



II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)



FAMILY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2013





COMMANDER'S COMMENTS

Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller



With July behind us we are nearing the halfway point of our deployment and things are going very well. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) assumed lead responsibility for conducting security operations across Afghanistan and here in Regional Command (Southwest) the fighting season has been busy but mainly contained to a few specific areas. This is due to the hard work your Marine, Sailor, and our Coalition partners are doing as advisors to the ANSF. They have helped improve coordination between the Afghan Army and Police who are now well trained, professionally equipped, and willing and able to take the fight to their enemies. I have every confidence that with our continued support as advisors the ANSF will give the Afghan people the confidence they need to stand up to and reject the Taliban, drug traffickers, and other criminal groups that are disrupting governance and community development with indiscriminate violence.

Media interest in Afghanistan doesn't seem to be very high back home and the perspective of journalists in the States or even in Kabul is generally different than ours here on the ground in Helmand and Nimroz. When media come to visit us we help them get out and about in theater so they can see how things are going here on the ground – then when they publish or broadcast their stories we post them to our Facebook page at facebook.com/regionalcommandsouthwest. I encourage you to visit the page. It's a good place to keep up with what's going on here and to find stories and photos you can share with friends and family to help them understand our mission.

As always, my thanks to all of you who are working so hard to keep things going on the home front throughout this deployment. If you haven't already you should be able to enjoy some R&R time with your Marine or Sailor soon and some may even find their deployments end early as we continue to realign the force for the Train, Advise & Assist mission ahead. Regardless of your R&R schedule though, less than one month from now we'll be at the halfway point and can start counting down the time until we'll all return home. There is still plenty of hard work ahead – but we'll be home before you know it.



SERGEANT MAJOR

Sgt. Maj. Paul Berry



Family and Friends of II MEF (Forward),

Hello from Afghanistan! Most days it is hot and some days it is really hot. We are very pleased with the progress in RC (SW). This is truly a team effort and our Marines and Sailors are making history.

Many of the split deployers have returned. I can say without a doubt every one of them contributed to our mission success. Many new faces have reported to II MEF (FWD). We are very pleased to see these newly joined Marines and Sailors. We look forward to their contributions and team effort. Of course none of this would be possible without your continued support.

As summer slowly comes to an end please take advantage of the remaining time to volunteer. The greatest gift we can give is our time. Contact our FRO and he can discuss many volunteer options.

It is time to think about the Marine Corps Birthday! As we progress into the early fall stay in contact with the FRO and our outstanding volunteers to learn more about the Marine Corp Birthday Ball. Thank you and Semper Fi.

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2013

FROM THE COMMAND

COMMANDER'S COMMENTS

SERGEANT MAJOR

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

FROM THE HOMEFRONT

FAMILY READINESS OFFICER

UPCOMING EVENTS

FROM THE FRONTLINES

CLR MARINE RE-ENLISTS, PG. 7

MARINES PROTECT B.L.S., PG. 8

RCBS TEACHING ARTILLERY, PG. 10



Follow us on Facebook

facebook.com/regionalcommandsouthwest



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





II MAF Fwd. COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

Master Chief Petty Officer Matthew DesChamps

Family and friends of II MEF FWD,

With Command Master Chief McNulty away, I'd like to thank you for your continued support of your service members deployed here in Afghanistan. Some units are heading home and some units are just getting into country, but either way they cannot do it without your support from the home front. Most of you are probably preparing for school to start and are enjoying the last free days of summer with family. It is important to keep busy to make the time go by a little quicker for you and your deployed Marine or Sailor.

On July 4th we celebrated a USO sponsored 5k/10k fun run in which a lot of Sailors either participated or volunteered to help support. The dining facilities went all out for a 4th of July lunch, decorating the facilities in red, white and blue and serving a nice spread of food. It's the little things that help us get by each day. It's not that we have forgotten where we are, but the festivities reminded us of home and what July 4th is all about.

During the past month, numerous Sailors throughout Regional Command (Southwest) qualified as an Enlisted Fleet Marine Force Warfare Specialist or completed the Fleet Marine Force Warfare Officer program. Each Sailor should be proud of their accomplishments. Additionally, the 3rd Quarter Sailors of the Quarter selections were announced for Regional Command (Southwest). The following sailors were selected: Senior Sailor of the Quarter, HM1 (FMF) Mikel Frazier (CLR-2); Junior Sailor of the Quarter, HM3 Rasheed Collins (2D MAF FWD); and Blue Jacket of the Quarter, HN Ashley Roof (CLR-2). Job well done! Also, the Navy announced our newest Lieutenant Commander reserve selects for this fiscal year: LT Calvin Martin (2d MAF FWD) in the US Navy reserves.

For those Sailors departing, your efforts have been tremendous and everlasting. Each of you should be proud of what you have done here. For those Sailors just arriving, you have big shoes to fill but I am sure you are up to the task and will do an exceptional job. To our families, you truly are heroes holding down the household back home. Your job may be the hardest of all in balancing all those things that come up throughout our deployment and you handle it exceedingly well. Thank you for your support!

Family Frustrations

A recent study at Creighton University found that, time together, frequency of sex, and money problems were the top three causes of arguments in marriage. Other marital struggles included expectations about household tasks, communication, and dealing with parents and in laws.

A friend of mine talked to me about a fight he had with his wife over the amount of money she spent on clothes for his daughter. It was about \$ 300 and he couldn't figure out why she spent so much. His wife replied that it was the start of school and their daughter needed new outfits. My friend stated that he never got new clothes for school, and his wife responded with the fact she did and why didn't he want the best for his daughter? The conversation escalated to argument with my friend stating that as he grew up, his family wasn't made of money. His wife responded by saying "why do you always act like my family was rich!"

Think about this; whether it's obvious or not, your family of origin plays a big part in your married life. What's "normal" to you may seem unusual to your spouse. Your family background often determines how you discipline your children, celebrate the holidays, spend money, and view the role of husband and wife. It affects almost all aspects of your life.

Maybe there was favoritism in your family or alcoholism or addiction or maybe some other dysfunction. The good news is that you don't have to allow bad family patterns to influence your marriage now. Don't give in to a fatalistic or victim mindset. If what you are doing and experiencing isn't working for you, then change it. As a chaplain I encourage you to ask God to help you deal with past hurts and seek counseling if needed.

With God's help you can embrace the good and overcome the negative things from your family background.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Cmdr. Patrick Smith



FAMILY READINESS OFFICER

Michael Cline

II MEF FWD FAMILIES,

We are quickly arriving at the halfway point of our deployment. The summer is upon us in full force, the children are out of school and things start happening, unexpected and unforeseen. In this letter, I have made a brief snapshot of what services the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society and American Red Cross can provide to Marines, Sailors and family members. I have also listed the Camp Lejeune agencies affected by the furlough and included information on the next upcoming family readiness event: Rock the Casba Pool Party.

AMERICAN RED CROSS

1108 Birch Street

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

Phone Numbers: Camp Lejeune (910) 451-2173, MCAS

New River (910)-449-4756, Hospital (910)450-4596

<http://www.redcross.org>

Emergency services and after hours/out of area Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) financial assistance can be provided by the American Red Cross, who can be contacted at Toll Free at: 1 (877) 272-7337.

The American Red Cross can provide the following services to families of active duty service members:

- Emergency messages may be sent via American Red Cross when the service member's command requires verification of an emergency or the service member's family cannot directly contact the service member
- Messages can be regarding the death, birth or illness of an immediate family member

1. Parent/spouse/child/sibling/last living blood relative/legal guardian/grandparent

2. Includes both step and in-law relations

- Message does not guarantee emergency leave (Determined by chain of command)

HOW DOES A RED CROSS MESSAGE WORK?

An emergency happens in the family: Family (or service member) contacts the American Red Cross in their local area. You can find the number on www.redcross.org by putting in their zip code or in their local phonebook under "American Red Cross"

- The Red Cross obtains basic information on service member and on emergency
- Emergency is verified
- Message is sent to service member and command via Red Cross channels

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

- Service Member Name, Rank, SSN or Date of Birth, Military Branch of Service, and full deployment address.

NAVY-MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY

400 McHugh Boulevard

Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

Hours: Monday-Thursday (8:00 AM - 4:00 PM),

Friday (8:00 AM – 3:00 PM)

Phone: (910) 451-5346

<http://www.mccslejeune.com/readiness/nmcr.html>

*Note: Emergency loans do not require an appointment.

- Quick Assist Loans up to \$300 to Active Duty Sailors and Marines.

- Budget Development, where you can get assistance developing your own personal budget.

- Interest-Loans and/or grants to help with unexpected financial needs such as:

1. Food, rent, and utilities.
2. Emergency transportation
3. Essential vehicle repairs
4. Unforeseen family emergencies
5. Excess medical/dental bills
6. Disaster relief assistance
7. Funeral expense

- Budget for Babies (layettes are included)
- Education Loans and scholarships for active duty spouses, and for children of active duty, retired, and deceased service members.
- Education loans for some active duty commissioning programs.

Commercial Phone: (910) 450-5939

Blackberry Mobile: (910) 546-7996

E-Mail: michael.e.cline1@usmc.mil

****** If you need any help on Red Cross Messages, please call (910) 450-5939 or (910) 546-7996 ******

Continues to next page...

WHAT CAMP LEJEUNE SERVICES ARE AFFECTED BY FURLOUGH?

The furlough will affect the Camp Lejeune Commissary, Naval Hospital, base schools, main vehicle registration office, identification center, traffic court and Legal Assistance Immigration Services for now. Camp Lejeune agencies have modified their services and hours of operation as follows:

- Defense Commissary Agency: Commissary closed Mondays.
- Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune: Pharmacy located at the Marine Corps Exchange closed Mondays.
- Base schools will be closed on the following dates: September 3, 4, 9, 16 and 23.
- The vehicle registration office at Building 60 will close from July 8 - Sept. 30. To accommodate this closure, the visitor center will be extending the hours of decal issuance/vehicle registration and check in/out to 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- The ID Card Center will close at 4 p.m. on Mondays.
- Traffic Court will be closed on Fridays starting July 12.
- Legal Assistance Immigration Services closes at noon on Wednesdays.

It is possible additional customer and family services delays may also occur. Additionally, sequestration budgetary challenges have increased the costs of some services (e.g., barber shops and certain seasonal swimming pools). Finally, these scheduled closures and periods of reduced hours are subject to change based on future fiscal decisions made by the federal government. For continuing updates or changes, please check with the Camp Lejeune Globe newspaper, www.lejeune.marines.mil or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/camp.lejeune.

UPCOMING FAMILY READINESS EVENT ROCK THE CASBA POOL PARTY

II MEF FWD will have a combined Family readiness event to celebrate the halfway point of the deployment on Aug. 9 at Paradise Point Pool from 7:30 – 10:30 p.m. This event will be open to all adult family members of II MEF FWD, II MHG FWD and the Security Force Assistant Advisor Teams.

Food will consist of a combination of Mediterranean/Greek fare buffet and sliders. Non-Alcoholic Drinks will be provided.

Entertainment will consist of a live DJ kicking the latest beats, as well as your favorites, karaoke for your amusement, and a Belly Dancer who will be teaching us the moves!

Free childcare will be provided by the Brewster CDC. Families need to call Brewster CDC to make reservations at 910-450-8467. Reservations should be made as soon as possible but no later than 72 hours in advance of the event. Childcare will be provided for children between the ages of six weeks through 12 years old. Childcare will begin at 1900 and will end at approximately 11 p.m. on the date listed in the subject line of this e-mail.

ENSURE YOUR CHILDREN ARE REGISTERED:

Children must be registered (have a white card) with Children, Youth, and Teen Programs before childcare can be provided. Registration will be completed with Resource & Referral Office (R&R), which is located in the TT II CDC, Bldg. TT 113 Iwo Jima Boulevard Tarawa Terrace. The phone number to contact R&R is; (910) 450-0553/54/55, Mon-Fri from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Bring your child's shot records to complete the registration process and a copy of the most recent medical physical (if available).

FOOD:

Families should provide meals and/or snacks for the children using this childcare (as CDC meal/snack service is not available after 3 p.m.) The food provided cannot require heating or refrigeration as there is no refrigeration or heating available. This information does not apply for infants six weeks to 12 months of age. For specific questions regarding the food policy families should speak with the Brewster CDC staff when making their reservations.

NOTE: I ask that you RSVP to my email at michael.e.cline1@usmc.mil to ROCK THE CASBA POOL PARTY as well as number of children requiring childcare.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any assistance you may need. I am here to help and make this deployment go smoothly for both you and your service member!!

CLR-2 Marine re-enlists, closes out deployment

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CPL. LIA ADKINS

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHUKVANI, Afghanistan -

On their last convoy together, while most Marines were looking at wrapping up their deployment, one noncommissioned officer saw the start of his second contract.

Cpl. Peter R. Hager always saw the Marine Corps as a short term plan—serve honorably for four years and then get out. But Hager's second deployment to Afghanistan changed his view on the Corps.

"The Marine Corps grew on me," said Hager, loadmaster for 2nd Platoon, Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 2. "I thought about if I got out, what could I see myself doing. There was just nothing there. I couldn't see myself doing anything different."

On his last convoy before returning home, Hager re-enlisted in a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Shukvani, June 10. The ceremony's location was fitting, as Hager has spent the last six months traveling to Shukvani and other bases within Helmand province retrograding equipment in preparation for the reduction of troops in 2014.

Hager says he owes a lot of his decision to re-enlist to the experience he gained on this deployment.

"Afghanistan is where you learn your job," said Hager, a Springfield, Mass., native. "You can go to (military occupational specialty) school and learn how to drive a truck, but this is where you learn to do your job. There's no other place that you can get this experience, for as far as, 'How much can I fit on this truck, or how am I going to put this together?' That's why I like the deployments. I like the challenges."

As the loadmaster, Hager is in charge of organizing the transport and loading of all gear the platoon will be transporting to different locations. He consistently looks for ways to load as much as allowed on a vehicle.

Hager and his platoon spent every week outside the wire, and despite being constantly on the go, his unit never came under attack or hit an improvised explosive device.

Staff Sgt. William R. Schultz, the platoon sergeant, boasts about Hager being the best loadmaster in the company.

"I don't speak from a biased opinion, I speak from experience," said Schultz, a Detroit native. "I have been in another platoon and their load master has struggled to perform anywhere near as well as Cpl. Hager."

As the single point of contact for all loads, Hager was personally responsible for the rigging, securing and transportation during

the rigging, securing and transportation during combat logistics operations.

"He takes pride in every aspect of his job," said Schultz. "Cpl. Hager consistently sought out and coordinated with supported units, and was often able to take more than requested, transporting extra gear and personnel."

Not only did Hager excel in his job, but also took the opportunity to learn from the Marines he works with. Hager says he has learned more about trucks in the last six months from his fellow NCOs than he has in his three years with the Marine Corps.

"We are a different breed, some of the smartest people I have ever met are in this platoon," said Hager. "We are always steered in the right direction. We never wait to get anything done, if it's possible, we are going to do it. That's just our nature. You can throw whatever you want at us, regardless, we are going to do it."





Coalition service members attend Ramazan Symposium

by Sgt. Bryan Peterson

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan-

More than 130 Coalition Forces service members and Afghan leaders attended the Regional Command (Southwest) Ramazan Symposium at the Afghan Cultural Center, here, July 6, to learn about Islam's holy month.

At the request of Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller, the RC(SW) commander, Helmand province officials, tribal elders and local mullahs attended the symposium to teach the command's senior leadership what Ramazan means to Muslims.

During opening remarks, Miller reaffirmed to his Afghan guests the coalition's commitment to bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan so the people may live free. He talked about respecting Islam's customs and traditions and how coalition service members can foster better relationships with their Afghan partners as they celebrate the fourth pillar of Islam.

"As we know, Ramazan is a special time in the lives of every Muslim throughout the world," said Miller. "The holy month of Ramazan is a period of self-reflection, devotion to God and self-control."

According to Muslim tradition, the Koran was sent to Gabriel who then revealed Allah's word to the Islamic prophet Mohammad during the ninth month of the lunar, Islamic calendar year.

The holy Islamic month begins at the first sighting of the crescent moon from Mecca and ends on the next sighting.

During this time, Muslims worldwide will fast from dawn until dusk. Adult Muslims will not eat or drink. They will abstain from any physical need, unless people have medical conditions, such as pregnancy. Muslims must make peace with their enemies, refrain from swearing and gossiping.

The last 10 days of Ramazan are considered the most distinct as Muslims are encouraged to worship more, ask for forgiveness and give to charity.

Afghan leaders taught their coalition partners about the history of Ramazan before advising them about the do's and don'ts during the fasting period to avoid offending Muslims. They encouraged all non-Muslims to avoid eating, drinking, listening to music and all other Ramazan sensitive acts in front of those who are fasting. Mawlawee Meherdil Farahee, the deputy chief of the Ulema Council in Lashkar Gah, the symposium's first speaker, described recent deadly incidents where the enemies of Afghanistan have "killed their brothers, sisters, sons and daughters."

"Just last week in [Kandahar], the [enemies of Afghanistan] took out a whole family," said the Muslim religious scholar. "Three days ago in Lashkar Gah, the enemies planted an



More than 130 Coalition Forces service members and Afghan leaders attended the Regional Command (Southwest) Ramadan Symposium at the Afghan Cultural Center, here, July 6, to learn about Islam's holy month. At the request of Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller, the RC(SW) commander, Helmand province officials, tribal elders and local mullahs attended the symposium to teach the command's senior leadership what Ramadan means to Muslims. (Photos by Sgt. Bryan Peterson)

improvised explosive device and killed a little girl who was getting a jug of water. We ask them to stop the atrocities and have them come join us in the peaceful month of Ramadan."

"God's order is that all Muslims live with each other in harmony and we are with open arms to our Muslim brothers who are trying to hurt peace in our country," Farahee added.

Afghan National Army Maj. Gen. Sayeed Malook, the 215th Corps' commanding general, echoed Farahee's sentiments, but also said the Afghan people should have nothing to worry about during Ramadan.

"Like the others today, we ask the [enemies of Afghanistan] to lay down their weapons during our holy month," said Malook. "But, if they don't, we and the rest of the [Afghan National Security Forces] will do what it takes to protect the people of Helmand Province.

"We will have our soldiers on patrol

"The holy month of Ramadan is a period of self-reflection, devotion to God and self-control."

Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller

and the police will have their policemen out on the streets so that the people will have us to protect them," Malook added.

U.S. Marine Maj. Peter Schnurr, officer in charge of the Sangin District Police Advisor Team, said his Marines are aware of Ramadan and the effects it will have on police they are advising.

"This symposium is very important," said Schnurr, "and as we operate as normal, my guys will do everything we can to make sure we are sensitive to our counterparts while they fast during Ramadan."



Regional Corps Battle School now teaching artillery

CAMP SHORABAK, Afghanistan - After Afghan National Army Staff Sgt. Narooli Talash joined the ANA three years ago, he spent three months at the Kabul Military Training Center in Afghanistan's capital to become an artilleryman.

But since then, he's spent his time as an infantryman with 4th Kandak, or battalion, 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps, fighting the enemies of Afghanistan in Delaram and Now Zad districts in Helmand province. When he heard he was coming to Camp Shorabak to refresh his cannonneer skills during a Regional Corps Battle School artillery course from June 17-July 7, he couldn't wait.

"The closest I've gotten to shoot anything compared to artillery were the mortars," said Talash. "But, I love artillery and what it can do for us. I'm excited to be here."

Throughout the course, Marines with Regional Command (Southwest)'s RCBS have taught Talash and 25 other ANA soldiers about the fundamentals of artillery at Camp Shorabak's Regional Military Training Center, here. Whether the training was a refresher for some or new experience for others, the soldiers are being trained so they can go back to their units and teach others through a method known as "train the trainer."

The "train the trainer" concept is built around Coalition Security Force Assistance teams who teach critical capabilities to select ANA soldiers and Afghan policemen who can then train others as Coalition forces draw down.

The training was split up into three classes: gun line, forward observer and fire direction center.

The three-week course, the battle school's first artillery training program, however, doesn't include live-fire training. Rather, the Marine instructors are teaching the soldiers how to set up a howitzer, accurately locate targets and relay information from the forward observers to the gun line, through the fire direction center.

The course will culminate with an exercise prior to graduation, July 7. The artillerymen, forward observers and fire direction center soldiers will receive a mission to locate targets to test their communication abilities.

First Lt. Steven Craig, the RCBS fires advisor, said the soldiers are grasping the knowledge quickly and those who have previous artillery experience are stepping in to help teach.

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
Sgt. Bryan A. Peterson**



"The soldiers who have the experience are a big help out here, because they teach what they know to the soldiers in the class and communicate more effectively," said Craig, a Moorpark, Calif., native. "This is great, because the intent of the course is to get these soldiers in the teaching mindset for when they get back and they're already doing it."

Craig said when the course began the soldiers were taking in a lot of knowledge in the classroom, but they spent more time outside getting familiar with the Russian-made 122mm D-30 howitzer.

He added the soldiers are visual learners and conducting repetitive drills on the howitzer helps them understand better.

"Artillery is a technical job," said Craig. "There's a lot of math involved and when you're trying to get the howitzers all on line, facing the right direction, it's easily forgettable if you're not doing this every day."

In the forward observer class, Sgt. Levi Slife, a RCBS joint terminal attack controller, taught soldiers how to



find enemy targets far away from friendly lines. His goal is to get the soldiers to find the enemy's distance and relay the information to soldiers in the FDC, who then relay it to the gun line.

Slife role played during the course, acting as if he was working in the FDC so he could communicate with the students in the class.

"I found (the role playing method) to be very effective with the Afghan soldiers," said the Littleton, Colo., native. "I taught them everything from finding the enemy, calling in for fire and making changes to adjust fire. They started getting it once I acted as if I was in the FDC."

During breaks in between classes, Slife was happy to see the soldiers still practicing.

"It just goes to show these guys are committed," Slife said.

Talash, who is eager to train others, wants to go back to his unit, gather some other soldiers in the FO and FDC classes who will be returning to Now Zad and



begin training immediately.

"We will have a complete artillery system in place by the time this course is over," said Talash. "We will be able to conduct training all the time, and, if there's a need for artillery, we will be proficient enough to take out the enemy."

