on the Ellen Degeneres Show

Mother's Day greetings posted on WDRD.com

Sgt. Christopher Scott – Phone interview with Ogdensburg Journal
