



----- Feb. 04, 2012 -----

NEWS

Operation Double Check: Through the eyes of infantrymen

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde



PATROL BASE 7171, Afghanistan -- Infantry Marines deployed to Afghanistan endure trials that Americans unfamiliar with military life cannot begin to fathom. Inclement weather, insatiable hunger, perpetual fatigue and direct combat with enemy forces are challenges frequently confronting the infantryman because he regularly operates in austere, hostile conditions. The infantry Marine in Afghanistan, commonly 18 years old and fresh out of high school, is often significantly more mature than others his age because of his unique experiences. The Marines of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, face the

challenges of combat as they participate in Operation Double Check, an ongoing battalion-level offensive to rid areas in southern Musa Qal'eh district, Helmand province, of insurgents and establish a government presence in places that have been insurgent safe havens in recent years. Double Check started in the early hours of Jan. 3 when the infantrymen, commonly called grunts, helicopter inserted into the area under the blanket of darkness and began clearing compounds believed to be improvised explosive device manufacturing factories. An early discovery of contraband suggested the enemy might be near. "We moved into a compound; it ended up being abandoned, but after we searched it, we found one room that had homemade explosive [materials] all over the floor and walls," said Staff Sgt. Justin Smith, a squad leader with Fox Company from Clinton Township, Mich. **(Read the STORY)**

RAF snipers protect Afghan family from insurgent attack

U.K. Defence News

Snipers from the RAF Regiment used their skills and training to protect an Afghan family caught up in an attack by insurgents in Helmand province. Gunners from II Squadron RAF Regiment got local people, including children, to safety before turning their weapons on the attackers. The incident happened during an operation by the unit in Helmand province where they have been working hard to build relations with the local community and regularly hold shuras (meetings) with local elders. The news coincides with today's (1 February 2012) 70th anniversary of the formation of the RAF Regiment in 1942. A unit from II Squadron, which is normally based at RAF Honington in Suffolk, was on a foot patrol when the attack happened. The patrol, which included snipers, were sat down talking to elders and children when they came under fire from an insurgent position.



Reacting quickly, the patrol ensured the civilians were out of harm's way before taking cover themselves. Having positively identified the firing position, the RAF Regiment patrol returned fire with a range of weapons including the L115A3 long range rifle, a state-of-the-art weapon used to locate and eliminate enemy activity. After the insurgent threat had passed the local family thanked the RAF Regiment by passing around naan bread. The RAF Regiment, along with the RAF Police, provide essential force protection for the strategically-important Camp Bastion and the local area. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Afghan Border Police, U.S. Marine partnership furthers governance in southern Helmand

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Reece Lodder



BANADAR, Afghanistan -- Situated in the southern portion of Afghanistan's Helmand province, Garmsir district has historically been a highway for insurgent movement from Pakistan. Though Garmsir is separated from the country's northern border by only the sparsely populated Khan-Neshin district, it's largely considered to border Pakistan with respect to human terrain. In its open desert, an area with a history of tribal conflict, the growing Afghan Border Police force has deepened its roots and established governance through the mentorship of U.S. Marines from Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. In existence for only eight

years, the ABP is a younger and significantly smaller force than other branches of the Afghan security infrastructure. Nonetheless, its mission is vital as Afghan forces prepare to assume lead security responsibility in Garmsir. "If the ABP didn't exist, there would be holes all along Afghanistan's southern border," said Capt. Jason Armas, 33, the commanding officer of Weapons Co., 3/3, and a native of Rye, N.Y. "They're the first line of defense from [insurgents] trying to launch an attack from Pakistan." While the ANA and ANP are committed to the local populace in heavily populated areas along the central Helmand River valley, the ABP are a mobile force ready to fill in where needed. "We're protecting our border but we're also in the cities fighting against the Taliban," said Pvt. Ghul Agha, a squad leader with 1st Tolai, 2nd Kandak, Helmand ABP. "We're here to destroy them and force them out of Garmsir." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Marines rescue Afghan Policemen from collapsed building

By Marine Cpl. Ed Galo

SANGIN TUFAAN, Afghanistan -- During a routine key leader engagement, Jan. 22, in Sangin Tufaan, Afghanistan, Marines with Afghan National Civil Order Police Mentorship Team Two, with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, found themselves in a situation that was anything but routine. During the engagement, an over-watch post constructed out of sandbags on top of a three story hardened structure collapsed into itself due to recent inclement weather. When the over-watch post collapsed, there were two ANCOP members inside who were buried and trapped under the rubble. Upon hearing the commotion from the wreck, some of the Marines with PET-II immediately ran to investigate. "I was



in one of the vehicles that were providing security when it all started," said Cpl. William Weeks, team leader, PMT-II, from Pensacola, Fla. "I ran to the roof when I heard all the noise. I saw the post had collapsed through two or three stories. I ran down the stairs to try and help." While Weeks was running down to help he found there was razor-sharp concertina wire and fallen lockers blocking his path. "We just started moving all the stuff out of the way, the c-wires, lockers, sandbags, everything," he continued. "I didn't know at the time if there were people there. I just started trying to clear everything out." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Sangin: Transforming insurgent hotbed into safe haven

Story by Marine Cpl. Jeff Drew, Photos by Marine Cpl. James Clark



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Local leaders and representatives of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan are working toward a brighter future in Sangin district and have made considerable progress in the past year. They have effectively transformed the once teeming insurgent hotbed into a relatively secure area where residents feel safe. "In the past, the situation of Sangin district was unacceptable to the people of Sangin," said Afghan National Army Lt. Col. Hazbullah, the commanding officer of 2nd Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps. "In the area of five kilometers away, our security forces did not have access; the area was under the threat of the enemy. By the cooperation of Afghan units, there is [now] security and there is a peaceful situation." Afghan security forces began to take on more responsibility this summer by leading patrols and security efforts in the area, as Marines and sailors with 2nd Marine Division (Forward) began to step back into a role that was more advisory in nature.

"Over the past five months, the situation in Sangin district is improving," said Hazbullah. "We are moving toward development. Today we have been able to gain the trust of the public. The people are confident that [security forces] are able to defend the property and honor of the people. The confidence and trust of the people is a result of the achievement of the security forces here." With a solid and confident Afghan security force taking the forefront, local leaders have begun to focus on rebuilding key aspects of daily life in the district, concentrating mainly on education. With three schools currently in operation and a new high school under construction, the registered number of students rose from 267 at the beginning of 2011 to more than 2,000 at the beginning of 2012. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Afghan police and British soldiers take on insurgents

U.K. Defence News

Soldiers from 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (1 YORKS) and their Afghan police partners have taken on insurgents during high-tempo operations deep in Taliban territory. Troops from B Company, 1 YORKS, took the fight to the insurgents during a recent patrol with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province. The soldiers, who trained for the rigours of their operational tour for more than a year, are intent on building on the progress made in previous tours. Supported by the Afghan National Police and their local volunteer counterparts, the Afghan Local Police, Patrol Commander Lieutenant Steve White led his team of nine men for over five hours into the Green Zone with a protective Apache gunship overhead ready to strike if needed. The insurgents constantly retreated in the face of the patrol, allowing the Afghan police to search several compounds of interest with relative ease. But, when the patrol began to withdraw, the insurgents attacked, using PKM general purpose machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. The 1 YORKS troops took cover and were joined by a group of Afghan police, who moved into position to attempt to capture two of the enemy fighters. The two insurgents panicked and retreated to the cover of a wood, pursued by British soldiers and the ANSF. After a fierce fire fight one of the insurgents was killed and the other fled. When the patrol eventually withdrew, the soldiers took the machine gun from one of the insurgents with them. Lieutenant White said the success of the patrol was, in part, down to the emergence of the Afghan Local Police. He said: "Today's patrol was a great example of how when working with our ANSF partners we can out-think, out-manoeuvre and ultimately defeat an insurgency that is struggling to match us. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Mobile command and control keeps Marines connected in southern Helmand

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez



CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan -- Whether Marines are patrolling, providing security, or delivering supplies, communication is key to the success of their missions across southern Helmand. The mobile modular command and control vehicle, or M2C2, provides this communication capability for Col. Roger Turner, commanding officer of Regimental Combat Team 5, and his staff, during battlefield tours and mobile missions, and to subordinate battalions operating in the RCT-5 battlespace. The M2C2 is a modified mine resistant ambush protected vehicle, equipped with computers and telecommunications equipment to provide wireless communications options for a commander's vehicle

with anyone from anywhere on the battlefield. "The M2C2 is a command operations center on the move," said Cpl. Ivan D. Garciamunoz, a radio operator with the RCT-5 communications platoon and 21-year-old native of Riverside, Calif. "All the capabilities you have in a COC (combat operations center), you have it in this vehicle." The vehicle is operated by a three-man team from the RCT-5 communications platoon. Their primary mission is to monitor and keep open lines of communication in the M2C2 while the commander's convoy is on the move. "My job involves establishing and maintaining radio communications," said Garciamunoz. "When entering a battalion's area of operation, I call in to inform them of our presence in their battlespace." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Echo Company's 3rd Platoon supports Afghan forces to set secure foundation

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes

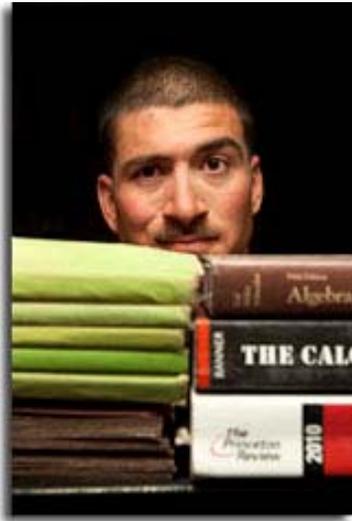
MUSA QAL'EH DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan -- The blades of a CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter stirred up the Afghan dust as it came in to land. The Marines inside heard the echo of the churning wind reverberate off the ground, and they knew they were close. The Marines flipped their night-vision goggles down, setting the nocturnal optic in place over their dominant eye in preparation to launch Operation Double Check. Members of Afghan National Security Forces are working with Marines from 3rd Platoon, Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, in the operation. Flown in by 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), 3rd Platoon was one of four platoons in the battalion's air assault element and has been instrumental in contributing to the successes of the



operation, according to 1st Lt. Mark Capansky, the platoon commander for 3rd Platoon. The Woodstock, Va., native said his Marines knew the terrain like the back of their hands and hit the ground with the goals of promoting legitimate governance and increasing security within the Musa Qal'eh district. They worked to clear the insurgents out of the area, while the Afghan Uniformed Police established new security posts around the southern Musa Qal'eh wadi, a dry riverbed and landmark within the district. "That was the second time 3rd Platoon had (flown in) -- we did it for Operation Western Gambit. Flying in to conduct (Operation) Double Check, with the whole platoon flying in helo, you feel confident for the fact you rehearse it two or three times a day before the operation," said Staff Sgt. Peter S. Ramos, a Patterson, N.J., native and the platoon sergeant for the platoon. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Killing Time: Hitting The Books

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Reece Lodder



This is the fifth installment in a series on U.S. Marines and Navy corpsmen from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, based out of Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. After laboring through training in the California desert in 2011, they are now supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Grueling days and the absence of home's amenities here make their work exhausting and their down time precious. They labor with little and appreciate the simple. This is their deployment grind. COMBAT OUTPOST TORBERT, Afghanistan -- The small, dusty tent reeks of filthy gear and grimy infantrymen who haven't seen a real shower in three months. As the day falls into night, they've found a moment to escape the grind of their deployment duties. They stretch out on their cots, enjoying the chance to joke around or watch movies. Unaffected by the cackle of his roommates, U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Edward Knudsen quietly sits on a green folding cot. He's plugged into the soft sounds of a movie soundtrack and lost in a thick math textbook. The 25-year-old is mentally spent from his day's work but he has a commitment to uphold. With a view to future schooling, he's pledged to keep his mind sharp by hitting the books. "Studying allows

me to measure my progress and get something out of my down time," said Knudsen, a native of Rapid City, S.D. "I'd rather see myself going through 1,400 pages of an SAT study guide during the deployment than knocking out six seasons of a television show." This unobstructed time is precious to Knudsen. During his second deployment to Afghanistan, the mortarman is filling the demanding billet of armory custodian for Headquarters Platoon, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. **(Read the STORY)**

Locals aid Afghan and British troops in seizure of insurgent arms caches

U.K. Defence News

British soldiers and their Afghan Army partners have discovered bomb-making equipment and ammunition after a local Afghan directed them to insurgent arms caches. Troops from C Company, 2nd Battalion The Rifles (2 RIFLES), were on a routine patrol with Afghan National Army (ANA) warriors when they were approached by a local Afghan who invited the patrol over for a shura - an impromptu meeting that involves chatting and drinking 'chai' (tea). The man disclosed that he and his family had been suffering from intimidation by insurgents, and so, after receiving reassurance of protection by the ANA and ISAF forces, he told the patrol the whereabouts of two Taliban 'hides' or weapons caches. The man showed the joint patrol to an uninhabited compound with two separate caches inside. The first cache contained improvised explosive device components, including pressure pads, battery packs and detonators, which were all picked up by the patrol's trained search dog. The second cache contained ammunition and a radio transmitter commonly used by the Taliban. All were heavily waterproofed. An ammunition specialist, along with a specially-trained team designed to remove improvised explosive devices from the ground, were on call to remove the IED components and they are now on their way back to the UK for exploitation. **(Read the STORY)**



Magnificent Bastards' fill in between scenes: Troops decompress during Operation Double Check

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes



MUSA QAL'EH DISTRICT, Afghanistan -- When the "Magnificent Bastards" with Echo Company are not actively engaged in seeking out and destroying the enemy, they do a number of things to take their minds off of the war and help their Afghan counterparts. Marines and sailors with 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, are partnered with Afghan National Security Forces to bring the fight to the enemy, but they also take time to decompress during ongoing operations. For the modern warrior, who has the most advanced war-fighting technology at his fingertips, it's hard for some to imagine a life without the World Wide Web, running water or, in some instances, even electricity. The Marines with Echo

Company have grown accustomed to a simpler way of life while conducting operations through mud-hut villages in northern Helmand province. The Marines with Echo Company find a variety of ways to adapt to their surroundings, overcome boredom, and entertain themselves to fill down time. Playing cards, miniature board games, and trading off items from their Meals-Ready-to-Eat to create combat recipes are a few things the troops do to fill their time when they are not patrolling through the Musa Qal'eh district. Combat is a stressful working environment for any service member, but the Bastards take a very simplistic approach to taking their minds off of the realities of war, providing the physical and mental recuperation needed to maintain a combat mindset and operations. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Rain, snow, dead of night finds postal Marines working

Story, photos and video by Marine Staff Sgt. Robert Storm

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Afghanistan -- "Rain, snow, dark of night, we're always working," said Sergeant Jerusa Muncy, 27, noncommissioned officer in charge, Delaram post office, from Bronx, N.Y. "Someone always has to be in the postal tent for security reasons. We never leave the mail unguarded." There are two postal Marines aboard Camp Delaram from 2nd Marine Logistics Group and they take their job very seriously. Accompanying Muncy, is Lance Cpl. Jasmine Jones, 21, postal worker, from Queens N.Y. They are responsible for delivery and shipping of all packages to NATO military and civilian personnel aboard FOB Delaram. "We have 2,000-3,000 pounds of mail come in every other day. We take care of all the mail except the Afghan nationals'," Jones said. "Since it's only a two-Marine shop, we need working parties (of Marines) to come help us; otherwise we'd never get the job done." While the hard work doesn't bother them, they do admit that sometimes Marines try to send packages home with things they shouldn't. Most of the time the Marines just don't realize the items are contraband. However, occasionally Marines try to ship home things that they know won't be accepted. "We have to check all the mail, so we usually catch anything, they like to try and send rocks and sand, but we don't allow it because the bacteria here is different than that back home and it could cause problems," Jones said. [\(Read the STORY\)](#) [\(See the VIDEO\)](#)



Explosive Hazard Reduction Course graduates at Helmand academy

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Meredith Brown



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Twenty-six Afghan National Security Forces students at the Joint Sustainment Academy Southwest aboard Camp Leatherneck graduated from the Explosive Hazard Reduction Course, Feb. 2. The four-week course taught the Afghan force students how to safely sweep for, identify and destroy improvised explosive devices in place, in addition to disposing of unexploded ordnance. Showing their support at the graduation was Maj. Gen. John A. Toolan, commanding general Regional Command Southwest and II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), Maj. Gen. Asmatullah Dawlatzai, commanding general 707th Zone Afghan Uniformed Police, and Brig. Gen.

Zamin Hussain, executive officer for the Afghan National Army 215th Corps. While addressing the students during the graduation, Toolan drew a comparison between the progress and security the Afghan National Security Forces provide and the education of the local Afghan population. Two years ago, there were not any schools or teachers operating in Helmand province, stated Toolan Now, there are about 135 school and more than 1,600 teachers in the province. "That would not have happened if we didn't have people like (the graduates), who took the time to study their profession and provide the security in Helmand province that is needed to bring the institutions of the government back alive here in Helmand," said Toolan, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y. **(Read the STORY)**

Afghan police chief helps reintroduce kites to the Helmand skies

U.K. Defence News

The once common sight of children flying kites in an area of Helmand province has returned after the Taliban, who banned the sport, were driven out. Youngsters in Kopak, in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province, were presented with the traditional symbol of Afghanistan's culture by the local Chief of Police, and within minutes the local children were seen flying kites in the Helmand skies.

Kite-flying is a traditional pastime in Afghanistan and kites were a common sight until the activity was banned under Taliban rule. The idea to reintroduce them in the local area was the brainchild of Lance Corporal Emma Pengilly, of D Company, 5th Battalion The Rifles (5 RIFLES), who operate in the region. Lance Corporal Pengilly discussed the project with the local Chief of the Afghan Uniform Police, Lieutenant Mirza Khan, and then raised the idea with local Afghans, obtaining a positive response from the mullah of the local mosque. Lieutenant Khan attended a shura, or meeting, with local elders and asked if they would like kites for their children - and the answer was resoundingly positive. Within minutes of the shura ending, one of the kites, distinctive by its Afghan traditional colours of green and yellow, was seen flying high in the sky. Lance Corporal Pengilly said: "The mullah of the local mosque burst into a huge smile the first time we mentioned the idea to him, and the local people have responded really well to the idea of the kites. "It was great to see them feeling secure and thinking towards passing an important part of their heritage onto their children." Lieutenant Khan said: "I used to fly kites when I was young and I really enjoyed giving out the kites so that the children can fly them. I wish there was enough for me to have a kite to fly myself!" **(Read the STORY)**



HEROES

Afghanistan chapel dedicated to fallen Marines

Story by Marine Cpl. Justin Boling, Photos by Marine Lance Cpl. Robert Carrasco



CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - A newly-constructed chapel at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, was dedicated in a ceremony Jan. 31 to Marines who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country. During the ceremony, troops gathered at the chapel to read scripture, sing songs and watch the placement of polished wood plaques bearing the names of their fallen brothers. "Originally, the chapel was just going to be called the 'Flightline Chapel,'" explained U.S. Navy Capt. Rondall Brown, the command chaplain for 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward). "After reflecting on the loss and the sacrifice of these men, this chapel had to stand for something more."

The Flightline Memorial Chapel is now dedicated to all members of the Marine Corps aviation community who have lost their lives serving in southwestern Afghanistan. "I looked at these men and their faithfulness to their commitment to protecting our freedoms, to the point that they gave their own lives for it," Brown said. The chapel, a small, unassuming metal building, sits just across the street from hangars where Marine Corps helicopters launch around the clock providing air support for NATO's International Security Assistance Force troops fighting insurgency throughout southwestern Afghanistan. Brown said the Flightline Memorial Chapel will serve as a place of reflection for troops of all faiths, and stand as a sanctuary from the stresses of deployment. "When you first walk in, the first thing you will see are plaques bearing the names of fallen heroes," said Brown. "Unfortunately, I know that they will not be the last to pay such a steep price, and this chapel stands for all of those who gave their life and those that will in the future." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Princess Anne presents 2 LSR with Afghanistan campaign medals

U.K. Defence News

Her Royal Highness Princess Anne, The Princess Royal, has presented personnel from 2 Logistic Support Regiment (2 LSR) with campaign medals following their return from a demanding tour in Afghanistan. During their tour, which took place between March and November 2011, personnel from 2 LSR spread out across Helmand province in support of Germany-based 20th Armoured Brigade, providing transport and communications expertise and also working closely with the Afghan National Army to help prepare them to take over the security of their own country. Princess Anne, who is the Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Logistic Corps, presented medals to 2 LSR during a ceremony held at Princess Royal Barracks in northern Germany on Thursday 26 January 2012



before attending a specially-arranged reception with military personnel and their families. Addressing the soldiers during the parade, she said: "It is with great pride that I am able to be here with you and your families to present your Operational Service Medals for Operation HERRICK 14 - medals that have been hard-earned whilst deployed either with the Close Support Logistic Regiment or as a member of the Theatre Logistic Group." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Duchess of Cornwall presents medals to medics returned from Afghanistan

U.K. Defence News



The Duchess, who is Commodore-in-Chief of the Royal Naval Medical Services, presented Afghanistan medals to more than 200 men and women from all three Services at a parade on Friday at HMS Excellent in Portsmouth. By far the greatest number of personnel came from the Royal Navy, which led the joint medical support for Operation HERRICK 14. Some of the men and women on parade were receiving a medal for their first tour of duty, others had already completed several tours. All the men and women were logistics and medical specialists who provided trauma care, first aid and logistics support to UK and coalition forces. The medical support was not confined to the hospital in Camp Bastion -

men and women from the Close Support Medical Regiment also accompanied 10,000 foot patrols across Helmand province, and provided medical care in the many forward locations. Among those receiving medals was Commander Carol Betteridge from Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service. As commanding officer of the military hospital in Camp Bastion she was responsible for running the hospital and supervising all of its multinational staff. During the six months of HERRICK 14, 374 people worked in the hospital, including regular and reserve personnel from 61 different units and clinical staff from the UK, USA, Denmark and Estonia. Commander Betteridge said: "Running the hospital was a great challenge, involving people from 61 units, four nations, regulars, reservists and civilians. It was a great example of team work in action." She added: "This is a very special day for us in the Naval Service, because the general public think of land operations in Afghanistan as being Army-specialised, but in fact the Royal Navy has been out there since it all began. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

VIGNETTES

Georgia native helps create brighter future in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes

MUSA QAL'EH DISTRICT, Afghanistan -- Michael S. Ussery and his older brother dreamed of a life bigger than what they believed the small town of Rochelle, Ga., had to offer. After weighing his options, Ussery found a path which not only allowed him to chase his dreams, but also gave him the opportunity to help others chase theirs. Corporal Ussery is an infantry rifleman and a team leader with Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment. He is currently serving his second combat tour in Afghanistan and leads his fire team in combat operations throughout the Musa Qal'eh district to assist the Afghan National Security Forces with securing the area, promoting growth, and stabilizing the local government for the Afghan people. Ussery said he knew he wanted to join a branch of the U.S. armed forces, but he did not put much thought into which one. That was until he had a conversation with his brother about developing a plan to leave their rural hometown, which only covers approximately two square miles in central Georgia. The brothers made an accord to join the Marine Corps after very short deliberation. It was the Marines' historic reliability that attracted Ussery to the Corps. Ussery said he and his brother talked about joining together. His brother, however, would have to wait for Ussery, who is a year his junior, to graduate high school if they wanted to attend training together. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Marine sergeant major serves with son in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Brian Adam Jones



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - As Sgt. Maj. Henry Prutch's yearlong tour in Afghanistan draws to a close, only one thing worried him – he might not get to see his son out here. But Lance Cpl. Scott Prutch, a landing support specialist with Combat Logistics Battalion 4, flew in to Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, to begin a six-month deployment to Helmand province, Jan. 28. The sergeant major is preparing to return home to eastern North Carolina in about a month as his unit, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), hands responsibility over to 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) in the early spring. "I knew it would be close, so this worked out pretty good," said the elder Prutch. "I missed his graduation

from boot camp in April." As the sergeant major for 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), Henry Prutch serves as the senior enlisted advisor to Maj. Gen. Glenn M. Walters, the flag officer responsible for all Marine Corps combat aviation operations in southwestern Afghanistan. Scott said his dad, a Marine with 29 years of experience, has had some pretty good advice for him, and provided a lot of support for him when he decided to join. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Michigan Marine welcomes son to world via video chat in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Katherine M. Solano

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Cpl. Joseph Schank, a small arms repair technician with Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), is familiar with missing monumental occasions in his young daughters' life due to his responsibilities as a Marine. He and his wife of three years have learned to communicate over long distances and support each other in crucial decisions without Schank's physical presence. But now, Schank has experienced a first in parenting. His second child, a son named Leland, was born while Schank was deployed in Afghanistan. Missing birthdays is one thing, said Schank, but missing the birth of his son was admittedly harder. "Being deployed and knowing that you are having a child is hard mentally and emotionally, but knowing what I get to come home to is what keeps me together," stated the native of Sandusky, Mich. Thanks to a strong Internet connection and video chat capability, the father of two was there to support his wife when their son was born. While he recounted the story, Schank seemed calm and collected, something he attributed to the fact that this was their second child and his wife was peaceful during the birth. However, when discussing what he would tell his son one day about the experience, Schank became more animated, especially when talking about the pride he has for his wife, particularly at this time. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



VIDEO

Emergency Response Drill

By U.S. Army Sgt. Christine Samples

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan -- Emergency response units worked together to run a practice drill at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan. The fire department ran a live-fire drill with casualties for emergency triage and transport. Exercises like this keep Marines, Airmen, Sailors, Soldiers and civilians on their toes working together if and when an actual incident occurs. Video footage, still photos, natural sound and interviews combine for an overview of emergency response aboard camp. [\(See the Multimedia Piece\)](#)

Task Force Belleau Wood holds symposium for coalition forces

Story by U.S. Army Sgt. Laura Bonano, Video by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Daniel Symonds



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — Task Force Belleau Wood held a cultural education symposium for coalition non-commissioned officers, Jan. 23-25, at the II Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group NATO conference room. The purpose of the program was to educate enlisted coalition service members on the similarities, differences, responsibilities, programs and practices that contributes to a successful partnership between forces, said Marine Sgt. Maj. Craig D. Cressman, the sergeant major of Task Force Belleau Wood. Enlisted service members from the U.S. Marines, U.S. Army, British forces, Bahrain forces, Afghan forces, and Royal Tonga Marines attended the seminar.

Attendees of the program divided into three groups to encourage cross talk and discussion. A facilitator led the focus on specific topics. A student at the conference, Army Staff Sgt. Anthony D. Reaves, of the 594th Transportation Company, out of Fort Campbell, Ky., discussed with the group rank structure and the promotion process. The groups agreed more meetings and conversing with other services would enhance cultural knowledge. [\(Read the STORY\)](#) [\(See the VIDEO\)](#)

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.



[\(VIDEO: Afghan National Police 1st Lt. Fazil Rahman Talks About Security in Sangin \(Pashto\)\)](#)

[\(VIDEO: Afghan National Police 1st Lt. Fazil Rahman Talks About Security in Sangin \(English\)\)](#)

[\(VIDEO: District governor of Sangin discusses change in the district \(English\)\)](#)

[\(VIDEO: District governor of Sangin discusses change in the district \(Pashto\)\)](#)

[\(VIDEO: Waheedullah, Instructor for ANP Talks About Education in Sangin district \(Pashto\)\)](#)

[\(VIDEO: Waheedullah, Instructor for ANP Talks About Education in Sangin district \(English\)\)](#)

MEDIA COVERAGE/Interviews

Task Force Belleau Wood holds symposium for coalition forces by Sgt. Bonano republished in the Worlds Luxury Guide

Faces of Transition: the Battered but Unbroken Soldier Featured article on Marines Blog by Marine Cpl. Reece Lodder

Faces of Transition: The Battered but Unbroken Soldier Featured on Forbes.com, linked to the story on DVIDS. (Story by Marine Cpl. Reece Lodder

Marines rescue Afghan Policemen from collapsed building by Marine Cpl. Galo republished in the War on Terror News blog

NYTimes Magazine, “The Hard Way out of Afghanistan” Summary: Journalist Luke Mogelson tells stories of his time spent in Helmand with Marines from 2/4 and 3/7.

The Ellen Show interviewed U.S. Navy Petty Officer Seddrick Spencer, BAS, 1/6 on 27 JAN. Coverage pending; Summary: The TV show interviewed as part of a pre-product for a possible surprise homecoming for Spencer and his family. They interviewed him about his family life, his duties and his time in the Navy.

Marine Cpl. Amy Henrikson, Capt Michael Gagnon and Maj Jeff Murphy interview with Boston Herald, Mass.

Afghan National Army Col. Mohammad Sarwar (interview) by Marine Cpl. Reece Lopez

Marine Cpl. Michael Kelly, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 40, interview with Fox Sports Radio, National

U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Miguel Barboza, Radio Lia

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

SUPERBOWL SHOUTOUTS

**Marine Maj. Jeffrey Murphy, New England Patriots
Marine Capt. Michael Gagnon, New England Patriots
Marine Cpl. Amy Lynn Henrikson, New England Patriots
Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Barron, New England Patriots
Marine GySgt. Alexander Ortiz, New York Giants
Marine Lance Cpl. Robert Watkins, Giants
Marine Sgt. Rosa Quintero, Dallas Cowboys
U.S. Army Sgts. 1st Class Michael Brownfield and
Bigas Brownfield, Patriots and Giants**