

# MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADE - AFGHANISTAN

*FAMILY NEWSLETTER*



*The Command Element of Regional Command (Southwest) in Helmand province, Afghanistan.*



# From the Commander's Desk:

Dear friends and family,

It has been a warm two months in Helmand, with the temperature often soaring above 110 degrees. Your Marines and Sailors have continued to work tirelessly and pick up momentum as we move well into the second half of the year. We have passed significant milestones in our advisor capacity with the Afghans as well as our retrograde and redeployment efforts, and we have taken the time to pause to remember some of our fallen heroes.



We sent our June newsletter just after the national runoff elections, and we continue to watch the ballot counting process to see who will become the next president. Closely tied to the presidential election is the signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement, which is critical to coalition support in Afghanistan post-2014 under Resolute Support. However, regardless of the outcome we know our mission in Helmand will come to a close by the end of this year. Your Marines and Sailors are working tirelessly to ensure a responsible transition of the facilities at Camps Bastion and Leatherneck to the Afghans, remediate the land and buildings that will not be transferred, and set the Afghan forces up for success in their fight against the Taliban while we safely retrograde our equipment and redeploy our personnel. We will also maintain the highest level of vigilance to ensure both our external and internal security.

During June, the Taliban launched a major attack in northern Helmand, and while the situation was fluid and checkpoints changed hands multiple times, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) responded on their own and repulsed the Taliban's attacks. During the June 2013 fighting season, the ANSF had the lead for security but were backed up by coalition ground forces. This year they have done the fighting all on their own, with limited support from coalition advisors, air support and intelligence support. This is a major step forward for the ANSF, and while the fighting season is not over, we are cautiously optimistic.

There were two other major milestones in ANSF development. We lifted off our Afghan National Police Advisor Team (ANPAT) from the provincial police headquarters in Lashkar Gah, marking the end of Level 1 police advising. The advisors at the Regional Corps Battle School also stepped back, and the Afghan instructors now conduct all the training at the school, which is the model in theater.

We have seen many changes within the command, and some of your loved ones have already returned home, while others have moved to Kandahar Airfield (KAF) to support our retrograde and redeployment process. Several units have redeployed and the Brigade Headquarters Group cased its battle colors. During this period, CLB-1 replaced CLB-7, HMM-366 replaced HMM-466, Sierra Battery 5/11 replaced Tango Battery 5/11, and VMM-261 left to support other requirements. On Aug. 15, 1st Marines - in command of Task Force Belleau Wood - transferred authority to 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, and the regimental headquarters is returning home.

Our hearts were heavy with the loss of four brave Marines: Staff Sgt. David Stewart, Sgt. Thomas Spitzer, Cpl. Brandon Garabrant and Cpl. Adam Wolff. These heroes gave their lives keeping the rest of us safe, and we will honor their sacrifice and keep them and their loved ones in our prayers.

We still have much work to do, and we will focus on the task at hand until the finish. We are increasingly going to expeditionary living measures, which may result in less frequent communication with your service member. Many of you have been taking care of the home front for more than eight months now, and you have our heartfelt thanks and admiration. You are constantly in our thoughts, and we know we could not accomplish this mission without your support.

Semper Fidelis,

D. D. YOO

Brigadier General, Commander, Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan / RC(SW)



# From the Sergeant Major:

Dear family and friends,

During the past two months, your Marines and Sailors have been extremely busy and very productive. Some units and personnel have finished their mission and redeployed, while some units have recently arrived in Helmand province to support the final efforts of the deployment.

Both when units arrive at Camp Leatherneck for the start of their deployment and when units are heading back to their home stations, I have the opportunity to speak with them. Speaking with the Marines and Sailors is the highlight of my time spent here in Afghanistan. Whether they are starting their deployment or ending it, the Marines' and Sailors' motivation and esprit de corps remain high.

In addition to various units starting or ending their missions here, there have been multiple other significant events during the past two months. Since our departure from the northern Helmand province, the Afghan National Army 215th Corps' 2nd Brigade has been working diligently to hold security in the region. Despite a major offensive by the insurgents during late June, the ANA soldiers were able to maintain security in the region and fend off the attackers. Their resiliency during the fighting and their ability to take the fight to the enemy is a testament to the training they received from your Marines and Sailors and those advisors and mentors of deployments past.

As I am sure most of you know, the official results of runoff elections are currently being audited. During the start of the audit process, service members stationed throughout Afghanistan were requested to support getting ballots to the capital of Kabul. In true Marine fashion, the MEB-A team worked around the clock devising plans to accomplish the mission in a timely manner, and we did just that. Within days, we had helped our Afghan partners get the ballots from Helmand province to Kabul without incident.

The command recently held the quarterly board to select the Marine of the Quarter and Noncommissioned Officer of the Quarter. Several outstanding Marines were submitted for the honor. Sergeant Michael Scott, with Task Force Belleau Wood, was named the NCO of the Quarter, and Lance Cpl. Tyler Angus, with Marine Aircraft Group - Afghanistan, was named the Marine of the Quarter.

In the coming months many things will change here on Camp Leatherneck. The retrograde is in full swing here in Helmand and your Marines and Sailors continue to give 100 percent of themselves to get the mission accomplished. It truly takes a team effort to retrograde years' worth of equipment and gear from the battlefield, but the Commanding General and I know we will not only complete the mission, but do it to perfection as Marines always do.

Lastly, during the past two months, four Marines paid the ultimate sacrifice while conducting combat operations in Helmand province. While we will miss these brave Marines, they, and those who have gone before them, will never be forgotten and will continue to live in our thoughts and memories.

Semper Fidelis,

D. E. BERRY, JR.

Sergeant Major, Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan / RC(SW)



Marines with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, sprint across a field to load onto a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter during a mission in Helmand province, Afghanistan, July 4, 2014. The company operated in Gereshk for three days and was involved in numerous kinetic engagements with Taliban insurgents.

Photo by Sgt. Joseph Scanlan





# From the Command Master Chief:

To our family, friends and loved ones,

Things are changing in Helmand province and aboard Camp Leatherneck, but the change is a sign of successes happening in the region.

The Sailors of Combat Logistics Battalion 7 completed their mission Aug. 1 and handed over responsibilities of the logistics combat element to CLB-1. While deployed, CLB-7's Surgical Company continued to train and refine their skills by participating in base-wide drills. They also worked with their UK counterparts helping to improve all immediate actions in the event of a mass casualty aboard Camp Leatherneck. The Forward Resuscitative Surgery System (FRSS), which is responsible for complex surgical cases, ended their mission at Camp Dwyer. Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466 recently redeployed and handed over their duties to HMM-366. Both CLB-7 and HMM-466 did amazing work while deployed, especially during the retrograde of the last Marines and Sailors from Nimroz province as well as those who left Sangin.



Recently, the Sailors with CLB-1 held a walking blood bank aboard Camp Leatherneck. More than 198 personnel aboard the camp came to donate blood. The walking blood bank screened individual's blood and helped to determine the best donors currently deployed.

We recognized our MEB-A Sailors of the Quarter, HM1(FMF) Aaron Spaulding, HM3(FMF) Sarah Thrasher and HN(FMF) Sean Smith. All the Sailors nominated represented their respective commands very well. We have some phenomenal Sailors doing some great work out here.

Throughout the past two months, your Sailors and Marines have been working tirelessly. They continue to advise their Afghan counterparts. Additionally, the retrograde and redeployment of gear and personnel is in full stride. Your service members' efforts continue to impress us all.

Finally, since the last time I wrote, four Marines have paid the ultimate sacrifice in Helmand province. These courageous Marines will not be forgotten; our heartfelt condolences and prayers go out to their families.

Semper Fidelis,

F. DOMINGUEZ

Command Master Chief, Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan / RC(SW)



Petty Officer 3rd Class Brianna Duran, a hospital corpsman with Combat Logistics Battalion 1, draws blood from Lance Cpl. Santiago Amarante, a rifleman with 1st Marine Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, during a walking blood bank aboard Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Aug 14, 2014. The walking blood bank identifies and screens qualified donors so they can donate for specific patients without delay.

Photo by Sgt. Dustin D. March

# Chaplain's Corner:

Greetings MEB-A families and friends!

As we enter into the middle of August, I am reminded by my 16-year-old son that school has started, which got me thinking. I remember in my last article I wrote about the seemingly never-ending cycle of change that we deal with on a day-to-day basis. The fact that my son and several million other kids are getting ready to start back to school made me think about those things that are indeed constant in life.

In the Armed Forces, we tend to deal very well with constants. Usually work starts at the same time every day. I usually wear the same thing to work every day. I know that deployments are a constant theme whether at war or in peace. Basically, I know that I am required to show up on time, in the right place, in the correct uniform and that I need to be prepared to give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, and if I choose not to do these things, there will be someone to hold me accountable for my decisions and actions. As I get older, I find that I am so comfortable with the consistencies life has for me, even if I sometimes yearn for the changing opportunities of life's adventures.

As a chaplain, I also know that there are supernatural constants that I can rely on. I know that God's love is constant and unchanging. I trust that God's grace is there for the taking, and I know that God has a plan for me that he had developed even before I was born, and that his plan, like his caring nature, remains the strongest constant in my life. So while I do see change every day, I am also thankful that some things in my life remain just as they have always been.

Until next time, I will try to remain always faithful to the Marines, Sailors and families I am honored to serve. Blessings to you and yours.

Semper Fidelis,

T. H. HUNT

Chaplain, Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan / RC(SW)



Check  
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on the  
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**eMARINE**

... delivering readiness information to Marines & those who support them



# Regional Command (Southwest)

## PHOTOS



Photo by Sgt. Joseph Scanlan

To see more photos of Marines, Sailors and our coalition partners in RC(SW) and to read stories about operations in southwestern Afghanistan, [click here](#).

▲ Corporal Deshaun Jackson, rifleman, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, takes cover behind a berm during a firefight in Helmand province, Afghanistan, July 6, 2014. Jackson, a native of Chicago, and the company operated in Gereshk for three days and were involved in numerous kinetic engagements with Taliban insurgents.

▼ Soldiers with the Danish Contingent lower the Denmark flag during a flag-lowering ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Afghanistan, July 21, 2014. This year marked the 17th rotation and final deployment to Afghanistan for DANCON. The ceremony marked the end of mission for the Denmark Army with Regional Command (Southwest).



Photo by Sgt. Jessica Ostroska



Photo By Sgt. Frances Johnson

▲ Corporal Alex Roberts, a turret gunner and weapons noncommissioned officer with Combat Logistics Battalion 7, makes final adjustments to his M240B machine gun in the turret of his Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, July 14, 2014. Roberts, a native of Dunelton, Fla., and his fellow turret gunners with CLB-7 act as the eyes and ears while being the guardian angels of each combat logistics patrol conducted during their deployment.





Photo by Sgt. Frances Johnson

◀ First Sgt. James J. Horr, left, senior staff noncommissioned officer of Brigade Headquarters Group - Afghanistan, and Col. Joseph J. Zarba, commanding officer of BHG-A, case the unit's battle colors during a ceremony for BHG-A aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, July 25, 2014. Brigade Headquarters Group - Afghanistan deployed to Camp Pendleton, Calif., during December 2013 and January 2014 to provide administrative and logistical support to the Marines and sailors of Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan and will redeploy at the end of July after completing a successful seven-month tour.

▼ Corporal Jacob Hall, a crew chief with Marine Aerial Refueling Transportation Squadron 352, stands in front of an American flag as a forklift shines its light, casting his shadow behind him after a battlefield illumination mission aboard Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, July 18, 2014. Battlefield illumination missions are implemented to light up areas in support of nighttime coalition operations within Regional Command (Southwest).



Photo by Sgt. Frances Johnson



Photo by Cpl. John A. Martinez Jr.

▲ U.S. Marine Cpl. Justin Hinckley, a team leader with Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, talks to a local family of the Washer district during a security patrol in Helmand province, Afghanistan, July 16, 2014. Patrols are conducted to disrupt enemy operations against Camps Bastion and Leatherneck.

➤ Army Sgt. Adam Keys, a wounded warrior from Bethesda, Md., is welcomed by fellow soldiers and Marines during his visit to Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Afghanistan, July 10, 2014. The visit was with Operation Proper Exit, an organization that helps wounded warriors who are recovering from being injured in battle.



Photo by Sgt. Jessica Ostroska

# Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan

## Promotions and Awards

The following MEB-A Marines were promoted to their current rank during July 2014.

Cpl. Stephen Slusser  
Cpl. Taylor Childers  
Cpl. Seth Littau  
Cpl. Patrick Mitchell  
Cpl. Joshua Lambert  
Sgt. Thien Le  
Sgt. Kristina Cebrero  
Sgt. James Pauly  
GySgt. Hector Flores

The following MEB-A Marines were promoted to their current rank during August 2014.

Cpl. Jowmar Ubalde  
Cpl. Christopher Mowery  
Cpl. James Hand  
Cpl. Eduardo Rueda Jr.  
Cpl. Felipe Cantu Jr.  
Sgt. Andrea Robb\*\*  
Sgt. Jason Angus\*\*  
MSgt. Jeremy Croghan  
CWO2 Adam Treaster  
CWO2 Daryle Howard Jr.  
CWO3 Aaron Ellis  
Capt. Chittakone Sinakone  
Capt. Christian Gomez  
Capt. Brock Fabian  
Capt. Kevin Holt  
Capt. Jimmy Housley Jr.  
LtCol. Jeffrey Dinsmore  
Col. Morgan Mann

\*\* Denotes meritorious promotion

### Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal

Sgt. Michel Wu	Sgt. Daniel Rowe
SSgt. Charles Cardon	SSgt. Marcus Mettert
1stLt. Benjamin Brida	Capt. Frank Alba Jr.
Capt. David Foti	Capt. Donald Schalaus

### Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device

Cpl. Carlos Monterroza	Sgt. Tony Ocanas-Jones
Capt. James Nilan	Capt. Daniel Evans

### Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal

SSgt. Zane Perry	GySgt. Jesus Garcia
GySgt. Brian Meemken	MSgt. Garey Tucker
MSgt. Jeremy Libby	CWO3 Richard Gilmore
Lt. John Lau (USN)	Capt. Theodore Martin
Maj. Bradford Klusmann	

### Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device

PO1 Eric Morgan	SSgt. Alberto Boy
Capt. Michael Harmon	Capt. Matthew Speers

### Meritorious Service Medal

CPO Lawrence Benson	Maj. Jordan Meads
Maj. Mark Nicholson	Maj. Earl Patterson
LCDR Brian Longbottom	LtCol. Andrew Eanniello
LtCol. Larry Jenkins Jr.	Col. Gerald Graham

### Bronze Star Medal

1st Sgt. Julian Lumm	SgtMaj. Rafael Rodriguez
CWO3 Stephen Larose	LtCol. Daniel Wittnam