



2nd Marine Division (Forward)

Task Force Leatherneck

Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

January 29, 2012

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.



California Marine cares for linguists

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Stockton, Calif., native Sgt. Joseph W. Tone, 27, the assistant linguist manager for Task Force Leatherneck, is responsible for maintaining rules and regulations for the linguist compound and its guard force. He also travels throughout the battle space to ensure they have what they need while they are out. Tone said he has gained an appreciation for the linguists' work ethic and their efforts to support Marines.

“They know the assignments are going to be austere,” said Tone. “A lot of our linguists come back year after year because they love working with Marines – the Marines take care of them. Also the Marines are very trusting of their linguists – the level of cooperation is through the roof.” (Official U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde)

Louisiana sailor mentors juniors

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Baton Rouge, La., native Petty Officer 1st Class Jeramie Fontenot, the leading petty officer for the Battalion Aid Station, Headquarters Battalion (Forward), 2nd Marine Division (Forward), assisted his junior corpsmen to earn their Fleet Marine Force Enlisted Warfare Specialist Device while in Afghanistan.

“From a professional standpoint, being deployed has been pretty rewarding,” said Fontenot, who is on his fifth deployment. “It’s really the first time I’ve been able to guide a group of sailors all the way through the steps of attaining the FMF pin.”

Fontenot said he looks forward to being with his family when he returns to the United States. “I look forward to going back and spending time with my wife and kids – and fishing,” said Fontenot. (Official U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde)



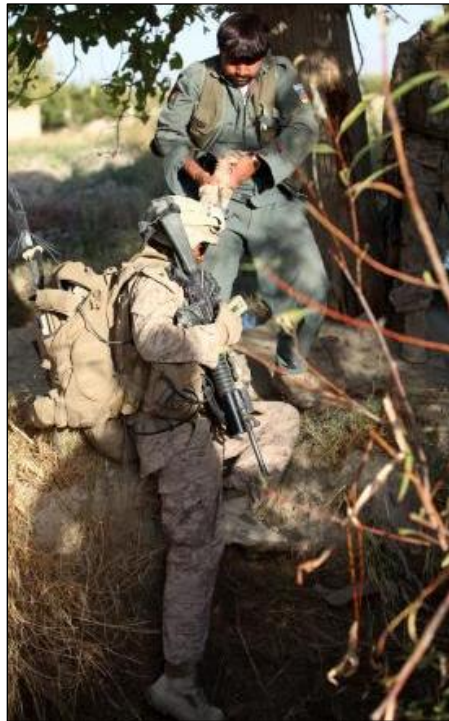
Musa Qal'eh: walking path of progress

By Cpl. Jeffrey Drew

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Musa Qal'eh, once terrorized by insurgents, now shines as a symbol of progress in the province, thanks to the hard work and dedication of Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan officials, Afghan security forces, Marines and sailors of the 2nd Marine Division (Forward), and other coalition partners.

They have worked together to eliminate the insurgent threat in the area, and local Afghan officials have tightened security and invested in infrastructure and education, successfully laying a strong foundation for years to come.

“Before, the security circle was very limited,” said Naimatullah Sameen, district governor of Musa Qal'eh. “Nobody could walk around confidently in the bazaar. Up to one



kilometer around us, it was not possible to walk around. There was no coordination among government authorities, and we were in a very vulnerable position. We did operations in the north, south, west and east. We expanded security, established (checkpoints), helped people, and more than 30 kilometers the security has been expanded.”

The district's bazaar saw an increase in trade as residents began to feel safe

in the area. According to Sameen, approximately 2,000 shops are now open, providing jobs and a renewed confidence in the district's economy. Upon the established base of security, windows of opportunity and progress opened to local citizens.

“In Musa Qal'eh district, before there was security, there was no education either,” said Sameen. “As we have improved security, education has been improved. Education establishes the foundation of a society.”

Education has taken flight in Musa Qal'eh during the last year. Afghan children are required to help their families harvest crops throughout the year, causing inconsistencies in the student reporting process and leading to inaccurate student attendance statistics. This year, however, teachers and education directors identified the most reliable times of the year to count students. Improvement in the student reporting process from the provincial to district level has led to a more accurate record of student attendance.

“Illiterate people don't know that (someone) might be tricking them,” said Sameen.

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ANA artillery fire lights the way of progress for Afghan security forces

By Cpl. Alfred Lopez

FIRE BASE FIDDLER'S GREEN, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Afghan National Security Forces have gained a new edge in the counterinsurgency fight in southern Helmand.

Afghan National Army soldiers with 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, conducted an artillery demonstration, firing illumination rounds from Howitzer D-30s for government officials and local elders from districts across southern Helmand Jan. 14.

“This event gave the Afghan people in this area an opportunity to observe their soldiers performing their duties with very minimal support from coalition forces,” said Capt. John Erskine, the office-in-charge of the Combat Support Advisory Team with 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, and native of Coronado, Calif.

The ANA artillerymen prepared for the demonstration for weeks, conducting independent and partnered training with their Marine counterparts five days a week, said ANA Lt. Col. Fazul Hazim, the commanding officer of 4/1/215.

“For this mission, they conducted night training on the D-30,” Hazim added. “They also exercised three night, live-fire rehearsals prior to the final shoot.”

“Our artillery advisers trained the soldiers on fire direction and gunline procedures,” Erskine said. “The training also focused on night missions, which is something new for the kandak.”

The demonstration was a significant step forward in the development of the 4th Kandak and the ANA's overall artillery capability.

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Marines, Afghan police secure southern Musa Qal'eh, work toward long-term stability during Operation Double Check

By Cpl. Thomas Bellegarde

PATROL BASE 7171, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Afghan National Security Force and Afghan National Police personnel are working with Marines and sailors from Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, to secure areas of southern Musa Qal'eh district, Helmand province, during Operation Double Check, which kicked off Jan. 3 when



the Marines helicopter-inserted into the area.

The troops cleared areas of the district south of Patrol Base 7171, including Surkyan, Khwajadad and Mosulmani, which were safe havens for insurgents in recent years. Security posts for Afghan Uniformed Police personnel were constructed in these places during the first week of operations to ensure the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan could maintain long-term control of the area.

“Fox Company was responsible for disrupting enemy forces on the eastern side of [Musa Qal'eh's dry riverbed],” said Midland, Texas, native Capt. Aaron Awtry, the commanding officer of Fox Company. “[During] the initial phase of the operation, ... we dropped by helicopter assault and disrupted enemy targets, safe houses, cache sites and things like that to keep the enemy off balance, which allowed our engineering assets and the Afghan police to establish those posts.

“We've completed that phase and now we're into the longer-term phase of the operation, [in] which we are down there operating with the Afghan



Uniformed Police in support of their posts,” he added.

The AUP and Marines are working together during the operation, but the Afghans also operate independently by conducting all-AUP patrols and providing security overwatch from their new posts.

“[The AUP] are the main effort,” said Awtry. “They were there with the Marines during the initial clear of those target locations; they were there to select the sites of where the posts were going to be built at; they were there to man the posts and help construct the posts and then to operate out of the posts and with the local populace.”

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Garmsir district eyes growth through school construction

By Cpl. Reece Lodder

KHAROTI, Helmand province, Afghanistan -- Afghan contractors work to reinforce the roof of a school building under construction here Nov. 19. Twelve permanent schools are currently under construction by local contractors in Garmsir district. Marines with the civil affairs team in support of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, visited several sites to inspect the structures and ensure compliance with the quality assurance standards of the Afghan government. The buildings are projected for mid-year completion.

