



# 2nd Marine Division (Forward)

## Task Force Leatherneck

Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

August 28, 2011

### Weekly News Round-Up

*The following content includes the weekly news coverage of 2nd Marine Division (Forward). The division, also known as Task Force Leatherneck, is the ground combat element of Regional Command (Southwest) and is responsible for Helmand and Nimroz provinces, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The content was created by Marine Corps Combat Correspondents and Combat Camera. Feel free to forward our stories to friends, family and those who support our deployed service members.*

## Ohio Marine returns to Afghanistan with new mission

By Cpl. Marco Mancha

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan – He comes from a small town in the Buckeye State. He had no real direction growing up and spent most of his days drawing and playing his 6-string guitar, until a simple decision to take a trip to a recruiter’s office changed his life forever.

Sergeant Tony L. Jago of Rushsylvania, Ohio, now finds himself thousands of miles away from home serving as the assistant operations chief for the Operations Section of 2nd Marine Division (Forward).

Jago said he remembers just wanting a change of pace and some structure in his life and joined the Marine Corps.

“Do I feel like I made the right choice? Of course, I mean why else would I still be here 10 years later,” said Jago with a smile. “I like the different people you meet and the different people you get to mentor, like young Marines.”

The 29-year-old spent his first four years as an infantryman serving with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, based at Camp Lejeune, N.C. He said he learned many of his leadership skills through three deployments with the unit.

His experience as a Betio Bastard, the unit’s nickname, took him from storming the beaches of Okinawa, Japan, in training exercises to aiding in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2004. Jago said he thought four years of hard work and complete dedication to his fellow Marines was enough and wanted to try something different.

He departed from the Marine Corps and took a full-time job as an injection molder, feeding plastic from a hopper into a heated barrel to mold it into a solid product, like keyboards



for computers, football helmets, and other products. It took him two years to realize how much he really missed being an active duty Marine.

“I just missed being around Marines,” explained Jago. “I missed being that small unit leader and really getting to know the Marines around me on a personal level, and just being a part of the Marine Corps atmosphere again.”

Shortly after rejoining the Corps in 2007, he attended the Infantry Squad Leader Course, where he learned to apply his leadership to a squad — a team of 12 Marines directed by the squad leader. Jago said it was his refresher course before deploying for a second tour to Iraq in 2008.

“Being an infantry guy, you don’t forget anything,” said Jago. “Going to ISLC was definitely the hardest course I’ve been through though, but it helped me improve on a lot of what I already knew.”

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# Iron Horses stampede insurgency

By Cpl. Marco Mancha

**COMBAT OUTPOST SHIR GHAZAY, Helmand province, Afghanistan** - Waves of rounds fly back and forth between the two forces. Marines move in pairs and continue to suppress the enemy while insurgents answer back with harassing fire. Clouds of dust suddenly emerge hundreds of meters behind the Marines' position and enemy rounds stop hissing by. The echoing sounds and muzzle flashes of AK-47 assault rifles cease. It's as if the insurgent forces knew big trouble was headed their way.

Alpha Company, 2nd Tank Battalion, known as Masters of the Iron Horse, brings the "intimidation factor" to the battlefield and provides the protection to allow fellow infantrymen to focus



on improving the way of life for the citizens of Helmand province.

"We pretty much have 70 tons of firepower, and the minute we show up, the insurgents pretty much know they

really don't stand a chance," said 25-year-old 1st Lt. Tom Figgatt, the executive officer for Alpha Company.

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## Pushing through the shadow of the insurgency

By Cpl. James Clark

**MARJAH DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan** - "There are no [insurgents] here. He says they aren't here."

The pashto-speaking interpreter translates as he looks from an older man to Lance Cpl. Andrew Wurster, a squad leader with 4th Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. This is the first person they have

encountered this morning during their patrol through the Polpazai village here, an area where insurgents are known to be operating, Aug. 11.

Glancing away, Wurster looks across the freshly irrigated field before turning back to the man and his teenage son. The father wears white robes and a coffee-colored vest. His facial hair is closely groomed, and he carries himself as if he hadn't a care in the world.

After another attempt to gain information on insurgent activity, Wurster shakes their hands and departs. Before the Marines have crossed the field, both father and son have disappeared. Normally that would be a clear sign that something is amiss, but it's the month of Ramadan, in which Muslims fast during the daylight hours, forsaking water and food, and often wait until dusk to tend their crops.

As the Marines make their way across one of the many canals, they reach another swath of farmland. Wurster spots a young boy tending a small herd of sheep. As the patrol begins to spread out, Wurster reaches the child.

Rounds rip past the Marines as automatic weapons come to life across the field. They take fire from the south and the west, the direction they are heading and the direction they came from. They have found who they were looking for.

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## Faith sustains Afghan soldiers during Ramadan

By Cpl. Colby Brown

**GARMSIR DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan** — Without food, water or relief from 120-plus degree temperatures, an Afghan National Army soldier patrols with his Marine counterparts. He is observing Ramadan, a month-long Islamic

holiday in which Muslims fast during daylight hours.

The soldier has been fasting for two weeks, but a parched tongue and hunger pain aren't things the human body gets used to. The Marines of 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment were briefed on how the holiday could

affect ANA soldiers, but witnessing the effects up close brings to life the commitment of their Afghan counterparts.

Some Marines with 1/3, such as Capt. Daniel Petronzio, are experiencing the fast firsthand.

“With the food, it’s not so bad,” said Petronzio, a native of Beverly, Mass., and the officer-in-charge of the 1/3 Embedded Training Team. “But the afternoon is definitely the most difficult time because of the dehydration. It’s much easier to [become aggravated]. But it has shown to me what the [ANA] soldiers are going through, and that going out during the day could be dangerous. And, it’s an honor to go through the same thing they are and have a more intimate understanding of Ramadan.”

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## Youth Shuras: Breaking trends in Sangin

By Cpl. Benjamin Crilly

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE JACKSON, Helmand province, Afghanistan** - More than 85 children from around Sangin attended the Sangin Youth Outreach Shura held by Female Engagement Teams assigned to 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Aug. 17.

“It is important to work with the youth of Sangin because just like the kids in the U.S., they want to grow up to be something,” said Sgt. Juanita Towns, the FET 13 team leader. “So it is just best that we try to start them off on the right path at a young age vice letting them join the (insurgency) now.”

The team members spread the word about the youth shuras and have recently had Afghan Uniformed Police officers help them in their endeavor to reach out to the children of Sangin.

The children, ages 1-14, were split into three groups in which they participated in age-appropriate informative stations and activities. This enabled the FET to reach out to each age group more effectively, and it was modeled after the cultural breakdown the children often gravitate toward on their own.



“It’s the first activity in Sangin for the kids, focused on the kids,” said FET member Lance Cpl. Jacqueline Veres. “So we are just trying to get them to see that we are here to help them, they can come to us and they can trust us.”

“The first one we had was a hygiene shura. The shura that we just had was a healthcare, education and activities shura,” said Towns, a Richmond, Va., native. “They played soccer, they did their time tables and the smaller kids just played with educational toys.”

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