



II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)



FAMILY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2013



COMMANDER'S COMMENTS



Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller



Your Marines and sailors of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) have arrived safely in Afghanistan and are already working hard to guide, advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces as they continue to take responsibility for the security of the Afghan people. This will be a challenging deployment but we are well prepared and Maj. Gen. Gurganus and his I MEF(Fwd) team laid a solid foundation for us to build on.

For all our effort and long days here, I know this year will be a challenge for our families back home too. Thank you for doing all you do to keep our families strong during our time apart. We will do our best to let you know what is happening here in Afghanistan and I know our family readiness officer, Michael Cline, will stay busy relaying information and putting together activities and programs to help you build friendship back home.

I hope all had a great time at the ice cream social. More to come!



SERGEANT MAJOR

Sgt. Maj. Paul Berry



Family and Friends of II MEF (Forward),

Hello from Afghanistan! All members of the II MEF (Forward) team have arrived safely. Our counterparts from I MEF (Forward) did a great job and we are set up for continued success. As we move ahead our primary focus is Security Force Assistance (SFA). You can be proud of our team as they continue to lead, teach and mentor their Afghan counter parts.

The dedication and hard work of our Family Readiness Officer and outstanding volunteers is greatly appreciated. I encourage every family member to volunteer and to make new friends. Please take advantage of the exciting events our FRO has scheduled throughout the deployment. Together we will make this a memorable deployment.

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www.iimeffwd.marines.mil
II Marine Expeditionary Force (Fwd)

Commander
Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller

Sergeant Major
Sgt. Maj. Paul A. Berry

Command Master Chief
Master Chief Petty Officer
Kelly A. McNulty

Chaplain
Cmdr. Patrick W. Smith

Family Readiness Officer
Michael E. Cline





COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

Master Chief Petty Officer Kelly McNulty



II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) staff, friends and family,

Greetings, I hope this finds everyone well. We have an extraordinary group of sailors and Marines who continue to impress us each day with their accomplishments.

What you should know is your sailors and Marines are better trained, better equipped and more professional than any other time in our history. I am very proud of them and truly honored and humbled by serving with them as we protect the freedoms of our great nation.

I would like to thank all of you, the staff, families and support teams, for your outstanding work and contributions in getting us out the door and into our area of operations. The support you provide your loved ones and the command will enable them to focus on the mission at hand.

If you have any questions or concerns, reach out and say hello. We'd love to hear from you. Until next month, thanks for all that you do in support of II MEF (Fwd) and our great Navy and Marine Corps team.

HOLD FAST AND LET GOD WORK 2 CORINTHIANS 4:17

There are times in life when everything you attempt to do will seem to go wrong. Your faith may be strong and your commitment deep, yet hard and stressful times come knocking at your door.

In such times, the power of prayer will strengthen and stabilize you. But you can't pray away life's seasons! God has a purpose for times like that. Real growth requires seasons of struggle as well as seasons of success. Sometimes, seasons of struggle increase our dependence on God and not on ourselves. This can be a risky time where we feel powerless, vulnerable, and confused. Yet it's necessary for our growth as a person.

As you look back on your life's accomplishments you'll notice they are seasonal. There are seasons of rain as well as sunshine, and each season

serves a purpose. That's why it can be a mistake to make a permanent decision based on a temporary circumstance or changing emotion.

St. Paul said, "the things which are seen are temporal (meaning subject to change) but... the things that are unseen are eternal. So to use a traditional Navy term "Hold Fast" or be steady...the stressful times going on right now won't always be this way. Sometimes the situation doesn't call for action, it calls for patience and trust in God.

Never forget, God loves you and wants the best for you. In ways we cannot always understand, God is in control of the stressful times and will work toward our good.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Cmdr. Patrick Smith



FAMILY READINESS OFFICER

Michael Cline

II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) family and friends,

We are in the full swing of the deployment of your Marines and sailors of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). There have been several issues our deployed family members are experiencing. The bulk of these issues are the inability to login to the II MEF (Fwd) eMARINE site, child care, and my transition to another location. Within this newsletter, there is information on the eMARINE site, NACCRRRA 16-hour free child care, and my location change and contact information. I have been working to break down several communication barriers to provide you with information of your deployed loved ones.

The II MEF (Fwd) eMARINE site has information pertaining to the command element of II MEF (Fwd) as well as deployment pages for each group. I am working on these pages at this time, so pictures and information may be limited. You will see this progress in the coming months. There are also outlets for specific audiences located on the left side of the II MEF (Fwd) homepage and these will consist of the II MEF (Fwd) commanding general, sergeant major, command master chief, chaplain, service members, spouses, parents and the Single Marine Program. The II MEF (Fwd) homepage has the command leadership pages already listed. The address to the site is

https://www.emarine.org/skins/eMarine/display.aspx?moduleid=d86df8ff-1e41-49a3-be8b-dcb27f97435d&mode=user&action=determine_user_identity&SubsiteID=15a102bd-ad91-4f18-82d6-321c3bb7182c

I know this may sound confusing, but remember that the homepage is required to have certain information, and the Deployment Central Pages are added features to provide a venue to see what your deployed Marine or sailor may be doing from time to time.

The II MEF (Fwd) eMARINE site has been updated with additional pages, namely the II MEF (Fwd) and II Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group (Fwd) Deployment Central Pages. Sponsors or invited family members who have a username and login can access these pages and the II MEF (Fwd) eMARINE site homepage. Once on the homepage, on the right side of the page under the "contact your family readiness officer" outlet is the "deployment central" outlet. The links for the II MEF (Fwd) Deployment Central and II MHG Deployment Central pages are listed within. By clicking either, you will go directly to the page respectively and be able to view the information, pictures and newsletters being submitted.

Below is additional information for service members and family members when subscribing to eMARINE. These are quick steps that are actually provided through the Marine Corps' eMARINE homepage. You can access the homepage by entering the following website in your internet browser: www.e-marine.org

On the homepage, click on the "getting started" tab near the top, second from the left. Click on either the "Marines and service member" or "family members" section. Each section's information is also provided below.

Your family wants to be as informed as possible about your unit. Once you have subscribed to your unit site, you will have the opportunity to invite up to five family members to join the site. You can also manage your family members list from anywhere in the world.

The eMarine website is a secure site available only to Marines, service members and their family members. This system will provide family members with a valuable tool to access documents, view photos/videos, participate in forums, and gain important information about their Marine's unit from anywhere in the world.

A unit's eMarine site promotes a community feeling within units by providing a place that is customized to the unit and contains content that is controlled by the unit. These sites can be accessed any time to view information and photos, read stories, ask questions, participate in Forums and much more.

Online tools include:

Announcements
Photo Gallery
Download Center
News
Frequently Asked Questions
Links
Forum
Streaming Video
Calendar
Survey

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: michael.e.cline1@usmc.mil
Work phone number : (910) 450-5939
BlackBerry: (910) 546-7996



1. Log in to E-MARINE: www.E-MARINE.org
2. Select the "Invite Family Members" link in the "Getting Started" menu.
3. Enter in the first & last name and email address for the family members you would like to invite and indicate which unit site to invite them to.
4. The family members will be added to your family member list and an invitation email will be sent inviting them to the site.
5. Once they complete their registration form, they're automatically approved for your unit's site.

NACCRRA Marine Corps Deployed Respite Care

The National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agency Marine Corps Deployed Respite Care provides 16 hours of free childcare per family of a deployed Marine.

Several of the deployed spouses have been using this service, but there are steps to use in order to register. Those interested can call 1-800-424-2246 and learn about the program and how their family can receive the service.

Eligibility is determined by the following parameters: Your spouse is deployed and you are enrolled in Operation Military Child Care or need to find occasional childcare.

Operation Military Child Care supports the temporary childcare needs of deployed parents. Family members and parents and/or guardians responsible for the childcare of deployed Marine children are eligible. The OMCC helps Marine families locate licensed childcare options in their communities and reduces childcare fees for full-time care.

NACCRRA information can be accessed by the following website:

http://www.jacksonvilleonline.org/3_membertomember/images/OCPC%20Deployment%20Care.pdf

Note: A copy of your service member's deployment orders may be required and the II MHG administration office can provide it for you. If you need a copy of the deployment orders, please notify me with the following information on your deployed spouse: rank, first name, middle initial, last name and when they deployed. I will contact II MHG administration and get a copy of the orders for you.

FUTURE EVENTS

Tarawa Terrace II Easter Egg Hunt March 24, at the Tarawa Terrace II Baseball Field from 1 - 3 p.m. Open to all military card holders.

May Mania May 17-19, 2013 at W.P.T. Field. Expect this fun-filled event to be like last year's, such as a carnival that will feature rides, a children's activity area, a luau-themed photo booth, lots of musical entertainment, and "Show Us Whatcha Got" showcasing the local singing talent. There will also be a beer garden and marketplace area with lots of food and cooking demonstrations.

4th of July Celebration will be hosted at the Camp Lejeune W.P.T. Field in early July. Fireworks, food and entertainment will be provided. Details to follow.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

II MEF (Fwd) Spouses Ball November 16, at Marston Pavilion from 6 - 10 p.m. More information will be disseminated as the date nears.

II MEF (Fwd) Christmas Party December 7, Goettge Field House from 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. More information will be disseminated as the date nears.



Sergeant Maj. Paul A. Berry (left), II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) sergeant major, and Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller, II MEF (Fwd) commander salute the II MEF (Fwd) battle colors during the Regional Command (Southwest) Transfer of Authority ceremony here, Feb. 28. Major Gen. Miller assumed command of RC (SW) from Maj. Gen. Gurganus, I MEF (Fwd) commander, assuming command of Coalition forces serving throughout Helmand and Nimroz provinces.

Transfer of Authority

II MEF ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY OF REGIONAL COMMAND SOUTHWEST

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. BRYAN A. PETERSON

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - Major Gen. W. Lee Miller, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) commander, took command of Regional Command Southwest during a Transfer of Authority ceremony here, Feb. 28.

Major Gen. Miller assumed responsibility of Coalition forces serving throughout Helmand and Nimroz provinces, from Maj. Gen. Charles M. Gurganus, I MEF (Fwd) commander.

“There is no light between (Maj.) Gen. Gurganus and I,” said Maj. Gen. Miller, addressing Afghan military and government officials in the audience.

“We have been tracking each other for nine months, now. I know what’s been going on (here). I know where you’re headed and I know how good you are. We will continue to press. I appreciate the opportunity to take command of RC (SW).”

Major Gen. Miller referred to his continued communication with Maj. Gen. Gurganus during I MEF (Fwd)’s yearlong deployment. He said he will continue building on NATO’s “guide, advise and assist” strategy as Afghan National Security Forces continue taking the lead in securing Afghanistan.

Major Gen. Gurganus is credited with taking what was considered a counterinsurgency campaign in the region to a security force assistance mode of operations while overseeing the drawdown of more than 10,000 Marines and other Coalition troops.

The security force assistance mission is executed by small Security Force Assistance Advisor Teams by providing guidance and advice to ANSF units as they conduct security operations. The teams facilitate the transition of security from Coalition forces to ANSF.

Last year the Afghan 215th Corps stood up a new 4th Brigade, further increasing its capabilities. This enabled 3rd Brigade to secure access to the provincial capital and 2nd Brigade to maintain pressure in the northern region of Helmand province in areas such as Kajaki and Sangin.

“Today, Afghans lead 80 percent of combat missions,” said Army Lieutenant Gen. James T. Terry, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command commander, during the ceremony. “This shows what a Coalition can get done. The idea of ANSF leading missions was just that, an idea. Now, it’s a reality...what you’ve done this past year is remarkable.”

Major Gen. Gurganus said it’s been a “year of complexity, challenges, and hard and good times,” but he

cited the strength of the coalition has “been the confidence, courage and trust” shared by all.

He emphasized confidence, courage and trust are synonymous with the Afghans.

“Add cooperation and that’s exactly what carries our ANSF partners through as well,” said Maj. Gen. Gurganus. “These three things, plus cooperation with one another and (the Afghan’s) commitment to the mission, is something really phenomenal to watch and my parting words are to continue that.”

He sees a “bright, positive” future for Afghanistan, especially in the Helmand province. Looking at Afghan National Army Maj. Gen. Sayeed Malook, the 215th Corps commanding general, and other Afghan military and civilian leaders, he said he was positive the “sun has risen” in Helmand province and “it will never set again.”



Major Gen. W. Lee Miller, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) commander (left) and Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, the International Security Assistance Force commander, salute during the Regional Command (Southwest) Transfer of Authority ceremony here, Feb. 28.



TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN

Photos and Story by Sgt. Bobby J. Yarbrough

TREK NAWA, Afghanistan—Using an oversized sand table as a terrain model, Afghan National Army Col. Mohammad Sarwar points to a spot within the sand where soldiers will construct a patrol base for the Afghan Uniform Police. As the executive officer of the 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, Sarwar is presenting a plan for conducting a clearing operation Feb. 10-12, within Trek Nawa, a sparsely populated area within Helmand Province known for sheltering insurgents.

The 1st Brigade has completed clearing operations within the area before, however this time the unit will establish three permanent patrol bases for local police units. The bases will be used to provide security to the local communities and prevent the insurgents from gaining a

stronger foothold in the province. To accomplish this, Sarwar has gathered military and police officials from throughout the region to coordinate and finalize an assault plan.

The meeting room is full—an assembly of brigade officers and noncommissioned officers as well as the ANA Kandak commanders who will lead the mission. The Marjah, Nad' Ali, and Nawa district police chiefs are also in attendance.

One by one, the leaders present the details of the three-day operation. The brigade operations officer, intelligence officer, and medical officer voice their mission responsibilities to the group. Kandak commanders brief their unit's battle plan, emphasizing their capabilities and tasks.

Small aspects of the mission become muddled, so Sarwar reemphasizes every detail, eliminating any doubts amongst the commanders.

In the corner, a small team of Marines sits quietly, listening to the specifics of the operation. The Marines are part of the 1st Brigade Security Force Assistance Advisor Team (SFAAT) tasked with mentoring and training the Afghans. But today their assistance isn't needed. For this operation the Afghans have the lead.

Although the Marines will serve alongside them for the duration of the mission, they will not provide weapons, equipment, or manpower for the counterinsurgency operation. They will simply provide mentorship.



Members of the Afghan National Army and Aghan Local Police patrol through Trek Nawa during a three-day clearing operation Feb. 11. The ANA and ALP forces cleared Trek Nawa from north to south, successfully disrupting insurgent activity along the way.



Afghan National Army Col. Mohammad Sarwar uses a terrain model to show military and police leaders where the ANA will establish three patrol bases outside Trek Nawa.



Members of the 1st Brigade, 215 Corps' Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, prepare their trucks and equipment for a clearing operation in Trek Nawa.

For the past seven months, the Camp Pendleton-based advisor team has pushed 1st Brigade to become self-reliant. And with much success, they have. Over the next week, the success of the operation will rest heavily on the ANA leaders. According to both U.S. and Afghan officials that is exactly where the responsibility should lie.

Transition in Afghanistan

In January, Presidents Barack Obama and Hamid Karzai met in Washington, D.C., and decided to speed up the military transition in Afghanistan. Both agreed Afghan forces would take the lead in combat operations starting this spring.

"What's going to happen this spring is that Afghans will be in the lead throughout the country," said Obama

during his speech alongside Karzai. "That doesn't mean that coalition forces including U.S. forces are no longer fighting—they will still be fighting alongside Afghan troops. It does mean though that Afghans will have taken the lead and our presence, the nature of our work will be different. We will be in a training, assisting, advising role. It will be a historic moment and another step toward full Afghan sovereignty."



(Top) An Afghan National Army soldier returns to Combat Outpost Passerlay after spending three days clearing insurgents out of Trek Nawa Feb. 11. (Lower Right) Members of the 1st Brigade, 215 Corps' Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team unload a damaged Humvee at Combat Outpost Passerlay Feb. 10. The team had been conducting a route clearing mission in Trek Nawa when they struck an improvised explosive device. (Lower Left) An Afghan National Army soldier fires the 2A18 122-mm Soviet howitzer during the night at Combat Outpost Passerlay Feb. 11. Members of the 4th Kandak fired illumination rounds to support the ground elements during a three-day clearing operation in Trek Nawa.



“The 1st Brigade is now in the lead and their maturity level and capabilities as a brigade is remarkable. They are the true definition of Afghans leading Afghans.”

Lt. Col. Philip Treglia

Within Helmand, the 1st Brigade has already taken the lead—controlling more than 60 percent of the battle space. In November 2012, the unit signed the Transfer of Lead Security Responsibility (TLSR), strengthening the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces in the region.

According to Lt. Col. Philip Treglia, commanding officer of the advisor team, 1st Brigade is a model unit that demonstrates the increased development of the ANA.

“For 43 months, the brigade has worked side-by-side with Marine advisors and they have been able to mirror what the Marines do on a tactical level,” said Treglia. “The 1st Brigade is now in the lead and their maturity level and capabilities as a brigade are remarkable. They are the true definition of Afghans leading Afghans.”

The push through Trek Nawa

On Feb. 10, approximately 800 ANA soldiers with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Kandaks of the 1st Brigade swept through Trek Nawa disrupting insurgent activity along the way. Although the soldiers came under heavy fire they were able to suppress and defeat the enemy.

During the operation, 19 insurgents were killed and 26 were captured. The 4th Kandak’s Route Clearance Company dismantled 34 improvised explosive devices emplaced by the enemy and located four weapons caches.

The clearing operation marked the first major operation the unit completed since signing the TLSR. Coordination between the Afghan National Army, Afghan Uniformed Police, and Afghan Local Police was the key to the mission’s success. Because of their proficiency, the three patrol bases were completed a day earlier than expected and no civilian casualties were reported.

Sarwar said he was impressed with 1st Brigade’s achievements in Trek Nawa and he believes future operations will show the true abilities of the Afghan National Security Forces.

“Through our planning, our mission in Trek Nawa was a success,” said Sarwar. “We have learned that coordination with our counterparts is critical to any operation and this will define our operations in the future.”

REGIONAL COMMAND (SW)



AIR GROUND TEAM