



2nd Marine Division (Forward)

Task Force Leatherneck

Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

December 25, 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.

Florida native faces family trials, attitude inspires

By Sgt. Earnest Barnes

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Benjamin Franklin once said, "... In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." Tampa, Fla., native Gregory L. Cole never thought the death of a loved one could bring to life a new perspective on how to live.

Corporal Cole, the current operations manager for the Combat Operations Center, 2nd Marine Division (Forward), received an unexpected message in May 2011 that he needed to return home from his yearlong deployment to Afghanistan. The trials

Cole would face through the next three months would test those with the strongest character, but he has displayed an unwavering strength that has inspired others.

Cole, who joined the Marine Corps in April 2009, volunteered for this deployment to serve with his brothers in 2nd Marine Division (Forward), also known as Task Force Leatherneck, even if he had to take a billet outside of his Military Occupational Specialty. He is a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear defense specialist, but took an administrative position for the opportunity to deploy.

Cole tracks all significant events that happen within the division's area of operations and archives them for future reference. For Cole, it is not what job you do, but rather being able to do any job as a Marine.

"I like waking up every day and being able to put on this guy right here – the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor," said Cole, as he pulled his left breast pocket away from his chest to exhibit the Marine Corps emblem embroidered on his uniform. "Not cheesy or anything, but I really like it. It's a sense of accomplishment; it is one of the few things in my life I have actually earned."

Cole assists the operations chief with battle space management. He reviews activity reports consisting of activities such as improvised explosive device finds, combat engagements and medical evacuations. These reports come from subordinate commands, and Cole tracks the activity and trends and keeps the watch officer up-to-date on where activity happens in the area of operations.

"He is responsible for inputting all of the significant acts and events that occur in Task Force Leatherneck's area of responsibility," said Sgt. Jeffrey J. Cyprus, the Task Force Leatherneck watch noncommissioned officer and Cole's direct supervisor.

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Operation Eagle Hunt takes flight

By Cpl. Marco Mancha

HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan - United States Marines and Afghan National Security Forces filled the air with dust recently as dozens of their vehicles rolled into the desert. Afghan camouflage-painted Humvees and small, green trucks with gun turrets led the way into the lower region of the province in search of insurgents.

The Afghan-led operation was a small shaping operation to clear the Taghaz

area of southern Helmand in preparation for future counterinsurgency operations to expand Afghan-led security. United States Marines are providing support to the Afghans throughout these operations in order to assist Afghan efforts to expand security, stability and development in the province.

More than 75 U.S. troops, including a few improvised explosive device detection dogs, accompanied roughly 100 Afghan Border Police and Afghan Uniformed Police members during the operation. A majority of those U.S. personnel were the Marines and sailors of Border Advisor Team 1.

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Afghan surgeons meet, new medical kandak takes form

By Sgt. Earnest Barnes

CAMP SHORABAK, Helmand province, Afghanistan -- Afghan National Army surgeons with the 215th Corps and their coalition partners met for a medical conference recently to discuss challenges with medical services in the 215th Corps, solutions for those challenges, and the future of a newly established medical kandak within the corps.

According to Brig. Gen. Zamin Hassan, the chief of staff for the 215th Corps, the mounting obstacles with the training of combat medics, medical supply management, and control of medical personnel called for a reform of the medical program. Hassan said other commands held their own medical conferences recently, but the 215th Corps is

the first Afghan National Army unit to stand up a new kandak strictly dedicated to medical services.

“We initiated this; I personally signed to have a medical kandak established,” said Maj. Gen. Farooq Pawani, the deputy commanding general for the 215th Corps. “All the issues in the medical field will be task organized, and all the challenges we have will be solved.”

The Corps Surgeon for the 215th Corps, Col. Sayedadualah Atullah Almadi, initially proposed his unit form the medical kandak and received overwhelming support from all levels of his command, as well as the Office of the Surgeon General of Afghanistan.

The medical personnel were previously attached to the Corps surgeon’s office or directly to one of the three brigades within the 215th Corps. This decentralized organization of medical personnel posed many challenges, such as arranging training, directing standard operating procedures, and coordinating efforts.

Almadi said his attempts to host medical training often met with little success, as medics were frequently employed by brigade commanders in various tasks or missions, ultimately preventing the medics from attending the training. Another persistent problem is the lack of formal education and proper medical training among the medics.

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Afghan Army prepares for air interdiction mission

By Cpl. Alfred Lopez

CAMP DWYER, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Since their arrival in early August, Marines and sailors with Regimental Combat Team 5 have been conducting air interdiction force missions in support of various operations throughout Helmand province.

These missions have successfully disrupted insurgent freedom of movement, focusing on individuals suspected of smuggling narcotics, weapons and improvised explosive device making materials through the outlying desert regions in the RCT-5 area of operations.

Until recently, only Marines have conducted these interdiction operations. But now Afghan National



Army soldiers with Military Police Tolay, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps are stepping up to the plate.

In preparation for future operations, Afghan National Army soldiers conducted AIF training under the watchful eye of Marines with the RCT-5 Embedded Training Team here Dec. 19.

“The purpose of our AIF operations is to disrupt enemy activity in order to deny their freedom of moment in

transporting drugs, weapons and fighters into and out of our area of operations,” said Maj. Shannon Neller, the RCT-5 ETT executive officer and 38-year-old native of Brooklyn, N.Y.

The addition of ANA soldiers to AIF missions guarantees better communication with individuals the partnered force will encounter, Neller said. The ANA soldiers are better able to interact with their fellow Afghans than their Marine mentors . . .

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The road less travelled; Marines push COIN along Route 611

By Cpl. James Clark

SANGIN DISTRICT, Afghanistan - The dirt along Route 611 has been pulverized to dust, turned to a trail of fine powder dotted with boot prints belonging to the Marines of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. The footprints cover the landscape, blown away by wind, convoys of armored transports and civilian caravans, only to be replaced the following morning by another series of exhausting patrols.



Each day the Marines and sailors of 1st Platoon depart Patrol Base Florida and make their rounds through their area of operations in the Sangin district.

When they first arrived, their presence was greeted with malevolent intent, in the form of small arms and indirect fire. Even the patrol base itself became a target. In the months following their arrival, the insurgency has been pushed to the fringes – replaced by a local populace struggling to find a voice after a long silence due to past fear and intimidation.

Traveling roads and footpaths that have become as familiar as the streets where they grew up, the Marines of Company A have come to recognize the faces of the men and children they pass during each patrol. They know histories and stories, having literally exchanged words while breaking bread.

The key to their success, the Marines say, lies in their understanding of counter insurgency operations . . .

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