



2nd Marine Division (Forward)

Task Force Leatherneck

Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

November 6, 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.



Afghanistan deployment gives Virginia native new perspective

By Sgt. Earnest Barnes

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Different experiences in life shape people’s perspectives and impact their decisions. One Virginia Beach, Va., native’s deployment to Afghanistan and a mother’s insight not only changed his perspective on the Marine Corps, but has altered the course of his life as well.

Lance Cpl. Leepoleon Jackson, an administration clerk for the Administration and Manpower Section, 2nd Marine Division (Forward), is working toward a promising future, thanks to the lessons his mother tried to teach him as a child and his experiences in the Marine Corps.

Jackson grew up in a single-parent home with a mother who would not tolerate negative influences in his life. He

said he wasn’t a bad kid for the most part, but he hung out with the wrong crowd. His mother had all she could take and decided Jackson needed more discipline in his life.

“When I was 16 or 17, my mom put me in this military program for at-risk youth,” said Jackson, who is 21 years old. “It is basically like a five-month ‘boot camp.’ I really liked the discipline the (instructors) had. I was a big fan of the uniforms and the whole military persona. I took a lot from the experience.”

The program, called the Commonwealth Challenge, was created to intervene in the lives of at-risk youth by providing the values, skills, education, and self-discipline needed to produce responsible, productive citizens, and to do so in a highly disciplined atmosphere, according to the program’s website.

Jackson went back to high school after he graduated from the program and enrolled in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, since he enjoyed the military lifestyle so much. Jackson knew after his time in the Commonwealth Challenge and JROTC he was going to join the military.

“I’m all about challenges,” said Jackson, a 2007 graduate of Green Run High School. “Out of all the other branches, I felt the Marine Corps would be the most challenging, so I thought it would be the best for me.”

He joined the Marine Corps Jan. 12, 2009, and attended the Personnel Administration School at Camp Johnson, N.C., before checking into his first duty station.

Jackson worked at the Installation Personnel Administration Center on Camp Lejeune, N.C., where he updated service members’ record books and assisted them with temporary additional duty orders and travel records. For Jackson, the same day-in-day-out routine was very repetitive, and he wanted a new challenge. He saw an opportunity to mix up his day-to-day routine.

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Operation Eastern Storm returns commerce, residents to Kajaki bazaar

By Cpl. James Clark

KAJAKI SOFLA DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Columns of mopeds, caravans of pack animals, and an endless stream of trucks, tractors and trailers heralds the return of local residents to the Kajaki Sofla District.

The area was nearly a ghost town when the Marines of 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, and Afghan soldiers inserted during Operation Tofan Sharq (Eastern Storm). In recent days, however, there has been a slow, but steady return to normalcy as the insurgent threat in the area has been systematically eliminated.

The goal of this major offensive operation is to force the Taliban-led insurgency in the Upper Sangin Valley region out of Kajaki. Coalition and Afghan National Security Forces pushed north from Sangin along Route 611, clearing insurgents out of the area along the way and securing the road leading to the once-terrorized village. The offensive has allowed local

residents to return to their homes and brought commerce back to the local bazaar.

The bazaar, a major hub for the local community, is a clear indicator of the operation's success thus far. The number of people shopping and selling their wares, the reception Marines and ANSF members receive when they pass through, and the number of local residents who hang around when coalition forces are present, serve as indicators of the improved conditions.

With the majority of insurgent forces on the run, having fled since the outset of the operation, the Marines find themselves with a rare opportunity. They currently hold the momentum, and, at the moment, are blessed by a break in the violence. This valuable time is allowing the Afghans to focus on bolstering ties that, with care, can grow into lasting bonds between the local leadership and their representatives in the Afghan government.

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US ambassador visits Nawa, sees progress

By Staff Sgt. Andrew Miller

COMBAT OUTPOST JAKER, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Ryan Crocker, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, visited the Marines and sailors of 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, here Oct. 31.

Crocker used the visit as an opportunity to see firsthand the progress Afghan security forces and the district government are making in Nawa.

While here, the ambassador attended a shura and tour of a local bazaar at the district center hosted by Nawa District Governor Abdul Manaf.

Manaf praised the people of Nawa for their continued support of the Afghan Local Police program and emphasized continued progress in the district's justice system.

“We have good governance and law enforcement in each part of Nawa District,” he said. “Now we have prosecutors and a courthouse, and if anyone has any problems they can come to the district leadership of Nawa.”

None of this, he reminded them, would be possible without the protection of local law enforcement.

Provincial Governor Gulab Mangal, also in attendance, noted that the progress here was the work of the community as a whole.

“Nawa district is part of the transition of Helmand province because of everyone's hard work,” Mangal said.

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Afghan police commander held captive, returns to fight insurgents

By Sgt. Earnest Barnes

MARJAH DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan — In the late 1990s when the Taliban seized Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul, the country was plagued with territorial and religious micro wars. The nationalists of Afghanistan, led by General Ahmad Shah Massoud, stood up against their extremist opposition to take back their country. One native of Baghlan province fought along-side his countrymen and was captured, but unlike most who fell into the hands of the Taliban, he lived to tell the story.

Second Lt. Gul Alam, now a commander in the Afghan National Civil Order Police, was one of the Mujahidin, or freedom fighters, under Massoud, who was famed for his leadership during the Soviet-Afghan

War in the 1980s. Alam took up arms at 25 years old when floods of insurgent forces poured into his homeland.

Alam moved with other Mujahidin fighters from Baghlan over the range of snow-peaked mountains to the southeast, to Panjshir province, which was the headquarters and stronghold of the Mujahidin. He and the men with him were holding a forward position to combat the Taliban forces that were quickly spreading throughout the country.

Alam's commander ordered him and his men to fall back into a location where they could meet with other fighters to plan for the next enemy's offensive — a message Alam never received because the batteries in his radio had died. ([Read Story](#))



Nawa Afghan Uniformed Police conduct independent operation

By Staff Sgt. Andrew Miller

COMBAT OUT POST JAKER, Helmand province, Afghanistan – Afghan Uniformed Police from the Headquarters Precinct of Nawa district successfully conducted their first major independent operation here Oct. 29.

The operation, which took place in the Shorshorak region of southern Helmand, was completely Afghan lead with the only involvement by Marine forces coming in the form of close-air support.

According to 1st Lt. Michael Haft, 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment's Weapons Platoon commander and a

native of Washington D.C., the AUP precinct received intelligence on Oct. 28 indicating there was an improvised explosive device factory operating in Shorshorak.

The AUP conducted an early morning insert into Shorshorak Oct. 29. The all-Afghan security force began its raid of the suspected IED production facility at approximately 5 a.m.

After a thorough search of the compound, the AUP force found fully assembled IEDs, pressure plates, a large trunk containing homemade explosive components, and confiscated one truck and two motorcycles.

After a few hours of further investigation of the compound and individuals detained during the raid, the AUP came under heavy small arms fire. They called in more than 60 officers, requesting as much support as the nearby precincts could offer.

“Even though they called for close-air support, they really didn't need it that much,” Haft said. “The AUP did all the fighting. The aircraft only gave them breathing room a couple times, but they never fired a shot.”

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