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----- Jan. 22, 2012 -----

## NEWS

### Helmand governor visits victims of Kajaki bombing

By Sgt. Laura Bonano

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Helmand Governor Mohammad Gulab Mangal visited the Bastion Role 3 Hospital, Jan. 19, to meet and talk with victims of the recent suicide bombing at the Kajaki Sofla Bazaar in Kajaki district, Helmand province. The governor wanted to relay his concern for the injured and express his sorrow for the devastation caused by the attack. Mangal consoled Afghan patients in the intensive care ward and also several who had come out of surgery. He offered hushed words of encouragement as he leaned in close to touch their heads or hold their hands. According to Helmand's Provincial Media Office, three policemen and 10 civilians



were killed, and two policemen and 20 civilians were wounded in a suicide attack, Jan. 18. A large number of people who were wounded in the attack were transported to the Bastion Role 3 Hospital on Camp Leatherneck for treatment. Although the hospital staff had dealt with large numbers of casualties previously, the staff had very little time to respond to the suicide attack, explained British Army Col. Duncan Wilson, the medical director for the Bastion Role 3 Hospital. **(Read the STORY)(See the VIDEO by Cpl. Meredith Brown)**

### Combat engineers improve 'Old Silk Road'

By Master Gunnery Sgt. Phil Mehringer



HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Nearly 150 Marines from 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward)'s 9th Engineer Support Battalion converged in the open Helmand desert on a dry river bed known as a wadi. They needed to quickly build a land bridge through the wadi, rushing to complete the project before the seasonal, heavy monsoon rains began. The average rainfall for the month of January is more than 6 inches, while the month of June is typically measured at less than a quarter-of-an-inch – more than a 2,300 percent increase in precipitation. The road, which is known as Route Red, lies on the western side of the Helmand River and is used to travel north and south from

Gereshk to Musa Qalah. It is rumored to be part of the original Silk Road, connecting the East to the West centuries ago and is easily navigated 10 months out of the year with the exception of the rainy season. The rapid downpour of rain and limited ability for the hardened, sun-baked Helmand desert to absorb the runoff, creates flooding, forcing local civilians and military vehicles to use an alternate route adding at least 18 miles to their trip in either direction. **(Read the STORY)(See the VIDEO by Brian Nygaard)**

## Field Training Unit prepares Gurkhas for Helmand

By Defence News

Soldiers from 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles (1 RGR) were among the latest to benefit from the experience of the Field Training Unit at Salisbury Plain in preparing troops for operations. Report by Joe Clapson. "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail," uttered Benjamin Franklin in the 18th century. And the architects of current British Army exercises are in full agreement. The Field Training Unit on Salisbury Plain is involved in almost every UK-based serial and is responsible for ensuring that soldiers are ready for all operations. But until now it has remained something of an unseen organisation. Unit commander Lieutenant Colonel Adam Griffiths explained the extremely important role his modest team of 45 staff play in the evolution of servicemen and women: "We design, deliver and develop foundation packages, mission specific and contingent operations training," he said. "The aim is to provide members of the British Armed Forces with the capability to be successful on all of their deployments." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Marine infantrymen mentor Afghan police force in Garmsir

By Cpl. Reece Lodder



GARMSIR DISTRICT, Afghanistan -- When U.S. Marines with Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, arrived here in early November, they met an Afghan National Police force primed for development. Their Afghan National Army counterparts were proficient and ready for transition, but the ANP were ready to grow. Instead of simply replacing the police mentoring team of their predecessors — fellow Hawaii-based 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment — Kilo's infantrymen dispersed along an 80-kilometer stretch to partner with ANP at each of the district's five police precincts. On their last deployment to Helmand province's Nawa district in 2010, the Kilo Marines

had a combat-specific mission and their own battlespace. Now, they're partnered solely with the ANP and spread throughout the area of operations of 3/3's four other companies. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## NATO's senior civilian in Afghanistan discusses challenges ahead

By Defence News

NATO's senior civilian representative in Afghanistan, Ambassador Sir Simon Gass, gave a lecture at the Royal United Services Institute yesterday on the challenges ahead as Afghanistan prepares to take on responsibility for its own security by 2015. Sir Simon began by reflecting on the fact that, as 2012 begins, there are just 36 months left before the ISAF mission in Afghanistan comes to an end and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) take on responsibility for the security of their country. 'How should those remaining months be used to achieve a sustainable degree of stability?' he asked. To put that question into context, Sir Simon first reflected on how much progress has been made so far: "That would depend," he said, "on what you take as your starting point. If you go back to 2001 when ambition was very high and the insurgency seemed to have been stamped out . . ."

[\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## 3/7 I Co. Marines maintain local relationships

By Cpl. Ed Galo



SANGIN, Afghanistan -- The Marines of I Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment maintain a great relationship with the locals in the village outside their patrol base near Sangin. They do this through daily security patrols throughout the area and by communicating with the people. "The big thing with today's patrol was talking with the people about their farms and animals," said Cpl. Jacob Marler, squad leader, from St. Louis, Mo. "We asked them about what they grow, what type of fertilizer they use, what their most important crops are, what their most important animals are and about how they get their water for their crops." While Marler and part of his squad were talking to

the villagers, half of the squad continued to patrol throughout the village. "We started going through the city looking for other possible crossing points or choke points to watch out for," Cpl. Mark Yenlavitch said, assistant patrol leader, from Victorville, Calif. We were basically surveying the area to get a better picture of the city," Yenlavitch said. Once the Marines were in the small village, they were greeted by dozens of children and a few adults. "We talk to the villagers daily," said Marler. "The kids here always run up and talk to you. Most of the IED (improvised explosive device) finds we've had here are from the kids coming up and telling us about them." According to the Marines, one of the biggest reasons their relationship is so strong with the locals is due to the diligence of the unit that came before them, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines.

[\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Mission accomplished: Marine Osprey squadron flies last mission of Afghanistan deployment

By Cpl. Justin Boling

CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan -- A Marine Corps MV-22B Osprey squadron flew its final combat mission, Jan. 17, to complete its deployment to Afghanistan. Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 162 has been deployed at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, for more than six months. The Marines will soon return to Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C. The squadron's final mission in Afghanistan was to transport Marines with 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment to a small patrol base in Helmand province, who will relieve Marines of 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.



"These Marines are extremely proficient, and helpful to us 'ground pounders,'" said Staff Sgt. Ricky Lara, a platoon sergeant with 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment. "My guys have a lot to worry about once we get on the ground but in the air we know we are in the good hands of our fellow Marines." Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 162 flies the MV-22B Osprey. The Osprey has the ability to takeoff vertically like a helicopter, and then tilt its rotors forward granting speed and maneuverability comparable to a traditional airplane.

The Marine Corps relies on the versatile Osprey for various missions in Afghanistan including troop and cargo transport, battlefield illumination, aerial resupply and assault insert of combat troops. Marine Corps Ospreys are deployed as part of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), the aviation combat element for the southwestern regional command of the NATO International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

[\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Hard-bitten battalion heads home after 3rd consecutive combat deployment

By Cpl. James Clark



CAKAJAKI SOFLA, Afghanistan -- With three deployments in three years, the men of 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment were called upon to serve as the tip of the spear for large scale offensive operations across Afghanistan's contentious Helmand Province. During months of heavy fighting in Garmsir, Afghanistan in 2008, the men of 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment put their moniker '1/6 HARD,' to the test and came through the other side, battered, but unbroken. In 2009, during the helicopter-borne insertion into the Taliban-held city of Marjah, the Marines of 1/6, disembarked tilt-rotor aircraft as vibrant-red tracer rounds zigzagged across the skyline.

For weeks they fought their way across muddy fields, amidst accurate small arms and indirect fire, and for several months, waged a deliberate counterinsurgency campaign in order to garner local support for Afghan National Security and Coalition forces. On their current deployment, the battalion was split across three distinctly different areas of operation, explained Capt. Brandon Turner, operation's officer, 1/6. Charlie Company returned to Marjah, reinforcing Marine and Afghan forces operating in the city's remaining troubled regions. Alpha Company moved to the Sangin District, where they supported the 3rd and later, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion. During Operation Eastern Storm, Headquarters, Bravo and Weapons companies secured route 611, which runs through Kajaki Sofla, an area that had long been a safe haven for insurgent sub-commanders and for arms and drug trafficking. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Data systems specialists keep Marine Corps running

By Staff Sgt. Robert Storm

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan -- Every day Marines use computers to send information, coordinate data for flights, order supplies and complete seemingly a million other tasks necessary to keep the Marine Corps functioning. The Marines that set-up the networks and service the computers are the 0651 Data System Specialists. "These data guys have a critical job. They keep us talking through multiple nets, NIPR (Non-secure Internet Protocol Router Network), SIPR (Secret Internet Protocol Router) and other networks," Sgt. Maj. Deets said, regimental sergeant major, RCT-6, from Annandale, Va. "They are a force multiplier and are vital to success on the modern day battlefield, where the flow of information is so important." While deployed, these Marines rotate shifts on a 24-hour schedule in order to keep communications running smoothly for the regiment. While their skills are invaluable, many times user error is the key to fixing the trouble. "A lot of the time the problems are simple things," laughs Lance Cpl. Corey Jarvis, data system specialist, Regimental Combat Team-6, from Bridgewater, Va. "We've had people call us for help and we show up and find that they don't have the power cord plugged in or even that they simply haven't pushed down on the power button hard enough." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## HEROES

### Marine helicopter mechanic in Afghanistan saves lives with maintenance discovery

By Cpl. Brian Adam Jones

CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan -- A Marine Corps sergeant in Afghanistan who unearthed a never-before-seen maintenance issue in a UH-1Y Huey was recently awarded by the Marine Corps for his potentially lifesaving find. The sergeant was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal in a ceremony at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, Jan. 12. Sgt. Christopher Lemke, a mechanic with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369, nicknamed the "Gunfighters," regularly conducts inspections on the squadron's UH-1Y Hueys and AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopters. But during a routine phase inspection of a Huey in late December, Lemke, a native of Macomb, Mich., uncovered something that could save countless lives. Phase inspections are regular



checks on an aircraft's various components to ensure they are safe. Underneath the UH-1Y Huey, in the aircraft's transmission compartment – an area so difficult to reach that maintainers call it the "hell hole" – Lemke found something wrong. "When two metals rub together, it creates this black liquid, and that's what I found," Lemke said. The transmission pylon beam and the main beam joint, which secure the aircraft's transmission to the airframe, were disintegrating. "This failure represented an extreme risk to the aircraft and aircrew," his award citation reads. The citation goes on to state that Lemke's finding led to a corpswide inspection, resulting in an engineering advisory report addressing a manufacturing defect found on multiple UH-1Y aircraft. "No one else had ever found such an issue, but when we looked at another aircraft we had in phase, it had the same problem. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## VIGNETTES

### A soldier's life in Helmand's Green Zone

By British Army Pvt. Graham 'T' Thurston



in his latest blog, Private Graham 'T' Thurston, a British soldier from 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (1 PWR), currently deployed to Afghanistan, gives an account of life in a checkpoint on the front line in Helmand province. Jeker is a relatively new checkpoint and packed with the latest technology to help the patrols get on the ground with as much intelligence and knowledge as possible. We also have BFBS [British Forces Broadcasting Service] TV and two internet computers and this gives us a good change to relax in the welfare tent that doubles up as a cookhouse. The other two B Company checkpoints aren't as lucky but they get up about once a week and check their mail and chill out.

With solar showers and toilets with a door (poo in a bag variety) this checkpoint is classed as a luxury here in the Green Zone. We are surrounded here by farms with deep irrigation ditches. These range from ones you can step over to ones that come up over chest height and you have to wade through. The banks are often very steep and it's impossible to get out without being dragged out by your mates on your stomach because it's so slippery and muddy. The locals are very happy that we are in the area and help us out by walking over the bridges to prove they have not got IEDs [improvised explosive devices] or putting down logs for us to make a crossing. This may be just to stop us walking in their crops but it strengthens our relationship with the locals and helps us with our patrols and shows who we can trust in the population.

[\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Faces of Transition: The Goofy Logistics Lieutenant

By Cpl. Johnny Merkley

*Editor's note: This is the first installment in an ongoing series featuring Marines and sailors serving with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, during their deployment to Afghanistan's Helmand province. Many are infantrymen, others are combat service support, but each is part of a historic transition in the making. They are the unique ingredients in a melting pot of service members devoted to preparing the Afghan National Security Forces for assumption of lead security responsibility in Garmsir district.*



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELHI, Afghanistan -- U.S. Marine 1st Lt. Ryan Gulliksen is goofy. The proclamation isn't an outside observation. It's an insistent confession backed by an animated personality and matching enthusiasm the lieutenant carries into his duties as a logistics officer with Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. On deployment in southwest Afghanistan's Helmand province, Gulliksen spends each of his days supporting the approximately 1,200 Marines and sailors in his battalion. "I love being a logistician," said the 26-year-old native of Ormond Beach, Fla., and 2003 graduate of Mainland High School. "It's completely unrewarding from other people's perspectives at times, but I affect the lives of every Marine in this battalion, one way or another. As the infantrymen of 3/3 patrol Garmsir district, Gulliksen works behind the scenes with a small team of logistics Marines to plan, pick-up and deliver food, fuel, water and ammunition. "The day I prevent the 19-year-old infantry lance corporal, who is patrolling three times a day and freezing his butt off, from coming home to a warm tent, dry boots and chow, I will put my rank on the battalion commander's desk because I've failed that Marine," Gulliksen said. "They can shoot, move and communicate for only so long. If I'm not giving them what they need, I haven't done my job." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Brooklyn, NY Marine: Afghanistan was a learning experience

By Cpl. Katherine M. Solano



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Cpl. David Russell holds a slew of job titles and responsibilities. His time in Afghanistan has been spent conducting inspections, taking inventories, reporting maintenance discrepancies, and overseeing Marines junior to him as they carry out their respective duties. Russell began his year-long deployment as a member of the Embedded Training Team with Afghan National Army counterparts, but his abilities and dedication to duty set him apart from his peers. He was noticed by superiors and subsequently moved to hold the job of logistics non-commissioned officer in charge with Headquarters and Service Company, 2nd Marine Logistics

Group (Forward). Russell credits his good attitude and determination to lessons he learned from his dad. "My father is just the smartest, wisest and most well-rounded man I know," he began. "I am who I am, and I am where I am, because of him." This conviction in his beliefs, job and commitment to the Marine Corps are often evident while Russell, a Brooklyn, N.Y., native, conducts the multitude of tasks that come with being the NCOIC of a section. He is a self-proclaimed adrenaline junkie, stating that his favorite part of his job is "any time I'm not at my desk." While he is unsure of whether or not he will re-enlist, Russell knows that whatever he does in the future will have to be exciting and rewarding. His commitment to his duties was recognized recently when his command awarded him with the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Atlanta Marine follows in father's footsteps, powers Marines in Afghanistan

By Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan -- Each Marine has a unique reason for joining the Corps: some enlist out of pride, some want to see a foreign land, and some do it simply to serve their country. Lance Cpl. Jerod Byron Young, an electrician with Regimental Combat Team 5 and 21-year-old native of Atlanta, joined the Marine Corps to follow in the footsteps of his father, retired Master Gunnery Sgt. Jason Anderson. Anderson's 26-year career inspired Young to become a Marine. His father's unwavering dedication to the service made Young want to follow in suit. "Seeing him serve for so long was so motivational for me," said Young. "It made me want to join." "My dad even told me that I'm fighting the war that he never finished," Young recalled with a smile. Young's role as an electrician is vital to Marines and sailors operating throughout southern Helmand. He repairs utilities equipment, such as generators and air conditioners, which keep forward operating bases and combat outposts ready and alert for the fight. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## VIDEO

### In their voices: Afghan elders speak about transition

By Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- In both English and Pashto, elders are speaking out about transition. Haji Ahmad Shah, a block elder for the Marjah district, speaks about the changes he has seen in Marjah in his video interview for a series titled "In their voices." The series provides personal accounts of the areas prior to coalition forces arriving, as well as current conditions, and allows the public to hear directly from Afghan community leaders, security officials and local government officials. Deputy District Governor Mohammad Rasoul Barakzai, deputy district governor of Marjah, talks about Marjah before coalition forces arrived and the progress and development

since insurgents were forced out of the area. This video is part of a series called "In their voices," a compilation of video interviews with key leaders in several areas of Helmand, to include Sangin and Marjah. The series provides personal accounts of the areas prior to coalition forces arriving, as well as current conditions. The "In their voices" series allows the public to hear directly from Afghan community leaders, security officials and local government officials. This unprecedented effort is being provided to inform the public on the key issues of security and development in the province. Several print articles will also be linked to the series to provide further background on the progress the Afghan people have experienced in Helmand as well.

[\(See the latest VIDEO: Marjah Elder Discusses Progress in Once-Troubled District/English\)](#)

[\(See the latest VIDEO: Marjah Elder Discusses Progress in Once-Troubled District/Pashto\)](#)

[\(See the latest VIDEO: Marjah Chief of Police Talks About State of District/English\)](#)

[\(See the latest VIDEO: Marjah Chief of Police Talks About State of District/Pashto\)](#)

## **MEDIA COVERAGE/Interviews**

Helmand governor visits victims of Kajaki bombing by Sgt. Laura Bonano republished by Firstpost.com, rr.com, schema-root.org, militarytimes.com, militarywebcam.com, i4U.com, my.afghan.com

Helmand Governor Visits Victims of Kajaki Suicide Bomber at Role 3 Hospital, Camp Bastion, Afghanistan b-roll by Cpl. Meredith Brown used on BFBS

Cpl. Reece photo Lodder featured in an article from The Week, "Will the Pentagon's \$450 billion budget cut 'decimate' the military?"

Major route construction projects near completion in Helmand, image gallery by Cpl. Meredith Brown republished in the North Shore Journal

Marine Cpl. David Russell, from Brooklyn, N.Y. – Radio Lia

British Army Maj. Paul Wincup, interview by Cpl. Meredith Brown

British Army Col. Duncan Wilson, Interview by Cpl. Meredith Brown

1st Lt. Adam Staff, a native of Walton, Ky; and ANP Lt. Mohammad Dawood interviews by Cpl. Reece Lodder

Lance Cpl. Jerod Byron Young, from Atlanta Ga., interview by Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

Afghan National Army Maj. Abdul Baqi interview by Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

### **SHOUTOUTS**

**Marine Sgt. Cedric McCormick, Baltimore, Md.**

**Marine Cpl. Antoine Whitley, San Francisco, Calif.**

**Marine Capt. Luis Reyna, San Francisco, Calif.**

**Marine Capt. James Lomsdale, New York, N.Y.**

**Marine 1st Lt. Patrick Darcey, Rehoboth, Mass.**

**Marine Cpl. Karl Winar, Flemington, N.J.**

**Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Elizar Dy, Fremont, Calif.**

**Marine Lance Cpl. Casey Roland, Brenham, Texas**