



2nd Marine Division (Forward)

Task Force Leatherneck

Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

May 22, 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.

North Carolina Marine Earns Meritorious Promotion During Deployment

By Lance Cpl. James Frazer

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan –Marine Corps promotions bring larger paychecks and increased responsibility, but they also indicate Marines’ superiors trust and belief they are ready to step up to the next level of leadership.

Swansboro, N.C., native Cpl. Phillip Coutts recently won a meritorious sergeant board during his second yearlong deployment to Afghanistan.

The sergeant board is an event in which a panel of senior Marines examines a group of corporals and awards one with a promotion to the rank of sergeant, based on his or her performance, effort and potential.

The Headquarters Battalion utilities chief, now Sgt. Coutts, said he received the promotion because, while plenty of others may qualify for the rank, when it comes time to do the work, he has always had the confidence to step up and take charge.

“While standing there with them watching me, I was so nervous,” said Coutts. “When it came down to it, though, I knew I had to just maintain my composure.”



Coutts, who also serves as the acting platoon sergeant for the Headquarters supply lot, presented the same level of confidence in the board that he brings to work every day. He said he knew he was completely prepared for any test or task he would be asked to perform during his latest board examination.

“I still knew a lot of the information I’d memorized for earlier boards I had attended,” Coutts said. “I’ve also got a lot of experience with a lot of different things that I could rely on if they asked me anything unexpected.”

Some of Coutts’ experience comes from his life before he was a Marine, when he dropped out of high school so he could work a full-time job to support a family.

He has worked as a police officer and a handyman, performing odd-jobs and basic home repairs, but his growing family gave him just the reason he had been looking for to start a stable profession as a service member. He studied and received his General Education Diploma he needed to pursue his dream of joining the military. Coutts now has a wife with three children and another one on the way. The drive and determination he used to get his GED to take care of his family has carried into his Marine Corps career as well, further adding to his success. “His initiative and his push to excellence is what inspired me to push him up for meritorious sergeant,” said Gunnery Sgt. Brian Scarbrough, Headquarters Battalion Supply and Logistics chief.

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Through the Ranks: Lance Corporal

By Cpl. Colby Brown

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan — Rocks crunch under the boots of a Marine walking a seemingly endless patrol route. He scans 360 degrees for suspicious activity as the sun slides beneath the horizon. It's getting late; if he wasn't on patrol, it would be dinnertime.

He hums the chorus of a song, which bounces off the walls of an empty house he passes. His fire team hums along, but no one smiles or laughs. Their eyes scour the terrain, and their ears are tuned for trouble.

ANA, Marines Search for Weapons, IED Materials

By Cpl. Benjamin Crilly

PATROL BASE FULOD, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - The Marines of 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, while on patrol with their ANA counterparts, searched the abandoned structure on a routine security patrol to ensure it was not being used to store weapons or IED components.

Culturally, the ANA served a vital role when the Marines search inhabited compounds since they are able to explain to local homeowners the intent of the search and be accepted as doing their job instead of seen as an outside threat to the Afghan's privacy and freedom.

“We know that at times they cannot conduct searches on their own and

Lance Cpl. Shawn Cole stops mid-hum. His fire team halts, and the chorus comes to an abrupt rest. Instead of thinking about how long they've been walking, they hone in on something. Despite the improvements in Garmsir District, even a farmer digging in his field could signal danger ahead – maybe an improvised explosive device.

After a tense moment, the muffled crunch of boot upon stone resumes. Trouble never materializes, and the patrol moves on.

“After about four or five hours of just walking, it's hard to stay concentrated,” Cole said. “So, I try to keep my Marines attentive and fresh. We pour over the ground, walls and trees, looking for [improvised explosive devices] and anything suspicious. Singing is a way I try to keep things fresh — make sure my Marines aren't being sucked into the monotony of patrol ...”

The blonde-haired, blue-eyed 21-year-old joined the Corps because he had always been interested in the military. He said he wanted to be a part of something bigger than himself, and his second tour in Afghanistan gives him that satisfaction.

Cole is a fire team leader with the Guard Force Platoon, 1/3, which provides security throughout the district.

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collect all the necessary intelligence that we see as important,” said Sgt. Kevin W. Zarefoss, a squad leader for 2nd Plt. “It is still important for us to put their face to it. We are putting an Afghan face on an Afghan problem. “

This also allows the Afghan soldiers

to see how to properly search for, collect and document evidence by watching the Marines. If they see the Marines care about respecting the culture and the property, the soldiers might have more trust in the Marines, said Lance Cpl. Patrick C. Hawco, a point man with 2nd Plt. [\(Read Story\)](#)



3/2 Marines Reflect on Fellow Warrior

By Lance Cpl. Clayton Vonderahe

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MUSA QAL'EH, Helmand Province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan –

A memorial service was held recently to honor the service of Staff Sgt. Jason Rogers.

Staff Sgt. Jason Rogers was the platoon sergeant of 3rd Platoon, Company C, 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, operating under the command of 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines while in Afghanistan.

Since joining the Marine Corps in 2003, Rogers served in two combat tours in Iraq and three in Afghanistan, including the current tour.

On April 7, 2011, Rogers and his platoon were performing a clearing operation to remove improvised explosive devices. He was clearing a path to a helicopter for two severely wounded Marines when he was taken from this world.

Rogers understood the dangers his job entailed and exhibited unwavering dedication to Corps and country, according to his fellow Marines. On April 27, his friends and fellow Marines gathered on Forward Operating Base Musa Qal'eh to remember a fallen hero.

A pair of boots was placed with a rifle standing vertically between them, barrel down. A Kevlar helmet crowned the stock of the rifle while

Rogers' dog tags were hung solemnly from the pistol grip.

The Marine Corps Flag crossed with the American Flag, provided a backdrop for his field expedient battlefield cross. The memorial allowed others to reflect on who Rogers was, what he meant to them, and how they would miss him.

“He always looked on the brighter side of things,” said Sgt. Jarrod Alexander, a squad leader with 1st squad, Company C, 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion. “He never had any discontent toward anything. He could always make any situation better, regardless of if it was bad or good.”

Marines reflected on his bright character and ability to befriend any one. They remembered his natural ability to lead Marines, especially in combat conditions.

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Alpha Company 1/5 Project Improves Sangin Economy

By Cpl. Benjamin Crilly

PATROL BASE JAMIL, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan -

The Government of Afghanistan is working with Marines of Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, to boost the economy and give the people of Sangin work through projects in the area. The projects are designed to clean up parts of Sangin and address the needs brought by tribal elders. This makes it imperative to interact with the elders firsthand and properly evaluate the scope of suggested projects.

“You have to start from somewhere. After all the work that (3rd Battalion,



5th Marines) did, people are a lot more willing to come forward and talk to us,” said Sgt. J. D. Hodges, the 4th Civil Affairs Group representative for Co. A, 1/5. “It is good to know who does not have the interest of the community first.”

A project to clean up and dig storm sewers for a road heavily used by local commuters going to and from the Sangin Bazaar was selected and announced earlier in the week. The project entailed contractors placing bids for truck leases and then showing

up with 10 workers a piece. The road was divided into even sections and worked on during set hours until completion. The set hours allowed the Afghan Local Police and Afghan National Security Forces to provide security for the workers ensuring that the work will not be hindered.

The sectioning off of the road, allowed the Marines to evaluate the quality of the work and the supervisor's ability to manage the small scale project. District officials will assess the contractors work and select whether or not they will use them for future projects. To be assigned to future projects the contractors had to participate in this project.

Since the funds for these projects are dispersed by GIRoA through the Marines, the Marines chose to set up a cash-for-work program to pay the workers and contractors individually for this project. [\(Read Story\)](#)

Afghans Trust ISAF with Their Children

By 1st Lt. Timothy Irish

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Nimroz province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - A 3-year-old Afghan boy and a 14-year-old girl were treated and medically evacuated from the district of Sangin by coalition forces Tuesday.

The Afghan children were brought by their mother to Forward Operating Base Sabit Qadam after receiving drastic burns.

“The boy accidentally spilled a vat of hot lamp oil on [himself] and his sister,” said Navy Lt. Richard Whitehead, the battalion surgeon for

1st Battalion, 5th Marines. “The little boy had burns over 50 percent of his body. Without us taking care of him he would of died later from secondary infection.”

Whitehead, a native of Pascagoula, Miss., explained how the assistance provided by his battalion aid station was just one part of the partnership between the Afghan National Army and the Marines and sailors in the area.

“They first came to an ANA patrol. Then HM3 Steven Foley [a corpsmen with the unit] called back and asked if we'd be able to provide treatment.”

The battalion aid station has provided medical care to more than 20 Afghan civilians since arriving in Sangin.



“Normally they approach a partnered patrol or ANA [soldiers] and that’s how they usually come in to us, which works out well because they are going to GIROA forces first,” added Whitehead explaining how locals will seek urgent medical care.

It is common for ISAF forces to treat Afghans for non-combat related injuries and illnesses when they ...

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ANA Leads Marines on Sangin Patrol

By Cpl. Benjamin Crilly

PATROL BASE FULOD, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan - Afghan National Army soldiers from the 2nd Tolay, 2nd Kandak, led a presence patrol through Sangin, Afghanistan, May 11.

While the ANA have been partnered with Marines for many patrols before, this was the first time the 2nd Tolay soldiers took charge of this kind of partnered patrol. The Marines of

Advisor Team 4 attached to Company C, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, took a back-seat role in the patrol and followed the ANA’s lead, allowing them to run the show.

When the soldiers lead the patrol, they plan the route, brief the plan and then maintain communications with their headquarters element throughout the patrol. The advisor Marines assist with air support if needed.

The ANA commander and squad leaders maintain command and control over the patrol from the first step. They are responsible for conducting improvised explosive device sweeping, posting security and coordinating with other maneuver elements in the area.

At a security pause, the ANA received a mission to push out farther and check multiple ANA outposts and the progress made on fortifying a new outpost. The commander gave his intent to the soldiers and they adjusted the patrol route to complete the new task.

“I think it was a good patrol because everything went according to plan while we were out there,” said Sgt. Jalaladdin Naqibullah, a squad leader for the 2nd Tolay.

The Marines of the advisor team fell into the patrol where the ANA patrol leader wanted them ... [\(Read Story\)](#)

