



----- Jan. 29, 2012 -----

## NEWS

### Taliban leader's control weakens as infighting infects group's top ranks

*Defence News*

Taliban leader Mullah Omar's grip on the insurgency is loosening as coalition battlefield successes in southern Afghanistan help sow discord among the Taliban top ranks and weaken the organisation, a top US commander has said. The US Marine Corps' Major General John Toolan, commander of coalition forces in the south west of Afghanistan, said: "What we have seen in the last couple of months is a lot of infighting among some of his senior leadership. There were some killings within and among the Taliban," he continued. Security analysts say that the discord among the Taliban's leadership is a sign that coalition battlefield successes have hurt the organisation, though it might also mean that the insurgency will increasingly be in the hands of more radical junior leaders who operate independently: "That could break either way," said David Barno, a retired three-star general at the 'Center for a New American Security', a defence policy think tank. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



### Musa Qal'eh: walking the path of progress

*By Cpl. Jeff Drew*



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Musa Qal'eh, once terrorized by insurgents, now shines as a symbol of progress in the province, thanks to the hard work and dedication of Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officials, Afghan security forces, Marines and sailors of the 2nd Marine Division (Forward), and other coalition partners. They have worked together to eliminate the insurgent threat in the area, and local Afghan officials have tightened security and invested in infrastructure and education, successfully laying a strong foundation for years to come. "Before, the security circle was very limited," said Naimatullah Sameen, district governor of Musa Qal'eh. "Nobody could walk around confidently in

the bazaar. Up to one kilometer around us, it was not possible to walk around. There was no coordination among government authorities, and we were in a very vulnerable position. We did operations in the north, south, west and east. We expanded security, established (checkpoints), helped people, and more than 30 kilometers the security has been expanded." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## ANA artillery fire lights the way of progress for Afghan security forces

By Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

FIRE BASE FIDDLER'S GREEN, Afghanistan -- Afghan National Security Forces have gained a new edge in the counterinsurgency fight in southern Helmand. Afghan National Army soldiers with 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, conducted an artillery demonstration, firing illumination rounds from Howitzer D-30s, for government officials and local elders from districts across southern Helmand here, Jan. 14. "This event gave the Afghan people in this area an opportunity to observe their soldiers performing their duties with very minimal support from coalition forces," said Capt. John Erskine, the office-in-charge of the Combat Support Advisory Team with 2nd



Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, and native of Coronado, Calif. The ANA artillerymen prepared for the demonstration for weeks, conducting independent and partnered training with their Marine counterparts five days a week, said ANA Lt. Col. Fazul Hazim, the commanding officer of 4/1/215. "For this mission, they conducted night training on the D-30," Hazim added. "They also exercised three night live fire rehearsals prior to the final shoot." Our artillery advisers trained the soldiers on fire direction and gunline procedures," Erskine said. "The training also focused on night missions, which is something new for the kandak." The demonstration was a significant step forward in the development of the 4th Kandak and the ANA's overall artillery capability. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Afghan forces, Echo Company oust insurgency, establish new security posts in Musa Qal'eh

By Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes



MUSA QAL'EH DISTRICT, Afghanistan – Marines with Echo Company and members of the Afghan National Security Forces are participating in Operation Double Check, an operation to promote legitimate governance within the Musa Qal'eh district. This operation further spread the influence of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to untouched areas and provided an opportunity for Afghan forces to take on a greater role in security efforts. Second Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, coordinated the operation launched Jan. 2 to eliminate insurgent fighters and establish Afghan Uniformed Police

security posts along the southern Musa Qal'eh wadi, a dry riverbed in Northern Helmand province. "The purpose was to clear the (insurgents) out of the southern Musa Qal'eh wadi and install a total of six Afghan Uniformed Police posts on both the east side and the west side of the wadi," said Capt. George J. Flynn III, a Woodbridge, Va., native and the commanding officer for Echo Company. "The idea (is) to connect the people of this area, the southern Musa Qal'eh wadi, to the district center at Musa Qal'eh." The villages around the wadi were cut off from each other and the district center because of the improvised explosive device-laced roads and the negative influence of the insurgency. Echo Company was tasked to clear the west side of the wadi so the communities would be able to reconnect. The battalion headquarters broke the operation into phases: clear the roads, give local residents freedom of movement, establish security measures in the area to prevent the insurgents' return, and assist the Afghans in taking charge of security in the area. Echo's 2nd and 3rd Platoons were inserted into the area under the cover of darkness during the operation. Marines and their Afghan Uniformed Police partners began knocking on doors of specifically targeted compounds just minutes after CH-53 Sea Stallion Helicopters dropped the reinforced rifle platoons off. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

# NATO claims 'successful year' in Afghanistan

By Defence News

A spokesman for NATO-led forces said that 2011 had been a 'remarkably successful year' in the fight against insurgents in Afghanistan and in the development of the Afghan security forces. In the southern Taliban stronghold, 'considerable advances' had been made in securing Kandahar City and its environs, said International Security Assistance Force spokesman Brigadier General Carsten Jacobson: "The success has been so great that insurgents have largely lost control of the area and now rely on IEDs [improvised explosive devices] as their primary method of attack," he said. And in the east, forces



had he said: "...significantly disrupted the Haqqani Network through Operations SHAMSHIR and KNIFE EDGE, where coalition forces captured or eliminated over 500 insurgent leaders and fighters last fall." The Haqqani Network has been blamed for a series of high-profile attacks in Kabul, including one on the US Embassy in September last year. The network is based in the Afghan-Pakistan border region, which Brigadier General Jacobson said would remain a key focus for operations. Kabul itself had, he said: "...become a thriving commercial capital, able to absorb and respond to spectacular attempts to disrupt security with resolute response to insurgent attacks, leaving the insurgents largely in a state of failure." Brigadier General Jacobson said Afghan forces were clearly in control of the city, as part of a phased transition ahead of a pull-out of NATO combat troops in 2014. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Combat engineers build posts during Operation Double Check to improve Musa Qal'eh's security

By Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde



PATROL BASE 7171, Afghanistan -- Marines from 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, spent the opening days of Operation Double Check building elevated security posts for Afghan National Security Force and Afghan National Police personnel. The posts, now complete, were placed in areas of southern Musa Qal'eh district, Helmand province, that lacked a coalition presence prior to the operation's start, Jan. 3 – areas that have been plagued by an active insurgency in recent years. The engineers are working in direct support of 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, during Double Check, and the platoon was split between Marines

building posts on the west side of the Musa Qal'eh wadi, or dry riverbed, supporting Echo Company, 2/4, and in the east assisting Fox Company, 2/4, during the construction period. "We are building posts on both sides of the wadi; half the platoon is over there and the other half is here," said Salt Lake City native Gunnery Sgt. Thomas Eardley, the platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon. "We're going to fortify these positions so the (Afghan Uniformed Police) and (Afghan National Army) can come in and control it with a little bit of Marine help and a lot of motivation." The engineers worked swiftly during the first week of the operation to complete the posts, spending many hours setting up and filling gabions, shoveling dirt, building berms and laying concertina wire – all with the Marines wearing full combat gear and using limited resources to accomplish their mission. "We've got one (bulldozer) and one (multi-purpose bucket loader) on each side of the wadi to do this, and that's it for heavy equipment; everything else is just manpower," said Eardley. "It's just hard work and motivation and then a couple pieces of heavy equipment to ensure we get the job done." Afghan Uniformed Police personnel selected the locations for the posts to be placed, choosing sites they felt to be easily tenable and visible to the public. The AUP patrolmen also helped with construction by filling sandbags and placing them on the posts as fortification. [\(Read the STORY\)](#) [\(See the b-roll VIDEO\)](#)

## UK troops fall in with MSB Marines during exchange program

By Sgt. Justin Shemanski

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Two soldiers with the British Army's Theater Equipment Support Battalion have spent the last several days turning wrenches among some of 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward)'s finest maintainers. Beginning Jan. 16, Lance Cpl. Craig Heaton and Craftsman Adam Evans traded places with a pair of their American counterparts for an opportunity to see how the Corps keeps their gear in the fight. The swap is part of an ongoing exchange program between Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2's Maintenance Company and their coalition counterparts at Camp Bastion. According to Maj. Brian Spooner, the



commanding officer of Maint. Co., it's all about maintaining positive relationships with our NATO partners. "It has allowed us to compare levels of maintenance and share ideas ... come up with unique solutions to unpredictable problems," said Spooner, a native of Fort Collins, Colo. The troops spent much of the week running diagnostics on various types of engines. Heaton, a vehicle mechanic and native of Northhamptonshire, England, noted an obvious difference between the ways the two forces approach equipment repair. The afternoon of Jan. 20 found the exchange pair at the Intermediate Maintenance Activity lot troubleshooting a Detroit Diesel V6 Logistics Vehicle System truck engine down to the component level – something quite different from what they would have done on the British side. Where the Marines do a lot of maintenance on site, Heaton explained that his unit would typically replace the whole part, an entire engine in this case, and send the broken piece of gear back to England for refurbishing. **(Read the STORY)**

## Bulk fuel Marines keep bases, operations running

By Cpl. Katherine M. Solano



FORWARD OPERATING BASE WHITEHOUSE, Afghanistan -- There is a platoon within 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward) that plays a vital role in every single ground operation conducted in the battlespace. The small number of Marines with Bulk Fuel Platoon, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, are spread over 19 different locations in Helmand province and are responsible for a fuel storage and distribution capacity of almost 2.5 million gallons. At each of their locations, they refuel tactical vehicles before and after operations, refill generators powering the bases, and even provide fuel for Afghan National Security Forces conducting coalition missions.

The responsibility of providing fuel for every operation out of FOB Whitehouse falls on two bulk fuel Marines and an engineer who was augmented to the unit to assist with the daily operations. "As a platoon, my Marines are doing the job of three companies," stated Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Lee, the bulk fuel officer for the platoon. Lee added that other companies throughout 9th ESB had stepped up to provide Marines to help support the fuel mission throughout the area. He pointed out how important it was for the battalion to come together to conduct large, widespread operations such as this. The mission does not include simply refilling vehicles, Lee explained. "We are trusted to safeguard coalition fuel," he began. "It is our job to account for each gallon and to ensure it is all up to military specifications. All of our sites maintain environmental regulations." This standard is upheld from the highest levels of leadership down to the operators who actually distribute the fuel. A regional site manager for the platoon, Sgt. Xuchill Laput, enforces strict checks and operating procedures on a daily basis at his sites. He acknowledges that it is not actually necessary to conduct daily thorough checks of all of the equipment and fuel lines, nor to change and clean filters throughout the pump system as often as they do. **(Read the STORY)**

## HEROES

### Marines in Afghanistan honor brethren killed in helicopter crash

By Cpl. Brian Adam Jones

CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan -- The Marines of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 363 filled the pews of a small chapel at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, to bid farewell to six fallen brothers, Jan. 24. In a somber scene, coalition forces gathered to memorialize the six Marines with the squadron who died when their CH-53D Sea Stallion heavy-lift helicopter crashed supporting combat operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan, Jan. 19. During the ceremony's final roll call, Sgt. Maj. Mitchell Green, the squadron's sergeant major, called the names of the fallen – Capt. Daniel B. Bartle, a native of Ferndale, Wash.; Capt. Nathan R. McHone, from Crystal Lake, Ill.; Master Sgt. Travis Riddick, a native of Centerville, Iowa; Cpl. Joseph D. Logan, of Willis, Texas; Cpl. Kevin J. Reinhard, from Colonia, N.J.; and Cpl. Jesse W. Stites, who grew up in Roxana, Ill., and Interlachen, Fla. "It is difficult to be here, easier to suppress our emotions and move on with our daily routine," said Lt. Col. Mark Revor, commanding officer of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 363, in his remarks at the ceremony. "It is difficult because they were more than friends, more than family – they were our brothers and our comrades." A



few hundred yards from the chapel, outside the squadron's hangar, the American flag flew at half-staff beside the squadron's sign depicting their logo, "The Lucky Red Lions." "It's hard to feel lucky today, but I know that I could not describe [it] better than to say I was lucky to serve with these men, lucky to have known them as well as I did," said Revor, "and I will be lucky indeed if I can brighten the days and nights of my friends the way that they brightened mine." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

### Princess unveils 'Heroes Wall' honouring three fallen soldiers from same school

Defence News



Three soldiers who died in Iraq and Afghanistan will always be remembered by their former school thanks to a Heroes Wall unveiled by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal last week. The brand new £18m Melior Community College in Scunthorpe was formally opened by Princess Anne, who toured the new buildings and met some of the 950 pupils. The Community College, which caters for 11-16 year olds, moved into the new buildings in June last year from two separate sites, replacing the Thomas Sumpter and South Leys Schools which amalgamated four years ago. Three former pupils who attended the school are Corporal Bryan Budd VC, Corporal Ben Leaning and Craftsman Anthony Lombardi, who lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The three soldiers' families and representatives of their regiments were invited to be present when the new Heroes Wall was unveiled, and to meet Princess Anne. The idea for the Wall came from an aspiration to raise £10,000 for the Help for Heroes charity, and staff and pupils bought slate tiles with their names on them. Above these fundraising tiles are commemorative tiles to the three fallen soldiers to perpetuate their memory within the school. Both Corporal Budd and his brother Stephen, who currently serves in the Army as a Warrant Officer (WO), attended Thomas Sumpter School - one of the schools that make up the new college: "The Princess asked about the idea behind the Heroes Wall and met the whole family," said WO Budd. "It is the first time that I have met her and it is nice of her to do this kind of event and support the military and their families." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## VIGNETTES

### Army retiree leads team to implement medical program

By Sgt. Laura Bonano

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Service members face a long journey toward recovery after sustaining injuries on the battlefield. Once they return stateside, many challenges will continue to test them. Physical rehabilitation, medical treatment and readjusting to everyday life can be a struggle. Dealing with lost or time-delayed medical records should not be another hurdle to cross. Steven Palmer, a twenty-one-year retired Sgt. 1st Class Army medic, led a team of civilian field service representatives to solve this problem when he first deployed to Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan in 2009 as a civilian. Palmer said he jumped at the chance to head up the program because he would be able to work with



service members again as the health information systems manager. A native of Alliance, Ohio, Palmer said he joined the military right after high school with his cousin for the adventure. He said he enjoyed it so much he decided to stay in until retirement. Palmer retired out of Fort Bragg, N.C. and now works as a civilian contractor out of his home in Ohio, when he is not deployed. Following a Congressional mandate, the team implemented the Theater Medical Information Program. The TMIP is an electronic medical system used to create a comprehensive overview of service members' medical records and documents. In essence, the same records available to service members in a garrison environment can be viewed at Combined Aide Stations in Afghanistan. Navy Capt. Jeffrey W. Timby, the Medical Director of Regional Command Southwest, said Palmer played a very important role in meeting the Congressional mandate for a theater-wide electronic medical record implementation. Palmer helped spread the TMIP across Helmand and Nimroz provinces. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

### Fox mobile Marines stay flexible during Operation Double Check

By Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde



PATROL BASE 7171, Afghanistan -- Armored trucks provide unique capabilities in a combat environment and mobile sections are often among the most utilized assets for a line company during an Afghanistan deployment. Missions tasked out to mobile sections can be highly variable – flexibility is a must for its Marines, especially during formal operations. The high-stress, sometimes tedious life of a mobile Marine in Afghanistan takes some getting used to as personal comfort gives way to mission accomplishment. Corporal John Kehoe, from Joliet, Ill.; Lance Cpl. Dakin M. Jausel, from Coulterville, Ill.; and Lance Cpl. Ryan J. Merritt, from Marshall, Minn.; all with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, have

served in the company's mobile section since arriving to Afghanistan in late summer as the crew of Truck Four. All three Marines are mortar-men by trade, having no experience working in a truck crew prior to the battalion's pre-deployment training evolution. Their new role as a truck crew – Kehoe the vehicle commander, Jausel the driver and Merritt the turret gunner – took some adjustment at first, but they quickly adapted. "It's definitely something that takes getting used to – sleeping in a seat, not being able to stretch out; being stuck in your gear for nine, 10 days at a time; eating nothing but (Meals, Ready to Eat) – things like that," said Kehoe, 23. [\(Read the STORY\)](#) [\(See the VIDEO interview\)](#) [\(B-Roll\)](#)

## New Jersey Marine takes troops from Parris Island to Afghanistan

By Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes

MUSA QAL'EH DISTRICT, Afghanistan -- Lance Cpl. Michael S. Ussery walked into the Echo Company headquarters to begin his morning routine as one of the company clerks and didn't pay much attention to who was in the office. Then he heard a voice that made his body lock into place and stare into the abyss like a recruit during his first few unsure moments aboard a Marine Corps recruit depot. An all-too-familiar voice belted, "I know you're going to say something there you!" The voice belonged to Staff Sgt. Peter S. Ramos, a Patterson, N.J., native and Ussery's former drill instructor. Their reunion came a couple years after Ramos marched Ussery across the parade deck during graduation from recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C. Ramos is now the platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon, Echo Company, and has two former recruits serving under his charge. Ramos serves as the senior enlisted Marine in his platoon and advises the platoon commander in administrative, logistical, and tactical decisions concerning the platoon. He is also in charge of ensuring the morale, welfare and discipline of the troops in his platoon, which was also a large portion of his job as a drill instructor. He said his experience as a drill instructor plays a big part in how he trains the Marines under his supervision and care. Ramos, who joined the Marine Corps just days before 9/11, was aware of the possibility of deploying to combat, but did not foresee the likelihood of such a deployment during a time of peace. That stood true until news of the terrorist attacks changed the outlook of his drill instructors and the face of the training regimen at the recruit depot. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Marine's best friend, insurgent's worst enemy

By Cpl. Johnny Merkley



FORWARD OPERATING BASE GERONIMO, Afghanistan -- When Cpl. Ross T. Gundlach enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2008, the last thing he expected to do was rely on a dog for survival while patrolling the rugged terrain of southern Helmand province. Gundlach, a 24-year-old native of Madison, Wis., was first stationed aboard Camp Foster, Okinawa, Japan, where he worked as a supply manager. His hard work during the first year of his enlistment didn't go unnoticed, and Gundlach was offered a position as the driver and assistant for Brig. Gen. Craig C. Crenshaw, the commanding general of 3rd Marine Logistics Group, for the second year of his Okinawa tour. "When they came to me with the job, I obviously didn't turn in down," Gundlach said. "It was a great opportunity and I learned a lot from the experience." After two years on

Okinawa, Gundlach was scheduled to transfer to a different unit. With several options on the table, Gundlach believed it was his duty to deploy to Afghanistan to serve his country, and seek the once in a lifetime experience that can only be found on the battlefield. "I requested to be with an infantry battalion, even though I was fully aware that I would be working as a supply clerk and probably not see any action," said Gundlach. "The sergeant major told me there was an opening with 2/6, so I jumped on that opportunity." After arriving at 2/6, he was given another, and more unexpected, opportunity of a lifetime. Gundlach was offered the job of dog handler, and was one of only two Marines in the battalion without an infantry background to be selected for that duty. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Minnesota Marine reenlists to lead Marines in Afghanistan

By Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez

CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan -- Leadership is, perhaps, the trait most commonly associated with the Marine Corps. From private to general, leadership is a quality that every Marine can take hold of, regardless of rank. One Marine has led at the tip of the spear over the course of a 16-year career. He is doing so once again, currently serving with Regimental Combat Team 5 in southern Helmand province. Staff Sgt. Jeremy Martinez, the RCT-5 Personal Security Detachment platoon commander, reenlisted here, Jan. 14, to continue his work as a leader of Marines.

“Leading Marines is, honestly, the one thing I’ve aspired to do since I was a lance corporal,” said Martinez, a

35-year-old native of Moorhead, Minn. “As I continue through my career, that’s all I could hope for...that I continue to have Marines to lead and mentor them to be, not only better Marines, but better people in general,” Martinez added. Martinez has served in the Marine Corps since 1996. In addition to his current deployment, he’s served two combat tours in Iraq (2002 and 2005). Throughout his career, Martinez has held multiple leadership positions with every unit in which he has served. He has led Marines as a machine gun section leader, platoon sergeant and company gunnery sergeant, to name a few. His current role as the PSD platoon commander places the safety and security of the RCT-5 commanding officer, Col. Roger Turner, directly in his hands. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Tatum Marine dreams of horses, ranches and Texas Rangers

By Staff Sgt. Robert Storm



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan -- “I’ve always known what I wanted to do in my life,” said Lance Cpl. Michael Autrey, data system specialist, Regimental Combat Team 6, from Tatum, Texas. Autrey, 19, is not your typical Marine. He joined the Marine Corps in June 2009 because of a promise from his great grandfather to serve at least one enlistment in the Marines to receive the discipline which would make him successful in life. “He’s eager to learn. He tries hard at everything he does,” said Staff Sgt Stephen Dunmire, data chief, RCT-6, from Pittsburg, Pa. “He’s driven. If he’s not good at something he’ll keep trying at it; he’s not afraid to fail and learn from it.” Though Autrey is constantly pushing himself to be a better Marine, he doesn’t plan to serve more than one tour of enlistment. One thing he does want to do is attend the Martial Arts Center of Excellence (MACE) and become a martial arts instructor before he gets out. “I like the Marine Corps; I just have other plans,” Autrey said. “I got some training in weapons and martial arts, and I’ll get my college paid for. After that I plan to move to the next step in my life.” Autrey smiled a lot but joked little. He

already owns land and he plans to build a recreational vehicle park when he returns home from Afghanistan. “I want to build a few RV parks – just enough to live comfortably while I focus on my other goals. I don’t need to be a millionaire,” Autrey said. “It’s a low investment, with a high profit and quick return.” Before joining the Marines he worked on a ranch training horses and competing in rodeos and other horse related events. Autrey has a passion for horses, and he said his life plans include teaching people how to train horses, owning and running a ranch for special needs children and even becoming a Texas Ranger. Since he was 5, Autrey has been learning to train horses. As he spoke, his enthusiasm grows with words and gestures. He told how his grandfather and a family friend, a native Cherokee Indian, taught him to treat horses as equals. Whereas most trainers use force applied techniques to train their horses, Autrey’s family techniques do not. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

# Doing the right thing always: Bulk fuel Marine learns lessons in ROTC, applies them to essential missions in Afghanistan

By Cpl. Katherine M. Solano

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WHITEHOUSE, Afghanistan - With a budding interest in joining the military beginning at a young age, Sgt. Xuchill Laput, a regional site manager with 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), never really considered another option. While he originally enlisted to be a combat engineer, over the years, Laput has come to appreciate the importance of being a bulk fuel Marine. He recognizes that every mission requires fuel, and it is up to the Bulk Fuel Platoon to keep that mission fulfilled. Laput says his interest in the military was solidified by one man in particular: his Reserve Officers Training Corps instructor in high school, Senior Chief Petty Officer Mark Williams. While attending Lincoln High School in Stockton, Calif., Laput stayed involved with the ROTC program and says he gleaned so much from it, to this day he continues to return to visit his mentor. "I grew up without a strong male figure," began Laput. "[Williams] was that figure for me in a lot of ways. He didn't tell me what to do, but he gave me advice on how to do the right thing, even in hard situations." It is this lesson that Laput says has carried over most throughout his Marine Corps career, both in general, and as a bulk fuel specialist. He says that everyone, not just Marines, should wake up in the morning with a goal to do the right thing throughout the day. This attitude carries over into his daily routine as a fuel farm manager. Laput stressed the fact that every morning at the fuel farm, he and his Marines wake up early and go through an extensive checklist of all of the equipment. He further explained the checklist procedures to include walking every inch of the fuel lines to look for leaks and tears, checking valves, cleaning filters and ensuring log books are up to date. While these procedures do not necessarily need to be done every day, the habit the Marines have gotten into by doing them every single morning solidifies Laput's belief in doing the right thing. **(Read the STORY)**



## VIDEO

### Harvest Hawk, Package

By Cpl. Daniel Wulz



KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan -- VMGR-252 Squadron utilizes the KC-130J aircraft, the Harvest Hawk, to support ground units in Afghanistan. If ground troops take enemy fire, the Harvest Hawk can provide close air support utilizing Harrier and Cobra pilots as WSOs or weapons systems operators aboard the Hawk while the C130 pilots navigate and control the aircraft. A special infrared sensor allows the WSOs to target the enemy on the ground. The Harvest Hawk is the first C-130 to ever be fitted with Hellfire and Griffin missiles for use in supporting ground troops in close combat engagements. The 252 is the second squadron to be outfitted with these weapons systems and has assisted in the pioneering of the Harvest Hawk mission. **(See the VIDEO) (B-Roll) (252 Squadron at Kandahar Air Field)**

## 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.

**(VIDEO: Musa Qal'eh deputy district governor discusses progress (English))**

**(VIDEO: Musa Qal'eh deputy district governor discusses progress (Pashto))**

**(VIDEO: Musa Qal'eh district governor speaks about progress (English))**

**(VIDEO: Musa Qal'eh district governor speaks about progress (Pashto))**

**(VIDEO: Helmand dir. of food dist. discusses wheat seed distribution in Musa Qal'eh (English))**

**(VIDEO: Helmand dir. of food dist. discusses wheat seed distribution in Musa Qal'eh (Pashto))**

## Old and New Gym Aboard FOB Delaram II

By Staff Sgt. Robert Storm



FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan - U.S. Marines are world renown for physical fitness and endurance. The Marines at FOB Delaram II have a better reason to keep that reputation going now that a new permanent gym opened January 23, 2012. "The first thing that I noticed is you can breathe easier," said Sgt. Rolando G. Ventura, S-1 noncommissioned officer-in-charge, Regimental Combat Team 6, from Brentwood, N.Y. "In the tents, it was hard to breathe while you worked out. It's also a lot bigger so you're not cramped next to one another while you work out." While the Marines at Delaram II live in tents, efforts have been made to increase

morale. The previous gym was four tents connected together, with pull-up bars and much of the other equipment outside. The tents were dimly lit, drafty and Marines constantly jostled one another as they completed their workout. The new gym is a permanent structure boasting more than 6,000 square feet of concrete floors. It was designed and built by Unity Logistics and Supply Services Company and cost \$303,000. Its original completion date was estimated to be September 2011 but logistical problems delayed the opening until January. "Obviously we're just happy that our Marines will have the opportunity to utilize the new facility," Sgt. Maj. Deets said, regimental sergeant major, RCT-6, from Annandale, Va. "The new gym is a welcome addition, it's going to do great things for increasing the quality of life for the Marines aboard Delaram II." **(See the VIDEO) (Read the STORY)**

## **Garmsir district community council meeting**

*By Cpl. Reece Lodder*

GARMSIRI, Afghanistan -- At Gamrsir District Center, Helmand province, Afghanistan, members of the Garmsir district community council speak about progress and challenges in Garmsir with U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Matthew Palma, the commanding officer of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, and his staff, here, Jan. 18. "America's Battalion" is aiding Afghan Nation Security Forces in assuming lead security responsibility over Garmsir in southern Helmand province. Illustrating the progress is a photo essay of Afghans preparing a mixture of mud and concrete while constructing the ceiling to a school building here, Jan. 19. Twelve permanent schools are currently under construction by local contractors in Garmsir district. U.S. Marines with the civil affairs team in support of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, visited several sites to inspect the structures and ensure compliance with the quality assurance standards of the Afghan government. The buildings are projected for mid-year completion. **(B-Roll) (See the GALLERY)**



## **MEDIA COVERAGE/Interviews**

**Lt. Col. Matthew Palma, Bristol, R.I., interview by Cpl. Reece Lodder**

**Sgt. Christopher Lemke talks to Macomb Township Patch, Macomb Mich**

**Cpl. Joseph Schank – Radio Lia**

**Marine Cpl. David Russell – Radio Lia**

**Solar energy project in southern Afghanistan by Cpl. Meredith Brown, republished in FeedAgg.com**

**Combat engineers perform route recon mission, paving the way for road improvements in Afghanistan by Cpl. Meredith Brown republished by Military News: Updates**

**3/7 I Co. Marines maintain local relationships by Cpl. Ed Galo republished in Soldier of Fortune**

**Data systems specialists keep Marine Corps running by Staff Sgt. Robert Storm republished in America Conservative Daily**

**eMarine: Daily 400-word profile on random Marine from RCT6**

## **SHOUTOUTS**

by Cpl. Reece Lodder

**Lance Cpl. Alex Akhromtsev, San Francisco 49'ers**  
**Sgt. Melvin Derrick Alegria III, San Francisco 49'ers**  
**Gunnery Sgt. Germaen Ramirez, San Francisco 49'ers**