



# GRIZZLY GOUGE

OFFICIAL REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 5 NEWSLETTER

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## The SITREP

Greetings Regimental Combat Team 5 friends and family. With one more month of hard work behind them, your Marines and sailors continue with their efforts in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, keeping one eye on the homecoming horizon.

This month's newsletter includes updates on upcoming family events from the Family Readiness Officer, Kim Merkel, Ingrid Bairstow writes about social media in the "Spouse's Corner", the Chaps gives tips on effective homecoming habits, a Marine's decisive action saves an Afghan National Army soldier, ANA combat support soldiers learn trauma care, and "America's Battalion" completes their final tour in Helmand province.

Over the past month, RCT-5 Marines and sailors continued to successfully support and train Afghan National Security Forces as they prepare to transition lead security authority. Marine infantry battalions began to reduce the number of coalition force positions in



MARJAH DISTRICT, Afghanistan - From left, U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Alberto Ruiz, Regimental Combat Team 5 sergeant major, Afghan Uniformed Police commander Staff Capt. Hagi Saldar; an interpreter with 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, Col. Roger B. Turner, commanding officer of RCT-5, Lt. Col. Timothy Bairstow, operations officer of RCT-5, and Dauod Parwani, RCT-5 cultural advisor, discuss how to improve the security of local Afghan nationals here, May 21, 2012. Turner and his staff visited various positions within the RCT-5 area of operation during a battlefield circulation. (Photo by Cpl. Ammon W. Carter)

the battlespace, while the number of ANSF positions continues to grow, both in number and quality of security.

The quality of governance in the RCT-5 area of operations also continues to grow, as evidenced by a shura recently held by the newly appointed governor of Khan Neshin district, Shah Mahmood. The commanding officers of 1st and 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalions, Lt. Col. George Schreffler and Lt. Col. Mark Clingan, attended the gathering, along with more than 40 district elders, each representing various villages and tribes in the district.

Mahmood and the assembled elders focused on the goals of securing Afghanistan and improving the lives of the people in Khan Neshin. The district governor emphasized the

importance of agriculture and education-focused projects, as well as the development of health clinics and clean water irrigation.

Those in attendance also discussed the formation of a district elder's council. This collection of elected elders will serve as a board of advisors to the district governor. The council, along with the shura, is a clear sign that governance in Khan Neshin is heading in the right direction.

In Garmsir district, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, nicknamed "America's Battalion", transferred authority of the district to Kilo Company, 3rd Bn., 8th Marines, after seven months of hard labor contributed to the future of the district.

The people of Garmsir have seen progress and development in their district due to the efforts of "America's Bat-



COMBAT OUTPOST YAZZIE, Afghanistan - U.S. Marine Col. Roger B. Turner, the commanding officer, Regimental Combat Team 5, poses for a photo with Marines of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment here, May 21, 2012. Turner and his staff visited various positions within the RCT-5 area of operation during a battlefield circulation. (Photo by Cpl. Ammon W. Carter)

**See SITREP on Page 12**

## Future of Garmsir in Afghan hands, 'America's Battalion' completes final Helmand tour

Story and Photos By Cpl. Reece Lodder

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Afghanistan — In the fall of 2004, the Marines and sailors of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment began a challenging journey that took them to the Middle East and central Asia.

They served on six combat deployments in the years since then — three each to Afghanistan and Iraq. They fought, sacrificed and honored their 16 fallen brothers.

Seven months ago, the men of 'America's Battalion' began their final Afghanistan deployment to Helmand province's Garmsir district. Now they're finally coming home.

The battalion replaced fellow Hawaii-based 1st Bn., 3rd Marines in Garmsir last November. They inherited an 80-kilometer long battlespace surrounding the Helmand River, previously the scene of intense fighting between insurgents and coalition forces.

In 2008, insurgents began heavily engaging British forces based in Garmsir in an attempt to gain control of the district. With a surge of Marines from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, they stabilized the district and returned its control to coalition forces. In May 2009, the British transferred Garmsir to 2nd Bn., 8th Marines, beginning the line of seven Marine battalions to serve here.

Fighting was minimal when 'America's Battalion' arrived in Garmsir. Despite persisting in surrounding districts, insurgent activity in Garmsir had largely been quelled by Marines and Afghan forces.

But their work was far from done in light of the nearing transition of lead security responsibility in Garmsir from Marines to Afghan forces.

Major Sean Carroll, the 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines executive officer, said 'America's Battalion' arrived in Garmsir during a critical phase in the 10-year Afghan campaign. While past battalions had focused on clearing and stabilizing Garmsir, their role was to help build its future.

"We needed to expand our battlespace, retrograde gear, and build, transfer and close positions while verifying the Afghan forces were ready to defend Garmsir as a whole," said Carroll, a San Diego native.

Carroll said the battalion demilitarized or transferred 39 of its 42 positions to Afghan forces,



MARJAH DISTRICT, Afghanistan — U.S. Marine Sgt. Ricardo J. Figueroa, an electrician and noncommissioned officer in charge of Marine Corps Integrated Maintenance Management System serving with Utilities Platoon, Regimental Combat Team 5, volunteers to carry bread purchased at a bazaar during a patrol here, April 6, 2012. Colonel Roger Turner and Sgt. Maj. Alberto Ruiz, the RCT-5 commanding officer and sergeant major, visited Marines and Afghan National Security Forces at several combat outposts throughout Helmand province's Marjah district. Figueroa, a Temecula, Calif., native, made rounds to every generator at each post to inspect and ensure they were in proper working order.

and retrograded and redeployed more than \$140 million dollars of gear from Afghanistan to the U.S.

While the future of Garmsir lay in the growth of Afghan-led security, its forces were simply "holding fast," said Lt. Col. Matthew Palma, the 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines commanding officer.

Afghan forces augmented Marine patrols but insufficient manpower prevented them from holding positions on their own and conducting unpartnered operations. The Afghan National Army maintained a single kandak, or battalion, spread thinly throughout the large district. The Afghan National Police force, approximately 300 strong yet understaffed, was "immature, corrupt and filled with insurgents," said Palma, a native of Bristol, R.I.

He said the Marines identified the Afghan police as Garmsir's "bid for success," and replaced the previous 25-man Police Mentoring Team with 210 infantrymen from Kilo Company, 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines.

Together, they identified and attacked corruption in the existing police force and partnered on operations and security patrols. Two Marine-led police academies grew the Afghan Local Police from 120 to 369 patrolmen, said Sgt. Phillip Kilgore, a PMT advisor

and 29-year-old native of Cincinnati. In total, Garmsir's police force doubled to more than 600.

A second ANA battalion — 6th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps — moved to Garmsir from Helmand's Marjah district in February. They began operating in southern Garmsir, augmenting 2/1/215 based in the northern portion of the district.

The bolstered ANA force expanded to positions throughout Garmsir and operated under the watch of Marine mentors. They progressed toward independent operations, Carroll said, "building their confidence and beginning to take the lead under our watch."

As the Afghan forces grew, citizens of Garmsir saw their impact on security. Their confidence in the abilities of their forces manifested in the numerous tips leading to the location and removal of 32 improvised explosive devices and 10 caches of weapons and other insurgent materiel.

See **GARMSIR** on Page 11

## FRO-Zone

"It ain't so 'til it's from the FRO"

Dear Families and Friends,

The homecoming chatter is beginning to buzz...

### Practice safe OPSEC!

Nothing is more important than the safety of your Marine or Sailor so it is critical that we refrain from directly talking about their return windows. Please do not blog or post that info on Facebook or other social networking sites. Make this the mantra and enforce it among your extended family and friends! Return dates were announced as early as possible to help everyone plan ahead. This information is sensitive and discretion must be practiced. It's exciting news but please temper your enthusiasm for their safety.

RCT-5 will NOT be posting return progress to our official Facebook page. Instead return updates will be messaged through the MOL email system and the 5th Marines extension on the 24-hour I MEF Family In-foline, 866-676-0662, Option 9, then 9, then 5. Go ahead and save this number to your phones and contacts so it's handy when you need it.

### Return info

Advance Party (ADVON): July 20-25th, 5th Marines Parade Deck in 62 Area (Camp San Mateo) aboard MCB Camp Pendleton  
Main Body: August 7-12, same location

Actual travel time from Afghanistan may vary, so the dates provided are best estimates for arrival. Please use these dates as a gauge for making travel arrangements. It is highly recommended you purchase travel insurance and/or refundable tickets to help recoup expenses should there be delays. The current plan is for RCT-5 personnel to be granted four days of leave after returning to Camp San Mateo. After those four days they will return to work for mandatory post-deployment training designed to aid their transition back into garrison and family life. Post-deployment leave block periods will be start shortly thereafter.

### Upcoming: Homecoming Events

Return and Reunion workshops – Contrary to conventional wisdom, military family studies and testimonies reveal it's not the deployment separation that is the most difficult part – it's the reintegration afterward. Set your family up for success by attending one of our two upcoming workshops that will prepare you for a better homecoming and reintegration experience.

Thursday, June 28th – Focus on children and family as a whole. Readiness and Deployment Support trainers facilitate open discussion with adults and kids through separate modules. 5:30pm-7pm at Bldg 1795/Family Readiness Center in the San Luis Rey area near Mainside. Kids ages 5-12 participate in one classroom, parents and other adult family members in another, both groups combine for the closing session.

Free child care will be provided for babies and children under 4 years old. Registration is required and Marine Corps Family Team Building is taking reservations now, call 760-725-9052.

July (date TBD) – Focus on couples. Adult-focused return and reintegration training with child care available. Separate announcement to come!

July banner-making party – Preliminary planning for our banner-making party is underway. The date and time will be announced soon! This is going to be so much FUN!

"Operation Rack Pack" Barracks Project – We are partnering with Operation Help A Hero to prepare barracks rooms for our single Marines and Sailors. More details about this July project will be announced later this month.

### May wrap-up

5th Marines families took to the high seas on May 20th for a sailing excursion out of beautiful Dana Point Harbor. The pictures testify to the fair winds and skies that created perfect conditions for a memorable experience. The 82' sailboat, "Curlew," and the 54' sailboat, "Spirit of Dana Point," carried 52 of our family members on a two-hour tour along the picturesque coastline. 1st Marine Division Commanding General, MajGen Ron Bailey, also joined in on the sea-going adventure. Along the way we encountered a large pod of dolphins, scores of pelicans and even a playful sea lion. Refreshments were provided through the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group. Special thanks again to the gracious crews of "Curlew" and "Spirit" for hosting the event.

As always, friends and families, please contact me or your Family Readiness Assistant with any of your questions, comments, ideas or concerns. We remain in touch!

Semper Fifth,

Kim Merkel

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# RCT-5 Dana Point Cruise



## The Chaplain's Corner

### *"The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Homecomings"*

Stephen Covey is famous for writing his run-away best seller, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." He applied these same principles to his second book, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families." With apologies to Dr. Covey, I've tweaked his principles into what we might call, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Homecomings."

#### **Habit #1: Be Proactive.**

Proactivity is that place between an event and our response to it. You can either take control of crises, challenges, or changes in your life or you can allow them to take control of you. Focus on what you can control and plan how to confront it. "Planning for the best and hoping for the best" really isn't a very good course of action when, in reality, the best doesn't always happen. Be prepared for things NOT always to work out as you hope they will and you'll be better prepared for the unexpected.

#### **Habit #2: Begin with the End in Mind**

Covey talks about a principle-centered personal mission statement that extends to long-term goals. If you're married, that's probably your marriage vows – traditionally some form of "for better, for worse, for richer, for poor, in sickness and in health, to death do you part." Regardless of how it's stated, the goal is a commitment for the long haul regardless of life's ups and downs. A whole year, though, is a long time to be apart and people do change. Perhaps the details of how you see your relationship playing out are different from your partner. Consider discussing it with your spouse using three ground rules: 1) listen with respect; 2) restate accurately to show you understand; and 3) write down the ideas you generate.

#### **Habit #3: Put First Things First**

Turn your mission statement into action; that is, do things that will build up the relationship with your spouse and family for the long haul. Plan on carving out some one-on-one bonding time where you can be away from kids and other responsibilities to nurture your relationship. Still, don't neglect spending time together as a family. Remember: kids measure love by "time spent."

#### **Habit #4: Think Win-Win**

Healthy relationships focus more "we" than on "me." This means sometimes sacrificing the small things in order to achieve something big. Covey says there's two characteristics of lasting marriages: 1) both spouses stop being single at heart and become married at heart; and 2) they care more about the health of their relationship than winning arguments. When you're again reunited, don't sweat the small stuff but remain flexible.

#### **Habit #5: Seek First to Understand...Then to be Understood**

Perhaps the most important principle of interpersonal relationships, effective listening seeks the other person's perspective – discerning both their feelings and meaning. Arguments can become a vicious cycle of shouting at one another, seeking to be understood, yet at the same time increasing defensiveness. The result is a shutdown of communication and starvation of the relationship. Seeking to understand involves taking the role of a faithful translator – ensuring we understand our partner's



*Cmdr. Mark S. Winward is the RCT-5 Regimental Chaplain. He is available anytime for pastoral counseling or personal support by contacting him at [mark.winward@afg.usmc.mil](mailto:mark.winward@afg.usmc.mil).*

message and communicating it back to them. Practiced regularly, this can create a supportive and encouraging environment that can weather long deployments and the challenges of life.

#### **Habit #6: Synergize**

When celebrated, individual differences can create a "synergy," or a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. The wisdom in the cliché "opposites attract" is found in the natural synergy that happens when couples and families celebrate their differences. Like old people who compliment one another, individual distinctions can become the strength rather than the weakness of your partnership. Of course, you've both had very different experiences over the past year – celebrate together how that time has matured you and what you both bring new to the relationship.

#### **Habit #7: Sharpen the Saw**

Take time to balance the physical, social/emotional and spiritual dimensions of your relationship. Unless you make deposits in these areas for yourself and each other, you'll find yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually bankrupt – unable to offer much of anything to anyone. Take time to exercise together, socialize together, and worship together and you'll discover a reserve of resources to tackle life's challenges together!

Highly successful homecomings don't happen by accident; they require intentional planning, mutual flexibility, and hard work. But apply the "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Homecomings" and you'll find your time together "prime time."

Godspeed,  
CHAPS

Chaplain Mark Winward  
CDR, CHC, USN  
RCT-5 HQCO - Chaplain

# Spouses' Corner

## How well do you do social media?

By Ingrid Bairstow

At a recent volunteer training event I watched a YouTube video about social media that stunned and amazed me.

Let me first say that I am not anti-social media (which includes any type of electronic interaction, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, etc). Like so many millions of others, I appreciate the instantaneousness of Facebook especially sharing information and photos with friends and family all over the world. It's especially useful avoiding trips to the post office, printing individual pictures and actually paying postage (remember those days?).

In a short video, Eric Qualman, a businessman and expert on social media presented the following tidbits of information, also published in his book, Socialnomics.

- Facebook tops Google for weekly traffic in the United States.

- Social media is the #1 activity on the Web.

- To reach an audience of 50 million, it took radio 38 years - TV 13 years - the internet 3 years. In less than one year, Facebook had 200 million users!

- In fact in terms of population, if Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest in the world, following China and India.

Qualman's research is obviously geared for the businesses that are perhaps reluctant to enter the modern world and social media. The numbers he lists are compelling.

"We don't have a choice on whether we do social media or not, the question is how well we do it," he states.

That's absolutely true for the business world – and same goes for the

individual person like you or I. But as an individual using social media, how "well we do it" primarily depends on the privacy and safety of the information we are sharing with more than 900 million people – that's the total number of active monthly Facebook users as of March 2012. Over 80% of them are outside the US and Canada! (Taken directly from Facebook's Newsroom online)

Remember your mother's advice about not talking to strangers? She probably believed strangers were not likely to have your safety as their top priority. Social media has us not only 'talking' to strangers, but telling them all about our lives – which school we went to, what our favorite movies are and the state where we grew up, not to mention what we, our servicemember spouse and our children look like in all those great pictures!

Unfortunately, I have not found a presentation on privacy concerns and how easy it is to access information posted on social media sites. However, anyone who has listened to an operational security brief has a basic idea about not sharing deployment data on social media sites. Yet, I see it all the time—an innocent post from a wife that is sad her husband is leaving for 12 months (I'm guilty) and of course the updates as homecomings approaches.

The YouTube presentation opened my eyes to the true extent that social media has and continues to change our world. It also made me more paranoid about what I am sharing with all those people! Here are some ways you can at least try to keep your information a little more private:

- ALWAYS check privacy settings and account settings regularly. Facebook is continually developing



*Ingrid Bairstow is the wife of RCT-5 Operations Officer, Lt. Col. Timothy Bairstow*

new settings with little or no notice in advance.

- Don't post anything you don't want 'someone dangerous' to know about you or your family. I deleted my hometown, high school and college as well as family members. Don't forget about dates and places where your military family member may be!

- Listen to the news and be aware of new laws and regulations regarding social media.

- If you have kids, monitor what they write and keep them educated about some of the dangers of posting too much information on their Facebook Wall. Use the private message function as much as possible.

I hope you will go and see the four-minute video yourself—bet you'll find our new reality startling and perhaps a little disconcerting as I did. Kim Merkel will also post a link to the video on the RCT-5 Facebook page.

Here is the link to ["The Social Media Revolution 2012."](#)

# Aboard Camp Dwyer



## Quick on his feet: Marine treats Afghan partner with improvised tourniquet

Story and photo by Cpl. Anthony Ward Jr.

CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan – A loud and familiar crack echoed throughout the confines of Camp Garmsir.

The sound, akin to that of a short burst from a small arms weapon, put Staff Sgt. Yobany Flores and the rest of his team on alert.

“We were conducting a class on the maintenance lot,” said Flores, the motor transport maintenance advisor to Afghan National Army’s 5th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps with the Embedded Partnering Team, Combat Logistics Battalion 5. “On the road that runs parallel to it, there were three ANA soldiers walking toward their compound.”

As the soldiers continued to walk, something out of the ordinary occurred.

“All of a sudden you hear a big blast, it sounded like somebody shot a weapon,” said Flores, a native of West New York, N.J. “I saw the soldiers, I hear the blast and I see a big cloud of smoke coming from them.”

The ANA soldiers had come across a device that looked similar to a blasting cap. One of the soldiers picked it up and, before he could properly dispose of the device, it exploded in his right hand.

“I’m walking towards it, trying to see what happened and then I see one individual stumbling around and his buddy trying to talk to him,” said Flores. “As I get closer to him I see that he has blood all over his face, and I move even closer and see that he’s pretty much dripping blood from his hand.”

“It was pretty bad, his hand was split open,” added Flores.

Realizing the severity of the situation, Flores leaped into action to aid the wounded soldier.

“I rushed up to him and told him to sit down,” said Flores. “So he sits down and I see that he’s still dripping a lot of blood, so I call over the radio, I’m still thinking he had gotten shot.”

After calling for medical support and realizing help would not be coming fast enough, Flores was forced to improvise.

“I’m looking at him and he’s still dripping blood so I ask my interpreter for his belt,” said Flores. “I grab my interpreter’s belt and I cinch it down on his upper bicep.”

Using the makeshift tourniquet, Flores was able to



CAMP DWYER, Afghanistan- After an Afghan National Army soldier was injured by an explosion from what fellow soldiers described as a blasting cap-like device, Staff Sgt. Yobany Flores used his linguist’s belt as an improvised tourniquet to stop the bleeding from the soldier’s hand. Flores is a motor transport maintenance advisor to 5th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps with Embedded Partnering Team, Combat Logistics Battalion 5. The West New York, N.J. native is on his third deployment to a combat zone, having previously deployed to Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2010.

stop the bleeding long enough to allow the other ANA soldiers to transport their injured counterpart to the Combat Support Hospital aboard Camp Dwyer. The soldier was later moved to Kandahar Regional Medical Hospital for follow on treatment, where he is currently resting in stable condition after surgery.

Flores is on his third deployment to a combat zone, to include tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He attributes his decisiveness to training he received prior to his current deployment to southern Helmand province.

“When you go through the CLS (Combat Lifesaver) course, they teach you a bunch of stuff, one of the first things being to stop the bleeding,” said Flores. “That’s the first thing that came to mind, let’s stop the bleeding. I didn’t have a tourniquet with me, so I just grabbed the belt.”

Editor’s Note: The Embedded Partnering Team, Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), is currently operating in direct support of Regimental Combat Team 5, 1st Marine Division (Forward), which works in partnership with the Afghan National Security Forces and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The Unit is dedicated to securing the Afghan people, defeating insurgent forces and enabling ANSF assumption of security responsibilities within its area of operations in order to support the expansion of stability, development and legitimate governance.



## Afghan soldiers with combat support kandak learn trauma care techniques

Story and photos By Cpl. Anthony Ward Jr.

COMBAT OUTPOST FIDDLER'S GREEN, Afghanistan – The Combat Support Advisory Team is tasked with advising the Afghan National Army's 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, on the many different aspects of combat support operations.

One key area in the development of ANA combat support capabilities is the basic combat life saving skills of Afghan soldiers, which enable them to provide immediate care to casualties on the battlefield.

As the new CSAT takes the reins from their predecessors, new teachers are teaching new skills.

"The old team taught them a whole lot of advanced medical training," said U.S. Navy Seaman Taqkari Johnson, a corpsman with the CSAT. "I'm going to go in and fine tune the basic skills for treating trauma, shock and stuff like that."

"It's good to know the medications and all the advanced stuff ... but it all boils down to knowing the basics," added Johnson. "Right now they're not seeing a bunch of fevers and colds, they're seeing a bunch of IEDs and trauma cases like that."

With trauma care in mind, Johnson began a medical class to instruct ANA soldiers on the proper use of tourniquets, pressure dressings and other basic combat lifesaving tools.

The course was attended by nine soldiers, with a mixed level of skills in combat care. At the beginning of the class, each soldier was asked about themselves and what they learned up to this point in combat casualty care. Once introductions were out the way, Johnson dove into the course material.

"I taught them the basics of what a tourniquet is," said Johnson. "When to use a tourniquet, where to apply it and how much pressure to apply."



COMBAT OUTPOST FIDDLER'S GREEN, Afghanistan – An Afghan National Army soldier with 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, applies a tourniquet to the leg of notional casualty during a combat lifesaver course here, May 7, 2012. The course was taught by U.S. Navy Seaman Taqkari Johnson, a corpsman with the Combat Support Advisory Team, comprised mainly of Marines from 11th Marine Regiment. With trauma care in mind, Johnson instructed ANA soldiers on the proper use of tourniquets, pressure dressings and other basic combat lifesaving tools.

The first day of the course ended with a practical application drill.

Two soldiers would lay on the ground with a notional injury to an arm, leg or multiple limbs. Tourniquets were given to another pair of soldiers waiting about 50 feet away to provide care to the notional casualties.

The two soldiers tasked as care providers would race down to their notional casualty, assess his injuries and apply the tourniquet as necessary to treat the simulated wounds.

The soldiers were all smiles at the conclusion of the first day's training, giving positive feedback to their corpsman advisor.

"It's very important for us to learn these skills. If some of our soldiers or some of our friends get injured we can help those guys and save lives," said Shah Wali, a soldier with Engineer Tolai, 4/1/215. "We are always in combat and [there is] always a chance for us to get injured."

"We want to do as much training as possible so we can teach it to the other soldiers," Wali added.

Equipping as many soldiers as possible with the knowledge to preserve a life and limb on the battlefield will aid in the continued development the ANA as they assume responsibility for security across southern Helmand.



COMBAT OUTPOST FIDDLER'S GREEN, Afghanistan – Afghan National Army soldiers with 4th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, watch attentively as Staff Sgt. Roy Lackey applies a tourniquet to U.S. Navy Seaman Taqkari Johnson during a combat lifesaver course here, May 7, 2012. With trauma care in mind, Johnson, a corpsman with the Combat Support Advisory Team, instructed ANA soldiers on the proper use of tourniquets, pressure dressings and other basic combat lifesaving tools.

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KHAN NESHIN DISTRICT, Afghanistan — U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Carlos Aguilera, a platoon sergeant with Echo Company, 1st Light Armored Battalion, and 31-year-old native of Los Angeles, works out with Ahlim, a linguist with Echo Co., using portable suspension training equipment during an overnight post here, April 26, 2012. Due to the high operational tempo required of Echo Co., Aguilera and his fellow Marines have spent nearly their entire deployment on the road. After a rigorous day of patrolling or holding a vehicle checkpoint, the Echo Marines utilize their mobile gym to maintain the Marine Corps standard of fitness. Photo by (Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez)



DURZAY, Afghanistan — U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Ronald Valdez (left), a corpsman with 1st Platoon, India Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, and 30-year-old native of Waipahu, Hawaii, extends a helping hand to Marine Lance Cpl. Patrick Mireles, a team leader and 23-year-old native of Austin, Texas, as Mireles jumps a stream during a security patrol here, April 30, 2012. After six combat deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq since 2004, they're finally coming home. During their seven months in Garmsir, they advised and developed Afghan forces preparing to take the lead in providing security for the district. As the Afghan forces grew in number and capability, commerce expanded and successful district community council elections were held in April 2012. 'America's Battalion' transferred control of coalition positions in Garmsir to Kilo Co., 3rd Bn., 8th Marines, May 14. (Photo by Cpl. Reece Lodder)



COMBAT OUTPOST DULUTH, Afghanistan — Yeager, an improvised explosive device detection dog, lies in front of a battlefield cross as Staff Sgt. Derick Clark, a kennel supervisor with Headquarters and Service Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, and 26-year-old native of Hillsdale, Mich., and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Michael Dale Reeves, a kennel officer in charge with 2nd Bn., 9th Marines and 41-year-old native of Mt. Pleasant, S.C., observe a moment of silence in honor of Lance Cpl. Abraham Tarwo, a dog handler and mortarman who served with Weapons Company, 2nd Bn., 9th Marines, during a memorial service here, April 22, 2012. Tarwo, who became Yeager's handler in July 2011, was killed in action during a dismounted patrol in support of combat operations in Helmand province's Marjah district, April 12. Tarwo's fellow Marines remember him for his contagious laughter and smile, and his unflinching courage on the battlefield. (Photo by Cpl. Alfred V. Lopez)

**GARMSIR from Page 2**

Far south in Garmsir's eastern desert bordering Pakistan, Afghan Border Police teamed with Marines to disrupt the movement of drugs and insurgent material into Garmsir using targeted helicopter insertions.

"We had some successes and some misses, but this disruption enabled the seed of Afghan governance to germinate," Palma said. "The people of Garmsir have known nothing but war their entire lives. The presence of their forces in ungoverned places allowed them to see freedom and democracy ... a better life."

On April 17, the people of Garmsir helped strengthen their own government by voting in free, Afghan-led district community council elections. More than 2,200 votes were cast to fill all 35 DCC seats, including six new seats in the Safar and Banadar regions, areas of southern Garmsir that previously lacked representation by Afghan government. The elections were held without incident.

"Before the elections, the people of southern Garmsir didn't see the benefits of government," Palma said. "They had water

problems and a stagnant economy. Education and health issues weren't addressed. Now, the government works for them. They have a voice and better access to the resources they need."

As security and governance increased, Garmsir's economy grew. In past years, its economic infrastructure had struggled to develop due to the people's dependence on subsistence agriculture as their main source of income, Palma said. Safely protected by their forces, local shoppers and business owners returned to commerce centers like Safar Bazaar, which grew from approximately 200 to 400 shops since November 2011.

"When we walked through any of Garmsir's bazaars on patrol, all of the shops were open," Palma said. "The people weren't intimidated by insurgents; they were free to shop or do business."

The shift is radically different from Garmsir in 2008, when the district was still run by insurgents. Under their relentless rule, schools were closed, commerce was controlled, and the people were oppressed.

Today, Garmsir is on the cusp of freedom.

Twelve schools have been constructed and opened in the past seven months. Citizens safely travel to their bazaars to purchase and sell goods. District security forces are ready to provide the people of Garmsir the security they've long desired.

"It took the entirety of our deployment, but the Afghan forces are completely capable of conducting operations independent from Marines," Palma said. "Now they're telling us we're simply slowing them down."

For the past seven months, the Marines and sailors of 'America's Battalion' have labored to improve Garmsir's future. As they return home to safety and the embraces of loved ones, their replacements with Kilo Co., 3rd Bn., 8th Marines are at the beginning of their mission.

The Kilo Co. Marines haven't started from scratch in Garmsir. The work of their predecessors has produced an Afghan force willing and able to provide security for their district –

which was included in the recent announcement by President Hamid Karzai marking the next phase of transition across Afghanistan.

Kilo Co. looks to build on the progress made by thousands of Afghan and coalition forces. Their sacrifices will help the people of Garmsir determine their own future.

"This is the best opportunity the Afghan people have had in 30 years to choose the life they want for the next 30," Palma said. "This is their chance to shape their future in the way they desire, rather than in the way someone else tells them it needs to be. They can take the freedom they've received and run with it, or they can regress."

Editor's Note: Third Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, is currently assigned to Regimental Combat Team 5, 1st Marine Division (Forward), which works in partnership with the Afghan National Security Forces and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The unit is dedicated to securing the Afghan people, defeating insurgent forces, and enabling the ANSF assumption of security responsibility within its operations in order to support the expansion of stability, development and legitimate governance.



SAFAR, Afghanistan — U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Tom Morton, a team leader with 3rd Platoon, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, and 23-year-old native of Nashville, Tenn., hands an Afghan child a toy during a security patrol here, Feb. 25, 2012. In November 2011, the Marines and sailors of 'America's Battalion' began their final Afghanistan deployment to Helmand province's Garmsir district. After six combat deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq since 2004, they're finally coming home. During their seven months in Garmsir, they advised and developed Afghan forces preparing to take the lead in providing security for the district. As the Afghan forces grew in number and capability, commerce expanded and successful district community council elections were held in April 2012. 'America's Battalion' transferred control of coalition positions in Garmsir to Kilo Co., 3rd Bn., 8th Marines, May 14.

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talion” and their ANSF partners. During their deployment, two Marine-led police academies more than doubled the district police force to 600. Local shoppers and business owners returned to commerce centers like Safar Bazaar, which grew from approximately 200 to 400 shops since November 2011.

Aboard Camp Dwyer, RCT-5 and 2nd Bn., 6th Marines, were visited by Gen. John R. Allen, the commander of International Security Assistance Forces, and Maj. Gen. Charles Gurganus, the commanding general of Regional Command (Southwest), who awarded and bid farewell to Marines and sailors of 2nd Bn., 6th Marines, who are nearing the end of their seven month deployment.

On Memorial Day, your Marines and sailors paid tribute to the sacrifices of the men and women who served before them during a service in the Camp Dwyer Chapel.

The month of June is a historic point for both 5th Marines and our brothers-in-arms of 6th Marines. It marks 94 years since the Battle of Belleau Wood in World War I, where both regiments earned the French Fourragere for their actions. The Marines also earned the nickname “tufleshunde” or devil dogs, from their German adversaries for the ferocity with which they fought at Belleau Wood.

Today, both Regiments are reunited in Afghanistan, fighting a weakened insurgency with the same tenacity that left them victorious in one of the bloodiest battles in Marine Corps history.

For the duration of the deployment, the Grizzly Gouge will continue to keep you informed on the actions and operations of RCT-5 Marines and sailors in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Our next edition is due for release in the first week of July. Visit the official RCT-5 Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/RegimentalCombatTeam5](http://www.facebook.com/RegimentalCombatTeam5)) and the RCT-5 DVIDS page (<http://www.dvidshub.net/units/RCT5-MD>) to follow the RCT-5 Public Affairs Office coverage of current news, photos and videos from southern Helmand.

## From the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group

Sunday May 20th was an incredible day of sailing for the families of our Fifth Marines. There were smiles from ear to ear as the women and children and even some of our RBE boarded the the 82' Historic Schooner, Curlew, with the overflow on the Spirit of Dana Point out of our beautiful Dana Point harbor. We were also pleased that General Bailey was able to join us for our ocean adventure.

It was so wonderful to have these families bonding together and enjoying a sunny day with smooth seas. Of course it was priceless to see the wonder and awe on the kid's faces when a huge seemingly endless pod of dolphin greeted our family sailors. It was certainly an unforgettable day for everyone who was able to attend.

The City of Dana Point and your DPSG want to invite you and the children to town for free movies under the stars on Fridays, June 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29. Lion King, Toy Story 3, Tangled, Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, and Puss in Boots will WOW the kids! Bring your lawn chairs and blankets and enjoy the nostalgic feel of the old drive-in movies. Refreshments will be available to purchase. Movies will be held at Lantern Bay Park, 25111 Park Lantern Road with a start time of approximately 8:00pm.

Every Sunday June 24th through August 26th, The City of Dana Point is proud to present their 2012 concert line up. Each concert is held from 3:00-6:00 p.m. with an opening band from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. and the main band from 4:30 p.m. -6:00 p.m. Refreshments will be available for purchase. Your Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group will be there each week selling desserts. Again, bring your lawn chairs and enjoy a great family time while listening to GREAT Tribute Bands like Elton John, Springsteen, Abba and others.

We are honored and privileged the City of Dana Point has adopted our Fighting Fifth Marines and hope that you will come to our City and take advantage of these FREE offerings for our Marines and families this summer.

Visit our website [DanaPoint5thMarines.com](http://DanaPoint5thMarines.com). Click on the link titled “Join our email list” and enter your email address. Keep informed about our news, information, fundraising activities, and great community events. Visit [Facebook.com/DanaPoint5thMarines](https://www.facebook.com/DanaPoint5thMarines), click the LIKE button and tell your Facebook friends about DPSG. Follow us on [Twitter.com/DanaPoint5thMar](https://twitter.com/DanaPoint5thMar) for instant updates.

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