



----- 2011 YEAR IN REVIEW -----

SECURITY - Protecting the Afghan People

Alongside our Afghan partners, International Security Assistance Forces provide the safety necessary to afford local people self determination and freedom of movement. Liberated from the threat of Taliban influence, economic development, effective governance and improved living standards have created opportunities for the people to prosper. The following articles take a look at the work coalition partners have accomplished during the past year.

Victory in Nawa: the final chapter

By Cpl. Jeff Drew

Editor's note: This is the final installment in a four-part series chronicling a trek across Nawa district called the Nawa Victory Walk, a four-day, 30-mile patrol by U.S. Marines and Afghan National Army soldiers.

NAWA DISTRICT, Afghanistan – Sailors and Marines with 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, slipped from the relative warmth of their sleeping bags, braving the morning chill, and began to prepare for the day. The final day of the Nawa Victory Walk was upon them, and the Marines were excited to finish the four-day, 30-mile patrol. The trek brought together Mercer Island, Wash., native Lt. Col. Tyler Zagurski, the battalion commander, and Afghan Lt. Col. Gul Ahmad, the kandak commander of 1st Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, in a patrol across the district to promote confidence in Afghan security forces and talk to residents. Los Angeles native Cpl. Matthew Noel rose from the ground and gave his bomb-sniffing dog, Sgt. Ringo, a pat on the head. Ringo had slept comfortably on the cot while his owner chose the cold ground, a testament to the dedication Noel has for his dog's health and performance. Noel dressed quickly, shook the cold from his bones, joined the other Marines, and stepped out the front gate of Patrol Base Kharaman. Ringo was taking the morning off and rode in a vehicle at Noel's recommendation. In the past three days, Ringo had helped lead the patrol, searching for improvised explosive devices for more than 25 miles. **(STORY)**



UK and Afghan troops conduct dawn raid in Helmand

Defence News



British troops and Afghan commandos have conducted a daring dawn raid under fire to target a suspected improvised explosive device (IED) factory in Helmand province. Operation EAGLE'S SHADOW saw more than 90 soldiers from the Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF) fly in three helicopters to the suspected factory in northern Nahr-e Saraj district. The area had earlier been cordoned off by Scimitar Mk2 armoured vehicles equipped with 30mm cannons, and Warthog all-terrain troop carriers armed with .50-calibre heavy machine guns and 40mm grenade machine guns. The vehicles, crewed by the Formation Reconnaissance Squadron, the BRF and the Warthog Group, helped to protect the landing sites as the helicopters swooped in. Once on the

ground, the soldiers came under harassing fire from insurgents as they moved in towards the compounds. But the insurgents withdrew after two short fire fights, and, with a protective Apache attack helicopter now overhead, the soldiers moved on to the compound where local Afghans said insurgents had been manufacturing IEDs. **(STORY)**

On post or patrol, Guard Force Platoon maintains security in Garmsir

By Cpl. Reece Lodder

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Afghanistan — Against the backdrop of a piercing mid-day sun, a squad of U.S. Marines quietly patrols along a Garmsir road. A slew of guests walk evenly within their ranks, following their escorts through the bazaar. For the first of three times this week, the Marines of Guard Force Platoon, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, provide security for their guests to meet with local leaders at the district center here. This isn't their first task of the day. A few hours before, they posted security from guard towers around nearby Forward Operating Base Delhi, providing overwatch in the biting cold, shivering through five-hour, early morning shifts. It also isn't their last duty of the day. Each is part of Guard Force's endless cycle of shifts on post, patrol and rest. Even during their rest time, each of the platoon's three squads remains ready to function as a quick reaction team. "Our operational tempo is rigorous and our schedule is always changing," said Sgt. Curtis Wolf, a 27-year-old Guard Force squad leader, and native of Bellevue, Mich. "The grind for our Marines is seven months of irregular sleep hours and not much off-time." Guard Force isn't a traditional infantry platoon. It's a melting pot of Marines from various occupational specialties.. **(STORY)**



42 Commando helps clear key route in Nad'Ali District

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Snodgrass



NAD'ALI DISTRICT, Afghanistan -- Marines with J Company, 42 Commando launched Operation Zamrod Pak 10 to clear a key route between Loy Mandeh Kalay in Northern Nad'Ali District to the Helmand provincial capital at Lashkar Gah, July 2-8. The operation cleared improvised explosive devices and reduced insurgent activity along the route, which is a vital access for coalition forces and locals into the capital. "We were able to clear [the route] of 12 IEDs between the two cities," said Maj. Aaron Fisher, a Paisley, Scotland, native, and J Company's officer commanding. "This increases our troops' and the Afghan nationals' mobility along this

route." "We provided protection for the combat engineers to eliminate the IEDs, so they could clear the route," he said. The commandos patrolled on foot each day of the operation, moving from village to village, securing each as they passed. The Marines' were responsible for providing security for the Royal Engineer clearance and destroyer teams who actually disposed of IEDs encountered en route.

(STORY) (VIDEO by Lance Cpl Daniel Wulz)

The road less travelled; Marines push COIN along Route 611

By Cpl. James Clark

SANGIN DISTRICT, Afghanistan -- The dirt along Route 611 has been pulverized to dust, turned to a trail of fine powder dotted with boot prints belonging to the Marines of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. The footprints cover the landscape, blown away by wind, convoys of armored transports and civilian caravans, only to be replaced the following morning by another series of exhausting patrols. Each day the Marines and sailors of 1st Platoon depart Patrol Base Florida and make their rounds through their area of operations in the Sangin District. When they first arrived, their presence was



greeted with malevolent intent, in the form of small arms and indirect fire. Even the patrol base itself became a target. In the months following their arrival, the insurgency has been pushed to the fringes – replaced by a local populace struggling to find a voice after a long silence due to past fear and intimidation. Traveling roads and footpaths that have become as familiar as the streets where they grew up, the Marines of Company A, have come to recognize the faces of the men and children they pass during each patrol. They know histories and stories, having literally exchanged words while breaking bread. **(STORY)**

Operation Eagle Hunt takes flight

By Cpl. Marco Mancha



HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- United States Marines and Afghan National Security Forces filled the air with dust recently as dozens of their vehicles rolled into the desert. Afghan camouflage-painted Humvees and small, green trucks with gun turrets led the way into the lower region of the province in search of insurgents. The Afghan-led operation was a small shaping operation to clear the Taghaz area of southern Helmand in preparation for future counterinsurgency operations to expand Afghan-led security. United States Marines are providing support to the Afghans throughout these operations in order to assist Afghan efforts to expand

security, stability and development in the province. More than 75 U.S. troops, including a few improvised explosive device detection dogs, accompanied roughly 100 Afghan Border Police and Afghan Uniformed Police members during the operation. A majority of those U.S. personnel were the Marines and sailors of Border Advisor Team 1. The BAT-1 mission was simple: advise their Afghan brothers in arms when necessary, assist with logistics, and accompany their Afghan counterparts on mounted and dismounted partnered patrols. **(STORY)**

Operation Western Gambit clears insurgents in Now Zad

By Cpl. Clayton Vonderahe

NOW ZAD DISTRICT, Afghanistan - Marines and sailors wait in the cold, dark, desolate Afghan desert. The air is heavy with moisture, teasing the troops with a potential downpour. If the rain came, then the aircraft wouldn't. The rain never came. An MV-22 Osprey swooped down into position next to the Marines and in an instant they were loaded inside. Each Marine was carrying enough water, food and gear to last them for several days away from any kind of support. On Nov. 26, Operation Western Gambit began. Marines from 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, loaded into helicopters and trucks from their bases in Now Zad and Musa Qal'eh Districts to enter into villages where



coalition forces had never been to disrupt the insurgent forces controlling the area. "There is a lot of enemy activity and a lot of things to expect. We expect direct and indirect fire; the threat is really real," said 1st Lt. Okechukwu Ihenacho, the platoon commander of 2nd Platoon, Weapons Company, 2/4, before the operation began. "The biggest threat, obviously, is the (improvised explosive device) threat. The Taliban knows that we are in Now Zad and have anticipated our movement. They have likely established IED belts in our direction of travel, in plans to mitigate our movements into those towns. They are not necessarily fighters, but do facilitate IED making and IED emplacement." **(STORY)**

Operation Eastern Storm returns commerce, residents to Kajaki Sofla Bazaar

By Cpl. James Clark



KAJAKI SOFLA DISTRICT, Afghanistan – Columns of mopeds, caravans of pack animals, and an endless stream of trucks, tractors and trailers heralds the return of local residents to the Kajaki Sofla District. The area was nearly a ghost town when the Marines of 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, and Afghan soldiers inserted during Operation Tofan Sharq (Eastern Storm). In recent days, however, there has been a slow, but



steady return to normalcy as the insurgent threat in the area has been systematically eliminated. The goal of this major offensive operation is to force the Taliban-led insurgency in the Upper Sangin Valley region out of Kajaki. Coalition and Afghan National Security Forces pushed north from Sangin along Route 611, clearing insurgents out of the area along the way and securing the road leading to the once-terrorized village. The offensive has allowed local residents to return to their homes and brought commerce back to the local bazaar. The bazaar, a major hub for the local community, is a clear indicator of the operation's success thus far. The number of people shopping and selling their wares, the

reception Marines and ANSF members receive when they pass through, and the number of local residents who hang around when coalition forces are present, serve as indicators of the improved conditions. **(STORY)**

Patrolling, Police, Poppies: Marines, Afghan police connect with locals while on patrol

By Lance Cpl. Daniel Wulz

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – Every day Marines from Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, stationed at Combat Outpost Rankel in Helmand province, Afghanistan, patrol the village of Safar and the area that surrounds it. Marines and Afghan Uniformed Police conducted land assessments and security patrols after surveying AUP checkpoints, April 16. The goal of patrolling with the local AUP is to supplement the relationship between Afghan police and the community, as well as gain information about insurgent activity. “The patrol turned out very well,” said Staff Sgt. Brendan G. Flynn, the staff non-commissioned officer in charge of



Police Mentor Team Safar, Echo Company, 2/1. “We learned from the people that the Taliban is pushing out letters trying to get money and support. The most successful patrols I have are the ones where we gain information. Marines don’t have to kill someone or blow something up to have a good patrol.” The Marines’ focus in their many patrols is establishing the presence of the AUP by helping Afghan forces build outposts of their own. This helps the police to build respect and trust within the local community, and eliminate threats from improvised explosive devices. Part of eliminating threats in the area of operation includes removing the means by which insurgents make money. **(STORY)**

Marine aviation key to major offensive in Afghanistan

By Cpl. Brian Adam Jones



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Under the veil of darkness, a team of Marine Corps CH-53 heavy-lift helicopters sped over the Helmand River valley in early October. Carrying nearly 100 Afghan commandos and their Marine advisers, the helicopters delivered them into the valley, just south of the Kajaki Dam. The Afghan and American troops were the first coalition forces in a massive offensive, Operation Eastern Storm, aimed at rooting out one of the last insurgent strongholds in the region. As the southwestern regional command of NATO's International Security Assistance Force undertakes Operation Eastern Storm, 2nd Marine Aircraft

Wing (Forward) has provided invaluable support in the coalition's efforts to secure Afghanistan's Route 611 and ensure peace and economic development in the region. “Our big support for Eastern Storm was getting [1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment and 2nd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment] into position,” said Lt. Col. Robert B. Finneran, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward)'s future operations officer and a native of Cape Carteret, N.C. “The threat level going into this was unknown.” **(STORY)**

Coalition forces deny insurgency movement, money in Afghanistan

By Cpl. Brian Adam Jones

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Military experts have long-deemed limiting the enemy's movement as vital to an effective campaign. In the deserts of southwestern Afghanistan, this can prove challenging. There are few roads. Tire tracks cut across the sand like a child's crayon scrawling on a wall. Traditional vehicle checkpoints can become ineffective, as the enemy can simply avoid them. "Once you stop one vehicle at a checkpoint on the ground, you can be pretty confident the traffic will stop from there," said Sgt. Joseph B. Holcombe, an infantryman with 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, from Haughton, La. To counteract this, the coalition has taken to the sky. The program, conceived in early 2011, employs aircraft from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) and utilizes a complex network of coalition resources to identify potential enemy vehicles. Marine Corps AH-1W Super Cobra and CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters are used to stop vehicles so that Marine Corps and Afghan forces can search them. **(STORY)**



DEVELOPMENT - Improving Afghan confidence

Development projects include new and refurbished schools and educational opportunities, cleared roads, expanded medical facilities, as well as infrastructure and irrigation system repairs. The professionalism of the Afghan National Security Forces also made great strides in 2011.

Sowing seeds of support; Marines facilitate crop change through agriculture transition program

By Cpl. James Clark



FORWARD OPERATING BASE MARJAH, Helmand Province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan — A little more than a week since it first began, the Marjah Accelerated Agricultural Transition program has begun to gain momentum in Marjah, Afghanistan, April 14. The program is one of several others, including programs provided by non-governmental organizations, which the Afghan government and coalition forces are conducting in order to foster agricultural growth. The programs are designed to assist farmers and landowners in their transition to alternate and licit crops. In many, but not all cases, this

involves the switch from opium, the illicit product of poppy cultivation, to other crops that will allow participants to make a living, legally. Designed as a short term solution meant to give the city's citizens a leg to stand on, MAAT is aimed specifically at residents of Marjah and only for the current harvest season, in order to stabilize the city's market and provide residents with a viable and legal source of income. **(STORY)**

Open for business: 9th ESB builds route to bring further growth to Helmand

By Cpl. Katherine M. Solano

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan - The Marines with 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), are currently conducting a mission that is, in some of the engineer's own words, a vital operation. They are constructing a route in an area that otherwise has nothing like it. The development of this main supply route is vital because it will ensure that the local nationals have a safe way to transport their goods throughout Helmand province, said Cpl. Mark E. Mattiaccio, a heavy equipment operator with 9th ESB. "There really are no other [established] roads out here that can be proclaimed as safe for the locals to drive on," Mattiaccio continued. The ongoing project in the Shir Ghazay area of northern Helmand province is important to coalition forces as well as locals for a number of reasons. Mattiaccio, a Rochester, N.Y., native, pointed out not only will the road be beneficial in the immediate



future, but it also has the potential to help people for years to come. **(STORY)**

Marjah bazaar centerpiece for civic projects, work programs

By Cpl. James Clark



MARJAH, Afghanistan – Just over two months ago, trash littered the streets and shops made of wood and aluminum stood uneasily, ready to collapse at any moment, at the Koru Chareh bazaar in Marjah, Afghanistan. Today crowds pass through the market place or wait near checkpoints manned by Marines with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, to register for civic work programs, May 5. Much of the fear and apprehension that was present during those first several weeks in the city have faded, and now families purchase goods in the bazaar and walk freely past

Marine and Afghan forces. In the wake of the fighting to take the Taliban held city, and after a poor poppy season, many locals have turned to coalition forces to find employment through cash-for-work programs. "There's a lot of traffic around here," said Gunnery Sgt. Brandon Dickinson, Weapons Platoon sergeant, with Bravo Company, 1/6. "A lot of people have come back here because we have a very large security bubble around the bazaar. I'm frequently amazed by how many shops pop up every time we go out. Considering the amount of time that has elapsed since we came here, the progress has definitely been in our favor." **(STORY)**

FET 8 Organizes Children's Shura at FOB Jackson

By Cpl. Katherine Keleher

FORWARD OPERATING BASE JACKSON, Afghanistan – With 53 little, smiling faces in attendance, members of Female Engagement Team 8 joined Afghan National Security Force troops recently to host a children's shura aboard the base in Sangin district, Helmand province. During the shura, which is a formal Afghan meeting, the children were taught various lessons and given the opportunity to vocalize any concerns they had of their communities. In attendance to lead the shura were five Afghan troops, a local teacher, the ministry of justice and FET-8. The Afghans talked with the children about the importance of not planting poppy or placing improvised explosive devices in the roads. They explained the role of ANSF troops in Sangin to protect them and prevent illegal activities. They also discussed why it is important to become good members of their society and gave them classes on the alphabet and counting numbers. To end the classroom portion of the shura, the ANSF troops put on a puppet show for the children. The troops wore decorated socks and on their hands and used stuffed animals while they squatted behind a make-shift stage, using the show to demonstrate to the children all the talking points they had gone over throughout the morning. The show ended on a positive note, telling the children to grow up to become doctors and teachers, not insurgents. **(STORY) (VIDEO by Cpl. Meredith Brown)**



Winning hearts and minds: Shock Trauma Platoon brings relief, relationships to Afghan locals

By Cpl. Katherine M. Solano



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM III, Afghanistan - There is a battle of sorts being won in southern Helmand province. The Marines and sailors at Forward Operating Base Delaram II, and specifically the Shock Trauma Platoon there, take pride in 'winning' the hearts and minds of locals. The STP is comprised of enlisted and commissioned sailors ranging from corpsmen to private practice family doctors, from nurses to surgeons. As part of Bravo Surgical Company, Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), it is the primary duty of the medical personnel

based here to support the Marines with Regimental Combat Team 8. However, since the area surrounding the FOB is relatively peaceful, according to those working at the STP, they are afforded a unique opportunity, a fact for which they are very thankful. While the sister STP at FOB Edinburgh treats mainly battle-injured service members, the patients of Delaram's STP are predominately Afghan National Army soldiers, Afghan Uniformed Policemen and locals, including multiple children. Positive, growing relationships have resulted with locals due to the level and caliber of care the STP continuously provides. They treat injuries ranging from cuts and scrapes, to gunshot wounds and injuries from improvised explosive device explosions. **(STORY)**

Solar energy project provides new opportunities for shop owners in southern Afghanistan

By Cpl. Meredith Brown

NAWA DISTRICT, Afghanistan – A single solar panel is mounted above a shop, a wire runs from the panel into the shop and attaches to a car battery, providing the only source of power for the shopkeeper. The storeowner operates a small photography studio, where he takes photos in his shop and prints them out for his customers. Situations like this are common for the shopkeepers in Nawa district who do not have a central power source. Many residents throughout the northern half of Helmand receive their energy from the hydroelectric power plant located at the Kajaki dam. However, the power supply does not reach Nawa, which is located in the southern portion of Helmand province. Now, with the help of a solar energy project in the district, there is a new opportunity for the shopkeepers in the Nawa bazaar. Nearly 150 shops in the bazaar will be able to receive steady power from the project. Capt. Brandon Newell, Expeditionary Energy Liaison Officer for Regional Command Southwest and a native of St. Amant, La., says this is the first type of large-scale solar hybrid project in Helmand to date. **(STORY)**



Musa Qal'eh gets connected through Wadi Crossing

By Staff Sgt. Ryan Smith



MUSA QAL'EH, Afghanistan - Commerce and travel through the District of Musa Qal'eh just became easier with the completion and grand opening of the Musa Qal'eh Wadi Crossing, Dec. 9. The new crossing was officially opened to traffic by Helmand Provincial Governor Gulab Mangal, accompanied by the Regional Command Southwest Commanding General Maj. Gen. John A. Toolan Jr., and several members of 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, during the event which drew a crowd of officials and elders from areas throughout the province to witness the progress and

realize the potential of what the new bridge means to the region. "The symbolic nature of this wadi crossing cannot be understated," said Lt. Col. Bill Vivian, the commanding officer for 2/4. "Connecting Musa Qal'eh, which has been seen as an island of security to the rest of the province, I think this symbolizes that connection. This is really a crowning achievement, not only for 2/4, but for all the battalions who have fought here before us." **(VIDEO by Cpl. Clayton Vonderahe)**

Elder shuras at Marjah's government center may herald time of renewal

By Cpl. James Clark

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MARJAH, Afghanistan – After establishing a bi-monthly schedule for their meetings last month, the city's third elder shura took place at the government center in Marjah Afghanistan, June 6. Shuras, the Afghan equivalent of a town hall meeting, serve as a forum where the concerns of the city residents can be discussed, and proposals deliberated upon. Prior to beginning the meeting, Haji Zahir, the regional district governor of Marjah, presided over a ribbon-cutting



ceremony, marking the end of reconstruction efforts at the government center and symbolized a formal presence of the Afghan government in Marjah. "The ceremony officially marked the government center's refurbishment after it was repainted, had new doors and windows installed, and had interior restructuring done," said Capt. Anthony F. Zinni, commanding officer for Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. "Having all the block leaders there, see the government of Afghanistan slowly establishing itself presents the perception of the government improving on what it has and a sense of status that comes with legitimacy." **(STORY)**



Lone Star Battalion helps Afghan troops open villages' first school

By Cpl. Katherine Keleher



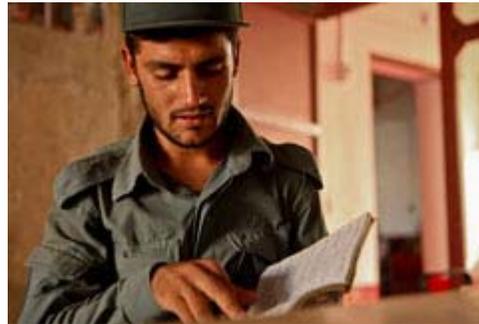
CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The town of Now Abad opened its first school, May 5, with the assistance of Afghan National Army soldiers and coalition forces. The village has high hopes for the 50 students expected to attend. "In a society that there is no school, there is no education. It will be dark like night," said ANA Lt. Col. Haje Obied Ulla, an education and religion officer with the 215th Maiwand Corps. "Education is like light, which brightens everything in the present and the future. This elementary school we established today will give the chance to the people to study. Become teachers, doctors, engineers and officers. Our people need everybody and

it would be possible via education and knowledge." The idea of a school being built was first thought of by ANA troops. After the initial planning, they proposed the idea to Marines with 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment. It was then that the U.S., British, Danish and Afghan troops began working together to make the idea a reality. "Our only wish is to pave the way for our kids and youths to study," Ulla explained. **(STORY)**

Afghan police broaden horizons through local literacy program

By Cpl. Marco Mancha

NAWA DISTRICT, Afghanistan - Among the biggest challenges the local government faces as the United States prepares to draw down thousands of troops from Afghanistan is its literacy rate. Only one in 10 recruits who sign up for Afghanistan's police and army can read and write according to a recent Reuters article. Many of the local residents find something as simple as spelling their own names a challenge. The Police Advisory Team with 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, is working with the Higher Education Institute of Karwan to teach Afghan Uniformed Police throughout Nawa how to read and write. HEIK's main objective is to support, prepare, and encourage Afghan youngsters to enroll in education to create a new, modern, and enlightened Afghanistan. HEIK's members are working closely with both the local AUP and other Afghan security forces throughout the country to help combat the literacy crisis. **(STORY)**



Afghan National Army prepares for air interdiction mission

By Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez



CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan – Since their arrival in early August, Marines and sailors with Regimental Combat Team 5 have been conducting air interdiction force missions in support of various operations throughout Helmand province. These missions have successfully disrupted insurgent freedom movement, focusing on individuals suspected of smuggling narcotics, weapons and improvised explosive devices making materials through the outlying desert regions in the RCT-5 area of



operations. Until recently, only Marines have conducted these interdiction operations. But now Afghan National Army soldiers with Military Police Tolay, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps are stepping up to the plate. In preparation for future operations, Afghan National Army soldiers conducted AIF training under the watchful eye of Marines with the RCT-5 Embedded Training Team here, Dec. 19. "The purpose of our AIF operations is to disrupt enemy activity in order to deny their freedom of movement in transporting drugs, weapons and fighters into and out of our area of operations," said Maj. Shannon Neller, the RCT-5 ETT executive officer and 38-year-old native of Brooklyn, N.Y. **(VIDEO) (STORY)**

Honey equals money in Helmand province

By Cpl. Katherine Keleher

GERESHK, Afghanistan – Beekeeping is the latest buzz in Helmand province, Afghanistan, after a three-day course during which nearly 20 Afghans learned the perks of farming bees rather than poppy. The course, hosted July 26-28 in Gereshk, took place at the province's master beekeeping teaching farm. Attendees received lectures by Afghan bee farmers from other provinces. These farmers had previously received training on bee farming from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, British Royal Army and Danish Army. "The farmers wanted to have bee hives to be able to generate income," said Don Welty, a senior agriculture advisor with the USDA, and a native of Stafford, Va. "They all know about the impact that bees and honey can make because it is mentioned in the Quran." The idea of an alternative crop like bees that would not be harvested and sold by insurgents appealed to coalition forces and the local government. The program began in April. "This is a great program to help the farmers diversify their farming programs and make additional income for their families," Welty said. "The goal is to have every farmer own five hives and generate up to \$1,000 per year. This would generate much more money than poppy. Once the farmers have alternatives then it is possible for them to move away from poppy."



(STORY)

Unclogging arteries brings back the lifeblood of Zaranj

By Lance Cpl. Daniel Wulz



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Twenty kilometers of newly excavated canal was reopened March 18, in Zaranj, Nimroz province, Afghanistan. The Central Asia Development Group, in conjunction with the United States Agency for International Development, oversaw the project along with local Afghan government officials. The newly excavated canal will provide water to more than half of the population of Zaranj. This water will be cleaner and give the people of Zaranj water for irrigation and drinking. "Canals bring lifeblood to agrarian desert communities, and they require periodic maintenance," said Col. Mike Lawrence, the Nimroz province provincial coordination lead for Regional Command Southwest's stability operations. "Lashkari Canal feeds several farms in Nimroz province and also provides drinking water to areas where silt had decreased the water flow." Several communities in Nimroz province suffered from drought because of the reduced water flow and insufficient upkeep of the canal. Lashkari Canal clean up and repair is now a high priority to the Nimroz provincial government,

Lawrence said. Gov. Abdul Karim Brahawi and his staff are pleased with the progress so far. **(STORY)**

Afghan police find huge opium stash in Helmand

Defense News

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) swooped on the address of a man suspected of illegally selling government-owned land in the bustling town of Gereshk, in the northern part of Nahr-e Saraj district. Inside, the police and their British partners from 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (1 PWRR) found several bags of wet opium. The Afghan counter-narcotics



team was called in, and on further investigation the police found a room hidden under a trapdoor - with dozens more bags of the drug hidden away underneath. The total haul weighed in at more than 175kg of wet opium - the first stage of processing poppy to make heroin. The team also found two machine guns, a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, and several AK-47 rifles, along with two pistols, possible components for improvised explosive devices, and imitation ANSF uniforms. The suspect will now face prosecution under the Afghan justice system. The British advisors on the operation were part of the Police Mentoring and Advisory Group (PMAG), which is led by 1 PWRR.



(STORY)

Improvements to Kajaki dam power potential in southern Afghanistan

By RC(SW) Team



KAJAKI, Afghanistan - Technicians with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineer District-South and Afghan engineers completed installation of switching equipment, July 11, at Kajaki Dam. The installed equipment, known as a primary switch center, marks the first major improvement in a series planned by Afghan and U.S. government agencies to increase reliability and capacity on the Southeastern Electrical Power System in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. The power plant services a number of key areas of southern Afghanistan including Sangin, Lashkar Gah, Kandahar city and Tangi. At Tangi, the line voltage is increased to 20kV to provide service to Musa Qal'ah. The switch center is made up of a combination of large, high voltage air switch disconnects, circuit breakers and other protective circuitry. The switch equipment functions in a way similar to residential circuit breaker boxes — but on a much larger scale. “Before the installation of the switch center, people in Helmand and Kandahar experienced a number of electrical outages every day, generally lasting for fairly long periods of time,” explained Chief Warrant Officer Thomas

Black, deputy commander of Task Force Breshna Barq, a special task force under AED-South charged with providing engineering and construction services to support projects for SEPS. **(STORY)**

Shoulder to Shoulder: CLB-6 Partner Team lends patience, expertise to new Afghan Nat'l Army Corps

By Sgt. Justin Shemanski

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- More than 200 Afghan soldiers stared intently at the handful of Marines standing nearby on a sun-soaked patch of land just outside of Kabul. At a glance, the odds were not necessarily in the Marines favor, but as history has proven, this was the way they preferred it. Some may view this as an intimidating scenario, but for a small group of Marines and sailors from Combat Logistics Battalion-6, Combat Logistics Regiment-2, Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan, this scene has played out on a daily basis for nearly two months. Beginning in January, 15 members of the "Red Cloud Battalion" stepped away from their daily duties in various occupational fields and took up the challenge of mentoring their Afghan brothers in arms. As the CLB-6 Partner Team, formerly Embedded Training Team, they were tasked with molding members of the newly formed 5th Kandak (Battalion), 215th Corps of the Afghan National Army into a well-trained self-sufficient logistical support force. **(STORY)**



Marines launch tactical officers' course at Helmand academy

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Jonathan Chandler



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – The inaugural running of the Tactical Leaders' Course, a training program for small unit-level Afghan officers, has begun aboard Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province. During



the nine-week course, the Joint Sustainment Academy Southwest will host 21 lieutenants and captains from various Afghan security forces and provide advanced training in skills key to small unit success. The students come from all branches of the ANSF in Helmand province, including the Afghan National Army, Police and National Security Directorate, said 1st Lt. Joshua Oresko,

a native of Crown Point, Ind., and an instructor at JSAS. "We want to make successful squad leaders, platoon commanders, company commanders, and staff officers," said Oresko "Just like every course at JSAS, the TLC is joint in order to provide all services' officers with a common knowledge and skill set."

(STORY)

Nawa celebrates opening of new justice center

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Jonathan Chandler

NAWA DISTRICT CENTER, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Marines with Civil Affairs Team 3 joined the local residents of Nawa to celebrate the grand opening of the new justice center, recently. Coordinating Director of Rule of Law and Law Enforcement United States Ambassador Hans G. Klemm and several members of the district's government gathered for the ribbon cutting ceremony. The civil affairs team with 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, played a big role in the project's success. Maj. Jason Johnson of Vineland, N.J., is currently serving as the team leader for the civil affairs team. He and his team of Marines, made sure the project was accomplished. The project was started by Marines of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, in August 2010. I think sound governance depends on people being able to bring their conflicts to a place where all the parties agree on the resolution," said Johnson, a 1997 graduate of Rowan University in Glassboro, N.J. "I think this place will be the symbol of that in the district of Nawa, which is why we worked so hard on it." **(STORY)**



(STORY)

TRANSITION - Transfer of lead security responsibility

The capabilities of the Afghan National Army and Police are growing, hence the threat from the insurgent is being reduced.

Afghan forces to take on security lead for Nad 'Ali

Defence News



Helmand province where British forces operate. The latest phase of the transition process, announced on Sunday 27 November 2011 by Afghan President Hamid Karzai, demonstrates continuing progress in the development of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Training the Afghans to lead on security across the country is now the main effort of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops. Building up the ANSF capability so that they can prevent Al-Qaeda from operating freely in Afghanistan and posing a threat to us and to our allies around the world will allow British combat forces to draw down gradually. Across Afghanistan, the announcement means that Afghan forces will soon have

lead responsibility for the security of almost half of the country's population. All of Afghanistan will have begun the process of transition by the end of 2013 and the ANSF will be leading on security operations in all provinces by the end of 2014. **(STORY)**

Combat engineers tear down patrol bases throughout Helmand province, paving way for Afghan pullout

By Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

FIREBASE SAENZ, Afghanistan – Firebase Saenz has

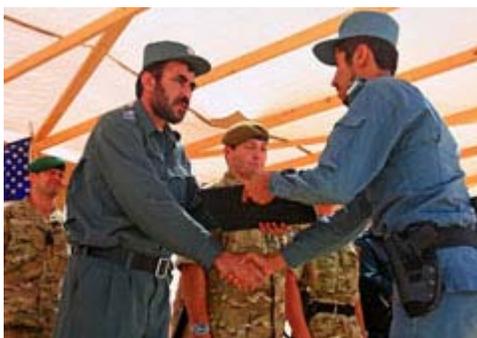


been destroyed. Its defenses have been torn down and its walls have been completely leveled. This destruction was not caused by insurgents – it was the handiwork of Marines from the 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward). With the recent reduction and reorganization of troops, Saenz is the first of several forward operating bases being demilitarized in Helmand province. The firebase, which covered a little over 11 acres of Afghan desert, was built more than a year ago and named after Sgt. Jose Saenz III who was killed in action, Aug. 9, 2010. During its existence, Saenz housed Marine artillery units armed with M777 Lightweight Howitzer cannons that provided indirect fire support for coalition ground forces operating in the northern half of Helmand province. After convoying north from Camp Leatherneck, the Marines of 9th ESB worked diligently from Dec. 13-15 to properly dismantle the base and ensure that there was little, if any, footprint from the Marines. **(STORY)**



Afghan police complete first advanced urban tactics training

By Cpl. Katherine Keleher



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – Thirty-five Afghan Uniformed Policemen graduated from the first Provincial Response Company Course at the Joint Sustainment Academy Southwest, Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Sept. 12. The seven-week course taught the AUP advanced police and quick reaction force tactics. “For almost seven weeks these policemen have participated in demanding police training,” said Maj. Andrew Martinez, the director of Joint Sustainment Academy Southwest and native of San Antonio. The course covered advanced combat tactics including patrolling, improvised explosive device detection, close quarter battle techniques and hours of marksmanship training. These skills are considered crucial as Afghan security forces continue to assume more independence in security operations, and as a result JSAS has been providing more advanced training courses to Afghan security forces Martinez explained. **(STORY)**

Second phase of transition plans reviewed during conference

By Cpl. Timothy Solano

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – “Tranche Two,” the second phase of transition in southwest Afghanistan was the highlight of a three-day conference aboard Camp Leatherneck in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Nov. 10-13. The upcoming intequal, the Dari word for transition, or tranche, a similar German term that assumes the same meaning incorporates turning over authority to coalition leaders and provincial governmental organizers throughout both Nimroz and Helmand provinces, giving those organizations the lead with developing Nimroz province. Afghan leaders traveled from as far away as Zaranj, a small metropolis in Nimroz province that skirts Iran, and Kabul, in the northern region of the country. Nimroz province is located in the extreme southwest corner of Afghanistan, and borders both Iran and Pakistan, making the region’s stability crucial to the success of NATO International Security Assistance Forces or ISAF. **(STORY)**



Toolan, Craparotta, Mangal participate in security shura

By Cpl. Daniel Wulz



LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan -- Marine Maj. Gen. John A. Toolan, commanding general, Regional Command Southwest, Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, commanding general, 2nd Marine Division (Forward) and Helmand provincial governor Gulab Mangal participate in a shura



about transitioning security responsibilities to Afghan National Security Forces as Marines withdraw from the Helmand province, in Lashkar Gah. [\(VIDEO\)](#) [\(VIDEO INTERVIEW\)](#)

Corpsmen teach Afghan soldiers skills to save lives in combat

By Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – “Get your head down! Get your head down! What are you doing? You’re getting shot at! Get your head down!” These were the words of Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Shoener, a hospital corpsman and instructor at the Joint Sustainment Academy Southwest, as he instructed 24 Afghan students to stay low while applying tourniquets to one another. This unique instruction took place during the final exercise of the Combat Medic Assistant Course aboard Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, July 27. The new course, which took nearly four months to develop, is designed to give intermediate medical skills to Afghan National Security Forces. Within the U.S. armed forces, medical training is divided into three tiers. Tier one consists of the elementary first aid skills taught to all service members during basic training. Tier two consists of advanced first aid and life saving procedures, while tier three is training specific to corpsmen and medics. [\(STORY\)](#)



Lashkar Gah hosts Helmand Agricultural Forum

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Snodgrass



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- The Afghan agricultural business community held a forum at the provincial government compound in Lashkar Gah, Helmand province, June 23. The forum, the first of its kind to be run by Afghan farmers in Helmand province, gave farmers and investors a chance to meet, form business relationships and discuss opportunities and grievances. “We’re holding this forum so that the agricultural co-ops, the Provincial Reconstruction Team, U.S. Marines, RC Southwest, and anyone involved with development work in Helmand can get together to discuss how to create an agricultural business

infrastructure,” said Lindsay Vandenburg, field manager for Peace Dividend Trust in Helmand province. Peace Dividend Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to making peace and humanitarian operations more effective, efficient and equitable. The forum lasted for several hours. Different representatives made their opinions heard, followed by a strategy session with senior representatives from the attending parties. [\(STORY\)](#) [\(VIDEO by Lance Cpl. Daniel Wulz\)](#)

ANA logistics capability to expand in Helmand Province

By 2nd Lt. Joshua Smith

KABUL, Afghanistan - The Afghan National Army will soon have more robust logistical capabilities in Southwestern Afghanistan. The Corps Logistics Battalion for the 215th Corps of the ANA is currently training in Kabul with the guidance and mentorship from Marines and sailors of the 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward). “This is a critical step in enabling the ANA to conduct their own logistics operations,” said Capt. Patrick Ross, the Embedded Training Team officer in charge. “The Marines will serve as direct mentors to their Afghan counterparts, within their occupational specialty.” Ross emphasized to his team the by-with-through method – absolutely everything must be done by the Afghans, with their understanding of the proper procedures and through their established chain of



command. **(STORY)**

GOVERNANCE - Enabling enduring stability

Improved security is facilitating the spread of government control, services and influence from the district centers to more rural areas.

The Growth of Governance in Now Zad, Afghanistan

By Lt. Col. Lewis Rhodes



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM, Afghanistan - On Dec. 7, in the Now Zad district of northern Helmand province, there was an unnoticed but significant step toward transition in Afghanistan. On that day, several local government officials attended a shura, a meeting between Afghans, to discuss security on the key road into the Now Zad district. This was the first gathering of Afghan government officials addressing a regional problem ever held in northern Helmand province. This event is particularly notable because it was conceived by the Now Zad District Governor Sayed Murad Saadat, known as DG Murad. Unlike many past situations where a Marine or a civilian advisor would either make the plan or plant the idea, this shura was Afghan initiated, Afghan planned, and Afghan conducted with minimal support from U.S. military forces. Our only assistance was to provide aircraft to transport attendees to the shura. Unlike most military training tasks, there is no standardized metric to gauge a district governor's growing leadership and governance abilities; we need to be patient and recognize shuras such as this as victories. The concept of this shura began when DG Murad approached

the Now Zad Marine civil affairs team leader and expressed the desire to host a road security shura. He stated that Now Zad could not continue to grow without improved road security, and since the majority of the road is outside of Now Zad he would need to meet with several other entities to discuss security.

(STORY)

Getting the word out in the Upper Sangin Valley

By Cpl. James Clark

SANGIN DISTRICT, Afghanistan - Nestled along Route 611, one of the few improved roads in Northern Helmand province, sits Patrol Base Florida, a home away from home for the Marines of 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. The Marines' arrival at the beginning of winter, prior to the outset of Operation Eastern Storm, a coalition and Afghan National Security Forces effort to drive the insurgency from key territory in the Kajaki District, was greeted with suspicion at first. In the months that followed, crowds have formed outside the patrol base each day and double in size during the weekly shuras, or meetings, with approximately 50 local citizens in attendance, recently. "We're starting to build pretty strong relationships with a couple key mosques," explained 1st Lt. Edward Yoo, a platoon commander from Bronxville, N.Y., and a 2009 Bowdoin College graduate. "In the past, the Taliban had a lot more freedom of movement. At the first shura, security was a large topic, but after the first few weeks, as security improved and we built trust and rapport, we started turning from how we could help them, to how they can help themselves." **(STORY)**



Upper Sangin Valley citizens meet for governance shura

By Staff Sgt. Ryan Smith



PATROL BASE ALCATRAZ, Afghanistan -- The Marines of 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion have been looking for ways to get the people of the Upper Sangin Valley more involved in their government since the beginning of their deployment. With recent successes during Operations Sing Sing and Tandem Thrust, the stage was set for the Marines to try a different approach and bring local district counsel and provincial leaders



to Patrol Base Alcatraz for a meeting with the local elders from the surrounding villages. Local elders met early on Sept. 3 for a shura, or meeting, at the base to hear from their government leadership on plans to work with the people who had previously been secluded from dealings in local government and the plans for projects to improve life in the area. “The thing is a lot of these guys won’t travel down to the district center where their primary seat of governance is,” said Capt. Jarrod Rothman, the assistant operations officer for 3rd Recon. “The only problem is the security situation we are still working on. We couldn’t bring [the officials] to Malozai during Operation Sing Sing. Conditions weren’t set yet for that to happen. “[Here] we had a supreme secure environment and a way to bring in a whole lot more people. We were really able to control the conditions. [It is] very difficult for [the insurgents] to affect us here.” **(STORY)**

GIRoA, ANA hold shura to connect with Sangin village

By Cpl. Benjamin Crilly

PATROL BASE FULOD, Sangin, Afghanistan - In the District of Sangin, the local Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is centralized at the Sangin District Center. The district governor and his staff hold shuras, similar to a town hall meeting, in the villages surrounding the district center allowing them to engage the people, inform them about programs available and show them the successes of those programs in other villages. They also listen to and try to rectify the problems or misunderstandings raised during the meetings within each village. This shura, held by the local district finance and administration officer, the district communications advisor and the commanding officer of a nearby Afghan National Army company at Patrol Base Fulod, July 26, was no exception. Local GIRoA officials coordinate with the Marines of Company C, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, to hold shuras like this throughout the Sangin Valley on and off of coalition bases. This cooperation enables the GIRoA officials to present a unified front with coalition forces when addressing the people. **(STORY)**



Afghan, American students build relationships via video teleconference

By Cpl. Reece Lodder



HAZAR JOFT, Afghanistan — For the second time in Garmsir district this year, Afghan and American high-school students interacted over a video teleconference here, Dec. 8. The VTC, held at the Garmsir Agricultural High School, was hosted by the non-profit organization Spirit of America in coordination with Marines from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, currently serving in the Garmsir. In April, the Los Angeles-based organization partnered with 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment to host a VTC for Afghan and American students at the Kadalo Drab School further south in Koshtay. “The VTCs are an extension of our mission — connecting the American people to the coalition mission on the ground in Afghanistan,” said Matt Valkovic, the manager of Spirit of America’s commander support program. **(STORY)**

District Governor Reaches Out to Sangin Villagers

By 1st Lt. Timothy Irish

PATROL BASE MATEEN, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - The Sangin District Gov. Mohammed Sharif visited his constituents in the village of Tughay today for the first time. Villagers of Tughay, in what is commonly known as “the green zone,” received the governor during one of their weekly meetings on Patrol Base Mateen. The



villagers had many grievances for the district governor to address; however, none of them were about security in the area. There were the usual virulent debates about land and property by village elders sitting cross legged on woven rugs. One man's presence made this event entirely unique, Mohammed Sharif. He entered a tent crowded with 83 elders to the sound of the Afghan national anthem. The shura was one of the first of its kind for the district of Sangin, where not more than six months ago, shuras with the district governor were limited to a heavily patrolled area in the vicinity of Forward Operating Base Jackson in the district center. "I know everything that goes on in Sangin," said Sharif. **(STORY)**



Zaranj shows promise to future of Nimroz province

By Cpl. Timothy Solano



ZARANJ, Afghanistan – Leaders of the C-9 Support Operations section aboard Camp Leatherneck met with Nimroz province officials in Zaranj, Dec. 2, to discuss future development in the region as "Tranche II" remains in effect. "Tranche II," the second part of a four-phase operation in Nimroz province is an ongoing transition toward infrastructure and security development in the region. The significance of the changeover lies in the fact that it is being led by Afghan provincial leaders as coalition forces take a backseat and merely facilitate the newly empowered government. Zaranj, the capital of

Nimroz province, is located in the extreme southwest corner of Afghanistan and acts as a major hub for commerce between Afghanistan and Iran. In previous months the city was a primary exporter of illegal narcotics into Iran but has become more stable with an enforced governing presence. "All of the security they have provided down there, they have done 100 percent on their own," said Maj. Robert Howard, the deputy Nimroz provincial coordination team leader. **(STORY)**

Shura Held with Top Leaders from Task Force Belleau Wood and Washir District Governor

By Cpl. Meredith Brown

WASHIR, Afghanistan -- Col. Michael M. Sweeney, commanding officer for Task Force Belleau Wood meets with Daoud Mohammad, the Washir district governor, during a shura. Here, Sweeney, commanding officer for Task Force Belleau Wood, and (Right) Col. Michael E. Cordero, Task Force Belleau Wood comptroller, with Daoud Mohammad, center, the Washir district governor, discuss improvements and developments within the district, Nov. 28. During the shura, plans to build a new police station and bazaar were laid out. **(VIDEO)**



Top generals, government officials discuss Nad 'Ali, Nawa

By Cpl. Katherine Keleher



LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan – The Quran discusses the word shura as a principle, which is roughly similar to consultation in Arabic; encouraging Muslims to discuss and decide their affairs with those who will be affected by their decisions. Regional Command Southwest leadership participated in a transition shura, or meeting, Nov. 28, at the Helmand Provincial Governor's Compound in Lashka Gah. During the shura, senior Afghans and coalition ground forces commanders in Nawa and Nad 'Ali presented security plans for transitioning those districts into Afghan control. Briefs were presented to Regional Command Southwest's senior leadership, including Maj. Gen. John A. Toolan, commanding general of

RC(SW) and II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), and Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, commanding general of 2nd Marine Division (Fwd.) and Task Force Leatherneck. "Today's meeting was about identifying and confirming that Nad 'Ali, Nawa and Marjah are at the right state to enter into the transition process," explained Toolan, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y. Although Marjah was not represented during this shura, the district is scheduled for transition at the same time as Nad 'Ali and Nawa. **(STORY)**

Marines accompany Afghan district governor during meeting at Camp Leatherneck bazaar

By Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan (Sept. 29, 2011) – On the northern end of Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, just outside of the perimeter, sits a shantytown by the name of "Soak City." This hub of tents surrounding a gas station consists of several hundred Afghans who have moved there so they can sell various wares to Afghan contractors and civilians visiting Camp Leatherneck. Daod Mohammad, the district governor of Washir, paid the community of merchants a visit Sept. 29 to tell them they will have to move to a new location farther north near Route 1. Camp Shorabak, headquarters of the Afghan National Army's 3rd Brigade, 215th Corps, will be expanding its outer perimeter, which will require all of the transients to move to a new location. In addition to moving the community, Mohammad started registering Afghan civilians and contractors so they can be taxed through the Afghan government and be entitled to government services. **(STORY)**



Marjah district governor meets with female elected officials, Marines

By Cpl. Katherine Keleher



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – The district governor of Marjah, Abdul Motalib, met with three female members of Helmand's Provincial Council and a member of the Department of Women's Affairs, April 2, to discuss ways local government can help the women of Marjah. Razia Baluch, Malika Helmandi and Karima, all elected officials with the Provincial Council serving four-year terms, and Sharifa, an employee with the Department of Women's Affairs, flew to Marjah from Lashkar Gah alongside Marines from the Female Engagement Team 11-1, II Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group (Forward). When 1st Lt. Zoe Bedell, officer-in-charge of FET 10-2, I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group (Forward), and her Marines first arrived in Afghanistan in September 2010, Marines and Afghan National Security Forces were still freeing Marjah from insurgents. Over time, coalition forces and the ANSF gained the upper hand. Now, as FET 10-2 prepares to leave Afghanistan and FET 11-1 is poised to take over, Bedell feels confident that Marjah is heading in the right direction. **(STORY)**

Afghan National Security Forces, coalition hold future strategy forum

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew Snodgrass

CAMP SHORABAK, Afghanistan - Afghan National Security Forces and local political leaders held a two-star general officer-level meeting with coalition forces, Sept. 26, at Camp Shorabak, Helmand province. The meeting provided an opportunity for key Afghan and coalition leaders to discuss the development milestones required to further shape security strategies in Helmand province. The Afghan and coalition leaders examined where their strengths and weaknesses are with their security policies and how they can improve them. Maj. General John A.



Toolan, commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) Regional Command Southwest, addressed the forum, and assured the ANSF leaders coalition forces are there to support them. "The purpose today is to discuss some examples of how Afghan National Security Forces can increase security in Helmand province," said Toolan. [\(STORY\)](#) [\(VIDEO\)](#)



AFGHANS TAKE LEAD - Driving toward success

As Afghans see the benefits of legitimate governance spread across the province, they are having the confidence to plan, execute and lead successful operations.

War-hardened Afghan soldier reflects on living through 30 years of conflict

By Cpl. Meredith Brown



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Mirali was 27 years old. He took up arms to protect his country and his family in Daykundi, located in south central Afghanistan. While fighting against the Soviet Army, Mirali's leg was injured when he took shrapnel from a rocket. He was later captured in his village and tortured by the Russians. "They would persecute me and beat my fingers and they knocked out my teeth," Mirali explained. "They captured me because I was supporting the [Afghan] government and protecting my country." Mirali escaped from the

Russians and fled to Pakistan. He stayed there for a year before returning to Afghanistan. "God kept me alive because it wasn't my time," Mirali said. His parents had passed away and two of his brothers immigrated to Iran. [\(STORY\)](#)

UK troops support Afghan led Operation WINTER SUCCESS

Defence News

Nearly 1,000 British and Afghan soldiers and Afghan Police have taken part in a major operation to clear insurgents from a crucial area of Helmand province. Operation ZAMESTANI PEEROZI, or 'WINTER SUCCESS', was planned by Afghan National Army staff and was led by Brigadier General Sheren Shah, commander of the 3rd Brigade of 215 Corps. It saw more than 280 British troops join forces with 550 warriors from the Afghan National Army (ANA) and patrolmen from the Afghan Uniformed Police in the area where the boundaries of Nad 'Ali, Nahr-e Saraj, and Lashkar Gah districts meet. Troops from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mentored and advised Afghan soldiers and headquarters staff through the operation, which cleared insurgents from between three major routes that run through the area before building new checkpoints to increase security. [\(STORY\)](#)



Afghans join local police to ensure safety of Helmand town

By Lance Cpl. Daniel Wulz



FORWARD OPERATING BASE RAHIM, Afghanistan – On July 27 after a short patrol from Forward Operating Base Rahim, U.K. Royal Marines and soldiers with A Company, 3 Mercian, gathered at the local Afghan National Police station to observe the beginning of a new local defense force in Rahim Kalay, Helmand province. The occasion was the graduation of the community's first-ever unit of Afghan Local Police, who will help keep insurgents out of the area and provide police services to



the village. Prior to the graduation ceremony, a shura was held regarding the progress made in the area with the ALP, Afghan National Army and overall security. The district chief of police, the Helmand provincial ALP commander, the local ANA commander, and U.K. military leadership all spoke at the shura to Afghan and British troops about the positive strides made in recent months. "Before the arrival of ISAF, the security situation here was not great," said Maj. Ben M. Wilde commanding officer of A Company, 3 Mercian, and a native of Chester, England. **(STORY)**

Afghan border patrolman exemplifies leadership

By Lance Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – Sgt. Wali Jan loves his rifle and he plans on using it. Wali Jan has been serving in the Afghan Border Police for the past five years and is currently enrolled in the non-commissioned officer's course at the Joint Security Academy Southwest here.

Wali Jan was one of the first students to arrive at the course and showed an eagerness to begin his training. "He sat around for about a week ... and he would ask me, 'When are the other students coming?'" said 1st Lt.

Timothy Malone, a native of Glen Burnie, Md., and ANSF Training Team OIC. "He really wanted to train. He's

always excited about what we're going to be training for, and he tries as hard as he can with everything that we do." Growing up in Lashkar Gah, Wali Jan was forbidden by the Taliban to attend school. The only education he has ever received has been military training. Wali Jan credits his instructors with helping him learn his job. "Marines are our teachers – they show us how to protect our country," said Wali Jan. "I have learned a lot. I can save lives now." **(STORY)**



Afghan Police show force in untouched area of Helmand

By Cpl. Daniel Wulz



FORWARD OPERATING BASE PAYNE, Afghanistan – In the Afghan-led operation Eagle Hunt, Afghan Border Police conducted patrols in an area of the Helmand province, Afghanistan, between Tahgaz and Dishu Ferry, alongside Marines and sailors from Dec. 7 to Dec. 13. The ultimate goal behind the operation was to bring Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan law to the area west of Tahgaz where no coalition forces or Afghan National Security Forces have been. "It was a successful mission," said Gunnery Sgt. Charles D. Arnold, operations chief, Border Advisory Team 2. "They went to establish GIROA law and a presence and let the locals in the area know that they aren't exempt." GIROA law is the set of rules which regulate the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It was set in place to mirror the rule of law in other societies. "GIROA law is basically like our laws in the United States. It's a set of rules you live by. It's set in place to prevent things like killing and stealing," said Arnold, who hails from Bellebiew, Fla. Eagle Hunt was planned entirely by the Afghan Border Police and carried out through four phases by

the ABP and BAT 2. **(STORY)**

Nothing lost in translation: Afghan soldier takes reins as explosives reduction course instructor

By Cpl. Timothy Solano

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - It's another training day at Joint Sustainment Academy Southwest, where Afghan soldiers are learning specific occupational specialties and general military skills just as they do every day. However, one course offers a unique learning advantage because the instructor is an Afghan National Army soldier and speaks his students' language, Pashto. Sgt. Hamidullah, with 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, has been an instructor for the Explosive Hazard Reduction Course at



JSAS for the last three months. He teaches everything, from detecting and identifying improvised explosive devices to the science behind assembling plastic explosives. “It’s my job to teach the students how to safely sweep for, and identify and destroy improvised explosive devices in place,” said Hamidullah. “I also teach them about connecting C-4 lines and fuses.” With a curriculum as intricate and potentially dangerous as the EHRC’s, every phase of the learning process is critical. **(STORY)**



Afghan Air Force conducts first independent medical evacuation

By Cpl. Katherine Keleher



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – After nearly a year of preparation, the Afghan National Army Air Force performed their first successful and independent medical evacuation, April 11, out of Camp Shorabak, Helmand province, Afghanistan. The medical evacuation consisted of an injured, but stable person being transferred from Camp Shorabak to Kandahar Regional Hospital by an ANAAF medical evacuation crew on a Mi17 helicopter. “Around 2010, the [ISAF Joint Command] had correspondence with the [Afghan National Army air force’s] generals and expressed an interest and desire

for Afghans to begin developing a [medical evacuation] type service,” said Royal Air Force Sqdn. Ldr. Ian Swain, who works in medical operations for Regional Command Southwest. “During the last year, mentors have been in place working up to this [medical evacuation] in terms of training and all the other various components.” **(STORY)**

Instructing the Instructor: Marines Let Afghans Take Lead in Training Nation’s Security Forces

By Lance Cpl. Daniel Wulz

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - At Joint Sustainment Academy Southwest aboard Camp Leatherneck, Marines and Afghan Uniformed Police gathered for the graduation ceremony of the AUP 11-6 and AUP 11-7 classes, May 21. “The AUP is responsible for all basic police force tasks at the provincial and district level,” said Col. Michael E. Cordero, the comptroller for Regional Command Southwest, in a speech to the graduating AUP classes. “You all will be quite busy after you leave here, but you are all very capable and well trained.” The classes themselves were two of the recent successful attempts to incorporate Afghanistan’s Ministry of Interior instructors into the course, guiding the Afghans in their training, and taking over the role of Marines. MOI’s new role as instructors follows closely with their other responsibilities as the department in charge of police forces, internal security and counter-narcotics in the country. **(STORY)**



Afghan National Army soldiers bid farewell to mentors

By Cpl. Katherine M. Solano



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The Marines with the Embedded Partnering Team, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), held a farewell dinner for their Afghan National Army counterparts aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Dec. 9. According to Capt. Patrick Ross, the officer-in-charge of the EPT, the team “was partnered with the 215 Corps Logistics Battalion, Afghan National Army, to provide [mentors], staff development and technical training, in order to accelerate the maturation of the battalion. Through daily, direct advising and partnering our Marines and sailors attempted to prepare these Afghan soldiers to operate independent of coalition forces.” The time has come for the ANA to

begin training with a larger-scale operation, more specifically the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Training Mission - Afghanistan. It was with this upcoming transition in mind that the Marines and ANA soldiers came together for a “hail and farewell” between the outgoing EPT and the incoming NTM-A EPT. **(STORY)**

Operation Afghan Warrior continues

By 1st Lt. Timothy Irish

WASHIR, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - Afghan forces now stand guard over every street in the Washir marketplace and man observations posts on hilltops surrounding the villages. Operation Afghan Warrior, that began 6 June, is now in its final stages having encountered no direct resistance from insurgent forces. Soldiers from the 1st Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police led the operation that contained minimal support from coalition forces. The coalition forces consisted of a U.S. Marine Route Clearance Platoon and several Explosive Ordnance Disposal assets and advisor support as well as other units from Regimental Combat Team 8. A shura, or meeting, was held Sunday with Col. Eric Smith, commanding officer of Regimental Combat Team 8, the district governor of Washir, the district chief of police, Brig. Gen. Wasea, commanding officer of the 2/215 ANA, and the Kandak commander in charge of the operation. The discussion centered on the way forward to improve Washir. **(STORY)**



SAVED ROUNDS - Personal sacrifice

Personnel retrieval and processing: bringing heroes home

2nd Marine Logistics Group

CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan – Personnel retrieval and processing specialists perform duties in both combat and non-combat environments pertaining to the search and recovery, identification, processing and transportation of America’s fallen heroes. Marines with the Personnel Retrieval and Processing Detachment, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward) at Camp Dwyer, Afghanistan, are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to take care their own in Southern Helmand province. The PRP specialist military occupational skill is a reserve-only field, and they constantly deploy overseas to current and previous combat zones, such as Japan and Vietnam. “To me it is an honor and a privilege to have the responsibility to take care of these fallen heroes and all of us in the shop take pride on what we do,” Lance Cpl. Kevin E. Campos, from Sacramento, Calif., a personnel retrieval and processing specialist with 2nd MLG (Fwd.). **(STORY)**



Gettin' Dirty with Company D Tankers

By Cpl. Marco Mancha



COMBAT OUTPOST OUELLETTE, Afghanistan – The brown beads of sweat stream down their faces as they work on the largest mobile ground weapon in the Marine Corps. These Marines have no problem living up to Company D’s alias: “Dirty Delta.” The tankers with 1st Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division (Forward), crank wrenches and get dirty to maintain their M-1A1 “Abrams” Main Battle Tank. The only other thing cranking besides the wrenches are the tunes playing on the MP3 while they work on the tanks. It is no easy task to maintain one of the most sophisticated weapons the military has to offer; just ask Elkridge, Md., native Sgt. Todd Cross. “We don’t stop working ‘til the job gets done,” said the section leader with the unit. “Changing the track pads, like we did today, is a really long process that may take more than just a day to finish. I don’t know if you know this, but there are 320 track pads on a single tank. That



definitely means you're getting dirty out here." "We don't stop working 'til the job gets done," said the section leader with the unit. "Changing the track pads, like we did today, is a really long process that may take more than just a day to finish. I don't know if you know this, but there are 320 track pads on a single tank. That definitely means you're getting dirty out here." **(STORY)**

Pocket-Sized Pieces of Mind: Deployed Marines keep reminders of home, luck and faith close to their hearts

By Sgt. Justin Shemanski

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The young Marine checked his gear for the last time just a few hours before he was to depart friendly lines. The plan was to leave under the cloak of darkness, bound for yet another remote outpost in need of resupply deep in the heart of Helmand province. Regardless of the somewhat safer guise of night, the Marine knew the enemy would be watching ... waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike, as they had so many other times during his last few combat logistics patrols. He wasn't nervous though. In addition to the hundreds of other well-trained Marines equipped with an arsenal of some of the world's most advanced weapons systems, he had a couple more personal items to include. Perhaps even more powerful than any rifle or rocket, he made certain these items accompanied him on every mission outside the wire — reminders of home. Wrapping a brown leather-strapped watch around his wrist and stuffing a tattered letter into the right cargo pocket of his desert Marine Pattern Utility Uniform — both gifts from a loved one back home — were always the final actions the Marine performed before heading out. **(STORY)**



This final 2011 Round-up brings together some of the best work coalition forces journalists have produced during the last year. Articles look at the progress ISAF-Afghan partnership has brought to Helmand province: out of 14 districts, 12 have functioning local governments with delivery of basic services to residents; cultivation of illicit crops has dramatically been reduced; and school attendance has increased dramatically.

HAPPY NEW YEAR