



# 2nd Marine Division (Forward)

## Task Force Leatherneck

Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

August 7, 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.*

## Headquarters Battalion Marines train the body, mind

### CAMP LEATHERNECK,

### Helmand province, Afghanistan –

Indian River, Mich., native Sgt. Warren Webber, the budget chief with Headquarters Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division (Forward), practices hand and arm manipulations during a Marine Corps Martial Arts training session. Webber recently earned his brown belt in MCMAP, which is the second to highest belt that can be earned in the program. Webber said he can't wait to put on a pair of blue jeans and tennis shoes when he returns home. (Photo by Cpl. Jeff Drew)



### CAMP LEATHERNECK,

### Helmand province, Afghanistan –

Queens, N.Y., native Lance Cpl. Lepoleon Jackson, a manpower clerk with Headquarters Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division (Forward), holds a pad during a Marine Corps Martial Arts training session. Jackson trains four days a week in Marine Corps Martial Arts with his comrades. He says he is most excited to see American trees and grass when he returns home. (Photo by Cpl. Jeff Drew)





## 1/6 returns to Marjah

By Cpl. James Clark

**MARJAH DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan** – When Marines moved on the former insurgent stronghold of Marjah last year, they took the first step toward laying the foundation for the counterinsurgency strategy that turned the tide in Iraq but had yet to be proven in Afghanistan.

A year and a half later, the strategy has taken hold, but few battalions who fought in the initial offensive have had the satisfaction of seeing their efforts come into fruition.

Fortune, however, is bringing that satisfaction to the Marines and sailors of 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.

Today, Marines and sailors with 1/6 walk through streets and down

alleyways once littered with spent shell casings. They greet local citizens, whose faces they have come to recognize from frequent meetings nearly a year ago. Children are now more likely to give thumbs up or wave to passing patrols than throw rocks, and the local residents no longer retreats indoors when Marine patrols pass them.

I think the biggest change is the children,” said Cpl. Brandon Bright, a corporal of the guard with Headquarters and Service Company, 1/6.

During their first patrol outside of the camp, Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Brandon Dixon, a corpsman with camp Guard Force, 1/6, was asked to help a young boy whose feet had been torn up while walking down the road.

“It was a little better than what I expected,” said Dixon, who is on first deployment with Marines. “I thought [the local citizens] would be a bit more stand-offish than friendly. I hope to keep helping them out so that we can build a better relationship with them.”

Although there are still areas where relationships between the local residents and coalition ...

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## Afghan police broaden horizons through local literacy program

By Cpl. Marco Mancha

**NAWA DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan** - Among the biggest challenges the local government faces as the United States prepares to draw down thousands of troops from Afghanistan is its literacy rate. Only one in 10 recruits who sign up for Afghanistan's police and army can read and write according to a recent Reuters article. Many of the local residents find something as simple as spelling their own names a challenge.

The Police Advisory Team with 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, is working with the Higher Education Institute of Karwan to teach Afghan Uniformed Police throughout Nawa how to read and write.

HEIK's main objective is to support ...

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## Alpha Battery brings Steel Rain to Helmand

By Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes

**FIREBASE SAENZ, Helmand province, Afghanistan** - An infantry squad leader can exercise a few options when engaged by insurgents. He could assault through the attack, while weighing the possibility of losing one of his Marines in the crossfire, or he can use one of the many assets available to him and call for artillery support. The Marines of Alpha Battery quickly stir up a storm to bring steel rain to the enemy when they receive the call for support.

The battery from 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment out of Marine Corps Base Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, is currently deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. They provide timely and accurate artillery fires for ground maneuver units in the northern-half of the province. The round which is most requested is the satellite-guided Excalibur XM982 Precision Engagement Projectile.



“The infantry can just fight it out or call for artillery,” said Staff Sgt. John Kellam, a Cincinnati native and the position battery gunnery sergeant at Fire Base Saenz. “I’d say 99 percent of the time, we get a call. The most important thing is being able to call for indirect artillery support rather than sending a Marine into a building where they are risking their life... [it’s important because we are] protecting

Marines from having to put themselves in situations like that.”

The battery is much like a game-show lifeline—whenever a unit is in a tight spot they just have to pick up the line and phone a friend. The battery is ready to launch rounds downrange whenever a call comes in, whether it is the Excalibur round, a high-explosive round, or just an illumination round.

“We provide a 24 hour-a-day, seven day-a-week security blanket,” said Capt. Richard H. Lee, a Fullerton, Calif., native and the commanding officer for the battery. “We can shoot a projectile accurately within five meters with minimal collateral damage.”

Lee understands how this support element can affect the troops on the ground. He was the artillery liaison and the executive officer for Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment when he deployed to Iraq in 2005.

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## Coram, N.Y. native leads Marines in Afghan fight

By Lance Cpl. Clayton Vonderahe

**COMBAT OUTPOST SHIR GHAZAY, Helmand province, Afghanistan** - First impressions are usually lasting ones and one Coram, N.Y. Marine will always remember the first sights and sounds of his initial introduction to the real war in Afghanistan.

Lance Cpl. Ronald Curaba, a fire team leader with 81mm Mortar Platoon, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines, has been serving throughout the Musa Qal’eh district of Afghanistan, roughly 250 miles southwest of Kabul, the nation’s capital. The reality he faces in Afghanistan was different from the perception he had built in his head over the years.

“My initial perception of Afghanistan was a little bit different but I knew it wasn’t going to be everything that you see on the news because you can never actually put yourself in a situation; until you are actually in it,” Curaba said. “I thought it was going to be a little bit more hectic. I do see a lot of stuff. I have been through a lot and have done my fair share but I thought it was going to be a lot crazier; the way the media made it out to seem. I don’t know if it was just the training ... if I was trained to be calm, but it is pretty easy to keep a clear head once you are out here in it and fighting.” [\(Read Story\)](#)

