

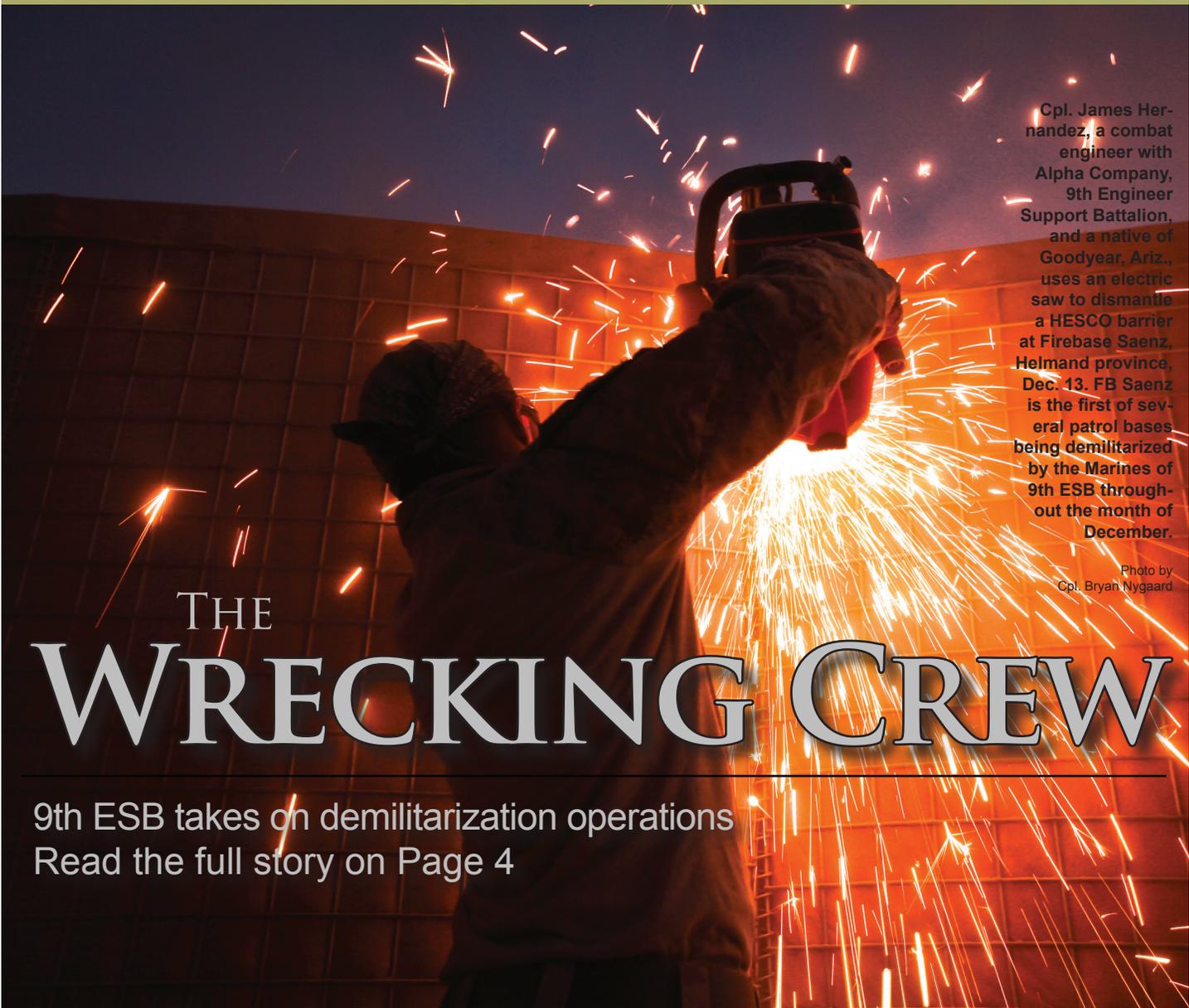


# THE WARRIOR'S LOG

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

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Cpl. James Hernandez, a combat engineer with Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, and a native of Goodyear, Ariz., uses an electric saw to dismantle a HESCO barrier at Firebase Saenz, Helmand province, Dec. 13. FB Saenz is the first of several patrol bases being demilitarized by the Marines of 9th ESB throughout the month of December.

Photo by Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

## THE WRECKING CREW

9th ESB takes on demilitarization operations  
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Photo by Cpl. Michael Augusto

Lt. Cmdr. Michael Tomlinson, the chaplain with 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), baptizes a Marine aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, May 16. Chaplain Tomlinson says baptisms are a high point for him on deployments.

## ‘You always wish you could do more:’

### *Chaplain brings cheer to Marines in Afghanistan during holiday season*

**Cpl. Katherine M. Solano**  
*2nd MLG (FWD) Public Affairs*

**CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan** – For many Marines, missing holidays due to deployments is often a fact of life. It can be prepared and planned for, but when these festive occasions arrive, and the Marine is continents away, there is not much that makes

the separation any easier.

As a chaplain, Lt. Cmdr. Michael Tomlinson knows, and sees, first-hand what a Marine deployed over the holidays goes through. He has been side-by-side with service members on four different tours over the last 10 years.

“The hardest time is over the holidays, because you miss your family and friends, and you miss the good food,” Tomlinson, the 2nd

Marine Logistics Group (Forward) chaplain said, with a slight smile.

While he acknowledges that he cannot provide the comfort of a good home-cooked holiday meal, Tomlinson says there are other ways to lift a Marine’s spirit during the winter months.

“I will be going [multiple places] on Christmas to provide worship services,” he began. “For some faith groups, communion is very important and it is something special we can do for Marines.”

Maintaining communication with loved ones back home is

also a way to make it through the holidays with a smile. Tomlinson gives out phone cards to troops to afford them an easy and cost-free means to get in touch with their families and friends.

He emphasizes the importance of staying in a deployed mindset, but also of staying connected with family and loved ones especially during this time of year.

“It is hard to ask ‘what would you do for people’, because you cannot make up for the feeling of missing loved ones,” Tomlinson concluded.



Click the DVIDS icon to view 2nd MLG (FWD) greetings from around Helmand province



# Inspired:

*Pittsburgh Marine enlisted with advice from lacrosse coach, Iraq veteran*

**Cpl. Katherine M. Solano**  
*2nd MLG (FWD) Public Affairs*

**SHIR GHAZAY, Afghanistan** – Lance Cpl. Jake Zalesky, a motor transportation operator with Support Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), was an avid lacrosse and hockey player in high school. He had the opportunity to attend college

on athletic scholarships due to his talent, but he turned those chances down in order to join the Marine Corps.

His lacrosse coach, Brent Davis, served for four years as a Marine before taking on a coaching job in the Pittsburgh area. Zalesky was immediately impressed when Davis arrived at Chartiers Valley High School.

“He was a family friend from a while back and he graduated with my oldest

brother,” Zalesky recalled. “When he started coaching lacrosse we just became real good friends. He became a mentor to me.”

Zalesky described how his initial interest in the Marine Corps was bolstered by numerous conversations and recollections with Davis, when he spoke of the camaraderie he had with his fellow Marines, the respect he earned through training and deployments, and the people

skills he acquired by working with Marines from all walks of life.

“I started talking to him my sophomore year, asking how he liked the Marine Corps,” Zalesky began. “He always gave me straight-up answers. He never tried to sell it to me, he was just honest.”

The inspiration went beyond verbal interactions. Zalesky seemed almost awestruck as he recounted the response that his teammates

had when Davis first became their coach.

“When they all heard that Davis was a former Marine, we all thought we were in big trouble,” Zalesky said, smiling at the memory. “We came to respect him really quickly, though. We learned a lot from him. The respect he got on and off the field was amazing. I wanted that.”

Not only does Zalesky claim that respect was a driving factor in his decision to enlist, but he says

that his inability to settle down or to follow in anyone else’s footsteps was the next biggest reason why he enlisted after high school.

“I hate doing things that everyone else does,” he concluded. “I figured I would make some money while everyone else lost it, and get some cool stories along the way. I wanted to have something to tell my kids and grandkids. I would rather be in the history books than just read them.”

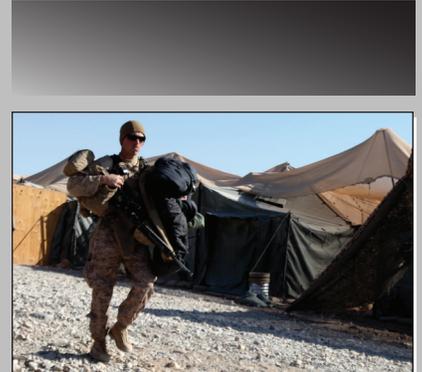
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**“I wanted to have something to tell my kids and grandkids. I would rather be in the history books than just read them.”**

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- Lance Cpl. Jake Zalesky

## WARRIOR of the WEEK



**LANCE CORPORAL  
JAKE ZALESKY**

**JOB:** Motor-T Operator  
**HOMETOWN:** Pittsburgh

**Q:** Who is your hero and why?

**A:** “Brent Davis. He always had the right information to give me and always steered me in the right direction.”

**Q:** If you could do any job for a day, what would it be?

**A:** “In the Marine Corps, I’d have to be a pilot. I love adrenaline rushes. Outside the Corps, it would be some kind of work with the Pittsburgh Penguins. Every time I go home, I go to a game with my dad and I love it.”

Sgt. Cody Palfreyman, a combat engineer with Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, and a native of West Valley, Utah, guides a bulldozer as it moves the berm surrounding a guard post at Fire-base Saenz, Helmand province, Dec. 14.

Photo by  
Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

# THE WRECKING CREW

## *9th ESB tears down patrol bases throughout Helmand province, paving way for US drawdown*

**Cpl. Bryan Nygaard**  
*RC(SW) Public Affairs*

**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 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 on 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.

“Even though it can be difficult [demilitarizing the base], you kind of just want to wreck the place, you know, have some fun with it,” said 1st Lt. Andrew Fassett, commander of 1st Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th ESB, and a native of Princetown, N.Y. “But [the Marines] have been doing a good job taking everything down and making sure to keep it neat so it fits on

the truck. We did the right job in terms of cleaning up after ourselves here in Afghanistan.”

Doing the right job included emptying sandbags, pushing down berms and coiling up hundreds of yards of razor-sharp concertina wire surrounding Saenz.

One of the more challenging tasks was dismantling the numerous HESCO barriers that made up the guard posts at each corner of the base. HESCO barriers (named after the British company HESCO Bastion) are military fortifications that have seen extensive use in both Iraq and Afghanistan. A typical HESCO is 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide and is made of a collapsible wire mesh container with a heavy-duty fabric liner that is usually filled with sand.

The Marines used tractors, forklifts, electric saws, shovels, pick axes, bolt cutters, knives and their hands to rip apart the HESCO barriers that once protected the Marines at Saenz from explosive blasts

and small-arms fire.

"It's pretty tedious work for myself and the other Marines," said Lance Cpl. Zachary Couch, a combat engineer with Alpha Co. and a native of Alton, Ill. "Using all the power tools, especially the bolt cutters - those get hard after a while ... after at least two or three 7-foot HESCOs, chopping them down from top to bottom. It gets pretty tough."

The Marines that were equipped with the electric saws were able to cut through the wire mesh with relative ease compared to the bolt cutters. The sparks they produced lit up the evening sky and resembled Christmas lights that would be seen on someone's house.

As darkness fell, the Marines used the headlights from the tractors to aid them in their disassembly of the HESCOs. As they continued working deep into the night, the temperature dropped below 20 degrees, forcing them to put on more and more warming layers.

A little bit before midnight, the Marines called it a day. There were no tents to house them in so they slept inside of the armored vehicles that brought them up to Saenz. Several Marines would cram into one vehicle and sleep in some very awkward and uncomfortable positions on top of their packs and body armor. The more Marines that crammed into a vehicle, the warmer it got inside.

The Marines woke up the next morning, the sun shone on their weather-beaten faces that were still covered with sand from the day before. They grabbed their tools and slowly made their way back to where they had left off the night before.

During the night, the bulldozers had pushed over and flattened the berms that made up the walls of the base, thereby removing protection from any possible insurgent fire. From then on, the Marines had to wear their helmets and body armor. Although it made it slightly more difficult for the Marines to accomplish their duties, it did increase their protection against any possible enemy fire.

Cpl. James Hernandez, a fire team leader in Alpha Co., was still sore from the day before and recovering from small burns inflicted by the sparks that the electric saw created. With fatigue wearing on the Marines under his charge, the Good-

year, Ariz., native would frequently gather them around him and offer some words of encouragement and motivation.

"I hate the cold," said Hernandez. "It just gets to you after a while. That's when all the morale starts going down when it starts getting cold or in the morning, trying to get everyone out of the racks or out of the vehicles which are a little bit warmer than outside.

"It gets kind of tiring every once in a while, trying to figure out how to keep the morale up and try to keep them going as fast as they've been going ... it wears you out a little bit."

Lance Cpl. Tameka Demps, a combat engineer in Alpha Co., finds her motivation in the work that she does.

"I just like to work. I like to be busy," said the Las Vegas native. "If I stop, I just, I don't know - I feel like I'm not doing anything. I like doing this. It's exhausting,

but it's fun."

Standing at barely 5 feet tall, Demps was constantly working, picking up pieces of HESCO that probably weighed as much as she does. Over time, her pace slowed down a bit, but she would never be seen with idle hands. Once all the work was completed, she grabbed a trash bag and began picking up small pieces of trash that were on the ground.

"It's just helping out with the main mission," said Demps. "We finish this base, we go on to the next one - we can get this deployment over with and go home."

After the Marines of 9th ESB finished dismantling Saenz, they headed toward the next patrol base. They will be working through Christmas and New Year's, dismantling more patrol bases while navigating roads that are laced with improvised explosive devices.



Photos by Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

(Above) Lance Cpl. Christopher Miller, a combat engineer with Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, and a native of Emmett, Mich., throws a piece of wood from a tent into the back of a dump truck at Firebase Saenz, Afghanistan, Dec. 15. (Left) Lance Cpl. Paul Flores, a combat engineer with Alpha Co., 9th ESB, and a native of Moundsville, W. Va., uses a pickaxe to clear away dirt from a HESCO barrier so it can be dismantled at Firebase Saenz, Dec. 14.

# Op Clean Sweep



Photo by Cpl. Michael Augusto

Boxes of excess gear and equipment are staged at the sort lot aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Dec. 22, as part of Operation Clean Sweep. After being inventoried and cleaned, this gear will be shipped back to the United States or to a unit currently deployed.

*2nd MLG (FWD) continues Operation Clean Sweep, accounts for millions of dollars worth of gear*

**2nd Lt. James F. Stenger**  
*2nd MLG (FWD) Public Affairs*

**CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan** – Over the last three months, Marines and Sailors of the 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward) have accounted for, sorted, cleaned and processed several millions of dollars worth of gear and equipment in support of Operation Clean Sweep aboard Camp Leatherneck and Camp Dwyer.

This operation is part of Regional Command Southwest's plan for redeployment and retrograde in support of reset and reconstitution (R4), which is a four-part term commonly used to refer to the concept of how the Marine Corps will most efficiently and effectively leave Afghanistan.

Planning for the departure of forces has become a primary focus of operations,

along with the continued training of Afghan National Security Forces.

Not only is the plan facilitating the process of leaving Afghanistan, but it is saving the Marine Corps money by identifying excess gear and reallocating it to the units deployed, vice ordering new equipment to be shipped here.

According to statistics compiled by Maj. Ken Karcher, the future operations officer for 2nd MLG (FWD) and officer in charge of redeployment and retrograde (R2) operations, Marines and Sailors attached to the sort lots and supply management units have recovered roughly \$30 million worth of excess supplies.

These items are currently being either shipped to Marine commands in the United States or reallocated to units currently fighting in support of International Security Assistance Force operations.

*Postal Marines awarded for holiday season work-ethic*

**Sgt. Justin J. Shemanski**  
*2nd MLG (FWD) Public Affairs*

**CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan** - When skimming through the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal citations for Lance Cpls. Caitlin E. Johnson and Markevis J. Seth, it was evident as to why they were standing tall and proud before a general officer, Dec. 30.

For their tireless work-ethic and dedication to duty during the holiday mail season, each Marine was awarded their respective medal by Brig. Gen. Michael G. Dana, the commanding general for the 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward).

Both are attached to the MLG's Postal Detachment based aboard Camp Leatherneck, which is charged with delivering postmarked pieces of home to more than 22,000 military and Department of Defense personnel scattered across Regional Command Southwest's area of operation.

Johnson, a native of Creswell, Ore., demonstrated remarkable leadership qualities during the holiday rush. During this time she assisted her contemporaries with processing more than 3 million pounds of mail, while displaying professionalism and morale-building spirit.

In addition to assisting with the handling and processing of mail, Seth took on the additional responsibility of ensuring more than 3,000 shipping containers were prepared for transportation to outlying forward operating bases. The Wilmington, Del., native was instrumental in training 24 individual augments, which were on hand to assist with the holiday load.

**COMMANDING GENERAL**  
BRIG. GEN. MICHAEL G. DANA

**SERGEANT MAJOR**  
SGT. MAJ. WILLIAM T. STABLES

**COMMAND MASTER CHIEF**  
CMDM RUSSELL W. FOLLEY

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