



2nd Marine Division (Forward)

Task Force Leatherneck

Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

June 26, 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.

Ballistic Underwear Make Their Way to Marines in Afghanistan

By Cpl. Marco Mancha

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – Once you get past the humor of “ballistic underwear,” the threat it helps mitigate is real and the protection is necessary.

The new ballistic underwear to better protect against life-altering injuries is here and has already become a standard in proper protective equipment for almost every unit when they go outside any forward operating base in Afghanistan.

Made of lightweight silk, the black pair of underwear that resembles bicycle shorts is in high demand throughout Afghanistan. The ultimate goal for the underwear is to better protect Marines from improvised explosive devices, the number one cause of American troop casualties since the start of the war.

According to Marine Corps Systems Command officials, “what the garment does is more wound mitigation.” The tier 1 ballistic underwear is manufactured from scientifically-tested ballistic silk material that provides an initial



level of protection against the effects of IED blasts.

The underpants are coated in an anti-microbial agent which protect against infections, and they come in a range of sizes, while the tier 2 protection is a unisex one-size-fits-all according to a report from BBC News. Both are washable, though forces will have to first remove the extra ballistic protection from inside the tier 2.

The 2nd Marine Division (Forward) surgeon and Birdsboro, Penn., native, Commander Sean Barbabella said he believes the underwear is definitely a step in the right direction.

“I think it is a positive move, and the Marine Corps has pushed to get this taken care of and get research done,” added Barbabella. “You know, things

might not get done as fast as you want initially, but it’s definitely moving down the road rapidly and ultimately saving lives.”

The 1992 University of Pittsburg graduate also mentioned the significant difference he’s seen with the patients he’s evaluated at Bastion Role III Medical Treatment Facility.

“I’ve already seen a couple of the U.S. Marines that have come in where small fragments were actually stopped or caught up in the underwear,” said Barbabella. “The fragmentation that went through didn’t leave as much damage as if [the Marine] wasn’t wearing any at all.”

Of the several functions of the underwear, ...

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Ohio native chases dreams into combat zone

By Pfc. James Frazer

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – When some people graduate college, the first thing they want to do is find a job where they can put their knowledge and new diploma to use. What happens when everything works the way it's suppose to, but they feel like something is still missing?

This was the problem Broadview Heights, Ohio native, 2nd Lt. John Suschak faced. He graduated from Bowling Green State University in 2008 with a degree in exercise science and began working as a physical trainer. It was a job doing what he loved everyday and he made a good living, yet there was something missing. It didn't take him long to figure out what that missing piece was.

"I've always wanted to join the military," said Suschak, the Logistics officer for Headquarters Battalion, 2nd Marine Division (Forward). "After college I felt a very strong, patriotic need to serve my country and do something that had meaning. I wanted to experience the sacrifice service members make to serve something bigger than themselves."



Suschak said he was first introduced to the military in his third year of high school when he received the opportunity to follow an Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps group for a day. The unit was practicing battlefield movements to demonstrate the knowledge the Army had taught them. Suschak discovered a fascination for the practice of battlefield tactics and strategy.

He put his newfound interest on hold as he worked toward earning his high school diploma. Once earned, he remained focused on his education and physical fitness throughout college, putting his interest in the military in the back of his mind.

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Camp Pendleton Marines insert, clear Ghughori Baba

By Cpl. Benjamin Crilly

PATROL BASE FIRES, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan -- Six CH-53E Super Stallions chopped through the early morning air, June 5. Moving swiftly under the cover of darkness, they transported their passengers to an uncertain objective where Marines have rarely gone before.

The Marines of 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, and partnered soldiers from the 1st Tolay, 2nd Kandak, Afghan National Army, were inserted at two landing zones on the outskirts of Ghughori Baba to carry out Operation Maneuver One.



The unit is from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California and is currently deployed to Sangin, Afghanistan a district roughly 300 miles southwest of Kabul, the nation's capitol.

The village of Ghughori Baba sits on the western side of the Helmand River across from 1st Platoon in the 33rd Georgian Light Infantry Battalion area of operations. Because of the river's geographic limitations to partnered patrols insurgents have been known to use the small village as a staging area for insurgents and weapons caches.

The restrictions make it the ideal staging place for enemy fighters before moving across the river to engage and operate against friendly forces.

"The enemy's center of gravity is their ability to exploit our boundaries. They know we have the Helmand River that separates us from Ghughori Baba, so that is a huge obstacle for us. They think we won't cross it," said 1st Lt. Charles Poulton, the 1st Platoon commander. "However, their critical vulnerability is their false sense of security."

"My end state to exploit was to conduct a helo (helicopter) insert to clear the city. The intent was have them wake up at dawn and have them (insurgents) surrounded and not be able to go anywhere," said Poulton, from San Clemente, Calif. "Once we were able to do that we let them know that we can get over there and there is no safe place for the enemy to harbor or hide their weapons. [\(Read Story\)](#)



Marine Duo Powers Up Area of Operations

By Cpl. Marco Mancha

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GERONIMO, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan –

The typical American may wake up, drink their coffee along with a small nutritious breakfast, and then head out the door to their nine to five job, with expectations of being home by six p.m. every evening. Life is much different for two Marines attached to the 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment.

Cpl. Samuel Penalzoza, a basic electrician, and Lance Cpl. Andrew Fuller, a generator mechanic, work as a team and

Chicago Native and Truck Company Keeps 1/5 Rolling in Sangin

By Cpl. Benjamin Crilly

FORWARD OPERATING BASE JACKSON, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - Cpl. Rene Sotelo, the loadmaster for 2nd Platoon, Truck Company B, Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division, spends anywhere from six to eight hours preparing the trucks before each convoy. Eight stops later the Chicago native and his fellow motor transportation operators return to Forward Operating Base Nalay after driving through the night resupplying 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, in Sangin, Afghanistan.

Deployed out of 33 Area, Camp Pendleton, Calif., the platoon runs combat logistics trains throughout the 1/5 battle space six nights a week. When not on the road, they are on standby to respond to the needs of the battalion by providing security, aiding the insertion and extraction of other convoys and conducting vehicle recovery.

“Every infantry battalion needs a support element and it’s important for us to be attached to them to get the supplies out there to the ground pounders,” said Staff Sgt. William

must respond to service calls anytime, day or night, to keep the more than 30 forward operating bases using generators, running.

In order to succeed in their mission, 1/9 must depend on generators to power up most of their electrical equipment.

Penalzoza, a Centerville, Va., native and Fuller, a Germantown, Md., native are on a very difficult schedule to make sure that power keeps flowing throughout the patrol bases and combat outposts.

“When we first got here there was a lot of chaos,” said Penalzoza. “The [Marines] who were here before us did their best with what they had, but we definitely had our work cut out for us when it came to fixing these generators.”

When they receive a call from a patrol base, the Marines are convoyed out to wherever they are needed as quickly as possible.

Sometimes they have to return to a location they just left because another generator goes down or a flood light stops working.

Their work load can get pretty heavy since they are the only two Marines in the unit who handle power related issues. Fuller said it may be a difficult job, but it’s worth doing.

[\(Read Story\)](#)



D. Hanna, the motor transportation operations chief for Truck Company B.

“Logistically; we are the backbone of the battalion. We allow the infantry to do what they do because the Marines [of Truck Company B] out here are diligently going on the road every night providing supplies.”

The platoon resupplies every company position with necessities – ammunition, ... [\(Read Story\)](#)

No Security Like Personal Security Detachment

By Cpl. Marco Mancha

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GERONIMO, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan –

Picture yourself in a foreign country full of sand, hot weather, and insurgents who want nothing more than to take your life. Your job is to drive and patrol through this combat zone and protect a commanding officer as he conducts his daily duties.

For the Personal Security Detachment of 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, it is their reality and they work diligently to ensure the best outcome possible of every mission the team executes.

The PSD, who is on charge of escorting the battalion commander and other VIPs through the unit's area of operations safely, hit an improvised explosive device within their first week in Afghanistan. Fort Davis, Texas, native and PSD platoon commander, Sgt. Bryan A. Behan, said his Marines reacted to the situation like they've been doing it for years.

“Three days after [2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment] left, my vehicle hit an improvised explosive device. Luckily, everything was good and nobody got hurt,” said Behan. “Everyone did what they had to do and our drills were down 100 percent. I was a little bit out of it and one of my Marines stepped up and finished the job. It was amazing.”

He said what makes his team work so well together is that they come from all types of backgrounds and different parts of the unit.

“It was basically, ‘Hey, every company has to give us five [Marines],’ so it was a very quick group,” explained Behan, a 2001 graduate of Fort Davis High School. “The group was different out of each company, and everyone had never worked together, so it was my job to make sure that happened.”

It's been four months since the PSD was formed and they've gone from a crawling phase to a full-on sprint, according to Behan and his Marines. [\(Read Story\)](#)

Ladies of Laughter Lighten Lava Dogs Hearts

By Cpl. Colby Brown

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELHI, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan —Tom Foss

and Ladies of Laughter stopped here, June 12, during their rib-tickling, knee-slapping tour of Helmand province, called ‘Comics on Duty.’

More than 80 Marines throughout 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment attended the show to watch Foss perform along with Christina Pazsitzky, Sarah Tiana and Jodi Miller.

“Nothing cures the soul like good ol’ laughter — just letting it out,” said

Gunnery Sgt. Shay Henry, the company gunnery sergeant for Hotel Co.

For Tiana and her fellow comedians, the tour is a way of saying thank you to men and women in uniform.

“I just like to see men holding guns laugh because men with guns shouldn't be laughing, they should be serious,” said Patsitzky, a native of Los Angeles.

“It's just really gratifying too see someone holding a gun laugh.”

“Laughter is the best medicine,” added Miller, a native of Rockaway, N.J. “It's kind of a cure-all. For that hour and a half of our show, it feels like everyone there is in a different place.”

Performances are scheduled to take place at nine different positions throughout Helmand, Regional

Command Southwest's area of operations.

“We get to see Afghanistan for ourselves, and we're coming to [the service members] instead of them coming to us, at a show,” said Tiana, a native of Calhoun, Ga.

“It's just a way for me to connect with [the troops] and talk and joke with the guys here.” Henry said the show was a refreshing diversion from daily counterinsurgency operations.

“Anything that gets our mind off of being away from home [and] in Afghanistan is good,” said Henry, a native of Lewiston, Idaho. “It lets the Marines know that there are a lot of people back home who appreciate their service, and it's good to have an outlet to relax and recharge from working 18-hour days.” [\(Read Story\)](#)