



II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)



FAMILY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2013





COMMANDER'S COMMENTS

Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller



We are half way through our deployment – and half way through the fighting season – but with the relative quiet of the holidays of Ramazan and Eid behind us the fighting season has picked up again. The Afghan National Security Forces continue to succeed on the battlefield and improve as an enduring organization responsible for the security of the Afghan people. They're up against a determined enemy, but I'm confident they will stay strong during this fighting season and be ready to face the next one on their own. They are giving the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan the time and space it needs to develop the trust of the Afghan people as they prepare to elect their next President and other government representatives.

All this is possible through the hard work, dedication, and innovation of your Marines and Sailors who make up the advisor teams – and those who support those teams day in and day out. In many ways this mission is more challenging than if we were leading the way in combat, but we are leaders as well as warriors and we're leading the ANSF as they enable the people they serve to live a future of their own choosing.

Our families back home play a key role in our success as well. Thank you for your continued support as summer passes and you get ready to send your kids back to school. We couldn't do what we do without you there to back us up.

Stay strong. We'll be home before you know it.



SERGEANT MAJOR

Sgt. Maj. Paul Berry



Hello from Afghanistan! Another month has come and gone already. As we progress through the summer the Marines and Sailors of RC (SW) have been nothing short of exceptional. Many Marines and Sailors have returned from deployment recently. Every one of them can be proud of their accomplishments. Many new faces have arrived to RC (SW) and we are excited to have the new members of the team onboard.

School will be starting soon and our family and friends back home will have an even busier schedule. The continued support we receive is greatly appreciated. Without your selfless sacrifice none of this would be possible.

Continue staying in touch with our Family Readiness Officer. Planning for the Spouses Marine Corps Birthday Ball is underway. I encourage everyone to attend and if time permits volunteer to help with the ceremony. Thank you and Semper Par.

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FROM THE COMMAND

COMMANDER'S COMMENTS
SERGEANT MAJOR
COMMAND MASTER CHIEF
CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

FROM THE HOMEFRONT

FAMILY READINESS OFFICER
UPCOMING EVENTS

FROM THE FRONTLINES

FIGHTING INSURGENCY, PG. 6
COMING FULL CIRCLE, PG. 10



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II Marine Expeditionary Force (Fwd)

Commander

Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller

Sergeant Major

Sgt. Maj. Paul A. Berry

Command Master Chief

Master Chief Petty Officer
Kelly A. McNulty

Chaplain

Cmdr. Patrick W. Smith

Family Readiness Officer

Michael E. Cline





COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

Command Master Chief Petty Officer Kelly McNulty



Greetings Navy and Marine Corps Team!

Where has the time gone? We are at the midway point now and we are continuing to see the positive impacts of the dedication and hard work of the Marines and Sailors. We have rotated several people on leave and have seen several redeploy to their loved ones during the last month. As we send back our Shipmates from deployment, please remember to celebrate safely. Always avoid drunk driving and continue to take a stand against destructive decisions that may harm servicemembers or others during a time of great celebration. Those still serving here remain focused on the mission and dedicated to doing the job at hand.

I'd like to share a hearty congratulations to our II MEF FWD Sailors who were selected to Chief Petty Officer from the most recent Navy E7 selection board. They are:



Intelligence Specialist (Chief Select) David Peters, C-2, II MHG
Hospital Corpsman (Chief Select) William Neason, GLT-9, II MHG
Religious Program Specialist (Chief Select) Jorge Arocho, 2D MAW
Hospital Corpsman (Chief Select) Louis Raiford, 2D MAW
Hospital Corpsman (Chief Select) Julita Walker, CLR-2



I'd also like to congratulate our recent Sailors of the Quarter:

Senior Sailor of the Quarter: HM1 Mikel D. Frazier, Medical Logistics Detachment, CLR-2

Junior Sailor of the Quarter: HM3 Rasheed R. Collins, 2D MAW

Bluejacket of the Quarter: HN Ashley N. Roof, CLR-2

Their selections are an honor for which only the most outstanding men and women of this command are selected. They are proven performers and leaders amongst their peers and have been recognized for their outstanding dedication while serving this command. I am proud to serve with each one of them.

I know there are many hardships involved with deployment and I want to express my deepest appreciation for your continued courage and enduring commitment to your loved ones serving in RC (SW)/II MEF FWD. Your sustained bravery and tenacity in the absence of your family members is an inspiration to us all! Thank you.

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,"
Philippians 2:3-5

True and False Humility

Let me give you 3 examples, and consider which is the best display of humility:

Example 1: A teenage girl walks to school with her head down and a chip on her shoulder. She often utters to herself – "I'm fat, stupid, and ugly."

Example 2: A man talks to his friends about his terrible job – he doesn't brag about his job because he hates his job, but he dominates the conversation with talks of how terrible his job is.

Example 3: A woman talks with her friends. She interjects briefly, but for the most part she listens to what her friends have to say.

The real example of humility is of course example number 3. The other two are not really displaying humility. Example number 1 is an example of low self esteem. Low self esteem is not the same as the quality of humility! Example number 2 is really displaying pride! It's difficult to see because he's not saying something positive about himself, but by dominating the conversation with facts about himself he says, "My life is very interesting! Everybody look at me!" This is not humility – it's pride. The third example displays a mature soul who does not draw attention to herself. She is not consumed with thoughts about herself but shows interest in other people. Applying this to the Christian life, humility is shown when a believer dwells primarily on God and not his or her own self-image.

The famous writer CS Lewis put it like this: "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less". Let us be a people who do not obsess with our own issues and self-image – but on God's kingdom and glory.

Philippians 2:3-5 "(3) Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (4) do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (5) Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,"

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Cmdr. Patrick Smith



FAMILY READINESS OFFICER

Michael Cline
II MEF FWD FAMILIES,

Congratulations! We have passed the half-way point of our deployment, and the II MEF FWD families are staying strong. The "Rock the Casba Pool Party" was an awesome event that featured Greek food, refreshments, music, and belly-dancing instruction. It was a great time to relax and take a breather from the daily stresses and toils.

Don't forget the upcoming Family Readiness events. These events are scheduled in the September-October timeframe for you!

II MEF FWD COMBINED BOWL-A-RAMA

DATE: 22 SEPTEMBER 2013

TIME: 2:00 – 5:00 p.m.

REMARKS: Free Bowling for the families of II MEF FWD, II MHG FWD, and the SFAAT teams! Come and enjoy free bowling, shoe rental, and food!

OCTOBERFEST

DATE: 17 OCTOBER 2013

TIME: 2:00 – 6:30 p.m.

REMARKS: Open to all Area 3 units, including II MEF FWD, II MHG FWD, and SFAAT families. The festival will include prizes, games, and other activities.

TRUNK OR TREAT

DATE: 27 OCTOBER 2013

TIME: 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

REMARKS: Come out and enjoy the Trunk or Treat Halloween event. Decorate your car trunk and provide a memorable experience for all the children of II MEF FWD, II MHG FWD, and SFAAT families. Prizes will be awarded for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Place trunks and costumes.

I want to remind everyone about LIFESKILLS classes available at the Marine Corps Family Team Building Center at Midway Park and at other area installations. The LIFESKILLS classes were developed to help military families through challenges they face daily and can be instrumental during deployments. Participants may attend workshops focused on various subjects including:

"CONFLICT MANAGEMENT"

Learn useful skills to constructively manage conflict. Most of us can think of a time when we didn't handle conflict very well. This class will boost your confidence towards effective conflict management.

"SAY WHAT?"

Have you ever been puzzled by someone's reaction to your communication with them? Why did they become so defensive? Communication is so much more than what we say. This class offers a wonderful opportunity to better understand people and increase your communication effectiveness.

"7 HABITS OF EFFECTIVE MILITARY FAMILIES"

This class provides the necessary tools to help families protect what's most important. Participants learn how to prevent life stressors and gain valuable insights to become a more effective team.

"MAKING CHILDREN MIND WITHOUT LOSING YOURS"

It's okay. You're not a bad parent. Parenting is a tough job! Lessen the exhaustion of parenting through time-proven steps to help you flourish.

"TIME MANAGEMENT"

Managing our time in today's fast paced world can be challenging for most people. This class will teach you helpful tips and techniques making time management much easier. Learn how to improve your own time management through better planning, prioritizing, delegating, control of your environment, understanding of yourself, routines and attitudes.

"EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS"

The military brings many to Jacksonville who have never experienced a hurricane. Our class will give you many helpful tips to be ready for whatever weather comes our way. We will discuss what should be addressed in an individual or family emergency plan and help you think about what should be in your emergency kit.

I have been to several of these classes and the information they provide is invaluable. I highly encourage you to attend. I can coordinate combined classes if you would like to attend as a II MEF FWD/II MHG FWD/SFAAT group. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

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E-MARINE Website:

<http://www.emarine.org/skins/emarine/home.asp>

x

II MEF FWD Newsletter:

<http://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/1227>

3

II MEF FWD Official Website Family Readiness:

<http://www.iimeffwd.marines.mil/FortheFamilies.aspx>

FIGHTING INSURGENCY

Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment remains vital to protecting coalition bases in Helmand

Story and photos by Sgt. Bobby J. Yarbrough

PATROL BASE BOLDAK, Afghanistan – It's an hour before sunrise and the Marines of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, actively search through the littered debris scattered across the floor of the abandoned house. The golden hues from their flashlights filter through the rooms as the Marines comb the darkness for any signs of disturbance.

The smell of moldy straw lingers in the air as Cpl. Quinton McCloud and his military working dog, Zamp, search through a bundle of half-empty grain sacks stacked in the corner of the main room. Across the courtyard, Lance Cpl. Michael Stock swings his metal detector back and forth sifting through the trash inside one of the goat pens, beads of sweat rolling down his face.

Two weeks ago, a sniper fired several shots at them from inside the compound as they patrolled the nearby fields. The Marines believe insurgents have been using the house as refuge and now they are searching for any evidence that could prove it—a buried weapons cache, residue leftover from making homemade explosives, or wiring used to connect improvised explosive devices.

Staff Sgt. Javier Jimenez, the platoon sergeant, asks a few Marines to climb atop the interior compound walls to skim the top of the building. As they scan the rooftops with their flashlights, small glints of pewter twinkle beneath a tiny pile of dried poppy stalks.

The Marines draw back the stalks and discover three spent ammunition cartridges buried in the dirt. As they unearth the rounds and place them in an evidence bag,

Jimenez radios to the rest of the company that the platoon had just found remnants of lethal aid.

For the company, finding the rounds was a small victory: Operation Grizzly IV had just begun and they had found evidence they could attribute to insurgency.

Fighting Insurgency

Firefights and roadside bombs have dwindled for many of the areas in Helmand Province; however, not in Washer, a small farming community surrounded by a vast stretch of rolling desert. The Marines closely monitor the area around Camps Bastion, Leatherneck, and Shorbak (BLS) because insurgent activity has continued to proliferate. Afghan National Security Forces have not established a permanent base in Washer, so Fox Company patrols the area to prevent insurgents from infiltrating the local community and attacking the bases.

Since an attack on Camp Bastion in September 2012, Coalition forces here have expanded their reach into local communities surrounding the bases to prevent similar attacks.

According to Capt. Andrew Nicholson, Fox Company commander, his unit serves as the first line of defense for BLS.

"There are still individuals here in Helmand who want to do harm to coalition forces," said Nicholson. "As a unit, our job is to prevent attacks from occurring at or near the bases. We methodically focus our efforts on the local communities and conduct daily operations to prevent those attacks from happening."

Since Fox Company's arrival in March, the unit has

consistently encountered resistance by insurgents. According to Cpl. Michael Emerson, a designated marksman with 1st Platoon, the unit's operational pace is the reason for much of the fighting.

"As a unit, we constantly have a presence in the local community," said Emerson. "We have platoons patrol for days at a time and our persistent interaction in the community disrupts much of the enemy's movement."

Operation Grizzly

Fox Company has become strategically important to Regional Command (Southwest). Over the last year Coalition forces have focused on building the Afghan National Army, Afghan Local Police, and Afghan Uniformed Police through security force assistance. Fox Company is one of the few Marine Corps units in Helmand province still focused on counterinsurgency operations.

Fox Company understands that insurgency is cyclical-lethal aid and personnel frequently flow in and out of areas. To combat this activity, the unit conducts operations, such as Operation Grizzly, to locate caches of lethal aid and identify individuals who are connected to insurgent activities.

The unit recently completed Operation Grizzly IV, where they maintained a steady pace cordoning and searching compounds, conducting day and night security patrols, and establishing an expeditionary patrol base.

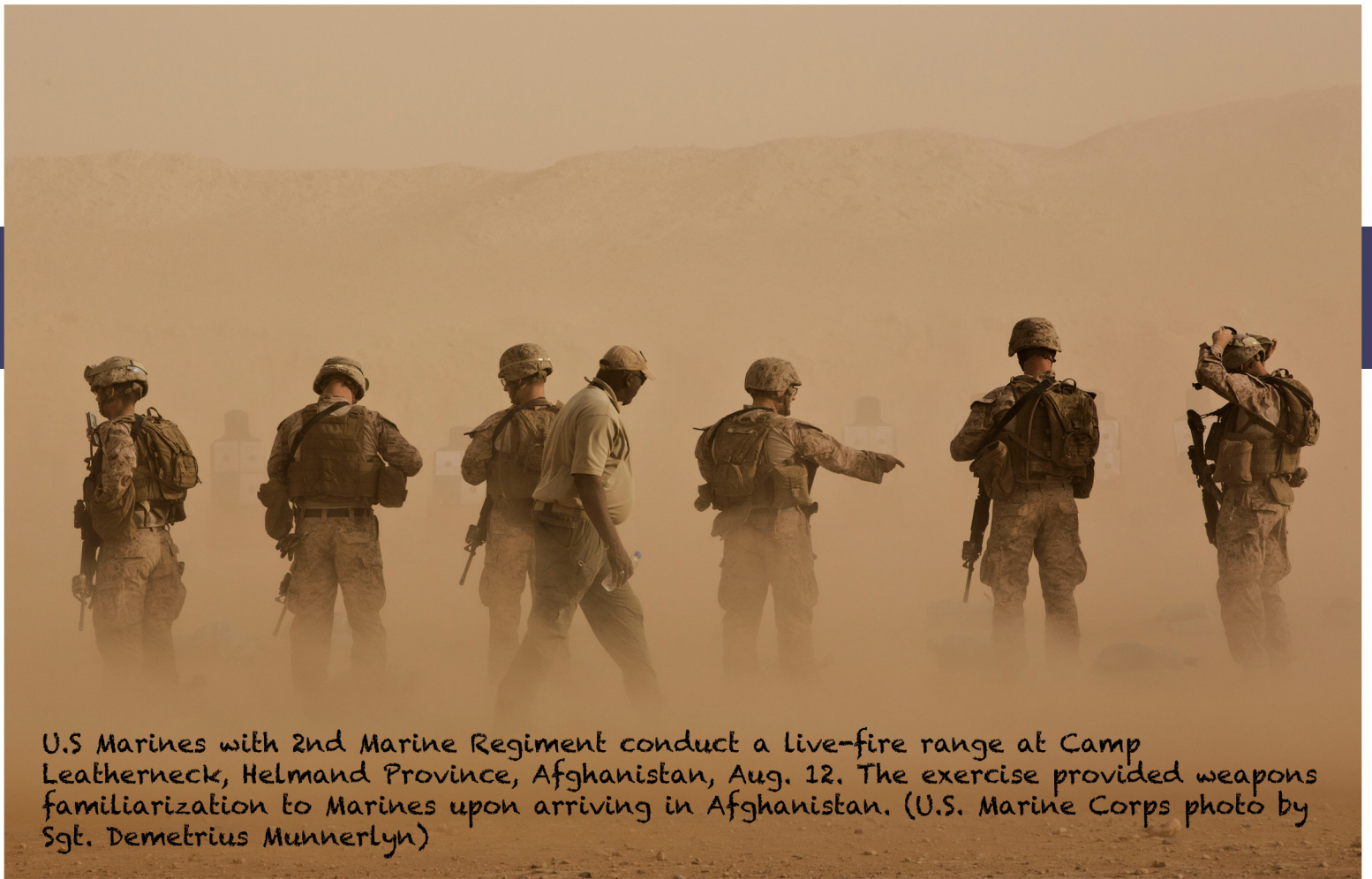
The two-day operation, much like the rest of Fox Company's deployment so far, involved harassing fire from insurgent snipers, which also included rocket-propelled grenades and machine gun fire. Once, a roadside bomb exploded and temporarily disabled a vehicle. Fortunately, no Marines were injured during any of the engagements.

The operation proved effective—the Marines were able to gain a large amount of information about the insurgents from the local population, they discovered evidence of lethal aid, and one insurgent was killed during a firefight.

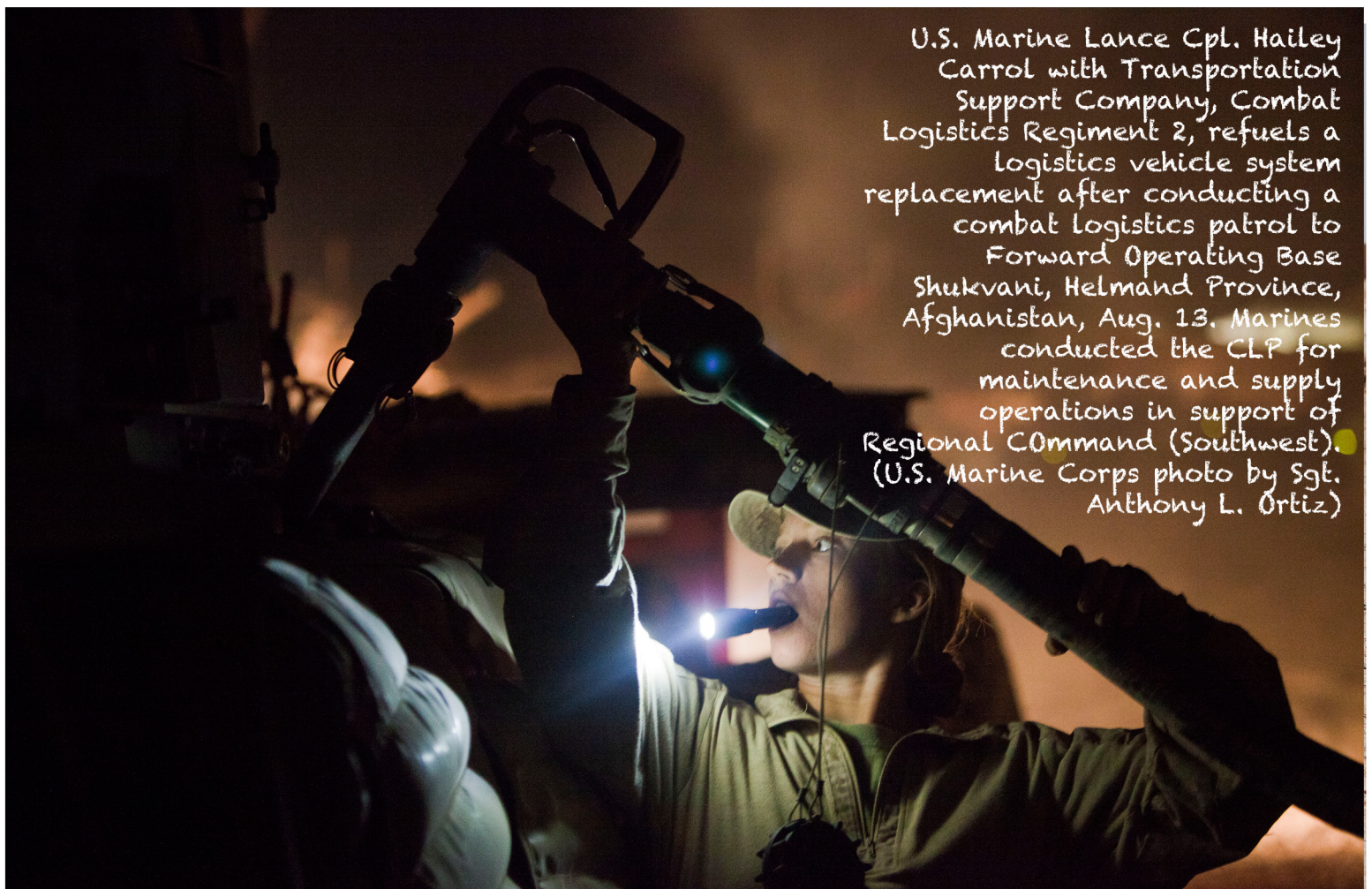
The Future of Washer

Nicholson said the end of Fox Company's deployment will mark the beginning of a new chapter in Washer. Plans for the Afghan National Army to assume responsibility for security here continue to progress. Nicholson has faith the ANA will be able to maintain stability in the region and he knows the positive influence his unit had on Washer will be felt by the Afghans there long into the future.





U.S. Marines with 2nd Marine Regiment conduct a live-fire range at Camp Leatherneck, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Aug. 12. The exercise provided weapons familiarization to Marines upon arriving in Afghanistan. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Demetrius Munnerlyn)



U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Hailey Carrol with Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 2, refuels a logistics vehicle system replacement after conducting a combat logistics patrol to Forward Operating Base Shukvani, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Aug. 13. Marines conducted the CLP for maintenance and supply operations in support of Regional Command (Southwest). (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Anthony L. Ortiz)

THIS MONTH IN PHOTOS



Captain Ernesto Howard, assistant officer in charge of the Supporting Arms Liaison Team, 2nd Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, takes notes during a patrol in Charibaya, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Aug. 8, 2013. Coalition forces conducted the patrol to meet with locals and investigate the terrain. (U.S. Marine Corps Photo by Sgt. Tammy K. Hineline)



U.S. Army Sgt. Lisa Swan, left, psychological specialist with 303rd Psychological Operations Company, and Marine Sgt. Joseph Szombathelyi, right, Load master with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 252, deliver Leaflets from a KC-130 Super Hercules over southern Afghanistan, Aug. 28. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Demetrius Munnerlyn)



U.S. Marines with Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines and Afghan National Security Forces exit a CH-53E Super Stallion aircraft after an operation at Camp Bastion, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Aug. 22. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Ashley E. Santy)

Lima Company comes full circle in Now Zad

Marines reflect on progress, sacrifices



Story and photos by Sgt. Lia Adkins

NOW ZAD, Afghanistan - When Marines first arrived to set up a combat outpost in Now Zad district in 2007, the area was desolate and riddled with rubble. Homes were empty, streets were barren and anyone who wandered into the city were believed to be Taliban.

It wasn't until 2009 after 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, launched and completed Operation Cobra's Anger, sweeping through Now Zad and clearing out insurgents, that locals started moving back.

Now, the unit has come full circle. They are back for their second tour of duty but this time to draw down operations and hand over security of the district to Afghan National Security Forces.

Today, Now Zad and its bazaar are flourishing in comparison. Hundreds of Afghans have moved back into the area, more than three dozen stores have opened in the bazaar and children can be seen playing throughout the area. Although the threat of insurgent attacks remains, Marines partnered with ANSF have helped the area recover and have fostered good relationships with locals.



A few of the Marines returning with 3rd Bn., 4th Marines were in Now Zad during some of the most intense fighting and have been overwhelmed by the change.

“When I first got back, it felt good to come back and see people, lights, the market bazaar open, and kids everywhere,” said Sgt. Jorge Vera , a squad leader for 4th Platoon, Company L, 3rd Bn., 4th Marines.

Now Zad was deserted when Vera arrived in 2008 as a team leader with 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment. The city remained peaceful for nearly two months—then war erupted. Taliban fighters relentlessly attacked Vera’s unit with small arms fire, heavy machine gun fire, mortars and improvised explosive devices.

“Up until the very day we left it was firefight after firefight, IED after IED,” said Vera, a Bronx, NY., native.

Vera said he has vivid memories of Now Zad, mostly because of the caustic toll the city had on his unit. Vera’s squad leader, Cpl. Michael W. Ouellette, was wounded by an IED and later succumbed to his injuries. Ouellette, who received the Navy Cross posthumously, is one of nineteen Marines killed in Now Zad since the war in Afghanistan began.

“There was a lot of sacrificing here, a lot of good guys didn’t get to come home,” said Vera. “(Those Marines) did all they had to, to turn this place to where it is now.”

Cpl. Larry Jackson deployed with Company L, 3rd Bn., 4th Marines in 2009, which replaced Vera’s unit. He participated in Operation Cobra’s Anger and said locals started moving into the city and interacting with Marines just days after the operation.

“At first they were slightly timid, but once they realized what we could do for them and what we were offering, they came around very rapidly,” said Jackson, a Paducah, Ky., native. “They actually got to the point where they were telling us things when we would go out, (such as), ‘Hey, there’s two IED’s over here that you need to blow up,’ or ‘I have mortar rounds in my house that the Taliban put there, can you come take them out?’.”

Jackson said it was amazing to get to redeploy to Now Zad and see how much it had changed. Jackson admits being able to return to the city and see the growth in the community made everything worth it to him in the end.

The Marines are now preparing to withdraw from the area. Now Zad will be the first district in Northern Helmand where security is handed over to ANSF.

The departure marks a moment of closure yet is poignant for some of the Marines.

Jackson said he feels ANSF can “hold their own” in the area after 3rd Bn., 4th Marines leaves and said he feels like the unit played a large part in getting Now Zad to its current state.

“I feel like something was accomplished with my time in Afghanistan,” said Jackson. “It was something that was bigger than me and maybe bigger than the unit because we impacted people’s lives forever.”



