

THE BLUE DIAMOND

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Division honors fallen service members



Sergeant Joshua Martin, a squad leader with Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division and Lance Cpl. Jacob Larson, an operations clerk with Headquarters and Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, place eight fallen Marines' identification tags on the monument during the 1st MarDiv(Fwd) memorial return ceremony at the 1st MarDiv headquarters building, May 20. The division returned from a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan, where 133 Marines, sailors and service members were killed in action. Martin, 26, is from Phoenix and Larson, 22, is from Salt Lake City.

Story and photo by Lance Cpl. Glen Santy

The Blue Diamond's memorial return ceremony honored eight 1st Marine Division Marines killed in action near the end of the yearlong deployment to Afghanistan at the 1st Marine Division headquarters building, May 20.

While deployed to Afghanistan, 1st Marine Division performed memorial services for service members who were killed in combat operations. These eight Marines could not be memorialized while in country because the memorial had already been shipped home.

The eight names were read aloud, and the Marine's identification tags were placed on the memorial. After placing the tags on the memorial, Gunnery Sgt. Joel Daniel, a musician with the 1st Marine Division Band, played a solemn "Amazing Grace" on bagpipes.

"Having the memorial in Afghanistan with us and then bringing it back home with us really brought the recognition back with us," said Brig. Gen. Joseph Osterman, the commanding general of 1st MarDiv(Fwd). "Having the Blue Diamond (monument) in the memorial garden really falls right in line with the plaques and monu-

ments that are from places like Guadalcanal."

The ceremony was also a memorial for all 133 fallen Marines, sailors and coalition forces who were killed during the division tour.

"Casualties were always tough to take," said Osterman. "But recognizing the losses and having the memorial services help bring closure for the Marines."

"We always need to remember the sacrifices of our service members out there," said Sgt. Maj. Phillip Fascetti, sergeant major of 1st MarDiv(Fwd).

During the ceremony, Osterman

and Fascetti added the Afghanistan battle streamer to the division's illustrious battle colors, which have been decorated throughout the division's history. The division has more than 25 battle streamers dating back to Guadalcanal and Okinawa during World War II to the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

"None of the Marines come back feeling sorry for themselves or sorry for the losses," said Osterman. "The comment you hear most often is, 'Sir, I knew what we were getting into.' They're all volunteers and their bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood are probably tighter than any other bond you'll see."

Marines awarded bronze stars

Photo by Lance Cpl. Glen Santy

Sergeant Joshua Frasier, a squad leader with 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, receives a Bronze Star Medal with distinguishing service device from Lt. Col. Aldo Garcia, the commanding officer of 1/11, at the 11th Marines parade deck in Camp Las Pulgas, May 27. Frasier, while serving as a squad leader for Battery I, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, 1/11, Regimental Combat Team 2, 1st Marine Division (Forward), led his Marines on more than 40 dismounted combat patrols, engaging the enemy on 14 separate occasions. The Marines and sailors conducted both mounted and dismounted patrols while deployed. The Bronze Star is one of the highest awards for combat valor, and is awarded to any service member who distinguishes him or herself by heroic or meritorious actions in combat. Frasier, 27, is from Vero Beach, Fla.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Alfred Lopez

Lieutenant Col. Brian Gilman, commanding officer of 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, awards the Bronze Star to Sgt. Maj. James Porterfield, battalion sergeant major of 1st Recon Bn., at Camp Margarita, May 20. Porterfield was awarded the Bronze Star for his superb leadership during a seven-month deployment as the sergeant major of 1st Recon Bn., 1st Marine Division (Forward), in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from May to December 2010. During Operation New Dawn, he inserted deep behind enemy lines as part of a battalion-level heliborne assault into Trek Nawa to disrupt and interdict Taliban forces attacking Marjah. He exposed himself to enemy fire on multiple occasions to support and encourage the men of his battalion. Porterfield is from San Diego.

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Angels honor 1st CEB Marine

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Alfred Lopez

A crowd of almost 45,000 Anaheim Angels fans erupted into a deafening collection of cheers and applause, but they weren't cheering for a game-changing homerun by designated hitter Bobby Abreu, or a spectacular diving catch from right fielder Torii Hunter.

They cheered for Sgt. Micah Crooks, a combat engineer with Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, as he stepped onto the mound.

Crooks gripped the ball, took aim at his target and fired.

The Angels selected Crooks to throw the ceremonial first pitch during a game against the Atlanta Braves at the Angels Stadium of Anaheim, May 21.

After being injured by an improvised explosive device while deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Crooks was medically evacuated home from Afghanistan in January.

"At first I thought this was too big for me," said Crooks. "But at the same time, I had to go out there to represent."

Crooks' wife, Raelena, said she contacted the Angels after learning about her husband's injury.

"Our family has always been season ticket holders with the Angels and we've seen some service members get selected to throw the first pitch," said Raelena, from Orange, Calif. "While Micah was in Germany, being transferred back home, it was a thought that crossed my mind."

The Crooks received their reply earlier this month, and were informed by the club that they



Sergeant Micah Crooks, a combat engineer with Headquarters and Support Company, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, waits to throw the ceremonial first pitch during an Anaheim Angels game against the Atlanta Braves at the Angels Stadium of Anaheim, May 21. Crooks was injured by an improvised explosive device in January during his deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Crooks, 25, is from Alexandria, La.

would be honored to have a Marine throw the first pitch, said Tim Mead, the Angels vice president of communications.

"We have a history of working with the military in the 50 years of our organization," said Mead. "We feel privileged welcoming service members back. It means a great deal to us to remind people that there's a special segment of our society doing special and important things."

After the pitch, Crooks headed with his family back to their designated box suite. Players, fans and members of the Angels organizations continued to express their gratitude for his service.

"It's an honor," said Crooks, 25, from Alexandria, La. "I was proud to go out there and be recognized by the Angels and represent the Marine Corps."



Sergeant Micah Crooks, a combat engineer with Headquarters and Support Company, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, throws a heater during the ceremonial first pitch of the Anaheim Angels game against the Atlanta Braves at the Angels Stadium of Anaheim, May 21. Crooks was injured by an improvised explosive device in January during his deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Crooks, 25, is from Alexandria, La.

"China Marines" welcome new CO

Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Alfred Lopez

Lieutenant Col. Kevin Norton relieved Lt. Col. Joseph R. Clearfield as the commanding officer of 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, during a change-of-command ceremony at the Camp Horno landing zone, May 19.

Clearfield assumed command of 1/4 in 2009 and is moving onto the Industrial College of the Armed Forces at Fort McNair, Washington, D.C.

"Lt. Col. Clearfield is a great man, and he turned over a great battalion," Norton said. "I just hope to live up to what he did and carry the battalion the same way."

"I'm having a hard time letting go," said Clearfield, from Baltimore. "But I could not be handing over the battalion to a better man, and a more professional officer."

Norton's service began when he enlisted and became an artilleryman with 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment in 1990. He was then commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps through the enlisted commissioning program in 1993.

Norton held various assignments in his career, which include rifle platoon commander, heavy machine gun platoon commander and company executive officer. He has held tenure with 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Regiment and as the commanding officer of a recruiting station in New Jersey, before assuming command of 1/4.

Norton also served in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Operation Joint Endeavor and Operation Iraqi Freedom I and II.

"I started in Marine Combat Training near these hills 21 years ago and it's overwhelming," said Norton, from Wilkes-Barre, Penn. "We're getting ready to head over to the Pacific in December, and we're ready to see some action over there!"



Lieutenant Col. Joseph R. Clearfield, former commanding officer of 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, and Lt. Col. Kevin Norton, the new commanding officer of 1/4, salute the troops during a pass in review at a change-of-command ceremony at the Camp Horno landing zone, May 19. Norton held various assignments in his career, which include rifle platoon commander, heavy machine gun platoon commander and company executive officer. He has held tenure with 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Regiment and as the commanding officer of a recruiting station in New Jersey, before assuming command of 1/4. Clearfield is moving onto the Industrial College of the Armed Forces at Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C.

2/1 remembers fallen warrior

*Story and photo by
Lance Cpl. Glen Santy*

Marines and sailors of 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment held a memorial service for Cpl. Chad Wade, a squad leader for 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment at the Camp Horno landing zone, May 25.

"I can't pretend to know what it's like to lose a son or a spouse," said Lt. Col. Matthew Reid, the commanding officer of 2/1. "The tragedy you're feeling today is my worst nightmare."

The Marines and sailors of 2/1 recently returned from a seven-month deployment to Garmsir District, Afghanistan. Wade was killed in action Dec. 1, 2010, while conducting combat operations.

"The Marines and sailors lived a hard life in Garmsir," Reid said "They went out for 24, 48 or 72-hour (patrols) at a time, and they were always taking the fight to the Taliban.

The Marines of 2/1 conducted a wide variety of missions while deployed. The missions ranged from dismounted and ambush patrols to security and route clearance.

Wade was described by his fellow service members as someone who never left a man behind. He would stay late with Marines from his squad to help them improve themselves or help with personal problems, his fellow Marines said.

"Today the Marine Corps has lost one of its best," said Sgt. Albert Tippet, a squad leader with Echo Company, 2/1. "Cpl. Chad Wade, you will never be forgotten.

To end the memorial, the names of the squad leaders were called out loud. The last name to be called was Wade, which was called three times to bring closure to the Marines and sailors of his unit.

Once the unit was dismissed, they stood in line to pay their respects to the battlefield memorial consisting of boots, rifle, helmet and identification tags. The service mem-



Major Gen. Michael Regner, commanding general of 1st Marine Division, and his wife, Mary, pay their respects to Cpl. Chad Wade, a squad leader with 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, during his memorial ceremony at the landing zone in Camp Horno, May 25. The unit recently returned from a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan where they conducted counterinsurgency operations in Garmsir district.

bers proceeded to greet and comfort Katie Wade, wife of Cpl. Chad Wade.

"Lives of the squad were saved because of Wade's sacrifice," Reid said. "He will be a part of our lives, and live in our hearts forever."

1st Mar Div Spouse Program: "Strengthening the leadership within us"

Courtesy story

More than 50 senior leaders and spouses from 1st Marine Division attended a special event board Camp Pendleton, May 25-26. The group came together for the inaugural 1st Marine Division Commanders' Conference, hosted by Maj. Gen. Mike Regner and his wife, Mary. Participants in this group were the division, regimental and battalion commanding officers, the sergeants major of these units, and their spouses board Camp Pendleton and twenty-nine Palms. The Marines gathered to discuss various leadership topics and operational issues.

Mary Regner stated that the goal of adding a spouses' program to this conference was to focus on resiliency training. The outcomes met and exceeded her expectations.

"The spouses bonded over the two days through numerous activities. They discussed ways to strengthen Marines' and sailors' families, one community at a time, from the squad and company levels to the battalion and regimental levels. Many agreed that sharing their experiences and wisdom with each other and the spouses of young officers, noncommissioned officers and staff NCOs in their commands though social activities in their homes, family readiness and MCCS-sponsored activities or at local community events builds stronger, more resilient spouses, families and

more cohesive units," Mary Regner said.

This training included a series of events that started with first strengthening oneself. Facilitated by Kathryn Butler, Marine Corps Family Team Building Program trainer, the group assessed their "four lenses" personality preferences and learned how to strengthen their closest relationships using the "Five Love Languages." The discussion of 'spouse-to-spouse' and family relationships was then extended to include ways that the five Love Languages could be used to provide better support to units' families. These courses are offered to all aboard Camp Pendleton.

In addition to the courses presented that afternoon, the group was treated to complimentary massages offered from a local multi-specialty sport & physical medicine clinic.

Thank-you gifts were presented to each participant, donated by the Words of Comfort, Hope and Promise Organization of San Clemente, Calif. Their mission is to demonstrate to our troops and their families that they are loved and supported, though the generosity of local civic organizations, church groups and private citizens.

"Most senior spouses focus their attention, behind the scenes, making sure that the rest of their unit's families are being taken care of. What they experienced in this instance was a taste of what they have been giving to others," Mary Regner said.

The second day's agenda included a tour of the mock Afghan village at the Infantry Immersion Trainer simulation facilities, where the spouses got to walk through a mock dusty village and see shops and homes, and through technical means even smell the smells and hear the sounds of everyday Afghan life. The realism was enhanced by mortar-attack simulations and Afghan actors who walked among them. These men and women visited with the spouses as they enjoyed a typical meal of meat, rice, salad and yogurt. Tea and baklava were offered as a special treat following the meal.

The spouses dusted themselves off as they returned to the classroom. Dr. Melinda Morgan, director of Families Overcoming Under Stress, led them in discussing the future goals and their roles of their group. Calling themselves "Partners in Command," they are spouses of the senior leaders of the Division: generals, colonels, lieutenant colonels and sergeants major.

"The concept of 'partners' has no boundaries. Their role as senior spouses enhances the efforts of the family readiness programs. Strengthened by the discussions and events of the conference, these spouses are looking forward to sharing the lessons they learned as they lead, mentor and support others within their own command's families," Mary Regner said.



Operation Zapoonki Guzaroon: 1/5 clears, pushes fighters north

Story and photo by
Cpl. Benjamin Crilly

SANGIN DISTRICT, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - The reinforced company-level clearing operation led by Company B cleared more than 250 compounds north of the battalion's area of operations to push insurgents out of the area and prevent them from exploiting the area that has not seen a Marine-led operation of this magnitude.

Second and 3rd Platoons, Company B, and the ANA cleared between Route 611 and Helmand River North. Intelligence shows that they were successful in disrupting enemy operations.

"The insurgents exploit the boundary between Bravo Company, 1/5 and Recon. They move south across the boundary to engage our partnered patrols then egress back north. They use [the space between units] as a safe haven," said 1st Lt. Travis R. Topolski, the platoon commander for 3rd Plt. "The insurgents use the boundary itself as an IED belt in an attempt to prevent us from maneuvering on them during a direct-fire engagement. The overall purpose of the clearing operation was to create a more stable environment and to deny the enemy the ability to attack our patrols on their terms and egress to a safer location."

As the main effort for the operation, the two rifle platoons on the ground clearing were supported by Combined Anti-Armor Teams, Scout Sniper Platoon, Advisor Training Teams and direct support assets from within the company. Every element contributed to the operation's success whether they were on the ground clearing with the platoons, maintaining a security cordon to prevent enemies from fleeing the area or providing immediate intelligence to the Marines searching.

"Every Marine had a specific task that facilitated the desired end state. We could not have accomplished the mis-

sion without everyone working toward the same goal," said Topolski, from Destin, Fla.

The four Marine rifle squads broke down into reinforced teams and moved into the area to methodically clear the confined objectives.

"Breaking down into so many elements was a good way to saturate the area and deny enemy freedom of movement," said Cpl. Matthew T. Woodall, a squad leader for 3rd Plt. "The mere presence we have in an area prevents the enemy's ability to set up and move on us."

With so many friendly units in the area, it was imperative that the Marines knew their sectors of fire and were aware of where the other elements were moving, said Woodall, a 2003 graduate of Heath High School from Paducah, Ky. Small unit leaders worked non-stop coordinating the company's movements and de-conflicting sectors of fire on the ground.

"It's like running a one-man combat operations center," said Topolski, who spent the majority of the three days

passing information back and forth between the company and his squad leaders. "It's a constant effort to maintain position reports for all your units."

The improvised explosive device threat is the most significant danger the Marines faced during the operations, said Topolski, a 2007 graduate of the University of West Florida. Even though some elements did receive and return small-arms fire, the enemy could not sustain any effective resistance to the Marines and ANA soldiers clearing the area.

Marines like Lance Cpl. Adam B. Kramvik, an assaultman for 3rd Plt., were on the ground sweeping for IEDs because it was the only way the enemy was able to attack coalition forces. Despite this the Marines and ANA soldiers pushed on and continued to disrupt the enemy.

"At one point the insurgents called for arms to support their failing endeavor and their requests were unanswered," said Kramvik, from Moorhead, Minn. "We started to see people take a stand against the enemy."



Marines from 3rd Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, and soldiers from 1st Tolay, 2nd Kandak, Afghan National Army, patrol through a wheat field during Operation Zapoonki Guzaroon in the Upper Sangin Valley, Afghanistan, May 23. The two rifle platoons on the ground clearing were supported by Combined Anti-Armor Teams, Scout Sniper Platoon, Advisor Training Teams and direct support assets from within the company. Every element contributed to the operations success whether they were on the ground clearing with the platoons, maintaining a security cordon to prevent enemies from fleeing the area or providing immediate intelligence to the Marines and ANA soldiers searching.

The response from the people showed coalition forces had succeeded in the operation. Their accomplishments can also be seen in the multiple caches, emplaced IEDs, and IED components they discovered and removed from Sangin.

By the third day, they were in an area where a coalition presence isn't common and had intruded homeown-ers already waiting outside of their compounds ready for the ANA and Marines to search.

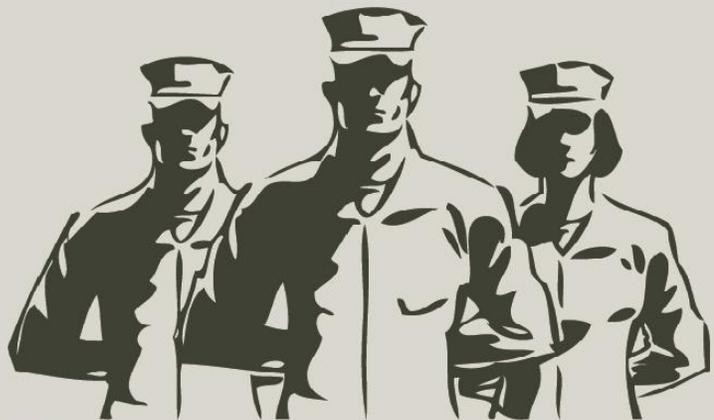
Keeping in mind that first impression are everything, the Marines and ANA soldiers were professional and respectful while searching and connecting with the people to show them they are there to create a safe and stable environment for the people.

The first two days, the Marines only saw locals fleeing in the morning and returning to their homes in the evening in response to insurgent threats. This meant the Marines had to be aware of the innocent local citizens whereabouts and fluidly transition between an enemy-focused and citizen-focused environment. The last day of the operation, the locals did not leave the area due to the expulsion of the enemy fighters.

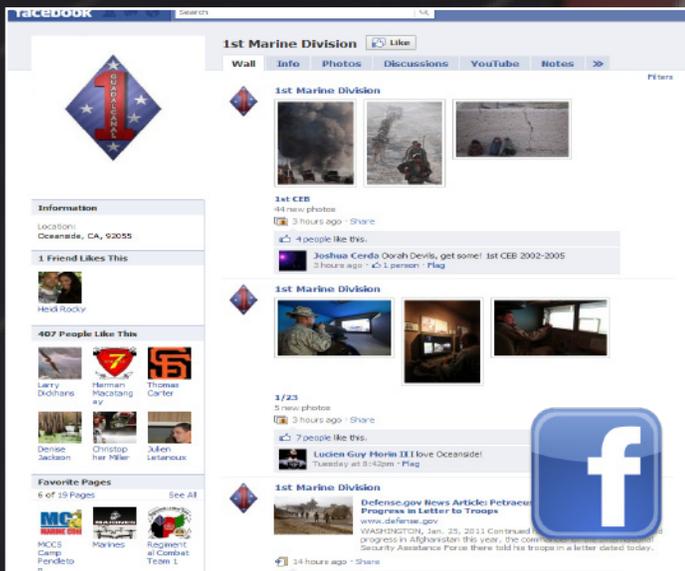
The final day was pure counter-insurgency. The squad I was with finished their portion of the objective first and had about an hour and half to wait before the second squad could finish," said Topolski. "During that time we had about 25 local nationals just hanging out with Marines talking and having fun. It was nice, it was a nice finish to a rather difficult night we had," said Topolski. "The success comes down to discipline and brilliance in the basics." Topolski. "The success comes down to

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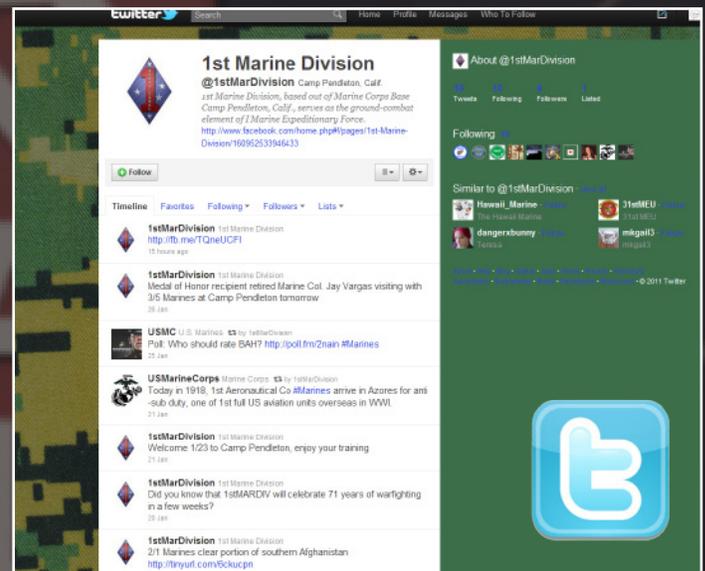
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