

Regional Command Southwest

Round-up

Biweekly PAO Report

----- May 13, 2014 -----

NEWS

Last Marines exit Sangin, Afghanistan

Story by Cpl. Joshua Young



FORWARD OPERATING BASE NOLAY, Afghanistan - The final Marines and sailors of Forward Operating Base Nolay exited the Sangin Valley, leaving the 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, Afghan National Army in full control of the FOB and the surrounding area for the first time without coalition forces in place since they first entered during 2006. The Marines and sailors from Security Force Assistance Advisor Team 2-215 arrived at Camp Leatherneck following a seven-month deployment and a convoy out of Sangin Valley, May 5. On the same day the last Marines of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment departed FOB Sabit Qadam, also in Sangin. ([Read the STORY](#))

The Sangin Story: last coalition service members leave once insurgent stronghold

Story by Staff Sgt. John Jackson

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – Multiple mounted patrols totaling 174 tactical vehicles with approximately 700 service members entered Camp Leatherneck's North Gate during the early morning hours and throughout the day, May 5. Tactical vehicles driving through a gate on the Marine Corps' central-Helmand base is a regular occurrence; however, this was a significant occasion for Marines, coalition forces and their Afghan counterparts. The armored vehicles were returning from Sangin, Afghanistan, an infamous battleground in northern Helmand province, and a village that will be remembered in Marine Corps and British history.

([Read the STORY](#))



1/7 departs Sangin with tribute to Korean War veteran

Story and photos by Cpl. Joseph Scanlan



FORWARD OPERATING BASE SABIT QADAM, Afghanistan – During the beginning years of the Marines' occupation in the Sangin District, the area was a hornet's nest of Taliban insurgents and became one of the most dangerous areas in the country. After years of blood, sweat and tears shed, the infantrymen of 7th Marine Regiment along with Afghan National Army soldiers rid the area of a vast number of Taliban insurgents. The Marines of "Suicide" Charley Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, were the final Marines to depart Sangin when they left Forward Operating Base Sabit Qadam, May 5.

([Read the STORY](#))

Marine Aircraft Group- Afghanistan helps retrograde last of personnel, equipment from Sangin Valley

Story and photos by Sgt. Frances Johnson

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan— Marine Aircraft Group- Afghanistan assisted in the retrograde of equipment and personnel from northern Helmand, May 3-5. Before the last Marines and sailors of Forward Operating Bases Nolay and Sabit Qadam convoyed out of northern Helmand to return to Camp Leatherneck for the final time, the “Gunfighters” of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 and “Heavyweights” of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 provided overwatch for returning vehicle convoys as well as retrograde support. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



CLB-7 Marines, sailors complete convoy out of Forward Operating Base Nolay for final time

Story and photos by Cpl. Cody Haas



FORWARD OPERATING BASE NOLAY, Afghanistan – Units currently deployed to Afghanistan are conducting missions to decrease the amount of gear and personnel aboard forward operating bases and combat outposts. One of the units providing this type of support is Combat Logistics Battalion 7. Marines and sailors with CLB-7, Regional Command (Southwest), conducted a logistics patrol to Forward Operating Base Nolay for the last time during a retrograde operation in Helmand province, Afghanistan, May 3-5. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

2nd CEB clears the way for last Marines to depart Sangin, Afghanistan

Story and Photos by Cpl. Cody Haas

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan – Marines with 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion conducted multiple route clearance missions during retrograde operations in northern Helmand province, Afghanistan, May 3-5. “Our mission is to verify all threats are free from the road,” said 2nd Lt. Joseph Jamgochian, 4th platoon commander, Route Clearance Company, 2nd CEB. “Overall our missions go very smooth without any hitches because the Marines spend a lot of time preparing their gear prior to each operation.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Regional Corps Battle School trains Afghan National Army soldiers on operating howitzer

Story by Sgt. Jessica Ostroska



CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan – Soldiers with the 215th Corps, Afghan National Army conducted D-30 122 mm howitzer training aboard Camp Bastion, Helmand province, Afghanistan, May 7. The training is part of a six-week course that gives Afghan instructors the opportunity to train their fellow soldiers on the howitzer weapons system. Prior to the course, the soldiers are assigned one of three roles required to operate the D-30. They either become a gun lineman, forward observer or become part of the fire direction cell. All three trades must fluidly work together to ensure the howitzer operates properly and effectively. [\(Read the STORY\)](#)

Combat engineer Marines conduct Transfer of Authority Ceremony in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Cpl. Cody Haas

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan –Marines and sailors with 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion relieved 1st CEB during a transfer of authority ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, April 20. “Our transfer of authority ceremony was relatively low key,” said Lt. Col. John Osborne, commander of 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, Regional Command (Southwest). “The reality is our transition has been very smooth. We stay in touch with each other when we’re not in theater.” [\(Read the STORY\)](#)



Royal Tongan Marines say farewell, lower flag in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Cpl. Cody Haas



CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - Distinguished military service members with Regional Command (Southwest) and International Security Assistance Force including Lt. Gen. John Lorimer, deputy commander of ISAF, attended a farewell ceremony and witnessed the lowering of the Kingdom of Tonga flag aboard Camps Bastion and Leatherneck, Afghanistan, April 28. During a morning ceremony aboard Camp Bastion, each Royal Tongan Marine was awarded medals for their devoted service to the coalition’s efforts. Afterward, the Royal Tongan Marines lowered their flag aboard Camp Leatherneck to symbolize the end of the country’s participation in support of combat operations in Helmand province and return to their homeland.

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

Estonian soldiers bid farewell to coalition counterparts in Helmand province

Story and photos by Sgt. Jessica Ostroska

CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan – Soldiers with the Estonian Contingent gathered for a flag-lowering ceremony aboard Camps Bastion and Leatherneck as they bid farewell to their coalition counterparts, May 9. “Today is a special day, and it is a milestone that will be recognized for a very long time in Afghanistan as well as our home countries,” said Brigadier Gen. Daniel D. Yoo, Commander of Regional Command (Southwest), during the ceremony. “Afghan security forces have taken the lead and continue toward full security responsibility. It is important and symbolic of the commitment of the international force and our accomplishment as a coalition force. The Estonian military has been a steward partner in Afghanistan, especially with RC(SW).”

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



PHOTOS

31st Georgian Light Infantry Battalion transfers authority to 23rd GLIB

Photos by Sgt. Frances Johnson



Georgian soldiers of the 23rd Georgian Light Infantry Battalion stand with the unit battle colors during a transfer of authority ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, May 1, 2014. The 23rd GLIB and a team of Marines known as the Georgian Liaison Team will be responsible for conducting security force operations during their deployment as the last contingent of Georgian soldiers to serve in Helmand province alongside the U.S. Marines. [\(See the PHOTOS\)](#)

Combat Engineer Marines conduct live-fire exercise in Afghanistan

Photos by Cpl. Cody Haas

Corporal Dylan McKee, a combat engineer with Assault Breacher Vehicle Platoon, 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, sits atop an Assault Breacher Vehicle and assists with sight alignment for the M48 .50 caliber machine gun before a live-fire exercise aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, April 30, 2014. The training exercise was designed for Marines to familiarize themselves with the range capability of the weapon system. ([See the PHOTOS](#))



1/7 patrols Larr Village, Afghanistan

Photos by Cpl. Joseph Scanlan



Sergeant Sloan Seiler, section leader, Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and a native of Hanston, Kan., patrols through a field during a mission in Larr Village, Helmand province, April 25, 2014. During the mission the Marines confiscated two rocket propelled grenades hidden in a cache.

([See the PHOTOS](#))

Infantrymen continue to disrupt Taliban in Larr Village, Afghanistan

Photos by Cpl. Joseph Scanlan

Corporal Timothy Antolini, left, anti-tank missileman, Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and Lance Cpl. Joseph Tyler, center, anti-tank missileman, provide security as a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter lands during a mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 28, 2014. The company's mission was to disrupt Taliban forces in Larr Village and establish a presence in the area. Five days prior to the helicopter-borne mission, the company confiscated two rocket-propelled grenades in the vicinity of the village.

([See the PHOTOS](#))



1/7 deters Taliban lethal aid in Tagvreshk Village

Photos by Cpl. Joseph Scanlan



CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters prepare to land to pick up Marines with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, during a mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan, May 1, 2014. The company operated in Tagvreshk Village, an area with suspected Taliban forces with the intent to disrupt any lethal aid. After hours of operating within the area, the infantrymen extracted from the area the same way they arrived. ([See the PHOTOS](#))

VIDEO

Royal Tongan Marines exit Afghanistan in traditional fashion

Video by Sgt. Frances Johnson

Royal Tongan Marines lower flags and perform traditional Sipi Tau for the last time on Camp Bastion and Leatherneck. Photos by Sgt. Frances Johnson, Cpl. Cody Haas and Lance Cpl. Darien Bjorndal. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Estonian soldiers lower flag for last time in Helmand province

Video by Cpl. Cody Haas



Estonian soldiers lower flag for last time aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, May 9, 2014. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

Estonian Minister of Defence Sven Mikser

Video by Cpl. Cody Haas

Interview with Estonian Minister of Defence Sven Mikser. Estonian soldiers lower flag for last time aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, May 9, 2014. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Two Florida chaplains visit forward operating bases

Video by Cpl. Joshua Young



Two chaplains, Navy Lt. j.g. Chad Goddard, a chaplain with Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan, and Army Lt. Col. Brian Ray, the Catholic chaplain for Regional Command (Southwest), visit service members aboard forward operating bases and deliver religious services. Goddard, who graduated from Pensacola Christian Academy and is endorsed by All Points Baptist Ministry, is from Pensacola, Florida. Ray, who graduated Mainland High School in Daytona Beach and Stetson University, is from Gainesville, Florida. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

Marine Col. C.J. Douglas

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson

Col. Christopher Douglas, team leader for the Security Force Assistance Advisor Team of the 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, Afghan National Army, talks to a Reuters TV reporter about handing over security responsibilities in the Sangin District to the Afghan forces. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Marine Col. C.J. Douglas

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson



Marine Col. C.J. Douglas talks to a WNYT-TV reporter in Albany, New York, about his Security Force Assistance Advisor Team turning over security control in Sangin District, Afghanistan, to the local Afghan security forces. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

Marine Col. C.J. Douglas

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson

Col. Christopher Douglas, the team leader for the 2nd Brigade, Security Force Assistance Advisor Team, currently deployed to Camp Leatherneck, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, talks to a reporter with The Associated Press, in Washington, D.C., about the Marines pulling out of Sangin, Afghanistan, and the current status of operations and security in the region. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Marine Col. C.J. Douglas

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson



Col. Douglas, team leader for the Security Force Assistance Advisor Team of the 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, Afghan National Army, talks to DMA Marines about his team being among the last Marine units out of FOB Nelay, Afghanistan. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

Marine Maj. Paul D. Tremblay Jr.

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson

Maj. Paul D. Tremblay Jr., deputy team leader for the Security Force Assistance Advisor Team of the 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, Afghan National Army, talks to Defense Media Activity Marines about his experiences during his deployments to Sangin District, Afghanistan. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Marine Capt. Alistair Howard

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson



Capt. Alistair Howard talks to a KNSD-TV reporter about being deployed to Afghanistan and leaving the Sangin District for good following his three previous deployments to the region. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

Marine Capt. Alistair Howard

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson

Captain Alistair Howard talks to a KSWB-TV reporter about being one of the last Marines to leave Sangin Valley in Afghanistan. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



Marine 1st Lt. Peter Marks

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson



Marine 1st Lt. Peter Marks, from Spokane, Wash., talks to a KHQ-TV reporter about all Marines now being out of Sangin District, Helmand province, Afghanistan, and handing over security control to the Afghan forces.

[\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)

Marine Sgt. Daniel Russo

Video by Staff Sgt. John Jackson

Sgt. Daniel Russo, a food service specialist, talks to Defense Media Activity - Marines about his experiences during his deployment to FOB Nolay in Helmand province, Afghanistan. [\(Watch the VIDEO\)](#)



EXTERNAL MEDIA COVERAGE: NORTHERN HELMAND RETROGRADE

1. [Camp Leatherneck is Afghanistan's next ghost town](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

2. [There are fewer than 300 Marines left in Afghanistan's once most violent district](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

3. [We weren't surprised about how Marines kept fit in Sangin. Well ... except for this one guy](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

4. [Video: Marine stays in touch through music](#)

Nelvin Cepeda, U-T San Diego

5. [Marines depart Sangin, leaving Afghans in charge](#)

Gretel Kovach, U-T San Diego

6. [Marines end operations in Sangin, Helmand's once bloodiest district](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

7. [Last Marines leave Sangin Valley](#)

Bret Stephens, Wall Street Journal

8. [Opportune 'bear hug' foils alleged green on blue attack in Afghanistan](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

9. [Video: Marine in Afghanistan](#)

Nelvin Cepeda, U-T San Diego

10. [Video: Last troops leave deadly region](#)

Bridget Naso, NBC San Diego

11. [Sparse Afghan medical clinic characterizes Marine withdrawal](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

12. [Photos: U.S. Marines in Sangin](#)

Nelvin Cepeda, U-T San Diego

13. [Citing progress, Marine advisors leave Helmand province](#)

Jim Michaels, USA Today

14. [A view from the front, Harlingen Marine helps secure an area of Afghanistan](#)

Travis Whitehead, Valley Morning Star

15. [Café Sangin](#)

Gretel Kovach, U-T San Diego

16. [Video: Saluting the Brave: 1st Lt. Peter Marks talks about his experience in the Marines](#)

NBC Spokane

17. [The Afghans' newest challenge: Getting the printer to work](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

18. [Oregon Marine Dean Bennet in Helmand province, Afghanistan](#)

Mike Francis, The Oregonian

19. [Video: Leaving Sangin](#)

Deborah Lutterbeck, Reuters

20. [Into the breach: How Sangin will enter the annals of Marine history](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

21. [The 7th Marines 'owned Sangin'](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

22. [On the ground in Afghanistan: the last days of a FOB](#)

Hope Hodge Seck, MCT

STERGA 2 RETROGRADE

1. [Army pulls out of its last frontline base in Helmand, leaving Camp Bastion as the only UK-controlled facility in Afghanistan](#)

Daily Mail

2. [British forces leave their last outpost in Helmand](#)

BBC News

3. [Britain closes Afghan base Sterga](#)

The Telegraph

4. [Sterga closure 'another step' in ending Afghan operations](#)

ITV

5. [British troops close final Afghanistan outposts](#)

SkyNews

6. [Britain closes last remaining forward base in Afghanistan](#)

ITV

7. [Afghanistan: British troops leave Helmand outpost](#)

BBC News

8. [Afghanistan: British troops close last operating base in Helmand province](#)

International Business Times

9. [Afghanistan in pictures: British troops begin the pullout from Helmand](#)

The Telegraph

To see more news, videos and photos of Regional Command (Southwest) Marines, sailors, soldiers, airmen and our coalition partners, please visit our Facebook page by clicking below.

