



----- Feb. 12, 2012 -----

## NEWS

### Nawa: The essence of progress

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Jeff Drew



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Extensive improvements in Nawa district and exceptional Afghan leadership has transformed the once improvised explosive device-laden area into a peaceful paragon of progress during the last year. Residents walk casually along roads and waterways, confident in local Afghan security forces to keep them safe. The growth of illegal drugs has been nearly eradicated as citizens have begun to see the benefits of growing legal crops. Interest in education is on the rise, ensuring a brighter future for the people of Nawa. The people are happy, healthy and hopeful. "Over the past

30 years Nawa lost everything, but now the government system is active," said Haji Abdul Manaf, the district governor of Nawa. "There was no rule, but now there is; there was no education, but now there is; there was no security, but now there is; there were no human rights, but now there is; there was poppy, but now it has been eradicated. The people laid down their weapons, and there was peace." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

### British and Afghan troops take on insurgency in Gereshk

U.K. Defence News

Nearly 1,000 British and Afghan soldiers have taken part in a major operation to increase security around a vital town in Helmand province. More than 280 British troops joined forces with 690 warriors from the Afghan National Army (ANA) and patrolmen from the Afghan National Police to clear insurgents from the area north of the bustling town of Gereshk in Nahr-e Saraj district. Making this commercial hub secure is a priority for Afghan forces in the coming year and has become the main focus for current operations. Nahr-e Saraj is one of the three districts in Helmand where British troops are deployed and the last where Task Force Helmand retains the lead for security following the transition of Nad



'Ali and Lashkar Gah. Operation ROZI ROSHAN, or 'Bright Day', was planned by Afghan National Army staff and led by Brigadier General Sherin Shah, Commander of the 3rd Brigade of 215 Corps. It is the third major ANA operation in three months and is part of a larger Nahr-e Saraj security plan called Operation SHAMALI KAMARBAND. Troops from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) advised Afghan soldiers and headquarters staff throughout the operation, which saw Afghan engineers, advised by sappers from 35 and 38 Engineer Regiments, build six new checkpoints to protect a transit route between Gereshk and the town of Rahim Kalay. The ANA's 3/215 Brigade is mentored by 2nd Battalion The Rifles (2 RIFLES), and Riflemen from 2 RIFLES joined their Afghan colleagues on the ground alongside troops from 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, the Queen's Royal Hussars, the Royal Engineers, and the Danish Army, whose troops are responsible for security in the area. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## UK soldiers help Afghan government officials meet village elders

U.K. Defence News



Soldiers from 5th Battalion The Rifles (5 RIFLES) have helped district community councillors and local elders from a village in Nahr-e Saraj (South) get together at a 'shura' or meeting. The meeting, in the village of Char Kutsa, signifies the progress 5 RIFLES have made since deploying to Helmand in October 2011, and is a milestone for the local Afghan National Security Forces and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The local Afghan Uniform Police hosted the shura at local checkpoint Lamar. Captain Chris Davies, Second-in-Command of A Company, 5 RIFLES, said the attendance of the district community councillors (DCCs) was a major step in improving governance in the area as it is the link between the Afghan

Government and the local people. He said: "This was the most significant and influential attendance we have seen so far in this tour and it is a real promising step for the local community here in Char Kutsa." "Not only does the attendance of the DCC officials add authority to the shura here, but it means that it has legitimacy with the government as well and will foster greater confidence among the rural communities here." ([Read the STORY](#))

## Evolution of war: A year in Helmand with 2nd Marine Division (Forward)

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Jeff Drew

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Marines and sailors with 2nd Marine Division (Forward) spent 2011 deployed to Helmand and Nimroz provinces, Afghanistan, leading Task Force Leatherneck in support of Operation Enduring Freedom during a pivotal period in southwest Afghanistan. The ground combat task force engaged in an evolution across the battle space brought about through counterinsurgency operations, removing enemy insurgents, working side-by-side with Afghan National Security Forces, developing infrastructure, and beginning the transfer of security responsibility to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Defeating insurgents operating within the division's area of operations laid the foundation for further success. One of many clearing operations during the division's tenure in Helmand brought together Marines with Regimental Combat Team 8, Afghan National Army soldiers with the 215th Corps, and Afghan National Police to clear known insurgent hotbeds along Afghan Highway 611 as part of Operation Eastern Storm. The roadway, held by the enemy and riddled with improvised explosive devices, connects many northern villages to the provincial government in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital. ([Read the STORY](#))



## Operation Tageer Shamal: ANA clears Trek Nawa, connects with population

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Johnny Merkley



TREK NAWA, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Afghan National Army soldiers with 1st Brigade, 215th Corps conducted a clearing operation here during Operation Tageer Shamal (Shifting Winds) Jan. 28-30. Similar to a recent clearing operation conducted by the ANA in the Shorshorak area of Nawa, Afghan forces led and conducted the clear of Trek Nawa, a sparsely populated region between Marjah and Nawa districts, with minimal assistance from coalition forces with 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. "The entire operation was planned with no help from the Marines," said Lt. Col. Baron Harrison, the Regimental Combat 5 Brigade Advisor Team officer in charge. "The success of this operation shows the ANA understand what they're doing and have confidence in their abilities." Through

the first day of the operation ANA forces began to clear Trek Nawa from north to south, successfully disrupting insurgent activity along the way. Their actions resulted in the confiscation and destruction of several hundred pounds of narcotics, the detainment of two suspected insurgents and the discovery and removal of an IED. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Marines in Helmand partner, mentor in Now Zad

Story and photos by Marine Staff Sgt. Robert Storm

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NOW ZAD, Afghanistan - As Afghanistan's leadership seeks to take increasing control of its own country, Marines with 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines find themselves conducting more training and advisory positions to Afghan National Security Forces. "We're working toward ANSF development," said Capt. Isaac Moore, 35, Afghan national adviser team officer in charge, from Wasilla, Alaska. "The goal is to make them better and get them in the lead. We want to transfer security to them." In previous years, Marines regularly engaged the enemy, clearing and conducting security operations throughout Helmand Province, Afghanistan. These kinetic operations led to the buildup of multiple outposts throughout the province. When Marines went out to patrol or conduct missions, the ANSF would send small teams to accompany the Marines in order to learn and gain experience. The ANSF were able to rely on Marine firepower and technology, but by themselves were limited in their ability to maintain stability and control in an area. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Wing Marines reflect on yearlong deployment at Helmand academy

Story and photo by Marine Cpl. Meredith Brown



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - For the past year, Marines from various aircraft wing specialties have stepped out of the realm of their everyday jobs to train and mentor Afghan National Security Force soldiers and police at the Joint Sustainment Academy Southwest aboard Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Afghanistan. Throughout the Marines' deployment, they were continually asked to learn new teaching skills to meet the emerging battlefield requirements placed on Afghan forces. The academy offered everything from basic training for the Afghan Uniformed Police to tactical leader's courses for company-grade Afghan

National Army officers. "Honestly, I pretty much had to learn an array of new skills," said Cpl. Paul Perez, an instructor at JSAS. Perez, a native of Orlando, Fla., was originally trained in supply administration and was serving at Marine Aircraft Group 29 out of Marine Corps Air Station New River prior to the deployment. "It had some challenges, but I definitely think it was a good experience because I was outside of my original [military occupational specialty] and working with different people and learning from different backgrounds," he added. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## Operation Clean Sweep: Logistics Marines account for millions of dollars worth of gear and equipment

Story by Marine 2nd Lt. James Stenger and photo by Marine Cpl. Michael Augusto

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - For the last five months, Marine and Sailors of 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward) have accounted for, sorted, cleaned and processed several millions of dollars worth of gear and equipment in support of Operation Clean Sweep aboard Camp Leatherneck and Camp Dwyer. This operation is part of Regional Command Southwest's plan for redeployment and retrograde in support of reset and reconstitution (R4), which is a four-part term commonly used to refer to the concept of how the Marine Corps will most efficiently and effectively leave Afghanistan. Planning for the departure of forces was a primary focus of operations for 2nd MLG (FWD), and remains a priority for the Marine Corps



Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.-based 1st Marine Logistics Group (FWD) as the two units transfer authority in mid-February, 2012. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## New solar-powered packing facility could change supply-demand paradigm for Afghan farmers

Story and photos by Master Gunnery Sgt. Phil Mehringer



MARJEH, Afghanistan - Construction of a new produce packing plant, the Marjeh Fruit and Vegetable Packing Facility, complete with a solar-powered cold storage facility, was recently finished, inspected and is now ready for business. The Marjeh plant could change the supply-and-demand economic model for area farmers. Marjeh lies just east of the Helmand River which provides the necessary water, through an intricate network of canals, to grow a variety of crops year-round. But local farmers struggle to deliver their produce to distant markets. Maj. Erich Bergiel, project supervisor and member of the Regional Command Southwest Economic Development section, related the

problem of getting produce to market in an Afghan parable: "Put fresh pomegranate in the back of your truck and on the way to market it turns into pomegranate jelly." The scorching heat in Helmand province is prolific, often reaching above 130 degrees Fahrenheit during the main harvest season. As a result, fresh fruits and vegetables have a very short life span, resulting in limited shelf-life and transportability. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## 1st MLG arrives at Camp Leatherneck

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Michele Watson

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Several Marines and sailors with 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward) arrived at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, kicking off the start of a slated year-long deployment, Jan. 24. Members of the group conducted integration training which included learning the lay of the land, rules of the base, and procedures for operating outside the wire. For all troops entering the country a Reception, Staging, Onward-movement and Integration brief and counter improvised explosive device training are required for all newly arrived personnel. "The importance for all hands to go through this training, regardless of their mission, is in the event they have to leave the wire," said Sgt.

Seth Regeczi, a chief instructor for RSO&I training. "We put them through situations they may have to face, so they have a general idea of what to do and have some form of training to fall back on." For some members of the group, this is a first deployment in country offering a chance to see a different part of the world. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## A smile gets you in: Looking at the Female Engagement Team

Story and video by Marine Maj. Bradley Gordon and photo by Marine Cpl. Meredith Brown



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan - A new video highlights the 2nd Marine Division (Forward)'s most recent look into the men and women who make up Task Force Leatherneck in their fight against the Taliban led insurgency through the eyes of the United States Marine Corps Female Engagement Team. "Inside the FET" tells the story of the Female Engagement Team, the Corps' solution to engaging the entire population of Helmand, adding depth to the counterinsurgency fight across southwest Afghanistan. In this long-form news profile, you will see why the FET was created, learn about the team's mission and capabilities, and see what infantry commanders on the ground have to say about the tangible results they have seen from having FET

Marines alongside their infantrymen. [\(Read the STORY\)](#) [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

## Afghan Local Police academy kicks off in Nawa

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Johnny Merkley

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.

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



## EOD holds class for soldiers to experience effects of IEDs

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Laura Bonano



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The 789th Ordnance Company out of Fort Benning, Ga., conducted a class on improvised explosive devices and gave a demonstration of the damages caused by roadside bombs Jan. 29. Army 1st Lt. Matthew B. Wharton, of the 789th EOD gave a block of instruction to soldiers from the 811th Ordnance Company, the 594th Transportation Company and the 375th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. Team members from the 466D EOD Flight also helped set up the demonstration of the controlled detonation range outside of Camp Leatherneck. Wharton educated the soldiers on specific markings usually associated with the placement of IEDs. Rocks are often

placed in a pattern to warn local Afghan civilians where bombs are placed, said Wharton. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

## HEROES

### Marines memorialize Seattle hero

Story and photos by Marine Staff Sgt. Robert Storm

FORWARD OPERATING BASE NOW ZAD, Helmand province, Afghanistan - The Marines stand at attention. War-toughened sergeants shout out "here" as their name is called. Leading the formation, 1stSgt Andrew Golding, 45, weapons company first sergeant, from Fort Lauderdale, Fl. calls the roll. "Sgt. Stacey." Silence follows. "Sgt. William Stacey," Golding's voice raises, but silence again reigns. "SGT. WILLIAM C. STACEY," Golding thunders. No one answers. Stacey has obeyed his last Marine Corps order. Stacey was killed in combat in Now Zad District, Helmand Province, Afghanistan on January 31, 2012. "Honor the fallen," Golding says quietly. He seems to deflate a little as he executes an about face and solemnly salutes the memorial made in honor of Stacey. It is a simple memorial; the American flag and the Marine Corps flag, in front of them are an M16, a pair of boots, a helmet, and dog tags. It is a memorial given to all Marines who fall in combat and the ceremony has no less dignity for being in a foreign country. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## Marines with helicopter squadron receive awards for accomplishments in Afghanistan

Photos by Marine Cpl. Brian Adam Jones



Sgt. Maj. Henry Prutch, right, and Maj. Gen. Glenn Walters, second from right, present Air Medals to Marines with the "Gunfighters" of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 during a ceremony at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, Jan. 6. More than 20 Marines with the squadron received Air Medals for conducting operations in the Helmand River valley. "Their actions made a positive direct contribution to [2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward)'s] mission in sustained combat flight operations to defeat enemy forces," the award citation read. Deployed from Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton, Calif., the squadron wields the only Marine attack helicopters in Afghanistan and uses a tandem of AH-1W

Super Cobra and UH-1Y Huey helicopters to support coalition and Afghan forces across southwestern Afghanistan. Walters is the commanding general of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward). Prutch is the sergeant major for 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward). ([View the Pictures](#))

## VIGNETTES

### Illinois Corpsman works with Combat Engineers, proves his worth in Garmsir

Story and photos by Marine Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

GARMSIR, Afghanistan - During the late afternoon hours of Jan. 30, Marines with Bridge Platoon, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward), were working hard to take apart a medium girder bridge in the rural district of Garmsir, Helmand province. During the disassembly, part of the bridge inadvertently gave way and landed on a Marine's leg, sending him to the ground, writhing in pain. "Doc! Doc! Doc! Doc, get up here now!" Sprinting on to the scene with his medical bag on his back was the corpsman for Bridge Platoon, Petty Officer Third Class Michael Soto. Though he didn't know exactly what was going on, he ran to where Marines were gathering around a body lying on the ground. Soto knelt down next to the injured Marine and began to determine the extent to which his leg was damaged. ([Read the STORY](#))



### Bridge named after US soldier's newborn son in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Army Sgt. Laura Bonano



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The Blue Force Tracker is designed to relay critical information to troops during missions, but it will forever hold more meaning to Army 1st Lt. Joshua J. Lien. Lien had always relied on the BFT to key him into the location of his troops and provide communication during convoy missions. The system displays a comprehensive overview of friendly forces and allows troops to instant message between vehicles. This day, the system relayed precious news. A very important 9lb. package was on the way. Lien, a platoon leader, was hard at work when he received the news. It did not come by way of phone call, letter, courier or telegraph. Instead, a hurried announcement came through the BFT. Lien's wife, Crystal L. Lien had gone into labor. New fatherhood jitters aside, Lien had a mission to complete away from his family, fighting a war and trying to rebuild a nation torn apart by conflict. He was leading the 200th Engineer Company, a National Guard unit from S.D., during an operation near

Bayazo village in Helmand province, Afghanistan. ([Read the STORY](#))

# Ohio native's initiative changes face of Afghan communications

Story and photos by Marine Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes

CAMP SHORABAK, Helmand province, Afghanistan - Something spoke to 1st Lt. Joseph M. Russell's heart as he watched the Twin Towers fall to rubble on that infamous day in September 2001. The Richmond Heights, Ohio, native heard a voice inside of him telling him to stand up against the wrongs done that day and fight for his country, so he did, not knowing his contributions would change how an entire Afghan National Army unit operates. Russell, now the communications advisor for the Afghan National Army's 215th Corps, is wrapping up a deployment to Helmand province in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, where he advises the communications officer for the 215th Corps in his daily operations to increase the ANA's capabilities and independence. "I'm a communications officer. My job, my mission, is to enable command and control for [a U.S.] commander, ensuring he can command throughout his battle space," said Russell, who is on his first tour to Afghanistan. "My mission in Afghanistan as the communications adviser is to assist and advise the 215th Corps communications officer in enabling command and control for the 215th Corps commanding general." [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



## VIDEO

### FET's Mission in Afghanistan

Multimedia piece by Marine Cpl. Daniel Wulz



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The FET is a vital part of the war effort that assists Afghan and Coalition Forces in the fight against terrorism. Now hear about FET's mission in Afghanistan told by personal experiences. [\(See the Multimedia Piece\)](#)

## II MHG Transfer of Authority

Video by Army Staff Sgt. Daniel Symonds



CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Second Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group (MHG) furled their colors in a transfer ceremony held in Afghanistan. [\(See the VIDEO\)](#)

## **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: ANA Communications Officer Talks About Transition to Encrypted Communications (Pashto))**

**(VIDEO: ANA Communications Officer Talks About Transition to Encrypted Communications (English))**

**(VIDEO: Afghan Civil Order Police Officer Discusses Security in the Sangin District (Pashto))**

**(VIDEO: Afghan Civil Order Police Officer Discusses Security in the Sangin District (English))**

**(VIDEO: Nawa District Chief of Police Discusses Security in the District (Pashto))**

**(VIDEO: Nawa District Chief of Police Discusses Security in the District (English))**

## **MEDIA COVERAGE/Interviews**

**Sgt. Quintero speaks with Alicia Dean of KXAN in Austin, Texas for the KXAN morning show.**

**HM3 Jeffrey Whitson, Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 2, interview with WTKF FM Jacksonville, N.C.**

**Maj Mark Micke, Marine Air Control Group 28, interview with WTKF-FM , Jacksonville, N.C.**

**LCpl Brad Berube, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 40, interview with Fox Sports Radio, National**

**Cpl. Katherine Solano talks to a Radio Lia reporter about her duties in Afghanistan and sends greetings to her family and friends.**

**Capt Michael Gagnon, Marine Wing Support Squadron 371, interview with Yuma Sun, Yuma, A.Z.**

### **SUPERBOWL SHOUTOUTS**

**Marine Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez, New York Giants**  
**Marine Cpl. McIntosh, New York Giants**  
**Marine Sgt. Moran, New York Giants**  
**Marine Sgt. Virola, New York Giants**  
**Gunnery Sgt. Job Sierra, Dallas Cowboys**

### **VALENTINES SHOUTOUTS**

**Gunnery Sgt. LeMarcus Staley, Camp Lejeune**  
**Gunnery Sgt. Benjamin Jones, Camp Lejeune**  
**Cpl. Dustin Colwell, Camp Lejeune**

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