



# 2nd Marine Division (Forward)

## Task Force Leatherneck

Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

October 9, 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.*

## Wanderlust: A Florida sailor's search for adventure

By Cpl. Jeff Drew

**CAMP LEATHERNECK, Helmand province, Afghanistan** – For some it's the discipline; for others it's the opportunity to be a part of the less than one percent of the United States population who serves in the military. For many, however, enlisting in the military is all about trying to satisfy an unquenchable wanderlust, an unappeasable sense of adventure. This was the case for Tampa, Fla., native Lt. Kevin L. Hughes, the current operations planner for 2nd Marine Division (Forward).

Hughes knew the Navy was right for him in 1986 after graduating from Chamberlain High School. The excitement of being out in the open air on a ship, traveling to far-off exotic places, mixed with a Navy recruiter making a phone call at the right time, led him down a path that would take him across the globe.

"I've always had an adventure streak in me; it called to me," said Hughes. "Being on a ship, seeing all different parts of the world, you're always going to different places and seeing different things, and I have."

From Australia to China, the Philippines to Korea and Pakistan, Hughes has traveled the world with the help of the Navy. But he seemed to quench his thirst for adventure and travel in 1990 when he returned to being a civilian. He began a family and continued serving his country in the Navy reserve for 10 years.

"In 2000 that sense of adventure reared its head again; I talked to my wife and re-enlisted," said the 2008 Excelsior University graduate. "I was a petty officer first class, and I had to take an administrative reduction to come back in the Navy as a second class. I worked my way back up and was meritoriously promoted to first class in 2003."

The enlistment was different this time around for Hughes. He had a family to think about, and being able to excel and focus on his job while spending time with his family required that he balance both aspects of his life.

"When I'm home, I'm home; I'm not there to discuss work. I'm there for them," Hughes said. "It's all about being able to maintain that balance instead of having your mindset off somewhere else."

In 2006 he was commissioned as a naval officer, achieving his ultimate goal. Hughes said he's always wanted to demonstrate to junior enlisted sailors that through hard work and dedication, anything can be accomplished.

"I love leading sailors and mentoring them," said Hughes. "I have a diverse background, what with being on active duty, in the civilian community, and then back to active duty. I can bring a different skill set to the table when I mentor junior sailors."

Hughes has worked with a Marine Corps unit for the past three years and is currently the officer with the longest track record in the 2nd Marine Division (Forward) operations office, a rare feat for a naval officer.

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# Pinjadoo: another success story in Nawa district

By Cpl. Tommy Bellegarde

**PINJADOO, Helmand province, Afghanistan** – The Pinjadoo Bazaar was already buzzing – hundreds of Nawa district residents were out selling and trading goods, conducting business on what seemed like a normal day. The already energetic atmosphere became even more excited when Nawa district’s governor, Haji Abdul Manaf, arrived on scene. A small crowd gathered around the governor as he shook hands and talked to people.

Afghan Uniformed Police patrolmen and Marines with Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, escorted the district governor through the Pinjadoo Bazaar as he interacted with citizens during a recent visit to view the progress the village is making



to promote commerce and stability in the area.

The crowd following the governor around the bazaar grew steadily as more and more people joined him.

“He’s got a unique ability to connect with his citizens and spread the positive message of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,”

said Capt. Jason Goodale of Woodbridge, Va., the commanding officer of Charlie Company, 1/9. “I thought the governor was well-received and very pleased to be among his people.”

The people have every reason to appreciate their district governor. Nawa has been a shining example of success in Helmand province during the past two years, ousting a visible insurgency and installing legitimate government officials like Manaf, among others. Pinjadoo has greatly benefitted from the area’s prosperity, and today its bazaar is a major center of commerce within the district.

“Everybody’s glad. Everybody’s happy,” said Manaf.

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## Musa Qal’eh gets connected through Wadi Crossing

By Cpl. Clayton Vonderahe

**MUSA QAL’EH, Helmand province, Afghanistan** - The Musa Qal’eh District Center is a bustling area thriving off its high distribution of commerce. During the summer, the streets are teeming with trucks delivering packaged goods, farmers towing carts filled with fruits and vegetables behind donkeys and livestock being herded to the butcher. During the rainy season, however, it is a much different situation.

A wadi, or river bed, separating the district center from many neighboring areas, floods with torrents of water, eliminating the ability to transport goods. The Marines

working in the area have spent years creating the groundwork necessary to build a crossing, enabling the populace to exchange goods, no matter the season.

In the beginning of September 2011, Marines with 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment took control of the battle space, and are responsible for overseeing the construction of the long awaited Musa Qal’eh Wadi Crossing.

The project is spearheaded by the civil affairs Marines from 4th Civil Affairs Group attached in support of 2/4, and is being constructed by the sailors with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4. The project is slated for completion in early December.

“The construction of the wadi crossing bridge has been noted as being rather vital,” said Gunnery Sgt. James Flaherty, the civil affairs team chief. “It fills up in the winter time, and when it does that, it makes access pretty much impossible to vehicles on the opposite side of the wadi. Hopefully after construction we will see a lot more commerce in the district center.”

The chief neighboring villages are to the south and west of Musa Qal’eh’s District Center, and are where the commerce traffic causing potential growth for the district center lies, according to Flaherty. The wadi dissects these areas, leaving the district center isolated from these villages when the water rises.

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# Afghan National Army rocks desert in first artillery shoot

By Cpl. Jeff Drew

## HELMAND PROVINCE,

**Afghanistan** – Temperatures rose in the desert as Afghan National Army soldiers with 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, recently fired their first artillery rounds in Helmand province since their unit was formed in May.

The soldiers began their artillery training at the Kabul Military Training Center and, upon graduating, fell under the mentorship of Marines with the Combat Support Advisory Team attached to 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, and select Marines with Charlie Battery, 1/12.

The CSAT has worked side-by-side with the Afghan artillerymen since May to get the soldiers ready for their live-fire shoot. The ANA knew how to process a fire mission when the two military forces first met, but the Marines offered to increase their proficiency and skill. One of the biggest improvements made was in the Fire Direction Center, where Marines

compute a target's range, direction and precise target location when a request for fire support comes in.

“In terms of the FDC we wanted to bring their mission processing time down,” said St. Louis native 2nd Lt. Bradley Naert, an advisor with the CSAT. “It was taking them roughly 10-15 minutes to process a mission and have the data ready after receiving

a call for fire; now they are down to six minutes, so that is a big success.”

The advisors often had no translators to instruct the ANA soldiers and had to learn Dari in order to teach them. When translators were available, the mentors found it best to teach them in order to better describe it to the ANA members.

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# Marjah district opens schools, develops future generations

By Sgt. Earnest Barnes

## MARJAH DISTRICT, Helmand province, Afghanistan

— The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan opened several schools within the district recently, intent on educating tomorrow's future for the nation.

The residents of Marjah celebrated more than six school openings in the past month. Government representatives, local residents, students and Marines with 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, gathered on several occasions to commemorate opening day ceremonies at various locations.

Students from 5 to 17 years of age lined up for the opening ceremony of the Balakino School located in central Marjah. A number of GIRoA representatives spoke to the crowd about the importance of security, education, and the future of Afghanistan at this particular ceremony.

“Before, the people were under the pressure of the insurgency, so they would not come to school. (Teachers) could not do their jobs properly because of the insurgents,” said Muhammad Dawood, the headmaster of one of the recently opened schools. “It is very important that the coalition forces are providing security; now the kids are coming to the schools.”

Educational opportunities were not widely available in Marjah under the negative insurgent influence formerly in the area, according to Dawood. He said with the increased security, local residents are not scared to send their children to school now.

“A little over a year ago, this area was controlled by the insurgents, and none of these schools were open,” said 1st Lt. Joe Falvey, a Plymouth, Mich., native and a platoon commander with Kilo Company, 3/6. “It is only since Afghan National Security Force (personnel) and the government have gained influence here that the schools have been reopened.”

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